



Community Engagement Synthesis of Key Findings

SIERRA SAN JOAQUIN JOBS (S2J2)

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In June 2023 the Sierra San Joaquin Jobs (S2J2) coalition (formerly Valley CERF coalition) launched a request for proposals (RFP) from community-based organizations to conduct resident engagement, including individual surveying, focus groups, and worker voice interviews. The RFP specifically targeted grassroots organizations with demonstrated, trusted relationships among disinvested communities. In August 2023, S2J2 awarded ten community-based organizations (CBOs) grants to undertake community engaged data collection. The grantees were charged with gathering the experiences of community members across S2J2 topical focus areas, including workforce, community infrastructure, climate, and education. This community engaged data collection supplements [baseline regional data analysis](#), providing the S2J2 coalition a more well-rounded evidence-base for planning and prioritizing investments in the region. The community-engaged data collection helps ensure that the planning process is grounded in the perspectives and experiences of residents who are most negatively impacted by the systems and infrastructure of the past and present socioeconomic status quo, and importantly whose experiences are less documented in public and administrative data sets.

The ten community-based organizations, located throughout the four-county region and with unique affiliations with different communities, selected are: Central Valley Workers Center (Tulare/Kings Counties), Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (Tulare/Kings Counties), Youth Leadership Institute (Madera County), Madera Coalition for Community Justice (Madera County), Community Action Partnership of Madera County, Inc., Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central (Fresno County), Jakara Movement (Fresno County), Southeast Asian Economic Development Coalition/ Fresno Center (Fresno County), Centro de Unidad Popular Benito Juárez (regional), and Binational of Central California (regional).¹ The regional grantees were expected to cover the four county region, whereas county-specific grantees had a more targeted geographic scope.

Grantees sought to elevate perspectives from communities that have been historically excluded from planning processes in the region and populations whose experiences are not often captured in broader data collection efforts. Focus was paid to gathering the experiences of farmworkers, migrant workers, youth, parents, residents of rural and unincorporated communities, and specific racial/ethnic groups including Cambodian, Chinese, Hispanic/Latino, Hmong, Indigenous, Lao, Mixteco, and Punjabi communities. Further details on the specific communities each community-based organizations engaged with can be found in Appendix A.

Grantee community-based organizations had autonomy over how to design their data collection process, and further details on methodology can be found in Appendix A. In total, 4,378 respondents were engaged

¹ Note that as of April 2024, this analysis includes data from all partners except for Central Valley Workers Center, who received a timeline extension.

through surveys (Madera County: 1,919; Fresno County: 542; Tulare County: 200; Regional: 1,537), focus groups (Madera County; 84; Fresno County: 19; Tulare/Kings County: 27; Regional: 25) and interviews (Fresno County; 25). While all data collection efforts focused on the S2J2 themes, substantive survey and focus group questions were not standardized. As a result, we can only include limited cross-county quantitative analysis. However, grantees used a standardized set of demographic questions. For a demographic profile of respondents across the region, please see Appendix B.

CROSS-COUNTY THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND KEY FINDINGS

Each grantee delivered a synthesis of the data they collected from community engagement. These reports are key references for county-specific needs and priorities. Partners at the Urban Institute then compiled and analyzed reports to identify high-level regional themes and key findings, detailed in this memo. This synthesis memo is organized around the key thematic areas for S2J2: industries and workforce, community infrastructure, resident wellbeing, and climate and environment.

A of all key findings is included in table 1, and an expanded analysis of these findings follows.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings by Domain

Industries and Workforce	
Sub-topic	Key Findings
Defining Good Jobs	Respondents emphasize that ‘good jobs’ give workers both the financial and nonfinancial resources to secure stability, health, and upward mobility for themselves and their families.
Workforce Conditions	Seasonal workers emphasized that a lack of stable work and income creates financial stress, depression and diminished mental health.
	Difficulties accessing affordable, reliable childcare are barriers to career development and accessing ‘good jobs’.
Workforce Threats	While workers recognize that new technology could mean increased productivity, this benefit for employers is outweighed by concerns of job replacement and instability.
	Environmental degradation, pollution, and climate change are considered risks to both workers’ health and safety as well as their opportunities for employment.
Structural Barriers	Undocumented workers are blocked from many public benefits and community services which emphasizes the need for tailored programs and legislative reform.
	Strict education credentials for jobs pose a barrier to career development for respondents.
Education and Training	Regionally, a majority of respondents shared that they did not know of any resources for workforce or skills development.
	Workforce training opportunities aren’t accessible to a large population of respondents because of language barriers, lifting up a need for both English language classes and multi-lingual trainings.
	Respondents want workforce training and skills-building programs to be created, promoted, and made accessible to them.

