

2021 STATE OF THE REGION REPORT

Ventura County Civic Alliance
Advancing Regional Stewardship & Dialogue





CREATING LASTING IMPACT IN OUR SHARED WORLD

Because of your generosity, the Ventura County Community Foundation has granted nearly \$50 million to our community in response to COVID-19.

Together, we have:

- Kept hundreds of families in their homes
- Provided food and basic needs to tens of thousands struggling to make ends meet
- Helped keep the doors of thousands of small businesses open
- Supported our community's farmworkers and essential workers
- Helped sustain the great work of hundreds of nonprofits serving Ventura County

VCCF'S VISION, MISSION, & VALUES

We envision an engaged and thriving community inspired by growing generosity.

Connecting people, resources, and solutions to create lasting impact in our shared world.

Trust • Transparency • Compassion • Equity
Tenacity • Excellence • Authentic Connection





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE CIVIC ALLIANCE	4	EDUCATION	45
VENTURA COUNTY KEY STATISTICS	6	Public School Enrollment.....	46
INTRODUCTION	8	Per-Pupil Spending.....	48
AGRICULTURE	9	English Learners.....	49
Harvested Acres	10	High School Graduation and Dropout Rates.....	50
Crop Changes.....	11	Childhood Socioeconomic Disparities ...	51
Crop Value.....	12	Community College Enrollment	52
Organic Production	13	Four-Year College Enrollment	54
Land Values	14	Earnings by Educational Attainment	55
Agricultural Exports.....	15	LAND USE & HOUSING	57
Employment and Earnings.....	16	Housing Starts.....	58
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & RESOURCES.....	17	Homeownership Rates.....	59
Public Libraries.....	18	Median Home Price	60
Voter Registration.....	19	Housing Affordability	61
Voter Turnout.....	20	Apartment Rents.....	62
Political Party Affiliation	22	NATURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES	63
Nonprofits by Type and Wages	24	Residential Electricity and Natural Gas Use.....	64
Nonprofits by Size	26	Solar Power Installations.....	65
Nonprofit Revenue	28	Air Quality.....	66
ECONOMY	31	Rainfall.....	68
Unemployment	32	Drought.....	69
Employment Growth	34	Water Use.....	70
Employment by Sector	35	Ocean Water Quality	71
Salaries by Sector	36	Oil and Gas Production	72
Gross County Product	37	Landfill Disposal Rate	73
Wages and Cost Of Living	38	PUBLIC HEALTH	75
Gender Difference In Pay	39	Life Expectancy and Income	76
Taxable Sales.....	40	Teen Birth Rate	78
Tourism.....	41	Opioid Deaths.....	79
Activity at the Port of Hueneme	42		

Leading Causes Of Death	80	Homelessness Among Children	96
COVID-19 Cases and Deaths	81	Child Abuse	98
COVID-19 Vaccination Rate	83	Domestic Violence	99
PUBLIC SAFETY	85	TRANSPORTATION	101
County Crime Rates	86	Means To Work	102
City Crime Rates	88	Transit Ridership	103
Juvenile Arrests	89	Vehicle Miles Traveled	104
Calls To Ventura County Fire Department	90	Time Spent Commuting	105
SOCIAL SERVICES	91	Bike Lanes	106
2-1-1 Calls	92	SOURCES	107
Food Aid	93	SPONSOR MESSAGES	110
Homelessness	94...	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	116

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!



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. We are a neutral convener that examines community concerns,

with an emphasis in creating civic dialogue around issues that affect Ventura County's quality of life.

The Civic Alliance is 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 2021 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 years.

The **Future of the Region Conference** takes place in

the even 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.



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VENTURA COUNTY CIVIC ALLIANCE CORE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

The Civic Alliance holds a set of core beliefs that guide its mission: regional stewardship, open dialogue, collaboration, evenhandedness, 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 Civic 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.

KEY STATISTICS

Ventura County

All information listed is for 2019 unless otherwise noted.

MEDIAN AGE

2019: 38.1
2017: 37.5
2015: 37.1
2013: 36.6
2011: 36.2
2009: 36.1
2000: 34.2

INCOME (2019)

Percent of Residents below the Poverty Level: 8.9%

Per Capita Income: \$38,595

Median Household Income: \$88,131

Median Family Income: \$99,612

Cost of Preschool Child care ages 2 - 5 years: \$11,253

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

COMPUTERS AND INTERNET USE (2019)

Households with a computer: 92.70%

Households with broadband internet: 88.20%

POPULATION

2019: 847,263
2017: 847,834
2015: 840,833
2000: 753,197

High School Diploma or Higher, Educational Achievement, Age 25+: 85.0%

Bachelor's Degree or Higher, Educational Achievement, Age 25+: 33.8%

Number of Veterans: 39,781

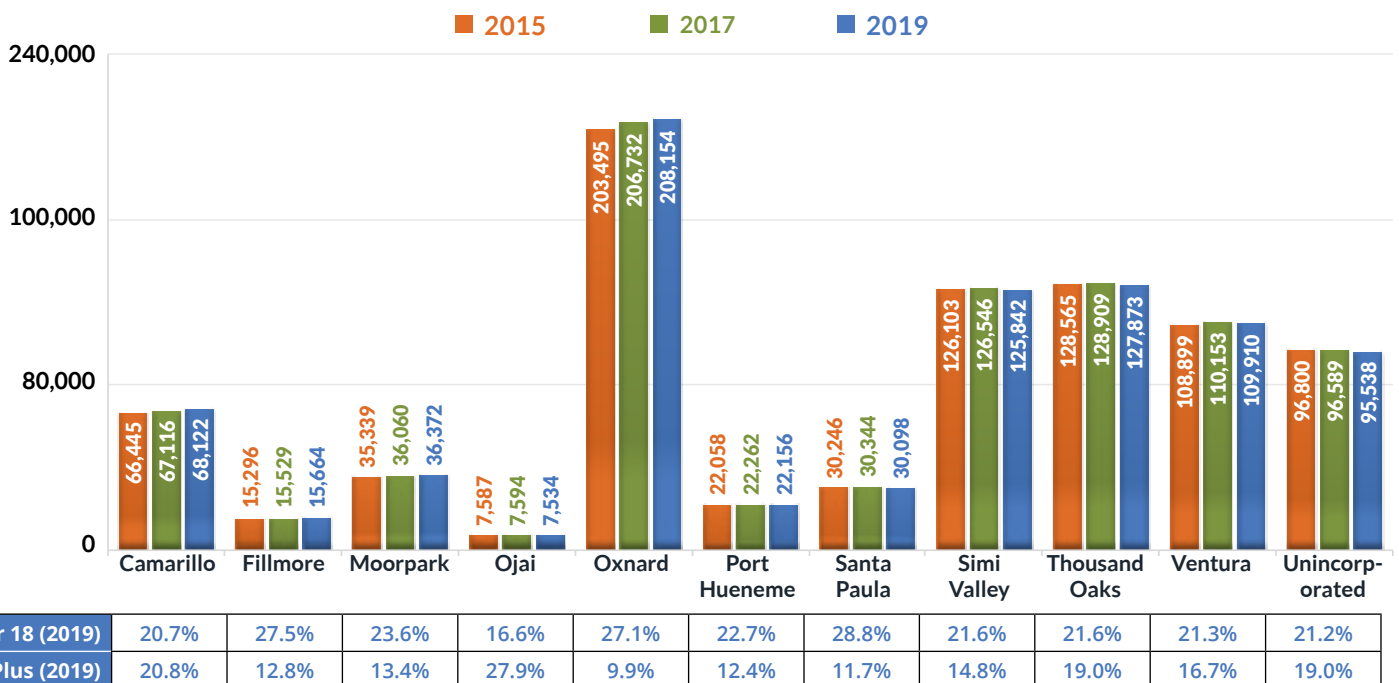
Land Area (2010): 1,843 sq. miles

Persons per Household: 3.09

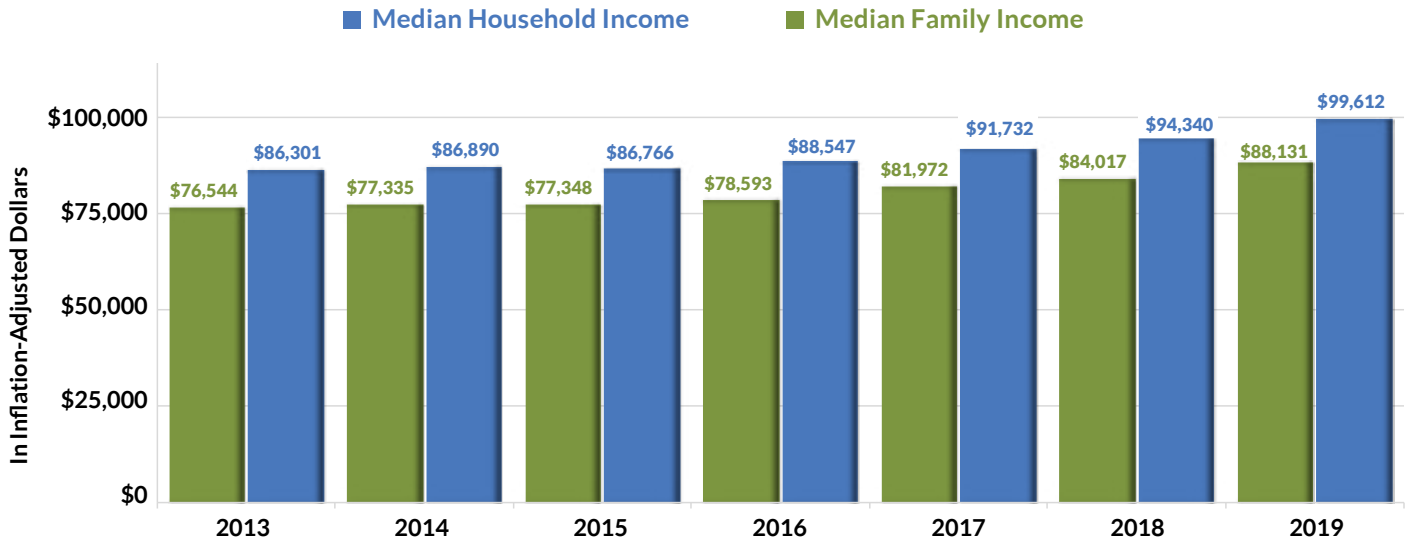
Acres of Built-Up Land (2018): 105,449

Persons per Square Mile: 459.7

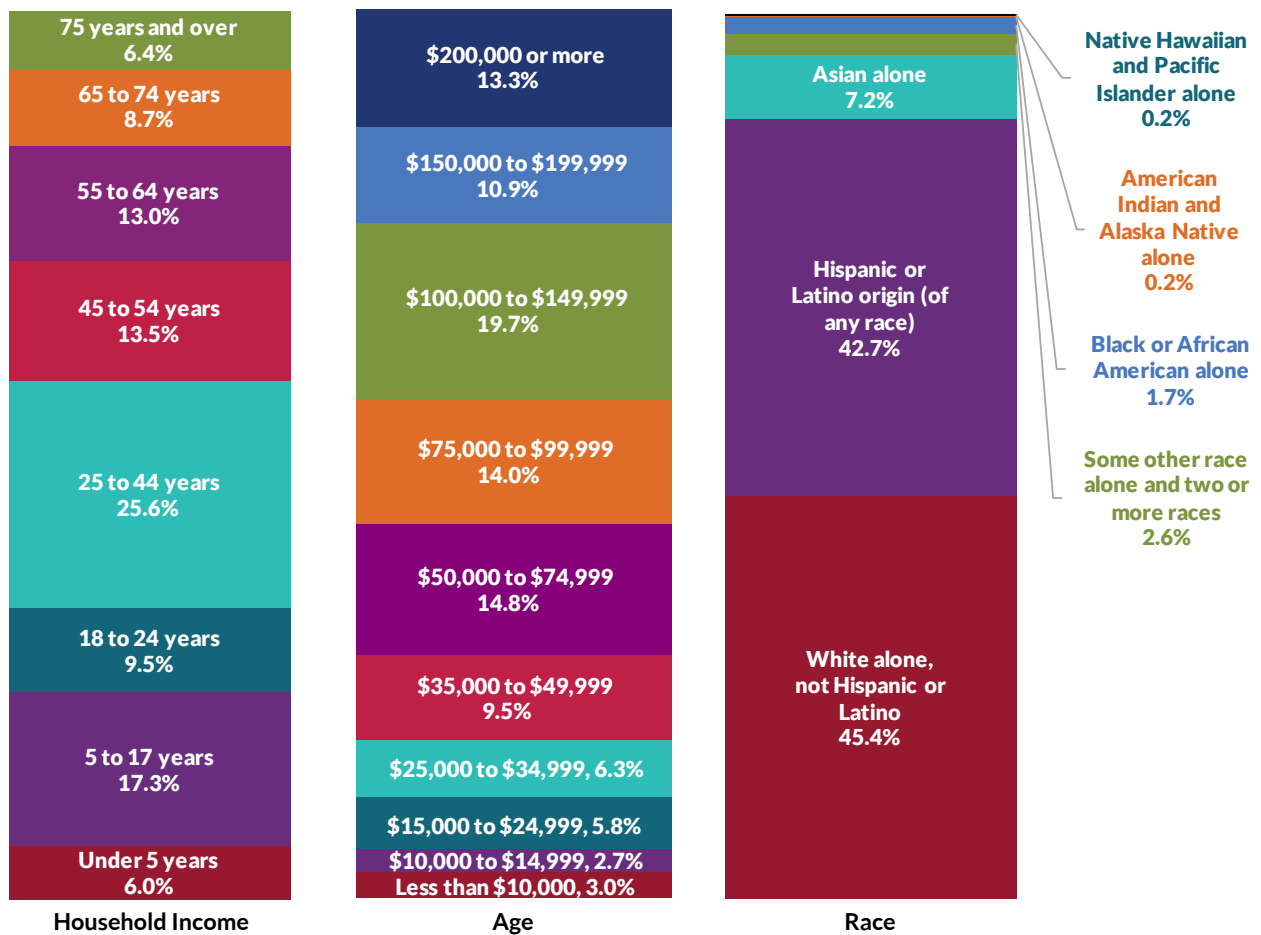
Population by Cities in Ventura County With Table of Percentage Under 18 and Percentage 65 Plus (2015, 2017, 2019)



Ventura County Median Household & Family Income in Inflation-Adjusted Dollars (2013 - 2019)



Ventura County Population by Household Income, Age and Race (2019)



THE STATE OF THE REGION, VENTURA COUNTY 2021

The Ventura County Civic Alliance (VCCA) is proud to publish this 2021 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 addresses 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 110 and view a complete list of sponsors on the inside back cover.

Research for this report was conducted under the direction of Jamshid Damooei, Ph.D., professor and executive director of the California Lutheran University Center for Economics of Social Issues. His team has carefully compiled the data from national, state and local sources which are listed beginning on page 107.

Where possible, we have included data and commentary on the impacts of the COVID-19

pandemic. For example, the Unemployment statistics in our Economy domain reflect the upheaval in the workforce. In Public Health, we added several charts on COVID-19 cases and deaths. In other domains, the pandemic impacted the availability of data requiring us to drop certain indicators, such as student test scores in Education.

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 and prior editions are available on our website along with other information about the Civic Alliance. You can download the report by visiting 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.





In recent years, Ventura County agriculture has fought one battle after another: against fires, drought, invasive pests, labor shortages, tariffs, ever-changing regulations, development pressure, increasing global competition and, of course, a pandemic that disrupted supply chains, distorted consumer behavior and endangered workers.

Agriculture was deemed an essential industry from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. While production went almost entirely uninterrupted, the industry felt the pandemic in a variety of ways. Coronavirus infected packinghouse employees and residents of farmworker housing in 2020, and the market for an array of products suddenly shifted as restaurants closed and consumers prepared meals at home.

These were formidable challenges, but in 2021 drought and climate change look like the biggest threats of all. Drought has gone from a recurring issue to a nearly permanent state of affairs — with varying levels of drought from 2012 to 2018, then a brutal one starting in 2021. The past decade now looks like one long drought, with a brief respite in 2019 and 2020.

John Krist, the CEO of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County, thinks persistent drought is the biggest driver of changes in the agricultural industry. “Folks on the pointy end of the spear,” he said, are those who grow vegetables such as leafy greens and plant multiple rotations per year.

“Those crops all have high water demand, and when you stack them up like that over the year, your water use goes pretty high,” Krist said.

In the absence of dramatic increases in water supply, those crops will get harder to grow profitably in Ventura

County, which will result in fewer crop rotations, larger gaps between planting and fewer jobs in the fields and in production and processing.

The big trend in berry farming, meanwhile, is lower profit margins, which have led to decreased acreage, especially for the spring strawberry harvest.

Drought and heat also threaten the county’s avocado orchards. “Avocados have been a really strong performer for growers in Ventura County for some time, but they are very sensitive to the heat and wind,” Krist said. “We’re seeing increasing extraordinary wind events and extraordinary heat events, and if those continue, there might be places in this county where we don’t grow avocados anymore.”

Along with strawberries and avocados, lemons are one of Ventura County’s signature crops, and those are threatened, too. Citrus greening disease, or huanglongbing, is very likely present in the county’s orchards, even if it hasn’t been detected here by state-recognized lab tests. So far, growers seem to be winning the battle against this incurable, fatal scourge of citrus trees, and HLB is not tearing through our orchards the way it devastated Florida’s orange groves a decade ago.

“There’s still a \$100 million question, whether citrus trees will survive,” Krist said.

Even with all these challenges, agriculture remains a thriving industry in Ventura County and accounts for almost 4% of the county’s overall economy. That figure has declined over the past couple of decades, but our farms still employ thousands of people, generate almost \$2 billion in annual revenue and provide Ventura County with a link to its agrarian past.

HARVESTED ACRES

Farmland stays below 100,000 acres

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measure is the number of crop-producing acres in Ventura County and what type of crops are planted on them. 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.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Farmed acres is one measure of the health of the county's agricultural economy: If farming is profitable, landowners will devote more of their property to it. At the same time, as farming becomes more efficient, growers can use fewer acres to produce the same or more output. The amount of land devoted to agriculture also affects the character, aesthetics and urban development pattern of Ventura County.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

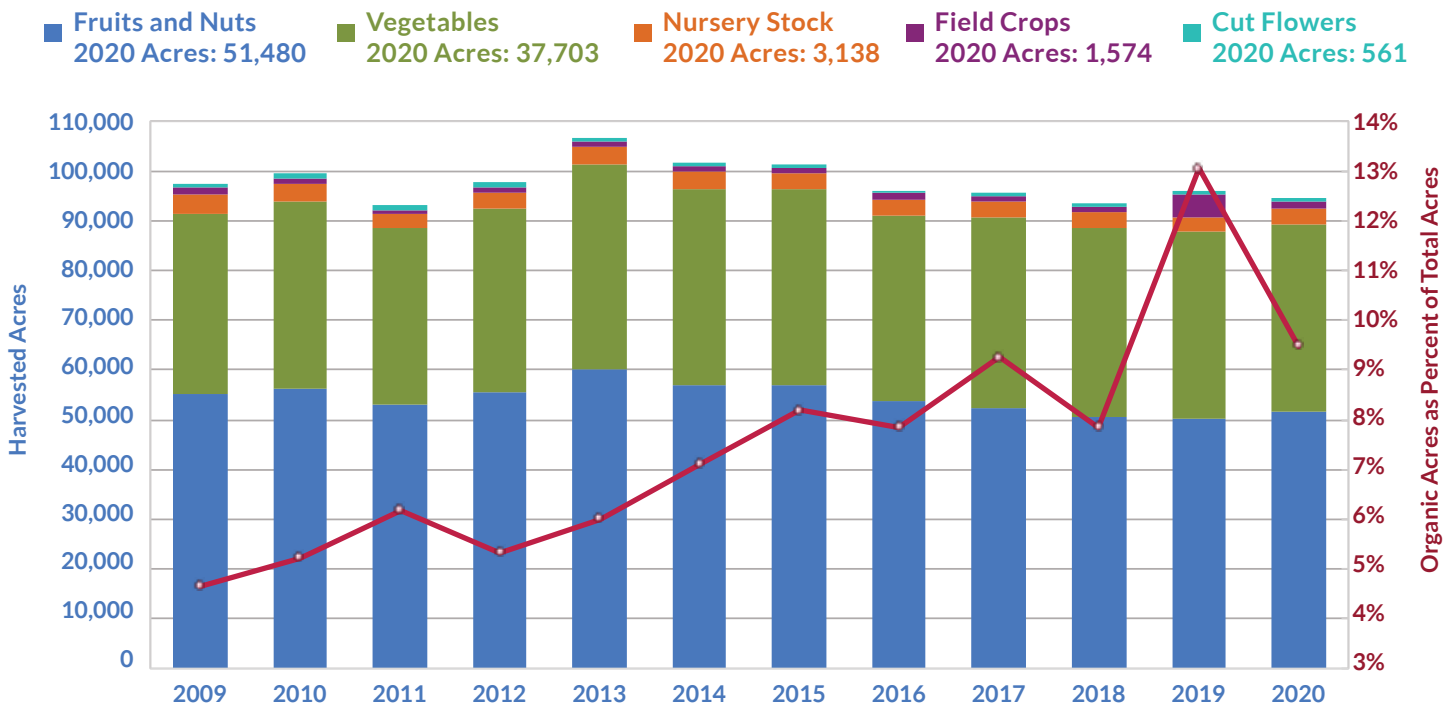
In 2020, Ventura County had 94,456 total acres of

active farmland, down 1.5% from the year before. That's consistent with a long-term trend of gradual decline. The portion of the county's land devoted to farming was 11.4% smaller in 2020 than it had been seven years earlier. Even a spike in 2013 to 107,000 acres fell below the totals from the 1990s, when the county usually had around 110,000 farmed acres.

The decline has been spread fairly evenly across the ag industry. Fruit and nut crops, vegetables, nursery stock and cut flowers all occupied fewer acres in 2020 than in 2013. The exception was field crops, including grains, beans and hemp, with 1,574 acres in 2020, 63.4% more than in 2013. This likely resulted from the addition of a new field crop, hemp, which was planted on thousands of acres in 2019, and hundreds in 2020.

Though the trend toward fewer farmed acres is real, it is gradual and relatively small. Much of the fluctuation is market-driven. For example, the 2013 spike in acreage may have been tied to a dip in strawberry prices that year.

Total Harvested Acres In Ventura County (2009 - 2020)



CROP CHANGES

Strawberries hold on as top crop

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are a breakdown of the 10 most valuable crops in Ventura County in 2020, by total revenue, and a snapshot of the top crops in previous years.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

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

HOW ARE WE DOING?

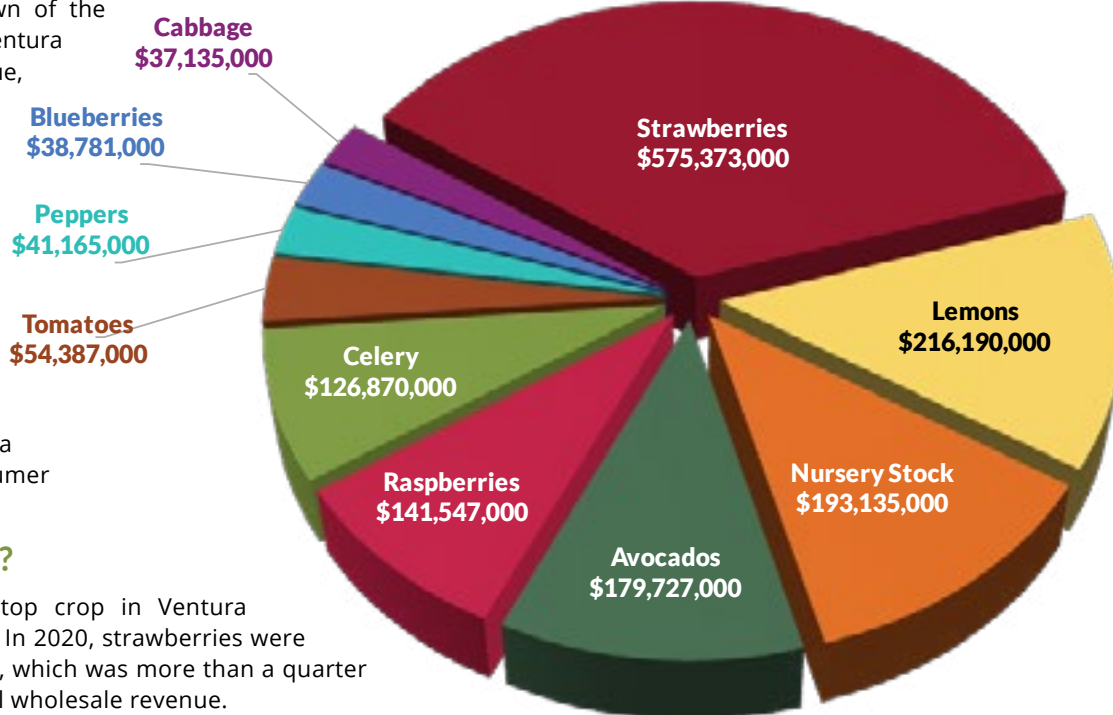
Strawberries have been the top crop in Ventura County every year for decades. In 2020, strawberries were worth \$575.4 million wholesale, which was more than a quarter of the county's total agricultural wholesale revenue.

The last few years have not been particularly lucrative for Ventura County strawberry growers, though. The 2020 revenue declined 12% from 2017, when strawberry sales amounted to \$654.3 million.

Lemons are typically the county's second most valuable crop, and 2020 was no exception. They were followed in the top five by nursery stock, avocados and raspberries.

Lemons topped the county's crop list as recently as the 1990s before being overtaken by strawberries. Over the course of the 20th century, lemons came to dominate Ventura County agriculture, replacing the beans and sugar beets that once defined the area's farm industry. Strawberries, in turn, eclipsed lemons by the year 2000.

— Top 10 Crops in Ventura County (2020) —



— Crop Changes in Ventura County (1982 - 2020) —

CROP RANKING	1982	1992	2002	2012	2016	2019	2020	2020 VALUE
1	Lemons	Lemons	Strawberries	Strawberries	Strawberries	Strawberries	Strawberries	\$575,373,000
2	Celery	Strawberries	Lemons	Lemons	Lemons	Celery	Lemons	\$216,190,000
3	Poultry and Dairy	Celery	Nursery Stock	Raspberries	Nursery Stock	Lemons	Nursery Stock	\$193,135,000
4	Strawberries	Nursery Stock	Celery	Nursery Stock	Celery	Raspberries	Avocados	\$179,727,000
5	Valencia Oranges	Valencia Oranges	Avocados	Celery	Raspberries	Nursery Stock	Raspberries	\$141,547,000
6	Seed	Avocados	Cut Flowers	Avocados	Avocados	Avocados	Celery	\$126,870,000
7	Nursery Stock	Lettuce	Tomatoes	Tomatoes	Peppers	Tomatoes	Tomatoes	\$54,387,000
8	Lettuce	Cut Flowers	Peppers	Peppers	Cut Flowers	Cut Flowers	Peppers	\$41,165,000
9	Avocados	Broccoli	Valencia Oranges	Cut Flowers	Tomatoes	Peppers	Blueberries	\$38,781,000
10	Broccoli	Cabbage	Raspberries	Cilantro	Kale	Hemp	Cabbage	\$37,135,000

CROP VALUE

Ag sector continues slow decline

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are 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. Revenue totals are from the county agricultural commissioner's annual Crop Report, which is drawn from surveys of county farmers and others in the agricultural industry.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Crop value represents the total income to farmers, an important measure of the size 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?

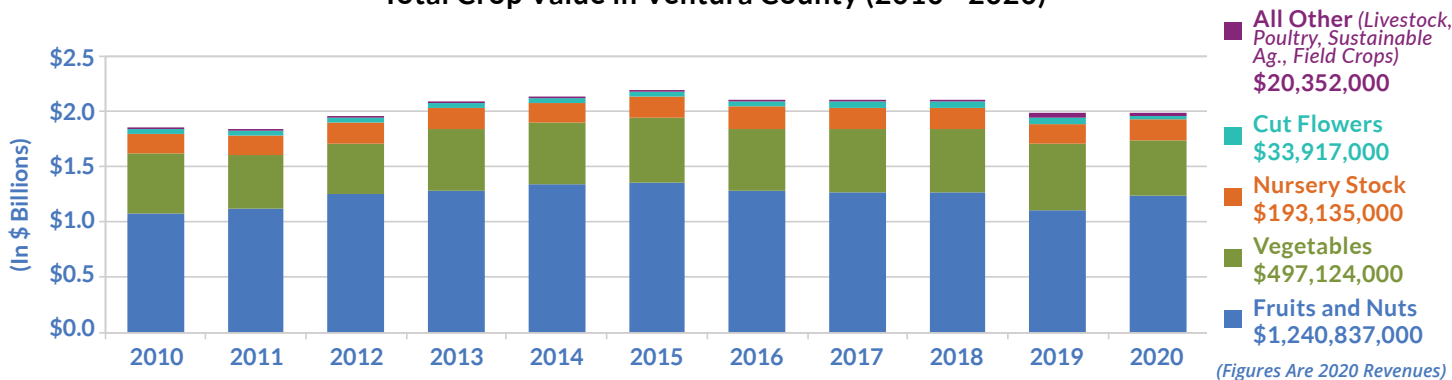
Ventura County's total farm revenue declined four out of the five years from 2010 to 2020. In 2020, total revenue was \$1.985 billion, down 0.2% from the previous year and 9.7% below the recent peak in 2015.

Of course, 2020 was a pandemic year, and a revenue drop of just 0.2% isn't too bad during an international crisis that shut down entire sectors of the economy.

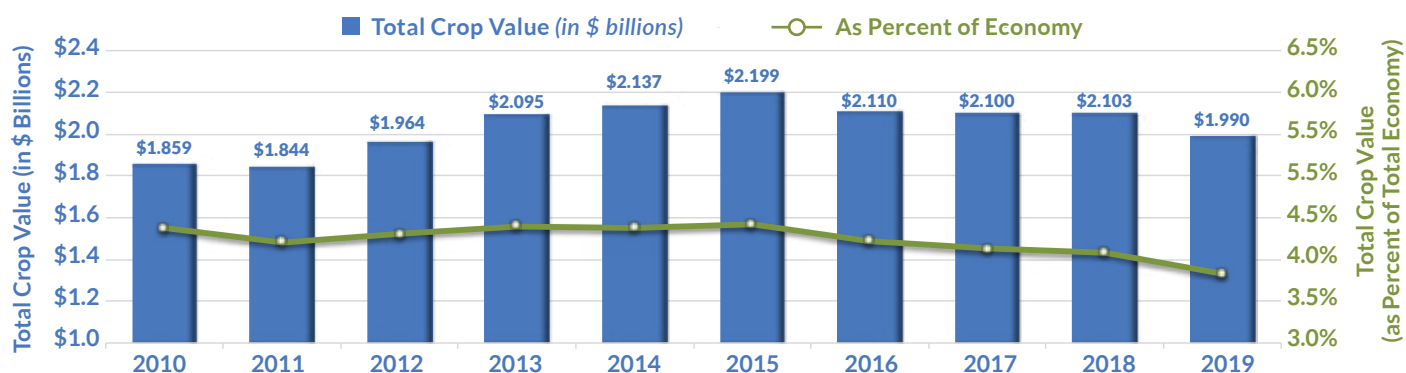
And in most years of the decade, the falloff in farm revenue was small, but those minor declines add up. And these figures are not adjusted for inflation. In inflation-adjusted terms, the agricultural sector has shrunk from a decade or two ago. Farm revenue was 3.8% of the Ventura County economy in 2019, down from 4.4% in 2015.

The shrinkage in the farm economy from 2019 to 2020 came despite a 13.2% increase in revenue from strawberries, which are by far the region's biggest value crop. Fruit and nut crops as a whole had a strong 2020, gaining 12% in value from the prior year. Vegetable crops, though, lost 17.3% of their revenue, led by a steep decline in celery, and field crops lost 80%. The primary factor in the drop in field crops was the near-disappearance of hemp from the county's fields; hemp generated \$35.5 million in revenue in 2019 and then fell off the list of top crops in 2020. The reasons for that were multifold: a glut of hemp in 2019; lack of processing capacity in Ventura County; and county and city regulations on where hemp could be grown, taking away thousands of potential acres in response to resident complaints about odor during the harvest.

Total Crop Value in Ventura County (2010 - 2020)



Total Crop Value as Percent of Total Ventura County Economy (2010 - 2019)



ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Organic acreage tumbles in 2020

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.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Organic food is no longer a niche market; it is now available in every major grocery chain and, in some stores, conventional produce can be hard to find. Organic food commands higher prices, as it is perceived as higher quality, and organic farming also can benefit the environment.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

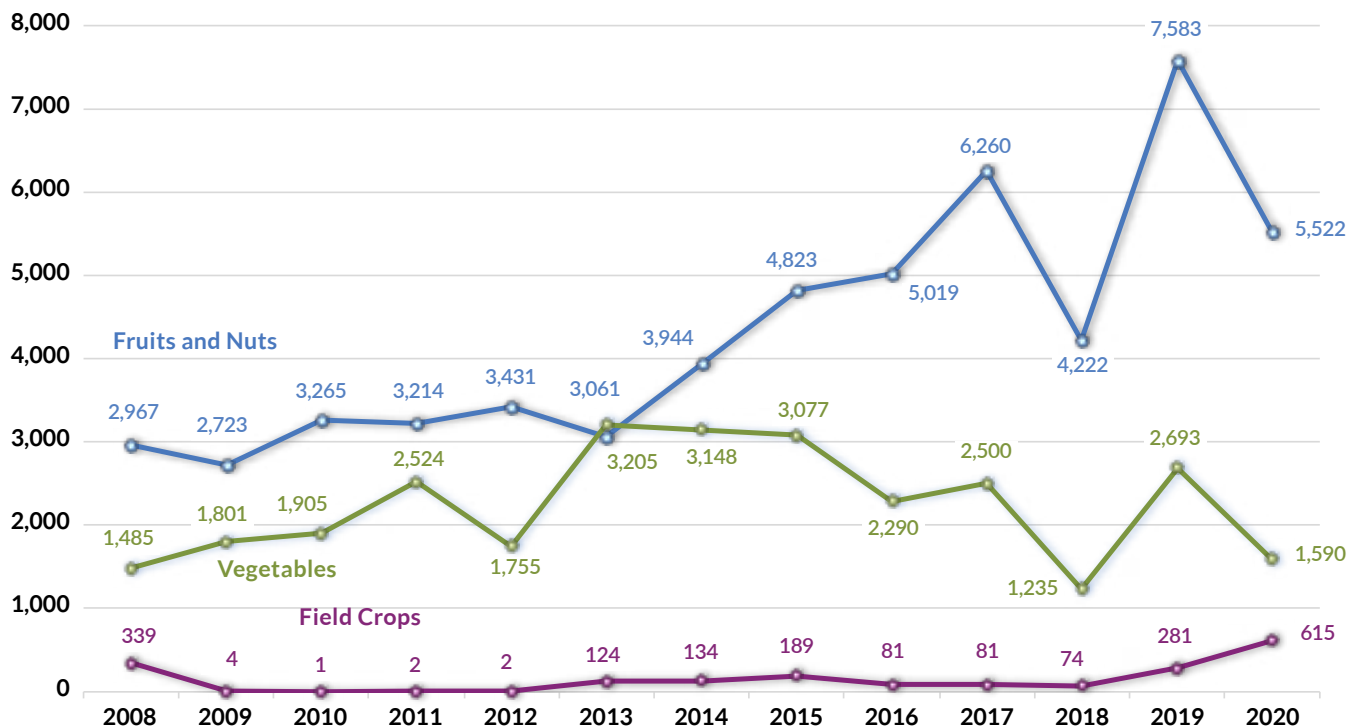
Organic farming has been on the rise in Ventura County for decades, but in 2020, organic acreage was down 26.9%, to 7,752 acres. This could be a single-year blip. There was an even bigger decline from 2017 to 2018, and then organic acreage recovered



the following year, posting a record high.

Organic acreage varies from year to year because the overall numbers are fairly small, relative to the county's entire agricultural industry. That means a single large farm choosing to switch from organic to conventional crops can have a big impact. The drought may also play a role here — as water becomes scarce, growers may decide they need to use non-organic methods.

Acres of Organic Farming in Ventura County (2008 - 2020)



LAND VALUES

Prices high despite recent dip

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 type of crop: row crops, such as berries; and different types of tree crops. The estimates are drawn from property sales compiled by a statewide professional appraisers association.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Whether owned or leased, land 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?

Farmland in Ventura County, like other types of land here, is extremely valuable. In 2020, the median price of an acre of row cropland was \$61,500; the median acre of lemon orchard was worth \$69,500; and the median acre of avocado orchard was valued at \$50,000.

These values are all remarkably high. The median value of an acre of irrigated cropland in the United States in

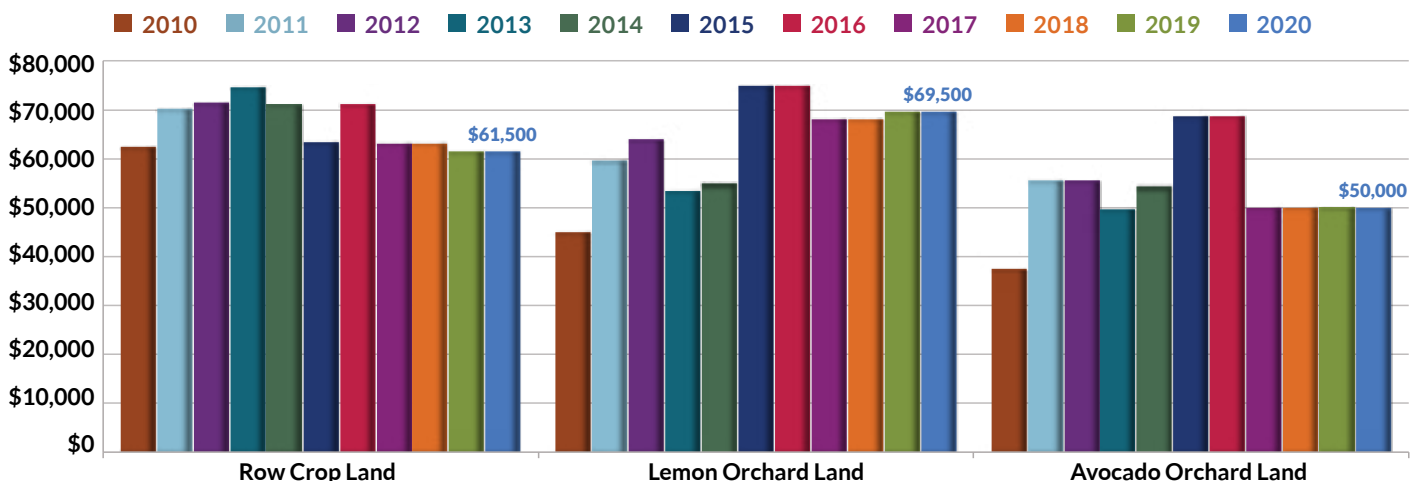
2020 was \$4,100, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This means Ventura County farmland is worth between 12 and 17 times the national average. Ventura County farmland is also costly compared to the rest of California, where the median acre of irrigated cropland was appraised at \$12,900 in 2020.

The value of row cropland in Ventura County has been stagnant in recent years. Taking a longer view, the median value in 2020 was 8.9% below the median in 2009. Orchard land has appreciated. Lemon orchard land was worth 46.3% more in 2020 than in 2009, while avocado orchard land rose 33.3% in that period. In every category, though, most of this appreciation happened in the early and mid-2010s, and the value of all types of cropland was lower in 2020 than it had been in 2016.

One possible explanation for these trends is water. As drought persists, all farmland becomes less valuable, and water-intensive crops are hardest hit. Strawberries, the dominant row crop in Ventura County, are relatively thirsty, and some berry growers may have fallowed their land, which reduces the value. At the same time, global demand for both lemons and avocados has been rising, which could drive up the value of orchard land.



Estimates of Crop Land Values Per Acre (Midpoints) in Ventura County (2010-2020)



AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS

Ventura County berries travel the world

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the agricultural commodities most often exported from Ventura County in 2020, expressed as shares of the total number of exported shipments, and the countries that are the biggest market for those exports. The Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office tracks this data as it inspects shipments for export.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

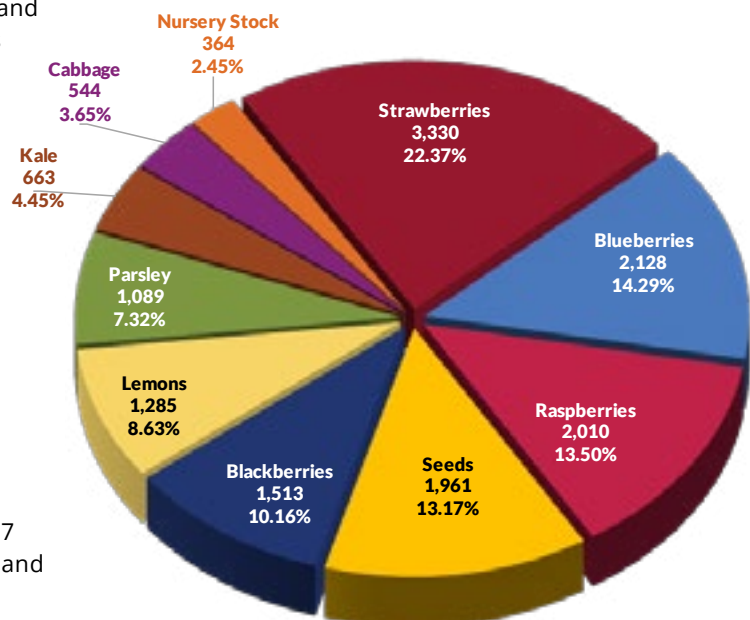
The market for Ventura County agricultural products is a global one. When growers here think about which crops to plant, they consider not only local markets and field conditions, but what customers want in Asia, Europe, Canada and elsewhere.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

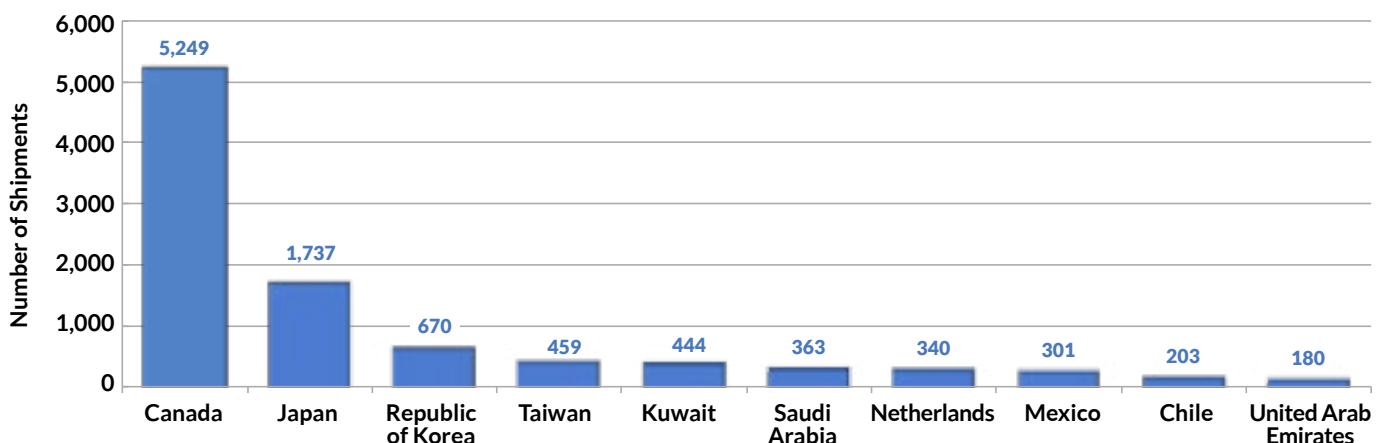
Strawberries are Ventura County's top crop, and they're also the top export, with 3,330 shipments in 2020, accounting for 22.4% of the county's top 10 Ag exports. This compares to 20% in 2018. Blueberries also rose from an 8% share in 2018 to 14.3% in 2020. Raspberries, lemons and parsley all declined the last two years, while 2018 minor players kale and blackberries broke into the top export list in 2020. Strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blackberries accounted for more than 60% of the county's top 10 agricultural exports in 2020.

The biggest international market for Ventura County crops is Canada, which received 5,249 shipments in 2020, more than half of the county's total exports. Japan was second, at 1,737 shipments, followed by South Korea, Taiwan and Kuwait.

Top Agricultural Commodities Exported from Ventura County (2020)
Total Cartons and Percent of Total



Top Ten Export Countries for Ventura County Agricultural Commodities (2020)



EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

Wages low, but climbing

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are inflation-adjusted (real) and non-adjusted (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, and employees rely on their income to pay their rent and feed their families. When farm wages are too low, governments and charities end up providing aid to help workers afford basic necessities.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

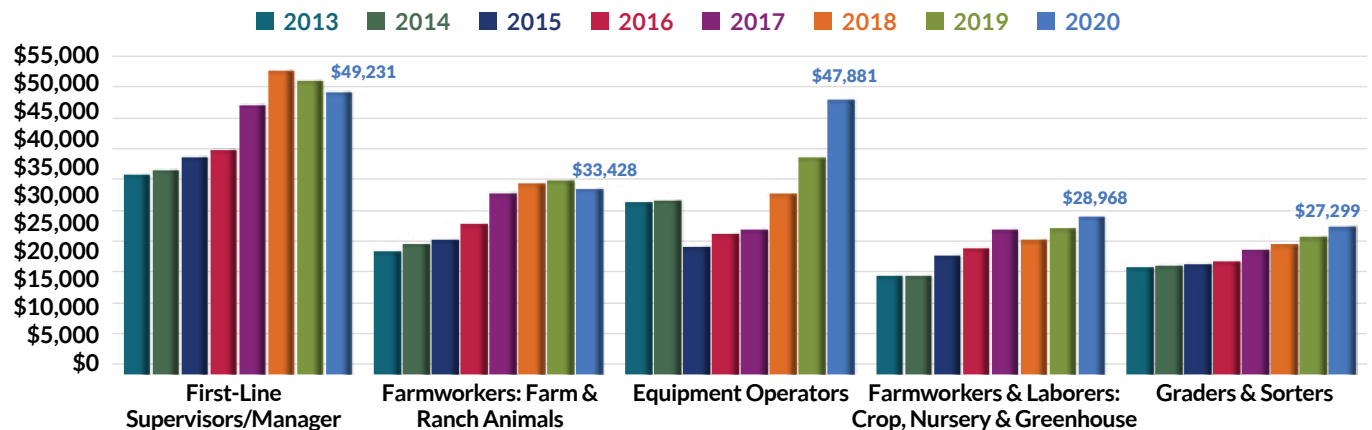
Most farm jobs are relatively low-paying, but earnings

have risen in recent years. The average salary across the entire agricultural industry was \$37,227 in 2020. When adjusted for inflation, that's 19.2% more than the average salary in 2011.

