

State Legislative District Indexes Methodology

November 2025

To promote understanding of state legislative district outcomes and racial disparities from multiple indicators, we calculate two summary measures of indicators: issue indexes of Democracy or Housing indicators for example, and a composite index of all indicators. Both issue indexes and the composite index are calculated separately for outcomes and racial disparity. We have calculated separate indexes and rankings for Senate and Assembly Districts. Note: these summary measures of indicators are distinct from the Index of Disparity measure we use to determine racial disparity for a single indicator.

Legislative District Issue Index Methodology:

We create issue indexes for five of the seven issues on RACE COUNTS (Economic Opportunity, Education, Healthy Built Environment, Housing, and Safety & Justice). We include all indicators within an issue for that issue index. Due to lack of data availability, we do not calculate indexes for Democracy or Health Care Access. Each of these issues has only one indicator. See the full list of issues and indicators at the end of this document.

First, we calculate disparity and outcome z-scores¹ for each indicator and cap them at |3.5| to lessen the impact of outliers. A positive z-score indicates a higher-than-average value, while a negative z-score indicates a lower-than-average value. For example, 86.4% of Assembly District 5 (AD5) residents perceive their neighborhood as safe. AD 5's perception of safety outcome z-score is -0.78, reflecting that AD 5 residents are slightly less likely to perceive their neighborhood as safe than the California Assembly District average (87.6%).

For education data, there is one extra step because this data is collected at school district not legislative district level. To address that mismatch, we have created a method to aggregate school district data to legislative district level. School districts are assigned to legislative districts using crosswalks created by the [California Department of Education](#). A school district can be assigned to more than one state legislative district, and a legislative district can have more than one assigned school district. See an example for education data below.

Assembly District 52: High School Graduation Rate

	Enrollment #	Graduates	Graduation Rate
School District 1	350	312	89.1%
School District 2	1,200	1,140	95.0%
AD 52	1,550	1,452	93.7%

Then we calculate the average disparity and outcome z-scores across indicators within each issue at legislative district level. After this, we suppress the z-scores for counties with few

¹ A z-score is a standardized number that tells you how far away a given data point is from the mean [or average]. [Source](#)

indicator disparity and outcome values within each issue. Each issue has its own indicator threshold as shown in the table below.

Issue	Minimum Indicator Threshold
Economic Opportunity	3
Education	4
Healthy Built Environment	2
Housing	5
Safety & Justice	2

Whether the minimum or maximum total rate is the best outcome will impact outcome z-scores. We account for that in our indicator outcome z-score calculations. The way we do that is by multiplying indicator outcome z-scores by -1 where the minimum total rate is the best outcome, so that they are consistent with the indicators where the maximum total rate is the best outcome. The adjusted indicator outcome z-scores are then used in all index calculations.

We then cap the remaining z-scores at |2| to lessen the impact of issue outliers. These capped z-scores are the issue area disparity and outcome index scores. These index scores are ranked and comprise the issue disparity and outcome ranks you see on RACE COUNTS. See an issue area index example below.

Assembly District 5: Safety & Justice Racial Disparity Index

Indicator	Indicator Score	Safety & Justice Index (Avg)
Incarceration	1.11	.20
Officer-Initiated Stops	-0.78	
Use of Force	0.28	

Legislative District Composite Index Methodology:

We calculate one composite index across all indicators in all issues on RACE COUNTS. We do this by taking the average of outcome and disparity issue indexes. See an example of a Composite Outcome Index below.

Senate District 7: Composite Outcome Index

Issue	Issue Index Score	Composite Index (Avg)
Democracy*	1.42	.72
Economic Opportunity	.75	
Education	.08	
Health Care Access*	1.91	
Healthy Built Environment	-.70	
Housing	1.19	
Safety & Justice	.39	

*Democracy and Health Care Access have only one indicator each due to data availability. For those issue areas, the Issue Index Score is the indicator score.

We suppress the z-scores for legislative districts with fewer than 4 issue index disparity and outcome scores, and we cap the remaining z-scores at |1| to lessen the impact of outliers. These capped z-scores are the composite index disparity and outcome scores. We rank these composite disparity and outcome scores, which become the legislative district disparity and outcome ranks you see on RACE COUNTS.

Legislative District Indicator Methodology

Democracy

Census Participation

Economic Opportunity

Connected Youth

Cost-of-Living-Adjusted Poverty

Employment

Employment as Officials and Managers

Internet Access

Living Wage

Per Capita Income

Education

3rd Grade English Proficiency

3rd Grade Math Proficiency

Chronic Absenteeism

Early Childhood Education

High School Graduation

Suspensions

Teacher & Staff Diversity

Health Care Access

Health Insurance

Healthy Built Environment

Drinking Water Contaminants

Lack of Greenspace

Proximity to Hazards

Toxic Releases from Facilities

Housing

Denied Mortgages

Evictions

Foreclosure Rate

Homeownership

Housing Cost-Burdened Renters

Housing Quality

Overcrowded Housing

Subprime Mortgages

Safety & Justice

Incarceration

Officer-Initiated Stops

Use of Force