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Cara Tan, Jennifer Hogg, Johanna Lacoe, and Jesse Rothstein



CalFresh Participation Among California's College Students: A 2023–24 School Year Update

CARA TAN, JENNIFER HOGG, JOHANNA LACOE, AND JESSE ROTHSTEIN

Food insecurity is widespread among college students in the United States. CalFresh food benefits, known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, can help students in California pay for food, but may not reach all eligible students. This data point provides estimates of CalFresh participation rates among California community college (CCC), California State University (CSU), and University of California (UC) students in California. It updates numbers from our last [data point](#), which focused on CalFresh enrollment during the 2022–23 school year for CCC and UC students. This is the first data point in this series to include CSU students. **Figure 1 shows the share of college students who participated in CalFresh at some point in the academic year 2023–24 and preceding years.**

This data point presents CalFresh participation rates, but it does not estimate what share of eligible students participate (or not) in CalFresh. Eligibility is based on multiple factors including income, household composition, school enrollment status, and financial aid status. A previous CPL [report](#) shows how many likely eligible college students are participating in CalFresh.

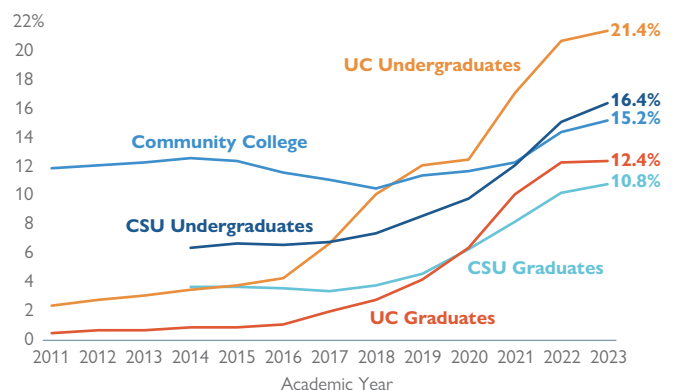
Key Findings

In Academic Year (AY) 2023–24, participation rose across all three public higher education segments.

Among community college students, participation increased by 0.8 percentage points to 15.2%, with approximately 320,000 students receiving CalFresh, about 42,000 more than the prior year. At CSU, participation rose by 1.3 percentage points for undergraduates (to 16.4%), with roughly 73,000 undergraduates participating, about 5,600 more than the prior year. CSU graduate student participation rose by 0.6 percentage points to 10.8%, with approximately 8,100 participating, about 400 more than AY 2022–23. At UC, undergraduate participation increased by 0.7 percentage

points to 21.4%, with approximately 52,000 students, about 2,000 more than the prior year. UC graduate student participation rose slightly (+0.1 percentage points) to 12.4%, with approximately 8,200 students. However, despite the growth in the participation rate, there were about 100 fewer students participating in CalFresh (than the year before) due to declining enrollment.

FIGURE 1. CalFresh participation rates among college students, 2011–12 to 2023–24



Participation rates continued to grow even after COVID-era federal policies expired, though at a slower pace than in prior years. AY 2023–24 is the first school year following the end of these policies, which had included emergency allotments that nearly doubled average monthly benefit amounts and expanded student eligibility.¹

This continued growth in CalFresh participation among college students tracks growth in policy and advocacy efforts in California. Several major state-level laws aimed at increasing college student participation in CalFresh went into effect in 2022, and implementation of these laws may have continued to mature into AY 2023–24, contributing to the continued growth in CalFresh participation.² Furthermore, networks of advocates, higher education administrators, and social service professionals have continued to advance the outreach and support students receive to help them enroll in CalFresh and reduce the prevalence of food insecurity. Rising costs of food may have also contributed to more students signing up for CalFresh.

Patterns of participation by student groups

Tables 1–5 present CalFresh participation rates during the 2023–24 academic year among community college students, CSU undergraduate students, CSU graduate students, UC undergraduate students, and UC graduate students, respectively. The [College Student CalFresh Participation Dashboard](#) presents these data as interactive line graphs, and allows users to explore how participation rates have changed over time. [Appendix Table A1](#) provides participation rates by community college campus.

Participation rates varied across higher education segments, regions, campuses, and student subgroups (see [Appendix](#) for subgroup definitions). Key patterns include:

- **California community college regions** — CalFresh participation rates continue to increase in every CCC region. The Central Valley had the highest participation rate (23.0%) and the largest increase from the prior school year (+1.4 percentage points). The Bay Area continued to have the lowest participation rate (10.4%).

