BUILDING COMMON GROUND THROUGH DATA

Insights on Vital Conditions in the IE

Online Companion Report

Prepared by the
UCR Center for Community Solutions
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Introduction

The Inland Empire Community Foundation commissioned a report by the UCR Center for Community Solutions to examine how residents across Riverside and San Bernardino counties (the "Inland Empire") experience well-being, belonging, and civic life. Using the Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being as an overarching framework, this study draws on findings from an original survey of 2,381 Inland Empire residents to explore Belonging & Civic Muscle in the region, as well as how those experiences relate to overall well-being and life satisfaction. With support from faculty at the UCR School of Public Policy, we also analyze publicly available data to highlight regional trends across the remaining six vital conditions, offering comparative insights drawn from sources such as the American Community Survey, California Department of Education, and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This online companion to the report published for the 2025 IECF Policy & Philanthropy Summit provides additional detail on survey methodology, demographic characteristics of survey respondents, and deeper analyses related to well-being, belonging, and civic muscle, before providing additional visualization of the publicly available data excluded from the main report. The appendix includes a list of all variables collected through the survey and the full-length faculty write ups for those which were abridged in the printed report.

A Survey of Well-Being, Belonging, and Civic Muscle in the Inland Empire

Methodology

To better understand how Inland Empire residents experience well-being—particularly as it relates to the vital condition of Belonging and Civic Muscle—we conducted a regionwide survey of 2,381 adults living in the Inland Empire (co-extensive with Riverside and San Bernardino counties) between June 17 and July 2, 2025. Respondents were recruited through Dynata, a national survey research firm that draws from established panels and offers modest incentives for participation. While not a probability-based sample, the resulting group broadly reflects the Inland Empire's population across key demographic characteristics (see breakdown below). To be eligible, individuals had to be age 18 or older, reside in Riverside or San Bernardino counties, and be able to complete the survey in English. Given these criteria, we refer to our sample as "Inland Empire residents" throughout this report.

Recognizing the importance of linguistic access in a region as diverse as the Inland Empire, we made efforts to field the survey in Spanish as well. However, neither Dynata nor several competing research firms were able to reliably recruit Spanish-speaking participants through their panels despite historically being able to do so — a shift speculated to be linked to the sociopolitical environment at the time of this report. As an alternative, we included a question asking respondents whether a language other than English is spoken in their home, which allows us to account for linguistic diversity as part of the analysis.

The survey featured a mix of established and original measures, including the Belonging Barometer

(assessing emotional connection, value, and inclusion), the Civic Engagement Scale (capturing civic responsibility and behaviors), and the Cantril Ladder (a global standard for measuring life satisfaction). We also included items drawn from national studies such as the American National Election Studies, General Social Survey, and American Social Capital Survey, alongside new questions tailored to local life experiences across the Vital Conditions framework. This blend of validated and region-specific items enables both comparative analysis and deeper insight into the lived realities of Inland Empire residents.

As with any survey-based research, certain limitations are worth noting. Online panel surveys may inadvertently exclude individuals with limited internet access or digital fluency, and response patterns may be influenced by self-selection bias. Despite these limitations, we believe the findings offer valuable insight into well-being, belonging, and civic life in the Inland Empire that can help catalyze conversations around regional strategy.

Survey Respondent Demographics

The graphs in this section offer a demographic snapshot of the 2,381 Inland Empire residents who participated in our survey, helping to ground the findings that follow in a clearer understanding of who is represented. These visualizations break down key characteristics—such as race and ethnicity, age, income, education, language spoken at home, family structure, and religious affiliation—by county, allowing for insight into both commonalities and differences across Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Where possible, we include benchmark data from the American Community Survey for the Riverside–San Bernardino–Ontario Metropolitan Statistical Area to allow for comparison of our sample with the broader regional population. These data help frame the perspectives captured in this report and underscore the diversity of experiences across the Inland Empire.
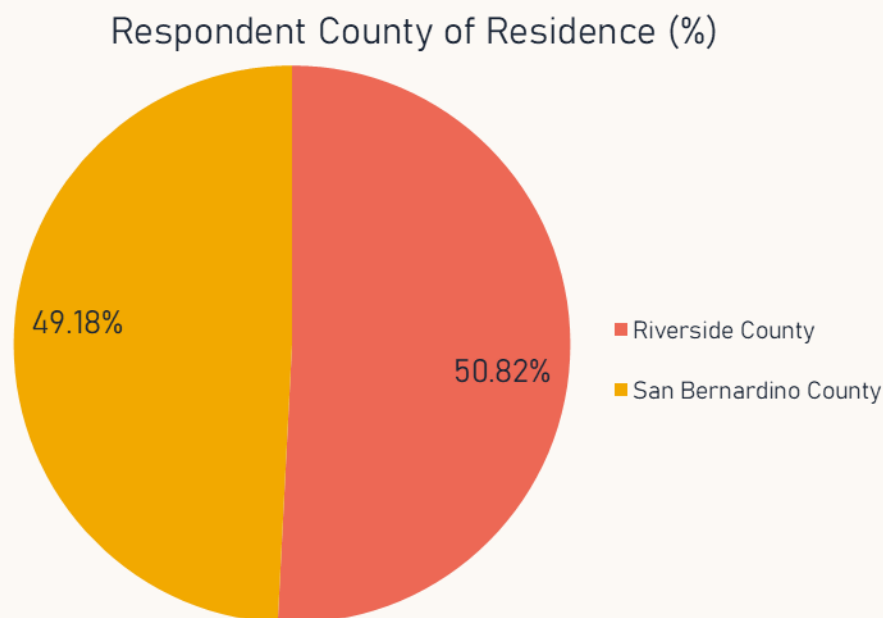

Respondent County of Residence (%)

49.18%

50.82%

■ Riverside County

■ San Bernardino County

Figure 1.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Self-Identified Gender x County (%)
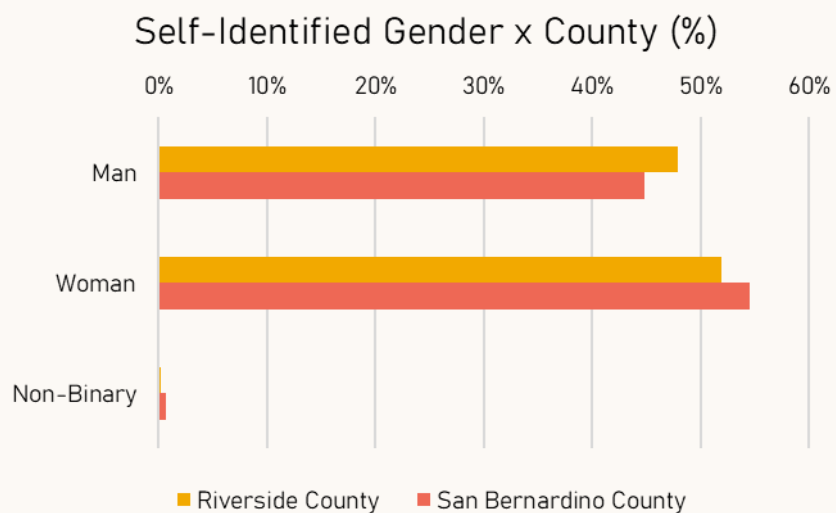
Figure 2.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Respondent Age x County (%)

Figure 3.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents
Note: The median age of the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA is 35.2 years. The median age of our sample is 46 years. This difference is likely driven, at least in part, by our sample focusing on adults; the MSA median includes children which decreases the median, whereas our sample includes only individuals over the age of 18 years. .

Respondent Race x County (%)

Figure 4.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents
Note: The racial composition of the Riverside–San Bernardino–Ontario 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 Ethnicity x County (%)
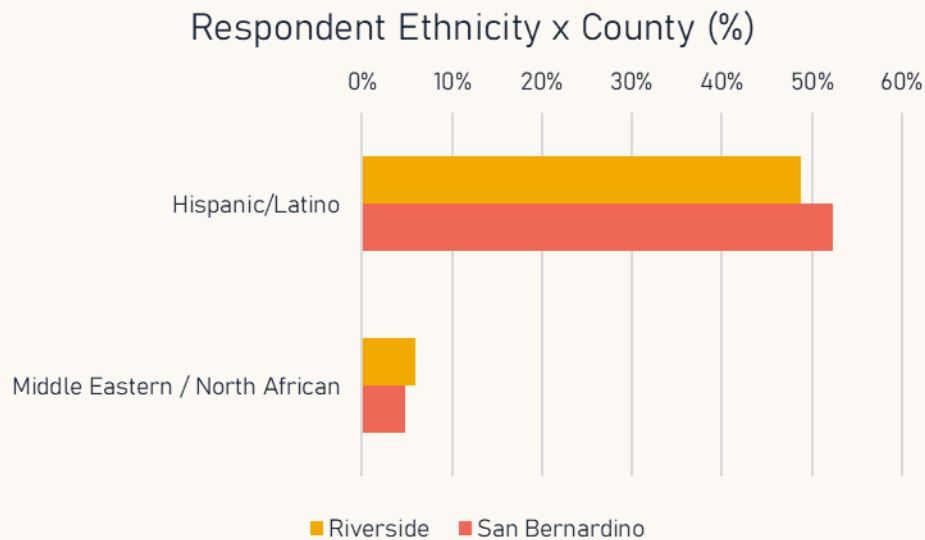
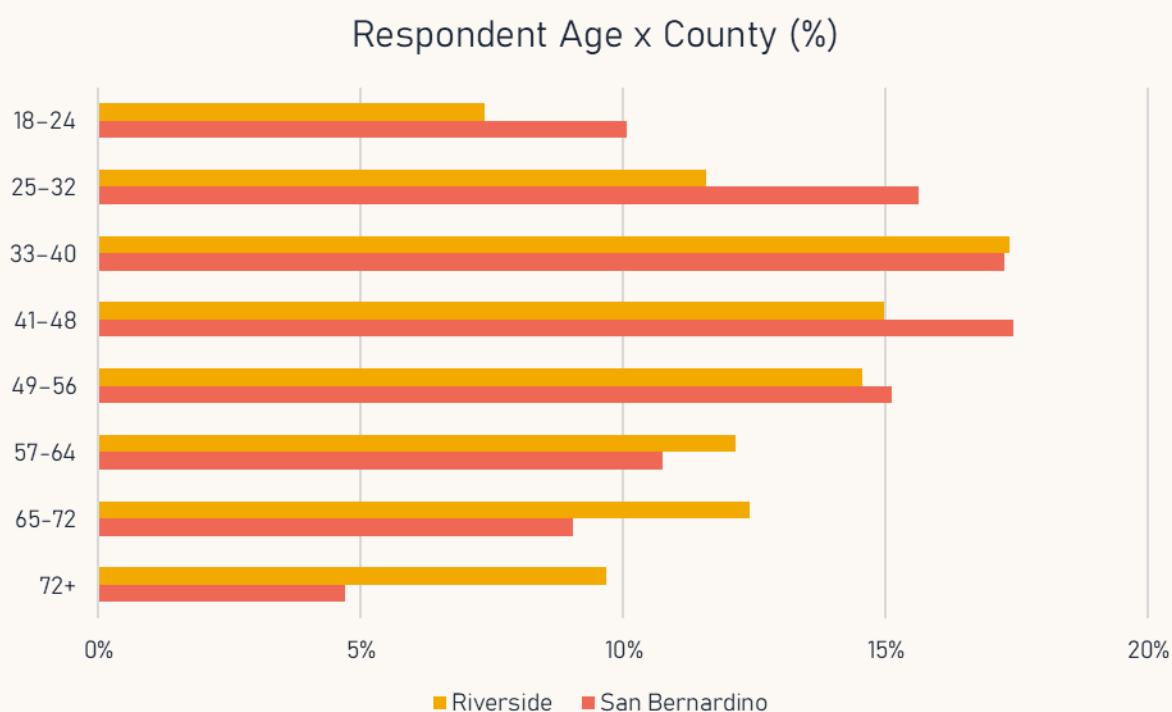Figure 5.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents
Note: The Riverside–San Bernardino–Ontario MSA is 52.5% Hispanic. The American Community Survey does not collect data on MENA identity.

Respondent Educational Attainment x County (%)
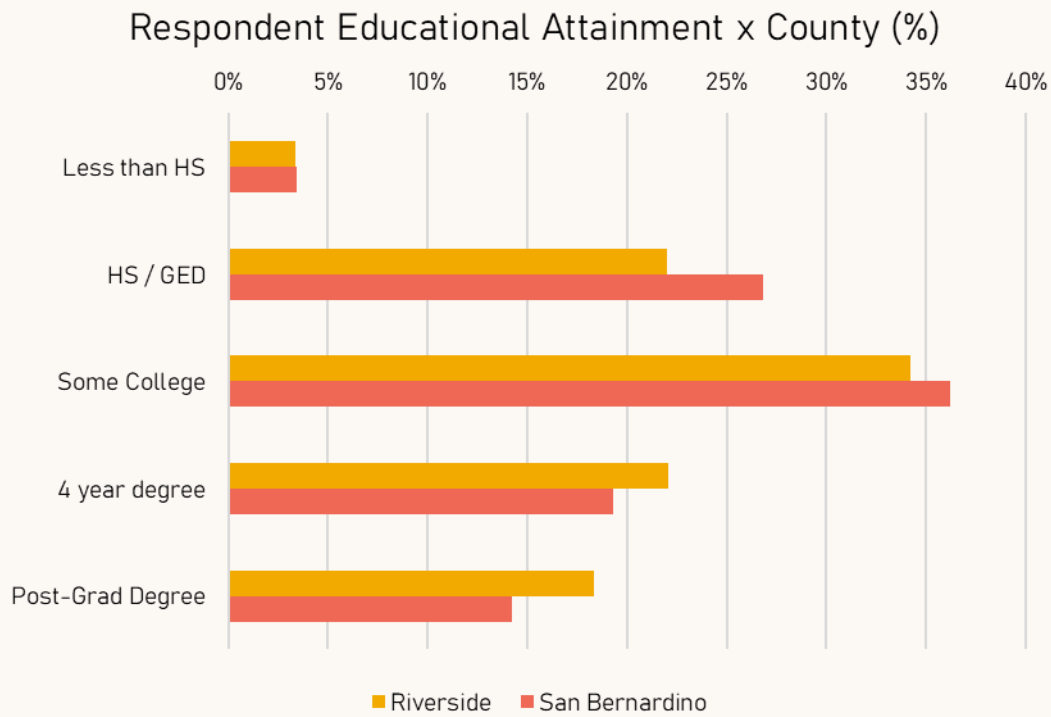
Figure 6.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents
Note: Educational attainment for the general population over age 25 in the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA is: 17% No Degree, 28% HS Degree, 30% Some College; 16% Bachelor's Degree; 9% Post-Graduate Degree.
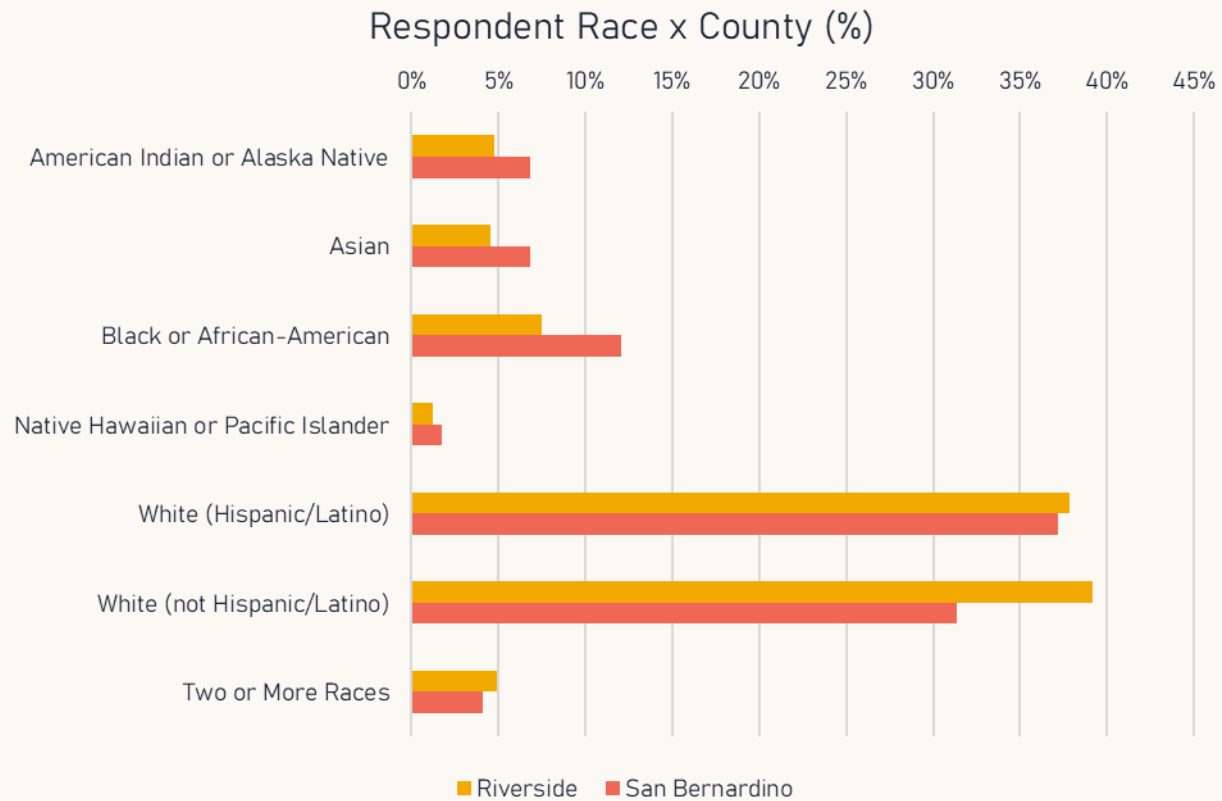
Respondent Annual Household Income x County (%)
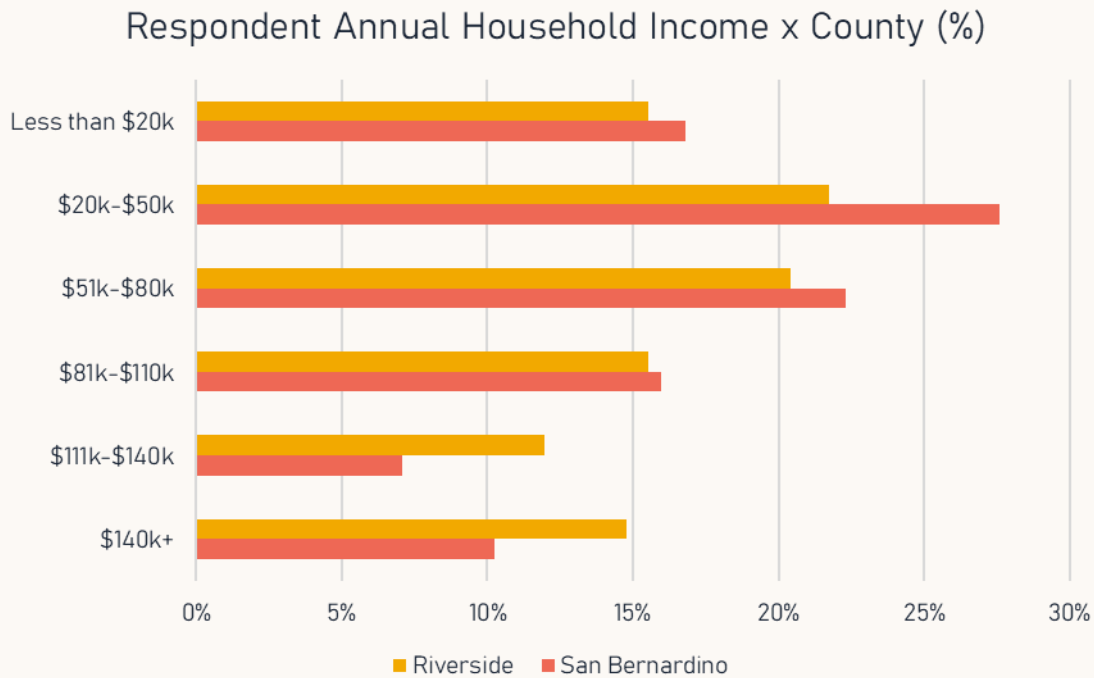
Figure 7.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents
Note: The median income for the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA is $35,408 per year.

