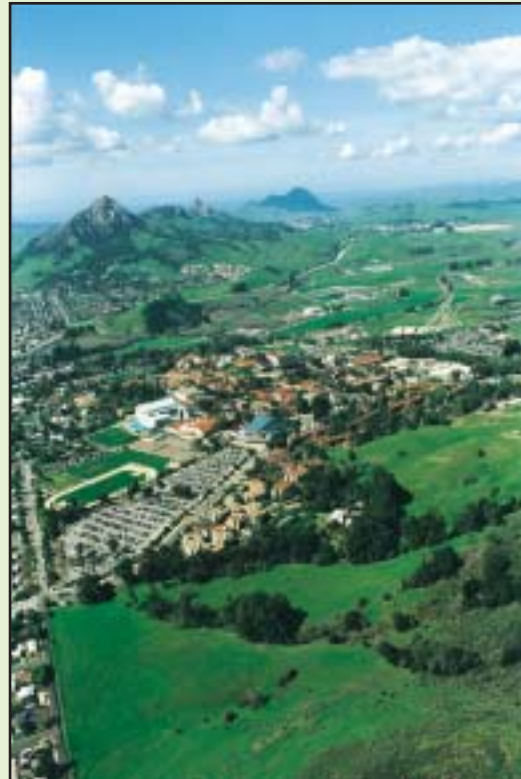


# ACTION for Healthy Communities



Indicator Report

2003

This publication highlights a variety of indicators tracking the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County as expressed by the community.

ACTION For Healthy Communities  
2003 Indicators Report

## Introduction

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ACTION for Healthy Communities is pleased to present the 2003 Indicators Report tracking the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County. The report is divided into seven sections corresponding to the goals of ACTION for Healthy Communities. Each section contains indicators that measure progress made over time toward achieving those goals.

The San Luis Obispo Community Health Foundation first convened the ACTION for Healthy Communities collaborative in February 1998. ACTION for Healthy Communities believes that by sharing resources and working

together, more comprehensive useful planning tools can be developed.

ACTION also believes that a more comprehensive approach to assessing the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County will enable organizations that allocate resources to address more effectively critical community concerns.

Based on pioneering work by the Foundation for Community Design, ACTION established the following seven goals upon which to focus our community-building efforts. Various community initiatives are underway, and others may be considered, to address these goals.

### ACTION FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: COMMUNITY GOALS

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<u>Area</u>	<u>Community Goal</u>
Basic Needs	All persons have the basic necessities of life, including food and decent, safe and affordable housing.
Economic	All persons have employment opportunities and support services that enable them to achieve their highest individual level of self-sufficiency.
Education	All students enter school ready to learn, and graduate from high school prepared for the workforce or higher education, and have an interest in life-long learning.
Health	All persons practice healthy behaviors, and have access to and use preventive and primary health care services that enable them to maximize their physical and mental well being.
Natural Environment	We maintain and enhance the health and beauty of the natural environment by living within our natural resources and human abilities, and we plan and manage development.
Public Safety	All persons feel and are safe in their homes, schools, workplace, and communities.
Social Environment	All persons have the opportunity to engage in the civic, recreational, and cultural aspects of their communities.

## The Data

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The data used in the 2003 Indicators Report come from a wide variety of sources including state and local government agencies and ACTION's countywide telephone surveys. Under contract to ACTION, the UCSB Economic Forecast Project compiled the secondary data and conducted the 2003 telephone survey.

The telephone survey, which included interviews with 522 randomly selected adults in San Luis Obispo County, used the same techniques and questions as the 1999 and 2001 telephone surveys. It is important to note that all surveys have some inherent biases. For example, people often overestimate behavior considered politically correct (such as frequency of volunteering). However, if the same questions are

asked from year to year, relative changes in those behaviors can be accurately tracked.

In addition to this 2003 Indicators Report, ACTION also publishes a Comprehensive Report, which includes 200 plus pages of data tables including a broader array of data than the Indicators Report.

The 2003 Indicators Report and other reports (for 2003 and prior years) may be downloaded for free at United Way of San Luis Obispo County's web site, under Community Partners, [www.unitedwayslo.org](http://www.unitedwayslo.org). For further information contact: ACTION for Healthy Communities c/o San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation, P.O. Box 1580, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 Voice: 805-543-2323 Fax: 805-543-2346

## Steering Committee

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Marsha Bollinger	Partnership for the Public's Health	Janna Nichols	United Way of SLO County
Carlyn Christianson	Community Representative/Volunteer	Nancy Rosen	SLO Community Health Foundation
Steve Devencenzi	SLO Council of Governments	Sandi Sigurdson	SLO Symphony
Patricia Gomez	Community Representative/Volunteer	Elizabeth "Biz" Steinberg	Children's Services Network
Pam Heatherington	Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo	John W. Taylor	Taylor Consulting Group
Susan Hughes	SLO County Public Health Department	Patricia Wilmore	San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce
Lillian Judd	Economic Opportunity Commission of SLO	Janice Fong Wolf	SLO County Community Foundation
Nita Kenyon	SLO County Department of Social Services	Sarah Cook, Project Staff	SLO County Community Foundation

## Collaborative Partners

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Achievement House	Library	San Luis Obispo Childcare Planning Council
Adult Services Policy Council	Planning and Building Department	San Luis Obispo Community Health Foundation
Area Agency on Aging	Probation Department	San Luis Obispo County Arts Council
Arroyo Grande Community Hospital/French Hospital Medical Center	Economic Opportunity Commission of SLO County	San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation
Atascadero Community Link	Economic Vitality Corporation	San Luis Obispo County Health Commission
Atascadero Youth Task Force	Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo	San Luis Obispo County Prevention, Advocacy and CARE Consortium
Boys & Girls Club of So. SLO County	First 5 Children and Families Commission of SLO County	San Luis Obispo County Medical Society
Children's Services Network	Habitat for Humanity of SLO County	San Luis Obispo County Office of Education
City of San Luis Obispo Human Relations Commission	Long Term Care Ombudsman	San Luis Obispo County YMCA
Community Health Centers of the Central Coast	Partnership for the Public's Health	San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival
County of San Luis Obispo: Department of Social Services	Paso Robles and San Miguel Health Collaborative	San Luis Obispo Symphony
Public Health Department	People's Self Help Housing Corporation	Taylor Consulting Group
	SLOCO Access	Tenet Health Systems
	San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce	Transitions-Mental Health Association
		United Way of San Luis Obispo County

## Major Financial Sponsors

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County of San Luis Obispo:  
 Administrative Office  
 Department of Social Services  
 Probation Department  
 Public Health Department  
 Economic Opportunity Commission of SLO County  
 First 5 Children and Families Commission of SLO County  
 San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation  
 United Way of San Luis Obispo County

## Supporting Financial Sponsors

Area Agency on Aging  
 Atascadero Linkages  
 Community Health Centers of the Central Coast  
 Long Term Care Ombudsman  
 People's Self Help Housing Corporation  
 SLO County Arts Council  
 SLO Mozart Festival  
 SLO Symphony





## MEETING BASIC NEEDS

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### Chapter A

Action Goal: All persons have the basic necessities of life, including food and decent, safe and affordable housing.

# LACKING BASIC NEEDS

## Indicator A1

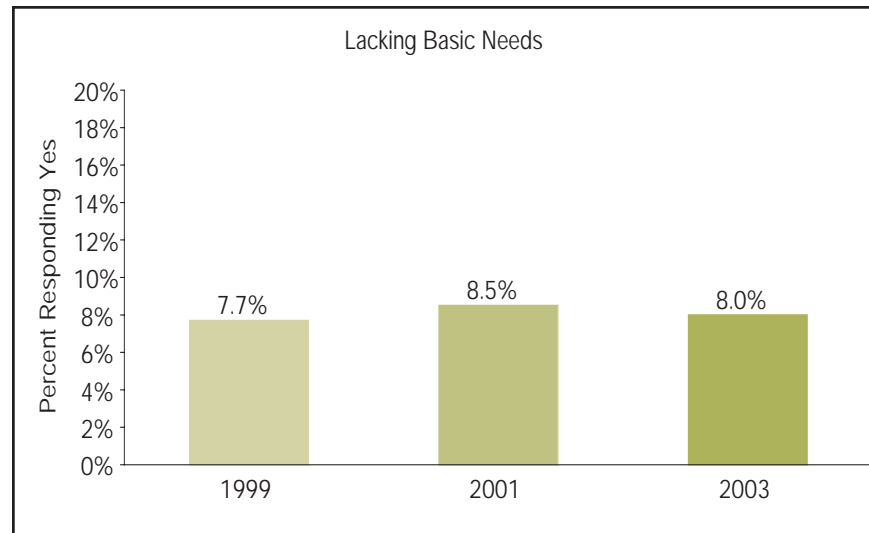
This indicator reports on the percentage of county residents who report that their basic needs are not met on a monthly basis. The 1999, 2001 and 2003 ACTION telephone surveys contained the following question, which was posed to randomly selected adults in the county: In any given month, do you have to go without basic needs such as food, clothing, childcare, housing or health care?

### Why Is It Important?

Ensuring that residents have access to basic needs is a fundamental responsibility of a compassionate community. Tracking trends in this area helps us determine how well we're fulfilling this responsibility.

### How Are We Doing?

Since 1999, the proportion of people who lack basic needs has been around 8 percent. The small changes shown on the graph are not statistically significant and may be the result of the random variations that occurs in surveys. The fact that the situation has not deteriorated, nor improved, should not overshadow the fact that roughly one in twelve county residents is going without such basic needs as food, clothing, and health care.



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone surveys: 1999, 2001 & 2003

"In any given month, do you have to go without basic needs such as food, clothing, childcare, housing or health care?"

# SHELTER OVERCAPACITY

## Indicator A2

This indicator measures the number of people turned away from the homeless shelter when demand exceeds the number of available beds. In the future, ACTION would like to monitor the total number of people receiving shelter, plus overcapacity requests.

### Why Is It Important?

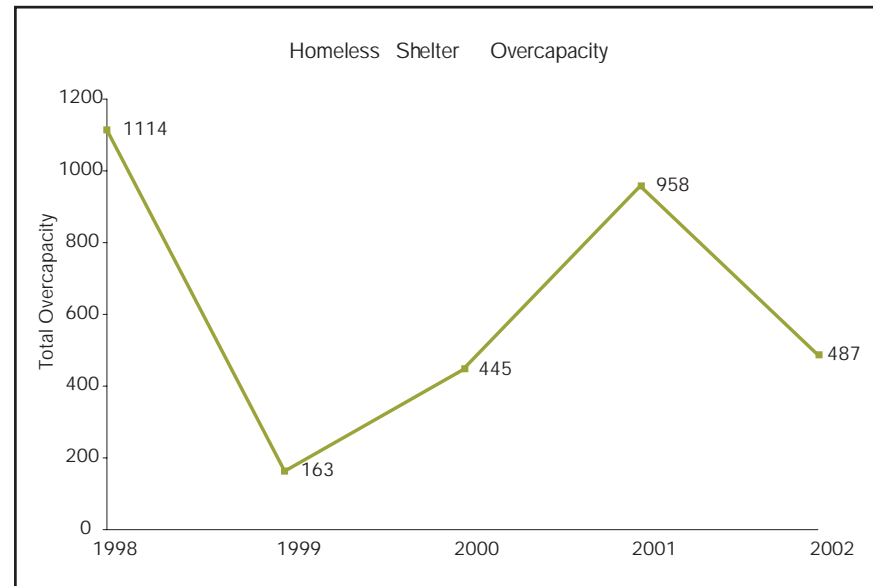
Without the stability of a home, people have increased difficulty in gaining and retaining employment, transportation, health care, childcare, and many other services. The National Alliance to End Homelessness indicates that alleviating homelessness requires three things: affordable housing, sufficient employment income, and the availability of services to help address personal problems that are often associated with homelessness, including mental illness, physical illness, domestic violence, and substance abuse.

### How Are We Doing?

ACTION would like to report the number of homeless people in the county. However, there is currently no source of data available. As a proxy, we report the number of people turned away from the SLO homeless shelter when demand exceeds the number of available beds. The EOC Emergency Homeless Shelter, located in the City of San Luis Obispo, has a capacity of 49 beds per night, plus overflow capacity of 15-35 beds provided in collaboration with the Interfaith Coalition for the Homeless, bringing the total annual shelter capacity in San Luis Obispo to 25,000 shelter nights. The shelter capacity increased in 1999 when the EOC-ICH overflow program expanded its services from 7 to 12 months.

Though this shelter serves clients from throughout the county, most homeless persons from outlying areas, especially North County, are unable or reluctant to travel to the San Luis Obispo shelter. Overcapacity for 2002 was significantly lower than in 2001, dropping from 954 to 487. This ends a three-year streak of nearly yearly doubling of overcapacity numbers. The decline in overcapacity in San Luis Obispo is a direct result of the expansion of the El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO) program in Atascadero. That volunteer, church-based program provides about 35 beds each night to homeless people. Although, ultimately, this indicator does not tell us much about the number of homeless people in the county, it does indicate a larger number of them are obtaining temporary shelter.

This indicator measures the number of people turned away from the homeless shelter when demand exceeds the number of available beds.



Source: EOC Emergency Homeless Shelter, 2002

# FOOD INSECURITY

## Indicator A3

This indicator is data from the San Luis Obispo Hunger Study for 2003. They are based on 219 interviews with clients of 11 food pantries, 9 kitchens, and the 2 shelters.

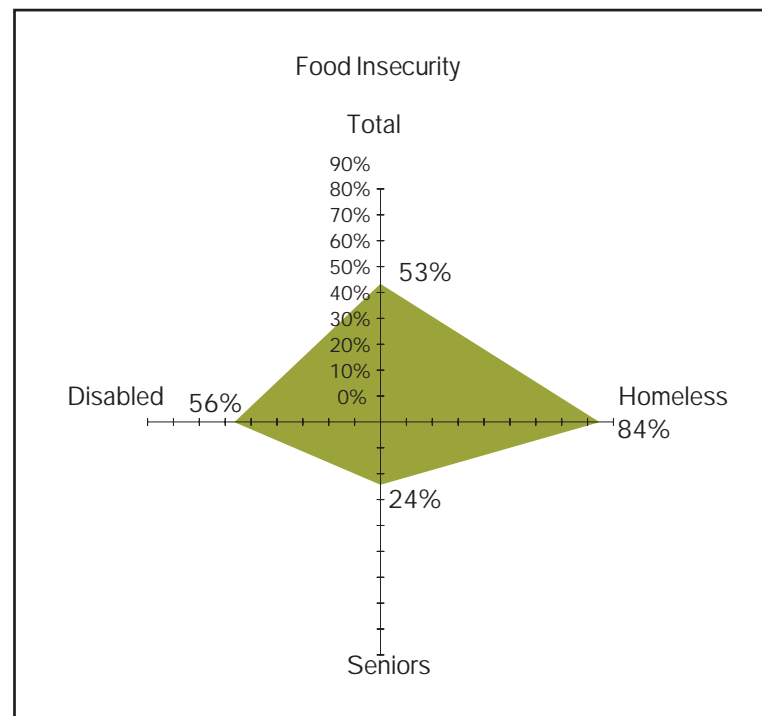
### Why Is It Important?

Food is a basic need. Good nutrition enhances a person's health and well-being. It prevents some chronic diseases and minimizes the impact of others. When financial resources are scarce, some people opt to meet other needs and forego nutrition, which can lead to numerous problems.

### How Are We Doing?

An individual is defined as food insecure if he/she answers yes to any of the following measures: Had to cut the size of meal because they could not afford more; were hungry but could not eat because they could not afford it; had to choose between paying for food and paying for medicine; had to choose between paying for food and paying for rent or mortgage; had to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities during the previous year; children had to skip meals because there was not enough money for food.

