DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT
PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENTAL MATH: CALIFORNIA

What Is Measured?
Percentage of California Community College students enrolled in a developmental math course within seven years

Who Is Counted?
First-time California Community College students enrolled in fall 2002, excluding dual-enrolled high school students

What It Tells Us
In California, 41 percent of incoming community college students took a developmental math course over a period of seven years from the time they first enrolled. Compared to all community college students, math remediation was more common among female (44 percent), low-income (58 percent), and younger students (59 percent). Students in academic programs and those preparing for transfer were more likely to enroll in developmental math (52 percent to 61 percent) than students in certificate or vocational programs (26 percent to 44 percent).

Why It’s Important
For students in need of developmental education, enrolling in specific courses mandated by the placement test is the first step toward advancement to a college-level program. Many students never enroll in developmental courses at the level at which they are assessed, however (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Because placements are not always binding, many students enroll in higher- or lower-level courses. Some may skip courses in the remedial sequence or skip developmental education altogether (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). As a result, the rates at which students enroll in developmental courses provide an incomplete picture of the need for remediation. Placement information, however, is rarely available, leaving enrollment rates as the only measure for gauging students' college readiness.

ABOUT THE DATA
Estimates were calculated based on data from the original source.

Developmental math courses: courses below college mathematics (with college mathematics defined as all math courses that fulfill the general education math requirement in the California State University and/or University of California systems). Developmental math courses include Basic Arithmetic (four levels below college math), Pre-Algebra (three levels below), Beginning Algebra (two levels below), and Intermediate Algebra/Geometry (one level below). Low-income: received a fee waiver in 2002-03. The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges offers need-based tuition waivers for low-income residents of California who are attending a community college. To qualify, a student must receive monthly cash assistance from TANF/CalWORKs, SSI/SSP, or General Assistance (or, if a dependent student, the student’s parent(s) receive this assistance) or meet a particular income threshold. This information is known only for students who apply for financial aid, and not all low-income students apply.

Age: student’s age at the time of college entry.

Academic goal: student’s self-reported academic goal at the time of college entry.
The following academic goals are not shown in the figure: "Other job-related," "abstract," "remediation," "undecided," and "not reported."

Percentages calculated by author.

DATA SOURCE