

SNAP Utilization and Eligibility in Texas and Texas Legislative Districts

*Prepared by the Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration Project¹
Updated Oct 17, 2020*

Approach & Background

This data brief describes and compares Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) utilization and eligibility in Texas, Texas House Districts (HDs), and Texas Senate Districts (SDs).

SNAP is a food-purchasing assistance program for households with low income. Households with income at or below 165% of the federal poverty level (FPL) may be eligible for benefits in Texas subject to additional requirements. For a three-person household, this equates to a household income of roughly \$36,000 per year.²

SNAP benefits can be used to buy any food for the household, such as fruits and vegetables, meat, dairy, breads/cereals, snack foods and non-alcoholic beverages, and seeds and plants which produce food for the household.³

Additional factors that may affect eligibility include current assets, employment status (location-specific), history of drug use, and citizenship status.⁴

The SNAP program benefits are funded 100% by the federal government and administered by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. Administration expenses are shared by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Texas government.

Estimates in this report are generated using SNAP data from the Texas Health & Human Services Commission and 2018 income statistics from the American Community Survey. Detailed income data for 2020 is not yet available.

The following calculations are **estimates** generated by extrapolating SNAP data that is available only by county. SNAP data are not available by Texas House or Senate district. As a result, the provided estimates may vary from the true counts or rates.

¹The Texas Research-to-Policy Collaboration (RPC) project is conducted by the Michael & Susan Dell for Healthy Living at the UTHealth School of Public Health in Austin. The Texas RPC aims to assist legislators by providing access to Texas research, data, and resources. Questions or inquiries should be directed to: TXRPCNetwork@uth.tmc.edu.

²<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/food/snap-food-benefits>

³<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/eligible-food-items>

⁴<https://www.freshebt.com/state/texas/food-stamps-eligibility-income-limits/>

Insights

- In Texas, 1,751,810 households containing 3,941,165 individuals received SNAP benefits in August 2020 (Figure 1).
- The average monthly SNAP benefits in Texas were \$261 for eligible households (\$116 per eligible individual).
- Compared to August 2019, in August 2020:
 - 468,214 more individuals received SNAP benefits in Texas, an increase of 13%.
 - In Texas SDs, this increase ranged from 6% to 26% (Figure 3)(Table 1).
 - In Texas HDs, this increase ranged from 6% to 30% (Figure 7)(Table 2).
- In April 2020, Texas received 417,468 applications for SNAP compared to 114,937 applications in April 2019, representing a 263% increase.⁵ More recent statewide application counts and county-level application counts have not been made publicly available.
- Discrepancy between high application counts and relatively smaller increases in approved cases may be related to maximum asset requirements. SNAP benefits remain limited to households with less than \$5,000 in liquid assets.
 - Liquid assets include cash, checking or savings accounts, Electronic Benefit Transfer cash account, savings certificates, stocks, or bonds.
 - The fair market value (FMV) of a primary vehicle over \$15,000 and FMV of additional vehicles over \$4,650 also count towards asset limits.⁶
- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,
 - Changes to SNAP eligibility include:
 - Temporary removal of paystub, work, and interview requirements.⁷
 - Automatic renewal of benefits in July and August 2020.⁸
 - Changes to SNAP benefits include:
 - Allowing purchase of online groceries with SNAP benefits.⁹
 - Addition of federal Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer, which provided a one-time \$285 benefit to households for each student receiving free or reduced-price school meals (benefits discontinued Sept 30, 2020).¹⁰
 - Providing maximum benefits for household size to all beneficiaries from April

⁵http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/houston-snap-gap-bifold.original.pdf

⁶<https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/twh/part-a-determining-eligibility/section-1200-resources>

⁷<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ffcra-impact-time-limit-abawds>

⁸<https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-hhsc-announce-extension-of-automatic-snap-renewals-during-covid-19-pandemic>

⁹<https://hhs.texas.gov/services/health/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-information-texans/snap-online-purchasing-pilot>

¹⁰<https://www.texastribune.org/2020/05/21/texas-snap-food/>

through October 2020.¹¹

- In Aug 2019, an estimated 50.6% of individuals with income at or below 165% FPL receive SNAP benefits.
 - In Texas SDs, this percentage ranges from 35% to 55% (Figure 4)(Table 3).
 - In Texas HDs, this percentage ranges from 26% to 60% (Figure 8)(Table 4).

Data Notes & Methodology

SNAP utilization estimates are generated using SNAP data from the Texas Health & Human Services Commission¹² and income statistics from the American Community Survey (ACS).¹³

SNAP household and eligible individual data are available by county and statewide, while income data are available by census tract, county, and statewide. We use income data from the ACS to estimate how the count of households/individuals receiving SNAP recorded for the county should be distributed among census tracts. The census tracts are then aggregated into legislative districts.

First, we calculate how much of the population with income <165% FPL (low-income population) in a given county lives within each census tract. We then divide the county SNAP household counts into the census tracts based on the size of the low-income population in each census tract. Tracts with a larger low-income population are assumed to have more SNAP households.

The ACS does not directly provide an estimate of the number of individuals with income <165% FPL. It does provide estimates for individuals with income <150% FPL and <185% FPL. To estimate the number of individuals <165% FPL, we assume there is a linear change in the population estimates from 185% FPL to 150% FPL and interpolate.

To generate legislative district level estimates, we then find the number of census tracts with any portion that lies within the district boundaries. Accounting for census tracts that only partially reside in a district, we then aggregate relevant SNAP data (monthly households, individuals, average payments, etc) and income data from each census tract to generate estimates for the district.

Code for this analysis in the R programming language is available upon request.

