

Childhood Obesity in Rural California: Issues and Approaches

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Rural California

- 85% of California's landmass
- 13% of population
~ 5 million people
- 16% poverty
- 1 in 60 Americans lives in rural California



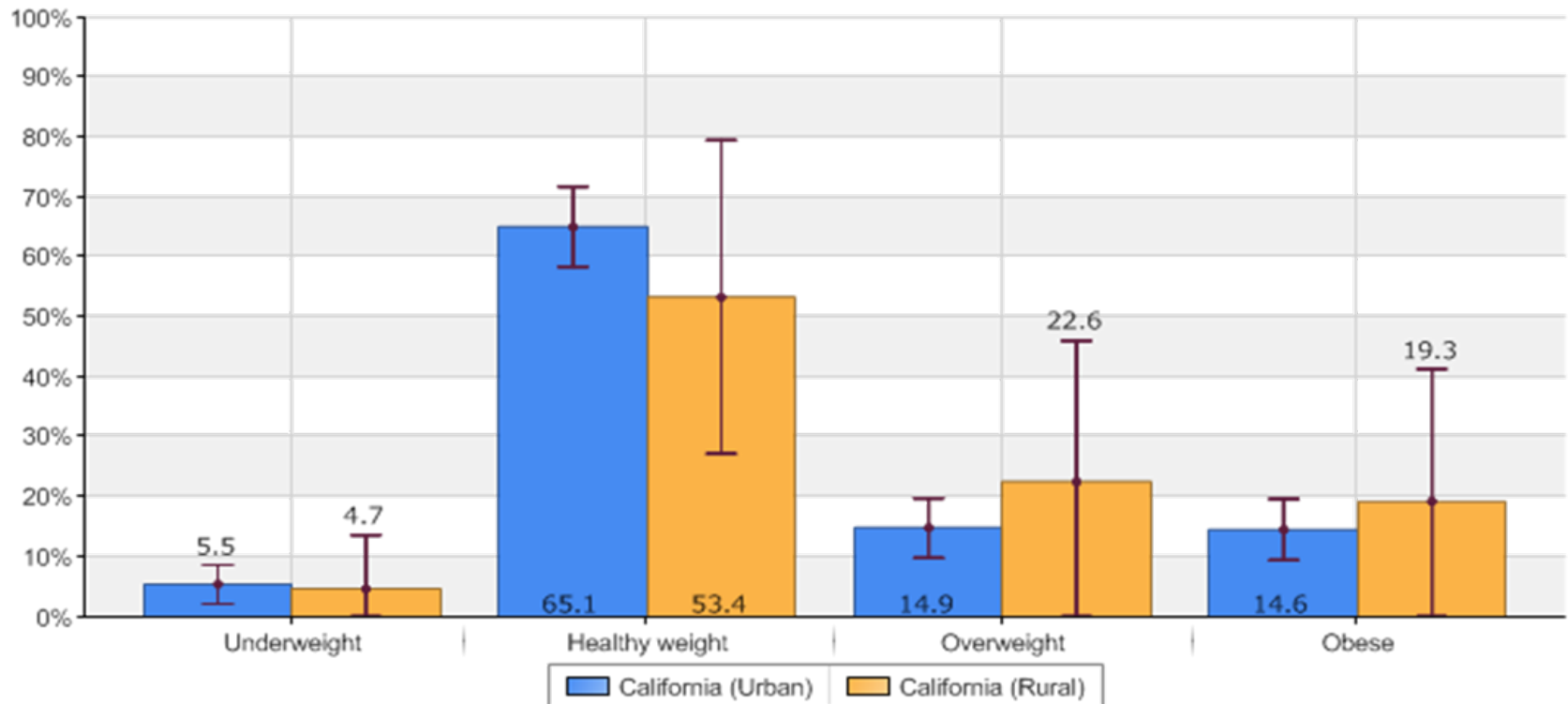
Where is Rural California?