Slightly more than one-half of the people interviewed in the food pantries and kitchens do not have a reliable source of food. Not surprisingly, homeless people are the most likely to experience food insecurity. Additionally, over half of the disabled respondents also claimed to have experienced food insecurity in the past year. Physical limitations may make it particularly difficult for the disabled as well as the elderly to access food, while their medical needs may be greater than the average person.



Source: San Luis Obispo County Hunger Study 2003

This indicator measures food insecurity in the County, based on the San Luis Obispo County Hunger Survey, 2003.

# AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

## Indicator A4

This indicator will track the number of homes set aside in the county for people with lower incomes.

### Why Is It Important?

Rising housing costs affect most residents of the County. That widespread impact is best measured by the Housing Opportunity Index (Indicator G1 in the Economy section). However, those who feel the impact of housing costs most acutely are those families and individuals with lower incomes. At the extreme, when residents can no longer afford any available housing, they may become homeless.

Housing can be affordable to lower income people either because the private housing market provides units they can afford, or because some type of government or non-profit program provides units that cost less than the going market rates. Of course, if the private housing market were providing adequate numbers of low cost units, there would be no need for public housing subsidies. It appears unlikely the private market will supply those homes any time soon. Thus, there is a need for publicly subsidized housing.

### How Are We Doing?

Since 2001, the San Luis Obispo County Housing Trust Fund has made considerable progress toward establishing a permanent source of local funds to build subsidized housing. However, currently there is no source of data on exactly how many such units exist in the County. For several years the county government has planned to track the number of government subsidized housing units, but it has not been completed. ACTION for Healthy Communities supports the County's plan to track the number of subsidized units as an indicator of how much we, as a community, are doing to help people with lower incomes keep roofs over their heads.

This indicator will track the number of homes set aside in the county for people with lower incomes.

# SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM

## Indicator A5

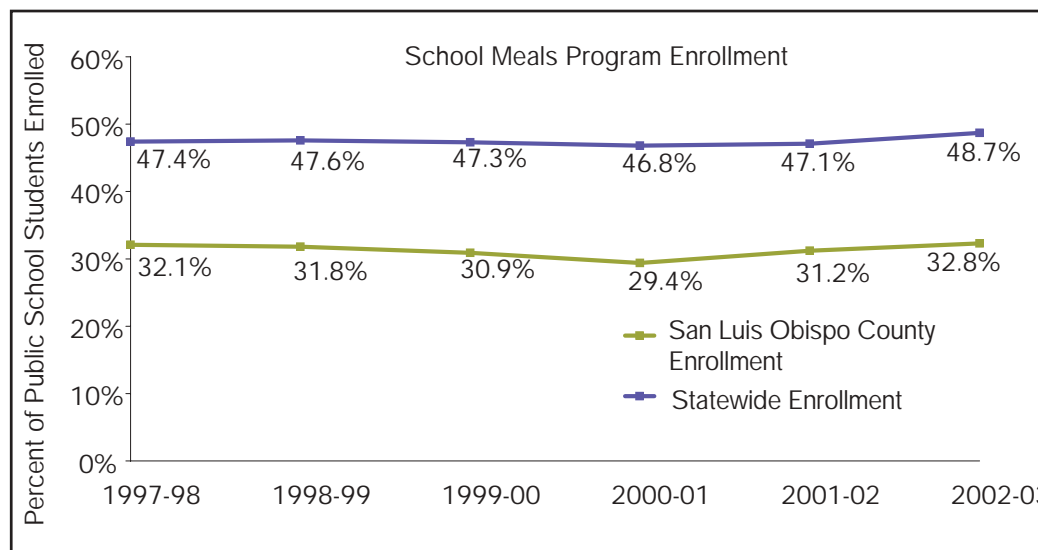
This indicator notes the proportion of local public school students enrolled in the Free or Reduced Price Meal Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

### Why Is It important?

Children enrolled in the school meals program come from low-income families who are at most risk of hunger and food insecurity. According to the state Department of Education, the program offers a convenient method of providing nutritionally balanced meals at a low price for parents struggling to make ends meet. For schools, the program enhances children's learning abilities by contributing to their physical and mental well being. Studies have shown that children whose nutritional needs are met have fewer attendance and discipline problems and are more attentive in class.

### How Are We Doing?

Meal program enrollment is by application and is based on the income of the child's parent or guardian being less than 185 percent of the poverty level. Enrollment means the student's family has met eligibility criteria and is "signed up" to participate. Because 97 percent of eligible families enroll, enrollment is a proxy for eligibility (for which historical data is unavailable). Enrollment trends for school programs have remained relatively consistent in the past six years, although the County has experienced a slight increase in enrollment since 2001. San Luis Obispo County continues to remain well below statewide levels. While nearly half of public school students in California are enrolled in the school meals program, 32.8 percent of San Luis Obispo students enroll in the program. However, this indicator implies that one-third of all County public school students live in families that may not be able to provide the children all the food they need.



Source: California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS)

This indicator notes the proportion of local public school students enrolled in the Free or Reduced Price Meal Program.



## SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

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### Chapter B

Action Goal: All persons have the opportunity to engage in the civic, recreational, and cultural aspects of their communities.

# VOTER PARTICIPATION

## Indicator B1

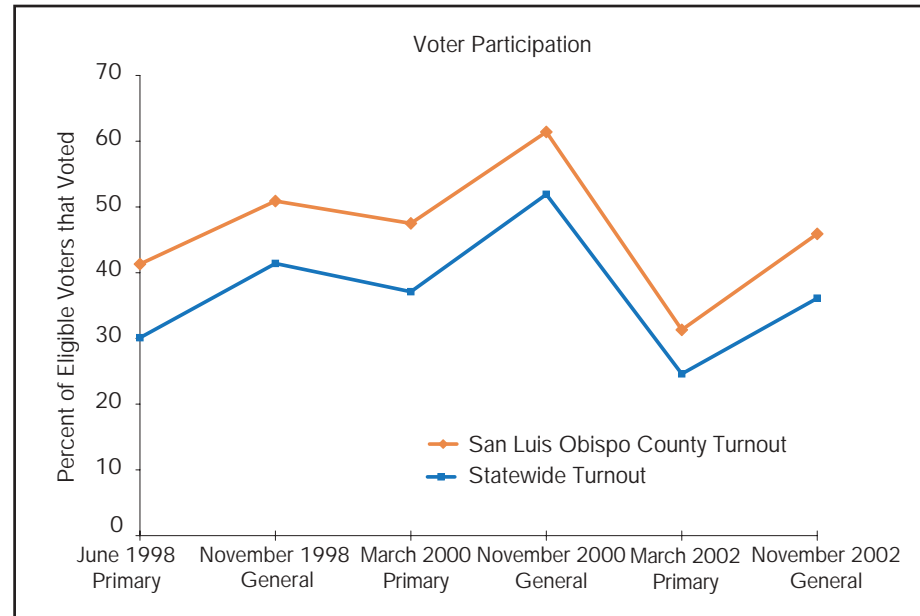
This indicator measures the percentage of the voting-age population that actually votes.

### Why Is It Important?

Involvement in the political process is one of the factors contributing to a healthy community. A community's needs and priorities should be determined by the voices of its residents. Opportunities for civic participation, like voting, are necessary to build and maintain a responsive government. Voting is one measure of whether people feel they have a stake in the future.

### How Are We Doing?

Looking at the graph, the long term trend in voter turnout is not clear. This is, in part, because voter turnout in general elections is typically higher than in primaries. However, both the 2002 primary and general elections saw a much lower turnout than earlier elections. This was true for the County as well as the State. Although it is encouraging that voter turnout in San Luis Obispo County is roughly 10 percent higher than the state level, the fact that only 46 percent of those eligible to vote (2002 general election) do so is not encouraging.



Source: California Secretary of State

This indicator measures the percentage of the eligible voters that actually votes.

# CHARITABLE GIVING

## Indicator B2

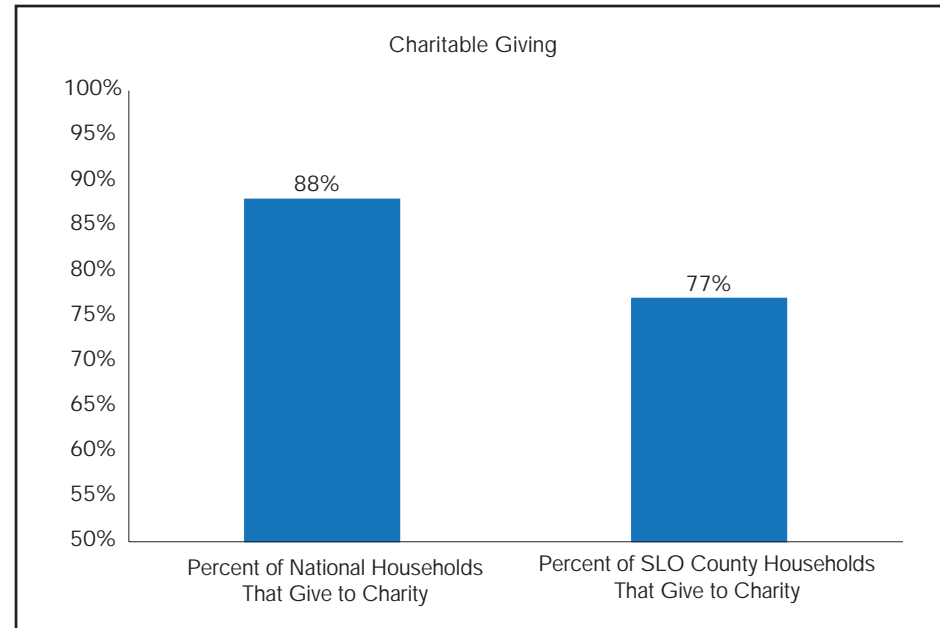
This indicator measures the percent of households in the county that have given to charity in the past year.

### Why Is This important?

Charity organizations provide important services not always addressed by other sectors of our community-- attending to the needs of youth, the homeless, victims of crime, low income families, the environment, sports, the arts, and much more. These organizations need the public's financial support in order to continue and expand the scope of their work. Some studies have shown that regions with high levels of charitable giving often indicate a greater philanthropy of residents, and therefore, a greater likelihood of personal involvement in community issues.

### How Are We Doing?

In the 2003 ACTION telephone survey, more than three-quarters of San Luis Obispo County households say they give to charities. Although this is certainly an admirable proportion, it is, in fact, lower than the national average of 88 percent. ACTION intends to track this measure in the County in future surveys.



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 2003 and "Giving and Volunteering in the United States", 2001

Did you or any member of your household contribute any money or other property to charity in 2002?

# YOUTH ACTIVITIES

## Indicator B3

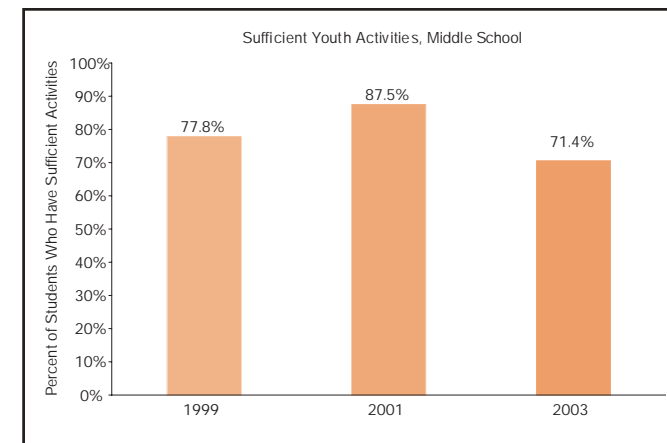
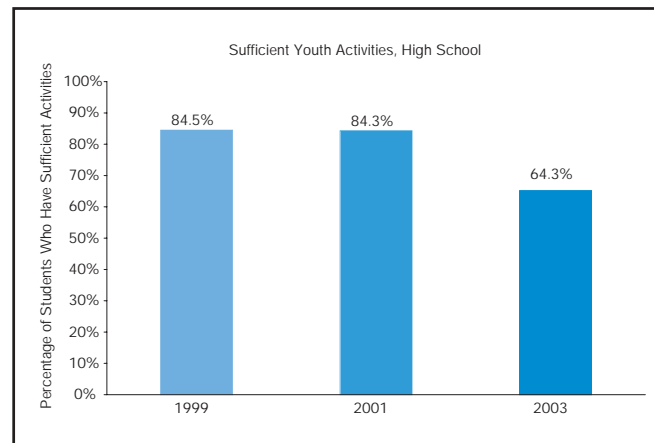
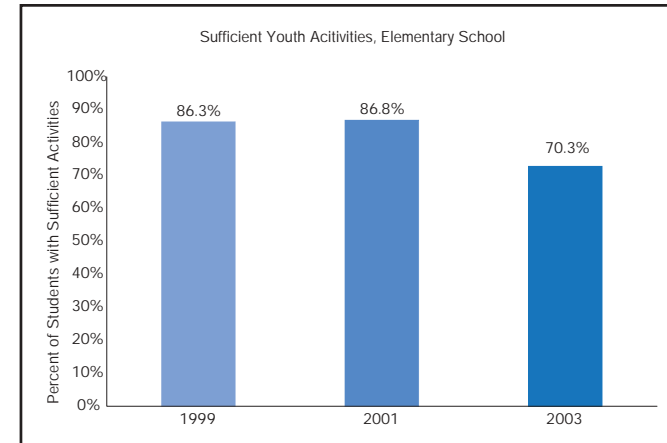
This indicator measures the degree to which parents feel their children have sufficient recreation opportunities. Specifically, phone survey respondents were asked the question: "Does your child or children have enough activities after school and on weekends, including recreational and cultural?"

### Why Is It Important?

According to the Educational Resources Information Center, "The number of children and adolescents without family supervision after school is increasing... These children risk injury, victimization, bad nutrition, and the negative impact of excessive television viewing... Those who 'hang out' with similarly aimless friends may join gangs or engage in premature sexual activity, tobacco, drug and alcohol use, and other anti-social behavior." Participation in constructive non-school activities not only lessens these risks but also encourages learning, teamwork, discipline, and mastery of skills.

### How Are We Doing?

The numbers of parents interviewed in the countywide telephone surveys for each school level are modest, around 40 to 100. Therefore, changes in the results from survey to survey of less than 10 percentage points or so may simply be the result of random variation. However, the number of parents who are satisfied with after school activities in 2003 dropped substantially from 2001. This suggests a growing concern among parents about after school hours. This may reflect increased publicity about after school problems or the experiences of their own children.



"Does your child or children have enough activities after school and on weekends, including recreational and cultural activities?"

# VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION

## Indicator B4

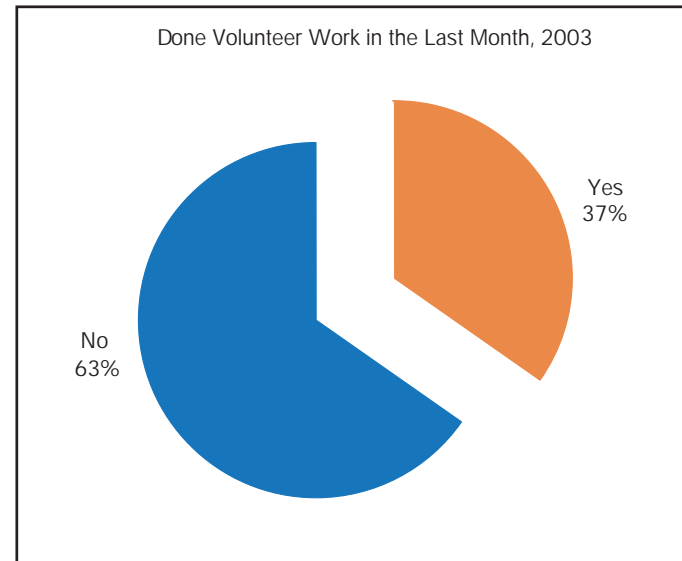
This indicator measures the proportion of adults in the County who regularly volunteer time to community or non-profit organizations.

