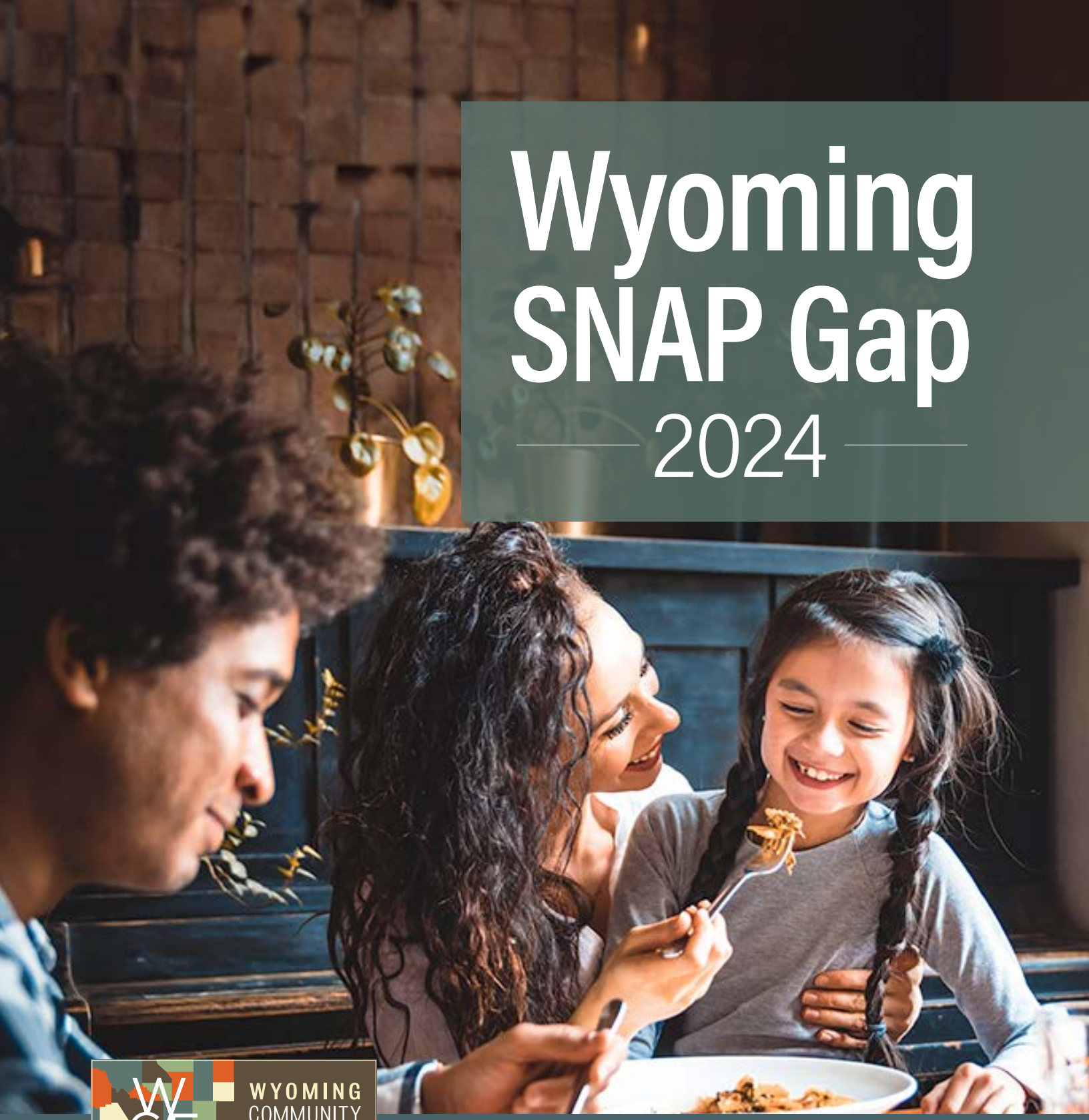


Wyoming SNAP Gap 2024

WYOMING COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center at the University of Wyoming

Amber Martinez, B.S., Senior Project Coordinator
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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

When Wyoming children and families can afford three nutritious meals a day, their health and overall well-being improves. Children also see improved educational outcomes. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a valuable resource to support food security in Wyoming.

