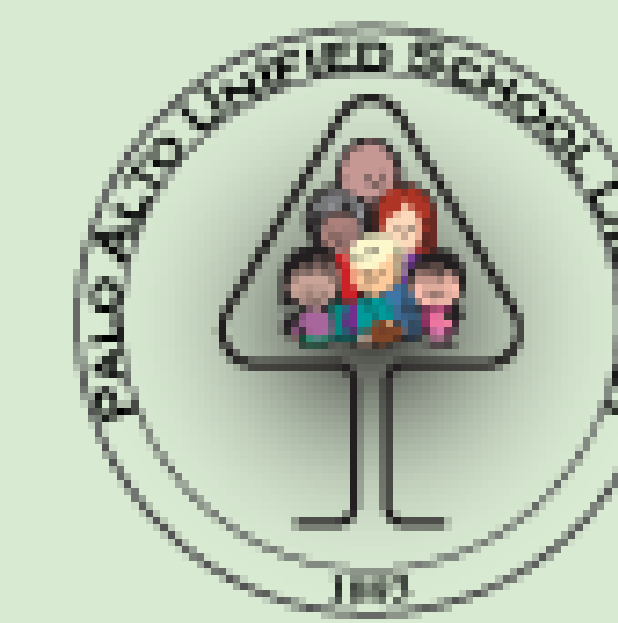




Nutrition Classes for Food Desert Residents

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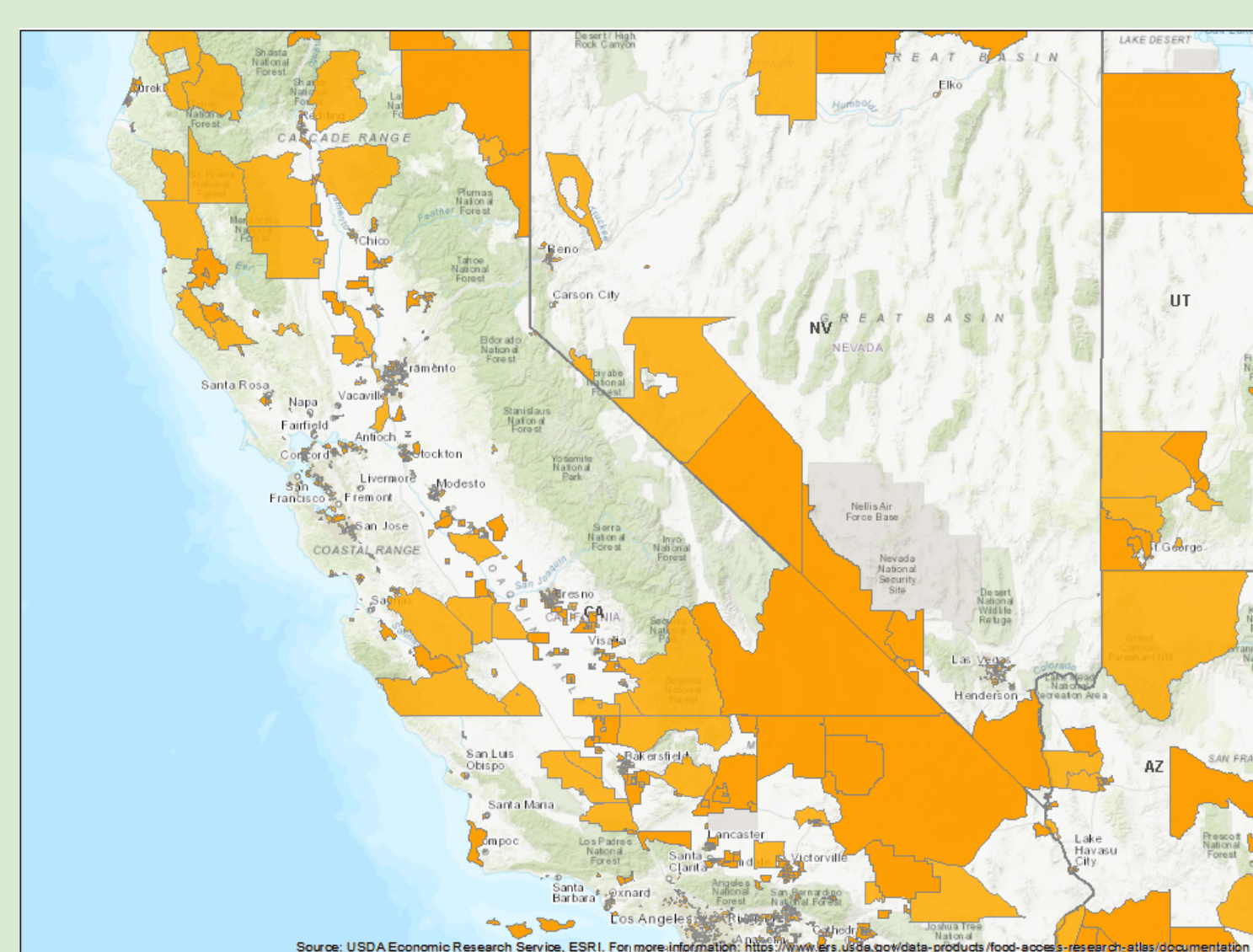


