

Pandemic Changes to Medi-Cal and Implications for California's Immigrant Farmworkers

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Before the pandemic, California's immigrant farmworkers faced barriers to health care

- Cost or lack of insurance most salient barrier to care
- Vast majority of farmworkers are immigrants
 - Nearly half are undocumented
- Documented workers benefitted from Medi-Cal expansion
 - Most undocumented are Medi-Cal ineligible

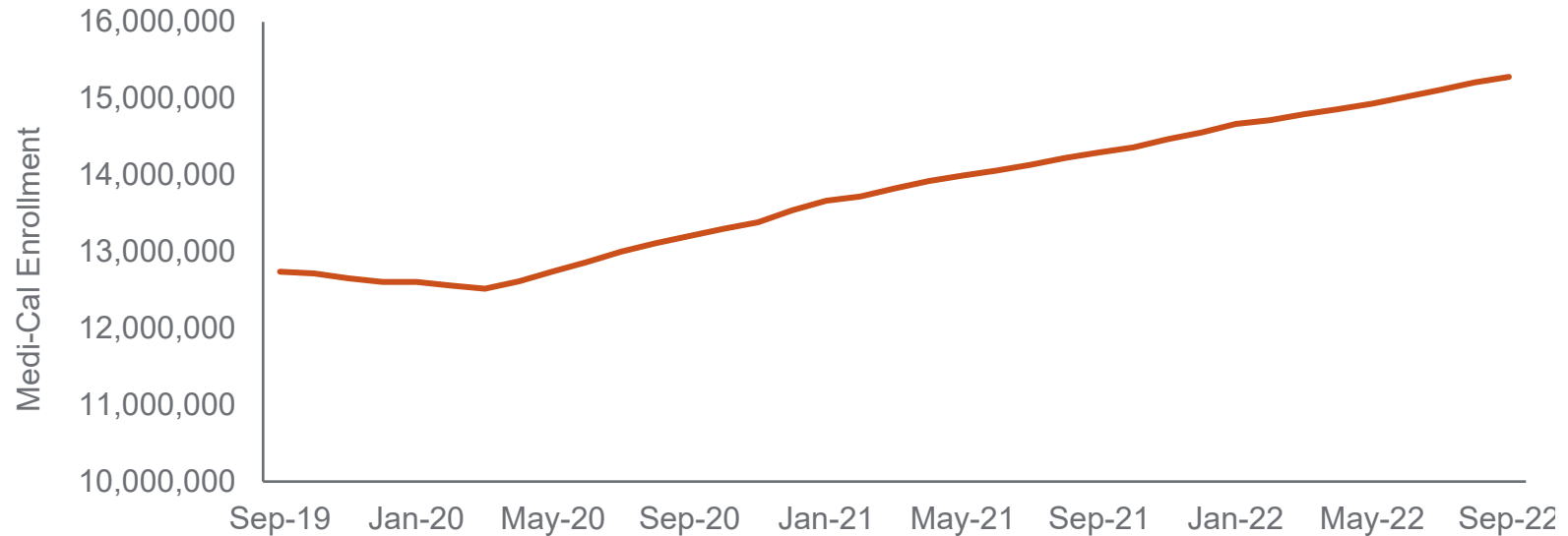
Changes amid the Pandemic



Federal and state public health emergencies declared

- Farmworkers continued essential work
 - Crowded work/living conditions put older farmworkers at risk
- Emergency paused Medi-Cal eligibility reviews
 - Reduced paperwork burden for farmworkers

Pausing eligibility reviews led to rise in Medi-Cal enrollment, but reviews will restart soon



Source: California Department of Health Care Services Fast Facts, December 2022.

