

A Look at Bay Area Poverty

Sandy Allen, *Manager, Data and Evaluation*
Ena Yasuhara Li, *Senior Director, Education and Evaluation*

Introduction

The Bay Area landscape is rapidly changing, and we want to ensure we are informed about the changing needs of our community, its challenges, and demographics related to poverty.

Quick facts:

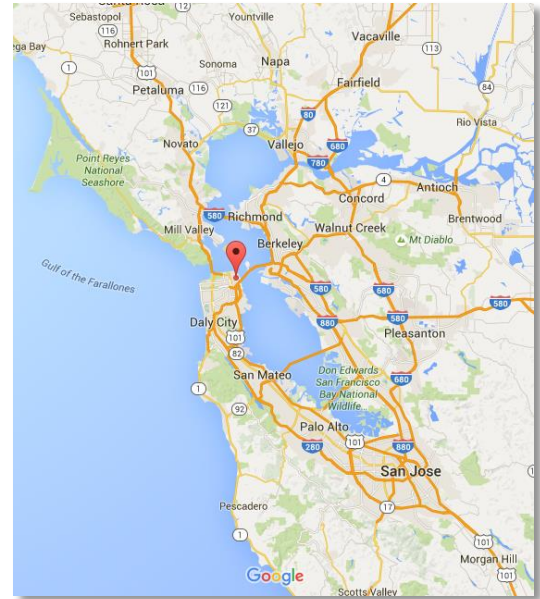
Largest county: Santa Clara, population of 1,918,044¹

Smallest county: Napa, population of 142,456²

California population: 39,144,818³

Population of 8 Bay Area Counties: 7,152,724⁴

The Bay Area's population is largely fueled by people flocking here from all over the United States. The fastest-growing Bay Area County, in both absolute numbers and percentage, is Alameda County, which saw a gain of 127,954 people (8.5%) in the past five years.⁵ The two slowest-growing counties were Napa and Marin, with gains under one percent.



Bay Area Poverty Stats

Percent of People in Poverty (Federal Poverty Level)⁶:

10% (Ranges from 7.5% in San Mateo County to 12.5% in Alameda County)

Cities with Highest Poverty Rate (Federal Poverty Level):

Bay Point: 28%

Oakland: 21%

San Pablo: 21%

Poorest Cities (Median Household Income):

San Pablo: \$45,305

Bay Point: \$45,389

Marin City: \$46,250

East Palo Alto: \$50,137

Oakland: \$51,144

Calistoga: \$51,974

Richmond: \$54,554

¹ As of July 1, 2015. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/06085>

² As of July 1, 2015. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/06055>

³ As of July 1, 2015. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/06>

⁴ <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

⁵ <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/06001>

⁶ \$24,300 for a family of four. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

Depending on the county, median household income ranges from \$67,000 in Solano County to \$93,000 in Santa Clara County (Figure 1).

The number of people in poverty is proportional to the county's population. Generally, the more people in the county, the more people there are living in poverty within that county (Figure 2).

However, population is not the only indicator of the number of people living in poverty. College graduates have filled most of the jobs that have been created since the economic downturn, with less-educated workers losing opportunities.⁷ This means that education is more important than ever and is a critical factor that impacts some communities more than others.

For example, over 50 percent of the population (over the age of 25) have at least a bachelor's degree in San Francisco and Marin Counties. However, in Solano County, just under 25 percent have a bachelor's degree. We see vast differences across the region when we look at education levels (Figure 3).

