

Fact Sheet

Millions of Adults Ages 50 and Older Rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's largest antihunger program and a lifeline for millions of people, including adults ages 50 and older, who are at risk for food insecurity (i.e., limited or uncertain access to adequate food).¹ SNAP provides financial assistance to low-income individuals and families to help buy the food they need. The program reduces food insecurity and poverty and is linked to improved health outcomes, including reduced hospitalizations among low-income older adults.²

Because SNAP is designed to respond to the needs of low-income populations, it has been a particularly important program during the COVID-19 pandemic. Millions of people enrolled in SNAP during the pandemic and associated economic downturn,³ which likely played a role in keeping the share of adults ages 50 and older who were food-insecure unchanged at 8 percent (or 9.5 million people) during that time period.⁴

This *Fact Sheet* describes selected characteristics of adults ages 50 and older who participate in SNAP and the benefits their households receive.⁵ The paper includes analysis of SNAP participants ages 50 to 59 as well as those ages 60 and older, and state-level data are included in the appendices.

Characteristics of Older Adults Participating in SNAP

Almost Half of SNAP Households Have an Older Adult

In 2019, 46 percent (8.7 million) of all SNAP households included at least one adult age 50 or older. That share varied by state and territory, from 30 percent in Utah to 58 percent in Florida and New York (appendix A, table 1). While the number of SNAP households with at least one adult age 50 or older stayed about the same between 2018 and 2019, the share increased slightly from 2018 (from 44 percent) due to a decrease in overall SNAP participation.

What Is a SNAP Household?

Eligibility for SNAP is determined at the household level. A household can be composed of a single individual or a group of people who live together and purchase and prepare food together. For the program's determination of household eligibility, the household typically must apply using aggregate income, expenses, and assets.⁶

The number of SNAP households with adults ages 50 to 59 decreased from about 3.8 million in 2018 to 3.6 million in 2019, but the overall share stayed the same. Conversely, the number of SNAP households with adults ages 60 and older increased from 5.1 million in 2018 to nearly 5.3 million in 2019. As a result, the share of households with adults 60 or older rose from 26 percent in 2018 to 28 percent in 2019.

Most Older SNAP Enrollees Live Alone

Older SNAP participants are more likely than younger SNAP participants to live alone. In 2019, 77 percent of SNAP households with an adult age 50 and older were single-person households, compared to 30 percent of younger households (without any person age 50 or older). Households with adults ages 50 and older had an average SNAP household size of 1.3 people, compared to 2.6 among households without any adult age 50 and older.⁷ Among older households, household size varied by state and territory, from 1.1 people in Connecticut to 1.8 in Alaska and 2.1 people in Guam (appendix A, table 2).

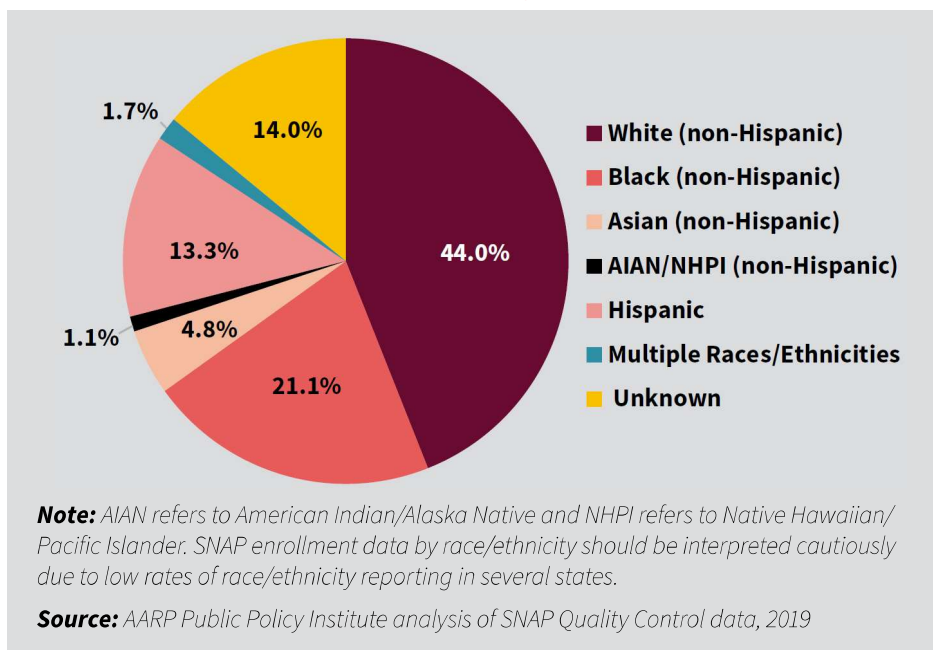
Households with adults ages 60 and older were most likely to be the smallest, with an average household size of 1.2 people compared to 1.5 people among households with adults ages 50 to 59.

