

## South L.A. sees big shifts but continues to struggle, report shows

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A new report on South Los Angeles by the UCLA School of Public Affairs indicates that the area, once mostly African American, now has a Latino majority and continues to experience fewer employment opportunities, higher poverty and more violent crime than the rest of Los Angeles County.

"The State of South L.A." also details the growth of charter schools in the area and cautions that the current mortgage foreclosure crisis could hit South L.A. especially hard.

The report is the first major effort to assess the state of South L.A. — an area that covers about 60 square miles and is home to approximately 885,000 people — since 1993, when UCLA researchers issued a similar report. The current report covers such key areas as demographics, public safety, education, housing and employment.

Geographically, South L.A. is roughly bounded by Interstate 10, La Cienega Boulevard, Alameda Street and Interstate 105. Its residents constitute 10 percent of the total population of Los Angeles County.

"South Los Angeles has changed in many ways, and the most noticeable is in terms of its ethnic and racial composition," said the report's principal author, Paul Ong, a UCLA professor of urban planning, social welfare and Asian American studies. "What was once known as a predominately African American area is now majority Latino, although the African American community remains an important force in South

Los Angeles."

"At the same time," he added, "South Los Angeles has not changed, particularly in terms of being economically disadvantaged."

The 1969 poverty rate for South Los Angeles, for example, was twice as high as the rate for Los Angeles County as a whole, Ong said. The same was true in 1989 and again in 2006, the report found.

"Despite calls for improvement after the 1965 riots and the 1992 unrest, South Los Angeles remains on the margins of the region's economy," Ong said.

The area's demographic shift has been significant, with the Hispanic/Latino population now twice as large as it was in 1990. Based on the latest available census figures, the report notes that while in 1990 47 percent of South L.A. residents were Hispanic/Latino and 47 percent were African American, by 2006 62 percent were Hispanic/Latino and 31 percent were African American. However, African Americans continue to be the most highly overrepresented racial or ethnic group, with about three times more blacks living in South L.A. than in Los Angeles County overall.

The report also reveals that South Los Angeles is "highly job-poor" with only about 0.5 jobs per worker, compared with 1.1 jobs per worker in Los Angeles County.

"This creates a difficult situation for residents of South Los Angeles," Ong said. "Many South Los Angeles residents must travel out of the area to find employment, and the cost of transportation creates an extra burden for them."

South L.A.'s poverty rate, 30 percent, was twice the overall county rate

in 2006. And while the percentage of children living below the poverty line fell from 41 percent in 2000 to 32 percent in 2006, the 2006 rate was still higher than the overall county rate of 27 percent.

"The observed lower socioeconomic status of South L.A. residents is related, in part, to the community's economic disadvantage in the labor market," Ong said.

Relative to Los Angeles County, South Los Angeles shows lower educational attainment, with twice as many residents — 43 percent — lacking a high school diploma, the report found. Eleven percent have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Property crime in South L.A. has fallen since 1996. The estimated number of property offenses in 1996 was 42.4 crimes per 1,000 people. By 2006, the rate had dropped to 26.3, closely mirroring the county rate.

The violent-crime rate, however, was twice as high as the county's in 2006, with approximately 15 violent crimes per 1,000 people. Young African American and Latino males were more affected by violent crimes than other groups.

The report shows that homeownership rates vary widely within South L.A., although the community has an overall rate lower than the county's. A little more than one-third of area households were homeowners in 2000, compared with 48 percent in Los Angeles County.

Between 2000 and 2007, home values in South L.A. rose faster than in other areas of the county.

"This is a trend that could not be sustained, leaving some homeowners at risk for foreclosure," Ong said. "Currently, South L.A. has a higher default and foreclosure rate than for the county, indicating that the

foreclosure crisis will likely escalate."

The report also found that California's charter school movement has flourished in South L.A., which has a disproportionately large share of the county's charter schools and students. Of the 51 charter elementary schools operating in the county during the 2007–08 school year, 16 were in South L.A., the researchers noted, and these schools accounted for 23 percent of the county's charter elementary school enrollment.

Yet South L.A. Hispanic/Latino elementary school children were much less likely to attend charter schools than African Americans, despite representing a major portion of the area's population. Sixty percent of the area's charter elementary school children were African American, while approximately 37 percent were Hispanic/Latino.

Charter elementary schools in South L.A. are significantly outperforming their local traditional elementary school counterparts, with a weighted Academic Performance Index base average score of 736, compared with 673 for traditional schools. Still, API scores for all elementary schools in South L.A. are lower than for elementary schools throughout the county.

"The State of South L.A." can be found at [www.spa.ucla.edu/pdf/State of South LA - Final Report1.pdf](http://www.spa.ucla.edu/pdf/State%20of%20South%20LA%20-%20Final%20Report1.pdf) .

Source: UCLA

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