

Support for Healthy Eating in Iowa

2019 survey to understand Iowans' support for healthy eating among low-income individuals using Food Assistance

The Harkin Institute for Public Policy & Civic Engagement surveyed 500 Iowans in December 2019 to gather feedback on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and determine if Iowans favor or oppose changes to SNAP that may influence the purchase patterns and food choices of people using Food Assistance in Iowa. In Iowa, SNAP is known as Food Assistance and is operated by the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS).

Findings

Of the 500 Iowans surveyed, the majority live in rural Iowa (70.8% rural counties vs. 29.2% urban); respondents represent 96 of the 99 Iowa counties.

Among Iowa SNAP beneficiaries, 81.0% agree that providing additional money for fruit and vegetables would be very helpful/helpful. The view that this strategy would be helpful/very helpful was highest among Democrats (82.7%) and over 70% of Independents and Republicans (71.0% and 70.5% respectively; not significantly different from total).

There is overall high support for providing more money to buy fresh fruits and vegetables among all income categories. This is highest in people making less than \$50,000 at 79.3%, compared to incomes greater than \$100,000, 72.5%, and between \$50,000-\$99,999, 70.3%.

Level of education also is shown to have an impact (76.6% high school graduate or less; 74.1% some college/2 year/technical/vocation; 75.1% college graduate or above) on support for providing more money to buy fresh fruits and vegetables.

Survey respondents also strongly favored additional strategies that could make it easier to buy more healthy foods and fewer unhealthy foods.

Strategy	Very helpful/ helpful Adults overall/SNAP recipients	Neither helpful nor unhelpful Adults overall/SNAP recipients	Unhelpful/ very unhelpful Adults overall/SNAP recipients
Providing Food Assistance recipients with more money to buy fresh fruits and vegetables in grocery stores. For example: For every \$1.00 spent on fresh fruits and vegetables, recipients would get another \$1.00 to spend on more fresh fruits and vegetables.	75.0%/81.0%	16.6%/13.0%	8.4%/6.0%
Ensuring that grocery stores, including convenience and corner stores, have a wide variety of affordable, healthy foods—such as fruits, vegetables, lean meats, low-fat milk, and whole grains.	68.0%/68.0%	22.6%/27.0%	9.4%/5.0%
Providing information to Food Assistance recipients on healthier eating options through nutrition or cooking classes.	59.8%/57.0%	29.2%/32.0%	11.0%/11.0%

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Demographics of respondents

- 500 Survey respondents
- 96/99 Iowa counties represented
- County:

Rural	70.8%
Urban	29.2%
- 20% have used SNAP in the past 12 months.
- Gender:

Female	54.4%
Male	45.4%
Non-binary/Transgender	0.2%
- Age:

18 –34	24.6%
35 –44	10.8%
45 –54	9.6%
55 –64	23.4%
65+	31.6%
- Number of adults in household 18+:

1	22.8%
2	62.4%
3	10.6%
4	3.2%
5+	1.0%
- Annual household income:

<\$25,000	18.8%
\$25,000-\$29,999	10.8%
\$30,000-\$34,999	7.0%
\$35,000-\$39,999	5.0%
\$40,000-\$49,999	6.0%
\$50,000-\$59,999	8.2%
\$60,000-\$74,999	11%
\$75,000-\$99,999	17.2%
\$100,000-\$124,999	5.8%
\$125,000-\$149,999	3.4%
\$150,000-\$199,999	3.2%
>\$200,000	3.6%
- Employment Status:

Retired	30.2%
Work full-time	30.0%
Work part-time	12.6%
Not employed currently/unable to work	8.6%
Homemaker	8.6%
Self-employed	5.6%
Student	2.4%
Looking for work	2.0%
- Highest completed education:

Some high school	2.2%
High school graduate	23.4%
Some college	22.8%
Two-year college/technical or vocational	15.0%
Four-year college degree	18.8%
Some postgraduate work	2.2%
Postgraduate degree	15.2%
Other	0.4%
- Political Affiliation:

Democrat	34.6%
Strong Democrat	15.0%
Lean Democrat	19.6%
Republican	34.6%
Strong Republican	18.8%
Lean Republican	15.8%
Independent	26.2%
Other	4.6%
- Grocery shopping location:

Grocery stores	89.8%
Big box stores	61.2%
Small discount stores	25.8%
Convenience stores	12.6%
Drug stores/pharmacy	6.8%
Other places	2.2%

BY THE NUMBERS

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Shopping Habits



A majority of Iowans buy their groceries at grocery stores. Rural Iowans are more likely to purchase groceries from discount stores.

Political Support



Additional money for Food Assistance recipients to purchase fruit and vegetables is supported by people from different political parties.

More Money for Fresh Produce



of respondents think providing Food Assistance recipients with more money to buy fresh fruits and vegetables in grocery stores would be very helpful or helpful.

Well-stocked Stores



of respondents think that ensuring that grocery stores, including convenience and corner stores, have a wide variety of affordable, healthy foods would be very helpful or helpful.

Educational Opportunities



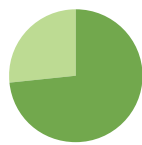
of respondents think providing information to Food Assistance recipients on healthier eating options through nutrition or cooking classes would be very helpful or helpful.

Widespread Support



81%

of SNAP beneficiaries agree that providing additional money for fruit and vegetables would be very helpful.



73.6%

of non-SNAP beneficiaries agree that providing additional money for fruit and vegetables would be very helpful.

Survey of Respondents

500
Iowans surveyed

20.0%
used SNAP in the last 12 months

96
of 99 Iowa counties are represented in the survey

54.4%
of respondents are women

70.8%
live in a rural county

77.2%
live in a household with two or more people age 18+

57.4%
are married

73.6%
own their home