A Tale of Two Cities

Bridging the Gap Between Promise and Peril

2003 Executive Review of the State of Los Angeles County
BRIDGING THE GAP: A TALE OF TWO FUTURES

Three years ago, United Way of Greater Los Angeles published the “Tale of Two Cities” report, which helped shine a spotlight across the deep chasms that divide the haves from the have-nots in Los Angeles County. This time around, A Tale of Two Cities – 2003 takes this analysis to the next level, by posing the question: What kind of future do we want to create for ourselves and our community?

PATHS TO THE FUTURE

Two possible scenarios for the future of our community emerge when we take a hard look at where we are today.

One is a “future of peril,” in which the divide between wealthy and working poor continues to grow. Los Angeles County is already the poverty capital of the nation, while—paradoxically—the center of some of its greatest wealth. When we follow this trend, it’s not hard to envision a community where businesses move out, taking jobs and tax base with them. Undereducated and unskilled workers can’t piece together enough work to support their families and technical workers must be imported from abroad. Overcrowded and underachieving schools turn out youth unqualified to earn a living wage and for whom there is no future. Dramatic disparities in income and power beget ethnic tensions, social unrest and crime, and gated communities can’t protect the privileged from fear.

What’s the alternative? In the “future of promise,” we can build upon the innate optimism of our community, and turn our amazing economic and cultural diversity into our greatest strength. This is a future where it’s understood that we all want the same things: a safe home for our families, a good education for our children, and the ability to prosper. Along this path, more youth than ever before graduate high school and college because they are better prepared to learn by the time they enter kindergarten. Businesses start up or move to Los Angeles to draw on the broad skill set of its workforce and links to the global economy. Small businesses and large corporations flourish, thanks to an increased buying power fueled by a working class that can afford more than just the barest of necessities. In this exhilarating “future of promise,” everyone benefits from making sure that no one is left behind. Each of these scenarios will be explored in greater detail at the end of the report’s larger sections.

THE COMMUNITY OF THE FUTURE

Right now, we are the community of the future. The challenges Los Angeles County confronts today, America will face tomorrow. By demonstrating how we choose to address the issues that we face in embracing our great cultural diversity, in building up the education of children and adults, in generating economic opportunity and strengthening systems of caring for human needs, we set the pace for the entire nation. In order to shape the “future of promise,” we must heed what the statistics and trends in this report are telling us, and bridge the gaps in our community.
1. Los Angeles County’s population of 9,824,800 residents as of 2002 is the largest of any county in the nation and greater than the populations of 42 states. The average population density of the county is 2,242 persons per square mile. But in the heart of the city, population density reaches as high as 23,151 persons per square mile.

2. Famed for its diversity, L.A. County currently has no ethnic majority. However, growth trends indicate that Latinos will become the majority by 2010.

3. The county’s race/ethnic groups differ widely in ethnic subgroups, language, immigration and citizenship status. The largest subgroups for Latinos are Mexicans and Central Americans. For Asians, the largest subgroups are Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans and Japanese. Most African Americans are U.S. born, with 6% African and West Indian immigrants. For Whites, distinct subgroups include Armenians, Russians and Iranians.

4. The population pyramid for each group shows patterns of births, immigration and aging. For example, the Latino population pyramid shows a broad base of children and young adults while the White population pyramid shows many older adults atop a narrow base of children and youth.

From modest beginnings in 1850 as a small town of 3,530 people, L.A. County has grown to a global community that is setting new benchmarks for diversity in a changing world. The driving principle of Los Angeles is the opportunity to create a new future – to fulfill a dream – and people from all over the globe strive to make their dreams come true in Los Angeles today.
5. **36% of residents in L.A. County are foreign born**, up from 32% in 1990. Legal immigration added 1.2 million persons to the county’s population between 1990 and 2000. The largest group of immigrants is from Latin America at 62%, followed by 30% from Asian countries.

6. **At 94%, African-Americans rank highest in percentage of U.S. born.** 85% of Whites are native born, followed by 74% for American Indians (many of whom are Latin American Indians), 51% for Latinos and 31% for Asians and Pacific Islanders.

