

The Women's
and Girls' Fund

A Leadership Initiative of
KERN COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Report on
the Status of
Women and Girls
in Kern County
2025

2025 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County

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2025 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County

Selected Key Takeaways

DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographics of Kern County Women and girls include 57% Latina, 29% White, 5% African American/Black and 5% Asian. More than half (68%) of girls in Kern K-12 school districts identify as Latina, and about 94% of girls in English-learner programs speak Spanish. The second most spoken language among English learners is Punjabi. While only 2% of immigrants county-wide speak Punjabi, they comprise 18% of English learners in the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District in Bakersfield.

EDUCATION

One in five (21%) of Kern Women hold four-year college degrees or higher, up from 16% just five years ago. This is a significant increase in such a short time span and driven by the increase in educational attainment among women of different races/ethnicity.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

The median earnings of Kern full-time working women have increased by 23% from 2018 to 2023 (from \$36,000 to \$45,000)! Disparities among women based on race/ethnicity persist with respect to earnings.

Kern Women hold a variety of job types: Thirty-nine percent work in management, business, science and art fields; (20%) work full time in lower-paying service jobs. In 2023, one in five jobs in the sciences, technology and engineering fields were held by Kern Women, while men held 79% of these jobs.

The poverty rate in Kern has decreased since 2018—for individuals and for families headed by partnered couples, as well as those headed by single parents. In 2023, 19% of Kern residents lived on income below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Fifteen percent of Kern families lived on income below the FPL level, and one in three (31%) of Kern families headed by a single woman lived in poverty. When a single mother has three or four children in the home, more than half (63%) lived in poverty.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Valley Fever is a common lung infection in the county, caused by fungi that live in the soil. While most cases are relatively mild, there are over 300 cases/100,000 residents diagnosed each year compared to the state average of 23 cases/100,000 Californians. In 2023 women accounted for 40% of all California cases.

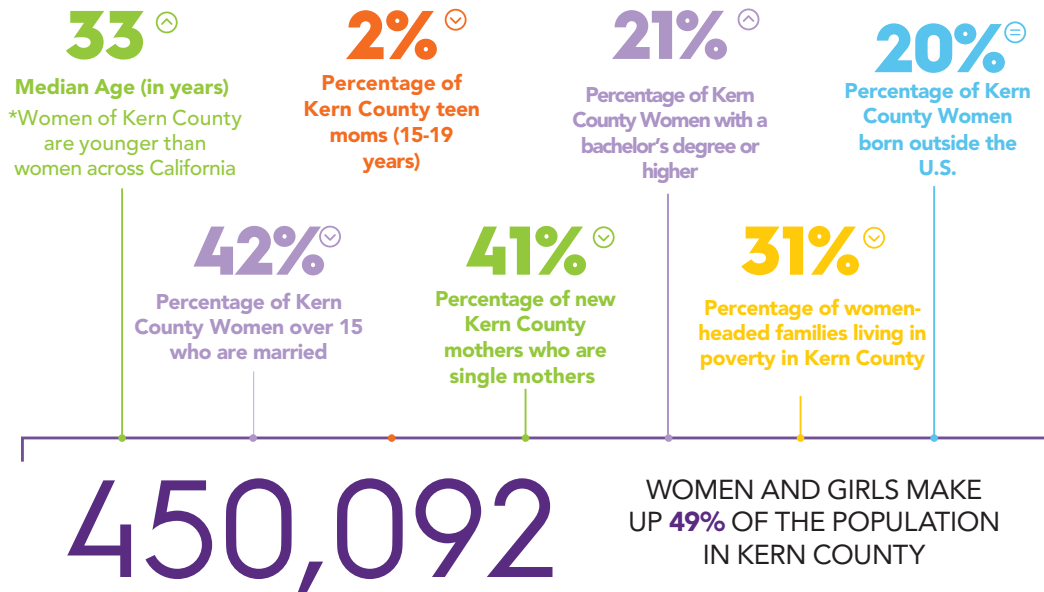
The mortality rate of Kern Women from breast cancer continues to decrease. In 2023, about 300 Kern Women died from breast cancer. The mortality rate from breast cancer is highest for African American/Black women and lowest for Asian women.

In 2022-2023, one in five Kern Women (and 8% of men) reported delaying needed health care. Of the adults who delayed needed care, over 40% reported difficulties with the healthcare system available to them. One issue involves the number of medical professionals serving the county: the ratio of Kern residents to medical professionals is almost twice that of the state and the nation. In Kern County, there are nearly 2,100 residents (compared to the state average of 1,200 Californians) per primary care physician.

Calls for law enforcement assistance in crimes of a domestic nature—domestic or intimate partner violence—have also been declining since 2021. At the same time, the proportion of Kern's domestic violence incidents involving the use of a weapon increased from 36% in 2021 to 76% in 2023, increasing the likelihood of serious injury or death to victims.

Kern County Women and Girls Today

⬆ INCREASE FROM 2020 REPORT ⬇ DECREASE FROM 2020 REPORT ⬇ SAME AS 2020 REPORT



Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Kern County

ALL AGES: GIRLS (LESS THAN 18 YEARS OLD) AND WOMEN 65 YEARS AND OLDER¹

AFRICAN AMERICAN ASIAN AMERICAN LATINA WHITE OTHER

ALL AGES



UNDER 18 YEARS



65 YEARS AND OVER



► The racial/ethnic distribution of Kern County girls (under 18 years) is more heavily Latina, while women 65 years and over are predominantly White.

CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN



¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates.
Tables: B01001, B01001B, D, H, I: Sex and Age

Kern County Women in the Workforce

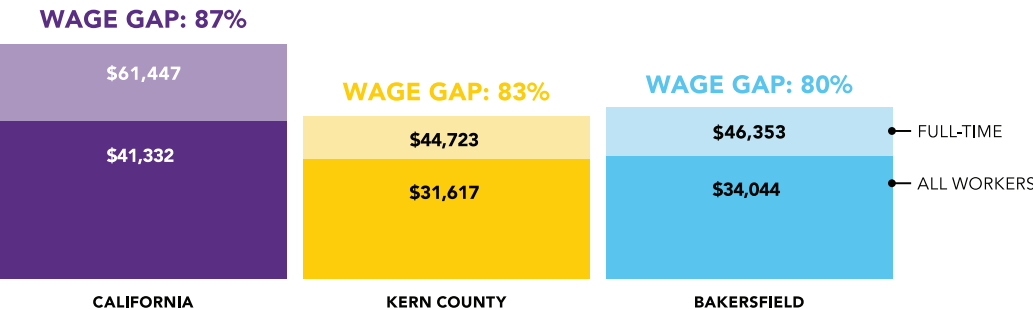
EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF WOMEN 20-64 YEARS OF AGE²

67% PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL WOMEN WHO ARE IN THE LABOR FORCE

7.8% UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

► A smaller percentage of women in Kern County (and Bakersfield) are in the labor force compared to all of CA and more women are unable to find work / are unemployed in Kern County compared to the state-wide figure.

MEDIAN FULL-TIME EARNINGS OF KERN COUNTY WOMEN 16 YEARS AND OVER: 2023



► Kern County Women have lower median earnings than women across the state, but the gender earnings gap is significantly larger for Kern County Women than for California working women as a whole: **83% vs 87%** of what men earn.

► The gender wage gap remains about constant at 83 cents earned by women for every dollar earned by men (2020 and 2025 Reports).

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION³

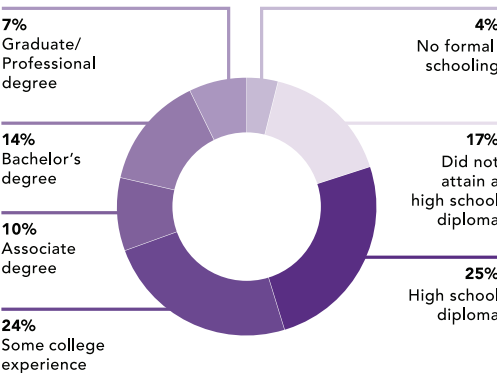
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES MEETING UC/CSU REQUIREMENTS:

A significantly smaller percentage of girls graduate high school in Kern County having completed requirements for admission to the University of California or California State University than do girls statewide (**42% vs 58%**).

ENGLISH LEARNERS:

Nearly 1 in 5 girls (**18%**) enrolled in Kern County schools are identified as English Learners. Kern County girls in English-Learner programs have a graduation rate of 84% with 20% having completed requirements for UC or CSU.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR KERN COUNTY WOMEN 25 YEARS AND OLDER: 2023



²Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates. Table S2301: Employment Status

³Source: California Department of Education, 2022-2023

SNAPSHOT OF KERN COUNTY WOMEN: THEN (2018) AND NOW (2023)

Population¹

Over the five-year period 2018-2023, Kern County's population has grown by about 2%, in line with California's overall population growth. In contrast to the county, Bakersfield's population has grown by just under 8% over the same period. The proportion of women has remained within one percentage point of 50% for Bakersfield, Kern, and the state.

Kern County Women 2018 and 2023

	2018	2023	Change
Total population	896,764	913,820	2% increase
Proportion of women	49%	49%	Constant at 49%

Percentage of Women and Girls by Age: 2023

Under 5 years	5-17 years	18-24 years	25-44 years	45-64 years	65-84 years	85 years and over
7%	21%	10%	28%	22%	12%	1%

The distribution of Kern Women by age has not changed significantly since 2018. However, over the period 2018-2023, the racial/ethnic distribution of Kern Women has changed, with the percentage of women who are Latina increasing from 53% in 2018 to 57% in 2023, and White women decreasing from 34% to 29% of all women.

Kern County Women 2018 and 2023

	2018	2023	Notable changes
African American/Black	5%	5%	Constant at 5%
Asian	5%	5%	Constant at 5%
Latina	53%	57%	Up 4 percentage points
White	34%	29%	Down 5 percentage points

Median Age²

Women of Kern County (median age 32.4 years) tend to be younger than women across the state of California (median age 39.2 years). However, in 2023, the median age of Kern Women increased by almost one year relative to 2018. The increase in the median age of women is seen across racial/ethnic groups.

1 U.S. Census Bureau. 2018, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S0101: Age and Sex. <http://data.census.gov>

2 U.S. Census Bureau. 2018, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Tables: B01002, B01002B, D,H, I: Median Age by Sex. <http://data.census.gov>

Kern County Women in 2018 and 2023 (median age in years)

	All women	African American/Black	Asian American	Latina	White
2018	32.6	27.4	40.0	26.3	44.0
2023	33.2	30.6	40.7	28.3	44.8

Marital Status of Women 15 Years and Over³

The marital status of Kern County Women is fairly typical of California women as a whole, with just over one in three (35 % for California and 37% for Kern County) women who are 15 years and over having never been married.

Kern County Women in 2018 and 2023

	2018	2023
Percentage of women who are: Married (not separated)	45%	42%
Widowed	8%	8%
Divorced	11%	11%
Separated	4%	3%
Never been married	33%	37%

Less than 2% of teen girls (15-19 years) were or had ever been married, in both 2018 and 2023.

New Mothers⁴

The data indicate that roughly 6% of Kern County Women between the ages of 15-50 years gave birth in 2023; 2% of these new mothers were teens between 15-19 years of age. Of all new mothers, 41% were unmarried. While the number of new teen mothers was small (279), 22% were unmarried.

Kern County New Mothers (15-55 years) in 2018 and 2023

	2018	2023	Change in births and birth rates
Number of women who gave birth in 2023 • Birth rate	12,827 61	13,116 60	births have increased by 2%, but the birth rate has been stable.
Number of teen mothers (15-19 years) • Birth rate of teens	523 17	279 8	births to teens have decreased by about one half, as has the birth rate.
Percentage of new mothers who were single Percentage of teen mothers who were single	43% 64%	41% 22%	There has been a decrease in the percentage of single mothers from 43% in 2018 to 41% in 2023, and the percentage of teen mothers who are single has dropped by more than one half. (from 64% to 22%).

Note: Birth rate is number of live births per 1000 women in age bracket.

