

Supplemental Nutrition in Jeopardy: Key Facts About CalFresh Beneficiaries

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Disclaimer

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the University of California, Los Angeles as a whole. The authors alone are responsible for the content of this report.

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SNAP and CalFresh Overview

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's largest food assistance program addressing food insecurity among low-income individuals and families. The program is funded entirely by the federal government, while states are responsible for administering benefits and sharing in the operational costs.¹ To qualify for SNAP benefits, individuals generally must have a household income below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL).² Only U.S. citizens and certain lawfully present noncitizens may receive SNAP benefits,³ and monthly benefits vary based on factors such as household size, income, disability benefits, and living expenses.⁴

SNAP, known as CalFresh in California, is a critical lifeline for qualifying state residents. In 2023, nearly 45% of adults in California struggled to afford food.⁵ Between 2023 and 2024, California administered a total of \$12 billion in CalFresh benefits to 5 million individuals.⁶ During this time, the monthly benefits averaged \$189 per recipient.⁷ To put this in perspective, the average monthly cost of groceries for a typical California family with children was more than \$1,200.⁸



Federal Proposals Threaten Food Security for Millions in California

The latest Senate reconciliation bill is estimated to reduce federal SNAP spending by \$186 billion through 2034.⁹ Key provisions include instituting work requirements for able-bodied working-age adults, even those who are parents or caretakers of young children; stripping out current exemptions for vulnerable populations including veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and young people who have aged out of foster care; and shifting significant SNAP costs to states based on payment error rates.¹⁰

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that more than 2 million individuals nationally would be cut from SNAP under the work requirement provision, and more than 5 million individuals live in households that would be at risk of losing at least some of their food assistance under the proposal.¹¹

A reduction in federal funding could force states, like California, to reduce already low benefits or restrict eligibility, disproportionately harming children, seniors, veterans, and individuals with a disability,¹² despite the proven role of SNAP in improving health and economic outcomes and stabilizing vulnerable communities.¹³ In the backdrop of upcoming simultaneous and [steep cuts to Medi-Cal](#) and SNAP, it's important to note that these cuts compromise the strength of the broader safety net.¹⁴ Almost all (92%) CalFresh enrollees also receive health coverage through Medi-Cal, and more than a third (34%) of Medi-Cal enrollees also receive CalFresh.¹⁵

This data brief highlights key facts about CalFresh enrollees and examines the broader health implications of reducing funding to SNAP. The analysis draws on data from UCLA LPPI's [Latino Data Hub \(LDH\)](#), which incorporates data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). We also present data from the [California Health Interview Survey \(CHIS\)](#) to provide additional insights.

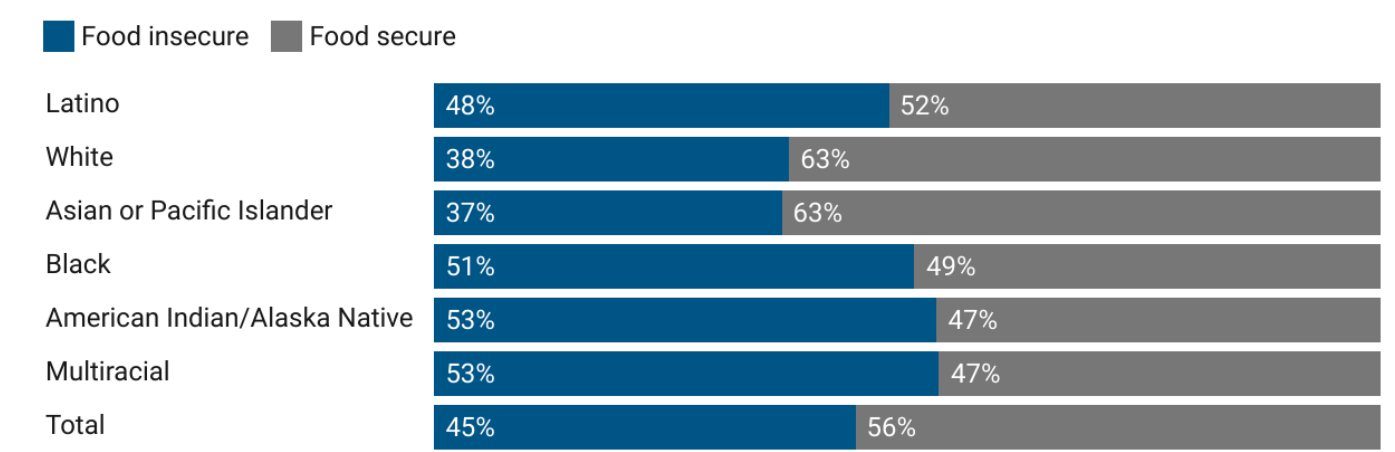
Key Findings

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Key Finding 1. Nearly half of low-income Latino adults in California face food insecurity.

