

EVERYONE WINS WHEN **EVERYONE IS COUNTED**



RURAL IMMIGRANT & MIGRANT FARMWORKER COMMUNITIES COUNT!



Photos from California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation 2017 Annual Report

Rural immigrant and migrant farmworker communities are vital to the success of California. Immigrant and migrant farmworkers work in the agricultural industry in rural areas.

California's rural communities are growing at a faster rate than the rest of the state. Central Valley rural communities are changing and growing at a faster rate than the rest of the state. The most significant change is occurring in the San Joaquin Valley, where Latinos have emerged as majorities in several counties (Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced and Tulare).¹

The Latino families in the San Joaquin Valley are young and with mixed status families. Latino families in rural California are less healthy, poorer, and face higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of education.²

Rural communities are identified as hard to count areas. Immigrant and migrant farmworkers are identified by the U.S. Census Bureau as hard to count populations. Farmworkers are at a high risk of being undercounted due to linguistic and cultural barriers, concentrated poverty, living in sub-standard housing, and limited access to internet connectivity. Hard to count farmworkers often don't know how to participate or understand the importance of the census.

Language access coupled with internet connectivity prohibit high response levels. The current political climate has resulted in widespread fear among immigrant & migrant farmworkers³ due to fear of retaliation, discrimination, profiling, and the mistrust of government in general.

High levels of concern exist about giving personal information to the federal government. The fear will continue into the 2020 Census count and suppress participation. Many farmworkers are indigenous to Mexico, where about 1/3 of farmworkers speak a language other than Spanish. The three most common indigenous languages are Mixtecto, Triqui, and Zapoteco.⁴

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

An undercount of California's rural immigrant and migrant farmworkers in the 2020 Census will have tremendous consequences for the State. In addition to addressing the linguistic and cultural barriers to census participation in rural communities, California should address the rising issues of mistrust in the confidentiality of Census responses. Achieving a fair, accurate count will require the State to invest resources in outreach to isolated and large geographic areas that include many mixed-status immigrant families and families affected by poverty. If the citizenship question is indeed added to the Census questionnaire form, residents need to be educated on their legal options for self-response and the current confidentiality protections codified by federal and state law.

Reliance on the internet as the preferred and primary response method will impede participation in the hardest to count rural areas. This will have an impact because of the digital divide and linguistic challenges of large Mexican and Indigenous populations. To mitigate this, the State will need to ensure residents in these communities know of all methods to respond.

California will need to invest more in community-based outreach to ensure a fair and accurate count of our rural communities.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS¹

- California should support articulated outreach and education strategies that are linguistically and culturally appropriate for rural immigrant & migrant communities focused on improving self-response, and to implement innovative strategies to address undercount causes during nonresponse follow-up.
- Residents need support to help them navigate the positive and negative risks of census participation.
- Community-based organizations as trusted messengers will need to have more than adequate resources to supplement and address cultural and linguistic issues beyond simply providing translation of information.
- Train community-based organizations, state and local governments, media and other messengers informing respondents about the implications of misrepresenting their citizenship status and legal consequences for undocumented and legal residents.
- Census promotion also needs to focus on the safety of responding to enumerators as well as the desirability of self-response.
- California should support the Language Access Plan as a vehicle for social justice and integration to address linguistic and cultural barriers for indigenous languages and ensure resources.
- California should work with community-based organizations and trusted messengers to plan post 2020 research to gain accurate measure of responses and evaluate the patterns of differential undercount in rural areas and hard to count diverse immigrant migrant populations.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Troubled Reflections: Latino Immigrants' Thinking About Census 2020: http://www.cirsinc.org/phocadownload/userupload/sjvcpr_troubled_reflections_final.pdf
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 University of New Hampshire, "2020 Census Faces Challenges in Rural America," Carsey Research, 2017;
- 4 Kissam, "Differential Undercount of Mexican Immigrant Families in the U.S. Census," *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*, 2017; Gabbard et al.,
- 5 "The Impact of Migrant Travel Patterns on the Undercount of Hispanic Farm Workers," 1993 Research Conference on Undercounted Ethnic Populations.

For more information about the Census Policy Advocacy Network, please contact CPAN@AdvanceProj.org or visit AdvancementProjectCA.org/CPAN