



Hidden In Plain Sight:

*Child Poverty in The Wealthiest County
In California*

The Jackie Speier Foundation



Table of Contents

- Hidden In Plain Sight
- The Facts
- Measuring Child Poverty
- Zip Codes And Hunger
- About Jackie Speier

Hidden In Plain Sight

Stunning views of the Pacific Ocean and a resilient economy that ranks San Mateo County as fourth richest in America seems an almost idyllic utopia. Yet hidden in plain sight lies a heart breaking struggle of thousands of children in object poverty.

San Mateo County is reflective of the paradox in America. Despite its lofty economic standing, America leads the world with more children experiencing poverty than most other wealthy nations. **(OECD Report Developed Nations/ Poor Kids PBS Documentary).**

Every 10 square miles in San Mateo County resides a million dollar plus income tax filer bordered by 9,000 to 27,000 children living at various poverty levels with some families subsisting on less than \$2000 a month. **(Census 2020/ Deep Poverty). See pg. 6 Measuring Child Poverty).**

San Mateo County is a living example of the contrast between extreme wealth and poor. We have the largest income inequality in California. The income of the top 1% is 50 times greater than the income of the remaining 99% **(First Five San Mateo County).**

Childhood is fleeting, gone within the blink of an eye with no ability to be recaptured. Poverty strips away this priceless time and leaves behind a child who often has impaired brain development along with poor academic, cognitive and health outcomes. The mental health status of children and their parents living in poverty can result in depression, suicidal thoughts, domestic violence and child abuse.

Single parent households, predominately led by women, have the highest rate of poverty in San Mateo County. Those most likely to live in these households are Black and Latino. **(Census 2020).**

- Over 28 % to 36% of school age children are eligible for free lunch. **(KidsData.Org/SMCAIITogether Better.org)**
- Nearly 16,000 children live with food insecurity but are ineligible for federal assistance or benefits. **(Feeding America 2020).**
- 68,000 children (43%) have reported mental and physical abuse, stress, and depression. **(Kids Data.Org.).**
- 16.3% of 9th graders and 17.6% of 11th graders have considered suicide in the past year. **(KidsData.Org/ Dignity Health Sequoia Hospital Report).**
- San Mateo County has the highest rate of youth self injury hospitalizations compared to neighboring counties and a higher rate than the state average. **(Kids Data.Org).**

Hidden In Plain Sight



We are attempting to save the world while blind to what is happening in our own backyard.

The wealth gap has widened with **just eight families** in the region holding more wealth than the bottom 50% of almost a half million families.

(Silicon Valley Index; KQED Report 2/18/2023).

Philanthropic giving has also increased. Yet **nearly 90% of giving in the region is going to national and global causes.** *(The Giving Code: Silicon Valley Non-Profits and Philanthropy.)*

We are attempting to save the world while blind to what is happening in our own backyard.

San Mateo County has over 18,000 single parent households of which 36% are headed by women who struggle to meet basic needs. Two out of five are caught in persistent financial insecurity. **(The Cost of Being Californian 2021: The Insight Center).** There are between 9,325 up to 27,208 children who live in poverty **(see pg. 6 table 1 for details).** If the San Mateo County self-sufficiency index is used, the percentage nearly doubles. **(see pg. 6 Table 1).** Many families have experienced food insecurity with Second Harvest reporting that they have been feeding over 107,000 residents each month. **(Second Harvest Report 2021)**

The Facts

Childcare

- Women are the first-line of caregivers, performing more than 75% of those responsibilities for their children and elderly family members.
- Women left the working world at a rate that hit a 33 year high in 2021. The most common reason given for leaving was the lack of childcare or the exorbitant cost of childcare. (*New York Times 2021: Pandemic Created Childcare Crisis. Mothers Bore The Burden*)
- The average cost of care per child is \$21,847 per year. San Mateo County costs for childcare has **increased by 67% over past five years. -- the most drastic increase in the Bay Area.** (*The Cost of Being Californian, 2021, The Insight Center*). San Mateo County is among the top five most expensive places in the nation for cost of infant care. (*USA Today 2022*).
- A family of four with young children could be spending nearly \$6,000 per month on rent and childcare. In the same scenario, having a mortgage and childcare expenses could exceed \$8,000 per month. (*Economic Policy Institute Family Calculator 2022*).
- Childcare and housing costs eats up over 52% of family income. (*Economic Policy Institute Family Calculator*).
- Childcare is not only an issue that directly impacts families but is also an infrastructure issue. Childcare options are absolutely fundamental to a working society.
- There is a severe need for childcare program availability as well as affordability. Yet, *the pay of a childcare worker is 59 cents less per hour than a dog walker makes.* (*Dog Walkers Make More Than Childcare and Elder Care Workers Fortune Magazine 3/16/2020*)
- There is a shortage of 17,000 childcare, pre-school and aftercare slots with 79% of need for subsidized care and 94% of infant care not being met. (*SAMCEDA Report 3/2023*).
- Sixteen of the 27 zip codes in San Mateo County are considered "child care deserts". (*SAMCEDA Report 11/2019*).
- Pre-pandemic, there were 940 childcare providers, only 240 opened after the shutdown. Although the number of providers has greatly improved after re-opening of the economy, the shortage of slots persists. (*Childcare Coordinating Council San Mateo County; Childcare Needs Assessment 2023*).



