

AT RISK AND UNDER-PROTECTED:

CALIFORNIA IMMIGRANT LATINOS AND THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN LOW WAGE WORK

A presentation to the California Latino Caucus
Informational Briefing on Latinos, Work and COVID-19
November 18, 2020

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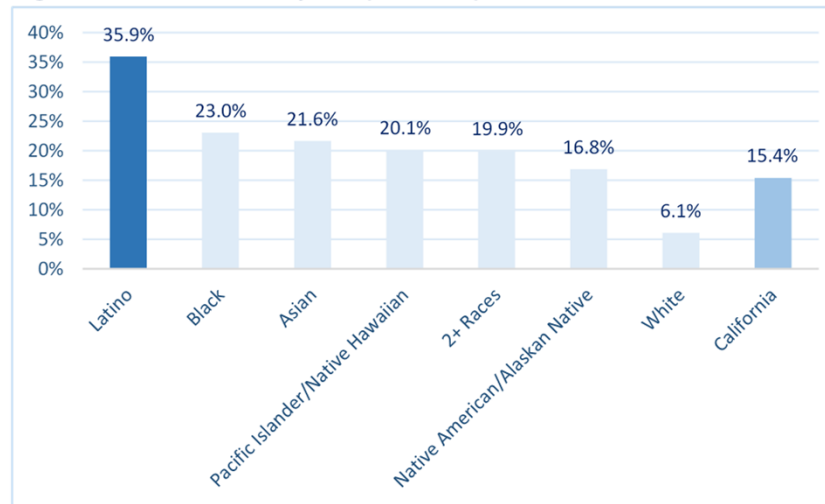
PURPOSE OF PRESENTATION

- Today we will share research that indicates the **need for a shift in public discourse** on COVID-19 policy. Key findings suggest that:
 - 1. The pandemic has led to many more **Latino deaths** than have been accounted for, particularly among **immigrants**.
 - 2. Latino **compliance** with **public health mandates** is **no different** than that of non-Latinos.
 - 3. **Stronger enforcement and education** around workplace rights and health and safety is vital for mitigating COVID-19 spread.

COVID-19 DEATHS

- In California, **Latinos** have experienced a greater increase in pandemic-era deaths than any other group.
- For Latinos there were **35.9% more deaths** in 2020 than in 2019. Whites had the lowest increase (6.1%).

Figure 1.1 Excess deaths, by race (California)

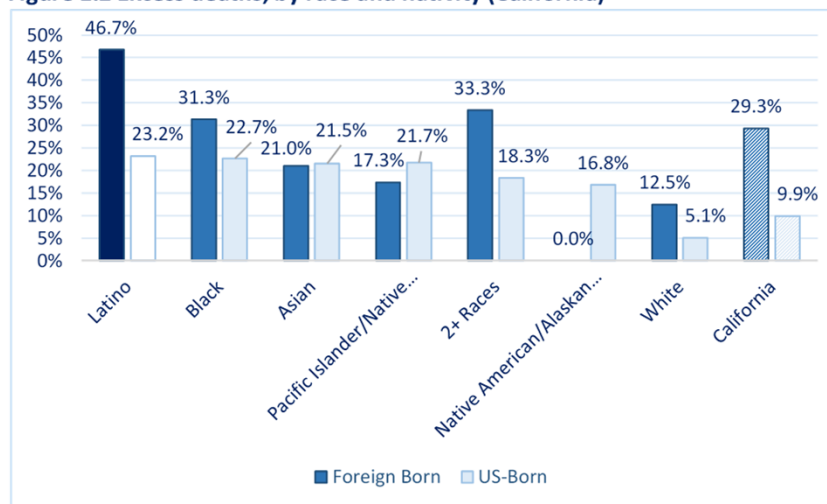


Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of California Department of Public Health California Vital data, March-August 2019-2020

COVID-19 DEATHS

- **Immigrant Latinos** experienced the greatest increases in deaths—despite average health.

