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## SECTION I: The Context of Water, Agriculture, and Rural Disparities

A sizeable portion of Western Fresno County includes Westlands Water District—formed by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors on September 8, 1952. Westlands is the largest agricultural water district in the United States, made up of more than 1,000 square miles [600,000 acres] of prime farmland in western Fresno and Kings Counties. Westlands has federal contracts to provide water to 700 family-owned farms that average 875 acres in size” ([Westlands Water District Maps 2024](#)). Today’s Westlands’ farmers produce more than 60 high quality commercial food and fiber crops for the fresh, dry, canned, and frozen food markets. More than 60% of the District’s lands are producing fruits and vegetables as well as permanent crops such as almonds, pistachios, and grapes.

Figure 1. Map of Westlands Water District

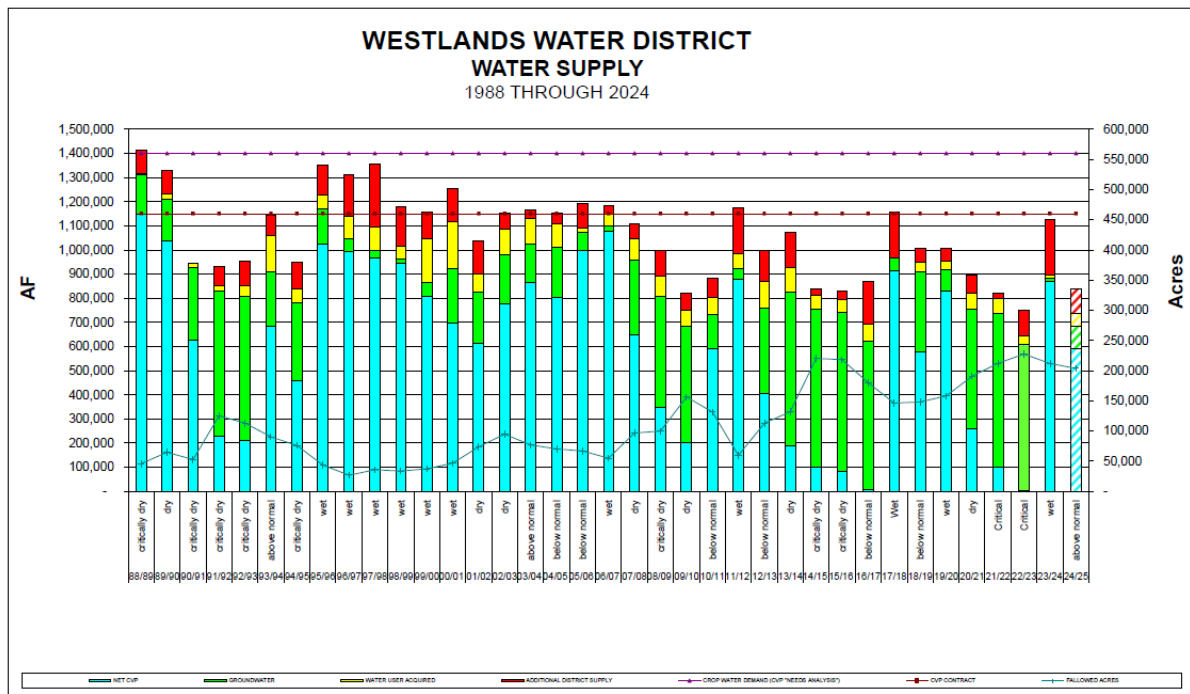


Source: [Westlands Water District](#)

## DROUGHT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

“Westlands has experienced a decrease in its water supply since the drought that began in 1986. Drought conditions as well as environmental regulations have led the Bureau of Reclamation to dramatically reduce the amount of water it delivers to Westlands. Today, Westlands can expect to receive only about 50 percent of its contractual [water supply](#) in an average water year” ([Westlands Water District History 2024](#)).

Figure 2. Westlands Water District Water Supply, 1988-2024



For the following [Water Allocation Table](#), the following definitions apply:

- Water Year – March 1 to February 28 (29 Leap Year)
- Final CVP Allocation ( 100% = 1,150,000 AF)+(Reassignment = 45,383 AF\*\*)
- Net CVP – CVP Allocation adjusted for carry over and rescheduled losses
- Groundwater – Total groundwater pumped
- Water User Acquired – Private Landowner water transfers
- Additional District Supply – Surplus water, supplemental supplies, and other adjustments.
- Fallowed Acres – Agricultural land out of production

Table 1A. Water Allocations by Year and Number of Fallowed Acres, 1988-2024

Water Year	CVP Allocation %	Net CVP (AF)	Groundwater (AF)	Water User Acquired (AF)	Additional District Supply (AF)	Total Supply (AF)	Fallowed Acres
1988	100%	1,150,000	160,000	7,657	97,712	1,415,369	45,632
1989	100%	1,035,369	175,000	20,530	99,549	1,330,448	64,579
1990	50%	625,196	300,000	18,502	-2,223	941,475	52,544
1991	27%	229,666	600,000	22,943	77,399	930,008	125,082
1992	27%	208,668	600,000	42,623	100,861	952,152	112,718
1993	54%	682,833	225,000	152,520	82,511	1,142,864	90,413
1994	43%	458,281	325,000	56,541	108,083	947,905	75,732
1995	100%	1,021,719	150,000	57,840	121,747	1,351,306	43,528
1996	95%	994,935	50,000	92,953	172,609	1,310,497	26,754
1997	90%	968,408	30,000	94,908	261,085	1,354,401	35,554
1998	100%	945,115	15,000	54,205	162,684	1,177,004	33,481
1999	70%	806,040	60,000	178,632	111,144	1,155,816	37,206
2000	65%	695,693	225,000	198,294	133,314	1,252,301	46,748
2001	49%	611,267	215,000	75,592	135,039	1,036,898	73,802
2002	70%	776,526	205,000	106,043	64,040	1,151,609	94,557
2003	75%	863,150	160,000	107,958	32,518	1,163,626	76,654
2004	70%	800,704	210,000	96,872	44,407	1,151,983	70,367
2005	85%	996,147	75,000	20,776	98,347	1,190,270	66,804
2006	100%	1,076,461	25,000	45,936	38,079	1,185,476	54,944
2007	50%	647,864	310,000	87,554	61,466	1,106,884	96,409
2008	40%	347,222	460,000	85,421	102,862	995,505	99,663
2009	10%	202,991	480,000	68,070	70,149	821,210	156,239
2010	45%	590,059	140,000	71,296	79,242	880,597	131,339
2011	80%	876,910	45,000	60,380	191,686	1,173,976	59,514
2012	40%	405,451	355,000	111,154	123,636	995,241	112,755
2013	20%	188,448	638,000	101,413	143,962	1,071,823	131,848
2014	0%	98,573	655,000	59,714	26,382	839,669	220,053
2015	0%	82,429	660,000	51,134	34,600	828,163	218,112
2016	5%	9,204	612,000	72,154	174,374	867,732	179,784
2017	100%	911,307	54,000	-50,009	174,490	1,089,788	146,275
2018	50%	580,050	328,000	42,338	55,872	1,006,260	148,320
2019	75%	827,317	89,000	37,985	53,433	1,007,735	158,103
2020	20%	259,540	493,000	66,436	63,822	897,756	190,972
2021	0%	99,928	636,000	63,822	20,595	820,345	211,920
2022	0%	3,822	603,000	37,546	104,866	749,234	227,563
2023	100%	871,194	10,000	13,515	231,606	1,126,315	211,678
2024*	50%	593,000	90,000	56,000	100,000	838,000	203,678

\*Estimated

\*\*In 2020, Assignments changed from 46,948 to 45,383

## GLOBAL CONTEXT: The Changing Landscape of Agricultural Exports & Imports

According to James Kaufman (2024), an agricultural economist in the International Trade and Development (ITD) branch of the Market and Trade Economics Division at the USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), the United States typically exports more agricultural goods by value than it imports. However, over the past decade, the value of imports has grown more rapidly than exports, resulting in a negative agricultural trade balance in 3 of the last 10 fiscal years:

From fiscal years 2013 to 2023, U.S. agricultural exports expanded at a compound annual growth rate of 2.1 percent. During that same time, U.S. agricultural imports increased by 5.8 percent. The robust increase in U.S. demand for imports has been largely driven by the strong U.S. dollar and consumer preferences for year-round produce selections (Kaufman 2024).

Figure 3. U.S. Agricultural Trade Surplus/Deficit by Year, 2006-24

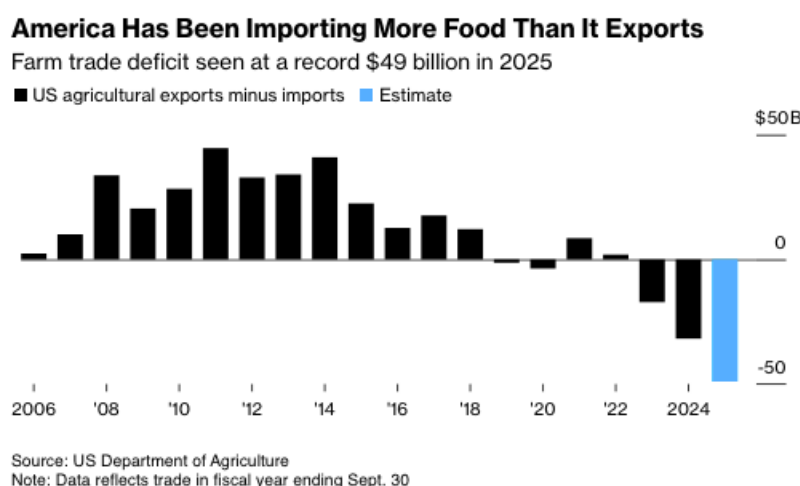
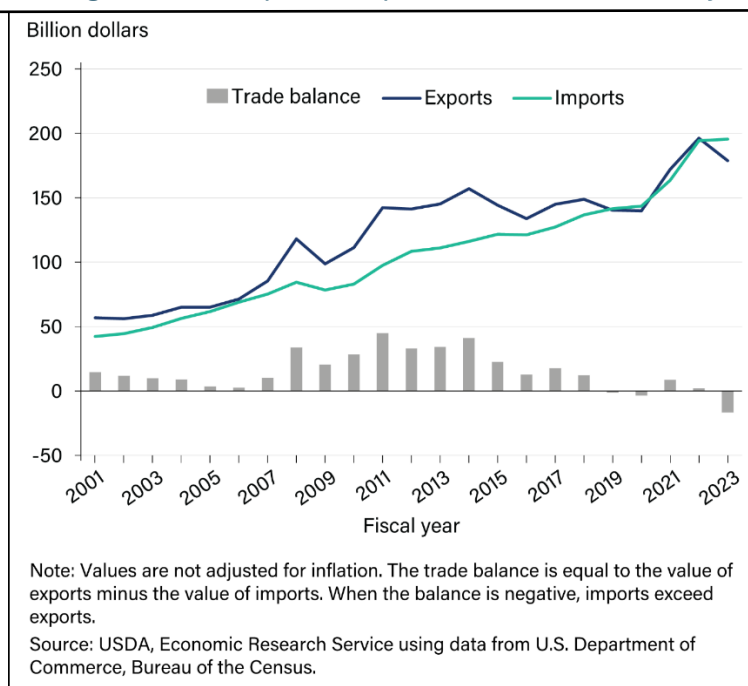


Figure 4. Value of U.S. Agricultural Exports/Imports & Trade Balance by Year, 2001-23





## RURAL DISPARITIES

According to Mental Health America ([2024](#)), “People living in rural areas—places not near cities and with small populations and large, open land areas—are confronted with unique challenges” when it comes to providing for their families and caring for their physical and mental health.

### Quick Facts

- “Rural areas have 20% fewer primary care providers than urban areas” ([Zhang et al. 2020](#)).
- “65% of rural counties do not have a psychiatrist and 81% do not have a psychiatric nurse practitioner” ([Andrilla et al. 2018](#)).
- “Roughly 3 in 10 rural Americans (28%) say they do not have a broadband internet connection at home” ([Vogels 2021](#)).
- “The suicide rate is between 18.3 and 20.5 per 100,000 residents,” nearly double that of large urban communities ([Center for Disease Control 2024](#)).

Regarding education, according to the California School Dashboard of the Department of Education (2023), of the 3,920 students enrolled in Mendota Unified in 2023-24, 98.3% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 59.9% are English learners, 0.2% are foster youth, 19.8% were chronically absent, 5.5% were suspended at least one day, 80.7% graduated, and 43.6% were prepared for college/career success. In addition, students in Mendota Unified were 37 points below the standard for English Language Arts and 77.6 points below the standard in Mathematics.

Of the 4,488 students enrolled in Coalinga-Huron Unified in 2023-24, 88.7% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, 43.4% are English learners, 0.5% are foster youth, 31.2% were chronically absent, 6.6% were suspended at least one day, 88.3% graduated, and 30.2% were prepared for college/career success. In addition, students in Coalinga-Huron Unified were 85.9 points below the standard for English Language Arts and 121.3 points below the standard in Mathematics.



## FRESNO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

According to California Code section 65040.12, “environmental justice” is the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

According to the [Final Draft of the County of Fresno’s General Plan Review](#) (2024):

- Communities with lower incomes, lower levels of education, and higher proportions of minority residents bear a disproportionate burden of environmental hazards.
- Furthermore, all people including those who live in disadvantaged communities should have the equal ability to participate in the decision-making process regarding environmental regulations.