7. **The naturalization rate for foreign-born residents in L.A. County rose during the ’90s.** By 2000, 38% of foreign-born residents were U.S. citizens, compared to 27% in 1990.

8. **A cross-border study of Mexican immigrants showed that up to 50% return to Mexico within two years, and 70% return within 10 years.** Those who settle in the U.S. are more likely to have a high school education, better-paid work, and are more likely to move up the income ladder. Intensified border enforcement activity has raised the risks of crossing for unauthorized migrants, increasing the lengths of stays.

9. **54% of L.A. County residents speak a language other than English at home.** 46% of persons speak English only, compared to 55% in 1990. 2.5 million residents (28%) say they don’t speak English “very well.”

10. **Births are the primary contributor to population growth in the county.** 59% of population growth in 2000 was due to births and 41% from persons who moved here.

11. **Life expectancy increased from 76.0 years in 1991 to 78.6 years in 2000.** For children born in L.A. County in 2001, life expectancy is 75.8 for males and 81.2 for females.

12. **The proportion of children age 0-17 and elderly age 65 and over to working-age adults will rise sharply in the coming decades.** By 2030, this “dependency ratio” could rise as high as 9 children and elderly to every 10 working-age adults, placing extraordinary demands on the economy to provide incomes for workers that will support all age groups.

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**AFRICAN-AMERICAN POPULATION**

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**ASIAN POPULATION**

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The quality of education determines the future of our community. For individuals, educational attainment is a driving factor in lifelong earning potential, while for local industry, the level of knowledge and skills available in the workforce fuels our local economy. As a child’s first and most important teachers, families need community support to raise children who are emotionally, intellectually and physically healthy. Whether it’s the scholastic achievement of our children or education by adults trying to learn new skills, land better jobs or start their own businesses, an investment in learning pays big dividends for the future of Los Angeles.

FAMILIES

13. 62% of youth age 0-17 live in married couple families; 18% live with a mother only; and 6% live with a father only. 14% of youth live with relatives or other families. 88,500 grandparents in L.A. County are fully responsible for raising at least one of their grandchildren.

14. 35% of mothers and 30% of fathers of children born in L.A. County in 2001 had less than a high school education. This has major implications for the child’s future, since a mother’s education is the best predictor of a child’s success in school.

15. 38% of new mothers in 2000 were unmarried, higher than the national average of 33%. As with all children in single-parent homes, these children are at a statistically higher risk of growing up in poverty, the greatest predictor of school failure.

CHILD CARE

16. For the cost of one year of child care for a 2-year-old in a licensed home at $125 per week, a family could pay for a year’s tuition and fees for three college students at a California State University campus. 70,000 low income, non-welfare families are estimated to be on waiting lists for state-funded child care.

17. Low wages are a major factor limiting quality care. Child care teachers in Los Angeles County averaged between $12,000 and $18,000 per year, far below the county median income, according to a 1995 study. About half had no health insurance available on the job.

SCHOOLS

18. 1,711,000 students were enrolled at the 1,700 school sites in L.A. County’s 94 school districts for the 2001-2002 school year. 10% of all K-12 students in the county are enrolled in private schools, down from a high of 13% in 1990.

19. Expenditures per pupil in California schools averaged $6,837 in 2000-2001, 11% less than the U.S. average $7,640. California ranks far down in the list of states in expenditures for education.
SCHOOL OUTCOMES

24. School achievement is improving at the lower grade levels, countywide. In 2002 testing, 41% of 3rd grade students scored at or above the national average (the 50th percentile) in reading, up from 31% in 1999. However, countywide improvement masks the much lower scores in poor neighborhoods. For example, 27% of 3rd graders in Lynwood score at or above the 50th percentile in reading, compared to 93% in Manhattan Beach.

25. School achievement at upper grade levels has improved only slightly. In 2002 testing, only 33% of 11th grade students scored at or above the national average in reading, up from 30% in 1999. Scores for 11th grade students are consistently higher than 9th or 10th grade, as many lower-achieving students drop out by 11th grade.

26. Only 48% of 11th graders statewide have passed the required high school exit exam. The state-mandated test in English and math was due to be required for graduation in 2004, but poor results have raised questions about whether the requirement can be implemented as scheduled.