Figure 1.2 Excess deaths, by race and nativity (California)

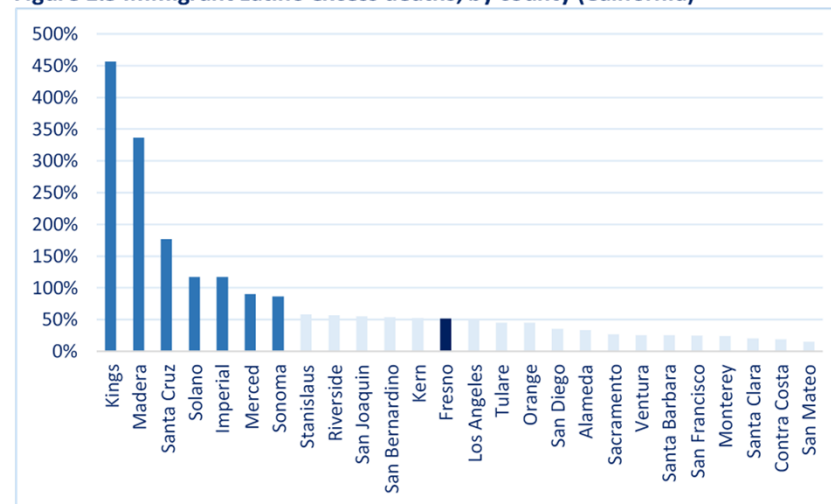


Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of California Department of Public Health California Vital Data, March-August 2019-2020

COVID-19 DEATHS

- **Fourteen counties** experienced an over **50% increase** in **immigrant Latino** deaths.

Figure 1.3 Immigrant Latino excess deaths, by county (California)



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of California Department of Public Health- California Vital Data, March-August 2019-2020

PUBLIC HEALTH BEHAVIOR

While efforts for mitigating the COVID-19 crisis have focused on education around **individual-level behavior** (e.g. mask-wearing, avoiding crowds, social distancing)...

The Coronavirus Outbreak > **LOVE** Latest Updates Maps and Cases Vaccine Tracker State Restrictions and Mask Mandates FAQ

CALIFORNIA TODAY

Helping California's Hard-Hit Central Valley

Tuesday: An announcement by Gov. Gavin Newsom signaled a shift in the state's fight against Covid-19. Also: Taking stock of protests.



By Jill Cowan

July 28, 2020



A garage was converted to house five farmworkers in Mendota. While their work is outside and dispersed, farmworkers often live in cramped quarters that could foster the spread of the coronavirus. Max Whittaker for The New York Times

PUBLIC HEALTH BEHAVIOR

UC Merced research has found **no evidence** that Latinos **do not follow** individual-level public health mandates.

Rather, Latinos are financially vulnerable and **work** in low-wage environments not conducive to public health mandates.

The Coronavirus Outbreak > **LOVE** Latest Updates Maps and Cases Vaccine Tracker State Restrictions and Mask Mandates FAQ

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PUBLIC HEALTH BEHAVIOR

Our Fresno Speaks study (Almeida et al. 2020) examined nearly 2,400 Fresno residents' experiences with COVID-19 and individual-level compliance with public health mandates.

Community and
Labor Center
at the University of California Merced

Research Brief
October 2020

Fresno Speaks 2020: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Registered Voters and their Positions on Major Issues

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This brief presents results from the largest random sample survey conducted in the City of Fresno since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic: the Fresno Speaks 2020 Survey.

Fresno is the fifth largest city in the state, and this study examines issues of health, well-being and safety. The study surveyed 2,397 registered voters with phones living in Fresno, from August to September 2020, on a range of community, health and safety issues concerning themselves and their households. We find high levels of job loss and reduced work hours among Fresno households—especially for low-income registered voters and non-whites.

The survey also found strong support for major policy reform. Most respondents (i.e. registered voters) supported public health behaviors mitigating COVID-19 spread; police reform; and investing in social programs, violence prevention and job opportunities.

