

National Equity Atlas

California Jobs First:

Equity Indicators for the Eastern Sierra Region

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PolicyLink

USC Dornsife
Equity Research Institute



About the National Equity Atlas

The **National Equity Atlas** is a first-of-its-kind data and policy tool, produced through a partnership between PolicyLink and the USC Equity Research Institute. It equips communities, advocates, and policymakers with actionable data and strategies to advance racial and economic equity in the United States.

About This Profile

This data portrait provides insights on racial equity, economic inclusivity, and environmental justice to support community and labor groups engaged in planning efforts related to **California Jobs First** (formerly the Community Economic Resilience Fund). It also demonstrates how community groups and analysts can leverage available data to explore equity issues and identify opportunities to address regional disparities.

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Introduction

Introduction

California Jobs First

California Jobs First (formerly the Community Economic Resilience Fund) represents a generational opportunity for California's regions to advance economic strategies anchored in racial equity, economic inclusivity, and environmental sustainability.

Established by the state of California in 2021, the \$600 million fund was designed to “deliver a sustainable and equitable economic future that meets communities and regions where they are by supporting new regional plans and investing in strategies and projects that help diversify regional economies and develop or expand environmentally sustainable industries that create high-quality, broadly accessible jobs for all Californians.”

The program's [vision](#) is to:

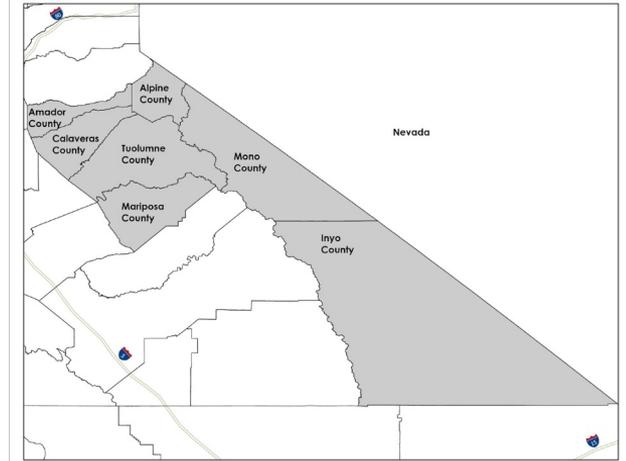
- Promote a sustainable and equitable recovery from Covid-19 that creates high-quality and accessible jobs for all Californians;
- Support the development of regional economic roadmaps for building sustainable economic growth and driving investments in industries that will thrive in a carbon-neutral future;
- Align and leverage state, federal, philanthropic, and private-sector investments to maximize recovery efforts and catalyze long-term economic resilience; and
- Integrate the priorities of community residents into regional planning processes.

Introduction

The Eastern Sierra Region

Home to slightly under 200,000 residents, the Eastern Sierra region comprises seven counties (Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne) between California's Central Valley and the California-Nevada border. The Sierra Business Council (SBC), a community-based nonprofit organization, applied for a \$5 million California Jobs first grant to facilitate efforts around economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and recent forest fires, as well as creating investments in climate change resilience and sustainable jobs. The SBC convened a consortium of local government, business, and civilian leaders to form the [High Road Transition Collaborative \(HRTC\)](#), a representative body to oversee the implementation of the funds.

This data portrait provides insights on racial equity, economic inclusivity, and environmental justice to support community and labor groups engaged in the California Jobs First program. These indicators, along with additional indicators on the [National Equity Atlas](#), can be used to inform planning for projects that would address the impacts of the state's historical exclusion of low-income communities and communities of color from economic development planning processes and economic opportunities.



Introduction

Defining an Equitable Region

Regions are equitable when all residents — regardless of their race/ethnicity, nativity, gender, income, neighborhood of residence, or other characteristics — are fully able to participate in the region's economic vitality, contribute to the region's readiness for the future, and connect to the region's assets and resources.

Strong, equitable regions:

- Have **economic vitality** that supports residents to secure high-quality jobs and to produce new ideas, products, businesses, and economic activity so the well-being of the residents is sustainable.
- Are **ready for the future**, with a skilled, ready workforce and a healthy population.
- Are **places of connection**, where residents can access the essential ingredients to live healthy and productive lives in their neighborhoods, reach opportunities located throughout the region (and beyond) via transportation and technology, participate in civic processes, and productively engage with other diverse residents.

Introduction

Data Summary

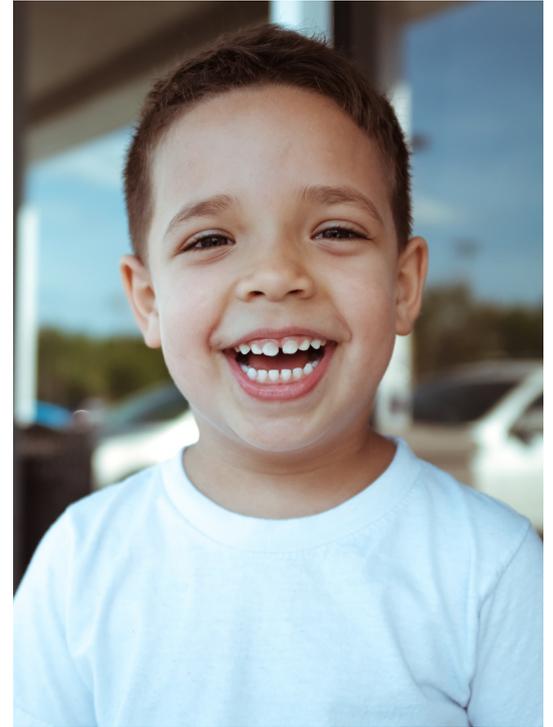
This data snapshot of the Eastern Sierra region is a resource for community and labor organizations engaging in the California Jobs First program to understand key demographic, social, and economic trends in the region. The data in this profile reveals that:

The Eastern Sierra region stands out as demographically, economically, and ecologically distinct from the rest of the state.

- The Eastern Sierra region accounts for 12 percent of California's land area, but less than one-half of one percent of its residents. Federally protected natural lands dominate the landscape, including some of the country's most cherished wilderness areas: parts of five national forests (Eldorado, Stanislaus, Sierra, Inyo, and Humboldt-Toiyabe) and two national parks (Yosemite and Death Valley). Because so much of the region's area lies under federal

management, plans for economic development and growth must balance the needs and requirements for ecological preservation.

- The regional economy orbits around the national parks and forests (both the public sector staff, as well as the public sector tourist economy that serves visitors), as well as the core services and goods needed to support the full-time residents of the area. A large portion of the job base is in retail, hospitality, and service jobs with limited room for income growth. Many of these workers experienced financial hardship when the parks and forests were closed early in the pandemic. Unlike California's metropolitan centers, white-collar industries like finance, insurance, real estate, business management, and STEM make up a very small portion of local jobs. The absence of local financial capital creates a challenge for local economic growth.



Introduction

Data Summary *(continued)*

- Latinx residents accounted for nearly half of all population growth in the region between 1990 and 2020, or 17,000 of the nearly 36,000 new residents added over that timespan. However, as of 2020, the Eastern Sierra region's population was still predominantly white, over twice the statewide white population rate (76 percent vs. 36 percent). A much smaller share of the population is foreign-born, compared to the statewide population (6 percent vs. 27 percent). While there has been a slight increase in Asian American and Pacific Islander residents, there were also net declines in the number of Black and Native American residents.
- The region's ecology is diverse, from forests to deserts to the fringes of the Central Valley. As a result, different areas provide different environmental challenges to residents. Neighborhoods

closest to the Central Valley, a region with high levels of pollution, experience higher levels of pollution and environmental risk. Residents in the forested areas must contend with the steady rise in forest fires in recent years, and desert-dwellers face more extreme heat conditions in climate change.

Equitable recovery and economic growth efforts must address the needs of the many local workers in low-wage industries, especially as income inequality has worsened in recent decades.

- Between 1980 and 2020, workers at the uppermost percentiles of the wage distribution saw their incomes increase, while most workers making less than median wages saw a decline in their wages when adjusting for inflation. Median wages for workers (i.e., workers at the 50th percentile of wages) stagnated over this period. In other words, the highest earners

in the region have become richer, while many of the lowest earners face steeper struggles in making ends meet.

- Poverty rates in the region rose slightly between 1990 and 2020 for all residents (10 percent to 11 percent) and white residents specifically (9 percent to 10 percent), even as poverty rates fell for residents of color over the same period. As mentioned above, the region has few of the high-earning jobs in tech, finance, and other white-collar industries at the core of California's 21st-century economic boom, and many service sector jobs whose wages have not kept pace with the state's broader financial growth.
- Areas with high unemployment, high poverty, and/or low median incomes are dispersed throughout the region, with areas of relative prosperity and relative financial distress often adjacent to one another. Notably, these areas do not

Introduction

Data Summary (*continued*)

- always overlap, as some parts of the region have low unemployment rates but high levels of poverty, and others have high unemployment rates but also relatively high median incomes. A regional approach to economic recovery must broadly address the needs of local workers while also parsing apart the distinct challenges that residents face in different communities.
- Only one in five adults between the ages of 25 and 64 have a bachelor's degree, well below the statewide average of 35 percent. The low proportion of jobs requiring bachelor's degrees is a key challenge for the region's economic growth, as a much larger share of jobs in California with living wages and sustainable futures require a four-year degree, and conversely, good employment opportunities are limited for residents

with an associate's degree or high school diploma. This challenge is compounded by the fact that the Eastern Sierra region has no four-year colleges and a single public community college campus, which requires young people growing up in the region to leave home to receive a higher education, and/or requires local government and business leaders to attract college-educated workers from elsewhere.