What is SNAP?

SNAP is a federal assistance program that provides adults and families experiencing poverty with financial support to purchase nutritious food. It aims to reduce hunger and improve food security for eligible participants. The benefits of SNAP range from healthier diets to a greater ability to locate and afford medical care resources, better current and long-term health, and reduced health care costs.[i] Specifically, people experiencing poverty who are enrolled in SNAP incur 25% fewer medical care costs each year than those not enrolled in SNAP.[ii] Additionally, when children and families have the resources and support required for their needs, there are fewer instances of child neglect and/or malnutrition, placement in foster care and parental stress.[iii]

Unfortunately, these SNAP benefits are not reaching everyone they could be. There are groups of people who meet the eligibility criteria for SNAP but are not receiving benefits and fall into the "SNAP gap". This gap is the percentage of eligible adults, families, and households that are not receiving SNAP benefits and exists partly because of the strict nature of SNAP eligiblity requirements.[iv, v] In FY 2019 – the last year for which complete data are available – the national SNAP gap was 18%.[vi]

Many adults and families miss out on SNAP benefits because they make slightly too much money or have too many qualifying assets. Others may not receive SNAP benefits because they do not know they qualify or they do not want to request government assistance.[vii] Additionally, SNAP applicants must provide various forms of documentation such as proof of income, citizenship status and proof of residency, identification, and proof of expenses to their local SNAP office. This poses an additional barrier to all applicants especially the elderly.

How does SNAP work?

As shown in Figure 1, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and each state jointly administer SNAP. They share administrative costs equally, each covering 50%, with the federal government covering 100% of SNAP benefits.[viii,ix] Each adult or family who applies for SNAP benefits must meet eligibility requirements on assets, gross monthly income, and net monthly income (See figure 2).

FIGURE 1: THE USDA'S FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE JOINTLY ADMINISTERS SNAP WITH EACH STATE

[1] Food and Nutrition Service, (2021, November). *Exploring the Causes of State Variation in SNAP Administrative Costs*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. https://bit.ly/4cBtNIm

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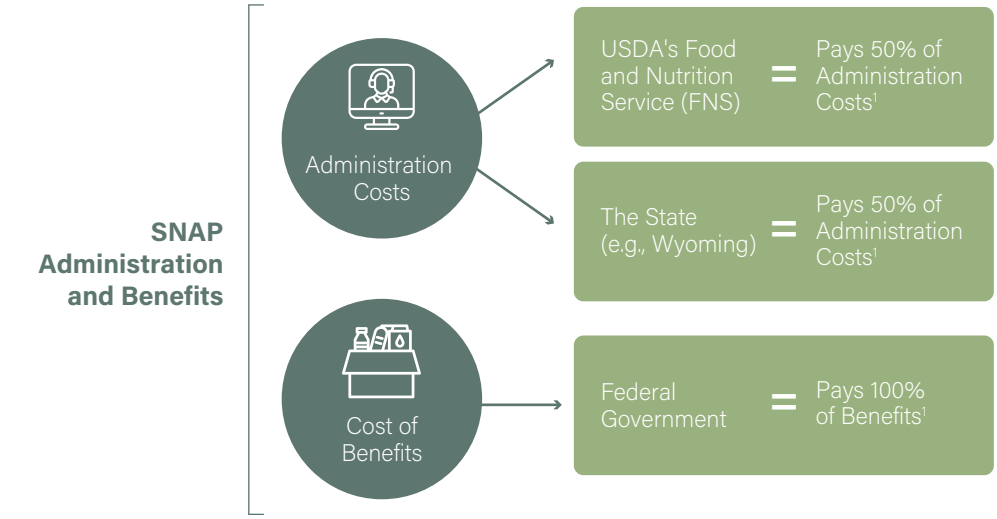
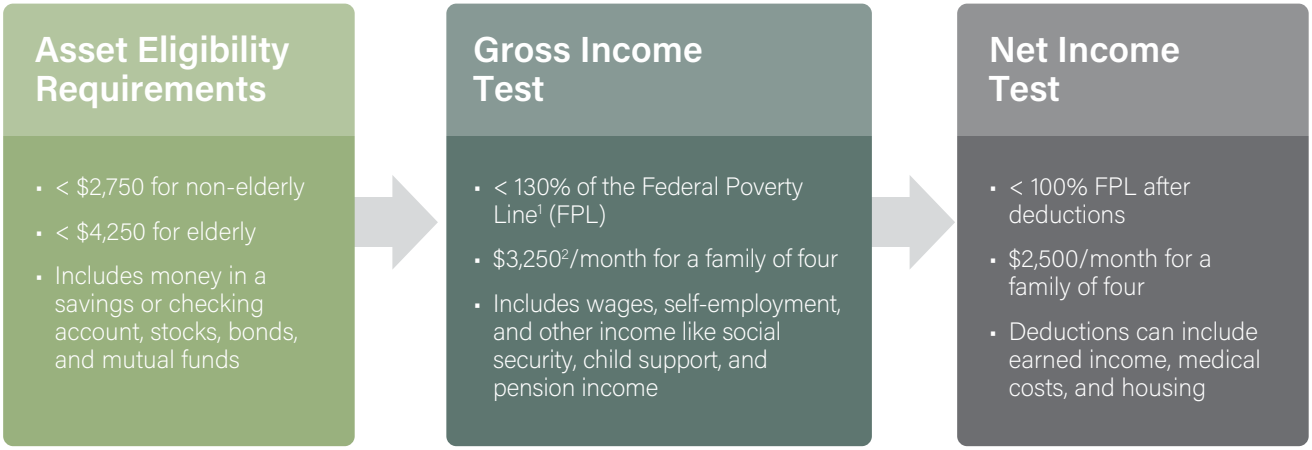


