

# Child Nutrition: Food Stamps

## Definition

*Children receiving food stamps* is the number of children under 18 who received food stamps during the reported year.

## Data in context

Every child needs adequate and nutritious food to grow up healthy. Children living without adequate food or experiencing food shortages face more health and psychological issues than other children.<sup>1</sup> The Food Stamp Program exists to help those most in need buy the food necessary for good health.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture administers the Food Stamp Program through its Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). All Food Stamp funds come from the federal government, and Kentucky allocates over \$611 million in federal funding to the program each year.<sup>2</sup> In Kentucky, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services administers the program through the Division of Family Support and determines eligibility, allotments, and the distribution of benefits. Households with gross income below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for food stamps, and the specific benefit amount is based on the household's income. Benefits are provided by coupons or an electronic card, very much like an ATM card, and accepted at grocery stores. Kentucky's use of electronic cards for food stamps allows families to access this support more easily.

Nationally, the number of food stamp recipients has risen since FFY 2002, corresponding to increases in people living below the poverty line.<sup>3</sup> The majority of all food stamp benefits (79 percent) go to households with children.<sup>4</sup> Among all food stamp recipients nationwide in 2004, fewer than 16 percent received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.<sup>5</sup>

The percent of eligible people participating in the program rose from FFY 2002 to FFY 2004, the most recent year data were available.<sup>6</sup> During FFY 2004, 60 percent of people eligible for food stamps nationally actually received them, up from 54 percent in FFY 2002.<sup>7</sup> Kentucky's utilization rate also increased from approximately 64 percent in FFY 2002 to 71 percent in

FFY 2004, ranking Kentucky 9th among states in highest access to food stamps.<sup>8</sup> Many neighboring states had similarly high participation rates.<sup>9</sup>

Kentucky's average monthly participation was 243,648 children for 2006.<sup>10</sup> The average monthly benefit for all recipients was \$211.48 per person.<sup>11</sup> The number of child recipients of food stamps in 2006 ranged from 127 children in Robertson, the least populous county, to more than 39,000 in Jefferson, the most populous county. The monthly average number of Kentucky children receiving food stamps grew by more than one third from 2000 to 2006. Ten counties, all located in Eastern Kentucky, saw decreases in the average monthly number of children receiving food stamps, corresponding with declining child populations and decreasing rates of child poverty in these counties. The largest decline in the percent of children receiving food stamps in 2006 was in Knott County (14 percent, or 273 children). The number of children receiving food stamps more than doubled in 10 counties: Anderson, Boone, Bracken, Grant, Oldham, Shelby, Simpson, Spencer, Trimble, and Woodford.

Food stamps offer a temporary lifeline for families locked out of economic opportunity or struggling to make ends meet. Systemic barriers like high prices for goods and services in poor neighborhoods, the relocation of jobs from low-income neighborhoods, and discriminatory hiring practices limit opportunities for families, especially families of color because of the interaction between poverty and race.<sup>12</sup> In 2002, one in



five Black or Hispanic households across the U.S. was likely to experience food insecurity, rates double the national average.<sup>13</sup>

Within Kentucky, the majority of children (79 percent) receiving food stamps in 2006 were White. Black children represented 18 percent of child food stamp recipients, and Asian and Hispanic children represented a combined 1 percent that year. In addition to food stamps, families also need opportunities to train for good jobs, build assets, and access consumer goods and financial services at reasonable costs.<sup>14</sup>