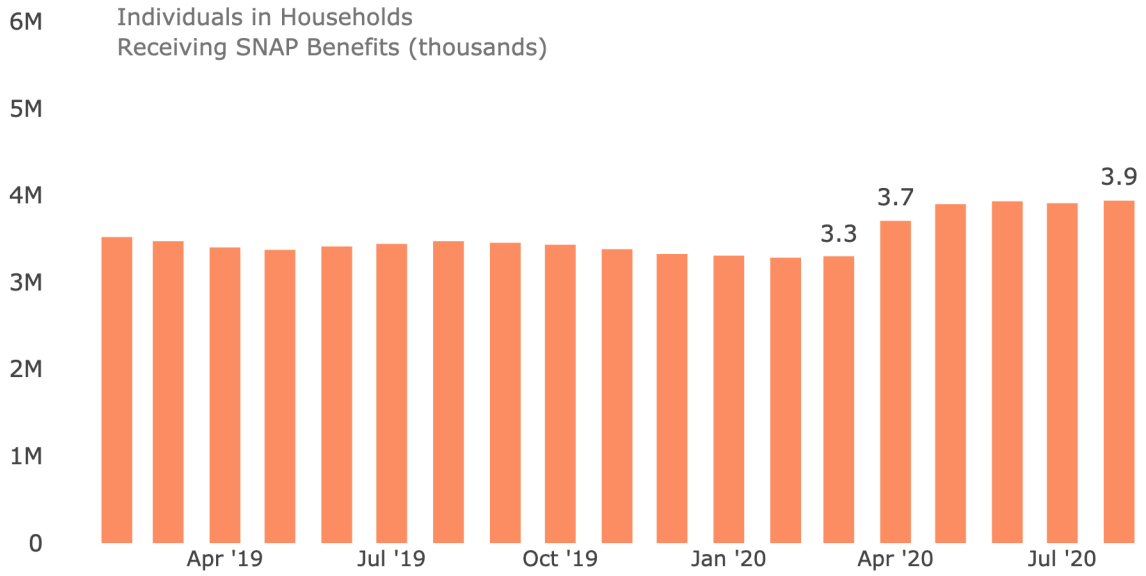
¹¹<https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-hhsc-announce-extension-of-emergency-snap-benefits-for-october-2020>

¹²<https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/records-statistics/data-statistics/supplemental-nutritional-assistance-program-snap-statistics>

¹³<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

Texas SNAP Statistics

Figure 1. Estimated Individuals in Households Receiving SNAP benefits in Texas



Texas Senate District SNAP Statistics

Figure 2. Est. Individuals Receiving SNAP Benefits in Texas Senate Districts, Aug 2020

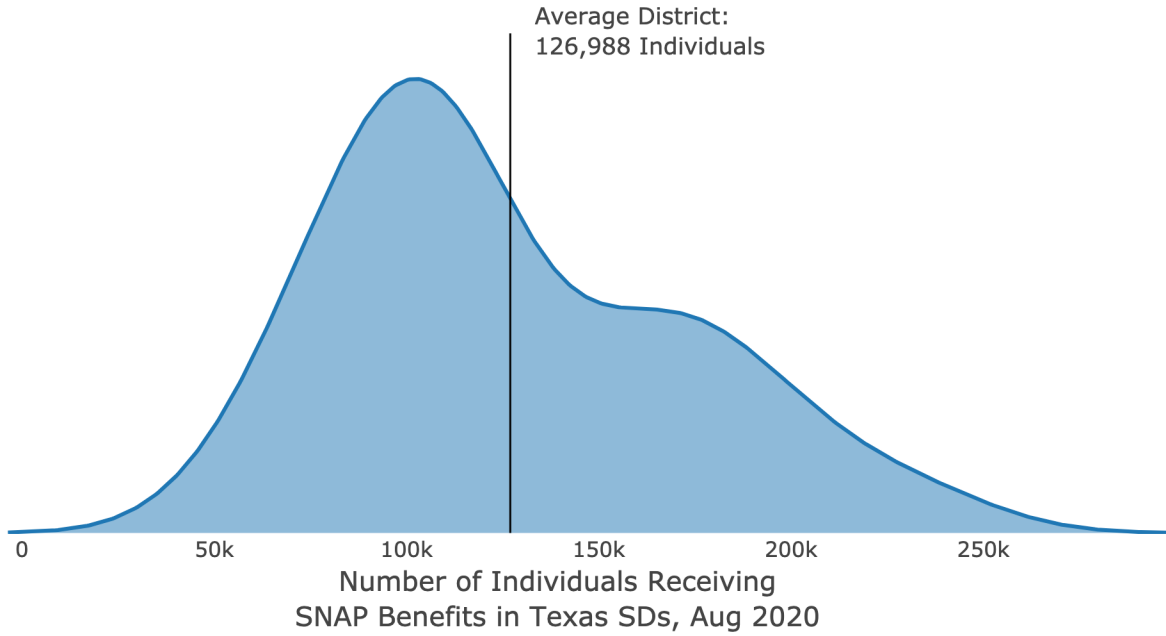


Figure 3. Est. Percentage Increase in Households Receiving SNAP Benefits in Texas Senate Districts, Aug 2019 to Aug 2020