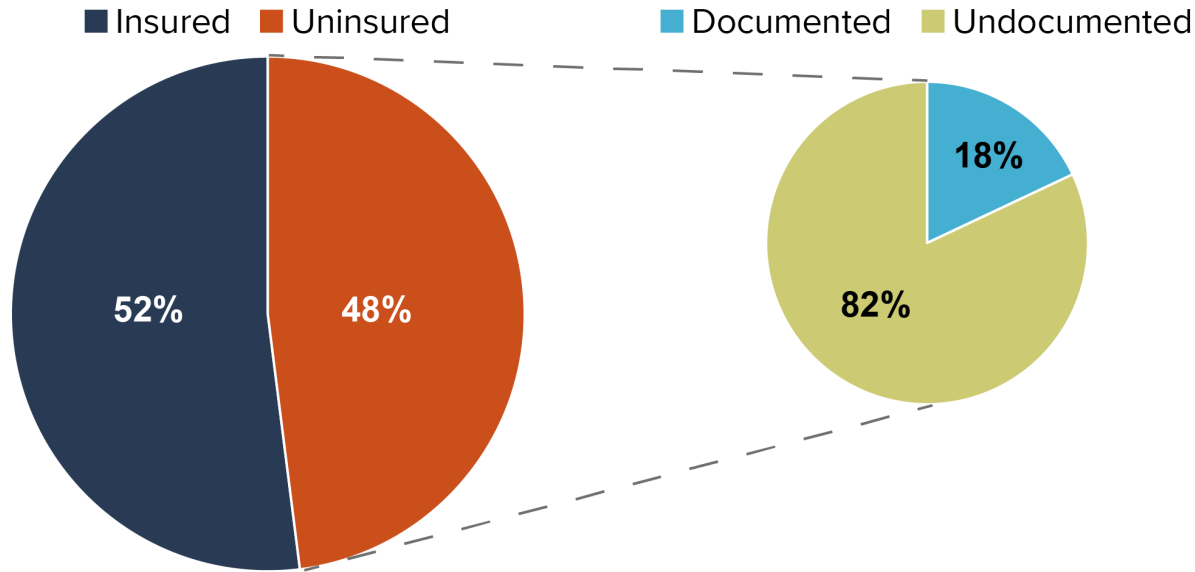
Telehealth use expanded dramatically amid the pandemic

- Flexibility on software
- Reimbursement for telehealth, including audio-only
 - Beneficial in rural areas
 - Beneficial for farmworkers unable to travel due to work

Certain COVID-19 care has been available through Medi-Cal regardless of immigration status

- COVID-19 testing
- Vaccination
- Treatment for coronavirus infection
- Long COVID may still be a concern

~4 in 5 uninsured immigrant farmworkers are undocumented; Medi-Cal flexibility was vital



Source: National Agricultural Workers Survey, fiscal year 2020.

What to Expect in 2023 and Beyond

Both continuous Medi-Cal enrollment and the federal public health emergency will end soon

- Continuous Medi-Cal enrollment ends March 31
- Federal public health emergency ends May 11
- Medi-Cal enrollment likely peaking now

Some enrollees will lose Medi-Cal

- Some will be disenrolled because they no longer qualify
- Others will have administrative challenges
- Expect churn in Medi-Cal population
- Number of uninsured will grow

Certain telehealth flexibilities will outlive the pandemic era

- Value of telehealth realized
 - Audio-only permanently approved for behavioral health
- Department of Health Care Services convened experts on using telehealth to increase access, reduce disparities (AB 133)
- New state laws allow certain Medi-Cal telehealth flexibilities (SB 184 and AB 32)

COVID-19-related services will remain available...

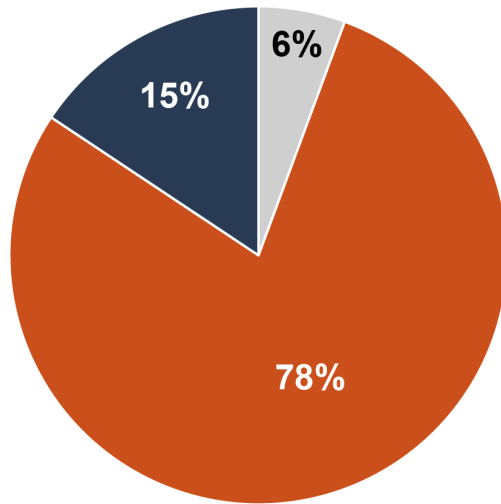
- Limited version of Medi-Cal for vaccines, testing, treatment regardless of immigration status through May 2023
- Tests, masks, vaccines free as long as stockpile lasts
- Moderna, Pfizer to offer free shots through patient assistance programs
- Some providers may offer COVID-related services free, or on a sliding scale

... but uninsured Californians may fall through the cracks

- Access to COVID-19-related services may decrease for undocumented, uninsured farmworkers after the emergency ends
 - Federal government figuring out access for uninsured
- Comprehensive Medi-Cal for all low-income Californians in 2024

In 2024, the largest age group of undocumented uninsured farmworkers becomes Medi-Cal eligible

■ Ages 19–25: Medi-Cal eligible ■ Ages 26–49: not eligible
■ Ages 50+: Medi-Cal eligible



Source: National Agricultural Workers Survey, fiscal year 2020.

Other issues to consider

- Medi-Cal outreach and enrollment assistance important for farmworkers
- Some will not meet Medi-Cal income requirements
- Questions about employer coverage crowd-out

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.