



# Central Valley North Regional Snapshot

## Region 4



Region 4 covers the northern Central Valley, which includes the counties of Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus. Though primarily an agricultural area, this region also has fast-growing urban centers such as Stockton and Modesto. According to the California Department of Finance, the Central Valley (Regions 4 and 5) is projected to have the fastest population growth in California through 2060.

The Central Valley is known for intense heat and severe drought conditions. The San Joaquin Valley will face rising temperatures and intensifying heat waves that strain agriculture, infrastructure, and energy systems. Climate change will reduce crop yields and raise heat-related health risks, especially for farmworkers. Droughts will reduce groundwater availability, requiring water-saving technologies and improved water management. (California Fourth Climate Change Assessment San Joaquin Valley)

Over 50% of residents in Madera and Merced Counties identify as Hispanic or Latino, significantly shaping the region's cultural and linguistic landscape. Community knowledge suggests that there has been an increase in indigenous immigrants from Oaxaca and other areas of Latin America, contributing to linguistic diversity and a resurgence of cultural pride as shown by the growth of festivals, markets, events, and restaurants. Local radio stations offer programming in indigenous languages, such as Mixtec, Zapotec, and Triqui, to meet the needs of these growing populations.



OCPSC consults with community-based organizations for Regional "Community Connections"

Migration from larger cities has led to rapid population growth and urbanization, creating demand for infrastructure and affordable housing. This region also has a younger demographic compared to other parts of California with a high proportion of children and young adults, particularly among immigrant families. Older adults on fixed incomes struggle with increased living costs, inadequate health care, and limited public transportation.

There is a high prevalence of multigenerational households, driven by rising housing costs. Rural communities, especially low-income and farmworker families, face challenges due to limited broadband access. This digital divide hinders access to essential services like telehealth, remote learning, and digital tools necessary for economic and social participation.

**The Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications (OCPSC)**, housed within the Governor's Office of Service and Community Engagement (GO-Serve), was established in July 2022 to tackle California's pressing statewide issues through effective public awareness and community engagement. Regional Snapshots can be used as a starting point for state agencies to understand demographic data and effective outreach approaches for community engagement. The Snapshots are a result of facilitated conversations with OCPSC's Trusted Messenger Network.



## Region 4 Snapshot

**Total Population: 1,784,053**

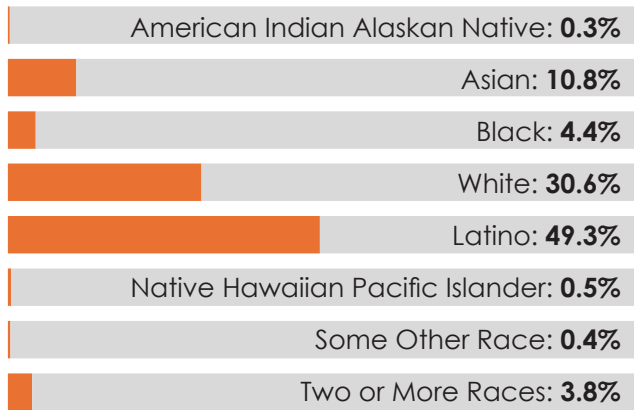


**4.5%**

of State Population



### Population by Race/Ethnicity



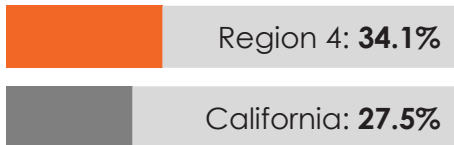
**17.5%**  
of Population  
with Limited  
English  
Proficiency

California: 17.2%

### Top Languages Spoken other than English:

- Spanish
- Punjabi
- Tagalog

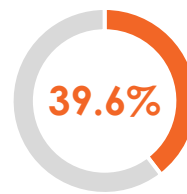
### Population **Below** 200% Federal Poverty



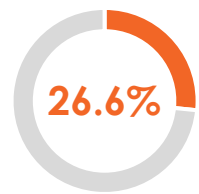
**Central  
Valley  
North**

**Counties:** Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus

**Largest Populated Cities:**  
Stockton, Modesto, Tracy



**Renter  
Population  
Percentage**  
California: 44.2%



**Housing Units in  
Hardest to Count  
Census Tracts**  
California: 27.3%

**6.8%**  
Uninsured Adults



California: 6.9%

**9.3%**  
without Broadband



California: 7.4%

**DATA NOTES:** The data above was obtained from the 2019 -2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. The Hard-to-Count totals were created by the Demographic Research Unit, a department of the California Department of Finance, and is from the 2025 vintage.

