

Child poverty in Santa Clara County, 2013

Key findings:

- In 2010, the child poverty rate for Santa Clara County was 13%. Of the more than 400,000 children residing in the county under the age of 18, almost 60,000 fell below the poverty line.
- The last decade has seen a significant increase in the concentration of children in low income areas. In 2010, 46% of poor children in Santa Clara County lived in areas where families earned two times the federal poverty level or less, compared to 21% in 2000.
- Pockets of child poverty are now more spread out in the county, as these pockets have extended from historically poor areas of the county like eastern San Jose and parts of Gilroy to other areas of the county.

Santa Clara County, with a median household income of over \$85,000 per year, is one of the wealthiest counties in California. More than 4 in 10 residents hold at least a bachelor's degree, and over half earn more than \$75,000 per year.¹ Despite the majority of residents earning high incomes, there are pockets of poverty in Santa Clara County.

The federal poverty threshold, also known as the federal poverty level (FPL), is adjusted for family size and inflation. In 2010, the poverty threshold for a family of four is an annual income of \$22,314.

Even with a high cost of living in the county, many residents earn far below \$44,628 or twice the poverty threshold for a family of four. Children may be particularly at risk for growing up in poverty, and its impact may last into adulthood.

The following brief describes the current state of child poverty in Santa Clara County and how it has changed over the last 20 years. The brief also describes the areas where low-income children are most likely to live in the county and how this has changed since 1990.

Why child poverty matters

Children who grow up in poverty may experience poor health and social and cognitive development.² These early-life experiences can have a profound effect on outcomes later in life. For example, research suggests that adverse experiences in childhood, such as the stress that comes from growing up in poverty, may increase the risk of chronic disease in adulthood.³ Such consequences are greatest for children who experience poverty at a young age and those who experience persistent and extreme poverty.⁴ Poverty rates are not the same across racial and ethnic groups. Nationally, poverty rates for African American and Latino children are three times those of White children.⁵ In 2011, this was also the case in Santa Clara County.

Growth in child poverty in Santa Clara County

Over the last twenty years, child poverty has fluctuated in Santa Clara County. While the number of children ages 0-17 living in poverty in the county declined from 1990 to 2000, this downward trend has reversed over the past decade. In recent years, Santa Clara County has experienced a steady increase in not only the total number of children in poverty, but also in the percentage of children living in poverty. The child poverty rate (100% FPL) dropped from 11% in 1990 to 9% in 2000, and then grew to 13% in 2010.

Child poverty in Santa Clara County is more than three times higher for children from some racial/and ethnic groups than others. Approximately 21% of Latino and 18% of African American children live in poverty, a higher percentage than White (6%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (7%) children.⁶ In 2010, of the more than 400,000 children residing in Santa Clara County under the age of 18, almost 60,000 (13%) fell below the poverty level (100% FPL). Among children from families who earned less than two times the federal poverty level (referred to as below 200% FPL, or \$44,628 for a family of four), the number and percentage of low income children in 2010 was more than twice as high (125,000, or 29% of all children in the county).

A greater share of children in 2010 lived in poverty than in either of the preceding decades.

Table 1: Percentage of children in poverty by poverty level and age, 1990-2010

		1990		2000		2010	
Poverty levels	FPL (federal poverty level) threshold	100% FPL	200% FPL	100% FPL	200% FPL	100% FPL	200% FPL
	FPL: Annual household income for a family of four	\$13,359	\$26,718	\$17,603	\$35,206	\$22,314	\$44,628
Children living in households earning below this level	Total, ages 0-5	13,547	26,647	11,580	29,623	20,255	44,983
	Percent, ages 0-17	10%	25%	8%	21%	14%	30%
	Total child population ages 0-5	130,066	130,066	139,830	139,830	148,537	148,537
	Total, ages 0-17	36,759	83,898	36,548	89,788	57,341	125,655
	Percent, ages 0-17	11%	24%	9%	22%	13%	29%
	Total child population ages 0-17	349,495	349,495	407,478	407,478	426,257	426,257

