Geography of Child Poverty in California

February 23, 2017

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Supported with funding from the LA Partnership for Early Childhood Investment and Sunlight Giving

PPIC PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

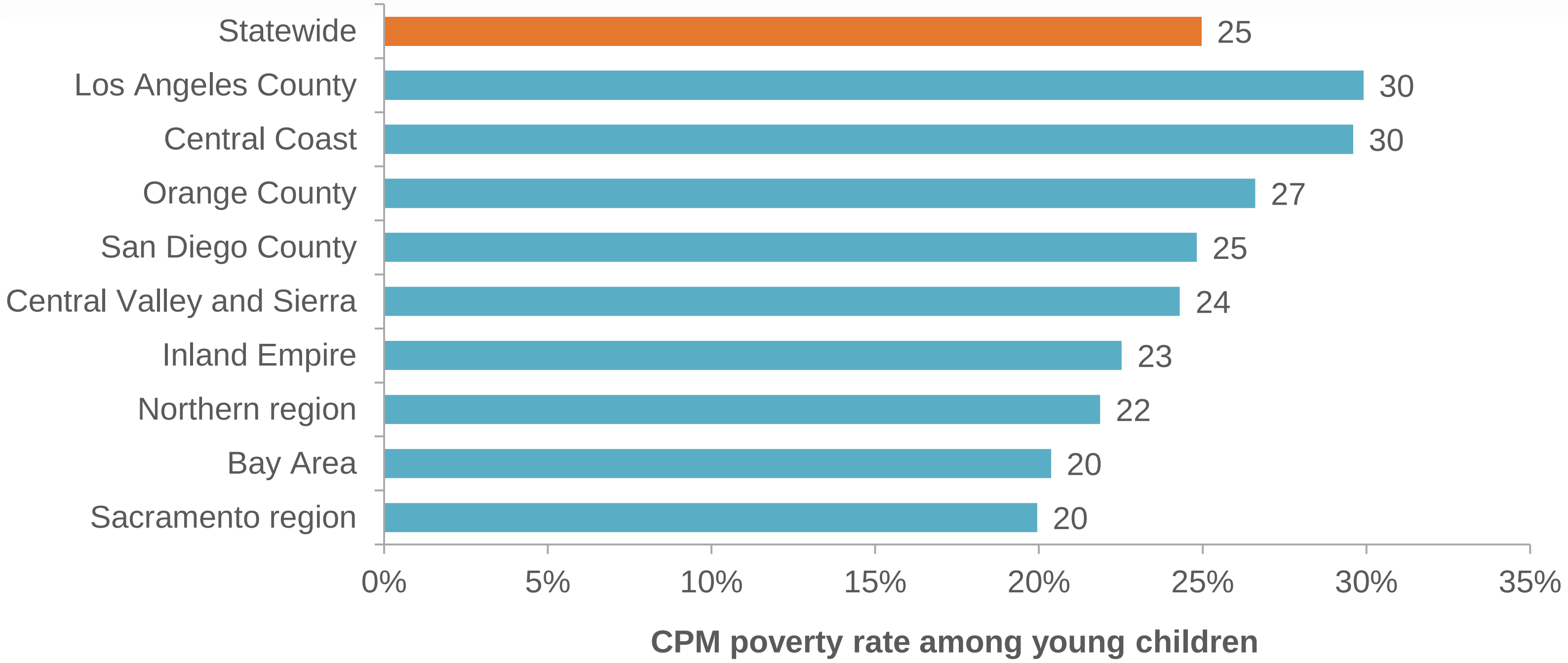
A quarter of young children in California live in poverty

- Over 750,000 children under age 5 live in families struggling to meet basic needs
- The typical poor family with young children:
  - has $26,000 in total resources per year (including benefits from safety net programs)
  - needs $7,800 more per year to be above the poverty line
- Adverse circumstances in children's early years can have long-term physical, social, and behavioral consequences

