

MARYLAND SNAP HOUSEHOLDS, 2022

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides financial aid to low-income households to purchase food (Food and Nutrition Act of 2008). SNAP substantially reduces the rate, depth, and severity of poverty and decreases the likelihood of being food insecure, particularly among children (Mabli et al., 2013; Ratcliffe et al., 2011; Tiehen et al., 2012). Further, the ability to afford nutritious food has positive short- and long-term physical and mental health benefits (Gregory & Deb, 2015; Hoynes et al., 2016; Oddo & Mabli, 2015).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most (91%) Marylanders eligible for SNAP benefits participated in the program (Cunnyngham, 2023), and the caseload hovered just over 330,000. Then, in state fiscal year (SFY) 2020, unemployment and SNAP cases soared (Figure 1). The caseload continued to rise throughout SFYs 2021 and 2022 and reached a historic high of 503,336 cases in February 2022. Meanwhile, unemployment steadily declined toward the pre-pandemic rate. SNAP participation then fell precipitously through the rest of SFY 2022 to a low of 367,910 cases in June 2022. The decline in Maryland SNAP cases reflects a similar trend in the national participation rate (Food and Nutrition Service [FNS], 2022a). However, national participation remained elevated consistent with COVID-19 rates, while the Maryland caseload approached pre-pandemic levels (FNS, 2022a).

The steep decline in cases began after several COVID flexibilities expired (Table 1). During the pandemic, eligibility requirements and administrative procedures were relaxed to meet the historic need for SNAP benefits and the elevated demand placed on human service workers. Some flexibilities became temporary state options with the Continuing Appropriations Act 2021 (FNS, 2020a). Maryland renewed many of these options in May 2021 (FNS, 2021c), and the end of the Maryland State of Emergency (SOE) on August 15, 2021 brought an end to most of these flexibilities in December 2021 and March 2022 (Family Investment Administration [FIA], 2022a).

This report is the third in a series that explores Maryland's SNAP caseload. It describes the 535,893 unduplicated Maryland households that participated in SNAP in SFY 2022 and answers the following questions: (1) What are the compositions and characteristics of SNAP households?; and (2) What are the demographic and employment characteristics of adult recipients in SNAP households?

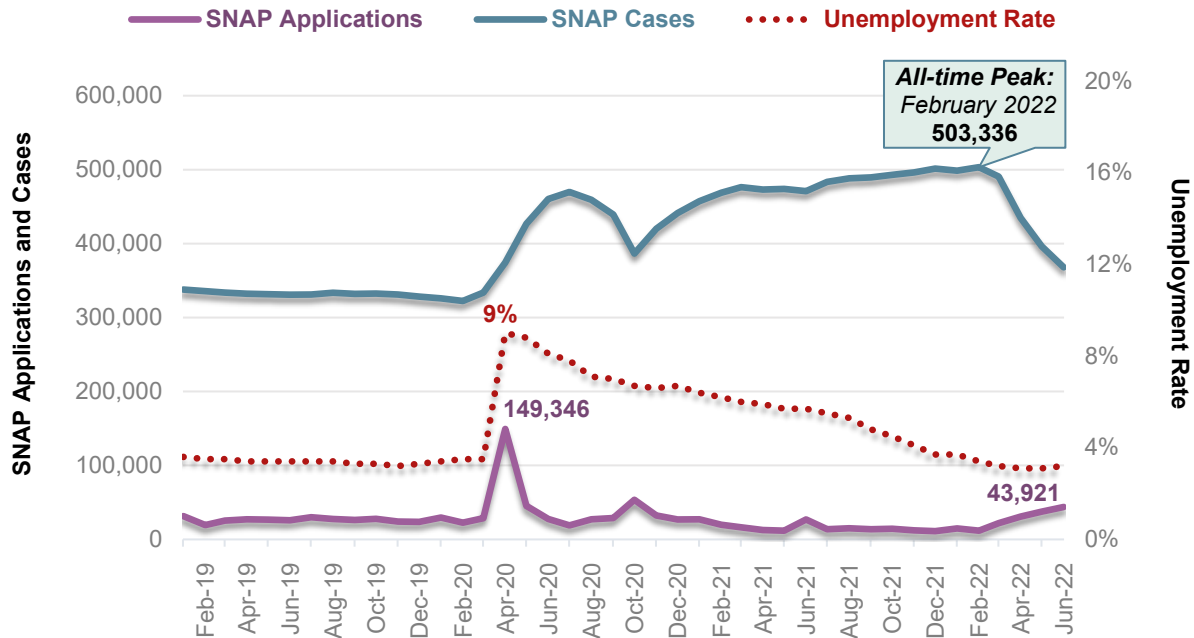
KEY FINDINGS

- Maryland served **an all-time high of 503,336 households** in February 2022 during a period of SNAP flexibilities. The monthly caseload then drastically decreased through June 2022. **Overall, the caseload decreased 6%** between SFYs 2021 and 2022.
- In SFY 2022, many household and recipient characteristics altered by the pandemic trended toward **pre-pandemic characteristics**, including household composition, new households, and adult recipient employment and earnings.
- Households had **more cumulative months of SNAP receipt** in the previous 10 years than in prior SFYs due to pandemic-era program flexibilities.
- The typical **adult recipient** was female (62%), Black (59%) or White (30%), and had never married (66%).
- Despite waived work requirements, **three in five (57%) ABAWDs were employed** while receiving SNAP. This percentage was similar to pre-pandemic SFY 2020, when the time-limit was in place.
- **Median quarterly earnings** while receiving SNAP (\$4,994) varied by adult type and demonstrates recipients' significant financial need.

This report describes how and by whom Maryland SNAP is utilized. When appropriate, this brief makes comparisons

to prior SFYs to highlight patterns of consistency or change in the caseload. This report can be leveraged by stakeholders for decision- and policy-making.

Figure 1. Maryland SNAP Applications, Cases, and Unemployment Rate



Note: Data on applications and cases came from statistical reports provided by the Maryland Department of Human Services: <https://dhs.maryland.gov/business-center/documents/>. Unemployment data came from the Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/>.

