

Huge Well-being Study Finds Five Disparate Californias

By Dan Walters | May 17, 2011

Metaphysically, if not physically, California has often been depicted as two distinct states -- even sparking periodic efforts to divide it officially.

For many years, it was Northern California vs. Southern California. More recently, demographers, geographers and political pundits have seen it as coastal California vs. inland California.

To **Sarah Burd-Sharps** and **Kristen Lewis**, however, there are five distinct Californias that are defined more by quality of life than geography. They are co-directors of the **American Human Development Project**, which analyzes states (California is the third) on the basis of how well their residents are doing in income, health and education, using data from a variety of sources.

"A Portrait of California" is the latest version, following similar analyses of Mississippi and Louisiana. The 179-page report covers virtually every corner of the state, applying a 10-point scale of personal well-being.

Its five distinct clusters range from "**Silicon Valley Shangri-La**," which scores an almost perfect 9.35 on the three indices for just 1 percent of the state's population, to the "**Forgotten Five Percent**" of residents in inner city Los Angeles and small farm towns at 2.59.

In between are the "**Metro-Coastal Enclave**" (18 percent of Californians) at 7.92, "**Main Street California**" (38 percent) at 5.91 and "**Struggling California**" (38 percent) at 4.17.

Asian Californians sit atop the population in most measures while Latinos and African Americans are near the bottom, although the authors note the remarkable longevity of Latinos.

"The analysis reveals that some Californians are enjoying the highest levels of well-being and access to opportunity in the nation today, while others are experiencing levels of well-being that characterized the nation decades ago," the report declares.

The report will be unveiled today at noon in Sacramento at the California State Association of Counties conference center at 11th Street and K Street Mall. The event is open to the public.