As the region diversifies, local leaders must address the region's longstanding racial income gap.

- While poverty rates and working-poverty rates (the share of residents employed full time, but with a household income below 200 percent of federal poverty limits) have fallen for residents of color in the past 30 years, Latinx and Native American residents still face higher levels of poverty and financial hardship than white

residents. The median wage for Latinx workers is only 76 percent of the median wage for white workers, and workers of color are underpaid relative to white workers with the same level of education.

- Workers of color make up a proportionate share of many of the region's major industries — including retail trade, other private services, and public administration — but are underrepresented in some other common job sectors, like education and construction. Assuming the region continues to become more racially diverse, all workers must receive equitable opportunities in the region's different industries, while also raising the overall well-being of the many service and public workers whose work keeps the national parks and forests as accessible spaces of natural beauty.

Introduction

General Discussion Questions

Inclusive Decision-Making

- Are the communities most deeply impacted by poverty and historic marginalization in your region *meaningfully engaged* in initiatives, priorities, and outcomes? How?
- Do the communities most deeply impacted by poverty and historic marginalization have any decision-making power to shape investments that can affect their future? In what way?

Targeted and Disaggregated Analysis

- What populations or communities aren't reflected in this data profile?
- Given how you plan to analyze economic vitality, connectedness, and readiness in your region, what are the most pressing inequities or disparities that you can isolate for further analysis? How will you perform this analysis to center the needs and priorities of frontline or deeply impacted communities?

California Jobs First represents a generational opportunity for California's regions to advance economic strategies anchored in racial equity, economic inclusivity, and environmental sustainability.



Demographics

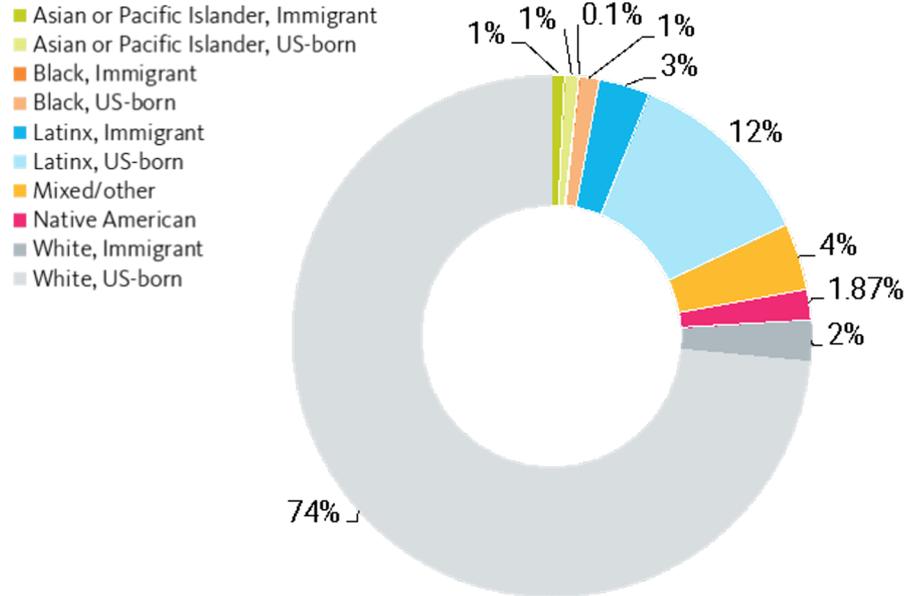
Demographics

Who lives in the region and how is this changing?

The Eastern Sierra region is sparsely populated, and a higher share of residents are white and US-born compared to California as a whole.

A region dominated by forests, mountains, and deserts, the Eastern Sierra accounts for 12 percent of California’s land area, but less than 0.5 percent of its residents. The population is three-quarters white, roughly twice the proportion of white residents statewide. Fewer than one in ten residents was born outside the US, compared to 27 percent of all Californians. Latinx residents account for the majority of residents of color and make up 15 percent of the overall population. Black, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native American residents altogether make up only 5 percent of residents. In general, the census tracts on the western edge of the region (closest to Sacramento and the Central Valley) and those along the California-Nevada border have higher percentages of residents of color.

Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity, 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 2020 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average.

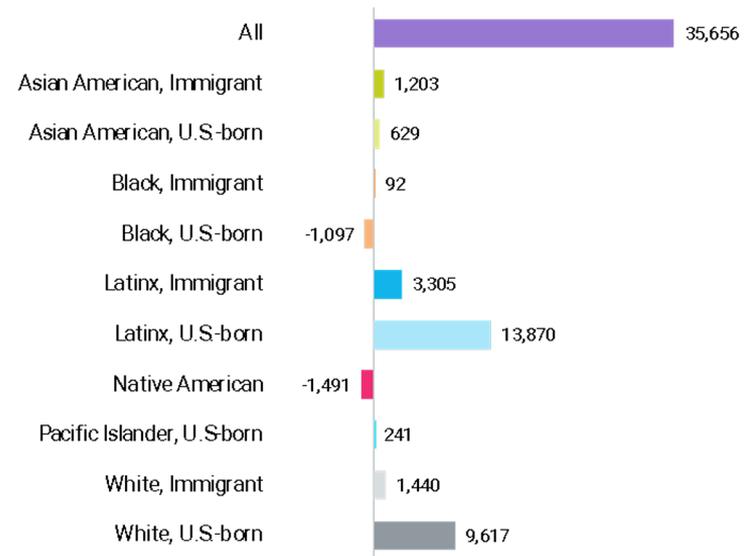
Demographics

Who lives in the region and how is this changing?

Latinx residents accounted for nearly half of all population growth in the region since 1990.

Between 1990 and 2020, the population in the Eastern Sierra region grew by 23 percent, slower than the statewide population growth of 32 percent over the same period. California's population growth has largely occurred in urbanized metropolitan areas, of which this region contains none. While white residents continued to make up the large majority of the population in 2020, Latinx residents accounted for 17,175 (48 percent) of the 35,656 additional residents. About three in 10 new residents over this 30-year period were white, with Asian American and Pacific Islander residents representing about 6 percent of population growth. By contrast, the region had a net decline in Black and Native American residents since 1990.

Change in Major Groups by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, 1990 to 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 2020 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA.
Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average.

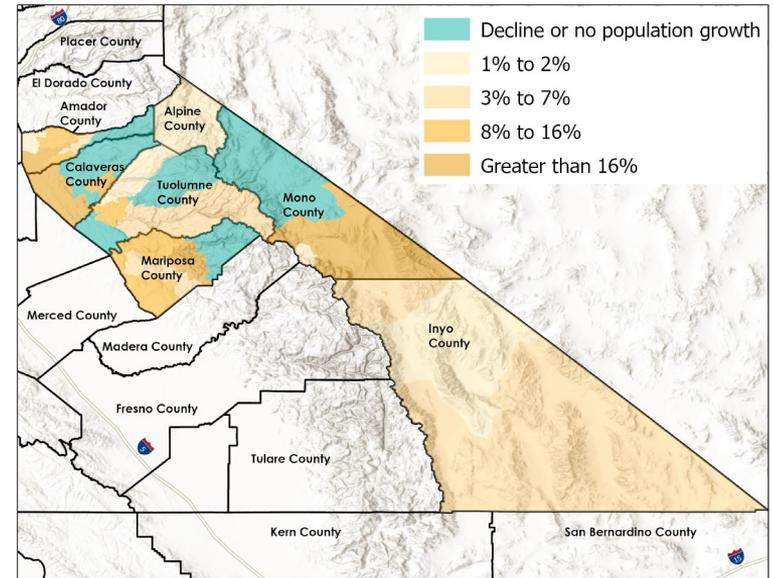
Demographics

Who lives in the region and how is this changing?

Population growth was concentrated in the small cities and towns adjacent to the Central Valley as well as the southern half of Mono County.

Much of the Eastern Sierra region is federally managed forest and park land, where few full-time residents live. The blue areas on the map, where there was either no or negative population growth between 2000 and 2020, include the El Dorado and Stanislaus National Forests, Yosemite National Park, and the Red Hills Recreation Management Area on the west side of Tuolumne County. By contrast, multiple communities surrounding these natural areas experienced upwards of 8 percent population growth in the first two decades of the millennium. The two census tracts with the highest population rate increases, over 16 percent, cover the cluster of communities southwest of Yosemite Village in Mariposa County, and the southern part of Mono County in and around the city of Bishop.

Population Growth by Census Tract, 2000 to 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas Analysis of 2020 ACS Summary File Data. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average.

Demographics

Further Data Exploration and Discussion Questions

- What parts of the region have grown the most quickly in the past generation? What has driven growth in those areas?
- What areas of the region have become more racially diverse?
- How have local governments and business leaders responded to incorporate residents of color into the workforce and community?
- How can local leaders coordinate activities, enact strategies, and engage constituents across such a large, low-density, and ecologically diverse region?

Regions are equitable when all residents — regardless of their race/ethnicity, nativity, gender, income, neighborhood of residence, or other characteristics — are fully able to participate in the region's economic vitality, contribute to the region's readiness for the future, and connect to the region's assets and resources.



