

# HEALTH MATTERS

Riverside University Health System — Public Health  
Epidemiology & Program Evaluation



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## Life Expectancy at Birth in Riverside County

### INTRODUCTION

Life expectancy is often viewed as a benchmark of the overall health of a population and a critical measure for evaluating disparities among groups. When viewed across time, it provides a useful tool for gauging the effects of broad social and public health policies. There is great value in viewing these trends at both the county and sub-county level to inform and influence local policies that impact health and wellness. This brief presents life expectancy data at the city and county level for the years 2013-2015.

### KEY FINDINGS

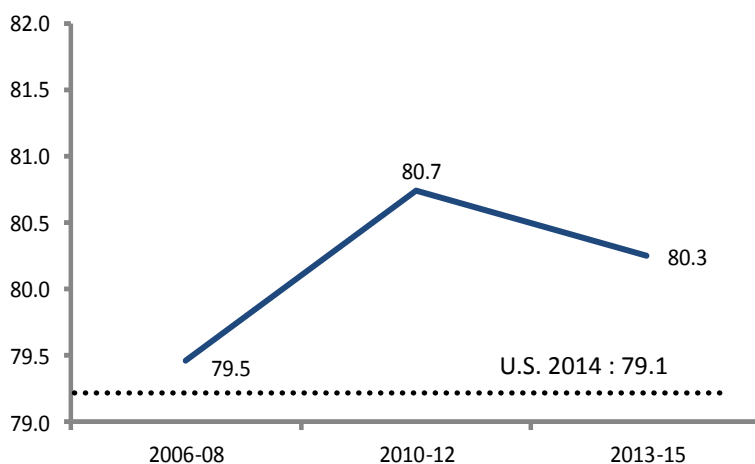
- ▶ Life expectancy in Riverside County has risen from 79.5 years to 80.3 years since 2006.
- ▶ Residents of most cities (22/28, 79%) have a life expectancy higher than the current U.S. estimate of 78.6 years.
- ▶ The average life expectancy of residents living in cities across Riverside County ranges from a high of 85.1 to a low of 74.3 years.

### COUNTY TRENDS

Life expectancy data compiled at three different times over the past decade illustrates a slight increase in life expectancy for Riverside County residents. For each value in Figure 1, three years of data was combined to give a more stable estimate of life expectancy at birth. Riverside County residents born between 2013 and 2015 can expect to live nearly one year longer than residents born between 2006 and 2008. It is unclear what caused the slight drop in life expectancy from 2010-12. The most recent estimate (2016) for life expectancy in the U.S. is 78.6 years indicating that Riverside County residents are living longer than the national average.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1. Life Expectancy at Birth