3 U.S. Census Bureau. 2018, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1201: Marital Status. <http://data.census.gov>

4 U.S. Census Bureau. 2-18, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1301: Fertility. <http://data.census.gov>

Poverty⁵

Poverty levels have decreased in Kern County since 2018. In 2023, 19% of all Kern residents lived on income below the federal poverty level (FPL), down two percentage points from 2018. A greater percentage of women and girls than men and boys live in poverty.⁶ Fifteen percent of families in Kern County live on income below the FPL. For Kern family households headed by single women, nearly one in three (31%) live on income below the federal poverty threshold, a number that has decreased from 39% in 2018.

Kern County Women in Poverty: 2018 and 2023

	2018	2023	Change
Percentage of women and girls living on earnings below the federal poverty threshold	23%	21%	The poverty rate based on the federal poverty threshold has decreased by 2 percentage points for females
Population of women-headed families	44,357	52,937	A greater number of families headed by women (with no spouse present)
Percentage of women-headed families in poverty	39%	31%	Percentage of women-headed family households in poverty has decreased by 8 percentage points
Percentage of all families living in poverty	17%	15%	The poverty rate of all family types has decreased by 2 percentage points

Educational Attainment of Women 25 Years and Older⁷

The percentage of Kern Women who have attained a bachelor's degree or higher is significantly smaller than the statewide average, 21% and 38%, respectively. However, from 2018 to 2023, the percentage of Kern Women holding a bachelor's degree or higher has increased by five percentage points from 16% to 21%.

Kern County Women (25 years and over) and Educational Attainment in 2018 and 2023

	2018	2023	Change
Less than high school	27%	21%	The proportion of Kern Women with less than a high school diploma has decreased, while those holding a bachelor's degree or higher has increased by 5 percentage points.
High school diploma	24%	25%	
Some college/associate degree	33%	34%	
Four-year degree or higher	16%	21%	

5 U.S. Census Bureau. 2018, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months; Table S1702: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families. <http://data.census.gov>

6 The federal poverty level threshold for 2023 was set at an annual income (not counting income from assistance programs) at \$15,480 for individuals, \$23,556 for a two-member household, and \$30,900 for a family of four, with two children under the age of 18 years. See <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-thresholds.html>

7 U.S. Census Bureau. 2018, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B15002: Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over. <http://data.census.gov>

Immigrant Women⁸

The American Community Survey program of the Census Bureau surveys residents (both citizens and non-citizens), but it is almost certain that some immigrants are not counted. However, based on Census Bureau figures, there is a smaller percentage of immigrants in Kern than the statewide average: 20% and 27%, respectively. Over the 2018-2023 five-year period, the immigrant population grew in equal proportion to the overall population so that the percentage of immigrants in 2023 is unchanged from 2018. About one in five women residing in Kern County was born outside of the United States.

Kern Women Born in Another County: 2018 and 2023

	Kern		California	
	2018	2023	2018	2023
Total women	436,995	450,092	19,883,492	19,514,495
Non-native	86,520	89,400	5,506,641	5,447,461
Percentage born in another country	20%	20%	28%	28%

Employment⁹

Nearly three-fourths (74%) of California women participate in the labor force. Relative to the state, a smaller percentage of women in Kern County (67%) are seeking work. However, among those who are seeking work 7.8% of Kern Women (and 5.1% of California women) cannot find it. Relative to 2018, a greater percentage of Kern Women were seeking work in 2023, with about 8% of those seeking work unemployed (unchanged from 2018).

Kern County Women (20-64 years) in the Labor Force: 2018 and 2023

	2018	2023
Percentage of total women who are in the labor force	62%	67%
Unemployment rate	8%	8%

Note: Percentages have been rounded.

Median Earnings of Full-Time Workers 16 Years and Over¹⁰

Although the median earnings for Kern Women who work full time is less than the statewide average, median earnings have increased by 23% in the county over the 2018-2023 period.

8 U.S. Census Bureau. 2018, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B05003: Sex by Age by Nativity and Citizenship. <http://data.census.gov>

9 U.S. Census Bureau. 2018, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2301: Employment Status. <http://data.census.gov>

10 U.S. Census Bureau. 2018, 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B20017: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. <http://data.census.gov>

Median Earnings of Full-Time Working Women in Kern in 2018 and 2023

	2018	2023	Change
Women	\$36,237	\$44,723	Up 23%
Men	\$44,140	\$54,107	Up 23%
Percentage of women's earnings to men's	82%	83%	Constant gap in median income between full-time working women and men

EDUCATION

K-12 Education

Enrollment. In 2022-2023, there were just over 197,000 girls and boys enrolled in Kern County's public K-12 schools; 49% of these students (96,700) were girls. Ninety-six percent of all girls identified as Latina, White, African American/Black or Asian/Filipina:¹¹

- 68% Latina
- 19% White
- 5% African American/Black
- 4% Asian or Filipina

About 2% identified with more than one race; Native Americans (American Indian/Alaska Native—AI/AN) comprised 0.4% and Pacific Islanders (PI) comprised 0.2%.

High school graduation rates. Kern County girls graduated from high school in four years at about the same rate as girls across the state (88.0% and 88.6%, respectively). A significantly smaller percentage of them completed requirements for admission to the University of California or California State University systems than do girls statewide.

Table 1. High School Graduation Rates and Outcomes for Kern County Girls by Race/Ethnicity: 2022-2023

	Graduation rate	Percentage meeting UC/CSU admission requirements	Dropout rate	Still enrolled after 4 years
African American/Black	79%	29%	14%	4%
AI/AN	75%	29%	13%	9%
Asian	95%	62%	3%	1%
Filipina	98%	83%	2%	0%
Latina	88%	41%	6%	5%
PI	95%	45%	0%	0%
White	88%	41%	9%	2%
Multiracial	90%	37%	4%	5%
Did not report	86%	53%	9%	2%
Kern girls	88%	42%	7%	4%
Comparisons				
California girls	89%	58%	7%	3%
Fresno girls	86%	53%	7%	4%
Merced girls	94%	38%	5%	0.1%

Note: AI/AN represents American Indian and Alaska Native groups; PI represents Pacific Islanders, including Native Hawaiians. These rates are for a single four-year cohort of students. Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers.
Source: California Department of Education. Four-year Graduation Rates and Outcomes Report

¹¹ California Department of Education. 2022-2023 Enrollment Report. Retrieved online using the data query tool at <https://dq.cde.ca.gov>

English learners. The English Learner program in Kern County schools is critically important for educating the county’s youth. In 2023-2024, there were nearly 36,400 English learners in Kern’s K-12 public schools: 94% of English learners spoke Spanish; the second most spoken language was Punjabi at 2% and just under 2% spoke Arabic. Among the remaining 2% of English learners, more than 35 other languages were spoken. In six of Kern’s 47 school districts, over half the population were English learners. The two schools with the highest percentages of Punjabi speakers are in Bakersfield: Two percent of students enrolled as English learners in the Greenfield Union School District and 18% in the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District speak Punjabi.¹²

Graduation rates and dropout rates of all girls in Kern English learner programs are comparable to state-wide statistics.¹³

Table 2. A Comparison of Kern County Girls in English-Language Programs with all California Girls in English-Language Programs: 2022-2023

	4-Year graduation rate	Percentage of graduates who completed UC/CSU requirements	Dropout rate	Percentage still enrolled after 4 years
Kern County	84%	20%	7%	6%
California	77%	31%	14%	6%

Source: California Department of Education

In the 2022-2023 cohort of students, note that Kern County girls in English-learner programs dropped at about half the rate of the statewide average and graduated at a significantly higher rate than English learners across the state. Twenty percent graduated having met the UC/CSU admission requirements, and this generally correlates with a low college-going rate.

Kern County girls in grades K-12 in 2018 and 2022: While enrollment figures have increased from 192,446 in 2018-2019 to 197,000 in 2022-2023, the proportion of girls remains unchanged at 49%. However, there has been a shift in the racial/ethnic distribution. The proportion of Latinas has increased from 66% in 2018 to 68% in 2022-2023, and that of White girls has decreased from 22% to 19%. The African American/Black and Asian American populations of girls are unchanged at 5% and 4%, respectively.

12 California Department of Education. (2025). English Learner Data. Retrieved from online database. <https://dq.cde.ca.gov>

13 The California Department of Education uses an adjusted cohort model to report 4-year graduation and dropout rates. The cohort of students who begin in the 9th grade is adjusted by adding any students who transfer into the system during the next three years and subtracting any students who transfer out, emigrate to another country, go to prison or a juvenile facility, or die during that four-year period. www.cde.ca.gov/ds/acgrinfo.asp

Table 3. Girls in Kern County English-Learner Programs

	Graduation rate	Percentage of graduates meeting UC/CSU requirements	Dropout rate	College-going rate within 12 months of high school completion (2021-2022 cohort)
2018-2019	90%	44%	7%	54%
2022-2023	84%	36%	7%	57%
EL:2018-2019	80%	21%	7%	
EL:2022-2023	84%	20%	7%	20%

Note: Blanks indicate that the figures were not reported in the 2020 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County.
Source: California Department of Education

The four-year graduation rate for all girls has decreased, while that for English learners has increased. The proportion of high school girls meeting UC/CSU requirements on graduation has decreased by eight percentage points, but remained about constant for English learners.

Enrollment of Kern adults in school. Since 2013, a significant proportion of Kern residents enrolled in school have been 20 years and older. In 2023, 32% of those who are 20-24 years of age were enrolled in school, 10% of those who are 25-34 years, and 3% of Kern adults who are 35 years and older were enrolled in school.¹⁴

Postsecondary Education

Of Kern County girls who completed a high school diploma in 2020-2021, 52% subsequently enrolled in college within one year (compared to 69% of girls in Fresno and 43% in Merced). Over 90% of these girls were enrolled in California colleges and universities. For Kern girls who completed English-learner programs, one in three (33%) enrolled in college within 12 months (compared to 49% statewide).

The percentage of high school graduates meeting the UC/CSU requirements correlates with the college-going rate of those with a high school diploma. In 2020-2021, for example, 76% of Kern girls who graduated from high school having completed the UC/CSU requirements were enrolled in college, while less than half (34%) of graduates who did not complete the UC/CSU requirements were enrolled.

Enrollment of women in college or graduate school. Since 2015, the number of Kern Women enrolled in college or graduate school has steadily increased. Interestingly, half of these women fall into what is considered the “traditional” college-going age range of 18-24 years, and the other half are assumed to be older women who are now enrolled in college or graduate school. In 2015 over half (58%) of women enrolled in college or graduate school were 18-24 years of age.¹⁵

14 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1401: School Enrollment. <http://data.census.gov>

15 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1401: School Enrollment. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 4. Enrollment of Kern County Women 18-24 Years of Age in College or Graduate School

	2015	2018	2023
Enrolled women of all ages	28,021	30,929	32,496
Enrolled women 18-24 years	16,256	15,207	16,181
Percentage of enrolled women 18-24 years	58%	49%	50%

Note: We assume that virtually all women currently enrolled in college who do not fall in the 18–24-year age range are older women returning to college (or graduate school). Across the state in 2023, 55% of college students were of traditional age (18-24 years).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Surveys 1-Year Estimates

Educational attainment. Twenty-one percent of women 25 years and over residing in Kern County have attained a four-year college (bachelor's) degree or higher compared to 38% of women across the state.

Table 5. Educational Attainment of Kern County Women 25 Years and Over: 2023

	California	Kern County	Bakersfield
Population of women 25 years and over	13,564,002	276,167	127,165
Percentage of women with no formal schooling	4%	4%	4%
Percentage of women in school who did not attain a high school diploma	11%	17%	12%
Percentage of women who attained a high school diploma	19%	25%	24%
Some college experience	19%	24%	25%
Associate degree	9%	10%	10%
Bachelor's degree	23%	14%	16%
Graduate/professional degree	15%	7%	9%
• Master's	• 11%	• 5%	• 6%
• Professional	• 3%	• 1%	• 2%
• Doctorate	• 2%	• 0.4%	• 0.5%

Note: Percentages are rounded.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates

The 4% of Kern County Women who have had no schooling is typical of the state as a whole. One in three (31%) of Kern Women hold a college degree (associate, bachelor's, and graduate/professional), up six percentage points from 2018. In 2023, roughly one in three (35%) Bakersfield women have earned a two-year college degree or higher.

Educational attainment is not equal among women; when disaggregated by race/ethnicity, we find that in 2023 more than half of Asian women had attained a two-year college degree or higher.