Most Older SNAP Households Live below the Poverty Line

SNAP households must have incomes below a certain amount to be eligible for benefits. The average gross monthly income of SNAP households with at least one adult age 50 or older was about \$860 in 2019, or \$10,316 a year (appendix A, table 2). Three-quarters (75 percent) of the 8.7 million SNAP households with adults ages 50 and older had incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL), which in 2019 was \$12,490 a year for a one-person household and \$16,910 a year for a two-person household. The Virgin Islands had the highest share of older SNAP households in poverty (92 percent; appendix A, table 2), while Vermont had the lowest (53 percent).

About one-sixth (16 percent) of SNAP participants ages 50 to 59 were reported to be working in 2019, compared to 5 percent of

FIGURE 1
Race/Ethnicity of SNAP Participants Ages 50 and Older, 2019



those ages 60 and older. However, recording employment at a given point in time overstates joblessness because many SNAP participants have unstable or temporary work and may be working on and off throughout the year.⁸ Relatively low employment rates among adults ages 50 to 59 could also be driven by high rates of disability (see section below).

Nearly Half of SNAP Participants Ages 50 to 59 Have a Disability

Food insecurity tends to be more common and more severe among SNAP households affected by disabilities, making these households some of the most vulnerable.⁹ Older SNAP participants are also more likely to have disabilities than younger participants. At the individual level, nearly half—47 percent—of the 3.7 million SNAP participants ages 50 to 59 had a disability in 2019.¹⁰ Among SNAP participants under age 50, the share with disabilities was only about 9 percent. Half (49 percent) of SNAP households with adults ages 50 to 59 included at least one person age 50 to 59 with a disability.

Older SNAP Recipients Represent Different Races and Ethnicities

Among SNAP participants ages 50 and older, 13 percent are Hispanic, 44 percent are non-

Hispanic White, 21 percent are non-Hispanic Black, 5 percent are non-Hispanic Asian, 1 percent are non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 14 percent are of unknown race/ethnicity (figure 1). Race/ethnicity data are unavailable for 14 percent of SNAP participants ages 50 and older due to low rates of race/ethnicity reporting in several states.

SNAP Benefits

SNAP Benefits Are Based on a Very Low-Cost Food Plan

SNAP benefits are calculated using the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), a very low-cost food plan that is supposed to be based on average consumption while meeting adequate nutrition and price targets. The TFP varies by household size, with larger SNAP households receiving larger benefit amounts. SNAP households are expected to spend about 30 percent of their net income on food. Thus, a monthly benefit allotment is calculated by multiplying net monthly income by 0.3 and subtracting that amount from the maximum monthly allotment for household size.

SNAP Benefit Amounts Changed During Pandemic¹¹

Mary is 65 years old, lives alone, and receives \$500 in Social Security income per month. In October 2020, she would have normally received \$54 in prepandemic monthly SNAP benefits. However, with pandemic emergency allotments, she received \$204. This amount increased to \$234 in January 2021 due to another temporary 15 percent boost. In October 2021, the 15 percent boost expired, but at the same time, a reevaluation of the USDA's Thrifty Food Plan—the basis on which SNAP benefits are calculated—took effect. As a result, her SNAP benefit increased from \$234 to \$250 per month. When emergency allotments end, her monthly benefit will decrease to \$100, which is more than the \$54 she received before the pandemic because of the TFP reevaluation.

Nearly One-Third of Older SNAP Households Receive the Maximum Benefit

Under normal SNAP rules, SNAP households with no net income receive the maximum SNAP benefit allotment for their household size (see maximum allotments by household size in appendix B).¹² These lowest-income households do not have disposable income available to purchase food and often rely solely on SNAP.