### Why Is It Important?

Volunteering reflects an awareness of others and their needs, and an affirmation that everyone benefits through a connected community. A well-documented aspect of volunteering is that it extends a person's social network. Socially connected people are more likely than isolated people to have good health, live longer, and have a better overall sense of well being.

### How Are We Doing?

According to the 2003 Countywide survey, a little over one-third (37%) of County residents said they volunteered in the past month. This is lower than the national figure of 44 percent. Although we would like to think our County's citizens are more generous than people in the rest of the nation, the results of this indicator, and Charitable Giving (B2), suggest otherwise. ACTION will continue to track these measures to see if community generosity increases in future surveys.



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 2003

“Have you done volunteer work for any organization in the past month?”

# DISCRIMINATION

## Indicator B5

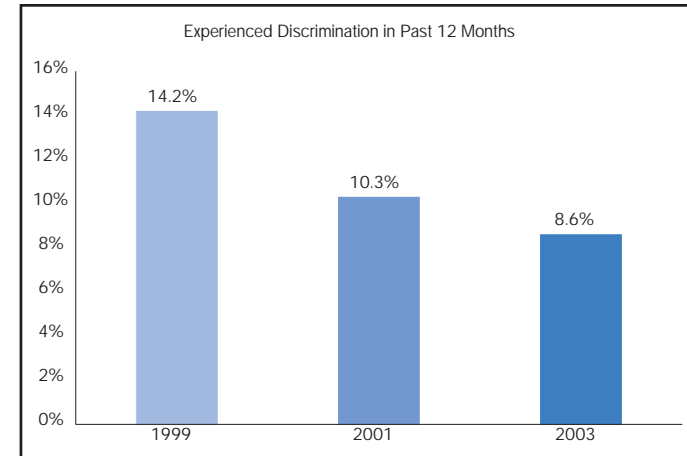
This indicator reports on the percentage of residents that has experienced some type of discrimination in the past twelve months. Both survey data and police reports are available to help us understand discrimination trends in the county.

### Why Is It Important?

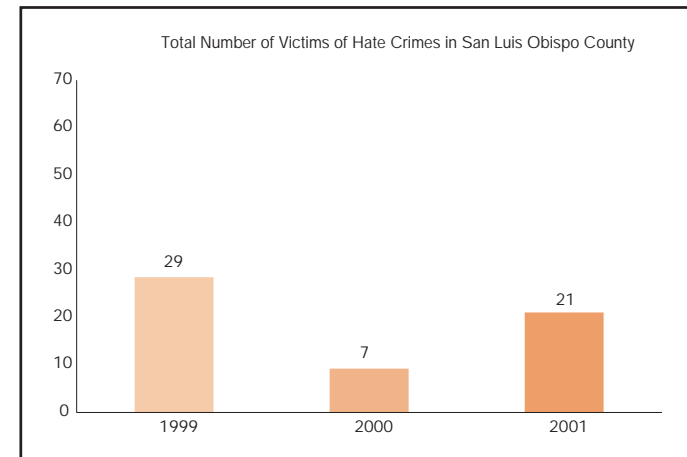
Everyone is entitled to a community free of discrimination. Being accepting of a person who is different from you is a trait that a community should strive to instill in all its members. Regularly surveying the community on this topic provides us with basic information on the scale of the problem, as well as the type of discrimination taking place.

### How Are We Doing?

The survey data indicates discrimination is down very slightly since 1999. However, the police reports show up and down numbers from year to year. Thus, there is no clear trend in the level of discrimination in the County.



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 2003



Source: Hate crimes in California 2001

“Have you been discriminated against in San Luis Obispo County in the last twelve months?”



## EDUCATION

### Chapter C

Action Goal: All students enter school ready to learn, and graduate from high school prepared for the workforce or higher education, and have an interest in life-long learning.

# STUDENT EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

## Indicator C1

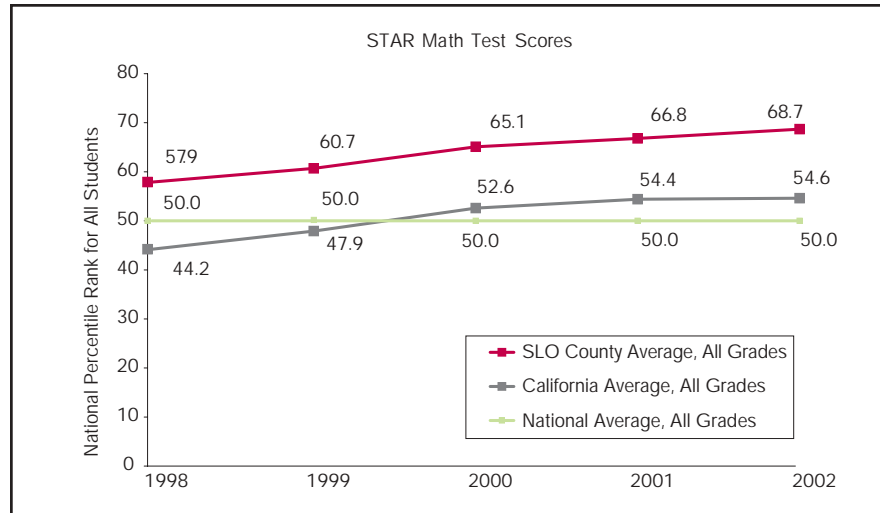
This indicator shows whether or not San Luis Obispo County students are improving their math and language skills.

### Why Is It Important?

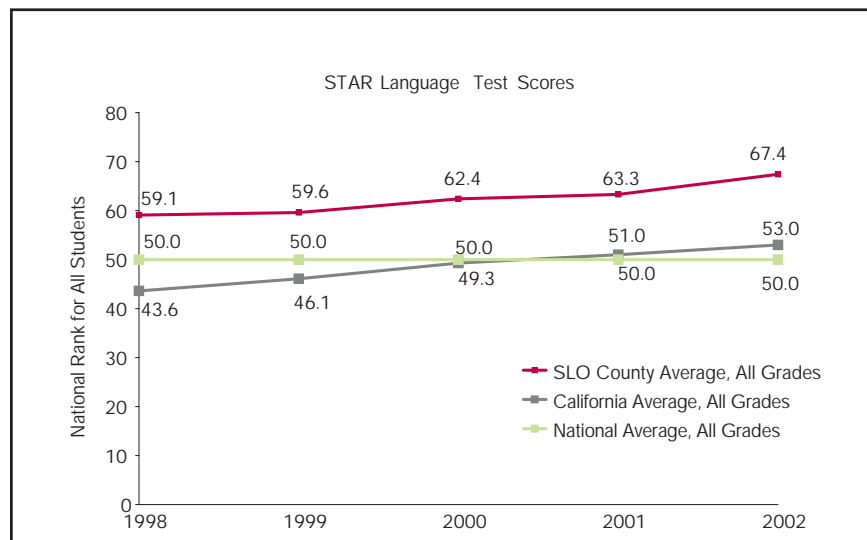
Young people need basic academic skills to participate fully in all aspects of life. Mastering these skills prepares students for further education, gainful employment, and self-sufficiency.

### How Are We Doing?

Since 1998 the California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program has required annual measurement of student achievement for public school students in grades 2 through 11. The program uses the nationally normed multiple-choice Stanford Achievement Test, 9th Edition (Stanford 9).



Source: California Department of Education



Source: California Department of Education

In both math and language, the national percentile rank for the "average" student in San Luis Obispo County (averaged across all grades) has outpaced state and national averages by at least 12 percentile points, and has risen consistently. 2002 was no exception, with San Luis Obispo students scoring 14.1 percentile points higher than California average in math and 14.4 percentile points higher in language.

This indicator tracks student achievement on the Stanford Achievement Test (STAR 9).

# HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES

Indicator C2

This indicator measures the percentage of students who drop out before completing four years of high school.

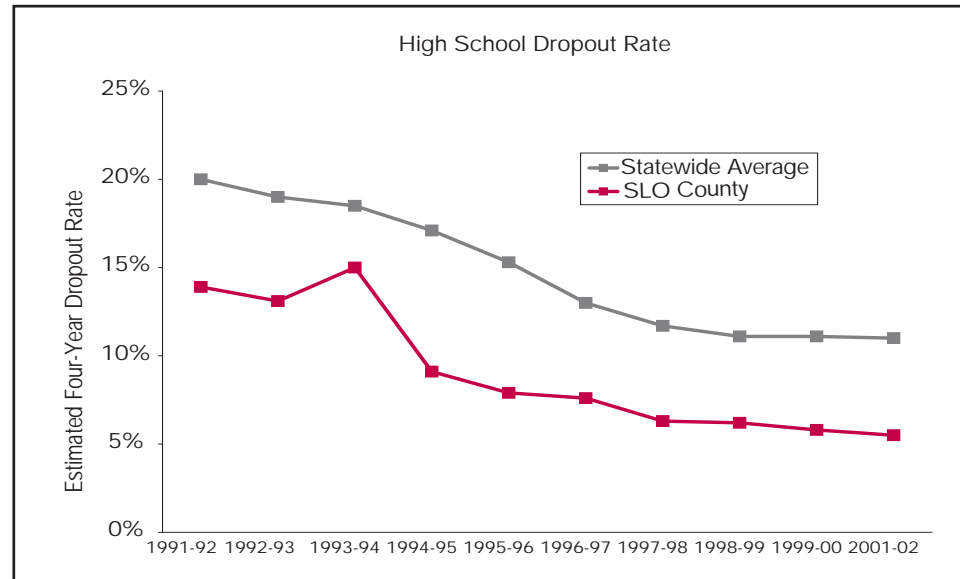
## Why Is It Important?

Lacking a solid education, students who drop out of high school often lose out on important opportunities in their lives, particularly employment.

## How Are We Doing?

Dropout rates have been on a gradual decline in San Luis Obispo County for the past six years, although slowing in rate since the 1999-2000 academic year. These rates remain significantly below statewide trends, which is about double the county numbers.

For 2001-02, districts with the highest four-year dropout rates were San Luis Coastal Unified (14.8) and Atascadero Unified (10.5). However, for the one-year rate for the same year, Shandon Joint Unified had the highest rate (3.3), followed by Atascadero Unified (1.1). The state one-year rate for that year was 2.7 percent.



Source: California Department of Education

This indicator measures the percentage of students who drop out before completing four years of high school.

# COLLEGE PREPARATION

## Indicator C3

This indicator measures the percentage of County high school graduates enrolling at Cuesta College with college-level language and math skills. More local high school graduates continue their education at Cuesta College than any other institution.

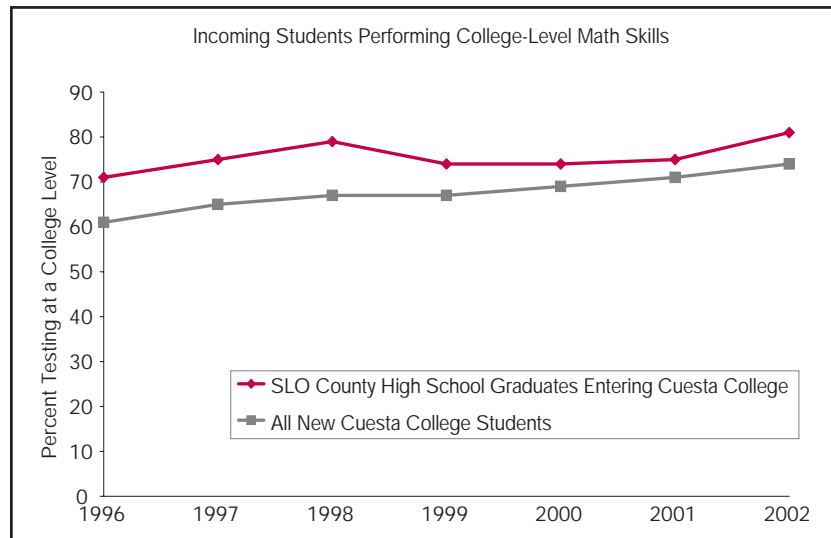
### Why Is It Important?

Fundamental math and language skills are essential for all students to advance academically on schedule and to participate fully in all aspects of the college experience. This measure indicates how well local high school graduates are prepared for college-level work.

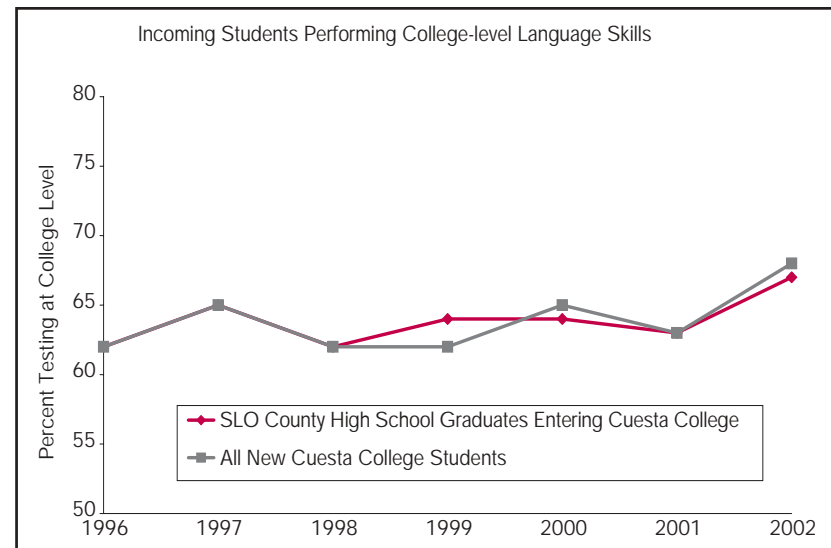
### How Are We Doing?

Community colleges across the state give incoming students standardized tests to determine if they need remedial classes in math and language. Those who meet the standard are deemed to be performing at the college level.

Although the long term trends are not entirely clear, it appears local high school graduates entering Cuesta are becoming slightly better prepared in both language and math skills. Compared with those coming from other areas, graduates of County high schools are noticeably better prepared for math but about equally prepared in language capabilities.



Source: Cuesta College, Matriculation Services, Advanced Placement Test



Source: Cuesta College, Matriculation Services, Advanced Placement Test

This indicator measures the percentage of county high school graduates enrolling at Cuesta College with college-level language and math skills.



# NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

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## Chapter D

Action Goal: We maintain and enhance the health and beauty of the natural environment by living within our natural resources and human abilities, and we plan and manage development.

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# AIR QUALITY

## Indicator D1

This indicator measures the quality of the air in San Luis Obispo County. The results are reported in terms of the number of days that air quality is considered unhealthy.

### Why Is It Important?

High levels of air pollution can have a major impact on people's health, especially those with respiratory problems. In addition, high levels of ozone reduce photosynthesis, which reduces crop yields. Ozone and particulates (small particles floating in the air) are the pollutants of greatest concern in San Luis Obispo County because they exceed state standards most frequently.

