

Santa Ana, which is only 2.3 miles away from Tustin, and the target of our outreach efforts, was designated in 1999, as an Empowerment Zone by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). An Empowerment Zone, as defined by HUD, is an area in severe and immediate need of intervention in the areas of health care, housing, childcare, youth development, transportation, workforce development and economic development. In 2002, it was reported that murders, robberies, and motor vehicle thefts in Santa Ana are among the nations worst¹. In fact, more recently a Los Angeles Times article reported that Santa Ana was ranked number one in the nation for “urban hardship” (even higher than Los Angeles) and is “the nation’s toughest place to survive.” Hardship is calculated by taking into account factors including unemployment, low education, income levels, and density. Over 75% of people residing in Santa Ana are Hispanic, which is three times higher than the County average². According to the Coalition of Orange County Community Clinics, almost half of Santa’s population is under 25 years of age and more than one-third of the County’s Medi-Cal recipients live in Santa Ana. The California Department of Health Services identifies **32 census tracts** in the city of Santa Ana as “hot spots” for teen pregnancy. “Hot spots” are defined as a census tract with teen birth rates that are statistically significantly higher than the average California rate.

Santa Ana is the most populous city in Orange County with just under 350,000 residents, with the majority (77.7%) of the population being Hispanic. A majority of residents are limited English proficient and predominantly working at minimum-wage positions that are subject to layoffs. Over 98% of ACCESS students in Santa Ana participate in the free or reduced lunch program at school, which is an indicator of living at or below the poverty level. Families in this geographic area often do not have relevant information about good nutrition, and most youth attend school hungry on a regular basis.

Santa Ana fourth graders rank last in the state in reading and math on Stanford Achievement tests. Santa Ana Unified School District, the largest school referral source to Santa Ana ACCESS school sites, traditionally ranks highest in the county in school dropout rates³.

¹ <http://santaana.areaconnect.com/crime1.htm>

² <http://www.ci.santa-ana.ca.us/facts/default.htm>

³ Orange County Department of Education