



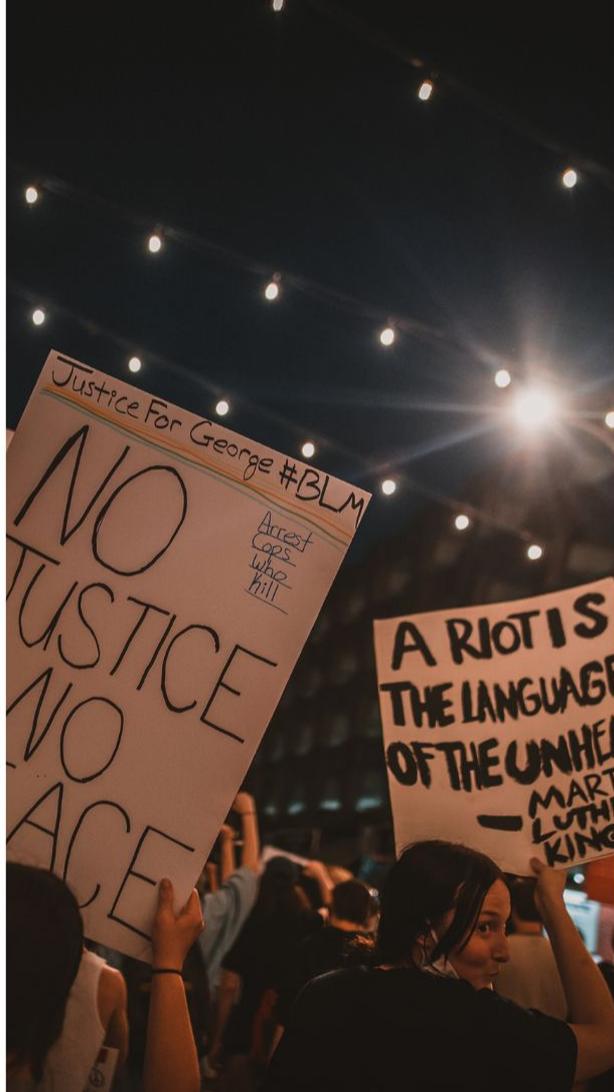
# Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative

Ventura County Board of Supervisors  
February 6, 2024



## **Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative**

*Our goal is to deepen our understanding of regional disparities, facilitate a region-wide conversation, and support the planning and implementation of initiatives focused on advancing social, health, environmental, and economic equity*





# TOWARDS A JUST AND EQUITABLE CENTRAL COAST



University of California Santa Barbara  
**BLUM**CENTER  
ON POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND DEMOCRACY

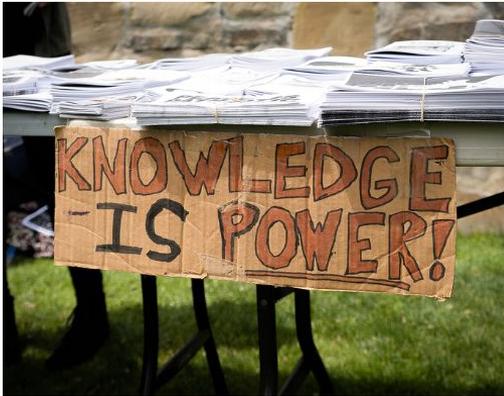
**USC**  
Dornsife  
*Equity Research  
Institute*



# Community-Based Collaborative Research Approach

Census-based  
data analysis

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Community  
Consultations

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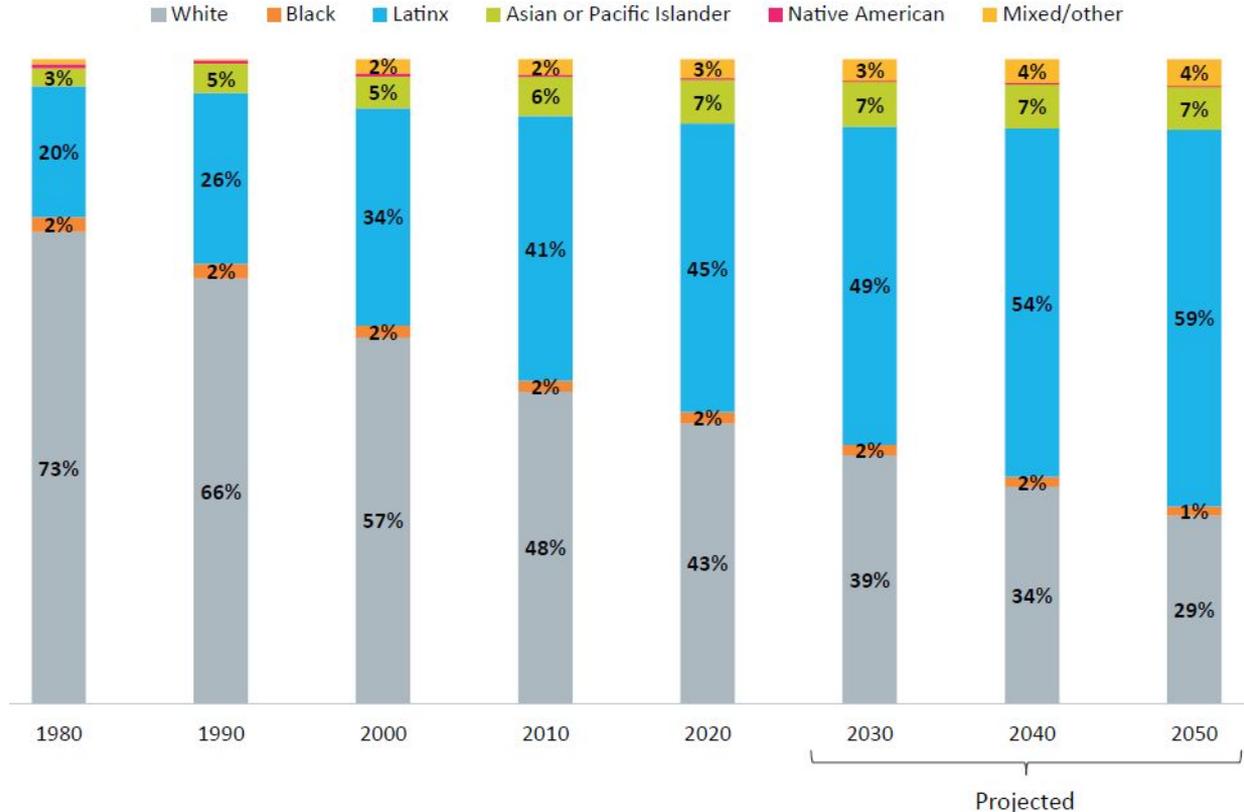


