

Children Receiving SNAP Benefits

DEFINITION

Children receiving SNAP benefits (formerly the Food Stamp Program) is the number of children under age 18 who participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in 2009 and the percentage change between 2005 and 2009 in the number of children under age 18 participating.

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.^{1,2,3} 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.⁴ Children who receive SNAP benefits are 26% less likely to go hungry than eligible children who are not enrolled.⁵

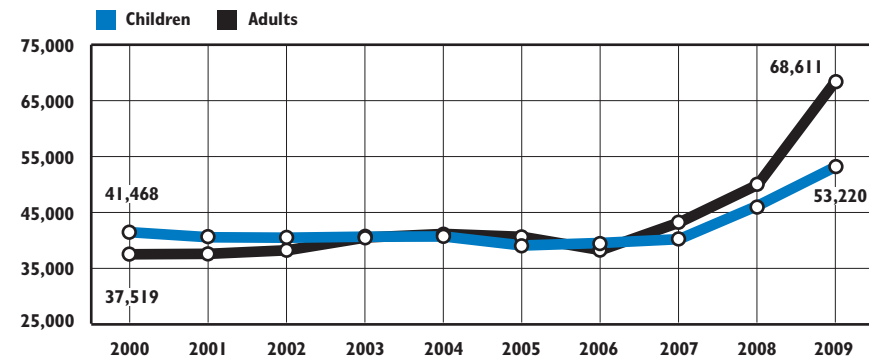
Traditionally, SNAP has been available to households with gross incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level, net incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, and no more than \$2,000 in resources.⁶ In April 2009, Rhode Island implemented expanded categorical eligibility, an option encouraged by the U.S.

Department of Agriculture (USDA), which allowed Rhode Island to increase the gross income limit and remove the resource limit for most applicants.^{7,8} The gross income limit for Rhode Island is now 185% of the federal poverty level (\$2,823 per month for a family of three in 2009). Households must still meet the net income limit of 100% of the federal poverty level after allowable deductions, which include deductions for housing costs and child care.^{9,10}

Purchasing food using SNAP benefits helps many low-income families bridge the gap between what they earn and their basic living expenses. In 2008, a Rhode Island family with one full-time, year-round worker making the minimum wage had only 70% of the income needed to meet basic expenses. If the same family received SNAP benefits, they would be able to meet 84% of their basic needs.¹¹ In 2009, the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of three in Rhode Island was \$388.¹²

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. SNAP is one of the fastest and most effective forms of economic stimulus because it moves money into the local economy quickly.¹³

Participation in the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program, Children and Adults, Rhode Island, 2000-2009



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, 2000 – 2009. Data represent children under age 18 and adults who participated in SNAP during the month of October.

- ◆ The most recent USDA report estimates that in 2007 there were 50,000 Rhode Islanders who were income-eligible for SNAP benefits but not enrolled. Rhode Island ranked 40th (1st is best) in the U.S. for SNAP participation.¹⁴
- ◆ Since 2007, the number of Rhode Island children receiving SNAP benefits increased by 32%, from 40,224 in 2007 to 53,220 in 2009, while the number of participating adults increased by 59%, from 43,207 in 2007 to 68,611 in 2009.¹⁵

Food Insecurity in Rhode Island

- ◆ The USDA defines food insecurity as not always having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Between 2006 and 2008, 11.7% of Rhode Island households and 12.2% of United States households were food insecure. In 2008, more than one in every five (21.0%) U.S. households with children were food insecure, while one-half (50.3%) of U.S. households with children with incomes below the poverty level experienced food insecurity.¹⁶
- ◆ More than 50,000 Rhode Islanders receive emergency food assistance from food pantries and soup kitchens each month, and 41% of food pantry clients have children at home. In 2009, over one-half (57%) of Rhode Islanders who accessed emergency food assistance also received SNAP benefits, up from 35% in 2006.¹⁷

Table 13. Children Under Age 18 Receiving SNAP Benefits, Rhode Island, October 1, 2005 and October 1, 2009