- **CSU campuses** — CalFresh participation rates increased for the majority of CSU campuses from 2022–23 but decreased on six campuses. For both undergraduate and graduate students, CSU Chico, CSU Humboldt, and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo have the highest CalFresh participation rates. CSU Chico had the highest participation rate for undergraduates (33.0%) and CSU Humboldt had the highest participation rate for graduate students (31.7%). Cal Poly San Luis Obispo saw the largest increases from the prior year by far for both undergraduate and graduate students (+12.8 and +7.4 percentage points, respectively).
- **UC campuses** — While overall participation increased slightly, CalFresh participation rates declined slightly at UC Berkeley, UC Merced, and UC Riverside for undergraduates and at all UC campuses except for UC Davis, UC Irvine, and UC Riverside for graduate students.
- **Student aid** — Participation rates stayed fairly consistent for students who receive financial aid, including Pell Grants and Cal Grants. About 32.9% of CCC students, 42.9% of UC undergraduates, and 28.6% of CSU undergraduates who received a Pell or Cal Grant also received CalFresh.
- **Racial and ethnic groups** — Participation increased across nearly all reported racial and ethnic groups in all segments. Black/African American students had among the highest participation rates across segments. Groups with the largest increases (2 or more percentage points) include Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander community college students, White CSU undergraduates, and American Indian/Alaska Native UC undergraduates. UC participation rates are also high among Hispanic/Latino/Chicano students, though participation in this group declined slightly among UC graduate students.
- **Age groups and tenure** — At the CCC campuses, participation increased fairly evenly for all age groups. The participation rate continued to be the highest for students 30–34 years old (20.4%); this group also had the largest increase (+1 percentage point). For CSU undergraduates, second- and third-year students had the highest participation rates (17.5% and 17.2%, respectively), and the latter had the largest increase (+2.5 percentage points). For UC undergraduates, third-year students had the highest participation rate with seniors a close second. The rate increased for students of all tenure except for the first-year students (-1.2 percentage points).

TABLE 1. CalFresh Participation Among California Community College Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
All Students	2,100,189	15.2	14.4	0.8
Region				
Northern California	184,807	16.7	15.5	1.2
Bay Area	392,516	10.4	9.7	0.7
Central Valley	225,368	23.0	21.6	1.5
South Central	156,322	12.5	11.6	1.0
San Diego	189,238	15.5	15.1	0.4
Greater Los Angeles	758,836	15.2	14.6	0.6
Inland Empire	188,089	17.1	15.7	1.4
Financial aid status				
Filed FAFSA	832,029	23.4	21.9	1.4
Did not file FAFSA	1,268,160	9.9	9.5	0.4
Cal Grant recipient	165,185	32.5	31.0	1.5
Pell Grant recipient	402,338	32.9	31.6	1.3
Promise Grant recipient	798,657	24.8	24.0	0.8
Any financial aid recipient	846,684	24.1	22.5	1.6
No financial aid recipient	1,253,505	9.3	8.6	0.7
Enrollment type				
First-time students	192,201	19.0	17.8	1.2
First-time transfer	174,991	12.1	11.8	0.3
Continuing	1,046,186	15.4	14.5	0.9
Returning	257,961	15.3	14.4	0.8
Special admit	277,156	15.6	14.5	1.0
Unknown	151,694	12.0	11.2	0.9
Enrolled terms				
Summer Only	216,766	10.6	9.2	1.4
Fall, winter, and/or spring	1,883,423	15.8	15.0	0.8

Table 1 continues on next page

TABLE 1. CalFresh Participation Among California Community College Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years
(continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	7,253	22.7	21.2	1.4
Asian	271,885	9.7	9.3	0.5
Black/African American	114,644	32.1	30.5	1.6
Hispanic/Latino	1,012,912	16.7	15.8	0.9
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	7,857	16.4	14.3	2.1
White	493,568	12.2	11.4	0.8
Two or more races	86,186	16.5	15.4	1.1
Unknown	105,884	9.5	9.7	-0.1
Gender				
Female	1,103,996	17.9	17.1	0.9
Male	924,248	12.0	11.2	0.9
Non-binary	24,006	18.1	17.6	0.5
Unknown	47,939	13.1	11.9	1.2
Other student subgroups				
Educational goal				
ESL/adult education	82,710	10.2	10.4	-0.2
Short-term career	246,703	14.1	13.4	0.7
Degree/transfer-seeking	1,102,229	17.7	16.6	1.1
Undecided/other	462,021	12.7	12.1	0.6
First-generation	492,162	19.6	18.7	1.0

