

Longevity for San Joaquin Valley Elders: Individual and Neighborhood Characteristics in Stanislaus County

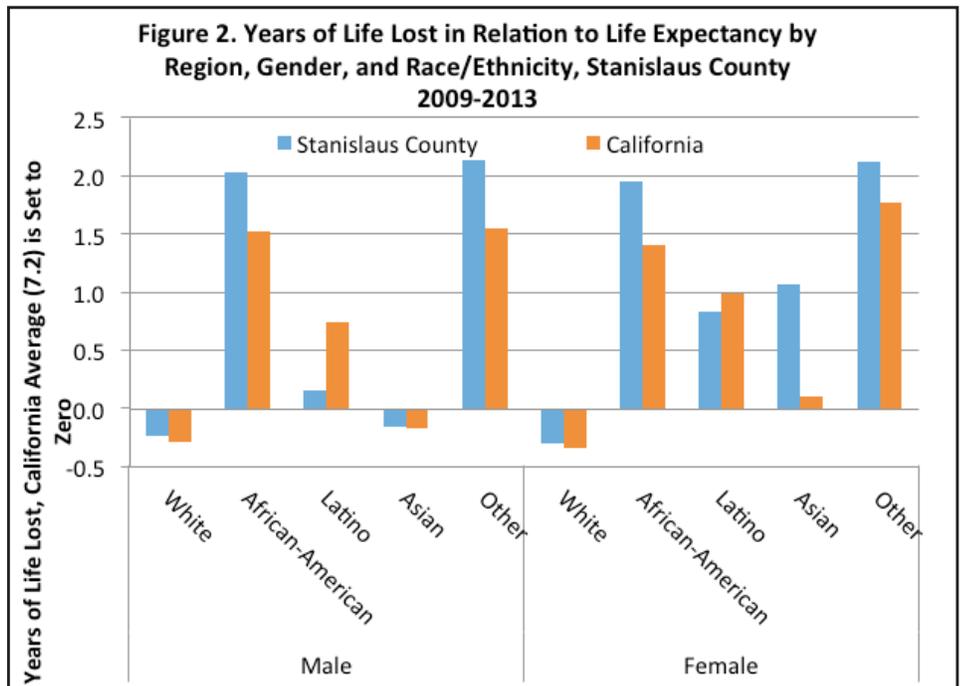
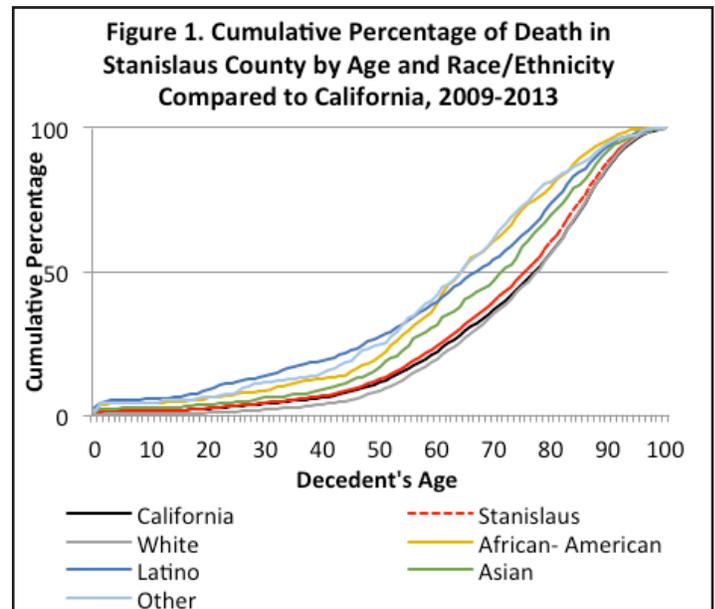
Background:

For seniors in the San Joaquin Valley, both demographic and socio-economic characteristics are linked to longevity. Individual and neighborhood characteristics combine to produce disparities in health that accumulate over a lifetime. Race/ethnicity serves as a proxy measure of both individual and social determinants of health such as access to healthcare, fresh produce, and environmental air quality. This report examines premature mortality prior to age 65 as well as years of life lost after 65 within Stanislaus County compared to the state.

