



Northern San Joaquin Valley

Socioeconomic Assessment Summary

APRIL 2024



NorthValleyTHRIVE.org

 CALIFORNIA
JOBS FIRST

Introduction

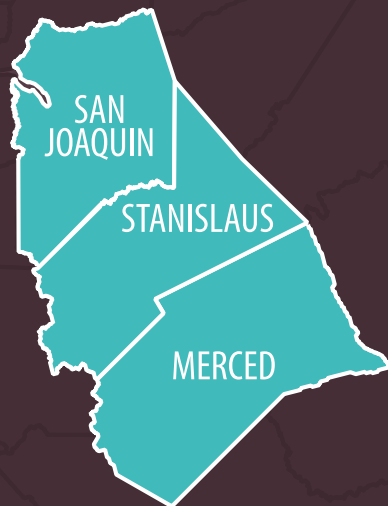
California Jobs First (formerly the Community Economic Resilience Fund or CERF) is a statewide program created in 2021 to help transition to more equitable and sustainable regional economies. The Northern San Joaquin Valley (NSJV) is one of thirteen California Jobs First regions.

To meet the opportunity of California Jobs First, the NSJV region quickly stood up a coalition of more than 200 partner organizations and more than 600 unique contacts – and growing. This new coalition of grassroots, government, workforce, philanthropy, labor, business, and educational organizations has formed as “North Valley THRIVE” (The High Road for an Inclusive, Vibrant Economy). These stakeholders are collectively addressing two fundamental areas of inquiry: the characteristics that define the region and the vision for a more equitable future.

Despite being an active engine in the powerhouse that is the California economy, and despite its proximity to the State’s tech epicenter to the west and political center to the north, the NSJV lags the State in several key indicators. It is for this reason that the promise of California Jobs First was met with such enthusiasm – an enthusiasm that has driven the convening of hundreds of organizations and residents in the past several months. The California Jobs First program’s explicit commitment to equity, community-led governance and the enfranchisement of historically marginalized communities was welcomed as a once-in-a-generation inflection point in the economic trajectory of our region.



The Northern San Joaquin Valley



Actions to Date and Moving Forward

North Valley THRIVE's initial focus was on identifying what makes the region unique. The North Valley THRIVE Research Consortium formed to ensure that top-notch analyses, tailored to the region, are produced and used in the California Jobs First efforts. This Consortium serves as a central hub for research and policy, involving universities like University of the Pacific, Stanislaus State University, and UC Merced, along with non-profits and other research institutions in the area.

In January 2024, the Consortium shared the North Valley THRIVE Baseline Regional Assessment Report which contained research highlighting key factors including socioeconomics and the environment. Insights into many issues for further discussion and collaboration are contained in the Report.

While North Valley THRIVE made significant efforts in stakeholder consultation, this Summary and the comprehensive Report are just the beginning. In future work the breadth of consultation will expand and collaboration with regional communities strengthened.

This Summary presents highlights of the following:

- People and the Economic System
- Climate and the Environment
- Public Health

The Summary adheres to the structure of the complete Report, accessible at www.NorthValleyTHRIVE.org



People and the Economic System



This Summary reviews four of the six topics from the Report's People and the Economic System Section:

- Demographics
- Regional Inequalities
- Economic Structure and Dynamics
- Low-Road and High-Road Jobs

Two other topics, Economic Shocks and Shifts and Economic Development Opportunities, are included in the full Report and will be further explored in subsequent analyses.

Demographics

The NSJV has a relatively young and diverse population. This provides a more robust and dynamic labor force, relatively high consumption patterns and a smaller dependent population that is potentially better able to invest in infrastructure, education, and health care. It also creates a social and cultural vibrancy that may become a significant regional amenity and attraction despite it currently being underdeveloped.

Slowed Population Growth

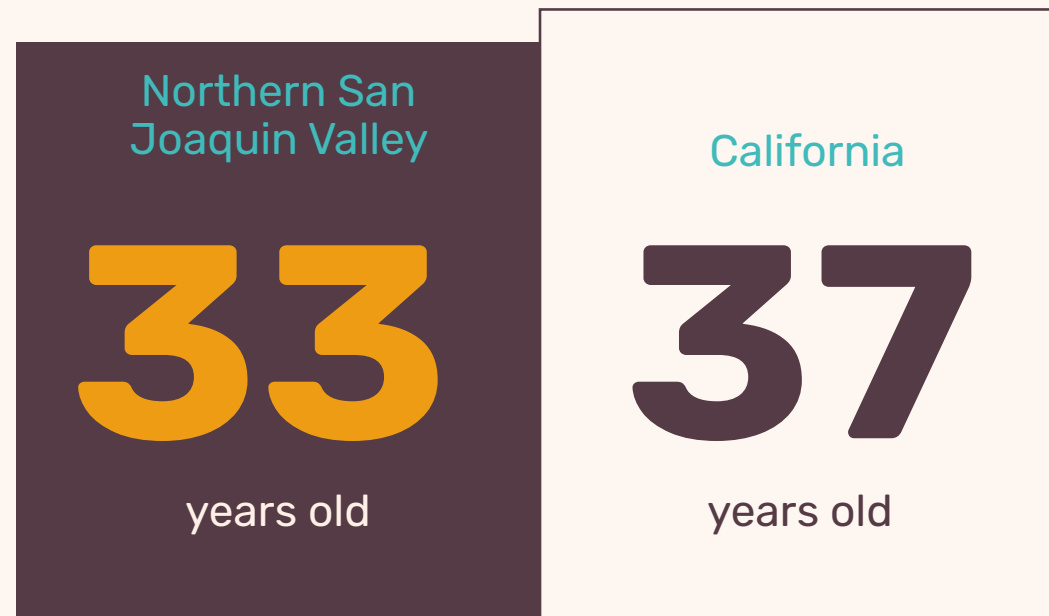
While a growing population can fuel economic expansion by bolstering the labor force and consumer demand, it also necessitates productivity enhancements and infrastructure development to sustain economic growth. The NSJV has experienced a notable slowdown in population growth compared to previous decades. Despite this, the region's growth remains relatively robust compared to California and the entire United States.

Decade	Growth Rate
1970s	24%
1980s	33%
1990s	15%
2000s	16%
2010s	9%

As of 2022, the NSJV had a population of **1,634,500 residents**.



Median Age



There are many young people in the Northern San Joaquin Valley, though the **population is aging due in part to declining fertility rates.**

Fertility & Mortality Rates

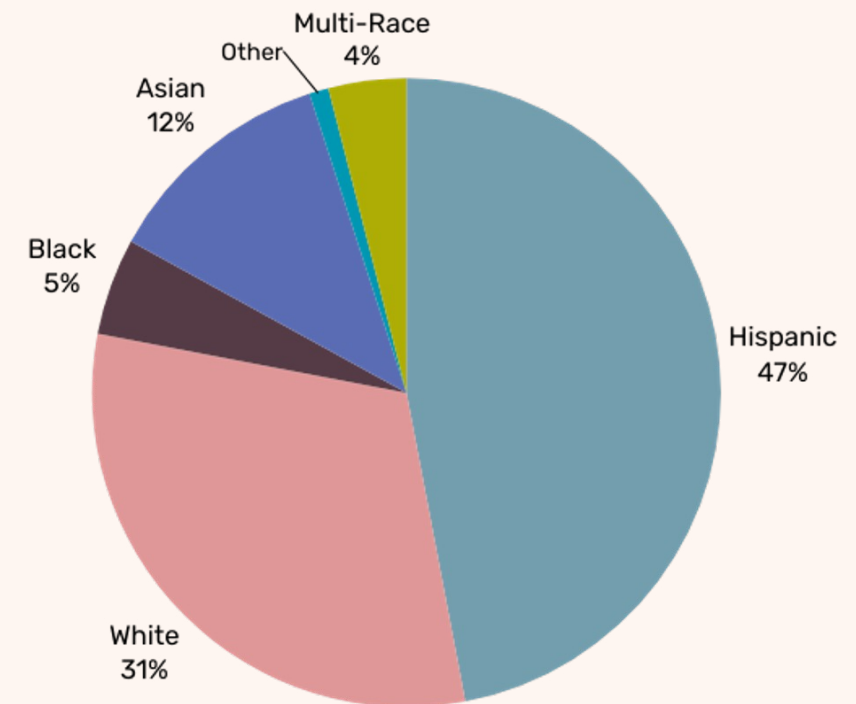
Analysis of net natural change –representing the difference between births and deaths– reveals a decline in the rate of net annual growth. Projections indicate that a significant portion of the NSJV’s future growth will come from increasing Hispanic and other non-White non-Hispanic populations. However, while historically driven by relatively high fertility rates, Hispanic fertility rates have notably decreased in recent years, contributing to the region’s overall slowing population growth.