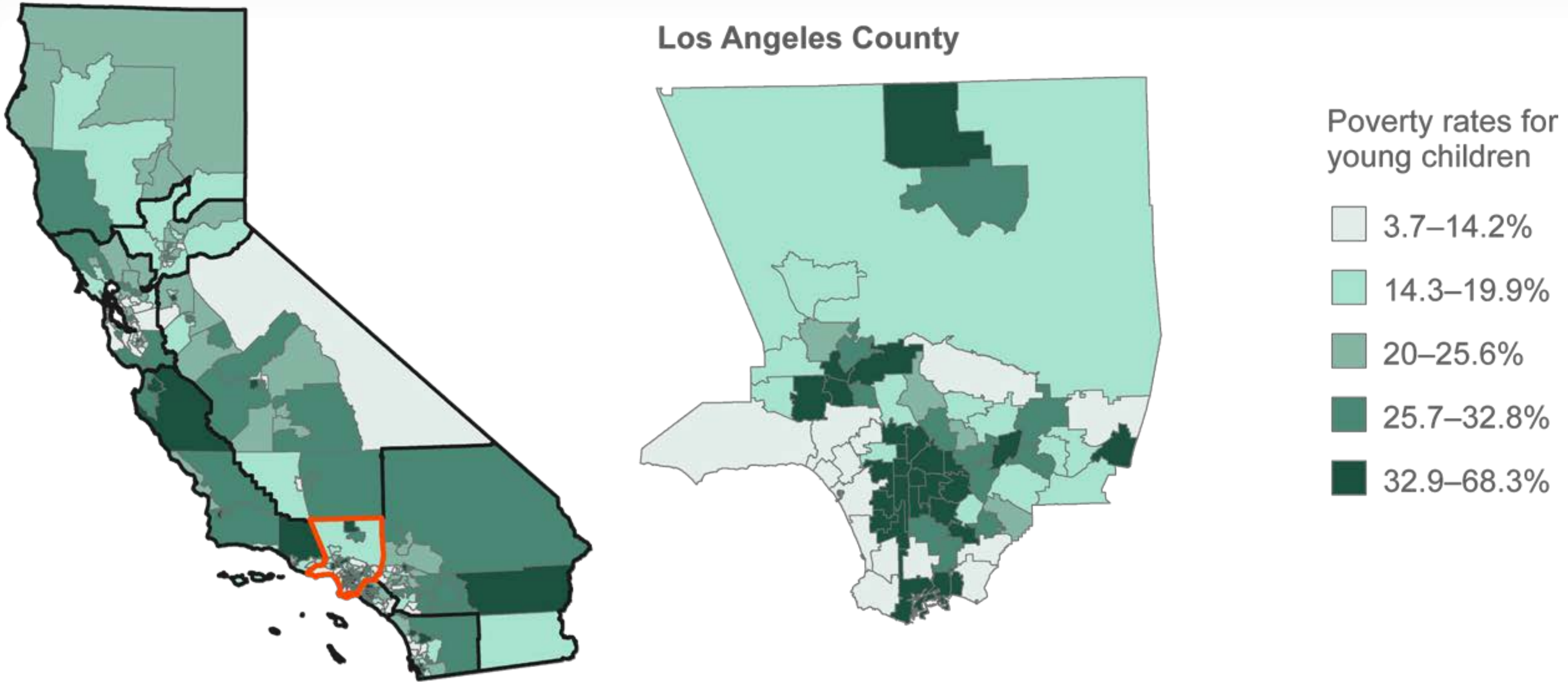
This research

- Focuses on young children age 0–5 in California
- Describes how the circumstances of poverty—and driving factors—vary across the state
- Examines poverty in detail at the subcounty level
- Features an online interactive where users can explore the rich data
- Relies on the California Poverty Measure for 2011–2014, a joint effort of PPIC and the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality

Poverty rates vary across the state's major regions...