Economic Vitality

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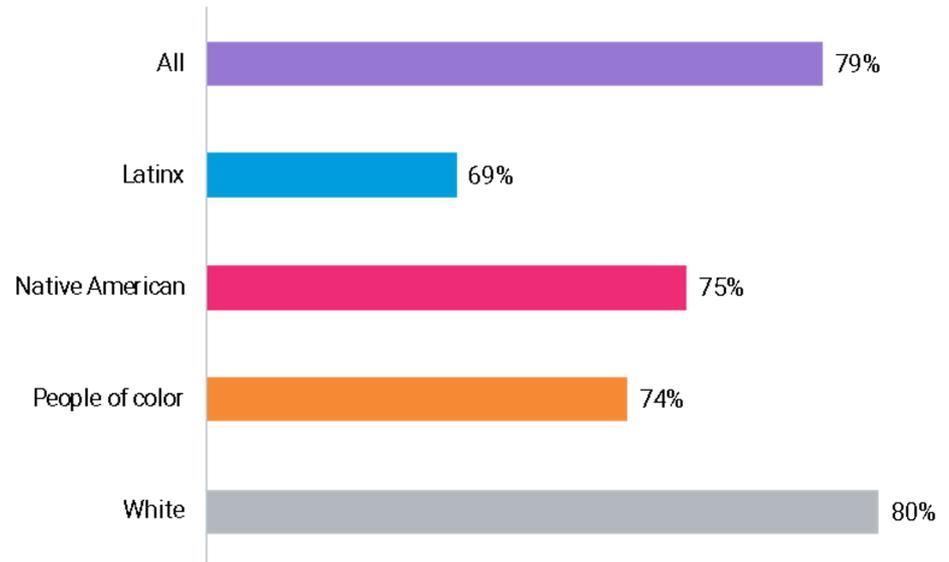
Economic Vitality

Do all workers earn a livable wage?

Four in five white workers earn at least \$15/hour, compared to just over two-thirds of Latinx workers.

About one in five workers in the Eastern Sierra region earns less than \$15/hour, in line with the [statewide average for all residents](#). However, there is a racial income gap between residents, with a six percentage-point difference between white workers and workers of color earning at least \$15/hour (80 percent vs. 74 percent). The gap is even bigger for Latinx workers: only 69 percent earn at least \$15/hour. Given the rapid growth of the Latinx population, local economic recovery efforts must ensure living wages for all and avoid the creation of long-term income disparities as the region diversifies.

Percent of Workers Earning at least \$15/hour by Race/Ethnicity, 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes the civilian noninstitutionalized labor force ages 25 through 64 years. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average.

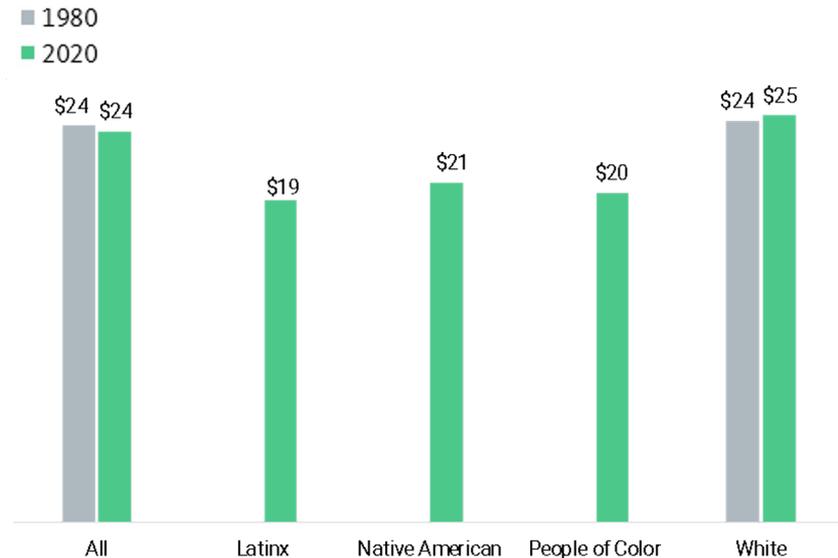
Economic Vitality

Is the median hourly wage increasing for all workers?

Median hourly wages have remained stagnant since 1980, and Latinx workers have a median wage equal to 76 percent of white workers' median wage.

The average worker in the Eastern Sierra region has not benefited from California's immense economic growth over the past 40 years. After adjusting for inflation, the median hourly wages in Eastern Sierra remain unchanged at \$24/hour, with just a \$1 increase in median wages for white workers only (\$24 to \$25). While wage data for people of color in 1980 is unavailable, comparing median hourly wages in 2020 illustrates the regional racial income gap. The median wage for all workers of color was 80 percent of the median wage of white workers; for Latinx workers, that proportion falls to 76 percent of white workers' median wage.

Median Hourly Wage by Race/Ethnicity, 1980 to 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes civilian noninstitutional full-time wage and salary workers ages 25 through 64 years. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 - 2020 average. Values are in 2020 dollars. There is not enough displayable data on median wages for workers of color in 1980.

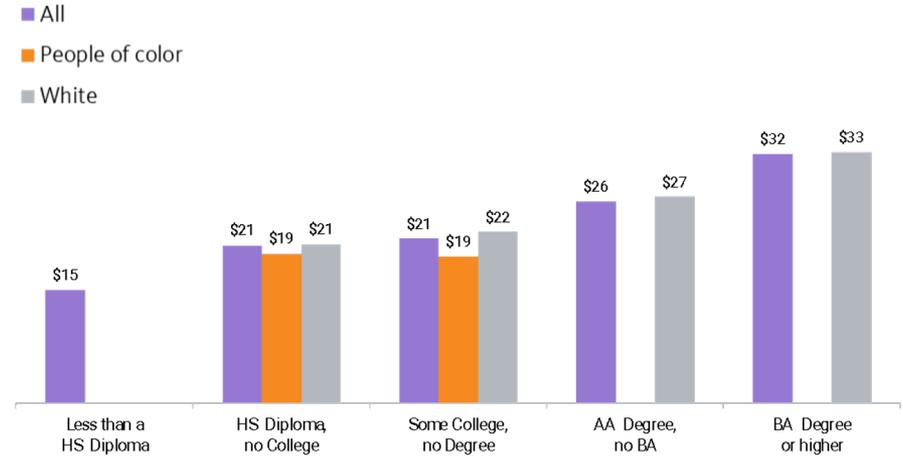
Economic Vitality

Do racial economic gaps persist across educational levels?

Workers with less than a high school diploma less than half the hourly wage of workers with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Median wages for workers in the Eastern Sierra region increase with educational attainment. For workers with a high school diploma or some college experience but no degree, median wages are 81 percent of the median wages for workers with associate's degrees, and 66 percent of the median wages for workers with bachelor's degrees. There is also a \$2 to \$3 gap in median wages between white workers and workers of color with the same level of education, though there is only sufficient data on workers of color with a high school diploma and some college but no postsecondary degree. The rise in residents of color in recent decades offers local leaders the opportunity to ensure racial equity in wages and increase economic opportunities for all.

Median Wage by Race/Ethnicity and Educational Attainment, 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes civilian noninstitutional full-time wage and salary workers ages 25 through 64 years. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average. Values are in 2020 dollars.
Note: Some data fields are missing because the population sample size is too small to produce data disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

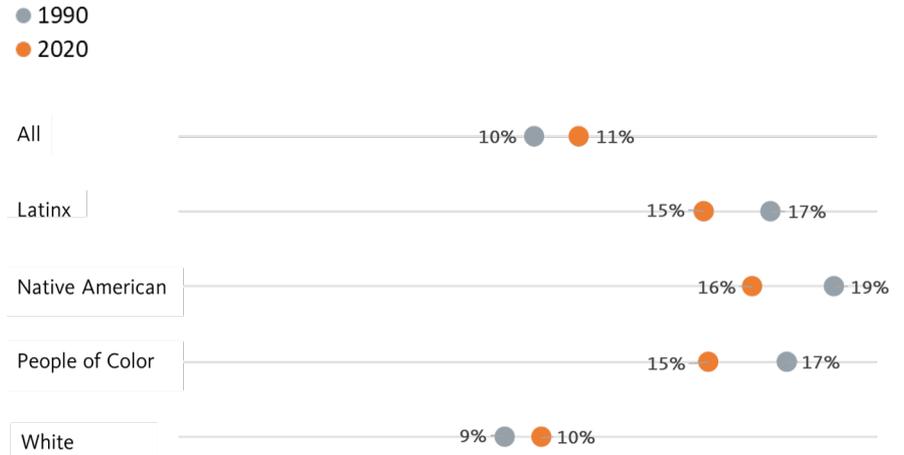
Economic Vitality

Is poverty low and decreasing?

Poverty rates for residents of color have slightly improved since 1990, but they remain substantially higher than poverty rates for white residents.

Economic insecurity in the Eastern Sierra region has risen slightly over the past generation. Between 1990 and 2020, the percentage of residents living below the poverty level grew from 10 percent to 11 percent. Notably, over the same period the poverty rates dropped for Latinx (17 percent to 15 percent) and Native American residents (19 percent to 16 percent), while rising slightly for white residents (9 percent to 10 percent). However, in 2020 residents of color were still more likely to experience poverty than white residents: over one in seven Latinx residents and one in six indigenous residents lived below the federal poverty level, compared to one in ten white residents. For context, the federal poverty level in 2020 was \$13,171 for an individual working adult with no children (the equivalent of \$6.33/hour working full time) and \$26,246 for a family of four with two working adults and two children.

Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 1990 and 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes all persons for whom poverty is determined. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average.

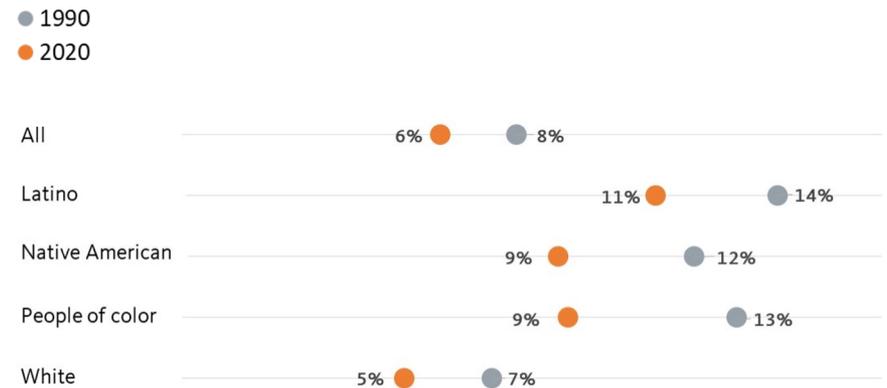
Economic Vitality

Is the share of workers who work full time and have incomes below poverty low and decreasing?

While working poverty has declined for all populations, workers of color are more likely to be experience working poverty.

Across California, there has been an increasing share of workers — particularly workers of color — who are working full-time yet continue to earn poverty wages. Here, we define “working poor” as those working full time with family incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. While the working poverty rate increased statewide, the rate declined in the Eastern Sierra region between 1990 and 2020 for all racial groups, even as the overall poverty rate increased locally. This could suggest a growing polarization of financial outcomes, with more residents living in poverty as well as more residents making more than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Despite decreasing rates of working poverty across the board, residents of color were still almost twice as likely as white workers (9 percent vs. 5 percent) to experience working poverty in 2020.

Working-Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 1990 and 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes the civilian noninstitutional population ages 25 through 64 years not living in group quarters who worked at all during the year prior to the survey. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average. Data for some racial/ethnic groups are excluded due to small sample sizes. Note: There is not enough reliable data to display for Native American residents in 2020.

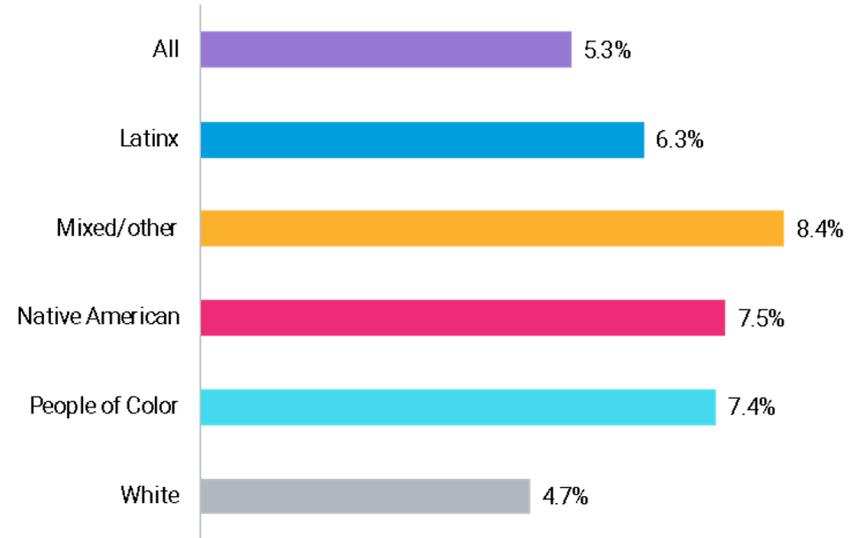
Economic Vitality

Can all residents access employment?

Native American, Latinx, and multiracial residents experience unemployment at greater rates than white workers.

The region's unemployment rate was 5.3 percent. However, there is a racial gap in unemployment across the Eastern Sierra region: less than 5 percent of white workers were unemployed compared to 6.3 percent of Latinx adults, 7.5 percent of indigenous adults, and 8.4 percent of residents who identified as multiracial or "other." These unemployment rates predate the Covid-19 pandemic and do not reflect the spike in unemployment in the spring and summer of 2020.

Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes the civilian noninstitutionalized labor force ages 25 through 64 years. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average.

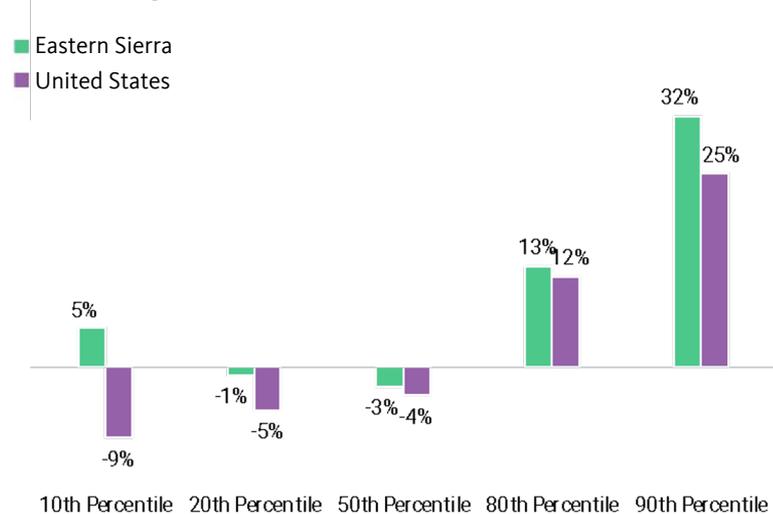
Economic Vitality

Are incomes increasing for all workers?

Growth in earnings over the last 40 years has disproportionately benefited high-wage earners, while it's declined for most workers in the bottom half of wages.

The United States has seen a stark increase in income inequality since 1980, as earnings have increased for the highest-wage workers while decreasing for workers with lower wages. Income growth and contraction in the Eastern Sierra region generally match these national trends. While median wages in the region stagnated between 1980 and 2020, the wages of workers at the top have increased by 32 percent, while workers at the 20th percentile of wages earned 1 percent less. Wages for workers at the bottom 10th percentile improved by 5 percent over this period. At the national level, the lowest-earning workers also saw the steepest decline in wages. Nonetheless, any economic recovery efforts in the region should consider the effects of growing income inequality on the opportunities available for working families.

Real Earned Income Growth for Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers Ages 25–64 Years, 1980 to 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes civilian noninstitutional full-time wage and salary workers ages 25 through 64. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average. Growth rates are adjusted for inflation.

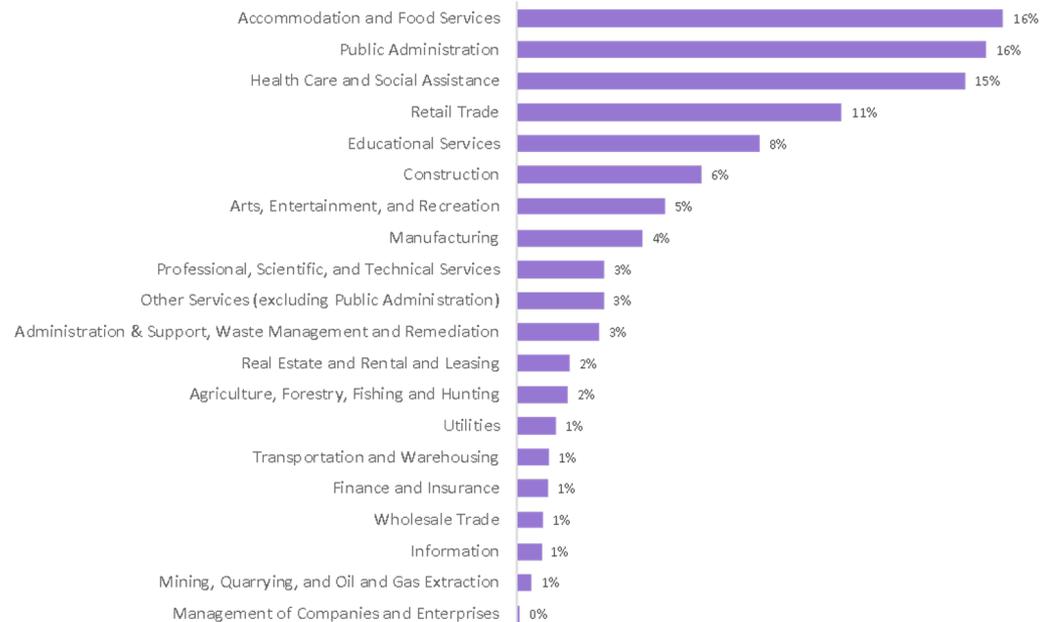
Economic Vitality

Which industries employ the most workers?

Four industries employ over half of all workers in the Eastern Sierra region.

