



Low-Income Children Face Healthy Lifestyle Barriers: Top Facts from California, 2009

The *Network for a Healthy California (Network)* creates innovative partnerships that empower low-income Californians to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and food security with the goal of preventing obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases. The *Network* surveys 9- to 11-year-old children using the *California Children's Healthy Eating and Exercise Practices Survey (CalCHEEPS)* every two years.¹ These key facts from the 2009 *CalCHEEPS* show that children from low-income families face greater barriers to achieving a healthy lifestyle. In California, the majority of children (56%) are enrolled in free or reduced price school meals due to their families' low income.²

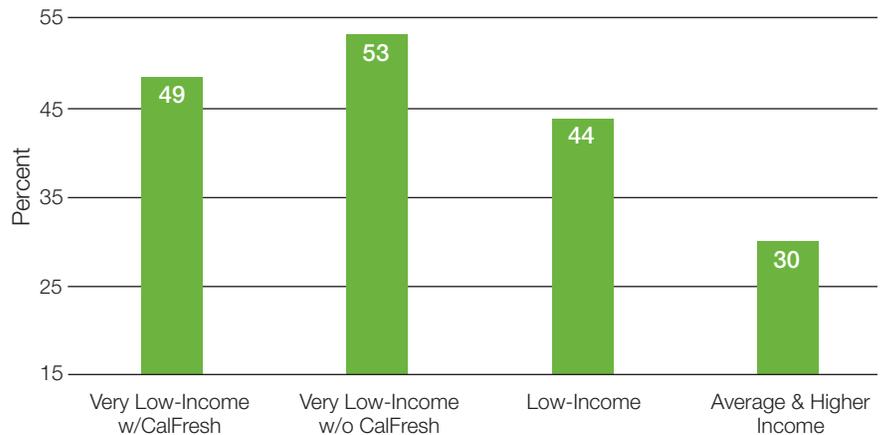


fact 1

Low-income children are more likely to be overweight.

Nearly two out of five children in California are overweight or obese. The rate is over 60 percent higher among children from very low-income homes compared to those from average and higher income households. Over half of these children are overweight and of those, up to two-thirds are already obese.

Rates of Overweight and Obesity Are Much Higher Among Very Low- and Low-Income Children



Notes: Overweight is defined as a BMI \geq 85th to $<$ 95th percentile. Obesity is a BMI \geq 95th percentile. CalFresh was formerly known as Food Stamps in California.



fact 2 **Children do not get the recommended amount of physical activity.**

Fewer than half (48%) of the 9- to 11-year-old children in California meet the guideline to engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate and vigorous physical activity daily. Only two out of five (40%) children who reside in very low-income CalFresh households meet this guideline.

fact 3 **Children eat too few fruits and vegetables.**

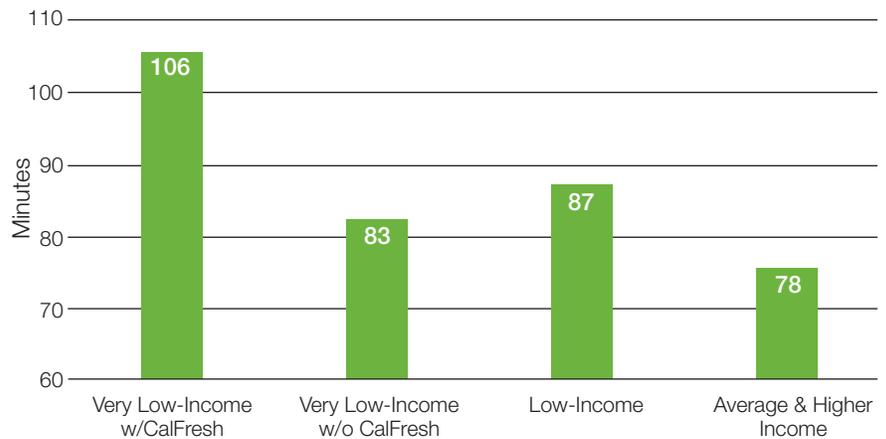
Fewer than one out of three (31%) California children meet the fruit recommendation for good health and only one in ten (9%) eat the recommended cups of vegetables.