Table 1 continues on next page

TABLE 1. CalFresh Participation Among California Community College Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years
(continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Age groups				
19 or less	668,819	14.9	14.0	0.9
20–21	287,011	11.8	11.0	0.8
22–24	238,065	14.2	13.4	0.8
25–29	239,471	18.2	17.3	0.8
30–34	178,555	20.4	19.4	1.0
35–39	134,822	18.7	17.8	0.9
40–49	167,662	14.9	14.1	0.8
50 and older	182,554	12.3	11.7	0.5

Note: Cell sizes less than 100 are suppressed to protect student privacy and are marked with a “-”. “First-generation students” refers to those who did not have a parent who attended college (see [Appendix](#) for more detail).

TABLE 2. CalFresh Participation Among CSU Undergraduate Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
All Students	446,796	16.4	15.1	1.3
Campus				
Bakersfield	9,998	19.5	17.9	1.6
Channel Islands	5,958	13.6	13.3	0.3
Chico	14,028	33.0	28.1	4.9
Dominguez Hills	13,965	21.1	20.4	0.7
East Bay	11,609	12.9	13.5	-0.6
Fresno	23,013	21.0	20.8	0.3
Fullerton	40,516	12.2	11.6	0.6
Humboldt	5,861	27.8	25.9	1.9
Long Beach	36,895	16.9	16.1	0.8
Los Angeles	23,186	20.4	19.4	1.0
Maritime Academy	858	-	-	-
Monterey Bay	6,526	17.3	13.9	3.4
Northridge	35,440	18.4	16.8	1.6
Pomona	26,341	12.4	11.9	0.6
Sacramento	32,823	16.1	16.8	-0.7
San Bernardino	17,617	12.5	11.2	1.3
San Diego	36,694	11.6	11.0	0.6
San Francisco	23,069	14.3	14.3	0.0
San Jose	29,286	11.5	11.6	-0.1
San Luis Obispo	22,527	25.8	13.0	12.9
San Marcos	14,955	10.8	12.1	-1.2
Sonoma	5,884	9.9	9.7	0.2
Stanislaus	9,667	17.2	15.5	1.8

Table 2 continues on next page

TABLE 2. CalFresh Participation Among CSU Undergraduate Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years (continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Financial aid status				
Filed FAFSA	337,959	20.2	19.1	1.0
Did not file FAFSA	108,837	4.7	3.1	1.6
Cal Grant recipient	131,062	28.6	27.5	1.0
Pell Grant recipient	256,091	24.1	22.6	1.5
CSU tenure				
1 year	148,175	15.5	15.2	0.3
2 years	120,449	17.5	16.0	1.5
3 years	84,475	17.2	14.6	2.5
4+ years	93,697	15.7	14.4	1.3
Enrollment type				
Transfer students	181,778	16.1	15.5	0.7
Community college transfer students	178,865	16.2	15.6	0.7
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	829	19.5	21.6	-2.0
Asian	71,295	13.4	12.7	0.7
Black or African American	18,622	29.3	28.8	0.5
Hispanic/Latino	220,572	18.5	17.5	0.9
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1,450	14.0	12.9	1.1
White	89,346	13.0	10.7	2.4
Two or more races	20,176	14.8	13.1	1.8
Unknown	15,008	16.6	15.5	1.1

Table 2 continues on next page

TABLE 2. CalFresh Participation Among CSU Undergraduate Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years (continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Gender				
Female	247,807	18.8	17.5	1.3
Male	197,677	13.4	12.0	1.4
Non-Binary	1,312	21.4	21.9	-0.5
Other student subgroups				
Has disability	28,536	23.4	22.0	1.3
First-generation	188,992	22.4	21.5	0.9
Not first-generation	184,178	14.3	12.5	1.8
Zero expected family contribution (EFC)	56,078	39.9	39.3	0.7

Note: Cell sizes less than 100 are suppressed to protect student privacy and are marked with a “-”. “First-generation students” refers to those who did not have a parent who attended college (see [Appendix](#) for more detail).