Notes: For 1990, 200% FPL data is only available for children ages 0-4 and 0-17. 100% and 200% FPL amounts in the table represent the federal poverty levels for a family of four. Additional poverty threshold information is available at: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld.index.html>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990, 2000 Summary Files and 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Concentration of child poverty in Santa Clara County

The number of children living in poverty is not evenly spread throughout the county, and the concentration of child poverty has changed in the last two decades. Areas with high poverty levels or concentrations of poverty often experience private sector disinvestment, higher crime rates, poor performing schools, and other features that put residents at risk for adverse health behaviors and health outcomes.⁷

In 1990, almost 14,000 children lived in high poverty neighborhoods (those with more than 22% of children in poverty).^A Almost 11,000 children lived in moderate poverty neighborhoods (with poverty rates between 11% and 22%) and 12,000 children lived in low poverty neighborhoods (less than 11% children in poverty).

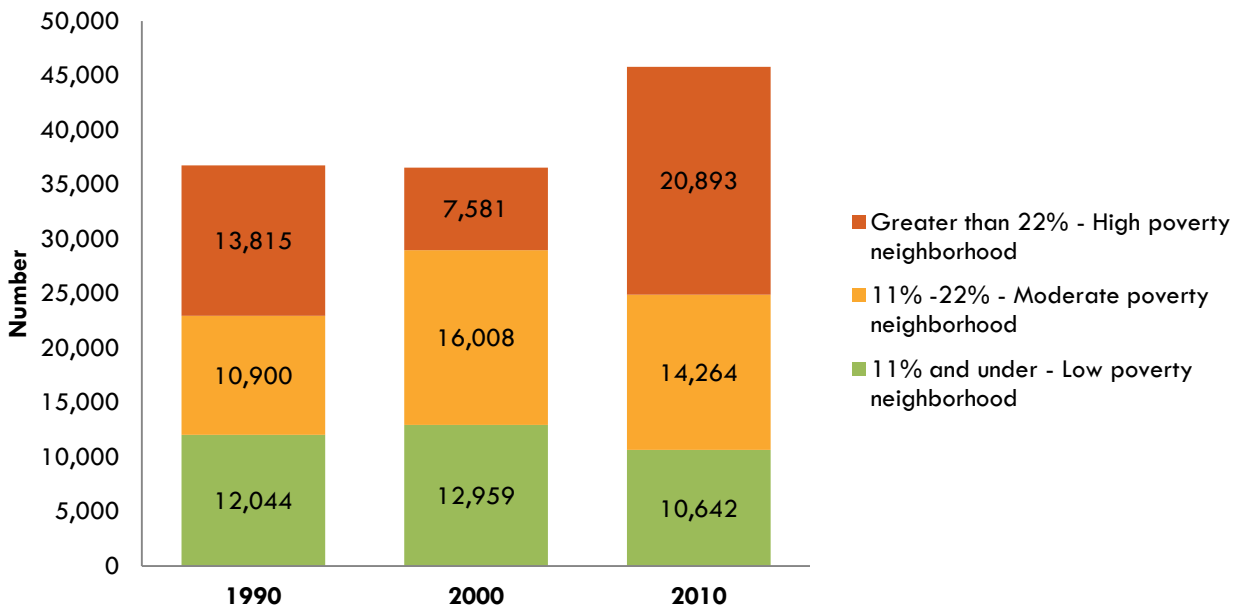
In order to assess the relative concentration of poverty in the county, we divided county census tracts into three categories: tracts that had less than the average rate of poverty (11%) of children living in poverty, tracts with more than average but less than twice the average poverty (11% to 22%) of children living in poverty, and tracts with greater than twice the average (22%) of children living in poverty. A poverty rate in excess of 20% is defined by the U.S. Census as a poverty zone and indicates a special area of concern.

In 2000, fewer children were living in high poverty neighborhoods (a decrease from 13,815 in 1990 to 7,781 in 2000). During this time period, children were more likely to live in moderate poverty neighborhoods (those with 11% to 22% of children in poverty) than in high poverty neighborhoods, suggesting that more families were earning higher incomes during this period and poverty was less concentrated than in the preceding decade.