Close to half (48%) of Latino low-income adults (ages 18 and older) in California (Figure 1) face food insecurity and struggle to get sufficient food to meet basic needs, compared to 38% and 37% of low-income white and Asian or Pacific Islander (AAPI) adults, respectively. Food insecurity is associated with poor health and a reduced ability to access and afford health care.¹⁶ However, research shows that these negative associations are mitigated among adults participating in federal assistance programs like SNAP and Medicaid,¹⁷ underscoring the importance of CalFresh in providing necessary benefits for at-risk Californians.

Figure 1. Food Insecurity by Race and Ethnicity Among Low-Income Adults (18+) in California, 2023



Notes: This question was only asked of adults ages 18 and older whose income is less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Non-Latino groups only include non-Hispanic individuals.

Source: LPPI analysis of AskCHIS, California Health Interview Survey, 2023, Food security (ability to afford enough food) [California].





Key Finding 2. CalFresh is essential for Latino communities.

Latinos account for more than half (55%) of all CalFresh participants (Figure 2), 25 percentage points greater than the share of white participants (20%), the second-largest racial group enrolled in the program. These disparities reflect the program’s important role in addressing food insecurity among California’s Latino communities.

Figure 2. CalFresh Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity, 2023

Racial/Ethnic Group	Enrollees	Share of Total Enrollees ▼
Latino	3,048,000	55%
White	1,086,000	20%
Asian or Pacific Islander	628,000	11%
Black	483,000	9%
Multiracial	215,000	4%
Native American	23,000	0.4%
Other	24,000	0.4%
Total	5,508,000	100%

Notes: Data reflect the number of individuals in a household receiving CalFresh benefits. Non-Latino groups only include non-Hispanic individuals.

Source: UCLA LPPI's Latino Data Hub.



Key Finding 3. CalFresh supports working families.

Among working-age (18-64) Latino CalFresh enrollees, more than two-thirds (69%) participate in the labor force (see Figure 3). Individuals in the labor force include those employed or actively job hunting. Relative to other racial and ethnic groups, Latino enrollees have the highest rate of labor force participation, followed by AAPI enrollees at 68%. This finding dispels myths that CalFresh serves primarily unemployed individuals and emphasizes the program's vital role in supporting working-class families to meet basic food needs.

Figure 3. Labor Force Participation Rates among Working-Age (18-64) CalFresh Participants by Race and Ethnicity, 2023

Racial/Ethnic Group	In the Labor Force	Labor Force Participation	Not in the Labor Force	Share Not in the Labor Force
Latino	1,132,000	69%	510,000	31%
White	408,000	61%	257,000	39%
Asian or Pacific Islander	236,000	68%	112,000	32%
Black	171,000	60%	113,000	40%
Native American	8,000	57%	6,000	43%
Multiracial	72,000	64%	40,000	36%
Other	8,000	67%	4,000	33%
Total	2,035,000	66%	1,043,000	34%

Notes: The data reflect the number of civilian working-age (18-64 years) individuals in households receiving CalFresh. Non-Latino groups only include non-Hispanic individuals.

Source: UCLA LPPI's Latino Data Hub.





Key Finding 4. CalFresh reaches the youngest Latinos.

Consistent with the younger demographics of the Latino population, children (0-17) make up 40% of Latino CalFresh enrollees—7 percentage points higher than the statewide average (33%) and nearly 20 points higher than the share of white enrollees (20%; see Figure 4). See Table 3 in the appendix for the additional age breakdowns of individuals receiving CalFresh.

Figure 4. Share of Children (0-17) in Households Receiving CalFresh by Race and Ethnicity, 2023

Racial/Ethnic Group	Children (0-17)	Children Share of Total Enrollees
Latino	1,207,000	40%
White	216,000	20%
Asian or Pacific Islander	130,000	21%
Black	144,000	30%
Native American	6,000	26%
Multiracial	87,000	40%
Other	9,000	38%
Total	1,790,000	33%

Notes: Data reflect the number of children (0-17) in households receiving CalFresh. Non-Latino groups only include non-Hispanic individuals.

