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SNAP Helps Millions of Children

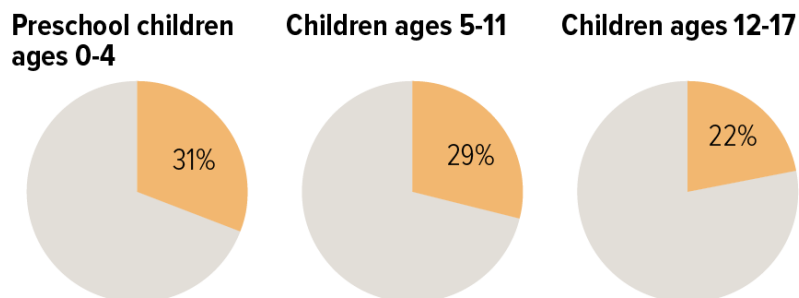
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) delivers more nutrition assistance to low-income children than any other federal program. It forms a critical foundation for the health and well-being of America’s children, lifting millions of families and their children out of poverty and helping them afford an adequate diet. Research shows that SNAP also has important long-lasting benefits for children.

- In a typical month, SNAP helps families with nearly *20 million children* afford an adequate diet. That’s 1 in 4 children in the United States. (See Figure 1.) Nearly half (44 percent) of SNAP recipients are children; another 21 percent are adults who live with those children.¹
- Two-thirds of SNAP benefits go to families with children. SNAP provided an estimated \$44 billion in 2016 to help families with children buy groceries. More than half of this amount went to families with very young children: infants, toddlers, and preschool- age children.

FIGURE 1

SNAP Helps Large Share of U.S. Children

Share of U.S. children who participate in SNAP in an average month



Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Characteristics of SNAP Households, Fiscal Year 2015,” and U.S. Census Bureau 2015 population estimates

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SNAP Improves Children’s Health and School Performance²

- Mothers in areas with access to SNAP (then called food stamps) during pregnancy in the 1960s and early 1970s, as the program gradually expanded nationwide, gave birth to fewer low birth-weight babies than mothers without access.

- Research suggests that SNAP participation can lead to gains in reading and math skills among elementary school children, especially young girls, and increase their chances of graduating from high school.

SNAP Targets the Neediest Families with Children

- In 2015, a typical family with children that received SNAP included one adult and two children, with an income of \$1,027 a month (not including SNAP) or about \$12,300 a year. This corresponds to 60 percent of the poverty line. Over 80 percent of SNAP families with children had incomes below the poverty line. And 45 percent of SNAP families with children were in *deep* poverty, with incomes at or below *half* of the poverty line (\$837 per month for a family of three in 2015).
- Families with children received SNAP benefits averaging \$393 each month in fiscal year 2015 or about \$4,700 a year, boosting their income by 38 percent.
- The overwhelming majority of SNAP recipients in families with children who *can* work *do* work. Over half of families with children with a non-elderly, non-disabled adult in the household have at least one working member while participating in SNAP. Almost 90 percent work in the year before or after participating.³

SNAP Significantly Reduces Child Poverty

- In 2015 1 in 5 children (14.5 million) lived below the poverty level — more than before the Great Recession. (In 2007, 1 in 6 children were poor, equivalent to 13.3 million children).⁴ In addition, the economic recovery has not reached many poor families with children in rural areas. Nearly 1 in 4 (23.7 percent) of children in rural areas were poor in 2014, a higher share than before the recession (22.3 percent in 2007).⁵ Numerous studies show that poor children are likelier to have health, behavioral, learning, and emotional problems.⁶
- SNAP kept about 3.8 million children out of poverty, and 2.1 million children out of deep poverty, in 2014.⁷
- Research finds that young children whose families consistently receive SNAP are likelier to have regular access to food, to be in good health, and are at lower risk of developmental delays, than young children in households that lost part or all of their SNAP benefits.⁸

SNAP Helps Families Put Food on the Table

- 13.1 million children lived in food-insecure households in 2015, meaning the household had difficulty affording nutritious, adequate food at some point during the year.⁹
- Food insecurity rates for households with children and households with children under age 6 were both nearly 17 percent in 2015, higher than the national average of 12.7 percent.¹⁰
- Poor children are more likely to be food insecure. Food insecurity in households with children is associated with inadequate intake of several important nutrients, deficits in cognitive development, behavioral problems, and poor health during childhood.¹¹
- SNAP benefits are modest yet alleviate food insecurity. Research indicates that food insecurity among children fell by roughly a third after their families received SNAP for six months.¹²