Tri-institute  
partnership

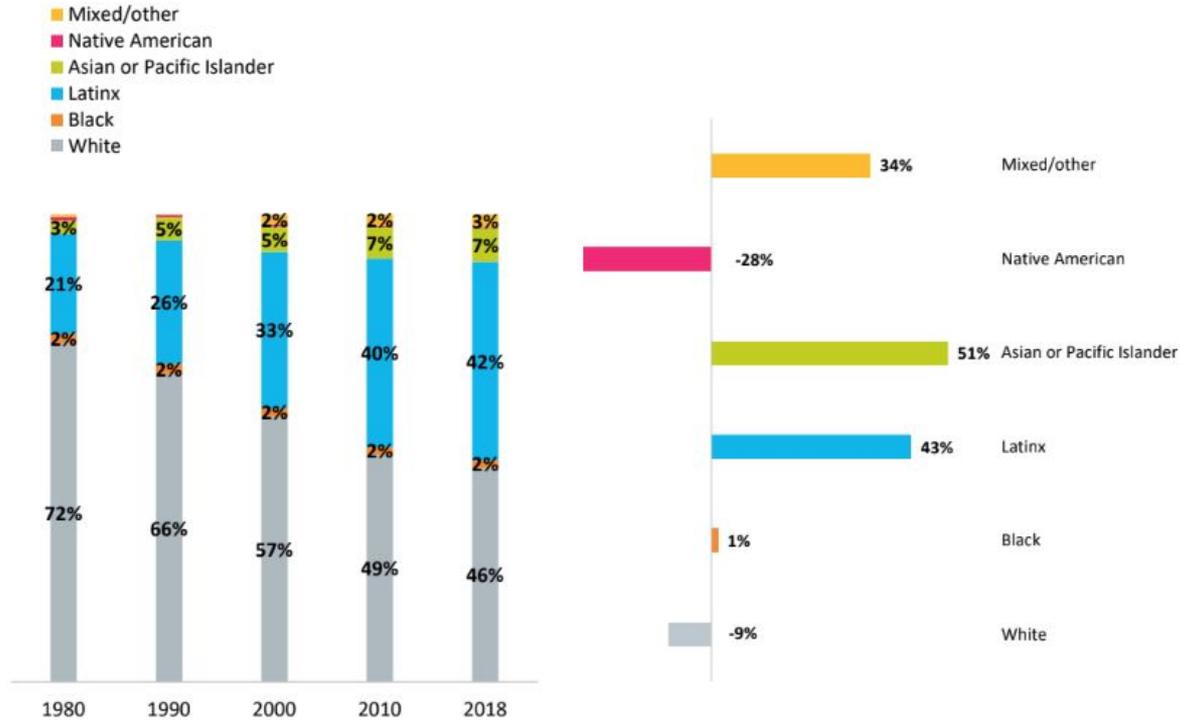
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# A Diversifying Region