We know that federal poverty rates underestimate economic hardship in the region. For example, 10 percent FPL does not tell you that in some counties, the median household income is less than \$50,000. We also know that poverty rates vary significantly across the region (200,000 people in Alameda vs 12,000 in Napa), and education levels are low across the region, especially in Napa and Solano counties. Even in San Francisco and Marin, only 52 percent and 54 percent

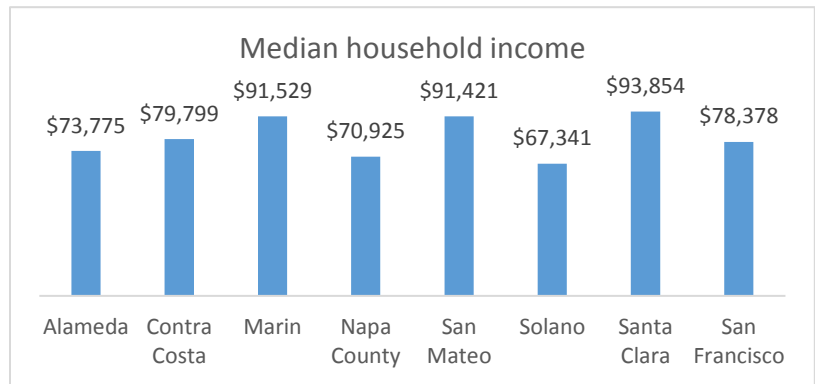


Figure 1: Median Household Income by County

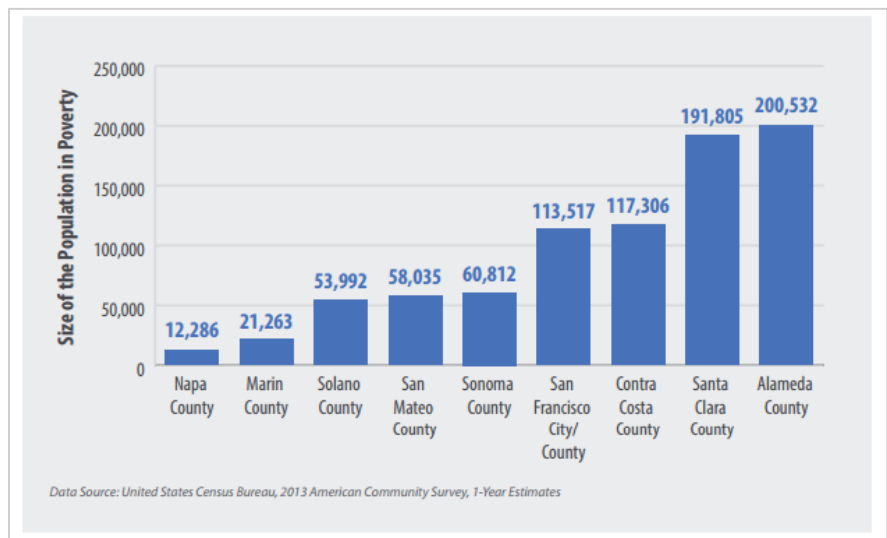


Figure 2: Total Number of Bay Area Residents in Poverty by County, 2013

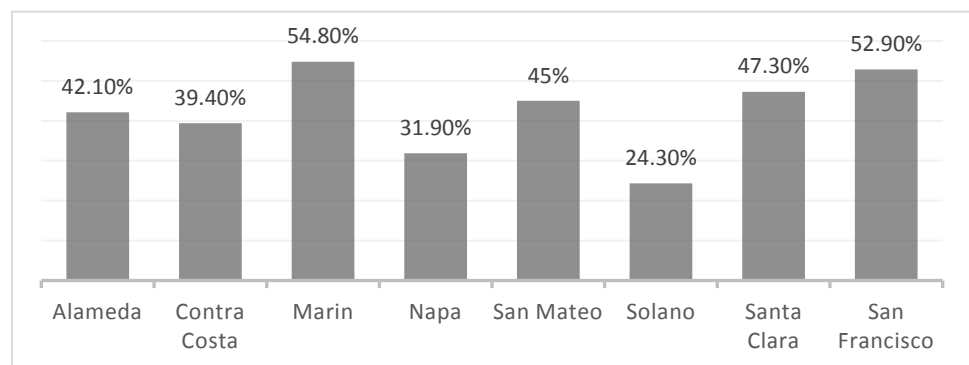


Figure 3: Percentage of Population with a Bachelor's Degree by County

⁷ https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Good-Jobs_Full_Final.pdf

of its population, respectively, have at least a BA degree, which is the highest percentage in the Bay Area.

