

The background of the cover is a scenic landscape photograph. It shows a valley with green fields and some buildings in the distance, surrounded by rolling hills and mountains under a sky with large, white and grey clouds. Overlaid on the left side of the image are several large, semi-transparent white chevrons pointing towards the right. The text is positioned on the left side, partially overlapping these chevrons.

# 2019 STATE OF THE REGION REPORT

**VENTURA COUNTY  
CIVIC ALLIANCE**

**ADVANCING REGIONAL  
STEWARDSHIP &  
DIALOGUE**





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## Ventura County Community Foundation

## William A. and Cynthia D. Fairburn Jr. Memorial Fund



William and Cynthia Fairburn Jr.

William and Cynthia Fairburn Jr. believed they could make the biggest impact with their legacy through the support of education and research.

The Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF) worked with the late Ojai couple to establish memorial funds, through which:

- Their fund has granted nearly 1,100 scholarships totaling \$2,072,417
- Their fund has generously supported Ventura County Civic Alliance's State of the Region Report, which offers impartial data to assess the progress and the challenges facing Ventura County.

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Contact Amber Landis, Donor Relations Officer, at [alandis@vccf.org](mailto:alandis@vccf.org) or 805.330.6615

*The William A. and Cynthia D. Fairburn Jr. Memorial Fund at VCCF is pleased to support the State of the Region report.*



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# About The Ventura County Civic Alliance

OUR MISSION: TO PROMOTE A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR THE VENTURA COUNTY REGION

Founded in 2001, the Ventura County Civic Alliance is a coalition of regional civic leaders with a shared commitment to the three Es — Economy, Environment and Social Equity. This balance ensures our research and community dialogue is embedded with a broad and diverse set of perspectives and priorities. As a neutral convener, we examine community concerns, with an emphasis in creating civic dialogue around issues that affect Ventura County's quality of life.

The Civic Alliance is now an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the Ventura County region and committed to engaging the community with unbiased dialogue and data such as this 2019 State of the Region Report.



## THE CIVIC ALLIANCE FOCUSES IN THESE AREAS:

The **Livable Communities Initiative** works with local governments and civic groups to increase understanding and support for integrating livable community principles into development decisions, and to showcase how those principles are being used throughout Ventura County.

The **State of the Region Report** provides accurate data and balanced insight across ten domains. The biennial reports are distributed free throughout the community thanks to the generosity of our sponsors. The reports are released in the odd-numbered years.

The **Future of the Region Conference** takes place in the even-numbered years and builds on the data in the State of the Region Report to stimulate discussion about our region's future by connecting the dots in our existing trends. Innovative speakers share their insights and connect their work with the data in the State of the Region Report.

**Civic Dialogue** is a core mission of the Ventura County Civic Alliance, and we continue to explore and promote forums and technologies to engage our community and foster dialogue between residents and community leaders. The State of the Region Report, and its fact-based research, is a tool to encourage informed conversation among all stakeholders.





# Core Principles & Values

The Alliance holds a set of core beliefs that guide its mission: regional stewardship, open dialogue, collaboration, even-handedness, unbiased research, the building of community capacity, and consensus-based decision-making. We bring together residents and civic organizations to cooperatively explore the complex economic, environmental and social equity challenges of our region, with the goal of finding integrated solutions to those issues and problems.

The Alliance welcomes supporters to become members for a small annual fee. Members receive discounts to special events, newsletters, invitations to participate on committees, and most importantly, the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring Ventura County's quality of life. To join, visit [CivicAlliance.org](http://CivicAlliance.org).



## VCCA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

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VCCA Chair  
County of Ventura Public Works Agency

**David Maron**

State of the Region Report Committee Chair,  
VCCA Vice-Chair  
Maron Computer Services

**Samantha Argabrite**

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**Tom Tarantino**

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**Celina L. Zacarias**

California State University Channel Islands



# Key Statistics

## VENTURA COUNTY

### Median Age

2017: 37.5      2011: 36.2  
2015: 37.1      2009: 36.1  
2013: 36.6      2000: 34.2

### Income (2017)

Percent of Residents

below the Poverty Level: 10.3%

Per Capita Income: \$35,771

Median Household Income: \$81,972

Median Family Income: \$91,732

**Household Income** includes all households, regardless of size;  
**Family Income** only includes households with two or more persons related through blood, marriage or adoption.

### Population

2017: 847,834

2015: 840,833

2010: 809,080

2000: 753,197

Number of Veterans: 42,012

Persons per Household: 3.09

Land Area (2010): 1,843 sq. miles

Persons per Square Mile: 460.0

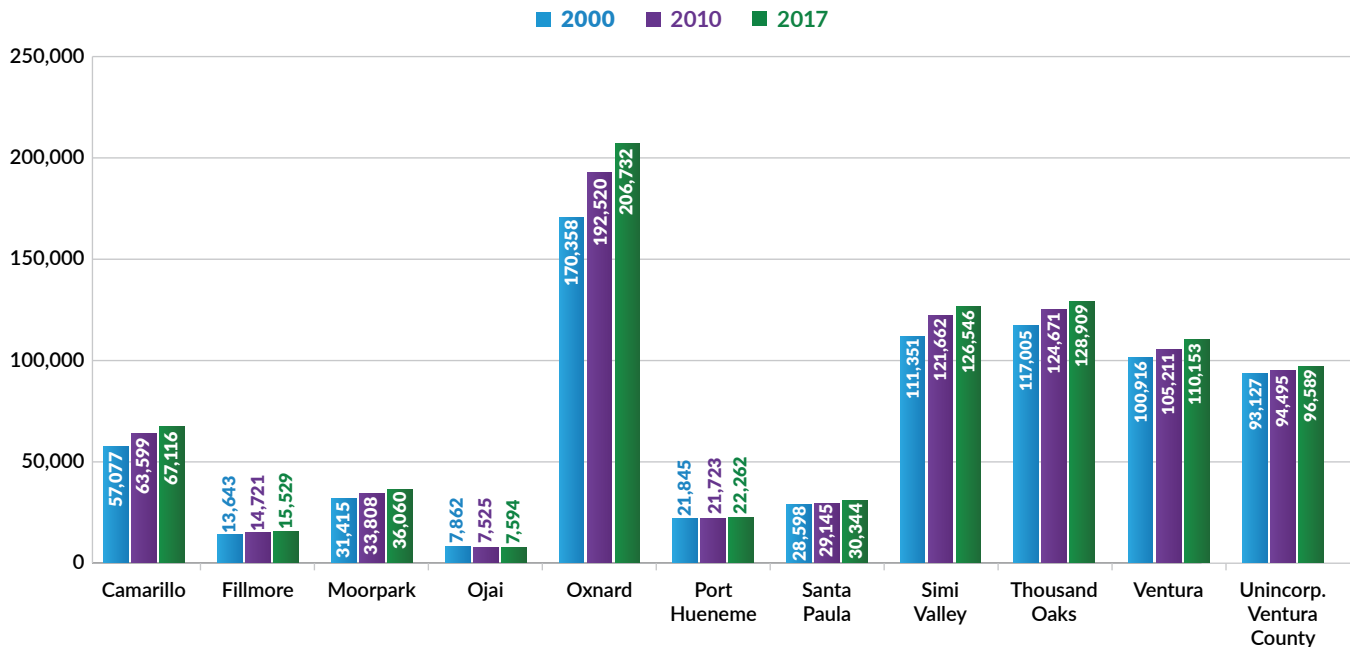
### Educational Achievement, Age 25+ (2017)

High School Diploma or Higher: 84.0%

Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 32.6%

All information listed is for 2017 unless otherwise noted.

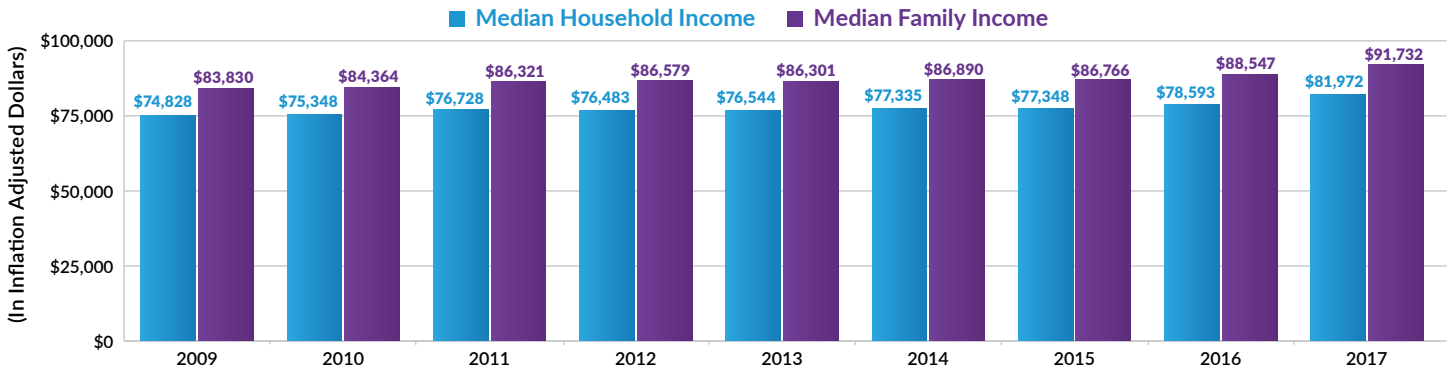
### Population by City in Ventura County (2000, 2010, 2017)



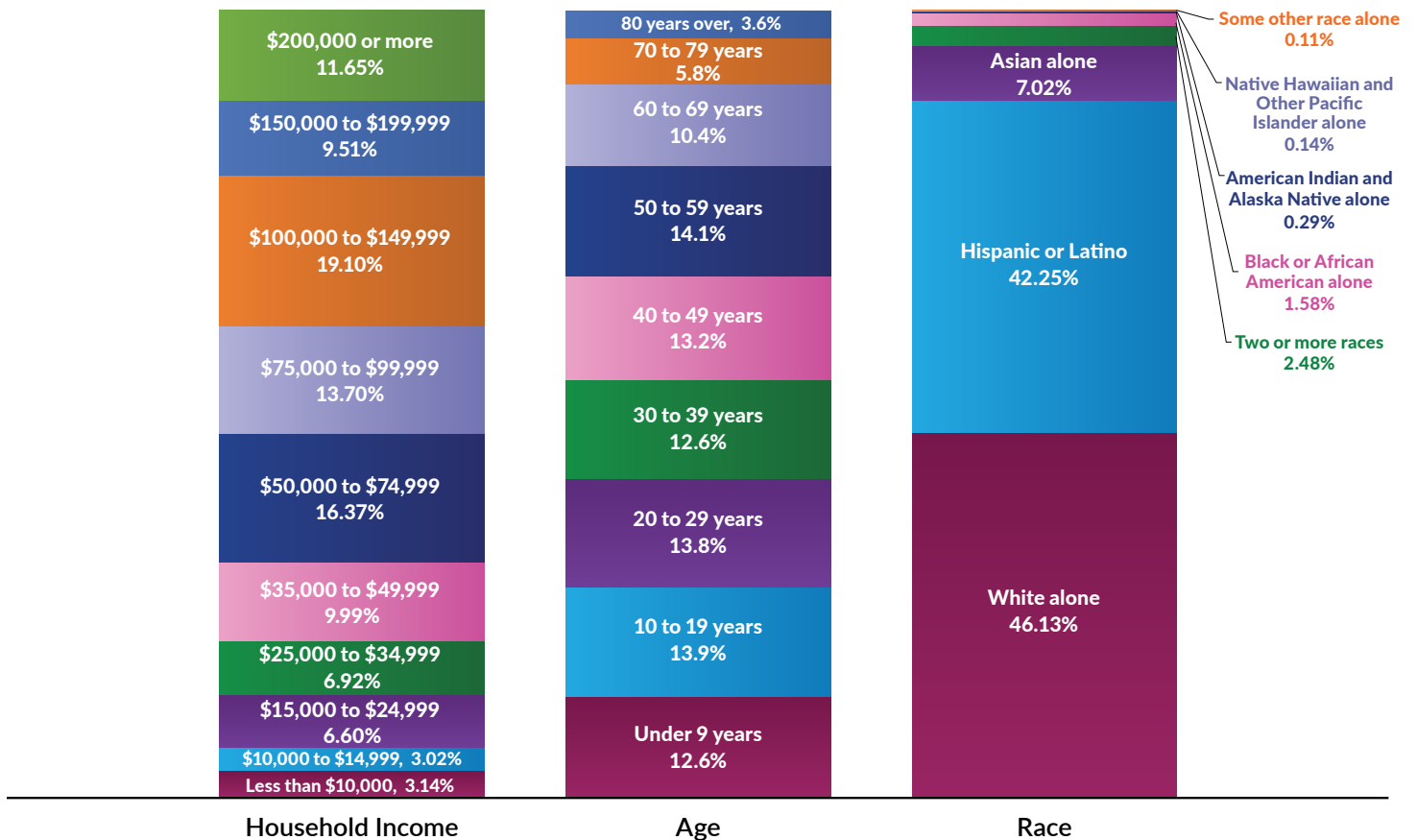
Under 18 (2017)	21.7%	28.6%	23.8%	20.7%	27.9%	23.2%	29.1%	22.3%	21.9%	22.2%	21.3%
65 Plus (2017)	19.2%	13.1%	11.0%	22.2%	9.5%	11.3%	10.9%	13.8%	17.9%	15.6%	16.0%



## Ventura County Median Household & Family Income in Inflation-Adjusted Dollars (2009 - 2017)



## Ventura County Population by Household Income, Age and Race (2017)



# The State of the Region, Ventura County 2019

The Ventura County Civic Alliance (VCCA) is proud to publish this 2019 version of our State of the Region Report examining 10 domains of interest to residents. We believe accurate, unbiased data is essential to guide civic engagement and policy development that address the challenges facing our region. We also use this data to guide our work to promote a healthy and sustainable future for Ventura County.

We are grateful for the generous support of our sponsors who enable us to produce and distribute this report. Please see their messages beginning on page 120 and view a complete list of sponsors on the inside back cover.

We have again contracted with the California Lutheran University Center for Economics of Social Issues (CESI) to research this report under the direction of Jamshid Damooei, Ph.D. His team has carefully compiled the data from national, state and local sources which are listed beginning on page 116.

To remain relevant, this report includes several new indicators with a “New This Year” flag on each page and in the Table of Contents.

Other indicators that have not had any new research in years have been dropped. Those older indicators are available in our earlier State of the Region reports located on our website. This 2019 edition includes a special section documenting some of the impacts of the Thomas, Hill and Woolsey fires that caused so much destruction in Ventura County in 2017 and 2018.

This report requires considerable effort to produce and we are thankful to all who participated. Please see the Acknowledgments section of the report for a list of our contributors.

This report is also available on our website along with other information about the Civic Alliance. You can download the report by visiting [CivicAlliance.org](http://CivicAlliance.org).

Our goal is to provide accurate data that assists business leaders, elected officials, community organizations and others to achieve effective solutions to the challenges our region faces. Ventura County is an extraordinary place to live and we look forward to working with you to preserve the best of our region and pass it on to future generations.

**David Maron**  
*State of the Region  
Report Committee Chair*

**Samantha Argabrite**  
*VCCA Board Member*

**David Fleisch**  
*VCCA Chair*

**Sandy Smith**  
*Past VCCA Chair*





# Agriculture

**The past decade** hasn't been easy for Ventura County farmers. They've battled drought, invasive pests, labor shortages, tariffs and increased global competition, along with the perennial challenges of development pressure and changing regulations.

Then, in 2017, some faced a ferocious enemy: the Thomas Fire. It started in an agricultural area north of Santa Paula and eventually burned 281,893 acres in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, including thousands of acres of avocado orchards and other farmland. Farmers lost crops, saplings, livestock, equipment, vehicles, barns, and their own homes.

Recovery will take years, but most of the affected farmers are rebuilding and replanting as they continue to deal with other challenges facing their industry. Chief among them is drought, which plagued the county from 2012 to 2018. The winter of 2018/19 proved sufficiently wet, though, to lift drought conditions in Ventura County and throughout the state.

**Ventura County remains a national leader in the production of strawberries, lemons, avocados and other crops.**

Years of water shortage prompted innovation in the agricultural industry. Growers installed more efficient irrigation, and water suppliers built infrastructure to store and deliver water. In the summer of 2018, farmers, landowners and water rights holders in Ventura County

launched a market to buy and sell the rights to pump groundwater. It's the first project of its kind in California and includes an attempt to comprehensively measure the groundwater that growers use. The market encourages farmers to consume water more efficiently and rewards conservation by allowing them to sell their excess water to other users.

Signs of stagnation have emerged in the county's agricultural sector. Total farm revenues — the figure that best captures the size and health of the industry — dropped in 2016 and 2017. But the declines are modest, and Ventura County remains a national leader in the production of strawberries, lemons, avocados and other crops. The county's oldest industry isn't going anywhere.



# Harvested Acres

## SLOW DECLINE IN ACREAGE CONTINUES

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of crop-producing acres in Ventura County. It includes all irrigated and dry-land farmed acreage. Pastureland that is irrigated, fertilized and otherwise cultivated for grazing is included; rangeland, which is natural land used for grazing and makes up most of Ventura County's cattle acreage, is not. The measure excludes agricultural lands that are not producing crops.

### Why is the measure important?

The amount of land in Ventura County devoted to agriculture tells us about the industry and the region's larger land-use patterns. As land is converted from farming to other uses, the character of the county evolves. Farmed acreage also measures the health of the agricultural economy: If farming is profitable, landowners will devote more of their property to it. At the same time, if farming becomes more efficient, growers can use less land to produce the same or more output. Finally, the harvested acreage data is broken down into different types of crops, revealing how our agricultural industry is changing.

### How are we doing?

Active farmland in Ventura County has slowly declined since 2013. In 2017, growers worked 95,137 acres in the county, down 10.7 percent from four years earlier. The long-term

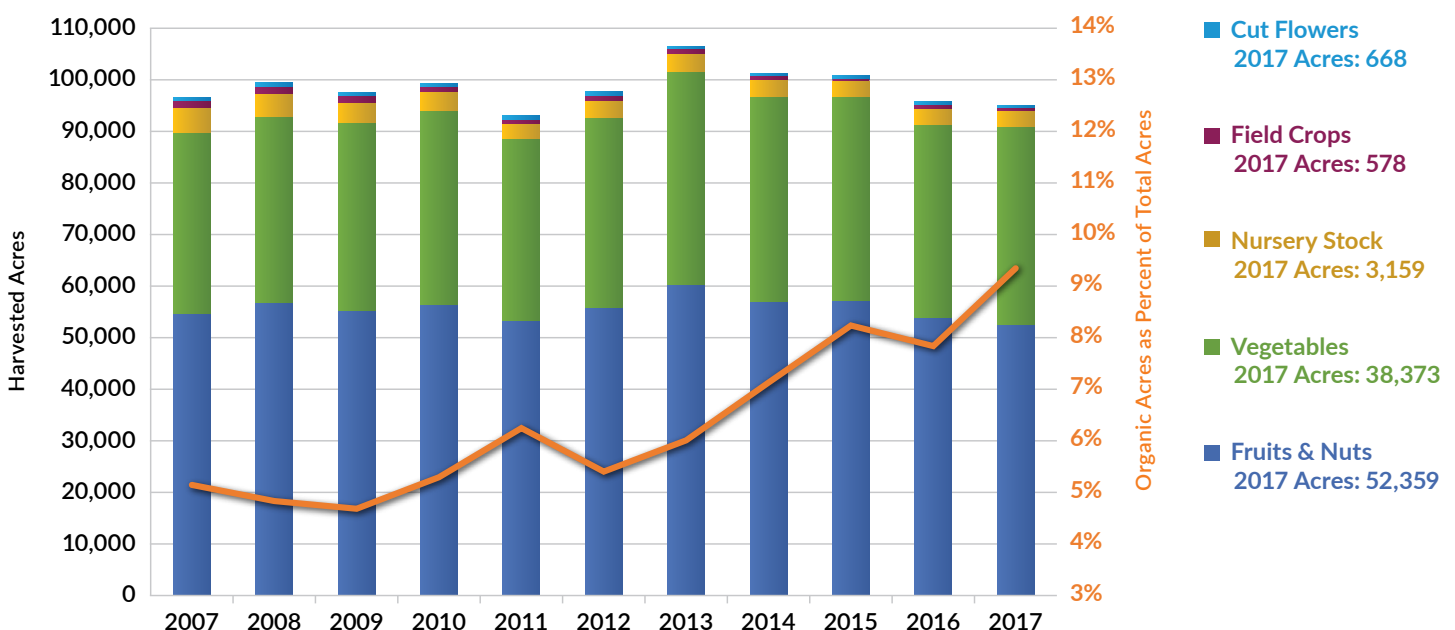
trend is similar. Harvested acres hovered around 110,000 in the 1990s then dropped below 100,000 in the early 2000s, before spiking in 2013. Although every crop category saw some drop in acreage between 2013 and 2017, the overall number of organic acres increased from 6,394 to 8,851.

There are several likely explanations for the decline. One is drought. As the dry years dragged on from 2013 through 2017 and water became harder or more expensive to obtain, farmers took land out of production.

The decades-long shift toward berries and away from other crops could be another factor in the long-term decline, as berries are less land-intensive than other crops grown in Ventura County. Seasonal fluctuation in the berry business contributes to a change in acreage, too: When strawberry prices are higher, growers don't need to plant as much. Low berry prices likely contributed to the 2013 spike in acreage.

Some farmland also has been converted to housing or commercial uses, though that trend slowed after the real estate crash of 2008. And, a tight labor market may have played a part, as some farmers reported cutting back their output because workers have become scarcer and more expensive to employ.

Total Harvested Acres in Ventura County (2007 - 2017)





# Crop Changes

## STRAWBERRIES ARE STILL KING

### What is the measure?

The measure is a breakdown of the 10 most valuable crops in Ventura County in 2017, by total revenue, and a snapshot of the top crops in previous years.

### Why is the measure important?

The specific crops grown here are crucial to the region's economy, ecology, culture and aesthetic appearance. Changes in crop production are also a window into evolving consumer tastes at home and abroad.

### How are we doing?

Strawberries have been king in Ventura County since the 1990s. In 2017, the strawberries grown in the county were worth \$654.3 million to growers, more than twice as much as any other crop.

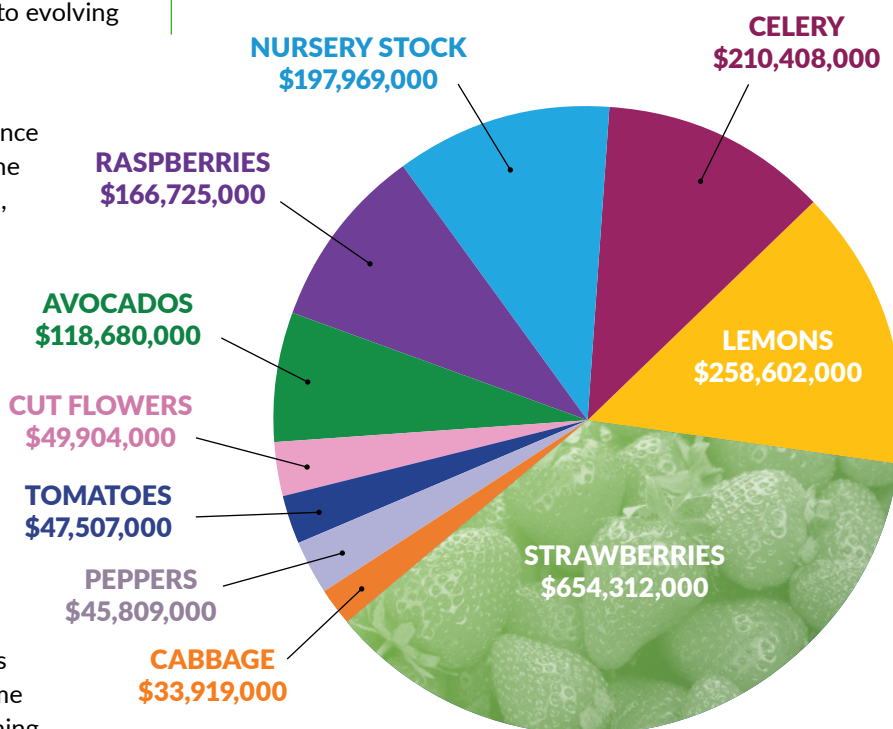
Lemons, the top crop for most of the second half of the 20th century, have settled into second place in the 21st century. In 2017, lemons were worth \$258.6 million.

Celery, nursery stock and raspberries rounded out the top five. Raspberries declined in recent years, plummeting from \$240.7 million in revenue in 2014 to \$166.7 million in 2017.

A century ago, beans and sugar beets dominated Ventura County agriculture. Citrus gradually displaced those crops, and then strawberries overtook citrus. The shift toward strawberries came as land values took off in Ventura County for farming

or any other purpose, pressuring growers to get the most from every acre. Berry fields generate more revenue per acre than citrus orchards or bean fields, so they often represent the best return for agricultural landowners.

### Top 10 Crops in Ventura County (2017)



### Crop Changes in Ventura County (1982 - 2017)

CROP RANKING	1982	1992	2002	2012	2016	2017	2017 VALUE
1	Lemons	Lemons	Strawberries	Strawberries	Strawberries	Strawberries	\$654,312,000
2	Celery	Strawberries	Lemons	Lemons	Lemons	Lemons	\$258,602,000
3	Poultry and Dairy	Celery	Nursery Stock	Raspberries	Nursery Stock	Celery	\$210,408,000
4	Strawberries	Nursery Stock	Celery	Nursery Stock	Celery	Nursery Stock	\$197,969,000
5	Valencia Oranges	Valencia Oranges	Avocados	Celery	Raspberries	Raspberries	\$166,725,000
6	Seed	Avocados	Cut Flowers	Avocados	Avocados	Avocados	\$118,680,000
7	Nursery Stock	Lettuce	Tomatoes	Tomatoes	Peppers	Cut Flowers	\$49,904,000
8	Lettuce	Cut Flowers	Peppers	Peppers	Cut Flowers	Tomatoes	\$47,507,000
9	Avocados	Broccoli	Valencia Oranges	Cut Flowers	Tomatoes	Peppers	\$45,809,000
10	Broccoli	Cabbage	Raspberries	Cilantro	Kale	Cabbage	\$33,919,000

# Crop Value

## TWO YEARS OF REVENUE DECLINE

### What is the measure?

The measure is the total wholesale value of all crops and livestock produced in Ventura County and that value as a percentage of the county's total economy, as reported by the county agricultural commissioner. The commissioner's annual Crop Report is drawn from surveys of county farmers and others in the agricultural industry.

### Why is the measure important?

Crop value represents the total income to farmers, an important measure of the scope and health of the county's agricultural industry. It measures gross revenue, so it does not reflect growers' profits or losses.

### How are we doing?

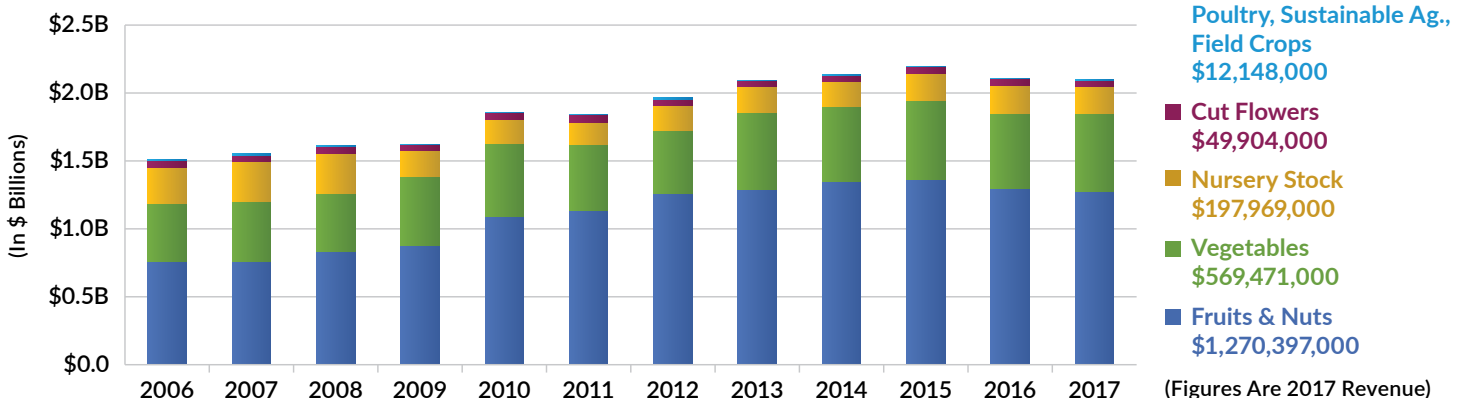
Farm revenue in Ventura County dropped in 2016 and 2017. In 2017, farmers in the county made \$2.09 billion in revenue, down from the record high of \$2.19 billion in 2015. Agriculture accounted for 4.1 percent of Ventura County's economy in 2017, down from 4.4 percent two years before.

The revenue drop in 2016 was a substantial 3.9 percent. In 2017, it fell 0.5 percent. When combined these contractions are modest, making it difficult to say whether the agricultural industry in Ventura County is truly in decline. Revenue fell in 2005 and again in 2011, and both times it recovered the following year.

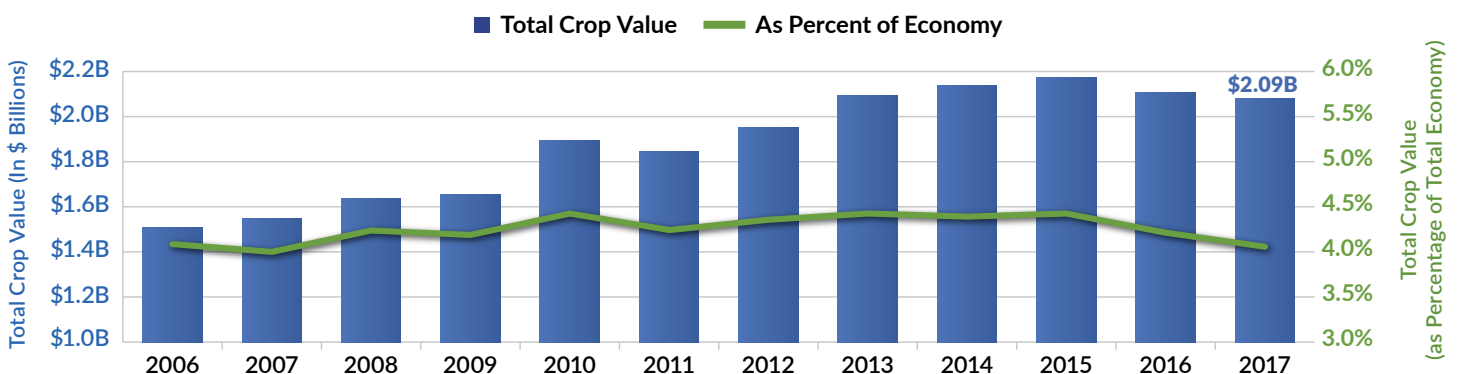
The dollar decline from 2015 to 2016 was concentrated in two major crops: avocados and raspberries. The avocado harvest in 2016 was nearly \$60 million smaller than in 2015; raspberry revenue was down \$57 million that year. Both crops stabilized in 2017. Avocado yields tend to follow a strong season with a weak one, so fluctuation is common in the industry. Raspberries, on the other hand, declined three straight years.

The Thomas Fire alone might account for these weaker revenues. The fire scorched thousands of planted acres and destroyed thousands of tons of fruit, though its full impact on the region's farm economy has yet to be precisely measured.

**Total Crop Value in Ventura County (2006 - 2017)**



**Total Crop Value as Percent of Total Ventura County Economy (2006 - 2017)**





# Organic Production

## ANOTHER RECORD YEAR FOR ORGANIC CROPS

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of acres in Ventura County devoted to organic farming. According to federal standards, organic food is produced without most conventional pesticides; without fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge; and without bioengineering and ionizing radiation. Organically labeled livestock must be fed organic feed, have access to the outdoors and cannot receive antibiotics or growth hormones.

### Why is the measure important?

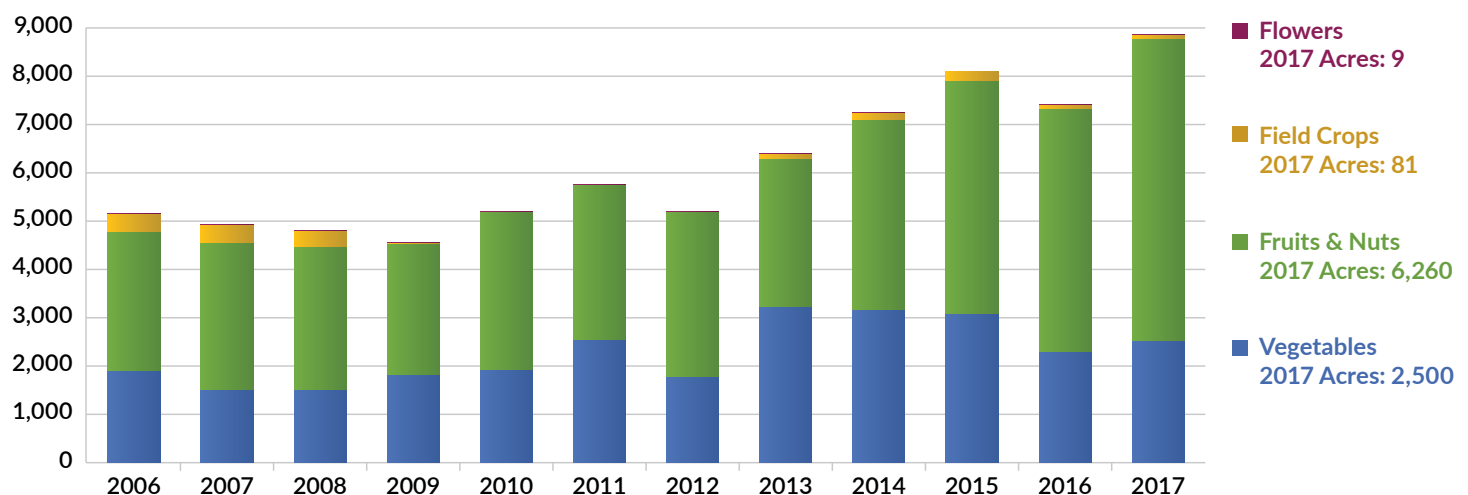
Once a niche market for environmentalists and health food proponents, organic products are offered by every major grocery store. Organic farming is a large and rapidly

growing part of the American agricultural industry, and organic products tend to command higher prices than their conventional counterparts.

### How are we doing?

Organic farming took up 8,850 acres in Ventura County in 2017, a record high after an unusual one-year decline in 2016. The portion of farmland used for organic crops grew from around 5 percent in 2004 to over 9 percent in 2017. Most of that growth has come since 2012, with organic acreage expanding 70 percent. As with conventional farming, the most common types of organic crops are fruits and nuts, followed by vegetables.

**Acres of Organic Farming in Ventura County (2006 - 2017)**



# Land Values

## AFTER PULLBACK, STILL HIGHER THAN STATE AVERAGE

### What is the measure?

The measure is the median value of one acre of agricultural land in Ventura County. The values are broken down by the median value of an acre used for row crops, such as berries, and for different types of tree crops. The estimates are drawn from property sales compiled by a statewide professional appraisers association.

### Why is the measure important?

Land, whether bought or leased, is among the biggest costs for any agricultural operation. At the same time, property is an asset to farmers who own it, and their businesses benefit from rising values.

### How are we doing?

As any homebuyer can attest, land in Ventura County is expensive, and farmland is no exception. In 2017, the median acre of most types of farmland was between \$50,000 and \$70,000. Lemon groves were appraised at \$68,000 per acre, avocado orchards at \$50,000 per acre and row cropland at \$63,000 per acre.

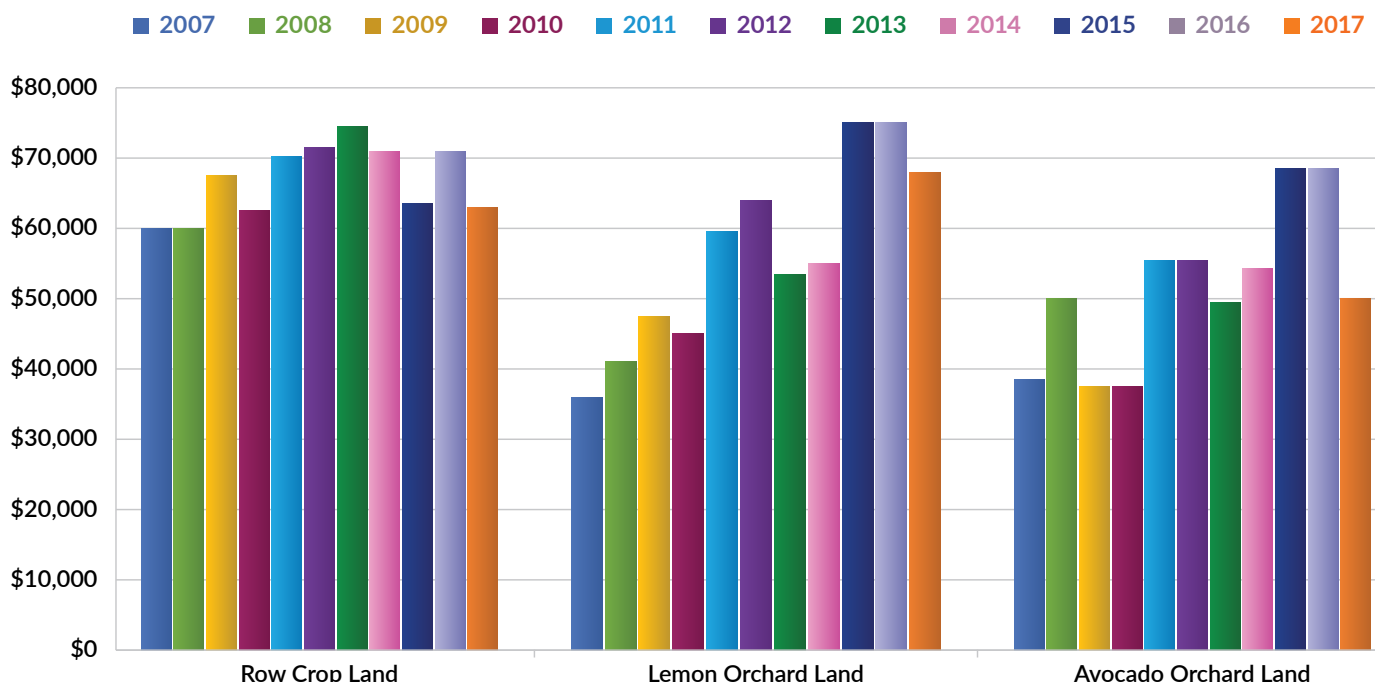
These figures dwarf the average value of an acre of cropland in the United States, which was \$4,090 in 2017, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In California, the value of cropland averaged \$11,740, but Ventura County is still extraordinarily expensive compared to the state as a whole.

It isn't just land value that drives these high prices. The crops grown in Ventura County, particularly strawberries but also lemons and avocados, are more valuable on a per-acre basis than most crops, which makes land planted with those products more valuable.

In Ventura County, lemon and avocado orchard land values have mostly caught up to row cropland. In 2007, row cropland was worth nearly 60 percent more per acre than orchard land. Since then, row crops have remained steady while lemon land values have surged higher. Avocado orchards shot higher then fell back in 2017 below row crops once again.

One possible explanation for this is the drought. Strawberries are a relatively thirsty crop, and growers may have reduced the value of berry acreage by fallowing it rather than paying the high cost of water. At the same time, global demand for citrus and avocados has accelerated, which could drive up the value of orchard land.

Estimates of Crop Land Values Per Acre (Midpoints) in Ventura County (2007 - 2017)





# Agricultural Exports

## CANADA IS TOP DESTINATION

### What are the measures?

The measures are the agricultural commodities most often exported from Ventura County in 2018, expressed as shares of the total number of shipments exported, and the countries that are the biggest markets for those exports. The Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's office tracks this data as it inspects shipments for export.

### Why are the measures important?

The market for Ventura County agriculture is a global one. When growers here think about which crops to plant, they must consider not only local markets and field conditions, but also what customers want in Asia, Europe and elsewhere.

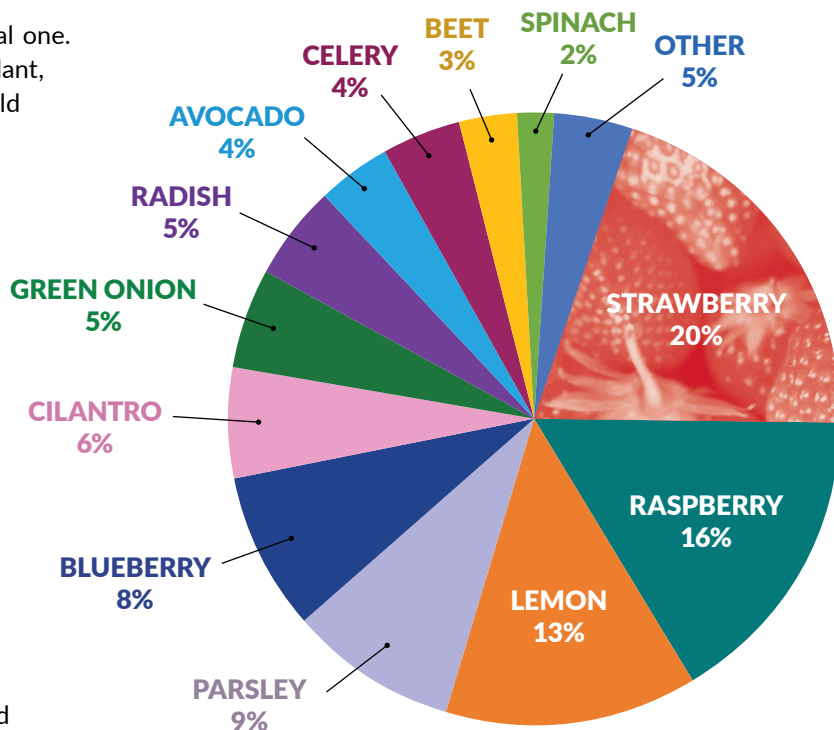
### How are we doing?

Strawberries, the top crop in value, were also the most exported product, with more than 3,000 shipments totaling over 1.5 million cartons shipped beyond our borders in 2018. That amounted to 20.2 percent of the county's agricultural export shipments. Raspberries were next, with 2,399 shipments, or 15.8 percent of the county's total exports, followed by lemons, at 13.1 percent, and parsley, at 9.3 percent.

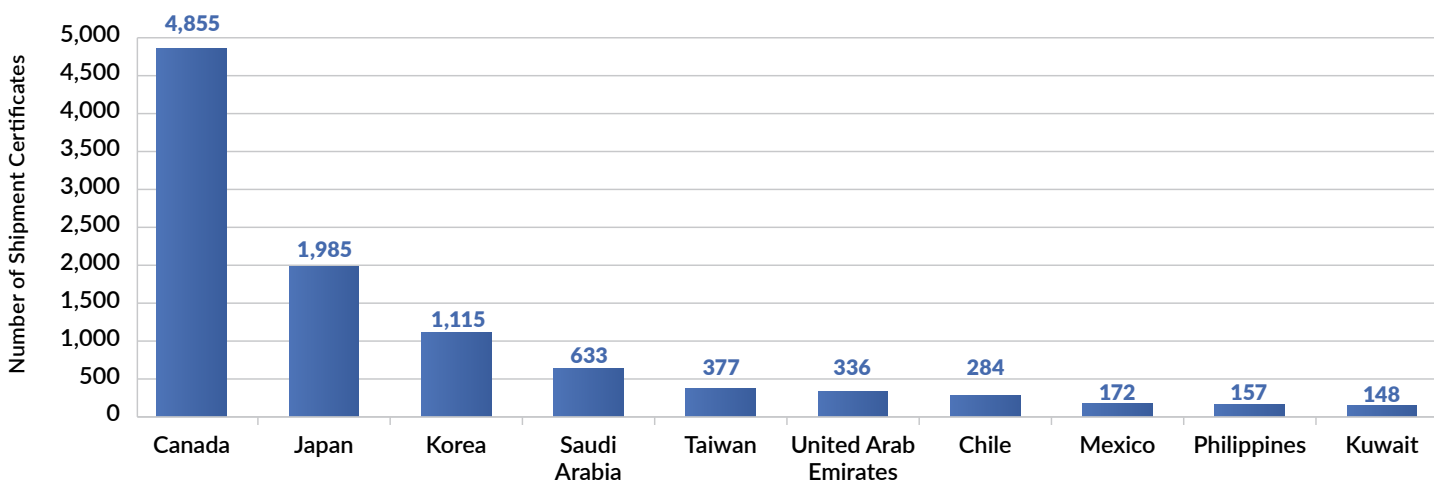
Ventura County growers sent their produce to 76 countries in 2018. Canada was by far the most common destination, accepting 4,855 shipments. Japan was next, at 1,985 shipments, followed by Korea, with 1,115 shipments. The increase in recorded

shipments to Canada is partially due to the presence of Light Brown Apple Moth in Ventura County. Prior to the pest's arrival, Canada, under NAFTA regulations, did not require export tracking for some crops.

### Top Agricultural Commodities Exported from Ventura County (2018)



### Top Ten Export Countries for Ventura County Agricultural Commodities (2018)



# Employment and Earnings

## FEWER WORKERS, HIGHER PAY

### What are the measures?

The measures are the real and nominal wages in the agricultural industry and wages by job category.

### Why are the measures important?

Ventura County's agricultural businesses employ thousands of people. Those workers' salaries support local businesses in a wide array of industries, and employees rely on that income to pay their rent and feed their families. If farm wages are too low, governments and charities end up providing aid to help the workers afford basic necessities.

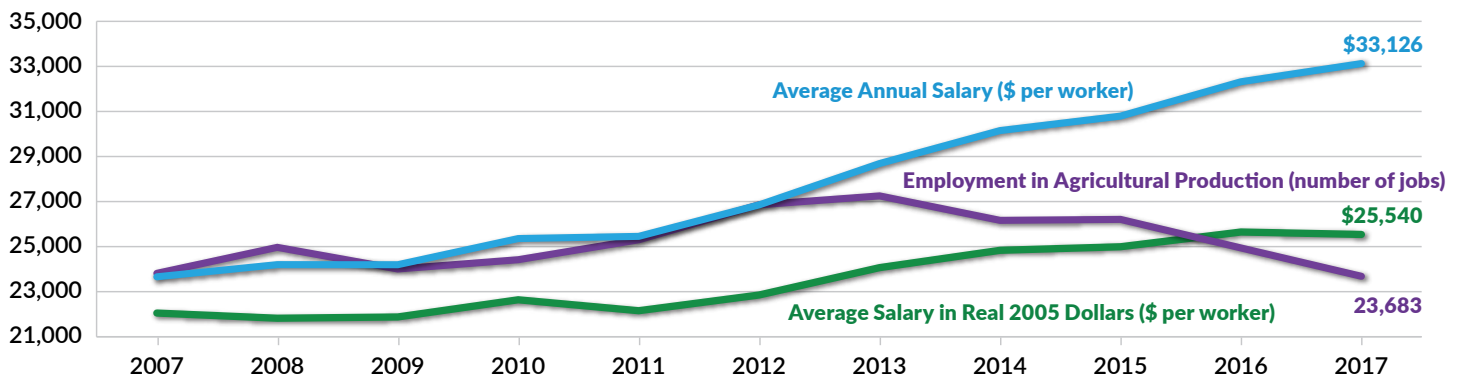
### How are we doing?

Growers are serious when they speak of a farmworker shortage. Ventura County's agricultural workforce has been shrinking in recent years, and, as an entry-level economics student could

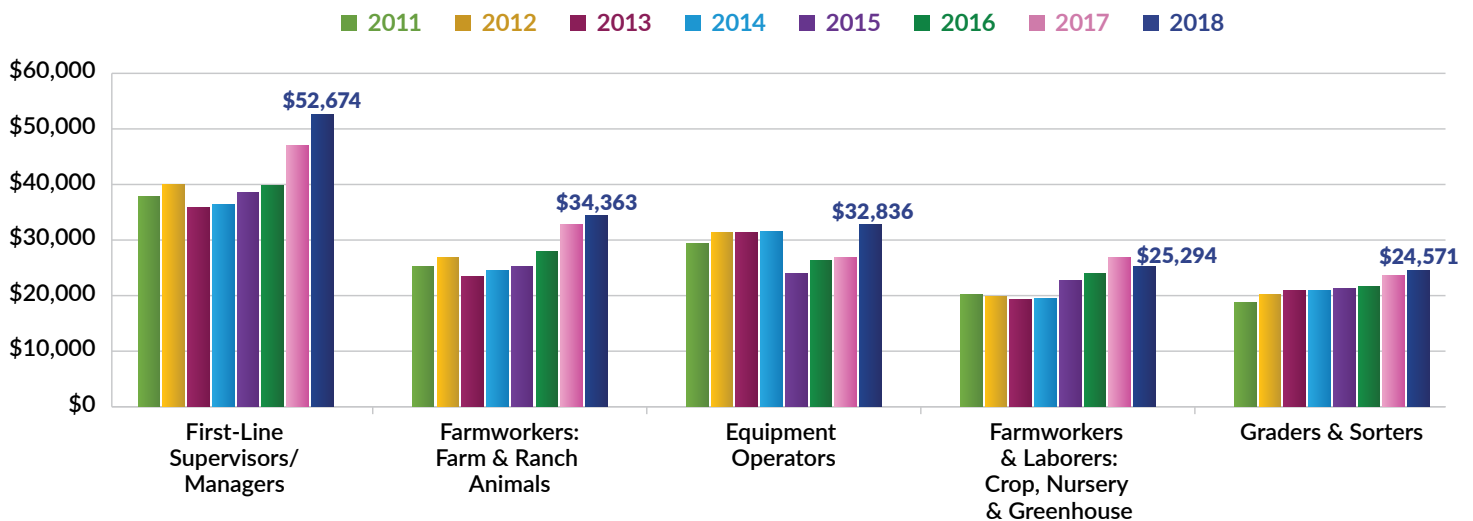
predict, salaries have grown during that time. In 2017, there were 23,683 agricultural workers in the county, down 13.1 percent from the peak in 2013. Their average annual salary in 2017 was \$33,126, up 15.3 percent from 2011, when adjusted for inflation.

The average salary figure hides a great deal of variance within the industry. The biggest category of employees — accounting for a little less than 1 in 5 agricultural workers — is laborers in fields, nurseries and greenhouses. In 2018, their average salary was \$25,294. Supervisors and managers, who accounted for a little more than 1 in 20 industry workers, earned an average of \$52,674 in 2018.

### Ventura County Agricultural Production Employment & Earnings (2007 - 2017)



### Agricultural Earnings (Mean Annual Wage) in Ventura County (Q1, 2011 - 2018)





# Community Engagement & Resources

**Community engagement and resources** is an umbrella that covers culture, politics, nonprofits and the arts. These can be tricky to measure because the impact on our county of an informed and engaged body politic, a thriving arts scene or a culture of charity and volunteer work defies description with hard data. In this section we focus on the aspects that can be measured: voter registration and turnout, party affiliation, nonprofit fundraising, spending on public libraries and the economic impact of creative industries. Between them, they paint a picture of a county in which people

willingly better their community by voting, volunteering and creating art.

**By some measures,  
Ventura County has an  
unusually engaged, cultured  
and passionate populace.**

By some measures, Ventura County has an unusually engaged, cultured and passionate populace. People here are likelier than the average Californian to vote, and our creative industries are a large and growing part of our economy. In other areas, we could stand to be more generous. Funding

for most of our public libraries long has lagged behind the state average, and the same is true of the revenue of our nonprofit organizations.



# Voter Registration

## RATE MATCHES ALL-TIME HIGH

### What is the measure?

The measure is the percentage of eligible Ventura County residents who are registered to vote.

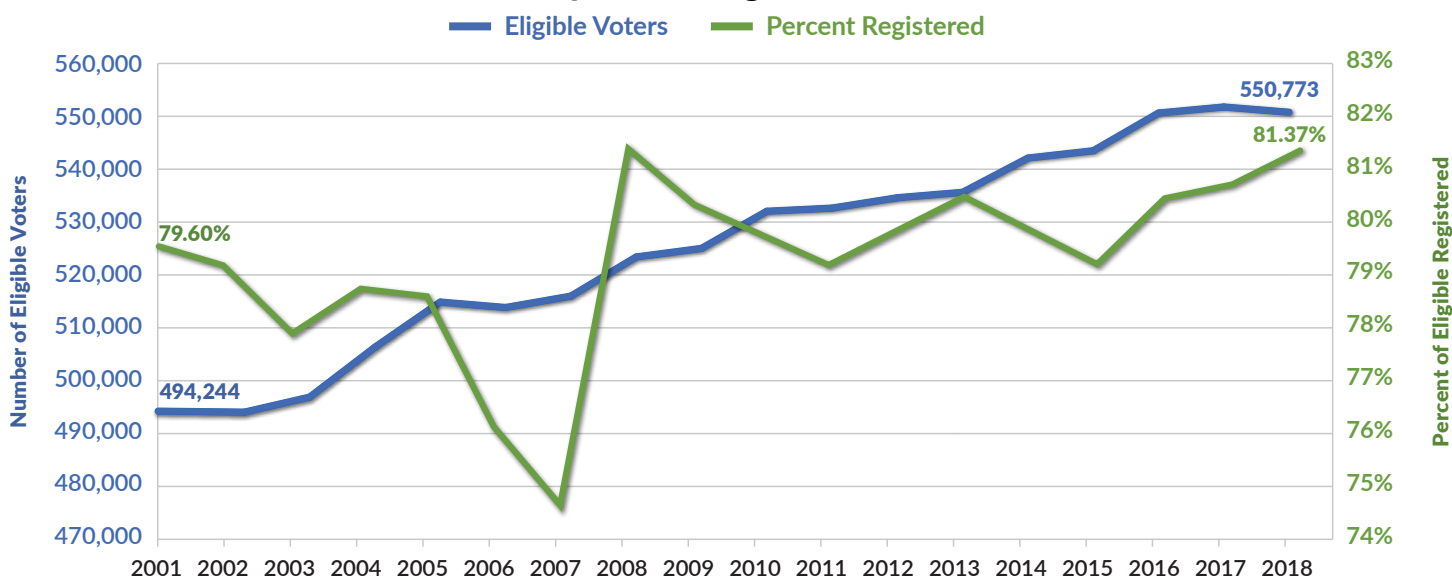
### Why is the measure important?

