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Tracking CalFresh Participation among Young Children

Technical Appendices

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Appendix A: Data and Methods

Data

This brief relies on monthly records of CalFresh and CalWORKs participation drawn from the SNAP and TANF Longitudinal Data Bases (LDBs) – files that are produced by the California Department of Social Services from the Medi-Cal Eligibility Determination System (MEDS). MEDS is a Department of Health Care Services data hub for storing Medi-Cal, CalFresh, and CalWORKs eligibility histories. For additional information, see appendices to [The Importance of CalFresh and CalWORKs in Children’s Early Years](#). Using these data, county of program participation refers to the county in which children were first enrolled in CalFresh. This implies that children who move across county lines within the first year of their lives are not captured in the county to which they moved.

The count of total number of infants in a county – which serves as the denominator for the estimated share of infants enrolled – is drawn from counts of [live births by county](#), made publicly available by the California Department of Public Health’s Center for Health Statistics and Informatics, Vital Statistics Branch. Specifically, county refers to county of mother’s residence, rather than the county in which the birth took place. As a result, there may be some mismatch for children who move across county lines within the first year of their lives and enroll in CalFresh in the destination county.

Estimates of the share of residents under 200 percent of the federal poverty level are drawn from extracts of the American Community Survey prepared by [IPUMS-USA](#).

Methods

The methodology for this brief is a subset of that developed in [The Importance of CalFresh and CalWORKs in Children’s Early Years](#), which is described in detail in that report’s appendices.

To calculate the share of all infants enrolled by their first birthdays, I compare the total number of children born in a calendar year and enrolled by their first birthdays to the number of live births in each county that calendar year. Notably, this brief does not involve adjusting the total number of children in each birth cohort for changes in population size over time, since it focuses on a short window of time. The estimates of share of infants enrolled by region are nonetheless imprecise to the extent that cross-county migration and deaths may occur.

“Early enrollment” describes the number of children enrolled by their first birthdays who were enrolled in CalFresh in their first three calendar months of life. Measuring early enrollment could be substantially impacted if administrative processes around recording participation of infants resulted in missing early months where infants were in fact already enrolled. Records of benefit issuance for families with infants and records of participation for infants show similar patterns. This suggests that data in this brief do not systematically underestimate the share of infants enrolled in their first three months of life.

TABLE A1

Regional grouping of counties

Region	List of counties
North	Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Nevada, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Tehama, and Trinity
Greater Sacramento area	El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba
Bay Area	Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, and Sonoma
San Joaquin Valley and southern Sierras	Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Tuolumne
Central Coast	Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura
Inland Empire	Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino

Notes: The three most populous counties—Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego—are presented on their own. These county groupings allow a general analysis by region, although California’s varied geography and distribution of population means no single way of grouping counties into an easily interpreted set of regions is “correct.” Appendix B shows county-level estimates to help distinguish between differences at a smaller geographic level.

Appendix B: Detailed Tables

TABLE B1

Estimated share of all infants who are enrolled in CalFresh by first birthday, 2021

Region	% enrolled	County	% enrolled
Statewide	34%		
North	41%	Butte	40%
North	41%	Colusa	23%
North	41%	Del Norte	62%
North	41%	Glenn	*
North	41%	Humboldt	*
North	41%	Lake	56%
North	41%	Mendocino	39%
North	41%	Shasta	35%
North	41%	Siskiyou	46%
North	41%	Lassen, Modoc	37%
North	41%	Nevada, Plumas, Sierra	*
North	41%	Tehama, Trinity	48%
Greater Sacramento area	34%	El Dorado	20%
Greater Sacramento area	34%	Placer	16%
Greater Sacramento area	34%	Sacramento	39%
Greater Sacramento area	34%	Sutter	33%
Greater Sacramento area	34%	Yolo	28%
Greater Sacramento area	34%	Yuba	44%
Bay Area	21%	Alameda	22%
Bay Area	21%	Contra Costa	24%
Bay Area	21%	Marin	20%
Bay Area	21%	Napa	24%
Bay Area	21%	San Francisco	23%
Bay Area	21%	San Mateo	14%
Bay Area	21%	Santa Clara	17%
Bay Area	21%	Santa Cruz	36%
Bay Area	21%	Solano	32%
Bay Area	21%	Sonoma	24%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Calaveras	33%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Fresno	*
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Kern	54%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Kings	47%

San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Merced	55%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	San Joaquin	39%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Stanislaus	37%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Tulare	69%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Tuolumne	26%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Alpine, Amador	*
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Inyo, Mono	27%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	53%	Madera, Mariposa	*
Central Coast	36%	Monterey	44%
Central Coast	36%	San Benito	27%
Central Coast	36%	San Luis Obispo	27%
Central Coast	36%	Santa Barbara	44%
Central Coast	36%	Ventura	29%
Inland Empire	36%	Imperial	46%
Inland Empire	36%	Riverside	30%
Inland Empire	36%	San Bernardino	41%
Los Angeles County	35%	Los Angeles	35%
Orange County	22%	Orange	22%
San Diego County	26%	San Diego	26%

Sources: Author's analysis of SNAP and TANF LDB files, and CDPH vital statistics records of live births by year.

