

2007 San Joaquin Valley Quality of Life Index



Tracking Quality of Life in the San Joaquin Valley

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PREFACE

The Center for Economic Research and Education of Central California (CERECC) is proud to present the **2007 San Joaquin Valley Quality of Life Index**. This is the first publication of its class in the region, and we hope to produce similar reports on a yearly basis designed to give an overall picture of the community's well being.

Although most residents of the San Joaquin Valley have a basic understanding of the economic conditions in each of its composing eight counties, we don't have a clear and concise measurement that captures most dimensions of the quality of life in the region that is also meaningful and useful. Institutional information is relatively abundant, however most of it is composed by 'raw' or aggregated numbers and are released without much analysis, which makes them subject to erroneous or even biased interpretation.

Perhaps more importantly, current traditional 'measurements' of regional progress and prosperity are frequently based on some notion of economic performance. They look at single indicators such as job growth, per capita income or unemployment rates, which completely ignore other factors that, taken together, are equally relevant when measuring regional economic development and the quality of life—examples of these are educational attainment, air quality, housing affordability, public safety, health conditions, to name a few.

The **Quality of Life Index (QLI)** is composed of an assorted list of indicators that measure the quality of community life and track it over time. The indicators do not explain why trends behave the way they do or what should be done to make improvements. Rather, the QLI indicators are vehicles for sharing and comparing information and best practices. The QLI indicators should assist to identify the causes and solutions to complex problems, and should help to measure the effectiveness of public policy and programs.

In addition, we hope that the QLI will serve as a tool for discussion and planning, and will increase the level of scrutiny and shared accountability for what happens in the San Joaquin Valley. We also hope that the QLI will help to build connections among people with common concerns in the many communities of the San Joaquin Valley by providing the information needed to generate those conversations.

So, what can you do with this report? Share the information with colleagues and friends. Become and advocate for positive change and support the community's efforts to measure, track and improve elements of its quality of life. In other words, get involved in the community and make a difference.

This year's report is a result of the financial support of the Provost Office and the College of Social Sciences at California State University, Fresno. Without their support this report would not have been possible. Being the first time in producing this report, we realize that there is ample room for improvement in several areas: for example, in the criteria for selecting the indicators as well as in the weights assigned to them, in the way the components were calculated as well as in the selection of the comparative regions.

For this reason, we extend a friendly invitation to every member of the community in the San Joaquin Valley, including business leaders, policy makers and community advocates, to provide us with their thoughts and feedback to help us make this effort more useful and worthwhile. Similarly, we openly invite interested parties to continue sponsoring this project to contact us. Only the combination of excellent ideas and committed resources will give us the power to move us forward.

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www.csufresno.edu/cerecc/

* Special thanks to Ms. Iliana Pérez for her invaluable research assistance.

Executive Summary

The **Quality of Life Index (QLI)** is a composite index that measures and tracks the quality of life in the San Joaquin Valley. The main goal of producing the QLI is to create an instrument for sharing and comparing information in order to build connections among residents with common concerns in the many communities of the San Joaquin Valley. The QLI does not examine why trends occur and does not offer policy recommendations to make improvements.

Key salient findings of the report include:

- The overall QLI index for California for the last 7 years has been significantly above of all SJV counties, which indicates that the overall performance of the SJV has substantially lagged the one of the whole State. Among the SJV counties in 2006, San Joaquin is the county that shows the higher quality of life while Tulare shows the lower quality of life.
- In terms of the economy component, for the period 200-2006, all SJV counties have been consistently outperformed by the State of California. The SJV shows a slight downward trend in economic terms.
- In terms of the business component, only San Joaquin County has outperformed California during the last few years. All other counties not only have shown a lower business component index than California, but also somewhat disperse. Most counties show a slight downward trend.
- In terms of the public safety component, with the exception of Kings County, all other SJV counties have been outperformed by California during the last 7 years. San Joaquin shows a significantly lower public safety performance.
- In terms of the government and politics component, all SJV counties have been outperformed by California which in fact shows a slight upward trend while the SJV as a whole remains stagnant. Among the best performers are Kern and Kings Counties, while among the poorest performers, Madera and Tulare Counties stand out.
- In terms of the community health component, with the exception of Madera County, all other SJV counties show a lower health performance than California. Although the differences are not extreme for most counties, the case of Kern County is particularly dramatic as it shows the lowest index value and a slight downward trend for the last 3 years.
- In terms of the literacy and education component, most SJV counties have been outperformed by California for the last few years. As a whole, the SJV region shows a steady performance but always below the one of the State.

WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX (QLI)?

The **Quality if Life Index (QLI)** is a composite index. The underlying principle of the index is that the quality of life is a reflection of the balance of social, cultural, environmental and economic factors at work in the San Joaquin Valley region. The QLI presents facts and data, rather than opinions. “Quality of life” does not refer to subjective interpretations of happiness resulting from interpersonal relationships or personal success. Rather, the QLI refers to the feeling of well-being, fulfillment or satisfaction resulting from factors in the external environment from a community perspective. Thus, the QLI only provides numerical indicators. We realize that some important dimensions of the quality of life are left out but this is only because quantitative indicators for those dimensions are not available.

The QLI has **7 broad components** which together contain **34 distinctive indicators** as defined next:

- 1) **Economy**, intended to capture the overall economic conditions. It is made of the following indicators:
 - a) Unemployment Rate
 - b) Employment Growth
 - c) Labor Force Participation Rate
 - d) Poverty Rate
 - e) Median Household Income
 - f) Per Capita Personal Income
 - g) Average Earnings per Job
 - h) Median Rent Estimates
 - i) Median Home Prices

- 2) **Business**, intended to sum up the business climate. It is made of the following indicators:
 - a) Number of Businesses per Capita
 - b) Total Deposits per Capita in Commercial banks and savings institutions
 - c) Total Non-residential Valuation Authorized by Building Permits per capita
 - d) Rate of Total Bankruptcy Filings (per 1,000 in the population)

- 3) **Public Safety**, intended to measure the conditions related to crime and overall community safety. It is made of the following indicators:
 - a) Rate of Violent Crime (per 1,000 in the population)
 - b) Rate of Property Crime (per 1,000 in the population)
 - c) Total Felons (per 1,000 in the population)
 - d) Injury Collisions (per 1,000 in the population)

- 4) **Government and Politics**, intended to capture political participation and overall government involvement. It is made of the following indicators:
 - a) Federal Government expenditure per capita
 - b) Voter Registration (registered as % of eligible population)
 - c) Property Taxes

- 5) **Community Health**, intended to sum up the overall health conditions of the community. It is made of the following indicators:
 - a) Infant Death rate (per 1,000 live births)
 - b) Number of physicians (per 1,000 in the population)
 - c) AIDS cases (per 100,000 in the population)
 - d) Ozone level, number of days above national 8-hour standard

- 6) **Literacy and Education**, intended to measure the schooling performance and overall educational conditions. It is made of the following indicators:
 - a) One Year grade 9-12 dropout rate
 - b) High School Graduation Rate
 - c) Per Pupil Spending (K-12)
 - d) SAT I Total Scores (Verbal + Math)
 - e) Number of High School Students per Computer

- 7) **Social Environment**, intended to capture the overall conditions regarding the social environment. It is made of the following indicators:
 - a) Total child abuse cases (per 1,000 in the population)
 - b) Domestic Violence Total calls (per 1,000 in the population)
 - c) Fatal Violent Injuries to Females (per 1,000 in the population)
 - d) Rate of Juvenile Felony Arrests (per in the 1,000 population)
 - e) Contributions, Gifts and Grants to Public Charities per capita

Each of the 34 indicators composing the QLI was chosen and is maintained based on the following 5 criteria:

Purpose: The indicator must be meaningful in that it provides relevant and useful information.

Stability: The indicator must contain data that are collected, compiled and calculated with the same methodology each year.

Comparability: The indicator must be available for all regions and computed with consistent methodologies across regions.

Understandability: The indicator must provide information in a way that most community members can easily understand and interpret.

Representative: All indicators taken together should measure the major dimensions of the quality of life in the community.

HOW IS THE QLI CALCULATED AND FOR WHICH REGIONS?

The mathematics behind the calculation of the QLI is relatively simple where each of the 34 indicators receives a score between 0 and 100 points based on relative rankings. Computing the QLI follows these 3 steps:

Step 1: For every year starting in 2000, the region with the best performance receives 100 points while the poorest performance region receives 0 points.

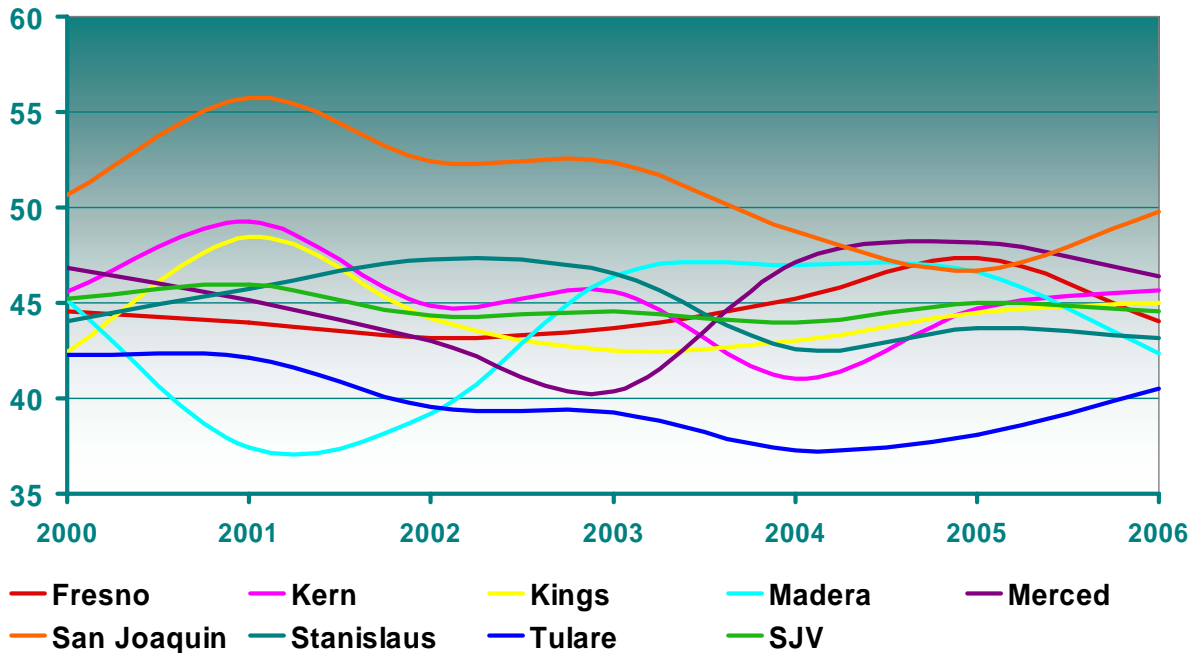
Step 2: The other regions receive scores between 0 and 100 points according to their relative performance. To calculate this, first we take the ratio of 100 to the difference between the largest and smallest value of a given indicator value per year. This is called the first component. Second, we take the difference between the largest indicator value in a given region and the indicator value for each of the other regions. This is called the second component. The score that each region receives (between 0 and 100) equals the product of the first component and the second component. This is called the indicator index.

Step 3: The index for each of the 7 components is calculated as the simple average of the index indicators contained in each component. For example, the government and politics index is calculated as the average of its three indicators indices: the Federal Government expenditure per capita index, the Voter Registration index and the Property Taxes index. Finally, the overall QLI is calculated as the simple average of the 34 indicator indices.

There are 10 regions selected for the QLI: the eight counties composing the San Joaquin Valley (**Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare**), the average for the region, and the whole State of California. The goal is to be able to measure, track and compare the quality of life indicators of each county to the whole region and the state.

In the following pages, the QLI is presented along with each of its components and indicators. First, the overall QLI is shown. Next, the index for each of the 7 components is presented followed by each of its indicators. Each page contains a brief explanation of the numbers and an interpretation of what they mean for the San Joaquin Valley.

Quality of Life Index (QLI)



What is the measure?

The QLI is the average of the 34 indicator indices. Regions with relatively better overall performance are closer to 100 and those regions with relatively worse overall performance are closer to 0. California is consistently above 65 for the period 2000-2006. So, for clarity of the graph California is not shown.

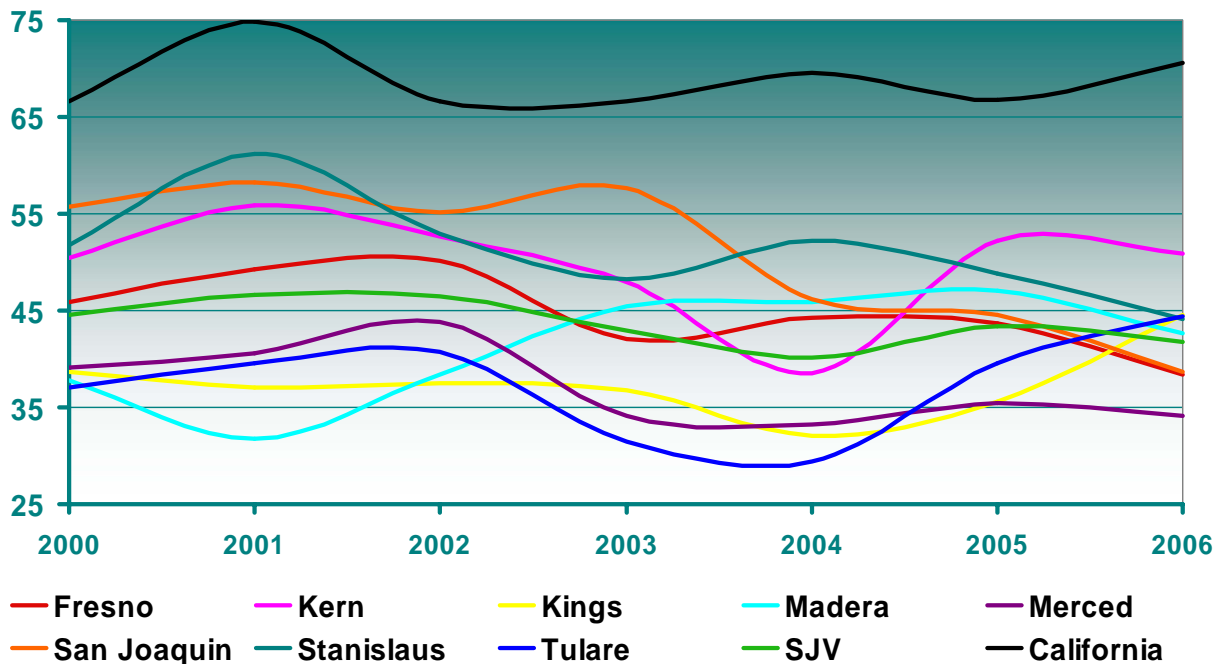
Why is it relevant?

The QLI is intended to measure the quality of life in the SJV and track it over time. The QLI as well as its 34 indicators should assist to identify the causes and solutions to complex problems, and should help to measure the effectiveness of public policy and programs.

How is the SJV doing?

The QLI index for California for the last 7 years it has been significantly above of all SJV counties: **73** in 2000, **74** in 2001, **71** in 2002, **68** in 2003, **66** in 2004, **71** in 2005 and **71** in 2006. It is not shown in the chart for clarity, but it is clear that the overall performance of the SJV has substantially lagged the one of the whole State. Among the SJV counties, San Joaquin is the county that shows the higher quality of life while Tulare County shows the lower quality of life.

Index Component 1: *Economy*



What is the measure?

The economy component index is the average of the 9 economic indicators shown immediately after this page. Regions with relatively better economic performance are closer to 100 and those regions with relatively worse economic performance are closer to 0.

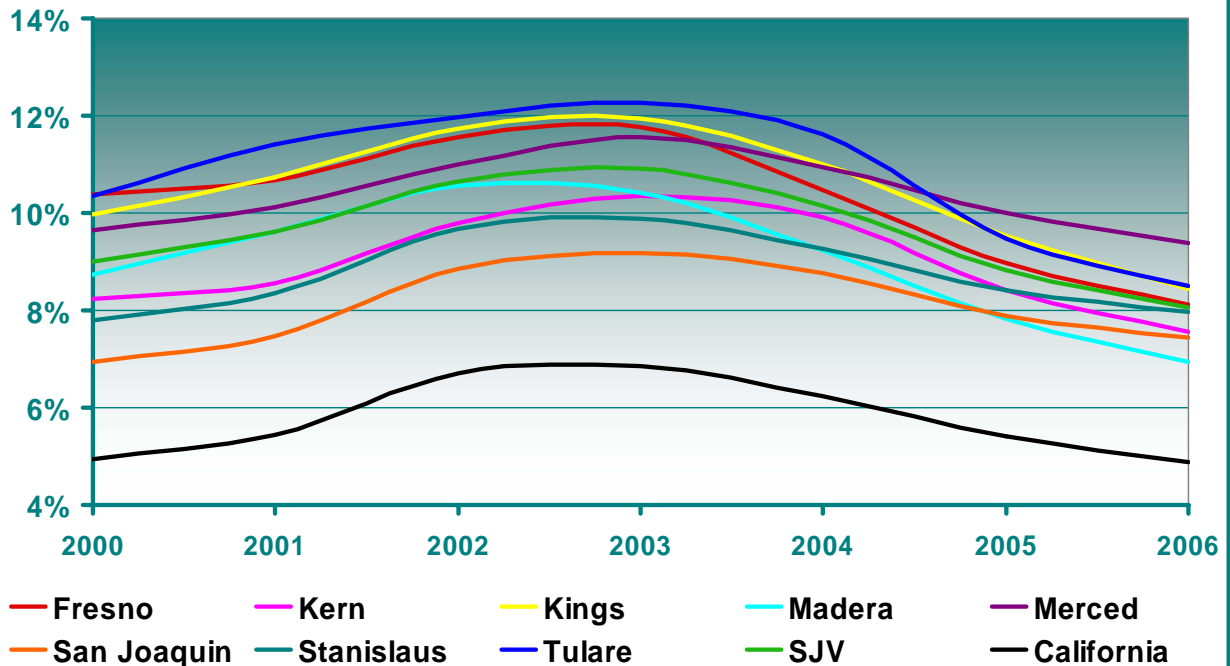
Why is it relevant?