Table 1B. Poverty Rates and Median Family Incomes for Cities in Western Fresno County Compared ([U.S. Census Bureau 2022](#))

City	Poverty Rate	Net % Above or Below Fresno County Poverty Rate Average	Median Family Income	Net % Above or Below Fresno County Median Family Income Average
Firebaugh	43.3%	132.7% above	\$36,078	46.8% below
San Joaquin	33.2%	78.5% above	\$43,750	35.4% below
Mendota	32.7%	75.8% above	\$43,315	36.1% below
Huron	32.1%	72.6% above	\$43,664	35.6% below
City of Fresno	22.1%	18.8% above	\$63,001	7.01% below
Kerman	21.9%	17.7% above	\$53,956	20.4% below
Coalinga	18.7%	0.54% above	\$68,976	1.8% above
Fresno County	18.6%	N/A	\$67,756	N/A
California	12.2%	34.4% below	\$91,905	35.6% above

In addition, Figure EJ-1 from the Fresno County General Plan shows that Western Fresno County has higher rates of disproportionate environmental hazard exposure, relative to the rest of the state, according to CalEnviroScreen 3.0. This major finding serves as a foundation for policy development.

**Figure EJ-1 CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Percentile Scores**

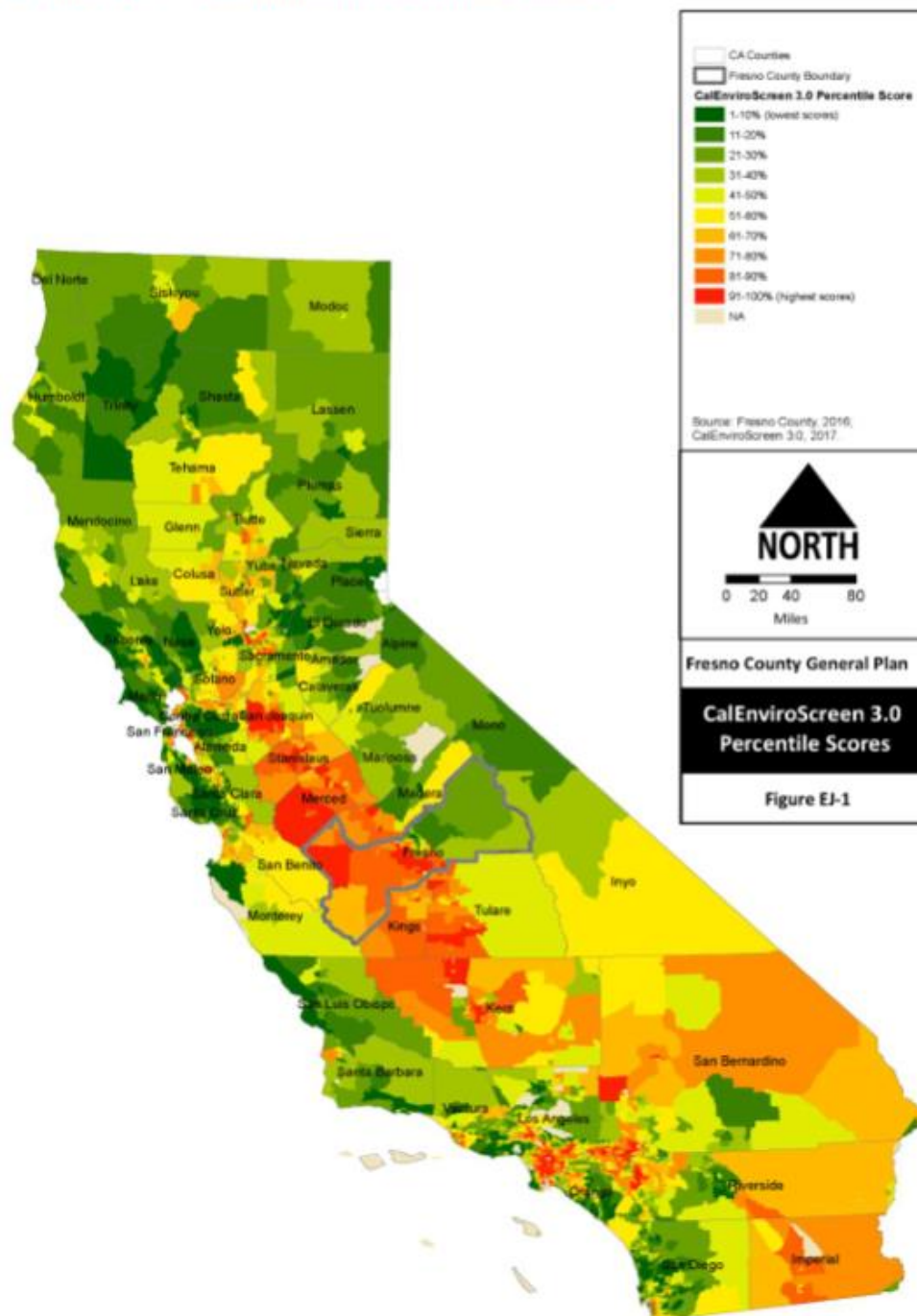
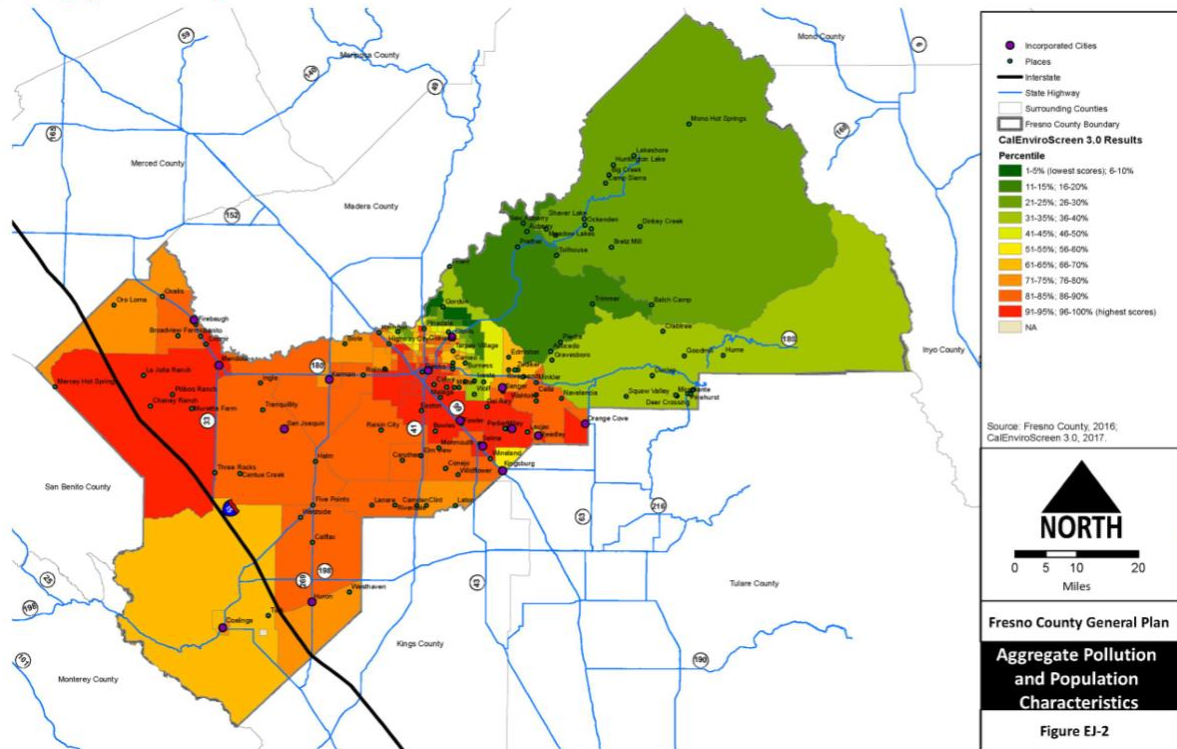


Figure EJ-2 shows the CalEnviroScreen 3.0 aggregate pollution burden and socioeconomic scores for all Fresno County census tracts. The percentile score is displayed, which relates to the frequency of the actual score; a percentile score not only indicates high rates of pollution and disadvantage but shows that it is also high in comparison to communities in the rest of the state.

*Figure EJ-2 Aggregate Pollution and Population Characteristics*



Viewing Figures EJ-3 and EJ-4 together, the data reveal that some census tracts are more burdened by either socioeconomic disparity or environmental concerns.

Figure EJ-3 Pollution Burden

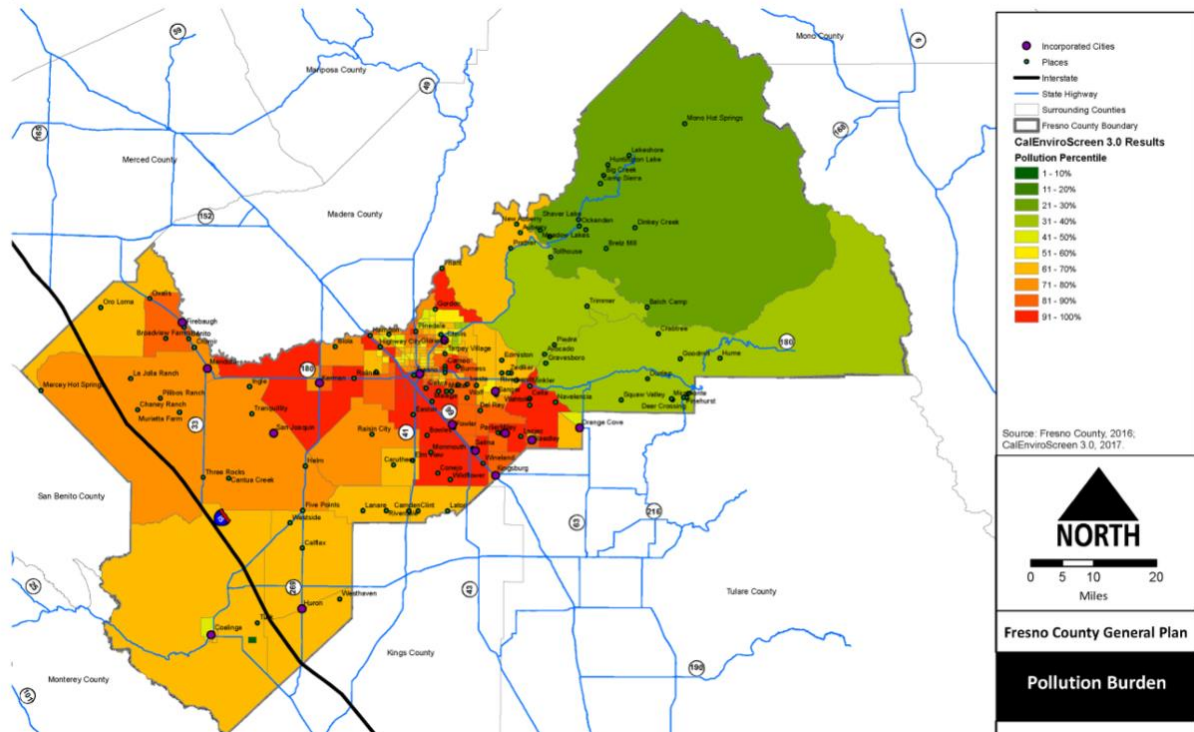
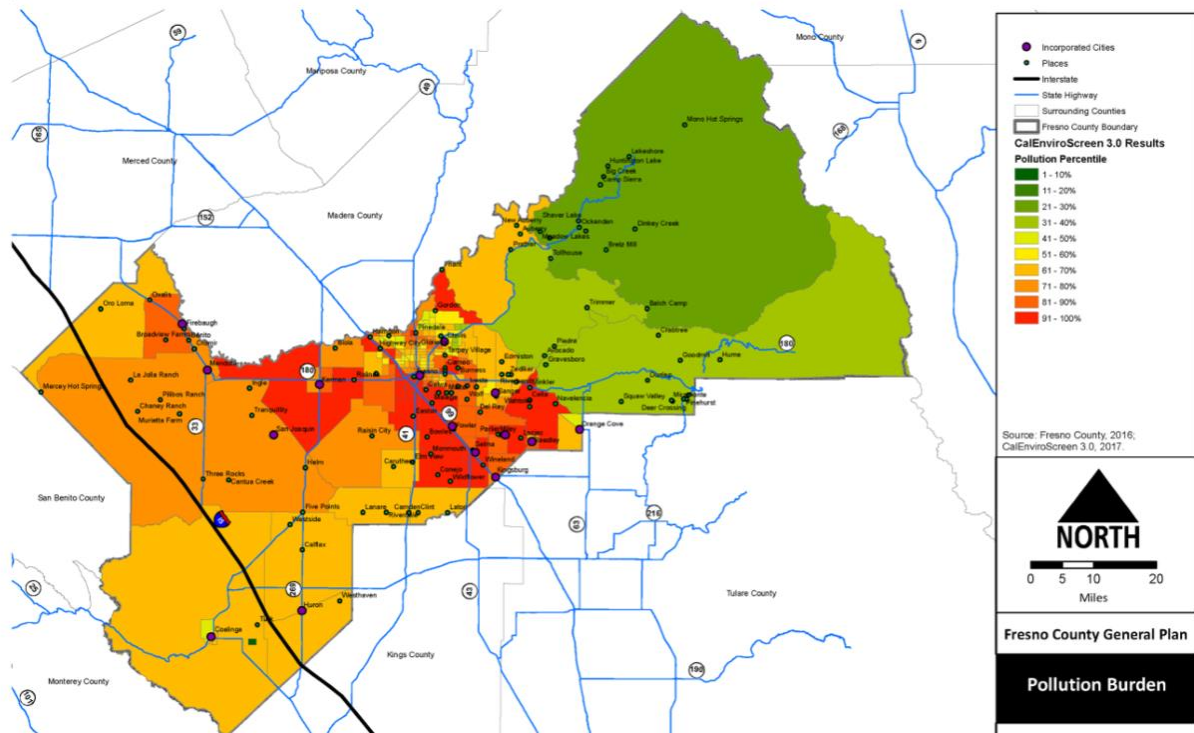


