

FOOD STAMPS

What does this indicator tell us?

The *Food Stamps* indicator reports the number of unduplicated children under age 18 in Connecticut who received Food Stamps (FS) and the percent they represent of the total child population for State Fiscal Years 1996, 2001, and 2003.

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) is the largest federally funded food assistance program in the United States. The FSP is an entitlement and the only federal program that provides assistance to households based solely on financial need. All other federal programs use categorical or nutritional need criteria. Households are eligible to receive FS if their gross household income is less than or equal to 130% of the federal poverty level (FPL), or the net household income is less than or equal to 100% of the FPL, and the household does not exceed the asset test. Persons receiving TFA (Temporary Family Assistance) or SSI (Supplemental Security Income) are automatically eligible for Food Stamps. Eligible households receive the maximum benefit minus 30% of their net income. In FY 2003, the maximum benefit for a household of three was \$366 per month.¹

Why is this indicator important?

The *Food Stamps* indicator is important as it provides policymakers with a measure of the number of children living in FS households who without the FSP would likely be at risk for hunger. In Connecticut, it is estimated that only about two-thirds of all individuals who are eligible currently participate in the program. Therefore, while income-eligible children historically have higher participation rates than other demographic groups,² it is probable that there are still a significant number of Connecticut children who are FS-eligible but are not receiving benefits.

Food Stamps and Family Economic Security

Congress established the current FSP as a permanent program in 1964 to help low-income households afford nutritious foods. The FSP provides many low-income households with their only major financial resource for food. The program has succeeded in increasing the food expenditures of participating

households.³ The FSP also acts as a cash supplement for low-income persons in that it frees up other monies for the purchase of non-food items.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, the federal welfare reform bill, instituted changes that negatively affected both TFA and FS benefits and participation rates. While welfare reform was not meant to impact FS participation, former welfare recipients have left the program at higher rates than other groups with the same income.⁴ Legal immigrants initially were deemed ineligible for FS under welfare reform legislation. Even though a subsequent federal rule reinstated FS benefits to some legal immigrants, their children left the FSP at higher rates, following the PRWORA, and have continued to exhibit lower participation rates than children of non-immigrant parents.

Nationally, FS caseloads peaked in 1994 and subsequently declined 38% between FFY 1994 and 2000.⁵ While the strong economy at the time contributed to FS caseload decreases, other factors, including the tightening of eligibility requirements, welfare reform, and states implementing new quality control measures, are noted to have negatively impacted FS participation. Since 2000, FS caseloads have increased steadily, due, in part, to the high national unemployment rate. As seen in the accompanying figure, Connecticut household Food Stamp participation has followed the national trend and is again on the rise.

Connecticut's on-going budget crisis has resulted in operational changes to the FSP, including FS office closings and reductions in FS staffing and intake hours. These cutbacks, coupled with parents sometimes having to work multiple jobs to make ends meet, have made it increasingly difficult for potentially eligible individuals and families to access, apply for, and receive, FS benefits.

How are Connecticut children and families faring?

There has been a 9% increase in overall household FS participation in Connecticut between December 2002 and December 2003.⁶ Child participation in Connecticut is also on the rise and, as expected, remains highest in the state's Priority School District municipalities. Child participation rates also remain relatively high in many of Connecticut's working-class towns and rural areas.

What can be done: Food Stamp administration and implementation

Known barriers to FSP participation include lack of program awareness, limited access to FS offices, perceived low benefit amounts, perceived time costs associated with participation, a stigma attached to FS use, loss of privacy, the complexity of the application process, and potential applicants' misperception that the program is not needed. While community-based FS outreach activities and large-scale media campaigns have attempted to increase FS participation among eligible non-participants, more local efforts are still needed to raise Connecticut's FS participation rate above its current level. The following actions could improve participation rates:

