



CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY

June 2006

➤ **The Central Valley is one of the fastest growing regions of California.**

During the past 10 years, the Central Valley has gained more than one million new residents. By 2005, its population reached 6.5 million, more than the population of 38 states. The California Department of Finance projects that by 2040 the valley will be home to almost 12 million people.

➤ **Migration is the leading source of population growth in the valley.**

Since 1970, over half (59%) of the valley's growth has been due to migration, with the remainder due to natural increase (the excess of births over deaths). In the 2000s, migration has been even more important, accounting for two-thirds of population growth in the valley. Most of the migrants are from other parts of California. Jobs, housing, and family are the primary reasons for migrating to the valley.

➤ **The population is not distributed evenly across the Central Valley.**

The Central Valley has four distinct subregions: the relatively sparsely populated Upper Sacramento Valley with 668,000 people, the Sacramento metropolitan area with 2.1 million people, the North San Joaquin Valley with 1.4 million people, and the South San Joaquin Valley with 2.4 million people.

➤ **Central Valley residents are ethnically diverse.**

The valley is home to a variety of ethnic groups: Non-Hispanic whites accounted for just over half of the valley's population in 2004, and Latinos were the largest minority group (32%). However, ethnic compositions vary across subregions: No one group composes a majority of the population in the San Joaquin Valley, but non-Hispanic whites make up over 60 percent of Sacramento Metro's population and over 70 percent of the Upper Sacramento Valley's. Latinos are the largest ethnic group in the South San Joaquin Valley (46%).

➤ **Most regions of the valley have high poverty rates.**

Outside of the Sacramento Metro region with its relatively low poverty rate (8 percent), about one in five valley residents lives in poverty, compared to 13 percent in the rest of the state.

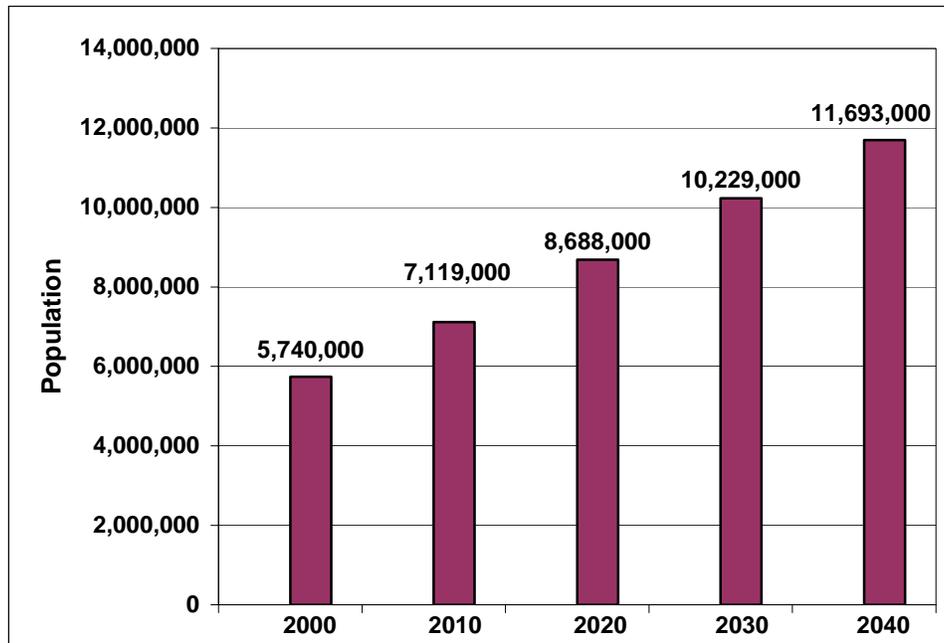
➤ **Education levels are lower in the valley than in the rest of the state.**

Except in the Sacramento metropolitan area, educational attainment levels are low in the valley. In 2000, only 14 percent of San Joaquin Valley adults (age 25 and older) were college graduates, compared to 28 percent in the rest of the state. The South San Joaquin Valley loses college graduates to the rest of the state while the Sacramento Metro region attracts college graduates.

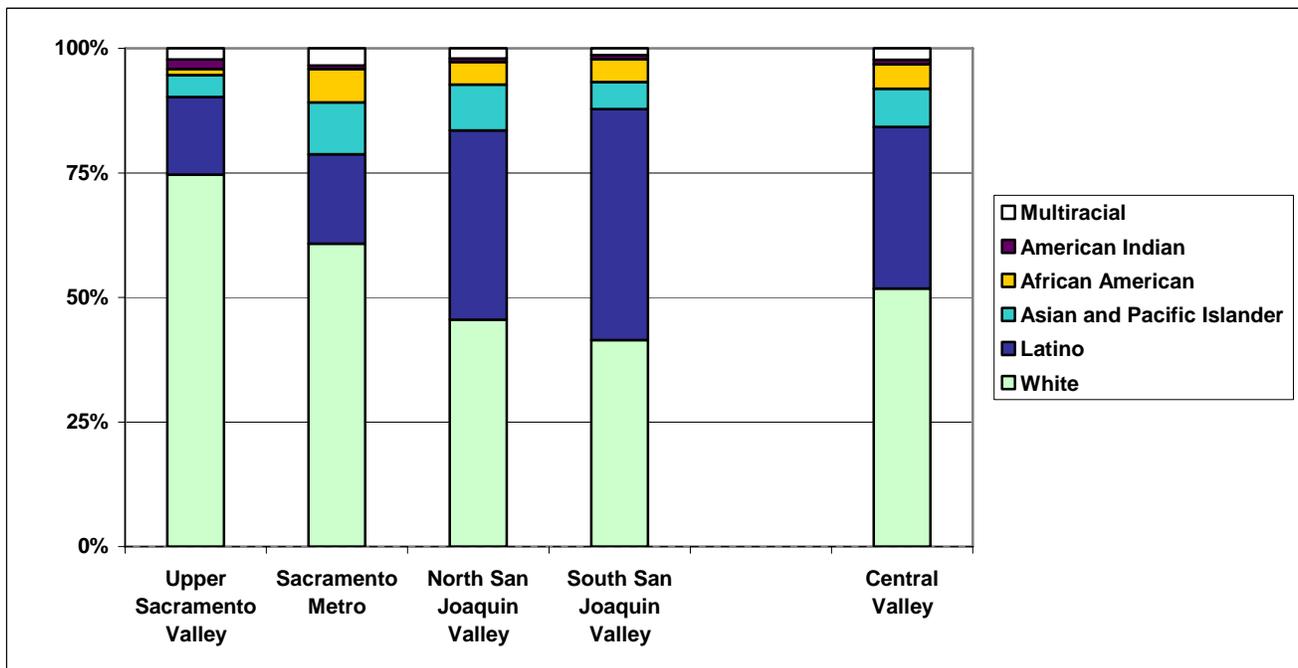
➤ **Valley voters are more politically conservative than other Californians.**

Republicans outnumber Democrats in the valley: 43 percent of registered voters are Republicans and 38 percent are Democrats. In the 2004 presidential election, majorities of voters in the Central Valley favored Bush over Kerry, while a majority in the rest of the state favored Kerry over Bush. In the May 2006 PPIC Statewide Survey, valley voters also distinguished themselves from the rest of the state by being twice as likely to describe themselves as conservative (42%) than liberal (20%), while 37 percent are moderates. Valley voters are more likely to approve (49%) than disapprove (41%) of the job performance of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Population Projections for the Central Valley



Ethnic Composition of the Central Valley, 2004



Sources: PPIC Statewide and Central Valley Surveys, California Department of Finance, U.S. Census Bureau.