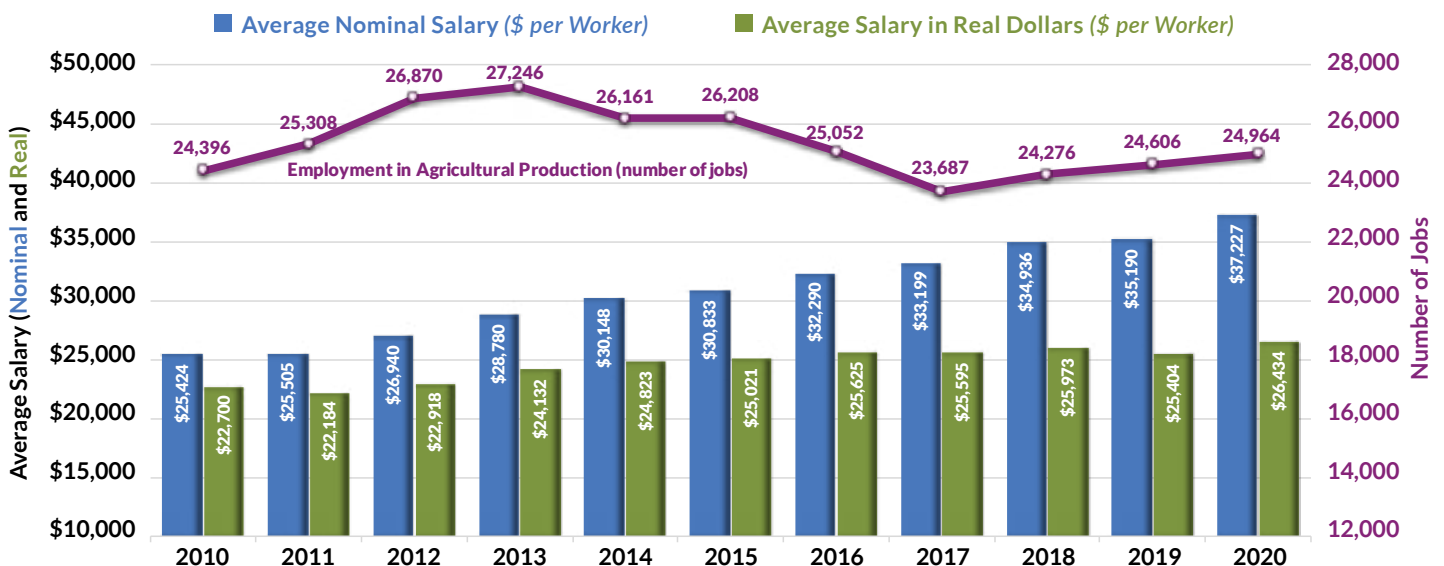
That increase appears to correspond to a decrease in workers. The industry employed 24,964 people in 2020. That was 8.4% below the peak in 2013 — a peak followed by four years of workforce shrinkage and then three years of growth.

Salaries in the ag industry vary widely. The most common job categories are farmworkers and laborers in fields, nurseries and greenhouses, with an average salary of \$28,968 in 2020. Supervisors and managers averaged \$49,231; equipment operators, \$47,881.

Agricultural Earnings (Mean Annual Wage) in Ventura County (Q1) (2013-2020)



Ventura County Agricultural Production Employment & Earnings (2010 - 2020)



Community Engagement and Resources

2021 STATE OF THE REGION REPORT



The pandemic years of 2020 and 2021 physically isolated us from our friends, families and colleagues. In some ways, though, they strengthened the bonds of community engagement. Voter turnout surged remarkably in 2020, perhaps due to a by-mail election in California that made it easier to vote from home. And the nonprofit community in Ventura County rose to the pandemic's challenges, with more need than ever for the services provided by basic-needs nonprofits and more donations and government funding to support them.

Largely, though, the pandemic left us isolated from our communities. Demonstrators marched in the streets all over the country, but for the most part COVID-19 guidelines prevented residents from attending in-person government meetings. Our libraries provided books but stood empty as gathering places. And although safety-net nonprofits were busier than ever, other nonprofits were sidelined by the pandemic. Arts organizations were especially hard-hit — many slashed their budgets 40% or 50%, said Vanessa Bechtel, president and CEO of the Ventura County Community Foundation, one of the county's biggest nonprofits.

Across Southern California, she said, around 12% of nonprofits didn't survive the pandemic's first year.

In a way, it was reminiscent of the last major funding crunch to hit nonprofits, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. But this time around, far more resources were available from donors and the federal government, including Paycheck Protection Program loans and Economic Injury Disaster Loans. The nonprofit sector was, therefore, largely able to meet the challenges before it, and the community connected in a way that helped thousands of people.

"Those on the front lines doing social services were called into action in a way that was unprecedented," Bechtel said. "In Ventura County, we onboarded 100,000 people into the nonprofit social safety net," through organizations like Food Share and the 805 Undocufund.

The Community Foundation itself had more than 10,000 first-time donors, and its revenue was nearly 10 times that of a normal year.

"What I've been witnessing more than ever before in my career is true collaboration and partnership in the sector," Bechtel said. "I have not felt this hopeful, ever. It just feels so hopeful for our future."

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

County's libraries comparatively underfunded

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the total operating expenditures of public library systems in Ventura County, divided by the population of each system's service area.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Public libraries are a vital community resource. In addition to the obvious — thousands of books at every resident's fingertips — they provide free internet access and e-books, along with gathering spaces for lectures, meetings and other events. They also promote children's literacy.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Most public library systems in Ventura County are funded at lower levels than the state average, and wide discrepancies exist between systems in the county.

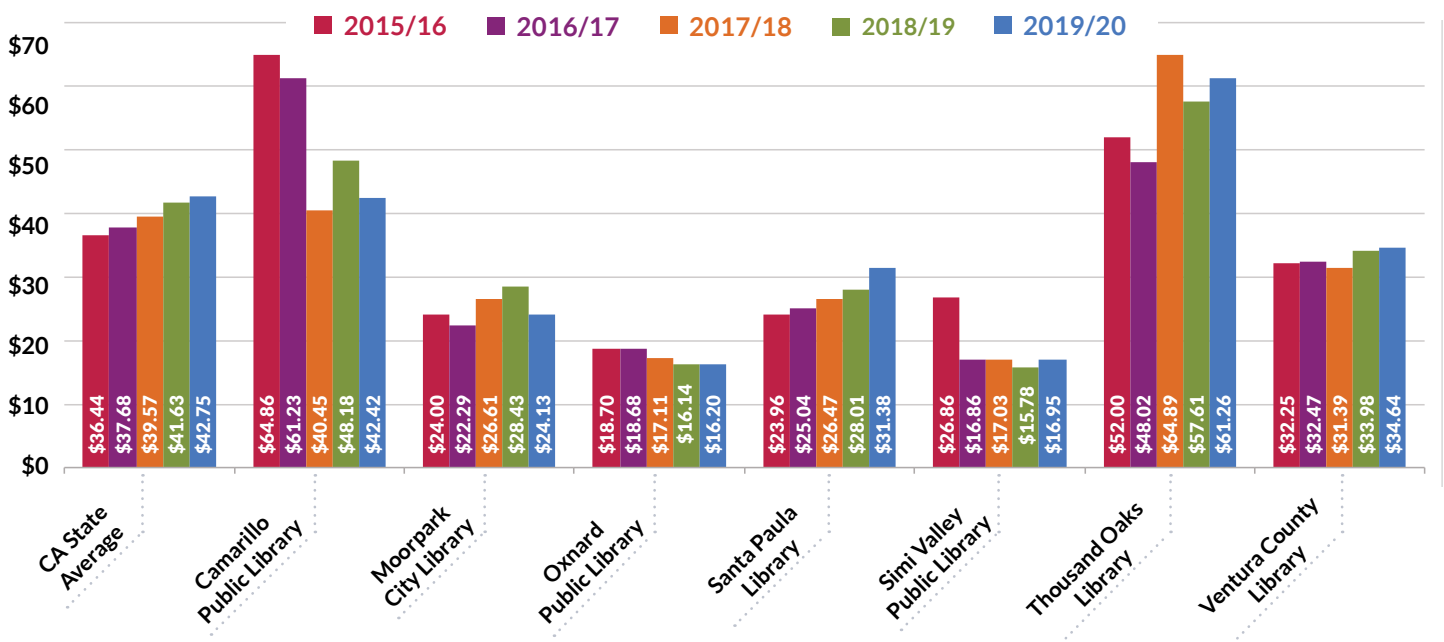
In the 2019/20 fiscal year, the state average was \$42.75 per person, a level exceeded by only one system in Ventura County: the Thousand Oaks Library, which had \$61.26 in per capita funding. At the other end of the spectrum, the Oxnard Public Library was the lowest funded in Ventura County, at \$16.20 per resident in 2019/20 — a little more than a quarter of the per capita funding in Thousand Oaks.

The rest of the county's libraries fell somewhere in between. The Camarillo Public Library was second to Thousand Oaks, and just a few cents below the state average, at \$42.42. The Ventura County Public Library System, which includes branches in Ventura, the Ojai Valley, Fillmore, Port Hueneme, Saticoy, Oak Park and Piru, had \$34.64 in per capita funding.

The funding for most library systems in Ventura County has declined or been stagnant in recent years. Between 2015/16 and 2019/20, the state average grew by 17.3%, while in the same period the per capita funding for the county library system increased 7.4%; funding in Moorpark was essentially flat; funding in Oxnard dropped 13.4%; funding in Camarillo was down 34.6%; and library funding in Simi Valley dropped by 36.9%. Library funding grew 17.8% in that five-year period in Thousand Oaks and 31% in Santa Paula.

The 2019/20 fiscal year, of course, includes only the early months of the pandemic. During that time, most libraries shut down, and then reopened only to distribute books but were closed to patrons. When they reopened again for visitors, it was with strict — and often expensive — procedures for cleaning, ventilation and limiting crowd sizes and close contact. It remains to be seen what effect these had on their budgets.

Per Capita Spending for Ventura County Public Library Systems
(FY 2015/16 - 2019/20)



VOTER REGISTRATION

Record numbers registered

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 the first step in making your voice heard in our democracy. In the past, California residents were required to register at least 15 days before an election in order to vote. That began to change in 2017 when the state instituted “conditional” registration at county election offices as late as Election Day. In 2020, conditional registration broadened to include every polling place, giving California essentially same-day registration.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Californians are living in a golden age of voter registration. The state passed a series of laws in recent years making it easier to register to vote, and they appear to have achieved the desired effect: Statewide, registration has gone from 72.7% in 2015 to 88% in 2021.

Ventura County residents have been even more eager to register. Registration figures in the county shot up from 79.2% in 2015 to 94.4% in 2021, with most of the increase coming after the state instituted universal

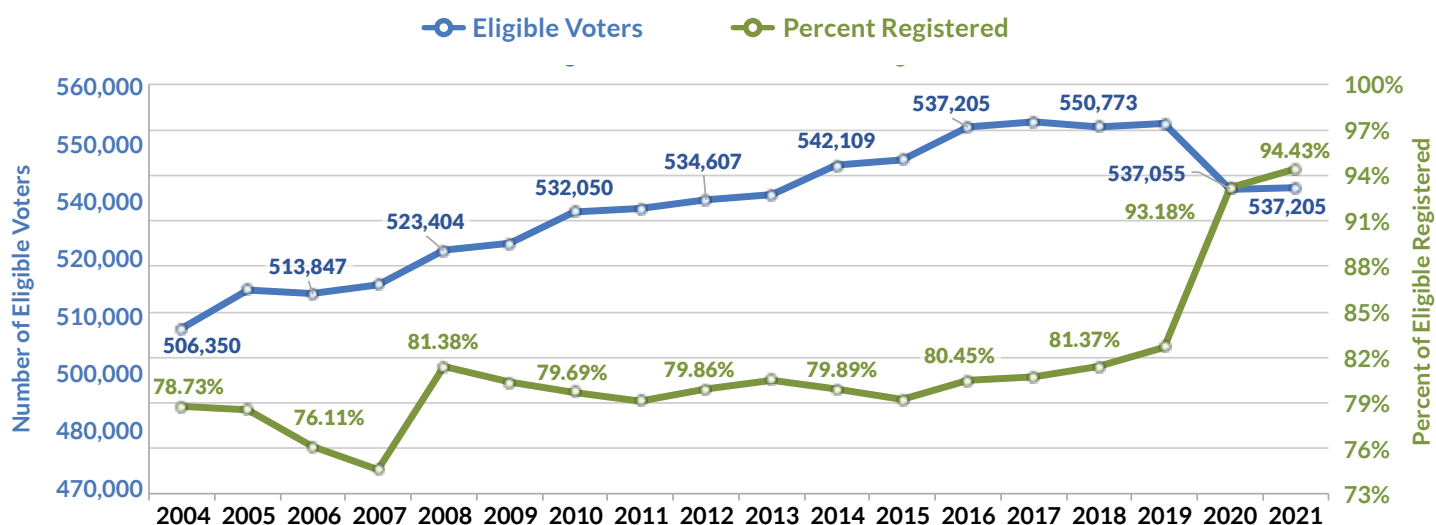
same-day registration in 2020. The registration rates for 2020 and 2021 are the highest on record for the county.

The voter registration rate tends to dip a bit in nonelection years and recover in presidential election years, but that pattern may be a thing of the past. Registration climbed even higher in 2021, a nonelection year, than it had been in 2020.

The number of eligible potential voters, meanwhile, has begun to fall in Ventura County, likely a result of the county's overall population decline in recent years.



Ventura County Voter Registration (2004 - 2021)



VOTER TURNOUT

Turnout high in 2016, higher in 2020

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. Some government agencies, including the Ventura County Clerk-Recorder's Office, express voter turnout as a percentage of registered voters, not eligible voters. We believe treating eligible residents who do not register to vote as nonvoters gives a more accurate picture of a community's voter turnout.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Voting is the most basic act of participation in our representative democracy. Not only is it the way we choose our leaders, it also acts as an expression of democratic 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. High turnout is indicative of an involved, educated citizenry, and of a political culture in which ordinary people believe their votes can make a difference.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Voter turnout is consistently higher in Ventura County than in the rest of the state, and turnout everywhere was unusually high in 2020. In the 2020 general election, 80% of eligible Ventura County residents voted, well above the statewide rate of 71%, Los Angeles County's rate of 71%, and Santa Barbara County's turnout of 70%.

Presidential election years typically produce higher turnout than nonpresidential election years, and 2020 was no exception. Turnout in Ventura County jumped from 57% in 2018 to 80% in 2020.

The 80% turnout in 2020 was the highest in the county's recent history, easily topping the 65.7% turnout rate in 2008 and the 66% rate in 2016. And even the last nonpresidential election was a high-turnout affair: 57% of eligible Ventura County residents voted in the 2018 midterm, up from 37.6% in 2014.

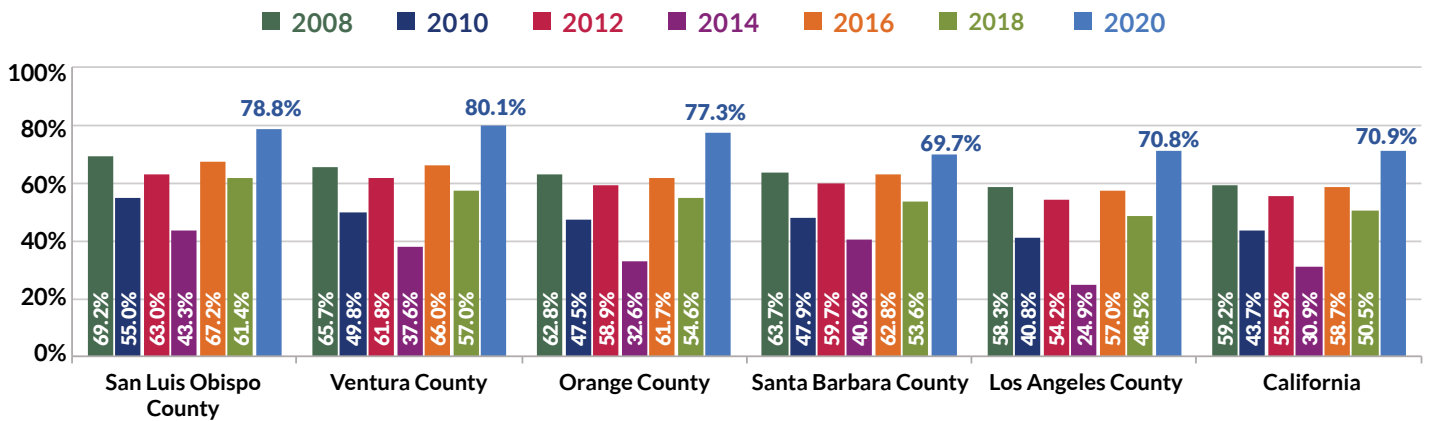
Nationwide, turnout in the 2020 election was the highest since the early 1900s, and the highest at any time since the United States began to guarantee the voting rights of women and African Americans. It remains to be seen whether 2016-2020 was a period of unique political engagement and voter turnout, or whether it signals a new trend.

The trend toward mail-in ballots does look like a significant and long-lasting shift. The percentage of Ventura County voters who vote by mail rather than at a polling place climbed steadily from 43.5% in 2008 to 63.3% in 2018. The pandemic, of course, meant the 2020 election was almost entirely mail-in, with 89.4% of the county's ballots cast either by mail or dropped off before Election Day. Without an active pandemic keeping people away from the polls, that figure is almost certain to decline in future elections, but California law and political culture have evolved to a point where most voters likely will continue to cast ballots by mail.

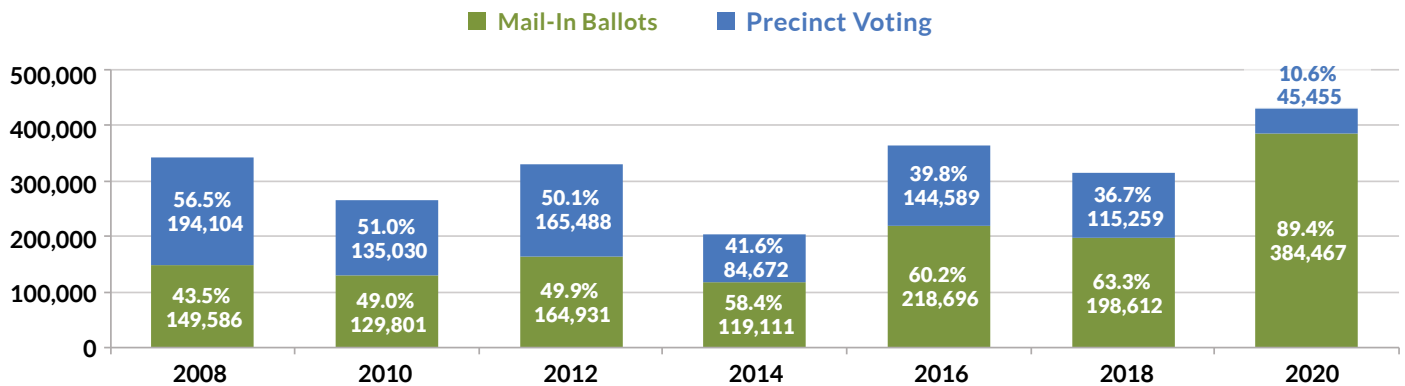
Another recent change in California is the move away from neighborhood polling places and toward citywide "voting centers." This means people who want to vote in person must often travel farther to reach their polling place. On the other hand, voters no longer need to know where their neighborhood polling place is; they can head to any voting center in the county to cast their ballots.



Percent of Eligible Voters Actually Voting in California General Elections (2008 - 2020)



Ventura County Mail-in Ballots vs. Precinct Voting (2008-2020)



POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION

Democrats widen lead in county

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

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

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

The party affiliation of voters in a legislative district is often the biggest factor in deciding which candidate is sent to Sacramento or Washington, D.C. Even in local elections, which are officially nonpartisan, party affiliation can influence voter behavior.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

For most of the 20th century, Republicans enjoyed consistent majorities in Ventura County. That began to change in the early 2000s, as Democrats narrowed the gap. In 2008 they passed Republicans in registration and haven't looked back. In 2021 the gap grew wider than ever, with 42.6% of the county's voters registered as Democrats and 28.8% registered as Republicans.

No Party Preference and third-party voters nearly equaled Republicans, at 28.6% of the electorate. The vast majority of those voters have no party preference. The largest third party in Ventura County in 2021 was the American Independent Party, at 3.2% of registered voters, followed by the Libertarian Party at 1% and the Green Party and Peace and Freedom Party, each at 0.4%.

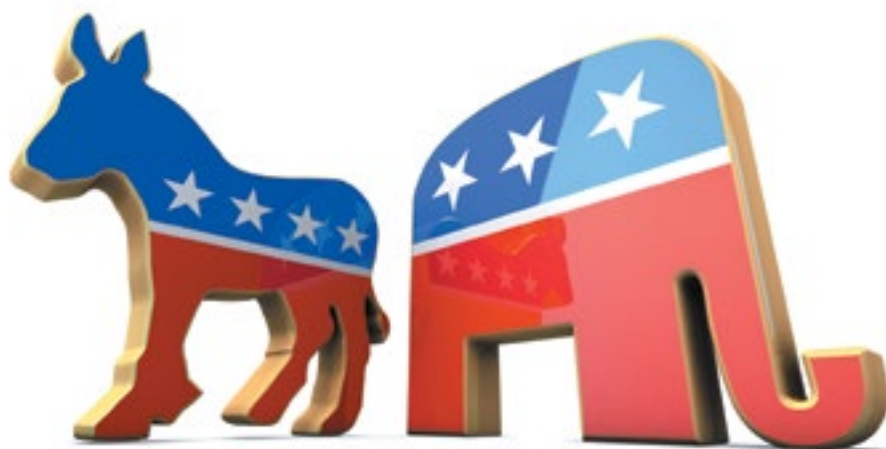
The rise of the No Party Preference voter is a statewide phenomenon, and one that has reshaped California and Ventura County politics over the past two decades. Democrats actually gained only a little bit in registration between 2000 and 2021, going from 38.9% of the electorate to 42.6%. The movement in registration statistics was almost entirely away from the Republican Party and toward no party at all: Republicans dropped from 41.7% of the electorate in 2000 to 28.8% in 2021, while No Party Preference voters went from 19.4% of the electorate in 2000 to 28.6% in 2021.

This trend may have crested, though. Ventura County's percentage of No Party Preference voters peaked in 2019 at 31.6% and dropped in each of the next two years, as Democrats gained ground.

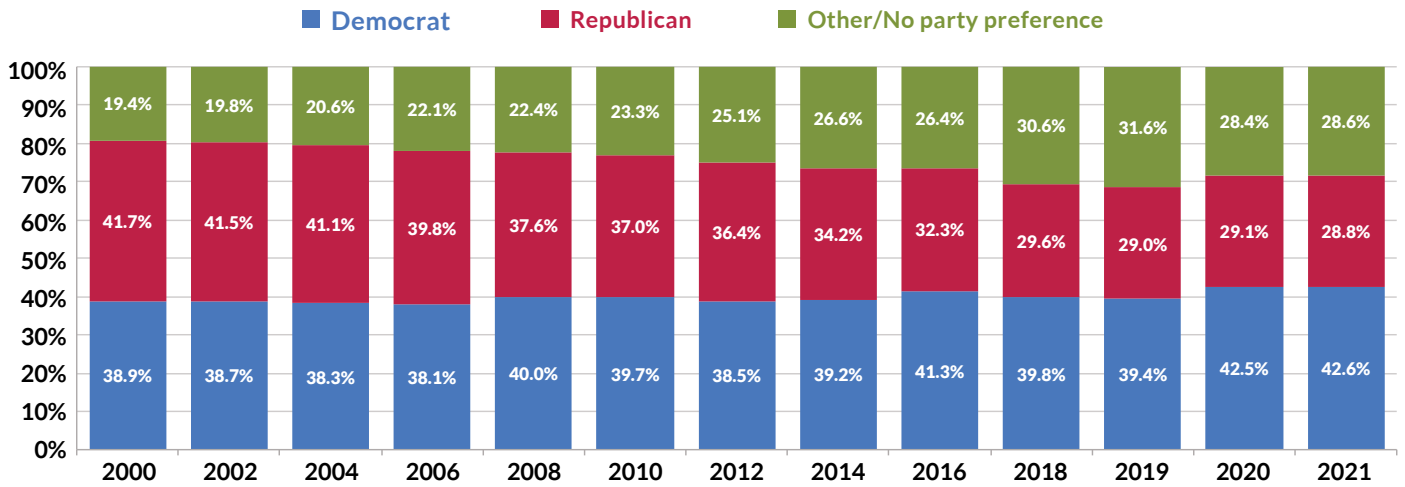
In 2021, Ventura County had three cities where more than half of registered voters were Democrats: Oxnard, at 54.8%; Ojai, at 53.4%; and Santa Paula, at 52.1%. Port Hueneme was just below that mark, with 49.9% of voters registered as Democrats.

No other cities in the county are as heavily Republican as Oxnard or Ojai are Democratic. The only city where Republicans outnumber Democrats is Simi Valley, by a margin of 37.7% to 33.9%.

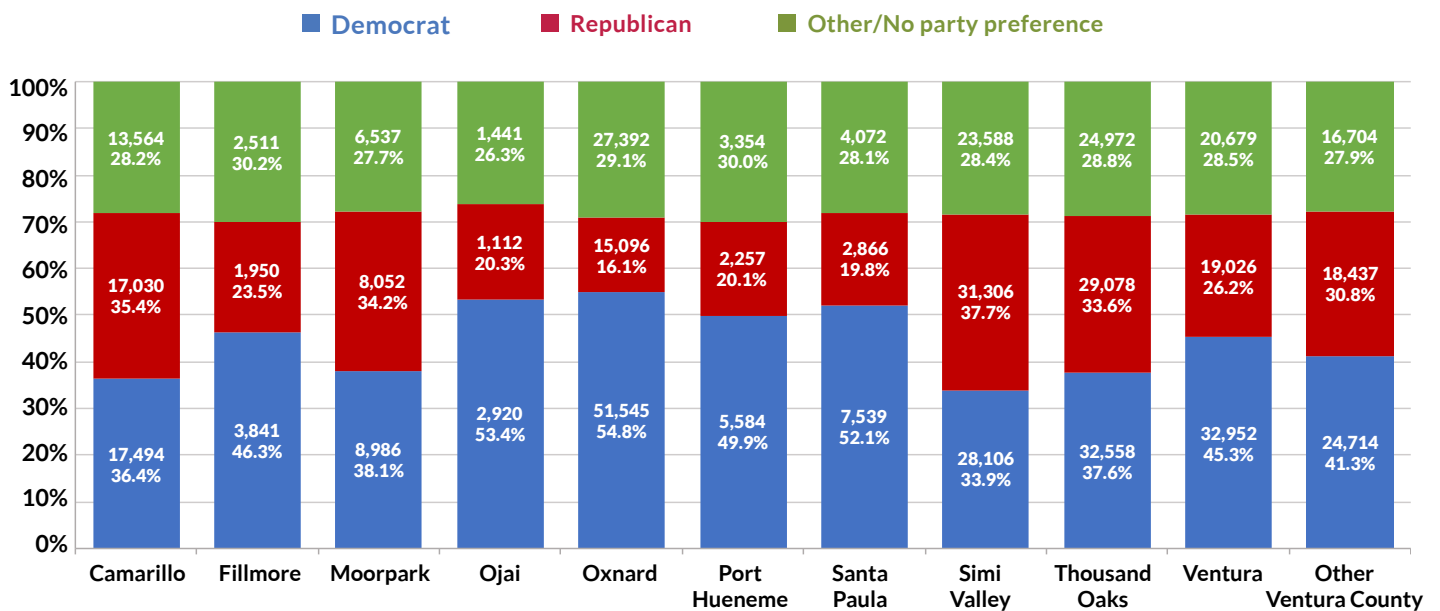
No Party Preference voters are distributed fairly evenly, with little relationship to a city's ratio of Democrats to Republicans. In every city in Ventura County, between 26% and 30% of voters are registered without a political party.



Affiliations of Registered Ventura County Voters (2000-2021)



Affiliations of Registered Ventura County Voters by City (2021)



NONPROFITS BY TYPE AND WAGES

Nonprofits employ nearly 9,000

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the number of nonprofits based in Ventura County, broken down by type, and the number of people employed by those nonprofits and the wages they receive.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

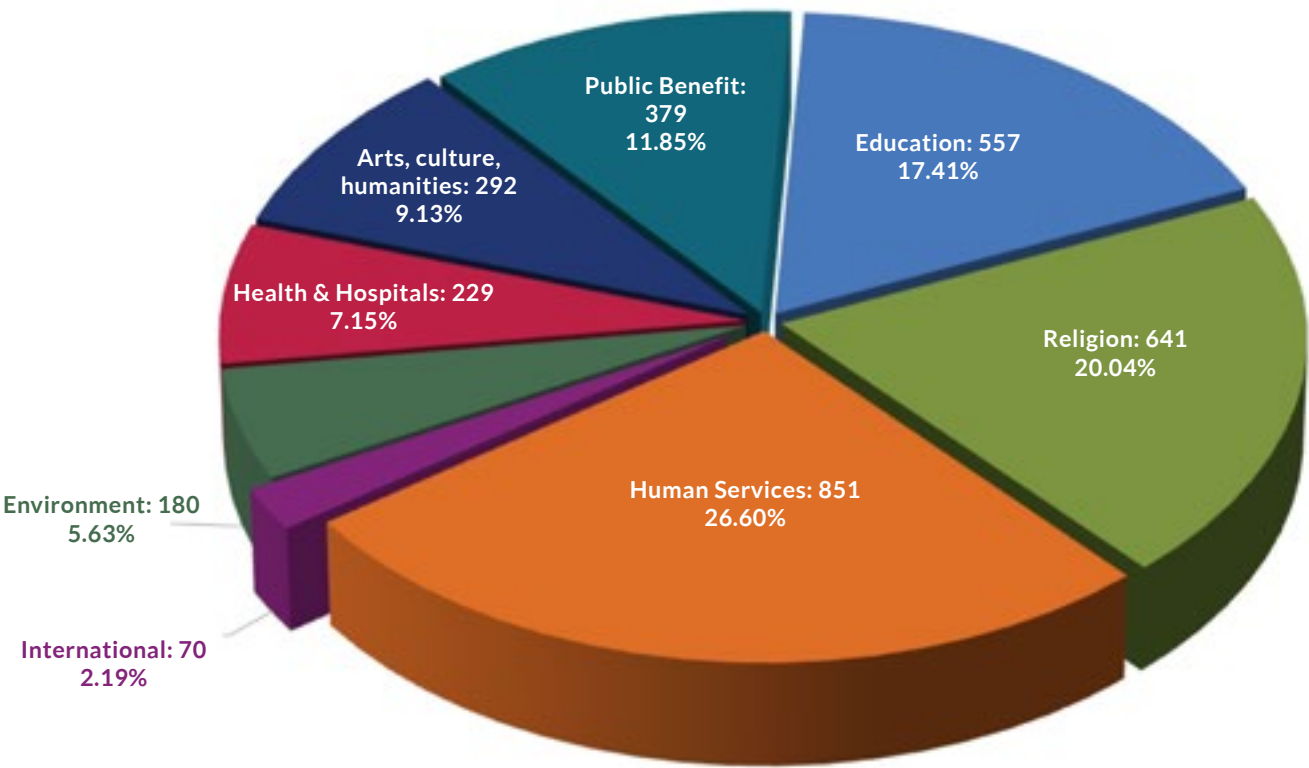
The nonprofit sector is an important part of the economy and the social fabric of Ventura County. Nonprofits do more than benefit the recipients of their services; they also provide jobs for thousands of county residents.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

There were 3,199 nonprofits based in Ventura County in 2019, and almost half were either religious or human-services organizations. Human-services nonprofits were the most common, at 27% of the county's total, followed by religious nonprofits at 20% and education nonprofits at 17%.

Ventura County nonprofits, excluding the county's nonprofit hospitals, employed 9,217 people and paid total wages of \$18.6 billion in 2019. Wages grew and jobs shrank in the nonprofit sector in 2020, although the nonprofit sector lost 5.5% of its jobs, compared to 6.7% for all employers in the county. In 2020, nonprofits accounted for about 2.9% of the county's jobs and 2% of its wages.

Number of Ventura County Nonprofit Organizations by Type (Fiscal 2019)



Comparison of Ventura County Nonprofit Employment and Total Employment
Data Excludes Nonprofit Hospitals (2019, 2020)

Nonprofits	2019	2020
Average Total Employment	9,217	8,714
Total Annual Wages	\$373,625,603	\$379,321,701
Average Annual Wages	\$40,537	\$43,530
All Employers Including Government	2019	2020
Average Total Employment	324,414	302,640
Total Annual Wages	\$18,611,976,245	\$19,072,582,704
Average Annual Wages	\$57,371	\$63,021

Comparison of California Nonprofit Employment and Total Employment
Data Excludes Hospitals (2019, 2020)

Nonprofits	2019	2020
Average Total Employment	920,373	884,534
Total Annual Wages	\$55,016,909,164	\$59,460,140,212
Average Annual Wages	\$59,777	\$67,222
All Employers Including Government	2019	2020
Average Total Employment	17,226,895	15,976,954
Total Annual Wages	\$1,223,558,511,352	\$1,266,094,046,132
Average Annual Wages	\$71,026	\$79,245



NONPROFITS BY SIZE

Schools, hospitals are biggest nonprofits

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the largest nonprofits in Ventura County, ranked by revenue in 2019, and the revenue for each type of nonprofit in 2019.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Ventura County's larger nonprofits are some of the major players in our economy and our civic and cultural lives. Many report assets and annual revenues in the hundreds of millions of dollars. They tackle some of our county's most serious social problems and have some of our most influential leaders on their boards.

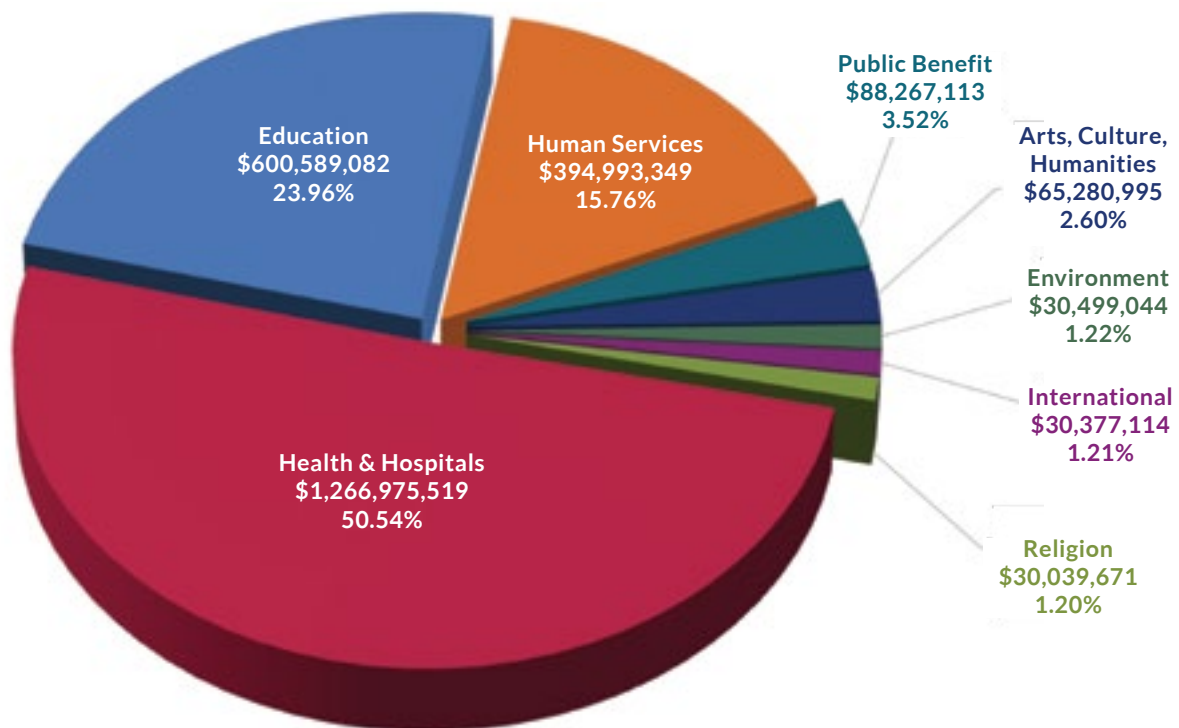
HOW ARE WE DOING?

While the most common types of nonprofits in Ventura County are religious and human- services organizations, the biggest nonprofits are hospitals and

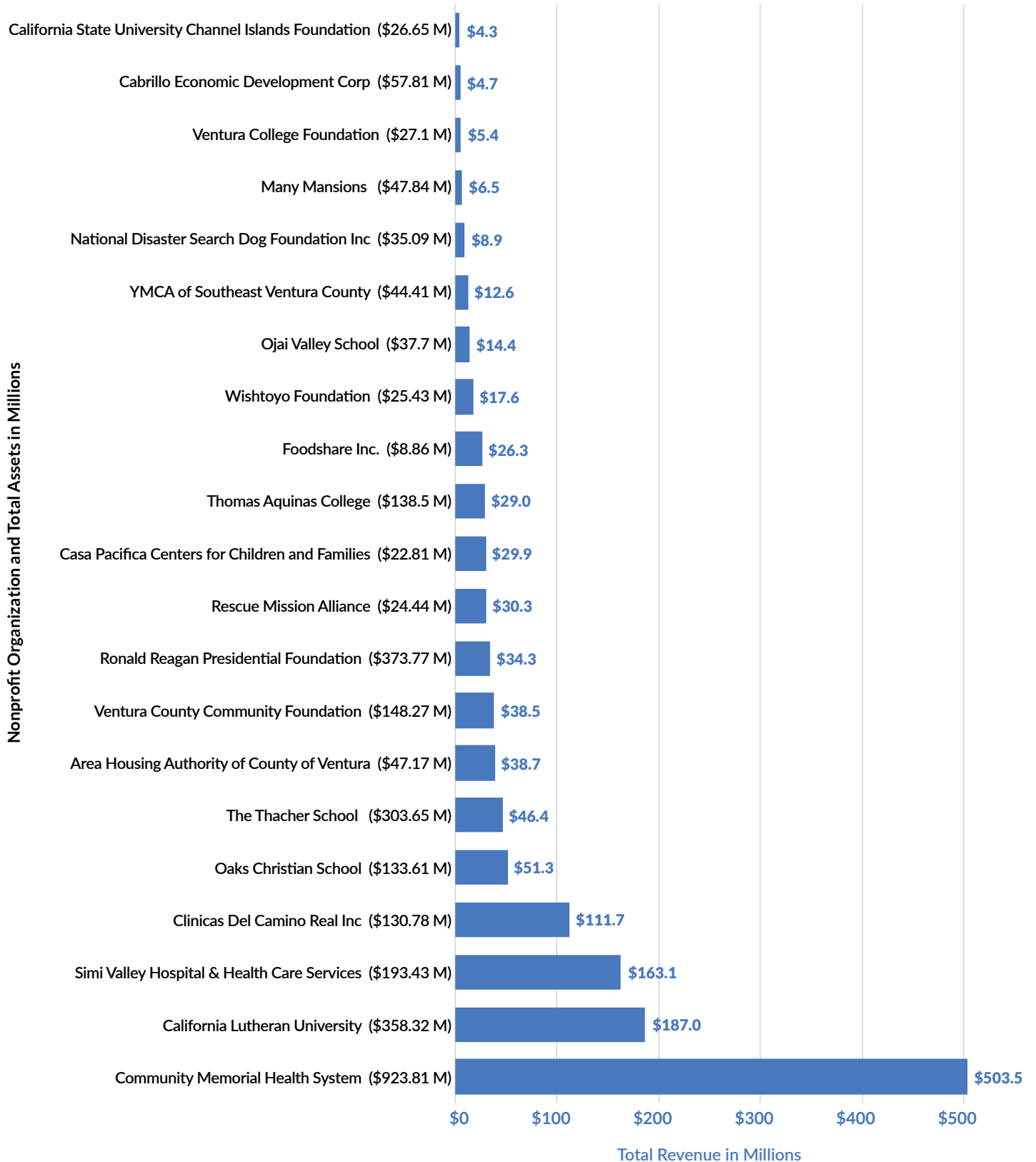
other health-care organizations, which accounted for 50.5% of all nonprofit revenue in the county in 2019, at nearly \$1.3 billion. Educational organizations, including universities, ranked second, at \$600.6 million, or 24% of the county's total.

The county's largest nonprofit is a hospital and health care provider: Community Memorial Health System in Ventura, which had \$503.5 million in revenue in 2019 and \$923.8 million in assets. The second biggest nonprofit by revenue in 2019 was an educational organization: California Lutheran University, with \$187 million in revenue and \$358.3 in assets. Rounding out the top six by revenue were two more health-care organizations, Simi Valley Hospital and Clinicas Del Camino Real; and two more educational organizations, Oaks Christian School and The Thacher School.

Ventura County Nonprofit Organizations by Revenue (Fiscal 2019)



Total Assets and Gross Receipts for Selected Large Ventura County Nonprofits (Fiscal Year 2019)



NONPROFIT REVENUE

Revenue growing, but still behind state

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the number of nonprofits filing Form 990 or 990-EZ with the IRS in Ventura County, our neighboring counties and California; the total revenue, assets and net assets of those nonprofits; and their per capita revenue at the county and state levels. Tax-exempt nonprofits typically must file Form 990 if they take in more than \$50,000 in revenue.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Nonprofit assets and revenue, in relation to the county's population, measure a nonprofit's resources relative to the size of the market they serve. They also offer 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 people from outside the county are counted, as are revenues from government grants, fees for service and other sources.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

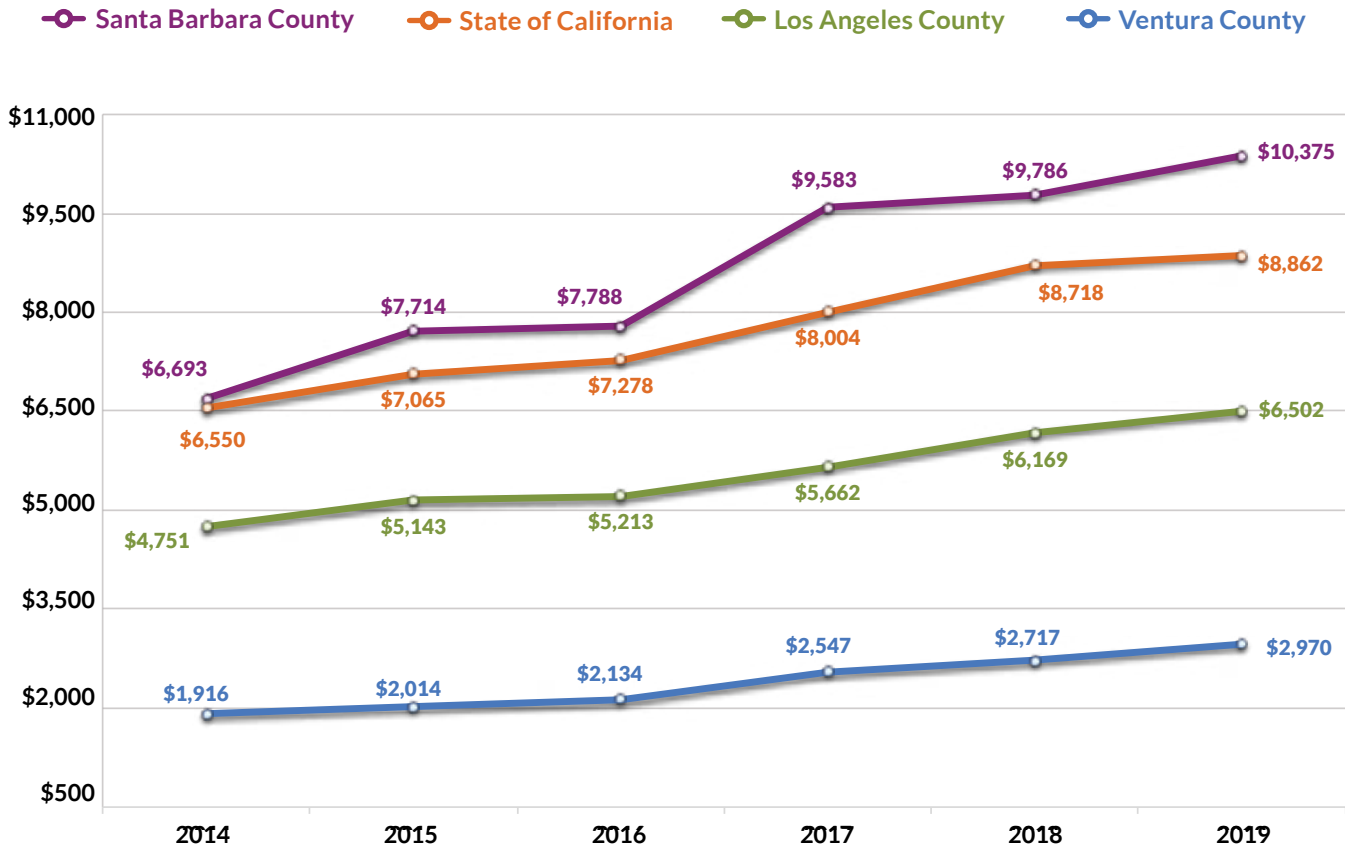
Even before the pandemic brought new responsibilities and new funding to the nonprofit sector, nonprofits in Ventura County had seen their revenues grow for years. The 1,052 nonprofits filing with the IRS in 2019 declared revenue of \$2.51 billion, or \$2,970 per Ventura County resident. That was 9.3% more per person than the year before, and 55% more than the per capita total from 2014, five years earlier.

Despite that growth, Ventura County lags well behind the state as a whole in nonprofit revenue per capita, and behind Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties. Santa Barbara County nonprofits had \$10,375 in revenue for every county resident in 2019, more than triple Ventura County's total. In Los Angeles County, nonprofit revenue was \$6,502, more than double the Ventura County figure, and in the entire state, it was \$8,862 per person, nearly triple our per capita total.