Source: UCLA LPPI's Latino Data Hub.

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Key Finding 5. CalFresh strengthens California’s broader safety net.

More than 3 million Californians, including 1.8 million Latinos (see Figure 5), are dually enrolled in CalFresh and Medi-Cal. CalFresh strengthens stable access to basic nutrition and reduces financial strain for families already facing barriers to health care and economic stability. High rates of dual enrollment demonstrate the role CalFresh has in supporting the safety net, ensuring that families facing racial disparities have access to basic needs.

Figure 5. CalFresh and Medi-Cal Dual Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity, 2023

Racial/Ethnic Group	Medi-Cal and CalFresh Dual Enrollees	Medi-Cal Enrollees	Share of Medi-Cal Enrollees with CalFresh
Latino	1,886,000	5,285,000	36%
White	524,000	1,654,000	32%
Asian or Pacific Islander	251,000	870,000	29%
Black	286,000	600,000	48%
Native American	13,000	30,000	43%
Multiracial	135,000	330,000	41%
Other	14,000	44,000	32%
Total	3,109,000	8,813,000	35%

Notes: Data for CalFresh enrollees reflect the number of individuals in households receiving CalFresh. Non-Latino groups only include non-Hispanic individuals.

Source: UCLA LPPI’s Latino Data Hub.

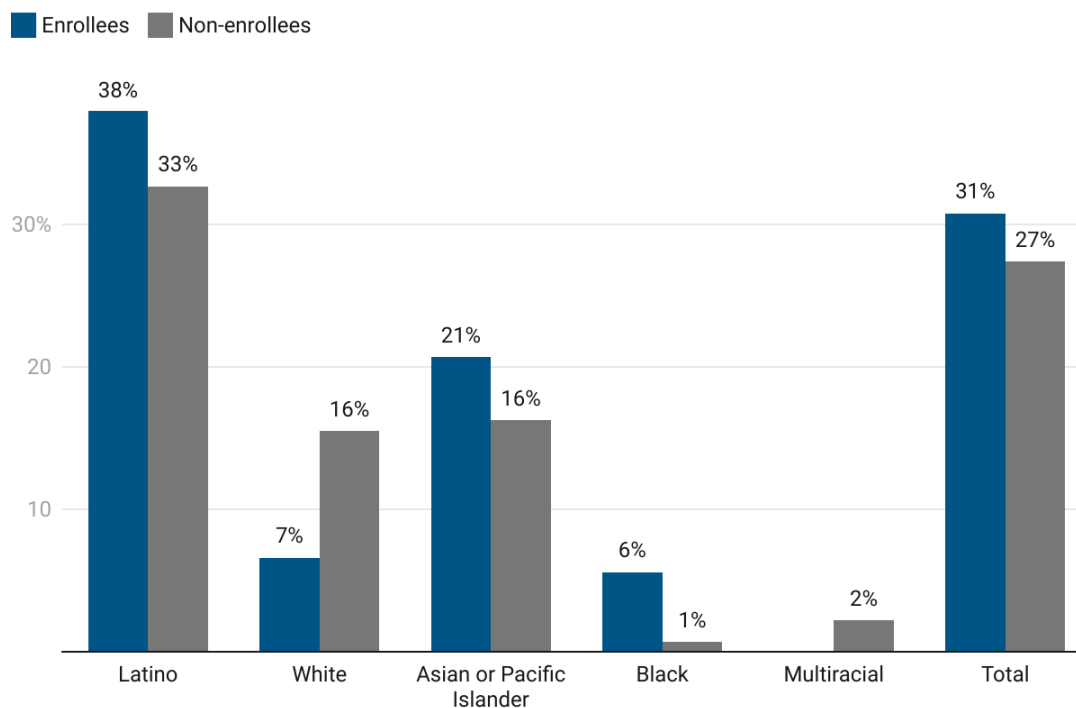


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Key Finding 6. Anti-immigrant policies have a chilling effect on the usage of government benefits, especially among current Latino communities.

