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CalFresh Helps Californians Buy Food in Every Congressional District, but More Support Needed in COVID-19 Federal Response

The federal Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) – known as CalFresh in California – is one of the nation’s most powerful antipoverty programs, helping millions of people buy the food they need to support their families and households. Even with a strong economy in 2019, CalFresh provided food assistance to nearly 1 in 10 Californians. Program participation varied across the state’s 53 Congressional districts, but was especially high in the 8th District (R-Cook), 16th District (D-Costa), and 21st District (D-Cox) (see Map 1 on page 3). CalFresh enrollment will increase dramatically in the coming weeks and months as many across the state lose jobs and income due to the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis.

SNAP is also one of the federal government’s most effective tools in boosting the economy when participants purchase food in their communities. While recent federal legislation responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by enacting temporary provisions in the SNAP program to streamline administration, maintain participation, and provide emergency benefits, more needs to be done. Federal policymakers should take additional actions to help households put food on the table *and* to boost the economy. Until the public health emergency is over *and* the economy improves, policymakers should increase SNAP’s maximum benefit and minimum monthly benefit and halt any administrative actions that would limit SNAP food assistance.

Millions of Californians Benefited From CalFresh Every Month in 2019

Congressional District	Representative	Party	Estimated Average Monthly Number of Participants, 2019*	CalFresh Participants as a Share of the Population	Rank (Highest to Lowest Percentage)	Estimated Annual CalFresh Benefits**
California			3,865,000	9.8%		5,996,249,000
1	LaMalfa, Doug	R	83,100	11.7%	17	128,932,000
2	Huffman, Jared	D	55,500	7.7%	35	86,133,000
3	Garamendi, John	D	77,300	10.3%	22	119,935,000
4	McClintock, Tom	R	45,300	6.0%	42	70,289,000
5	Thompson, Mike	D	48,500	6.6%	39	75,303,000
6	Matsui, Doris O.	D	128,600	16.5%	5	199,577,000
7	Bera, Ami	D	66,700	8.9%	28	103,457,000
8	Cook, Paul	R	155,600	21.7%	3	241,414,000
9	McNerney, Jerry	D	103,800	13.4%	11	161,070,000
10	Harder, Josh	D	82,700	10.9%	20	128,354,000
11	DeSaulnier, Mark	D	35,300	4.6%	43	54,787,000
12	Pelosi, Nancy	D	51,500	6.7%	38	79,865,000
13	Lee, Barbara	D	65,000	8.5%	29	100,799,000
14	Speier, Jackie	D	23,000	3.0%	50	35,607,000

Congressional District	Representative	Party	Estimated Average Monthly Number of Participants, 2019*	CalFresh Participants as a Share of the Population	Rank (Highest to Lowest Percentage)	Estimated Annual CalFresh Benefits**
15	Swalwell, Eric	D	31,400	4.0%	46	48,767,000
16	Costa, Jim	D	174,500	23.3%	2	270,788,000
17	Khanna, Ro	D	20,300	2.6%	53	31,511,000
18	Eshoo, Anna G.	D	21,200	2.8%	51	32,820,000
19	Lofgren, Zoe	D	50,400	6.6%	40	78,172,000
20	Panetta, Jimmy	D	61,200	8.3%	30	95,019,000
21	Cox, TJ	D	173,200	24.3%	1	268,735,000
22	Nunes, Devin	R	105,500	13.7%	9	163,690,000
23	McCarthy, Kevin	R	105,700	14.1%	8	163,935,000
24	Carbajal, Salud	D	57,200	7.7%	32	88,764,000
25	Vacant		70,600	9.9%	24	109,603,000
26	Brownley, Julia	D	53,700	7.4%	37	83,352,000
27	Chu, Judy	D	64,600	9.2%	26	100,227,000
28	Schiff, Adam	D	82,600	11.6%	18	128,208,000
29	Cárdenas, Tony	D	80,400	11.4%	19	124,721,000
30	Sherman, Brad	D	49,400	6.4%	41	76,684,000
31	Aguilar, Pete	D	94,900	12.6%	14	147,168,000
32	Napolitano, Grace	D	63,700	8.9%	27	98,870,000
33	Lieu, Ted	D	19,200	2.7%	52	29,711,000
34	Gomez, Jimmy	D	98,700	13.2%	13	153,103,000
35	Torres, Norma	D	90,200	11.7%	16	139,946,000
36	Ruiz, Raul	D	99,200	13.2%	12	153,896,000
37	Bass, Karen	D	99,600	13.5%	10	154,528,000
38	Sánchez, Linda	D	55,300	7.7%	34	85,801,000
39	Cisneros, Gilbert R.	D	33,500	4.6%	44	51,990,000
40	Roybal-Allard, Lucille	D	116,800	16.3%	7	181,156,000
41	Takano, Mark	D	76,200	9.8%	25	118,261,000
42	Calvert, Ken	R	63,100	7.6%	36	97,846,000
43	Waters, Maxine	D	93,500	12.4%	15	145,052,000
44	Barragán, Nanette	D	129,200	17.8%	4	200,395,000
45	Porter, Katie	D	27,500	3.4%	49	42,670,000
46	Correa, J. Louis	D	77,800	10.6%	21	120,696,000
47	Lowenthal, Alan	D	72,800	10.2%	23	112,921,000
48	Rouda, Harley	D	26,800	3.7%	48	41,634,000
49	Levin, Mike	D	27,300	3.7%	47	42,366,000
50	Vacant		58,800	7.8%	31	91,157,000
51	Vargas, Juan	D	123,000	16.5%	6	190,855,000
52	Peters, Scott	D	32,400	4.2%	45	50,211,000
53	Davis, Susan	D	61,600	7.7%	33	95,495,000