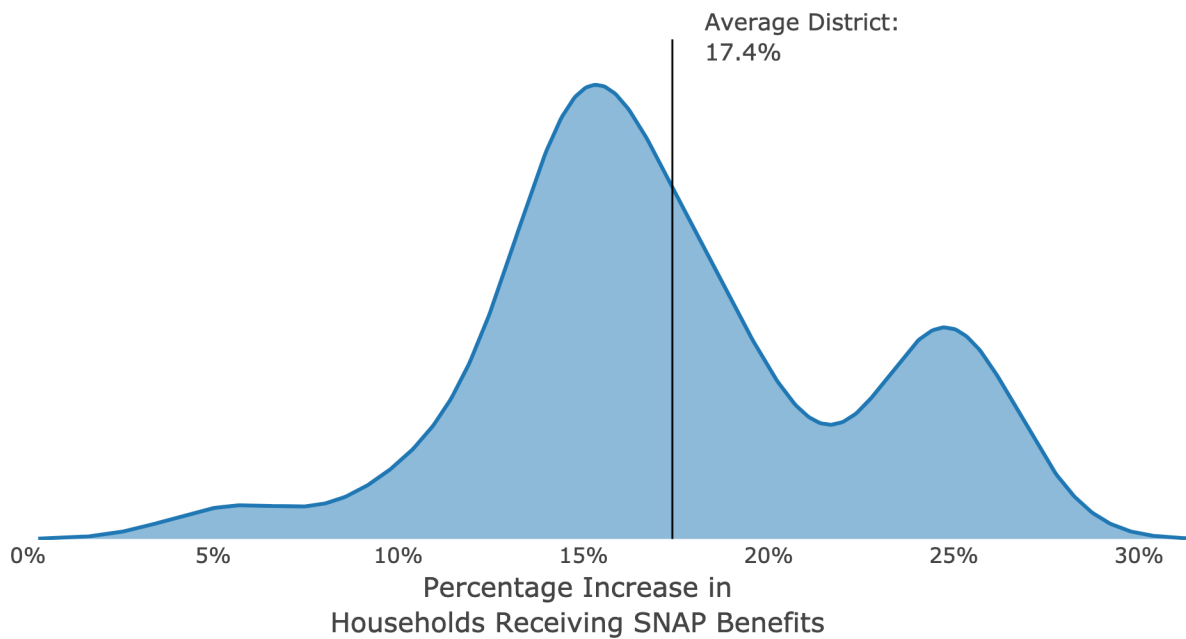


Figure 4. Est. Percentage of Individuals with Income <165% Federal Poverty Level Who Receive SNAP Benefits in Texas Senate Districts, using Pre-COVID-19 Income Data

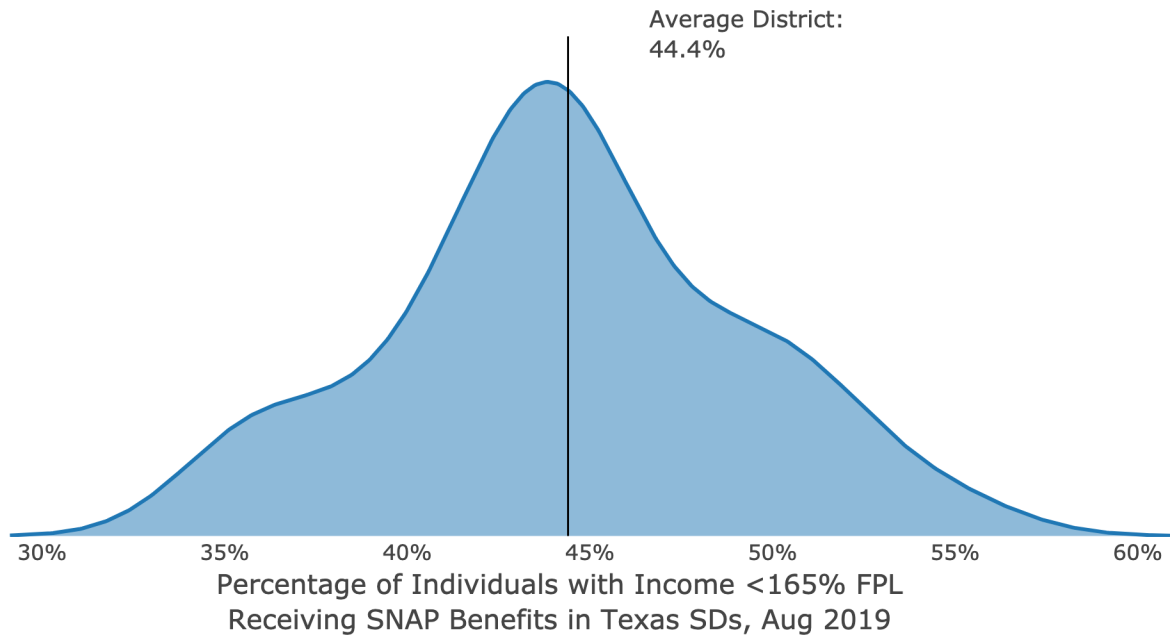
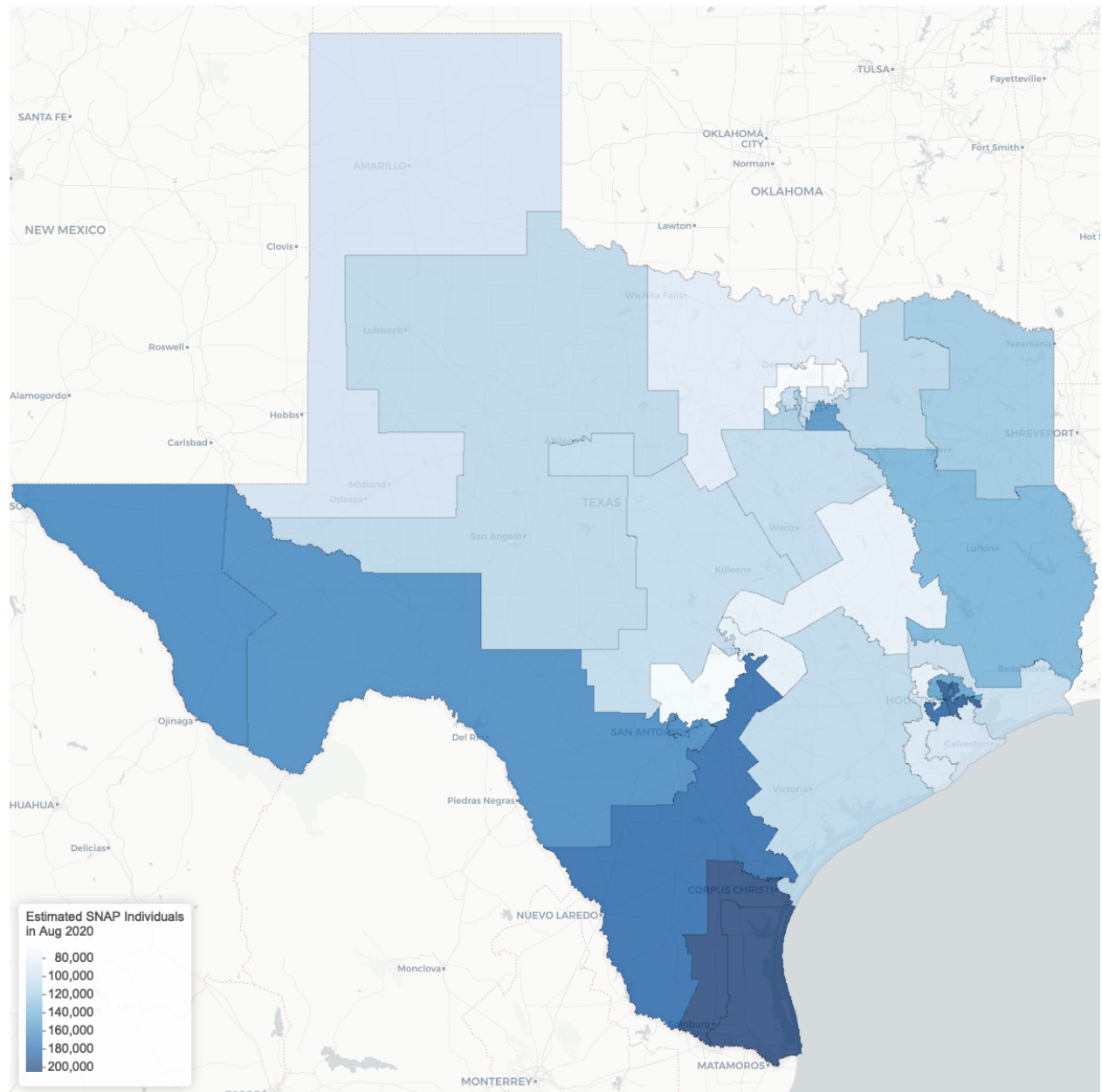