Language Spoken at Home x County (%)

■ Riverside ■ San Bernardino
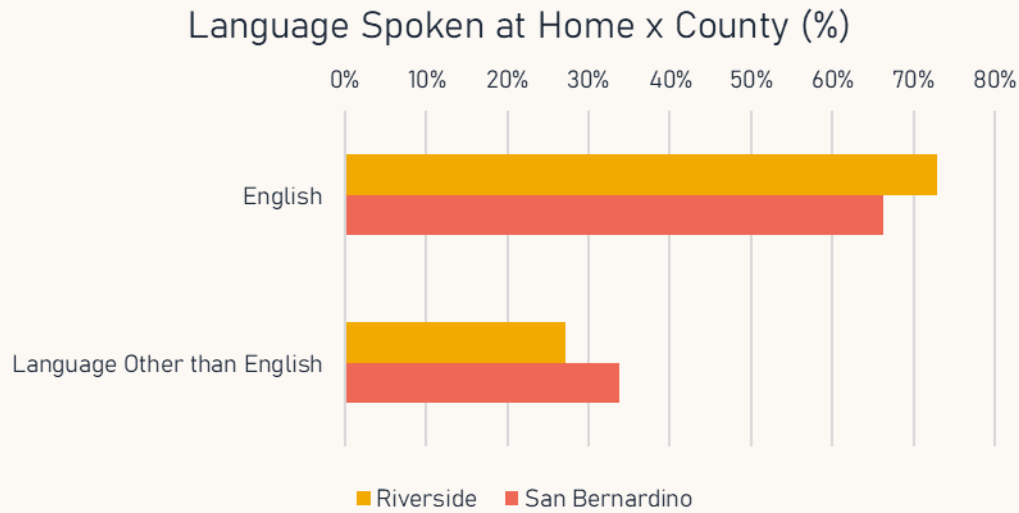
Figure 8.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Respondent as Currently Married x County (%)

■ Riverside ■ San Bernardino
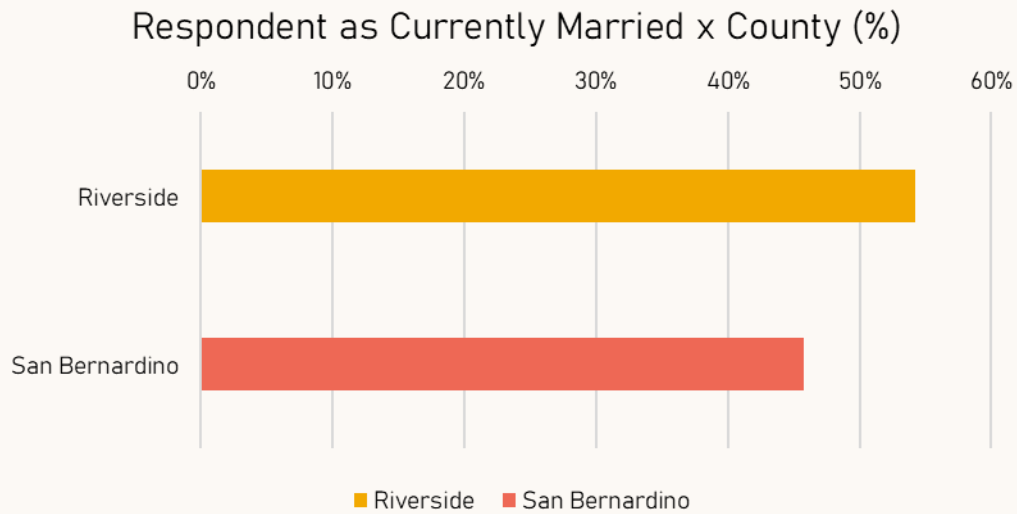
Figure 9.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Respondent as a Caregiver to a Child Under the Age of 18 x County (%)
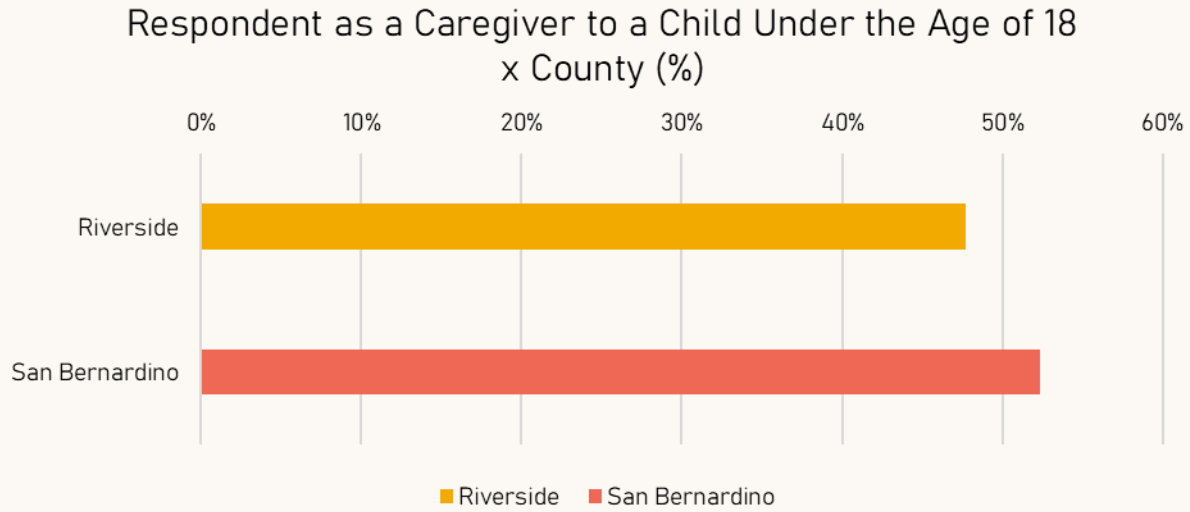
Figure 10.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Respondent Religious Affiliation x County (%)
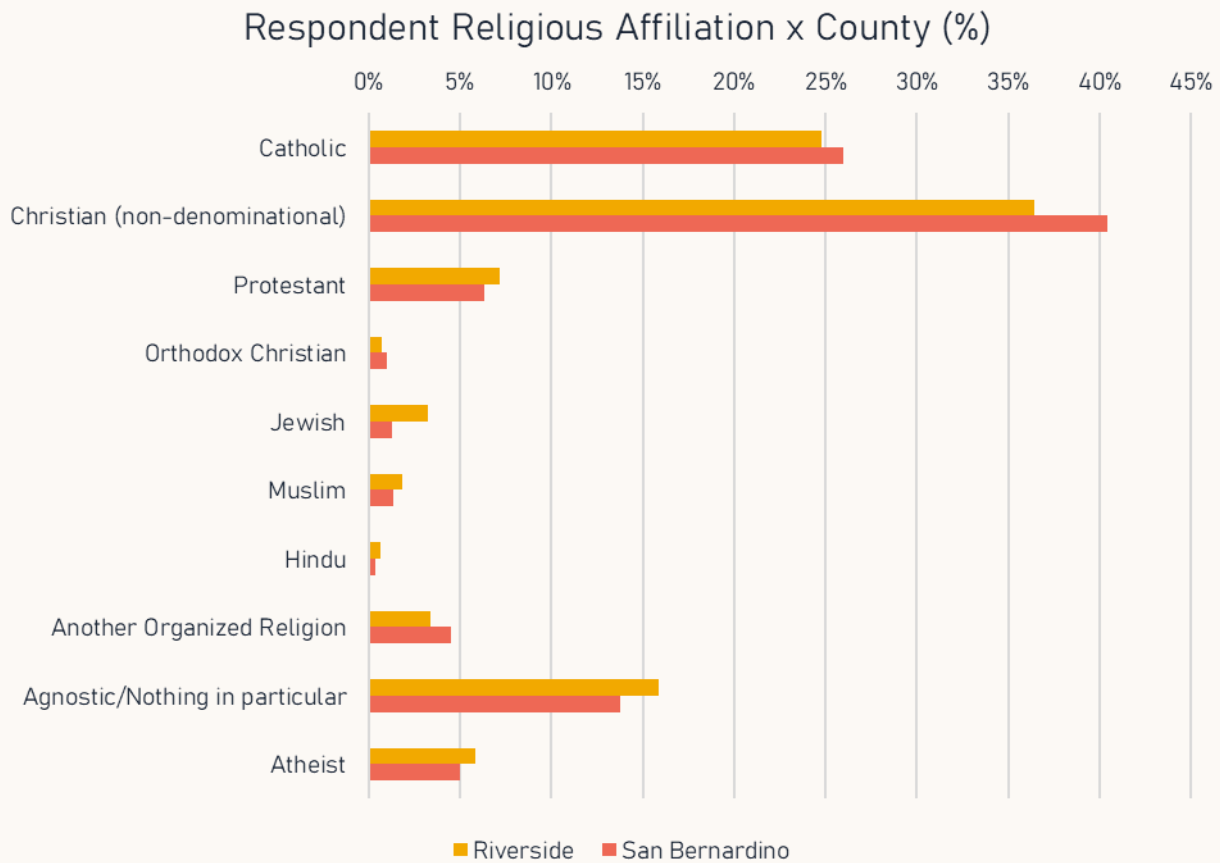

Figure 11.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Belonging & Civic Muscle

Belonging and Civic Muscle rests at the center of the seven Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being — a framework that identifies the essential ingredients all people and places need to thrive. This condition refers to the extent to which individuals feel seen, valued, and connected to others, and whether they have the opportunity, support, and power to actively shape the decisions that affect their lives and communities. While often associated with formal civic behaviors like voting or attending public meetings, civic muscle encompasses a much broader range of experiences and actions. It includes everyday interactions, social networks, volunteerism, mutual aid, trust in institutions, and the degree to which people feel empowered to act for the common good. At its core, belonging and civic muscle is about the strength of our social fabric and our ability to work together to improve the places we call home.

A growing body of research underscores how vital social connection, trust, and civic engagement are to individual and community well-being. People who feel a strong sense of belonging tend to report higher life satisfaction, better mental health, and greater resilience in the face of adversity.[1] Further, belonging is an independent determinant of health and well-being with research showing that lacking social connection increases the risk of premature death as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and being socially connected decreases the risk of early death by 50%.[2] Robust social networks and a sense of purpose are also linked to longer life expectancy and reduced risk of chronic disease — so much so that the U.S. Surgeon General recently declared loneliness and isolation a public health crisis.[3]

Similarly, communities with high levels of civic trust and engagement are more likely to experience lower crime rates, stronger local economies, and greater responsiveness from public institutions.[4] Civic muscle is not just about participating in elections or jury duty, it is about cultivating the relationships, trust, and shared responsibility that allow people to solve problems together, advocate for change, and support one another. Without belonging and civic muscle, individuals are more likely to feel disconnected and powerless, and communities struggle to mobilize the collective action needed to thrive.

A Snapshot of How Inland Empire Residents Connect & Engage in Civic Life

Before turning to our core measures of belonging and civic engagement, we first explore how Inland Empire residents connect with others, participate in community life, and view democratic institutions. To provide this context, we asked about political orientation, voting behavior, trust in government, beliefs about elections, sources of news, and the extent to which respondents engage in social activities or belong to commu-

1 Haslam, S.A., Jetten, J., Postmes, T. and Haslam, C. (2009), Social Identity, Health and Well-Being: An Emerging Agenda for Applied Psychology. Applied Psychology, 58: 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2008.00379.x ; Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB. Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review. PLoS Med. 2010 Jul 27;7(7):e1000316. doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316. PMID: 20668659; PMCID: PMC2910600.

2 Holt-Lunstad J, Smith TB, Layton JB. Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review. Plos Medicine. 2010;7(7):e1000316–e1000316. doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316.; Holt-Lunstad J, Robles TF, Sbarra DA. Advancing social connection as a public health priority in the United States. Am Psychol. 2017 Sep;72(6):517-530. doi: 10.1037/amp0000103. PMID: 28880099; PMCID: PMC5598785.

3 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2023). Our epidemic of loneliness and isolation. https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf

4 Putnam, R. D. (2020). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.; Skocpol, T. and Fiorina, M.P, editors. *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*. Brookings Institution Press, 1999. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctv86dhdr.

nity organizations. Together, these responses offer a snapshot of the civic and social landscape that shapes belonging in the region and enables communities to effectively collaborate, address shared challenges, and sustain long-term well-being.

Formal membership in community organizations is one way people build relationships, access resources, and exercise civic voice – all of which cultivate Belonging & Civic Muscle. Most Inland Empire residents (42%) report no active membership in formal organizations within the past year, with religious or spiritual groups being the most common type of affiliation among those who do participate.

In the past 12 months, have you been an active member of the following types of organizations?

Figure 12.

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

While most Inland Empire residents report engaging in informal social bonding—like visiting with friends—far fewer participate in formal civic or community activities that build bridging social capital, such as volunteering, attending public meetings, or working on local projects.
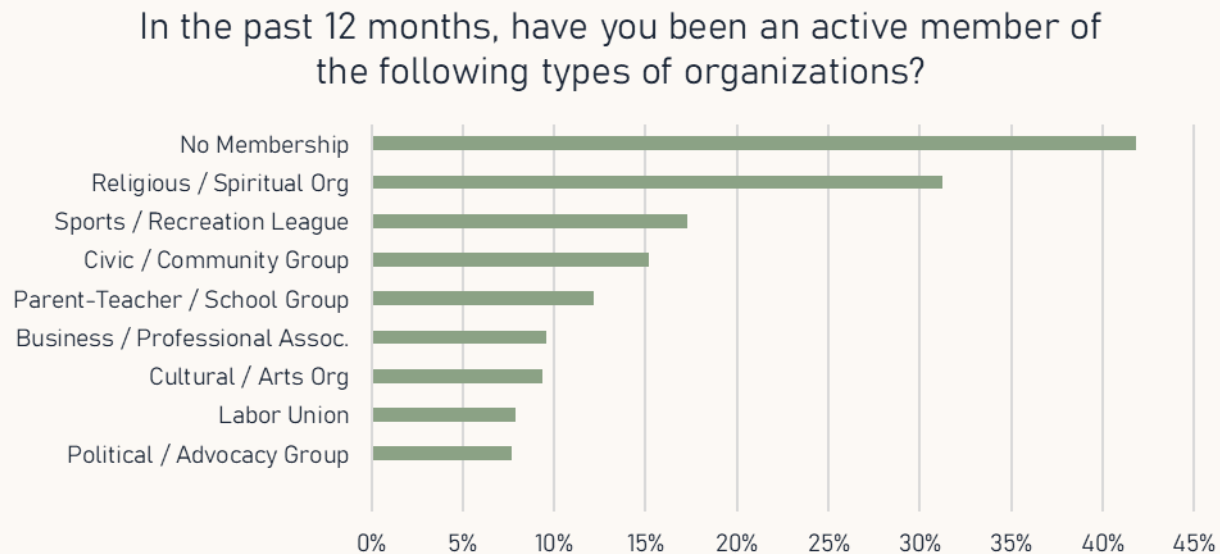
In the past 12 months, have you done any of the following activities?

Figure 13.

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

Most Inland Empire residents stay informed through traditional and digital media—TV (62%), internet (56%), and social media (54%)—while fewer turn to newspapers, radio, or podcasts, highlighting the varied information ecosystems that shape how people understand and engage with their communities, and underscoring the importance of leveraging diverse communication channels to build informed, connected, and civically engaged communities.

Which of the following sources do you use to learn about the news?
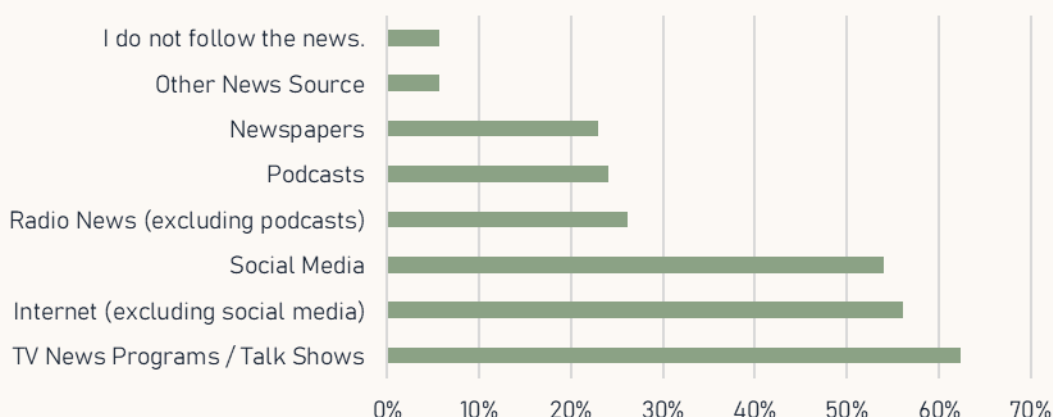
Figure 14.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Just under half of Inland Empire residents (47%) believe elections influence government "most of the time" or "always," while a significant share (32%) feel elections rarely or never make the government pay attention — pointing to a notable divide in trust in democratic responsiveness and raising questions about how this perception may weaken residents' motivation to engage and their overall sense of belonging and civic efficacy.

How much do you feel that having elections makes the government pay attention to what people think?

Figure 15.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Trust in government is cautious overall—with 36% never or rarely trusting local government, and 45% saying the same about the national—but local institutions fare better than national ones, suggesting that proximity may matter when it comes to perceived accountability and trustworthiness. This is especially critical because trust in institutions underpins people's willingness to participate civically and strengthens the social bonds essential to belonging and collective action.

How much of the time do you think you can trust the [local / national] government to do what is right?

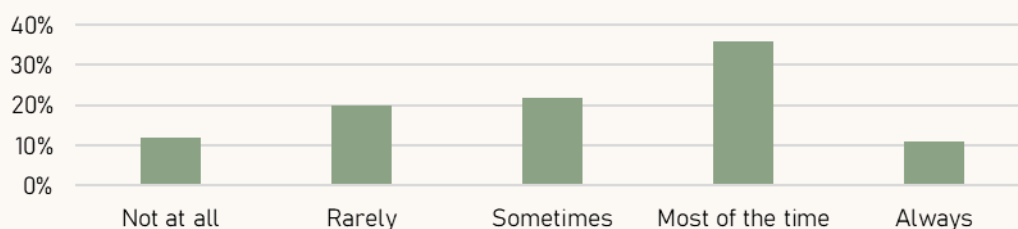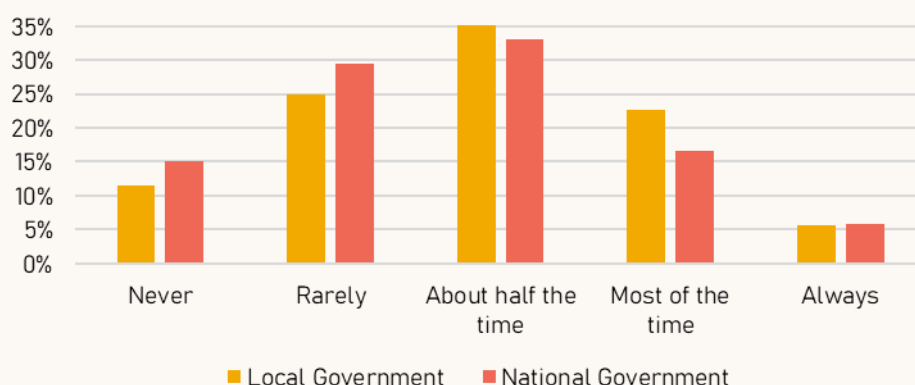*Figure 16.*
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

While over 8 in 10 Inland Empire residents report being registered to vote at their current address, roughly 1 in 3 vote in half or fewer of elections, highlighting a gap between registration and consistent civic engagement.

Are you registered to vote at your current address?
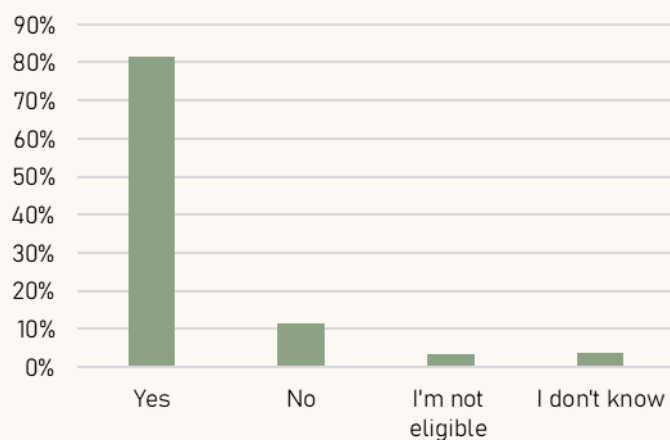
In general, how often do you vote in elections?
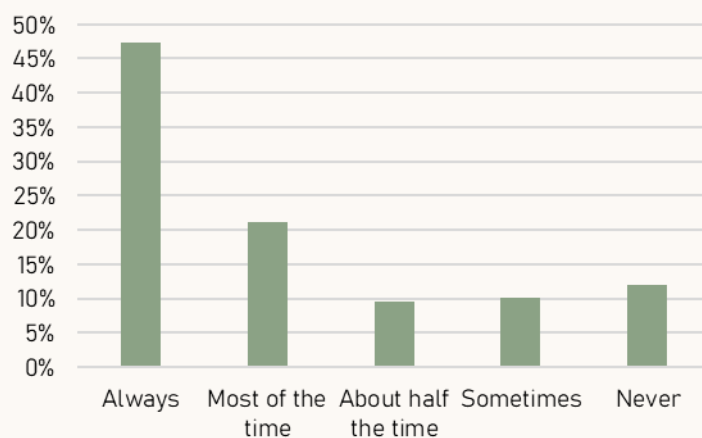
Figures 17 (left) and 18 (right).
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Ideological self-identification among Inland Empire residents is relatively evenly distributed, with 32% identifying as moderate, 34% identifying as liberal to some degree, and 33% identifying as conservative to some degree — underscoring the need for inclusive spaces that foster connection, dialogue, and shared action across differences, which are essential for building a strong sense of belonging and robust civic muscle in a diverse community.

Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative.
Where would you place yourself on this scale?
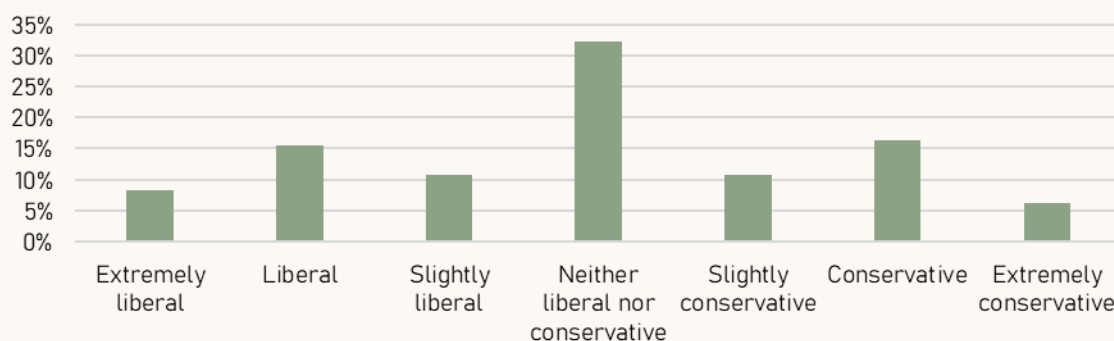
Figure 19.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Over half of **Inland Empire residents who identify as liberal (55%) or conservative (56%) report that nearly all of their political conversations reflect their own views**, which runs the risk of creating ideological echo chambers that can undermine social trust and civic dialogue. In contrast, **moderates are far more likely (45%) to engage with an equal mix of perspectives,** presenting a critical opportunity to foster bridge-building efforts that strengthen belonging and civic muscle across diverse political identities.