TABLE 3. CalFresh Participation Among CSU Graduate Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
All Students	75,403	10.8	10.2	0.6
Campus				
Bakersfield	1,892	10.3	11.2	-0.9
Channel Islands	570	-	-	-
Chico	1,710	19.1	18.3	0.8
Dominguez Hills	3,062	10.1	9.5	0.6
East Bay	3,209	7.3	7.0	0.3
Fresno	2,921	17.5	15.3	2.2
Fullerton	5,748	7.5	7.2	0.3
Humboldt	728	31.7	28.4	3.4
Long Beach	7,029	12.7	11.7	1.1
Los Angeles	4,144	13.6	11.4	2.1
Maritime Academy	< 100	-	-	-
Monterey Bay	1,099	17.0	18.0	-1.0
Northridge	6,443	10.4	10.1	0.3
Pomona	2,797	6.5	7.6	-1.1
Sacramento	3,727	11.3	10.6	0.7
San Bernardino	3,462	8.1	8.7	-0.6
San Diego	5,954	13.1	12.1	0.9
San Francisco	3,722	13.6	12.2	1.4
San Jose	10,762	6.0	5.9	0.1
San Luis Obispo	1,244	20.3	13.0	7.3
San Marcos	1,740	10.4	12.4	-2.0
Sonoma	723	-	-	-
Stanislaus	1,515	11.1	10.5	0.6

Table 3 continues on next page

TABLE 3. CalFresh Participation Among CSU Graduate Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years (continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Financial aid status				
Filed FAFSA	41,500	17.8	16.9	0.9
Did not file FAFSA	33,903	2.2	1.9	0.3
Cal Grant recipient	389	31.6	27.4	4.2
Pell Grant eligible	20,304	20.1	19.4	0.7
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	201	-	-	-
Asian	10,300	11.4	10.6	0.8
Black or African American	2,924	17.2	16.2	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	27,567	13.2	12.7	0.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	183	-	-	-
White	18,476	10.5	9.7	0.8
Two or more races	2,622	14.3	13.2	1.1
Unknown	4,342	10.5	9.4	1.1
Gender				
Female	47,765	12.4	11.7	0.7
Male	27,394	8.0	7.4	0.5
Non-Binary	244	-	-	-
Other student subgroups				
Has disability	3,265	25.2	23.5	1.8
First-generation	25,754	16.4	15.7	0.6
Not first-generation	23,475	14.8	13.5	1.3
Zero expected family contribution (EFC)	2,202	42.1	41.6	0.5

Note: Cell sizes less than 100 are suppressed to protect student privacy and are marked with a “-”. “First-generation students” refers to those who did not have a parent who attended college (see [Appendix](#) for more detail).

TABLE 4. CalFresh Participation Among UC Undergraduate Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
All Students	243,803	21.4	20.8	0.7
Campus				
Berkeley	34,315	21.8	22.0	-0.3
Davis	33,160	21.3	20.7	0.6
Irvine	30,522	21.8	19.4	2.5
Los Angeles	34,811	18.0	16.5	1.5
Merced	8,507	25.1	25.2	-0.1
Riverside	23,764	16.6	17.7	-1.1
San Diego	35,385	20.8	20.3	0.6
Santa Barbara	24,276	29.7	29.5	0.2
Santa Cruz	19,063	21.8	19.7	2.1
Financial aid status				
Filed FAFSA	163,020	30.2	30.2	0.0
Did not file FAFSA	80,783	3.8	2.4	1.4
Cal Grant recipient	77,319	42.9	43.6	-0.7
Pell Grant eligible	83,841	43.3	43.7	-0.3
Any financial aid recipient	132,447	35.2	35.3	-0.1
No financial aid recipient	111,356	5.1	3.4	1.7
UC tenure				
1 year	72,923	13.9	15.1	-1.2
2 years	65,735	23.3	21.7	1.7
3 years	54,818	25.5	23.6	2.0
4+ years	50,327	25.4	24.7	0.7
Enrollment type				
Transfer students	52,758	23.3	23.3	0.0
Community college transfer students	46,591	24.3	24.4	-0.1