Figure 5. Est. Individuals Receiving SNAP Benefits in Texas Senate Districts



Texas House District SNAP Statistics

Figure 6. Est. Individuals Receiving SNAP Benefits in Texas House Districts, Aug 2020

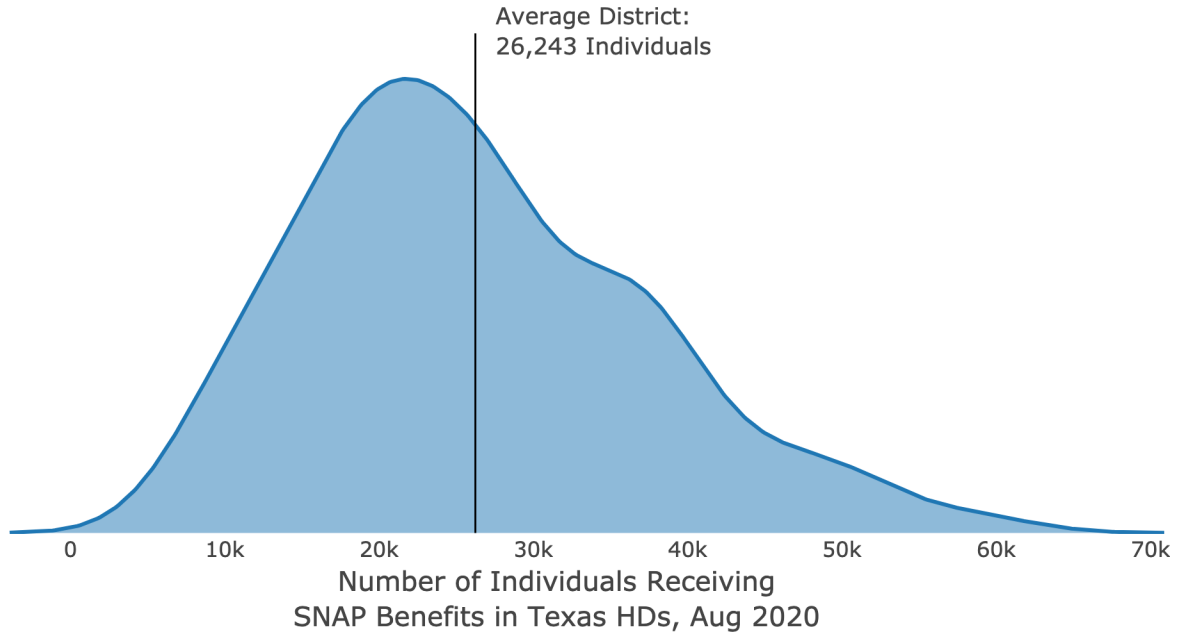


Figure 7. Est. Percentage Increase in Households Receiving SNAP Benefits in Texas House Districts, Aug 2019 to Aug 2020

