



Basic Needs

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Basic Needs Issues

People require that certain basic needs be provided before they can begin to enjoy the benefits of life in 21st century America. That is, they need basics like food, shelter, clothing, and medical care before other quality-of-life aspects are relevant.

Compared with big cities, there is little visible sign of poverty in San Luis Obispo County: there are no ghettos here. That does not mean there are not people living among us who are going without life's basic needs. Almost one-third of County school children qualify for the low-income meals program. The San Luis Obispo homeless shelter serves 65 to 85 people each night, and turns others away.

Over the past three surveys about 8 percent, or one in twelve, of respondents have reported going at least some time without these basic services. Medical care is the need most people give up when incomes are insufficient to pay for all their basic needs. Significant percentages have also gone without food or clothing.

Many San Luis Obispo County residents

believe high housing costs force these people to go without basic needs. They argue housing costs are so high that it makes it difficult or impossible for many people to pay for other basic needs. Housing costs are high in the County, and many people do spend so much on housing they must neglect other needs. Tables A8 through A12 document the high and rising cost of housing in San Luis Obispo County.

The high cost of San Luis Obispo County housing does not fully explain the difficulty some have in meeting basic needs. The data indicate there are multiple factors that cause people to go without basic needs. Throughout this document there are clear signs of these other contributing causes: Unemployment is rising. A significant portion of the population earns less than the poverty level. Relatively well-paying economic sectors are shrinking while poorer paying jobs are growing. Health care is a growing problem that is now affecting even relatively well-off families. Childcare is often not available for the working poor. Many of our children may not receive the education needed to provide for financial security in the coming decades.

A1

Basic Needs

In any given month, do you have to go without basic needs such as food, clothing, childcare, housing, or health care?

	1999	2001	2003
Number of Respondents	542	808	522
Response	Percent	Percent	Percent
Yes	7.7	8.5	8.0
No	92.3	91.5	92.0
Total	100	100	100

If yes, what do you go without? (Top 3 responses)

	1999	2001	2003
Number of Respondents	39	77	42
Response	Percent	Percent	Percent
Health Care (including prescriptions)	51.3	52.9	61.9
Food	35.9	30.9	35.7
Clothing	12.8	29.4	31.0

During the past 12 months, did you either delay or not get a medicine that a doctor prescribed for you?

Response	Number	Percent
Delayed or didn't get medicine	21,000	11.8
Didn't delay (got medicine)	157,000	88.2
Total	178,000	100

During the past 12 months, did you delay or not get a test or treatment that a doctor ordered?

Response	Number	Percent
Delayed or didn't get test/treatment	14,000	7.9
Didn't delay (got test/treatment)	164,000	92.1
Total	178,000	100

Are you able to afford enough food?

Response	Number	Percent
Able to afford enough food (food secure)	44,000	74.5
Not able to afford enough food (food insecure)	15,000	25.5
Total	59,000	100

Do you eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day?

Response	Number	Percent
Eat 5 or more servings fruit/vegetables daily	86,000	49.5
Eat less than 5 servings fruit/vegetables daily	88,000	50.5
Total	174,000	100

Annual Income

Family Size							02-03 %
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Change
1	\$8,050	\$8,420	\$8,350	\$8,590	\$8,860	\$8,980	1.4
2	10,850	11,060	11,250	11,610	11,940	12,120	1.5
3	13,650	13,880	14,150	14,630	15,020	15,260	1.6
4	16,450	16,700	17,050	17,650	18,100	18,400	1.7
5	19,250	19,520	19,950	20,670	21,180	21,540	1.7
6	22,050	22,340	22,850	23,690	24,260	24,680	1.7
7	24,850	25,160	25,750	26,710	27,340	27,820	1.8
8	27,650	27,980	28,650	29,730	30,420	30,960	1.8

Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Poverty Guidelines, 2003.

Note: Poverty income guidelines are for all states except Alaska and Hawaii. For 1997 add \$2720 for each additional family member; for 1998 add \$2800, in 1999 add \$2820; in 2000 add \$2900; in 2001 add \$3020; in 2002 add \$3080; and in 2003 add \$3140.

	Total	Homeless	Seniors	Disabled
Food Insecure: Answered “yes” to any of the following six measures	53%	84%	24%	56%
During the previous year have you:				
Cut size/skip meals because not enough money or food	37%	67%	7%	40%
Been hungry but didn’t eat because couldn’t afford enough food	24%	35%	12%	24%
Chosen between paying for food and paying for medicine	33%	67%	7%	40%
Chosen between paying for food and paying for rent/mortgage	20%	26%	6%	12%
Chosen between paying for food and paying for utilities	20%	20%	7%	20%
Children had to skip meals because not enough money or food*	17%	NP**	NP	NP
Currently Receiving Food Stamps				
Percent	14%	24%	2%	24%
Number of Respondents	219	55	96	25

Source: San Luis Obispo Hunger Study, 2003.

