

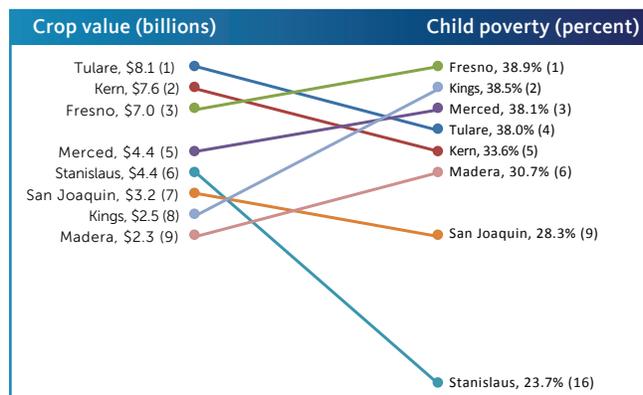
California's San Joaquin Valley: A Region and its Children Under Stress

Report Highlights

Vulnerable children in the San Joaquin Valley are more likely to breathe contaminated air, lack access to healthy food and safe drinking water, face greater exposure to violence and have more limited educational opportunities. By taking action to keep the air and water clean, increasing access to assistance programs and early education, expanding economic opportunity for low-income families, building on the region's wealth of cultural resources and garnering more support from Sacramento, the San Joaquin Valley's children, their families and communities will thrive.

The San Joaquin Valley is a place of contradictions.

The San Joaquin Valley is home to more than four million residents, more than 10% of California's population. Agriculture, oil and land development generate significant wealth. Eight of the San Joaquin Valley counties are among the top nine agricultural producers in the state, and seven of these same counties are in the top 10 counties with the highest child poverty rates.



The population of the Valley is growing rapidly.

Systems and policies that support the health and well-being of San Joaquin Valley children, families and communities are essential as the population is growing rapidly. The population in the San Joaquin Valley is projected to grow at more than twice the rate as the state as a whole, with the most rapid growth among multiracial, Asian and Latino populations.

San Joaquin Valley population growth

California 2014



California 2060



San Joaquin Valley 2014



San Joaquin Valley 2060



Many children live in communities and go to schools where they have no access to safe drinking water and are exposed to pesticides and other sources of air pollution.

Schools are a large source of the drinking water that young children consume. Compared to other regions, the San Joaquin Valley has the highest percentage of schools where the drinking water does not meet regulatory standards. In 1 of 4 schools in the Valley, children do not have access to safe drinking water.

The region as a whole does not meet either federal or California clean air standards. The cumulative effect of air, water and other forms of pollution in the San Joaquin Valley's most impacted neighborhoods is associated with an increase in the number of children hospitalized for potentially preventable conditions such as asthma. In some counties, the children's rate of hospitalization for asthma is nearly double the state average.

Race and ethnicity is a powerful predictor of the well-being of the Valley's children.

Poverty: In the nine-county region, approximately 1 in 5 white children under the age of 6 are poor. In comparison, the poverty rate for Asian and multi-racial children is 30%, doubles to 40% among Latino children, and triples to 60% for African American children.

Children under 6 in the San Joaquin Valley

2 of 10 white children are poor



3 of 10 Asian and multi-racial children are poor



4 of 10 Latino children are poor



6 of 10 African American children are poor



"The root of many of the Valley's problems is poverty and the lack of economic diversity in the region. It is a cycle that limits options in employment to low wage, low skill work. That affects educational attainment, and impacts the environmental quality."

– San Joaquin Valley social justice advocate

Environmental hazards: Environmental hazards are more prevalent in communities of color. Latino children are 46% more likely than white children to attend schools with pesticides of concern applied nearby, and nearly two times more likely than white children to attend schools that are in the top 25% of schools in terms of nearby pesticide use. Communities where the water is contaminated with high levels of nitrate or arsenic have higher concentrations of people of color compared to communities where the water does not exceed federal guidelines for these contaminants.

School to prison pipeline: Data show that San Joaquin Valley children ages 10-17 face a greater risk of ending up in jail, with the felony juvenile arrest rate higher in every county than the statewide average. African American youth are arrested at a markedly higher rate than any other population.

Many children live in families that worry about running out of food.

More than 1 in 4 children live in families that worry about running out of or are unable to provide nutritious foods. Children with an inadequate diet are more likely to be hospitalized as an infant, more likely to develop asthma, and more likely to perform poorly in elementary school.

Promoting Health and Racial Equity in the Region

There are avenues for action on each of these priorities for the children of the San Joaquin Valley. The Local Control Funding Formula expands opportunities for communities to shape school programs and policies to create an educational system that gives every child a chance to succeed. Innovative efforts are under way to increase access to healthy food for children and provide culturally appropriate programming for their families. There are strong environmental justice organizations advocating for state and local regulations that will improve the living environment for all. To advance equitable land use planning, as well as the other three priorities, an end to the systematic exclusion of low-income people and people of color from decision-making bodies is required. As part of the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund's work, a policy agenda has been crafted by community leaders and is being advanced to improve conditions for all.

Community residents identified priorities for the Valley's future.

As described in the report, California's San Joaquin Valley: A Region and its Children Under Stress, community residents and leaders were asked to identify the issues and concerns that they felt were most central to the health and well-being of the region's children. Four areas were identified:

- **Early Education** supports the developmental needs of young children and lays the foundation for all future learning.
- **Healthy Food** is a basic precondition for good health and all families should have easy access to affordable, fresh, healthy food that children need in order to thrive.
- **Healthy Living Environments** encompass the natural, built and socio-economic conditions of a community, and remain a key determinant of health and well-being.
- **Equitable Land Use Planning** engages residents in shaping the physical design of their communities to provide the resources needed to build a healthy, sustainable and prosperous region.

In 2016, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Sierra Health Foundation commissioned a report that chronicles the status of children in the San Joaquin Valley and asks community members to share their vision of an ideal community for children. The research was conducted by the UC Davis Center for Regional Change in partnership with the Pan Valley Institute. The findings presented above were drawn from the report, California's San Joaquin Valley: A Region and Its Children Under Stress. Please see the report for the specific data sources.