

A close-up photograph of several people's hands and forearms clasped together in a circle, forming a human pyramid. The individuals have diverse skin tones and are wearing various casual clothing, including a blue denim jacket, a red and black plaid shirt, and white long-sleeved shirts. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a light-colored paved surface.

# **Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative**



# **A Regional Vision of Equity**

*Acknowledges our shared history,  
our socioeconomic integration and  
interdependence, and our long and  
growing history of bi-county activism.*





# TOWARDS A JUST AND EQUITABLE CENTRAL COAST

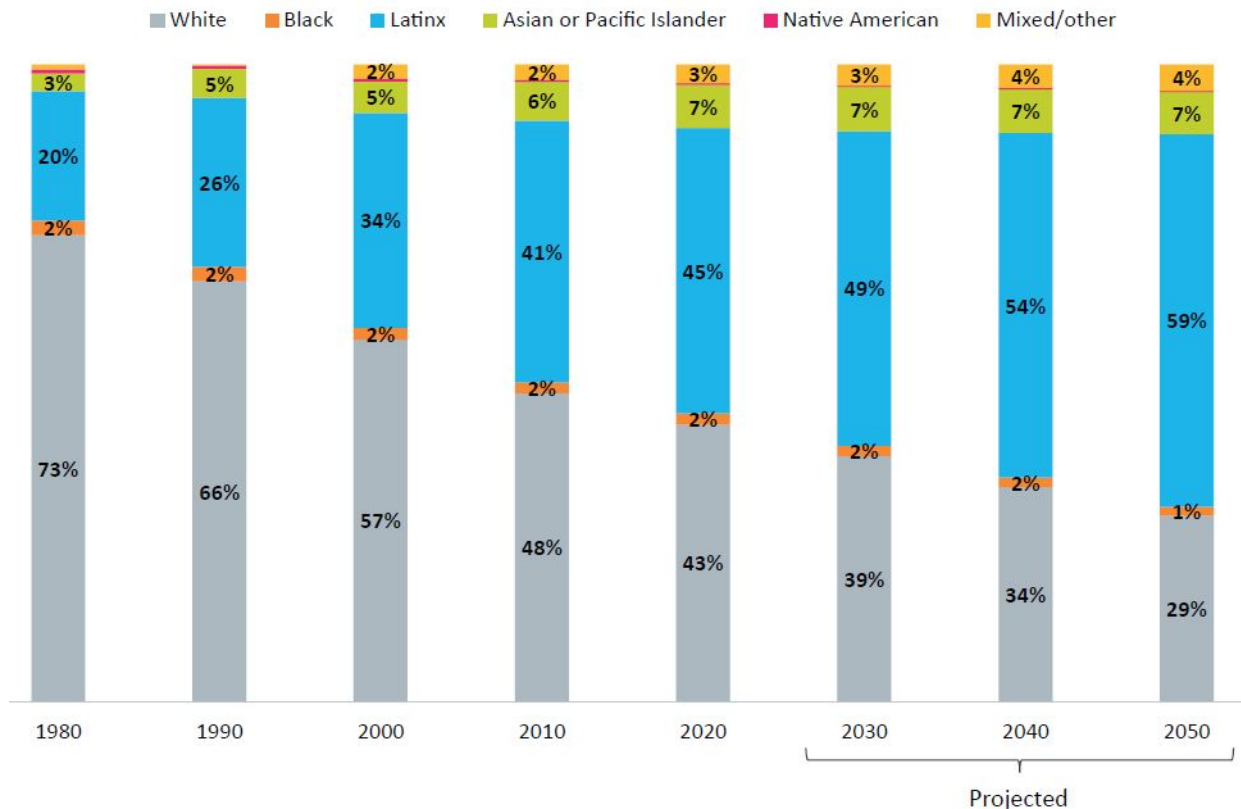


University of California Santa Barbara  
**BLUM**CENTER  
ON POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND DEMOCRACY

