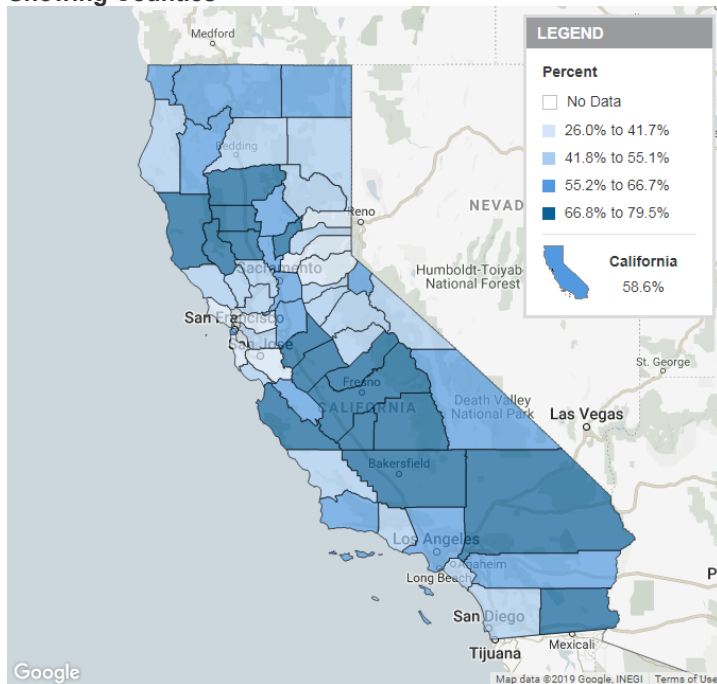


Food Security in California

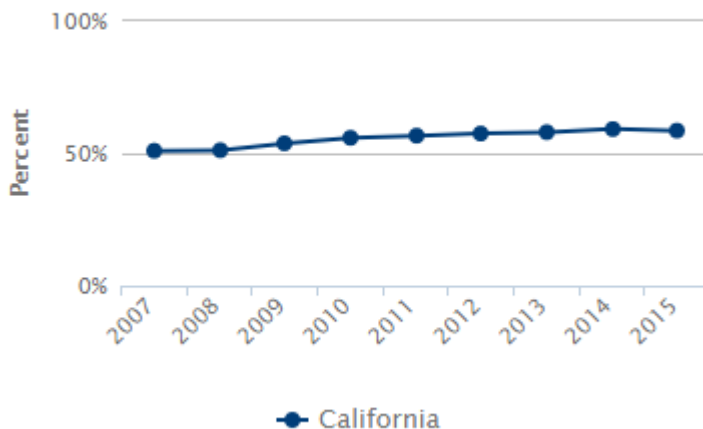
Students Eligible to Receive Free/Reduced Price School Meals: 2015; Showing Counties



Definition: Percentage of public school students eligible to receive free or reduced price meals. A child's family income must fall below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines (\$31,005 for a family of four in 2014-2015) to qualify for free meals, or below 185% of the federal poverty guidelines (\$44,123 for a family of four in 2014-2015) to qualify for reduced price meals.

Data Source: California Dept. of Education, Student Poverty FRPM Data (Mar. 2016); U.S. Dept. of Education, NCES Digest of Education Statistics (Mar. 2016).

Students Eligible to Receive Free/Reduced Price School Meals



What It Is

Kidsdata.org provides the following indicators of food security:

- The number of individuals and the number and percentage of households, by race/ethnicity, participating in the CalFresh supplemental food program, formerly known as Food Stamps; these data are from the California Department of Social Services (CDSS)*
- The estimated number and percentage of children under age 18 living in households with limited or uncertain access to adequate food (i.e., children living in "food insecure" households), calculated by Feeding America; these data also are shown for U.S. Congressional Districts
- The number and percentage of K-12 public school students who are eligible to receive free or reduced price school meals, overall and by eligibility status (i.e., the number and percentage of students who are eligible to receive free school meals, eligible for reduced price school meals, and not eligible for this program); these data come from the California Department of Education

