

August 2021

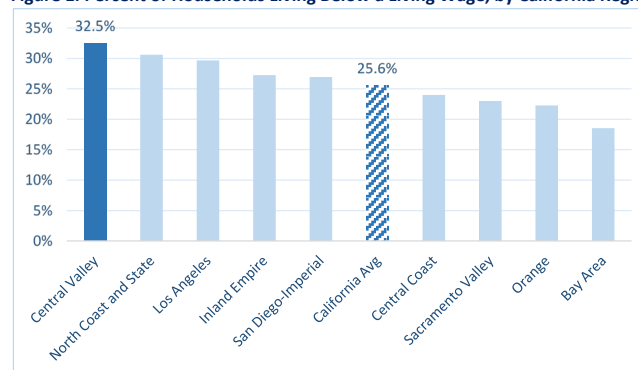
## FACT SHEET: How Fresno's Economic Inequalities Exacerbated the COVID-19 Pandemic

Fresno County and the Central Valley suffer from high social and economic inequalities. Central Valley households headed into the COVID-19 pandemic with the state's greatest combination of below-subsistence income, jobs at high risk of COVID-19 exposure, low rates of immigrant naturalization, and lack of access to the safety net. Fresno County households closely mirrored these inequalities, resulting in a disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Fresno residents' health and economic well-being.

### Household Inequalities

- **Living Below a "Living Wage."** Nearly one in three (32.5%) Central Valley households survive on less than a "living wage"—the amount needed to avoid "consistent and severe housing and food insecurity" (Nadeau 2018, 2). This ranks last among California's ten regions (see figure 1). Fresno's rate (32.2%) was seventh-to-last among all California counties.<sup>1</sup>
- **Large and Low-Wage Households in the Region.** The Central Valley's median household income (\$60,000) and worker earnings (\$30,000) were second-to-last in the state. These figures are particularly disadvantaged considering the valley had the state's largest household size (3.0 persons) and children per household (0.9) (analysis not shown).
- **Fresno County's Large and Low-Wage Households.** Fresno's median household income (\$58,000), worker earnings (\$30,000), average household size (2.9), and children per household (0.8) were similar to the those of the Central Valley as whole.
- **High Rent Burden.** One fourth (23.4%) of all Fresno County households, and half (50.7%) of renter households, were rent burdened—spending over 30% of household income on

Figure 1. Percent of Households Living Below a Living Wage, by California Region



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019 data

rent. This rate was sixth-highest in California in 2019 (see figure 2). Local areas with the highest rent burden had the highest eviction rates.<sup>2</sup>

- **High Utility Costs.** High utility costs are partially responsible for many Central Valley households living below a living wage. Despite low regional incomes, Central Valley renters' median annual utility costs (\$2,720) were second-highest in the state.<sup>3</sup> Fresno County renter households paid similar costs (\$2,700); moreover, Fresno City relief fund applicants' average internet arrears (\$71) were similar to electricity (\$62) and gas arrears (\$72) (City of Fresno 2021).
- **High Poverty.** Fresno County's **household poverty** rate (19.3%) was higher than the valley (16.0%), and **ranked third in California** in 2019.

<sup>1</sup> We applied the MIT (2020) living wage calculator to ACS data from 41 California counties (and areas of combined counties) with over 150,000 persons.

<sup>2</sup> See Faith in the Valley (2019).

<sup>3</sup> This measure combined median water costs, and median gas/electricity, for those households who paid either costs.

- **Pandemic Economic Downturn.** Half of Fresno City households had pandemic era income reduction. Latino (57%), Black (55%) and Asian (55%) households lost income more often than white (42%) households (Almeida et al. 2020).

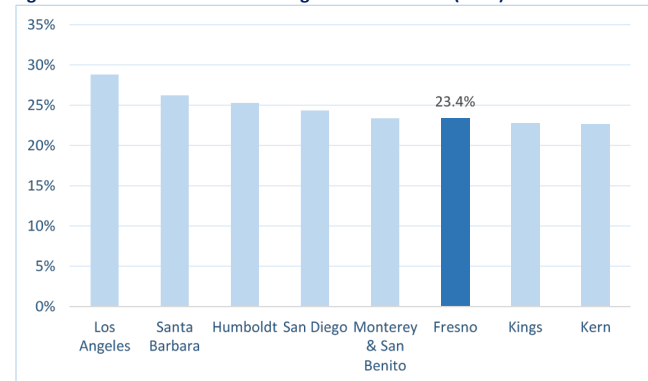
## Worker Inequalities

- **High COVID-19 Risk at Work.** Over one in four (26.8%) Central Valley workers worked in jobs with the highest risk of COVID-19 spread.<sup>4</sup> This was the **highest** rate in the state. In Fresno County, the rate was 22.3%.
- **Disadvantages among High-Risk Workers.** In 2014-2018, Central Valley workers in COVID-19 high-risk industries were disproportionately immigrant (45.2% vs. 25.6%), non-citizen (31.5% v. 13.3%), lived in larger households (3.9 vs. 2.1 persons), and had a poverty rate nearly twice as high (18.1% vs. 10.6%) (Padilla et al. 2021). In 2019, they earned much less than other workers (\$23,000 vs. \$32,000).
- **Fresno High-Risk Workers.** Fresno high-risk workers had even lower earnings (\$20,000 vs. \$32,000) and were less likely to have health coverage (81.0% vs. 89.5%) than other workers. This contributed to greater hardship and a 27.5% increase in deaths—fifth in the state.<sup>5</sup>

## Lack of a Safety Net

- **Immigrant Naturalization.** The naturalization rate among Central Valley immigrants (45.6%) was second-to-last among the state's ten regions. Fresno County's rate (44.2%) was even lower. Many were undocumented, and—as the only group federally prohibited from receiving federal aid—had no access to stimulus checks or unemployment relief during the pandemic.
- **High unemployment among Black, Latina and immigrant women.** During the peak of the pandemic economic downturn, job loss rates for California's Black (25.4%), Latina (28.9%)

Figure 2. California Counties with Highest Rent Burden (2019)



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019

women were among the highest for any groups (Flores and Padilla 2020). Job loss rates were highest for non-citizen immigrant women (36.3%)—many of whom were undocumented and had no access to the safety net.