Table 6. Percentage of Kern County Women 25 Years and Older by Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity: 2023¹⁶

	African American/ Black	Asian	Latina	White, not Hispanic	All women
Population	12,847	17,756	141,516	96,659	276,167
Less than high school	16%	8%	34%	7%	21%
High school diploma	19%	23%	26%	25%	25%
Some college	35%	18%	20%	29%	24%
Percentage of women with a college degree	31%	51%	19%	39%	31%
• Associate's degree	7%	9%	7%	13%	10%
• Bachelor's degree	16%	30%	9%	16%	14%
• Graduate/Professional degree	8%	12%	3%	10%	7%

Note: Percentages have been rounded and may not add to 100%; statistics for other races/ethnicities are not reported.

Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Since 2018 the percentage of Kern Women holding a two-year college degree or higher has significantly increased—driven by increases for women of color, as well as for White women.

Percentage of Kern Women holding Associate's degree or higher in 2018 and 2023:

- All women Increased from 25% to 31%
- African American/Black Increased from 29% to 31%
- Asian Increased from 50% to 51%
- Latina Increased from 15% to 19%
- White Increased from 34% to 39%

Relative to men, in 2023 Kern Women held the majority share of four-year college and master's level degrees and just under half of professional degrees.¹⁷ Relative to the state population, Kern Women held a larger share of four-year and master's level degrees, but a smaller share of professional and doctoral degrees.

Table 7. Women's Share of Four-Year College and Higher Degrees for Population 25 Years and Over

	California	Kern County	Bakersfield
Bachelor's degrees	52%	55%	59%
Master's degrees	55%	59%	59%
Professional degrees	49%	46%	48%
Doctorates	43%	34%	44%
Women's share of 4-year college and higher degrees	52%	55%	58%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

¹⁶ 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. (2024). Tables B15002, B15002B, D, H, I: Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over. <http://data.census.gov>

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B15002: Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 7 illustrates that Kern Women in general have a higher educational attainment than Kern men.

Field of First Bachelor’s Degree

For many students, the academic major of the earned bachelor’s degree will lead to a career in a related field. Among Kern residents who hold a bachelor’s degree, a smaller percentage hold degrees in science and engineering than Californians in general. A greater proportion of Kern’s college graduates hold bachelor’s degrees in education than those across the state.¹⁸

Table 8. Percentage of First Bachelor’s Degree by Field

	Kern County	California
Number of bachelor’s degrees	108,414	10,884,534
Science and engineering	38%	42%
Science and engineering related fields	10%	8%
Business	16%	17%
Education	9%	5%
Arts, humanities, and other	26%	26%

Note: These data are not disaggregated by gender.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Career, Technical, Vocational Education

Not all students will opt for a college pathway to a career. For many young women and men, training that develops skills for a specific occupation and which will lead directly to a job is preferable to a more expensive and more time-consuming college degree. In Kern County, career technology (CTE) programs have healthy enrollment. In recent years, the Kern High School District has committed additional funding to CTE, updating programs and facilities including those at its capstone campus, the Regional Occupational Center in Bakersfield. Their website indicates that these programs enroll just over 19,000 students in grades 9-12 with a graduation rate of 96%.¹⁹

California community colleges that serve Kern County (Bakersfield, Cerro Coso, and Porterville Colleges) also offer robust programs in vocational education.²⁰ Popular majors include registered and vocational nursing, psychiatric technology, welding, and automotive technology.

In Fall 2024, these three colleges collectively enrolled a total of just under 41,000 students, of whom 1,650 (4% of all students) were on a pathway to obtaining a vocational degree/certificate. About two-thirds of these vocational students were enrolled at Bakersfield College, 22% were enrolled at Cerro Coso and 13% were at Porterville. In 2023-2024, just over 40% of all Kern Community College District graduates (3,550 students out of about 8,700 graduates) received a certificate or a vocational degree.

18 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B15012: Field of First Bachelor’s Degree. <http://data.census.gov>
19 Kern High School District: Career and Technical Education on home page. (retrieved online July 5, 2025). <https://www.kernhigh.org>
20 Kern Community College District 2024-2025 Fast Facts Sheets. (February 2025). https://www.kccd.edu/institutional-research/_documents/IR%20Reports/fast-facts/2024-2025/PC%20Fast%20Facts%202024-25%20Final.pdf

Adult Literacy and Numeracy Assessment

The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) surveys adults 16-74 years of age to assess their cognitive skills and life expectancy. Two of the assessments focus on literacy and numeracy. The fourth and latest round of nationwide PIAAC assessment was carried out between August 2022 and June 2023. National results are currently available for the 2023 PIAAC assessment, but the latest data available for the state and county are what we reported in the 2020 Report on the Status of women and Girls in Kern County. Those results are based on the combined results of the 2012, 2014, and 2017 PIAAC surveys.

Assessment results are broken into three levels for both literacy and numeracy:

- LEVEL 1 suggests a level of reading/writing or numerical concepts at grades 1-3.
- LEVEL 2 suggests reading/writing or numerical concepts at grades 4-5.
- LEVEL 3, the highest level of proficiency, suggests competency at grade 6 or higher.

Relative to earlier years, the 2023 percentages of Americans testing at the highest level 3 have decreased and the percentages of American adults (16-74 years) testing at the lowest level 1 have increased.²¹

Table 9. Percentage of Americans Testing at Each Level of Literacy and Numeracy Competency

	Kern		United States		
	2012/2014/2017	2023*	2012/2014	2017	2023
LITERACY					
• Level 1	40%		18%	19%	28%
• Level 2	29%		33%	33%	29%
• Level 3	31%		50%	48%	44%
NUMERACY					
• Level 1	50%		28%	29%	34%
• Level 2	26%		34%	33%	28%
• Level 3	24%		39%	37%	38%

Note: The outdated scores for Kern are based on three rounds of PIAAC data in 2012, 2014, and 2017. The 2023 scores at county levels are not yet available online.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, PIAAC Program

The 2023 PIAAC results at the national level have been disaggregated by several variables. By gender, women perform about equal to men in literacy, but they demonstrate significantly less competency in numeracy. Over 40% of men scored at the highest level of competency in numeracy, compared to one in three women.

²¹ Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). (December 2024). <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/>

Table 10. Percentage of Persons Scoring at Level in Literacy and Numeracy: U.S. Results by Gender by Year

	Women			Men		
	2012/2014	2017	2023	2012/2014	2017	2023
LITERACY						
• Level 1	17%	18%	26%	18%	19%	29%
• Level 2	33%	34%	30%	33%	33%	27%
• Level 3	50%	49%	44%	49%	48%	44%
NUMERACY						
• Level 1	31%	30%	36%	24%	28%	32%
• Level 2	35%	36%	30%	32%	31%	26%
• Level 3	34%	34%	34%	44%	41%	42%

Note: Results for 2012/2014 are based on two collections of data.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, PIAAC Program

Economic Well-Being

Employment

A smaller proportion of Kern Women than those across the state participate in the labor force. Of those women looking for work, a greater proportion are unable to find employment (i.e., are unemployed) than women across the state.²²

Table 11. Employment Status of Women 20-64 Years of Age

	California	Kern	Bakersfield
Population of women 20-64 years of age	11,431,757	250,444	119,164
Percentage of women in labor force	74%	67%	69%
Unemployment rate	5.1%	7.8%	5.1%

Note: The labor force participation rate includes the percentage of women who are looking for a job; the unemployment rate is the percentage of those who are looking for a job but unable to find one.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

A smaller percentage of Kern Women than men are looking for work (67% compared to 79%), but their unemployment rate is about the same (7.8%-7.9%). Note that the unemployment rate for women in the county is significantly greater than for those in Bakersfield and the state.

Working mothers. The employment status of working mothers is worth noting. The comparison of all women to mothers who have children at home under 18 years shows similar labor force participation and unemployment rates.²³

²² U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2301: Employment Status. <http://data.census.gov>

²³ U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2301: Employment Status. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 12. Kern County Working Mothers: Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates

	Number	Labor force participation	Unemployment rate
All women	250,444	67%	7.8%
All mothers with children under 18 years	96,249	69%	7.9%
Mothers with children under 6 years	16,553	60%	9.3%
Mothers with children under 6 years and between 6-17 years	25,845	66%	11%
Mothers with children between 6-17 years	53,851	74%	6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

However, when there is a child under the age of six years at home, there are significant differences: the labor force participation rate drops and the unemployment rate increases. For mothers with pre-K children, fewer are looking for work—and those who are looking are less likely to find a job.

Earnings

The median earnings of Kern working women have increased from \$36,200 in 2018 to \$44,700 in 2023.²⁴

Table 13. Median Earnings of California Working Women and Men: 2023

	Kern	Merced	Fresno	California
Women				
All employed	\$31,617	\$29,165	\$33,743	\$41,332
Worked full time	\$44,723	\$41,816	\$48,683	\$61,447
Men				
All employed	\$41,669	\$43,619	\$44,993	\$52,385
Worked full time	\$54,107	\$52,053	\$57,173	\$70,315

Note: “All employed” includes full time and part-time workers (anyone over 16 years who had earnings in the past 12 months).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

In 2023, the earnings of full-time working women of Kern County fell within the earnings of women in Fresno and Merced counties. Bakersfield women who worked full time earned \$46,353, a little more than women across the county. Among Kern Women there is an earnings disparity when earnings are disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Disparity in earnings of Kern full-time workers. The Report on the Status of Women and Girls generally notes disparities in earnings of full-time workers that are correlated with gender and racial differences.²⁵

24 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B20017: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. <http://data.census.gov>

25 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Tables B20017, B20017B, D, H, I: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 14. Median Earnings of Kern County Full-Time Working Women and Men by Race/Ethnicity: 2023

	All	African American/ Black	Asian	Latinos	White, not Hispanic origin
Women	\$44,723	\$40,133	\$61,319	\$39,785	\$64,831
Men	\$54,107	\$50,165	\$75,543	\$45,480	\$73,901
Women's earnings as percentage of men's earnings of same race/ ethnicity	83%	80%	81%	87%	88%
Percentage of women's earnings to white men	61%	54%	83%	54%	88%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Table 14 outlines the earnings gap between women and men, but there is also an earnings gap between women. For example, Kern's full-time working Latinas earn 61% of what White women earn and full-time working Latinos earn 62% of what White men earn. These disparities result from several factors, including differences in occupation, educational attainment, parenthood, age, and structural and systemic barriers.

Occupations

Kern Women work in a variety of occupations, but nearly half (48%) hold either service, sales, or office jobs.²⁶

Table 15. Percentage of California and Kern County Women Working Full Time in Five Occupational Clusters

	Kern	California
Number of women	103,110	5,660,584
Management, business, science, arts occupations	39%	53%
Service occupations	20%	15%
Sales and office occupations	28%	24%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	5%	1%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	7%	7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Thirty-nine percent of Kern Women engage in management, business, science and arts occupations. Note that higher paying jobs tend to be in these fields: The median earnings of Kern Women working full-time jobs in management, business, science, and arts are \$69,367, while the median earnings of all full-time working Kern women (regardless of job) are \$44,855.²⁷

26 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B24020: Sex by Occupation for the Full-Time, Year-Round Employed Civilian Population 16 Years and Over. <http://data.census.gov>

27 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B24022: Sex by Occupation and Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) for the Full-time, Year-round Civilian Population 16 Years and Over. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 16. Median Earnings of Full-Time Working Kern County Residents in the Major Occupational Clusters

	Kern		California	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
All occupations	\$44,855	\$54,483	\$61,544	\$70,692
Management, business, science, arts occupations	\$69,367	\$89,599	\$87,235	\$110,728
Service	\$34,597	\$46,631	\$36,842	\$43,098
Sales and office	\$42,084	\$52,021	\$50,727	\$60,430
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	\$22,729	\$45,718	\$32,285	\$52,471
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	\$35,699	\$47,272	\$36,623	\$47,549

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

At both the state and county level, the median earnings of women are less than men in every occupational cluster. There are many types of jobs within each occupational cluster, and women tend to be concentrated in the lower-paying jobs. Teasing apart the management, business, science, and arts occupations into smaller job groupings, we see how well women are represented relative to men and their median earnings for full-time work.

