

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which the U.S. Department of Agriculture administers, is the nation's first line of defense against hunger. Without SNAP, hunger in this country would be far worse. Here are the reasons why we need to urge policymakers to protect and strengthen this effective program:

- 1. SNAP reduces hunger and food insecurity.** SNAP supports people with low incomes desperately needing food assistance by providing targeted assistance to purchase food at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and other regular commercial food outlets, through an effective and efficient Electronic Benefit Transfer system. SNAP was responsible for supporting 39.9 million people living in 20.5 million households in 2020, helping to keep food insecurity rates relatively stable amidst an unprecedented pandemic.<sup>1,2</sup>
- 2. SNAP benefits run out fast.** Because SNAP benefits are so urgently needed by families, they are spent quickly. Currently, SNAP benefits lie at about \$6 per person per day. Households spend over three-fourths of their benefits by the middle of the month, and 89 percent of benefits are spent after only three weeks.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, research shows that ER visits among older adults are lower closer to the beginning of the month that benefits are issued.<sup>4</sup>
- 3. SNAP stimulates the economy and supports working families.** According to recent studies, it is estimated that each dollar in federally funded SNAP benefits during a downturn generates between \$1.50 and \$1.80 in economic activity. SNAP is targeted to go to the people with the lowest incomes in our country. This includes millions of working families experiencing poverty.
- 4. SNAP reaches key vulnerable populations.** 81 percent of SNAP households include a child, an older adult, or a person with disabilities; 85 percent of all SNAP benefits go to such households. While losing a job is the most common event causing a household to seek SNAP,



53 percent of SNAP households with children in fiscal year 2020 (pre-pandemic) worked and had earnings.<sup>5,6</sup>

- 5. SNAP during childhood improves adulthood outcomes.** Research found that receipt of SNAP in early childhood improved educational attainment up to college graduation, economic outcomes, longevity, and reduced likelihood of needing public assistance in adulthood.<sup>7</sup>
- 6. SNAP responds to economic challenges.** SNAP reacts quickly and robustly to economic problems. This was seen most clearly and dramatically at the start of the recession in 2008 when millions of people became newly unemployed or underemployed. This was seen once again during the COVID-19 pandemic when, in 2020, SNAP was responsible for nearly 200,000 U.S. grocery industry jobs, with wages totaling more than \$6.7 billion, leading to nearly 45,000 more jobs in agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, municipal services, and other industries; and generated more than \$1 billion in federal tax receipts and \$975 million in state and local tax receipts.<sup>8</sup> The end of critical Emergency Allotments is estimated to correlate with a \$20 billion loss in grocery retail sales.<sup>9</sup>

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- 7. SNAP reduces poverty.** SNAP lifted 2.8 million Americans out of poverty in 2021, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, compared to not having the benefit expansions, the combination of the fall 2021 Thrifty Food Plan update and the provision of temporary SNAP Emergency Allotments reduced poverty in quarter four of 2021 by 14.1 percent and child poverty by 21.8 percent. Poverty reduction from these benefit expansions is highest for Black and Latinx participants, helping reduce disparities between these groups and White people.<sup>11</sup>
- 8. SNAP prevents choosing between housing, utility costs, and food.** SNAP is nearly as effective as the Earned Income Tax Credit in lifting families above the poverty line. It also allows households to avoid choosing between paying for rent and utilities or food. Since the end of Emergency Allotments, many individuals are falling behind on rent and utility payments.<sup>12</sup>
- 9. SNAP relieves pressure on overwhelmed food banks, pantries, religious congregations, and other emergency food providers across the country.** They recognize the comprehensive approach needed to end hunger and see SNAP as the cornerstone of national, state, and local anti-hunger efforts, and are the first to note their inability to meet added demand that would come from weakening SNAP.<sup>13</sup> For example, for every meal provided by a Feeding America network food bank, SNAP provides nine meals.<sup>14</sup>
- 10. Disaster SNAP provides timely support for those experiencing natural disasters.** When states experience disasters, Disaster SNAP (also called D-SNAP) has been deemed effective and responsive in quickly providing nutrition assistance to people recovering from hurricanes, tornadoes, and other disasters, as recently seen in the aftermath of wildfires in California, tornadoes in southeastern states, and Hurricane Ian.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/characteristics-snap-households-fy-2020-and-early-months-covid-19-pandemic-characteristics>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/food-insecurity-at-a-two-decade-low-for-households-with-kids-signaling-successful-relief>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/benefit-redemption-patterns-fy-2017#:~:text=On%20average%2C%20SNAP%20households%20had,before%20receiving%20their%20next%20issuance>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167629619301316>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/dynamics-and-determinants-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-participation-2008-2012>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> FRAC ResearchWIRE Summer 2019 Issue <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/researchwire-summer-2019.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://frac.org/blog/snap-promotes-food-security-jobs-and-dignity-during-covid-19-and-beyond>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.winsightgrocerybusiness.com/retailers/snap-customers-look-grocers-after-rollercoaster-benefits-experience#:~:text=Hit%20to%20grocery%20retailers&text=Every%20%241%20change%20in%20SNAP,CBPP%20data%20cited%20by%20dunnhumby.>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2022/demo/p60-277.html>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.urban.org/research/publication/effect-reevaluated-thrifty-food-plan-and-emergency-allotments-supplemental?utm\\_source=urban\\_newsletters&utm\\_campaign=UIU](https://www.urban.org/research/publication/effect-reevaluated-thrifty-food-plan-and-emergency-allotments-supplemental?utm_source=urban_newsletters&utm_campaign=UIU)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.joinpropel.com/reports/may-2023-pulse-survey>

<sup>13</sup> <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/3878351-snap-cuts-could-lead-to-hunger-cliff-experts-fear/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate/snap>

<sup>15</sup> <https://frac.org/programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/disaster-snap>