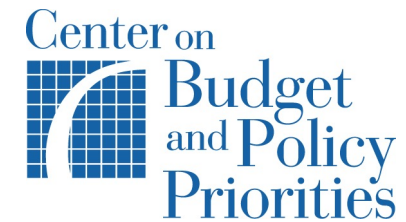


Improving SNAP Benefit Adequacy

NOPREN Food Security Working Group

**Brynne Keith-Jennings,
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January 27, 2020



Today's Roadmap

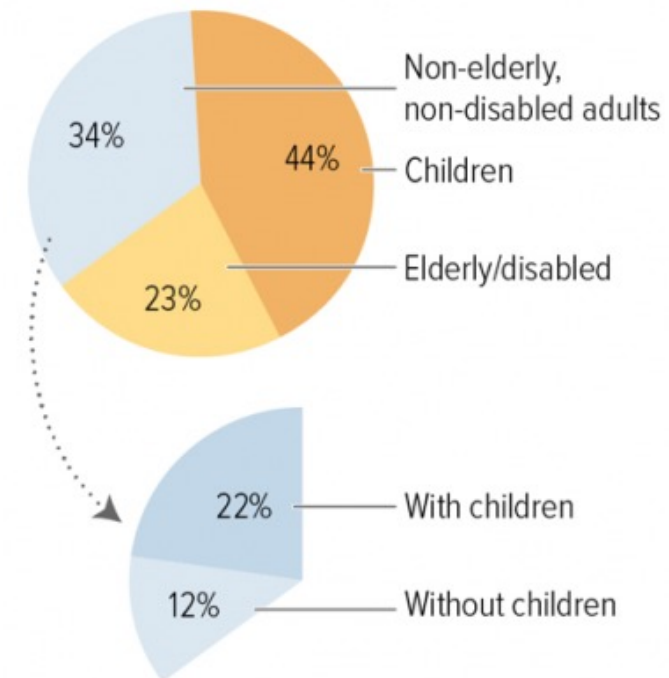
- SNAP
 - Background
 - Impact on poverty, food insecurity, and health
- SNAP benefit levels
 - Thrifty Food Plan and other assumptions
 - Changes in benefit levels and impact on
 - Food spending and consumption
 - Food security
 - Diet and health
- Voices and reflections from the field



What is SNAP?

- Critical element of social safety net
- Means-tested program, broadly available
- Focused on those with greatest need
- Benefits to purchase most foods at participating retailers
- Helped over 37 million in Oct. 2019
 - 1 in 9 Americans
- Average of \$1.40 per person per meal in food benefits

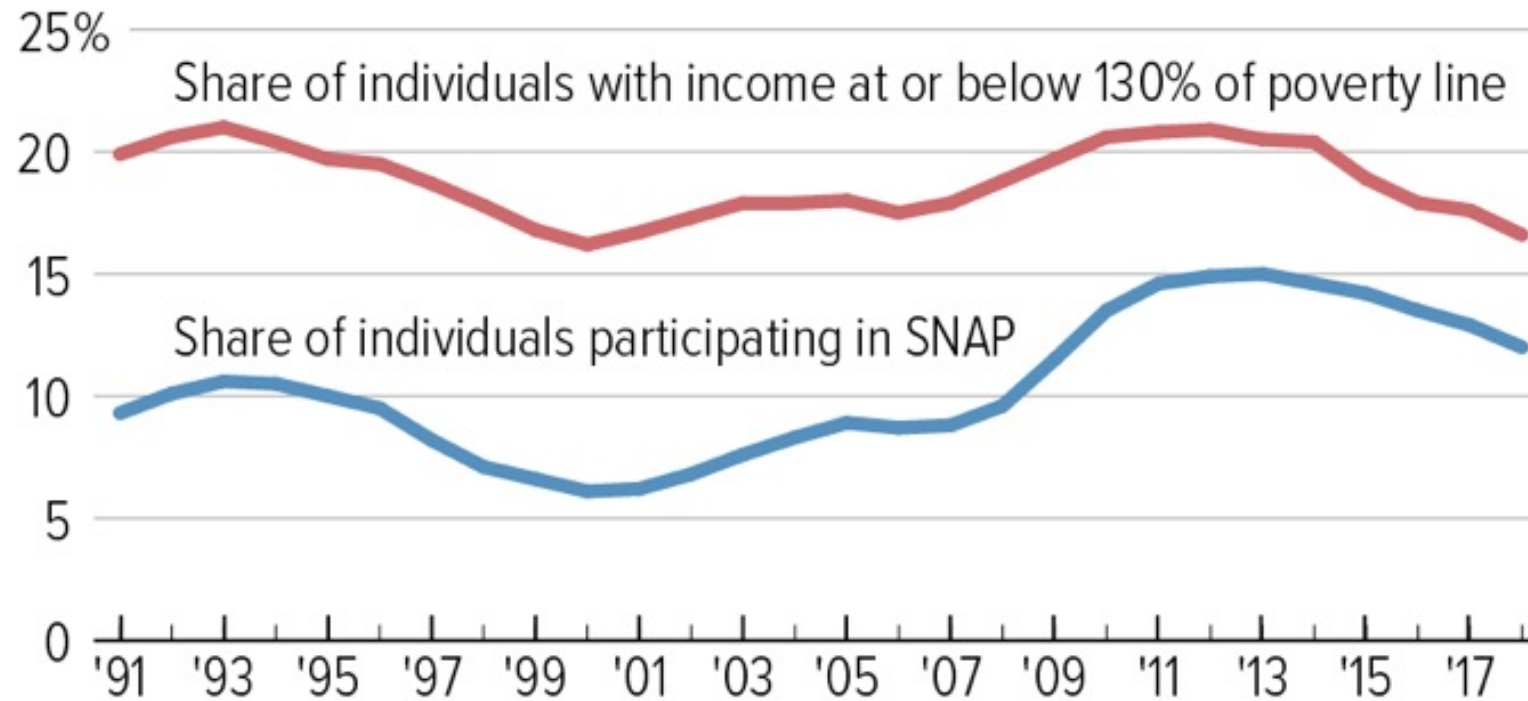
Close to Two-Thirds of SNAP Recipients Are Children, Elderly, or Disabled



Source: CBPP tabulations of U.S. Department of Agriculture 2017 SNAP household characteristics data

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SNAP Tracks Changes in Share of Population That Is Poor or Near-Poor