Data Sources:
OSHPD, Healthcare Workforce Development Division
U.S. Census Bureau
January 2006

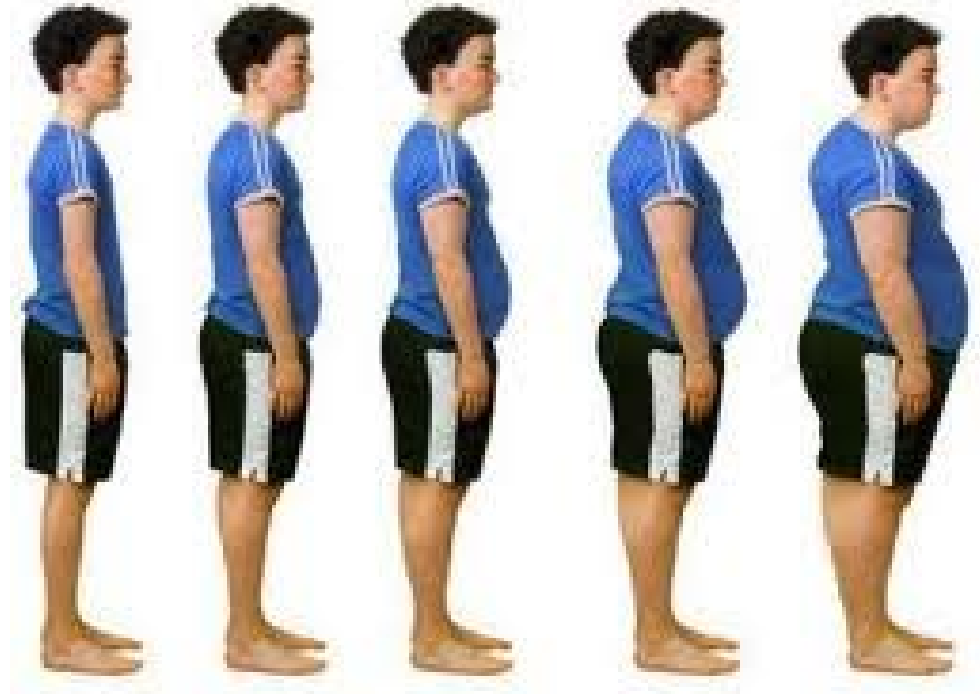
Childhood Obesity: Rural and Urban Children

- Higher rates of overweight and obesity among rural children - 42% rural vs. 30% urban



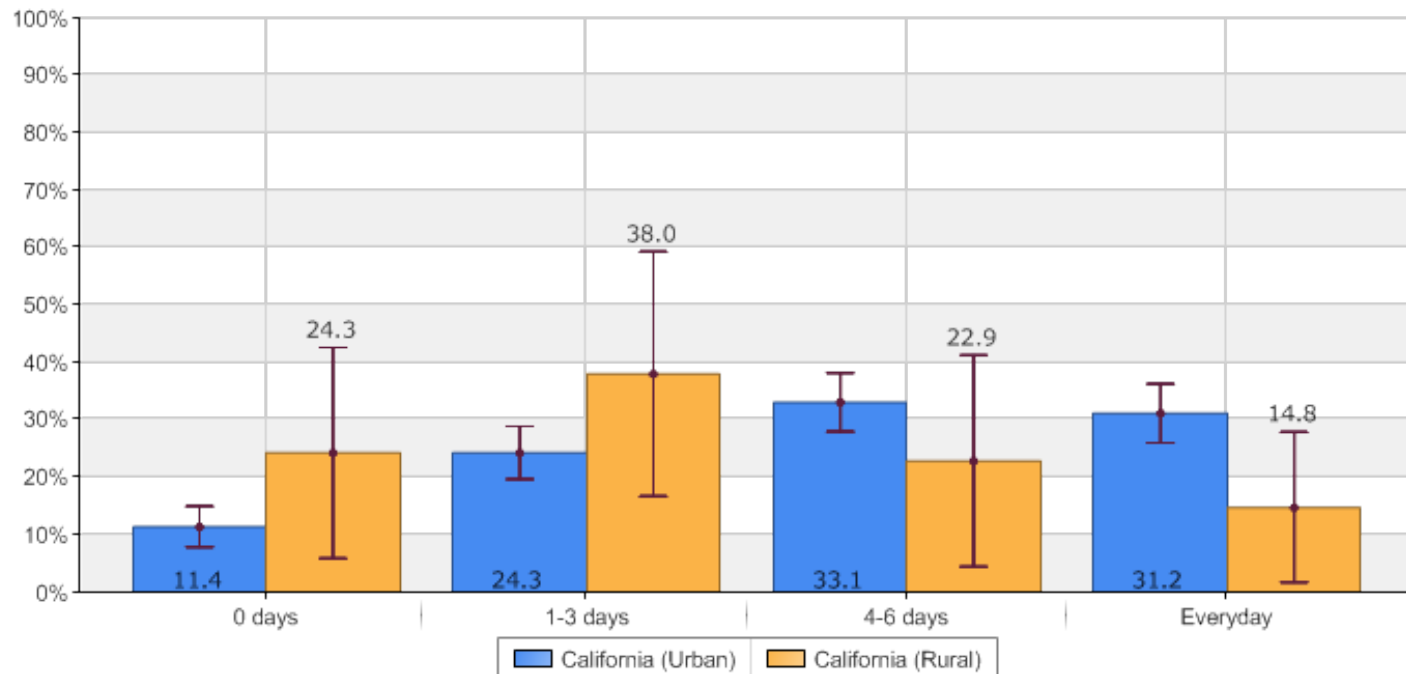
National Survey of Children's Health, 2007