When you have conversations with family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers, are the political views you hear more liberal or more conservative?
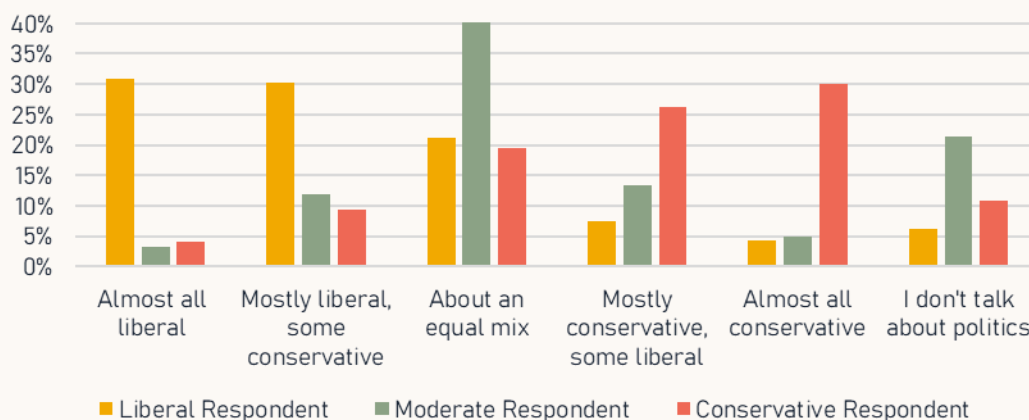
■ Liberal Respondent　■ Moderate Respondent　■ Conservative Respondent

Figure 20.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

The Belonging Barometer

Methodology

The Belonging Barometer[5] measures individuals' sense of belonging through their level of agreement with 10 statements that gauge their connection, acceptance, authenticity, influence, and exclusion across a variety of life settings (e.g. in the workplace, local community, nation). We administered the full suite of statements to assess belonging in the local community—defined as the people who live in the respondent's region—plus a subset of statements to assess belonging in the U.S., allowing for partial comparison of local and national belonging among Inland Empire residents.

The Belonging Barometer statements administered to our sample include:
- I feel emotionally connected to my *local community*.
- My *local community* welcomes and includes me in activities.
- I feel unable to be my whole and authentic self with my *local community*. (reverse scaled)
- My *local community* values me and my contributions.
- My relationships with others in my *local community* are as satisfying as I want them to be.
- I feel like an "insider" who understands how my *local community* works.
- I feel like I am treated as "less than" others in my *local community*. (reverse scaled)
- I feel unable to influence collective decisions within my *local community*.* (reverse scaled)
- When interacting with people in my *local community*, I feel like I truly belong.*
- I am comfortable expressing my opinions in my *local community*.*
- I am comfortable expressing my opinions to the average *American*.*
- I feel unable to influence decisions that affect me in *America*. (reverse scaled)*
- I feel like I truly belong in *America*.*

Respondents rate their agreement with each statement on a 1–5 scale and are grouped by their average score into exclusion (<2.34), ambiguous (2.34–4.66), or belonging (>4.66). The researchers who developed the barometer consider those in the exclusion or ambiguous groups to experience "non-belonging".

Who Feels like They Belong in the IE?

To better understand how experiences of belonging vary across the region, we begin by looking at overall responses to the Belonging Barometer in the context of the local community. We then disaggregate those responses by age, gender, race and ethnicity, educational attainment, and income to uncover patterns across demographic groups. These snapshots can help identify for whom belonging may be the strongest and for whom more attention may be needed to ensure everyone feels connected, valued, and included. Figures 21—26 present these findings.

The majority of respondents reported a sense of *ambiguity* about their belonging in the local community (58%), while nearly one-third felt a clear sense of *belonging* (32%) and only about 10% reported experi-

encing exclusion. 68% of Inland Empire residents are characterized as experiencing what prior research deems "non-belonging" (exclusion or ambiguity).

IE Residents x Belonging Barometer Category (%)

Figure 21.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Feelings of belonging in the local community generally increase with age, with the youngest adults (18–24) reporting the lowest levels of belonging and the highest levels of exclusion, while older adults- especially those 72 and over—report the highest sense of belonging and the lowest sense of exclusion.

Age x Belonging Barometer Category (%)

Figure 22
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Self-identified women report non-belonging at a higher rate than self-identified men (women—70%; men — 66%), while a full 100% of the non-binary individuals in the sample report non-belonging.

Self-Identified Gender x Belonging Category (%)

Figure 23.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Experiences of belonging in the local community vary by racial and ethnic group, with White (non-Hispanic/Latino) respondents reporting the highest levels of belonging and Asian respondents reporting the lowest. Notably, multiracial respondents reported the highest levels of exclusion, while ambiguity about belonging was especially pronounced among Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander respondents.
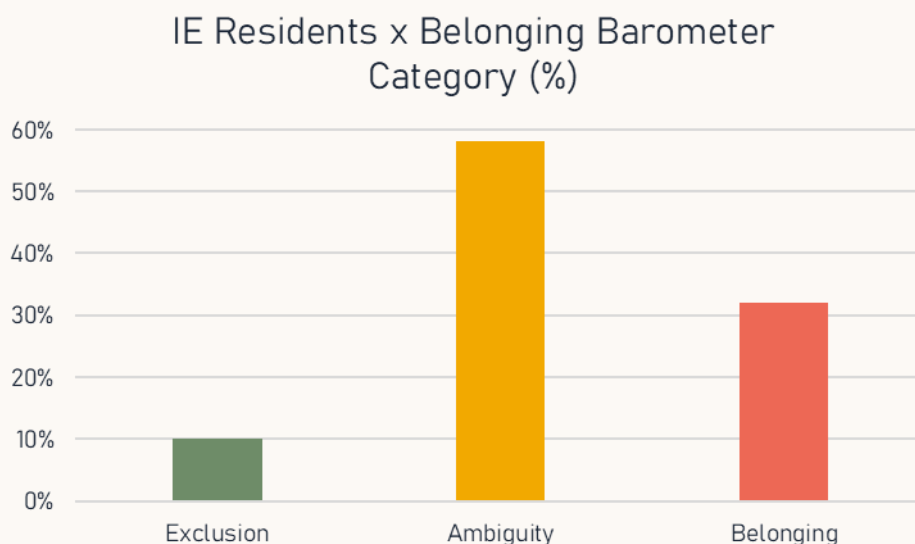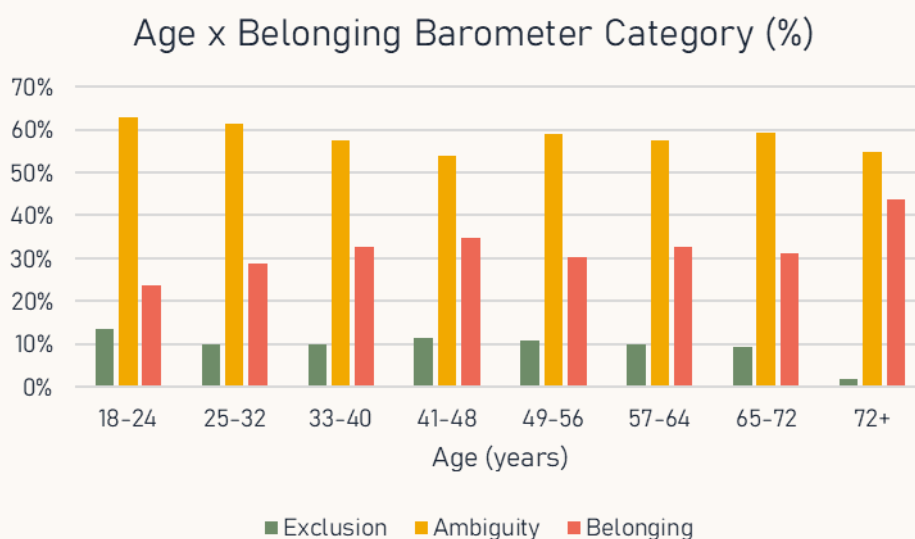
Race / Ethnicity x Belonging Barometer Category (%)
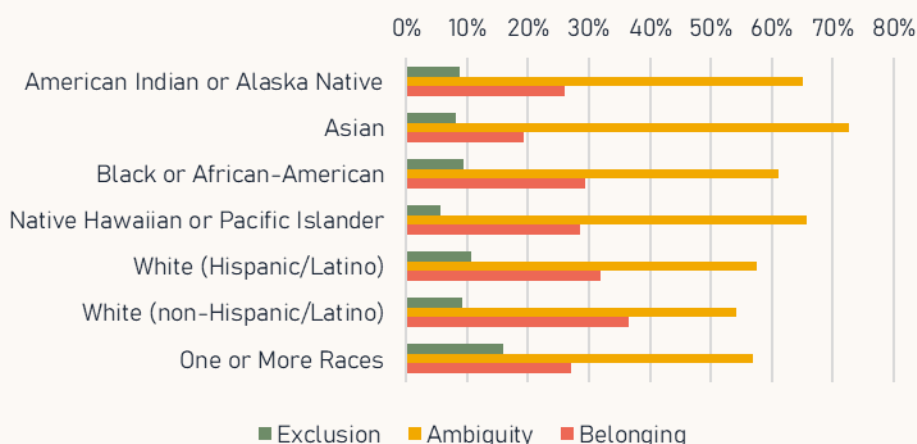
Figure 24.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Belonging in the local community increases steadily with educational attainment, with those holding graduate or professional degrees reporting the highest sense of belonging and those with less than a high school education reporting the highest levels of exclusion.
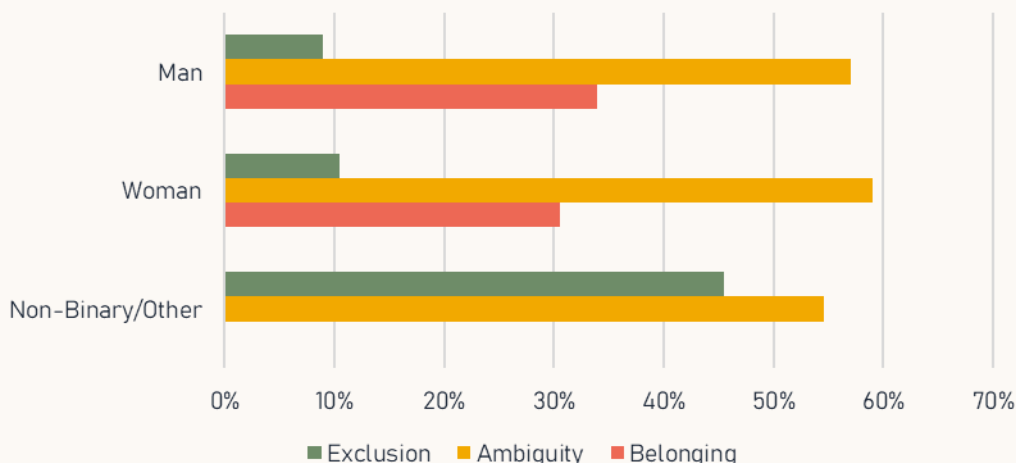
Educational Attainment x Belonging Barometer Category (%)
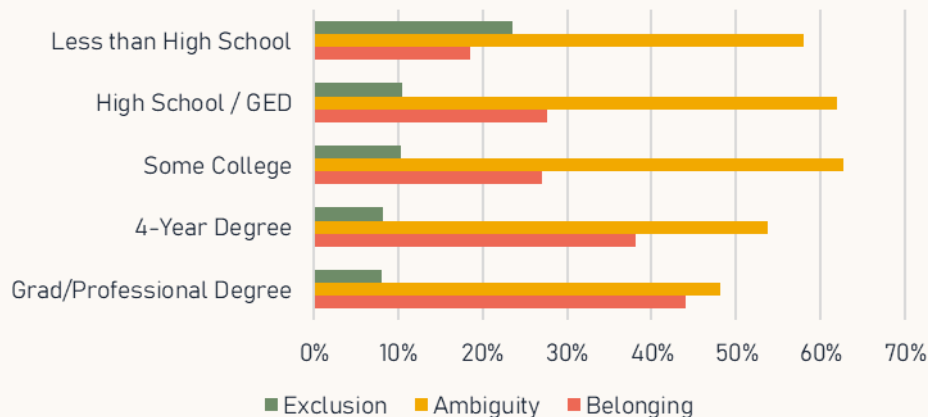
Figure 25.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Belonging in the local community increases and exclusion decreases as income rises, with those earning $140k or more nearly two times more likely to report a sense of belonging than those earning $20k or less.

Annual Household Income x Belonging Barometer Category (%)
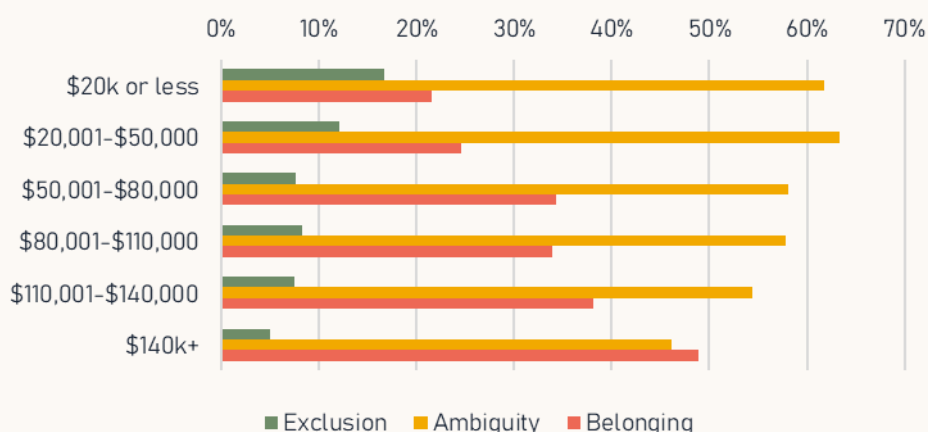
Figure 26.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

The Belonging—Thriving Connection

As the previous sections' graphs highlight, belonging is not evenly distributed across the population, but it also further varies across individuals' overall well-being. In this section, we explore how levels of belonging differ across those who are thriving, struggling, or suffering, and identify significant predictors of who is thriving that help explain what may foster or hinder a sense of connection.

Figure 27 reveals a striking relationship between belonging and overall well-being in the Inland Empire. Among those who are thriving, 47% report a strong sense of belonging — compared to just 9% of those who are suffering. Conversely, 91% of those who are suffering and 76% of those who are struggling experience non-belonging (ambiguous or excluded), relative to 53% of those who are thriving, underscoring the strong association between the absence of social connection and decreased individual well-being.
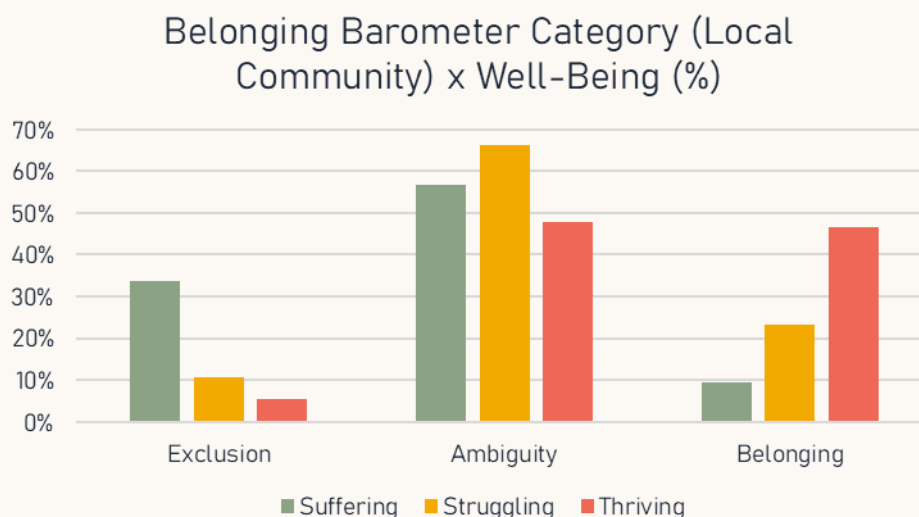

Belonging Barometer Category (Local Community) x Well-Being (%)

Figure 27.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

This pattern aligns with a growing body of research that identifies belonging and social connectedness as independent determinants of well-being, on par with factors like smoking or physical inactivity. But the benefits of belonging aren't just individual, they are collective. High levels of exclusion or ambiguity weaken the civic and social fabric that everyone depends on, making communities more vulnerable to economic disruptions, public health crises, and the ill-effects of natural disasters. Even those who are thriving today have a stake in fostering broad-based belonging, because resilient, equitable communities require everyone to feel connected, valued, and empowered to contribute.

Emerging Belonging Dimensions & their Relationship with Well-Being

These overall levels of belonging offer important insights, but they can obscure meaningful variation in the different types of connections that people have that "feed" into this overall measure. To better understand if there are different dimensions of belonging and how they relate to well-being in the Inland Empire, we examined responses to the ten belonging barometer statements using principal component analysis. This allowed us to uncover latent patterns in how people responded — identifying clusters of statements that tend to move together and helping us identify different dimensions of belonging.

The results reveal two clear groupings of statements, represented in Figure 28, that we label as related to *bonding* and *bridging social capital*. Bonding social capital refers to closer-knit, emotionally support-

ive relationships with people who share similar backgrounds, values, or life experiences. In a local context, this might include trusted neighbors or people we otherwise feel "at home" with in community settings. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, reflects connections with individuals or groups who are different from us—across lines of race, class, language, or belief—and who may offer new perspectives, access to resources, or opportunities for civic collaboration. These bridging ties are essential for fostering inclusive communities where everyone feels they belong and can contribute.

Variation in Belonging Statements x Well-Being Category (%)
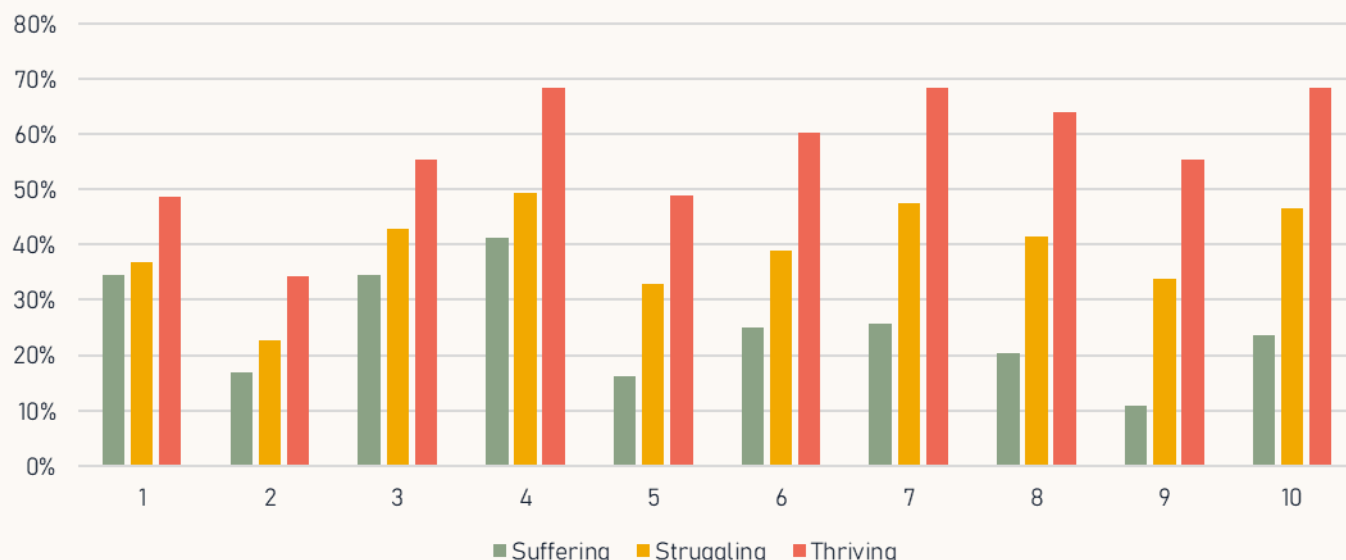
1. I feel unable to be my whole and authentic self with my local community. (reverse scored)
2. I am comfortable expressing my opinions in my local community.
3. I feel emotionally connected to my local community.
4. My relationships with others in my local community are as satisfying as I want them to be.
5. I feel unable to influence collective decisions within my local community. (reverse scored)
6. I feel like I am treated as "less than" others in my local community. (reverse scored)
7. I feel like an "insider" who understands how my local community works.
8. My local community welcomes and includes me in activities.
9. My local community values me and my contributions.
10. When interacting with people in my local community, I feel like I truly belong.

Figure 28
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents
Note: Differences between groups for each statement are statistically significant (p<0.05) based on a t-test of means.

Statements 1-4 are associated with feelings of emotional support and personal comfort, most typically derived from connection to people who are similar to us in their background or identity, and are labeled bonding social capital. Statements 5-10 are associated with themes of fairness, inclusion, and the ability to influence the community and are labeled as associated with bridging social capital. When plotted by well-being status, we find that thriving residents report the highest levels of agreement with all Belonging Barometer statements and across both dimensions of belonging, while suffering residents report the

lowest. However, the gaps between thriving and suffering are wider for bridging statements and there is less agreement with these statements overall, regardless of well-being category. These patterns suggest that thriving communities are marked by both interpersonal ties and a broader sense of social inclusion, while suffering and struggling residents—and to a lesser, but still significant extent, struggling residents—experience lower levels of belonging on multiple fronts.

This distinction is helpful to understand because different dimensions of belonging may be associated with well-being in different ways and to different extents. Understanding that helps provide a starting point for discussions about the types of programs and policies that may be most conducive to fostering a more connected, thriving region. .

To build on the patterns observed in Figure 28, we ran an ordinal logistic regression to better understand how different dimensions of belonging relate to Inland Empire residents' overall well-being. Specifically, we modeled well-being—measured using Cantril Ladder categories (suffering, struggling, thriving)—as a function of individuals' agreement with the bonding and bridging belonging statements, while controlling for a range of resident characteristics, including age, income, county of residence, educational attainment, gender identity, religious affiliation, and language spoken at home.

This type of analysis helps us isolate the unique relationship between different forms of belonging and well-being while accounting for other background factors. In doing so, it provides a clearer picture of which aspects of belonging are most strongly associated with residents' well-being. Understanding these dynamics is helpful for targeting the kinds of social and community conditions that may help more Inland Empire residents move from suffering to struggling, and struggling to thriving.

Both bonding and bridging dimensions of belonging are significantly associated with higher well-being, with bridging having a larger correlation. For example, a one-unit increase in overall agreement with the bonding statements (Figure 28, statements 1-4)—such as moving from "strongly disagree" to "somewhat disagree"—is associated with 32% higher odds (p<0.005) of moving up a well-being category (e.g., from struggling to thriving). A one-unit increase in agreement with the bridging statements (Figure 28, statements 5-10) is associated with 74% higher odds (p<0.001) of the same improvement. The strength of these relationships is substantial — agreeing more with the bonding belonging statements is associated with improving the respondent's odds of being in a higher well-being category as much as living in a household with roughly $30,000 more in annual income, while bridging belonging has an effect comparable to about $90,000 more in annual household income.

While these findings are exploratory and should not be taken as definitive or causal, they are intended to spark deeper dialogue and inquiry. In particular, they underscore the potential importance of not only strengthening connections with those who are similar individuals, but developing opportunities to build belonging that bridges different groups and fosters inclusive connections that beget community participation.

