

Basic Food

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

Program Description

The Basic Food program provides people with assistance 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. 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. To qualify for Basic Food, a household's earnings must fall below 200% of the federal poverty level (\$51,636 for a family of three). The average daily benefit for a household receiving Basic Food is \$13.74 per day.
- **Outreach and education.** In addition to food assistance, the SNAP Education program conducts statewide education to expand opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. With over 60 providers across the state, SNAP-Ed works directly with communities to break down barriers and elevate community assets, increasing equitable access to nutritious food and physical activity, and enables choice for the SNAP-eligible population. Through nutrition education and changes to policies, systems and environments, the SNAP-Ed program reaches close to 1.5 million people annually.
- **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 talents to increase their skills and expertise so they have a broader range of options for future employment.

Highlights from 2023

- **Replacement of Food Benefits** stolen through EBT card skimming, cloning or other fraudulent methods was implemented in August 2023, allowing replacement of validated claims for up to two months of benefits issued. As of June 30, 2024, 6,740 claims totaling \$3,102,538 have been replaced.
- **Fiscal Responsibility Act** changed Work Requirements for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents effective July 2023. This legislation increases the upper age limit for required participation from 49 to 52 years. The limit will again increase to 54 years in October 2024. The FRA also provided new participation exceptions for veterans, homeless individuals and foster care alumni who are under age 24 but in foster care when they turned 18.
- **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 increased from FY 2022 to FY 2023.

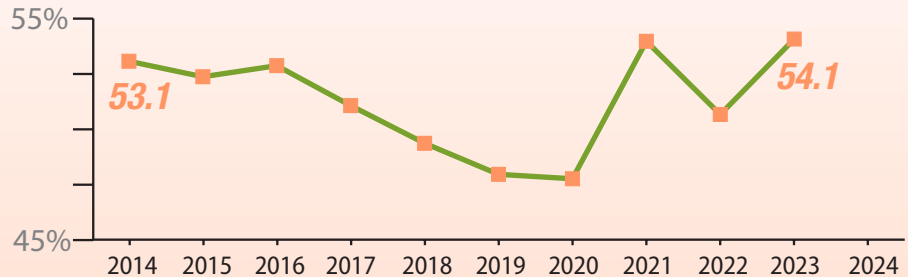


FY 2022 **873,078**

FY 2023 **924,162**

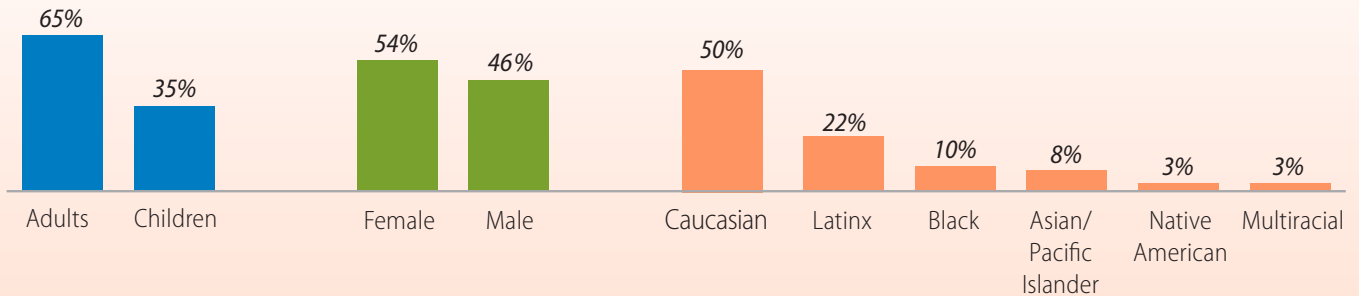
Meeting the Need

The percentage of households receiving Basic Food increased during the pandemic and, after a drop, has increased again due to inflation. For every 100 households living below 200% of the federal poverty line, approximately 54 were served in 2023.



Characteristics of People Served

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

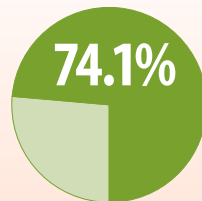


Average Benefit

The average benefit for a household receiving Basic Food.

\$13.74
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.

→ Share of spending on Basic Food = 0.09%

