

Children Receiving SNAP Benefits

DEFINITION

Children receiving SNAP benefits is the number of children under age 18 who participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in October 2017.

SIGNIFICANCE

Hunger and lack of regular access to sufficient food are linked to serious physical, psychological, emotional, and academic problems in children and can interfere with their growth and development.¹² The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program, helps low-income individuals and families obtain better nutrition through monthly benefits they can use to purchase food at retail stores and some farmers' markets.³ Child food insecurity has been shown to decrease by almost one-third after their families have received SNAP benefits for six months.⁴

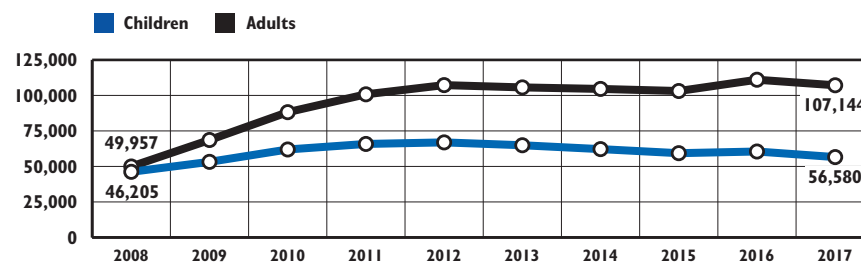
Nationally, SNAP is available to households with gross monthly incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level, (\$26,546 for a family of three in 2017) net monthly incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, and no more than \$2,250 in resources.⁵ In 2009, Rhode Island implemented expanded categorical eligibility, an option encouraged by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, allowing the state to increase the gross income limit and

remove the resource limit for most applicants.⁶⁷ The gross monthly income limit for Rhode Island is now 185% of the federal poverty level (\$37,777 for a family of three in 2017).^{8,9} Households must still meet the net monthly income limit of 100% of the federal poverty level after allowable deductions, which include deductions for housing costs and child care.¹⁰

SNAP is an important anti-hunger program that helps individuals and families purchase food when they have limited income, face unemployment or reduced work hours, or experience a crisis.¹¹ In Rhode Island during October 2017, 79% of SNAP recipients had gross incomes below the federal poverty level (\$20,420 for a family of three in 2017).^{12,13} In October 2017, the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of three in Rhode Island was \$379.¹⁴

Participation in SNAP has been associated with improvement in current and long-term health outcomes among low-income or food insecure children.¹⁵ SNAP also is effective in reducing poverty. Nationally in 2015, SNAP reduced poverty 20.9% for non-Hispanic Blacks, 17.6% for Hispanics, 15.5% for non-Hispanic Whites, and 21.3% for working families.¹⁶ In addition, SNAP is a quick and effective form of economic stimulus because it moves money directly into the local economy.¹⁷

Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Children and Adults, Rhode Island, 2008-2017



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, 2008–2015 and RI Bridges Database, 2016–2017. Data represent children under age 18 and adults who participated in SNAP during the month of October.

◆ Of the 163,724 Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP in October 2017, 65% were adults and 35% were children. Of the children enrolled in SNAP, 34% were under the age of six.¹⁸

◆ The number of children and adults receiving SNAP benefits decreased slowly between 2012 and 2015, then increased in 2016. It is possible that the 2016 increase is due to efforts to avoid denying eligible SNAP recipients during the difficult transition to the RI Bridges/UHIP computer system. Between 2016 and 2017, the number of adults receiving SNAP benefits decreased by 3,901, and the number of children receiving SNAP decreased by 3,925.^{19,20}

Food Insecurity in Rhode Island

◆ The USDA defines food insecurity as not always having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Between 2014 and 2016, 12.8% of Rhode Island households and 13.0% of U.S. households were food insecure. In 2016, 16.5% of all U.S. households with children were food insecure, while 43.8% of U.S. households with children with incomes below the poverty level experienced food insecurity.²¹

◆ Federal nutrition programs provide assistance to children and families through SNAP, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.²² In 2017, food pantries and soup kitchens provided emergency food assistance to more than 57,000 Rhode Islanders each month who needed additional help to meet their nutritional needs.²³

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Table 12. Children Under Age 18 Receiving SNAP Benefits, Rhode Island, October 2017

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER PARTICIPATING
Barrington	96
Bristol	413
Burrillville	384
Central Falls	3,171
Charlestown	154
Coventry	913
Cranston	3,057
Cumberland	699
East Greenwich	180
East Providence	1,709
Exeter	92
Foster	86
Glocester	111
Hopkinton	183
Jamestown	41
Johnston	1,023
Lincoln	608
Little Compton	40
Middletown	449
Narragansett	193
New Shoreham	7
Newport	1,367
North Kingstown	825
North Providence	1,080
North Smithfield	190
Pawtucket	6,393
Portsmouth	242
Providence	21,355
Richmond	97
Scituate	151
Smithfield	187
South Kingstown	543
Tiverton	377
Warren	285
Warwick	2,391
West Greenwich	62
West Warwick	1,691
Westerly	776
Woonsocket	4,803
Unknown	156
Four Core Cities	35,722
Remainder of State	20,702
Rhode Island	56,580

Increasing Access to SNAP Benefits

◆ The transition to the RI Bridges/UHIP computer system caused backlogs in applications for SNAP and other benefits. While the state has made progress in reducing the backlog, there are still issues to address to ensure that applications for SNAP benefits are processed in a timely manner, including staffing and technical issues with the computer system.²⁴

◆ Rhode Island could increase access to SNAP benefits for children and families by ensuring adequate staffing in field offices, reducing wait times, reducing documentation requirements, simplifying renewal processes, improving communications with clients and community partners, providing additional staff training, and seeking recommendations for system improvements from line staff.^{25,26}

Note to Table

In 2008, the Food Stamp Program was renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) data are from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, October 2017.

Due to changes in the availability of data, we report participation for the entire month of October, rather than October 1 in this Factbook. Due to this change in methodology, *Children Receiving SNAP Benefits* cannot be compared with Factbooks prior to 2016.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

References

- ¹ *Food insecurity: Indicators of child and youth well-being.* (2016). Washington, DC: Child Trends.
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- ^{5,10} U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2018). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Am I eligible for SNAP?* Retrieved February 14, 2018, from www.fns.usda.gov
- ⁶ *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) 2009-2012 accomplishments.* (n.d.). Cranston, RI: Rhode Island Department of Human Services.
- ⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2009). *Improving access to SNAP through broad-based categorical eligibility. Memorandum to regional administrators.* Retrieved February 20, 2018, from www.fns.usda.gov
- ⁸ Rhode Island Department of Human Services. (n.d.). *SNAP eligibility.* Retrieved February 14, 2018, from www.dhs.ri.gov
- ^{9,13} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2017). Annual update of the HHS poverty guidelines. *Federal Register*, 82(19), 8831-8832.

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