27. Student scores on the SAT are up, having rebounded from a notable decline in the mid-90’s. In 2001, SAT scores averaged 970, compared to a mid-90’s low of 948.

28. 62% of students in the Class of 2000 graduated with their class. 46% of these graduates were Latino, 26% were White, 17% were African American, 17% were Asian Pacific and 1% were American Indian and others. Over 1 in 3 high school graduates also completed college prep courses required for UC/CSU admission. Among graduates in each ethnic group, 60% of Asian Pacifics completed the required prep courses, 43% of Whites, 26% of Latinos, 29% of African Americans and 29% of American Indians.

But those jobs are a thing of the past. … Schools must prepare students for this new economy.” – California Business Roundtable
**The State of Education**

**College and Continuing Education**

29. **48% of high school graduates in L.A. County entered college in 2000.** More than half of first-time freshman attended community colleges, 17% went to University of California campuses, 22% to California State University schools and 5% to private institutions.

30. **547,000 students were enrolled in 2001 in public colleges and universities in Los Angeles County.** 392,000 were in community colleges, 111,000 attended California State University branches, 37,000 were enrolled in the University of California (UCLA). Statistics were not available for many of the county’s 157 private degree-granting colleges and universities.

31. **13,000 associate degrees and 18,900 bachelor’s degrees were awarded by public colleges and universities in the county in 2000.** Of the bachelor’s degree recipients, 8% were African American, 27% Asian Pacific, 1% American Indian, 25% Latino, 36% White and 3% Other. 19,000 graduate degrees were conferred in 2000 by colleges and universities in the county, including 5,018 master’s degrees, 458 doctorates and 554 professional degrees in fields such as medicine and law.

“California should establish a college-going culture in its high schools...to help overcome patterns that otherwise threaten the long-term socioeconomic well-being of all residents, especially underrepresented minorities.”

– California Senate Office of Research

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**Education Level of Adults**

![Education Level of Adults Chart](image-url)
ADULT EDUCATION LEVEL

32. 30% of adults age 25 and over in L.A. County did not graduate from high school, with more than half having less than a 9th grade education. These levels have remained the same since 1990. 19% of adults have a high school diploma as the highest level of formal education, down slightly from 21% in 1990, as more high school graduates are now going on to college.

33. One in four adults have completed a bachelor’s degree or higher. This is up from 22% in 1990. 26% of adults have completed an associate degree (from community college), or attended college without receiving a degree.

34. 10,321 L.A. County adults received GEDs in 2001. A general education diploma is equivalent to high school graduation. A total of 14,696 took the test, with 70% of test-takers passing.

RETURN ON EDUCATION

35. Average yearly earnings for adults in the U.S. range from $18,900 for high school dropouts to $99,300 for those with professional degrees. Earnings increase with each increment of education.

THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

PROMISE
• Achievement test scores continue to rise, providing a strong foundation for ongoing school success
• With improved academic skills, more students stay in high school and graduate
• Adult education level rises as more young adults go to college and receive degrees
• Vocational education in community colleges produces skilled workers able to achieve middle-class incomes
• Opportunities for learning English and GED preparation allow immigrant adults to improve their educational qualifications

PERIL
• Failure to remediate poor achievement in high schools results in a generation trapped in a life of low-level jobs and meager earnings
• Need to supplement family income continues to draw youth in poor families out of school and into low-paid, dead-end employment
• Lack of mentors and lack of preparation in math and science limits entry into well-paid technical and professional careers, such as engineering or health sciences
• Schools in low-income communities find it hard to attract credentialed, experienced teachers
THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY

The economy of Los Angeles County is one of the most vibrant in the world. But along with prosperity has come an increasingly troubling economic paradox: L.A. is home to some of the greatest wealth in the nation, and yet also harbors some of the greatest poverty and need. Now, after a record 10 years of uninterrupted growth, L.A. County is experiencing an economic slowdown, that coincides with post-9/11 ripples, and arrives on the heels of an unprecedented energy crisis.