	Local business ownership is a common aspiration, but respondents lack the necessary financial support, mentoring, and training to successfully pursue entrepreneurship.
	Respondents want improved education quality in the public-school system and access to experiential learning, college-level courses, and training in trades to expand potential avenues to success for youth.
Community Infrastructure	
Housing Access and Affordability	Increases in rental costs and a lack of affordable housing were the most cited barriers to affordable housing in the region.
	Residents in Fresno and Tulare counties reported housing discrimination as a barrier to affordable housing in the region.
Transportation	When thinking about the future of transportation in their community, residents across the region want to see an expanded and more reliable bus system.
	Improvements to current transportation infrastructure, like enhancing road maintenance and repairs, would also benefit residents.
	Residents would like to see more alternative transportation methods by increasing cycling and pedestrian lanes and encouraging carpooling/ridesharing programs across the region.
Digital Access	Due to cost and availability of services, digital access is an issue for many throughout the region.
Resident Wellbeing	
Financial Stability	Housing costs, monthly utility bills, and food are the top three financial stressors emphasized by respondents region-wide.
	Respondents cite that household income is not keeping up with inflation, making it harder to afford everyday necessities.
	A very high number of respondents reported feeling <i>very uncomfortable</i> with their financial situation month-to-month.
Public Health	Access to quality, affordable healthcare is emphasized by residents across counties as a key issue.
Climate and Environment	
Environmental Health	The largest regional environmental concerns are air pollution and water pollution.
	Respondents share that poor air quality contributes to unsafe working conditions for farmworkers in the region.
Climate Investments	Extreme weather events (drought, wildfires, heat, floods) were perceived as large threats; communities expressed need for governmental support as disasters increase in frequency and severity.
	Across counties, respondents want increased access to safe green space and improved environmental health.

INDUSTRIES AND WORKFORCE

Across counties, residents lifted up a vision for a Central San Joaquin Valley economy that values workers' financial and physical wellbeing and prioritizes investments towards workers' job stability and skills development. Regionally, respondents noted disconnection from (and possible lack of) workforce development programs that are accessible, indicating an opportunity to expand, improve, and better promote these initiatives. Respondents also indicated a need for industries (namely agriculture and food service) to develop in ways that create new 'good

jobs', preserve and improve the quality of current employment, and positively impact human and environmental health.

Defining 'Good Jobs'

Respondents emphasized that 'good jobs' give workers both the financial and nonfinancial resources to secure stability, health, and upward mobility for themselves and their families.

Though the question asked of respondents, 'what makes a good job?', is broad, answers across counties strongly clustered around key elements, indicating a shared regional vision. The frequently noted characteristics of a 'good job' include comprehensive benefits and healthcare, retirement contributions, and living wages. These tangible elements all build towards two broader 'good job' outcomes that were desired regionally: work-life balance and not having to live paycheck-to-paycheck. In Madera County, Spanish-speaking respondents commonly brought up 'safety' as a feature of a good job. Majority of Madera's respondents were farmworkers, emphasizing the importance of workplace safety and hazard reduction in the agricultural industry.

"A good job means I can provide for myself and my family not living paycheck to paycheck...being able to be independent." (high school student in Madera County engaged by Youth Leadership Institute)

"A good paying job is something where you pay more than a minimum wage, have consistency of hours, work conditions are bearable and language access is easily accessible" (respondent in Fresno County engaged by Jakara Movement)

In Fresno County, respondents were asked to report on potential elements of a 'good job' and how important that element is to job quality. The five elements that were ranked 'very important' most frequently are high wages, benefits, healthcare, retirement, and work environment. Other elements ranked 'very important' by 60 percent or more of respondents include career mobility, childcare options, consistency/set scheduling, and flexible scheduling.

Workforce Conditions

Seasonal workers emphasized that a lack of stable work and income creates financial stress, depression and diminished mental health.

In the regional survey from Binational Central California, where over 60 percent of respondents were farmworkers (n=837), respondents shared that the biggest challenge they face is lack of stable work/income due to seasonal harvesting. And 40 percent included that this lack of work has led to financial stress, depression, and diminished mental health. In a focus group conducted by Tulare/Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (n=27), many farmworkers expressed a need for new job opportunities and training programs to avoid the economic instability during off seasons.

Difficulties accessing affordable, reliable childcare are barriers to career development and accessing 'good jobs'.

In the Jakara Movement's survey, 22 percent of respondents of all genders included childcare in their response but over 40 percent of female respondents shared that childcare is an essential aspect of a 'good job'. Some stated that the lack of accessible childcare in the region has prevented them from joining the workforce altogether.

