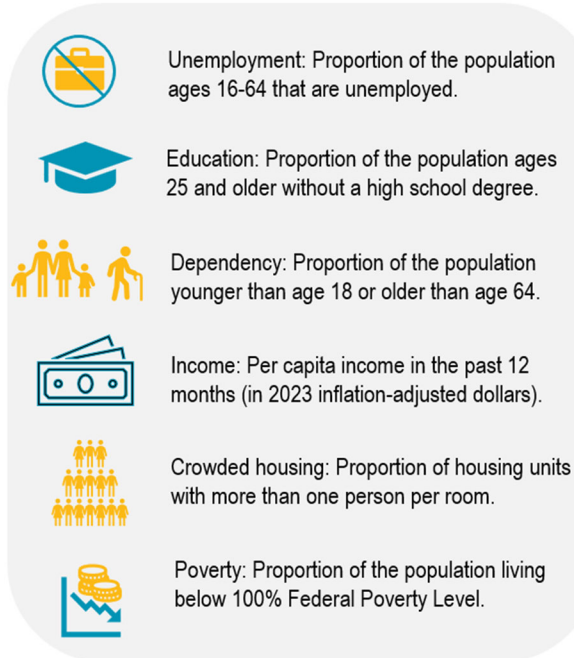# ECONOMIC HARDSHIP INDEX

Estimated* Economic Hardship Index by Subregional Area, San Diego County, 2023

Figure 1: Components of EHI

Unemployment: Proportion of the population ages 16-64 that are unemployed.

Education: Proportion of the population ages 25 and older without a high school degree.

Dependency: Proportion of the population younger than age 18 or older than age 64.

Income: Per capita income in the past 12 months (in 2023 inflation-adjusted dollars).

Crowded housing: Proportion of housing units with more than one person per room.

Poverty: Proportion of the population living below 100% Federal Poverty Level.

Economic Hardship Index (EHI): Index of economic conditions based on crowded housing, dependency, education, income, poverty, and unemployment, with a higher value indicating worse economic conditions.[1]

The estimated EHI compares economic conditions between subregional areas in San Diego County. The six indicators include: unemployment, dependency, educational attainment, per capita income, crowded housing, and poverty (see *Figure 1*). Data were obtained from the US Census Bureau's 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. The six component variables were standardized with equal weight. The EHI is the normalized sum of the six standardized component variables.[2,3] A higher value of EHI indicates worse economic conditions. The estimated EHI values for the subregional areas were calculated based on aggregating census tract data.

The estimated EHI by subregional area shows the variation in levels of economic hardship (see *Figure 2*) and allows identification of communities with greater economic hardship.

Table 1: Subregional Areas with the Highest Estimated* Economic Hardship Index, San Diego County, 2023

Subregional Area (SRA)	Region	Economic Hardship Index	Life Expectancy
Chula Vista	South	100.0	81.0
National City	South	98.0	80.1
South Bay	South	84.0	79.1
El Cajon	East	82.1	79.9
Mountain Empire^	East	79.8	N/A
Southeastern San Diego	Central	78.6	78.2
Mid-City	Central	70.8	79.9
Vista	North Coastal	66.9	80.8
Lemon Grove	East	62.5	81.1
Fallbrook	North Inland	61.2	82.0
Escondido	North Inland	58.5	80.2
Spring Valley	East	57.5	79.3
Laguna-Pine Valley^	East	56.2	N/A
Anza-Borrego Springs^	North Inland	52.1	N/A
San Marcos	North Inland	50.0	83.1

In 2023, **Chula Vista SRA** (South Region) had the **highest economic hardship index** compared to all other SRAs in San Diego County.

In 2023, **the 3 subregional areas** with the **highest economic hardship** were in **South Region** in San Diego County.

In 2023, **7 out of 10 subregional areas§** with the highest economic hardship also had the lowest life expectancies** in San Diego County.

§Among subregional areas (SRA) that had data availability for economic hardship index as well as life expectancy.

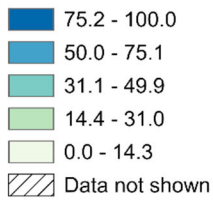^Life Expectancy data not available, censored due to variance in population size.

Figure 2: Estimated* Economic Hardship Index by Subregional Area, San Diego County, 2023

