
October 28, 2013

SNAP Benefit Cuts Will Affect Thousands of Veterans In Every State

By Arloc Sherman and Brynne Keith-Jennings

Thousands of veterans in every state will be among the nearly 48 million people who now participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and who will experience a benefit cut as the 2009 Recovery Act's temporary benefit boost ends on November 1, according to a new Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis.¹

The new analysis, which uses data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, finds thousands of veterans lived in SNAP households in every state between 2009 and 2011. For instance, more than 100,000 veterans lived in SNAP households in two states: Florida (109,500) and Texas (105,700). North Dakota had the fewest such veterans (2,200). (See Table 1.)

Nationwide, in any given month, a total of 900,000 veterans nationwide lived in households that relied on SNAP to provide food for their families in 2011, a previous analysis of Census data estimated.²

The 2009 Recovery Act temporarily raised SNAP benefits as a form of effective economic stimulus and to reduce the hardship that low-income families faced during the recession. This benefit increase is set to expire on November 1. The coming benefit cut will reduce SNAP benefits, which are already modest, for all households by 7 percent on average, or about \$10 per person per month. Without the Recovery Act's boost, SNAP benefits in fiscal year 2014 will average less than \$1.40 per person per meal. This is a serious cut, especially considering that over 80 percent of SNAP participants live in poverty. House and Senate members who are now beginning to negotiate a final Farm Bill should keep this benefit cut in mind as they consider, in reauthorizing the SNAP program, whether to make even deeper cuts.

¹ For more information on the temporary benefit boost, see Stacy Dean and Dorothy Rosenbaum, "SNAP Benefits Will Be Cut for All Participants in November 2013," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Revised August 2, 2013, <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3899>.

² Dottie Rosenbaum, Stacy Dean, and Robert Greenstein, "Cuts in House Leadership SNAP Proposal Would Affect Millions of Low-Income Americans," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Revised September 17, 2013, <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=4009>.

Table 1

State Table: Veterans in Households Receiving SNAP Benefits, 2009 to 2011

State	Estimated Number of Veterans Receiving SNAP
Alabama	29,700
Alaska	4,500
Arizona	40,100
Arkansas	19,000
California	82,800
Colorado	17,900
Connecticut	10,200
Delaware	5,300
District of Columbia	3,900
Florida	109,500
Georgia	53,500
Hawaii	6,000
Idaho	9,400
Illinois	49,800
Indiana	31,900
Iowa	16,500
Kansas	12,400
Kentucky	28,100
Louisiana	29,100
Maine	12,400
Maryland	21,600
Massachusetts	21,600
Michigan	69,400
Minnesota	14,700
Mississippi	16,300
Missouri	40,900
Montana	5,700
Nebraska	7,600
Nevada	11,300
New Hampshire	5,000
New Jersey	15,900
New Mexico	10,800
New York	69,900
North Carolina	50,900
North Dakota	2,200
Ohio	72,500
Oklahoma	24,600
Oregon	37,300
Pennsylvania	59,300
Rhode Island	5,000
South Carolina	30,300
South Dakota	4,300
Tennessee	50,400
Texas	105,700
Utah	8,700
Vermont	4,900
Virginia	35,100
Washington	51,600
West Virginia	13,500
Wisconsin	26,200
Wyoming	2,700

Notes: Estimates shown are for veterans living in households that received any SNAP income during the past 12 months. Monthly estimates of SNAP participation would be lower.

Source: CBPP Analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2009 to 2011

For low-income veterans, who may be unemployed, working in low-wage jobs, or disabled, SNAP provides an essential support that enables them to purchase nutritious food for their families. Nationwide, SNAP is a powerful anti-hunger and anti-poverty tool: in 2011, it kept 4.7 million people above the poverty line, including 2.1 million children. SNAP has been shown to reduce hardship and to allow struggling households greater access to food.³

Many veterans returning from service face challenges in finding work. While the overall unemployment rate for veterans is lower than the national average, the unemployment rate for recent veterans (serving in September 2001 to the present) remains high, at 10.1 percent in September 2013. About one-quarter of recent veterans reported service-connected disabilities in 2011,⁴ which can impact their ability to provide for their families: households with a veteran with a disability that prevents them from working are about twice as likely to lack access to adequate food than households without a disabled member.⁵

Veterans who participate in SNAP tend to be young, but their ages range widely: 57 percent of the veterans in our analysis are under age 30, while 9 percent are aged 60 or older. They served during many conflicts, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Vietnam, and in some cases, Korea and World War II, as well as in peacetime.

This benefit cut, which will reduce benefits to each of the veterans who rely on SNAP, takes effect the same week that the House and Senate Agriculture Committees begin their conference committee negotiations on the Farm Bill, which includes a reauthorization of and additional proposed cuts to SNAP. The House version of the bill would cut SNAP by nearly \$40 billion over the next 10 years, denying benefits to about 3.8 million people in 2014 and an average of 3 million people each year over the coming decade.

Notes on Methods

The Center analyzed the American Community Survey (ACS) for this state-level analysis. The figures presented here represent our best estimate of the number of veterans who are likely at any time in the next 12 months to receive a lesser amount of SNAP benefits than they would have received. The number who will experience a cut in any given month is somewhat lower.

³ See, for example, James Mabli, Jim Ohls, Lisa Dragoset, Laura Castner, and Betsy Santos, “Measuring the Effect of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation on Food Security,” prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, August 2013, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Measuring2013.pdf>.

⁴ Congressional Research Service, “Employment for Veterans: Trends and Programs,” R42790, October 2012, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42790.pdf>.

⁵ Alisha Coleman-Jensen, and Mark Nord, “Food Insecurity Among Households With Working-Age Adults With Disabilities,” ERR-144, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, January 2013. About one-third (33.5 percent) of households with a working-age member who was out of the labor force due to disability were food insecure. While the food insecurity prevalence rate was slightly lower (30.5 percent) for households with a veteran who was out of the work force due to disability, this rate is still much higher than households with no working-age adults with disabilities (12 percent).

The analysis combines data for three years, 2009 through 2011, to improve the reliability of the state estimates. The figures, which total 1.5 million veterans nationwide, refer to veterans who live in households where anyone received SNAP benefits *at any time in the past 12 months*. An earlier CBPP analysis, based on a different Census survey (the Current Population Survey), estimated that 900,000 veterans lived in SNAP households *in an average month*. The figures differ for three reasons. First, the 1.5 million total here represents veterans in SNAP households at any point in the year, which is necessarily a larger group than a monthly average. Second, it comes from a different survey, the ACS; the earlier figure is from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, which tends to undercount SNAP recipients more than the ACS does. Third, it covers a different period, 2009 through 2011; the earlier estimate was for 2011 alone.⁶ Both surveys likely badly undercount homeless veterans, though the ACS probably misses fewer.

⁶ The inclusion of the two earlier years is likely to make the ACS figure lower because SNAP caseloads were growing during this period in response to the still-weak economy.