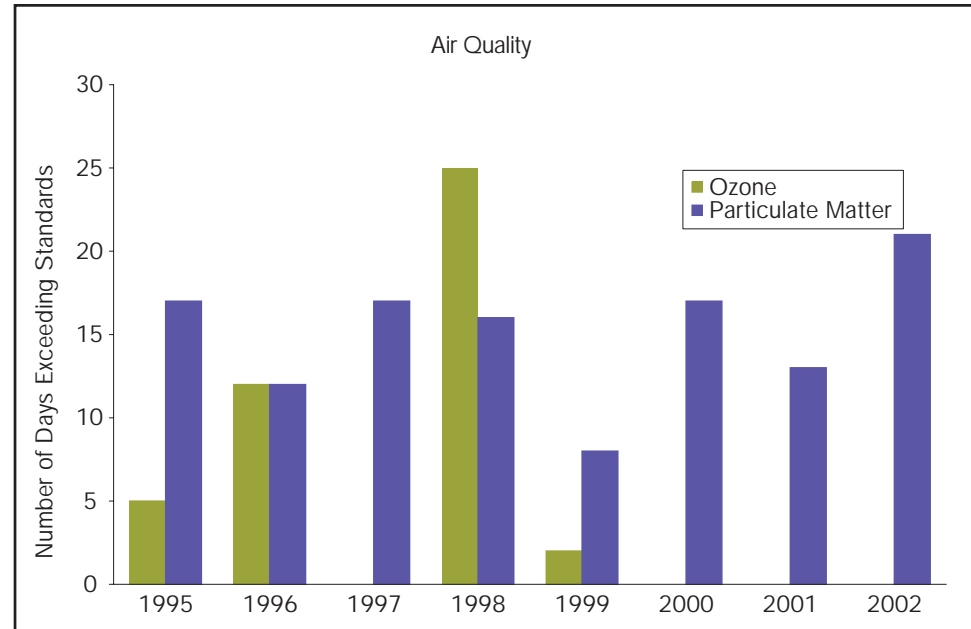
Unhealthy ozone levels can cause impaired breathing and reduced lung capacity along with significant crop and forest damage. Particulate matter pollution from mining, motor vehicle exhaust, factories, construction, roads, wildfires, and wind-blown dust can greatly reduce visibility in addition to being a health hazard.

### How Are We Doing?

A network of 10 monitoring stations throughout San Luis Obispo County routinely measures ozone and particulate matter. Ozone levels are measured continuously and averaged each hour. Particulate matter is sampled for 24 hours every sixth day. The Air Pollution Control District compares the average of the readings with the state's health-based standards. The results reveal how many days any monitoring station in the County exceeds the standards, or is considered unhealthy.

Although most people think the air in San Luis Obispo County is relatively pure, excessive particulate matter continues to cause unhealthy air in some parts of the county at some times. While the long term trend may be downward, there were still 21 days in 2002 where particulate matter was unhealthy. Most of the unhealthy readings occurred near the Nipomo Dunes. Since 1999 there have been no days when ozone made county air unhealthy.

This indicator measures the number of days that air quality is considered unhealthy.



Source: County Air Pollution Control District

# ENERGY USE

## Indicator D2

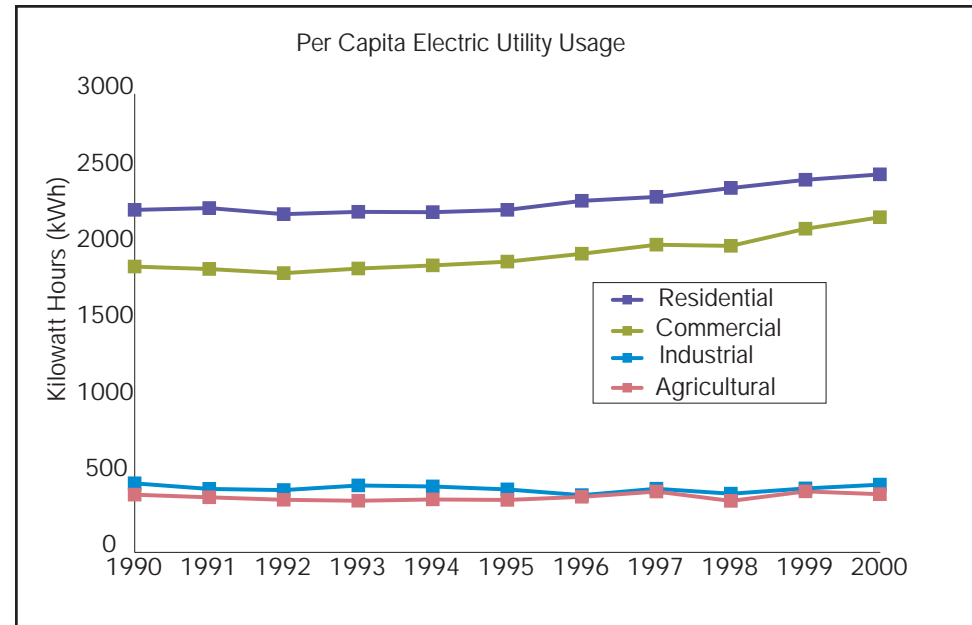
This indicator measures the amount of electricity used in San Luis Obispo County per person by the residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors. The State Energy Commission stopped publishing electricity use data after 2000. Although the data has not been updated, we are retaining this indicator in the hope they will resume publishing such data.

### Why Is It Important?

Reducing energy use has beneficial effects on both the County's economy and environment. Lower energy use means lower utility bills and more disposable income for residential users and lower operating costs for businesses. Lower per capita consumption in the residential sector reflects several factors, including higher energy efficiency resulting from better building construction, more efficient arrangement of urban land uses, use of more efficient electrical appliances and conservation of electrical energy by individual households.

### How Are We Doing?

The chart shows that per capita electrical use was stable during the first half of the decade, averaging about 2,234 kWh per capita. Since 1996, residential electrical energy use has increased by about 10 percent. This trend is going in the wrong direction. Per capita commercial electricity use also shows a rising trend, which may be due to the improved business environment in the last half of the 1990s. Industrial and agricultural electrical energy use have remained stable.



Source: California Energy Commission

This indicator measures the amount of electricity used in San Luis Obispo County per person by the residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors.

# GROWTH PATTERNS

## Indicator D3

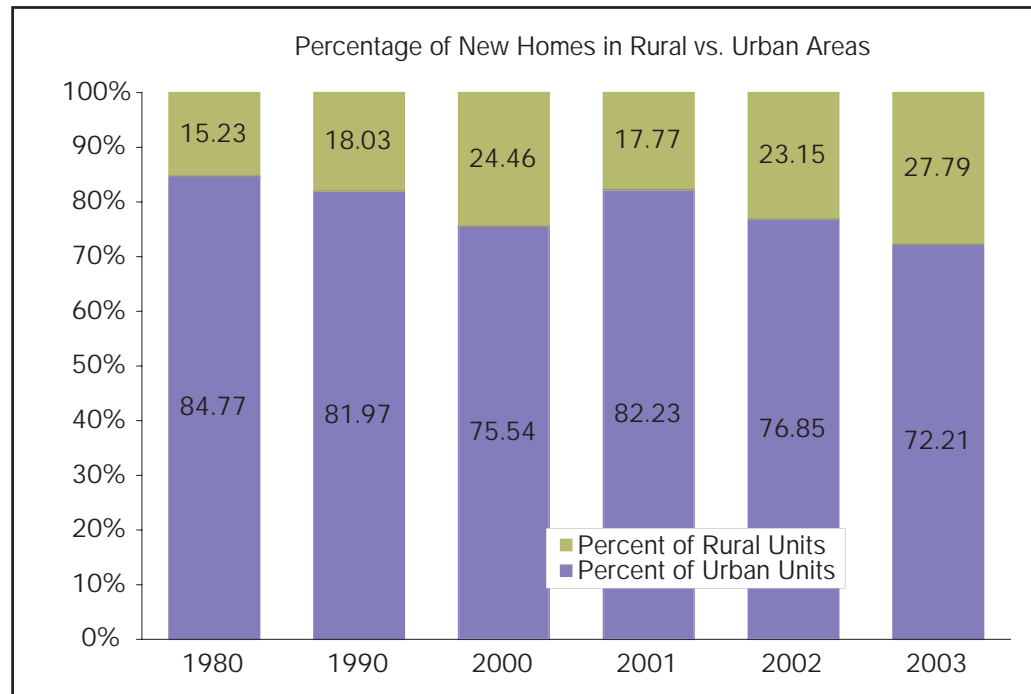
This indicator shows the number of new dwelling units completed each year in the County's rural areas as a percentage of all new dwelling units built in the County. The indicator is a measure of the effectiveness of government policies in encouraging new residential construction in existing communities to help reduce building in agricultural and open space lands.

### Why is it Important?

More compact development within existing communities enables more efficient provision of public services and helps maintain our sense of living in a rural County.

### How Are We Doing?

The County Department of Planning and Building tracks the number of new residences built in each part of the County and each incorporated city. In general, those built outside the cities and the Urban Reserve Lines (URL's) of unincorporated communities are built in what most think of as rural areas. In the 1990's, less than 20 percent of all new homes built in the County were built in rural areas, with about 80 percent built in the cities and unincorporated communities. The trend for the last decade has been slightly upward-climbing, which is a sign of sprawl. The goal is to reduce the percentage of rural buildings, all the while ensuring that urban areas provide a quality of life that makes them attractive places to live.



Source: County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department

This indicator shows the number of new dwelling units completed each year in the County's rural areas as a percentage of all new dwelling units built in the county.

# SCHOOL OVERCROWDING

## Indicator D4

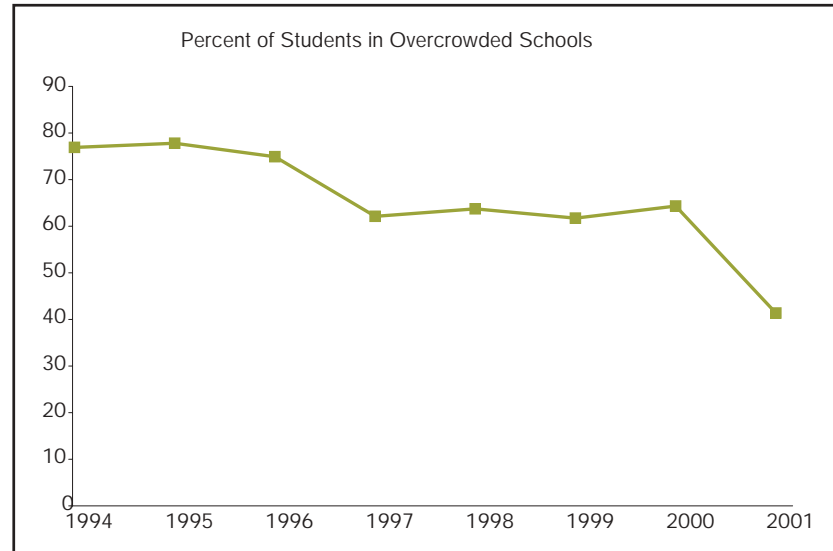
This indicator shows the percentage of students in the County's public schools who attend schools where enrollment exceeds the school's design capacity.

### Why is it Important?

Schools are designed to accommodate a certain number of students. The size of the library, the cafeteria, the classrooms, the playfields, and the number of restrooms are all determined by the expected student population. When the number of students exceeds the design capacity, each student's "share" of these facilities is diminished and the overall learning environment suffers. At the extreme, students may perceive that the community does not place a high priority on maintaining a high quality educational system. They may wonder why they should make a personal investment in such a system.

### How Are We Doing?

The way school facilities are funded in California makes it very difficult for districts to expand or build school buildings until existing facilities are overcrowded. State law limits the ability of school districts to collect fees from residential developers to expand facilities to accommodate a growing student population. Also, districts must demonstrate that existing schools are overcrowded to compete successfully for state building funds. Through 1996, about 75 percent of the County's students were in overcrowded schools. Since then, as existing schools have expanded, new schools opened and in some cases enrollment declined, the figure has dropped sharply to 41.3 percent.



Source: School Districts in San Luis Obispo County and County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department

This indicator shows the percentage of students in the County's public schools who attend schools where enrollment exceeds the school's design capacity.

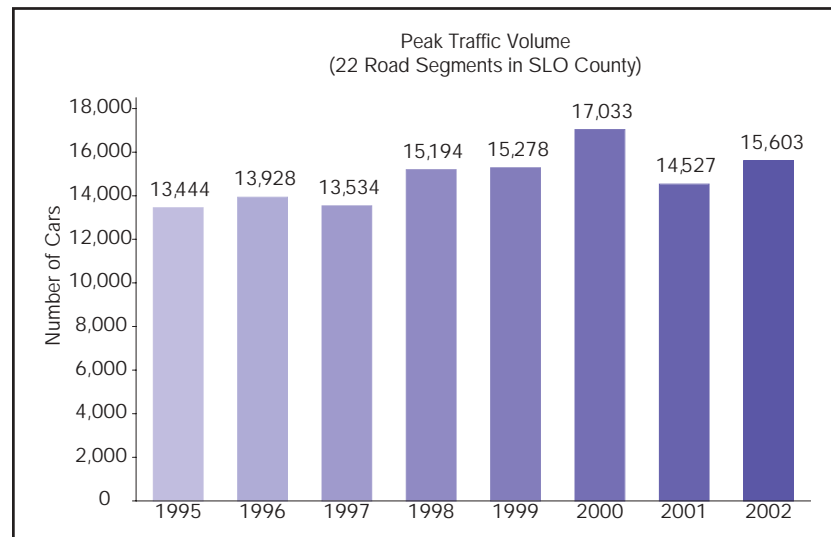
# TRAFFIC VOLUME

## Indicator D5

This indicator shows the level of vehicle traffic on our roadways.

### Why Is It Important?

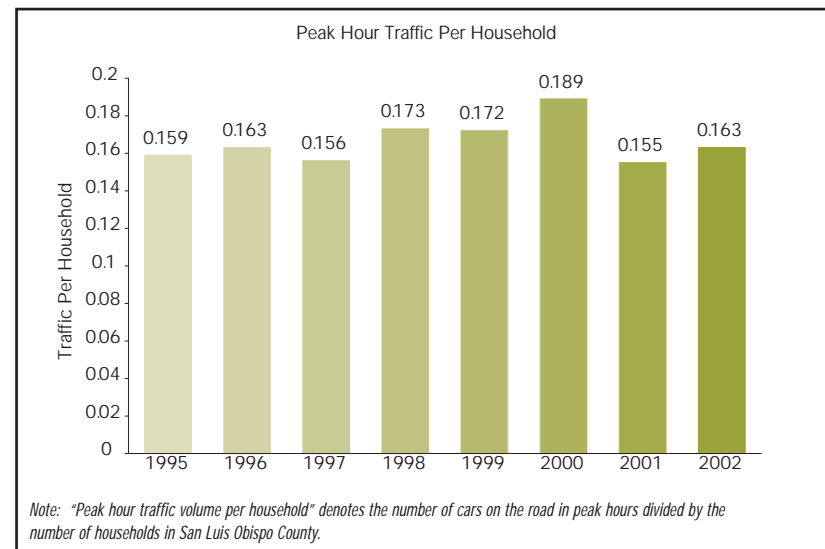
Growth in the numbers of vehicles on our roads has a number of disadvantages, including slower travel times, increased energy use, rising air pollution, more accidents, and added consumer cost, as well as the sense that we are becoming a congested urban area. Increases in the numbers of vehicle trips can result from: population growth, commuting because homes are not near jobs, and development outside of existing communities. The use of public transit, vanpools, carpools, bikes, and walking reduces the number of trips by single-occupant vehicles, which saves energy as well as reducing air pollution and traffic congestion.



Source: County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department

### How Are We Doing?

The San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building measures the number of vehicles using 22 road segments in the county-maintained road network during the peak traffic hour. Although traffic on city streets is not included, changes in traffic levels of County roads are probably a reflection of changes on all types of roads within the County. We include two graphs, one of which is a measure of traffic per household in order to control for increases in population. In both cases, we see that traffic volume in 2002 increased slightly from 2001. In per capita terms, traffic volume for this decade remains lower than traffic volume since 1996. These indicators can be used as a measure of success of local policies that encourage the use of public transit, bicycles and walking as alternative forms of transportation.



Note: "Peak hour traffic volume per household" denotes the number of cars on the road in peak hours divided by the number of households in San Luis Obispo County.

Source: County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department

This indicator shows the level of vehicle traffic on our roadways.

# WATER CONSUMPTION

## Indicator D6

This indicator shows how efficiently we are using limited water supplies. The indicator shows the average amount of water used each day by customers (mostly homes) of the larger water providers in the County.

