

Economic and Social Stressors in San Luis Obispo County

ACTION FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
UNVEILS A NEW QUALITY OF LIFE STUDY

HIGHLIGHTS ABOUT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STRESSORS IN 2010

As the nation struggles with the economic downturn, so do San Luis Obispo County residents. The two greatest concerns in our community, as reported in the 2010 ACTION for Healthy Communities quality of life study, are housing costs and employment opportunities. Almost half of our residents say they do not feel better off economically this year as compared to last year.

At the same time, 1 in 5 residents live on the edge, reporting they have less than \$300 in a savings account. Another disconcerting finding is the 20% increase of households (all family sizes) living in poverty from 2003 to 2009.

What's happening to the overall quality of life of San Luis Obispo County residents? The correlation of these economic stressors and the physical and mental health of our residents is troubling.

Health Issues:

- More residents report they lack health insurance.
- After many years of decline, smoking rates have increased since 2006.
- In the last year the binge drinking rate in our county was higher than the State rate.
- More residents report they exercise less than they did in 2003.

Social Issues:

- One third of residents are very concerned about racism in San Luis Obispo County.
- Twelve percent of local residents reported they went without basic needs such as food and health care in the last year.
- Increasing numbers of residents needing public assistance puts a strain on our social services systems.

For a closer look at the local economy and how it is impacting San Luis Obispo County residents, please read on.



ACTION for Healthy Communities is a consortium of public and private organizations that collaborate to assess the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County. The goals of the project are to raise public awareness, provide accurate and reliable data, improve decision-making, establish community goals, and develop collaborative action plans to achieve those community goals.

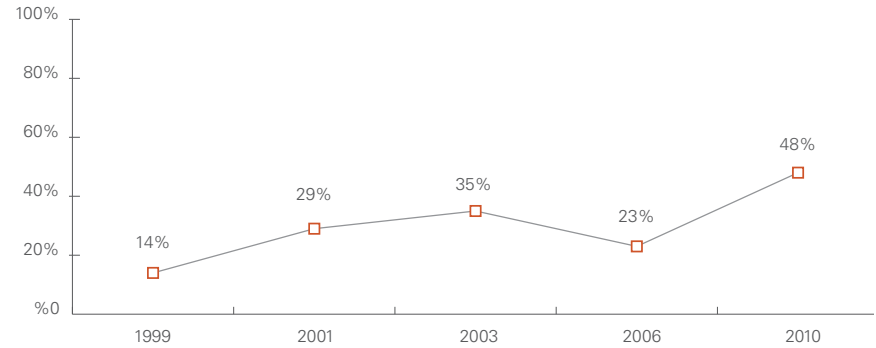
ACTION started collecting data about the county in 1999 and has updated the data in 2001, 2003, 2006 and 2010. This 2010 project included a telephone survey of a random sample of 1,101 San Luis Obispo County residents. The term “residents” is used to identify the telephone survey respondents. The overall study also included a face-to-face survey with homeless individuals, dependent adults, and Spanish-speaking parents. The data from the 2010 surveys are combined with data from a wide range of federal, state and local sources to bring you a picture of life in San Luis Obispo County. The full report may be found at <http://www.unitedwayslo.org/action/index.html>.

THE ECONOMY

Reflecting the recession, almost half (48%) of residents said they feel worse off economically this year as compared to last year. This is more than double the 23% who reported feeling worse off in 2006.

- The median family income in the county is \$72,500; in California it is \$71,000, and nationally it is \$64,400.¹
- However, nearly 30% of residents had household incomes of \$35,000 or less per year, which was a decline from almost 34% in 2003. Sixty-five percent of these households had at least two members. At the same time the number of households earning over \$100,000 doubled since 2003, from 11% to 22%.²

RESPONDENTS WHO FELT WORSE OFF ECONOMICALLY THIS YEAR THAN LAST YEAR



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2010.
 Note: The word "economically" was added in 2001 for clarity.

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF RESIDENTS



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey, 2010.

BASIC NEEDS

Basic needs were not met for many people in 2009.

- 1 in 5 people surveyed did not have savings of at least \$300.
- Twelve percent of residents said they went without some basic needs in the last year, most often health care and food.²
- Nearly 29% of county residents were not able to afford enough food in 2007.³

An increasing number of people need public assistance.

