

# SNAP Maps:

## Overview of SNAP Average Monthly Participation Among Eligible Seniors

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) plays a critical role in improving the health, nutrition, and well-being of millions of older adults (age 60 plus) struggling against hunger.

*Yet too many eligible seniors are missing out on SNAP.*

Nationally, only 42 percent (4.2 million) of eligible seniors participated in SNAP on average each month in fiscal year (FY) 2015.

### State Findings

Participation rates among eligible seniors vary across the nation. New York led the nation with a participation rate of 70 percent (+/- 6 percent) among eligible seniors, while California<sup>1</sup> and Wyoming ranked as the two lowest-performing states with rates of 19 percent (+/- 4 percent) and 20 percent (+/- 4 percent), respectively.

#### Highest- and Lowest-Performing States for SNAP Participation Among Eligible Seniors on Average Each Month, FY 2015

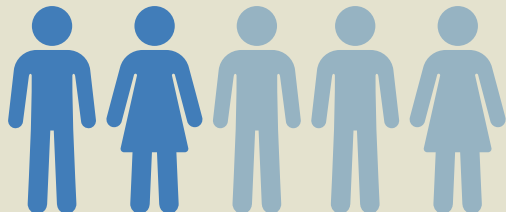
Top Five States		Bottom Five States	
State	Rate	State	Rate
New York	70% (+/- 6%)	Arizona	29% (+/- 3%)
Vermont	68% (+/- 7%)	Utah	26% (+/- 5%)
Massachusetts	67% (+/- 6%)	Arkansas	25% (+/- 3%)
Oregon	62% (+/- 6%)	Wyoming	20% (+/- 4%)
Rhode Island	60% (+/- 6%)	California	19% (+/- 4%)

In 15 states and the District of Columbia, the rates were statistically higher than the national rate of 42 percent for seniors, while 25 states had rates that were statistically lower than the national rate.

<sup>1</sup> In California, the value of CalFresh (the state's name for SNAP) benefits are included within recipients' Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP). This makes SSI/SSP recipients — many of whom include seniors — ineligible for CalFresh. California is changing this policy, making it possible for more low-income seniors to participate in SNAP.

### SNAP Matters for Seniors

#### Too Many Seniors Miss out on SNAP



**Nationally, only an estimated 42% (2 in 5) of eligible seniors participate in SNAP**

Source: USDA's FY2015 Trends in SNAP Participation Rates report

#### State SNAP Participation Among Eligible Seniors Compared to the National Monthly Average, FY 2015

Above National Monthly Average	Below National Monthly Average	No Statistical Difference
Connecticut	Alabama	Alaska
District of Columbia	Arizona	Colorado
Florida	Arkansas	Maryland
Hawaii	California	Minnesota
Illinois	Delaware	Missouri
Maine	Georgia	Nevada
Massachusetts	Idaho	New Hampshire
Michigan	Indiana	New Mexico
New Jersey	Iowa	Ohio
New York	Kansas	Tennessee
Oregon	Kentucky	
Pennsylvania	Louisiana	
Rhode Island	Mississippi	
Vermont	Montana	
Washington	Nebraska	
Wisconsin	North Carolina	
	North Dakota	
	Oklahoma	
	South Carolina	
	South Dakota	
	Texas	
	Utah	
	Virginia	
	West Virginia	
	Wyoming	

## Rates for Eligible Seniors Compared to all Eligible Individuals

The average monthly participation rate for eligible seniors lags far behind the participation rate for all eligible individuals. Only an estimated 42 percent of eligible seniors participated in SNAP on average each month in FY 2015 compared to 83 percent of all eligible people.

### SNAP Matters for Seniors

#### Participation Among Eligible Seniors Lags Far Behind Participation Among All Eligible Individuals

In FY 2015, an estimated **42 percent of eligible seniors** participated in SNAP on average each month ...



... Compared to **83 percent of all eligible people.**



**Source:** Mathematica Policy Research analysis of FY2015 state SNAP average monthly participation rates among eligible seniors, provided by USDA Food and Nutrition Service, and state SNAP participation rates among all eligible individuals published in *Reaching Those In Need: Estimates of State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2015*, produced by Mathematica Policy Research for USDA Food and Nutrition Service, January 2018.

#### Highest-Performing States for SNAP Participation on Average Each Month Among Eligible Cohorts

Top 10 States for SNAP Participation Among Seniors		Top 10 States for SNAP Participation Among all Individuals	
State	Rate	State	Rate
New York	70% (+/- 6%)	Delaware	100% (+/- 6%)
*Vermont	68% (+/- 7%)	Illinois	100% (+/- 5%)
Massachusetts	67% (+/- 6%)	*Michigan	100% (+/- 5%)
*Oregon	62% (+/- 6%)	New Mexico	100% (+/- 6%)
*Rhode Island	60% (+/- 6%)	*Oregon	100% (+/- 6%)
Connecticut	54% (+/- 6%)	Washington	100% (+/- 5%)
Maine	54% (+/- 6%)	*Rhode Island	99% (+/- 6%)
Florida	53% (+/- 5%)	*Vermont	99% (+/- 6%)
*Michigan	51% (+/- 6%)	District of Columbia	98% (+/- 6%)
*Washington	51% (+/- 6%)	Wisconsin	96% (+/- 5%)

\*Five states were in both lists for participation rates among eligible seniors and all eligible individuals.

#### Lowest-Performing States for SNAP Participation on Average Each Month Among Eligible Cohorts

Lowest-Performing States Among Seniors		Lowest-Performing States Among all Individuals	
State	Rate	State	Rate
*California	19% (+/- 4%)	*Wyoming	59% (+/- 6%)
*Wyoming	20% (+/- 4%)	*North Dakota	62% (+/- 5%)
*Arkansas	25% (+/- 3%)	*Utah	69% (+/- 5%)
*Utah	26% (+/- 5%)	*Arizona	70% (+/- 4%)
*Arizona	29% (+/- 3%)	*California	70% (+/- 3%)
*North Dakota	30% (+/- 5%)	Texas	70% (+/- 3%)
*Virginia	31% (+/- 4%)	Mississippi	71% (+/- 5%)
Alabama	32% (+/- 4%)	*Arkansas	72% (+/- 4%)
Idaho	32% (+/- 4%)	New Jersey	74% (+/- 5%)
Kentucky	32% (+/- 4%)	New Hampshire	75% (+/- 5%)
Nebraska	32% (+/- 4%)	*Virginia	75% (+/- 5%)
Oklahoma	32% (+/- 4%)		

\*Seven states were in both lists for participation rates among eligible seniors and all eligible individuals.

All states — including the lowest-performing state at 59 percent (+/- 6 percent) — had participation rates among all eligible individuals above the average rate for eligible seniors of 42 percent.

## Conclusion

Because of SNAP's entitlement structure, added federal funding is available for states, localities, and nonprofit programs to grow SNAP participation to reach additional eligible people, especially seniors. Through concerted outreach and the adoption of senior-friendly policies, states can connect millions of additional seniors to all the benefits of SNAP without the need for additional federal appropriations. For more, visit [FRAC's Senior Hunger webpage](#).

**Sources:** Mathematica Policy Research analysis of FY2015 state SNAP average monthly participation rates among eligible seniors, provided by USDA Food and Nutrition Service, and state SNAP participation rates among all eligible individuals published in *Reaching Those In Need: Estimates of State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2015*, produced by Mathematica Policy Research for USDA Food and Nutrition Service, January 2018.