Registering to vote is not by itself enough to make your voice heard in selecting our leaders, but it's a necessary first step. California generally requires voters to register at least 15 days before an election though if they miss that deadline, prospective voters may now register "conditionally" as late as Election Day at their county elections office.

### How are we doing?

More than 80 percent of eligible Ventura County voters have been registered for the past few years, and even when the percentage dipped below 80 in the 2000s, it never fell under 74 percent. In 2018, the county's registered voters reached an all-time high of 448,174 or 81.37 percent of those eligible. The landmark high-turnout election of 2008 was the only other time this percentage of county residents were registered. The registration rate tends to dip in non-election years and peak in presidential election years, ranging in this century from a low of 74.58 percent in 2007 to a high of 81.38 percent in 2008. Ventura County had the 15th highest registration rate among California's 58 counties in 2018. The statewide registration rate was 78.16 percent.

Ventura County Voter Registration (2001 - 2018)





# Voter Turnout

## VENTURA COUNTY EXCEEDS STATE AVERAGE

### What are the measures?

The measures are the percentage of eligible voters who voted in recent elections, and whether they cast their ballots by mail or in person.

Many government agencies report voter turnout as a percentage of the number of registered voters. We believe expressing turnout as a percentage of the number of eligible voters – whether or not they are registered – more accurately measures civic engagement. The first step in voting is registering, and when people do not register, the turnout rate should group them with non-voters.

### Why are the measures important?

Our nation is supposed to derive its powers from the consent of the governed, and voting is the most basic expression of that consent. Voter turnout is often considered a measure of a government's legitimacy; in a free and fair election with contested seats, the higher the turnout the more likely the results reflect the will of the people. A high turnout also indicates a vote of confidence in a country's political system, as it signals citizens' belief their votes can make a difference.

### How are we doing?

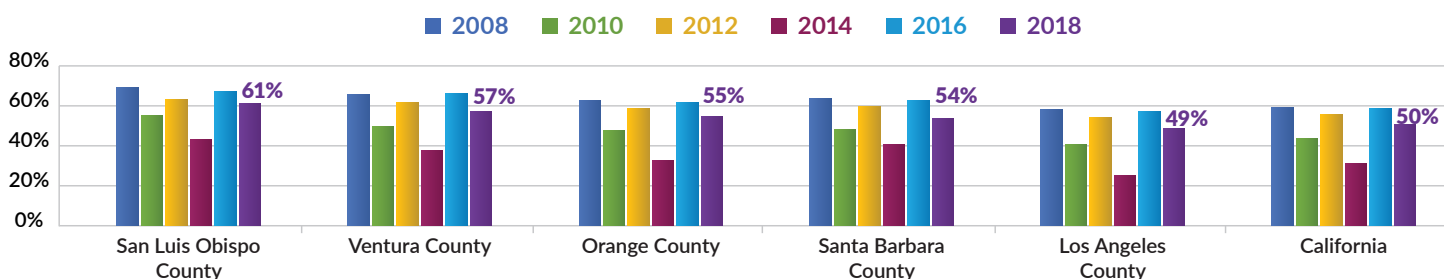
In recent elections, voter turnout in Ventura County consistently topped the state average and that of our neighboring counties. In the 2018 general election, 57 percent of eligible voters in the county cast ballots, compared to 53.6 percent in Santa Barbara County, 48.5 percent in Los Angeles County and 50.5 percent statewide.

Turnout in 2018 ranked very high for a midterm, non-presidential election. The last midterm election, in 2014, saw turnout of 37.6 percent in Ventura County and 30.9 percent in California. Presidential elections always draw more voters than midterms, and the last presidential election, in 2016, saw particularly high turnout. In Ventura County, 66 percent of eligible voters cast ballots in 2016 compared to 58.7 percent statewide.

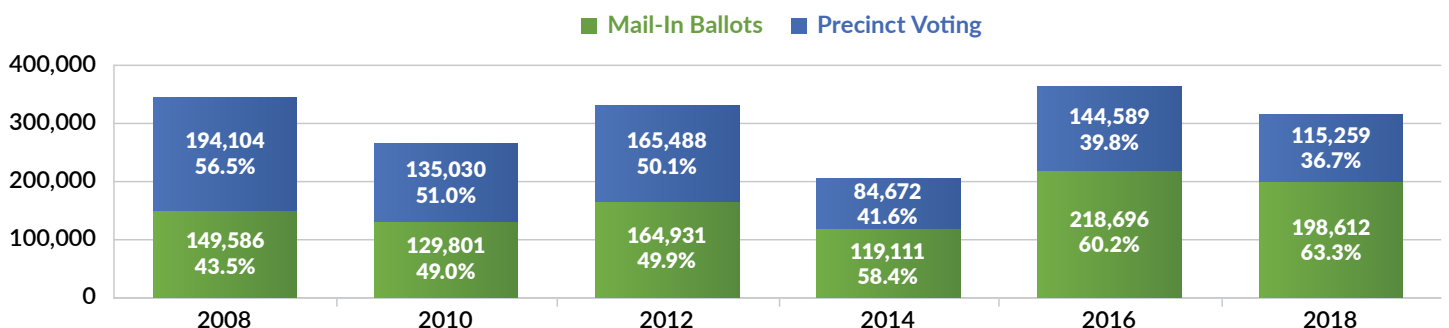
Turnout has fluctuated dramatically over the past decade, particularly in non-presidential elections. Almost 20 percentage points separates the lowest-turnout midterm election, in 2014, from the highest-turnout contest, in 2018.

Turnout rises and falls, but one inescapable trend is the rise of absentee voting. In 2018, the portion of ballots cast by mail hit its highest level yet, at 63.3 percent, around 20 percentage points higher than 10 years before.

### Percent of Eligible Voters Actually Voting in California General Elections (2008 - 2018)



### Ventura County Mail-in Ballots vs. Precinct Voting (2008 - 2018)



# Political Party Affiliation

## GROWTH IN “NO PARTY PREFERENCE” CONTINUES

### What is the measure?

The measure is the percentage of registered voters in Ventura County and in each city who register as Republicans, Democrats or as Other/No Party Preference — which means they are not members of any political party or they affiliate with a third party.

### Why is the measure important?

In federal and state elections, the party affiliation of voters in the district often decides who is sent to Sacramento or Washington, D.C. Local elections are officially nonpartisan, but party affiliation can influence voters' choices on local candidates and issues, too.

### How are we doing?

Democrats have a comfortable majority in Ventura County, at 39.8 percent of registered voters in 2018. Their numbers held steady from 2000 through 2018, while the number of Republicans declined and the number of voters with no party preference grew. In 2018, Republicans in Ventura County were overtaken by independent voters: 29.6 percent of

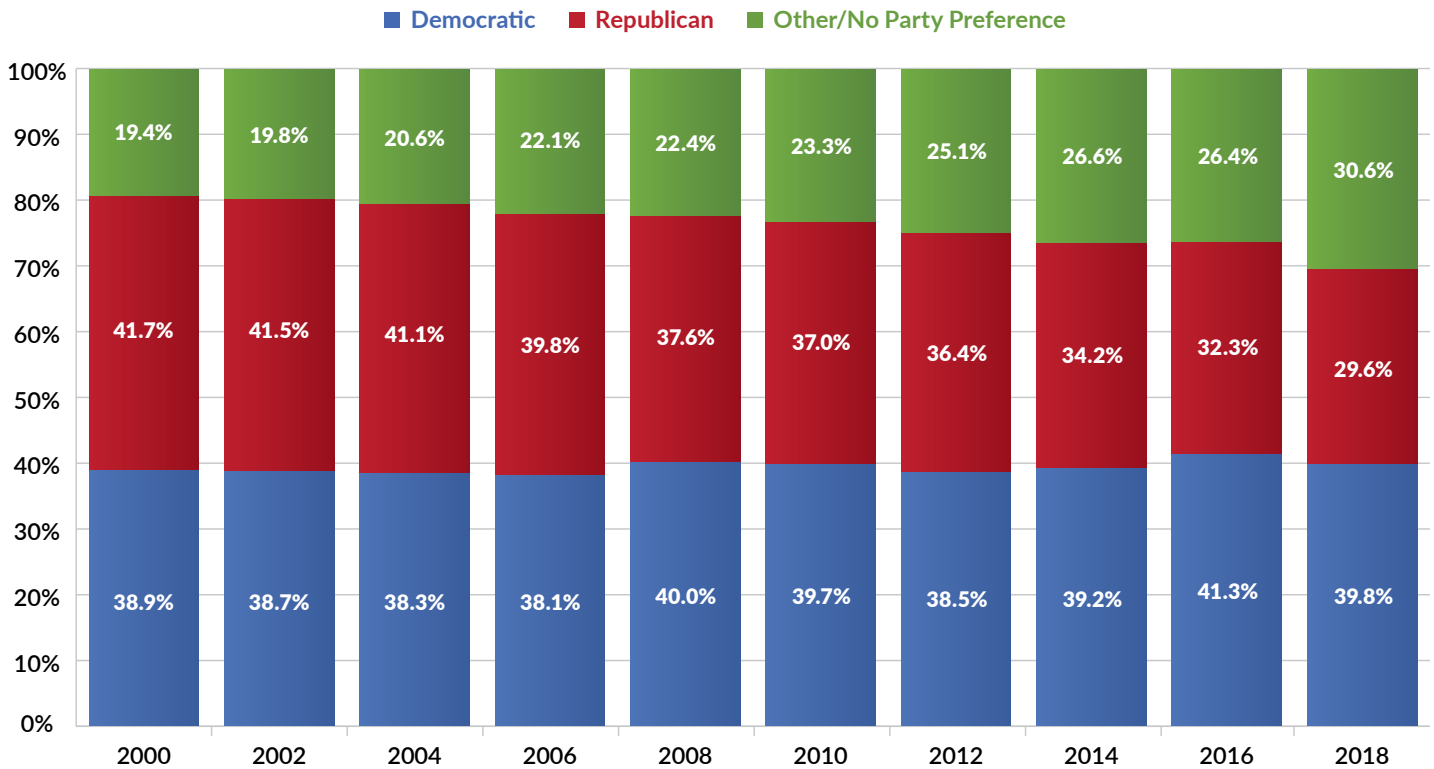
the county's registered voters were Republicans, and 30.6 percent belonged to no party or a smaller party.

In 2018, there were 178,374 Democrats, 132,841 Republicans, 112,869 voters listed as No Party Preference, 10,524 American Independents, 1,804 Greens, 3,600 Libertarians, 1,181 Peace & Freedom voters, 1,711 with unknown affiliations and 5,270 with smaller parties.

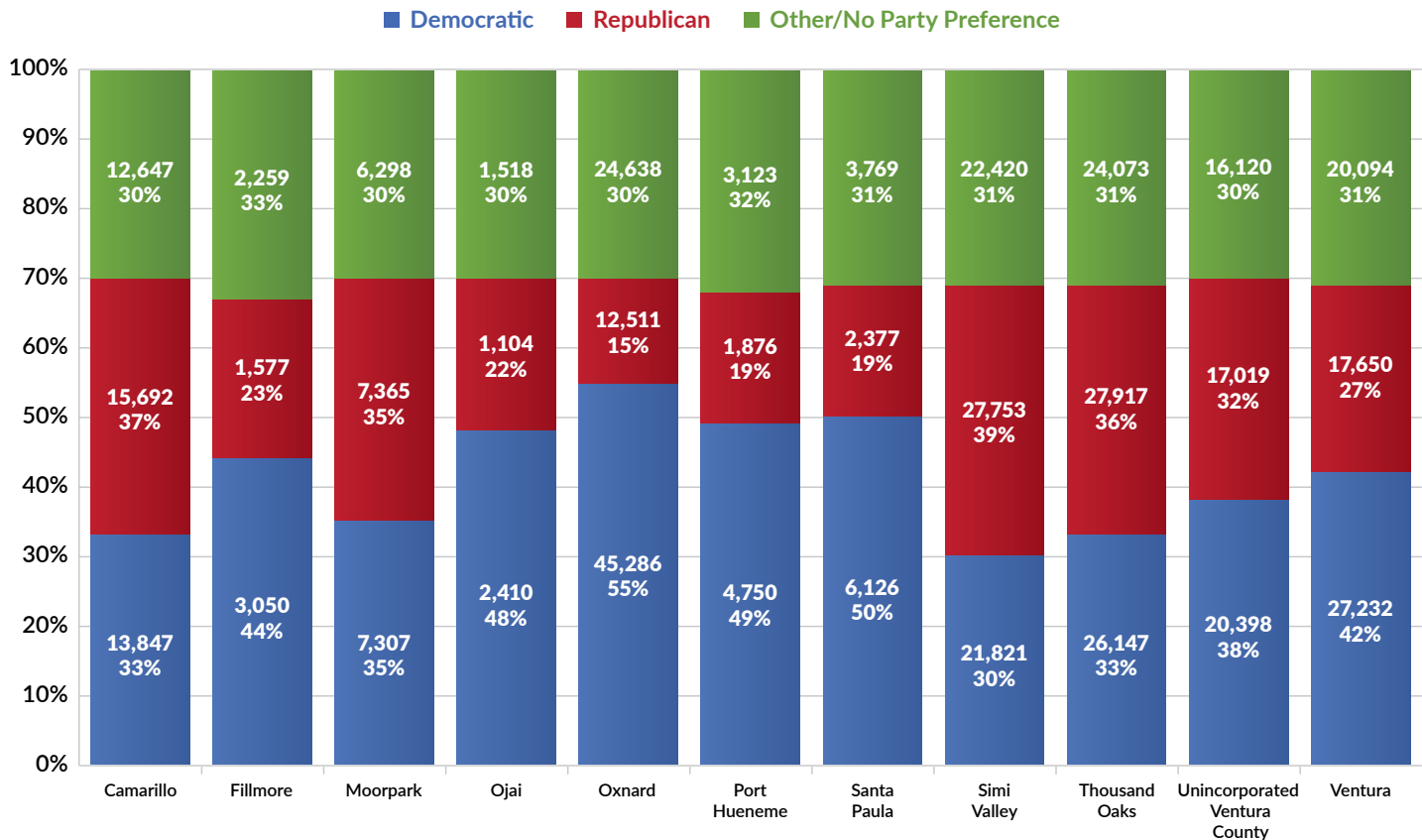
Oxnard is the bluest city in Ventura County, with 55 percent of its voters registered as Democrats in 2018. Santa Paula was next at 50 percent Democrats, and Port Hueneme, Fillmore, Ojai and Ventura were also heavily Democratic. Republicans did not enjoy comparably large majorities anywhere in the county. Simi Valley had the biggest Republican edge, with 39 percent of voters registered as Republicans and 30 percent as Democrats. Camarillo and Thousand Oaks were the only other cities with more Republicans than Democrats. Unaffiliated and third-party voters are fairly evenly distributed throughout the county, making up between 30 percent and 33 percent of the electorate in each city.



## Affiliations of Registered Ventura County Voters (2000 - 2018)



## Affiliations of Registered Ventura County Voters by City (2018)





# Nonprofits

## COUNTY HAS MORE THAN 3,000 NONPROFITS

### What are the measures?

The measures are the number of charitable nonprofits in Ventura County, broken down by type; and the assets and revenues of a selection of the county's biggest nonprofits.

### Why are the measures important?

The nonprofit sector is an important part of Ventura County's economy and its social fabric. Some of the region's biggest hospitals and universities are nonprofits or have nonprofit foundations associated with them. Nonprofits also provide a large part of Ventura County's social safety net, helping feed the hungry and shelter the homeless.

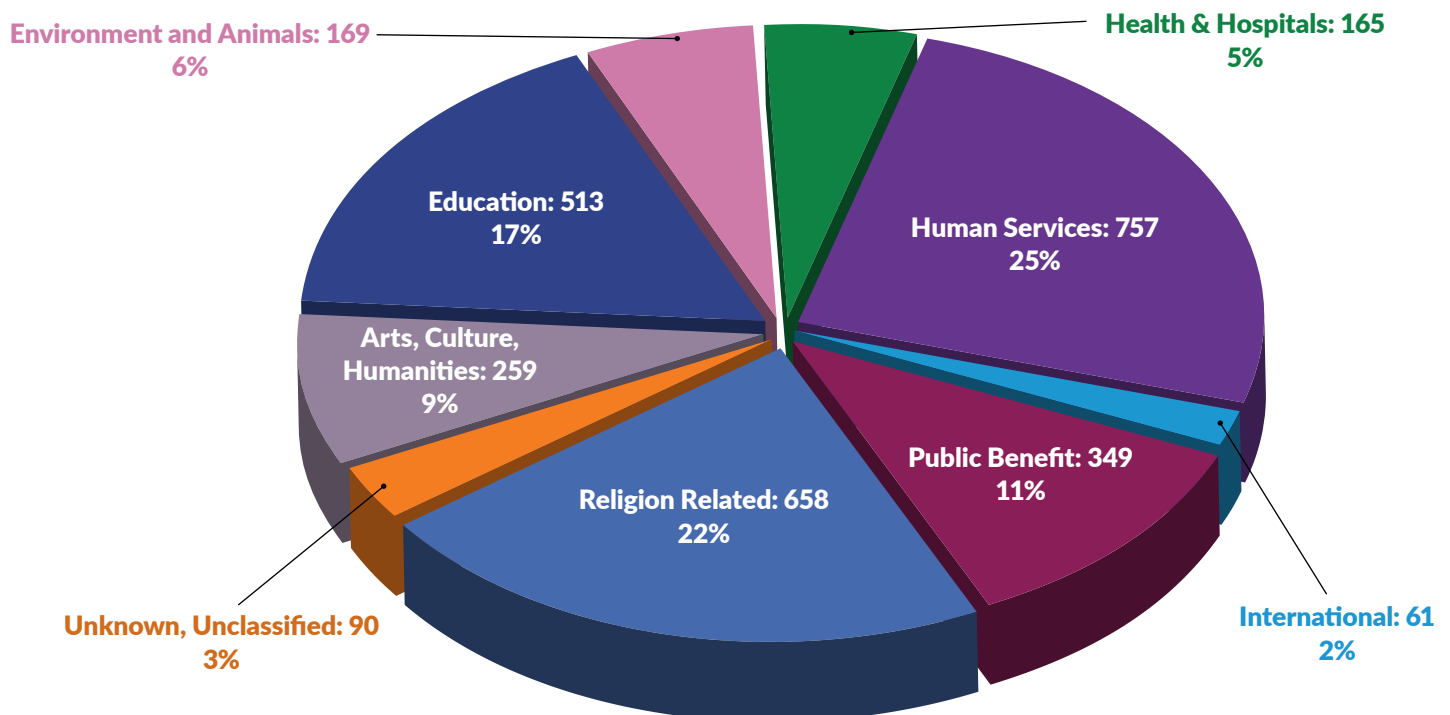
### How are we doing?

In 2018, Ventura County was home to 3,021 groups that filed as nonprofits under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, which covers charitable organizations and foundations. Human services organizations were the most common, making up 25 percent of the total, followed by churches and other religious organizations, at 22 percent, and private schools and other educational nonprofits, at 17 percent.

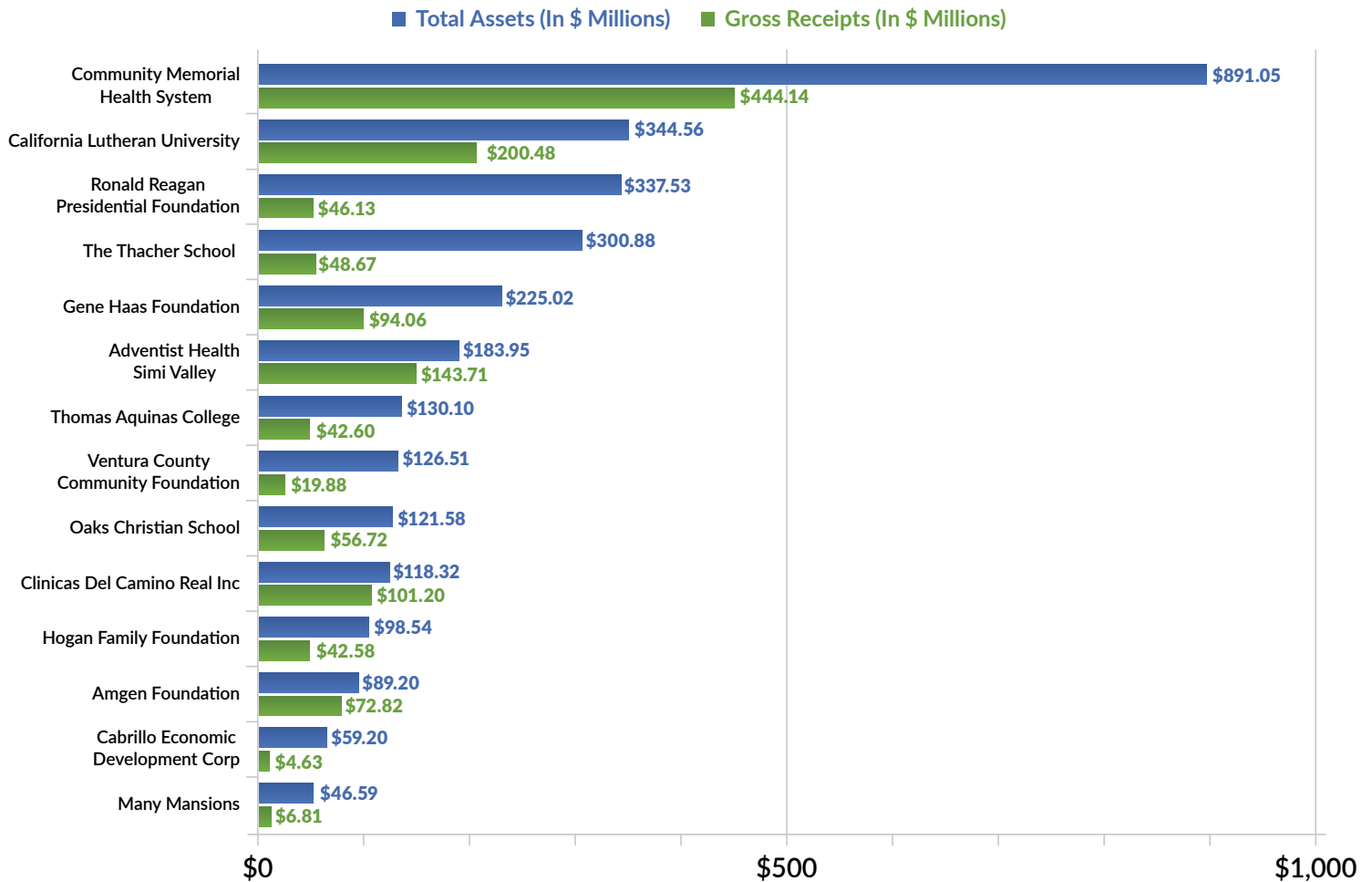
The county's biggest nonprofits, in financial terms, tend to be hospitals, colleges and major foundations. The county's largest nonprofit in the 2017/18 fiscal year was Community Memorial Health System, which took in \$444.1 million in gross receipts and had assets of \$891 million. The nonprofit owns Community Memorial Hospital in Ventura, which in 2018 finished construction on a \$275 million building. California Lutheran University was second, with \$200.5 million in revenues and \$344.6 million in assets.

Other nonprofits with more than \$100 million in assets included the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation, which supports the Reagan Library in Simi Valley; the Thacher School in Ojai; the Gene Haas Foundation, a private foundation started by the founder of Haas Automation in Oxnard; the Ventura County Community Foundation; and Clinicas Del Camino Real, a network of medical clinics.

**Number of Ventura County  
Nonprofit Organizations by Type (2018)**



## Total Assets and Gross Receipts for Selected Large Ventura County Nonprofits (2017/2018)



## Comparison of Ventura County and California Nonprofits (2014 - 2017)

	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Organization Count (Filing 990 or 990-EZ)</b>				
Ventura County	741	812	929	936
California	35,325	37,116	43,002	43,842
<b>Total Revenue on 990 and 990-EZ</b>				
Ventura County	\$1.58 Billion	\$1.68 Billion	\$2.06 Billion	\$2.11 Billion
California	\$248.84 Billion	\$269.57 Billion	\$287.84 Billion	\$305.63 Billion
<b>Total Assets</b>				
Ventura County	\$3 Billion	\$3.08 Billion	\$3.39 Billion	\$3.59 Billion
California	\$399.99 Billion	\$421.09 Billion	\$444.68 Billion	\$486.15 Billion
<b>Total Net Assets</b>				
Ventura County	\$1.81 Billion	\$1.88 Billion	\$2.11 Billion	\$2.39 Billion
California	\$236.68 Billion	\$251.51 Billion	\$263.46 Billion	\$294.65 Billion
<b>Per Capita Revenue</b>				
Ventura County	\$1,862	\$1,969	\$2,415	\$2,466
California	\$6,443	\$6,921	\$7,340	\$7,737

# Nonprofit Revenue

## COUNTY REVENUE TRAILS NEIGHBORS AND STATE

### What is the measure?

The measure is the revenue of nonprofits based in Ventura County on a per capita basis and compared to the state and nearby counties. It includes nonprofits with \$50,000 or more in revenue and excludes private foundations, which are largely funded by an individual, family or company.

### Why is the measure important?

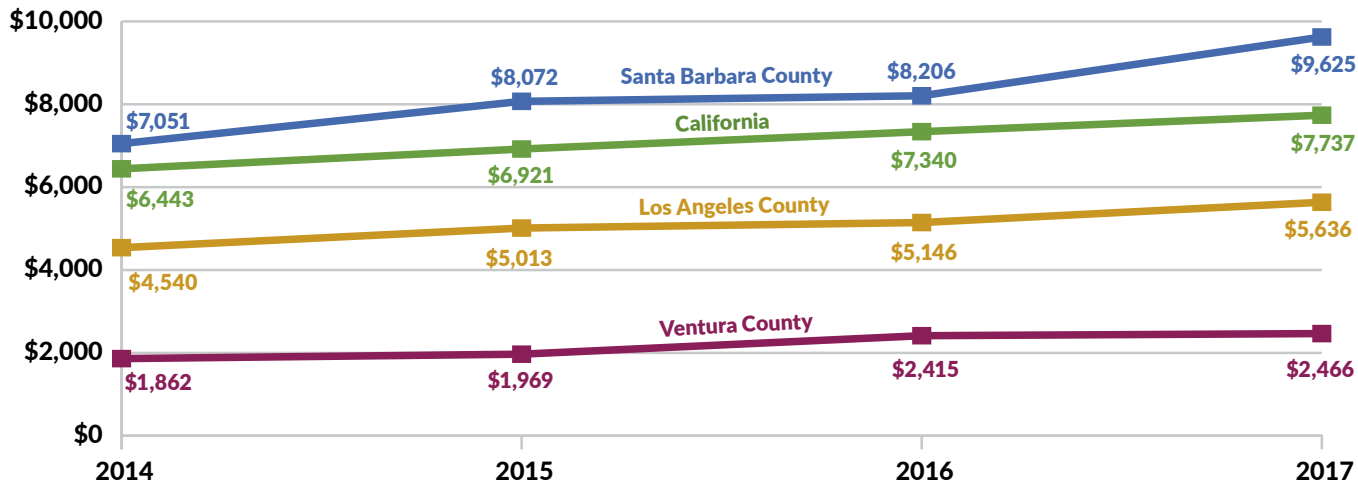
Revenue, in relation to the county's population, measures how much the county's nonprofits have to work with relative to the size of the market they serve. It also offers an imprecise measure of the philanthropy of Ventura County residents — imprecise because donations to nonprofits based elsewhere are not counted, while contributions to local nonprofits by non-residents are included.

### How are we doing?

Ventura County's nonprofit sector is underdeveloped, at least by this measure. In 2017, there were 936 nonprofits that took in more than \$50,000. Their total revenue was a little over \$2.1 billion, or \$2,466 per county resident — well below the statewide per capita figure of \$7,737 and the per capita revenues in Santa Barbara County, at \$9,625, and Los Angeles County, at \$5,636. While Ventura County has many small nonprofits and a few mid-sized ones, it lacks the concentration of large nonprofits or major donors found in Los Angeles, Santa Barbara or San Francisco.

Though Ventura County's nonprofit sector lags behind much of the state in per capita revenue, it has grown in recent years. Per capita revenue rose every year from 2014 to 2017 for a total increase of 32.4 percent over three years.

Nonprofit Per Capita Revenue (2014 - 2017)





# Creative Economy

## THOUSANDS WORK IN CREATIVE FIELDS

### What are the measures?

The measures are the number of businesses and employees in Ventura County's creative industries in 2017, according to a study by Americans For The Arts. Creative industries include film, radio and television; design and publishing; performing and visual arts.

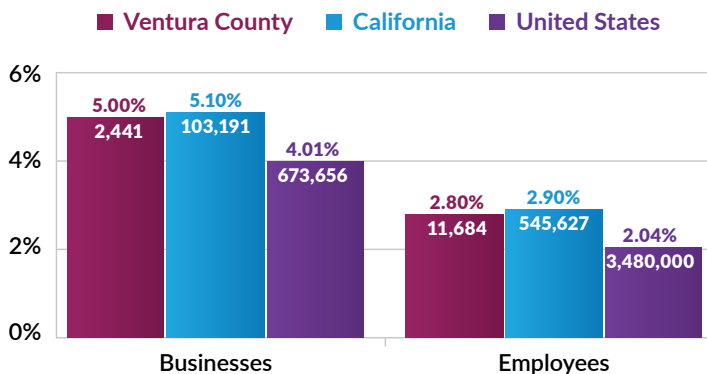
### Why are the measures important?

The arts are an often overlooked economic and cultural force. Jobs in creative industries stimulate the larger economy, as people who spend money at concert venues and galleries also tend to patronize restaurants and hotels. And research suggests an urban area's friendliness to artists and creative types correlates positively with many measures of vitality and quality of life.

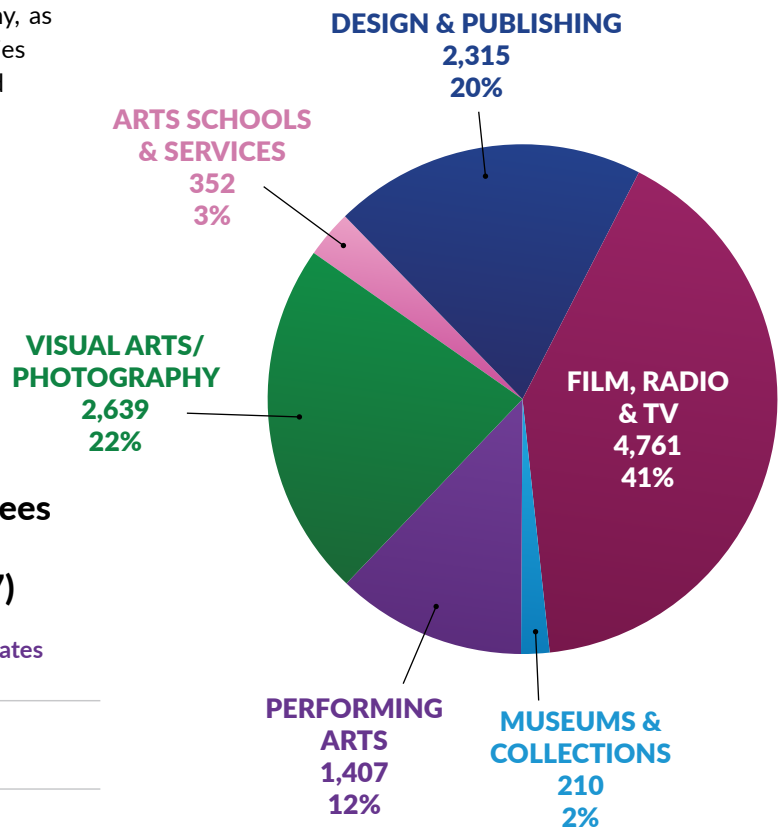
### How are we doing?

Around 5 percent of Ventura County's businesses and 2.8 percent of its workers were in creative industries in 2017. Both figures were above the national average but slightly below the average for California.

**Number of Businesses and Employees in Creative Industries and Percent Share of Total (2017)**



**Employees Within Ventura County Creative Industries (2017)**



# Public Libraries

## LIBRARY FUNDING MOSTLY DOWN

### What is the measure?

The measure is spending on public libraries on a per capita basis.

### Why is the measure important?

Public libraries are a vital community resource. They offer free Internet access for people who have no other way to connect, and space for lectures, meetings and other public events. They promote children's literacy and put thousands of books at every resident's fingertips — all free of charge.

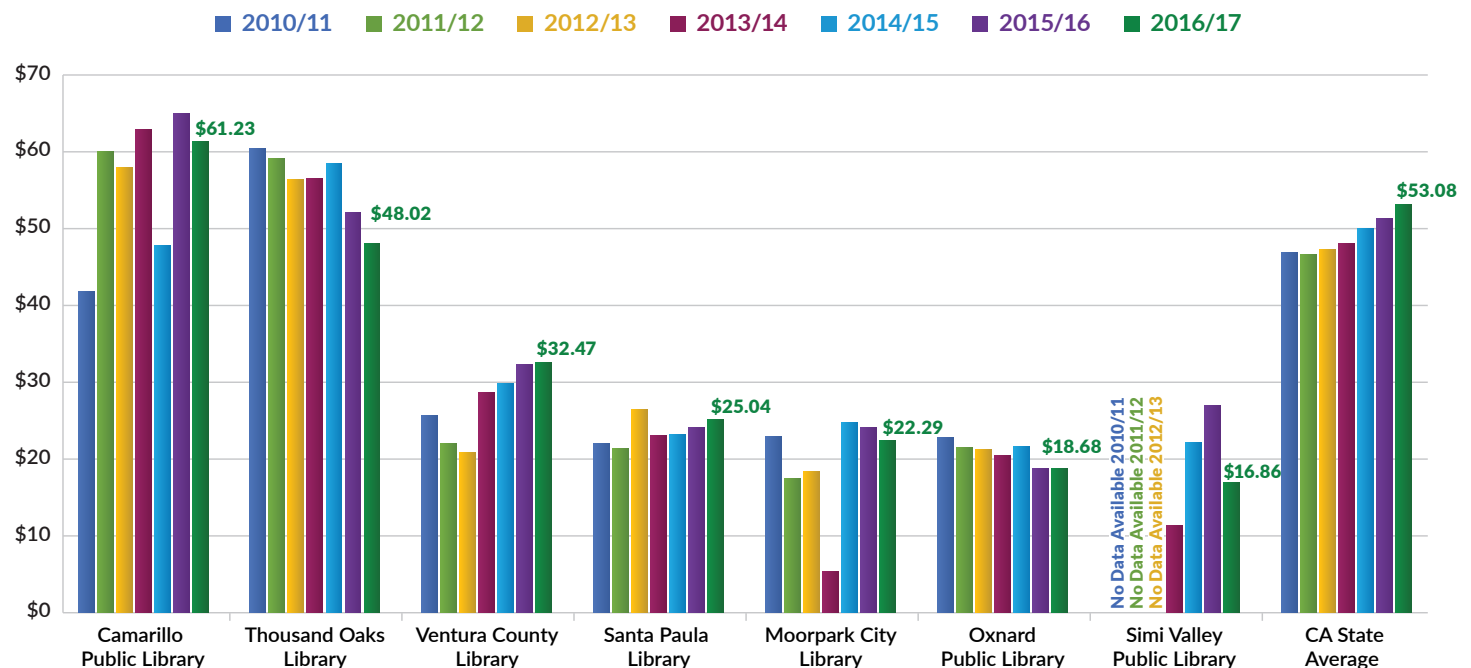
### How are we doing?

Most of Ventura County's libraries are underfunded compared to the rest of California. The state average in 2016/17 was \$53.08 per capita. In Ventura County, only the Camarillo Public Library, at \$61.23 per city resident,

exceeded that level. The Thousand Oaks Library was next in funding at slightly below the state average, at \$48.02 per person. At the low end of the spectrum, Simi Valley's library system budgeted \$16.86 per city resident in 2016/17, with Oxnard at \$18.68.

The Ventura County Library System fell in the middle of the pack, at \$32.47 per resident in 2016/17. The county system operates branches in Ventura, the Ojai Valley, Fillmore, Piru, Port Hueneme, Saticoy, El Rio and Oak Park. The rest of the county's cities have independent library systems, run either by the cities themselves, as in Thousand Oaks and Santa Paula, or by a private contractor, as in Moorpark, Camarillo and Simi Valley.

**Per Capita Spending for Ventura County Public Library Systems (FY 2010/11 - 2016/17)**



# Economy

**Technically speaking**, Ventura County is in a recession — or was in one, as recently as 2018. And yet, “how is our economy doing?” is not an easy question to answer. By some measures, it is remarkably healthy. The unemployment rate is near record lows. The county has added jobs every year since 2011. The demand to live here outstrips the supply of housing.

By other measures, our economy is anemic. According to the Center for Economic Research and Forecasting at California Lutheran University, Ventura County’s economic output shrank in 2016 and 2017, when adjusted for inflation, and was projected to contract again in 2018. Negative economic growth is the standard definition of a recession, and it’s happened here while the state and nation hum along with steady growth.

We have had sustained employment growth, but that has been relatively meager, not topping 1.5 percent annually since 2013. And the jobs we create aren’t always the ones we need for a balanced economy. Low-paying sectors like hospitality

**Negative economic growth is the standard definition of a recession, and it’s happened here while the state and nation hum along with steady growth.**

and food service are expanding, while manufacturing and other high-paying industries shrink. The population is aging, and people aren’t moving here. Our population growth consistently has underperformed the expected rate due

to births and deaths, which means people are leaving. Ventura County is in danger of evolving in the direction of so much of coastal California, a place defined by its wealth and its poverty, with less room for the middle class than in previous generations.

Ventura County is an expensive place to live and do business. Typically that comes with a tradeoff: High-cost areas are usually high-growth areas.

San Francisco is a prime example. Living there is extremely expensive, but opportunity abounds for both entrepreneurs and workers. In Ventura County, we have high costs and low growth — not a recipe for prosperity. Our government and business leaders have taken an approach that produced a comfortable life for many current residents, but they will need to consider a different course to provide sufficient opportunities for increasing the middle class population.





# Unemployment

## JOBLESS RATE AT RECORD LOWS

### What is the measure?

The measure is the unemployment rate in Ventura County, which reflects the number of people in the workforce without jobs. Only people with jobs or looking for work are considered in the workforce; those who stopped seeking employment are excluded.

### Why is the measure important?

Employment is the primary way most people participate in the economy. Without jobs, they are at a greater risk of poverty, hunger and homelessness. Stretches of joblessness can damage a worker's career, and long-term unemployment can be devastating. On the macroeconomic level, the unemployment rate is a common, if imperfect, shorthand for the economy's strength.

### How are we doing?

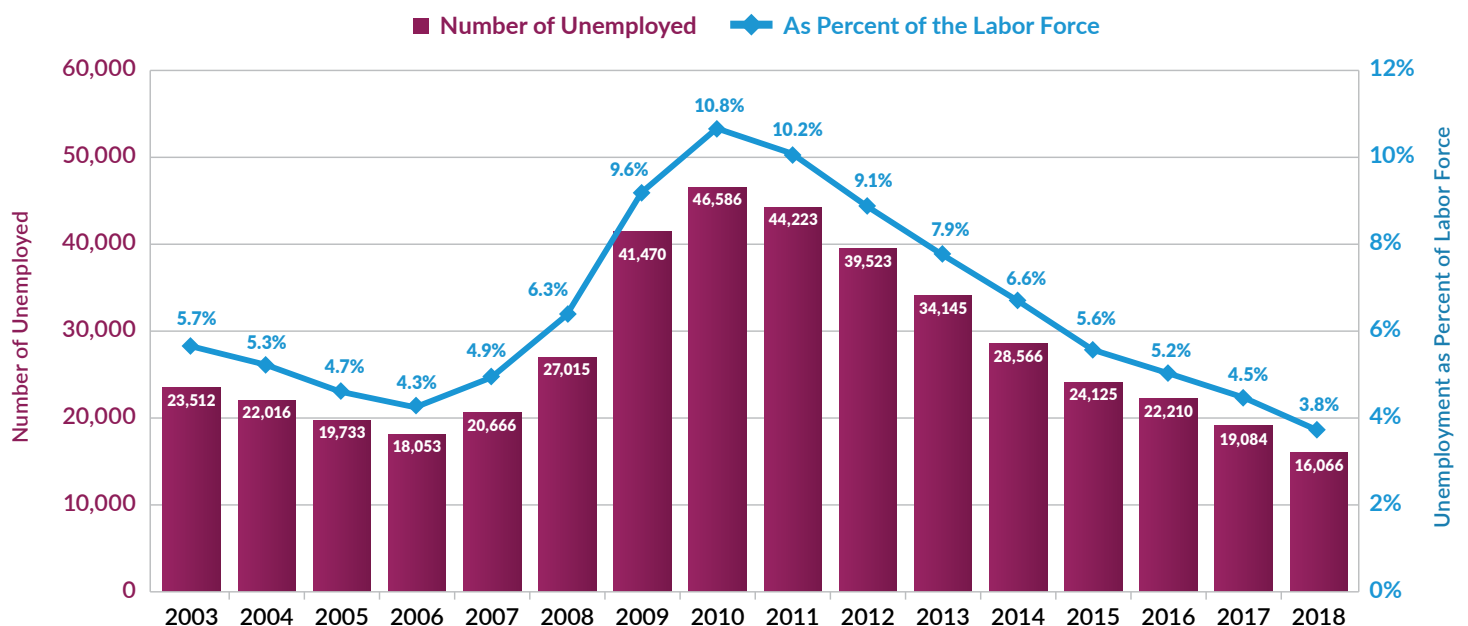
Our economy has its problems, but it is providing work for nearly everyone who is actively looking for it. In 2018, just 3.8 percent of the Ventura County workforce was unemployed, the lowest level of the 21st century. While Ventura County's economic recovery has lagged behind California and the United States in some aspects, our unemployment rate stayed slightly below that of the state and the nation in 2018.

The turnaround in our unemployment rate has been remarkable. It started to rise during the Great Recession and more than doubled in three years, peaking at 10.8 percent in 2010.

Unemployment worsened even after the recession of 2008/09 ended, because the jobless rate is known as a "lagging indicator." Businesses tend to take a long-term view when making mass hiring decisions, so the unemployment rate usually doesn't rise until well after a recession has begun and doesn't decline until after a recession has ended.



Ventura County Unemployment (2003 - 2018)



# Employment Growth

## JOB GROWTH PLUGS ALONG

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of people employed in Ventura County each year. It does not include the agricultural industry, where employment is highly seasonal.

### Why is the measure important?

A robust supply of jobs is a community's most effective anti-poverty program. If the Ventura County economy doesn't generate enough jobs for its residents, many will go without work or will commute to employers outside the county, increasing household expenses, traffic congestion and pollution.

### How are we doing?

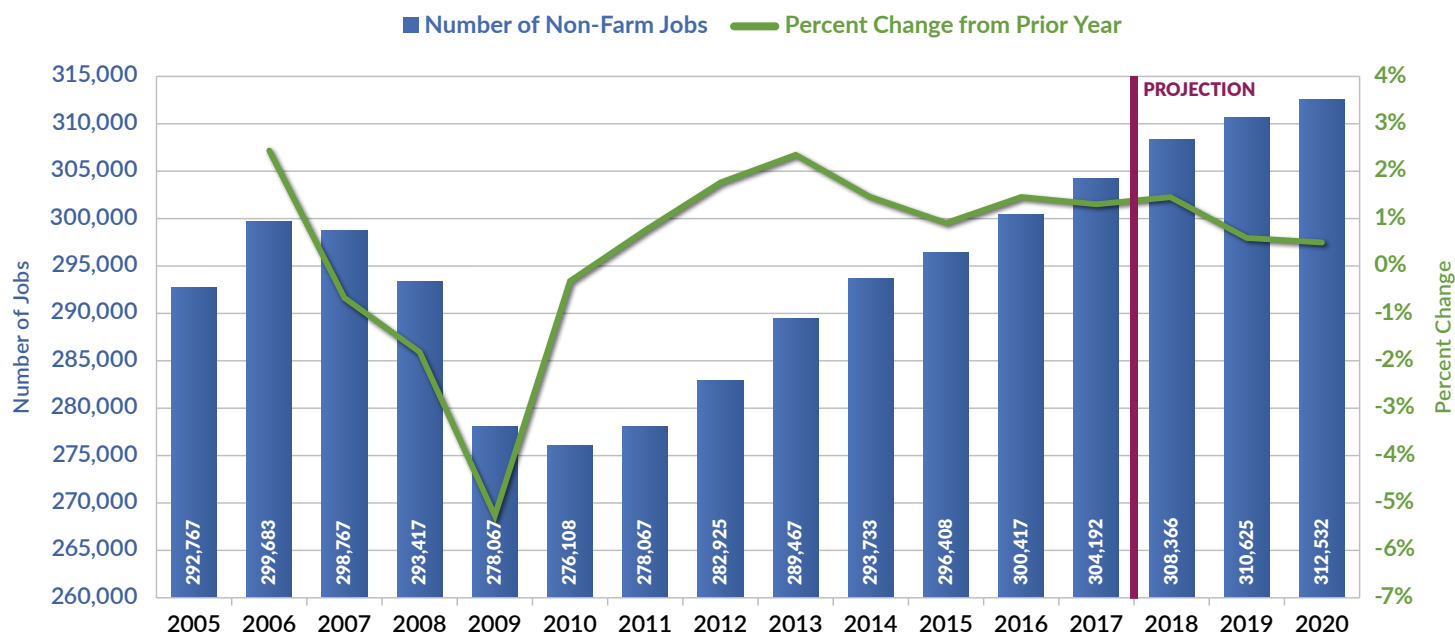
Ventura County has gained back the more than 22,000 jobs lost between 2007 and 2010, or about 7.6 percent of its total nonfarm employment. In 2017, there were 304,192 nonfarm

jobs in the county, 1.3 percent more than the year before and 4,509 above the pre-recession peak in 2006. Jobs were projected to grow by 1.4 percent more in 2018.

While our county's economy has struggled in terms of total output, job growth in recent years has been respectable. It was above 1 percent in five of the seven years from 2011 to 2017, easily outpacing our population growth of around 0.5 percent per year. During the post-recession period of the 2010s, Ventura County's job growth has been slightly stronger than just before the recession.

That trend is not expected to continue. The California Lutheran University economic forecast team is projecting job growth of 0.7 percent in 2019 and 0.6 percent in 2020. That would be the first two years of back-to-back job growth below 1 percent since 2007 through 2010, when we saw four straight years of negative job growth.

### Ventura County Employment Growth (2005 - 2020)



# Employment by Sector

## SERVICE JOBS ON THE RISE

### What is the measure?

The measure is a breakdown of employment in Ventura County by industrial sector. It starts in 2007, just before the Great Recession, and tracks employment changes every two years until 2017.

### Why is the measure important?

Job creation is important, but not all jobs are created equal. Breaking down employment by sector shows whether new jobs are emerging from well-paying industries. This data also allows people — as well as businesses, governments, schools and universities — to plan for careers most likely to offer good job prospects.

### How are we doing?

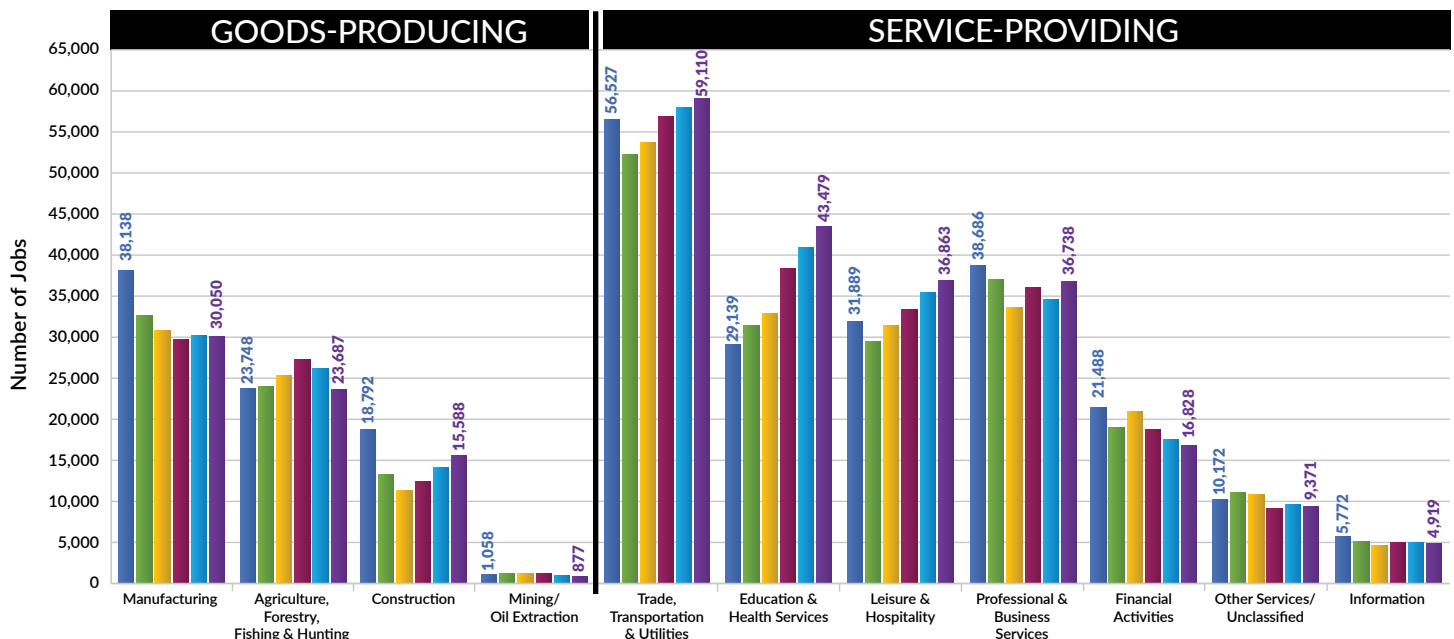
Ventura County, like most of the United States, is shifting from an economy based on manufacturing to one centered on services and information. In 2017, the county had 207,308 jobs in service-providing industries and just 70,202 jobs in goods-producing industries. What's more, that gap is widening: Between 2007 and 2017, the county's service jobs grew 7.1 percent while goods-producing jobs fell 14.1 percent.

This is a problem because goods-producing jobs generally pay better than service jobs as reported on the next page. In manufacturing, for example, a worker received an average salary of \$98,332 in 2017, but the sector lost 21.2 percent of its jobs between 2007 and 2017. Leisure and hospitality showed strong growth during that decade, adding 15.6 percent to its employment total but is the region's lowest paying industry, at \$21,840 per year in 2017.



### Ventura County Employment Growth (2007 - 2017)

■ 2007 (Pre-Recession) ■ 2009 ■ 2011 ■ 2013 ■ 2015 ■ 2017



2007 Goods-Producing Total = 81,736 Jobs

2017 Goods-Producing Total = 70,202 Jobs

2007 Service-Providing Total = 193,623 Jobs

2017 Service-Providing Total = 207,308 Jobs



# Salaries by Sector

## SALARIES IN MANUFACTURING OUTPACE SERVICES

### What is the measure?

The measure is the average pay in Ventura County employment sectors.

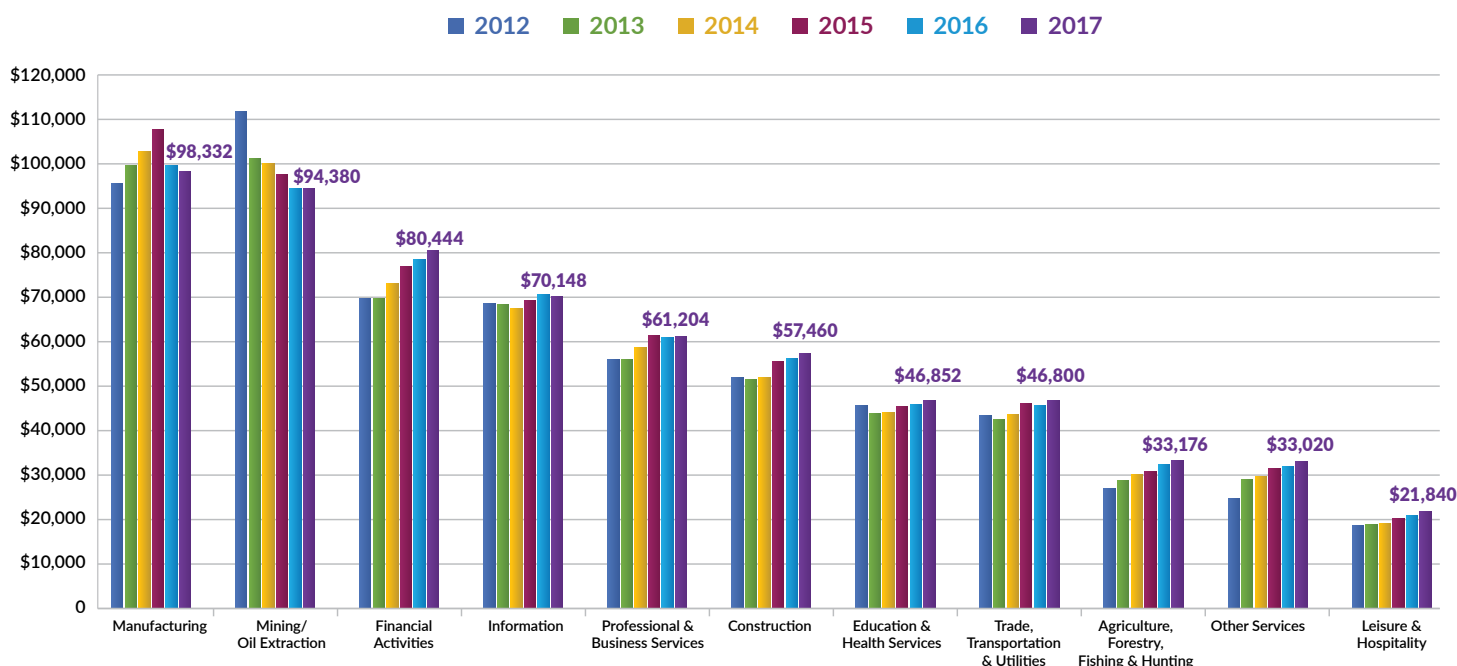
### Why is the measure important?