Table 1. Maryland COVID Administrative Flexibilities, SFY 2022

Waiver or Flexibility	In Effect SFY 2022	Waiver or Flexibility	Expired SFY 2022
ABAWD Time Limit Waiver (Secretary of HHS, 2022; FNS, 2020b)	In Effect	Waive Recertification Interview* (FIA, 2022a; FNS 2021b)	Exp: Mar. 2022
Emergency Allotments (FNS, 2022b; 2022c)	In Effect	Extended Certification Periods* (FIA, 2021; FNS 2021c)	Exp: Dec. 2021
No Face-to-Face Interviews* (FIA, 2022a, 2022b, 2023; FNS 2021b)	In Effect	Waive Initial Interview* (FIA, 2021; FNS 2021c)	Exp: Dec. 2021
P-EBT (FNS, 2022c; 2022d)	In Effect	Use Periodic Report Procedures to Recertify Households* (FNS, 2020a, FNS 2021c)	Exp: Dec. 2021
		15% Increase in SNAP Benefits (FIA, 2021; USDA, 2021)	Exp: Sept 2021

Note: The definition for acronyms in this table are as follows: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); Food and Nutrition Service (FNS); Maryland Family Investment Administration (FIA); and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). *Indicates an administrative flexibility that was originally authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (2020). The Continuing Appropriations Act of 2021 converted these flexibilities to temporary state options (FNS, 2020a) eligible for renewal once in May 2021 through December 2021 (FNS, 2021c), and again in January 2022 (FNS, 2021b).

STUDY POPULATION

The study population for this report includes every household that received SNAP for at least one month in SFY 2022 (July 2021 through June 2022). Eligibility for SNAP is based on households: a household describes who in the residence is part of the group receiving SNAP (FIA, 2020). A household may be one person or a group of people who live together and prepare food together (Food and Nutrition Act of 2008). In SFY 2022, there were 592,399 unduplicated adult recipients in 535,893 unduplicated SNAP households.

Household and Adult Types

This report presents some analyses by household and adult *types*, providing a richer picture of who participates in SNAP. These types are based on the household compositions identified in the Food and Nutrition Service’s national report on SNAP households (Cronquist & Eiffes, 2022) and groups specified in the Food and Nutrition Act (2008). Table 2 shows household and adult types, and the first findings section provides a written description of each type. These types are not mutually exclusive. Household composition can change monthly, and this report captures an entire SFY. Therefore, some households and adult recipients may be represented in multiple types. Although some overlap of household and adult types may occur, separating analyses by type allows stakeholders to understand the nuances between distinct groups of recipients.

Table 2. Counts of Adults and Households, SFY 2022

Type	Adult Recipients	Households
Adults with Child(ren)	210,129	184,227
ABAWDs	130,281	123,288
Adults with a Disability	69,485	68,320
Older Adults	131,214	122,628
Other Adults	73,377	70,869
Unduplicated Total	592,399	535,893

Note: This table represents a snapshot for the entire SFY. Adult recipient and household types are not mutually exclusive categories as family composition and individual circumstances can change throughout the year. Therefore, values do not add up to the unduplicated total as adult recipients and households may be represented by more than one type.

Additional Population Information

Households that received SNAP for more than one month in the SFY are included in the population only once. Specifically, this report includes the data from the very first month in the SFY that the household received benefits, even if the household participated for more than one month in the SFY or had multiple exits from and re-entries into the program. This report shows demographic and employment analyses for all adult recipients, including adults who were not heads-of-households. Demographic and employment analyses exclude adults who were not recipients, such as heads-of-households who were ineligible for benefits but who received SNAP on behalf of other eligible household members.

Comparison Groups

When relevant, this report compares SFY 2022 findings to prior findings. There are three comparison cohorts referenced throughout: (1) SFY 2020 pre-pandemic cohort; (2) SFY 2020 pandemic cohort; and (3) SFY 2021 cohort. For more information about the households in these groups, please review *A Profile of Maryland SNAP Households, 2020: Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Hall, 2021), and *Maryland SNAP Households, 2021* (Hall, 2022).

Defining Recipients

This report defines recipients using data available in the administrative data system, discussed in the next section.

Adult Recipients. Adult recipients include any individual who: (1) has a “recipient” code in the administrative data system; (2) has an “adult” code for the adult-child indicator in the administrative data system; *and* (3) is 16 years or older during the first month in which they received benefits in the SFY.

Child Recipients. Child recipients include any individual who: (1) has a “recipient” code in the administrative data system; (2) has a “child” code for the adult-child indicator in the administrative data system; and (3) is younger than 19 years of age during the first month in which they received benefits in the SFY.

DATA

Study findings are based on analyses of administrative data retrieved from computerized management information systems maintained by the State of Maryland. Demographic and program participation data were extracted from the Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) system and its predecessor, the Client Automated Resources and Eligibility System (CARES). Employment and earnings data were obtained from BEACON and its predecessor, the Maryland Automated Benefits System (MABS).

E&E and CARES are the administrative data systems for safety net programs managed by the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS). CARES was operational between March 1998 and November 2021. The migration to E&E began in April 2021 and all jurisdictions migrated to E&E by November 2021.¹ Both E&E and CARES provide individual- and case-level program participation data for SNAP and other services, as well as demographic data on participants. Certain demographic data in this report reflect the limited nature of the administrative data systems used (e.g., gender is a binary field). Race (e.g., Black, White) and ethnicity (i.e., Hispanic/Latinx) data represent individuals who self-identify or for whom case managers assign a race and ethnicity (FIA, 2008). Race and ethnicity fields changed between data systems and may not be comparable between years. This report uses the combined non-gendered term

¹ The transition to E&E resulted in some data inaccuracies. When we were able to identify data inaccuracies, we excluded analyses or used the CARES data to supplement and correct data. Given

the transition to a new data system, there may be additional unknown data issues. Hence, comparisons between years should be interpreted with caution.

Hispanic/Latinx in place of Hispanic or Latino to be inclusive.

BEACON became the administrative data system for Unemployment Insurance (UI) in September 2020 (replacing MABS) and includes data from all employers covered by the state's UI law and the Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) program. Together, these account for approximately 91% of all Maryland civilian employment. However, BEACON data have a few limitations. First, BEACON provides aggregate earnings on a quarterly basis. Thus, it is not possible to compute or infer hourly wages or weekly or monthly salaries from these data. Second, the data do not include earnings from adults engaged in alternative work arrangements or informal work not covered by UI law. Finally, BEACON does not include out-of-state employment. Out-of-state employment by Maryland residents (16%) is four times greater than the national average (3.6%) and is even higher in certain jurisdictions.² This report excludes some adult recipients from employment analyses due to missing identifying information (n=1,005).

Data Analysis

This report utilizes descriptive statistics to describe households and adult recipients who participated in SNAP, including percentages, medians, and averages. The average represents the total (e.g., all earnings) divided by the number of individuals included in the analysis. Median is sometimes preferred as a better representation of the data. The median is derived by arranging all values from lowest to highest and selecting the midpoint value.