A substantial proportion of jobs in the Eastern Sierra region fulfill three core pillars of the local economy: staffing the national parks and forests, operating the tourism industry that serves visitors to these natural areas, and providing core services and goods to the small population that lives in the region. As such, just four industries — accommodation and food services, public administration, health care and social assistance, and retail trade — account for 58 percent of all regional jobs. Many of these jobs were “[essential](#)” jobs early in the pandemic, and many more service workers reliant on tourists faced financial fallouts when the parks and forests closed during the shelter-in-place period. White-collar jobs in business management, STEM, finance, real estate, and information, while abundant in California’s coastal metropolises, are few in the Eastern Sierra region. An equitable recovery plan should emphasize the well-being of residents in the public sector and service jobs whose work enables the preservation of the parks and forests as cherished national landmarks.

Share of Workers by Industry, 2020



Source: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2020).

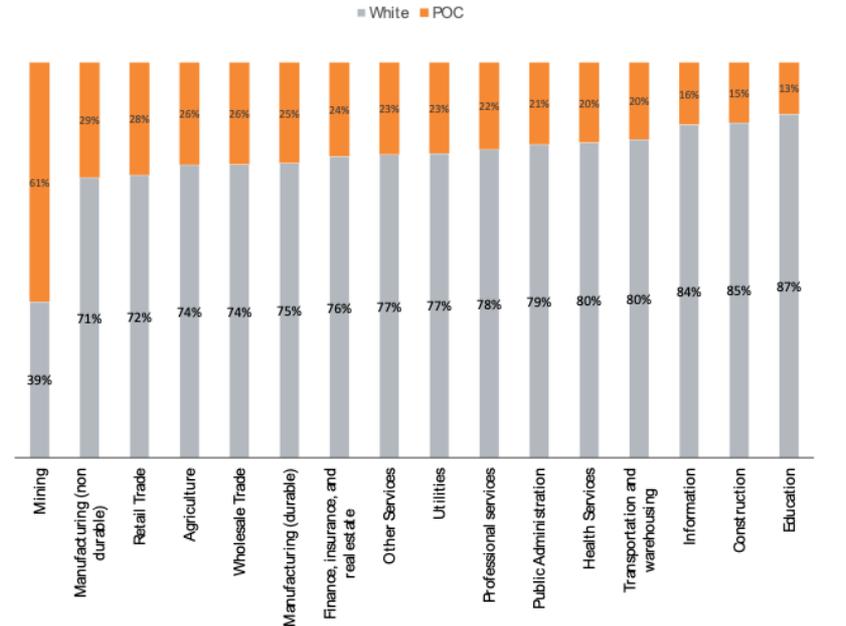
Economic Vitality

Which industries employ the most workers of color?

Workers of color make up a majority of the local mining workforce and are underrepresented in information, construction, and education jobs.

People of color make up 29 percent of working-age Eastern Sierra residents. They also comprise a roughly proportionate share of workers in many local professions, including common occupations in retail trade (28 percent of all workers) and public administration (21 percent), as well as generally higher-earning jobs in finance, insurance, and real estate (24 percent) and professional services (22 percent). Conversely, workers of color are underrepresented in a handful of local industries, including the larger regional workforces in construction (15 percent) and education (13 percent). The notable outlier is the mining industry, which employs only 1 percent of all workers in the region, but whose workforce is 61 percent people of color. Workers in higher-risk industries like mining, manufacturing, and transportation must enjoy strong labor protections, living wages, and healthcare provisions.

Industry by Race/Ethnicity, 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes the civilian, noninstitutional labor force ages 25 through 64 years. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average. Data for some racial/ethnic groups are excluded due to small sample size.

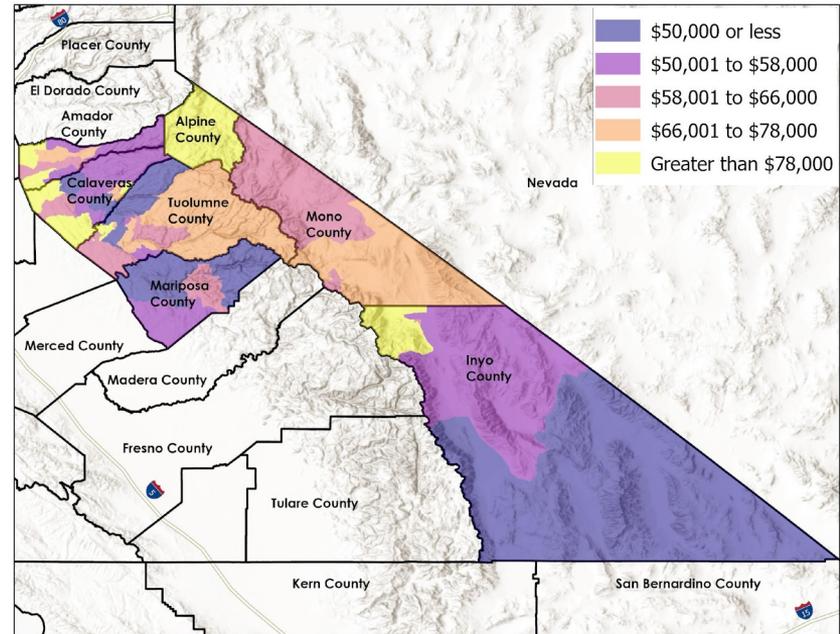
Economic Vitality

Do all workers across the region earn a living wage?

Communities with higher and lower median household incomes are often found next to one another across the region.

Median household incomes vary widely across the Eastern Sierra region, and they often vary between census tracts within a single county. Areas with relatively higher median incomes (\$78,000 and upward) include all of Alpine County, the western edges of Amador and Calaveras County, and the communities west of Bishop in Inyo County. Meanwhile, areas with the lowest median incomes (\$50,000 and less) include the southern half of Inyo County, Yosemite Valley, communities west and north of Yosemite, and the towns north of San Andreas in Calaveras County. There does not appear to be any notable correlation between areas of the Eastern Sierra region with lower median household incomes, and those with higher proportions of residents of color.

Median Household Income by Census Tract, 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas Analysis of 2020 ACS Summary File Data. Note: Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average.

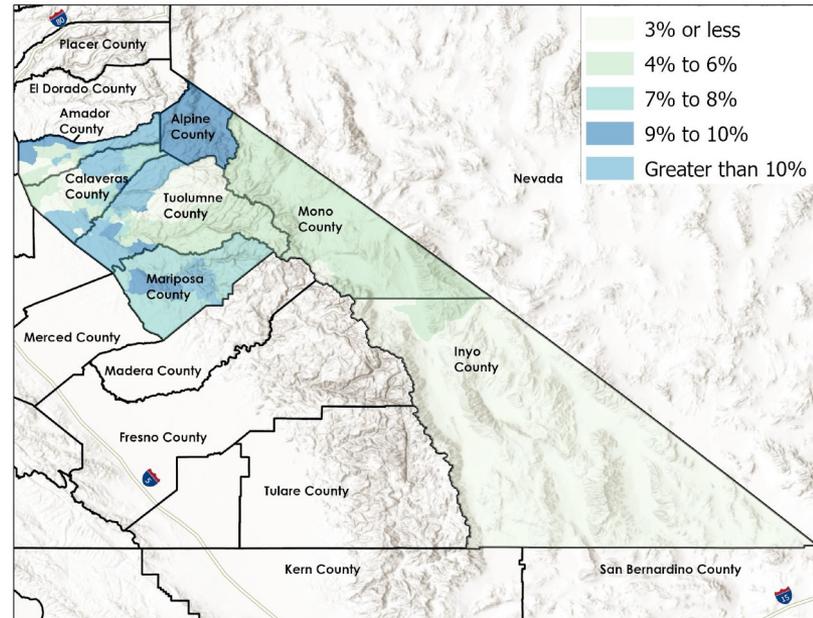
Economic Vitality

How does unemployment vary across the region?

Unemployment rates are high in many neighborhoods in the northern part of the region.

Areas of high unemployment are common in the northern part of the Eastern Sierra region, as only Inyo County has unemployment levels entirely below the statewide average of 5 percent. The eastern half of Amador County, the northern and western edges of Tuolumne County, and southwestern Calaveras County all have unemployment rates above 10 percent. Some neighborhoods, particularly those adjacent to the Central Valley, overlap with the parts of the region with comparatively more residents of color, but others lie in predominantly white areas. Notably, income levels in the Eastern Sierra region do not always correlate with unemployment rates: the southernmost census tract in Inyo County has one of the lowest median incomes in the region, but also one of the lowest unemployment rates. This suggests a high proportion of residents are gainfully employed, albeit in low-wage industries.

Unemployment Rate by Census Tract, 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas Analysis of 2020 ACS Summary File Data. Note: Universe includes the civilian, noninstitutional labor force ages 25 through 64 years. Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average.

Economic Vitality

Further Data Exploration and Discussion Questions

- What is driving poverty in certain parts of the region? Why have poverty rates increased over the last several decades?
- Which workers and communities suffered the most financial hardship from the Covid-19 pandemic?
- How can local leaders address the region's racial income gap, especially for Latinx workers, as the region becomes more racially diverse?
- Where are the highest-earning jobs located? Who is being left out of those jobs, and what strategies can ensure equitable access?
- How can economic recovery efforts address the broader challenge of there being few local jobs in traditionally high-wage industries like finance and STEM? How can local leaders balance economic growth with ecological preservation?

Equitable regions have economic vitality that supports residents to secure high-quality jobs and to produce new ideas, products, businesses, and economic activity so the well-being of the residents is sustainable.