But County-Level Data Doesn’t Tell the Real Story

While county level data can give us an idea of what is happening at a high level, we see a very different picture when we drill into what’s happening within each county. Each county has high-poverty cities and neighborhoods. For example, the median household income in the city of San Rafael is \$15,861 lower than that of overall Marin County. The city of East Palo Alto, in San Mateo County, has a median household income that is \$38,705 lower (Figure 4).

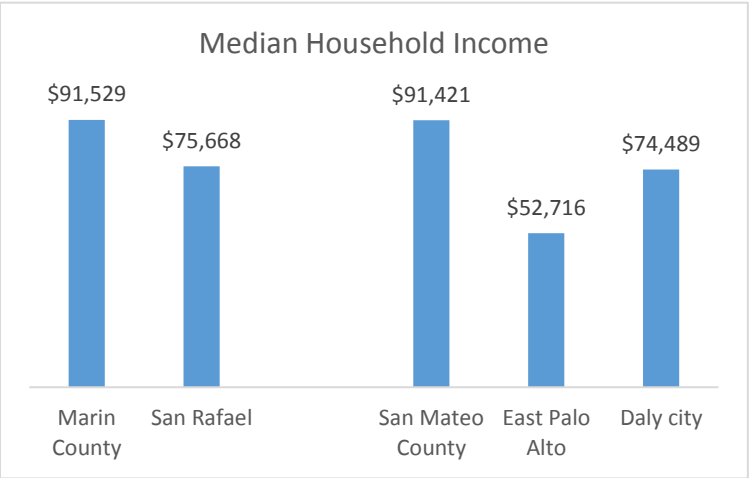


Figure 4: Median Household Income, Marin and San Mateo Counties

Each county also has a school district that has a significantly higher percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch. For example, while only 39 percent of Santa Clara County students are eligible for free or reduced lunch,⁸ 85 percent and 80 percent of students in the Alum Rock and Franklin McKinney school districts in San Jose are eligible (Figure 5).

County	School District
Alameda County: 45%	Oakland Unified: 75%
Contra Costa County: 41%	Pittsburg Unified: 85%
	West Contra Costa Unified: 71%
Marin County: 27%	San Rafael Unified: 74%
Napa County: 46.2%	Calistoga Joint Unified: 74%
San Mateo County: 35%	Ravenswood City (EPA): 97%
Santa Clara County: 39%	Alum Rock (San Jose): 85%
	Franklin-McKinney (San Jose): 80%
Solano County: 52%	Vallejo City Unified: 71%

Figure 5: Percentage of Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunches, Bay Area Counties and School Districts

However, Even City-Level Data Doesn’t Tell You Everything

A 2012 look at poverty by census tract shows that some neighborhoods within a city have poverty rates that are significantly higher. For example, the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco had a poverty rate of 50.6 percent (Figure 6).

⁸ Free and reduced lunch: A child's family income must fall below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines (\$31,005 for a family of four in 2014-2015) to qualify for free meals, or below 185% of the federal poverty guidelines (\$44,123 for a family of four in 2014-2015) to qualify for reduced price meals.

Census Tract	Area	Poverty Rate (%)
Low Poverty Tracts		
2529.15	Solano County - Outskirts of Vacaville	0.0%
6095.00	San Mateo County - San Carlos	0.1%
4301.02	Alameda County - North, Unincorporated	0.1%
2007.03	Napa County - West, City of Napa	0.3%
High Poverty Tracts		
4105.00	Alameda County - Central Oakland	47.4%
4228.00	Alameda County - Near Berkeley Campus	48.5%
5009.02	Santa Clara County - Near San Jose State Campus	49.5%
125.02	San Francisco City/County - Tenderloin	50.6%
Data Source: United States Census Bureau, Small Area Income Estimates		