Workforce Threats

While workers recognize that new technology could mean increased productivity, this benefit for employers is outweighed by concerns of job replacement and instability.

Technology and AI were popular topics of discussion in respondents' written survey answers and in focus groups. Discussion mainly originated from workers within two industries poised for major technological changes in the coming decade, agriculture and food service. In Fresno County, the Jakara Movement's data reported that 17 percent (n=279) of workers, felt like technology shifts/skill gaps will be the most significant threats to their work, which could produce barriers to employment (lack of training to operate machinery and technology, jobs being replaced by machines) but some respondents expressed optimism that with training, they would become proficient with the new technology, maintain employment, and receive higher pay for their expanded skillset. In most counties, however, employers do not offer trainings to keep up with technological advancement, leaving many employees feeling unprepared, as noted in a regional focus group. In Madera County, new technology/AI was reported as the prevailing perceived threat to job security and employment opportunities in agriculture. And in the regional survey conducted by Binational of Central California, respondents noted that they fear new technologies will include increased toxic chemicals, negatively impacting both workers' health and the environment.

Across counties, older workers were vocal that they fear that technology will cause job displacement and that they will experience ageism in hiring as younger workers are seen as more adaptable. High school aged respondents from Madera and Tulare counties expressed less trepidation and more interest in technology being expanded in the workplace, especially pertaining to robotics.

Environmental degradation, pollution, and climate change are considered risks to both workers' health and safety as well as their opportunities for employment.

Throughout the region, respondents voiced that pesticide exposure and extreme heat are considerable hazards in their workplace. Farmworkers most frequently noted environment and climate job safety (like pesticide toxic exposure and heat exposure) as well as job stability concerns because climate change impacts (heat, flooding) impact crop yield.

In Tulare County (n=226) 74 people, accounting for 33 percent of respondents, reported that climate change is the biggest threat to their line of work. Sixty-nine percent of those surveyed by FEVC Fresno (n=104) answered that climate change is the biggest issue that will affect their work.

Structural Barriers

Undocumented workers are blocked from many public benefits which emphasizes the need for tailored programs and legislative reform.

Across the region, many undocumented workers voiced that they need financial and social supports, but their inability to access key public services like unemployment benefits is a significant barrier to stability and wellbeing. While no community engagement efforts asked questions about immigration status, Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central in Fresno County reported that 90 percent of participants (n=99) have relied on the organization to declare that they do not have social security numbers. Undocumented respondents also noted that their immigration status structurally excludes them from access to fair wages and labor rights. While undocumented respondents expressed a need for legislative reform that allows them access to the same benefits as all other California taxpayers, there is also a need for immediate financial and social assistance.

“We want support to receive work benefits, for better treatment for us farm workers because they demand a lot from us and with little pay. They pressure us as if we were contractors but they pay us the minimum per hour.”
(Mixteco respondent in Fresno County engaged by Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central)

Strict education credentials for jobs pose a barrier to career development for respondents.

In synthesis reports, grantees indicated that some respondents shared that strict education requirements for jobs pose an undue burden and restrict access to ‘good jobs’, including those in the public sector and government. Madera County high school students engaged by Youth Leadership Institute shared that securing employment is difficult in the county due to high schoolers’ lack of experience relative to older adults, and that qualifications like needing a driver’s license for some jobs pose a barrier.

Participants in the Tulare/Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce data collection noted that the skillsets of immigrants are often undervalued and go unrecognized in the US, despite the skills being certified in their countries of origin. By failing to acknowledge their qualifications, immigrants are restricted from accessing stable, good-paying jobs. Participants expressed the need for the US to develop a system that will acknowledge and certify past work experiences and trainings of a person who immigrated to the US.

Education and Training

Regionally, a majority of respondents shared that they did not know of any resources for workforce or skills development.

Training and skills-building programs are key components of workforce development, but responses across counties indicate a glaring gap in knowledge of and access to these services. Within Fresno County, more than 190 people, 22 percent of respondents (n=885), reported not being aware of any job training or adult education programs. In Madera County, 65 percent of English-speaking residents (n=619) and 77 percent of Spanish-speaking residents (n=493) reported that they have not been exposed to these programs. It is unclear whether respondents’ disconnection from training programs indicates that the relevant programs do not exist within the county or if there are relevant workforce programs, but these programs are not promoted sufficiently or are inaccessible. While most Tulare County respondents were aware of training programs, a majority also indicated they did not feel able to access them because of factors like age, language, and citizenship.

