

Unfinished Business: Why Cities Matter to Welfare Reform California

An analysis of welfare caseloadsⁱ in the 89 urban counties that contain the 100 largest US citiesⁱⁱ between 1994 and 1999 found that:

- In 1999, ten states, including California, accounted for nearly 70 percent of the nation's welfare caseloads, up significantly from 42.5 percent in 1994. The bulk of the national welfare population can be found in: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington. These ten states contained 53 percent of the overall national population in 1999. California contained more than a quarter (26.1 percent) of all welfare cases in the nation.
- While urban welfare caseloads are declining rapidly, they are shrinking more slowly than national caseloads. California and twelve of its largest urban counties also all lagged behind the national declines. While the nation's welfare caseloads dropped by 51.5 percent between 1994 and 1999, the state reduced its caseload by only 28.7 percent, to 640,989 cases. Urban county declines ranged from a low of 12.0 percent in Kern County (Bakers-

field) to a high of 51.1 percent in Santa Clara County (San Jose). Los Angeles County, the county with the largest caseload in California and the nation, saw its welfare cases decline by only 23.8 percent, to 235,321 cases in 1999.

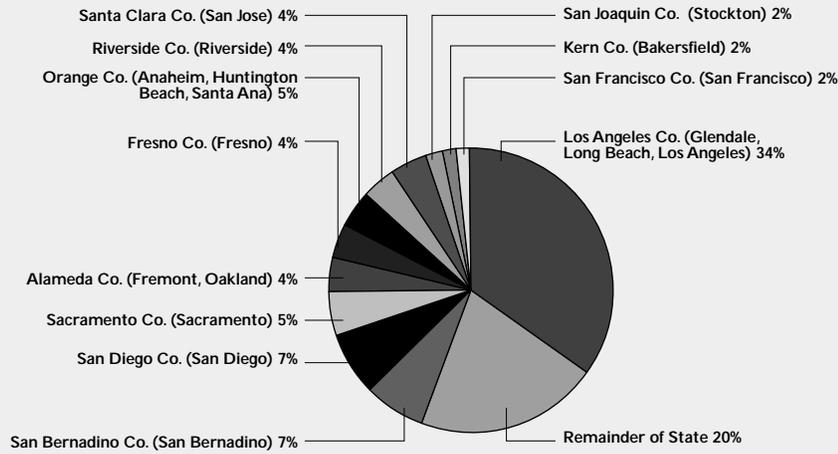
- The share of state welfare caseloads stayed stable in the majority of urban counties in California. Los Angeles County experienced a slight increase in its share of the state caseload, growing from 34.4 percent in 1994 to 36.7 percent in 1999. Two counties—San Diego and Santa Clara—experienced small decreases in their shares of California's welfare rolls (1.1 percentage points). The remaining nine counties' shares did not fluctuate by more than 1.0 percent in that five year period.
- Half of California's large urban counties are shouldering a disproportionate share of their state's welfare cases when compared to their share of the state's total population. Six out of the twelve counties surveyed contained a larger percentage of the state caseload than their share of the total state population: Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Sacra-

mento, San Bernadino, and San Joaquin counties. The remaining six counties—Alameda, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco, and Santa Clara—contained caseloads proportionate to or less than their "fair share," relative to their shares of the total state population.ⁱⁱⁱ

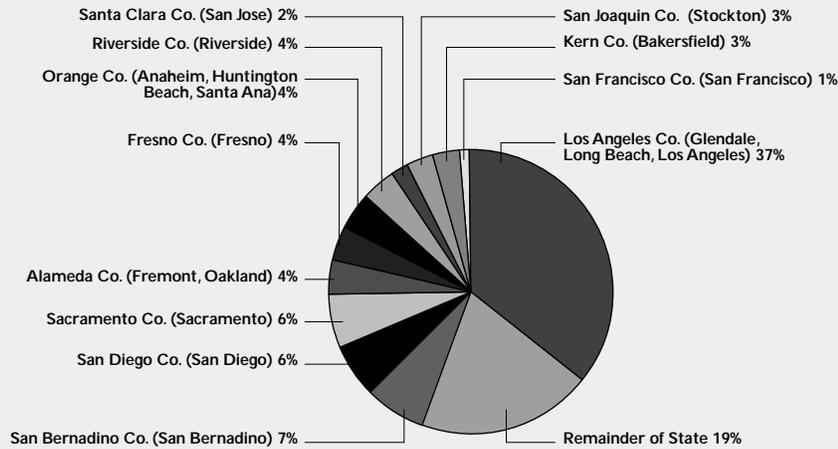
- Racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented on the California welfare rolls compared to their numbers in the total population. In all four counties where data was available, whites comprise at least half of the total population, but in no counties do they represent more than 30 percent of the welfare rolls. Blacks are seriously over-represented on the welfare rolls in all four counties, and Hispanics are over-represented in all counties except San Francisco County.^{iv}