# A Diversifying Ventura County

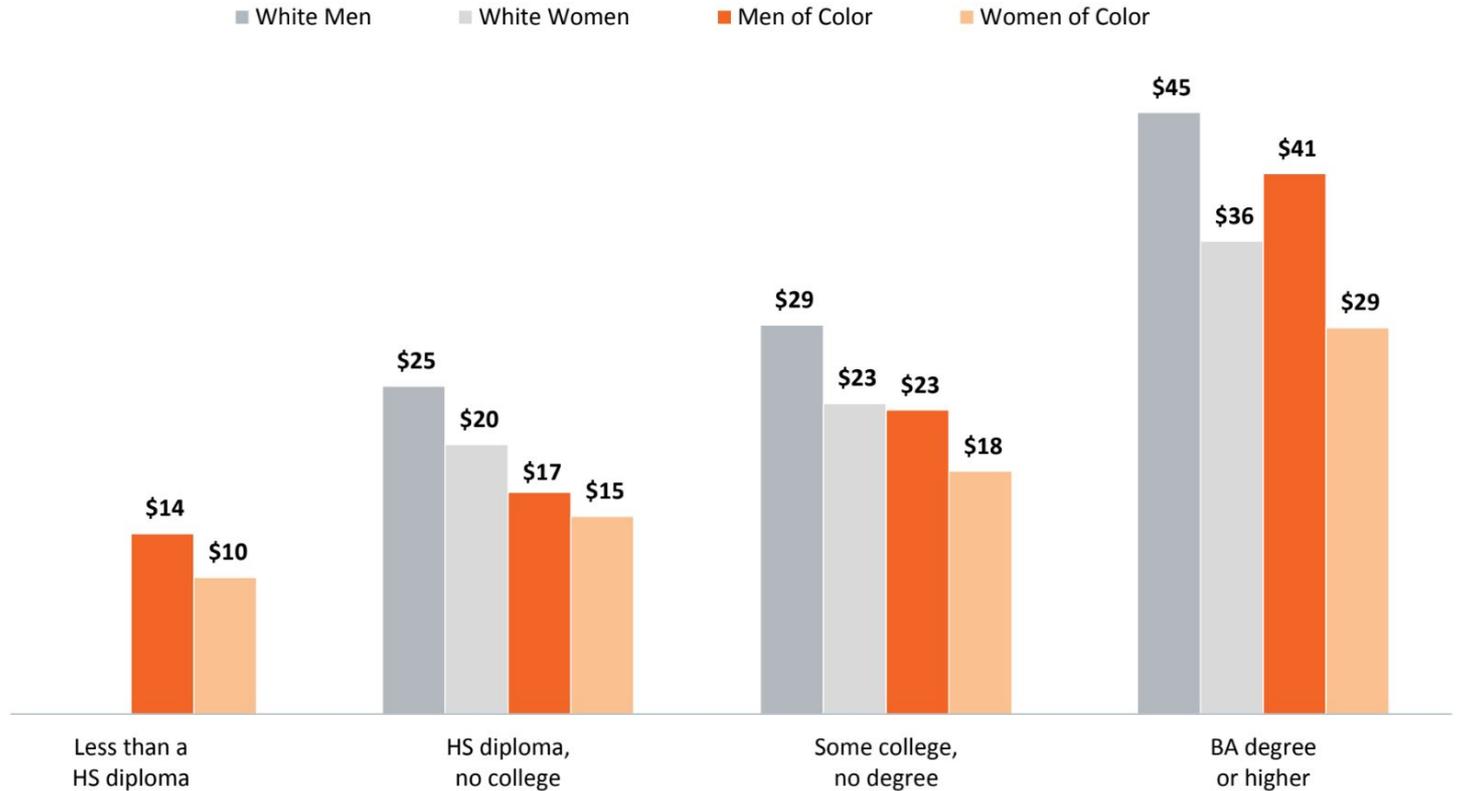


# Rising Inequality: Real Income Growth, 1979-2018

■ Santa Barbara County, CA    ■ Ventura County, CA    ■ United States



# Median Wage by Education, Race, & Gender (Ventura County)



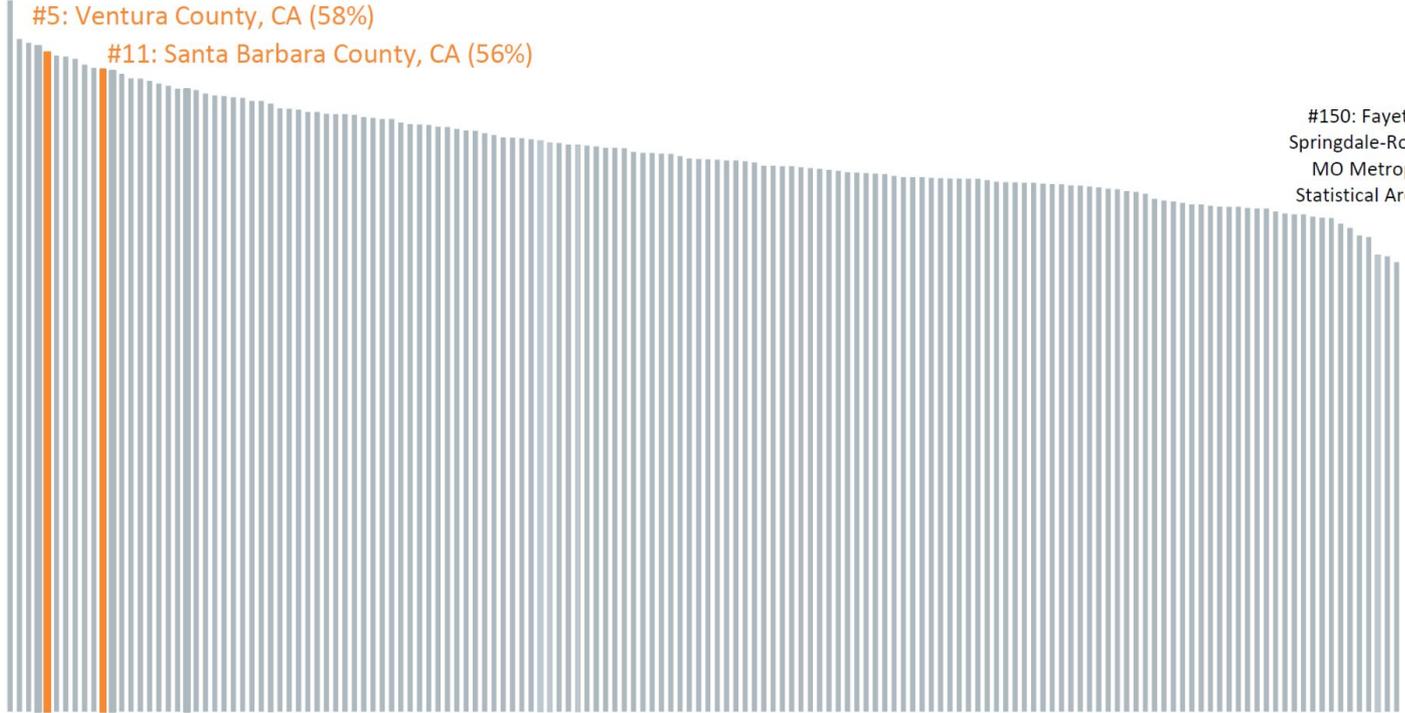
# Rent Burden

#1: Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami  
Beach, FL Metropolitan Statistical  
Area (62%)

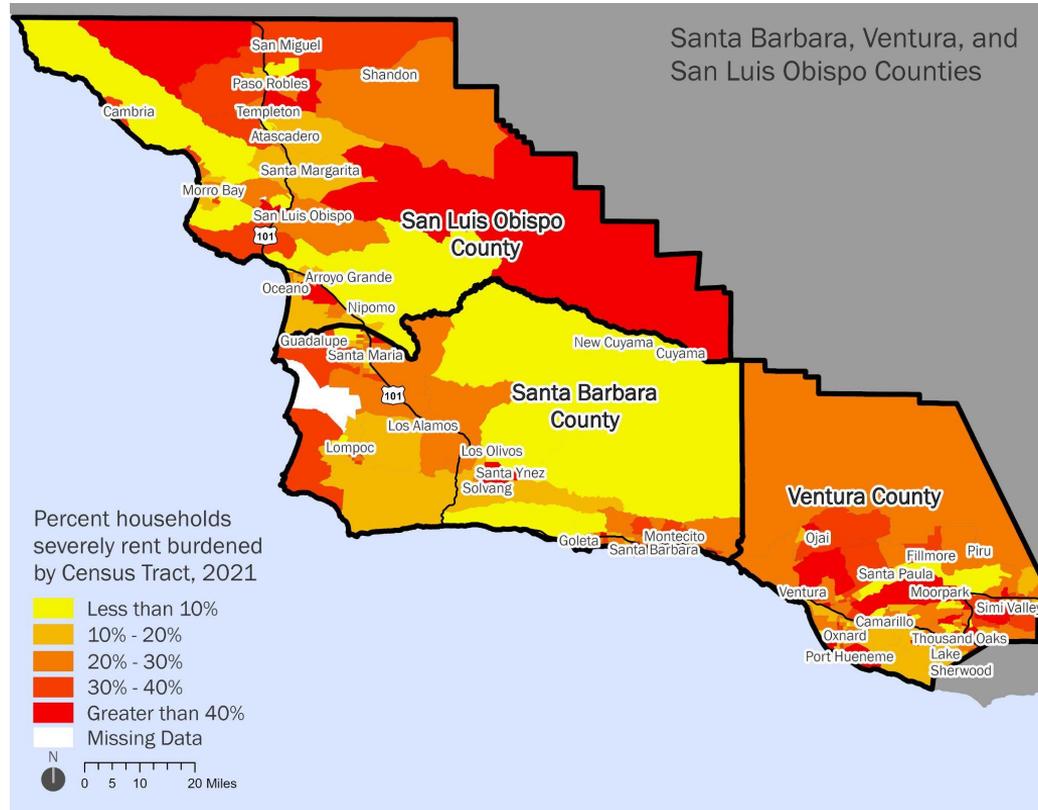
#5: Ventura County, CA (58%)

#11: Santa Barbara County, CA (56%)

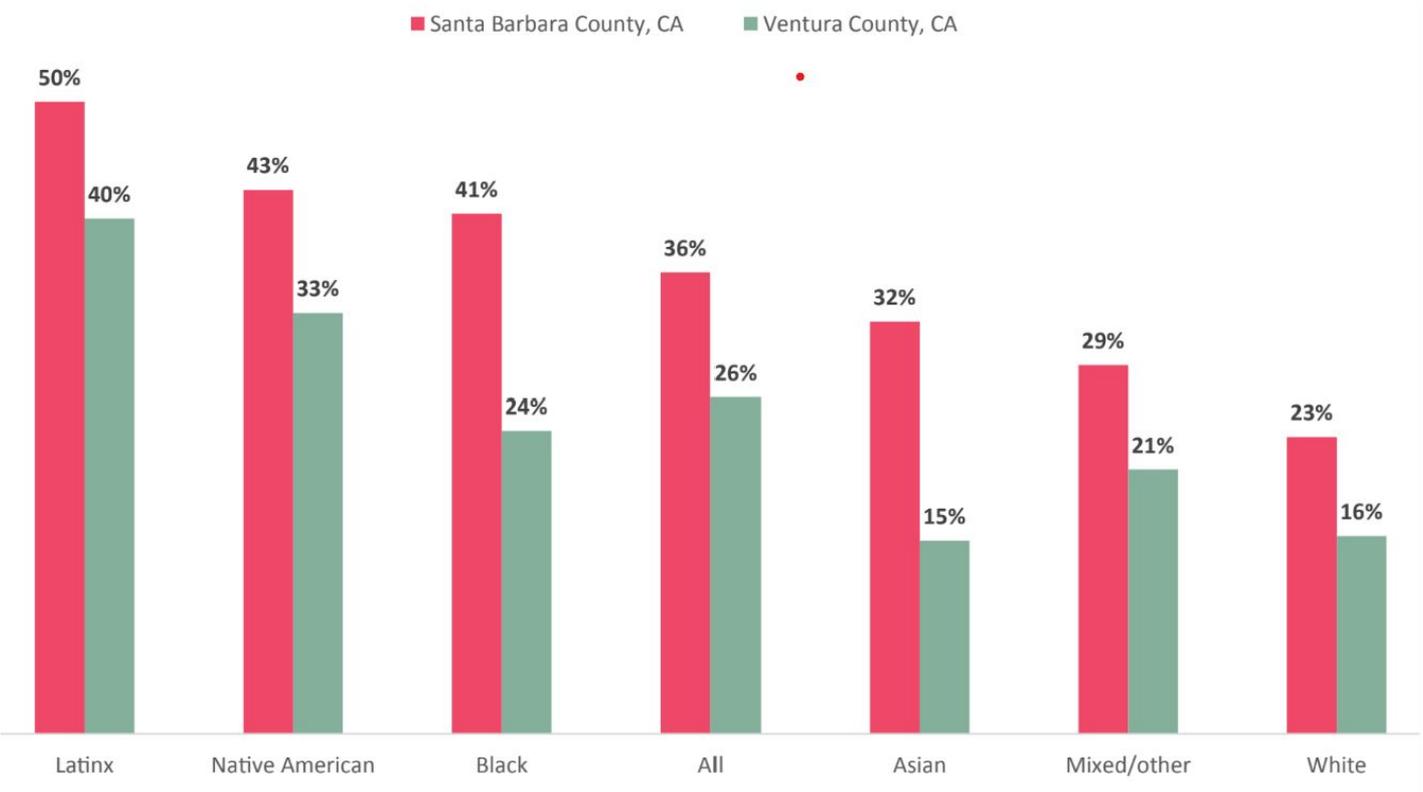
#150: Fayetteville-  
Springdale-Rogers, AR-  
MO Metropolitan  
Statistical Area (39%)



