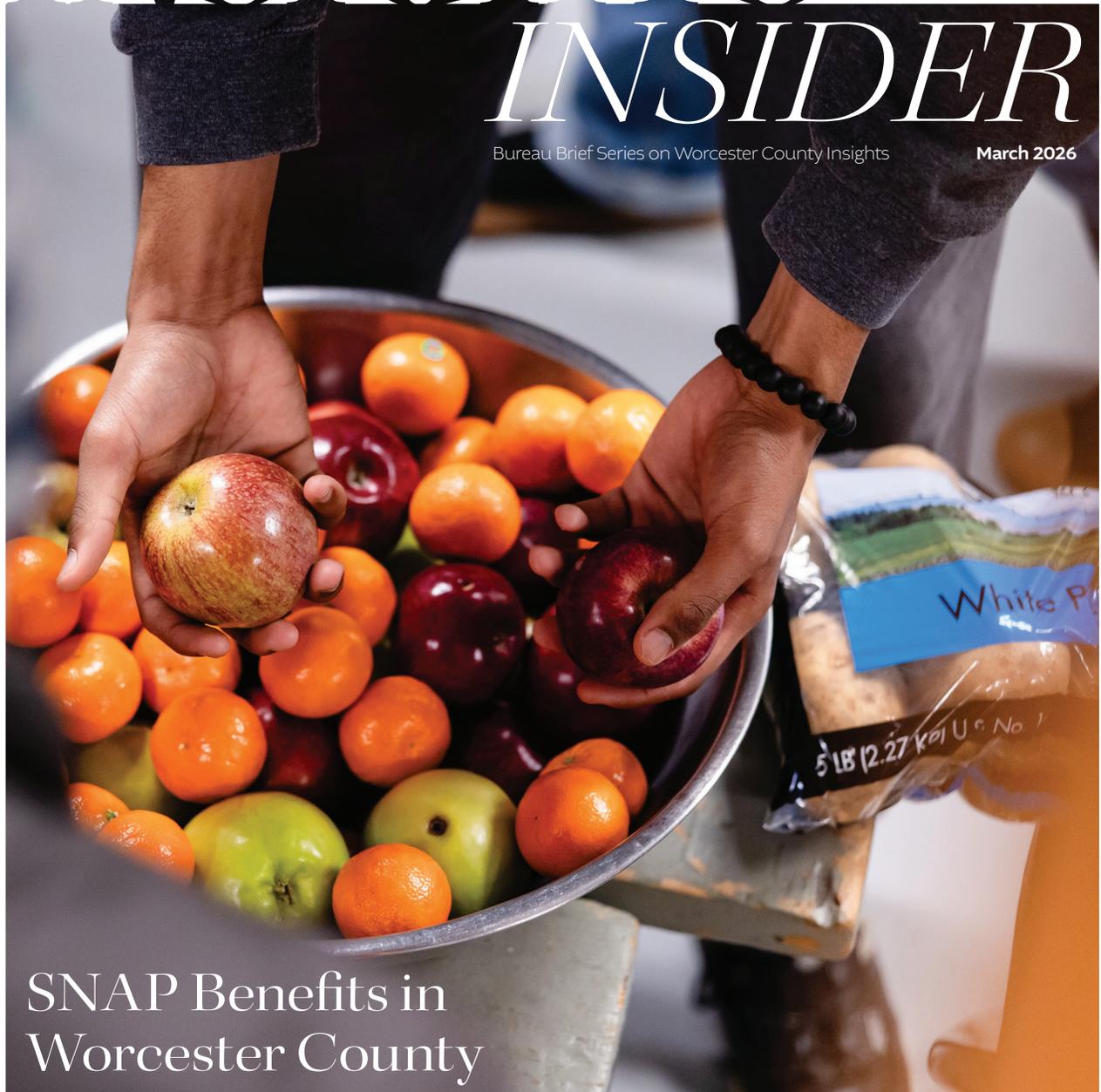


INSIGHTS INSIDER

Bureau Brief Series on Worcester County Insights

March 2026



SNAP Benefits in Worcester County

SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is a long-standing federal Department of Agriculture program providing funds to feed individuals in the United States living under certain household income thresholds. In Massachusetts, the state Department of Transitional Assistance is responsible for administering the SNAP program.