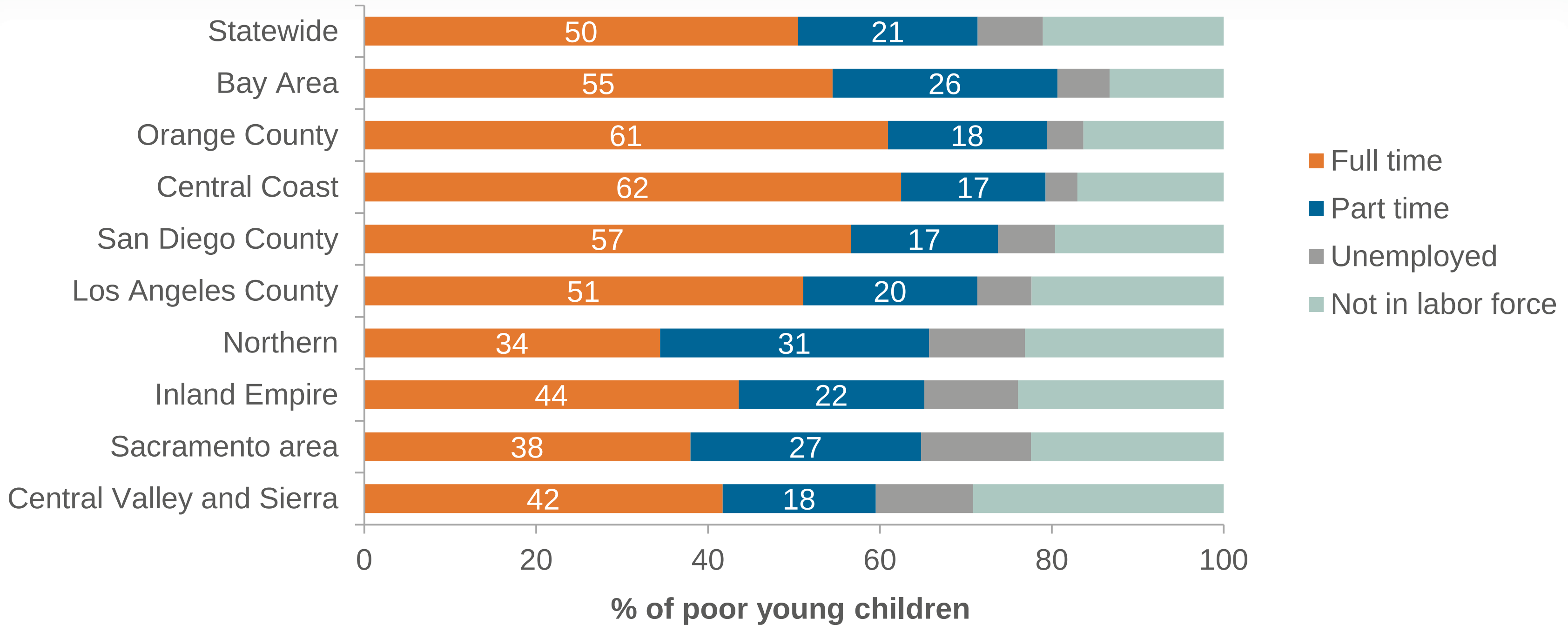
… but local variation in poverty is even more dramatic



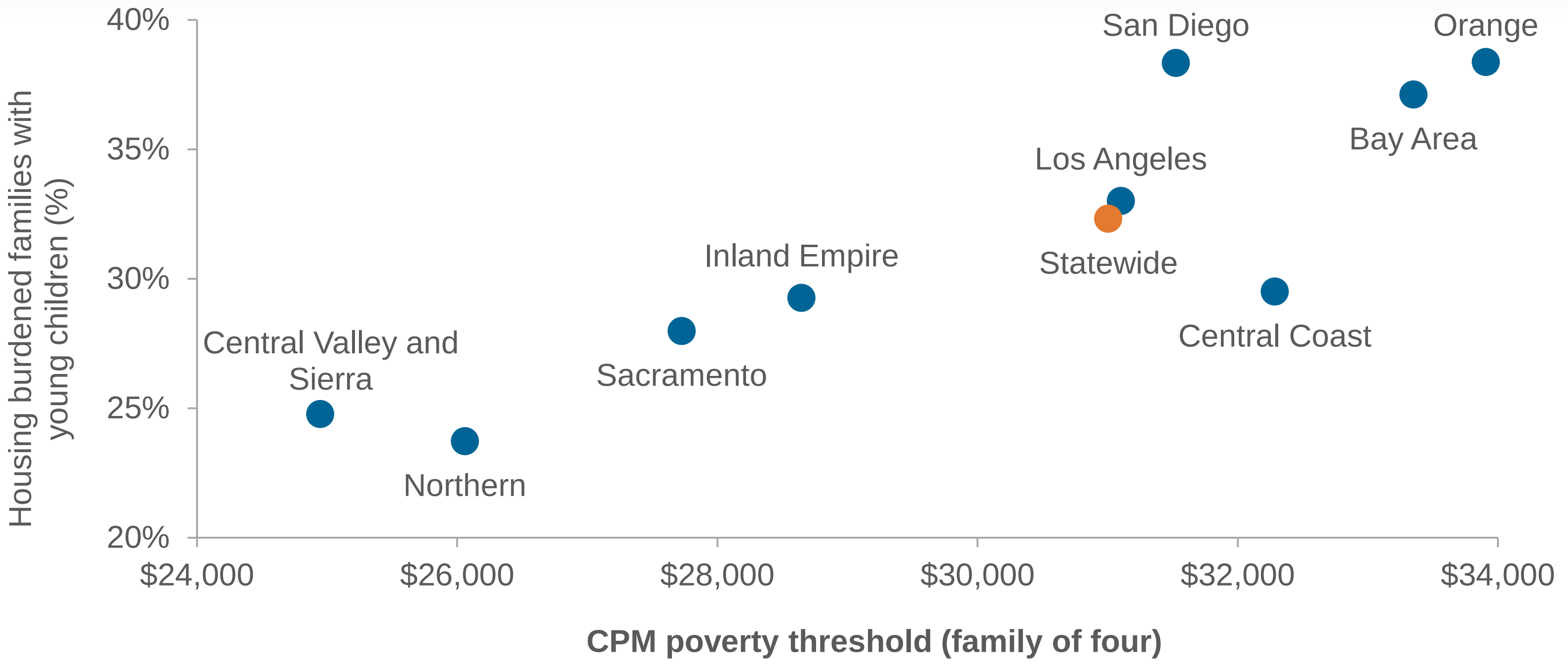
How do poor families make ends meet?