NET NATURAL CHANGE

The difference of births and deaths within a given population over a specified period of time. Mathematically, net natural change can be expressed as:
Net Natural Change = Number of Births - Number of Deaths



Diversity in the NSJV



The Northern San Joaquin Valley is a **diverse community.**

Net Migration

Migration patterns in the NSJV exhibit two main dynamics: positive net inflows from other parts of California and negative net outflows to other areas of the United States. The region’s affordability compared to the neighboring San Francisco Bay area is identified as a significant factor driving positive inflows from within other parts of California. Conversely, higher living costs in the NSJV region relative to other parts of the United States may be contributing to negative outflows to other parts of the United States.

A key point is that NSJV inflows from other parts of California offset outflows to other states during most of the 2010s. This is a trend that we might have expected to continue during recent years, as hybrid and remote models have grown during the pandemic. Other parts of California continue to exhibit inflow patterns due to these dynamics. Despite this, net domestic migration in the NSJV appears to be slowing down with indications of negative outflows in recent years.

NET MIGRATION

Is a component of population change consisting of the difference between in-migration (inflows) and out-migration (outflows) within a given population over a specified period of time.



Regional Inequalities

Inequality can limit access to education and other resources in a region. These limitations can damage regional efforts toward high-road economic growth. These socioeconomic issues create significant negative externalities, impact workforce stability, and reduce consumer spending power.

Income Inequality

While the NSJV's Gini coefficients are somewhat lower than the state and national averages, the table below indicates high levels of income inequality. Further analysis reveals disparities in household income distribution across population quintiles (fifths).

GINI COEFFICIENT

A measure of statistical dispersion quantifying the degree of income (or wealth) inequality within a population. It is expressed as a value from 0 to 1, where 0 is perfect equality (everyone has the same income) and 1 is perfect inequality (one person has all the income).

	Lowest Quintile	Second Quintile	Third Quintile	Fourth Quintile	Highest Quintile	TopQ-to-BottomQ
Merced County	3.4%	9.1%	14.9%	22.5%	50.0%	14.5
Stanislaus County	3.8%	9.5%	15.5%	23.6%	47.7%	12.7
San Joaquin County	3.4%	9.3%	15.5%	23.7%	48.0%	14

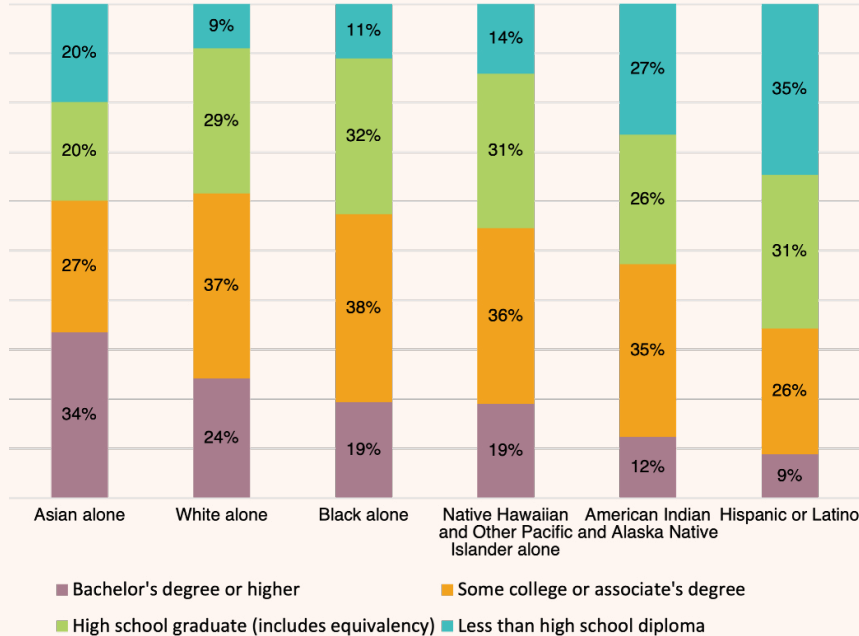


Educational Attainment by Race / Ethnicity

5 Year Sample



The Northern San Joaquin Valley labor force has **limited post-high school qualifications**



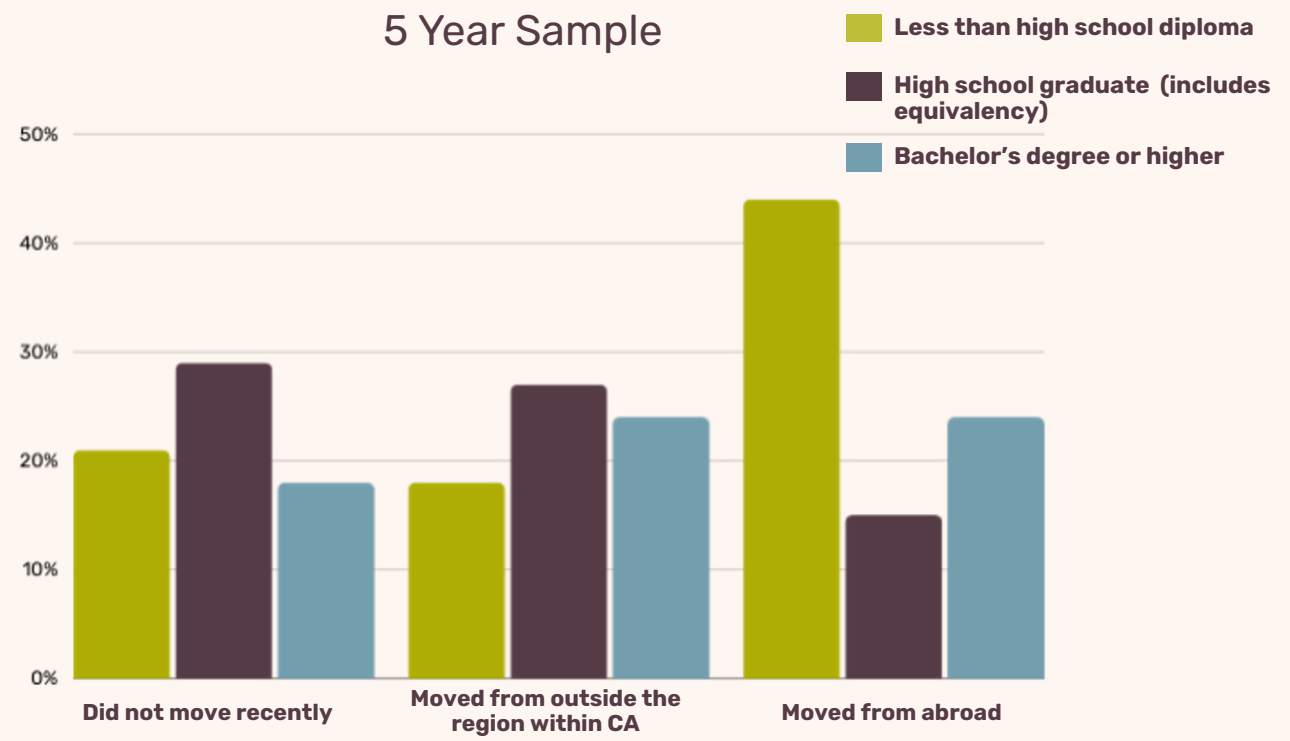


What can CERF be for us?

