

RESEARCH REPORT

# Changing Landscapes for Black Californians

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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Changing Landscapes for Black Californians</b>	<b>1</b>
Southern California Case Study	1
Policy and Programmatic Consideration	16
Central California Case Study	19
Policy and Programmatic Consideration	32
Northern California Case Study	34
Policy and Programmatic Consideration	51
In Closing	53
<b>Notes</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>About the Authors</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Statement of Independence</b>	<b>62</b>

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# Executive Summary

**The United States is experiencing a period of significant Black migratory behavior. The country's story of the last 30 years has been that of reverse migration for Black Americans, largely leaving the northern and western urban enclaves of their elders and heading southward. This reversal, commonly termed the 'New Great Migration,' has spurred the largest growth in Black population in cities across Texas, Florida, North Carolina, and Georgia.<sup>1</sup>**

However, not all Black relocation has been across state lines. Within-state migration has also experienced an upswing. Over the last decade, several factors have contributed to many Black residents relocating from urban epicenters to the suburbs of metropolitan areas and to smaller, less dense, less populous cities. This has been the reality of many Black Californians: as the Black populations of San Francisco and Alameda counties drop, those of Contra Costa and Sacramento rise; as Los Angeles sees its share of Black residents decline, neighboring Riverside and San Bernardino shares increase.

Factors shaping these movement patterns are varied in nature. Some, those most frequently highlighted in media and research outlets,<sup>2</sup> relate to influences of force. For example, we are in an era of rapid gentrification, and its resultant displacement has hit several of California's low-income residents and communities of color—not to conflate the two—particularly hard.<sup>3</sup> Through a combination of land-use forces and underregulated housing market factors, many Black Californians are being priced out of their current homes or are seeing their range of housing choices shrink. Moreover, spiked inflation and rolling layoffs<sup>4</sup> paired with slow to unmoving salaries has resulted in crippling unaffordability in many cities. Evidence of this unaffordability is offered by the volume of Californians currently at risk of being evicted or who have experienced eviction in recent years; this cohort is disproportionately comprised of Black residents.<sup>5</sup>

Other movement factors relate to circumstances more broadly. The COVID-19 pandemic has left lasting changes on our geographical needs. Work-from-home affordances have encouraged some people to leave urban environments in favor of decentralized living, better performing school districts, and enhanced access to nature. And while Black and Latinx workers are far less likely than workers of other races to be able to telework,<sup>6</sup> some are and have adopted similar relocation behavior as their remote-working, non-Black peers.<sup>7</sup>

Less regularly spotlighted are the desire-, or choice-based factors that shape the decision to relocate for Black Californians. Some are choosing to establish new roots in places where their voices

are welcome and elevated. Take for example Dr. Corey A. Jackson, who in 2022, became the first Black representative elected to California State Legislature from Riverside County after relocating to Moreno Valley in Southern California—a place he felt supported his drive to contribute to and shape communities of faith, youth education, organizing power, and public safety.<sup>8</sup> While others are following the bells of opportunity, like Melanie Glass, who moved to Fresno in Central California to start her own art gallery with the help of Black-owned small business support programs offered by the Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce.<sup>9</sup> Fresno was recently ranked by *JobSage* as one of the nation’s top 10 best cities for entrepreneurs of color with 38 percent of its start-ups being minority owned (compare that to just 19 percent of start-ups nationwide).<sup>10</sup>

Then there are others who may be looking to build on the successful placemaking of other minority groups. For example, the surge in Black population experienced by Elk Grove in Northern California comes on the heels of a previous decade of steadily growing Asian and Latinx populations in the city.<sup>11</sup> Elk Grove’s demonstrated valuing of diversity—further evinced by its establishment of a Diversity and Inclusion Commission within City Government and its official “No Place for Hate” Proclamation<sup>12</sup>—may be a risk mitigation factor that Black Californians are drawn to as they make home location decisions. All of these factors—those of force, circumstance, and choice – have contributed to within-state Black migratory patterns of the last several years.

But what does this movement mean for Black Californian quality-of-life? The answer is: many things, some good and some worrisome. On the upside, migration is allowing some Black residents to price into homeownership. For some, relocating has meant the difference between just making rent in an expensive area and being able to own a home in a less expensive one. Even for those for whom homeownership remains out of reach, relocating can mean a decrease in housing cost burden, which is correlated with a slew of positive mental, physical, and social health benefits.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Black Californians have particularly high voter turnout rates.<sup>14</sup> As a result, influxes of new Black residents could mean a surge in new voting block power, especially on matters related to funding social services as the majority of Black voters vote in alignment with Democratic platforms (White and Laird 2020).

On the downside, relocating can result in a lost sense of community both for the parties that leave and for those that remain in place.<sup>15</sup> Suburbanized living styles typically increase transportation costs: time costs—which speaks to the growing prevalence of ‘super commuting’ among Black communities across the state (Balderrama 2021), financial cost, and environmental cost. Furthermore, in California, the typical pattern of out-flow from urban centers generally means a move inland, away from the coast. In most cases, this is connected to a decreased access to healthy living elements like parks and green space, walkable neighborhoods, and plentiful fresh grocers. It is also associated with decreased access

to public services and job opportunities (BARHII 2022) as well as perceived erosion of Black political power in the state’s most populous urban centers.<sup>16</sup> Finally, a surge of comparatively wealthy newcomers can drive up rents for existing residents. Evidence of this has already begun to surface.<sup>17</sup>

To best be able to harness opportunities, lessen burdens, expand spheres of choice, and support the creation of communities of belonging, policy shapers need to gain a rich understanding of the landscape of this period of Black migration in California. The case studies in this report seek to contribute to exactly that by looking at patterns of change over time in data related to the topics in box 1. These patterns have been made comparable across geographies and across Black and non-Black populations.

**BOX 1**

**Focal Topics of Case Studies**

Data analysis is related to elements of place, space, and means.

- |                          |                                |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ▪ Rents and sale prices  | ▪ Mortality                    |
| ▪ Housing cost burden    | ▪ Hate crimes and use of force |
| ▪ Income                 | ▪ Poverty                      |
| ▪ SNAP benefits          | ▪ Unemployment                 |
| ▪ Education attainment   | ▪ Transportation               |
| ▪ Obesity and inactivity | ▪ Access to parks              |

**Source:** Author’s compilation.

Zooming in on several county- and city-level municipalities in Southern, Central, and Northern California where Black residents are moving to/ relocating from, we unveil several high-level themes:

1. Black Californians, in general, are moving into areas with lower average housing costs. While this may elevate the housing choice power of Black newcomers, it may increase housing pressures among existing Black residents in these municipalities.
2. Areas with growing Black populations are largely typified by higher rates of obesity and inactivity, higher poverty and unemployment rates, and have lower levels of education attainment than the areas from which Black Californians are relocating. While this may paint a grim picture on the surface, this speaks to the fact that this moment could be catalytic for receiving communities: new Black residents may bring with them greater demands of school

boards, new sources of tax revenue, new values of activity, and they may create new jobs as they open new businesses.

3. Areas seeing surges in their Black populations also generally have fewer incidences of use of force by law enforcement and fewer anti-Black hate crimes than areas losing Black population. As Black Californians move into places where they are less likely to be targeted or abused, actions should be taken to ensure that that reality continues to be the case, and that Black public safety remains a priority in places when migrating Black Californians are settling.

These themes host implications related, though not exclusively, to the following set of **policy considerations and recommendations**.

#### AT THE STATE LEVEL

**Establish virtuous cycle of development by supporting Black developers and Black-led community-based organizations.** This cycle of development could be achieved via dedicated state-level funding, for example, a California Black Housing and Community Fund, across three interrelated investment areas:

- » **Project development** to increase housing access for Black families and support Black-led developers to bring “brick and mortar” projects to fruition.
- » **Organizational capacity building** to strengthen the ability of Black-led organizations to deliver projects and services.
- » **Community planning** to envision future projects, especially in parts of the state that are experiencing a growing Black population.

#### AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

**Focus on health.** Park and green space accessibility is low overall across the three regions and unevenly spatially distributed within each:

- » **Setting regional green space/infrastructure targets.** While park access is poorly distributed, several regions as a whole features large, ecologically diverse green space. Collective contributions to linear parks for walking and cycling that connect the area’s many state and regional parks as well as national forests and nature reserves would contribute to overall health by tackling high obesity and inactivity rates, poor air quality, and intense single-occupancy vehicle dependence. Hiring locally for construction efforts could also help to mitigate high unemployment rates.



**Establish strong(er) oversight authorities.** Incidences of police use of force as well as accounts of anti-Black hate crimes are particularly high in certain regions across the state:

- » [Establishing external \(auditor\) police oversight committees.](#) At the regional level, these oversight committees may better protect Black Californians as they cross municipal lines than doing so at the local or county levels.

**Minimize heightened transportation cost burdens.** An increasing share of transit ridership across the state identify as Black. As Black residents continue to relocate to less centralized areas, transit costs and travel times for these residents can increase:

- » [Offering new transit fare products.](#) To best meet the changes in resultant travel needs may call for the creation of new payment and discount offerings for transit riders.

## AT THE COUNTY LEVEL

**Support housing cost relief efforts.** Due to the prolonged effects of COVID-19, many residents experience increased housing insecurity and cost burdens placed on them:

- » [Continuing to provide Emergency Rental Assistance support.](#) Programs designed to combat the pandemic's impact need ongoing reinforcement, as many households have not returned to their pre-pandemic levels of housing security.
- » [Reinstating eviction moratoriums.](#) These include rent holds as well as provision of legal representation in eviction cases. As the workforce has yet to bounce back from the pandemic, the need for these protections has not dissipated.

**Facilitate Black homeownership.** Renters, particularly Black renters, who are disproportionately housing cost burdened across the state, may find that home ownership, which they were priced out of or discriminatorily barred from in their previous place of residence, is well within reach in their new one:

- » [Assisting Black renters to become homeowners by:](#)
  - providing property tax relief
  - re-examining the ways borrowers qualify for mortgages and revamp the process to assess creditworthiness more precisely and inclusively
  - improving and expanding financial education and homeownership preparation
  - increasing the visibility, access, and types of down payment assistance programs
  - expanding financing options for different types of creditworthy borrowers
  - implementing programs that sustain homeownership for low-wealth borrowers

**Foster a sustainable workforce.** Certain counties have particularly high rates of both poverty and unemployment:

- » [Strengthening local workforce systems](#). This leverages resources distributed at the county level by both state and federal programs to expand employment opportunities, support career advancement, and streamline the training to employment pipeline for residents.

**Incentivize wellness and combine it with systems of learning.** Black health and Black education attainment indicators are comparatively low in many municipalities with new influxes of Black residents:

- » [More closely wedding the policy areas of health and education](#) include:
  - safe routes to school (bicycle infrastructure)
  - schools that can financially incentivize students (varied schooling levels) to walk or take sustainable/healthful modes to school.
  - work-partnership benefit packages (transit/walk/bike incentivization)

**Commit to poverty alleviation and wealth creation.** Though poverty rates among the broader US Black population are on the decline, Black poverty rates in some California municipalities are increasing rapidly.<sup>18</sup> Continued and new resources should be dedicated to easing the contributory pressures to poverty. Especially those that disproportionately impact Black households.

- » [Focusing on resources to ease the pressures contributing to poverty](#) include, but are not limited to:
  - child care assistance
  - pre-apprentice and apprenticeship program funding
  - tax credits (for example, education, energy, housing)
  - pay equity (nationally, Black women earn 63 cents to every \$1 earned by white men)

## AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

**Decrease housing market demand pressures:**

- » [Legalizing accessory dwelling units](#) can be an effective means of increasing housing supply and diversifying housing typology to meet varied family/household needs.
- » [Allocating public land for affordable housing](#) can be an effective way to minimize barrier costs to development for non-commercial, nonmarket rate, and/or nonmixed-use projects.

**Institutionalize ongoing strategy sharing platforms for peer learning across municipalities.** There are practices regarding education and poverty alleviation in particular that some municipalities across the state have found particularly impactful and can coach others on:

- » [Sharing strategies from other jurisdictions experiencing success.](#) For example, Brentwood has a near 100 percent high school degree attainment rate among its Black population (98 percent). It also has, compared to over cities in the region, a low Black poverty rate (4 percent).
- » [Establishing systems of ongoing peer learning.](#) This may call for data sharing and regular convening.

**Strengthen housing market regulations.** Rents in some cities are rising fast with many jurisdictions seeing annual increases of over 10 percent. Relatedly, eviction rates in the region are comparatively high (in relation to rates of other regions across the state):

- » [Getting ahead of this concerning trend](#), it may be wise to implement more stringent rent control policies:
  - rent stabilization
  - rent caps
  - tenant protections

The specifics of which policy considerations are most directly applicable where, evidence of why, and a more detailed policy discussion can be found in each region-specific section of this report.

A final key takeaway comes by way of this work's limitations. This research was intentional in its focus on readily available, standardized, uniformly collected data. This resulted in heavy dependence on the Census. This choice was made in part because it allowed for appropriate comparison across time and geography without fear of mistreatment of the data and in part to demonstrate to policy stakeholders that a means by which to measure quality-of-life delineated by race is indeed highly accessible. However, the data presented here fall short of painting the full picture of Black quality-of-life across California. Other metrics—for example those proposed by Diener and Suh (1997) that span “normative ideals, subjective well-being, and one’s ability to meet one’s own desires”—have just as important policy implications as measures of unemployment rates and housing cost burdens. The absence of these additional indicators from this report speaks to their unavailability and/or inconsistency across data providers. Because what gets measured gets improved, California would likely benefit from conducting its own statewide quality-of-life census at a regular cadence that features questions delineated by race and designed to complement those already present in the national census. The painting of a fuller picture can be made possible.



# Changing Landscapes for Black Californians

## Southern California Case Study

This case study provides an overview of demographic, population, and social indicator data for Southern California with a focus on counties that have experienced notable change, both in an increasing and decreasing direction, in Black population between 1990 and 2021. While Los Angeles County saw sizable decreases in its Black population, Riverside County and San Bernardino had significant increases. More narrowly, this case study also looks at city-level data for several localities in the region that experienced the greatest increase in Black population over the focal three-decade span. These localities include Lancaster, Victorville, and Moreno Valley (figure 1).

### Brief Region Overview

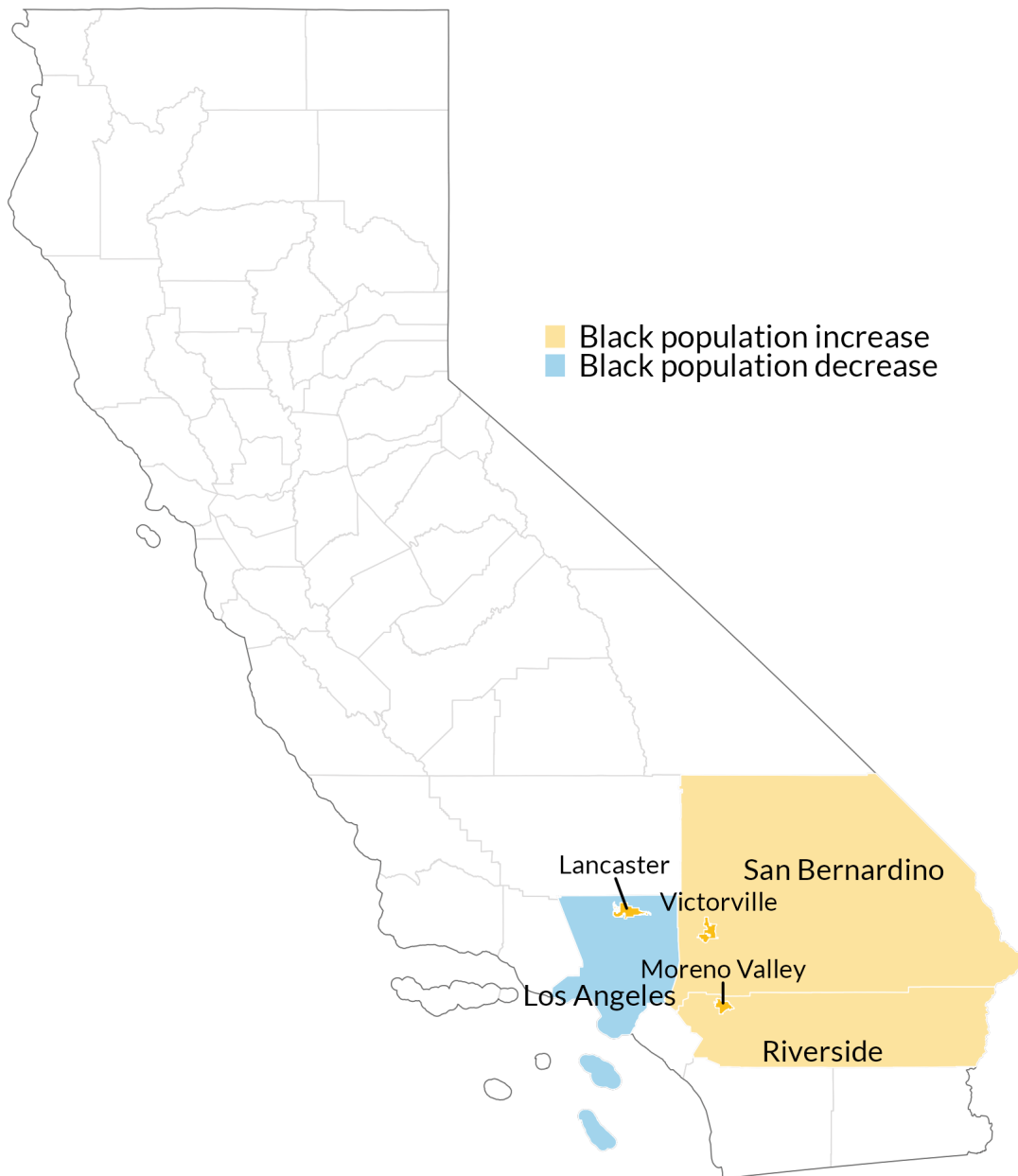
Bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west and California's desert region to the east, Southern California is both geographically and economically diverse. Southern California is the most populous region in California—hosting the state's largest metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, the Inland Empire, and San Diego—and has experienced significant economic growth, outpacing national growth rates for the past two decades. **In 2021, its gross domestic product (GDP) totaled \$1.6 trillion. At this scale, Southern California would be the 13th largest economy in the world, if it were its own county.**<sup>19</sup>

Alongside these patterns of economic growth, the region has seen increased housing pressures and skyrocketing costs of living.<sup>20</sup> Many of these difficulties have been felt disproportionately poignantly by the region's Black communities. Financial hardships as well as loss of neighborhood identity and sense of belonging—largely in part due to gentrification—have motivated many Black residents to relocate. The data presented within this case study aims to describe some of the demographic, socioeconomic, health and education related, housing-centric, and transportation changes across the region that have taken place over the last three decades. Black outcomes and conditions are compared both within and across jurisdictions. They are framed against non-Black trends, total population trends, and against themselves across municipal borders. This case study serves to better understand resident movement within Southern California for policymakers, as well as current and would-be residents alike.