Figure EJ-3 Pollution Burden



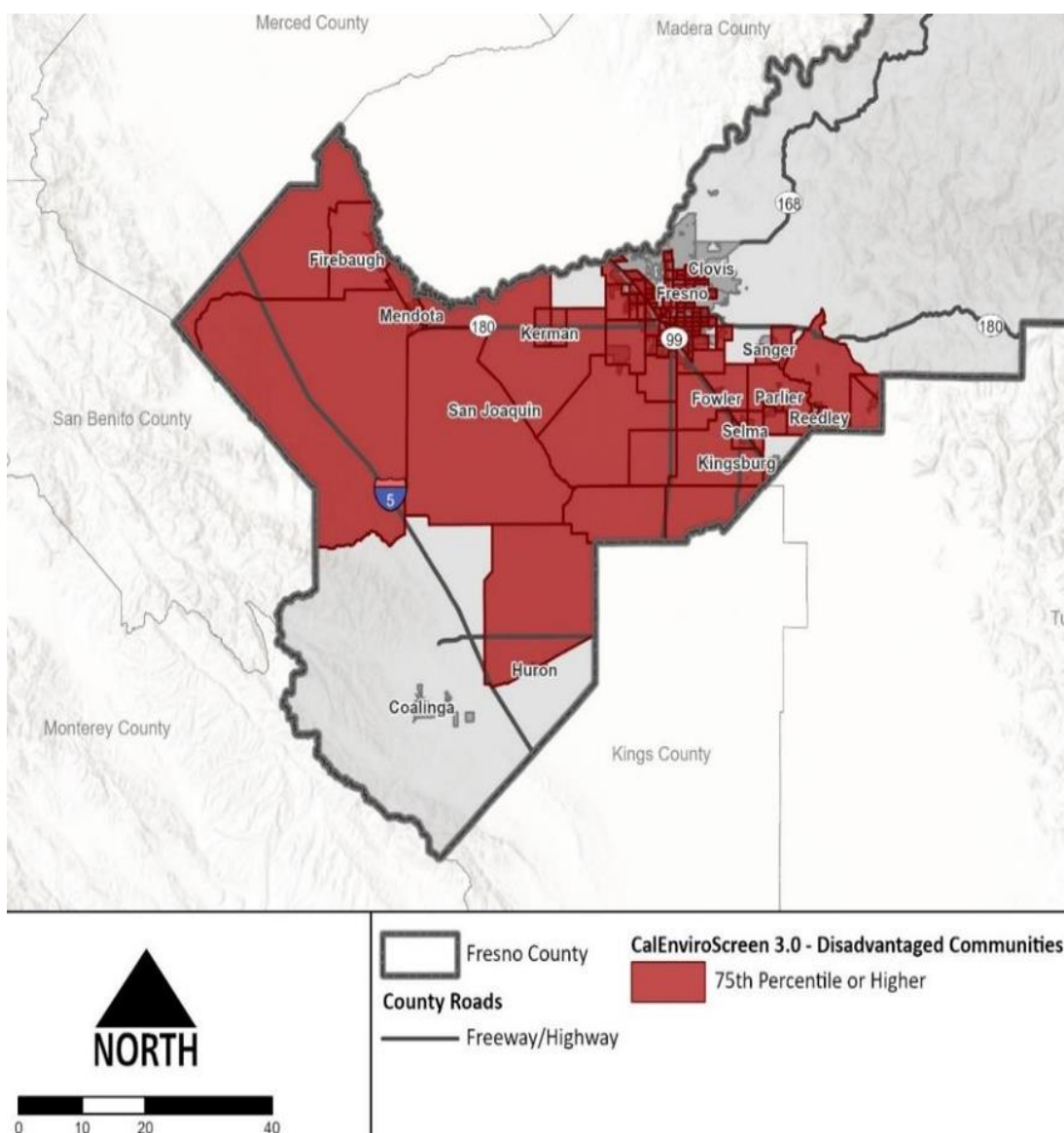


### SB535: Disadvantaged Communities

Disadvantaged communities are targeted by the State for investment from the cap-and-trade program. Senate Bill 535 outlines how the CalEPA will allocate these funds and relies on the CalEnviroScreen tool for making these decisions. In April 2017, CalEPA identified disadvantaged communities for the purpose of SB 535 by selecting the 25 percent highest scoring census tracts in CalEnviroScreen 3.0.

**Fresno County General Plan Policy Document, February 2024, identified 29 out of 59 total disadvantaged communities listed as located in western Fresno County target area** (see EJ Element, Pages 2-185 through 2-202, specifically Table EJ-1, pages 2-194 and 2-195). Figure EJ-5 displays the identified census tracts and the unincorporated communities and incorporated cities in the county. Within geographic area west of the extended alignment of South Henderson Road from Caruthers northwest through Kerman to north Fresno County line with Merced— which alignment and boundary for a western Fresno County target are for outreach to disadvantaged communities also reflects the NW to SE alignments through the San Joaquin Valley of predominant freeway infrastructure alignments of I-5 and SR99.

**Figure EJ-5 SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities**



## Environmental Justice Goals & Policies

The Fresno County General Plan Policy Document (February 2024) identified the following goals related to environmental justice and policies:

<b>GOAL EJ-A</b>	<p>To ensure the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies do not disproportionately impact any individual race, any culture, income or education level.</p>
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<b>GOAL EJ-B</b>	<p>To promote physical activities in unincorporated communities by creating equitable opportunities for bicycling, walking, and access to open space areas.</p>
<b>GOAL EJ-C</b>	<p>To have consistent, equitable, and improved access to healthy foods and beverages, health services, and resources that enhance quality of life.</p>
<b>GOAL EJ-D</b>	<p>Ensure that Fresno County residents have equitable access to safe and sanitary living conditions.</p>
<b>GOAL EJ-E</b>	<p>Encourage and facilitate equitable civic engagement in the decision-making process by all County residents.</p>

## SECTION II: Methodology and Primary Data Sources

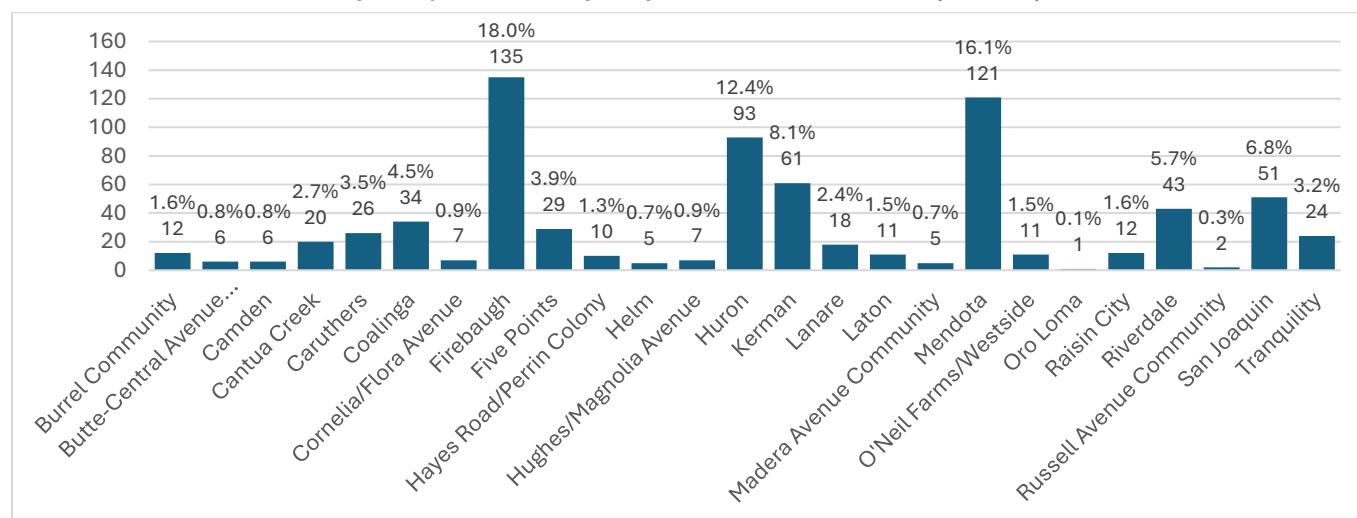
A brief survey of residents was conducted across 6 incorporated cities and 36 unincorporated communities throughout Western Fresno County as part of focus groups and outreach for Rural Communities Rising<sup>1</sup> between August 12, 2024 and April 22, 2025. The survey included both open- and closed-ended questions (see Appendix). Any secondary data sources utilized are noted through in-text citations with links to those sources and serve to supplement, contextualize, and/or corroborate primary source data.

## SECTION III: Description of the Sample & Western Fresno County

### Brief Survey & Focus Groups conducted in Western Fresno County communities

- 750 responses (Location, # of responses, percentage of total)
  - Burrel Community (12) – 1.6%
  - Butte-Central Ave Neighborhood (6) – 0.8%
  - Camden (6) – 0.8%
  - Cantua Creek (20) – 2.7%
  - Caruthers (26) – 3.5%
  - Coalinga (34) – 4.5%
  - Cornelia/Flora Avenue (7) – 0.9%
  - Firebaugh (135) – 18.0%
  - Five Points (29) – 3.9%
  - Hayes Road/Perrin Colony (10) – 1.3%
  - Helm (5) – 0.7%
  - Hughes/Magnolia Avenue (7) – 0.9%
  - Huron (93) – 12.4%
  - Kerman (61) – 8.1%
  - Lanare (18) – 2.4%
  - Laton (11) – 1.5%
  - Madera Ave Community (5) – 0.7%
  - Mendota (121) – 16.1%
  - O'Neil Farms/Westside (11) – 1.5%
  - Oro Loma (1) – 0.1%
  - Raisin City (12) – 1.6%
  - Riverdale (43) – 5.7%
  - Russell Ave Community (2) – 0.3%
  - San Joaquin (51) – 6.8%
  - Tranquility (24) – 3.2%

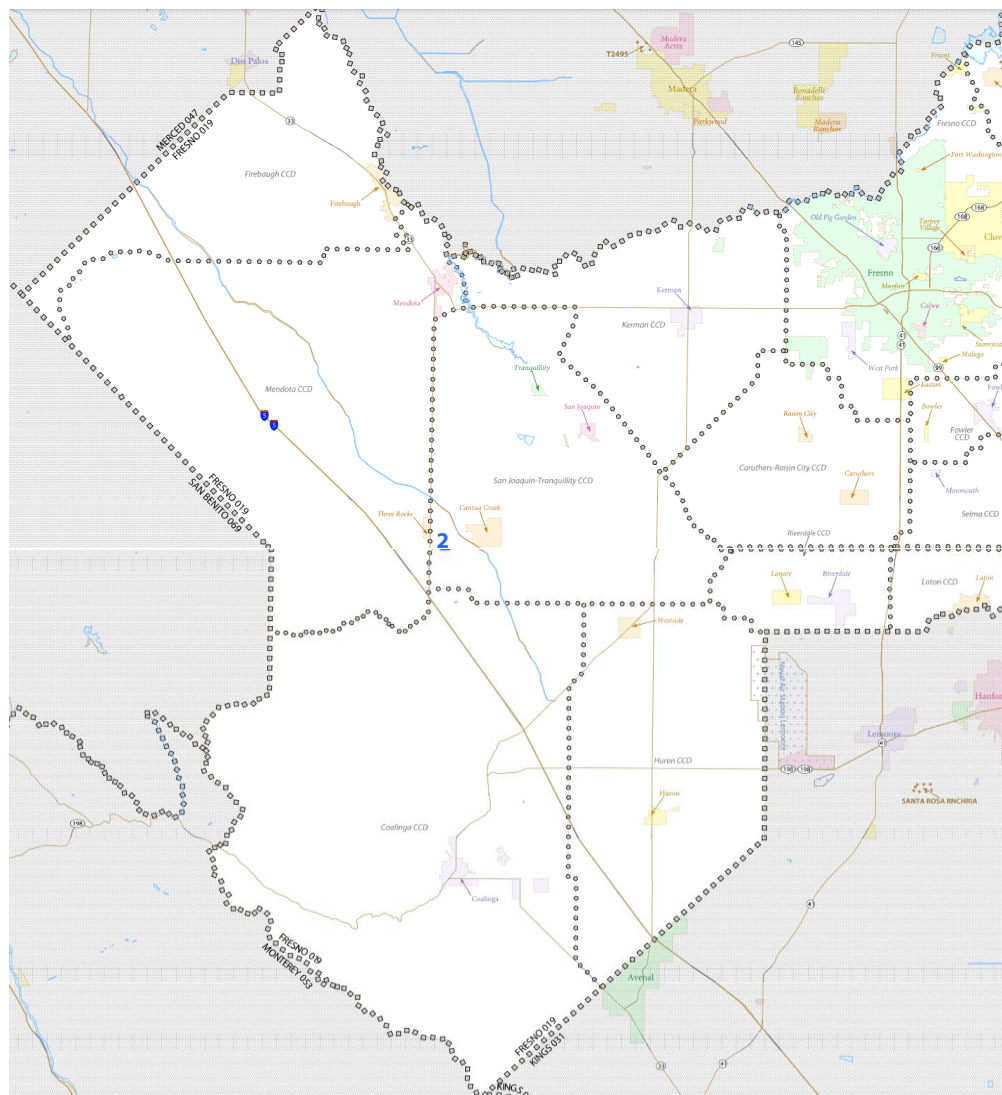
Table 2. Number of Survey Respondents by City/Town of Residence (N=750)



<sup>1</sup> Rural Communities Rising is a 501c3 nonprofit community benefit organization and its mission is “to connect residents in rural, Western Fresno County in order to organize, build community power, and secure the health, well-being and economic benefits our communities deserve.”