A. California Urban Counties' Share of State Welfare Caseload, 1994

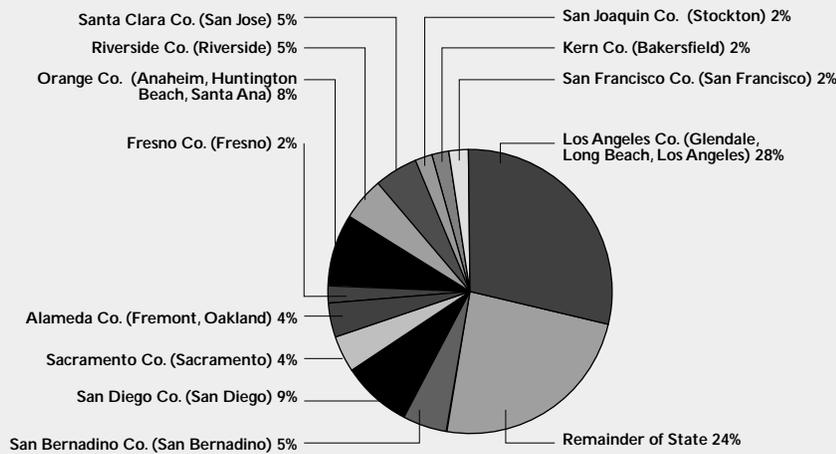


B. California Urban Counties' Share of State Welfare Caseload, 1999





C. California Urban Counties' Share of Total State Population

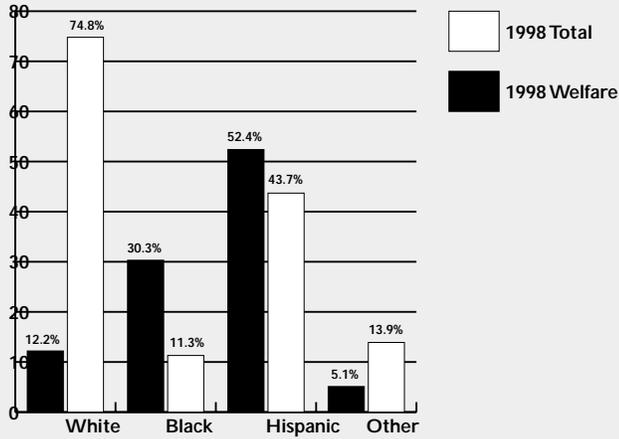


California Data Table

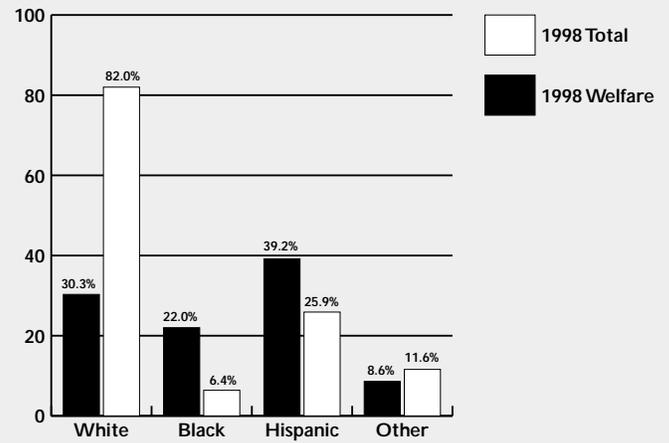
	Welfare Cases 1999	% Decline in Welfare Cases 1994-1999	% of State Caseload 1994	% of State Caseload 1999	% of Total State Population 1999	Fair Share Index ⁱⁱⁱ	City Concentrated Poverty Rate 1990 ^v	% of County Population Central City 1998 ^{vi}
CALIFORNIA	640,989	28.7%						
Alameda Co. (Fremont, Oakland)	25,584	31.0%	4.1%	4.0%	4.3%	0.9	5.0%	40.8%
Fresno Co. (Fresno)	26,040	27.8%	4.0%	4.1%	2.3%	1.8	23.1%	52.7%
Kern Co. (Bakersfield)	19,191	12.0%	2.4%	3.0%	1.9%	1.6	0.0%	33.3%
Los Angeles Co. (Glendale, Long Beach, Los Angeles)	235,321	23.8%	34.4%	36.7%	28.1%	1.3	6.6%	43.7%