Economic performance is frequently equated to development and prosperity. Although pure economic factors are not enough to capture the full scope of what is meant by quality of life, they are certainly among the most significant indicators of advance and progress.

How is the SJV doing?

All SJV counties have been outperformed by the State of California as a whole. Perhaps more importantly, the SJV shows a slight downward trend led by at least 3 counties (Fresno, Stanislaus and San Joaquin). In 2006, Kern showed the best economic performance while Merced showed the worst.

Economy: Unemployment Rate



Source: California Employment Development Department

What is the measure?

The unemployment rate is calculated as the proportion that the number of unemployed represents of the labor force. It is expressed in percentage terms.

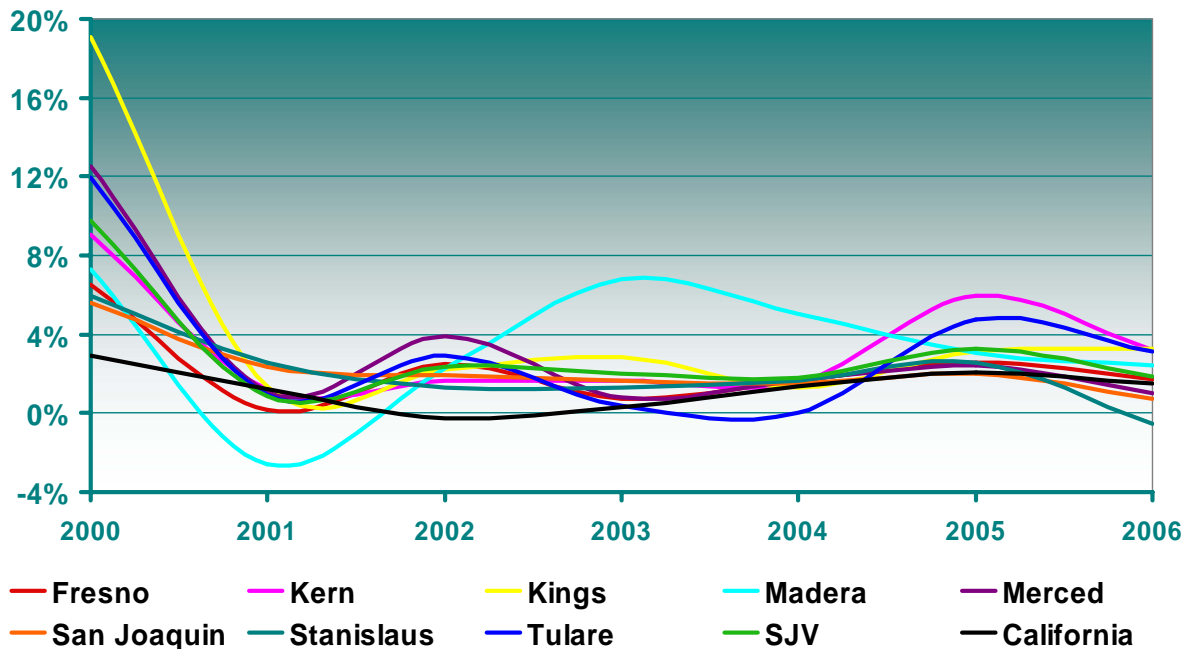
Why is it relevant?

The unemployment rate measures the condition and extent of joblessness within a given economy. The unemployment rate also serves as a gauge of the health of the labor market and the regional economy, where high numbers of unemployed relative to the labor force can indicate poor economic health.

How is the SJV doing?

Despite the recent downward trend after the recession years, all SJV counties have experienced higher unemployment rates than California. The 2006 differential in unemployment rates between California and the SJV was 3 percent points. For the same year, Merced showed the highest unemployment rate (9.3%) while Madera showed the lowest (6.9%).

Economy: Employment Growth



Source: California Employment Development Department

What is the measure?

Employment growth is calculated as the annual rate of growth of total employment. It is expressed in percentage terms.

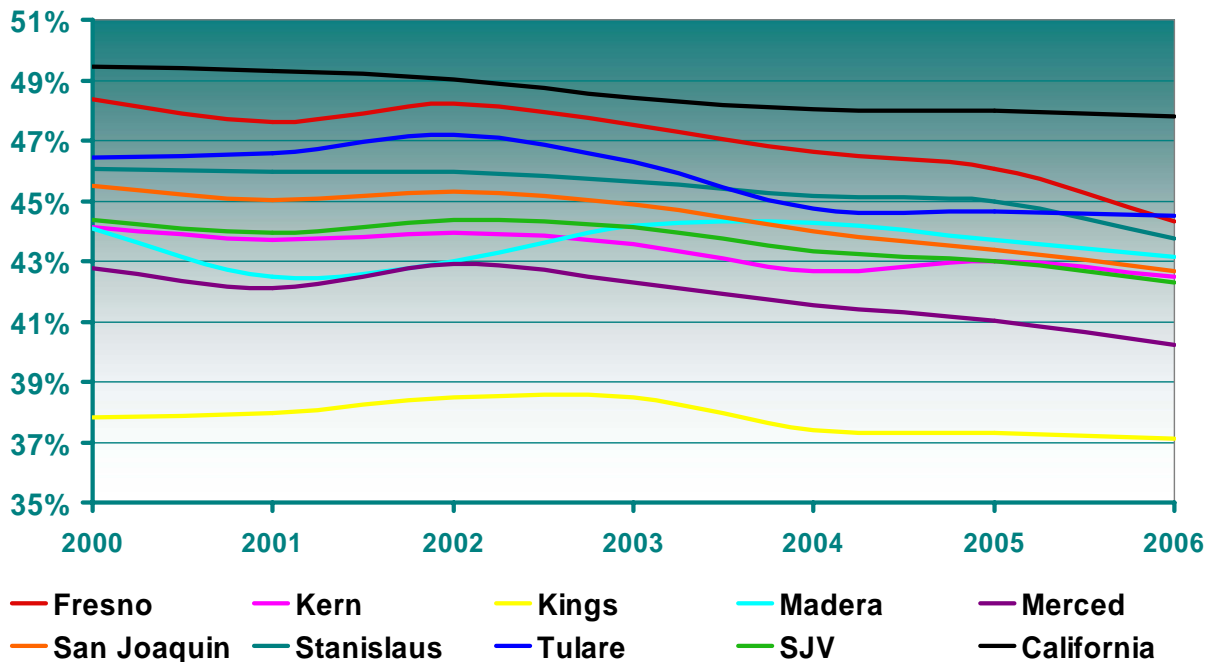
Why is it relevant?

Employment growth measures the speed at which jobs are being created. Similar to the unemployment rate, it also serves as a gauge of economic health. Generally, economies with rapidly growing employment are considered healthier than those with low employment growth.

How is the SJV doing?

After a period of high employment growth rates that ended in 2000, most SJV counties are now experiencing lower employment growth rates. In 2006, only Stanislaus registered negative growth rates, which meant job losses. On the positive side, in 2006 five SJV counties registered higher employment rates than California (Fresno, Madera, Kern, Kings and Tulare).

Economy: Labor Force Participation Rate



Source: California Employment Development Department

What is the measure?

The labor force participation rate is calculated as the fraction of the population that is in the labor force. It is expressed in percentage terms.

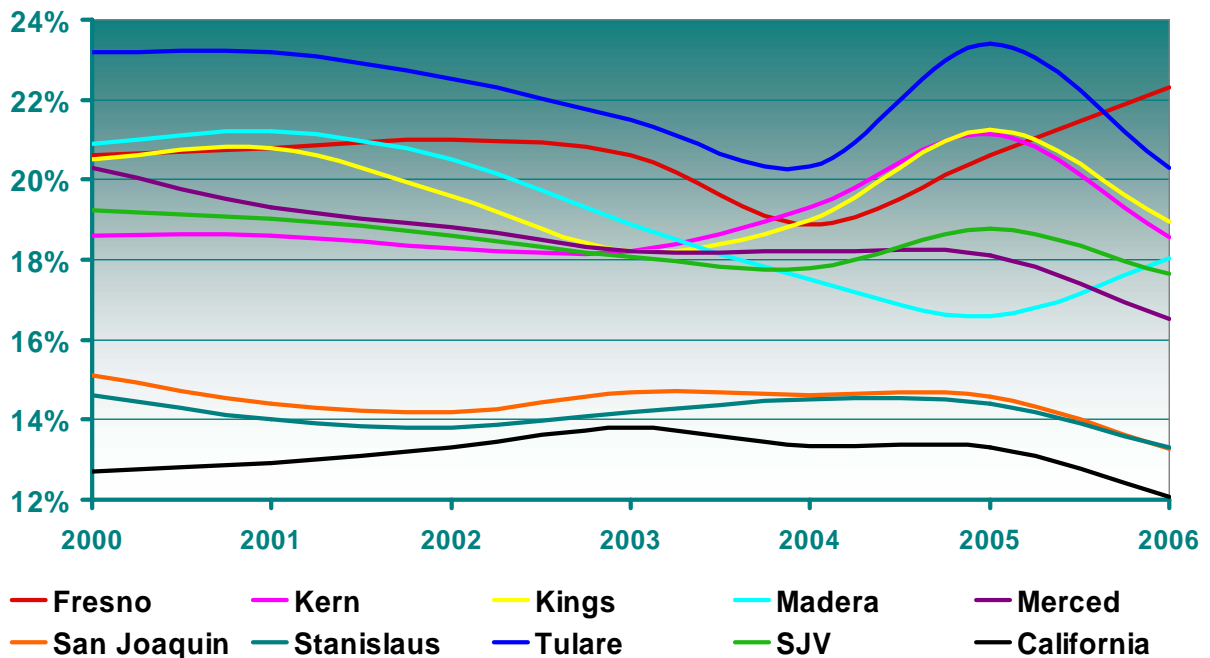
Why is it relevant?

The decision of an individual to participate (or not) in the labor force is a decision of how best allocate time between work and non-work activities. Therefore, the labor force participation rate basically represents the supply of labor.

How is the SJV doing?

SJV counties show a wide dispersion of this indicator, from a high in Tulare of 44.5% to a low in Kings of 37.1% in 2006. This spreading is probably due to differences in demographic factors such as the age, gender and even racial composition. Interestingly, all SJV counties along with California show a slight downward trend.

Economy: Poverty Rate



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates

What is the measure?

Poverty rate is calculated as the percent of the population that does not reach the minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. It is expressed in percentage terms.

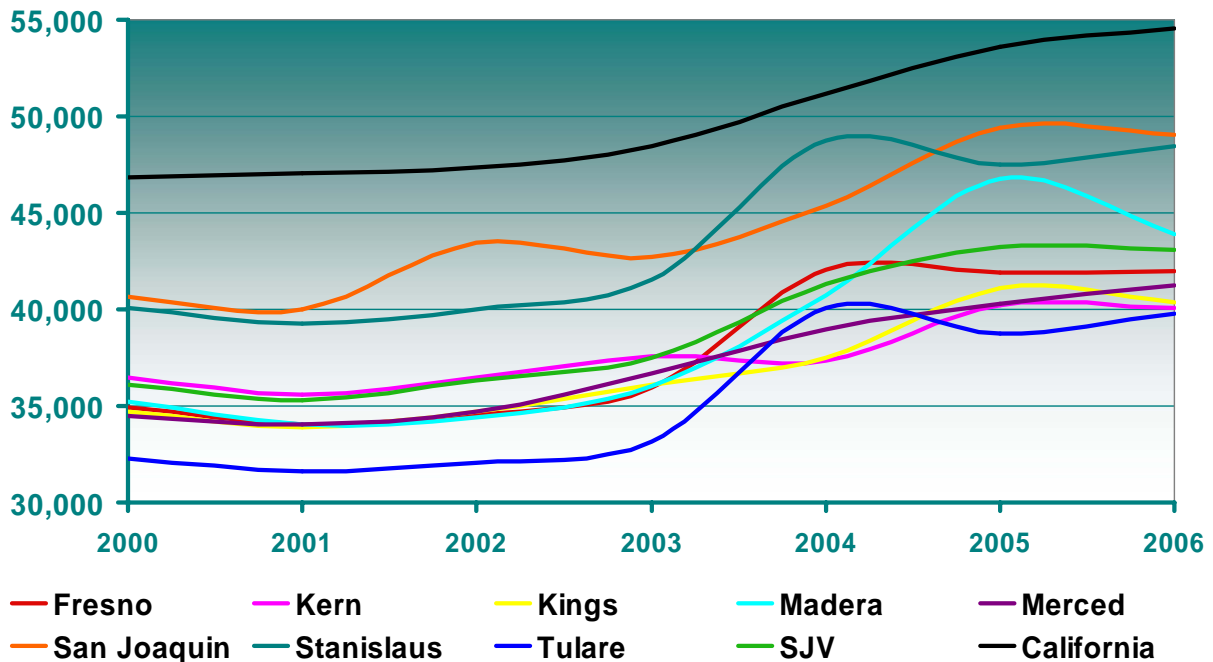
Why is it relevant?

Poverty and social exclusion can be interpreted as evidence of the failure of economic development to reach the most vulnerable segments of the population. Diminishing poverty rates can help regional economies reach their growth and prosperity potential.

How is the SJV doing?

All SJV counties show higher poverty rates than California. In particular Fresno, Madera, Kern, Kings, Merced and Tulare, have experienced substantially large poverty rates for the last few years. Only San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties show poverty rates closer to the one for California.

Economy: Median Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates

What is the measure?

This indicator is the median household income in the past 12 months as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. A household may consist of a person living alone or multiple unrelated individuals or families living together. It is expressed in dollars.

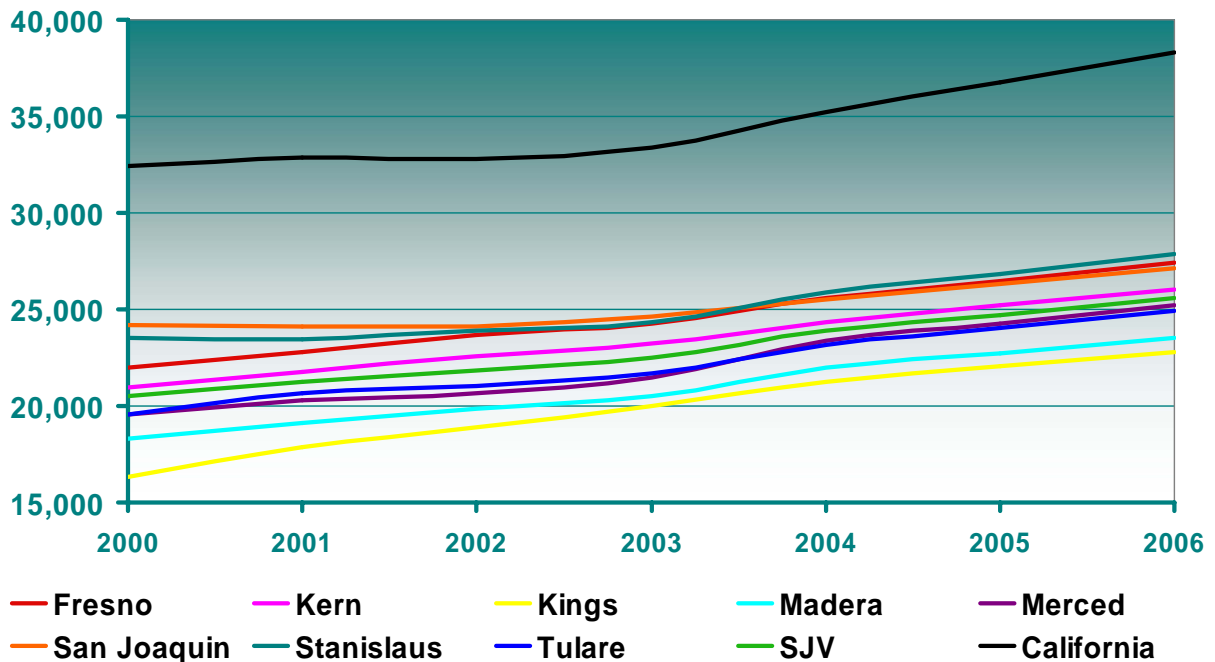
Why is it relevant?

Since median income is the amount which divides the income distribution into two equal groups, one half having income above that amount, and the other half having income below that amount, median household income can be interpreted as the income of the "middle class".

How is the SJV doing?

All SJV counties show a clear upward trend since around 2002. However, although San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties are closer to the California level, the rest of the SJV counties are lagging behind by more than \$10,000.

Economy: Per Capita Personal Income



Source: Statistical Abstract, California Department of Finance

What is the measure?

Per capita personal income is the income received by persons from all sources divide by the population. It includes income received from participation in production as well as from government and business transfer payments. It is expressed in dollars.