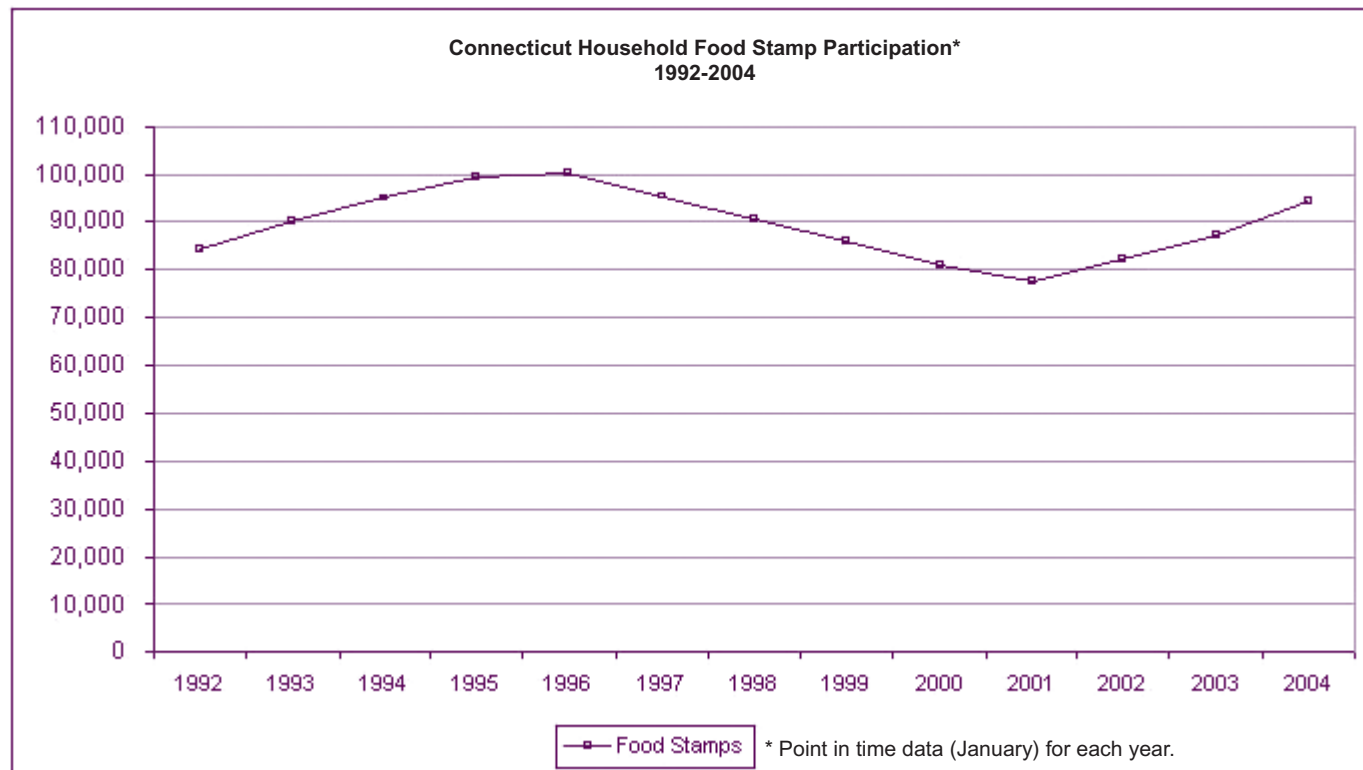
- ▶ Engagement by municipalities and local providers in the design and implementation of community-specific outreach efforts;
- ▶ Standardization of the eligibility criteria for federal programs such as Food Stamps, School Meals, Medicaid, etc.;

- ▶ Creation of a universal standardized application form for multi-program use; and
- ▶ Allowance of non-governmental entities to screen and enroll FS applicants in community settings.

Where can I get more information?