Workforce training opportunities aren’t accessible to many respondents because of language barriers, lifting up a need for both English language classes and multi-lingual trainings.

Respondents across the region indicated that a barrier to accessing ‘good jobs’ is that training programs are not offered in the language that they speak. More than 45 percent of regional Binational survey respondents (n = 837) reported a desire for new job opportunities that offer in-person language training, such as an English language class, alongside technical trainings.

“Due to the language base, we cannot advance more.” (respondent in Madera County engaged by Madera Coalition for Community Justice)

Respondents want workforce training and skills-building programs to be created, promoted, and made accessible to them.

Though a majority had not accessed workforce trainings, respondents voiced a clear need for these services. And some respondents in Fresno County noted that they “don’t have the money” to keep up with new technologies, indicating a need for no or low-cost programs. Across the region, respondents indicated a desire for apprenticeship opportunities and trade skills training; training on new technology; reskilling programs for industries poised for technological changes, including agriculture; training for jobs in the medical industry; and English language classes.

Participants in a Tulare/Kings focus group shared that they are advocating for the establishment of a recreational center that would serve as a multifunctional entity to host educational programming and career services, while also functioning as a space for residents to wind down and participate in recreational activities. A centralized building acting as a hub for both career development and play could make programming less daunting and more accessible for community residents.

Also of note, respondents to the regional Binational survey shared that as far as investments in the agricultural industry are concerned, they hope to see investments produce more upskilling opportunities for workers rather than more technical advances. Respondents to the Binational survey also indicated that they are particularly interested in jobs within the growing solar energy industry.

Local business ownership is a common aspiration, but respondents lack the necessary financial support, mentoring, and training to successfully pursue entrepreneurship.

Teenage participants in Youth Leadership Institute’s focus groups shared that small business ownership, especially in the food service and retail industries, was a common career aspiration for youth. Respondents in Tulare County also expressed a need for education and training for aspiring business owners and more support for local businesses. Participants in a focus group conducted in Kings/Tulare counties noted the lack of support for startup businesses in their counties. Many participants indicated the need for microloans to help them start their business, as well as educational courses to teach them how to financially manage their business once it’s running. Furthermore, some participants felt that the municipal governments must first amend the zoning laws to reduce barriers for new businesses looking for retail space. Further community listening and engagement efforts are needed to determine the specific education and financial interventions needed to support aspiring entrepreneurs.

Residents want improved education quality in the public school system and access to experiential learning, college-level courses, and training in trades to expand potential avenues to success for youth.

Students and parents across the region voiced a need for expanded, and improved, public education. Madera County high school students engaged by Youth Leadership Institute shared that they want more experiential learning and college-level courses available in high school to better prepare them for further education and the workforce. The Madera County students voiced particular interest in courses that set them up for future education and employment in health care. Respondents to the Tulare County and regional surveys noted that they think schools should also teach courses that prepare students for trade jobs and apprenticeships to better position youth for employment. Respondents from the City of Huron in Fresno County expressed the need for their own high school as the nearest high school, Coalinga High School, is half an hour from Huron, impacting access.

“We hope that there is a high school so that the children can succeed and also that the teachers do their job inspiring and supporting the children for a better future.” (Mixteco respondent in Huron community engaged by Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central)

“I want more opportunities for college [level] learning for something that is specific in health care at school.” (high school student in Madera County engaged by Youth Leadership Institute)

“Learning about taxes...teaching us [how to] pay bills.... I think those courses should be at school.” (high school student in Madera County engaged by Youth Leadership Institute)

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Regionally, respondents indicated a need for programs, investments, and policies that increase the availability of affordable and stable housing, ensure reliable and accessible multimodal transportation across geographies, and make broadband more widely available.

Housing Access and Affordability

Increases in rental costs and a lack of affordable housing were the most cited barriers to affordable housing in the region.

Across the region, residents are most concerned with housing costs. Driving this concern are high rental/property costs, and a limited availability of affordable housing units. Moreover, respondents reported a lack of information or resources when looking for affordable housing. According to the Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central survey, which focused its efforts on Fresno County and surveyed mostly farmworkers, 91 respondents (n=249) cited high rental costs as a barrier to housing. Residents in Madera County also felt the pressure of rent increases, with over 55 percent of English-speaking respondents (n= 619) citing rent rate increases and limited “rental space” as barriers. Spanish-speaking residents in Madera County also noted strict renter requirements, such as credit history and high deposit amounts, as barriers to housing in the region.

“They are building new homes, but those are fancy and expensive, not for us. I just want a simple home with a nice backyard.” (high school student in Madera County, engaged by Youth Leadership Institute)

Residents in Fresno and Tulare counties reported housing discrimination as a barrier to affordable housing in the region.

