

GAPS IN THE SAFETY NET

POVERTY AMONG UNDOCUMENTED CALIFORNIANS

May 2024

California's social safety net protects families during times of economic hardship - but undocumented Californians are unjustly excluded from many safety net programs due solely to immigration status. Data from California Poverty Measure (CPM)* shows the disproportionate prevalence of poverty among undocumented Californians (1) and severe economic disparities in the state.

41% of undocumented children and young adults ages 0-26 in CA are living in poverty (2), which is twice the rate compared to the statewide average.



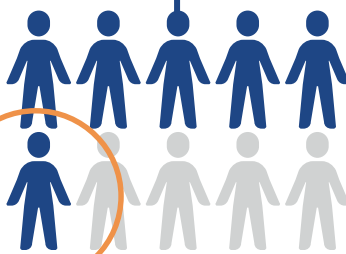
Impacts of Poverty on Children:

- More likely to develop emotional disorders and cognitive deficits (4)
- Higher risk for illness, food insecurity, lower quality prenatal and health care, and higher exposure to environmental pollution (5)
- Lower educational attainment than peers (6) with lasting impacts on economic mobility in adulthood

*"[In] January of this year, the rains flooded my business and I had a total loss of my cooking equipment... [As] a 44 year old undocumented mother of 3 sons, having access to CalFresh would help me continue running my small business with a **safety net in times of crisis.**"*

Brenda Z, San Diego

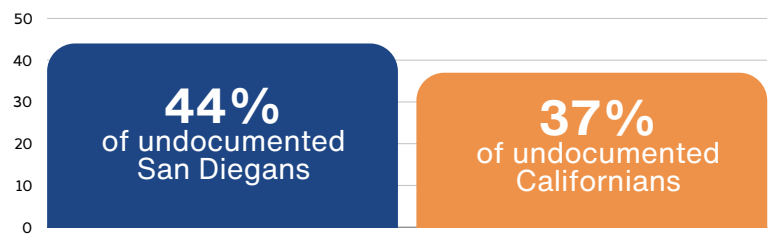
6 IN 10 (64%) undocumented Californians of all ages are living in or near poverty (2), compared to 35% statewide.



1 IN 10 (11%) undocumented Californians are living in deep poverty (2).

When families don't have enough resources, they are more likely to experience food (7) and housing (8) insecurity. The loss of a job or an emergency can quickly pull families below the poverty line without a safety net to catch them.

San Diego region has the **highest rate of poverty** in the state among undocumented Californians.



POLICY SOLUTION: FOOD4ALL

Food4All is a movement and campaign fighting for immigrant inclusion in California's food safety net (10).

CalFresh (3) is California's most successful anti-poverty program and kept 430,000 children out of poverty in 2023(9). **Food4All** would expand access to CalFresh for all Californians by removing immigration status as a barrier to receiving food benefits.

No Exceptions. No Exclusions. No Delays.

TECHNICAL NOTES

ABOUT THE DATA

The Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) provided consultation and data on poverty from the California Poverty Measure (CPM)*. Brenda Z. shared their lived experiences and expertise. We gratefully acknowledge all of these contributions and the important issues they bring to light.

*The California Poverty Measure (CPM) is a tool for measuring state-specific poverty. It aims to illustrate a more accurate depiction of poverty in California by including necessary expenditures like childcare, out-of-pocket health costs, and varied costs of housing across the state. By including tax credits, food assistance, and other non-cash public benefits in the measure, the CPM can better show how impactful our social safety net is in alleviating poverty. The CPM is jointly produced by the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality and the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC).

This data is from the California Poverty Measure 2017-2019 average. 2017-2019 pooled data is the most recently available data in which rates of undocumented Californians can be disaggregated. These years will likely have a poverty rate that is more closely aligned with present poverty rates than any of the years immediately following the height of the pandemic due to issuances of emergency allotments and other pandemic-era programs.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Undocumented immigrants** in this data refers to non-citizen immigrants who are not authorized to live or work in the US. To learn more about how this is measured in the CPM, see PPIC's technical appendix.
2. **Deep poverty, poverty,** and **near poverty** refer to households who are below 50%, below or at 100%, or below 150% but above 100% of the CPM poverty rate, respectively.
3. CalFresh is California's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Recipients of this program receive an Electronic Balance Transfer (EBT) card loaded with monthly benefits that can be used like a debit card at authorized retailers, like grocery stores or farmers markets. This program helps low-income Californians afford to put food on the table. Learn more and apply at BenefitsCal.com.

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