

# SNAP COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS DASHBOARD

## CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT EXPLORER

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### About the Dashboard

This exploratory tool was built to share information about Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participation, household income, and household demographics within each congressional district. Users may select their own district, along with any other district of interest, and can compare two districts at once within a given State.

### Data Sources

US Census Bureau (2020). *National 2020 118th Congressional District to 2020 Zip Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA) Relationship File*. Census Bureau Relationship Files. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-files/time-series/geo/relationship-files.2020.html#entitycd>

US Census Bureau (2022). *2013-2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Data Tables*. Retrieved from <https://api.census.gov>

USDOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics (2023). *Congressional Districts, Last updated December 10, 2023*. National Transportation Atlas Database. Retrieved from <https://geodata.bts.gov/datasets/usdot::congressional-districts/about>

### Key Definitions

Note: Because this tool relies on American Community Survey (ACS) data from the Census Bureau, definitions used below are sourced from Census Bureau definitions. Some definitions, such as "Household," may not align with the definitions used for administering SNAP.

#### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

An area established by law for the election of representatives to the United States Congress. After the apportionment of congressional seats among the States based on decennial census population counts, each State with multiple seats is responsible for establishing congressional districts for the purpose of electing representatives. Each congressional district is to be as equal in population to all other congressional districts in the State as practicable, based on the decennial census counts. The boundaries may be changed more than once during a decade. Source: [Census.gov Glossary for Congressional Districts](#)

#### HOUSEHOLD

In this dashboard, a household includes all the people who occupy a housing unit (such as a house or apartment) as their usual place of residence.

A household includes the related family members and all the unrelated people, if any, such as lodgers, foster children, wards, or employees who share the housing unit. A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit such as partners or roomers, is also counted as a household. The count of households excludes group quarters.

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---

There are two major categories of households, "family" and "nonfamily." For more information on how a household is defined for SNAP eligibility purposes, please see [this page](#).

Source: [Census.gov Glossary for Household](#)

### POVERTY

Following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) Directive 14, the Census Bureau uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If the total income for a family or unrelated individual falls below the relevant poverty threshold, then the family (and every individual in it) or unrelated individual is considered in poverty. Please note that SNAP eligibility is determined based on the Department of Health and Human Services' poverty guidelines. Differences between the HHS poverty guidelines and the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds are discussed [here](#).

[Link to OMB Directive 14](#)

Source: [Census.gov Glossary for Poverty](#)

### ZIP CODES AND ZIP CODE TABULATION AREAS

A ZIP (Zone Improvement Plan) Code is a five-digit code assigned by the U.S. Postal Service to a section of a street, a collection of streets, an establishment, structure, or group of post office boxes, for the delivery of mail.

Source: [Census.gov Glossary for ZIP Codes](#)

A ZIP Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA) is a geographic area that approximates the delivery area for a ZIP Code. The Census Bureau defines ZCTAs by allocating each block that contains addresses to a single ZCTA, and therefore ZCTAs do not precisely depict the area within which mail deliveries associated with that ZIP Code occur.

Source: [Census.gov Glossary for ZIP Code Tabulation Area \(ZCTA\)](#)

### Disclaimers/Data Limitations

#### ZIP CODE TABULATION AREAS, NOT ZIP CODES

For ease of reading, in this exploratory tool we utilize the phrase "ZIP Code" in place of ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs) created by the Census Bureau. As ZIP Codes are designed to be mail delivery routes, they are not necessarily shapes with clear borders, so ZIP Code Tabulation Areas were created to approximate ZIP Code borders.

#### CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

In this dashboard, we utilize the 118th congressional district boundaries which correspond to the most recently available congressional district breakdowns within ACS data tables.

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---

Every 10 years, following the completion of the US Decennial Census, States have the responsibility to redraw congressional district boundaries, if needed. The specific timing and process of this redistricting are determined by each State. States may experience changes in the number of congressional districts due to congressional district reapportionment. States may also experience legal challenges to congressional district boundaries that may necessitate redrawing congressional district boundaries before the next Decennial Census. As a result, in some cases, congressional district boundaries may vary from year-to-year, which must be kept in mind when considering data over time. The dashboard does not account for changes in congressional district boundaries in its year-over-year comparisons.

ZCTAs may align to different congressional districts over time as redistricting occurs. ZCTAs within the dashboard align to the boundaries for the 118th Congress.

### **SPECIAL GEOGRAPHIES**

Puerto Rico is not included in the dashboard as Puerto Rico has a nutrition assistance program that is not part of SNAP.

Although Guam and the US Virgin Islands are part of SNAP, they are excluded from the dashboard as they are not represented in the American Community Survey.

While the District of Columbia does not have congressional representation, it is included within the dashboard as a delegate district (at large).

### **Contact Information**

For questions about this dashboard, email [FNSStudies@usda.gov](mailto:FNSStudies@usda.gov) and [FNCS.Analytics@usda.gov](mailto:FNCS.Analytics@usda.gov).

For more information about SNAP, please visit the [SNAP page on the USDA website](#).

To explore American Community Survey data, visit the [Census Bureau Data](#) website.