**FIGURE 1**

**Focal Municipalities for Southern California**

*State of California by county geography*



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Source: 1990 Decennial Census and 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

## Sample of Counties in Southern California with Black Population Decrease

From 1990 to 2021, the population increased in Los Angeles County by 13.5 percent totaling over 10 million residents. Over this same time period, the county's Black population dropped by nearly 20 percent (table 1). Taken in tandem, these changes reflect an overall decreased share of the total population represented by Black residents of 3 percent.

TABLE 1

### Population Changes Over Time Where Black Population Decreased: Los Angeles County

	1990	2021	1990 to 2021
Total population	8,863,164	10,019,635	+13.5%
Black population	992,972	795,213	-19.9%
Black share of total population	11.2%	7.9%	-3.3%

Source: 1990 Decennial Census and 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California.

TABLE 2

### 2021 Socioeconomic Indicators

	Median household income	Share of non-Black population in poverty	Black median household income	Share of Black population in poverty
Los Angeles County	\$76,367	13.3%	\$54,241	20.0%

Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California.

At 20 percent of the total Black population, the poverty rate among Black county residents is 6.7 percent higher than it is across the total population who do not identify as Black. Median household income is about \$22,000, that is, 29 percent lower for Black Los Angeles County residents than across the county population as a whole (table 2).

TABLE 3

### 2021 Housing Indicators

	Owner cost burden non-Black population	Renter cost burden non-Black population	Black owner cost burden	Black renter cost burden
Los Angeles County	34.1%	54.3%	41.1%	62.4%

Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California.

In Los Angeles County, the median gross rent in 2021 was \$1,653, and the median home value was \$647,000. Homeowners accounted for 46.2 percent of the total population, while Black homeowners accounted for 33.1 percent of the total Black population. Cost burdens experienced by non-Black residents and Black residents were similarly disparate. Among non-Black homeowners, 34.1 percent were cost burdened, defined as the condition in which one is spending more than 30 percent of one's income on housing, as compared to 41.1 percent of Black homeowners. This relationship is intensified among those who rent. Across non-Black renting populations, 54.3 percent were cost burdened. Across Black renters, 62.4 percent were cost burdened. Exacerbated by COVID-19's racially disparate economics impacts paired with skyrocketing interest rates and home prices, it is anticipated that these housing divides will worsen in the coming years (table 3).<sup>21</sup>

### Sample of Counties in Southern California with Black Population Increase

In 1990, Riverside County's total population was 1,170,413, and its Black population was 63,591. Those population counts increased by 2021 to 2,409,331 and 156,255, respectively. This corresponded with an increase of 1.1 percent of Black residents in the total county population.

San Bernardino County's total 1990 population was 1,418,380 and its Black population was 114,934. In 2021, the total population rose 53.1 percent to 2,171,071. The Black population rose 51.5 percent to 174,169. Overall, the share of total county population who identifies as Black dropped, ever so slightly, by 0.1 percent (table 4).

**TABLE 4**  
**Population Changes Over Time Where Black Population Increased: Riverside and San Bernardino Counties**

	1990	2021	1990 to 2021
<b>Total population</b>			
<i>Riverside</i>	1,170,413	2,409,331	+105.9%
<i>San Bernardino</i>	1,418,380	2,171,071	+53.1%
<b>Black population</b>			
<i>Riverside</i>	63,591	156,255	+147.7%
<i>San Bernardino</i>	114,934	174,169	+51.5%
<b>Black population share of total pop.</b>			
<i>Riverside</i>	5.4%	6.5%	+1.1%
<i>San Bernardino</i>	8.1%	8.0%	-0.1%

Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California.



In 2021, Riverside hosted greater income parity than San Bernardino with Black median income (\$73,278) sitting about \$3,000 dollars below total population median income (\$76,066). This gap in San Bernardino was about \$15,000 with total median income sitting at \$70,287 and Black median income at \$55,229. Similarly worrisome is San Bernadino's 2021 Black poverty rate: one-fifth of the county's Black residents met the federal poverty threshold.<sup>22</sup> Riverside's poverty rates are slightly lower with 11.7 percent and 15.3 percent of the non-Black and Black populations, respectively, meeting the federal threshold (table 5).

**TABLE 5**  
**2021 Socioeconomic Indicators**

	Median household income	Share of non-Black population in poverty	Black median household income	Share of Black population in poverty
Riverside County	\$76,066	11.7%	\$73,278	15.3%
San Bernardino County	\$70,287	13.7%	\$55,229	21.4%

Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California.

**TABLE 6**  
**2021 Housing Indicators**

	Owner cost burden non-Black population	Renter cost burden non-Black population	Black owner cost burden	Black renter cost burden
Riverside County	33.0%	55.0%	35.0%	62.7%
San Bernardino County	29.9%	52.8%	35.7%	61.4%

Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California.

In Riverside County, the 2021 median gross rent was \$1,552, and the median home value was \$390,400. The percentage of residents who owned their homes was 68.1 percent for the total population and 53.6 percent for the Black population. In San Bernardino County, the 2021 median gross rent was \$1,427 and the median home value was \$370,700. Of the total population, 60.5 percent owned their home. Of the Black population, 37.1 percent owned their home.

Riverside and San Bernardino residents are significantly cost burdened. Among 2021 homeowners, 33.0 percent of non-Black Riverside residents and 35.0 percent of Black Riverside residents were cost burdened. The same was true of 55.0 percent of non-Black renters and 62.7 percent of Black renters in the county. In San Bernardino, 29.9 percent of the non-Black and 35.7 percent of the Black population were subject to owner cost burden, while 52.8 percent of the non-Black and 61.4 percent of the Black population were subject to renter cost burden (table 6).

## **Additional Comparators: Quality-of Life Indices Across the Region**

Most housing relocations/moves in the US are local. While the single largest share of moves occurs within-county, the next most common classification are moves that take place within-state. Of those, most occur from one county to an immediately neighboring county. Together, local and within-state moves accounted for 82 percent of all US relocations in 2019.<sup>23</sup>

Against this backdrop, it is reasonable to assume that many of the changes in Black population counts across the three counties of Riverside, Los Angeles, and San Bernardino are directly between one another. That is to say, it is fair to conclude that many of the Black people leaving Los Angeles are the same Black people settling in Riverside and San Bernardino. Given this reality, there is value in placing these jurisdictions in conversation with one another; comparing them across a set of quality-of-life indices: housing, health, education, transportation, criminal justice.

## **HOUSING**

**Black residents across the state are more cost burdened than any other racial or ethnic group. Intensifying financial pressures in urban cores over the last decade have resulted in Black migration into suburban areas at a rate not experienced since the 1960s.**<sup>24</sup> This reality explains the observed exodus from Los Angeles an inflow into the less urban counties of Riverside and San Bernardino.

As previously mentioned, but not yet compared, Black Los Angeles County homeowners in 2021 were more likely to be cost burdened (41.1 percent) than Black homeowners in Riverside and San Bernardino counties (35 percent and 35.7 percent respectively). Relatedly, Black residents were less likely to be homeowners at all in both Los Angeles (33.1 percent of the county's Black population owned their home) and San Bernardino (37.1 percent) counties than in Riverside (53.6 percent).

## HEALTH

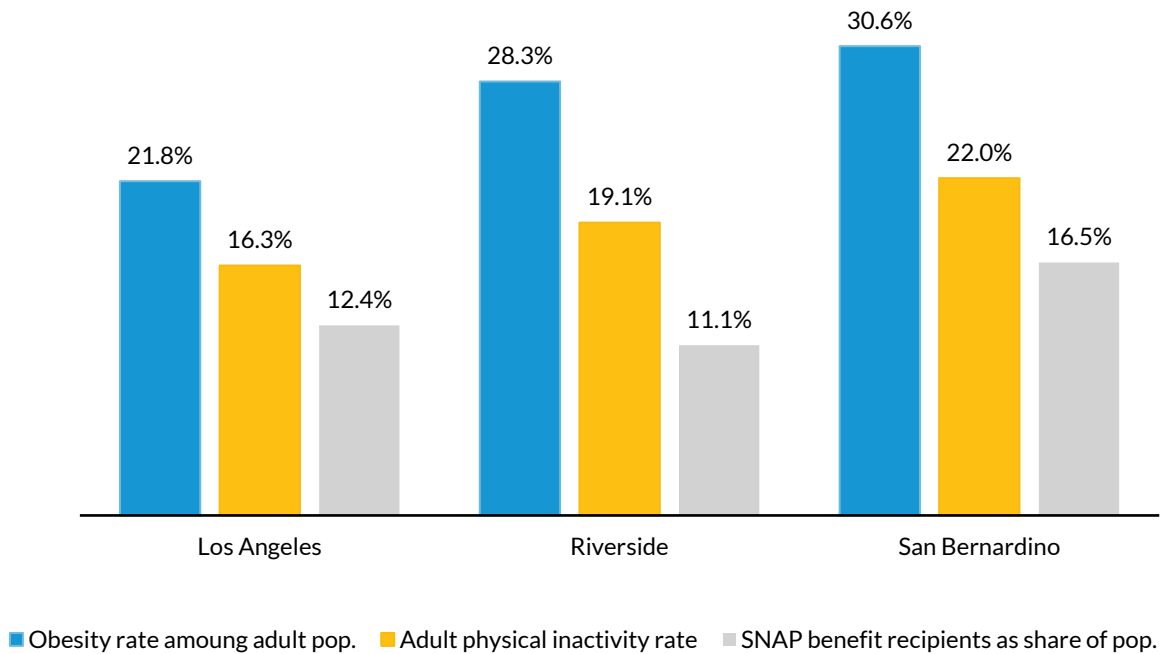
In 2021, San Bernardino had the highest Black infant mortality rate at 11 per 1,000 live Black births across all three counties. For Riverside and Los Angeles, this metric sat at 7 and 7 respectively. In all three cases, this figure is nearly double the infant mortality rate for the total, nonracially delineated county population, which was 6 per thousand in San Bernadino, 4 in Riverside, and 4 in Los Angeles.<sup>25</sup>

Obesity was highest in San Bernardino with 30.6 percent of the 2021 adult population classified as obese. For Riverside, this share of the adult population totaled 28.3 percent. In Los Angeles, 21.8 percent. Physical inactivity followed similar trends. 22 percent of San Bernardino's adult population age 20 and over reported having no leisure-time physical activity. The same was true of 19.1 percent of Riverside's 20-and-over adult population and 16.3 percent of Los Angeles County's. In comparison to Riverside and Los Angeles, San Bernardino had the largest share of its population receive SNAP benefits: 16.5 percent. Riverside's and Los Angeles' SNAP recipients comprised 11.1 percent and 12.4 percent of their respective county resident populations. Premature death rates were notably higher for San Bernardino County (515 per 100,000 people) than for Riverside (444 per 100,000 people) and Los Angeles (402 per 100,000 people) (figure 2).

These three counties vary significantly not only with respect to health outcomes, but also with respect to health-related land use conditions and their resultant consequences. In general, **air quality across the region is low with all three counties regularly topping the state's most polluted counties by the American Lung Association.**<sup>26</sup> San Bernardino and Riverside have higher rates of park inaccessibility, as defined by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, as the percent of county residents that live farther than half a mile from a park (across the three counties): 39 percent and 35 percent respectively, in comparison to Los Angeles at 18 percent.<sup>27</sup>

FIGURE 2

Select Health Indicators for Sample of Southern California Counties with Changing Black Populations



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**Sources:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): 2021 Obesity Prevalence Maps; University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, Physical Inactivity 2021; FRED: SNAP Benefits Recipients by County 2021.

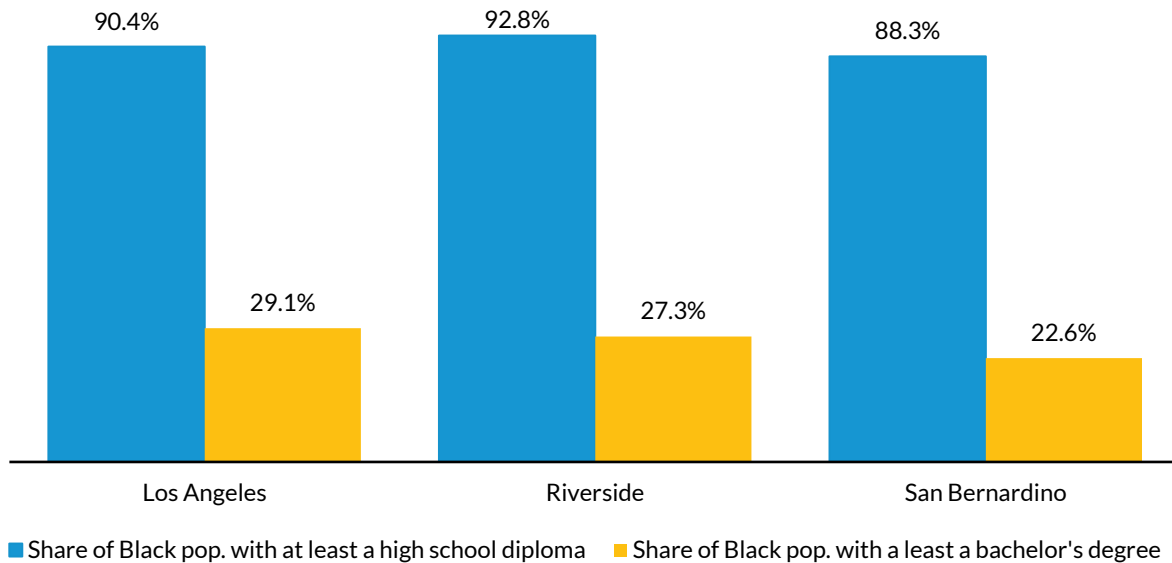
**Note:** Population is abbreviated as “pop.” in the legend.

## EDUCATION

As of 2021, 29.1 percent of Black Los Angeles residents had at least a bachelor’s degree, compared to 27.3 percent of the Black population of Riverside and 22.6 percent of the Black population in San Bernardino. These values straddled the statewide Black average of 26 percent. With respect to high school education, 90.4 percent of Black residents in Los Angeles had at least a high school degree. As was the case for 92.8 percent of Black residents in Riverside and 88.3 percent of residents in San Bernardino. The 2021 Black population statewide average was 89.1 percent (figure 3).

FIGURE 3

**Select Education Indicators for Sample of Southern California Counties with Changing Black Populations**



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**Source:** 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California Counties, California.

**Note:** Population is abbreviated as “pop.” in the legend.

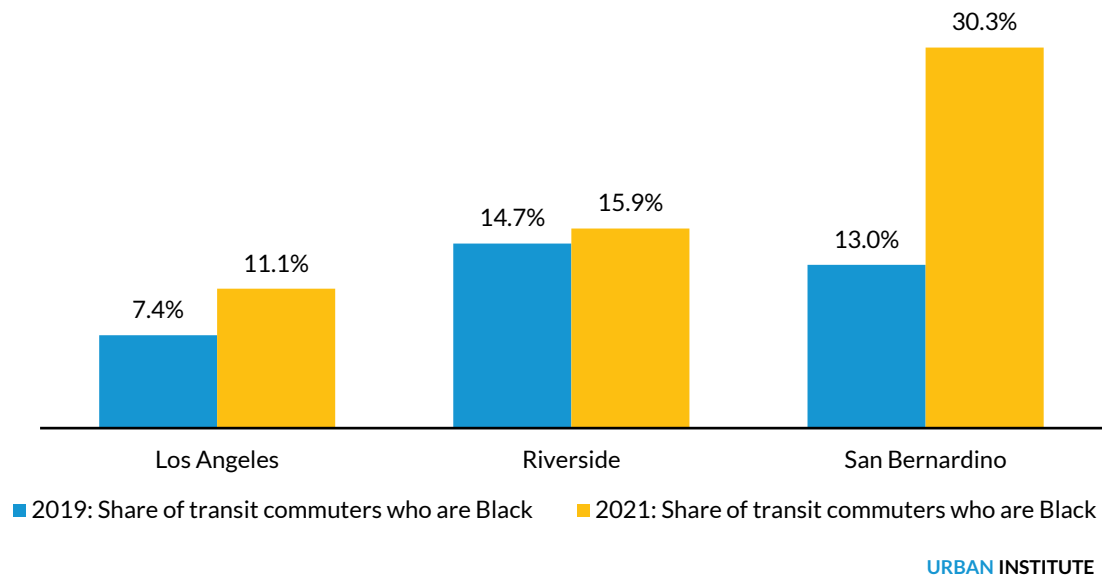
## TRANSPORTATION

**A vast share of Southern California residents make most of their trips by private vehicle, contributing to the region’s reputation for heavy traffic and long commutes.** Hosting subway, bus, and BRT (primarily provided by LA Metro) and regional rail services (primarily operated by MetroLink), Los Angeles County residents have the region’s most extensive suite of transit services and better transit access than Riverside and San Bernardino residents. As of January 2023, Riverside Transit Agency operates 47 bus routes and San Bernardino OmniTrans operates 30 bus routes. Both counties have MetroLink service from their downtown cores to Los Angeles County. For transit-using Black residents relocating from Los Angeles County to Riverside and San Bernardino counties, these conditions make for a major reduction in service options and flexibility, as well as a likely increase in burden with respect to travel time and cost.