Table 17. Representation of Kern County Women in Job Groups Within the Management, Business, Science, and Art Occupational Cluster²⁸ and their Median Earnings Relative to Men²⁹

Job grouping	Percentage of women relative to men working in these jobs	Median earnings of women	Median earnings of men	Percentage of women to men earnings
All full-time jobs	39%	\$44,855	\$54,583	82%
Management, business, financial	44%	\$61,955	\$87,500	71%
Computer, science, engineering	21%	\$85,375	\$101,277	84%
Education, legal, community service, arts and media	63%	\$62,367	\$66,004	94%
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	74%	\$80,103	\$105,928	76%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Table 17 data show that Kern Women—as women across the state—are vastly underrepresented in computer, science and engineering jobs—and jobs in these fields offer the highest median earnings of any listed in the table. Table 18 shows comparable data for both Fresno and Merced counties with similar observations: women are underrepresented in computer, science, and engineering occupations, which offer some of the higher median wages.

28 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2402: Occupation by Sex for the Full-Time, Year-Round Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over. <http://data.census.gov>

29 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B24022: Sex by Occupation and Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) for the Full-time, Year-round Civilian Population 16 Years and Over. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 18: Representation of Fresno County and Merced County Women Working Full Time within the Management, Business, Science, and Art Occupational Cluster and their Median Earnings Relative to Men

	Fresno County			Merced County		
Job grouping	Percentage of women to men in these jobs	Median earnings of women	Percentage of women to men earnings	Percentage of women to men in these jobs	Median earnings of women	Percentage of women to men earnings
All full-time jobs	42%	\$49,028	86%	39%	\$41,723	80%
Management, business, financial	44%	\$66,822	82%	34%	\$63,312	91%
Computer, science, engineering	25%	\$77,146	80%	37%	\$91,398	112%
Education, legal, community service, arts and media	60%	\$63,910	84%	74%	\$62,279	95%
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	70%	\$81,171	67%	71%	\$84,950	74%

An earnings gap between women and men. Tables 16-18, where median earnings of women and men are indicated, show that women working full time in each job group (except one) earn less than men. This gap in median earnings between full-time working women and men is persistent across job groups and geographies: Across all types of jobs, working women have a median income that is a fraction of that of men: In 2023 data, full-time working women earn:

- Kern County 82% of men
- Fresno County 86% of men
- Merced County 80% of men
- California 87% of men
- United States 81% of men

There are many and complex factors that result in these earnings gaps, including the types of jobs within each group held by women versus those held by men, unequal work experience, unequal opportunities for promotion, etc. While deeper research studies into pay differences between women and men show that there is a pay gap between women and men for equitable work, it is important to recognize that the comparisons above do not address differences based on gender alone.

Educational Attainment and Median Earnings

In this chapter on economic well-being, we have probed data that illustrate the impact of motherhood on the ability to find a job (unemployment rate) and how the type of occupation can impact earnings. Educational attainment is another factor that statistically correlates with earnings: In general, the higher the level of educational attainment, the greater the median earnings.³⁰

30 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B20004: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2023 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 19. Educational Attainment and Median Earnings: Kern County and Bakersfield

	California		Kern		Bakersfield	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
No high school diploma	\$25,152	\$35,969	\$23,963	\$29,834	\$26,222	\$29,852
High school diploma	\$33,760	\$46,010	\$30,542	\$42,167	\$30,771	\$40,099
Associate degree or some college	\$41,362	\$57,832	\$36,426	\$60,318	\$36,765	\$61,735
Bachelor's degree	\$67,986	\$91,308	\$60,997	\$80,228	\$61,354	\$75,271
Graduate or professional degree	\$92,278	\$129,151	\$90,826	\$105,620	\$94,276	\$102,262

Note: These earnings are for all women or men 25 years and over with earnings (not just full-time workers).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Table 19 illustrates that women with bachelor's degrees will statistically earn about twice as much as women with only a high school diploma. Women with a graduate or professional degree will likely earn on the order of one and one-half times that of women with a bachelor's degree.

Note, too, that women with equal educational attainment to men have lower median earnings than men—in Bakersfield, Kern, and across California.

Poverty

There are several measures of poverty in use today (see Editor's Note). We have considered the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) as defined by the American Community Survey Program of the U.S. Census Bureau and the California Poverty Measure (CPM). The differences between the two measures are chiefly in the costs used to establish the poverty threshold and the way in which a person's income is calculated. The generally cited disadvantage of using the FPL is that it fails to consider the cost of housing in different parts of the country: the same poverty threshold is used across all parts of the country. When the FPL is used, a person's income is primarily limited to earnings. When the CPM is used, a person's income is adjusted upward for income received in the form of federal assistance (e.g., nutritional programs and housing subsidies) and downward for nondiscretionary expenses (e.g., taxes).³¹

31 Kimberlin, S.; Bohn, S.; Danielson, C.; Malagon, P.; and Wimer, C. (retrieved online July 2025). Poverty in California Technical Appendices. Public Policy Institute of California. See, for example, Appendix B for a summary of the differences between the FPL and the CPM. <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/1023cdf-appendix.pdf>

In the first quarter of 2023, the percentage of Kern residents living below the FPL was 19%³² while the percentage living below the CPM was 11%.³³ Because the FPL threshold (\$30,900 for a family of four with two children under 18) is so similar to the CPM (\$31,800 for a Kern family of four renting a home), the major difference in poverty rates likely originates in the calculation of income. In contrast to the FPL, the CPM includes income from social assistance programs enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, many of these programs are set to expire, but the difference in the poverty rate calculated in the two approaches illustrates how important social assistance was in raising vulnerable populations out of poverty during a worldwide crisis.

It should be noted that Kern County has one of the lowest costs of living in the state;³⁴ the county maintains pace with the state in setting minimum wages (\$16.50/hour in 2025).

In this report, we have opted to use the FPL-calculated poverty rate in order to be consistent with our general use of American Community Survey data. Using the FPL, the poverty rate in Kern is 19% for individuals with the rate for women at 21%. This rate, while higher than the state rate of 11%, is in line with most other counties in the San Joaquin Valley:³⁵

Table 20. Percentage of Residents 18 Years and Over Living Below the Federal Poverty Level by County in the San Joaquin Valley

County	Population	Percentage all individuals	Women	Men
Kern	895,923	19% (+1)	21%	18%
Kings	138,900	17% (+4)	20%	15%
Fresno	996,401	18% (+1)	19%	17%
Madera	155,924	18% (+4)	20%	16%
Merced	288,794	19% (+3)	22%	17%
San Joaquin	791,704	12% (+1)	13%	12%
Stanislaus	545,215	12% (+2)	14%	11%
Tulare	475,013	17% (+2)	20%	15%

Note: Percentages are rounded. Numbers in parentheses represent the range in the poverty rate for all individuals: As an example, the 95% confidence level for Kern County is between 18%-20%. The smaller the sample size (i.e., population), the larger the margin of error.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Among all individuals, the poverty rate varies with race/ethnicity. Across Kern County the percentage of individuals living on earnings below the FPL is 19%, but this figure varies from a high of 30% for African American/Black women and men to a low of 9% for Asian women and men.

32 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. <http://data.census.gov>

33 Public Policy Institute of California. (Online tool accessed July 2025). California Poverty by County and Legislative District. <https://www.ppic.org/interactive/california-poverty-by-county-and-legislative-district>

34 See, for example, DeMarco, J. (2025). Cost of Living in California. Social Finance Loans. <https://www.sofi.com/cost-of-living-in-california/>

35 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 21. Percentage of Kern County Women and Men Living Below the Federal Poverty Level by Race/Ethnicity: (2023)

	African American/ Black	Asian	Latinos	White
Percentage	30%	9%	21%	15%

Note: Percentages are rounded; these data are not disaggregated by gender.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Similar to the way that educational attainment impacts earnings, it impacts poverty rates.³⁶

Table 22. Poverty Rates and Educational Attainment of Kern County Adults 25 Years and Over

Educational attainment	Less than high school	High school diploma	Associate degree or some college	Bachelor's degree or higher
Percentage in poverty	26%	18%	14%	7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

While 19% of all Kern individuals 25 years and over live on earnings less than the FPL, more than one in four (26%) who have less than a high school education lives in poverty. The poverty rate is reduced by nearly half for those who have some college (but less than a four-year degree). The poverty rate is halved again to 7% for those who have attained a bachelor's degree or higher.

The percentage of families living below the FPL depends on the type of family unit and characteristics of the head of household. These factors are discussed in the Report section titled Home and Family.

Table 23. Percentage of Individuals and Families Living on Earnings Below the Federal Poverty Level

	Women	Men	All individuals	All families
Kern	21%	18%	19%	15%
Bakersfield	18%	16%	17%	14%
California	11%	13%	12%	9%

Note: For more discussion of families and poverty rates, please see Chapter on Home and Family

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

³⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months. <http://data.census.gov>

Home and Family

Housing

In 2023, there were a total of 309,632 housing units³⁷ in the county; 289,845 were occupied. Twenty-eight percent of homes have been constructed since 2000 and are less than 23 years of age.³⁸

Of the occupied units, 60% are households occupied by homeowners and 40% are occupied by renters. Owner-occupied homes have a median value of \$346,600 and roughly two-thirds are mortgaged. Renter-occupied homes generate a median rent of \$1,286 monthly. Unfortunately, at this rent point, nearly half (47%) of renters pay more than one third of their income in rent.³⁹

Type of Household

In the county, the vast majority (72%) of homes are occupied by family groups, while 28% are nonfamily households occupied by one or more people who are not related.⁴⁰

Table 24. Characteristics of Family and Nonfamily Households in Kern County: 2023

Total households: 289,845			
Family Households • With children	209,800 (72%) • 103,200	Nonfamily households	80,000 (28%)
Head of household			
Married or partnered couple • With children	131,300 • 59,400	Single male • Living alone	42,300 • 32,200
Single male (no spouse present) • With children	25,700 • 15,400	Single woman • Living alone	37,700 • 30,700
Single woman (no spouse present) • With children	53,100 (18%) • 28,400		

Note: Numbers are rounded to the nearest 100. Children are under the age of 18 years and may be those of the householder or related to the householder in some other way.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

The Housed Population

In 2023, Kern's 290,000 homes housed 895,000 people.⁴¹ Roughly 63,000 women and men lived alone. An average of about three to four people inhabited each family home. In addition:

- Over one-third (37%) of those housed are children (less than 18 years old) of a householder (biological, adopted, stepchild) or other related children.
- One in four (24%) of those living in households with children is a grandparent. Of these 24,000 grandparents, 26% are responsible for their own grandchildren under 18 years of age.

37 A housing unit is defined by the Census Bureau as any separate living quarter. It is commonly a house, apartment, mobile home, condominium or one or more rooms in a home that is occupied as separate living quarters. https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/tech_docs/subject_definitions/2023_ACSSubjectDefinitions.pdf

38 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey. Table DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics. <http://data.census.gov>

39 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey. Table DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics. <http://data.census.gov>

40 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey. Table S0201: Selected Population Profile. <http://data.census.gov>

41 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP02: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States. <http://data.census.gov>

Teens. Among the housed population, there are just over 74,000 teenagers aged 15-19 years. Most of these teens (54%) live with a family headed by partnered parents, one-third (31%) live with a single mother, and 12% live with a single father. Eight percent of these teens who are 16-19 years of age are not enrolled in school and neither are they looking for work outside the home (i.e., they are not participating in the labor force).⁴² While the characteristics of these teens are not disaggregated by gender, there are data disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Table 25. Characteristics of Kern County Teens Living in Households: 2023

	All teens	African American/Black	Latinos	White
Population in households	74,133	4,533	50,721	13,642
• Partnered couple	54%	19%	53%	61%
• Women-headed	31%	66%	31%	25%
• Male-headed	12%	13%	13%	12%
• Nonfamily households	3%	2%	3%	2%
Teens participating in labor force	30%	46%	30%	30%
Not enrolled in school and not in labor force	8%	12%	8%	10%

Note: The population is 15-19 years for teens in family households; the population is 16-19 years for labor force participation and school enrollment.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Among the African American/Black population, nearly half of teens 15-19 years of age live in a family household headed by a single woman, and nearly half of the teens (46%) are in the labor force.

