



Alaska

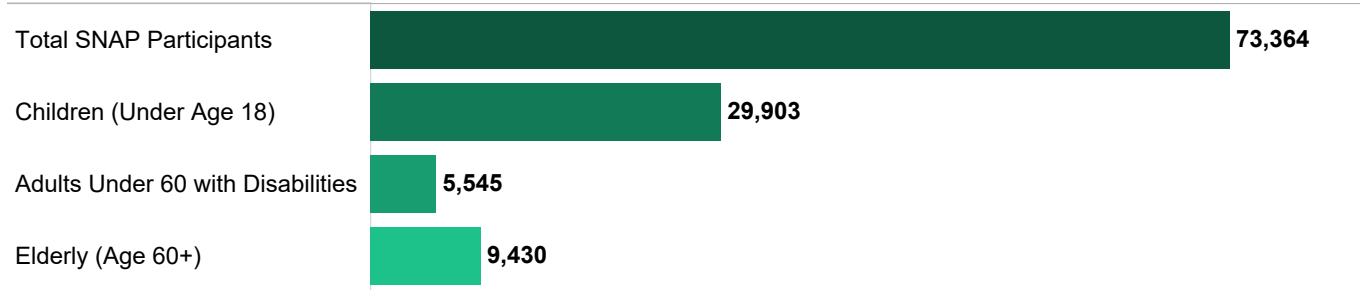
Who Participates in SNAP?

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** provides food assistance for low-income individuals and households. Eligibility for SNAP and benefit levels are determined by a number of factors, including household size, income, and available resources. SNAP is available to everyone who applies and meets the eligibility requirements set by their State.

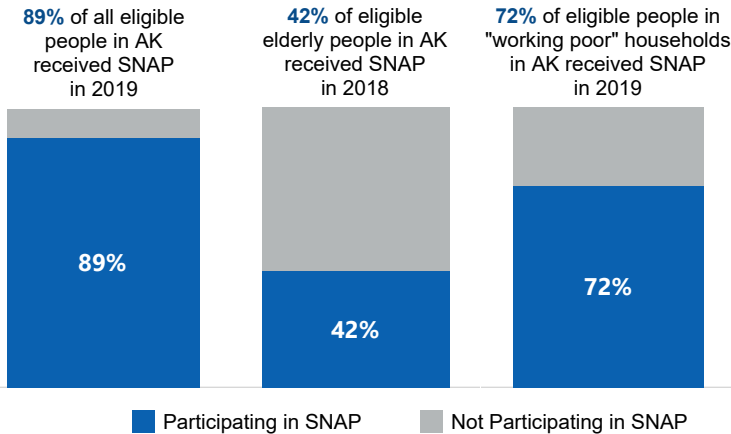
In fiscal year (FY) 2020*, **73,364** people in **33,212** households received SNAP benefits in Alaska (AK). The average monthly benefit was **\$164** per person.

84% of AK households receiving SNAP in FY 2020 had income at or below the poverty line.

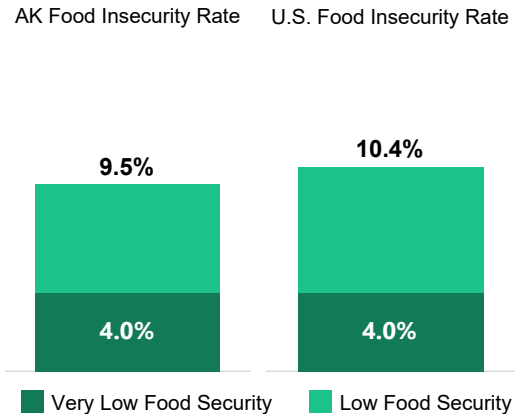
22% of AK households receiving SNAP in FY 2020 had income from wages or work.



Not all who qualify for SNAP receive it.



On average, **9.5%** of AK households were food insecure between 2019-2021.



What is SNAP's Economic Impact?

An average of **\$12 million** in SNAP benefits were issued each month in AK in FY 2020. SNAP benefits are spent on food, so they support farmers, processors, distributors, and retailers. Approximately **511** food retailers accept SNAP benefits in AK.

During economic downturns, every \$1 in new SNAP benefits issued can increase gross domestic product by \$1.54.

To learn more about SNAP, please visit: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>.

*Data limited to Sept. 2019 - Feb. 2020 due to COVID-19-related impacts on data availability.
Data on SNAP participation and participant characteristics from fiscal year 2020 SNAP quality control data. SNAP participation rates available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/usamap>. Food insecurity prevalence data from USDA Economic Research Service. Data on SNAP retailers from USDA's SNAP Retailer Locator. More on SNAP's economic multiplier available at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2019/july/quantifying-the-impact-of-snap-benefits-on-the-u-s-economy-and-jobs/>.