- **Unclaimed Relief.** Even residents who qualified for aid often failed to claim aid. The valley lost an estimated \$951m from unclaimed federal stimulus checks, second in the state only to Los Angeles' \$1.55bn loss (Augustine et al. 2021).

## References

- Almeida, Paul, Edward Flores, Ana Padilla, Venise Curry and Rodrigo Alariste-Diaz. 2020. Fresno Speaks 2020: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Registered Voters and their Positions on Major Issues. Merced, CA: UC Merced Community and Labor Center.
- Augustine, Elsa, Charles Davis, Aparna Ramesh. 2021. The Stimulus Gap: 2.2 Million Californians Could Miss \$5.7 Billion in Federal Stimulus Payments. Berkeley, CA: California Policy Lab.
- City of Fresno. 2021. ERAP Update. May 10.
- Flores, Edward and Ana Padilla. 2020. Persisting Joblessness among Non-Citizens during COVID-19. Policy Report. Merced, CA: UC Merced Community and Labor Center.
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- Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 2020. Living Wage Calculator. Accessed on March 15, 2020 at <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>
- Nadeau, Carey Anne. 2018. Living Wage Calculator. User's Guide/ Technical Notes: 2018 Update. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Padilla, Ana, Elsa Macias, Edward Flores, and Ellen Widdess. 2021. "California COVID-19 Workplace Outreach Project." Presentation to Central Valley Partner Organizations. February 17.
- UC Merced Community and Labor Center. Forthcoming. Fact Sheet: Hot Spot—COVID-19 Pandemic-Related Deaths in the Central Valley.

## Mission Statement

The UC Merced Community and Labor Center conducts research and education on issues of community, labor and employment, in the San Joaquin Valley and beyond.

<sup>4</sup> The California Labor Workforce & Development Agency identified agriculture, food processing, grocery, restaurant/food service,

janitorial/hospitality, warehousing, and manufacturing at highest risk of COVID-19 spread.

<sup>5</sup> See UC Merced Community and Labor Center (forthcoming).

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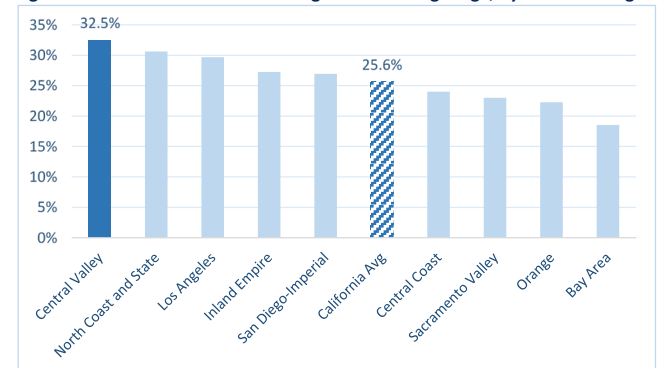
## FACT SHEET: How Kern's Economic Inequalities Exacerbated the COVID-19 Pandemic

Kern County and the Central Valley suffer from high social and economic inequalities. Central Valley households headed into the COVID-19 pandemic with a combination of below-subsistence income, jobs at high risk of COVID-19 exposure, low rates of immigrant naturalization, and lack of access to the safety net. Kern County households closely mirrored these inequalities—including high rates of rent burden and poverty—resulting in a disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Kern residents' health and economic well-being.

### Household Inequalities

- **Living Below a "Living Wage."** Nearly one in three (32.5%) Central Valley households survive on less than a "living wage"—the amount needed to avoid "consistent and severe housing and food insecurity" (Nadeau 2018, 2). This ranks last among California's ten regions (see figure 1). Kern's rate (36.1%) was fourth-to-last among all counties in the state.<sup>1</sup>
- **Large and Low-Wage Households in the Region.** The Central Valley's median household income (\$60,000) and worker earnings (\$30,000) were second-to-last in the state. These figures are particularly disadvantaged considering the valley had the state's largest mean household size (3.0 persons) and children per household (0.9) (analysis not shown).
- **Kern County's Large and Low-Wage Households.** Kern's median household income (\$53,800), worker earnings (\$25,000), average household size (2.9), and children per household (0.9) were similar to the those of the Central Valley as whole.
- **High Rent Burden.** Less than one fourth (22.6%) of all Kern County households, and nearly half (45.0%) of renter households were rent

Figure 1. Percent of Households Living Below a Living Wage, by California Region



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019 data

burdened—spending over 30% of household income on rent. This rate was eighth-highest in California in 2019 (see figure 2).

- **High Utility Costs.** High utility costs are partially responsible for a large number of the region's households living below a living wage. Despite low regional incomes, Central Valley renters' median annual utility costs (\$2,720) were second-highest in the state.<sup>2</sup> Kern County renter's median annual utility costs (\$2,300) and costs for high-rent burdened households (\$2,280) were **second highest in the region**.
- **High Poverty.** Kern County's **household poverty** rate (16.5%) was higher than the valley (16.0%), and **ranked ninth in California** in 2019.

<sup>1</sup> We applied the MIT (2020) living wage calculator to ACS data from 41 California counties (and areas of combined counties) with over 150,000 persons.

<sup>2</sup> This measure combined median water costs, and median gas/electricity, for those households who paid either costs.