**Comparison of Ventura County and California Nonprofits
Filing IRS 990 or 990-EZ (2014 - 2019)**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Organization Count						
Ventura County	1,049	1,055	1,080	1,105	1,081	1,052
California	49,247	50,281	50,873	51,293	50,573	49,471
Total Revenue						
Ventura County	\$1.62 Billion	\$1.71 Billion	\$1.81 Billion	\$2.16 Billion	\$2.30 Billion	\$2.51 Billion
California	\$252.56 Billion	\$274.60 Billion	\$284.58 Billion	\$314.99 Billion	\$344.54 Billion	\$350.97 Billion
Total Assets						
Ventura County	\$3.03 Billion	\$3.13 Billion	\$3.28 Billion	\$3.64 Billion	\$3.77 Billion	\$3.97 Billion
California	\$405.98 Billion	\$427.18 Billion	\$444.99 Billion	\$497.08 Billion	\$527.81 Billion	\$552.59 Billion
Total Net Assets						
Ventura County	\$1.81 Billion	\$1.91 Billion	\$2.08 Billion	\$2.41 Billion	\$2.56 Billion	\$2.70 Billion
California	\$238.29 Billion	\$255.45 Billion	\$264.61 Billion	\$301.45 Billion	\$322.33 Billion	\$340.85 Billion
Per Capita Revenue						
Ventura County	\$1,916	\$2,014	\$2,134	\$2,547	\$2,717	\$2,970
California	\$6,550	\$7,065	\$7,278	\$8,004	\$8,718	\$8,862

Nonprofit Per Capita Revenue (2014 - 2019)







Between the financial crisis of 2008 and the Great Recession that followed, and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021, Ventura County and the rest of the nation have been through two major economic shocks in a little over a decade. The immediate impact of these events was similar in some ways: mass layoffs, skyrocketing unemployment and disruption to our county's balance of service-providing and goods-producing industries.

These two recessions differed in important ways. Perhaps the biggest one is their duration. The Great Recession was triggered by a financial crisis, while the 2020 recession, of course, was brought on by a noneconomic event, the COVID-19 pandemic. While still very much with us in the fall of 2021, the pandemic's worst appeared over, and the economy already was recovering. It took around five years for Ventura County to recoup the jobs lost in 2008 and 2009, and the unemployment rate stayed above 9% for three years. During the pandemic, unemployment

shot up higher, topping 14% in April 2020, but a year and a half later it was down to 5.3%.

Like the Great Recession, the pandemic downturn looks to have long-lived effects on our economic lives. It vastly expanded our social safety net, which reduced our national poverty rate even during a time of mass unemployment. It changed the relationship of millions of Americans with their jobs, leading thousands to work from home some or all of the time and thousands more to quit to seek better opportunities. It changed our travel patterns, our commuting routines and our consumption habits.

The period between these catastrophes was relatively prosperous, but it revealed cracks in our economic foundation. Inequality and a high cost of living have posed problems for Ventura County for years, and recent events have not brought forth any solutions. As the pandemic fades, our economy will continue to grow. It remains to be seen, however, whether it will grow in a manner that offers widespread prosperity.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment spike was temporary

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 those looking for work are considered part of the workforce; those who have 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 risk of poverty, hunger and homelessness. Even brief 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 health of the economy.

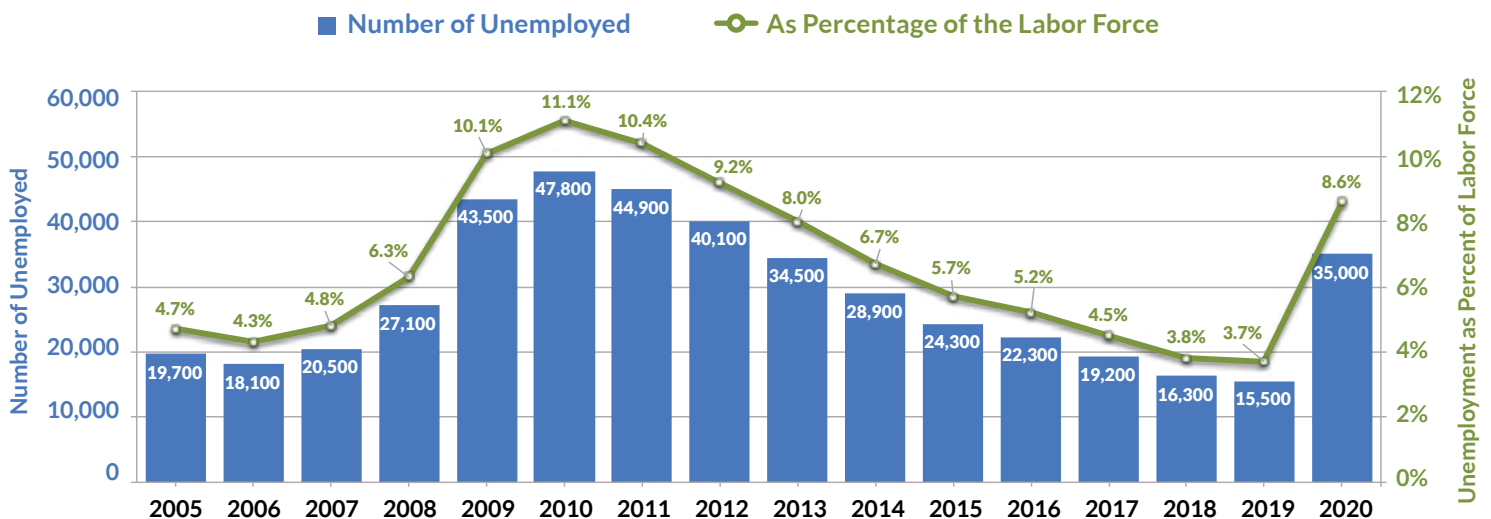
HOW ARE WE DOING?

The start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March and April 2020 shocked the economy in unprecedented ways. Nationwide millions of businesses had to close as governors issued lockdown orders. Not all of their employees lost their jobs, but many did. In a single month, the U.S. unemployment rate went from low by historical standards to the highest point since the Great Depression.

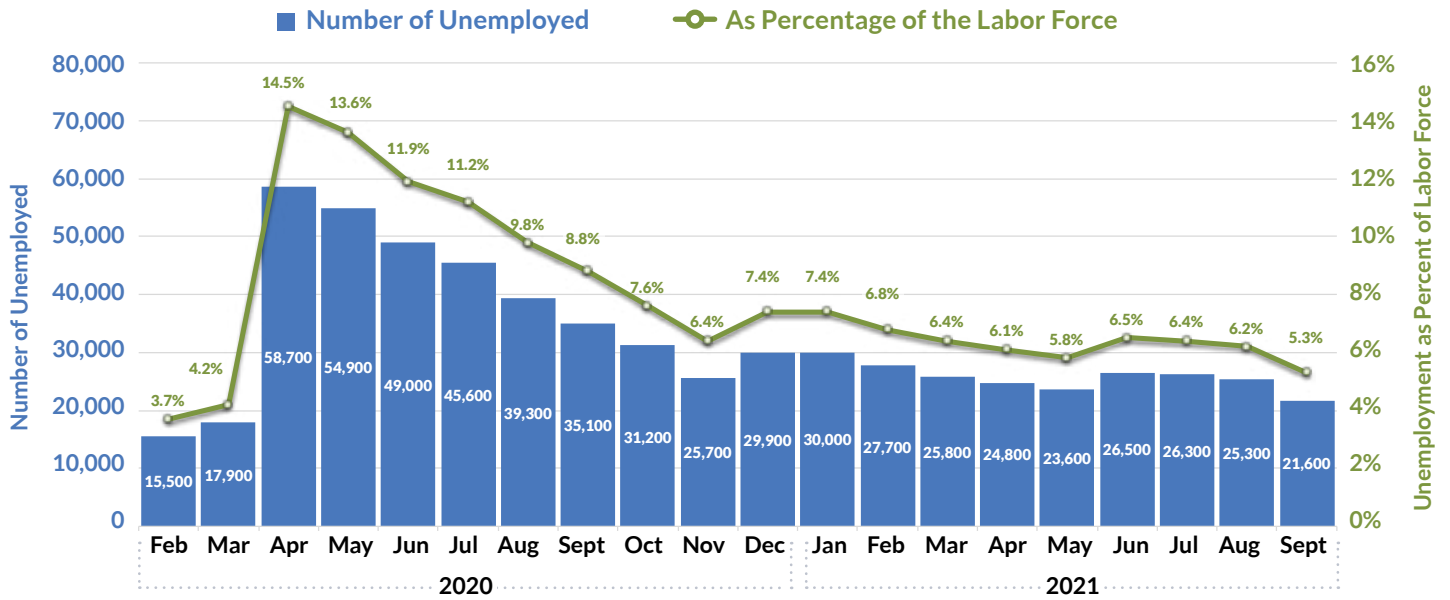


In Ventura County, the unemployment rate shot up from 4.2% in March 2020 to 14.5% in April. This extreme economic emergency was fairly short-lived; the unemployment rate declined steadily to 6.4% in November 2020, and hovered in that vicinity until a drop in September 2021 to 5.3%. That averaged out to an unemployment rate of 8.6% for the entirety of 2020 — the highest since 2012, but still below the full-year averages during the depths of the Great Recession, when the unemployment rate stayed above 10% for three consecutive years.

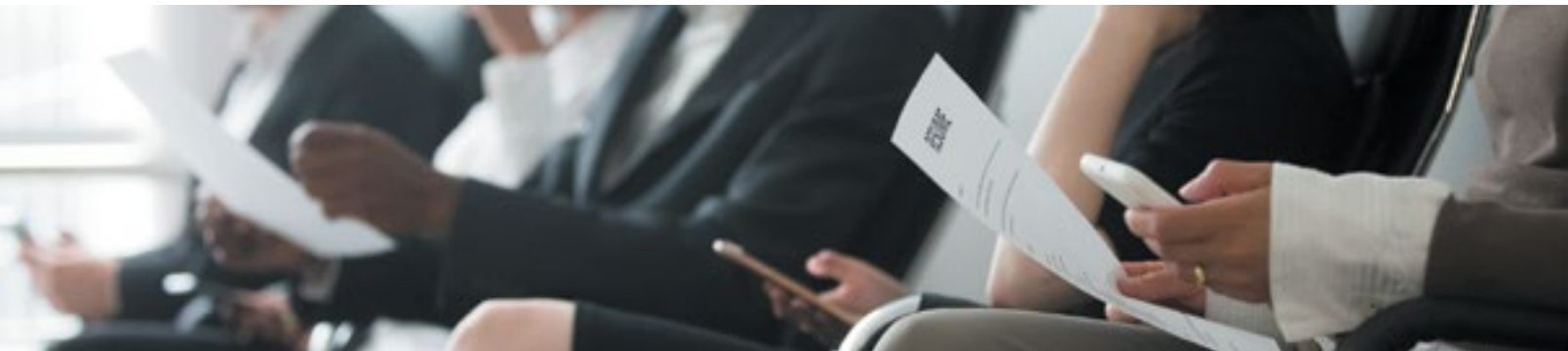
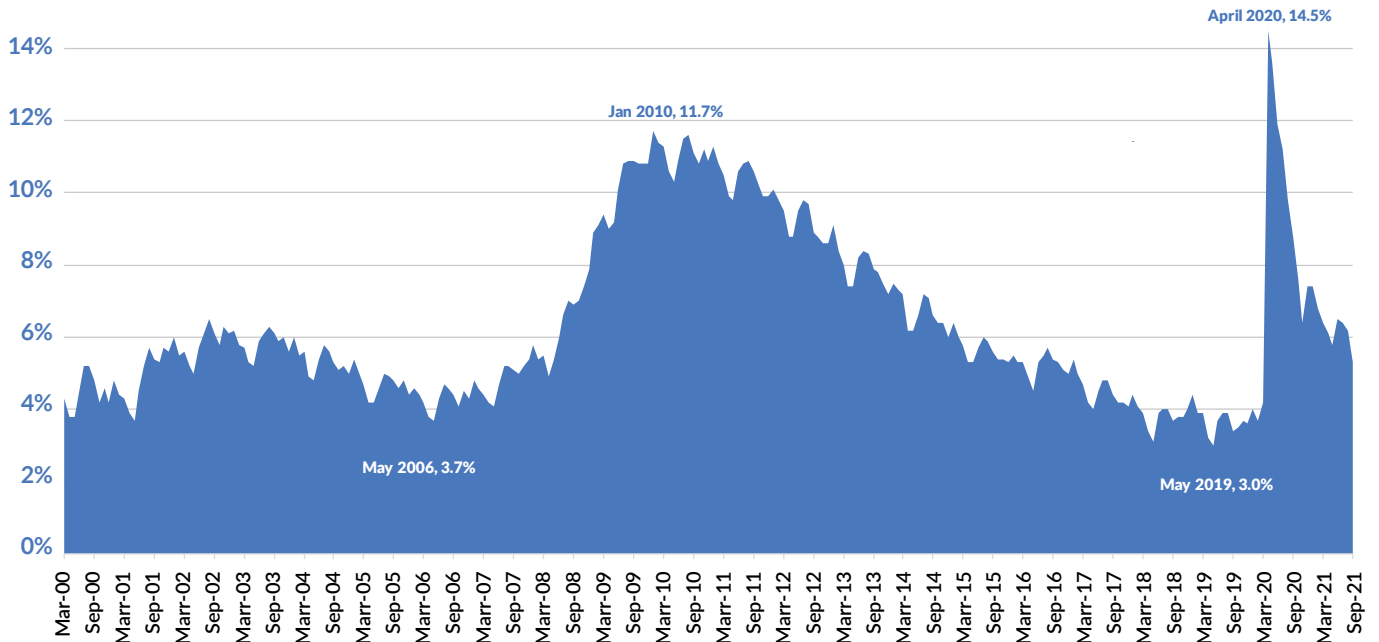
**Ventura County Unemployment - Annual Average,
Not Seasonally Adjusted (2005 - 2020)**



Ventura County Unemployment by Month, Not Seasonally Adjusted (February 2020 - September 2021)



Ventura County Historical Unemployment Rate by Month, Not Seasonally Adjusted (March 2000 - September 2021)



EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

Years of progress erased

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

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 ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

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

HOW ARE WE DOING?

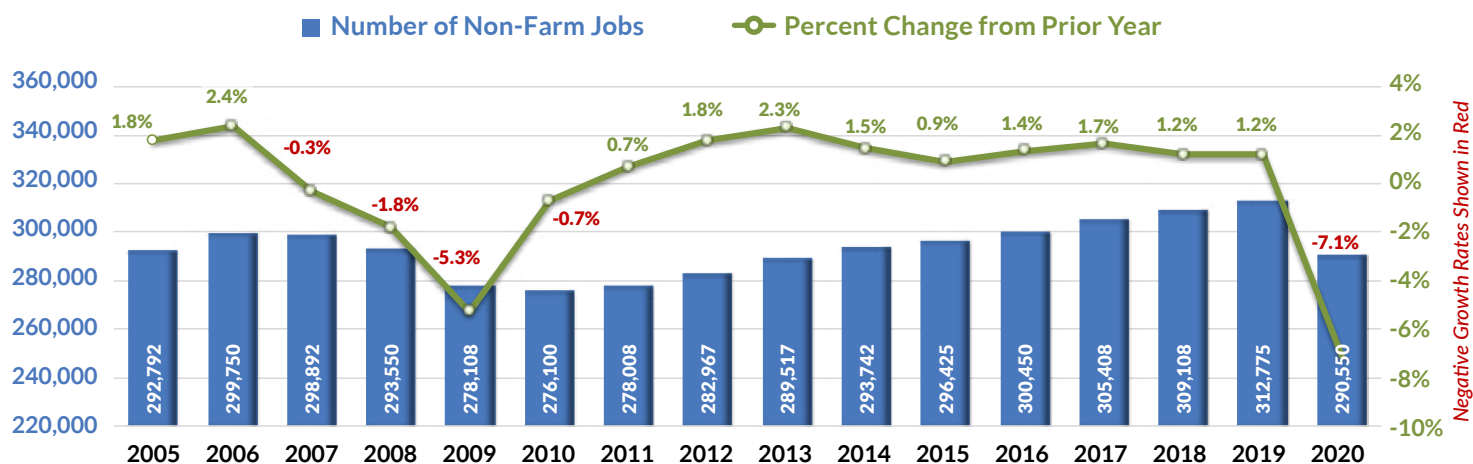
There were 290,550 nonfarm jobs in Ventura County

in 2020, the lowest total since 2013, when the county had fewer people. Ventura County lost more than 22,000 jobs in 2020 due to the pandemic and its attendant business restrictions, or nearly as many as it gained during the first six years of recovery after the job market bottomed out in 2010, during the last recession.

The 7.1% contraction in jobs in a single year was by far the worst in this century, exceeding the 5.3% job loss in 2009. Before 2020, Ventura County saw steady job growth for nearly a decade — steady, but slow, as the county only topped 2% job growth once between 2011 and 2019.



Non-Farm Ventura County Employment (2005 - 2020)



EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

Most industries shed jobs in 2020

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is a breakdown of employment in Ventura County by industrial sector. It includes 2007, before the Great Recession, and every year from 2016 through 2020.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Job creation is important, but so is the type of jobs that are created. A breakdown by sector shows whether jobs are emerging in industries that pay well, are likely to grow in the future or are resistant to offshoring or mechanization.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

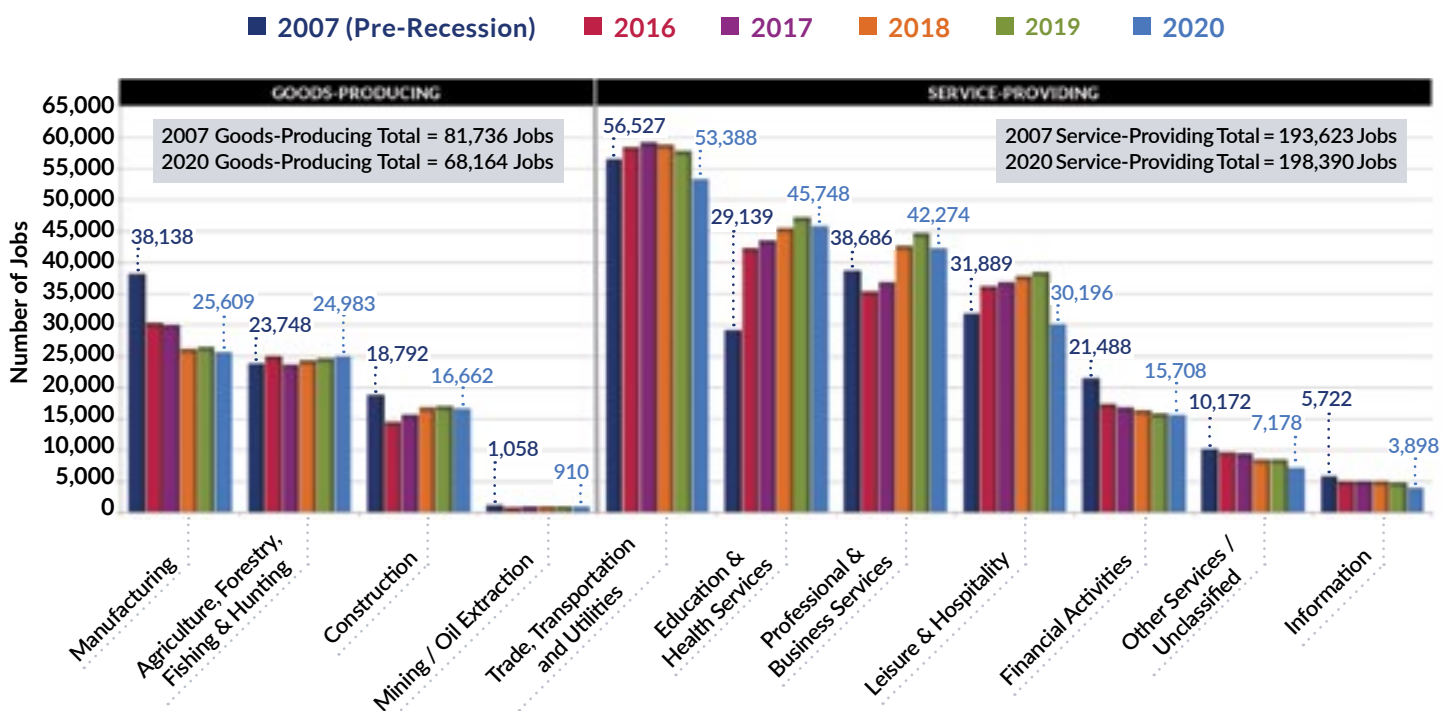
The pandemic did not hit all industries equally. Jobs in the leisure and hospitality industry, which includes restaurants, declined by 27.6% between 2019 and 2020, far more than in any other industry. There were 30,196 jobs in leisure and hospitality in Ventura County in 2020, fewer than 13 years earlier. The information sector posted the second biggest percentage decline, dropping 18.5% from the year before. It is one of the smaller service-sector classifications, employing 3,898 people in 2020.

Every job classification charted by the California Employment Development Department shrank between 2019 and 2020 in Ventura County, with one exception: agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (in Ventura County, this is almost entirely agriculture), which grew 1.5%.

These employment sectors can be divided into goods-producing jobs, such as agriculture, construction and manufacturing; and service-providing jobs, such as finance, education and health care, and leisure and hospitality. In 2020, jobs disappeared in both categories, but service-providing industries lost far more than goods-producing ones. All combined goods-producing job categories declined 1.2% from 2019 to 2020, while service-providing jobs declined 8.6%.

In Ventura County, services industries produce the most jobs. This has been true for decades but is becoming more pronounced. The Great Recession was a turning point. In 2007, the county had more manufacturing jobs than in health and education, leisure and hospitality, and nearly the same as professional and business services. By 2016, manufacturing had fewer jobs than any of those industries in Ventura County.

Ventura County Employment Growth (2007, 2016 - 2020)



SALARIES BY SECTOR

Salaries grew in pandemic

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the average pay in Ventura County in different 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 here.

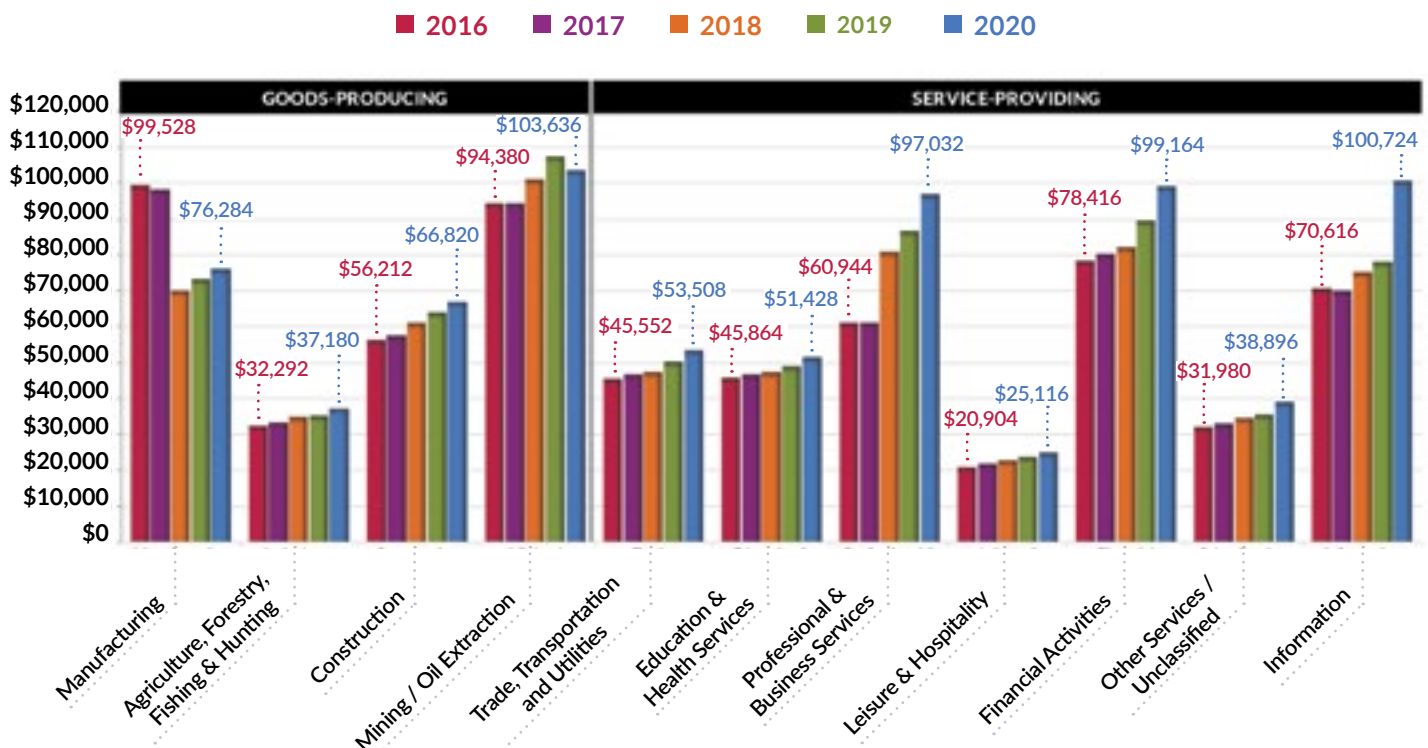
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Salaries in many industries grew substantially in 2020, as their employment totals shrank. The information sector was an outlier with 28.9% salary growth in just a year. Every other sector grew as well, including 10.9% in finance and 6.1% in leisure and hospitality. This might not be a positive sign, though — most of the jobs eliminated during the pandemic were in relatively low-wage industries, which pushes the average salary of the remaining jobs higher.

When this salary information is viewed in light of the job data in the previous measure, on employment by sector, a pattern emerges: The jobs that are most prevalent in Ventura County do not pay as well as less plentiful jobs, and, at least before the pandemic, this was getting worse, with job growth concentrated in lower-paying sectors. Leisure and hospitality has been the lowest-paying sector every year from 2016 through 2020, with an average salary of \$25,116 in 2020. It was the fourth-largest sector in 2020 and saw job growth every year from 2016 through 2019, until jobs in the sector shrank during the pandemic. The sectors with the most jobs in Ventura County in 2020 were trade, transportation and utilities; and health and education, and both of those had below-average salaries: \$53,508 for trade, transportation and utilities; and \$51,428 for health and education.

The highest salaries in 2020 were in oil extraction (\$103,636), information (\$100,724), finance (\$99,164) and professional and business services (\$97,032). Of those, only professional and business services ranked among the six largest categories by employment.

Ventura County Salaries by Sector (2016-2020)



GROSS COUNTY PRODUCT

A lost decade of negative 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 each year. Gross product counts only the final sale to the consumer, not intermediary transactions among producers and wholesalers. The annual totals are in 2012 inflation-adjusted dollars, also known as real dollars. The 2019 figure is considered preliminary and subject to revision.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

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

HOW ARE WE DOING?

In 2019, before the COVID-19 recession started, Ventura County had not recovered fully from the Great Recession of 2008. Our gross county product in 2019 was \$54.8 billion, a healthy 2.83% growth rate above the previous year, but still well below the total from 2007, when adjusted for inflation.

Inflation-adjusted gross product in Ventura County dropped a stunning 8.92% from 2007 to 2008 and continued to fall every year until 2012. The economy grew by relatively modest margins for a few years after

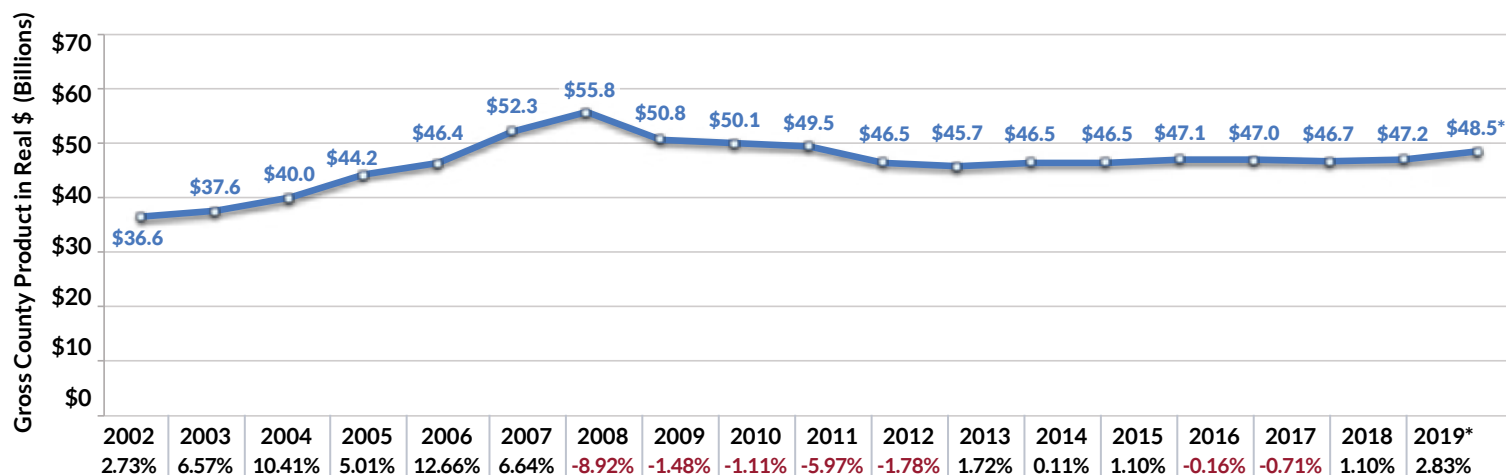
that before contracting again in 2016 and 2017. Ventura County's economy shrank in seven of the 12 years between 2007 and 2019. Even after two years of growth, in 2019 our inflation-adjusted gross county product was 13% smaller than it had been in 2007.

Our county's economy was sluggish during a decade when the nation as a whole and California, showed consistent economic growth. Nationally and statewide, gross domestic product shrank only one year, from 2008 to 2009, before growing steadily through 2019.

The Great Recession and its aftermath struck Ventura County harder than previously known. Measuring economic activity as it's happening is challenging, and the U.S. Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis — the source for national and regional gross product statistics — revises its statistics every five years when it gets new data from the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2019, the BEA issued a significant revision to Ventura County data. The new numbers revealed the economy grew faster in the prerecession boom years of 2003 through 2007 than the initial estimates showed, and also that the recession here was deeper and longer and the recovery, slower.

Our lack of economic growth is particularly distressing when viewed alongside our high cost of living. While demand to live here is high, our economy is failing to generate opportunities that might allow people to afford to live here. One possible silver lining is that economic growth in 2019 was stronger than it had been since 2007. COVID-19, of course, disrupted that growth, but perhaps our county was starting to find a recipe for economic growth that we might return to as the pandemic eases.

**Ventura County Economic Growth in 2012 Inflation-Adjusted
(Real) Billions of Dollars (2002-2019)**



Percentages above are the change in Real Gross County Product from prior year

* 2019 number is preliminary estimate

WAGES AND COST OF LIVING

Many jobs don't pay a living wage

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

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

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

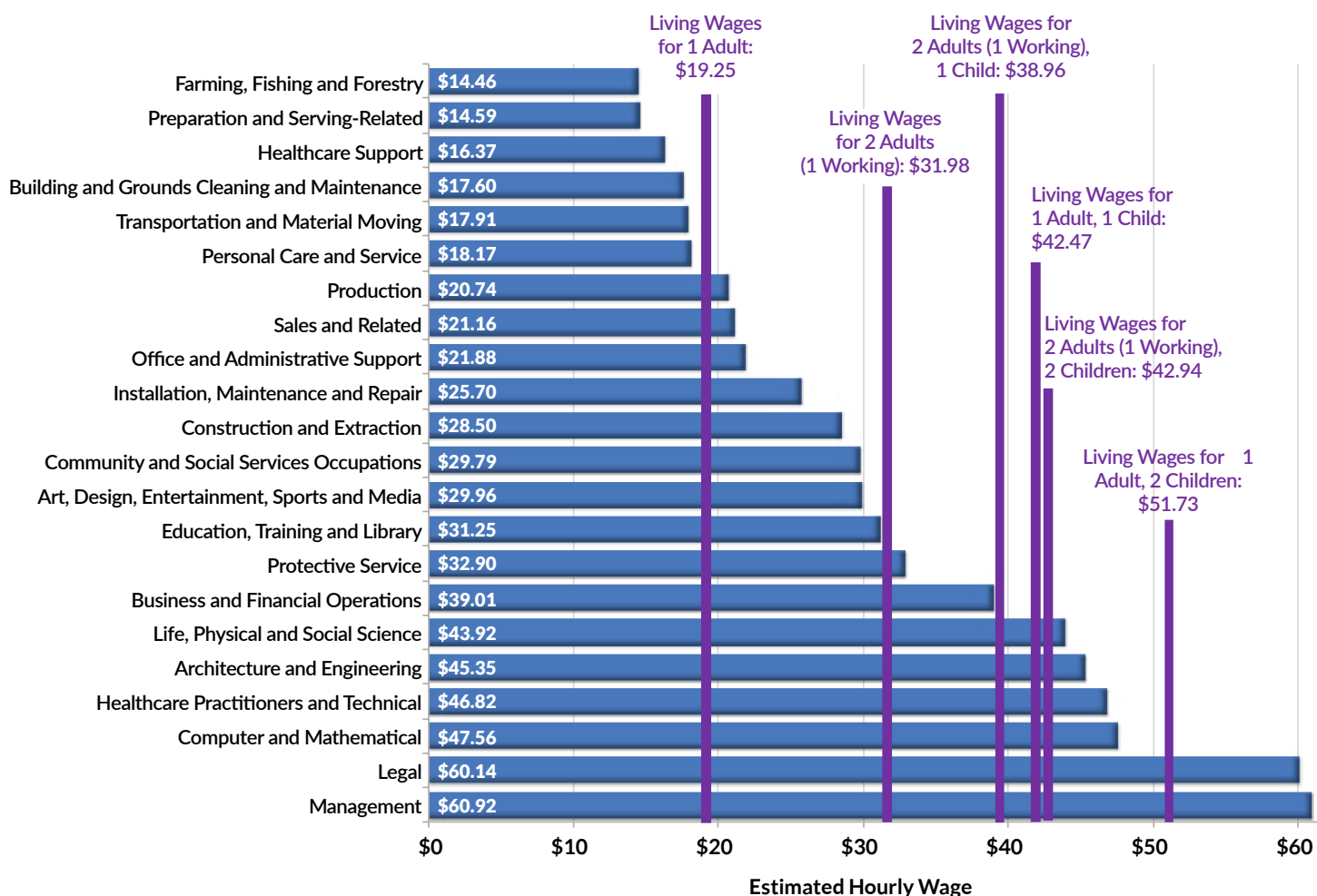
Wages are half of a household's financial equation. Expenses are just as important, and vary greatly by region and by household size.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County's wages are relatively high, but so is its cost of living. In lower-wage jobs, supporting even one person is difficult, and larger families require either high-wage jobs or multiple incomes.

The living wage for one adult in 2020 was \$19.25 per hour. That's more than the average wage in agriculture (\$14.46 per hour), food service (\$14.59), health care support (\$16.37) and personal care and services (\$18.17). A single adult supporting two children needs \$51.73 per hour, which is more than almost every occupation in Ventura County except for legal (\$60.14 per hour) and management (\$60.92).

Ventura County Comparison of Average Hourly Wage by Occupation and Cost of Living (2020)



GENDER DIFFERENCE IN PAY

Wage gap persists

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the average annual salary for men and women in various employment sectors in Ventura County from 2015 to 2019. 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 jobs and promotions, their careers are harmed, as well.

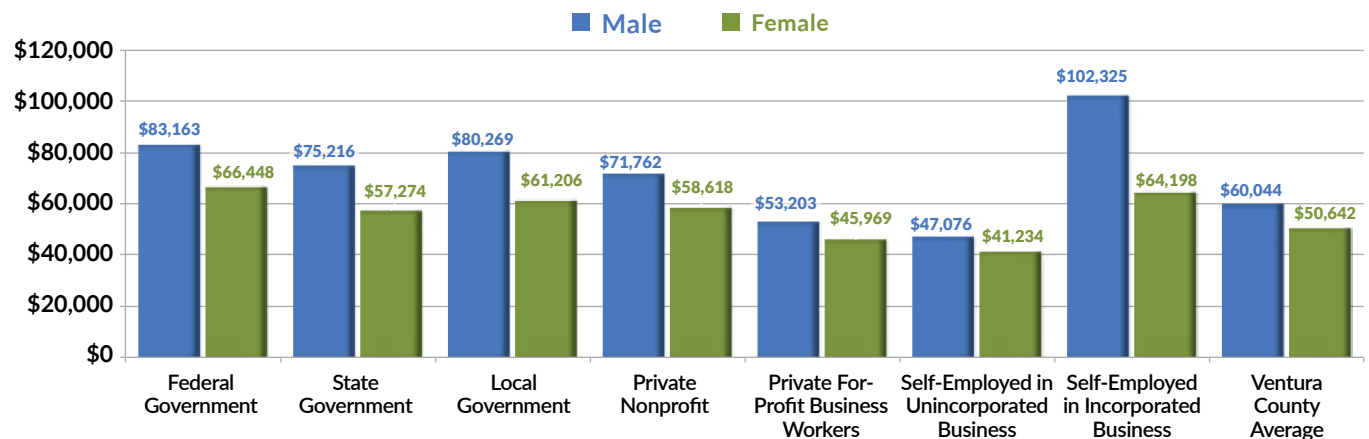
HOW ARE WE DOING?

In 2019, among full-time workers in all sectors in Ventura County, women earned 84.3 cents for every dollar earned by men. That wage gap was a few cents

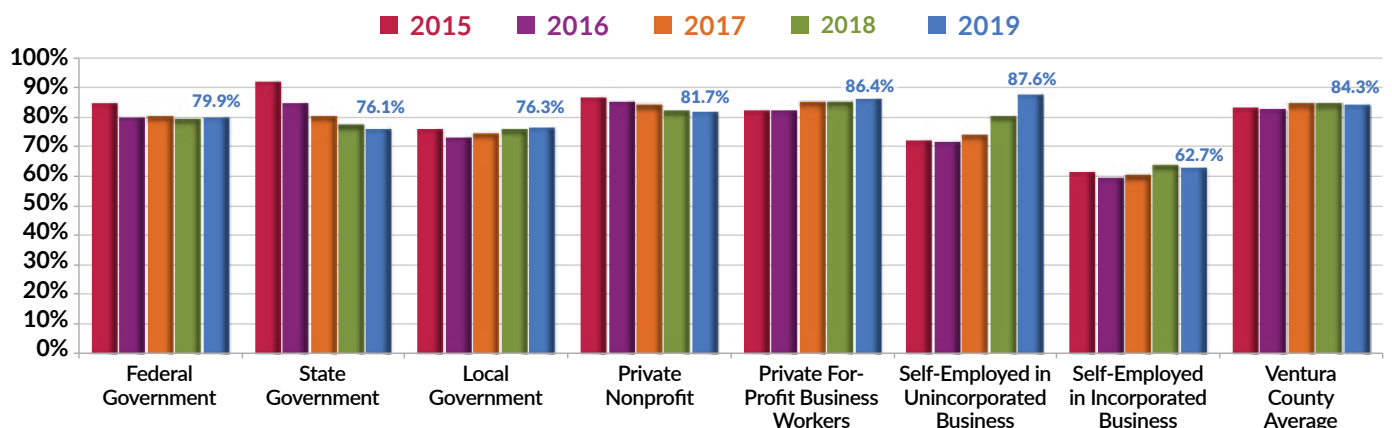
smaller than the national gap, and a fraction of a cent bigger than what it had been in Ventura County in 2017 and 2018.

The gaps vary widely by employer. Private, for-profit businesses have a better record than government agencies in this regard; in 2019, women at private companies earned 86.4% as much as men, more than women at private nonprofits (81.7%), state government (76.1%), local governments (76.3%) or the federal government (79.9%). The closest gender parity, with women earning 87.6% as much as men, was among people who are self-employed in unincorporated businesses, who are often sole proprietors and independent contractors. The widest gap, with women earning 62.7% as much as men, was among people self-employed in incorporated businesses — typically, people who own a small business that also employs other people.

Pay for Work by Gender, Median Earning in Ventura County
in 2019 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars (2019)



Female Earnings as a Percentage of Male Earnings (2015 -2019)



TAXABLE SALES

Pandemic drove sales down

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the total sales of taxable goods in each city in Ventura County, from 2018 to 2020.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Though services are more important than ever, much of the economy still depends on the buying and selling of goods. Food and medicine are not taxed, but most items are, so taxable sales are a good indicator of economic activity. Sales taxes are also an important source of revenue for city and county governments.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

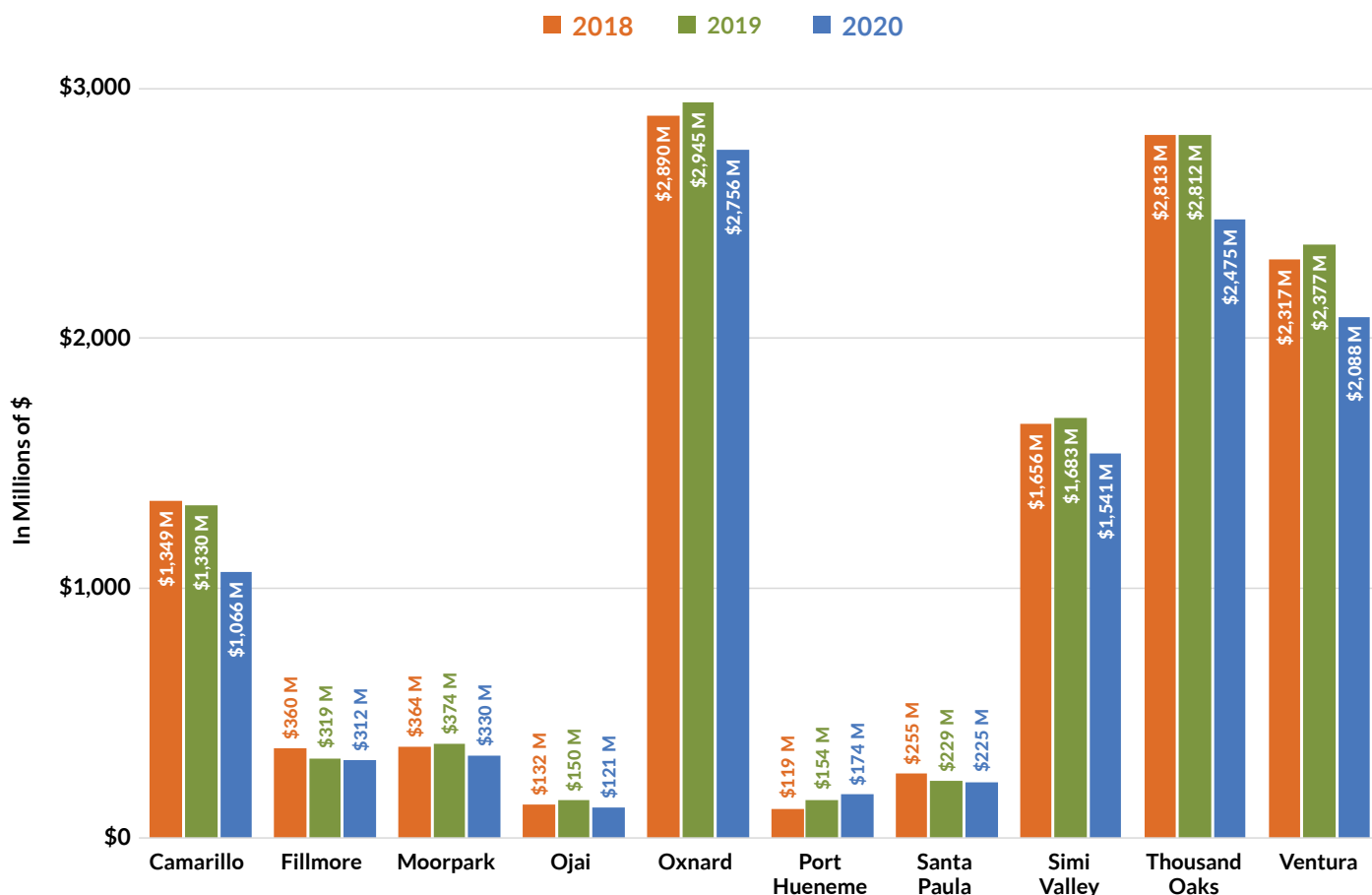
Sales declined almost everywhere in Ventura County once the pandemic hit in 2020. The exception was

in Port Hueneme, which has \$174 million in taxable sales in 2020, up 13% from the year before. Much of the city's increase came from legal cannabis sales.

Oxnard, the largest city in the county, has the most taxable sales, with \$2.8 billion in 2020, a 6.4% decline from 2019. Thousand Oaks was second, at \$2.5 billion in taxable sales in 2020, followed by Ventura, at \$2.1 billion.

Camarillo experienced the biggest decline from 2019 to 2020, when taxable sales dropped 19.8%, to \$1.1 billion. Camarillo's economy depends highly on sales at its outlet mall, which was closed or operating with limited capacity for much of 2020. Ojai, with an economy dependent on tourists to a large degree, had the second largest decline, at 19.3%.

Ventura County Taxable Sales by Cities in Millions of Dollars (2018 - 2020)



TOURISM

Visitors stayed away in 2020

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the spending by visitors to Ventura County using different types of accommodations, between 2016 and 2020, and the breakdown of transient occupancy taxes for selected cities in 2019. Transient occupancy taxes are the taxes charged to visitors in hotels, vacation homes and other rentals occupied for less than 30 days.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Ventura County is a beautiful place that attracts visitors, which makes tourism a big part of our economy and cultural identity. Dividing visitors by their type of accommodation and the area where they stay can help us understand who is coming to Ventura County and what's bringing them here.

