



BY ALISSA ANDERSON

With Many California Communities Still Economically Distressed, the New Congress Should Prioritize Policies That Improve People's Economic Well-Being

As the 115th Congress convenes this month, the US economy is in its seventh year of recovery from the Great Recession. Yet many communities in California have not shared in the nation's recent economic gains. Statewide, nearly 6 million people, including almost 2 million children, are living in families with incomes below the US Census Bureau's official poverty line, which is about \$19,000 in annual income for a family of three.¹

Poverty affects communities in every one of California's 53 congressional districts, but there are stark differences in the level of economic hardship across districts. The latest Census figures show that the official 2015 poverty rate ranged from a low of 6.8% in District 17 (D-Khanna) in the San Jose area to a high of 30.8% in District 16 (D-Costa) in the San Joaquin Valley. Also, poverty has increased in nearly every district since 2000, and the largest increases are concentrated in inland, suburban communities, reflecting a broader national trend. These findings highlight the urgent need for the new Congress to prioritize policies that give all people the opportunity to thrive and move up the economic ladder.

The latest Census data (see Map on page 3) show that:

- **Three congressional districts are extremely distressed, with more than one-quarter of all residents living in poverty.** These districts – 16 (D-Costa), 21 (R-Valadao), and 34 (D-Becerra) – include communities in the San Joaquin Valley and in Los Angeles.²
- **In eight districts, between one-fifth and one-quarter of all residents live in poverty.** These districts – 6 (D-Matsui), 8 (R-Cook), 29 (D-Cárdenas), 36 (D-Ruiz), 40 (D-Roybal-Allard), 43 (D-Waters), 44 (D-Barragán), and 51 (D-Vargas) – include communities along the US-Mexico border as well as in Los Angeles, the Inland Empire, the San Fernando Valley, and the Sacramento region.³
- **Only 10 districts have fewer than 1 in 10 residents living in poverty.** These districts – 4 (R-McClintock), 14 (D-Speier), 15 (D-Swalwell), 17 (D-Khanna), 18 (D-Eshoo), 19 (D-Lofgren), 33 (D-Lieu), 39 (R-Royce), 49 (R-Issa), 52 (D-Peters) – largely include communities in the Bay Area and along the southern California coast.

In addition, a recent Brookings Institution analysis shows that nearly every California congressional district was more economically distressed in recent years than in 2000, due largely to the impact of the Great Recession. The communities that have been hit the hardest tend to be those in inland, suburban areas (see Table on page 5).

Specifically:

