



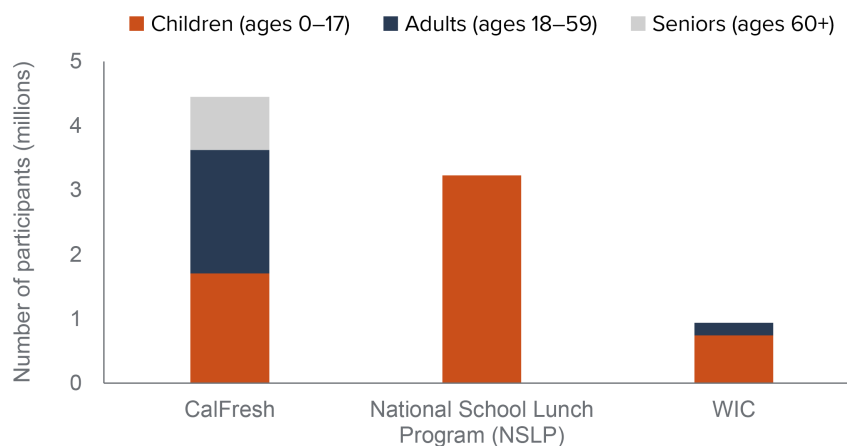
California's Nutrition Safety Net

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More than fifteen public programs aim to help Californians access nutritious food.

- ▶ About one in ten (1.4 million) California households lack the resources to meet their food needs—a rate of [food insecurity](#) that is slightly lower than the national rate.
- ▶ A disproportionate share of households experiencing food insecurity are Latino (47% vs. 30% in the population overall) or include children (41% vs. 30% overall).
- ▶ In fall 2021, 3.7 million households participated in one of the three largest nutrition programs—CalFresh, WIC, or school meals—according to the [California Poverty Measure \(CPM\)](#). [Smaller programs](#) support meals for child care settings and older adults, food banks, and other in-kind food distribution.

CalFresh serves all ages, while other large nutrition programs focus on children



Sources: CDSS [CalFresh Data Dashboard](#); USDA FNS [Child Nutrition Tables](#); USDA FNS [WIC Data Tables](#).

Notes: Chart shows July 2021 CalFresh participation, October 2022 NSLP estimated daily participation, and fiscal year 2022 WIC average monthly participation. NSLP estimate includes students enrolled in K–12 schools and residential child care institutions; count may include some participants up to age 21. WIC adult count includes some parents under age 18.

CalFresh provides low-income families with monthly resources to buy food.

- ▶ CalFresh, known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), enrolls about 5 million Californians whose adjusted household incomes fall under the federal poverty line (\$23,040 for a family of three in 2023). [Seven in ten eligible residents are enrolled](#), one of the nation's lowest participation rates.
- ▶ CalFresh benefits are federally funded (expected to be about [\\$13 billion](#) in budget year 2022–23). County, state, and federal governments split the costs of administering the program (\$2.1 billion in 2022–23).
- ▶ The California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) provides \$97 million in comparable, state-funded assistance to about 42,000 immigrants ineligible for CalFresh. Undocumented immigrants are currently ineligible for CFAP, with those ages 55 and over set to gain eligibility in 2027.
- ▶ The average CalFresh and CFAP benefit was \$263 per person in December 2022, including pandemic emergency allotments of about [\\$84 per person](#) that expired in [March 2023](#).

WIC supports low-income Californians who are pregnant or caring for young children.

- ▶ WIC is a federal program that provides healthy food, breastfeeding support, and health care referrals to individuals with incomes under 185% of the federal poverty line who are new caregivers, pregnant, postpartum, or under age five, and at nutritional risk. [Participation is much higher in California](#) than elsewhere: 69% of eligible residents are enrolled.

- ▶ During fiscal year 2022–23, WIC is expected to provide \$639 million in food benefits to about 940,000 Californians; services and administrative costs total \$343 million.
- ▶ The average monthly benefit, which can be used for items like milk, infant formula, and produce, was \$57 per person in 2022, including substantial [pandemic increases](#) currently set to expire in September 2023.