In 2019, nearly a third (29 percent) of households with adult(s) ages 50 or older received the maximum benefit (appendix A, table 3). This share varied by state, from 15 percent in Hawaii to 51 percent in New York. Among households without an older adult, a larger share received the maximum benefit (43 percent).

On average, SNAP households with at least one adult age 50 and older received \$142 per month in 2019, or \$1.56 per meal (appendix A, table 3).¹³ The maximum benefit of \$192 in 2019 for a one-person household equates to approximately \$2.10 per meal (appendix B).¹⁴ However, in 2019, people who were food insecure reported spending an average \$3.13 per meal.¹⁵ Thus, even the maximum SNAP benefit was likely insufficient to cover all meal costs even before the pandemic caused an economic downturn.

One in Six Older SNAP Households Receive the Minimum Benefit

The federal government has established a nominal SNAP benefit floor. In 2019, that minimum SNAP benefit was \$16 per month for one- and two-person households in most states and the District of Columbia.¹⁶ Beginning in October 2021, the minimum monthly benefit increased to \$20 for most states.¹⁷

While most SNAP households with adults ages 50 and older receive more than the minimum benefit, 17 percent received the minimum benefit in 2019. The share receiving the minimum benefit varied by state and territory, from 1 percent in Guam and Hawaii to 34 percent in Wisconsin (appendix A, table 3). Older SNAP households were more likely

than younger SNAP households to receive the minimum benefit. Among households without adults ages 50 and older, only 4 percent received the minimum benefit. In fact, of all SNAP households receiving the minimum benefit, three-quarters (77 percent) were households with adults ages 50 and older.

Households that qualify for the minimum benefit are still low-income households that must meet SNAP income requirements. Under typical SNAP rules, gross income must not be higher than 130 percent of the FPL (about \$16,700 for a single-person household in 2021), while net income must not be higher than 100 percent of the FPL. However, under federal rules, households with people ages 60 and older or people with disabilities need to meet only the net income limit. While the minimum benefit can help, it is a small supplement that covers only about five meals a month.¹⁸

Fewer Than One in Six SNAP Households with Adults 60 and Older Claim the Medical Expense Deduction

SNAP allows households that include adults ages 60 and older or people with disabilities to deduct medical expenses from their income for SNAP benefit calculation purposes. Any medical expenses over \$35 a month that have not otherwise been reimbursed can be deducted, which can help these households qualify for higher SNAP benefits. There are a wide range of allowable deductions, including health insurance premiums and copayments, prescription drug costs, dental and hearing costs, and transportation to medical appointments.¹⁹ Some states allow additional expenses not listed in federal regulations, such as home modifications and alternative therapies.

Many seniors face significant out-of-pocket medical costs,²⁰ but only 15 percent of SNAP households with at least one adult age 60 or older claim the medical expense deduction. This share varies widely by state and territory, from just 4 percent in Maine and Washington, DC, to 41 percent in North Dakota and 69 percent in the Virgin Islands (appendix

A, table 4). One of the potential reasons why the share claiming the medical deduction is so low is that medical expenses must be verified. To reduce the administrative burden on caseworkers and SNAP participants, some states use a standard medical deduction (set amount) when participants can prove medical expenses over \$35.

A Critical Program for Older Adults, Especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic

SNAP is an essential federal nutrition program that helps millions of older adults put food on the table. A countercyclical program, SNAP is designed to expand when the economy weakens and contract when the economy strengthens. Thus, the program has taken on heightened importance during the COVID-19 pandemic, as factors such as increased unemployment have cut into people's incomes and higher food prices have made it even more difficult for many low-income older adults to afford food.²¹

Federal and state governments temporarily increased SNAP benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic in response to the economic downturn. Several legislative and policy changes have occurred since March 2020, and as of October 2021 SNAP households are still seeing a modest increase of about \$12 to \$16 per month.²² Average benefits will drop once pandemic emergency allotments end but will remain higher than prepandemic benefits due to the Thrifty Food Plan reevaluation.

