

THRIVING IN THE INLAND EMPIRE: WOMEN & WELL-BEING THROUGH THE LENS OF VITAL CONDITIONS

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

The IECF Women's Giving Fund commissioned a study by the UCR Center for Community Solutions to explore what helps—or holds back—women's ability to thrive in the Inland Empire (Riverside + San Bernardino counties). Drawing upon data from an original survey and publicly available sources, we examine women's well-being through the lens of vital conditions, revealing variation in women's lived experience, where our region excels and where challenges persist. This technical appendix to our two-page "first look" report offers additional information on our methodology and graphs of survey respondent characteristics, as well as the publicly available measures selected for inclusion from the American Community Survey and California Health Interview Survey.

We look forward to sharing the complete findings at [*She Counts: A Data-Driven Conversation about IE Women's Well-Being*](#) on Tuesday, June 3rd, 2025 from 12pm-1:30pm and hope you are able to join us.

SURVEY OF WOMEN IN THE IE

METHODOLOGY

To better understand the self-reported life experience and well-being of women in the Inland Empire, we conducted a survey designed to align with the Vital Conditions framework. The survey gathered insights on subjective life expectations and key areas affecting quality of life, including economic stability, social connections, health, and access to resources.

The survey was administered online between January 28th, 2025 and February 3rd, 2025 to a sample of 1000 women living in Riverside (n=500) and San Bernardino (n = 500) counties. Participants were sampled through Dynata, a survey research firm that recruits individuals for inclusion on their survey panels through diverse channels to ensure broad representation of the target population. Only individuals who 1) self-identified as a woman, 2) lived in Riverside or San Bernardino counties, 3) were over the age of 18, and 4) were able to complete a survey in English were eligible to participate in this study. Unfortunately, given time and cost constraints, the survey was only offered in English.

The questionnaire included both closed- and open-ended questions, allowing respondents to share both quantitative ratings and qualitative experiences. This included Cantril's Ladder to assess overall subjective well-being, a series of statements aligned with the Vital Conditions framework to gauge levels of agreement on key factors that shape quality of life, and measures of individual characteristics—ranging from housing cost burden to caregiver status and general demographics. A full presentation of the findings will be shared at the *She Counts* event on June 3rd.

While every effort was made to ensure a representative dataset, some biases are inherent. Non-random sampling through an online panel in our region may over- or under-represent certain groups, particularly those with limited internet access or non-English speakers. Further, response

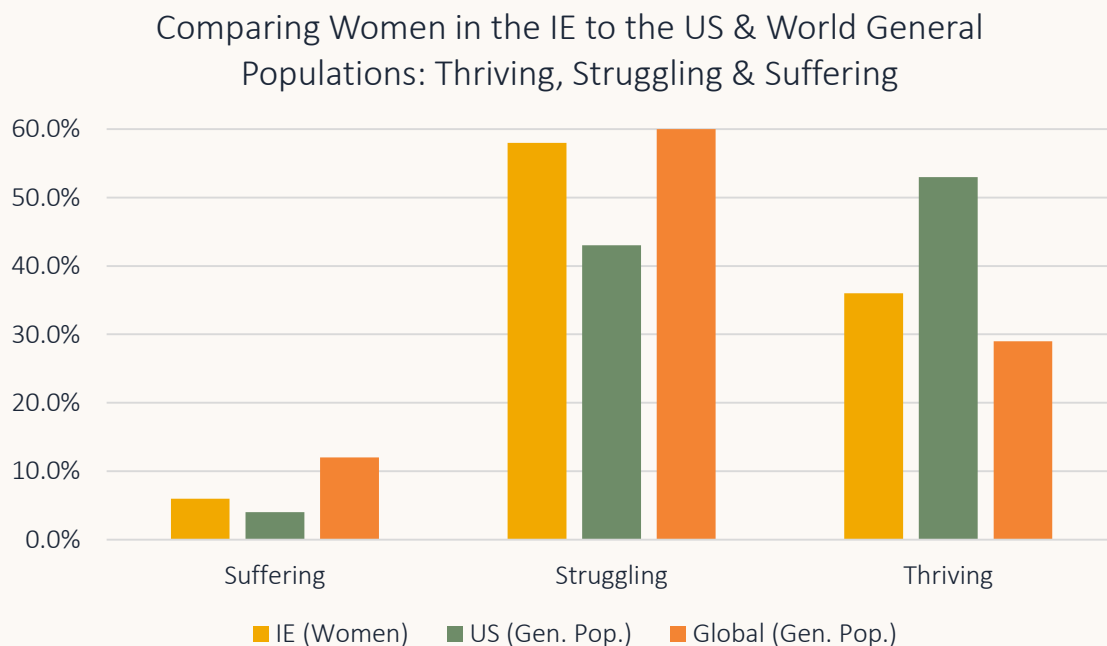
bias could skew results toward those more engaged or opinionated. Despite these limitations, we find our respondent's characteristics generally mirror that of women in the region overall and we are confident the findings offer valuable insights into women's well-being in the Inland Empire.

CANTRIL'S LADDER: A MEASURE OF THRIVING IN THE IE

A core measure in our analysis is the Cantril Ladder, a widely used, subjective tool for assessing life expectations and well-being (see: Gallup 2024, Cantril 1965; Yin et al. 2023; Kahneman & Deaton 2010; among many others).

Cantril's Ladder asks respondents to rate their current lives on a 0-10 scale, with 0 representing the worst possible life and 10 the best possible life. They also estimate where they expect to be in five years using this same scale. The "swing" between present and future ratings provides insight into optimism, resilience, and perceived opportunity. Globally, most people expect their future selves to be better off, making a negative swing a critical indicator of distress or diminished hope for upward mobility. Within the Vital Conditions framework, Cantril's Ladder is used to better understand subjective well-being and provides a baseline from which communities can work to pinpoint where conditions—such as economic security, social connection, and reliable healthcare, among others—may be falling short in supporting thriving communities.

Based on Gallup's global research on life evaluations, Cantril Ladder scores are typically categorized into three well-being groups: thriving, struggling, and suffering, each with distinct implications for well-being and perceived life opportunities (Gallup 2009). Individuals who rate their current lives at 7 or higher and their future at 8 or higher are considered to be thriving, meaning they experience strong well-being and feel optimistic about their future. Those in the struggling category, who rate their life between 5 and 6, face uncertainty and instability, despite



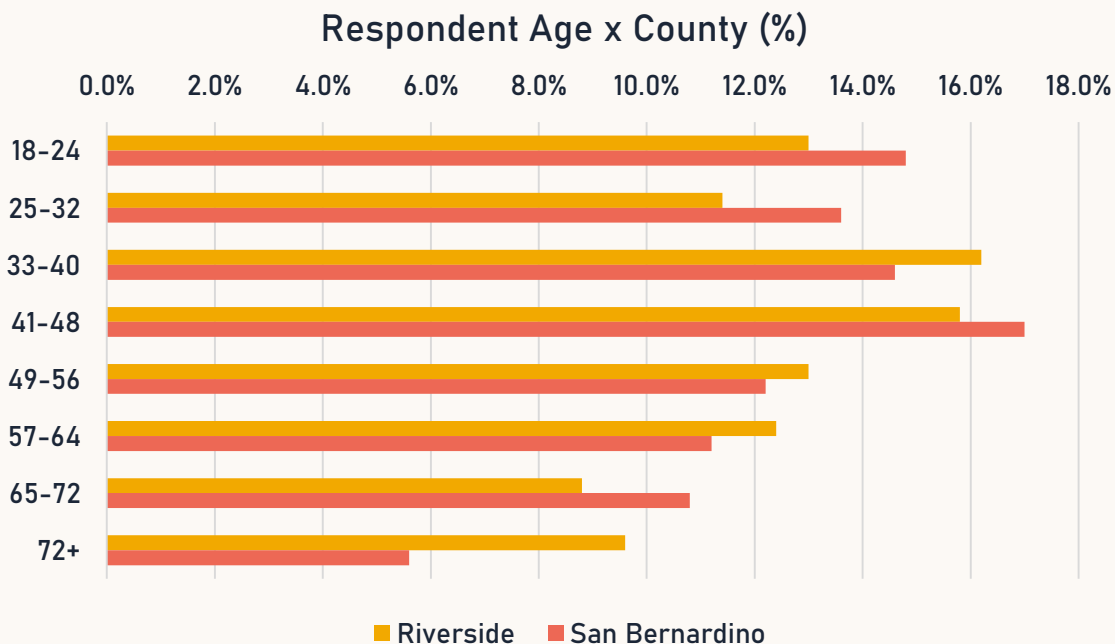
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women