² Data were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau website (data.census.gov) using the 2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for

Extreme values do not affect the median, which can sometimes skew averages. This report examines population statistics and therefore does not include inferential statistics which are used to generalize sample findings to the population.

FINDINGS: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Residence of Households

Maryland's 24 jurisdictions contain diverse communities that span urban, suburban, and rural areas. Two thirds of Maryland's counties share a border with one of four states or the District of Columbia, further varying the labor market and economic conditions of each jurisdiction. These differences affect job opportunities, earnings, access to transportation, and other resources.

Each jurisdiction's percentage of the SNAP caseload in SFY 2022 (Table 3) remained consistent with the previous year (Hall, 2022). Three quarters (72%) of households that received SNAP in SFY 2022 lived in one of Maryland's most populous jurisdictions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023): Baltimore City (26%), Prince George's County (17%), Baltimore County (14%), Montgomery County (9%), and Anne Arundel County (6%). These jurisdictions also have higher participation in other important safety net programs, including Temporary Cash Assistance, Medical Assistance, and the Temporary Disability Assistance Program (FIA, 2022c). The remaining jurisdictions make up Maryland's borders where populations are lower, and each accounted for 3% or less of SNAP households.

Sex of Workers by Place of Work—State and County Level (B08007).

Table 3. SNAP households by Jurisdiction, SFY 2022

	Share of all Households	Number of Households
	%	<i>n</i>
Baltimore City	26%	141,999
Prince George's	17%	90,781
Baltimore County	14%	74,612
Montgomery	9%	46,580
Anne Arundel	6%	33,482
Harford	3%	16,165
Washington	3%	16,148
Wicomico	3%	13,479
Howard	2%	13,294
Charles	2%	12,284
Frederick	2%	11,793
Allegany	2%	9,575
Cecil	2%	9,232
St. Mary's	1%	7,815
Carroll	1%	6,229
Dorchester	1%	5,552
Worcester	0.9%	4,816
Calvert	0.9%	4,581
Caroline	0.7%	3,815
Somerset	0.7%	3,595
Talbot	0.6%	2,998
Garrett	0.5%	2,609
Queen Anne's	0.5%	2,551
Kent	0.3%	1,867
Maryland	100%	535,893

Note: Counts represent the total number of unduplicated households that received SNAP in the SFY. Jurisdiction counts do not sum to the state total due to missing jurisdiction information for 41 households. Valid percentages are reported.

Although not shown, all jurisdictions experienced a decline in the SFY 2022 SNAP caseload³ with the largest percentage decreases occurring in Calvert County (-16%), Baltimore County (-13%), and Charles County

³ The caseload decreased between SFYs 2021 and SFY 2022 in the following jurisdictions, listed in order of largest to smallest percentage decrease: Calvert, Baltimore County, Charles, Carroll, Prince George's, Anne Arundel, Dorchester, Frederick, Howard,

(-12%). Overall, Maryland's SNAP caseload decreased by 6%. This decline is in part due to the expiration of several pandemic-era administrative exemptions (Table 1) and may also reflect ongoing recovery from the economic effects of the pandemic.

The Maryland SNAP caseload **decreased 6%** between SFY 2021 and SFY 2022, resulting in **36,730 fewer SNAP households**.

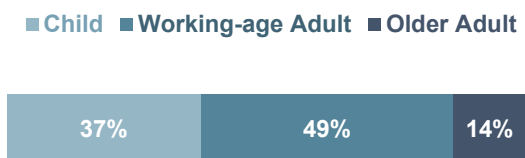
Household Composition

SNAP is a means-tested program, meaning a household's income must fall below a certain threshold to maintain eligibility. Many means-tested programs restrict participation to certain categories of low-income individuals. For instance, TCA limits participation to households with dependent children. SNAP is available to low-income families regardless of household composition. As a result, most SNAP recipients—both nationally and in Maryland—are adults (Cronquist, 2022; Hall, 2022).

The age of SNAP recipients in SFY 2022 remained consistent with SFY 2021 (Hall, 2022); half (49%) of SNAP recipients were working-age adults (between 16 and 59 years), two fifths (37%) were children under 19 years, and one in seven (14%) recipients were older adults, defined as age 60 or older (Figure 2).

Somerset, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Worcester, Kent, Caroline, Talbot, Montgomery, Harford, Garrett, Washington, Wicomico, Baltimore City, Cecil, and Allegany.

Figure 2. Age of Recipients, SFY 2022



Note: Valid percentages reported.

Household Types

SNAP is available to a range of individuals and families with unique circumstances. Examining participation patterns and characteristics by household type can help program administrators target services to meet recipients' varied needs. This section presents analyses for five household types as well as overall summary measures for all households. The five household types align with types identified in federal reports, including: (1) households with children; (2) households with an able-bodied adult without dependents (ABAWD); (3) households with an adult with a disability; (4) households with an older adult; and (5) other households that do not meet the definitions of the previous four household types.

Figure 3 provides the percentage of the caseload that met the criteria for each household type in SFY 2022. These categories are not mutually exclusive as a qualifying household may be included in multiple household types during the year. Adult recipients in these households are further described in the adult recipients' findings section.

The distribution of households in SFY 2022 was very similar to pre-pandemic SFY 2020. During the pandemic months of SFY 2020, some household types grew to represent a larger percentage of the caseload, such as households with ABAWDs (41%), while

Households with Children: Households with at least one child recipient 17 years or younger at any point during the SFY. Although uncommon, this can include children aged 16 or 17 who are head-of-households.

Households with an Able-Bodied Adult without Dependents (ABAWD): Households with at least one adult recipient between 18 and 49 years who does not have a documented disability and is subject to federal work requirements at any point during the SFY.

Households with an Adult with a Disability: Households with at least one adult recipient between 18 and 59 years who has a temporary or permanent disability exemption at any point during the SFY.

Households with an Older Adult: Households with at least one adult recipient 60 years or older when SNAP receipt began during the SFY.

Other Households: Households with at least one adult recipient who does not fit criteria for any other household type at any point during the SFY.

others shrank (Hall, 2022). In SFY 2021, the pattern began to revert to the pre-pandemic normal, and this trend was largely stable in SFY 2022.

