
Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Angela Rushen
(213) 236-1809/ rushen@scag.ca.gov
Steve Lambert, The 20/20 Network
(909) 841-7527/ steve@the2020network.com



3.2 million residents in 6-county SCAG region live in poverty; rate continues to grow despite recovery

Los Angeles, CA – Poverty levels in the six-county Southern California Association of Governments region have jumped 69 percent since 1990, with one in four children now living in poverty, according to research to be presented tomorrow (Thursday, Dec. 5) at SCAG’s 4th Annual Economic Recovery & Job Creation Summit.

The numbers, from U.S. Census Bureau data, show 3.2 million people in the SCAG region living in poverty in 2012, up from 1.9 million in 1990. That 69 percent increase is nearly three times the population growth rate (26 percent) during that period. Overall, the share of SCAG-region residents living in poverty is now 18 percent, led by Imperial County (23 percent) and San Bernardino County (20 percent).

SCAG officials warn that the situation might even be worse when factoring in the region’s relatively high cost of living. Poverty status is determined at the federal level by the U.S. Census Bureau by comparing households’ average income against a minimum threshold of basic living needs. It does not factor in variations in cost of living.

“This is a problem that is not going away on its own. Fixing it is an urgent priority requiring collaboration unlike anything we’ve ever seen at the local, regional and state level,” said Hasan Ikhata, SCAG Executive Director.

SCAG’s Economic Summit, at the Omni Los Angeles Hotel, will address this and other challenges facing Southern California as the region attempts to recover from the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Regulatory reform and increasing educational opportunities for residents in the region are major agenda items.

According to the Census data, poverty rates for working residents without a high school diploma are about 26 percent in the SCAG region – 60 percent higher than that for those with a diploma. In addition, the SCAG region lags significantly behind the Bay Area in terms of percentage of residents with a bachelor’s or higher degree (43 percent for the Bay Area, 29 percent for the SCAG region).

Fixing that will require coordinated economic development planning that engages businesses, policy makers and educators – all three of which will be well represented at Thursday’s Summit. In addition, detailed findings from the poverty research will be released and available to the media.

The Summit will also feature a keynote speech by Darrell Steinberg, President pro Tempore of the California State Senate, as well as region-wide and county-by-county economic forecasts.

For more information on the Summit, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.

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SUMMIT DETAILS:

When: December 5, 2013, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

WHERE: Omni Los Angeles Hotel, 2521 S. Olive St., Los Angeles

PHOTO, VIDEO and INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE.

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.