* Figures are rounded to the nearest 100. Estimates may not sum to total due to rounding.

** Figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000. Estimates may not sum to total due to rounding.

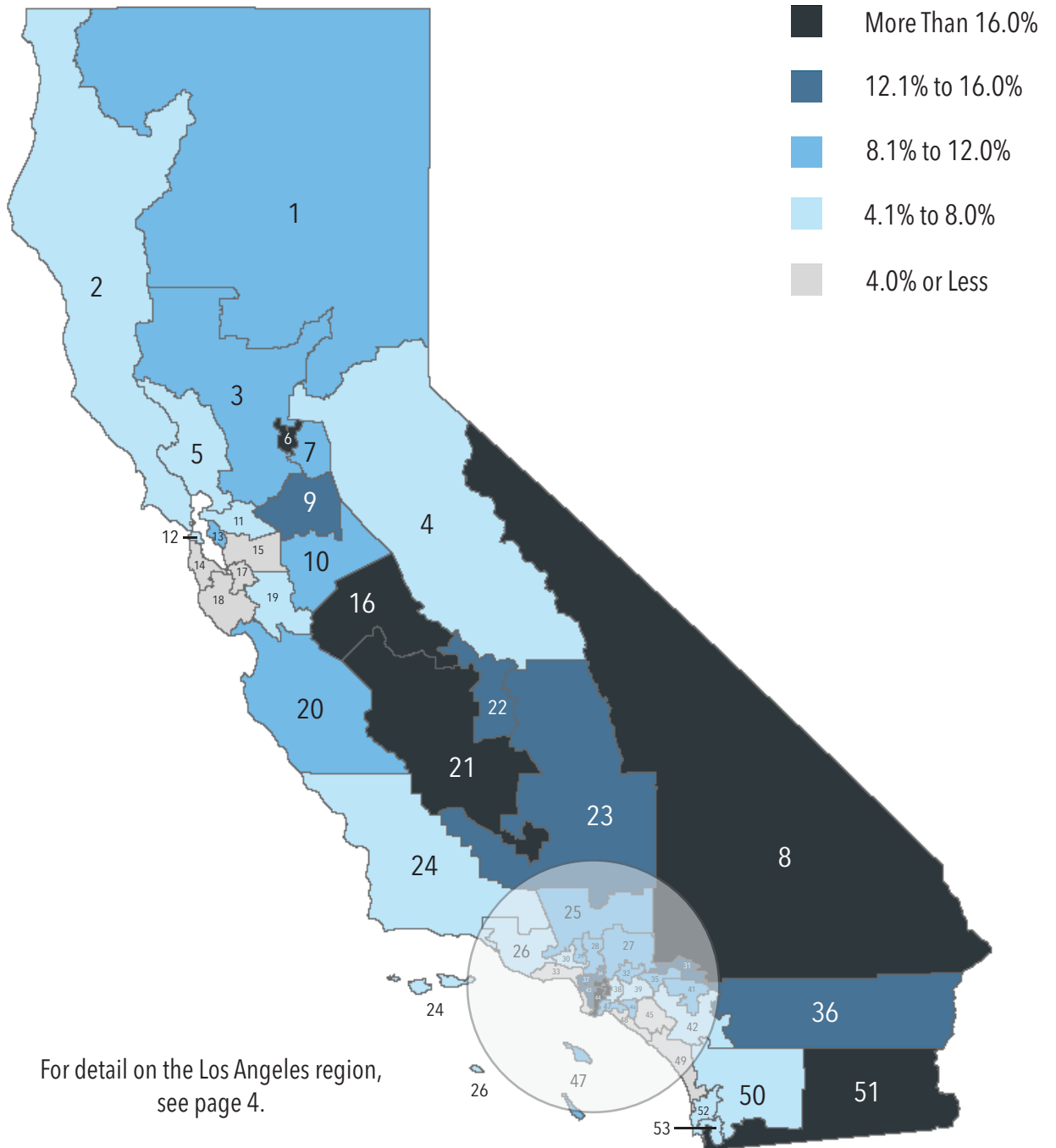
Note: Values for California reflect the actual number of CalFresh participants and the total value of CalFresh benefits in 2019. District level estimates are based on zip code-level data for CalFresh recipients in June 2019. Data are for individuals receiving federal SNAP benefits and do not reflect individuals receiving state-funded assistance through the California Food Assistance Program.