- We consider these major factors:
  - Income from work
  - Coping with California’s high cost of living
  - Access to social safety net benefits

Most poor families with young children have at least one working adult



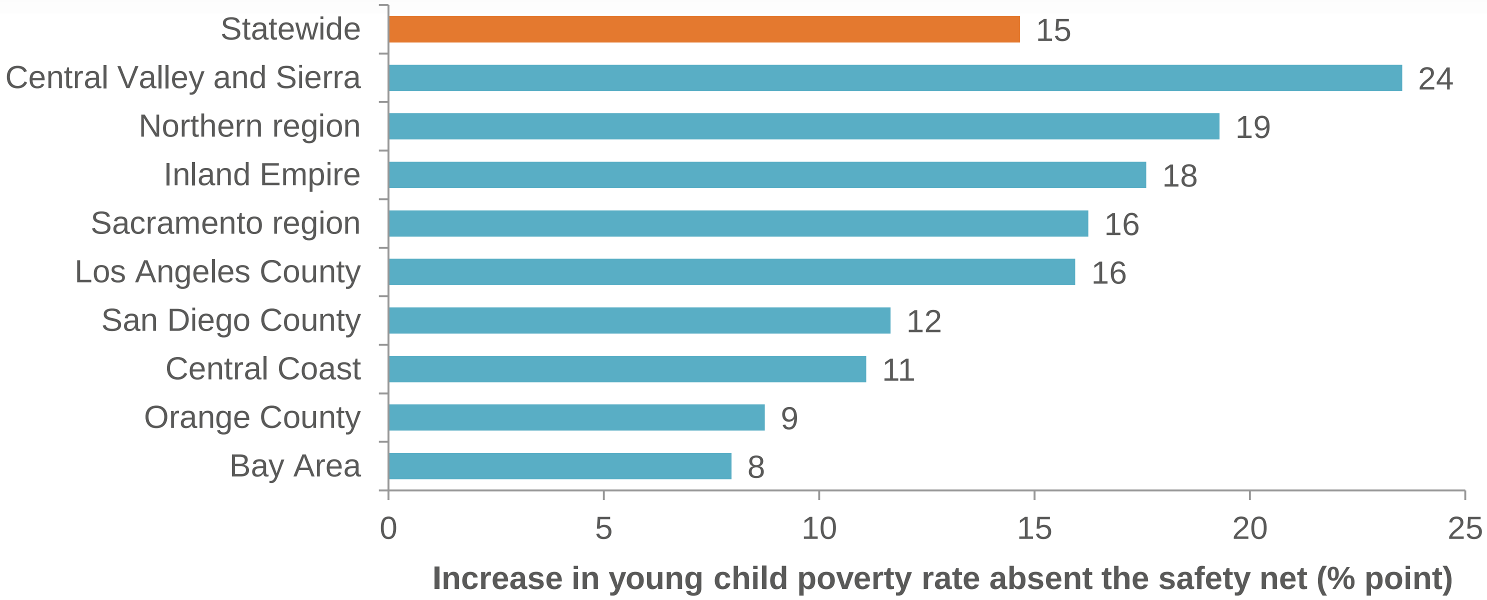
High cost of living is a burden for working families with young children



How do poor families cope with a high cost of living?