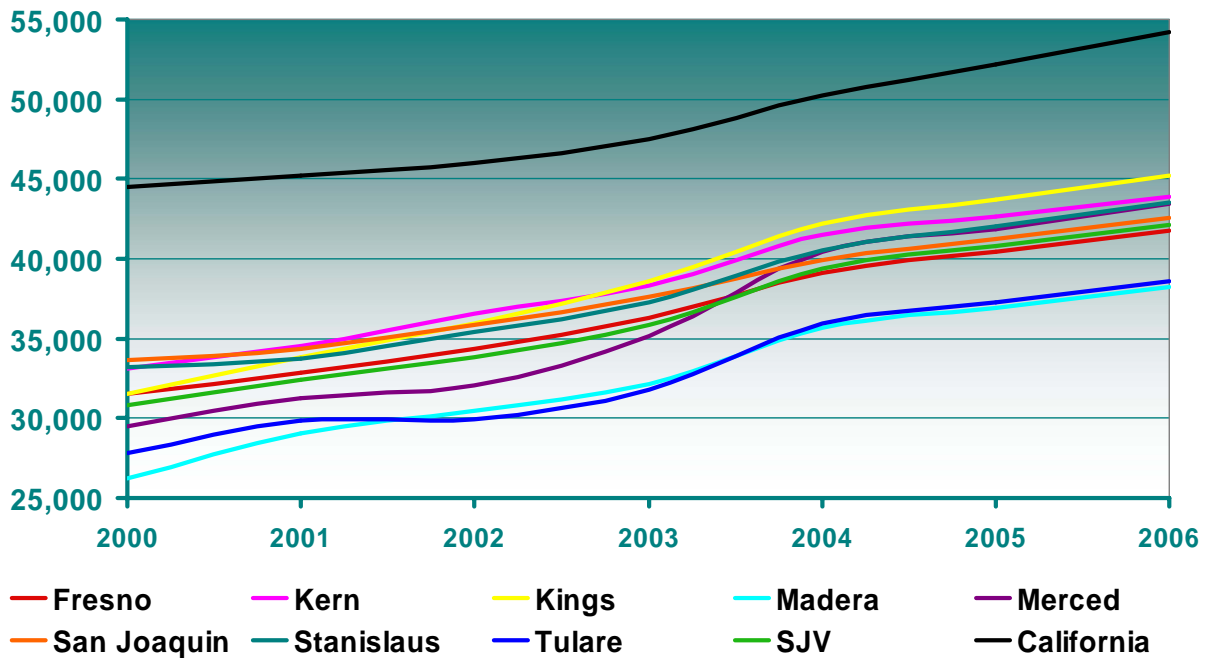
Why is it relevant?

Although per capita income does not indicate anything about the distribution of income, it can be used as a measure of how well off is the population.

How is the SJV doing?

Similar to median household income, although all SJV counties show a slight upward trend, the per capita personal income for California is clearly higher. Interestingly, this indicator shows less dispersion than median household income.

Economy: Average Earnings per Job



Source: REIS, Bureau of Economic Analysis

What is the measure?

Average earnings per job are calculated as the ratio of wages and salaries to total employment as defined by the BEA. It is expressed in dollars.

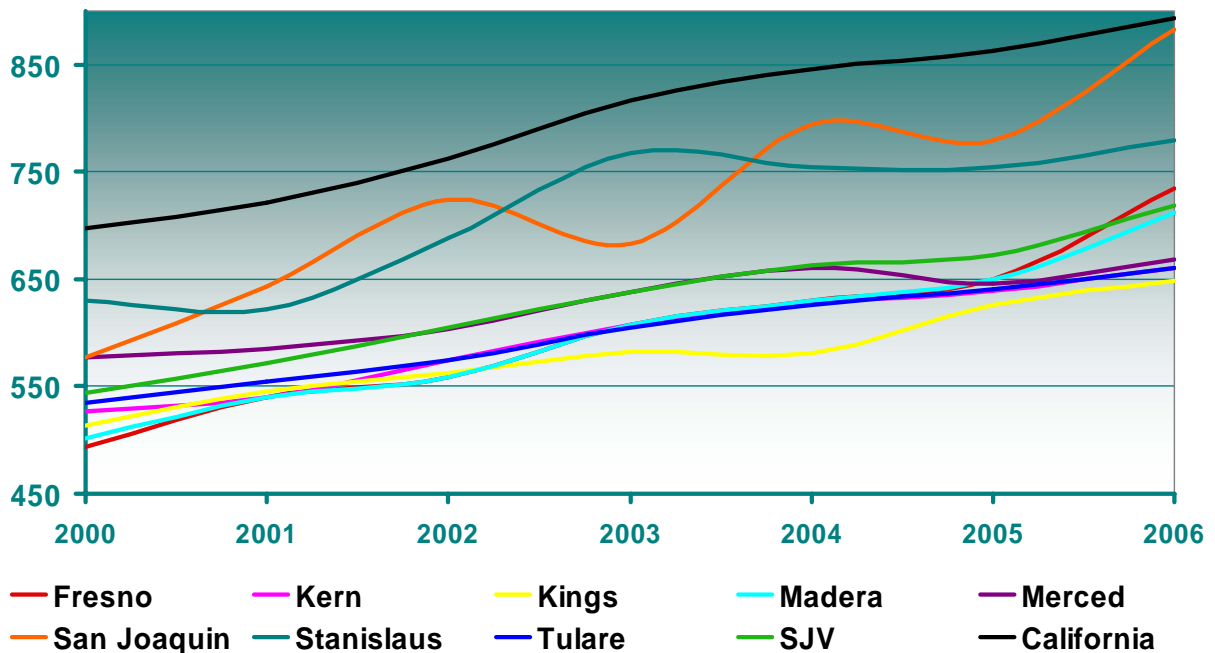
Why is it relevant?

Average earnings per job indicates how well paid jobs are. This indicator allows comparisons across regions of the compensation to the labor force.

How is the SJV doing?

Similar to median household income and per capita personal income, although all SJV counties show a slight upward trend, the average earnings per job for California is clearly higher. Two facts are worth to highlight. First, Kings County shows the higher average earnings per job but the lowest median household income for the last few years. Second, Madera and Tulare counties are lagging behind the rest of the SJV counties in terms of average earnings per job.

Economy: Median Rent Estimates



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

What is the measure?

The median rent is the threshold which divides the 2-bedroom apartment rent levels into two equal halves. One half of all apartments has rent above this threshold, and the other half has rent below the threshold. It is expressed in dollars.

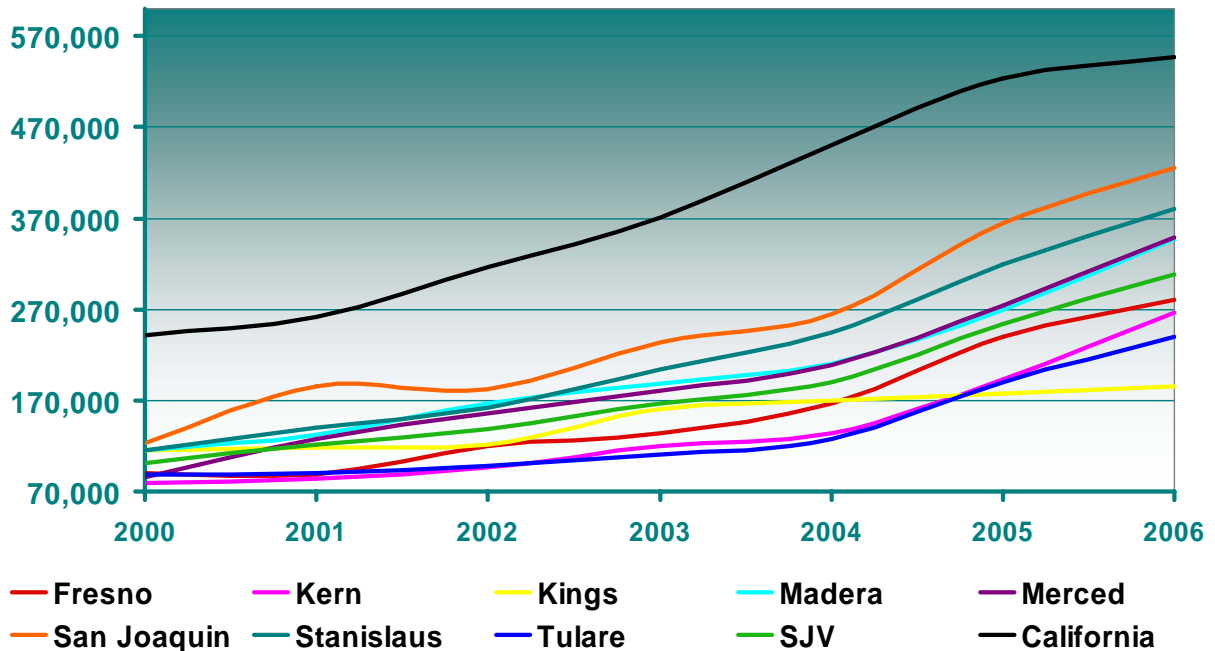
Why is it relevant?

When compared with income, it can be a measure of housing affordability for those unable to buy a house.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties, all other SJV counties show a significant lower median rent than California as a whole. All counties and California also show a clear upward trend.

Economy: Median Home Prices



Source: Empire Real Estate Group, RAND

What is the measure?

The median home price is the threshold which divides the home price level into two equal halves. One half of all homes valued at a price above this threshold, and the other half of all homes valued at a price below. It is expressed in dollars.

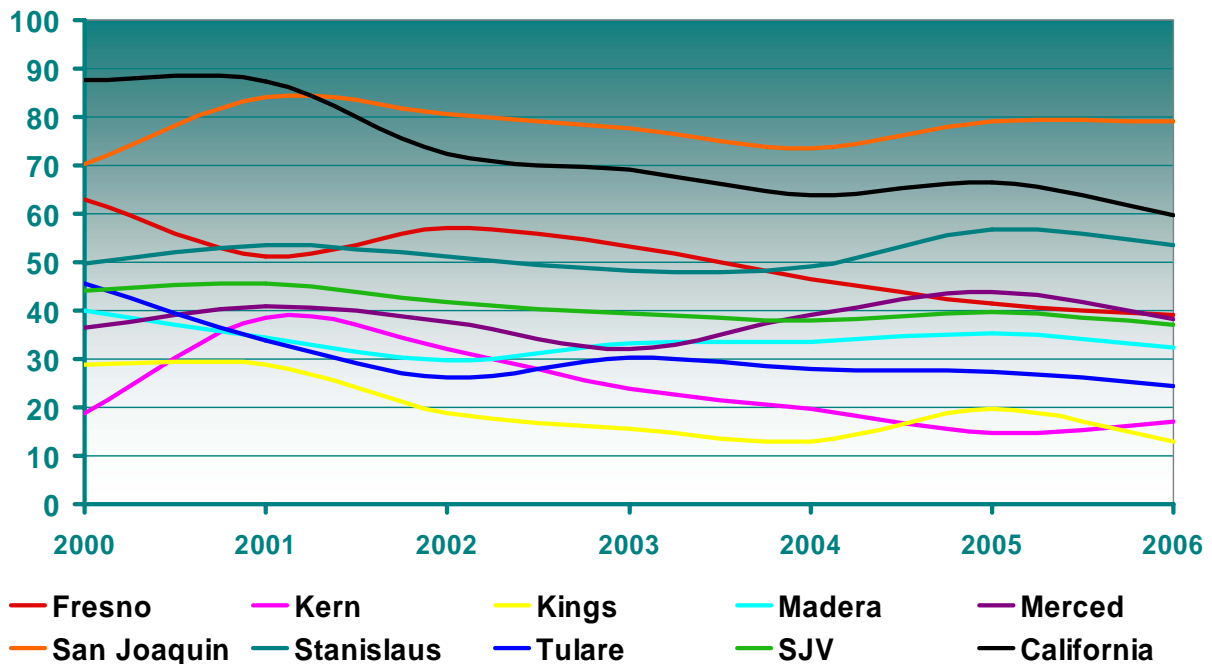
Why is it relevant?

Growing median home prices represents rising property value for homeowners. However, it also represents a growing challenge for some members of the population in terms of housing affordability.

How is the SJV doing?

Although California shows significantly higher median home prices than SJV counties, all regions show a clear upward trend. In addition, there is wide and increasing dispersion in median home prices among SJV counties. In 2006, Kings County shows the lower median home price (\$184,586) while Stanislaus shows the highest (\$380,000).

Index Component 2: *Business*



What is the measure?

The business component index is the average of the 4 business indicators shown immediately after this page. Regions with relatively better business performance are closer to 100 and those regions with relatively worse business performance are closer to 0.

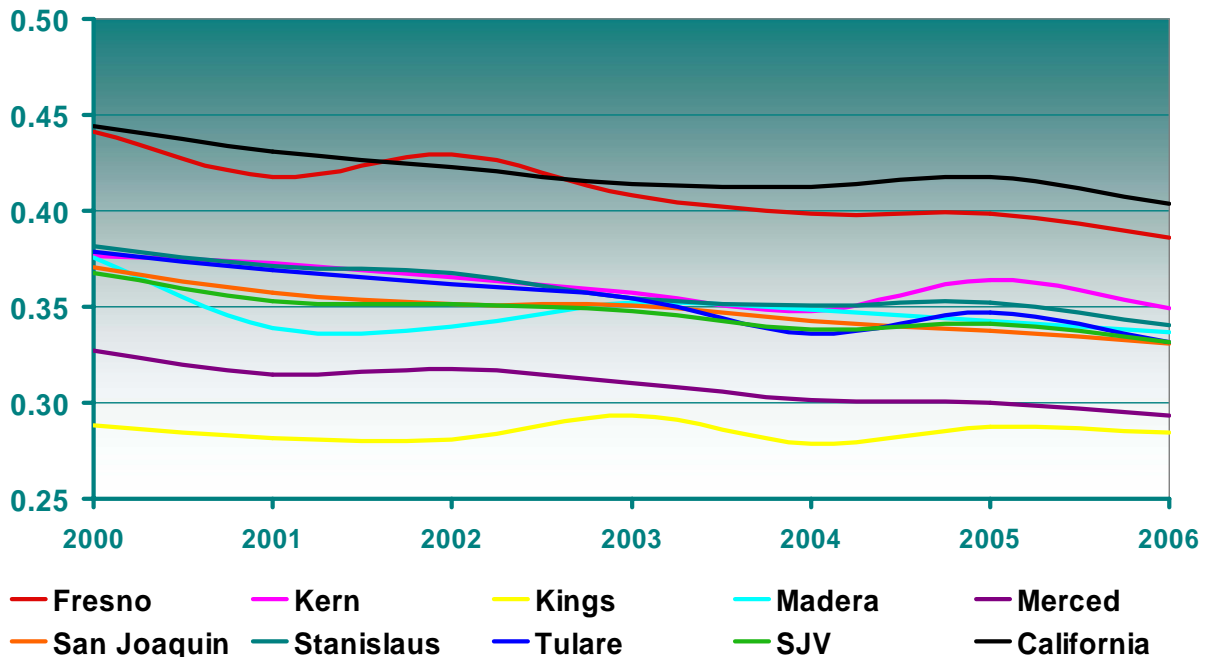
Why is it relevant?

Gauging the business climate is significant when considering that business decision locations –capable to generate employment, income and wealth in the community- are sometimes heavily dependant on it.

How is the SJV doing?

Among SJV counties, only San Joaquin has outperformed California during the last few years. All other counties not only have shown a lower business component index, but also somewhat disperse. Although not immediately obvious in the chart, all regions show a slight downward trend.

Business: Number of Businesses per Capita



Source: California Employment Development Department

What is the measure?

The number of businesses per capita is calculated as the number of employees of all sizes divided by the total population. It is expressed as the number of operating businesses in the economy per person.

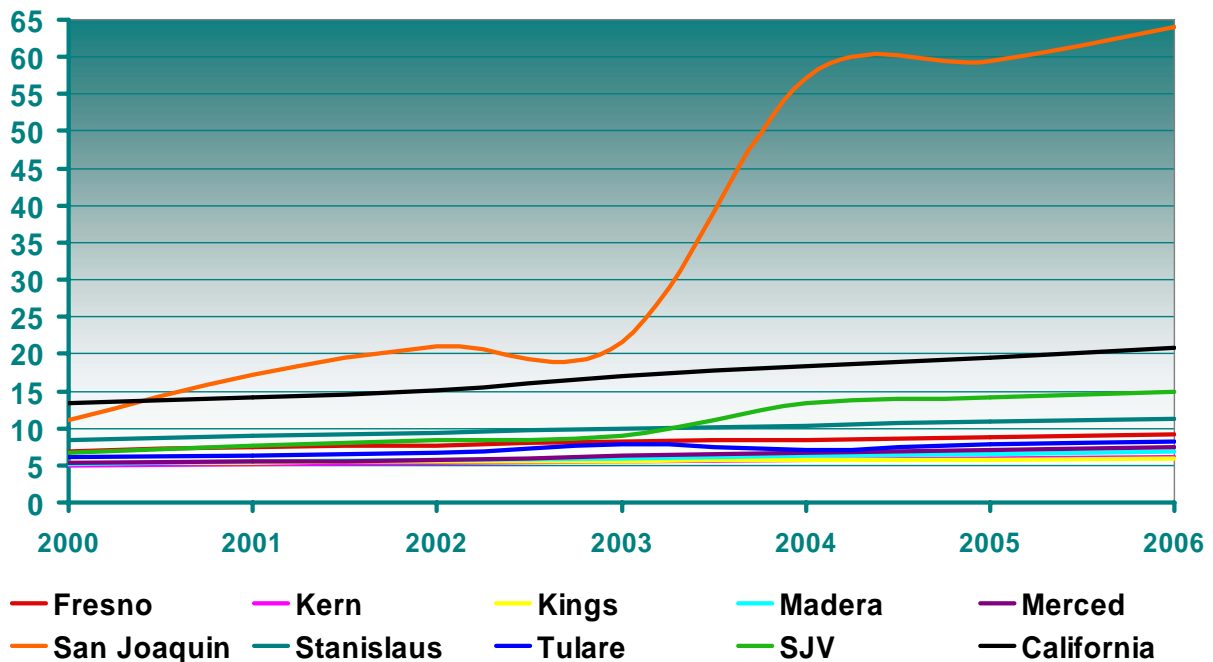
Why is it relevant?

Businesses are the source of employment, income and wealth in the regional economy.

How is the SJV doing?

Although Fresno County shows a number of businesses per capita close to California, all other counties exhibit a significantly lower number, Kings and Merced in particular. In addition, similar to the overall business component index, all regions show a clear downward trend.