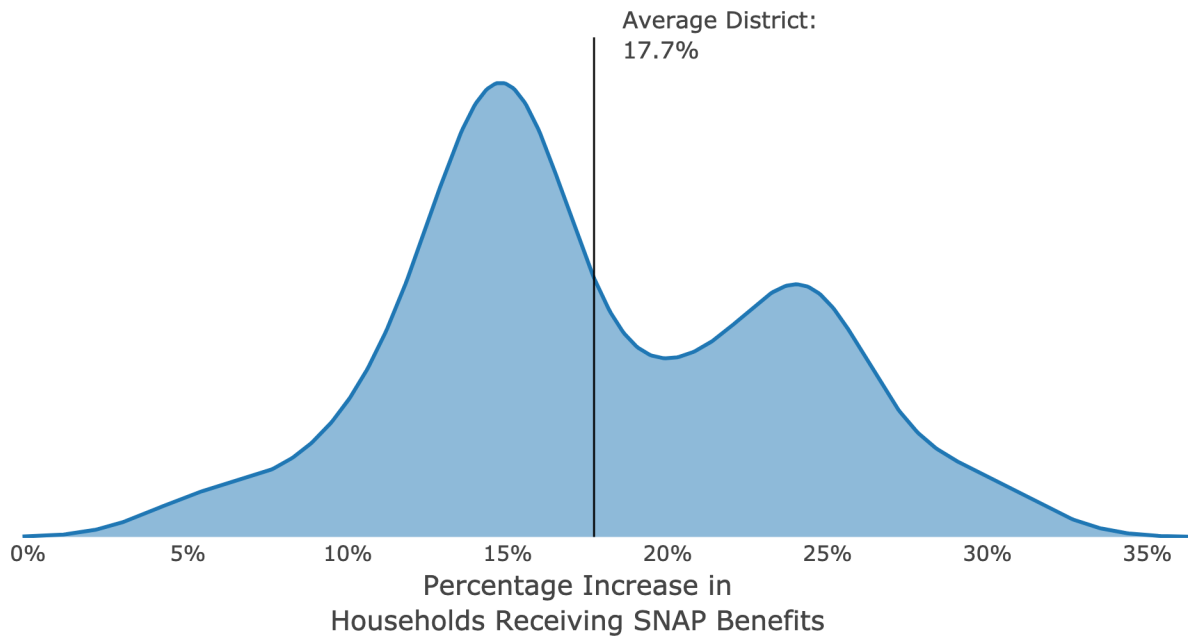


Figure 8. Est. Percentage of Individuals with Income <165% Federal Poverty Level Who Receive SNAP Benefits in Texas House Districts, using Pre-COVID-19 Income Data