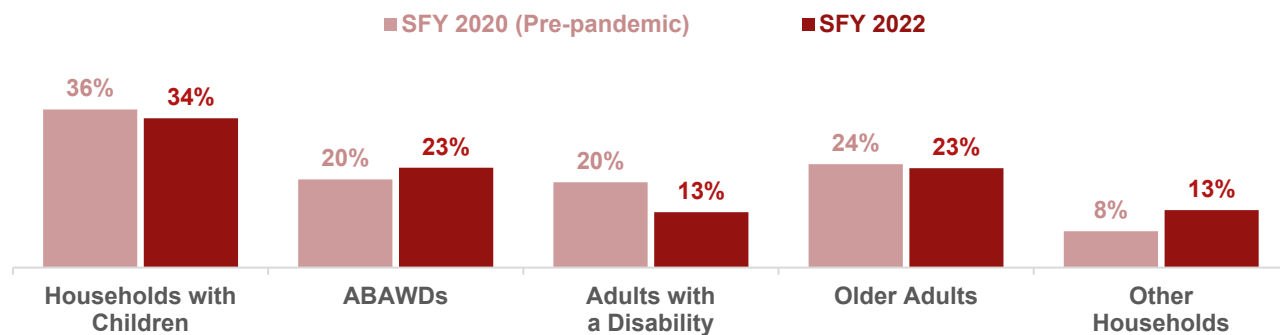
Households with children were most common: one in three (34%) households had at least one child. Although not shown, this includes: households with *only* children (3%), households with a single adult with children (24%), married-adult households with children (3%), and other multiple-adult households with children (4%). The next most common types of households in SFY 2022 were those with ABAWDs and older adults; one quarter (23%) of all households had an ABAWD, and an additional one quarter (23%) had an older adult. The remaining household types included a smaller percentage of the caseload: one in seven (13%) households had an adult with

a disability, and an additional one in seven (13%) were other households.

More households fell into the 'other households' category in SFY 2022 than pre-

pandemic SFY 2020. While the exact reason for this change is not clear, it may be related to changes among other adult recipients, discussed later in this report.

Figure 3. Household Types



Note: Household types are not mutually exclusive categories, as family composition and individual circumstances can change throughout the SFY. Therefore, percentages for each SFY do not add up to 100%.

Number of Recipients

Figure 2 shows that two thirds of recipients in SNAP households were adults. Table 4 extends this analysis to examine the number of recipients in each household, including the number of children, the number of adults, and the total number of recipients. Overall, three in five (62%) households in SFY 2022 had one recipient. Most (85%) households had one adult, while only one in three (34%) had a child in the household. Households with multiple adults were less common: one in eight (12%) households had two or more adults.

The number of adult and child recipients varied by household type. Households with children, for example, typically had two or more recipients (96%), consisting of one adult (70%) and one (44%) or two (32%) child(ren). On the other hand, most ABAWDs (90%), older adults (88%), and other households (87%) had only one adult recipient. One in 10 (10%) households with children did not have any adult recipients, an increase of 2 percentage points from SFY 2021.⁴

⁴ SNAP households may include only children for a few reasons, including that a child lives with an adult, but the adult is ineligible for SNAP. In these instances, only the child(ren) is/are included in the

SNAP household. For additional policy information, please review the Maryland [SNAP Program Manual](#).

Table 4. Number of Recipients per Household by Household Type, SFY 2022

	Households with Children	ABAWDs	Adults with a Disability	Older Adults	Other Households	All Households
Total Number of Recipients						
1 recipient	4%	89%	76%	87%	87%	62%
2 recipients	37%	8%	13%	11%	11%	17%
3 recipients	30%	2%	6%	1%	2%	11%
4 or more recipients	30%	0.8%	5%	1%	0.5%	10%
Number of Child Recipients						
No children	—	98%	84%	97%	100%	66%
1 child	44%	1%	9%	2%	—	15%
2 children	32%	0.3%	4%	0.7%	—	11%
3 or more children	24%	0.1%	3%	0.4%	—	8%
Number of Adult Recipients						
No adults	10%	0% ⁺	0% ⁺	—	—	3%
1 adult	70%	90%	87%	88%	87%	85%
2 adults	17%	8%	11%	11%	11%	10%
3 or more adults	3%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%

Note: ⁺Values under 0.1% are rounded to 0%. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. This table represents the entire SFY, and household composition can change monthly. Consequently, some characteristics may be less intuitive. For example, by definition, a household with an ABAWD does not have children; however, Table 4 shows that some households with ABAWDs had children. This likely means that at some point in the SFY, an adult with children became an ABAWD, or a child joined an ABAWD household.

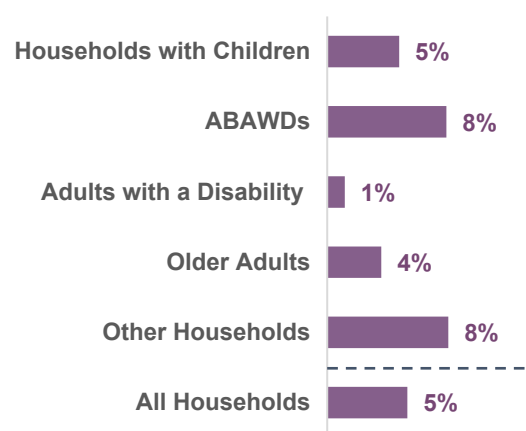
Previous SNAP Receipt

There is no lifetime limit to SNAP receipt, unlike some other means-tested programs. As such, SNAP is a resource that individuals and families can use whenever changes to family structure or economic circumstances precipitate the need. Previous research shows the percentage of households new to the program tends to be low, and most households had an average of four years of receipt in the previous 10 years (Hall, 2022).

Figure 4 presents the percentage of households that were new to SNAP in SFY 2022 by household type. Overall, new households were uncommon: only 5% of all households utilized Maryland SNAP benefits for the first time in SFY 2022. New households were most common among ABAWDS (8%) and other households (8%).

For the remaining household types, 1% to 5% of households were new in SFY 2022.

Figure 4. Percentage of Households New to SNAP by Household Type, SFY 2022



Note: Household types are not mutually exclusive categories. The percentage of new SNAP households represents households that were new to SNAP in Maryland in the SFY. Valid percentages are reported.

The percentage of households new to the program in SFY 2022 trended toward the pre-pandemic SFY 2020 months across household types (Hall, 2021; 2022). During the pandemic, almost two in five households were new to SNAP, a stark contrast to one in 20 in SFY 2022. A smaller percentage of households with ABAWDs were new to the program in SFY 2022 than in the pre-pandemic months of SFY 2020 (Hall, 2021) due to the program flexibilities afforded to these recipients during the pandemic.

Table 5 complements Figure 4 by providing the months of receipt in the previous 10 years by household type. Previous receipt shown in this table is cumulative, as households can have one or more spells of receipt in which they leave and return to the program. National-level data suggest that it is common for SNAP recipients to have multiple spells of receipt leading to an accumulation of months (Leftin et al., 2014).