Risk
Factors:
Rural and
Urban
California



Exercise

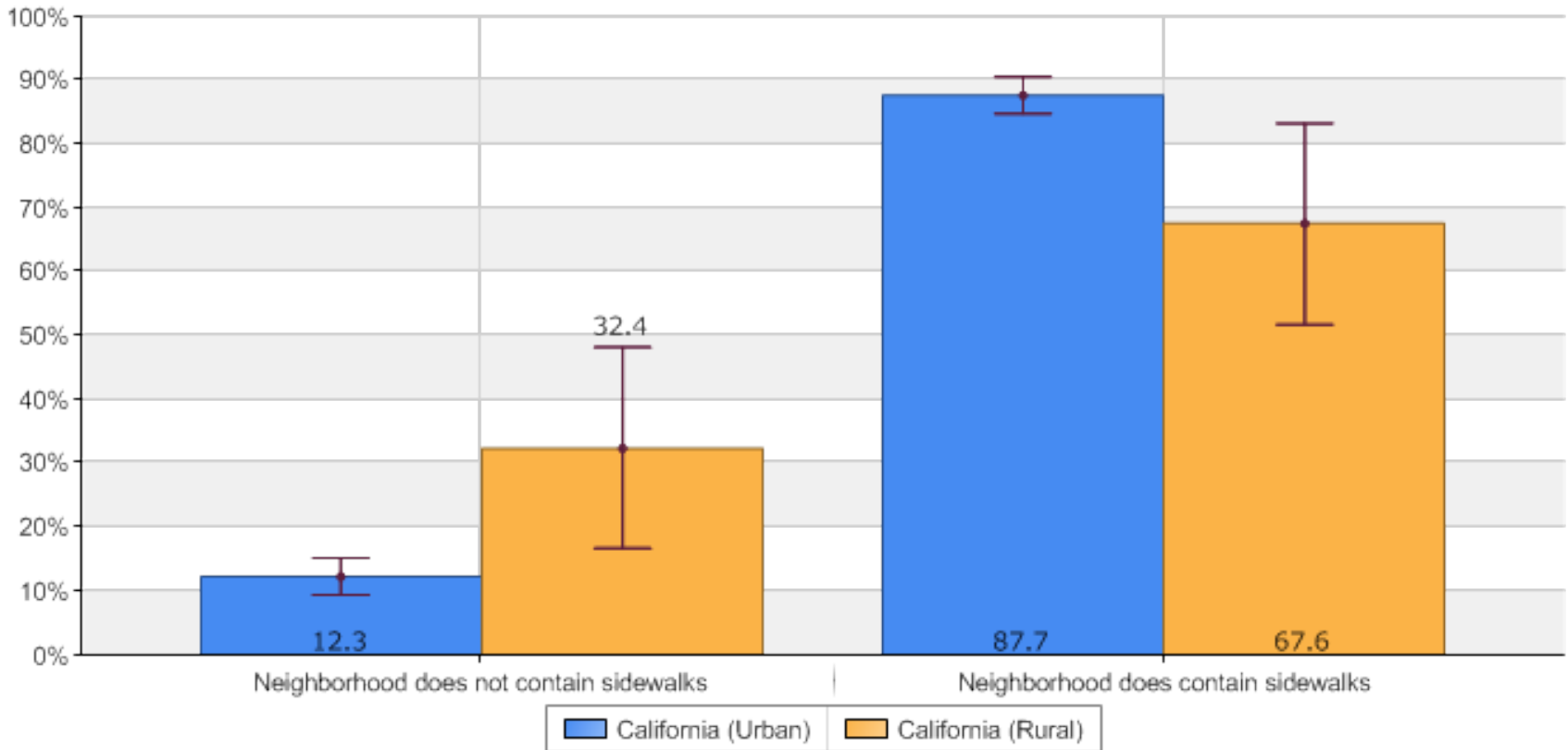
- Rural children are less likely to engage in vigorous physical activity
- Exercise 4 or more days/week: 38% rural vs. 64% urban