More information can be found using the following sources:

- ▶ Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), at: www.frac.org
- ▶ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, at: www.cbpp.org
- ▶ The Joint Center on Policy Research, at: www.jcpr.org
- ▶ The Urban Institute, at: www.urban.org
- ▶ Welfare Information Network, at: www.financeprojectinfo.org
- ▶ Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation, Food and Nutrition Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, at: www.fns.usda.gov



SOURCE: Connecticut Department of Social Services.

Endnotes

¹ Farrell, M., Fishman, M., Langley, M., & Stapleton, D. (2003). *The Relationship of Earnings and Income to Food Stamp Participation: A Longitudinal Analysis*. Washington, DC: Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved on April 16, 2004, from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan03011/>

² Devaney, B. L., Ellwood, M. R., & Love, J. M. (1997). Programs that Mitigate the Effects of Poverty on Children. *The Future of Children. Children and Poverty, Vol. 7, No.2-Summer/Fall 1997*. pp. 88-112.

³ Devaney, B. L., et al.

⁴ Farrell, M., et al.

⁵ Food Stamps Resources, Welfare Information Network: Information for Decision Making. *The Finance Project*. Retrieved on April 16, 2004, from <http://www.financeprojectinfo.org/win/food.asp>

⁶ Food Research and Action Center (2004). Food Stamp Participation Increases in December More Than 23.3 Million Persons; December Participation Is More Than 6.4 Million Persons Higher Than in July 2000. Retrieved on March 29, 2004, from <http://www.frac.org/html/news/frsp/latest.html>



Food Stamps - Child Participation

Location	SFY 96 # Receiving	SFY 01 # Receiving	SFY 03 # Receiving	Location	SFY 96 # Receiving	SFY 01 # Receiving	SFY 03 # Receiving
Fairfield County	30,361	17,494	18,098				
Bethel	218	52	77	Norwalk	3,026	1,767	1,700
Bridgeport	17,870	11,434	11,825	Redding	17	6	11
Brookfield	81	15	35	Ridgefield	47	18	21
Danbury	2,569	1,150	1,175	Shelton	420	226	255
Darien	16	6	13	Sherman	7	14	10
Easton	7	0	4	Stamford	3,912	1,655	1,626
Fairfield	266	113	158	Stratford	1,034	630	743
Greenwich	352	137	174	Trumbull	134	59	56
Monroe	64	36	32	Weston	5	5	5
New Canaan	33	21	17	Westport	55	34	53
New Fairfield	70	34	45	Wilton	16	8	9
Newtown	142	74	54				
Hartford County	48,347	33,429	35,277				
Avon	39	16	31	Manchester	2,041	1,315	1,582
Berlin	159	52	44	Marlborough	34	7	17
Bloomfield	529	323	424	New Britain	7,981	5,766	6,213
Bristol	2,375	1,740	1,868	Newington	281	162	198
Burlington	36	21	33	Plainville	315	152	220
Canton	45	25	32	Rocky Hill	106	60	80
East Granby	37	30	40	Simsbury	60	35	37
East Hartford	3,177	2,211	2,182	Southington	540	331	311
East Windsor	195	103	176	South Windsor	121	83	56
Enfield	995	568	679	Suffield	100	49	61
Farmington	121	104	109	West Hartford	1,150	619	642
Glastonbury	280	111	112	Wethersfield	240	134	223
Granby	52	26	23	Windsor	612	357	398
Hartford	26,466	18,850	19,332	Windsor Locks	257	169	152
Hartland	3	10	2				
Litchfield County	3,184	1,868	2,254				
Barkhamsted	11	21	25	Norfolk	16	10	6
Bethlehem	24	8	10	North Canaan	15	36	42
Bridgewater	5	0	1	Plymouth	261	147	196
Canaan	83	18	22	Roxbury	3	1	0
Colebrook	9	3	5	Salisbury	40	19	13
Cornwall	4	1	0	Sharon	20	6	5
Goshen	9	6	15	Thomaston	119	62	71
Harwinton	18	7	10	Torrington	1,116	867	1,030
Kent	25	3	6	Warren	1	1	5
Litchfield	61	23	34	Washington	40	15	12
Morris	25	10	5	Watertown	281	120	134
New Hartford	34	22	32	Winchester	473	297	370
New Milford	443	145	188	Woodbury	48	20	17
Middlesex Co.	2,993	1,741	2,020				
Chester	52	17	18	East Hampton	128	67	71
Clinton	188	89	101	Essex	47	20	30
Cromwell	145	75	81	Haddam	46	32	30
Deep River	70	33	56	Killingworth	17	13	13
Durham	52	15	25	Middlefield	26	19	23
East Haddam	96	44	52	Middletown	1,817	1,162	1,316