FIGURE 2: APPLICANTS MUST MEET BOTH THE ASSET AND THE GROSS AND NET INCOME REQUIREMENTS TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SNAP



[1] Each year, the federal government puts out guidelines that detail how much income a family needs for housing, transportation, meals, etc. These guidelines are referred to as federal poverty levels (FPLs) and vary based on the size of a household. Many states, Wyoming included, use FPLs to set eligibility thresholds for public assistance programs.

[2] See Table 1 for income limits for other family sizes.

Sources: Wyoming Department of Family Services (n.d.) *Table I: SNAP Income Limits*. https://bit.ly/3zvh9vS & Wyoming Department of Family Services (n.d.). SNAP and *POWER Policy Manual*. https://bit.ly/4cV7SM1

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Some individuals and families that meet certain criteria are exempt from all or some of the income and asset thresholds. Categorical eligibility is one type of exemption. If all members inside a household receive financial assistance such as Personal Opportunities With Employment Responsibilities (POWER), Wyoming's cash assistance program, Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), they are considered categorically eligible and do not have to meet the typical SNAP requirements. Those over 60 and people living with disabilities also have different thresholds: they only need to meet the net income test for SNAP eligibility.

TABLE 1: A FAMILY OF FOUR IN WYOMING QUALIFIES FOR SNAP IF THEY MAKE LESS THAN $3,250 PER MONTH OR $39,000 PER YEAR

Income Thresholds for SNAP by Family Size

Assistance Unit Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income (130% FPL)	Maximum Net Monthly Income (100% FPL)	Maximum Monthly SNAP Benefit
1	$1,580	$1,215	$291
2	2,137	1,644	535
3	2,694	2,072	766
4	3,250	2,500	973
5	3,807	2,929	1,155
Each Additional Member	+557	+429	+219

Source: Wyoming Department of Family Services, (n.d.). *SNAP Income Allotments and Deductions.* https://bit.ly/3zvh9vS

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More individuals, families, and households could benefit from receiving SNAP benefits. Children, the elderly, and those living with disabilities are among those most in need of SNAP.[X]

Bridging the SNAP Gap

How could Wyoming help close the SNAP Gap?