Note: The data is based on 219 interviews with clients of 11 food pantries (106 interviews), 9 kitchens (98 interviews), and the 2 shelters (15 interviews). The numbers are the percentages of each group that answered “yes” to the question. “Seniors” are people 65+ years of age and “Disabled” are people receiving Social Security Disability Income(SSDI).

*Based on 35 interviews with parents

**Number too small to report

Respondents by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	% of Total
Latino/Hispanic	12%
White	74%
All Other	14%

Respondents by Gender

Gender	% of Total
Male	39%
Female	61%

Respondents by Place of Residence

Place	% of Total
San Luis Obispo	23%
Coastal Cities	12%
South County	21%
North County	43%
North Santa Barbara County	2%

Respondent Types	% of Total
Age 65+	28%
Homeless	25%
Disabled (receiving SSDI)	11%
Household Income at or below 150% of poverty level	68%

Source: San Luis Obispo Hunger Study, 2003.

Note: The data is based on 219 interviews with clients of 11 food pantries (106 interviews), 9 kitchens (98 interviews), and the 2 shelters (15 interviews). The numbers are the percentages of each group that answered "yes" to the question. "Seniors" are people 65+ years of age and "Disabled" are people receiving Social Security Disability Income(SSDI).

*Based on 35 interviews with parents

**Number too small to report

How concerned are you about homelessness in your community? Please answer "Very Concerned," "Somewhat Concerned," or "Not at All Concerned."

	1999	2001	2003
Number of respondents	539	799	522
Response	Percent	Percent	Percent
Very Concerned	29.9	33.7	33.0
Somewhat Concerned	42.7	46.1	43.7
Not at all Concerned	27.5	20.3	23.0
Don't Know	na	na	0.4
Total	100	100	100

Shelter Occupants, by Background

EOC Emergency Shelter(SLO)	1998
Domestic Violence	32%
Chronic Substance Abuse	50%
Mentally Ill	45%
HIV/AIDS	4%
Elderly	7%
Total Shelter Occupants	883

Note: Percents do not total, as occupants may fulfill more than one category.

Note: Updated information not available.

Shelter Over Capacity

EOC Homeless Services	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
1st Quarter: Jan-March	43	28	26	111	29
2nd Quarter: April-June	351	64	177	253	175
3rd Quarter: July-Sept	430	47	129	291	165
4th Quarter: Oct-Dec	290	24	113	303	118
Total Overcapacity	1114	163	445	958	487

Note: Over capacity refers to the number of individuals seeking shelter that exceeds the number of available beds. The shelter has a regular capacity of 49 beds per night, plus overflow capacity of 15-35 beds provided in collaboration with the Interfaith Coalition for the Homeless. Capacity increased in 1999 when the EOC-ICH overflow program expanded from 7 to 12 months per year.

Clients Placed in Permanent Housing

EOC Homeless Services	1999	2000	2001	2002
Number of Single Adults	43	57	42	50
Number of Families	35	30	59	48
Number of Parents	40	38	70	55
Number of Children	71	38	99	80
% children	46.1	28.6	46.9	43.2
Number of clients permanently housed	154	133	253	235

Source: Economic Opportunity Commission (EOC), 2003.

Fair Market Rents* for San Luis Obispo County

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	02-03 % Change
Number of Bedrooms						
Studio	\$507	\$514	\$525	\$584	\$619	6.0
1	573	580	593	659	699	6.1
2	727	736	752	836	886	6.0
3	1,009	1,022	1,045	1,162	1,232	6.0
4	1,192	1,207	1,234	1,372	1,454	6.0

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2003.
www.huduser.org/datasets/fmr.html

Average Apartment Rents for San Luis Obispo County, 2001

Number of Bedrooms	Units	Rent
Studio	260	\$637
1 Bedroom, 1 Bath	179	\$762
2 Bedroom, 1 Bath	82	\$1,017
2 Bedroom, 2 Bath	174	\$1,119
3 Bedroom, 2 Bath	21	\$1,170
2 Bedroom Townhouse	144	\$1,174

Source: UCSB Economic Forecasting Project, 2003.

*Note: Fair market rents are gross rent estimates. They include the shelter rent plus the cost of all utilities, except telephones. FMR's determine the eligibility of rental housing units for the Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments program. Section 8 program participants cannot rent units whose rents that exceed the FMR's.

A7

Concern, Housing Costs

How concerned are you about housing costs in your community? Please answer "Very Concerned," "Somewhat Concerned," or "Not at All Concerned."