avoiding severe hardship. Research shows that struggling individuals are more likely to experience higher levels of worry and daily stress, poorer physical health, and are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and poor diet choices (Gallup, 2024). Individuals who are suffering rate their present and future life at 4 or below, and tend to lack access to basic needs, experience extreme stress, and face significant barriers to a better future. Belonging to the suffering group is correlated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and chronic illness (Gallup 2024).

In the Inland Empire, a lower share of women are suffering compared to global averages, but a high percentage remain in the struggling category. (See: graph above.) Further, there is a thriving gap between the US general population's percentage thriving (53%) versus the IE's (36%). Together, these asymmetries in subjective well-being underscore the need to better understand the causes and conditions of thriving in the IE, as well as policy and other investments to decrease the thriving gap.

SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

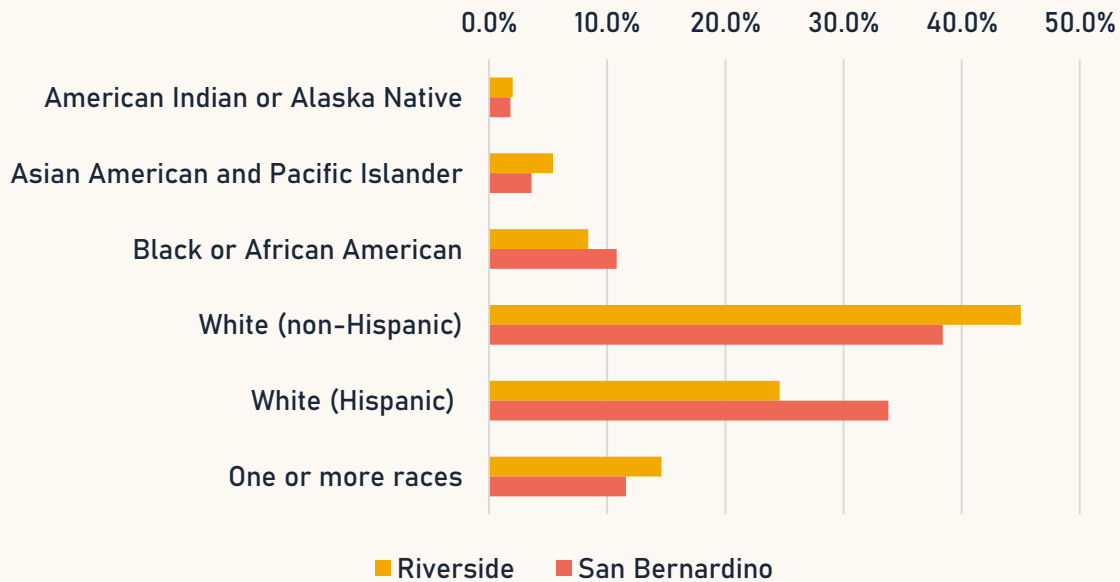
The following nine graphs provide a snapshot of key characteristics of the women in Riverside and San Bernardino counties who participated in our survey, offering important context on who is represented and whose experiences shape these findings. Where available, we present data from the American Community Survey for the Riverside-Ontario-San Bernardino Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in the notes underneath each graph as a point of comparison to assess representativeness. By examining differences in education, race, housing cost burden, caregiver status, and more, these data help us understand who we are in conversation with and the diverse realities of women in the Inland Empire.



Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women

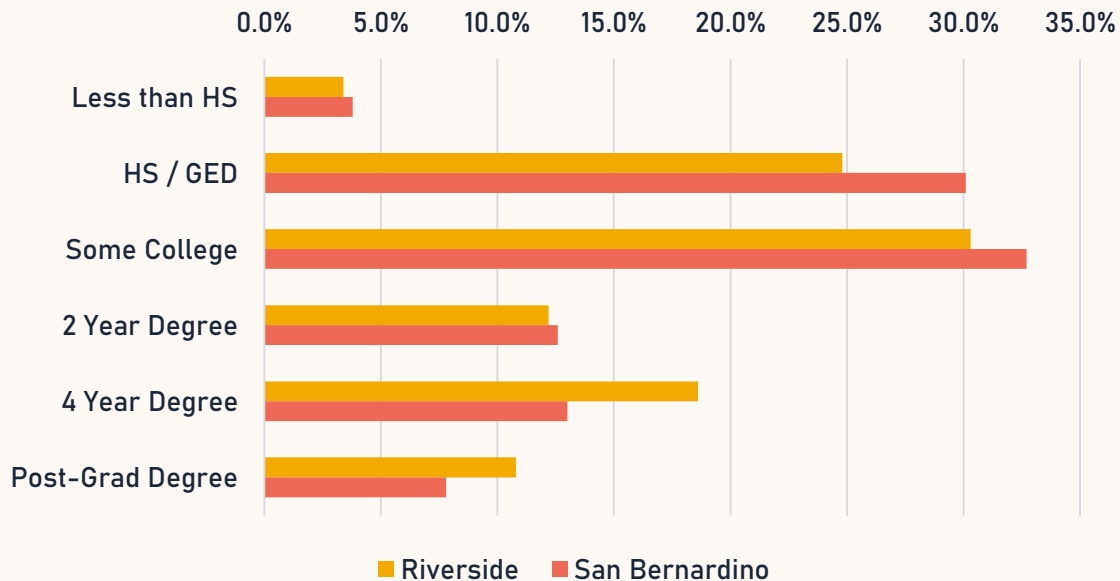
Note: The median age of the Riverside-Ontario-San Bernardino MSA is 35.2 years. The median age of our sample is 44 years. This difference is likely driven, at least in part, by our sample focusing on adults; the MSA median includes children and decreases the median, our sample includes only women over the age of 18 years.