From 2000 to 2010⁸, a period of time impacted by the economic recession, the number of children living in high poverty neighborhoods more than doubled, to approximately 21,000. The number of children living in moderate poverty neighborhoods decreased from 2000, as did the number living in low poverty neighborhoods. These changes indicate both the number and percentage of children living in high poverty or moderate poverty

neighborhoods has grown in the county in the last two decades.

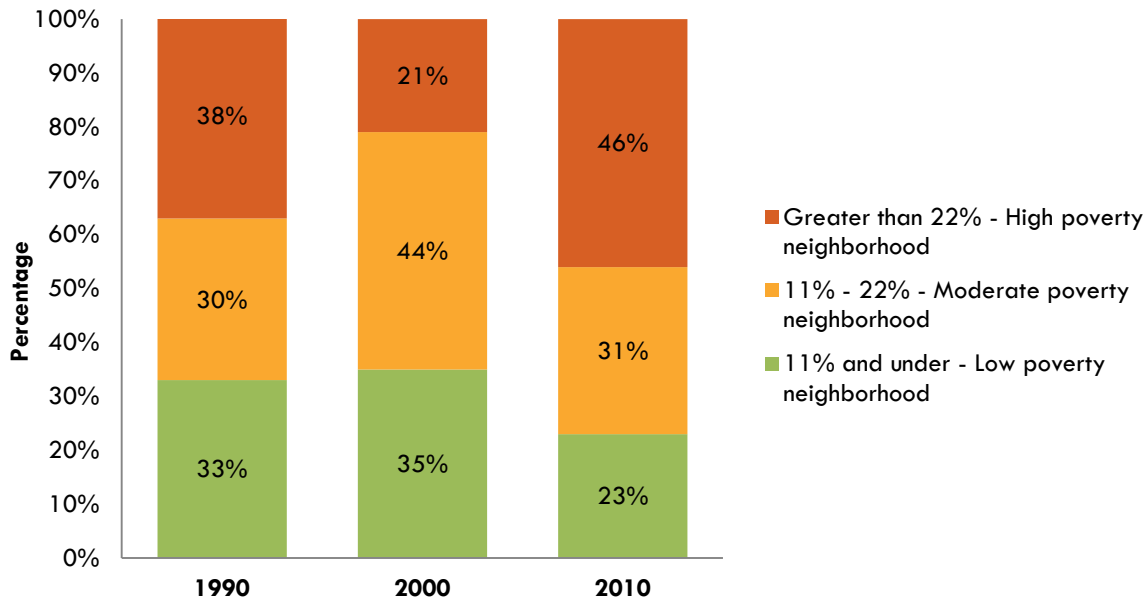
Figure 1: Number of children in poverty by neighborhood poverty level, 1990-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990, 2000 Summary Files and 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Children who are from low income households and who also live in high poverty neighborhoods may experience even more detrimental effects than if they lived elsewhere. People who reside in areas of concentrated poverty may experience limited private sector community investment, fewer employment and educational opportunities, and higher crime rates.⁸ The percentage of poor children living in high poverty neighborhoods (neighborhoods with greater than 22% of children living in poverty) decreased from 38% to 21% between 1990 and 2000. In 2010, this rate increased to 46%. The percentage of low income children living in moderate poverty neighborhoods increased from 30% to 44% between 1990 and 2000, and decreased to 31% in 2010.

Figure 2: Percentage of children in poverty by neighborhood poverty level, 1990-2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990, 2000 Summary Files and 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Where children in poverty live in Santa Clara County