Lastly, the survey examined Fresno registered voters' attitudes towards voting and participating in civic engagement, and

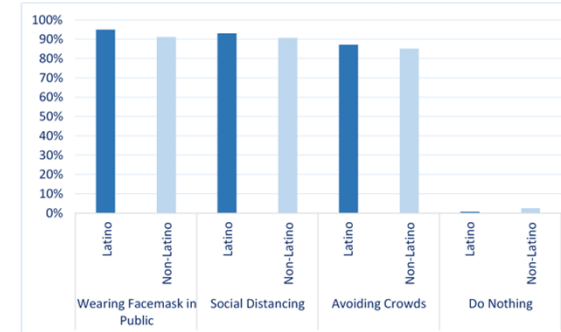
KEY FINDINGS

1. Between 85.6 to 92.0 percent of voters engage in public health behaviors mitigating spread of COVID-19.
2. Half (50%) of Fresno voter households experienced job loss or work hours reduced following the onset of the pandemic.
3. More Latina/o/xs (57.0%), African-American (54.6%) and Asian American (54.5%) households experienced income reduction than white households (42.0%).
4. Fresno registered voters expressed strong support for police reform. Most (77.9%) stated they would support elected officials who advocated for police reform. The most popular solutions to gangs were proactive, from providing jobs to people with records (30.4%) or youth (28.9%), to public social programs (18.4%).
5. Fresno registered voters also expressed strong support for policy reform through voting and grassroots civic participation. Support was strongest for addressing issues

PUBLIC HEALTH BEHAVIOR

Fresno Latinos' compliance with public health mandates was the same as that of other groups, between 86 and 92% (with a 95% confidence interval, and 2% margin of error).

Figure 2. Compliance with Public Health Mandates, by race



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center and Fresno County Civic Engagement Table- Fresno Speaks 2020 Survey

PUBLIC HEALTH BEHAVIOR

Rural immigrant Latinos experienced financial insecurity, worked in environments with unsafe practices, and said they **did not speak out due to fear of retaliation** (Young et al. 2020).

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
MERCED

October 21, 2020

The pandemic's financial toll on Latino immigrants in California's hardest-hit rural regions threatens their work, families, and health

Maria-Elena De Trinidad Young, Fabiola Perez-Lua, Hannah Samoff, Denise Diaz Payán, Sidra Goldman-Mellor

Rural Latino immigrants: A vital population

During the pandemic, Latino immigrants in the San Joaquin and Imperial Valleys have continued to provide essential services in communities confronting the state's highest SARS-COV-2 infection rates.¹ A majority of California's agricultural workforce in these rural regions are Latino immigrants who help supply the nation's food – including over a third of vegetables and two-thirds of fruits and nuts grown in the U.S.² Latino immigrants also account for a high percentage of service sector employees, such as domestic and home health workers. Although these sectors have been deemed essential during the pandemic, there have been few targeted policies to protect workers, their families, or their communities.

This research brief describes the financial insecurity that Latino immigrants in rural California are encountering during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic continues, Latino immigrants living in regions such as the San Joaquin and Imperial Valleys are incurring new costs as they actively engage in preventive measures, such as using personal protective equipment (PPE) and sheltering in place, and continue to provide essential services with limited to no workplace protections. Moreover, parents have faced the added burden of having to implement remote education for their children with limited affordable broadband internet services available in rural areas. Policy responses are needed to prevent adverse health and economic outcomes for a population that is vital to the nation's economy and well-being.

Policy actions needed to protect rural Latino immigrants

- **Prioritize** income support – regardless of legal status – to alleviate financial stress.
- **Mandate** workplaces adhere to COVID-19 safety guidelines.
- **Alleviate** household expenses through programs such as rent moratoriums and utility payment support.
- **Provide** free broadband internet services to rural communities.

