

Incomes and Poverty

Matthew Fienup
October 23, 2017

On average, Ventura County residents enjoy higher incomes than those of the United States or California. Forty percent of Ventura County households have incomes greater than 100,000 dollars, compared to 34 percent for the State and only 26 percent for the Nation. Both average and median household incomes in Ventura County are well above those of the United States and California:

Income and Income Distribution 2016						
	United States		California		Ventura County	
		%		%		%
Estimated Households by HH Income	118,860,065		12,944,178		268,091	
Income < \$10,000	7,963,784	6.7	699,927	5.4	8,735	3.3
Income \$10,000 - \$14,999	5,699,549	4.8	584,989	4.5	7,049	2.6
Income \$15,000 - \$19,999	5,615,371	4.7	526,006	4.1	9,563	3.6
Income \$20,000 - \$24,999	5,928,371	5.0	581,059	4.5	9,970	3.7
Income \$25,000 - \$29,999	5,501,898	4.6	495,728	3.8	9,741	3.6
Income \$30,000 - \$34,999	5,777,895	4.9	539,507	4.2	8,951	3.3
Income \$35,000 - \$39,999	5,338,202	4.5	498,105	3.8	8,795	3.3
Income \$40,000 - \$44,999	5,380,237	4.5	515,009	4.0	10,074	3.8
Income \$45,000 - \$49,999	4,734,622	4.0	457,955	3.5	7,957	3.0
Income \$50,000 - \$59,999	9,209,026	7.7	890,403	6.9	18,521	6.9
Income \$60,000 - \$74,999	11,850,363	10.0	1,219,707	9.4	26,709	10.0
Income \$75,000 - \$99,999	14,672,995	12.3	1,574,447	12.2	33,990	12.7
Income \$100,000 - \$124,999	10,312,781	8.7	1,228,401	9.5	33,740	12.6
Income \$125,000 - \$149,999	6,355,018	5.3	805,397	6.2	18,636	7.0
Income \$150,000 - \$199,999	6,924,913	5.8	1,019,268	7.9	25,183	9.4
Income \$200,000 +	7,595,040	6.4	1,308,270	10.1	30,477	11.4
Estimated Average Household Income	\$81,346		\$96,961		\$105,609	
Estimated Median Household Income	\$57,617		\$67,739		\$80,135	

Source: US Census Bureau, 2016 ACS 1-year Estimates

Ventura County's higher incomes are accompanied by lower rates of poverty than either the United States or California.

Poverty and Income, 2016			
	United States	California	Ventura County
Poverty			
People of All Ages in Poverty	14.0%	14.3%	9.5%
Median Household income	57,617	67,739	80,135
Per Capita Income	31,128	33,389	35,298

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census (2016 ACS 1-year estimates)

In addition, Ventura County’s poverty rate has declined more than that of either the United States or California. While the United States’ 2016 poverty rate remained 0.7 percentage points above its 2005 level, and California’s 2016 poverty rate remained 1.0 percentage points above its 2005 level, Ventura County’s rate was 0.4 below its 2005 level:

Poverty and Income									
	United States			California			Ventura County		
Education Attainment in Persons >25 Years	People of All Ages in Poverty	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	People of All Ages in Poverty	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income	People of All Ages in Poverty	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
2005	13.3%	46,242	25,035	13.3%	53,629	26,800	9.9%	66,859	29,634
2010	15.3%	52,250	26,059	15.8%	57,708	27,353	10.7%	71,864	31,135
2015	14.7%	55,775	29,979	15.3%	64,500	31,587	9.6%	80,032	34,226
2016	14.0%	57,617	31,128	14.3%	67,739	33,389	9.5%	80,135	35,298

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census (ACS 1-year estimates)

Whether using traditional measures or a cost of housing adjustment, Ventura County’s poverty rate is low. We do not believe that this should be interpreted to mean that Ventura County offers abundant economic opportunity that has lifted the poor out of poverty. Rather Ventura County is a very expensive place to be poor, and our belief is that many poor individuals and families have left the county for lower cost and more generous communities. Many of the working poor are actually residents of Los Angeles County who commute into Ventura County to work in the growing, low wage service sectors. The fact that Ventura County’s labor force is shrinking, at the same time that thousands of jobs are being created, provides evidence to support this hypothesis.

Growth rates in homeless populations also bare this out. According to an annual survey by the Ventura County Continuum of Care Alliance, the number of homeless people in Ventura County has declined by 35 percent over the past five years. By comparison, according to a survey by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, the number of homeless in Los Angeles County increased 30 percent in just the last two years. Surveys of homeless populations are notoriously difficult to conduct, so we take the actual raw numbers with a grain of salt; however, the opposing signs on each County’s homeless population growth rate is meaningful.

More evidence of the lack of upward economic opportunity in Ventura County comes from the Brookings Institution. According to Brookings’ *Metro Monitor*, of the 100 largest metropolitan areas in the United States, Oxnard/Ventura/Thousand Oaks ranked number 90 for economic growth since 2010—only 10 metro areas suffered slower economic growth. Thousand Oaks and the surrounding metro area ranked number 82 for economic inclusion, a measure of whether economic opportunity and prosperity are widely shared by residents living at various income levels within an area. Only 18 of the 100 largest metropolitan areas exhibited greater economic inequality than Ventura County.