Figure 5. 2020 Census Tract Reference Map



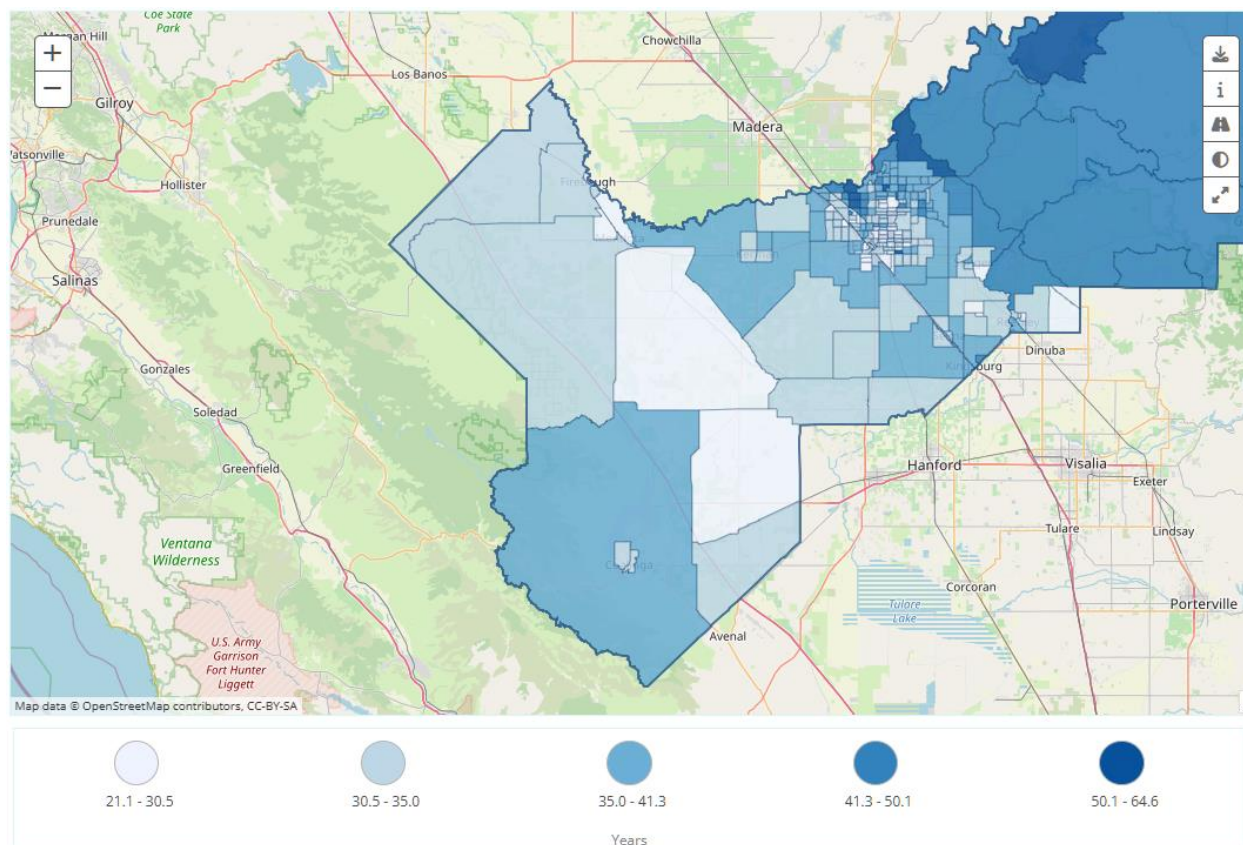
Source: [U.S. Census](https://www.census.gov)

\*Note: Additional demographic profiles available for each Census Tract via [Census Reporter](https://data.census.gov).

## AGE

Figure 6 shows the median age throughout Western Fresno County, ranging from 25.9 and 33.7 in Census Tracts # 83.03 and # 83.04 in Mendota to 37.4 in Census Tract # 79.03 in Coalinga. That means half of all residents in the latter census tract in Mendota are younger than 33.7 years old and half of all residents are older than 33.7 years. Generally speaking, the relatively young population of residents suggests a significant “stake” for families in the future of this region.

Figure 6. Median Age, Fresno County, 2023

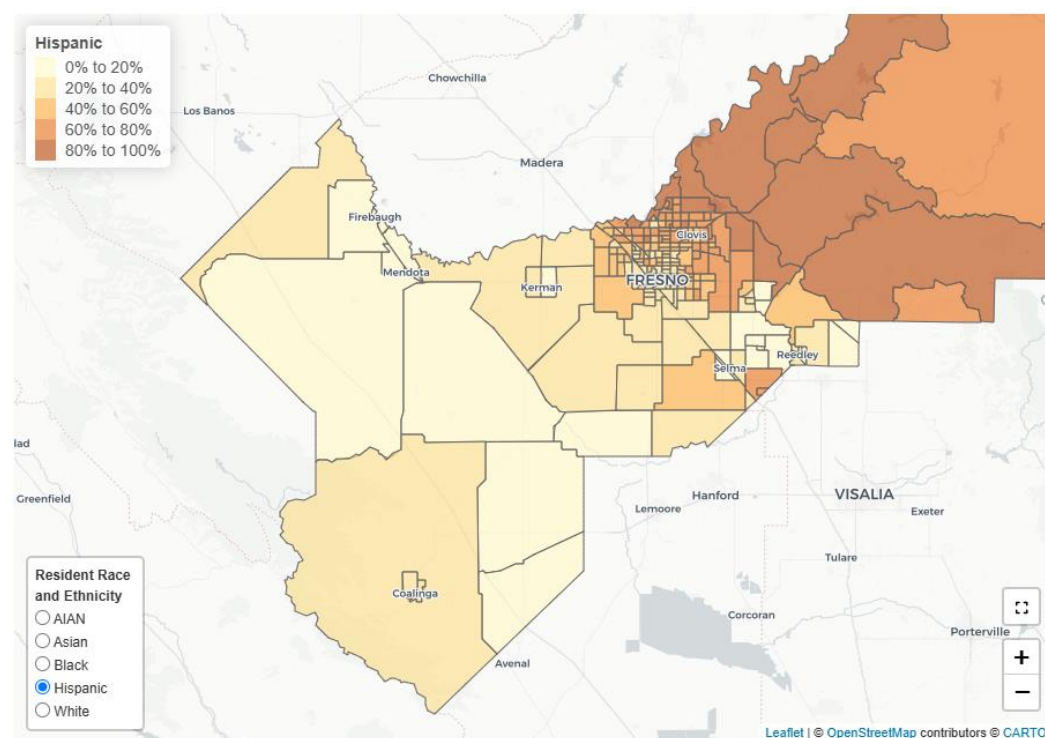


Source: [Healthy Fresno County Data](#)

## RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Figure 7 displays the high degree of residential segregation in Western Fresno County, with the percentage of residents being Hispanic ranging from 83.76% (Lanare-Riverdale Cluster) to 99.77% within Census Tract #83.03 (in Mendota).

Figure 7. Hispanic Residents' Exposure to Different Race/Ethnic Neighbors, 2022



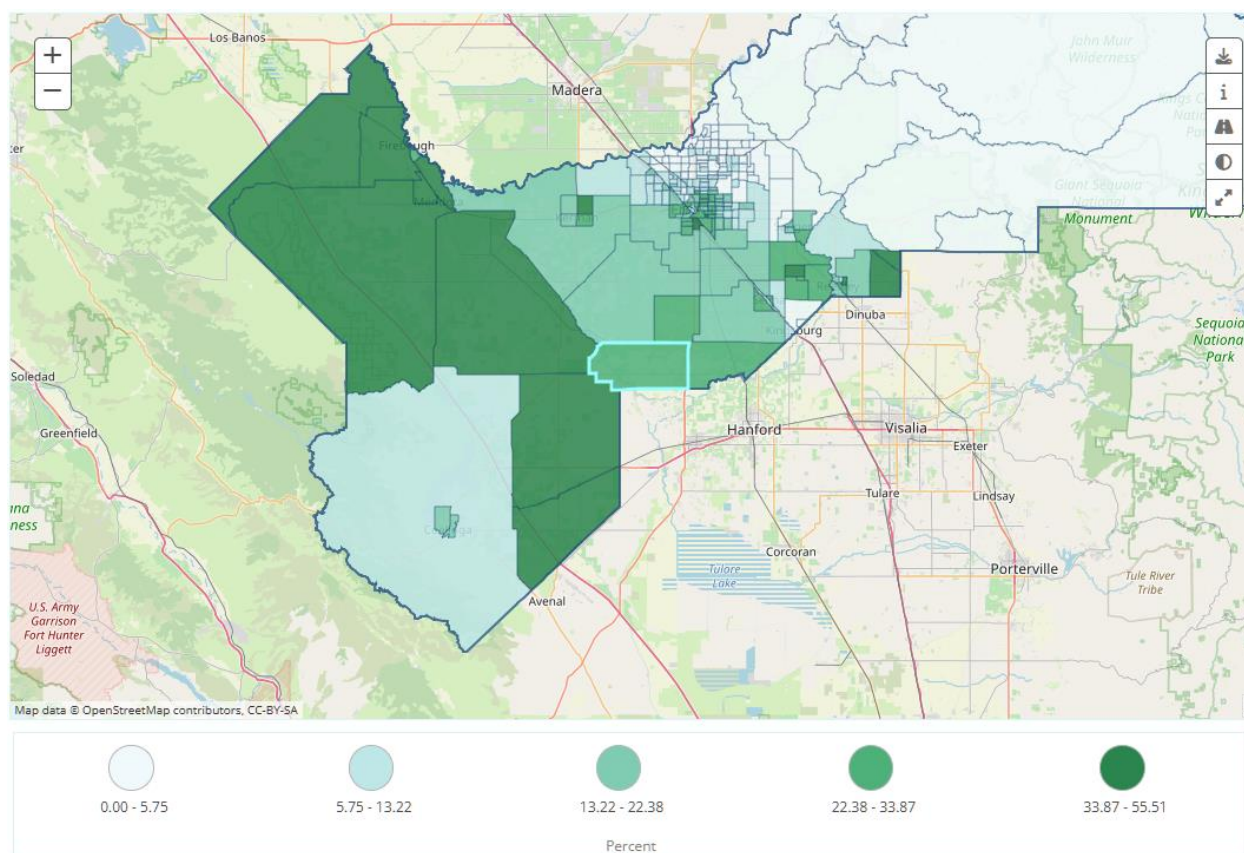
Source(s) and notes:

Source: 5-year American Community Survey data from 2018-2022.

Available at [DRIVE Data Dashboard Maps](#)

Figure 8 shows the percentage of adults ages 25 and over with less than a 9<sup>th</sup>-grade education, ranging from 11.84% in Census Tract # 79.03 in Coalinga to 29.2% in Census Tract # 77.00 in the Lanare-Riverdale Cluster to 55.51% in Census Tract # 83.03 in Mendota. Generally speaking, the relatively lower educational attainment of residents suggests the potential for significant re-skilling for future employment opportunities.

Figure 8. Population Age 25+: Less than 9th Grade Education, Fresno County, 2023



Source: [Healthy Fresno County Data](#)



## HOMEOWNERSHIP & RESIDENTIAL TENURE

Figure 9 reveals the homeownership rates among Hispanics in Western Fresno County, ranging from 59.84% within the Lanare-Riverdale Cluster to 100% within Census Tract #83.01 (in Mendota) Cluster.

Figure 10 reveals the median years of residential tenure among homeowners and renters in Western Fresno County, ranging from 6 years in the Huron Cluster to 14 years in the Lanare-Riverdale Cluster. That means half of all households in the Lanare-Riverdale Cluster have moved into their housing unit within the past 14 years, and half of households have lived in their housing unit for more than 14 years.

Generally speaking, the relatively high rates of homeownership and long rates of residential tenure suggest a significant “stake” residents have in the future of this area.