Respondent Race x County (%)

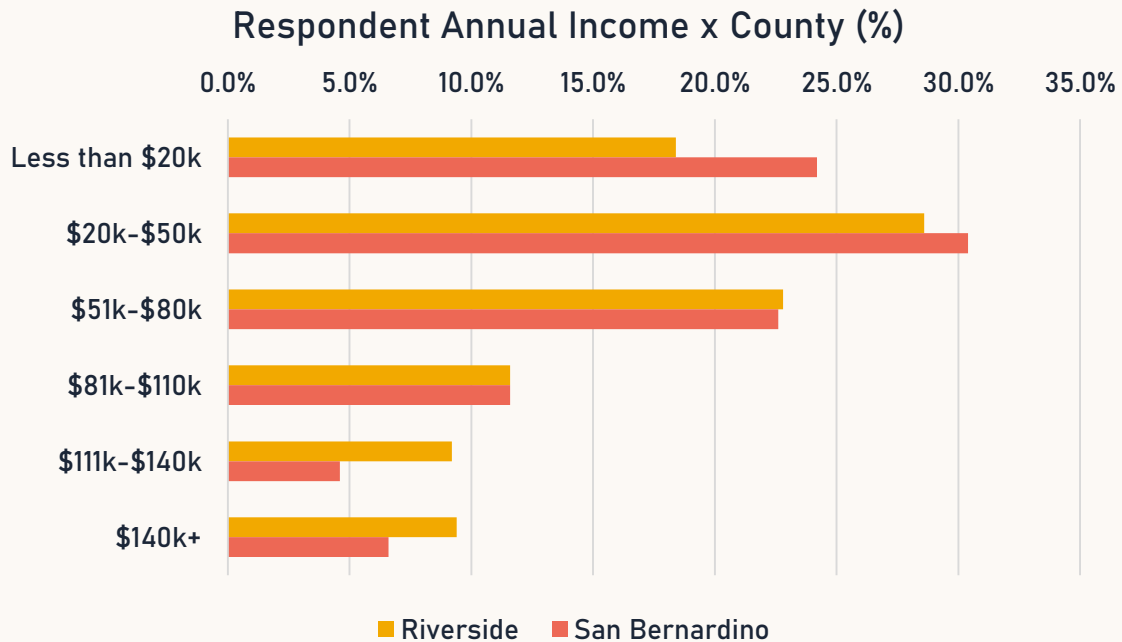


Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women
Note: The racial composition of the Riverside-Ontario-San Bernardino MSA is: 2% American Indian or Alaska Native; 8% Asian American or Pacific Islander; 8% Black or African American; 27% White (non-Hispanic); 51% White (Hispanic); 4% one or more races.

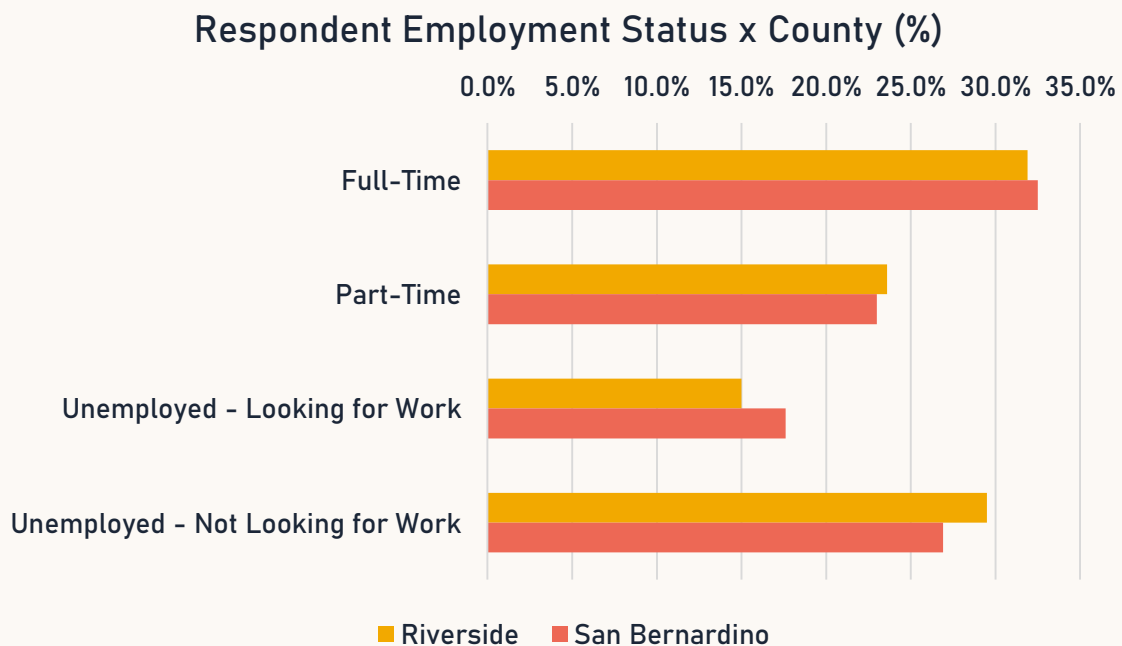
Respondent Educational Attainment x County (%)



Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women
Note: Educational attainment for the general population over age 25 in the Riverside-Ontario-San Bernardino MSA is: 17% No Degree, 28% HS Degree, 30% Some College; 16% Bachelor's Degree; 9% Post-Graduate Degree.

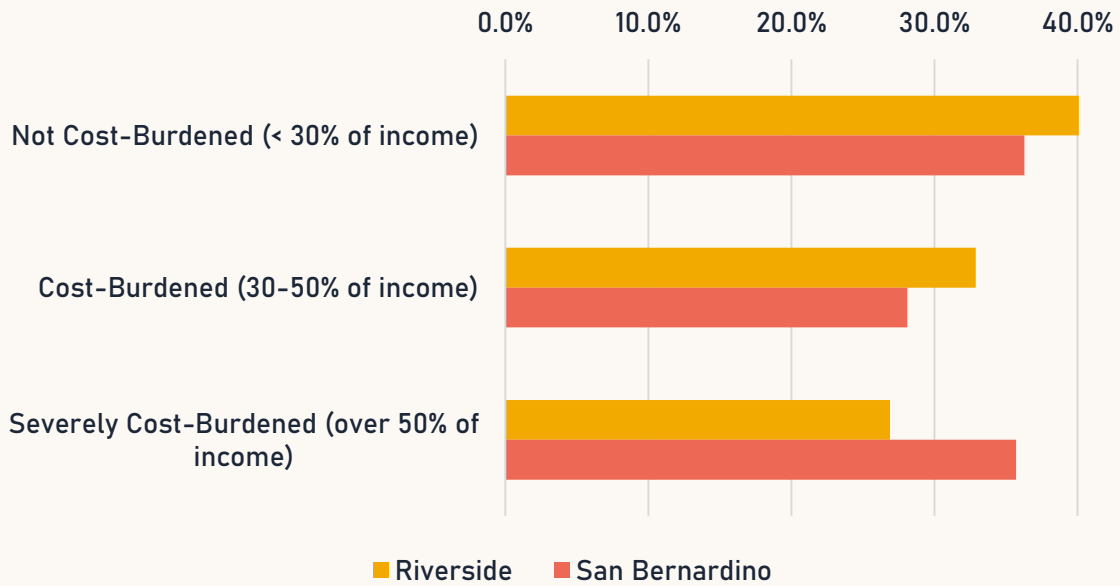


Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women
Note: The median income for the Riverside-Ontario-San Bernardino MSA is \$35,408 per year.