Housing discrimination was prevalent across the region, according to respondents. A total of 219 people (10 percent) in Tulare and Fresno counties had faced housing discrimination based on race, gender, and/or income when searching for housing. Respondents who filled out the surveys in Fresno and Tulare counties primarily identified as Asian or Latino/a/x, highlighting housing discrimination within these communities.

Transportation

When thinking about the future of transportation in their community, residents across the region want to see an expanded and more reliable bus system.

Over 441 residents (26 percent) in Fresno and Tulare counties want to see improvements to the public bus system. Respondents commonly desired expanded bus access to rural communities as well as extending operating times for those who work late. In particular, Eastern Madera was singled out as a geographic area that lacked adequate

access to the bus system. The United Way of Fresno and Madera’s survey of Madera County reported notable differences between the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking survey results. Among English-speaking respondents, 88 percent travel by personal vehicle and 4 percent rely on public transportation (n=619). And among Spanish-speaking respondents, 68 percent use a personal vehicle, 17 percent rely on carpool and shared rides, 6 percent rely on walking, and 7 percent rely on public transportation (n=493).

“A good network of bus service is very much needed for the older population who can’t drive or have limited skills to drive.” (farmworker in Fresno County engaged by Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central)

The youth population in Madera reported feeling frustrated at the public transportation system and many consider it unreliable. The students mentioned that access to reliable transportation could improve attendance by making their commutes easier.

According to an interview from the Jakara Movement, language is a barrier towards accessing public transportation and that translated, accessible route maps are needed to better serve the Punjabi community

“Punjabi has a different script. We can’t understand what route the bus will take due to limitations.” (respondent in Fresno County engaged by Jakara Movement)

Improvements to current transportation infrastructure, like enhancing road maintenance and repairs, would also benefit residents.

Over 390 residents (23 percent) surveyed from Fresno and Tulare counties shared a desire to enhance road maintenance and repairs, making it the second highest priority for infrastructure in the region.

Beyond enhancing road repairs, residents in Tulare/Kings county want to see safer road designs (e.g. the implementation of left turn lanes), and improved street lighting so that pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers feel more comfortable on the road.

Some residents would like to expand alternative transportation methods by increasing cycling and pedestrian lanes and encouraging carpooling/ridesharing programs across the region.

Residents throughout the region expressed interest in the expansion of cycling lanes and pedestrian lanes to increase the walkability of their communities. Additionally, about 200 people (11 percent of total respondents) in Fresno and Tulare counties thought that ridesharing/carpooling programs could positively impact the future of transportation in the region and improve their air quality through a reduction in emissions. Respondents in Tulare County noted that the high cost of gas is a serious concern for farmworkers who have to drive throughout the region for work.

Digital Access

Due to cost and availability of services, digital access is an issue for many throughout the region.

When Fresno County residents were asked if they had access to reliable broadband, 35 percent (n=535) responded “No”. In Madera, 15 percent of English-speaking respondents (n=619) and 33 percent of Spanish-speaking respondents (n=493) lack access to reliable broadband. Respondents cited cost or unavailable service as barriers towards accessing broadband. A lack of internet access can exacerbate inequalities in employment and educational opportunities.

RESIDENTIAL WELLBEING

Residents across the region note that low wages and inflation have produced considerable financial stress, especially related to basic needs like housing, utilities, and food. Healthcare access is also an issue for many in the region, especially for rural communities and for those who need access to specialties like pediatric and mental healthcare.

Financial Stability

Housing costs, monthly utility bills, and food are the top three financial stressors emphasized by respondents in the region.

Across Fresno and Tulare counties, housing costs were the largest financial stressor. Twenty-two percent of Fresno County respondents (n=2074) and 27 percent of respondents (n=399) in Tulare County selected housing as a top stressor. Monthly utility bills and food costs ranked second and third, respectively, on the list of financial stressors.

“Constant hikes in rents and inflation have led to financial distress in many households. There has been a lot of stress and no options of affordable housing available in the area or at least we don't have resources available for affordable housing in Punjabi. Constant visits to the hospital and no proper public transportation has led to a lot of chaos in our lives and we could barely make ends meet.” (respondent in Fresno County engaged by Jakara Movement)

Respondents cite that household income is not keeping up with inflation, making it harder to afford everyday necessities.

Respondents across counties also noted that household income was not keeping pace with inflation and increased cost of living. Everyday expenses, such as rent and food, are increasing while wages remain stagnant, forcing residents to make decisions to sacrifice basic necessities.