6 Doolittle, A, and Faul, A.C. "Civic Engagement Scale." *SAGE Open*, vol. 3, no. 3, 4 July 2013, p. 215824401349554, https:doi.org/10.1177/2158244013495542.; Flanagan, C.A., et al. *Civic Measurement Models: Tapping Adolescents' Civic Engagement. CIRCLE Working Paper 55*. 5 Jan. 2007, www.researchgate.net/publication/234700265_Civic_Measurement_Models_Tapping_Adolescents.

The Civic Engagement Scale

Methodology

The Civic Engagement Scale[6] captures both attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of civic life, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how individuals feel about and act upon their sense of community responsibility. The attitudinal subscale includes eight items that assess personal beliefs about civic responsibility, such as the importance of helping others, staying informed, and supporting one's community. The behaviorial subscale includes six items that capture concrete actions like volunteering, donating, and staying civically engaged. Respondents rate their agreement with each item on a 1–7 scale, and average scores are used to assess civic orientation with average scores of less than 2.34 being categorized as "low", 2.34-4.67 as "moderate" and above 4.67 as "high" civic engagement.

The attitudinal subscale includes the following statements:
1. I feel responsible for my community
2. I believe I should make a difference in my community
3. I believe that I have a responsibility to help the poor and the hungry.
4. I am committed to serve in my community
5. I believe that all citizens have a responsibility to their community
6. I believe that it is important to be informed of community issues
7. I believe that it is important to volunteer
8. I believe that it is important to financially support charitable organizations

The behavioral subscale includes the statements below:
1. I am involved in structured volunteer position(s) in the community
2. When working with others, I make positive changes in the community
3. I help members of my community
4. I stay informed of events in my community
5. I participate in discussions that raise issues of social responsibility
6. I contribute to charitable organizations within the community

While originally designed to assess civic development in young adults, the scale has since been validated across general adult populations around the world[7] and it particularly useful as it goes beyond more traditional measures of civic engagement—such as voter turnout—allowing us to differentiate between people who feel civically responsible and those who take civic action, offering a broader view of community engagement.

Who is Civically Engaged in the IE?

To explore how civic engagement varies across the IE, we examine the Civic Engagement Scale categories for all residents before breaking them by demographic factors such as age, race and ethnicity, education,

and income. This view helps surface which groups are more actively engaged and where gaps may exist that call for greater inclusion. Figures 29–33 present these findings.

Most Inland Empire residents report high levels of attitudinal civic engagement, such as caring about community issues, while fewer demonstrate high levels of behavioral engagement, like volunteering or attending public meetings. Overall, nearly half fall into the high civic engagement category, though a sizable portion remain moderately engaged.

Civic Engagement Scale Category, Subscale & Overall (%)
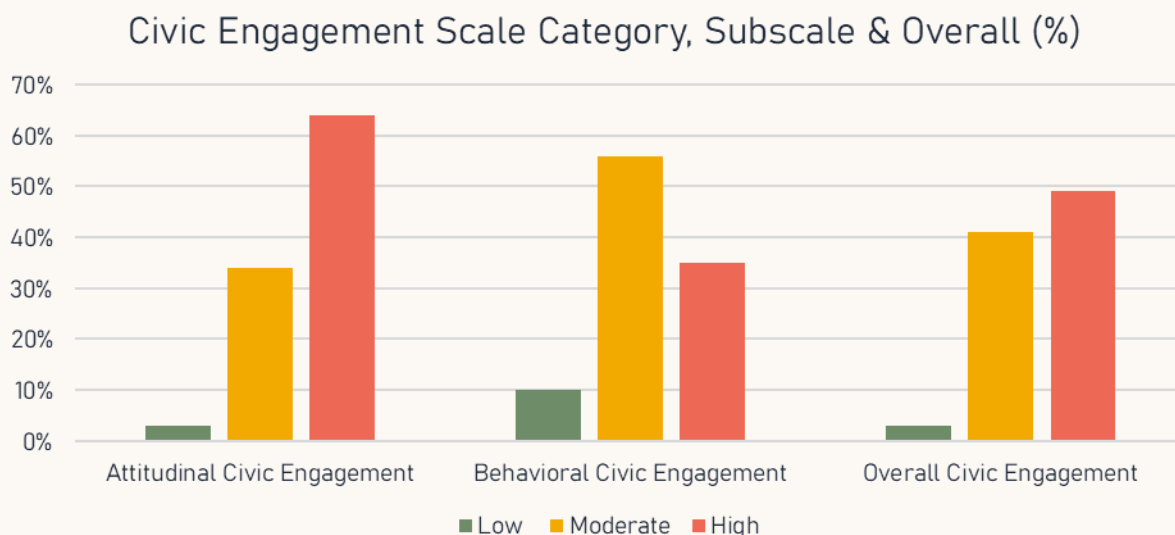
Figure 29.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Civic engagement tends to increase from young adulthood through middle age, peaking among those aged 33–48, before tapering slightly among older adults.

Age x Civic Engagement Scale Category (%)
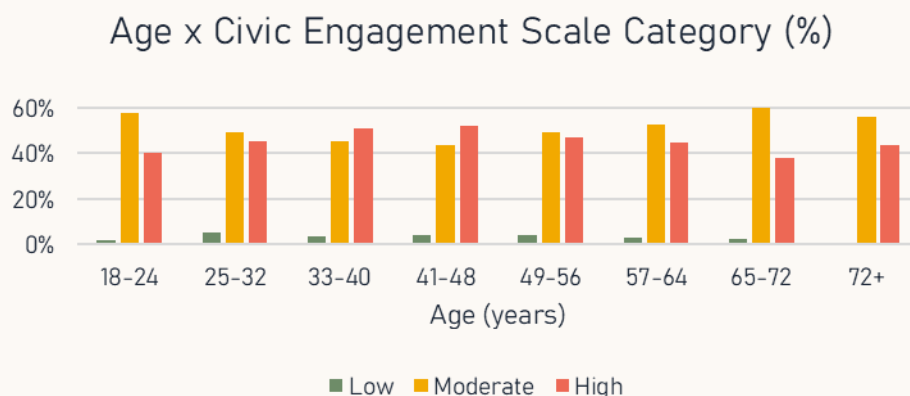
Figure 30.

Self-identified men and women have similar patterns in civic engagement, with women being slightly more moderately engaged (woman — 53% vs. man — 48%) and men being having high engagement at

a slightly higher rate (man — 48% vs. woman —45%). Non-binary individuals show higher moderate engagement (73%) but lower high engagement (27%) compared to both groups.

Self-Identified Gender x Civic Engagement Scale Category (%)
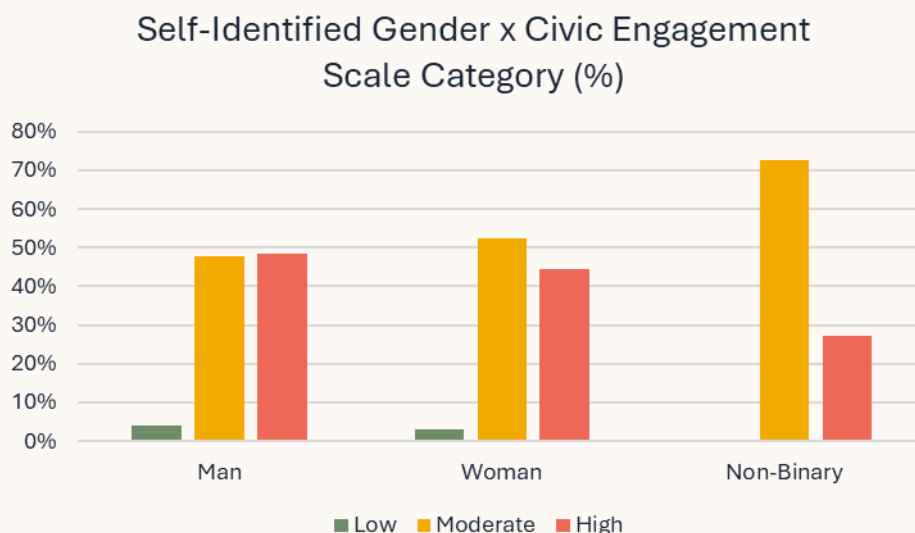
Figure 31.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Across all racial and ethnic groups, most respondents report moderate or high civic engagement, with White (non-Hispanic/Latino) individuals slightly more likely to fall in the high engagement category. American Indian or Alaska Native respondents were the most likely to report low civic engagement.

Race x Civic Engagement Scale Category (%)

Figure 32.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Civic engagement increases notably with educational attainment, with 65% of those holding graduate or professional degrees reporting high engagement compared to just 33% of those with less than a high school education.
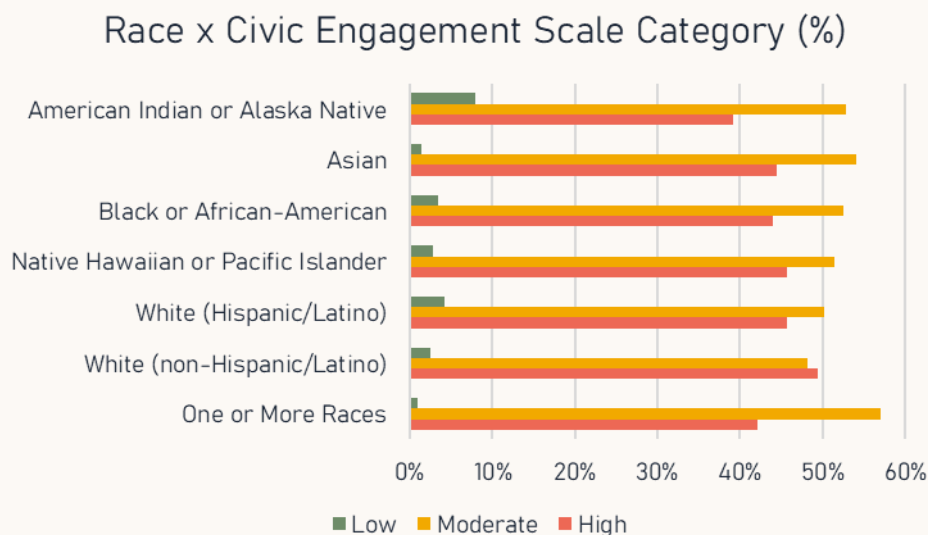
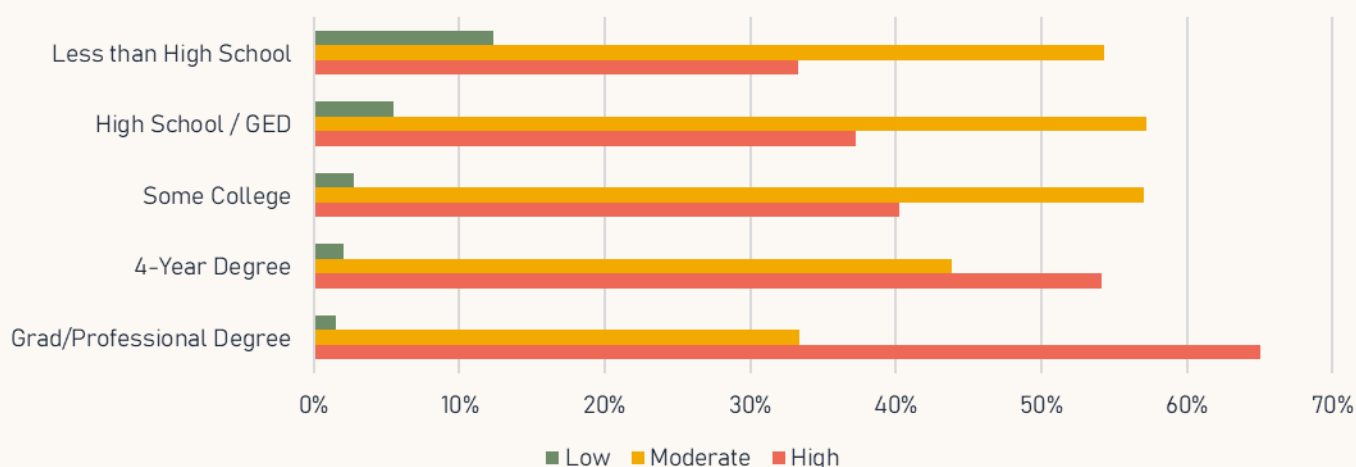## Educational Attainment x Civic Engagement Scale Category (%)

Figure 33.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Civic engagement tends to rise with income, with those earning $140,000 or more reporting high engagement at nearly twice the rate of those earning $20,000 or less. This pattern highlights the relationship between economic resources and active participation in community life.

Annual Household Income x Civic Engagement Scale Category (%)
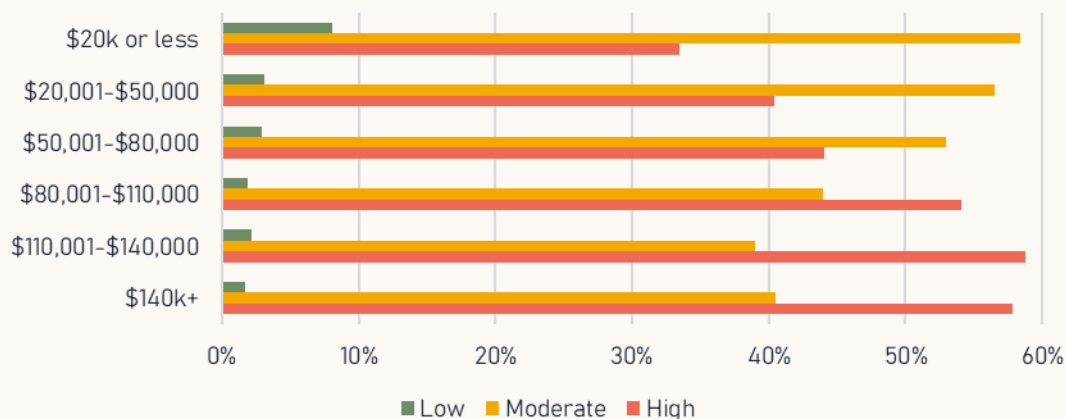
Figure 34.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

8 Gilbert, K. L., Quinn, S. C., Goodman, R. M., Butler, J., & Wallace, J. (2013b). A meta-analysis of social capital and health: A case for needed research. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *18*(11), 1385–1399. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105311435983; Kawachi, I., & Berkman, L. F. (2014). Social Capital, Social Cohesion, and Health. *Social Epidemiology*, *2*, 290–319. https://doi.org/10.1093/med/9780195377903.003.0008; Wray-Lake, L., DeHaan, C. R., Shubert, J., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Examining links from civic engagement to daily well-being from a self-determination theory perspective. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *14*(2), 166–177. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2017.1388432; Fenn, N., Robbins, M. L., Harlow, L., & Pearson-Merkowitz, S. (2021). Civic Engagement and Well-Being: Examining a Mediational Model Across Gender. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, *35*(7), 089011712110012. https://doi.org/10.1177/08901171211001242

The Civic Engagement—Thriving Connection

Research consistently shows that civic engagement—like volunteering, voting, or participating in community groups—is linked to higher levels of individual and community well-being. People who are civically engaged often report greater life satisfaction, a stronger sense of purpose and belonging, as well as better physical and mental health and increased longevity.[8]

Civic Engagement Scale Category x Well-Being (%)

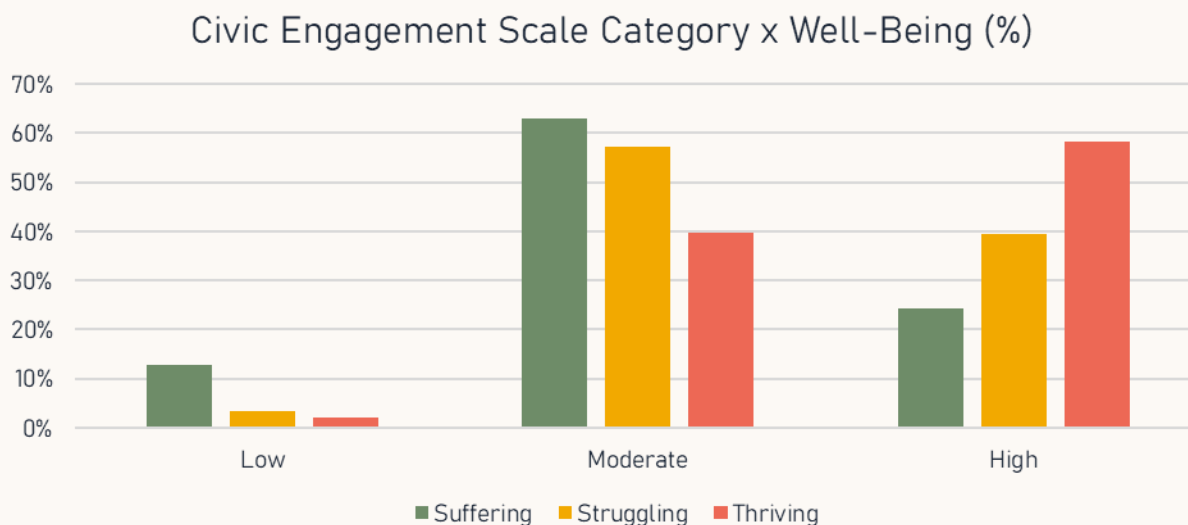*Figure 35*
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

In the Inland Empire, civic engagement is strongly correlated with how individuals rate their own well-being. Only 24% of people who are "suffering" report high civic engagement, compared to 58% of those who say they are "thriving." The share of residents with low engagement drops sharply as well-being improves, suggesting that thriving and civic participation may reinforce one another.

While the overall Civic Engagement Scale offers a broad view of the relationship between civic engagement and well-being, examining the individual statements provides deeper insight into which specific beliefs and behaviors vary the most across residents who are thriving, struggling and suffering. This statement-level analysis (see: Figure 36) can help identify potential areas for targeted outreach or support to strengthen civic connection and well-being in the region.

The civic engagement scale reveals a strong and consistent relationship between individuals' levels of well-being and their sense of civic responsibility and action. Across nearly every statement, rates of agreement increase as well-being improves — from "suffering" to "struggling" to "thriving." For example, 74% of those suffering believe it is important to be informed about community issues (Statement 2), compared to 85% of those struggling and nearly 88% of those thriving. Similarly, the belief that "all citizens have a responsibility to their community" (Statement 3) rises from 60% among those suffering to 78% among those thriving. Statements 1-6 reflect beliefs that are relatively widely held, even among those with lower well-being, suggesting that a baseline sense of civic duty may be relatively resilient to personal well-being challenges.

Variation in Civic Engagement Statements x Well-Being (%)

Legend: ■ Suffering ■ Struggling ■ Thriving
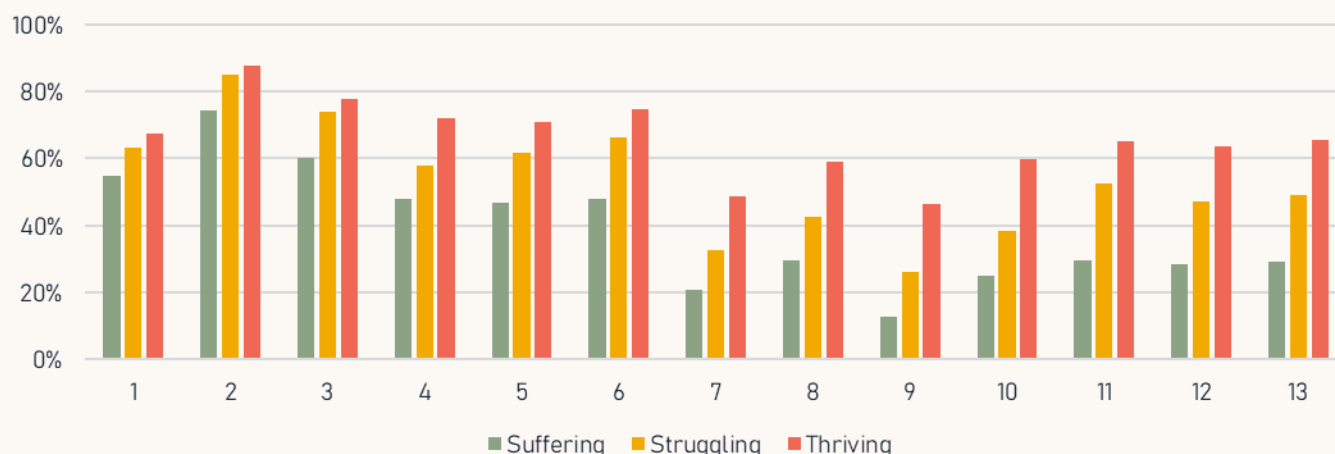
1. I believe that I have a responsibility to help the poor and the hungry.
2. I believe that it is important to be informed of community issues.
3. I believe that all citizens have a responsibility to their community.
4. I stay informed of events in my community.
5. I believe I should make a difference in my community.
6. I believe that it is important to volunteer.
7. I participate in discussions that raise issues of social responsibility
8. I feel responsible for my community.
9. I am involved in structured volunteer position(s) in the community.
10. I contribute to charitable organizations within the community.
11. I am committed to serve in my community.
12. When working with others, I make positive changes in the community.
13. I help members of my community.

Figure 36.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Where the gaps between well-being categories widen most sharply is in behaviors, particularly those most likely to require more time, energy, or resources. Only 13% of people who are suffering report being involved in structured volunteer roles (Statement 9), compared to 26% of those struggling and 46% of those thriving — a 33-point difference. The same pattern emerges with charitable contributions (Statement 10), where agreement nearly doubles between struggling (38%) and thriving (60%) respondents. The largest overall gap is seen in participation in social responsibility discussions (Statement 7), which jumps from just 21% among those suffering to nearly 49% among those thriving. This suggests that while values related to civic engagement remain relatively stable, active participation is strongly shaped by well-being — highlighting the potential importance of reducing barriers for those who are lower on the Cantril Ladder to engage more fully in civic life.