Alaska

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

February 13, 2023

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the nation's most important and effective anti-hunger program. Congress made many temporary improvements to SNAP during the COVID-19 pandemic to take advantage of the program's ability to deliver benefits quickly in response to job and income losses, including by authorizing emergency allotments and certain eligibility and administrative changes. These changes have either already ended or will expire when the public health emergency ends on May 11, 2023. Alaska ended emergency allotments starting in September 2022.

Whom Does SNAP Reach?

In fiscal year 2022, it helped:

- **92,100** Alaska residents, or **13%** of the state population (**1 in 8**)
- **41,206,900** participants in the United States, or **12%** of the total population (**1 in 8**)

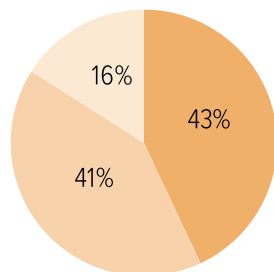
ALASKA	more than 66% of SNAP participants are in families with children	more than 30% are in families with members who are older adults or are disabled	more than 37% are in working families
NATIONALLY	more than 65% of SNAP participants are in families with children	more than 36% are in families with members who are older adults or are disabled	more than 41% are in working families

Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, fiscal year 2020 (pre-pandemic period)^a

Most SNAP Participants in Alaska Have Incomes Below the Poverty Line

Share of participants by household income, fiscal year 2020 (pre-pandemic period)

- Income at or below 50% of poverty line
- Income between 51-100% of poverty line
- Income above 100% of poverty line



Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, fiscal year 2020 (pre-pandemic period)^b

Many Alaska households struggle to put food on the table. The most recent data show:

- **9.5%** of households were “food insecure,” meaning that their access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources.
- **10.5%** of the population lived below the poverty line.
- **12.4%** of children lived below the poverty line.
- **8.5%** of older adults lived below the poverty line.

SNAP reaches populations in need: 89% of eligible individuals participated in SNAP in **Alaska** in 2018, and **80%** of eligible workers participated.

SNAP lifted **22,000** people above the poverty line in **Alaska**, including **10,000** children, per year between 2014 and 2018, on average. (These figures adjust for households' underreporting of benefits.)

What Benefits Do SNAP Participants Receive?

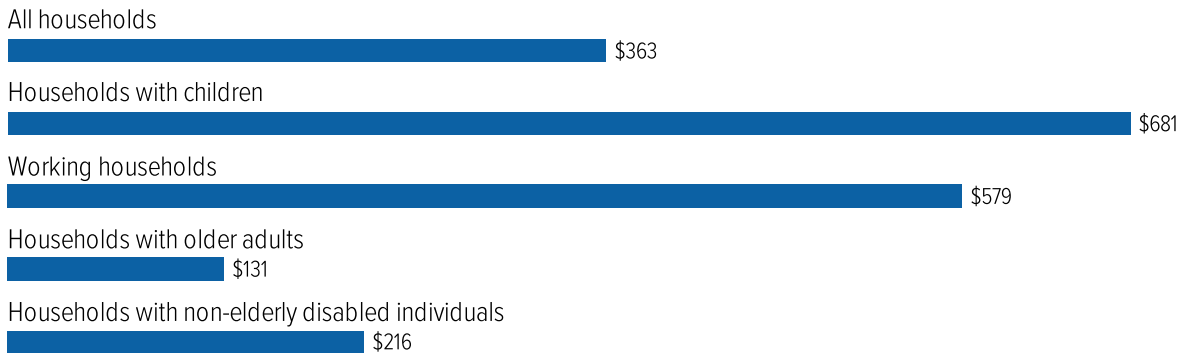
SNAP targets benefits according to need. Households with very low incomes receive more SNAP benefits than households closer to the poverty line because they need more help affording adequate food. SNAP participants in Alaska received \$171.09 million in benefits in 2019, \$198.3 million in 2020, \$288.05 million in 2021, and \$348.72 million in 2022 (including temporary pandemic relief in 2020 through 2022).

SNAP benefits since early 2020 have been affected by temporary pandemic-related benefit increases; an adjustment to the Thrifty Food Plan, upon which SNAP benefits are based; and higher-than-normal cost-of-living adjustments to reflect high food price inflation.



	Average SNAP benefit in nominal dollars, fiscal year 2023 (estimated, after all pandemic measures expire)
For each household member per month:	\$271
For each household member per day:	\$8.90

Average Monthly SNAP Benefit By Demographic Group, Fiscal Year 2020 (pre-pandemic period), Alaska



Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, fiscal year 2020 (pre-pandemic period)

How Does SNAP Benefit the Economy?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that in a weak economy, \$1 in SNAP benefits generates \$1.50 in economic activity. Households receive SNAP benefits on electronic benefit transfer cards, which can be used only to purchase food at one of about 254,400 authorized retail locations around the country, including some 500 in Alaska.

Notes: Due to a higher cost of living, Alaska has different eligibility, deduction, and benefit levels than the continental U.S. Alaskan SNAP participation declines annually following the increase in income residents experience from the receipt of dividends from the Alaska Permanent Fund. In addition to SNAP, in fiscal year 2022, based on preliminary data, an average of about 200 individuals per month in Alaska received benefits through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) which is a federal program that provides commodity foods to low-income households, including the elderly, living on Indian reservations, and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations and in the state of Oklahoma.