- Leverage for something much bigger, beyond initial investment
- Actualization of our priorities and values
- Roadmap for future investment and economic relationship building
- Establishing ourselves as an economic region
- Developing a shared vision

Educational Attainment by Migration (2022)

5 Year Sample



Nearly Half of NSJV Families Struggle to Meet Basic Needs

A comprehensive analysis conducted by the Brookings Institution and Cities GPS for the North Valley THRIVE Research Consortium sheds light on poverty and inequality in the NSJV. Approximately 45% of families in the region struggle to meet basic needs, with around 75% of these families having active labor market participation among adults.

Detailed regional and county-level data from this assessment is available via the QR Code/link to the right.



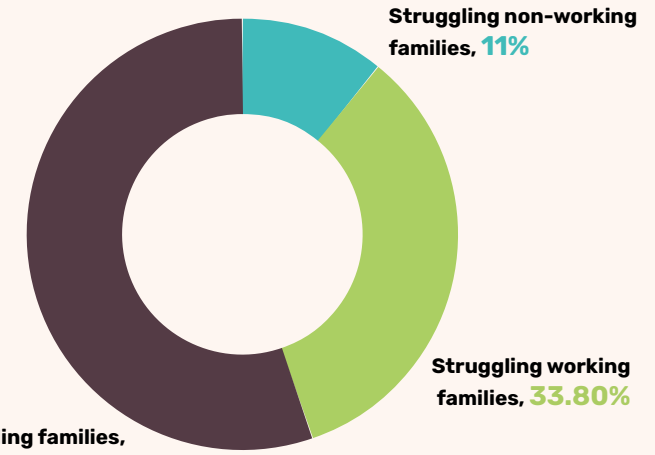
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BASIC NEEDS

Refers to an estimation of the minimum expenses required for a family to meet their essential needs for food, housing, clothing, transportation, healthcare, and other necessities. These estimates reflect costs according to family structure across each of the NSJV's three counties.

Struggling Families

Notably, there has been a substantial increase in social protection payments during the pandemic, with the NSJV displaying a relatively high per-capita rate of these payments compared to state and national averages. This may be reflective of disproportionately higher regional needs.



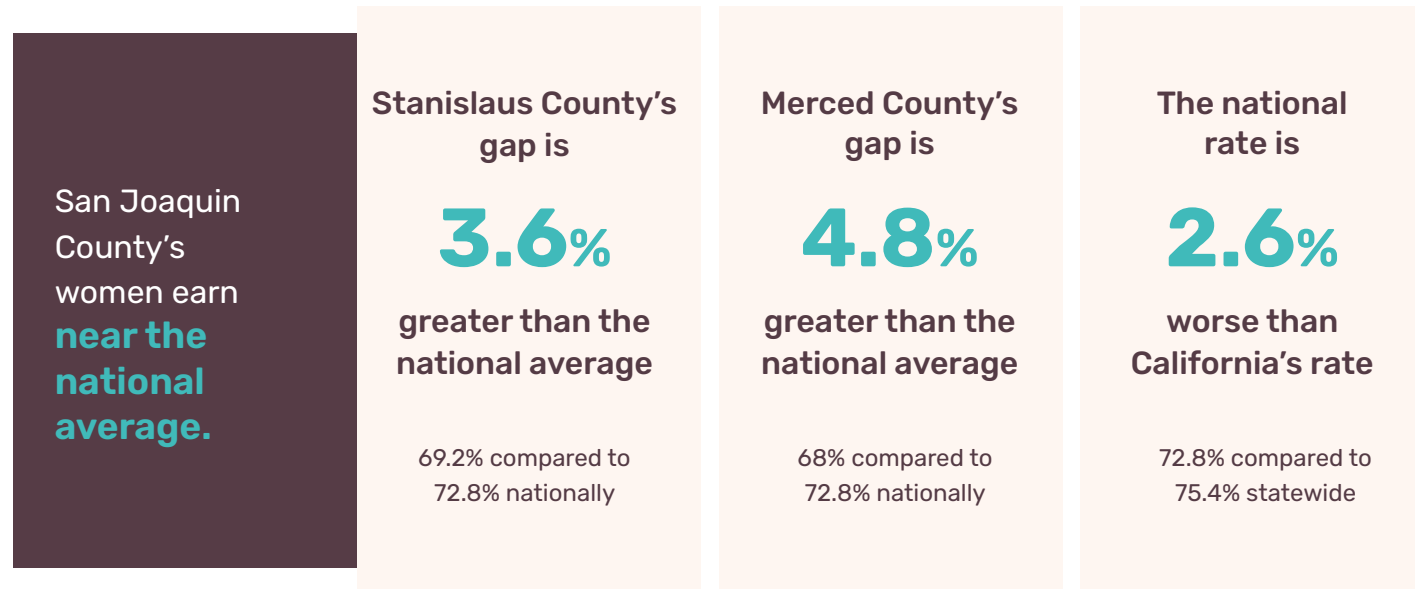
12 Migrants from other parts of the state and abroad were **more likely to have a bachelor's degree**. Foreign-born residents were also **less likely to have finished high school**.

Non-struggling families, 55.20%

Gender-based Pay Gap Disparities

Income disparities between men and women in the region are a particularly important factor making overall economic inequality worse. While women's earnings as a percent of men's earnings in San Joaquin County are close to national levels, data indicates a wider gender pay gap in Stanislaus and Merced Counties compared to the national average. This discrepancy suggests that income disparities between men and women in the region may worsen overall economic inequality, particularly when considering California's lower gender pay gap compared to the national average.

Gender Pay Gap Examination



Language Justice

Communication inequalities stemming from language diversity and limited English proficiency contribute to disparities in information access and utilization among social groups in the NSJV. These challenges, highlighted through community stakeholder feedback, underscore the importance of addressing barriers related to information trust and access. The Report describes how communication inequalities create differences among social groups in their ability to generate, disseminate, and use information at the community level. Additionally, the report indicates how these inequalities impact resident ability to access, process, and act on information at the individual level.