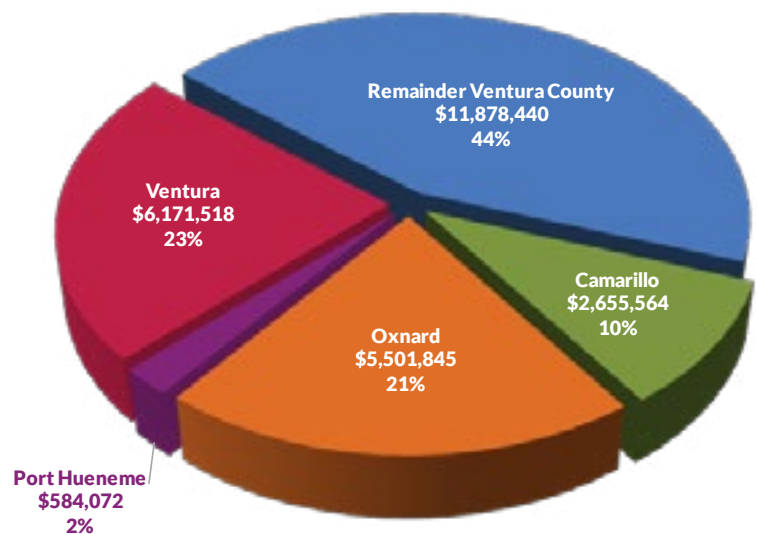
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Tourism of almost all types took a big hit in 2020, as would be expected during a pandemic. Spending by visitors at hotels, motels and short-term rentals — which makes up the bulk of Ventura County's tourism revenue — dropped from \$731 million in 2019 to \$423 million in 2020, a 42.1% decline. Day trips were even more disrupted, with spending by day travellers down 77.6%, from \$398 million to \$89 million. The sole

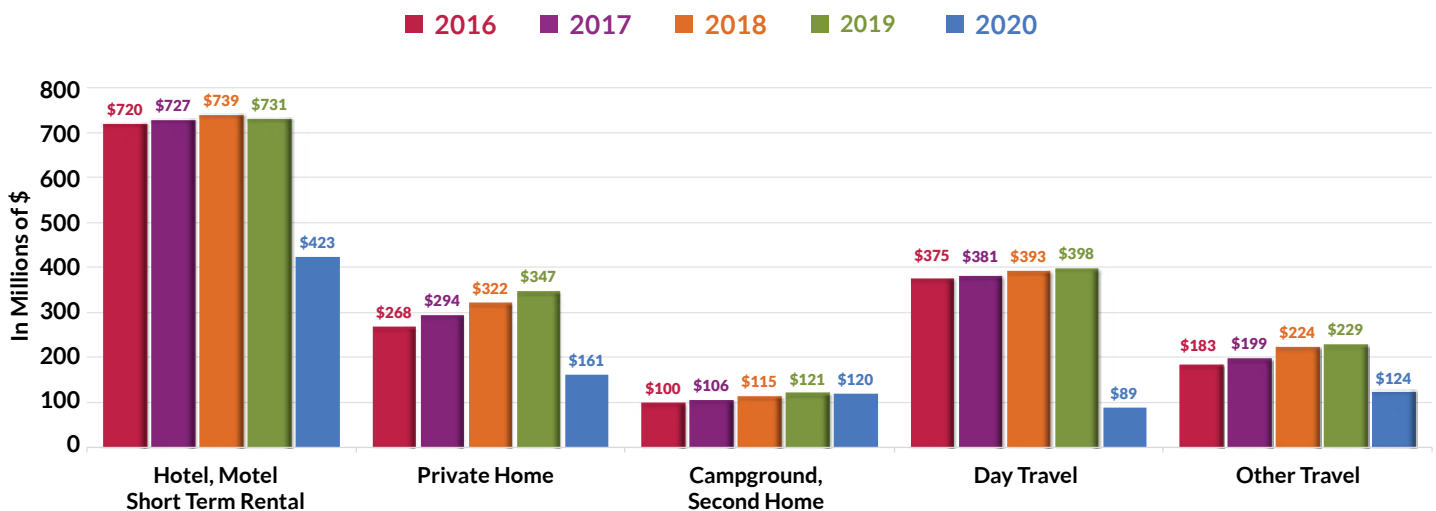
exception to this trend was visitors to campgrounds or their own second homes. Their spending nearly matched pre-pandemic levels, dropping from \$121 million in 2019 to \$120 million in 2020, as people sought outdoor and private accommodations where they could follow social-distancing guidelines.

In 2019, Ventura accounted for \$6.2 million in transient occupancy taxes paid by hotels and other short-term accommodations, 23% of the county total. Oxnard was next, at \$5.5 million, or 21% of the total.

— Ventura County Transit Occupancy Tax (2019) —



— Ventura County Visitor Spending by Accommodation Type in Millions of Dollars (2016 -2020) —



ACTIVITY AT THE PORT OF HUENEME

Hueneme joins global trade boom



WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measures are the operating revenue of the Port of Hueneme for each July-June fiscal year; commodity shipments through the port, of both automobiles and “high and heavy” and general cargo; and containers shipped through the port.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

The Port of Hueneme is Ventura County's connection to world trade and one of the county's chief economic engines, generating jobs at the port itself and a network of connected businesses that unload, store, transport and process imported and exported goods. It is one of the nation's chief importers of automobiles and bananas, and also serves as the point of departure for much of the produce exported by Ventura County growers. As a relatively small port, the Port of Hueneme does not receive the giant cargo ships that frequent the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, but it does provide an important relief valve for those crowded ports by taking containers and other cargo from smaller ships.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Revenue for the Port of Hueneme declined in the 2019-20 fiscal year when the COVID-19 pandemic started, but in 2020-21, as the pandemic dragged on and Americans' appetite for imported goods grew, the port hit a new record with \$20.3 million in operating revenue, 13.2% more than the year before.

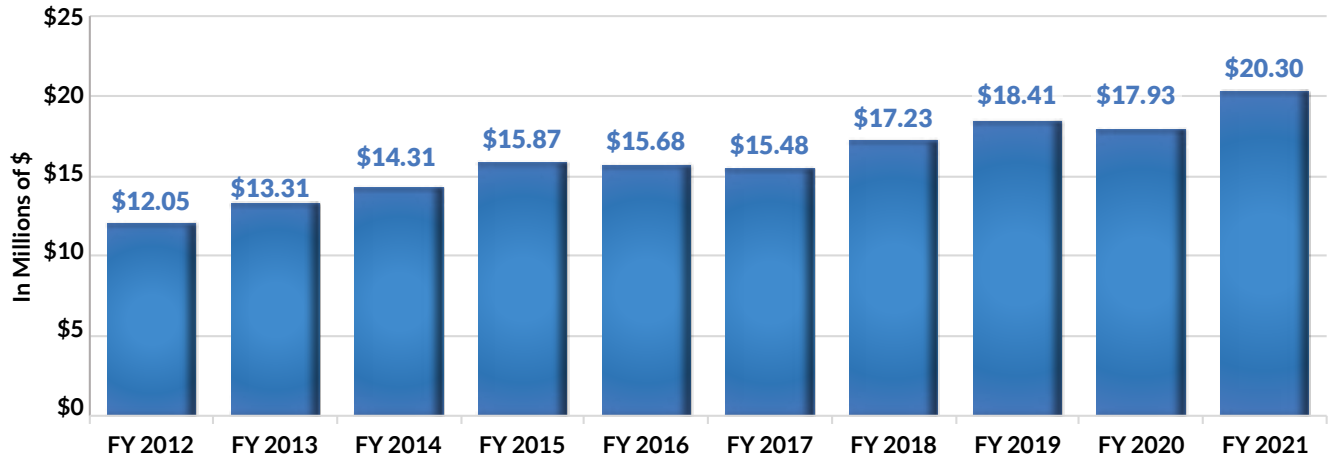
Business at the port was booming before the pandemic, too, with revenue up 6.8% in the fiscal year that ended in June 2019 and up 11.3% the year before that. Despite a few years of stagnation in the middle of the decade, the long-term trend has seen revenue climb by 68.5% over the last nine years, without adjusting for inflation.

Automobiles are among the port's chief imports, and that business suffered early in the pandemic, with a 10% decline in imported vehicles between fiscal year 2019 and 2020. In 2021, the port received 325,879 vehicles, up 10.6% from the year before, but still below the pre-pandemic high of 342,510 in 2019.

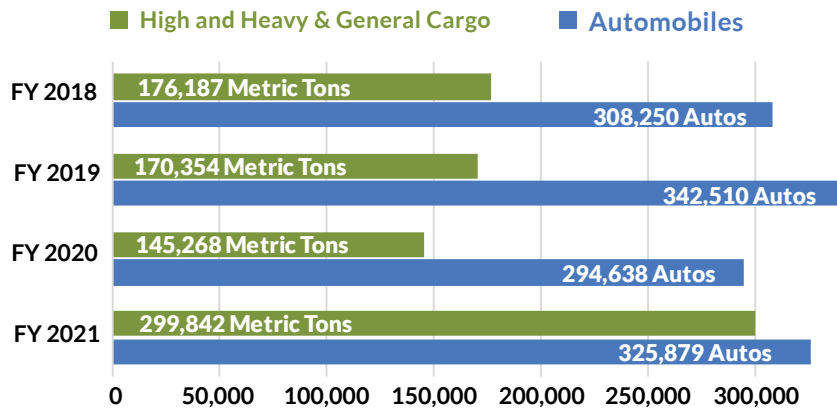
General cargo and “high and heavy” cargo saw their demand skyrocket during the pandemic. General cargo, also known as “break-bulk,” includes barrels and other goods that can be transported individually, and not in containers, while “high and heavy” cargo refers to oversized items like tractors and generators. The two types of cargo accounted for 299,842 metric tons shipped into the Port of Hueneme in fiscal year 2021, more than twice the previous year.

Though containers aren't a huge part of the Port of Hueneme's business, the port participated in the great container-based global trade boom of 2021. It imported the equivalent of 35,882 forty-foot containers in the first nine months of 2021, more than double the total from that period the previous year, and exported the equivalent of 10,155 forty-foot containers, also more than double the previous year.

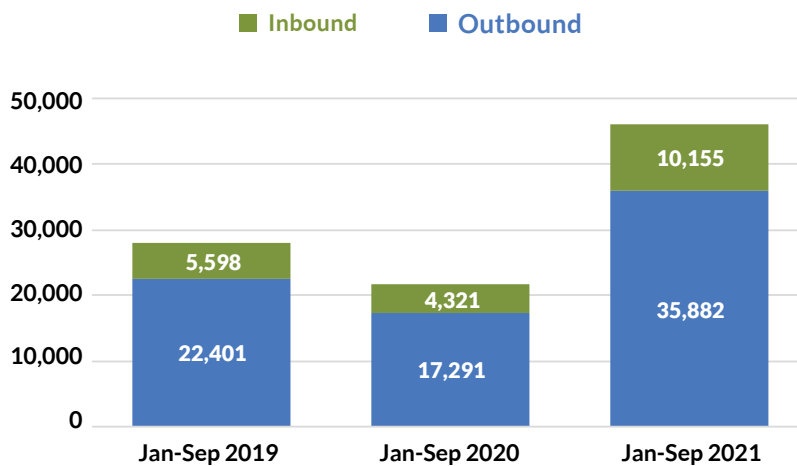
Port of Hueneme Fiscal Year Revenues In Millions of Dollars (July - June, 2012 - 2021)



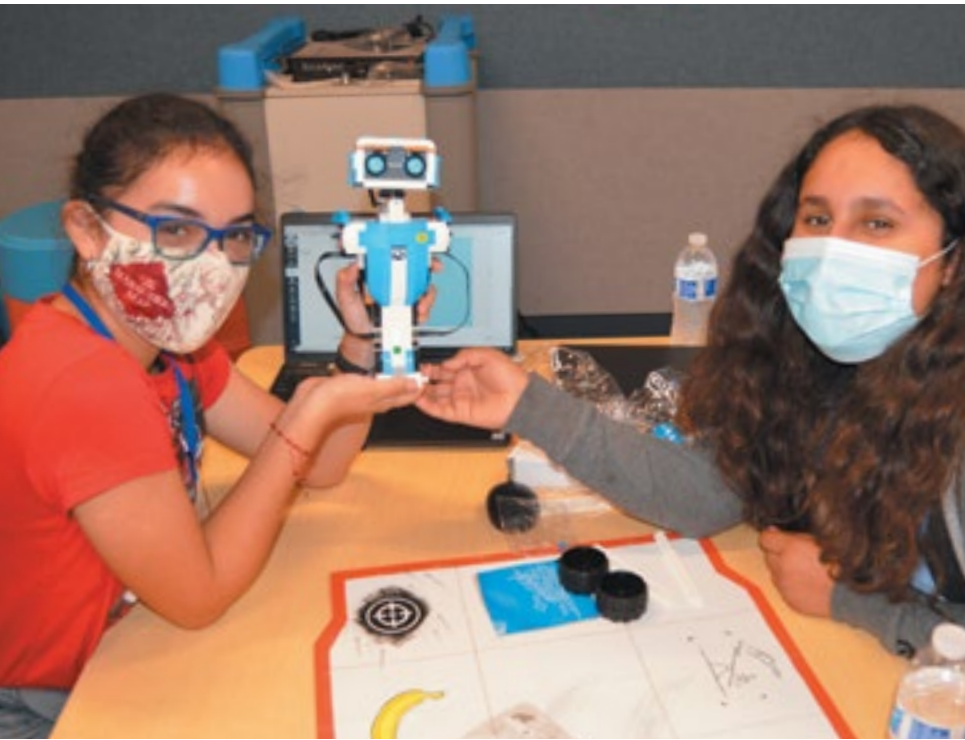
Port of Hueneme Commodity Shipments (July - June, 2019 - 2021)



Full Container Units in 40-Foot Equivalents (Jan - Sep, 2019 - 2021)







It is difficult to overstate the impact of COVID-19 on our educational system. For centuries, schools have been built around gathering students and their teachers in the same room. In mid-March 2020, every school in California and many others around the country set aside that model, with at most a few days' notice. Teachers and administrators were, as the saying goes, "building the plane while flying it" — designing a remote, internet-based delivery system and curriculum and implementing it at the same time. In most Ventura County public schools, it was more than a year before students returned to campus on even a part-time basis, and in some institutions of higher learning, many classes remained remote in the fall of 2021. Even when students returned to campus, the pandemic was ever-present; they wore masks, ate lunch outside or in small groups; and were prepared to go home in the event of an outbreak.

Some data in this domain reflects the tremendous upheaval COVID-19 brought to Ventura County's schools and colleges in 2020 and 2021. Among the biggest challenges these schools face is a relative

lack of students. Enrollment fell during the pandemic at K-12 schools, community colleges and four-year universities. In the case of K-12, the pandemic accelerated a trend of declining enrollment, as Ventura County's population slowly shrinks and ages.

In other areas, the pandemic clearly brought great upheaval, but it's too soon to measure it. Federal and state governments greatly increased school funding in 2020 and 2021, especially for cleaning, smaller class sizes, ventilation and anything meant to contain the spread of COVID-19. Our data does not reflect the impact of that, since per-pupil spending numbers were not yet released for any school year past 2019/20.

Other effects of the pandemic are, so far, harder to measure. Anecdotes abound of "learning loss" in schools nationwide, but California suspended some standardized testing and altered parts of it during the pandemic. This leaves no comprehensive scores to compare academic achievement before and after the pandemic forced the move to remote learning.

PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Pandemic accelerates decline

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the number of students enrolled in Ventura County public schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, and the enrollment in each of the county's school districts with more than 300 total students.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

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

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Enrollment in Ventura County's public schools peaked in the 2004/05 school year and has declined steadily since. The 2020/21 school year — in which most public school students were learning remotely — was projected to have the biggest single-year enrollment decline in decades. Enrollment was 135,312 in 2019/20, the year the pandemic started, and was projected by the state at 131,481 in 2020/21, a decline of 2.8%.

The 2020/21 projection would be the county's lowest enrollment since the 1997/98 school year. And the trend is likely to continue. The county's total

enrollment is projected to decline annually through the 2030/31 school year. By then, Ventura County K-12 public schools will have a little under 106,000 students, fewer than in 1986/87.

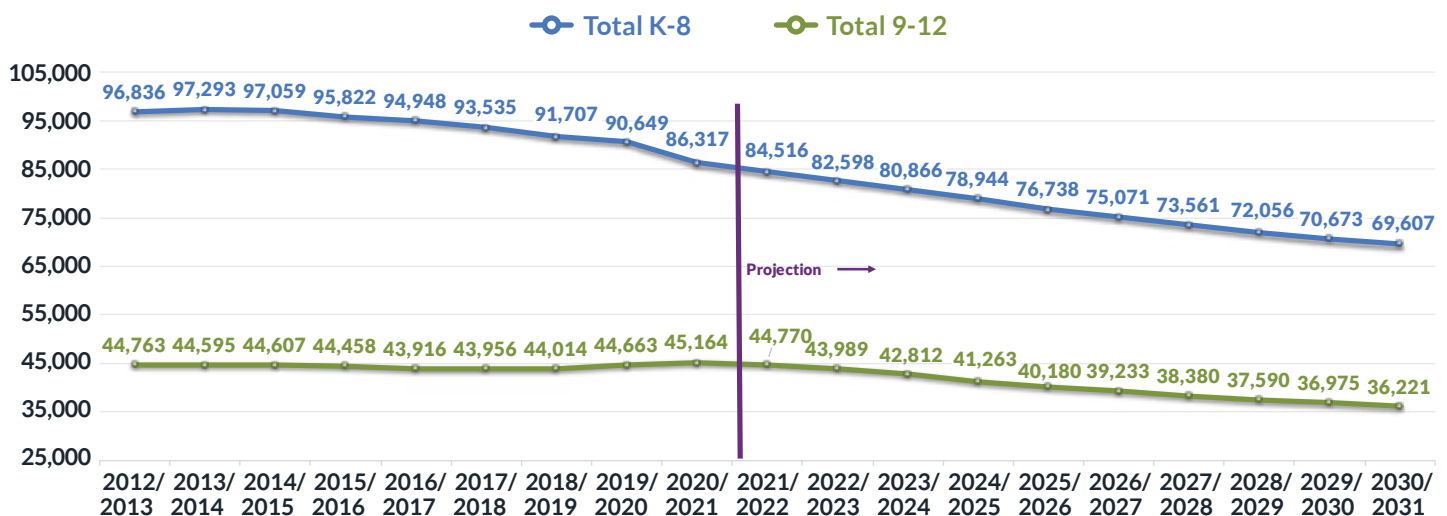
Some of this shift is simple demographics. There are fewer young children in the United States now than there were in the 1990s and early 2000s, when the millennial generation — the largest in the country's history — was still in school. Ventura County also experienced declining enrollment in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the smaller Generation X was school-aged.

But other factors are at work. Ventura County's population has declined overall in recent years, and the county's cost of living makes it especially difficult for families with young children to live here.

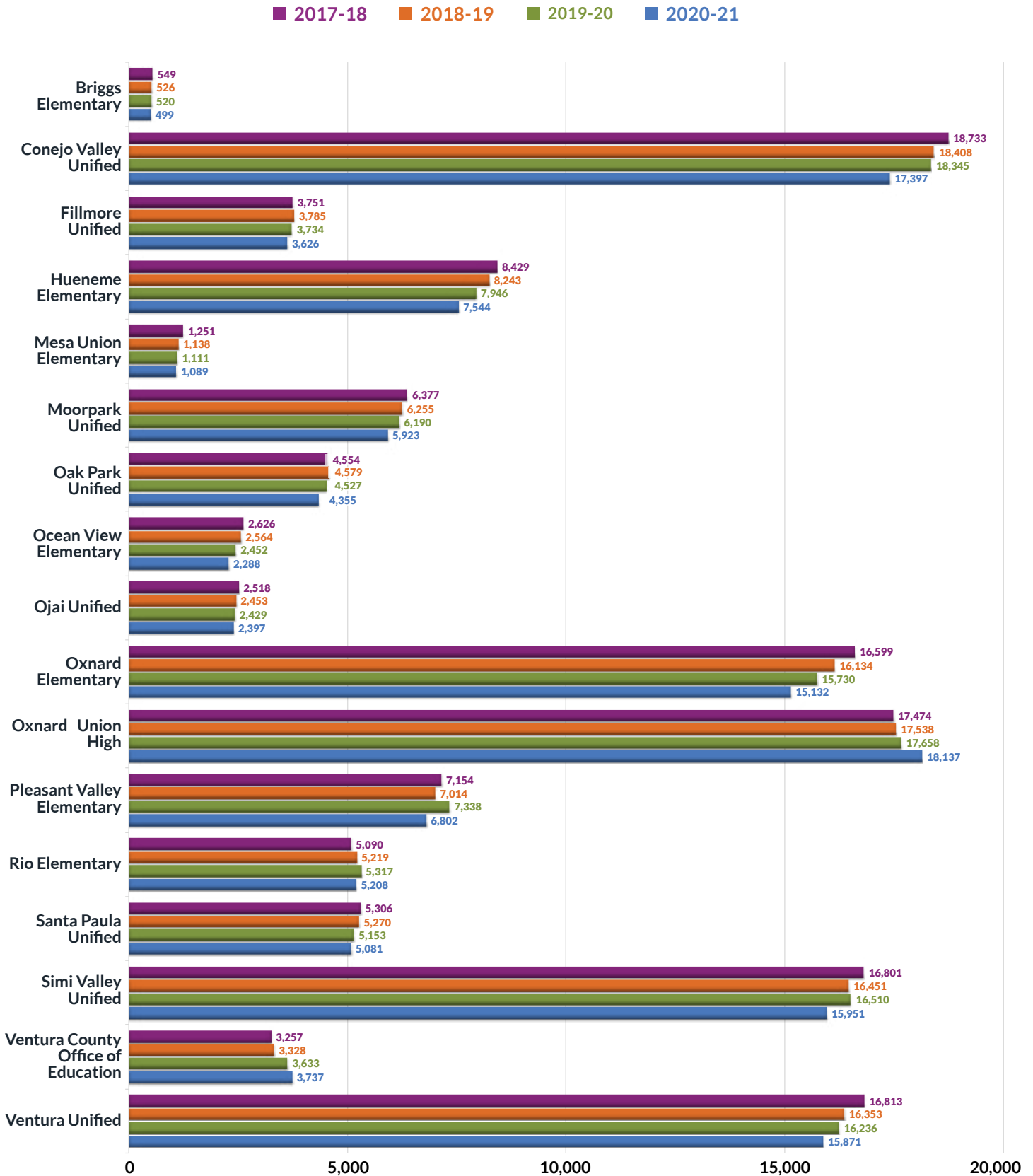
Elementary and middle school rolls are shrinking the fastest at the moment, while enrollment in the county's high schools essentially has been unchanged for nearly a decade. High school enrollment is expected to drop faster in the future, as the smaller cohorts of children currently in elementary or middle school move through the system.

Only the Oxnard Union High School District has shown enrollment growth in recent years. The Conejo Valley Unified and Oxnard Elementary districts experienced the sharpest declines.

Ventura County Public School Enrollment (2012/13 – 2030/31)



Ventura County Public School Enrollment - Districts With 300 or More Students (2017/18 - 2020/21)



PER-PUPIL SPENDING

Spending at historic highs

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the total spending on a per-pupil basis by 11 of the largest school districts in Ventura County, including most of the county's unified districts. A unified district holds classes in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Per-pupil spending is calculated by adding up most school district expenditures, including salaries, food service, facilities and certain retirement benefits. The number is then divided by the district's average daily attendance.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Nearly everything in a school, from the teachers to the books to the building itself, costs money. Adequate funding alone doesn't ensure a quality education, but it's a necessary element. Tracking how funding changes over time shows whether local, state and federal policymakers are prioritizing education. Comparing spending in different districts can indicate whether students in different cities receive similar resources.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

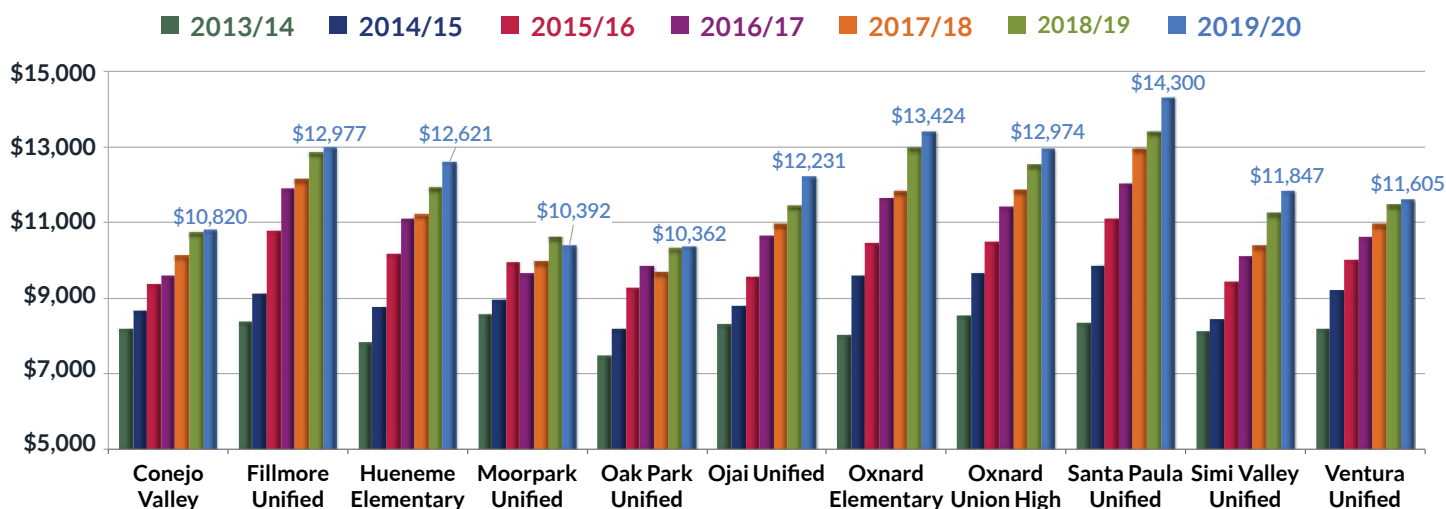
Spending in most Ventura County school districts has never been higher. Even before the biggest infusions of federal and state cash related to the pandemic, in 2019/20 Santa Paula Unified had

the highest per-pupil spending levels of any large district in the county that year, at \$14,300, a 6.6% increase from the previous school year. Oxnard Elementary, at \$13,424 per student, was next. The lowest-funded districts were Conejo Valley Unified, Moorpark Unified and Oak Park Unified, all spending between \$10,000 and \$11,000 per student in 2019/20. Only Moorpark Unified received less money in 2019/20 than the year before, with a 2.1% drop in per-student funding.

This sizable funding gap is a recent phenomenon. In 2019/2020, the top district in funding had 38% more per-student revenue than the bottom district, while in 2013/14, the gap was only 14.7%.

In 2013/14, the state started a system that aims to direct money to the districts that need it most. In the past, state funding was broadly even, and sometimes districts in affluent communities actually received more money than those in less wealthy areas. Oak Park Unified's per-pupil funding in 2009/10 was higher than that of districts in Oxnard and Fillmore. Under the revised system, extra money goes to districts with lower-income families and more English learners. As a result, schools in Oxnard, Santa Paula, Port Hueneme and Fillmore get significantly more funding per student than those in Moorpark, Oak Park or Thousand Oaks.

Annual Per-Pupil Spending in the Unified and Larger Non-Unified Districts (2013/14 - 2019/20)



ENGLISH LEARNERS

Fewer need language help

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of public school students in Ventura County and in California 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 programs. Students move out of this classification as their English improves.

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

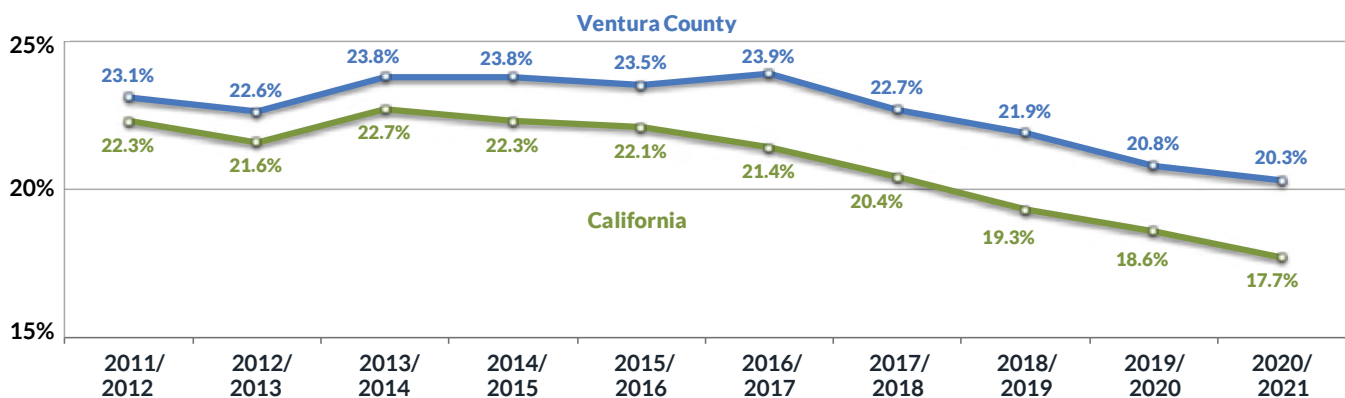
struggle with language comprehension at the same time they are trying to learn math, history, science and other subjects taught in English.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

The number of English language learners in Ventura County has declined steadily since 2016/17, mostly tracking the statewide decline. In 2020/21, English language learners in Ventura County public schools were 20.3% of the student population, the fourth straight year the percentage fell. California reported 17.7% English language learners in 2020/21, down from 18.6% the previous year.



Percentage of Public School Students Classified as English Learners (2011/12 - 2020/21)



HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND DROPOUT RATES

County's graduation rate dips below state's

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 the 12th grade; and the high school dropout rate, defined as the percentage of students who leave school before the end of the 12th grade without earning any certificate or degree.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

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

HOW ARE WE DOING?

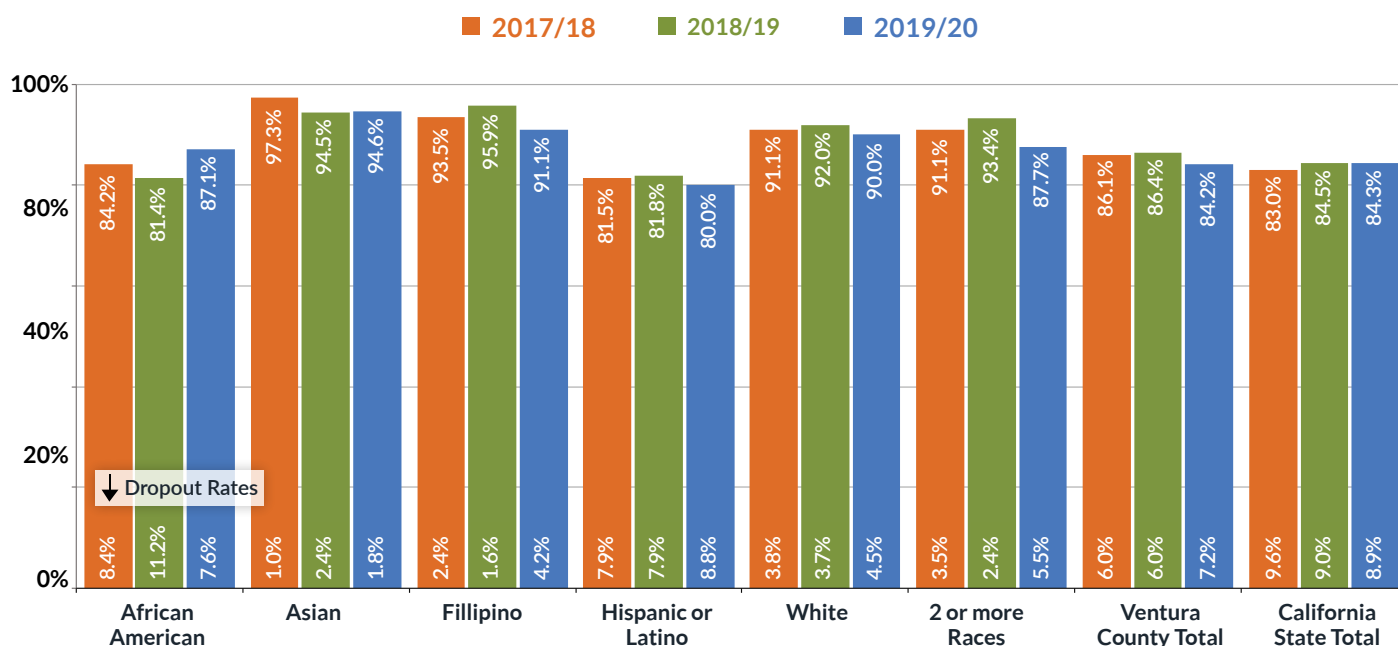
The high school graduation rate in Ventura County was 84.2% in 2020, a decline of 2.2 percentage points from the year before. That decline came the year

COVID-19 forced schools into remote learning three months before graduation, so the pandemic could be a factor. However, the state's overall graduation rate dropped only 0.2 percentage points from 2019 to 2020, and the pandemic shut down schools statewide. Ventura County's graduation rate in 2020 dropped below the state's, after years of hovering a few percentage points higher.

Nearly 16% of the class of 2020 in Ventura County high schools failed to graduate on time, but not all are considered dropouts. The dropout rate in 2020 was 7.2%; the other 8.6% of the class of 2020 obtained some sort of alternative to a diploma. As the graduation rate fell, the dropout rate rose, going from 6% in 2018 and 2019 to 7.2% in 2020.

Noticeable racial disparities exist in Ventura County's dropout and graduation rates. In 2020, Latino students had an 80% graduation rate, while 90% of white students and 94.6% of Asian American students graduated.

Ventura County Schools Graduation and Dropout Rates (2017/18 - 2019/20)



CHILDHOOD SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES

Deep inequality in county

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is an index made up of six socioeconomic indicators from 2021, applied to the 18 elementary and unified school districts in Ventura County. The indicators are the poverty rate among children under 6; the percentage of women-led households with children under 6 who live below the federal poverty line; the percentage of people who speak English “less than very well”; the percentage of students classified as English language learners; the percentage of adults 25 and older without a high school diploma; and the percentage of students eligible for free or discounted meals at school. The percentages are added together and weighted equally; 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 have more to worry about than their studies; they are learning English, or thinking about whether their families can afford enough food. These factors challenge educators as well as students, and the state recognizes this by making extra funding available for schools with large numbers of these pupils.

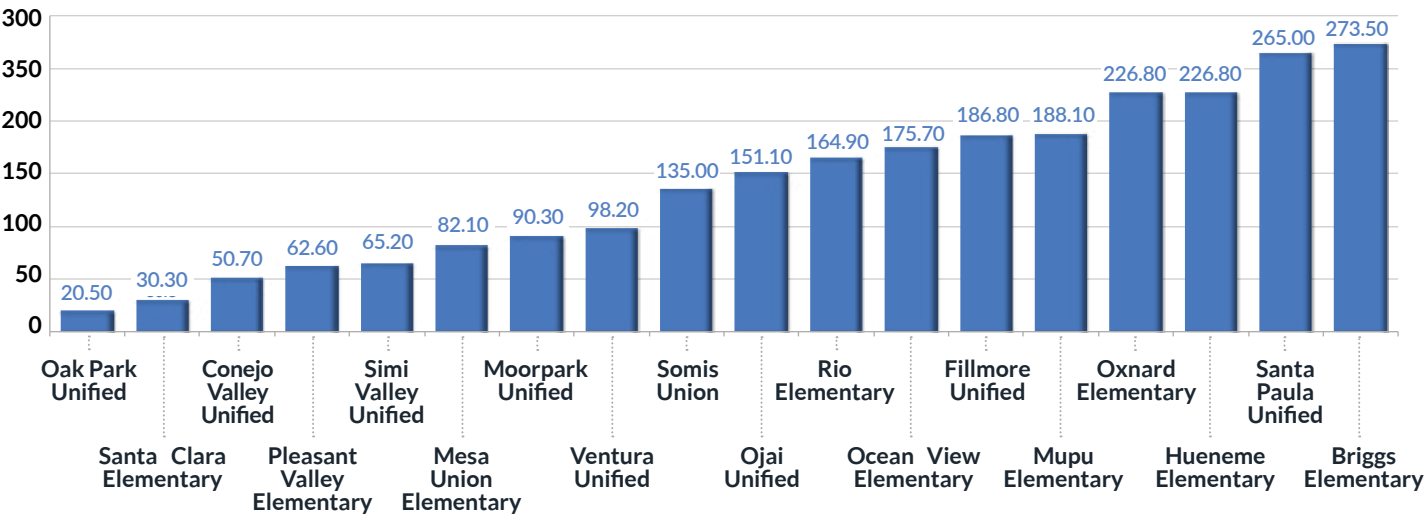
HOW ARE WE DOING?

There are huge differences in these indicators between school districts in Ventura County. The Briggs Elementary School District and Santa Paula Unified ranked highest on the index, meaning they had the most socioeconomic challenges. The Oxnard and Hueneme elementary school districts tied for third. Every district that scored high on the index is located in the Santa Clara River Valley or on the southern Oxnard Plain — Ventura County’s two main agricultural areas, where the workforce is concentrated in low-paying farm jobs.

At the other end of the spectrum, the Oak Park Unified School District scored lowest, followed by Santa Clara Elementary, a single-school district east of Santa Paula. Other districts with low scores were in the Conejo Valley, the Camarillo area and Simi Valley.

The differences between these areas in the individual measures that make up the index are striking. In Oak Park, just 1.6% of adults lack a high school diploma; in Santa Paula 36.4% of adults did not graduate from high school. In Ojai, 2.3% of young children live below the poverty line; in Port Hueneme, 24.1% do. In Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Santa Paula and Fillmore more than 80% of students qualify for free or discounted meals. In Oak Park, 8.5% of students qualify.

“Misery Index” for Selected Ventura County School Districts (2021)



COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Colleges shrink in pandemic

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

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

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Community colleges represent an important 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 also improves the recipient's job prospects and earning potential. And community colleges offer classes and technical certificates for nontraditional college students, so they can improve their skills and advance in their careers or train for new ones.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

The pandemic hit our community colleges hard. The three colleges had a combined 29,607 students in the fall of 2020, down 11.7% from the previous fall. Enrollment for most of the preceding decade had been stable: After a post-recession decline due largely

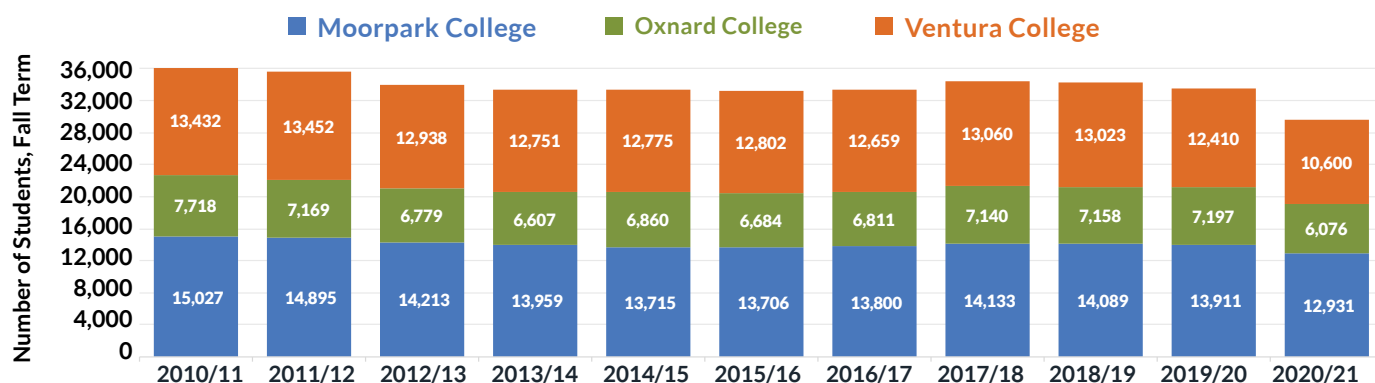
to budget cuts in 2011 and 2012, enrollment hovered between 33,000 and 35,000 from 2012 to 2019.

Moorpark College experienced the smallest enrollment decline in the first full school year of the pandemic, a 7% drop from 2019 to 2020. The other colleges saw steeper falloffs: Ventura College at 14.6% and Oxnard College at 15.6%.

The age breakdown at the three colleges largely reflects the type of students they attract; younger students usually come straight from high school and are more likely to be full-time students, while older students often work while they pursue their education and need evening classes. Moorpark College has the youngest student body, with 75.7% of its students under age 25 in fall 2020 and 42.7% under 20. At Ventura College, 69.3% of students were younger than 25 and 36.5% were under 20, and at Oxnard College, 68.1% were under 25 and 34.4% were under 20.

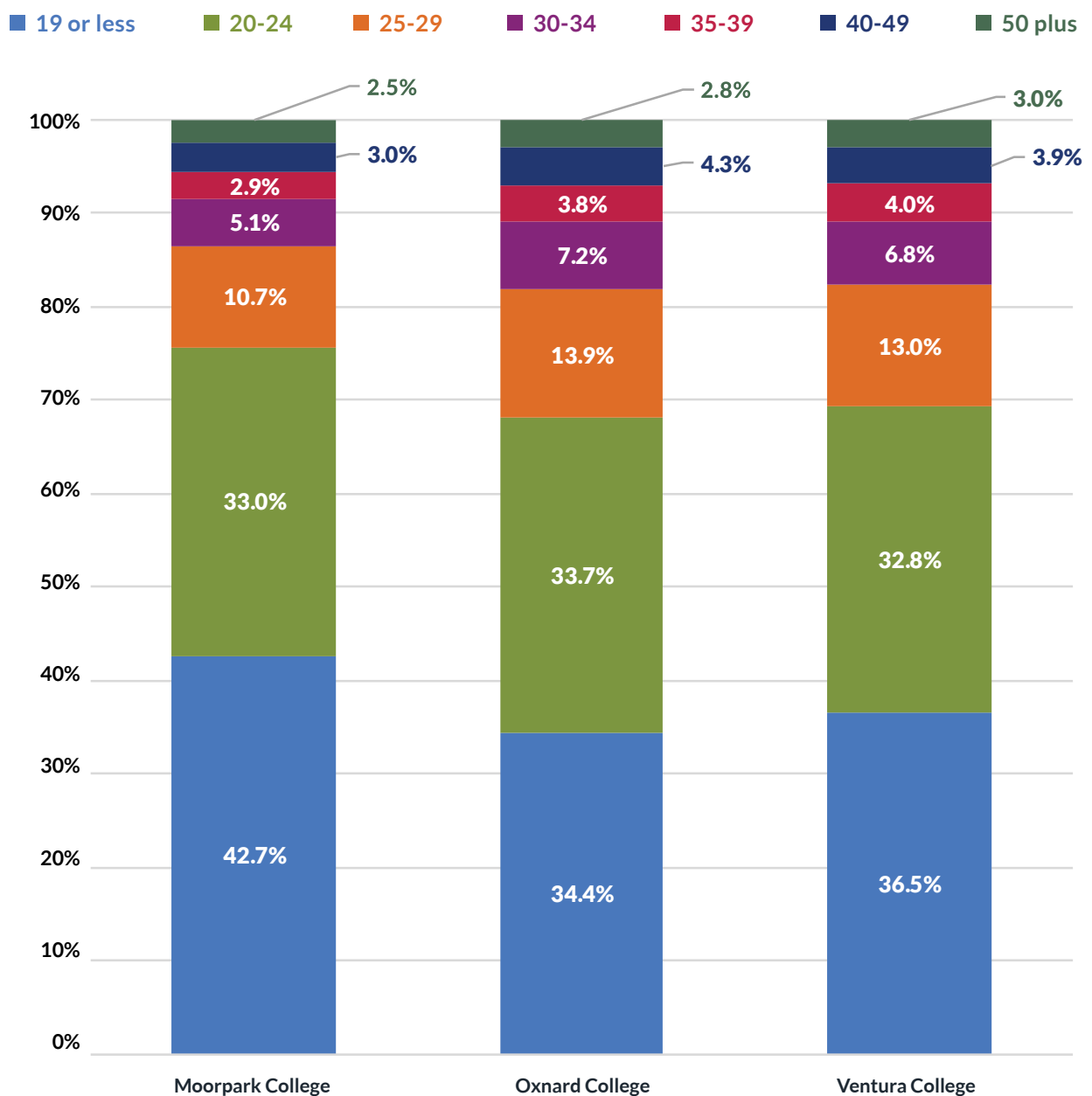
For at least the last decade, more women than men enrolled in all three community colleges. In fall 2021, women made up 58% of the student body at Oxnard College and Ventura College, and 56% at Moorpark College.

Ventura County Community College Enrollment (Fall Term, 2010/11 - 2020/21)





Ventura County Community College Enrollment by College and Age (Fall Term, 2020/21)



FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

COVID-19 reverses years of growth

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 lifetime earning potential, and attending college without graduating also helps. Thriving four-year universities benefit our county's culture and economy, as they bring well-paying jobs and well-educated students, graduates and faculty members to our communities.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Remote learning does not appear to have attracted people to the college experience. Ventura County's two major universities both reported significant declines in enrollment during the pandemic. At CSUCI, our largest and only public four-year university, enrollment dropped 2.3% from 2019 to 2020, and 7.4% more from 2020 to 2021. That came after years of enrollment growth, as CSUCI doubled in size from 2008 to 2017.

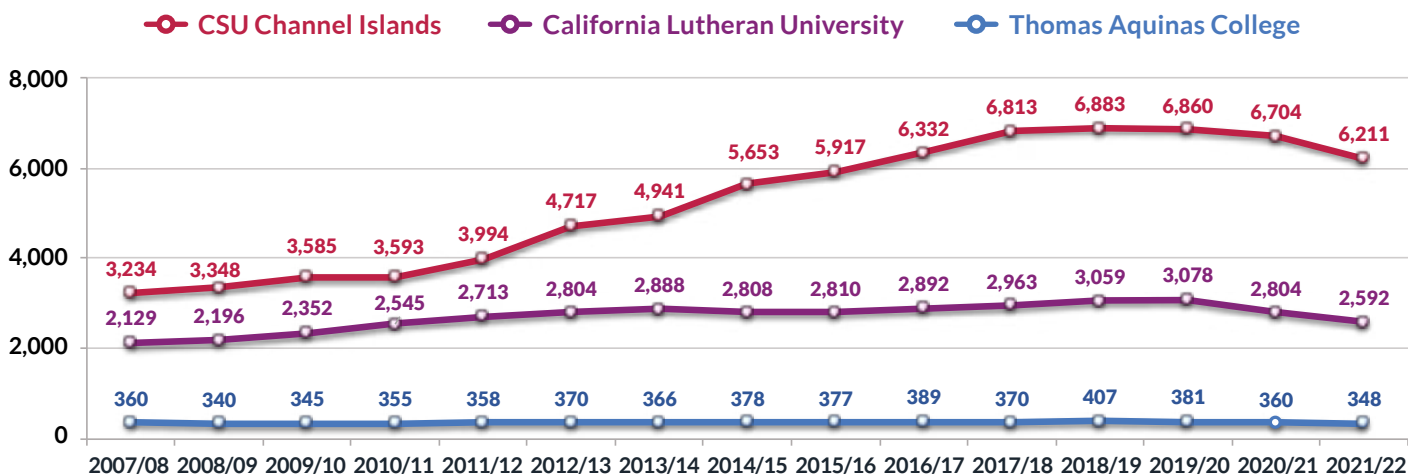
It now appears unlikely CSUCI will reach its enrollment target of 10,000 students by 2025.

The county's largest private university, California Lutheran saw a sharper decline in the first school year of the pandemic and a similar one in the second year. Enrollment at CLU dropped 8.9% from 2019 to 2020, and 7.6% more from 2020 to 2021.

Thomas Aquinas College also experienced an enrollment decline during both pandemic school years. The 2018/19 spike to 407 students was temporary to support students before the opening of their Massachusetts campus.



Four-Year College Undergraduate Enrollment in Ventura County (2007/08 - 2021/22)



EARNINGS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Education pays, but disparity persists

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

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

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

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

HOW ARE WE DOING?