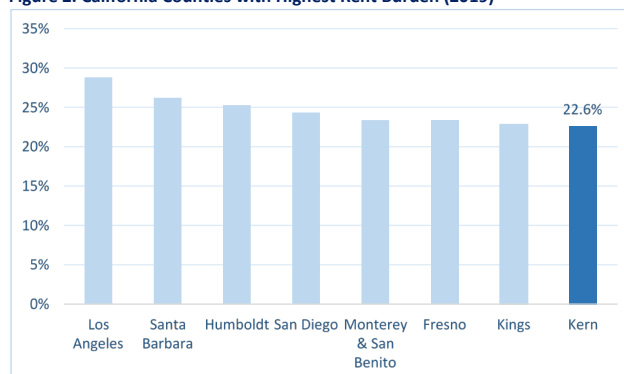
## Worker Inequalities

- **High COVID-19 Risk at Work.** Over one in four (26.8%) Central Valley workers worked in jobs with the highest risk of COVID-19 spread.<sup>3</sup> This was the **highest** rate in the state. In Kern County, the rate (27.7%) was higher than that of Central Valley workers.
- **Disadvantages among High-Risk Workers.** In 2014-2018, Central Valley workers in COVID-19 high-risk industries were disproportionately immigrant (45.2% vs. 25.6%), non-citizen (31.5% v. 13.3%), lived in larger households (3.9 vs. 2.1 persons), and had a poverty rate nearly twice as high (18.1% vs. 10.6%) (Padilla et al. 2021). In 2019, they earned much less than other workers (\$23,000 vs. \$32,000).
- **High-Risk Workers.** Kern high-risk workers had even lower earnings (\$20,000 vs. \$30,000) and were less likely to have health coverage (85.4% vs. 89.5%) than other workers. This contributed to greater hardship and a 21.5% increase in deaths—higher than the state (18.5%).<sup>4</sup>

## Lack of a Safety Net

- **Immigrant Naturalization.** The naturalization rate among Central Valley immigrants (45.6%) was second-to-last among the state's ten regions. Kern County's rate (38.7%) was much lower. Many were undocumented, and—as the only group federally prohibited from receiving federal aid—had no access to stimulus checks or unemployment relief during the pandemic.
- **High unemployment among Black, Latina and immigrant women.** During the peak of the pandemic economic downturn, job loss rates for California's Black (25.4%) and Latina (28.9%) women were among the highest for any groups (Flores and Padilla 2020). Job loss rates were highest for non-citizen immigrant women

Figure 2. California Counties with Highest Rent Burden (2019)



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019

(36.3%)—many of whom were undocumented and had no access to the safety net.

- **Unclaimed Relief.** Even residents who qualified for aid often failed to claim aid. The valley lost an estimated \$951m from unclaimed federal stimulus checks, second in the state only to Los Angeles' \$1.55bn loss (Augustine et al. 2021).

## References

- Augustine, Elsa, Charles Davis, Aparna Ramesh. 2021. The Stimulus Gap: 2.2 Million Californians Could Miss \$5.7 Billion in Federal Stimulus Payments. Berkeley, CA: California Policy Lab.
- IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 2020. Living Wage Calculator. Accessed on March 15, 2020 at <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>
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- Padilla, Ana, Elsa Macias, Edward Flores, and Ellen Widess. 2021. "California COVID-19 Workplace Outreach Project." Presentation to Central Valley Partner Organizations. February 17.
- UC Merced Community and Labor Center. Forthcoming. Fact Sheet: Hot Spot—COVID-19 Pandemic-Related Deaths in the Central Valley.

## Mission Statement

The UC Merced Community and Labor Center conducts research and education on issues of community, labor and employment, in the San Joaquin Valley and beyond.

<sup>3</sup> The California Labor Workforce & Development Agency has identified agriculture, food processing, grocery, restaurant/food service,

janitorial/hospitality, warehousing, and manufacturing at highest risk of COVID-19 spread.

<sup>4</sup> See UC Merced Community and Labor Center (forthcoming).

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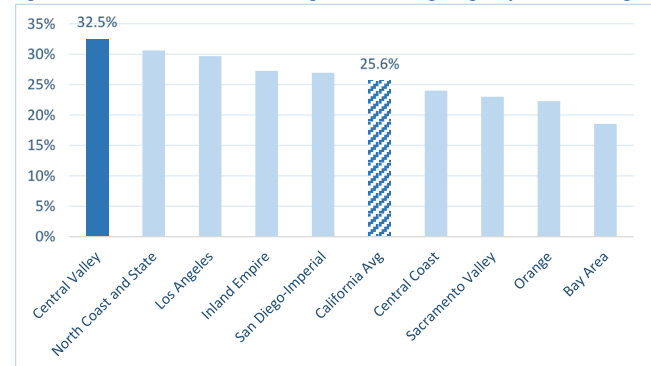
## FACT SHEET: How San Joaquin's Economic Inequalities Exacerbated the COVID-19 Pandemic

San Joaquin County and the Central Valley suffer from high social and economic inequalities. Central Valley households headed into the COVID-19 pandemic with a combination of jobs at high risk of COVID-19 exposure and lack of access to the safety net. San Joaquin households mirrored these inequalities, resulting in a disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on San Joaquin residents' health and economic well-being.

### Household Inequalities

- **Living Below a "Living Wage."** Nearly one in three (32.5%) Central Valley households survive on less than a "living wage"—the amount needed to avoid "consistent and severe housing and food insecurity" (Nadeau 2018, 2). This ranks last among California's ten regions (see figure 1). San Joaquin's rate (27.5%) was higher than the state average (25.6%).<sup>1</sup>
- **Large and Low-Wage Households in the Region.** The Central Valley's median household income (\$60,000) and worker earnings (\$30,000) were second-to-last in the state. These figures are particularly disadvantaged considering the valley had the state's largest household size (3.0 persons) and children per household (0.9) (analysis not shown).
- **San Joaquin County's Large and Low-Wage Households.** San Joaquin's median household income (\$70,000), worker earnings (\$32,000), average household size (3.1), and children per household (0.9) were similar to the those of the Central Valley as whole.

Figure 1. Percent of Households Living Below a Living Wage, by California Region



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019 data

- **High Rent Burden.** One fifth (20.8%) of all San Joaquin County households, and half (49.6%) of renter households, were rent burdened—spending over 30% of household income on rent.
- **High Utility Costs.** High utility costs are partially responsible for a large number of the region's households living below a living wage. Despite low regional incomes, Central Valley renters' median annual utility costs (\$2,720) were second-highest in the state.<sup>2</sup> San Joaquin County renter households (\$3,200) and high rent-burdened households (\$3,380) paid even higher costs.

