

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

DESCRIPTION

Proper nutrition and healthy food education can have positive effects on individuals and the community at large. This is one of the motivations behind the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), funded by the U.S Department of Agriculture (USDA). Formerly called Food Stamps or Food Support, SNAP helps low-income individuals and families buy food, as well as plants and seeds from which to grow food. More than 621,000 Minnesotans – almost 11 percent of the state’s population – received SNAP at some point in 2016.¹ The USDA considers SNAP to be highly effective at reducing food insecurity.² The program also includes education encouraging healthy food choices and living an active lifestyle while on a limited budget. In 2017, approximately 16,700 Minnesotans participated in the courses and an additional 200,000 accessed related information, through websites, newsletters, social media and health fair publications.³

HOW WE ARE DOING

In 2017, more than \$576 million in food benefits were paid to a monthly average of 427,604 people, or 209,265 households, in Minnesota.^{4,5} Of those, 70 percent were children, seniors and people with disabilities.⁶ Ramsey County, like most of the U.S., has seen its average monthly cases decline in the last five years, from 40,767 in 2013 to 33,783 in 2017. Ramsey County consistently has a higher percentage of households receiving SNAP benefits (16.7 percent in 2015) than Hennepin County (12.2 percent) or the state (10.2 percent).⁵ Compared to poverty, 16.6 percent of Ramsey County households received SNAP benefits in 2016, while 13.9 percent were living in poverty.³ A household is eligible for SNAP benefits if its members are receiving MFIP assistance. In 2017, there were 47,912 households in the county eligible for SNAP. This is a drop of almost 18,000 from the 56,535 eligible households in 2013.^{5,7}

DISPARITIES

The American Community Survey provides a snapshot of SNAP participants for each Congressional District; Ramsey County is almost entirely represented by the 4th Congressional District. In 2016, characteristics of SNAP-utilizing householders in this area were as follows: 42.5 percent white, 27.9 percent Black or African-American, 20.1 percent Asian, and 8.1 percent Hispanic or Latino (of any race); while most people who receive SNAP benefits are white, non-white households are disproportionately represented among SNAP recipients compared to the overall racial and ethnic composition of this district.

Looking at work status, 18.2 percent of SNAP participants had no workers in the family in the past 12 months, while 44.5 percent had one worker and 37.4 had two or more workers. In addition, 54.8 percent of households receiving SNAP benefits included children under 18 years, 52.6 percent of recipients lived with disabled individual(s), and 24.9 percent lived with one or more people 60 years and over. Half of all households receiving SNAP benefits

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Information to note

- The majority of people receiving food benefits are children, seniors and people with disabilities. **callout text**
- Ramsey County has a higher percentage of households receiving SNAP benefits than Hennepin County or Minnesota.
- The vast majority of SNAP recipients are from families with one or more people working.

¹ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Minnesota. Minnesota Department of Human Services. https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/snap-in-minnesota_tcm1053-301213.pdf. Published April 2018. Accessed October 2018.

² White House Report Highlights New Research on SNAP’s Effectiveness and the Importance of Adequate Food Assistance. United States Department of Agriculture. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pressrelease/2015/wh-120815>. Published December 8, 2015. Accessed October 2018.

³ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education. Minnesota Department of Human Services. <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfsrserver/Public/DHS-6776-ENG>. Published January 2018. Accessed October 2018.

⁴ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program helps people with low incomes buy food. Minnesota Department of Human Services. <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfsrserver/Public/DHS-5738-ENG>. Published April 2018. Accessed October 2018.

⁵ Financial reports and forecasts. Minnesota Department of Human Services. <https://mn.gov/dhs/general-public/publications-forms-resources/reports/financial-reports-and-forecasts.jsp>. Accessed October 2018.

⁶ Minnesota Department of Human Services. Letter regarding SNAP provisions in 2018 Farm Bill. https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/mn-dhs-delegation-letter-re-snap-provisions-in-2018-farm-bill_tcm1053-338791.pdf. Accessed October 2018.

⁷ Chart Book: SNAP Helps Struggling Families Put Food on the Table. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/chart-book-snap-helps-struggling-families-put-food-on-the-table>. Updated February 14, 2018. Accessed October 2018.