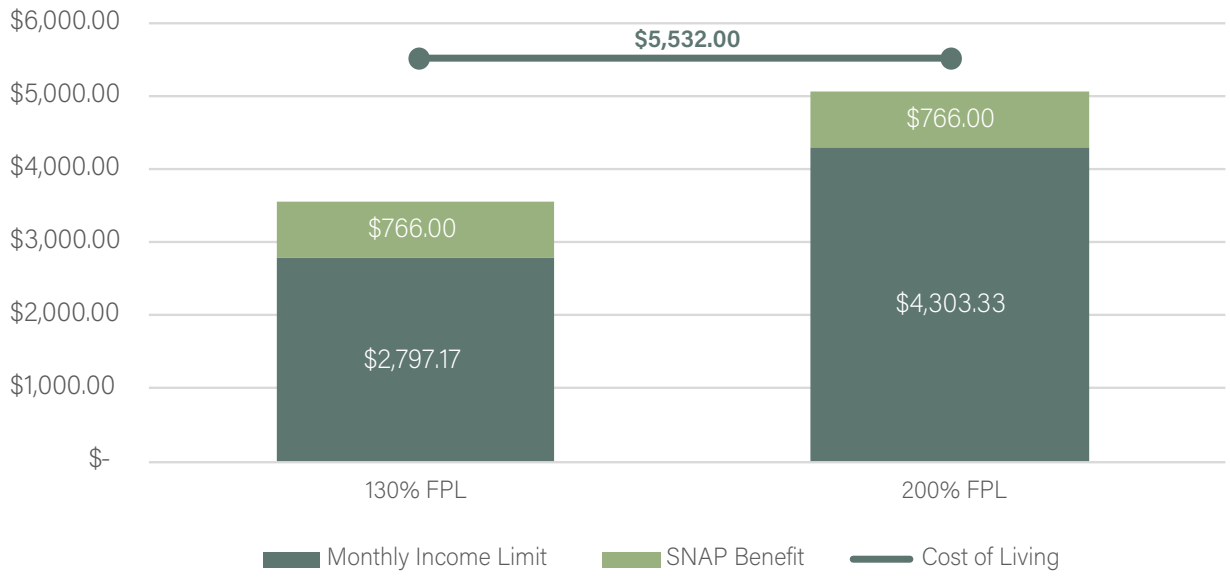
- Extend SNAP benefits to employed young adults[xi]
- Extend SNAP's medical expense deduction to all recipients (currently available only to those older than 60)[xii]
- Implement Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) to increase the gross income threshold (currently 130%) for working adults when their income is low enough and expenses are high enough.[xiii] Currently, Wyoming remains 1 of 11 states that do not use BBCE.[xiv]
- Increase the asset or resource limit (think savings accounts or mutual funds) from $2,500 to $10,000. This increase would allow families to save for emergency expenses or bridge the gap as they transition away from financial or other support



At the current threshold for gross income eligibility, a single mother in Wyoming cannot make more than $2,797 a month (only 51% of what she needs to make ends meet: approximately $5,532/month[xv]) to qualify for a maximum SNAP benefit of $766 (See Table 1). As shown in Figure 3, if the gross income threshold were raised to 200% under BBCE, this mother could make up to $4,303 a month (78% of what she needs) and still qualify for SNAP benefits.

FIGURE 3: RAISING SNAP'S GROSS INCOME THRESHOLD WOULD ALLOW MORE SINGLE MOTHERS TO QUALIFY FOR SNAP

Gross Income Thresholds of 130% and 200% Compared to the Median Cost of Living for a Single Mother in Wyoming



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SNAP IN WYOMING

According to 5-year (2018-2022) American Community Survey (ACS) data estimates, 11,307 households in Wyoming (or 5% of all households) receive SNAP.[xvi] For details about enrollment by county and race/ethnicity, please see Table 2.

To determine the SNAP Gap in Wyoming, the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC) at the University of Wyoming used 5-year (2018-2022) Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) data for the United States and guidance from the *Snap and Power Policy Manual*[xvii], published by the Wyoming Department of Family Services (WDFS). Because of the complexity of determining SNAP eligibility, WYSAC's analysis **only included people living in single-family households (which excludes foster children and individuals living in group quarters such as college dormitories and correctional institutions) and did not include SNAP's asset eligibility requirement**. As such, the numbers below should be interpreted within these bounds. Detailed methods and analysis information can be found here.