<sup>1</sup> We applied the MIT (2020) living wage calculator to ACS data from 41 California counties (and areas of combined counties) with over 150,000 persons.

<sup>2</sup> This measure combined median water costs, and median gas/electricity, for those households who paid either costs.



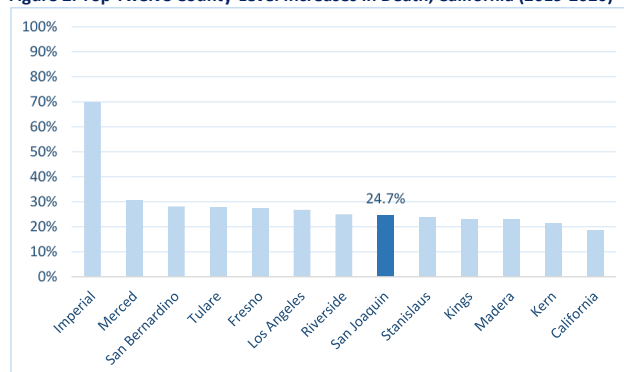
## Worker Inequalities

- **High COVID-19 Risk at Work.** Over one in four (26.8%) Central Valley workers worked in jobs with the highest risk of COVID-19 spread.<sup>3</sup> This was the **highest** rate in the state. San Joaquin County's rate (26.7%) was **tenth-highest** in the state.
- **Disadvantages among High-Risk Workers.** In 2014-2018, Central Valley workers in COVID-19 high-risk industries were disproportionately immigrant (45.2% vs. 25.6%), non-citizen (31.5% v. 13.3%), lived in larger households (3.9 vs. 2.1 persons), and had a poverty rate nearly twice as high (18.1% vs. 10.6%) (Padilla et al. 2021). In 2019, they earned much less than other workers (\$23,000 vs. \$32,000).
- **San Joaquin High-Risk Workers.** San Joaquin high-risk workers had lower earnings (\$26,000 vs. \$36,000) than non-high-risk workers and were less likely to have health coverage (88.6% vs. 91.7%) than other workers. This contributed to greater hardship and a 24.7% increase in deaths—**eighth** in the state (see figure 2).<sup>4</sup>

## Lack of a Safety Net

- **Immigrant Naturalization.** The naturalization rate among Central Valley immigrants (45.6%) was second-to-last among the state's ten regions. San Joaquin County's rate was 53.9%. Many were undocumented, and—as the only group federally prohibited from receiving federal aid—had no access to stimulus checks or unemployment relief during the pandemic.
- **High unemployment among Black, Latina and immigrant women.** During the peak of the pandemic economic downturn, job loss rates for California's Black (25.4%), Latina (28.9%) women were among the highest for any groups (Flores and Padilla 2020). Job loss rates were highest for non-citizen immigrant women

Figure 2. Top Twelve County-Level Increases in Death, California (2019-2020)



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of California Department of Public Health- California Comprehensive Death File Mar-Dec 2019-2020

(36.3%)—many of whom were undocumented and had no access to the safety net.

- **Unclaimed Relief.** Even residents who qualified for aid often failed to claim aid. The valley lost an estimated \$951m from unclaimed federal stimulus checks, second in the state only to Los Angeles' \$1.55bn loss (Augustine et al. 2021).

## References

- Augustine, Elsa, Charles Davis, Aparna Ramesh. 2021. The Stimulus Gap: 2.2 Million Californians Could Miss \$5.7 Billion in Federal Stimulus Payments. Berkeley, CA: California Policy Lab.
- Flores, Edward and Ana Padilla. 2020. Persisting Joblessness among Non-Citizens during COVID-19. Policy Report. Merced, CA: UC Merced Community and Labor Center.
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<sup>3</sup> The California Labor Workforce & Development Agency has identified agriculture, food processing, grocery, restaurant/food service,

janitorial/hospitality, warehousing, and manufacturing at highest risk of COVID-19 spread.

<sup>4</sup> See UC Merced Community and Labor Center (forthcoming).

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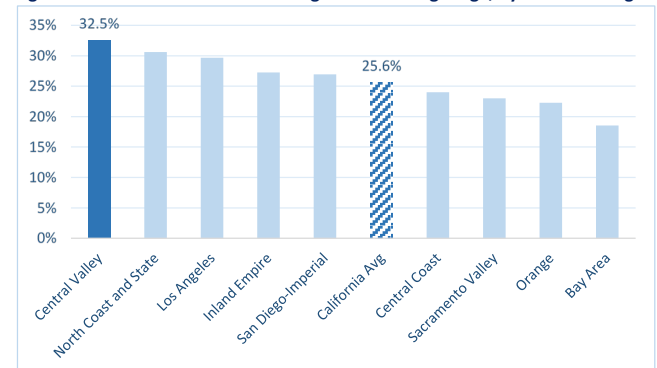
## FACT SHEET: How Kings' Economic Inequalities Exacerbated the COVID-19 Pandemic

Kings County and the Central Valley suffer from high social and economic inequalities. Central Valley households headed into the COVID-19 pandemic with the state's greatest combination of below-subsistence income, low rates of immigrant naturalization, and lack of access to the safety net. Kings County households closely mirrored these inequalities—high rates of rent burden among renter households—resulting in a disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Kings residents' health and economic well-being.

### Household Inequalities

- **Living Below a “Living Wage.”** Nearly one in three (32.5%) Central Valley households survive on less than a “living wage”—the amount needed to avoid “consistent and severe housing and food insecurity” (Nadeau 2018, 2). This ranks last among California's ten regions (see figure 1). Kings' rate (38.6%) was the **highest among all California counties.**<sup>1</sup>
- **Large and Low-Wage Households in the Region.** The Central Valley's median household income (\$60,000) and worker earnings (\$30,000) were second-to-last in the state. These figures are particularly disadvantaged considering the valley had the state's largest household size (3.0 persons) and children per household (0.9) (analysis not shown).
- **Kings County's Large and Low-Wage Households.** Kings' median household income (\$55,000), worker earnings (\$32,000), average household size (3.0), and children per household (1.0) were similar to the those of the Central Valley as whole.
- **High Rent Burden.** Nearly a fourth (22.8%) of all Kings County households and half (47.7%) of renter households, were rent burdened—

Figure 1. Percent of Households Living Below a Living Wage, by California Region



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019 data

spending over 30% of household income on rent. This rate was **seventh-highest** in California in 2019 (see figure 2).