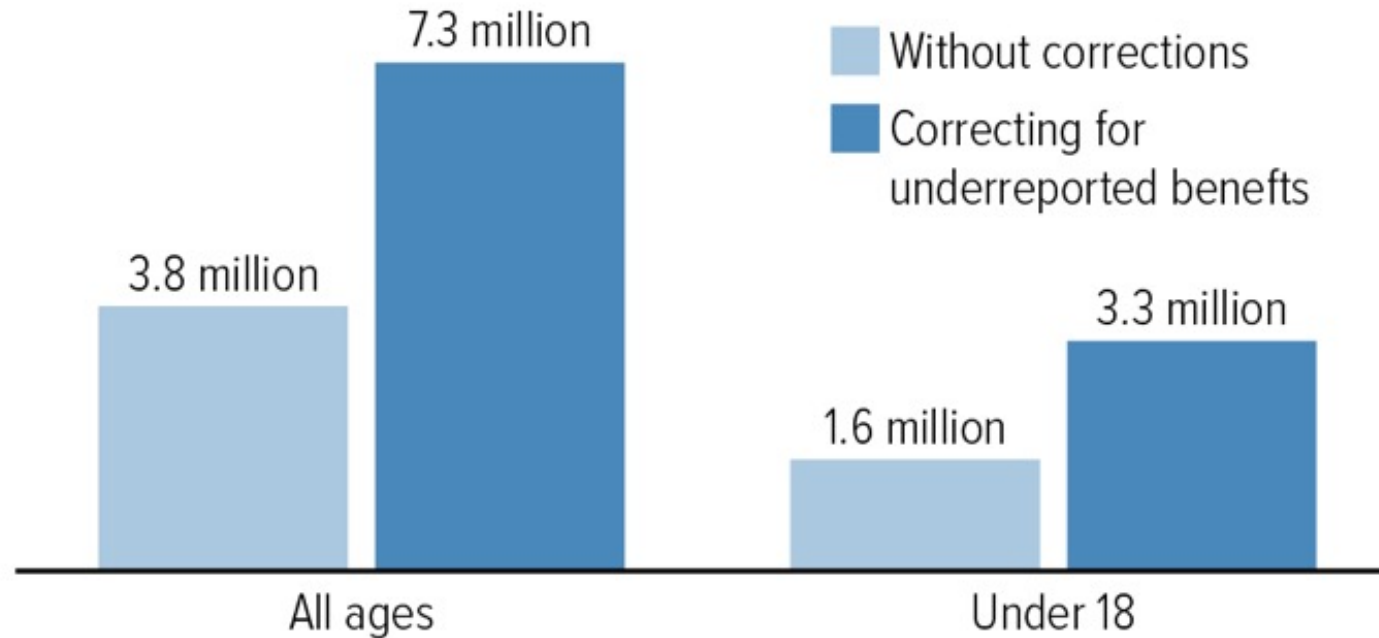


Note: Poverty estimates are annual estimates. SNAP shares of resident population are calendar year averages.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Agriculture

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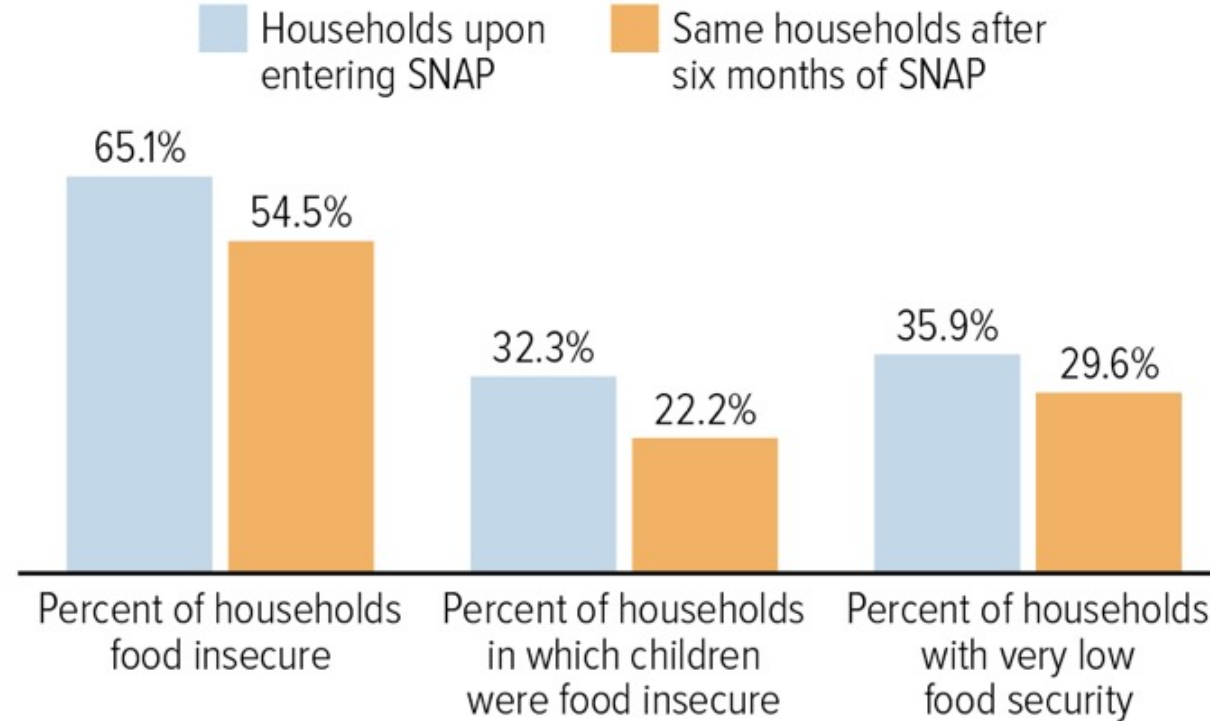
SNAP Kept Millions of People Above Poverty Line in 2016



Note: Figures use the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), and the 2017 SPM poverty line adjusted for inflation. Survey data has the tendency to underreport government benefits. We correct for this for SNAP, Supplemental Security Income and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Source: CBPP analysis of data from the Current Population Survey and U.S. Census Bureau SPM public use files; corrections for underreported government assistance from Health and Human Services/Urban Institute Transfer Income Model (TRIM)

