

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).

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} The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) 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 hunger 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, net monthly incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, and no more than \$2,750 in resources.⁵ Rhode Island is one of 41 states that have implemented broad-based categorical eligibility, which allowed Rhode Island to increase the gross income limit and remove the resource limit for most applicants.⁶ The gross monthly income limit for Rhode Island is 185% of the federal poverty level (\$42,606 per year

for a family of three in 2022).

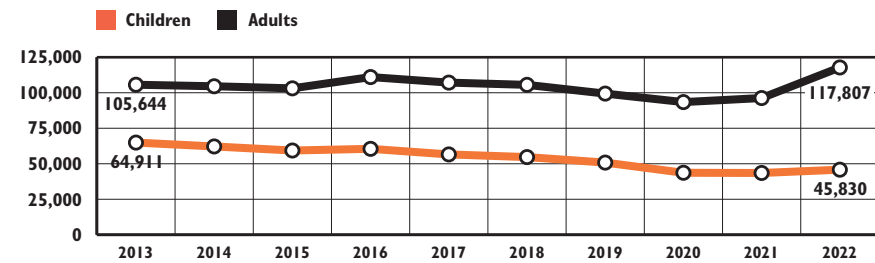
Households must still meet the net monthly income limit of 100% of the federal poverty level after allowable deductions, which include deductions for housing costs and child care.^{7,8}

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.⁹ In Rhode Island during October 2022, 69% of SNAP households had gross incomes below the federal poverty level (\$23,030 for a family of three in 2022).^{10,11} In October 2022, the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of three in Rhode Island was \$549 (this average does not include supplemental benefits provided during the COVID-19 pandemic).¹² Beginning October 2021, maximum monthly benefits increased due to an update of the Thrifty Food Plan on which benefits are based.¹³

Participation in SNAP in early childhood is associated with improvements in short- and long-term health outcomes, improved high school graduation rates, and increases in adult earnings. In 2020, SNAP and the School Lunch Program lifted 3.2 million Americans out of poverty and was the most effective program for lifting families out of deep poverty.^{14,15,16} SNAP is also an 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, 2013-2022



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, 2013–2015 and RI Bridges Database, 2016–2022. Data represent children under age 18 and adults who participated in SNAP during the month of October.

◆ Of the 163,637 Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP in October 2022, 72% were adults and 28% were children. Of the children enrolled in SNAP, 32% were under the age of six.¹⁸

◆ Between 2020 and 2022, the number of adults receiving SNAP benefits increased, while the number of children enrolled decreased from 2020 to 2021 and then increased slightly in 2022.¹⁹



Child Hunger in Rhode Island

◆ Food insecurity is a method to measure and assess the risk of hunger.²⁰ The USDA defines food insecurity as not always having access to enough food for an active, healthy life. From 2018 to 2020, 8.2% of Rhode Island households and 10.7% of U.S. households were food insecure. In 2020, 14.8% of all U.S. households with children and 40.5% of U.S. households with children living in poverty experienced food insecurity.²¹ Rhode Island launched a retail SNAP incentive pilot program which gives discounts on fruits and vegetables, improves nutrition, and reduces food insecurity in households.²²

◆ Several federal nutrition programs provide nutrition assistance to children and families, including SNAP, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.²³ The Rhode Island Community Food Bank network served, on average, 10,000 more people each month in 2022 than in 2021, with nearly one in three Rhode Island households unable to afford adequate food.²⁴

Table 13. Children Under Age 18 Receiving SNAP Benefits, Rhode Island, October 2022

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER PARTICIPATING
Barrington	139
Bristol	257
Burrillville	380
Central Falls	2,280
Charlestown	76
Coventry	726
Cranston	2,588
Cumberland	663
East Greenwich	161
East Providence	1,510
Exeter	100
Foster	92
Glocester	86
Hopkinton	169
Jamestown	21
Johnston	923
Lincoln	570
Little Compton	23
Middletown	363
Narragansett	118
New Shoreham	1
Newport	1,013
North Kingstown	615
North Providence	1,076
North Smithfield	188
Pawtucket	5,344
Portsmouth	164
Providence	16,857
Richmond	163
Scituate	119
Smithfield	226
South Kingstown	356
Tiverton	262
Warren	300
Warwick	1,683
West Greenwich	80
West Warwick	1,450
Westerly	499
Woonsocket	4,395
Unknown	61
Four Core Cities	28,876
Remainder of State	17,160
Rhode Island	46,097



COVID-19 and SNAP Benefits

◆ According to 2022 survey data from the RI Life Index, 41% of households with children in Rhode Island reported not being able to meet their basic food needs, compared to 31% of all households, up from 25% for households with children and 18% for all households in 2021.²⁵

◆ Between March 2020 and February 2023, SNAP households that were not already receiving the maximum benefit temporarily received supplemental benefits. All SNAP households were eligible for a supplemental benefit of at least \$95 during the COVID-19 public health emergency.^{26,27}

◆ SNAP participants can now select and pay for their groceries online using their EBT card at participating online retailers.²⁸

◆ Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) provides benefits to replace free and reduced-price school meals missed due to school closures and distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2022, almost half (49%) of students receiving P-EBT benefits in Rhode Island also received SNAP benefits.^{29,30}

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 2022. *267 children changed addresses mid-month resulting in the total being greater than the total number of distinct children

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

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- ⁴ Carlson, S., & Llobrera, J. (2022). *SNAP is linked with improved health outcomes and lower health care costs*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- ⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2021). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): SNAP eligibility*. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from www.fns.usda.gov
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2020). *Broad-based categorical eligibility*. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from www.fns.usda.gov
- ⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2022). Annual update of the HHS poverty guidelines. *Federal Register*, 87(14), 3315-3316.
- ⁸ Policy basics: *The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*. (2022). Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

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