Orange Co. (Anaheim, Huntington Beach, Santa Ana)	23,301	42.0%	4.5%	3.6%	8.3%	0.4	0.4%	29.2%
Riverside Co. (Riverside)	25,369	27.1%	3.9%	4.0%	4.6%	0.9	0.0%	17.7%
Sacramento Co. (Sacramento)	36,550	19.6%	5.1%	5.7%	3.6%	1.6	5.0%	34.6%
San Bernadino Co. (San Bernadino)	43,458	31.0%	7.0%	6.8%	5.0%	1.4	n/a	11.4%
San Diego Co. (San Diego)	40,466	39.5%	7.4%	6.3%	8.5%	0.7	3.5%	44.1%
San Francisco Co. (San Francisco)	7,710	41.1%	1.5%	1.2%	2.3%	0.5	1.7%	100.0%
San Joaquin Co. (Stockton)	16,363	24.8%	2.4%	2.6%	1.7%	1.5	11.1%	43.7%
Santa Clara Co. (San Jose)	15,480	51.1%	3.5%	2.4%	5.0%	0.5	0.0%	52.5%



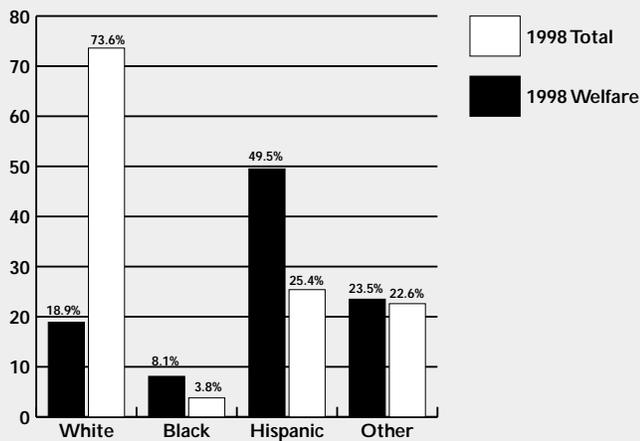
**Los Angeles County Racial and Ethnic Composition:
Total Population vs. Welfare Caseload, 1998**



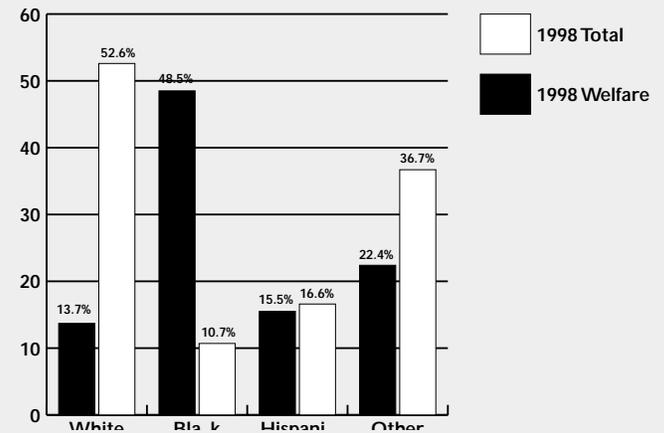
**San Diego County Racial and Ethnic Composition:
Total Population vs. Welfare Caseload, 1998**