- **High Utility Costs.** High utility costs are partially responsible for a large number of the region's households living below a living wage. Despite low regional incomes, Central Valley renters' median annual utility costs (\$2,720) were second-highest in the state.<sup>2</sup> Kings County renter households paid slightly lower costs (\$2,560), but high rent-burdened households paid significantly higher costs (\$3,480).

<sup>1</sup> We applied the MIT (2020) living wage calculator to ACS data from 41 California counties (and areas of combined counties) with over 150,000 persons.

<sup>2</sup> This measure combined median water costs, and median gas/electricity, for those households who paid either costs.

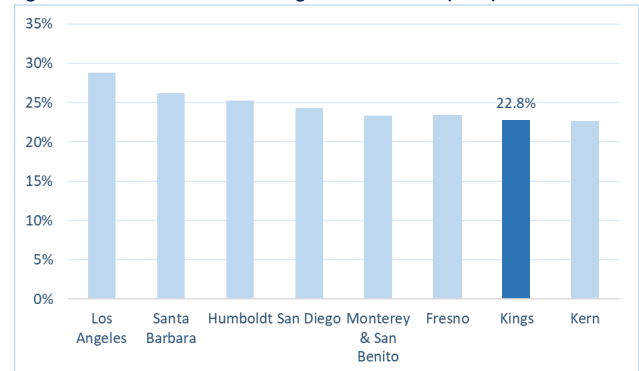
## Worker Inequalities

- **High COVID-19 Risk at Work.** Over one in four (26.8%) Central Valley workers worked in jobs with the highest risk of COVID-19 spread.<sup>3</sup> This was the **highest** rate in the state. In Kings County, the rate was 23.8%.
- **Disadvantages among High-Risk Workers.** In 2014-2018, Central Valley workers in COVID-19 high-risk industries were disproportionately immigrant (45.2% vs. 25.6%), non-citizen (31.5% v. 13.3%), lived in larger households (3.9 vs. 2.1 persons), and had a poverty rate nearly twice as high (18.1% vs. 10.6%) (Padilla et al. 2021). In 2019, they earned much less than other workers (\$23,000 vs. \$32,000).
- **Kings High-Risk Workers.** Kings high-risk workers had drastically lower earnings (\$20,000 vs. \$36,000) and were less likely to have health coverage (80.4% vs. 92.5%) than other workers. This contributed to greater hardship and a 23.2% increase in deaths—**tenth** in the state.<sup>4</sup>

## Lack of a Safety Net

- **Immigrant Naturalization.** The naturalization rate among Central Valley immigrants (45.6%) was second-to-last among the state's ten regions. Kings County's rate (46.0%) was slightly higher. Many were undocumented, and—as the only group federally prohibited from receiving federal aid—had no access to stimulus checks or unemployment relief during the pandemic.
- **High unemployment among Black, Latina and immigrant women.** During the peak of the pandemic economic downturn, job loss rates for California's Black (25.4%) and Latina (28.9%) women were among the highest for any groups (Flores and Padilla 2020). Job loss rates were highest for non-citizen immigrant women

Figure 2. California Counties with Highest Rent Burden (2019)



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019

(36.3%)—many of whom were undocumented and had no access to the safety net.

- **Unclaimed Relief.** Even residents who qualified for aid often failed to claim aid. The valley lost an estimated \$951m from unclaimed federal stimulus checks, second in the state only to Los Angeles' \$1.55bn loss (Augustine et al. 2021).

## References

- Augustine, Elsa, Charles Davis, Aparna Ramesh. 2021. The Stimulus Gap: 2.2 Million Californians Could Miss \$5.7 Billion in Federal Stimulus Payments. Berkeley, CA: California Policy Lab.
- Flores, Edward and Ana Padilla. 2020. Persisting Joblessness among Non-Citizens during COVID-19. Policy Report. Merced, CA: UC Merced Community and Labor Center.
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<sup>3</sup> The California Labor Workforce & Development Agency has identified agriculture, food processing, grocery, restaurant/food service,

janitorial/hospitality, warehousing, and manufacturing at highest risk of COVID-19 spread.

<sup>4</sup> See UC Merced Community and Labor Center (forthcoming).



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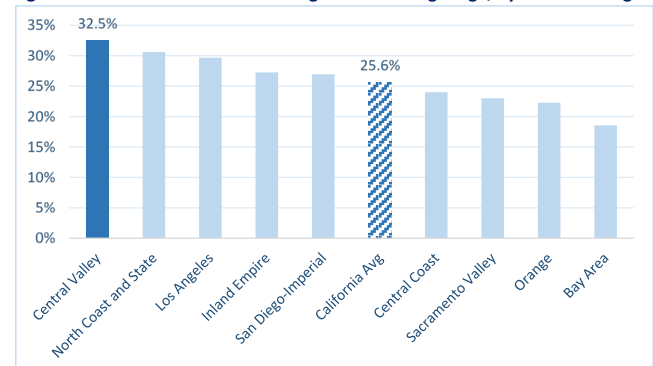
## FACT SHEET: How Stanislaus' Economic Inequalities Exacerbated the COVID-19 Pandemic

Stanislaus County and the Central Valley suffer from high social and economic inequalities. Central Valley households headed into the COVID-19 pandemic with jobs at high risk of COVID-19 exposure and lack of access to the safety net. Stanislaus County households experienced similar inequalities, resulting in a disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Stanislaus County residents' health and economic well-being.