Figure 6: Poverty Rates in Bay Area Census Tracts, 2012

Race is also a factor related to poverty. Around nine percent of the population in the cities in the graph below accessed food stamps/SNAP in the past 12 months. However, breaking the numbers down by ethnicity shows a different story. Seventeen percent of those accessing SNAP are African American and 14 percent are Hispanic or Latino, compared to the nine percent average. Taking a closer look into cities like San Pablo and Vallejo reveals disparities that exist by race/ethnicity, even within one city (Figure 7).

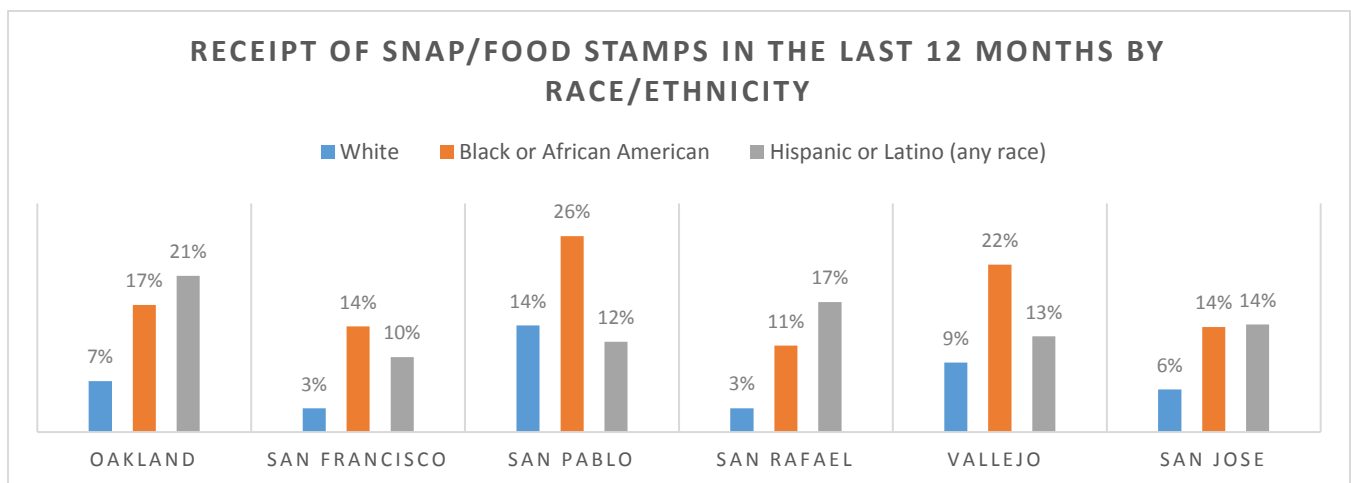


Figure 7: Receipt of SNAP/Food Stamps in Past 12 Months by Race/Ethnicity

Where people live matters, since poverty impacts health and life expectancy. According to the Alameda County Public Health Department, a baby born in the Claremont neighborhood (in East Oakland) has an average life expectancy of 74 years, 12 years less than a child born in the wealthy district of Piedmont.

As seen in the next graph, where one lives impacts health problems like diabetes, asthma, homicide, and obesity. These issues are not unique to Alameda County and the City of Oakland, but are true for many of counties and cities served by United Way Bay Area (Figure 8).