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

36. Los Angeles County is an economic powerhouse that would rank 16th among the world’s largest economies in gross product. L.A. County’s gross domestic product of $285 billion is larger than the economies of Switzerland, Sweden and Austria.

37. In 2001, 78% of all jobs in L.A. County were within the four largest industry sectors: services at 33% of employment, retail trade at 16%, manufacturing at 15% and government at 15%. The services sector that dominates the county’s economy includes business services, health services, motion picture production, engineering and management, hotels and entertainment.

38. Los Angeles remains one of the leading manufacturing centers in the nation. However, a steady decline in heavy manufacturing (average annual earnings $41,964) has coincided with a rise in generally less well-paid light manufacturing (average annual earnings $29,745).


40. The informal economy using “off the books” employment is a growing component of business activity. Day laborers, nannies, restaurant and garment industry workers are examples of workers in the informal sector. Estimated to employ an average of 15% or 811,000 workers, off the books employment reduces tax revenues, often pays substandard wages and provides no benefits.
41. Small business is a growth area in the Los Angeles economy: 96% of all businesses have less than 50 employees, and fully 70% have less than five employees. The number of large businesses with more than 50 employees has declined only slightly, but by 2001 these large businesses had only 17% of all employees compared to 29% in 1993.

42. The number of business bankruptcy filings in Los Angeles County has declined over the past six years, from 12,000 in 1996 to 5,400 in 2001.

43. Los Angeles County leads the nation in number of Latino and Asian-owned businesses, and is third in African American business ownership. Latino, Asian and other minority-owned businesses employed 476,000 workers and generated $75 billion in sales.

44. 201,000 women-owned businesses were active in the county in 1997, down 14% from the number operating in 1992. Women-owned businesses employed 243,000 with sales of $33 billion.

EMPLOYMENT

45. The county’s labor force is 4.8 million strong, including 60% of men and 53% of women age 16 and over.

46. The unemployment rate in August 2002 was 6.4%, compared to 6.2% for California and 5.7% for the U.S. Unemployment reached a 12-year low of 4.4% in May 2001. The impact of 9/11 caused a rapid decline in travel, tourism and entertainment, striking particularly hard at the county’s thousands of lower paid workers in airports, hotels, restaurants and related businesses.

47. There has been a rise in unemployment among younger workers. In February 2002, the national unemployment rate for the age group 16-24 was 11%, compared to only 5% among workers 25-64. The unemployment rate for 16-19 year-olds who are not in school in Los Angeles was 24% in 2000, with an alarming 37% not in the labor force.

48. The greatest amount of job growth in recent years has occurred within lower-wage occupations. Seven of the top 10 occupations in job growth pay less than $25,000 annually. For example: retail salespersons at $21,731; security guards at $18,117; cashiers at $18,781.

49. L.A. County has never fully regained jobs that were lost at the start of the recession, back in 1991. South Los Angeles was hit particularly hard by loss of jobs due to plant closures and a shift to nondurable (low-wage) manufacturing. Today, South Los Angeles has the county’s worst level of job scarcity with 7.2 residents per job, compared to 2.8 residents per job for the City of Los Angeles.

50. A key labor force issue is the increasing value of education. In California, wages have increased only for workers with a college degree, when adjusted for inflation. For those with the lowest level of education, wages have actually declined. This is a major factor in the Los Angeles area’s high poverty level.
51. **Median income for L.A. County residents declined by a startling 10% from 1990 to 2000.** In inflation-adjusted dollars, median income slipped from $45,266 in 1990 to $42,189 in 2000.

52. **At the bottom and top of the income scale, 23% of households earn less than $20,000 and 3% have incomes of $200,000 or more.**

53. **Self-employment earnings averaged $35,000 according to the 2000 census.** The average Social Security income was $11,000, and income from public assistance averaged $4,900.

54. **While the difference between men’s and women’s earnings has narrowed substantially, a significant gender gap in wages still remains.** Among all full-time, year-round workers, men in L.A. County earned an average of $35,299. Women earned 14% less with an average of $30,981.

55. **There is a large disparity in median income level among the different ethnic groups.** Median income levels in 2000 ranged from $31,905 for African Americans to $53,978 for Whites. In every ethnic group, incomes are lower than the inflation-adjusted income levels in 1990.