Selected Characteristics of Children Receiving SNAP, 2015

	Number of Children Receiving SNAP	Share of all Children Receiving SNAP ^a
Total Children, Age 0-17, Receiving SNAP	19,891,200	100%
Age		
Under 5	6,119,400	31%
5 to 11	8,380,900	42%
12 to 17	5,390,700	27%
Disability status		
Children without disabilities	18,919,700	95%
In household with no members with a disability	16,996,300	85%
In household with someone with a disability	1,923,400	10%
Children with disabilities	971,400	5%
Household composition ^b		
Children living with one adult	12,318,600	62%
Children living with multiple adults	7,530,300	38%
Married adults	5,198,100	26%
Other multiple-adult household	2,332,200	12%
Children living with no adults or where household composition is unclear	42,100	0.2%
Citizenship status ^b		
Citizen children (U.S. born and naturalized)	19,561,200	98%
Citizen children living with only citizen adults	15,598,900	78%
Citizen children living with at least one non-citizen	3,921,100	20%
Citizen children living with no adults or with adults of unknown immigration status	41,100	0.2%
Non-citizen children (refugees, legal permanent residents, and other eligible non-citizens)	329,900	2%

a. Some category sub-totals do not add up to totals due to rounding.

b. For determining household composition and citizenship status of adults living with of SNAP children, we include adults who, because they are ineligible, are not part of the SNAP unit.

Source: CBPP analysis of U.S. Agriculture Department 2015 SNAP household characteristics data.

Children Receiving SNAP as a Share of the Population by State, and Average SNAP Benefits, 2015

State	SNAP Children	Share of State's Children Receiving SNAP ^a	SNAP Households with Children	Average Monthly SNAP Benefits, All Households with Children	Percentage of SNAP Households with Children, with Gross Incomes Under 51% of Poverty	Percentage of SNAP Households with Children, with Gross Incomes Between 51-100% of Poverty
Alabama	396,900	36%	196,500	\$405	53%	34%
Alaska	35,300	19%	15,600	\$669	57%	36%
Arizona	478,000	29%	215,500	\$401	47%	31%
Arkansas	199,900	28%	96,500	\$385	46%	43%
California	2,318,700	25%	1,105,800	\$382	55%	31%
Colorado	234,800	19%	111,300	\$411	48%	39%
Connecticut	154,100	20%	77,100	\$392	39%	37%
Delaware	66,100	32%	33,700	\$386	44%	38%
District of Columbia	51,100	43%	25,700	\$385	57%	31%
Florida	1,448,200	35%	704,600	\$373	40%	37%
Georgia	808,700	32%	381,800	\$414	52%	35%
Hawaii	74,100	24%	35,000	\$721	41%	39%
Idaho	95,100	22%	42,300	\$408	41%	42%
Illinois	842,700	28%	406,900	\$411	47%	41%
Indiana	379,200	24%	175,300	\$409	48%	40%
Iowa	166,800	23%	78,600	\$362	41%	33%
Kansas	130,300	18%	58,200	\$402	42%	39%
Kentucky	312,600	31%	154,300	\$393	47%	43%
Louisiana	406,900	37%	189,800	\$420	52%	37%
Maine	69,500	27%	37,600	\$372	33%	43%
Maryland	322,200	24%	163,200	\$366	39%	36%
Massachusetts	268,000	19%	140,300	\$352	35%	34%
Michigan	581,600	26%	281,600	\$396	38%	41%
Minnesota	216,200	17%	97,600	\$355	44%	33%
Mississippi	276,900	38%	125,700	\$414	53%	37%

Children Receiving SNAP as a Share of the Population by State, and Average SNAP Benefits, 2015