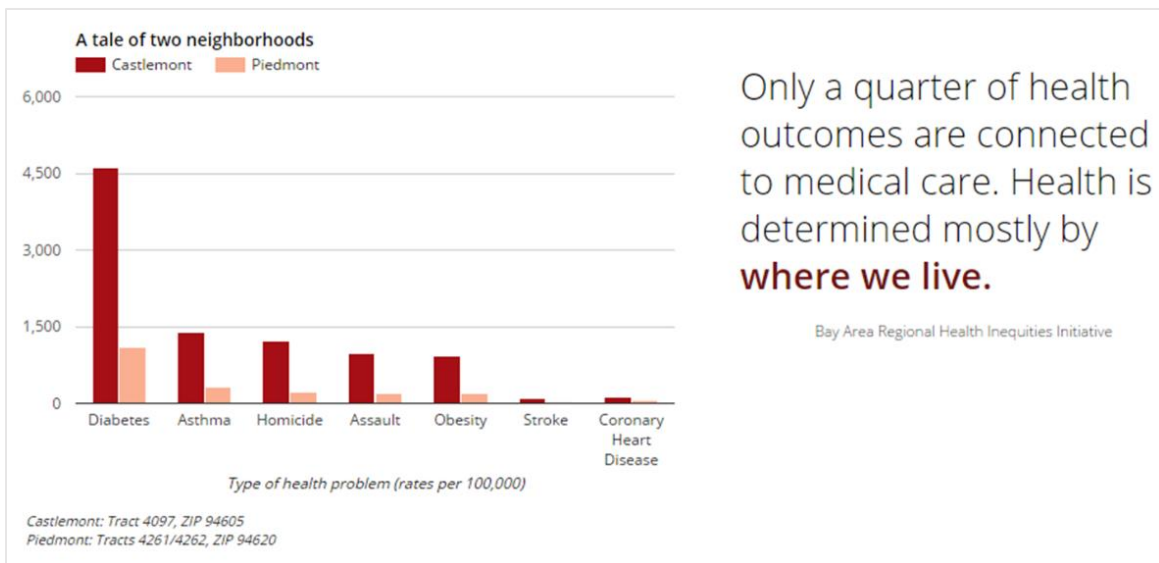
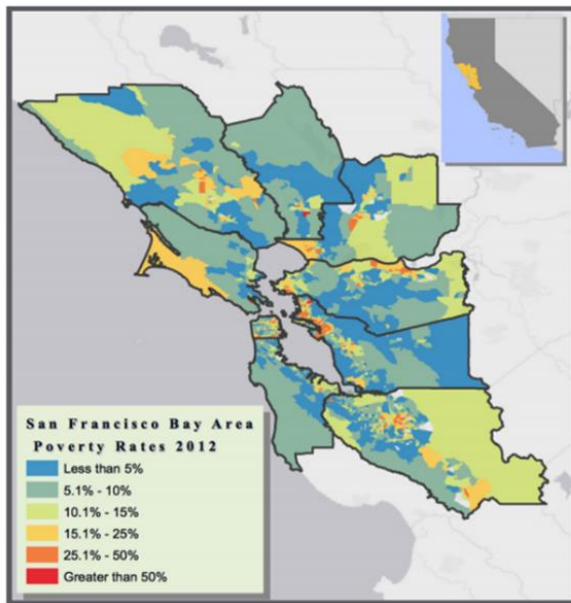


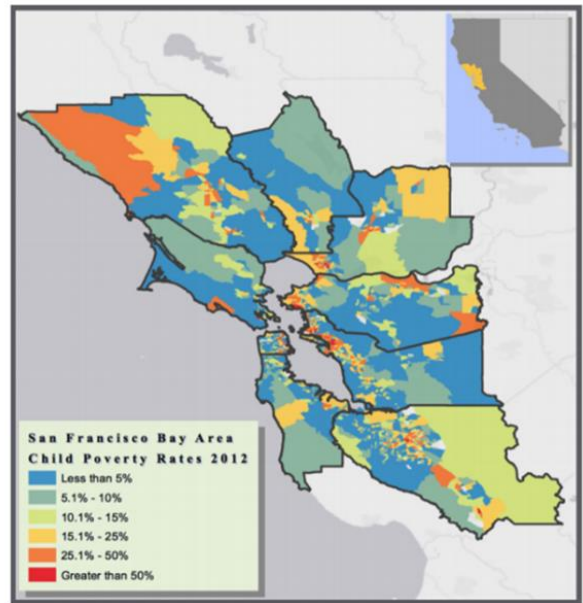
Figure 8: Health Problems in Castlemont v. Piedmont

In addition, children are also more likely to live in poverty across the region. The maps below show higher child poverty rates than overall poverty rates (Figures 9 and 10).