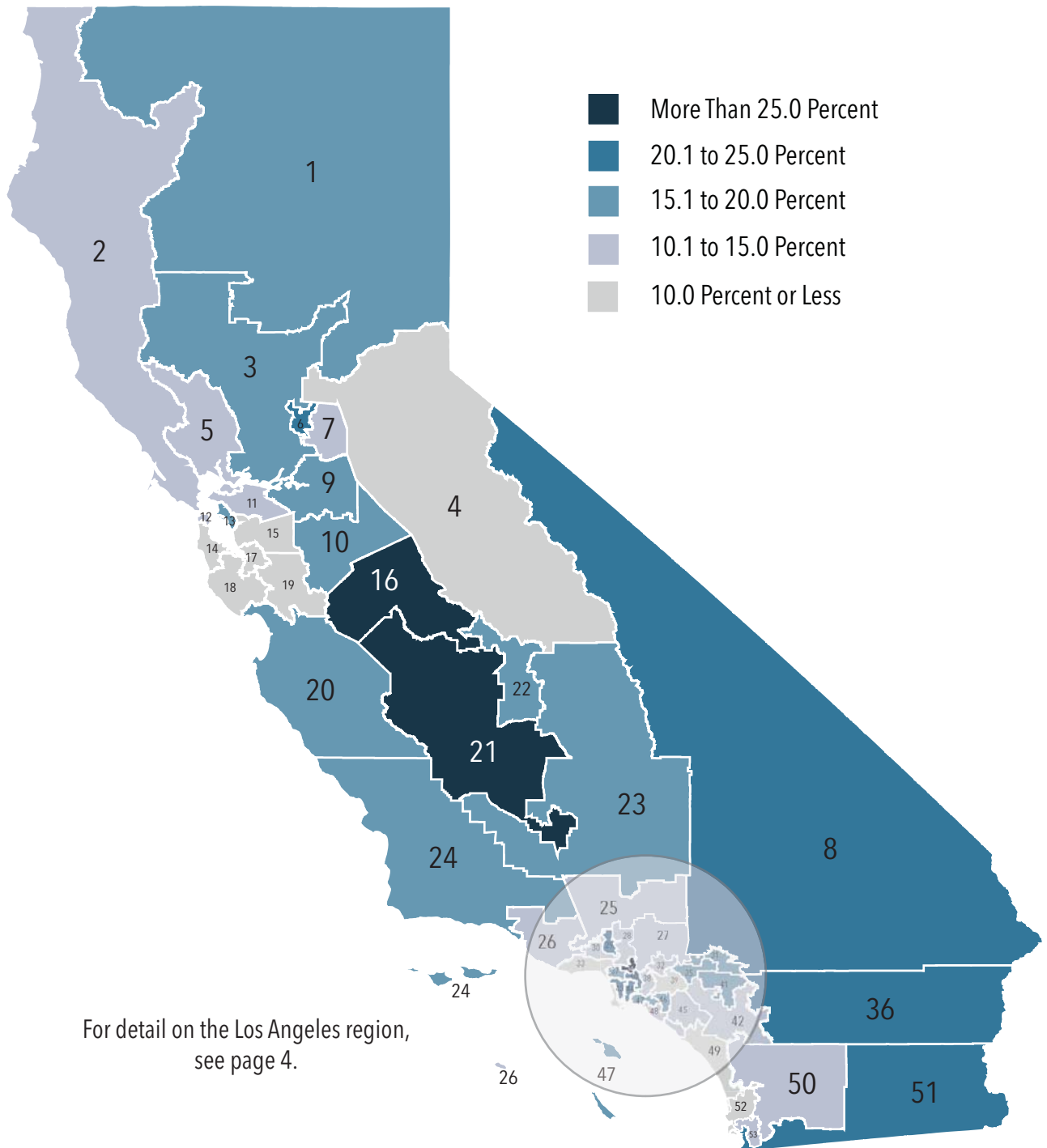
- **Poverty rates rose in 45 of California's 53 congressional districts between 2000 and 2010-14.**⁴ For example, the poverty rate increased by more than 4.0 percentage points between 2000 and 2010-14 in four districts: 5 (D-Thompson), 7 (D-Bera), 8 (R-Cook), and 41 (D-Takano), which include communities in the Inland Empire, the eastern Sierra, the Bay Area, and the Sacramento vicinity. In contrast, poverty rates declined in just two districts, while there was no statistically significant change in the remaining six districts.
- **Growth in the number of people living in poverty far outpaced overall population gains in most districts.**

For example:

- Between 2000 and 2010-14, the number of people facing severe economic hardship *more than doubled*, rising by 112%, in District 42 (R-Calvert), which includes suburban communities in Riverside County. Although District 42 experienced the greatest population gains in California during this period (the number of district residents rose by about three-quarters), the increase in the number of residents living in poverty still far exceeded the growth in the overall population.
- In District 7 (D-Bera), which includes suburban communities east and south of Sacramento, the number of residents facing severe economic hardship increased by about 84% between 2000 and 2010-14, far outpacing the 25% increase in the district's total population.
- Three other districts saw the number of economically distressed residents rise by more than 70% between 2000 and 2010-14, far exceeding overall population growth. These districts – 8 (R-Cook), 25 (R-Knight), and 45 (R-Walters) – include communities in the Inland Empire and Death Valley region, northern Los Angeles County, and Orange County. The vast majority of people living in poverty in these districts reside in suburban areas.