A worker's salary is the most important factor in determining living standards and economic opportunities. Knowing which careers pay well is crucial to gauging whether the jobs created in the county can sustain a decent quality of life.

### How are we doing?

Salaries vary widely by industry, from manufacturing at an average of \$98,332 in 2017 to leisure and hospitality at \$21,840. In most sectors, salaries are on the upswing with a few exceptions: Manufacturing salaries peaked in 2015 and dropped for two straight years afterward, and earnings in mining and oil extraction declined steadily since 2012. Salaries in the information sector as well as the education and health services sector grew slower than inflation. Salaries rose fastest in financial activities; agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; professional and business services; and construction.

### Ventura County Salaries by Sector (2012 - 2017)



# Gross County Product

## THREE YEARS OF STALLED GROWTH

### What is the measure?

The measure is gross county product, which is defined in much the same way as the U.S. gross domestic product: the total market value of all goods and services sold in Ventura County in one year. Gross product counts only the final sale to the consumer, not intermediary transactions among producers and wholesalers.

### Why is the measure important?

Gross product tells only part of the story, but it is the most common shorthand for describing the economic productivity and standard of living of a region or nation. Growth or decline in gross product is the most accepted gauge of whether a nation or region is in a period of economic contraction, known as a recession, or one of expansion.

### How are we doing?

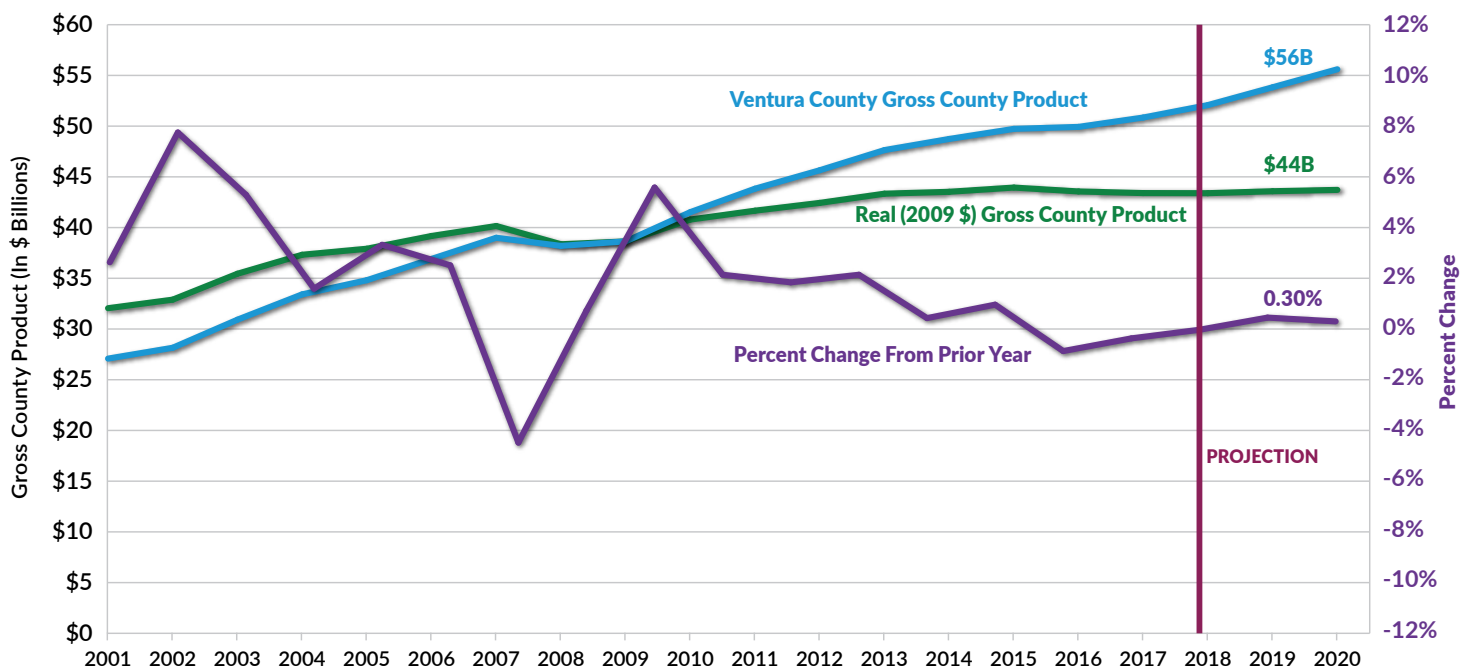
The Ventura County economy has been far from robust in recent years. Total inflation-adjusted economic output shrank in 2016 and again in 2017 to \$50.8 billion and was projected to contract again in 2018, according to the California Lutheran University Center for Economic Research and Forecasting. When adjusted for inflation, the county experienced almost no economic growth between 2013 and 2018.

The CLU forecasters do not expect things to get much better in the coming years; they are projecting growth of 0.45 percent in 2019 and 0.3 percent in 2020. If those predictions hold true, Ventura County will go seven years without significant economic growth.

This is not a symptom of an unhealthy national economy, such as we experienced when Ventura County's production shrank by 4.5 percent during the recession of 2008. During our local recession of 2016 through 2018, the state and the nation experienced steady economic growth.

California's economy has been particularly hot. In the San Francisco and Los Angeles regions, high-cost areas are thriving, creating high-paying jobs even as they fail to provide enough housing for the workers who take those jobs. In Ventura County, something in this chain is broken. There is plenty of desire to live here, and our cost of living is correspondingly high. But with our economy no longer growing, we lack the economic opportunities that make a high cost of living tolerable.

Recent and Projected Growth in the Ventura County Economy (2001 - 2020)



# Wages and Cost of Living

## THE ENDS DON'T MEET EASILY

### What is the measure?

The measure is the hourly wage a full-time worker in Ventura County must earn to support a family. It represents the income needed to cover housing, food, child care, transportation, health care and other expenses.

### Why is the measure important?

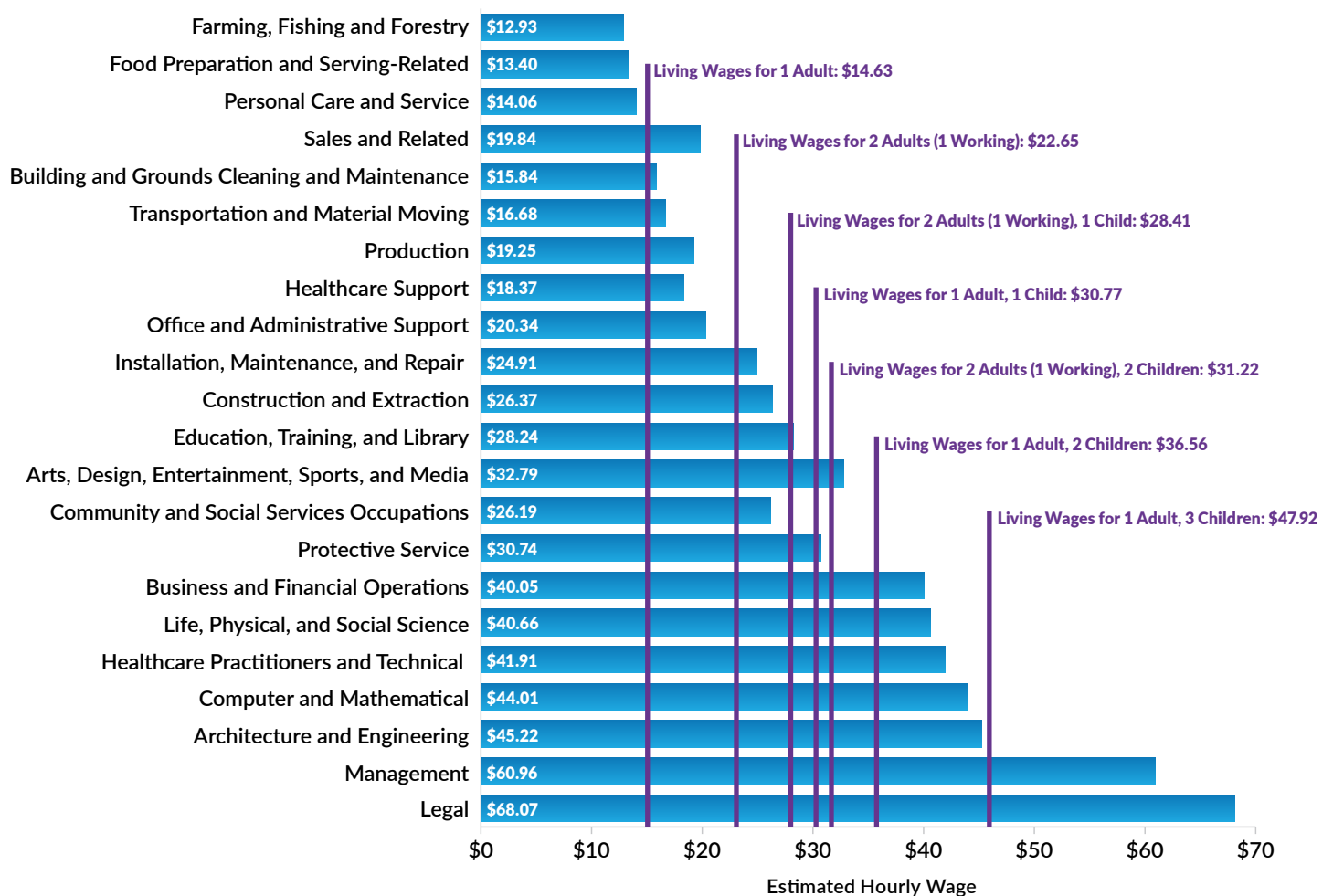
Wages are half of a household's financial equation. Expenses are equally important and vary widely by region and by household size.

### How are we doing?

In many industries, supporting even a single person in Ventura County with one salary is a challenge. As households get larger, they become nearly impossible to maintain on a single income, except in the highest paying jobs.

The living wage for one adult in 2018 was \$14.63 per hour. Most jobs in Ventura County pay more than that except farming, food service and personal care. For a single adult with two children, the living wage rises to \$36.56 per hour. That's more than the average wage in teaching, construction, social services and many other industries. And for an adult with three children, the living wage in 2018 was \$47.92 an hour, exceeding the average wage in all but the management and legal fields.

### Ventura County Cost of Living and Hourly Wages Comparison (2018)





# Gender Difference in Pay

## WOMEN MAKE 85% OF MEN

### What is the measure?

The measure is the average annual salary for men and women in various employment sectors from 2013 to 2017. It covers people over the age of 16 who work full time and aren't in the military.

### Why is the measure important?

When women earn less than men, they face a lower standard of living and are less able to provide for their families. If their lower wages stem from fewer opportunities for promotions and new jobs, their careers are harmed as well.

### How are we doing?

Women consistently earn less than men in all types of full-time employment in Ventura County. In 2017, women made 84.6 cents for every dollar earned by men, which was similar to the nationwide gender gap. Female entrepreneurs have it particularly hard: Women who own incorporated businesses earned just 60.6 percent of men's wages in that sector in 2017. Women who own unincorporated businesses fared a bit better, at 74 percent of men's earnings.

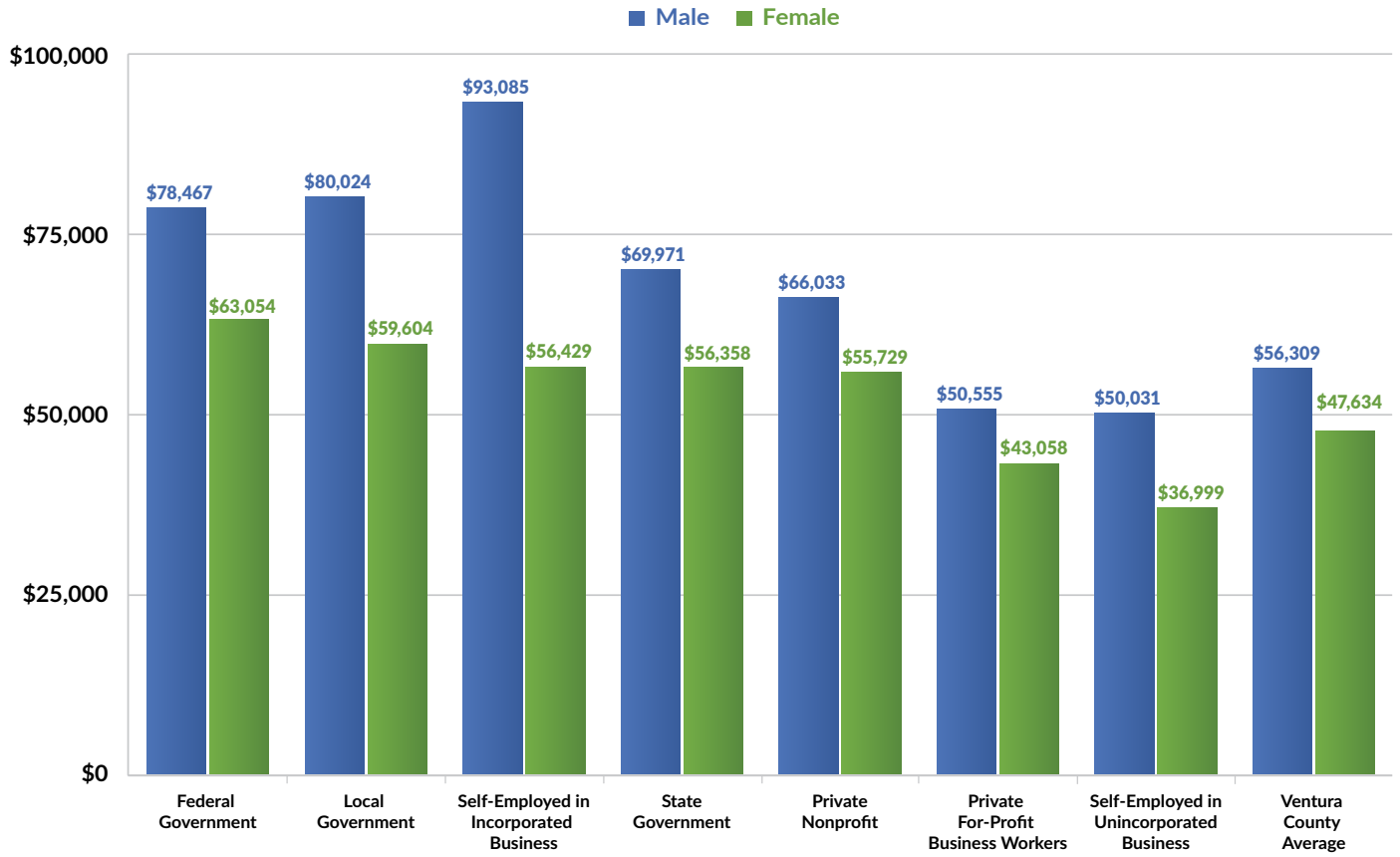
Women in local government, a major employer in Ventura County, earned 74.5 percent as much as men in 2017. One possible explanation is police officer and firefighter are among the highest paying positions in local government, and those fields typically are not characterized by gender equity.

In state and federal governments, women earned 80.5 percent and 80.4 percent, respectively. In the private sector, women in private for-profit businesses earned 85.2 percent as much as men, and women in private nonprofits earned 84.8 percent as much as men. That means that even in Ventura County's sector closest to parity, women earned nearly 15 cents less on the dollar than their male counterparts.

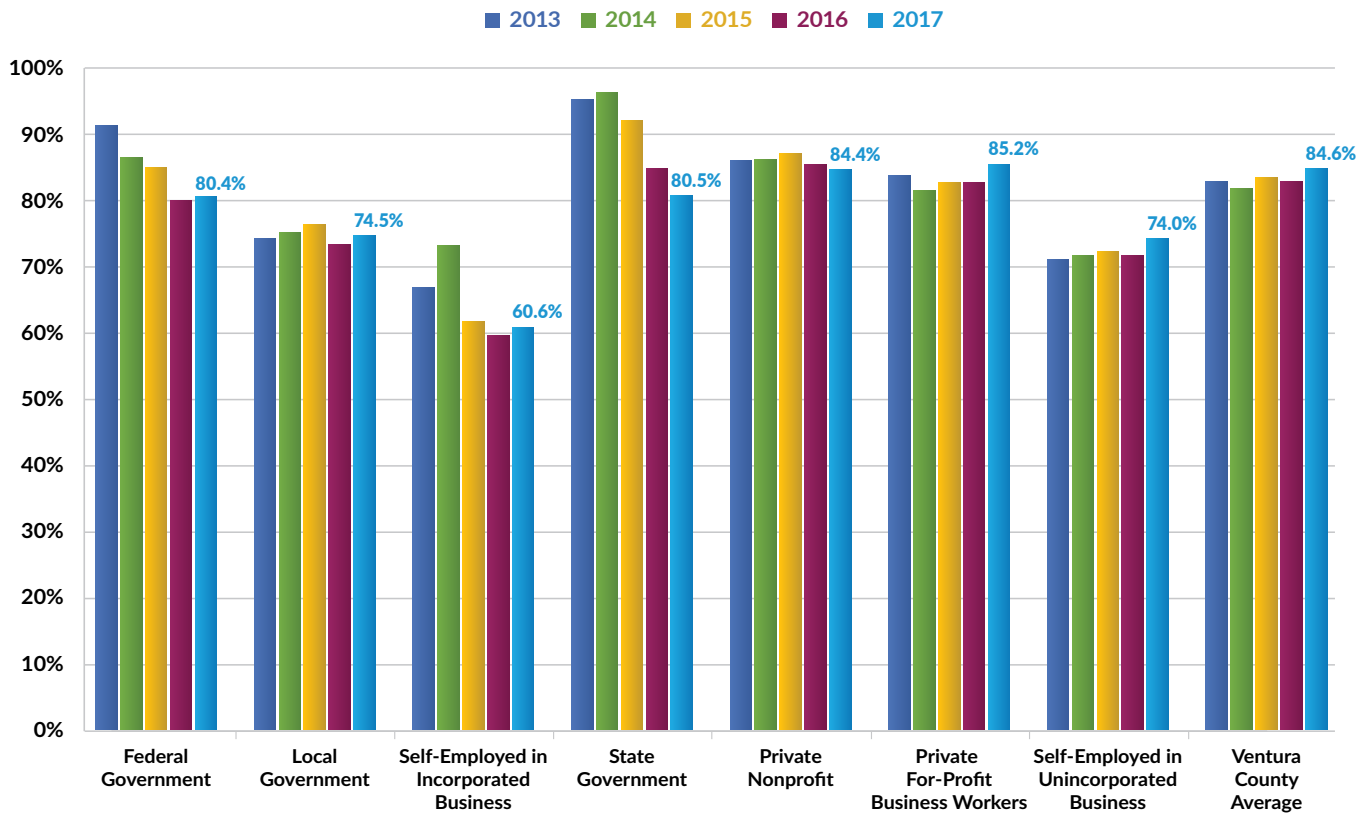
There is a silver lining in this data: the gender wage gap in Ventura County appears to have shrunk in recent years, going from 82.6 percent in 2013 to 84.6 percent in 2017.



## Pay for Work by Gender, Median Earning in Ventura County in 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars (2017)



## Female Earnings as a Percentage of Male Earnings (2013 - 2017)



# Cost of Child Care

## PROFESSIONAL CHILD CARE OUT OF REACH FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

### What is the measure?

The measure is the cost of licensed child care in Ventura County in 2017, expressed as a percentage of the federal poverty level for different family structures.

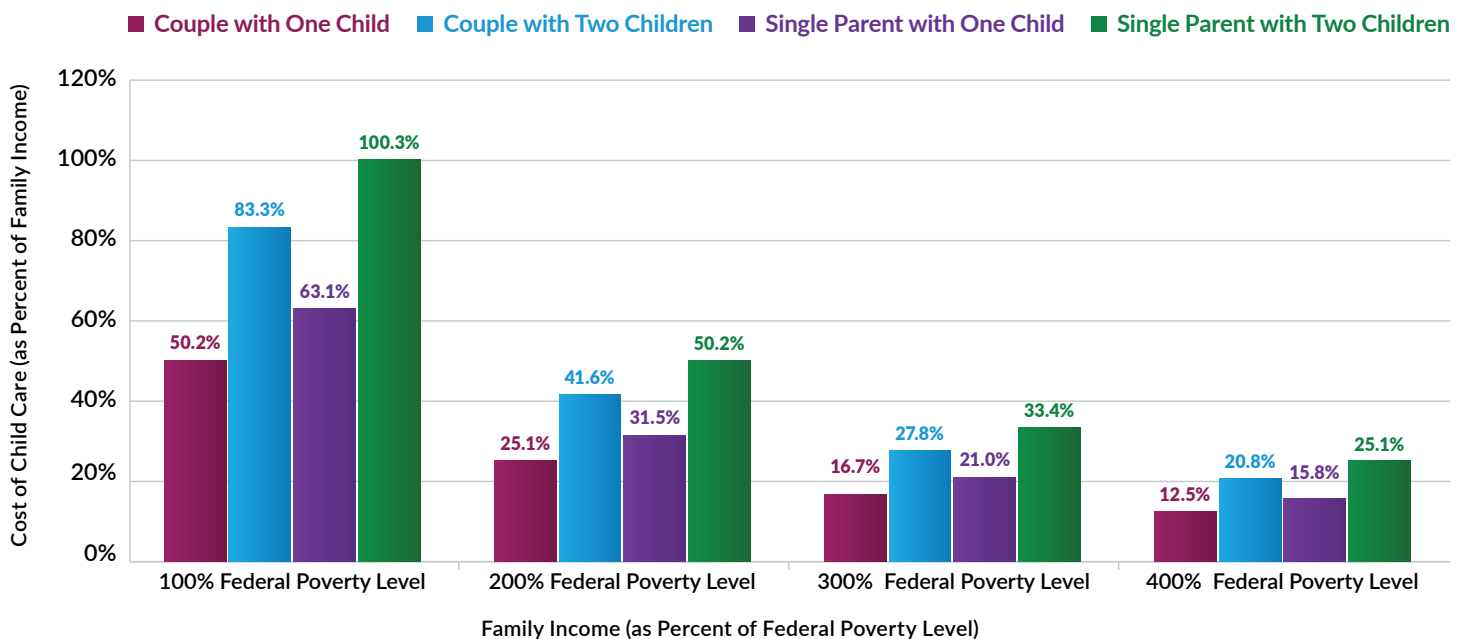
### Why is the measure important?

Stay-at-home parenting is now the exception, and most families need help with child care. But licensed care can be unaffordable for many.

### How are we doing?

Child care can eat up a huge portion of the budget for all but the highest income families. For example, two working parents with two children, earning 400 percent of the federal poverty level, would need to spend 20.8 percent of their income on full-time child care. For the truly poor, paying for professional child care is out of the question: A single parent at the poverty level would have to spend 63.1 percent of her income on care for one child, and 100.3 percent for two children.

### Cost of Child Care as a Percent of Family Income in Ventura County (2017)





# Economic Impact of the Port of Hueneme

## SLIGHT RISE IN JOBS; FINANCIAL IMPACT GROWING

### What are the measures?

The measures are the jobs related to the Port of Hueneme and the revenue generated by the port to businesses as well as state and local governments, according to a study conducted by the port.

### Why are the measures important?

The Port of Hueneme is one of Ventura County's chief connections to the global economy. It handles much of the county's exported farm products, and it receives imported automobiles, produce and other goods.

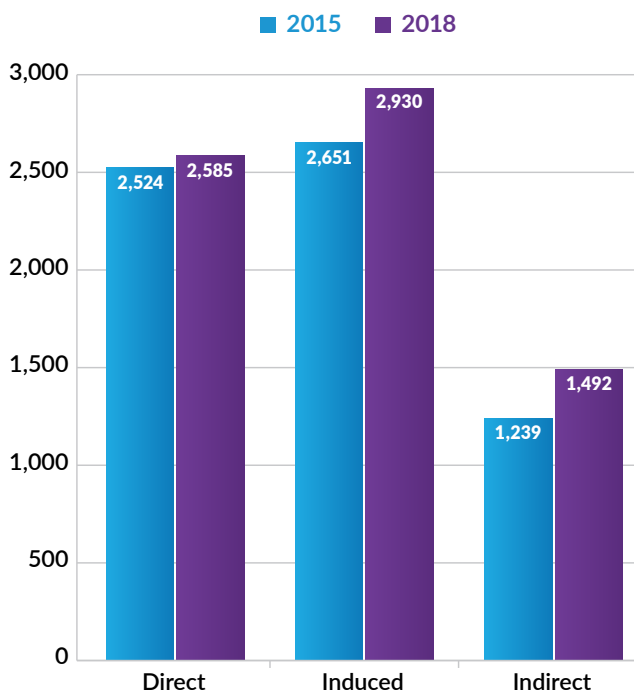
### How are we doing?

The Port of Hueneme directly employed 2,585 people in 2018, little changed from the 2,524 it employed in 2015. But a closer look at the employment and revenue data shows the port's impact grew in those three years. It was responsible

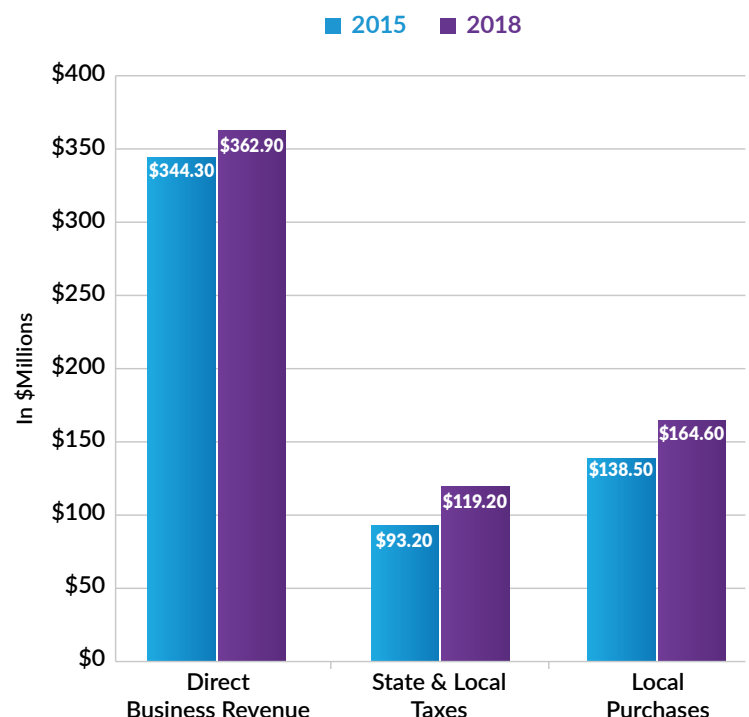
for a total of 7,007 jobs in 2018, which is 9.2 percent more than in 2015. That includes direct employment as well as indirect and induced jobs. Indirect jobs are generated as a result of local purchases of goods and services by firms operating at the port. Induced jobs are those that provide goods and services to outside firms and workers dependent on the port. For example, taxes paid by the port support jobs in local government, and the workers at the port go to local doctors for health care.

Business revenue at the Port of Hueneme was \$362.9 million in 2018, up 5.4 percent from 2015. That led to \$119.2 million in state and local tax payments and \$164.6 million in local purchases by firms dependent on port activity. The tax revenue grew 27.9 percent in three years.

**Jobs Related to Port of Hueneme Marine Terminals (2015, 2018)**



**Revenue, Tax and Economic Impact (in \$ Millions) from Port of Hueneme Marine Terminals (2015, 2018)**









# Education

**Ventura County's schools,** colleges and universities are among our greatest assets, and they also hold vast untapped potential. Our college student population grows every year as our biggest universities continue to expand and that bodes well for our workforce and employers. At the primary and secondary level, some of our schools rank among the most successful in the state, while others face challenges common to high-poverty districts throughout the nation.

The past few years have brought major changes to public education in California. The state completely revamped its method for funding schools, starting with the adoption of the Local Control Funding Formula in 2013. Under that law, extra funding goes to schools judged most in need, because they have more English language learners, more low-income students or more pupils in foster care. In the intervening years the law has made a dramatic impact. A decade ago, schools in low-income areas received the same funding — or sometimes less — than their counterparts in high-income areas. Now the schools and districts judged to have the greatest need get the most state funding.

**...some of our schools rank among the most successful in the state, while others face challenges...**

California's system for testing students and tracking school performance also is entirely new. In 2013, California suspended its standardized testing program until it could institute tests that matched the state's new Common Core standards. Then in 2015, the federal No Child Left Behind Act was repealed, giving states authority over their testing regimes.

This change resulted in the demise of the Academic Performance Index, which rated all public schools in California on a 200 to 1,000 scale, based on standardized-test performance. The new assessment system, the California School Dashboard, debuted in 2017. More holistic than the API, it includes standardized test results and measures along with rates for attendance, graduation and suspension — instead of a single measure based on testing. This means the State of The Region Report includes more data about schools than ever before. It also means more data is available than we can include. Complete reports on standardized testing and all other information the state collects about public schools can be found at [www.CaSchoolDashboard.org](http://www.CaSchoolDashboard.org).





# Public School Enrollment

## STUDENT POPULATION DROPPING

### What are the measures?

The measures are the number of students enrolled in Ventura County public schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, and the public school enrollment by school district.

### Why are the measures important?

A school's average daily attendance is the most important factor in determining how much funding it receives from the state. Districts with growing enrollment will see their funding increase, while those with declining enrollment will see their funding drop, which can lead to teacher layoffs or even school closures.

### How are we doing?

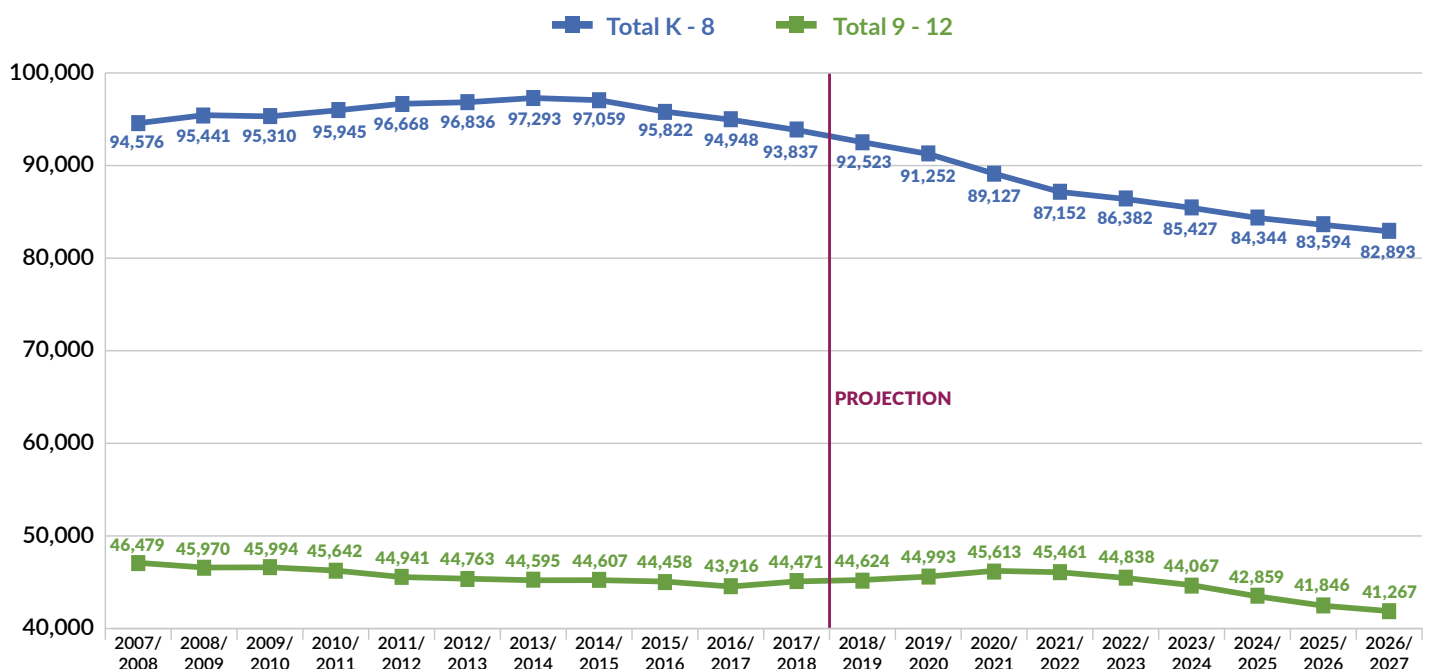
Public school enrollment in Ventura County slowly declined for most of the 21st century so far, and that decline is expected to accelerate in the coming years. In the 2017/18 school year, there were 137,758 students in kindergarten through 12th grade, a 1 percent drop from the previous year and the fourth straight year of declining enrollment. The California Department of Education projects county enrollment to continue to fall every year from 2018/19 through 2026/27,

which is as far as the state's projections go. By 2026, Ventura County is expected to have fewer public schoolchildren than in 1997.

This follows national demographic trends. There are simply fewer young children today than there were in the 1990s and early 2000s, when the millennial generation, now the largest generation in U.S. history, was still in school. Ventura County last experienced declining enrollment in the early 1980s, before millennials reached school age. Public school enrollment in Ventura County peaked in 2004, at 145,316 students.

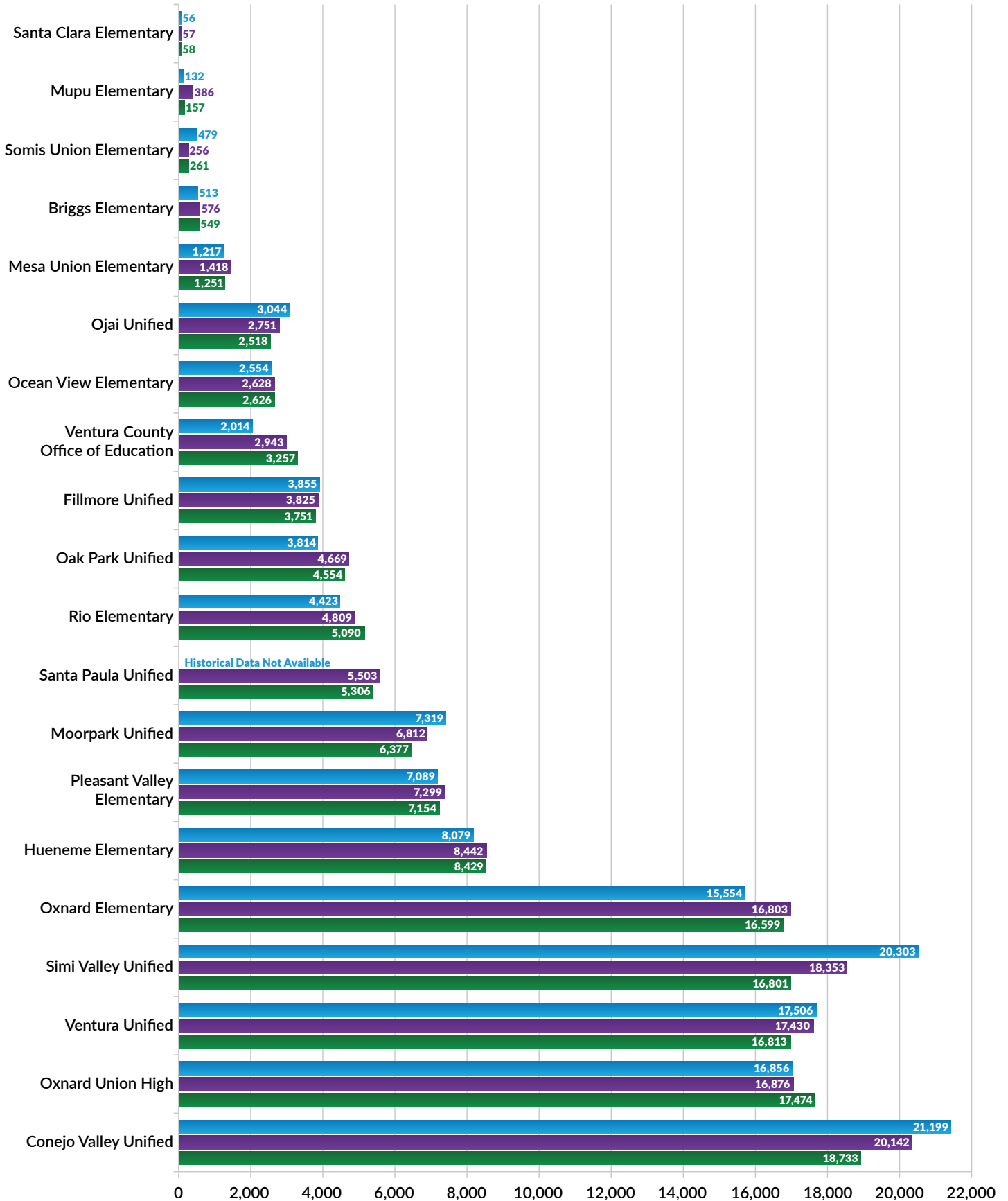
Schools aren't shrinking everywhere in the county. Those losing students are concentrated in areas with high housing costs, as families with young children find it harder to afford homes. Districts in Oxnard and Port Hueneme grew between 2009 and 2018, a reflection of the growing and relatively young populations in those areas and of their lower housing costs when compared to other cities in Ventura County. Districts in Ojai, Simi Valley and the Conejo Valley lost the most students.

Ventura County Public School Enrollment (2007/08 - 2026/27)



# Ventura County Public School Enrollment (2009/10, 2013/14, 2017/18)

■ 2009/10 ■ 2013/14 ■ 2017/18



# Per-Pupil Spending

## SCHOOL SPENDING KEEPS CLIMBING

### What is the measure?

The measure is the total spending on a per-pupil basis by seven unified school districts in Ventura County. Per-pupil spending is calculated by adding up most expenditures, including salaries, food service, facilities and certain retirement benefits. The number is then divided by the district's average daily attendance.

A unified district covers grades kindergarten through 12, in contrast to districts that have only high schools or only elementary and middle schools. We compared unified districts because the available funding and the necessary costs differ from high schools and elementary schools in some ways. Santa Paula was not unified until 2013.

In 2014/15, the California Department of Education started including state payments to employee pension funds in its per-pupil statistics. Spending totals spiked that year due to the change and can't be compared directly to earlier totals.

### Why is the measure important?

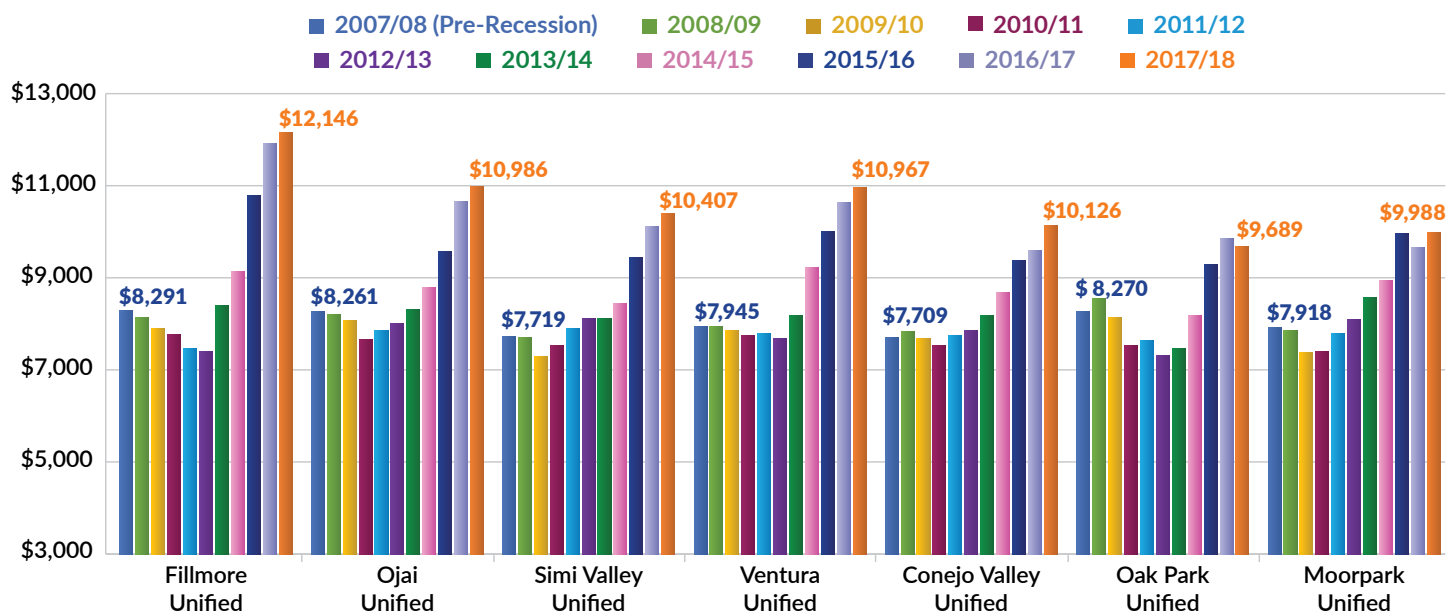
Nearly everything in a school, from the teachers to the books to the building itself, costs money. Adequate funding isn't enough by itself to ensure a quality education, but it's a necessary element. Looking at how funding changes over time shows whether state, federal and local policymakers are prioritizing education, and comparing spending by different districts can show whether students in different cities are getting similar resources.

### How are we doing?

School spending has risen since a post-recession dip that ran roughly from 2008 through 2013. Most unified districts in Ventura County have seen steady increases since 2014. In the 2017/18 school year, districts spent between \$10,000 and \$11,000 per student, with a few exceptions: The Fillmore Unified School District spent more than the others, at \$12,146 per student, and the Moorpark and Oak Park districts each spent a little less than \$10,000 per student.

Generally speaking, districts in lower-income areas get more funding than those in higher-income areas. This is a recent development in California, starting with a law enacted by the Legislature in 2013. This new formula awards extra funds to districts with large numbers of students classified as English language learners as well as students from low-income families. Before 2013, funding across districts was broadly even, and in many cases schools in more affluent areas received more money than schools in poorer areas. For example, in the 2011/12 school year the Oak Park Unified School District spent slightly more per student than the Fillmore district. The next year, Fillmore spent more, and by 2017/18, its spending was nearly \$2,500 per student more than Oak Park's.

Annual Per-Pupil Spending in the Unified Districts (2007/08 - 2017/18)





# Average Class Size

## CLASS SIZES DECREASING, BUT TOP STATE AVERAGE

### What is the measure?

The measure is the average number of students per class in Ventura County and statewide. The California Department of Education did not accurately collect this data for the 2009/10 school year.

### Why is the measure important?

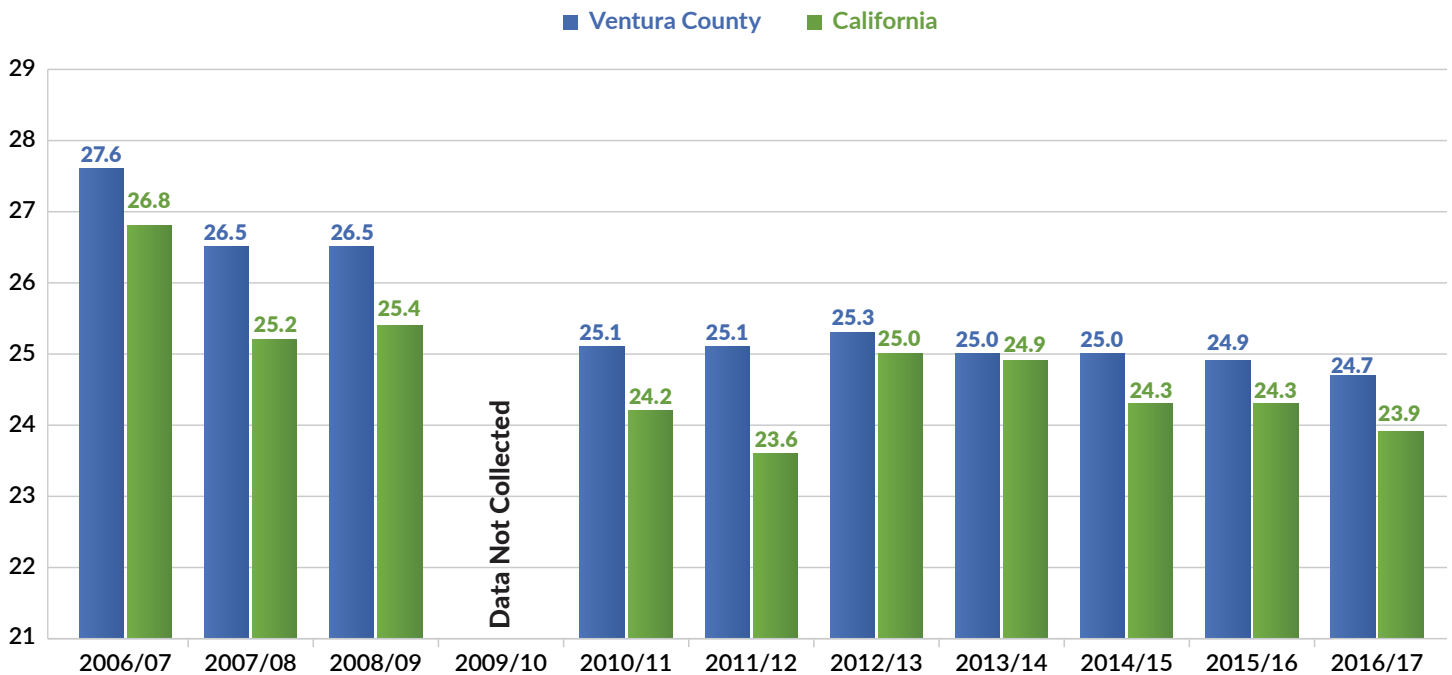
With smaller classes, students get more individualized instruction, and teachers are better equipped to handle pupils who are having trouble. Many studies have shown a positive impact on student achievement, especially in the lower grades.

### How are we doing?

Classes in Ventura County are consistently larger than the statewide average. In 2016/17, the average class in a Ventura County public school had 24.7 students, compared to 23.9 statewide.

Class sizes in the county have decreased slightly since 2010/11. Before that, classes were larger, topping 27 students per classroom in Ventura County in 2006/07.

**Average Class Size in Ventura County and California (2006/07 - 2016/17)**



# English Learners

## MORE THAN 1 IN 5 STUDENTS LACK FLUENCY

### What is the measure?

The measure is the percentage of public school students in Ventura County who are classified as “English learners,” which means they speak a language other than English at home and would benefit from enhanced English language skills to succeed in their school’s core academic programs. Students move out of this classification as their English skills improve.

In 2010/11, the state’s data collection was incomplete, so the statewide figure for that year is unusually low.

### Why is the measure important?

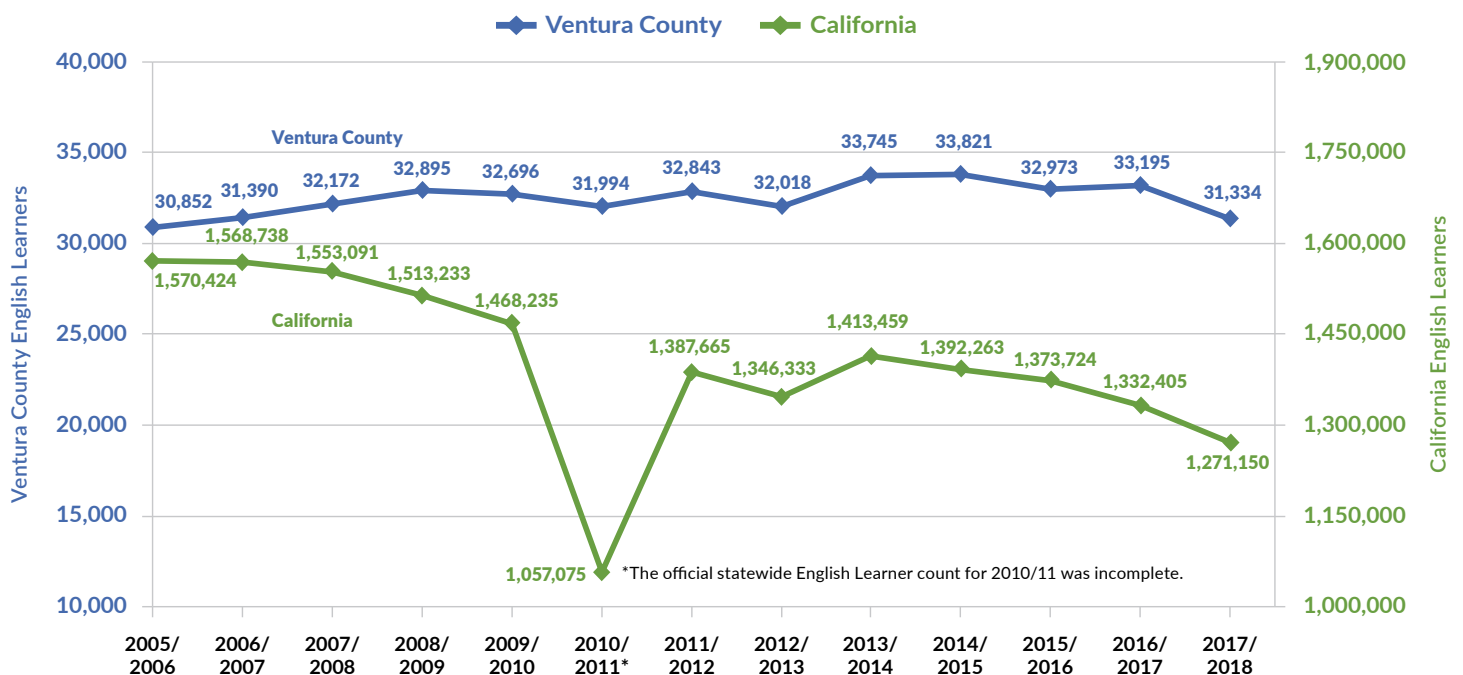
Fluency in spoken and written English is an important skill for the classroom and beyond. Students with limited English bear

an extra burden in school: They are struggling with language comprehension at the same time they are trying to learn math, history, science and other subjects taught in English.

### How are we doing?

In the 2017/18 school year, Ventura County public schools had 31,334 students classified as English learners, a 5.6 percent drop from the year before and the lowest total since 2005/06. That decline is tied to the overall decrease in enrollment; the percentage of students who are English learners actually has grown slightly. In 2017/18, English language learners made up 22.7 percent of the county’s students, while in 2005/06 they made up 21.6 percent of students.

Number of Public School Students Classified as English Learners (2005/06 - 2017/18)



# High School Graduation and Dropout Rates

*MORE STUDENTS GRADUATING, FEWER DROPPING OUT*

## What are the measures?

The measures are the high school graduation rate, defined as the percentage of students who enter public high schools in Ventura County in the 9th grade and complete high school with a standard diploma at the end of 12th grade; and the high school dropout rate, defined as the percentage of students who leave school early without earning any type of degree or certificate.

## Why are the measures important?

A high school diploma is typically the minimum level of education required to find a career that can bring long-term prosperity. Compared to graduates, high school dropouts have much lower salaries for their entire working lives, and they are more likely to be unemployed.

## How are we doing?

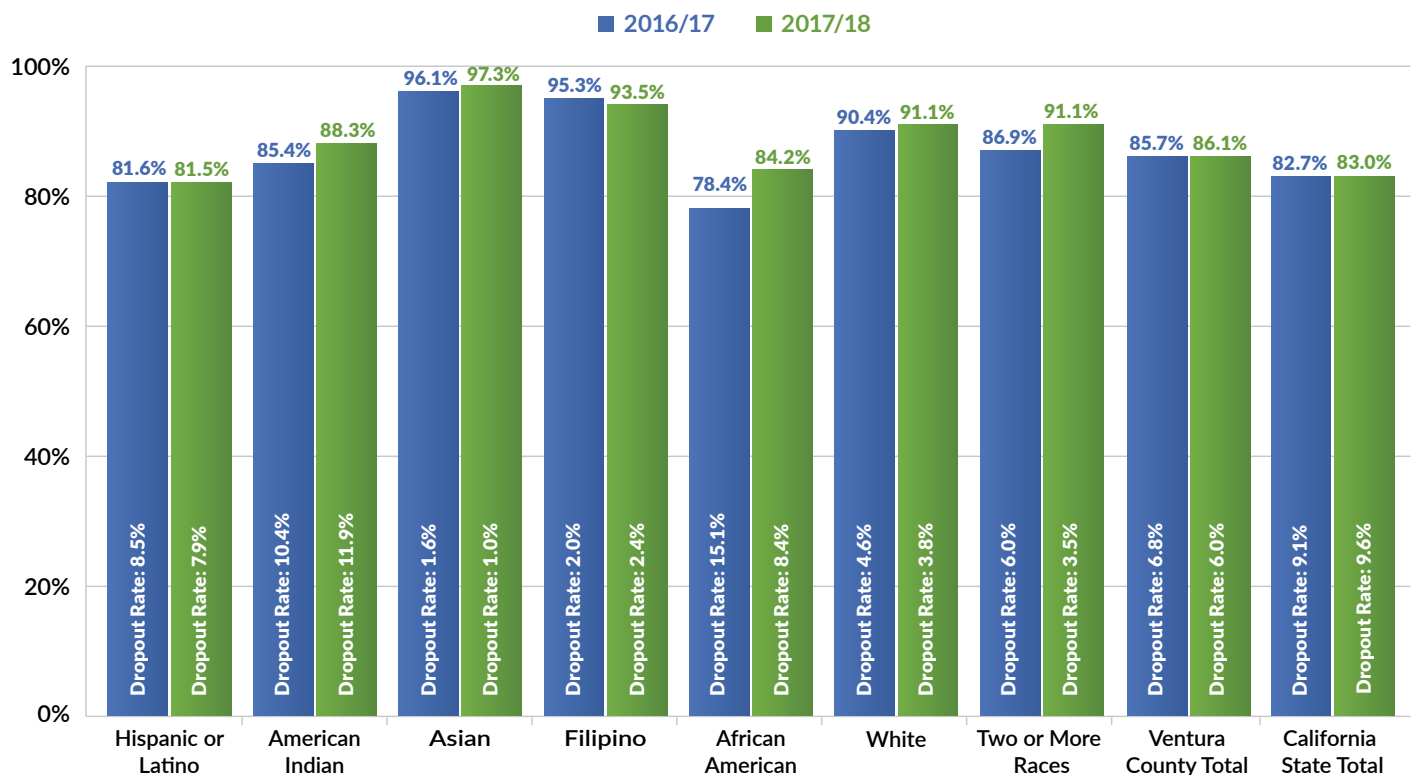
Ventura County high school students had an 86.1 percent graduation rate in 2018, slightly better than the year before and also above the statewide rate of 83 percent. Wide disparities exist between ethnic groups, though. White

students had a 91.1 percent graduation rate, much higher than Latino students, at 81.5 percent, and African American students, at 84.2 percent.