56. **Los Angeles is one of the nation’s most expensive urban areas.** Los Angeles ranked third on a cost of living scale at 144.7, where 100 represents the average urban cost of living. Manhattan topped the list at 235.2, followed by San Francisco at 199.2.
57. **18% of all L.A. County residents, or 1,675,000 people, are living below the poverty level.** This is the largest poverty population of any metropolitan area in the nation, though it represents a substantial decline from the recession high point of 24%, in 1995. (The poverty level for a family of four in 2002 is $18,100 per year.)

58. **25% of all children in L.A. County are growing up in poverty.** Children have a much higher poverty rate than senior citizens: 11% of seniors are below the poverty level.

59. **47% of female-headed households with children under age 5 are poor.** Only 17% of married couples with children under 5 are living in poverty.

60. **The number of financial aid recipients dropped from 977,300 in 1995 to 579,500 in June 2002 following implementation of welfare reform, which coincided with a period of rising employment.** Other public assistance programs showed a different trend: in-home support for the elderly and disabled rose steadily. The number of Medi-Cal recipients more than doubled, rising to nearly 1.3 million to cover former welfare recipients and low income children.

“Everyone gains as we diminish the domain of poverty. The working poor receive sustainable rewards for their labor, and those untouched by poverty share the benefit of a more stable community and an expanding economy.”

— Economic Roundtable

### WORKING POOR

61. **46% of poor families with children in California have a full-time worker in the household.** Low wages and part-time or temporary work are the main reasons that working people fall below the poverty line. To keep a family of four above the poverty level, a parent would have to work a full 40-hour week, year-round, at $8.75 per hour, two dollars above the minimum wage.

62. **Only 32% of former welfare recipients who have been working for five years earn incomes above the poverty level,** according to a study of City of Los Angeles Housing Authority clients. These workers are earning at the highest level in their careers, yet their families continue to bear the brunt of poverty. The study showed that English speakers and those with higher levels of education had the greatest success in moving toward self-sufficiency. Average earnings after participating in the welfare-to-work program were just $9,988 in 1999.

63. **The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) provided an average of $1,160 additional income to low income working families in 1997.** The EITC is a powerful poverty-fighting weapon because it not only reduces poverty and income inequality, but also encourages work. For example, the EITC for a single working parent with two children would raise the income of a family earning $9,988 (as cited above) to $13,876. 775,000 low income households in Los Angeles County received EITC refunds in 1997, the highest rate among large metropolitan areas - yet thousands of working poor families don’t know about or use this benefit.
Los Angeles is among the nation’s least affordable housing markets. With a rapid increase in demand and slow increase in supply, both rents and home prices have skyrocketed.

From 2000 to 2002, the county’s population increased by 306,000, but only 35,300 additional housing units were built.

As of August 2002, only 30% of households could afford a home at the median price of $269,000. This is particularly startling when compared to the nation as a whole, where 55% can afford a median-priced home.

48% of housing units in the county are owner-occupied, and 52% are rented. The highest owner-occupied rate is in Antelope Valley, at 68%. The lowest rate is in the central L.A./Hollywood area, where only 23% of residents own their own home. The home ownership rate is 37% for African Americans, 37% for American Indians, 51% for Asian Pacifics, 38% for Latinos and 58% for Whites.

Renters spend proportionately more for housing than owners, although homeowner incomes are much higher. 22% of renters pay more than 50% of their income for rent, compared to 14% of homeowners. The high cost of rent saps the ability of low-to-moderate income households to save for buying a home of their own.

People who own their homes tend to stay in the same place for about 11 years, while people who rent tend to stay only 3 years, on average. Longer residence is one of the ways in which homeownership stabilizes a community.

Over 400,000 workers (11% of all workers in L.A.) commute to work an hour or more each way. The median commute is 29 minutes. These figures reflect the rise in housing prices, as people search for affordable homes that are farther away from where they work.
**HOME PURCHASE AFFORDABILITY RATE**

70% Could not afford to buy
30% Could afford to buy

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**HOMELESSNESS**

71. **There are 13,632 beds available in the 331 homeless shelters around Los Angeles County.** This figure is up 26% from the number of beds that were available to the homeless in 1997.