Business: Deposits per Capita in Banks & Savings Institutions



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, USA Counties

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the ratio of the total deposits in commercial banks and savings institutions (FDIC-insured) to the total population. It is expressed in thousands of dollars per capita.

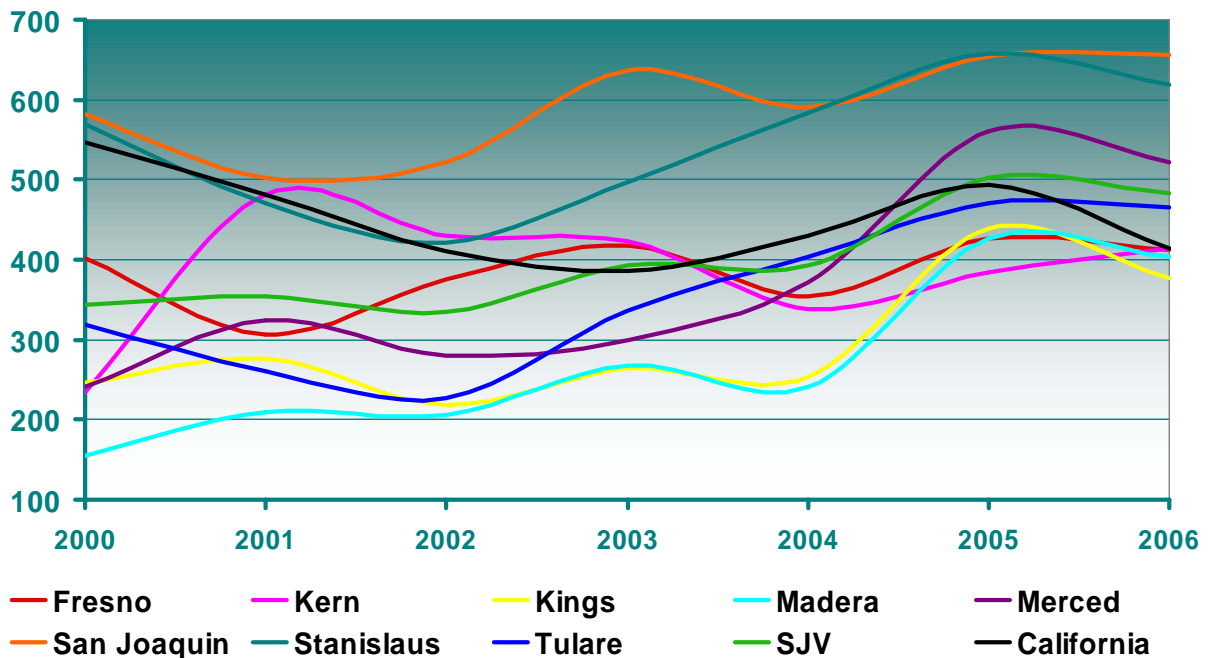
Why is it relevant?

Savings are a main source of investment. In other words, savings can be vital to increase the amount of fixed capital available, which contributes to economic growth.

How is the SJV doing?

Among SJV counties, only San Joaquin has significantly outperformed California during the last few years (see its explosive growth starting in 2004). Although all other counties show a slight upward trend, savings levels lagged the one for California.

Business: Non-residential Valuation by Building Permits per capita



Source: Statistical Abstract, California Department of Finance

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the ratio of total non-residential valuation authorized by building permits to the total population. Permits include commercial, industrial, others and additions or alterations. It is expressed in dollars per capita.

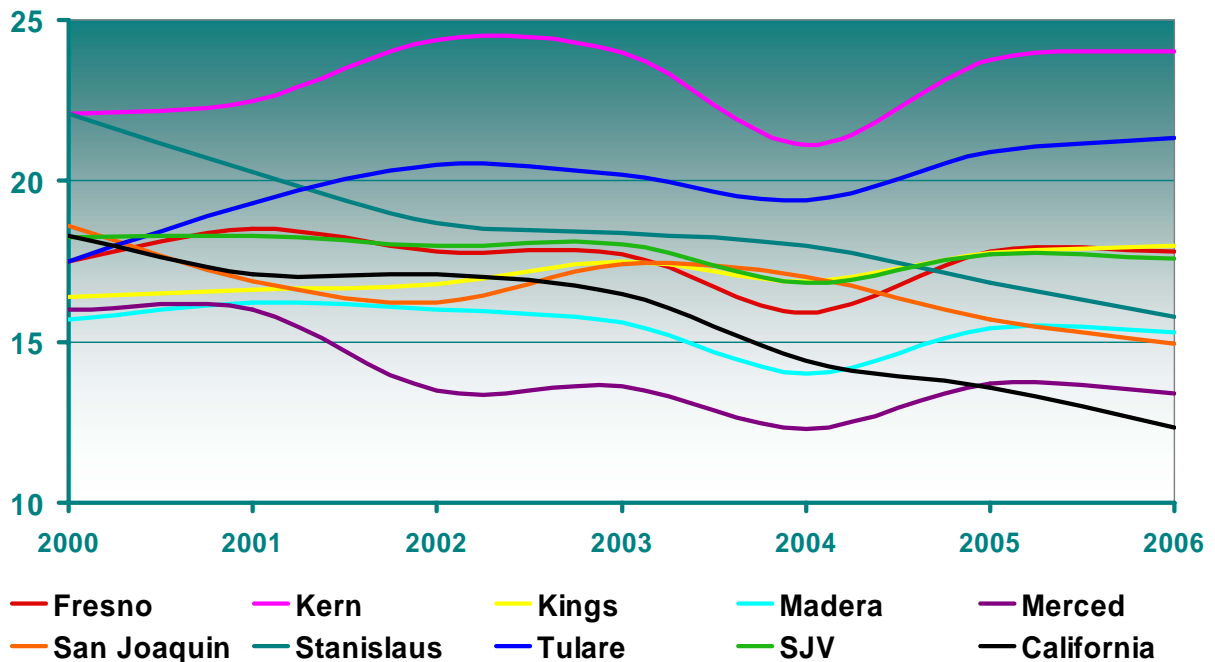
Why is it relevant?

Commercial and industrial expansion is generally viewed as a sign of a healthy business sector. High construction levels in this sector can also be an indication of stability and confidence in the future business and economic conditions.

How is the SJV doing?

Despite the fact that 4 SJV counties are not doing as well as California on this area, most SJV counties show a good performance. San Joaquin and Stanislaus lead the region which taken a whole, shows a slight upward trend.

Business: Rate of Total Bankruptcy Filings



Source: Administrative Office of the U.S. Bankruptcy Courts

What is the measure?

This rate is calculated as the total number of bankruptcy filings per 1,000 persons.

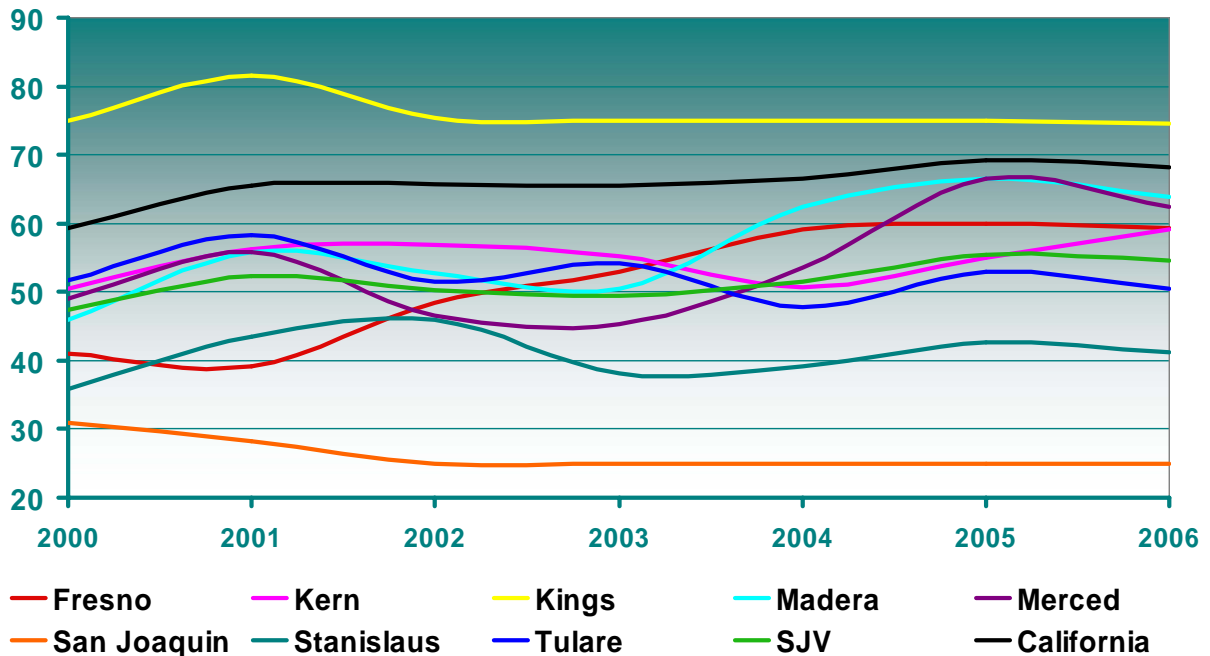
Why is it relevant?

This indicator can be interpreted as the rate of entrepreneurial success. The higher this success, the more capable will be a region to create and sustain economic vitality.

How is the SJV doing?

In 2006, all SJV counties showed a bankruptcy rate higher than California which has experienced a steady decline for the last few years. Kern and Tulare are the counties with the highest bankruptcy rate, while Merced and San Joaquin are among with the lowest.

Index Component 3: *Public Safety*



What is the measure?

The public safety component index is the average of the 4 public safety indicators shown immediately after this page. Regions with relatively better public safety performance are closer to 100 and those regions with relatively worse public safety performance are closer to 0.

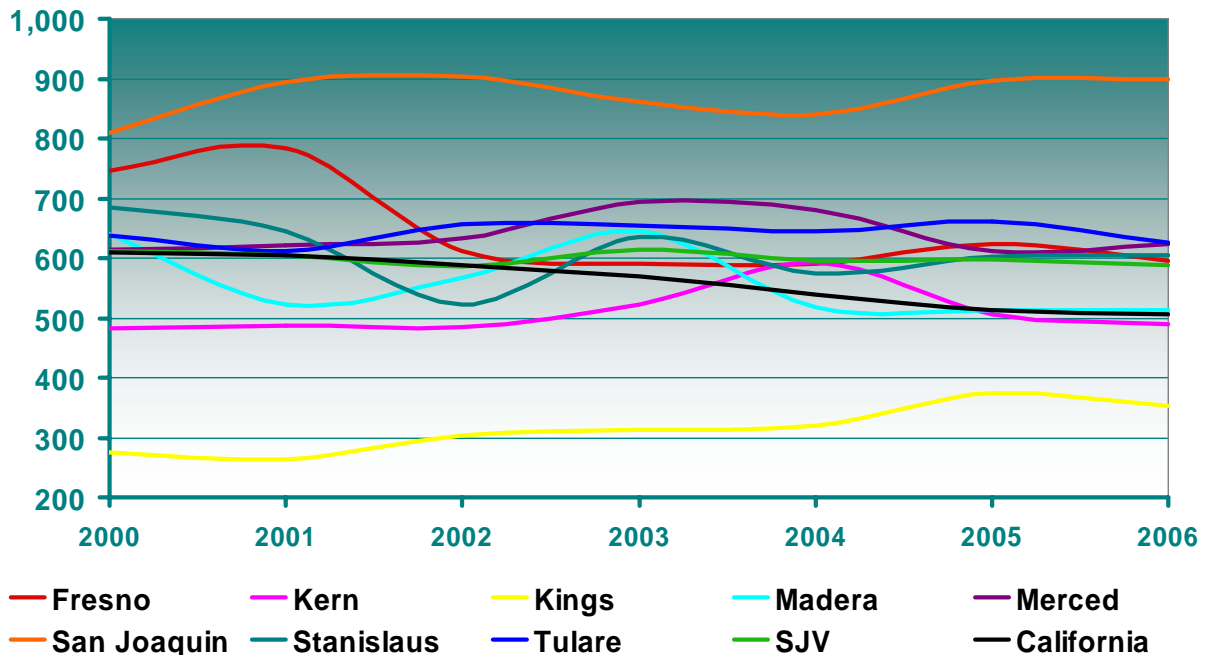
Why is it relevant?

Community residents should feel and be comfortable and safe in their own homes, neighborhoods and roads.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of Kings County, all other SJV counties have been outperformed by California in the last few years. Interestingly, while San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties show the best business performance, are also the ones with the lowest public safety performance.

Public Safety: Rate of Violent Crime



Source: California Department of Justice

What is the measure?

This rate is calculated as the total number of violent crimes per 1,000 persons. Violent crimes include murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery and assault.

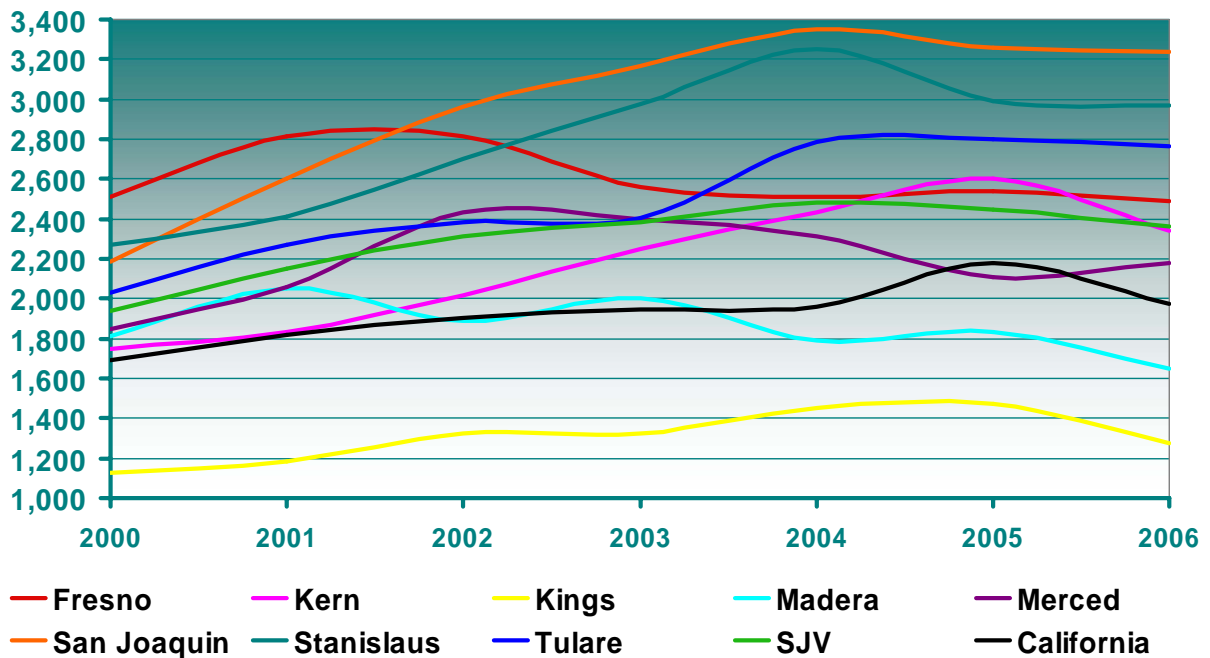
Why is it relevant?

Violent and property crimes can be seen as a direct attack on the quality of life of a community.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of Kern and Kings Counties, all other SJV counties show higher rates of violent crime than California. San Joaquin County is notable for its significantly high rate of violent crime while Kings stands out for its significantly low rate of violent crime.

Public Safety: Rate of Property Crime



Source: California Department of Justice

What is the measure?

This rate is calculated as the total number of property crimes per 1,000 persons. Property crimes include burglary, larceny theft, and motor vehicle theft.

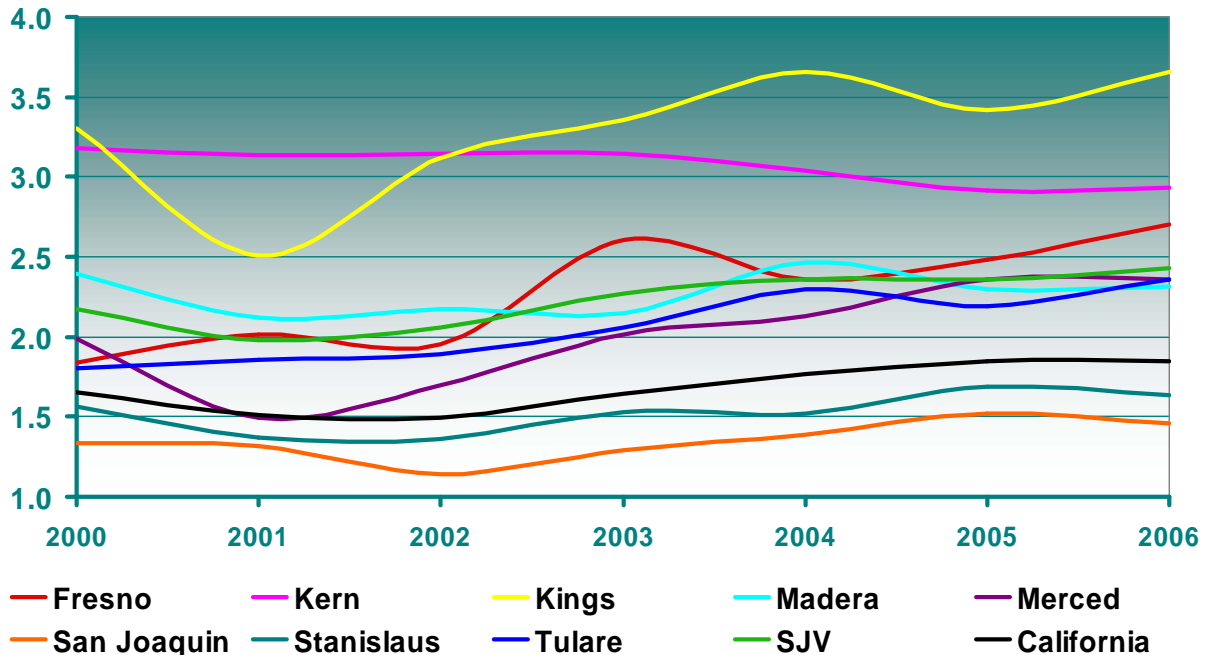
Why is it relevant?