**USC**  
**Dornsife**  
*Equity Research  
Institute*

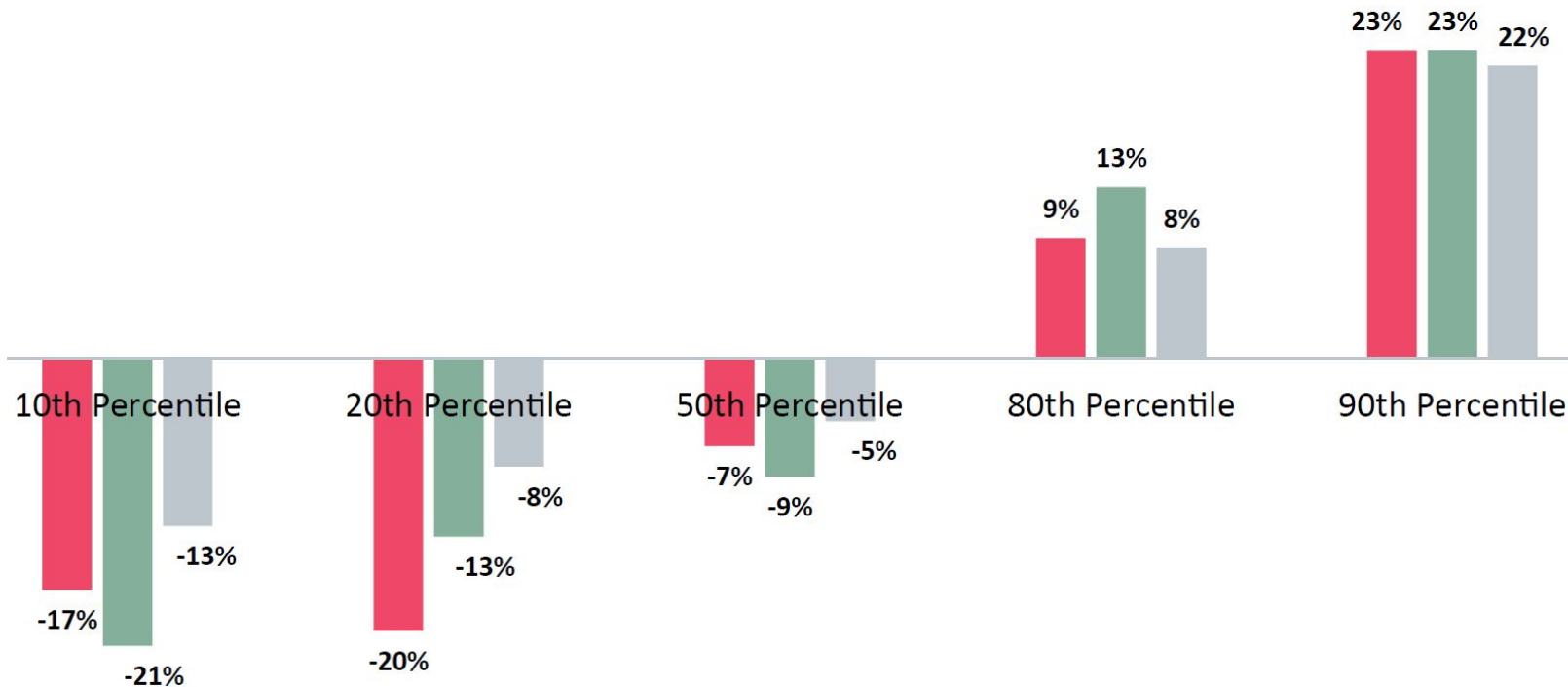


# A Diversifying Region

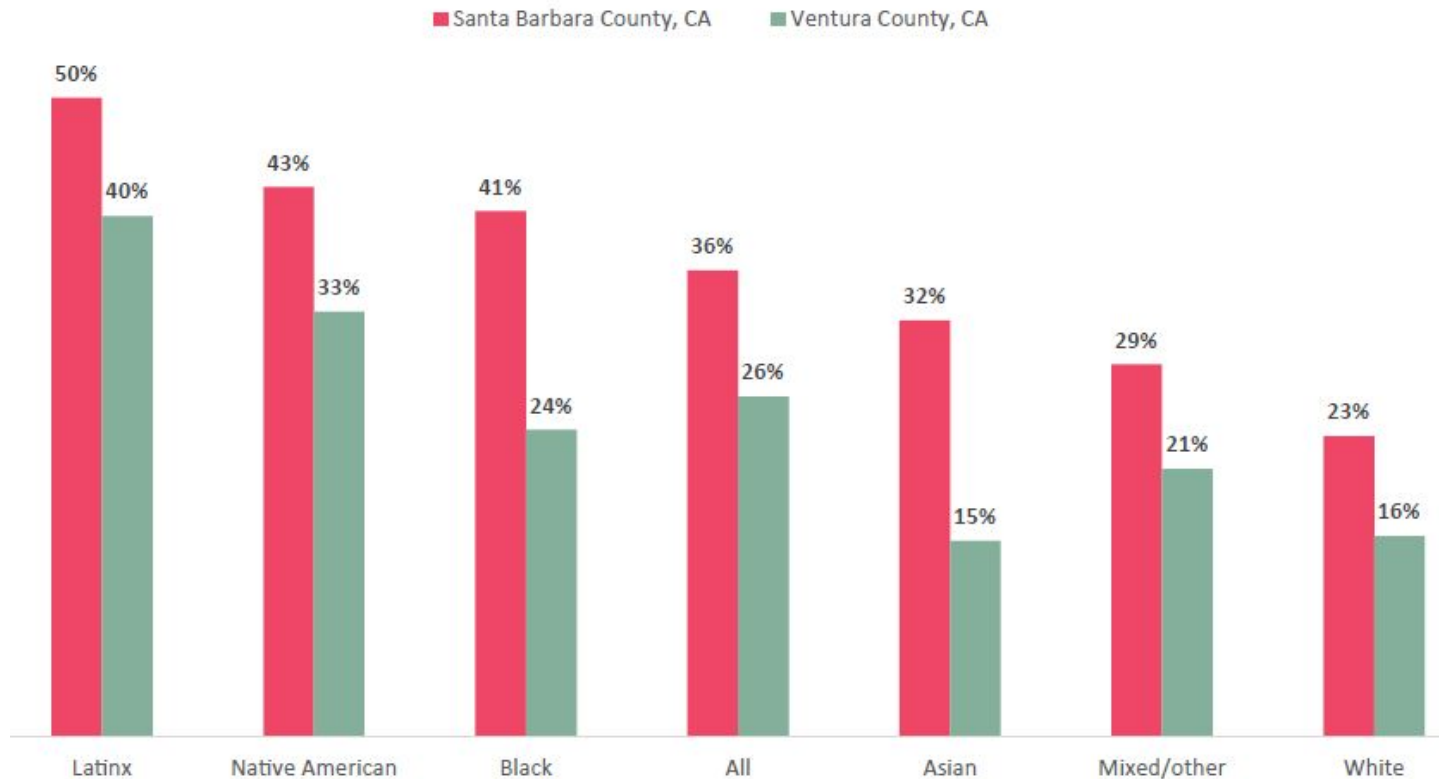


# Rising Inequality: Real Income Growth, 1979-2018

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



# Economic Hardship by Race







## Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative

*The Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative aims to deepen our understanding of regional disparities, facilitate a region-wide multi-sectoral conversation, and advance social, health, environmental, and economic equity through a community and research-informed action framework.*





# 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

2

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.



## **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**

**4** 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.



## **Recognize, respect, and protect immigrant rights, civic integration, and political voice**

**Whether they are recent arrivals or long-standing residents, immigrants are an integral part of the Central Coast region, as contributors to the regional economy, community organizers, educators, students, parents, and neighbors. Fully achieving equity and justice in the region requires that all immigrants, regardless of citizenship status, have full access to the social safety net, emergency relief, and the legal protections accorded workers and tenants. Local political systems should be made more aware, responsive, and accountable to immigrant communities, through immigrant-inclusive organizing, naturalization, and voter registration campaigns.**

**5**

## **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.



## Be a leader in environmental and climate justice

There is no denying that climate change and environmental crises are a reality in the Central Coast. While communities vary in their response resiliency due to factors of inequity, environmental burdens adversely affect all communities regardless of race or affluence. The region has a long history of fighting against offshore drilling, fossil fuel power plants, a proposed liquefied natural gas terminal, and the use of hazardous pesticides on commercial farms. More action is needed to invest in public transportation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and protect local infrastructure from the ravages of climate change. Stronger collaboration between the original stewards of the region's land and water, the Chumash and Tataviam people, and environmental and social justice groups within the region can show the rest of the country dynamic pathways forward toward a more sustainable and just environment.

## 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

9

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.