While nearly 14 percent of the class of 2018 in Ventura County did not graduate with their classmates, not all of them are considered dropouts. The countywide dropout rate was 6 percent, so 8 percent of Ventura County high school seniors obtained some sort of alternative to a diploma. Dropout rates, too, vary widely by ethnicity: The rate among Asian American students was just 1 percent, while among Latinos it was 7.9 percent.

The graduation rate has ticked up slightly over the years, but it has not improved as dramatically as the dropout rate. In other words, high school students are much more likely than a decade ago to obtain a high school equivalency or other certificate, but only slightly more likely to finish high school with a standard diploma.

**Ventura County Schools Graduation Rates (2016/17, 2017/18)**





# Childhood Socioeconomic Disparities

*INEQUALITIES ARE BROAD, DEEP*

## What is the measure?

The measure is a “misery index” made up of six socioeconomic indicators from 2017, applied to 18 school districts in Ventura County. The indicators are the poverty rate among children 5 and younger; the percentage of women-led households with children 5 and younger who live below the federal poverty line; the percentage of adults 25 and older without a high school diploma; the percentage of people who speak English “less than very well”; the percentage of students classified as English learners; and the percentage of students eligible for free or discounted meals at school. The percentages are added together and weighted equally for the index. A higher number indicates greater socioeconomic challenges.

## Why is the measure important?

Not all schools face the same task in educating their students. In some areas, children are much more likely to enter school having grown up poor or without fluency in English. These factors challenge educators, and the state recognizes this when it makes extra funding available for schools with large numbers of these students.

## How are we doing?

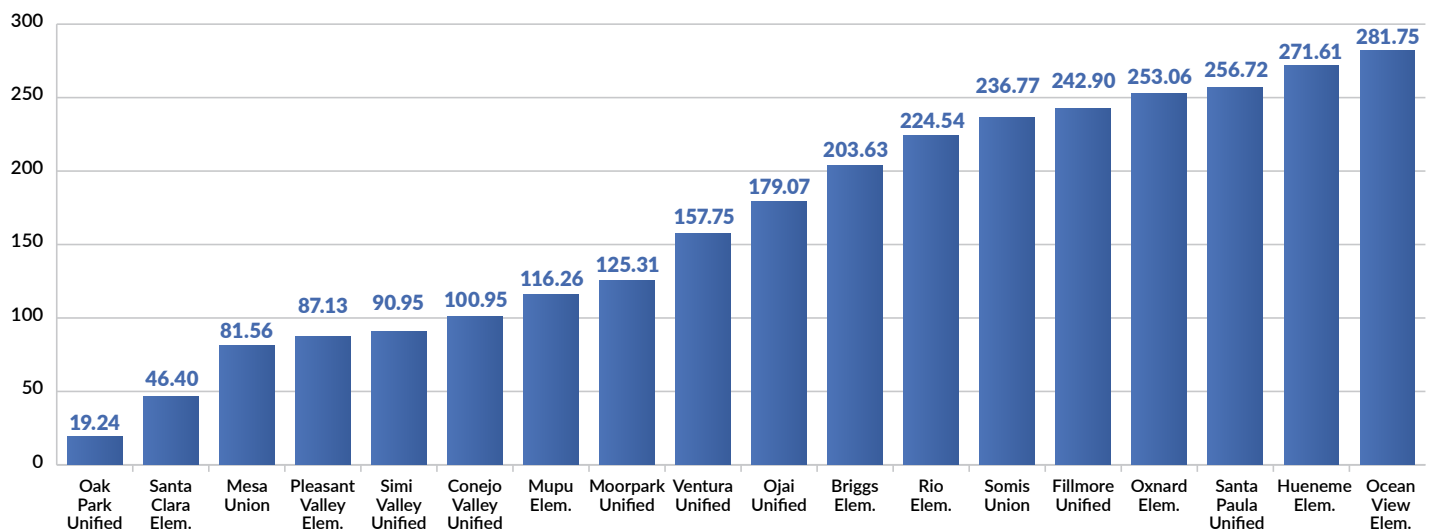
The Ocean View and Hueneme Elementary school districts scored highest on the index. Both districts are located at

the southeastern end of the Oxnard Plain, in the heart of Ventura County’s agricultural industry. It is surely no coincidence in these neighborhoods, where many people work low-paying agricultural jobs, young children face the greatest socioeconomic challenges. Other districts with high “misery index” scores include those in Oxnard, Santa Paula and Fillmore.

At the other end of the scale, the Oak Park Unified School District had by far the lowest score on the index, followed by the Santa Clara Elementary district, a district with one small school between Santa Paula and Fillmore. Districts in Simi Valley and Camarillo and the Mesa Union Elementary district outside of Camarillo rounded out the five with the lowest scores.

The differences between the high and low end of the index are vast. In Fillmore, 36.3 percent of children 5 and younger live in households below the federal poverty line. While in Oak Park and the Santa Clara Elementary district, no children live below the poverty line. Four districts — Santa Paula, Hueneme, Oxnard and Ocean View — have more than 80 percent of their students eligible for free or discounted meals at school, while in Oak Park, 6.7 percent of students are eligible.

**“Misery Index” for Selected Ventura County School Districts (2017)**



# School Safety

## BULLYING, WEAPONS ON THE DECLINE

### What are the measures?

The measures are the number of 11th graders who report seeing a weapon at school or being bullied in the previous 12 months, according to an annual survey by the California Department of Education.

### Why are the measures important?

A school where students are bullied and exposed to weapons is not a healthy learning environment. A gun, knife or other weapon suggests serious violence could occur. Bullying, even without violence, can inflict severe psychological harm on the victims.

### How are we doing?

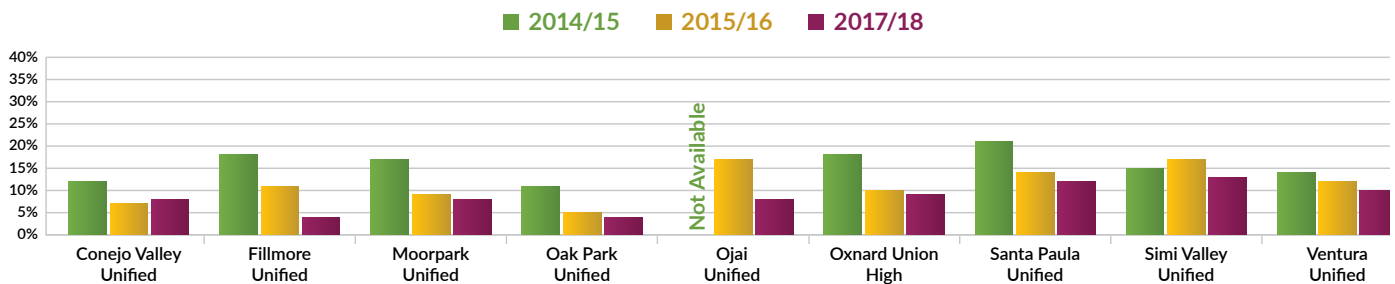
A substantial minority of 11th graders in Ventura County are bullied at school. During the 2017/18 school year, 32 percent of 11th graders in the Conejo Valley Unified School District reported being bullied in the past year, the highest number in the county, followed by Oak Park Unified at 30 percent and Ventura Unified at 29 percent. Santa Paula Unified was the only district in which fewer than 20 percent

of 11th graders reported being bullied.

There is progress here, even as more is needed. Reports of bullying decreased in almost every district between 2014/15 and 2017/18. In Fillmore, the percentage of students who reported being bullied dropped from 34 to 20 percent in that three-year period, and it declined in Moorpark from 33 to 25 percent.

Weapons at school are less common than bullying, but in some districts more than 10 percent of 11th graders report seeing a gun, knife or other weapon at school in the past year. Simi Valley Unified had the highest rate, at 13 percent — somewhat surprising since Simi Valley is generally a low-crime city. Santa Paula and Ventura were also above 10 percent, and Fillmore and Oak Park had the lowest rates, both at 4 percent. Like bullying, weapons are becoming rarer in our schools: The percentage of students who said they'd seen one at school dropped in every school district between 2014/15 and 2017/18.

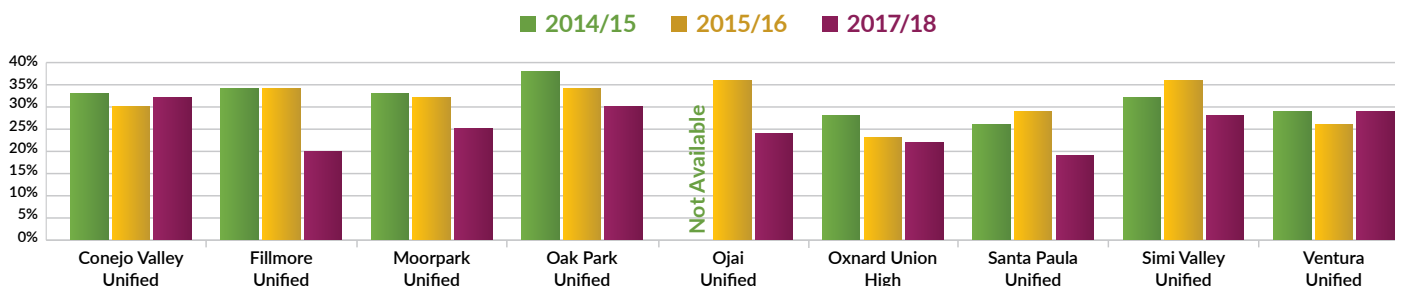
### 11th Grade Students Who Have Seen a Weapon At School in Last 12 Months



Survey Question:

During the past 12 months, how many times on school property have you seen someone carrying a gun, knife, or other weapon?

### 11th Grade Students Who Have Been Bullied in Past 12 Months



Survey Question:

During the past 12 months, how many times on school property were you harassed or bullied for any of the following reasons? Your race, ethnicity, or national origin; your religion; your gender; because you are gay or lesbian or someone thought you were; a physical or mental disability; or any other reason.

# Standardized Test Scores

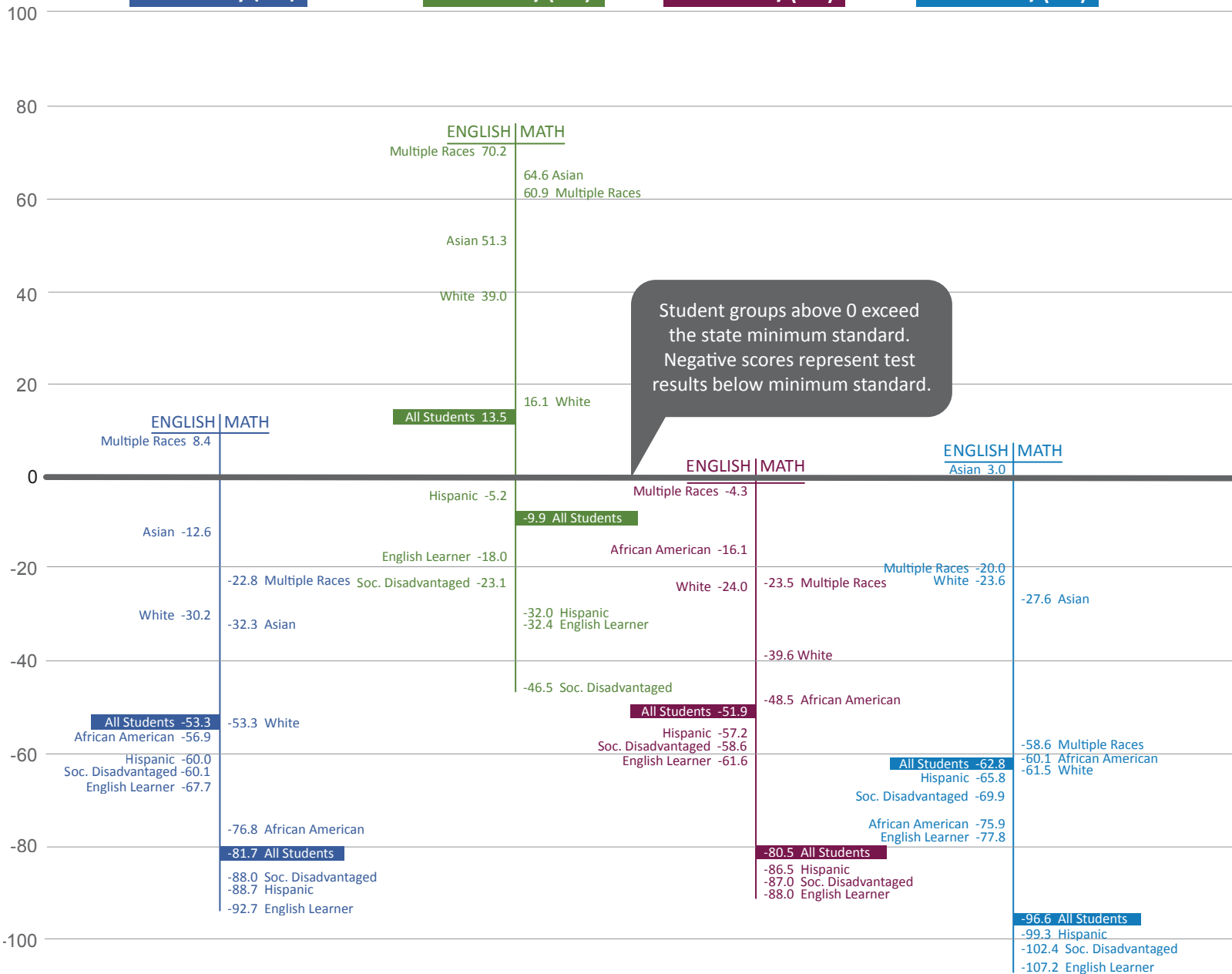
## ACHIEVEMENT GAPS PERSIST

**Hueneme  
Elementary (K-8)**

**Mesa Union  
Elementary (K-8)**

**Ocean View  
Elementary (K-8)**

**Oxnard  
Elementary (K-8)**

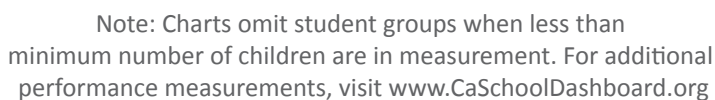


Charts include subset of Calif. Dashboard student groups. Omitted groups are: English Only, Filipino, Foster Youth, Homeless Youth, Students with Disabilities. These groups are included in the "All Students" category.



The scores are expressed as a distance above or below the

state standard, which is defined by the California Department of Education as “demonstrating the knowledge and skills necessary for students to be on track for college and career readiness at their grade level.” Scores are listed for all students in a district and for most subgroups, such as ethnic or socioeconomic, when the district has a statistically significant number of students.



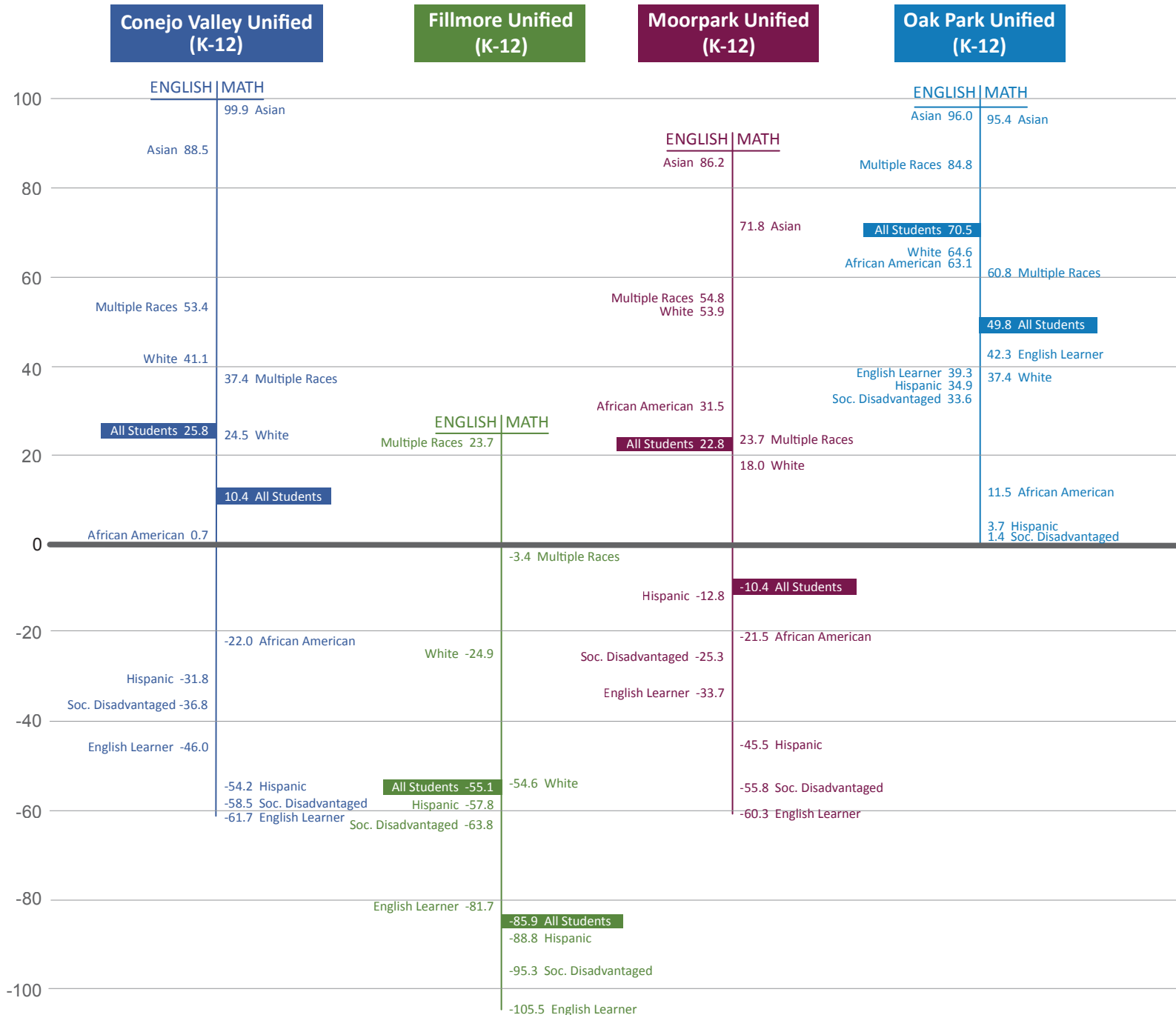
## Why are the measures important?

Standardized tests measure the knowledge California's public school students are expected to master in each grade level. That isn't the only thing we should know about school performance, but it is undoubtedly one of the most important factors. Scores for subgroups — for example, the average results for white students and Latinos, or for pupils who are socioeconomically disadvantaged — are useful for gauging whether a school or district is educating all students in an equitable way. Schools

that fall below state standards on these tests or those that fail to show improvement or to close gaps between different subgroups can face sanctions from the state.

## How are we doing?

School districts in Ventura County vary tremendously in their academic performance. At one end of the spectrum, every group of students in the Oak Park Unified School District exceeded state standards in both math and English. At the

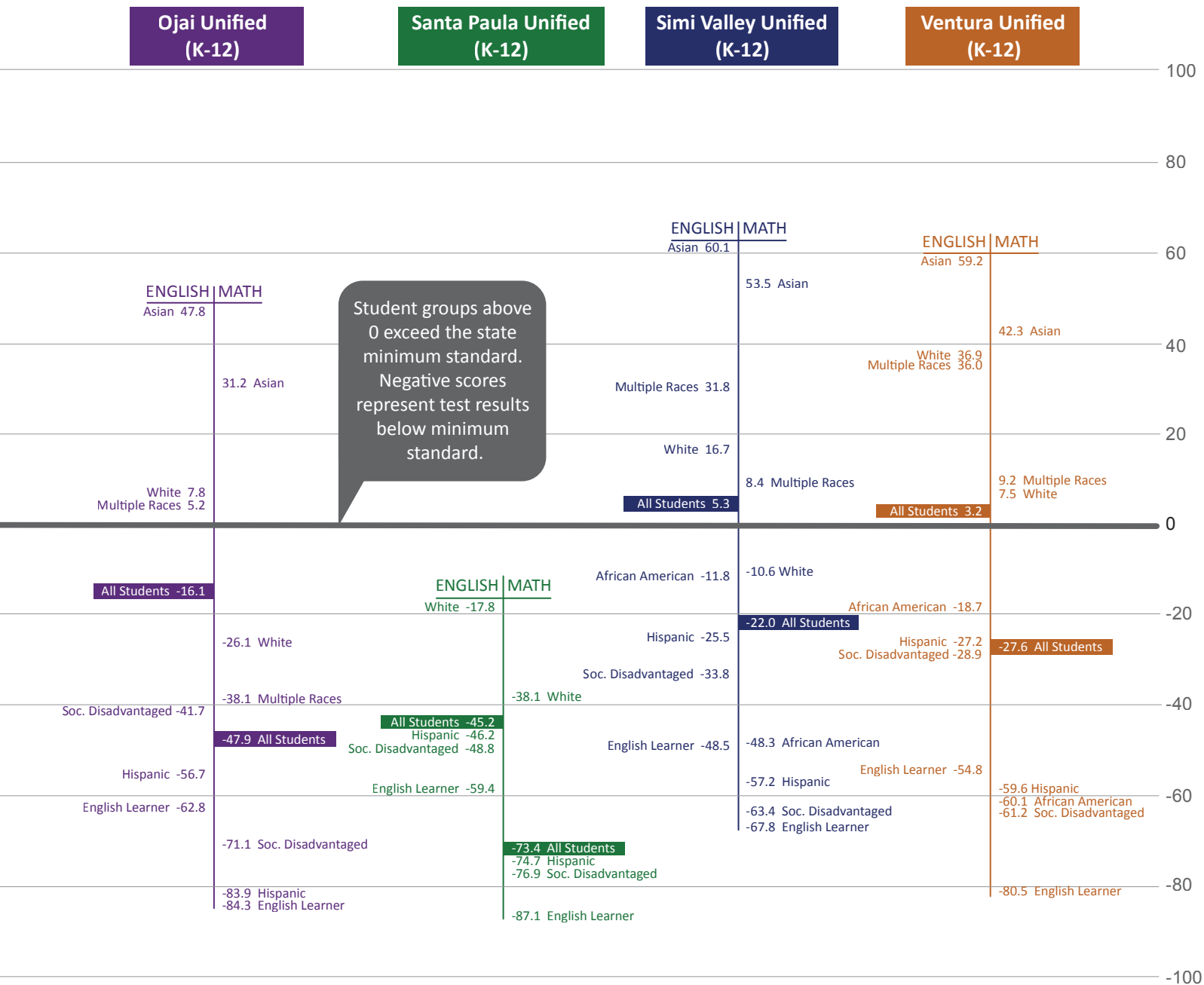


Charts include subset of Calif. Dashboard student groups. Omitted groups are: English Only, Filipino, Foster Youth, Homeless Youth, Students with Disabilities. These groups are included in the "All Students" category.

other end, not a single group of students in the Ocean View Elementary School District, at the southern end of the Oxnard Plain, met standards in either math or English.

These disparities between districts correspond to socio-economic indicators detailed on page 46. In other words, students who grow up in areas with higher poverty levels and lower adult education attainment end up in schools that perform much worse on standardized tests than those in areas with less poverty and better educated adults.

Wide gaps exist within school districts, too. In the Conejo Valley Unified School District, Asian students scored 99.9 points above the standard in math and 88.5 points above in English, and white students scored 41.1 points above the standard in English and 24.5 points above in math. In contrast, Conejo Valley Unified's Hispanic students scored 31.8 points below the standard in English and 54.2 points below in math; the district's students classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged scored 36.8 points below the standard in English and 58.5 points below in math.



Note: Charts omit student groups when less than minimum number of children are in measurement.  
For additional performance measurements, visit [www.CaSchoolDashboard.org](http://www.CaSchoolDashboard.org)



# Community College Enrollment

## COUNTY'S COLLEGES GROWING AGAIN

### What are the measures?

The measures are the number of students enrolled at the three campuses of the Ventura County Community College District: Ventura College, Oxnard College and Moorpark College; and the age breakdown at each campus.

### Why are the measures important?

Community colleges are a key cog in the educational system. Affordable and open to anyone, a community college is the only route to a four-year university for many people. A two-year degree is also, on its own, a boon to the recipient's job prospects and earning potential. And community colleges offer classes and technical certificates for people who aren't traditional college students, so they can improve their skills and advance in their careers or train for new ones.

### How are we doing?

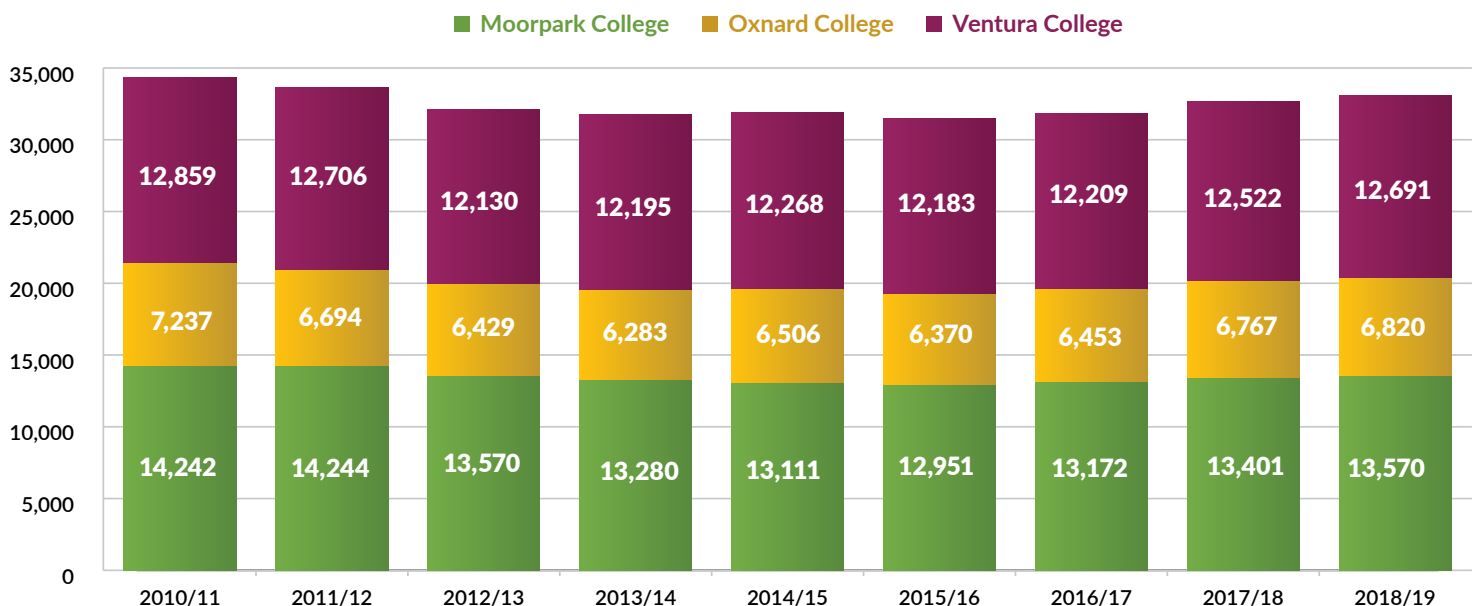
After shrinking for a few years due to post-recession budget cuts, Ventura County's community colleges returned to

growth after the 2015/16 school year. In the fall of 2018, there were 33,081 students enrolled in the county's three campuses, 1.2 percent more than the previous year. Enrollment remains below the fall of 2011, though, when the district had 3.8 percent more students than it did in 2018.

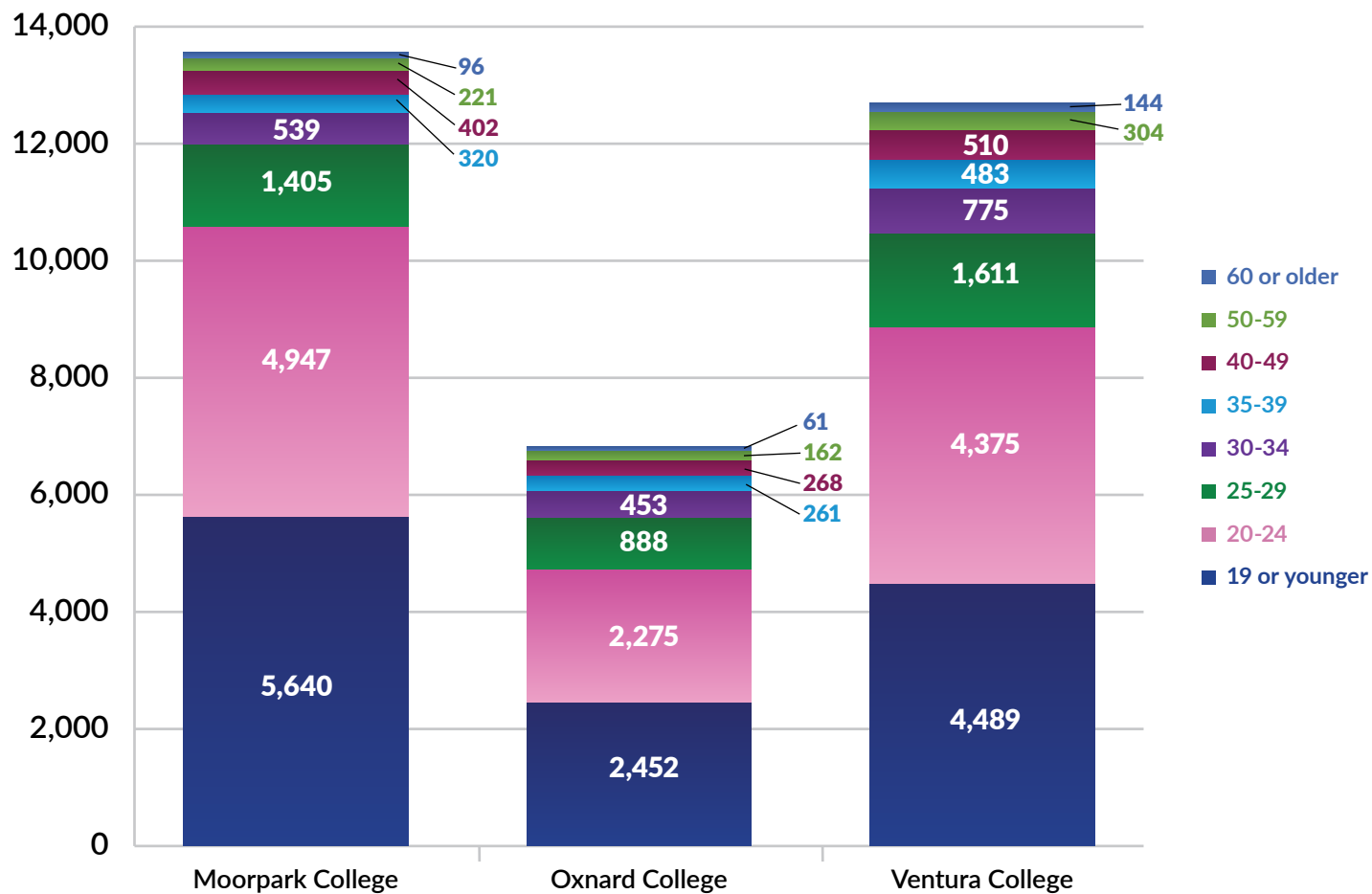
Moorpark College, with 13,570 students in 2018, and Ventura College, with 12,691, are much larger than Oxnard College, with 6,820. The Oxnard campus experienced the steepest enrollment decline in the early 2010s, relative to its size, losing 13.2 percent of its enrollment between 2010 and 2013.

Moorpark College has the highest portion of traditional college students, with 78 percent of its enrollment under the age of 25 in 2018. At Ventura College, 69.8 percent of the students were younger than 25, and at Oxnard College, 69.3 percent were younger than 25.

**Ventura County Community College Enrollment (Fall Term, 2010/11 - 2018/19)**



## Ventura County Community College Enrollment by College and Age (Fall Term, 2018/19)



# Four-Year College Enrollment

*CSUCI STILL COMING INTO ITS OWN*

## What is the measure?

The measure is the number of students enrolled at Ventura County's four-year universities: California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks; California State University, Channel Islands, near Camarillo; and Thomas Aquinas College, near Santa Paula.

## Why is the measure important?

College attendance has become a requirement to participate in many parts of the modern American economy. A four-year degree dramatically improves a graduate's lifetime earning potential and going to college without graduating helps as well. Thriving four-year universities benefit our county's culture and economy, as they bring well-paying jobs and educated students and faculty to our communities.

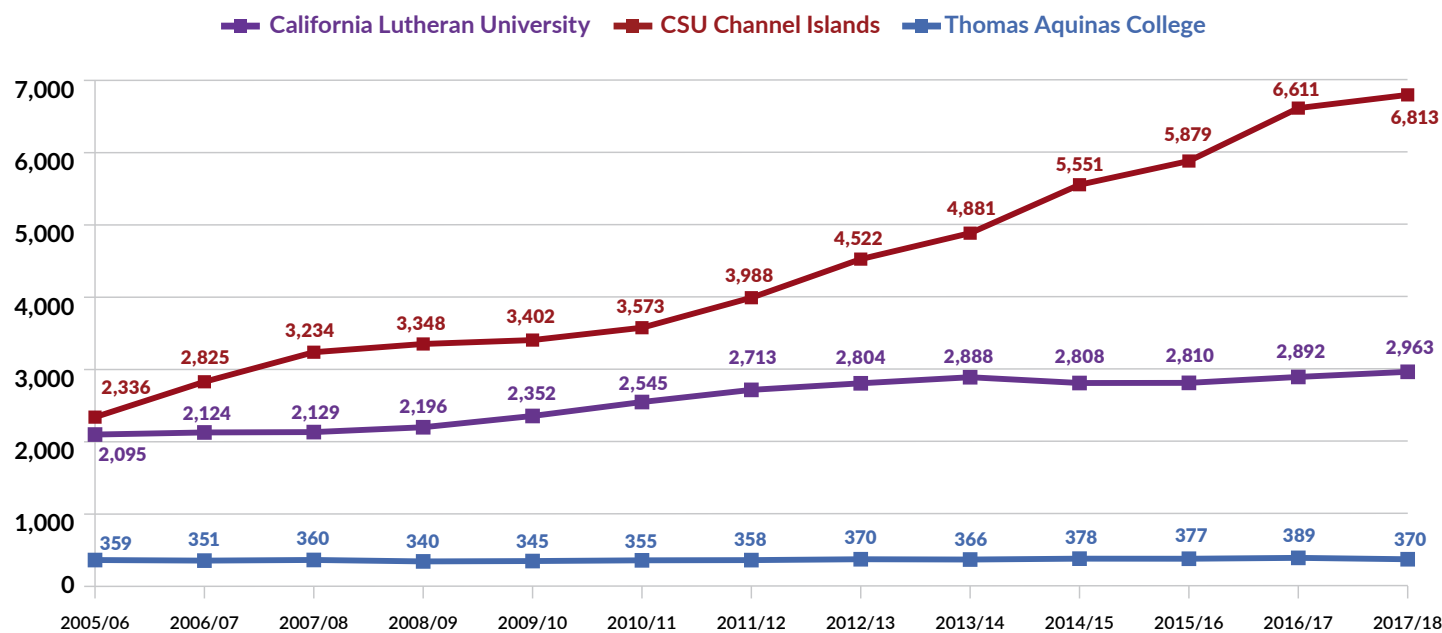
## How are we doing?

Ventura County's only public university, CSU Channel Islands, is the fastest growing campus in the California State University system. In 2017, it had 6,813 undergraduate students, nearly 1,000 more than just two years earlier. The school approximately doubled in size between 2009 and 2017. The University opened in 2002 with 29 students and plans to accommodate more than 10,000 by 2025.

The county's largest private university, California Lutheran, also is growing, though not as quickly. It had 2,963 undergraduates in 2017, its third straight year of enrollment growth and a 34.9 percent increase between 2008 and 2017.

The county's other private college, Thomas Aquinas, is much smaller, with 370 undergraduates in 2017. It grew slowly in the early 2000s and stayed about the same size since 2012.

**Four-Year College Undergraduate Enrollment in Ventura County (2005/06 - 2017/18)**





# Earnings by Educational Attainment

## DIPLOMAS PAY OFF

### What is the measure?

The measure is the median annual earnings by Ventura County residents, sorted by gender and education level. It includes all county residents 25 and older, whether they work full or part time.

### Why is the measure important?

Education is among the most important factors in determining future prosperity. From high school on, every level of additional schooling produces lifelong benefits. This is true for men and women, though gender disparities exist at all education levels. Additional information on the gender earnings gap is included in the Economy domain.

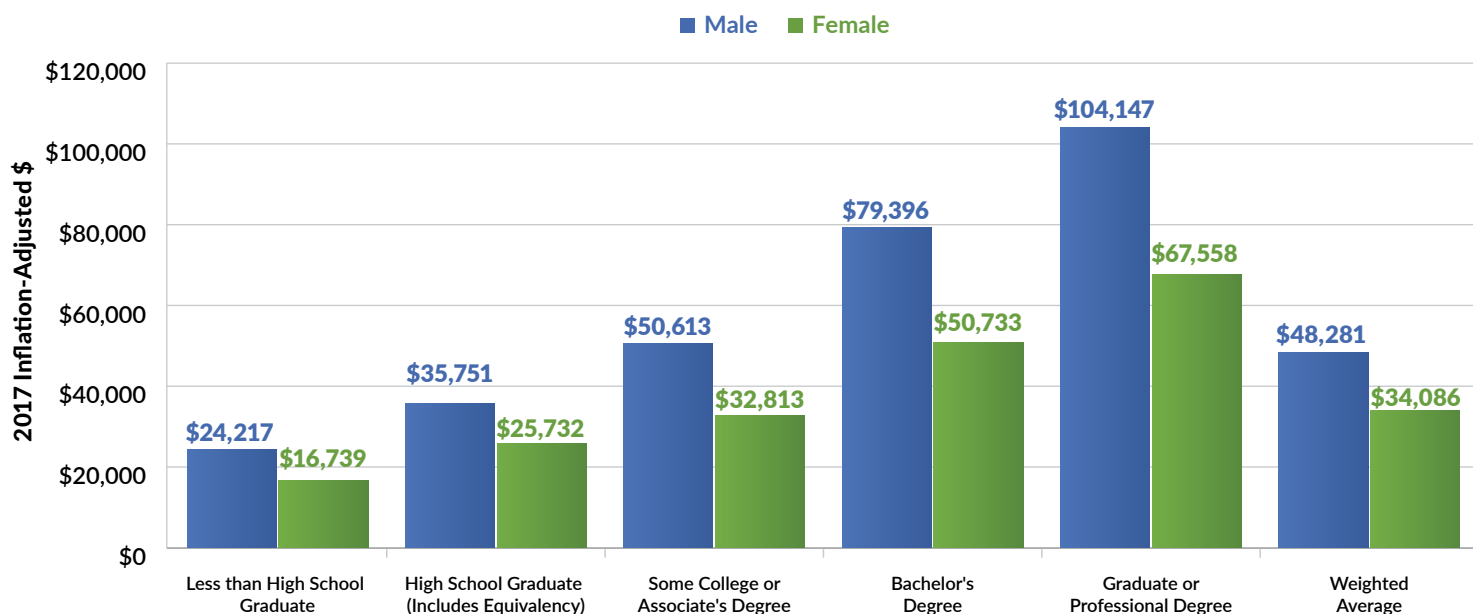
### How are we doing?

The economic benefits of education are enormous. In 2017 in Ventura County, the average holder of a bachelor's degree

earned almost twice as much as the average high school graduate, and around 50 percent more than the average worker with some college education but lacking a four-year degree. The average worker with a graduate or professional degree earned more than twice as much as the average worker with some college education but without a four-year degree, and almost a third more than the average worker with a bachelor's degree.

Women earn less than men at every level of education. This data includes all working adults 25 and older, regardless of whether they work full or part time. Because women are more likely to work part time, this data shows larger gender gaps than the section on the gender wage disparity presented in the Economy domain of this report, which includes only full-time workers.

**Ventura County Median Earnings by Gender and Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Older (2017)**



# Preschool Opportunities

## PRESCHOOL SPACE IN SHORT SUPPLY

### What is the measure?

The measure is the ratio of demand for preschool among low-income families to the number of spaces available in First 5 preschools in 17 Ventura County ZIP codes.

### Why is the measure important?

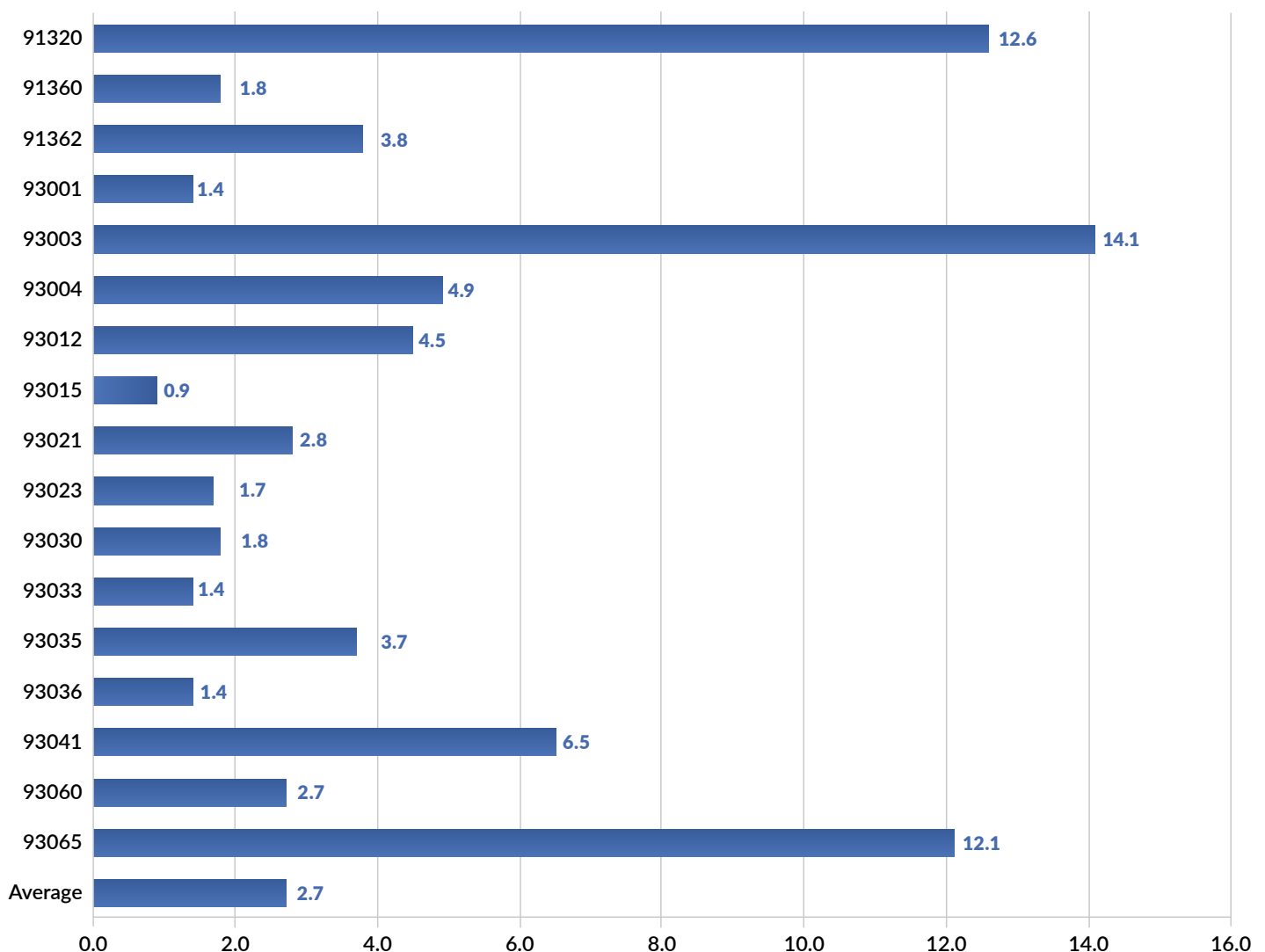
Numerous studies show quality preschool prepares children for school and imparts long-lasting educational benefits, which are particularly helpful to low-income children. But most preschool is privately provided and out of the financial reach of low-income families.

### How are we doing?

In most of the county, the demand for free preschool outstrips the supply. The biggest shortages were in Ventura's 93003 ZIP code, which had 14.1 children in need per open spot in 2016; the 91320 ZIP code in Newbury Park, with 12.6 children in need per opening; and the 93065 ZIP code in Simi Valley, where there were 12.1 children in need per opening.

Only Fillmore and Piru (the 93015 ZIP code) had more openings than children in need, with a ratio of 0.9. Other areas that came close, with ratios between 1.0 and 2.0, were Oxnard (93030, 93033 and 93036), Thousand Oaks (91360), Ojai (93023) and west Ventura (93001).

Ratio of Demand to Available Preschool Spaces in Ventura County (2016)



# Land Use & Housing

**California finds itself** in the throes of a housing crisis. The chief problem is affordability, especially in desirable and prosperous areas like Ventura County. With demand outstripping supply, home prices and rents have been on a long upward trajectory, and the results include longer commutes from sprawling exurbs, young people driven out of state by the cost of living and rising homelessness in our biggest cities.

Our county presents unique challenges in this crisis. With abundant acreage devoted to farms and ranches, national forest and coastline, much of the county is off limits to development, either by necessity or by choice. The political equilibrium across the county resists large-scale development, and that resistance is codified in SOAR, or Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources, a set of laws that give voters the final say on most development projects planned for open space or farmland.

Natural disasters pose another obstacle to providing enough housing. In December 2017, the Thomas Fire tore through

western Ventura County, destroying hundreds of homes in Ventura and the upper Ojai. In November 2018, the Hill and Woolsey fires hit eastern Ventura County, burning hundreds of dwellings in Oak Park, Thousand Oaks and Malibu. More than 2,500 structures were lost in these blazes, most of them single family homes. Rebuilding will take years, and in the meantime a region already suffering a housing shortage, will be squeezed harder.

Despite these challenges, some progress is being made. Ventura County's housing starts — the number of new homes permitted to be built — reached a 12-year high in 2017. There has been a flurry of apartment construction in recent years in Ventura, Oxnard and Camarillo, with more proposed in the near future. Cities from Thousand Oaks

to Ventura are planning downtown areas with improved access to transit, housing and jobs, aiming to create truly walkable neighborhoods. Perhaps, when future State Of The Region reports are written, 2019 will be seen as a tipping point, a time when our communities began to seriously address the housing crisis.

**There has been a flurry of apartment construction in recent years in Ventura, Oxnard and Camarillo, with more proposed in the near future.**



# Acres of Urban and Built-Up Land

## WE DON'T SPRAWL LIKE WE USED TO

### What is the measure?

The measure is the amount of land in Ventura County devoted to urban purposes, defined as developed to a density of at least one residential or commercial unit for every 1.5 acres.

### Why is the measure important?

If developers and governments want to meet the demand for housing, jobs and other expansion in our region, they have two choices: Increase the density of land already urbanized or zone more rural land for urbanization. Developing rural land decreases the amount of farmland and open space, threatens the viability of the agricultural industry and could harm our environment and rob us of places for outdoor recreation. On the other hand, refusing to develop rural land puts pressure on our existing urban spaces, and the public and elected officials frequently reject increasing density in those areas.



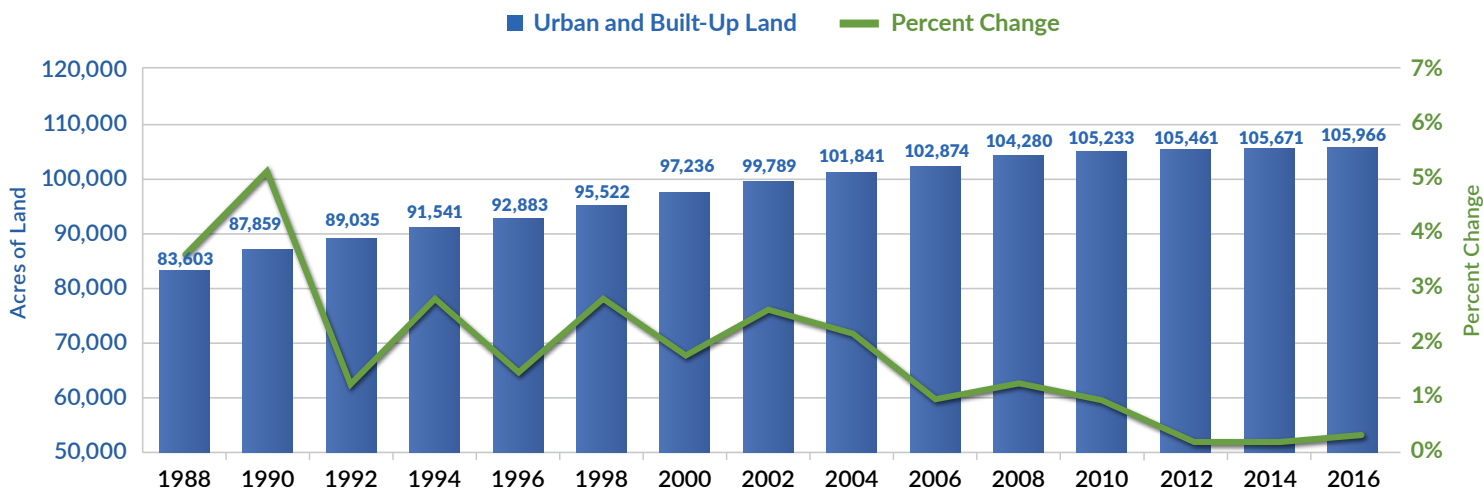
### How are we doing?

The urbanization of Ventura County slowed after the Great Recession of 2008. Between 2010 and 2016, the last year for which data is available, the county developed just 733 acres, an increase of 0.7 percent over six years. That brought the total to 105,966 acres of urban and built-up land in Ventura County in 2016, or about 10,000 acres more than the amount of harvested agricultural land.

Even during the last real estate boom, in the early 2000s, Ventura County's urbanization proceeded relatively slowly. The county peaked at adding 2.6 percent to its inventory of developed acres between 2000 and 2002, which was similar to the growth rate the county saw during the recession of the early 1990s. The last true building boom in Ventura County was in the late 1980s when the county developed 4,256 acres of rural land between 1988 and 1990, an increase of 5.1 percent.

Politics appears to matter at least as much as economics when it comes to urbanization. The development rate of rural land slowed noticeably after 1995 when Ventura County voters passed growth control laws collectively known as Save Open Space and Agricultural Resources or SOAR. In 2016, voters extended these measures through 2050, so it seems unlikely Ventura County will see 1980s-style sprawl development anytime soon.

Acres of Urban and Built-Up Land and Percent Change in Ventura County (1988 - 2016)





# New Housing Starts

## RECENT BUMP IN NEW HOME PERMITS

### What is the measure?

The measure known as “housing starts” is the number of building permits issued each year by local governments for new housing units. It does not necessarily reflect the number of new homes actually built in a given year.

### Why is the measure important?

Ventura County’s housing shortage is undeniable and by many measures is worsening. Apart from the years following the crash of 2008, home prices consistently have risen faster than inflation for decades. Rents are climbing fast, too, and apartment vacancy rates are low. The way to meet rising demand is to build new housing, and that requires building permits.



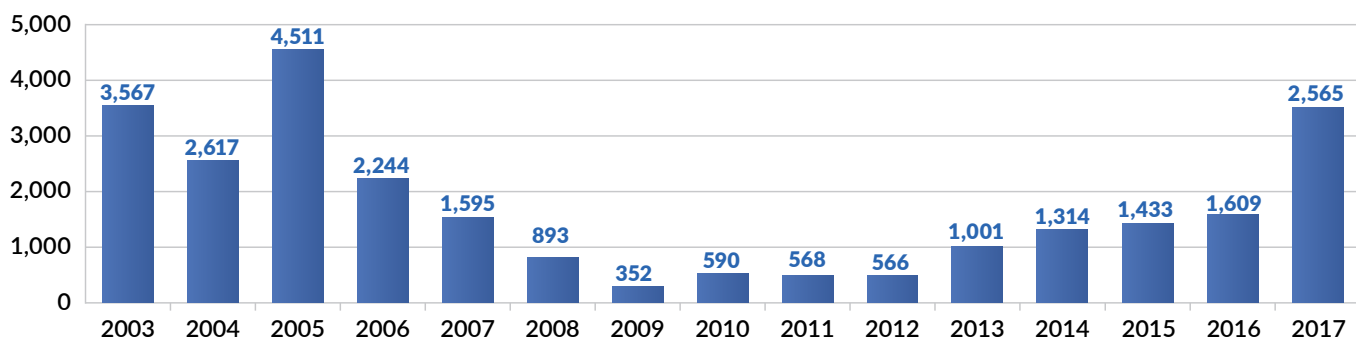
### How are we doing?

It took a decade but in 2016 and 2017 Ventura County seemed to turn a corner toward building more housing. In 2017, agencies issued 2,565 permits for new housing units, the highest number since 2005 and the fifth year in a row of year-to-year growth in housing starts. Recent figures remain far below the early 2000s boom, when the county frequently topped 3,000 housing starts, peaking at 4,511 in 2005.

For a decade, housing starts fell behind our population growth. Between the start of 2010 and the end of 2015v, Ventura County’s population grew by 31,853, according to the California Department of Finance. Since approximately three people occupy the average household, the county would need to add more than 10,000 units to accommodate those additional residents. But during that time, building permits were issued for 5,472 new homes.

