

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. As of April 2022, about 40 states still issue emergency allotments, including California.

Whom Does SNAP Reach?

In fiscal year 2021, it helped:

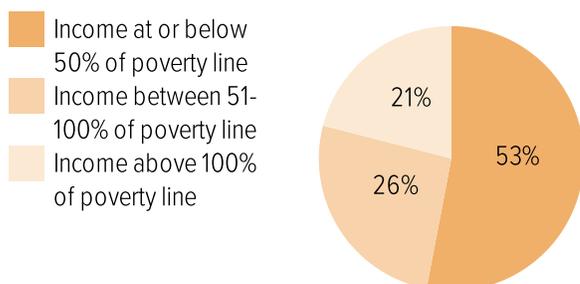
- **4,327,100** California residents, or **11%** of the state population (**1 in 9**)
- **41,500,000** participants in the United States, or **13%** of the total population (**1 in 8**)

CALIFORNIA	more than 66% of SNAP participants are in families with children	almost 19% are in families with members who are older adults or are disabled	more than 40% are in working families
NATIONALLY	more than 66% of SNAP participants are in families with children	almost 36% are in families with members who are older adults or are disabled	almost 42% are in working families

Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, FY 2019^a

Most SNAP Participants in California Have Incomes Below the Poverty Line

Share of participants by household income, FY 2019



Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, FY 2019^b

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

- **9.8%** of households were “food insecure,” meaning that their access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources.
- **11%** of the population lived below the poverty line.
- **14.5%** of children lived below the poverty line.
- **10.7%** of older adults lived below the poverty line.

SNAP reaches populations in need: 70% of eligible individuals participated in SNAP in **California** in 2018, and **59%** of eligible workers participated.

SNAP lifted **833,000** people above the poverty line in **California**, including **408,000** children, per year between 2013 and 2017, on average. (These figures adjust for households’ underreporting of benefits.)

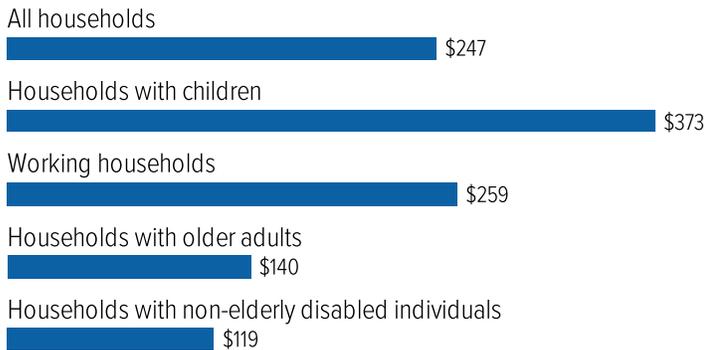
What Benefits Do SNAP Participants Receive?

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 California received \$5.98 billion in benefits in 2019, \$7.82 billion in 2020, and \$11.24 billion in 2021, including temporary pandemic relief. A congressionally directed update to the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), upon which SNAP benefits are based, went into effect for fiscal year 2022. The table below shows actual benefits in 2019 and 2021 (including the temporary pandemic measures). We also estimated 2022 average benefits without the temporary measures to reflect the level of SNAP benefits after the measures expire, and including the TFP revision.



(Average SNAP benefit in nominal dollars)	Fiscal Year 2019 (pre-pandemic) ^c	Fiscal Year 2021 (includes pandemic increases)	Fiscal Year 2022 (estimated, excluding emergency allotments)
For each household member per month:	\$141	\$217	\$175
For each household member per day:	\$4.64	\$7.12	\$5.76

Average Monthly SNAP Benefit By Demographic Group, FY 2019, California



Note: These benefit amounts are for fiscal year 2019, the most recent year for which these data are available by demographic group. SNAP benefits for 2020 and 2021 are higher because of the temporary pandemic-related benefit increases, including emergency allotments, which are still in effect in many states, and a 15 percent increase, which ended at the end of fiscal year 2021 — at the same time the TFP revision went into effect. When the emergency allotments end, all households will experience cuts, but benefits will be higher than they otherwise would have been because of the TFP revision.

Source: CBPP analysis of data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, FY 2019

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 (EBT) cards, which can be used only to purchase food at one of about 254,400 authorized retail locations around the country, including some 27,100 in California.

For more information on SNAP, including California-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>

California SNAP program: <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/food-nutrition/calfresh>

Advocates: Nourish California, <https://nourishca.org/>

Notes: In addition to SNAP, in FY 2021, based on preliminary data, an average of about 2,300 individuals in California 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.

^a Shares are for fiscal year 2019, the most recent year for which demographic data are available. The shares may be different during the COVID-19 pandemic.

^b Ibid.

^c Due to a data anomaly caused by the federal government shutdown in 2019, SNAP average benefits for fiscal year 2019 in most states are modestly higher than they otherwise would have been.