The immigrant community. About 20% (178,000) of Kern's housed population were born in another country (compared to 27% of householders across the state). While the county's population includes people from all continents (including Oceania), 80% were born in Latin America and 16% were born in Asian countries. Residents who have immigrated to the county bring a rich diversity of cultural differences. There are also challenges with English-speaking ability in some immigrant households.

Over half (55%) of Kern's population over the age of 5 years speak only English in their homes. The remaining 45% speak a language other than English at home. Although they are proficient in their first language, according to the U.S. Census 16% of the households that speak a language other than English at home are not proficient in English.⁴³

42 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S0902: Characteristics of Teenagers 15-19 Years. <http://data.census.gov>

43 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table DP02: Selected Social Characteristics in the United States. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 26. Language Spoken at Home by Kern County's Population: 2023

	California	Kern	Percentage of households that speak English less than "very well"
Only English	55%	55%	
Language other than English spoken in home	45%	46%	16%
• Spanish	29%	41%	15%
• Other Indo-European	5%	2%	0.4%
• Asian and Pacific Islander	10%	3%	1%
• Other languages	1%	0.7%	0.3%

Note: Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100%. Other Indo-European languages include Russian, French, Portuguese, Dutch, Armenian, Greek, and Slavic languages, among others. Asian and Pacific Islander languages include Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Filipino, Bengali, Burmese, Hindi, and Punjabi, among others.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

There is low English proficiency in 15% of Spanish-speaking households.

The Sikh community. Sikhs comprise the second largest immigrant community in Kern County. Sikhism is one of the largest religions in the world, but unfortunately the Census surveys do not probe religious affiliation. Since most of the 25-30 million Sikhs in the world live in Punjab (a state in northern India), we can get some insight by looking at the characteristics of the Punjabi-speaking population in California, which is large enough to give reliable statistics. According to the Census Bureau, there are about 171,000 California residents who speak Punjabi (0.5% of Californians); over half (about 63%) speak English "very well".⁴⁴

However, Sikh organizations⁴⁵ state that the Census severely undercounts the Sikh population. While there are many estimates of the Sikh population, common approximate estimates are these:

- 500,000 Sikhs in the U.S. (about 0.1-0.2% of population)
- 250,000-280,000 Sikhs in California (about 7% of population)
- 30,000-40,000 Sikhs in Kern County (about 4% of population)
- Most Sikhs living in Kern County are concentrated in Bakersfield.

In 2022, Manpreet Kaur became the first Sikh Punjabi woman to be elected to the Bakersfield City Council. She serves as the representative for Ward 7 (which includes the Panama Buena School District) and as Vice Mayor of the city.⁴⁶

44 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B16001: Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over. <http://data.census.gov>

45 These organizations include the Sikh Coalition, the Jakarta Movement, and Harvard University's Pluralism Project (<https://pluralism.org>). For more local figures, see Bakersfield news article dated May 15, 2022): <https://www.turnto23.com/news/local-news/bakersfield-sikh-community-feels-appreciative-for-aapi-month#:~:text=Harveen%20Kaur>

46 Kern County governance website: Bakersfield City. Retrieved online data on July 4, 2025. www.bakersfieldcity.us

The Unhoused Population

Kern County participated in the annual Point-In-Time (PIT) Count of its unhoused population (unsheltered persons living on streets or in places not intended for habitation and persons who are sheltered in temporary housing) in late January 2025.⁴⁷ Volunteers documented a total 2,606 unhoused persons, down from 2,669 in 2024. This decrease in the number of unhoused Kern residents represents good news. And there's more: The proportion of the unhoused population living "on the streets" (unsheltered) has decreased from 62% in 2024 to 53% in 2025.

Characteristics of the unhoused population. The 2025 PIT Report for the county does not disaggregate the unhoused population by gender, although earlier reports found that women comprised about 31%-38% of the unhoused. In 2025, selected characteristics of the total unhoused population include:

- One in four (26%) are adults between 25-34 years of age; 6% are under 18 years, 6% are youth between 18-24 years, and 7% are over 65 years of age.
- Over 40% (42%) are White, one in four (25%) is Latina/o, and another one in four (23%) is African American/Black. White and African American/Black persons are overrepresented in the unhoused relative to the general population: White persons comprise about 29% of the general population, while African American/Black persons comprise about 5%. Latina/o persons comprise 57% of the general population but only 25% of the unhoused.
- Nearly one in three (30%) are defined as "chronically homeless".
- Nearly 100 persons (4% of the unhoused population) are veterans who have served in the U.S. military forces.

Reasons given by the 2025 unsheltered population for being homeless. While the underlying reasons for homelessness are complex, 823 unsheltered individuals reported their perceptions of important reasons that had contributed to their homelessness.

- 24% cited health issues—physical, mental, and substance use problems. Some chronic health conditions included asthma, diabetes, heart disease, liver disease, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and valley fever.
- 17% cited household or family problems (marital issues, domestic abuse)
- 18% cited employment problems (low wages, unemployment)
- 6% cited the cost of housing (mortgage issues or high rent).

The number of unhoused individuals varies widely from year to year across the state, and Kern is no exception.

⁴⁷ Kern County Point In Time Report 2025. (2025). The Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative. <https://bkrhc.org/pit-count-reports/>

Table 27. Recent Numbers of Kern County's Homeless Population

Year	Total unhoused	Percentage of unhoused that were unsheltered
2019	1,330	60%
2020	1,580	64%
2021*	2,150*	
2022	1,603	45%
2023	1,948	52%
2024	2,669	62%
2025	2,606	53%

Note: The 2021 PIT Count was not conducted in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. An asterisk indicates the result is statistically unstable.

Source: The Bakersfield-Kern Regional Homeless Collaborative 2025 Point-In-Time Report

In 2019 Kern documented 1,330 unhoused persons; in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, that number was estimated as 2,150, and by 2023 that number had decreased to 1,948. In 2025 the total had again increased. Acknowledging that there are challenges in obtaining accurate counts of the unhoused population, there are also many challenges to successfully addressing the root issues. Health, social, and employment issues as well as a lack of affordable housing contribute to the housing status of individuals and families.

Marital Status

In the snapshot of Kern Women, we reported that 42% of women 15 years and over were married, 8% widowed, 11% divorced and 3% separated. Over one-third of Kern Women (37%) have never been married. This distribution changes with age: For example, the percentage of young women less than 35 years of age who have never married is higher than the percentage for all ages. Similarly, the percentage of older women who are widowed is higher than the percentage for women of all ages.

Table 28. Marital Status of Kern County Women (15 Years and Over) by Age Group: 2023⁴⁸

	Number of women	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	Never married
15-19 years	36,102	2%	0%	0%	0%	99%
20-34 years	95,475	31%	0.4%	4%	2%	62%
35-44 years	59,903	52%	2%	13%	7%	27%
45-54 years	48,377	62%	3%	14%	6%	15%
55-64 years	46,689	58%	10%	17%	4%	12%
65 years and over	9,534	42%	32%	16%	2%	7%
All ages of women	346,080	42%	8%	11%	3%	37%

Note: Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Note that only about 1% of teen girls have been married and that overall, 63% of Kern Women have been married at some time.

New Mothers

In 2023, just over 13,000 Kern Women gave birth; just under 300 (2%) new mothers were teens 15-19 years of age.⁴⁹

Table 29. Percentage of New Kern County Mothers (15-55 Years of Age) by Race/Ethnicity: 2023

	Percentage of new mothers	Birth rate (number of births/1000 women)	Percentage of single mothers
All women	13,116	60	41%
African American/Black	6%	74	62%
American Indian and Alaska Native	5%	137	0
Asian	5%	61	53%
Latina (may be any race)	63%	61	39%
White, not Hispanic origin	22%	54	34%

Note: The U.S. Census defines a "single mother" as a woman who is either never married, currently married with an absent spouse, separated, divorced, or widowed, and who is living with one or more of her own, never-married children under the age of 18. While Latinas account for over 60% of new mothers and Asians account for only 5%, both groups of women have the same birthrate. The highest birthrate is for American Indian and Alaska Native women.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Of Kern's new mothers in 2023:

- 19% were born in another country
- 46% have a high school education or less and 13% have a bachelor's degree or higher
- 30% have earnings of less than the FPL threshold
- 52% are in the labor force
- 6% received public assistance income in the past year

Poverty of Families (Percentage of families living on income below the FPL)

The poverty rates of families depend on the type of family, number of children and other factors related to the head of household (e.g., marital status, employment, educational attainment)⁵⁰

49 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1301: Fertility. <http://data.census.gov>

50 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1702: Poverty Status of Families. <http://data.census.gov>

Table 30. Percentage of Kern County Families Living in Poverty and Characteristics of Head of Household⁵¹

	All families	Married couple	Single woman headed	Single man headed
	15%	9%	31%	15%
Employment of householder in past 12 months				
Worked	11%	6%	25%	10%
*Full time	*6%	*4%	*13%	*5%
Less than high school	24%	19%	34%	29%
Bachelor's or higher	6%	2%	23%	1%

Note: Married couple households include common-law partnerships and same sex couples.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Families headed by a partnered couple are less likely to live in poverty than those headed by a single woman or man. The poverty rate of single women who head family households (with either their own or related children) is noteworthy: One in three (31%) family households headed by single women lives in poverty, about twice the poverty rate of households headed by a single man.

Single mothers and their families. In 2023, there were 53,000 family households headed by single women in Kern County; 64% of these households included the woman's own or related children under the age of 18 years. Where there were three or four children of the householder, significantly more than half (63%) lived in poverty. The financial stress of single mothers is not unique to Kern County—or to single mothers in the San Joaquin Valley. The poverty rates of these families are a concern that should not be overlooked.

Table 31. Percentage of Families Headed by a Single Mother Living in Poverty by Characteristics of Mother

Characteristic	Kern County	Fresno Co.	Merced Co.	California
Percentage living below FPL	31%	28%	37%	20%
• 1-2 of their own children	• 33%	• 37%	• 34%	• 26%
• 3-4 of their own children	• 63%	• 48%	• 73%	• 51%
Educational attainment				
• High school or less	• 34%	• 46%	• 55%	• 32%
• Bachelor's degree or above	• 23%	• 13%	• 5%	• 9%
Employed in past 12 months	25%	21%	35%	14%
• Full time	• 13%	• 12%	• 15%	• 6%

Note: Children are 18 years old or younger and may be biological children of the householder (their own children) or may be related or adopted children. In this table, we have focused on households that are comprised of children of the woman householder or single mother family households.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

51 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S1702: Poverty Status of Families and Table B17010: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families by Family Type by Presence of Related Children under 18 Years by Age by Related Children. <http://data.census.gov>

The data in Table 31 illustrate the impact that children can have on the financial needs of a family; when there are more than two children under the age of 18 years present, the poverty rate doubles relative to having only one or two children. The impact of the educational attainment and employment status of the mother on the poverty rate is also significant. For single mothers who have a bachelor's degree or higher, the poverty rate is about one-third that of mothers with a high school diploma or less. And, when the mother is employed, the poverty rate of single-mother families decreases; but when the mother is employed full time, the poverty rate drops by about one-half. These generalizations hold true for both county and state statistics.

Women-headed families: 2018 and 2023. The 2020 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County indicated that 39% of Kern's single woman family households were living in poverty in 2018 and that for households with one to two children the poverty rate was 46% (for 3-4 children, the rate was 71%). Based on two data points, poverty rates of single mothers and their families in 2023 appear to have decreased significantly from 2018.

Although published in the 2020 Report, these numbers reflect 2018 data.

Health and Safety

General Health Status

In the 2023 California Health Interview Survey,⁵² nearly half (47%) of Kern Women 18 years and over rated their health as “very good” to “excellent” (45% of men did the same). About a third (35%) of women reported “good” health and less than one in five (18%) rated their health as “fair” or “poor.” These numbers are better than the years leading up to 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared.

Table 32. Percentage of Kern County Women Reporting their Health Status

Health status	2017-2019	2021-2023	2023
Excellent	11%	12%	17%
Very good	27%	27%	30%
Good	39%	34%	35%
Fair	15%	24%	16%
Poor	9%	3%	2%*

Note: The average of three years of data is reported to increase statistical reliability of the figures. An asterisk indicates that for the single year count in 2023, the number of women rating their health as “poor” was small, and the result is statistically unstable.