Across all three counties, both pre-COVID and presently, Black residents are more likely to travel via transit than their white counterparts.<sup>28</sup> Despite this, Black residents experience less access to public transit than white residents both in transit-rich and transit-poor areas. Gentrification and suburbanization patterns among communities of color of the last five years have worsened this

condition of access inequity and, without intervention, will likely continue to do so (Paul and Taylor 2021).

**FIGURE 4**  
**Select Transportation Indicators for Sample of Southern California Counties with Changing Black Populations**



Source: Journey to Work American Community Survey single year estimates.

Figure 4 above reflects two concurrent phenomena. First, transit ridership across the region and the country at large is slowly recovering from record breaking lows due to COVID-19 and its lasting impacts on work location requirements; largely work-from-home affordances (Kahana and Dickens 2023). **However, workers of color, Black workers in particular, serve disproportionately in ‘essential’ roles, service roles that require in-person presence, and for a handful of other reasons are less likely to have the option to work from home or access to travel mode alternatives than white workers. As a result, Black transit ridership has remained comparatively strong.** In some counties, this persistent Black ridership paired with increases in Black populations in suburban areas has resulted in a significant increase in the share of transit riders represented by Black residents. San Bernardino serves as a prime example of this with just 13 percent of its transit work commute ridership identifying as Black in 2019 more than doubling to 30.3 percent in 2021.

Prior to COVID-19, average journey to work trip times were highly similar across the three counties. In 2019, the average journey to work took 31 minutes for a Los Angeles County resident, 32 minutes for a San Bernardino County residents, and 34 minutes for a Riverside County resident.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

In 2021, documented use of force was highest in Los Angeles County at 172 incidences, lower in San Bernardino (71 incidences), and much lower in Riverside (38 incidences) (Bonta 2021a). In 2019, 824,489 Black people were incarcerated in Los Angeles County. In comparison, 176,772 Black people were incarcerated in San Bernardino and 153,580 incarcerated in Riverside. In 2020, there were a significantly greater number of anti-Black hate crimes reported by law enforcement in Los Angeles (102), than in Riverside (8) and San Bernardino (8) (Bonta 2021b).

### Sample of Cities in Southern California with Black Population Growth

This section focuses on conditions in three municipalities that have experienced the region's largest city-level growth in Black population between 1990 and 2021. Lancaster City spans an area of 94.5 square miles in northern Los Angeles County. It is located a little over an hour from the city of Los Angeles. Major employment sectors include health care and social assistance, educational services, and manufacturing. Though Moreno Valley is located in Riverside County, it is considered to be part of the greater Los Angeles area. Its economic sector is dominated by wholesale and retail trade, health care, educational services, and food services.<sup>29</sup> **Victorville is situated in San Bernardino County directly enroute between the commercial hubs of Los Angeles and Las Vegas. It is internationally and nationally known for its manufacturing, warehousing, and aerospace-related services.**

The period of 1990 to 2021 saw major growth for all three cities, both with respect to total population and with respect to Black population specifically. **In Lancaster, the city with the largest number of new Black residents (27,958) across this 30-year span, the number of Black people residing in the city was nearly five times as many in 2021 as in 1990.** This surge meant that Black residents went from making up 7.4 percent of the 1990 total population to 20.5 percent of the 2021 total population. Moreno Valley's population did not increase as sizably as Lancaster's or Victorville's. Still, its Black population more than doubled during this time. Victorville's total population more than tripled (226.2 percent growth) while its Black population more than quintupled (446.5 percent growth). Overall, Victorville saw a 6.4 percent increase in the share of its population who identifies as Black (table 7).

TABLE 7

**Population Changes Over Time Where Black Population Increased: Cities of Lancaster, Moreno Valley, and Victorville**

	1990	2021	1990 to 2021
<b>Total population</b>			
<i>Lancaster</i>	97,291	171,820	+76.6%
<i>Moreno Valley</i>	118,779	208,371	+75.4%
<i>Victorville</i>	40,674	132,924	+226.6%
<b>Black population</b>			
<i>Lancaster</i>	7,207	35,165	+387.9%
<i>Moreno Valley</i>	16,402	37,300	+127.4%
<i>Victorville</i>	3,899	21,308	+446.5%
<b>Black population as share of total population</b>			
<i>Lancaster</i>	7.4%	20.5%	+13.1%
<i>Moreno Valley</i>	13.8%	17.9%	+4.1%
<i>Victorville</i>	9.6%	16.0%	+6.4%

Source: 1990 Decennial Census and 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California.

## Disparities Across Other Indices: 2021 City-Level Data

As previously mentioned, the story of Black household movement in California is not one that can be fully told through census data (nor was telling the fullness of that story the core objective of this work). It is not one exclusively defined by difficulty, by a dearth of resources and agency, nor by disparity and cause for concern. Though the data highlighted in this section speak most strikingly to the negative side of many coins for Black Californians, it is important to keep in mind two vital points: (1) conditions of Black joy, Black resilience, Black thriving, Black entrepreneurship, and Black innovation abound; and (2) the data currently collected via the census captures but a tiny sliver of information related to quality of life, and that the lack of information may be hindering our ability to truly understand life conditions across many communities. While past census efforts to expand the suite of measures of well-being<sup>30</sup> exist, they are limited, have not been continued into every census year, and are not all delineated by race. The focus in this section of the limited measures that are collected as a part of every census serves, in part, as a call for continued work toward expansion of the census's 'well-being' encapsulation.

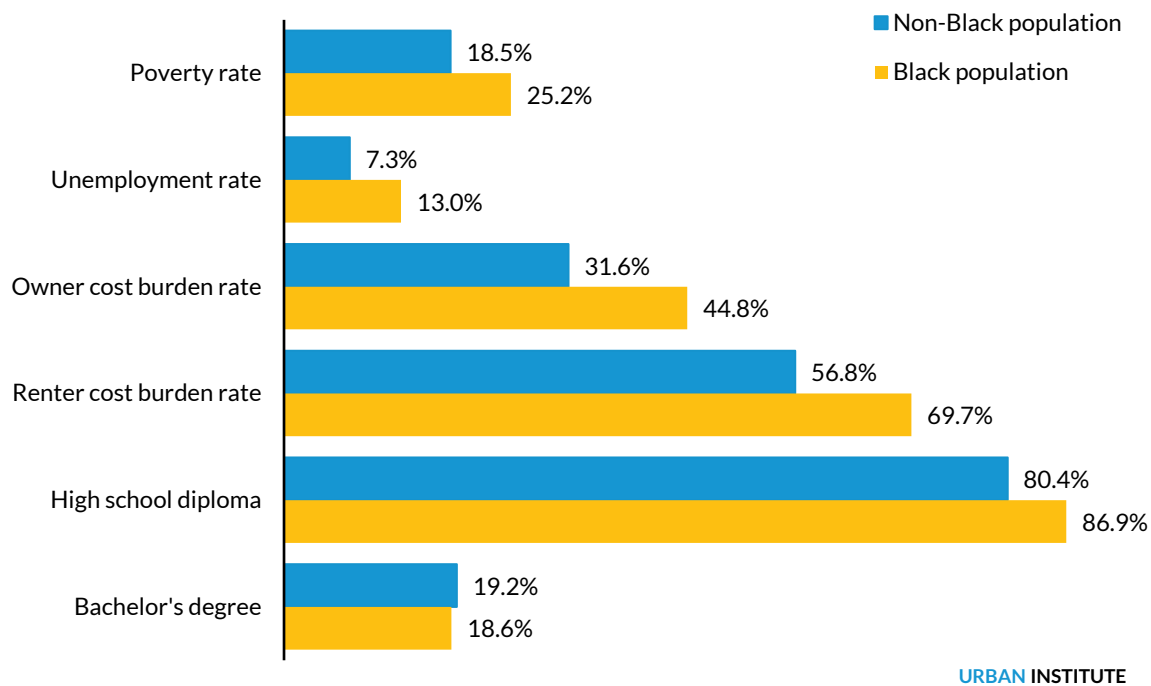


## LANCASTER

In Lancaster, 18.5 percent of the 2021 non-Black population met the poverty threshold. For Black Lancaster residents, that rate was 25.2 percent. The unemployment rate for Black residents of Lancaster (13 percent) was almost double that of the non-Black population (7.3 percent). The 2021 median rent in Lancaster was \$1,384 and the median home value was \$303,400. Of the non-Black population of homeowners in Lancaster, 31.6 percent were cost burdened. For Black homeowners, this figure was 44.8 percent. The non-Black population renter cost burden rate was 56.8 percent and Black renter cost burden rate sat at 69.7 percent. Black residents exceeded the non-Black population education attainment statistics for high school degree attainment (86.9 percent of the Black population hold a high school diploma versus 80.4 percent of the non-Black population). There is much parity between the Black and non-Black population with respect to attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher: 18.6 percent of the Black population versus 19.2 percent of the non-Black population (figure 5).

FIGURE 5

### Lancaster Quality-of-Life Indicators by Non-Black and Black Populations



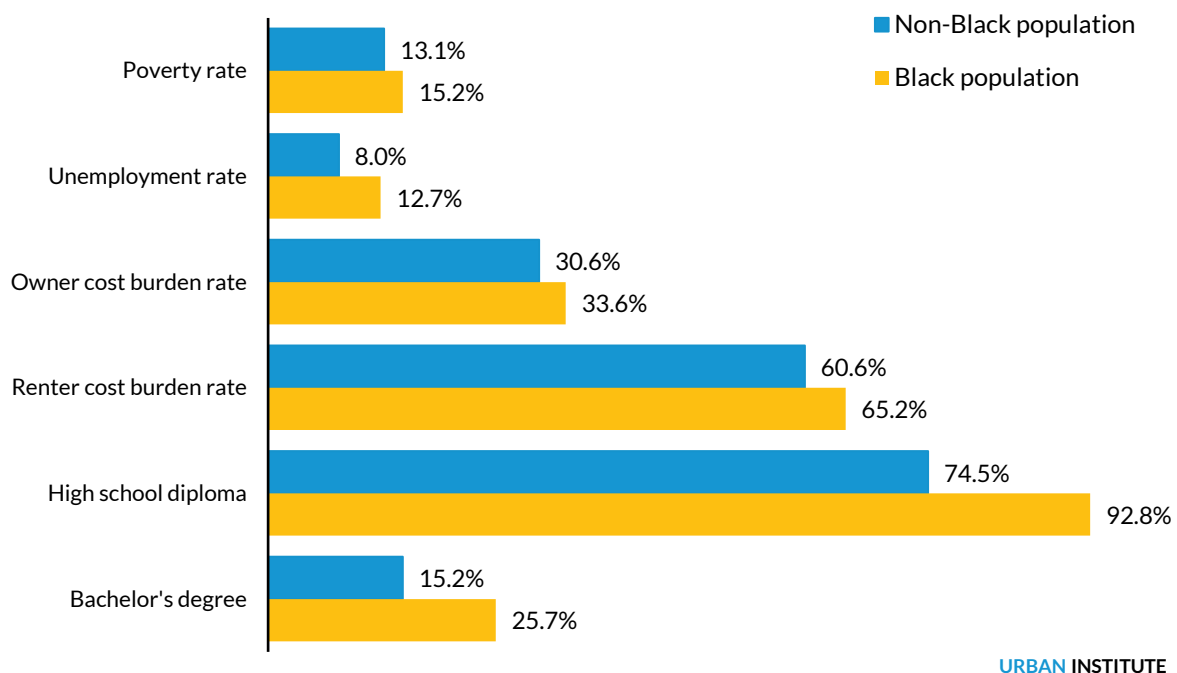
Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California.

## MORENO VALLEY

2021 poverty rates in Moreno Valley for the non-Black population and Black population are fairly comparable at 13.1 percent and 15.2 percent respectively. The gap in unemployment rate is greater: 12.7 percent of Black Moreno Valley residents met the poverty threshold as compared to 8 percent of non-Black residents. The median rent in Moreno Valley was \$1,712 and the median home value was \$353,400. The owner cost burden for Black residents in Moreno Valley was higher than it was for non-Black homeowners (33.6 percent vs. 30.6 percent). Similarly, the Black renter cost burden was higher than that of the non-Black renting population (65.2 percent vs 60.6 percent). As shown in figure 6, in terms of education attainment, Black residents of Moreno Valley fare better than non-Black residents in terms of both high school (74.5 percent for the non-Black population vs. 92.8 percent for the Black population) and bachelor's degree attainment (15.2 percent vs. 25.7 percent).

FIGURE 6

### Moreno Valley Quality-of-Life Indicators by Non-Black and Black Populations

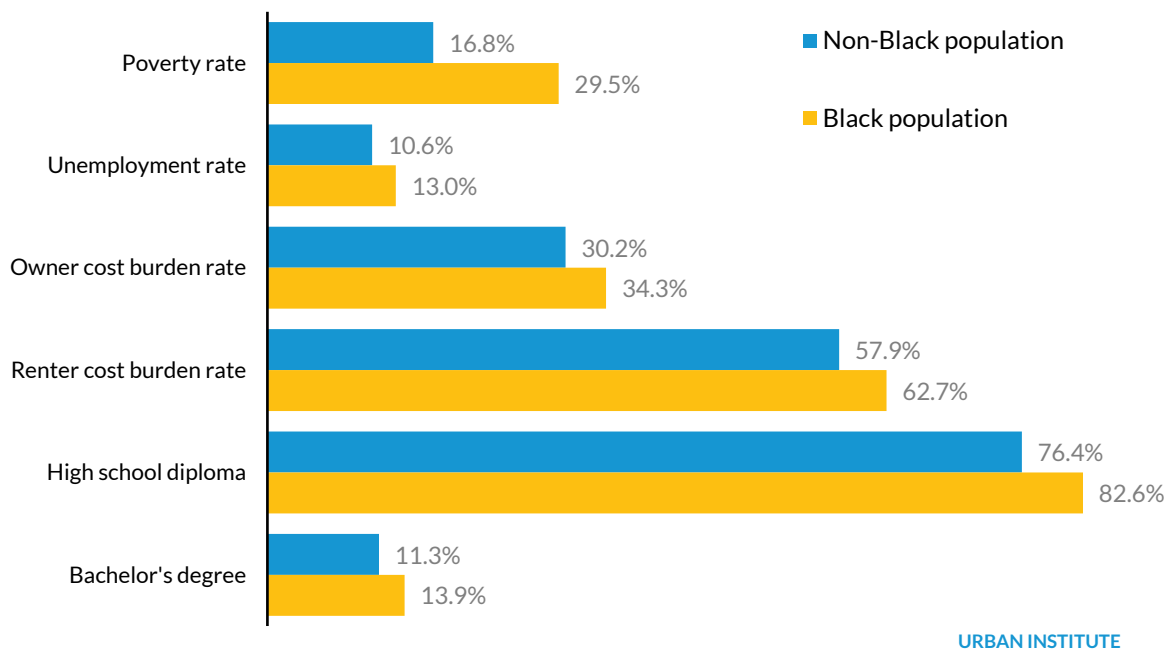


Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California

## VICTORVILLE

Of the three cities, Victorville had comparatively high 2021 poverty and unemployment rates for both non-Black residents (16.8 percent and 10.6 percent, respectively) and Black residents (29.5 percent and 13.0 percent, respectively). The median rent in Victorville is \$1,360 and the median home value is \$257,400. The owner cost burden for non-Black residents in Victorville was 30.2 percent and 34.3 percent for Black homeowners. The renter cost burden for non-Black renters was 57.9 percent and was 62.7 percent for the Black renter population. Victorville's education attainment rates were generally lower than both Lancaster and Moreno Valley. Of the non-Black population, 76.4 percent had at least a high school degree (compared to 82.6 percent of the Black population), and 11.3 percent had at least a bachelor's degree (compared to 13.9 percent of the Black population) (figure 7).

**FIGURE 7**  
**Victorville Quality-of-Life Indicators by Non-Black and Black Populations**



Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data for Southern California.

## Policy and Programmatic Consideration

The three counties covered in this brief face two distinctly different profiles of hardship. For those living in Los Angeles, Black residents in particular, their struggles related to housing costs and a rapidly decreasing support base (namely with respect to a sense of ‘community and systems of belonging’<sup>31</sup>) seem to eclipse most other aspects of county life. San Bernardino, and to a lesser extent Riverside County, offer greater affordability, but present difficulties with respect to quality-of-life aspects that would reasonably concern many new Black Californians moving into these counties. These difficulties include high rates of poverty and unemployment, infant mortality rates far above regional, state, and national levels, high obesity and physical inactivity markers, and poorly distributed access to parks and green space. Below are several ways to approach alleviating these struggles.

### STATE LEVEL

**Establish a virtuous cycle of development by supporting established Black development and Black-led community-based organizations:**

- This cycle of development could be achieved via using dedicated state-level funding, for example, a California Black Housing and Community Fund, across three interrelated investment areas:
  - » [project development](#) to increase housing access for Black families and support Black-led developers to bring “brick and mortar” projects to fruition
  - » [organizational capacity building](#) to strengthen the ability of Black-led organizations to deliver projects and services
  - » [community planning](#) to envision future projects, especially in parts of the state that are experiencing a growing Black population

### REGION LEVEL

**Establish oversight committees:**

- Incidences of police use of force as well as accounts of anti-Black hate crimes are particularly high in this region (as compared to Northern and Central California):
  - » [Establishing external \(auditor\) police oversight committees](#). At the regional level, it may better protect Black Californians as they cross municipal lines than doing so at the local or county levels.

