

## Key Findings

Most of San Mateo County’s children are faring as well as, or better than, the average child in California, as measured by their status on indicators of health, development, school achievement and family and community supports. In addition, for many indicators, children’s well-being in San Mateo County has improved in recent years. For example:

- More women than ever before are receiving prenatal care early in their pregnancies: In 2004, 89.8% of San Mateo County residents giving birth received prenatal care in their first trimester.
- Infant mortality rates have fallen by more than 15% from 1996-1998 to 2002-2004 (from 4.5 to 3.8 per 1,000).
- In the fall of 2006, approximately 3,000 children were without health insurance, down considerably from the estimated 17,000 uninsured prior to the establishment of the San Mateo County Children’s Health Initiative in 2003.

In other positive findings, 59% of youth surveyed in the county report that they feel safe at school, and more than 75% of fifth and seventh graders report close and supportive connections with the adults in their homes.

However, on most measures, substantial disparities in well-being exist across ethnic and racial groups, and Caucasian/white and Asian<sup>ii</sup> (not including Pacific Islander) children tend to fare better than other groups. Large income disparities also exist in the county, and even families with incomes well above the Federal Poverty Level often cannot make ends meet due to the high cost of living.

The data indicate several specific areas of concern for the county:

- The percentage of infants born low birthweight increased<sup>iii</sup> between 2001 and 2004, and African Americans continue to have the highest percentages of babies born low birthweight (14% versus 6.6% for all San Mateo County infants in 2004).
- In 2005, one-third of 2- to 11-year-olds had never seen a dentist, compared to 24% statewide.
- In 2004, one-quarter of fifth, seventh and ninth graders were overweight.
- Though the overall teen birth rate has fallen in the last decade, rates for Latinas and African Americans were eight to 10 times higher than for Caucasian/white and Asian teens in 2004.
- The percentage of public school students enrolled in the free or reduced price meal program increased from 24.2% in 2002 to 30.4% in 2006, and the percentage of families that could afford to purchase a median-price home dropped from 23% to 12% between 1995 and 2005.
- While San Mateo County reading scores have improved in recent years, only 23% of economically disadvantaged third graders scored at or above the 50th percentile on the California Achievement Test (CAT/6) for reading, compared to 61% of non-economically disadvantaged students in 2006.
- The county only had enough licensed child care spaces to serve 30% of children ages 0-13 with parents in the labor force in 2004, and care was so expensive that 26% of families in the county could not afford to enroll their children in a licensed child care center or preschool in 2005.

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ii. The definitions of racial/ethnic groups vary by data source. This report uses the terms “Caucasian/white,” “Hispanic/Latino” and “African American/Black” to reflect this variation in terminology.

iii. Throughout this report, terms such as “increased,” “decreased,” “rose,” and “fell” are used to indicate trends and change. No tests were conducted to determine if observed changes were statistically significant.

- In 2004-2006, 11th graders in San Mateo County were more likely than their counterparts in California to report use of alcohol, marijuana and cigarettes within the past month.
- Death rates for youth and young adults ages 15-24 increased from 44.3 to 54.7 per 100,000 from 1999-2001 to 2002-2004.

This report also reveals areas in which additional data and analyses would be useful. The data presented in this report primarily examine one issue at a time without exploring how different issues interact to affect children. For example, low-income households are likely to be located in the same neighborhoods that have high crime rates and low-performing schools. The children who are most vulnerable are those facing multiple risk factors, and future analyses could explore and track the progress of those very vulnerable children and youth. Also, more data on factors that promote children's development and resiliency would provide a more complete picture of children's well-being.

***This report does not prescribe specific actions but, instead, highlights critical issues that need additional attention.*** It is designed to promote collaboration among government agencies, community-based organizations, policymakers, business leaders and residents to address the most pressing concerns in San Mateo County. Only through concentrated and coordinated efforts can the county help all its children reach their full potential.

## Demographic Snapshot

In 2007, San Mateo County had a total population of approximately 733,000,<sup>1</sup> including 167,000 children and youth ages 0-17.<sup>2</sup> About 10,000 children are born to San Mateo County residents each year.<sup>3</sup> In 2007, 41% of all children and youth in the county were Caucasian/white, followed by Latinos/Hispanics (31%), Asians (19%), multiracial children (5%), African Americans (2%), Pacific Islanders (2%), and Native Americans (0.4%).<sup>4</sup> In the 2006-2007 school year, 23% of students in San Mateo County schools were English Learners, of whom about three-quarters were Spanish-speaking.<sup>5</sup>

### Local Action

Public and private organizations across the county are actively leading community initiatives that aim to reduce disparities and improve children's well-being. Examples of such initiatives include efforts to provide health insurance for all children, offer preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, increase child care affordability, increase children's preparedness for kindergarten, decrease childhood obesity, prevent youth violence, promote positive youth development, expand affordable housing, and redesign the child welfare system.

For more information, see [www.kidsdata.org/sanmateoreport](http://www.kidsdata.org/sanmateoreport).

<sup>1</sup> All endnotes for this report are available online at [www.kidsdata.org/sanmateoreport](http://www.kidsdata.org/sanmateoreport).