National Survey of Children's Health, 2007

Sidewalks

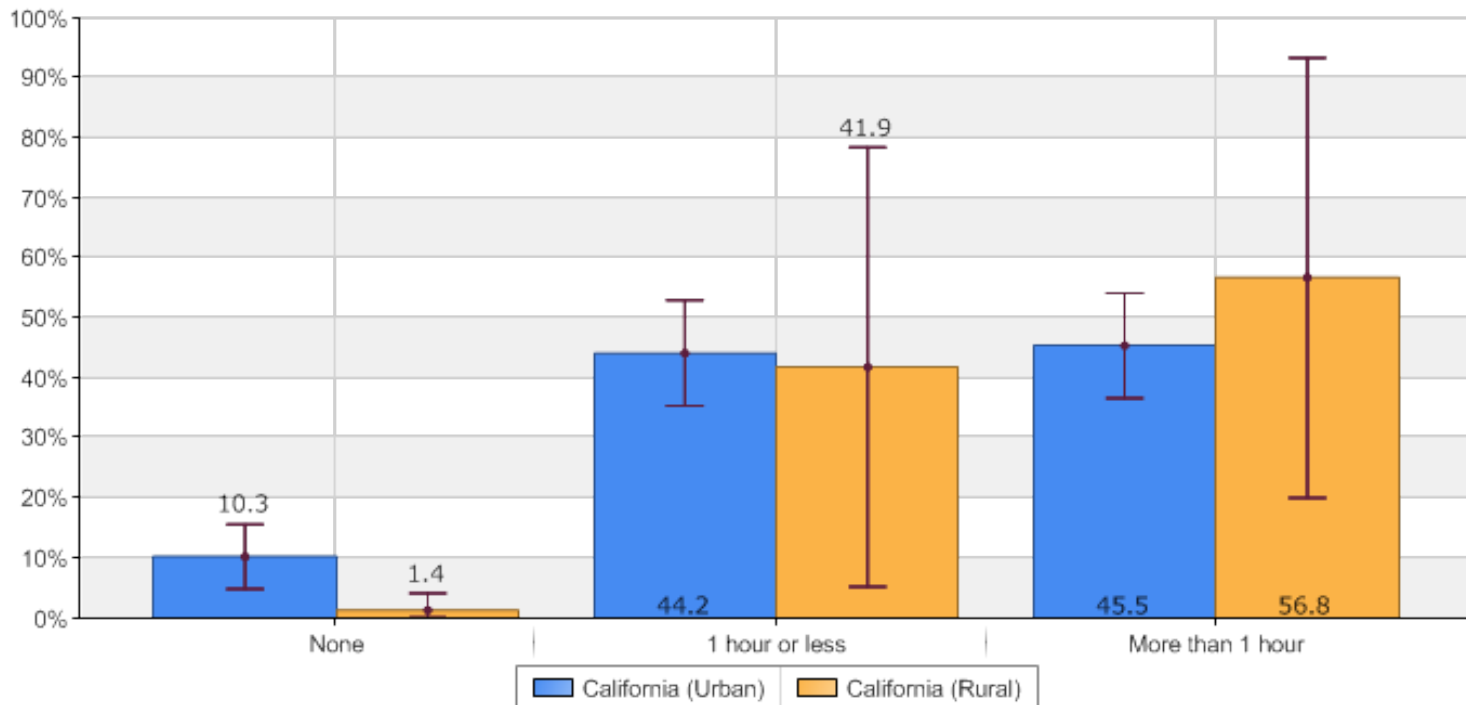
- Rural neighborhoods are less likely to have sidewalks or walking paths – 32% vs. 12%