Violent and property crimes can be seen as a direct attack on the quality of life of a community.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of Madera and Kings Counties, all other SJV counties show higher rates of property crime than California. San Joaquin County is notable for its significantly high rate of property crime while Kings stands out for its significantly low rate of property crime.

Public Safety: Total Felons



Source: California Department of Justice

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total number felons per 1,000 persons. Crimes commonly considered felonies include aggravated assault and/or battery, arson, burglary, some instances of drug possession, embezzlement, grand theft, treason, espionage, racketeering, robbery, murder, rape and fraud.

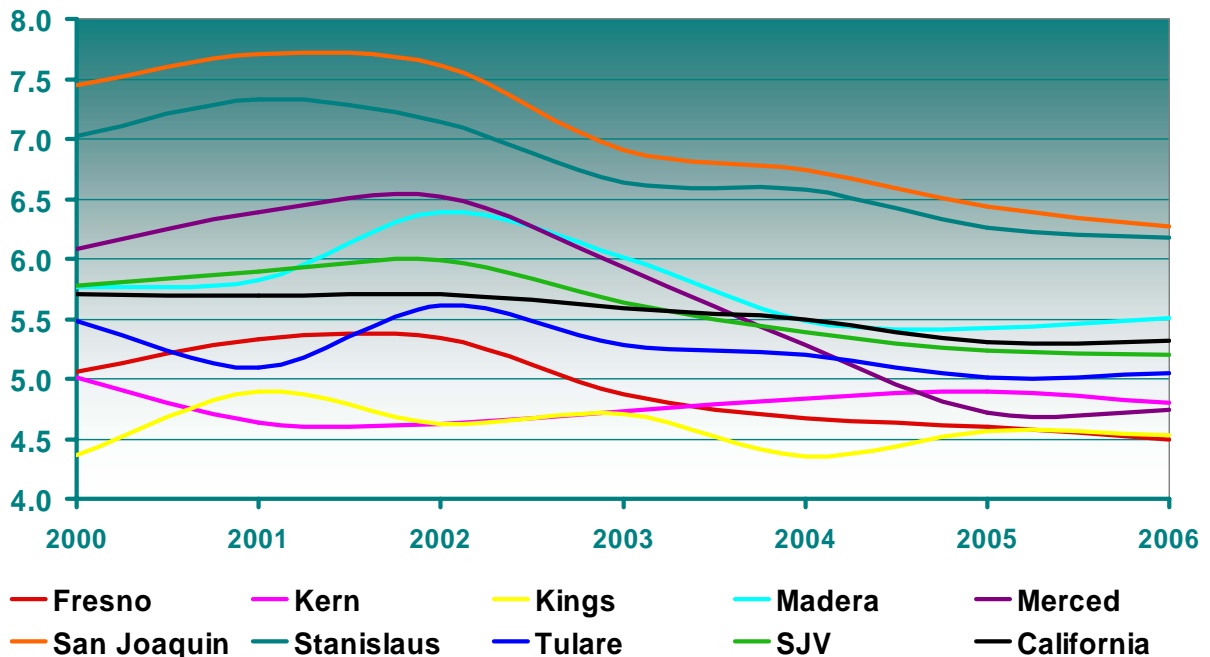
Why is it relevant?

The number of felons relative to the size of the population can be an indicator of community health in terms of actual and potential crime levels.

How is the SJV doing?

Only San Joaquin and Stanislaus have relatively lower numbers of felons than California. The rest of the SJV counties have consistently shown relatively larger numbers of felons. Most noticeable are Kern and Kings Counties. It is also worth to bring attention to the slightly upward trend that the SJV shows for the last few years.

Public Safety: Injury Collisions



Source: California Highway Patrol

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total number injury collisions as reported by the CHP per 1,000 persons in the population.

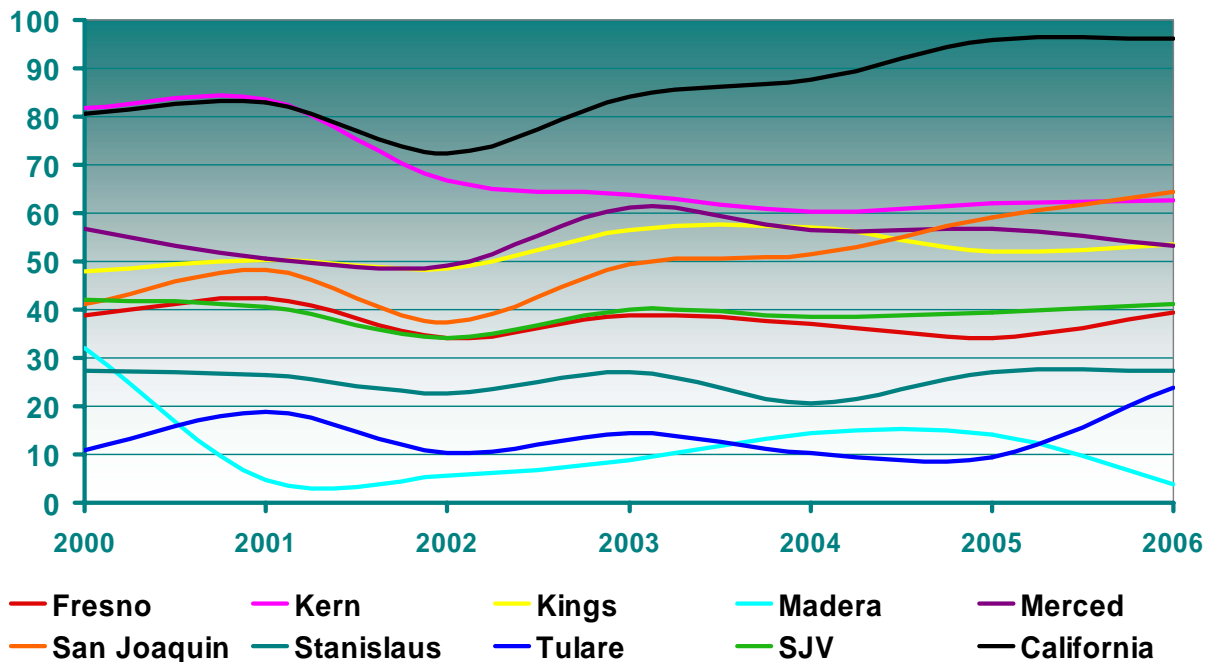
Why is it relevant?

Motor vehicle accidents are perhaps among the community's highest sources of preventable deaths and injuries, particularly among the young segment of the population.

How is the SJV doing?

All regions show a downward trend for the last few years. In 2005 and 2006, only San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Madera Counties had higher injury collisions rates. Fresno and Kings Counties are notable for its significantly low rate of injury collisions.

Index Component 4: *Government and Politics*



What is the measure?

The government and politics component index is the average of the 3 government and politics indicators shown immediately after this page. Regions with relatively better government and politics performance are closer to 100 and those regions with relatively worse government and politics performance are closer to 0.

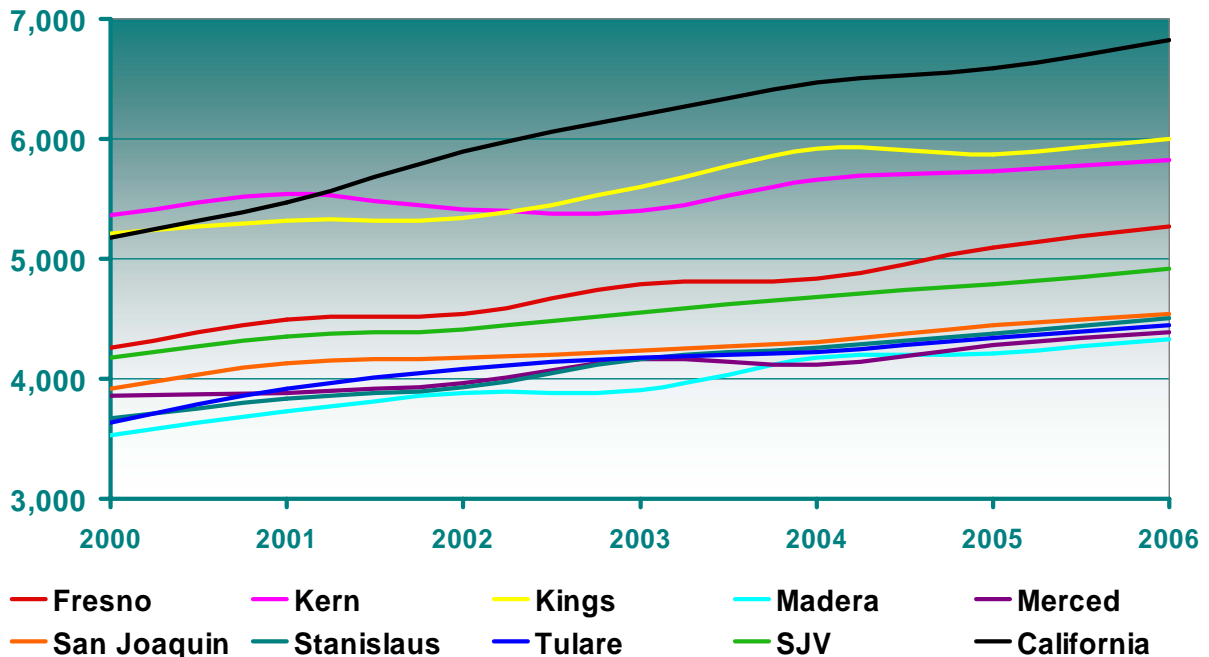
Why is it relevant?

Public participation and government involvement in social life are essential ingredients for the quality of life as they enhance the opportunities to build social capital and civic engagement.

How is the SJV doing?

All SJV counties have been outperformed by California which in fact shows a slight upward trend while the SJV as a whole remains stagnant. Among the best performers are Kern and Kings Counties, while among the poorest performers, Madera and Tulare Counties outstand.

Government and Politics: Federal Government Expenditure



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, USA Counties

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total level of federal government spending in the region divided by the total population. It is expressed in dollars per capita.

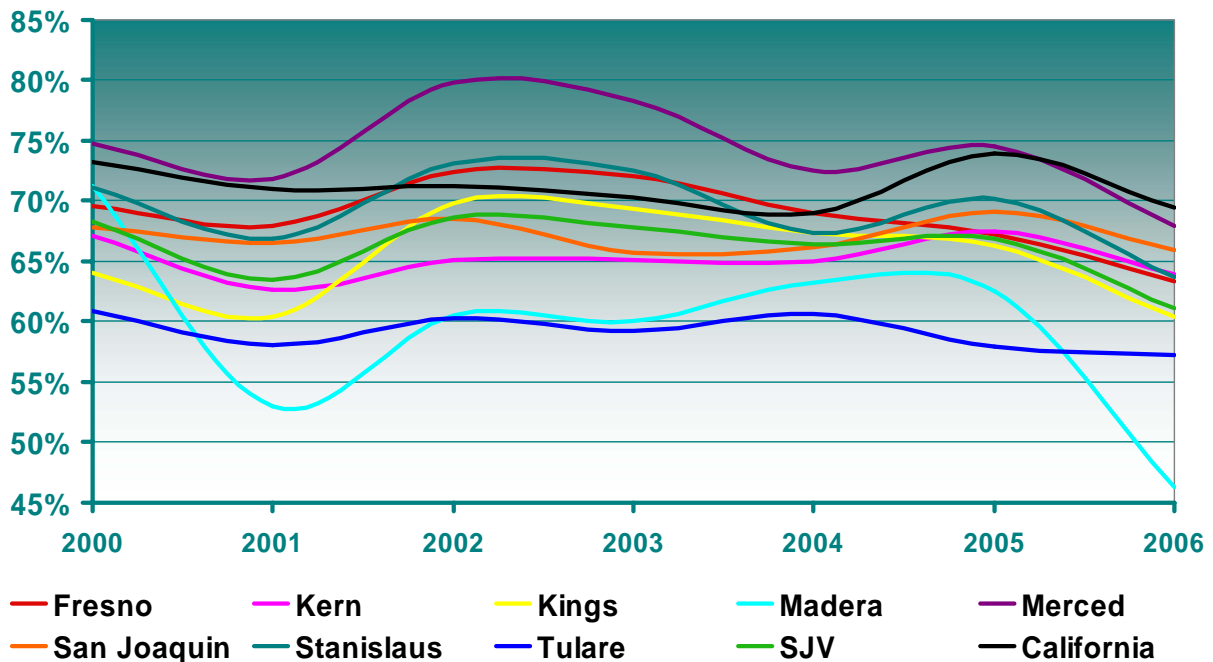
Why is it relevant?

The level of participation of the federal government in county-level community life is an important component to enhance the quality of life. Through multiplicative effects, federal dollars poured into the local economy are capable to transform places and entire regions.

How is the SJV doing?

Government spending per capita is higher for California as a whole than for all SJV counties. Although Kern and Kings Counties receive substantially more federal resources than other counties, still lag behind the amount of funds per person for the State.

Government and Politics: Voter Registration



Source: California State Secretary

What is the measure?

This rate is calculated as the ratio of the number of people registered to vote to the number of those eligible. It is expressed in percentage terms.

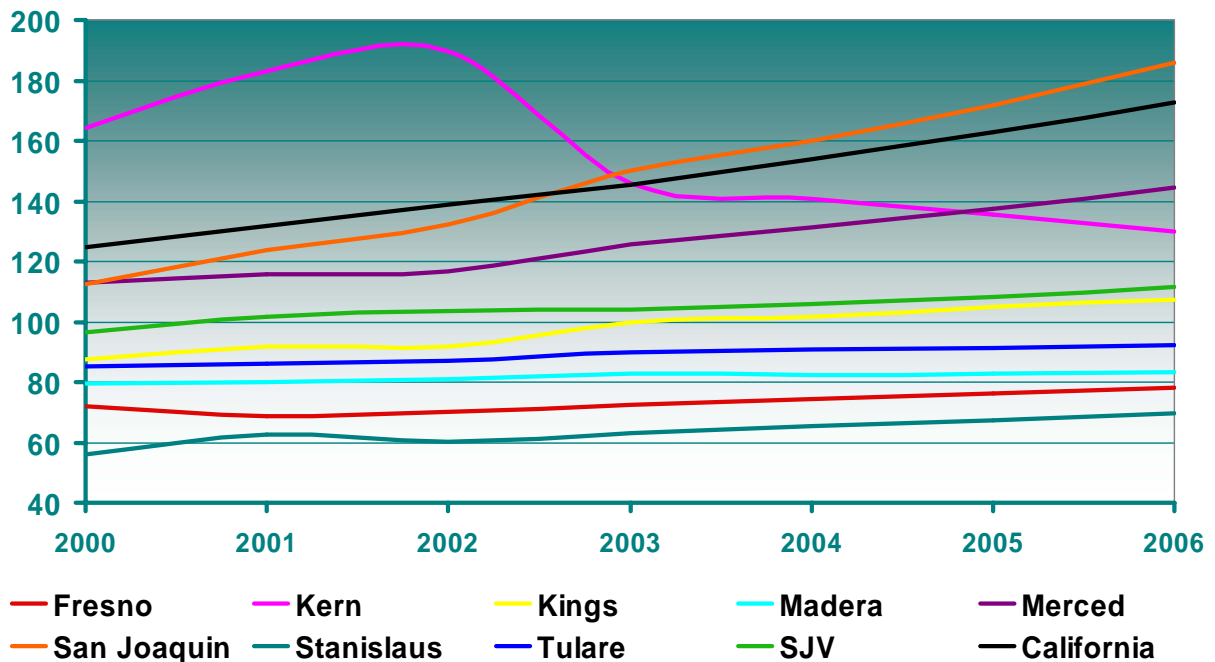
Why is it relevant?

Voter registration can be a measure of the level of interest that community residents have in community affairs. This civic responsibility can improve the accountability of government.

How is the SJV doing?

All SJV counties show lower voter registration rates than California. Although the difference is not substantial for most counties, it is significant for both Tulare and Madera Counties.

Government and Politics: Property Taxes



Source: California State Controller

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total amount collected as property tax revenue in the region divided by the total population. It is expressed in dollars per capita.