SNAP households in SFY 2022 received an average of 55 months—or just over four and a half years of SNAP—in the previous 10 years. When examining categories of previous receipt, Table 5 shows that only one in 20 (5%) households had no receipt in the previous 10 years. This represents households that were brand new to the program as well as households that had previously participated in SNAP, although not in the previous decade. About three in 10 (29%) households had between one month and two years of receipt in the previous decade. Finally, two in three (66%) households had more than two years of receipt in the previous 10 years.

Some households had more cumulative months of previous SNAP receipt. Households with children, adults with a disability, and older adults had higher

average months of receipt in the previous 10 years than all households. Two fifths of households with adults with a disability (40%) and older adults (36%) had eight or more years of receipt in the previous 10 years, demonstrating that they use SNAP as a longer-term safety net. Consistent with prior research (Hall, 2022; Leftin et al., 2014), households with ABAWDs and other adults (i.e., working-age adults) had the lowest average months of receipt in the previous 10 years (32 and 45 months, respectively), which demonstrates the versatility of the program.

Although not shown, the average months of previous receipt increased across adult types between SFYs 2020 and 2021 (Hall, 2021; 2022). For instance, in SFY 2021, households with adults with a disability had an average of 75 months (just over 6 years) of SNAP receipt within the previous 10 years, an increase of five and a half months from SFY 2020. Additionally, the percentage of adults with no receipt in the previous 10 years decreased across households. Among households with ABAWDs, this figure decreased from 25% in SFY 2020 (Hall, 2021), to just 8% in SFY 2022. Policy changes that increased access to SNAP (shown earlier in Table 1), such as the time-limit exemption, and economic hardship faced by families during the pandemic are likely responsible for these changes. Among ABAWDs', benefits are typically limited to three months in a 36-month period unless work requirements are met. During SFY 2022, all ABAWDs were exempt from the time limit. Despite a growing history of SNAP use among households with ABAWDs, three fifths (58%) received benefits for 2 years or less, indicating that these recipients still primarily use SNAP as a short-term safety net.

Table 5. Months of Receipt in the Previous 10 Years by Household Type, SFY 2022

	Households with Children	ABAWDs	Adults with a Disability	Older Adults	Other Households	All Households
No receipt	5%	8%	1%	4%	8%	5%
2 years or less (1–24 months)	22%	50%	14%	19%	34%	29%
2–6 years (25–72 months)	33%	28%	28%	27%	31%	30%
6–8 years (73–96 months)	15%	7%	17%	14%	12%	13%
8–10 years (97–120 months)	25%	7%	40%	36%	15%	23%
Average Months	59	32	75	68	45	55

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

FINDINGS: ADULT RECIPIENTS

This section provides more information about the adult recipients of SNAP benefits in SFY 2022 including demographics, employment participation, and earnings of recipients. Analyses are provided for each adult type and for all adults. This information reveals changes in the caseload that may impact how SNAP programs, such as the SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) programs, are developed and administered.

Demographics

Table 6 provides the demographic characteristics of adult recipients in SFY 2022 by adult type. Adult recipients were typically female (62%), Black (59%) or White (30%), and had never married (66%). The average age was 44 years, and three in five (62%) adults were 35 or older. Finally, three in four adults (76%) completed high school, and nearly one in five (16%) had additional education after high school.

These demographic characteristics differed by adult type. For example, four in five (79%) adults with children and three in five (62%) older adults were female; comparatively, roughly half of all ABAWDs

(45%), adults with a disability (53%), and other adults (51%) were female. Compared to all recipients, a larger percentage of ABAWD recipients were Black (67%) and a smaller percentage were White (24%). Similarly, a greater percentage of older adults were Asian (8%), and a smaller portion were Black (52%) than the percentages for all adult recipients (4% and 59%, respectively).

The number of Hispanic/Latinx recipients increased from 3% in SFYs 2020 and 2021 (Hall, 2021; 2022) to 6% in SFY 2022. Hispanic/Latinx adults with children and ABAWDs had the largest increases (4 and 3 percentage points, respectively), which corresponds to the overall higher distribution of these adult types represented in the caseload. This increase is notable

Adult types are similar to the household types defined earlier. Rather than examining a household, however, this section examines *adults* who:

- (1) have children,
- (2) are ABAWDs,
- (3) have a disability,
- (4) are older adults, *or*
- (5) do not fit any of these descriptions.

due to the relatively small proportion of Hispanic/Latinx SNAP recipients, and it may be related to the disproportionate hardship experienced by these individuals during and after the pandemic months of SFY 2020 (Brown, 2020; Olivo et al., 2020; Zamarripa & Roque, 2021).

Age also varied substantially by adult type. The average age ranged from 32 years for ABAWDs to 70 years for older adults. These findings are consistent with federal program rules, which specify that ABAWDs are adults between the ages of 18 and 49 years (FNS, 2019), and older adults are defined as adults 60 years or older (FNS, 2021a). Half (54%) of adults with children were younger than 35, and half (46%) were 35 or older. Conversely, most (77%) adults with a disability were 35 or older with nearly half (46%) between 50 and 59 years.

Other adult recipients' average age was 47 years, a departure from that of previous reports. In SFY 2020, four fifths (83%) of other adult recipients were between 50 and 59 years old (Hall, 2021), compared with 63% in SFY 2022. These recipients also were less likely to be married or previously

married compared to SFY 2020 (36% vs. 41%, respectively) (Hall, 2021). While the exact reason cannot be determined, the increase in younger, never married recipients categorized as other adults may be due to program or system changes during the fiscal year. For example, it may be possible that some of these other adults were working-age ABAWDs who were not coded as such due to the ABAWD time limit waiver.

Educational attainment was more consistent across adult types than other demographics and did not substantially change from previous years (Hall, 2021; 2022). Most adults had completed high school, ranging from 70% of adults with a disability to 78% of adults with children. For reference, about 90% of Maryland's adult population 25 or older has completed high school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Post-secondary education also was equally common across adult types (16%–17%), apart from adults with a disability: only one in 10 (10%) adults with a disability had any post-secondary education.