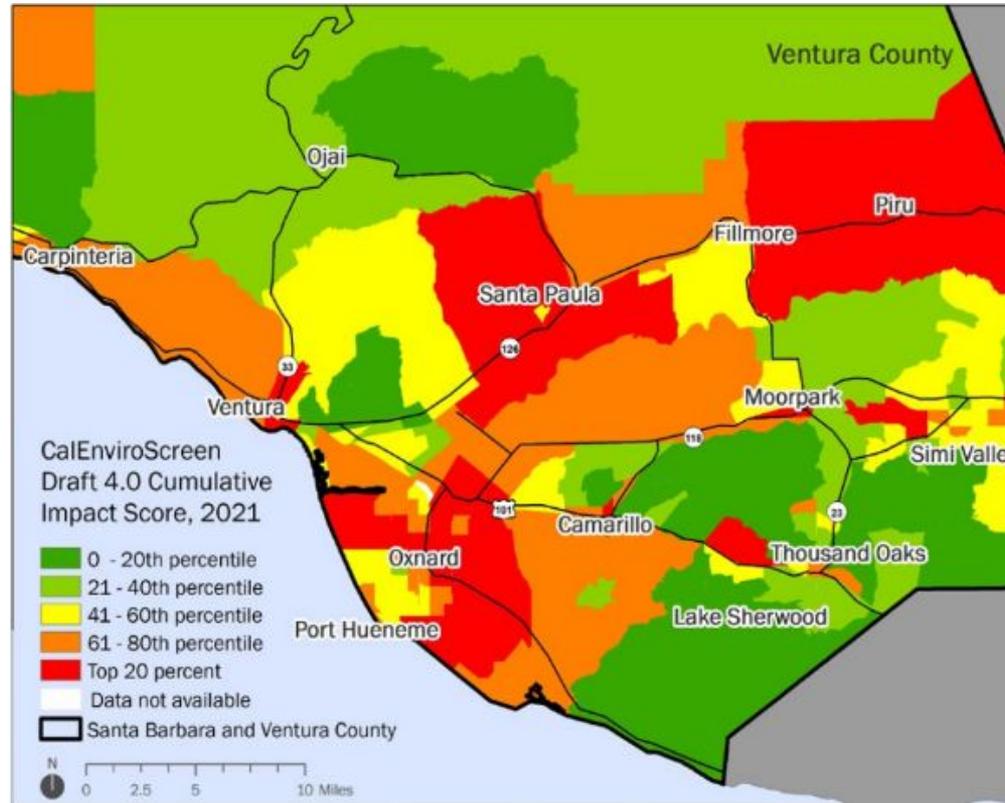
# Tri-County Region Rent Burden Map



# Economic Hardship by Race



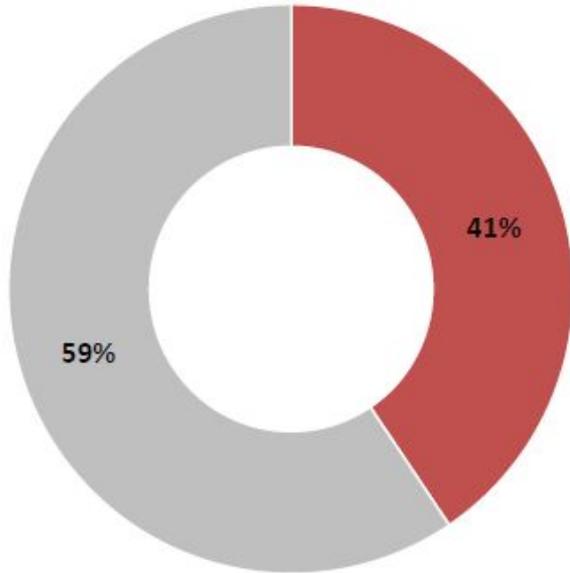
# Environmental Burden



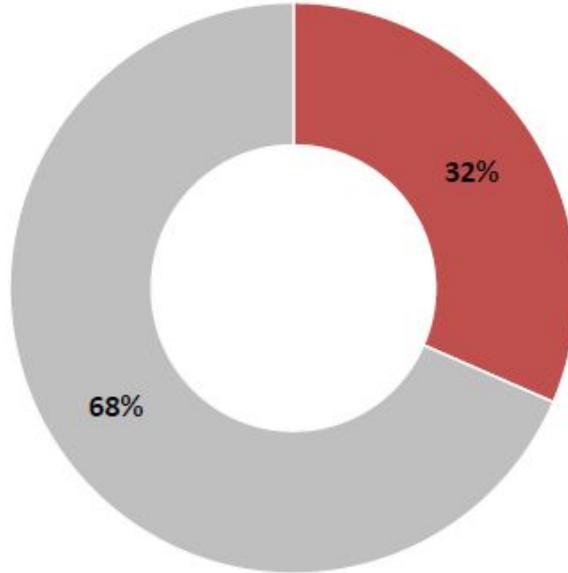
# Voter Turnout, by Race

■ People of color  
■ White

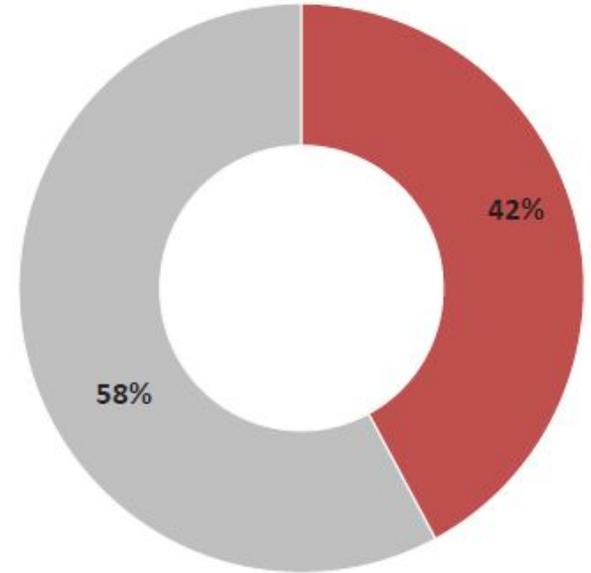
REGISTERED VOTERS,  
2020



VOTER TURNOUT,  
2020



CITIZEN VOTING-AGE POPULATION  
BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2018