Social Mobility

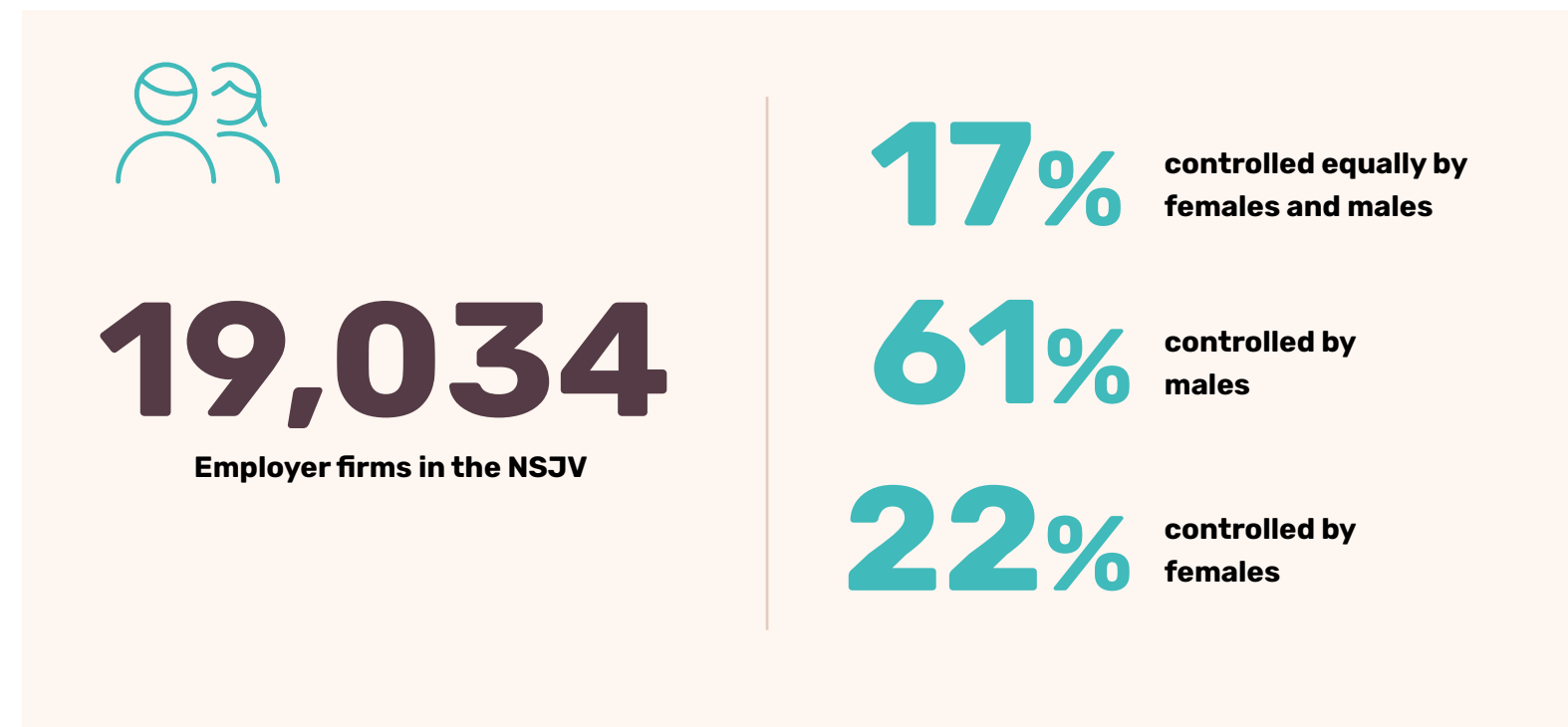
Social mobility is the change in a resident's socio-economic situation. It is associated with the degree to which people have the same chances to do well in life regardless of their background or other circumstances beyond their control. Because social mobility is crucial for fostering a vibrant society, it remains a significant concern in the NSJV, particularly within disinvested communities. While region-specific research on social mobility is lacking, data from the Opportunity Atlas suggests low intra- and inter-generational social mobility, potentially perpetuating inequality and hindering socio-economic development.

INTER- and INTRA-GENERATIONAL SOCIAL MOBILITY


Inter-generational social mobility refers to socioeconomic change across different generations. It measures the extent to which a person's socioeconomic conditions differs from that of their parents or ancestors. Intra-generational social mobility, on the other hand, considers socioeconomic movement during an individual's lifetime.

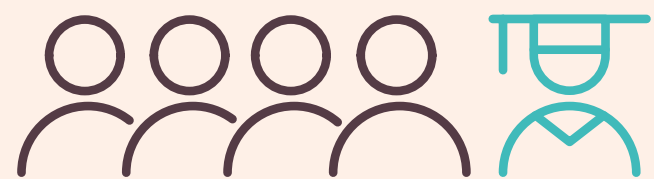
Disparities in Business Ownership

An initial assessment of business ownership in the NSJV highlights gender disparities, indicating a disproportionate number of male-controlled employer firms in the region. Recognizing the role of business ownership structures in either worsening or improving inequality, further examination is warranted to understand its implications for socio-economic development in the NSJV.





 The region's strategic location and low-wage population is both an economic strength and weakness.



Only **one in five** entry-level jobs requires higher education.

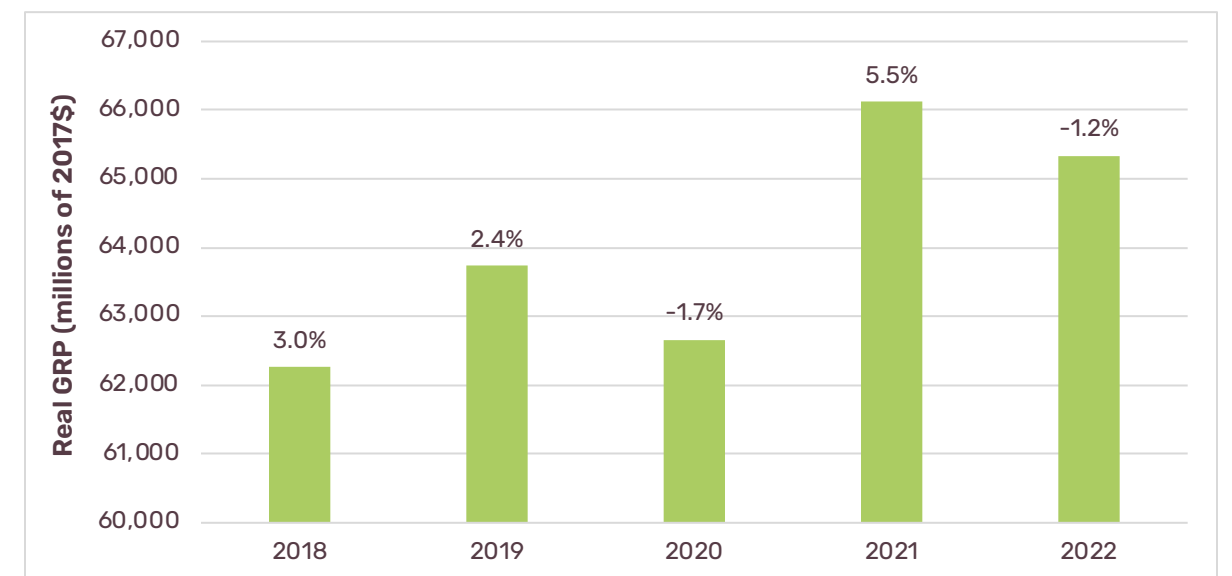
Economic Structure and Dynamics

The NSJV's central location in Northern California provides easy access to major markets and urban centers like San Francisco, Sacramento, and the Silicon Valley. This makes it an attractive location for businesses seeking proximity to these areas but with lower operational costs. However, in comparison to other parts of California, the NSJV has limited higher educational attainment as well as fewer specialized skill sets. This could pose a challenge in attracting high value and advanced industries that tend to require a more educated and skilled workforce

Gross Regional Product

In 2022, the NSJV had a nominal Gross Regional Product (GRP) of \$80.5 billion, ranking 9th among the thirteen California Jobs First regions. The figure below illustrates significant fluctuations in the region's economic growth over recent years, with variations evident across its counties.

NSJV GRP (2022): **\$80.5 billion**



Trade Flows

Examining trade flows within and beyond the region, the report underscores the importance of intra-regional and inter-state trade. Ongoing research seeks to illuminate the geographic and sectoral dynamics of these flows.

Transportation and the Movement of Goods in the NSJV Highlight the Significance of Regional Infrastructure and High Housing Needs

Assessing the critical role of infrastructure in driving economic development in the NSJV, the Report examines the region's historical and contemporary transportation and goods movement systems, alongside its industrial and commercial property resources. It also highlights inter-regional connections and the recent growth of e-commerce opportunities.