Source: California Health Interview Surveys for the years listed

There are variations among reports of health status reported by Kern Women based on race/ethnicity. The only sample populations in Kern that are sufficiently large for reporting in 2023 were Latinas and White women. The asterisks on data remind us that the results are statistically unstable. Of these groups, Latinas rate their health status lower than White women:

- 25%* of Latinas reported their health as “excellent” to “very good” compared to 71%* of White women.
- 49% of Latinas rated their health as “good” compared to 24% of White women.
- 24%* of Latinas rated their health as “fair” while only 2%* of White women did so.

Leading Causes of Death from Disease

In Kern County, as across the state, cancers (as a group) and heart disease are the leading causes of death. In Kern, chronic lower respiratory disease is the third leading cause of death followed closely by Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, and stroke. Unfortunately, the mortality rates for Kern adults are significantly higher than those statewide for nearly all the leading causes of death.⁵³

52 2023 California Health Interview Survey. Topic: Health Status: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Fielding School of Public Health. <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

53 County Health Status Profiles 2024. (2025) California Department of Public Health and California Conference of Local Health Officers. (see Tables 1-18). <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHSI/Pages/County-Health-Status-Profiles.aspx>

Table 33. Age-Adjusted Mortality Rates (Deaths per 100,000 Adults) by Disease: 2020-2022

	Kern County	California
All causes	951.1	670
All cancers	138	122
• Lung	• 24.1	• 20.6
• Breast (women)	• 20.2	• 17.6
• Prostate (men)	• 18.9	• 18.2
Heart disease	118.6	77.2
Chronic lower respiratory disease	52.6	24.5
Alzheimer's disease	51.9	35.5
Diabetes	48.8	23.6
Stroke	38.4	37.0
Liver disease	21.6	14.4

Note: Mortality rates are commonly reported as deaths per 100,000 population. Age-adjusted rates weight age-specific crude death rates by a factor representing the proportion of the age group in a standard population.

Source: California Department of Public Health

Although it is not listed in Table 33, COVID-19 was the third leading cause of death of California women and men in 2020 and 2021; it was the fourth leading cause of death in 2022 and had dropped out of the top ten causes in 2023, placing 13th. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted life across the globe for a little over two years and has contributed to the deaths of just under 1,000 women in the county.

Table 34. Deaths of Kern County Women from COVID-19: 2020-2023⁵⁴

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of deaths	280	527	102	39
Crude death rate women	98.3	148.6	57.2	13.3

Note: The crude death rate is the number of deaths of women from COVID per 100,000 women

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WONDER online database

In Kern County fewer women than men are likely to die in any year. However, some diseases kill more women than men. In 2023, Kern County's deaths by gender show that more women than men died from stroke and chronic lower respiratory disease and that more than twice as many women as men died of Alzheimer's disease.⁵⁵

54 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. WONDER online database. Retrieved July 2025. <http://wonder.cdc.gov>

55 California Department of Public Health. (2023). California Health and Human Services: 2014-2023. Final Deaths by Year by County. <https://data.chhs.ca.gov/dataset/death-profiles-by-county/resource/579cc04a-52d6-4c4c-b2df-ad901c9049b7?filters=County%3AKern>

Table 35. Number of Deaths by Disease of Kern County Women and Men: 2023

Cause of death	Women	Men
All causes	3,166	3,968
Cancers	589	588
Heart disease	668	938
Alzheimer's disease	229	97
Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease	226	196
Diabetes	168	197
Stroke	161	133
Liver disease/Cirrhosis	65	113

Note: Only leading causes of death by disease in 2023 are listed.

Source: California Department of Public Health

While the actual numbers of deaths from any specific cause vary from year to year, these general conclusions usually hold:

- More men than women die as a result of heart disease and liver disease.
- More women than men die as a result of stroke and Alzheimer's disease.

Breast cancer. Breast cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed and deadliest forms of cancer among women in general and more specifically in California.⁵⁶ The California Department of Public Health reports that in California, breast cancer accounted for the deaths of nearly 14,000 women over the three-year period from 2020-2022, corresponding to an annual average mortality rate of 22.7 deaths per 100,000 women. In Kern County alone, breast cancer accounted for the deaths of just under 300 women each year over 2020-2022, corresponding to an average annual mortality rate of 20 deaths per 100,000 Kern Women.⁵⁷ The mortality rate from (female) breast cancer has been between 18-22 deaths per 100,000 women since 2018. In 2023, the crude death rate for Kern Women was 19 (19 deaths from breast cancer for every 100,000 women).⁵⁸

The National Cancer Institute's public database provides more detailed insight into both the mortality and incidence rates of breast cancer at the state and county levels.⁵⁹ Note that Kern has a lower incidence rate of breast cancer (confirmed by a medical diagnosis), but a higher mortality rate from the disease than the state as a whole.

56 U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. U.S. Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations Tool. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute. Released in June 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz>.

57 County Health Status Profiles 2024. (2025) California Department of Public Health and California Conference of Local Health Officers. (see Table 5). <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHSI/Pages/County-Health-Status-Profiles.aspx>

58 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. WONDER online database. (Retrieved July 2025). <http://wonder.cdc.gov>

59 U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. U.S. Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations Tool. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute; <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz>. Released in June 2024.

Table 36. Incidence and Mortality Rates of Breast Cancer for California Women

	Incidence (2017-2021 annual average)	Mortality Rate (2018 – 2022 annual average)
Kern	106/100,000 women	21/100,000 women
California	124/100,000 women	19/100,000 women

Note: The incidence rate is the number of new cases diagnosed annually per 100,000 women; the mortality rate is the number of deaths per 100,000 annually from breast cancer. Data are averaged over multiple years due to the small population sample when disaggregated by county.

Source: National Institute of Cancer. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Breast cancer and race/ethnicity. Incidence rates of breast cancer (i.e., the number of new cases diagnosed each year) varies by race/ethnicity.⁶⁰

Table 37. Incidence and Mortality Rates of Breast Cancer for Kern County Women by Race/Ethnicity

	All women	African American/Black	Asian	Latina	White
Incidence	106.2	108.2	102.5	88.8	113.0
Mortality	20.5	34.9	14.8	16.0	22.6

Note: Rates are number/100,000 women. These incidence rates are an average annual rate over the five-year period 2017-2021; mortality rates are an average annual rate over the five-year period 2018-2022.

Source: National Cancer Institute. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Trends. Although data for a single-year count are not available at the county level in this cited source, we note that statewide, the incidence rate of breast cancer has slowly increased from 2013 to 2021, while the mortality rate has decreased slightly. Caution is urged in interpreting year-to-year data that encompass the 2020-2021 years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 38. Breast Cancer Incidence and Mortality Rates for California Women Pre- and Post-COVID-19

	2013	2018	2021/2022
Incidence Rate	123.7	124.7	129.4 (2021)
Mortality Rate	20.2	19.1	18.8 (2022)

Note: Data from 2013 and 2018 are pre-COVID-19 and the last column is post-COVID-19, the most recent data available at this source.

Source: National Cancer Institute. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Screening and survival. Mammography is a screening tool which can diagnose many breast cancers in an early stage of development when tumors are small and most treatable. In 2021, 67% of Kern Women 50-74 years of age were up to date on recommended mammogram screenings.⁶¹ Detected early, many breast cancers can be put into remission (sometimes using aggressive treatment involving chemotherapy and radiation). The five-year survival rate for California women, an estimate of the percentage of patients who will not have died as a result of breast cancer five years after diagnosis, is 92%.

60 U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. U.S. Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations Tool. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute. These data, released in June 2024, are the most recent comprehensive numbers at this reference site. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz>

61 U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. U.S. Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations Tool. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute. (released in June 2024.) <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz>

Chronic Conditions

Chronic conditions, even those diseases which are well managed, often will eventually result in death. In 2023, the data in Table 35 show that the deaths of 3,000 Kern Women and men were attributed to chronic conditions associated with chronic lower respiratory disease, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and liver diseases. California Health Interview Surveys over a similar period give an idea of the prevalence of some of these chronic conditions in Kern County.⁶²

Table 39. Percentage of Women and Men Who Have Ever Been Diagnosed with a Chronic Condition

	Kern		California		Data notes: Year/definition
	Women	Men	Women	Men	
Asthma	14%	13%	18%	15%	2022-2023
Diabetes	14%	10%	11%	12%	2022-2023
Heart disease	4%*	8%	6%	8%	2022-2023
High blood pressure	35%	32%	26%	28%	2023
Cholesterol (>240)	18%	13%	21%	19%	2023
Height/weight					2022-2023
• Normal	27%	16%	40%	32%	BMI 18.5-24.99
• Overweight	28%	34%	28%	38%	BMI 25.0-29.99
• Obese	44%	48%	30%	28%	BMI 30 and over

Notes: These percentages are rounded to whole numbers and are based on responses to the CHIS for the years indicated; where 2022-2023 is the period listed, figures are averaged over two years to increase statistical stability. The abbreviation BMI refers to the body mass index used to define weight categories for adults. The asterisk for women's heart disease indicates that the small sample size makes the percentage statistically unstable. Diabetes and cholesterol figures do not include those with borderline conditions; blood pressure figures include those who are borderline high. For those experiencing heart disease, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol levels, over half report that they are managing the condition with the assistance of a medical professional.

Source: California Health Interview Survey for the years listed.

The limited reliability of one- or two-year survey responses caution us against drawing firm conclusions from the figures in Table 39. For these years, the data suggest that:

- Women of Kern County exhibit significantly lower levels of heart disease than Kern men, but higher levels of cholesterol
- Kern Women have lower rates of asthma and lower cholesterol levels than women across the state
- One in three women in Kern compared to about one in four women across the state have high blood pressure
- A greater percentage of Kern Women have diabetes than women statewide
- Kern Women tend to be heavier for their height than women statewide, with over 40% classified as obese compared to 30% statewide.

Lower respiratory disease. Table 35 does not consider the array of conditions that contribute to chronic lower respiratory disease (LRD), the third or fourth leading cause of death of women and men in the county. Among

⁶² California Health Interview Surveys (CHIS) for the years listed. Topic: Health Conditions (not cancer). UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Fielding School of Public Health. [online dataset] <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

the major conditions that contribute to LRD and breathing problems are asthma, which causes obstruction of the airways, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a manifestation of damage to lung structure. Most COPD is associated with emphysema or chronic bronchitis, but there are other bacterial and fungal infections such as valley fever that can damage the lungs and lead to chronic LRD.

Valley fever is a lower respiratory tract infection caused by a fungus that lives in the soil. When the soil is disturbed, the fungal spores go airborne and may be inhaled. Soil in California's Central Valley is good at supporting these fungi, and this puts agricultural workers in particular and the entire population at risk due to blowing dust. While most valley fever cases are mild and often clear up on their own, there are severe cases that require anti-fungal medication and that can spread throughout the body causing serious and lasting damage.

The incidence of valley fever has rapidly increased over the past decade, and the county has accounted for more than one-third of all cases in California since 2013.⁶³

Table 40. Cases and Rate of Valley Fever in the State and Kern County 2013-2023

	California		Kern	
	Cases	Case rate	Cases	Case rate
2013	3,329	9	1,659	191
2018	7,642	19	2,951	330
2023	9,054	23	3,012	331

Note: The case rate of valley fever is the number of cases per 100,000 population, rounded to a whole number. While the numbers of cases of valley fever in the state and county have increased dramatically over the decade, the share of cases contributed by Kern has dropped from 50% in 2013 to 33% in 2023.

Source: California Department of Public Health

In 2023, the number of cases of valley fever throughout the state was 9,054: 3,659 women and 5,389 men contracted the disease. Note, too, that the number of cases across the state is about three times that in the county in 2023. However, due to the much smaller population in Kern, the case rate in Kern is over 14 times greater than that in California.

Mental and Emotional Health

Several indicators of mental and emotional health suggest that Kern Women's health outcomes are near the average of women across the state. A greater percentage of women than men, both in the county and the state, report stress or mental distress in the form of psychological episodes that interfere with normal activities.⁶⁴ Thoughts of suicide generally are reported by a greater percentage of women than men, but suicide itself is carried out far less often by women than men.

