

# Basic Food

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services  
Economic Services Administration  
Community Services Division

## Program Description

The Basic Food program provides assistance for individuals and families to purchase and access nutritious foods, and plays a critical role in supporting our communities in reaching their full potential. Washington state's federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is mirrored by the state-funded Food Assistance Program, which is for immigrants who do not yet qualify for federal SNAP benefits.

We provide tools and resources to promote well-being through:

- **Access to healthy foods.** Healthy food is foundational to our well-being, and without it, we struggle to fully contribute to our community. Basic Food provides monthly food benefits to ensure children and adults have a full belly and access to nutritional foods that help us through all stages of life by ensuring healthy brain development, greater school attendance, increased health and social inclusion. In order to qualify for Basic Food, a household's earnings must fall below 200% of the federal poverty level (\$49,716 for a family of three). The average daily benefit for a household receiving Basic Food is \$14.47 per day.
- **Outreach and education.** In addition to food assistance, the program conducts statewide educational efforts to spread healthy eating awareness and increase physical activities through SNAP-Education. When our community members have the tools we all need to thrive, including knowledge about fresh, healthy food, resource management and food safety, they can create lifelong habits that build a solid foundation for themselves and their families.
- **Connection to employment and training opportunities.** The Basic Food Employment and Training program is a partnership between DSHS, community-based organizations and the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges. BFET gives youth and adults the opportunity to make use of their gifts and talents to increase their skills and expertise so they have a broader range of options for future employment.

## Highlights from 2022

- The **Thrifty Food Plan** was reevaluated in 2021 for the first time in 15 years to reflect updated data on food prices, consumption and dietary guidance. This resulted in sizable increases to Basic Food benefit allotments over the past two years – roughly 23% in October 2021 followed by over 12% in October 2022.
- The **BFET program operates in 35 of 39 counties in Washington state** and is one of the most robust employment and training programs in the country.

### More information:

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# Basic Food Facts

## Trends

The number of people served by Basic Food decreased from FY 2021 to FY 2022.

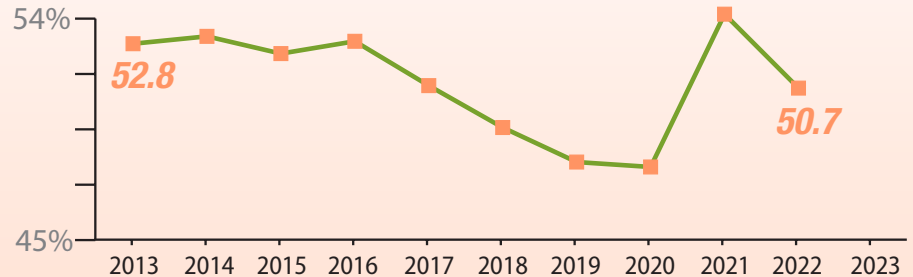
Decrease

FY 2021 **950,592**

FY 2022 **873,078**

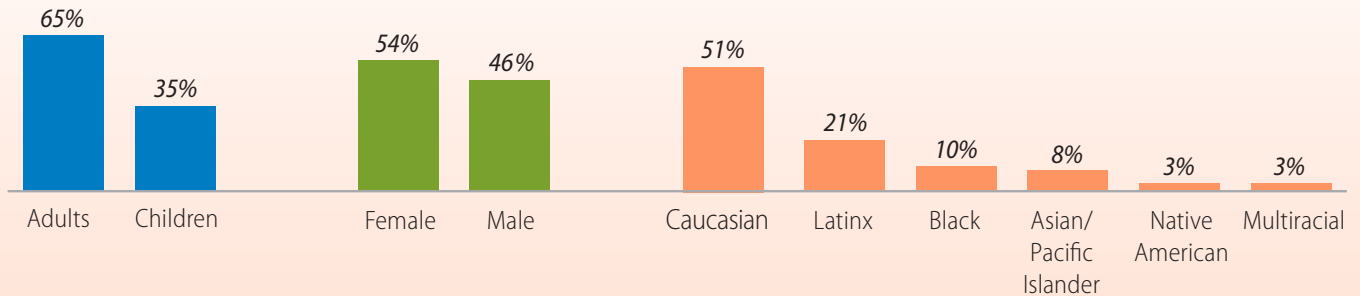
## Meeting the Need

The percentage of households receiving Basic Food increased sharply during the pandemic and has decreased as the economy improves. For every 100 households living below 200% of the federal poverty line, approximately 51 were served in 2022.



## Characteristics of People Served

Adults, females and people who racially identify as Caucasian make up the majority of the caseload.

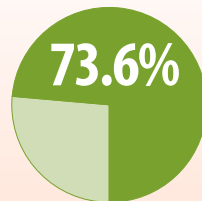


## Average Benefit

The average benefit for a household receiving Basic Food.

**\$14.47**  
per day

## Receipt of Other Benefits



Approximately 74% of people receiving Basic Food do not receive a cash benefit.

## Budget

Basic Food accounted for less than 1% of state spending in the 2021-2023 biennium.

