



NEWS RELEASE

Embargo until October 4, 2017

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New Report from Measure of America Reveals Nearly 15-Year Gap in Life Expectancy Rates Between Communities in Los Angeles County

Highway to Health: Life Expectancy in Los Angeles County examines 106 cities and unincorporated neighborhoods and includes recommendations for increasing life expectancy and reducing disparities

NEW YORK — The first analysis of life expectancy rates in over a decade for cities and unincorporated areas within Los Angeles (LA) County, *Highway to Health: Life Expectancy in Los Angeles County* reveals a nearly fifteen-year gap in life expectancy between communities.

Released today by [Measure of America](#), a project of the Social Science Research Council, the report presents original life expectancy calculations using recent data from the California Department of Public Health available for 106 cities and unincorporated neighborhoods in Los Angeles County, as well as for community plan areas and city council districts within the City of Los Angeles. The report also includes recommendations for increasing life expectancy and reducing disparities.

According to the findings, a baby born in Los Angeles County in 2014 can expect to live 82.1 years, several years longer than the average American born that same year, at 78.8 years. If LA County were a country, it would be globally ranked eleventh in longevity.

In 2000, the average LA County resident born that year could expect to live 78.7 years. By 2010, life expectancy had increased to 81.5 years – an improvement of almost three years. Within LA County, life expectancy rates vary by community as much as 14.7 years.

Top-Five Communities in LA County with the Longest Life Expectancies:

- Walnut Park (90.5 years); Malibu (89.8 years); Castaic (88.9 years); Rowland Heights (87.0 years); and Rancho Palos Verdes (86.7 years)

Bottom-Five Communities in LA County with the Shortest Life Expectancies:

- Lancaster (76.4 years); Westmont (76.3 years); Lake Los Angeles (76.2 years); East Rancho Dominguez (76.1 years); and Sun Village (75.8 years)

“The good news is that life expectancy in LA County is up nearly three years since 2000,” said Kristen Lewis, co-director, Measure of America. “The bad news is that the disparities in life expectancies between communities within LA – some of which are even adjacent to one another and on the surface

appear to be quite similar—are stark. As a society, we need to pay far more attention to the social determinants of health—factors like access to green spaces for exercise, jobs with decent wages, social cohesion, clean air, nutritious foods, and quality schools—alongside access to doctors and medicine.”

Two Miles Away and Eleven Years Apart – Life Expectancy in Walnut Park and Cudahy:

Walnut Park, a largely Latino community located in Southeast LA County, has an average life expectancy of 90.5 years. Only two miles away, Cudahy, also a predominantly Latino city, has a life expectancy of only 79.2 years. Both communities are densely populated, have low adult education levels, median personal earnings around \$19,000, and most employment opportunities in low-wage service, production, and transportation. What accounts for the 11-year life expectancy gap?

These seemingly similar communities differ in important ways, and these differences may be acting together to chip away at health over time in Cudahy. For instance, Cudahy has a poverty rate of 43.6 percent, more than 15 percentage points higher than the rate in Walnut Park. 84 percent of Cudahy residents are renters, nearly twice that of Walnut Park residents. Finally, residents of Cudahy are more likely to be exposed to high levels of particulate matter and industrial emissions such as lead, increasing their risk of cancer, heart disease, and asthma.

“Average life expectancies in communities within LA County are powerfully influenced by social, economic, and environmental conditions within that community and by larger societal conditions,” said Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. “Hence, meaningful progress in reducing the glaring disparities described in this report require addressing these conditions, in large part through policy change and other strategies that change systems and environments in ways that better support health.”

Looking Ahead – Increasing Life Expectancy and Reducing Disparities:

Measure of America included in the report key public health issues where improvements can and already are being made, such as awareness campaigns targeted at practices that harm health and cut lives short. For example, one in seven deaths in LA County is linked to cigarette smoking, making it an LA Department of Public Health priority. Other critical public health issues include homicide, the second-leading cause of premature death in the county, and the leading cause of death among black and Latino young men in Southeast Los Angeles; suicide, the fifth-leading cause of premature death; and traffic fatalities, the third-leading cause of premature death in the county population, and the second-leading cause of death for children and young-adults, aged 5-24 years. In addition, efforts to increase access to public parks, reasonable living wages, supporting place-based initiatives, and organizing communities to fight for environment justice are all ways actors are contributing to improved population health in LA County.

“LA County can help to close the gap between longer-living communities and those where life expectancy is cut short by continuing to invest in policies and awareness campaigns that address common obstacles,” said co-director Sarah Burd-Sharps. “This includes focusing on issues like cigarette smoking, violence, prenatal care, and depression.”

The *Portrait of Los Angeles County* project, and *Highway to Health: Life Expectancy in Los Angeles County*, is sponsored by the Annenberg Foundation, BCM Foundation, Blue Shield of California

Foundation, The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, Citi Community Development, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, Leonetti/O'Connell Family Foundation, the LA County Quality and Productivity Commission's Productivity Investment Fund, The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, Sony Pictures, Southern California Grantmakers, the United Way of Greater Los Angeles, and the Weingart Foundation. Other partners include the Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection, Department of Children and Family Services, and Department of Public Health. *Highway to Health* was produced in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

The full report is available [here](#). You can also review the data with an interactive map [here](#).

About The SSRC

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is an independent, international non-profit with the mission of mobilizing social science to disseminate essential knowledge. Founded in 1923, the SSRC fosters innovative research, nurtures new generations of social scientists, deepens how inquiry is practiced within and across disciplines, and mobilizes necessary knowledge on important public issues.

About Measure of America

An initiative of the **Social Science Research Council**, Measure of America provides easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding the distribution of well-being and opportunity in America and stimulating fact-based dialogue about issues we all care about: health, education, and living standards.

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