While the modifications to the “public charge” rule during the first Trump administration that would have included Medi-Cal and CalFresh enrollment as reasons to deny permanent residence status to legal permanent residents were reversed by the Biden administration,¹⁸ its chilling effect persists due to lingering mistrust and misinformation, especially among immigrant and mixed-status households.¹⁹ In 2023, 38% of Latino CalFresh enrollees and 33% of non-enrolled Latinos reported avoiding government benefits due to concerns that doing so could harm their or a family member’s immigration status (see Figure 6). These rates are significantly higher than among white (7%), Black (6%), and Asian (21%) enrollees. More publicized immigration enforcement actions, combined with efforts to link several governmental databases – including SNAP and Medicaid enrollee information – for immigration enforcement purposes,²⁰ will further exacerbate food insecurity, hunger, and hardship among California’s most marginalized communities.

Figure 6. Avoidance of Government Benefits Due to Immigration Concerns Among CalFresh Enrollees by Race and Ethnicity, 2023



Note: Data for "Multiracial" individuals enrolled in CalFresh are unavailable due to small sample sizes.

Source: LPPI analysis of AskCHIS, California Health Interview Survey, 2023, Ever avoided government benefits due to concern over self or family member disqualification from green card/citizenship (California).

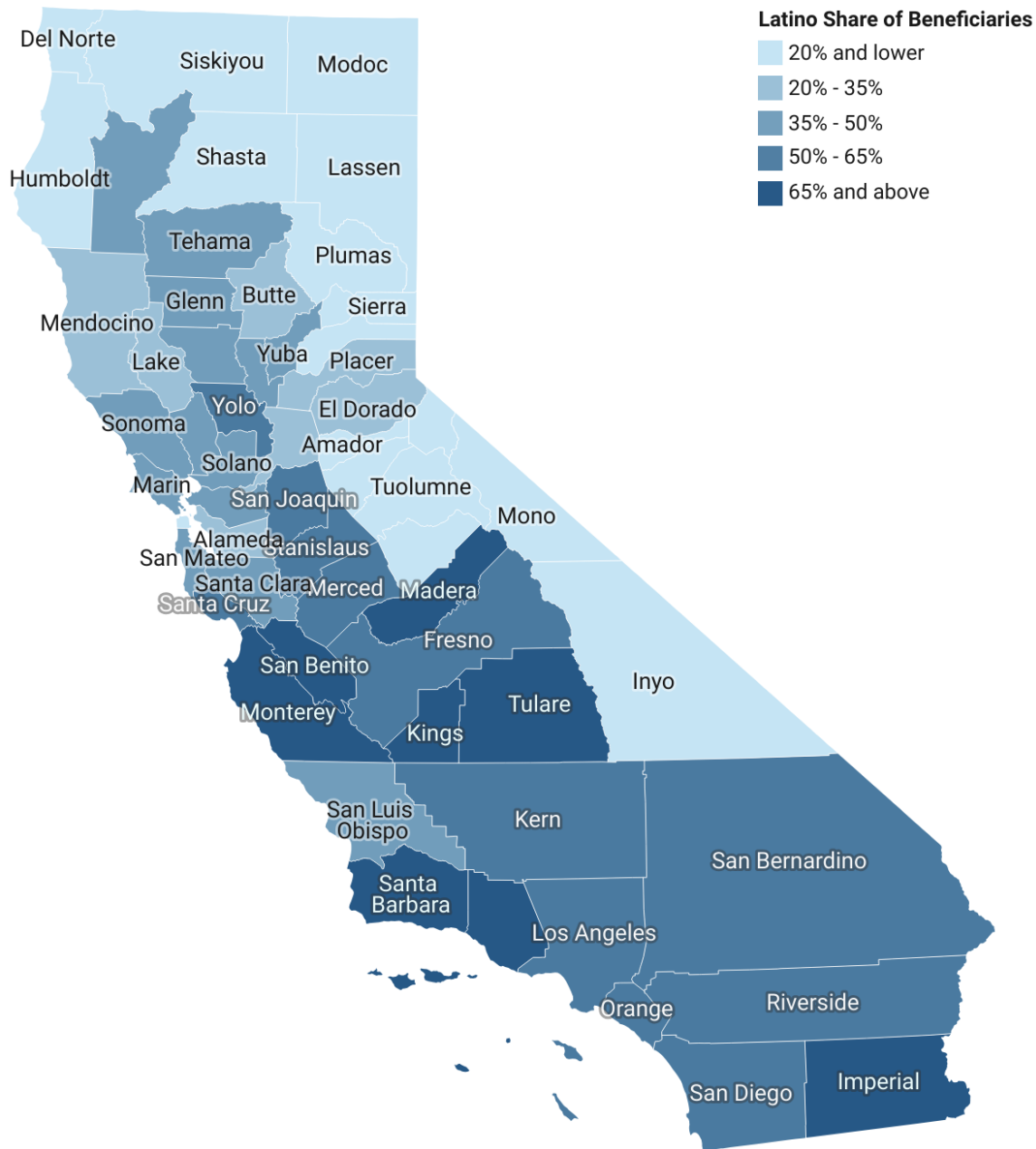
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Key Finding 7. Cuts to CalFresh would hit California's Latino heartland the hardest.