### Household Inequalities

- **Living Below a "Living Wage."** Nearly one in three (32.5%) Central Valley households survive on less than a "living wage"—the amount needed to avoid "consistent and severe housing and food insecurity" (Nadeau 2018, 2). This ranks last among California's ten regions (see figure 1). Stanislaus' rate (27.7%) was higher than the state average (25.6%).<sup>1</sup>
- **Large and Low-Wage Households in the Region.** The Central Valley's median household income (\$60,000) and worker earnings (\$30,000) were second-to-last in the state. These figures are particularly disadvantaged considering the valley had the state's largest household size (3.0 persons) and children per household (0.9) (analysis not shown).
- **Stanislaus County's Large and Low-Wage Households.** Stanislaus' median household income (\$70,000), worker earnings (\$32,900), average household size (2.9), and children per household (0.8) were similar to the those of the Central Valley as whole.
- **High Rent Burden.** One fifth (20.9%) of all Stanislaus County households, and half (49.6%)

Figure 1. Percent of Households Living Below a Living Wage, by California Region



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019 data

of renter households, were rent burdened—spending over 30% of household income on rent.

- **High Utility Costs.** High utility costs are partially responsible for a large number of the region's households living below a living wage. Despite low regional incomes, Central Valley renters' median annual utility costs (\$2,720) were second-highest in the state.<sup>2</sup> Stanislaus County renter households paid higher costs (\$3,040). High rent-burdened households paid even higher costs (\$3,260).

<sup>1</sup> We applied the MIT (2020) living wage calculator to ACS data from 41 California counties (and areas of combined counties) with over 150,000 persons.

<sup>2</sup> This measure combined median water costs, and median gas/electricity, for those households who paid either costs.

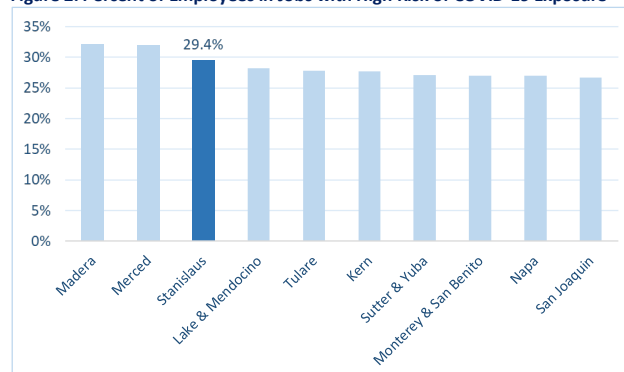
## Worker Inequalities

- **High COVID-19 Risk at Work.** Over one in four (26.8%) Central Valley workers worked in jobs with the highest risk of COVID-19 spread.<sup>3</sup> This was the **highest** rate in the state. Stanislaus County's rate (29.4%) was the **third-highest in the state** (see figure 2).
- **Disadvantages among High-Risk Workers.** In 2014-2018, Central Valley workers in COVID-19 high-risk industries were disproportionately immigrant (45.2% vs. 25.6%), non-citizen (31.5% v. 13.3%), lived in larger households (3.9 vs. 2.1 persons), and had a poverty rate nearly twice as high (18.1% vs. 10.6%) (Padilla et al. 2021). In 2019, they earned much less than other workers (\$23,000 vs. \$32,000).
- **Stanislaus High- Risk Workers.** Stanislaus high-risk workers had lower earnings (\$30,000 vs. \$35,000) and were less likely to have health coverage (88.6% vs. 91.6%) than non-high-risk workers. This contributed to greater hardship and a 23.7% increase in deaths—ninth in the state.<sup>4</sup>

## Lack of a Safety Net

- **Immigrant Naturalization.** The naturalization rate among Central Valley immigrants (45.6%) was second-to-last among the state's ten regions. Stanislaus County's rate (50.4%) was slightly higher. Many were undocumented, and—as the only group federally prohibited from receiving federal aid—had no access to stimulus checks or unemployment relief during the pandemic.
- **High unemployment among Black, Latina and immigrant women.** During the peak of the pandemic economic downturn, job loss rates for California's Black (25.4%), Latina (28.9%) women were among the highest for any groups

Figure 2. Percent of Employees in Jobs with High Risk of COVID-19 Exposure



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019 data

(Flores and Padilla 2020). Job loss rates were highest for non-citizen immigrant women (36.3%)—many of whom were undocumented and had no access to the safety net.

- **Unclaimed Relief.** Even residents who qualified for aid often failed to claim aid. The valley lost an estimated \$951m from unclaimed federal stimulus checks, second in the state only to Los Angeles' \$1.55bn loss (Augustine et al. 2021).

## References

- Augustine, Elsa, Charles Davis, Aparna Ramesh. 2021. The Stimulus Gap: 2.2 Million Californians Could Miss \$5.7 Billion in Federal Stimulus Payments. Berkeley, CA: California Policy Lab.
- Flores, Edward and Ana Padilla. 2020. Persisting Joblessness among Non-Citizens during COVID-19. Policy Report. Merced, CA: UC Merced Community and Labor Center.
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- Padilla, Ana, Elsa Macias, Edward Flores, and Ellen Widess. 2021. "California COVID-19 Workplace Outreach Project." Presentation to Central Valley Partner Organizations. February 17.
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## Mission Statement

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<sup>3</sup> The California Labor Workforce & Development Agency has identified agriculture, food processing, grocery, restaurant/food service,

janitorial/hospitality, warehousing, and manufacturing at highest risk of COVID-19 spread.

<sup>4</sup> See UC Merced Community and Labor Center (forthcoming).

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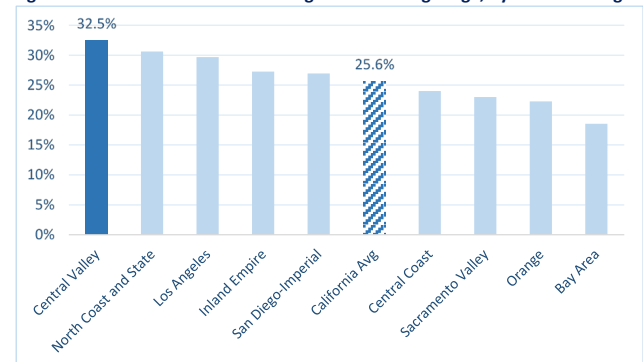
## FACT SHEET: How Madera's Economic Inequalities Exacerbated the COVID-19 Pandemic

Madera County and the Central Valley suffer from high social and economic inequalities. Central Valley households headed into the COVID-19 pandemic with the state's greatest combination of below-subsistence income, jobs at high risk of COVID-19 exposure, low rates of immigrant naturalization, and lack of access to the safety net. Madera County households suffered greater inequalities—including high rent burden and utility costs—resulting in a disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Madera residents' health and economic well-being.

