

# SNAPSHOT OF CALIFORNIA'S EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS FOR CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

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# Purpose

- To conduct a review of California's current state, local and community preparedness programs and efforts to identify:
  - ▣ Barriers and challenges to reaching racially and ethnically diverse communities;
  - ▣ Programmatic and policy gaps and priorities for integrating these communities into preparedness planning and implementation; and
  - ▣ Successes, promising efforts and lessons learned.

# Background (continued)

- California's culturally diverse population:
  - Over 40% non-white
  - 1 in 3 is Hispanic/Latino
  - 1 in 3 is foreign born
  - 43% speak a language other than English
  - 1 in 5 (~6.8 million) speaks English less than very well
  - Estimated 2.4 million undocumented immigrants

# Background (continued)

“...it’s not a matter of **if** a disaster will strike, but **when...**”

~*Maria Shriver, First Lady of California*

- California has a long history of coping with disasters, with nearly 5,000 wildfires, several major earthquakes (greater than magnitude 4.0) and numerous other natural disasters each year.
- Not everyone is affected equally, and often racially and ethnically diverse communities are hit the hardest.
- This is particularly true for California, a state rich in racial, ethnic and language diversity.
- Over the decades, and particularly in the wake of the Loma Prieta earthquake and other events, greater attention has been given to preparedness, response and recovery for California’s diverse populations.

# Methodology

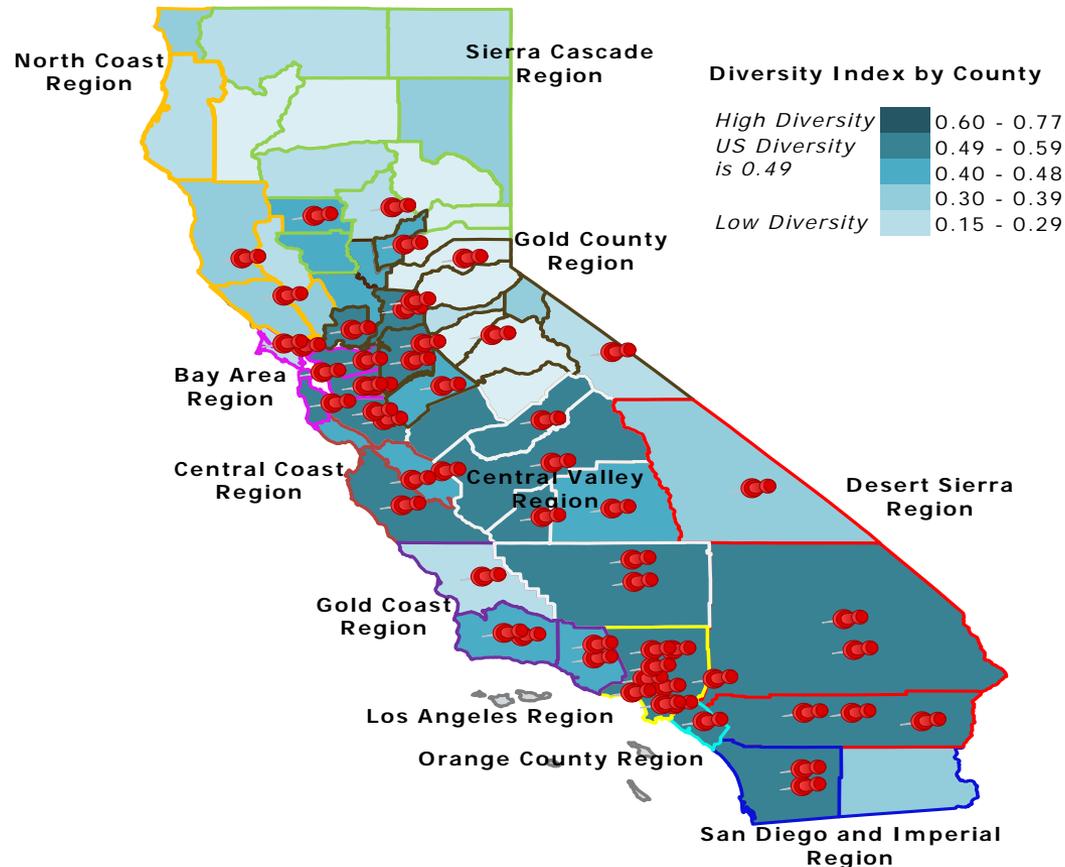
- Three-pronged approach:
  - ▣ Conducted a review of 148 websites originating from state, local and community public and private sector organizations across California and focusing on preparedness and public health issues;
  - ▣ Conducted a review of disaster and public health literature focusing on emergency preparedness for racially and ethnically diverse communities in California;
  - ▣ Conducted 13 key informant interviews with individuals representing a range of regions, sectors and priorities.