Nearly half of California’s public school students eat free breakfast or lunch at school.

- ▶ In fall 2022, about 2.9 million of California’s [5.8 million K–12 public school students](#) ate school lunch each day, and 1.6 million ate school breakfast. An estimated [3.4 million](#) are eligible for federal free or reduced-price meals.
- ▶ As of 2022–23, California’s Universal Meals Program supplements federal funding for low-income students to ensure that all students can access two meals at school for free, maintaining a federal pandemic expansion. During COVID, the federal government provided money for groceries to replace meals missed at school; it also funds afterschool and summer meal programs and will launch a [permanent summer benefit](#) for low-income students in 2024.
- ▶ The federal government provided [\\$3.2 billion](#) for California’s meal programs and [\\$5.3 billion](#) for grocery money for school-age children during the 2021–22 school year, when it covered the cost of all meals. California’s proposed 2023–24 budget includes more than [\\$1.4 billion for meals](#) not covered by federal funds.

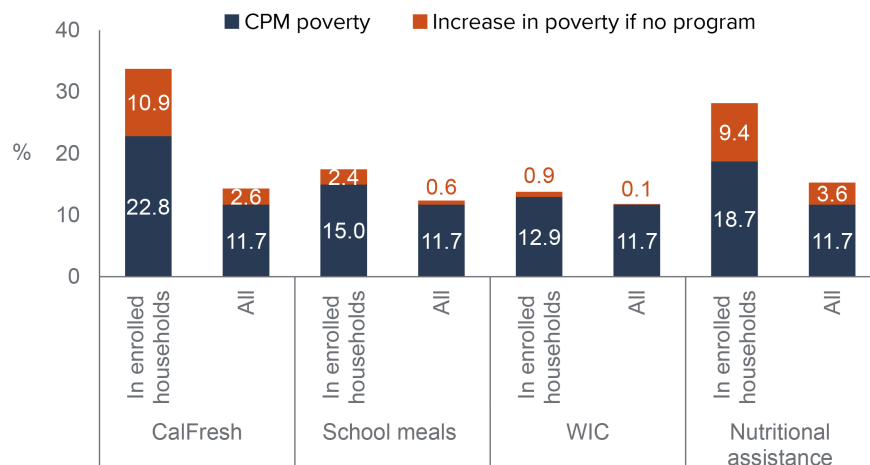
CalFresh, school meals, and WIC lift 1.4 million Californians out of poverty.

- ▶ In fall 2021, more than one in ten Californians (11.7%) lived in poverty. Without CalFresh, that rate would have been 2.6 percentage points higher. School meals and WIC lower poverty to a smaller degree.
- ▶ Program effects are substantially larger for enrolled families. For example, without CalFresh and school meals, participating families would have seen poverty rise by 10.9 and 2.4 points, respectively.

Policymakers face key decisions to improve nutrition assistance programs.

- ▶ With [the federal public health emergency](#) ending in May 2023, policymakers must consider whether and how to replace food assistance for those who will see reduced benefits or lose eligibility, like [college students](#).
- ▶ As part of the 2023 Farm Bill, federal lawmakers will have the chance to incorporate lessons learned from the pandemic into SNAP, and to revisit perennial questions, like work requirements for single adults.
- ▶ Food assistance access among immigrant communities is both a challenge and priority for California policymakers, who continue to discuss including all undocumented Californians in CFAP.

Nutrition programs reduce poverty for many Californians



Source: California Poverty Measure fall 2021.

Notes: Chart shows program impacts on people in households where any member participates. There may be overlap across program participation. “Nutritional assistance” includes CalFresh, WIC, and school meals.

Sources: CDSS [CalFresh Data Dashboard](#); CHHS [Record Reconciliation Dashboard Data](#): 2015-2020; USDA FNS [WIC Data Tables](#); [IPUMS CPS FSS](#) 2019–2021; USDA FNS [Child Nutrition Tables](#); CDE [2022–23 Child Nutrition Program Reimbursement Rates](#); CDE California Nutrition, Information, and Payment System; [California Poverty Measure, fall 2021](#).