The NSJV faces a pressing need for housing infrastructure, due to its high housing demand. Despite housing challenges being widespread across California and the United States, they are particularly acute in the NSJV. **The region's proximity to wealthier areas like the San Francisco Bay Area exacerbates this need. This proximity incentivizes inter-regional commuting, driving up local costs as residents seek more affordable options elsewhere.** For instance, data reveals a significant disparity in median home prices between Alameda County and San Joaquin County. In July of 2022, the median home price in Alameda County exceeded the median home price in San Joaquin County by \$900,000.

Further evidence of the region's housing challenges is shown in the table below, where despite the national attention given to California's housing shortage, each NSJV county exceeds the state in residents per housing unit.

Place	Persons per Housing Unit
San Joaquin County	2.99
Stanislaus County	2.94
Merced County	3.12
NSJV	2.99
California	2.65

Financial Ecosystem

As a central focus of the financial ecosystem assessment, the Report scrutinizes regional risk capital investments over the past decade (2014-2023), alongside trends in insured institutional deposits and small business and farm loan activities.

HOUSING AS INFRASTRUCTURE

This refers to the provision of residential structures and related amenities. It encompasses various elements such as affordable housing, urban planning, zoning regulations, transportation accessibility, and community services. Adequate housing infrastructure aims to address housing needs, promote sustainable development, and enhance the quality of life for residents.

Between 2018 and 2022, the NSJV had only **25.5%** of the **total venture capital** investment of the Central San Joaquin Valley

and just **2.5%** of the **Sacramento region's total.**

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Most firms (over 16,000), in the NSJV are businesses with 20 or fewer employees. However, most employment (some 200,000 jobs), occur in firms that have 500 or more employees.

Assessing the regional innovation system and entrepreneurship landscape, the Report identifies challenges in business creation and innovation outputs. It also identifies potential knowledge clusters ripe for leveraging.

The NSJV faces simultaneous opportunities and challenges because of its relative prices and affordability. The NSJV offers a lower cost of living compared to the neighboring San Francisco Bay Area, which can be appealing for attracting and retaining talent as well as businesses looking for cost effective operational bases. However, within the region, and compared to other areas nationally, the NSJV's relative costs create affordability challenges that may impede economic competitiveness and social wellbeing.



New businesses in NSJV

2,200
(2020)

New business per 100,000 residents

240 California
140 NSJV



Fewer businesses start in the Northern San Joaquin Valley than the state as a whole.

Inter-regional Inflows

The Report examines regional and inter-regional income trends as indicators of the standard of living of both the NSJV and its residents. It draws attention to the increasing importance of income transfers within and between regions, notably from individuals commuting outside their county of residence.

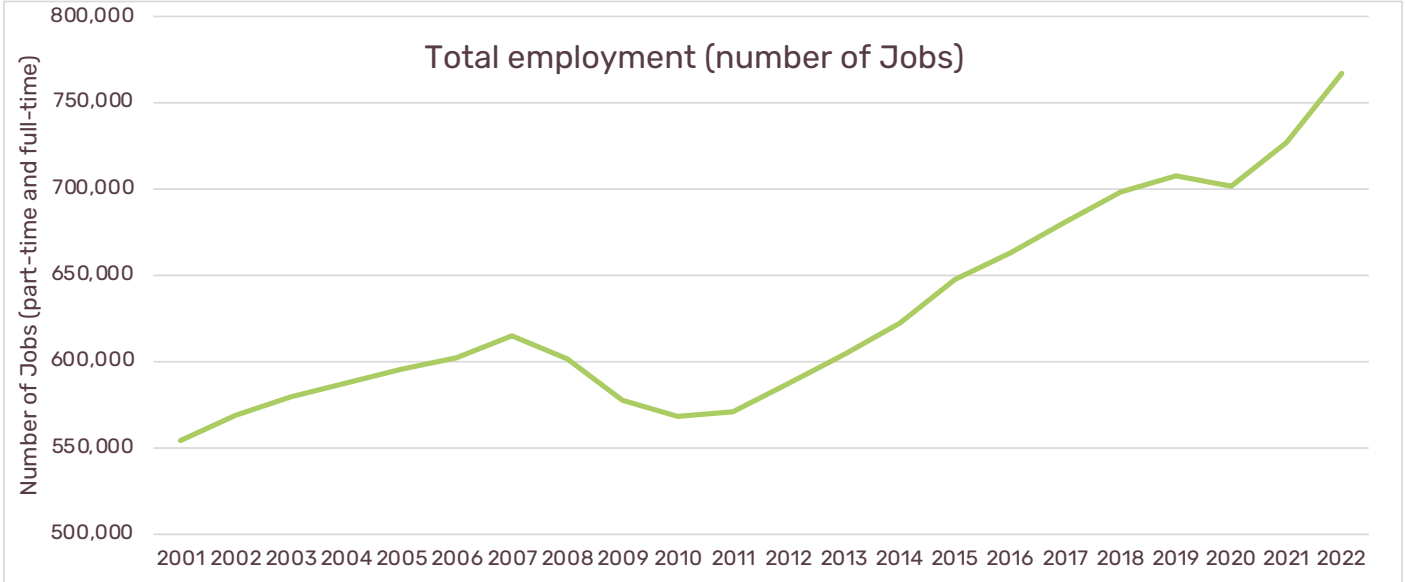
Analysis reveals substantial growth in earnings inflows to San Joaquin County, totaling **\$3.0 billion** in real terms from 2012 to 2022. During the same period, Stanislaus County saw an increase in inflows of **\$1.4 billion**, while Merced County experienced a **\$1.0 billion increase.**



Employment Growth

The NSJV region experienced robust employment growth throughout the 2010s. Total full-time and part-time jobs reached 767,250 in 2022. However, the Report notes that there are some concerns about the nature of these jobs, especially their knowledge intensity. In this regard the NSJV ranks lowest among the 13 California Jobs First regions in terms of the percentage of jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree or higher for entry-level positions.

While job growth is expected to taper slightly in the late 2020s, forecasts anticipate a 3.4% increase in the 2030s, followed by 5.8% in the 2040s and 4.5% in the 2050s. NSJV employment is projected to increase to 868,000 by 2060.



The competitive effect of the dynamic shift-share analysis identifies significant intra-regional growth features. This includes over 20,200 jobs in transportation and warehousing across the NSJV, with over 98% located in San Joaquin County. Similarly, regional competitiveness in the health care and social assistance sector contributed to 4,750 jobs, with a majority (70%) in Stanislaus County.

COMPETITIVE EFFECT

This is a component of the dynamic shift-share analysis that accounts for the portion of regional economic growth or decline attributed to factors beyond overall industry trends or national economic changes. It assesses how well a region’s industries perform relative to their counterparts in other regions, indicating a competitive advantage or disadvantage in sectors.

Unemployment is Near Historically Low Levels

Labor force indicators reveal historically low levels of unemployment returning to the region post-pandemic. The Report discusses trends in labor force participation, with uncertainty surrounding whether the region will return to pre-pandemic downward trends or maintain the growth observed in 2022 and early 2023.

Intra- and Inter-Regional Commuting

Commuters coming in and going out of San Joaquin County have increased in recent decades. In the early 1980s, fewer than 10,000 county residents commuted outside the county for work. Today, that number exceeds **100,000 commuters coming into and leaving San Joaquin County daily**. As the Northern California economy integrates, commuting is critical for planning and economic development. More commuters create transportation infrastructure challenges and opportunities to leverage our regional advantages.

While the Covid-19 pandemic caused significant disruption to established commute patterns. Initial data suggests a 20% decrease in inter-regional commuting compared to pre-pandemic levels, but uncertainty remains as remote and hybrid work practices continue to evolve.