# Findings: Web-based Review

- Of the 148 organizational websites profiled...
  - ▣ 72% provide links to translated materials
  - ▣ 42% provide translated materials directly on their site
  - ▣ 14% offer courses and trainings for service providers focused on cultural competence, language issues and topics related to reaching diverse communities
  - ▣ 12% explicitly indicate actively collaborating with other agencies
  - ▣ 5% indicate involvement in research and evaluation activities; offer guidance on promising strategies and practices; and indicate involvement in advocacy or policy work

# Findings: Web-based Review (continued)

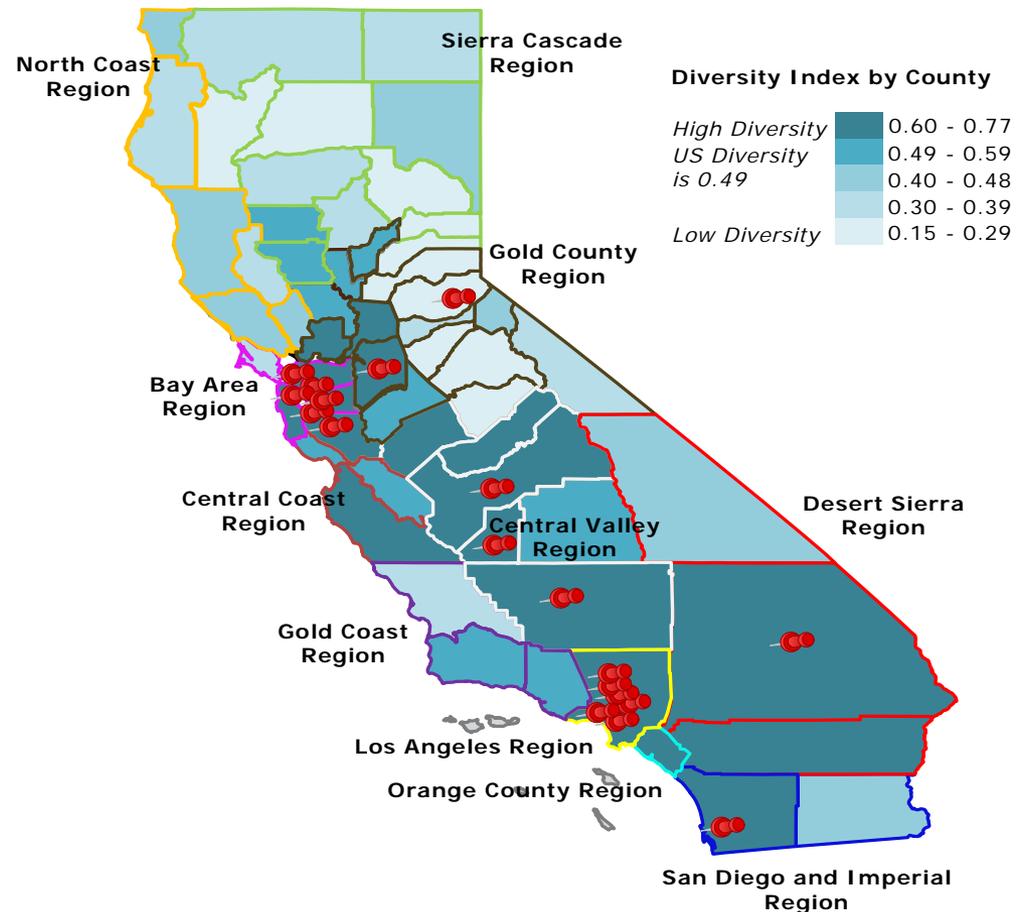
- Where are the local agencies that provide translated resources located across California?



Data Source for Diversity: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

# Findings: Web-based Review (continued)

- Where are the local agencies that provide training and education programs on diversity preparedness located across California?



# Findings: Literature Review

## □ **Individual/Community Level Barriers:**

- ***Low socioeconomic status:*** limited financial resources; substandard housing; low literacy; and limited transportation.
- ***Culture and language:*** limited English proficiency; little familiarity with U.S. culture, customs and programs; and information received from non-mainstream sources.
- ***Trust and perceived fairness of government response:*** low trust in warning messages and service providers; less likely to believe that government will respond fairly to needs.