Food Stamps

Source:

Connecticut Department of Social Services. (SFY '96, '01, and '03). Unpublished data.

Methodology:

The total unduplicated number of children in a town or county receiving Food Stamp benefits at any point in the year for state fiscal years 1996, 2001, and 2003.

Key:

SFY = State Fiscal Year

What we need to know

- Population-specific barriers to participation
- Number of children living in households where child or adult has experienced food insecurity by town

Food Stamps - Child Participation							
Location	SFY 96 # Receiving	SFY 01 # Receiving	SFY 03 # Receiving	Location	SFY 96 # Receiving	SFY 01 # Receiving	SFY 03 # Receiving
Middlesex Co. contd.							
Old Saybrook	95	32	62	Westbrook	57	36	44
Portland	157	87	98				
New Haven Co.							
Ansonia	1,009	774	886	New Haven	17,482	13,572	13,666
Beacon Falls	70	25	29	North Branford	121	55	58
Bethany	23	21	16	North Haven	155	95	98
Branford	393	185	237	Orange	22	10	21
Cheshire	89	32	45	Oxford	50	35	29
Derby	538	406	382	Prospect	51	18	34
East Haven	750	473	432	Seymour	286	201	180
Guilford	122	54	67	Southbury	64	37	33
Hamden	1,237	845	821	Wallingford	765	331	345
Madison	41	20	29	Waterbury	11,241	8,852	10,313
Meriden	4,889	3,584	3,689	West Haven	3,185	2,058	2,000
Middlebury	35	15	16	Wolcott	139	83	89
Milford	885	471	473	Woodbridge	23	15	21
Naugatuck	1,061	701	731				
New London Co.							
Bozrah	19	21	26	New London	2,710	1,917	2,104
Colchester	224	129	133	North Stonington	51	34	27
East Lyme	167	93	104	Norwich	2,421	1,700	1,973
Franklin	10	13	7	Old Lyme	61	25	17
Griswold	323	174	232	Preston	43	24	24
Groton	1,251	859	839	Salem	26	21	15
Lebanon	85	70	78	Sprague	121	84	84
Ledyard	143	94	105	Stonington	359	216	242
Lisbon	54	49	50	Voluntown	71	27	29
Lyme	4	0	3	Waterford	192	102	114
Montville	284	229	229				
Tolland County							
Andover	36	12	9	Somers	92	33	35
Bolton	33	16	14	Stafford	342	128	135
Columbia	36	15	18	Tolland	51	12	18
Coventry	152	108	93	Union	13	8	0
Ellington	97	50	64	Vernon	1,021	689	745
Hebron	58	22	27	Willington	67	21	21
Mansfield	300	135	109				
Windham County							
Ashford	95	52	61	Pomfret	41	19	36
Brooklyn	143	72	73	Putnam	533	380	333
Canterbury	69	27	53	Scotland	18	1	14
Chaplin	18	22	44	Sterling	68	43	49
Eastford	14	9	3	Thompson	215	121	157
Hampton	29	37	13	Windham	2,364	1,755	1,804
Killingly	999	706	743	Woodstock	66	32	36
Plainfield	693	435	453				
CONNECTICUT							
	145,893	98,341	103,984				