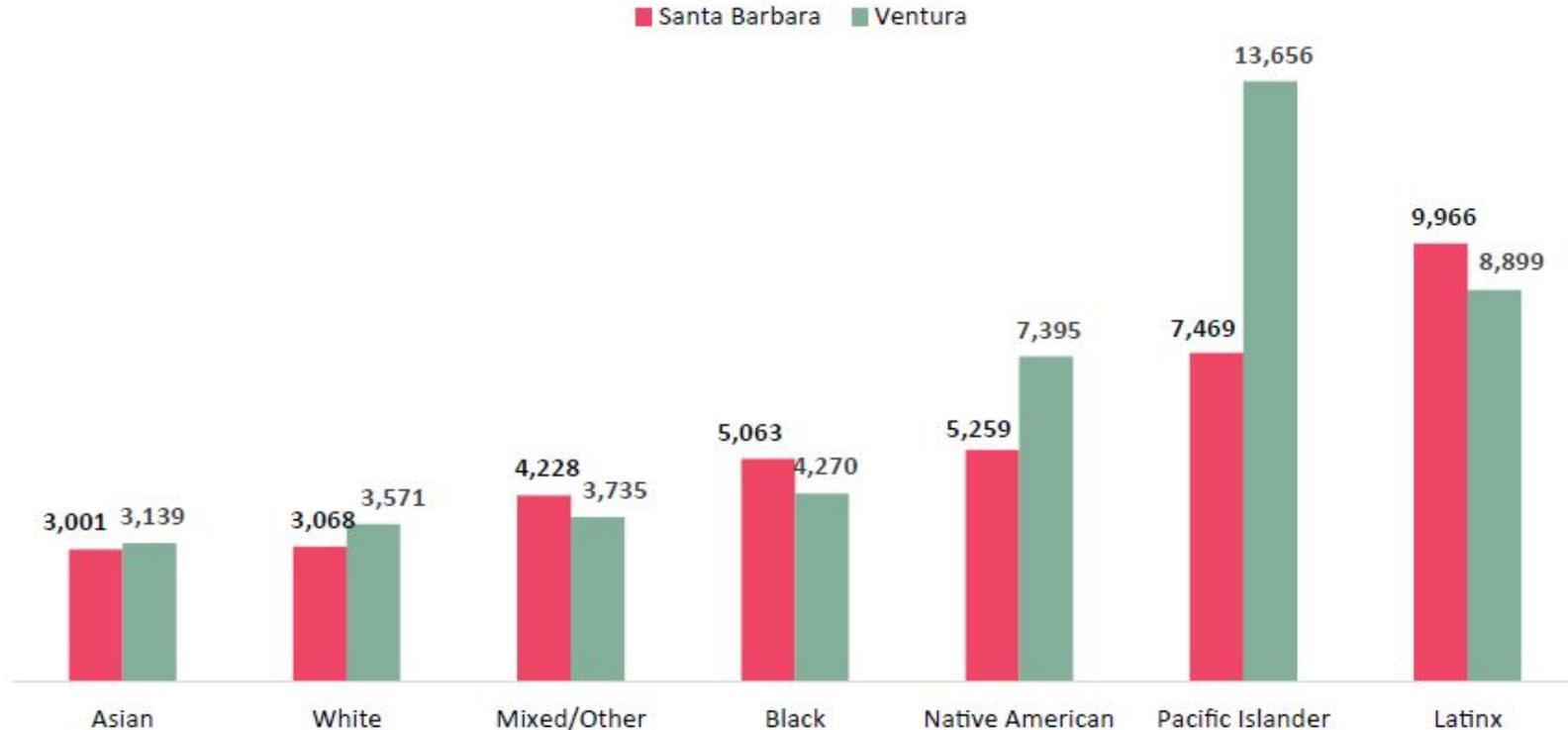




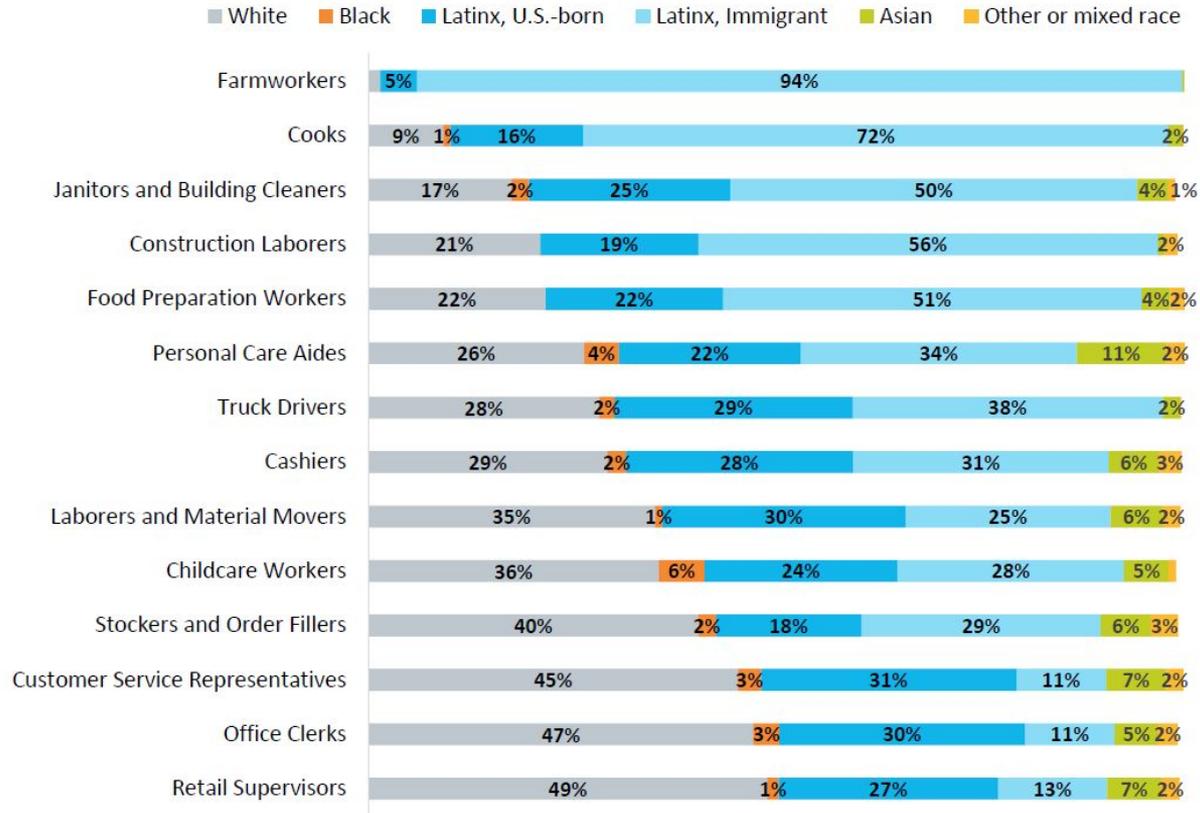
Living Through the Pandemic:

