



**NEWS RELEASE  
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## **San Joaquin Valley census research reports reveal serious consequences of adding the citizenship question to Census 2020**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Just-released survey results from San Joaquin Valley demographic experts show that the U.S. Department of Commerce’s decision to add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census would be likely to have a major impact in suppressing census response among San Joaquin Valley Latino immigrants and their social networks, who make up one-third of the region’s total population.

The first two reports on consequences of adding the citizenship question and other barriers to a complete count are based on research conducted for The Center at Sierra Health Foundation and its San Joaquin Valley Health Fund, and are available online at: [www.shfcenter.org/sjvhealthfund](http://www.shfcenter.org/sjvhealthfund):

[\*San Joaquin Valley Latino Immigrants: Implications of Survey Findings for Census 2020\*](#)

[\*San Joaquin Valley Latino Immigrants: Implications of Survey Findings for Census 2020 – Executive Summary\*](#)

[\*A Cascade Model: How Latino Immigrants’ Lowered Response Will Lead to Differential Census Undercount in Census 2020\*](#)

“We’re excited to have had an opportunity to make a contribution to the public dialogue about the impact of adding a citizenship question to Census 2020,” said Edward Kissam, a researcher active in advocacy for a fair and accurate census and lead author of the report.” Our survey provides unique insights into the Latino immigrant community’s perspectives because it is based on face-to-face interviews, where interviewers who are immigrants themselves spoke with survey respondents in familiar, immigrant-friendly environments, such as parks, flea markets and community events.”

Because federal and state funding throughout the post-census decade is allocated based on census-derived data and political representation is determined by a community’s, county’s or state’s share of the national population, census fairness and accuracy is crucial to community well-being. The new reports show that lowered response and resulting undercount might result in the loss of close to \$2 billion dollars of federal funding during the post-census decade for the eight-county region.

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“We believe the findings in this report show that going forward with a decennial census that includes the citizenship question will have short-term and long-lasting negative health and social impacts on individuals, families and communities in the San Joaquin Valley,” said Chet P. Hewitt, president and CEO of Sierra Health Foundation and The Center at Sierra Health Foundation. “The research also provides insights about how advocacy, strategic collaboration and outreach can help ensure a complete count for Census 2020 in hard-to-count communities.”

“This research, conducted by community members in the San Joaquin Valley, has given us insight into the ways vulnerable populations of the Valley will respond to the addition of a citizenship question in the 2020 Census,” said California Institute for Rural Studies Director Gail Wadsworth. “The responses unveiled in this report show that adding a citizenship question to the Census will likely result in an undercount of residents in the San Joaquin Valley. The impacts of an undercount have the potential to be devastating to the communities in this region.”

### **Key Findings from the Reports:**

- Interviews with more than 400 Latino immigrants showed widespread willingness to respond to a simple census that asked a few basic questions about households—with more than eight out of 10 (84%) of survey respondents saying “yes.” But if the citizenship question were to be included, less than half (46%) would be willing to respond.
- Undocumented immigrants are least willing to respond to a census that includes a question on citizenship. Only 25% were willing to respond. But even immigrants with legal status and naturalized citizens were much less willing to respond if the citizenship question were included (willingness decreased to 63% among legal residents and 70% among naturalized citizens).
- An unexpected finding was that even the U.S.-born second-generation adult children of Latino immigrants were also very negative about a census with the citizenship question. Less than half (49%) said they would be willing to answer the census if it is included.
- In contrast to what has generally been assumed, decreased willingness to respond to a census that included the citizenship question stemmed not only from uncertainty about whether the government might misuse the information for immigration enforcement, but also from concerns that asking the question was divisive and an unwarranted effort to get personal information if the purpose of the census was to count people.
- The survey also asked if people would be willing to answer an enumerator who might come to their door asking for information about a neighboring household that had not responded. Very few survey respondents—only 8%—said they would be willing to provide this information if the citizenship question were to be included.
- Survey results suggest that lowered response stemming from addition of the citizenship question would lead to an undercount of about 11.7% of first- and second-generation Latino immigrant households. This differential undercount, alone, would decrease the overall Census 2020 count of the San Joaquin Valley population by about 4.1%.

- The survey also assessed other factors that will affect the Census 2020 count. These include uneven delivery of census forms because some households do not have their own mail delivery (only shared mailboxes or PO Boxes), have uneven access to the Internet for online response, have literacy and language barriers, or live in complex households where several families live at a single address.
- Findings show that if the Census Bureau underestimates the extent of non-response and fails to hire the numbers of Spanish-speaking enumerators needed if large numbers of households fail to respond, then census accuracy might decrease still further.
- The expected level of census undercount stemming simply from lowered response among Latino immigrants is projected to cost the San Joaquin Valley region almost \$200 million per year in unrealized revenue from federal programs for which funding is allocated based on census data. Census undercount would also dilute Latino political representation, particularly in the smaller, rural communities in the region.
- The report also includes suggestions about ways in which innovative and collaborative efforts between local communities and the Census Bureau could ameliorate the negative impact of adding the citizenship question.

These reports were researched by Census Research Advisor Edward Kissam and Research Project Advisor JoAnn Intili of the WKF Giving Fund, Survey Data and Operations Manager and Latino Focus Group Manager Cindy Quezada of Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative, Data Manager and Analyst Dr. Richard Mines, and Director of California Institute for Rural Studies Gail Wadsworth, who served as Project Director and Analyst of Qualitative Data. Interviews were conducted by Rafael Flores, Jorge San Juan, Morena Fuentes, Marco Antonio Fuentes, Rigoberto Garcia and Lilia Becerril. Edward Kissam was the lead author of both reports.

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