Why This Topic Is Important

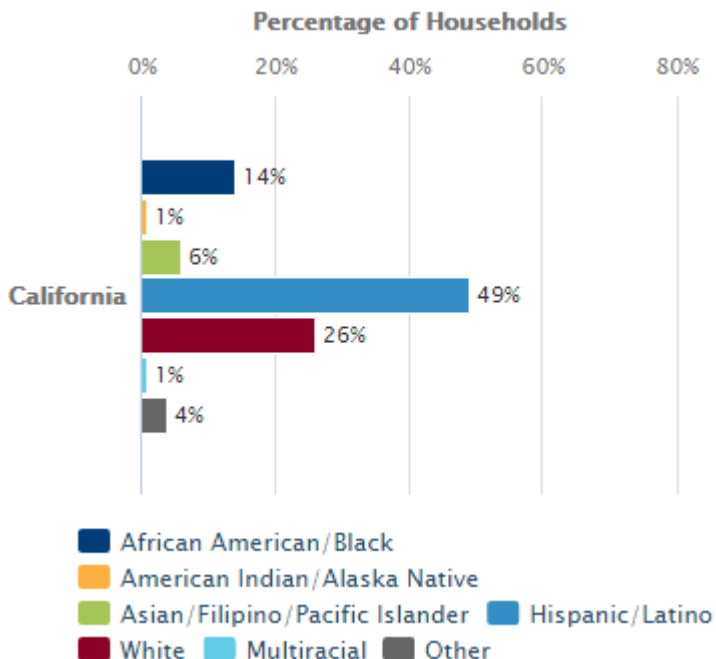
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as not having consistent, dependable access to enough food for active, healthy living (1). Approximately one in five U.S. children live in food-insecure households (2). Food-insecure children are more likely to experience a host of health issues, including developmental, cognitive, behavioral, and mental health problems (3). Among pregnant women, food insecurity is associated with physical and mental health problems, as well as birth complications (3). Children and communities of color are disproportionately affected by food insecurity (3).

Food assistance programs, such as food stamps (i.e., SNAP, or CalFresh in California), the Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, provide a safety net to help ensure that low-income children, expectant mothers, and families get adequate nutrition. These programs have been shown to reduce

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CalFresh (Food Stamp) Participation, by Race/Ethnicity: 2015



Definition: Percentage of households receiving CalFresh benefits, by race/ethnicity of household contact (e.g., in 2015, 1% of California households receiving CalFresh benefits had a multiracial household contact).

Data Source: California Dept. of Social Services, CalFresh Data Files (Oct. 2015).

poverty, improve birth outcomes, and improve children's health in general (4, 5). Student participation in the National School Breakfast Program also is associated with improved school performance and cognitive functioning (6).

How Children Are Faring

Nearly 59% of all public school students in California are eligible for free or reduced price school meals (meaning their household incomes are less than about \$44,000 for a family of four), according to 2015 data. This equates to over 3.5 million low-income students statewide, an increase from about 3.2 million (51%) in 2007. County and school district data show increases, as well; between 2007 and 2015, percentages rose in all but one county and in most school districts with available data. At the county level, the percentage of students eligible for free/reduced price meals ranged from 26% to 80% in 2015. Many more students are eligible for free meals than for reduced price meals. In 2015, over 3 million California students (50% of all students) were eligible for free meals, while over 500,000 (9%) were eligible for reduced price meals.

In 2015, almost 4.5 million Californians participated in the CalFresh supplemental food program, formerly known as Food Stamps. Hispanic/Latino and white households represented the majority of CalFresh participants in 2015, accounting for 75% of the approximately 2.1 million participating households.

According to 2014 estimates, almost 2.1 million California children (23% of the child population) lived in "food insecure" households with uncertain or inadequate access to food, down from nearly 2.5 million (27% of the child population) in 2011.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:
<https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/39/food-security/summary>



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