

Data Sources for “Food Assistance Sources for Californians, 2021”

updated 2/10/23

CalFresh Regular Issuance

To estimate the number of meals from CalFresh, we used data from the [California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\)](#).

- For the months of Jan-Jun 2021, we used FY 20-21 data (File: [DFA256FY20-21](#), Column AK: Total Issuances, Statewide by month)
- For the months of July-Dec 2021, we used FY 21-22 data (File: [DFA256FY21-22](#), Column AK: Total Issuances, Statewide by month)

CalFresh Emergency Allotments

To estimate the number of meals from CalFresh emergency allotments, we used data from the [US Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) for the state of California](#). We confirmed with CDSS that the emergency allotments were not reported in the Regular Issuance data.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program

To estimate meals from WIC, we used dollar amounts of EBT transactions, statewide, in 2021 from the [California Health and Human Services Open Data Portal](#) --> [2021 Forward \(Part C\) WIC EBT Redemptions](#)

Pandemic EBT

We used the [Pandemic-EBT Outcomes Report](#) to estimate the value of benefits issued through P-EBT 2.0 in 2021, to eligible children who lost access to free or reduced-price school meals between October 2020 – August 2021. We included total benefits issued to both school-age and young children.

School Nutrition

Counts of free and reduced-price meals served to children at schools (e.g., breakfast, lunch, snack) were obtained from the California Department of Education for School Year (SY) 2020-2021 and summer 2021. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sh/sn/#annual>. Data are available by school year only. Most recent SY 2020-21 was used to approximate entire calendar year 2021. This may be an undercount, as some schools were closed in Fall 2020 but open and serving meals in Fall 2021.

- For school year 2020-21, data are from [School Nutrition Program SNP County profile report](#) Total Summary Tab □ 2020-21 Participation Data, All Free/Reduced Meals served)
- For summer 2021, data come from [Summer Meal Programs](#) – Includes Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Options (SSO)
 - Total SFSP & SSO Annual tab □ Total Summer Meals Column, statewide for SY 2020-21

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Data are from the [California Department of Education Food Programs](#) data site. The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides [Statewide](#) Summary Tabs for meals served at Child Care Centers, Adult Day Care Centers, Day Care Homes. We used data from the following fields to estimate food assistance meals:

- o SS Breakfast – California Statewide, Free and Reduced meals combined
- o SS Lunch – California Statewide, Free and Reduced meals combined
- o SS Supper – California Statewide, Free and Reduced meals combined
- o SS Snack – California Statewide, Free and Reduced meals combined

Data were available from October 2020 through September 2021. Oct 20-Dec 20 reports were used to approximate service for same dates in 2021.

Other Senior / Meal Programs

Home delivered meals for older adults were reported on the [California Department on Aging's COVID-19 Response Data Dashboard](#). Actual numbers of meals served were reported for the first 6 months of 2021 only; we used the average number of meals per month and to calculated the approximate number of meals for 2021. This number, 30.2M meals, is consistent with recent trends; 27M meals were reported in 2020, which represented a 51% increase over the previous year (2019).

We were unable to obtain estimates of meals provided by programs such as Meals on Wheels, medically tailored meal services, and other delivery or specialty programs serving older adults. Using guidance from [Closing the Meal Gap for Older Californians \(2021\)](#), we determined that these additional forms of food assistance make up a very small fraction of total food assistance in California. To account for these meals, we augmented CDA's 2021 meal count by 10%.

Food Banks (and other Charitable Food Assistance programs)

Pounds of food distributed through food banks represent food provided by the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), community, retail, and agricultural donations, and purchased food.

- CAFB members: Total pounds of food distributed by member food banks in 2021 came from CAFB's Member Survey fielded in October 2022. Thirty-three out of 41 member food banks reported pounds of food distributed in 2021. Data for the remaining 8 food banks were derived using annual reports or prior year estimates.
- Non-CAFB members: We approximated the amount of food distributed by non-CAFB member food banks based on a CDSS memo from September 2021, which uses a 60/40 formula which considers poverty and unemployment rates in the food banks' distribution areas. In September 2021, non-CAFB members' 60/40 determinations represented 12% of the whole; we used this figure as a proxy for the share of food being distributed through these agencies. We also recognize there are other organizations and entities that distribute food but were not included in this calculation, such as private charities that solicit or glean

food independently for distribution, and Tribal organizations. (For example, the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations had 2349 average monthly participants in 2021, but data on pounds of food distributed was not immediately available.) To conservatively account for these other food distribution programs, we assumed that a total of 15% of food distribution was done by non-CAFB member organizations, or around 182M pounds.

Notes

- For benefits reported as dollars, we used a conversion of 1 meal = \$3.45 to calculate the number of meals provided, based on [Feeding America's most recent \(2020\) average meal cost for California](#).
- For food assistance provided by food banks, we used a conversion factor of 1.2 lbs = 1 meal.
- For programs reporting meals served, we kept the data in their original units (meals), recognizing there may be variation across programs in meal size, composition, and value.

We thank the San Diego Hunger Coalition and Diana Jensen for their assistance and advice. For questions about the data, please contact maylynn.tan@cafoodbanks.org.