SNAP Helps Families Afford Adequate Food

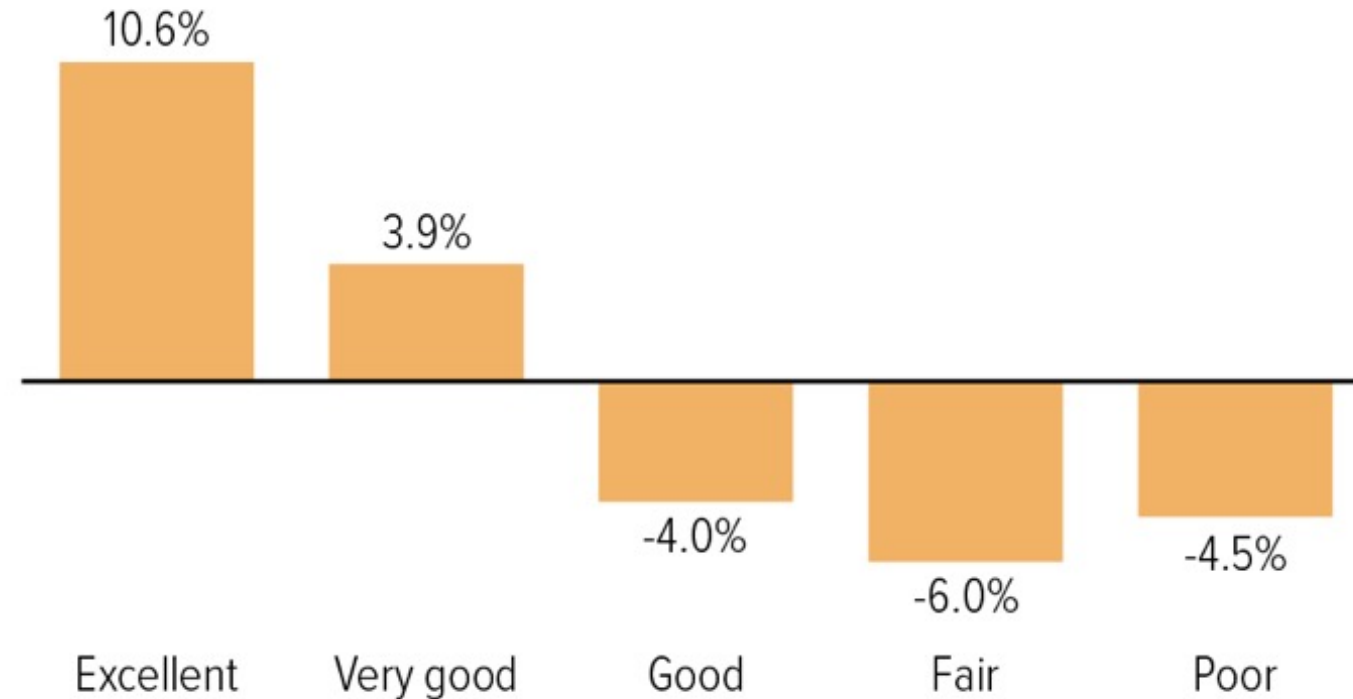


Note: "Food insecure" = household lacks consistent access to nutritious food at some point during the year because of limited resources. "Households with food insecure children" = households in which both children and adults experience food insecurity during the year. "Very low food security" = one or more household members have to skip meals or otherwise eat less at some point during the year because they lack money.

Source: Agriculture Department, "Measuring the Effect of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation on Food Security," August 2013. This chart shows the results of a study that looked at longitudinal data comparing SNAP households upon beginning to receive SNAP, and six months after SNAP receipt.

SNAP Participants Report Better Health Than Eligible Non-Participants

Percent more or less likely to describe health as:

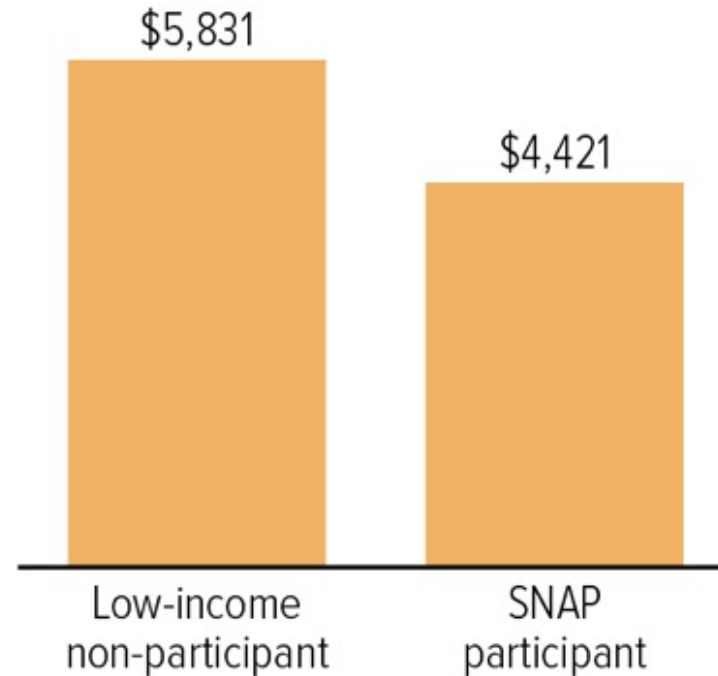


Source: Christian A. Gregory and Partha Deb, "Does SNAP Improve Your Health?" Food Policy, 2015. Adjusted for differences in demographic, socioeconomic and other characteristics. Sample includes adults aged 20 to 64 in households with income at or below 130% of the federal poverty level.

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A SNAP Participant Incurs \$1,400 Less for Health Care

Estimated annual per-person health care spending

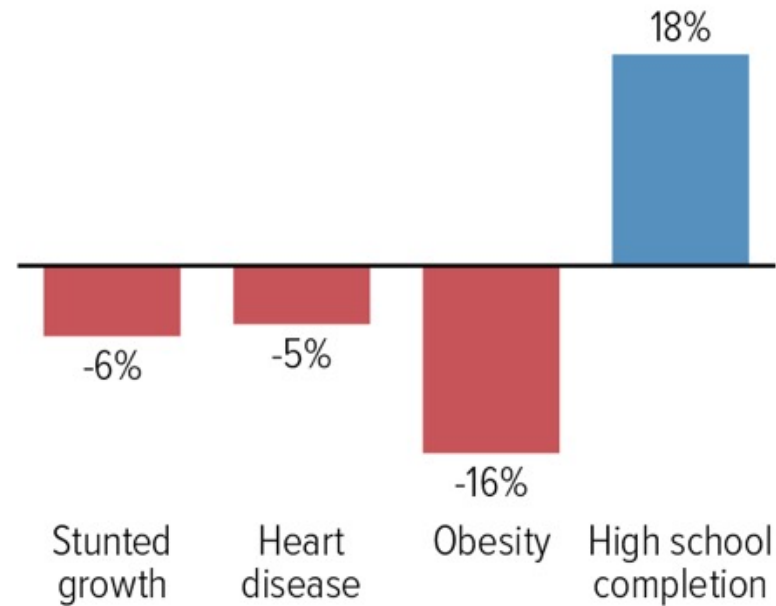


Note: Health care spending includes out-of-pocket expenses and costs paid by private and public insurance, including Medicare and Medicaid.

Source: Seth Berkowitz, Hilary K., Seligman, and Sanjay Basu, "Impact of Food Insecurity and SNAP Participation on Healthcare Utilization and Expenditures," University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research, 2017.