Data Source: United States Census Bureau, Small Area Income Estimates

Figure 9: Overall Bay Area Poverty Rates by Census Tract, 2012



Data Source: United States Census Bureau, Small Area Income Estimates

Figure 10: Bay Area Child Poverty Rates by Census Tract, 2012

What This Means for United Way Bay Area

Fortunately, our work is already focused in most places of concentrated poverty (i.e. San Pablo, Oakland, Bay Point, West Contra Costa Unified). Our SparkPoint, Two-Generation Work, and Earn It! Keep It! Save It! sites are located in the following highest-poverty areas:

SparkPoint Contra Costa West – Richmond
SparkPoint Contra Costa West at Dover Elementary School (2Gen site) – San Pablo
SparkPoint Contra Costa East – Bay Point
SparkPoint Oakland – East Oakland
SparkPoint Marin – San Rafael
SparkPoint Solano at Solano Middle School (2Gen site) – Vallejo
SparkPoint Redwood City at Taft Elementary School
SparkPoint Napa at Phillips Elementary School (2Gen site)
SparkPoint at Skyline College – San Bruno
SparkPoint at Cañada College – Redwood City
SparkPoint Fremont
SparkPoint American Canyon
SparkPoint San Francisco in the Mission Neighborhood

In addition, our 253 Earn It! Keep It! Save It! sites are located in almost all of the high-poverty neighborhoods in the Bay Area. High-poverty neighborhoods are also home to high concentrations of EITC-eligible households. Therefore, our free tax preparation services are accessible to those communities. For example, there are 24 locations in Oakland alone, and eight locations in the San Pablo/Richmond areas. As we look to expand services each year to those most in need, we will target these high-poverty neighborhoods as well.

It is also important to look at county, city, and neighborhood-level data. As United Way Bay Area expands its work throughout the region, it will be important to elevate the struggles that families face in the Bay Area. It will also be important to ask what we can do in areas where we are not present, and how we can be the most impactful to address the needs.

Stories of People in Our Communities

Eraina is a client and single mother served at Dover Elementary School in partnership with SparkPoint Contra Costa and United Way's Two-Generation program. She has participated in financial coaching and the Parent University Workshops series.

"I am a single mom. I've worked full time at the same job for 19 years. I hope to one day buy my family a house. Although I was able to make ends meet and even afford extras, such as vacations, gifts, and parties, I still have a long way to go towards my real goal, my house."





Victor is a former client and student assistant at SparkPoint at Skyline College, and has worked with a financial coach on his goals. Since completing SparkPoint, Victor has gone on to enroll in San Jose State University, pursuing a degree in electrical engineering.

“Me and my five siblings were raised by a single mother in San Mateo. I got into trouble when I was young. I was in and out of juvenile detention and was not able attend high school on a regular basis. I was involved with the wrong people. But I made a decision to turn my life around and enroll in community college.”

Ronnie is a community member featured in an article by KQED.⁹ Monday through Friday, he commutes 80 miles from his home in Stockton to his job at Stanford University. To get to and from Stanford, he has to take a bike, a train, and a bus. He spends 16 hours away from home and treks a total commute of nearly six hours. His story reflects the challenges with affordable housing and low wage workers in Santa Clara County.

“I do what I have to do, I have a family to take care of. It is my responsibility to take care of them. If that means sacrificing a few spare hours a day to give them a better life, I’ll do it. I am not doing anything special. There are hundreds and hundreds of other people doing the same thing I do, every day.”



⁹ <https://ww2.kqed.org/news/2015/03/28/long-commute-to-silicon-valley-increasingly-the-norm-for-many/>