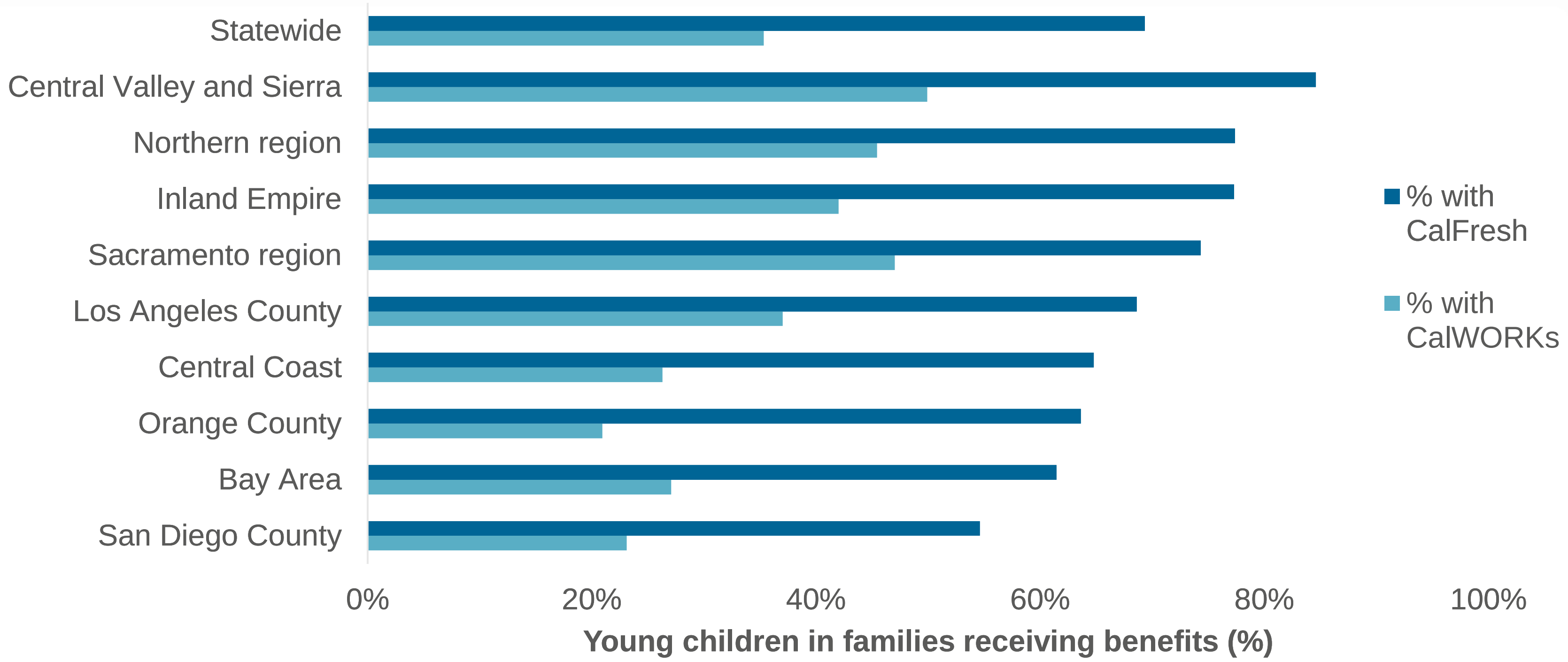
- 55% of poor young children live in overcrowded housing—twice the rate of non-poor young children
  - Rates of overcrowding are higher in costly regions
- Some working parents cope by making extremely long commutes
  - But rates are similar among poor and non-poor families
- Major social safety net programs boost family resources
  - But they do not account for cost of living

Safety net programs reduce child poverty substantially



Note: Safety net programs include CalWORKs, CalFresh, EITC, CTC, school meals, WIC, SSI, General Assistance, federal housing subsidies

Although eligibility is a constraint, there are many opportunities to increase safety net access



How can we lower child poverty in California?

- Increasing earnings is critical, especially in inland California
- Higher earnings do not offset housing costs in coastal regions
- Safety net programs are an important boost for nearly all poor families with young children
  - Efforts to increase enrollment among the eligible population are key
  - Identifying gaps related to cost of living may also be warranted
- Varying strategies are needed across California’s diverse regions and local areas

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Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.