

The Antipoverty Effects of SNAP

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the nation’s largest nutrition assistance program, helps millions of poor and low-income Americans buy food. But SNAP’s antipoverty effects are often understated because of underreporting in the survey data used to develop estimates.

After correcting for underreporting, we find that SNAP removed 8.4 million people from poverty in 2015, reducing the poverty rate from 15.4 percent to 12.8 percent (a 17 percent drop).¹ This effect is particularly pronounced among children: SNAP reduced the number of children in poverty by 3.8 million, or 28 percent.

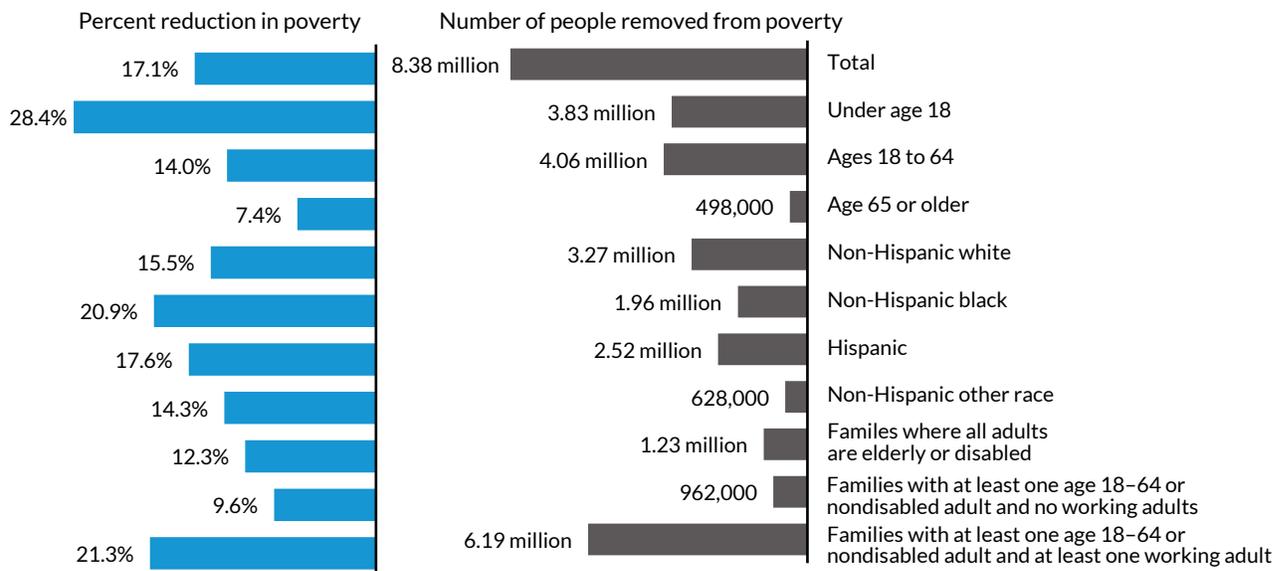
Lifting People Out of Poverty

SNAP reduced poverty among people of all races and ethnicities. The program reduced poverty 21 percent for non-Hispanic black people, 17.6 percent for Hispanic people, and 15.5 percent for non-Hispanic white people. The racial and ethnic group with the largest number of people removed from poverty was non-Hispanic white people (3.3 million), followed by Hispanic people (2.5 million) and non-Hispanic black people (2.0 million).

Groups with the largest proportionate decline in poverty include children, people living in nonmetropolitan² areas (24 percent), people in working families (21 percent), and non-Hispanic black people (21 percent).

FIGURE 1

Reduction in Poverty Caused by SNAP by Age, Race or Ethnicity, and Work or Disability Status, 2015



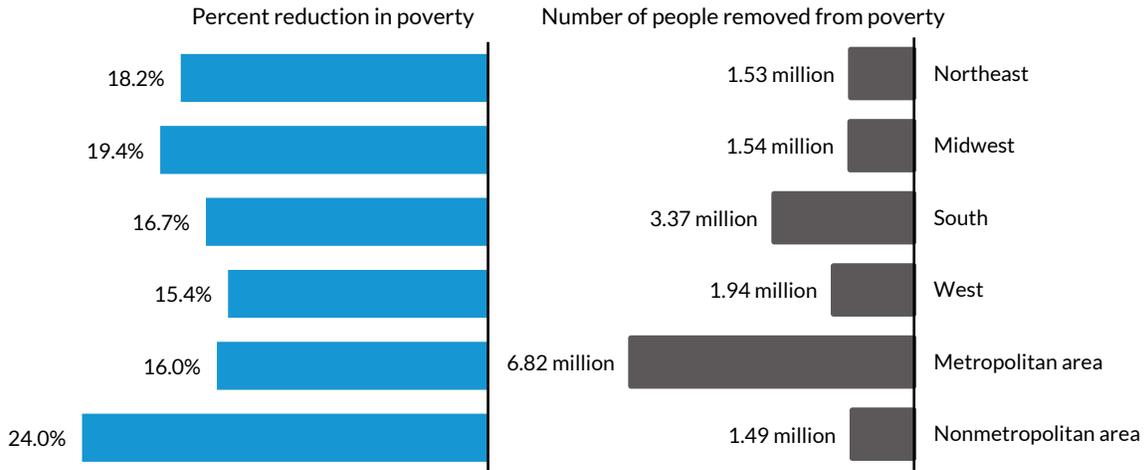
Source: Authors’ calculations based on the 2016 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement and the Transfer Income Model, Version 3.

Note: For each category, figures show the number and share of people in that category lifted above the Supplemental Poverty Measure threshold because of SNAP.

Groups with the largest number of people removed from poverty by SNAP include adults ages 18 to 64, non-Hispanic white people, people in families with a working adult, residents of the South, and residents of metropolitan areas. These are also the groups with the largest overall populations.

FIGURE 2

Reduction in Poverty Caused by SNAP by Region and Metropolitan Status, 2015



Source: Authors' calculations based on the 2016 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement and the Transfer Income Model, Version 3.

Note: For each category, figures show the number and share of people in that category lifted above the Supplemental Poverty Measure threshold because of SNAP.

Helping Working Families

SNAP has a substantial effect on working families, reducing poverty in this group 21 percent in 2015. Families with an adult who worked at least part of the year account for nearly three-quarters (6.2 million) of the people lifted out of poverty by SNAP.

Acknowledgments

This work was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, or the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute's funding principles is available at urban.org/fundingprinciples.

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¹ We use the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) to estimate SNAP's effects on poverty. The SPM includes benefits such as SNAP and housing subsidies, accounts for taxes and other nondiscretionary expenses, and uses poverty thresholds developed from recent consumer expenditure data. For more information, see the full report this fact sheet is based on, *The Antipoverty Effects of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*.

² Nonmetropolitan areas include small towns and rural areas in counties not economically connected to urban centers.