Poverty Rates Are High in Many California Congressional Districts

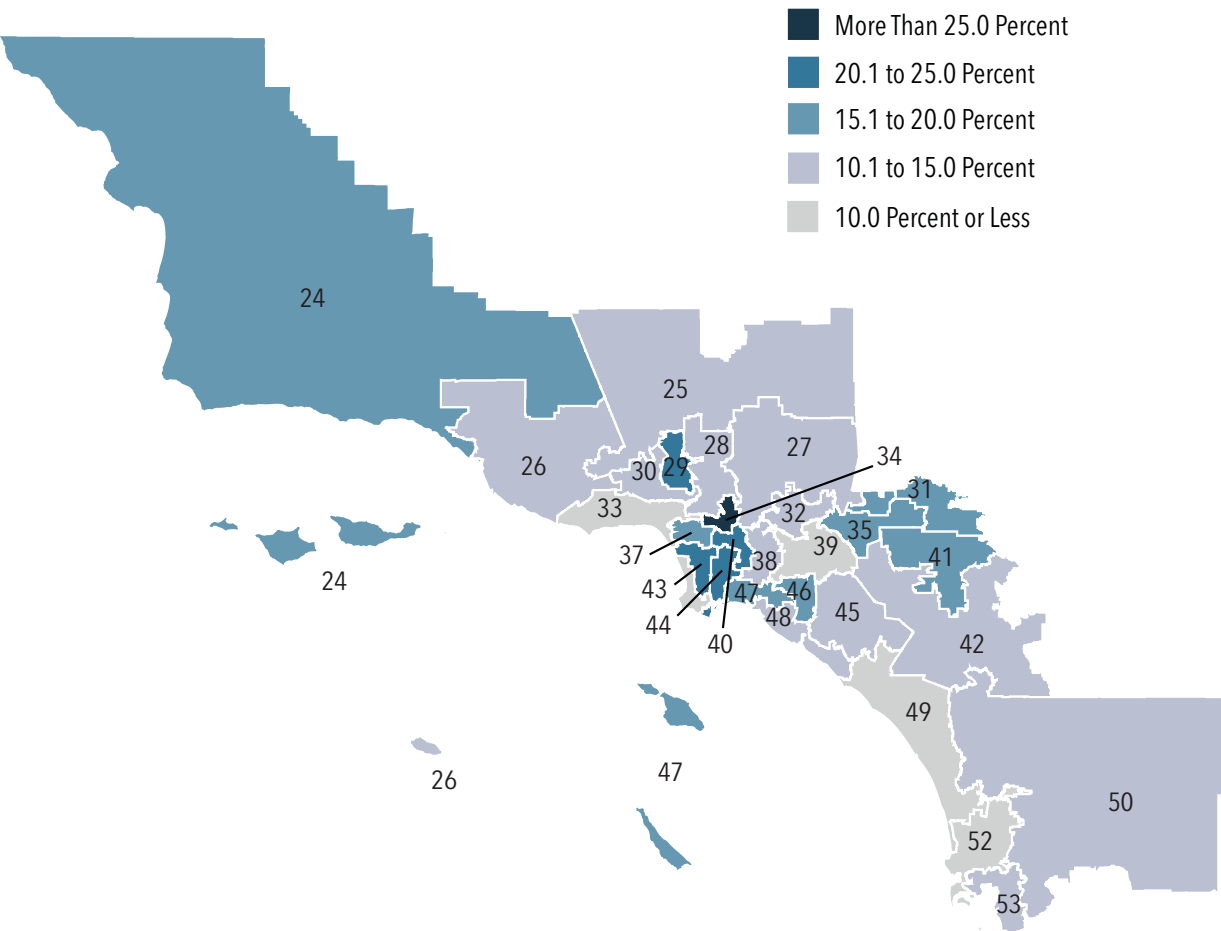
Percentage of People Living in Poverty in 2015 Based on the Official Federal Poverty Measure



Source: Budget Center analysis of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey data

Poverty Rates Are High in Many California Congressional Districts (Los Angeles Region Detail)

Percentage of People Living in Poverty in 2015 Based on the Official Federal Poverty Measure



Source: Budget Center analysis of US Census Bureau, American Community Survey data

The Number of People Living in Poverty Rose in Nearly Every District, With the Largest Increases Concentrated in Inland, Suburban Communities