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were below poverty level.⁸

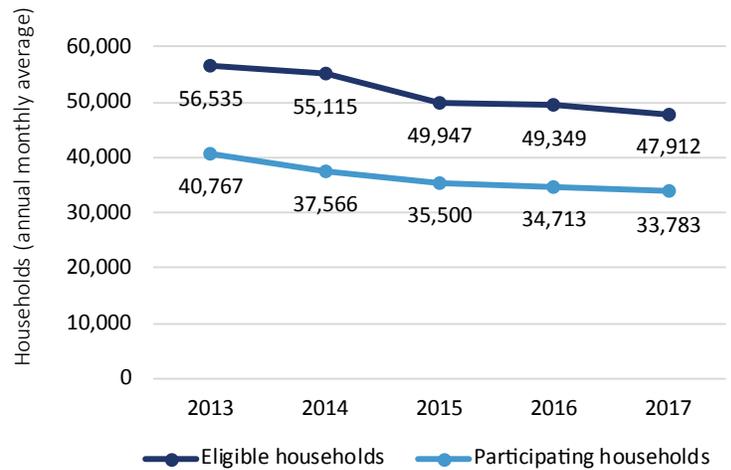
RISK FACTORS

Low-income individuals and those living in poverty are more likely to experience food insecurity and SNAP has been highly effective at addressing this issue. The amount of benefits received is based on income, expenses and the number of people in the household.⁹

WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

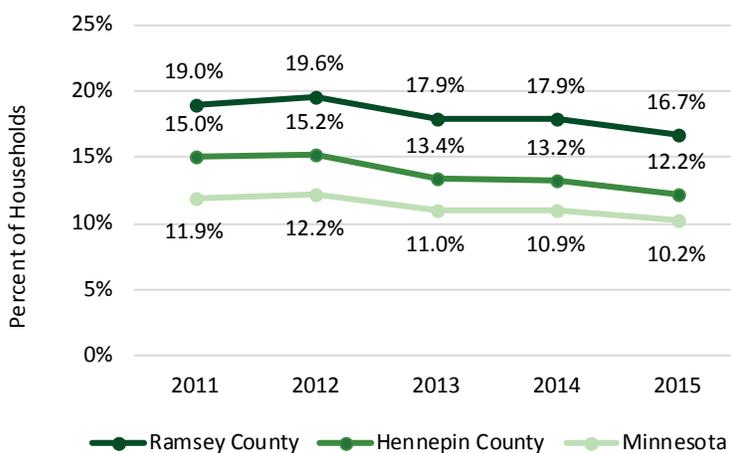
Ramsey County, through the Financial Assistance Services (FAS) department, helps people determine if they are eligible and apply for food assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), and senior nutrition assistance. SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, helps Minnesotans with low incomes get the food they need for nutritious and well-balanced meals. People who are approved for SNAP can use their benefits at many stores, farmers markets and senior dining sites. FAS staff determine initial and ongoing eligibility, and communicate program rules and requirements to clients as well as to internal and external social service providers and other community agencies. Staff also assist clients in finding community resources to meet their needs beyond economic assistance programs.

SNAP Eligibility and Participation, Ramsey County



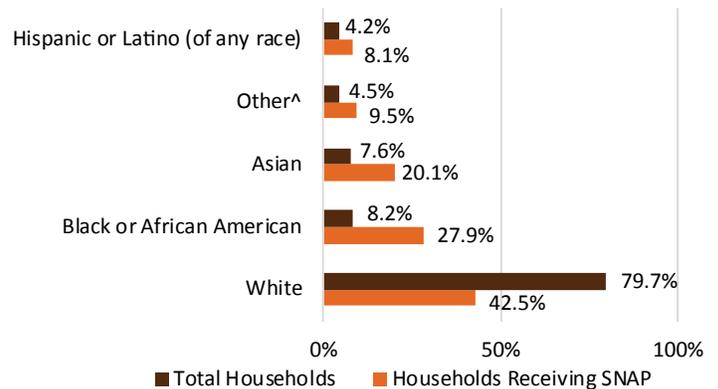
Sources: Minnesota Department of Human Services.¹⁰

SNAP Participation



Source: Minnesota Department of Human Services.¹¹

SNAP Utilization by Race and Ethnicity*, 4th Congressional District, 2016



*Defined by the characteristics of the household head.

^includes American Indian, Alaska Native, "some other race," and "two or more races"

Source: United States Department of Agriculture.¹²

⁸ Profile of Snap Households: Minnesota Congressional District 4. United States Department of Agriculture. https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Minnesota_4.pdf. Published January 2018. Accessed October 2018.

⁹ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Minnesota Department of Human Services. <https://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/adults/economic-assistance/food-nutrition/programs-and-services/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.jsp>. Accessed October 2018.

¹⁰ MN Department of Human Service Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) <https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/news-initiatives-reports-workgroups/economic-supports-cash-food/>. Accessed October 2018.

¹¹ Minnesota Department of Human Services. <https://mn.gov/dhs/general-public/publications-forms-resources/reports/financial-reports-and-forecasts.jsp>. Accessed October 2018.

¹² Profile of Snap Households: Minnesota Congressional District 4. United States Department of Agriculture. https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Minnesota_4.pdf. Accessed October 2018.