### Focus on health:

- Park and green space accessibility in both Riverside and San Bernardino are low and unevenly spatially distributed:
  - » [Setting regional green space/infrastructure targets](#). While park access is poorly distributed, the region as a whole features large, ecologically diverse green space. Collective contributions to linear parks for walking and cycling that connect the area's many state and regional parks as well as national forests and nature reserves would contribute to overall health by tackling the region's issues of high obesity and inactivity rates, poor air quality, and intense single-occupancy vehicle dependence. Hiring locally for construction efforts could also help to mitigate high unemployment rates.

### Minimize newly heightened transportation cost burden:

- There is an increasing share of transit ridership in all three counties identify as Black. As Black residents increasingly relocate from Los Angeles to less centralized areas, transit costs and travel times for these residents increase. Many of their social and service networks either remain in Los Angeles County or are also relocated to fewer central locales:
  - » [Offering new transit fare products](#): Best meeting the changes in resultant travel needs may call for the creation of new payment and discount offerings for transit riders. For example:
    - [free or discounted weekend travel](#)
    - [free or discounted intercounty travel](#)
    - [flat rate all day unlimited weekend travel](#)
    - [payment integration across all regional services](#)
    - [discounted off-peak regional travel](#)

## COUNTY LEVEL

### Support housing cost relief efforts:

- Due to the effects of COVID-19, many residents experienced increased housing insecurity and cost burdens placed on them:

- » [Continuing to provide Emergency Rental Assistance support.](#) Programs designed to combat the pandemic's impact need ongoing reinforcement, as many households have not returned to their pre-pandemic levels of housing security.
- » [Reinstating eviction moratoriums.](#) In Los Angeles County, many tenant protection measures established in 2020 are to end in April of 2023<sup>32</sup>. These include rent holds as well as provision of legal representation in eviction cases. As the workforce has yet to bounce back from the pandemic, the need for these protections has not dissipated.

#### **Facilitate Black homeownership:**

- Renters, particularly Black renters, who are disproportionately housing cost burdened across all three counties, and move out of Los Angeles County and into Riverside and San Bernardino counties may find that home ownership, which they were priced out of or discriminatorily barred from in LA, is well within reach now:
  - » [Assisting Black renters to become homeowners.](#) The median home values in Riverside and San Bernardino counties are nearly half that of Los Angeles County. These counties can help many relocating Black households hurdle barriers to homeownership by providing:
    - [down payment assistance](#)
    - [property tax relief](#)

#### **Foster a sustainable workforce:**

- San Bernardino in particular has high rates of both poverty and unemployment (Riverside and LA County are not without cause for concern in these areas):
  - » [Strengthening local workforce systems.](#) Both federal and state programs should be leveraged to expand employment opportunities, support career advancement, and streamline the pipeline from training to employment for residents of this region (Eyster et al. 2016).

# Central California Case Study

This case study provides an overview of demographic, population, and social indicator data for Central California with an express focus on counties that have experienced notable increase in Black population between the years of 1990 and 2021. Specific attention is paid to Kern and San Joaquin counties. More narrowly, this case study also looks at city-level data for several localities in the region that experienced the greatest increase in Black population over the specified three-decade span. These localities include Fresno, Bakersfield, and Stockton (figure 8).

## Brief Region Overview

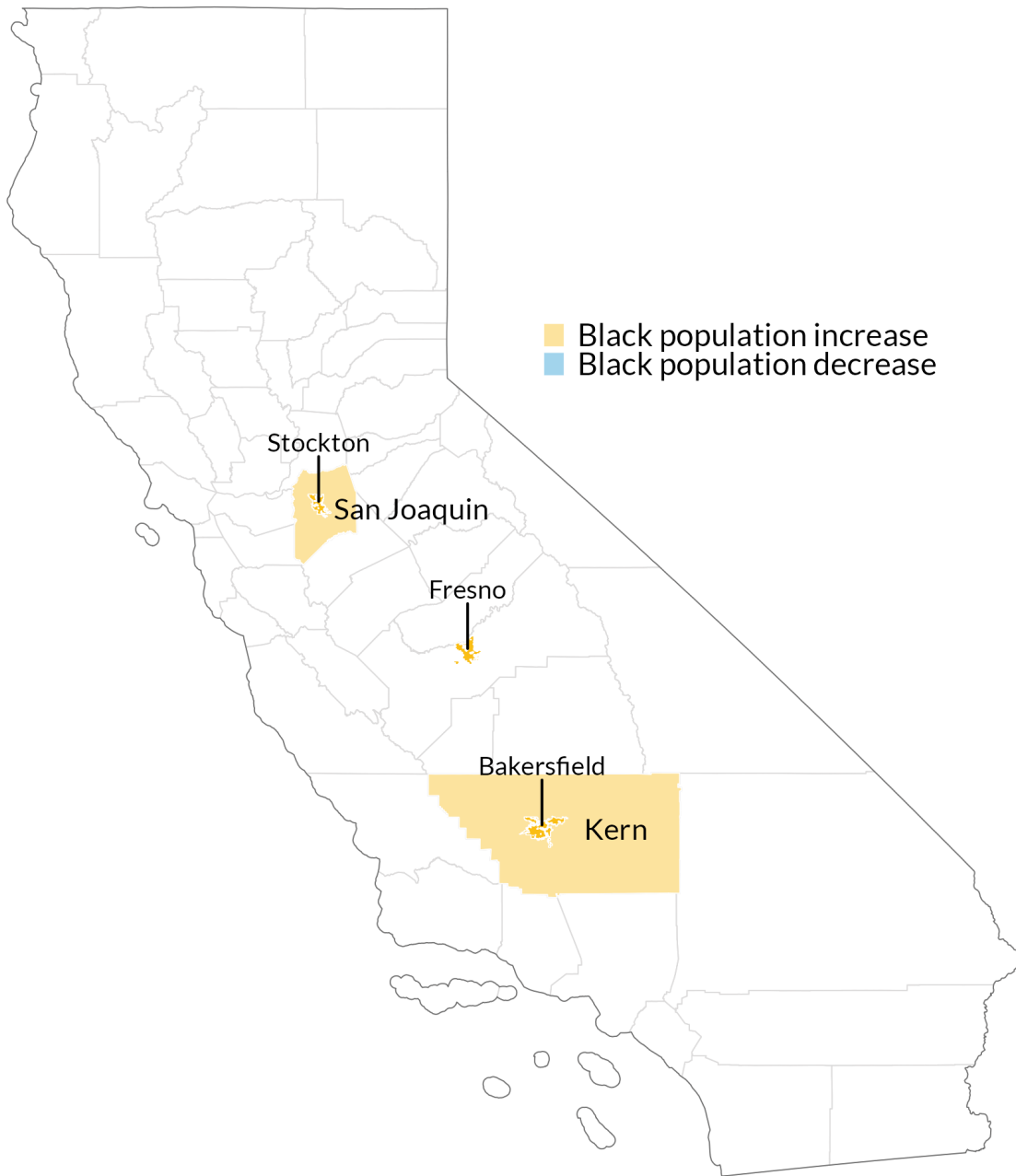
Central California, otherwise referred to as the Central Valley, includes about 19 counties bordered by the Sierra Nevada to the east and the Coast Ranges to the west. **Home to over seven million people, this region is known for its diverse and nation-leading agricultural industry: hosting several of the top agricultural sellers in the country.<sup>33</sup> One of California's growing regions, smaller cities such as the ones highlighted in this case study are housing more people than ever before.<sup>34</sup>**

The data presented within this case study aim to describe some of the demographic, socioeconomic, health and education related, housing-centric, and transportation changes across the region that have taken place over the last three decades in areas that have experienced growth. Black outcomes and conditions are compared both within and across jurisdictions. They are framed against non-Black trends, total population trends, and against themselves across municipal borders. This case study serves to better understand resident movement within Northern California for policymakers, as well as current and would-be residents alike.

**FIGURE 8**

**Focal Municipalities for Central California**

*State of California by county geography*



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Source: 1990 Decennial Census and 2016–21 American Community Survey data.



## Sample of Counties in Central California with Black Population Increase

From 1990 to 2021, the population increased in Kern County by over 65 percent bringing the county to nearly 1 million residents. Over this same time period, the county's Black population grew by just over 60 percent; a total of 18,610 new Black residents. These concurrent changes resulted in a slight decrease in the share of the total population comprise of Black residents by 0.1 percent.

San Joaquin County grew by nearly 300,000 residents: a 60 percent increase. The Black population very nearly doubled. With an increase of 26,749 Black residents, the share of San Joaquin's total population that identified as Black grew from 5.6 percent to 7 percent (table 8).

TABLE 8

### Population Changes Over Time Where Black Population Increased: Kern and San Joaquin Counties

	1990	2021	1990 to 2021
<b>Total population</b>			
<i>Kern</i>	543,477	905,644	+66.6%
<i>San Joaquin</i>	480,628	771,406	+60.5%
<b>Black population</b>			
<i>Kern</i>	30,131	48,741	+61.8%
<i>San Joaquin</i>	27,094	53,843	+98.7%
<b>Black population as share of total population</b>			
<i>Kern</i>	5.5%	5.4%	-0.1%
<i>San Joaquin</i>	5.6%	7.0%	+1.4%

Source: 1990 Decennial Census and 2016-2021 American Community Survey data for Central California.

TABLE 9

### 2021 Socioeconomic Indicators

	Median household income	Share of non-Black population in poverty	Black median household income	Share of Black population in poverty
Kern County	\$58,824	18.7%	\$41,466	31.6%
San Joaquin County	\$74,962	13.1%	\$59,023	19.7%

Source: 2016-21 American Community Survey data.

In 2021, the gap in median income between the total population and Black population of each county were fairly similar: \$17,358 in Kern and \$15,939 in San Joaquin. With respect to poverty rates, both the non-Black populations and Black population of Kern County experienced rates significantly above the state average.<sup>35</sup> Nearly a third of all Black Kern residents met the federal poverty threshold.<sup>36</sup> San Joaquin fared slightly better, yet still hosted high rates of poverty across both its non-Black (13.1 percent) and Black (19.7 percent) populations (table 9).

**TABLE 10**  
**2021 Housing Indicators**

	Owner cost burden non-Black population	Renter cost burden non-Black population	Black owner cost burden	Black renter cost burden
Kern County	27.3%	51.5%	32.9%	62.7%
San Joaquin County	26.7%	49.8%	42.1%	61.2%

Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

The median home value in Kern County in 2021 was \$241,400, which was one of the lowest in California.<sup>37</sup> Over half of all households were homeowners (59.3 percent). This was true of just 34.8 percent of all Black households were. Just over a quarter of all non-Black homeowners (27.3 percent) were cost burdened—defined as spending more than a third of one’s income on housing costs. This rate was sizably higher for Black homeowners with over a third (32.9 percent) experienced housing cost burden. In San Joaquin County, where 2021 median home values were \$391,500, 49.8 percent of non-Black homeowners were cost burdened compared to 42.1 percent of Black homeowners. Housing pressures were even greater for renting households. The 2021 median rent was \$1,063 in Kern and \$1,387 in San Joaquin. In Kern, 51.5 percent of non-Black renters and 62.7 percent of Black renters were cost burdened. In San Joaquin, these rates were slightly lower at 49.8 percent of non-Black renters and 61.2 percent of Black renters (table 10).

## Additional Comparators: Quality-of-Life Indices Across the Region

This section looks at housing, health, education, transportation, and criminal justice data across the neighboring municipalities of interest in Central California. Comparing these indices across the region may provide relocating Black households a picture of place-specific challenges and opportunities. It may also provide local policymakers with an idea of which peer jurisdictions to turn to for advice, or which sectors of service need concentrated support as resident populations change.

## HOUSING

The cost of housing, for ownership and renting, is a large factor for migration across the country and within California. For low-income communities, these cost pressures often result in involuntary relocation (that is, displacement). Statewide, almost 1 percent of tenants face eviction every year (Inglis and Preston 2018). However, in Kern County, 5.7 percent of renting households had evictions filed against them in 2010.<sup>38</sup> This percentage decreased between 2010 and 2017. Of renting households in 2017, 4 percent had evictions filed against them. Similarly in San Joaquin County, of renting households in 2010, 5.4 percent had evictions filed against them. This percentage decreased in 2017 to 3.3 percent.

Racial disparities in access to homeownership are apparent in mortgage loan data throughout the region. In 2018, white households were 1.5 times more likely than Black households to have their loans originated in Kern County. In 2021, the white-Black loan likeliness divide rose slightly to 1.6 times. In San Joaquin County, white households were also 1.5 times more likely than Black households to have their loans originated in 2018, and 1.6 times more likely in 2021. **In both counties from 2018 to 2021, Black households had the smallest chances of getting mortgage loans compared to Asian households, Hispanic or Latino households, and white households.**<sup>39</sup>

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*In 2022, in San Joaquin County, one needed to make \$31/hour to afford the average rent. Given that the median income for Black households was \$59,023, the average Black household was making \$28/hour.*

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Housing development in San Joaquin County using the low-income housing tax credit decreased by 64 percent in the last two years, and asking rents increased 9.1 percent between 2020 and 2021 (Mazzella 2022a).

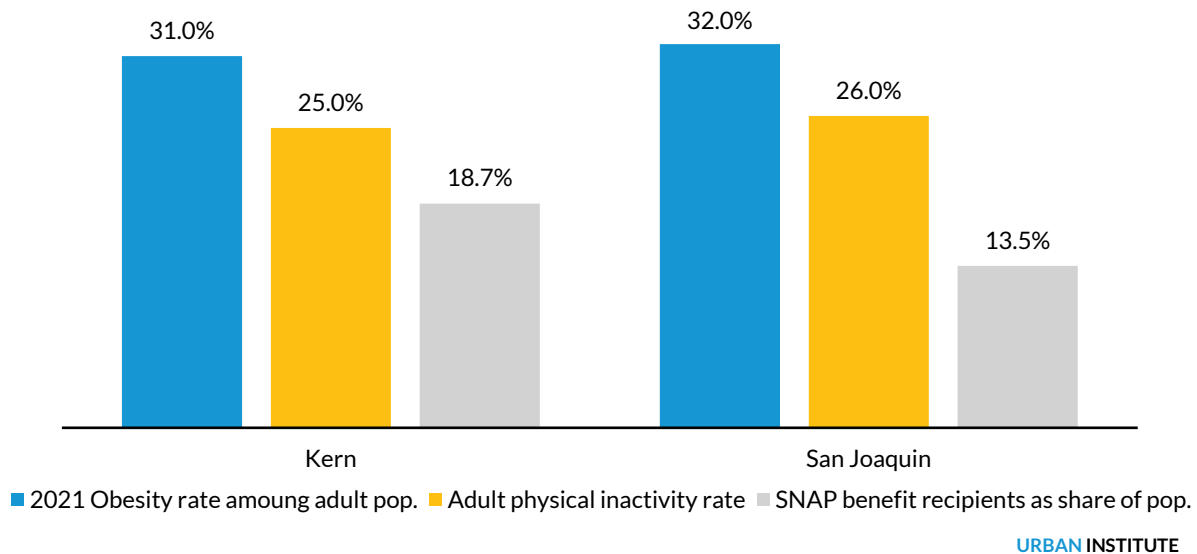
In Kern County, residents needed to make \$22.57/hour to afford the average rent in 2022. Black households were making \$20/hour on average. Rent prices went up about 12.1 percent from 2020 to 2021, and low-income housing tax credit home development increased by a few hundred over that same time period (Mazzella 2022b).

## HEALTH

In 2021, Kern and San Joaquin counties had Black infant mortality rates that were double the infant mortality rate of their general populations. Both counties had a Black infant mortality rate of 12 per 1,000 live Black births compared to 6 per 1,000 live births (nonracially delineated).<sup>40</sup>

FIGURE 9

### Select Health Indicators by Central California Counties with Changing Black Populations



**Source:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC: Adult Obesity Maps 2021; University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, Physical Inactivity 2021; FRED: SNAP Benefits Recipients by County 2021.

**Note:** Population is abbreviated as “pop.” in the legend.

Obesity was slightly higher in San Joaquin with 32 percent of the 2021 adult population classified as obese. For Kern, this share of the adult population totaled 31 percent. Physical inactivity followed similar trends: 26 percent of San Joaquin’s adult population age 20 and over reported having no leisure-time physical activity. The same was true of 25 percent of Kern’s 20-and-over adult population. Kern had the larger share of its 2021 population receive SNAP benefits: 18.7 percent. San Joaquin’s SNAP recipients comprised 13.5 percent of its resident population. Premature death, defined as any death occurring before age 75, was slightly more prevalent in Kern County (505 persons per 100,000 people) than in San Joaquin County (498 persons per 100,000 people) (figure 9).<sup>41</sup>

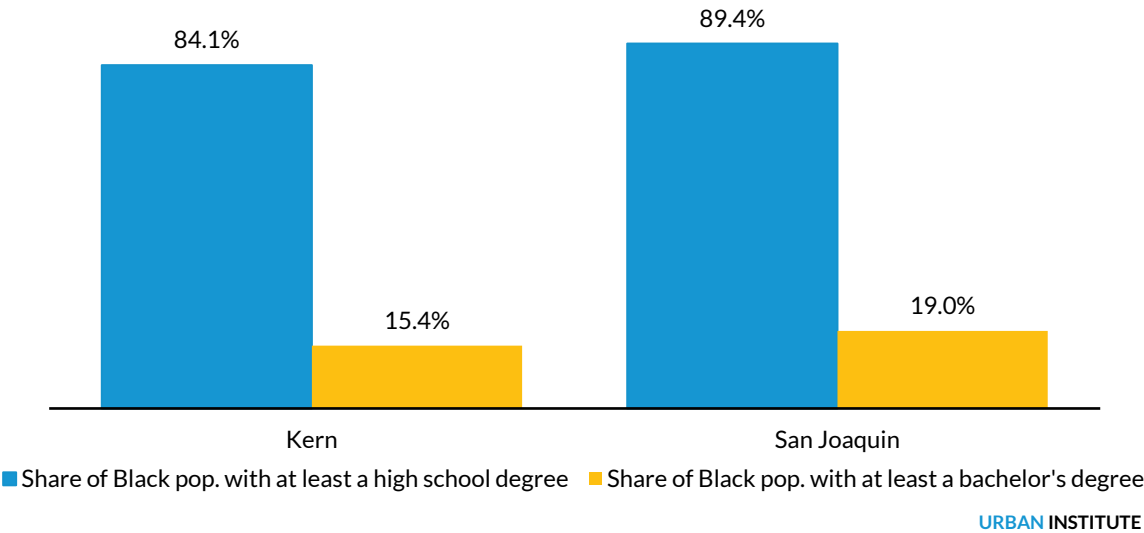
These counties vary not only with respect to health outcomes, but also with respect to health-related land use conditions and their resultant consequences. Park inaccessibility, defined by the California Department of Parks and Recreation as the percentage of county residents that live farther

than half a mile from a park across the region is high. In San Joaquin, 27 percent of residents in 2021 lived more than half a mile from a park. The inaccessibility was far worse for Kern residents, of which 43 percent were park-access starved.<sup>42</sup>

EDUCATION

As of 2021, 19.0 percent of Black San Joaquin residents had at least a bachelor’s degree, compared to 15.4 percent of the Black population of Kern. Both counties, fall significantly short of the statewide Black average of 26 percent for bachelor’s degree attainment.<sup>43</sup> With respect to high school education, 89.4 percent of Black residents in San Joaquin had at least a high school diploma. As was the case for 84.1 percent of Black residents in Kern. Both Black populations outperform county non-Black populations: 75.9 percent for Kern and 80.3 percent for San Joaquin (figure 10).