Table 4 continues on next page

TABLE 4. CalFresh Participation Among UC Undergraduate Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years (continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	1,400	20.5	17.9	2.6
Asian American/Asian/ Pacific Islander	108,789	16.3	15.6	0.7
Chinese	43,366	12.2	11.4	0.8
East Indian/Pakistani	19,946	8.3	7.4	0.8
Filipino	11,450	21.5	20.8	0.7
Japanese	3,719	13.3	11.3	2.0
Korean	9,718	19.8	18.9	0.9
Vietnamese	14,320	31.0	31.2	-0.2
Other Asian/Pacific Islander	6,270	23.3	23.0	0.3
Black/African American	11,717	34.0	34.0	0.1
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	63,524	34.2	34.3	0.0
White/Caucasian	51,324	15.2	14.4	0.8
Unknown	7,049	10.6	9.4	1.3
Gender				
Female	132,732	24.5	23.9	0.6
Male	105,105	17.7	16.9	0.8
Non-binary	3,484	25.6	24.4	1.2
Unknown	2,482	13.1	11.7	1.4
Other student subgroups				
Has disability	14,803	28.8	29.4	-0.6
Foster youth	1,395	49.3	48.8	0.5
First-generation	63,900	40.8	41.0	-0.2
Not first-generation	126,516	18.8	17.9	0.9
Zero expected family contribution (EFC)	44,442	46.6	46.8	-0.2
UC employment	57,098	33.0	31.0	2.0

Note: Cell sizes less than 100 are suppressed to protect student privacy and are marked with a “-”. “First-generation students” refers to those who did not have a parent who attended college (see [Appendix](#) for more detail).

TABLE 5. CalFresh Participation Among UC Graduate Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
All Students	66,164	12.4	12.3	0.1
Campus				
Berkeley	13,706	8.5	8.9	-0.4
Davis	8,233	16.4	14.7	1.8
Irvine	7,650	12.2	11.0	1.2
Los Angeles	14,529	15.2	15.7	-0.5
Merced	797	3.8	-	-
Riverside	3,993	7.8	7.6	0.2
San Diego	8,999	8.7	8.8	-0.1
San Francisco	3,174	34.8	34.9	-0.1
Santa Barbara	3,028	7.4	8.6	-1.2
Santa Cruz	2,055	5.8	6.3	-0.5
Financial aid status				
Filed FAFSA	20,830	33.3	32.1	1.2
Did not file FAFSA	45,334	2.9	2.6	0.3
Pell Grant recipient	< 100	-	-	-
Any financial aid recipient	14,841	25.6	21.5	4.0
No financial aid recipient	51,323	8.6	9.5	-0.8

Table 5 continues on next page

TABLE 5. CalFresh Participation Among UC Graduate Students, 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 Academic Years (continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	441	-	-	-
Asian American/Asian/ Pacific Islander	21,644	13.6	13.3	0.3
Chinese	9,323	8.8	8.9	0.0
East Indian/Pakistani	4,538	9.5	9.0	0.5
Filipino	1,237	22.2	22.0	0.2
Japanese	994	14.5	13.5	1.0
Korean	1,783	17.4	16.4	1.0
Vietnamese	1,728	31.9	31.0	0.8
Other Asian/Pacific Islander	2,041	20.2	19.9	0.3
Black/African American	3,637	26.4	26.4	0.0
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	8,636	20.6	21.4	-0.7
White/Caucasian	18,439	11.8	11.8	0.0
Unknown	13,367	2.2	1.8	0.4
Gender				
Female	31,914	16.6	16.3	0.3
Male	32,414	8.4	8.4	0.1
Non-Binary	936	15.4	19.8	-
Unknown	900	-	-	-
Other student subgroups				
Has disability	2,839	25.6	25.0	0.6
Foster youth	< 100	-	-	-
First-generation	8,654	30.3	30.1	0.2
Not first-generation	18,755	25.4	24.6	0.8
Zero expected family contribution (EFC)	15,225	25.8	26.4	-0.6
UC employment	34,673	7.9	8.3	-0.4

Note: Cell sizes less than 100 are suppressed to protect student privacy and are marked with a “-”. “First-generation students” refers to those who did not have a parent who attended college (see Appendix for more detail).

The Student Supports linked database

To better measure student participation in CalFresh, the California Policy Lab (CPL) partners with the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University Chancellor's Office (CSUCO), the University of California Office of the President (UCOP), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC). Through this partnership, CPL created a linked database of student-level administrative data on college enrollment, financial aid, and CalFresh participation that makes this analysis possible.

CPL matches encrypted data records from each agency without ever receiving Personally Identifiable Information (PII), allowing for accurate data linkage while guaranteeing the protection of private information.³

This data resource, known as the Student Supports database, is the first of its kind in California, and is enabling CPL and our research partners to:

- a) observe California college students as they begin, progress through, and complete their education;
- b) directly estimate student eligibility and take-up of safety-net benefits;
- c) pilot and evaluate strategies to increase take-up; and
- d) examine the relationship between receiving safety-net benefits and student success.

