

# Nurturing Healthy Behaviors in San Luis Obispo County

ACTION FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES  
UNVEILS A NEW QUALITY OF LIFE STUDY

## HIGHLIGHTS ABOUT HEALTHY LIVING IN THE COUNTY

*While many San Luis Obispo County residents are making better choices that impact their health, there is plenty of room for improvement. Adults and children are eating five fruits and vegetables a day, but more than half of adult residents ate fast food at least once in the last week. While adults engaged in physical activity 3 or more days a week, and fewer of them are overweight than in 2007, almost half of adults are obese or overweight.*

Parents are concerned with helping their children make healthier food choices, and data shows that since our last report fewer children are obese or overweight in our county. Residents are staying active outdoors and visiting the many recreations areas in the county. However they would still like to have more bike paths and hiking trails in San Luis Obispo County. Most residents are involved with reading or writing for pleasure, and almost half attended a music, dance or theater performance in the last month.

Lifestyle changes can prevent or delay the onset of many chronic diseases and keep health costs down. Eliminating three risk factors —poor diet, inactivity and smoking—would prevent 80% of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes and 40% of cancer.<sup>1</sup> It is disconcerting to learn smoking rates are increasing with more residents smoking than in previous years.

Healthy living is not just a matter of personal willpower. It is now widely known that behavior change is more likely to endure when a person's environment is simultaneously changed in a manner that supports the behavior change. The socio-ecological model for behavior change identifies the basic social and environmental influences: individual lifestyles, work and school environments, communities, and public policies.

These factors affect everyone in our community, especially low-income families who often work multiple jobs, eat more fast food, and purchase low-cost calorie dense foods.

*For a closer look at the healthy lifestyles of San Luis Obispo County residents, please read on.*



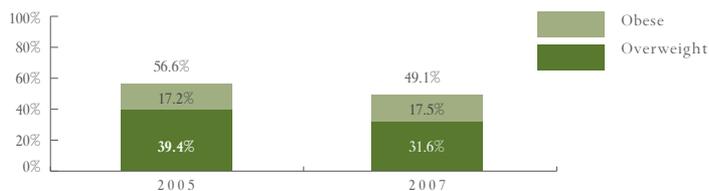
*ACTION for Healthy Communities is a consortium of public, private, and non-profit organizations that collaborate to assess the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County. The goals of the project are to raise public awareness, provide accurate and reliable data, improve decision-making, establish community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

## Almost half of residents are overweight or obese.<sup>3</sup>

- While nearly half (49%) of adults were overweight or obese in 2007, this is an improvement from 2005 in which 57% were overweight or obese.<sup>3</sup>

PERCENT OF ADULTS WHO ARE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE



Source: California Health Interview Survey, 2005 and 2007.

Note: In adults, obesity is defined as a BMI of 30 or more; overweight is a BMI of 25 or more.  $BMI = (weight/height (in)^2) * 704.5$

- The number of children, ages 5-19, considered to be overweight or obese, declined to 39% in 2008, compared to 43% in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

## More than half (53%) of adult residents ate fast food at least once in the last week.<sup>2</sup>

- Forty-one percent (41%) had eaten fast food one or two times in the last week, and 13% had eaten fast food three or more times.<sup>2</sup>
- Of those residents who reported going without basic needs, 42% went without food.
- Twenty-nine percent (29%) of San Luis Obispo County residents were not able to afford enough food in 2007, up from 23% in 2001.<sup>3</sup>

## Children are eating more fruits and vegetables than their parents.<sup>2</sup>

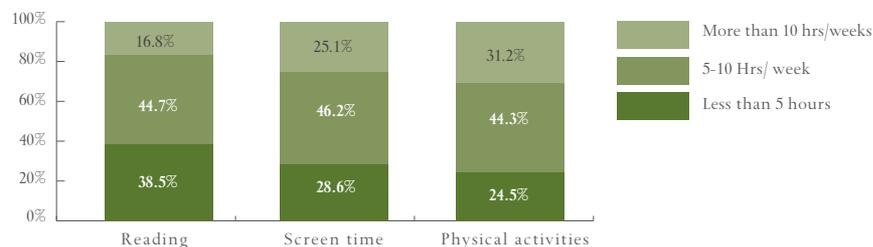
- Sixty percent (60%) of residents surveyed by phone, reported that their children ate 5 or more servings of fruits or vegetables a day, while only 47% of adults ate 5 or more servings of fruits or vegetables a day.<sup>2</sup>
- Teens had the lowest rate of fruit and vegetable consumption, with only 42% eating 5 or more servings a day.<sup>2</sup>

## EXERCISE

## While three out of four (77%) residents exercise at least three times a week, this reflects a slight decline from 2001 (80%).<sup>2</sup>

- Forty-eight percent (48%) of residents said they engaged in 30 minutes of exercise at least 5 days a week and 29% claim to exercise 3 to 4 times a week.<sup>2</sup>
- Most children (71%) spent at least 5 or more hours after-school per week on screen time – using computers, watching TV or videos, or texting.<sup>2</sup>

CHILDREN'S AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES



Source: Applied Survey Research, ACTION Telephone Survey, 2010.