Children With Access to SNAP Fare Better Years Later

Percentage-point change in outcomes for adults who received SNAP as children, compared to adults who did not



Note: The study compared individuals who had access to SNAP (then food stamps) in early childhood after its introduction in the 1960s and early 1970s to similar children who did not (because they were born before its introduction) in each county.

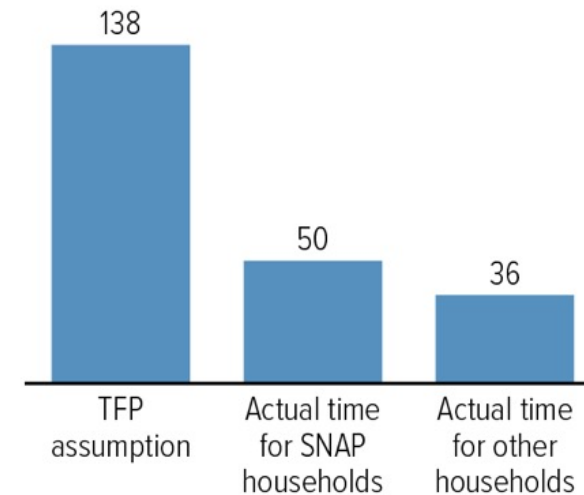
Source: Hoynes, Schanzenbach, and Almond, "Long-Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net," American Economic Review, April 2016.

Thrifty Food Plan (TFP)

- Minimal cost, nutritionally adequate diet plan
- SNAP benefits are tied to TFP
- Some assumptions and shortcomings
 - Assumes unrealistic amount of time
 - Out of line with current consumption
 - Does not meet some key dietary standards
 - Does not account for varying family types and dietary needs

Families Spend Far Less Time Preparing Food Than Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) Assumes

Average minutes per day

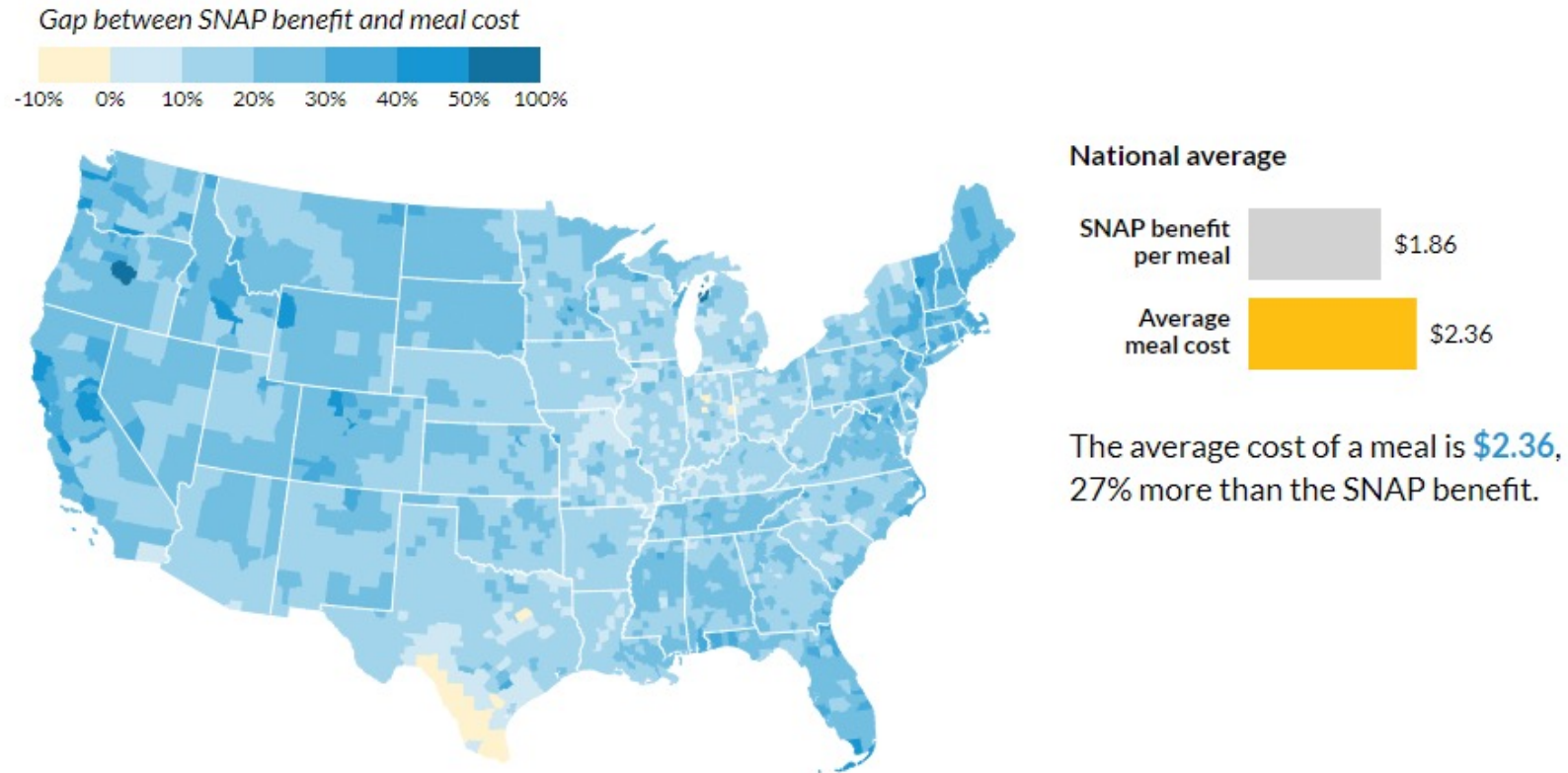


Note: TFP = Agriculture Department estimate of a nutritionally adequate diet at a minimal cost, on which SNAP benefit levels are based. All estimates exclude time spent shopping for food; TFP estimate excludes time spent on cleanup.

Sources: Rose (2007), "Food Stamps, the Thrifty Food Plan, and Meal Preparation," Hamrick and McClelland (2016), "Americans' Eating Patterns and Time Spent on Food."

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Does SNAP Cover the Cost of a Meal?