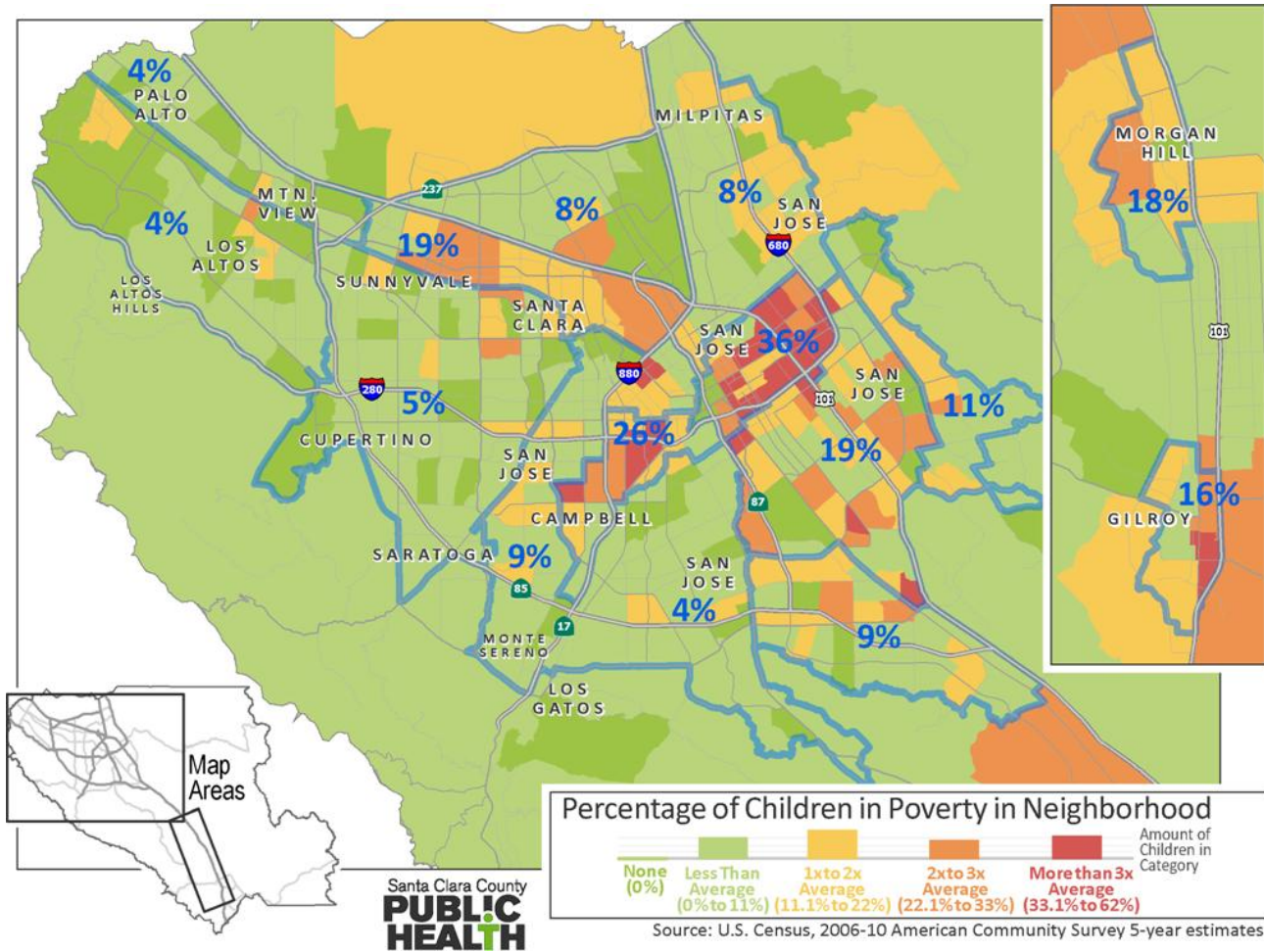
Children in households under the poverty level live throughout urban, suburban, and rural areas in Santa Clara County, but are more common in some parts of the county than in others.

The cost of housing is high in Santa Clara County. Residents at most income levels are challenged to find housing that is affordable, but this challenge is much greater for low-income households given severely limited resources. Certain regions in the county have more affordable housing opportunities and, consequently, the child poverty rate varies between regions.

Northwestern parts of the county have low child poverty rates (approximately 4%). This climbs to nearly 1 in 5 children (16%-18%) in the south and to over 1 in 3 children (36%) in the east of Santa Clara County.