## SMOKING

More residents are smoking than in previous years, but fewer people are smoking in the house.<sup>2</sup>

- Smoking is up slightly (13.1%) in 2010, from 11.7% of residents saying they smoked in 2006.<sup>2</sup>
- Ninety-five percent (95%) of residents said no one smoked in their house in the last 30 days (2010), compared to 87% in 2001.<sup>2</sup>

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ACTIVITIES

In addition to healthful eating and staying physically active, healthy behaviors include engaging in social and cultural activities that support one's mental health and sense of well-being.

Most residents spent their free time reading or writing for pleasure and almost half attended a music, dance or theater performance in the last month.<sup>2</sup>

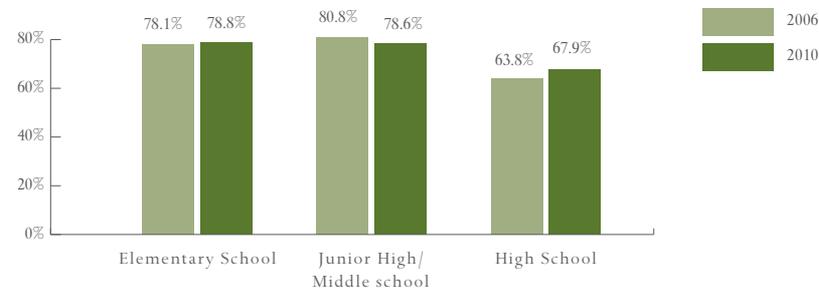
- 83% of residents read books, wrote for pleasure, or attended a book or writing club.<sup>2</sup>
- 45% attended a music, dance or theater performance.<sup>2</sup>
- 42% created arts and crafts such as painting, sewing and pottery.<sup>2</sup>
- 42% had attended a gallery show or visual arts exhibit.<sup>2</sup>

## SCHOOL AND WORKSITE WELLNESS

Schools are doing a better job of providing healthier environments, but employers have some work to do.<sup>2</sup>

- Sixty percent (60%) of residents reported that their employers did not have programs which help employees with adopting healthier eating or physical activity practices.<sup>2</sup>
- A large percentage of parents (79%) were aware of efforts to provide healthier food options and increased physical activities in their children's elementary school.<sup>2</sup>

### PARENTS AWARE OF EFFORT IN THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL



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

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Only 25% of children walk or bike to school.<sup>2</sup>

- At least 75% of school-aged children were driven (60.5%), took the bus (14.2%), or drove themselves to school (22.1% of high school students), while fewer than 25% of elementary and middle-school children walked or biked to school.<sup>2</sup>
- Forty-four percent (44%) of parents said that sidewalks and street improvements for safety would encourage children to walk.<sup>2</sup>

### Half of residents (52%) had a commute of 15 minutes or less to get from home to work.<sup>2</sup>

- Thirty-two percent (32%) of residents took 16 to 35 minutes to get to work, while 12.3% traveled more than 35 minutes to get to work, and 4% worked at home.<sup>2</sup>

### More than 90% of residents visited outdoor recreation sites at least once in the past three months.<sup>2</sup>

- More than a third (39.4%) of residents averaged weekly visits (11+ times in last 3 months) to a local outdoor recreation site.<sup>2</sup>
- Most residents (67%) lived a mile or less away from local parks or trails.<sup>2</sup>
- The top five recreation opportunities that residents wanted more of include: bike paths (57%), hiking trails (54%), natural areas (51%), parks (47%) and senior centers (42%).<sup>2</sup>

## TYPES OF PUBLIC RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INCREASED

	2010
Bike Paths	56.60%
Hiking Trails	53.60%
Natural Areas	51.40%
Parks	46.80%
Senior Centers	41.80%
Playgrounds	39.90%
Sports fields	29.90%
Gyms	19.20%
None	7.90%
Other	11.10%

Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey 2010

#### Endnotes:

1. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Global and Domestic Health Priorities: Spotlight on Chronic Disease, 2006
2. ACTION for Healthy Communities, Telephone Survey, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2010.
3. California Health Interview Survey, 2001, 2005 and 2007.
4. California Department of Health Care Services, Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance, 2006-2008.

*Action*

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