

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

March 9, 2023

### ***A Portrait of the Valley: San Joaquin Human Development Report 2023 Reveals Stark Disparities in Well-Being Across the Region***

*Measure of America's new report on the San Joaquin Valley breaks down well-being and access to opportunity by race, place, and gender*

**Fresno, CA – March 9, 2023** – [Measure of America](#), a project of the [Social Science Research Council](#), today released *A Portrait of the Valley: San Joaquin Human Development Report 2023*, an extensive study of well-being across race, place, and gender in the eight-county San Joaquin Valley region. Using the American Human Development Index (HDI), which measures well-being using health, education, and earnings data and is expressed on a scale from zero to ten, the report found that stark variation exists by place and by demographic group—resulting in significant inequalities regionwide.

Of the six racial and ethnic groups for whom it is possible to calculate an HDI score, Asian (5.55 out of 10) and white (5.18) Valley residents have the highest levels of well-being. Residents who identify as Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (4.17), Latino (3.87), Black (3.32), and Native American (2.67) have much lower scores, indicating the greater challenges to well-being and access to opportunity these groups face. The Valley as a whole scores 4.31, falling significantly below the California statewide score of 5.85.

Among census tracts in the San Joaquin Valley, HDI scores range from a low of 0.96 in Census Tract 13.01 in Kern County to a high of 8.58 in Census Tract 43.01 in Fresno County. Over 200 census tracts in the Valley—more than one in five—score below 3.0 on the 10-point HDI scale. Residents of these areas face more barriers to opportunity than do those who live in the San Joaquin Valley's higher-scoring areas. They have much lower levels of well-being—shorter life expectancies, less access to education, and extremely low earnings—than others in the region or the state, on average. The residents of these census tracts tended to be most vulnerable when the Covid-19 pandemic hit and continue to face the greatest challenges to recovery today.

“California has seen exciting and meaningful growth over the past decade: in the aggregate, people are living longer and healthier lives, attending school and attaining degrees at higher rates, and earning higher wages,” said Kristen Lewis, Director of Measure of America. “However, that progress has bypassed too many Californians, including residents of the San Joaquin Valley, reinforcing stubborn disparities by location, gender, race, and ethnicity that limit opportunities for millions of people—made even worse by the impacts of Covid-19. Without intentional policy changes and investments, we will continue to see progress without equity.”

#### **Key findings in *A Portrait of the Valley* include:**

- ***Overall well-being by race and ethnicity:*** Of the six racial and ethnic groups in the San Joaquin Valley for which it is possible to calculate HDI scores, Asian residents have the highest score, 5.55, followed closely by white residents, who score 5.18. The score for Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI) in the San Joaquin Valley is 4.17, for Latino residents, 3.87, and for Black residents, 3.32. Native American San Joaquin Valley residents have the lowest score, 2.67. This low score is rooted in California's history of displacement, discrimination, land theft,

family separation, and exclusion toward Native American peoples, and the resulting trauma and unequal distribution of resources of all sorts.

- **Overall well-being by place:** Among census tracts in the San Joaquin Valley, HDI scores range from a low of 0.96 in Census Tract 13.01 in Kern County, which lies in Bakersfield and East Bakersfield, to a high of 8.58 in Census Tract 43.01 in Fresno County, which is bordered on the south by West Herndon Avenue and on the north by the Madera County line. Over 200 census tracts in the Valley—more than one in five—score below 3.0 on the ten-point HDI scale. Burdened by unremitting economic pressure to make ends meet in the face of some of the highest living costs in the country and reliant on overstretched and often inadequate public services—from schools to transportation to health care—people living in low-scoring areas face a restricted set of choices and opportunities. They also face tremendous human insecurity, as the pandemic made tragically clear; they were more vulnerable before Covid-19, they were hardest hit by its health, social, and economic effects, and they face the steepest climb to recovery.
- **Health:** The average life expectancy for residents of the San Joaquin Valley is 78.2 years, 2.9 years shorter than the state average. A baby girl born today in the San Joaquin Valley can expect to live 81.0 years, a baby boy, 75.6 years—a 5.4-year difference. Asian residents have the longest life expectancy, 82.1 years, and Asian women live the longest of any race/gender combination, 84.9 years. Latino residents have the second-longest life expectancy, 80.9 years. Latina women, whose life expectancy is 84.2 years, outlive their male counterparts by 6.3 years. White residents' life expectancy is 76.5 years, 79.1 for women and 73.9 for men. NHOPI residents have a life expectancy of 73.9 years, slightly longer—by nearly a year—than that of NHOPI residents in the state overall. Black residents of the San Joaquin Valley can expect to live 70.6 years, nearly eight years less than the average resident. The life expectancy for Black men is lower still, 67.8 years, whereas Black women have a life expectancy of 73.6 years. Native American residents of the San Joaquin Valley have the shortest life expectancy among the region's racial and ethnic groups, 70.2 years, eight years less than the average resident and almost twelve less than Asian residents. Native American men's life expectancy is 66.2 years, women's, 73.5 years.
- **Earnings:** Median personal earnings in the San Joaquin Valley are \$31,100, about \$8,800 less than in the state overall. Men vastly outearn women, \$35,900 versus \$25,500, a difference of \$10,400. Though the sizes of the earnings gaps vary by race and ethnicity, women across the San Joaquin Valley earn much less than men, a phenomenon also found in California and in the country as a whole. This stubborn wage disparity is rooted in socialization, cultural norms around caretaking, and gender stereotypes as well as outright wage discrimination. Among racial and ethnic groups in the San Joaquin Valley, white residents earn the most, \$42,300, while Native American (\$26,200) and Latino (\$26,300) residents earn the least. A difference of about \$16,000 separates these groups. Latina women have the lowest earnings of any race/gender combination in the San Joaquin Valley, \$21,100. White men, the top-earning group (\$51,600), make well over double what Latina women earn: roughly \$30,500 more.
- **Education:** Compared to adults ages 25 and up in California as a whole, adult residents of the San Joaquin Valley are less likely to have earned a high school diploma, 84.5 percent compared to 76.1 percent, and about half as likely to hold a bachelor's degree, 37.1 percent compared to 18.0 percent. San Joaquin Valley young people between the ages of 3 and 24 are about as likely to be enrolled in school as other young Californians, however. Compared to boys and young

men, girls and young women ages 3 to 24 have slightly higher rates of school enrollment in the San Joaquin Valley, and women ages 25 and up enjoy an edge over their male counterparts across all educational outcomes, from high school graduation to graduate degree attainment—though this educational advantage is not reflected in their earnings.

*A Portrait of the Valley* details several policy priorities—such as investing Covid-19 recovery dollars chiefly in areas that score below 3.0 on the HDI, treating high-speed broadband as a public utility akin to electricity, improving the well-being of farmworkers, and investing in a green-economy future for the Valley—that can improve well-being for all while reducing disparities in health, education, and income. The report can serve as a resource for communities, advocates, and policymakers working toward closing gaps in well-being, both during recovery from the pandemic and over the long term.

*A Portrait of the Valley* is based on 2016–2020 data, the latest available from the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The full report is available [here](#). *A Portrait of the Valley* was made possible through the financial support of the Central Valley Community Foundation, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, The James Irvine Foundation, The James B. McClatchy Foundation, and The LEAP Institute.

#### **About Measure of America**

An initiative of the **Social Science Research Council**, Measure of America provides easy-to-use yet methodologically sound tools for understanding the distribution of well-being and opportunity in America and stimulating fact-based dialogue about issues we all care about: health, education, and living standards. Visit us at [measureofamerica.org](https://www.measureofamerica.org).