Connectedness

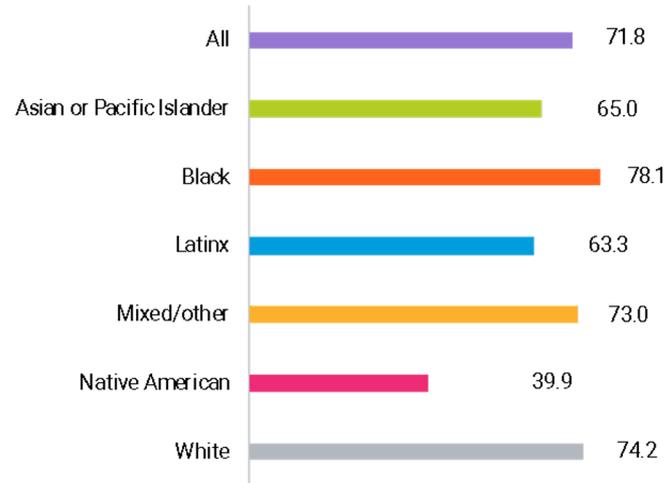
Connectedness

Do all residents have access to clean air?

Air pollution exposure in the Eastern Sierra region is higher than 72 percent of census tracts in the United States overall.

Despite the prevalence of protected nature areas, air pollution in the Eastern Sierra region is still higher than in the majority of places in the US. The average resident lives in a census tract that is exposed to a level of air pollution higher than 71.8 percent of census tracts nationwide. While few, Black residents in the region experience even higher levels of exposure to air pollution (an exposure index score of 78.1), Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Latinx residents in the region face lower levels of exposure (65 and 63.6, respectively).

Air Pollution Exposure Index by Race/Ethnicity, 2020 (air pollution data from 2018)



Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2018 National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment (NATA); U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census Summary File 3, 2010 and 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Summary File.

Note: Index of exposure to air toxics for cancer and noncancer risk (combined and separately). Values range from 1 (lowest risk) to 100 (highest risk) on a national scale based on the distribution across census tracts nationwide.

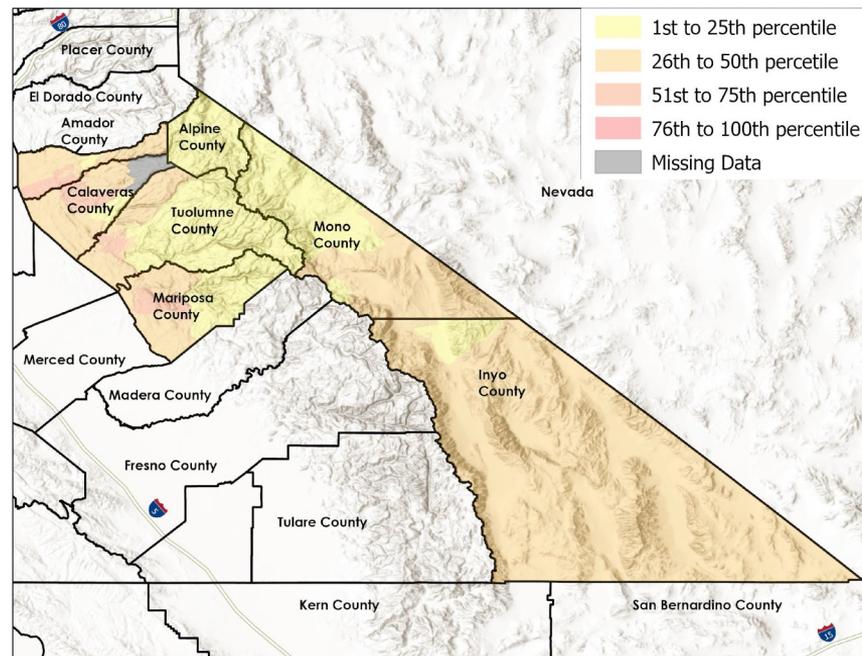
Connectedness

Do all residents live in a clean pollution-free environment?

Despite many low-pollution areas, a string of communities along the northwestern edge of the region experience heightened levels of pollution and environmental risk.

The [CalEnviroScreen](#) (CES) — a tool developed by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) and its Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) — maps the impacts of multiple types of pollution and environmental health conditions. The CES designates any census tract scoring in the top quartile of the state (76th to 100th percentile) as a disadvantaged community. No such communities fall within the Eastern Sierra region, as the abundance of federally protected natural areas helps to preserve the overall environmental profile. However, a handful of census tracts adjacent to the Central Valley fall within the second-highest quartile (51st to 75th percentile). These areas — in and around the communities of Sutter Creek, Jackson, San Andreas, Sonora, and western Mariposa County — are subject to higher levels of ozone exposure, drinking water contamination, and proximity to solid waste hazards. Residents of these areas also suffer from heightened rates of asthma and cardiovascular disease.

CalEnviroScreen (CES) Score Percentile by Census Tract, 2021



Source: CalEnviroScreen 4.0, California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, California Environmental Protection Agency. Note: CalEnviroScreen percentiles shown are based on a statewide ranking of census tracts. The top 25 percent of tracts statewide are among those identified as disadvantaged communities under Senate Bill 535.

Connectedness

Further Data Exploration and Discussion Questions

- What are the primary sources of pollution and environmental risk in the region?
- Who is experiencing the greatest burden of pollution? Who would be most burdened by the polluting activity of any investments being proposed?
- What are the major health risks and barriers to longevity that residents in the region face? How can local leaders improve health equity for low-income residents, especially as the population becomes more racially diverse?
- How can local leaders mobilize residents living in low-density, relatively isolated communities to work together for the region's future?

Equitable regions are places of connection, where residents can access the essential ingredients to live healthy and productive lives.

Readiness



National Equity Atlas

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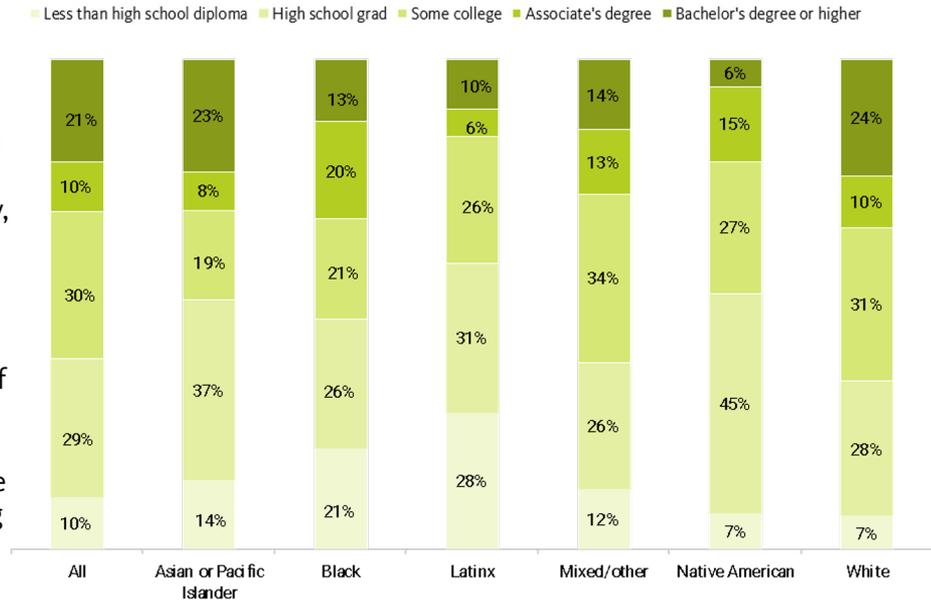
Readiness

How prepared are the region's residents for jobs of the future?

Just over one in five adults in the Eastern Sierra region have a bachelor's degree or higher.

Higher levels of educational attainment are often associated with increased access to economic security through better-paying jobs. Overall, 21 percent of adults ages 25 to 64 in the Eastern Sierra region have a bachelor's degree or higher — 14 percentage points lower than the statewide totals for all adults in California (35 percent). Conversely, a much higher share of local adults have some college education with no degree (30 percent, compared to 21 percent statewide). Latinx residents, who make up the largest community of color, are four times as likely as white adults to not have a high school diploma (28 percent vs. 7 percent) and are less than half as likely to have a college degree of any kind (16 percent vs. 34 percent). Notably, there are no four-year degree-granting institutions in the Eastern Sierra region, which means that young residents must either leave home or commute considerable distances to earn a bachelor's degree. The majority of students seeking an associate's degree would also have to leave, as there is only one satellite campus within the California community college system, in Bishop. This poses a challenge in cultivating an educated young workforce that can stay rooted in the region.

Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity, 2020



Source: National Equity Atlas analysis of 2020 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Universe includes the working-age population ages 25-64. Data for 2020 represent a 2016 through 2020 average.