WYSAC's analysis identified 31,725 households potentially eligible for SNAP in Wyoming with 22% (n=7,093) enrolled in SNAP (a gap of 78%; Table 3). Half of these potentially eligible households included at least one person who is over 60 or lives with a disability (Table 3).

Among all SNAP-eligible households, 78% (n=23,885) do not receive SNAP and households with someone over 60 or living with a disability experience the largest gap: 89% (n=13,620) do not receive SNAP (Table 3).

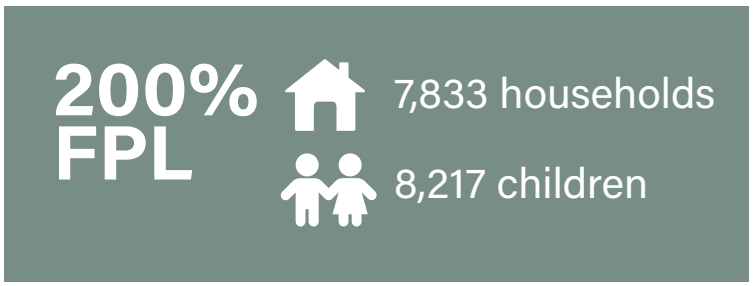
Of eligible households with children under the age of five, 53% (n=1,462) do not receive SNAP and, of single-mother households, 43% (n=517) do not receive SNAP (Table 4). Of eligible households with children under the age of 18, 59% (n=3,412) do not receive SNAP and of single mother households, 49% (n=1,325) do not receive SNAP (Table 4).

TABLE 2: FIVE PERCENT OF ALL WYOMING HOUSEHOLDS ARE ENROLLED IN SNAP

Wyoming Households Enrolled in SNAP, by County

	Number of Households	Percent of all Households
Wyoming	**11,307**	**4.8%**
Albany	580	3.6
Big Horn	232	5.4
Campbell	406	2.3
Carbon	324	5.5
Converse	362	6.4
Crook	3	0.1
Fremont	1,198	8.2
Goshen	392	7.7
Hot Springs	145	6.9
Johnson	59	1.5
Laramie	2,332	5.6
Lincoln	284	3.7
Natrona	1,837	5.6
Niobrara	67	6.3
Park	548	4.2
Platte	267	6.9
Sheridan	371	2.8
Sublette	18	0.5
Sweetwater	1,100	6.7
Teton	74	0.8
Uinta	519	6.8
Washakie	111	3.3
Weston	78	3.0
Race/Ethnicity		
White	9,268	82
Black or African American	352	3.1
American Indian and Alaska Native	706	6.2
Asian	56	0.5
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0
Other	217	1.9
Two or more races	708	6.3
Hispanic or Latino	1,078	9.5
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	8,675	76.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-year estimates. Table S2201.
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WYSAC also determined that an increase in the gross income threshold from 130% FPL to 200% FPL would allow an additional 7,833 households, including 8,217 children under the age of 18, to qualify for SNAP. These children would especially benefit from receiving SNAP as SNAP eligibility automatically qualifies them for free school lunches. [xviii]

TABLE 3: HOUSEHOLDS WITH SOMEONE OVER 60 OR LIVING WITH A DISABILITY EXPERIENCE THE LARGEST SNAP GAP IN WYOMING

Households Eligible for SNAP, by Eligibility Type

	Receives SNAP		Does Not Receive SNAP			
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**Total N**	**Total %**
Categorically Eligible[1]	1,524	40	2,286	60	3,810	12
People Over 60 or Who Live with a Disability	1,762	11.2	13,934	88.8	15,696	49.5
Everyone Else	3,807	31.2	8,412	68.8	12,219	38.5
Total	**7,093**	**22.4**	**24,632**	**77.6**	**31,725**	**100**

[1] A household is categorically eligible if all its members receive financial assistance such as POWER, Tribal TANF, and/or Social Security.

Source: Analysis of 5-year (2018-2022) IPUMS USA microdata.

