

# 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.<sup>1,2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Child hunger has been shown to decrease by about one-third after their families have received SNAP benefits for six months.<sup>4</sup>

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 \$3,000 in resources.<sup>5</sup> Rhode Island is one of 45 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.<sup>6</sup> The gross monthly income limit for Rhode Island is 185% of the federal poverty level (\$49,303 per year

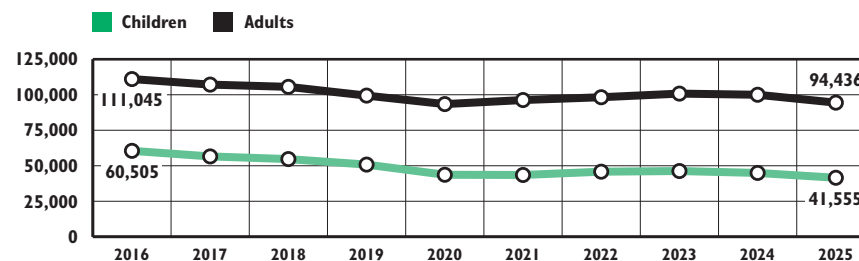
for a family of three in 2025).<sup>7</sup> Households must still meet the net monthly income limit of 100% of the federal poverty level after allowable deductions, which include deductions for housing costs and child care.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> In Rhode Island during October 2025, 67% of SNAP households had gross incomes below the federal poverty level (\$27,320 for a family of three in 2025).<sup>7,9</sup> In October 2025, the average monthly SNAP benefit for a family of three in Rhode Island was \$766.<sup>9</sup> In 2025, Congress passed H.R.1, mandating that updates to the Thrifty Food Plan, on which SNAP benefits are based, be cost-neutral, preventing SNAP benefits from being updated to reflect food costs and updated dietary guidelines.<sup>10</sup>

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 2024, SNAP lifted 3.6 million Americans out of poverty and helped nearly 42 million people put food on the table.<sup>3,4,11</sup> SNAP is also an effective form of economic stimulus because it moves money directly into the local economy.<sup>8</sup>



## Participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Children and Adults, Rhode Island, 2016-2025



Source: Rhode Island Department of Human Services, RI Bridges Database, 2016-2025. Data represent children under age 18 and adults who participated in SNAP during the month of October.

- ◆ Of the 135,991 Rhode Islanders enrolled in SNAP in October 2025, 69% were adults and 31% were children. Of the children enrolled in SNAP, 33% were under the age of six.<sup>9</sup>
- ◆ Over the past decade, the number of children receiving SNAP benefits has declined by almost one-third (31%).<sup>9</sup>



## Child Hunger in Rhode Island

- ◆ Food insecurity is a method to measure and assess the risk of hunger. The USDA defines food insecurity as not always having access to enough food for an active, healthy life.<sup>12</sup> From 2022 to 2024, 10.6% of Rhode Island households and 13.3% of U.S. households were food insecure. In 2024, 9.1% of all U.S. households with children and 39% of U.S. households with children living in poverty experienced food insecurity.<sup>13</sup> The USDA will no longer be conducting an annual survey on food insecurity, meaning that detailed annual state and national data on food hardship will no longer be available.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ 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.<sup>15</sup> The Rhode Island Community Food Bank network of 137 member agencies served, on average, 89,000 people each month in 2025, up from 84,400 the previous year.<sup>16</sup>

Table 12. Children Under Age 18 Receiving SNAP Benefits, Rhode Island, October 2025



## SNAP Program Updates

◆ According to 2025 survey data from the RI Life Index, 34% of households in Rhode Island reported not being able to meet their basic food needs. There were large disparities by race and ethnicity with the highest rates among Latino households, 58% of which were not able to meet their basic food needs.<sup>16</sup>

◆ Rhode offers a retail SNAP incentive pilot program which gives discounts on fruits and vegetables, improves nutrition, and reduces food insecurity in households.<sup>17</sup>

◆ Beginning in summer 2024, each child in Rhode Island who is eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch can receive \$40 per summer month or a total of \$120 for the summer in SUN Bucks to purchase groceries during the summer.<sup>18</sup>

◆ Federal policy changes in 2025 significantly restructured the SNAP program, ending work reporting requirement exemptions for former foster youth, parents of children over 14, veterans, and homeless individuals. These changes also shifted administrative costs to states, impacting state budgets, changed eligibility requirements to limit immigrants from accessing nutrition support, and changed how utility exemptions are calculated, effectively decreasing benefits.<sup>16</sup>

CITY/TOWN	NUMBER PARTICIPATING
Barrington	121
Bristol	223
Burrillville	313
Central Falls	1,883
Charlestown	110
Coventry	753
Cranston	2,429
Cumberland	552
East Greenwich	147
East Providence	1,390
Exeter	69
Foster	56
Glocester	94
Hopkinton	150
Jamestown	18
Johnston	866
Lincoln	535
Little Compton	22
Middletown	352
Narragansett	102
New Shoreham	11
Newport	869
North Kingstown	573
North Providence	974
North Smithfield	145
Pawtucket	4,834
Portsmouth	139
Providence	15,109
Richmond	125
Scituate	82
Smithfield	249
South Kingstown	324
Tiverton	239
Warren	236
Warwick	1,687
West Greenwich	72
West Warwick	1,322
Westerly	438
Woonsocket	3,868
Unknown	74
Five Core Cities	26,563
Remainder of State	14,918
Rhode Island	41,555

### 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 2025.

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.

Five core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

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