Introduction

Food deserts in low income communities contribute to the cycle of poverty in this US and create health issues for residents. People in low income areas do not have easy access to groceries, nor do they have time to cook said groceries (Freeman, 2007). Fresh Approach is combats this issue through their program, Veggie Rx, which includes nutrition/cooking classes as well as vouchers for farmers' market vegetables. This study analyses the applicability of the program.

Research Methodologies

Data points from 800+ survey from Fresh Approach regarding economic/familial backgrounds of program participants were collected. The data was collected from 2019 and 2020 Veggie Rx workshops. Data collected included testimonials, monthly income, household size, CalFresh/SNAP status and zip code. Participants residing in food deserts were defined by zip code and data was analyzed separate from the group.



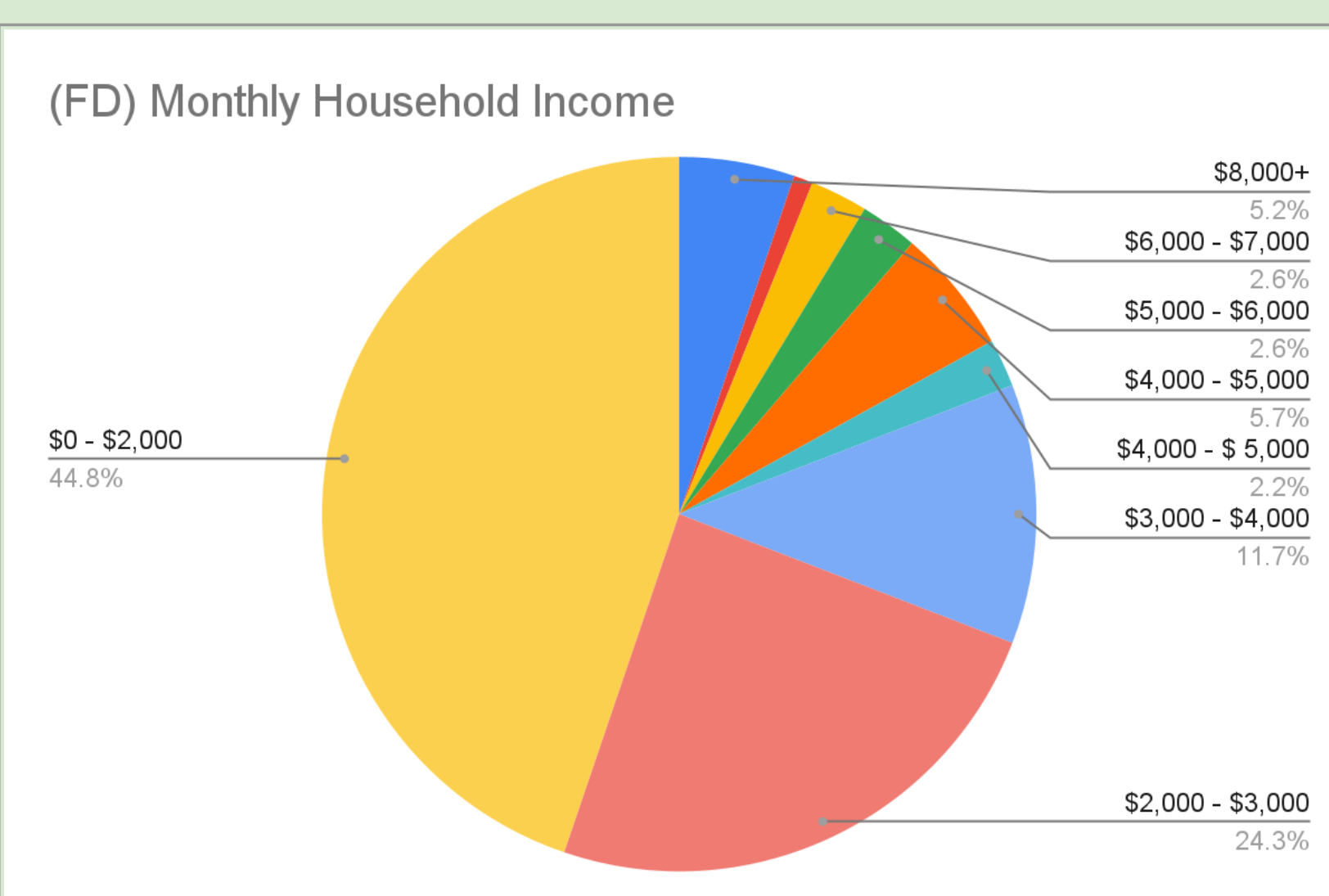
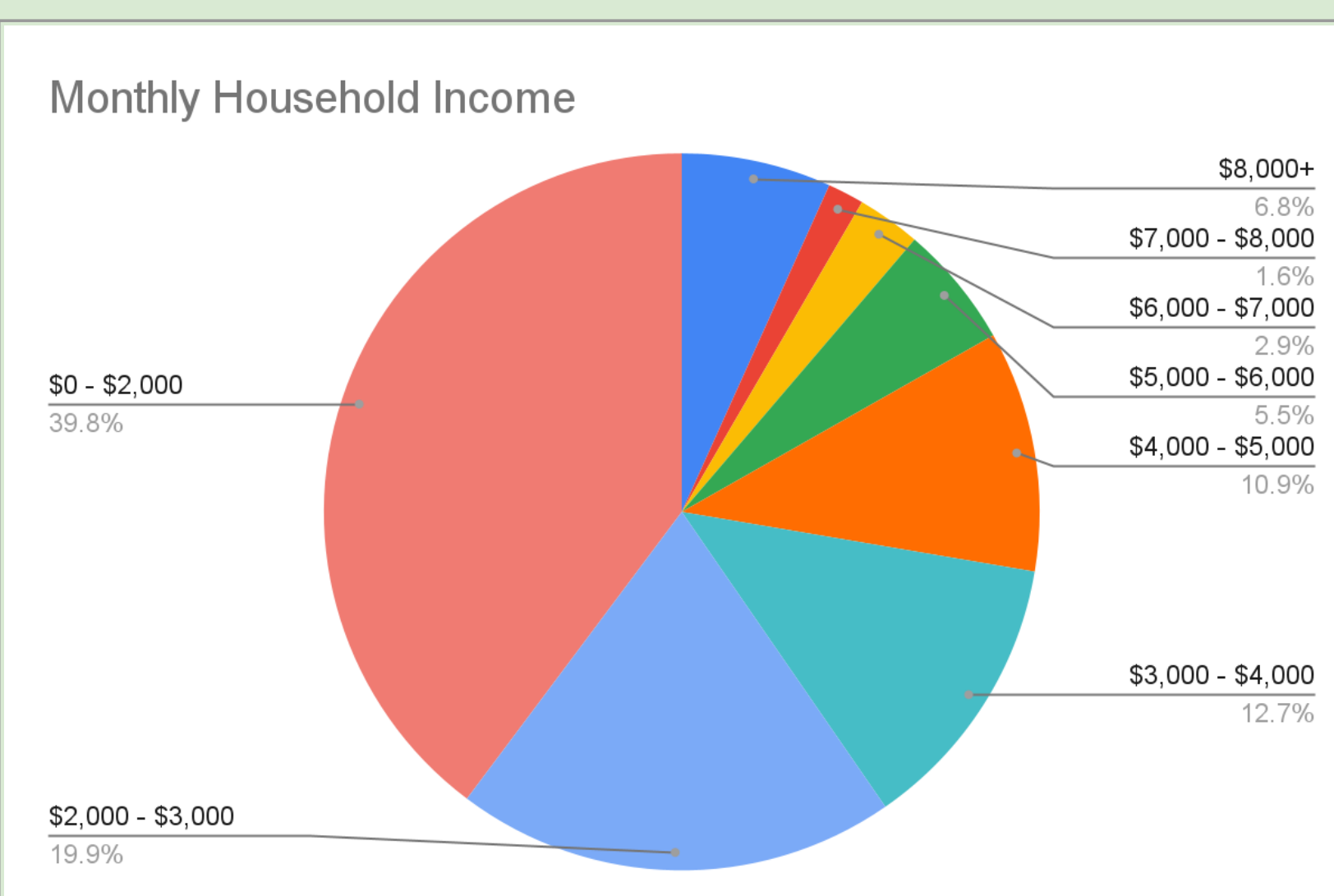
Map of California showing food deserts. (USDA)

