

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), 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 hunger has been shown to decrease by almost one-third after their families have received SNAP benefits for six months.⁴

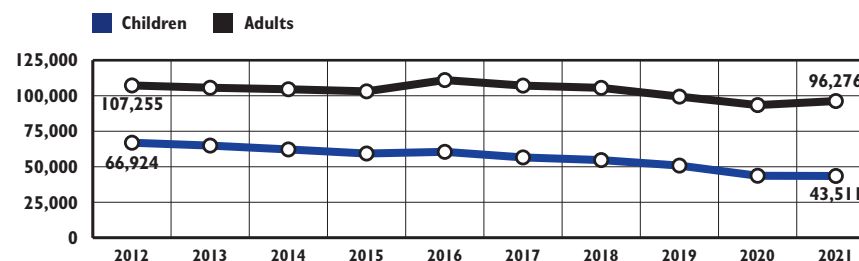
Nationally, SNAP is available to households with gross monthly incomes below 130% of the federal poverty level, net monthly incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level, and no more than \$2,500 in resources.⁵ Rhode Island is one of 41 states that have implemented broad-based categorical eligibility, 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 (\$40,626 per

year for a family of three in 2021). 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.^{7,8,9}

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.¹⁰ In Rhode Island during October 2021, 73% of SNAP households had gross incomes below the federal poverty level (\$21,960 for a family of three in 2021).^{11,12} In October 2021, the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of three in Rhode Island was \$493 (this average does not include supplemental benefits provided during the COVID-19 pandemic).¹³ Beginning October 2021, maximum monthly benefits increased due to an update of the Thrifty Food Plan on which benefits are based.¹⁴

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 National School Lunch Program lifted 3.2 million Americans out of poverty and was particularly effective at lifting families out of deep poverty.^{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, 2012-2021



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, 2012–2015 and RI Bridges Database, 2016–2021. Data represent children under age 18 and adults who participated in SNAP during the month of October.

◆ Of the 139,787 Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP in October 2021, 69% were adults and 31% were children. Of the children enrolled in SNAP, 32% were under the age of six.¹⁸

◆ The number of children and adults receiving SNAP benefits decreased each year between 2016 to 2020. Between 2020 and 2021, the number of adults receiving SNAP benefits increased, while the number of children enrolled remained about the same.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. Between 2018 and 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 were food insecure, while 40.5% of U.S. households with children with incomes below the poverty level experienced food insecurity.²¹

◆ 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.²² In 2021, the number of Rhode Islanders who received emergency food assistance from food pantries and soup kitchens to help to meet their nutritional needs went down to the pre-pandemic level of 53,650 each month, down from the peak of 76,500 in November 2020.²³

Children Receiving SNAP Benefits

Table 12. Children Under Age 18 Receiving SNAP Benefits, Rhode Island, October 2021



COVID-19 and SNAP Benefits

◆ According to 2021 survey data from the RI Life Index, 25% of households with children in Rhode Island reported not being able to meet their basic food needs, compared to 18% of all households.²⁴

◆ Since March 2020, SNAP households that were not already receiving the maximum benefit have been receiving supplemental benefits. Beginning in April 2021, all SNAP households were eligible for a supplemental benefit of at least \$95 for as long as the federal government has declared a public health emergency and the state has issued an emergency or disaster declaration. In addition to these supplemental benefits, federal COVID relief bills temporarily increased the maximum monthly benefit by 15% from January 1, 2021 through September 30, 2021.^{25,26}

◆ SNAP participants can now select and pay for their groceries online using their EBT card at participating online retailers.²⁷

◆ 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 2021, 39% of students receiving P-EBT benefits in Rhode Island also received SNAP benefits.^{28,29}

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER PARTICIPATING
Barrington	145
Bristol	231
Burrillville	338
Central Falls	2,023
Charlestown	106
Coventry	639
Cranston	2,515
Cumberland	568
East Greenwich	139
East Providence	1,422
Exeter	72
Foster	88
Glocester	97
Hopkinton	155
Jamestown	21
Johnston	854
Lincoln	525
Little Compton	27
Middletown	360
Narragansett	120
New Shoreham	4
Newport	921
North Kingstown	600
North Providence	905
North Smithfield	166
Pawtucket	5,038
Portsmouth	144
Providence	16,376
Richmond	150
Scituate	110
Smithfield	199
South Kingstown	329
Tiverton	232
Warren	278
Warwick	1,595
West Greenwich	72
West Warwick	1,402
Westerly	473
Woonsocket	3,978
Unknown	94
Four Core Cities	27,415
Remainder of State	16,002
Rhode Island	43,511

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 2021.

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 Ralston, K., Treen, K., Coleman-Jensen, A., & Guthrie, J. (2017). *Children's food security and USDA child nutrition programs*, EIB-174. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.
- ² Thomas, M. M. C., Miller, D. P., & Morrissey, T. W. (2019). Food insecurity and child health. *Pediatrics*, 144(4), 1-9.
- ³ Food Research and Action Center. (2020). *FRAC facts: SNAP strengths*. Retrieved January 26, 2022, from www.frac.org
- ⁴ Carlson, S., & Keith-Jennings, B. (2018). *SNAP is linked with improved nutritional 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 January 26, 2022, from www.fns.usda.gov
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2020). *Broad-based categorical eligibility*. Retrieved February 8, 2022, from www.fns.usda.gov
- ⁷ Rhode Island Department of Human Services. (n.d.). *SNAP monthly income guidelines*. Retrieved February 8, 2022, from www.dhs.ri.gov
- ^{8,12} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). Annual update of the HHS poverty guidelines. *Federal Register*, 86(19), 7732-7734.
- ^{10,17} *Policy basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*. (2019). Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

(continued on page 178)