Table 6. Demographics of Adult Recipients by Adult Type, SFY 2022

	Adults with Children	ABAWDs	Adults with a Disability	Older Adults	Other Adults	All Adult Recipients
Gender						
Female	79%	45%	53%	62%	51%	62%
Male	21%	55%	47%	38%	49%	38%
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian [^]	4%	2%	1%	8%	2%	4%
Black [^]	60%	67%	59%	52%	58%	59%
Hispanic/Latinx	8%	5%	3%	6%	4%	6%
Native American/Pacific Islander [^]	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
White [^]	27%	24%	36%	33%	34%	30%
Other [^]	1%	1%	0.2%	1%	1%	1%
Age (Years)						
18 to 24	17%	27%	5%	–	10%	14%
25 to 34	37%	37%	18%	–	13%	24%
35 to 49	38%	36%	31%	–	14%	25%
50 to 59	6%	0% ⁺	46%	–	63%	15%
60 & Older	2%	0% ⁺	–	100%	–	22%
Average Age	35	32	45	70	47	44
Marital Status						
Never Married	69%	87%	72%	39%	64%	66%
Married	17%	4%	6%	18%	10%	12%
Previously Married	14%	10%	22%	43%	26%	22%
Highest Education Level						
Did not Complete High School	22%	25%	30%	26%	24%	24%
Completed High School [#]	78%	75%	70%	74%	76%	76%
> <i>Only High School</i>	62%	58%	60%	58%	60%	60%
> <i>Post-secondary Education</i>	16%	17%	10%	16%	16%	16%

Note: [^]Non-Hispanic/Latinx. [#]General Education Development Program (GED) certificates are included in high school completion rates. Age is based on the first month of receipt in the SFY. Gender, race, and ethnicity categories come from predetermined fields in the state administrative database. Race and ethnicity categories changed due to the transition from CARES to E&E and are not comparable to prior years. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. ⁺Values under 0.1% are rounded to 0%. Valid percentages are reported.

Employment & Earnings History

Administrators may gain insight into recipients' earning potential by understanding their employment and earnings history prior to their most recent SNAP spell. Therefore, Figures 5 and 6 provide the percentage of adult recipients who were employed in the year before their SNAP spells and their respective median earnings. The figures show data by adult type for SFY 2020 in the months before the pandemic and SFY 2022.

Despite increases during the pandemic, employment participation in the year prior to SNAP receipt has returned to pre-pandemic trends. In the early pandemic months, nearly two thirds (63%) of adult recipients who began participating in SNAP were employed in the year prior to their SNAP spells, demonstrating a stronger work history (Hall, 2022). Figure 5 shows that nearly half (46%) of all adult recipients in SFY 2022 were employed in the year prior to their SNAP spells, a return to the pre-pandemic rate in Maryland (45%).

Adults with children and ABAWDs had the highest rates of employment in SFY 2022: three in five (60% and 59%, respectively) of these adults were employed in the year prior to the start of their SNAP spells. Adults with a disability and older adults were least likely to be employed in the prior year: one in four (25%) adults with a disability and one in five (20%) older adults were previously employed. Finally, half (49%) of all other adults in SFY 2022 were employed in the year prior to their SNAP spells.

Employment in the year before SNAP receipt was lower in SFY 2022 than in the pre-pandemic months of SFY 2020 among some adult types. For example, 60% of

adults with children were employed in the year prior to SNAP receipt in SFY 2022, 4 percentage points lower than in pre-pandemic SFY 2020 (64%). Unlike most adult types, other adults were employed at a higher rate in SFY 2022. Almost half (49%) of other adults were employed in SFY 2022, an increase from 45% of other adults in pre-pandemic SFY 2020. This increase may be related to the shift in the demographics of these recipients, discussed earlier.

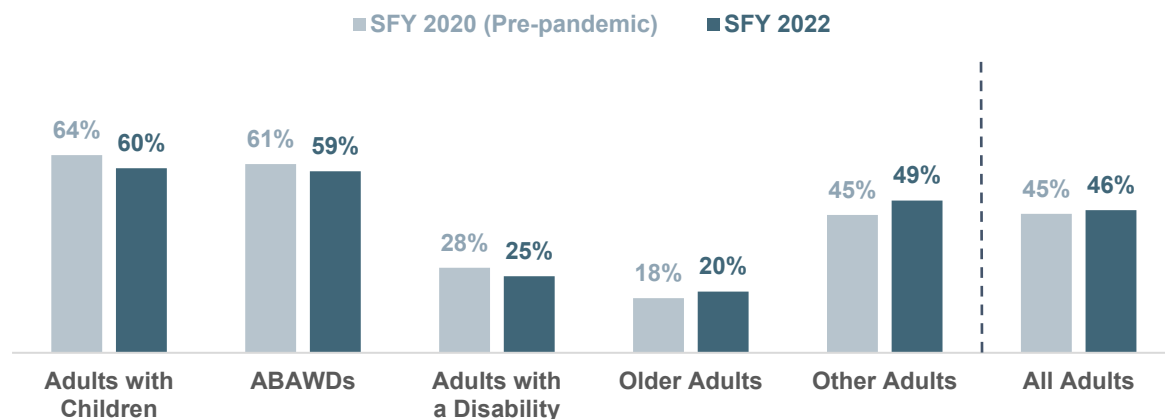
Figure 6 adds to Figure 5 by examining the median earnings for adult recipients who were employed in the year prior to their SNAP spells by adult type for SFYs 2020 (pre-pandemic) and 2022. As with employment, median earnings spiked during the early pandemic months to roughly \$26,000 (Hall, 2022). In SFY 2021, median earnings declined toward pre-pandemic levels, and in SFY 2022 they were very similar to those of pre-pandemic SFY 2020. Employed recipients in SFY 2022 earned a median of approximately \$15,150 in the year prior to SNAP receipt, just a few thousand dollars higher than the poverty threshold for a family of one in 2022 (\$13,590; Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation [ASPE], 2022). Many (62%) SNAP households had only one recipient. However, two in five (38%) households had two or more recipients (Table 4), and these median earnings are a few thousand dollars short of the poverty threshold for a family of two (\$18,310; ASPE, 2022).

As with employment, earnings vary by adult type. Adults with stronger work histories, such as adults with children and other adults, earned more (\$18,400 and \$15,300, respectively) than adults with a disability

(\$7,000).⁵ However, it is worth noting that a majority (60%) of households with children had three or more recipients, and the median earnings for adults with children were substantially lower than the poverty thresholds for three- (\$23,030) and four-

(\$27,750) person households (ASPE, 2022). These findings illustrate how families teeter on the edge of sustainable earnings before the onset of SNAP receipt, which likely contributes to their participation in the program.

Figure 5. Employment in the Year before SNAP Spell by Adult Type



Note: This figure excludes recipients for whom identifying information was unavailable. Refer to the data section for data limitations. Valid percentages are reported.