National Survey of Children's Health, 2007

“Screen Time”

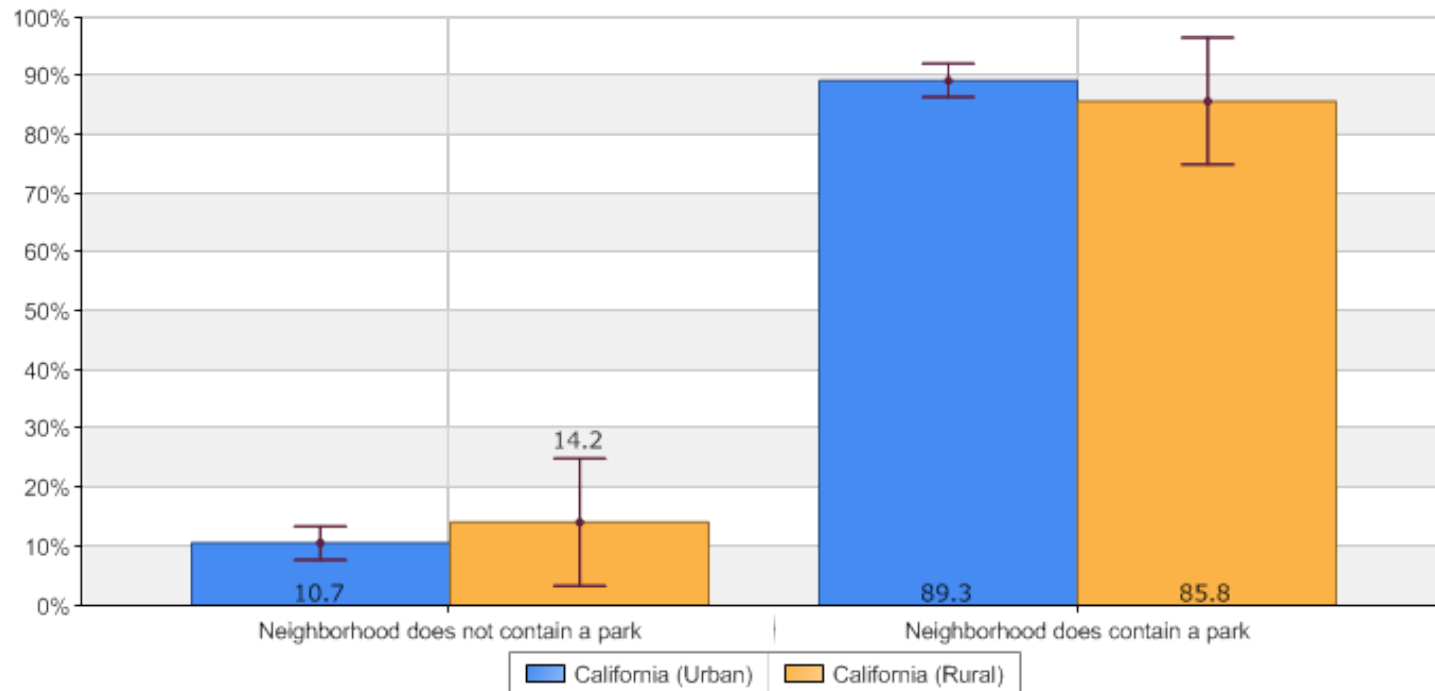
- Rural children spend more time in front of “screens”
 - Over 1 hour/day: 57% rural vs. 46% urban



National Survey of Children's Health, 2007

Parks/Playgrounds

- Somewhat fewer parks and playgrounds in rural areas: 14% vs. 11% do not have
 - Perceptions of safety are similar: 87% vs. 84%



