



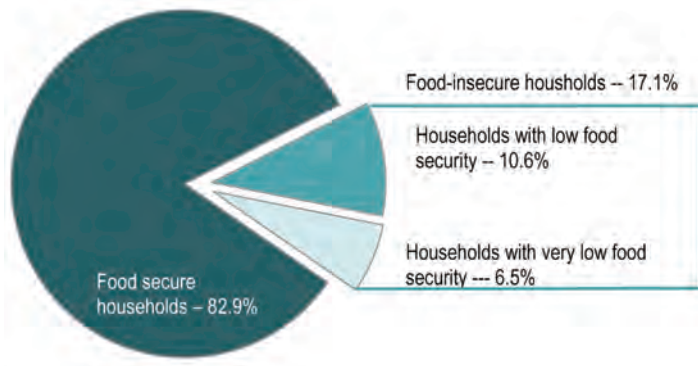
FACT SHEET: *November 24, 2010*

One in 6 Mississippi Households Suffered Food Insecurity During 2009

Food security – access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life – is one of several conditions necessary for a population to be healthy. This month, the USDA’s Economic Research Service released its [annual report](#) measuring household food security. The report reveals that in Mississippi in 2009, 1 in every 6 households was food insecure at some time during 2009.¹

Across Mississippi 82.9% of households were food secure during all of 2009. In contrast, 17.1% of households experienced food insecurity at some point during the year, and a substantial portion -- 6.5% -- experienced very low food security. A household experiences very low food security if they skip meals or reduce what they are eating because they lack enough resources to obtain adequate food for their household. Many of these households also seek out local food pantries to supplement their nutrition needs. Nationally, 14.7% of households were food insecure last year, and households with children experienced food insecurity at a greater rate than households overall.

MS Households by Food Security Status, 2009



Source: USDA Economic Research Service

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Helps Families Make Ends Meet in Current Recession

Programs that ensure low-income, working families have adequate resources for food have become more important as unemployment and poverty rise during the current recession. In Mississippi, in September 2010, over 125,000 individuals were unemployed and seeking work. Hundreds of thousands more have had to take part-time work, had their hours cut, or are in jobs that pay wages inadequate to support their families. All of these families may be struggling to make ends meet and in need of additional support.

SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp program, provides nutrition assistance, so adults can provide adequate meals for their families. Without this support, many families would have their monthly budget for food reduced, or would have to sacrifice their spending on other needs like rent, gas, utilities, and medical care. The average households receives \$4.00 per day for each household member to help supplement the cost of food, so households can obtain a nutritionally adequate diet.²

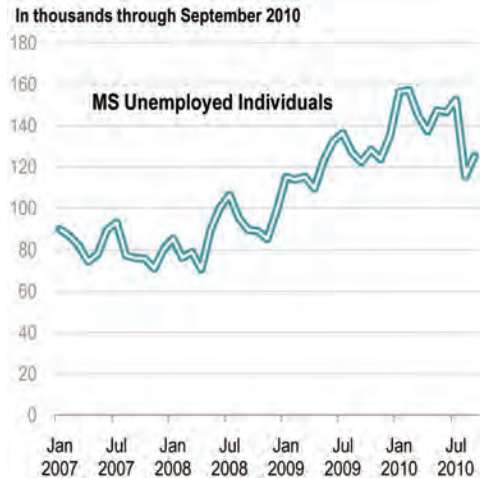
With thousands of families experience periods of unemployment or reduced hours, SNAP has responded to the needs of Mississippi families. The figure below illustrates the rise in SNAP caseloads since January 2007, and the corresponding rise in unemployment. In fact, the percent change in the unemployed and the percent change in SNAP caseloads since January 2007 has been relatively similar with the number of unemployed rising 39.6 percent (89,726 to 125,311) and the number of SNAP cases rising 41.5 percent (425,009 to 601,486).



FACT SHEET: *November 24, 2010*

One in 6 Mississippi Households Suffered Food Insecurity During 2009

Mississippi Unemployed Individuals and SNAP Participants, 2007-2010



Although the percent increase in SNAP cases and unemployed individuals is similar, SNAP caseloads have clearly risen dramatically in response to a growing need in the current recession.

SNAP caseloads in Mississippi surpassed 600,000 in September 2010, an all-time high for monthly participants since tracking began.³ The rise in SNAP caseloads underscores the widespread economic strain being felt by households across Mississippi.

Temporary SNAP Reforms Help Mississippi Households

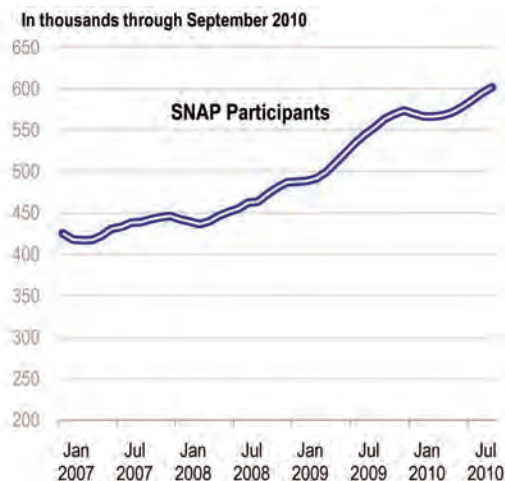
The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act temporarily increased the maximum food by 13.6 percent to help families encountering periods of exceptional financial hardship. The average family received about \$40 more per month with the ARRA increase.⁴

The increased support from ARRA in the form of SNAP benefits also has a direct impact on local businesses and economies.

Households spend benefits in local grocery stores that then purchase more goods from regional suppliers. Moody's Analytics estimates that for every \$1 spent in SNAP, Gross Domestic Product increases by \$1.74.

The economic downturn has generated increased demand for many programs that help families make ends meet. Although many need additional support beyond what SNAP provides. SNAP has responded sufficiently to the needs of families experiencing unemployment and underemployment in the current recession.

For the more than 600,000 participants in Mississippi, SNAP benefits provide one life line for weathering the loss of income that comes with job loss.



Sources: USDA Economic Research Service; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics

¹USDA Economic Research Service.

²Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. "Policy Basics: Introduction to the Food Stamp Program".

³Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates; MS Department of Human Services.

⁴Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. "Food Stamp Program is Effective and Efficient."