

Basic Needs in San Luis Obispo County

ACTION FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
UNVEILS A NEW QUALITY OF LIFE STUDY



HIGHLIGHTS ABOUT BASIC NEEDS IN 2010

San Luis Obispo County residents continue to face financial challenges that are interfering with their ability to meet basic needs. Findings from the 2010 ACTION for Healthy Communities quality of life study revealed this to be especially true for dependent adults, the homeless, Spanish-speaking parents, residents with less than a high school diploma, and female householders with children.

Nearly half of San Luis Obispo County residents said they were worse off economically this year compared to last year. This is not a surprise since the region has lost jobs since the start of the recession and residents are using larger portions of their incomes to pay for housing and utilities. Some San Luis Obispo County residents are going without health care, medications, food and clothing, and more residents are seeking community and government assistance.

In San Luis Obispo County there has been about a 20% increase of households (all family sizes) living in poverty from 2003 to 2009. From 2003 to 2009, there was an additional 6,493 individuals living in poverty.¹³

Living in poverty has long-term consequences for both adults and children who live in San Luis Obispo County. Studies show that living in poverty affects all aspects of a person's life; including but not limited to overall health status, a child's ability to learn, and ultimately a person's ability to earn a living.

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

ACTION for Healthy Communities is a consortium of public, private, and non-profit 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.

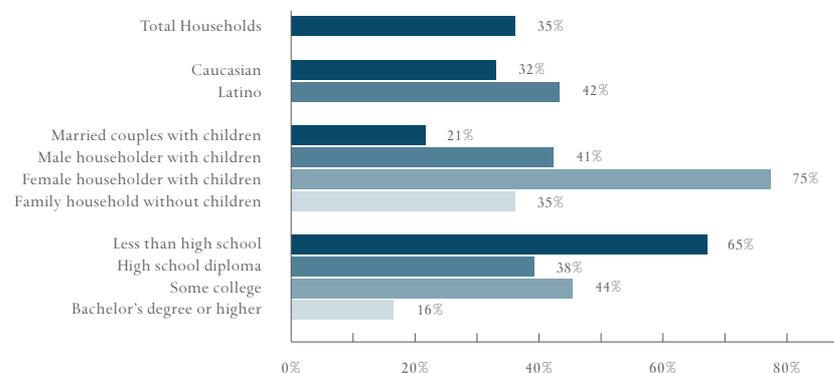
ACTION for Healthy Communities began assessing quality of life in the county in 1999 by collecting key datasets about quality of life issues, with updates completed in 2001, 2003, 2006 and 2010. The 2010 project includes a telephone survey of a representative sample of 1,101 San Luis Obispo County residents. The term “residents” is used to describe data from those telephone survey respondents. The overall study also included a face-to-face survey with homeless individuals, dependent adults, and Spanish-speaking parents. The primary data pieces have been 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://ActionSLO.org>

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Nearly 30% of residents had household incomes of less than \$35,000 per year. Of those residents, 10% earned less than \$15,000 per year.¹

- **EMPLOYMENT:** The county's unemployment rate was 9% in 2009, up from 6% in 2008. There were 5,200 fewer people employed in San Luis Obispo County from 2008 to 2009.²
- **INCOME:** A high percentage of female householders with children (75%) and residents with less than a high school diploma (65%) fell below the Self-Sufficiency Income Standards in 2007. The Self-Sufficiency Standard is the level of income deemed necessary to pay for basic needs, without relying on government assistance.³
- **SAVINGS:** According to those surveyed, one in five people said they did not have at least \$300 in a savings account.¹
- **HOUSING:** Of those surveyed by phone, 1 in 4 residents said they used more than one-half of their income on housing and utilities.¹ The average monthly cost for a two bedroom rental was \$1,230 in 2010, up from \$975 in 2004.⁴

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS BELOW SELF-SUFFICIENCY INCOME STANDARDS, SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY



Source: Insight Center for Community and Economic Development, *Overlooked and Undercounted 2009: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in California*
 These percentages were calculated using the most recent Self-Sufficiency Income Standards and the 2007 American Community Survey

BASIC NEEDS

More than 1 in 10 telephone survey respondents had to go without at least one basic need in 2010.¹

Of those surveyed who reported going without basic needs, more than 55% went without health care and 42% went without food in 2010.¹

More than 16% of San Luis Obispo County residents had to delay or go without medications they needed during the past 12 months, compared to 11% in California in 2007.⁵

| IF YOU HAD TO GO WITHOUT BASIC NEEDS, WHAT DID YOU GO WITHOUT? | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Response | 2001 | 2003 | 2006 | 2010 |
| Health Care | 53% | 62% | 57% | 55% |
| Food | 31% | 36% | 40% | 42% |
| Clothing | 29% | 31% | 37% | 30% |
| Childcare | NA | 7% | 11% | 9% |
| Housing | NA | 7% | 10% | 6% |
| Other | NA | 10% | 16% | 7% |
| Total respondents | 77 | 42 | 61 | 132 |
| Total responses | NA | NA | 103 | 197 |

Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2010.