# Findings: Literature Review (continued)

- **Institutional/Organizational Level Barriers:**
  - ***Limited knowledge*** about diverse communities and their distinct needs;
  - ***Limited infrastructure support*** to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services (e.g., workforce diversity, availability of on-site bilingual interpreters, and cultural competence training for service providers); and
  - ***Limited funding, resources and collaboration.***

# Findings: Key Informant (KI) Interviews

- Who were the key informants?
  - 3 county public health departments
  - 2 local emergency management & response agencies
  - 4 private sector philanthropic and advocacy groups
  - 2 community-based organizations
  - 2 state agencies
  
- Key informants represented 4 different regions, including Central Coast, Bay Area, Central Valley, and Los Angeles, as well as the state of California.

# Findings: KI Interviews (continued)

- Identified challenges and barriers to reaching California's diverse communities in emergencies:
  - ***Individual-level barriers:***
    - Economic and social stressors within communities
    - Limited trust
    - Culture and language
    - Geographic Isolation
  - ***Institutional/Organizational-level barriers:***
    - Lack of funding and flexibility in funding for culturally and linguistically appropriate services
    - Limited collaboration for these efforts

# Findings: KI Interviews (continued)

- Examples of strategies and practices adopted by key informants and their organizations:
  - ▣ **Community Engagement:** establishing planning committees and advisory groups; and building informal partnerships.
  - ▣ **Infrastructure support for culturally and linguistically appropriate services:** recruiting bilingual and racial/ethnic staff; and establishing policies to encourage use of professional interpreters.
  - ▣ **Community needs assessments and surveys:** identifying the distinct and specific needs of culturally diverse communities as well as community resources and assets and current programs.
  - ▣ **Establishing collaborations:** partnering to share resources, information and services.

# Findings: KI Interviews (continued)

- Recommendations on coordinating activities across agencies and sectors:
  - ▣ ***Establishing mandatory steering committees*** with community representatives within CA's Office of Emergency Services and other emergency management and response agencies.
  - ▣ ***Reaching out to ethnic media.***
  - ▣ ***Working with neighborhood councils*** to provide basic preparedness information.
  - ▣ ***Working with schools*** to disseminate basic preparedness information.

# Findings: KI Interviews (continued)

- Recommendations for policy changes:
  - ▣ ***Encouraging collaboration across organizations:*** encouraging jointly-funded projects; financial incentives for active collaboration (e.g., subsidizing travel); building cordial and personal relationships across sectors.
  - ▣ ***Increasing programmatic flexibility for local agencies:*** providing opportunities for local agencies to innovate and tailor plans to communities' distinct and specific needs.
  - ▣ ***Increasing funding for programs, resources and services:*** funding to hire professional interpreters or provide printed translated resources (as opposed to online materials).

# Discussion

- Disparities, challenges and barriers faced by racially and ethnically diverse communities in emergencies are not new; however they are deeply rooted in complexities that require specific attention and tailored strategies.
- While in California, many promising efforts over the past couple of decades have emerged to address the needs of diverse communities in emergencies, a large percentage remain focused on “more of the same”.
  - ▣ E.g., Large majority of agencies ONLY develop and provide translated materials to meet the needs of their diverse communities.

# Discussion

- Where promising practices and strategies exist, they are fragmented and implemented only by a few organizations.
  - ▣ E.g., Conducting community needs assessments; involving community members in local preparedness planning and implementation
- Efforts also remain largely concentrated in densely populated areas across the state (e.g., Bay Area and Los Angeles).
- Few efforts are being made to integrate principles of cultural and linguistic competence (that have proven to be successful in reducing disparities in health care) in planning and implementation.
  - ▣ E.g., cultural competence training for first responders and service providers, onsite interpreters, diversity in the workforce

# Directions and Questions for Future Consideration

- Coordination of information, resources and services across organizations, sectors and regions.
- Infrastructure support for developing culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and services.
- Collaboration between Public Health/Emergency Management agencies and local community to foster trust and understanding.
- Tailoring emergency preparedness plans and actions to the broader social, economic and political circumstances of communities.
- Increasing funding and allowing for greater flexibility in allocation of funds.

EXPERTS TODAY PREDICTED  
NATURAL DISASTERS SO  
DEVASTATING THAT ONLY  
THE RICH AND POWERFUL  
WILL SURVIVE...



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