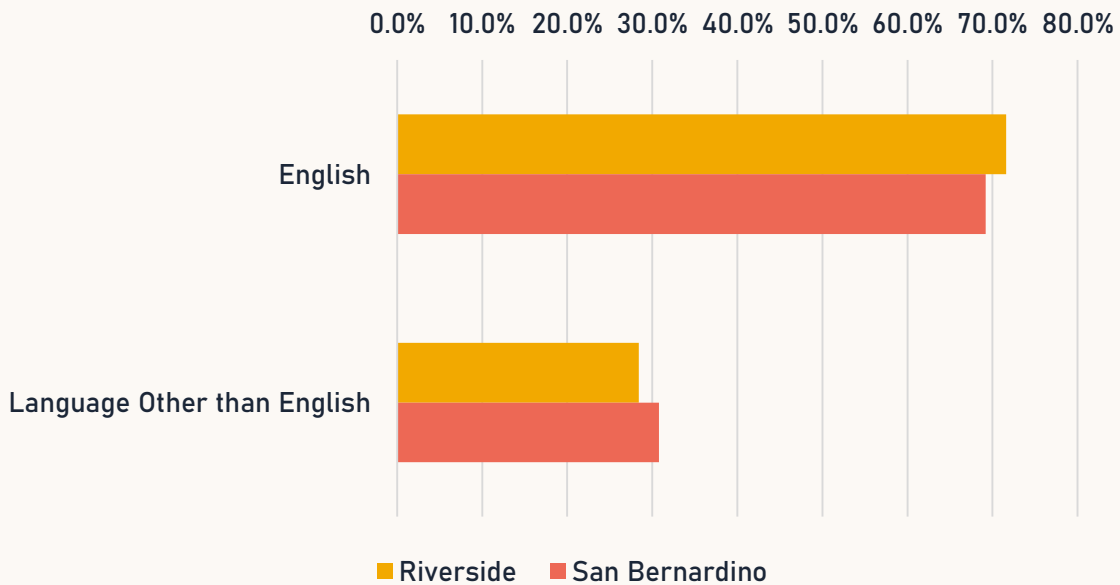
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women

Respondent Housing Cost Burden x County (%)



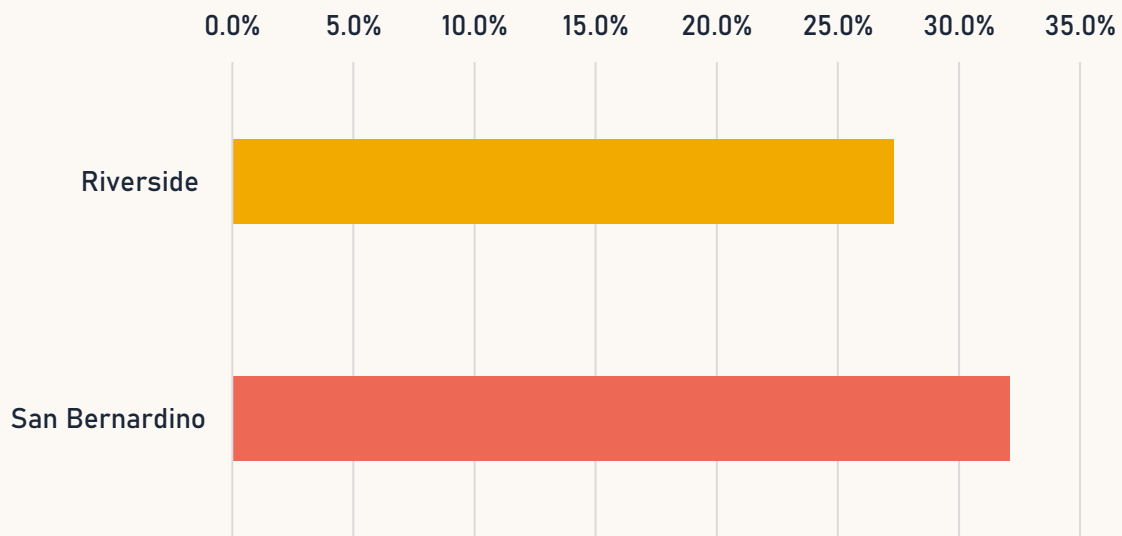
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women

Language Spoken at Home x County (%)



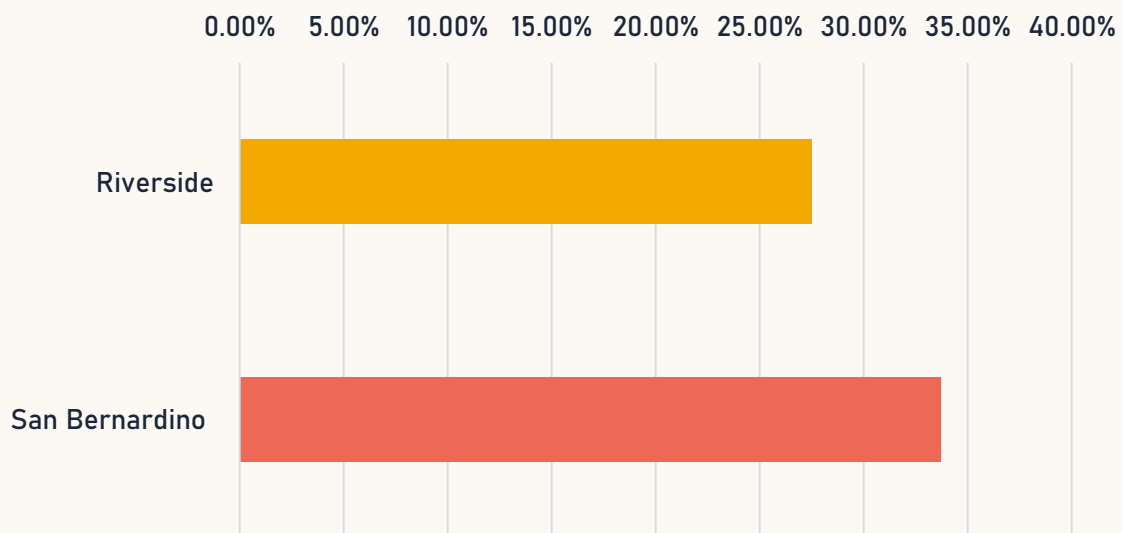
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women

Respondent as a Caregiver to a Child Under the Age of 18 x County (%)



Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women

Respondent as Caregiver to Someone Over the Age of 18 x County (%)



Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Women

ANALYSIS OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE DATA

ABOUT THE DATA

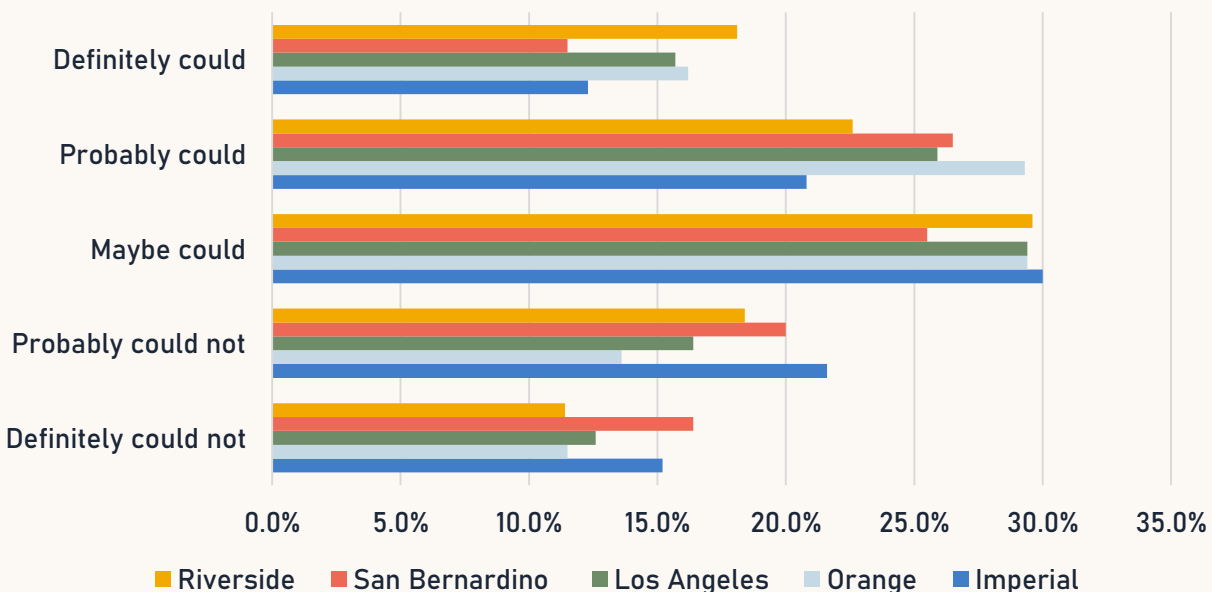
We reviewed available ACS and CHIS data against the variables currently collected for each Vital Condition by the IE Vital Conditions Network. Because the Vital Conditions themselves are for the entire population and not just a subset, we had to make several judgement calls about which indicators to split out by sex, and which indicators would not be meaningful divided in this way. For example, we chose to omit “Thriving Natural World” as a category altogether, as due to the constraints of this project, encapsulating the impact on women in a single metric was not meaningful.