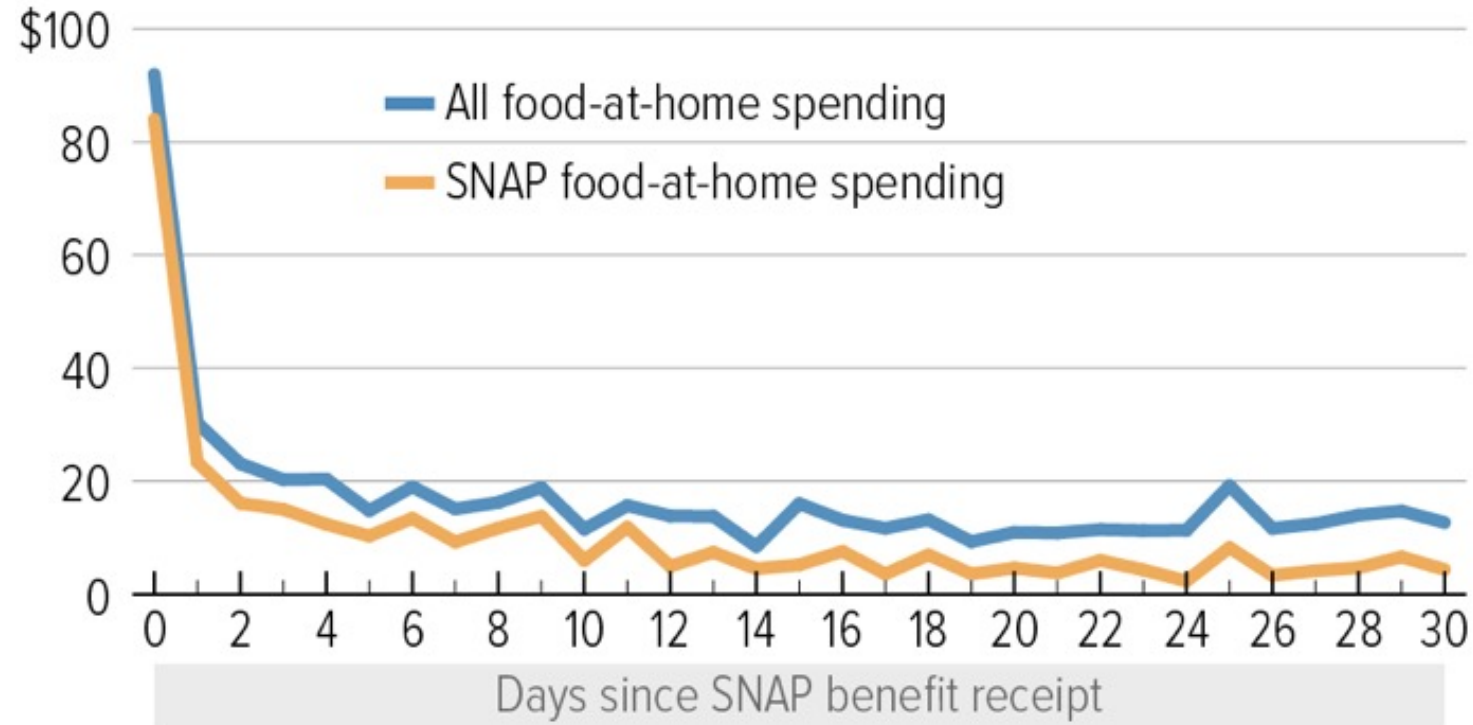
URBAN INSTITUTE

<https://www.urban.org/does-snap-cover-cost-meal-your-county>

Elaine Waxman, Craig Gundersen, and Megan Thompson, "How Far Do SNAP Benefits Fall Short of Covering the Cost of a Meal?" Urban Institute, Feb. 2018.

SNAP Household Spending on Food Falls Throughout the Month

Average daily expenditures for food



Source: Laura Tiehen, Constance Newman, and John Kirlin, The Food-Spending Patterns of Households Participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Findings From USDA's FoodAPS, Economic Research Service, USDA, August 2017

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Food Consumption and Security Also Fall Towards the End of the Month

- Later in the month:
 - Food consumption drops
 - 38% lower caloric intake in last 2 days of the month
 - 25% less than estimated energy requirement
 - Food insecurity rises
 - 3X the probability of a day without eating
 - 17 percentage points higher probability of eating less than usual
 - 11 percentage points higher likelihood of being food insecure

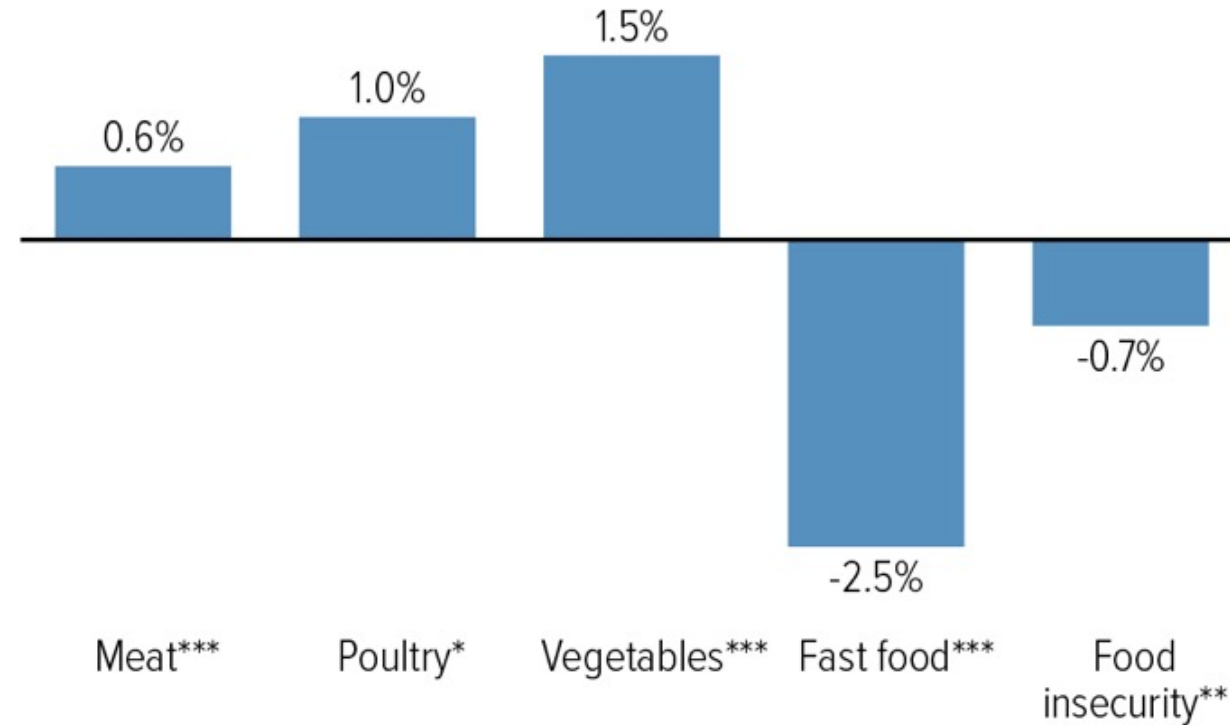
Jessica Todd, "Revisiting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program cycle of food intake: Investigating heterogeneity, diet quality, and a large boost in benefit amounts," *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 37(3): 437-458, 2015.