The following maps show the Latino share of CalFresh enrollees by county and congressional district (see Figures 7 and 8). Areas like the Central Valley and Imperial County have high Latino enrollment in CalFresh, including agricultural districts that fuel California's economy. Cuts would directly harm working-class communities in politically influential regions. In Central Valley counties like Fresno, Tulare, and Kings, Latino residents make up about three-fourths of all CalFresh enrollees, highlighting the program's importance to these communities. This overlaps with agricultural districts, CA-21 and CA-22, which, along with the rest of California, produce over a third of all vegetables and over three-quarters of fruits and nuts for the entire country.²¹ Imperial County has the highest Latino enrollment share, at around 90%.

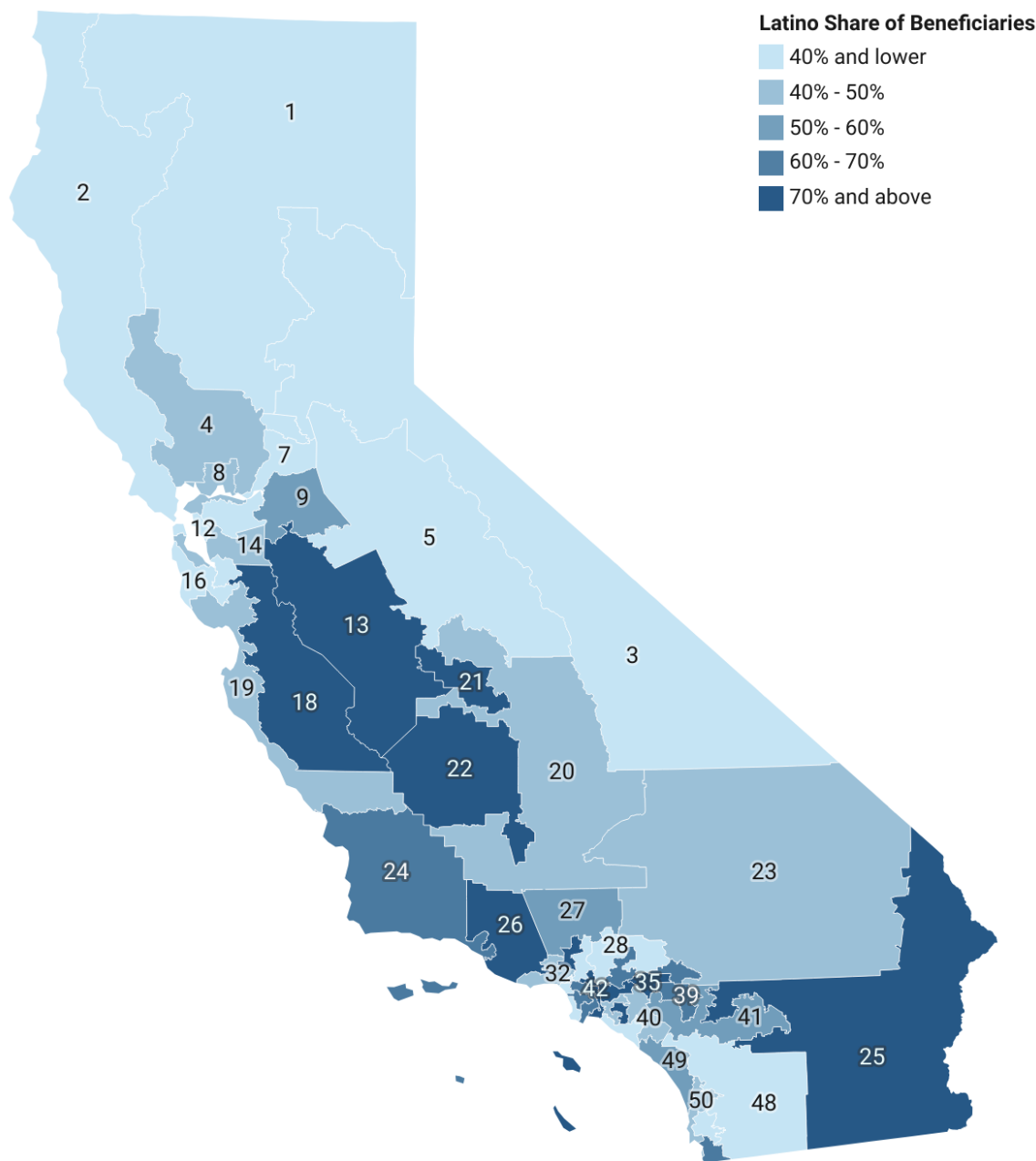


Figure 7. Latino Share of CalFresh Enrollees by County, 2023



Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2023 5-year Estimates. The congressional district allocation is generated using the [Geocorr 2022](#) from Census blocks to Public Use Microdata areas (PUMA) and Census blocks to the 119th Congressional Districts from the [Missouri Census Data Center](#) while controlling for the number of Latino/non-Latinos by congressional districts based on Census Bureau estimates.

Figure 8. Latino Share of CalFresh Enrollees by Congressional District, 2023



Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2023 5-year Estimates. The congressional district allocation is generated using the [Geocorr 2022](#) from Census blocks to Public Use Microdata areas (PUMA) and Census blocks to the 119th Congressional Districts from the [Missouri Census Data Center](#) while controlling for the number of Latino/non-Latinos by congressional districts based on Census Bureau estimates.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Table 1. Share of Adults (18-64) and Seniors (65+) in Households receiving CalFresh by Race and Ethnicity, 2023