“Inflation is too high after COVID. Our work hours have drastically reduced and work conditions have worsened...As a single income home with a family of two, my family is struggling to keep up with the basic necessities [like] increasing rent, groceries and health and car insurance.” (respondent in Fresno County engaged by Jakara Movement)

A very high number of respondents reported feeling very uncomfortable with their financial situation month-to-month.

When asked about their financial stability, 21 percent of respondents in Fresno County (n=538) reported feeling “very uncomfortable”, followed by 39 percent reporting “uncomfortable”. When disaggregating by Fresno County surveys, 1 in 3 respondents who answered the Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central survey, and 1 in 2 respondents who answered the Southeast Asian Economic Development Coalition survey felt “very uncomfortable” with their financial situations. Within Madera County, 11 percent of Spanish-speakers (n=493), and 5 percent of Tulare County survey respondents (n=195) felt “very uncomfortable” with their financial security, respectively. The Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce noted that the response rate for the financial stability survey question was low compared to others, perhaps indicated people were not comfortable stating they

were unsatisfied. The high rates of financial insecurity reflect the stress that residents feel as they face higher rents, food prices, and utilities rates.

Public Health

Access to quality, affordable healthcare is a major issue across counties.

In Fresno County, 42 percent of respondents reported having easy access to healthcare, 49 percent of respondents have healthcare, but face barriers to access, while 8 percent do not have healthcare (n=492). About half of all respondents (n=549) have healthcare through the state rather than their employers. In a regional survey conducted by Centro de Unidad Popular Benito Juarez, respondents recalled not seeking medical attention due to their legal status, out of fear of being deported if revealed, putting their wellbeing at risk.

Across both surveys conducted in Madera County, respondents highlighted the negative impact the recent hospital closure has had on their access to healthcare. Limited facilities, spread across the region, further highlight the need for reliable, quality public transportation. From a focus group facilitated by the Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, respondents noted a lack of pediatric and mental health services.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

In addition to the threat climate change poses to jobs in the agriculture industry and the health risks workers face from toxic exposure to pesticides (*detailed in the Workforce and Industries section*), respondents across the region indicate that their day-to-day lives are impacted by pollution and extreme weather events. Respondents also express a need for greater public sector investment in recovery efforts (as a result of floods, extreme heat, etc.) and increased funding for equitable access to safe green space.

Environmental Health

The largest regional environmental concerns are air pollution and water pollution.

In Fresno County, air pollution was ranked slightly higher with 54 percent of respondents, 234 people, citing it as a concern while 39 percent, 168 people, cited water (n=432). In Tulare County, 47 percent of respondents, 148 people, were concerned about air pollution and 30 percent, 94 people, cited water pollution (n=318).

According to a focus group with the youth population, conducted by the Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, 93 percent of high school students surveyed (n=30) noted air pollution as a top concern.

In a regional survey conducted by Centro de Unidad Popular Benito Juarez, 80 percent of respondents (n=700) are worried about climate change and its impacts. Respondents who are farmworkers noted that their work has already been impacted by the effects of climate change as seen through an increase in droughts, and low produce production.

Although many respondents recognize the urgency of climate change, some participants in the regional survey want to see more education surrounding adaptation and resiliency measures to empower communities with knowledge so that they can take action to mitigate climate change.

Respondents share that poor air quality contributes to unsafe working conditions for farmworkers in the region.

A common thread throughout the surveys was the negative impact of poor air quality on farmworkers in the region. Farmworkers in Tulare County pointed out that the dust generated by the large volume of fruit orchards in the area contributes to poor air quality. A salient quote from a farmworker summarizes the impact of air pollution on their work stating,

“Air pollution is so much that I could barely breathe sometimes. I feel that air pollution is more than water pollution. Water pollution is still manageable as we can get clean water from the stores while clean air is more important for us to breathe. I see so less trees and green spaces around my zip code.” (respondent in Fresno County engaged by Jakara Movement)

Informed by focus groups conducted by the Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, students are well aware of the threat of poor air quality in their region and attribute the pollution to automobiles and the transportation/ manufacturing industries.

Climate Investments

Extreme weather events (drought, wildfires, heat, floods) were perceived as large threats; communities expressed need for governmental support as disasters increase in frequency and severity.

Within the agricultural industry, farmworkers are worried that extreme droughts will limit their work opportunities and their access to water. The increase in disasters has decreased the wellbeing of residents in the region. In Fresno County, many have issues breathing and face constant lung congestion during wildfire events and pollen season. Respondents in the Regional survey noted the need for better governmental support programs when natural disasters occur.

Participants in a regional survey (n=700) are concerned that the counties are not adequately preparing residents for extreme events. Some worry that language barriers will hinder the dissemination of disaster preparation alerts and evacuation measures across the community prior to an event occurring.