⁶³ California Department of Public Health. Valley fever website. Valley fever cases and incidence rates by local health jurisdiction, California 2001-2023. <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/ValleyFeverDataPublications.aspx>

⁶⁴ 2022-2023 California Health Interview Survey. (pooled data 2022, 2023). UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Fielding School of Public Health. Topic: Mental and Emotional Health. [online dataset] <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

Table 41. Indicators of Psychological Distress in Kern County Women: 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Experienced a serious psychological episode in the past year⁶⁵					
• Women	16%	19%	29%	21%	19%
• Men	14%*	14%*	18%*	12%*	19%*
Thought about suicide⁶⁶					
• Women	16%*	15%	26%	17%	22%
• Men	10%*	8%*	12%	20%	20%
Number of suicides (2023)⁶⁷					
• Women	31	23	25	18	30
• Men	90	101	87	93	103

Note: Percentages from single-year counts are rounded; an asterisk indicates the result is statistically unstable.

Sources: California Health Interview Surveys and California Department of Public Health

Emotional distress and thoughts of suicide among children in middle and high school (especially girls) is concerning. In the school-administered Healthy Kids Survey, about half the girls in Kern school grades 7-11 self-report feelings of sadness, and about one in five have seriously considered suicide.⁶⁸

Table 42. Self-Reported Assessment of Emotional Well-Being by Kern County Adolescent Students

	Grade 7	Grade 9	Grade 11
Percentage of those who experience:			
	2021-2023		
Chronic feelings of sadness and loneliness	37%	37%	41%
• Girls	• 45%	• 47%	• 51%
• Boys	• 24%	• 24%	• 28%
Serious ideas of committing suicide	18%	17%	17%
• Girls	• 23%	• 22%	• 20%
• Boys	• 10%	• 10%	• 11%
	2017-2019		
Chronic feelings of sadness and loneliness	29%	34%	38%
• Girls	• 37%	• 44%	• 48%
• Boys	• 21%	• 23%	• 28%
Serious ideas of committing suicide	16%	17%	18%

65 2022-2023 California Health Interview Survey. (pooled data 2022, 2023). UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Fielding School of Public Health. Topic: Mental and Emotional Health. [online dataset] <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

66 2022-2023 California Health Interview Survey. (pooled data 2022, 2023) Topic: Mental and Emotional Health. [online dataset] <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

67 California Department of Public Health. 2014-2023 Final Deaths by Year by County [Online data set last updated December 2024] <https://data.chhs.ca.gov/dataset/death-profiles-by-county/resource/579cc04a-52d6-4c4c-b2df-ad901c9049b7>; For California numbers: 2014-2023 Final Deaths by Year Statewide. <https://data.chhs.ca.gov/dataset/7a456555-87b9-4830-817c-72d72e628745/resource/f8bb67bf-923d-4d74-8714-dc2bcf5609b7/download/20250116>

68 Kern County. (2024) California Healthy Kids Survey, 2021-2023: Main Report. San Francisco: WestEd for California Department of Education. The 2021-2023 and the 2017-2019 Reports can also be accessed through the data query tool on the California Department of Education website (<https://dq.cde.ca.gov>) or at https://data.calschls.org/resources/Kern_County_2123_Sec_CHKS.pdf

Note: To determine chronic feelings of sadness and loneliness, students were asked, "During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more that you stopped doing some usual activities?" To determine ideas of suicide, students were asked, "During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?" The 2017-2019 survey, prior to COVID-19 did not present a gender breakdown of the suicide question. The 2019-2021 survey was administered during COVID and only to 7th graders in the Kern school district. Please refer to the Healthy Kids Survey Reports for details.

Source: California Healthy Kids Survey

In the 2017-2019 Healthy Kids Survey report for Kern County, a greater percentage of adolescents in Kern's K-12 schools reported chronic feelings of sadness and loneliness, but thoughts of suicide were about the same in 2017 as in 2021-2023.

Substance Use

Frequent use of drugs can be a sign of emotional distress. In 2023, the age-adjusted death rate from drug overdoses in Kern was twice that in the state (50 deaths/100,000 and 26 deaths/100,000, respectively); on average in 2021-2023, about 450 Kern residents died each year from drug overdoses.⁶⁹

On the California Health Interview Survey, about 1% of Kern Women and 2% of Kern men reported using methamphetamine. About one-fourth (26% of women and 28% of men) reported having used products containing cannabidiol (CBD) and about 6% of Kern Women and 2% of men are current users. In 2023 roughly 5% of Kern adults reported misusing prescription painkillers in the past year.⁷⁰

Access to Healthcare

In 2023, 92% of Kern adults had health insurance coverage:⁷¹

- 96% of White women and men are insured
- 94% of Asians
- 91% of African Americans/Blacks
- 89% of Hispanics

In general, a higher proportion of women than men are insured: 94% women compared to 90% men. But this leaves 75,000 uninsured women and men living in Kern County. Of Kern's 2023 uninsured population:⁷²

- 39% are women.
- 77% identify as Hispanic (Latinos).
- 45% were born in another country.
- 5% are living with a disability.
- 9% are in the labor force, but unemployed.
- 23% live on earnings below the federal poverty level.
- 6% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

While the lack of insurance adds a burden of cost to getting health care, the medical infrastructure in the

69 County Health Status Profiles 2024. (2025) California Department of Public Health and California Conference of Local Health Officers. (see Table 19). <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHSI/Pages/County-Health-Status-Profiles.aspx>

70 California Health Interview Surveys (CHIS) for the years listed. Topic: Health Behaviors. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Fielding School of Public Health. [online dataset] <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

71 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2701: Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the U.S. (selected for Kern and California). <http://data.census.gov>

72 U.S. Census Bureau. 2023 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table S2702: Selected Characteristics of the Uninsured in the United States. <http://data.census.gov>

country also makes access to timely care a challenge. The number of residents per medical professional is used as a measure of average patient burden. The patient burden of medical professionals in Kern County is higher than for Fresno County, but less than for Merced County. Kern's primary care physicians have twice the average patient burden as primary care physicians across the state and across the nation.⁷³

Table 43. Number of Kern County Residents per Medical Professional

	Kern County	Fresno County	Merced County	California	U.S.
Primary care physician	2,090	1,480	2,390	1,230	1,330
Mental health provider	390	200	400	210	300
Dentist	1,900	1,560	2,150	1,080	1,360

Source: County Health Rankings

When surveyed in 2022-2023, Kern Women and men responded to three reasons for delaying needed healthcare: insurance or healthcare provider issues, barriers in the healthcare system, and personal or other reasons.⁷⁴

Table 44. Kern County Adults Who Delayed Needed Healthcare and Reasons: 2022-2023

	Women	Men
Percentage who delayed health care	19%	8%
Insurance issues	6%	
Healthcare system issues	43%	45%
Personal or other issues	51%	56%

Note: Data from 2022 and 2023 were pooled to achieve greater statistical reliability for reporting the percentage who delayed healthcare; only 2023 survey results are reported for reasons given.

Source: California Health Interview Survey for the years listed

Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Domestic violence or intimate partner violence includes an array of physical and sexual abuse crimes. Such crimes are notoriously underreported. The California Violence Experiences Survey (CalVEX) estimates that less than 10% of those who experience such violence file an official claim.⁷⁵ Despite the vast underreporting of violence in general and domestic violence in particular, calls for assistance to law enforcement agencies do provide some insight into trends.

Calls for assistance in domestic violence incidents fluctuate from year-to-year. In Kern, for example, after appearing to stabilize at around 4,700 calls per year from 2014-2016, the number of calls for assistance in domestic violence incidents increased by 45% to 6,803 in 2017. In 2018, the number of calls increased by 50% to 10,189. Shortly thereafter the COVID-19 pandemic began, and many areas noticed a spike in domestic violence incidents in 2021.⁷⁶

73 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps: Kern County 2025. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/california/kern?year=2025>

74 2022, 2023 California Health Interview Surveys. Topic: Access and Utilization. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Fielding School of Public Health. [online dataset] <https://ask.chis.ucla.edu>

75 Center of Gender Equity and Health. (August 2023). The 2023 CalVEX Report FAQ. The REIS Group. <https://geh.ucsd.edu/>

76 California Department of Justice. Data retrieved from Open Portal data set. Crimes: 2014-2023. <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/exploration/crime-statistics/domestic-violence-related-calls-assistance>

Table 45. Domestic-Violence-Related Calls for Law Enforcement Assistance

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Kern						
Total calls	10,159	8,925	8,689	8,982	6,166	4,749
Percentage with a weapon	34%	35%	35%	36%	52%	76%
California						
Total calls	166,890	161,123	160,646	164,608	162,422	160,357
Percentage with a weapon	46%	47%	45%	47%	55%	63%

Source: California Department of Justice

Since 2021, the number of calls to law enforcement agencies for assistance has decreased in Kern and across the state. However, domestic incidents involving the use of a weapon have significantly increased from 36% of calls in 2021 to 76% of 2023 calls logged in Kern County. At this point, the weapon of choice is personal, e.g., the use of hands, fists, feet. A firearm is the second most specific weapon of choice: In 2022, 4% of domestic violence incidents involved a gun.

The general trends in domestic violence incidents reported to law enforcement in Kern County and throughout the state are similar. The calls fluctuate each year, and it is clear that domestic violence is not decreasing in any meaningful way. What is alarming is the increasing use of weapons in domestic violence, which makes the possibility of severe injury or death to victims much more likely.

Factors associated with domestic and intimate partner violence against women. Intimate partner violence is the result of many factors occurring at individual, family, and society levels. Domestic violence is perpetrated by a partner who is compelled to control family members and domestic activities. Abusers are driven by (among other things) low self-esteem, low income, and the conviction of strict gender roles (i.e., male dominance).⁷⁷ Violence can negatively affect women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health. The abused woman is often dependent on the partner—emotionally and financially.

Some risk factors associated with Intimate Partner Violence include topics covered in this report; however, these factors may be impacted by underreporting:

- *Educational attainment:* Rates of intimate partner violence, based on reporting, are higher when educational attainment is lower. This is true for both the perpetrator and the abused.
- *Employment:* Low levels of a woman's access to paid or well-paid employment is associated with higher rates of intimate partner violence. When the partner is somewhat financially independent, a lower rate of domestic violence is observed.
- *Stereotypical gender roles (i.e., male dominance in relationships):* Not only do societal norms reinforce male dominance, but the imbalance of power between intimate or domestic partners is heightened when partners have differing levels of educational attainment.

Gender inequality that accords a higher status to men than women and the acceptability of violent acts toward women are considered root causes of violence against women.⁷⁸

77 Violence Against Women Fact Sheet. (March 2024). World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

78 Violence Against Women Fact Sheet. (March 2024). World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

Editor's Note

The 2025 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County accesses research results across the state and the nation to build a comprehensive picture of the status of women in the county. Where possible, the report provides breakdowns of available data by racial or ethnic identity to provide insights into disparities among women. Reliable statistical interpretation of data, however, requires an adequate sample size in the study. In this report, there are many instances where the population is too small to disaggregate, especially by gender. Consequently, there are data tables which disaggregate small population databases *either* by gender or by race. As always, we refer readers to references cited in the report for a better understanding of the limitations of data presented.

Common Terms Used in the Report

Gender. The report is generally written in binary terms based on the still very large proportion of the population which identifies in binary terms as either female or male.

- Women, girls, females. Females is the general term but is not generally favored in diversity studies. The report refers to women (females 18 years and over unless otherwise specified) and girls as generally females under the age of 18 years.
- Men, boys, males. The age distinctions used for females generally apply here.

Racial/Ethnic distinctions, in surveys, usually self-identified by respondents. The U.S. Census Bureau is in the process of updating the racial/ethnic groups it tracks. Census surveys currently allow a single choice among several races or a multi-racial identification; a racial group is exclusively of that race on the basis of self-identification. Ninety-five percent of California women self-identify as one of four racial/ethnic groups: African American/Black, Asian, Latina or Hispanic, and White.

- In accordance with the Women's and Girl's Fund spelling conventions, Latinos refers to a group of mixed genders, Latina refers to a woman, Latinas refers to women, Latino refers to a man and Latinas refers to men.
- In Census Bureau counts, Latinos or persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.
- African American as used in this Report also includes persons who identify as "Black."
- Asian American refers to a person who identifies as Asian and who is residing in the United States.
- White includes anyone who identifies as such or is assigned to the White category based on ethnic identification (Middle Eastern/North African ethnicities, for example). Persons who have identified as Latin or Hispanic heritage are counted in their own ethnic grouping.