Measuring Thriving in the Inland Empire with the Cantril Ladder

Methodology

The Cantril Ladder, developed by Hadley Cantril in the 1960s, is a widely used tools for assessing subjective well-being and life satisfaction across populations.[9] It has become a cornerstone of global research on quality of life, adopted in large-scale studies like the Gallup World Poll and the OECD's Better Life Initiative. The ladder framework asks individuals to reflect on their lives as a whole—placing themselves on a scale from 0 (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life)—to capture not only present satisfaction but also anticipated future well-being. This dual rating allows researchers to assess optimism and hope alongside current life quality, offering insight into perceived opportunities for advancement, psychological resilience, and systemic inequities. The framework has proven to be highly predictive of various life outcomes in prior research, including health status, employment, civic engagement, and mortality, among other outcomes.[10]

Gallup's research has led to the development of a three-tier classification system—*thriving*, *struggling*, and *suffering*—based on how individuals score their current and future life evaluations.[11] Those classified as *thriving* rate their current life at 7 or higher and their expected life in five years at 8 or higher. These individuals tend to report greater emotional stability, stronger social support, and better health outcomes. *Suffering* individuals fall at or below a 4 in their current and future life rating. This group faces the greatest hardship—often marked by social isolation, chronic illness, or exposure to systemic barriers—and is at significantly higher risk for depression, suicide, and disengagement from institutions.[12] Those who are neither thriving nor suffering are categorized as *struggling*. Research indicates that this group often experiences higher levels of daily stress, job insecurity, and fluctuating access to basic resources.

Who is Thriving in the IE?

In the Inland Empire, 6% of residents are classified as suffering, 53% as struggling, and 41% as thriving. (See: Figure 37.) On their own, these figures provide an important snapshot of regional well-being, but without context, it's difficult to judge whether this represents a relatively strong or weak position. To better understand these numbers, it's helpful to compare them with broader benchmarks. Nationally, only 4% of Americans report suffering, while 43% are struggling and 53% are thriving. Globally, by contrast, suffering is more common at 12%, with 60% struggling and just 29% thriving. This comparison suggests that the Inland Empire experiences lower well-being than the U.S. overall, but fares better than many regions worldwide,.

While overall rates of well-being offer a helpful snapshot, they can obscure important differences across groups and communities. In this section, we take a closer look at who is most likely to be thriving, struggling, or suffering by presenting well-being by across demographic characteristics.

9 Cantril, H. (1965). *The pattern of human concerns*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
10 See: Kahneman, D., & Deaton, A. (2010). High income improves evaluation of life but not emotional well-being. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(38), 16489–16493. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1011492107 ; Gallup. (2024). *Gallup Global Emotions Report 2024*. Retrieved from https://www.gallup.com/analytics/349280/global-emotions.aspx ; Gallup. (2009). *Gallup Global Wellbeing: A Leading Indicator of Future Trends*. Retrieved from https://news.gallup.com/poll/126965/Gallup-Global-Wellbeing.aspx
11 Gallup. (2009). *Gallup Global Wellbeing: A Leading Indicator of Future Trends*. Retrieved from https://news.gallup.com/poll/126965/Gallup-Global-Wellbeing.aspx; Gallup. (2024). *Gallup Global Emotions Report 2024*. Retrieved from https://www.gallup.com/analytics/349280/global-emotions.aspx;
12 Gallup. (2024). *Gallup Global Emotions Report 2024*. Retrieved from https://www.gallup.com/analytics/349280/global-emotions.aspx

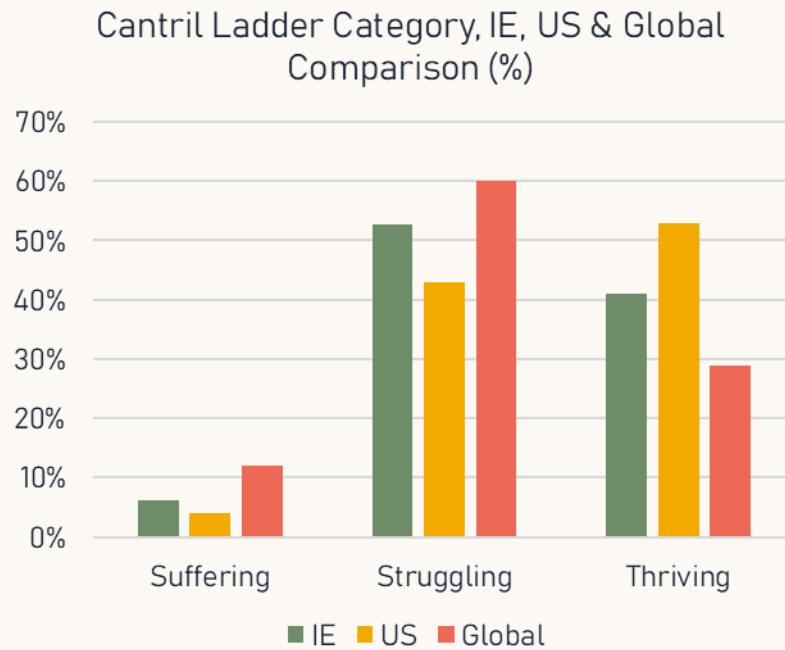## Cantril Ladder Category, IE, US & Global Comparison (%)

Figure 37.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Well-being in the Inland Empire generally improves with age, with younger adults (18–32) significantly more likely to be struggling and less likely to be thriving compared to older adults. However, suffering begins to rise again among residents in their late 50s and 60s, suggesting a potential dip in well-being as people approach retirement age.
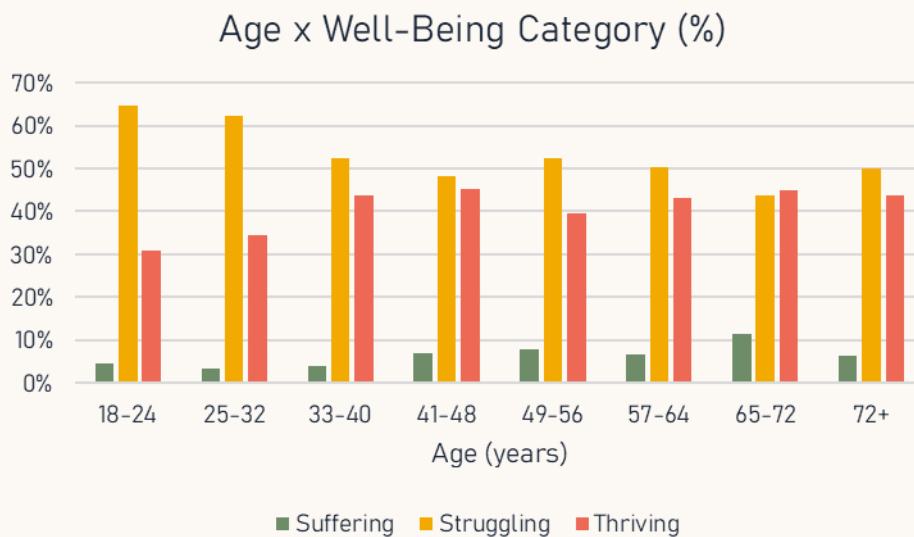
Age x Well-Being Category (%)

Figure 38.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Well-being in the Inland Empire varies by gender identity. Although men have slightly higher well-being than women, they have similar patterns with 44% of men and 39% of women thriving, and 50% of men and

55% of women struggling. In contrast, non-binary respondents report significantly lower well-being, with 91% struggling and 0% thriving.
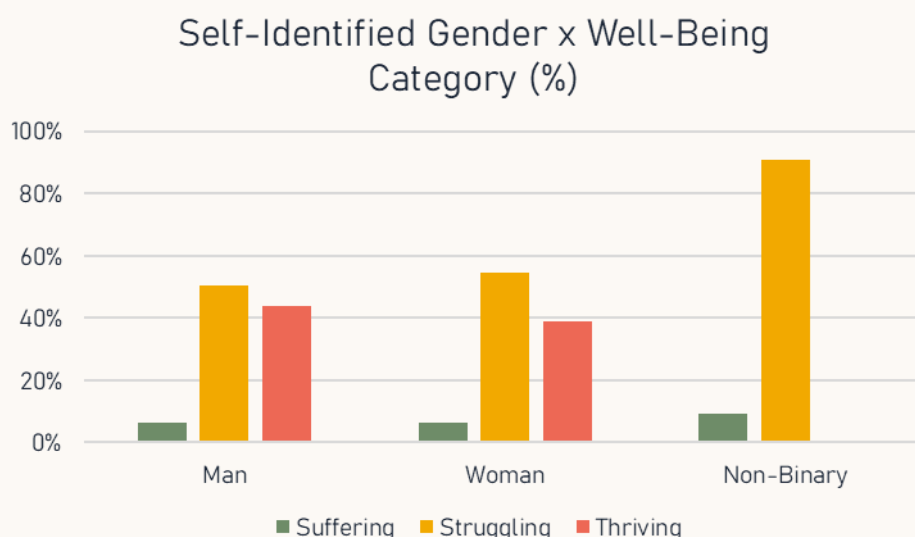
Self-Identified Gender x Well-Being Category (%)

Figure 39.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Well-being varies by race and ethnicity in the Inland Empire, with Asian respondents reporting the highest rates of thriving (49%) and the lowest rates of suffering (2%). In contrast, non-Hispanic white residents report the highest rates of suffering (8%), while multiracial respondents and Black residents are among the least likely to be thriving.

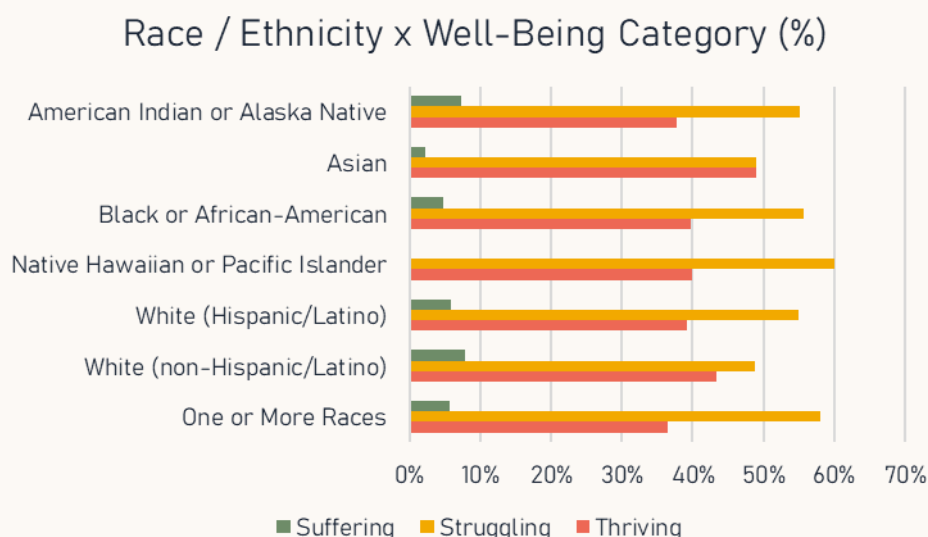### Race / Ethnicity x Well-Being Category (%)

Figure 40.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Well-being in the Inland Empire rises steadily with educational attainment. Only 31% of those with less than a high school education report high well-being, compared to 58% of those with a graduate or pro-

fessional degree, while rates of low well-being drop significantly as education increases.
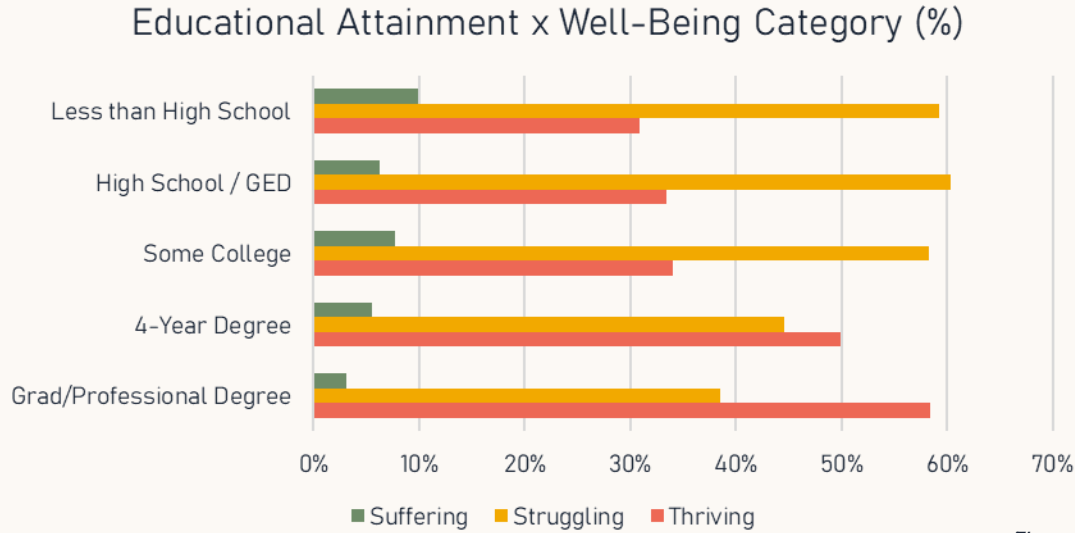
Educational Attainment x Well-Being Category (%)

Figure 41.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

Well-being in the Inland Empire is also closely associated with household income. Only 30% of those earning $20,000 or less report high well-being, compared to 64% of those earning over $140,000. At the same time, rates of suffering decrease sharply as income increases — from 9–10% at the lowest income levels to just 1–2% at the highest.

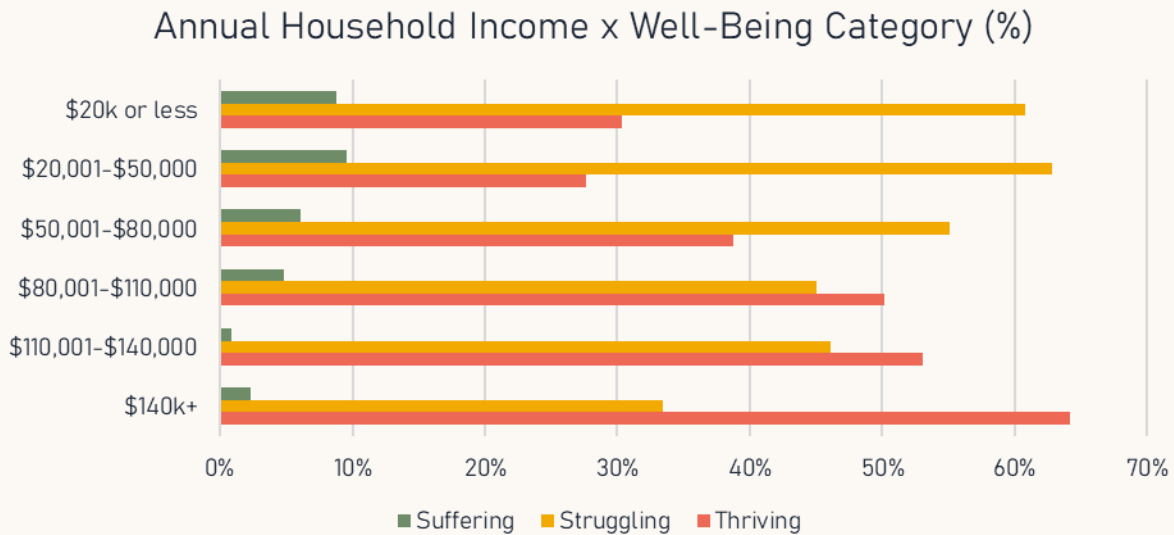## Annual Household Income x Well-Being Category (%)

Figure 42..
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

In summary, well-being in the Inland Empire varies by age, race, education, and income, with younger adults, lower-income households, and those with less formal education being more likely to report struggling or suffering. Compared to national averages, the region has a smaller share of residents who say they are thriving. These patterns highlight a potential need for targeted investments in the vital conditions that enable all residents to thrive.

Thriving Across the Vital Conditions

Understanding how lived experience varies across the Vital Conditions offers valuable insight into what supports or constrains well-being in Inland Southern California. The chart below shows how residents at different levels of well-being responded to 12 survey statements—two for each of the six remaining Vital Conditions—highlighting patterns that provide insight into areas of disparity and commonality. The graph is organized so that the statements proceed from most to least similar across well-being category, left to right.

This chart reveals notable patterns in how Inland Empire residents' experiences across the vital conditions vary by overall well-being. Across nearly all items, thriving individuals consistently reported the highest levels of agreement, followed by those struggling, then those suffering — demonstrating a gradient in access to supportive conditions. Some responses indicate greater commonality across groups, such as awareness of alternative transportation options (thriving—80%; suffering = 64%), and delaying

Variation in Vital Condition Statements x Well-Being (%)

Suffering Struggling Thriving
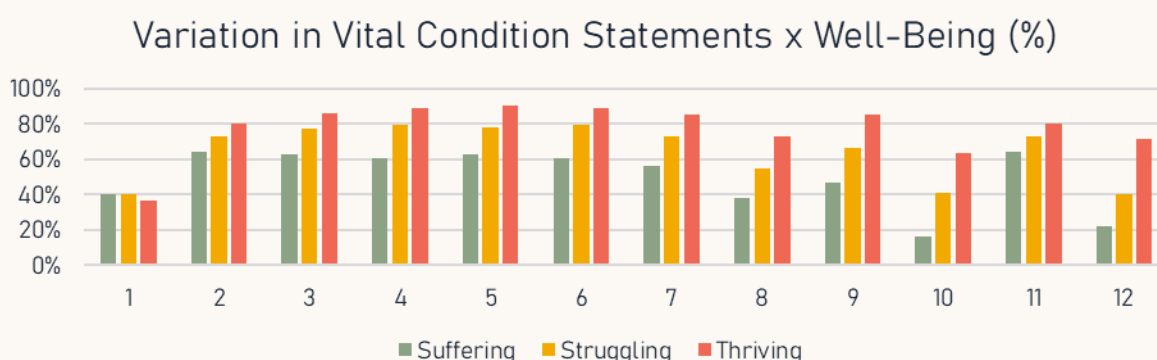
1. I delay seeking medical care because it's expensive. *(Basic Needs for Health & Safety)*
2. I am aware of available transportation options other than my personal vehicle (e.g. public transportation, bike route). *(Reliable Transportation)*
3. Educational resources—like schools, trainings, and libraries—are accessible in my community. *(Lifelong Learning)*
4. I have a safe and reliable way of traveling in my community. *(Reliable Transportation)*
5. I feel safe and secure inside my home. *(Humane Housing)*
6. I value my education. *(Lifelong Learning)*
7. I have access to clean air, safe drinking water, and green spaces in my community. *(Thriving Natural World)*
8. The natural environment near my home improves my quality of life. *(Thriving Natural World)*
9. feel my basic health and safety needs are met. *(Basic Needs for Health & Safety)*
10. I feel my employment will remain stable over the next year. *(Meaningful Work & Wealth)*
11. I have opportunities to increase my income or grow in my career. *(Meaningful Work & Wealth)*
12. After I pay my rent or mortgage, I have enough money to spend on other ne-

Figure 43.
Source: 2025, UCR Center for Community Solutions Survey of IE Residents

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medical care due to cost (37% thriving; 40% suffering). Others suggest deeper divides, like stable employment (thriving — 64%; suffering — 16%) or money for necessities after paying for housing (thriving — 71%; suffering — 22%). The vital condition with the least disparity across well-being categories for both statements is Reliable Transportation. the greatest is Meaningful Work & Wealth.

A Snapshot of the (Remaining) Vital Conditions using Publicly Available Data

This section highlights how Riverside and San Bernardino counties are doing across select indicators aligned with the Vital Conditions for Well-Being. We compare measures across neighboring regions—Los Angeles and Orange counties—as well as the Central Valley[13] through a series of graphs with limited inter-pretation, offering additional context for understanding strengths, disparities, and opportunities in the Inland Empire. All data were publicly available at the time of this report and drawn from the American Community Survey (1-year and 5-year) and the Center for Disease Control.

Reliable Transportation

Between 2013 and 2023, Riverside and San Bernardino counties saw modest increases in remote work, though these gains (5.9% and 6.1%, respectively) lag behind Orange and Los Angeles counties. Both Inland counties also experienced smaller declines in public transit use and driving compared to their

Percentage Change in Commute Mode, 2013-2023
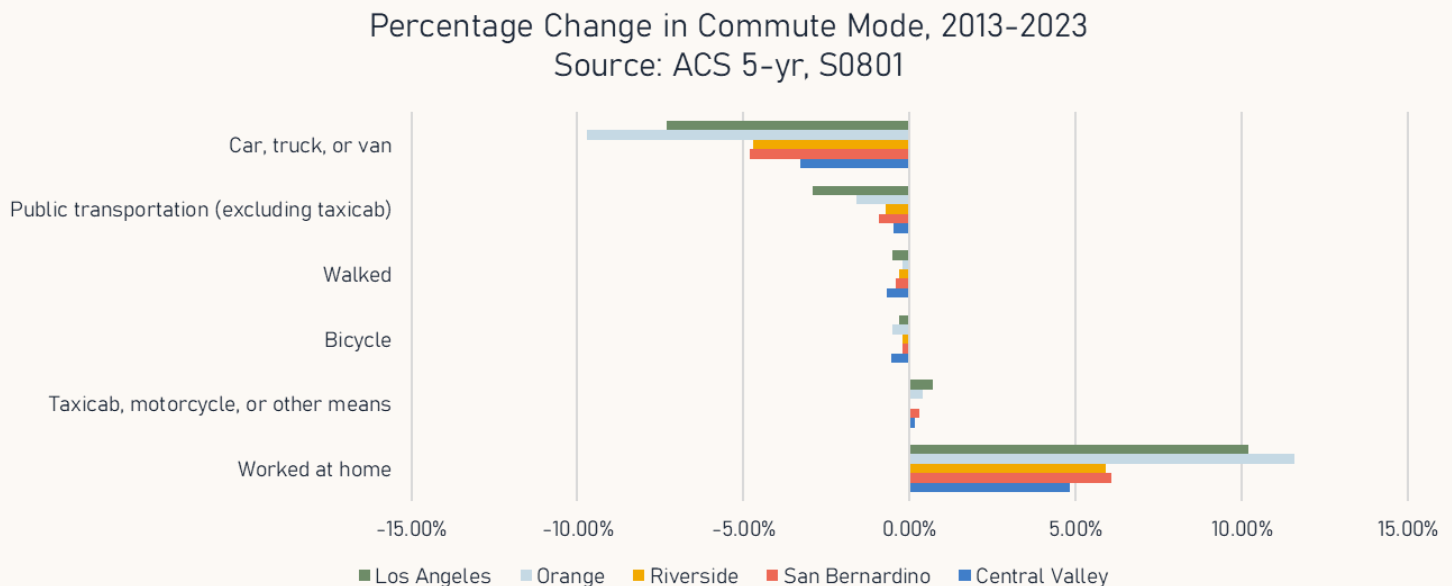Source: ACS 5-yr, S0801

Figure 44.

Note: The "Central Valley" values are averages of data pulled from the ACS and the CDC for the following counties: "007" Butte, "011" Colusa, "021" Glenn, "019" Fresno, "029" Kern, "031" Kings, "039" Madera, "047" Merced, "061" Placer, "077" San Joaquin, "067" Sacramento, "089" Shasta, "095" Solano, "099" Stanislaus, "101" Sutter, "103" Tehama, "107" Tulare, "113" Yolo, and "115" Yuba.