Our findings to date are available on the [Student Supports webpage](#).

Note: We updated our crosswalk among the different

datasets to more accurately link student information across sources. The results in the brief reflect the updated crosswalk, even for earlier years, and thus differ slightly from earlier data points (for AY 2019–20, 2020–21, and 2021–22).

This research is conducted through the [California College Data and Policy Project](#) (CCDPP). The Project is a joint initiative of the California Policy Lab and the Center for Studies in Higher Education. The CCDPP will generate new insights and research on what works to better support California students and their families as they transition through the education system.

Acknowledgements

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The California Policy Lab generates research insights for government impact. We are an independent, nonpartisan research institute at the University of California with sites in Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Sacramento. This research publication reflects the views of the authors and not necessarily the views of our funders, our staff, our advisory boards, the California Community College system, the University of California Office of the President, the California State University system, the California Department of Social Services, the California Student Aid Commission, or the Regents of the University of California.

Endnotes

- 1 Federal law requires that college students (enrolled half-time or more) meet additional requirements, beyond the standard SNAP eligibility criteria. These requirements are called "exemptions" and include situations such as caring for a young child, participating in work study or TANF, and participating in a SNAP Employment & Training program. During the pandemic, Congress added two additional exemptions: having "Zero Expected Family Contribution" based on your FAFSA, and being eligible for work study (even if you did not participate).
- 2 These laws included large allocations for basic needs centers on campus (AB 132), mandating more collaboration between campus basic needs staff and county eligibility workers (AB 1326), and streamlining the process by which an Employment & Training program could be classified as an exemption to the federal student rule (AB 396)
- 3 See Appendix C of our [CalFresh Eligibility Report](#) for more information on our linkage methodology.
- 4 The data fields required to link student records are unavailable for Calbright College students. We hope to incorporate this college in future reporting using an alternative methodology.

Appendix

Variable definitions

- **Received CalFresh:** Students are identified as participating in CalFresh if they received CalFresh benefits during a term (quarter or semester, depending on the school) in which they were also enrolled in college.
- **Filed a FAFSA:** Students who matched to a submitted FAFSA record in the California Student Aid Commission dataset were identified as having filed a FAFSA. All other students in the population were identified as not having filed a FAFSA.
- **Any financial aid recipient:** Among community college students, this group represents all students who received any type of [community college financial aid](#), including aid awarded by the federal or state government, and aid awarded by the California Community Colleges. Among UC students, this group represents all students who received aid through any of the following: the Blue and Gold Opportunity plan, Cal Grants, Pell Grants, Federal SEOG grants, UC grants, other gift aid or financial assistance from UC, veterans' specific assistance, work study, Chaffee grant, or either a federal or other type of loan.
- **First-generation student:** For community college students, first-generation students are defined as those who reported having no parent or guardian who attended college or earned an Associate degree, in accordance with California Community Colleges' [technical definition](#). This data began being collected by CCCCCO in 2017. For UC and CSU students, we define first-generation students as those who reported on the FAFSA that neither parent attended college. Approximately 76% of CSU undergraduates, 55% of CSU graduate students, 67% of UC undergraduates, and 31% of UC graduate students submitted a FAFSA. UC students who did not submit FAFSAs are not included in either the "first-generation" or the "not first-generation" subgroups. Given the different data sources used to define this subgroup, we recommend that readers avoid making comparisons regarding student counts or CalFresh participation rates across the higher education segments.
- **Enrollment types:**
 - For community college students, **first-time students** are those who are enrolled for credit in higher education for the first time after high school. **First-time transfer students** are those enrolled in the reporting college and who transferred from another institution of higher education. **Continuing students** are those who are enrolled in the current session and were enrolled in the previous regular session. **Returning students** are those enrolled in the reporting college after an absence of one or more terms. **Special admit students** are those currently enrolled in K–12. **Unknown** are those students whose enrollment status is not known. These categories are all mutually exclusive.
 - **Summer only** students are defined as those who are enrolled only in the summer term for a given academic year. **Fall, winter, and/or spring** students are those who are enrolled in at least one non-summer term in a given academic year.
- **Race/ethnicity:** For community college, CSU, and UC students, we rely on the racial and ethnic subgroups that are reported in each segment's administrative data, which are based on student self-report.
- **Zero expected family contribution (EFC):** The expected family contribution is a measure of how much the student and their family is expected to contribute to the cost of the student's education, based on information reported on their FAFSA. Individuals with zero EFC are not expected to contribute financially to the cost of education.
- **Has disability:** For community college, CSU, and UC students, this subgroup is based on an indicator for having a disability in college administrative data, and may not be inclusive of all students who identify as having a disability. Students with certain types of disability are not subject to the CalFresh "[student rule](#)" and therefore do not need to meet a student exemption to be eligible for CalFresh, so long as they meet the citizenship and income requirements.