Estimated* Economic Hardship Index by Subregional Area, San Diego County, 2023

Economic Hardship Index
- 75.2 - 100.0
- 50.0 - 75.1
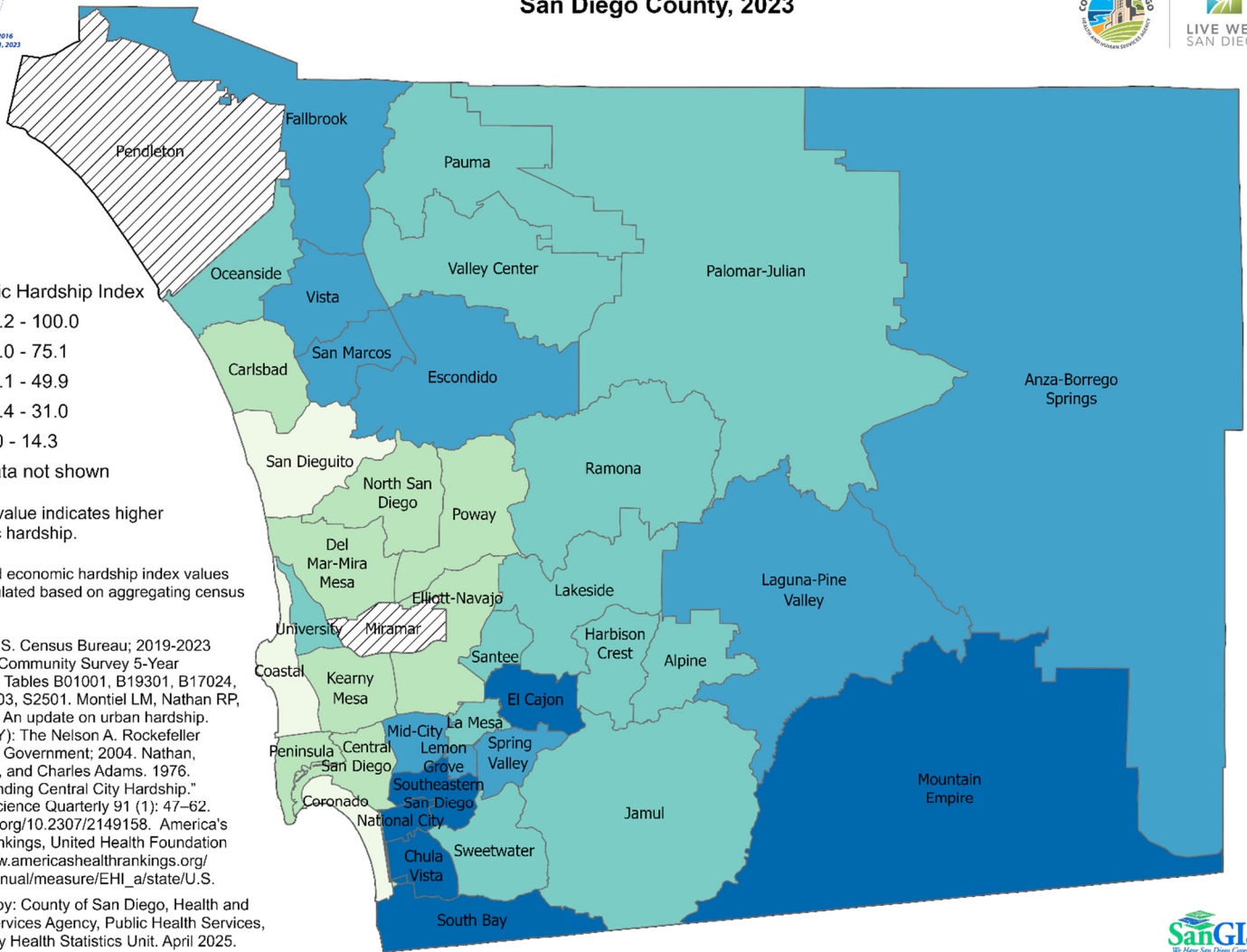- 31.1 - 49.9
- 14.4 - 31.0
- 0.0 - 14.3
- Data not shown

A higher value indicates higher economic hardship.

*Estimated economic hardship index values were calculated based on aggregating census tract data.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables B01001, B19301, B17024, DP02, DP03, S2501. Montiel LM, Nathan RP, Wright DJ. An update on urban hardship. Albany (NY): The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government; 2004. Nathan, Richard P., and Charles Adams. 1976. "Understanding Central City Hardship." Political Science Quarterly 91 (1): 47–62. https://doi.org/10.2307/2149158. America's Health Rankings, United Health Foundation https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/EHI_a/state/U.S.

Prepared by: County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Services, Community Health Statistics Unit. April 2025. Contact PHS.CHSU.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov. https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/hhsa/programs/phs/community_health_statistics/.

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*Estimated economic hardship index values were calculated based on aggregating census tract data.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2019-2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables B01001, B19301, B17024, DP02, DP03, S2501. Life Expectancy: California Department of Public Health, Center for Health Statistics, Office of Health Information and Research, Vital Records Business Intelligence System (VRBIS). California Department of Finance. Demographic Research Unit. Report P-3: Population Projections, California, 2020-2070 (Baseline 2023 Population Projections; Vintage 2024 Release). Sacramento: California. September 2024. 2023 Esri Updated Demographics Complete Database. Starting with 2023, life expectancy utilizes California Department of Finance and Esri population estimates. 2023 vintage should not be trended back to previous years.
Prepared by County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Services, Community Health Statistics Unit. April 2025.

References
1. America's Health Rankings analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, United Health Foundation, AmericasHealthRankings.org, accessed 2023.
2. Montiel LM, Nathan RP, Wright DJ. An update on urban hardship. Albany (NY): The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government; 2004.
3. Nathan, Richard P., and Charles Adams. 1976. "Understanding Central City Hardship." Political Science Quarterly 91 (1): 47–62. https://doi.org/10.2307/2149158.