Karen Hamrick and Margaret Andrews, "SNAP Participants' Eating Patterns Over the Benefit Month: A Time Use Perspective," *PloS One*, 11(7): e0158422, 2016.

Christian Gregory and Travis Smith, "Salience, Food Security, and SNAP Receipt," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 38(1): 124-154, 2019

Higher SNAP Benefits Mean More Groceries, Better Nutrition

Estimated impact on food consumption and food insecurity of \$30 increase in monthly per capita benefits

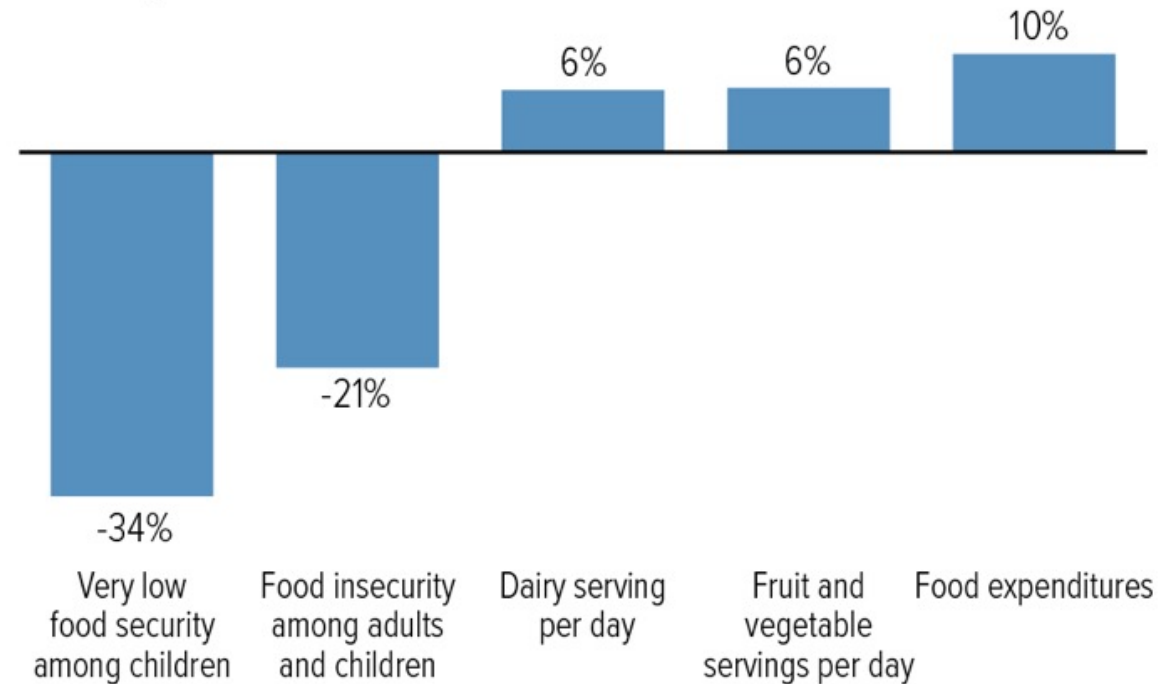


“, **, *** Indicate relationship is significant for a two-sided test at the 0.15, 0.10, 0.05 level or better, respectively.

Source: Anderson and Butcher, “The Relationships Among SNAP Benefits, Grocery Spending, Diet Quality, and the Adequacy of Low-Income Families’ Resources”

Additional SNAP Benefits Raise Food Expenditures and Improve Household Food Security

Impact of extra \$60 in SNAP benefits each summer month for each school-aged child in SNAP household

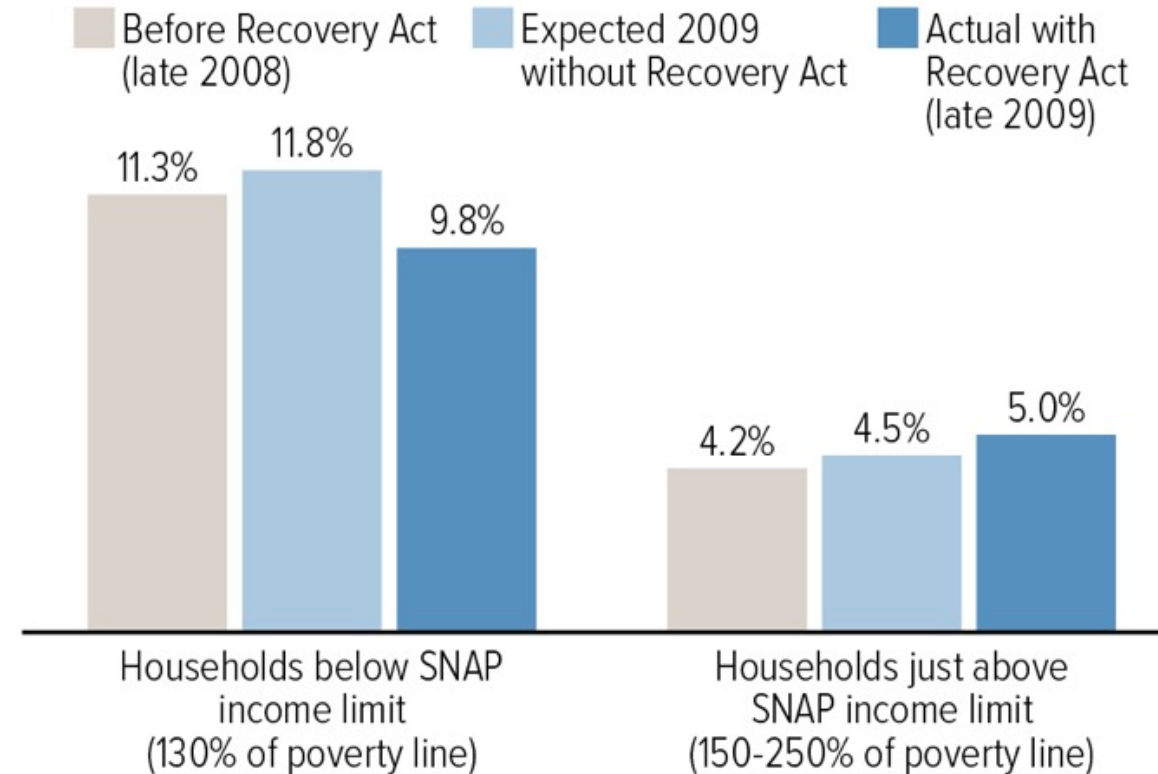


Note: Very low food security = one or more household members must cut the size of meals, skip meals, or go entire days without food due to lack of resources. Food insecurity = household members lack consistent access to enough food to support an active, healthy life.