Between fiscal years 2019 and 2020, over 4 million more people of all ages (in 2.6 million households) enrolled in SNAP.²³ SNAP enrollment has continued to climb since, and as of October 2021 over 6 million more people were enrolled in SNAP than in fiscal year 2019.²⁴ Data presented in this report demonstrate a significant prepandemic need for SNAP among households with older adults, and the need has only increased during the pandemic.

Appendix A: State-Level Tables

TABLE 1

SNAP Enrollment among Households with Adult(s) Ages 50 and Older, 2019

State	Total SNAP Households (All Ages)	Total Households with Adult(s) 50+	Households with Adult(s) 50–59	Households with Adult(s) 60+	Share of All SNAP Households with Adult(s) 50+
Alabama	336,117	149,402	75,110	78,655	44%
Alaska	36,106	16,008	8,385	8,537	44%
Arizona	368,321	158,520	73,114	91,727	43%
Arkansas	154,330	58,542	29,120	29,934	38%
California	1,912,235	695,495	313,915	395,667	36%
Colorado	222,621	103,965	40,426	65,638	47%
Connecticut	208,386	101,375	37,367	64,979	49%
Delaware	62,376	31,363	17,361	14,629	50%
District of Columbia	64,967	29,885	14,090	16,017	46%
Florida	1,522,372	877,574	290,415	611,085	58%
Georgia	635,011	255,847	102,461	158,466	40%
Hawaii	79,688	40,612	14,798	26,826	51%
Idaho	66,179	26,731	12,143	14,968	40%
Illinois	867,365	371,292	157,461	222,594	43%
Indiana	249,918	102,358	46,191	57,575	41%
Iowa	149,892	53,790	28,544	26,539	36%
Kansas	90,508	38,974	17,555	22,228	43%
Kentucky	238,005	107,696	54,519	56,439	45%
Louisiana	371,079	152,250	78,280	74,706	41%
Maine	81,831	43,670	17,177	27,253	53%
Maryland	331,408	172,173	63,400	112,483	52%
Massachusetts	445,234	231,241	82,981	150,347	52%
Michigan	610,601	306,474	149,090	164,390	50%
Minnesota	203,969	88,613	38,873	50,663	43%
Mississippi	210,106	90,353	47,428	44,728	43%
Missouri	316,872	138,335	64,548	76,607	44%
Montana	51,744	23,908	10,797	13,506	46%
Nebraska	71,454	28,777	12,313	17,070	40%
Nevada	217,684	92,633	36,677	56,471	43%
New Hampshire	39,044	18,098	9,212	9,480	46%
New Jersey	353,632	198,163	58,939	144,350	56%
New Mexico	213,873	78,108	40,738	39,514	37%
New York	1,483,787	858,528	267,974	605,022	58%
North Carolina	614,748	266,512	112,453	162,720	43%
North Dakota	23,176	9,863	3,865	6,064	43%
Ohio	675,942	335,812	158,873	184,651	50%
Oklahoma	258,127	108,285	56,713	54,464	42%
Oregon	346,536	175,195	70,197	108,769	51%
Pennsylvania	934,629	475,763	186,458	292,582	51%
Rhode Island	85,936	43,846	14,728	29,533	51%
South Carolina	275,813	123,985	60,209	65,559	45%
South Dakota	37,657	15,489	6,935	8,748	41%
Tennessee	420,474	187,076	94,290	98,720	44%
Texas	1,440,379	579,092	234,012	346,945	40%
Utah	71,797	21,368	10,094	11,650	30%
Vermont	38,978	22,247	8,262	14,316	57%
Virginia	328,254	158,160	73,290	86,648	48%
Washington	473,593	206,844	75,913	133,261	44%
West Virginia	158,503	82,573	40,319	45,191	52%
Wisconsin	312,535	141,935	63,500	80,860	45%
Wyoming	11,755	4,598	2,413	2,226	39%
Guam	15,293	6,203	2,728	3,727	41%
Virgin Islands	11,160	5,072	1,724	3,465	45%
United States	18,802,000	8,710,673	3,588,375	5,289,192	46%

Note: SNAP households with adults 50+, 50–59, and 60+ refer to households with at least one eligible adult 50+, 50–59, and 60+, respectively.