Due to the reporting limitations of the ACS, and some of the small population sizes of the Central Valley counties, some of the datasets that used 1-year files in the printed report needed to be replaced by 5-year files in order to get data for as many counties as possible. However, even with these measures taken, a few of the counties did not meet the population threshold to report data, and thus were omitted from their respective Central Valley values. The ACS also reported several of the data points as percentages; while not ideal, these were also averaged to create a Central Valley value.

Similarly, the CDC data on PM2.5 was not reported for all counties; in order to utilize the same data as reported in the printed version, we had to omit several counties to create the value reported for the Central Valley.

Due to the extremely varied nature of the counties that make up the Central Valley region, future iterations of the "Central Valley" value would likely be aided by creating sub-regions (and likely leaving Sacramento County as its own sub-region), and calculating values for each.

coastal counterparts, suggesting more limited shifts in commute behavior overall.

Humane Housing

Between 2013 and 2023, Riverside County saw the largest decline in the share of renters facing severe rent burden (paying 50% or more of income on rent), with a decrease of 2.72 percentage points—greater than in any other comparison region. Most counties, including Riverside and San Bernardino, also saw slight increases in the share of renters paying a lower portion of their income toward rent, particularly in the 10%–19.9% range, suggesting a modest shift toward housing affordability for some households.

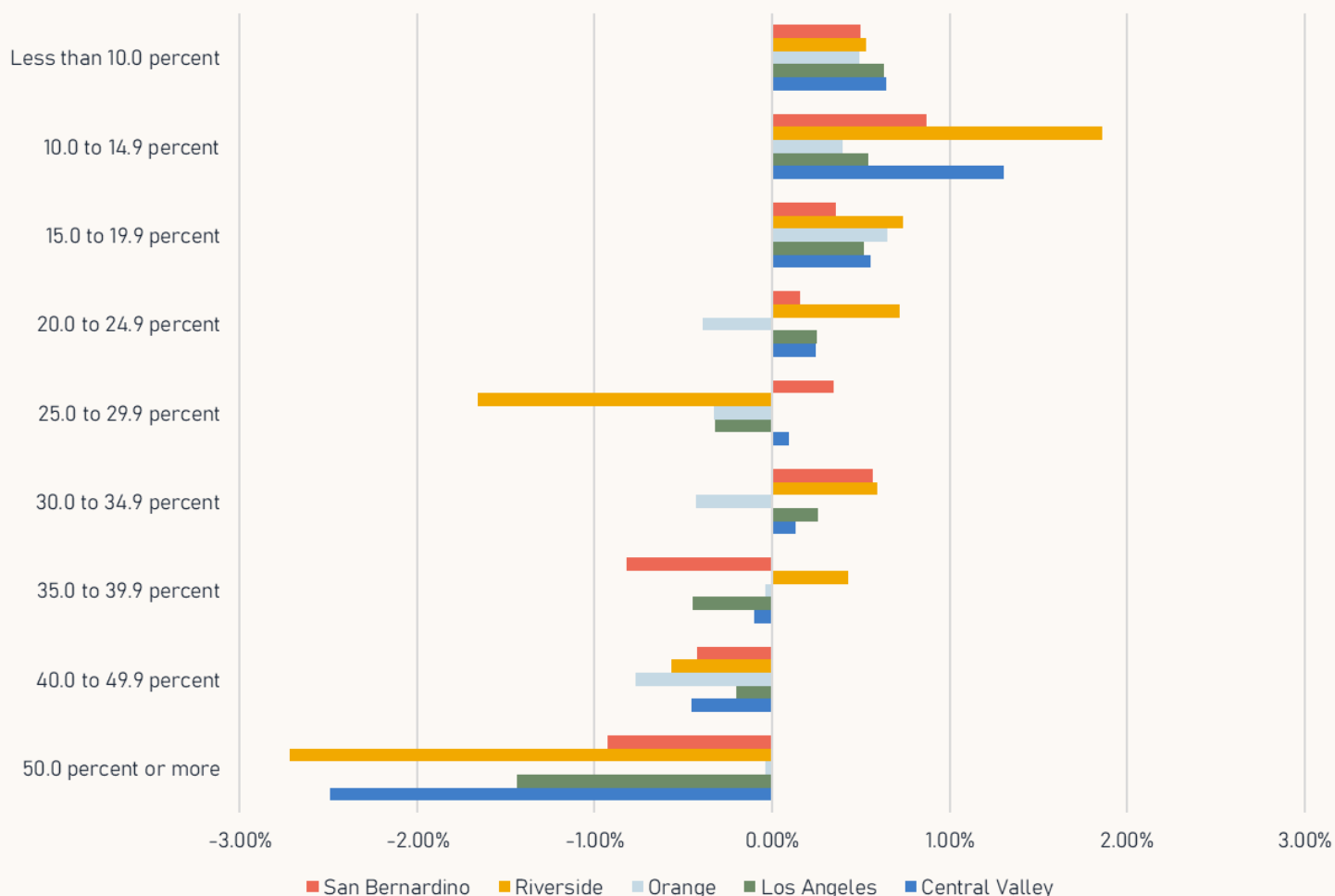Change in Rent Burden, 2013–2023
Source: ACS 5-year, B25070

Figure 45.

Basic Needs for Health & Safety

From 2013 to 2023, the share of households receiving food stamps (SNAP) declined significantly among White households across all regions, with the largest decreases observed in the Central Valley (–28.5%) and Inland Empire counties (–21.5% in San Bernardino, –21.3% in Riverside). In contrast, multiracial

households and Asian households experienced notable increases in SNAP receipt across nearly all counties, especially in Riverside County, where SNAP participation rose by 20.6% for multiracial households and 2.2% for Asian households. Hispanic or Latino households also saw sharp declines in Orange (–16.5%) and Los Angeles (–12%) counties, while remaining relatively stable in the Inland Empire and Central Valley.

Percent Change in Households Receiving Food Stamps by Race, 2013–2023
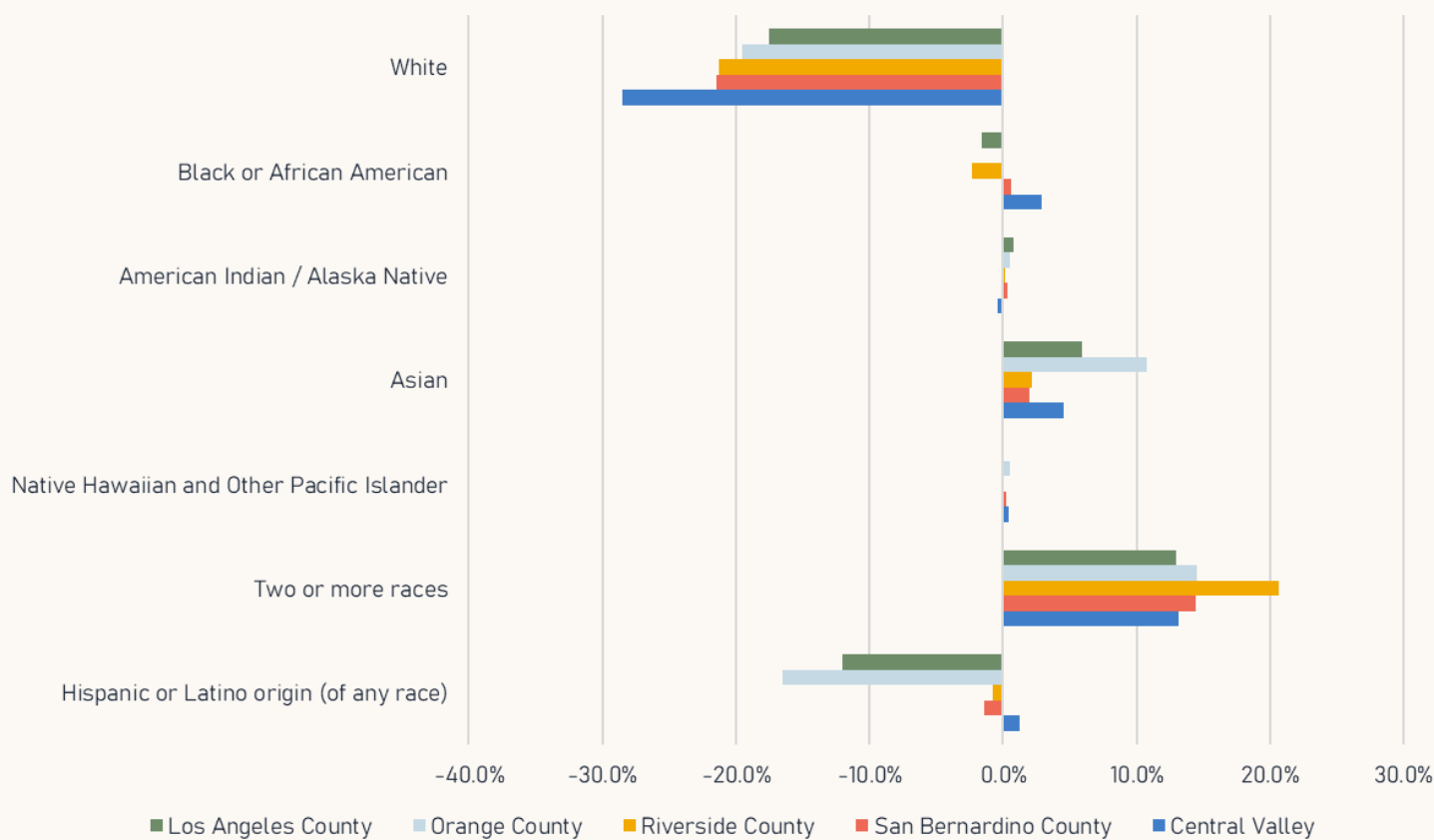Source: S2201, ACS 5-year

Figure 46.

Lifelong Learning

Educational attainment across the Inland Empire lags behind nearby coastal counties. In both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, just over 80% of adults age 25 and older have at least a high school diploma, comparable to the Central Valley but lower than Orange County (87%). When it comes to four-year college degrees, only 23% of adults in San Bernardino County and 25% in Riverside hold a bachelor's degree or higher—similar to the Central Valley (26%) but trailing behind Los Angeles (36%) and especially Orange County (43%).

Educational Attainment for the Population 25+: Percentage that Have At Least a High School Diploma, Percentage that Have At Least a Bachelor's Degree
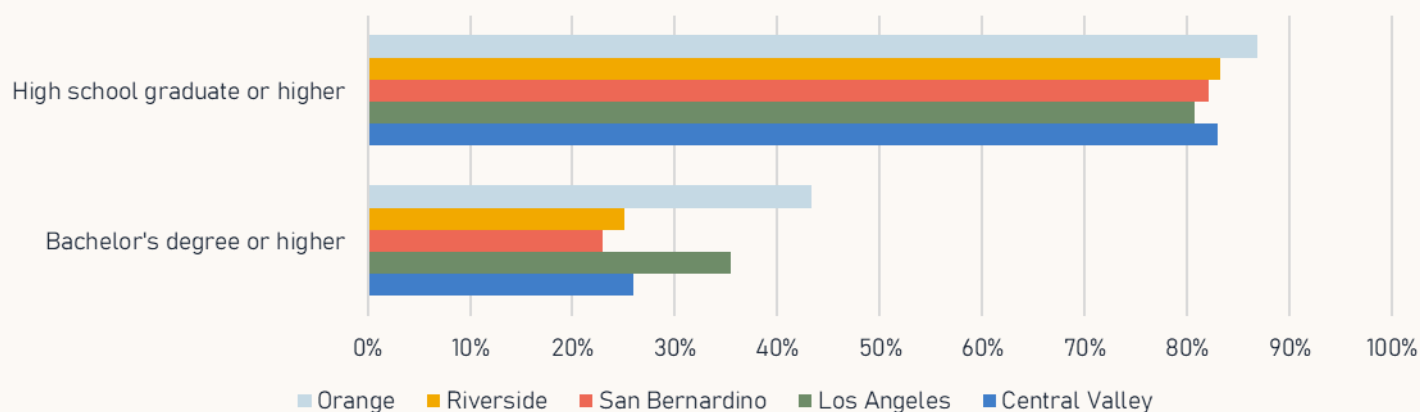### Source: ACS 5-year, S1501

Figure 47.

Prescthool enrollment among 3- and 4-year-olds in the Inland Empire lags significantly behind neighboring regions. Only about 30% in San Bernardino County and 31% in Riverside County are enrolled in school, compared to 36% in the Central Valley, 48% in Los Angeles County, and nearly 54% in Orange County.

Percentage of 3 & 4 Year Olds Enrolled in School
Source: ACS 5-year, B14003

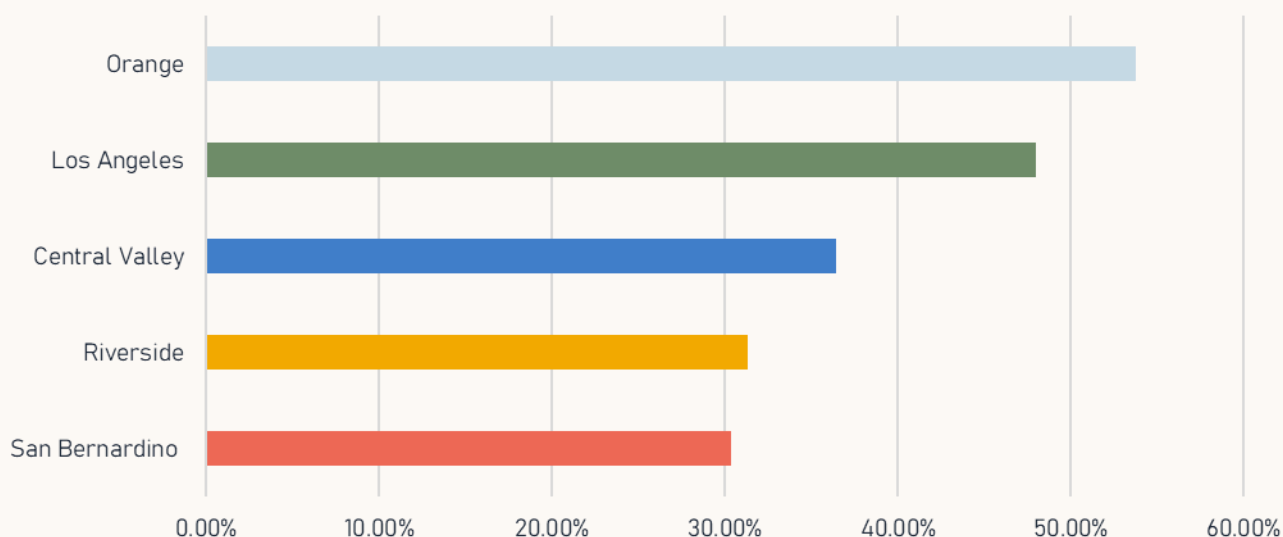*Figure 48.*

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Meaningful Work & Wealth

Between 2015 and 2023, median earnings rose in nearly all occupational groups in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, with especially large gains in transportation, food service, and building maintenance roles. However, several higher-wage fields—such as protective services, healthcare practitioners, and STEM—saw median earnings decline, indicating uneven wage growth across sectors.

Change in Median Earnings by Occupation, 2015–2023
Source: ACS 5-year, S2412

Figure 49.

There is a steady, upward trend in employment rates (ages 16+) across all four counties from 2013 to 2023, with a notable dip in 2021 likely reflecting pandemic-related disruptions. While Riverside and San Bernardino counties started with lower employment levels, they saw the largest gains over the decade—narrowing the gap with Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Percent of Population that is Employed (out of the Population 16+), 2013–2023
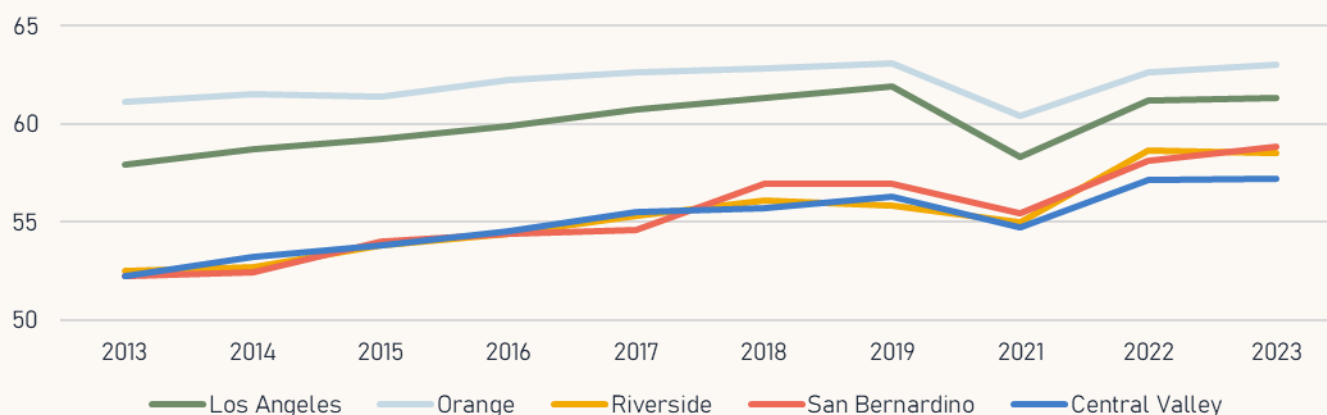Source: ACS 1-year, DP03

Figure 50.

Thriving Natural World

Riverside and San Bernardino Counties have experienced a modest increase in extreme heat days over the past decade, with annual counts generally fluctuating between 20–30 days. While all five regions show a slight upward trend, Riverside and San Bernardino appear to have had a smaller overall increase compared to sharper rises seen in places like Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

Annual Number of Extreme Heat Days from May–September
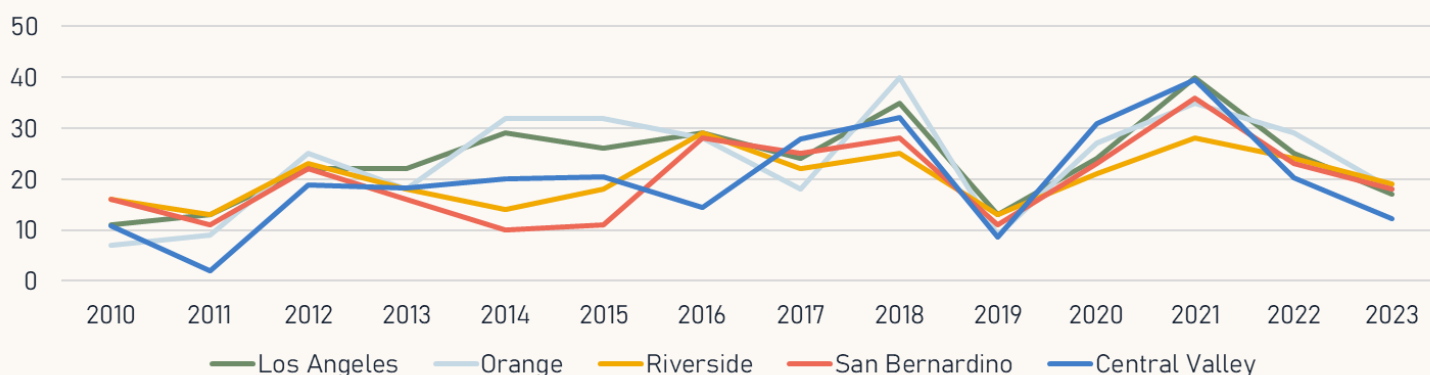Source: National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, CDC, Heat and Heat-Related Illness

Figure 51.

San Bernardino County shows a clear upward trend in PM2.5 concentrations, peaking well above the national standard in recent years, especially between 2017 and 2021. Riverside County remains consistently above the standard throughout the period, indicating persistently elevated pollution levels rather than worsening conditions.

PM2.5: Highest Annual Average Concentration: Difference from National Standard (12, Monitor)
Source: National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, CDC
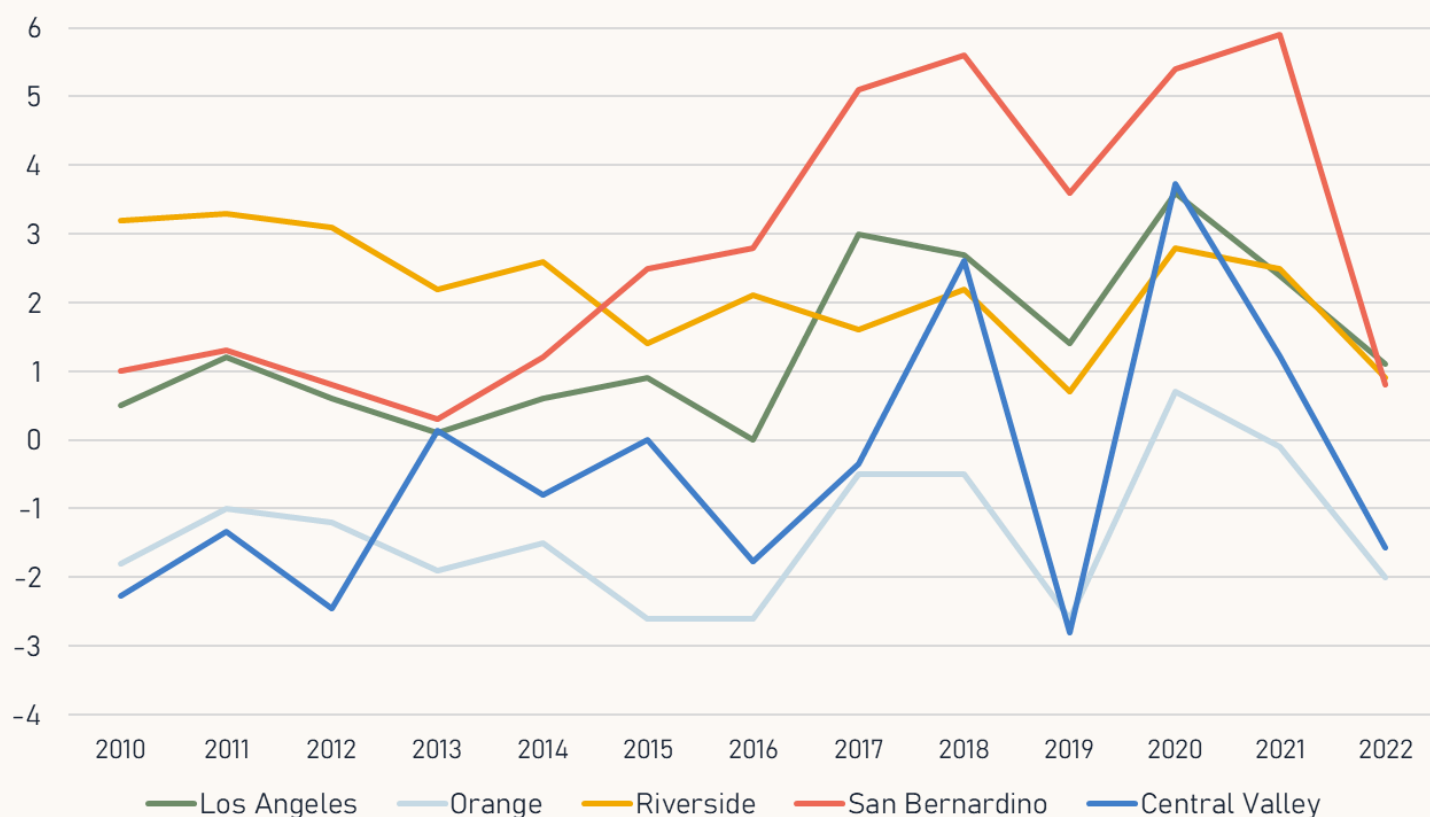

Figure 52.

