

# County Indexes Methodology

## November 2025

To promote understanding of county 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. Note: these summary measures of indicators are distinct from the Index of Disparity measure we use to determine racial disparity for a single indicator.

### County Issue Index Methodology:

We create issue indexes for all seven issues on RACE COUNTS (Crime & Justice, Democracy, Economic Opportunity, Education, Health Care Access, Healthy Built Environment, and Housing). We include all indicators within an issue for that issue index. See the list of all issues and indicators at the end of this document. First, we calculate disparity and outcome z-scores<sup>1</sup> 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 Alameda County residents perceive their neighborhood as safe. Alameda County's perception of safety outcome z-score is -0.78, reflecting that Alameda residents are slightly less likely to perceive their neighborhood as safe than the California county average (87.6%).

Then we calculate the average disparity and outcome z-scores across indicators within each issue at county level. After this, we suppress the z-scores for counties with few 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
Democracy	3
Economic Opportunity	3
Education	4
Health Care Access	3
Healthy Built Environment	4
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

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

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.

#### Alameda County: Safety & Justice Racial Disparity Index

Indicator	Indicator Score	Safety & Justice Index (Avg)
Arrests for Status Offenses	0.61	
Use of Force	0.28	
Incarceration	1.11	
Officer-Initiated Stops	.93	
Perception of Safety	-0.78	0.43

#### County 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 example of the Alameda County Composite Outcome Index below.

#### Alameda County: Composite Outcome Index

Issue	Issue Index Score	Composite Index (Avg)
Democracy	0.47	
Economic Opportunity	1.00	
Education	0.77	
Health Care Access	0.43	
Healthy Built Environment	-0.16	
Housing	0.28	
Safety & Justice	0.30	0.44

We suppress the z-scores for counties 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 county disparity and outcome ranks you see on RACE COUNTS.

## County/State Indicator Methodology

### Democracy

Census Participation  
Diversity of Elected Officials  
Diversity of Candidates  
Midterm Voting  
Presidential Voting  
Registered Voters

### 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

Got Help (Mental or Behavioral Health)  
Health Insurance  
Life Expectancy

Low Birthweight

Preventable Hospitalizations

Usual Source of Care

### Healthy Built Environment

Asthma  
Drinking Water Contaminants  
Food Access  
Lack of Greenspace  
Proximity to Hazards  
Toxic Releases from Facilities

### Housing

Denied Mortgages  
Evictions  
Foreclosure Rate  
Homelessness (Student)  
Homeownership  
Housing Cost-Burdened Renters  
Housing Cost-Burdened Owners  
Housing Quality  
Overcrowded Housing  
Subprime Mortgages

### Safety & Justice

Arrests for Status Offenses  
Incarceration  
Officer-Initiated Stops  
Perception of Safety  
Use of Force