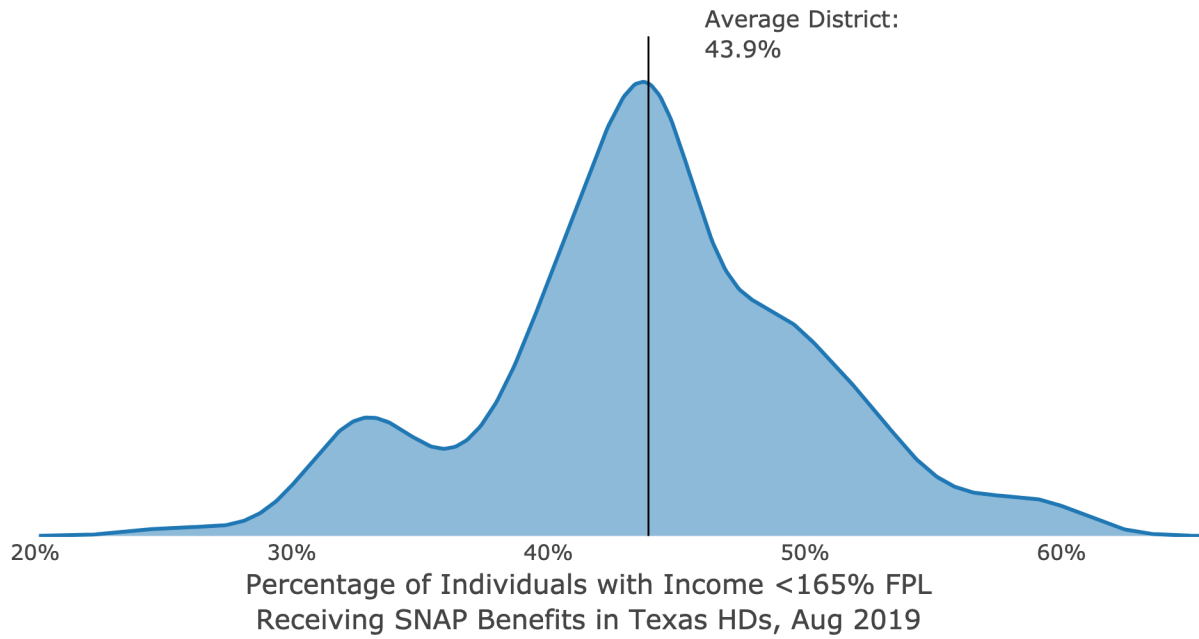


Figure 9. Est. Individuals Receiving SNAP Benefits in Texas House Districts

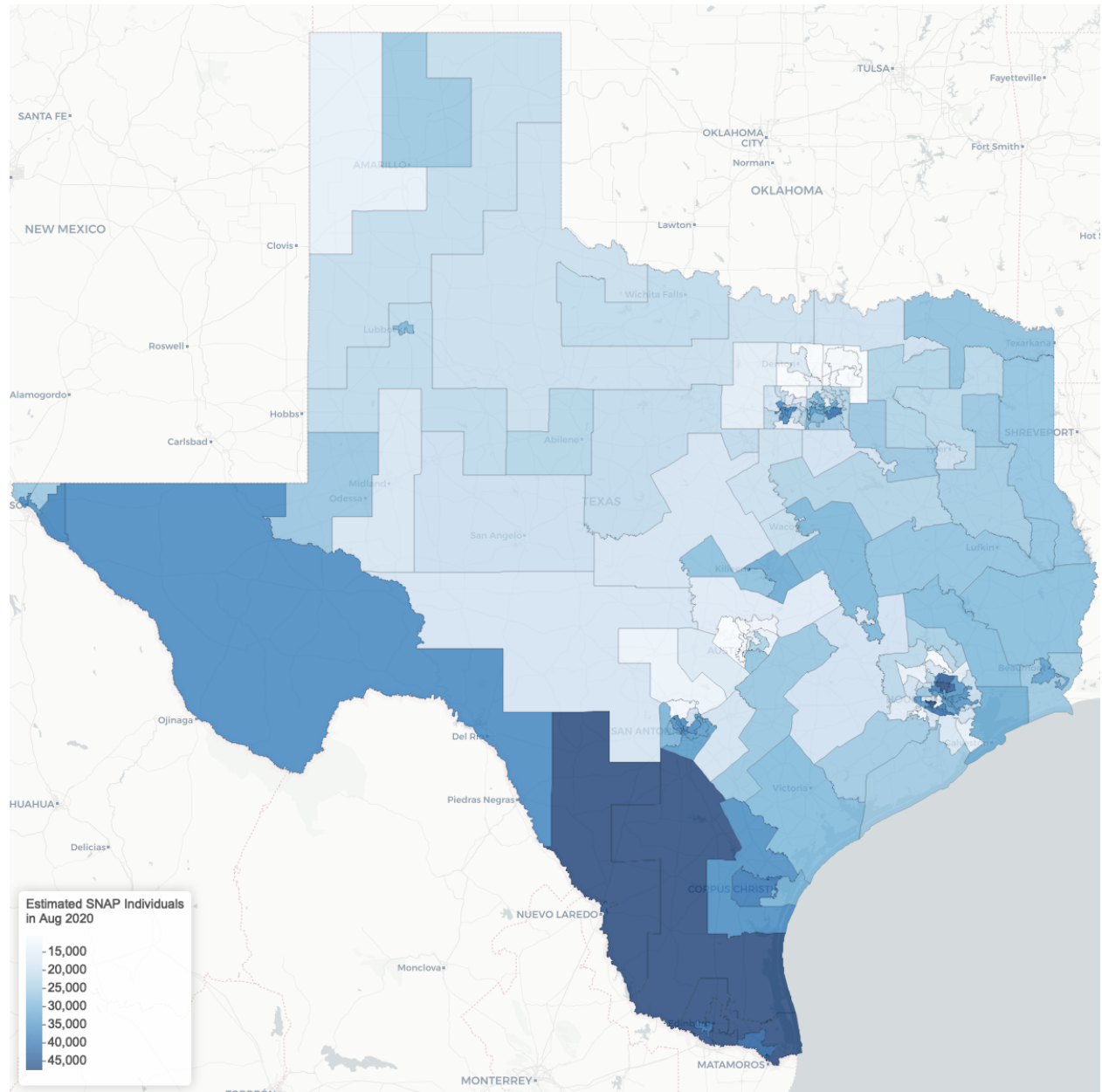


Table 1: SNAP Utilization by Texas Senate District

Senate District	Est. SNAP Households	Est. SNAP Beneficiaries	Aug Year-over-Year Change (%)	Senate District	Est. SNAP Households	Est. SNAP Beneficiaries	Aug Year-over-Year Change (%)
SD 1	58,553	127,193	13.7	SD 17	42,921	94,703	26
SD 2	52,489	115,817	15	SD 18	50,590	113,097	24.2
SD 3	65,932	142,203	18.4	SD 19	72,320	167,808	16.1
SD 4	49,485	107,549	20.5	SD 20	90,773	212,591	15.3
SD 5	37,511	83,616	18.5	SD 21	77,519	186,118	15
SD 6	89,899	195,643	24.4	SD 22	48,788	110,882	13.1
SD 7	38,363	83,488	24.4	SD 23	74,507	160,605	14.5
SD 8	26,091	58,221	19.3	SD 24	49,026	110,718	11.3
SD 9	47,327	107,165	14.7	SD 25	31,577	71,889	17
SD 10	52,899	122,413	14.8	SD 26	74,438	168,714	16.3
SD 11	45,189	97,796	25.7	SD 27	96,990	236,166	10.1
SD 12	28,964	67,010	18	SD 28	49,776	113,618	14.6
SD 13	86,409	188,590	24.9	SD 29	75,116	169,695	5.6
SD 14	40,623	85,539	16	SD 30	40,782	90,836	15.3
SD 15	70,306	153,004	24.4	SD 31	41,052	99,678	18.4
SD 16	43,729	94,262	14.5				