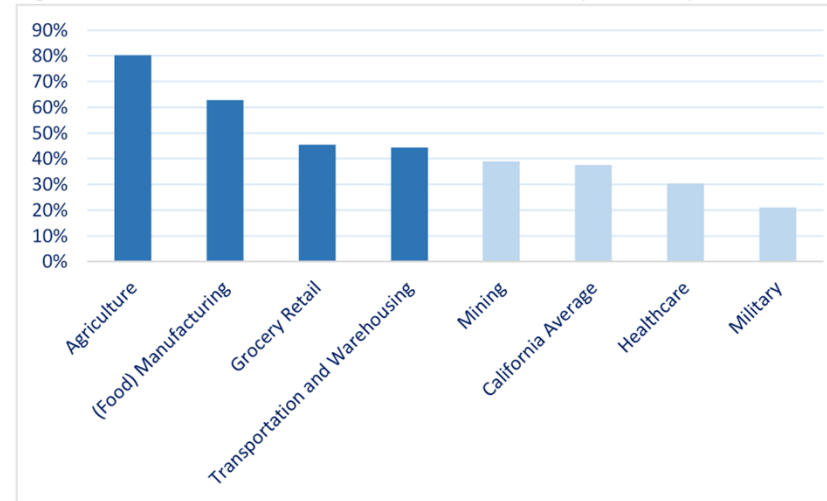


¹ California Covid-19 and Case Count (2020, October 20). Retrieved from The New York Times

FRONTLINE ESSENTIAL WORK

- California Latinos comprise a large proportion of the **essential jobs not conducive to social distancing**—especially food chain jobs.
- Across the US, **only 16.2%** of Latinos are able to **work from home**—the lowest rate of any group (EPI, 2020).

Figure 3. Percent of Essential Industries that is Latino (California)



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2014-2018 Public Use Microdata (PUMS) data

FRONTLINE ESSENTIAL WORK

- **Agricultural and food processing** workers have a uniquely disadvantaged profile.
- Agricultural and food processing workers have high rates of being **immigrant, non-citizen**, earning **low wages**, and living in **large** or **multiple family** households.

Table 1. Characteristics of Farmworker Households (versus all others), California only

		Ag worker	Food proc	All other
<i>Demographics</i>	Latino	94.1%	63.1%	37.2%
	Immigrant	78.8%	50.5%	33.6%
	Non-citizen	66.4%	31.0%	14.9%
<i>Earnings</i>	Median salary and wages	\$21,005	\$32,316	\$40,394
<i>Household Size</i>	Persons per household	4.3	3.9	2.7
	Subfamily rate (per 100 households)	23.0	23.0	9.0
<i>Household Structure</i>	% of single adult households	7.1%	4.9%	15.0%
	Adults per household	2.9	3.0	2.1
	% of households with 1+ child	62.3%	47.8%	32.5%
	% of households with 2+ children	44.0%	29.5%	18.7%
	Children per household	1.4	1.0	0.6
<i>Worker Households</i>	% of households with 2+ workers	62.8%	65.9%	39.4%
	Employees per household	2.0	2.0	1.3
	Total number of households	175,669	184,169	12,802,904

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS- American Community Survey 2019 data

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

The profile of disadvantaged immigrant workers in essential frontline industries leaves them **vulnerable** to workplace health and safety non-compliance.

Prior to the pandemic, some **industries** already had a long track record of workplace health and safety **non-compliance** (Padilla and Flores 2020).

This is especially true in the Central Valley's **meatpacking** industry.

Community and
Labor Center
at the University of California Merced

Policy Brief
August 2020

Manufacturing Risk: A Regional Analysis of Workplace Compliance in California's Meatpacking and Processing Industries¹

By Ana Padilla, Edward Orozco Flores²

SUMMARY

California's meatpacking and processing industries exhibit major regional disparities in inspections per 1,000 workers and violations per inspections. In this brief, we examine US Census Bureau- American Community Survey 2014-2018 data and US Department of Labor- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 2015-2020 data. We find that the Central Valley has the state's highest rates of inspections per 1,000 employees, and two-thirds of the state's unplanned (accident, complaint or whistleblower-based) inspections—but also the second-lowest rate of violations per inspection. We suggest that high unplanned inspections and low violations may indicate a lack of agency enforcement and business compliance, and the region's recent COVID-19 outbreaks in animal slaughter and processing may be linked to broader trends in lack of workplace health and safety enforcement. We recommend policy reform that sets a standard for workplace health and safety standards across all regions.