HUMAN CAPITAL

Human capital refers to the collective skills, knowledge, abilities, and experiences possessed by the region's workforce and population. It represents an essential component of economic and social development, contributing to productivity, innovation, and overall prosperity. However, in the Report years of formal education is used as an imperfect measure.

Human Capital

Analysis of educational attainment levels of the NSJV's population shows the region's limited human capital, which poses a significant challenge for regional development. Ultimately, the region's low knowledge intensity of existing employment aligns with this relatively low level of human capital. As a result, the assessment suggests the importance of simultaneously enhancing education and training opportunities for the region's population while supporting employers that foster regional knowledge development.

In complementing the efforts of the regional K-16 "We Will!" collaborative, the Report focuses on the NSJV's higher education system and completion rates at these institutions. While data on subject and award level completions indicate significant regional education capabilities, utilization levels are relatively low. This indicates a potential need for enhanced educational access.

Regional Amenities

The initial analysis of regional amenities suggests potential underinvestment in the NSJV. According to a National Assessment, despite possessing a diverse social and cultural fabric, the region ranks 11th lowest among the 13 California Jobs First regions in terms of arts vibrancy.

Low-Road and High-Road Jobs

In the context of the Report, "High-Road Jobs" jobs refer to positions that prioritize fair wages, benefits, worker rights, and opportunities for skill development and career advancement. These jobs also support broader societal goals such as economic equity and sustainability.

Additional data is available via the QR Code/link to the right.



<https://bit.ly/NVTBAR24>

QUALITY/PROMISING/OPPORTUNITY JOBS

To estimate "High-Road Jobs" in the NSJV, the Brookings Institution and Cities GPS analysis defines quality, promising, and opportunity jobs. Quality jobs are defined as those with benefits and a wage (\$32.80/hour) sufficient to reduce the NSJV's struggling children by half and provide pathways to another quality job. Promising jobs do not pay a sufficient wage (\$32.80/hour) or offer benefits but do provide a pathway to a quality job within the next 10 years. Together they form "opportunity jobs".

Only 23.8% of NSJV Jobs Can be Considered Quality Jobs

The analysis defines quality jobs in the NSJV as those offering wages that are sufficient to halve the number of children in struggling families across the NSJV. Quality jobs should also offer benefits, and pathways to other quality jobs. Research suggests that that just 23.8% of jobs in the region meet these criteria.

Opportunity Jobs Make Up Just 40% of All Jobs in the NSJV

Considering additional jobs that offer pathways to quality jobs but lack the socially desirable wage rate or benefits, the analysis identifies promising jobs. Together these form "opportunity job" that would enable self-sufficiency and financial stability, now or soon, for a majority of children currently in struggling working families. Opportunity jobs comprise about forty percent of all jobs in the NSJV. The analysis details demographic and sectoral distribution of these jobs, providing valuable insights for the region's high-road economy development strategies.

Climate and the Environment



Climate and the Environment

Research indicates that the greatest immediate climate and environmental threats facing the NSJV are: 1) extreme heat and rising temperatures; 2) drought and changing precipitation cycles (including groundwater overdraft and drinking water access for unincorporated communities); 3) flooding as a result of more severe storms, snowmelt runoff and proximity to vulnerable rivers and levees; and 4) pollution burden including PM2.5 and ozone exposure, as well as proximity to pesticides, hazardous waste facilities and superfund sites.

Disinvested communities in the NSJV are particularly vulnerable to these environmental threats and their associated economic challenges. Decades of disinvestment have left many with fewer and more limited resources to adapt to climate change, and these groups are more likely to experience both job losses and economic hardship. This illustrates the need for targeted interventions and improved communication strategies to address these historic underinvestment issues

The majority of the NSJV's population experiences compound vulnerability due to low income, disinvestment, and high levels of exposure to environmental pollutants and climate threats.

- Fifty-four percent of the total population make less than 80% of the Statewide annual median household income.
- The NSJV region in California has historically faced underinvestment, particularly in disinvested communities. Many of these communities have experienced issues like brown tap water, indicating inadequate infrastructure and environmental neglect. Across the NSJV, community members have also highlighted the lack of access to safe places for recreation and natural spaces, as well as limited park space and spending on parks per person.
- This historic underinvestment has contributed to the disproportionate impact climate change and environmental hazards have on these communities, which further increases their vulnerability to health risks and economic challenges.

Disinvested communities in the NSJV face a higher burden of health risks associated with climate change and environmental hazards, including heat stress, air pollution, water pollution, and flood vulnerability.

Heat Stress: Rising temperatures are expected to increase the frequency and intensity of heat waves, which can lead to heatstroke, dehydration, and respiratory problems, especially for agricultural and field workers, or those in jobs in factories or manufacturing. Community conversations have indicated that rising temperatures are already changing workhours and making working conditions hazardous throughout the NSJV.

Air Pollution: The poor air quality in the NSJV, exacerbated by the region's geography, poses severe health risks to its residents. Fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and ozone from vehicle traffic, agricultural production and pesticides, and wildfires contribute to respiratory infections, asthma, and heart conditions. Disinvested communities, lacking adequate indoor air filtration and often working outdoors, face increased health risks. This can also further strain limited healthcare resources for the region.

Water Pollution: Many communities in the NSJV also experience high exposure to contaminants, pesticides and fertilizer runoff in their drinking water supplies. Many unincorporated communities in the NSJV lack access to potable water and sewer systems, leading to increased exposure to water contaminants such as nitrates, arsenic, and pesticide runoff, exposing residents to numerous environmental hazards and public health concerns.

Flood Vulnerability: The NSJV region faces significant flood vulnerability due to its proximity to floodplains, rivers, and vulnerable levees. Disinvested communities in the NSJV are less likely to have the resources to respond to or recover from severe flooding events, increasing their vulnerability. Community comments have indicated that hazard communication to these vulnerable communities is often challenging due to language barriers or cultural differences, leaving them at a higher risk of exposure and with decreased preparation capacity.

Climate change in the NSJV is projected to reduce agricultural productivity, worsen water scarcity, damage infrastructure, and disproportionately impact vulnerable communities, resulting in interconnected health, environmental, and socio-economic challenges.

Reduced agricultural productivity: Rising temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns are expected to reduce crop yields and livestock production. This will have a significant impact on the region's economy, which is heavily reliant on agriculture.

Drought and water scarcity: Climate change is expected to cause longer drought periods throughout the NSJV. This may increase water scarcity and contribute to chronic groundwater basin overdraft, leading to higher water prices, competition for water resources, and increased land falling across the NSJV region. Drought may further increase the region's vulnerability to other climate hazards such as wildfires as well as the amount of dust in the air, resulting in poor air quality. Because the majority of the NSJV population relies on groundwater for drinking water supplies, residents run the risk of more wells drying up and increased levels of pollution of remaining water supplies.

Damage to infrastructure: Extreme weather events, such as floods and wildfires as well as extreme heat are expected to become more frequent and intense due to climate change. This is expected to damage infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and power lines, and disrupt essential services.

The health, environmental, and socio-economic consequences of climate change are often highly correlated. As a result, the lowest income, and most highly vulnerable populations in the NSJV are anticipated to experience the greatest impacts.

- Air pollution can exacerbate respiratory illnesses, which can lead to poorer health, increased rates of healthcare costs and lost productivity.
- Drought and increased water scarcity can contribute to food insecurity, and result in increased contamination levels in regional drinking water, which negatively impacts the health and well-being of residents throughout the three-county region.