District	Representative	Party	Percent Change, 2000 to 2010-14		Percentage of People Living in Poverty by Type of Community, 2010-14				Poverty Rate		Percentage Point Change in Poverty Rate
			People in Poverty	Total Population	City	Suburb	Small Metro	Rural	2000	2010- 14	2000 to 2010-14
California			29.9%	12.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14.2%	16.4%	2.2
1	LaMalfa, Doug	R	25.8%	7.6%	0.0%	4.0%	62.6%	33.4%	15.7%	18.4%	2.7
2	Huffman, Jared	D	28.2%	4.7%	0.0%	23.3%	20.8%	55.9%	11.1%	13.6%	2.5
3	Garamendi, John	D	36.7%	13.2%	0.0%	29.8%	54.3%	15.8%	13.6%	16.5%	2.8
4	McClintock, Tom	R	67.4%	26.2%	12.2%	52.8%	5.2%	29.8%	7.8%	10.4%	2.6
5	Thompson, Mike	D	64.2%	7.5%	0.0%	8.5%	85.1%	6.4%	8.5%	13.0%	4.5
6	Matsui, Doris O.	D	37.4%	16.4%	63.1%	36.9%	0.0%	0.0%	19.8%	23.4%	3.6
7	Bera, Ami	D	84.4%	24.5%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.9%	13.2%	4.3
8	Cook, Paul	R	74.9%	28.5%	3.0%	94.9%	0.0%	2.2%	15.5%	21.1%	5.6
9	McNerney, Jerry	D	42.1%	27.2%	52.0%	48.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.9%	18.9%	2.0
10	Denham, Jeff	R	52.9%	22.7%	0.0%	16.0%	84.0%	0.0%	14.3%	17.8%	3.5
11	DeSaulnier, Mark	D	49.3%	6.5%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.6%	12.0%	3.4
12	Pelosi, Nancy	D	20.8%	5.7%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.9%	13.6%	1.7
13	Lee, Barbara	D	14.2%	3.1%	66.4%	33.6%	0.0%	0.0%	16.1%	17.8%	1.7
14	Speier, Jackie	D	41.3%	6.0%	21.8%	78.2%	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%	8.1%	2.0
15	Swalwell, Eric	D	61.0%	17.1%	30.5%	69.5%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	8.7%	2.4
16	Costa, Jim	D	33.8%	17.5%	48.5%	8.1%	43.4%	0.0%	27.7%	31.5%	3.8
17	Khanna, Ro	D	40.9%	11.4%	64.5%	35.5%	0.0%	0.0%	6.0%	7.6%	1.6
18	Eshoo, Anna G.	D	25.4%	1.4%	38.3%	54.6%	7.0%	0.0%	5.9%	7.3%	1.4
19	Lofgren, Zoe	D	47.5%	9.9%	81.1%	18.9%	0.0%	0.0%	9.7%	13.0%	3.3
20	Panetta, Jimmy	D	41.9%	11.0%	0.0%	10.2%	89.8%	0.0%	13.3%	17.0%	3.7
21	Valadao, David	R	40.3%	23.4%	15.4%	62.3%	22.3%	0.0%	27.3%	31.0%	3.7
22	Nunes, Devin	R	56.1%	27.6%	25.3%	21.3%	53.4%	0.0%	16.9%	20.7%	3.8
23	McCarthy, Kevin	R	57.6%	31.1%	28.7%	51.2%	20.1%	0.0%	16.0%	19.3%	3.2
24	Carbajal, Salud	D	22.4%	4.5%	0.8%	0.2%	99.0%	0.0%	13.6%	15.9%	2.3
25	Knight, Steve	R	73.3%	27.9%	0.8%	99.2%	0.0%	0.0%	10.3%	14.0%	3.7
26	Brownley, Julia	D	40.1%	15.1%	54.7%	45.3%	0.0%	0.0%	9.7%	11.8%	2.1
27	Chu, Judy	D	3.5%	3.6%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.6%	12.6%	0.0
28	Schiff, Adam	D	-5.6%	-0.4%	60.1%	39.9%	0.0%	0.0%	16.8%	15.9%	-0.9
29	Cárdenas, Tony	D	11.3%	4.4%	96.5%	3.5%	0.0%	0.0%	20.7%	22.0%	1.4
30	Sherman, Brad	D	36.8%	11.7%	96.6%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	10.3%	12.6%	2.3
31	Aguilar, Pete	D	36.0%	21.1%	44.1%	55.9%	0.0%	0.0%	18.0%	20.2%	2.2
32	Napolitano, Grace	D	2.3%	2.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.7%	14.7%	0.0
33	Lieu, Ted	D	16.9%	1.7%	47.1%	52.9%	0.0%	0.0%	8.0%	9.2%	1.2
34	Becerra, Xavier	D	-4.2%	-0.3%	96.5%	3.5%	0.0%	0.0%	30.3%	29.1%	-1.2