Source: AARP Public Policy Institute analysis of SNAP Quality Control data, 2019

TABLE 2
Characteristics of SNAP Households with Adult(s) Ages 50 and Older, 2019

State	Average Household Size	Single-Person Households	Average Gross Monthly Household Income	Share of Households with Gross Income under Poverty Line
Alabama	1.4	80%	\$812	84%
Alaska	1.8	66%	\$1,039	75%
Arizona	1.5	72%	\$822	77%
Arkansas	1.4	75%	\$783	83%
California	1.4	70%	\$805	71%
Colorado	1.2	84%	\$855	74%
Connecticut	1.1	89%	\$898	66%
Delaware	1.5	70%	\$921	75%
District of Columbia	1.2	84%	\$682	85%
Florida	1.3	78%	\$852	76%
Georgia	1.4	75%	\$846	75%
Hawaii	1.4	56%	\$894	85%
Idaho	1.4	77%	\$919	77%
Illinois	1.3	80%	\$875	71%
Indiana	1.3	84%	\$798	81%
Iowa	1.2	86%	\$881	69%
Kansas	1.3	67%	\$806	82%
Kentucky	1.4	53%	\$699	89%
Louisiana	1.3	80%	\$724	89%
Maine	1.3	81%	\$1,024	64%
Maryland	1.2	84%	\$871	73%
Massachusetts	1.2	81%	\$989	69%
Michigan	1.2	84%	\$899	71%
Minnesota	1.3	85%	\$980	70%
Mississippi	1.3	81%	\$755	86%
Missouri	1.3	59%	\$822	80%
Montana	1.3	69%	\$908	71%
Nebraska	1.3	82%	\$887	76%
Nevada	1.2	80%	\$879	70%
New Hampshire	1.2	85%	\$930	72%
New Jersey	1.2	79%	\$901	74%
New Mexico	1.4	77%	\$776	83%
New York	1.3	80%	\$988	72%
North Carolina	1.3	70%	\$924	68%
North Dakota	1.3	86%	\$881	70%
Ohio	1.3	82%	\$859	74%
Oklahoma	1.4	56%	\$774	84%
Oregon	1.2	83%	\$917	68%
Pennsylvania	1.3	82%	\$955	70%
Rhode Island	1.2	64%	\$971	66%
South Carolina	1.3	64%	\$773	84%
South Dakota	1.3	80%	\$920	71%
Tennessee	1.3	81%	\$759	82%
Texas	1.3	81%	\$668	86%
Utah	1.3	81%	\$731	82%
Vermont	1.3	60%	\$1,093	53%
Virginia	1.3	83%	\$737	85%
Washington	1.2	83%	\$852	76%
West Virginia	1.4	58%	\$912	75%
Wisconsin	1.3	64%	\$1,025	63%
Wyoming	1.3	84%	\$787	79%
Guam	2.0	50%	\$871	84%
Virgin Islands	1.3	75%	\$574	92%
United States	1.3	77%	\$860	75%