fact 4

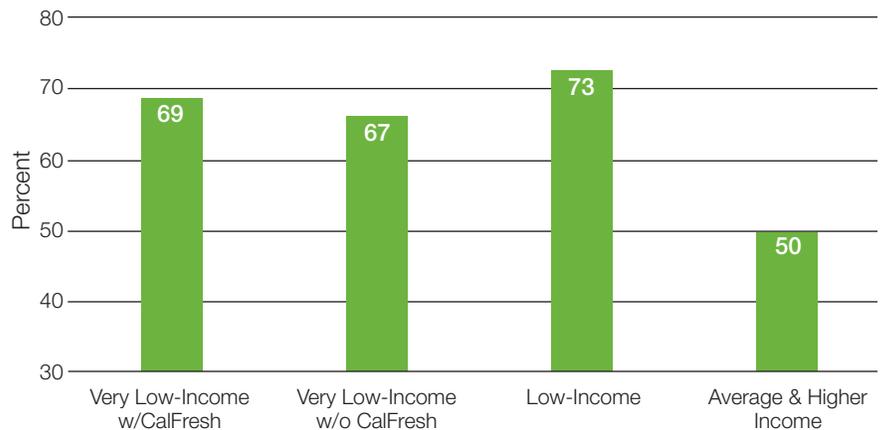
Low-income children get more screen time.

Children from lower income households spend up to 30 minutes more daily watching television and playing video or computer games compared to children from average and higher income homes. They are up to 50 percent more likely to have a television in their bedroom. California children with televisions in their bedrooms average 30 minutes more screen time and are 20 percent less likely to meet the recommended two or fewer hours a day of screen time, when compared to children without a television in their bedroom.

Many Very Low-Income Children Spend More Time Watching Television and Playing Video or Computer Games



Most Children From Low-Income Homes Have a Television in the Room Where They Sleep



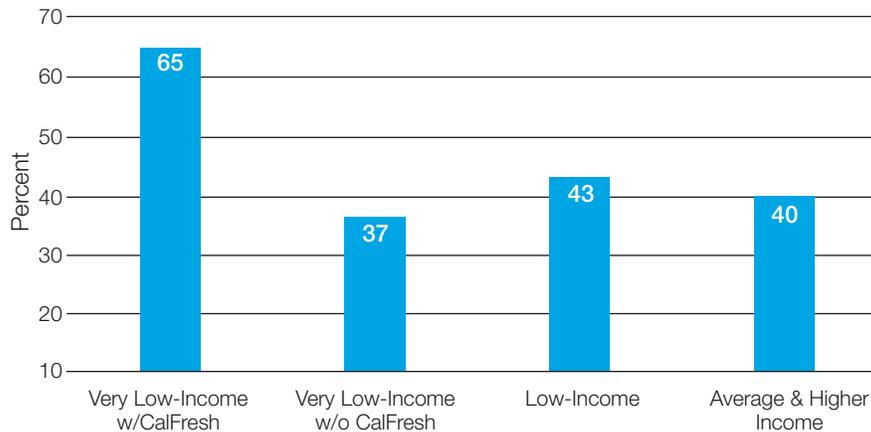


fact 5

More parents can be role models for a healthy lifestyle.

Almost two-thirds of children who reside in CalFresh households agree that their parents eat high calorie, low nutrient foods compared to about two-fifths of the children from other groups. California children who agree with this statement report more daily servings of high-fat snacks (0.9 vs. 0.7 servings) and high calorie, low nutrient foods (3.8 vs. 3.3 servings), compared to those who disagree. Parents and other adults can support healthy eating by being role models.

Many Children Agree That Their Parents Eat High Calorie, Low Nutrient Foods like French Fries, Chips, or Desserts

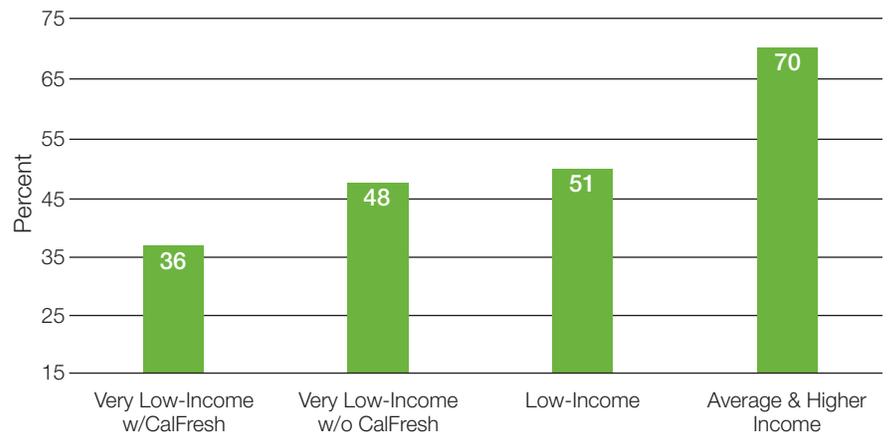


fact 6

Few low-income children participate in organized sports to support an active lifestyle.