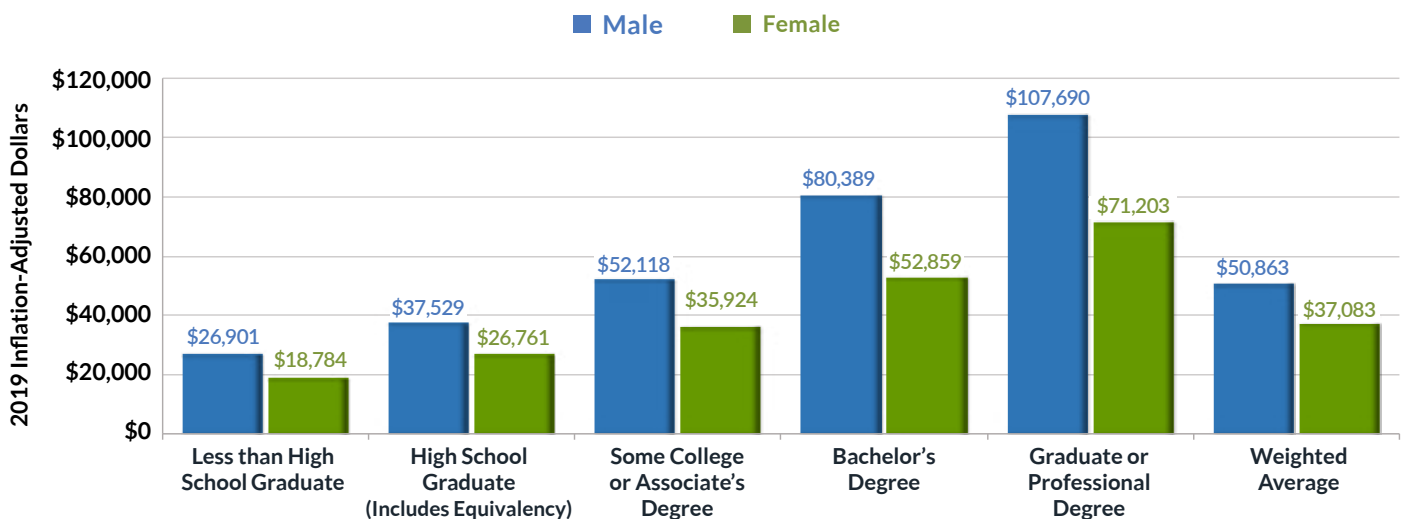
Education pays. In 2019, the median holder of a bachelor's degree in Ventura County earned about twice as much as the median high school graduate. The median worker with a graduate or professional

degree earned about twice as much as the median worker with a two-year community college degree or some college experience without a degree. Finishing high school is extremely valuable; men without high school diplomas earned \$26,901 on average and women without them earned \$18,784, well below the earnings of high school graduates.

Women earned less than men at every level of education. The weighted average regardless of education level was \$50,863 for men and \$37,083 for women in 2019, with bigger disparities at higher levels of education. The median female high school graduate's income was 71.3% of her male counterpart. For women with a graduate or professional degree, their earnings were 66.1% of similarly educated men.

Because women are more likely than men to work part time, this data shows larger gender gaps than the section on the gender wage disparity 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 (2019)





Land Use and Housing



Many areas of our lives, our society and our economy were upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing and land use were not among them. Instead of reversing long-standing trends, the pandemic reinforced them.

Rents and home prices have been climbing for years in Ventura County, lifting our housing out of reach for more and more people. In 2020 and 2021, housing costs took off at rates unseen since the early 2000s bubble. The median home price in the county jumped 20% from June 2020 to June 2021, and the average rent of a two-bedroom apartment went up 10.9%.

The number of new units permitted in the county did climb in 2020, but too little to keep up with demand. And that rising demand was, in many instances, a consequence of the pandemic. In 2020, millions of Americans suddenly found themselves working from home. That meant they could live anywhere they wanted, at least until they had to return to their offices. For a lot of people, “anywhere they wanted” turned out to be someplace like Ventura County, or Santa Barbara, or other coastal California communities that might have been too far from major urban centers for an easy commute in the pre-pandemic days.

At the same time the pandemic was freeing relatively affluent office workers to move to places like Ventura County, it was making it even harder for lower paid service workers, the backbone of our labor force, to afford to live here. Restaurant and hotel employees, retail clerks and cosmetologists found themselves out of work for long stretches of 2020 and 2021. Extra unemployment benefits and an eviction moratorium helped cushion them from the full impact of rising rents and falling incomes, but those policies were winding down by fall 2021, and the pandemic was not.

It remains to be seen how Ventura County will respond to these challenges. These pressures could accelerate our pre-pandemic shift toward a more unequal community, where the cost of living rises, the population declines, and many young families move elsewhere for economic opportunity. But that’s not the only road out of the pandemic. In many of our cities, including Ventura, there was a flurry of new residential construction in 2021, some of it specifically for low-income residents and much of it following the smart-growth “infill” model rather than the old pattern of suburban sprawl. It could be the beginning of a response to our housing crisis.

HOUSING STARTS

Building permits up in 2020

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of building permits issued each year by local governments for new housing units.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Ventura County, like most of coastal California, lacks sufficient housing. Home prices have risen faster than inflation for decades, with a brief respite after the 2008 market crash. The inventory of homes for sale is historically low, and apartment vacancy rates are low as well, with rents rising. These are all the markers of a shortage of homes, and the only way out of that is to build more of them.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Building more housing has been a topic of much discussion in state and local government, but so far that talk has produced little action. There were

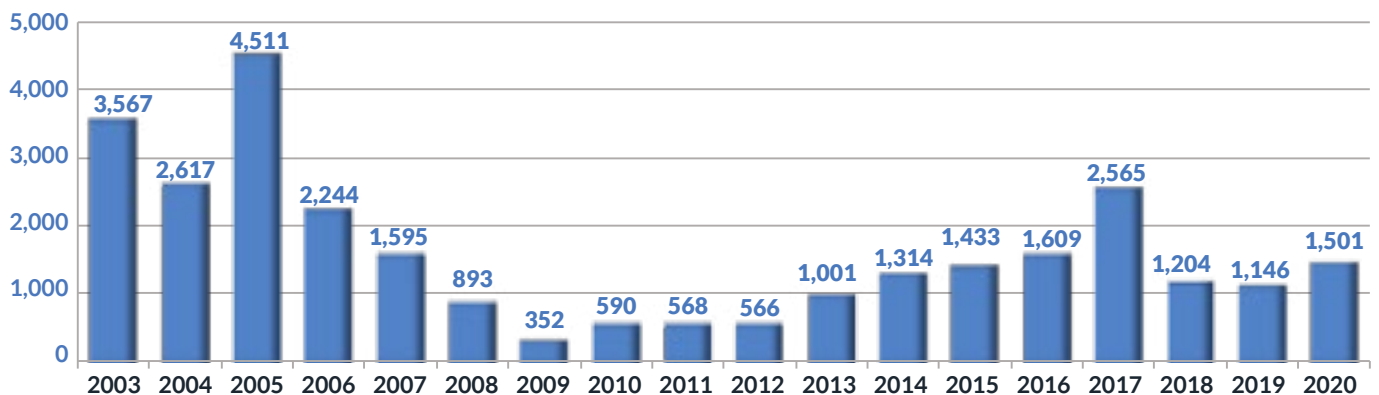
1,501 new homes permitted in Ventura County in 2020, more than in either of the two previous years. That falls below the recent peak of 2,565 in 2017, and well under the totals every year before the last housing bubble burst in 2008.

Ventura County never fully recovered its residential construction. Housing starts plummeted from 4,511 in 2005 to 352 in 2009, a 92.2% drop in four years. Since then they only have reached half of that 2005 total once, in 2017, and for the rest of the past decade the pace of residential building stayed at around one-third of that pre-crash level.

For years, Ventura County's housing starts were inadequate to keep up with its population growth. That trend has slowed, since the county's population has declined slightly in recent years. But demand for housing remains high, with rents and prices rising and vacancy rates low. When new inventory hits the market, it is quickly purchased or rented.



New Housing Units Permitted in Ventura County (2003-2020)



HOMEOWNERSHIP RATES

Owners outnumber renters in county

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the percentage of homes occupied by their owners, rather than by renters, in Ventura County, other counties in California, and each city in Ventura County.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Promoting homeownership has long been a goal of public policy makers and private financial institutions. Owning a home helps a family build wealth, and it often fosters a connection to the neighborhood and wider community.

Owning a home also comes with drawbacks, and many economists believe it is a worrying sign if the ownership rate climbs too high. Buying a home poses a major financial risk. Families who can't pay their rent can look for a cheaper apartment; homeowners who fall behind on their mortgage and are unable to sell their home can lose the house and see their savings evaporate and their credit ruined. Owning a home also makes people less mobile; it's harder for a homeowner to relocate for a job than it would be for a renter.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

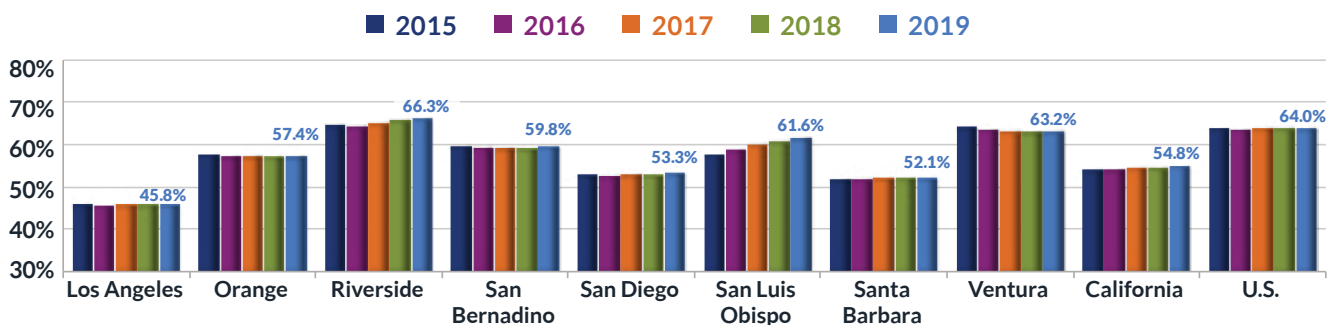
Ventura County has a high rate of homeownership, despite its high housing costs. In 2019, more than 63%

of homes in Ventura County were occupied by their owners, well above the state rate of 54.8% and not far below the national rate of 64%. Almost all other counties in Southern California and on the Central Coast posted lower rates of homeownership, including 45.8% in Los Angeles County and 52.1% in Santa Barbara County. Only Riverside County, at 66.3%, had a higher homeownership rate, and real estate there is less expensive than in Ventura County.

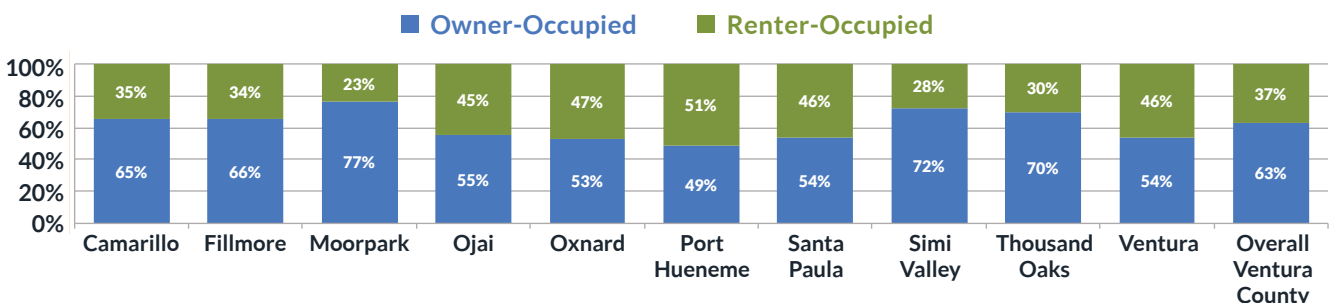
Ventura County's homeownership rate dropped from 65.8% in 2011 to 63.2% in 2019, and declined in seven of the eight intervening years. That is to be expected during a time when real estate prices were usually rising, but it's a bigger decline than experienced by the state or other nearby counties.

Cities in Ventura County vary widely when it comes to homeownership. In Moorpark, 77% of homes are occupied by their owners, and in Port Hueneme, only 49% of homes are owner-occupied. Cities in eastern Ventura County have fewer apartments and more single-family housing, and higher homeownership rates than cities in the western part of the county: Moorpark, Simi Valley and Thousand Oaks rank highest in the county's homeownership rates, and Port Hueneme, Oxnard, Santa Paula and Ventura have the lowest rates.

Homeownership Rate by County (2015-2019)



Percentage of Owners and Renters in Ventura County Cities (2019)



MEDIAN HOME PRICE

Prices jump 20% in a year

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the median price of a single-family detached home in Ventura County in June of each year from 2003 to 2021, and the median home price in each city in the county in June of 2020 and 2021.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Home values matter both to people who already 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 their dream of homeownership slip away. When prices drop, homeowners lose equity and can find it hard to sell their homes, which raises the specter of foreclosure. People looking to buy benefit from lower prices, of course. Home prices also are an indicator of the condition of the housing market: High prices and price increases signify the supply of housing in the area might be inadequate to meet the demand.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

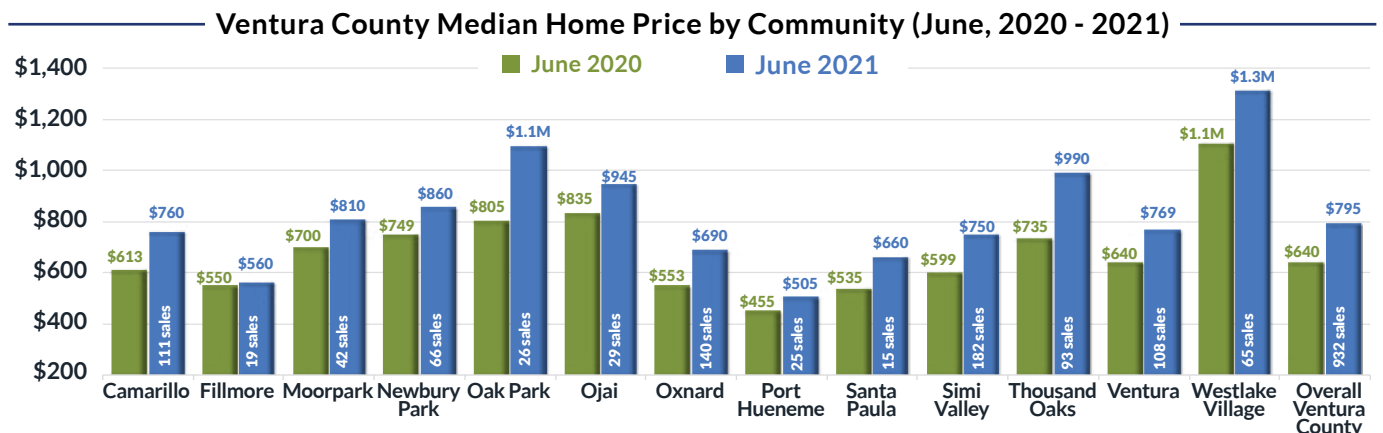
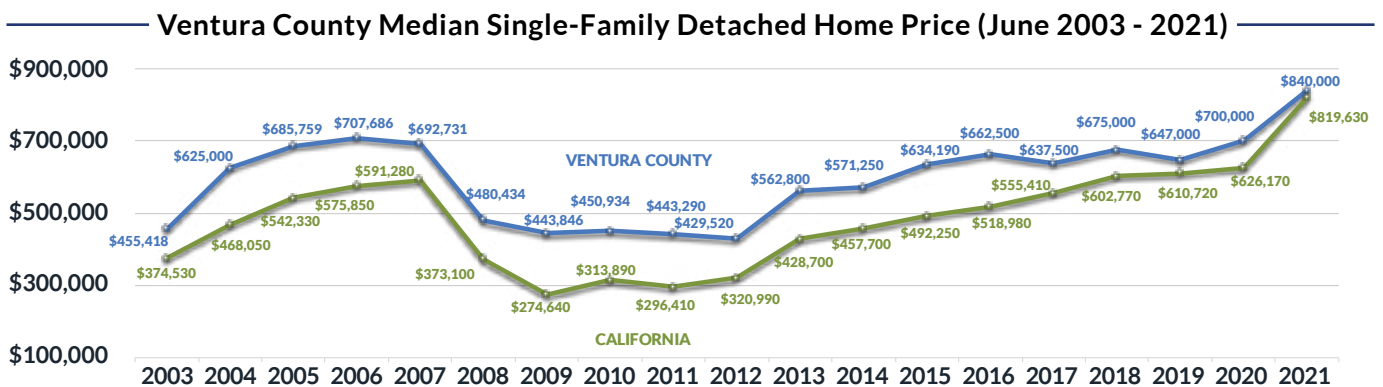
Home prices in Ventura County, and in the rest of California, shot up tremendously during the pandemic. The median price of a home sold in Ventura County

was \$840,000 in June 2021, up 20% from a year earlier. Percentagewise, that's more than the total appreciation between 2013 and 2019, and it exceeds any single-year gain since 2004, except for 2013, when home prices jumped 31% as they were recovering from the crash of 2008.

In 2020, Ventura County's median home price climbed above its highest point during the mid-2000s bubble, when prices topped out at \$707,686 in June 2006.

Ventura County isn't alone in seeing a pandemic real estate boom. California's median price in June 2021 was \$819,630, up 30.9% from a year earlier. For decades, Ventura County has been a relatively expensive place to buy a home, compared to the rest of California. It remains more expensive than the rest of the state, but the gap is narrowing, and will be erased soon if the trend from 2021 continues.

Ventura County's most expensive community in June 2021 was Westlake Village, with a median sale price of \$1.3 million. Oak Park wasn't far behind, at \$1.1 million, followed by Thousand Oaks at \$990,000 and Ojai at \$945,000. At \$505,000, Port Hueneme had the lowest median sale price, followed by Fillmore at \$560,000, Santa Paula at \$660,000 and Oxnard at \$690,000.



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Barely 1 in 4 families can afford median home

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are Ventura County's housing affordability rate — defined as the percentage of households able to afford the county's median-priced home — and the county's median family income. The affordability calculation assumes a 10% down payment and a 30-year mortgage at prevailing interest rates. If the mortgage payment falls below 30% of the household's income, the home is considered affordable.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Home prices are only part of the equation for buyers; whether they can afford to buy also depends on interest rates and their incomes. Affordability is obviously important for anyone looking to buy a house, but it matters for the entire community. If people who live and work in Ventura County can't afford to buy homes here, they might move farther away from their jobs, which worsens traffic and air pollution. They might leave the region entirely. Or they might stretch their

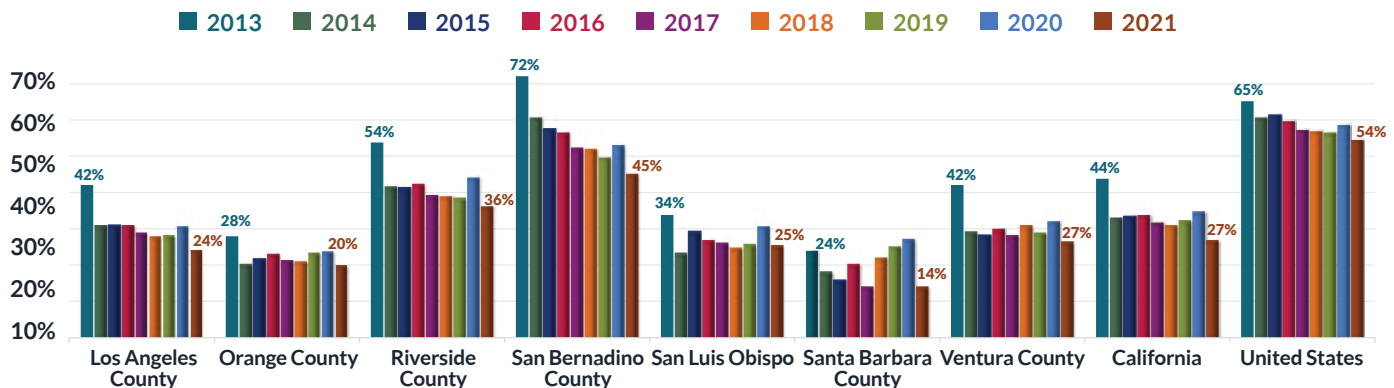
budgets to buy, which poses the risk of foreclosure and puts a squeeze on the family's finances.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

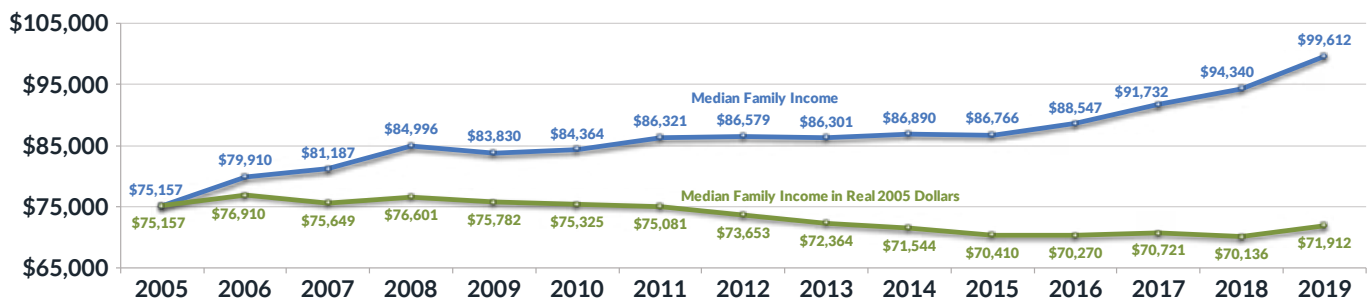
In the first quarter of 2021, just 27% of Ventura County households could afford the median home here. That was the lowest rate of any first quarter for more than a decade. The affordability rates in Ventura County and California were the same, and both were precisely half of the national affordability rate of 54%. Our neighboring counties are even less affordable: Santa Barbara County's rate was just 14% in the first quarter of 2021, and Los Angeles County's was 24%.

While home prices have been rising, our county's incomes have been stagnant, and have even declined when adjusted for inflation. The median family income in 2019 was \$99,612. When adjusted for inflation, that was 2.5% higher than the year before, but 6.5% lower than it had been in 2006. Ventura County's families started losing income in 2009 during the Great Recession but their incomes continued to drop until 2016, during what should have been a period of economic recovery.

Housing Affordability Index (Q1, 2013 - 2021)



Median Family Income in Ventura County (2005 - 2019)



APARTMENT RENTS

The rent is high and getting higher

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the 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. Vacancy rates are important because if they are too low, they are a sign that the area needs more rental housing. Low vacancy rates leave renters with limited choices and high prices.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

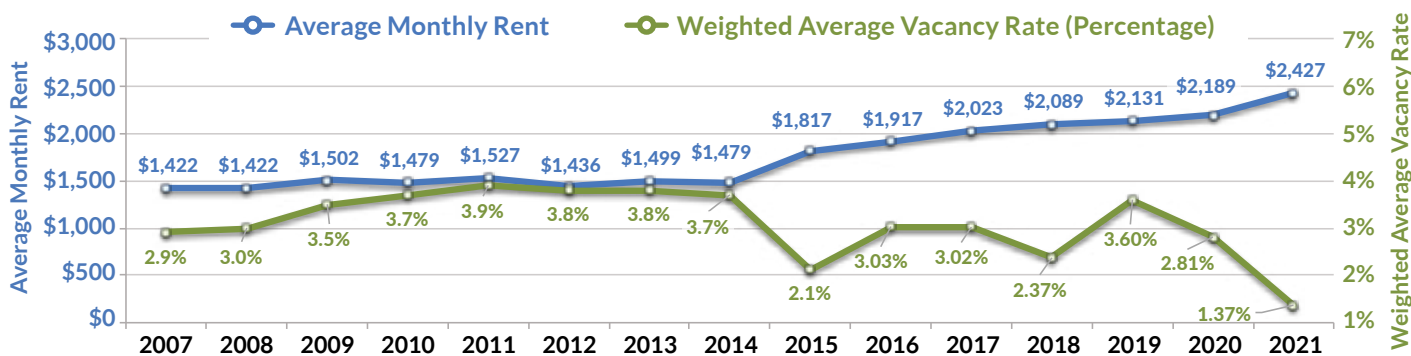
It's a hard time to be a renter in Ventura County. The average rent of a two-bedroom apartment countywide hit \$2,427 in July 2021, an increase of 10.9% over the previous July. That was an extraordinary jump in just one year, but rising rents are nothing new. The average rent of a two-bedroom apartment has risen every year since 2014, for

a total increase of 64% over seven years. It hasn't always been like this; the previous seven-year period, from 2007 to 2014, saw the average rent go up by just 4%, much lower than the rate of inflation.

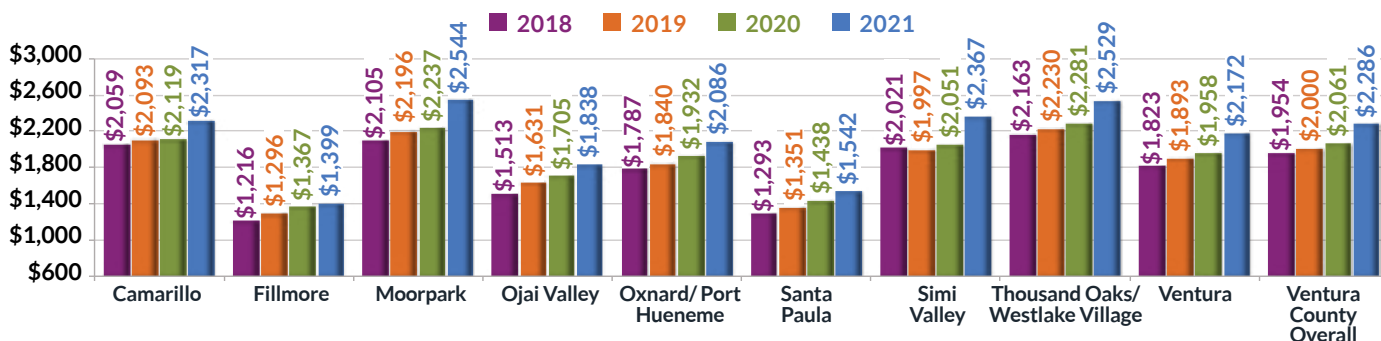
Rents have gone up everywhere in the county, but some cities are much more expensive than others. The county's highest rents in June 2020 were in Moorpark, where the average apartment of any size went for \$2,544 per month, up 13.7% from a year earlier. Thousand Oaks and Westlake Village, Simi Valley, Ventura and Camarillo were also above the overall county average of \$2,286 per month for all unit sizes. Fillmore had the lower rent, at \$1,399 per month, just 2.3% more than in 2020.

Rents and vacancy rates show the relationship an economist would predict: When vacancy rates fall, rents rise. Vacancy rates in Ventura County apartment buildings dropped from 2.81% in July 2020 to 1.37% in July 2021. Both rates are extraordinarily low, compared to the national vacancy rate of about 6.2% for all rental housing. Even when vacancies have been relatively high by our standards — they hovered between 3.7% and 3.9% from 2010 to 2014 — they have been low enough to give us what by most standards would be a very tight rental market.

Average Ventura County Two Bedroom Apartment Rents & Weighted Average Vacancy (July, 2007 - 2021)



Average Monthly Apartment Rent, All Unit Sizes (July, 2018 - 2021)



Natural Resources



Ventura County treasures its natural environment. Neighboring Santa Barbara is often cited as the birthplace of the modern American environmental movement, after a major oil spill off its coast in 1969. Ventura County arguably could be the point of origin for current campaigns to preserve farmland and open space from suburban sprawl.

In large part, these efforts have succeeded. Over the past few decades, sprawl has slowed; our air and ocean water have gotten cleaner; we use less water and electricity per person; and more of our power comes from solar and other renewable sources.

But we are not making the same progress as in past decades. In recent years, county officials have posted warnings at our beaches due to polluted ocean water much more often than they did a decade ago. Our air quality has stopped improving, and has, by some measures, even declined. Our landfills receive more trash than a few years ago.

The environment did catch a bit of a break with the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020. With fewer cars on the

road and fewer crowds at beaches, wildlife could roam more freely. But the respite was temporary; by 2021 we returned to most of our pre-pandemic habits.

The environmental challenges of our time are even more serious than those of a generation or two ago. Climate change is no longer a threat on the horizon as evidenced by our changing weather and increased severity and frequency of wildfires. In fact, the average annual temperature in Ventura County has increased 2.6 degrees Celsius — 4.68 degrees Fahrenheit — since the late 1800s, according to a 2019 analysis by the Washington Post. This increase is more than twice as much as the global average, and more than the 2-degrees Celsius global threshold that the 2015 Paris Agreement seeks to prevent.

Global warming is, of course, planetwide. Unlike a polluted beach or smoggy air, it can't be fixed at the local or county level. But through conservation, renewable energy and innovation, we can do our part to reduce carbon emissions and help keep the planet livable.

RESIDENTIAL ELECTRICITY AND NATURAL GAS USE

Electricity usage down, natural gas up

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the amount of electricity used by residential customers in Ventura County, in kilowatt-hours per year, and the amount of natural gas, measured in therms per year. A kilowatt-hour is the amount of energy required to keep a 1,000-watt appliance running for one hour, and a therm of natural gas is equal to 100,000 BTUs.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Energy efficiency is good for our bank accounts as consumers, good for the electricity grid and good for the environment. Though California has set a goal of 100% clean power by 2045, for now most of our power comes from sources that affect the environment to some degree. Natural gas, a common household fuel as well as the state's top fuel source for electrical power plants, releases carbon dioxide when burned, which contributes to climate change. Hydropower dams, one of the state's leading energy sources, do not produce carbon but do cause ecological problems, such as harm to rivers and fish habitats.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County used 1.76 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity in 2019, the lowest total of any year since 2006. The county's population, of course, was smaller in 2006 than in 2019, and on a per-capita basis, electricity consumption in recent years has declined significantly from previous decades.

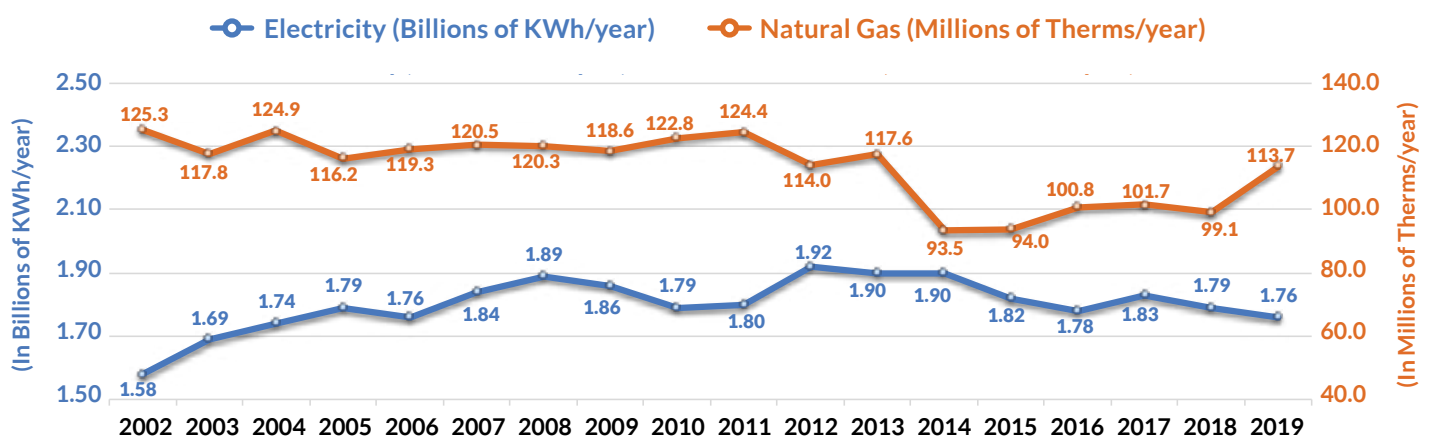
The county turned a corner in electricity conservation around 2012; after rising gradually over the previous decade, it began to drop the next year. Total residential energy consumption in the county fell in six of the seven years between 2012 and 2019, for a total decline of 8.3% during that period.

Natural gas consumption has followed a slightly different pattern. It stayed fairly flat during the 2000s — which means it declined on a per-capita basis — before falling sharply in the early 2010s. The county's homes used 93.5 million therms in 2014, a drop of 24.8% over the previous three years. But the county's natural gas usage began to climb in 2015 and in 2019 it was 113.7 million therms, the highest mark since 2013.

The 2019 jump occurred across Southern California, mostly due to the unusually cold weather that hit the state in the first half of the year. Cooler weather brought rain which helped lift the region out of drought and is reflected in the rainfall section of this report.

Statistics about natural gas and electricity consumption are only available through 2019, so they do not reflect changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. It is likely residential consumption of gas and electricity increased in 2020 when people stayed home more, though that upsurge would be accompanied by a drop in energy consumption at restaurants, offices and other businesses shuttered during parts of the pandemic.

Ventura County Residential Electricity and Natural Gas Consumption (2002 - 2019)



SOLAR POWER INSTALLATIONS

Solar boom shines on

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?

Solar power is California's leading source of renewable energy. Expanding our solar capacity is essential to meet our climate goals, including a state mandate that half of our power comes from renewable sources by 2025, and 100% by 2045.

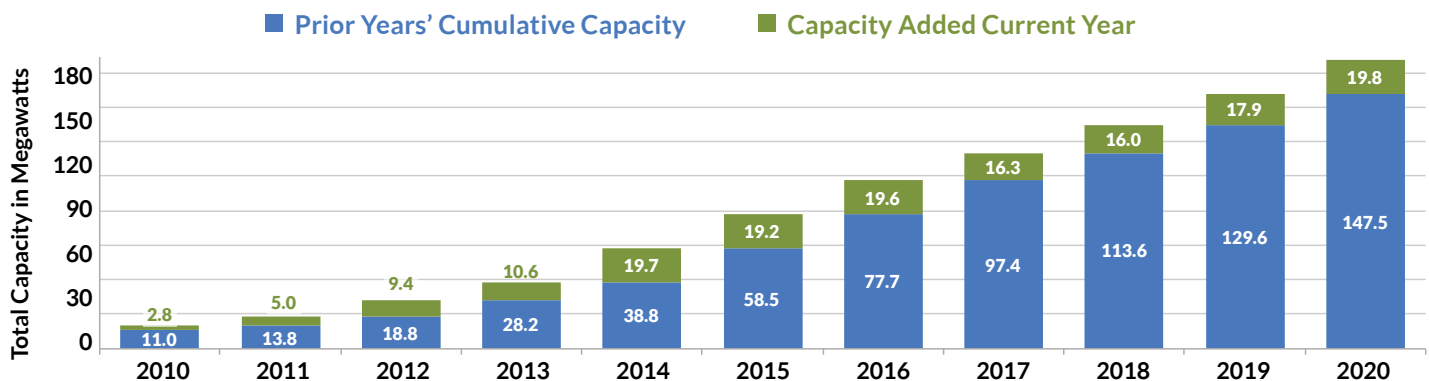
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County's solar capacity continues to grow

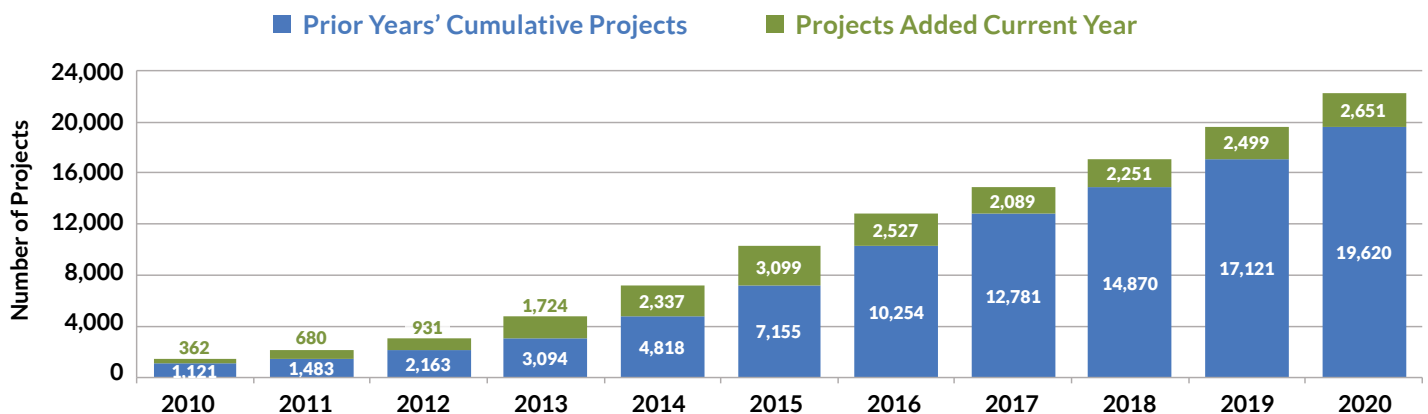
every year. In 2020, the county added 19.8 megawatts, to bring its total capacity to 167.3 megawatts. That's enough to power tens of thousands of homes, as much as a relatively small natural gas power plant or a large commercial solar field.

Instead of large-scale solar farms, Ventura County has smaller solar arrays scattered throughout the region on both public and private property. A total of 2,651 solar projects went online in 2020, bringing the county's number to 22,271. That made 2020 the second most productive year on record for new solar installations, after 2015. New installations are trending larger in recent years; 2020 saw a record addition of new capacity in megawatts.

Ventura County Solar Capacity in Megawatts (2010 - 2020)



Ventura County Solar Projects (2010 - 2020)



AIR QUALITY

Air mostly cleaner, but particulates still an issue

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the number of days per year Ventura County exceeded state standards for ozone and PM10 particulate matter in the air.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Air pollution threatens our health and can shave years off our lives. Ozone and particulate matter are different types of pollution, each harmful in its own way. Ozone, a molecule consisting of three oxygen atoms, occurs naturally in the upper atmosphere, where it filters harmful radiation. In the lower atmosphere, it is a pollutant, caused when emissions from cars, power plants and other sources react with sunlight. High ozone levels contribute to smog and can cause eye and throat irritation, reduced lung capacity and crop damage.

Particulate matter is a mixture of dust, soot, soil, metal particles and liquid droplets, small enough to be inhaled. Particles 10 microns or smaller are known as PM10, and can aggravate asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Days with dangerously dirty air have become rare in Ventura County. In 2020, the county only exceeded the state's one-hour standard for ozone five times, after never exceeding the standard in 2019. Ventura

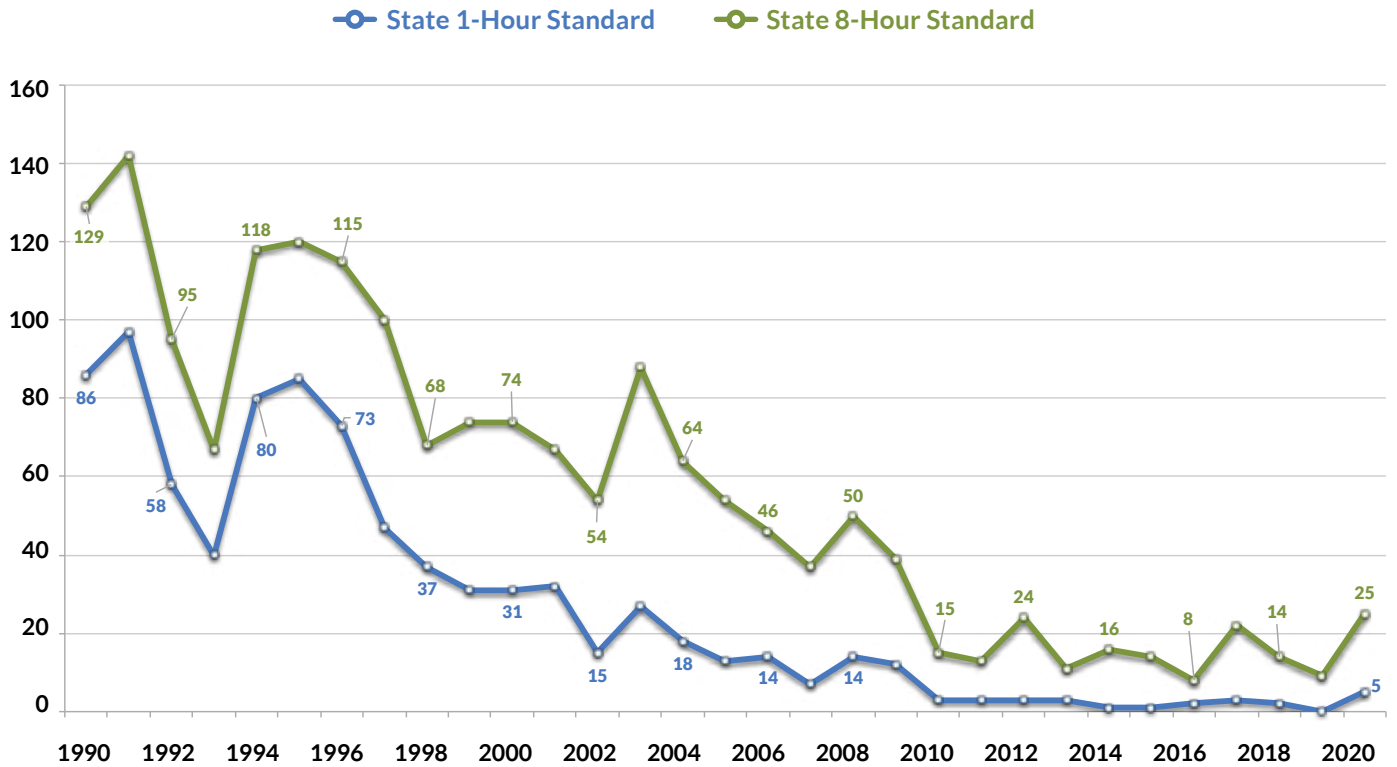
County exceeded the state's eight-hour ozone standard on 25 days of 2020, up from nine days in 2019. Both figures were much lower than they had been in the 1990s and early 2000s; in fact, Ventura County routinely exceeded the 8-hour ozone standard more than 100 times a year in the 1990s.

Ventura County topped the state's 24-hour PM10 standard on 21 days in 2020, up from 15 in 2019. Particulate matter pollution increased by this standard as the 2010s progressed, going from six days above the state standard in 2010, 2011 and 2012 to 34 days in 2017. But PM10 levels still fall below what they were in the 1990s, when days above the standard peaked at 99 in 1991. Wildfires cause particulate matter, which may explain the relatively high readings in 2017 and 2018, when the county was hit by the Thomas and Woolsey fires. Construction dust also contributes to PM10, and that could factor into the decline in PM10 levels after the housing boom of the early and mid-2000s ended.

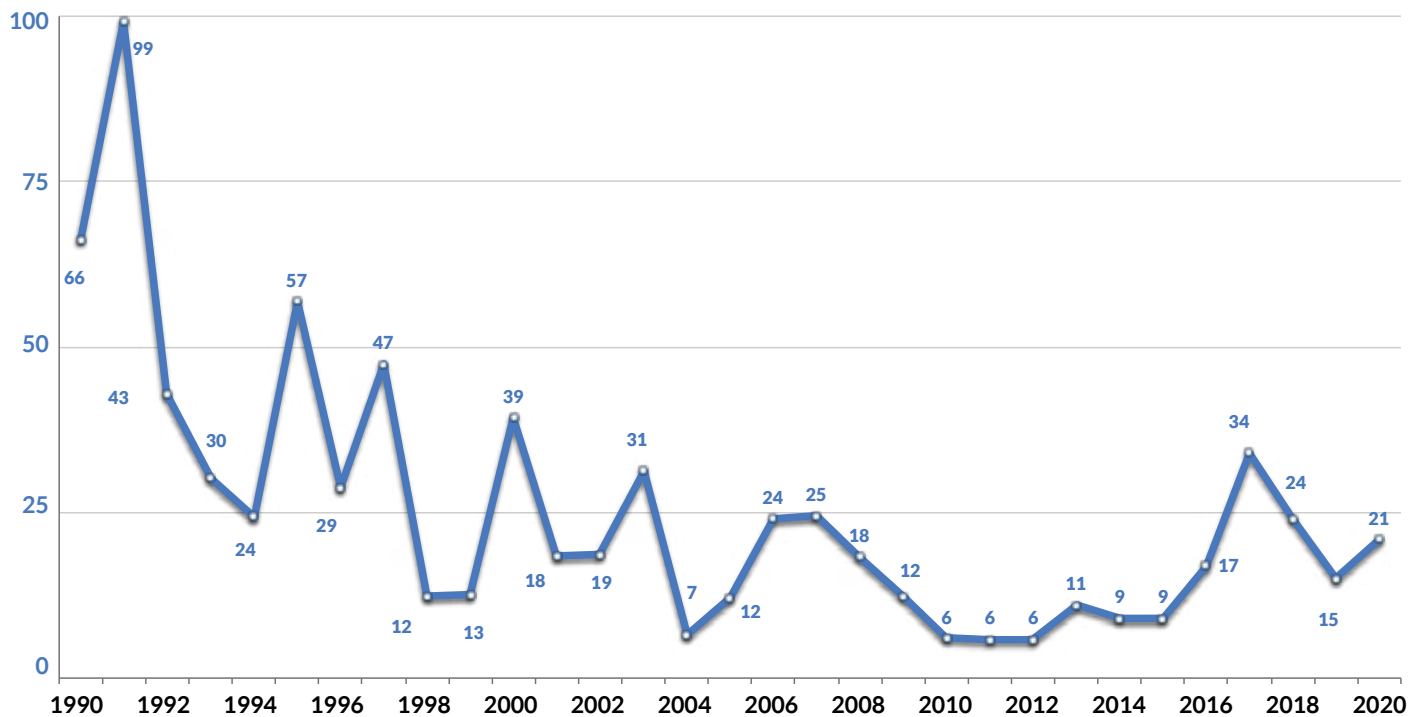
In both particulate matter and ozone, Ventura County made great progress in the 1990s and early 2000s, only to plateau or even backslide in the 2010s. This makes sense: It is easier to find ways to reduce pollution when there are more pollutants to reduce. If we want our air quality to improve, we will have to find a way to capture "fruit" that doesn't hang as low.