FIGURE 10  
Select Education Indicators by Central California Counties with Changing Black Populations



Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Between 2011 and 2020, two-thirds of California’s entire prison population was arrested within the Central Valley region (Bonta 2021a). In 2021, documented use of force by police officers against civilians in Kern County totaled 24 incidences. From 2010 to 2021 in Kern County, 31 anti-Black hate crimes were recorded by law enforcement. In San Joaquin County, there were 6 documented use of force incidences in 2021, and 63 anti-Black hate crimes were recorded between 2010 and 2021 (Bonta 2021b).

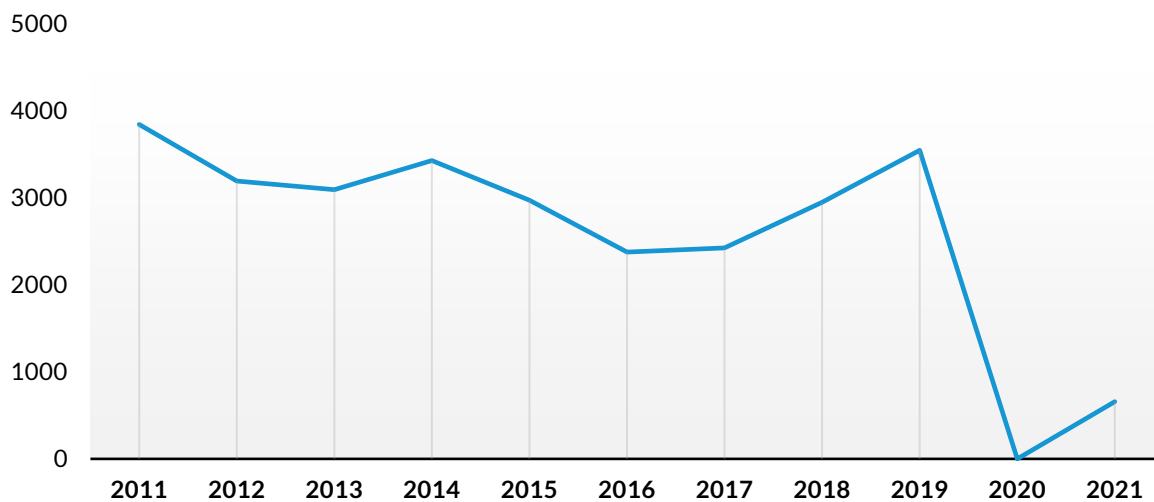
## TRANSPORTATION

In 2021, 98.8 percent of all journey-to-work trips originating in Kern County were made via car. Though Kern County operates 11 fixed-routes and several paratransit services, transit utilization is extremely low with just 2 percent of all trips conducted using transit (figure 11).

**FIGURE 11**

### Select Transportation Indicators: Kern County

*Number of Kern County residents who typically commute to work via transit*



Source: Journey to Work American Community Survey single year estimates.

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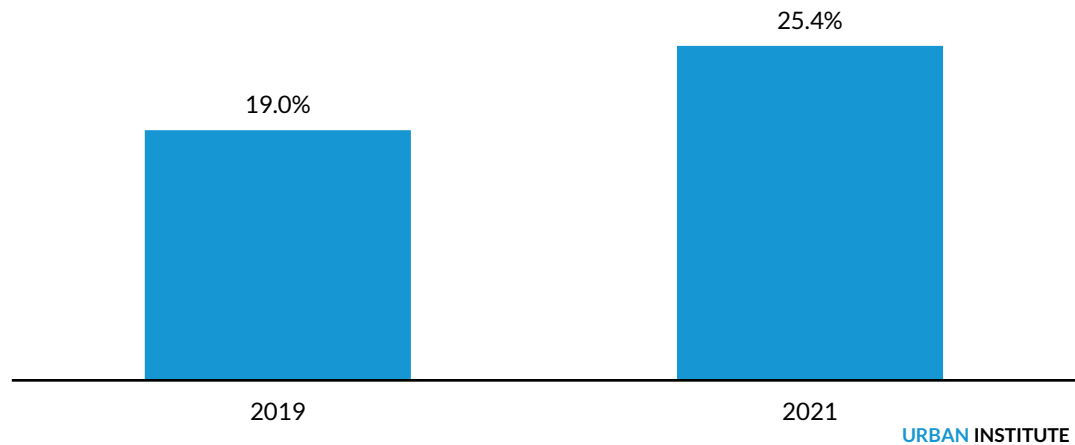
Unfortunately, journey-to-work data specific to the share of transit riders who identify as Black is not available via the Census. This is typically the case in conditions where representation was not strong enough to make summation assessments (that is., too few degrees of freedom within the dataset).

Transit use is higher in San Joaquin. The county's RTD (regional transit provider) offers 30 fixed routes which provide local and regional express service to neighboring counties on weekdays. Unfortunately, weekend service is significantly less robust: 6 fixed routes, 1 of which runs express. San Joaquin currently has a transportation master plan that features proposed enhancements and expansions of bikeways, pedestrian recreational trails and sidewalk improvements, improved wayfinding signage and waiting facilities for transit services, and roadway quality upgrades (Mintier Harnish Planning Consultants 2016). The county adopted the plan in 2016.

FIGURE 12

**Select Transportation Indicators: San Joaquin**

*Share of San Joaquin transit commuters who identify as Black (work trips only)*



Source: Journey to Work American Community Survey single year estimates.

### Sample of Cities in Central California with Black Population Growth

This section focuses on conditions in three cities in the region that have experienced the greatest increase in their Black populations between 1990 and 2021. Bakersfield, in Kern County, more than doubled in total population size over the last three decades and is a growing manufacturing hub. Fresno, located in Fresno County, is the largest city in the Central Valley and is one of the largest majority-Latinx cities in the country. Stockton, in San Joaquin County, was recently named the country's most diverse city.<sup>44</sup> Stockton is currently going through a 'rebranding'. Approaches to this effort range from targeting economic recovery through entrepreneurship to enhanced activation of green space.<sup>45</sup>

The period of 1990 to 2021 saw sizable growth for all three cities, both with respect to total population and with respect to Black population specifically. In Bakersfield, the number of Black people residing in the city was 1.7 times as many in 2021 as in 1990; a gain of 11,237 people. However, the total population grew at a greater rate. As a result, Black residents went from making up 9.4 percent of the 1990 total population to 6.8 percent of the 2021 total population. Though Fresno's total population grew by 52.1 percent, its Black population grew by just 24.9 percent between 1990 and 2021. As a result, Black people went from comprising 8.3 percent of the total population to 6.8 percent; a 1.5 percent decrease. **Stockton was the only of the three cities to see an expansion of the share of its total population represented by Black people (+1.7 percent).** Ultimately, the city gained 15,660 Black residents (table 11).

TABLE 11

Population Changes Over Time Where Black Population has Increased: Cities of Bakersfield, Fresno, and Stockton

	Total population 1990	Total population 2021	Total population change 1990 to 2021
<b>Total population</b>			
<i>Bakersfield</i>	174,820	398,756	+128.1%
<i>Fresno</i>	354,202	538,678	+52.1%
<i>Stockton</i>	210,943	317,818	+50.7%
<b>Black population</b>			
<i>Bakersfield</i>	16,509	27,746	+65.0%
<i>Fresno</i>	29,409	36,726	+24.9%
<i>Stockton</i>	20,321	35,981	+77.1%
<b>Black population as share of total population</b>			
<i>Bakersfield</i>	9.4%	6.8%	-2.6%
<i>Fresno</i>	8.3%	6.8%	-1.5%
<i>Stockton</i>	9.6%	11.3%	+1.7%

Source: 1990 Decennial Census and 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

## Disparities Across Other Indices: 2021 City-Level Data

As previously mentioned, the story of Black household movement in California is not one that can be fully told through census data (nor was telling the fullness of that story the objective of this work). It is not one exclusively defined by difficulty, by a dearth of resources and agency, nor by disparity and cause for concern. Though the data highlighted in this section speak most strikingly to the negative side of many coins for Black Californians, it is important to keep in mind two vital points: (1) conditions of Black joy, Black resilience, Black thriving, Black entrepreneurship, and Black innovation abound; and (2) the data currently collected via the census captures but a tiny sliver of information related to quality of life, and that that—lack of—information may be hindering our ability to truly understand life conditions across many communities. While past census efforts to expand the suite of measures of well-being<sup>46</sup> exist, they are limited, have not been continued into every census year, and are not all delineated by race. The focus in this section of the limited measures that are collected as a part of every census serves, in part, as a call for continued work toward expansion of the census’s ‘well-being’ encapsulation.

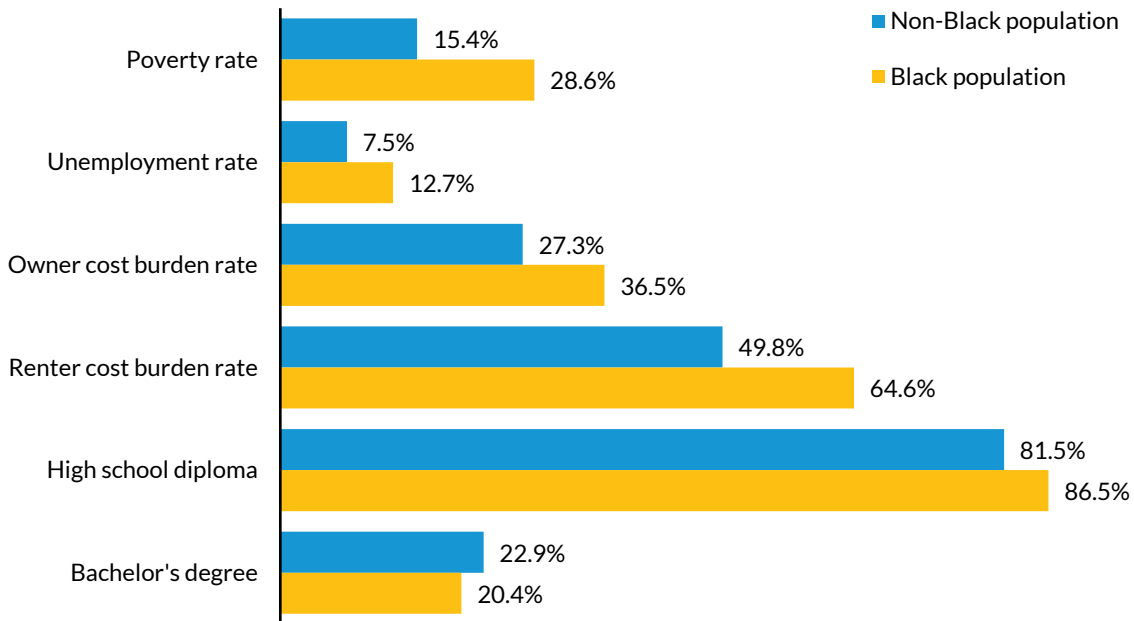


## BAKERSFIELD

In Bakersfield, 15.4 percent of the 2021 non-Black population met the poverty threshold. For Black Bakersfield residents, that rate was twice as high at 28.6 percent. The unemployment rate for Black residents of Bakersfield (12.7 percent) was almost significantly higher than that of the non-Black population (7.5 percent). The 2021 median rent in Bakersfield was \$1,177, and the median home value was \$272,000. Of the city's non-Black population of homeowners, 27.3 percent were cost burdened. For Black homeowners, this figure was 36.5 percent. The non-Black population renter cost burden rate was 49.8 percent and Black renter cost burden rate remained at 64.6 percent. Education statistics along Black and non-Black divides were similar in Bakersfield to much of the rest of the state in that Black communities tended to have a higher share of their populations attaining a high school diploma and a lower share (as compared to non-Black populations) attaining a bachelor's degree or higher. In this city specifically, 86.5 percent of the 2021 Black population held a high school diploma versus 81.5 percent of the non-Black population, while 20.4 percent of the Black population held a bachelor's degree or higher versus 22.9 percent of the non-Black population (figure 13).

FIGURE 13

### Bakersville Quality-of-Life Indicators by Non-Black and Black Population



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Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

## FRESNO

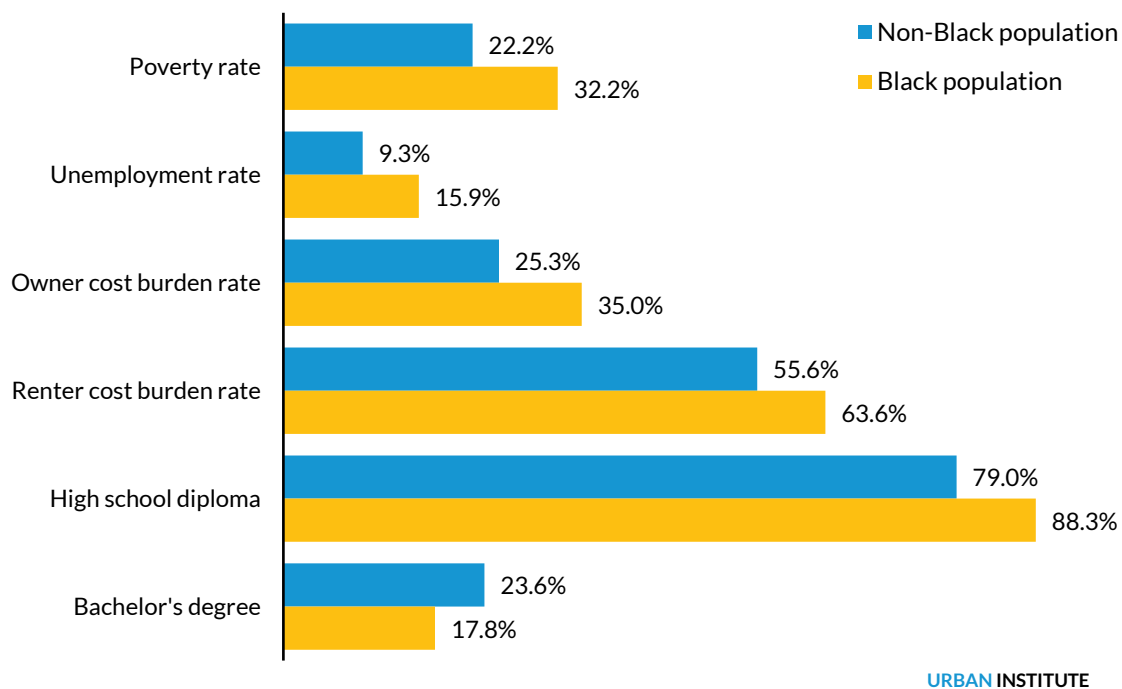
In 2021, 22.2 percent of non-Black Fresno residents met the poverty threshold, compared to a third of the city's Black residents (32.2 percent). Unemployment rates were similarly disparate: 9.3 percent of non-Black residents were unemployed, while 15.9 percent of Black residents were unemployed.

The 2021 median rent in Fresno was \$1,115 and the median home value was \$273,900. These medians served as the foundations for the following housing cost burden rates: The owner cost burden for Black residents in Fresno was about 10 percent higher than it was for non-Black homeowners (35.0 percent vs. 25.3 percent). Across races, the majority of city residents who rented felt financial pressures relating to their homes. Much like the case for homeowners, the Black renter cost burden was higher than that of the non-Black renting population (63.6 percent vs. 55.6 percent).

Regarding education attainment, **as with Bakersfield, Black residents of Fresno fare better than non-Black residents in terms of high school degree attainment** (79.0 percent for the non-Black population vs. 88.3 percent for the Black population). This relationship was inverted for bachelor's degree attainment (23.6 percent non-Black vs. 17.8 percent) (figure 14).

