

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 (\$45,991 per year

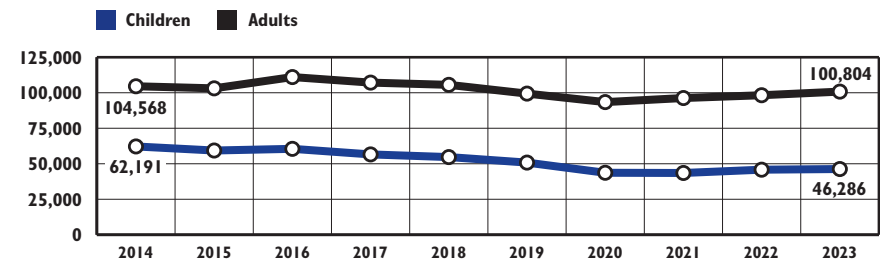
for a family of three in 2023).

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 childcare.^{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 2023, 72% of SNAP households had gross incomes below the federal poverty level (\$24,860 for a family of three in 2023).^{10,11} In October 2023, the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of three in Rhode Island was \$559 (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 2021, SNAP and the School Lunch Program lifted 2.8 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, 2014-2023



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, InRhodes Database, 2014–2015 and RI Bridges Database, 2016–2023. Data represent children under age 18 and adults who participated in SNAP during the month of October.

★ Of the 147,090 Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP in October 2023, 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 from 2016 to 2020 and since then has slowly increased.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 2020 to 2022, 8.6% of Rhode Island households and 11.2% of U.S. households were food insecure. In 2022, 17.3% of all U.S. households with children and 42.3% 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, 17,700 more people each month in 2023 than in 2022, with nearly one in three Rhode Island households unable to afford adequate food.²⁴

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Table 13. Children Under Age 18 Receiving SNAP Benefits, Rhode Island, October 2023



Summer EBT Program and SNAP Benefits

★ According to 2023 survey data from the RI Life Index, 38% of households with children in Rhode Island reported not being able to meet their basic food needs, compared to 29% of all households, down from 41% for households with children and 31% for all households in 2022.²⁵

★ Between March 2020 and February 2023, all SNAP households were eligible for a supplemental benefit of at least \$95 during the COVID-19 public health emergency. By March 2023, families no longer received these benefits as the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023* passed, ending all emergency allotments related to the COVID-19 pandemic.^{26,27}

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

★ Beginning in summer 2024, each child in Rhode Island who is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals will be able to receive a monthly \$40 payment on an EBT card during summer months.²⁹

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER PARTICIPATING
Barrington	137
Bristol	250
Burrillville	347
Central Falls	2,270
Charlestown	100
Coventry	715
Cranston	2,789
Cumberland	646
East Greenwich	158
East Providence	1,502
Exeter	113
Foster	75
Glocester	108
Hopkinton	179
Jamestown	18
Johnston	902
Lincoln	598
Little Compton	21
Middletown	396
Narragansett	122
New Shoreham	0
Newport	1,022
North Kingstown	590
North Providence	1,055
North Smithfield	182
Pawtucket	5,202
Portsmouth	176
Providence	17,315
Richmond	174
Scituate	115
Smithfield	242
South Kingstown	370
Tiverton	282
Warren	272
Warwick	1,752
West Greenwich	75
West Warwick	1,441
Westerly	508
Woonsocket	4,229
Unknown	99
Four Core Cities	29,016
Remainder of State	17,171
Rhode Island	46,286

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 2023. *261 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

- ¹ Gallegos, D., Eivers, A., Sondergeld, P., & Pattinson, C. (2021). Food insecurity and child development: A state-of-the-art review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(17), 8990. MDPI AG. Retrieved February 2, 2023, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/>
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- ³ Food Research and Action Center. (2023). *FRAC facts: SNAP strengths*. Retrieved February 21, 2024, from www.frac.org
- 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. (2024). *Broad-based categorical eligibility*. Retrieved February 20, 2024, from www.fns.usda.gov
- ⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2023). Annual update of the HHS poverty guidelines. *Federal Register*, 88(12), 3424-3425.
- ⁸ Policy basics: *The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*. (2022). Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

(continued on page 178)