

Race and Ethnicity in California: Demographics Report Series—No. 5 (December 2001)
Latino Communities of the Central Valley: Population, Families, and Households

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Executive Summary

California is home to 31.1 percent of the U.S. Latino population. Within the state, the Central Valley is one area heavily populated by Latinos, second only to the Los Angeles region. In fact, Latinos comprise the population majority in 45.2 percent of cities in the Central Valley. This report examines available Census 2000 data on population, households, and families, for counties in the Central Valley—including Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tulare.

As this report documents, 54.0 percent of the total Central Valley population identified with a non-White race/ethnicity on the census; this percentage is even larger for the under age 18 population (65.8). Overall, 39.8 percent of people in the Central Valley are Latino. More specifically, Latinos in this region are predominantly Mexican (85.3 percent), more so than in the overall state (77.1) or the U.S. (58.5). A number of Latinos in the Central Valley identified with additional race/ethnicity groups: 62.8 as “Some Other Race,” 38.5 percent as White, 2.5 percent as American Indian, 1.2 percent as Asian, and 1.1 percent as Black.

Analyses presented in this report indicate that counties in the Central Valley are racially/ethnically diverse, though Blacks are the least residentially integrated with Whites, followed by Latinos, Asians, and American Indians, respectively.

In terms of housing occupancy, the majority of units in the Central Valley are owner-occupied (rather than renter-occupied), ranging from 55.9 to 66.2 percent across the counties, with a region average of 60.1 percent compared to 56.9 percent statewide. Vacancy rates in the area range from 3.8 to 10.5 percent across counties, with a region average of 6.7 percent, compared to 5.8 percent for California overall. Also notable, Central Valley counties have larger percentages of vacant housing for migrant workers than in the state overall.

Average household sizes are larger in Central Valley counties than for California generally (2.87), ranging between 3.00 and 3.28 persons. While households in this region headed by a White householder tend to be the smallest, with an average of 2.55 persons, those headed by Latino (4.03) or “Some Other Race” (4.19) householders tend to be the largest.

Families make up 75.5 percent of households in the Central Valley. Nearly three out of four families (73.1 percent) in the region are married couples, 19.0 percent are female-headed with no spouse, and 7.9 percent are male-headed with no spouse. Of Latino families, 68.4 percent are married couples, 21.1 percent are female-headed with no spouse, and 10.5 percent are male-headed with no spouse. Average family sizes are larger in Central Valley counties than for the state of California overall (3.43), ranging from 3.47 to 3.69 persons. In this area, families headed by a White householder tend to be the smallest, with an average of 3.04 persons, while those headed by an Asian householder tend to be the largest (4.41). Latino families also tend to be large relative to other race/ethnicity groups and are the most likely to include children.

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