Number of Days Ventura County Exceeded State Ozone Limits (1990 - 2020)



Estimated Days in Ventura County Above the State 24 - Hour PM10 Standard (1990 - 2020)



RAINFALL

Rain returned in 2019, 2020

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 calendar year.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

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

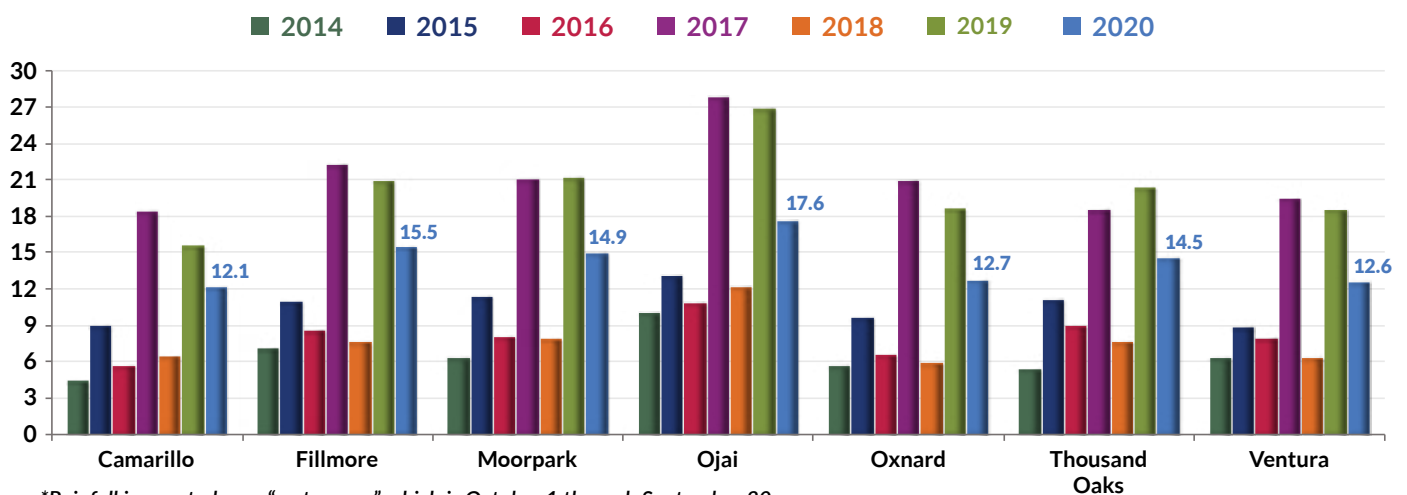
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County entered another drought in 2021, but 2019 and 2020 were fairly wet years. Rainfall totals in 2020 ranged from 12.1 inches in Camarillo to 17.6 inches in Ojai, and the year before, from 16 inches in Camarillo to 27 in Ojai. The Ojai Valley almost always gets the most rainfall of any area in the county.

Before emerging from the drought in 2017, Ventura County had some of its driest years on record. Less than 5 inches of rain fell in Camarillo in 2014, and Thousand Oaks received just a little more than that. In a typical year, those cities often get two or three times as much rain.



Average Inches of Rainfall* (2014 - 2020)



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

DROUGHT

The next drought is upon us

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

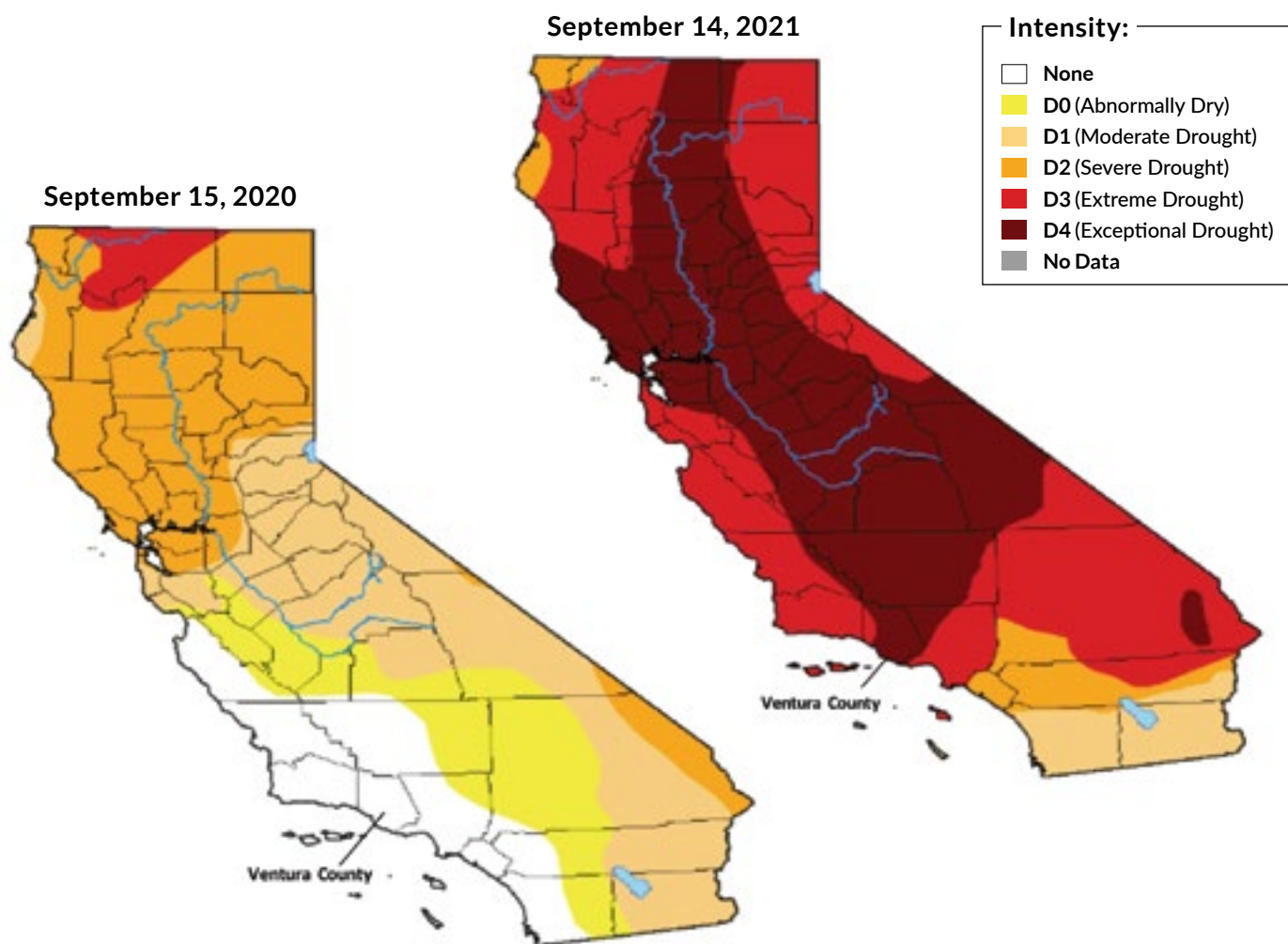
The measure is the level of drought in California, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, which is produced by the University of Nebraska, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Periods of extended drought hurt our economy, our environment and our health, as water for drinking and irrigation becomes scarcer, more expensive and of lower quality. Droughts also increase the risk of serious wildfires, as the brush in our wildlands becomes drier and more flammable.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

By the spring of 2021 Ventura County returned to a serious drought, as it had been five years earlier. The intervening years without a drought were looking like an exception to the new rule. This new drought came upon us suddenly. In September 2020, Ventura County and its surrounding areas in Southern California and the Central Coast were not classified by the U.S. Drought Monitor as unusually dry at all, and one year later, most of Ventura County was in a state of “exceptional drought,” the driest category in the system. Nearly all of California was in some phase of drought by September 2021.



WATER USE

Usage climbed slightly in 2020

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

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

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Water is a precious resource in Southern California. Lacking enough locally sourced water for its population, Ventura County must rely in part on imports from Northern California or the Colorado River. Conservation is cheaper and better for the environment than importing more water or finding new sources, and it allows us to grow our population with less additional strain on our water resources.

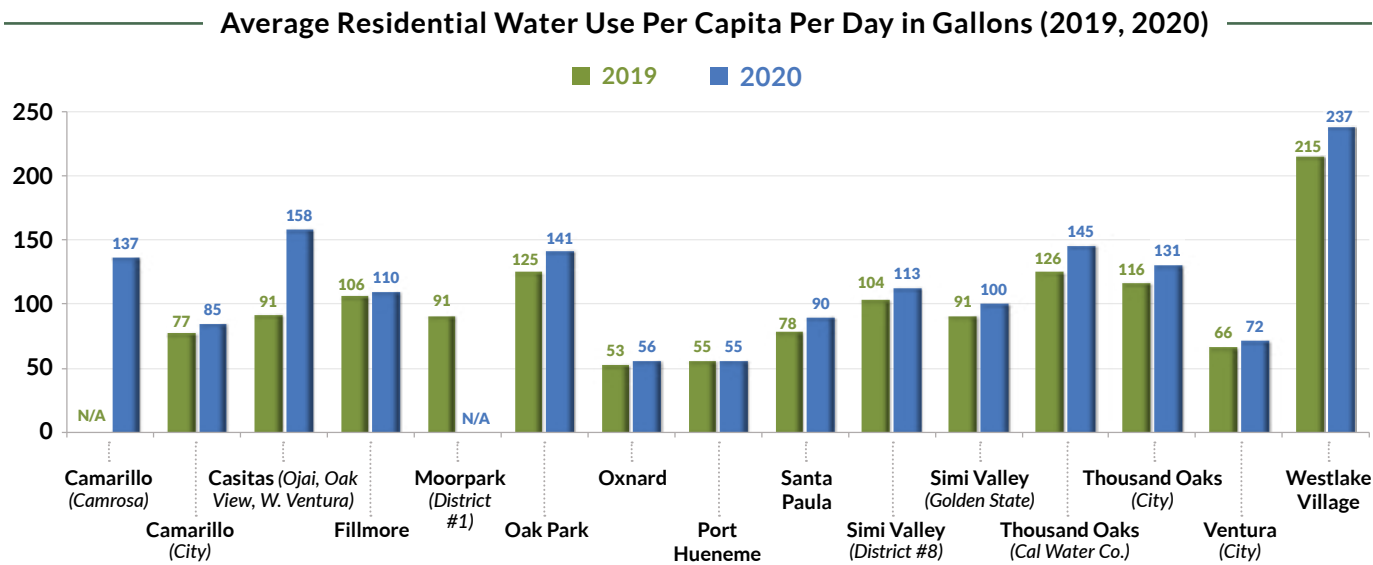
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Not surprisingly, people in the warmer inland valleys of Ventura County use more water than residents of the cooler, coastal areas. Water usage is also higher where homes and yards are bigger. In 2020 the average Port Hueneme resident used 55 gallons of water per day, while the average resident of Westlake Village, where the weather is much warmer and yards are much larger, used 237 gallons. The rest of the county fell somewhere in between, with the Santa Rosa Valley, the



Ojai Valley, Fillmore, Oak Park, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks and Westlake Village all using more than 100 gallons per person, per day, and Ventura, Santa Paula, Port Hueneme, Oxnard and Camarillo falling below 100 gallons per person, per day.

In most of the county, water usage in 2019 and 2020 were similar, with a slight increase in 2020. The biggest increase was in the Casitas Municipal Water District, which covers the Ojai Valley and parts of West Ventura. The average resident there used 158 gallons per day in 2020, up from 91 in 2019. The 2020 countywide increase in usage likely resulted from more people working from home during the pandemic.



OCEAN WATER QUALITY

Beach warnings on the rise again

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of days per year Ventura County beaches were posted as unsafe for public use because of bacterial contamination, except when the pollution is the direct result of rainfall. In Southern California, where storm drains are largely independent of sewage treatment systems, heavy rain washes bacterial sources, such as animal waste, into coastal waters. This nearly always triggers a three-day advisory for the public to avoid recreational use of the water. 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 ranks high among our greatest natural resources, but its value diminishes substantially if the ocean is too dirty to enter safely. Polluted water puts swimmers and surfers at risk for

infections and rashes. It also hurts our economy, since our beaches draw tourists to our coastal cities.

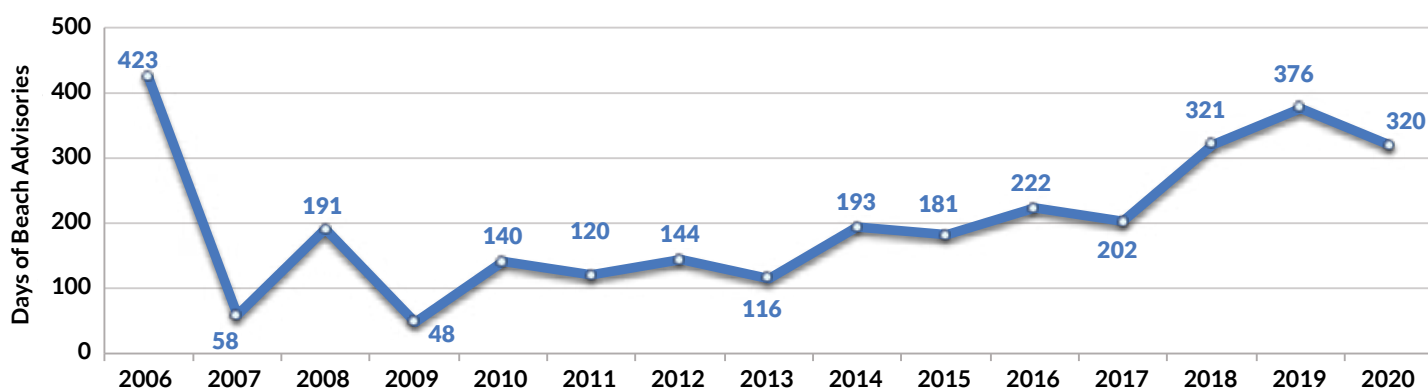
HOW ARE WE DOING?

In 2020, beach advisories were posted 320 times in Ventura County, down from 376 the previous year. Our ocean water consistently ranks among the cleanest in Southern California. However, the long-term trend is concerning. The county posted more than 300 beach advisories in 2018, 2019 and 2020, while the number was below 200 every year between 2007 and 2015. In 2009 only 48 beach advisories were posted in Ventura County for the entire year.

Our ocean water is still cleaner than it was in the 1990s and early 2000s; in 2004, county health officials posted 752 beach advisories. That largely resulted from a few problem beaches with particularly polluted water, and the county was able to clean up those areas. The problem in recent years seems more widespread and has resulted in advisories that can last a week or more.



Days of Posted Beach Advisories for Water Quality - Ventura County (2006 - 2020)



OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION

Industry continues gradual decline

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the amount of crude oil and natural gas extracted from Ventura County each year. Oil is measured in 42-gallon barrels and natural gas is measured in cubic feet.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Oil and gas are essential to the world and the regional economy, despite efforts to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. The local production and sale of petroleum products generate jobs and tax revenue for Ventura County and have for more than a century. Oil and gas extraction poses a threat to our environment, and the production and consumption of fossil fuels contribute to climate change; on the other hand, oil produced in the United States can replace oil imported from overseas, which lessens the environmental impact. In addition, Ventura County more strictly regulates oil and gas extraction than many other petroleum-producing areas.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Production of oil and natural gas in Ventura County has declined steadily for decades. In 2020, the county produced 6.5 million barrels of crude oil. That was up 1.8% from 2019, but 2019 posted the county's lowest oil production in decades. Oil production in 2020 was 17.9% below 2010 levels and less than half what it had been in 1990.

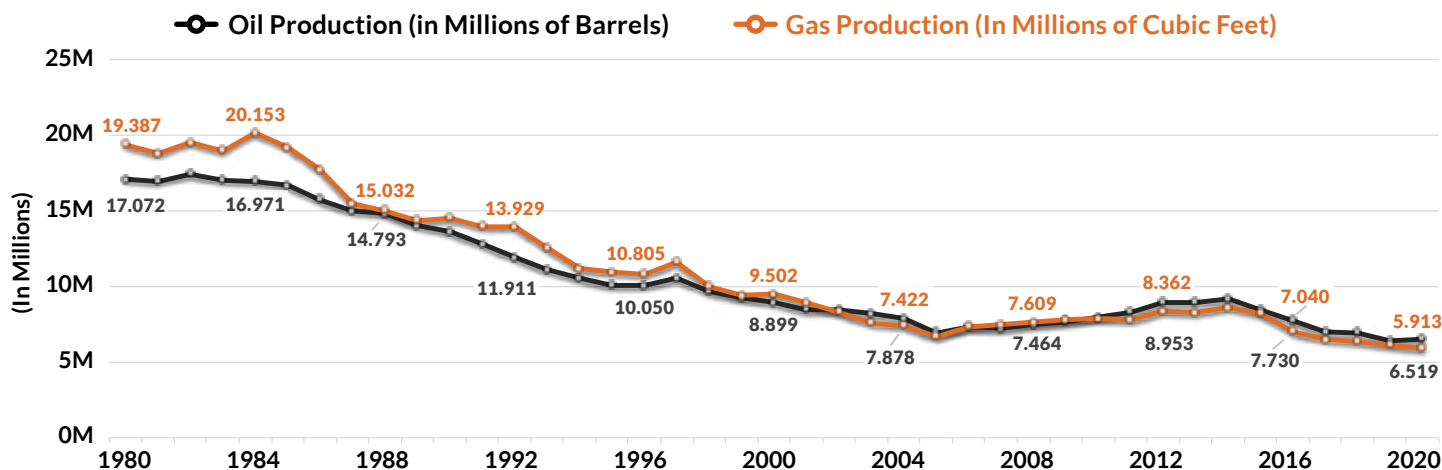
Natural gas production followed a similar trend. The

county produced 5.9 million cubic feet of natural gas in 2020 which represented a 3.6% decline from 2019 and a 60% decline since 1990.

Two simultaneous trends are at work here: First, a secular, long-term trend toward less oil and gas production in Ventura County. This has been caused by rising costs in the region; stricter regulations in California and Ventura County; an environmental movement in the county and state that has targeted oil and gas industries; a natural decline in Ventura County petroleum deposits; and an extraction boom in other states that use newer methods such as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. Second is a smaller cyclical trend for production to climb when oil prices rise, which happened in the early 1980s and again in the early 2010s. Because oil and gas are relatively expensive to extract in the United States, when prices are low it is often more efficient to import them. These market-driven spikes in production are relatively small when compared to the secular decline.



Oil and Gas Production in Ventura County (1980 - 2020)



LANDFILL DISPOSAL RATE

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 its unincorporated areas.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Trash thrown into 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 buried and can be unsuitable for future development or recreation.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

When the recycling and composting movement was new, disposal rates dropped in Ventura County and all over California. But that trend seems to have run its course, and in most of Ventura County, residents generated more trash in 2019 than they had five years earlier. The exceptions were in Thousand Oaks, which posted the same disposal rate in 2014 and 2019, and Port Hueneme, where the rate dropped from 3.7 pounds per person, per day in 2014 to 3.2 pounds in 2019.

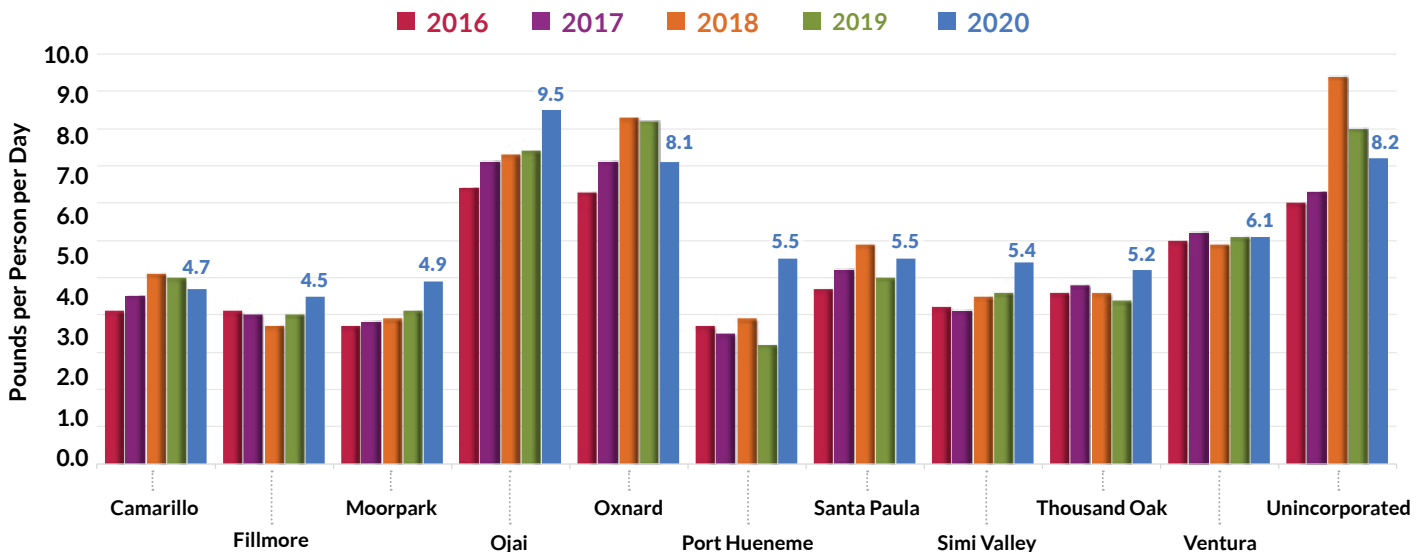
Though state laws mandate recycling and cities and waste companies are heavily incentivized to increase the practice, the business of recycling has become more difficult in recent years, which could be contributing to higher landfill disposal rates. China once accepted tons of plastics and other recyclable materials from the United States, but in 2019 it stopped accepting those shipments, leaving many U.S. waste haulers and recyclers with no buyers for their materials.

Port Hueneme had the county's lowest disposal rate in 2019, followed by Fillmore and Moorpark.

The highest disposal rates were in Oxnard, at 9.2 pounds per person, per day; the unincorporated areas of the county, at 9 pounds, and Ojai, at 8.4 pounds. In all of those areas, disposal rates have risen significantly in recent years. Ojai's rate in 2019 was 64.7% higher than in 2014, and Oxnard's disposal rate grew 37% in that five-year period.

Some disparities between the cities don't seem to correlate with location, population density, economics or demographics. Oxnard and Port Hueneme are similar communities in most ways, yet the average Oxnard resident threw away nearly three times as much trash in 2019 as the average Port Hueneme resident.

Per Capita Disposal Rates in Pounds/Person/Day (2016 - 2020)







In 2019, the public health mission of fighting infectious and chronic diseases was a routine and often overlooked government function, something most Americans rarely thought about.

In 2020, the core public health task of infectious disease control became the most important function of nearly every government in the world. Millions of Americans suddenly became conversant in terms like effective reproduction numbers, quarantines, social distancing, incubation periods, fomite versus airborne transmission, personal protective equipment and all the rest.

COVID-19 dominated the public health conversation with good reason. In Ventura County, its impact was devastating. The virus killed 1,000 county residents in the 12 months after it first appeared here and hospitalized thousands more.

To control the disease, county and state public health authorities issued stay-at-home orders, closed businesses and school campuses, facilitated testing,

required masks and oversaw a vaccine rollout that protected hundreds of thousands of Ventura County residents.

There is, of course, more to public health than the control of airborne infectious diseases. Those other concerns didn't go away because we're in a pandemic. In 2020, the opioid crisis took on more urgency, claiming more lives than ever before. Other measures are improving: teen pregnancy, for example, is rarer than it's been since government agencies began tracking it.

In many ways, ours is a healthy county. Everywhere in Ventura County, our residents can expect to live longer than the national average. But we have challenges ahead, and they will become more prominent as we move out of the crisis phase of the pandemic. Perhaps a new understanding of, and respect for, the job of public health will be one of COVID's lasting societal side effects.

LIFE EXPECTANCY AND INCOME

Health, wealth are linked

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the life expectancy of someone born between 2015 and 2017 in 23 Ventura County ZIP codes, and the average household income in each ZIP code in 2019.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Life expectancy ranks among the most important indicators of an individual's well-being and quality of life. It often serves as a shorthand to compare the health or the healthcare systems of different countries or regions. Comparing life expectancy to income shows the extent to which wealth and health correlate.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

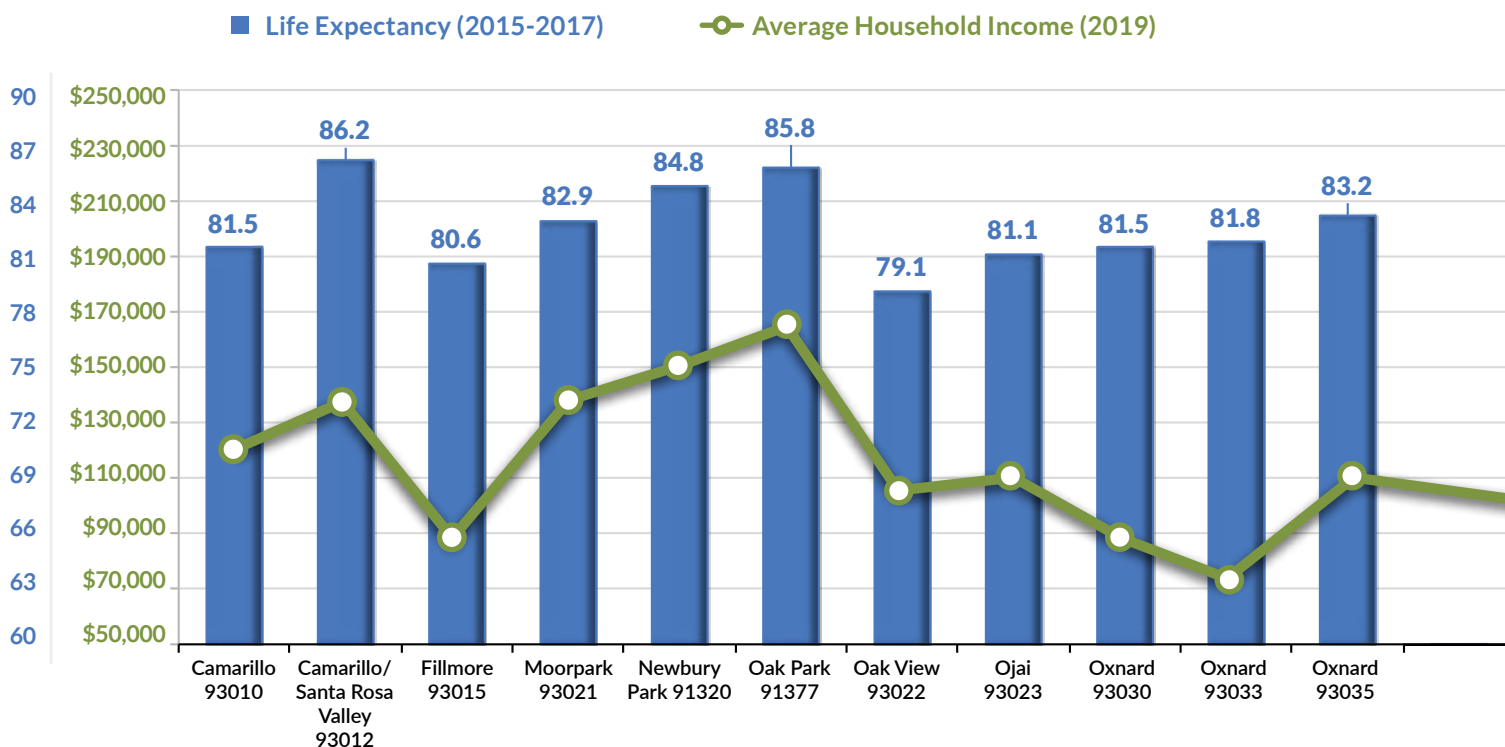
Life expectancy for people born in most parts of Ventura County between 2015 and 2017 is in the low 80s, ranging from a low of 79.1 years in Oak View to a high of 86.6 years in the 91361 ZIP code of Thousand Oaks and Westlake Village. Every Ventura County ZIP code exceeded the national average, which was 78.6 in 2017.

A correlation exists between wealth, health and place. The county's wealthiest ZIP code, in Thousand Oaks and

Westlake Village, also had the highest life expectancy. The next highest average household incomes were in the 91362 ZIP code of Thousand Oaks and Westlake Village, in Oak Park and in Newbury Park. All those areas also had relatively long predicted life spans, between 84 and 86 years. In lower income areas, the relationship does not appear as strong. The lowest income ZIP codes were in Oxnard, Port Hueneme and Santa Paula. The life expectancy in those areas fell below the most affluent areas, but the shortest life spans were in Oak View and the 93003 ZIP code in Ventura, which had household incomes near the middle of the pack.

This might be explained by what public health experts call the "Hispanic paradox" or the "epidemiological paradox." This refers to the fact that Latinos in the United States live longer than people of other ethnicities, despite the fact they have lower average incomes and education levels than white Americans, factors typically associated with better health outcomes. In Ventura County, this means low-income but heavily Latino areas like South Oxnard and Santa Paula have longer life expectancy than middle-income and predominantly white areas like Oak View and East Ventura.

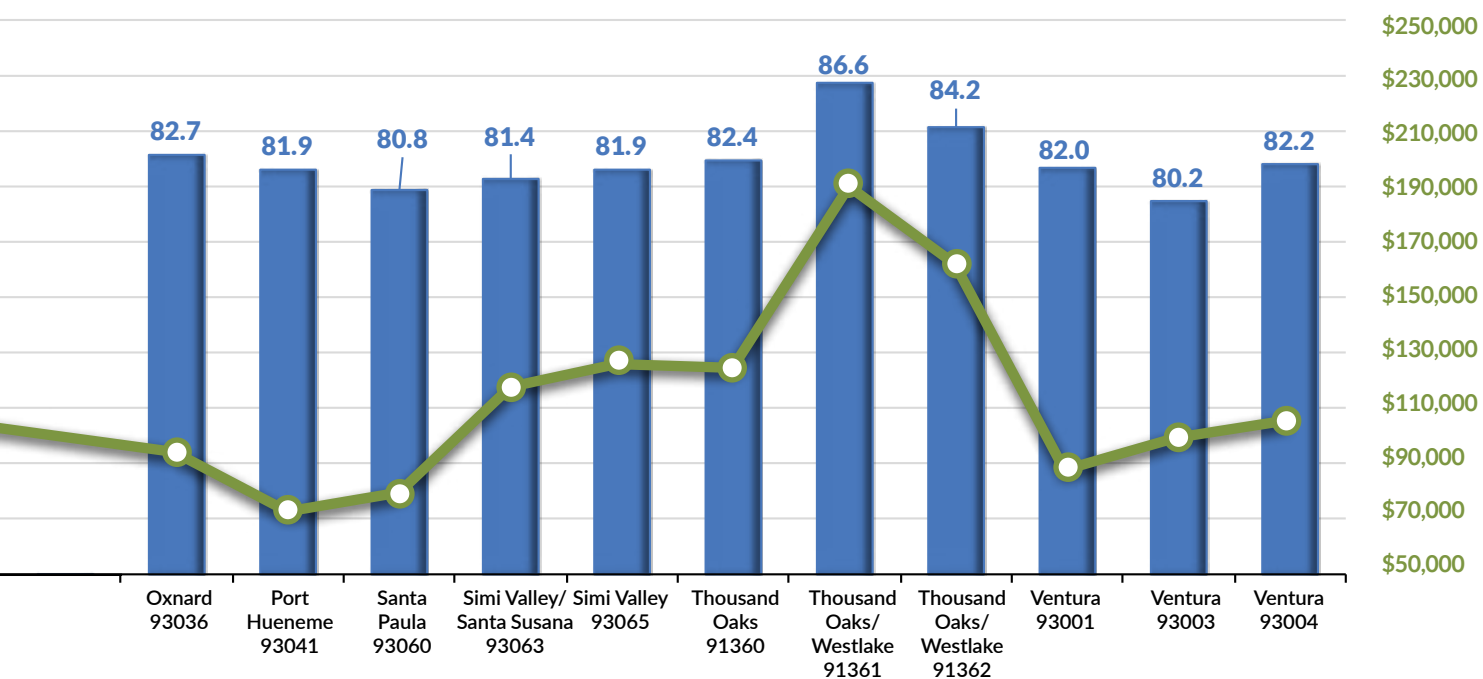
Ventura County Life Expectancy (2015-2017) & Average Household Income (2019)





■ Life Expectancy (2015-2017)

—○— Average Household Income (2019)



TEEN BIRTH RATE

Births to teens rarer than ever

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of births to teen mothers (ages 15 to 19), expressed as the rate of births each year per 1,000 teen girls. Each year's rate is actually the rate for the previous seven years combined, to smooth out any short-term anomalies.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

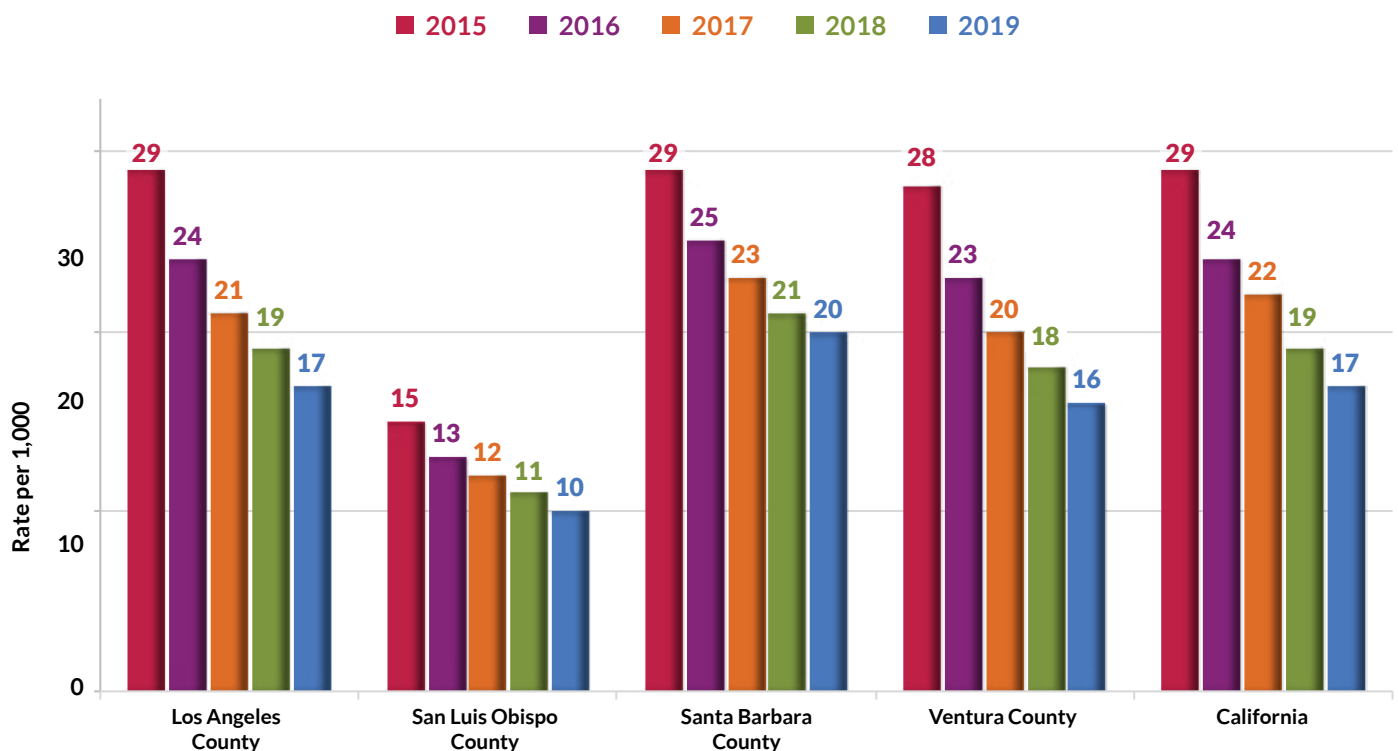
Giving birth as a teenager puts at risk the future quality of life of mother and child. Teen mothers are more likely than their peers to drop out of school, live in poverty, be single parents, lack adequate prenatal care and deliver premature and low-birth-weight infants. Children of teen mothers tend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

HOW ARE WE DOING?

The teen birth rate in Ventura County continues to fall, even from already historically low levels, just as it does in the state and the nation. In the seven-year period that ended in 2019, there were 16 births for every 1,000 teen girls in Ventura County, less than half of the rate from the period that ended in 2013. Ventura County's teen birth rate is similar to that of California as a whole, and to the rate in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties. San Luis Obispo County has had a lower teen birth rate in recent years, though it is not declining as fast as Ventura County's.

The long-term decline in the teen birth rate goes back decades; nationally, the rate is about one-fourth what it was in the early 1990s. That makes it even more remarkable the decrease continues to drop so steeply, a fourth decade into the trend. Whether this is driven by public policy or cultural and social changes, or some combination of both, our county, our state and our nation have made real, sustained progress.

Teen Birth Rate per 1,000 for Ages 15 to 19 (2015 - 2019)



OPIOID DEATHS

Another deadly epidemic

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of people who die each year of opioid overdoses in Ventura County, in California and in other Southern California counties. Overdose deaths include those from prescription painkillers such as oxycodone and street drugs such as heroin, and do not include deaths from chronic, long-term use. 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 more than a decade, and Ventura County is no exception. Overdose deaths are only one facet of this issue — addiction can wreck lives that it does not ultimately end — but fatal overdoses are the most serious one, and a useful metric for measuring the larger problem.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County's opioid epidemic has been severe for years, and in 2020 it got much worse. More than 140 people died of opioid overdoses, a rate of 17.07 per 100,000 county residents. The death rate spiked 70% in a single year and was more than triple what it had been just four years earlier.

Ventura County had more opioid deaths per capita in 2020 than the state as a whole, and more than Los Angeles, Santa Barbara or Orange counties. In the first half of the 2010s, we made some progress in combatting the deadliest outcome

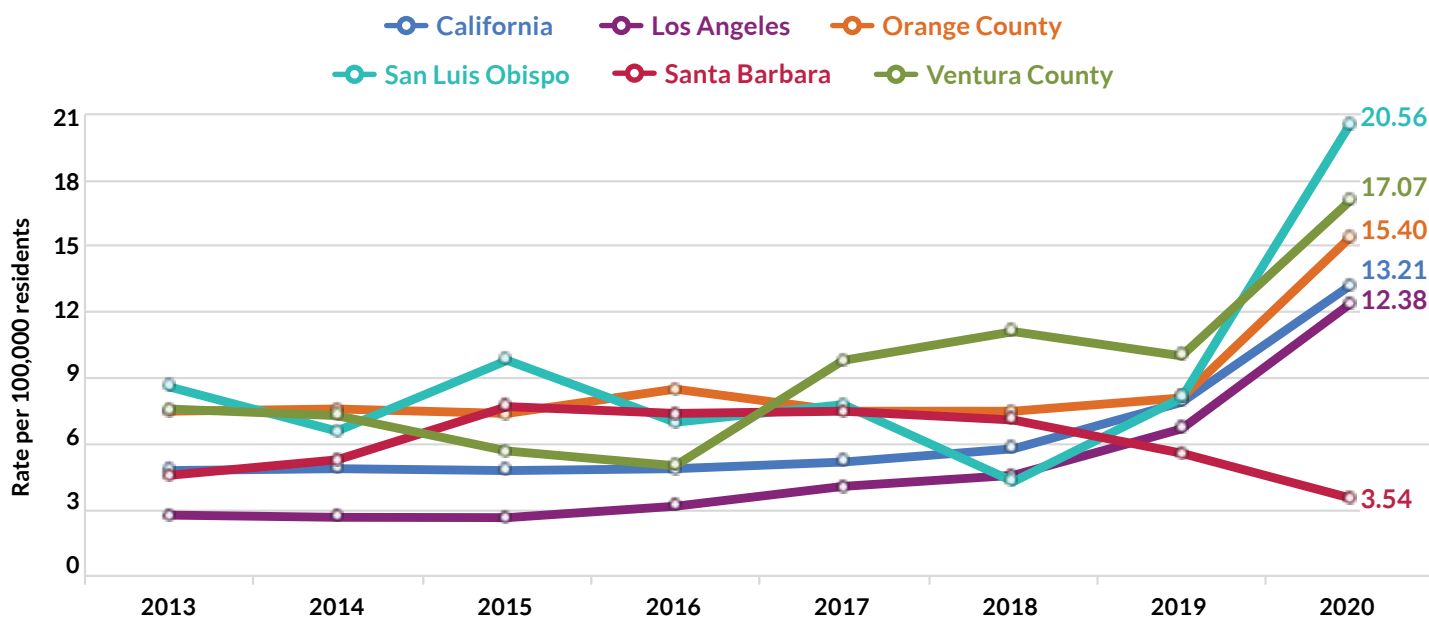
of opioid addiction; Ventura County's rate of overdose deaths per 100,000 residents dropped in half, from 10.75 in 2012 to 5.01 in 2016. But any confidence we might have felt in 2016 that we were getting a handle on this problem was unwarranted. The death rate more than doubled from 2016 to 2019, and more than tripled between 2016 and 2020.

There are a few possible explanations for this. The increased prevalence of the synthetic opioid fentanyl, which can be deadly even in small doses, is one of them. The pandemic is another; drug abuse and overdoses rose nationwide as the isolation of 2020 set in.

Whatever the reasons, Ventura County is suffering even more than nearby areas. In 2016, our overdose death rate was about the same as the state's, and lower than that of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Orange counties. By 2020, it was 29.2% higher than the statewide death rate and above that of all the other nearby coastal counties except San Luis Obispo.

The outlier on this measure is Santa Barbara County. Overdose deaths there declined dramatically in 2019 and 2020, when they were rising everywhere else in the region and statewide. In 2020, Santa Barbara County had 16 opioid overdose deaths, or 3.54 per 100,000 residents. That's about half of what it had been two years earlier, about one-fifth the rate of Ventura County and one-fourth the statewide rate. This could be a temporary blip, but if Santa Barbara County has found a sustainable way to cut overdose death rates in half, that example will be worth learning from.

Opioid Overdose Deaths per 100,000 Residents (2013 - 2020)



LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH

Heart disease, cancer county's top killers

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is a ranking of the most common causes of death for Ventura County residents from 2017 through 2019.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Accurate information on the most common causes of death enables doctors, researchers and public health professionals to focus their efforts and resources where they can do the most good. Knowing what kills us also tells us about the choices we make. For example, heart disease and other ailments are often tied to diet and lifestyle.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

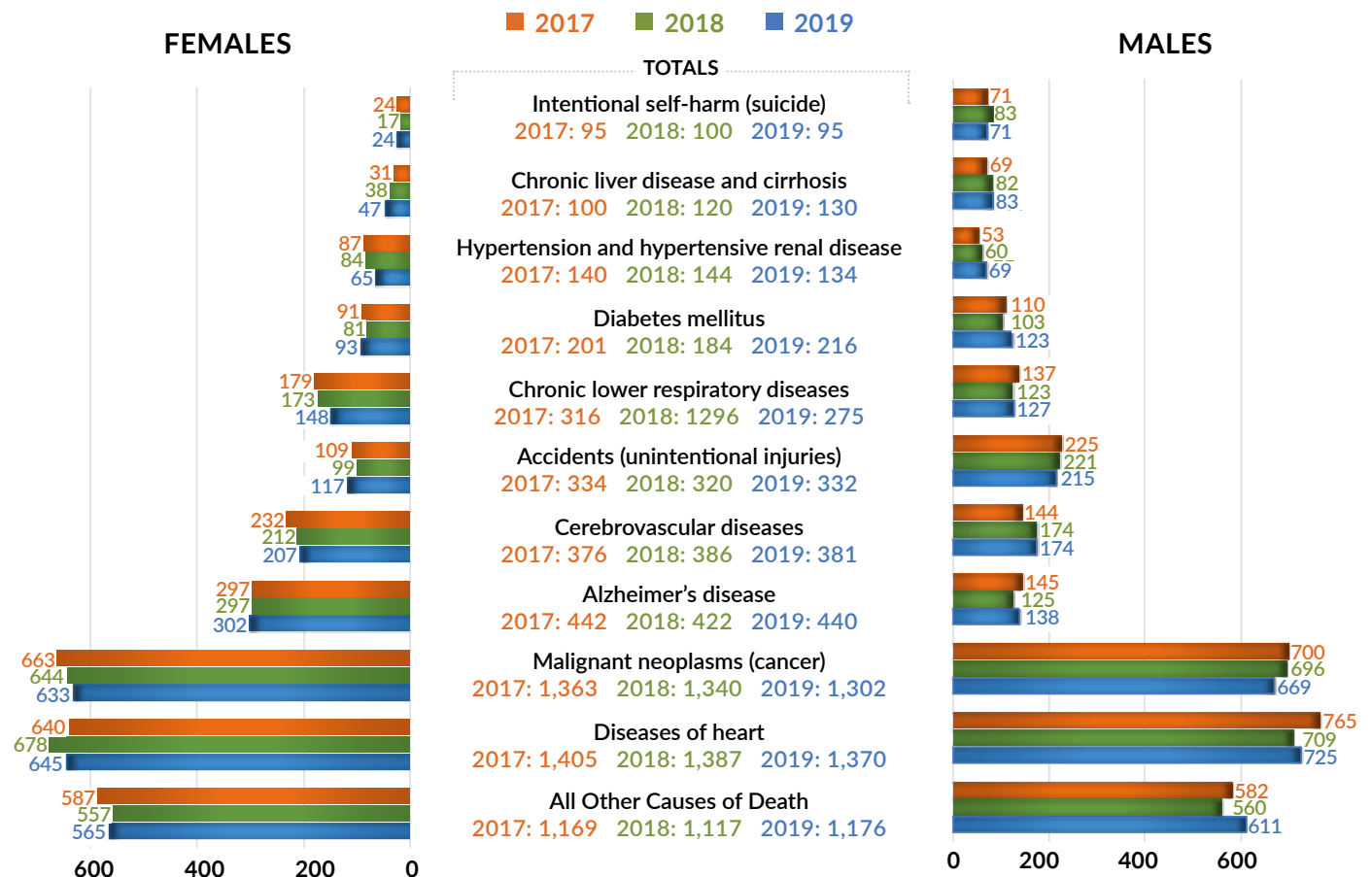
Heart disease and cancer always top the list of the most common causes of death in Ventura County, and in the United States as a whole. In 2019, heart disease took the top spot in the county, with 1,370 deaths, and cancer was second, with 1,302. Both have become less deadly in recent years, with heart

disease deaths dropping by 2.5% between 2017 and 2019, and cancer deaths down by 4.5% in that two-year period.

When 2020 statistics are available, it appears both opioid overdoses and COVID-19 likely will break into the top 10. In 2019, Ventura County had 89 opioid overdose deaths, which places it just outside the top 10 causes of death. Suicide was 10th in 2019, with 95 deaths. In 2020, 141 Ventura County residents died of opioid overdoses.

COVID-19 deaths are discussed elsewhere in this domain, but it is clear in 2020 and 2021 the disease will be among the chief killers of Ventura County residents. The county had 373 COVID-19 deaths between the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and the end of that year. By the end of September 2021, there had been 776 more COVID-19 deaths, for a total of 1,149 in 19 months. During the first year of the pandemic, there were around 1,000 deaths, which would place it not far behind cancer and heart disease as the third leading cause of death countywide.