72. **84,000 persons are estimated to be homeless each night in Los Angeles County.** 375,000 L.A. County adults reported being homeless at some point over the past five years. In 1999, permanent housing programs for homeless persons offered 1,624 housing units in Los Angeles County.

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“**The region is building the wrong type of housing in the wrong location at the wrong price for the population and economy it now has. Homebuilders in the region remain in the suburban mode, following land availability and buying power rather than population growth and need.”**

—The Southern California Study Center
With the benefits of constant improvements in medicine, diet and exercise, residents of Los Angeles are living longer, healthier lives. Trends in family violence have also declined and the county enjoyed a 45% drop in crime during the 1990s. But with a financial crisis in the public health sector and the first increase in major felonies in seven years, the health and safety of our community faces new challenges in the years to come.

**The State of the Community**

**Healthy Births**

73. *Birth outcomes in the county are better than national rates.* The infant death rate fell to a new low of only five infant deaths per thousand births and 86% of pregnant women received early prenatal care in the first trimester of their pregnancy. Low birthweight has increased slightly, primarily due to medical procedures that save many premature infants.

**Causes of Death**

74. *Death rates for most leading causes declined substantially over the past decade.* Improvements in exercise and smoking cessation helped to improve the rates for heart disease, stroke and lung cancer. New drug therapies for AIDS produced the greatest impact, producing a 77% decrease in the AIDS death rate.

75. *Diabetes death rate is up 48%, largely due to the epidemic of obesity among adults and children.* The increase in Alzheimer’s deaths is not preventable at present, but reflects an increase in number of elderly.

“Almost half of adolescents who continue smoking regularly will die eventually from a smoking-related illness.”

**Death Rates Down for Most Causes but Diabetes and Alzheimer’s Claimed More Lives**
76. The leading cause of premature death and disability in Los Angeles County is coronary heart disease, followed by alcohol dependence, and homicide/violence. 20% of all deaths each year in Los Angeles County are due to tobacco use, which could be prevented by lifestyle changes.

77. An estimated 466,000 Los Angeles County adults had an episode of serious mental illness, such as severe depression, in the past year.

78. As many as 790,000 youth, adults and seniors in Los Angeles County use illicit drugs. This estimate includes illegal use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs.

79. Death and disability rates are 30% higher for men than for women, pointing to the need for active outreach and education aimed at men who may disregard preventative treatments.

80. Inequalities in health status among ethnic groups are reflected in death rates, pointing to a need for access to health care and culturally specific outreach and health education.

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76. The leading cause of premature death and disability in Los Angeles County is coronary heart disease, followed by alcohol dependence, and homicide/violence. 20% of all deaths each year in Los Angeles County are due to tobacco use, which could be prevented by lifestyle changes.

77. An estimated 466,000 Los Angeles County adults had an episode of serious mental illness, such as severe depression, in the past year.

78. As many as 790,000 youth, adults and seniors in Los Angeles County use illicit drugs. This estimate includes illegal use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs.

79. Death and disability rates are 30% higher for men than for women, pointing to the need for active outreach and education aimed at men who may disregard preventative treatments.

80. Inequalities in health status among ethnic groups are reflected in death rates, pointing to a need for access to health care and culturally specific outreach and health education.

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**HEALTH BEHAVIOR**

81. 70% of toddlers are fully immunized, and 70% of elderly receive annual flu vaccinations. Both are very helpful in reducing illness at vulnerable stages of life.

82. 44% of California adults and 28% of children have no dental insurance. More than half of all California children have untreated tooth decay.

83. 41% of adults get little or no vigorous exercise. This helps account for the fact that 36% of adults in L.A. County are overweight, and 17% are obese. Other important health behavior issues include smoking (18% of adults and 15% of teens), binge drinking (16% of adults) and nutrition – lack of fruits and vegetables (88% of adults).