Implications & Next Steps

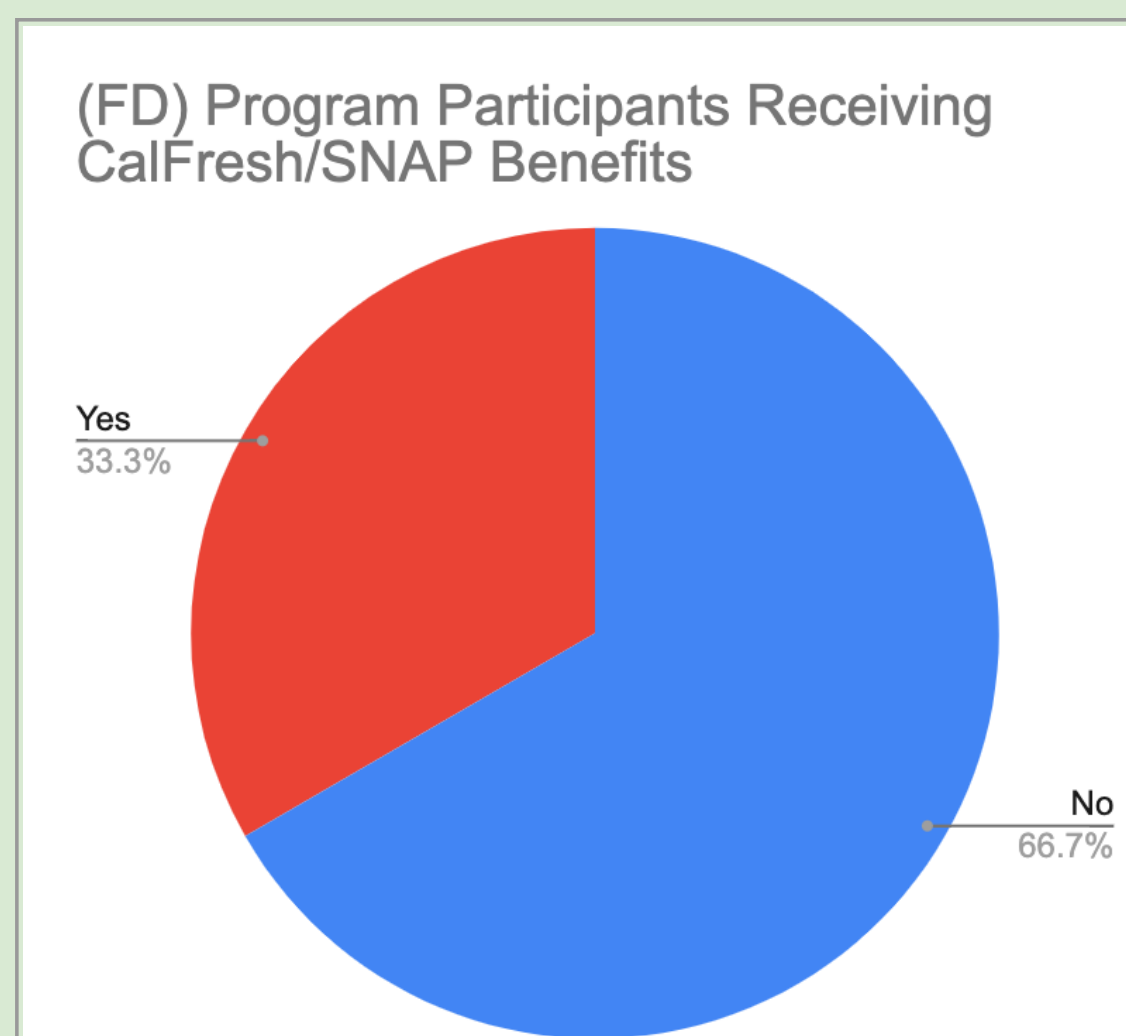
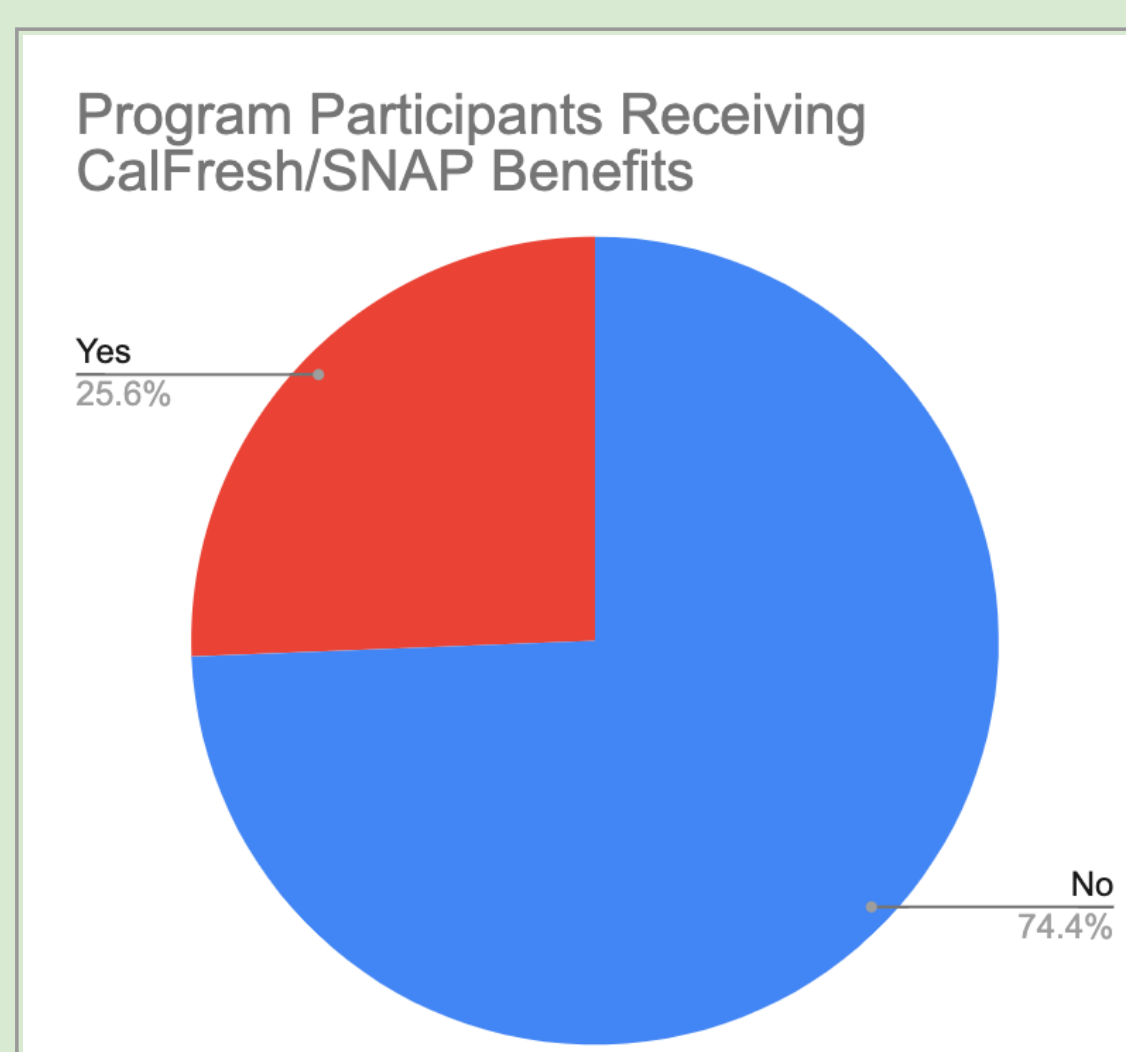
It is clear that there is a need for programs such as Veggie Rx, one that addresses the difficulties of accessing healthy foods as a low-income person by providing produce vouchers as well as cooking and nutrition classes. It is important to acknowledge and support the efforts of different organizations in combating food inequality as it is a problem that afflicts many. The issue needs to be addressed in many ways and Veggie Rx is a great method.