Table 2: SNAP Utilization by Texas House District

House District	Est. SNAP Households	Est. SNAP Beneficiaries	Aug Year-over-Year Change (%)	House District	Est. SNAP Households	Est. SNAP Beneficiaries	Aug Year-over-Year Change (%)
HD 1	13,233	28,235	12.3	HD 76	16,020	36,234	5.6
HD 2	11,321	24,474	13.3	HD 77	16,760	37,907	5.6
HD 3	10,235	23,135	25.4	HD 78	11,990	27,118	5.6
HD 4	11,674	26,975	18.6	HD 79	11,824	26,744	5.6
HD 5	10,644	23,534	13.1	HD 80	19,976	50,085	12.3
HD 6	9,304	21,057	14.6	HD 81	10,814	26,986	29.5
HD 7	12,658	27,126	15.5	HD 82	7,228	18,405	28.1
HD 8	11,127	24,362	15.0	HD 83	9,605	22,444	15.5
HD 9	13,202	27,891	12.2	HD 84	12,811	29,416	13.5
HD 10	8,368	19,751	15.1	HD 85	11,545	26,341	29.2
HD 11	11,829	26,145	14.3	HD 86	5,965	14,395	12.6
HD 12	13,927	30,155	12.7	HD 87	11,537	26,753	9.2
HD 13	9,164	19,869	18.5	HD 88	9,032	21,774	14.1
HD 14	8,152	18,329	15.3	HD 89	4,133	9,383	21.9
HD 15	4,898	11,157	27.8	HD 90	16,214	37,520	14.8
HD 16	11,151	25,404	27.8	HD 91	7,408	17,144	14.8
HD 17	11,623	27,159	19.4	HD 92	7,501	17,358	14.8
HD 18	13,481	29,142	25.1	HD 93	9,330	21,591	14.8
HD 19	13,765	28,848	20.3	HD 94	9,281	21,478	14.8
HD 20	7,308	16,608	16.7	HD 95	16,406	37,966	14.8
HD 21	12,535	26,669	16.1	HD 96	6,518	15,084	14.8
HD 22	16,361	33,864	13.1	HD 97	9,843	22,777	14.8
HD 23	15,077	31,812	25.9	HD 98	3,491	8,079	14.8
HD 24	7,018	14,630	25.0	HD 99	8,216	19,014	14.8
HD 25	11,490	26,333	27.0	HD 100	15,505	33,422	14.5
HD 26	5,440	12,244	30.5	HD 101	10,435	24,148	14.8
HD 27	8,261	18,591	30.5	HD 102	10,663	22,985	14.5
HD 28	7,309	16,449	30.5	HD 103	14,561	31,387	14.5
HD 29	7,887	18,177	29.1	HD 104	15,862	34,191	14.5
HD 30	13,082	29,108	23.6	HD 105	12,582	27,123	14.5
HD 31	21,083	48,957	16.3	HD 106	3,898	9,017	21.2
HD 32	14,712	31,147	20.6	HD 107	10,964	23,633	14.5
HD 33	4,189	10,008	19.6	HD 108	7,313	15,764	14.5
HD 34	18,989	40,202	20.6	HD 109	12,127	26,140	14.5
HD 35	24,304	59,952	10.5	HD 110	19,170	41,322	14.5
HD 36	18,497	46,070	11.5	HD 111	13,695	29,522	14.5
HD 37	21,322	51,444	8.4	HD 112	10,640	22,936	14.5
HD 38	18,083	43,630	8.4	HD 113	10,921	23,541	14.5
HD 39	21,228	52,872	11.5	HD 114	10,168	21,917	14.5
HD 40	22,753	56,671	11.5	HD 115	7,406	15,963	14.5
HD 41	16,775	41,781	11.5	HD 116	17,215	39,019	16.3
HD 42	17,822	46,608	10.6	HD 117	13,374	30,311	16.3
HD 43	16,181	37,058	20.6	HD 118	15,292	34,660	16.3

(continued)

House District	Est. SNAP Households	Est. SNAP Beneficiaries	Aug Year-over-Year Change (%)	House District	Est. SNAP Households	Est. SNAP Beneficiaries	Aug Year-over-Year Change (%)
HD 44	8,406	19,570	17.8	HD 119	15,343	34,776	16.3
HD 45	7,496	17,265	20.5	HD 120	16,143	36,589	16.3
HD 46	11,859	24,575	15.4	HD 121	8,812	19,973	16.3
HD 47	3,376	6,998	15.4	HD 122	5,549	12,578	16.3
HD 48	5,135	10,641	15.4	HD 123	16,411	37,196	16.3
HD 49	8,645	17,915	15.4	HD 124	13,079	29,644	16.3
HD 50	6,884	14,268	15.4	HD 125	16,126	36,550	16.3
HD 51	13,221	27,398	15.4	HD 126	10,521	22,897	24.4
HD 52	5,604	13,206	21.9	HD 127	7,046	15,334	24.4
HD 53	8,494	18,755	18.5	HD 128	9,812	21,354	24.4
HD 54	12,214	28,245	9.8	HD 129	8,753	19,048	24.4
HD 55	13,954	32,459	10.0	HD 130	6,564	14,286	24.4
HD 56	9,704	21,420	11.1	HD 131	19,138	41,651	24.4
HD 57	13,153	27,966	15.3	HD 132	9,066	19,730	24.4
HD 58	8,863	20,677	13.8	HD 133	8,219	17,888	24.4
HD 59	8,171	18,878	13.7	HD 134	5,627	12,246	24.4
HD 60	10,218	22,312	14.1	HD 135	9,429	20,521	24.4
HD 61	6,967	16,061	18.5	HD 136	4,481	10,561	21.9
HD 62	9,360	20,445	12.6	HD 137	22,127	48,154	24.4
HD 63	3,350	7,749	21.2	HD 138	12,215	26,583	24.4
HD 64	7,374	17,057	21.2	HD 139	18,560	40,390	24.4
HD 65	5,683	13,145	21.2	HD 140	22,575	49,130	24.4
HD 66	3,794	8,613	21.9	HD 141	20,514	44,644	24.4
HD 67	5,158	11,710	21.9	HD 142	16,149	35,143	24.4
HD 68	9,357	21,025	13.9	HD 143	16,901	36,781	24.4
HD 69	10,537	22,095	11.1	HD 144	16,223	35,306	24.4
HD 70	5,173	11,743	21.9	HD 145	17,118	37,253	24.4
HD 71	10,877	23,924	8.9	HD 146	18,017	39,210	24.4
HD 72	9,075	20,541	19.5	HD 147	15,782	34,346	24.4
HD 73	5,808	13,512	18.3	HD 148	15,696	34,159	24.4
HD 74	15,547	37,487	13.4	HD 149	16,221	35,301	24.4
HD 75	17,167	38,829	5.6	HD 150	8,299	18,063	24.4