Notes: Several measures protect privacy in counties where fewer than 30 infants were enrolled in CalFresh. Certain neighboring counties are grouped together when one consistently had fewer than 30 infants enrolled (e.g. Inyo and Mono counties). In counties that only occasionally had fewer than 30 infants enrolled, * indicates that the estimate is suppressed. In CDPH data, the count of live births from Alpine and Sierra counties was suppressed throughout this period for having small numbers.

TABLE B2

Share of infants (those enrolled by first birthday) who are enrolled in CalFresh in first 3 months of life, by county

Region	2010	2021	% change	County	2010	2021	% change
Statewide	56%	55%	-2%				
North	62%	54%	-14%	Butte	64%	50%	-21%
North	62%	54%	-14%	Colusa	49%	50%	2%
North	62%	54%	-14%	Del Norte	70%	*	*
North	62%	54%	-14%	Glenn	65%	*	*
North	62%	54%	-14%	Humboldt	67%	67%	-1%
North	62%	54%	-14%	Lake	53%	56%	6%
North	62%	54%	-14%	Mendocino	58%	50%	-14%
North	62%	54%	-14%	Shasta	61%	45%	-26%
North	62%	54%	-14%	Siskiyou	57%	48%	-17%
North	62%	54%	-14%	Lassen, Modoc	68%	*	*
North	62%	54%	-14%	Nevada, Plumas, Sierra	61%	47%	-24%
North	62%	54%	-14%	Tehama, Trinity	65%	54%	-17%

Greater Sacramento area	60%	57%	-4%	El Dorado	58%	50%	-15%
Greater Sacramento area	60%	57%	-4%	Placer	52%	54%	3%
Greater Sacramento area	60%	57%	-4%	Sacramento	61%	59%	-4%
Greater Sacramento area	60%	57%	-4%	Sutter	59%	53%	-10%
Greater Sacramento area	60%	57%	-4%	Yolo	55%	51%	-6%
Greater Sacramento area	60%	57%	-4%	Yuba	65%	61%	-6%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	Alameda	52%	45%	-12%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	Contra Costa	56%	53%	-6%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	Marin	58%	62%	6%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	Napa	52%	62%	20%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	San Francisco	60%	60%	0%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	San Mateo	51%	57%	12%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	Santa Clara	61%	62%	3%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	Santa Cruz	56%	62%	10%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	Solano	60%	56%	-8%
Bay Area	57%	55%	-2%	Sonoma	61%	59%	-4%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Calaveras	64%	*	*
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Fresno	68%	63%	-7%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Kern	63%	62%	-2%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Kings	63%	62%	-1%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Merced	63%	64%	1%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	San Joaquin	56%	56%	0%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Stanislaus	60%	56%	-7%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Tulare	66%	60%	-8%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Tuolumne	58%	*	*
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Alpine, Amador	51%	46%	-10%
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Inyo, Mono	56%	*	*
San Joaquin Valley/Sierra	63%	61%	-3%	Madera, Mariposa	53%	65%	24%
Central Coast	58%	63%	10%	Monterey	59%	69%	18%
Central Coast	58%	63%	10%	San Benito	55%	51%	-7%
Central Coast	58%	63%	10%	San Luis Obispo	61%	56%	-9%
Central Coast	58%	63%	10%	Santa Barbara	57%	62%	9%
Central Coast	58%	63%	10%	Ventura	56%	61%	8%
Inland Empire	56%	49%	-13%	Imperial	62%	44%	-28%
Inland Empire	56%	49%	-13%	Riverside	48%	41%	-16%
Inland Empire	56%	49%	-13%	San Bernardino	61%	56%	-9%
Los Angeles County	49%	49%	0%	Los Angeles	49%	49%	0%
Orange County	56%	58%	4%	Orange	56%	58%	4%
San Diego County	52%	59%	15%	San Diego	52%	59%	15%

Sources: Author's analysis of SNAP and TANF LDB files.

Notes: Several measures protect privacy in counties where fewer than 30 infants were enrolled in CalFresh. Certain neighboring counties are grouped together when one consistently had fewer than 30 infants enrolled (e.g. Inyo and Mono counties). In counties that only occasionally had fewer than 30 infants enrolled, * indicates that the estimate is suppressed.



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