Data & Findings

“It has been such a pleasure to visit different markets and select from the rainbow arrays of fruits and vegetables and talk with our local farmers. In these difficult economic times, the vouchers have been immensely helpful in adding additional support to my family's food budget. It has really meant a lot to us”

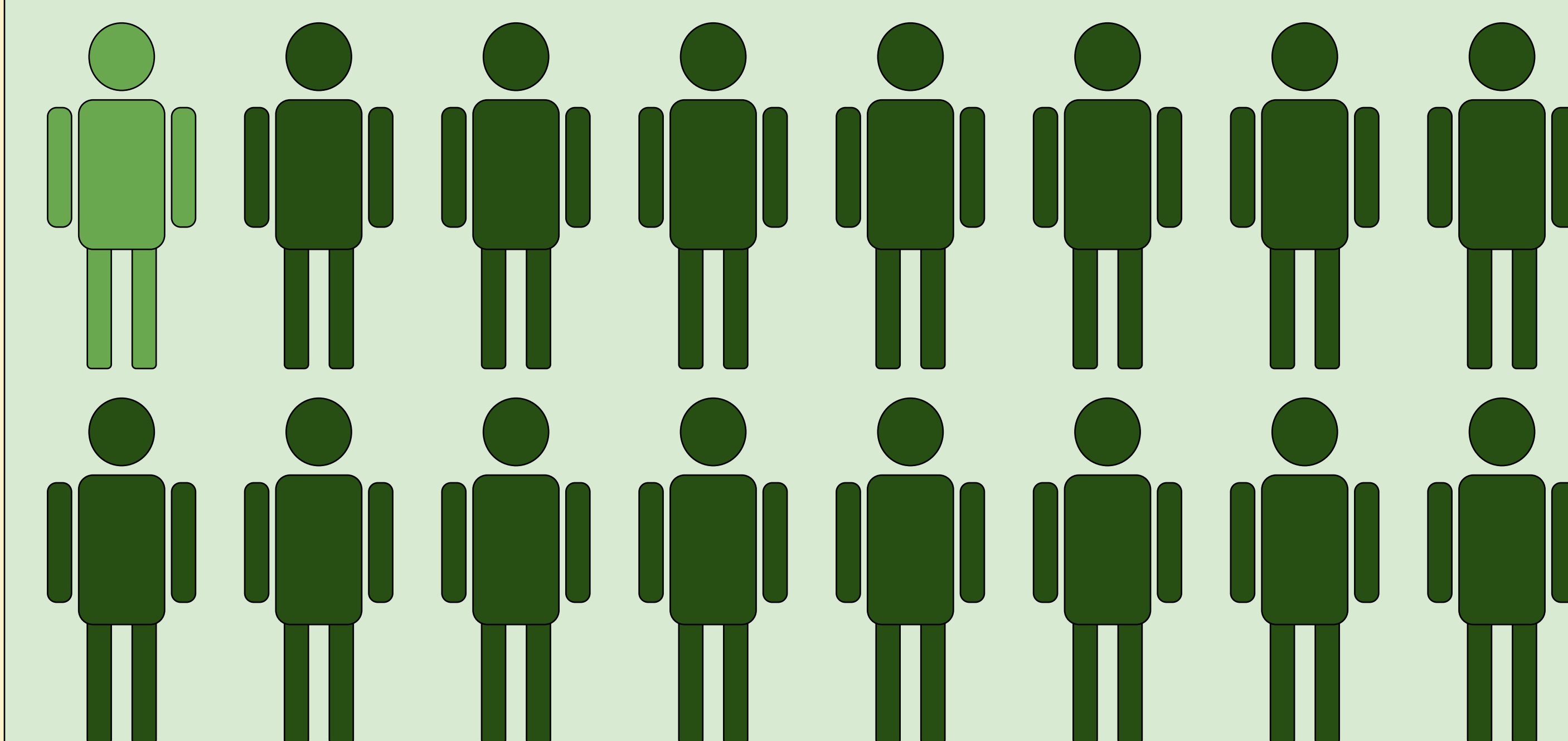


40% of Veggie Rx participants live in a food desert. The program is not targeted towards food desert residents or CalFresh/SNAP beneficiaries, though the food desert residents who participate generally have more difficult circumstances than the average participant.



“My daughters have been eating more local fruits and veggies from the farmers' market since we started this program. I lost my job a couple of months ago and this program has been helping me put food on the table”

(Quotes were all taken directly from Veggie Rx participants)



1 in every 16 Americans lives in a food desert*

*defined as a low-income area where 500+ people or 33%+ of the population is far (>1 mile in urban areas, 10 for rural) from a supermarket or large grocery store (USDA)

Analysis & Conclusions

The Veggie Rx program serves many low income Californians, but many are not receiving CalFresh or SNAP benefits. The majority of participants do not live in food deserts (60%) Those living in food deserts showed a higher than average household size and lower than average household monthly income, demonstrating that those living in food deserts likely cannot spend as much time or money on healthy, hearty foods.

The testimonials support the implementation of such a program. The quantitative data was useful in identifying the demographic of participants, although more data would be useful to provide a measure of how efficient or important such a program could be.

Citations & Acknowledgments

Thank you to Shelby Bustria, Ana Pereda and the Veggie Rx Team at Fresh Approach. Additional appreciation for Erin Angell and Caroline Peres.

Freeman, A. (2007). Fast Food: Oppression through Poor Nutrition. *California Law Review*, 95(6), 2221-2259. doi:10.2307/20439143