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Missouri	365,000	26%	173,200	\$421	53%	36%
Montana	48,400	21%	23,200	\$404	46%	32%
Nebraska	85,000	18%	36,900	\$401	45%	38%
Nevada	179,300	27%	85,200	\$371	42%	39%
New Hampshire	41,000	16%	21,100	\$339	31%	32%
New Jersey	396,900	20%	196,500	\$368	40%	41%
New Mexico	205,700	41%	96,500	\$410	50%	35%
New York	1,049,800	25%	506,700	\$405	32%	50%
North Carolina	695,800	30%	344,400	\$387	47%	34%
North Dakota	23,000	13%	11,100	\$416	43%	30%
Ohio	693,000	26%	344,900	\$407	47%	40%
Oklahoma	267,200	28%	124,800	\$418	55%	32%
Oregon	274,500	32%	137,100	\$352	39%	33%
Pennsylvania	734,300	27%	357,100	\$390	41%	32%
Rhode Island	65,500	31%	33,400	\$363	36%	38%
South Carolina	365,900	34%	180,700	\$406	53%	38%
South Dakota	46,300	22%	20,200	\$434	44%	42%
Tennessee	514,900	34%	251,400	\$413	53%	36%
Texas	2,059,600	29%	907,900	\$387	41%	40%
Utah	118,300	13%	48,700	\$422	41%	40%
Vermont	29,500	25%	14,800	\$348	25%	32%
Virginia	376,200	20%	190,700	\$394	51%	36%
Washington	412,400	26%	204,100	\$345	38%	31%
West Virginia	136,600	36%	69,500	\$374	46%	37%
Wisconsin	315,900	24%	153,400	\$343	30%	43%

Children Receiving SNAP as a Share of the Population by State, and Average SNAP Benefits, 2015

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Wyoming	15,800	11%	7,200	\$404	46%	39%
Guam	26,300	-	10,000	\$719	45%	30%
Virgin Islands	12,500	-	6,300	\$524	53%	30%
United States ^b	19,891,200	27%	9,509,900	\$393	45%	37%

a. Estimates of state population of children are as of July 1, 2015; estimates of children on SNAP are for fiscal years. National share excludes Guam and Virgin Islands because comparable population data are not available. In 2010, based on data from that year's decennial Census and 2010 SNAP household characteristics data, about 40 percent of children participated in SNAP in both Guam and the Virgin Islands.

b. Individual state totals do not add up to the U.S. total due to rounding.

Sources: CBPP analysis of Agriculture Department 2015 SNAP household characteristics data; Census Bureau 2015 population estimates; Census Bureau 2010 Census.

¹ Kelsey Farson Gray, Sarah Fisher, and Sarah Lauffer, "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2015," prepared for the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, November 2016, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/characteristics-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-households-fiscal-year-2015>.

² Steven Carlson *et al.*, "SNAP Works for America's Children," CBPP, September 29, 2016, <http://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-works-for-americas-children>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Bernadette D. Proctor, Jessica L. Semega, and Melissa A. Kollar, "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2015," Census Bureau, September 2016, <http://www.census.gov/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-256.html>.

⁵ Thomas Hertz and Tracey Farrigan, "Understanding Trends in Rural Child Poverty, 2003-2014," Department of Agriculture, Economic and Research Service, May 2016, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=45543>.

⁶ Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Greg Duncan, "The Effects of Poverty on Children," *The Future of Children*, 7(2), 1997, www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/docs/07_02_03.pdf.

⁷ Forthcoming CBPP analysis of Census Bureau data from the March Current Population Survey; corrections for underreported benefits from Department of Health and Human Services/Urban Institute TRIM model.

⁸ Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba *et al.*, "Punishing Hard Work: The Unintended Consequences of Cutting SNAP Benefits," Children's HealthWatch, December 2013, <http://childrenshealthwatch.org/punishing-hard-work-the-unintended-consequences-of-cutting-snap-benefits/>.

⁹ Alisha Coleman-Jensen *et al.*, "Household Food Security in the United States in 2015," Economic Research Service, September 2016, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=79760>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ John T. Cook and Deborah A. Frank, "Food Security, Poverty, and Human Development in the United States," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1136(1), 193-209, 2008, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1196/annals.1425.001/epdf>.

¹² James Mabli *et al.*, "Measuring the Effect of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation on Food Security," Department of Agriculture, August 2013, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/measuring-effect-snap-participation-food-security-0>.