FIGURE 14

### Fresno Quality-of-Life Indicators by Non-Black and Black Population



Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

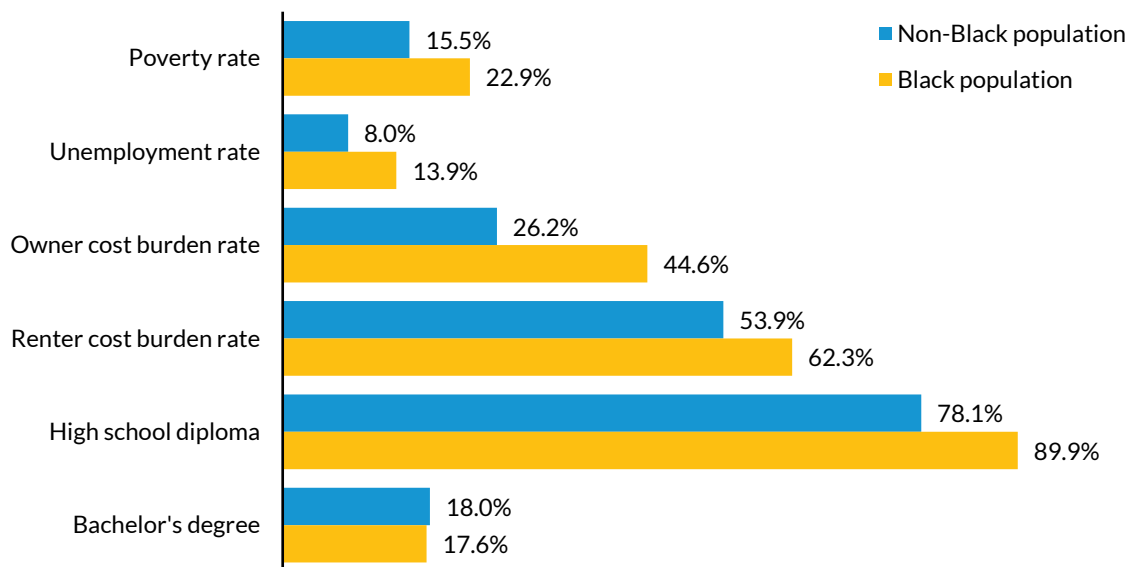
## STOCKTON

For the non-Black population, 2021 poverty rates in Stockton were lower than they were in Fresno and nearly identical to what they were in Bakersfield. Within the city's non-Black population, 15.5 percent were living in poverty. At 22.9 percent, the poverty rate for Stockton's Black population was lower than it was for both Fresno's and Bakersfield's Black populations. Unemployment rates across the three cities are very similar. In Stockton, 8.0 percent of non-Black and 13.9 percent of Black residents were unemployed in 2021.

The median rent in Stockton was \$1,271, and the median home value was \$324,600 in 2021. Among homeowners, 26.2 percent of the non-Black owner population was cost burdened as were 44.6 percent of Black homeowners. The renter cost burden for non-Black renters was 53.9 percent and was 62.3 percent for the Black renter population. The high school education gap between Black and non-Black residents was larger in Stockton than in either Fresno or Bakersfield. Of the non-Black population, 78.1 percent had at least a high school degree compared to 89.9 percent of the Black population. Conversely, the college education gap was smaller in Stockton than in the other two focal cities: 18.0 percent and 17.6 percent of the city's non-Black and Black populations, respectively, had at least a bachelor's degree (figure 15).

FIGURE 15

### Stockton Quality-of-Life Indicators by Non-Black and Black Population



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Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

## Policy and Programmatic Consideration

The Central California municipalities focused on within this case study are broadly characterized by high poverty rates, low education attainment (as compared to the rest of the state), relatively low housing costs (not to be confused with affordability, as median income in the region is low and unemployment is high), and disproportionate overrepresentation in the State's carceral system. Additionally, health indicators (for example, obesity and physical inactivity rates) and health-related metrics, such as access to park/open/green space, are poor.

### STATE LEVEL

**Establish a virtuous cycle of development by supporting established Black development and Black-led community-based organizations:**

- This cycle of development could be achieved via using dedicated state-level funding—for example, a California Black Housing and Community Fund—across three interrelated investment areas:
  - » [project development](#) to increase housing access for Black families and support Black-led developers to bring “brick and mortar” projects to fruition
  - » [organizational capacity building](#) to strengthen the ability of Black-led organizations to deliver projects and services
  - » [community planning](#) to envision future projects, especially in parts of the state, like Central California, that are experiencing a growing Black population

### REGION LEVEL

**Establish stronger oversight authorities:**

- Two-third of the state's prison population, as of 2021, was arrested in the Central Valley:
  - » [Establishing external \(auditor\) police oversight committees](#). At the regional level, it may better protect Black Californians as they cross municipal lines than doing so at the local or county levels.
  - » [Focusing on behavioral change](#). By using this method of monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating calls for oversight committees to have both decisionmaking and consequence administering power.

## COUNTY LEVEL

### Increase access to homeownership support:

- There is an increasing disparity in loan origination likelihood between Black and non-Black homeownership applicants in both Kern and San Joaquin counties, for example:
  - » 3by30 Initiative<sup>47</sup>
  - » Keys Unlock Dreams program<sup>48</sup>
- Additional homeowner support approaches include:
  - » Improving and expanding financial education and homeownership preparation.
  - » Increasing the visibility, access, and types of down payment assistance programs.
  - » Expanding financing options to meet the needs of different types of creditworthy borrowers.
  - » Re-examining the ways borrowers qualify for mortgages and revamp the process to assess creditworthiness more precisely and inclusively.
  - » Implementing programs that sustain homeownership for low-wealth borrowers.

## LOCAL LEVEL

### Strengthen housing market regulations:

- Rents in the region are rising fast with many jurisdictions seeing annual increases of over 10 percent. Relatedly, eviction rates in the region are comparatively high (in relation to rates of other regions across the state):
  - » Implementing more stringent rent control policies to get ahead of this concerning trend, it may be wise to implement more stringent rent control policies:
    - rent stabilization
    - rent caps
    - tenant protections

# Northern California Case Study

This case study provides an overview of demographic, population, and social indicator data for Northern California with an express focus on counties that have experienced notable change—both in an increasing and decreasing direction—in Black population between the years of 1990 and 2021. While Alameda County, San Francisco County, and San Mateo County saw decreases in their Black population, Contra Costa County and Sacramento County had significant increases. More narrowly, this case study also looks at city-level data for several localities in the region that experienced the greatest increase in Black population over the focal three-decade span. These localities include Antioch, Elk Grove, and Brentwood (figure 16).

## Brief Region Overview

Bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the San Joaquin Valley to the east, Northern California is a growing technological hub, home to over a quarter of all California residents (Bellisario et al. 2016). Known for the Bay Area, Silicon Valley, and the Redwood Forest, the entire region has seen steady growth annually, doubling in size over the last 50 years. In fact, **Northern California has seen the state's fastest regional growth over the last five decades with respect to both population and economic might**<sup>49</sup>.

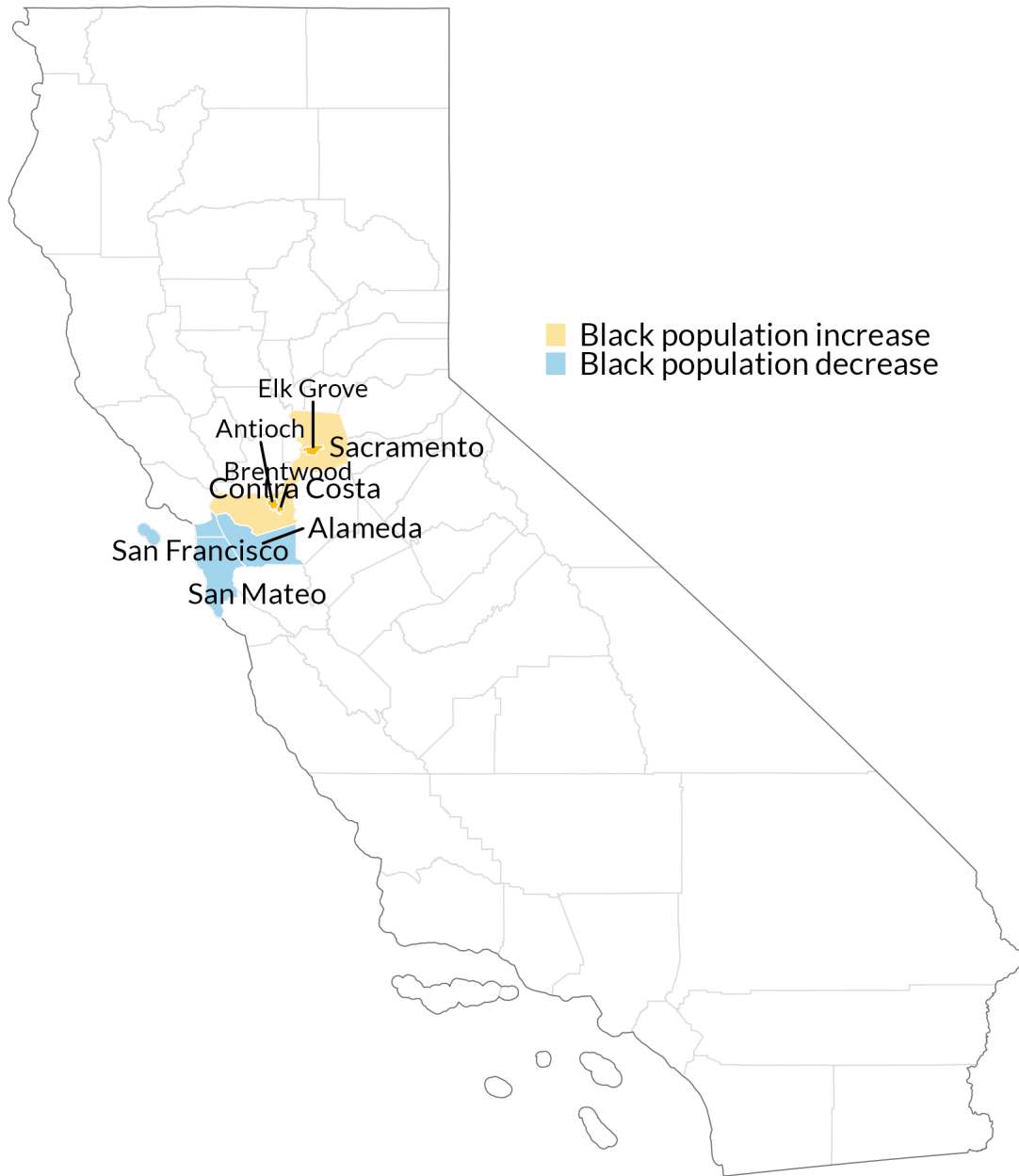
However, this growth has not been evenly distributed across geographies nor across subsets of the population. This unevenness has offered limited opportunities for residents with low incomes and priced many out of their homes. Such pressures have disproportionately affected Black residents in Northern California who face a growing racial wealth gap, mounting rental and homeownership prices, and gentrifying communities.<sup>50</sup>

The data presented within this case study aims to describe some of the demographic, socioeconomic, health and education related, housing-centric, and transportation changes across the region that have taken place over the last three decades. Black outcomes and conditions are compared both within and across jurisdictions. They are framed against non-Black trends, total population trends, and against themselves across municipal borders. This case study serves to better understand resident movement within Northern California for policymakers, as well as current and would-be residents alike.

FIGURE 16

**Focal Municipalities for Northern California**

*State of California by county geography*



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Source: 1990 Decennial Census and 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

## Sample of Northern California Counties with Black Population Decrease

TABLE 12

Population Changes Over Time Where Black Population Decreased: Alameda, San Francisco, and San Mateo Counties

	1990	2021	1990 to 2021
<b>Total population</b>			
<i>Alameda</i>	1,279,182	1,673,133	+30.8%
<i>San Francisco</i>	723,959	865,933	+19.6%
<i>San Mateo</i>	649,623	762,488	+17.4%
<b>Black population</b>			
<i>Alameda</i>	229,249	170,632	-25.6%
<i>San Francisco</i>	79,039	45,135	-42.9%
<i>San Mateo</i>	35,283	17,999	-49.0%
<b>Black population as share of total population</b>			
<i>Alameda</i>	17.9%	10.2%	-7.7%
<i>San Francisco</i>	10.9%	5.2%	-5.7%
<i>San Mateo</i>	5.4%	2.4%	-3.0%

Source: 1990 Decennial Census and 2016-2021 American Community Survey data.

Between 1990 and 2021, Alameda's total population increased by 30.8 percent, San Francisco's by 19.6 percent, and San Mateo's by 17.4 percent. Despite this growth, all three counties experienced a substantial decrease in their Black population over the same period. **The Black population as a share of Alameda County's total population decreased from 17.9 percent to 10.2 percent. San Francisco's Black population share decreased from 10.9 percent to 5.2 percent, and San Mateo's Black population share decreased from 5.4 percent to 2.4 percent (table 12).**



TABLE 13

## 2021 Socioeconomic Indicators

	Median household income	Share of non-Black population in poverty	Black median household income	Share of Black population in poverty
Alameda County	\$112,017	8.0%	\$61,524	16.7%
San Francisco County	\$126,187	9.4%	\$44,142	26.4%
San Mateo County	\$136,837	6.0%	\$90,064	11.2%

Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

The 2021 median income of Black residents in these three counties was starkly different from the median income of the total population. Alameda County’s median Black income was about \$50,000 less than the overall median. San Francisco’s median Black income was about \$80,000 less than the overall median, placing Black median income at nearly a third of total population median income. San Mateo’s median Black income was about \$47,000 less than the overall median. Notably, at just over \$90,000, San Mateo County had one of the highest Black median household incomes in the country, coming in at double the national Black median household income for 2021.<sup>51</sup>

Double the share of Alameda’s Black population met the federal poverty threshold<sup>52</sup> as compared to its non-Black population (table 13). The same was roughly true of San Mateo. In San Francisco, the share of Black residents living in poverty was nearly three times the share of non-Black resident living in poverty. With a statewide Black poverty rate of 19.4 percent and a US national Black poverty rate of 21.7 percent, San Francisco County’s 2021 condition of Black poverty was a staggeringly worrisome outlier.<sup>53</sup>

In Alameda County, median rent was \$2,043 and median home value was \$870,100 in 2021. Black residents experienced higher cost burdens—defined as more than 30 percent of an individual’s income going towards rent, a mortgage, or other housing-related needs—for both renters and owners. Across the county, 54 percent of homes were owner-occupied units and 25.9 percent of non-Black owners were cost burdened. Of Black residents, 32 percent owned their homes and 39.0 percent of Black homeowners were cost burdened. Black renters were also disproportionately cost burdened (59.0 percent) as compared to non-Black renters (44.5 percent) (table 14).

**TABLE 14**  
**2021 Housing Indicators**

	Owner cost burden non-Black population	Renter cost burden non-Black population	Black owner cost burden	Black renter cost burden
Alameda County	25.9%	39.0%	44.5%	59.0%
San Francisco County	28.3%	36.3%	34.2%	50.6%
San Mateo County	28.7%	36.5%	45.7%	52.8%

Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

In San Francisco County, where 2021 median rent was \$2,130 and the median home value was \$1,194,500, 38 percent of homes were owner-occupied units and 28.3 percent of non-Black owners were cost burdened. However, only 21 percent of Black residents in San Francisco owned their home, and 36.3 percent of Black homeowners were cost burdened. Black renters also disproportionately experienced financial hardship with 50.6 percent being subject to rental cost burdens compared to 34.2 percent of non-Black renters.

Following similar trendlines, in San Mateo County, 60 percent of homes were owner-occupied units and 28.7 percent of non-Black owners were cost burdened: 46 percent of Black residents in San Mateo County owned their homes and 36.5 percent of Black homeowners were cost burdened. Black renters experienced cost burden at a rate of 52.8 percent. Among non-Black renters, 45.7 percent experienced rental cost burden. The county's 2021 median rent was \$2,599, and median home value was \$1,225,900.

### **Sample of Counties in Northern California with Black Population Increase**

Sacramento County's total population by about 530,000 residents between 1990 and 2021: an increase of 51.0 percent. Increase in the county's Black population was also sizable. In 2021, the county saw an increase in Black population of nearly 55,000: a 56.5 percent increase. The share of Sacramento's total population comprised of Black residents increased slight from 9.3 percent in 1990 to 9.7 percent in 2021. Contra Costa County saw slower growth over the same period of time, increasing by about 350,000 total residents: a 44.5 percent increase. The county's Black population increased by about 25,000 residents: a 34.4 percent increase. Despite overall growth, the proportion of the total population represented by Black residents declined, dropping from 9.3 percent in 1990 to 8.6 percent in 2021 (table 15).

TABLE 15

**Population Changes Over Time Where Black Population Increased: Contra Costa and Sacramento Counties**

	1990	2021	1990 to 2021
<b>Total population</b>			
<i>Contra Costa</i>	803,732	1,161,643	+44.5%
<i>Sacramento</i>	1,041,219	1,571,767	+51.0%
<b>Black population</b>			
<i>Contra Costa</i>	74,577	100,260	+34.4%
<i>Sacramento</i>	97,129	152,051	+56.5%
<b>Black population as a share of total population</b>			
<i>Contra Costa</i>	9.3%	8.6%	-0.7%
<i>Sacramento</i>	9.3%	9.7%	+0.4%

Source: 1990 Decennial Census and 2016-2021 American Community Survey data.

In both Contra Costa and Sacramento, Black residents earned significantly less than the median income of the total population in 2021: nearly \$34,000 less in Contra Costa and \$20,000 less in Sacramento. Additionally, Black residents disproportionately experience poverty in both counties as compared to the non-Black population.

In Contra Costa, 13.7 percent of Black residents met the federal poverty threshold, compared to 7.7 percent of the non-Black population. In Sacramento, 20.3 percent of Black residents lived in poverty in 2021. Among the county's non-Black population, the rate was 12.5 percent (table 16).

TABLE 16

**2021 Socioeconomic Indicators**

	Median household income	Share of non-Black population in poverty	Black median household income	Share of Black population in poverty
Contra Costa County	\$110,455	7.7%	\$76,540	13.7%
Sacramento County	\$76,422	12.5%	\$56,032	20.3%

Source: 2016-2021 American Community Survey data.

Black residents in Contra Costa and Sacramento County experienced higher housing cost burdens for both renters and owners, exacerbating pressures on lower income households. In Contra Costa County, where 2021 median rent was \$2,061 and the median home values was \$689,000, 28.5 percent of all non-Black homeowners were cost-burdened while 34.2 percent of Black owners were cost-burdened. Similarly disparate, 47.6 percent of all non-Black renters were cost burdened compared to 64 percent of Black renters. Of homes in Contra Costa, 67.0 percent were owner-occupied units. Among the Black population specifically, 46.9 percent of county residents owned their home.