Leading Causes of Death in Ventura County (2017 - 2019)



COVID-19 CASES AND DEATHS

Pandemic killed more than 1,100 in county in 19 months

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measures are the number of positive coronavirus tests and the number of COVID-19 deaths in Ventura County in each month since the pandemic began in March 2020.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

COVID-19 is the deadliest pandemic in a century. It has cost more than 1,100 Ventura County residents their lives and touched the lives of hundreds of thousands more, with just about every resident affected in some way by stay-at-home orders, business and school closures, job losses and more.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

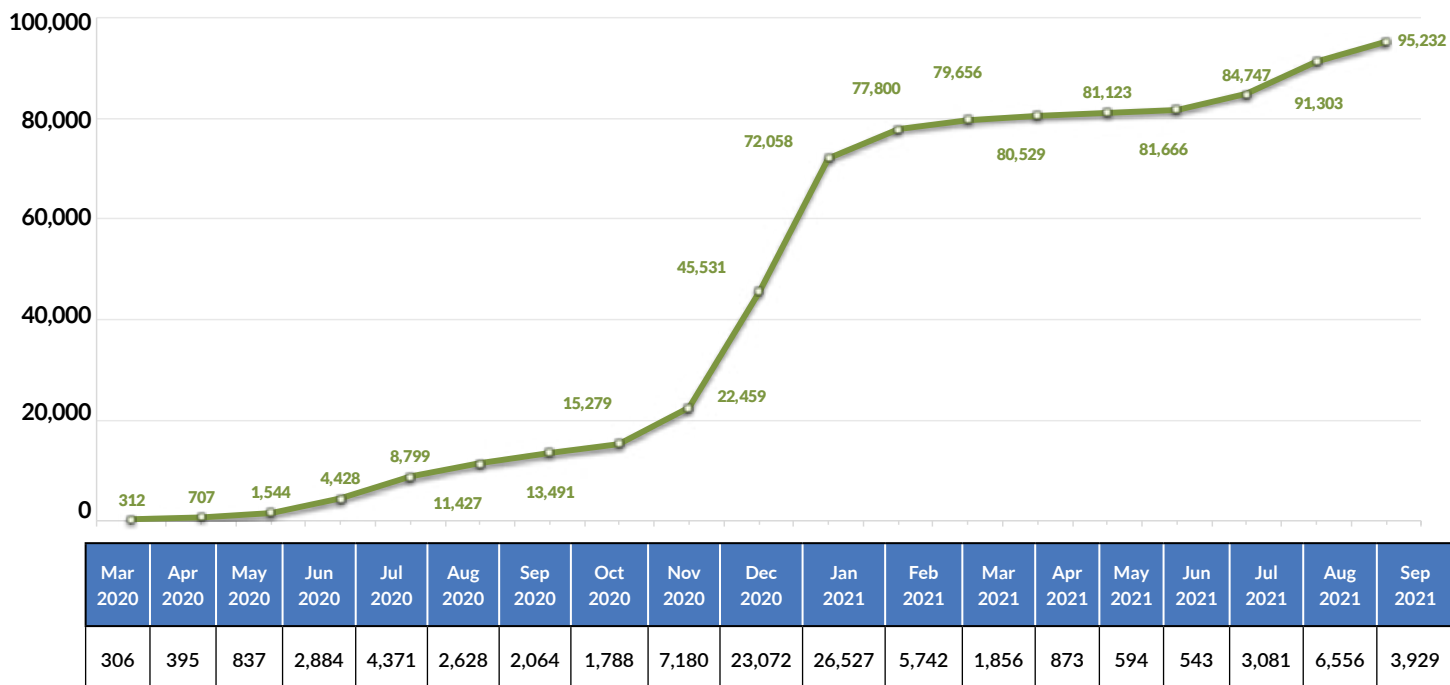
By September 2021, 18 months into the pandemic, nearly 1 in 9 Ventura County residents had tested positive for coronavirus, a total of 95,232 confirmed cases. The county death toll topped 1,000 almost exactly one year after the first deaths, and 18 months into the pandemic 1,149 Ventura County residents had died of COVID-19.

The bulk of the cases and the deaths happened during the winter of 2020/21. In the very dark month of January 2021, Ventura County reported 383 deaths. December and February were nearly as deadly, with a total of 748 deaths across those three months, nearly two-thirds of the total for the first 18 months of the pandemic.

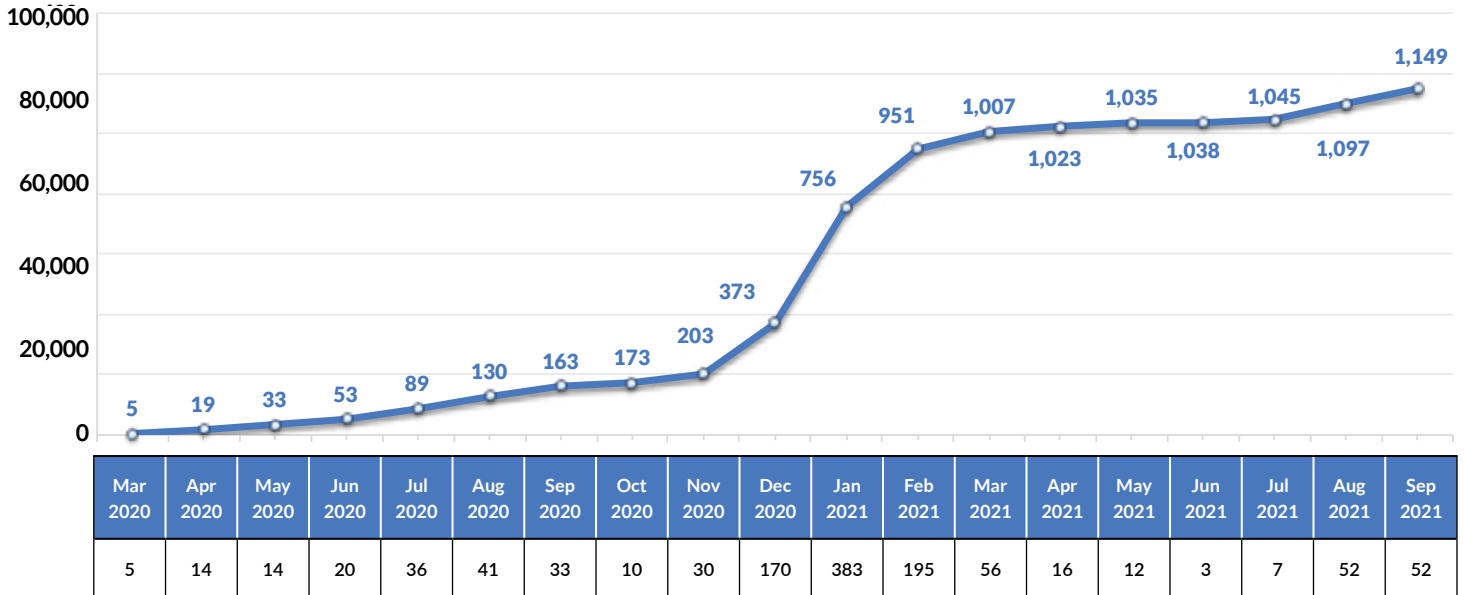
By the spring of 2021, with COVID-19 vaccines widely available, new cases and deaths fell to their lowest levels since the pandemic began. The reprieve was temporary; the late summer and early fall of 2021 brought a wave of cases caused by the delta variant of the novel coronavirus. In fact, more new cases were diagnosed in August 2021 than in any month outside of that winter wave. With most of the county's population vaccinated, that surge was much less deadly. August 2021 posted 14.2% more COVID cases than February 2021, but 73.3% fewer deaths.

Ventura County's rate of COVID-19 deaths paralleled that of the state of California and the nation through most of the pandemic, though the U.S. death rate spiked higher in the spring of 2020 when the virus devastated the New York metropolitan area, and the winter wave was smaller nationwide than in California. A national spike in COVID deaths in 2021 surpassed the uptick in Ventura County, likely because our vaccination rate exceeds that of many states and counties across the country. Our death toll corresponds with most nearby counties, with one exception: Los Angeles was the center of the deadly 2020/21 winter wave. At its peak in January 2021, Los Angeles County had nearly 75 deaths per 100,000 people, 66.4% more than Ventura County's rate that month of 44.9 deaths per 100,000 residents.

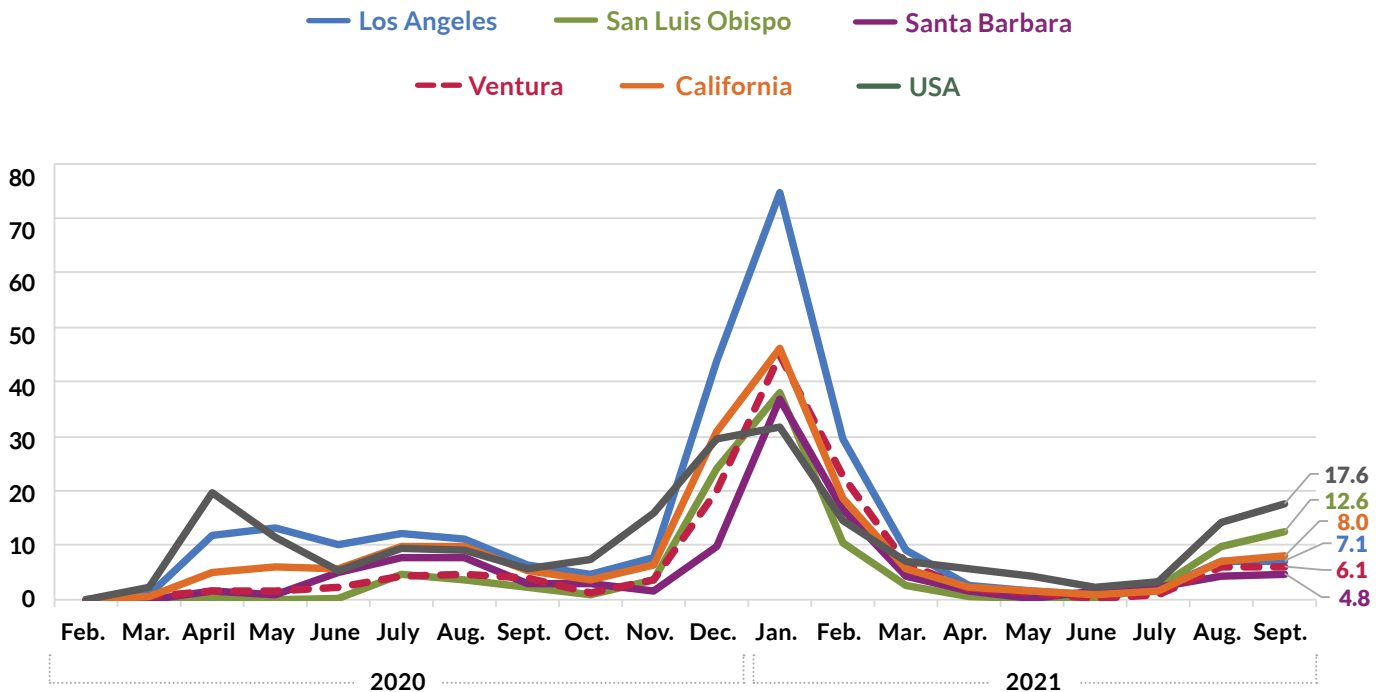
Ventura County COVID-19 Cumulative Cases and Table With Cases by Month (March 2020 - September 2021)



Ventura County COVID-19 Cumulative Deaths and Table With Deaths by Month (March 2020 - September 2021)



Ventura County COVID-19 Monthly Deaths Compared to Region, California and Nation Per 100,000 Residents (Feb 2020 - Sep 2021)



COVID-19 VACCINATION RATE

County outpaces neighbors, state, nation

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measures are the percent of the eligible population that is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and vaccinated with at least one dose for Ventura County, other nearby counties, the state of California and the United States. The statistics are from Oct. 28, 2021, when the eligible population included everyone over age 11.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

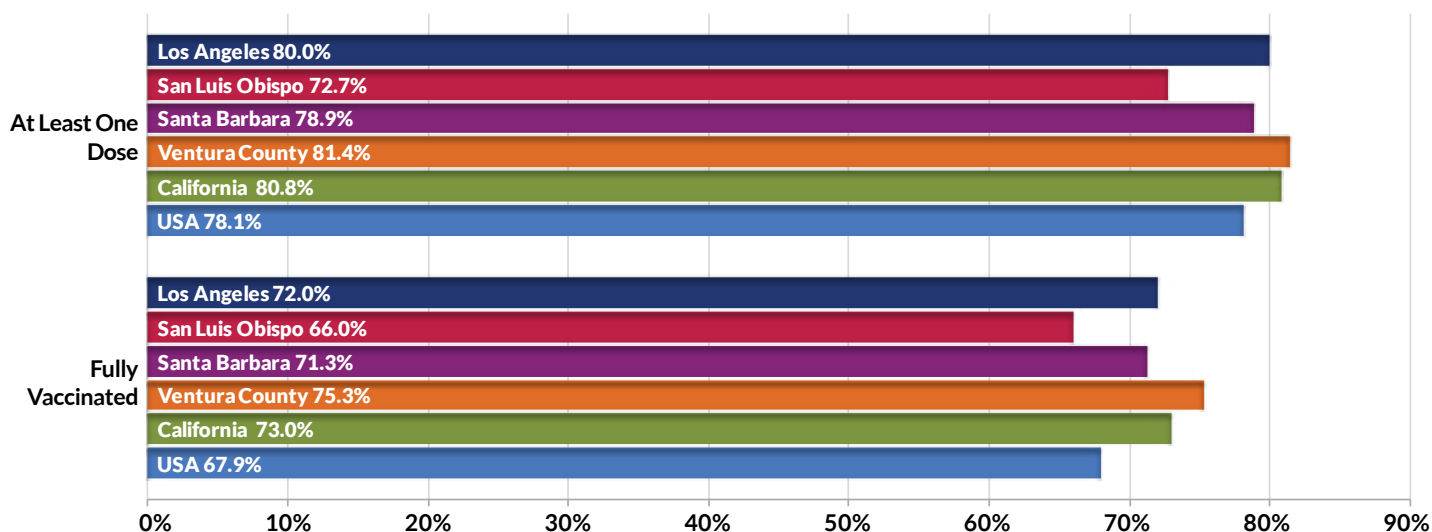
Vaccines are the best weapon we have against COVID-19. They do not completely stop the spread of the disease, but they reduce it greatly. If vaccinated people contract COVID-19, they are far less likely than the unvaccinated to require hospitalization or to die. The availability of vaccines in the spring of 2021 correlated with a sharp decrease in the rate of new cases, and since then, the virus has spread more among the unvaccinated and caused them more serious health problems.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Relatively speaking, Ventura County has fared quite well at vaccinating its population against COVID-19. By the end of October 2021, 75.3% of the 12-and-older population was fully vaccinated, and 81.4% had received at least one dose of a vaccine. Both figures surpassed the counties of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Los Angeles, and the state as a whole. They were also well above the national rates for the 12-and-over population.



Percent of Population Ages 12 and Up Vaccinated for COVID-19 (October 2021)







American communities' relationships with their police departments evolved dramatically in 2020 and 2021: demonstrations on the streets, funding debates in city council chambers and rising crime rates in some cities that may have been tied to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Ventura County, residents did march in the streets but the status quo largely prevailed. Police funding and policies remained mostly in place. Already at historic lows, crime rates dropped even further in 2020, and Ventura County topped the list of California's large counties with the lowest crime. The fact that thousands of county residents spent more time at home for most of the year appeared to have little effect on the level of property crimes or violent crimes.

Public safety is central to Ventura County's identity. Police and fire departments are among the top funding priorities for our local governments, and generally that investment has yielded results. Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley consistently rank among the safest cities in the nation with populations above 100,000. And while crime rates are higher in Oxnard, Ventura, and other cities, they are much lower everywhere in the county than a generation or two ago. In fact, the county's overall crime rate in 2020 was less than half of what it had been in 1994. And the improvement continues; many cities in the United States saw their crime rates rise again in recent years, but Ventura County's have continued to drop, albeit more slowly than in the 1990s.

COUNTY CRIME RATES

California's safest large county

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 murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, grand theft and arson.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Violent crimes and property crimes harm a community's quality of life. The 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 perennially ranks among California's

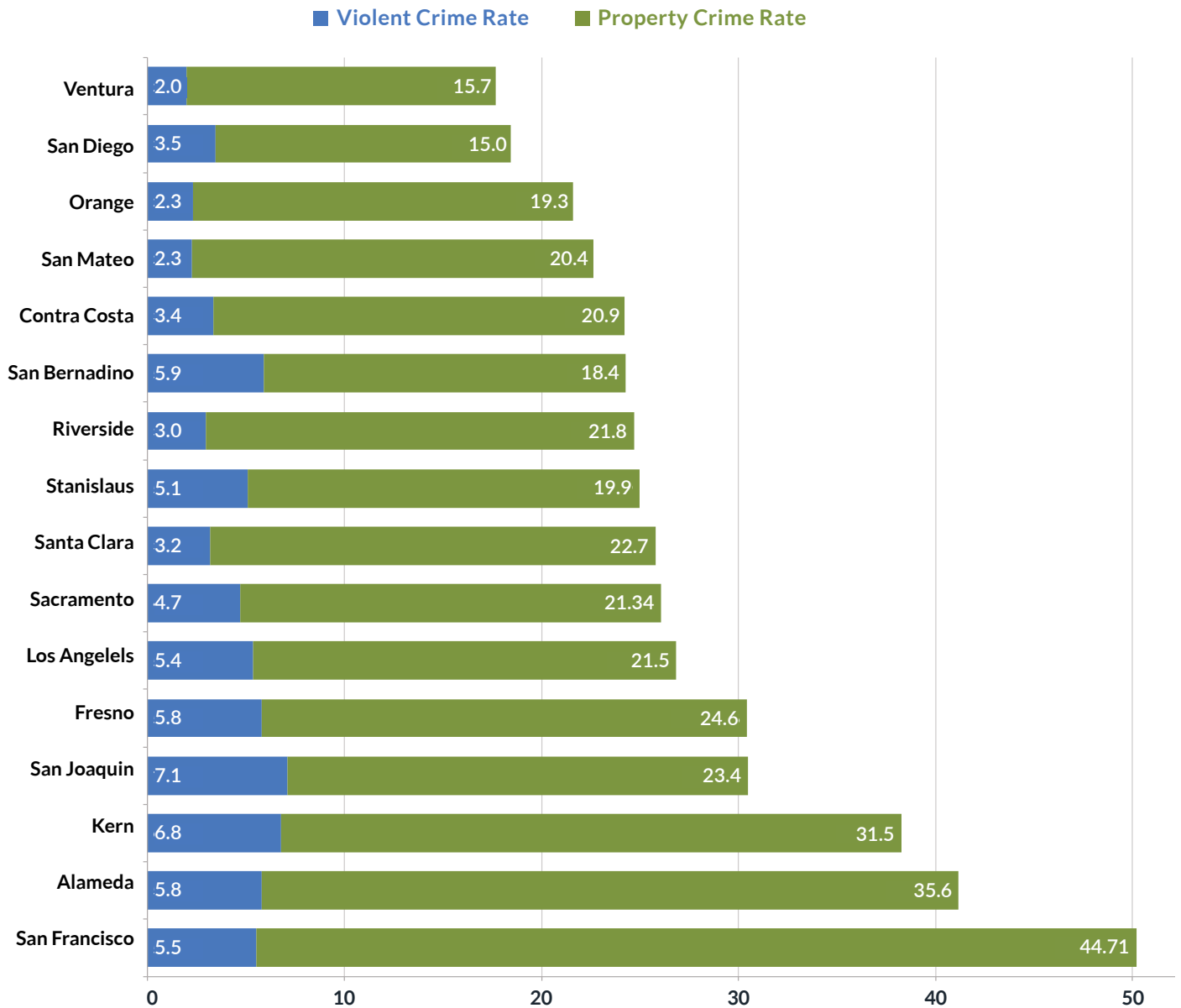
safest large counties, and in 2020 it was the safest of all. The violent crime rate of 2 per 1,000 residents came in lowest among the state's large counties, and the property crime rate of 15 per 1,000 residents was second lowest only to San Diego County, for a combined crime rate that was the lowest in the state.

There was a much publicized crime spike in some U.S. cities and counties in 2020, but Ventura County was not among them. The combined Part I crime rate of 17.7 per 1,000 residents slightly exceeded the 17.2 rate in 2019, but still fell below any other year in recent history.

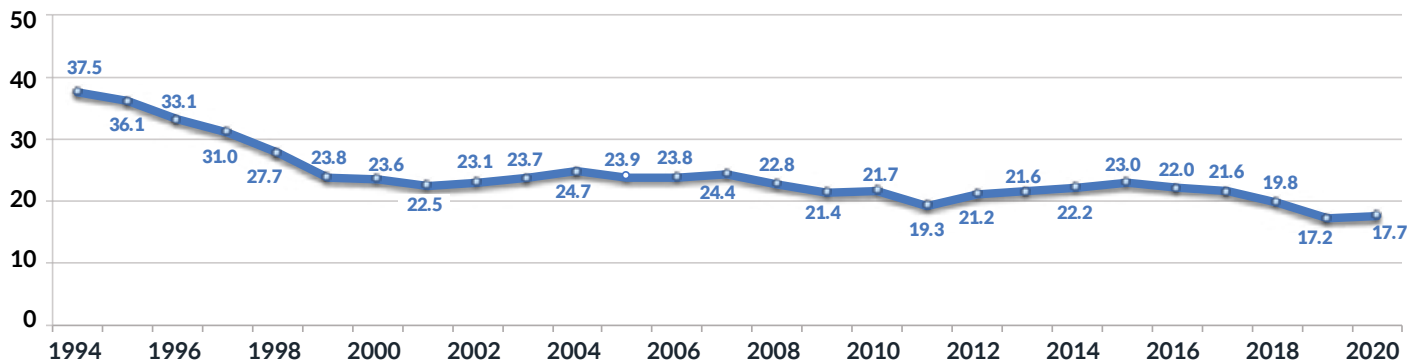
As in the nation as a whole, Ventura County saw its crime rate drop precipitously during the 1990s, before leveling off in the 2000s. In Ventura County, the rate inched up between 2011 and 2015 and then declined again starting in 2016. The overall trend is a major success story, with crime rates falling in recent years to about half of what they were in the mid-1990s.



Crime Rates in California's Most Populated Counties per 1,000 (2020)



Overall Ventura County Crime Rate per 1,000 Population (1994 - 2020)



CITY CRIME RATES

Moorpark, Ojai lead in safety

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

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

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

While the county's overall crime rate is very low that does not mean every neighborhood is equally safe. Rates in individual cities better describe the impact of crime on residents' daily lives than the countywide statistics. The city rates also reveal inequalities in safety and could point to where our public safety resources are best directed.

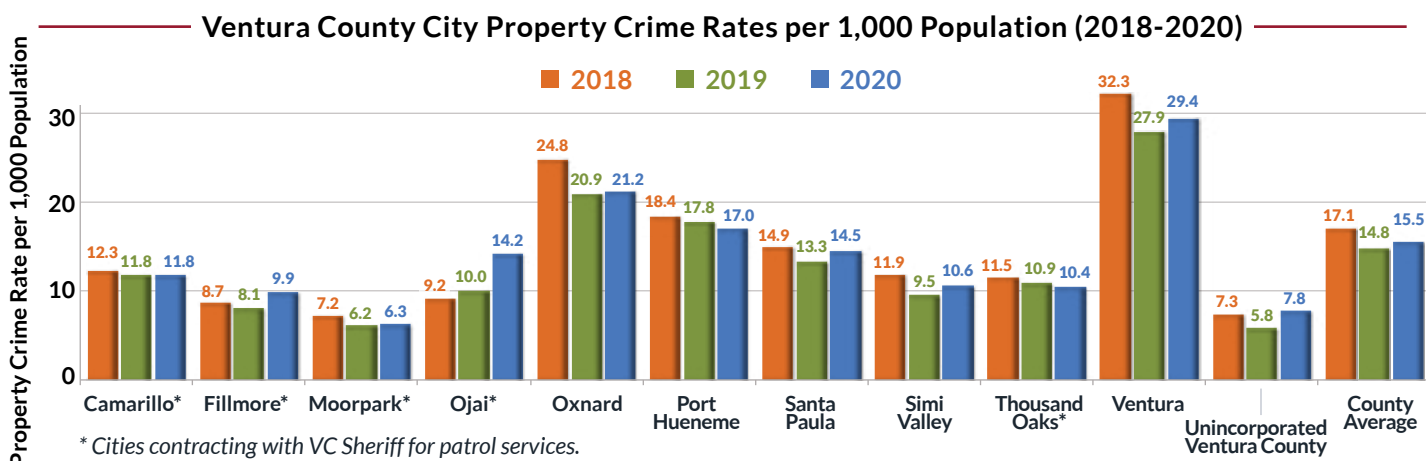
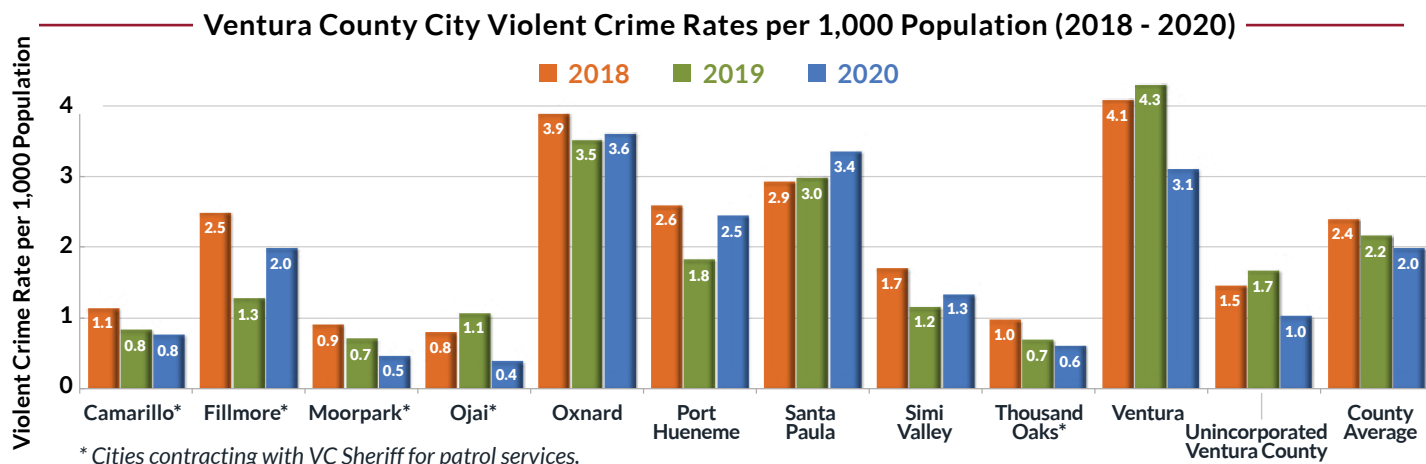
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Moorpark consistently places among the county's safest cities, and in 2020 it had the lowest overall crime rate, at 6.8 Part I crimes per 1,000 residents. Ojai posted a slightly lower violent crime rate — 0.4 per 1,000, compared to

0.5 in Moorpark — but Moorpark had by far the lowest property crime rate, at 6.3 per 1,000 residents.

Moorpark, Ojai, Thousand Oaks and Camarillo all recorded fewer than 1 violent crime per 1,000 residents in 2020, putting them below half of the county's overall violent crime rate of 2 per 1,000, while Simi Valley was also well below the average, with 1.3 violent crimes per 1,000 residents. Those five cities, as well as Santa Paula and Fillmore, all fell below the county's overall property crime rate of 15.5 per 1,000.

Ventura County's highest crime cities are typically Ventura and Oxnard. In 2020, Ventura had the highest property crime rate, as it usually does, at 29.4 Part I crimes per 1,000 residents. Oxnard was next, at 21.2 per 1,000. Ventura, though, ranked third in violent crime rate, behind both Oxnard and Santa Paula, after years of posting the highest violent crime rate in the county. Ventura's violent crime rate dropped from 4.3 per 1,000 residents in 2019 to 3.1 in 2020, a 28% improvement in just one year.



JUVENILE ARRESTS

Arrests of children continue to drop

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

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

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Crimes committed by children are doubly tragic. They harm their victims and the community, just as crimes committed by adults, and they also hurt their perpetrators. Children who enter the criminal justice system are more likely to experience 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?

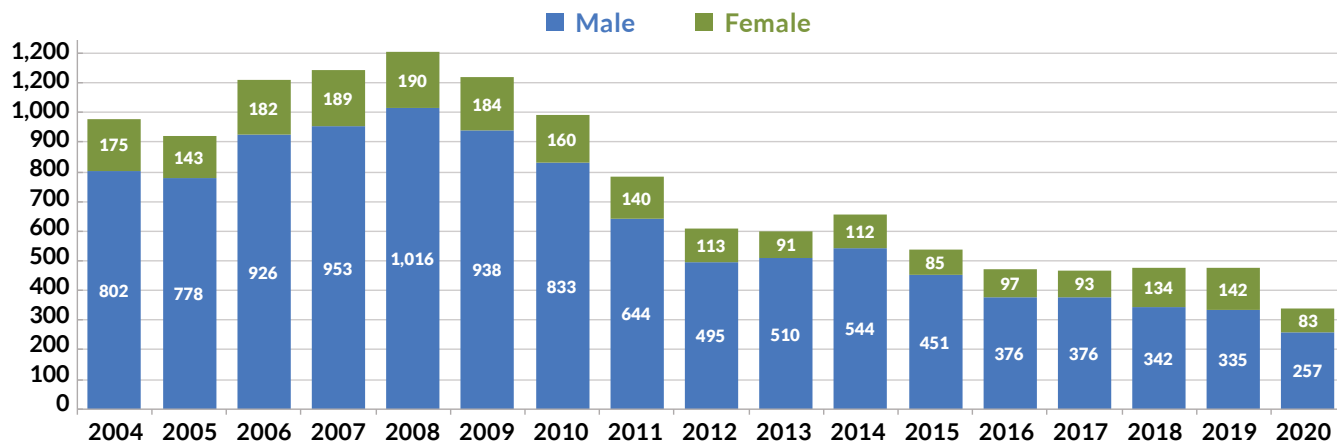
Fewer and fewer juveniles are arrested every year in Ventura County. In 2020, there were 340 felony juvenile arrests, a drop of 28.7% from the year before and 71.8% from the recent peak in 2008. Misdemeanor arrests

dropped even more: In 2020 youth were arrested for 702 misdemeanors, down 43.2% in a single year and 83.7% since 2008.

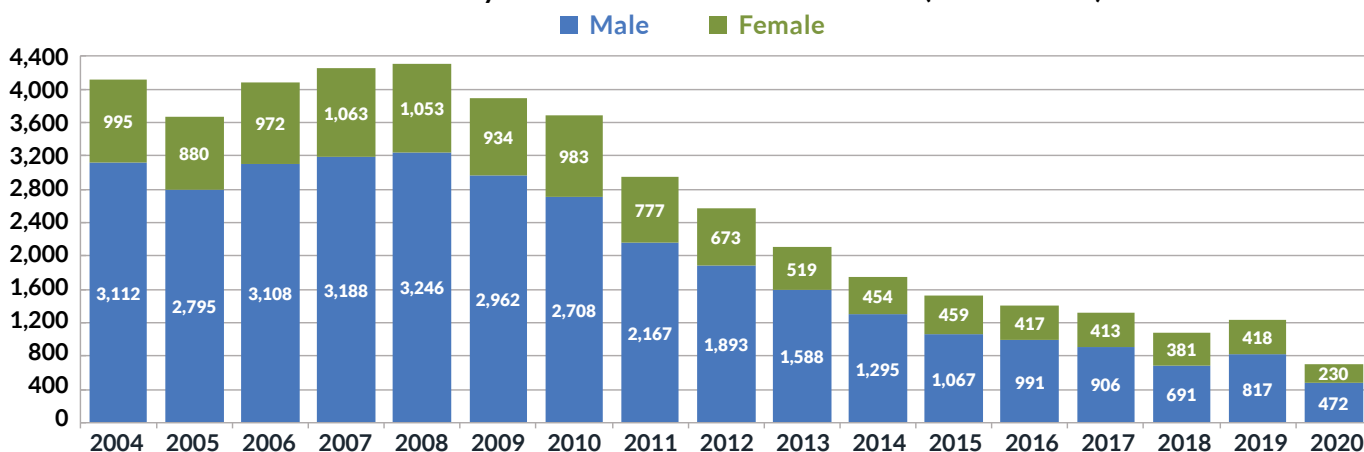
Overall crime has dropped in those years, but not by anything approaching the margin of the decline in juvenile arrests, so it seems unlikely this decrease solely results from a decline in juvenile crime. It's also unclear what role the pandemic played in this trend. The majority of the county's children weren't attending school in-person for most of 2020, a scenario that could present more opportunities to get on the wrong side of the law — or fewer opportunities to be caught doing so.

If police and prosecutors are finding ways to address juvenile crime without arrest and incarceration, it points to a positive trend and an area in which Ventura County could serve as a model. If juvenile crime is not being addressed, the trend might be less positive. Either way, thousands fewer youth are entering the criminal justice system, a promising sign in its own right.

Ventura County Juvenile Felony Arrests (2004 - 2020)



Ventura County Juvenile Misdemeanor Arrests (2004 - 2020)



CALLS TO VENTURA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire stations busier than ever

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of calls to the Ventura County Fire Department in 2019, divided into medical, fire and other types of service requests. The department serves the unincorporated areas of Ventura County and seven of its 10 cities: Ojai, Santa Paula, Port Hueneme, Camarillo, Thousand Oaks, Moorpark and Simi Valley.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

The number of calls to a fire department helps determine how many firefighters and stations it needs, and how much public funding it requires. The number of fire calls serves as a potential measure of a community's success at fire prevention, while the number of medical calls likely reflects the age and health of the population — as well as certain extraordinary events such as the COVID-19 pandemic,

though that is not reflected in these figures, since they are only available through 2019.

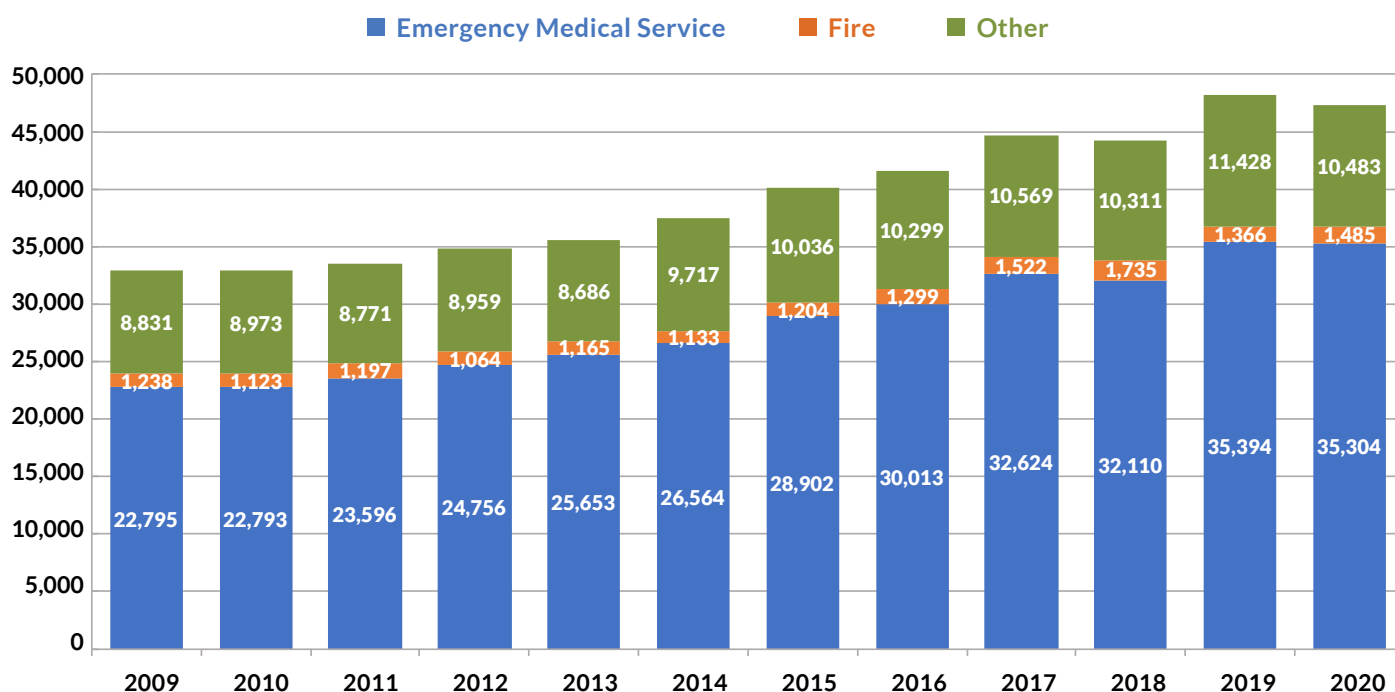
HOW ARE WE DOING?

As with many modern fire departments, the Ventura County Fire Department responds far more often to medical emergencies than to fires. In 2019, medical emergency accounted for 73.4% of the department's 48,188 calls, while fires accounted for just 2.8%.

The number of medical calls rose in nine of the 10 years from 2009 to 2019, while the number of fire calls fluctuated between 1,064 in 2012 and 1,735 in 2018. The number of fire calls dropped in 2019 after four straight years of increases.

The department overall is getting busier, driven mainly by the rise in medical calls. Total calls to the Ventura County Fire Department were 46.6% higher in 2019 than a decade earlier.

Calls to Ventura County Fire Department (2009-2020)



Social Services



The COVID-19 pandemic pushed Ventura County's social services infrastructure to its limits in 2020 and 2021. And for the most part, the patchwork of government agencies and private charities that forms our social safety net met the challenges. Our food banks saw monumental increases in demand from people relying upon them to stay fed — but they also experienced huge increases in donations and volunteers, and consequently the amount of food they distributed. Unemployment hit levels in 2020 that exceeded the worst of the Great Recession of 2008 — but this time, federal and state governments responded with extra unemployment benefits that ran into the hundreds of billions of dollars.

Our safety net is stretched thin in many respects, though, and has been for years before the pandemic. There is no better illustration of this than our homelessness crisis. When the county held its annual census in early 2020, before the pandemic, volunteers found 1,743 people living on the streets, in their cars, in homeless shelters and in other places not meant for permanent human

habitation. It was the highest total since 2013. Even in the intervening years, when the homeless population was smaller, there hasn't been a time since the count began when there were fewer than 1,000 people without housing in Ventura County, an affluent area in one of the wealthiest nations on Earth. And thousands of children annually are at risk of homelessness, living in motels or overcrowded shared housing.

Many of our problems stem from the same sources as our strengths: Ventura County is a beautiful, sought-after place to live, and that makes it expensive. By far the most common type of call to 211, Ventura County's social services hotline, is placed by those seeking housing assistance. Other common inquiries also are related to our high cost of living: questions about food banks and general-income assistance.

These problems aren't going away, even if the pandemic does. It is up to us, as Ventura County residents, to make sure our social services are up to the challenges.

2-1-1 CALLS

Housing the biggest need

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the volume of calls to Ventura County's 211 social services hotline for different purposes. A program of Interface Children & Family Services, 211 Ventura County operates a 24-hour call center that connects callers with health and human services organizations. It also provides information during disasters about shelters, road closures and other emergency services.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

The 211 hotline receives more than 30,000 calls and texts per year. Its operators connect callers to government and nonprofit agencies that provide food and rent assistance, substance abuse treatment,

help dealing with domestic violence and more. The hotline's database of calls, organized by need, offers insight to where our community's greatest needs lie.

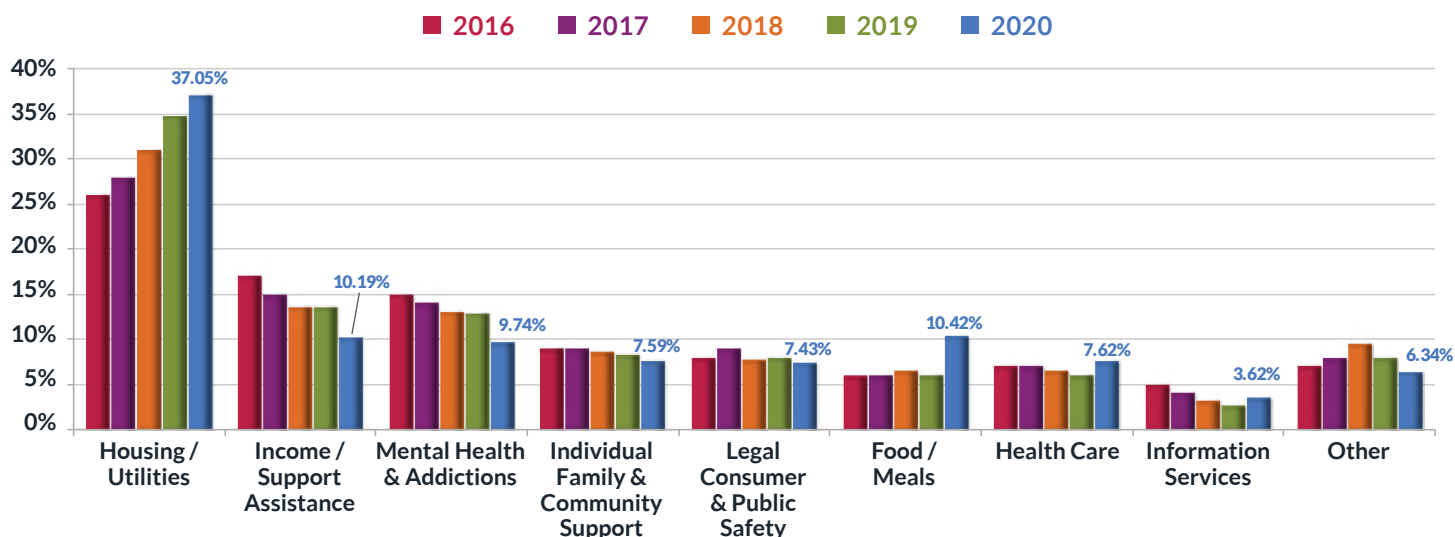
HOW ARE WE DOING?

As expected in an area with high housing costs, the most common 211 inquiry is help with housing or utilities. And the share is growing: in 2020, 37.1% of calls were related to housing, up from 26% in 2016.

The next most common type of call was for food assistance, at 10.4% of calls, followed by general-income support, at 10.2%, and mental health or addiction treatment, at 9.7%. The need for food assistance spiked during the pandemic, going from 6% of calls in 2019 to 10.4% in 2020.



Ventura County 2-1-1 Calls by Category of Need (2016 - 2020)



FOOD AID

Food bank meals skyrocketed in 2020

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of meals provided in the county and at individual pickup locations by Food Share, Ventura County's biggest food bank. The organization reports its distribution figures in pounds, with a conversion rate of 1.2 pounds equaling one meal.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Hunger takes precedence over almost any other human need. Without enough to eat, or proper nutrition, adults and children alike will have trouble learning, working, physically thriving, avoiding illness and stress, being happy and realizing their potential. While our federal, state and local governments have programs to provide food or cash assistance to people in need, they don't reach everyone and they don't cover every recipient's needs. Private food banks like Food Share therefore have an important role in combating hunger.

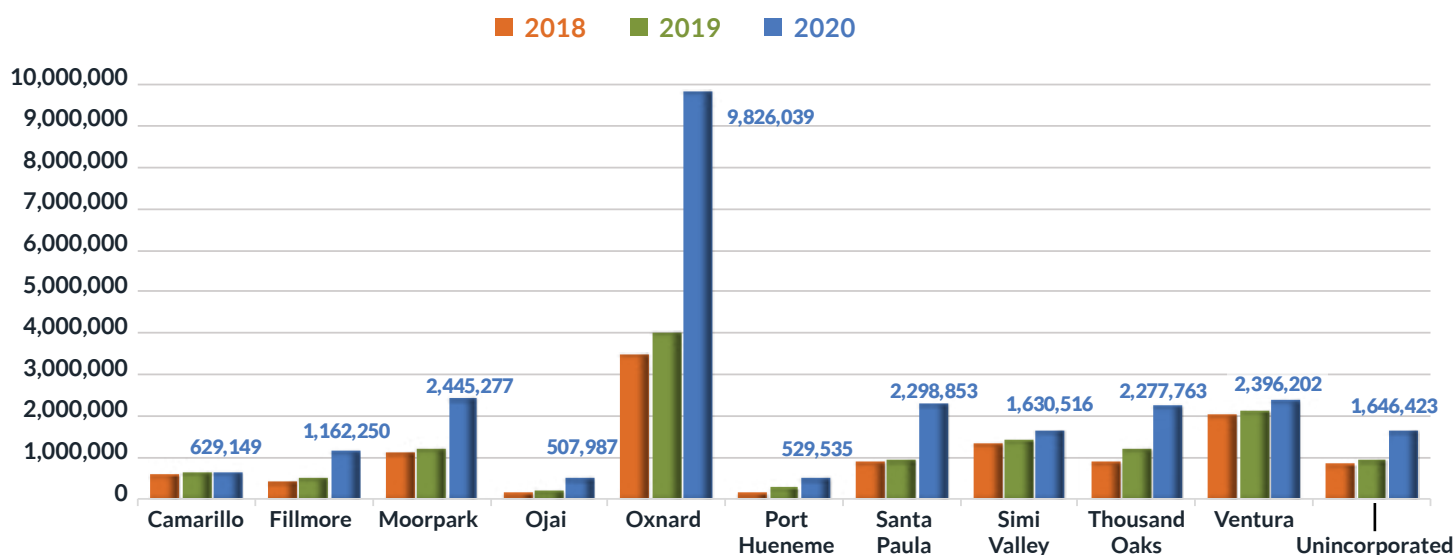
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Thousands of Ventura County residents needed help with food during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, far more than in earlier years. Food Share distributed a total of 25.6 million pounds in 2020, 88% more than in 2019. In some areas, the increase was even

bigger: Meals distributed in Oxnard, Moorpark, Ojai, Santa Paula, Fillmore and Thousand Oaks all more than doubled. The increases were much smaller in Ventura and Simi Valley, and meals distributed to Camarillo residents actually dropped from 2019 to 2020, by 2%. Food Share closed some of its food pantry locations during the pandemic, which likely explains declines or modest increases in those cities.



Food Share Pounds Distributed By Pantry Location (2018 - 2020)



HOMELESSNESS

Unhoused population continues to grow

WHAT ARE THE MEASURES?

The measures are the number of people in Ventura County who were homeless on the day of the annual homeless census, which city they were in on that day and how many were military veterans. Taken annually by volunteers since 2009 — though not in 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic — 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, in riverbeds, on sidewalks or in cars. People living in motels or staying with friends or family are not considered homeless, nor are people who are in a jail, hospital or another institution on the day of the census.

WHY ARE THE MEASURES IMPORTANT?

Few human needs are more elemental than shelter. People without permanent homes often lack adequate sanitation or protection from the elements. They often go without reliable medical care and 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. Homelessness also financially burdens local governments because unhoused people may end up in county jails or emergency rooms.

Homelessness among military veterans is tracked separately because public and private institutions have made a concerted effort in recent years to eliminate veteran homelessness in the United States, and the census gives insight into whether they are succeeding.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County's homeless population rose for three straight years, from 2018 to 2020, and anecdotal evidence suggests it probably climbed again in 2021, though no official census was taken that year. The census counted 1,743 homeless people in the county in 2020, up 4.4% from the year before, and up a total of 51.3% since 2017.