Source: AARP Public Policy Institute analysis of SNAP Quality Control data, 2019

TABLE 3
Benefits among SNAP Households with Adult(s) Ages 50 and Older, 2019

State	Average SNAP Benefit			Receiving Maximum SNAP Benefit (%)			Receiving Minimum SNAP Benefit (%)		
	Households with Adult(s) 50+	Households with Adult(s) 50-59	Households with Adult(s) 60+	Households with Adult(s) 50+	Households with Adult(s) 50-59	Households with Adult(s) 60+	Households with Adult(s) 50+	Households with Adult(s) 50-59	Households with Adult(s) 60+
Alabama	\$127	\$161	\$98	19%	33%	5%	17%	10%	23%
Alaska	\$275	\$373	\$229	30%	41%	21%	29%	15%	39%
Arizona	\$140	\$190	\$103	25%	39%	13%	21%	10%	29%
Arkansas	\$112	\$150	\$78	19%	31%	8%	28%	15%	41%
California	\$172	\$216	\$140	44%	58%	34%	12%	7%	16%
Colorado	\$130	\$174	\$107	24%	33%	18%	23%	12%	29%
Connecticut	\$152	\$172	\$143	47%	58%	41%	14%	9%	17%
Delaware	\$148	\$183	\$104	27%	29%	23%	22%	12%	35%
District of Columbia	\$134	\$175	\$99	35%	51%	20%	19%	13%	25%
Florida	\$144	\$194	\$122	25%	42%	17%	18%	12%	22%
Georgia	\$136	\$191	\$102	25%	39%	16%	20%	9%	28%
Hawaii	\$306	\$389	\$270	15%	25%	10%	1%	1%	1%
Idaho	\$132	\$177	\$97	16%	25%	8%	17%	9%	23%
Illinois	\$144	\$177	\$122	31%	42%	22%	16%	8%	21%
Indiana	\$126	\$156	\$102	24%	36%	14%	20%	14%	25%
Iowa	\$121	\$158	\$85	24%	39%	7%	24%	13%	36%
Kansas	\$128	\$162	\$104	20%	30%	11%	18%	13%	21%
Kentucky	\$129	\$178	\$83	19%	33%	5%	17%	9%	25%
Louisiana	\$135	\$149	\$120	24%	35%	11%	10%	9%	11%
Maine	\$126	\$151	\$112	21%	31%	15%	25%	20%	29%
Maryland	\$120	\$163	\$96	21%	33%	14%	24%	13%	30%
Massachusetts	\$152	\$178	\$142	35%	41%	32%	13%	9%	14%
Michigan	\$133	\$155	\$114	28%	34%	22%	18%	15%	20%
Minnesota	\$109	\$131	\$91	16%	23%	10%	30%	27%	33%
Mississippi	\$113	\$145	\$82	20%	31%	7%	18%	10%	28%
Missouri	\$127	\$157	\$106	19%	33%	7%	17%	10%	24%
Montana	\$132	\$165	\$112	25%	36%	17%	18%	11%	23%
Nebraska	\$119	\$161	\$93	18%	29%	9%	21%	10%	29%
Nevada	\$114	\$157	\$87	25%	44%	13%	27%	11%	37%
New Hampshire	\$129	\$146	\$115	26%	31%	21%	15%	13%	16%
New Jersey	\$147	\$161	\$146	30%	36%	27%	13%	20%	10%
New Mexico	\$134	\$162	\$109	25%	34%	14%	20%	13%	28%
New York	\$178	\$204	\$166	51%	51%	50%	9%	9%	10%
North Carolina	\$118	\$162	\$89	20%	32%	11%	27%	18%	33%
North Dakota	\$142	\$180	\$128	27%	37%	21%	19%	11%	23%
Ohio	\$141	\$188	\$104	30%	44%	18%	23%	12%	32%
Oklahoma	\$129	\$175	\$86	24%	35%	12%	20%	11%	29%
Oregon	\$131	\$173	\$106	24%	40%	14%	19%	9%	26%
Pennsylvania	\$141	\$171	\$124	29%	40%	22%	15%	9%	19%
Rhode Island	\$131	\$146	\$123	27%	32%	25%	21%	17%	23%
South Carolina	\$121	\$157	\$91	21%	30%	13%	19%	13%	24%
South Dakota	\$162	\$188	\$142	31%	38%	26%	6%	6%	6%
Tennessee	\$124	\$171	\$87	24%	39%	9%	27%	13%	39%
Texas	\$133	\$165	\$112	17%	25%	11%	11%	7%	14%
Utah	\$137	\$180	\$103	28%	37%	20%	21%	16%	26%
Vermont	\$158	\$190	\$140	42%	49%	38%	13%	11%	14%
Virginia	\$130	\$180	\$87	24%	41%	8%	21%	10%	29%
Washington	\$135	\$158	\$124	24%	35%	17%	13%	11%	13%
West Virginia	\$111	\$136	\$86	16%	24%	9%	29%	20%	37%
Wisconsin	\$103	\$133	\$82	21%	32%	13%	34%	24%	42%
Wyoming	\$136	\$200	\$70	18%	29%	9%	25%	10%	40%
Guam	\$373	\$495	\$287	39%	46%	33%	1%	0%	2%
Virgin Islands	\$217	\$304	\$180	26%	51%	14%	8%	4%	10%
United States	\$142	\$178	\$120	29%	39%	22%	17%	11%	21%

Note: SNAP households with adults 50+, 50-59, and 60+ refer to households with at least one eligible adult 50+, 50-59, and 60+, respectively.