## Build from our victories

10

Building a just and equitable region requires a long-term commitment, a willingness to confront entrenched forces of resistance, and the often-painstaking work of organizing coalitions on multiple fronts. It draws vital energy from accomplishments along the way. Recent victories give cause for hope. Activists successfully pressured state and local governments to increase funding for tenant protections, affordable housing, and services for the unhoused during the pandemic. Environmental organizations and activists created a carbon-free renewable energy program and established a diversified climate justice network. Grassroots organizations collaborated to provide greater assistance to immigrant families who have faced significant loss as a result of natural disasters. These victories are only a small portion of the overall transformative change that is needed, but they nevertheless demonstrate that such change is possible when communities organize the public, persuade stakeholders, form alliances, and apply political pressure to those in power.



## Open avenues to participatory democracy

11

While progress in key areas has been made in recent years, these victories have only been possible because of sustained, targeted organizing campaigns that make concrete demands and electoral strategies to hold elected officials accountable. Broad-based, but unfocused, support for change often loses when the status quo is supported by powerful interests. Organizations rooted in the region's diverse communities are needed more than ever to empower marginalized groups by activating new and occasional voters to build electoral power, pressuring reluctant lawmakers, and building coalitions across groups that have historically been excluded from the political process. Advancing equity on the Central Coast also calls for an expanded toolkit for realizing the region's democratic potential, such as participatory budgeting, equity impact standards, and other measures to promote community engagement in public decision making.

A close-up photograph of two hands shaking in a firm grip. The hand on the right is darker-skinned and wears a silver ring on the ring finger. The hand on the left is lighter-skinned. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green grass and people in the distance.

Where Do We Go From Here?

# **Moving the Initiative Forward**



# Equity in Action

Economic Equity  
Direct Service

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Housing Equity  
Advocacy

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Information Equity  
Philanthropy

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Where We Are Now



## Gap Analysis

CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL EQUITY INITIATIVE

Where We Want To Be

### Launch of Regional Equity Study

- Report disseminated; regional data & equity framework published
- Website launched; presentations delivered; diverse stakeholders engaged; awareness & interest created
- Training & technical assistance requested; implementation questions raised
- Funding & sustainability needs identified

01.



### Build a CCREI Framework

02.

- Identify equity data and the framework for intersectional, intersectoral, and regional change to be implemented
- Identify system-based change processes
- Identify "readiness for change" best practice approaches
- Identify the role of narrative change in collective action



### 3-Year Strategic Action Plan

04.

- Create a regional, intersectional, & intersectoral strategic action plan for the Initiative, that is readiness-appropriate, specific, measurable, actionable, feasible, relevant, & timely
- Sustain implementation of the Initiative
- Develop methods for victories, goals & milestones to be achieved and celebrated
- Monitor and evaluate short-term and long-term Initiative-guided change

### Activate Change Champions from Diverse Sectors

03.

- Identify use & application of CCREI in their field/sector.
- Determine needs for further website & material development, to guide regional, intersectoral, & intersectional change
- Utilize strengths-based, collaborative, community-engaged process to determine readiness for multi-sector change & best-practice applications of Initiative framework



*"We envision the sweet honey of the Initiative's sustainability. The proof (of the SAP process) is in the honey!"*



## Strategic Action Planning

## 4 Pillars of Cross-Sector Collaboration

Information gathered from the 8/19/22 Working Group 1 (17 Change Champions representing 6 diverse sectors, divided into 4 breakout groups), 22 survey responses (completed 8/19-8/31), and 22 individual interviews (9/1/22 - 10/5/22) has yielded four pillars of cross-sector collaboration.

1

**Belonging: Trusting Cross-Sector Relationships**

*Psychological safety, communication agreements, & healthy boundaries are needed to reduce an "us vs. them" mindset, invite new authentic connections & strengthen existing connections*



2

**Mastery: Acknowledgement of Power & Privilege**

*Awareness, understanding, & naming of structural power imbalance across sectors, institutions, social locations, lived experience, & roles*



3

**Interdependence: Successful Reciprocal Collaboration**

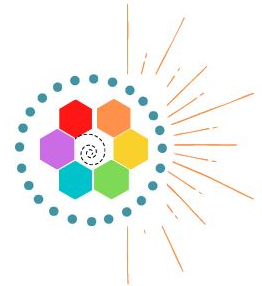
*Giving and receiving to build resource-sharing alliances, promote a "collective narrative", & catalyze grassroots alliances & organic organizing efforts*



4

**Generosity: Sustainable Resource Circulation**

*Circulating resources (time, funding, people, roles, skills, space, data) reliably & consistently to produce replicable data-driven actions that achieve measurable results*



[www.centralcoastequity.org](http://www.centralcoastequity.org)