These figures are overall rates for children in a region and do not capture the differences within these areas. There are neighborhoods within particular regions that have 40% or more children in poverty while other neighborhoods nearby have none.^{C D}

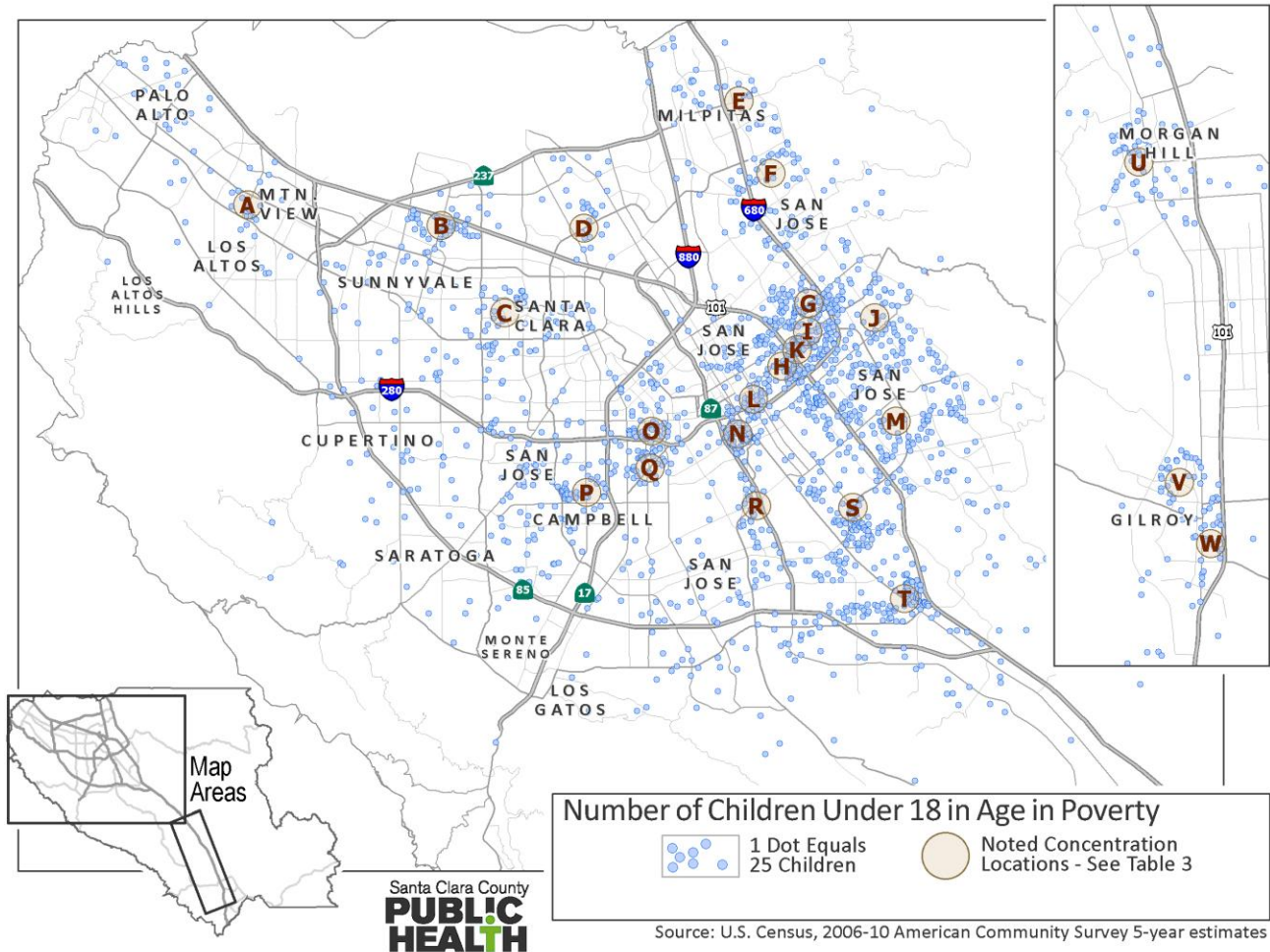
Map 1: Percentage of children in poverty by neighborhood



Areas with higher child poverty are found throughout the county and the majority of cities and regions of the county have areas of concern.^E There are a number of factors that play a major role in the location of affordable housing, and therefore the location of children in poverty within the county. Some of the notable ones include the availability of higher density housing, such as apartments and multi-family structures, decreased property values sometimes available near major street arterials, highways, expressways, and freeways, and historic segregation patterns.