Figure 9. Homeownership among Hispanics, Fresno County, 2022

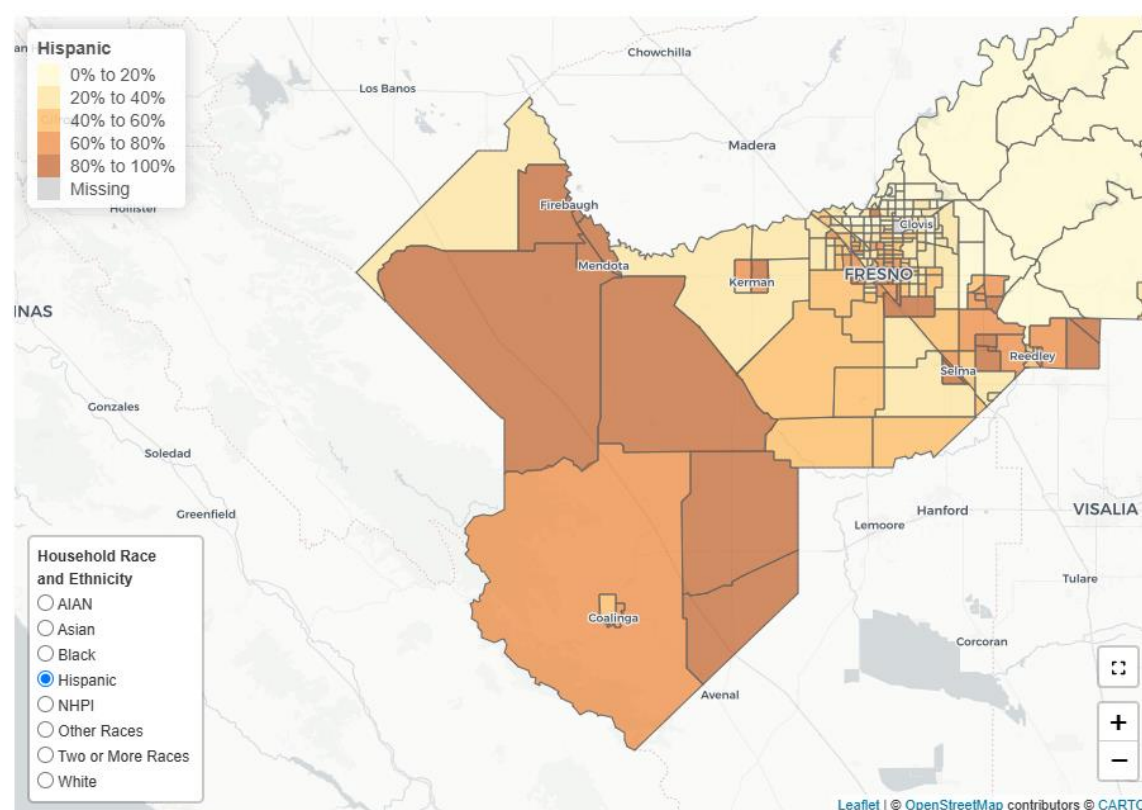
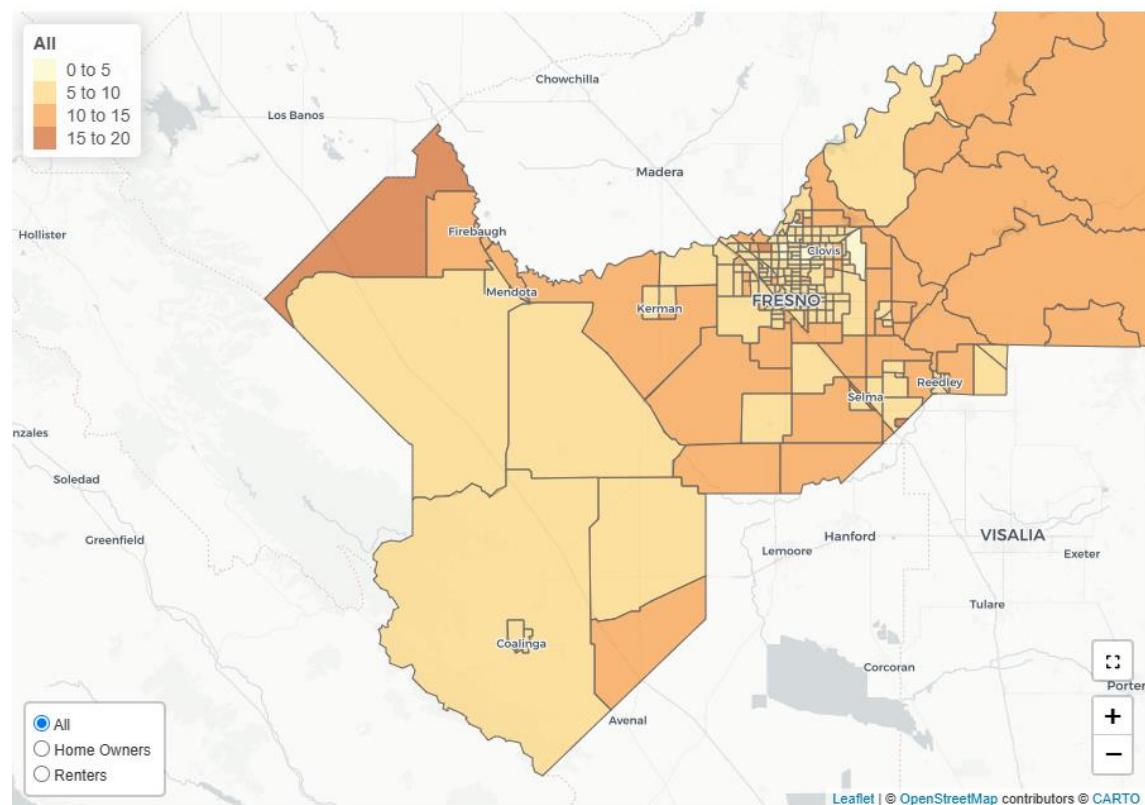


Figure 10. Median Number of Years Residents have lived in their Home, Fresno Co., 2022



**Source(s) and notes:**

**Source:** 5-year American Community Survey data from 2018-2022.

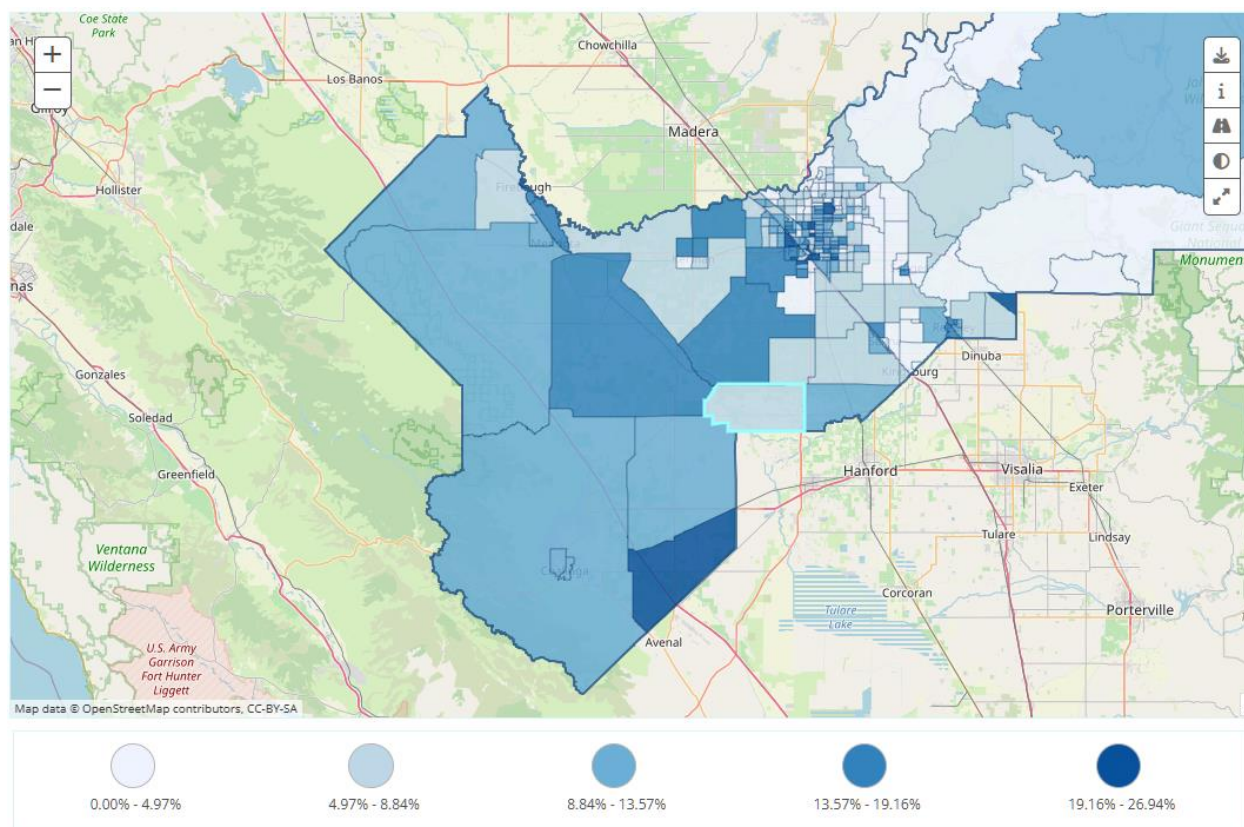
Available at [DRIVE Data Dashboard Maps](#)

## EMPLOYMENT STABILITY & INSECURITY

- The decreased agricultural water supply has led to an increase in the number of acres being fallowed. With that, the number of agricultural jobs available has decreased, impacting families' employment stability and security.

Figure 11 shows the unemployment rate of the population ages 16 and over along the Westlands Water District, ranging from 6.75% in Census Tract # 77.00 in the Lanare-Riverdale Cluster to 23.11% in Census Tract # 78.01 in Huron. Generally speaking, the relatively high unemployment rate suggests an already beleaguered workforce with limited employment opportunities.

Figure 11. Population 16+ Unemployed, Fresno County, 2023



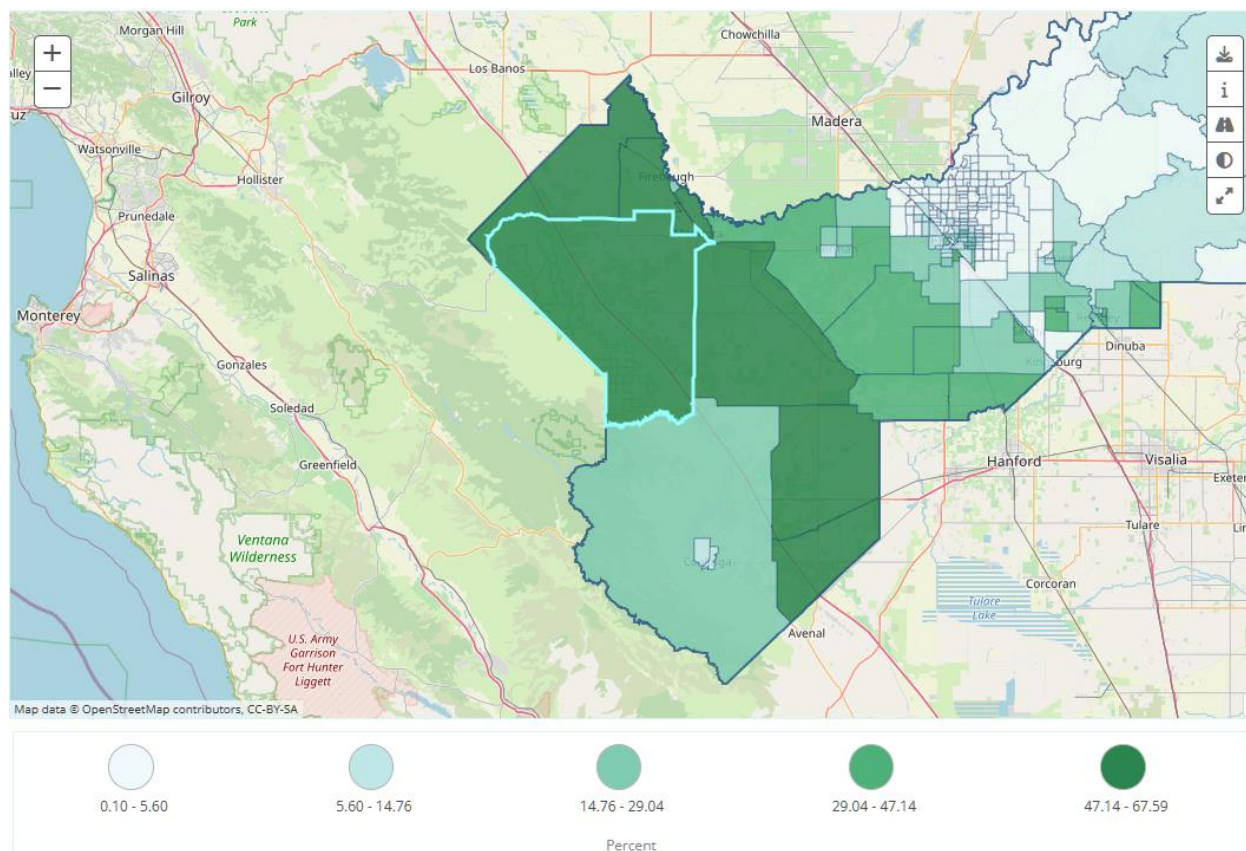
Source: [Healthy Fresno County Data](#)

Water Supply has a direct effect on employment rates in the incorporated and unincorporated cities and towns in Western Fresno County. Because this region's predominant economic engine is a secondary labor market concentrated within the agricultural industry, when additional acres are fallowed, more people find it difficult to find work within the region.