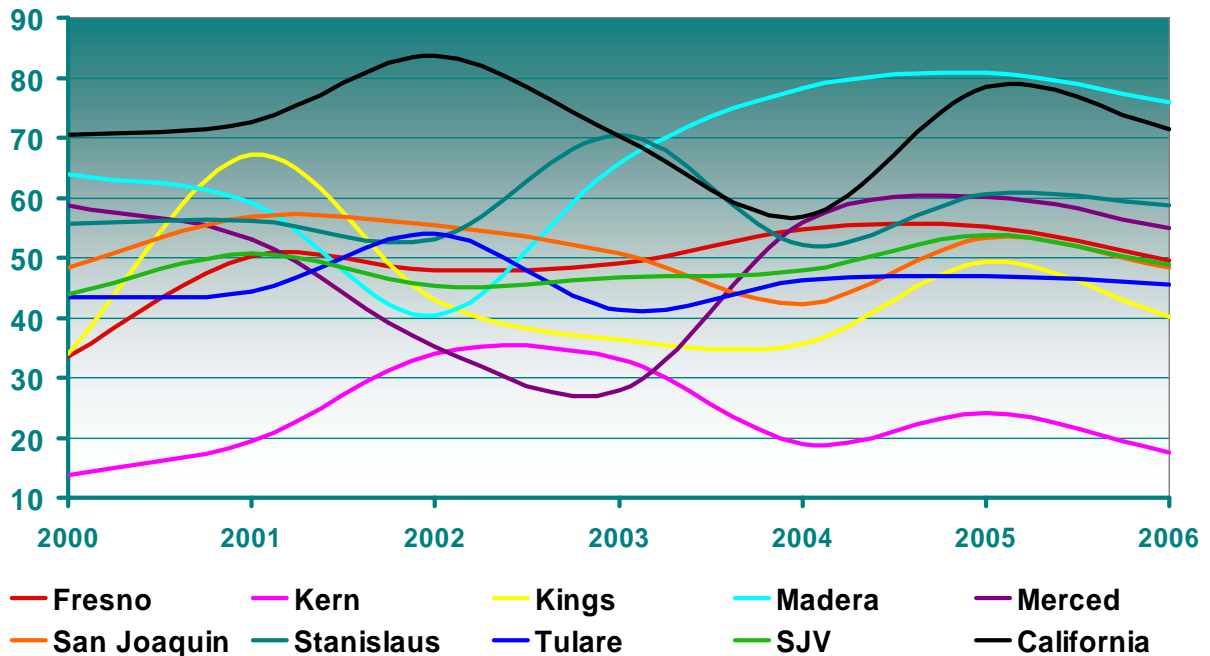
Why is it relevant?

Local governments have the responsibility of providing many services such as police, fire fighters, parks, etc., which directly affect the quality of life of a community. Property taxes support a relatively small portion of these responsibilities.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of San Joaquin County, all other SJV counties collect less property tax revenue than California as a whole. It is worth noticing the dramatic disparity between California and Counties such as Fresno, Madera or Stanislaus, which can reach levels of a 100% difference.

Index Component 5: *Community Health*



What is the measure?

The community health component index is the average of the 4 community health indicators shown immediately after this page. Regions with relatively better community health performance are closer to 100 and those regions with relatively worse community health performance are closer to 0.

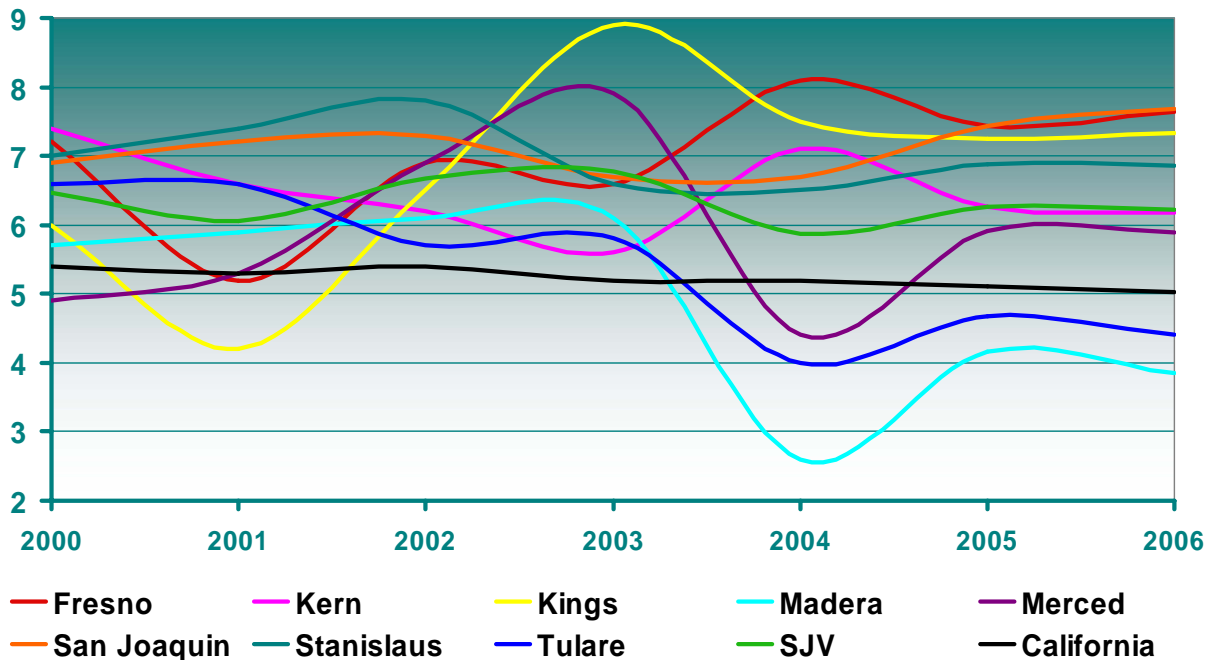
Why is it relevant?

Quality of life is directly impacted by the health conditions of its population. Healthy community residents have greater ability to enjoy life as they follow healthy choices and healthy behaviors.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of Madera County, all other SJV counties show a lower health performance than the whole State of California. Although the differences are not extreme for most counties, the case of Kern County is particularly dramatic as it shows the lowest index value and a slight downward trend for the last 3 years.

Community Health: Infant Death Rate



Source: California Department of Health Services

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the number of deaths among infants per 1,000 live births, as reported by the California Department of Health Services.

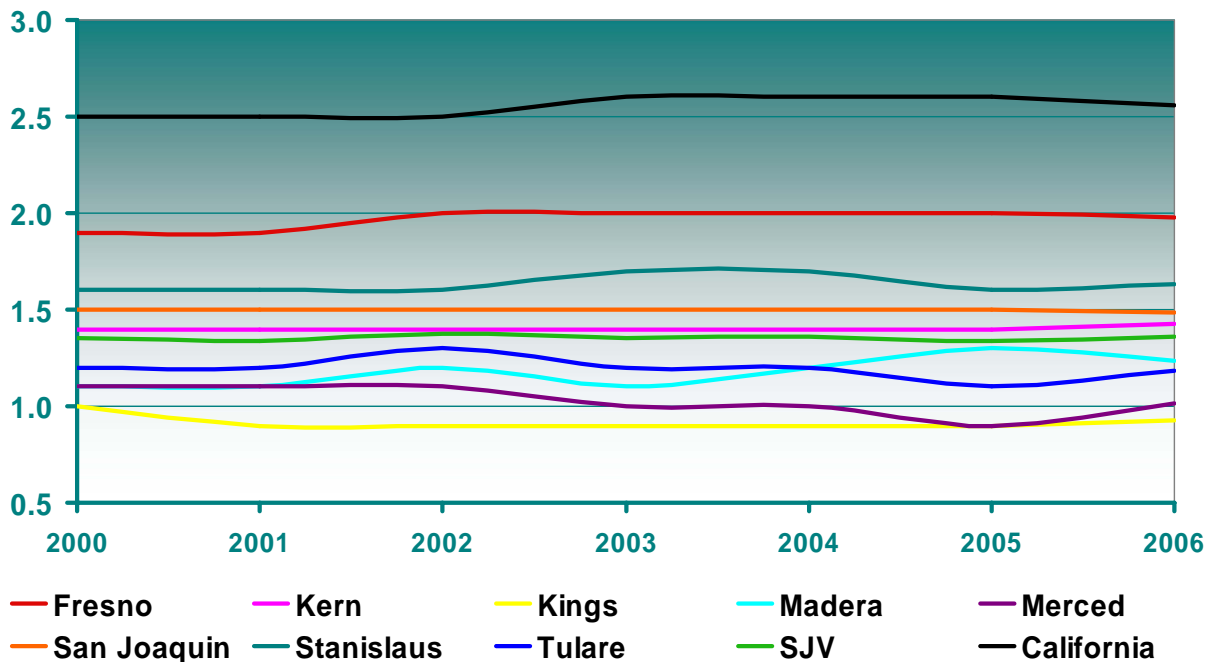
Why is it relevant?

Infant death rates reflect the health status of the mother, as well as the quality of health care mothers and infants receive. This indicator is linked to poverty, nutrition and environmental quality.

How is the SJV doing?

Most SJV counties outperform California, in some case substantially as in Fresno, San Joaquin and Kings Counties. Although the SJV as a region shows better numbers than California, two counties are lagging behind: Madera and Tulare Counties which, in addition, show a slight downward trend.

Community Health: Number of Physicians



Source: California Department of Consumer Affairs

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total number of physicians per 1,000 persons in the population.

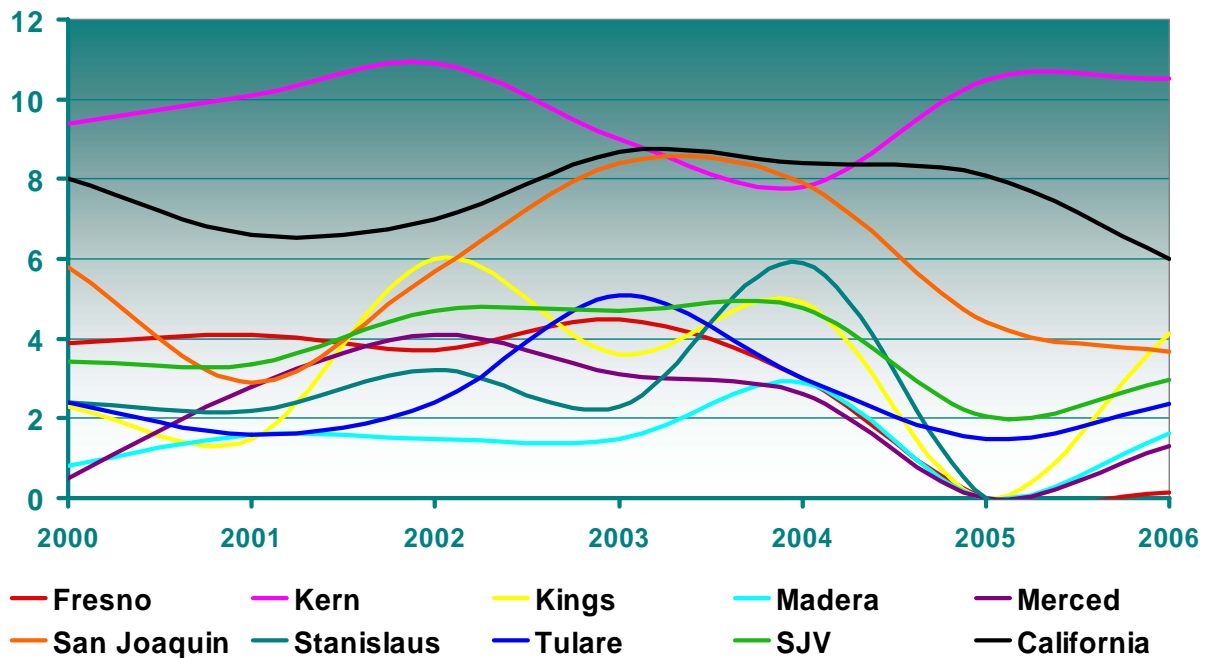
Why is it relevant?

Physicians should be readily available and in enough numbers to meet the health needs of the population.

How is the SJV doing?

Most SJV Counties are substantially lagging behind California, in some cases dramatically such as in Kings and Merced Counties. Perhaps the exception is Fresno County which, nevertheless also shows a relatively low number of physicians.

Community Health: AIDS Cases



Source: California Department of Consumer Affairs

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total number of AIDS cases per 100,000 persons in the population.

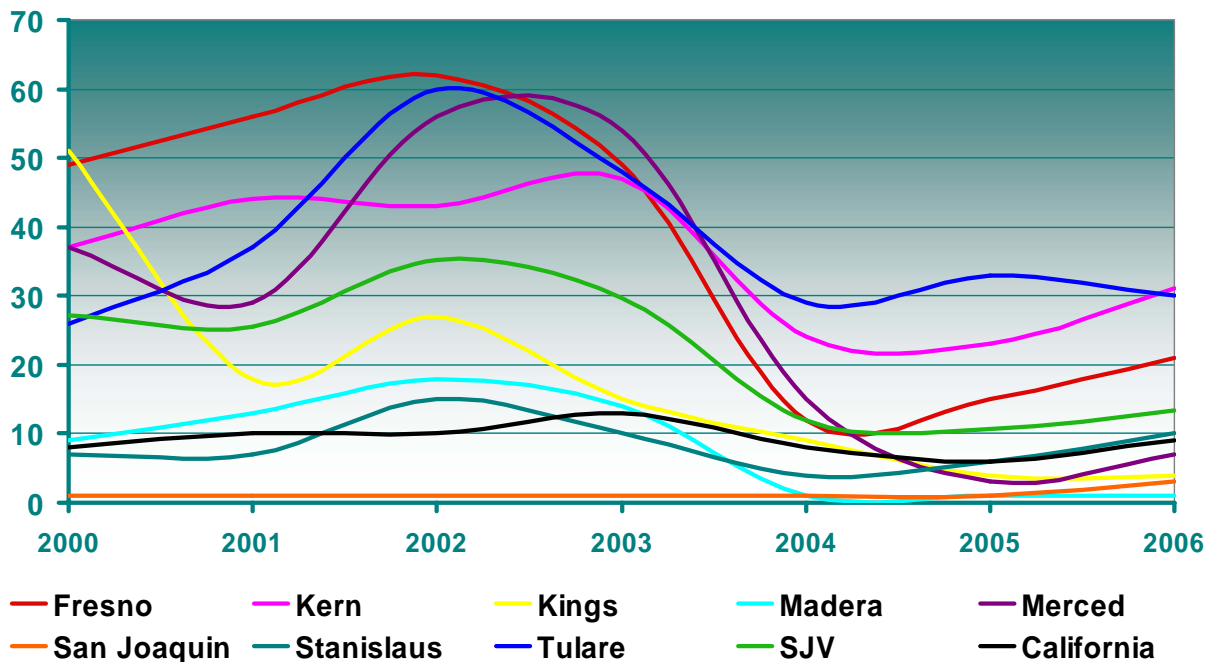
Why is it relevant?

Sexually transmitted diseases frequently result as a product of risky or careless behaviors that may lead to serious health community problems.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of Kern County, all other SJV Counties show a lower incidence of AIDS than California. Most noticeable for this low incidence are Fresno, Madera and Merced Counties, while San Joaquin and Kings Counties stand out for having the highest incidence rates of the SJV.

Community Health: Ozone Level



Source: California Air Resources Board

What is the measure?

This indicator shows the number of days the region reports ozone levels above the national 8-hour standard.

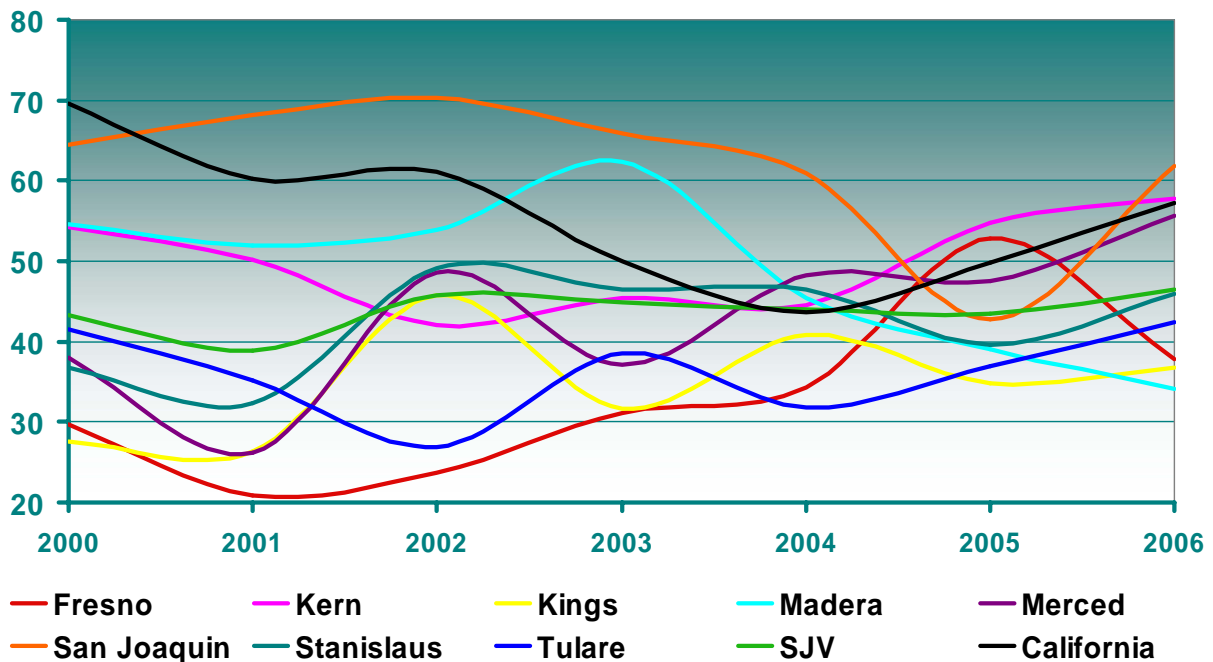
Why is it relevant?

Ozone is among the most important factors impairing the normal functioning of the lungs. It also limits people's ability to conduct physical activity and can enhance the likelihood of getting an assorted list of respiratory diseases.

How is the SJV doing?

Kings, Madera, San Joaquin and Merced Counties show lower ozone levels than California. However, the rest of the counties show substantially higher levels which produces that the SJV as a region performs worse than California. It is worth noticing though, that all regions show a clear downward trend for the last three years.

Index Component 6: *Literacy and Education*



What is the measure?

The literacy and education component index is the average of the 5 literacy and education indicators shown immediately after this page. Regions with relatively better literacy and education performance are closer to 100 and those regions with relatively worse literacy and education performance are closer to 0.