FINDINGS

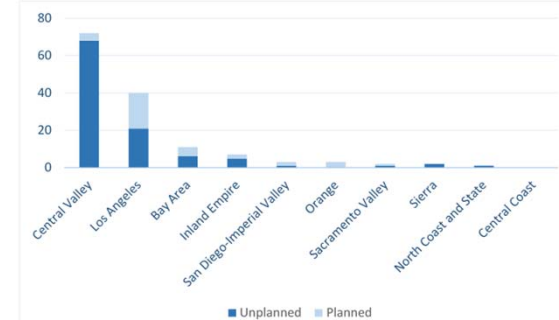
The Central Valley has not only more animal slaughtering and processing industry jobs than any other California region—its higher rates of unplanned (e.g. accident, complaint and referral) investigations and low rates of violations-per-inspection suggest greater health and safety non-compliance.

We examined US Census Bureau- American Community Survey data from 2014-2018 to generate an estimate of the number of workers in California's animal slaughter and processing industry. For this we selected North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 3116, "animal slaughtering and processing," and weighted estimates for all persons employed in this industry. We also examined US Department of Labor- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) records from July 11, 2015 to July 10, 2020. We drew upon "closed" cases from these OSHA records, not currently open, ongoing investigations.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Across the last five years, the Central Valley's meatpacking industry has accounted for **two of every three** (68 of 105, or 64.8%) of the state's inspections related to **meatpacking accidents, complaints or whistleblower-related investigations** (Padilla and Flores 2020).

Figure 2. Unplanned versus Planned Inspections, Animal Slaughtering and Processing Industry (California only)

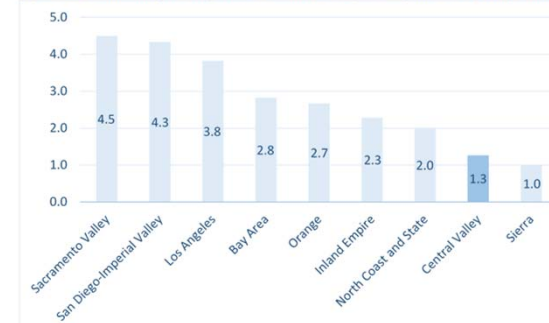


Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of US Department of Labor- Occupational Safety and Health Administration 2015-2020 data

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

At the same time, the Central Valley's meatpacking industry has had nearly the **lowest rate of violations** issued per inspection in the state—suggesting a greater need for enforcement (Padilla and Flores 2020).

Figure 3. Violations per Inspection, Animal Slaughtering and Processing Industry (California only)



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of US Department of Labor- Occupational Safety and Health Administration 2015-2020 data

LOCAL OUTBREAKS

- **Non-compliance** with workplace health and safety measures has seeded some of the state's **largest COVID-19 outbreaks** in agriculture and meatpacking.
- In early May, an outbreak in Kings County-based Central Valley Meat Company accounted for **virtually all** of the county's **hundreds** of COVID-19 cases (Bolanos 2020).

The screenshot shows the NPR for Central California website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'News', 'Music', 'Entertainment', 'Membership & Events', 'About', 'Connect', 'Calendar', and 'Search'. A 'DONATE' button is in the top right. Below the navigation bar, the article title 'Kings County COVID-19 Spike Is Due To Meat Packing Facility in Hanford' is prominently displayed. The author is listed as 'By MARI BERLANOS' and the date as 'MAY 6, 2020'. To the left of the main image, there are social media sharing options for Facebook, Twitter, and Email. The main image shows a meatpacking facility with workers in white protective suits and masks. Below the image, there's a 'Listen' button with a play icon and a duration of 3:22. The text of the article begins with 'Rural Kings County has seen a large spike in COVID-19 cases over the last two weeks. The majority of those cases can be traced back to the Central Valley Meat Company in Hanford.' and continues with 'As of Wednesday, Kings County reported 211 cases of the coronavirus; 138 of them are connected to the meat packing facility, which is still operating. County'.