Location of housing may contribute to health disparities for poor children. More affordable housing may be located near major roadways, and these locations may increase susceptibility to cardiovascular disease, respiratory illnesses such as asthma, and other illnesses. Residence near major arterials may also increase social isolation, as major roadways may create barriers within neighborhoods.⁹ Residential segregation may also limit access to high quality economic and educational opportunities, perpetuating racial/ethnic health disparities.¹⁰

Map 2: Number of children under 18 in poverty



In each of the high poverty regions within the county there are many smaller areas where child poverty is concentrated. In some cases, many high-poverty areas are clustered along major arterial roads and include high-density housing near commercial areas. These appear in a more linear pattern in a particular region, as seen in Map 2. In other cases, some regions have a large number of high-poverty housing tracts or neighborhoods, but these are scattered in no particular pattern. Still other areas have a smaller number of areas with children in poverty, which are dispersed. Some of the densest concentrations described north to south in terms of street names near or in them, are described in Table 2 (see corresponding letter on Map 2).^F

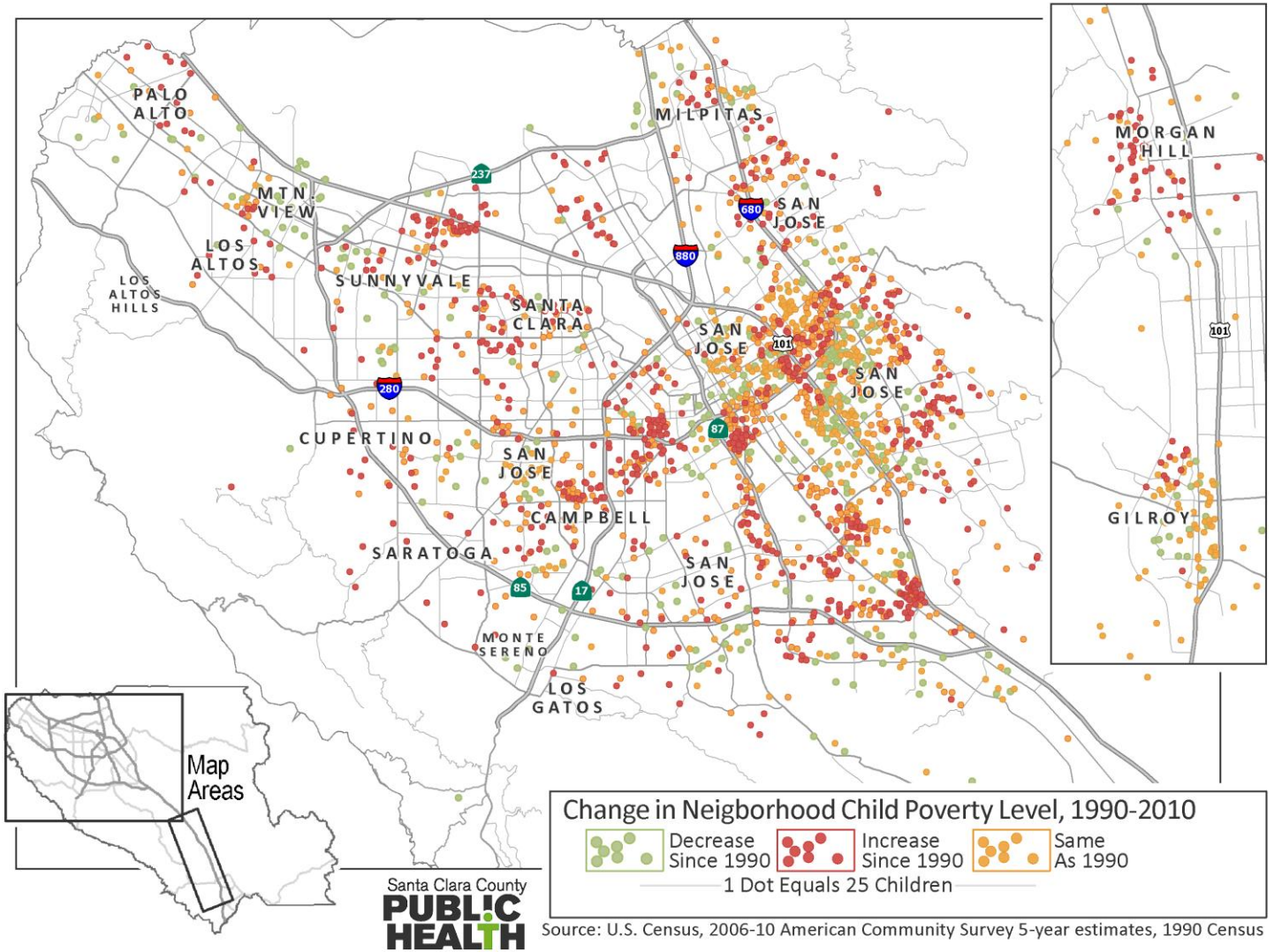
Table 2: Areas with high concentrations of child poverty