### Why Is It Important?

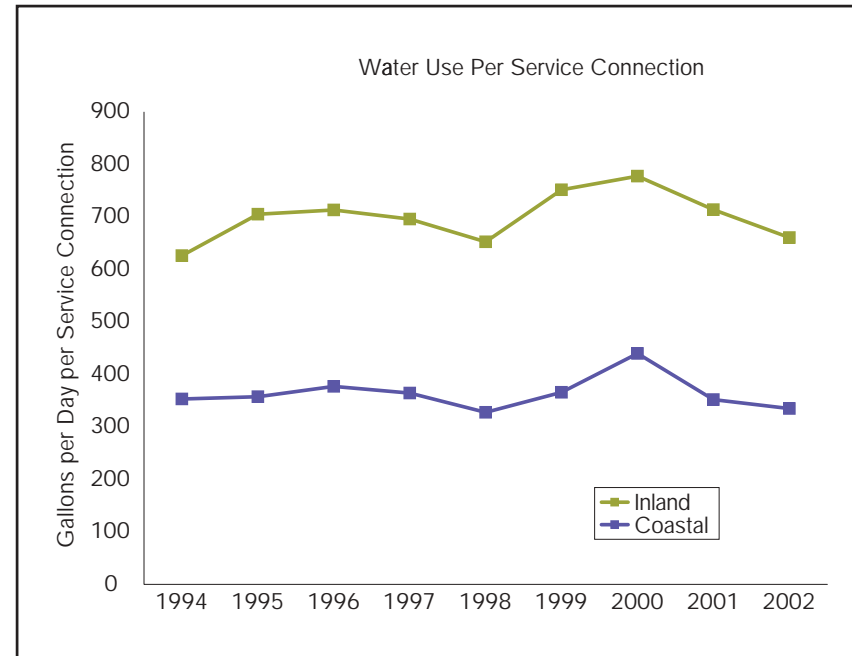
The water supply in San Luis Obispo County is limited largely to the annual rainfall, which is stored in reservoirs and underground aquifers. Many people are concerned that we are pumping more water from the aquifers than is replaced by the winter rains. Importing water from outside the County and desalinating ocean water are expensive alternatives. A growing population, increasing crop irrigation, and expanding businesses all increase the demand for water. One of the easiest and least expensive ways to increase the supply of water is to use what we have more efficiently, through the adoption of water conservation practices by individual consumers and water suppliers.

### How Are We Doing?

The San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building compiles water use data from the incorporated cities, community service districts (CSD's) and some larger private water companies. These data do not include water pumped privately for agricultural irrigation. Consumers in the inland areas (north of the Santa Lucia range) use more water because of their higher summer temperatures. Therefore, the graph shows average annual water use per connection separately for inland and coastal areas.

Water demand is influenced by the annual weather patterns. In hotter, drier years more water is used for landscaping and crops. The graph reflects these annual weather fluctuations. As conservation measures are more widely used, we should begin to see a downward trend in water use per connection. Although water use has declined since 2000, it is not clear if this is the beginning of a long term trend prompted by conservation efforts.

This indicator shows the average amount of water used each day by customers of the larger water providers in the County.



Source: Water purveyors, County of San Luis Obispo Planning and Building Department



## HEALTH ISSUES

### Chapter E

Action Goal: All persons practice healthy behaviors, have access to and use preventive and primary health care services that enable them to maximize their physical and mental well-being.

# EXERCISE

## Indicator E1

This indicator measures the County residents' self-reported frequency of concentrated exercise (30 minutes or more). Specifically, phone survey respondents were asked the question: "How many days a week do you engage in physical activity (such as gardening or brisk walking) for a combined total of 30 minutes or more?"

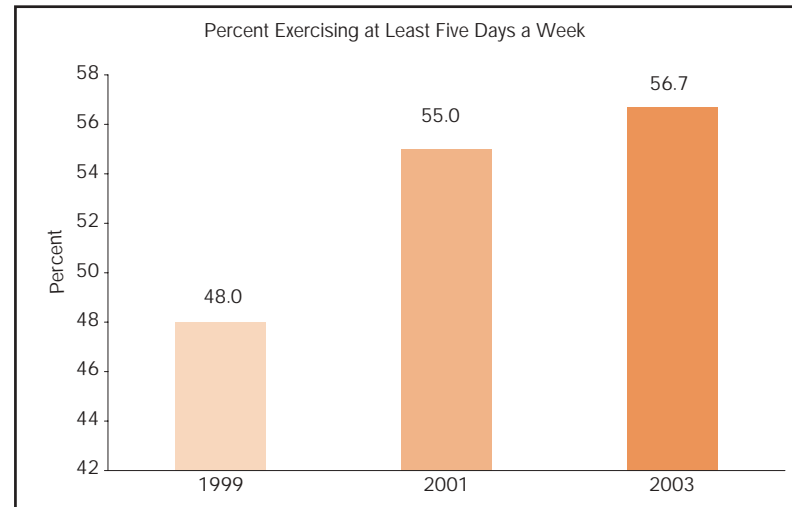
### Why Is It Important?

Regular, sustained exercise is shown to be a key to maintaining good health, longevity, and well being. Through sustained exercise, the heart enters an aerobic state, strengthening the heart muscle, burning fat, directing additional oxygen to body organs, and causes the brain to release endorphins improving attitude and mental acuity.

### How Are We Doing?

In 1999, 2001, and 2003, telephone survey respondents were asked to indicate the number of days each week they participate in physical activity for 30 minutes or more. While some may exaggerate their answers to questions about a socially acceptable behavior, tracking responses to the same question over time can uncover change in the level of behavior.

In 2002, 56.7 percent of survey respondents said they exercised at least five times. This is practically the same as results from the 2001 survey, in which 55 percent of respondents claimed to exercise at least five times a week. However, in comparison with 1999, we begin to observe positive changes in exercise habits, as the percent of exercisers increased by eight percent from 48 percent.



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 1999, 2001, 2003

"How many days a week do you engage in physical activity (such as gardening or brisk walking) for a combined total of 30 minutes or more?"

# PHYSICAL HEALTH

## Indicator E2

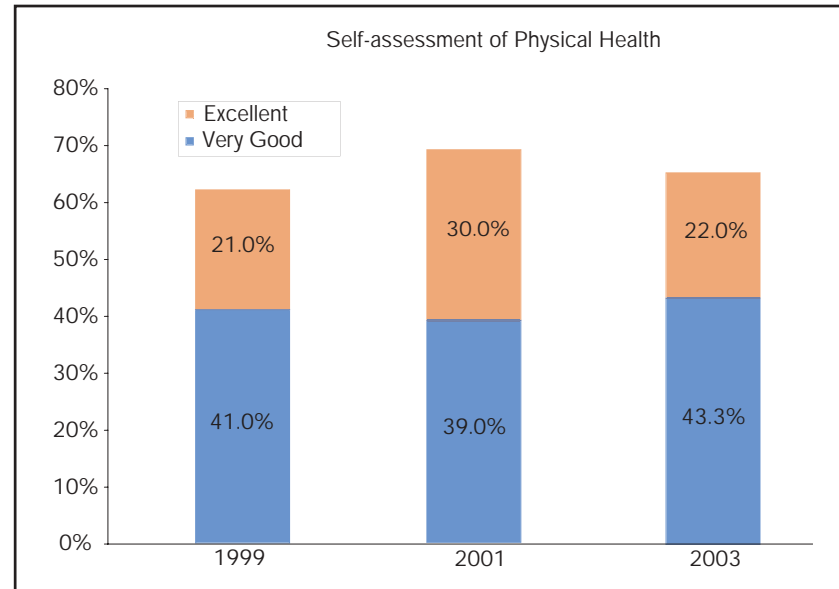
This indicator measures the proportion of County residents who report being in “good” or “excellent” physical health.

### Why Is It Important?

Good physical health makes it easier for people to participate in nearly every aspect of personal and community life.

### How Are We Doing?

According to the telephone surveys, about two-thirds of San Luis Obispo County residents are in excellent or very good health. The proportion increased between 1999 and 2001 but dipped slightly in 2003. This will be an interesting trend to watch as our county's population continues to age.

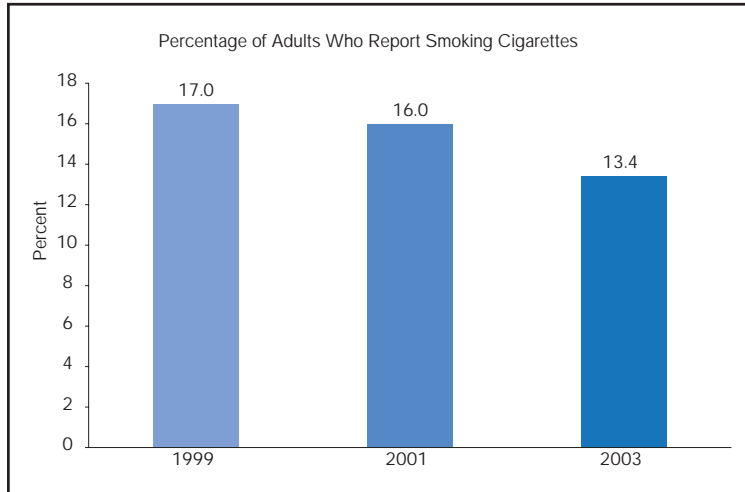


Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 1999, 2001, 2003

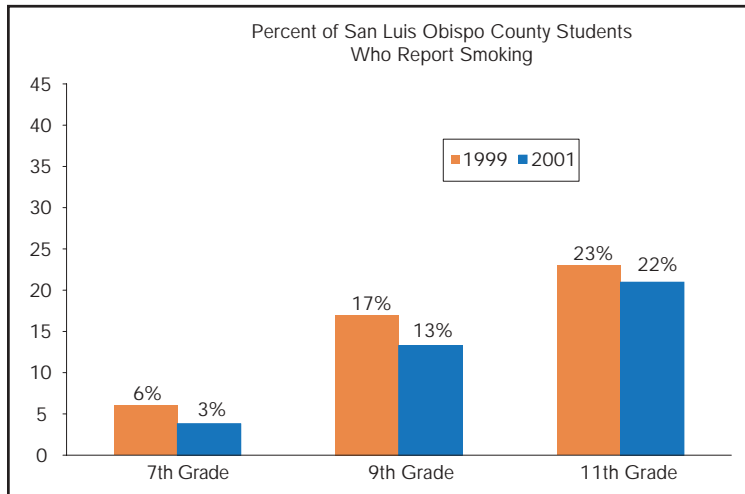
In general, would you say your health is:  
excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor.

# TOBACCO USE

## Indicator E3



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 1999, 2001, 2003



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey, 1999, 2001

This indicator reports on the proportions of adults and teens who smoke.

### Why Is It Important?

The Center for Disease Control reports that, in addition to the well known association with cancer, cigarette smoking also causes heart disease and stroke. On average, someone who smokes a pack or more of cigarettes per day lives seven years less than someone who never smoked.

Among young people, the short-term health consequences of smoking include respiratory and non-respiratory effects, addiction to nicotine, and the associated risk of other drug use. Long-term health consequences of youth smoking are reinforced by the fact that most young people who smoke regularly continue to smoke throughout adulthood.

In addition, teens who smoke are three times more likely than non-smokers to use alcohol, eight times more likely to use marijuana, and 22 times more likely to use cocaine.

### How Are We Doing?

Adults in the 1999, 2001 and 2003 ACTION phone surveys were asked about their smoking behavior. In 2003, 13.4 percent adults said they smoke, a decline from the reported 16 percent of adult smokers in 2001 and 17 percent in 1999.

Among students in the California Healthy Kids Surveys that took place in 1999 and 2001, there was a decrease among all age groups surveyed. Trends show that the likelihood of a student smoking increases as students grow older. Of the 1,619 11th graders surveyed, 22% smoke cigarettes on a daily basis.

This indicator reports on the proportions of adults and teens who smoke.

# TEEN ALCOHOL ABUSE

## Indicator E4

This indicator measures self-reported episodes of heavy drinking among students.

### Why Is It Important?

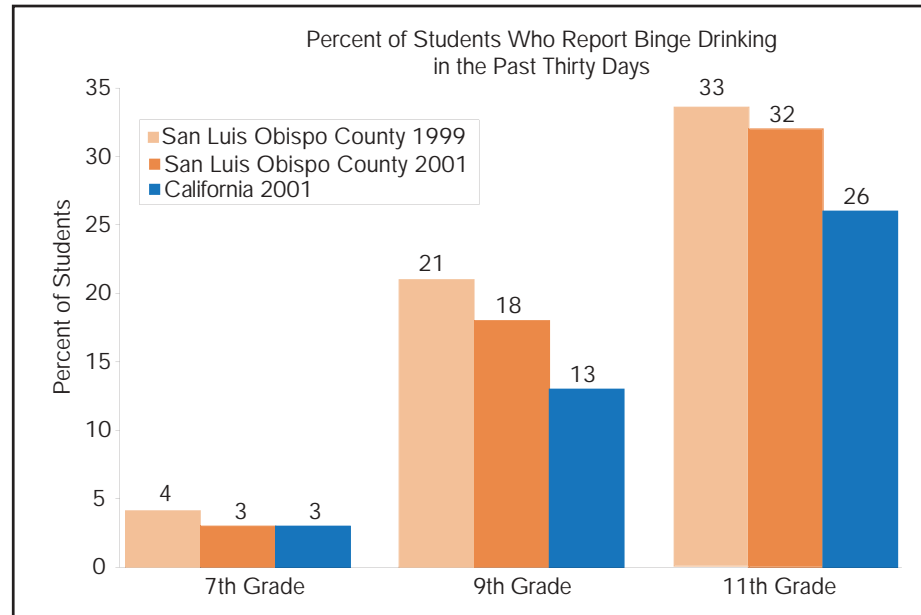
In addition to increased likelihood of addiction, as well as short-term and long-term health risks, binge drinkers open themselves up to many alcohol-related problems, including losing control over their actions, making poor choices, and taking part in high-risk activities such as unprotected sex and driving while intoxicated.

### How Are We Doing?

In Fall 2001, the California Healthy Kids Survey asked students the following question:

“During the past 30 days, did you drink five (alcoholic) drinks in a couple of hours?” The consumption of five drinks in a single setting is one of the most widely used definitions of heavy drinking, frequently referred to as “binge-drinking.”

Large numbers of San Luis Obispo County high schoolers participate in binge drinking. Almost one in five freshmen and more than one in three juniors report drinking five or more drinks at one time. Although some students may tend to exaggerate their behavior, others may tend to underreport their binge drinking. Thus, while the absolute accuracy of the numbers may be in question, by any account, they are high. The proportion reporting binge drinking was down slightly from 1999 for freshmen but unchanged for the other grade levels. Another telling comparison is that binge drinking levels in San Luis Obispo County are substantially higher than statewide rates, which are measured in the same way.



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey, 2001

This indicator measures self-reported episodes of heavy drinking episodes among students.

# TEEN BIRTH RATE

## Indicator E5

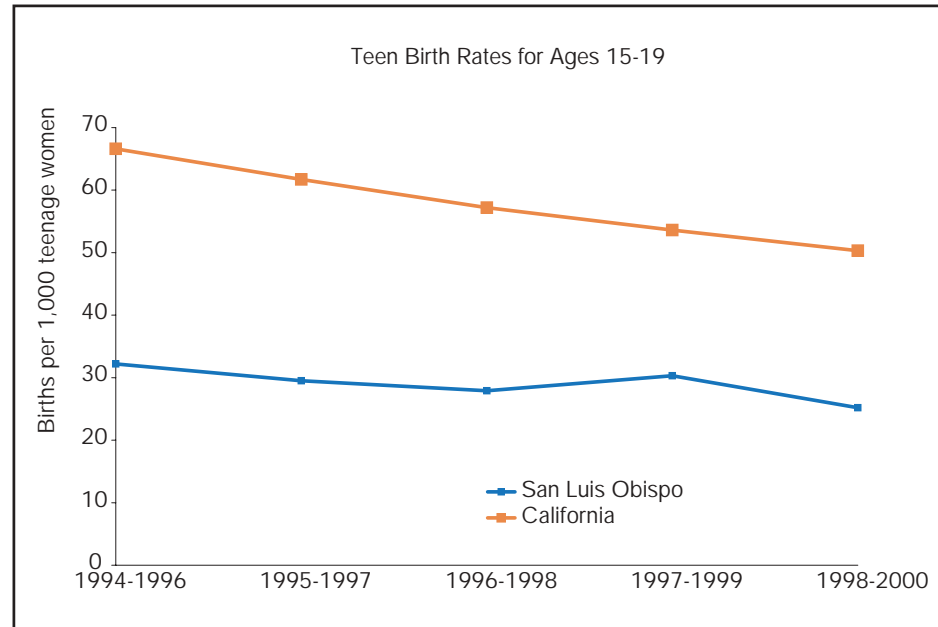
The teen pregnancy rate measures the number of births to teenage women between the ages of 15 and 19 for every thousand women of the same age in the population.