Food Deserts

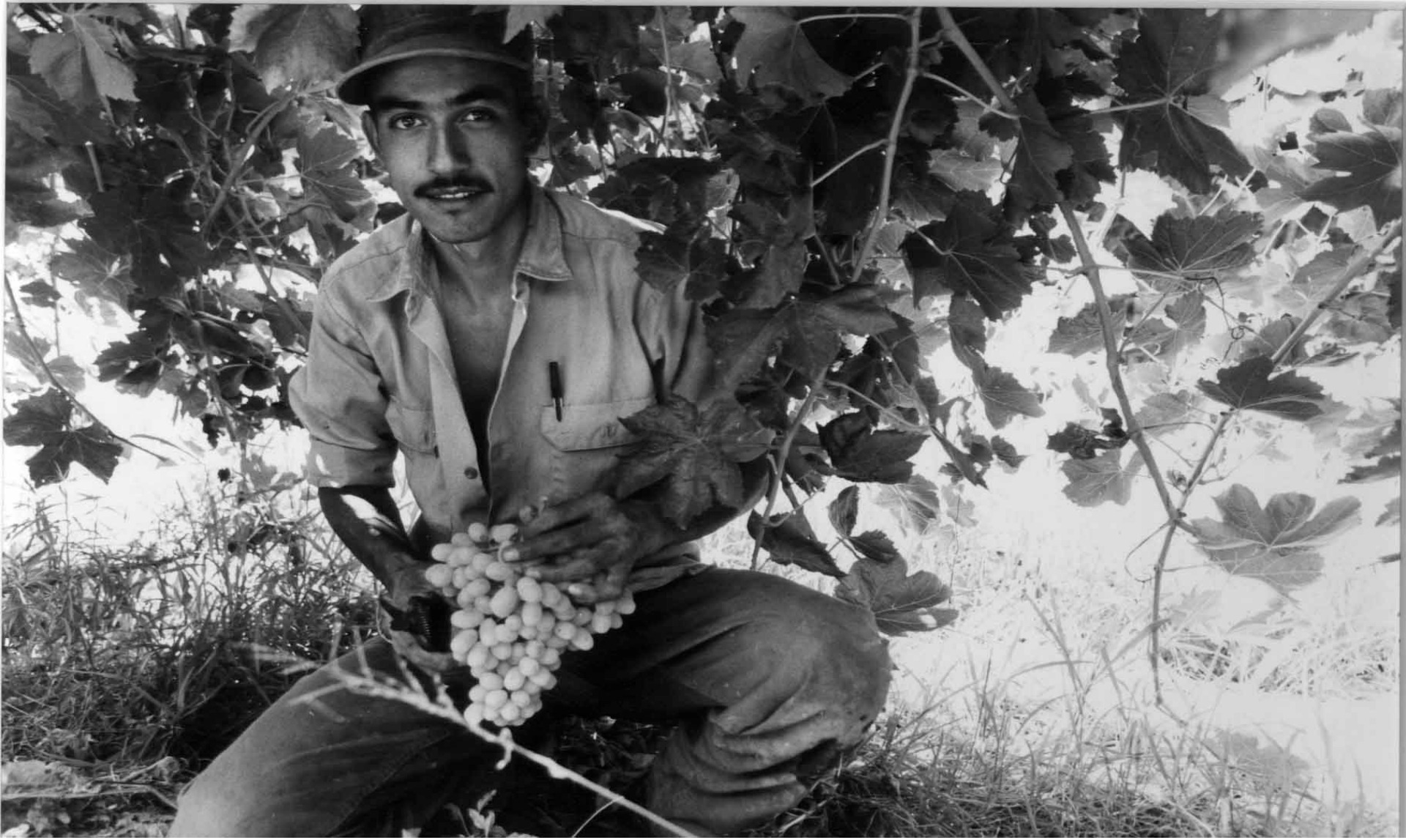
- USDA study
 - 371 California census tracts are “food deserts”
 - 15% of those are rural
- *Low-income* rural residents are 3 times more likely to have no vehicle and live over one mile from a supermarket
 - Rural: 7.4%
 - Urban: 2.5%
- “In small-town and rural areas with limited food access, the lack of transportation infrastructure is the most defining characteristic.”