In 2016 and 2017, new building permits of 4,174 more than kept pace with population growth of 5,112 residents or roughly 1,700 new homes. We still have plenty of catching up to do to make up for the deficits incurred between 2006 and 2015.

**New Housing Units Permitted in Ventura County (2003 - 2017)**



# Homeownership Rate

## HOMEOWNERS TO THE EAST, RENTERS TO THE WEST

### What is the measure?

The measure is the percentage of homes occupied by their owners rather than by renters.

### Why is the measure important?

Promoting home ownership has been a goal of public policy-makers and private financial institutions for generations. Home ownership helps families build wealth, and owning a home often fosters connection to the neighborhood and community.

Owning a home also has drawbacks, and many economists believe it is a troubling sign if the homeownership rate climbs too high. Buying a home is a major financial risk. Families no longer able to pay their rent can look for a cheaper apartment; homeowners who fall behind on their mortgages and are unable to sell can lose their homes and see their savings evaporate and credit ruined. Owning a home also makes people less mobile; if a homeowner loses her job, it's harder to relocate for employment than it would be for a renter.

### How are we doing?

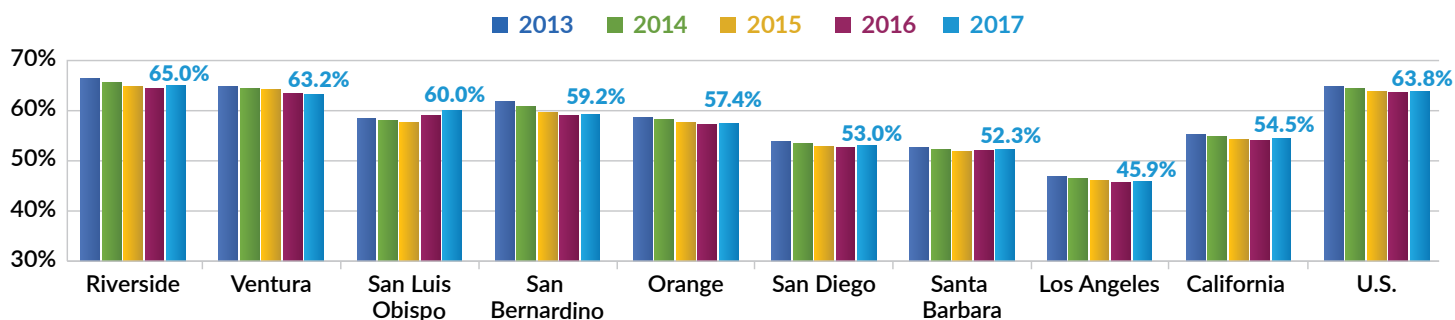
Despite the high price of homes in Ventura County, people here are more likely than the average Californian to own their home. In 2017, the homeownership rate in the county was 63.2 percent, higher than the statewide rate of 54.5 percent and about the same as the national rate of 63.8 percent.

Homeownership rates dropped nationwide after the real estate crash of 2008 and continued to decline during the recovery. In Ventura County, the rate fell from nearly 70 percent in 2005 to 65.8 percent in 2011 and 63.2 percent in 2017.

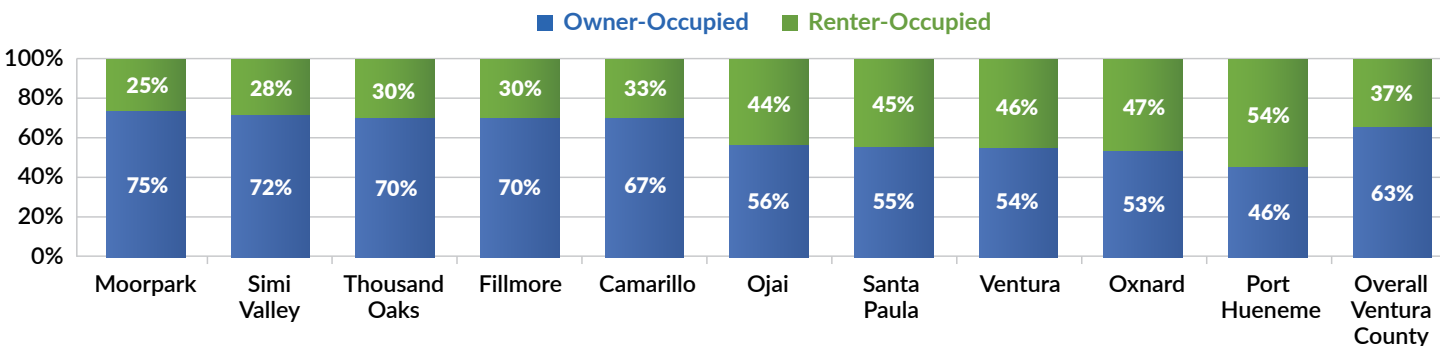
Ventura County's homeownership rate is higher than other Southern California counties — with the exception of Riverside County, where home prices run much lower than Ventura County.

Residents of eastern Ventura County are likelier to own their homes than people in the western part of the county. Moorpark had the county's highest homeownership rate in 2017, at 75 percent, followed by Simi Valley at 72 percent and Thousand Oaks and Fillmore, both at 70 percent. Camarillo had the lowest rate, at 67 percent, followed by Ojai, Santa Paula and Oxnard, which were all between 54 and 56 percent.

Homeownership Rate by County (2013 - 2017)



Percentage of Owners and Renters in Ventura County (2017)



# Median Home Price

## HOME VALUES NEARING 2006 PEAK

### What is the measure?

The measure is the median price of all homes sold each year in Ventura County, including new and existing houses and condominiums. The median is the point at which half of all sales were for higher values, and half were for lower values.

### Why is the measure important?

Home values are important to people who own homes and those who want to buy them. When prices rise, homeowners see their net worth balloon along with their home equity, and renters see the dream of home ownership slip away. When prices drop, homeowners lose equity and can find it hard to sell their homes, while people looking to buy benefit as more homes come into their price range.

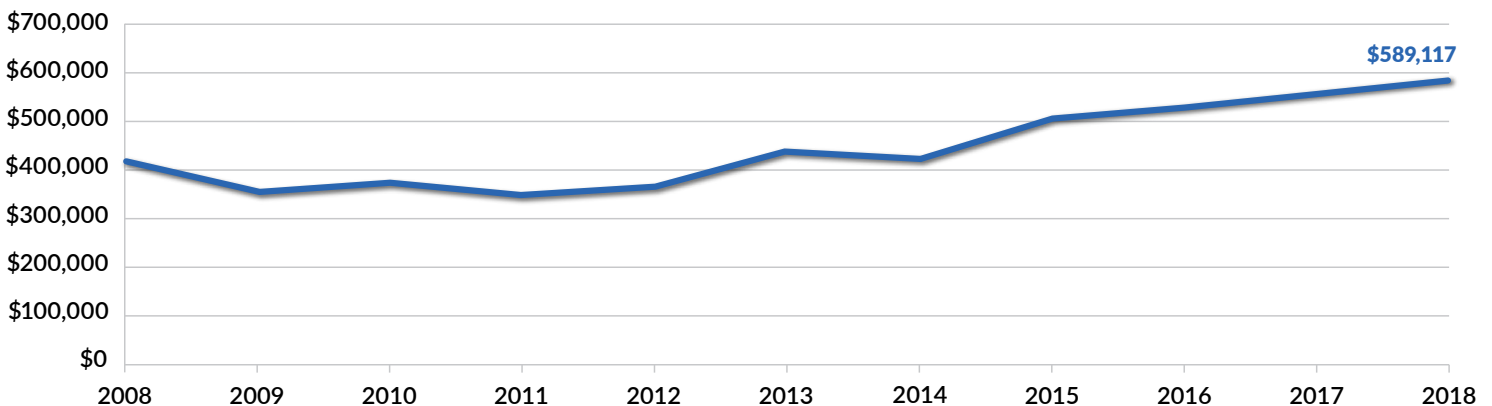
### How are we doing?

Ventura County's median home price hit \$589,117 in 2018, which is 6.7 percent higher than the year before and the fourth straight year of rising prices.

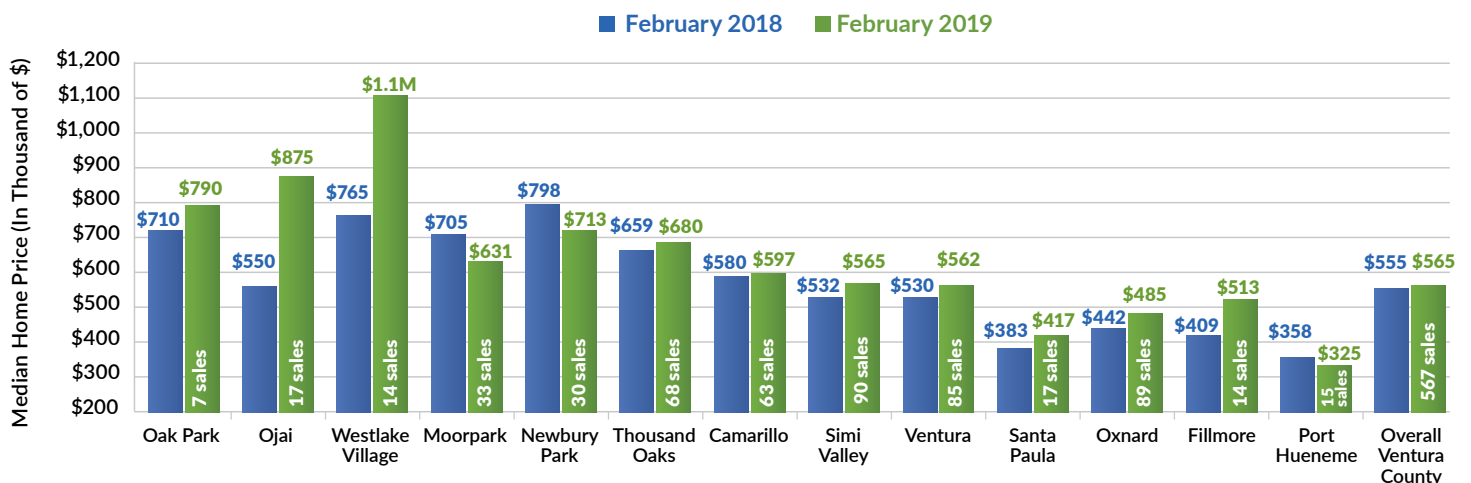
Prices in 2018 approached their peaks from the last real estate boom, when the median price in Ventura County topped \$600,000 in 2006. That peak was followed by five years of steep decline, bottoming out at \$356,408 in 2011.

Home prices in February 2019 were lowest in Port Hueneme, which had a median sale price of \$325,000, and highest in Westlake Village, where the median sale was for \$1.1 million. Oak Park, Newbury Park, Thousand Oaks and Ojai were all near the top, with prices above \$700,000. At the low end, Oxnard and Santa Paula joined Port Hueneme with medians below \$500,000.

**Ventura County Median Home Price, Annual Average (2008 - 2018)**



**Ventura County Median Home Price by Community (February 2018 - 2019)**



# Apartment Rents

## FEWER VACANCIES WHILE RENTS STEADILY CLIMB

### What are the measures?

The measures are average rents and vacancy rates in market-rate apartment buildings in Ventura County, as tracked by Dyer Sheehan Group. For vacancy rates, a weighted average of all apartments is used, regardless of size.

### Why are the measures important?

Tens of thousands of households in Ventura County rent their homes. Rent is almost always their biggest monthly expense, and the type of home they can afford is often dictated by the ups and downs of the rental market.

### How are we doing?

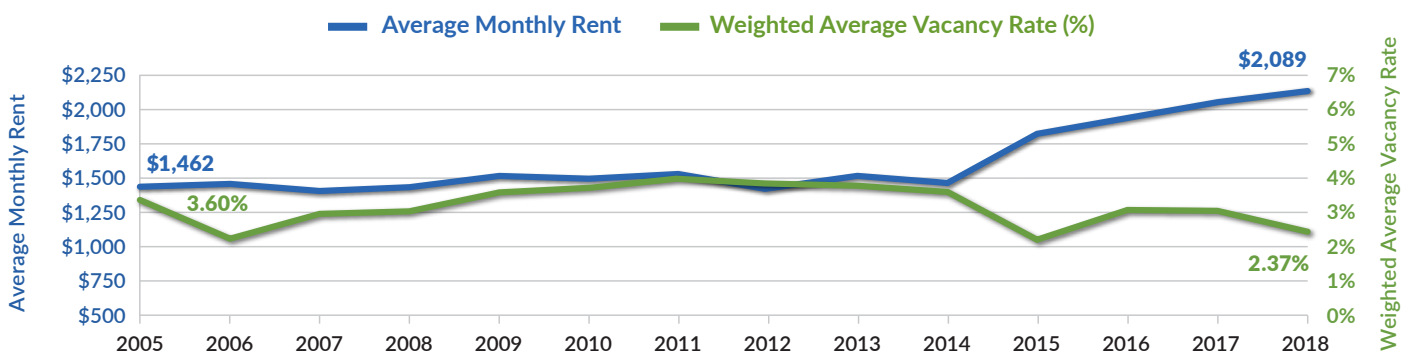
Apartment rents in Ventura County have skyrocketed. In July 2014, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment was \$1,479; in July 2018, it hit \$2,089, a 41.2 percent climb in four years. That came after nearly a decade of stagnation; the average rent in 2014 was \$17 per month more than in 2005, which amounts to a decrease when adjusted for inflation.

Thousand Oaks, Moorpark, Camarillo and Simi Valley posted the county's highest rents in 2018, averaging above \$2,000 per month for all unit sizes. The lowest monthly rents were in Fillmore, at \$1,216, and Santa Paula, at \$1,293.

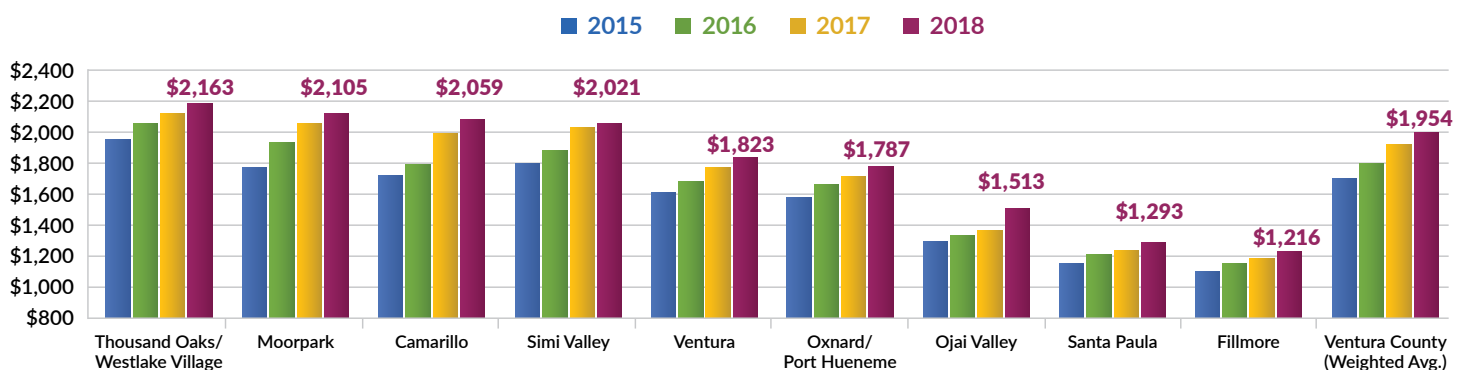
While rents are high, vacancy rates in Ventura County are quite low. The countywide rate was 2.37 percent in July 2018, down from 3.02 percent a year earlier. It dropped in 2015 as rents went up, after a few years of floating between 3.5 percent and 4 percent. The rate here consistently falls below the national vacancy rate of around 7 percent for rental housing, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.



### Average Ventura County Two Bedroom Apartment Rents & Weighted Average Vacancy (July 2005 - 2018)



### Average Monthly Apartment Rent - All Unit Sizes (July 2015 - 2018)





# Housing Affordability

## BUYING A HOME MOSTLY A DREAM

### What is the measure?

The measure is the percentage of households who can afford to buy the county's median-priced home. The calculation assumes a 10 percent down payment and a 30-year mortgage at prevailing interest rates. If the mortgage payment is less than 30 percent of the household's income, the home is considered affordable.

### Why is the measure important?

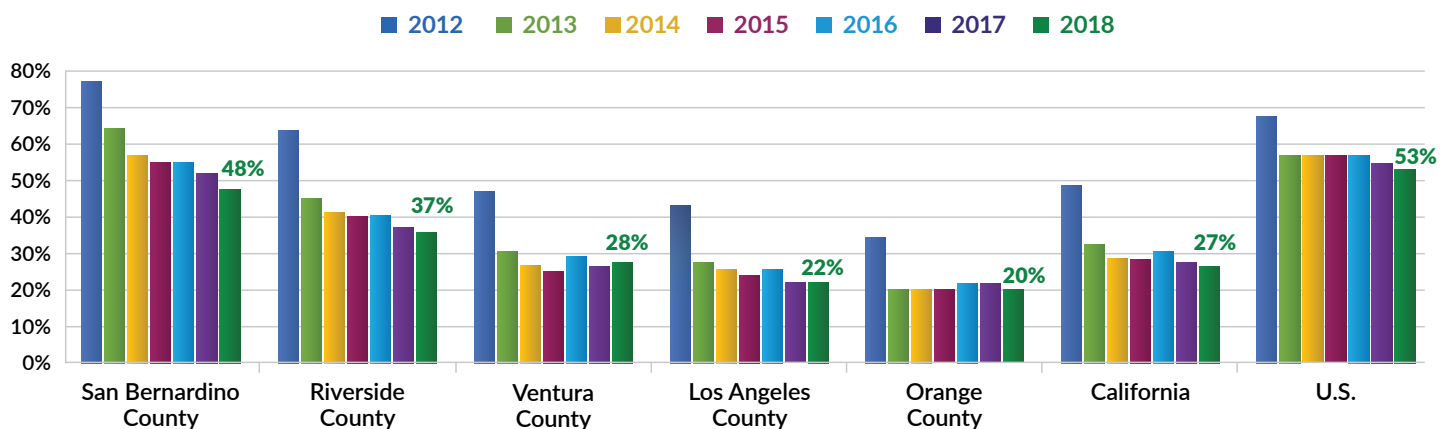
Ventura County's home prices are relatively high, but they are only half of the home-buying equation. The affordability index measures the true cost of buying a home, because it factors in upkeep expenses. If people who live and work in Ventura County cannot afford to buy here, they might move farther from their jobs — worsening traffic and air quality. They might leave the region altogether. Or they might stretch their budgets to buy, putting themselves at risk of foreclosure.

### How are we doing?

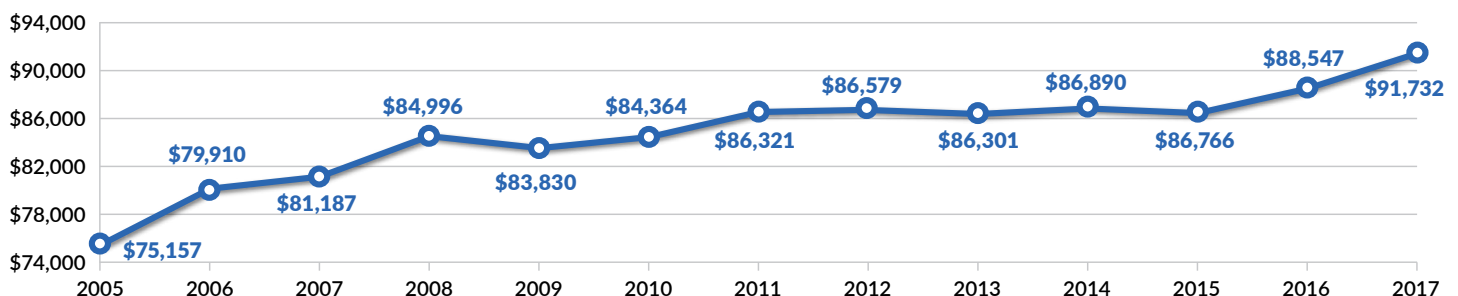
Our median family income has been rising in recent years but not enough to keep pace with increasing home prices. In 2018, just 28 percent of Ventura County residents could afford the county's median-priced home, down from 47 percent in 2012.

Ventura County's affordability rate mirrored California as a whole, but measured about half the national rate of 53 percent. In Southern California, higher-wage, higher-cost counties like Ventura, Los Angeles and Orange scored lower in affordability than lower-wage, lower-cost counties like Riverside and San Bernardino. In other words, our higher wages fail to offset our higher housing costs.

Housing Affordability Index (Q3, 2012 - 2017)



Median Family Income in Ventura County (2005 - 2017)









# Natural & Environmental Resources

**Ventura County's** natural environment is among its greatest resources, and over the past several decades we have done a good job of safeguarding it. Our county embraced the modern environmental movement, which started in nearby Santa Barbara in the aftermath of a major oil spill in 1969. Compared to where we were a few decades ago, our air and ocean water are much cleaner. We use less electricity per person, get more of our power from renewable sources and extract far less oil and natural gas.

But there are signs we may have reached a point of diminishing returns in some measures of environmental quality. Trends

**There are signs we may have reached a point of diminishing returns in many measures of environmental quality.**

that looked strongly positive in the long term have either stopped improving or actually started moving in the opposite direction. In recent years particulate matter in the air has spiked. Beach advisories due to contaminated ocean water, once an everyday occurrence, nearly disappeared by 2009, only to creep back over the past decade. We are sending more trash to our landfills than just a few years ago. By most measures, we are still much better off than we were a generation ago, but without action we could find ourselves once again breathing dirty air and swimming in polluted ocean water.



# Electricity Use

## USAGE RISES IN 2017 AFTER MULTI-YEAR DECLINE

### What is the measure?

The measure is the amount of electricity used by residential customers in Ventura County, in kilowatt-hours per year.

### Why is the measure important?

Energy efficiency is good for our bank accounts, the electricity grid and for the environment. Though California has set a goal of 100 percent clean power by 2045, for the time being most of our electricity comes from sources that affect the environment in some way. Natural gas, the state's top fuel source for power plants, releases carbon dioxide when burned, contributing to climate change. Hydropower dams, another leading source of California's power, do not produce carbon, but they cause other ecological problems, such as harm to fish habitats.

### How are we doing?

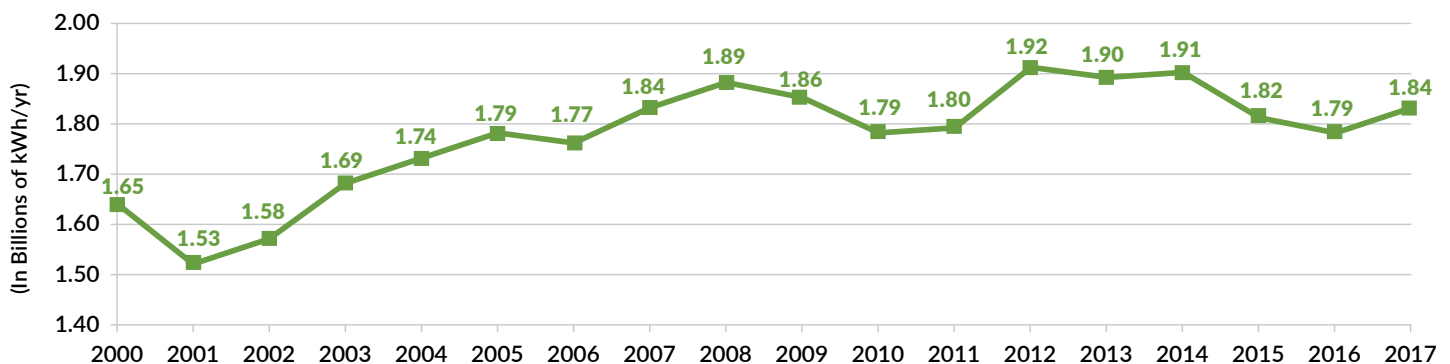
Ventura County residents used 1.84 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity in 2017, an increase of 2.8 percent from the previous year. That came after four straight years of flat or

declining energy consumption, from a high point in 2012 of 1.92 billion kilowatt-hours.

Two trends in energy usage appear at work simultaneously. The first is that consumption of power, like that of most other goods, rises during a strong economy and drops during a recession. Usage grew steadily from 2001 until the Great Recession started in 2008. That was followed by a decline as the downturn deepened, and an increase in 2012 during the recovery. In recent years, as the region's economy has stagnated or grown very slowly, consumption has been nearly flat.

The second trend is a slight decline in overall consumption, which becomes clear when the figures are adjusted for the county's population growth. On a per-capita basis, energy consumption in 2017 was lower than it had been in 2000. Conservation and efficiency are working: Even with the proliferation of electronic devices in our lives, we use slightly less power.

**Ventura County Residential Electricity Consumption (2000 - 2017)**





# Solar Power Installations

## THE SOLAR BOOM SLOWS

### What are the measures?

The measures are Ventura County's solar power capacity and the number of new solar projects each year.

### Why are the measures important?

In 2018, California passed a law mandating half of the state's energy will come from renewable sources by 2025, and 100 percent by 2045. Solar power is the state's leading source of renewable energy, and an expansion of our solar capacity will be essential if we are to meet those targets.

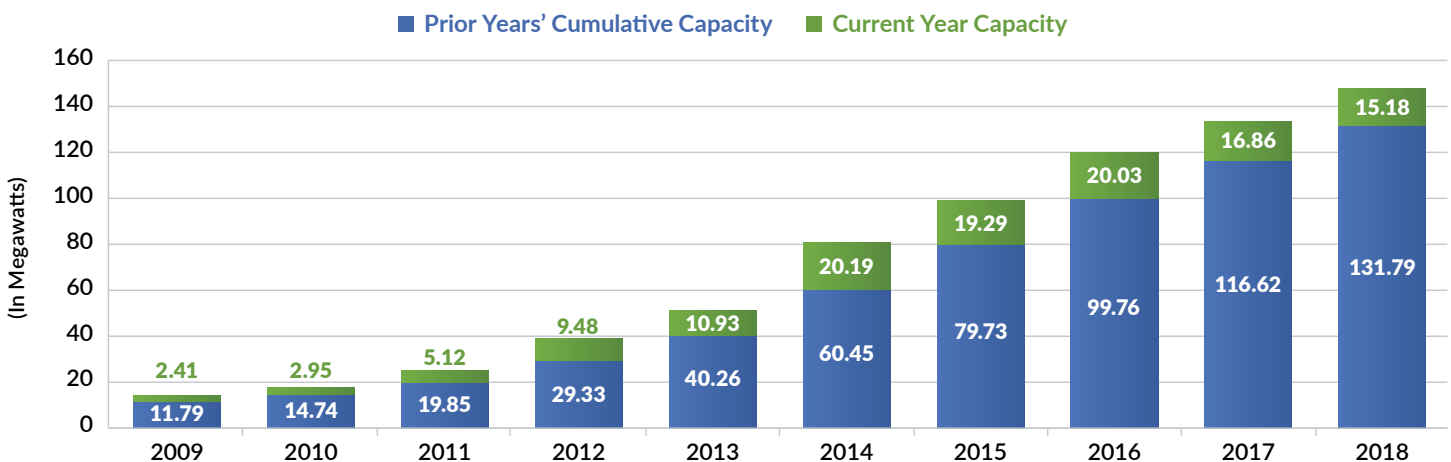
### How are we doing?

The solar industry in Ventura County continues to thrive, though its growth has slowed in recent years. In 2018, the industry added 15.18 megawatts of capacity in Ventura

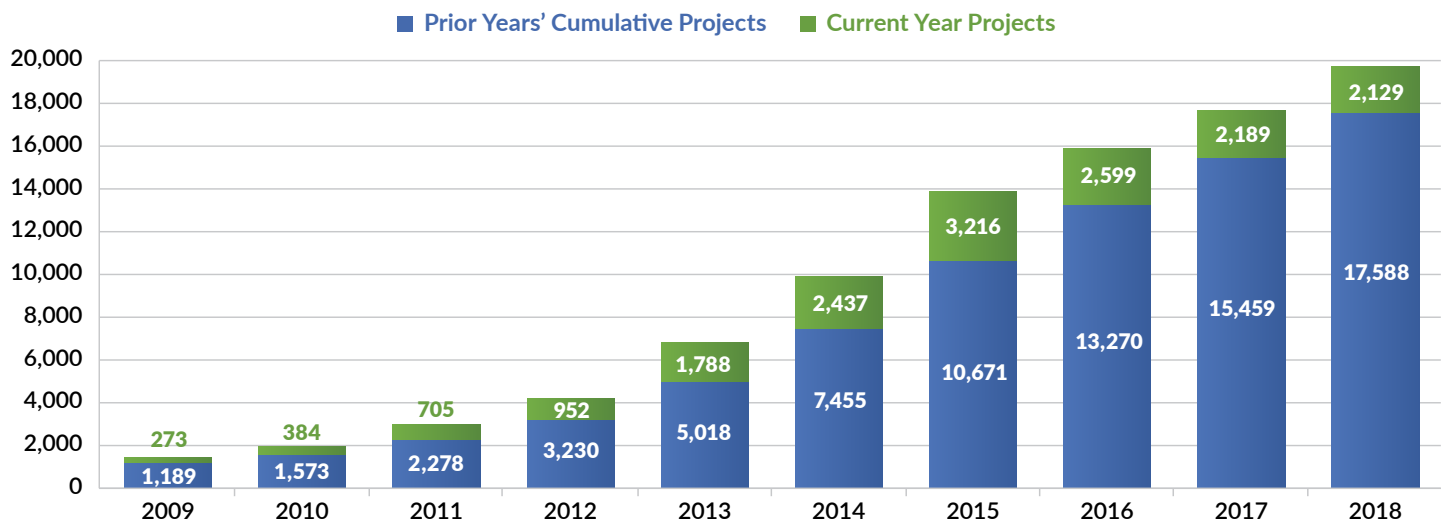
County, bringing the county's total capacity to 131.79 megawatts. That's equal to one large commercial solar field, enough to power tens of thousands of homes. The 15.18 megawatts added in 2018 was the smallest output of new solar projects since 2013, though.

Ventura County's solar power capacity is scattered throughout thousands of small installations on public and private property. By the end of 2018, there were 17,588 solar installations in the county, 2,129 of which went online in 2018. The peak of the recent solar boom was 2015, when 3,216 new installations powered up.

**Ventura County Solar Capacity (2009 - 2018)**



**Ventura County Solar Projects (2009 - 2018)**



# Air Quality

## WE BREATHE CLEANER AIR THAN BEFORE

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### What are the measures?

The measures are the number of days per year Ventura County exceeded state standards for ozone and particulate matter in the air.

### Why are the measures important?

High levels of both ozone and particulate matter are harmful, in different ways. Ozone, a molecule consisting of three oxygen atoms, occurs naturally in the upper atmosphere, where it is essential as a filter of harmful radiation. In the lower atmosphere, however, it is a pollutant formed by reactions between two other types of air pollutants, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds. High ozone levels contribute to smog and can cause eye and throat irritation, reduced lung capacity and crop damage.

Small enough to be inhaled, particulate matter is a mixture of metal, soot, soil, dust and liquid droplets. Particles 10 microns or smaller are known as PM10. Exposure to PM10 can aggravate asthma and other respiratory illnesses and is associated with increased risk of premature death, especially in the elderly and people with cardiopulmonary disease.

### How are we doing?

Frequent days with dirty air appear to be a thing of the past in Ventura County. Twice in 2018, the region exceeded California's one-hour limit for ozone, and its eight-hour ozone

limit 14 times. In the 1970s and 1980s, the county almost always exceeded state ozone limits more than 100 days per year. Ozone levels declined throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, before flattening out near the current levels around 2010. There was a bit of a spike in 2017, though. That year saw three days over the one-hour ozone limit, tying the highest level since 2009; its 22 days above the eight-hour limit were the highest since 2012.

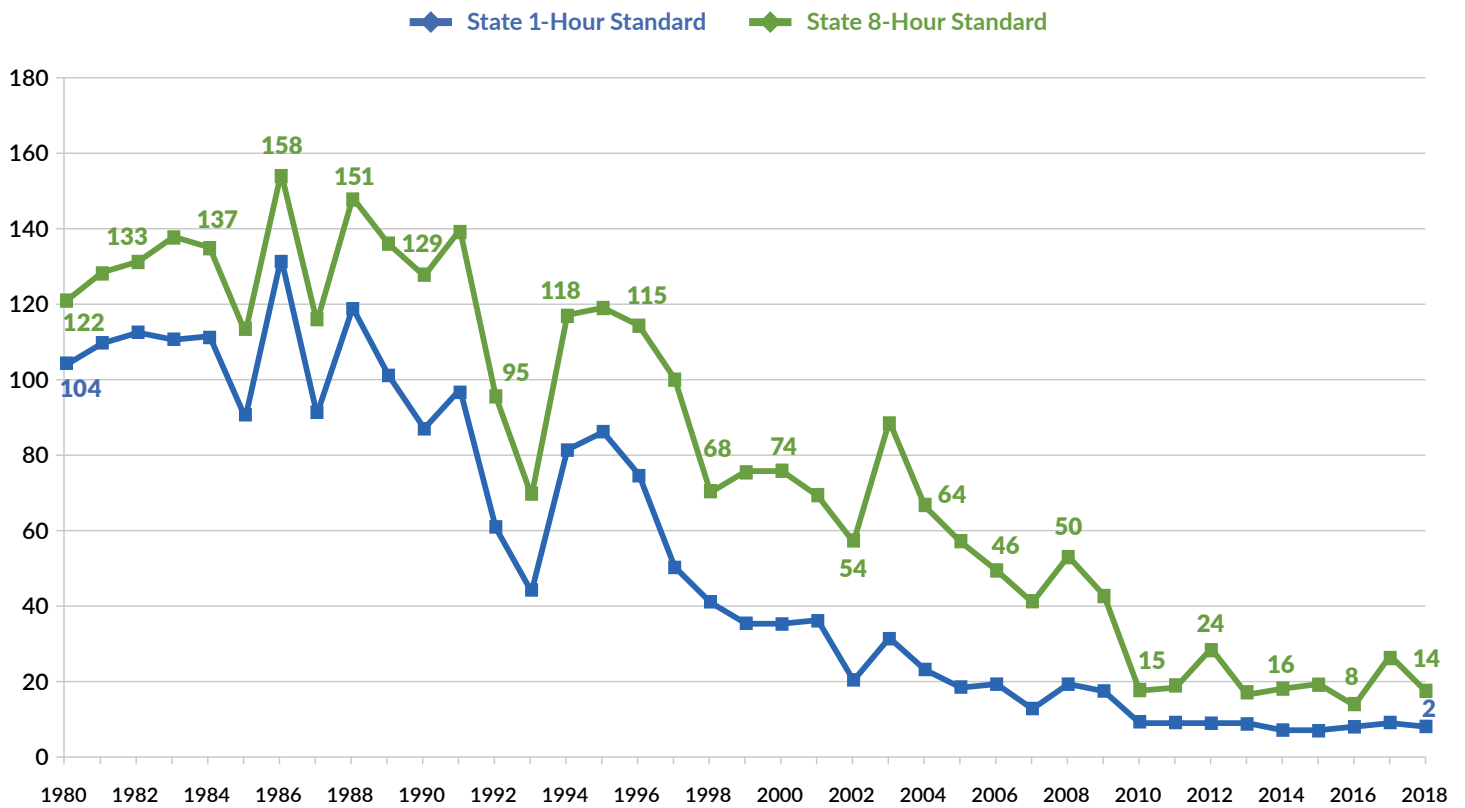
Ventura County also has achieved long-term reduction in the amount of particulate matter in its air though improvement has been less dramatic than with ozone and, in fact, has reversed in recent years. In 2018, the county exceeded the state 24-hour standard 23 times for PM10. That was down from 34 times over the limit in 2017, and far below the levels in the 1990s, when the county routinely topped 40 days per year over the PM10 standard.

However, PM10 levels in 2018 were well above those between 2010 and 2015, when the county exceeded the limit fewer than 10 times each year. In fact, in 2013, Ventura County went all year without surpassing the PM10 standard.

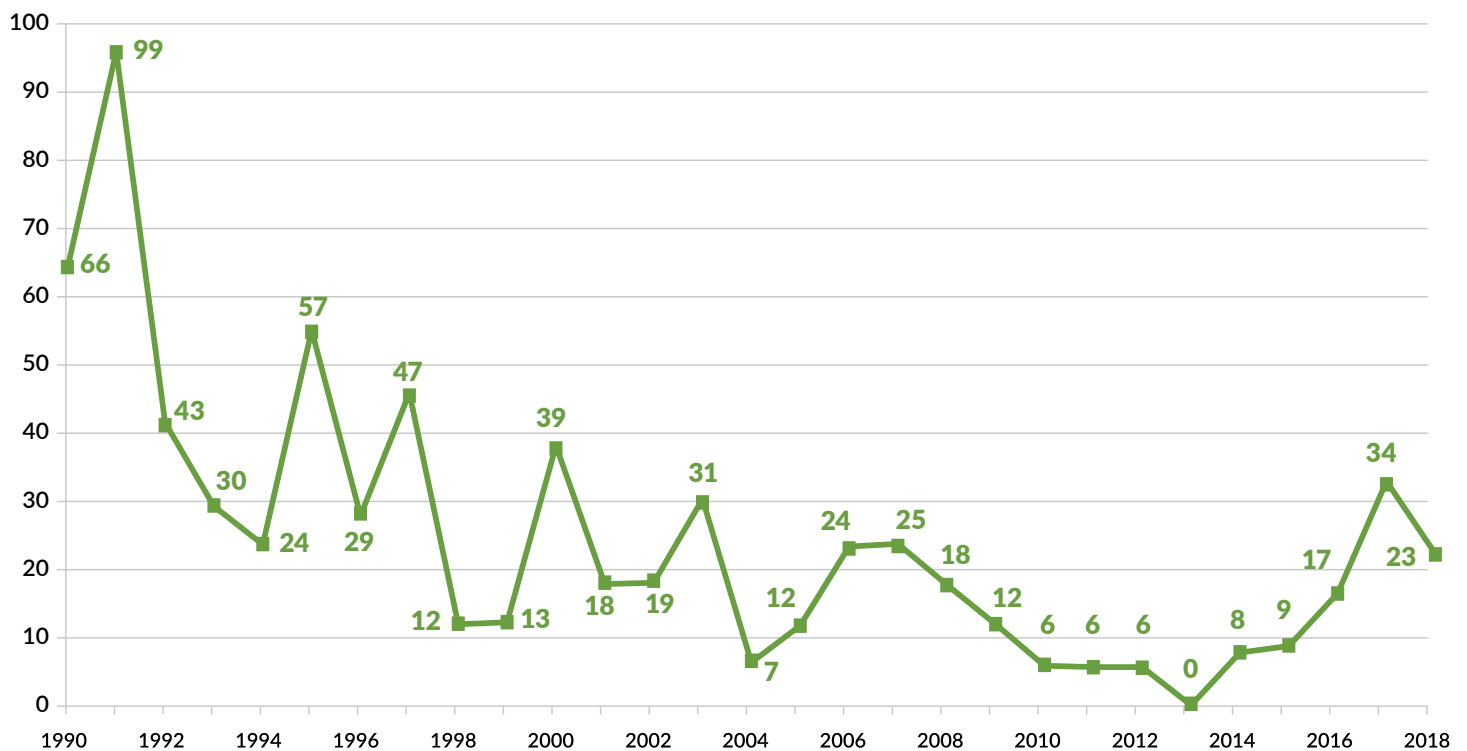
Although the smoke from wildfires is generally associated with PM2.5, particles can affect PM10 and are responsible for some of the increase in 2017 and 2018. Even after fires are out, blowing dust and ash can impact PM10.



## Number of Days Ventura County Exceeded State Ozone Limits (1980 - 2018)



## Estimated Days in Ventura County Above the State 24 - Hour PM10 Standard (1990 - 2018)





# Rainfall

## ANOTHER DRY YEAR IN 2018

### What is the measure?

The measure is the amount of rain that falls in different locations in Ventura County during each “rainfall year,” from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30 of the following year.

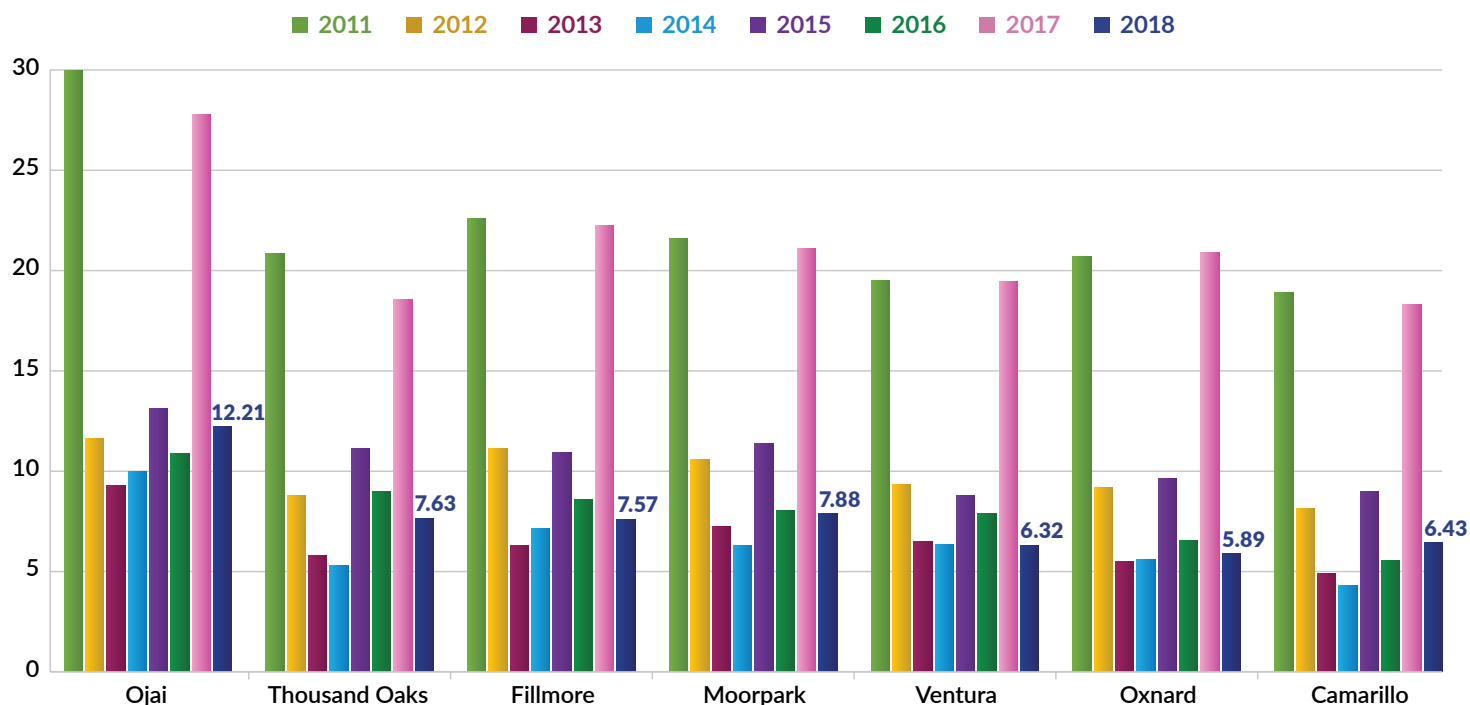
### Why is the measure important?

Life needs water. By filling lakes, rivers and aquifers, rainfall supplies both drinking water and agricultural irrigation. It is also crucial to the health of wildlife and wildlife habitats, and it reduces the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

### How are we doing?

Six of the past eight years have been unusually dry in Ventura County, though the 2019 rainfall year is shaping up to be above average. In 2018, rainfall totals ranged from 5.89 inches in Oxnard to 12.21 inches in Ojai. Most of the county received less than half as much rain in 2018 as in 2017, which was the wettest year in most areas since 2011. Ojai almost always gets the most rain of any city in Ventura County; in 2018, more than twice as much rain fell there as in Oxnard.

### Average Inches of Rainfall\* (2011 - 2018)



\*Rainfall is counted on a “water year” which is October 1 through September 30



# Drought

## IT'S OVER

### What is the measure?

The measure is the level of drought across California, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, produced by researchers at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

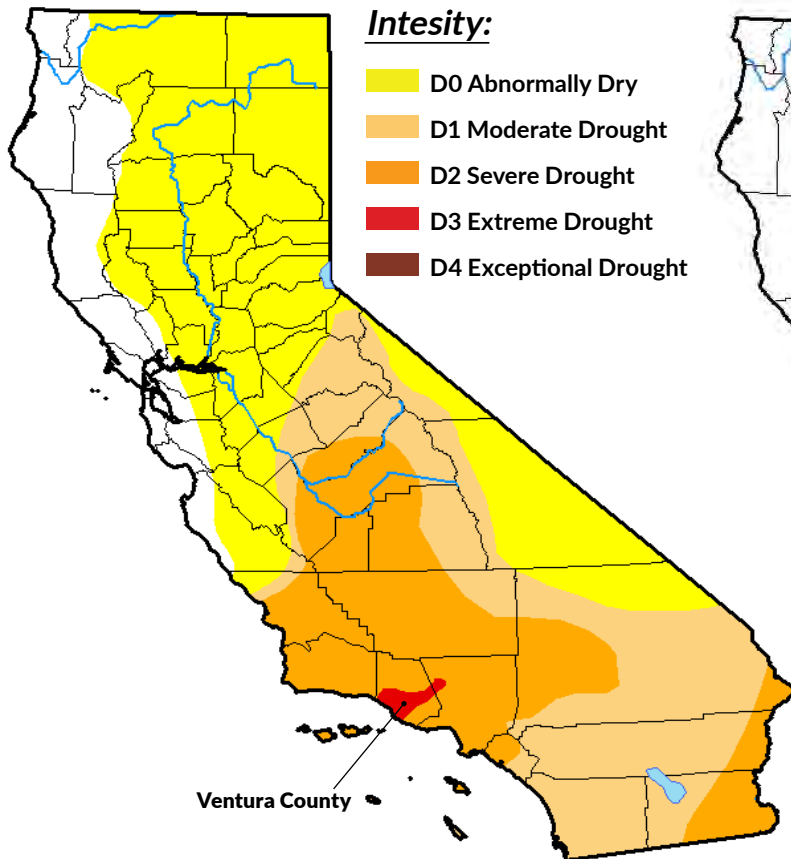
### Why is the measure important?

Drought hurts our economy, environment and health as water for drinking and irrigation becomes scarcer, more expensive and of lower quality. The longer a drought persists, the drier the brush becomes in our wildlands and the greater risk of serious wildfire.

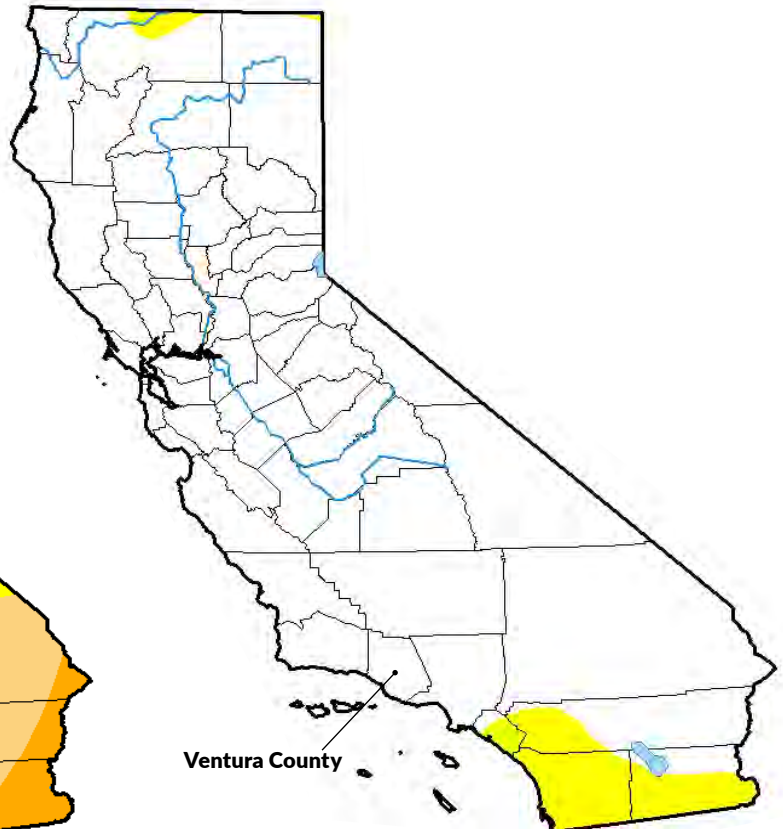
### How are we doing?

After drought parched nearly the entire state from 2011 through 2016, California flitted in and out of drought status from 2017 through early 2019. Throughout all of that, Ventura County was one of the state's driest regions. By January 2019, most of the state was covered by moderate drought, with Ventura County one of only a few areas still in a state of extreme drought. Then the rain began to fall, and by March 2019 the entire state, Ventura County included, was no longer in a drought.

March 13, 2018



March 14, 2019



# Water Use

## HOTTER REGIONS, BIGGER HOMES CONSUME MORE

### What is the measure?

The measure is the amount of residential water used per person each day in 2018, in 14 service areas of Ventura County. The statistics for Westlake Village include some residences in Los Angeles County.

### Why is the measure important?

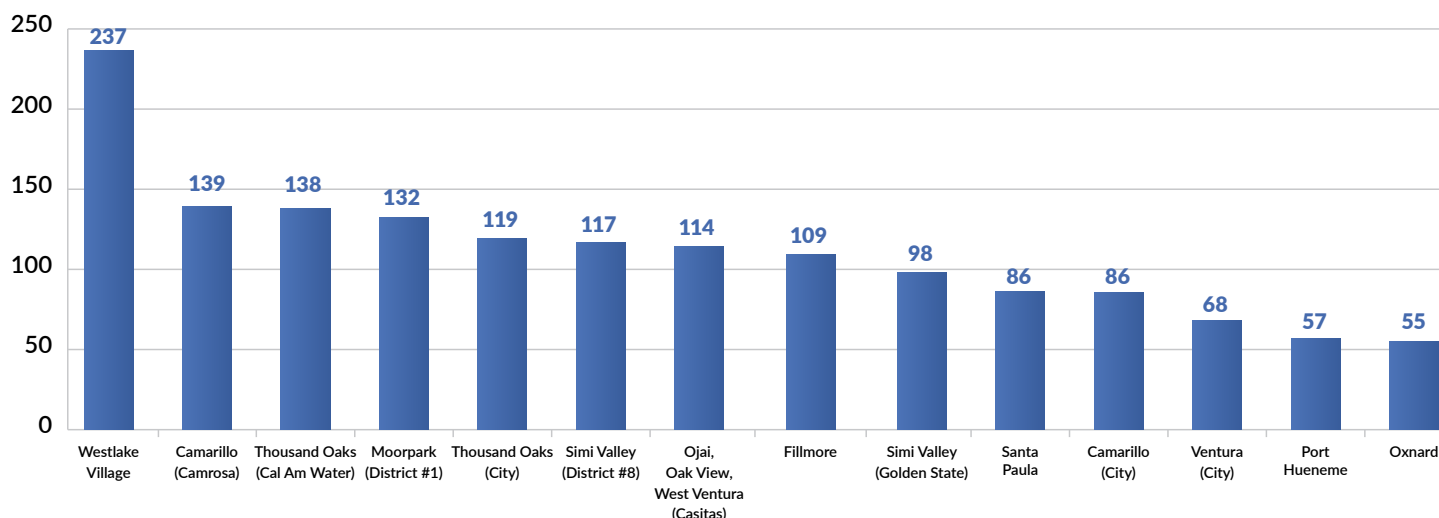
Water is precious in Southern California, even during our wettest years. Ventura County lacks enough locally sourced water for its population and must rely in part on imports from Northern California or the Colorado River. Areas of the county that do not import water, such as the city of Ventura, are considering doing so. The drought also has renewed interest in ocean desalination plants or other projects to increase the water supply. But the cheapest way to deal with

scarcity is to reduce usage. Conservation also allows us to grow our population without putting further strain on our water resources.

### How are we doing?

People in warmer parts of Ventura County use far more water than people in cooler climates, and water usage is also higher in areas with larger residential properties. Neither of these facts is surprising, because landscaping requires more water than other residential uses. The differences can be extreme: Westlake Village residents used an average of 237 gallons per day in 2018, while Oxnard residents used an average of 55 gallons daily.

**Average Residential Water Use per Capita per Day in Gallons (2018)**





# Ocean Water Quality

## MORE BEACH ADVISORIES POSTED

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of days per year beaches in Ventura County were posted as unsafe for public use because of bacterial contamination, for reasons other than rainfall. The Ventura County Environmental Health Division bases these warnings on tests for three types of bacteria: fecal coliform, total coliform and enterococcus, all of which are associated with sewage, animal waste and other pollutants.

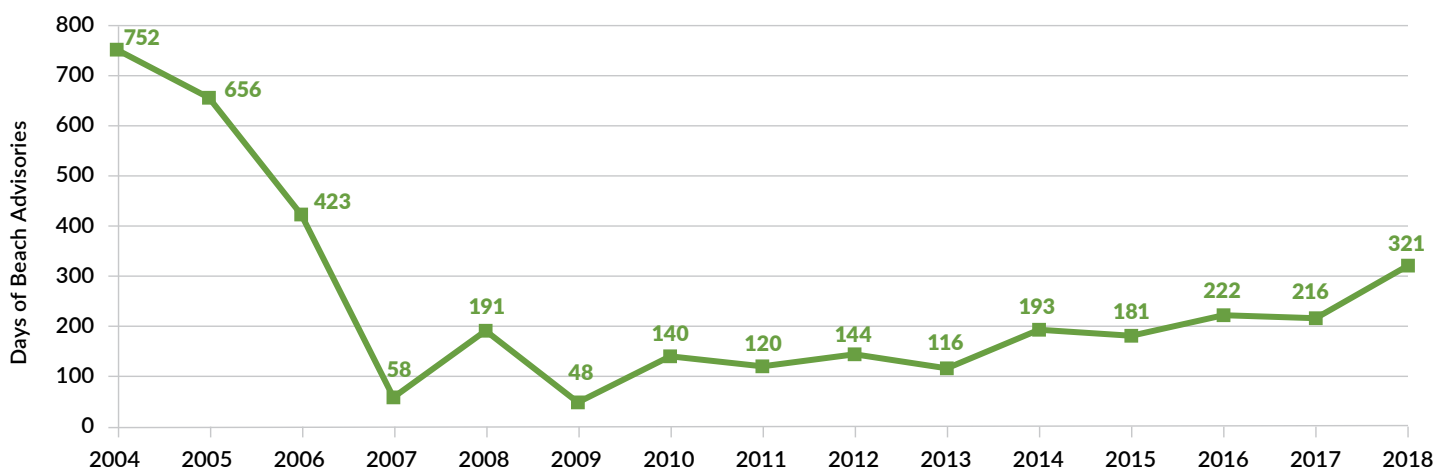
### Why is the measure important?