District	Representative	Party	Percent Change, 2000 to 2010-14		Percentage of People Living in Poverty by Type of Community, 2010-14				Poverty Rate		Percentage Point Change in Poverty Rate
			People in Poverty	Total Population	City	Suburb	Small Metro	Rural	2000	2010- 14	2000 to 2010-14
35	Torres, Norma	D	24.2%	13.8%	23.2%	76.8%	0.0%	0.0%	17.0%	18.6%	1.6
36	Ruiz, Raul	D	65.8%	39.6%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	17.2%	20.5%	3.2
37	Bass, Karen	D	1.9%	4.0%	96.7%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	22.5%	22.0%	-0.5
38	Sánchez, Linda	D	16.0%	3.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%	12.9%	1.4
39	Royce, Ed	R	29.1%	6.8%	1.2%	98.8%	0.0%	0.0%	8.8%	10.6%	1.8
40	Roybal-Allard, Lucille	D	9.2%	2.3%	33.6%	66.4%	0.0%	0.0%	26.6%	28.3%	1.8
41	Takano, Mark	D	69.0%	32.1%	40.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.1%	20.6%	4.5
42	Calvert, Ken	R	112.0%	74.7%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.6%	10.4%	1.8
43	Waters, Maxine	D	5.6%	4.2%	36.9%	63.1%	0.0%	0.0%	20.5%	20.8%	0.3
44	Barragán, Nanette	D	7.0%	6.9%	41.7%	58.3%	0.0%	0.0%	23.7%	23.8%	0.0
45	Walters, Mimi	R	72.3%	17.1%	1.4%	98.6%	0.0%	0.0%	6.2%	9.1%	2.9
46	Correa, J. Louis	D	16.2%	2.3%	39.0%	61.0%	0.0%	0.0%	17.1%	19.4%	2.3
47	Lowenthal, Alan	D	3.9%	5.1%	61.5%	38.5%	0.0%	0.0%	17.5%	17.3%	-0.2
48	Rohrabacher, Dana	R	38.4%	0.4%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.9%	10.9%	3.0
49	Issa, Darrell	R	41.3%	17.3%	16.6%	83.4%	0.0%	0.0%	9.6%	11.6%	2.0
50	Hunter, Duncan D.	R	65.5%	19.2%	0.1%	99.9%	0.0%	0.0%	10.3%	14.3%	4.0
51	Vargas, Juan	D	17.7%	12.5%	50.5%	25.9%	23.6%	0.0%	23.1%	24.2%	1.1
52	Peters, Scott	D	55.1%	23.6%	91.0%	9.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.6%	9.6%	1.9
53	Davis, Susan	D	34.3%	15.3%	57.8%	42.2%	0.0%	0.0%	12.1%	14.1%	2.0

Note: Highlighting indicates changes that are statistically significant at the 90 percent confidence level.

Source: Brookings Institution analysis of US Census Bureau data; US House of Representatives

¹ All poverty rates reported in this *Fact Sheet* are based on the US Census Bureau's official poverty measure. 2015 is the most recent year for which data are available.

² Governor Brown recently nominated Representative Becerra to be California's next Attorney General. If Becerra is confirmed by the state Legislature, his congressional seat would be filled through a special election.

³ In another 15 districts, the share of residents living in poverty was between 15.1% and 20.0%, while in 17 districts, the poverty rate was between 10.1% and 15.0%.

⁴ Brookings Institution analysis of decennial Census and American Community Survey data, downloaded from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/poverty-crosses-party-lines/#CA> on November 28, 2016. Changes in poverty rates and in the number of people living in poverty reported in this *Fact Sheet* are statistically significant at the 90% confidence level. Brookings reports data from the American Community Survey for five years combined (2010 through 2014) to increase the reliability of the data. Brookings standardized district boundaries between 2000 and 2010-14 to ensure the data were comparable across years.