Summary of Findings:

Figure 1 illustrates all deaths (n=18,467) in Stanislaus County between 2009 and 2013. Compared to California, Stanislaus County experiences greater premature loss of life. In Stanislaus County, 30% of these deaths were prior to age 65 as opposed to the 28% for the state. There are also notable racial/ethnic differences in premature mortality within Stanislaus County. While 25% (below state average) of White and 38% of Asian deaths occurred prior to the age of 65, African Americans and Latinos experience higher than average premature mortality at 49%, and 46%, respectively. Forty-nine percent of Native American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, biracial, and self-identified other racial/ethnic groups combined also experience premature death.

Figure 2 illustrates years of life lost in Stanislaus County's senior population in relation to California's race- and gender-specific life expectancy. This graph provides insight into which racial/ethnic groups, on average, are not living as long as expected. African-



Americans and those in the “other” category are disproportionately affected, and the disparity worsens within Stanislaus County. In contrast, Whites and Asian males are living longer than expected throughout the state. The major causes of death post 65 years of age are cardiovascular, respiratory, nervous system, cancer, and diabetes contributing to 40%, 12%, 9%, 6% and 4% of all deaths, respectively.

Current Elder Health Activities in Stanislaus County:

Stanislaus County Health Services Agency (HSA)'s mission is to

- Promote wellness and healthy lifestyles,
- Prevent illness and injury,
- Provide quality care and treatment, and
- Preserve access to healthcare for the underserved through leadership, continuous improvement, and teamwork. This applies to individuals of all ages.

HSA provides primary and specialty health care services to the community via its network of federally qualified health center look-alike outpatient clinics. HSA's Public Health Division works to promote healthy lifestyles that help extend the length and enhance the quality of life for all county residents. Individual and group support for nutrition, physical activity and smoking cessation are offered. HSA educates local decision makers on policy and infrastructural changes that make it easier for individuals to be healthy. HSA also works with many organizations, both public and private, to promote health and well-being for elders. The following is a brief summary of community programs and initiatives focused on elder health.

Meeting Basic Needs: Food and nutritional services for elders are offered by the Howard Training Center, Meals-on-Wheels, Salvation Army, Catholic Charities and the Gospel Mission. The Area Agency on Aging helps seniors with housing, utilities, financial and legal service assistance. United Way's 211 call line links residents to resources specific to their needs. The Senior Community Service Employment Program provides training for low income senior citizens. Advancing

Vibrant Communities assists seniors with minor home repairs, yard care, and needed household items.

Active Lifestyles: Stanislaus County has multiple programs that keep elders active and involved with their communities, including the Healthy Aging Association's Young at Heart and Modesto Parks and Recreation's Senior Center Programs which provide exercise and enrichment activities. Some health plans support physical activity through Silver Sneakers, A Matter of Balance and Ninety after Fifty.

Special Support for Elders and Caregivers: The Multipurpose Senior Services Program offers case management services. The Senior Center Without Walls and Program to Encourage Active and Rewarding Lives for Seniors (PEARLS) bolster social support. Project Hope provides peer and professional counseling. Several organizations offer adult day care programs. Visually Impaired Persons Support (VIPS) assists with adaptive technology, independent life and job skills training, and support groups. Community Service Agency (CSA)'s In Home Supportive Services helps seniors stay in their homes while Adult Protective Services investigates reports of elder abuse. Area Agency on Aging maintains a directory of services at <http://www.agingservices.info/pdf/caregiver-booklet.pdf>.

Access to health insurance and health care: The Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program works with seniors to identify and apply for appropriate insurance. Community Hospice assists with end of life care and bereavement counseling.

Future Elder Health Activities in Stanislaus County:

Stanislaus County departments are currently working on coordinating operations to create a “one-stop shop” for elders to access services and health-supporting activities. Health facilities, including Health Services Agency and Golden Valley Health Centers, are researching grant opportunities to enhance patient-centered and team-based care to improve well-being and prevent unneeded hospitalizations.

This report was produced by the California State University, Fresno, Central Valley Health Policy Institute in partnership with the San Joaquin Valley Public Health Consortium.
Stanislaus County Public Health Division is a member of the Consortium.



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