### Why is it Important?

Pregnancy and child bearing during adolescence can jeopardize the health of both the mother and unborn child. Teen mothers are at greater risk for having pregnancy complications, premature births, and low birth weight infants. Young mothers can also face decreased employment opportunities, lower educational attainment, and increased likelihood of poverty and welfare dependence. Further, teen births represent a significant financial burden to the public. The state estimates that close to 75 percent of all teen births are paid by Medi-Cal, and the total public program costs (i.e., CalWorks, Medi-Cal) for the first year of one teen pregnancy conservatively hovers around \$10,000.

### How Are We Doing?

The County's teen birth rate appears to be declining slowly. The County rate is only about one-half the rate for teens across the state.



Source: California Department of Health Services

The teen pregnancy rate measures the number of births to teen women between the ages of 15 and 19 for every thousand women of the same age in the population.

# ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

## Indicator E6

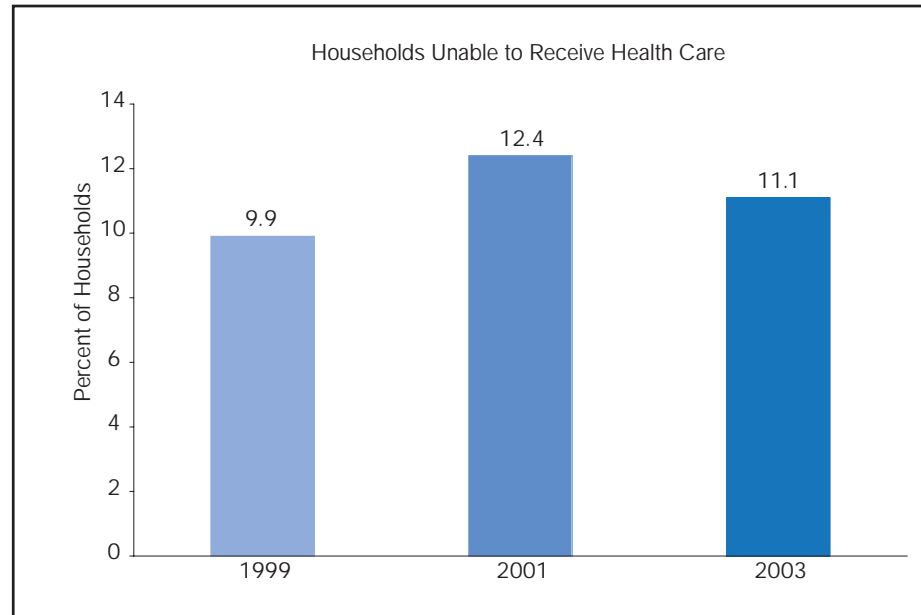
This indicator measures the number of people who reported being unable to obtain needed health care in the past year because they could not afford it.

### Why Is It Important?

The California Health Care Foundation states, "Californians have access to some of the best health care in the world. Yet on any given day, there can be a disappointing gap between the quality of medical care that scientific research has shown we can achieve and the quality of medical care that we actually receive. Variations in the quality of our health care- delivered by health plans, hospitals, provider groups, and long-term care facilities- have serious implications for all Californians."

### How Are We Doing?

In the three countywide ACTION telephone surveys, more than one in ten residents reports not being able to afford health care. The question used in the 1999 survey was slightly different, so those results are not fully comparable to the 2001 and 2003 results. Nonetheless, the proportion unable to receive care has been reasonably constant since 1999 despite the turmoil in the local health care industry. Although most would consider the number of people unable to receive health care as being too high, at least it has not grown in recent years.



Source: ACTION for Health Communities telephone survey, 1999, 2001, 2003

"Have you or a member of your household needed health care in the past year and been unable to receive it because you could not afford it?"

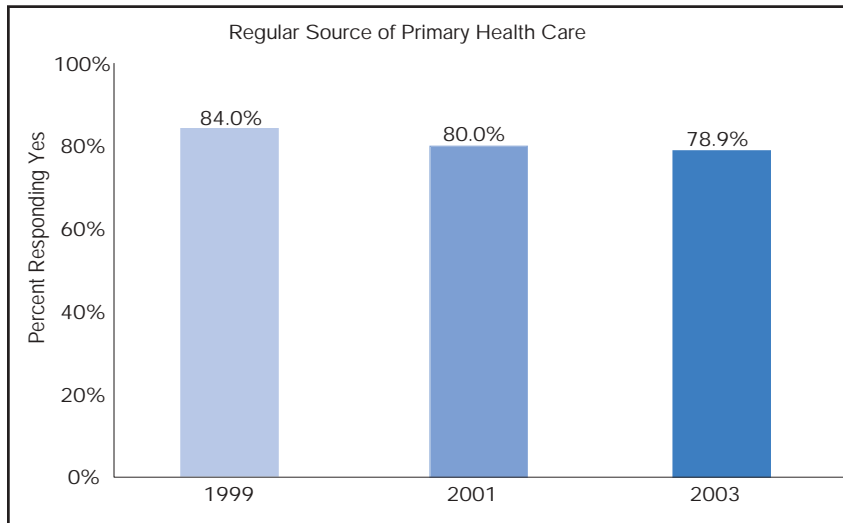
# PRIMARY HEALTH AND DENTAL CARE

Indicator E7

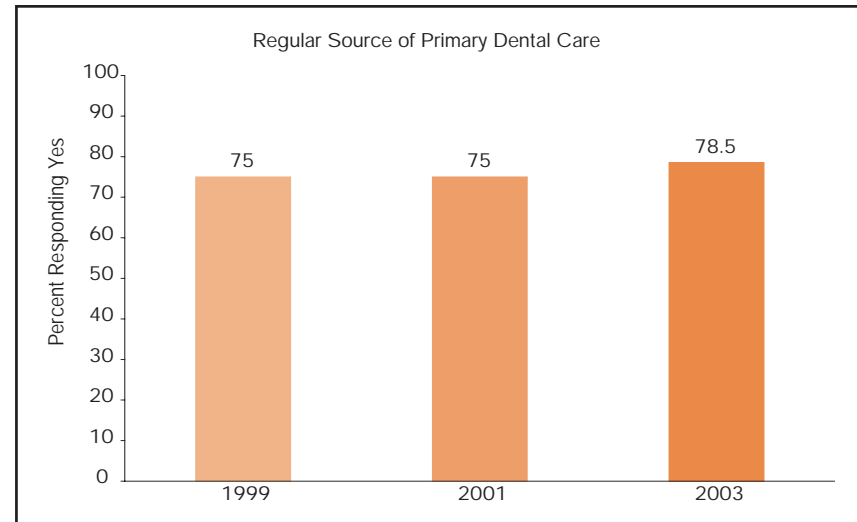
This indicator measures the availability of a regular source of medical and dental care.

## Why Is It Important?

Maintaining health through regular preventative care is the most effective and least expensive form of health care, and represents one of the best investments in public health resources. In addition, if residents know in advance where to turn for medical or dental care, they are more likely to be able to access appropriate care when needed.



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 1999, 2001, 2003



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 1999, 2001, 2003

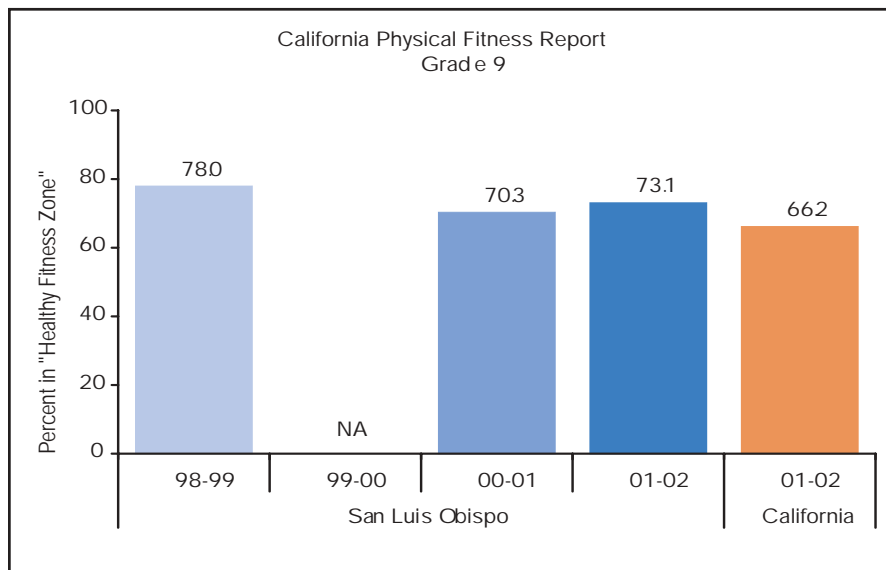
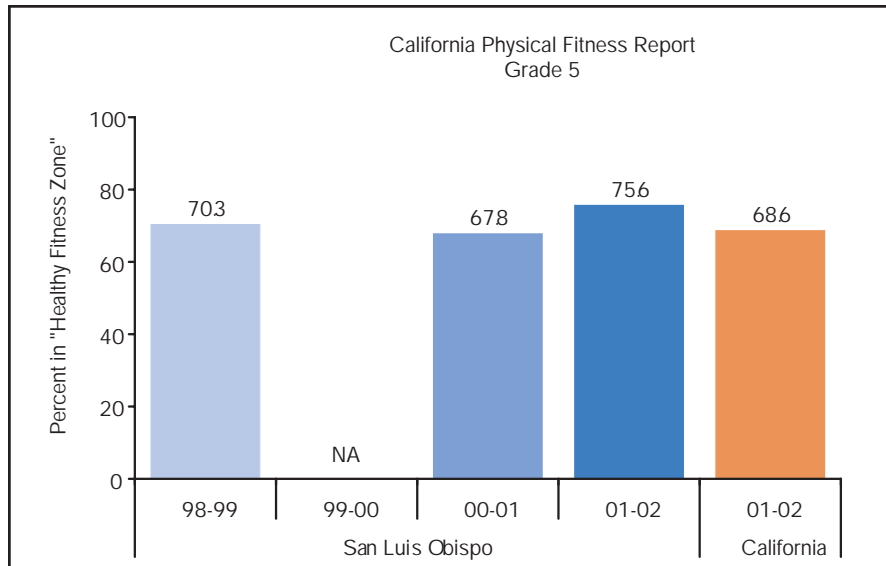
## How Are We Doing?

Despite the turmoil in the San Luis Obispo County medical care, there has been no change since 2001 in the number of people reporting having a regular source of medical care. However, there had been a decline between 1999 and 2001. In terms of dental care, there has been a slight increase in the number reporting having a regular source, from 75 percent in the last two surveys to 78.5 percent.

“Do you have a regular source of primary health care?”  
“Do you have a regular source of dental care?”

# STUDENT PHYSICAL FITNESS

## Indicator E8



Source: California Department of Education

This indicator measures the physical fitness of elementary and high school students.

### Why Is It Important?

Many people think educational efforts mainly involve mental, social, and emotional learning. However, it is just as important to teach students to take care of their bodies and health. Good health habits learned in childhood are likely to last a lifetime, yielding long-term financial and quality-of-life benefits for the entire community.

### How Are We Doing?

The Fitnessgram tests several types of physical ability among fifth, seventh, and ninth graders statewide. The test uses criterion-referenced standards to evaluate fitness performance. Performance is classified into two general areas: in, or not in "healthy fitness zone (HFZ)." The standards were established by the Cooper Institute for Aerobic Research to represent a level of fitness that offers some degree of protection against disease that results from sedentary living.

Among local students, fitness levels in Spring 2002 for both fifth graders and ninth graders increased slightly from the previous academic year. San Luis Obispo County students also scored higher on average than students statewide.

This measures the percent of fifth and ninth grade students who are evaluated to be "in the healthy fitness zone" according to Fitnessgram tests.

# IMMUNIZATION RATE

## Indicator E9

This indicator measures the percentage of children immunized against preventable diseases by age two.

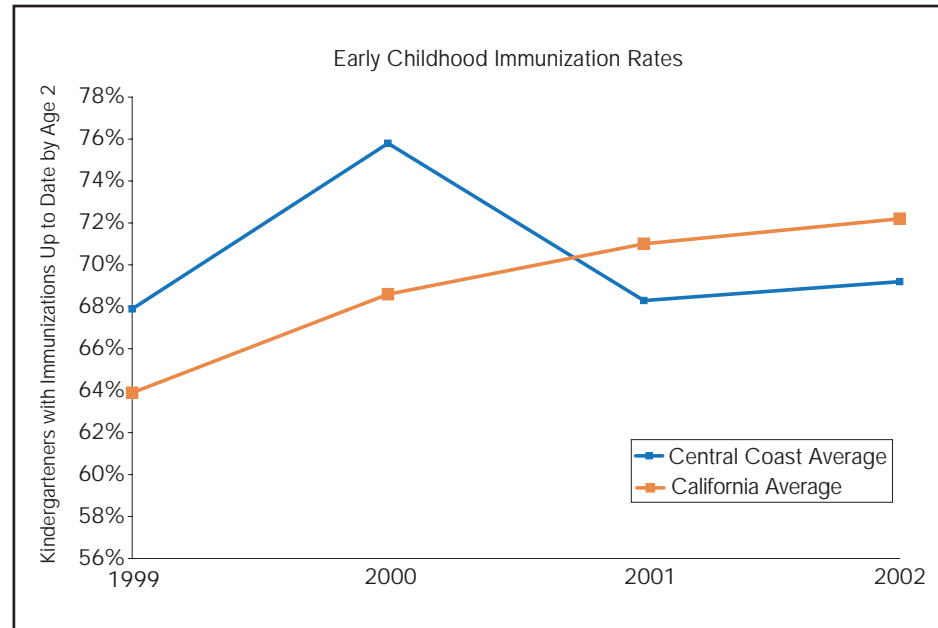
### Why Is It Important?

Immunizations are a key preventative measure that safeguards the health of children as well as the overall community. The widespread success of immunization programs in the United States has resulted in a drastic reduction of many infectious diseases.

### How Are We Doing?

By the time they get to kindergarten, the vast majority of children, countywide and statewide, have received adequate immunizations. Public health officials reviewing kindergartners' immunization records also determine the proportion that had immunizations up to date by age two.

In recent years, the County has strongly promoted early immunizations. While these efforts appeared to have had a positive impact in the late 1990's, the rate of early immunizations has dropped by more than 8 percent since 2000, sinking below the statewide rates.



Source: California Department of Health Services

This indicator measures the percentage of children immunized against preventable diseases by age two.



## PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES

### Chapter F

Action Goal: All persons feel and are safe in their homes, schools, workplace, and communities.

# VIOLENT AND PROPERTY CRIMES

## Indicator F1

This indicator measures the number of violent and property crimes reported in San Luis Obispo County.