Source: Budget Center analysis of data from the Department of Social Services and US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

MAP 1

Californians Across All Congressional Districts Need CalFresh, and That's Only Expected to Increase

Estimated CalFresh Participation as a Share of the Population, 2019

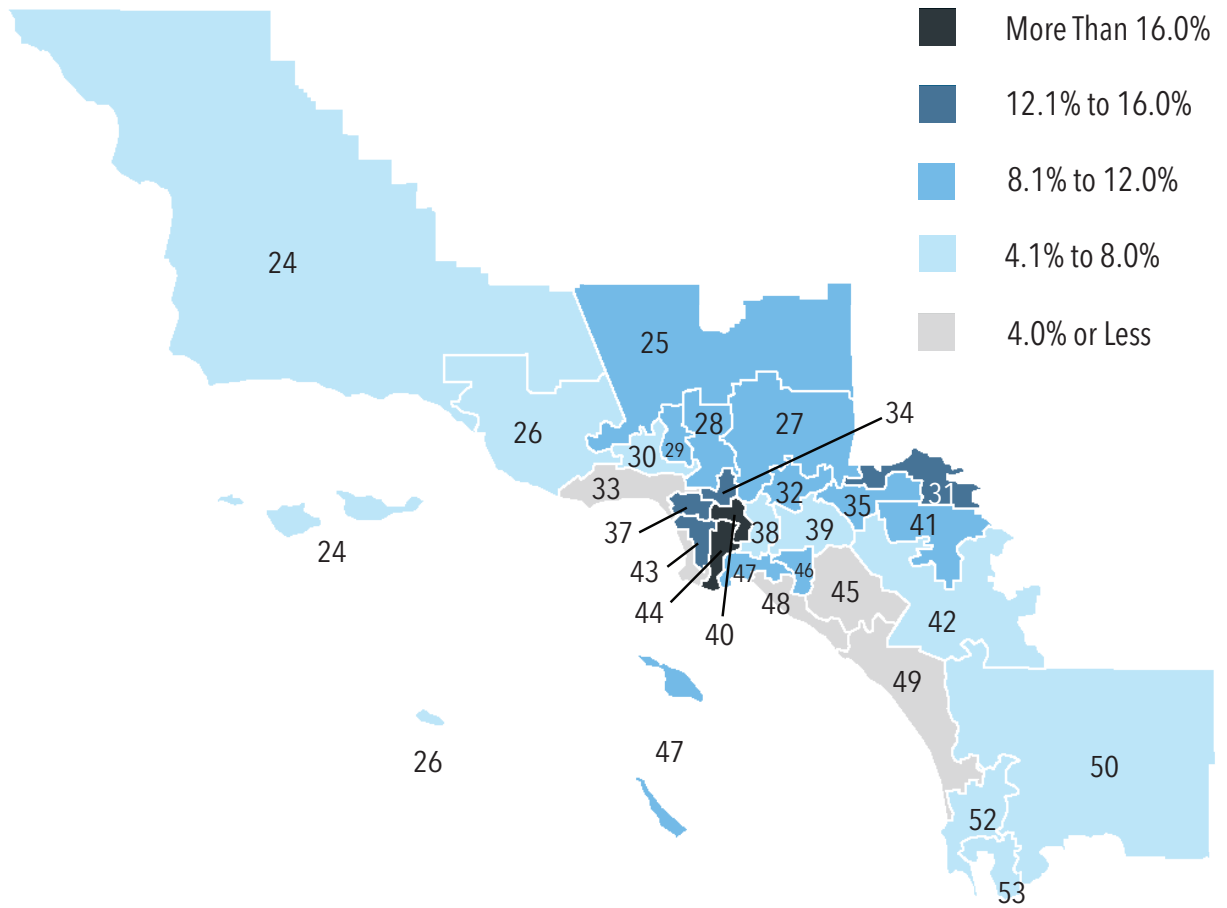


Note: Congressional district estimates are based on zip code-level data of CalFresh recipients. Data are for individuals receiving federal SNAP benefits and do not reflect individuals receiving state-funded assistance through the California Food Assistance Program.
 Source: Budget Center analysis of data from the Department of Social Services and US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

MAP 2

Californians Across All Congressional Districts Need CalFresh, and That's Only Expected to Increase

Estimated CalFresh Participation as a Share of the Population (Los Angeles Region), 2019



Note: Congressional district estimates are based on zip code-level data of CalFresh recipients. Data are for individuals receiving federal SNAP benefits and do not reflect individuals receiving state-funded assistance through the California Food Assistance Program.

Source: Budget Center analysis of data from the Department of Social Services and US Census Bureau, American Community Survey