



NEWS RELEASE

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Amanda de Castro

adecastro@groupgordon.com

(212) 784 5724

A Portrait of Los Angeles County 2026 Finds Meaningful Progress in Overall Well-Being, Yet Gaps Persist for Black and Latino Angelenos

Measure of America's latest report analyzes a decade of human development in Los Angeles County, identifies sharp disparities in overall well-being, life expectancy, access to education, and more, offers solutions to close persistent gaps

LOS ANGELES, CA – March 11, 2026 – Today, Measure of America, a nonpartisan project of the Social Science Research Council focused on well-being and opportunity in America, released [A Portrait of Los Angeles County 2026](#), their second study on the well-being of Angelenos across race, place, and gender. Building on the findings of the first *A Portrait of Los Angeles County* in 2017, the report makes it clear that many—but not all—Angelenos have been making meaningful progress.

“While well-being in Los Angeles County has improved overall in the past decade, looking at the HDI by place, by gender, and by race and ethnicity shows that stark inequalities remain,” **said Kristen Lewis, Director of Measure of America.** “*A Portrait of Los Angeles County 2026* makes it clear that while some Angelenos are thriving, others are falling further behind. And human security crises—including COVID-19, last year’s devastating wildfires, increased immigration enforcement, and skyrocketing living costs—have eroded progress in many areas. We hope that communities and policymakers alike use this report to address these sharp disparities and work toward an equitable future for all Angelenos.”

“Equity and inclusive access are central to our work at the Department of Mental Health. We want to ensure that we are doing everything we can to continue reducing barriers that keep people from the care they need,” **said Dr. Lisa H. Wong, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health.** “Through this report, we hope to build upon our roadmap and better understand the successes that have allowed us to expand our culturally responsive, community-based services, but also learn where we need to do more work and close gaps in outcomes. This report will guide us on how we design programs and allocate resources, and the work to be done is a shared responsibility that will take collective action, collaboration, and accountability from all of us – public and private partners, community leaders, stakeholders, and advocates. Together, we are committed to building a healthier future for everyone.”

The report uses the American Human Development Index (HDI), which offers a clear snapshot of well-being by combining the best available data on health, education, and income—three fundamental building blocks of a good life—into a single score ranging from zero to ten. Over the past decade, Los Angeles County’s HDI score rose modestly from 5.43 to 5.64, with significant gains in educational attainment and meaningful increases in median personal earnings. However, the county’s score falls short of the 1.0-point increase goal set for the region in the 2017 report, and significant gaps continue to exist by race and ethnicity, gender, and geography.

Key findings from *A Portrait of Los Angeles County 2026* include:

- **Overall well-being:** A person’s neighborhood is a strong predictor of their life outcomes, with wealthier areas typically having higher well-being scores. The highest average well-being scores are found in Brentwood-Pacific Palisades, at 9.58, with Southeast Los Angeles scoring the lowest at 3.03 out of 10.
 - Well-being outcomes in Los Angeles County vary substantially by race and ethnicity as well; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI) have the lowest HDI score, 4.01, while Asian residents have the highest HDI score, 7.68.
- **Earnings:** While women outscore men in almost every other category, men earn more. In fact, the earnings gap between women and men grew from \$7,500 in 2015 to \$9,300 in 2023—\$49,700 annually compared to \$40,400, respectively.
 - Earnings also vary sharply by race and ethnicity, with white workers in Los Angeles County earning \$70,200 per year, \$13,700 more than Asian Angelenos (\$56,500), the next highest-earning group. Latino Angelenos, who make up roughly half of all County residents, earn the least, \$35,900. Black Angelenos earn slightly more than the County median, \$47,100.
 - Roughly 18 percent of children in LA County, nearly one in five, live in poverty, with rates as high as 26 percent for Black children and 22 percent for Latino children.
- **Health:** Asian Angelenos have the longest life expectancy (86.2 years), outliving Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islander (NHOPI) Angelenos (71.2 years) by 15 years and Black Angelenos (72.9 years) by more than 13 years. A 6.1-year gap in life expectancy separates men (77.5 years) and women (83.6 years) in LA County.
 - Black mothers remain considerably more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than women of any other racial or ethnic group, with California’s 2020-2022 mortality ratio for Black women being nearly four times higher than that of white and Asian women, and three times the ratio for Latina women.
- **Education:** Educational attainment improved significantly between 2015 and 2023; the share of adults with at least a bachelor’s degree increased by 18.4 percent and the share of adults with graduate degrees increased by 25.9 percent.
 - However, chronic absenteeism surged in the pandemic, jumping from 13.8 percent in 2019 to 22.0 percent in 2024. A staggering 22.7 percent of students countywide

miss 10 percent or more of school days, and chronic absentee rates are highest among Black students, 32.5 percent.

- **Housing:** In every neighborhood across Los Angeles County, a resident earning the local median salary would need to work over 40 hours a week to afford monthly median housing costs without being cost-burdened. In 31 of those neighborhoods, a median-salary earner would need to work more than 80 hours per week—double the standard workweek—just to keep housing costs affordable.

Progress is possible. *A Portrait of Los Angeles 2026* identifies nine recommendations for action to improve well-being and access to opportunity in Los Angeles: address premature mortality, improve access to mental health and substance-use prevention and treatment, invest in high-quality early care for children from birth to age five, support young people as they transition to thriving adulthood, expand economic opportunity and security, keep people housed and increase access to affordable housing, strengthen protections for threatened communities, reduce justice involvement and support community reentry, and bolster disaster recovery and climate resiliency. For more specifics on the nine recommendations for action, please refer to the report.

A Portrait of Los Angeles County 2026 was made possible through the support of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, James Irvine Foundation, the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Cedars-Sinai, and First 5 LA.

The full report is available [here](#). Measure of America also launched an interactive online portal featuring direct quotes and insights from the 2025 community data walks, available on the [report website here](#). The digital platform allows users to explore key issues that surfaced during the study through the lived experiences of Los Angeles County residents in their own words.

About Measure of America

[Measure of America](#), an initiative of the nonprofit Social Science Research Council, provides easy-to-use, methodologically sound tools for understanding the distribution of well-being and opportunity in America. Through national and state reports, thematic briefs, and interactive websites, Measure of America breathes life into numbers, using data to create compelling narratives that foster greater understanding of our shared challenges and greater support for people-centered policies. Measure of America has produced [over 60 comprehensive reports, tools, and resources](#) based on original research that provide a uniquely accessible way to understand well-being and opportunity in America's communities. The hallmark of this work is Measure of America's American Human Development Index (HDI), an alternative to GDP and other money metrics that tells the story of how ordinary Americans are faring and empowers communities with a tool to track progress over time.