Source: AARP Public Policy Institute analysis of SNAP Quality Control data, 2019

TABLE 4
**Share of SNAP Households with Adult(s) Ages 60 and Older
 Claiming Medical Expense Deduction, 2019**

State	Households Claiming Deduction	
	Number	Percent
Alabama	15,318	19%
Alaska	508	6%
Arizona	8,588	9%
Arkansas	3,263	11%
California	42,115	11%
Colorado	8,496	13%
Connecticut	4,598	7%
Delaware	1,203	8%
District of Columbia	650	4%
Florida	59,191	10%
Georgia	34,913	22%
Hawaii	3,392	13%
Idaho	2,458	16%
Illinois	37,729	17%
Indiana	4,804	8%
Iowa	5,065	19%
Kansas	4,587	21%
Kentucky	4,960	9%
Louisiana	6,008	8%
Maine	1,088	4%
Maryland	15,823	14%
Massachusetts	28,803	19%
Michigan	27,742	17%
Minnesota	5,969	12%
Mississippi	5,052	11%
Missouri	18,942	25%
Montana	2,625	19%
Nebraska	3,160	19%
Nevada	6,830	12%
New Hampshire	1,059	11%
New Jersey	20,827	14%
New Mexico	2,052	5%
New York	132,627	22%
North Carolina	28,603	18%
North Dakota	2,492	41%
Ohio	18,488	10%
Oklahoma	4,758	9%
Oregon	19,753	18%
Pennsylvania	46,642	16%
Rhode Island	6,568	22%
South Carolina	10,269	16%
South Dakota	2,444	28%
Tennessee	14,633	15%
Texas	36,206	10%
Utah	879	8%
Vermont	4,664	33%
Virginia	11,211	13%
Washington	13,233	10%
West Virginia	6,250	14%
Wisconsin	23,445	29%
Wyoming	799	36%
Guam	1,013	27%
Virgin Islands	2,394	69%
United States	775,187	15%

Source: AARP Public Policy Institute analysis of SNAP Quality Control data, 2019

Appendix B: Maximum SNAP Benefits

TABLE 1
Changes in SNAP Maximum Monthly Allotment, 2018–22

Household Size	Maximum Monthly SNAP Allotment				
	Oct. 2018– Sept. 2019	Oct. 2019– Sept. 2020	Oct. 2020– Dec. 2020*	Jan. 2021– Sept. 2021	Oct. 2021– Sept. 2022**
1	\$192	\$194	\$204	\$234	\$250
2	\$353	\$355	\$374	\$430	\$459
3	\$505	\$509	\$535	\$616	\$658
4	\$642	\$646	\$680	\$782	\$835
5	\$762	\$768	\$807	\$929	\$992
6	\$914	\$921	\$969	\$1,114	\$1,190
7	\$1,011	\$1,018	\$1,071	\$1,232	\$1,316
8	\$1,155	\$1,164	\$1,224	\$1,408	\$1,504
Each additional person	\$144	\$146	\$153	\$176	\$188

* The maximum allotments shown here were originally slated to continue through September 30, 2021. However, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 increased the maximum allotments in January 2021 through June 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 extended these increases through September 2021.

** Reflects Thrifty Food Plan update.

Note: The allotments described here are for households in the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia. The allotments are different in Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands.

- 1 “Definitions of Food Insecurity,” US Department of Agriculture, September 2021, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>.
- 2 Laura J. Samuel et al., “Does the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Affect Hospital Utilization among Older Adults? The Case of Maryland,” *Population Health Management* 21, no. 2 (April 2018): 88–95, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5906726/>.
- 3 “SNAP Data Tables,” US Department of Agriculture, September 2021, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.
- 4 AARP Public Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, 2020.
- 5 Although the US Department of Agriculture defines *elderly* as ages 60 and older, this *Fact Sheet* generally uses the term *older households* to refer to SNAP households with adults ages 50 and older. Throughout the paper, references to households with older adults mean SNAP households with at least one older adult who is eligible for SNAP.
- 6 For eligibility purposes, individuals who are ages 60 or older and are unable to purchase food and prepare meals with others in the household because of a permanent disability may be considered a separate SNAP household if the aggregate income of the other individuals they live with is less than 165 percent of the federal poverty level for their household size.
- 7 While most households with older adults are single-person households, some households have two or more people, raising the average to 1.3 persons per household.
- 8 Brynne Keith-Jennings and Raheem Chaudhry, “Most Working-Age SNAP Participants Work, but Often in Unstable Jobs,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 15, 2018, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/most-working-age-snap-participants-work-but-often-in-unstable-jobs>.