For more information on SNAP, including Alaska-specific information, please see:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Chart Book: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/chart-book-snap-helps-struggling-families-put-food-on-the-table>

USDA SNAP data: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

Alaska SNAP program: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/SNAP/default.aspx>

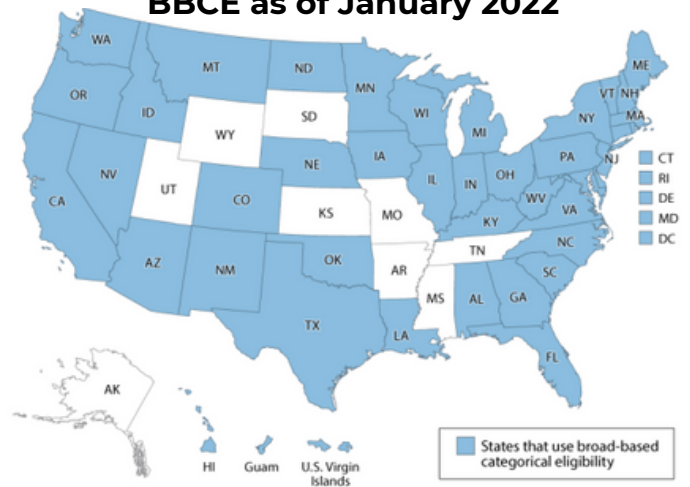
^a Shares are for the pre-pandemic period of fiscal year 2020, from October 2019 to February 2020. Administrative data on the pandemic period of fiscal year 2020 (March 2020 through September 2020) are not presented, because state data are not available for every month during this period. The COVID-19 pandemic limited data collection in the months of March through September 2020.

^b Ibid.

Alaska has an opportunity to help put food on the table for low-income working families and seniors.

This state option under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is proven to increase efficiency of application processing and is effective at supporting working Alaskans and seniors on fixed incomes. Most states are already taking advantage of this option, known as Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE), demonstrating the appeal and success of its implementation.

States Opting for SNAP BBCE as of January 2022



Source: Congressional Research Service (CRS), based on data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as of January 2022.

Note: Some states implement "narrow" categorical eligibility. Without a reliable data source for "narrow," this map only reflects those opting for broad-based categorical eligibility.

Why is BBCE right for Alaska?

There are several key reasons why adopting BBCE is right for Alaska...



It helps working families by eliminating a "benefits cliff" as their earnings rise. BBCE allows states to phase down benefits for working families as their income rises. We often hear about SNAP clients who turn down a raise at work for fear that they will lose more benefits than their increased earnings. BBCE allows states to lift this threshold and gradually lower benefits which lets households take higher-paying work and still benefit from SNAP.



It lets low-income households save for the future. Research has shown that assets are crucial to helping families escape poverty and climb the economic ladder and asset limits send the wrong message by discouraging savings. Not only do SNAP participants need savings to obtain and retain jobs, address emergencies, and ensure they are not living paycheck-to-paycheck, but accumulating and being able to pass assets on to the next generation is a key strategy for families to escape the cycle of poverty.



It encourages SNAP participants to get and keep jobs. Raising the asset and income limit will allow SNAP participants to climb their way to financial security by allowing them to accept pay raises, gradually reduce benefits, and set aside savings for the future. Additionally, removing the asset test allows recently unemployed workers to receive benefits without having to spend down savings. This is similar to unemployment insurance which does not have an asset test to qualify.



It simplifies SNAP administration and increases State's flexibility. In addition to the benefits for SNAP participants, BBCE also has administrative benefits:

- It reduces the complexity of the SNAP application process for states and households, increasing administrative efficiency
- It reduces the risk of errors in eligibility determination
- It is a proven way of helping low-income families without costing the state anything



Alaska does not currently use BBCE

Without this option, Alaskan households are subject to the federal asset and income tests:

- **Families must earn less than 130% of the federal poverty line**, or \$2,683 per month (net) for a family of four in FY20. Families making just \$1 more per month lose their benefits.
- **Households cannot have assets (including money in the bank) exceeding \$2,250**, or \$3,500 for households with at least one elderly or disabled family member.

Broad-based Categorical Eligibility is a win for both government administrative efficiency and family economic security. This option will provide the State of Alaska with a no-cost avenue to increasing caseworker efficiency, while helping clients to become self-sufficient.

How can we implement this option in Alaska?

Under this option, households may become “categorically” eligible for SNAP if they also qualify for a non-cash Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefit.

- States can elect to implement less restrictive asset and/or income limits for many or all households that apply for SNAP if they receive TANF or a TANF Maintenance-of-Effort funded benefit, such as a pamphlet or an 800-number.
- Implementing this change can be a simple administrative change within the Department of Health, or a legislative change. In some states, implementation was as simple as waiving the asset questions during the application process.

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