HARD TO REACH POPULATIONS

It is clear that many San Luis Obispo County residents are struggling to meet their basic needs, and the concern is greater for dependent adults, the homeless and Spanish-speaking parents.

| IF YOU HAD TO GO WITHOUT BASIC NEEDS, WHAT DID YOU GO WITHOUT? | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Response | Dependent Adults | | Homeless | | Spanish-Speaking Parents | |
| | 2006 | 2010 | 2006 | 2010 | 2006 | 2010 |
| Food | 44% | 80% | 68% | 80% | 74% | 74% |
| Childcare | 12% | 13% | 17% | 27% | 34% | 59% |
| Health care | 61% | 59% | 49% | 69% | 52% | 74% |
| Clothing | 40% | 63% | 59% | 69% | 48% | 63% |
| Housing | 12% | 26% | 76% | 93% | 33% | 37% |
| Other | NA | 17% | NA | 11% | NA | 0% |
| Total respondents | 89 | 46 | 152 | 81 | 86 | 27 |
| Total responses | 151 | 119 | 408 | 283 | 207 | 83 |

Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities, Face-to-Face Survey, 2006, and 2010.

ACTION for Healthy Communities Comprehensive Report indicated 34% of dependent adults, 68% of homeless, and 32% of Spanish-speaking parents said they had to go without basic needs such as food, clothing, childcare, housing, or health care in 2010.⁷ Additional findings:

- HOUSING / UTILITY COSTS:** More than 31% of dependent adults and 37% of Spanish-speaking parents said they spent more than one-half of their income on housing and utilities.⁷
- HOMELESS:** More than 7% of dependent adults and 14% of Spanish-Speaking

parents said they were currently homeless in 2010, up from 3% and 9%, respectively, in 2006.⁷

- **SHELTER:** More homeless residents sought shelter from Community Action Partnership-SLO County (CAPSLO) - Homeless Services. Reports indicate CAPSLO was not able to shelter 527 residents in 2008 due to overcapacity; almost double the number they were not able to shelter in 2007.⁸

A total of 2,841 homeless persons were identified in the 2009 SLO County enumeration. Twenty-nine percent of the homeless population were families with children.⁶

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY PROGRAMS ASSIST WITH BASIC NEEDS

While the needs of San Luis Obispo County residents are rising, so are the requests for community and government programs.

- Department of Social Services:
 - CalWORKs Program reported a 12% increase in the number of San Luis Obispo County residents receiving temporary financial assistance and employment services between 2001 and 2009.²
 - There were 10,118 food stamp applications in 2009-10, an increase of 13% from 8,959 in 2008-09.⁹
- Free & Reduced School Meal Program served 34% of all K-12 students in 2008-09.¹⁰
- An additional 12% of youth in San Luis Obispo County enrolled in the Healthy Families Program between 2001 and 2009.¹¹
- In 2008, CAPSLO-Homeless Services placed 276 families in permanent housing compared to 139 families in 2005.⁸
- 211 HOTLINE CALLS for assistance have increased significantly in the

category of housing

- 387 calls in 2008-09 compared to 150 calls in 2006-07 and for assistance in obtaining food,
- 233 calls in 2008-09 compared to 77 calls in 2006-07¹²

Endnotes:

1. ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey, 2010.
2. State of California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division, 2010.
3. Insight Center for Community and Economic Development, Overlooked and Undercounted 2009: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in California, 2009.
4. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD USER Data Sets, 2010.
5. California Health Interview Survey, 2001, 2003, and 2007.
6. The Homeless Services Coordinating Council, Homeless Enumeration Report, SLO County 2009.
7. ACTION for Healthy Communities, Face-to-Face Survey, 2010.
8. Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County, 2010.
9. County of San Luis Obispo, Social Services Department, Food Stamp Program Statistics, 2010.
10. California Department of Education, Data Quest, 2010.
11. Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board, 2001-2010.
12. Transitions-Mental Health Association, 2010.
13. United States Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2009.

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