### Household Inequalities

- **Living Below a "Living Wage."** Nearly one in three (32.5%) Central Valley households survive on less than a "living wage"—the amount needed to avoid "consistent and severe housing and food insecurity" (Nadeau 2018, 2). This ranks last among California's ten regions (see figure 1). Madera's rate (36.7%) was **third-highest** among all counties in the state.<sup>1</sup>
- **Large and Low-Wage Households in the Region.** The Central Valley's median household income (\$60,000) and worker earnings (\$30,000) were second-to-last in the state. These figures are particularly disadvantaged considering the valley had the state's largest mean household size (3.0 persons) and children per household (0.9) (analysis not shown).
- **Madera County's Large and Low-Wage Households.** Madera's median household income (\$64,000), worker earnings (\$25,000), and children per household (1.0) were similar to the those of the Central Valley as whole. Madera's average household size (3.3) was the largest in the state.

Figure 1. Percent of Households Living Below a Living Wage, by California Region



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019 data

- **High Rent Burden.** Nearly half (48.2%) of all Madera County renter households were rent burdened—spending over 30% of household income on rent. This rate was **third-highest** in the Central Valley in 2019.
- **High Utility Costs.** High utility costs are partially responsible for a large number of the region's households living below a living wage. Despite low regional incomes, Central Valley renters' median annual utility costs (\$2,720) were second-highest in the state.<sup>2</sup> Madera County renter households paid the highest costs (\$3,500) in the region while high rent-burdened households paid only slightly lower costs (\$2,540).

<sup>1</sup> We applied the MIT (2020) living wage calculator to ACS data from 41 California counties (and areas of combined counties) with over 150,000 persons.

<sup>2</sup> This measure combined median water costs, and median gas/electricity, for those households who paid either costs.

- **High Poverty.** Madera County's **household poverty** rate (17.3%) was higher than the Central Valley (16.0%), ranking **third in the valley** and **seventh in California** in 2019.

## Worker Inequalities

- **High COVID-19 Risk at Work.** Over one in four (26.8%) Central Valley workers worked in jobs with the highest risk of COVID-19 spread.<sup>3</sup> This was the **highest** rate in the state. Madera County had the **highest** rate (32.1%) in California (see figure 2).
- **Disadvantages among High-Risk Workers.** In 2014-2018, Central Valley workers in COVID-19 high-risk industries were disproportionately immigrant (45.2% vs. 25.6%), non-citizen (31.5% v. 13.3%), lived in larger households (3.9 vs. 2.1 persons), and had a poverty rate nearly twice as high (18.1% vs. 10.6%) (Padilla et al. 2021). In 2019, they earned much less than other workers (\$23,000 vs. \$32,000).
- **Madera High-Risk Workers.** Madera high-risk workers had the **lowest** median wages and rates of health coverage in the valley. High-risk workers had lower earnings (\$20,000 vs. \$30,000) and were less likely to have health coverage (76.3% vs. 88.5%) than other workers. This contributed to greater hardship and a 23.1% increase in deaths.<sup>4</sup>

## Lack of a Safety Net

- **Immigrant Naturalization.** The naturalization rate among Central Valley immigrants (45.6%) was second-to-last among the state's ten regions. Madera County's rate (37.0%) was the **lowest** in the region. Many were undocumented, and—as the only group federally prohibited from receiving federal aid—had no access to stimulus checks or unemployment relief during the pandemic.

Figure 2. Percent of Employees in Jobs with High Risk of COVID-19 Exposure



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019 data

- **High unemployment among Black, Latina and immigrant women.** During the peak of the pandemic economic downturn, job loss rates for California's Black (25.4%), Latina (28.9%) women were among the highest for any groups (Flores and Padilla 2020). Job loss rates were highest for non-citizen immigrant women (36.3%)—many of whom were undocumented and had no access to the safety net.
- **Unclaimed Relief.** Even residents who qualified for aid often failed to claim aid. The valley lost an estimated \$951m from unclaimed federal stimulus checks, second in the state only to Los Angeles' \$1.55bn loss (Augustine et al. 2021).

## References

- Augustine, Elsa, Charles Davis, Aparna Ramesh. 2021. The Stimulus Gap: 2.2 Million Californians Could Miss \$5.7 Billion in Federal Stimulus Payments. Berkeley, CA: California Policy Lab.
- IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, [www.ipums.org](http://www.ipums.org).
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<sup>3</sup> The California Labor Workforce & Development Agency has identified agriculture, food processing, grocery, restaurant/food service,

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<sup>4</sup> See UC Merced Community and Labor Center (forthcoming).

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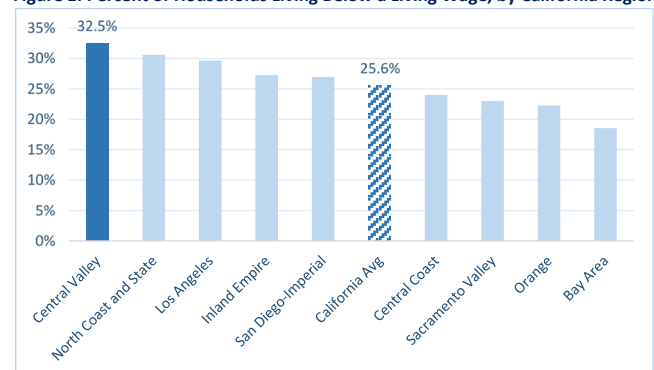
## FACT SHEET: How Tulare's Economic Inequalities Exacerbated the COVID-19 Pandemic

Tulare County and the Central Valley suffer from high social and economic inequalities. Central Valley households headed into the COVID-19 pandemic with the state's greatest combination of below-subsistence income, jobs at high risk of COVID-19 exposure, low rates of immigrant naturalization, and lack of access to the safety net. Tulare County households closely mirrored these inequalities, resulting in a disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Tulare residents' health and economic well-being.