Figure 12 shows the percentage of employed civilians working in agriculture/forest/fish/hunt industries ages 16 and up in Western Fresno County, ranging from 26.65% in Census Tract #84.03 in Firebaugh to 37.94% in Census Tract # 77.00 in the Lanare-Riverdale Cluster to 67.59% in Census Tract # 83.04 in Mendota. Generally speaking, the relatively high rates of employment in the agriculture/forest/fish/hunt industries suggest a significant “stake” residents have in the future utilization of land in this area.

Figure 12. Employed Civilian 16+ by Occupation: Agriculture/Forest/Fish/Hunt, 2023



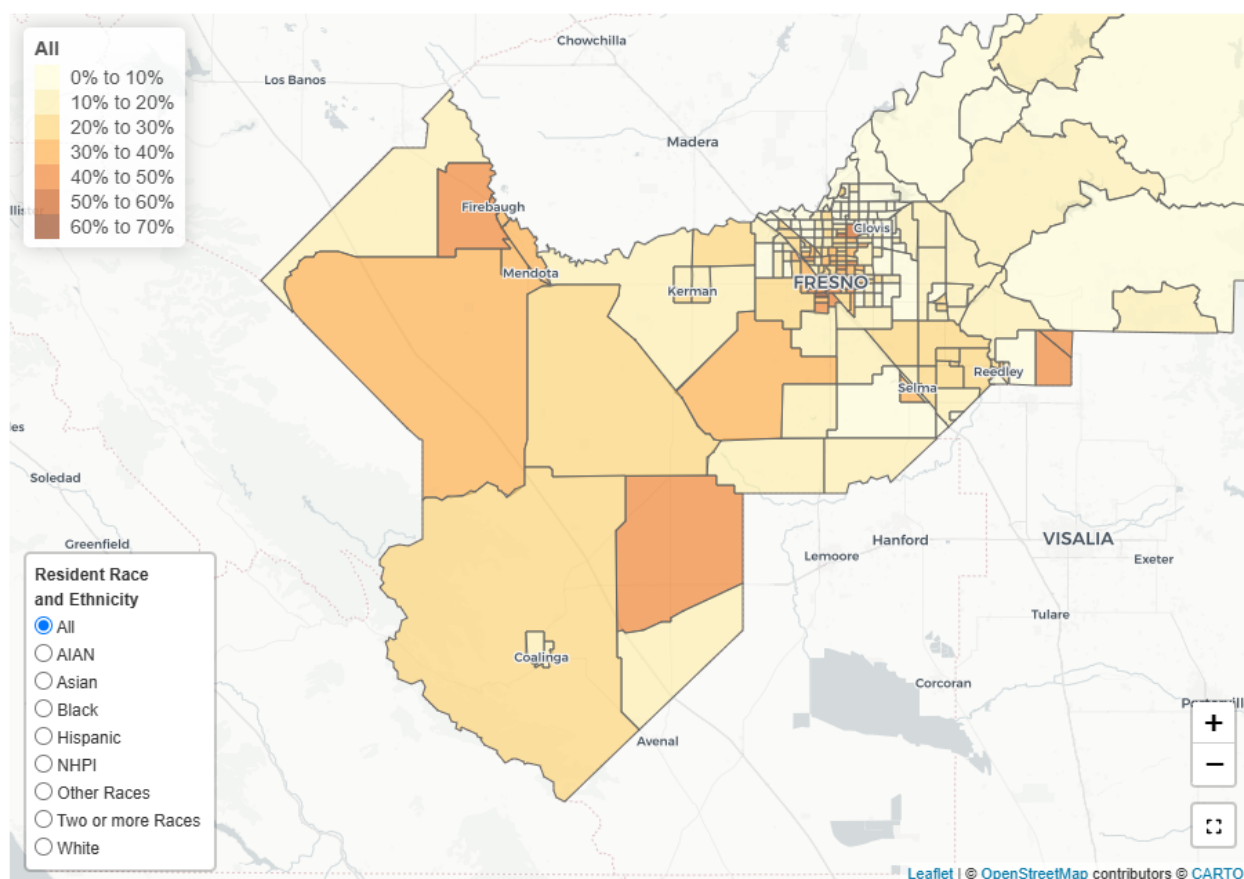
Source: [Healthy Fresno County Data](#)

## POVERTY, FINANCIAL CHALLENGES, & HOUSING INSECURITY

- The restrictions on agricultural water supply have directly impacted agricultural employment, and with increases in unemployment, existing low wages for available jobs, and rising cost of living, residents are facing significant financial challenges and more likely to experience poverty.

Figure 13 shows the share of residents experiencing poverty in Western Fresno County, ranging from 11.98% (Lanare-Riverdale Cluster) to 42.87% within Census Tract # 84.05 (in Firebaugh).

Figure 13. Share of Residents Experiencing Poverty, Fresno County, 2018-22



Source(s) and notes:

**Source:** 5-year American Community Survey data from 2018-2022.

Available at [DRIVE Data Dashboard Maps](#)

## THE LACK OF HEALTHCARE SERVICES

- Numerous participants in the focus groups across Western Fresno County communities held as part of the outreach by Rural Communities Rising noted the need for improved access to healthcare, clinics, and an emergency room.

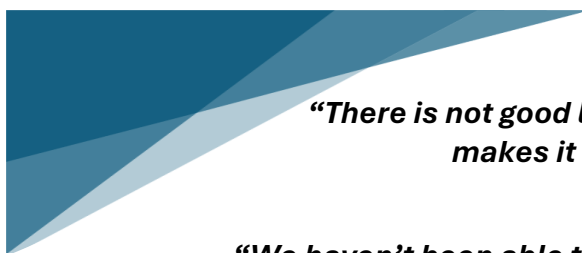


***“A health clinic and emergency room are needed in Huron. Since the ER in Coalinga does not provide good care, we must drive to Hanford.”***

- Hispanic mother from Huron

## POOR QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE

- Numerous participants in the focus groups held in communities across Western Fresno County as part of the Rural Communities Rising outreach highlighted issues with various forms of infrastructure.
  - People named poor road quality, the lack of lights for streets, and the lack of crosswalks as public safety issues.



***“There is not good lighting for our streets which makes it dangerous for pedestrians.”***

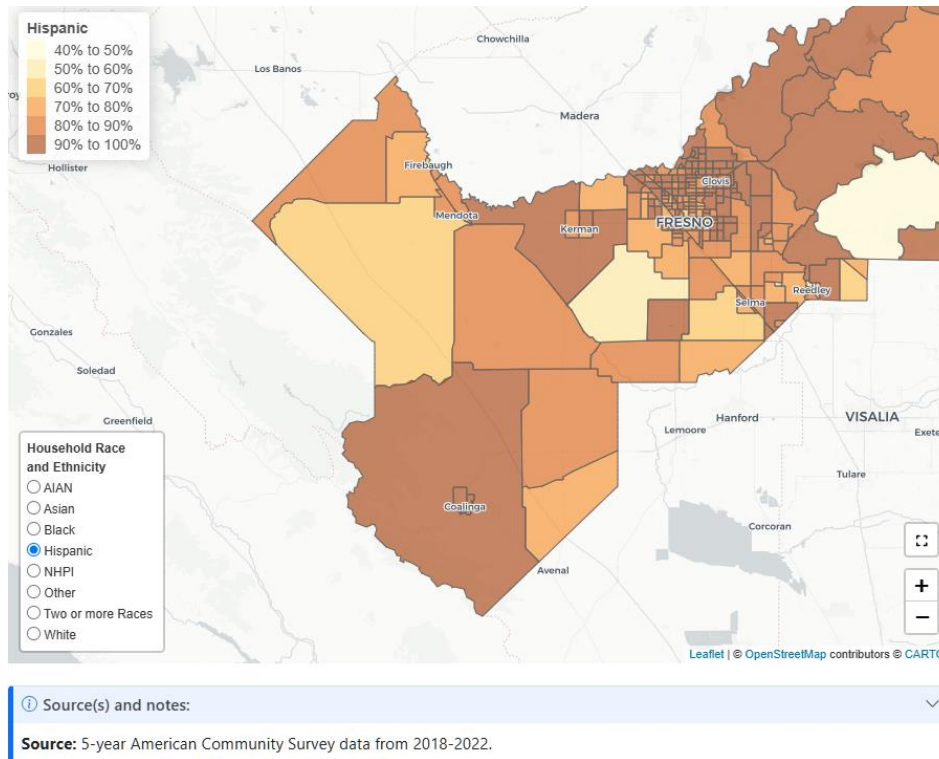
- Hispanic mother from Huron

***“We haven’t been able to get lit crosswalks in Huron either, and there are no crossing guards also.”***

- another Hispanic mother from Huron

- Another example of essential infrastructure in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is access to hi-speed Wi-Fi.
  - Figure 14 shows the percentage of households with access to a computer and broadband in Western Fresno County, ranging from 74.28% within Census Tract #84.05 (in Firebaugh) to 86.88% within the San Joaquin-Tranquility Cluster to 97.13% within Census Tract #79.03 (in Coalinga).

Figure 14. Hispanic Households w/ Access to Computer & Broadband, Fresno Co., 2022



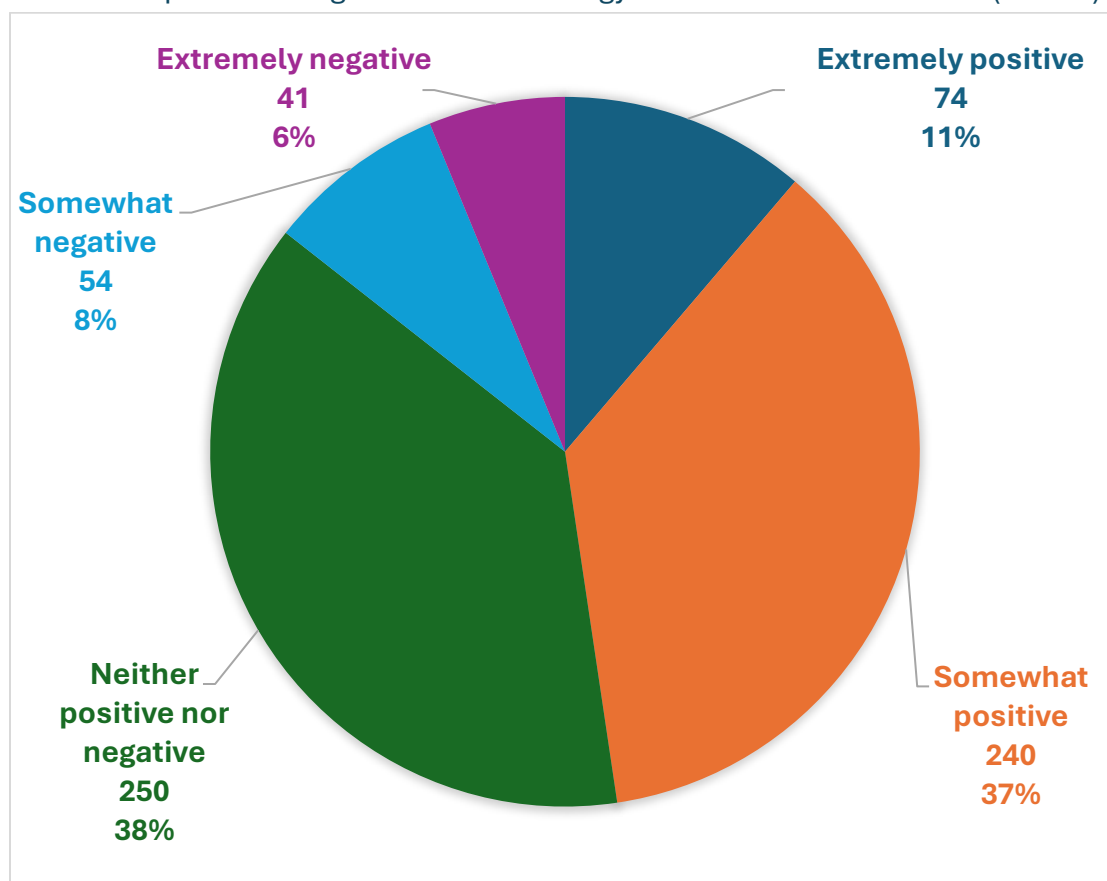
Available at [DRIVE Data Dashboard Maps](#)

## SECTION IV: Quantitative Findings

### Rural Residents' Outlook on the Future

- For the TOTAL SAMPLE of the brief survey and focus groups conducted in Western Fresno County communities, when asked, "**How do you feel about the next 5-10 years, given the possibility of future reductions of irrigated farmland and development of large-scale clean energy facilities on fallowed land in your region**" (N=659), the overall response was largely POSITIVE (47.6%), with only 14.4% NEGATIVE responses and 37.9% NEITHER POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE.
  - 11.2% of survey respondents are **extremely positive** about the next 5-10 years, while 6.2% are **extremely negative**.
  - 36.4% are **somewhat positive** and 8.2% are **somewhat negative**.
  - 37.9% are **neither positive or negative**.