Ventura County's coastline is one of our greatest resources, but its value diminishes greatly if the ocean is too dirty to enter safely. Polluted water puts swimmers and surfers at risk of illness and rashes. It also hurts our economy, as dangerous beaches can depress the tourism industry in seaside areas.

### How are we doing?

In 2018, beach advisories in Ventura County were posted 321 times due to excessive bacteria in the water, up from 216 the previous year. Our beaches consistently rate among the cleanest in Southern California. However, our ocean water has gotten dirtier since 2009, when beaches were closed only 48 times. They remain much cleaner than they were in the early 2000s – in 2004, county health officials posted beach advisories 752 times. A large part of that improvement came from focused efforts to clean up a few especially polluted beaches. The resurgence in beach closures over the past decade is a sign the county might need to expand that effort to more of its shoreline.

Days of Posted Beach Advisories for Water Quality - Ventura County (2004 - 2018)



# Oil and Gas Production

## PRODUCTION FELL TO ALL-TIME LOWS IN 2017

### What is the measure?

The measure is the amount of crude oil and natural gas extracted from Ventura County each year. Oil is measured in 42-gallon barrels, or BBL, and natural gas is measured in thousands of cubic feet, or MCF.

### Why is the measure important?

Oil and gas are essential to the world economy and to the region's, despite recent efforts to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. The local production and sale of petroleum generate jobs and revenue for Ventura County, as they have for more than a century. Oil extraction also poses a threat to our environment that must be carefully monitored.

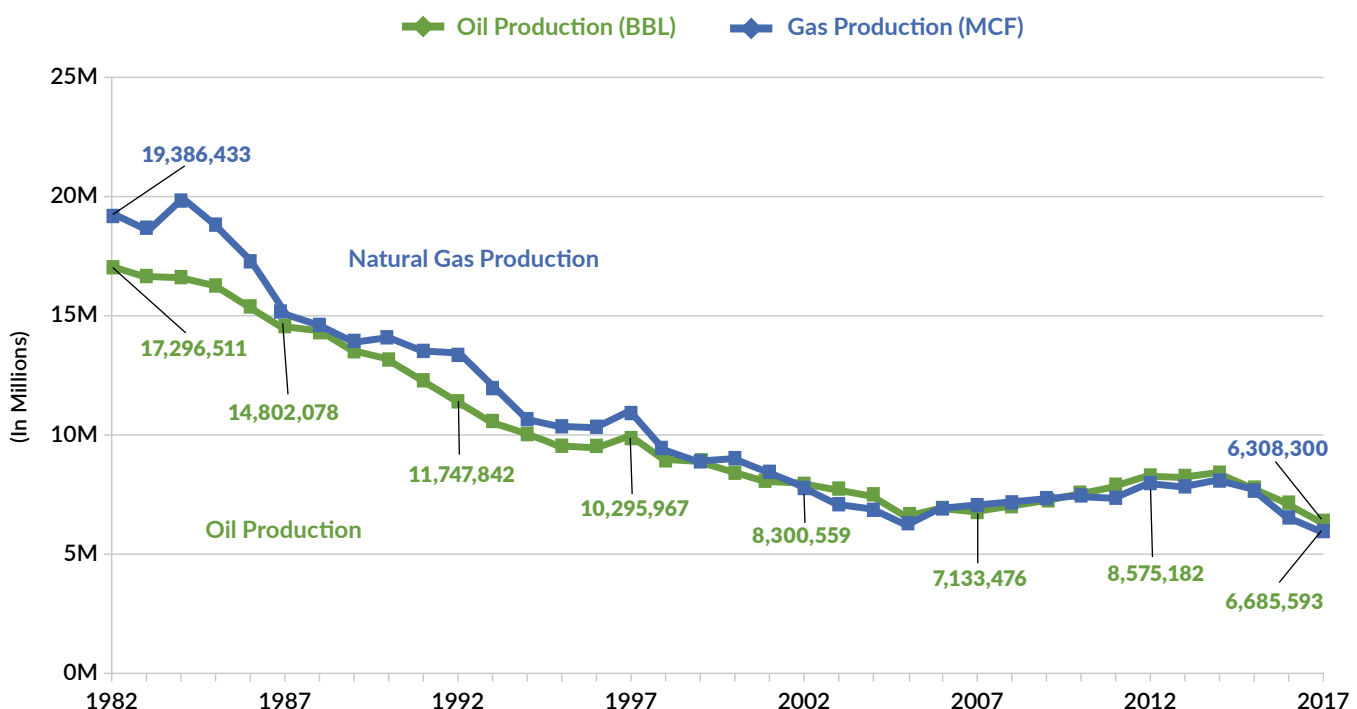
### How are we doing?

Despite its rich history in western Ventura County, including the founding of Union Oil (Unocal) in Santa Paula, Ventura County's petroleum industry is not what it used to be. In 2017, the county produced around 6.7 million barrels of oil and 6.3 million MCF of natural gas. Both were the lowest totals on record, with oil roughly 40 percent and natural gas 33 percent of production in the early 1980s.

Several factors are at work here. The first is the price of oil: inflation-adjusted prices were higher in the early 1980s before beginning a long decline through the end of the 1990s. This made it more efficient to extract oil in the United States than to import it. The local political and geologic conditions are also important. Oil and gas production have taken off in other parts of the United States, due in part to advancements in hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. Ventura County has seen no such boom since California more strictly regulates fracking and other extraction methods. In addition, a strong environmental movement here frowns upon petroleum exploration and extraction.



Oil and Gas Production in Ventura County (1982 - 2017)



# Landfill Disposal Rate

## MOST CITIES PRODUCING MORE TRASH

### What is the measure?

The measure is the disposal rate — the pounds of trash per person, per day sent to landfills — for Ventura County's 10 cities and the county's unincorporated areas.

### Why is the measure important?

Trash is a pollutant. Refuse thrown in landfills can release toxic substances into the air, ground and water, sometimes for hundreds of years. And landfill space is finite. When a landfill reaches capacity, it is covered with earth and can be unsuitable for future development or recreation.

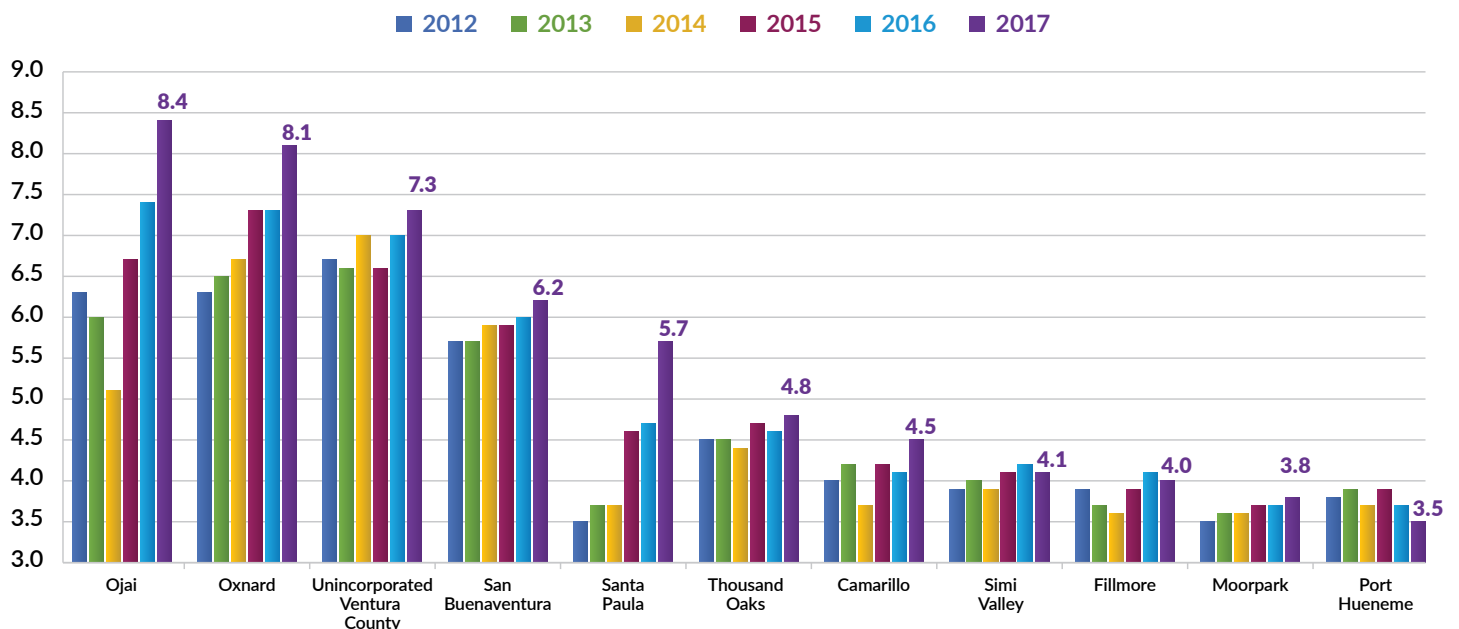
### How are we doing?

For decades, disposal rates dropped and recycling rates grew in Ventura County. But the trends have reversed in recent years: In nine of 10 cities and the unincorporated county, residents threw away more trash per person in 2017 than

in 2012. Sometimes those margins are wide. In Oxnard, the disposal rate went from 6.3 pounds per person, per day in 2012 to 8.1 pounds in 2017 — an increase of 28.6 percent over five years. Ojai's rate jumped 33.3 percent, and Santa Paula's spiked 62.9 percent. Disposal rates in Ventura, Thousand Oaks, Fillmore, Simi Valley and Moorpark increased slightly, and the rate in Port Hueneme declined.

These wide disparities in cities' disposal rates don't seem easily explained by location, population density, development patterns, demographics or economics. The average Oxnard resident threw away more than twice as much trash in 2017 as the average resident of neighboring Port Hueneme, and the average Ojai resident discarded more than twice as much as the average residents of Simi Valley, Moorpark, Fillmore and Port Hueneme.

Per Capita Disposal Rates in Pounds/Person/Day (2012 - 2017)







VENTURA COUNTY  
MEDICAL CENTER



# Public Health

**The health of Ventura County's people** is encouraging in some ways and distressing in others. We live in a wealthy nation that generally falls on the higher end of most global health measures, yet we lag other countries of similar wealth on some key statistics, such as life expectancy and child mortality. Most Ventura County residents live longer than the national average, but a closer look reveals life span is tied to our relative prosperity. People in our higher income ZIP codes can expect to live years longer than those in our lower income areas.

We share life-expectancy challenges with our fellow Americans. The leading causes of death in Ventura County are cancer and heart disease, just as they are nationwide. The national epidemic of opioid addiction has

hit Ventura County particularly hard. During the past decade hundreds of county residents died of overdoses of opioids, both legal and illegal. Our county often records a rate of fatal overdoses at twice the state average, and higher than other coastal Southern California counties.

**Most Ventura County residents live longer than the national average, but a closer look reveals life span is tied to our relative prosperity.**

Bright spots do appear, though, and some of those are among young people. Teen pregnancy has dropped for decades and is now at its lowest rate in recorded history. Smoking tobacco, one of the deadliest habits a young person can acquire, is also much rarer among today's teens than youth of previous generations.

Vaping, though, has gained popularity, a sign the societal war we've waged on tobacco and nicotine may not be over yet.



# Life Expectancy and Income

## HEALTH AND WEALTH GO HAND IN HAND, USUALLY

### What are the measures?

The measures are the life expectancy of someone born between 2015 and 2017 in 23 ZIP codes in Ventura County, and the average household income in each ZIP code in 2017.

### Why are the measures important?

Life expectancy is one of the most important indicators of public health and of an individual's likely well-being and quality of life. It often serves as shorthand to compare the health or health-care systems of different countries or regions. Comparing life expectancy to income shows the extent to which wealth is correlated with health outcomes.

### How are we doing?

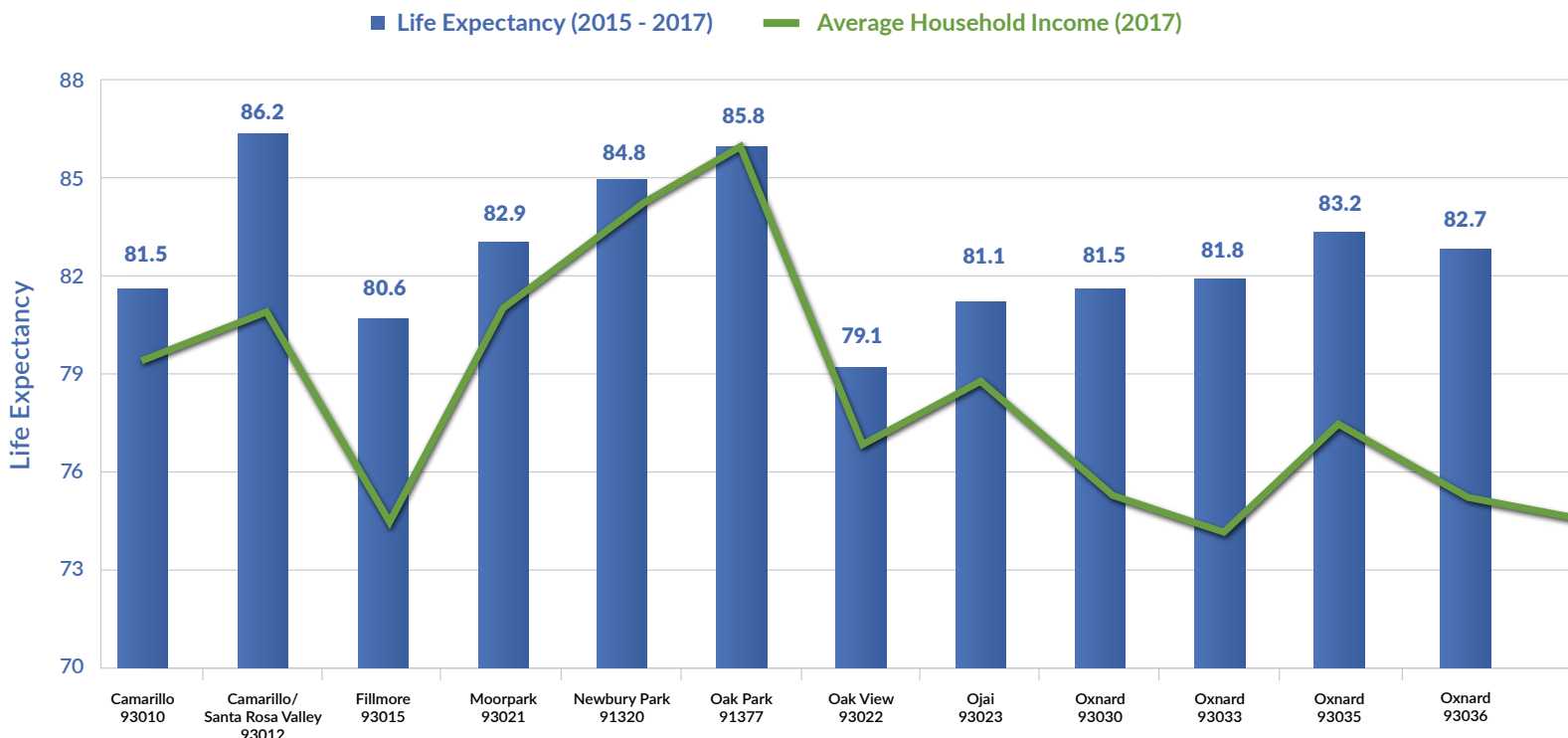
The average Ventura County resident born between 2015 and 2017 can expect to live 82 years, above the national average of 78.7 years in 2016. Wealth and health relate closely, but not perfectly. The county's wealthiest ZIP code also is home to residents who can expect to live the longest: 91361, in Thousand Oaks and Westlake Village. With an

average household income of \$174,031 in 2017, residents born between 2015 and 2017 can expect to live 86.6 years. Those living in the second highest income area, the Oak Park ZIP code of 91377 with an average household income of \$163,949 in 2017, have a life expectancy of 85.8 years.

The county's lowest median household incomes were in the 93041 ZIP code in Port Hueneme, at \$72,405, and the 93060 ZIP code in Santa Paula, at \$72,581. Both had life expectancies lower than the wealthiest areas — 81.9 years in Port Hueneme and 80.8 years in Santa Paula. Neither were at the bottom of the longevity list, however. The shortest life expectancy was in the 93022 ZIP code of Oak View and Casitas Springs, at 79.1 years, although average incomes there were near the middle of the pack, at \$95,201.

This could be explained by what public health experts call the "Hispanic paradox" or the "epidemiological paradox." Latinos in the United States experience longer life spans compared to people of other ethnicities. Nationwide, Latinos born in 2014

## Ventura County Life Expectancy (2015 - 2017) & Average Household Income (2017)

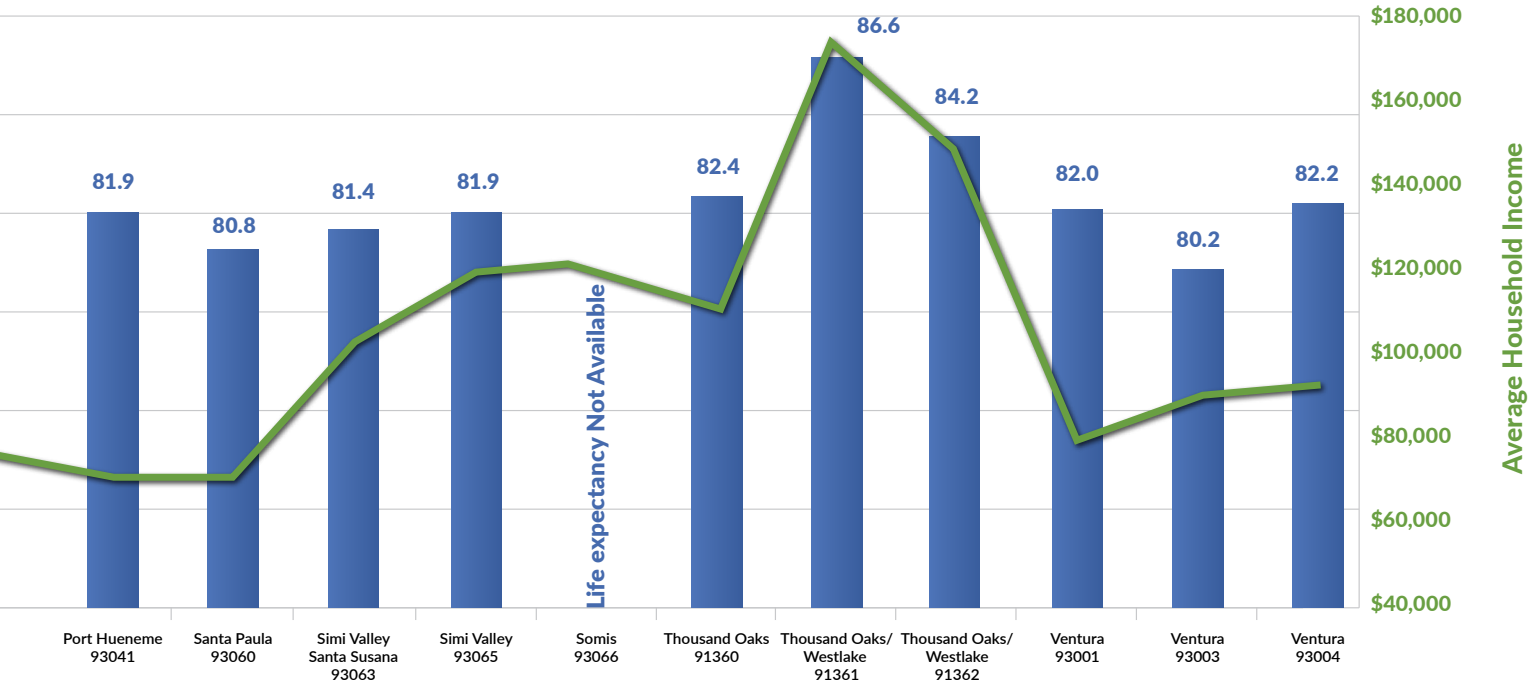






could expect to live 81.8 years, compared to 78.8 years for non-Hispanic whites and 75.2 years for African Americans, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This occurs even though white Americans have higher average incomes and education levels than Latinos, and those factors are usually associated with better health outcomes.

In Ventura County, many ZIP codes with low incomes are heavily Latino, including those in south Oxnard, west Ventura, Port Hueneme, Fillmore and Santa Paula. They all have higher life expectancies and lower incomes than Oak View, nearly 80 percent white in the 2010 census. However, the average life expectancy countywide is similar for whites and Latinos: 81.6 years for whites, and 81 years for Latinos.



# Asthma Hospitalizations

## FEWER COUNTY CHILDREN HOSPITALIZED FOR ASTHMA

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of hospitalizations for asthma symptoms each year in Ventura County per 10,000 residents, sorted by patient age.

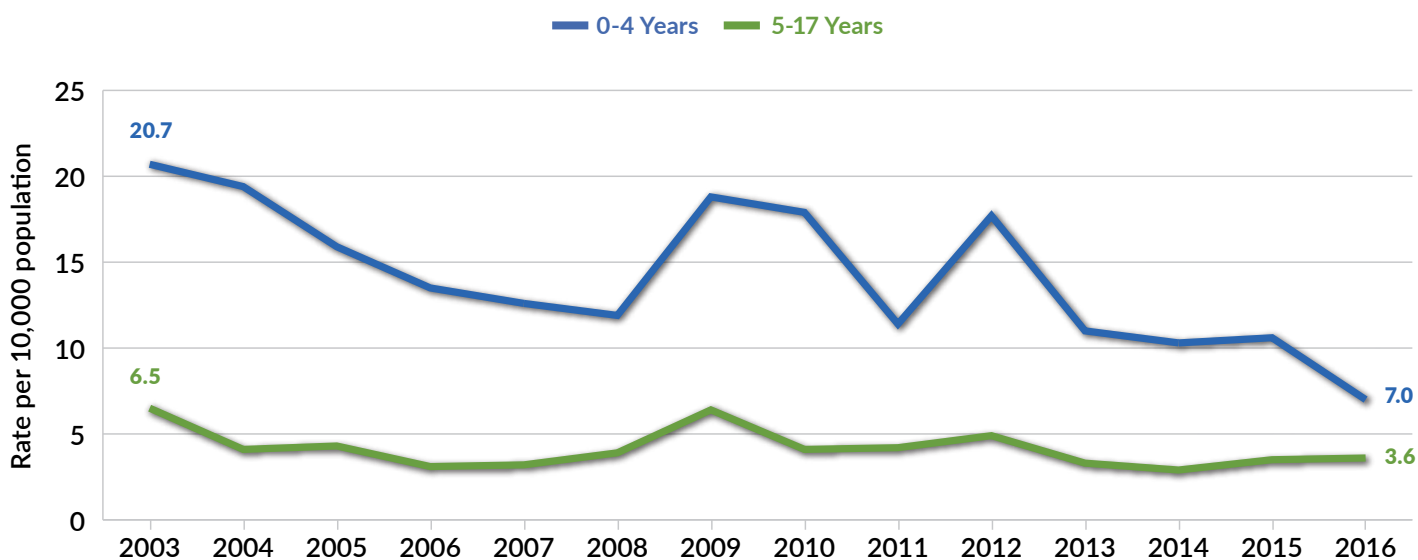
### Why is the measure important?

A chronic respiratory disease, asthma affects around 8 percent of Americans. It disproportionately is diagnosed in children, young adults and the poor. Asthma attacks can be triggered by exposure to pollutants, tobacco smoke, dust from farm fields or construction sites, and fine soot in smoke and diesel emissions.

### How are we doing?

Hospitalizations due to asthma are declining, even as the disease becomes more common. Children are the most likely to be hospitalized for asthma attacks. In 2016, the overall asthma hospitalization rate was 4.5 per 10,000 children in Ventura County, down from 5.4 per 10,000 the previous year. Admittance rates have declined steeply for the youngest children who also are most likely to be hospitalized. Seven children were admitted for asthma for every 10,000 children under the age of 5 in 2016, down from 10.6 the year before, and down from more than 20 hospitalizations per 10,000 young children in 2003.

Ventura County Asthma Hospitalization Rate by Age (2003 - 2016)



# Teen Birth Rate

## CONTINUED DECLINE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH VICTORY

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of births to teen mothers (ages 15 to 19), expressed as the rate of births per 1,000 teen girls.

### Why is the measure important?

Teen birth has a detrimental impact on the future quality of life of both mother and child. Teen mothers are more likely than their peers to drop out of school, live in poverty, be single parents, lack adequate prenatal care and deliver premature and low birth-weight infants. Children of teen mothers tend to have poorer health and more behavioral problems than their peers and are more likely to become teen parents themselves.

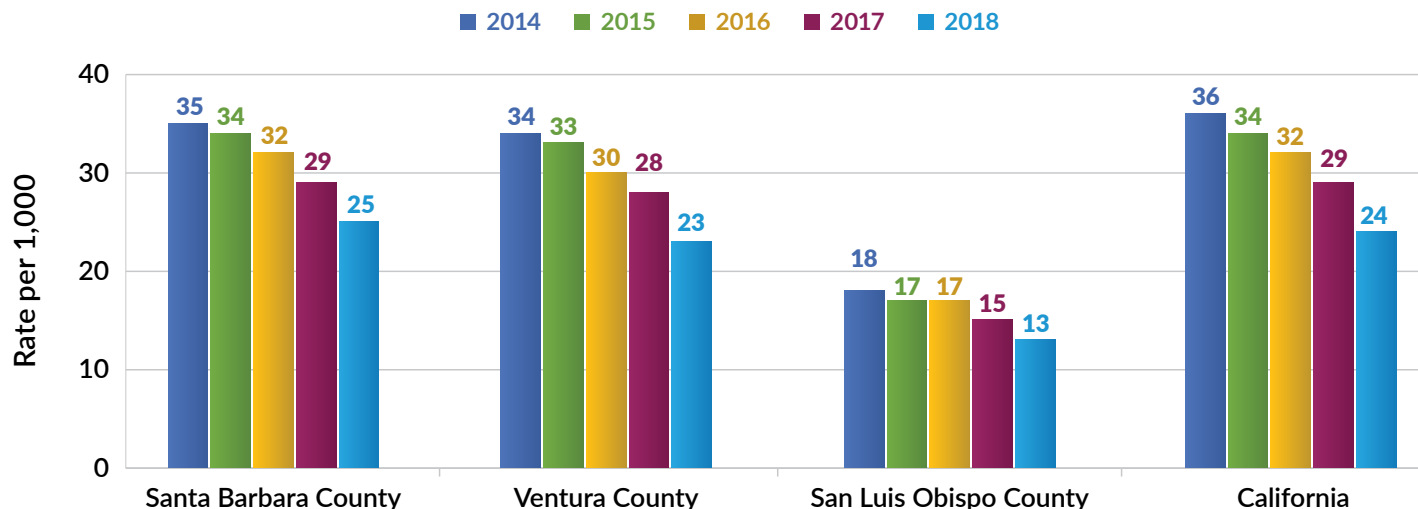
### How are we doing?

The decline in teen birth rates across the country is an underappreciated public health success story. The birth rate for girls in the United States was 18.8 births per 1,000 teens in 2017, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That's 70 percent lower than the rate in 1991.

Ventura County mirrors that trend, although our teen birth rate is higher than the national average. In 2018, the birth rate was 23 per 1,000 teen girls, down from 28 the year before and 34 in 2014. In California, the teen birth rate in 2016 was 24, a drop from 36 in 2014. Santa Barbara County's teen birth rate slightly exceeded that of Ventura County in 2018, at 25 births per 1,000 teen girls. San Luis Obispo County had a much lower rate of 13 per 1,000.



Teen Birth Rate per 1,000 for Ages 15 to 19 (2014 - 2018)





# Teen Substance Abuse

## ALCOHOL, POT DECLINE AS VAPING RISES

### What are the measures?

The measures are the percentage of children in grade 11 in selected Ventura County school districts who report the following: smoking one or more cigarettes in the past 30 days; using electronic cigarettes in the past 30 days; smoking or otherwise consuming marijuana in the past 30 days; and having been “very drunk” or high seven or more times in their lives.

### Why are the measures important?

Tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs are particularly harmful to developing minds and bodies. Tobacco use ranks among the leading preventable causes of death in the United States, and cigarette smokers can expect to live at least 10 fewer years than non-smokers, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Electronic cigarettes have not been studied to the same extent, so the health effects are not as well understood. For adults, they may serve as a tool to quit smoking, but for teens vaping likely introduces them to nicotine use and possibly addiction.

Millions of adults use alcohol and marijuana in moderation without serious problems, but people who take them up at a young age are more likely than their peers to develop addictions and other problems related to substance abuse.

### How are we doing?

Cigarettes, marijuana and bingeing on alcohol and other drugs all became less popular in most Ventura County school

districts between 2013 and 2018, while electronic cigarette usage rose in some districts and fell in others.

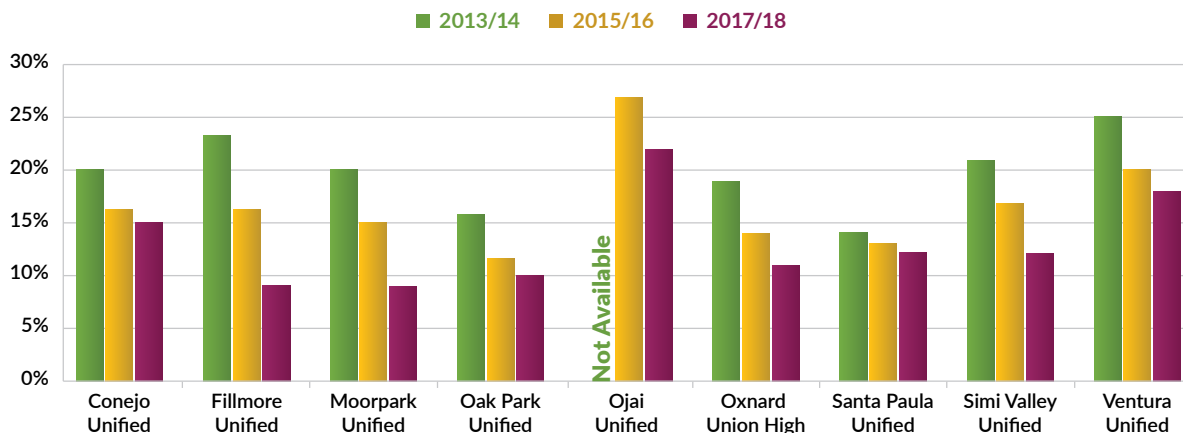
A few decades ago, smoking was the most popular vice among teens. That’s changed — in the 2017/18 school year, the percentage of 11th-graders who reported smoking one or more cigarettes within the past 30 days was 4 percent in Ventura Unified School District, 3 percent in Conejo Valley Unified, 2 percent in Oxnard Union and 1 percent in Santa Paula Union.

Electronic cigarette use, or vaping, is much more common than smoking among the high school juniors surveyed. Vaping rates vary widely, from 23 percent of 11th-graders in Ventura and the Conejo Valley to 9 percent in the Oxnard Union district (which includes high schools in Oxnard and Camarillo) and 8 percent in Santa Paula.

Marijuana appears as popular as vaping. Again, usage varies, from 22 percent of 11th-graders in Ventura to 9 percent in Santa Paula. Marijuana use fell between 2013/14 and 2017/18 in seven of the eight districts reporting results.

High school juniors in Ojai and Ventura were more likely than their counterparts elsewhere in the county to report being very drunk or high seven or more times in their lives: 18 percent of 11th-graders in Ventura Unified and 22 percent in Ojai answered that question in the affirmative. In every district with complete survey results, the percentage of students reporting that level of inebriation fell between 2013/14 and 2017/18, sometimes by wide margins.

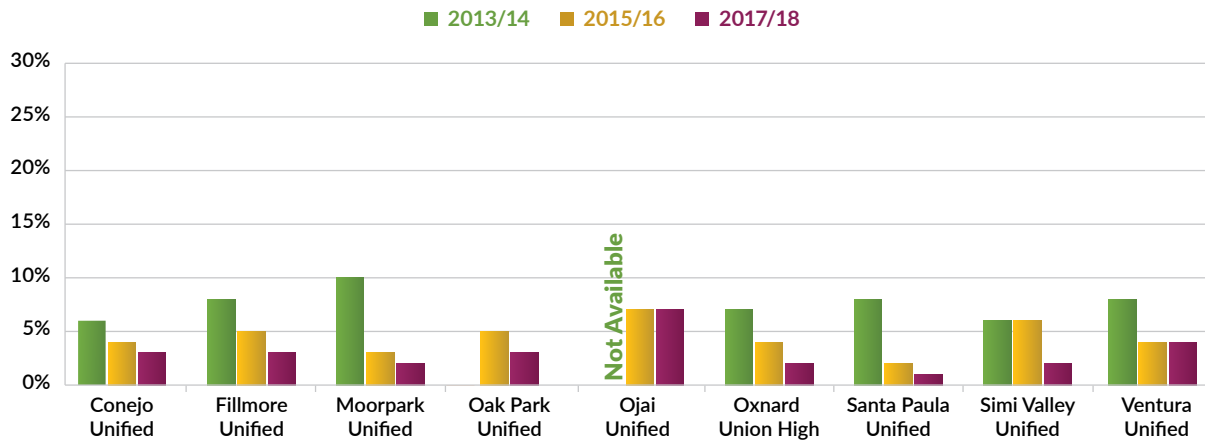
### Drunk or High, 7 or More Times by 11th-Grade Students (Lifetime)



**Survey Question:** During your life, how many times have you been...

- Very drunk or sick after drinking alcohol?
- High (loaded, stoned, wasted) from using drugs?

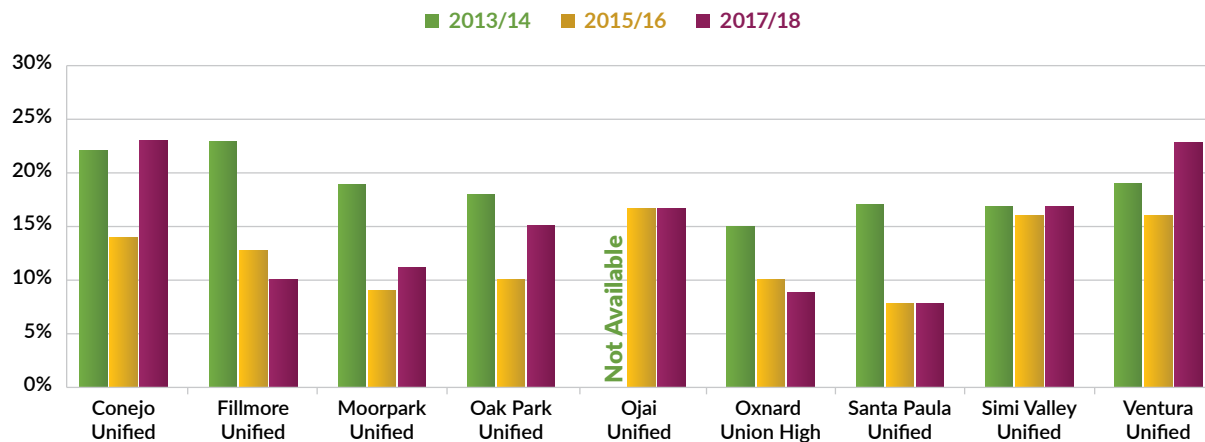
## Cigarette Use by 11th-Grade Students in the Past 30 Days



### Survey Question:

During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use cigarettes?

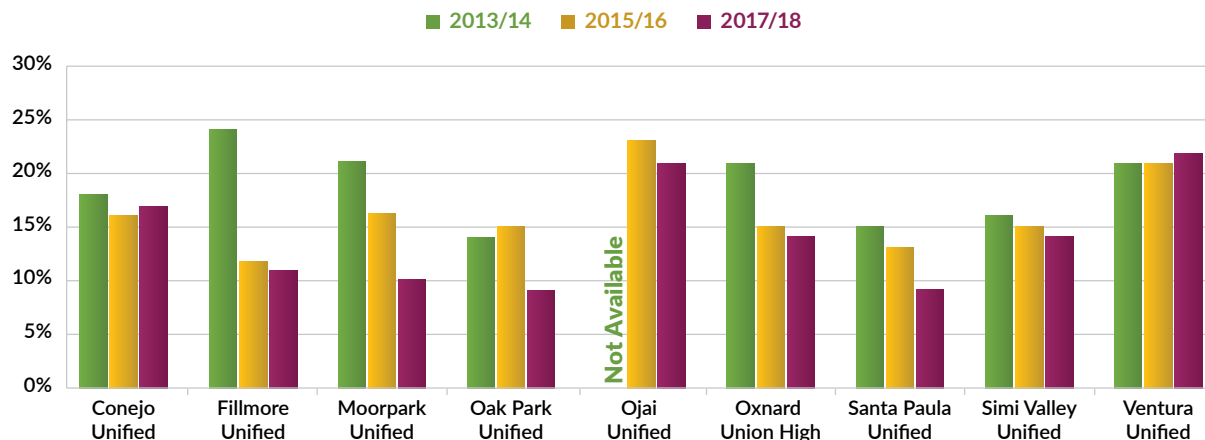
## Electronic Cigarette (Vape Pen) Use by 11th-Grade Students in the Past 30 Days



### Survey Question:

During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use electronic cigarettes?

## Marijuana Use by 11th-Grade Students in the Past 30 Days



### Survey Question:

2014/17: During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use marijuana (pot, weed, grass, hash, bud)?

2017/18: During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use marijuana (smoke, vape, eat, drink)?

# Teen Mental Health

## 1 IN 6 JUNIORS CONSIDERED SUICIDE IN PAST 12 MONTHS

### What are the measures?

The measures are the percentage of students in selected Ventura County school districts who report experiencing chronic sadness or considering suicide over the past 12 months, according to an annual state survey of public school students.

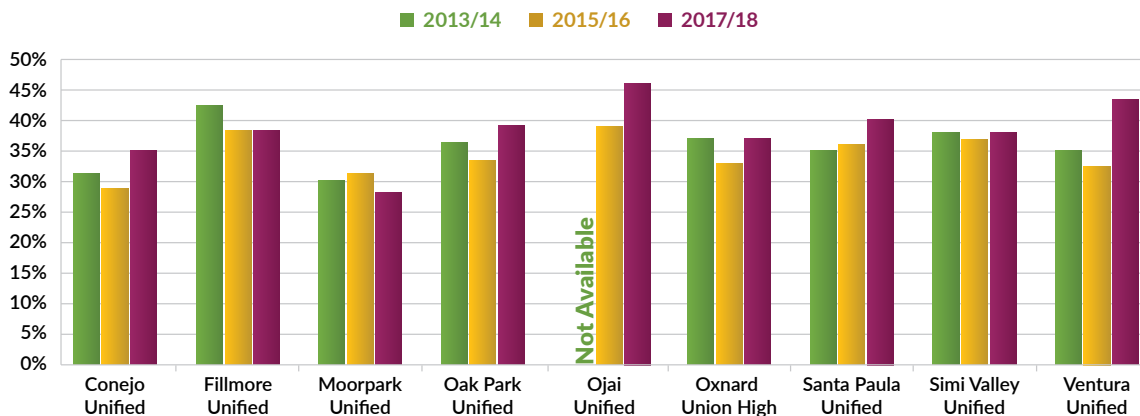
### Why are the measures important?

Suicide is the third leading cause of death for people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the United States, and the suicide rate among teens and young adults has nearly tripled since the 1940s. Feelings of chronic sadness, of course, are not the same as suicidal thoughts or actions, but they indicate mental health problems and potentially call for treatment.

### How are we doing?

In 2017/18, the portion of 11th-graders who said they “considered suicide” in the past year ranged between 13 percent and 20 percent depending on the school district. That’s comparable to the 16 percent of high school students who reported “seriously considering” suicide in a recent nationwide survey. Depression is more common: 46 percent of 11th-graders in Ojai Unified reported experiencing chronic sadness, and other school districts showed slightly lower totals. Depression remained about as common in most school districts in 2017/18 as it had been four years earlier, while the percentage of students reporting suicidal thoughts fell in all but two districts over that period.

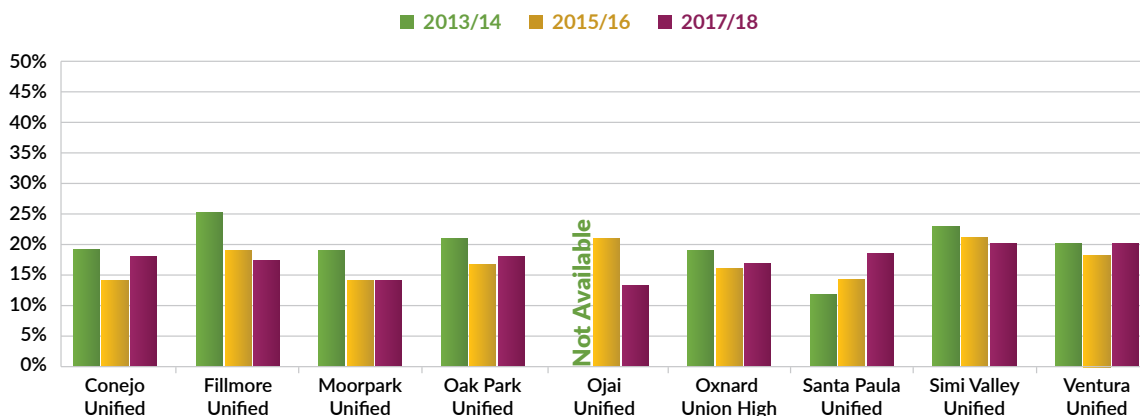
**Percentage of 11th-Grade Students Reporting Chronic Sadness in Past 12 Months (2013 - 2018)**



**Survey Question:**

During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that you stopped doing some usual activities?

**Percentage of 11th-Grade Students Who Considered Suicide in Past 12 Months (2013 - 2018)**



**Survey Question:**

During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?



# Leading Causes of Death

## CANCER, HEART DISEASE CLAIM THE MOST LIVES

### What is the measure?

The measure is a ranking of the most common causes of death for Ventura County residents.

### Why is the measure important?

Accurate information on the top causes of death enables doctors, researchers and public health professionals to focus their efforts and resources. Knowing what kills us also tells us about the choices we make — for example, heart disease and other ailments often are tied to diet and lifestyle.

### How are we doing?

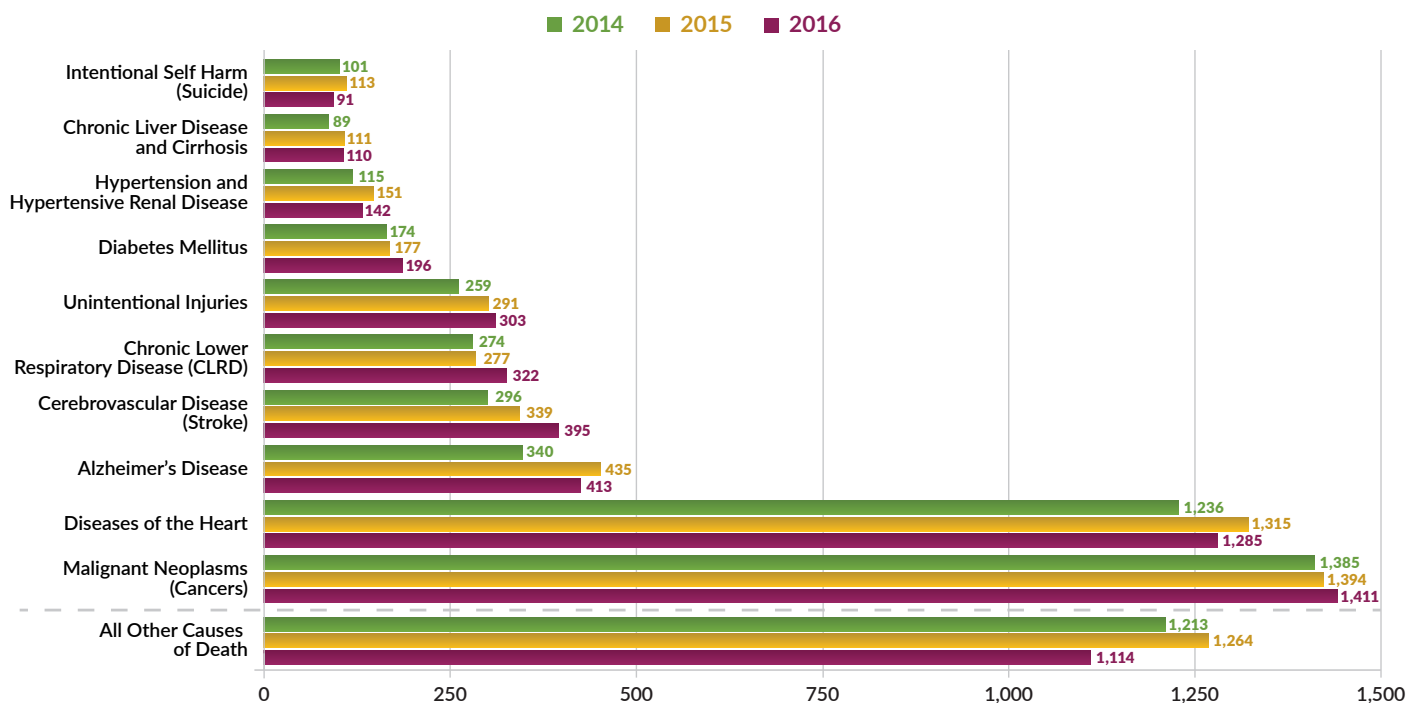
Heart disease and cancer are by far the most common causes of death in Ventura County, just as they are in the United States. Cancer was the county's biggest killer, responsible for 1,411 deaths, followed by heart disease, at 1,285 deaths — an inversion of their ranks at the national level. In Ventura County, Alzheimer's, stroke and chronic lower respiratory disease rounded out the top five.

Unintentional injuries — car accidents and the like — accounted for 303 deaths in Ventura County in 2016, the sixth most common cause of death. Nationally, accidents ranked third in 2016, accounting for more fatalities than either stroke or Alzheimer's. Chronic lower respiratory

diseases also are less prevalent here than nationwide; they are the fourth leading cause of the death in the nation, and the fifth in Ventura County. This difference could be attributed to our low smoking rate, as long-term cigarette use often causes respiratory diseases.



Leading Causes of Death in Ventura County (2014 - 2016)



# Opioid Deaths

## FATAL OVERDOSES SPIKED IN 2017 AFTER A DECLINE

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of people who died each year of opioid overdoses in Ventura County and in California, including prescription painkillers such as oxycodone and street drugs such as heroin. Fatalities are expressed as a rate of deaths per 100,000 residents.

### Why is the measure important?

The United States has been mired in a crisis of opioid addiction for the past decade, and Ventura County is no exception. Overdose deaths are only one aspect of the problem — addiction can wreck lives that it does not ultimately end — but they are a useful metric. Understanding the scope of this problem, where it is most severe and whom it typically affects, is a necessary step in solving it.

### How are we doing?

Overdoses of all opioids, both legally prescribed and illegally acquired, now kill more Americans than car accidents. In 2017 across the nation, more than 70,000 people fatally overdosed on drugs of all kinds — double the number in 2007, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Fatal opioid overdoses nearly tripled in that decade, and this class of drugs now accounts for about two-thirds of all fatal overdoses.

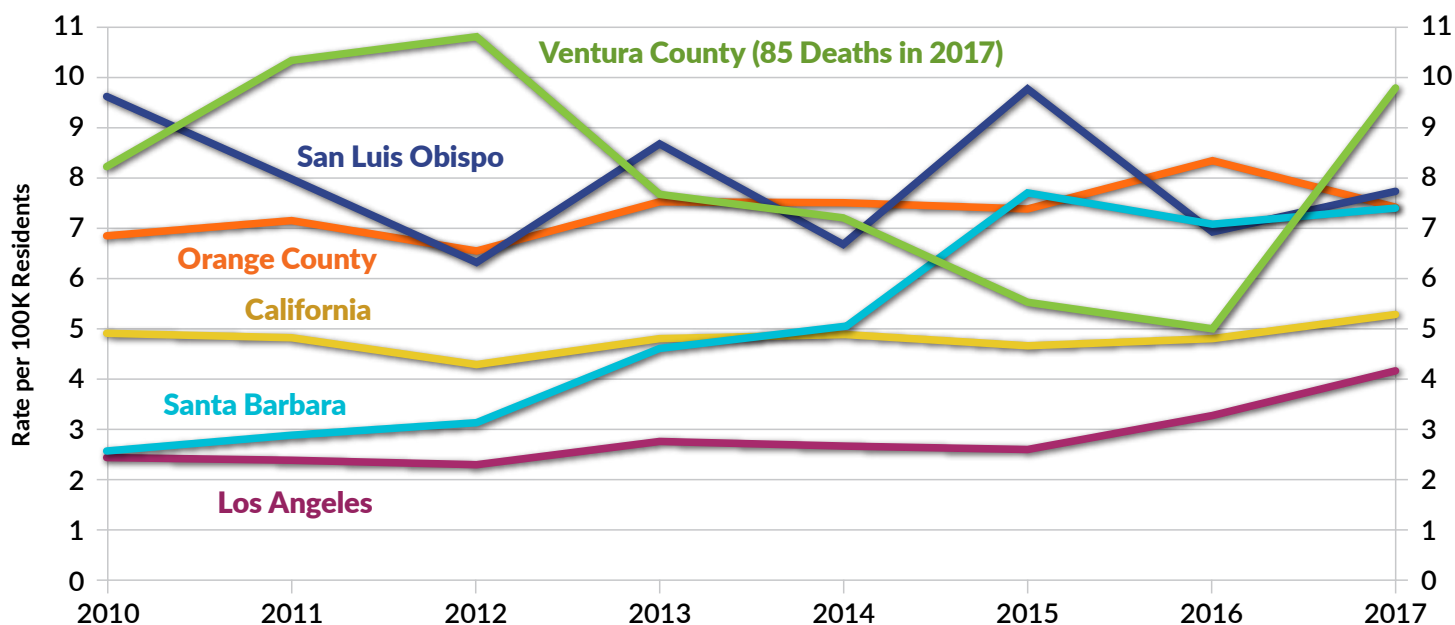
From 2008 to 2017, Ventura County's rate of opioid overdose deaths exceeded the statewide rate every year, sometimes more than doubling that rate.

The county's fatal opioid overdoses peaked at 10.75 per 100,000 residents in 2012, amounting to approximately one death every four days. That's higher than the peak rates for Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Diego and Orange counties. The fatal overdose rate in Ventura County dropped for four straight years after that, bottoming out in 2016 at 5.01 deaths per 100,000 residents, closer to the statewide rate.

Ventura County's overdose deaths spiked in 2017, though, at 9.8 per 100,000 residents for a total of 85 lives lost — nearly double the rate in the previous year. It's too soon to say whether this is an anomaly or the start of a troubling new trend.



Opioid Overdose Deaths per 100K Residents (2010 - 2017)



# Public Safety

**Ventura County takes pride** in its public safety. Police and fire services are among the highest priorities of every local government in the region, and that investment has brought results. The county always places among the safest large counties in California; Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley routinely rank among the nation's safest cities of more than 100,000 residents.

And while crime is higher in Oxnard and Ventura than in other parts of the county, those cities also are success stories. Crime rates across the county are a fraction of what they were 30 years ago, a trend that repeats across the nation. Some areas have seen their crime rates

**Police and fire services are among the highest priorities of every local government in the region, and that investment has brought results.**

creep up in recent years, but Ventura County is not among them; here, our neighborhoods remain as safe as they have been in generations.

The remarkable decline in crime in American cities in the 1990s has been studied widely. A variety of theories try to explain the phenomenon, from policing tactics to a growing economy to a reduction in childhood lead exposure, but none has been established as definitive. Without a clear story of

why crime dropped, it is difficult to draw lessons for what can be done to foster further improvements. But whatever Ventura County is doing seems to work.





# County Crime Rates

## VENTURA COUNTY RANKS AMONG STATE'S SAFEST

### What are the measures?

The measures are the number of serious crimes reported per 1,000 residents in California's 16 largest counties, and Ventura County's crime rate over time, according to the FBI and the California Department of Justice. The crime rate is based on what the FBI classifies as "Part I crimes," including rape, murder, robbery, aggravated assault, arson and grand theft.