We chose to use the ACS 2023 1-year sample as it provides the most recent data available. For the CHIS data we similarly wanted to reflect recency, but needed to balance that against statistical stability; accordingly, several of the measures are pooled across a few years to create stable estimates. In selecting variables we considered the following:

- inclusion as part of the IE Vital Conditions measures;
- has data for 2023 or 2023, including pooling;
- can be meaningfully cut by sex;
- had data at the county level (i.e., Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino).

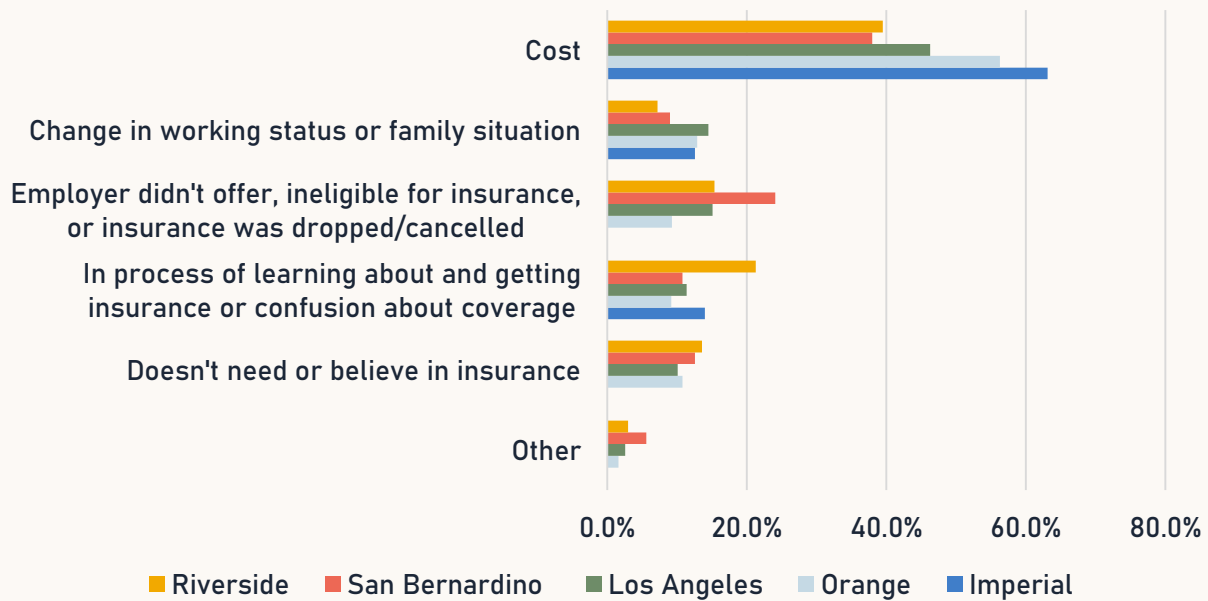
Once we had our universe of potential variables, we ran an initial pass, comparing outcomes for all five counties. Based on our Center’s prior experience with community groups, funders, and government agencies, we sought to identify two variables for each Vital Condition that would be potentially compelling for leaders throughout this region. Below are 12 graphs representing each of the statistics presented in the report.

Can Contact Elected Officials in the Community - Adult Women



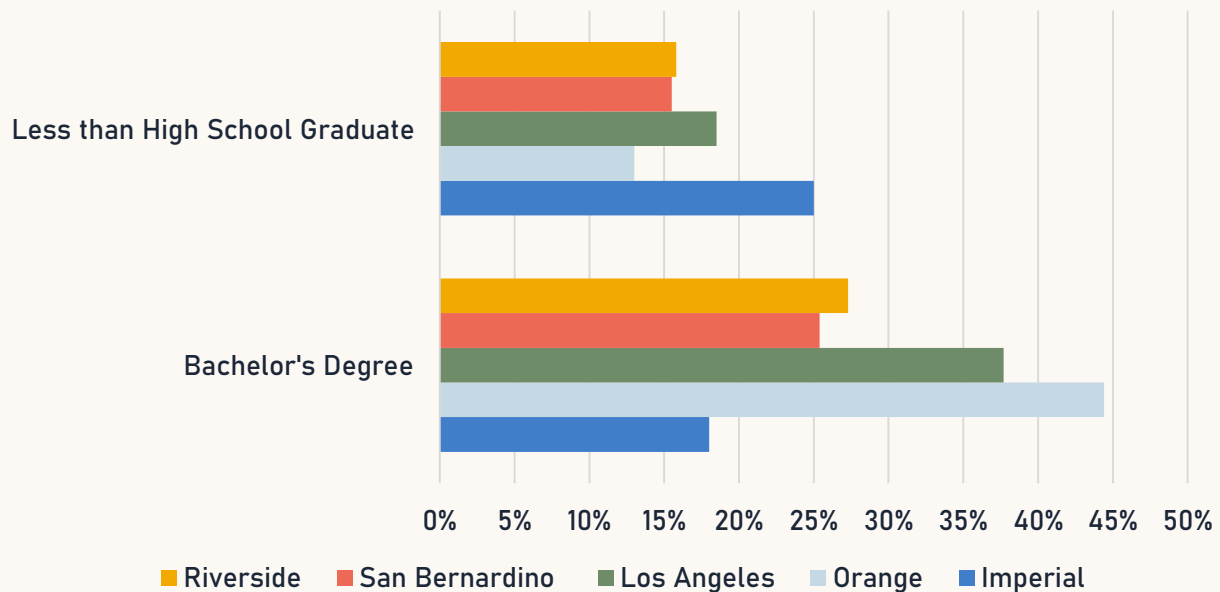
Source: 2023 California Health Interview Survey