	2001	2003
Number of Respondents	802	522
Response	Percent	Percent
Very Concerned	55.7	67.8
Somewhat Concerned	27.7	22.0
Not at all Concerned	16.6	9.6
Don't Know	na	0.6
Total	100	100

Housing Expenses

Does one-third or more of your income go to housing, including utilities, such as gas and electricity?

	1999	2001	2003
Number of Respondents	534	782	522
Response	Percent	Percent	Percent
Yes	54.5	66.4	63.8
No	45.5	33.6	33.5
Don't Know	na	na	0.4
No Response	na	na	2.3
Total	100	100	100

Among those paying more than one-third of your income to housing expenses, does one-half or more of your income go to housing, including utilities, such as gas, and electricity?

	1999	2001	2003
Number of Respondents	287	494	333
Response	Percent	Percent	Percent
Yes	37.6	47.4	52.9
No	62.4	52.6	46.5
Don't Know	na	na	0.6
Total	100	100	100

San Luis Obispo MSA

	1st Q 1996	1st Q 1997	1st Q 1998	1st Q 1999	1st Q 2000	1st Q 2001	1st Q 2002
Median Price**	153	155	170	180	206	248	290
Housing Opportunity Index	45.3	41.7	43.9	42.8	23.3	21.2	13
Median Income**	43.3	43.8	46.2	48	48	50.2	50.3
National Rank	176	180	179	173	178	176	188

**Measured in thousands of dollars

Housing Affordability Comparisons

	Housing Opportunity Index 1st Q 2002	National Rank 1st Q 2002
San Luis Obispo, MSA*	13.0	188
Fresno, MSA	52.1	156
Ventura/Oxnard, PMSA	36.9	173
Salinas, MSA	7.7	191
Santa Barbara, MSA	25.2	181
San Jose, PMSA	20.1	185
Merced, MSA	33.0	178
Santa Cruz, PMSA	8.0	190
Visalia, MSA	63.6	132
San Francisco, PMSA	9.2	189
National	64.8	---

Source: National Association of Home Builders, 2003.

Note: The Housing Opportunity Index is the share of homes in a particular area that would have been affordable to a family earning the median income. It is based on the median family income, interest rates, and the price distribution of homes sold for each market in a particular quarter of a year. This measure was discontinued in the 1st quarter of 2002 due to insufficient funding. The price of homes sold is collected from actual court records by First American Real Estate Solutions, a marketing company. The median family income for each market is calculated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

*Metropolitan Area is one of a large population nucleus, together with adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that nucleus. MSA's are relatively free standing and are not closely associated with other metropolitan areas. There are approximately 190 MSA's nationwide.

Median Sales Price (in thousands of \$)

	1st Q	1st Q	1st Q	1st Q	1st Q	1st Q	1st Q
MSA/PMSA	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Fresno	105	100	102	102	109	118	134
Merced	96	98	106	110	120	154	163
Ventura/Oxnard	188	196	202	224	250	267	303
Santa Cruz	209	217	248	273	338	397	420
San Luis Obispo	153	155	170	180	206	248	290
Visalia	90	89	90	94	96	101	110
National	118	120	129	134	140	153	160

Source: National Association of Home Builders, 2003.

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2001-2002 Countywide Program Enrollment

	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	02-03 % Change
California	47.6%	47.3%	46.8%	47.1%	48.7%	3.4
San Luis Obispo County	31.8%	30.9%	29.4%	31.2%	32.3%	3.5

Note: In 2000-2001, 30.2% of San Luis Obispo students were eligible for the program. Since 97% of eligible families enroll (at least in 2000-2001), enrollment is a proxy for eligibility (for which historical data is unavailable).

2002-03 Program Enrollment by District

District	Free & Reduced Price Meal Enrollment	% of Students Enrolled
ATASCADERO UNIFIED	1,207	20.8%
CAMBRIA UNION ELEMENTARY	na	na
CAYUCOS ELEMENTARY	47	20.1%
COAST UNIFIED	338	36.5%
COAST UNION HIGH	na	na
LUCIA MAR UNIFIED	4,881	44.7%
PASO ROBLES JOINT UNIFIED	2,527	36.6%
PASO ROBLES JOINT UNION HIGH	na	na
PASO ROBLES UNION ELEMENTARY	na	na
PHILLIPS ELEMENTARY	na	na
PLEASANT VALLEY JOINT UNION EL	43	30.7%
SAN LUIS COASTAL UNIFIED	1,968	24.8%
SAN LUIS OBISPO CO CYA DIST	na	na
SAN LUIS OBISPO CO. OFFICE OF ED.	130	23.4%
SAN MIGUEL JOINT UNION ELEMENT	213	51.2%
SHANDON JOINT UNIFIED	248	67.4%
TEMPLETON UNIFIED	324	12.1%
County Totals:	11,926	32.3%
State Totals:	3,006,877	48.7%

Source: California Department of Education, 2003; Dataquest.