Across counties, respondents want increased access to safe green space and improved environmental health.

Residents in Fresno County imagine a future that includes well-maintained parks and green spaces in their communities. One parent mentioned emphasized this point when asked about what they want to see in the future stating,

“[I want] a healthy environment (good air, safe), good and safe parks to play (actual green grass so kids can run and play), a good and successful future and good health (no valley induced diagnosis [like] asthma).” (respondent in Fresno County engaged by Southeast Asian Economic Development Coalition)

NEXT STEPS

Summaries from all CBOs (as well as this cross-county synthesis) will be shared with HRTCs to inform the regional S2J2 planning process and shared with research partners at the Urban Institute to guide recommendations. The key findings from this community engagement effort can be useful throughout S2J2 planning and programmatic development. The HRTCs can use community engaged data to add additional context to baseline findings, ground truth assumptions in lived experience, strengthen the case for advancing specific programs and policies, and to help ensure investments are targeted to reach the communities who need them most.

Appendix A. Methods and Limitations

Methods

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) had full autonomy over how to design their data collection process. Choices ranged from surveying, leading focus groups, and/or conducting interviews. The most popular method among CBOs was surveying, which allows for efficient data collection over a short period of time. Across the ten CBOs, seven chose to survey their communities. Focus groups were the second most common method, with four CBOs (Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Youth Leadership Institute, Madera Coalition for Community Justice, and Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central) choosing to facilitate multiple focus groups in their community. Only one CBO (Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central) chose to conduct interviews.

Grantees sought to elevate perspectives from communities that have been historically excluded from planning processes in the region and populations whose experiences are not often captured through broader data collection efforts. The following table overviews the target populations for each CBO’s data collection:

Organization	Communities engaged
Central Valley Workers Center (Tulare/Kings Counties)	Low-income communities, rural communities
Tulare Kings Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (Tulare/Kings Counties)	Hispanic/Latino communities
Youth Leadership Institute (Madera County)	High-school aged youth
Madera Coalition for Community Justice (Madera County)	Immigrants, Hispanic/Latino communities, middle-aged parents, high-school aged youth, senior citizens, business owners
Community Action Partnership of Madera County, Inc	Low-income communities, senior citizens, food service industry workers, farmerworkers
Familias Empoderadas del Valle Central (Fresno County)	Mixteco community and Latino immigrant communities of Mexico and Central America
Jakara Movement (Fresno County)	Punjabi community, Hispanic/Latino communities, young adults (age 18-25), workers in trucking industry, workers in meat packing industry, workers in restaurant industry
Southeast Asian Economic Development Coalition/ Fresno Center (Fresno County)	Cambodian community, Chinese community, Hmong community, Lao community, other Southeast Asian communities, farmworkers

Centro de Unidad Popular Benito Juárez (regional)	Indigenous communities including San Pablo Tijaltepec, San Juan Mixtepec, Ixcantepec Nieves, San Agustin Atenango, San Juan Copala, Rancho Alfaro, Ejutla de Crespo across Fresno, Kings, Madera, and Tulare counties
Binational of Central California (regional)	Rural communities, Hispanic/Latino communities, low-income communities, indigenous communities, farmworkers

After data collection was complete, the CBOs lead an initial analysis of their data. The Urban Institute developed a reporting template that they shared with CBOs to support them through their data analysis process. Within the reporting template, CBOs summarized their target populations, demographics of their survey respondents/participants, key findings, and noted any limitations they faced. After CBOs completed their individual data analysis, they submitted their reports to the Urban Institute team. Due to the standardized reporting template, the Urban team was able to conduct a cross analysis of the substantial data collection efforts across all CBOs in the region. The Urban team produced a high-level summary of key findings in hopes of lifting up issues that are of high priority across community residents.

Limitations

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, CBOs reported many challenges and limitations. One common challenge CBOs cited in the data collection process was pressure around time. Many CBOs felt like their data collection was incomplete because they ran out of time to capture the voices of their target population. Under one instance, a CBO noted that they weren't able to solicit the concerns of the rural community because of the time that it took to travel to gather the data. The limitation of time was also brought up frequently by respondents taking the survey; many respondents felt like the surveys were too long and were reluctant to share their time without being adequately compensated. This led to survey questions being left unanswered or skipped.

Miscommunication was another challenge that arose for CBOs. A couple of CBOs felt that survey respondents didn't fully understand what the question was asking, potentially due to the language barriers or the way the questions were worded. Due to this miscommunication, the answers reflected in the survey could be misleading if they were misinterpreted by the respondent.