84. 20% of residents under age 65, or 1,677,000 people, have no health insurance from an employer’s plan or public programs such as MediCal. The current county financial crisis has led to closing of clinics and reduction in services. Uninsured residents with emergency care needs are likely to be forced to go to private hospital emergency rooms or do without medical care.
Crime

85. Los Angeles has a relatively low crime rate, ranking 33rd among the major metropolitan areas in the nation.

86. After declining steadily for seven years, the number of major felonies reported in Los Angeles County increased 7% in 2000. Although the California Crime Index rate in 2000 was less than half of the 1991 level, the upturn in reported crimes was troubling.

87. The felony arrest rate for adults in 2000 was down 33% compared to the 1991 figures. For juveniles, the felony arrest rate was down 58%.

88. 1,300 gangs are active in the county, with an estimated membership of 96,000 teens and young adults. 587 gang-related deaths were reported in 2001, following a sharp upswing in gang violence starting in 2000.

89. $43,800 is the price tag for one year of incarceration for a teenager convicted of a criminal offense. In 2002, 1,575 teenagers were incarcerated in county or state correctional facilities. Youth incarceration is down from a peak of 3,742 in 1993.

MAJOR CRIME DROPPED
45% DURING THE 1990S

GANG-RELATED DEATHS
ONCE AGAIN ON THE RISE
“Current research indicates that in 30% to 60% of families experiencing either domestic violence or child maltreatment, the other form is also present.”
– David and Lucile Packard Foundation

**FAMILY VIOLENCE**

90. **53,290 calls related to domestic violence were received by the police in 2000**, down from the high mark of 75,639 calls in 1995. Other domestic violence indicators have also declined: domestic violence arrests in the county fell 21% from 1997 to 2000, and non-fatal hospitalized injuries to women due to partner abuse declined by 45% since 1991.

91. **151,000 new child abuse cases were investigated by the county Children’s Services department in 2000**, down from a peak of 198,000 cases in 1997.

92. **38,273 children were in foster care in 2000**. A record number of 2,900 children were placed in adoptive homes in 2000 as part of the effort to stabilize the lives of children who have been abused or neglected.

**CHILD ABUSE REFERRALS AND OUT OF HOME PLACEMENTS DECLINED**
THE STATE OF THE COMMUNITY

Environment and Civic Life

93. Los Angeles County has the nation’s worst traffic conditions in nearly every category. Los Angeles drivers spend an average of 136 hours per year in traffic delays, and burn 204 gallons of wasted fuel. This adds up to a cost of $2,510 per traveler, per year.

94. 10% of days in 2001 did not meet federal air quality standards for ozone. This can lead to respiratory illness or complications of an existing condition.

CIVIC LIFE

95. 62% of L.A. County respondents polled in January 2001 felt that California was going in the right direction. The general outlook of the public tends to be optimistic, although optimism for county residents declined to 46% in 2001 following the economic slump and September 11 tragedy.

96. 76% of eligible voters in L.A. County were registered for the 2000 presidential election, and 68% of those who were registered actually voted. Among young adults (age 18-24), only 49% of registered voters went to the polls. Voter registration was highest for African Americans and Whites, and lower for the Asians and Latinos.

97. 36,796 nonprofit organizations in L.A. County were registered as of June 2002. This indicates a particularly strong base of organized community interest groups.

“Asians, Blacks, Latinos and Whites agree more often than not on a wide range of issues. All four groups tend to name education, crime and the economy as the state’s most critical policy arenas.”

—Public Policy Institute of California
98. Civic disengagement (lack of involvement in political or neighborhood issues) together with low political interest characterizes Californians, according to a series of statewide surveys. Response trends indicate longstanding distrust of government and politicians.

PHILANTHROPY

99. 66% of county residents reported that they contributed to charitable organizations. Religious organizations were most often named as receiving donations of money. Other top choices for cash donations included human service organizations, children’s organizations, schools or other education institutions.

100. 21% of California adults reported that they are very involved in volunteer and charity work, and another 40% report that they were somewhat involved.