Source: Collins and Klerman (2017), Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration.

Very Low Food Security Declined for Low-Income Households After Temporary SNAP Benefit Increase

Percent of households with very low food security

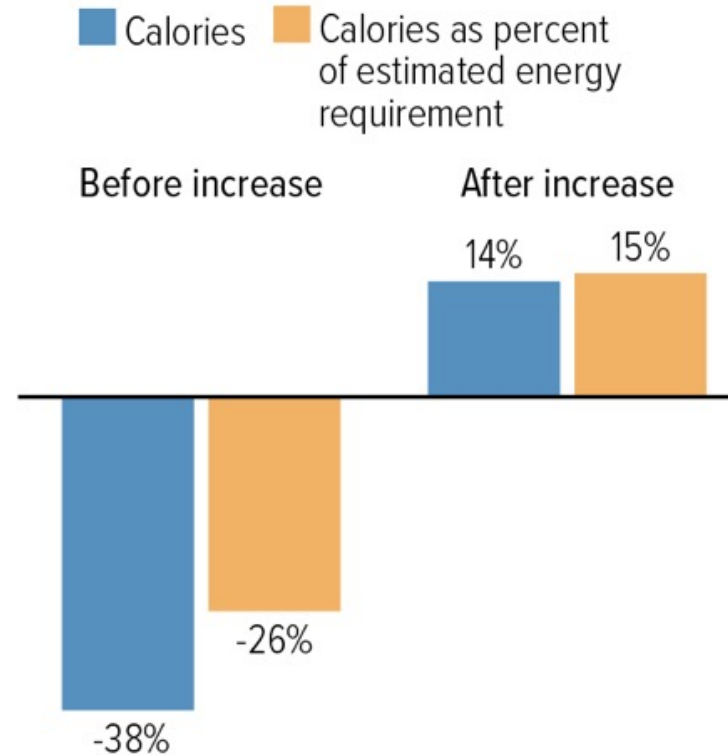


Note: Very low food security = one or more household members must cut the size of meals, skip meals, or go entire days without food due to lack of resources.

Source: Economic Research Service, "Food Security of SNAP Recipients Improved Following the 2009 Stimulus Package," April 2011.

2009 Recovery Act's SNAP Benefit Boost Reversed End-of- Month Calorie Reductions

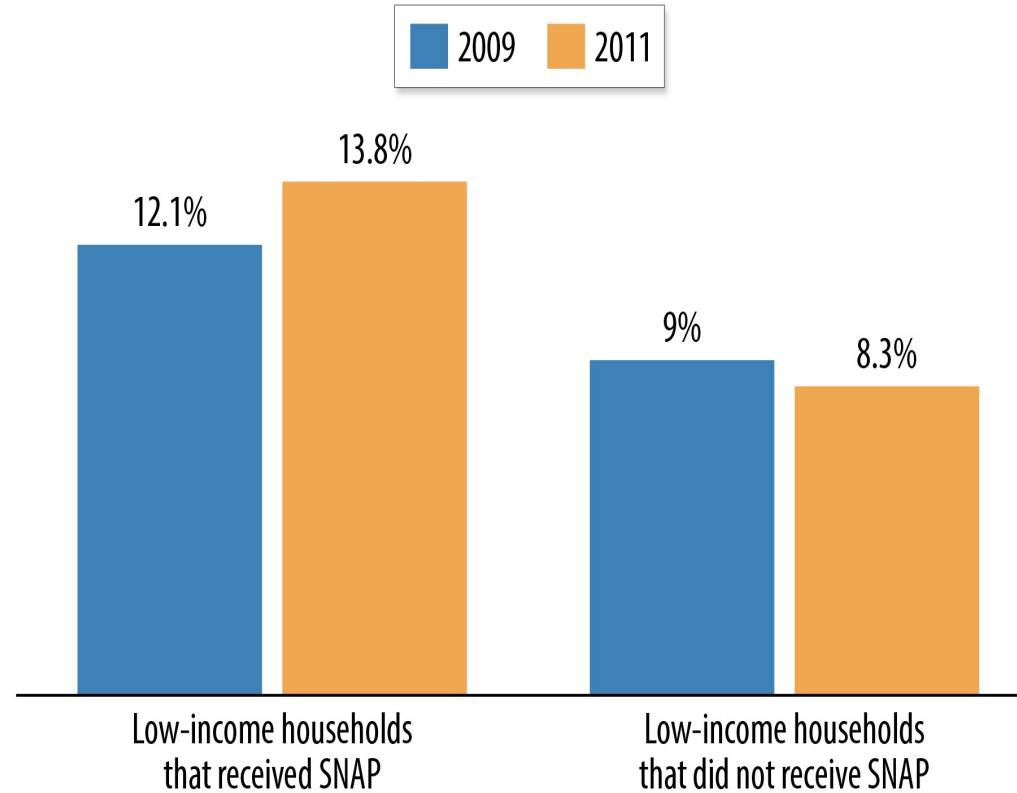
Change in consumption in final two days of month



Source: Jessica Todd, "Revisiting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Cycle of Food Intake: Investigating Heterogeneity, Diet Quality, and a Large Boost in Benefit Amounts," *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 37(3): 437-458, 2015, Table 2

Decline in Value of SNAP Benefits Led to Increase in Very Low Food Security for SNAP Households

Percent of households with very low food security



Source: Economic Research Service, "Effects of the Decline in the Real Value of SNAP Benefits From 2009 to 2011," August 2013

