# Central Valley South Regional Snapshot

## Region 5

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

Region 5 covers the Southern Central Valley, the heart and soul of California's agricultural community accounting for more than half of California's food production. It is characterized by a low population density over a large, rural geographical area. This region includes the counties of Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Kern. Fresno and Bakersfield are the region's largest cities. Fresno is the fifth largest city in California, with Bakersfield the ninth largest, both are significant metropolitan centers in the Southern Central Valley.

The region experiences poor air quality due to its valley topography which traps heat and air pollution. Droughts and extreme heat waves further exacerbate this problem. Air and water pollutants affect the region's rates of respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses and high levels of cancer.

The Central Valley population is overwhelmingly Latino compared to the rest of California. These Latin American immigrants include indigenous communities primarily from Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Michoacán in Mexico. They play a vital role in the region's agricultural economy but face systemic barriers, including language inaccessibility, poor labor conditions, and limited access to health and education services.

The region is home to the nation's largest Sikh community, making Punjabi the third most spoken language (after English and Spanish) in the region. Fresno is home to the largest Hmong population in California. Central Valley communities contribute to the vibrant cultural and religious diversity of the region.

The Central Valley has significant digital divide challenges including the lack of access and affordability to broadband for low income and rural families. Lack of broadband was identified as a major constraint to the future of agriculture in this region. Farms also lack broadband access necessary for modern precision agriculture. In addition, broadband is needed to strengthen education achievement and healthcare delivery.

**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 5 Snapshot

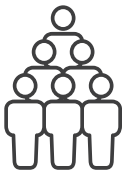
## Central Valley South

**Counties:** Fresno, Kings, Tulare, and Kern

**Largest Populated Cities:**
Fresno, Bakersfield, Visalia

## Total Population: 2,551,189

**6.5%**
**of State Population**



### Population by Race/Ethnicity

- American Indian Alaskan Native: **0.4%**
- Asian: **6.9%**
- Black: **4.0%**
- White: **28.3%**
- Latino: **57.1%**
- Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander: **0.1%**
- Some Other Race: **0.4%**
- Two or More Races: **2.8%**

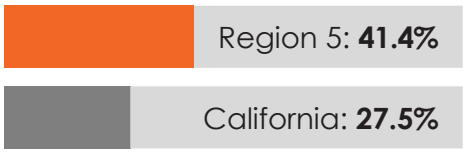
**19.3%**
**of Population with Limited English Proficiency**
California: **17.2%**

**Top Languages Spoken other than English:**
- Spanish
- Punjabi
- Hmong

**Renter Population Percentage**
California: **44.2%**

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

### Population Below 200% Federal Poverty




**7.6%**
*Uninsured* **Adults**

California: **6.9%**

**11.6%**
*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

## Pivot in the face of change

Community-based organizations must constantly shift their outreach tactics to reach residents who are often skeptical of the government and have a growing fear of immigration enforcement. Consistent, timely, and accurate voices from trusted messengers are the foundation of outreach. To address new contexts or ways people receive information, community-based organizations use data to geo-fence message alerts to target populations and text in existing WhatsApp groups. When the usual door-to-door canvassing is not feasible, they spread awareness through neighborhood bicycle brigades, videos with cultural dances and music, and murals with local people and messages.

## Training the next generation for civic engagement

Youth leadership programs operated by community-based organizations foster personal development and contribute to stronger communities through youth civic engagement, creating energy and inspiration for residents. Young people conduct outreach to raise awareness of critical issues for their family and peers.

> *"A boy died of extreme heat while playing football. We knew he wouldn't be the last if we didn't act and act boldly. His death wasn't just a tragedy; it was a call to responsibility. We understood then, as we do now, that prevention begins with education, and education must come from people, including youth, our communities trust."*
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> **Dr. Arleana Waller**, ShePower Leadership Academy

Ameer Abdul-Kareem Brooks, Council on American Islamic Relations, and Hope Flinto and Luisa Sanchez, West Fresno Health Care Coalition, formed a partnership to reach communities.

## Use data to understand community needs

To create a meaningful impact, community-based organizations combine community knowledge with quantitative data. They use participatory surveys of residents to complement information from local government and service providers and Census data. Demographic and language data can help pinpoint which languages are spoken in the neighborhood so they can tailor communications and culturally relevant materials for community engagement.

> *"Hard-to-count census tracts directly reflect the lack of resources in our communities. When neighborhoods are undercounted, they're missing out on essential educational programs, housing access, and broadband connectivity. We must use this data not just to understand the gaps, but also to ensure fair representation, and invest in programs that empower the next generation of leaders and drive lasting change."*
>
> **Dayana Lopez**, Dolores Huerta Foundation

# Disability Inclusive Communication and Outreach

**In California, one in four adults has some type of disability.** To provide disability inclusion we must ensure all people can live fully in the world on their own terms. Accessibility means identifying and removing barriers, whether structural or attitudinal, for people with disabilities so they can fully participate in society.

Learning about the intersection of the disability rights and civil rights movement at the Ed Roberts Campus

In partnership with the **Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)**,11 in-person statewide training sessions educated 100 percent of the Trusted Messenger Network, 121 community-based organizations. Participants walked away reflecting on how their programs, materials, and interactions could be more accessible, accommodating, and inclusive.

**Resources for Independence Central Valley** believes that all people can live independently, with dignity, make their own choices, and participate fully in the community if given the right tools and resources. They serve as a trusted messenger to cross-disability communities in Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, and Tulare Counties. With the Central Valley experiencing more extreme heat days, people with disabilitiWes face a heightened risk of injury or death because they are more likely to be low income, lack air conditioning, and cooling centers are not always readily accessible due to transportation barriers.

*"Through our partnership with the State, we have reached people with disabilities who are usually left out, as they lack access to accurate and timely information. For example, we produced a vlog in ASL on knowing the signs of extreme heat. We also served as a local resource to other CBOs to serve people with disabilities. One such partnership is with the Valley Center for the Blind to connect with individuals who are blind or have low vision and who may not have equitable access to information due to lack of expensive Assistive Technology or the skills needed to browse the web and social media platforms."*

**Sarah Harris**,
Director of Programs,
DREDF

**Communication Tactics: Tips for accessible information and communication**

- Enlist trusted messengers who represent people with various disabilities.
- Use plain language and everyday words.
- Avoid policy and medical language.
- Provide information in accessible formats such as ASL, braille, closed captions, audio description, and easy-to-read materials with large text and pictures or visual cues.
- Use a microphone when speaking to groups of people.
- Describe graphics so those who are blind or have low vision can follow along with presentations.
- Include audio description on videos as well as alternative text labeling for graphics on digital materials for people who use screen reading software.