



## KEY FACTS

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# SNAP: The Most Effective Tool for Ending Childhood Hunger

## *Top facts and statistics about SNAP and its essential impact.*

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or “food stamps”) remains one of the most powerful tools we have for ending childhood hunger in the United States today. Here are some basic facts about the program and how it affects hungry children in America.

### SNAP Facts

#### SNAP helps millions of children in America get the food they need.

- Nearly half (44%) of all people who participate in the SNAP program are kids. <sup>1</sup>
- Families with kids receive two-thirds (67%) of all SNAP benefits. <sup>1</sup>

#### Who Relies on SNAP: Kids, the elderly, the disabled, veterans and their families.

- **Four out of five SNAP participants** either work or are unable to work (children, the elderly or disabled). <sup>2</sup>
- Breaking it down: The majority of people who rely on SNAP are **kids (44%), the elderly and disabled (19%)** and their families (23%).
- An estimated **900,000 veterans and 5,000 active duty members** of the military rely on food stamps. <sup>3</sup>

#### SNAP helps children escape poverty *and* hunger.

- In 2014, SNAP benefits lifted 2.1 million kids out of poverty. <sup>1</sup>
- Food insecurity among kids falls by roughly a third (33%) after families have been receiving benefits for about six months. <sup>1</sup>

#### SNAP is efficient and effective

- SNAP has a **96.34% accuracy rate** in providing correct benefits to low-income people. (And this error rate has been falling for more than a decade; in 2002, the SNAP error rate was more than 8%.) <sup>4</sup>

#### SNAP affects a child's ability to learn.

- The SNAP benefit cycle is linked to test scores. Families get their SNAP benefits monthly, and for many families, this benefit runs out before the end of the month. When SNAP benefits run out, kids struggle in school.
- A research project in North Carolina tracked student test scores against when their families received their SNAP benefits. Scores were highest among students whose families got their SNAP benefits 2-3 weeks before a standardized test (meaning the kids had food during the learning and test prep.) At the same time, scores were lowest among kids who were **trying to study during the last days of their family's SNAP benefit cycle** (or when food budgets were most likely to be exhausted.) <sup>1</sup>
- A separate study found that early access to SNAP leads to an **18 percentage point increase** in the likelihood of high school graduation. <sup>1</sup>

#### SNAP affects a child's behavior.

- The SNAP benefit cycle is tied to school discipline problems. In a study, the incidence of disciplinary events among students in families on food stamps was **nearly 50 percent higher** at the end of the month, when benefits has typically run out, than at the beginning of the month. <sup>5</sup>
- Analysis also "suggests that the exhaustion of SNAP benefits causes an **11% increase** in the rate of disciplinary actions between the first and last week of the month for SNAP students." <sup>1</sup>

### SNAP affects a child's health.

- Studies show that when pregnant moms have access to food stamps, it reduces the likelihood of **low birth weight by 23%**. Low birth weight is linked to infant mortality, cognitive development and chronic disease later in life. <sup>1</sup>
- When kids in need had access to food stamps while in utero and before the age of five, there is a significant reduction in “metabolic syndrome,” which leads to obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes, including a **16 percentage point reduction** in the likelihood of being obese. <sup>1</sup>
- With kids, SNAP is also linked to improved health outcomes including the likelihood of being hospitalized, needing multiple doctor visits and missing school. <sup>1</sup>
- A recent study from researchers at UCSF showed that hospital admissions among low-income Americans for diabetic complications **rise by 27% at the end of the month**, which they believe is linked to “exhausted food budgets” tied to food stamps running out. In 2003, the average cost of a hospital admission for diabetic complications was **nearly \$1200**. <sup>6</sup>

## Other Facts about Poverty and Hunger in America.

### Poverty in America

- **\$20,090:** The federal poverty level for a family of three.<sup>7</sup>
- **46.7 million:** The number of people living in poverty in America, or 14.8%.<sup>8</sup>
- **15.5 million:** The number of children living in poverty in America, or 21.1%.<sup>8</sup>
- **2 in 5:** The number of children in America who will spend at least one year of their childhoods in poverty.<sup>9</sup>
- **51%:** Percent of U.S. public school kids who live in low-income homes.<sup>10</sup>

### Hunger In America

- **15.3 million:** The number of children in America who live in “food insecure” homes, or 20.9%.<sup>11</sup>
- **23.6%:** Percent of kids struggling with hunger who live in rural America vs. inside metropolitan areas (18.4%).<sup>11</sup>
- **22%:** Percent of households in Mississippi that are food insecure, giving it the highest rate in the nation. Mississippi is followed by Arkansas (19.9%), Louisiana (17.6%), Kentucky (17.5%) and Texas (17.2%).<sup>11</sup>

### Impact

- **43%:** How much less likely it is that a persistently poor child gets a college education.<sup>12</sup>
- **17.5%:** Average difference in standardized math scores in schools serving breakfast in the classroom vs. traditional breakfast in the cafeteria.<sup>13</sup>
- **31%:** How much more likely it is that a food-insecure child in America will be hospitalized at some point during their childhood.<sup>14</sup>

### Links:

1. Council of Economic Advisers, “[Long-Term Benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#),” 2015.
2. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “[Chart Book: SNAP Helps Struggling Families Put Food on the Table](#),” 2015.
3. Military.com, “[Nearly 1 million vets face food stamp cuts](#),” 2013.
4. USDA, “[Quality Control Error Rates](#),” 2014.
5. Bloomberg News, “[End of Month Hunger Hurts Students on Food Stamps](#),” 2012.
6. Health Affairs, “[Exhaustion Of Food Budgets At Month's End And Hospital Admissions For Hypoglycemia](#),” 2014.
7. Office of the Federal Register, “[2015 Poverty Guidelines](#),” January 2015.
8. United States Census Bureau, “[Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2014](#),” September 2015.
9. Urban Institute, “[Child Poverty and Adult Success](#),” September 2015.
10. Southern Education Foundation, “[A New Majority Research Bulletin: Low Income Students Now a Majority in the Nation's Public Schools](#),” January 2015.
11. United States Department of Agriculture, “[Household Food Security in the United States in 2014](#),” September 2015.
12. Urban Institute, “[Child Poverty and Adult Success](#),” September 2015.
13. Deloitte Consulting, “[Ending Childhood Hunger: A Social Impact Analysis](#),” February 2013.
14. Journal of Nutrition, “[Food Insecurity Is Associated with Adverse Health Outcomes among Human Infants and Toddlers](#),” March 2004.