



## Report Analyses County's Racial, Economic Disparity

By Jason Walsh | January 18, 2012

A report released today by the Marin Community Foundation casts a harsh light upon the effects income disparity has upon the residents of Marin.

The report, titled A Portrait of Marin, analyzed "gaps" in Marin quality of life based on geography, race and gender. The report was developed by the American Human Development Project of the Social Science Research Council. It ranks the well-being of Marin residents on a scale of 0 to 10 using the American Human Development Index--an index employed internationally since the 1980s to assess the well-being of developing countries.

The HD Index considers health based on longevity, education enrollment/attainment, and standard of living based on income. The highest HD Index ranking for communities in Marin is Ross, which is 90 percent white, with a composite index of 9.70 (out of 10); the Canal area of San Rafael, which is 76 percent Latino, scores the lowest, at 3.18—even below West Virginia, the lowest-ranking state overall. Using this scale to measure the comparative well-being of racial groups in Marin, the highest HD Index is for Asian Americans (8.88) and whites (8.44), with a wide gap between those groups and African Americans (5.72) and Latinos (5.17).

Among its findings:

- \* While 88 percent of white children are enrolled in preschool, only 47 percent of Latino children are.
- \* High school drop out rates for African Americans is 21 percent—five times that of whites; the Latino drop-out rate of 18.3 percent is four times higher than whites.
- \* Ross residents are expected to live 13 years longer than residents in the Hamilton neighborhood of Novato. Ross's longevity is a full decade longer than the national average.
- \* The median personal earnings of Ross residents are more than double those of the typical American worker.
- \* The typical worker in the Canal neighborhood of San Rafael earns just over \$21,000 a year—about the same as an American worker in the late 1960s.
- \* Students in schools whose students have greater needs tend to get fewer public dollars. And while low-income children typically benefit most from enrollment in preschool, they are least likely to be enrolled in one.
- \* The typical female worker living in Marin earns nearly \$14,000 less per year than the typical male worker—a larger earnings gap than for the country as a whole (\$11,179).
- \* The distribution of income in Marin is exceedingly lopsided; the top fifth of Marin taxpayers take home about 71 percent of the county's total income. The bottom fifth earns 1.3 percent of the total income.
- \* African Americans in Marin have a shorter life expectancy than any racial or ethnic group (79.5 years), compared to 90.9 years for Asian Americans, 83.5 years for whites, and 88.2 years for Latinos.

Marin Community Foundation president Thomas Peters says that, while it's been known for quite a while that Marin, on average, scores highly compared to national and statewide standards, this report shows that many Marinites still struggle to "live long and productive lives."

"The persistence of disparities is not simply a case of cause and effect," says Peters. "Factors like education, health, and income reinforce each other and create, for some, a cycle of success, and for others, a cycle of ongoing struggle and inability to thrive." Peters notes that the report found a strong overlap in findings by geographic area and by demographic groups--indicating high levels of residential segregation by race and ethnicity. "This only makes the cycle of poverty that much more difficult to overcome," he says.

Marin Community Foundation officials say they'll use the report to galvanize action among elected officials, nonprofit leaders and other concerned citizens.