NPR for Central California

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Kings County COVID-19 Spike Is Due To Meat Packing Facility in Hanford

By MARI BERLANOS • MAY 6, 2020

Photo: Valley Public Radio News

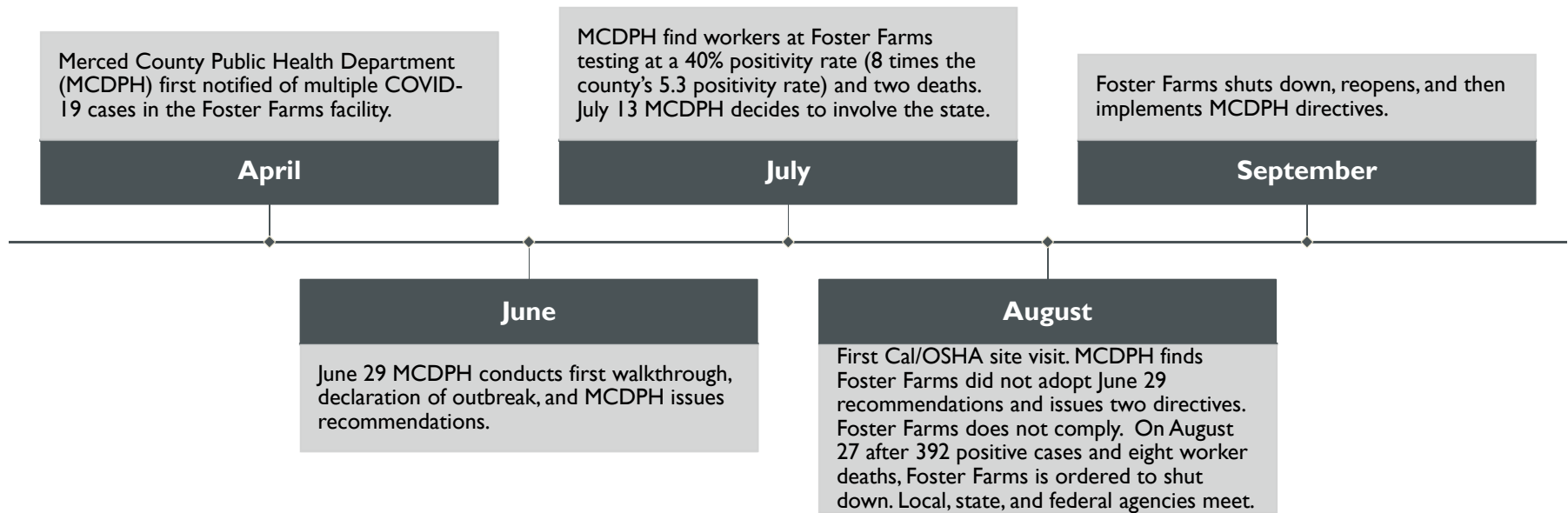
Share
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Listen
3:22

[Listen to the story here.](#)

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As of Wednesday, Kings County reported 211 cases of the coronavirus; 138 of them are connected to the meat packing facility, which is still operating. County



FOSTER FARMS LIVINGSTON OUTBREAK

CONCLUSION

- In **conclusion**, we find that:
- **First**, California **immigrant Latinos** have had far greater COVID-19 era **increases in death** than any other group.
- **Second**, California **Latino deaths** are not due to lack of **individual-level compliance** with public health mandates.
- **Third, industries** with low-wage, immigrant Latino workers have a long track record of health and safety **non-compliance**—and such industries are now at greater risk of COVID-19 spread.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- We **recommend**:
- **First, education** efforts need to focus on **workplace-related** behavior, such as workplace health and safety education, **worker rights** trainings, and the use of compliance-related **mechanisms**.
- **Second, stronger enforcement** around workplace health and safety standards, as well as **inter-agency** collaboration.