### Why Is It Important?

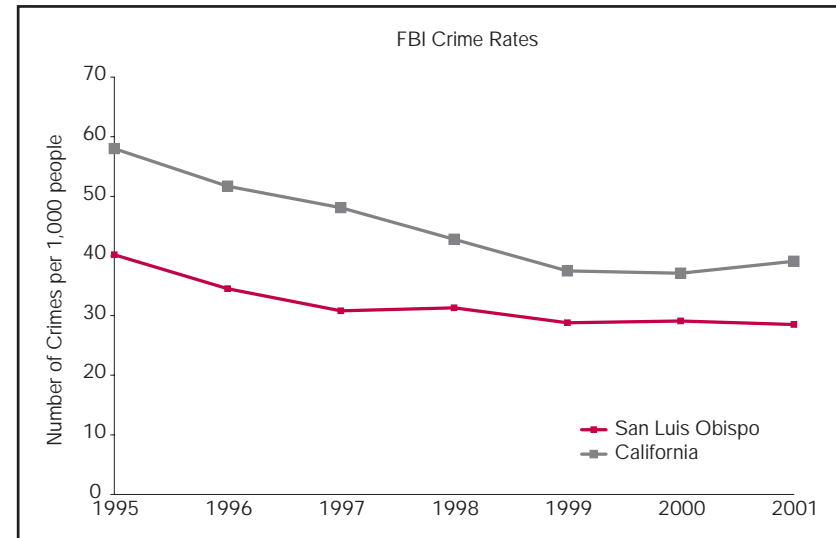
Crime is a reflection of the basic social and economic health of a community. Crime and the perception of crime are directly linked to residents' feelings of safety and security, and is an important element in determining the quality of life in a community.

### How Are We Doing?

The California Department of Justice collects violent and property crime data from all of the County's law enforcement agencies. Specifically, the violent crimes tallied are murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault. Reported property crimes include burglary, larceny, auto theft and arson. Although this indicator has

been widely used and reported by the FBI since the 1930s, it suffers several weaknesses. The statistic fails to take into account the number of victims; they merely report the number of incidences. Also, more numerous but less traumatic crimes, such as driving under the influence, fraud, vandalism, abuse, and disturbing the peace are excluded from this indicator.

In continuing with nearly a decade-long trend, FBI Crime rates for San Luis Obispo County continue to be on a decline, although the rate of decline has slowed since 1998. This is not unlike statewide trends which, with the exception of 2001, has also experienced declining crime rates.

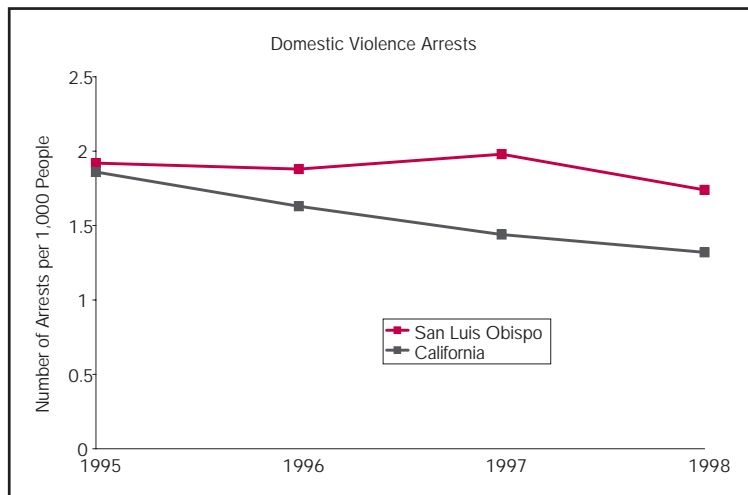
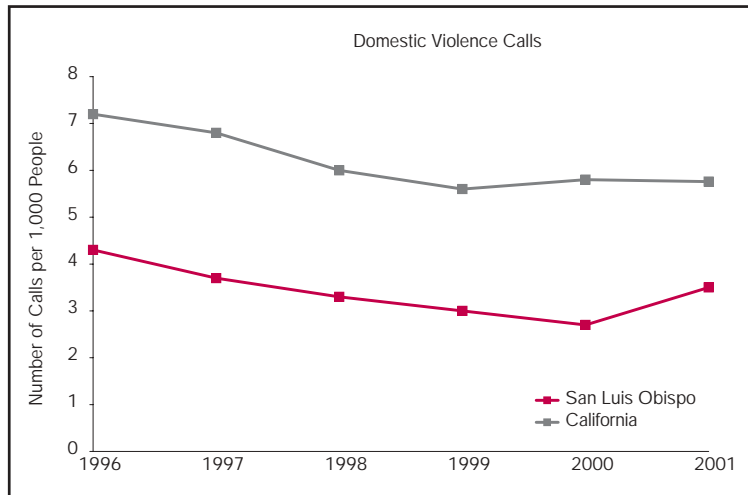


Source: California Criminal Justice Profile

The FBI index is derived from the sum of eight types of crimes: homicides, forcible rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults, burglaries, motor vehicle thefts, larceny-theft, and arson.

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Indicator F2



Source: California Department of Justice Criminal Justice Statistics Center

This indicator monitors the level of domestic violence in the County. Two measures, the number of domestic violence-related calls for assistance and the number of arrests for domestic violence, provide the data.

### Why Is It Important?

The incidence of domestic violence and abuse is one reflection of the quality of family life. There is a direct link between a healthy community and the incidence of domestic violence. Domestic violence and abuse includes attacks with guns, knives, heavy objects hands, fists, and feet.

Researchers have found that domestic violence, especially spouse abuse, is sometimes caused by financial stress in the family. When families experience unemployment or other money problems, violence is more likely to occur.

### How Are We Doing?

The accompanying data are based on law enforcement reports from across the County. A "call for assistance" means a police office was dispatched in response to a call, but no arrest resulted from the officer's visit. In order for an arrest to occur, a victim would have to press charges against the abuser.

Through 2000, domestic violence in San Luis Obispo County declined slowly but steadily. However, 2001 showed a significant, and we hope temporary, upturn. Nonetheless, domestic violence appears to be much less common in San Luis Obispo County than in the state, which has almost twice the rate of domestic violence calls.

This indicator measures the number of domestic violence-related calls for assistance and the number of arrests for domestic violence.

# JUVENILE CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

## Indicator F3

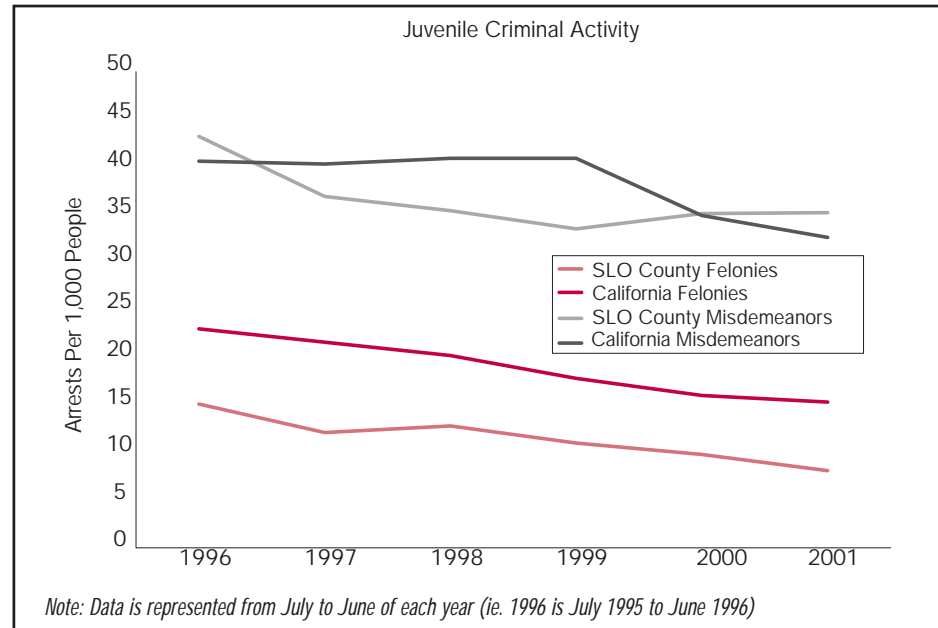
This indicator measures the number of juveniles who are apprehended in connection with any type of crime, from minor offenses to felonies.

### Why Is It Important?

The number of juveniles committing crimes is a sign of how well a community (families, schools, and other organizations) is rearing its young people, as well as an indicator of how many youths might be headed toward a life of crime. Communities with low incidences of juvenile criminal activity are perceived to be healthier than communities with higher rates of such crime.

### How Are We Doing?

Local juvenile felonies have been steadily decreasing. They are roughly half the state level. Local misdemeanors have been essentially flat for the last five years. The misdemeanor rates are similar to the state level, and in fact higher than the state level for 2001.



Source: County Probation Department, Juvenile Services Unit

This indicator measures the number of juveniles who are apprehended in connection with crimes, both misdemeanors and felonies.

# CHILD ABUSE REPORTS

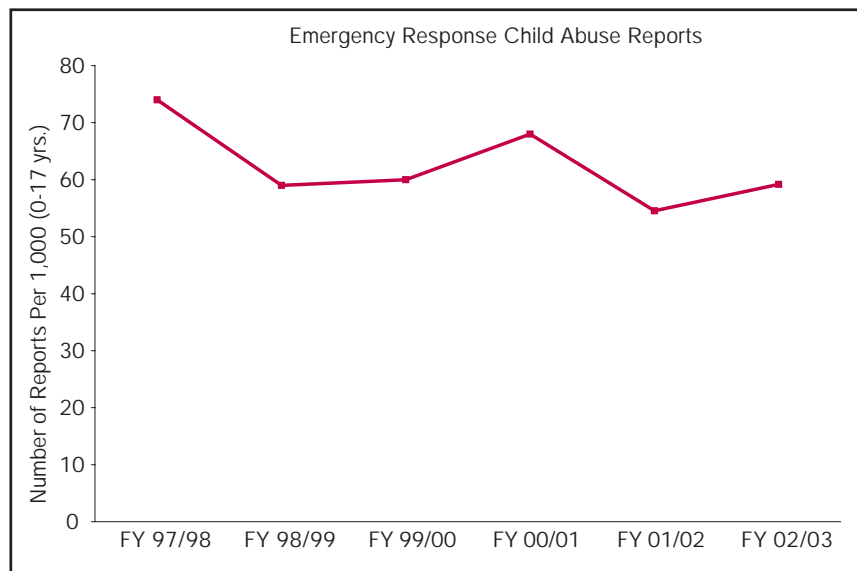
## Indicator F4

**T**his indicator reports on the level of child abuse in San Luis Obispo County. It reports the number of investigated reports, both emergency and non-emergency responses.

### Why Is It Important?

There is a direct link between a healthy community and the prevention of child abuse. Child abuse encompasses sexual abuse, physical abuse, verbal abuse, severe neglect, and other forms of abuse. In addition to the physical and psychological damage inflicted on the child, the consequence of child abuse places demands on support services and school systems.

### How Are We Doing?



Source: San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services

This graph shows the number of emergency child abuse reports filed each year by the County Child Welfare Services office. Reports taken by law enforcement authorities are not included.

In recent years, reported child abuse rates have not shown any clear trend. The number of such reports exceeds 3,000 per year in San Luis Obispo County.

This indicator reports on the level of child abuse in San Luis Obispo County. It reports the number of investigated reports, both emergency and non-emergency responses.

# ADULT SAFETY PERCEPTIONS

## Indicator F5

This indicator reports how safe county residents actually feel in their neighborhoods.

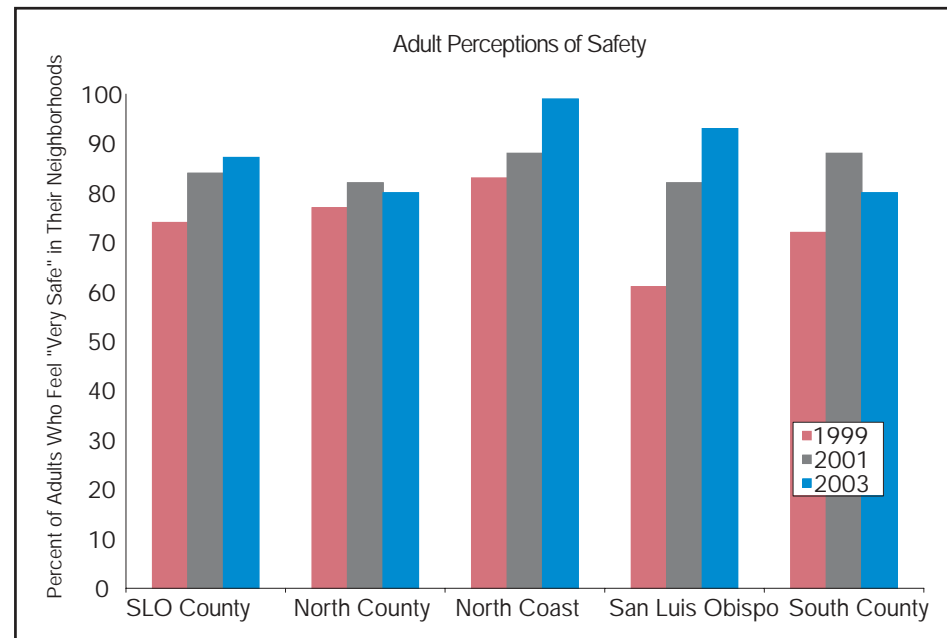
### Why Is It Important?

How safe someone feels is a reflection of personal experiences as well as impressions of the general level of crime, which come largely from the media. Of course, one may be fearful of many activities that are not crimes. Homeless people, rowdy neighbors, dark parking lots, aggressive drivers, and drunks outside a bar may make some uneasy or fearful. However, it is criminal behavior over which society has the most control. If authorities inform the public about the true level of crime in the community, then residents should be able to form an accurate impression of their physical safety.

### How Are We Doing?

This indicator uses the results of the ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone surveys of adult residents. Over 500 residents responded in 1999, 800 responded in 2001 and 522 residents responded in 2003 to the question, "How safe would you say you feel in your neighborhood?"

In 2003, nearly 90 percent of residents say they feel "very safe" in the neighborhood. These results confirm an upward trend between the three survey years, representing a nearly 20 percent increase in residents who feel very safe in their neighborhood since 1999. As in past years, the North Coast area had the most respondents say they felt very safe. Conversely, the South Coast and North County were the two areas in which the percent of respondents reporting that they felt safe decreased.



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities, 1999, 2001 and 2003

"How safe would you say you feel in your neighborhood?"

# STUDENT SAFETY PERCEPTIONS

Indicator F6

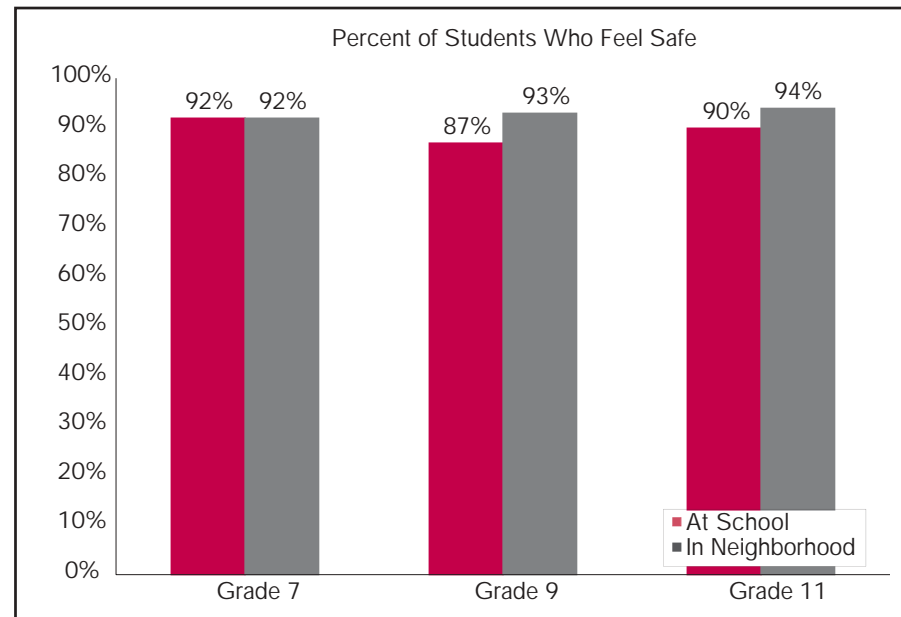
This indicator reports whether young people feel safe in their schools and neighborhoods.