A lack of trust and security may have impacted how respondents answered the survey questions. Even though the CBOs work hard to establish trust and community membership, the survey questions still touch on vulnerable subjects such as financial stability and health, which may have deterred individuals from answering or could have led to false reporting. Additionally, a few CBOs mentioned people who are undocumented refused to take the survey in fear that it would negatively impact them. Finally, although CBOs continued to canvass throughout extreme weather events such as heavy flooding and wind, their engagement rate likely declined as community members chose to stay inside on those days.

Appendix B. Demographic Data

Together, the community-based organizations (CBOs) and the Urban Institute developed a standard demographic survey to help inform whether the participants that provided input are representative of the diverse communities that CBOs serve. Once finalized, the demographics survey was incorporated into all CBO engagement efforts and completed by every respondent to ensure that demographic cross-analysis could be conducted throughout the region. Below is a table of the total Central San Joaquin Valley community engagement demographic info.

Category	Madera #	Madera %	Fresno #	Fresno %	Tulare Kings #	Tulare Kings %	Region #	Region %	Total #	Total %
Gender										
Woman	1026	74.1%	327	60.3%	137	68.0%	852	55.4%	2342	64.0%
Man	345	24.9%	207	38.2%	61	30.0%	668	43.5%	1281	35.0%
Non-binary	10	0.7%	4	0.6%	2	1.0%	17	1.10%	33	0.90%
Other	3	0.2%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	0.11%
Race										
American Indian or Alaska Native	22	2.5%	0	0.0%	3	1.5%	394	25.6%	419	13.3%
Asian	19	2.1%	371	68.5%	3	1.5%	15	.98%	408	13.0%
Latino/a/x	467	52.2%	129	23.8%	99	49.5%	1018	66.2%	1713	54.4%
Black	32	3.6%	4	0.7%	0	0.0%	19	1.2%	55	1.70%
White	278	31.1%	10	1.8%	65	32.5%	64	4.2%	417	13.2
Middle Eastern or North African	4	0.4%	4	0.7%	0	0.0%	27	1.8%	35	1.10%
Other	72	8.1%	0	0.0%	30	15.0%	0	0.0%	102	3.20%
Tenure										
Less than 1 year	56	5.0%	33	6.1%	4	2.0%	88	5.7%	181	5.40%
1-5 years	265	23.8%	137	25.3%	30	15.0%	239	15.5%	671	19.9%

5-10 years	219	19.7%	142	26.2%	44	22.0%	590	38.4%	995	29.5%
More than 10 years	572	51.4%	228	42.1%	110	55.0%	620	40.3%	1530	45.3%
Education Level										
Elementary school to 8th grade	224	21.3%	79	14.6%	42	21.0%	575	40.5%	920	28.8%
Some high school, no diploma	129	12.3%	62	11.5%	22	11.0%	430	30.3%	643	20.1%
High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (e.g., GED)	226	21.5%	114	21.1%	58	29.0%	197	13.9	595	18.6%
Some college credit, no degree	156	14.8%	51	9.4%	28	14.0%	116	8.18	351	11.0%
Trade/technical/vocational training	41	3.9%	21	3.9%	9	4.5%	48	3.38	119	3.72%
Associate's degree	89	8.5%	29	5.4%	16	8.0%	20	1.41	154	4.81%
Bachelor's degree	131	12.5%	94	17.4%	10	5.0%	25	1.76	260	8.13%
Master's degree	44	4.2%	25	4.6%	4	2.0%	2	0.14%	75	2.34%
Professional degree	7	0.7%	8	1.5%	1	0.5%	0	0.0%	16	0.50%
Doctorate degree	5	0.5%	6	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	11	0.34%
No formal education	0	0.0%	44	8.1%	0	0.0%	6	0.42%	50	1.56%
Other	0	0.0%	6	1.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	0.19%
Age										
17 or younger	17	1.5%	6	1.1%	13	6.5%	27	1.76%	63	1.86%
18-24	67	6.0%	48	8.9%	15	7.5%	146	9.50%	276	8.16%
25-34	263	23.7%	115	21.3%	50	25.0%	337	21.9%	765	22.6%

35-44	277	24.9%	156	28.8%	52	26.0%	418	27.2%	903	26.7%
45-54	205	18.4%	109	20.1%	27	13.5%	305	19.8%	646	19.1%
55-64	148	13.3%	70	12.9%	22	11.0%	170	11.1%	410	12.1%
65 or older	135	12.1%	37	6.8%	14	7.0%	134	8.72%	320	9.46%
Total Respondents	1,919		542		200		1,537		4,198	