Riverside County, 2006 - 2015



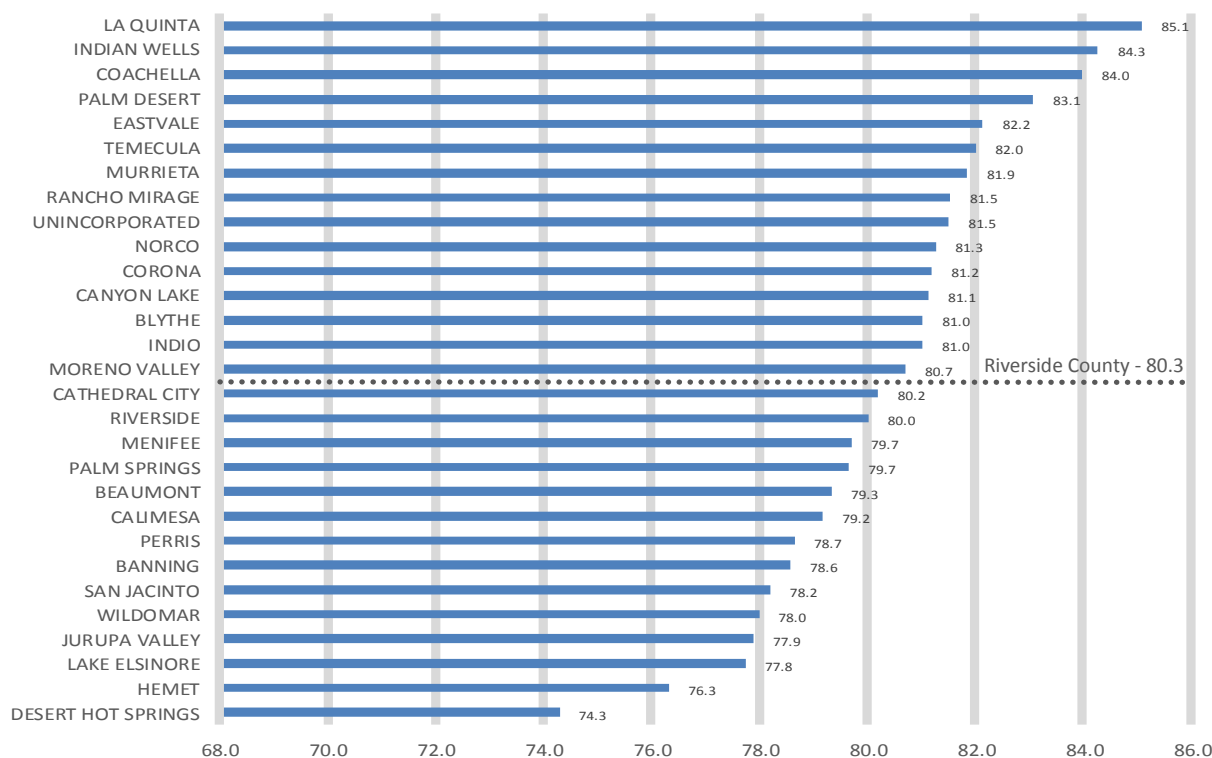
While national estimates show a rise of five years in life expectancy for U.S. residents between 1980 and 2014, evidence suggests that the increase in life expectancy may be coming to an end as the effects of obesity-related illnesses threaten a sharp rise in the number of premature deaths from diabetes, stroke and heart disease.<sup>3,4</sup> The national life expectancy dropped in 2015 for the first time since 1993 in part due to the dramatic rise in deaths from opioid abuse.<sup>3,4</sup> It is unclear whether a downward trend will develop or a plateau will occur.

## GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATIONS

Current research suggests there are dramatic disparities in life expectancy from county to county across the U.S. with nearly a 20 year difference between the highest and lowest performers.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, there are dramatic differences in life expectancy at the sub-county level as seen by examining city level data from the years 2013-2015 for Riverside County. Mortality and population data was combined over the three-year period to increase stability of estimates at the city level. Census tract data aggregated to the city level is depicted in Figure 2, providing an average life expectancy for incorporated areas across Riverside County. Census tracts outside of city boundaries were grouped as “Unincorporated” with a calculated life expectancy of 81.5 years. The countywide life expectancy over the three year period is displayed for

reference. Fourteen cities have a life expectancy that exceeds the county average of 80.3 years and 14 cities fall below the county value. When compared to the current national life expectancy of 78.6 years, 22 cities (79%) have a higher life expectancy for their residents. The disparity between the highest and lowest cities is nearly 10 years with La Quinta residents reaching a life expectancy of 85.1 years and Desert Hot Springs residents reaching 74.3 years. The full dataset and interactive map of life expectancy values by city is now available online at [www.shaperivco.org](http://www.shaperivco.org).

**Figure 2. Life Expectancy (in years) by City: Riverside County, 2013-2015**



Source: Vital Records Business Intelligence System, and U.S. Census Bureau 2010-2015

**Suggested Citation: Meconis, K. Life Expectancy at Birth in Riverside County. Riverside University Health System — Public Health, Epidemiology & Program Evaluation.**

References:

1. Vital Records Business Intelligence System (VRBIS), 2006-2015
2. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Population Estimates, 2010 and 2014.
3. Tinker, B. US life expectancy drops for second year in a row. Published on [CNN](http://www.cnn.com) on Dec 21, 2017.
4. Scutti, S. Life Expectancy differs by 20 years between some US Counties. Published on [CNN](http://www.cnn.com) on May 9, 2017.