Measuring Child Poverty

A study conducted by the National Institute of Health found that giving a low income mother a nominal \$333.00 per month changed the brainwaves of her infant in positive ways. The invisible consequences of child poverty become apparent much later in life. As such, **the measurement of child poverty can mean the difference between being fed and going hungry.**

(Poverty Reduction Alters Infant Brain Activity National Institute For Health.Gov 2/2022).

- The federal poverty level was created in 1960 and is calculated as 3 times the cost of an adequately adjusted diet in 1964 and based upon data from 1955. Although adjusted upward for inflation, it assumes outdated assumptions that families spend the majority of their budget on food. The poverty threshold does not account for housing costs in different geographic regions, childcare, transportation costs, or payroll taxes. **"There is no other economic statistic in use today that relies on 1955 data and methods developed in the 1960's."** *(Measuring Child Poverty In The United States Institute For Research on Poverty Vol. 35 9/2019; 2008 Congressional Testimony Rebecca Blank on Poverty Measure)*
- In order to address these shortcomings other poverty measuring tools have been introduced. The Census Bureau introduced the **Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM)** in 2011 to better reflect 21st Century life. SPM reflects the costs of food, clothing, shelter, utilities, and geographic variation. *(Census.Gov).*
- **San Mateo County is the most expensive county in California for a family of four. It is also the wealthiest.**
- **10 of the richest zip codes in California are here.** *(Kids Data.Org and Insight Center Report on Families 2023).*
- In 2013, the Public Policy Institute of California and the Stanford Poverty Center released the **California Poverty Measure (CPM)** to more adequately reflect poverty in California, The CPM takes into account necessary expenditures, and geographic differences in housing costs.
- The United Way developed **The Real Cost Measure** as their nationwide network found that the true number of families contending with poverty was hidden. *(United Waysca.org/realcost.SanMateoCounty.)*
- **San Mateo County Self Sufficiency** index was created to measure the economic health of families. It takes into account the cost of living, taxes, transportation, health care costs and available public assistance. In 2021, the index minimum amount for a family of four was \$160,617 per year. *(The California Family Needs Calculator based upon American Community Survey).*
- **Kids Data.Org** produces data on child well-being in California from 35 trusted public sources. It is funded by the Lucille Packard Foundation and the California Department of Public Health. Its economic data on families includes a poverty measure.

Measuring Child Poverty

How Is Poverty Defined?

Federal poverty level is defined as a family of 4 with annual income of \$30,000 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

Despite major efforts to mitigate problems, young children remain historically undercounted with the 2020 Census having *the largest undercount since 1970*. (Census.Gov2020). The undercount of young children varies significantly by race. Young children are more likely than other age groups to have complex living situations such as multigenerational households with non-relatives, or blended family households. These situations often lead to an undercount.

Tracking economic indicators like inflation, unemployment, and gas prices are essential for measuring the health of our economy. We must also prioritize the economic well being of our children in real time. Similar to economic indicators, child poverty figures can change rapidly due to life circumstances such as parent job loss, divorce, illness or unexpected expenses.

While the numbers may differ (depending upon the measurement used,) we can all agree that way too many children and families are struggling. **If we can't solve these issue here, in one of the wealthiest areas in the world, where can they be solved?**



San Mateo County Poverty Numbers

Listed below are the different child poverty rates for San Mateo County:

- **2020 Census San Mateo County**
157,276 children 0-18 years

Poverty Rate: 6.2% (Ranges 4.51% to 8.09%).
Number of Children: 9,325 to 12,724

- **California Poverty Measure San Mateo County)**

Poverty Rate: 12.0%
Number of Children: 18,873

- **Kidsdata.org SanMateo County**

Poverty Rate: 17.3%
Number of Children: 27,208

- **Census Supplemental Survey: San Mateo County**

Poverty Rate: 5.1%
Number of Children: 8,021

- **United Way Real Cost: San Mateo County**

Households Family of Four: 24%
Number of Families: 54,921 below Real Cost Measure

- **San Mateo County Self Sufficiency Index**

In 2021 the index minimum amount for a family of 4 to live without any assistance was \$160,617 per year. (The California Family Needs Calculator based upon American Community Survey).