### Why are the measures important?

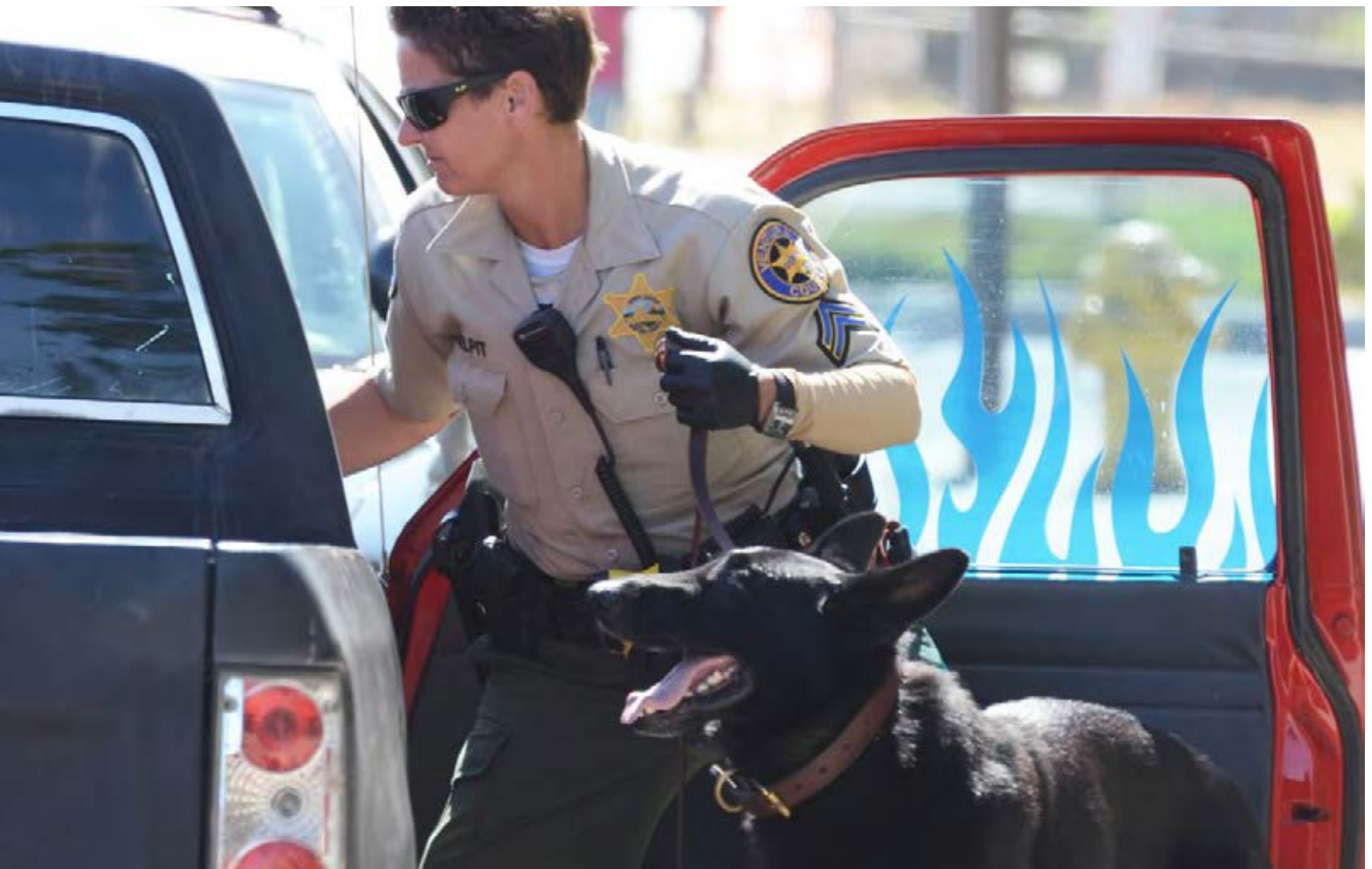
Violent and property crimes seriously erode a community's quality of life. Victims suffer, of course, as do other residents who live under threat of victimization. Crime also consumes public resources, as the cost of investigating and prosecuting crimes and imprisoning offenders falls on taxpayers and takes away from other priorities.

### How are we doing?

Ventura County is a low-crime area, compared to other California counties and compared to Ventura County's own past. In 2017, offenders committed 21.42 serious crimes in the county for every 1,000 residents, the second lowest rate among California's largest counties, after San Diego County. Only San Mateo and Orange counties had lower violent crime rates.

Ventura County's rate in 2017 fell slightly from the year before, the third lowest since 1993.

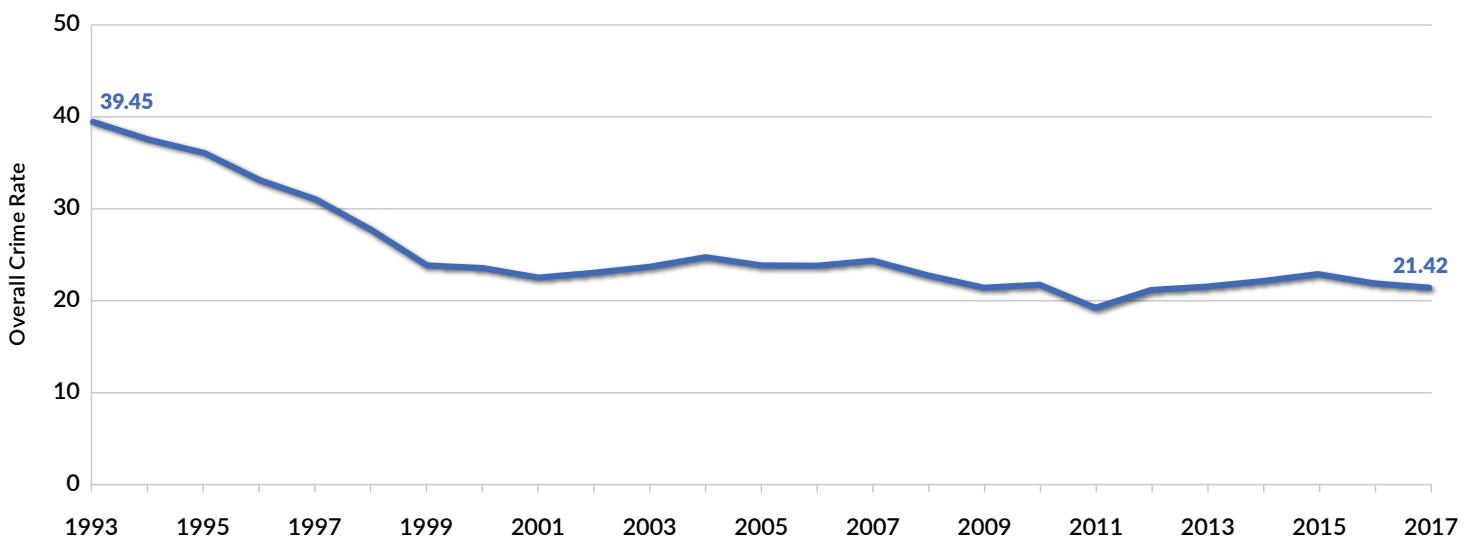
The county's crime rate has changed little since the early 2000s, ticking up slightly between 2003 and 2007 and then dropping again. The long-term story of crime in Ventura County is one of dramatic success, similar to the experience of the entire nation in the 1990s and 2000s. Crime rates in Ventura County are now about half of their peak in the early 1990s.



## Crime Rates in California's Most Populated Counties per 1,000 (2017)



## Overall Ventura County Crime Rate per 1,000 Population (1993 - 2017)



# City Crime Rates

## MOORPARK LEADS IN SAFETY

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of serious property and violent crimes reported per 1,000 residents in Ventura County's cities.

### Why is the measure important?

Ventura County's overall crime rate gives a useful big-picture view of the county's safety, but the crime rates in our individual cities better describe the impact of crime on residents' daily lives. City rates also reveal inequalities in safety and could point to where our police resources are best directed.

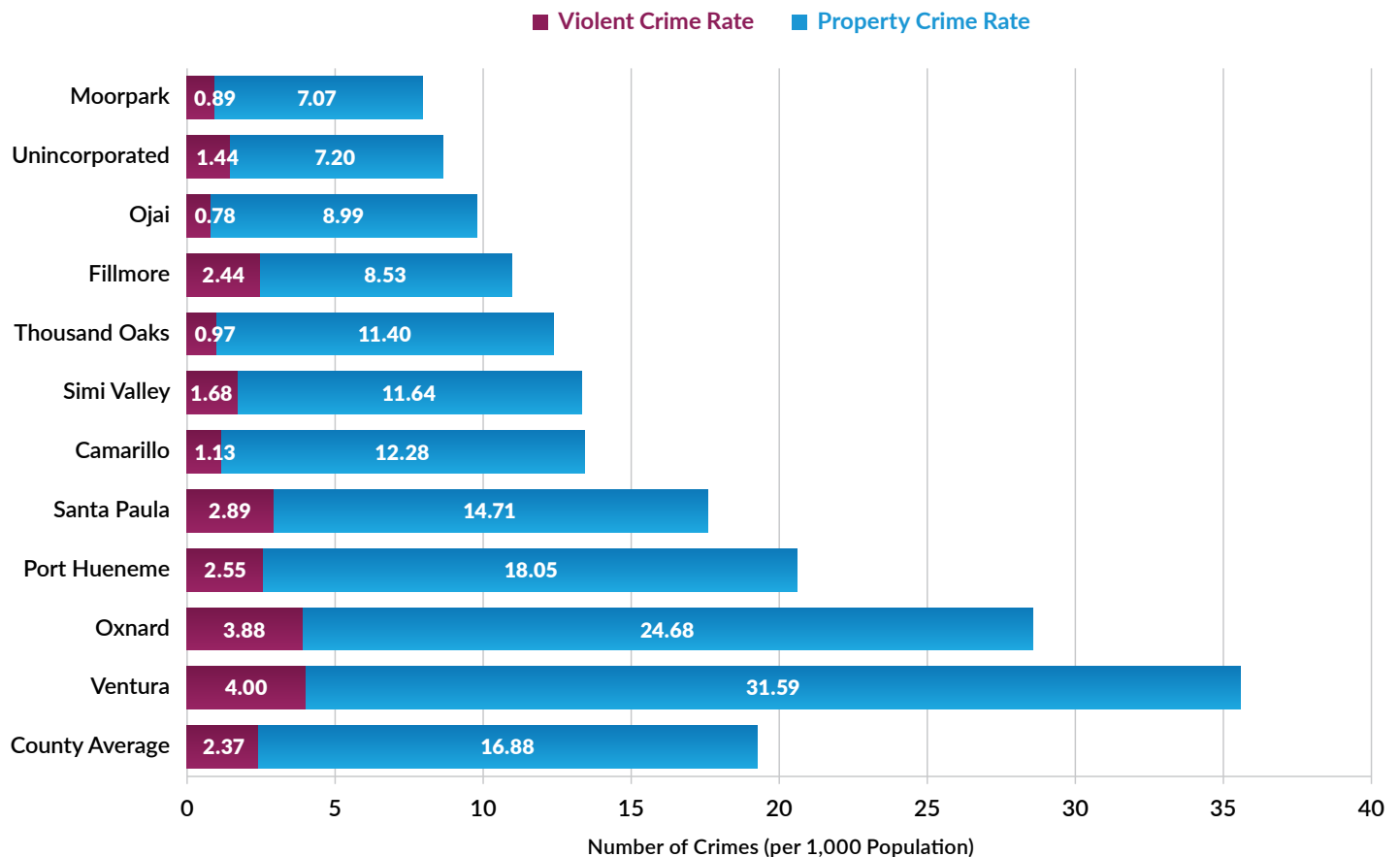
### How are we doing?

In 2018, Moorpark posted the county's lowest crime rate, with eight Part I crimes per 1,000 residents. Ojai had the county's lowest violent crime rate, while Moorpark saw the lowest rate of property crimes.

The three cities with rates higher than the county as a whole were Ventura, Oxnard and Port Hueneme. Ventura consistently had the county's highest crime rates over the past decade, and 2018 was no exception. The city reported 35.6 Part I crimes per 1,000 residents. That was down slightly from 2017 but still well above Oxnard, the city with the second highest crime rate, at 28.6 Part I crimes per 1,000 residents. Ventura had the highest rates of both violent and property crimes.



Ventura County City Crime Rates per 1,000 Population (2018)





# Juvenile Arrests

## FEWER CHILDREN COMMITTING CRIMES

### What are the measures?

The measures are the number of arrests of people under age 18 for felonies and misdemeanors in Ventura County.

### Why are the measures important?

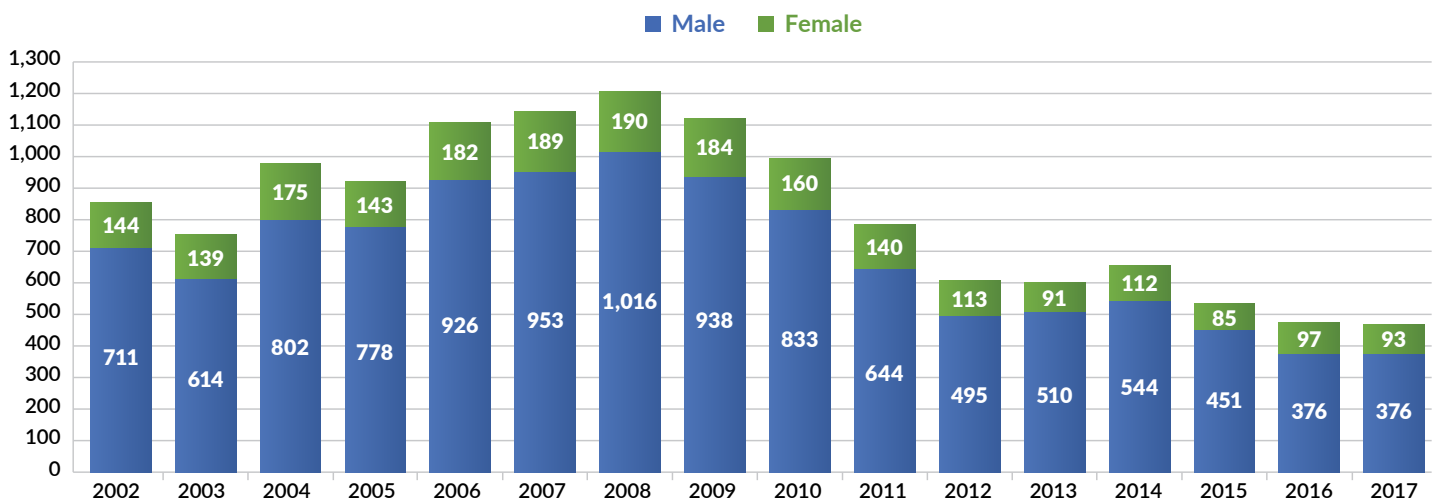
Crimes committed by children are doubly tragic. They harm victims and society to the same extent as crimes committed by adults, and they also hurt the perpetrators to an even greater degree. Entering the criminal justice system at a young age is a predictor of future incarceration and other negative life outcomes. To keep young people off that track, the juvenile justice system puts a greater emphasis on rehabilitation than the adult system.

### How are we doing?

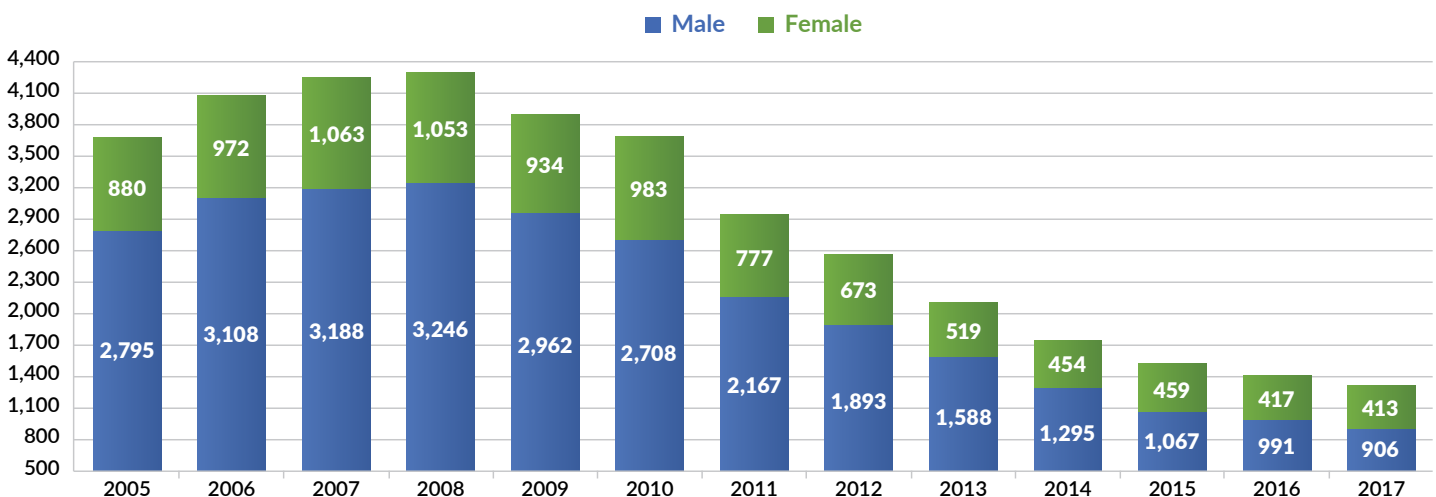
Juvenile arrests have declined steeply for the past decade. In 2017, there were 469 felony juvenile arrests in Ventura County, slightly fewer than the previous year and down 61.1 percent from 2008. In 2017, misdemeanor juvenile arrests numbered 1,319, also a slight decline from 2016 and a drop of 69.3 percent since 2008.

This dramatic decline came during a period when the overall crime rate stayed flat, so the trend represents efforts at the state and local levels to address juvenile crime with methods other than arrest and incarceration.

**Ventura County Juvenile Felony Arrests (2002 - 2017)**



**Ventura County Juvenile Misdemeanor Arrests (2005 - 2017)**



# Traffic Collisions

## CRASHES UP, DEATHS DOWN

### What are the measures?

The measures are the number of vehicle collisions each year in Ventura County and the number of people injured and killed in those crashes.

### Why are the measures important?

Driving is the most dangerous activity people undertake on a regular basis. Every year, thousands are injured on roads and highways in Ventura County and dozens are killed. Grasping the extent of the problem is a first step in reducing this danger.

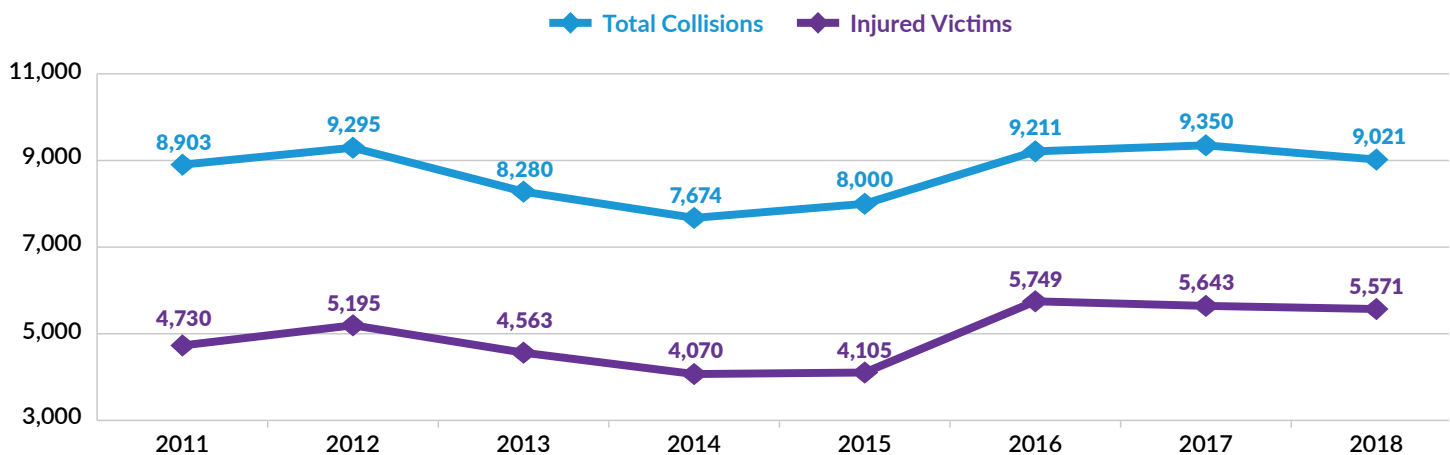
### How are we doing?

The number of fatal accidents and the number of people killed in those crashes declined substantially since 2011. This appears to be more a function of safer automobiles than safer driving, because the number of collisions and injuries in them has not declined.

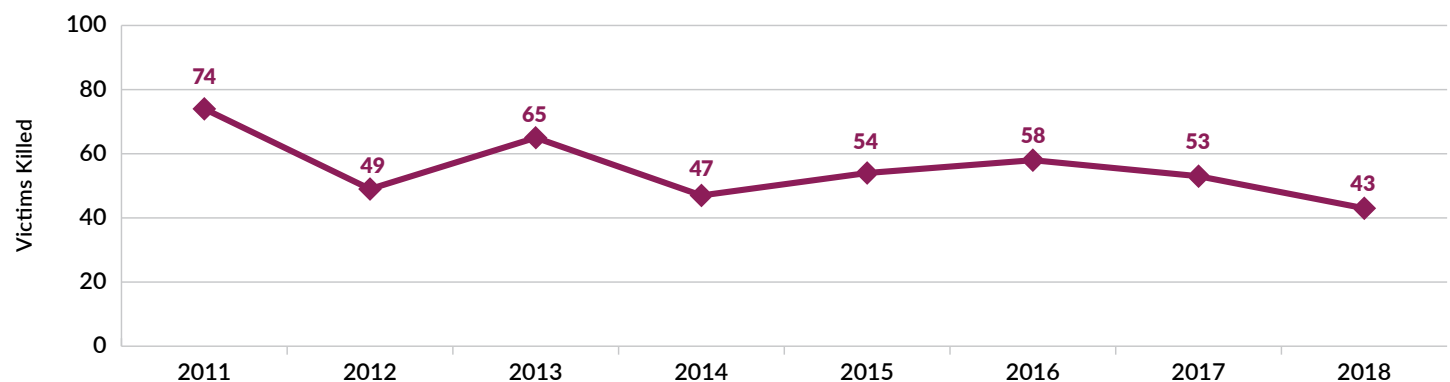
In 2018, vehicle accidents killed 43 people in Ventura County, the lowest figure of the decade and a 41.9 percent drop from the total in 2011. There were, however, 1.3 percent more collisions in 2018 than in 2011 and 17.8 percent more injuries. The number of crashes and injuries may be related to texting and other distractions, along with an increase in the number of miles motorists drive. At the same time, the number of fatalities is on a slow and steady decline, due presumably to better safety features in our cars.



Number of Traffic Collisions and Injured Victims in Ventura County (2011 - 2018)



Victims Killed in Ventura County Traffic Collisions (2011 - 2018)



# Calls to Ventura County Fire Department

## FIRE CALLS TRENDING UP

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of calls to the Ventura County Fire Department, divided into medical, fire and other types of service requests. The department serves the unincorporated areas of Ventura County and six of its 10 cities: Ojai, Port Hueneme, Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark and Simi Valley.

### Why is the measure important?

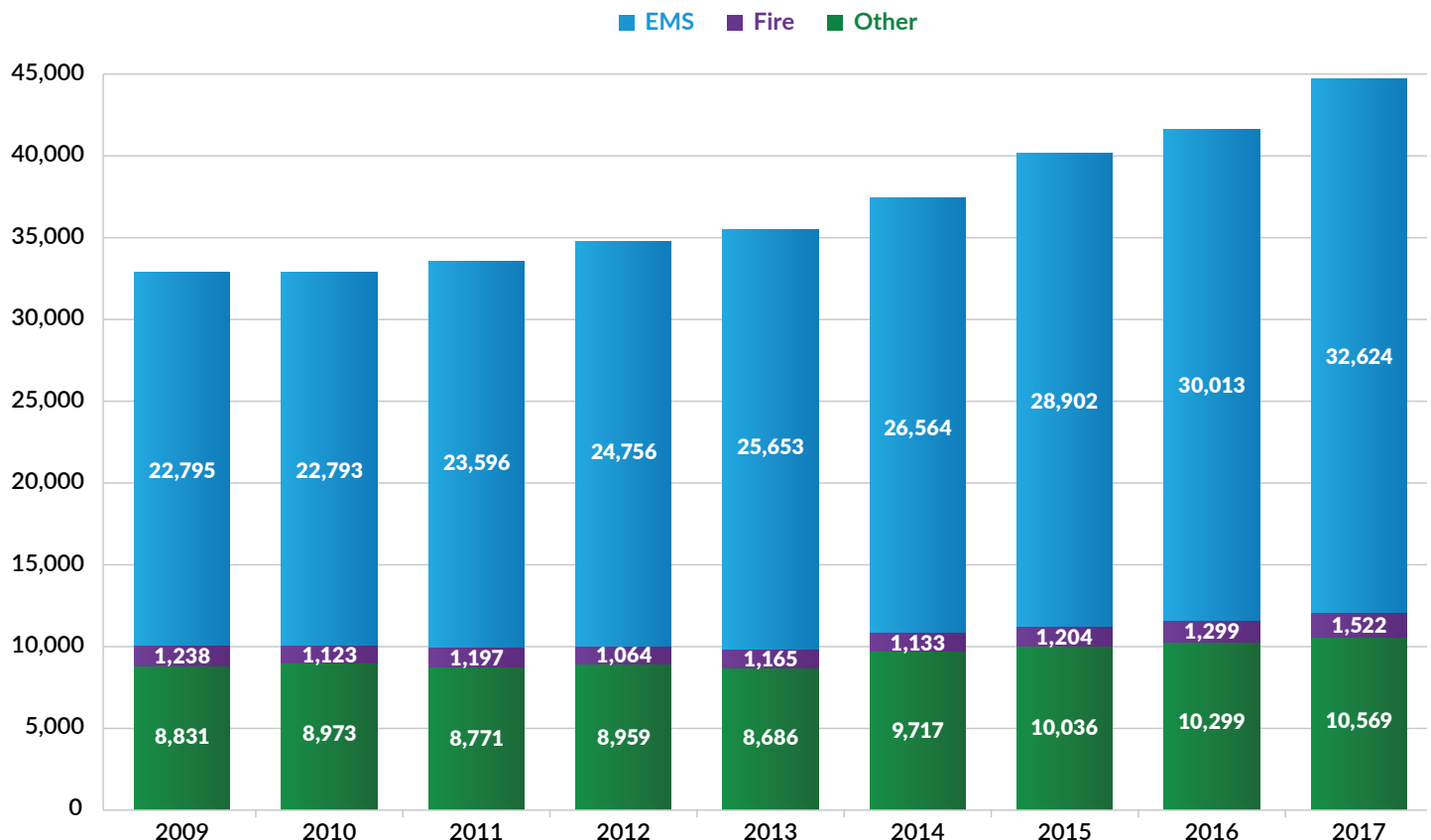
The number of calls a fire department responds to helps determine how many firefighters and stations it needs and how much public funding it requires. The number of calls can measure the community's success at fire prevention, while the number of medical calls likely reflects the age and health of the population.

### How are we doing?

Fire departments do a lot more than fight fires. In 2017, the Ventura County Fire Department responded to 44,715 calls; only 3.4 percent involved fires. Emergency medical calls made up 73 percent of the volume, and the department's total workload grew by 7.5 percent from 2016 to 2017.

Though the long-term trend is for fire departments to devote more energy to medical emergencies compared to blazes — as structure fires grow rarer than they were decades ago — there is a short-term trend toward more fire calls for the Ventura County Fire Department. The department responded to 1,522 fire calls in 2017, a 17.2 percent increase over 2016 and the third consecutive year that number rose.

Calls to Ventura County Fire Department (2009 - 2017)





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# Social Services

**On the whole,** Ventura County is beautiful, prosperous and safe. Left out of that positive quality of life, however, are residents who need help making ends meet, feeding their families, putting a roof over their heads and dealing with addiction and mental health issues. They also may seek protection from domestic abuse and other violence.

In our county and nation, these problems are addressed through a patchwork quilt of social service providers, including charities and faith institutions, private businesses, individual volunteers and government agencies at the local, state and federal levels. The 2-1-1 phone service reflects this cooperative approach. Funded by a coalition of charitable and governmental agencies and operated by a nonprofit, this hotline connects people to social services.

In some areas, these services are achieving the desired effect. Take the matter of homelessness, among the most serious societal issues our communities face.

**Over the past decade, we have seen a substantial drop in the number of Ventura County residents who sleep outdoors, in their cars, in homeless shelters or in other substandard conditions.**

Over the past decade, we have seen a substantial drop in the number of Ventura County residents who sleep outdoors, in their cars, in homeless shelters or in other substandard conditions.

However, the recent data is disturbing. Homelessness is back on the rise in Ventura County, and in 2019 reached its highest level in six years.

Ventura County is a region with residents at both extremes of the economic spectrum. That means we face great challenges in helping the most vulnerable among us, but we also can draw upon abundant resources for those efforts, as seen in the dramatic increase in charitable giving after the Thomas Fire.



# 2-1-1 Calls by Need

## HOUSING AID TOPS THE LIST

### What is the measure?

The measure is the volume of calls to Ventura County's 2-1-1 social services call center. 2-1-1 Ventura County is a program of Interface Children & Family Services, which operates a 24-hour hotline that connects callers with health and social services organizations. It also provides information about shelters, road closures and other emergency services during disasters.



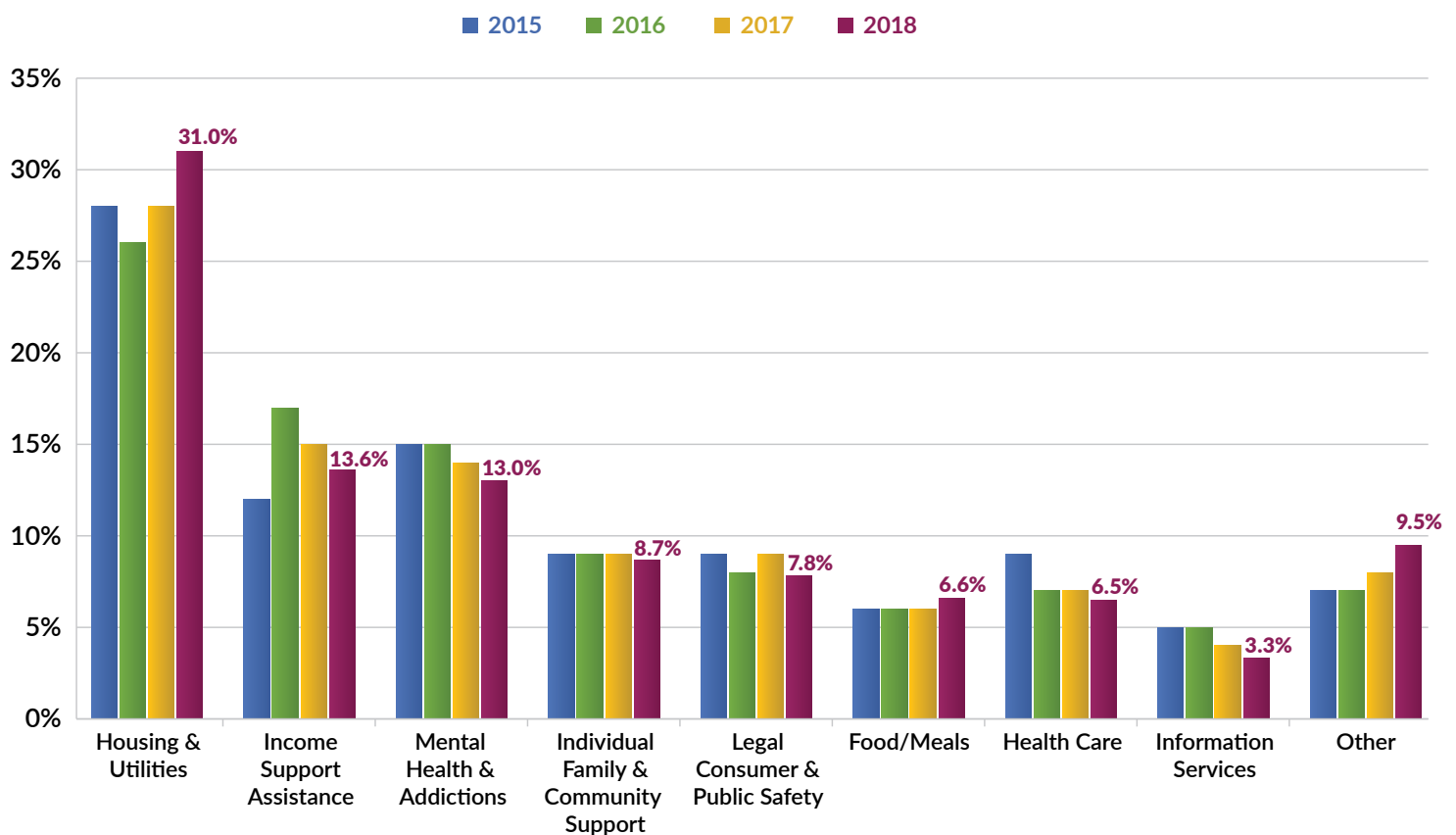
### Why is the measure important?

The 2-1-1 hotline receives more than 30,000 calls and texts per year. Its operators connect callers to nonprofit and government agencies that provide food and rent assistance, substance abuse treatment, help dealing with domestic violence and other social services. The hotline's database of calls, organized by need, offers insight into where our community's needs lie.

### How are we doing?

Housing in Ventura County is expensive and often in short supply, so it should come as no surprise this is the area of greatest need for 2-1-1 callers. In 2018, calls for help with shelter and utilities made up 31 percent of the county's 2-1-1 calls, higher than their share in either 2015 or 2016. The rest of the top five categories of calls in 2018 were general income assistance, at 14 percent; mental health and addiction, at 13 percent; individual, family and community support, at 9 percent; and legal, consumer and public safety concerns, at 8 percent.

Ventura County 2-1-1 Calls by Category of Need (2015 - 2018)



# Revenue to United Way

## FIRE RELIEF BOOSTS DONATIONS TO NEW HEIGHTS

### What is the measure?

The measure is the amount of money received each year by the United Way of Ventura County.

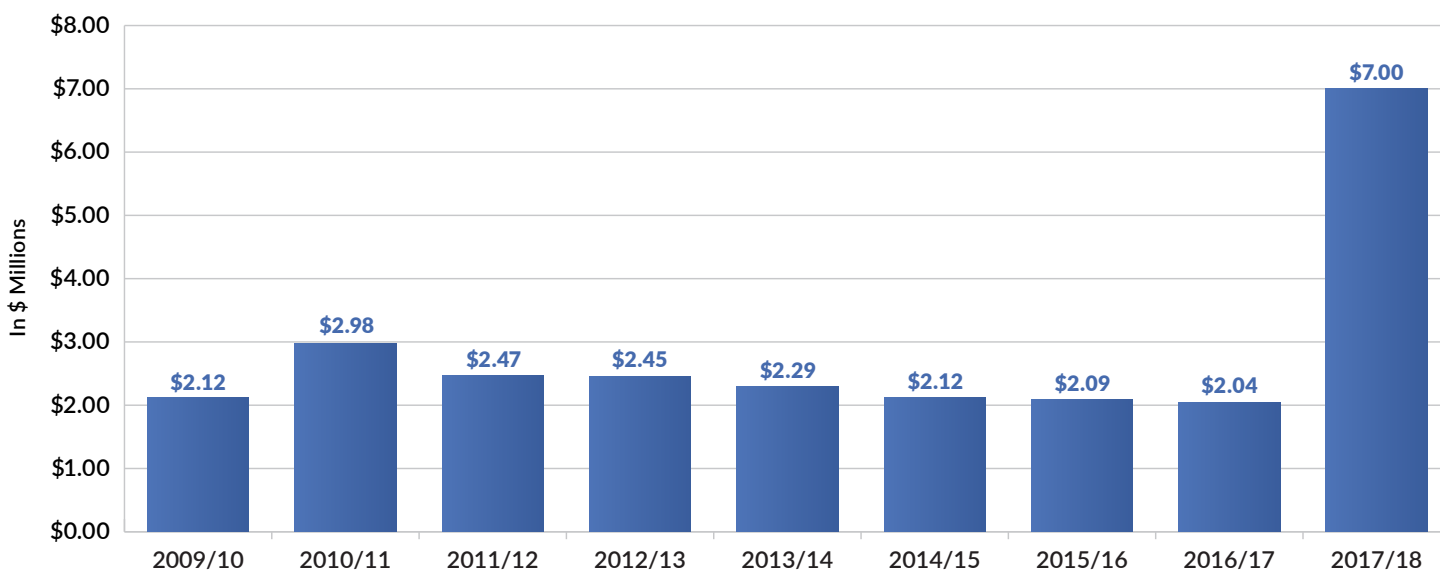
### Why is the measure important?

The United Way is only one charity, but it is one of the county's biggest. It has a broad mission and does most of its work by leveraging volunteer resources through its Volunteer Ventura County program and strategically investing grants in programs like 2-1-1 Ventura County. It also provides resources for people affected by wildfires and other disasters.

### How are we doing?

The United Way of Ventura County took in around \$7 million in donations in the 2017/18 fiscal year, far more than any year in the previous decade and more than three times as much as it received in any of the previous four years. The majority — a little over \$4.6 million — was earmarked for victims of the Thomas Fire and the subsequent flooding and mudslides. But regular donations, unrelated to the disasters, totaled \$2.4 million, more than the United Way received in any year since 2012/13. Before 2017/18, revenue dropped for six straight years, going from \$2.98 million in 2010/11 to \$2.04 million in 2016/17.

Revenue to United Way of Ventura County (2009/10 - 2017/18)



In 2017/18, United Way regular donations were \$2.4 million. Funds earmarked for Thomas Fire/disaster victims were \$4.6 million.





# Homelessness

## HOMELESS COUNT SURGES AFTER YEARS OF DECLINE

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of people in Ventura County who were homeless on the day of the annual homeless census. Taken annually by volunteers since 2009, the census counts people as homeless if they are living in emergency or transitional shelters or are without shelter, such as those sleeping in parks, along rivers, on sidewalks or in cars. People living in motels or staying with friends or family are not counted as homeless. Also excluded are people who are in a jail, hospital or other institution when the census happens.

### Why is the measure important?

Few human needs are more elemental than shelter. People without homes often live without adequate sanitation or protection from the elements. They lack reliable medical care and often go without treatment for chronic diseases, addiction or mental health problems. They face the risk of theft, violent crime or legal penalties for sleeping in unauthorized public or private spaces. Because homeless people frequently end up in county jail or emergency rooms, local governments often foot the bill for their care.

### How are we doing?

After five consecutive years of decline, Ventura County's homeless population rose the last two years, reaching 1,699 people in January 2019. That was a 28.5 percent increase over the previous year, and the highest total since 2013.

Ventura County's homeless people are concentrated in Ventura and Oxnard. In 2019, Ventura had 555 individuals living without permanent shelter, and Oxnard had 548, adding up to nearly two-thirds of the county's total. Simi Valley was third with 121 homeless people, and Santa Paula was fourth with 106. Santa Paula's homeless population more than doubled from 2018 to 2019.

The spike in homelessness in 2019 is the most dramatic one-year increase since the count began a decade earlier. The

organization that oversees the study, the Ventura County Continuum of Care Alliance, offers a few possible explanations for the increase, including: rising rents; displacement due to homes destroyed in recent wildfires; and a more thorough volunteer effort to locate homeless persons on the date of the census.

Though their efforts are improving, the volunteers almost certainly undercount the number of homeless people in Ventura County. The tally happens on only one day — Jan. 22 in 2019 — so it omits people who are homeless at other times of the year or who are in jail or the hospital on that day. And it includes only individuals the volunteer census takers can locate, who agree to speak with them and who admit to being homeless.

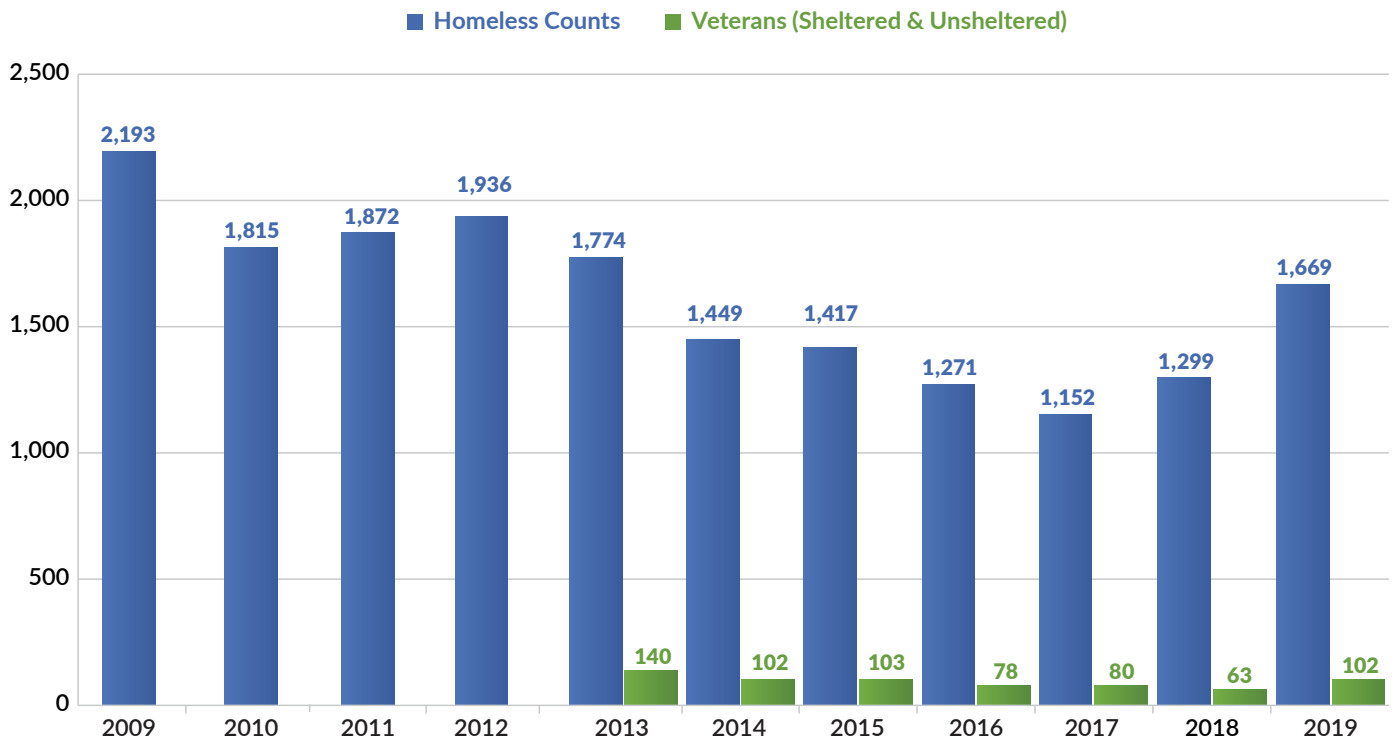
Despite the uptick in 2018 and 2019, the long-term trend is positive. The first year of the count, in 2009, volunteers found 2,193 people living without permanent shelter, 31.4 percent more than in 2019.

Most of the improvement came between 2012 and 2017. Whether that is because the economy was improving in that post-recession period, or because of policy choices made by leaders in Ventura County and elsewhere, is not clear. What is clear is that the homelessness crisis across Southern California intensified even as the problem lessened somewhat in Ventura County. In Los Angeles County, the 2017 count found more than 55,000 homeless people, an increase of 42 percent since 2010.

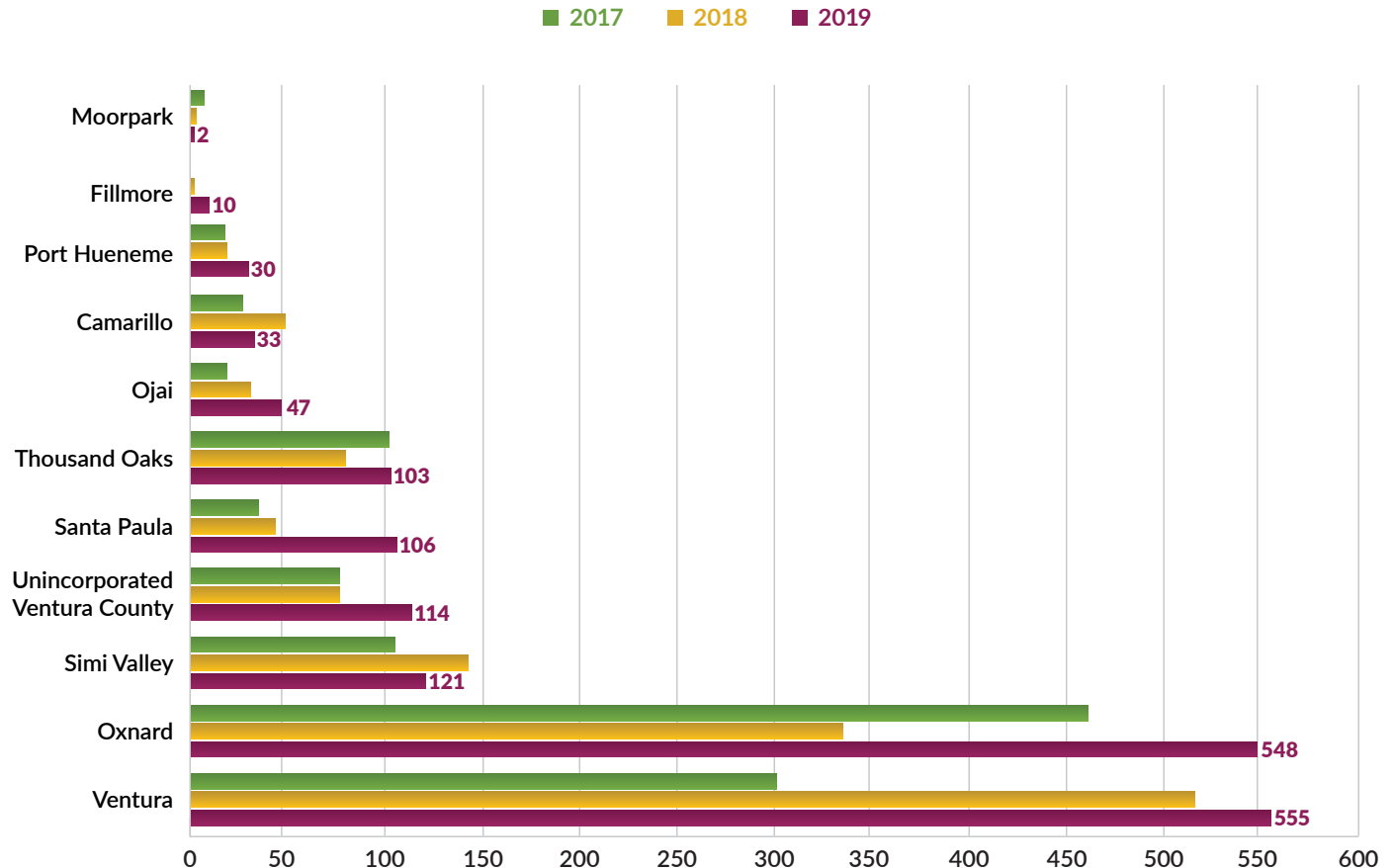
The county's social services infrastructure, both public and private, has focused on homelessness among veterans by reaching out with services and building more housing for them. This brought results: The 2018 census of the county's homeless population found 63 homeless veterans, down from 140 five years earlier. In 2019, though, the count of homeless veterans jumped to 102.



## Ventura County Homeless Counts (2009 - 2019)



## Ventura County Homeless Counts by City (2017 - 2019)



# Homelessness Among Children

## MORE THAN 5,000 STUDENTS LACK STABLE HOUSING

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of students in or near homelessness in each school district in Ventura County. The figures are drawn from a California Department of Education survey that differs in three major ways from the annual census of homeless people in the county. First, the survey is given to all public school students, while the volunteers working on the annual census only consider people they find who appear to be homeless. Second, the student survey uses a broader definition of homelessness: Students are classified as homeless if they live in a hotel or motel or shared housing due to economic hardship, while the census only considers people homeless if they stay in a shelter, a car or outdoors. Third, the county census measures how many people are homeless on one specific day, while the student survey classifies children as homeless if at any point in the previous year they stayed outdoors, in a shelter, in a car or in shared housing for financial reasons. Those differences contribute to a higher count on the student survey than in the volunteer census.

### Why is the measure important?

Homelessness is an unacceptable condition, especially for children. A child who is homeless is more likely to be unprepared for school, have an unstable and stressful home life, be poorly nourished or be sleep-deprived. Though a motel room or a garage shared with another family might technically qualify as shelter, it is rarely a home suitable for children.

### How are we doing?

The number of homeless or near-homeless children in Ventura County dropped dramatically between 2015 and 2016 before rising again in 2017 and 2018. In 2018, there were 5,715 public school students whose families reported being homeless at some point in the previous year. That number was up 29.9 percent from 2017, though it was still 12.7 percent lower than the total from 2015. Homelessness among public school students also grew statewide in 2018, by a smaller margin of 1.1 percent.

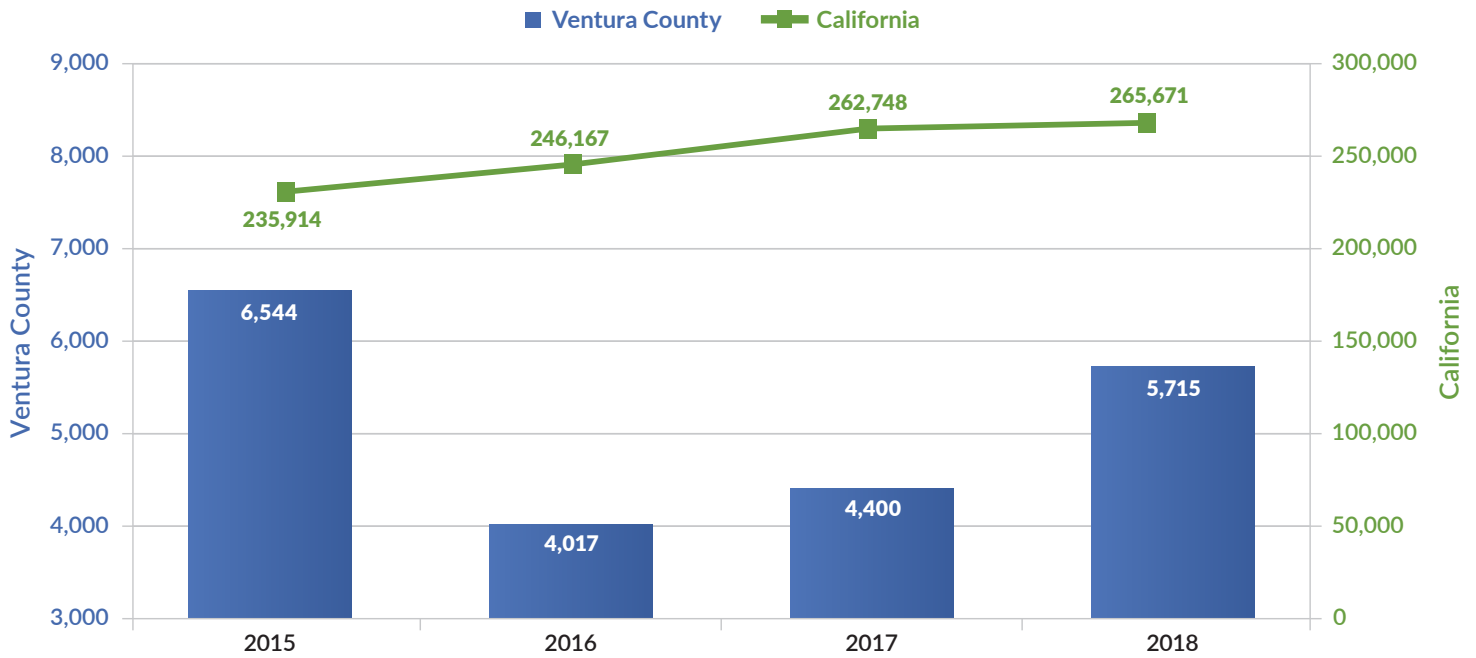
In Ventura County, homelessness among children is most common in the Oxnard Union High School District, which had 2,519 students on its Oxnard, Port Hueneme and Camarillo campuses classified as homeless in 2018. That was a stunning 78.8 percent increase from the district's total in 2017. Since no other school system came close to a spike of that size, the district's higher numbers could be due in part to its efforts over the past two years to train staff to identify homeless students more accurately.

The crisis in homelessness among children is felt mostly by those living in motels, cars, garages or other substandard housing, rather than those living on the streets. The 2019 count of the homeless in Ventura County found 12 people under the age of 18 without shelter, and 104 more classified as homeless but staying in shelters or transitional housing. Homeless teens, though, might try harder than adults to avoid the census takers, for fear of alerting foster care or juvenile justice officials to their presence.

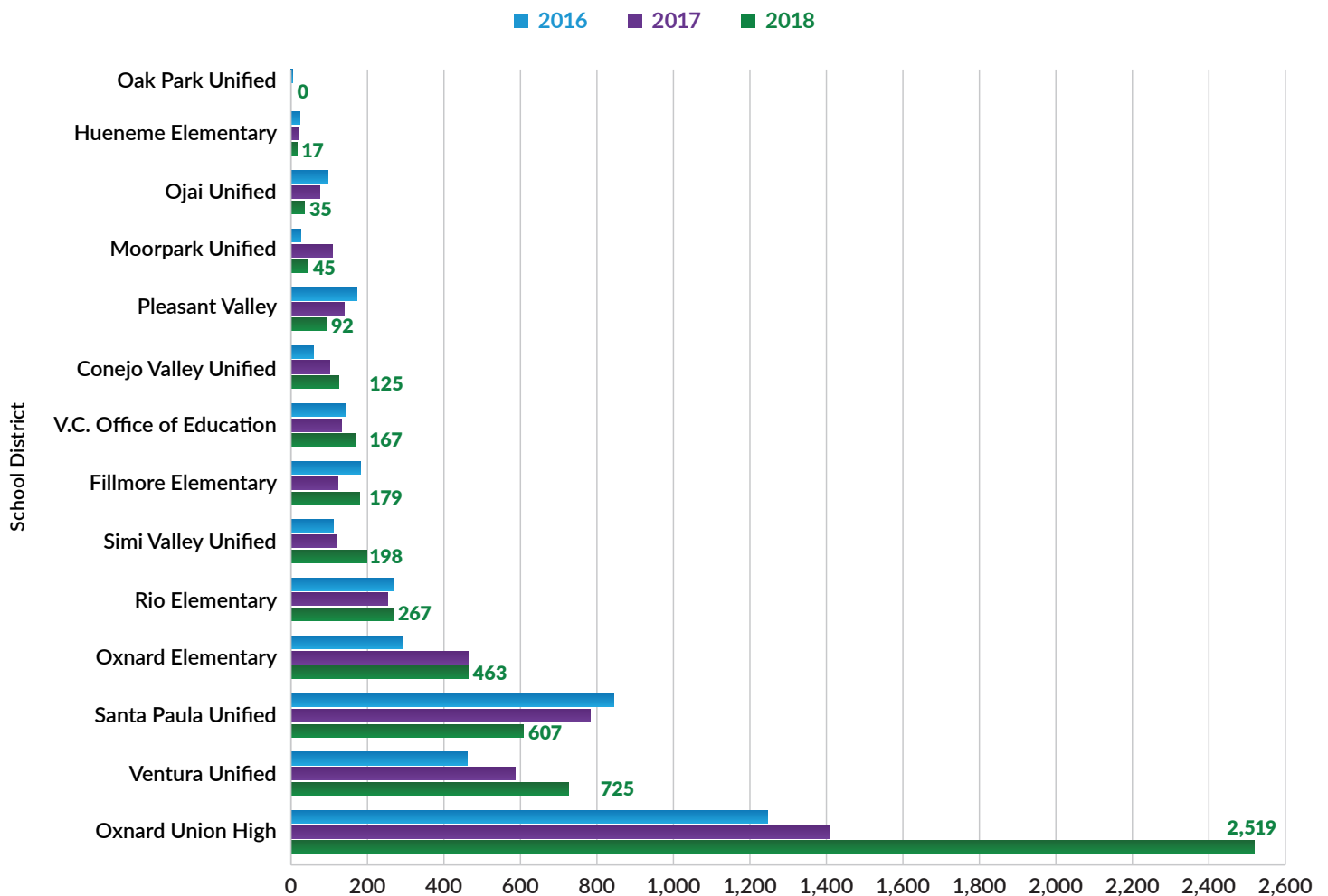




## Ventura County Public School Student Homelessness (2015 - 2018)



## Homeless Children in Ventura County for Larger Public School Districts (2016 - 2018)



# Child Abuse

## REPORTS IN VENTURA COUNTY ON THE RISE SINCE 2000

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of children each year reported to authorities as abused or neglected, expressed as a rate per 1,000 children in the county. The total includes reports that were substantiated, along with those found to be inconclusive, unfounded or still under investigation. The data counts each child only once per year, even if authorities received multiple reports of abuse or neglect.