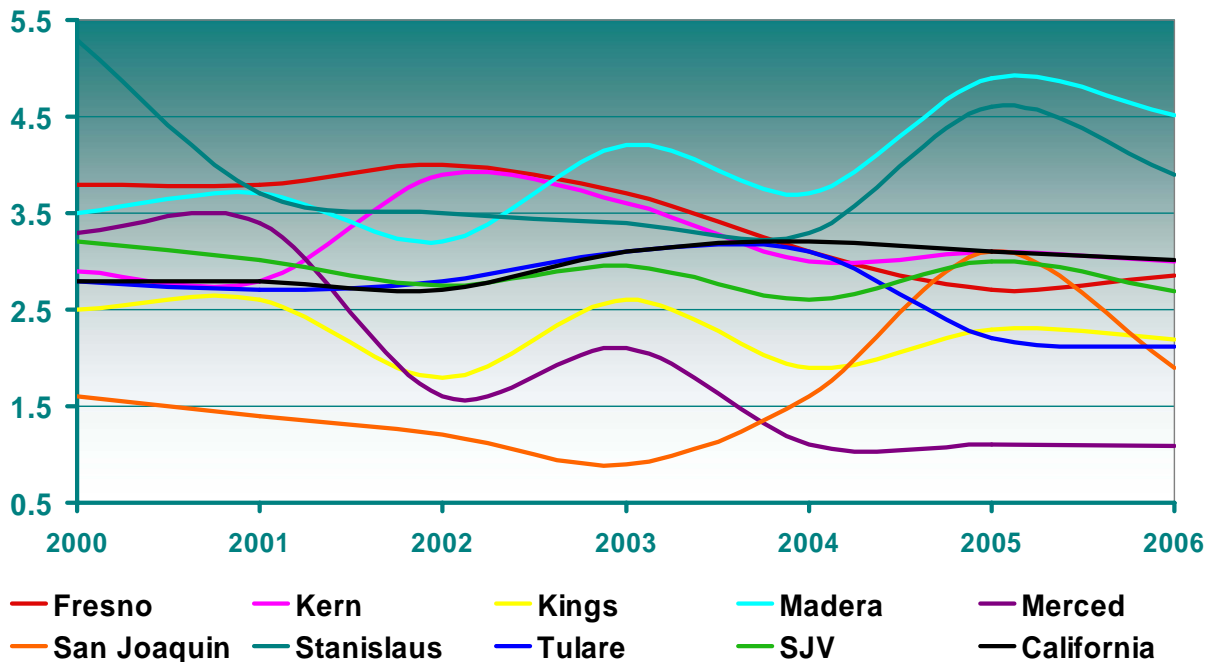
Why is it relevant?

Education is a key ingredient for the future of children and thus for the future of the community. The quality of life is enhanced when children learn and succeed in school, when they gain appreciation for culture and enjoy learning throughout their lives.

How is the SJV doing?

Most SJV counties have been outperformed by California for the last few years. The exceptions are Kern, Merced and San Joaquin Counties, although their better performance has not been constant. As a whole, the SJV region shows a steady performance but always below the one of the State.

Literacy and Education: One Year Grade 9-12 Dropout Rate



Source: California Department of Education

What is the measure?

This rate is calculated according to the formula used by the California Department of Education: Dropout Rate = (Gr. 9-12 Dropouts / Gr. 9-12 Enrollment)*100.

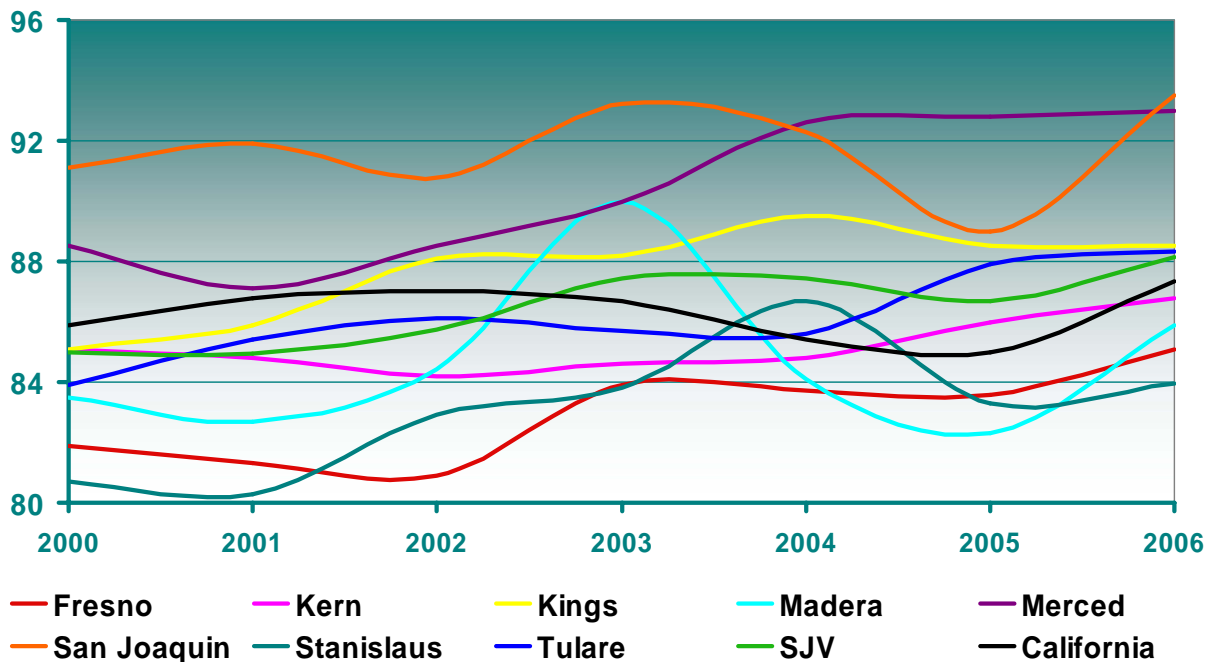
Why is it relevant?

Students that dropout frequently require special services to continue their education or to obtain and maintain employment.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of Madera and Stanislaus Counties for the last 3 years, all other SJV counties show lower dropout rates than California. Although some counties such as Fresno and Merced show a slight downward trend, the dropout rate for the SJV as a whole has steadily oscillated between 2.5 and 3.5.

Literacy and Education: High School Graduation Rate



Source: California Department of Education

What is the measure?

This rate is calculated according to the formula used by the California Department of Education: Number of Graduates (Year 4) divided by Number of Graduates (Year 4) + Gr. 9 Dropouts (Year 1) + Gr. 10 Dropouts (Year 2) + Gr. 11 Dropouts (Year 3) + Gr. 12 Dropouts (Year 4)

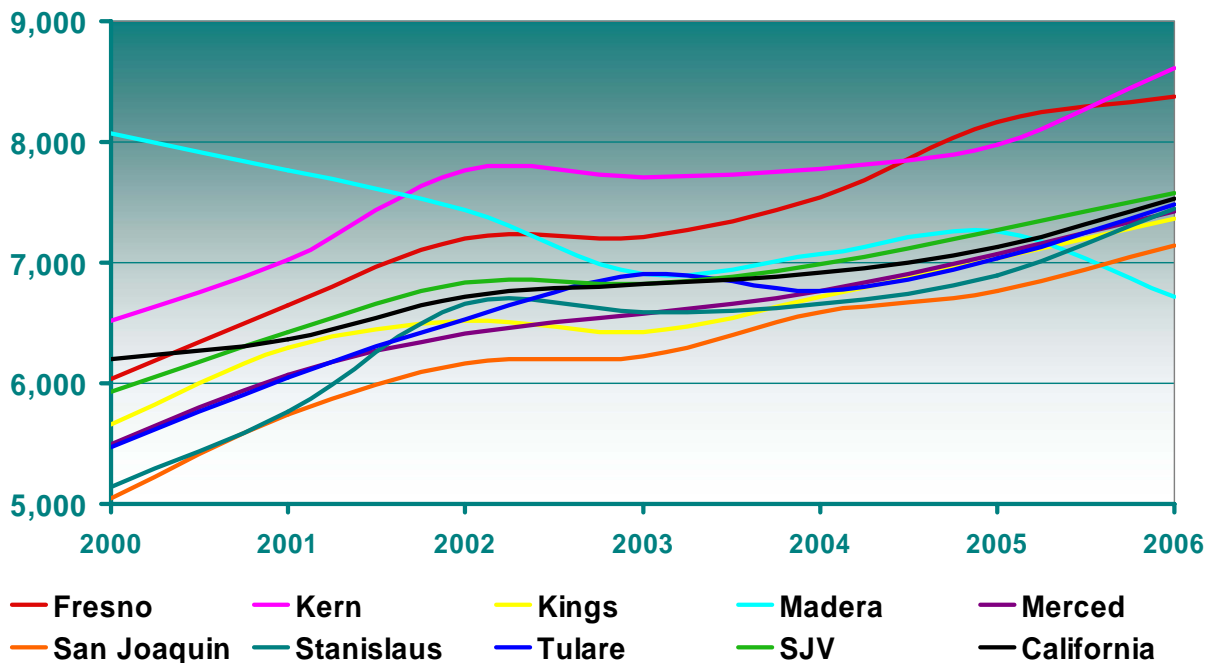
Why is it relevant?

A high school diploma is essential for lifelong learning and to become active members of the community workforce.

How is the SJV doing?

Since around 2003, the SJV as a region has outperformed California which also shows a slight upward trend. In fact, only Fresno and Stanislaus Counties consistently show high school graduation rates below the SJV average. Merced and San Joaquin are the counties with the highest graduation rates of the region.

Literacy and Education: Per Pupil Spending (K-12)



Source: California Department of Education

What is the measure?

Per pupil spending reflects the current expense of education and average daily attendance (ADA) in California school districts as defined by the California Department of Education. Per pupil spending is then calculated by dividing the current expense of education by ADA. It is expressed in dollars.

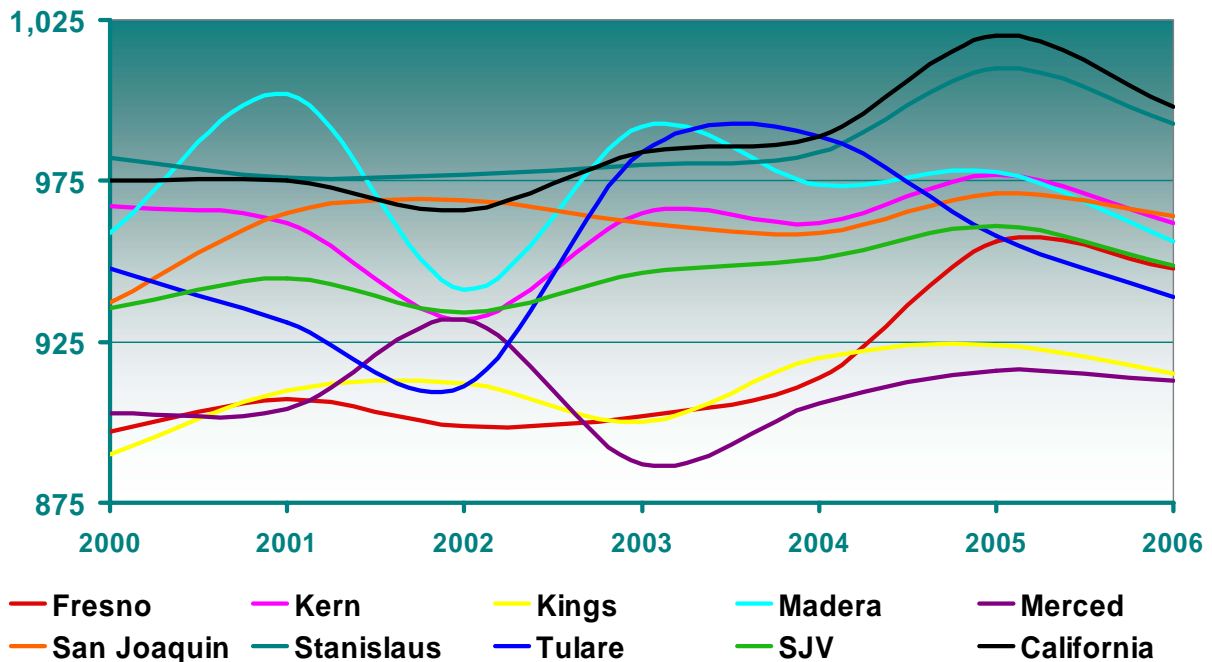
Why is it relevant?

The quality of education heavily depends on funding. Per pupil spending demonstrates the commitment to meeting the educational needs of the community.

How is the SJV doing?

All counties show a clear upward trend. In fact, since around 2004 the SJV has outperformed California. Fresno and Kern Counties outstand for their significantly high per pupil spending levels.

Literacy and Education: SAT I Total Scores (Verbal + Math)



Source: California Department of Education

What is the measure?

This indicator is simply the SAT I Total Scores (Verbal + Math).

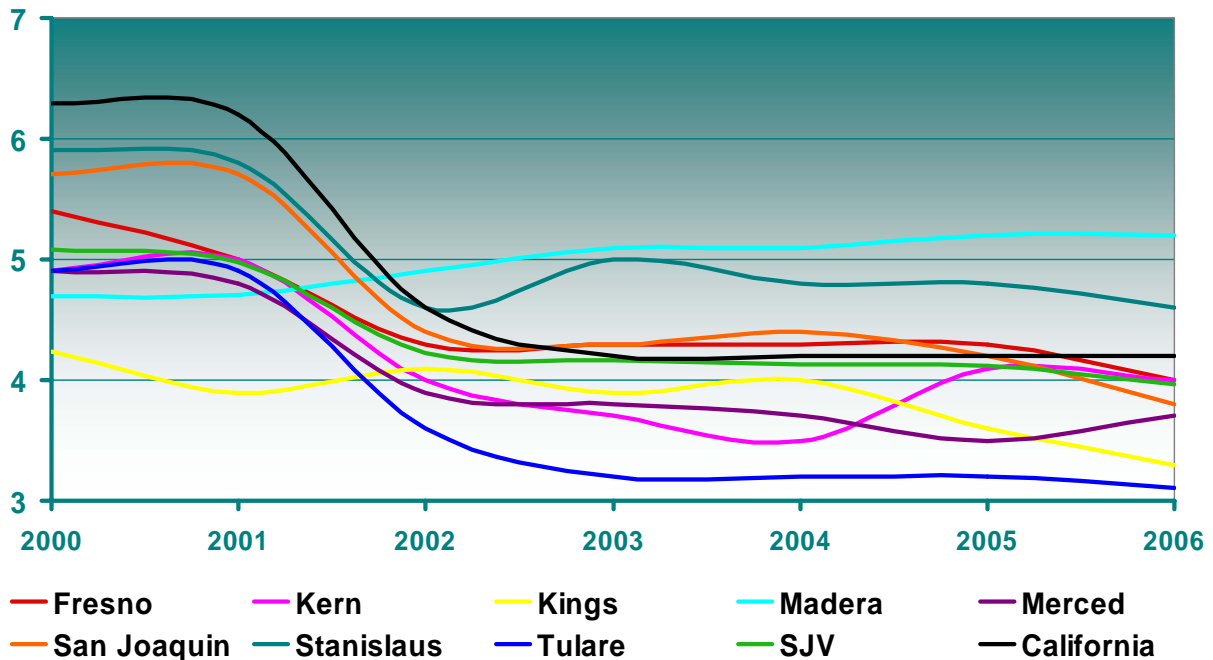
Why is it relevant?

SAT scores gauge the readiness for higher education. Whether students are prepared to enter the workforce or continue their education is key to their future opportunities and success, which can have a major impact on the community's quality of life.

How is the SJV doing?

While there is a wide dispersion among counties, they all show lower levels on SAT scores than California. The exception is Stanislaus County which closely follows the State's performance. On the other hand, Merced, Kings and Fresno Counties have consistently shown lower levels than the SJV as a whole.

Literacy and Education: High School Students per Computer



Source: California Department of Education

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as total enrollment in K-12 divided by the number of computers which are owned or leased by the school and that are used at least part of the time for instruction or activities directly related to instruction.

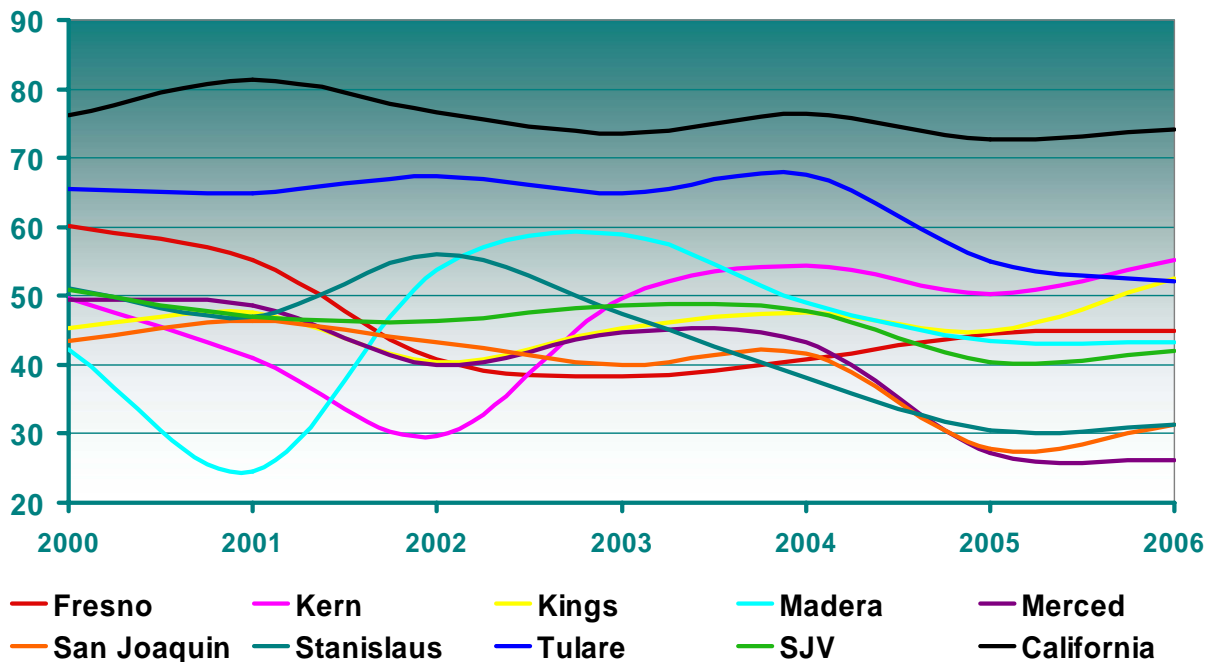
Why is it relevant?