THE FUTURE OF LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY

PROMISE

- Residents act to minimize health risks and benefit from more years of good health
- Nonprofit community clinics are supported in providing health care for uninsured and education for healthier communities
- Decline in family violence and effective intervention reduce intergenerational “transmission” of domestic violence and child abuse
- Increases in naturalization and home ownership programs stabilize low income communities and build civic participation

PERIL

- Deterioration of low-cost public health care systems for low income and uninsured will create intense pressure on emergency rooms and threaten the solvency of private hospitals
- Sick or injured people who lack health insurance forego care, creating risks of future illness, disability or public health threats
- Failure to address behavioral health issues of obesity, lack of exercise, alcohol and drug abuse, results in increases in preventable death and disability
- Lack of involvement in community activities leads to widespread withdrawal from efforts to address neighborhood, city and state issues that demand citizen buy-in
To reach the “future of promise,” our community must come together to find meaningful and effective measures that bridge the gaps between the peril and the promise and maximize opportunities for the working poor, employers and all residents. We can’t stand idly by and assume that others are working toward a solution. Each of us must realize the personal stake we have in making Los Angeles County a better place to live and work.

No single entity - government, nonprofit organization or private business - can effectively work towards a future of promise without buy-in and support from all sectors of the community. Simply put, community issues require a community response.

Through publications like this one, United Way hopes to not only stimulate community-wide dialogue, but to help facilitate a course of action that will effectively address pressing needs. Analysis of the issues outlined in this report has led United Way to the following conclusions, which will help shape the direction of its investments in the years ahead.

An investment in education is the single best investment we can make for the future of our community, and it is one that will have a positive, palpable effect on every level of our society.

Our rich diversity does not change the fact that we all want the same basic things. We all want to succeed, and we all want our children to succeed. A future of promise will be built upon a foundation of parenting education and literacy programs; improved English instruction for non-English speakers; and quality and affordable child care to help stimulate children’s minds before they even enter kindergarten. The right investment at the beginning of a child’s life will resonate through the whole socio-economic structure of our community.

The overall strength of the economy can be improved by putting opportunities for greater economic stability and empowerment within reach of the working poor.
An increased focus on knowledge and resources can also help empower today’s low-wage earners to become tomorrow’s homeowners and entrepreneurs. Through basic adult education, job training and placement programs, financial literacy classes, and small business education, the working poor can move up into better jobs or start businesses of their own. As they break the cycle of poverty, their new level of participation in the economy allows them to pass the gift of economic independence to their children.

To protect the safety, health and well being of all residents, communities must work together to maintain services that support at-risk populations.

In a community with limited access to health care and other basic needs, no one is immune from scenarios of crowded emergency rooms, increased violence and civic disengagement. Communities must rally for programs that provide basic medical and dental care for the uninsured, minimize crime and violence and offer shelter and food in times of crisis. Greater civic participation will also be a hallmark of a promising future, where under the tradition of democracy, people are encouraged to engage in civic dialogue about the best ways to preserve our promise for generations to come.

**THE UNITED WAY OF GREATER LOS ANGELES**

So how do we move beyond data and speculation, optimism and idealism? United Way of Greater Los Angeles is dedicated to focusing a wide range of community resources to create a future of promise for L.A. County. Working with our corporate partners, major philanthropists, foundations and individual donors at all levels, we’re making far-reaching investments in the vital areas of learning, empowering and caring through United Way’s Bridging the Gap Fund, and building programs and initiatives that make a difference. It’s not about merely uplifting the poor and downtrodden. This is thoughtful, specific action-based on the facts and figures in this report—which can bring about a more promising future for all of us.

We invite you to join United Way in this work, and to use the facts in this report in your efforts. A gift to United Way will be used locally as an investment that provides the means for a better tomorrow.

**PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY AND HELP UNITED WAY BRIDGE THE GAP IN OUR COMMUNITY.**
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California Budget Project
California Business Roundtable
California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office
California Community Foundation
California Department of Education
California Department of Finance, Demographic Research
California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics
California Employment Development Department
California Postsecondary Education Commission
California Senate Office of Research
California Youth Authority
Child Abuse Prevention Network
Children’s Defense Fund
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Los Angeles County Children’s Planning Council
Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, Public Health
Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services, Research & Statistics
Los Angeles County Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect
Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, Safe Streets Bureau
Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation
Los Angeles Times
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