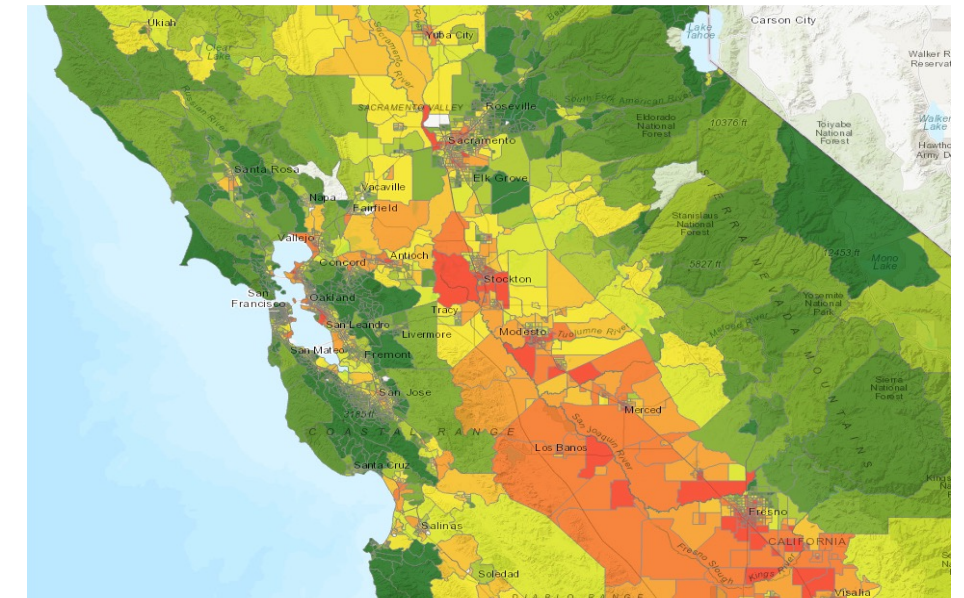
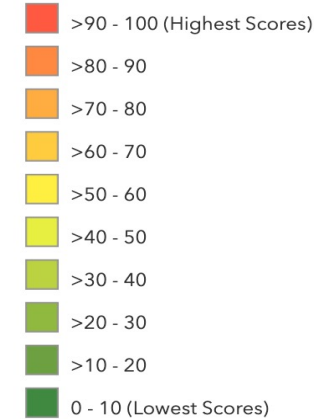
- Communities struggling with access to clean water may be forced to purchase expensive alternatives, causing additional economic burdens.
- Extreme weather events can also damage homes and businesses, which can lead to economic hardship and displacement.

Addressing the impacts of climate change and fostering environmental sustainability while at the same time encouraging industry development and job growth will require a comprehensive and coordinated approach that considers the health, environmental, and socio-economic needs of disinvested communities throughout the NSJV.

CalEnvirScreenOverallPercentileMap

Overall Percentile

CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Results



CalEnviroScreen 4.0 High Pollution, Low Population

Public Health



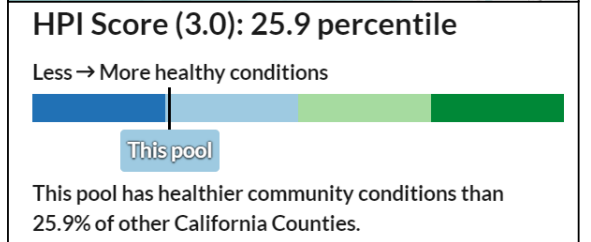
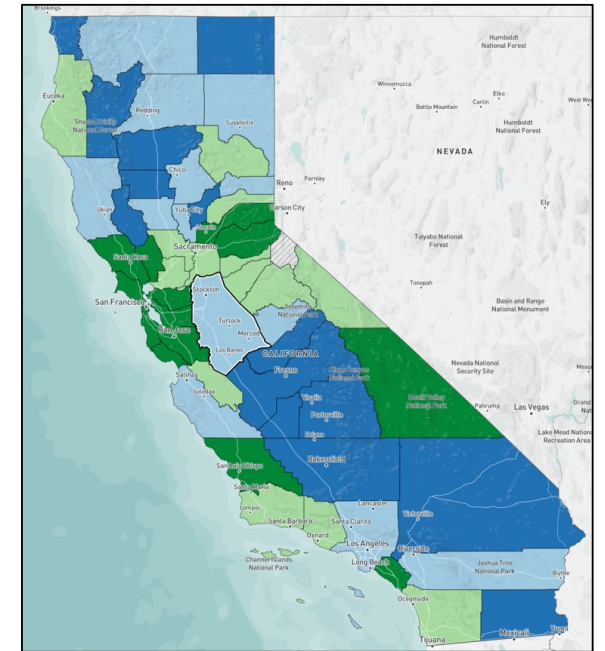
Public Health

The region faces numerous challenges related to public health outcomes and social determinants of health, many of which relate to economic conditions, as well as climate and environmental factors. As detailed in the Report, these impacts are felt most seriously by the disinvested communities that comprise most of the NSJV region.

As shown in the figure to the right, if the overall health and well-being of the three-county NSJV region was ranked against California's other 55 counties, the NSJV would rank lower than nearly 75 percent of counties in the state.

The following table presents the rankings of the NSJV in the Healthy Places Index (HPI) according to eight conditions that summarize a further 23 indicators. Accordingly in seven of the eight conditions the NSJV falls in the lowest half of California counties.

Regarding relative strengths, overall, the HPI suggests that our region has better healthcare access conditions than 53.4 percent of other California counties. Significantly, some 90.4 percent of adults aged 18 to 64 years are estimated to have health insurance in the NSJV. However, having health insurance may not present the full picture of healthcare access, such as health professional availability, which data shows is a significant challenge in our region, particularly with regard to an insufficient number of dentists, mental health providers, primary care physicians, and other primary care providers.



NSJV Condition	Percent of California Counties with Less Healthy Conditions
Clean Environment	16%
Transportation	24%
Education	26%
Economic	36%
Neighborhood	36%
Housing	36%
Social	45%
Healthcare Access	53%

In terms of relative weaknesses, the HPI suggests the following four issues:

Water Quality

The NSJV faces many struggles with drinking water quality, which can cause serious impacts to public health. With an index score of 739, which reflects combined information about 13 contaminants and two types of water quality violations that are sometimes found when drinking water samples are tested, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the worst 3.4 percentile for the “Drinking Water Contaminants” indicator. People in our region experience high rates of diseases like chronic kidney disease and cardiovascular disease, which are linked to water quality issues. Further, the region is facing serious threats to groundwater, as well as issues like impaired water bodies and extreme heat that can further exacerbate water quality challenges. Pesticide and fertilizer use, especially from non-organic farming in our dominant agricultural sector, is also a significant concern.

Air Quality

Air quality also presents numerous negative impacts on public health in the NSJV. The region struggles with poor air quality and residents face serious health concerns as a result. This includes high levels of things like diesel fumes, ground ozone, and tiny particles called PM 2.5. With an annual average of fine particulate matter concentration (very small particles from vehicle tailpipes, tires and brakes, power plants, factories, burning wood, construction dust, and many other sources) of 11 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), the NSJV’s third worst performing HPI indicator consists of particulate matter 2.5 micrometers and smaller (“PM 2.5”). Overall, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 19th percentile for the “PM 2.5” indicator. With an average of 0.175 kilograms of diesel particulate matter pollution released per day, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 22.4 percentile for the “Diesel PM” indicator. Further, with an average amount of ozone in the air during the most polluted 8 hours of summer days at 0.051 parts per million (ppm), the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 34.5 percentile for the “Ozone” indicator. Clearly, air quality presents a significant challenge to public health in the NSJV. Breathing in this pollution can lead to lung cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, heart problems, strokes, high blood pressure, and asthma.