Main Reason for Currently Uninsured Status – Percentage of Adult Women



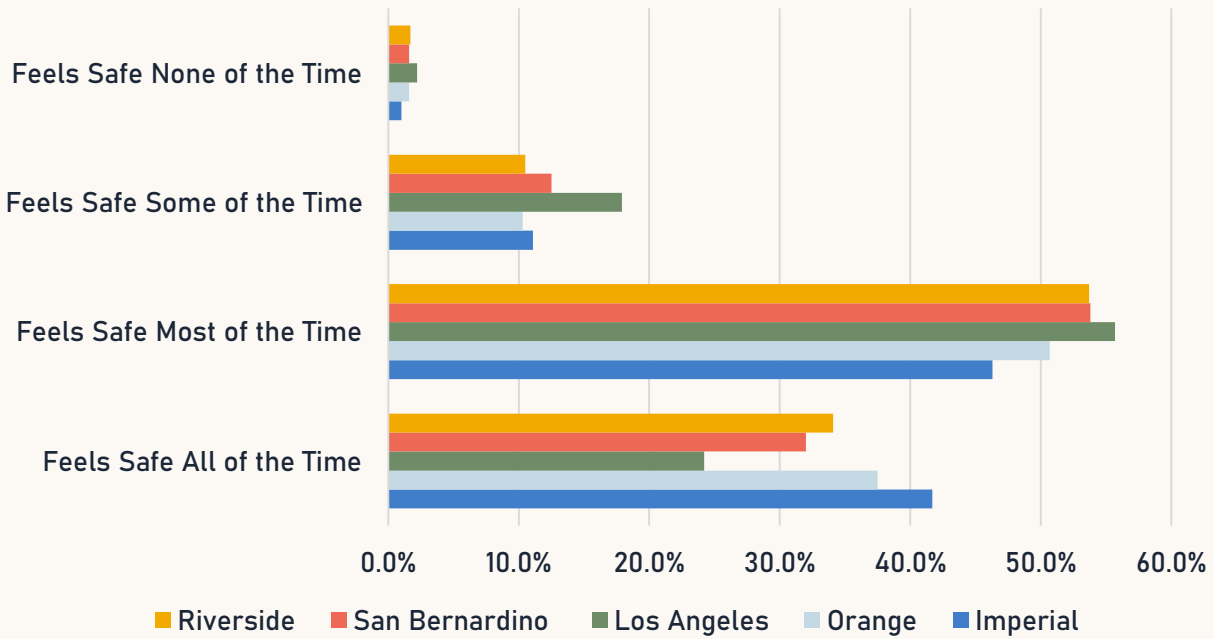
Source: 2019-2023 California Health Interview Survey

Educational Attainment – Percentage of Adult Women (25+ years)



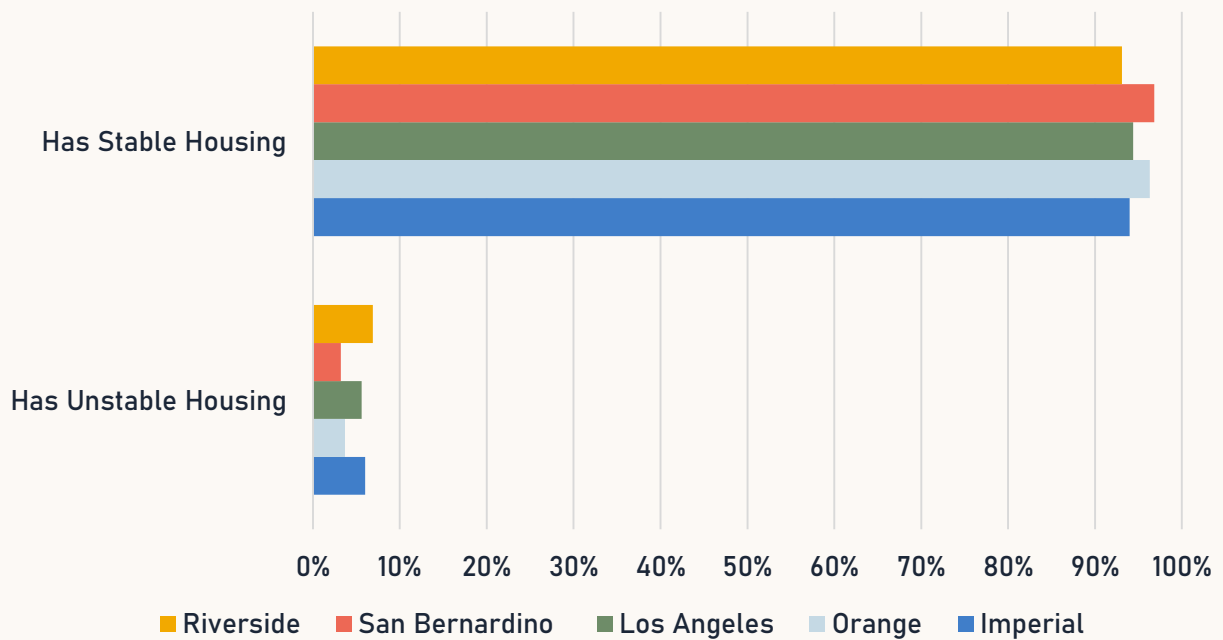
Source: 2023 ACS 1-year

Feels Safe in Neighborhood - Percentage of Adult Women



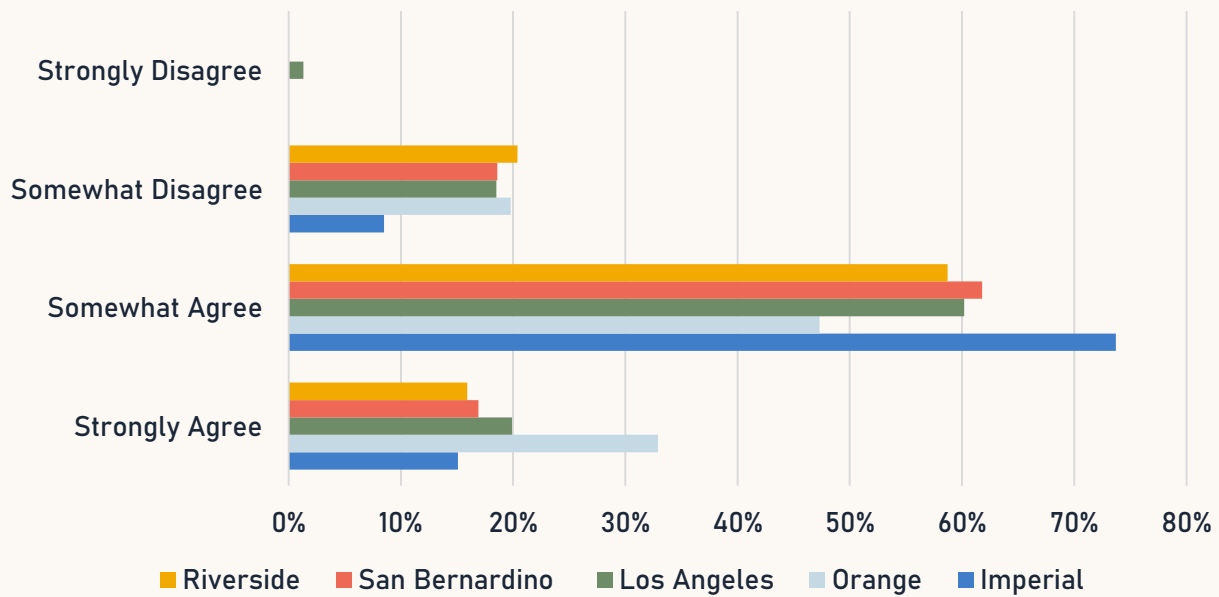
Source: 2019-2023 California Health Interview Survey

