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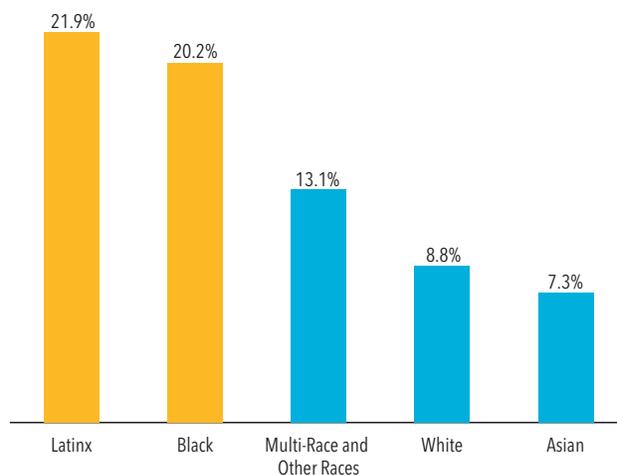
Not Enough to Eat: California Black and Latinx Children Need Policymakers to Act

Right now, many families do not have enough food on the table, and this problem is particularly acute for Latinx and Black families in California. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, about 1 in 10 Californians sometimes or often lacked access to enough food to support a healthy lifestyle.¹ Struggling to have enough food affects people of all ages, but it is especially harmful to children, as inadequate nutrition can harm their health, development, and learning.²

Due to historic and ongoing racial discrimination, Black and Latinx families have always struggled to afford enough food, and the COVID-19 health and economic crisis has only made this problem worse.³ Data from the Census Bureau's weekly Household Pulse Survey provides information on how COVID-19 is affecting families. In California, about 1.9 million households with children (15.9%) reported sometimes or often not having enough food to eat during a four-week period in late June and July. Latinx and Black households were more likely to lack enough food at home, with more than 1 in 5 Latinx households and Black households with children reporting sometimes or often not having enough to eat (21.9% and 20.2%, respectively).⁴

Latinx and Black Households With Children Are More Likely to Lack Enough Food During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Share of California Households That Sometimes or Often Did Not Have Enough to Eat



Note: Data represent multiweek averages from survey responses collected June 25-30, July 2-7, July 9-14, and July 16-21. Due to small sample sizes, some demographic groups were combined into the Multi-Race and Other Races category. This category reflects people identifying as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or more than one race.
Source: Budget Center analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey

Families struggling to afford enough food underscores the need for federal policymakers to help Californians during the ongoing health and economic crisis. Federal policymakers should ensure families have the resources they need to feed their families, including:

- Increasing the maximum Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit, known as CalFresh in California, by at least 15%, which would boost benefits by about \$25 per person per month.⁵ In addition, federal policymakers should expand food assistance to immigrants who are excluded from SNAP – many of whom are Latinx.
- Extending Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) through the 2020-21 school year. P-EBT is a one-time disaster response program that supports children who lost access to free or reduced price school meals due to school closures, but will expire at the end of September.⁶ P-EBT was one of the few programs that provided food benefits to children regardless of immigration status.
- Helping families with younger children afford food by adding the Child and Adult Food Care Program to P-EBT, so those who lost access to federally funded meals when child care programs closed can receive support.
- Investing in programs like virtual home visiting, which can connect families to food banks, food assistance, and other resources that help put food on the table.⁷

During this health and economic crisis, families should not agonize over having enough food at home. Children should never worry about when they will eat again. Policy inaction will only worsen racial health and educational disparities in California. It is critical that policymakers invest in programs that protect and promote children's health and well-being.

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¹ Feeding America, *Food Insecurity in California*, accessed <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2018/overall/california> on September 1, 2020.

² Feeding America, *Map the Meal Gap 2020*, accessed <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Map%20the%20Meal%20Gap%202020%20Combined%20Modules.pdf> on September 1, 2020.

³ Angela Odoms-Young, et al., "Examining the Impact of Structural Racism on Food Insecurity: Implications for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disparities," *Family & Community Health* 41 (2019), pp. S3-S6.

⁴ These figures represent multi-week average estimates from the Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey data: Table 3b Food Sufficiency for Households with Children, in the Last 7 Days. Data for Week 9 Household Pulse Survey were collected between June 25 - June 30, Week 10 data were collected July 2 - July 7, Week 11 data were collected July 9 - July 14, and Week 12 data were collected July 16 - July 21. Estimates do not include those who did not respond. Due to small sample sizes, some demographic groups were combined into the Multi-Race and Other Races category. This category reflects people identifying as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or more than one race. Race and ethnicity refers to the respondent who answered questions for the household.

⁵ Brynne Keith-Jennings, *Heroes Act Provides Much-Needed SNAP Boost* (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: May 18, 2020).

⁶ California Department of Social Services, *Pandemic EBT*, accessed <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/home/pandemic-ebt> on September 2, 2020.

⁷ Jennifer Marshall, et al., "Statewide Implementation of Virtual Perinatal Home Visiting During COVID-19," *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 24 (2020), pp. 1-7.