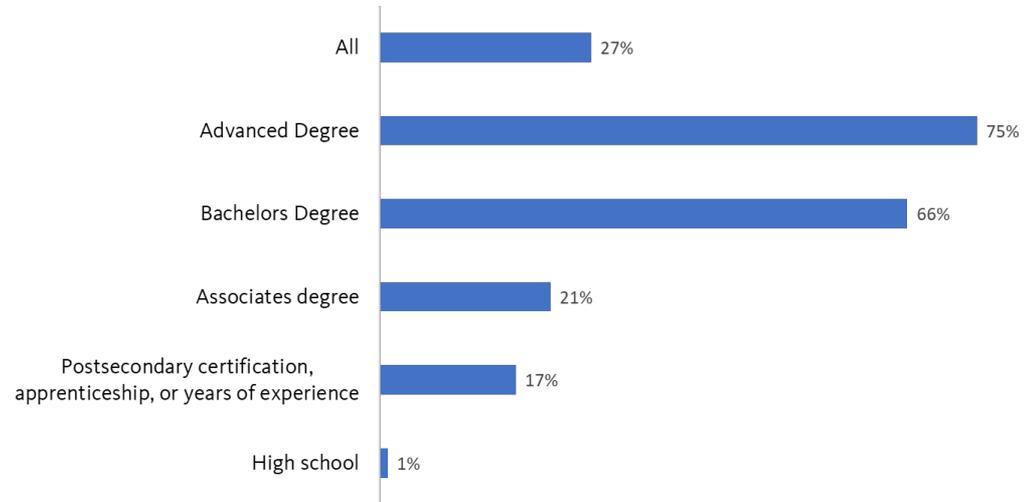
Readiness

How prepared are the region's residents for jobs of the future?

The vast majority of workers in the Eastern Sierra region face challenging prospects in finding “good jobs.”

For California workers, a bachelor's degree is a significant gateway to accessing “good jobs,” or stable jobs that provide family-sustaining wages and are automation-resilient. Statewide, two-thirds of workers with a bachelor's degree or higher have high-quality jobs of this sort, compared to just one in five workers with an associate's degree, one in six workers with postsecondary vocational certification or an apprenticeship, and just 1 percent of high school graduates. Given that only one in five adults in the region have a bachelor's degree, and given the prevalence of retail and service jobs, it is likely that many residents struggle to find good jobs. Because young people must leave the region to attend a physical college campus, the region should strategize how to cultivate a job base that offers living wages for people without four-year degrees, as well as jobs that can attract educated residents back after graduation.

Share of Workers in Good Jobs, Overall and by Educational Requirements, California, 2020



Source: Employment from 2020 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA, and occupational characteristics from Lightcast job posting data and 2020 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA.

Note: The data displayed covers the entire state of California, as there is not enough local data to produce a statistically reliable graph.

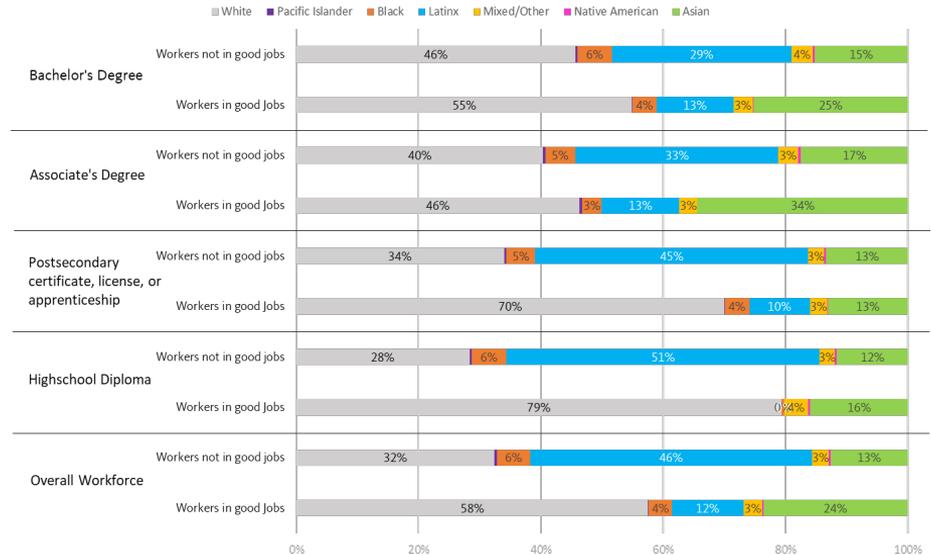
Readiness

How prepared are the region's residents for jobs of the future?

Workers of color in California are currently underrepresented in good jobs.

White workers in California are overrepresented in good jobs across all levels of educational requirements. However, the landscape of economic inequity in the Eastern Sierra region is nuanced, given that the area has a far higher proportion of white residents than the state. As we have seen, residents of color in the region face heightened levels of unemployment and working poverty compared to white residents, as well as lower median wages. At the same time, the prevalence of service sector jobs and low levels of postsecondary educational attainment means that many white workers are also likely unable to access good jobs in the region. An equitable economic framework for the region must account for existing racial disparities, as well as the broader dynamics of the regional economy that lead many white workers to struggle as well.

Distribution of Workers by Race/Ethnicity, Job Quality, and Educational Requirements, California, 2020



Sources: Employment and worker demographics from 2020 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA, and occupational characteristics from Lightcast job posting data and 2020 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA.

Note: The data displayed covers the entire state of California, as there is not enough local data to produce a statistically reliable graph.

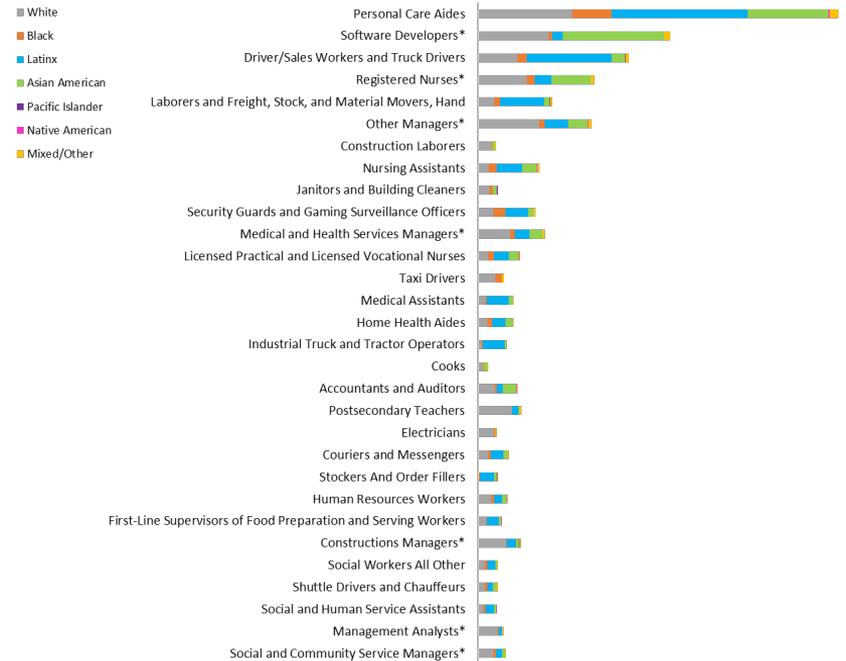
Readiness

How prepared are the region’s residents for jobs of the future?

Projected job growth for Latinx and Black workers is heavily concentrated in low-quality jobs.

Young people in California are [more racially diverse than prior generations](#), they’ve added to the growing diversity of the workforce across all sectors. However, job growth projections indicate that existing racial inequities in employment will persist. White and Asian American/Pacific Islander workers account for large shares of projected job growth in “good jobs.” Meanwhile, Latinx and Black workers make up disproportionately high shares of projected jobs in sectors with low pay, long-term job insecurity, and/or poor working conditions. Because the Eastern Sierra region is more demographically and ecologically unique than the rest of California, it may be more difficult to project the kinds of economic shifts that will happen at the local level. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that there will continue to be a job base rife with public and service sector positions, and economic growth in the region must prioritize the quality of those jobs, as well as ensuring equal opportunities for an increasingly diverse workforce.

Occupations Projected to Add the Most Workers of Color, by Race/Ethnicity, California, 2020 to 2030



Sources: Lightcast modeling for occupational growth and 2020 5-year ACS microdata from IPUMS for demographic characteristics of occupations. Notes: Occupations marked with asterisks are classified as good jobs. The data displayed covers the entire state of California, as there is not enough local data to produce a statistically reliable graph.

Readiness

Further Data Exploration and Discussion Questions

- How does the absence of higher educational institutions in the region shape local economic growth? How can local leaders cultivate an educated workforce that stays in the region?
- How can local governments and employers work to improve and sustain the well-being of the public sector and service workers who maintain the national parks and forests?
- What does projected job growth look like in the region over the next decade? How can local leaders accommodate the region's growing racial diversity into job growth and other core priorities for economic development?

Equitable regions are ready for the future, with a skilled, ready workforce and a healthy population.



Data and Methods

National Equity Atlas

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Data and Methods

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Data and Methods

Data Source Summary and Regional Geography

Unless otherwise noted, all the data and analyses presented in this profile are the product of PolicyLink and the USC Equity Research Institute (ERI), and they reflect the Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne Counties. The specific data sources are listed in the table displayed on the right-hand side of this page.

While much of the data and analysis presented in this profile are fairly intuitive, in the following pages we describe some of the estimation techniques and adjustments made in creating the underlying database and provide more detail on the terms and methodology used. Finally, the reader should bear in mind that while only a single county is profiled here, many of the analytical choices in generating the underlying data and analyses were made with the intent to replicate the analyses in other counties and regions and to ensure that they could be updated over time. Thus, while more regionally specific data may be available for some indicators, the data in this profile is drawn from our regional equity indicators database, which provides data points that are comparable and replicable over time.