This spike in homelessness is distressing on its own, but even more so in the light of the progress our county seemed to be making just a few years ago. From 2012 to 2017, the homeless population decreased every year, going from 1,936 people to 1,152. But in the years since, almost all of that progress evaporated, and by 2020 we were back to 2013 levels of homelessness.

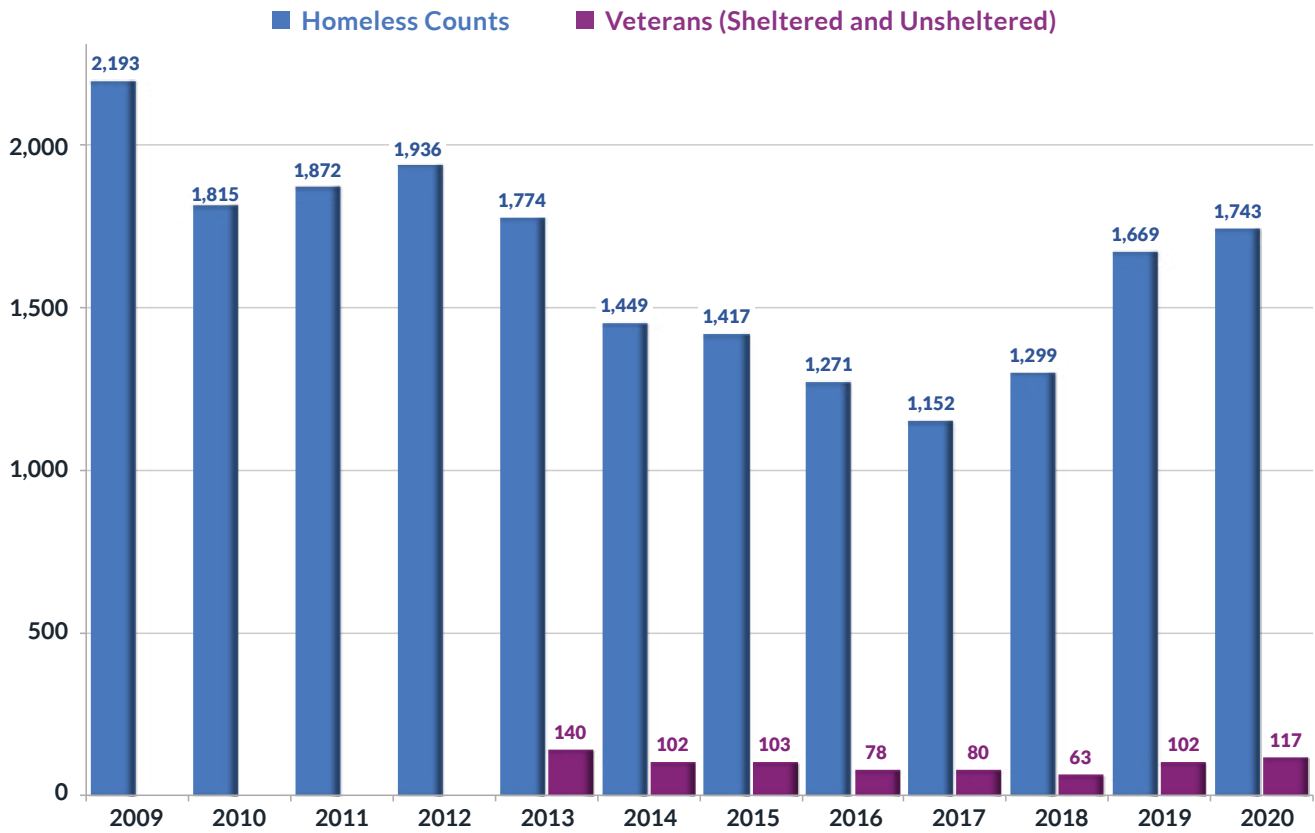
Although more resources and programs target homeless veterans than other homeless people, their population is growing again — nearly doubling between 2018 and 2020. There were 117 homeless veterans in the county on the day of the 2020 census, more than any year since 2013.

Most of Ventura County's homeless people are concentrated in the cities of Ventura and Oxnard. In 2020, the census found 567 homeless people in Oxnard, 32.5% of the county's total; and 531 in Ventura, 30.5% of the county's total. Other cities do have significant homeless populations, though, including Simi Valley, at 162 people, and Thousand Oaks, at 152.

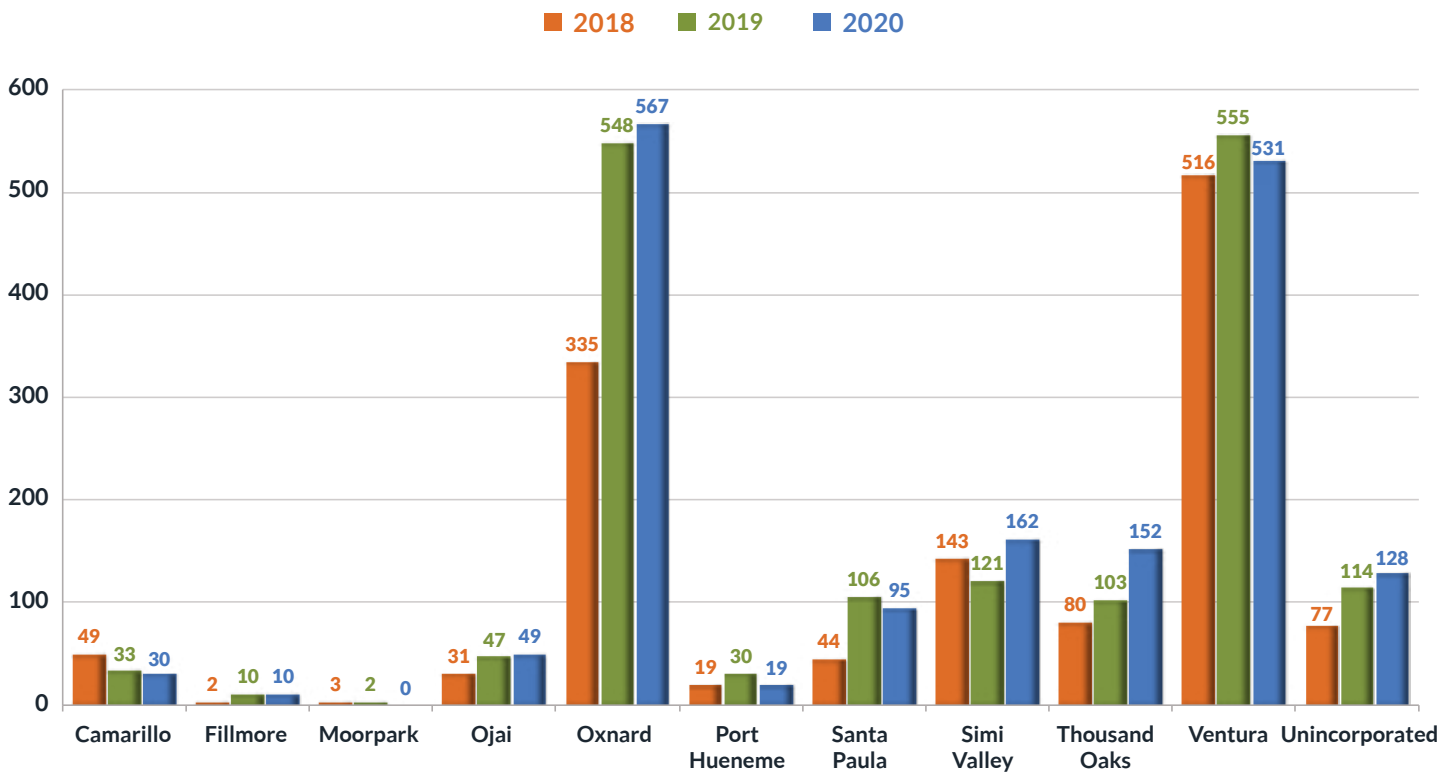
High housing costs drive homelessness, and those have been rising even faster than usual in Ventura County in recent years. However, housing costs were climbing in the mid-2010s, too, and in those years we appeared to be making progress against homelessness. Something has broken lately in either the conditions that prevent homelessness in Ventura County, or our response to the problem, or both.

If there was a silver lining in the 2020 homeless census, it was an increase in the proportion of homeless residents who found space in some type of public or private shelter. In 2019, 24.6% of the county's homeless residents were considered sheltered, and in 2020 that jumped to 27.4%. This statistic should continue to improve — a new homeless shelter opened in Ventura in January 2020, shortly after the 2020 homeless census, and another new shelter is planned for downtown Oxnard in the coming years.

Ventura County Homeless Counts (2009-2020)



Ventura County Homeless Counts by City (2018-2020)



HOMELESSNESS AMONG CHILDREN

Nearly 6,000 children lack stable housing

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of students in or near homelessness in Ventura County, and in each school district in the county.

The figures are drawn from a California Department of Education survey that differs in three major ways from the county's annual census of homeless people. First, all public school students are surveyed, while the volunteers working on the annual census only consider people they encounter 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 motel or in 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 counts everyone who had been without stable housing at any point in the previous year. Due to those differences, the student survey consistently returns a much higher count of homeless children than the point-in-time census.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

A child who is homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, is likely to be unprepared for school, have an unstable and stressful family life, and be poorly nourished or sleep-deprived. Though a motel room

or a garage shared with another family technically might qualify as shelter, both fall short of a stable environment for children.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

In the 2020-21 school year, the families of 5,964 public school students in Ventura County reported they experienced homelessness at some point in the previous year. That was 6.7% below the previous year, but a 48.5% increase from 2015-16, when the total was at its lowest in recent years.

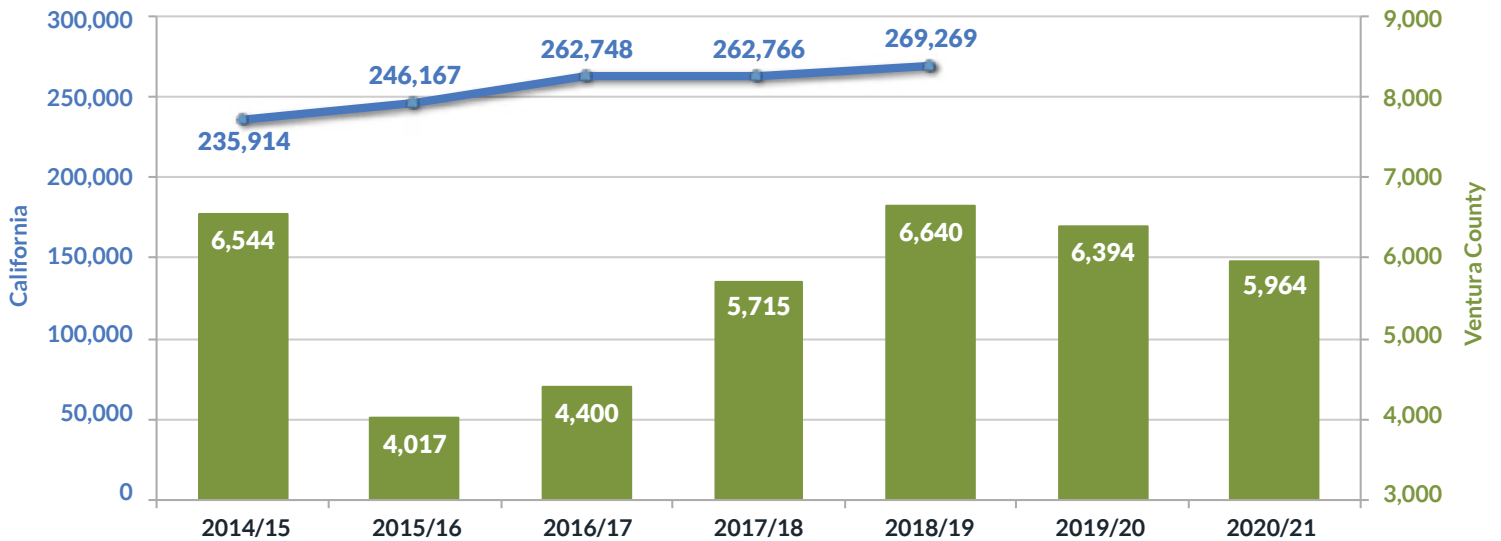
In Ventura County, the school districts with the most students who experience homelessness are in Oxnard, Santa Paula, Port Hueneme, Ventura and El Rio, a neighborhood just north of Oxnard. In 2020-21 the Oxnard Union High School District has the most students in or near homelessness, at 1,405 — a figure that represents a 45.6% drop from just two years earlier. In the Oxnard Elementary School District, however, the trend went in the other direction, with an 83.9% increase in student homelessness in two years.

The vast majority of children experiencing homelessness live in motels, garages or other substandard housing, not on the streets or in homeless shelters. The 2020 count of homeless people in Ventura County found just 18 people under the age of 18 without shelter, 35 living in emergency homeless shelters, and 78 more in transitional housing.



Ventura County Public School Student Homelessness (2014/15-2020/21)

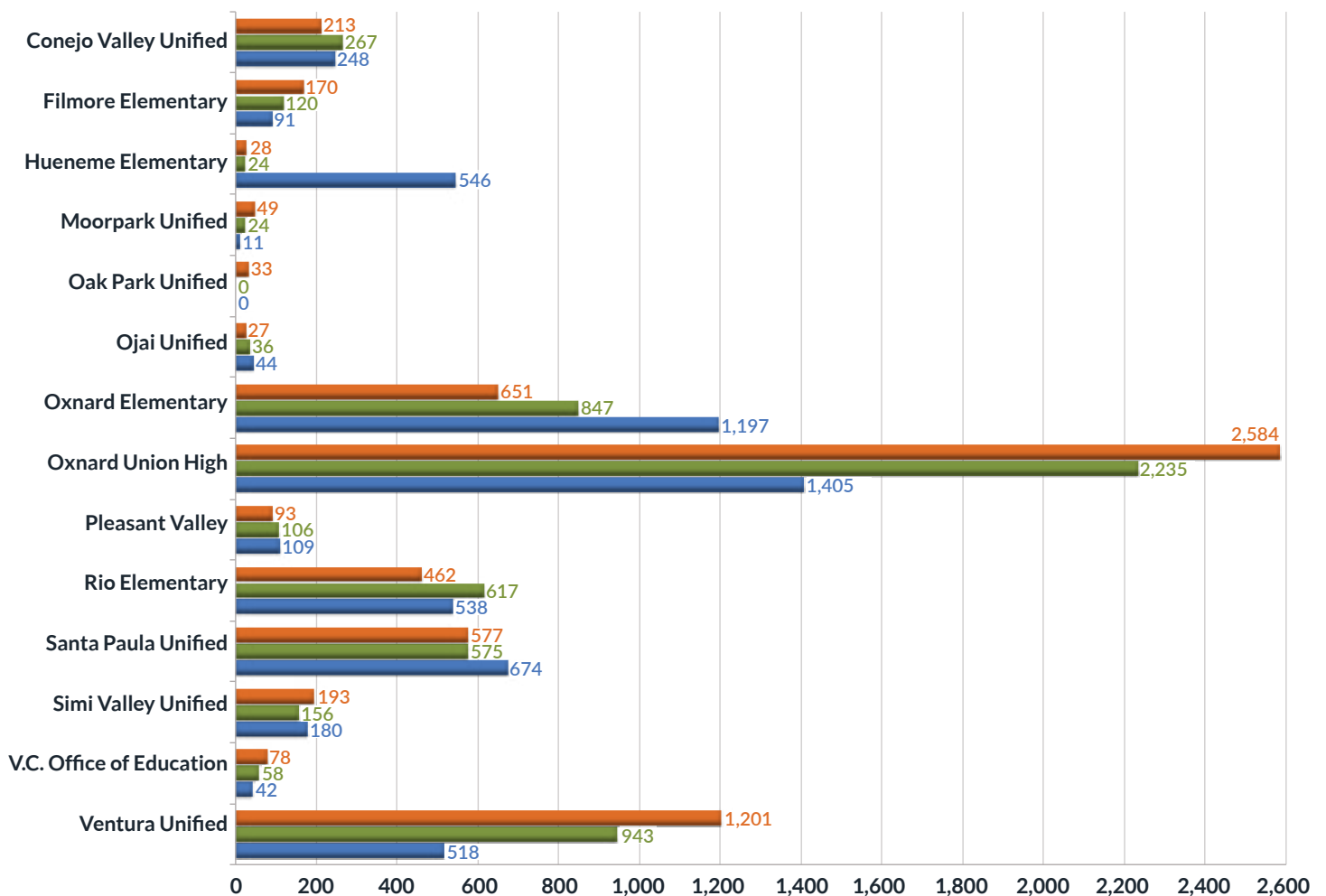
■ Ventura County ○ California



California student homelessness counts not available for 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Homeless Children in Ventura County - Larger Public School Districts (2018/19 - 2020/21)

■ 2018/19 ■ 2019/20 ■ 2020/21



CHILD ABUSE

Reports fell in the pandemic

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of children each year with allegations of abuse or neglect, expressed as a rate per 1,000 children. The total includes reports that were substantiated, along with those found to be inconclusive or unfounded or are 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 or neglect may result in serious mental and/or physical harm upon some of society's most vulnerable people. In addition to protecting the immediate welfare of the child involved, stopping abuse in one household can break a multigenerational cycle of trauma, as studies suggest victims may be more likely to grow up to be abusers themselves or be victimized again as adults.

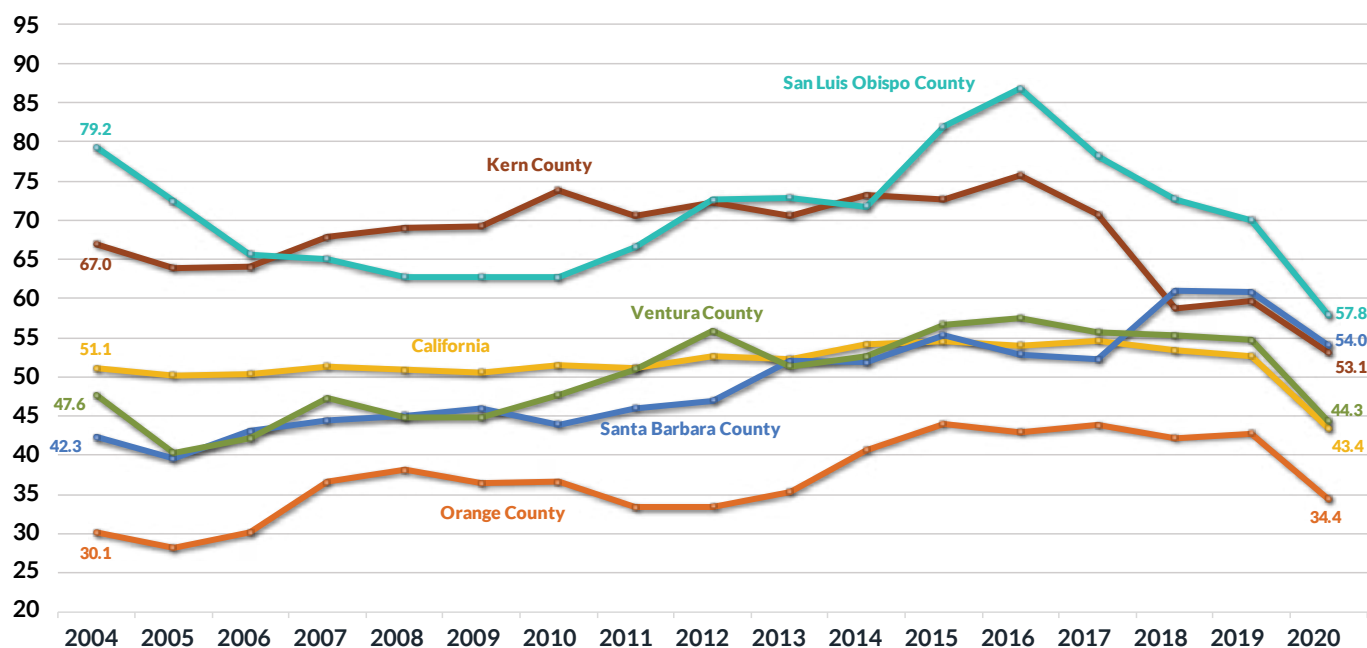
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County's rate of child abuse and neglect is typical for a California county. In 2020, Ventura County had 44.3 reports of child abuse or neglect per 1,000 children, and California as a whole had 43.4 per 1,000 children. Ventura County's rate was lower than Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Kern counties, but higher than Orange County.

Reports of child abuse and neglect dropped everywhere in 2020, but it's unlikely that reflects a true decrease in the number of children who were abused. Rather, the consistent, single-year drop statewide seems like an artifact of the pandemic: With schools closed, children who may be victims of abuse didn't come into contact as often with teachers, school personnel and other mandated reporters who might notice and report suspected abuse.

Before the pandemic, reports of abuse and neglect in Ventura County were trending slightly downward. The rate dropped from 57.5 per 1,000 children in 2016 to 54.7 per 1,000 in 2019.

Child Abuse and Neglect Allegation Rate Per 1,000 Residents Age 0-17 (2002 - 2020)



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Calls up in 2020, down long-term

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of 911 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 mental and physical health of adults and children. Its direct effect on victims is obvious and tragic. It also indirectly affects generations of people, as children exposed to abuse are more likely to be involved in abusive relationships as adults.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

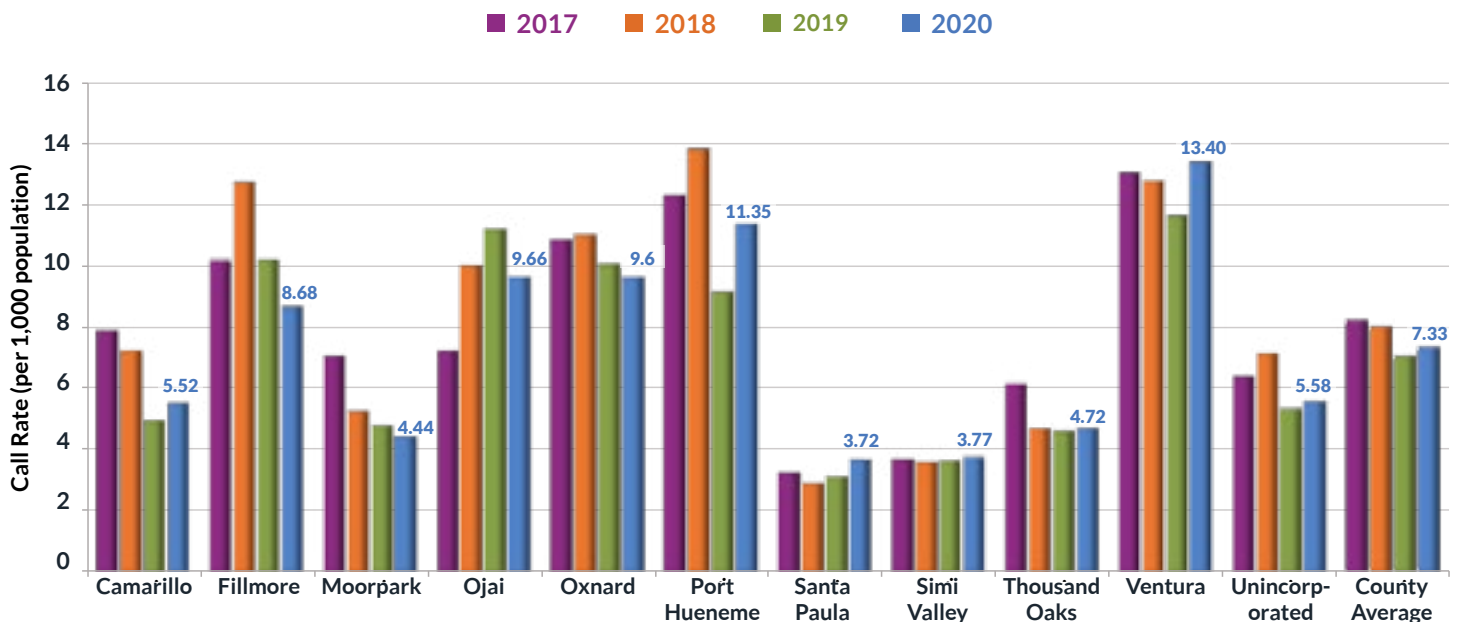
At least when judging by emergency calls, domestic violence in Ventura County declined in the years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, before ticking up slightly in 2020. The rate of 911 calls per 1,000 residents was 7.33 in 2020, up from 7.06 in 2019 but well below the 9.43 rate in 2015.

In 2020, Ventura posted the highest rate of domestic violence calls, at 13.4 per 1,000 residents, followed by Port Hueneme at 11.35 and Oxnard and Ojai, both at 9.66. The county's lowest rates were in Santa Paula at 3.72 per 1,000 residents, Simi Valley at 3.77 and Moorpark at 4.44.

As with child abuse reports, a lower rate of domestic violence calls might not mean a lower rate of actual cases of abuse, because both types of crimes often go unreported.



Domestic Violence Calls per 1,000 Residents (2017-2020)





Transportation



Ventura County is a collection of suburban communities and rural enclaves, many separated by greenbelts and natural borders like rivers and mountains. As such, its residents are highly dependent on private automobiles and freeways.

Progress toward diversifying our transportation system has been slow. In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic started, more than 78% of Ventura County residents commuted to work every weekday by driving alone. Ridership has declined on our public transit systems, even before the pandemic. And although our cities added miles of bicycle lanes in recent years, in most places, bicyclists still risk competing with cars for space on the roads.

“In our county, there are a lot of incentives for driving,” said Darren Kettle, who served as executive director of the Ventura County Transportation Commission from 2007 through the summer of 2021, and is now the CEO of the Metrolink commuter rail agency. “We take great pride in our individual communities and the space between them and our open space, but those don’t necessarily translate to allowing for super-simple public transit.”

In Ventura County, public transit is “mobility of last resort,” Kettle said. Our busiest bus routes offer service no more frequently than every 20 minutes, and a system that people would choose to rely on would need to run twice that often. That would take “a whole heck of a lot of money,” Kettle said.

The pandemic, of course, delivered a major shock to the transportation system. Hundreds of thousands of Ventura County residents suddenly had nowhere to go when lockdowns started in March 2020. The roads nearly emptied, and transit services almost shut down. But when we started returning to our jobs and other outings, we largely resumed our old habits. In 2021 freeway traffic nearly went back to pre-pandemic levels.

Some pandemic-driven changes to our transportation habits could be permanent, Kettle said. He’s already seen more people on the roads outside of typical commute times, as they work flexible schedules or work from home some or all of the time.

But our reliance on automobile infrastructure appears unlikely to change — and if it does, it will be gradual. Kettle said that during his 14 years with VCTC, the county’s intergovernmental transportation planning and funding agency, he saw a gradual shift away from a single-minded focus on increasing freeway capacity and toward a more holistic view of transportation.

VCTC is now planning to add another lane in each direction to Highway 101 through most of Ventura County. To win state funding, the new lanes will be for express buses and carpoolers.

In the grand scheme of things, Kettle said, “transportation is a very personal issue.”

MEANS TO WORK

Most commuters drive solo

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

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

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Driving alone on a daily basis — the most common way for generations of Americans to commute, at least when there's not a pandemic raging — puts stress on the roads and the environment. Government agencies, employers and environmentalists urge us out of our own vehicles and into transit, and this annual survey measures how successful they've been.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

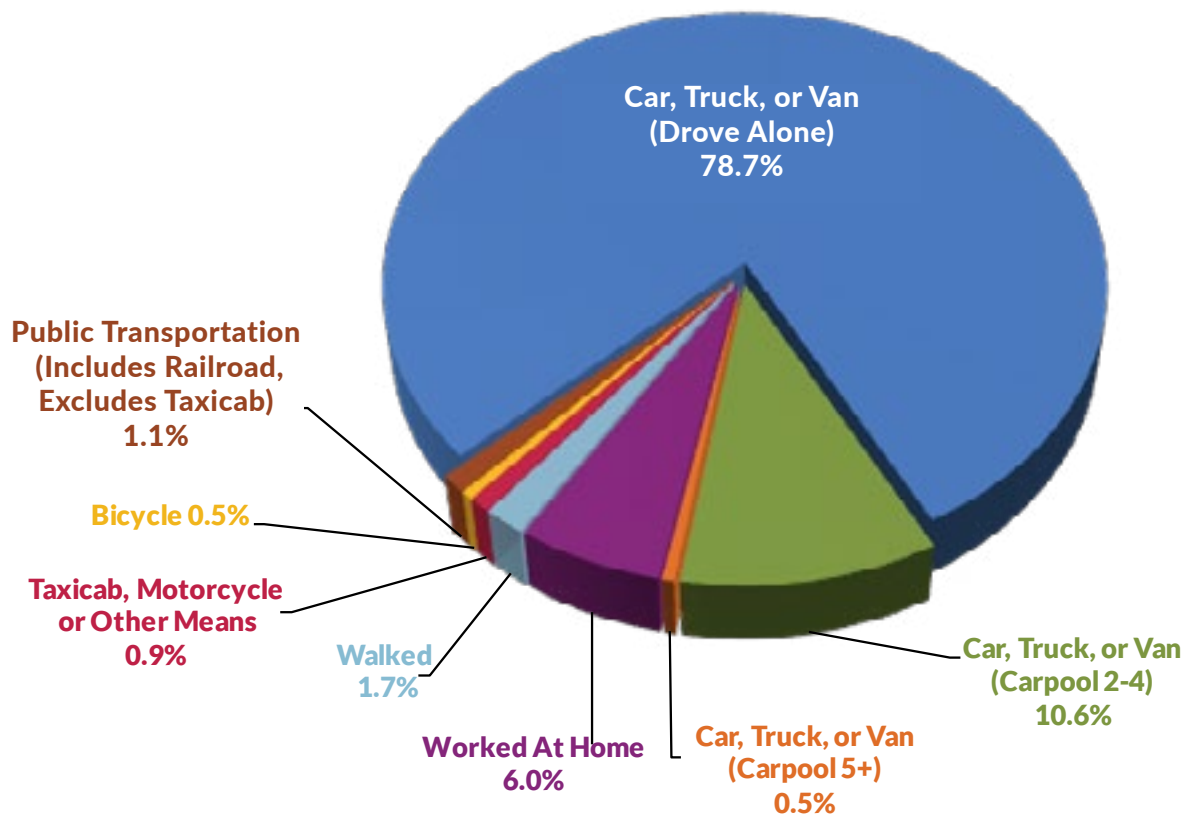
The most recent data available is from 2019, before the pandemic forced thousands of Ventura County residents to work from home. In 2019, 78.7% of employed county residents reported driving alone as

their primary method of getting to work. That habit has been very resistant to change — the percentage of people driving alone actually grew slightly between 2017 and 2019, and between 2005 and 2019 it decreased by only 1.5 percentage points.

Carpooling was the next most popular option after driving alone, with 11.1% of workers driving a private vehicle with one or more companions. Six percent of respondents in 2019 said they worked at home — a figure that obviously changed a great deal the following year — and only 3.3% got to work by walking, bicycling or on public transportation. The number of workers using public transportation to get to work dropped between 2017 and 2019, from 1.3% to 1.1%, which is less than those who walked to work.

One possible reason for these shifts is that in the later years of the 2010s, used cars and vehicle financing were plentiful and relatively cheap, which allowed more people to own and drive their own cars.

Means to Work in Ventura County (2019)



TRANSIT RIDERSHIP

Buses declining in popularity

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the number of unlinked trips per year on Ventura County's four largest public transit systems: Gold Coast Transit District, which serves Ventura, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme and the surrounding unincorporated areas; the city bus systems in Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley; and the Ventura County Transportation Commission's intercity buses, which run longer routes between cities in Ventura County and to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties. Unlinked trips are total boardings per vehicle regardless of transfer status.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

Buses dominate public transportation in Ventura County. For people who don't drive or can't afford to, they're often the only affordable option. More bus trips mean less traffic congestion, gasoline consumption and air pollution, and an increase in bus trips could be a sign that we're planning our cities in a way that provides housing, jobs and stores in locations accessible to people without private vehicles.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

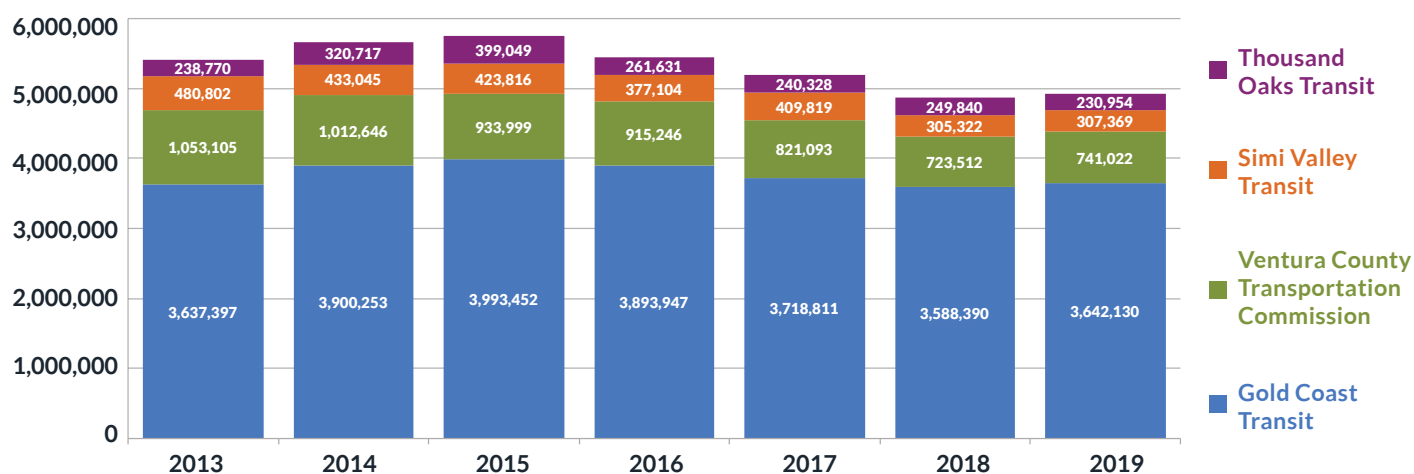
Ridership on Ventura County's three biggest bus systems grew from 2018 to 2019 — the last year for which data is available — after declining in each of the previous three years in most systems.

Gold Coast, by far the biggest transit system in the county, had 3.64 million unlinked trips in 2019, a 1.5% increase from 2018, but 8.8% below the system's peak in 2015. Simi Valley Transit and the Ventura County Transportation Commission's intercity buses followed similar patterns, with both systems gaining riders from 2018 to 2019 after losing them in each of the five previous years. And in Thousand Oaks, the city bus system continued to shed riders in 2019, when it had 42% fewer trips than in 2015.

When the data is released for 2020 and 2021, it likely will show big declines in ridership, since many transit systems reduced service during the COVID-19 pandemic, and many potential riders were either furloughed or working from home. But even before the pandemic, the 2019 data shows the county experiencing a decline similar to other regions.

A number of theories could explain this trend, which is echoed in Los Angeles and other regions. One is the expansion of Uber and Lyft throughout the 2010s. Another is a rise in private vehicle ownership during the decade, particularly among lower-income households. Transit agencies also increased fares, and in many cases they do not offer the comprehensive service that allows someone to live easily without a car.

Number of Annual Ventura County Unlinked Trips (2013 - 2019)



VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED

Drivers stayed home in 2020

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the total number of miles traveled on selected highways in Ventura County. Caltrans sensors count vehicles at certain spots on freeways, and the agency then estimates total miles driven based on those vehicle counts.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

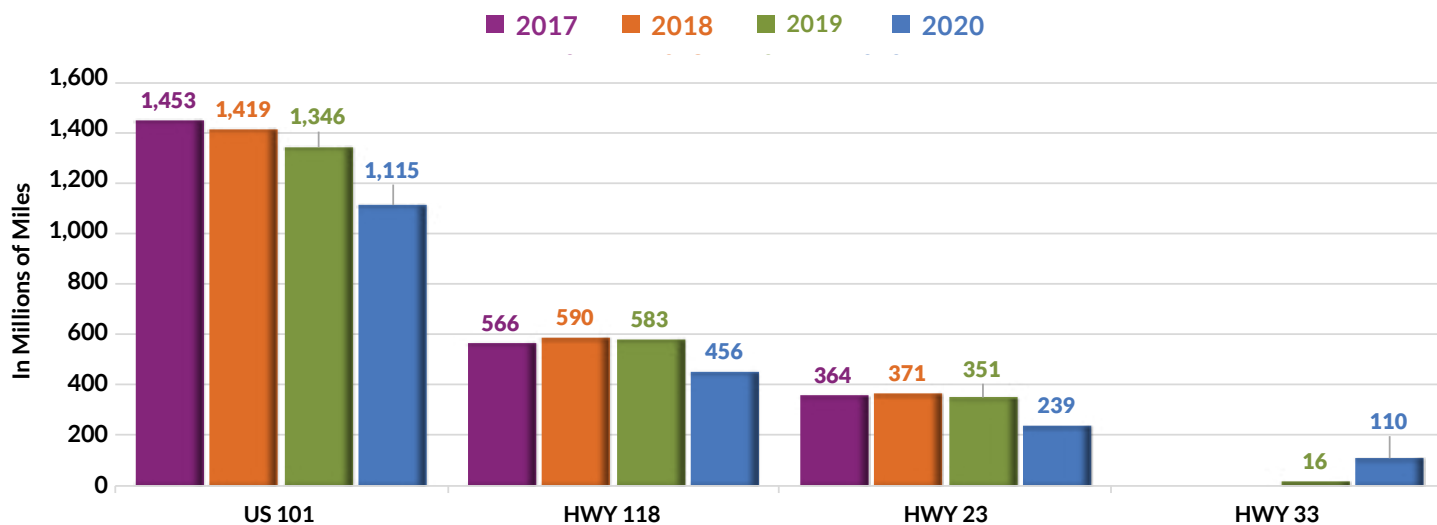
The miles we drive impact our lives, our planet, our roads and our economy. More miles driven tends to equate to more traffic congestion, if the extra driving falls during commute times and along major commuting routes. Driving puts wear and tear on our roads, which requires tax money to fix them and often necessitates closing lanes for repairs. Driving costs money, whether for fuel, insurance or depreciation on a vehicle. And of course, with most vehicles, driving means burning petroleum products, emitting carbon into the atmosphere and warming the planet; according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, cars and trucks account for about a quarter of U.S. carbon emissions.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Unsurprisingly, miles driven on all of Ventura County's highways dropped noticeably in 2020, when the pandemic kept many people home from workplaces and schools for months. The decline wasn't as sharp as one might expect, though, given the empty roads in March and April of 2020. On Highway 101, which has the county's highest vehicle counts, Caltrans estimated around 1.1 billion vehicle miles were traveled in 2020, a 17.2% decline from 2019. On Highway 118 through Simi Valley and Moorpark, 456 million miles were driven in 2020, a 21.8% drop from the year before. And on Highway 23 in Thousand Oaks and Moorpark, the 239 million miles in 2020 represented a 31.9% one-year decline.

More surprising than the decline in 2020 is the fact vehicle miles on Highway 101 had been dropping for years before the pandemic. These declines were smaller — 2.3% in 2018 and 5.1% in 2019 — but they still amounted to millions fewer miles driven from year to year. With no pandemic or recession in those years to reduce the need for driving, and with our transit systems also seeing shrinking passenger counts, this trend bears watching.

Total Annual Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) in Millions
Selected Ventura County Roads (2017 - 2020)



HWY 33 data available for northbound lane only starting in 2019. HWY 126 does not have sensors to collect VMT data.

TIME SPENT COMMUTING

Commutes getting longer

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the one-way time it takes Ventura County residents to get to their jobs, according to surveys conducted from 2016 through 2019.

WHY IS THE MEASURE IMPORTANT?

As many people discovered during the COVID-19 pandemic, commuting affects 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 from work or encountering more congestion on the roads, worsen traffic and degrade the environment, as idling cars release more air pollution per mile than moving ones.

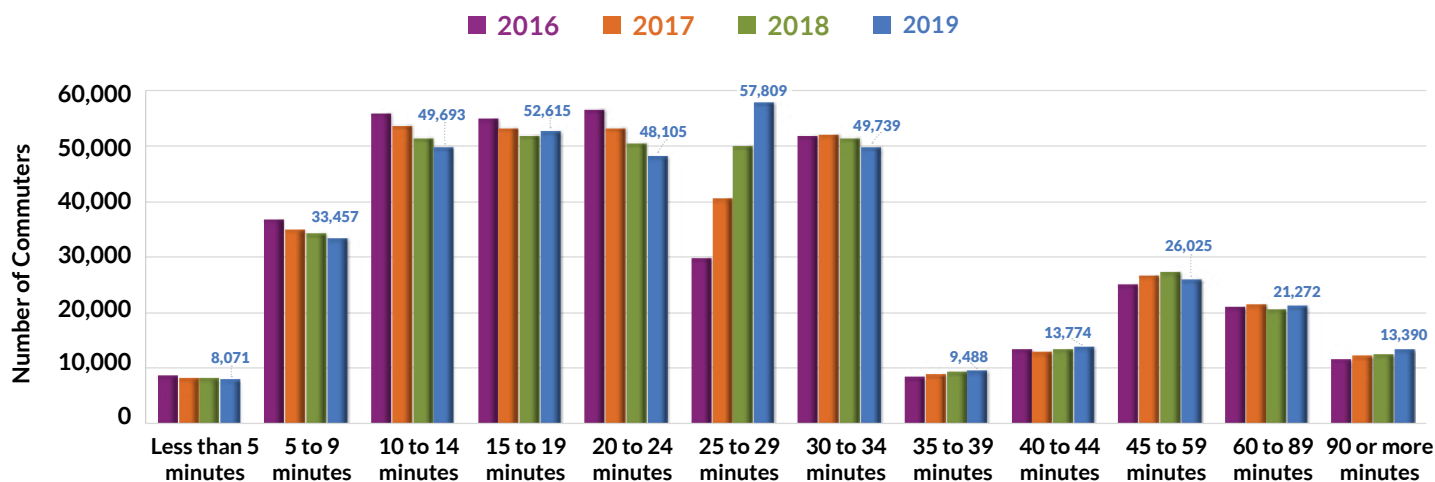
HOW ARE WE DOING?

Ventura County's commutes appear to be getting longer — or at least they were before the pandemic started in 2020. Between 2016 and 2020, the number of Ventura County residents with commutes in every 5-minute range shorter than 25 minutes decreased, while the number of Ventura County residents with

commutes in almost every 5-minute range above 25 minutes increased. For example, the number of people with commutes of 90 or more minutes increased by 15.9% in three years, while the number of people with commutes of 10 to 14 minutes dropped by 11.1% in that period.



Travel Time to Work in Ventura County (2016 - 2019)



BIKE LANES

Ventura and unincorporated areas add the most

WHAT IS THE MEASURE?

The measure is the total miles of bike lanes in each city in Ventura County and in the county's unincorporated areas. They are divided into four types of bike lanes: Class 1, which are off-road paths used only by cyclists and pedestrians; Class 2, painted bike lanes next to 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 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 planet.

Our roads, though, are often ill-suited for bicycles, and riding can be inconvenient or dangerous without designated bike lanes.

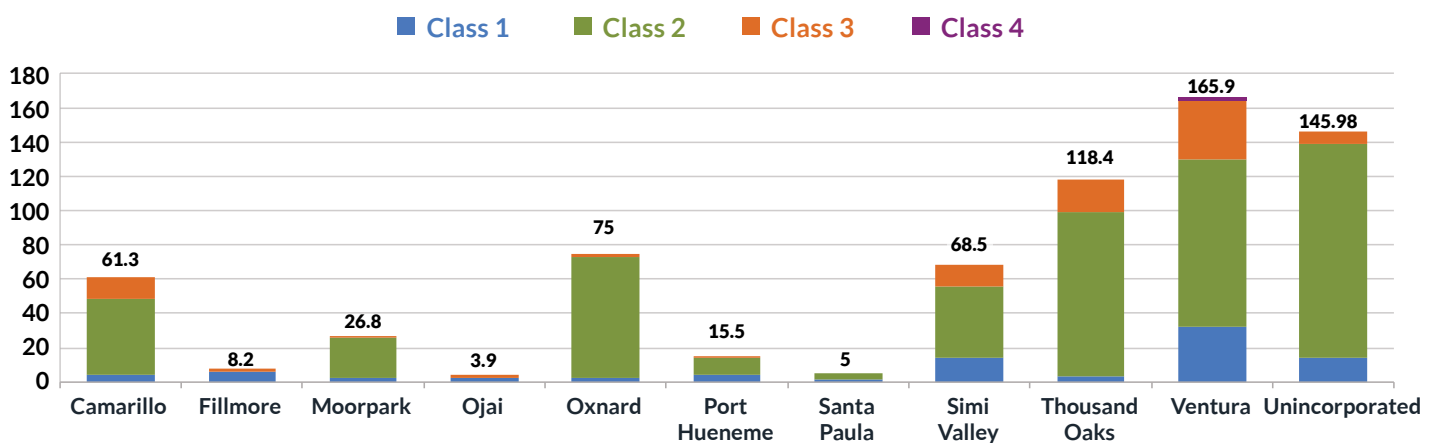
HOW ARE WE DOING?

There were 694 miles of bike lanes in 2021, which was 183 miles more than in 2018 — a 36% increase in three years. More than 90% of that increase came from Ventura with 70 miles, Thousand Oaks with 25, and the unincorporated areas of the county with 77 miles. The rest of Ventura County made meager, if any, additions in those three years.

Fillmore, Simi Valley and Ojai were unchanged since 2018. Port Hueneme added only 5 miles but that amounted to an increase of over 56%.



Miles of Ventura County Bike Lanes (2021)



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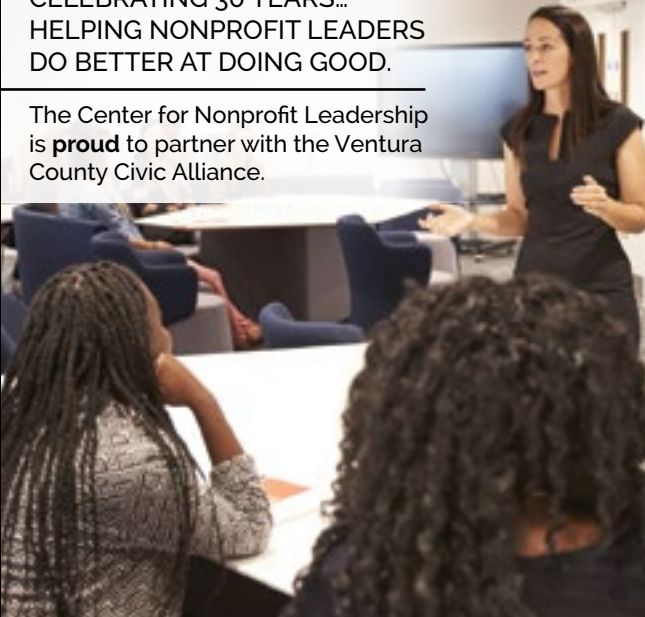
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