ID	Area	ID	Area	ID	Area	ID	Area
A	Rengstorff Ave. between El Camino Real and Middlefield Rd.	G	McKee Rd. and Maybury Rd. near King Rd. and Jackson Ave.	M	Quimby Rd. between Tully Ave. and Ruby Rd.	S	Senter Rd. and Monterey Hwy. near Tully Rd. and Hellyer Ave.
B	Fair Oaks Ave. between Hwy. 101 and Evelyn Ave.	H	Julian Ave. and Hwy. 280 near 24 th St. and Hwy. 101	N	Willow St. and Alma Ave. near Hwy. 87 and 1 st St.	T	Blossom Hill Rd. and Chynoweth Ave. near Monterey Hwy. and Hwy. 87
C	East of Lawrence Expwy. between Benton St. and Kifer Rd.	I	Alum Rock Ave. between Hwy. 101 and Capitol Ave.	O	Scott St. between Bascom Ave. and Meridian Ave.	U	West of Monterey Rd. between Edmundson Ave. and Llagas Rd.
D	Montague Expwy. near Highway 101 and Lafayette St.	J	White Rd. between Alum Rock Ave. and Quimby Rd.	P	Winchester Blvd. between Payne Ave. and Hamilton Ave.	V	Santa Teresa Blvd. and Wren Ave. north of 1 st St.
E	Calaveras Rd. near Highway 680	K	San Antonio St. between Highway 101 and Highway 680	Q	Southwest Expwy. between Highway 280 and Bascom Ave.	W	Monterey Rd and Highway 101 south of Leavesley Rd.
F	Cropley Ave. near Morrill Ave. and Piedmont Rd.	L	Reed St. between 1 st St. and 14 th St.	R	Highway 87 and Almaden Expwy. north of Capitol Expwy.		

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In the last two decades, there has been a shift in the specific areas of the county that have high numbers of children in poverty. The largest poverty areas in 1990 declined in size and share (but remain large) and other smaller areas have grown. Demographic patterns, residential development, as well as other factors may have caused many of these changes.

Map 3: Change in neighborhood poverty level, 1990-2010



The green dots in Map 3 show the locations where child poverty has decreased since 1990.^G The red dots are locations where child poverty has increased. The gold dots represent child poverty areas which have been stable (neither increased nor decreased) since 1990. There was a noticeable drop in the number of children in poverty in central and south eastern San Jose, eastern Mountain View and southern Gilroy. There were large increases near the freeway intersections of 280/880, Highway 101 near Blossom Hill Rd, Highway 101 near Fair Oaks Ave and in other areas of the county.

As an example, the following two regions described in Table 3 had the largest concentrations of children in poverty in 1990 and experienced decreases in the number and percentage of children in the area who were living in poverty by 2010.

Table 3: Changes in child poverty (1990-2010) in areas with some of the highest concentration in 1990

Areas ^H comprised of Census Tracts within:	Number of Children Below Poverty in 1990	Percentage of all Children in Poverty in the County in 1990	Child Poverty Rate in this Area in 1990	Number of Children Below Poverty in 2010	Percentage of all Children in Poverty in County in 2010	Child Poverty Rate in this Area in 2010
2 miles of 280/680/101 freeway interchange in San Jose	13,979	38%	24%	12,753	28%	24%
2 mile of 1st St. & Monterey Rd. in Gilroy	2,217	6%	18%	2,049	4%	13%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990, 2000 Summary Files and 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The following two regions described in Table 4 have had some of the most significant growth of children in poverty since 1990.

