

Economic Security

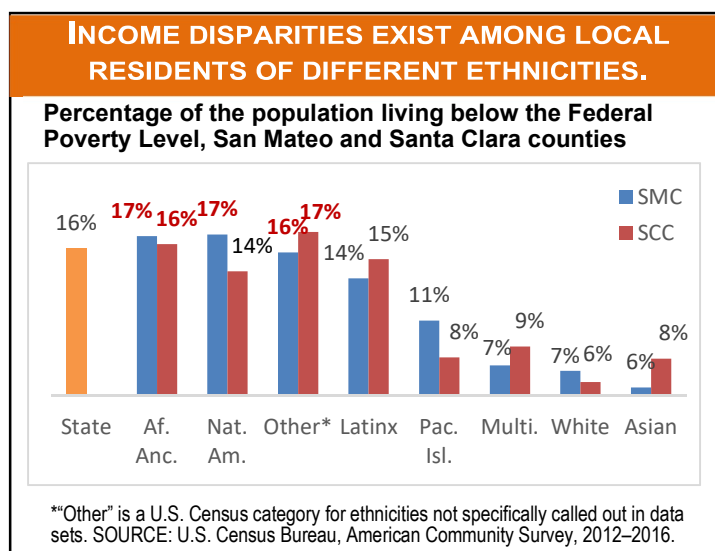
What's the issue?

Economic security is one of the most widely recognized social determinants of health. Higher incomes and a secure social support system — families, friends, communities — play a significant role in people’s overall well-being.¹ The cost of living in the Bay Area is extremely high and rising at rate that’s outpacing the growth of household incomes.² Access to economic security programs such as SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly referred to as food stamps) results in better long-term health outcomes.³ But childhood poverty has lasting effects: Even after their conditions improve, people experience poorer health outcomes over time.⁴

What does the data show?

Income

The California Self-Sufficiency Standard indicates that nearly one in three households in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties — Stanford Health Care’s service area — is unable to meet its basic needs.⁵ Despite the fact that the Federal Poverty Level underestimates economic insecurity in the Bay Area, sizeable proportions of African ancestry, Native American, Latinx, and “Other” residents of both counties live in poverty (see chart).



Food Access

A limited income can lead to food insecurity. Food insecurity is a significant issue in both counties. The proportions of San Mateo County residents receiving SNAP benefits and other government assistance have been increasing recently.⁵

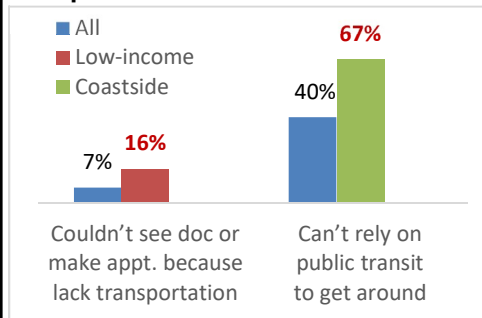
HEALTH NEED INDICATOR	BENCHMARK	SAN MATEO COUNTY	SANTA CLARA COUNTY
Food Insecurity Rate	6% ^H	9%	11%
Food Insecure Population Ineligible for Assistance	22%	39%	39%
Food Insecure Children Ineligible for Assistance	29%	46%	46%

^H Indicates Healthy People 2020 national aspirational goal. When not noted, benchmark is state average. SOURCES: Food Insecurity: SMC: San Mateo County Health, Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2018; SCC and CA: Feeding America, 2016. Food Insecure and Ineligible: Feeding America, 2014.

¹ World Health Organization. (2018). *The Determinants of Health*.
² Bay Area Council Economic Institute. (Undated.) *The Cost of Living Continues to Rise for Bay Area Residents*.
³ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2018). *Economic Security, Health Programs Reduce Poverty and Hardship, With Long-Term Benefits*.
⁴ Gupta, R. P., de Wit, M. L., & McKeown, D. (2007). The Impact of Poverty on the Current and Future Health Status of Children. *Pediatric Child Health*. 12(8): 667–672.
⁵ The Federal Poverty Level, the traditional measure of poverty in a community, does not take into consideration local conditions such as the high cost of living in the Bay Area. The California Self-Sufficiency Standard, set by the Insight Center for Community Economic Development, provides a more accurate estimate of economic stability in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

SOME RESIDENTS HAVE TRANSPORTATION ISSUES.

San Mateo County survey respondents



SOURCE: San Mateo County Health, Health and Quality of Life Survey, 2018. Although comparable data are not available for Santa Clara County, it is reasonable to expect that conditions are similar.

In Santa Clara County, more than **25%** of Latinx residents indicated that they had visited a food bank or received other free meals in the past year.⁶

Transportation

Poor access to transportation can impede access to health care, increase social isolation for older adults, and result in long commutes to work. These issues can add to family instability and poor mental health.⁷

What does the community say?

Residents and local experts who shared their perspectives as part of Stanford Health Care's 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment ranked economic security as a high priority. They noted that the high cost of living, particularly for lower-income residents, is affecting a variety of basic needs, including

food, health care, housing, and transportation. Economic insecurity and housing instability were discussed as drivers of poor mental health and substance use in both counties. In Santa Clara County, mental health providers reported that mental health care costs are difficult for middle-income parents. The community also expressed concerns about the cost of long-term care for middle-class older adults with fixed incomes. In San Mateo County, economic stressors that affect housing instability and food insecurity were identified by multiple sources as drivers of domestic violence. Human trafficking is an emerging issue in the county, which experts attributed to chronic housing issues and related instability.

"Food insecurity is very present among the people living in the Bay Area. ... The homeless are a very small fraction of [who the food bank] serves. Most of the people served are working adults ... \$12 an hour is not enough. You cannot live on that, not in this area." —LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDER

Our commitment to community health

Stanford Health Care collaborated with 21 other health systems and organizations in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties on the 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment. Based on the statistics and community input collected, economic security emerged as a top health need.

With findings from the assessment, Stanford Health Care developed a 2020–2022 Implementation Strategy that will help determine the investments the hospital makes in the community, including programming and partnerships. Over the next three years, the hospital will focus on how food, transportation, and high-quality employment impact health behaviors and outcomes in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Strategies include expanding programs that address access to healthy food and workforce-related education. Stanford Health Care will also invest in strategies to increase transportation options, affordable child care, and financial literacy. The anticipated impacts range from less food insecurity and reduced income disparities to better health outcomes among low-income residents. Results will be measured and reported in the next assessment.

Stanford Health Care's Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Strategy reports are available publicly on its website. Comments are welcome and encouraged.

⁶ Santa Clara Public Health Department, Behavioral Risk Factor Survey. (2013–2014).

⁷ Syed, S. T., Gerber, B. S., & Sharp, L. K. (2013). Traveling towards disease: transportation barriers to health care access. *Journal of Community Health, 38*(5), 976–993.