In addition to the publicly available indicators presented above, the printed report published for the 2025 IECF Policy & Philanthropy Summit includes other selected measures that reflect key aspects of the remaining vital conditions. For several of these measures, faculty contributions were lengthier than there was room for in the printed report, so we include their write ups in the appendix for readers seeking additional insight or context.

Data for the Common Good

This exploratory study reflects the region's commitment to using data in service of the common good. To better understand what helps communities thrive in Inland Southern California, our approach was guided by the Vital Conditions for Well-Being framework and our methodology combined publicly available indicators with original survey data focused on three key areas: thriving overall, belonging, and civic muscle. The survey data offers an important complement to traditional sources by capturing how residents experience the conditions that support well-being in their everyday lives.

This report includes summary analyses of both public data and survey findings. For readers who wish to explore further, the appendix includes a list of all survey variables, along with more detailed faculty-authored analyses where available.

If you are interested in using this data for your organization—for example, to strengthen grant proposals or understand trends in your organization's focus area—please contact us at solutions@ucr.edu to discuss ways we may be able to develop and conduct a tailored analysis of this data in support of your work. In some cases, our Center's Randall Lewis Policy Researchers may be able to provide these sort of customized analyses at no cost to your organization.

Appendix

A-1. Survey Variables

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Zip code

- County of residence

- Gender identity

- Age (in years)

- Race

- Ethnicity – Middle Eastern and North African

- Ethnicity – Hispanic / Latino

- Marital status

- Highest level of education

- Household annual income

- Child under 18 at home

- Language spoken at home

WELL-BEING (Cantril Ladder)

- Present-day life rating (0–10 scale)

- Future life rating (0–10 scale)

- Cantril Ladder Category (Thriving / Struggling / Suffering)

BELONGING & CIVIC MUSCLE

Civic Engagement Scale (CES) – Attitude Statements

- I believe I should make a difference in my community

- I believe I have a responsibility to help the poor and the hungry

- I am committed to serve in my community

- I believe all citizens have a responsibility to their community

- I believe it is important to be informed of community issues

- I believe it is important to volunteer

Civic Engagement Scale (CES) – Behavioral Statements

- I stay informed of events in my community

- I contribute to charitable organizations in the community

- I help members of my community

- I make positive changes when working with others

- I am involved in structured volunteer positions

- I participate in discussions about social responsibility

Civic Engagement Scale (CES) – Overall

- CES Total Score

- CES Category

Belonging Barometer for the Local Community

- I feel emotionally connected to my local community

- My local community welcomes and includes me

- I feel unable to influence collective decisions

- I feel unable to be my authentic self in the community

- My local community values me and my contributions

- My relationships in the community are satisfying

- I feel like an "insider" in my community

- I am comfortable expressing opinions in my local community

- I feel treated as "less than" in my community

- I feel like I truly belong when interacting in my community

- Belonging Barometer (local community) Category

Belonging Barometer for National Belonging

- I feel like I truly belong in America

- I feel unable to influence decisions that affect me in America

- I am comfortable expressing my opinions to the average American

Political Efficacy & Engagement

- Trust in local government

- Trust in national government

- Belief that elections make government pay attention

- Political ideology (7-point scale)

- Frequency of voting

- Voter registration status

- Presidential vote choice (2024)

- Political views heard in conversations with friends / family (liberal/conservative)

- News & Information Sources

Organizational Membership & Social Participation Over Past 12 Months

- Religious / spiritual organization

- Civic / community group

- Sports / recreation league

- Political / advocacy group

- Business / professional association

- Labor union

- Cultural / arts organization

- Parent-teacher / school group

- Worked on community project

- Donated blood

- Attended public meeting

- Attended political meeting or rally

- Attended club / organizational meeting

- Had friends over

- Been to a friend's home

- Volunteered

VITAL CONDITIONS *(other than Belonging & Civic Muscle)*

- I delay seeking medical care because it's expensive.

- I am aware of available transportation options other than my personal vehicle (e.g. public transportation, bike route).

- Educational resources--like schools, trainings, and libraries--are accessible in my community.

- I have a safe and reliable way of traveling in my community.

- I feel safe and secure inside my home.

- I value my education.

- I have access to clean air, safe drinking water, and green spaces in my community.

- The natural environment near my home improves my quality of life.

- I feel my basic health and safety needs are met.

- I feel my employment will remain stable over the next year.

- I have opportunities to increase my income or grow in my career.

- After I pay my rent or mortgage, I have enough money to spend on other necessities.

OTHER

- The Dictator Game (Trust, Reciprocity & Prosocial Behavior)

    - Someone on your block

    - Someone in your city/town

    - Someone in your state

- Housing Cost Burdened

A-2. Analysis of Publicly Available Data by UCR School of Public Policy Faculty, Extended Write-Ups

Lifelong Learning
with Mark Long, Ph.D., Dean & Professor, UCR School of Public Policy

The figures below show the relationship between the percentage of a high school's students who are deemed to be "Socioeconomically Disadvantaged" and the students' average performance on English Language Arts, Mathematics, and College/Career readiness. These figures contrast the performance of high schools in the Inland Empire (IE) and Los Angeles and Orange Counties (LAC-OC).
A student is deemed be socioeconomically disadvantaged if the student has one of following characteristics:

(1) neither of the student's parents has received a high school diploma;
(2) the student is eligible for or participating in the Free Meal program or Reduced-Price Meal program;
(3) the student is eligible for or participating in the Title I Part C Migrant program;
(4) the student was considered Homeless;
(5) the student was Foster Program Eligible;
(6) the student was Directly Certified;
(7) the student was enrolled in a Juvenile Court School; the student is eligible as Tribal Foster Youth. https://documentation.calpads.org/Glossary/AccountabilitySubgroupData/Socio-EconomicallyDisadvantagedSubgroup/#socio-economically-disadvantaged-subgroup

Performance on English Language Arts and Mathematics are taken from exams taken during 11th grade, specifically the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment or the California Alternate Assessment. For these exams, 0 denotes being "at the expected standard".
Students are deemed "Prepared" for colleges and careers based on their performance on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment in English Language Arts and Mathematics, Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams, completion of dual enrollment, meeting University of California and California State University admissions requirements, or completion of a career technical education pathway.
https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/documents/collegecareerready18.pdf

The figure below shows that performance of English Language Arts is negatively associated with the share of students who are disadvantaged. The red and black lines are predicted levels of performance in the IE and LAC-OC regions, respectively, as a function of share disadvantaged. There is no significant difference between these two regression lines in terms of their intercepts or slopes. This result suggests that poor performance on English Language Arts examinations in the IE is caused more by having a higher share of students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged rather than by poor performance of the school, *per se*. Put differently, there is no significant difference between the English Language Arts performance of students in the IE relative to students in LAC-OC *controlling for the extent of socioeconomic disadvantage*. [Figure A-2], below, shows that performance on mathematics exams is negatively associated with the share of students who are disadvantaged. The slopes of the IE and LAC-OC regression lines are not significantly

different from each other (*p-value* = 0.12), but the intercepts are significantly different (*p-value* = 0.01). This result shows that schools in the IE are doing worse than their LAC-OC counterparts, controlling for the extent of socioeconomic disadvantage. Put differently, worse performance of IE students in mathematics cannot solely be attributed to IE students having higher levels of disadvantage.
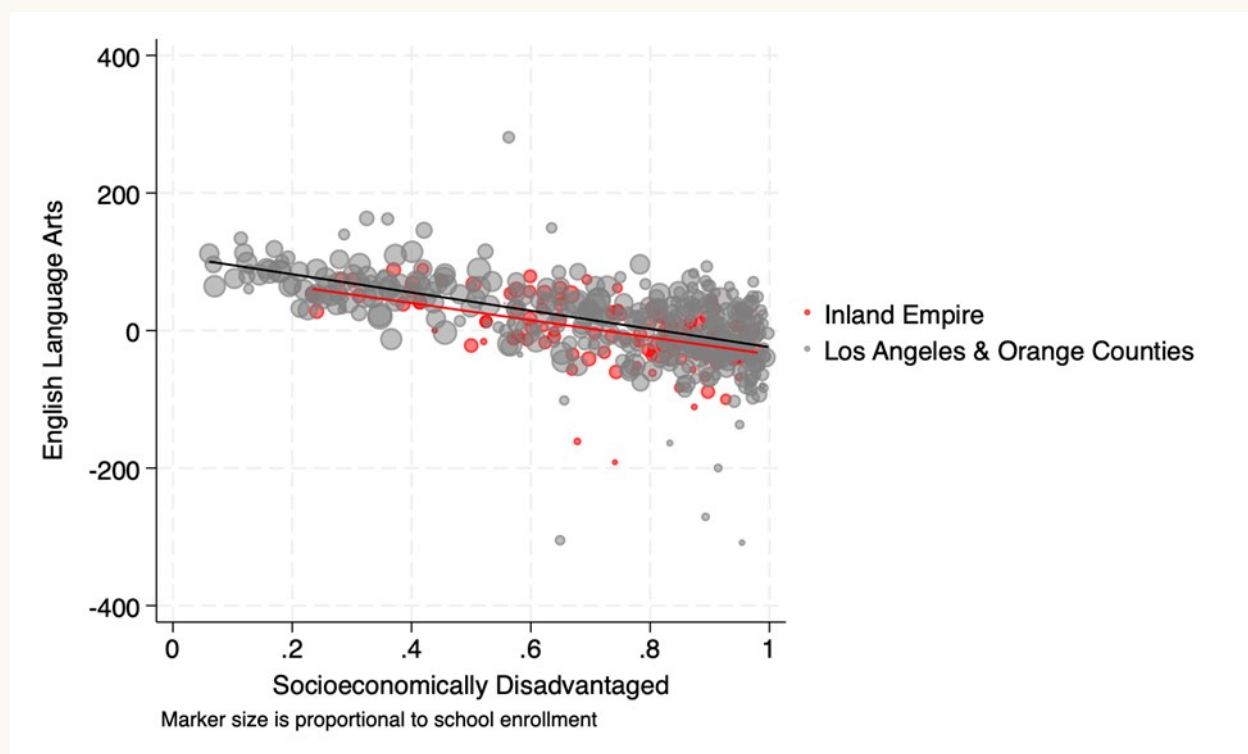

Figure A-1.

[Figure A-3] below, shows that students' readiness for college and careers is negatively associated with the share of students who are disadvantaged. The red and black regression lines do not have significantly different intercepts or slopes.
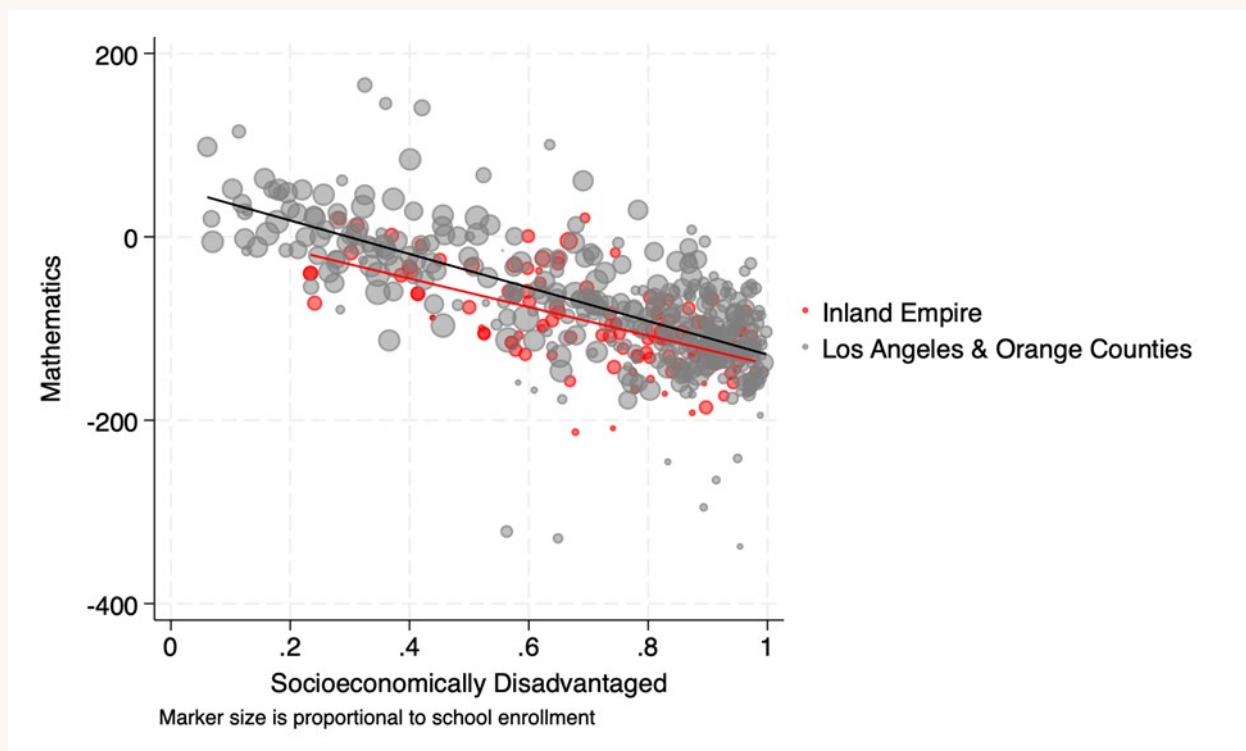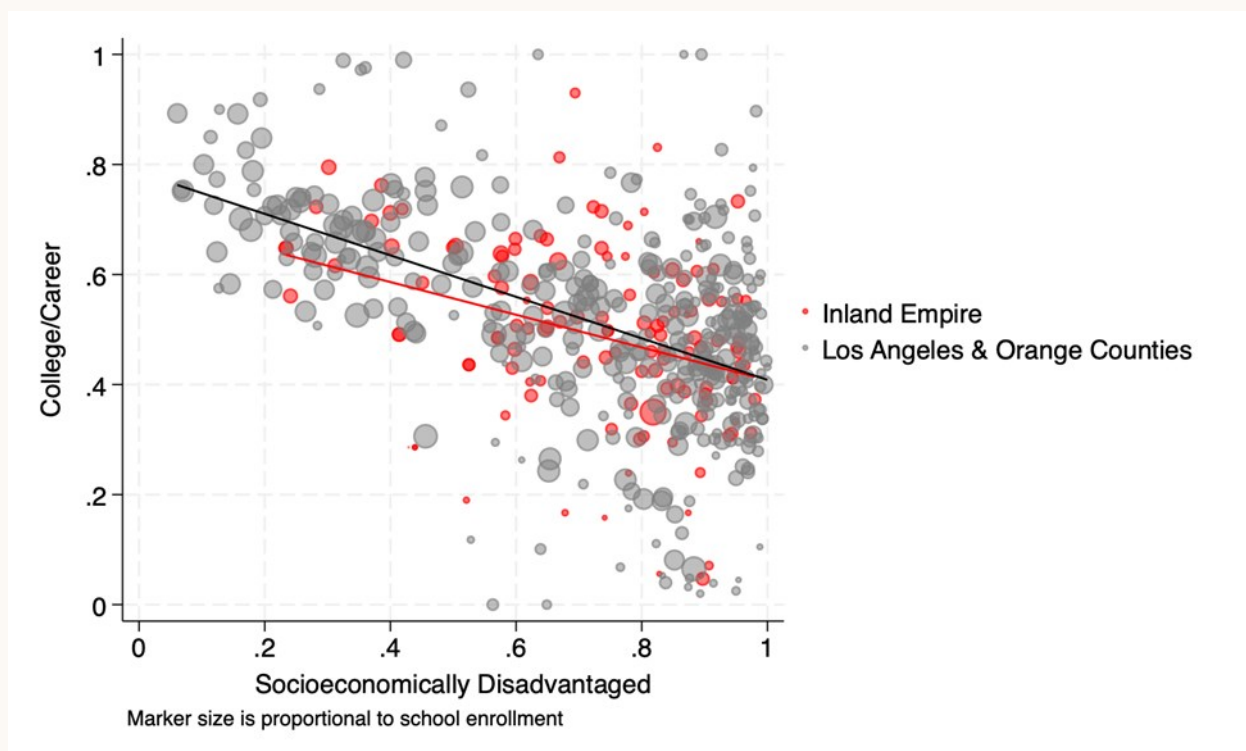
Figure A-2.

Figure A-3.

Humane Housing
with Richard Carpiano, Ph.D., Professor, UCR School of Public Policy

Generally, rent as a percentage of household income is an indicator of a household's rent burden: the higher the percentage, the higher the financial burden that a household experiences to pay rent. For 2013 and 2023, Figures [A-4] and [A-5] show that, of all households with rent payments of 35% or higher, the majority (~3 of every 10 households) are paying 50% or more of their income towards rent. Fig. A-6 shows that while the prevalence of households with this extreme level of rent burden has decreased, the decline in rent burden of 35% or higher was, in large part, due to the decline in these extreme rent burdened households, especial-ly in Riverside County where this decline of nearly 3 percentage points was the largest among the four counties. Likewise, Fig. A-6 shows more detail for the opposite end of the rent burden spectrum: increased prevalence of households paying less than 20% of their income towards rent. Here again, Riverside County stands out, especially among households in the 10-14.9% burden range.
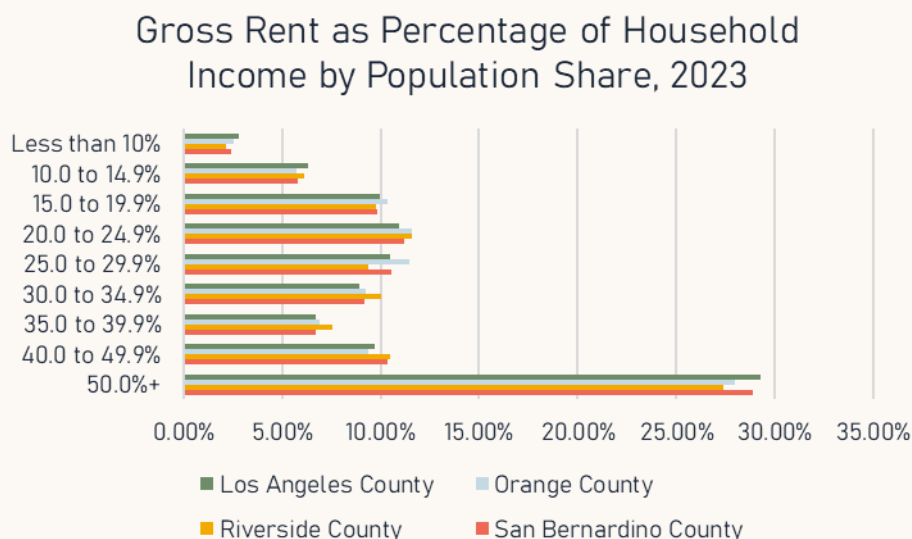
Gross Rent as Percentage of Household Income by Population Share, 2023

Figure A-4.

Gross Rent as Percentage of Household Income by Population Share, 2013
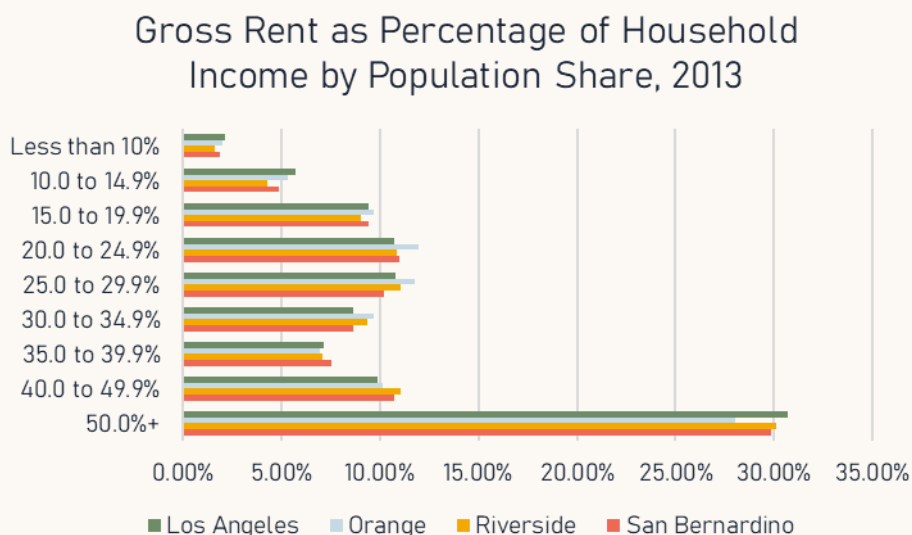

Figure A-5.