Housing Stability - Percentage of Adult Women



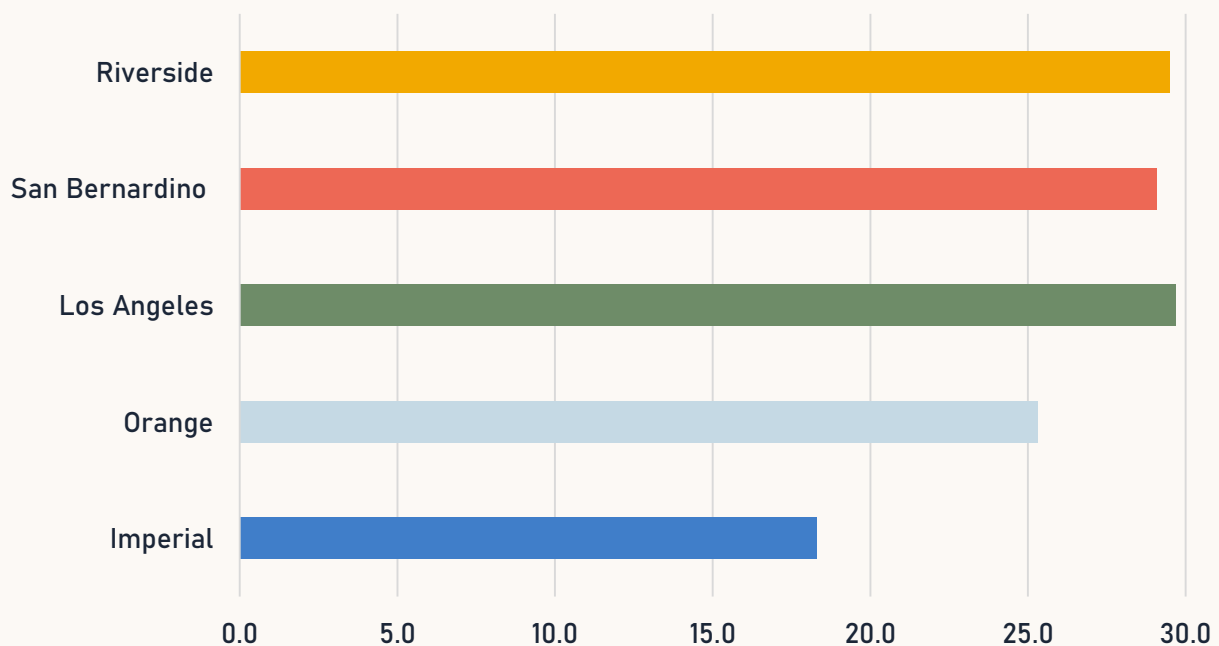
Source: 2022, 2023 California Health Interview Survey

Believes They Can Make a Difference - Percentage of Teen Girls



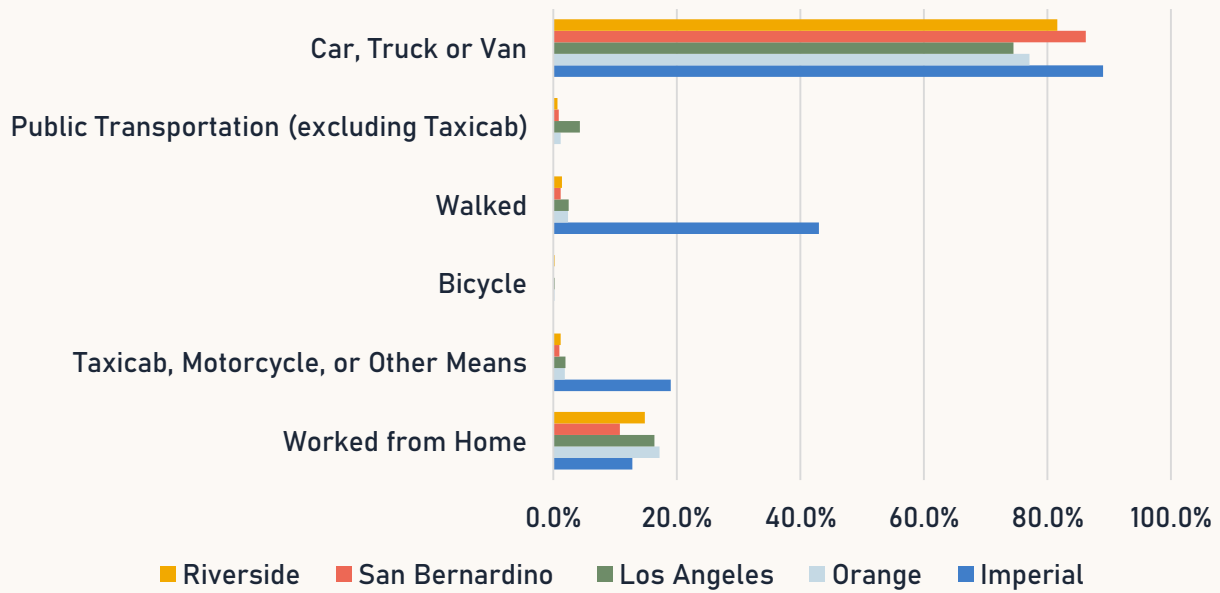
Source: 2019-2023 California Health Interview Survey

Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes) - Adult Women



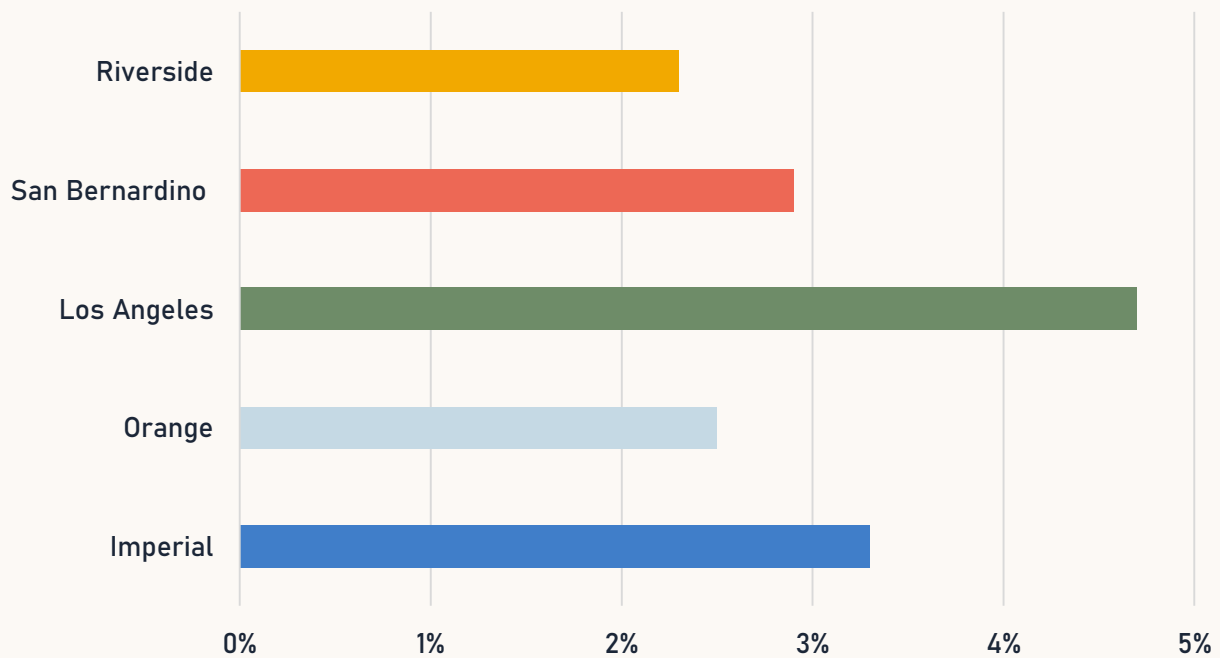
Source: 2023 ACS 1-year

Means of Transportation to Work - Percentage of Adult Women



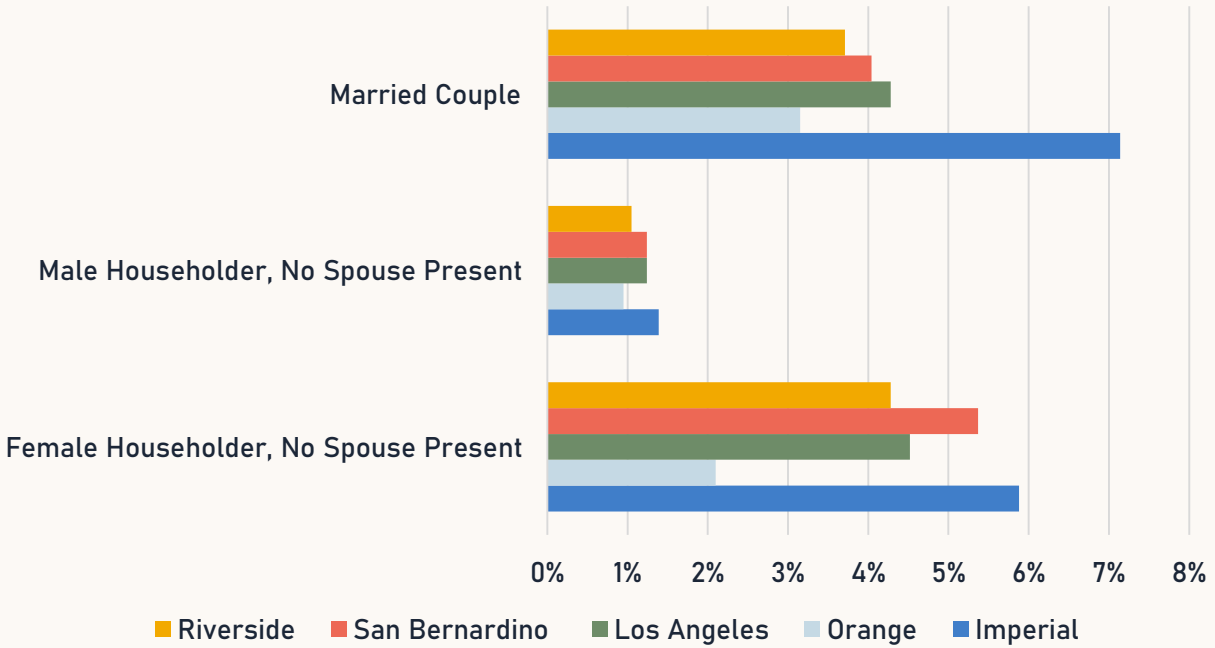
Source: 2023 ACS 1-year

No Vehicle Available - Percentage of Adult Women



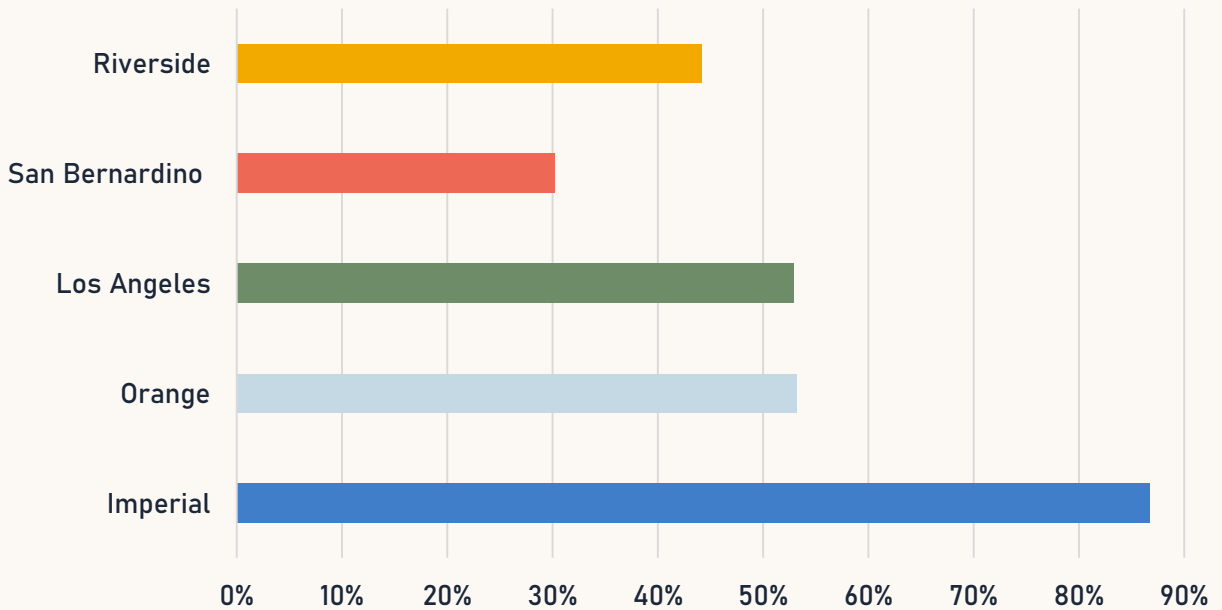
Source: 2023 ACS 1-year

Poverty Status by Family Type - Percentage



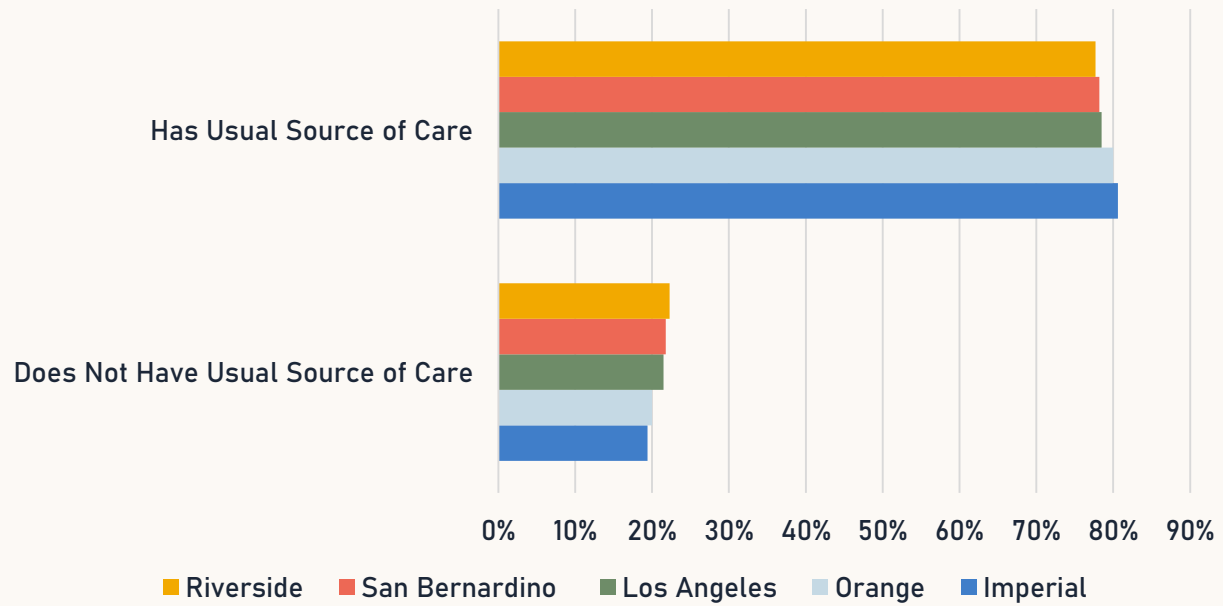
Source: 2023 ACS 1-year

Preschool Enrollment - Percentage of Girls (3-4 Years Old)



Source: 2023 ACS 1-year

Has Usual Source of Health Care - Percentage of Adult Women



Source: 2023 California Health Interview Survey

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