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TABLE 4: MORE WYOMING CITIZENS – ESPECIALLY THE ELDERLY AND CHILDREN – COULD BENEFIT FROM RECEIVING SNAP BENEFITS.

Households Eligible for SNAP, by Children in the Home and Household Type

		Receives SNAP		Does Not Receive SNAP		
		n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**Total N**
Households with Children under 5	Single Mother	705	57.7	517	42.3	1,222
	Single Father	198	85.7	33	14.3	231
	Married Couple	432	30.9	966	69.1	1,398
	Other*	162	39.8	245	60.2	407
	Total	**1,497**	**45.9**	**1,761**	**54.1**	**3,258**
Households with Children under 18	Single Mother	1,582	53.8	1,357	46.2	2,939
	Single Father	489	56.3	380	43.7	869
	Married Couple	543	24.3	1,688	75.7	2,231
	Other*	307	46.7	350	53.3	657
	Total	**2,921**	**43.6**	**3,775**	**56.4**	**6,696**

Note: Households with children under 5 are also included in households with children under 18

*IPUMS USA data does not have a classification for unmarried parents and codes these households as "N/A".

Source: Analysis of 5-year (2018-2022) IPUMS USA microdata.

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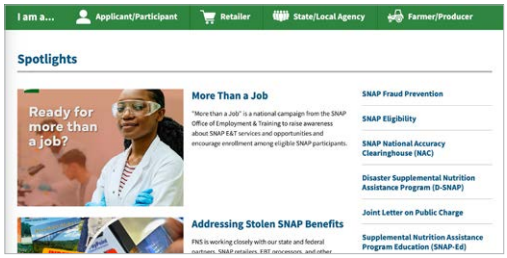
RECOMMENDATIONS

We know that families and children perform better, have better long-term outcomes and are generally better off when they have access to the nutrition they need. How can Wyoming do better for our working families?

Encourage the Department of Health to expedite the creation of an online application portal. Provide those eligible for SNAP with more information, including information on the current application process and provide web links for applicants to access the PDF application. .



To curb the stigma surrounding SNAP, educate Wyomingites on the long-term benefits of SNAP.



Encourage schools and community organizations to share SNAP resources broadly so people can easily access them.



Support the adoption of BBCE that raises the gross income threshold and increases the asset eligibility requirement so thousands more households in Wyoming can be more financially and food secure.

DATA SOURCES

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide continuous survey that collects demographic, housing, social, and economic data. The U.S. Census Bureau randomly selects a sample of addresses to receive the survey in the mail. The ACS provides 1-year and 5-year estimates (data collected over 12 months and 60 months, respectively). The Census Bureau advises that although 5-year estimates are the least current, they are the most accurate. Annual (1-year) estimates are only provided for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 or greater.

U.S. Census Bureau, IPUMS USA Data: IPUMS USA, formerly known as the "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series," is an online platform and database offering access to more than sixty comprehensive, finely detailed samples of the American populace. These samples are sourced from sixteen federal censuses, the American Community Surveys spanning from 2000 to the present, and the Puerto Rican Community Surveys from 2005 to the present. While some of these samples have been in existence for a significant duration, others were curated specifically for the IPUMS USA database. Together, these samples represent the most abundant repository of quantitative data documenting the enduring shifts within the American population over time.

ENDNOTES

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xi Ed Markey, United States Senator for Massachusetts. (2023, July 20). Markey, Trahan Announce Bridging the SNAP Gap Act to Expand the Eligibility, Increase Benefits for Americans with Medical Expenses. https://bit.ly/4cxswlO

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xiii Rosenbaum, D. (2019, January). SNAP's "Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility" Supports Working Families and Those Saving for the Future. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. https://bit.ly/3LlCxXf

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xvi U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-year estimates. Table S2201.

xvii Wyoming Department of Family Services (n.d.). SNAP and POWER Policy Manual. https://bit.ly/4cV7SM1

xviii Food and Nutrition Service, (2024, June). Applying for Free and Reduced Price School Meals. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. https://bit.ly/4cuFQqW



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https://wysac.uwyo.edu/wysac/
https://wycf.org/