**Santa Clara County Racial and Ethnic Composition:
Total Population vs. Welfare Caseload, 1998**

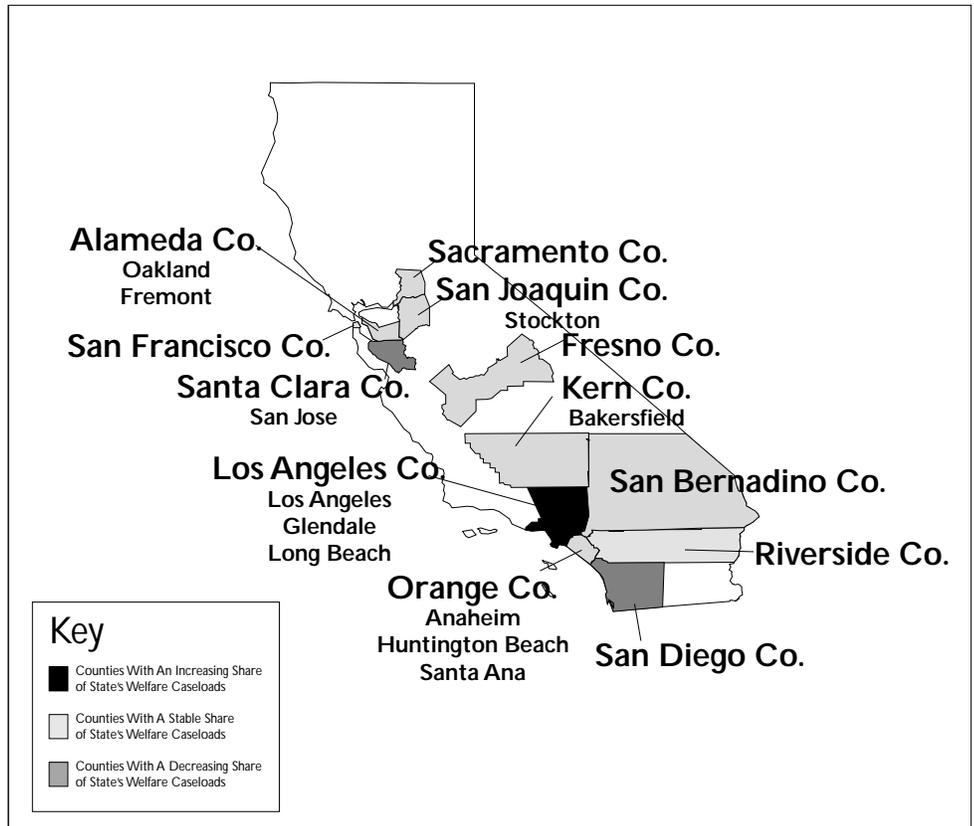


**San Francisco County Racial and Ethnic Composition:
Total Population vs. Welfare Caseload, 1998**





Right: The map indicates the change in concentration of state welfare caseloads in the twelve California counties between 1994 and 1999. Los Angeles County experienced an increased concentration of California's welfare cases; San Diego and Santa Clara counties experienced small decreases in concentration; the other nine counties' shares of the state caseload remained stable.



Endnotes

- i The caseload data reflect the number of welfare cases, not individual recipients. Welfare cases may include a two-parent household with children, a single-parent household with children, or cases where there is no adult in the assistance unit (child-only cases). The data also reflect the number of cases that received cash assistance under Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and its successor, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).
- ii Because welfare programs, both AFDC and TANF, are typically administered at the county-level, the caseload data reflect the county caseloads, not the number of cases within the central cities. For the most part, the use of county-level caseload data may understate the central city welfare trends because of the inclusion of welfare cases from suburbs.
- iii The Fair Share Index conveys the share of the state welfare population contained in a county, compared with the county's share of the overall state population. The Fair Share Index is a ratio of two figures: the county's percentage of the state welfare caseload in 1999 divided by the county's percentage of the state total population in 1999.

- iv Percentages may not add up to 100 percent, since the ethnic category "Hispanic" may overlap with other racial categories.
- v The concentrated poverty rate reflects the percentage of the city population that lived in census tracts where 40 percent of the residents were poor in 1990 (the most recent year for which concentrated poverty data is available). Concentrated poverty is associated with the social characteristics and behaviors that define the so-called "hard-to-serve" welfare population: illiteracy, chronic unemployment, poor work history, no high school diploma, low skills, teenage pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births.
- vi The percentage of the county population that lives in the central city indicates how "urban" the county and, by extension, the welfare caseload actually is. Counties in the Southwest and West are relatively larger than the Northeastern and Midwestern counties and contain larger suburban populations. We would expect that the welfare population is more urban even in relatively more suburban counties. The indicator serves as a rough estimate of how well the county welfare data captures city-specific welfare trends.

Full Report Available at:
www.brookings.edu/urban

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