**Data Source:** Kentucky Department for Community Based Services, Division of Family Support.

- 1 Food Research and Action Center. *Facts about Hunger*. Available at <http://www.frac.org>. Accessed September 2007.
- 2 USDA Economic Research Service. *Kentucky Food Nutrition Service Assistance Programs Fact Sheet, FY 2005*. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov>. Accessed September 2007.
- 3 Cunyngnam, K., Castner, L., and Schirm, A. (2006). *Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2004*. USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov>. Accessed September 2007.
- 4 Food Research and Action Center. *Food Stamp Program*. Available at <http://www.frac.org>. Accessed September 2007.
- 5 USDA Food and Nutrition Service (2005). *Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 2004 Summary*. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov>. Accessed September 2007.
- 6 Cunyngnam, K., Castner, L., and Schirm, A. (2006). *Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2004*. USDA Food and Nutrition Service. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov>. Accessed September 2007.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. June 2006 Data Book. Available at <http://chfs.ky.gov>. Accessed September 2007.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006). "Unequal Opportunities for Rural Family Economic Success." *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed September 2007.
- 13 Food Research and Action Center (2004). *Hunger in America, and Its Solutions*. Basic Facts. Available at <http://www.frac.org>. Accessed September 2007.
- 14 Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006). "Unequal Opportunities for Rural Family Economic Success." *Race Matters Toolkit*. Available at <http://www.aecf.org>. Accessed September 2007.

## Children receiving food stamps (average monthly number of children)

	2000	2006
Kentucky	177,569	243,648
Adair	760	959
Allen	516	990
Anderson	297	674
Ballard	303	390
Barren	1,367	2,331
Bath	755	962
Bell	2,754	3,181
Boone	1,058	2,796
Bourbon	569	937
Boyd	2,391	3,069
Boyle	766	1,304
Bracken	240	522
Breathitt	1,706	1,676
Breckinridge	733	1,121
Bullitt	1,504	2,832
Butler	618	891
Caldwell	542	724
Calloway	903	1,230
Campbell	2,379	3,416
Carlisle	152	217
Carroll	390	581
Carter	1,851	2,451
Casey	719	1,246
Christian	3,322	4,802
Clark	1,348	2,071
Clay	2,666	2,697
Clinton	602	834
Crittenden	380	437
Cumberland	412	502
Daviess	3,580	5,197
Edmonson	518	666
Elliott	659	705
Estill	1,200	1,400
Fayette	6,633	10,595
Fleming	642	844
Floyd	4,187	4,172
Franklin	1,085	2,078
Fulton	622	642
Gallatin	333	506
Garrard	529	882

	2000	2006
Grant	800	1,822
Graves	1,308	2,168
Grayson	1,015	1,623
Green	434	543
Greenup	1,594	2,127
Hancock	219	394
Hardin	2,462	4,353
Harlan	3,594	3,276
Harrison	502	918
Hart	885	1,196
Henderson	1,763	2,446
Henry	524	811
Hickman	229	234
Hopkins	2,255	2,783
Jackson	1,036	1,224
Jefferson	27,036	39,426
Jessamine	1,175	2,298
Johnson	1,947	2,091
Kenton	4,611	7,153
Knott	1,902	1,629
Knox	3,391	3,708
Larue	531	774
Laurel	3,274	4,436
Lawrence	1,432	1,474
Lee	799	793
Leslie	1,180	1,146
Letcher	2,303	2,203
Lewis	1,150	1,411
Lincoln	960	1,651
Livingston	277	415
Logan	911	1,482
Lyon	154	210
McCracken	3,066	3,661
McCreary	2,053	2,067
McLean	300	512
Madison	2,286	3,800
Magoffin	1,555	1,564
Marion	802	982
Marshall	754	1,218
Martin	1,580	1,475
Mason	872	1,245

	2000	2006
Meade	583	1,155
Menifee	488	579
Mercer	589	1,019
Metcalfe	452	689
Monroe	588	781
Montgomery	1,080	1,620
Morgan	1,048	1,117
Muhlenberg	1,202	1,954
Nelson	1,259	2,021
Nicholas	328	453
Ohio	1,155	1,658
Oldham	371	945
Owen	444	688
Owsley	671	662
Pendleton	547	845
Perry	2,960	2,748
Pike	4,852	5,067
Powell	1,014	1,321
Pulaski	2,611	3,934
Robertson	110	127
Rockcastle	949	1,295
Rowan	928	1,342
Russell	940	1,255
Scott	936	1,826
Shelby	559	1,677
Simpson	378	967
Spencer	223	453
Taylor	900	1,227
Todd	420	808
Trigg	322	552
Trimble	245	531
Union	612	775
Warren	3,629	5,027
Washington	273	523
Wayne	1,440	1,715
Webster	532	693
Whitley	3,288	3,700
Wolfe	811	934
Woodford	302	692