In Sacramento County, median rent was \$1,434 and the median home value was \$398,300 in 2021: 25.4 percent of non-Black homeowners were cost burdened. The same was true for 35.3 percent of Black homeowners. Among renters, 50.4 percent of non-Black residents and 61.5 percent of Black residents were cost burdened. Of homes in Sacramento, 57.8 percent were owner-occupied units. Among the Black population specifically, 34.8 percent of county residents owned their home in 2021 (table 17).

**TABLE 17**  
**2021 Housing Indicators**

	Owner cost burden non-Black population	Renter cost burden non-Black population	Black owner cost burden	Black renter cost burden
Contra Costa County	28.5%	34.2%	47.3%	64.0%
Sacramento County	25.4%	35.3%	50.4%	61.5%

Source: 2016 – 21 American Community Survey data.

## Additional Comparators: Indices Across the Region

Most housing relocations—moves—in the US are local. While the single largest share of moves occurs within-county, the next most common classification are moves that take place within-state. Of those, most occur from one county to an immediately neighboring county. Together, local and within-state moves accounted for 82 percent of all US relocations in 2019.<sup>54</sup>

Against this backdrop, it is reasonable to assume that many of the changes in Black population counts across the counties of Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo, Contra Costa, and Sacramento are directly between one another. Framed differently, it is fair to conclude that many of the Black people

leaving Alameda, San Francisco, and San Mateo are the same Black people settling in Contra Costa and Sacramento. Given this reality, there is value in placing these jurisdictions in conversation with one another; comparing them across a set of quality-of-life indices.

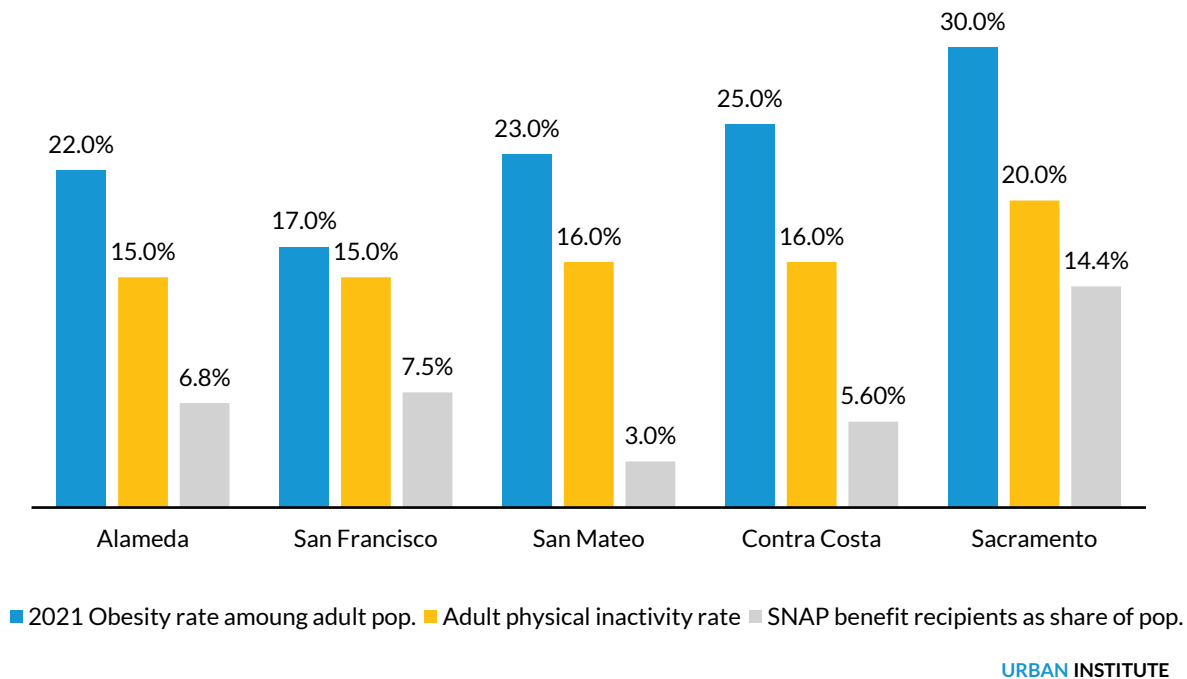
## HEALTH

In 2021, Alameda County's Black infant mortality rate was 7 per 1,000 live Black births. For both San Francisco and Contra Costa, this rate was 6 per 1,000. **Of the five focal counties, Sacramento had the highest Black infant mortality at 8 per 1,000 live Black births.** (San Mateo Black infant mortality data was not available). In all five cases, this figure is substantially worse than infant mortality rates for total, nonracially delineated county populations: 3 per 1,000 live births in the counties of Alameda, San Francisco, and San Mateo; 4 per 1,000 in Contra Costa; and 5 per 1,000 in Sacramento.<sup>55</sup>

**Obesity was highest in Sacramento with 30 percent of the 2021 adult population age 20 and over classified as obese.** Obesity rates in 2021 for the other four focal counties were as follows: 22 percent in Alameda, 17 percent in San Francisco, 23 percent in San Mateo, and 25 percent in Contra Costa. The statewide obesity rate for California that year was 24 percent. Physical inactivity followed similar trends with the largest share of 20-and-older adults in Sacramento reporting having no leisure-time physical activity: 20 percent. The same was true of 15 percent of Alameda's 20-and-over adult population, 15 percent of San Francisco County's, 16 percent of San Mateo's, and 16 percent of Contra Costa's. The statewide average for no leisure-time physical activity was 18 percent. At nearly double the rate of all other county, Sacramento had the largest share of its population receive SNAP benefits in 2021: 14.4 percent. Premature death rates were also notably higher for Sacramento (430 per 100,000 people) than they were for Alameda (262 per 100,000 people), San Francisco (344), San Mateo (255), and Contra Costa (342) (figure 17).<sup>56</sup>

FIGURE 17

Select Health Indicators for Sample of Northern California Counties with Changing Black Populations



Sources: CDC: Adult Obesity Maps 2021; University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, Physical Inactivity 2021; FRED: SNAP Benefits Recipients by County 2021.

Note: Population is abbreviated as "pop." in the legend.

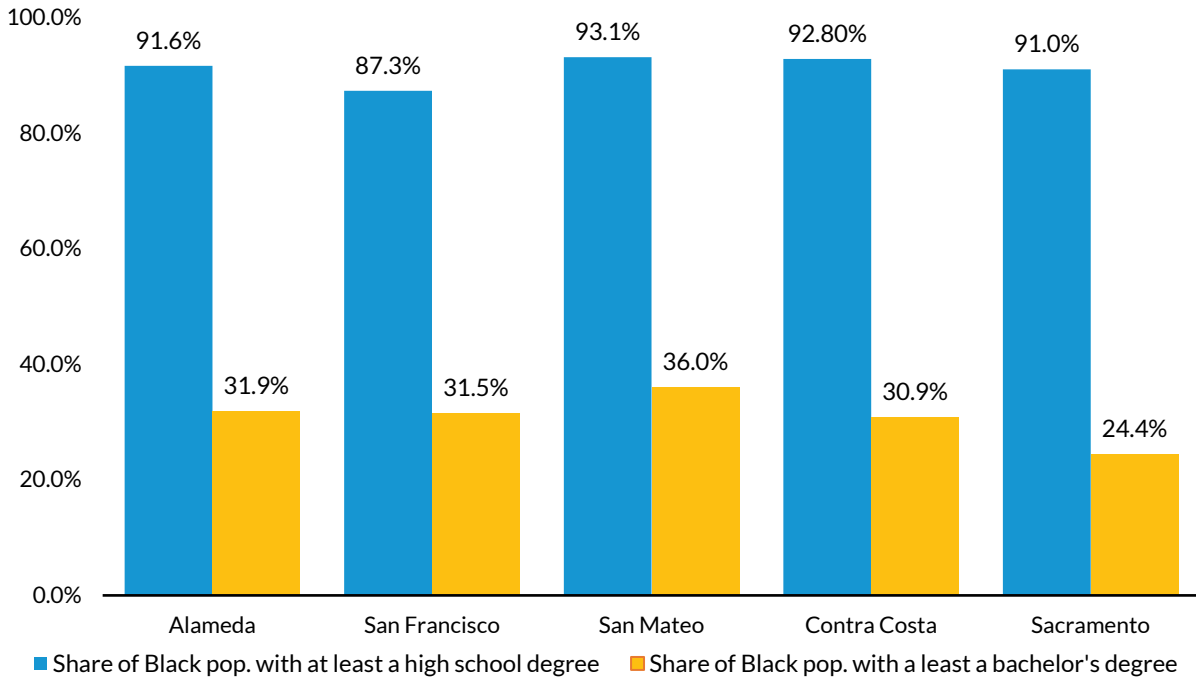
These counties vary significantly not only with respect to health outcomes, but also with respect to health-related land use conditions. **Park inaccessibility is defined by the Department of Parks and Recreation as the percentage of county residents that live farther than half a mile from a park. Alameda's park inaccessibility rate is 5 percent. San Mateo's is 8 percent. Contra Costa's is 17 percent. Sacramento's is 10 percent.** Impressively, San Francisco residents have strong and evenly dispersed access to park: the county's park inaccessibility rate is 0 percent.<sup>57</sup>

## EDUCATION

In 2021, approximately 90 percent of the total populations of Alameda, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties had at least a high school diploma: 89.0 percent, 88.8 percent and 90.8 percent respectively. This rate of education attainment was higher among the Black populations of Alameda and San Mateo County where 91.6 percent and 93.1 percent, respectively, of Black residents held at least a high school diploma. The 2021 share of Black residents holding a high school diploma was lower than the total population's attainment share in San Francisco at 87.3 percent (figure 18).

FIGURE 18

Select Education Indicators for Sample of Northern California Counties with Changing Black Populations



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Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

Note: Population is abbreviated as “pop.” in the legend.

*Around 89.7 percent of the total population of Contra Costa County and 88.1 percent of Sacramento County had at least a high school degree. This rate was higher for the Black population of both counties; 92.8 percent of the Black population of Contra Costa and 91.0 percent of the Black population of Sacramento County had at least a high school degree.*

The disparities regarding the populations of these counties holding a bachelor’s degree or more in 2021 are starker. The percentage of the total population in Alameda, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties who had at least a bachelor’s degree was 49.6 percent, 59.5 percent and 52.5 percent respectively. The share of the Black population who had at least a bachelor’s degree in these counties was 31.9 percent, 31.5 percent, and 36.0 percent, respectively. The story is similar in Contra Costa and

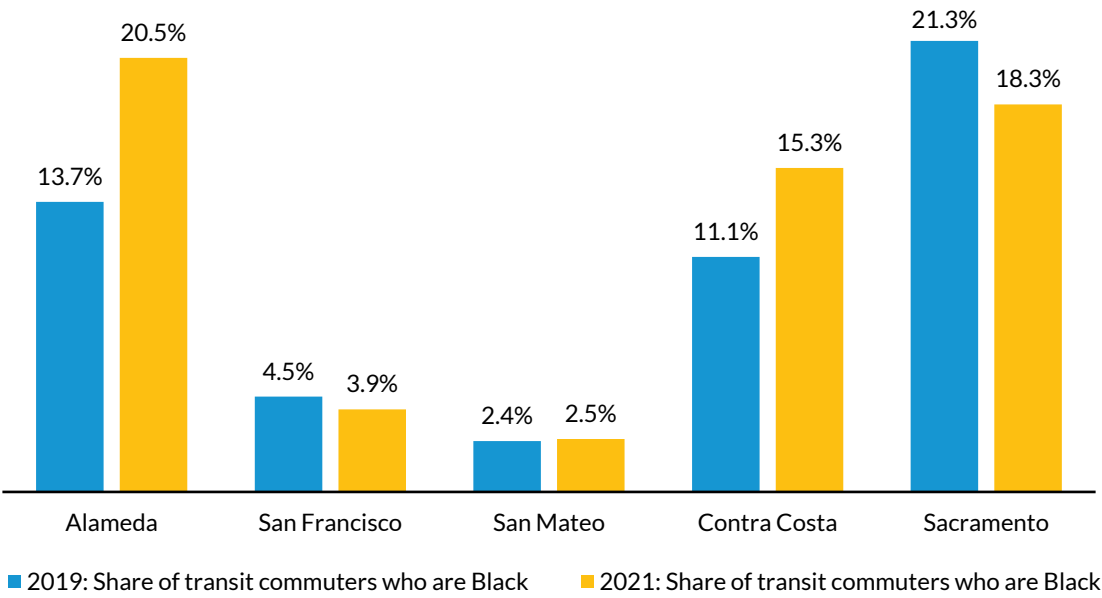
Sacramento County, with the percent of the total population possessing a bachelor’s degree or more being 44.1 percent and 32.0 percent, respectively, while the attainment share for Black residents in these counties was 30.9 percent and 24.4 percent respectively.

At the state level, the share of California’s Black population with at least a high school degree was 89.1 percent in 2021. The share of the state’s Black population with a bachelor’s degree or more was 26.0 percent.

TRANSPORTATION

Northern California features the state’s most extensive and diverse set of transportation networks, namely with respect to pedestrian, cycling, and transit infrastructure. Sustainable modal split is high, especially in the Bay Area, as compared to other metropolitan areas throughout the state.<sup>58</sup> Though the region as a whole features comparatively strong service, San Francisco by far hosts the highest transit, walking, and cycling utilization rates and offers exponentially more trips per day with more connections and better frequency than any of the other focal counties. While the majority of transit trips in San Francisco take place via rail, the majority of transit trips in all other counties take place via bus.

FIGURE 19  
Select Transportation Indicators for Sample of Northern California Counties with Changing Black Populations



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Source: Journey to Work American Community Survey single year estimates.



Figure 19, above, reflects two concurrent phenomena. First, transit ridership across the region and the country at large is attempting to recover from record-breaking lows due to COVID-19 and its lasting impacts on anxiety in contained public spaces such as transition station and onboard buses (Navarrete-Hernandez et al. 2023), work location requirements, and largely work-from-home affordances (Kahana and Dickens 2023). However, across the country, workers of color, Black workers in particular, serve disproportionately in ‘essential’ roles, service roles that require in-person presence, and for a handful of other reasons are less likely to have the option to work from home or access to travel mode alternatives than white workers. As a result, Black transit ridership has remained comparatively strong. In some counties, this persistent Black ridership paired with increases in Black populations in suburban areas has resulted in a significant increase in the share of transit riders represented by Black residents. Such trends are widespread and define the majority of the country’s largest urbanized areas. Both Alameda and Contra Costa serve as prime examples of this with lower share of their transit work commute ridership identifying as Black in 2019 than in 2021.

Interestingly, two of the five focal counties in the region, San Francisco and Sacramento, saw their share of transit work-trip commuters represented by Black residents decrease from 2019 (pre-COVID) to 2021 (recovery stage). This stands in opposition to national trends. This could be occurring because COVID-era financial pressures have priced Black riders out of being able to afford transit—a reasonable assumption as transit costs continue to be increasingly non-competitive with alternative modes (for example, a one-way BART ticket can cost up to \$10.30)—or the rate at which workers are losing their jobs and therefore no longer making commute trips is disproportionately high for Black residents of these particular counties.

Prior to COVID-19, the average journey to work trip times were somewhat varied across the region’s counties. In 2019, the average journey to work took 33 minutes for both Alameda residents and San Francisco residents, 29 minutes for San Mateo County residents, 38 minutes for those living in Contra Costa, and 28 minutes for those in Sacramento.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

In 2021, there were 18 instances of use-of-force incidents in Contra Costa County, 28 in Sacramento, 5 in San Mateo, 12 in San Francisco, and 32 in Alameda County (Bonta 2021a). In 2020, there was one instance of an anti-Black hate crime in Contra Costa County, 5 in Alameda County, 8 in Sacramento County, 1 in San Mateo County, and 0 in San Francisco (Bonta 2021b).

## Sample of Cities in Northern California with Black Population Growth

This section focuses on conditions in three areas that have experienced the region's largest city-level growth in the share of their population that identifies as Black between 1990 and 2021 (table 18).

**TABLE 18**

**Population Changes Over Time Where Black Population Increased: Cities of Antioch, Brentwood, and Elk Grove**

	1990	2021	1990 to 2021
<b>Total population</b>			
<i>Antioch</i>	62,195	114,750	+84.5%
<i>Brentwood</i>	7,563	63,618	+741.2%
<i>Elk Grove</i>	17,489	175,510	+903.9%
<b>Black population</b>			
<i>Antioch</i>	1,626	23,073	Pop. grew x 14 times
<i>Brentwood</i>	53	6,057	Pop. grew x 114 times
<i>Elk Grove</i>	369	19,247	Pop. grew x 52 times
<b>Black population as share of total population</b>			
<i>Antioch</i>	2.6%	20.1%	+17.5%
<i>Brentwood</i>	0.7%	9.5%	+8.8%
<i>Elk Grove</i>	2.1%	11.0%	+8.9%

**Source:** 1990 Decennial Census and 2016-2021 American Community Survey data.

**Note:** Population is abbreviated as "pop." in the table.

Antioch, in Contra Costa County, is a 30 square mile commuter city that almost doubled in size over the past 30 years. In the same county, Brentwood's total population grew by 8 times since 1990. Largely surrounded by farmland, Brentwood has become more suburbanized in recent decades.<sup>59</sup> **Elk Grove, Sacramento County, grew even more rapidly over this time while remaining one of the county's most affluent areas.**

The period of 1990 to 2021 saw major growth for all three cities, not only with respect to the total population but with respect to the Black population as well. In Antioch, the city with the largest number of new Black residents (21,447) across this 30-year span, the number of Black people residing in the city was about 14 times as many in 2021 as in 1990. This surge meant that Black residents went from making up 2.6 percent of the 1990 total population to 20.1 percent of the 2021 total population. Brentwood's Black population did not increase as sizably (+6,000 residents). Still, its Black population

grew by a multiplier of 114 times during this time. Elk Grove's Black population grew by 52 times taking its 1990 Black population of 369 to 19,247 in 2021. Overall, Brentwood saw an 8.8 percent increase in the share of its population who identifies as Black, and Elk Grove saw an 8.9 percent increase.