Low-income children are up to 50 percent less likely to participate in organized sports. California children who participate in organized sports are 34 percent more likely to meet the physical activity recommendation on a typical day. Organized sports, offered outside of the school day, support physically active lifestyles among low-income children.

Children From Low-Income Homes Are Less Likely to Participate in Organized Sports Outside of Their School Physical Education Class

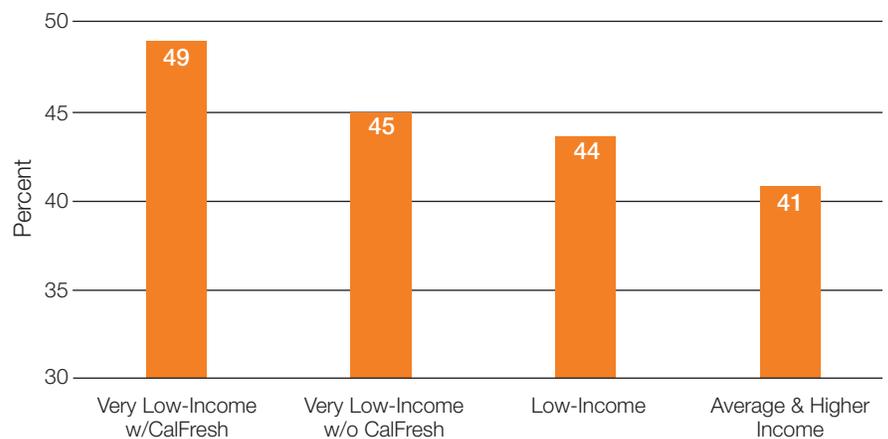


fact 7

Many students get high calorie, low nutrient foods as rewards in the classroom.

Just under half of California children report that their teachers reward students by giving out high calorie, low nutrient rewards like candy, cookies, chips, or soda.

Very Low-Income Children Are Most Likely to Get Candy, Cookies, Chips, or Soda Rewards From Teachers



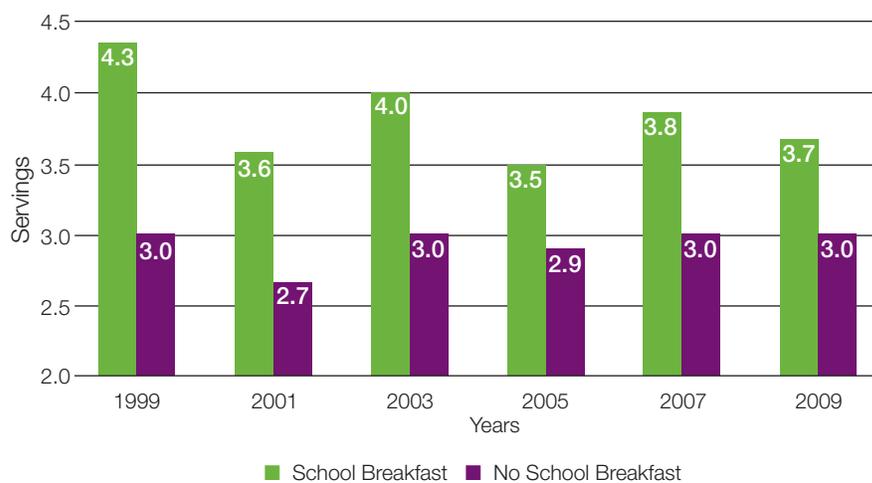


fact 8

Higher participation in the school breakfast program may help increase fruit and vegetable intake.

Children participating in school breakfast average 0.6 to 1.3 servings more fruits and vegetables in every survey year from 1999 through 2009.

