

Central Coast Regional Snapshot

Region 6



The Central Coast invokes images of stunning coastal towns and the fertile Salinas Valley. Region 6 includes the counties of Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura. The population is spread out in small to medium-sized cities with rural farmlands. Forested mountain ranges enhance the diverse ecosystem. The most populous cities are Oxnard, Salinas, and Santa Maria. Five of the six counties in the Central Coast have a higher population of Latino residents than the state average.

With a productive agricultural economy, the region is home to a large farmworker community, with Monterey County having the largest number of farmworkers in the region. Farmworkers often face language access barriers due to limited English or Spanish proficiency. Census data does not accurately capture the language preferences of Indigenous migrant individuals who may be classified as Hispanic/Latino. Migrant farmworkers from Mexico often belong to a mutual support, hometown association, allowing them to preserve their faith, speak their languages, celebrate traditions, and maintain ties to their villages.

The availability of affordable housing is a challenge for Central Coast residents, especially for low-wage workers in the agriculture, tourism, or retail sectors. Rates of student homelessness are



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

more than three times the state average in Santa Barbara (12.3%) and Monterey (14.2%) Counties. Outreach presents a challenge when residents live in unconventional or overcrowded housing.

The Central Coast is particularly vulnerable to climate change with rising sea levels, rising temperatures, and variability in precipitation. Recent climate-related disasters of fires, floods, and storms have caused unsafe conditions for the region's population and geography.

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 6 Snapshot

Total Population: 2,331,631

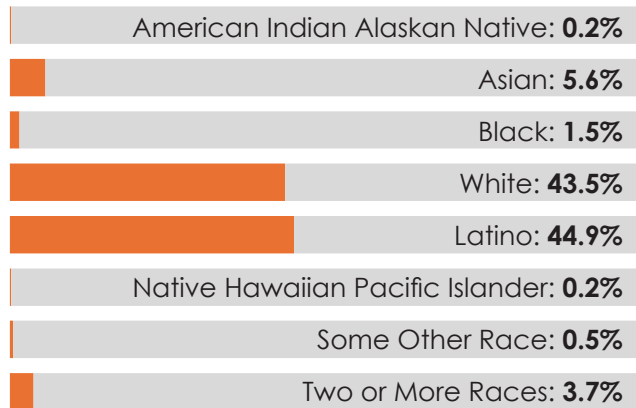


5.9%

of State Population



Population by Race/Ethnicity



15.8%
of Population
with Limited
English
Proficiency

California: 17.2%

**Top Languages
Spoken other
than English:**

- Spanish
- Tagalog

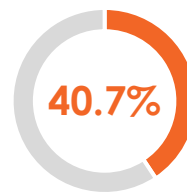
Population **Below** 200% Federal Poverty



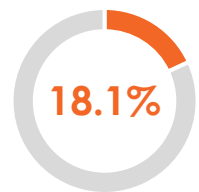
**Central
Coast**

Counties: Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura

Largest Populated Cities:
Oxnard, Salinas, Simi Valley



**Renter
Population
Percentage**
California: 44.2%



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

7.9%
Uninsured **Adults**



California: 6.9%

7.0%
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

Use radio as an effective tool for farmworker communities

In-language radio can foster close ties with communities by addressing their social needs, broadcasting timely information, and providing entertainment. Radio can also be an effective way to prevent the spread of misinformation and dispel myths and fears. It can also prepare and warn the audience of weather emergencies, such as extreme heat or floods.

"The Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project's (MICOP) Radio Indigena offers easy-to-understand programming in Spanish and seven variants of Mixteco, Zapoteco, and Purepecha. Topics on live radio shows include community organizing, healthcare access, mental health, self-help, and wellbeing, as well as native Indigenous music."

Mixteco Indigenous Community Organizing Project



Community foundations leverage relationships and resources

Community foundations across the state of California play a vital role in engaging with communities. They partner with small community-based organizations by serving as an administrative backbone, leveraging additional funding, and building collaborative networks. They can also cover a vast region by partnering with other community foundations.

"During Census 2020, the State helped to mobilize us and leverage funding to reach our communities. We built something tremendous together. We went from the Complete Count Committee to the Complete Reach Committee for vaccine outreach. Imagine the potential if we keep this momentum going. We could tackle digital equity. We could tackle extreme heat. Together, there is so much we can do for our communities."

Vanessa Bechtel, Ventura County Community Foundation



Door-to-door canvassing in the Central Coast's agricultural community

Create impactful outreach activities

Partnering with schools as trusted spaces, community-based organizations extend their reach to youth and their families at resource fairs and workshops. Door-to-door canvassing is most effective in pairs to engage safely with residents. Community-based organizations collaborate to organize and participate in local events or small gatherings.

"We do not simply hand out flyers, nor are we just extra hands at events. We are agents of change. A promotora is a trusted person known for being helpful and advocating for the needs of their communities. Promotores are volunteers with a heart of service."

Santa Barbara County Promotores Network





Reaching Communities through Trusted Messengers

The unprecedented challenges California has faced in recent years has demonstrated the State must remain ready to coordinate and communicate effectively with the diverse range of communities it serves. A deep commitment to equity and inclusion for all Californians is what unites community-based organizations and the State. While the State provides data, messaging, and operational support, community-based organizations adapt messaging with sensitivity to the lived experiences of those served.

Providing culturally and linguistically customized outreach requires an understanding of the structural inequalities of a neighborhood and region. Community-based organization outreach workers offer their lived experiences and language competency and provide a grounded understanding of the realities of the individuals and families they serve. Empathy and trust are key to their work and require showing understanding, sharing the facts and supporting the individual to make an informed decision.

Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance hires bilingual community health workers with similar stories, experiences and cultural backgrounds as the community members they serve. Their team overcomes challenges through adaptive outreach strategies, while building rapport and trust. They strive to provide community members with equitable access to resources.

Promotoras chatting about protection from extreme heat with a local resident



"Relationships matter, especially when you are working with fragmented communities who have endured multiple life-changing events. We create opportunities for community members to engage with one another, learn from each other and test their knowledge. They also commit to sharing the message with another person, which helps them see themselves as educators."

Adriana Mata, Pajaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance

Community-based organizations use a trusted messenger model by recruiting outreach workers (also known as promotoras de salud, community health workers or navigators) to share information so that community members can make informed decisions. This effective model was recognized during California's Census 2020 efforts and replicated in other outreach efforts. These tested outreach approaches were gleaned from engagements with outreach workers in the Salinas Valley, Merced, Santa Cruz, Madera, and Northern San Diego.



How to reach community members

- Show up consistently to build trust
- Start a conversation by acknowledging people's situations, priorities, and fears
- Simplify information so it is easy to understand while avoiding medical or legal terms
- Use methods they are accustomed to, such as an in-person, eye-to-eye conversations rather than a flyer they may not read