## **Disparities Across Other Indices: 2021 City-Level Data**

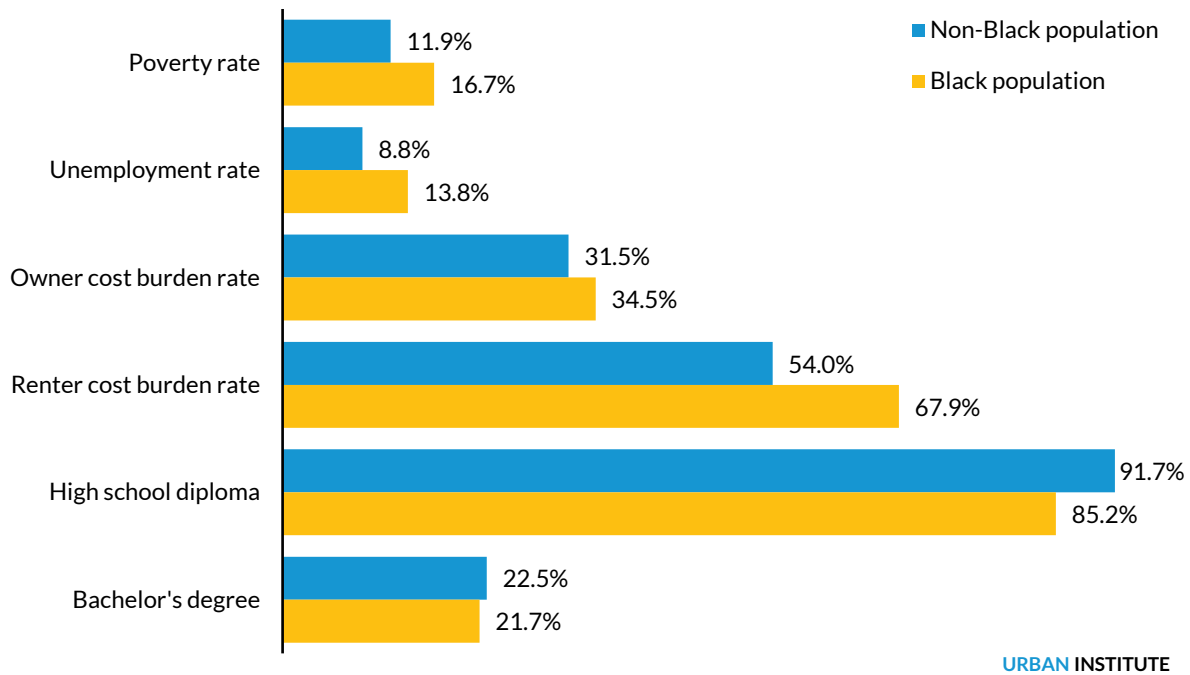
As mentioned earlier, the story of Black household movement in California is not one that can be fully told through census data (nor was telling the fullness of that story the objective of this work). It is not one exclusively defined by difficulty, by a dearth of resources and agency, nor by disparity and cause for concern. Though the data highlighted in this section speak most strikingly to the negative side of many coins for Black Californians, it is important to keep in mind two vital points: (1) conditions of Black joy, Black resilience, Black thriving, Black entrepreneurship, and Black innovation abound; and (2) the data currently collected via the census captures but a tiny sliver of information related to quality of life, and that that lack of information may be hindering our ability to truly understand life conditions across many communities. While past census efforts to expand the suite of measures of well-being<sup>60</sup> exist, they are limited, have not been continued into every census year, and are not all delineated by race. The focus in this section of the limited measures that are collected as a part of every census serves, in part, as a call for continued work toward expansion of the census's 'well-being' encapsulation.

### **ANTIOCH**

In Antioch, 11.9 percent of the 2021 non-Black population met the poverty threshold. For Black Antioch residents, that rate was 16.7 percent. Black residents also had a higher unemployment rate (13.8 percent) than non-Black residents (8.8 percent). The 2021 median rent in Antioch was \$1,986 and the median home value was \$467,500. Of total Antioch residents, 61.9 percent owned their homes in 2021 compared to 47.5 percent of Black residents.

FIGURE 20

### Antioch Quality-of-Life Indicators by Non-Black and Black Population



Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

Of the non-Black population of homeowners in Antioch, 31.5 percent were cost burden. For Black homeowners, this figure was 34.5 percent. The non-Black population renter cost burden rate was 54.0 percent and Black renter cost burden rate sat at 67.9 percent. Non-black residents exceeded the Black population education attainment statistics for high school degree attainment (91.7 percent of the non-Black population held a high school diploma versus 85.2 percent of the Black population). There was much parity between the Black and non-Black population with respect to attainment of a bachelor's degree of higher: 21.7 percent of the Black population versus 22.5 percent of the non-Black population (figure 20).

### BRENTWOOD

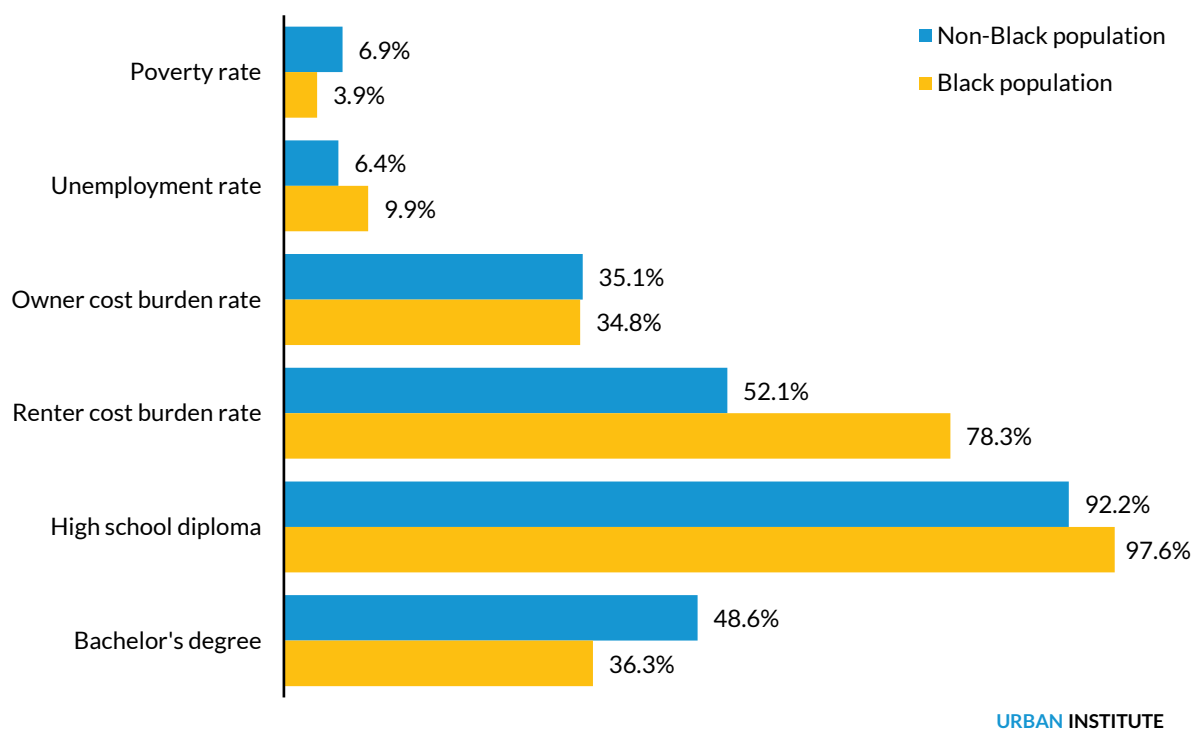
In Brentwood, 6.9 percent of the 2021 non-Black population lived in poverty. Counter to most cities, in which Black poverty rates are higher than rates experienced by nearly all other races, just 3.9 percent of Black Brentwood residents met the poverty threshold. Black residents did, however, face a higher unemployment rate (9.9 percent) compared to the non-Black residents (6.4 percent). The 2021 median rent in Brentwood was \$2,248, and the median home value was \$634,700. Home ownership rates were

distinctly high in Brentwood as compared to cities across the region. Of total Brentwood residents, 80.2 percent owned their homes in 2021. The same was true for 73.3 percent of Black residents.

Of the non-Black population of homeowners in Brentwood, 35.1 percent were cost burdened. For Black homeowners, this figure was slightly lower at 34.8 percent. This level of parity contrasts starkly with rent-related figures. Of non-Black renters, 52.1 percent were cost burdened. Of Black renters, 78.3 percent were cost burdened. Black residents exceeded the non-Black population education attainment statistics for high school degree attainment (97.6 percent of the Black population held a high school diploma in 2021 versus 92.2 percent of the non-Black population). At nearly 100 percent high school degree attainment, Brentwood has one of the country's highest Black education attainment rates. Brentwood had a higher share of its non-Black population with at least a bachelor's degree (48.6 percent) than share of its Black population (36.3 percent) (figure 21).

FIGURE 21

**Brentwood Quality-of-Life Indicators by Non-Black and Black Population**



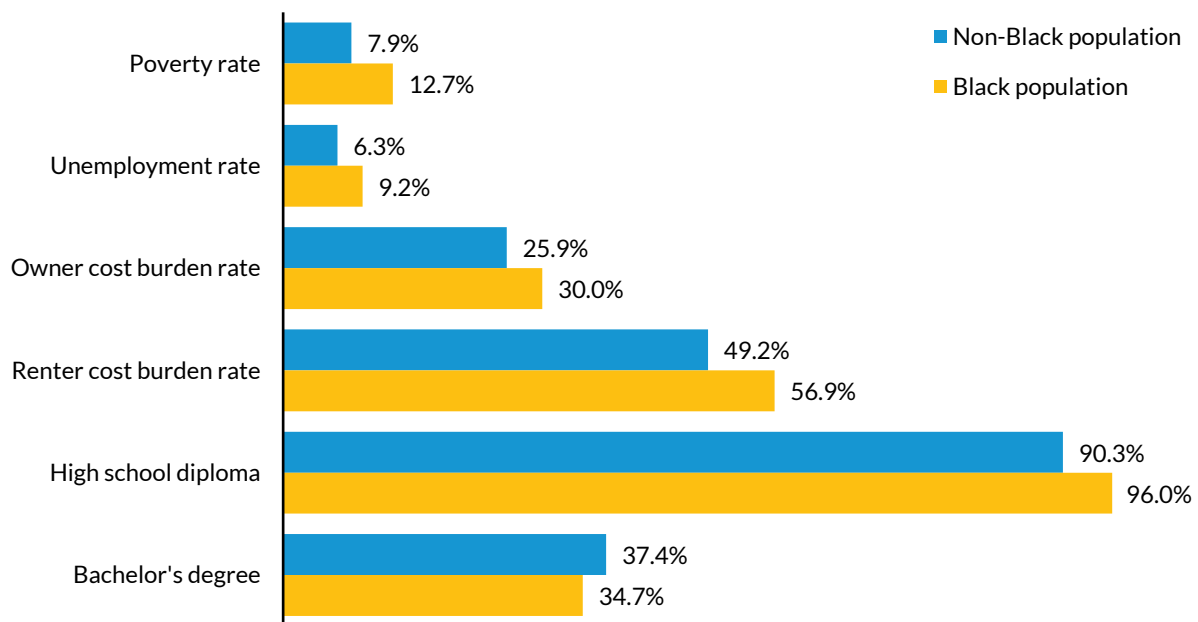
Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

## ELK GROVE

In Elk Grove, 7.9 percent of the 2021 non-Black population met the poverty threshold. For Black Elk Grove residents, that rate was 12.7 percent. Black residents also had a higher unemployment rate (9.2 percent) than non-Black residents (6.3 percent). The 2021 median rent in Elk Grove was \$1,898, and the median home value was \$466,600. Of total Elk Grove residents, 74.0 percent owned their homes in 2021 compared to 54.5 percent of Black residents. Of the non-Black population of homeowners in Elk Grove, 25.9 percent were cost burdened. For Black homeowners, this figure was 30.0 percent. The non-Black population renter cost burden rate was 49.2 percent, and Black renter cost burden rate sat at 56.9 percent. Black residents exceeded the non-Black population education attainment statistics for high school degree attainment (96.0 percent of the Black population held a high school diploma versus 90.3 percent of the non-Black population). The racial education gap was narrower and inverted with respect to bachelor's degree attainment: 34.7 percent of the Black population versus 37.4 percent of the non-Black population (figure 22).

FIGURE 22

### Elk Grove Quality-of-Life Indicators by Non-Black and Black Population



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: 2016–21 American Community Survey data.

## Policy and Programmatic Consideration

Northern California is largely characterized by high levels of wealth disparity between Black and non-Black populations and high housing cost burdens. It also hosts lower levels of poverty and unemployment across both Black and non-Black communities than do Southern and Central California.

### STATE LEVEL

**Establish a virtuous cycle of development by supporting established Black development and Black-led community-based organizations:**

- This cycle of development could be achieved via using dedicated state-level funding, for example, a California Black Housing and Community Fund, across three interrelated investment areas:
  - » [project development](#) to increase housing access for Black families and support Black-led developers to bring “brick and mortar” projects to fruition
  - » [organizational capacity building](#) to strengthen the ability of Black-led organizations to deliver projects and services
  - » [community planning](#) to envision future projects, especially in parts of the state that are experiencing a growing Black population

### COUNTY LEVEL

**Commit to poverty alleviation and wealth creation:**

- The financial state of Black residents of San Francisco is particularly worrisome. Black median income is one-third that of non-Black median income, and 1 out of every 4 Black San Francisco resident lives below the Federal poverty line. Though poverty rates among the broader US Black population are on the decline,<sup>61</sup> San Francisco’s Black poverty rate is increasing rapidly.<sup>62</sup> Continued and new resources should be dedicated to easing the contributory pressures to poverty, especially those that disproportionately impact Black households:
  - » [Dedicating resources to ease the pressures contributing to poverty](#) include, but are not limited to:
    - [child care assistance](#)
    - [pre-apprentice and apprenticeship program funding](#)
    - [tax credits \(for example, education, energy, housing\)](#)

- [pay equity \(nationally, Black women earn 63 cents to every \\$1 earned by white men\)](#)

#### **Support housing cost relief efforts:**

- Due to the effects of COVID-19, many residents experienced increased housing insecurity and cost burdens placed on them:
  - » [Providing emergency rental assistance support.](#) The increased housing insecurity and cost burdens placed on many residents due to COVID-19 continue to have an effect. Programs designed to combat the pandemic's impact need ongoing reinforcement.
  - » [Enacting or maintaining eviction moratoriums.](#) This include rent holds as well as provision of legal representation in eviction cases. As the workforce has yet to bounce back from the pandemic, the need for these protections has not dissipated.

#### **Incentivize wellness and combine it with systems of learning:**

- Health and Black education attainment performance indicators are comparatively low in Sacramento. Sacramento is the region's only county with Black college degree attainment (24 percent) below the state average of 26 percent:
  - » [Placing these factors in policy conversations:](#)
    - safe routes to school (bicycle infrastructure).
    - schools can financially incentivize students (varied schooling levels) to walk or take sustainable/healthful modes to school.
    - work-partnership benefit packages (transit/walk/bike incentivization)

### **LOCAL LEVEL**

#### **Learn from peer municipalities:**

- There may be practices regarding education and poverty alleviation that Brentwood has found particularly impactful and can coach others on:
  - » [Sharing strategies from other jurisdictions experiencing success.](#) Brentwood has a near-100 percent high school degree attainment rate among its Black population (98 percent). It also has, compared to over cities in the region, a low Black poverty rate (4 percent).
  - » [Establishing systems of ongoing peer learning that benefit all of the region's cities.](#)

#### **Decrease housing market demand pressures:**



- » [Legalizing accessory dwelling units](#). Doing so can be an effective means of increasing housing supply and diversifying housing typology to meet varied family/household needs.
- » [Allocate public land for affordable housing](#). This can be an effective way to greatly minimize barrier costs to development for non-commercial, non-market rate, and/or non-mixed-use projects.

## In Closing

As Black Californians continue patterns of within-state housing relocation, questions arise for migrating residents as well as those charged with their stewardship (e.g. policymakers, service providers, landlords and developers, chambers of commerce, community organizations, elected officials). These questions can be boiled down into two categories: (1) what quality of life awaits me (or them)?, and (2) how can that quality of life be enhanced? By comparing readily available census data across jurisdictions losing Black population and those gaining, this work begins to answer both—at a zoomed-out lens, one must note.

In general, we find that Black Californians are moving into areas with lower average housing costs largely typified by higher rates of physical inactivity (contributed to by less walk-friendly built environments, less access to parks, and fewer active transportation options), higher poverty and unemployment rates, and lower levels of education attainment than the areas from which they are relocating. While an initial assessment of this reality may raise concern, it also suggests that this moment could be catalytic for Black population-receiving communities: new Black residents may bring with them greater demands of school boards, new sources of tax revenue, new values of activity, and they may create new jobs as they open new businesses. To actuate this moment of potential collective uplifting and well-being, we make policy recommendations at the state, regional, county, and local levels centered around the following themes:

- Supporting continued—largely enacted during COVID-19—housing cost relief programs, facilitating Black homeownership, preserving lower cost rental opportunities, and decreasing housing market pressures.
- Committing to poverty alleviation by fostering a sustainable workforce and supporting the establishment of new Black-owned businesses.
- Investing in public wellness via its infrastructural tributaries of education, sustainable transportation, health, and safety (by way of civic accountability and oversight).

Finally, we highlight that work of this nature is limited in its dependence on readily available, standardized, uniformly collected (across jurisdictions and over time) data. As a result, the findings presented here fall short of painting the full picture of Black quality-of-life California. Because what gets measured gets improved, we advise that California would benefit from conducting its own, statewide quality-of-life census at a regular cadence that features questions delineated by race and designed to complement those already collected in the nationwide census. We recommend further that decisions of which data/metrics to include in such a state-specific census ought to be contributed to by practitioners in the growing field of race-based analytics.<sup>63</sup>

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