

DEMOGRAPHIC & SOCIAL HEALTH INDICATORS

Research has shown that socioeconomic status, education, employment and social networks are important indicators of a community's health. Research has documented the powerful effect of social environment on health.¹ With rare exception, lower socioeconomic status is associated with a greater burden of disease and shorter life expectancy. Education and employment are often correlated with improved health status. In addition, persons with strong social support networks are, on average, more likely to be healthy than those living in more isolated circumstances.

Table 1.1: Select Demographic Characteristics, Los Angeles County, 1997

Population Trends¹	Number	Change
1970	7,041,982	
1980	7,477,239	6%
1990	8,901,987	19%
2000	9,838,861	11%
2010	10,604,452	8%
2020	11,575,693	9%
Persons by Gender²	Number	Percentage
Male	4,797,597	49.8%
Female	4,837,166	50.2%
Total	9,634,763	
Age Distribution²	Number	Percentage
<5 years	759,722	8%
5-14 years	1,402,834	15%
15-44 years	4,595,580	48%
45-64 years	1,867,372	19%
65-74 years	551,988	6%
75+ years	457,261	5%
Race/Ethnicity²	Number	Percentage
White	3,235,051	34%
Latino	4,220,832	44%
African-American	901,785	9%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,230,207	13%
American Indian	46,888	<1%

1. California State Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit.

2. Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Office, Urban Research Division, P.E.P.S.

Demographics:

Distribution of the Population by Age and Race or Ethnicity

The population of Los Angeles County was nearly 9.6 million in 1997 representing 30% of the California population. The growth in total population has slowed during the 1990s compared to the rapid growth seen during the 1960s through the 1980s (see Table 1.1). Changing migration patterns indicate that more people have moved out of Los Angeles County than into the county in recent years. However, the increasing birth rate has fueled a population growth rate of 0.5% annually.

Most communities in Los Angeles County are multiethnic. Approximately one-third of all zip codes in the county do not have an ethnic group that constitutes a majority (>50%). According to 1997 estimates, 44% of the county's population are Latino, 34% are white, 13% are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 9% are African American (see Table 1.1). In addition, almost one-third of county residents were born outside the United States. Most Latinos (76%) in Los Angeles County are of Mexican origin, and approximately 15% of the Latino population are from Central and South America. Most Asians are from China, the Philippines, Korea, and Japan, with increased immigration from Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia.

Sixty-eight percent of households in Los Angeles County are made up of families, and 33% are nonfamily households—people who live alone or with unrelated persons. The proportion of children living in married couple families is 64%, down from 78% in 1970. Twenty-one percent of children live with one parent and the remaining 15% live with grandparents, other relatives, or other caretakers.

Linguistic Characteristics of the Population

Studies have shown a direct link between the poor health status of some ethnic populations and barriers that are related to language use and culture³. Immigrants and other non-English speaking groups may experience significant problems obtaining health-related information and services². Limited English-speaking ability can be a significant barrier to accessing health care, public assistance programs, community services, and other resources.

Table 1.2: Language Use By The Foreign-Born Population, 1990

	United States	L.A. County
Population	249,000,000	8,900,000
Foreign-born population	8%	33%
Foreign-born arrived 1980-90	44%	53%
Speak language other than English at home	14%	45%
Do not speak English very well	6%	25%

Note: Language data refer to the population aged five years and older.

Source: Russell Sage Foundation, *New York, Ethnic Los Angeles*, 1996. U.S. Department of Commerce, *1990 U.S. Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1990), 266.

Due in large part to the ethnic diversity and size of the population, both California and Los Angeles have a high proportion of non-English speaking residents, and a substantial portion of all the non-English speakers in the nation⁴ (see Table 1.2). Nearly one-half (45%) of the population of Los Angeles County reports speaking a language

other than English at home. Los Angeles County's cultural and linguistic diversity requires culturally-sensitive community programs and interventions to promote the health of all residents.

Table 1.3: Language Spoken At Home In The Los Angeles Region And Los Angeles County, 1990

	Los Angeles Region	% Increase Since 1980	Los Angeles County	% Increase Since 1980
English only	8,209,000	+0.05	4,436,000	-7
Spanish	3,520,000	+74	2,555,000	+69
Chinese	257,000	+179	210,000	+173
Tagalog	202,000	+149	158,000	+136
Vietnamese	122,000	+223	50,000	+162
Korean	165,000	+163	124,000	+133
Japanese	83,000	+17	63,000	+10
All others	736,000	+41	528,000	+38

Note: Language data refer to the population aged five years and older.

Source: Russell Sage Foundation, New York, *Ethnic Los Angeles*, 1996. U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990 U.S. Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1990), 266.