Education and technology (particularly computers and access to the Internet) go hand in hand. Computer literacy among students will be a must have in the near future.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of Madera County, all other counties show a clear downward trend. In fact, most SJV counties outperform California which implies that as a region, the SJV shows consistently lower levels. Kings and Madera outstand for their low ratio of students to computers.

Index Component 7: Social Environment



What is the measure?

The social environment component index is the average of the 5 social environment indicators shown immediately after this page. Regions with relatively better social environment performance are closer to 100 and those regions with relatively worse social environment performance are closer to 0.

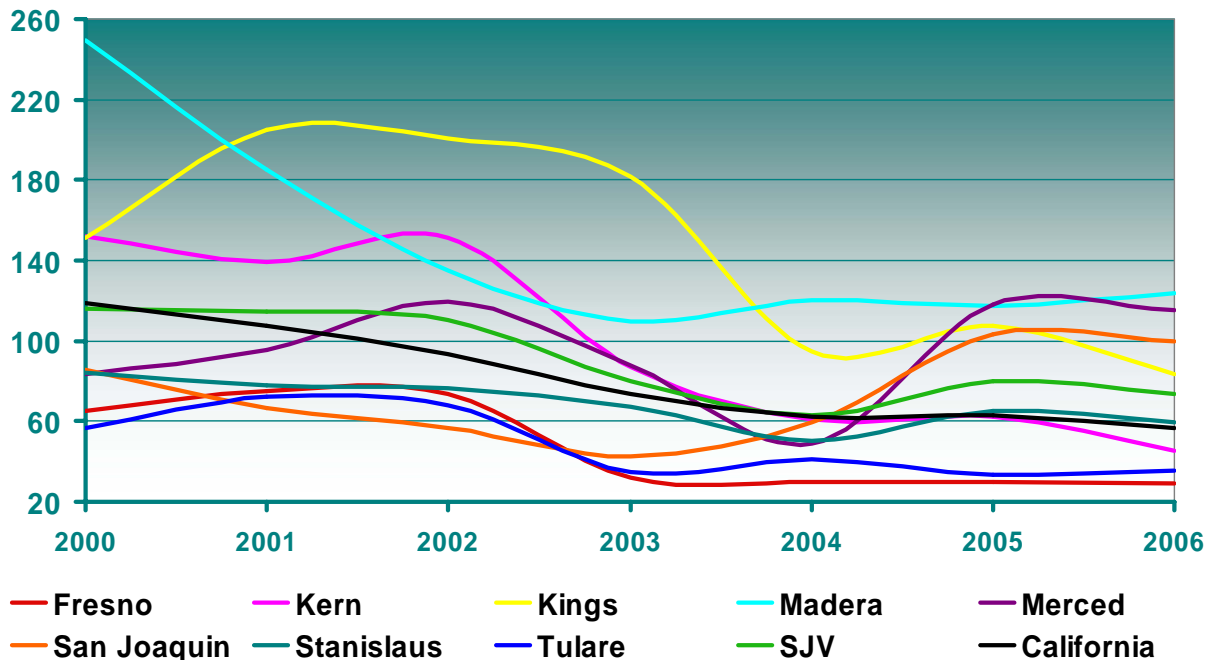
Why is it relevant?

The way residents treat each other and care for the most vulnerable populations is an important aspect of the quality of life. Philanthropy and volunteerism are key elements to enhance the social environment.

How is the SJV doing?

All SJV counties show a social environment component index significantly below the one of California. In fact, the SJV as a region shows a slight downward trend led mainly by three counties: Merced, Stanislaus and San Joaquin.

Social Environment: Total Child Abuse Cases



Source: California Department of Justice

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total number of child abuse cases per 100,000 persons in the population.

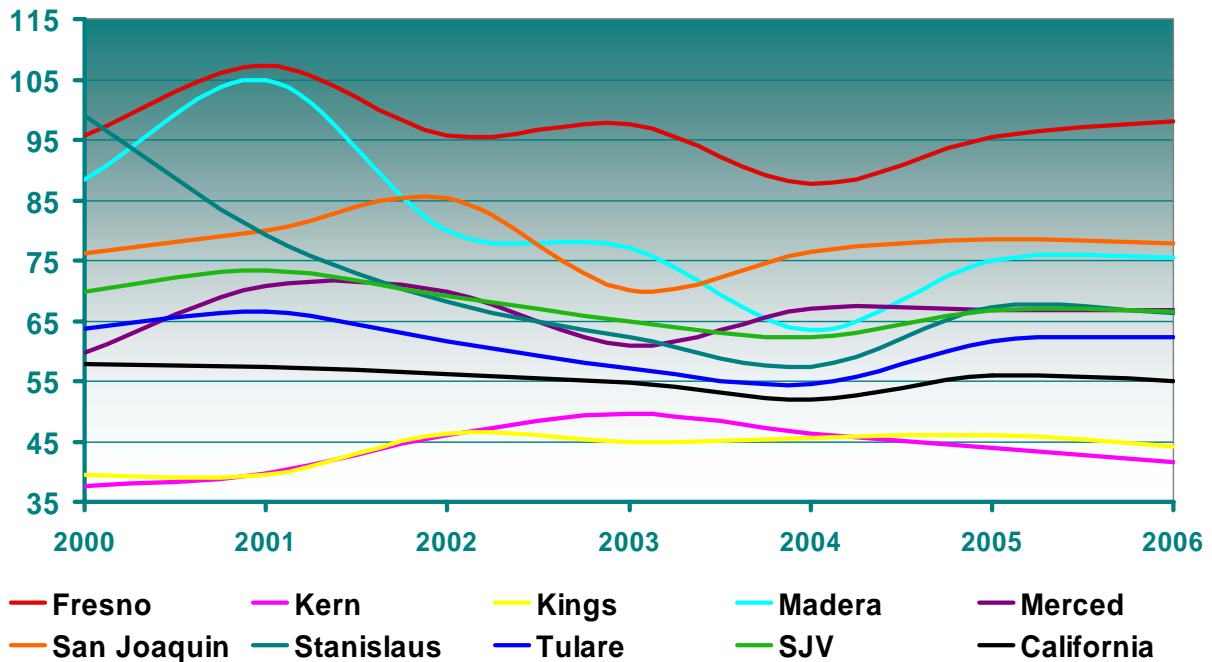
Why is it relevant?

Children who are abused often suffer harms that can have significant, long-lasting negative impacts on their lives. In addition, child abuse places demands on support services and even the school system.

How is the SJV doing?

Basically all counties show a declining trend. However, the SJV as a region has consistently shown higher number of child abuse cases than California. Fresno and Tulare stand out as the counties with the lower number of child abuse cases in the SJV, while Madera and Merced outstand for being the ones with the highest numbers.

Social Environment: Domestic Violence Total Calls



Source: California Department of Justice

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total number of domestic violence calls per 10,000 persons in the population. Domestic violence means abuse committed against an adult or a fully emancipated minor who is a spouse, former spouse, cohabitant or former cohabitant.

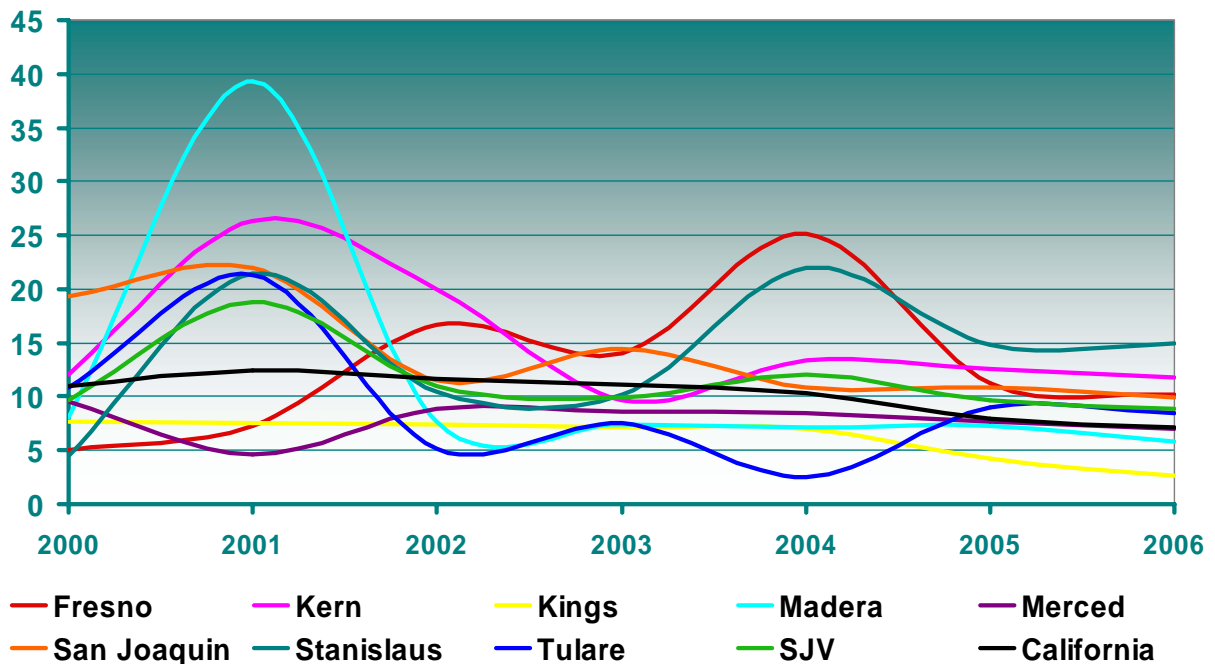
Why is it relevant?

Domestic violence can have serious negative implications for the health and well-being of people. It also directly impacts the families to which they belong. In addition, domestic violence can reflect the health of the community as a whole.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of Kern and Kings Counties, all other SJV counties show higher numbers of domestic violence calls than California. Fresno County stands out for its significant high number.

Social Environment: Fatal Violent Injuries to Females



Source: California Department of Health Services

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total number of fatal violent injuries to females per 100,000 persons in the population. Fatal violent injuries include all types of physical harm inflicted by one person on another resulting in death.

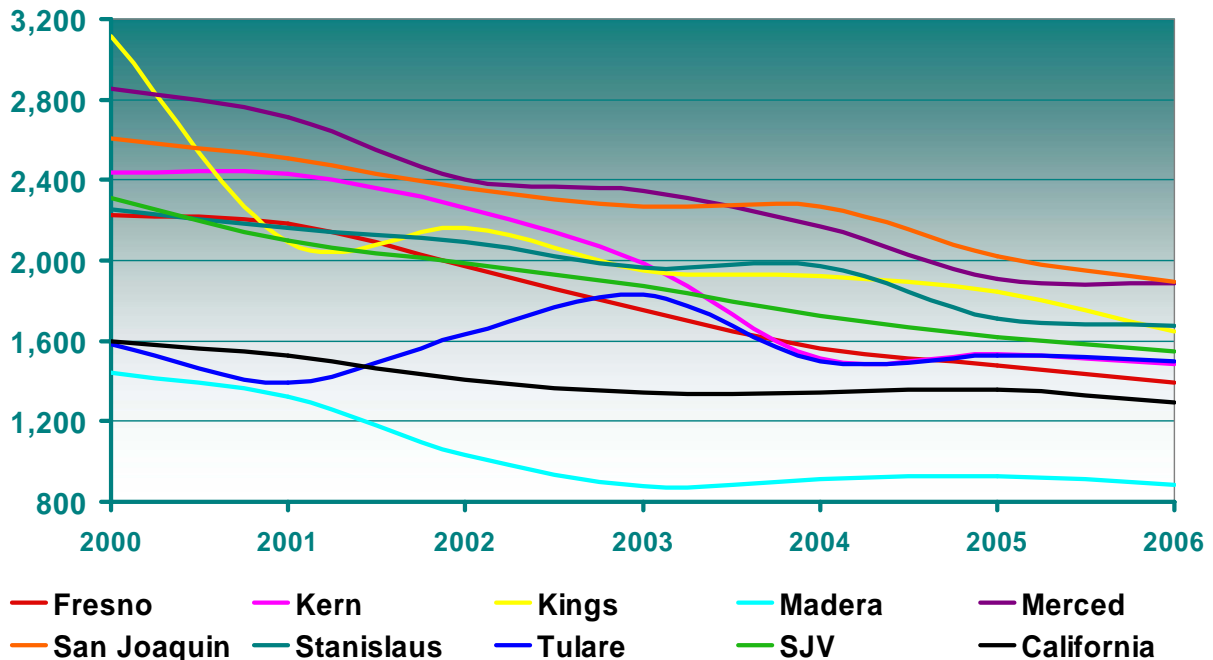
Why is it relevant?

Family and social harmony are critical elements to the quality of life, particularly with regard to gender discrimination and other more violent forms of abuse.

How is the SJV doing?

With the exception of Fresno and Stanislaus Counties, most other SJV counties show a slight downward trend. For the last few years, only Madera and Kings Counties show a lower number of fatal violent injuries to females than California.

Social Environment: Rate of Juvenile Felony Arrests



Source: U.S. Department of Justice

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the total number of juvenile felony arrests per 1,000 persons in the population.

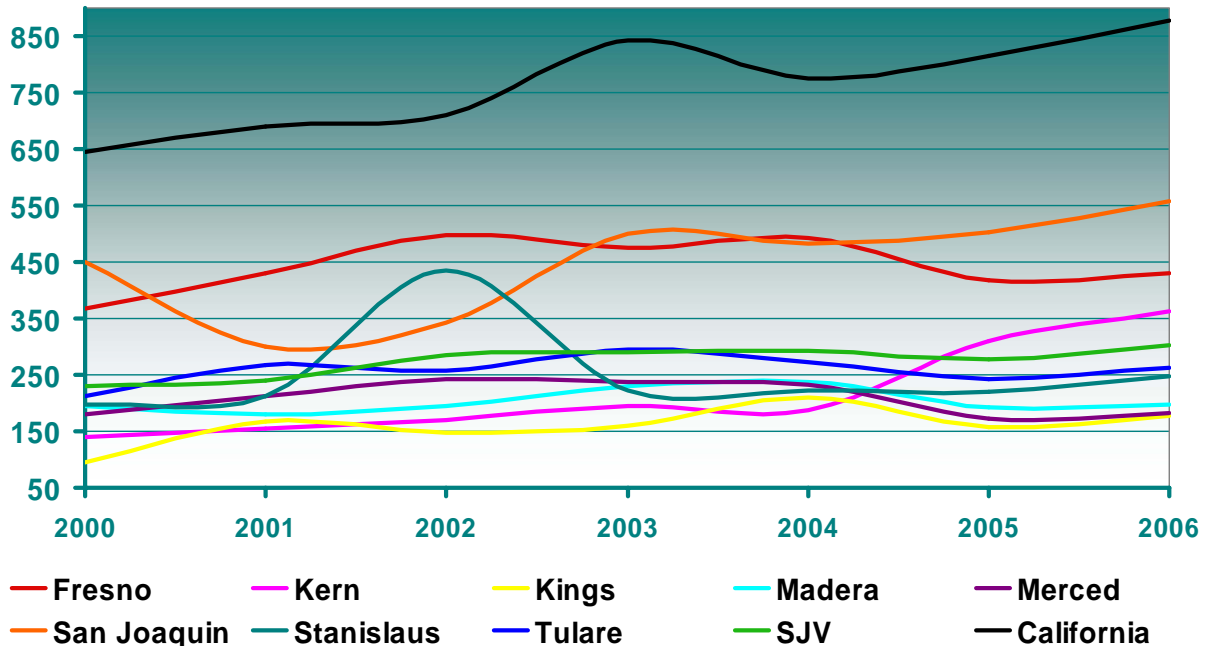
Why is it relevant?

Juvenile crime directly impacts the community's safety of today but it also gives an indication of how safe the community may be in the future. In addition, juvenile crime can also reflect the effectiveness of intervention programs focused on the youth.

How is the SJV doing?

All counties show a clear downward trend. Actually, the decline shown by most counties has been significant, in some cases cutting the number of arrests in half, such as Kings County. However, most SJV counties registered higher numbers of juvenile felony arrests than California. Madera County stands out for its significantly low number.

Social Environment: Contributions, Gifts & Grants Public Charities



Source: National Center for Charitable Statistics

What is the measure?

This indicator is calculated as the ratio of the total amount in contributions, gifts and grants to public charities to the total population. It is expressed in dollars.

Why is it relevant?

Non-profit organizations provide many important community services that sometimes are not addressed by other sectors. Support for those organizations attending the needs of the homeless and low-income families, taking care of the environment, and promoting culture, art and sports, is essential for the quality of life.

How is the SJV doing?

Most SJV counties substantially lag California. Although San Joaquin and Fresno Counties show consistently higher levels, the region as a whole shows a stagnant amount of contributions to charity, which contrast with the clear upward trend observed for California.

About the Center for Economic Research and Education of Central California (CERECC)

The Center for Economic Research and Education of Central California (CERECC) is an ancillary unit of the Department of Economics at the California State University, Fresno. The Center provides economic analysis for local business, community groups, and policymakers, and provides educational material to local educators.

MISSION

The mission of CERECC is to integrate and utilize the expertise of Department of Economics at the California State University, Fresno, on a broader regional basis. The Center's goal is to enhance economic development in our region by pursuing a two-pronged approach—economic research and economic education. To realize this goal, the Center provides economic research in issues relevant to Central California, and provides extension services for local educators.



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