# The Cost of Inequality

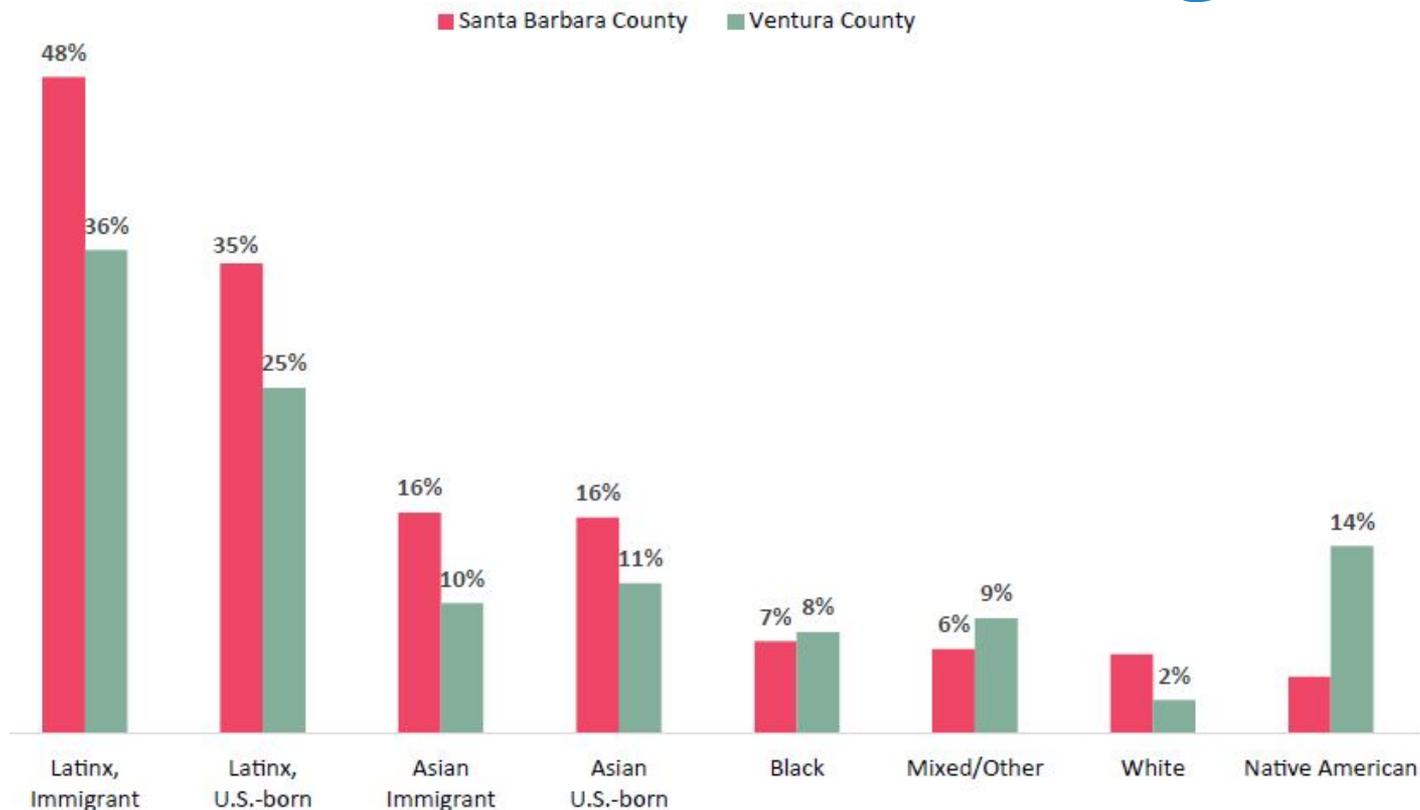
# COVID-19 Case Rates (per 100k)