California Children Who Have School Breakfast Eat More Fruits and Vegetables

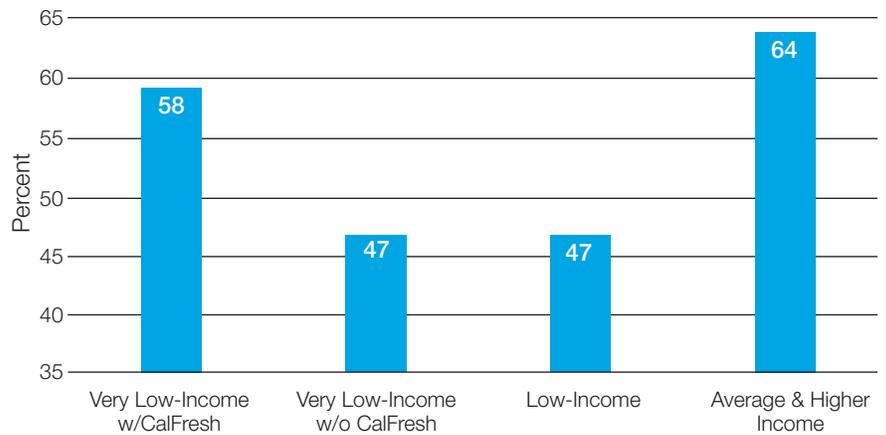


fact 9

Low-income children have less access to nutrition lessons.

Children from average and higher income households are up to 27 percent more likely to report access to nutrition lessons at school compared to children from lower income homes.

Many Very Low- and Low-Income Children Have Less Access to Nutrition Lessons at School

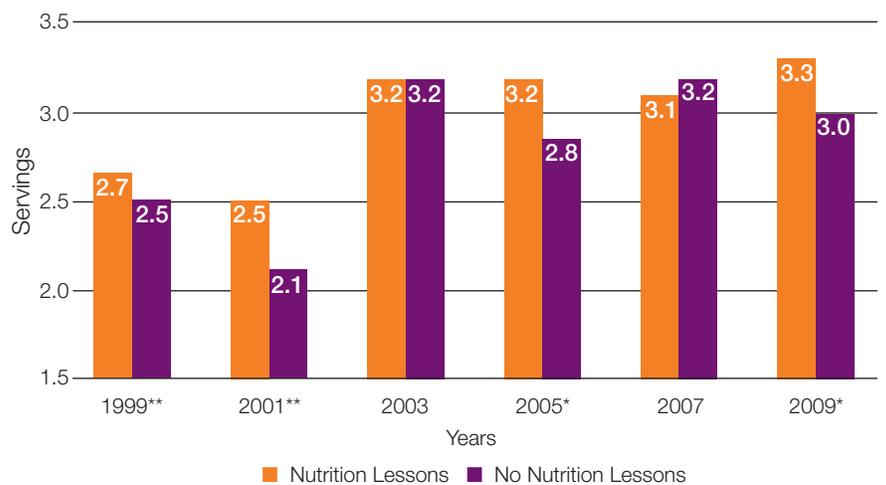


fact 10

School nutrition lessons empower children to make healthy food choices.

Participating in nutrition lessons at school is positively related to fruit and vegetable consumption in most survey years.

California Children Who Have Nutrition Lessons Tend to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables



Notes: *p<.05 **p<.01



Data Description

Comparisons are made among four groups of 9- to 11-year-old children using federal poverty level and CalFresh participation (Table 1). Only statistically significant differences are reported ($p < .05$).

Table 1: Categorization of Children

INCOME GROUPS	CALFRESH HOUSEHOLDS	FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL
Very Low-Income w/CalFresh	Yes	$\leq 130\%$
Very Low-Income w/o CalFresh	No	$\leq 130\%$
Low-Income	No	$>130-185\%$
Average and Higher Income	No	$>185\%$

Data Sources

¹ California Department of Public Health, *Network for a Healthy California*, 1999-2009 *California Children's Healthy Eating and Exercise Practices Survey (CalCHEEPS)*. Background and Documentation: 2009 *CalCHEEPS*. www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/REU-CalCHEEPSBackground_and_Documentation2009.pdf. Accessed April 7, 2011.

² California Department of Education. *DataQuest: 2009-2010 Free or Reduced Price Meals Data*. <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>. Accessed April 7, 2011.



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California* with funding from USDA SNAP, known in California as CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.cachampionsforchange.net.