TABLE A1. CalFresh Participation Among California Community College Students, Academic Year 2023–2024 by Campus

Campus	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Allan Hancock College	18,874	14.6	14.2	0.4
American River College	38,902	16.4	15.3	1.1
Antelope Valley College	17,062	27.4	25.6	1.8
Bakersfield College	44,355	24.4	23.9	0.5
Barstow Community College	5,116	29.9	28.8	1.1
Berkeley City College	7,164	17.6	17.2	0.4
Butte College	13,857	24.9	22.5	2.4
Cabrillo College	15,135	13.3	12.6	0.7
Calbright College ⁴	5,013			
Canada College	7,047	6.8	6.8	0.0
Cerritos Community College	31,726	17.2	16.1	1.1
Cerro Coso Community College	7,415	16.0	15.2	0.8
Chabot College	17,225	11.5	10.5	1.0
Chaffey College	31,493	13.9	13.0	0.9
Citrus College	15,086	14.7	13.7	1.0
City College of San Francisco	43,050	10.4	10.2	0.2
Clovis Community College	9,970	16.3	15.4	0.9
Coastline Community College	12,500	10.1	9.1	1.0
College of Alameda	4,607	20.5	19.9	0.6
College of Marin - Kentfield	8,824	8.2	8.4	-0.2
College of San Mateo	10,784	6.1	5.9	0.2
College of the Canyons	37,002	9.0	7.8	1.2
College of the Desert	17,982	16.3	15.6	0.7
College of the Redwoods	6,814	30.4	27.3	3.1
College of the Sequoias	17,619	25.2	22.9	2.3

Table A1 continues on next page

TABLE A1. CalFresh Participation Among California Community College Students, Academic Year 2023–2024 by Campus
(continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
College of the Siskiyous	3,461	14.5	13.2	1.3
Columbia College	3,654	18.7	15.9	2.8
Compton College	6,811	36.0	34.4	1.6
Contra Costa College	8,637	14.9	14.1	0.8
Copper Mountain College	2,404	25.7	22.9	2.8
Cosumnes River College	16,501	15.7	15.3	0.4
Crafton Hills College	7,873	12.1	10.3	1.8
Cuesta College	16,704	12.1	10.4	1.7
Cuyamaca College	9,275	29.9	26.9	3.0
Cypress College	17,116	15.2	14.4	0.8
De Anza College	26,733	6.5	6.3	0.2
Diablo Valley College	21,978	9.3	8.1	1.2
East Los Angeles College	55,444	13.8	15.4	-1.6
El Camino College	31,484	16.6	16.5	0.1
Evergreen Valley College	12,506	10.6	10.4	0.2
Feather River College	2,497	17.4	16.3	1.1
Folsom Lake College	10,954	11.4	10.0	1.4
Foothill College	22,639	7.8	6.6	1.2
Fresno City College	33,442	26.1	25.0	1.1
Fullerton College	23,446	13.4	12.3	1.1
Gavilan College	9,960	10.8	9.8	1.0
Glendale Community College	23,013	22.2	21.2	1.0
Golden West College	14,341	12.5	11.8	0.7
Grossmont College	16,064	18.9	17.3	1.6
Hartnell Community College	13,838	13.1	12.5	0.6
Imperial Valley College	12,010	27.3	25.4	1.9