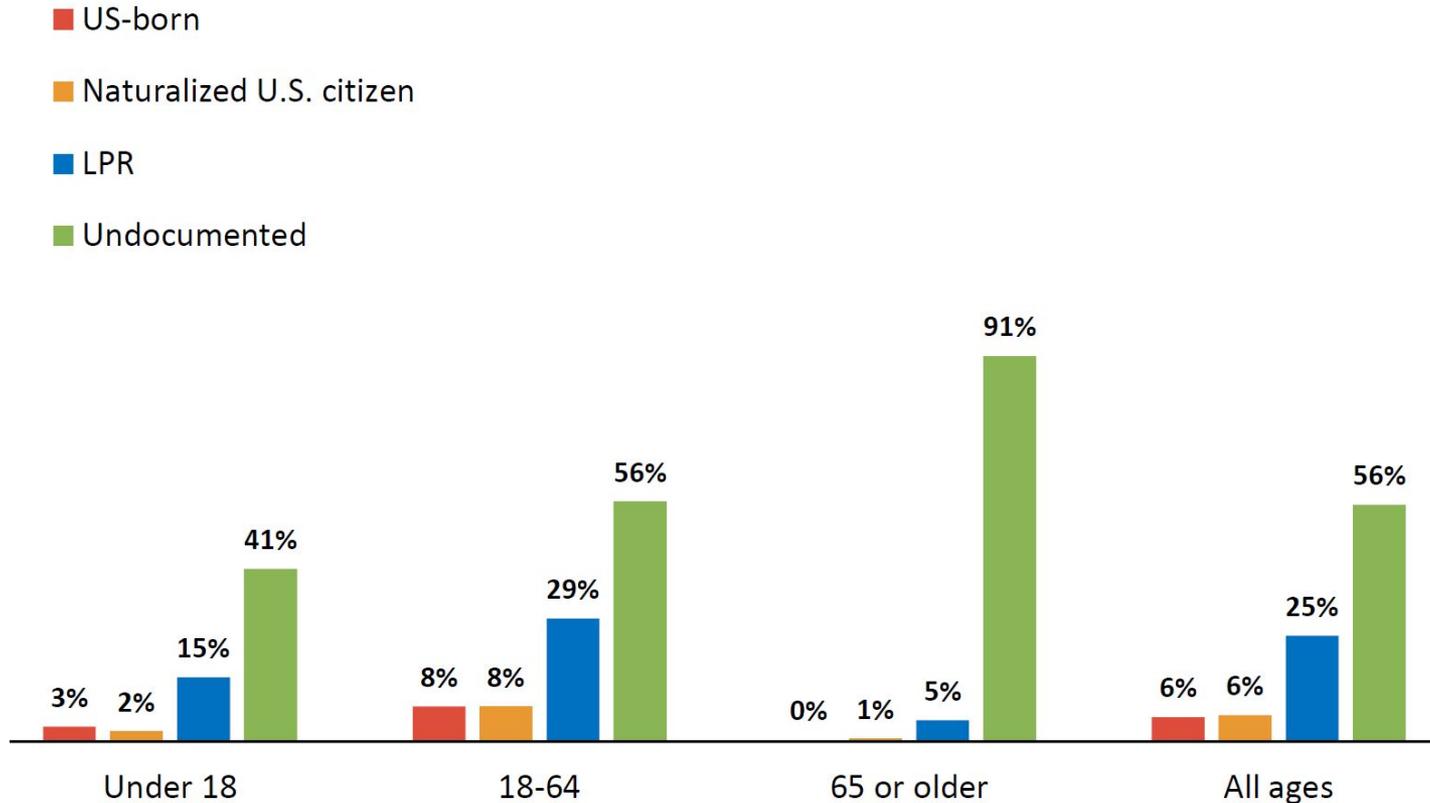
# Frontline Occupations, by Race



# Overcrowded Housing

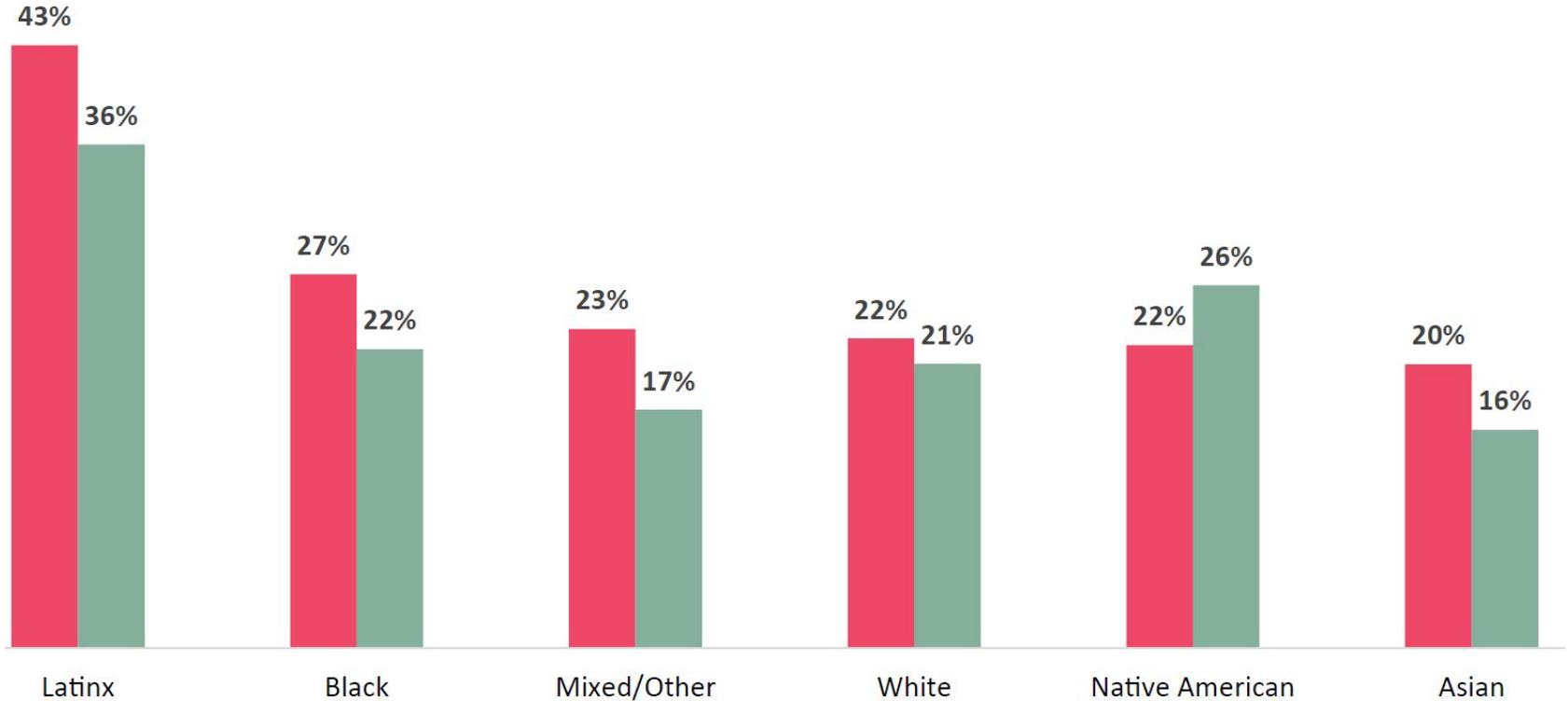


# Percent with No Health Insurance, by Immigration Status and Age



# Digital Divide

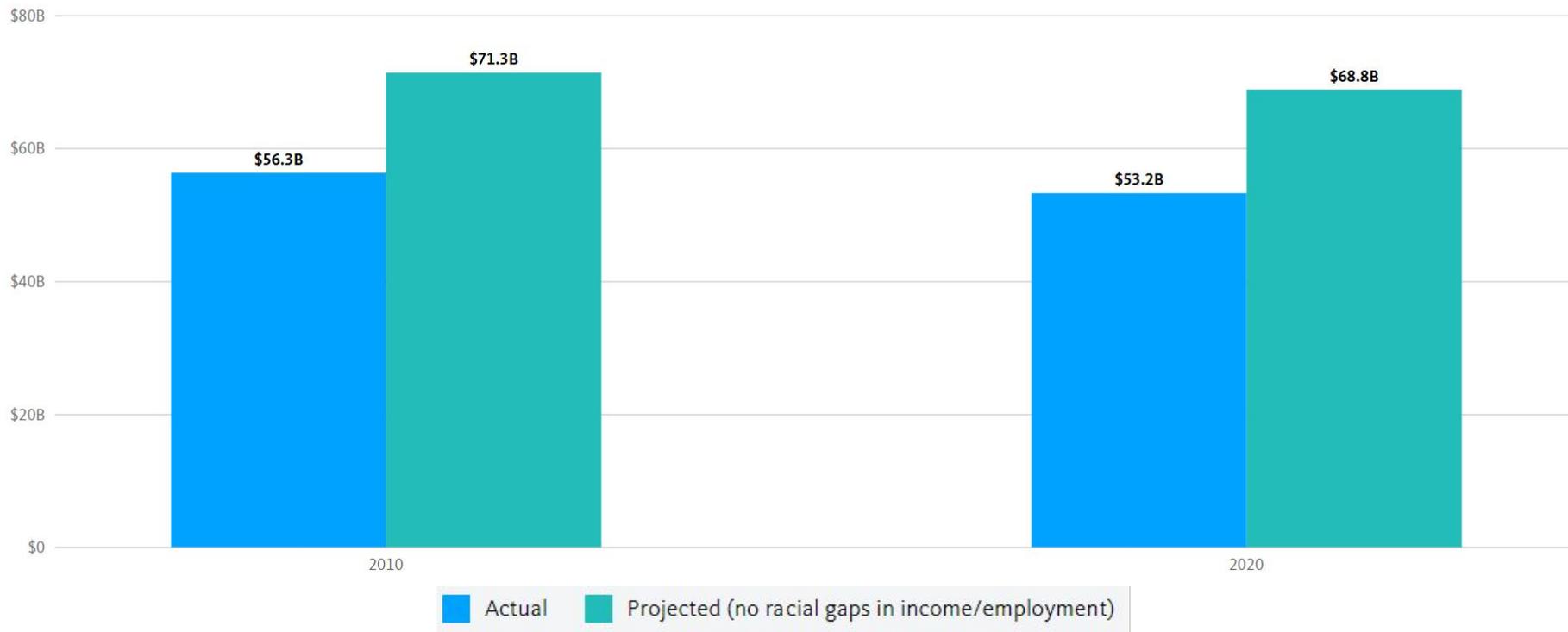
■ Santa Barbara County ■ Ventura County





# Economic Benefits

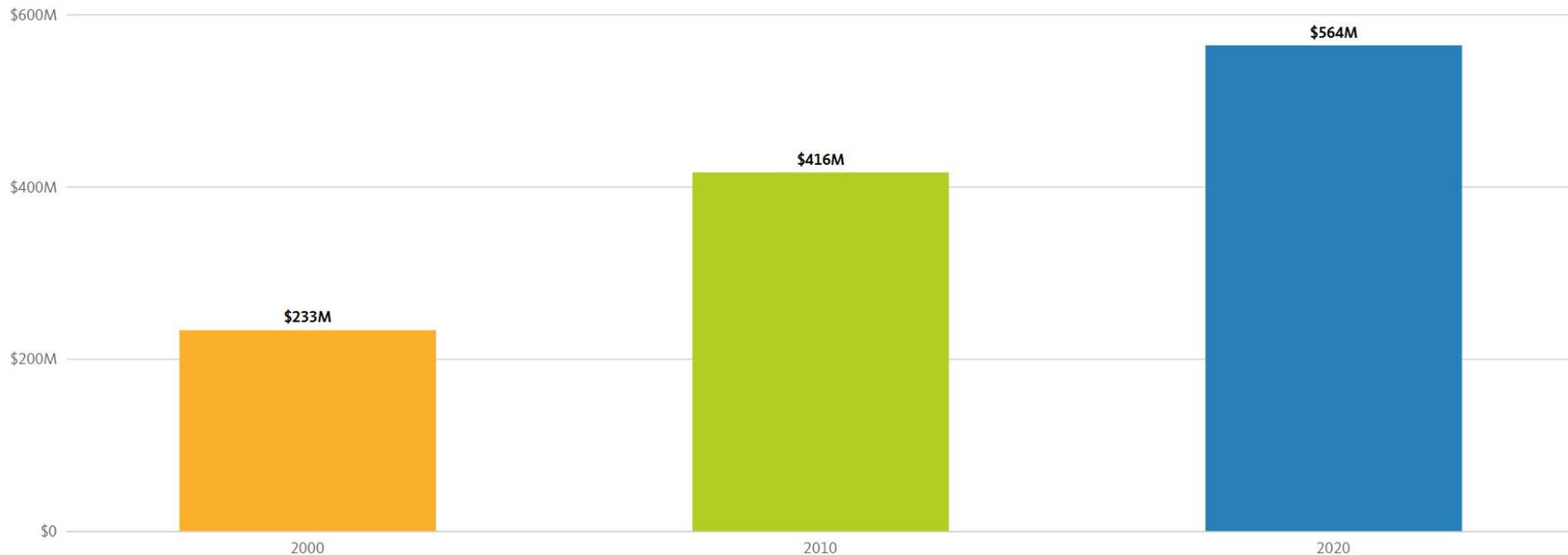
# GDP Increase with Racial Equity, Ventura County



Source: National Equity Atlas

# Income Gains from Eliminating Rent Burden, Ventura County

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# Principles & Priorities

For Research and Action

# Respect the rights and experiences of Indigenous people

1

It is important to acknowledge that the Central Coast region is on the traditional, unceded homelands of the Chumash and Tataviam people. We acknowledge and support their ongoing struggles for political rights, cultural recognition, and land protection by recognizing the historical experience of colonization, enslavement, violence, and resource extraction that established the region, and honoring the knowledge, cultural traditions, and resilience that have sustained Native communities over time. **As we look to the future planning and development of the region, it is critical that we also center Native principles of stewardship and reciprocity between the land and the lives it sustains.** Indigenous peoples, perspectives, and experiences must be centered in processes of acknowledgment and accountability, and in the frameworks we bring to regional equity, environmental, and democratic organizing.

## Center equity and justice as foundational economic values

This starts with an economic vision that recognizes freedom from want and a justly compensated workforce as signposts of economic strength, that respects workers' rights to labor in dignity, and that embraces goals such as closing racial and gender wage gaps as benchmarks of regional economic success. It calls for public and private investment in strategies that improve labor standards for traditionally undervalued but essential workers and that promote access to high-quality job opportunities for historically marginalized communities. **Equity and prosperity can and should be embraced as mutually supportive goals, but only when guided by active measures to assure that the benefits of prosperity are widely and equitably shared.**

2

## Invest in inclusive, universally accessible infrastructures of opportunity and social provision

**3** A just and equitable region rests on more than an inclusive economy. It requires a robust infrastructure of social investment—in systems of care, opportunity, civic connectedness, and political engagement—that promotes health, education, and human development, assures equal justice for all, and provides assistance in times of need. The vast disparities in access to adequate, affordable quality health care is but one of the major fault lines brought to the surface by the region's experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. All Central Coast residents should have access to basic rights and social goods, such as health care and quality education, which requires accommodating for diverse language, cultural, and technological needs as well as making them available regardless of income, citizenship, or immigration status.

## Advance racial and intersectional justice

Racial and intersectional justice inform all aspects of equity work, and cut across multiple issue areas, in efforts that seek change at the systemic level. A growing number of intersectional justice initiatives in the region focus on the needs—and draw on the leadership—of youth, who represent the fastest-growing segment of the region’s BIPOC population and who have heightened public awareness of how systemic problems of chronic underfunding, criminalized behavior, and discriminatory disciplinary protocols have fed into the school-to-prison pipeline and otherwise failed to nurture students from historically marginalized groups. In these and aligned initiatives, **advancing racial and intersectional justice means emphasizing nurturing, culturally relevant learning environments; fully inclusive access to services, educational, and employment opportunities; and restorative approaches to discipline and public safety.**