## Why Is It Important?

Just as it is important for adults to feel safe in the community, it is equally important for children to feel safe in their schools. An educational institution should maintain a safe environment where students can learn without concern for their personal safety. A peaceful campus also allows teachers and administrators to focus on educational needs rather than security issues.

## How Are We Doing?

The California Healthy Kids Survey 2001 asked students about safety, both in their schools and their neighborhoods. Young people in San Luis Obispo County say they feel quite safe in both places, especially so in their neighborhoods. Across the three grade levels, nine out of ten students feel safe in their schools, and an even slightly higher proportion feel safe in their neighborhoods. These numbers mirror the high proportions of adults that say they feel safe where they live (Indicator F5).



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey

"Do you feel safe at school/in your neighborhood"



## ECONOMIC ISSUES

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### Chapter G

Action Goal: All persons have employment opportunities and support services that enable them to achieve their highest individual level of self-sufficiency.

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# HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

## Indicator G1

This indicator reports how many families can afford to buy homes. More specifically, the indicator reports the percentage of homes sold that a family with an average income could afford to buy.

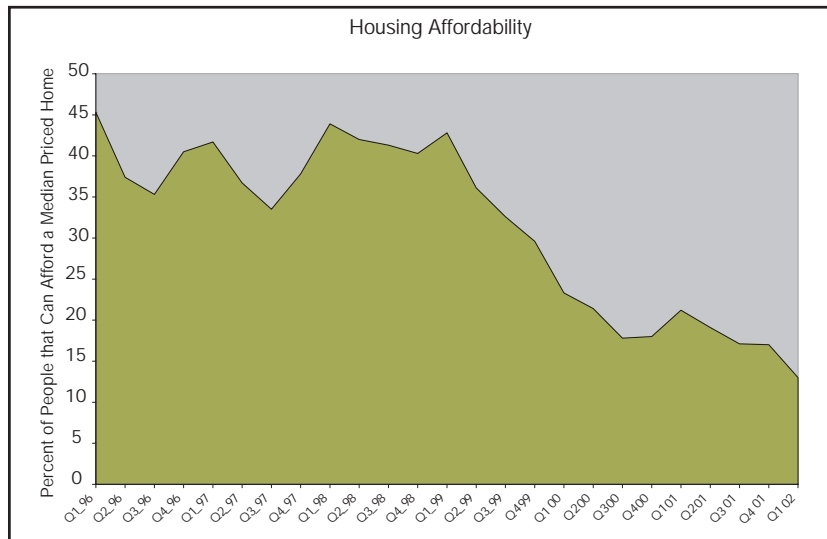
### Why Is It Important?

Home ownership is a goal for many. Home equity is the largest component of most families' assets. Rising home prices increase the owner's equity and expand the local tax base. In addition, home ownership strengthens communities.

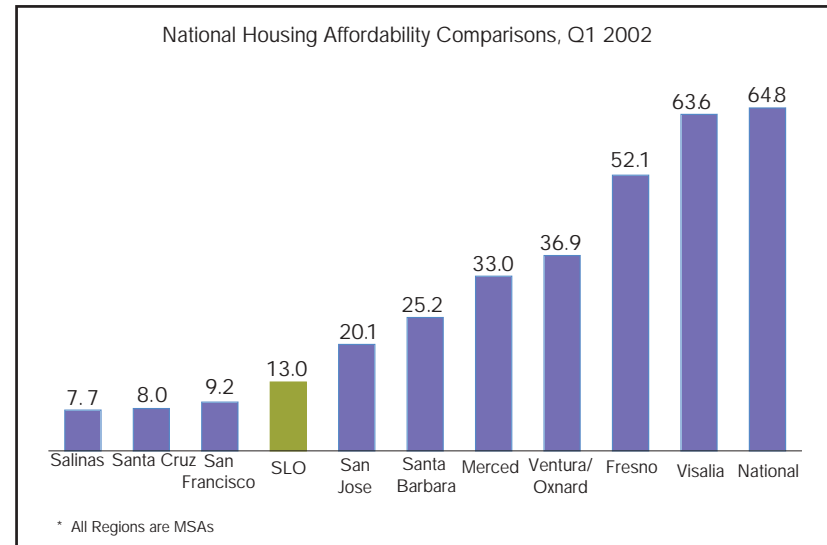
A shortage of homes that families can afford causes them to use a greater percentage of their income on housing. It can also force them to commute farther, or leave the area entirely. Typically, high home prices are also reflected in high rents, both for houses and apartments.

### How Are We Doing?

Housing affordability is calculated from median family income, mortgage interest rates, and prices of home sold in a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). In the first quarter of 2002, only 13 percent of the families in San Luis Obispo MSA (which encompasses all of the County) could afford to buy the median priced home. Thus, the proportion of County residents who can afford to buy houses has continued its steady decline from 40 percent a few years ago. The County now ranks 188 out of 191 MSAs in the nation in terms of housing affordability. Although the absolutely least affordable areas in the nation are counties to our north, other counties to our south and inland are much more affordable.



Source: UCSB Economic Forecast Project



Source: National Association of Home Buildings

This indicator reports the percentage of San Luis Obispo residents who could afford to buy the median-priced home in the County.

# UNEMPLOYMENT

## Indicator G2

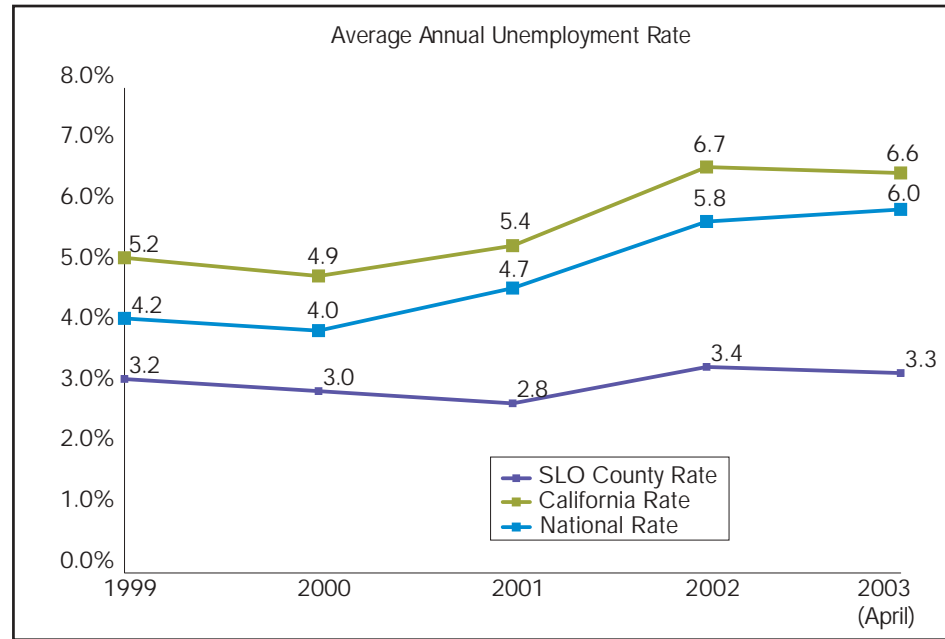
This indicator tracks the annual average unemployment rate for the County.

### Why is it Important?

A prosperous community has an adequate supply of jobs that generate income sufficient to pay for basic needs. The unemployment rate represents one piece of a complex puzzle that helps us determine whether we're achieving this goal.

### How Are We Doing?

The County continues to have a very low level of unemployment, significantly below state and national levels. Although the rate increased slightly in 2002, it did not increase as much as the California and national rates. The April 2003 unemployment rate of 3.3 percent translates into 4,100 people who are unemployed and actively seeking work, out of a total labor force of 123,800.



This indicator tracks the annual average unemployment rate for the county.

# AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE

Indicator G3

This indicator measures the proportion of parents who say they are unable to obtain needed childcare.

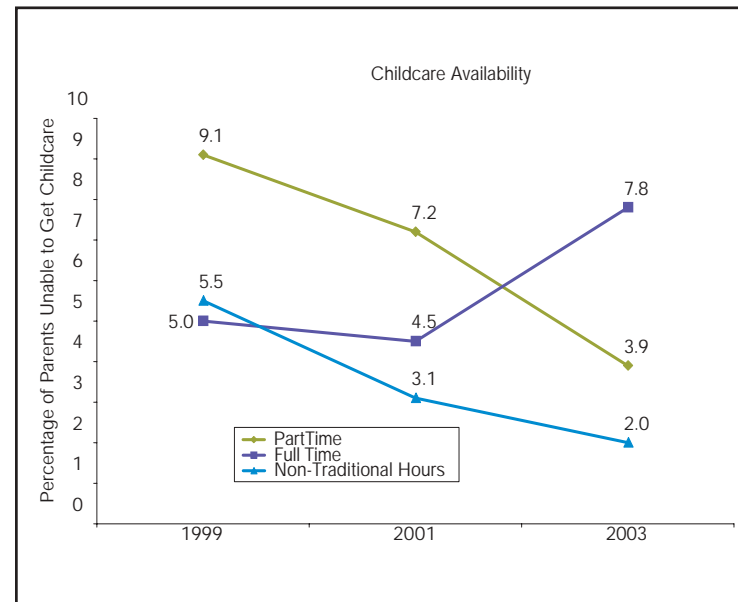
## Why Is It Important?

Parents of all incomes are using childcare in increasing numbers and at increasingly varied hours. Many children spend at least some time in childcare during their critical developmental years. As a result, childcare centers, family childcare homes, relatives and nannies have become essential to working families with children. The availability of childcare impacts a community's economic well being and is a key factor in helping welfare recipients attain self-sufficiency. The quality of childcare has been shown to have a key role in the development of children.

## How Are We Doing?

The 1999, 2001 and 2003 surveys asked parents with children, "Is there a kind of childcare you need for your children but cannot get?" The kind of childcare needed was divided into four types: Full-time, which is 8 hours a day; Part-time, which is 0-6 hours a day; Non-traditional hours, which may include evenings or weekends, and other.

According to these surveys of parents, part time and non-traditional care for children is getting easier to obtain in San Luis Obispo County. However, full time care, possibly the most important type, may be getting more difficult to find.



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 2003

"Now, thinking about your childcare needs, is there any kind of childcare you need for your children but cannot get?"

# PERSONAL INCOME

## Indicator G4

This indicator tracks the average per capita income of people in the County.

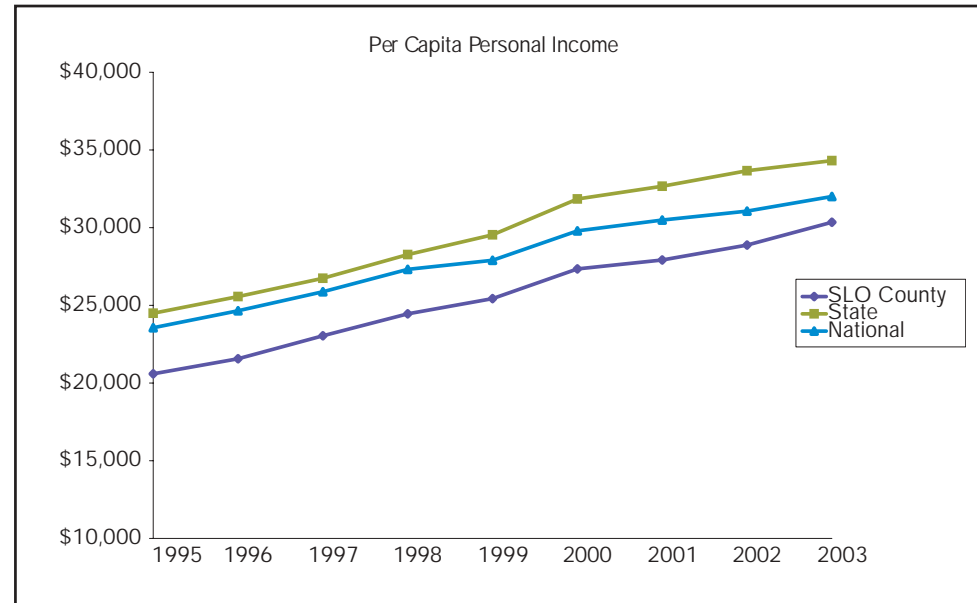
### Why Is It Important?

Personal income is an indirect indicator of quality of life. Income enables both individuals and families to make both necessary and discretionary purchases of goods and services.

### How Are We Doing?

The graph to the right illustrates personal income, adjusted for inflation, on a per person basis. Personal income includes wages and salaries, transfer payments (i.e. social security, property and investment income), and income from self-employment.

Personal income has increased by 47 percent since 1995, reaching an all-time high of \$30,345. However, this remains below both the state and national per capita income levels, which are \$34,311 and \$32,007, respectively.



Source: UCSB Economic Forecast Project

This indicator tracks the average per capita income of people in the county.

# ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

## Indicator G5

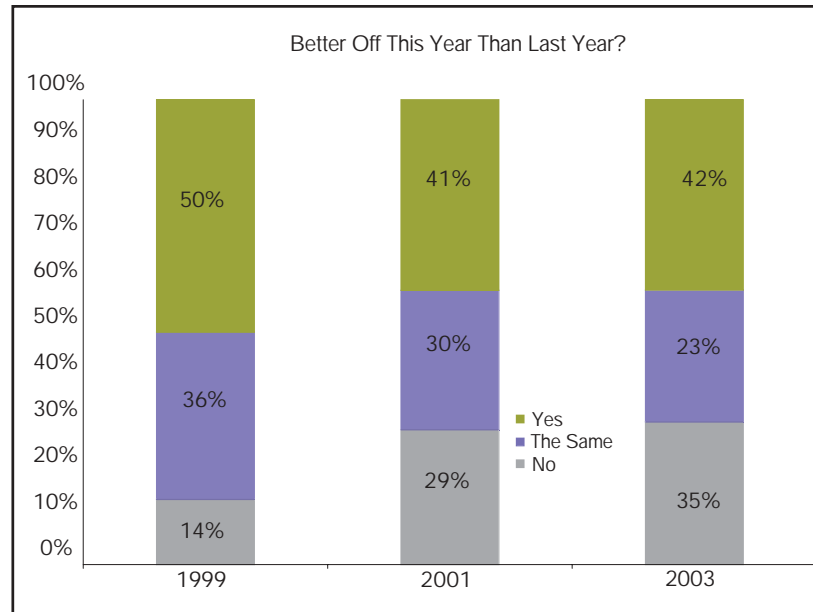
This indicator reports people's perceptions of their economic status.

### Why is it Important?

While per capita personal income provides an objective measure of income, it may not reflect how people feel about their finances. If costs (such as housing) are high, job security is lacking, or the stock market swoons, people may feel much different from what the objective data show. Therefore, this indicator reports how County residents assess their personal and family economic status relative to the previous year.

### How Are We Doing?

In 2001 and 2003, ACTION asked phone survey respondents, "Do you feel you are better off this year than last year, economically?" In 1999, the word "economically" was not included in the survey question, and so results may not be statistically comparable. The number of respondents claiming to be better off economically has remained consistent, even with the volatility the economy has experienced in the past few years. On the other hand, the number of people indicating their finances have declined is somewhat higher than in 2001. All in all, this indicator shows either no change or very slight deterioration in how local residents feel about their economic well being.



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 1999, 2001, 2003

"Do you feel you are better off this year than last year economically?"

# NOTES

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# NOTES

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