Figure 15. Feelings about the Next 5-10 years, w/ possibility of reductions of irrigated farmland & development of large-scale clean energy facilities on fallowed land (N=659)



### Geographic Differences of Opinion about the Future: Huron, Mendota, & Firebaugh

Further analysis of the three largest geographic locations surveyed (Firebaugh, Huron, and Mendota) revealed distinct differences of opinions by location.

Figure 16. Outlook for the next 5-10 years, Huron (N=80)

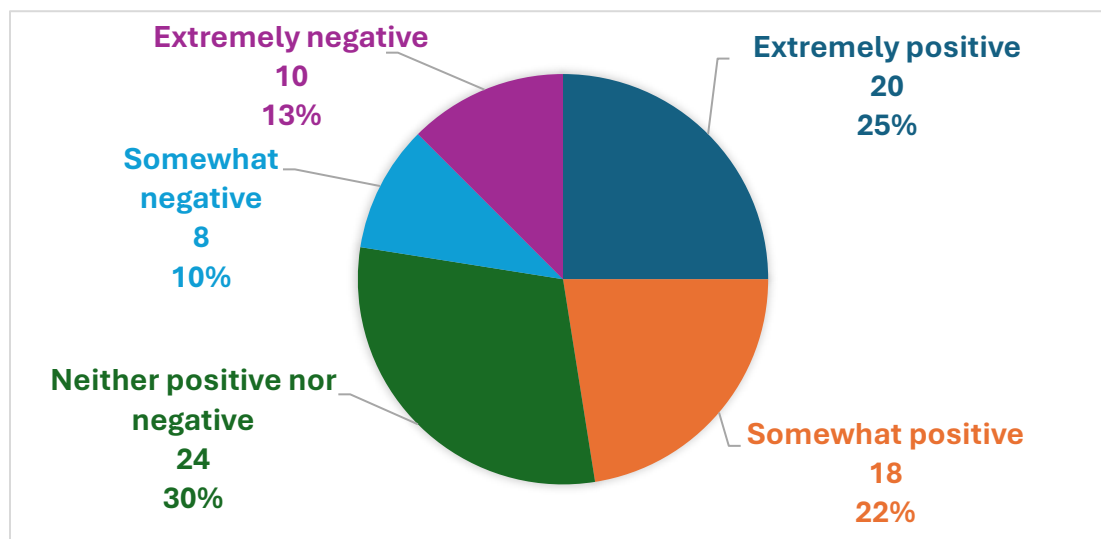


Figure 17. Outlook for the next 5-10 years, Mendota (N=89)

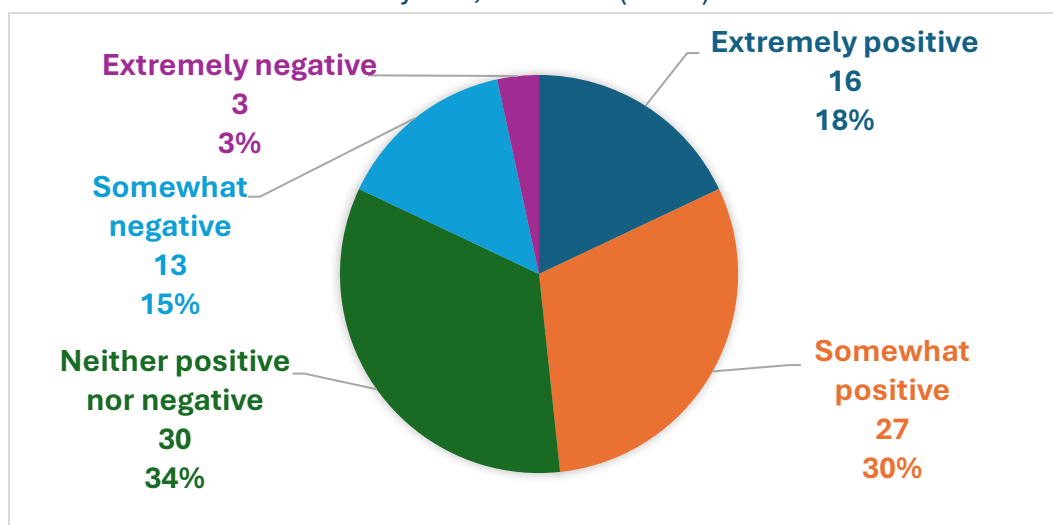
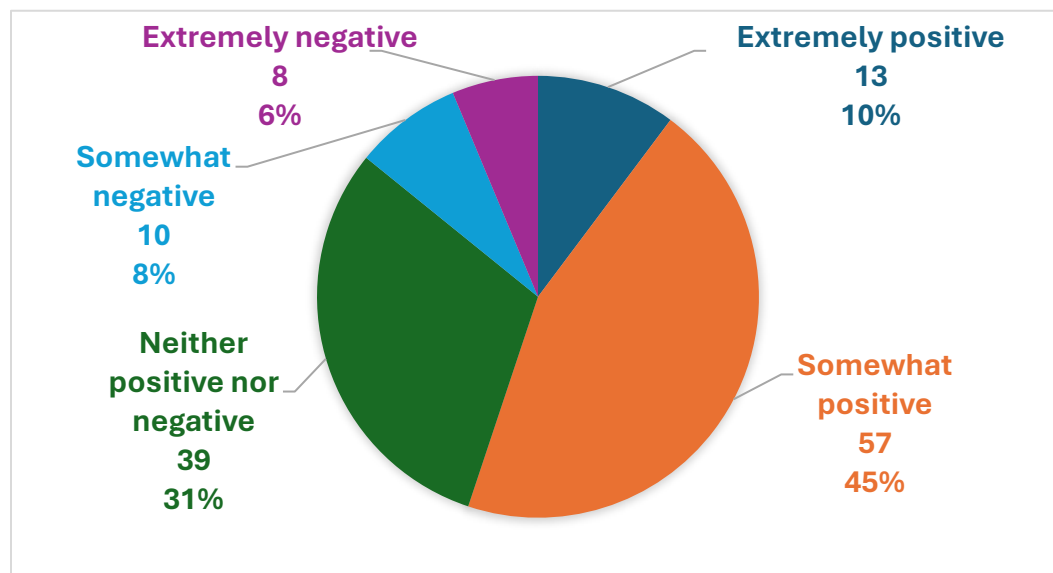


Figure 18. Outlook for the next 5-10 years, Firebaugh (N=127)



## Summary of Geographic Differences of Opinion about the Future: Huron, Mendota, and Firebaugh

- HURON** has the greatest degree of bifurcation of views with the largest percentage of residents who feel “Extremely positive” about the next 5-10 years (25.0%) compared to residents in Firebaugh (10.2%) and Mendota (18.0%) and the largest percentage of residents who feel “Extremely negative” (12.5%) compared with Firebaugh (6.3%) and Mendota (3.4%).

Figure 19. Geographic Differences in Extremely Positive Views of the Future

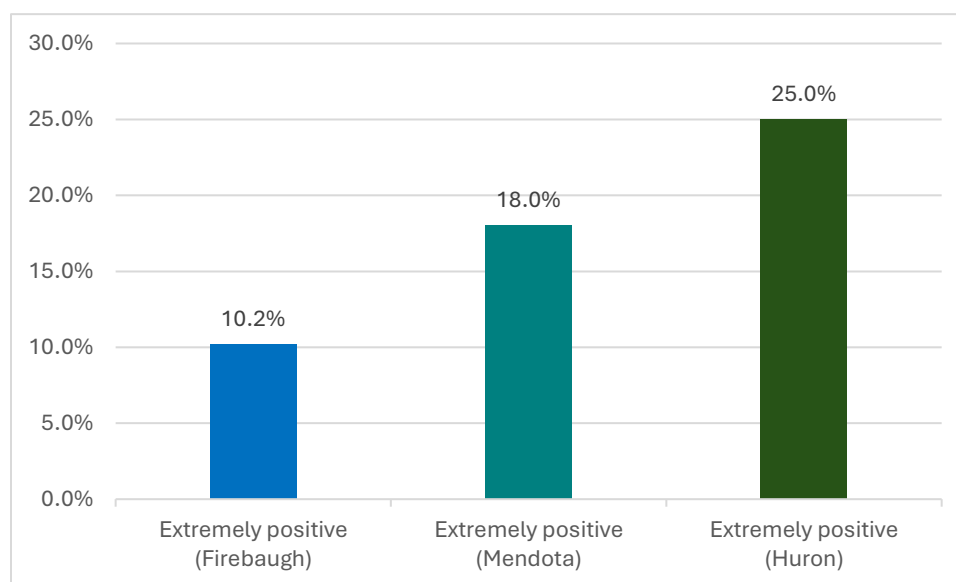
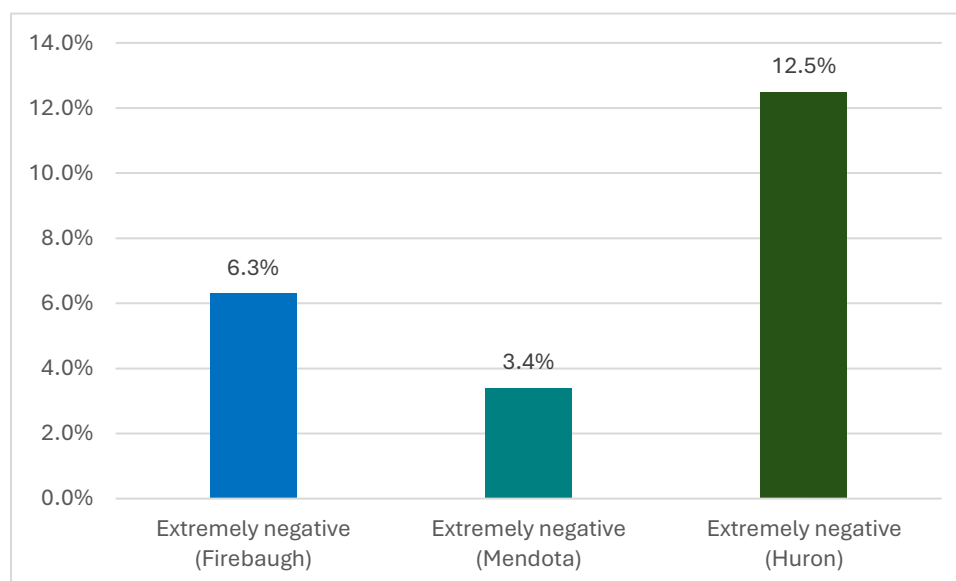


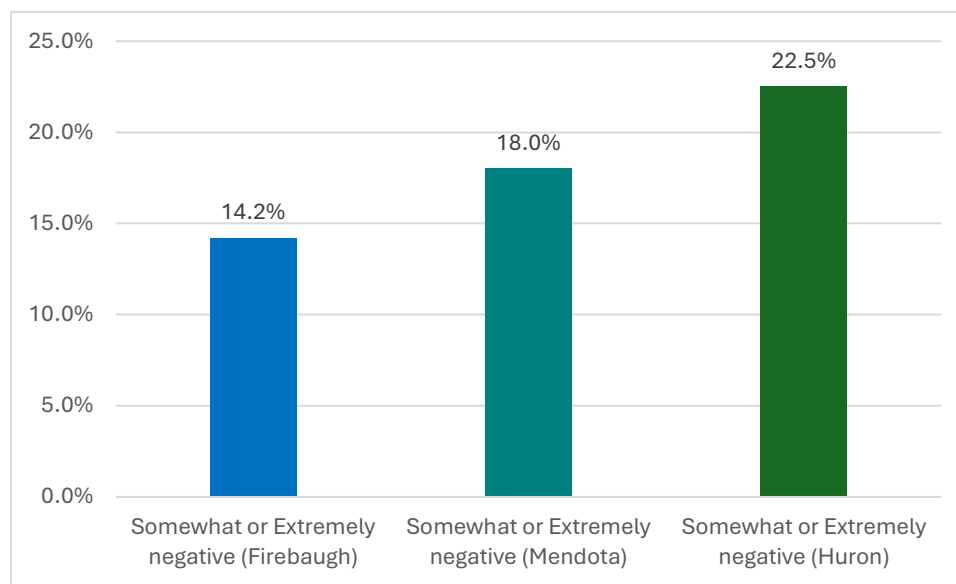
Figure 20. Geographic Differences in Extremely Negative Views of the Future



- MENDOTA** has the lowest percentage of residents with an extremely negative view (3.4%) compared to residents in Huron (12.5%) and Firebaugh (6.3%); however, a significant percentage of residents report feeling “Somewhat negative” (14.6%).