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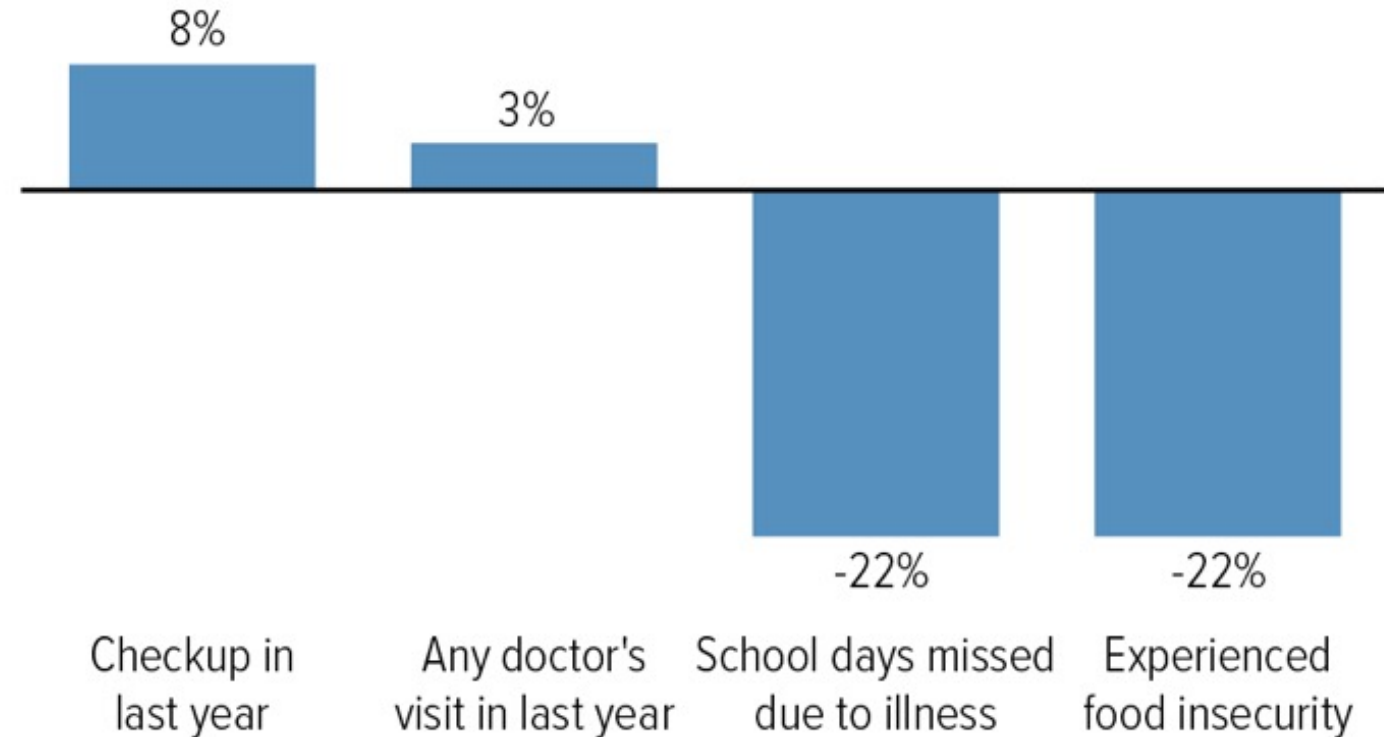
Cutting Benefits Reduces Food Spending and Food Security

After benefit increase ended in 2013, compared to other low-income households:

- Food insecurity rose by 8% more among households that received SNAP every month in the last year
- Very low food security rose by 14% more

10 Percent Increase in SNAP Purchasing Power Improves Child Outcomes

Change in selected outcomes associated with a 10 percent increase in SNAP purchasing power



Source: Bronchetti, Christensen, and Hoynes, "Local Food Prices, SNAP Purchasing Power, and Child Health," 2018.

Families Report Tradeoffs, Struggles Due to Inadequate Benefits

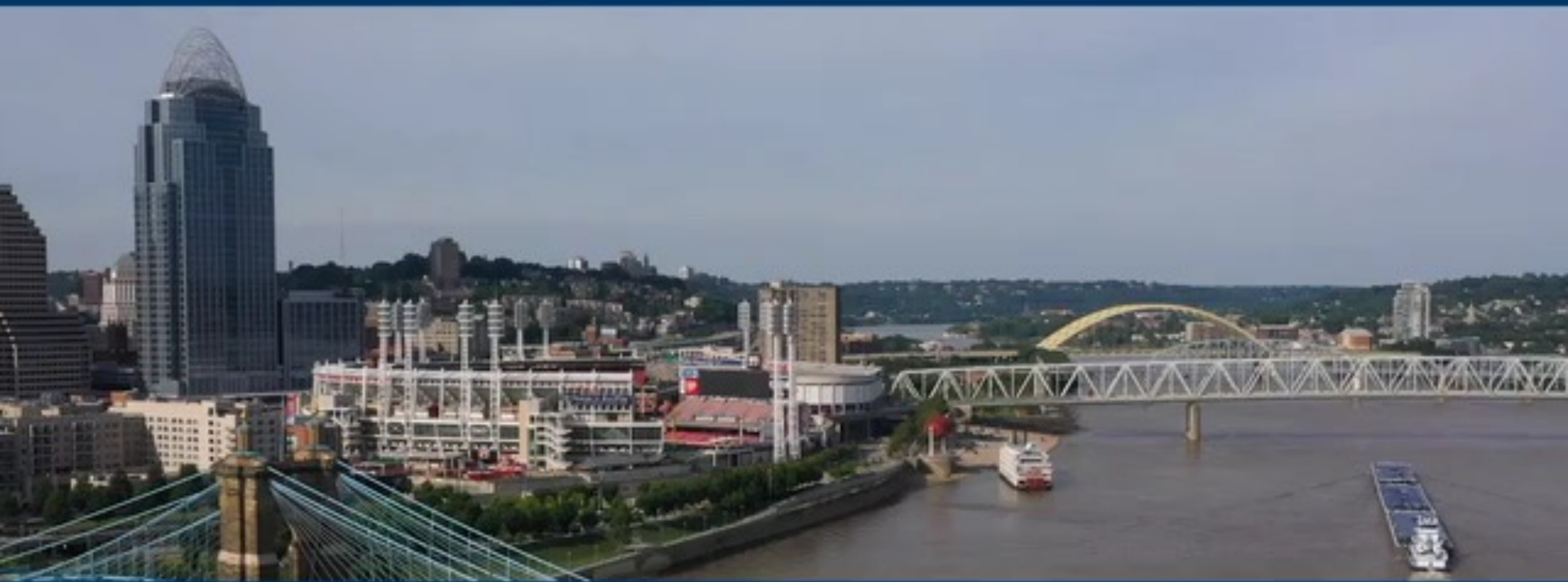
“I had to do without buying food in order to put gas in the truck to go to work the next day. . . . I get Food Stamps on the 5th. . . Three weeks later, the food stamps are gone so at that point, the food’s coming out of my pocket and if I have money, I have to make that choice, you know? I have to have gas in order to work to make more money.”

Kathryn Edin *et al.*, “SNAP Food Security In-Depth Interview Study,” USDA, March 2013.

Families Report Tradeoffs, Struggles Due to Inadequate Benefits

“Oh yeah, [SNAP] doesn’t cover a month. There is no way. It doesn’t cover a month, not with a growing ten-year-old. There is no way. Half the time I don’t eat. I’ll live on coffee and pain medication. That sounds awful but I can go without food. . . . That’s not the way to do it, I know, but when it comes to [him] eating or me, it’s going to be [him] every time.”

Kathryn Edin *et al.*, “SNAP Food Security In-Depth Interview Study,” USDA, March 2013.





Questions?

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[More Adequate SNAP Benefits Would Help Millions of Participants Better Afford Food](#)

[Links of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program With Food Insecurity, Poverty, and Health: Evidence and Potential](#)