Methods, Limitations, and References

Preventing Hunger Dashboard

1. Indicator Name: Preventing Hunger
   a. Methods
      i. The primary source of data for CalFresh is the CalWIN data system, which documents all CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and General Assistance benefits distributed to county residents.
      ii. CalWIN data include the total amount of funds distributed by month, the demographics and zip codes of households receiving benefits, and the number of applications received and expedited by month.
      iii. To estimate the number of meals provided by CalFresh, the total amount of CalFresh funds provided to residents per month is divided by an estimate of the average cost of a low-cost meal for a family of four in Santa Cruz county. This average cost is derived from the US Department of Agriculture's national monthly low-cost meal estimates, which are then adjusted to reflect the differential in the cost of food in Santa Cruz county relative to the national average (see "Feeding America" report below).
   b. Limitations
      i. The estimated number of meals provided by CalFresh assumes that CalFresh recipients are buying low-cost foods and that the average family receiving benefits includes two parents and two children.
      ii. The national meal cost estimates and local cost adjustments may not always reflect current prices.
   c. Sources & References
      i. USDA low-cost meal estimates by month: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp/usda-food-plans-cost-food-reports-monthly-reports
      ii. Feeding America reports: Hunger & Poverty in the United States | Map the Meal Gap (feedingamerica.org)