Figure 6. Median Earnings in the Year before SNAP Spell by Adult Type



Note: Earnings are only for adult recipients who were employed in the year before their SNAP spells began and who had earnings in Maryland. Refer to the data section for data limitations. Earnings are standardized to 2022 dollars.

⁵ Adults with a disability may have lower earnings compared to other adult types because: (1) they are more likely to be employed part-time (BLS, 2023b); and (2) The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 allows employers to pay wage rates below the minimum

wage in certain circumstances, including when individuals' productive capacities are impaired by a disability.

Employment & Earnings while Receiving SNAP

Adult recipients of SNAP may be subject to two sets of work requirements. Recipients 16 to 59 years of age must register for work or participate in a qualifying employment program for at least 30 hours a week, or they may lose their benefits (FNS, 2019). However, many recipients may immediately apply for and receive SNAP once they meet the work requirement again. The second work requirement, called the ABAWD time-limit, applies only to ABAWD recipients, for whom SNAP receipt is limited to three months within a three-year period if they do not work or participate in a qualifying employment program for at least 80 hours a month. ABAWDs were exempt from this work requirement throughout SFY 2022 due to pandemic-era program flexibilities.

This section of the report analyzes how many adult recipients were employed in the quarter(s) in which they received SNAP.⁶ While many adult recipients are subject to work requirements, older adults and adults with a disability categorically are not required to work while receiving SNAP. Consequently, employment while receiving SNAP varied greatly by adult type. As shown in Figure 7, nearly three in five adults with children (58%) and ABAWDs (57%) were employed while receiving SNAP, followed by other adults (42%). Adults with a disability (18%) and older adults (9%) were least likely to be employed while receiving SNAP.

⁶ A limitation of this analysis is that the administrative database only reports quarterly employment. Consequently, this and similar analyses may understate or overstate employment and earnings in which adults are both employed and receiving SNAP. For example, it is possible that in the first quarter of

Figure 7 also compares employment in the quarter(s) of SNAP receipt in SFY 2022 with the pre-pandemic months of SFY 2020. Prior to the pandemic, two in five (39%) SNAP recipients were employed while receiving SNAP benefits. During the pandemic, many more individuals with strong work histories began using SNAP, often for the first time. As a result, employment among recipients who typically do not work while receiving benefits, such as adults with a disability and older adults, appeared to increase. In contrast, adults with children and ABAWDs worked at a slightly lower rate during the pandemic (Hall, 2022). Employment while receiving SNAP started to stabilize to pre-pandemic rates in SFY 2021 (Hall, 2022), and this trend continued in SFY 2022, during which the overall employment rate was 41%.

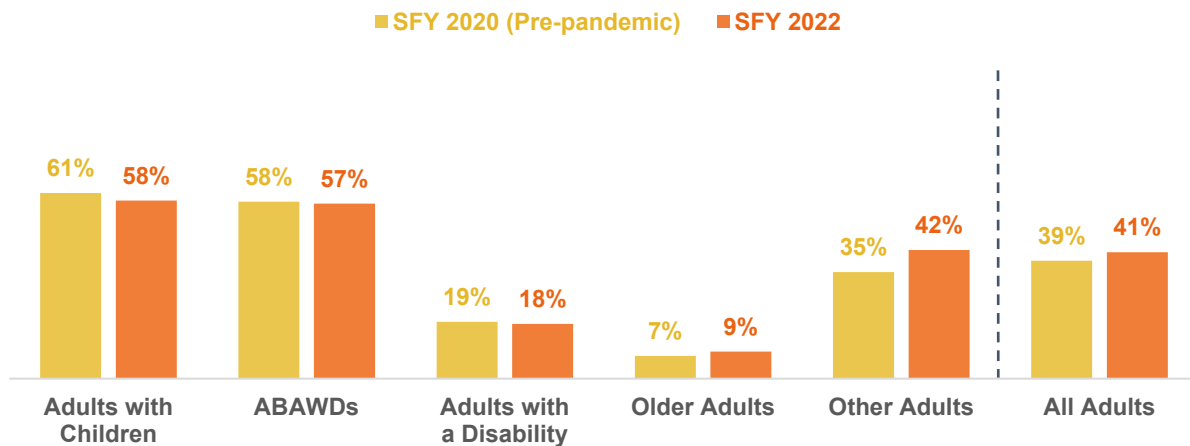
This trend was observed across most adult types. For example, 61% of adults with children worked while receiving SNAP in the pre-pandemic months of SFY 2020, compared with 58% in SFY 2022. These recipients had decreased rates of participation during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic in part due to the impact COVID had on parents' ability to maintain stable employment amidst increased childcare needs well into SFY 2021 (Albanesi & Kim, 2021; Garcia & Cowan, 2022; Hall, 2022; Hansen, et al., 2022). The increase in employment while receiving SNAP in SFY 2022 may indicate some adult recipients with children are now able to return to the workforce. Similarly, roughly three in five ABAWDs were

calendar year 2020 (January through March), recipients were employed in January and February but lost employment and began receiving SNAP in March. In this instance, the data would show employment and SNAP receipt in the same quarter.

employed while receiving SNAP in pre-pandemic SFY 2020 (58%) and SFY 2022 (57%) compared to closer to half (52%) during the pandemic months of SFY 2020 (Hall, 2022). It is noteworthy that while ABAWDs were exempt from the work requirement during SFY 2022, these recipients worked while receiving SNAP at

an equal rate to pre-pandemic SFY 2020 when the time limit was in effect. Other adults in SFY 2022 were employed at a higher rate compared to the pre-pandemic period (42% and 35%, respectively). This increase may be related to the shift in the demographics of these recipients, discussed earlier.