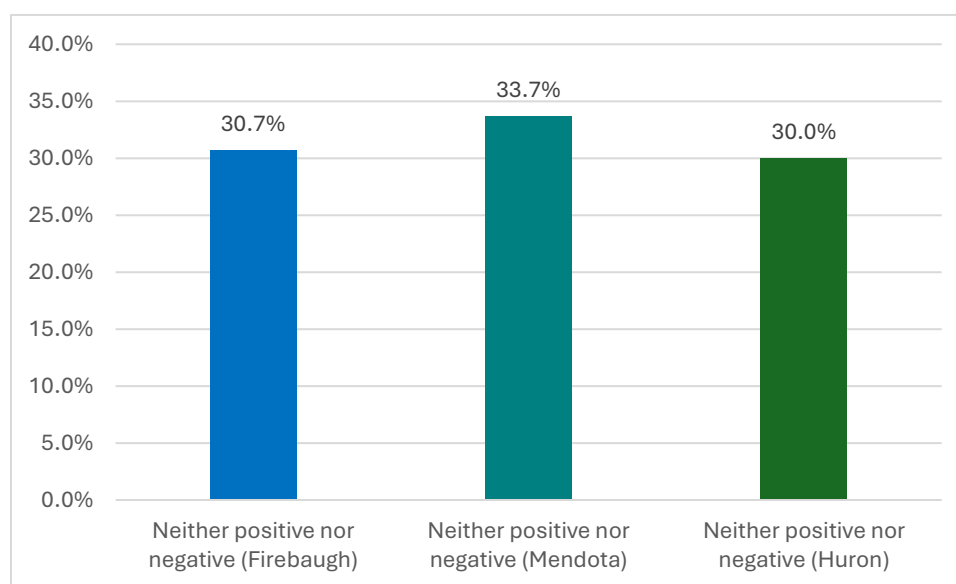


Figure 21. Geographic Differences in Overall Negative Views of the Future



- FIREBAUGH** has the lowest percentage of residents with overall negative views of the future with 14.2% of respondents expressing an “Extremely negative” (6.3%) or “Somewhat negative” (7.9%) view of the next 5-10 years compared to residents in Huron (22.5%) and Mendota (18.0%).

Figure 22. Geographic Differences in “Undecided” Views of the Future

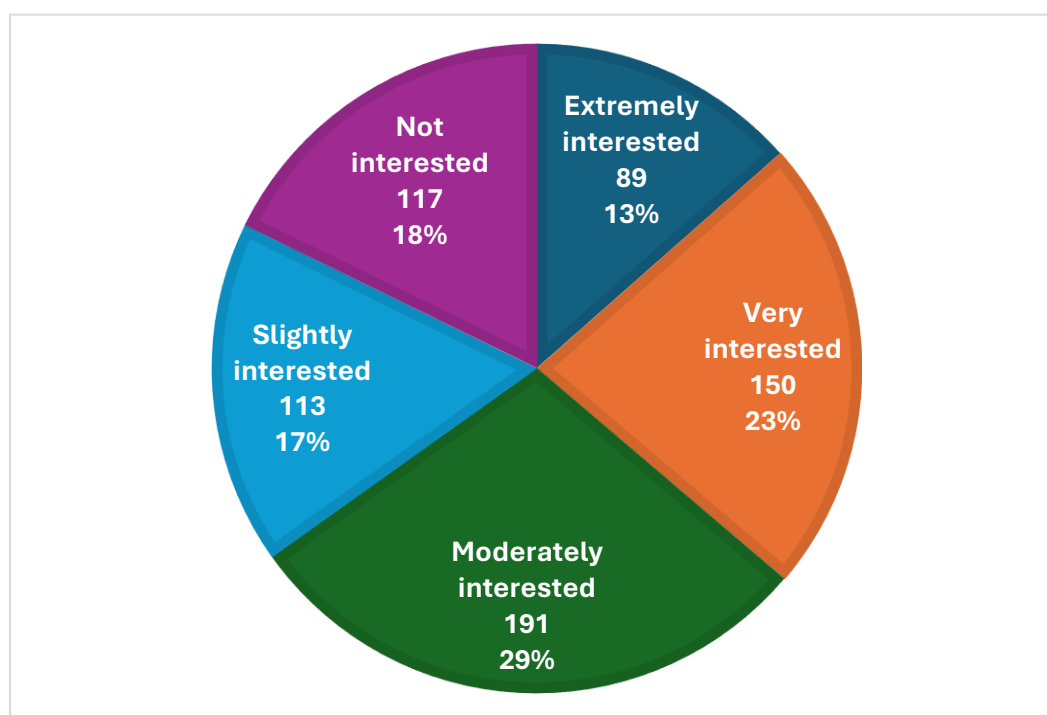


- MENDOTA** has the largest percentage of residents reporting “Neither positive nor negative” views of the future (33.7%) compared to residents in Firebaugh (30.7%) and Huron (30.0%).

## Public Interest in Engagement & Possibilities for Community Organizing

- A significant percentage of individuals responded in the affirmative (82%) when asked, “What is your level of interest in a leadership role related to a possible community partnership being formed to address changes in agriculture and new energy industries in your region?” This shows a high degree of interest in potential for community mobilization around the efforts associated with the newly established 501c3 organization, Rural Communities Rising.

Figure 23. Interest in a Leadership Role related to a possible Community Partnership to Address Changes in the Region (N=660)



- **82% of the overall sample expressed at least some degree of interest in a leadership role** with 36% saying either “Extremely interested” (13%) or “Very interested” (23%), **with HURON having the highest proportion of residents indicating this level of interest (49.4%)** compared to Mendota (42.7%) and Firebaugh (33.9%).

## SECTION V: Qualitative Findings

In addition to the closed-ended questions, the survey contained four open-ended questions that allow for qualitative analysis:

1. Your Top **PERSONAL** Goals/Interests/Needs/Challenges/Concerns
2. Your Top **COMMUNITY** Goals/Interests/Needs/Challenges/Concerns
3. **How would you describe your thoughts or feelings about** the personal and community impacts and consequences of **SIGNIFICANT FUTURE REDUCTIONS OF IRRIGATED FARMLAND** in your region?
4. **How would you describe your thoughts or feelings about** the personal and community impacts and consequences of the **DEVELOPMENT OF LARGE-SCALE CLEAN ENERGY FACILITIES on fallowed land** in your region?

### Rural Residents' Top PERSONAL Goals/Interests/Needs/Challenges

237 individuals responded to the question about their TOP PERSONAL goals/interests/needs/challenge.

The majority of these responses focused on the NEED for additional financial support/income.

Seventy respondents (70, 29.5%) identified the NEED for more, stable, and better-paying jobs. Only 4 respondents (1.7%) referred to the NEED for more field/farm/agricultural jobs.

Nineteen respondents (19, 8.0%) focused on the NEED for education, the majority citing the need for a high school in Huron.

Four respondents (4, 1.7%) focused on personal GOALS, including additional education and civic involvement.

Overall, respondents were less focused on PERSONAL goals/interests/needs/challenges and more focused on COMMUNITY goals/interests/needs/challenges.

### Rural Residents' Top COMMUNITY Goals/Interests/Needs/Challenges

237 individuals responded to the question about their TOP COMMUNITY goals/interests/needs/challenge.

In addition to financial support/income and more jobs, more housing (affordable and rental) (9, 3.8%), a pharmacy (9, 3.8%), a clinic (4, 1.7%), and improved roads and street lighting (13, 5.5%), the largest group—36 respondents (15.2%)—expressed the NEED for a sports complex with recreational activities for youth, an outdoor gym, parks, a public swimming pool, and a community center with a commercial kitchen and fireplace.

## Thoughts & Feelings about Significant Future Reductions of Irrigated Farmland

The negative thoughts and feelings regarding significant future reductions of irrigated farmland have most to do with the economic consequences of that—primarily, additional job losses, the resulting loss of income, and the potential negative effects on the local economy. A few respondents were concerned about not having skills, education, or experience for other types of employment that may become available. Several respondents acknowledged the inevitability of the retiring of more, recognizing that increasing amounts of farmland have been fallowed over the past 18 years. In fact, other than 2011, when just 59,514 acres were fallowed, the number of acres fallowed annually ranged from a low of 96,409 (2000) to a high of 227,563 acres (2022).

## Thoughts & Feelings about Development of Large-Scale Clean Energy Facilities on Fallowed Land

Approximately 165 individuals responded to this question. Some were concerned about the owners and elected officials not understanding the priorities of rural residents nor hiring local workers to do the work. Others wondered whether rural residents would see a benefit of purchasing cheaper electricity. One Spanish-speaking resident expressed this duality of possibilities, “The development of clean energy facilities on vacant land could be beneficial by generating employment and promoting sustainability. However, it could also raise concerns about environmental impact and the loss of natural spaces, which requires careful planning and community involvement.”

Another Spanish-speaking resident explained, “The development of clean energy facilities on brownfield land could be a great opportunity for the region, as it would encourage the transition to sustainable sources and potentially attract investment. However, it could also raise concerns about the use of space and the visual impact on the community, as well as the potential lack of consultation with residents. It is essential to involve the community in the process to ensure equitable benefits.”

Finally, a couple residents generated alternative ideas for the use of at least parts of the fallowed land. One wrote: “Another great option for the use of the fallowed land would be to build housing and shelter for the unhoused, complete with mental health and drug rehabilitation programs.”

## APPENDIX I: The Survey Instrument (English & Spanish)

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE SURVEY

1. What is the name of the community organizer speaking with you and sharing this form? Circle one: Felipe Perez, Jose Antonio Ramirez, Keith Bergthold, Central Valley IAF, Espi Sandoval, Eliseo Gamino, Martha Solis, Other, NA (e.g., website)
2. If you selected OTHER, please write write the name of the person or organization that asked or assisted you to fill out this survey?
3. Your FIRST NAME
4. Your LAST NAME
5. Phone number (e.g., 559-XXX-XXX)
6. Email address (N/A if none)
7. City/Town you live in
8. Zip Code of your residence (5-digits)
9. What is the name of the church (e.g., St. Paul Catholic Church), faith community, or community organization are you part of? (i.e., your primary affiliation)
10. Please list any other groups (community groups, schools, health clinics) you are part of:
11. Your Top <b>PERSONAL</b> Goals/Interests/Needs/Challenges/Concerns
12. Your Top <b>COMMUNITY</b> Goals/Interests/Needs/Challenges/Concerns

13. How would you describe your thoughts or feelings about the personal and community impacts and consequences of SIGNIFICANT FUTURE REDUCTIONS OF IRRIGATED FARMLAND in your region?

14. How would you describe your thoughts or feelings about the personal and community impacts and consequences of the DEVELOPMENT OF LARGE-SCALE CLEAN ENERGY FACILITIES on fallowed land in your region?

15. Given the possibility of future reductions of irrigated farmland and development of large-scale clean energy facilities on fallowed land in your region, how do you feel about the next 5-10 years?

CIRCLE ONE:

- A. Extremely positive
- B. Somewhat positive
- C. Neither positive nor negative
- D. Somewhat negative
- E. Extremely negative

16. What is your level of interest in a leadership role related to a possible community partnership being formed to address changes in agriculture and new energy industries in your region?

CIRCLE ONE:

- A. Extremely interested
- B. Very interested
- C. Moderately interested
- D. Slightly interested
- E. Not interested

17. What is the name of one other person from your community that we should speak with about these issues?

18. What is the phone number or email address of that person we should speak with?



## SPANISH LANGUAGE SURVEY

1. ¿Cuál es el nombre del organizador comunitario que habla con usted y comparte este formulario? Felipe Perez, Jose Antonio Ramirez, Keith Bergthold, Central Valley IAF Organizer, Espi Sandoval, Eliseo Gamino, Martha Solis, Other, N/A (e.g., website)
2. Dado que seleccionó OTRO, ¿cuál es el nombre de la persona u organización que le pidió o le ayudó a completar esta encuesta?
3. Tu NOMBRE
4. Tu APELLIDO
5. Número de teléfono (por ejemplo, 559-XXX-XXX)
6. Dirección de correo electrónico
7. Ciudad/Pueblo donde vives
8. Código postal de su residencia
9. ¿Cuál es el NOMBRE de la iglesia (por ejemplo, Iglesia Católica de San Pablo), comunidad de fe u organización comunitaria de la que forma parte? (es decir, su afiliación principal)
10. Enumere otros grupos (grupos comunitarios, escuelas, clínicas de salud) de los que forma parte:
11. Sus principales objetivos/intereses/necesidades/desafíos/inquietudes <b>PERSONALES</b>
12. Sus principales objetivos/intereses/necesidades/desafíos/inquietudes de <b>la COMUNIDAD</b>

13. ¿Cómo describiría sus pensamientos o sentimientos sobre los impactos y consecuencias personales y comunitarias de FUTURAS REDUCCIONES SIGNIFICATIVAS DE TIERRAS AGRÍCOLAS DE RIEGO en su región?
14. ¿Cómo describiría sus pensamientos o sentimientos sobre los impactos y consecuencias personales y comunitarios del DESARROLLO DE INSTALACIONES DE ENERGÍA LIMPIA A GRAN ESCALA en terrenos baldíos/barbechos de su región?
15. Dada la posibilidad de futuras reducciones de tierras agrícolas irrigadas y el desarrollo de instalaciones de energía limpia a gran escala en tierras en barbecho en su región, ¿cómo se siente acerca de los próximos 5 a 10 años? a. Muy positivo b. Algo positivo c. Ni positivo ni negativo d. Algo negativo e. Extremadamente negativo
16. ¿Cuál es su nivel de interés en un rol de liderazgo relacionado con una posible asociación comunitaria que se está formando para abordar cambios en la agricultura y las nuevas industrias energéticas en su región? F. Extremadamente interesado G. Muy interesado H. Moderadamente interesado I. Un poco interesado J. No me interesa
17. ¿Cuál es el nombre de otra persona de su comunidad con quien deberíamos hablar sobre estos temas?
18. ¿Cuál es el número de teléfono o la dirección de correo electrónico de esa persona con la que debemos hablar?