Social Determinants of Health

Multiple factors affect our health based on where we live and how we live, including the following:



Social Conditions: The HPI ranks the NSJV’s social conditions in the 44.8 percentile overall, which primarily reflects our region’s low percentage of registered voters (76.8 percent).



Transportation Conditions: The HPI ranks the NSJV’s transportation conditions in the 24.1 percentile overall, which primarily reflects relatively low automobile access (31st percentile), as well as the relatively small percent of workers (16 years and older) commuting to work by transit, walking, or cycling (just 3.27 percent).

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, including factors like socioeconomic status, education, neighborhood, employment, and social support networks, which significantly impact health outcomes.





Neighborhood Conditions: The HPI ranks the NSJV’s neighborhood conditions in the 36.2 percentile overall. With 79.4 percent of people in the NSJV living within walkable distance (half-mile) of a park, beach, or open space, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 62.1 percentile for the “Park Access” indicator; however, this indicator does not reflect park amenities, safety, usage, and investments, which data show occur at lower rates in the region. With 7.55 percent of land with tree canopy (weighted by number of people per acre), the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 31st percentile for the “Tree Canopy” indicator.



Housing Conditions: The HPI ranks the NSJV’s housing conditions in the 36.2 percentile overall. With 56.3 percent of people in the NSJV owning their own home, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 17.2 percentile for the “Homeownership” indicator. With 25.3 percent of low-income renters in the NSJV paying more than 50% of their income on housing costs, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 50th percentile for the “Low-Income Renter Severe Housing Cost Burden” indicator. Finally, with 92.6 percent of households not being overcrowded (more than 1 person per room) in the NSJV, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 27.6 percentile for the “Uncrowded Housing” indicator.



Economic Conditions: The HPI ranks the NSJV’s economic conditions in the 36.2 percentile overall, which means that the majority of counties perform better than our region. More specifically, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 31st percentile for the “Above Poverty” indicator. The NSJV ranks in the 43.1 percentile for the “Employed” indicator, with 67.7 percent of people aged 20-64 with a job. And, with a per capita income of \$26,300, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 25.9 percentile for the “Per Capita Income” indicator.



Education Conditions: While higher education attainment leads to higher rates of self-sufficiency and lower rates of poverty, educational attainment remains a significant challenge in the NSJV. With regard to Education conditions, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 25.9 percentile overall. Regarding the three indicators that make up the Education condition, with 17.3 percent of people over age 25 with a bachelor’s education or higher education, the HPI ranks the NSJV in the 25.9 percentile for the “Bachelor’s Education or Higher” indicator.

Regarding the “Preschool Enrollment” indicator, 43.3 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in the NSJV are in school, which places the NSJV in the 36.2 percentile. Without adequate childcare in the region, single parents, especially single mothers of color, struggle with educational attainment and related economic indicators that impact health at some of the highest levels.

Access to Care

Many NSJV residents struggle to access good quality behavioral, dental, and medical care providers. Research indicates that residents often struggle to find mental health providers, dentists, or even just to get regular check-ups with doctors or adequate prenatal care. As a result, residents experience more mental and physical distress, have higher rates of diseases like cancer, and face other health problems like low-birth-weight babies or even infant deaths. Without regular and routine medical care, residents may end up needing to go to the emergency room more often for things like asthma attacks or complications from diseases like diabetes or cancer. This likely contributes to the NSJV having elevated rates of breast cancer deaths, prostate cancer deaths, diabetes deaths, and colorectal cancer deaths, as well as rates of other diseases mentioned above.

While the Report and its Appendices provide more details, the table on the opposite page gives a summary of public health conditions facing the NSJV.

Health Factor	Merced	San Joaquin	Stanislaus	California	United States
Adult Obesity	38%	30%	33%	30%	32%
Adult Smoking	15%	14%	14%	9%	16%
Air Pollution – Particulate Matter	9.6	9.8	10.6	7.1	7.4
Alcohol-Impaired Deaths	28%	30%	31%	28%	27%
Broadband Access	89%	88%	89%	90%	87%
Child Care Centers (centers per 1,000 under 5 years olds)	5	6	4	8	7
Children in Poverty	29%	16%	19%	16%	17%
Dentists	2,200:1	1,700:1	1,440:1	1,100:1	1,380:1
Diabetes Prevalence	13%	11%	11%	9%	9%
Disconnected Youth	10%	10%	8%	7%	7%
Drinking Water Violations	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
Excessive Drinking	19%	21%	21%	18%	19%
Food Environment Index (0-worst to 10-best)	7.2	7.9	8.1	8.8	7
Frequent Mental Distress	16%	15%	16%	13%	14%
Frequent Physical Distress	13%	11%	11%	10%	9%
Gender Pay Gap	0.85	0.84	0.83	0.86	0.81
High School Completion	70%	80%	80%	84%	89%
Homicides (per 100,000 residents)	8	10	4	5	6
Life Expectancy	78.2	77.7	77.3	81	78.5
Mammography Screening	30%	29%	30%	30%	37%
Math Scores	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.7	3
Mental Health Providers	430:1	370:1	410:1	240:1	340:1
Motor Vehicle Crash Deaths	18	16	15	10	12
Other Primary Care Providers	1,470:1	2,420:1	1,370:1	1,260:1	810:1
Physical Inactivity	29%	24%	26%	21%	22%
Poor or Fair Health	22%	17%	18%	14%	12%
Premature Age-Adjusted Mortality	380	390	400	290	360
Premature Death	7,400	7,800	7,800	5,700	7,300
Preventable Hospital Stays	3,323	2,427	3,229	2,256	2,809
Primary Care Physicians	2,270:1	1,680:1	1,530:1	1,230:1	1,310:1
Reading Scores	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.9	3.1
School Funding Adequacy	-\$6,428	-\$3,882	-\$4,136	-\$1,882	\$1,062
Severe Housing Problems	23%	24%	23%	26%	17%
Social Associations (per 100,000 residents)	4	4.7	5.6	6	9.1
Some College	49%	52%	53%	67%	67%
Unemployment	10.40%	8.70%	8.40%	7.30%	5.40%
Uninsured	11%	8%	7%	8%	10%
Voter Turnout	59.50%	61.70%	62.50%	67.90%	67.90%

Note: The “Red” indicators are those that at least one county performs worse than the State/Nation, the “Teal” indicate all counties perform better than the State/Nation.

Sources Tables and Figures:

- Population Growth by Decade: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Population (CAINC1)
- Income by Quintile: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B19082, 2017-2021
- Struggling Families: Brookings and Cities GPS analysis of University of Washington Self-Sufficiency Standard and American Community Survey 1-year public-use microdata sample, 2019 – 2021.
- Gross Regional Product (GRP): Bureau of Economic Analysis, Real GDP by County (CAGDP9) Updated: December 7, 2023.
- Persons per Housing Unit: California Department of Finance Population and Housing Estimates (Report E-1 & E-1H) Released: May 1, 2023
- Total Employment: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Total Full-time and Part-Time Employment (CAEMP25N) Updated: November 16, 2023.
- Environmental, Public Health and Socioeconomic Conditions: CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Results - California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA).
- Select County Health Performance Indicators: University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, County Health Rankings & Roadmaps 2023, www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Prepared for: North Valley THRIVE

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The North Valley THRIVE Baseline Regional Assessment Report provides an in-depth analysis of the Northern San Joaquin Valley (NSJV). This Summary further expands on that analysis, specifically highlighting the region's key socio-economic elements. As the North Valley THRIVE moves into development of a Regional Plan, these initial evaluations will be further enhanced. The NSJV is currently at a pivotal juncture, with unique potential to create cohesive and effective highroad development. By choosing this path, the NSJV can evolve into a healthier, sustainable, and resilient region, bringing extensive benefits to all its residents and communities.

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