- 9 Alisha Coleman-Jensen and Mark Nord, “Disability Is an Important Risk Factor for Food Insecurity,” US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, May 6, 2013, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2013/may/disability-is-an-important-risk-factor-for-food-insecurity#:~:text=Not%20only%20is%20food%20insecurity,than%20other%20food%20insecure%20households>.
- 10 Disability data are available only for adults under age 60 and likely undercount the true number of individuals with disabilities. Nonelderly individuals are identified as having a disability based on receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or a combination of hours worked, work registration status, receipt of Social Security, veterans’ benefits, or workers’ compensation, and/or unit medical expense deduction.
- 11 Stacy Dean, “Thrifty Food Plan Re-evaluation Puts Nutrition in Reach for SNAP Participants,” US Department of Agriculture, August 30, 2021, <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2021/08/30/thrifty-food-plan-re-evaluation-puts-nutrition-reach-snap-participants>.
- 12 Net income refers to gross income minus allowable deductions. For example, elderly or disabled members may deduct medical expenses that are over \$35 for the month. More information on deductions is available at “SNAP Eligibility,” US Department of Agriculture, October 1, 2021, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/recipient/eligibility>.
- 13 There are differences in average monthly allotments by state, impacted largely by household size. In addition, because of the high cost of living in Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands, these states and territories have different income eligibility requirements and benefit maximums.
- 14 The maximum benefit is higher in Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands due to higher cost of living.
- 15 “Food Insecurity in the United States,” Feeding America, 2021, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/>.
- 16 The minimum benefit is higher in Alaska, Guam, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands due to higher cost of living. See “Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Information,” US Department of Agriculture, October 1, 2021, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/allotment/COLA>.
- 17 The Consolidated Appropriations Act, enacted in December 2020, increased the minimum benefit from January through June 2021. The American Rescue Plan Act, enacted in March 2021, extended this increase through September 2021. The minimum benefit increased to \$20 in October 2021 as a result of the Thrifty Food Plan reevaluation.
- 18 Based on the 2019 minimum benefit and average amount spent per meal by people who were food insecure in 2019 (\$3.13).
- 19 “Maximizing the SNAP Medical Expense Deduction,” National Council on Aging, December 2, 2020, <https://www.ncoa.org/article/snap-medical-expense-deduction>.
- 20 Claire Noel-Miller, “Medicare Beneficiaries’ Out-of-Pocket Spending for Health Care,” AARP Public Policy Institute, June 11, 2020, <https://www.aarp.org/ppi/info-2020/medicare-beneficiaries-out-of-pocket-spending-for-health-care.html>.
- 21 Olivia Dean and Lynda Flowers, “As Pandemic Wears On, Food Challenges Are Increasing for Many Older Americans,” AARP Public Policy Institute, July 1, 2020, <https://blog.aarp.org/thinking-policy/as-pandemic-wears-on-food-challenges-are-increasing-for-many-older-americans>.
- 22 In March 2020, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act allowed USDA to grant state waiver requests for emergency SNAP allotments. All states used these waivers to increase households’ SNAP allotments up to the maximum amount allowed for their household size. However, those already receiving the maximum benefit—the lowest-income households—did not receive an increase. USDA took action to remedy this, and beginning April 2021, all SNAP households were eligible to receive emergency allotments. Additionally, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 increased maximum allotments by 15 percent from the June 2020 value of the TFP for January through June 2021. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 further extended this maximum allotment increase through September 2021. While the temporary 15 percent benefit increase ended after September 2021, this loss was offset by a recent reevaluation of the TFP, which resulted in permanent benefit increases for nearly all SNAP participants beginning in October 2021. As a result, SNAP households saw a modest increase in benefits in October: about \$12 to \$16 per person per month.
- 23 “SNAP Data Tables,” US Department of Agriculture, September 2021, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.
- 24 The 2021 data reflect preliminary data from USDA as of October 1, 2021.

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