Altogether, given the extent of political attention paid to affordable housing and homelessness (especially during election cycles) in recent years, plus increases in housing prices and supply in our region over this time period, it is difficult for one to argue that this observed decline is not due to out-migration of low income households but is instead attributable to increased availability of rental units across these four counties and rent prices adjusting due to the supply of rental housing outpacing demand for rental housing.
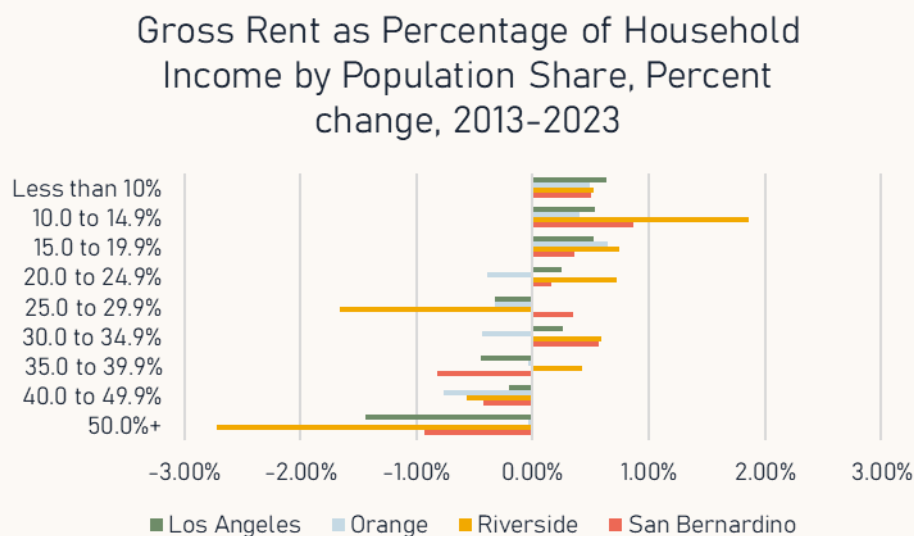

Gross Rent as Percentage of Household Income by Population Share, Percent change, 2013-2023

Figure A-6.

Basic Needs for Health & Safety
with Richard Carpiano, Ph.D., Professor, UCR School of Public Policy

Food Stamps/SNAP

As a benefit for low income households, receipt of Food Stamps/SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), a federal program implemented in California as "CalFresh." is a valuable indicator of socioeconomic disadvantage. [Figures A-7 and A-8] show rather stark racial-ethnic differences in the percentage of households receiving this benefit (and thus being low income): Considering that Whites and Latinos constitute a substantial proportion of the population for each these four counties, it is concerning that, per Fig. A-7, approximately 30-37% of White households and approximately 40-57% of Hispanic or Latino households qualify for this benefit. Furthermore, not all households that are eligible for this benefit are signed up for it. For as concerning as these numbers are, they are substantially lower than the 2013 estimates for these groups, when half or more of White and Hispanic/Latino households received Food Stamps/SNAP. Thus, as shown in Fig. A-9, the 2023 estimates for these two racial-ethnic groups represent substantial decreases for White households (i.e. an approximately 20 percentage point drop in each of the four counties) and Hispanic/Latino households (i.e. an approximate 15 percentage point decrease in Los Angeles and Orange Counties). While such decreases in receipt of this important assistance may seem positive, in light of earlier discussions about rent burden, such decreases are likely indicative of such economically vulnerable households moving out of the area.

Furthermore, these declines are only part of the story. Between these two time periods, other racial-ethnic groups experienced increases in receipt of this assistance: Asian households in Los Angeles County (approximately 10 percentage points higher than 2013) and Orange County (approximately 5 percentage

points); and Multirace households (approximately 15-20 percentage point increases).

Lastly, though Black/African American households showed no change in Food Stamp/SNAP receipt between these two time points, approximately 1 in 6 households in, respectively, Los Angeles and San Bernardino Counties and 1 in 10 households in Riverside County received this assistance in 2023 and 2013.
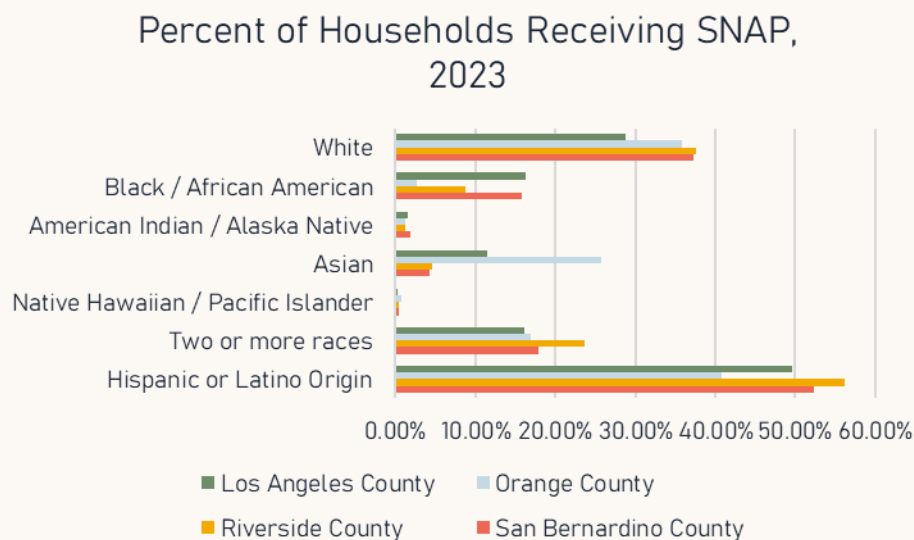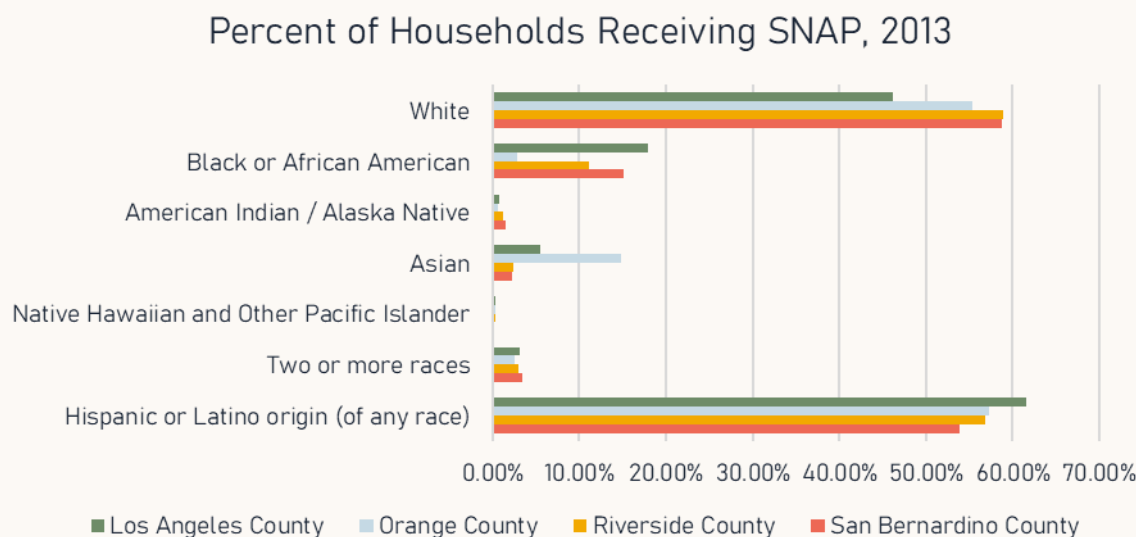

Figure A-7.

Figure A-8..

Percent Change in Households Receiving SNAP, 2013-2023

Legend: ■ Los Angeles County ■ Orange County ■ Riverside County ■ San Bernardino County
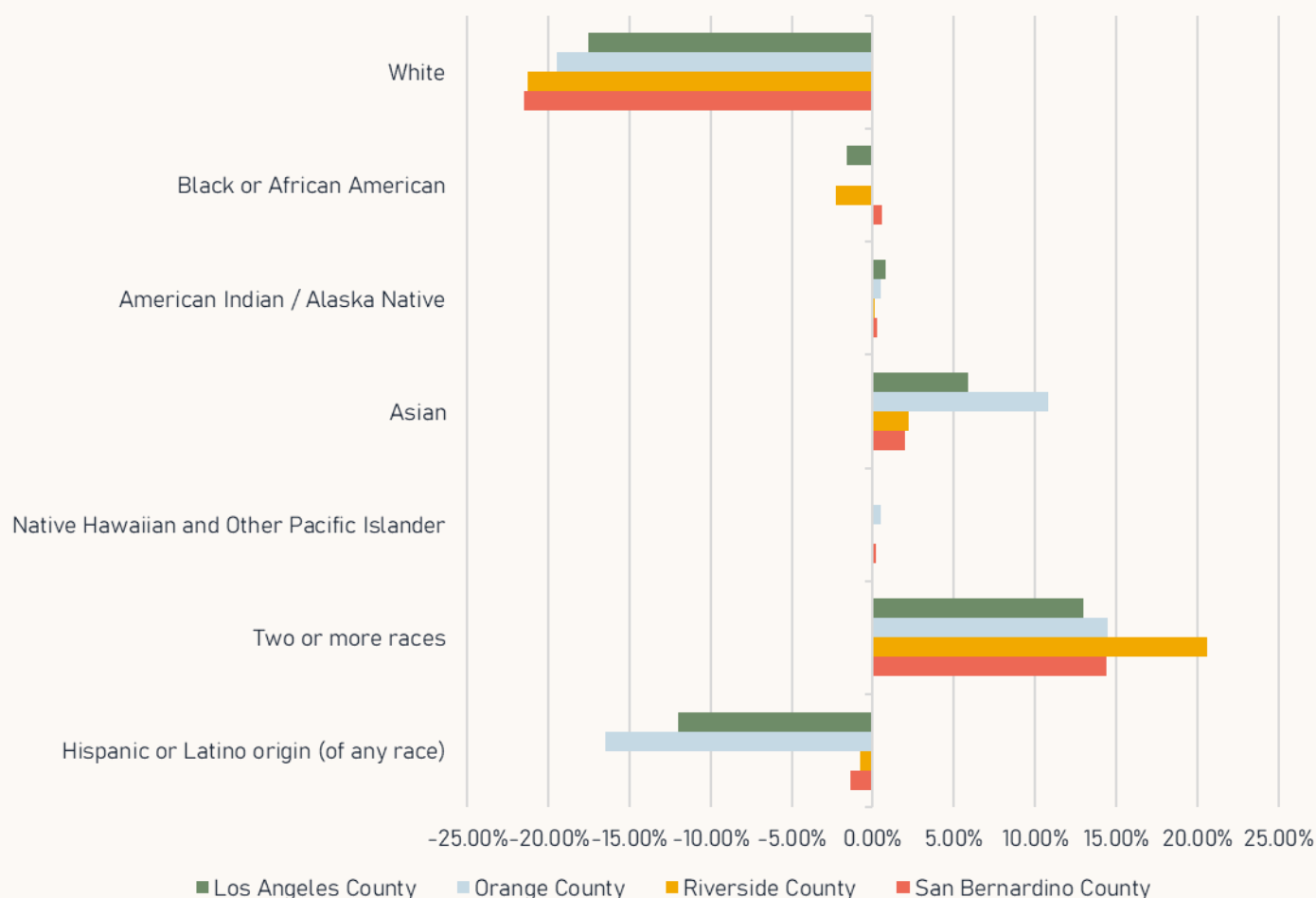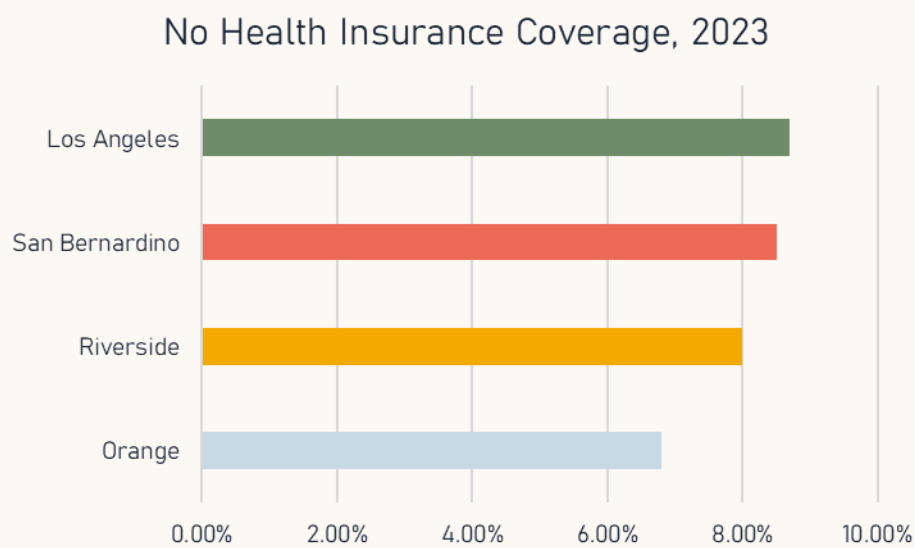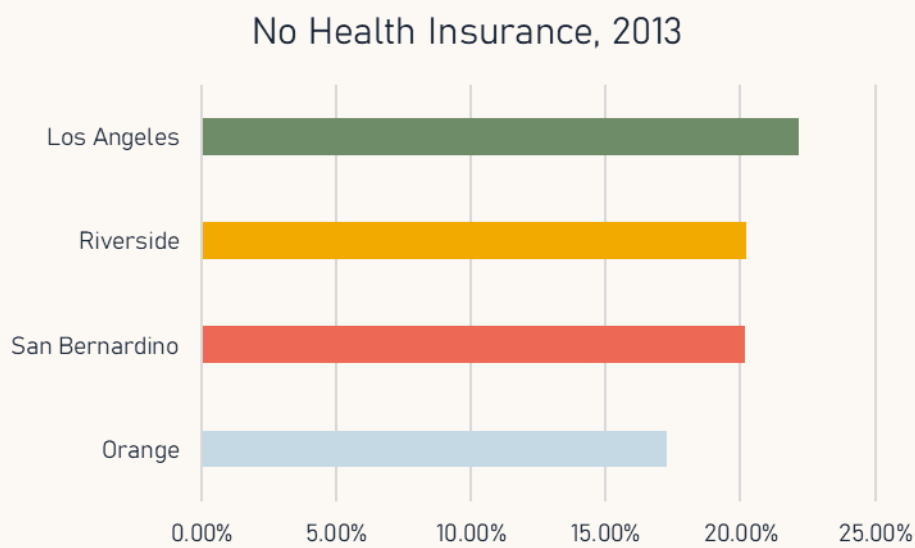
Figure A-9.

Health Insurance Coverage

As shown in [Fig. A-10], generally, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties did not meaningfully differ from each other in the percent of residents with no health insurance coverage (i.e. 8-8.7% for all three), while Orange County had slightly lower prevalence (6.80%). Per the changes reported in [Figure A-12], these 2023 prevalences were substantially lower than what they were in 2013: approximately 10 (Orange County) to 13.5 (Los Angeles County) percentage points. It is unclear what specific factors underlie this drastic a change. However, in 2022, California expanded coverage eligibility for Medi-Cal (California's implementation of the federally-funded Medicaid program). Yet, per some of the other indicators already discussed, out-migration by some of the most economically vulnerable households may have also accounted for at least some of this change.

No Health Insurance Coverage, 2023

Figure A-10.

No Health Insurance, 2013

Figure A-11.

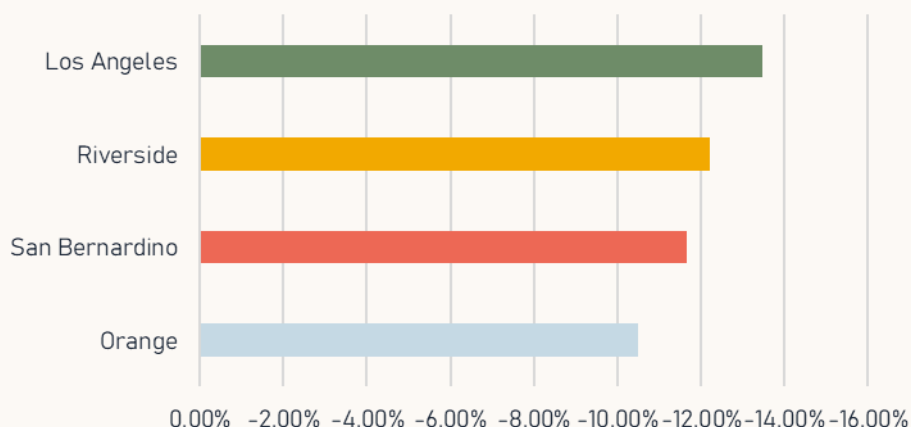## No Health Insurance, Percent Change 2013–2023

Figure A-12.

Thriving Natural World
with Kurt Schwabe, Ph.D., Professor, UCR School of Public Policy

PM2.5: Highest Annual Average Concentration, Amount Over National Standard (12, Monitor), 2010–2022
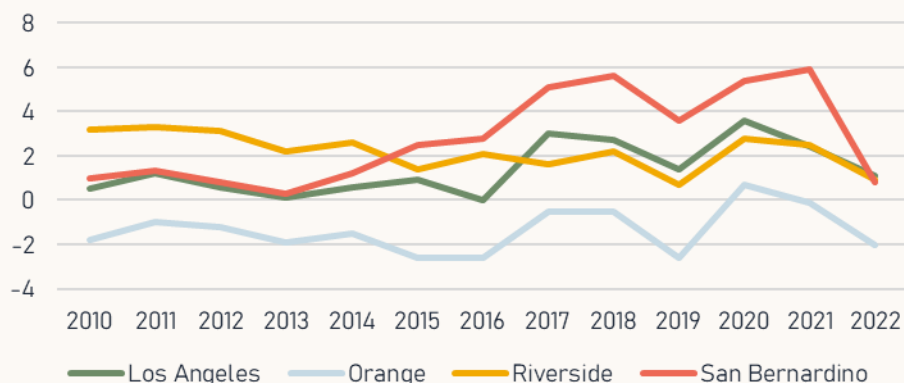

Figure A-13.

- In general, PM2.5 levels have increased in the decade from 2010 to 2020.
- 2020 PM2.5 levels would likely have been much higher but were dampened due to lower economic activity and driving due to Covid-19.
- Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties have experienced the greatest increase in PM2.5 emissions.
- Increases in the warehouse industry in Riverside and San Bernardino counties likely contributes to increased PM2.5 emissions.
- The extent to which PM2.5 Emissions will continue to rise over the next few decades will depend, in part, on the degree to which the transportation industry electrifies.

Annual Number of Extreme Heat Days from May–September
Source: National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, CDC, Heat and Heat-Related Illness
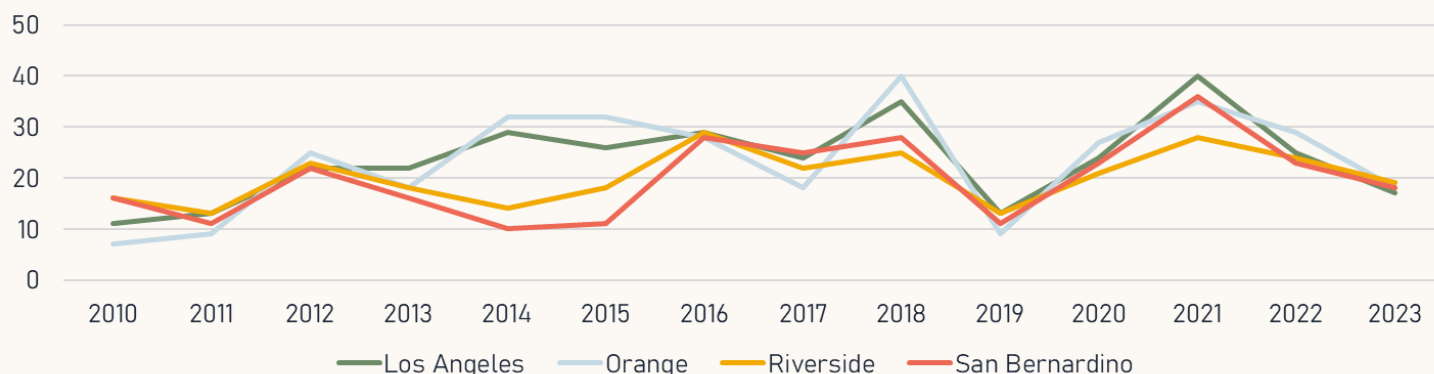

Figure A-14.

- The number of extreme temperature days within the Southern California region has increased over the past decade.
- Particularly concerning is the increase in frequency of extreme temperature events as evidenced by the near 40 days of extreme heat in 2018 and 2021 relative to around 15 days in 2010 for the Inland Empire.
- Increases in extreme temperature has negative impacts on the availability of water, water quality, health, and agricultural production.
- Lower income households, and agricultural workers are some of the most vulnerable populations to rising temperatures given limited resources and disproportionate exposure.

Reliable Transportation
with Andrew Crosby, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, UCR School of Public Policy

Means of Transportation to Work, Percent Change, 2013-2023
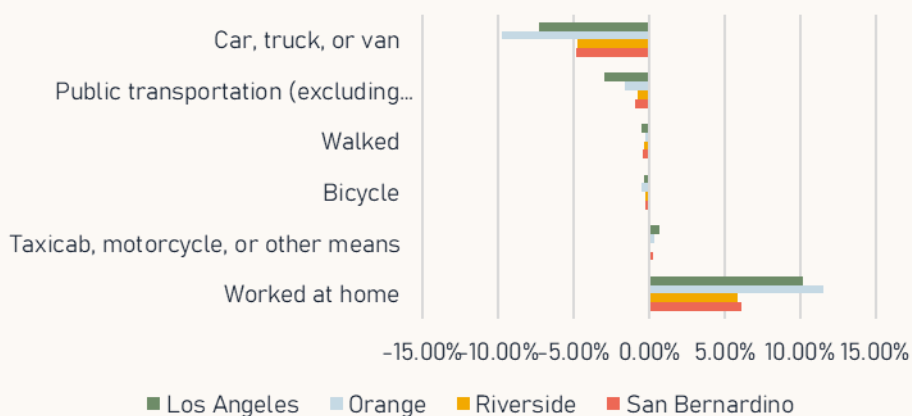

Figure A-15.

Public transportation use declined nationwide during the COVID-19 pandemic and has been slowly recovering for most systems in recent years. In the Southern California region, ridership recovery has also been aided by service expansions. For example, Metrolink launched its Arrow Service in 2022 between San Bernardino and Redlands, and has also expanded services on its existing lines. Similarly, the Riverside Transportation Authority (RTA) launched its Route 200 CommuterExpress route between San Bernardino and Anaheim in 2018, which has proven popular to the point where the RTA has increased the number of buses serving the route.

Additional expansions are also planned. Orange County plans to open a streetcar system in 2026. Metrolink has created a plan known as Southern California Optimized Rail Expansion (SCORE), intended in part to provide expanded transportation options for the 2028 Summer Olympics, although a large portion of SCORE remains unfunded.