- CalWORKs provides temporary financial assistance and employment services to families in poverty with minor children. CalWORKs participation increased 8%, from 4,262 families in 2008 to 4,624 in 2009.⁴
- The Food Stamp program saw a 26% increase in participation from 9,363 households in 2008 to 11,827 in 2009.⁴
- Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California) is administered through both the Social Security Administration and the Department of Social Services. While the number of cases administered through Social Security remains fairly constant at around 5,000 annually, the number of Social Services cases increased over 11%, from an average of 9,449 per month in 2008 to an average of 10,503 per month in 2010.
- General Assistance to indigent adults who are not eligible for any other programs rose 13%, from 251 recipients in 2008 to 284 in 2009.⁴
- About one-third (34%) of school-aged children were enrolled in the Free and Reduced Price Meal program in 2008/2009, much lower than California's average of 54%.⁶ The meal program is a federally assisted program that provides low cost or free breakfasts and lunches to children in low-income families during the school day.
- Approximately 10% of residents said they were receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for an adult or a child in their family with a disability.

EMPLOYMENT

5,200 jobs in the county were lost in 2009.

- Jobs in the county declined from 107,400 in 2008 to 102,200 in 2009. The declines were felt in many sectors including farm and non-farm labor, however there was a slight increase in state and local government jobs.⁴
- Unemployment in the county was 9% in 2009, up from 5.7% in 2008. It was highest in Oceano (16.6%), Nipomo (11.9%) and Paso Robles (10.7%) in 2009.⁵

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY COMMUNITY

Unemployment Rate by community	2007	2008	2009	2001-2009 Net change
Arroyo Grande	4.4%	5.9%	9.2%	5.8
Atascadero	3.5%	4.7%	7.4%	4.6
Cambria	3.0%	4.0%	6.3%	4.0
Cayucos	2.4%	3.3%	5.2%	3.6
Grover Beach	4.2%	5.6%	8.8%	5.1
Lake Nacimiento	4.3%	5.8%	9.1%	5.9
Los Osos	3.3%	4.4%	6.9%	4.3
Morro Bay	3.3%	4.5%	7.1%	4.6
Nipomo	5.8%	7.7%	11.9%	7.5
Oceano	8.3%	10.9%	16.6%	10.1
Paso Robles	5.1%	6.8%	10.7%	6.7
Pismo Beach	4.4%	5.9%	9.2%	5.8
San Luis Obispo	4.7%	6.3%	9.9%	5.0
San Miguel	4.6%	6.2%	9.7%	6.0
Shandon	2.0%	2.8%	4.4%	2.2
Templeton	3.0%	4.1%	6.4%	4.1
San Luis Obispo County	4.3%	5.7%	9.0%	5.1
California	5.3%	7.2%	11.4%	6.1
United States	4.6%	5.8%	9.3%	4.5

Source: State of California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, 2010.
U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010.

San Luis Obispo County is the third least affordable area in the nation for housing.

- Out of 234 listed areas only the New York City and San Francisco metropolitan areas are considered less affordable.⁷
- Houses are getting relatively cheaper to buy, but rents are going up.
- The median home price fell from \$533,000 in 2006 to \$350,000 for the first quarter of 2010.⁷
- Only a third of homes (32%) were affordable to median income families in 2010. This was a large increase from the 7% that were affordable in 2007.⁷
- The average cost for a two bedroom rental increased 26% to \$1,160 a month in 2010 compared to \$923 in 2006.⁸
- There has been a steep decline in the number of residential building permits in the county from 2,222 in 2003 to 373 in 2009, a decline of over 83%.⁹
- Almost 1 in 4 residents (23%) spent more than half of their income on housing and utilities, 39% spent between one-third and one-half of their income on housing costs, and 38% spent less than the recommended one-third of their income on housing costs.

Fewer residents have health insurance and more are struggling with mental health issues.

- Economic stressors are impacting residents' ability to get health care. Fewer residents have health insurance coverage, declining from 89% in 2006 to 84% in 2010. Seventy-three percent of those without insurance said it was due to the cost, up from 60% in 2006.²
- The 2007 California Health Interview Survey reported that 16% of residents delayed or didn't get medications in the last year, up from 11% in 2003.³
- The percent of residents who rated their mental health (including stress, depression and problems with emotions) as fair or poor doubled between 1999 and 2010.

Endnotes:

1. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD Program Income Limits, 2010.
2. ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2010.
3. California Health Interview Survey, 2007.
4. State of California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information, 2010.
5. State of California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, 2010. U.S., Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010.
6. California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, 2010.
7. National Association of Home Builders, NAHB – Wells Fargo Housing Opportunity Index (HOI), 2010.
8. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD USER Data Sets, 2010.
9. Construction Industry Research Board, 2010.

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