Zip Codes and Hunger

One zip code is among the wealthiest cities in America. It borders another where the poverty rate is almost twice the average in the Bay Area. A child living in the first zip code 94027 (Atherton) has a very different life from the one living in the second 94063 (Redwood City). **(Living At The Intersection of Rich And Poor San Jose Mercury News. 2/2020).** Matthew Desmond of Princeton said it best -- "*our values should not end where our property line begins.*"

Child poverty in San Mateo County exists in every zip code. The quickest way to identify struggling children is to look at those who participated in the free lunch program in school. The program requires the family be below 130% of the federal poverty level or receiving SNAP to qualify..

Percent of Children who qualify for free lunch (California Department of Education 2022).

Sequoia Union: 29.9%
Redwood City Elementary: 57.8%
Ravenswood Elementary: 78%
Jefferson Elementary: 49.2%
Jefferson Union High: 27.2%
Bayshore Elementary: 53.1%
San Bruno Elementary: 27.6%
Burlingame Elementary: 15.2%
Belmont Redwood Shores: 7.1%
San Mateo Foster City: 28.4%
San Mateo High School: 23.2%
Menlo Park Elementary: 9.3%
Cabrillo Unified: 39.6%
La Honda Pescadero: 37.8%
Sequoia Union High School: 29.9%
South San Francisco Unified: 34.4%
Millbrae Elementary: 25.0%
Pacifica: 17.4%
Brisbane Elementary 19.8%

(*California recently mandated free lunch for all California children. 8/2022.)

Only 3 countries in the developed world have a higher poverty rate than the United States. (PBS.Org Poor Kids Documentary).

The Child Tax Credit **cut child poverty nearly in half--the largest drop on record.** The tax credit delivered the most effective measure to combat child poverty in the nation's history. **(Center For The Study Of Social Policy 2023).** The program drove evictions to a record low and powered a swift economic recovery. Child abuse and neglect cases also dropped. **(JAMA Network 2023).** In the span of six months, poverty in America was drastically reduced. **(New York Times Editorial 3/16/2023).**

Congress allowed the credits to expire, causing child poverty to spike by 41% nationally. **(Robert Reich).** Poverty continues a growth pattern in San Mateo County. **(St. Louis Fed 2022).**



Hidden In Plain Sight

San Mateo County Snapshot

(*1). Single parent households are home to 25,000 children

(*3.) 9,000 to 27,000 children live in households with income at different poverty thresholds

2,600 students have housing instability.

Nearly (68,000) children (43.3%) have had an adverse impact experience (AIE). (AIE) includes trauma, stress, emotional and physical abuse, sexual abuse, parental violence, divorce.

(*4.) 31% of all Black children and 20% of all Latino children live in poverty.

(*2.) Since 2020 food stamp use in San Mateo County has increased by 41%-- the largest increase in California.

Domestic violence increased by 20% in 2021.

Women 65 and older are 21% of the population and increasing.

*1.. Census 2020 & children as % of single households.

*2. San Jose Mercury News

*3. All sources for measuring child poverty as listed in report.

*4. The Cost of Being Californian.: The Insight Center

About Jackie Speier

Relationships are currency. Jackie Speier has forged thousands of relationships in both the private and public sectors for over 50 years. She has represented San Mateo County as a County Supervisor, a member of the State Assembly, a State Senator and a Congresswoman. She was also a technology Vice President at Electronic Arts. There are very few people who know San Mateo County as well as Jackie Speier.

During her career, she has delivered hundreds of millions of dollars of state and federal funding to San Mateo County. She has taken on some of the most difficult and controversial problems and she has done so with tenacity and courage.

"I've been in many campaigns in my career," said Jackie but eradicating child poverty in San Mateo County will be the most important one of my life.



Women and children have benefited from her work in areas such as funding and legislation in pediatric cancer research, creation of the breast cancer postage stamp to fund breast cancer research, sexual assault prevention legislation, suicide prevention legislation, enforcement of child support orders, child abuse prevention, and financial privacy. Jackie also created the Professional and Business Women's Conference (PBWC) which has become among the largest in the nation and has educated tens of thousands of women.

Jackie is a mother of two children, a wife and a best selling author of two books: **She was named one of the fifty most fearless women in the world by Newsweek** and one of the most influential members in the US House by Politico magazine. She resides in Hillsborough, California with her husband Barry and their dog Emma.

A Message From Jackie Speier:

I've been in many campaigns in my career. Eradicating child poverty will be the most important one of my life.

Our challenge will be connecting the resources, innovation and wealth of San Mateo County to the tremendous needs of women and children. I'm confident we can.

Won't you join me?

We are initiating a series of summits and community feedback sessions in order to shape grant-making for maximum impact. As a result, we are not yet at the funding stage. Please check back here for updates on this process as we will publicly communicate what is learned.

For information on supporting the important work of the foundation through donations please contact:

Sheryl Young
San Mateo County Program Director
Philanthropic Ventures Foundation
syoung@venturesfoundation.org
(650)-245-9090

For information on partnerships and upcoming events please contact:
Margaret Lyons at infojackiespeierfoundation@gmail.com

For all other requests, please email us:
Infojackiespeierfoundation@gmail.com