

DOLORES HUERTA FOUNDATION

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K.T.
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Lamont & Weedpatch, California

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Geography: Lamont and Weedpatch, California

The Struggles: In conjunction with acute poverty, Lamont and Weedpatch suffer environmental health hazards (e.g., arsenic-contaminated water; the worst air quality in the nation¹), insufficient infrastructure (e.g., unpaved roads, lacking sewers, few sidewalks and streetlights), poor educational outcomes (e.g., high rates of suspension, expulsion, and dropout), youth rivalry and gang violence, and critical health disparities (i.e., high rates of overweight, obesity, diabetes, asthma, and depression; the highest teen birth rate in California).

In the last decade, rapid population growth has severely overburdened the communities' shared water delivery and drainage infrastructure. Approximately 100 families currently reside in neighborhood enclaves that were informally developed on private land. Unable to connect to existing drainage systems, these enclaves are also precluded from paving roads and constructing sidewalks.

The People Impacted: At least 30 percent (29.7% - 40.7%) of Lamont and Weedpatch families live below the federal poverty level.² Median household income ranges from \$19,838 to \$25,578³; most employment is found on farms or in packing plants. Over three quarters (75%-81%) speak a language other than English at home and about half are foreign-born (45%-47%).⁴ According to DHF's recent Community Needs Assessment, over one-third of our constituents are undocumented.⁵ Approximately 95 percent (94.6% - 96.6%) of Lamont students and more three quarters (75.6% & 89.7%) of Weedpatch students are eligible for free and reduced price meals.⁶

The Culture: The residents of Lamont and Weedpatch are a cohesive community. Many attend the local Catholic Church and celebrate various Latino cultural events including Cesar Chavez Day, Cinco de Mayo, Día de la Virgen Guadalupe. Residents pride themselves on their civic engagement and are active in their neighborhood associations that work on infrastructure and community improvements. There is a large Oaxacan indigenous community that organizes Guelagueltas, and Festival Mexico.

Our communities are similar to Arvin, E. Bakersfield, Shafter, Wasco, and Delano. And are uniquely distinct from Southwest, Northwest neighborhoods of Bakersfield.

¹ American Lung Association. 2010. Most polluted cities. Retrieved from: <http://www.stateoftheair.org/2010/city-rankings/most-polluted-cities.html>
² U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Gonzalez, Mayra. Community needs assessment of people residing in Lamont, Arvin, and Weedpatch, with a focus on agricultural workers.
⁶ California Department of Education. 2010, April. Free and reduced price meals/CalWORKS - School level files. Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/cw/filesafdc.asp>

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Arvin, California

Geography: Arvin is 23 miles southeast of Bakersfield and 9 miles from the neighboring community of Lamont. Arvin is surrounded by agricultural fields on borders of the city. It is also the most southern city in the Central Valley and has the worst air quality in the nation.

Community issues: In conjunction with acute poverty, Lamont and Weedpatch suffer environmental health hazards (e.g., arsenic-contaminated water; insufficient infrastructure (e.g., unpaved roads, lacking sewers, few sidewalks and streetlights), poor educational outcomes (e.g., high rates of suspension, expulsion, and dropout), youth rivalry and gang violence, and critical health disparities (i.e., high rates of overweight, obesity, diabetes, asthma, and depression; the highest teen birth rate in California).

The People: At least 30-40% percent of Arvin families live below the federal poverty level. Median household income ranges from \$15,000 to \$25,000; most employment is found on farms or in packing plants. 95% speak a language other than English at home and about 88.6% foreign-born. According to DHF's recent Community Needs Assessment, 25.3% are undocumented.^[2] 57% of the residents are renters vs. 40% home-owners

The Culture: The residents of Arvin are a cohesive community. Many attend the local Catholic Church and celebrate various Latino cultural events including Cesar Chavez Day, Cinco de Mayo, Día de la Virgen Guadalupe. Residents pride themselves on their civic engagement and are active in their neighborhood associations that work on infrastructure and community improvements. There is a large Oaxacan indigenous community that organizes Guelagueltas, and Festival Mexico.

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^[2] Gonzalez, Mayra. Community needs assessment of people residing in Lamont, Arvin, and Weedpatch, with a focus on agricultural workers.