APPENDIX A

- Our July 2020 brief, *Hidden Threat*, found that county-level COVID-19 positivity rates were correlated with a prevalence of large and low-wage households.

Community and
Labor Center
at the University of California Merced

Policy Brief
July 2020

Hidden Threat: California COVID-19 Surges and Worker Distress

By Edward Orozco Flores, Ana Padilla¹

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Low-wage work is associated with the spread of COVID-19, and to mitigate COVID-19 spread it is not enough to simply regulate business openings and public gatherings—policymakers must also innovate health and safety reforms focused on the workplace and provide a greater safety net for workers.

Our analysis examines the relationship between low-wage work (“worker distress”) and recent county-level COVID-19 positive test rates. We find a strong relationship between low-wage work and COVID-19 positivity, and identify those industries with the greatest prevalence of low-wage work. Lastly, we estimate the number of private sector workers in firms exempted from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act’s (FFCRA) paid leave provisions, by industry.

We recommend reporting COVID-19 positivity by industry; improved workplace health and safety standards mitigating the spread of COVID-19; and a greater safety net for low-wage workers unable to access traditional unemployment benefits, paid sick or family leave, or health insurance.

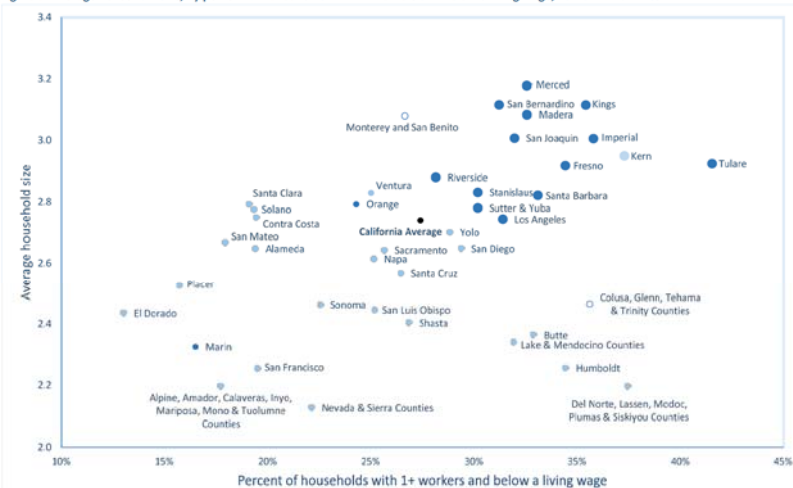
KEY FINDINGS

1. Eighteen of California’s fifty-eight counties had COVID-19 positive test rates above 8%, as of July 12, 2020.²
2. Most counties (93%) with high worker distress were on the state’s COVID-19 watchlist with positivity rates above 8%. These counties were: Imperial, Stanislaus, Merced, Tulare, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, Madera, Kings, Fresno, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, Yuba and Sutter.
3. Most counties (95%) with low worker distress were marked by low COVID-19 positivity. Only 2 of 37 counties with low worker distress had rates above 8%.
4. The relationship between worker distress and COVID-19 positivity was constant across rural, suburban, and urban regions.
5. Worker distress was highest in agriculture, accommodations and food services, administrative and support and waste management, transportation and warehousing, and retail. Additionally, most workers lack federal emergency paid leave.

APPENDIX A

- Nearly all (14 of 15) counties with a high prevalence of large and low-wage households had positivity rates above 8%, and virtually no (2 of 37) other California counties had positivity rates above 8%.

Figure 3. Average household size, by percent of households with 1+ workers and below a living wage, California counties



Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of IPUMS-USA American Community Survey 2018 PUMS data

Note: Large dots (any color) = counties above California average in both average household size and worker households below a living wage

Note: Dark blue dots (any size) = counties with COVID-19 positivity rates exceeding the state threshold (>8%)

Note: White dots (any size) = some counties with COVID-19 positivity rates exceeding the state threshold (>8%)