

SNAP CHARACTERISTICS DASHBOARD

About the SNAP Characteristics Dashboard

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Characteristics Dashboard is comprised of publicly available data. The Dashboard describes the economic and demographic characteristics of households participating in SNAP by State and over time, as well as SNAP participation rates by State and by household characteristic. The Dashboard may be used by the public to view the statistical characteristics of the SNAP population in the following ways:

1. Compare the number of Americans unemployed or in poverty against the number participating in SNAP;
2. Track annual SNAP participant income and demographic characteristics over time; and
3. Contrast SNAP participation rates and household statistics of each State in the U.S.

Data Sources

SNAP Quality Control (QC) Data - The SNAP Quality Control data are an edited version of the raw data file generated by SNAP's QC System, which is composed of monthly case reviews conducted by State SNAP agencies. The SNAP QC data contain detailed demographic, economic, and SNAP eligibility information for a nationally representative sample of SNAP participants. The data, produced annually, are well suited for tabulating characteristics of SNAP participants.

Public Webpage - <https://snapqcdata.net/>

Documentation - <https://snapqcdata.net/datafiles>

Characteristics of SNAP Households Report - Using SNAP household data collected for quality control (QC) purposes, FNA publishes reports detailing characteristics of the SNAP population and uses the data for additional analyses. This report is part of an annual series that began in 1976, which presents a picture of the demographic and economic circumstances of households and individuals who participated in SNAP during a fiscal year (FY) (Oct. through Sept.). A new report is written every year, the latest of which is below.

Public Webpage - <https://www.fna.usda.gov/research/snap/characteristics-fy22>

Trends in USDA SNAP Participation Rates - This report is an annual series on SNAP participation rates, which estimates the proportion of people eligible for benefits under federal income and asset rules to those who actually participate in the program during an FY. A new report is written every year, the latest of which is below.

Public Webpage - <https://www.fna.usda.gov/research/snap/national-participation-rates/fy20and22>

Reaching Those in Need: Estimates of State SNAP Participation Rates - This annual report presents estimates of the percentage of eligible persons, by State, who participated in the SNAP during an average month in an FY and in the two previous FYs. SNAP eligibility criteria include maximum income and resource thresholds, as well as certain nonfinancial criteria, such as age and disability status. A new report is written every year, the latest of which is below.

Public Webpage - <https://www.fna.usda.gov/research/snap/state-participation-rates/2020>

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Data Limitations

- A. *SNAP Quality Control (QC) Data* - Because the Coronavirus COVID-19 public health emergency affected data collection starting in March 2020, the FY 2020 data covers only the pre-pandemic period of October 2019 through February 2020 and the pandemic period of July to September 2020. This effects the estimates contained in the respective FY 2020 annual reports—SNAP Characteristics Report, Trends in USDA SNAP Participation Rates, and Reaching Those in Need.
- B. *Trends in USDA SNAP Participation Rates*: Estimates for the *Trends* report use multiple data sets, which produces estimates that may exceed 100% for some SNAP subgroups. To see a full methodological explanation for these anomalies, users of this dashboard should see the full report.
- C. *Reaching Those in Need*: Estimates for the *Reaching Those in Need* report use multiple data sets, which produces wide confidence intervals. Users of this dashboard should go directly to the report to see the range of these confidence intervals.

Elderly and Working Poor Participation Rates: Elderly participation rates are produced intermittently and are not contained in the above reports. FNA recommends caution when comparing the participation rates for elderly or working households below the poverty line to each other or the general participation rates. They are produced using different models to more accurately optimize each particular estimation and, therefore, are not directly comparable.

Methods and Key Definitions

- A. *Certification period*: Length of time a household is certified to receive SNAP benefits. When the certification period expires, households must be recertified to continue receiving benefits.
- B. *Children*: Individuals younger than age 18.
- C. *Disabled Individual*: SNAP rules define an individual with a disability as someone who receives Federal or State payments because of a disability or blindness, receives a disability retirement benefit from a governmental agency, receives an annuity under the Railroad Retirement Act and is either eligible for Medicare, is considered disabled based on SSI rules, or a veteran/veteran's spouse/veteran's child with a permanent disability receiving veterans' benefits.
- D. *Elderly individuals*: Adults age 60 or older.
- E. *Employment Earnings*: Includes wages, salaries, self-employment income, and other reported earned income.
- F. *Gross income*: Total monthly countable income of a household in dollars, before applying deductions.
- G. *Household*: Individuals who live in a residential unit and purchase and prepare food together. Spouses living together, and children younger than age 22 living with their

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parents must be considered a SNAP household, regardless of whether or not they purchase and prepare food together.

- H. *Poverty Guidelines*: HHS issues the poverty guidelines used by FNA and many other Federal programs to determine income eligibility. The guidelines are based on the poverty thresholds issued by the Census Bureau.
- I. *SNAP Participation Rate*: estimates of the percentage of individuals who were eligible for SNAP benefits under Federal income and resource rules that chose to participate in the program.
- J. *Supplemental Security Income (SSI)*: Federal income supplement program that provides cash assistance to low-income elderly individuals and non-elderly individuals with disabilities.
- K. *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)*: Federally funded, State-run program that provides temporary cash or other assistance to eligible families with children in order to assist needy families and for other purposes.
- L. *Working Poor*: People who are eligible for SNAP benefits and live in households in which someone earns income from a job.

Contact Information

For questions, please reach out to FNA.Analytics@usda.gov