# Community Insights

## Leverage women as pillars of their households

Central Valley community-based organizations focus on reaching mothers and women in their communities. For many cultures within the Central Valley, women manage the household and thus have the most awareness of their family's needs. During door-to-door canvassing, outreach workers weave in critical information into their conversations with women about their children, food and cooking, or issues related to their home. These informed women then become effective community messengers within their own network of families, often to other mothers.

## Collaborate to expand reach across the region

Community-based organizations cross-share strategies and tactics to address specific audiences, informed by their deep community relationships with their target demographic groups. By leveraging their relationships, resources, and events, community-based organizations expand their reach.



Outreach workers share critical information as they engage with communities.

## Using community knowledge to strategize

Leveraging community knowledge by engaging with staff in the planning process to gather insights, perspectives, and expertise helps to identify meaningful outreach approaches. Outreach workers educating workers in the fields or at markets are uniquely equipped to understand and address the cultural nuances because they live in the neighborhood and share similar lived experiences.

*"We've learned how important regional collaboration is, especially when we host events. When we come out and do events together, what we can deliver to the community explodes because now you have multiple languages, multiple symbols, and multiple ways of communicating. We've learned best practices by seeing how other local organizations provide services, and they've learned from us."*

**Ines Ruiz-Huston,**  
El Concilio California



*"Looking someone in the eyes is more respectful, that's how we do the outreach, and the community respects that. The indigenous community is used to direct contact, and they react to that. Flyers on a car don't have the same impact. From our work, we know that everyone can be a community leader and share the life-saving information they hear from us with their family, their church, their community."*

**Hector Hernandez,**  
Unidad Popular Benito Juarez







### Engaging Farmworkers

Farmworkers are vital to the United States's economy, laboring every day in fruit orchards and dairy farms, in blazing heat and freezing cold, to ensure families across the nation have food on their tables.

Farmworkers are least likely to receive accurate and timely information on matters affecting and important to them. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers may move frequently following the seasons and live in temporary, overcrowded, and hidden housing. They often have limited proficiency in English and even Spanish, as many newly arrived migrant and guest workers speak Mixteco, Triqui, and other indigenous languages. Rumours and misinformation are prevalent and can create confusion and fear. Transportation challenges, as well as reliable broadband and internet connectivity due to residing in rural, isolated geographies, serve as additional barriers to access information and services.

Although confronted with sporadic work, low wages, and frequent natural disaster disruptions, farmworker families continue to settle into local communities and make up an integral part of California's regional economy and culture.

The **California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation** (CRLAF) brings over forty years of active engagement with farmworkers and low-wage rural workers. CRLAF recently partnered with the State to raise awareness around critical issues including the California Census operations of 2020, 2010, and 2000; the Vaccinate ALL 58 campaign; and other outreach work to support California's highest priority campaigns. Campaign topics empower residents to build on their existing strengths within community education and advocacy.



Promotoras talking with farmworkers in the fields about the dangers of extreme heat

CRLAF and other organizations serving farmworkers have found that hiring former farmworkers and their children is an effective approach to establish trusting relationships. From shared experiences, values, and knowledge of local issues, these staff members are able to deliver accurate information, while dispelling myths and rumors, and guiding farmworkers to community-centered engagement.

#### Good Practices to Engage Farmworkers

- Worksites are ideal places to communicate with farmworkers because they have little time off from fieldwork and may not have transportation to alternative places.
- Convenient and accessible alternative sites are churches, schools, food distribution sites, local markets, and parks, which are familiar places easily reached without a car.
- Language access is key to making information relevant and timely.