Table 3: SNAP Utilization among Individuals With Income <165% FPL by Texas Senate District

House District	Est. Individuals <165% FPL w/ SNAP (%)	House District	Est. Individuals <165% FPL w/ SNAP (%)
SD 1	45.1	SD 17	44.9
SD 2	42	SD 18	44.6
SD 3	48.1	SD 19	50.9
SD 4	46.2	SD 20	54.9
SD 5	36	SD 21	49.1
SD 6	44	SD 22	44.3
SD 7	44	SD 23	41.1
SD 8	35.1	SD 24	51.5
SD 9	43.2	SD 25	43.2
SD 10	44.1	SD 26	48.8
SD 11	46.8	SD 27	52
SD 12	38.2	SD 28	42.3
SD 13	44.1	SD 29	49.8
SD 14	36	SD 30	39
SD 15	44	SD 31	41.1
SD 16	41.1		

Table 4: SNAP Utilization among Individuals With Income <165% FPL by Texas House District

House District	Est. Individuals <165% FPL w/ SNAP (%)	House District	Est. Individuals <165% FPL w/ SNAP (%)	House District	Est. Individuals <165% FPL w/ SNAP (%)	House District	Est. Individuals <165% FPL w/ SNAP (%)
HD 1	50.8	HD 39	52.2	HD 77	50	HD 115	41.1
HD 2	40.9	HD 40	52.2	HD 78	50	HD 116	48.8
HD 3	38.6	HD 41	52.2	HD 79	50	HD 117	48.8
HD 4	47.1	HD 42	52.9	HD 80	52.4	HD 118	48.8
HD 5	41.5	HD 43	55.8	HD 81	43.9	HD 119	48.8
HD 6	37.8	HD 44	43.7	HD 82	39.5	HD 120	48.8
HD 7	46.3	HD 45	29.9	HD 83	41.1	HD 121	48.8
HD 8	45.2	HD 46	33.8	HD 84	41.8	HD 122	48.8
HD 9	46.6	HD 47	33.8	HD 85	44.1	HD 123	48.8
HD 10	46.1	HD 48	33.8	HD 86	38.9	HD 124	48.8
HD 11	42.3	HD 49	33.8	HD 87	44.3	HD 125	48.8
HD 12	43	HD 50	33.8	HD 88	41.1	HD 126	44
HD 13	40	HD 51	33.8	HD 89	32	HD 127	44
HD 14	25.6	HD 52	36.9	HD 90	44.1	HD 128	44
HD 15	38.7	HD 53	40.2	HD 91	44.1	HD 129	44
HD 16	38.7	HD 54	59.1	HD 92	44.1	HD 130	44
HD 17	48.4	HD 55	59.9	HD 93	44.1	HD 131	44
HD 18	47.4	HD 56	43.4	HD 94	44.1	HD 132	44
HD 19	52.6	HD 57	47.2	HD 95	44.1	HD 133	44
HD 20	39.9	HD 58	43.7	HD 96	44.1	HD 134	44
HD 21	55.6	HD 59	39.2	HD 97	44.1	HD 135	44
HD 22	54.1	HD 60	41	HD 98	44.1	HD 136	36.9
HD 23	46.2	HD 61	36.3	HD 99	44.1	HD 137	44
HD 24	47.8	HD 62	41.7	HD 100	41.1	HD 138	44
HD 25	48	HD 63	32	HD 101	44.1	HD 139	44
HD 26	44.9	HD 64	32	HD 102	41.1	HD 140	44
HD 27	44.9	HD 65	32	HD 103	41.1	HD 141	44
HD 28	44.9	HD 66	32	HD 104	41.1	HD 142	44
HD 29	49.2	HD 67	32	HD 105	41.1	HD 143	44
HD 30	48.5	HD 68	41.3	HD 106	32	HD 144	44
HD 31	56.3	HD 69	46.8	HD 107	41.1	HD 145	44
HD 32	58.8	HD 70	32	HD 108	41.1	HD 146	44
HD 33	33.9	HD 71	48.9	HD 109	41.1	HD 147	44
HD 34	58.8	HD 72	38	HD 110	41.1	HD 148	44
HD 35	52.1	HD 73	33.9	HD 111	41.1	HD 149	44
HD 36	52.2	HD 74	52.5	HD 112	41.1	HD 150	44
HD 37	51.9	HD 75	50	HD 113	41.1		
HD 38	51.9	HD 76	50	HD 114	41.1		