Dietary Risk Factors - Comparable

- Fast food: 2 or more times/week
 - Rural: 35%
 - Urban: 38%
- Soda: 2 or more glasses/day
 - Rural: 13%
 - Urban: 15%
- Fruits and vegetables: 5 or more servings/day
 - Rural 51%
 - Urban: 48%



Farmworkers



Farmworkers

- Particular subset of rural population
 - ~ farmworkers and family members in CA
- Poor diet, high food insecurity, high rates of diet-related chronic disease (CA Agricultural Worker Health Study, 2000)
- 60% are here with children



Diet and Nutrition

- Fresno County farmworker study (2007)
 - 45% food insecure
 - 86% high fat diet
 - 42% < 3 servings of fruits and vegetables/day
 - 53% “Relied on a few kinds of low-cost food to feed children because running out of money”
- Salinas Valley Farmworker Study (2010)
 - 66% food insecure
 - 93% would like to eat more fruits and vegetables

Farmworkers

- “It is ironic that those who till the soil, cultivate and harvest the fruits, vegetables and other foods that fill your tables with abundance have nothing left for themselves.”
 - Cesar Chavez



Isolation & Transportation

- Farmworkers are more likely to live in outlying rural areas
 - 42% have no vehicle
 - limited public transit in rural areas
 - Many rely on rides to the supermarket
 - average cost = \$20 round trip
- High reliance on convenience stores with unhealthy food

Parenting

- Farmworkers, including many women, work long days
 - Limited time to prepare healthy meals
 - Higher reliance on fast food
- Farmworker mothers report guilt about being away from children for long stretches
 - Assuage guilt with “Happy Meals”

Strategies for Rural Areas



Education

- Nutrition Education
 - High interest in eating better and feeding children healthier food
- “Pasos Saludables” – farmworker obesity and diabetes prevention
 - Pilot – collaboration between UC Berkeley and Reiter Berry Farms
 - Nutrition education, exercise, peer support
- Media: “La Flor del Sin Nombre”
 - Telenovela promoting improved diet among farmworkers – 33,000 views

Community Gardens

- High interest in community gardens in farmworker and rural communities
 - Know how to grow food
- High interest in organic food
 - Not available or affordable
- Urban Farm Model – Veggielution (San Jose)
 - Communally run
 - Very flexible - no commitment
 - 2 hours volunteer time = 1 bag of produce

School Gardens

- Expanding, but need to promote more in rural areas



CA School Garden Survey, 2010

Home Gardens

- La Mesa Verde (San Jose)
 - Helping low-income community members establish home gardens
 - Providing:
 - Seeds
 - Fertilizer
 - Technical assistance - via Master Gardeners

Farmers' Markets

- Growing number of farmers markets in rural areas
 - Need more
 - More that accept EBT



Farmers' Markets

- ALBA – Ag & Land Based Training Assn
 - Establishing farmers markets in low income communities on Central Coast
 - Connecting Latino farmers with Latino community members via farmers' markets & other
- Kaiser Permanente
 - Some farmers markets in Central Valley
- Fresno Metro Ministry
 - EBT in Flea Markets – serving low-income people
 - Selma, CA – 1st in nation

Food from Farms

- Some growers allow farmworkers to bring home food from farms
 - approx. 1 additional serving/day of fruits and vegetables for family members
 - Especially happy on organic farms
- Need to encourage more growers to provide farmworkers with fresh produce as a workplace benefit

Community Organizing

- Poder Popular Para la Salud del Pueblo - TCE
 - Policy and systems change in rural farmworker communities
- Promotores - grassroots organizing and leadership development
- High farmworker interest in improving diet and nutrition surfaced
 - Establishment of community gardens
 - Establishment of new flea markets with more affordable fruits and vegetables

Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP)

- Multi-pronged approach:
- Farmers markets and community gardens
- Markets with fresh foods in low-income neighborhoods
- Physical activity and education in schools and after-school programs
- Parks, sidewalks, walking trails and bicycle lanes
- Promoting “smart growth” to create healthier communities
- Encouraging physical activity and healthy eating through media

Contact Information

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