Table A1 continues on next page

TABLE A1. CalFresh Participation Among California Community College Students, Academic Year 2023–2024 by Campus
(continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Irvine Valley College	20,151	8.5	7.6	0.9
Lake Tahoe Community College	9,077	5.7	5.0	0.7
Laney College	11,036	22.6	22.1	0.5
Las Positas College	9,934	6.4	5.9	0.5
Lassen College	3,017	14.9	13.6	1.3
Long Beach City College	36,547	21.1	19.8	1.3
Los Angeles City College	22,514	23.8	23.3	0.5
Los Angeles Harbor College	11,465	18.4	18.9	-0.5
Los Angeles Mission College	14,505	19.2	19.9	-0.7
Los Angeles Pierce College	22,807	15.5	14.7	0.8
Los Angeles Southwest College	7,531	28.0	30.3	-2.3
Los Angeles Trade - Technical College	18,548	29.5	29.4	0.1
Los Angeles Valley College	22,254	20.1	20.7	-0.6
Los Medanos College	10,623	15.5	12.7	2.8
Madera Community College	6,110	26.3	24.7	1.6
Mendocino College	7,437	22.1	21.4	0.7
Merced Community College	17,891	22.9	20.7	2.2
Merritt College	7,627	21.1	19.7	1.4
Miracosta College	21,767	9.0	9.6	-0.6
Mission College	9,985	9.4	8.5	0.9
Modesto Junior College	24,617	18.6	16.6	2.0
Monterey Peninsula College	10,642	10.3	9.3	1.0
Moorpark College	18,014	8.0	7.6	0.4
Moreno Valley College	12,384	16.9	15.3	1.6
Mt. San Antonio College	72,317	11.2	10.5	0.7

Table A1 continues on next page

TABLE A1. CalFresh Participation Among California Community College Students, Academic Year 2023–2024 by Campus (continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Mt. San Jacinto College	26,452	15.1	14.2	0.9
Napa Valley College	6,372	9.8	8.9	0.9
Norco College	13,598	11.5	10.5	1.0
North Orange Continuing Education	16,205	11.3	10.1	1.2
Ohlone College	15,871	5.5	5.0	0.5
Orange Coast College	20,631	10.7	9.8	0.9
Oxnard College	8,788	16.4	15.0	1.4
Palo Verde College	5,268	8.5	7.0	1.5
Palomar College	28,028	8.6	8.1	0.5
Pasadena City College	38,615	12.4	12.6	-0.2
Porterville College	6,313	32.1	34.0	-1.9
Reedley College	11,161	27.8	26.2	1.6
Rio Hondo College	32,331	12.3	12.2	0.1
Riverside City College	25,458	15.8	14.3	1.5
Sacramento City College	21,714	19.1	17.2	1.9
Saddleback College	35,715	7.7	7.3	0.4
San Bernardino Valley College	18,114	21.5	19.5	2.0
San Diego City College	13,697	19.9	19.6	0.3
San Diego College of Continuing Education	23,290	21.3	22.1	-0.8
San Diego Mesa College	21,864	12.4	12.4	0.0
San Diego Miramar College	15,623	8.0	7.7	0.3
San Joaquin Delta College	26,064	18.0	16.4	1.6
San Jose City College	12,199	13.1	13.0	0.1
Santa Ana College	60,735	12.5	10.8	1.7

Table A1 continues on next page

TABLE A1. CalFresh Participation Among California Community College Students, Academic Year 2023–2024 by Campus (continued)

	TOTAL STUDENT COUNT (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2023–24)	% OF STUDENT BODY ENROLLED IN CALFRESH (AY 2022–23)	PERCENTAGE POINT CHANGE FROM AY 2022–23 TO 2023–24
Santa Barbara City College	25,557	8.4	8.3	0.1
Santa Monica College	36,312	14.9	14.3	0.6
Santa Rosa Junior College	31,694	8.9	8.3	0.6
Santiago Canyon College	25,970	12.9	11.4	1.5
Shasta College	13,125	19.7	18.6	1.1
Sierra College	24,980	10.9	9.7	1.2
Skyline College	12,036	6.8	6.9	-0.1
Solano Community College	12,221	12.8	11.7	1.1
Southwestern College	27,620	15.0	15.3	-0.3
Taft College	7,392	24.2	21.5	2.7
Ventura College	14,321	12.1	12.3	-0.2
Victor Valley College	21,947	26.5	25.2	1.3
West Hills College - Coalinga	3,925	28.9	28.4	0.5
West Hills College - Lemoore	5,440	26.0	23.1	2.9
West Los Angeles College	12,716	23.0	23.5	-0.5
West Valley College	12,149	5.2	5.1	0.1
Woodland Community College	5,047	16.8	17.4	-0.6
Yuba College	7,424	18.1	16.7	1.4

Note: Cell sizes less than 100 are suppressed to protect student privacy and are marked with a “-”.