

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Average Congressional District

Findings

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is America's primary defense against hunger, providing food assistance to over 42 million families. The program provides essential support to millions of seniors, people with disabilities, and working Americans who struggle to afford groceries.

In the average congressional district, **51,400 households**, totaling **95,600 people**, are enrolled in SNAP. Each household receives an average of **\$351 a month** – roughly **\$12 a day** – to purchase food.

SNAP is a program for working families, seniors, people with disabilities, and children. In the average district:

- 52% of families in SNAP have at least one working adult,
- 49% of SNAP households include someone with a disability,
- 43% of SNAP households include children under the age of 18, and
- 42% of SNAP households have incomes below the poverty line.

SNAP strengthens local economies. Each benefit dollar generates \$1.50 of additional economic activity by supporting grocery stores, food retailers, and their suppliers. The average district receives **\$216 million annually** in benefits, creating a total annual economic impact of **\$324 million**.

Background

SNAP is the largest nutrition assistance program in the country, serving about 42 million Americans (roughly 12% of all Americans).¹ The program reduces hunger; improves enrollees' long-term health, educational, and economic outcomes; and supports local economies. These benefits include:

- **Reducing Food Insecurity:** SNAP participation reduces severe food insecurity by 20%.²

¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *State Level Participation & Benefits* (May 2025) (<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-4fymonthly-8.pdf>) (SNAP enrollment); U.S. Census Bureau, *Population* (November 5, 2025) (<https://www.census.gov/topics/population.html>) (U.S. population).

² James Mail and Jim Ohls, *The Journal of Nutrition, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation is Associated with an Increase in Household Food Security in National Evaluation* (December 10, 2014) (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25644357/>).

- **Alleviating Poverty:** SNAP increases the average enrolled household's monthly income by over 30%.³ In 2024, the program lifted an estimated 3.6 million people (including 1.4 million children) above the poverty line.⁴
- **Improving Health Outcomes:** Low-income families with SNAP access show significantly lower rates of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure in adulthood.⁵ Access to SNAP has also been linked to higher birth weights and lower healthcare costs.⁶
- **Enhancing Educational Achievement:** Children who receive SNAP perform better academically and in the labor market. Individuals who access the program in early childhood have better long-term educational and economic outcomes.⁷
- **Stimulating Local Economies:** SNAP benefits also support local grocers and food retailers. Research shows that each dollar of SNAP benefits generates an additional \$1.50 of economic activity and provides even more support during economic downturns and recessions.⁸
- **Supporting Vulnerable Populations:** SNAP primarily helps society's most vulnerable members. Children make up 40% of all participants, and nearly 80% of recipients are children, elderly people, or people with disabilities.⁹ Despite common misconceptions, the majority of households enrolled in SNAP have at least one member who is working.¹⁰

³ USDA, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2023*, pages XII-XIV (April 2025) (<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/snap-FY23-Characteristics-Report.pdf>).

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Poverty in the United States: 2024*, Table B-7 (September 2025) (<https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2025/demo/p60-287.pdf>).

⁵ Douglas Almond, Hilary Hoynes, and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, *The Review of Economic Statistics, Inside the War on Poverty: The Impact of Food Stamps on Birth Outcomes* (2011) (https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1162/REST_a_00089); Hilary Hoynes, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, and Douglas Almond, *American Economic Review, Long-Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net* (2016) (<https://gspp.berkeley.edu/assets/uploads/research/pdf/Hoynes-Schanzenbach-Almond-AER-2016.pdf>).

⁶ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *SNAP is Linked with Improved Health Outcomes and Lower Health Care Costs* (December 14, 2022) (<https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-is-linked-with-improved-health-outcomes-and-lower-health-care-costs>).

⁷ Hilary Hoynes, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, and Douglas Almond, *American Economic Review, Long-Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net* (2016) (<https://gspp.berkeley.edu/assets/uploads/research/pdf/Hoynes-Schanzenbach-Almond-AER-2016.pdf>).

⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Economy: New Estimates of the SNAP Multiplier* (July 2019) (<https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/laserfiche/publications/93529/ERR-265.pdf?v=42851>).

⁹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Key Statistics and Research* (updated July 24, 2025) (<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/key-statistics-and-research>); U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Characteristics of SNAP Households: Fiscal Year 2023* (updated May 2, 2025) (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/characteristics-fy23>).

¹⁰ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *SNAP Provides Critical Benefits to Workers and Their Families* (April 28, 2025) (<https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/snap-provides-critical-benefits-to-workers-and-their-families>); U.S. Census Bureau, *About a Third of Families Who Received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits Had Two*

The SNAP program is facing two major challenges in 2025. In July, congressional Republicans and President Trump enacted a budget reconciliation law that will cut assistance to many current enrollees and make it harder to enroll in the program. The law adds work requirements for veterans, homeless individuals, former foster children, and parents with teenage children.¹¹ An estimated 2 million people will lose benefits each month.¹² The law will also reduce monthly benefits for all enrollees and further cut benefits for families who receive assistance for household utilities.¹³

The Trump Administration has disrupted benefit payments during the ongoing government shutdown. In late October, the Trump Administration initially refused to pay November benefits, claiming it lacked legal authority to use the program's \$5-6 billion contingency fund.¹⁴ Although federal judges ordered the Administration to reverse course, the Administration has indicated it will only provide 65% of the funding needed for November.¹⁵ The Administration's actions to date have jeopardized beneficiaries' access to their benefits.¹⁶ At the same time, the Administration has transferred \$13 billion of USDA funds into a "slush fund" to provide emergency relief to farmers hurt by the Administration's tariff policies.¹⁷

or More People Working (July 21, 2020) (<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2020/07/most-families-that-received-snap-benefits-in-2018-had-at-least-one-person-working.html>).

¹¹ Congressional Research Service, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Related Nutrition Programs in P.L. 119-21: An Overview* (August 15, 2025) (<https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48552>).

¹² Congressional Budget Office, *Estimated Effects of Public Law 119-21 on Participation and Benefits Under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* (August 11, 2025) (<https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2025-08/61367-SNAP.pdf>).

¹³ Congressional Research Service, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Related Nutrition Programs in P.L. 119-21: An Overview* (August 15, 2025) (<https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48552>).

¹⁴ Factcheck.org, *Democrats and Republicans Clash Over SNAP Contingency Funds* (updated October 31, 2025) (<https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/democrats-and-republicans-clash-over-snap-contingency-funds/>).

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *REVISED Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefit and Administrative Expense Update for November 2025* (November 5, 2025) (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/revised-benefit-administrative-expense-update-Nov-2025>).

¹⁶ Factcheck.org, *Democrats and Republicans Clash Over SNAP Contingency Funds* (updated October 31, 2025) (<https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/democrats-and-republicans-clash-over-snap-contingency-funds/>).

¹⁷ Government Executive, *USDA Transfers \$13B into 'Slush Fund' for Future Tariff Relief* (October 30, 2025) (<https://www.govexec.com/management/2025/10/usda-transfers-13b-slush-fund-future-tariff-relief/409198/?oref=ge-home-top-story>).