Racial/Ethnic Group	Adults (18-64)	Adult Share of Total Enrollees	Seniors (65+)	Senior Share of Total Enrollees
Latino	1,643,000	54%	199,000	7%
White	667,000	61%	203,000	19%
Asian or Pacific Islander	348,000	55%	150,000	24%
Black	286,000	59%	53,000	11%
Native American	14,000	61%	3,000	13%
Multiracial	113,000	53%	14,000	7%
Other	12,000	50%	3,000	13%
Total	3,071,000	56%	622,000	11%

Notes: Data reflect the number of individuals in households receiving CalFresh, separated by age group. Non-Latino groups only include non-Hispanic individuals.

Source: UCLA LPPI's Latino Data Hub.

Appendix 2. Table 2. Latino Share of CalFresh Enrollees by County, 2023

County	Total Enrollees	Latino Enrollees	Latino Share of Enrollees	County	Total Enrollees	Latino Enrollees	Latino Share of Enrollees
Alameda	172.1K	58.5K	34%	San Bernardino	401.3K	245.2K	61%
Butte	36.4K	8.8K	24%	San Diego	360.7K	182.1K	50%
Contra Costa	115.2K	44.1K	38%	San Francisco	90.8K	17.1K	19%
El Dorado	12.2K	2.7K	22%	San Joaquin	154.6K	82.1K	53%
Fresno	260K	168.5K	65%	San Luis Obispo	21.1K	9.4K	44%
Humboldt	25.7K	4K	16%	San Mateo	44.9K	22K	49%
Imperial	55.4K	51K	92%	Santa Barbara	54.6K	39.2K	72%
Kern	205.1K	125.4K	61%	Santa Clara	135.4K	59.4K	44%
Kings	32K	23K	72%	Santa Cruz	29.8K	17.8K	60%
Los Angeles	1.6M	965K	62%	Shasta	28.7K	3.6K	13%
Madera	41.5K	31.4K	76%	Siskiyou, Lassen, Del Norte, Plumas & Modoc	20.4K	3.9K	19%
Marin	12.6K	5K	40%	Solano	56.9K	20.3K	36%
Mendocino & Lake	31.6K	8.7K	28%	Sonoma	40.1K	18.9K	47%
Merced	67.5K	43.6K	65%	Stanislaus	93.6K	57K	61%
Monterey & San Benito	52.9K	40.8K	77%	Sutter and Yuba	36K	13.5K	37%
Napa	9.3K	4.5K	49%	Tehama, Glenn, Colusa & Trinity	18.5K	7.7K	42%
Nevada & Sierra	8.8K	835K	10%	Tulare	142.4K	110.5K	78%
Orange	299.6K	159.1K	53%	Tuolumne, Calaveras, Amador, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono & Alpine	19.7K	3K	15%
Placer	25.4K	6.9K	27%	Ventura	91.7K	66.7K	73%
Riverside	350.6K	226.8K	65%	Yolo	29.2K	15K	51%
Sacramento	268.8K	75.2K	28%		0	0	

Note: Figures shown in the table are rounded; shares of Latino enrollees are estimated from the raw data.

Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2023 5-year Estimates.

Appendix 3. Table 3. Latino Share of CalFresh Enrollees by the 119th Congressional District, 2023

Congressional District	Representative	Latino Enrollees	Total Enrollees	Latino Share of Total Enrollees	Congressional District	Representative	Latino Enrollees	Total Enrollees	Latino Share of Total Enrollees
1	Doug LaMalfa	128.3K	35.7K	28%	27	George Whitesides	112.3K	61K	54%
2	Jared Huffman	79.3K	21.8K	28%	28	Judy Chu	71.6K	27.3K	38%
3	Kevin Kiley	53.4K	11.8K	22%	29	Luz Rivas	137.4K	99.8K	73%
4	Mike Thompson	81K	37.1K	46%	30	Laura Friedman	106.6K	30.1K	28%
5	Tom McClintock	99.3K	37.1K	37%	31	Gilbert Cisneros	116.1K	80.5K	69%
6	Ami Bera	142.3K	39K	27%	32	Brad Sherman	71.9K	28.8K	40%
7	Doris Matsui	127.7K	38.4K	30%	33	Pete Aguilar	146.4K	101.3K	69%
8	John Garamendi	107.1K	42.8K	40%	34	Jimmy Gomez	151.3K	114.2K	75%
9	Josh Harder	151K	79.9K	53%	35	Norma Torres	114.7K	85.6K	75%
10	Mark DeSaulnier	52.1K	16.3K	31%	36	Ted Lieu	39.6K	12.4K	31%
11	Nancy Pelosi	71.9K	13.1K	18%	37	Sydney Kamlager	175.3K	112.1K	64%
12	Lateefah Simon	101.2K	29.3K	29%	38	Linda Sánchez	89K	66K	74%
13	Adam Gray	176.6K	130.8K	74%	39	Mark Takano	111.2K	77.5K	70%
14	Eric Swalwell	63.1K	26.7K	42%	40	Young Kim	46.8K	22.4K	48%
15	Kevin Mullin	58.1K	24.2K	42%	41	Ken Calvert	88.2K	46.3K	52%
16	Sam Liccardo	43.9K	15.2K	35%	42	Robert Garcia	135.4K	101K	75%
17	Ro Khanna	44.5K	13.1K	29%	43	Maxine Waters	172.7K	107.9K	63%
18	Zoe Lofgren	93.7K	75.4K	80%	44	Nanette Barragán	144.3K	99.8K	69%
19	Jimmy Panetta	54.4K	21.9K	40%	45	Derek Tran	91K	38.5K	42%
20	Vince Fong	146.4K	62.2K	42%	46	Lou Correa	110.9K	80.3K	72%
21	Jim Costa	234.2K	167.8K	72%	47	Dave Min	49.1K	14.7K	30%
22	David G. Valadao	210.2K	166K	79%	48	Darrell Issa	85.3K	31.5K	37%
23	Jay Obernolte	170.1K	83.9K	49%	49	Mike Levin	44.1K	24.1K	55%
24	Salud Carbajal	82K	52.2K	64%	50	Scott Peters	52.9K	24K	45%
25	Raul Ruiz	179.7K	143.7K	80%	51	Sara Jacobs	89K	31K	35%
26	Julia Brownley	79.7K	59.6K	75%	52	Juan Vargas	122.4K	84.1K	69%

Created with Datawrapper

Note: Figures shown in the table are rounded; shares of Latino enrollees are estimated from the raw data.

Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2023 5-year Estimates. The congressional district allocation is generated using the [Geocorr 2022](#) from Census blocks to Public Use Microdata areas (PUMA) and Census blocks to the 119th Congressional Districts from the [Missouri Census Data Center](#) while

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⁷ *Ibid.*

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