4

## **Protect tenants, preserve communities, and make housing affordable for all**

6

The crisis of affordable housing has been woven into the fabric of everyday life on the Central Coast, in the form of out of reach home prices, heavy rent burdens, long commutes, rising numbers of unhoused, unsheltered people, and years'-old affordable development targets gone unfulfilled. It's long since time we stop pretending this crisis can be resolved without massive investments of public resources and reordering of regional priorities to **construct and otherwise make available housing that is safe, accessible, and affordable, that adheres to standards of environmental sustainability, and that respects the rights of tenants to live free of the threats of eviction, arbitrary rent hikes, and gentrification.**

## Bridge digital divides for underserved communities

8 Full and unencumbered digital access is no longer simply a matter of consumer choice in societies that have turned to internet-based modes of learning, health and service provision, communication, and civic engagement, as we have on the Central Coast. It is a basic necessity for full participation in economic, social, political, and civic life. **Bridging digital divides starts with the recognition that internet access is an essential public good, bringing public responsibility to provide affordable and equitable access to all individuals, households, and communities that lack the income, technological, and other resources necessary to attain it.** It also requires active steps to gauge and remedy the learning losses, social and civic isolation, and service disparities that stem from disparities in connectivity.

## Create platforms for collaborative, community-engaged equity research

The data featured in this report, gathered in consultation with our community networks, provide aggregate indicators of the equity trends and challenges facing the Central Coast and offer some sense of what it would mean to address them on a region-wide scale. While the need for such indicator-based analysis continues, it is also a jumping off point for a broader program of research that builds regional capacity—and the more variegated, community-rooted knowledge base—for inclusive and equitable planning, policy development, and political action. In addition to the region's academic and independent research institutes, such a program will rely extensively on engagement with too-often unheard community voices, experiences, and expertise from community organizations— especially when it comes to understanding the mechanisms and day to day realities of inequality, collecting ground-level data, and identifying priorities and levers for change. Deepening and diversifying our knowledge base in this way also enhances the capacity to build a shared understanding of the region's problems and prospects, generate alliances across issue areas, and track progress towards equity and justice over time.

9



# Ventura County Collaboration

An aerial photograph of a coastal city, likely Santa Monica, California. The view is from an elevated position, looking down over residential buildings and greenery in the foreground. In the middle ground, a sandy beach curves along the coast, with waves breaking on the shore. A prominent pier extends into the blue ocean on the right side. The background shows a clear blue sky and distant landmasses. A semi-transparent blue rectangular box is overlaid on the lower-left portion of the image, containing white text.

**Where Do We  
Go From Here?**



Think and act regionally  
Commitment to research and data  
Support and build community capacity  
Make equity an ongoing commitment