### Household Inequalities

- **Living Below a "Living Wage."** Nearly one in three (32.5%) Central Valley households survive on less than a "living wage"—the amount needed to avoid "consistent and severe housing and food insecurity" (Nadeau 2018, 2). This ranks last among California's ten regions (see figure 1). Tulare's rate (32.2%) was the **second-highest** in California.<sup>1</sup>
- **Large and Low-Wage Households in the Region.** The Central Valley's median household income (\$60,000) and worker earnings (\$30,000) were second-to-last in the state. These figures are particularly disadvantaged considering the valley had the state's largest household size (3.0 persons) and children per household (0.9) (analysis not shown).
- **Tulare County's Large and Low-Wage Households.** Tulare's median household income (\$57,900) and worker earnings (\$28,000) were lower than those of the Central Valley, while average household size (3.2) and children per household (1.0) were higher.
- **High Rent Burden.** Over half (57%) of Tulare renter households, were rent burdened—spending over 30% of household income on rent.

Figure 1. Percent of Households Living Below a Living Wage, by California Region



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2019 data

- **High Utility Costs.** High utility costs are partially responsible for a large number of the region's households living below a living wage. Despite low regional incomes, Central Valley renters' median annual utility costs (\$2,720) were second-highest in the state.<sup>2</sup> Tulare County renter households paid lower costs (\$2,170), and high rent-burdened households paid slightly lower costs (\$2,040).
- **High Poverty.** Tulare County's **household poverty** rate (18.1%) was higher than the valley (16.0%), ranking **fourth in California** in 2019.
- **Pandemic Economic Downturn.** Nearly half (44%) of the Central Valley's households experienced economic downturn and "three in

<sup>1</sup> We applied the MIT (2020) living wage calculator to ACS data from 41 California counties (and areas of combined counties) with over 150,000 persons.

<sup>2</sup> This measure combined median water costs, and median gas/electricity, for those households who paid either costs.



ten (30%) of households either went one day without food, or had to rely on food stamps or a food bank in order to have sufficient food” (Flores 2020, 4-5).

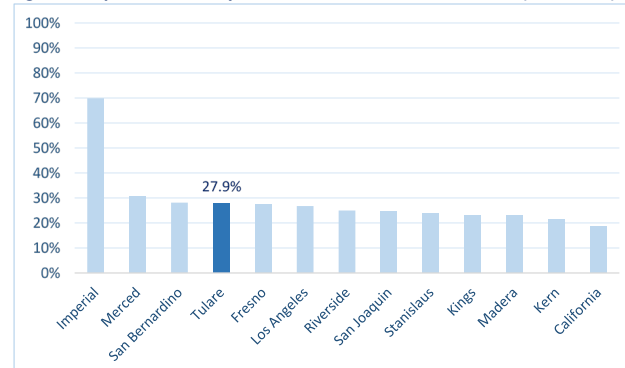
## Worker Inequalities

- **High COVID-19 Risk at Work.** Over one in four (26.8%) Central Valley workers worked in jobs with the highest risk of COVID-19 spread.<sup>3</sup> This was the **highest** rate in the state. Tulare County’s rate (27.8%) was **fifth-highest** in the state.
- **Disadvantages among High-Risk Workers.** In 2014-2018, Central Valley workers in COVID-19 high-risk industries were disproportionately immigrant (45.2% vs. 25.6%), non-citizen (31.5% v. 13.3%), lived in larger households (3.9 vs. 2.1 persons), and had a poverty rate nearly twice as high (18.1% vs. 10.6%) (Padilla et al. 2021). In 2019, they earned much less than other workers (\$23,000 vs. \$32,000).
- **Tulare High-Risk Workers.** Tulare high-risk workers had lower earnings (\$25,000 vs. \$28,000) and were less likely to have health coverage (87.4% vs. 87.7%) than other workers. This contributed to greater hardship and a 27.9% increase in deaths—**fourth in the state** (see figure 2).<sup>4</sup>

## Lack of a Safety Net

- **Immigrant Naturalization.** The naturalization rate among Central Valley immigrants (45.6%) was second-to-last among the state’s ten regions. Tulare County’s rate (44.6%) was lower. Many were undocumented, and—as the only group federally prohibited from receiving federal aid—had no access to stimulus checks or unemployment relief during the pandemic.
- **High unemployment among Black, Latina and immigrant women.** During the peak of the pandemic economic downturn, job loss rates

Figure 2. Top Twelve County-Level Increases in Death, California (2019-2020)



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of California Department of Public Health- California Comprehensive Death File Mar-Dec 2019-2020

for California’s Black (25.4%), Latina (28.9%) women were among the highest for any groups (Flores and Padilla 2020). Job loss rates were highest for non-citizen immigrant women (36.3%)—many of whom were undocumented and had no access to the safety net.

- **Unclaimed Relief.** Even residents who qualified for aid often failed to claim aid. The valley lost an estimated \$951m from unclaimed federal stimulus checks, second in the state only to Los Angeles’ \$1.55bn loss (Augustine et al. 2021).

## References

- Augustine, Elsa, Charles Davis, Aparna Ramesh. 2021. The Stimulus Gap: 2.2 Million Californians Could Miss \$5.7 Billion in Federal Stimulus Payments. Berkeley, CA: California Policy Lab.
- Edward Flores. 2020. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Rural San Joaquin Valley Households and Workers. Merced, CA: UC Merced Community and Labor Center
- Flores, Edward and Ana Padilla. 2020. Persisting Joblessness among Non-Citizens during COVID-19. Policy Report. Merced, CA: UC Merced Community and Labor Center.
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