### Why is the measure important?

Child abuse visits serious mental and physical harm upon some of society's most vulnerable people. Studies suggest victims may be more likely to grow up to be abusers themselves or to be victimized again as adults, so stopping abuse in one household can break a multigenerational cycle of trauma and violence.



### How are we doing?

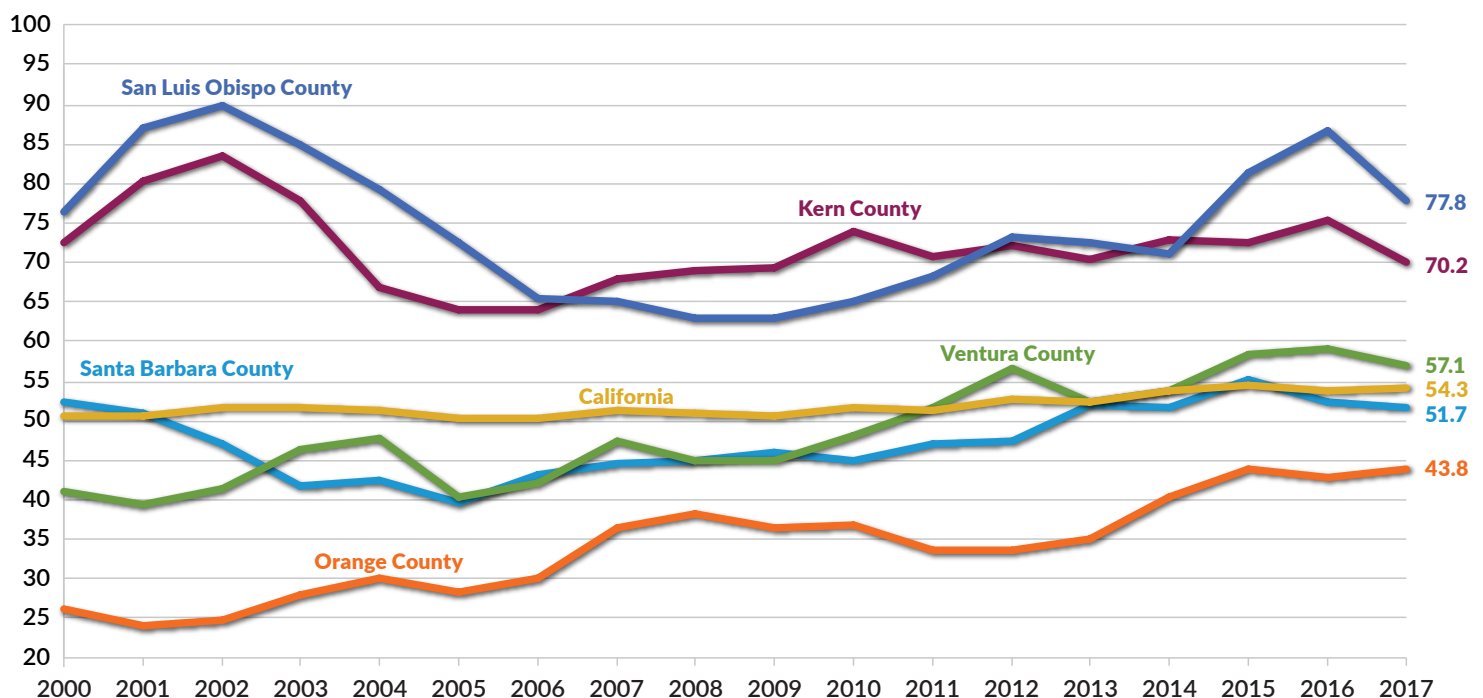
In 2017, reports of child abuse and neglect in Ventura County were only slightly higher than the overall California rate. Ventura County had a rate of 57.1 reports per 1,000 children compared to 54.3 statewide.

Santa Barbara County had a similar rate, at 51.7 cases per 1,000 children. Orange County's rate was lower than Ventura County's, and San Luis Obispo and Kern counties both had significantly higher rates of reported child abuse.

While the statewide number has been virtually the same since 2000, Ventura County has seen an increase in abuse and neglect reports. In 2001, there were 39.4 reports per 1,000 children in Ventura County compared to the statewide rate of 50.5 at the time. The county's rate has fluctuated since then, but the overarching trend has been a steady increase, with our region matching the state average in 2011.

Although distressing on its face, this trend has not resulted in an actual increase in substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect in recent years. In fact, the number of children in care has declined by 28% during the last four years. Child abuse, like many forms of domestic abuse, tends to be under-reported, so an upturn in reports might mean Ventura County residents are doing a better job reporting suspected abuse.

**Child Abuse and Neglect Allegation Rate Per 1,000 Residents Age 0-17 (2000 - 2017)**



# Domestic Violence Calls

## 9-1-1 CALLS STEADILY DECREASE IN FIVE CITIES

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of 9-1-1 calls in Ventura County pertaining to domestic violence, including abuse of spouses, partners and children. It is expressed as a rate of calls per 1,000 residents.

### Why is the measure important?

Domestic violence has far-reaching implications for the physical and mental health of adults and children. Its direct effect on victims is obvious and tragic. It also indirectly affects generations of children, as people exposed to abuse as youngsters are more likely to be involved in abusive relationships as adults.

### How are we doing?

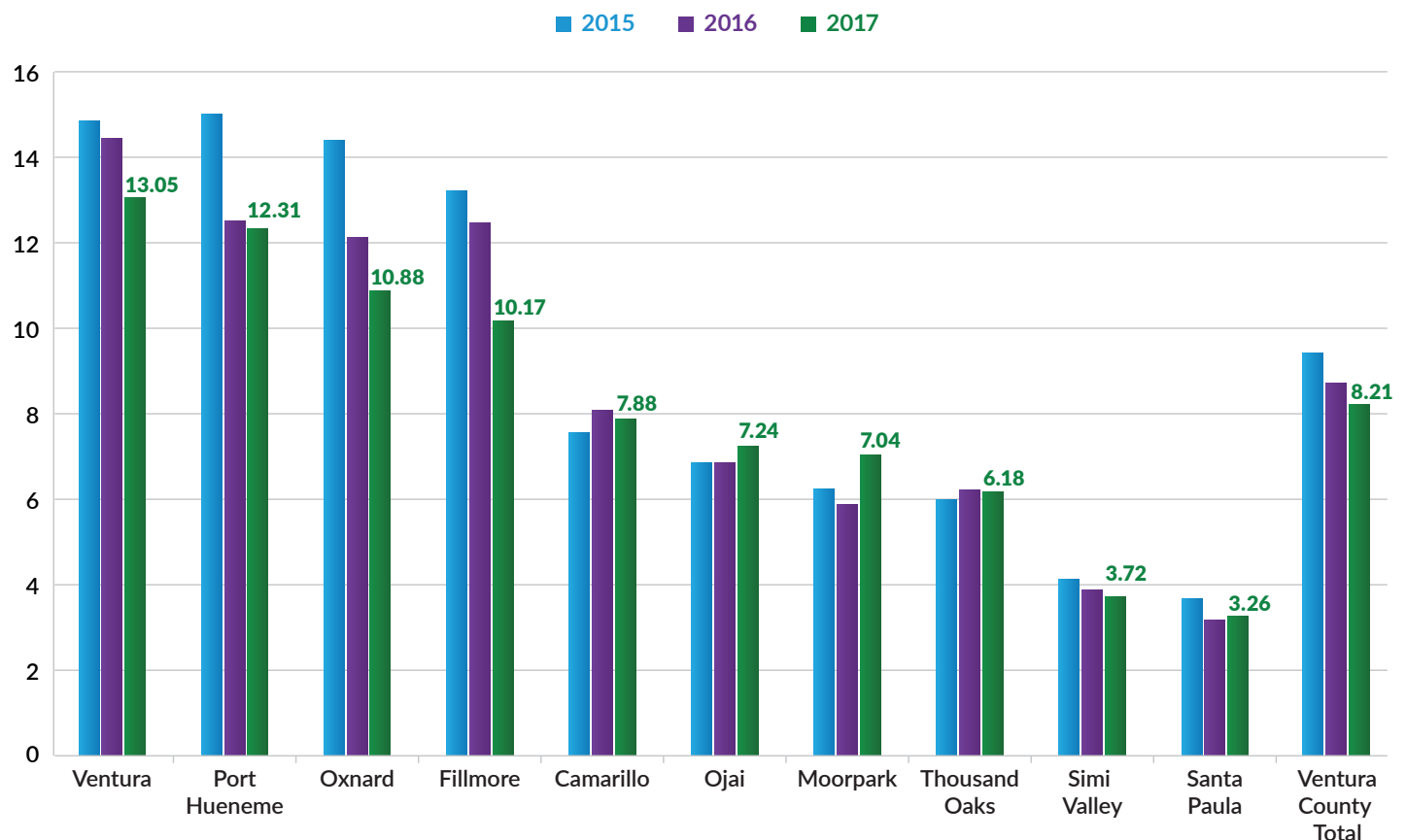
Emergency domestic violence calls dropped for two straight years leading up to 2017, going from 9.43 calls per 1,000 people in 2015 to 8.21 calls per 1,000 in 2017. The rate also fell in all four cities with a history of the highest rates of domestic violence calls: Ventura, Port Hueneme, Oxnard and Fillmore.

Oxnard showed the biggest improvement, with 24.4 percent fewer calls per 1,000 residents in 2017 than in 2015. Simi Valley and Santa Paula logged the lowest rates of domestic violence calls, at 3.72 per 1,000 residents in Simi Valley and 3.26 per 1,000 in Santa Paula. Calls also declined in those cities between 2015 and 2017.

Though these numbers are encouraging, they might not signify a real drop in domestic violence, because many incidents of such violence go unreported.



Domestic Violence Calls per 1,000 Residents (2015 - 2017)









# Transportation

**Ventura County's transportation network**, like that of most of Southern California, is centered on cars and freeways. In 2018, a series of natural disasters reminded us just how important that infrastructure is, and how vulnerable.

The mudslides that devastated Montecito in January 2018 covered Highway 101 with tons of mud, rock and debris. For two weeks, the freeway was closed between Ventura and Santa Barbara, a stretch of highway traveled by around 100,000 vehicles every day.

Thousands of commuters had to miss work, work from home, take the train once it resumed service a few days after the slide or travel by sea on tourist excursion boats that shifted to commuter service during the crisis. Volunteer pilots shuttled patients in and out of Santa Barbara for medical appointments or workers to jobs crucial for public safety.

The mudslide, triggered by the December 2017 Thomas Fire, wasn't the only disaster to shut down major roadways. In November 2018, nearly every highway and many local roads in eastern Ventura County were closed at some point as the Woolsey and Hill fires tore through the area.

These road closures are a reminder that Ventura County relies heavily on a few major highways and the local road network.

**In Ventura County's cities, development patterns are slow to evolve in a direction that's friendlier to walking, biking or mass transit.**

That's unlikely to change anytime soon, but other alternatives help mitigate that dependency. In April 2018, for example, Amtrak started running its Pacific Surfliner in the morning, so workers can travel by rail from Ventura County to Santa Barbara.

In Ventura County's cities, development patterns are slow to evolve in a direction that's friendlier to walking, biking or mass transit. While, Ventura, Oxnard and Thousand Oaks have emphasized density and walkability in new land use policies, historical planning practices that focus on the movement of cars, make real change a challenge. Pedestrian and bike safety measures such as protected bike lanes, lighting and other measures that encourage walking, biking and transit are the exception in most cities rather than the rule.

Since voters did not reach the two-thirds approval threshold in the 2016 election for a sales tax earmarked for transportation projects, we lack dedicated funding to improve roads or make public investments in alternative transportation modes. For the near future, it appears Ventura County must make do with the transportation culture and infrastructure we have.



# Means to Work

## DRIVING ALONE STILL RULES THE COMMUTE

### What is the measure?

The measure is the primary method of transportation to and from work for Ventura County residents 16 years of age and older.

### Why is the measure important?

Driving alone on a daily basis, the most common way for generations of Americans to get to work, puts stress on the roads and the environment. Public agencies, employers and environmentalists are urging us out of our own vehicles and into transit and carpools, and this data illustrates the results so far. One success story is the Ventura County to Santa Barbara 101 corridor which has less than 70% of commuters driving alone.

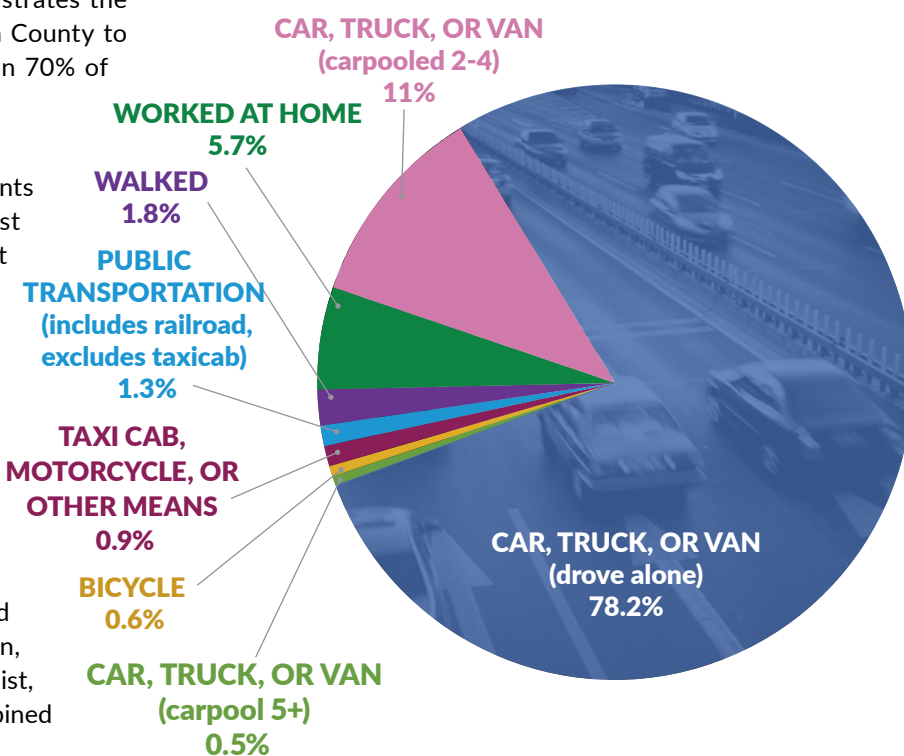
### How are we doing?

The commuting habits of Ventura County residents have been resistant to change. In 2017, the last year with survey results available, 78.2 percent of employed county residents reported driving alone as their primary method of getting to work. That's about a half a percentage point higher than the year before, and only slightly lower than the 80 percent figure back in 2005.

After driving alone, the most popular commuting method was carpooling, with 11.7 percent of respondents sharing rides with people they know. Most rode in carpools with four or fewer people, while less than 1 percent vanpooled with five or more people. Public transportation, including railroad, ranks near the bottom of the list, at just 1.3 percent of workers in 2017. The combined

total of workers who walk, use transit, ride bicycles or choose any other non-car method of getting to work added up to 4.7 percent. Factor in workers who didn't commute at all because they work from home, and the total non-driving population barely creeps above 10 percent.

Means to Work in Ventura County (2017)





# Transit Ridership

## BUSES DECLINE IN POPULARITY

### What is the measure?

The measure is the total number of trips per year on Ventura County's four largest public transit systems: Gold Coast Transit, which serves Ventura, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme and the adjacent unincorporated county; the city bus systems in Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley; and the Ventura County Transportation Commission's intercity buses, which run on longer routes between cities as well as between Ventura County and Los Angeles and Santa Barbara counties.

### Why is the measure important?

Buses are the dominant form of public transportation in Ventura County. For people who don't drive or can't afford to, they're often the only affordable option. Encouraging transit use is a policy goal of government at most levels, since more bus trips reduce traffic congestion, gasoline consumption and air pollution.

### How are we doing?

Ridership in Ventura County's four largest transit agencies peaked in 2015 and declined in each of the next two years. The drop was seen across the county: All four agencies had fewer passenger trips in 2017 than two years earlier.

The biggest declines were at Thousand Oaks Transit and the Ventura County Transportation Commission's intercity

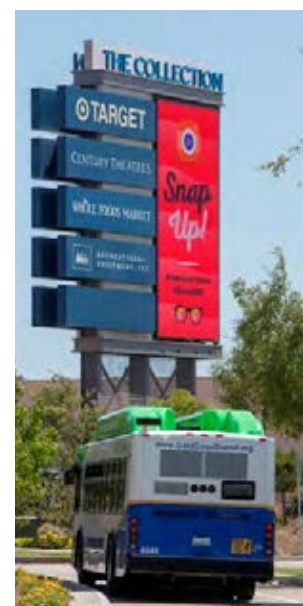
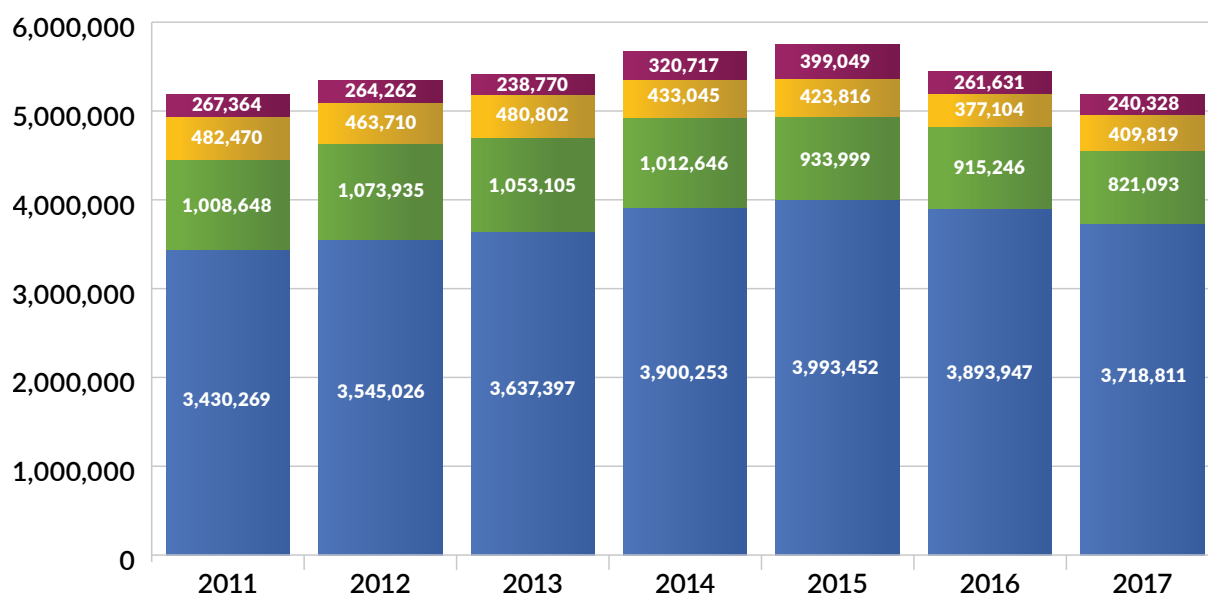
service, which runs buses between Ventura County cities and to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties. Ridership on the VCTC intercity bus service dropped every year from 2012 to 2017, with a 12.1 percent decline over the last two years of that period partially due to a reduction in service. Thousand Oaks has seen a more sudden and steep drop in bus ridership, with a decline of 39.8 percent between 2015 and 2017.

Gold Coast Transit, which runs bus service in Ventura, Ojai, Oxnard and Port Hueneme and is by far the county's biggest transit provider, saw a two-year ridership decline of 6.9 percent between 2015 and 2017. Simi Valley Transit ridership dropped 3.3 percent in the same two-year period.

These declines come as nearly every local government and transit agency is trying to promote walking and the use of public transit. While there is no easy explanation for why people travel by bus less than they did in 2015, a few possibilities are worth investigating: the spread of Uber and Lyft, the dramatic rise since 2000 of private vehicle ownership, particularly among lower-income households; less expensive gasoline; freeway widening projects that have made driving freer of hassles; fare increases by some transit agencies; and holes in the transit system that render it a suboptimal choice for people with other options.

### Number of Annual Ventura County Unlinked Trips (2011 - 2017)

■ Gold Coast Transit ■ VCTC Intercity (formerly VISTA) ■ Simi Valley (SVT) ■ Thousand Oaks (TOT)



# Bike Lanes

## CITY OF VENTURA LEADS THE WAY

### What is the measure?

The measure is the total miles of bike lanes in each Ventura County city and in the county's unincorporated areas. They are divided into Class 1, which are paths used only by bicycles and pedestrians; Class 2, which are painted bike lanes next to lanes of automobile traffic; Class 3, bike routes designated by street signs or painted markings on the road, but without separate lanes; and Class 4, bike lanes that are separated from motor vehicle traffic by a physical barrier or a lane of parking.

### Why is the measure important?

Bicycling is good for our health and for the environment. Our roads, however, are often ill-suited for bicycles, and riding can be inconvenient or dangerous without designated bike lanes.

### How are we doing?

Ventura County had 511.6 miles of bike lanes in 2018, which was 28.3 miles more than two years earlier. Camarillo created the most new lanes, adding 12 miles in two years; Simi Valley added 6.4 miles; Fillmore, 5.1 miles; and the city of Ventura, 7.4 miles, including the county's first Class 4 bike lane. Santa Paula and Port Hueneme lost a small portion of their bike lanes between 2016 and 2018.

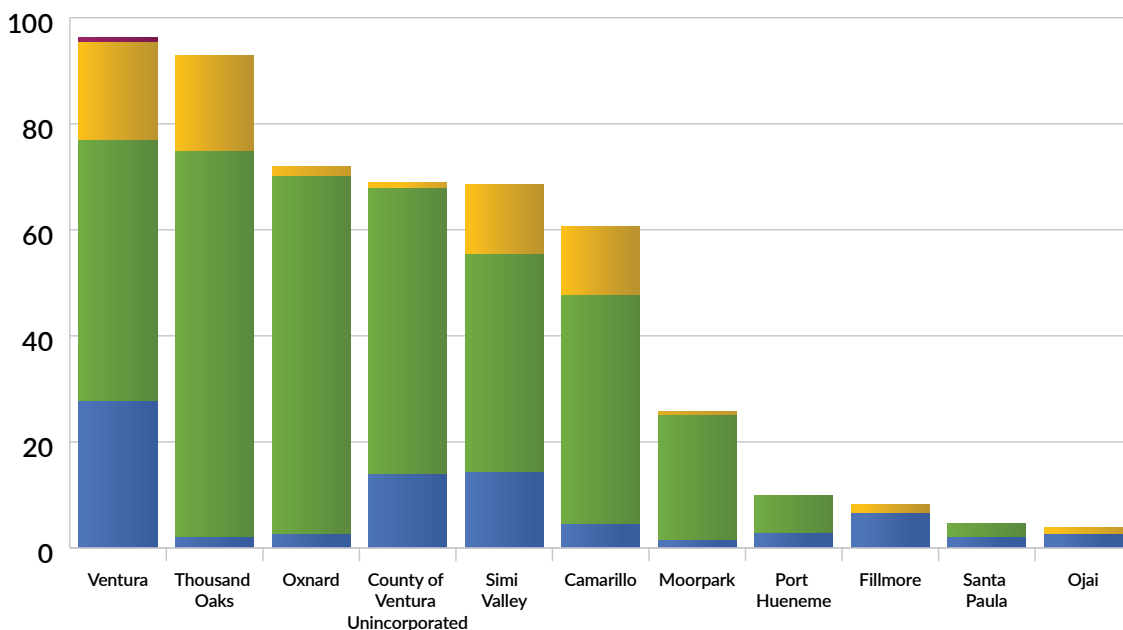


Ventura County's bike infrastructure is unevenly distributed, and not all bike lanes are created equal. Ventura has more bike lanes than any other city, followed closely by Thousand Oaks, while Camarillo has the most on a per capita basis. Oxnard, the county's most populous city, ranks third in bike lanes.

The most common type of bike lane is a Class 2, which is separated from traffic by a line painted on the road. Seventy percent of Ventura County's bike lanes follow this model. Class 1 and 4 lanes, the only kinds that physically separate bikes from automobiles, make up 15.8 percent of the county's total bike lanes. Ventura is far and away the county's leader in separated bike routes, followed by Simi Valley.

Miles of Ventura County Bike Lanes (2018)

■ Class 1 ■ Class 2 ■ Class 3 ■ Class 4



# Time Spent Commuting

## LONG COMMUTES, AND GETTING LONGER

### What is the measure?

The measure is the one-way time it takes Ventura County residents to get to their jobs.

### Why is the measure important?

Commuting is a drain on productivity and quality of life; every minute on the road is time not spent on work, leisure, exercise, sleep or with family. Long commutes – whether they result from living farther away from work or encountering more congestion on the roads – worsen traffic and degrade the environment, as idling cars release more air pollutants per mile than moving ones.

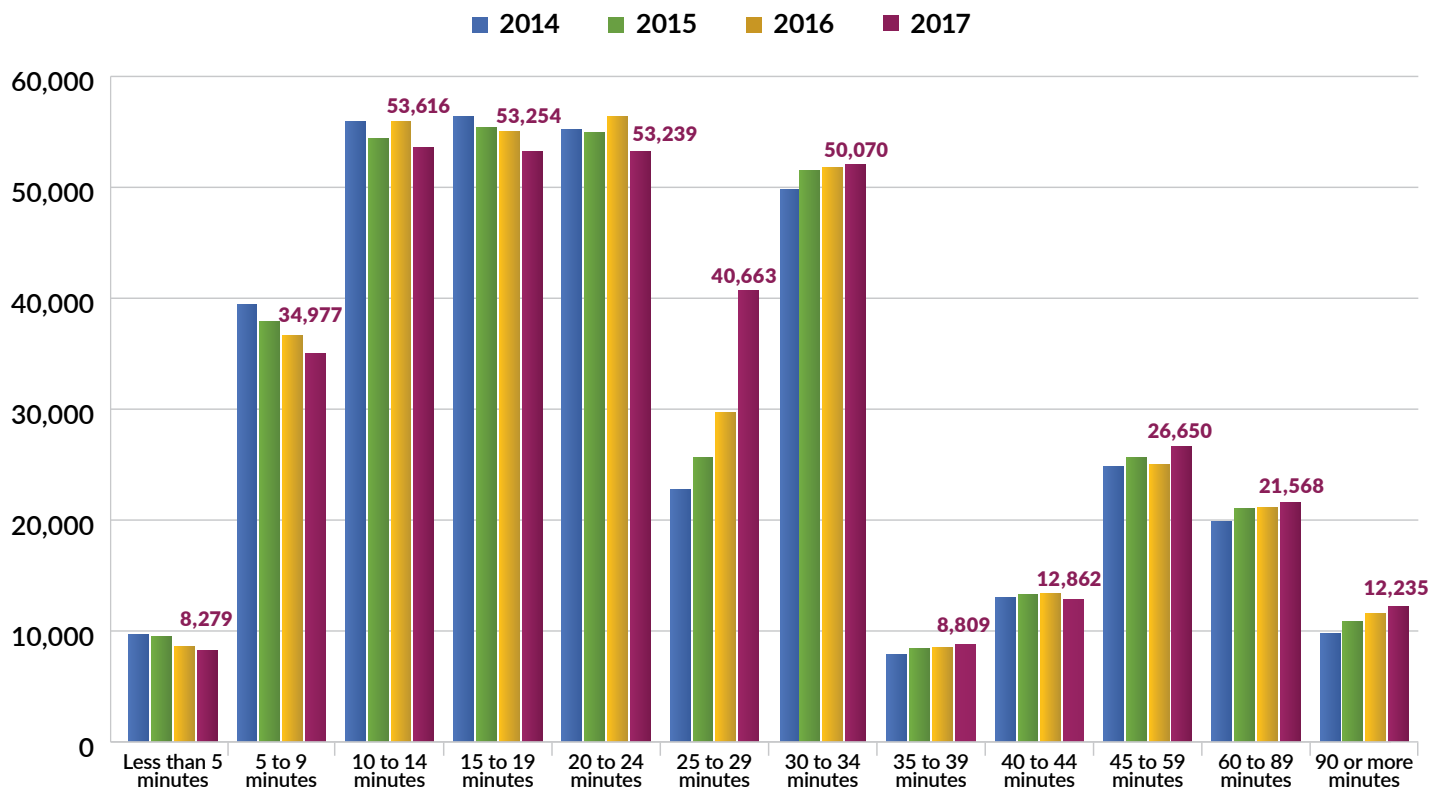
### How are we doing?

On the edge of a major metropolitan area, Ventura County lacks its own robust job market, potentially forcing county residents into lengthy commutes. In 2017, more than 134,000 county residents, about 35 percent of the employed population, commuted longer than half an hour.



This chart shows our commutes are getting longer. Fewer people have short commutes of 24 minutes or less, while the number of workers with commutes over 25 minutes has grown significantly since 2014.

Travel Time to Work in Ventura County (2014 - 2017)









# Wildfire Impacts

**Two of the 10** most destructive wildfires in California history started in Ventura County less than a year apart: the Thomas Fire in December 2017 and the Woolsey Fire in November 2018. The Thomas Fire burned 281,893 acres and destroyed 1,063 structures in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, killing two people. The Woolsey scorched 96,949 acres and claimed 1,643 structures in Ventura and Los Angeles counties, taking three lives.

Those frightening figures tell only part of the story. Businesses and schools closed, farmers lost crops and equipment, county residents breathed air far dirtier than normal and the Thomas Fire led to the Montecito mudslide that killed 21 people.

The story of these disasters also is a tale of renewal and rebuilding, helped by the generosity of our community and its nonprofit organizations. The Ventura County Community Foundation, the United Way of Ventura County and other groups raised millions of dollars to help people who lost their homes or otherwise suffered in these fires. That includes \$1,500 in recovery assistance donated by the United Way to each household that sustained destruction or damage to

their residence in the Thomas Fire and more than \$1 million given to the Salvation Army by the Community Foundation to help those affected by the Woolsey Fire.

Over the past few decades, our fires have grown bigger and more destructive, and nothing suggests the worst is over — except, perhaps, the fact that hundreds of thousands of acres of vegetation blackened in 2017 and 2018 will need time to regrow before they can burn again.

Taking a wider view, though, the entire state of California and the rest of the American West might be changing their approach to preventing, fighting and controlling fires. The recent firestorms

focused attention on the problem and garnered support for better forest management, tighter restrictions on building in fire-prone areas, new requirements for fire-safe buildings and better methods of notifying people of an evacuation and getting them out of their homes safely. The question now is whether we can take any of those steps before the next catastrophic fires erupt.

**Over the past few decades, our fires have grown bigger and more destructive**



# Insurance Claims From Fire Losses

## NEARLY \$4.8 BILLION IN DAMAGES

### What is the measure?

The measure is the total dollar value of all insurance claims filed related to the Thomas, Hill and Woolsey fires in Ventura County, according to data collected by the California Department of Insurance.

### Why is the measure important?

While not everyone who suffers losses in a fire is insured, most people are. That means the Department of Insurance's totals for insured losses are the best metric we have for gauging the fires' direct financial impact.

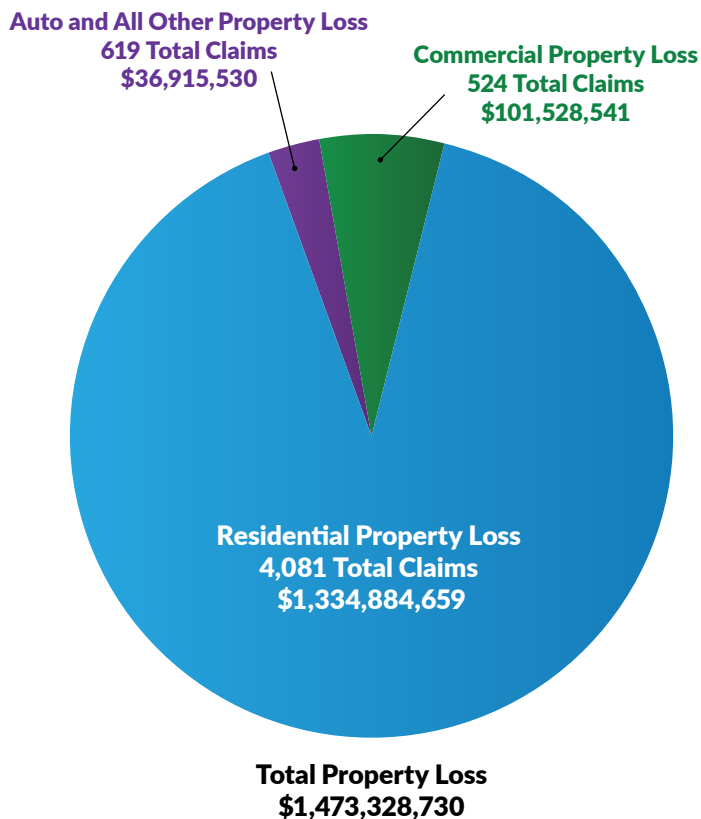
### How are we doing?

The Thomas Fire destroyed about \$1.47 billion in insured property in Ventura County. More than 4,000 claims were filed for personal residential property, including 620 homes listed as total losses, for a total of \$1.33 billion. Insured

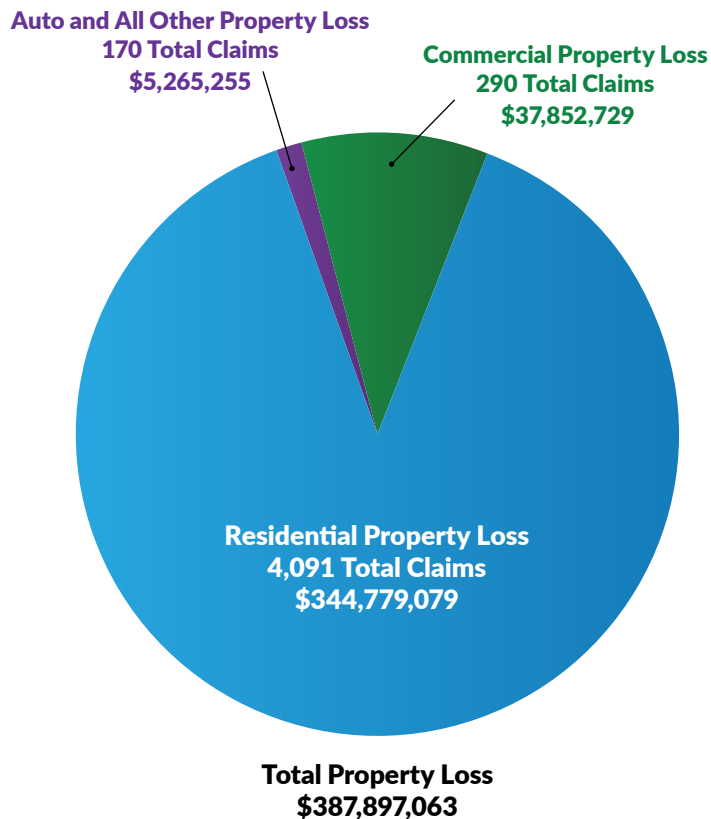
commercial property losses totaled \$101.5 million, including 31 properties claimed as complete losses; that figure includes apartment buildings. Ventura County residents also filed 619 claims on automobiles and non-residential commercial property, totaling \$36.9 million.

The Hill and Woolsey fires of November 2018 were even more destructive, at \$3.32 billion in total insurance claims, but most of the damage occurred in Los Angeles County. In Ventura County, 135 homes were destroyed for a total of \$344.8 million in losses. Commercial property owners filed 290 claims, totaling \$37.9 million, and 170 claims were filed for automobiles and non-residential commercial property, totaling \$5.3 million.

**Ventura County Insured Lossess  
from 2017 Thomas Fire**



**Ventura County Insured Lossess  
from 2018 Hill and Woolsey Fires**





# Air Quality During the Thomas Fire

## PM2.5 SPIKED IN OJAI AS INFERNO BURNED

### What is the measure?

The measure is the air quality index during December 2017 at three measuring stations in Ventura County: one in Ojai, another in the El Rio area north of Oxnard and a third in Thousand Oaks. The index is based on measurements of PM2.5, which is particulate matter 2.5 microns or smaller. PM2.5 is present in smoke and is smaller than the particles in the PM10 measurements discussed elsewhere in this report.

### Why is the measure important?

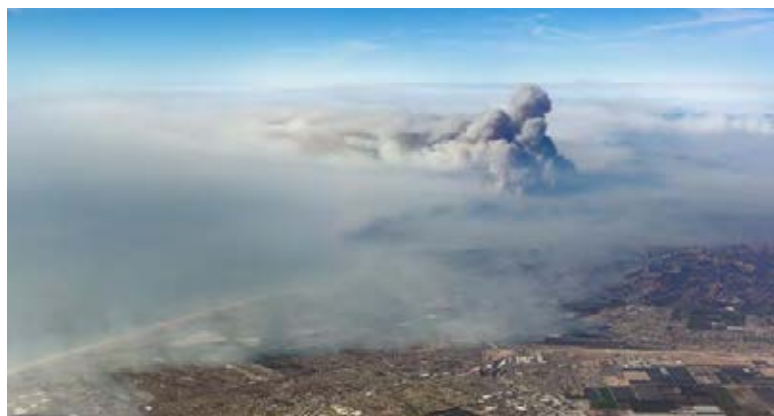
The Thomas Fire started Dec. 4 near Santa Paula and burned through the month of December. Its impact on the air was obvious, as people in both Ventura and Santa Barbara counties could see, smell and taste the smoke sometimes without even stepping outside. Schools districts shut down, in some cases for weeks, to keep children from going out into the dirty air.

### How are we doing?

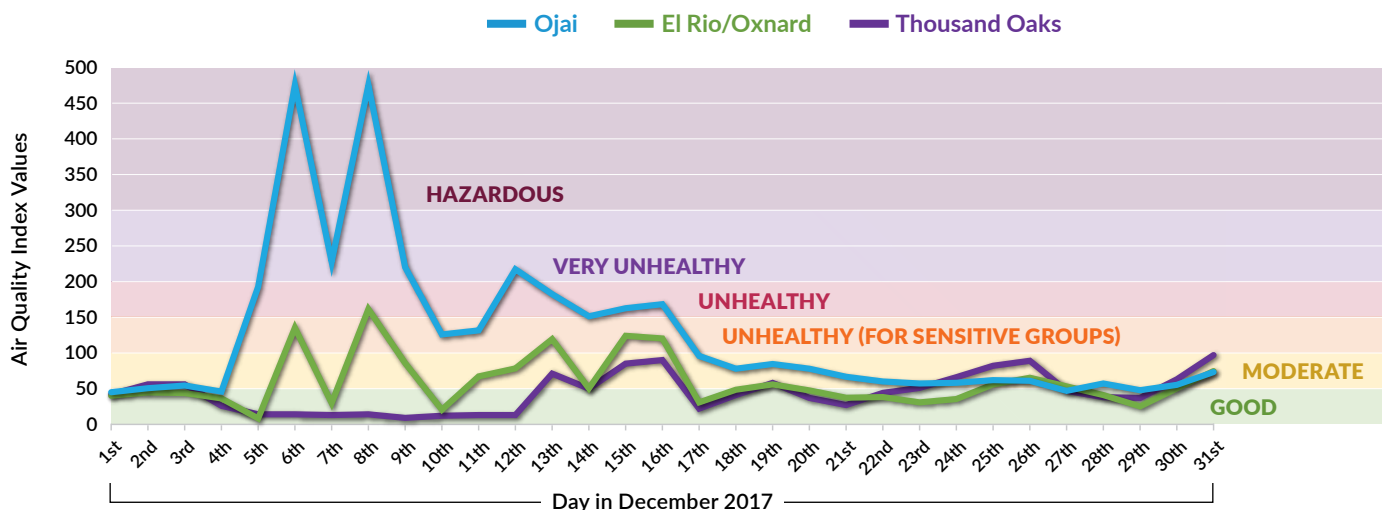
The air in some parts of Ventura County was dangerous to breathe during the early days of the Thomas Fire. In Ojai, the air quality index (AQI) reached the maximum value of 500 on December 6 and again on December 8. The index ranks a score of 150 and above as “unhealthy” and readings above 300 are “hazardous.” For twelve days beginning December 5, the Ojai air was classified as unhealthy for all but two days. Six of those days were “very unhealthy” or hazardous.

The air measured near Oxnard was cleaner, but it also deteriorated during the fire. On Dec. 8 the air hit the unhealthy level and seven other days it hit moderate or “unhealthy for sensitive groups”, meaning conditions were unhealthy for the very young, the elderly and people with asthma.

There is no official PM2.5 measurement station in the Ventura area. Ventura presumably fell between Oxnard and Ojai in these measurements, as it was usually closer to the fire than Oxnard and farther than Ojai. But during the first two days of the fire, on December 4 and 5, it burned within Ventura’s city limits, so the air quality may have reached the unhealthy or hazardous range for at least a few hours.



### Air Quality Index in Ventura County (December 2017)



# Fire Related School Closures

## CLASSES CANCELED FOR STUDENT AND STAFF SAFETY

### What is the measure?

The measure is the number of days of school canceled in Ventura County K-12 districts due to wildfires in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years.

### Why is the measure important?

The typical school year in the United States is already short by international standards, and many countries that routinely outscore us on measures of student achievement have longer school years, longer school days, or both. Research on the effect of summer breaks indicates missing school can be especially harmful for children from low-income families and those who are behind their peers academically. And, when school is canceled because of a wildfire, mudslide threat or other disaster, concerns arise beyond academics — disruption of students' routines during an already traumatic time may add to the disaster's psychological toll.

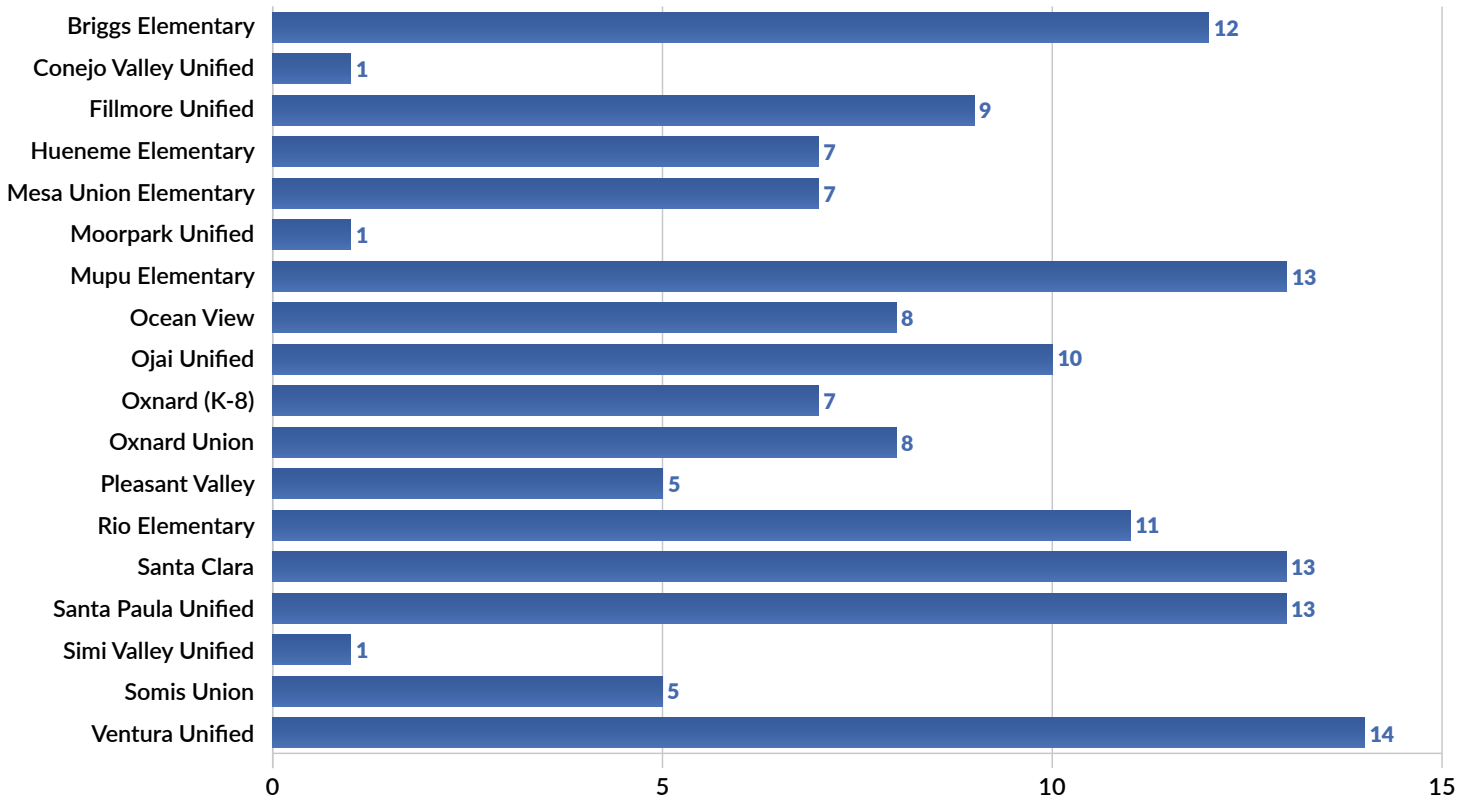
### How are we doing?

The Thomas Fire was very disruptive to the 2017/18 school year in western and northern Ventura County. The Ventura Unified School District canceled 14 days of school in December 2017, and the four districts in or around Santa Paula — Briggs, Mupu, Santa Clara and Santa Paula Unified — each called off 11 or more days of school, out of 180 days in a typical school year. Those closures came just before the scheduled two-week winter break, so in some schools, students were away from the classroom for nearly five weeks in a row.

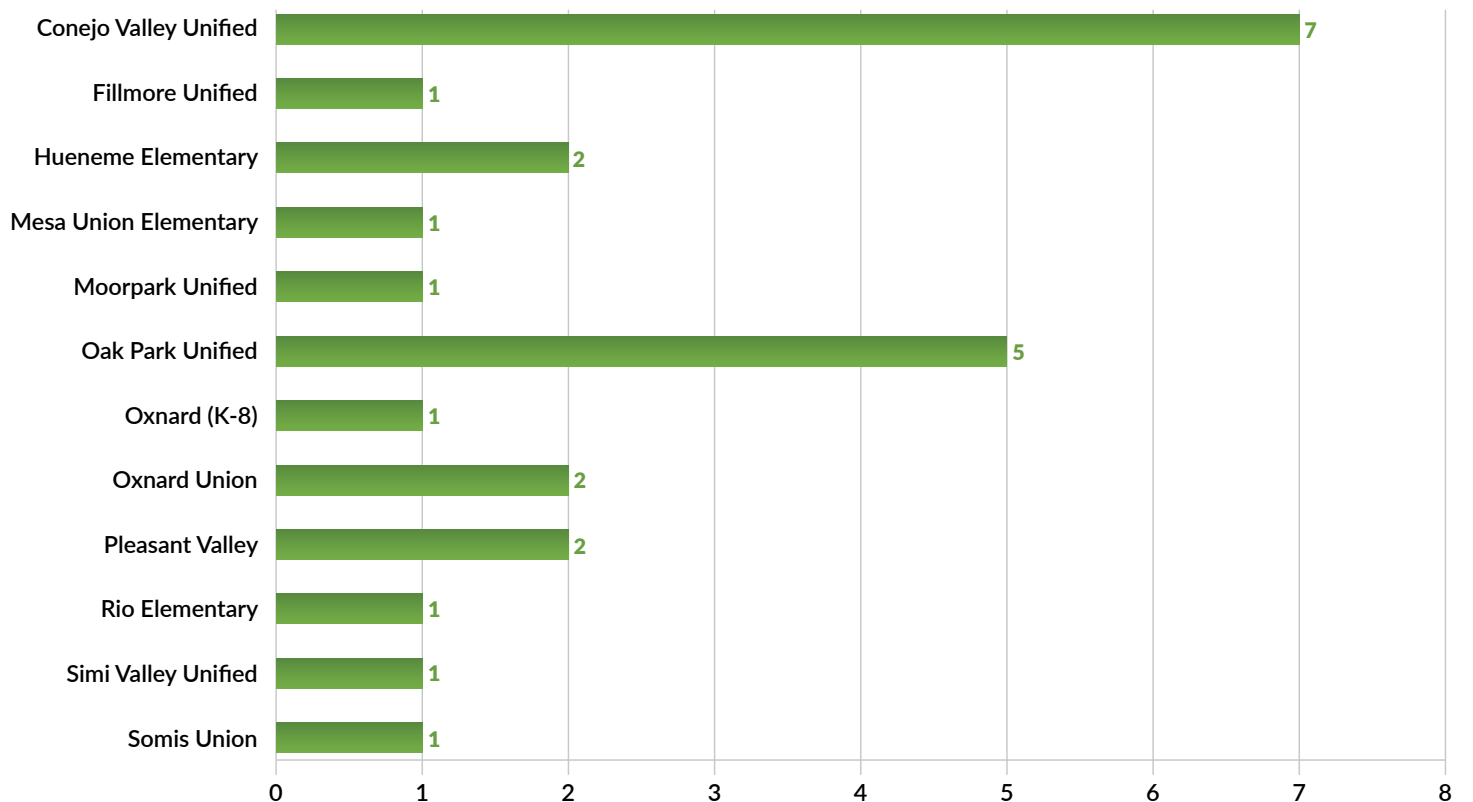
The Hill and Woolsey fires in November 2018 had a smaller impact, but children still missed a week or more of instruction in some districts. The Conejo Valley Unified district shut down for seven days, and Oak Park Unified canceled five days.



### School Days Lost Due to Thomas Fire (2017/18)



### School Days Lost Due to Hill and Woolsey Fires (2018/19)





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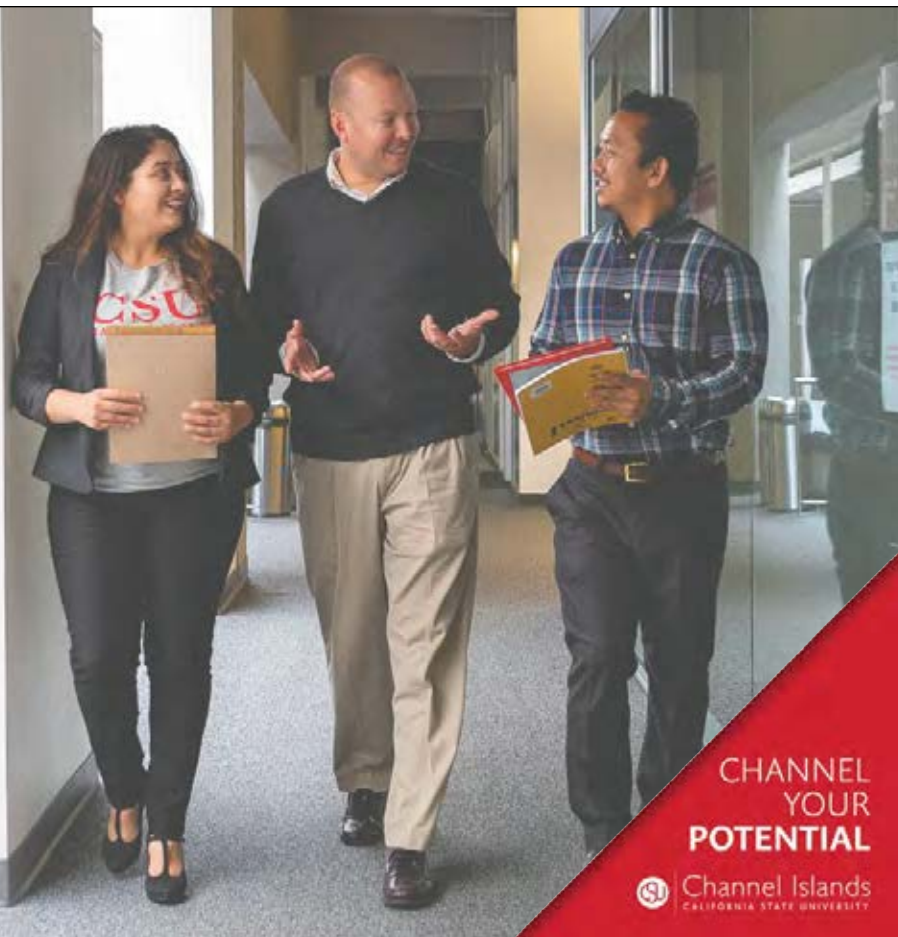
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