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER PARTICIPATING IN 2005	NUMBER PARTICIPATING IN 2009	% CHANGE IN NUMBER PARTICIPATING FROM 2005 TO 2009
Barrington	28	85	204%
Bristol	160	363	127%
Burrillville	186	456	145%
Central Falls	2,038	2,917	43%
Charlestown	99	152	54%
Coventry	381	772	103%
Cranston	1,547	2,857	85%
Cumberland	253	617	144%
East Greenwich	81	190	135%
East Providence	914	1,608	76%
Exeter	44	86	95%
Foster	34	79	132%
Glocester	61	158	159%
Hopkinton	84	209	149%
Jamestown	21	40	90%
Johnston	398	839	111%
Lincoln	195	551	183%
Little Compton	9	46	411%
Middletown	149	392	163%
Narragansett	87	218	151%
New Shoreham	3	5	67%
Newport	884	1,202	36%
North Kingstown	385	634	65%
North Providence	420	907	116%
North Smithfield	51	213	318%
Pawtucket	3,795	5,790	53%
Portsmouth	91	237	160%
Providence	16,767	20,771	24%
Richmond	51	125	145%
Scituate	39	149	282%
Smithfield	52	457	779%
South Kingstown	270	406	50%
Tiverton	108	321	197%
Warren	258	373	45%
Warwick	1,136	2,295	102%
West Greenwich	22	129	486%
West Warwick	851	1,472	73%
Westerly	383	815	113%
Woonsocket	2,833	4,696	66%
Core Cities	27,168	36,848	36%
Remainder of State	8,000	16,784	110%
Rhode Island	35,168	53,632	53%

SNAP Participation in Rhode Island

◆ Between 2005 and 2009, the number of Rhode Island children receiving SNAP benefits increased by 53% from 35,168 to 53,632.¹⁸

◆ SNAP participation rates among children increased by more than one-third (36%) in the core cities and more than doubled (110%) in the remainder of the state.

◆ In 2009, Rhode Island implemented a number of strategies to improve access to SNAP benefits including implementing “expanded categorical eligibility” so more families qualify, conducting telephone interviews so applicants do not need to apply in person, and requiring less frequent recertification.¹⁹

◆ Simplifying applications, reducing documentation requirements, improving communication (i.e., phone systems and notices), extending hours of operation and providing child care at enrollment sites, and hiring more workers so that caseloads are reduced and applications can be processed in a timely fashion are additional strategies that could be implemented to further increase access.²⁰

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, InRhodes Database, October 1, 2005 and October 1, 2009.

The data in the city/town table may differ from the data on the previous page as this table uses point-in-time data for October 1st, rather than data based on participation for the entire month.

Due to changes in Rhode Island’s SNAP eligibility criteria (e.g., implementation of expanded categorical eligibility) many children in families with gross incomes up to 185% of the federal poverty level are now eligible for SNAP. For this reason, 2000 Census data on the number of children in families with incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level no longer provides an accurate estimate of the number of income-eligible children, and this year’s Factbook does not present participation rates. Instead, the number of children participating in 2005 (the year when the lowest number of children were participating since we began collecting data) and 2009 is presented. Due to this change in methodology, SNAP participation rates in previous Factbooks cannot be compared with data presented here.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

References

- ¹ Reading, writing and hungry: The consequences of food insecurity on children, and on our nation’s economic success: Issue brief #8. (2008). Washington, DC: Partnership for America’s Economic Success.
- ² Cook, J. T., March, E. L., & Ettinger de Cuba, S. (2009). *Even very low levels of food insecurity found to harm children’s health: Children’s Health Watch policy action brief*. Boston, MA: Children’s Health Watch.
- ³ National Anti-Hunger Organizations. (2009). *NAHO roadmap to end childhood hunger in America by 2015*. (2009). Retrieved January 22, 2010 from www.hungersolutions.org/newsroom/roadmap-end-childhood-hunger-america-2015

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