Table 4: Changes in child poverty (1990-2010) in areas with some of the highest concentration in 2010

Areas comprised of Census Tracts within:	Children Below Poverty in 1990	Percentage of all Children in County in Poverty in 1990	Child Poverty Rate in this Area in 1990	Children Below Poverty in 2010	Percentage of all Children in Poverty in County in 2010	Child Poverty Rate in this Area in 2010
1 1/4 miles of 880/280 freeway interchange in San Jose	1,615	4%	13%	3,263	7%	22%
1/2 mile of Monterey Rd. & Chynoweth Ave. in San Jose	1,137	3%	14%	2,189	5%	22%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990, 2000 Summary Files and 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Review of changes in poverty patterns suggest the development of affordable housing structures and the search for more affordable housing in denser neighborhoods near major freeways and expressways contributed to this shift. Decreases in the number of children in poverty in areas with a lot of single family detached housing suggests less living space available to poor children over time. Other areas, where there have been targeted interventions to increase the livability of high-density apartment communities, have seen poverty population decreases.

Conclusion

Despite a decade of declining child poverty from 1990 to 2000, the percentage of children living in poverty grew in Santa Clara County from 2000 to 2010. Currently, there are more poor children in the county than there were two decades ago.

Pockets of child poverty are now more spread throughout the county, as these pockets have extended from historically impoverished areas of the county like eastern San Jose and parts of Gilroy to other areas of the county. This may make it harder to meet the needs of poor children and their families, as well as to locate services close to where they and their families live. Additional resources and planning may be needed to determine how to best support these county residents.

Notes

^A The U.S. Census subdivides the county into census tracts and provides statistical measures of population at this level. In order to understand regional and local variations in population, census tracts are generally small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county. Each tract typically has between 1,500 and 8,000 people, with an optimal size of 4,000. For purposes of this report, we used census tracts as our area of analysis, also referred to as “neighborhoods” throughout the report. Due to changes in Census sampling methods, the Census now reports 5 year average measures of poverty at this level, unlike the single time period reported in 1990 and 2000. At the time of this report, the most recent period of data available is 2006 through 2010. While the overall rate of children in poverty was 11% in 2006-2010 for Santa Clara County, some areas (as measured using this tract subdivision) have rates of child poverty in excess of 60%, while others have zero.

^B Poverty data available at census tract level in five year estimates for 2010 (used 2006-10 data).

^C Regions have been subjectively determined, with the objective of maximizing distinctions in child poverty rates.

^D Census tracts with child poverty rates of 0% exist within 1 mile of tracts with rates in excess of 40%.

^E Nine out of fifteen cities and towns in Santa Clara County have at least one census tract, where the population in poverty exceeds 20%.

^F Concentrations are provided for descriptive purposes only and are based upon qualitative review of population patterns. Over 75% of all children in poverty live in census tracts that are located within 1 mile of these locations.

^G Representative dots are the generalized location of children in poverty within the census tract. Each dot represents 25 children in poverty, located randomly within the census tract, but not located in areas where there is no population present.

^H Area distances vary with the objective of capturing measurable and significant child poverty areas.

References

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³ Kuh, D., & Y. Ben-Shlomo (2004). *A Life-Course Approach to Chronic Disease Epidemiology*, 2nd Edition. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

⁴ Ratcliffe, C and SM McKernan (2010). Childhood Poverty Persistence: Facts and Consequences. The Urban Institute. Brief 14.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau (2010). Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010, Report P60, n. 238.

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⁸ Kneebone, E. et al (2011). The Re-Emergence of Concentrated Poverty: Metropolitan Trends in the 2000s. Brookings Institution.

⁹ Krieger, J., & D.L. Higgins (2002). Housing and Health: Time Again for Public Health Action. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92(5).

¹⁰ Williams, D.R., & C. Collins (2001). Racial residential segregation: A fundamental cause of racial disparities in health. *Public Health Reports*, 116(5).