Source	Dataset
Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)	1980 5% State Sample 1990 5% Sample 2000 5% Sample 2020 American Community Survey, 5-year microdata sample
U.S. Census Bureau	1980 Summary Tape File 1 (STF1) 1980 Summary Tape File 2 (STF2) 1980 Summary Tape File 3 (STF3) 1990 Summary Tape File 2A (STF2A) 1990 Modified Age/Race, Sex and Hispanic Origin File (MARS) 1990 Summary Tape File 4 (STF4) 2000 Summary File 1 (SF1) 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3) 2010 Summary File 1 (SF1) 2010 TIGER/Line Shapefiles, 2010 Census Block Groups 2010 TIGER/Line Shapefiles, 2010 Census Tracts 2010 TIGER/Line Shapefiles, 2010 Counties OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics
Geolytics	1980 Long Form in 2010 Boundaries 1990 Long Form in 2010 Boundaries 2000 Long Form in 2010 Boundaries 2020 Long Form in 2010 Boundaries
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	WONDER Life Expectancy
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment (NATA)
California Office of Environmental Health	CalEnviroScreen 4.0

Data and Methods

Selected Terms and General Notes

Broad Racial/Ethnic Origin

Unless otherwise noted, in every analysis presented, all categorization of people by race/ethnicity and nativity is based on individual responses to various census surveys. All people included in our analysis were first assigned to one of several mutually exclusive racial/ethnic categories, depending on their response to two separate questions on race and Hispanic origin as follows:

- “White” and “non-Hispanic White” are used to refer to all people who identify as white alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Black” and “African American” are used to refer to all people who identify as Black or African American alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Latinx” refers to all people who identify as being of Hispanic origin, regardless of racial identification.

- Asian American refers to all people who identify as Asian American alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Pacific Islander” or “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander” refer to all people who identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Asian American and Pacific Islander,” “Asian or Pacific Islander,” and “API” are used to refer to all people who identify as Asian American or Pacific Islander alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “Native American” and “Native American and Alaska Native” are used to refer to all people who identify as Native American or Alaskan Native alone and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.

- “Mixed/other” and “Other or mixed race” are used to refer to all people who identify with a single racial category not included above, or those who identify with multiple racial categories, and do not identify as being of Hispanic origin.
- “People of color” or “POC” is used to refer to all people who do not identify as non-Hispanic white.

Nativity

The term “US-born” refers to all people who identify as being born in the United States (including US territories and outlying areas), or those born abroad to at least one US-citizen parent. The term “immigrant” refers to all people who identify as being born abroad, outside of the United States, to non-US-citizen parents.

Data and Methods

Selected Terms and General Notes (*continued*)

Other Selected Terms

Below we provide definitions and clarification for some of the terms used in the profile.

The term “region” refers to metropolitan areas or other large urban areas (e.g., large cities and counties). The terms “metropolitan area,” “metro area,” and “metro” are used interchangeably to refer to the geographic areas defined as Metropolitan Statistical Areas under the December 2003 definitions of the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

The term “neighborhood” is used at various points throughout the profile. In the introductory portion of the profile, this term is meant to be interpreted in the colloquial sense. However, in relation to any data analysis, it refers to census tracts.

The term “communities of color” generally refers to distinct groups defined by

race/ethnicity among people of color.

The term “high school diploma” refers to both an actual high school diploma as well as a high school equivalency or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

The term “full-time workers” refers to all persons in the IPUMS microdata who reported working at least 45 or 50 weeks (depending on the year of the data) and who usually worked at least 35 hours per week during the year prior to the survey. A change in the “weeks worked” question in the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS), as compared with prior years of the ACS and the long form of the decennial census, caused a dramatic rise in the share of respondents indicating that they worked at least 50 weeks during the year prior to the survey. To make our data on full-time workers more comparable over time, we applied a slightly

different definition in 2008 and later than in earlier years: in 2008 and later, the “weeks worked” cutoff is at least 50 weeks while in 2007 and earlier it is 45 weeks. The 45-week cutoff was found to produce a national trend in the incidence of full-time work over the 2005-2010 period that was most consistent with that found using data from the March Supplement of the Current Population Survey, which did not experience a change to the relevant survey questions. For more information, visit https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2012/demo/Gottschalck_2012FCSM_VII-B.pdf.

Data and Methods

Selected Terms and General Notes (*continued*)

General Notes on Analyses

Below, we provide some general notes about the analysis conducted.

In relation to monetary measures (e.g., income, earnings, and wages) the term “real” indicates the data has been adjusted for inflation. All inflation adjustments are based on the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U) from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Data and Methods

Summary Measures from IPUMS Microdata

Although a variety of data sources were used, much of our analysis is based on a unique dataset created using microdata samples (i.e., “individual-level” data) from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) for four points in time: 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2016-2020 pooled together. The 1980 through 2000 files are based on the decennial census, which each covering about 5 percent of the US population. The 2016-2020 files are from the ACS, and they cover only about 1 percent of the US population each. The five-year pooled ACS file was used to improve statistical reliability and achieve a sample size that is comparable to that available in previous years.

Compared with the more commonly used census “summary files,” which include a limited set of summary tabulations of population and housing characteristics, the use of the microdata samples allows for the

flexibility to create more illuminating metrics of equity and inclusion. It also provides a more nuanced view of groups defined by age, race/ethnicity, and nativity for various geographies in the United States.

The IPUMS microdata allows for the tabulation of detailed population characteristics, but because such tabulations are based on samples, they are subject to a margin of error and should be regarded as estimates — particularly in smaller regions and for smaller demographic subgroups. In an effort to avoid reporting highly unreliable estimates, we do not report any estimates that are based on a universe of fewer than 100 individual survey respondents.

A key limitation of the IPUMS microdata is geographic detail. Each year of the data has a particular lowest level of geography associated with the individuals included, known as the

Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) for years 1990 and later, or the County Group in 1980. PUMAs are generally drawn to contain a population of about 100,000. They also vary greatly in geographic size — from being fairly small in densely populated urban areas to very large in rural areas — often with one or more counties contained in a single PUMA.

While the geography of the IPUMS microdata generally poses a challenge for the creation of regional summary measures, this was not the case in this instance, as the geography of the region could be assembled perfectly by combining entire 1980 County Groups and 1990, 2000, and 2010 PUMAs.

Data and Methods

Good Jobs Analysis

The analysis presented here draws from two key data sources: the 2018 five-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata from IPUMS USA and a proprietary occupation-level dataset from Lightcast (expressed at the six-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) level). While detailed sources and notes are included beneath each figure throughout the report, here we provide additional information on these two key data sources and methods used for the analysis of “good jobs,” automation risk, and income/GDP gains with racial equity in the workforce.

Unless otherwise noted, the ACS microdata is the source of all tabulations of demographic and workforce equity metrics by race/ethnicity and nativity included in this report. In addition, unless otherwise noted, racial/ethnic groups are defined such that all groups are non-Latinx (excluding those who identify as Hispanic or Latinx), leaving all

persons identifying as Hispanic or Latinx in the “Latinx” category. The term “US-born” refers to all people who identify as being born in the United States (including US territories and outlying areas), or those born abroad to at least one US-citizen parent. The term “immigrant” refers to all people who identify as being born abroad, outside of the United States, to non-US-citizen parents.

The ACS microdata was aggregated to the detailed occupation level and merged with data from Lightcast to conduct the “good jobs” and “automation risk” analyses that appear in the report.

The proprietary data from Lightcast is based on job postings by collecting data from close to 50,000 online job boards, newspapers, and employer sites daily. Lightcast then de-duplicates postings for the same job, whether it is posted multiple times on the same site or across multiple sites.

Finally, Lightcast applies detailed text analytics to code the specific jobs, skills, and credentials requested by employers.

The equity gap for good jobs was calculated using occupation characteristics from the ACS (employment and average salary), Lightcast data models (typical education requirements advertised on job postings and metropolitan-area occupational employment projections), and the automation risk associated with each occupation from the Frey and Osborne’s 2013 paper, *The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation*.

Data and Methods

Additional Data Resources

[The National Equity Atlas](#): The National Equity Atlas is the most detailed report card on racial and economic equity in the United States. It equips advocates and policymakers with actionable data and strategies to advance racial equity and shared prosperity.

[California Immigrant Data Portal](#): The California Immigrant Data Portal is a resource and progress tracker for immigrants and those serving immigrant communities across the state. It presents data and case studies that can be used to better understand and promote the well-being of immigrants, their families, and their communities.

[Statewide Vulnerability & Recovery Index](#): This index — developed by the California Advancement Project — uses zip code-level data to identify California communities most in need of immediate and long-term pandemic and economic relief. Policymakers and community stakeholders can use it to determine where to target interventions.

[CalEnviroScreen](#): This mapping tool helps identify California communities that are most affected by multiple sources of pollution and where people are often especially vulnerable to pollution's effects.

[California Opportunity Area Maps](#): These maps — created by the Othering & Belonging Institute for the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee (CTCAC) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) — measure and visualize place-based characteristics linked to critical life outcomes, such as educational attainment, earnings from employment, and economic mobility. Opportunity maps can be used to inform how to target investments and policies in a way that is conscious of the independent and interrelated effects that research has shown that place — the conditions in communities where people live — has on economic, educational, and health outcomes.

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Demographics

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The USC Dornsife Equity Research Institute (formerly known as USC PERE, the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity) seeks to use data and analysis to contribute to a more powerful, well-resourced, intersectional, and intersectoral movement for equity.

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