Figure 7. Percentage Employed while Receiving SNAP by Adult Type

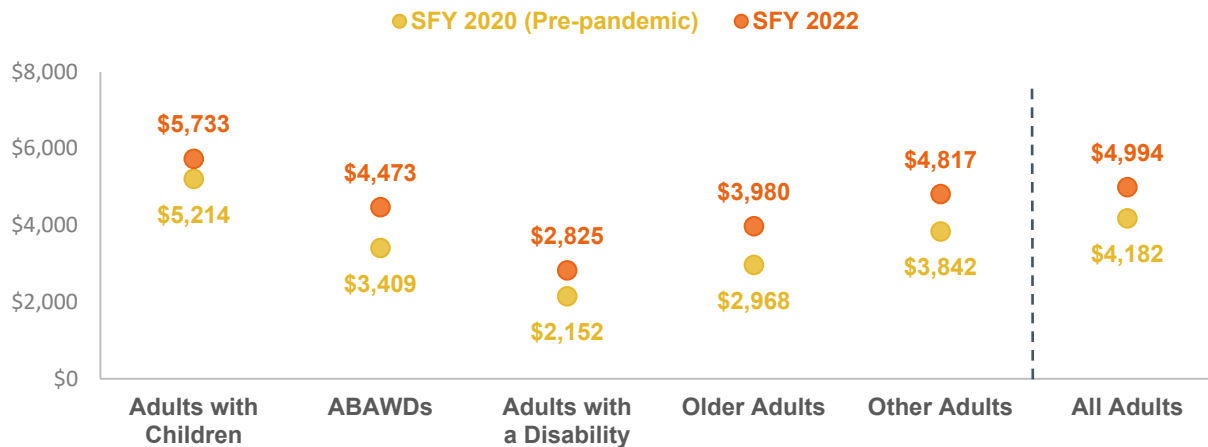


Note: This figure shows the percentage of adults who were both SNAP recipients and employed in the same quarter for at least one quarter in the SFY. It excludes recipients for whom identifying information was unavailable. Refer to the data section for data limitations. Valid percentages are reported.

The final analysis in this report examines median quarterly earnings for adult recipients who were employed and received SNAP in the same quarter(s). Figure 8 shows that employed adult recipients in SFY 2022 earned a median of nearly \$5,000 in the quarter(s) in which they received SNAP. Adults with children had the highest quarterly earnings at approximately \$5,700. Comparatively, other adults and ABAWDs earned between \$4,500 and \$4,800 in the quarter(s) in which they received SNAP. Adults with a disability and older adults had the lowest median quarterly earnings, at approximately \$2,800 and 4,000, respectively.

The pandemic caused record high inflation that made the cost of food and other necessities soar (Bureau of Labor Statistics [BLS], 2022). Earnings also increased during this time (Bernstein & Tedeschi, 2021; Inflation in 2023, 2023; BLS 2023a). Earnings in the quarter(s) of SNAP receipt in SFY 2022 were higher than those of pre-pandemic SFY 2020. Overall, adult recipients earned around \$800 more quarterly in SFY 2022 than in SFY 2020 (pre-pandemic). ABAWDs, older adults, and other adults' earnings increased the most at around \$1,000, while earnings among adults with children and adults with a disability increased around half as much.

Figure 8. Median Quarterly Earnings while Receiving SNAP by Adult Type



Note: Median quarterly earnings are reported for the quarters in which adults were both SNAP recipients and employed in Maryland. Refer to the data section for data limitations. Earnings are standardized to 2022 dollars.

CONCLUSIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about widespread economic hardship, unemployment, and underemployment. In response, the federal government expanded funding and access to social safety net programs including SNAP. Maryland embraced expansion and as result was ranked 2nd in the nation for SNAP participation among low-income individuals in 2021, an improvement from 13th in 2019 (FNS, 2023). The primary goal of this program is to reduce food insecurity, but SNAP also helps jump-start the economy during recessions. Every dollar of SNAP benefits spent can create up to \$2 of economic activity, and this multiplier effect is greatest when relief efforts target low-income individuals (Economic Research Service, 2021; Canning and Mentzer Morrison, 2019; Canning & Stacy, 2019). Historically, program investment rolls back once the economy stabilizes.

During the COVID-19 recession, food insecurity and SNAP cases surged, both across the country and in Maryland (Pepalis 2022; Kakaei et al., 2022; Kim-Mozeleski et

al., 2023). So as not to overburden program administrators, states could opt into flexible policies and procedures, such as recertification interview waivers, through the duration of the federal public health emergency. Maryland utilized many of these flexibilities in SFY 2022, although some expired before the end of the fiscal year. Consequently, there were two prominent patterns of SNAP utilization in SFY 2022. First, the caseload steadily increased to an all-time high of 503,336 cases in February 2022. Then, cases steeply declined through the remainder of the fiscal year to a low of roughly 368,000 cases in June after the expiration of several flexibilities. By the end of SFY 2022, the Maryland SNAP caseload and unemployment rate mirrored the pre-pandemic months of SFY 2020.

Many characteristics of Maryland SNAP households also returned to pre-pandemic SFY 2020 patterns in SFY 2022. For instance, about one in five households had an ABAWD in the pre-pandemic months of SFY 2020 and in SFY 2022. During the pandemic months of SFY 2020, twice as many households—two in five, specifically—had an ABAWD. Similarly, the

percentage of households new to the program returned to the pre-pandemic rate: while two in five households were new in SFY 2021 (Hall, 2023), only 5% and 6% of the caseload was new to the program in pre-pandemic SFY 2020 and SFY 2022, respectively.

Similarly, employment and earnings characteristics returned to the pre-pandemic normal. For example, during the pandemic, adults with children and ABAWDs worked and earned slightly less (Hall, 2022). Then, in SFY 2022, employment in the quarter(s) of SNAP receipt increased modestly among both adults with children and ABAWDs, mirroring the pre-pandemic months of SFY 2020. Notably, employment while receiving SNAP was roughly the same among these recipients in a period with work requirements (in SFY 2020) and a period without them (in SFY 2022).

Some characteristics of SNAP households did not revert to pre-pandemic patterns. For instance, most household types had *more* cumulative months of previous SNAP receipt in the previous 10 years in SFY 2022 than prior to the pandemic. This change can be attributed to policies that expanded access to the program, such as waiving recertification interviews or the ABAWD time limit exemption. However, the overall pattern of SNAP utilization by household types remained consistent with prior years: households with working-age recipients, such as ABAWDs and other adults, tend to use SNAP for shorter periods than households with adults with a disability or older adults for whom work requirements do not apply (Hall, 2022; Leftin et al., 2014). Varying utilization patterns demonstrate how SNAP serves as both a short- and long-term safety net, depending on a household's needs.

Changes to the unemployment rate, job growth, income, and economic activity in SFY 2022 are strong indicators that the economy is actively recovering after the COVID-19 recession (Harris & Mehrotra 2022). In SFY 2022, many Maryland SNAP participation characteristics reflected pre-pandemic patterns, which may also serve as evidence of economic recovery. However, low-income families will continue to face obstacles moving forward, such as elevated inflation and the risk of food insufficiency (Congressional Budget Office 2023; Gill & Nagle, 2022, Martinchek et al., 2023). Additionally, the end of COVID-era policy and other legislative changes may create further obstacles for some of the most vulnerable populations and change the landscape of SNAP participation in Maryland.

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