Two other racial groups native to the United States or its territories are tracked by the Census Bureau: American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NH/PI). Native Hawaiians are sometimes included as Pacific Islanders. Unfortunately, statistical data relative to these population groups at the level used in this report are generally not stable or reliable due to the small population sizes.

Poverty. There are several measures of poverty that might be used as an indicator of the economic well-being of Kern County. We have considered both the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and the California Poverty Measure (CPM).⁷⁹ In both approaches, a dollar amount is set as the minimum required to cover a basic cost of living. The minimum amount then becomes a poverty threshold: when an individual or a family's income falls below the threshold, the person or family is said to be living in poverty.

⁷⁹ Kimberlin, S.; Bohn, S.; Danielson, C.; Malagon, P.; and Wimer, C. (retrieved online July 2025). Poverty in California Technical Appendices. Public Policy Institute of California. See, for example, Appendix B for a summary of the differences between the FPL and the CPM. <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/1023cdf-appendix.pdf>

Some of the basic differences between the FPL and CPM approaches are:

- *Expenses.* The FPL is the “official” measure used by the American Community Survey Program of the U.S. Census Bureau. The FPL bases its threshold on the national consumer price index (CPI), which chiefly considers expenses associated with the cost of food, fuel, and utilities. This number is adjusted for inflation annually and additional adjustments are made for age and size of family. The FPL is a national threshold. On the other hand, the CPM bases its threshold on a minimum budget (cost of living) calculated from the five-year average of costs of food, shelter, clothing, and utilities. Because housing costs vary widely across the U.S., this threshold differs across the nation. In 2023, the FPL for Kern (and the nation) for a family of four with two children under the age of 18 years was \$30,900; the CPM threshold for a family of four that rents a home was \$31,800.
- *Income.* The next part of the equation is to define income. When using the FPL, income is confined to earnings; federal assistance programs are not counted as part of income. When using the CPM, income is based on earnings which are then adjusted by adding income available through assistance programs, such as nutritional (SNAP) and housing subsidies. Income is then adjusted downward by considering nondiscretionary expenses, such as income taxes, childcare, housing, and out-of-pocket work- and medical-related expenses. The impact of assistance programs on income calculated by the CPM was particularly significant in lifting vulnerable populations out of poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although we report Kern’s poverty rate using both the FPL and the CPM, we have adopted the FPL to use in discussing poverty rates throughout the report. The FPL, which is a federal threshold across the nation regardless of the cost of housing in the region, is consistent with our use of the American Community Survey data throughout the report.

Characteristics of Data used in the Report

- *Multiple data sources have been used in compiling the 2025 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County.* This report draws on multiple sources of published data that provide insight into the status of women. We draw heavily on the U.S. Census Bureau’s yearly American Community Surveys (ACS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the California Health Interview Survey, and the California Department of Education. All sources are cited in the footnotes with addresses for electronic access.
- *All data provide a snapshot at the time the measurement was made.* While the most recent ACS data is from 2023, other databases used in the report may present data from later years.
- *Data over multiple years must be used to discern trends.* Two data points (e.g., the comparison of 2018 with 2023 data) cannot establish a trend. This report will use multi-year trends through 2023 to determine trending in indicators of women’s status. However, discontinuity is seen in some of the 2020 and 2021 data as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not yet clear whether the discontinuity is a rare occurrence or whether it signals a new trend line.
- *All statistical data are imprecise.* The reliability or precision of data relies on the size of the sample studied and how representative the sample is of the population. Note that for simplicity, margins of error are not given in this report, and data are generally rounded to whole numbers. Use caution when comparing any numbers that are close in value. Specific margins of error can be found in many of the references cited. For surveys targeting particular audiences, the results are applicable to survey respondents.
- *Survey data are only as accurate as the respondents’ answers.* Many surveys ask participants multiple questions, some of which require specific and extensive knowledge. When using survey data, it is assumed that respondents answer as truthfully as they can. However, individuals may differ in their understanding of questions, their life experiences, and knowledge of facts.
- *Go to the source in the footnotes.* The footnotes provide detailed citations for all data and claims presented in the Report.

Comparisons of Data

In this report, the status of Kern Women is frequently compared to the average of women across the state (and sometimes across the nation) to offer context. These comparisons do not provide much insight to reasons for differences since the demographics and economy of Kern differ greatly from the state average, which is heavily influenced by California's well-populated coastal regions. A comparison of Kern Women to those residing in other counties in the San Joaquin Valley may provide more insight. To that end, Fresno and Merced counties appear as comparators for some economic and health measures. Like Kern, the population demographics are similar, each has one relatively large city, and each is home to a California university. While Kern's population is about the same as that of Fresno County (900,000-1,000,000), the population of Merced is about one-third the size (389,000). This means that the margin of error in Merced County's statistics is larger than that in Kern or Fresno County (See Table 20, for example). *Caution is urged in making comparisons where numbers differ slightly (e.g., less than 5%); in such cases the margins of error in each number may show that numbers do not differ significantly.*

Good data should lead to complex questions, reflection, and potential new actions. The goal of this report is to help inform the important work of the Women's and Girls' Fund of the Kern Community Foundation as it sets priorities and makes other data-driven decisions that will continue to improve the status of women and girls in the County and the state.

ABOUT KERN COUNTY

Kern County is one of 58 counties in the state of California, located at the southern edge of California's Central Valley. It is the third largest county in terms of area and is home to 2.3% of the state's population.

Forty-three percent of Kern's population reside in Bakersfield, the county's largest urban center and its county seat. Another 23% of the county's population live in the 10 other incorporated cities ranging in population from 53,000 to around 1,000. One in three people (34%) resides in more rural areas.

Kern County's major industries employing a large proportion of the workforce include agriculture, energy production, healthcare, retail, and education.

In this report, we look at the status of women and girls across the county in terms of economic wellbeing, family and homes, health and safety—and the correlation of educational attainment of women to these issues. On key issues, data from the 2020 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County are referred to for comparison with updated figures.

20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FUND OF KERN COUNTY

As we Celebrate our 20th Anniversary of the Women's & Girls' Fund of Kern County, we would like to share our purpose: Transforming the Lives of Women and Girls in Kern County by mobilizing the power and passion of women working together.

ABOUT THE WOMEN'S & GIRLS' FUND OF KERN COUNTY

In 2003, founding organizer, Judi McCarthy, along with likeminded and passionate women in our community, had a vision to transform the lives of women and girls in Kern County by mobilizing the power and passion of women working together. To accomplish this, they established the Women's & Girls' Fund by creating an endowment that exists forever and grows through contributions and market conditions. Each year 4% of the endowment is allocated to grants that focus on long-term solutions to societal problems facing women and girls in all parts of Kern County. Through collective giving the endowment has now grown to over \$2.8 million and we can grant \$100,000 per year meeting our goal in 2025 our 20th anniversary year! THANKS TO EACH OF YOU!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

THE CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AT MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

The Center for the Advancement of Women at Mount Saint Mary's University is a hub for women's equity research, advocacy, and leadership development. Its vision is to find solutions to persistent gender inequities and work with partners to eradicate those inequities in our lifetime. That goal includes eliminating obstacles that women face in the workplace, in their communities, in the media, and beyond to make a positive difference in the lives of women and girls in California and our nation. The Center also creates public programming, research guides, and training opportunities to engage more partners in its work. MSMU.EDU/CAW

MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES

Mount Saint Mary's University is the only women's university in Los Angeles and one of the most diverse in the nation. The University is known nationally for its research on gender equity, its innovative health and sciences programs, and its commitment to community service. As a leading liberal arts institution, Mount Saint Mary's provides year-round, flexible, and online programs at the undergraduate and graduate level. Weekend, evening, and graduate programs are offered to women and men. Mount alumnae are engaged and active global citizens who use their knowledge and skills to better themselves, their communities, and the world. MSMU.EDU

OUR VISION CONTINUES AS WE WORK TOGETHER

WOMEN EDUCATE * WOMEN ENDOW * WOMEN EMPOWER * WOMEN MENTOR

Women Educate to create awareness of women's and girls' needs unmet by current strategies.

Women Endow a permanent fund, our annual yield benefits local women & girls programs.

Women Empower one another to become philanthropists and advocates of positive social change.

Women Mentor naturally as we share our stories, we all can encourage and uplift each other daily.

GRANTMAKING

The Women's and Girls' fund focuses our grantmaking to support education and training. Our 2025 update to The Status of Women & Girls in Kern County Report will be announced in September. We will be voting on the focus of the grants for the next five years at the end of 2025.

Our grant committee is composed of Vision Committee members, donors and engaged students. Each year we issue grant guidelines and invite applications from local nonprofit organizations. Together, we evaluate these requests alongside community research. We work by consensus and make thoughtful decisions that results in grants that focus on root causes and long-term solutions to improve the lives of Kern's Women and girls.

PAST WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FUND GRANTEES

Alliance Against Family Violence & Sexual Assault

Bakersfield Police Activities League

Bakersfield Women's Business Conference

Be Finally Free

Boys and Girls Clubs of Kern County

CASA Esperanza

Charmed & Chosen, Inc.

Community Action Partnership of Kern

Covenant Community Services

CSUB Foundation

Diamond in the Rough

Domestic Violence Advisory Council
Dress for Success Bakersfield
emPOWERment Dess Perkins Foundation
Garden Pathways
Girl Scouts
Global Family Care Network
Henrietta Weill Memorial Child Guidance Clinic
Kern County Educational Services Foundation
Kern Dance Alliance
Kern Economic Development Foundation
Kern High School District Foundation
Kern Literacy Council
Kern Partnership for Children and Families
Kern River Valley Revitalization Corp.
Kernville USD Family Resource Center
Latina Leaders of Kern County
League of Dreams
Mercy Housing California
Mountain Communities Family Resource Center
No Sister Left Behind
STARBASE Edwards
STEMTaught Foundation
Taft College Foundation
Teen Success Inc.
The Open Door Network
The Mission at Kern County
The Wildlands Conservancy at Wind Wolves Preserve
United Way of Kern County
Valley PBS
Women's Economic Ventures
Youth 2 Leaders Education Foundation

THE IMPACT

To date, the Women's and Girls' Fund has awarded 108 grants to local nonprofit organizations totaling \$ 916,686 since 2005. Through our grantmaking, Women's and Girls' Fund Donors are philanthropists and advocates of positive social change in Kern County. Your gifts to The Women's and Girls' Fund make a lasting impact.

Growing your Giving as you share your time, talents & treasure also make a lasting impact. We are looking for women to become part of the Grants Allocation Committee that meet each year 3 times from September thru February. Let us know by emailing us at wgf@kernfoundation.org if you are interested in becoming part of this amazing process! Women's & Girls' Fund is a leadership initiative of the Kern Community Foundation.

KERN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Kern Community Foundation is a vibrant nonprofit enterprise with a simple mission: "Growing Community. Growing Philanthropy." For 25 years, the Foundation has been in business to serve as a charitable resource for local donors and corporations and to generate capital that provides philanthropic

solutions to help make Kern County a better place to live, work, and visit. Since its establishment in 1999, we have been home to almost 200 charitable funds. We have awarded close to \$30 million in grants and scholarships. For more information about Kern Community Foundation visit kernfoundation.org.

KERN COMMUNITY | Growing community.
F O U N D A T I O N | Growing philanthropy.

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Kern Community Foundation is a 501(c) 3 organization with a tax ID of 77-055587

Find us at Kern Community Foundation

What We Do/Community Initiatives/The Women's & Girls' Fund



A Leadership Initiative of KERN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the dedication, hard work and persistence of so many individuals and institutions. We would like to extend a special thank-you to the following individuals and organizations.

THE WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FUND AT KERN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Women's & Girls' Fund Vision Committee

Founders, Advocates, Donors and all involved in our Fund

Dayna Nichols, Chair

Christina Bynum, Co-Chair

Melissa Morse, SWG Report Chair

Carla Barrientos & Dr. Jinping Sun, Grants Allocation Committee Co-Chairs

Nancy Chaffin Joy, Advisory Board

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