Educational Attainment

The public education system is a crucial component of community health and individual opportunity. Illiteracy is linked to low-paying jobs that do not provide health insurance, lack of health information, and poor living conditions.⁵ Furthermore, children living with parents who have little education experience more health problems than other children, even after adjusting for socio-economic factors.⁶ Data on high school dropouts also provides valuable information on health problems associated with teenagers. There is evidence that teenagers who drop out of high school may be at increased risk of unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse, and violence.⁷

Table 1.4: Limited English-Speaking Students In Los Angeles County, 1997-98

	Total	% of Total
English only or fluent bilingual	1,020,934	65%
Limited English proficient		
Spanish	491,037	31%
Armenian	12,721	0.8%
Korean	8,739	0.6%
Cantonese	8,114	0.5%
Vietnamese	6,207	0.4%
Cambodian	6,213	0.4%
Tagalog	5,028	0.4%
Mandarin	5,454	0.3%
All other limited English proficient	17,717	1%
Total	1,582,164	100%

Source: Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council, United Way of Greater Los Angeles, *Los Angeles County Children's Score Card*, 1998.

Table 1.5: Education, Los Angeles County And California

	L.A. County	California
Public school enrollment (1997–98)	1,583,283	5,727,303
White	20%	39%
Latino	57%	41%
African-American	12%	9%
Asian	8%	8%
Filipino	2%	2%
Pacific Islander	1%	1%
Public school high school graduation rates (1996–97) ¹	40%	36%
White	43%	40%
Latino	30%	23%
African-American	38%	29%
Asian	67%	60%
Filipino	51%	45%
Pacific Islander	59%	33%
Public school dropout rate ²	5%	3%
White	2%	2%
Latino	6%	5%
African-American	7%	5%
Asian	2%	2%
Filipino	2%	2%
Pacific Islander	4%	4%
Public school teachers (1996–97) ³	65,000	249,000
White	64%	79%
Latino	17%	11%
African-American	11%	5%
Asian	6%	4%

1. Percentage of 12th grade graduates in Los Angeles County public schools completing all courses required for U.C. and/or C.S.U entrance for 1996–1997.

2. Dropouts as a percent of enrollment, 1 Year Rate Formula: $(Gr. 9-12 \text{ Dropouts} / Gr. 9-12 \text{ Enrollment}) * 100$, 1996–1997.

3. Full-time equivalent public school teachers

Source: CBEDS—California Basic Educational Data System, Educational Demographics Unit, California Department of Education Los Angeles County Office of Education.

Numerous challenges face Los Angeles County public school systems. The proportion of children “at-risk” in the school system has increased dramatically as a result of the high number of children living in poverty and the high number of children with limited English-language abilities.

Table 1.5 highlights a number of key figures on educational attainment rates in Los Angeles County. In addition:

- Nearly 30% of Los Angeles County adults ages 25 and over have not completed high school.

- Latinos make up 62% of those without a high school diploma followed by African-Americans (26%), Asians (20%), and whites (13%).
- In the decade between 1980 and 1990, the proportion of adults with less than a fifth grade education increased by 70%.

Economic Resources

Poverty and income disparities, employment rates, and housing characteristics are important factors that influence the health of a community. Median household income is a useful indicator to characterize household/family economic resources and the distribution of income in a given community. Income is a predictor of a family's economic well-being, which subsequently determines a family's ability to obtain adequate housing, nutrition, and health insurance, and may be related to health behaviors. Table 1.6 highlights a number of key figures related to income. In addition:

- The median income in Los Angeles County was \$43,942 in 1998.
- 13% of Los Angeles County households had incomes over \$100,000, and 18% had incomes below \$15,000 in 1998.

Table 1.6: Income, Poverty and Unemployment, Los Angeles County, 1998

Household Income	Households	Percentage
Less than \$15,000	552,036	18
\$15,000–\$34,999	806,930	26
\$35,000–\$49,999	475,317	15
\$50,000–\$74,999	579,840	19
\$75,000–\$99,000	295,132	9
\$100,000+ and over	397,479	13
Total Households	3,106,734	100
Persons Below Poverty Level	Number	Percentage
All Persons	2,151,885	22
0–4	257,559	34
5–14	451,424	32
15–24	333,637	27
25–34	386,134	23
35–44	297,622	18
45–54	180,847	16
55–64	103,757	15
65–74	77,215	14
75 and over	63,690	14
Labor Force Status ¹		
Unemployed	326,488	7.0

1. All persons aged 16 and over.

Source: United Way of Greater Los Angeles, 1999. State of the County Report: Los Angeles 1998-99.