HISTORIC SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY, 1970-2017

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Funding Water Infrastructure for the San Joaquin Valley Summit
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The story of the San Joaquin Valley

• The San Joaquin Valley is unique in many ways, known as the primary producer of food for the nation but also as a region with social and economic challenges.

• The 20th century saw the San Joaquin Valley become more diverse but more unequal with rising poverty and income gaps

• As the center of food production, the San Joaquin Valley economy relies heavily on agriculture
  • This has serious implications for the issue of water infrastructure, as the decline in agricultural production in a region with a monolithic economy that already struggles with socioeconomic disparities could have enormous consequences for the well-being and mobility of Valley residents – especially in low-income communities, communities of color, and immigrant communities.
Higher unemployment

The unemployment rate has stayed consistently higher than in the state overall, exacerbated by the 2007-2008 economic crisis.

While counties began to recover, they have been hit especially hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, seeing 600-800% increases in initial unemployment claims from 2019 to 2020.
Changing Socioeconomic Conditions

Unemployment Rate
California, Counties, 1970-2017
Rising Poverty

The poverty rate of the San Joaquin Valley has steadily risen, leading to significant gaps between the poverty rates of counties in the SJV and California overall. The 2008 recession accelerated the rise in some areas, with only slight recovery.
Changing Socioeconomic Conditions

Percent Below Poverty
California, Counties, 1970-2017

- 0.0 - 10.0
- 10.0 - 20.0
- 20.0 - 30.0
- 30.0 - 40.0
- 40.0 - 50.0
- 50.0 - 60.0
- 60.0 - 64.8
San Joaquin Valley Water Investment Program
Socioeconomic Considerations

Historic Poverty Trend
SJ Valley versus State of CA
1970 to 2017

We are economically disadvantaged

1970
1.6 X greater poverty rate

2017
1.6 X greater poverty rate
Changing Racial and Ethnic Demographics

In line with the rest of California, the San Joaquin Valley has been steadily diversifying, in large part due to the growth of the Latinx population.
Changing Racial and Ethnic Demographics

A major contributor to the racial diversification of the San Joaquin Valley is immigration, which rose dramatically in California following the 1965 Hart-Celler Act.

The largest share of immigrants in recent decades are from Mexico, but the Valley has also received a significant number of immigrants from Southeast Asia and more recently the Middle East.

In the San Joaquin Valley, the agricultural economy relies heavily on migrant and immigrant labor.
Changing Racial and Ethnic Demographics

Percent (Non-Hispanic) White
California, Counties, 1980-2017

- 0 - 20
- 20 - 40
- 40 - 60
- 60 - 80
- 80 - 100
Educational Attainment

While college graduation rates increased dramatically with the expansion of access to higher education across the state of California, the San Joaquin Valley lags significantly.
Changing Educational Attainment

Percent College Degree
California, Counties, 1970-2017

- 0.0000 - 10.0000
- 10.0000 - 20.0000
- 20.0000 - 30.0000
- 30.0000 - 40.0000
- 40.0000 - 50.0000
- 50.0000 - 60.0000
- 60.0000 - 60.1552
Persistent Inequality

Residential segregation has remained moderately high and stable since 1970 in most counties, despite the existence of fair housing laws.

Urban centers are characterized by both racial and income segregation.
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Industrial reliance on agriculture

Compared to the state overall, the San Joaquin Valley economy and labor force are much more heavily dependent on agriculture, particularly in Tulare, Kings, Fresno, and Kern counties.
Historic Ag Sector Employment Trend
SJ Valley versus State of CA
1970 to 2017

- We are economically disadvantaged.
- We are Ag-Centric for Jobs.

5.2x greater resilience on agriculture for employment

1970: 17.82%

5.4x greater resilience for employment agriculture

2017: 12.58%

Year

1970: 3.40%
1980: 3.49%
1990: 3.38%
2000: 1.92%
2012: 2.29%
2017: 2.31%

Percent Ag Sector Employed, %

All CA Counties
SJV Average
Directions forward

- Housing inequality
  - The San Joaquin Valley suffers from a severe shortage in affordable, decent housing. While the Valley is known for its lower cost of living, lower incomes and higher poverty mean that being able to afford the median rent of a home is still unattainable for many.

- Education and diversifying the workforce
  - An overarching problem that the Valley faces is its heavy dependence on agriculture. A monolithic economy makes the Valley vulnerable. It is important to invest in higher education to diversify the skills of Valley residents and create opportunities for them to apply their skillsets in the Valley rather than migrating out of the Valley.

- Environment and health
  - The San Joaquin Valley is notorious for its air pollution, affecting most residents but especially low-income communities and communities of color segregated into areas where they are exposed to heavier concentrations of pollutants. This has severe ramifications, as life expectancy is significantly shorter in affected areas.
  - Access to quality water remains woefully disparate, with low-income urban communities exposed to higher levels of lead and rural communities unable to rely on safe and clean water.
  - Renewed infrastructure must prioritize reducing air pollution and increasing access to clean, safe water.
Data sources

• Decennial census and long-form summary files, 1970-2010
• American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2008-2012 and 2013-2017
• Summary files and shapefiles extracted from National Historic Geographic Information System (NHGIS), Minnesota Population Center