In Worcester County, about 15.8% of residents utilized SNAP each month in 2025, slightly higher than the statewide rate of 14.94%. In Massachusetts, as of November 2025, SNAP costs an estimated \$240 million a month. (The Research Bureau has written about food insecurity and SNAP previously; see “Is Worcester County Food Insecure? It Depends on Where” originally published in November 2022 and updated in September 2023).

Throughout 2025, **Massachusetts had an average 654,104 households each month receiving SNAP, or more than 1,000,000 residents. Worcester County averaged 81,823 households and 139,197 residents, or 12.51% and 13.06% of the statewide totals, respectively, the fourth highest among Massachusetts’ 14 counties.** These numbers (and the numbers throughout this brief) represent both active and closed cases – households that were, at some point in the month, utilizing SNAP.

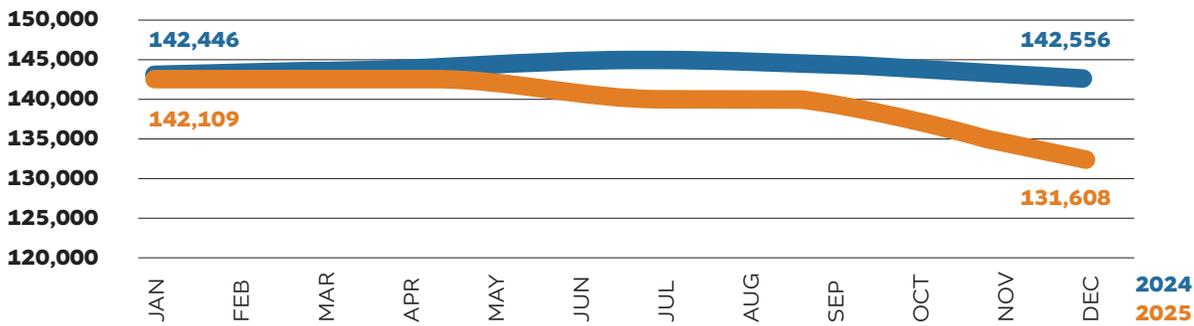


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FIG. 3 *Number of Residents Utilizing SNAP in Worcester County each month, 2024-25*



Worcester County SNAP Cases (Households)	55.19%
Worcester County SNAP Clients	49.63%
Worcester County Households	7.84%
Worcester County Population	6.38%
Worcester County Households, \$0 to \$49,999	-16.16%
Worcester County Households, \$50,000 to \$99,999	0.52%
Worcester County Households, \$100,00 or more	32.97%
Statewide SNAP Cases (Households)	51.12%
Statewide SNAP Clients	46.85%
Statewide Households	6.76%
Statewide Population	3.51%
Statewide Households, \$0 to \$49,999	-12.44%
Statewide Households, \$50,000 to \$99,999	-6.91%
Statewide Households, \$100,00 or more	28.33%

TABLE 1

2019 to 2024 % Change, Selected Household Characteristics

SNAP Data via Department of Transitional Assistance. Other data via American Community Survey, 2019 and 2024 1-YR Estimates, Table DP03. Although 2025 DTA data is now available, we used 2024 for consistency with the Census data.

Ginny's Helping Hand in Leominster serves clients across North Central Massachusetts and nearby towns. The organization provides food to individuals and also acts as a distribution hub for local soup kitchens and pantries. Its thrift store allows the team to respond quickly to urgent needs for clothing and personal hygiene items.



Nonprofit Insights from Greater Worcester Community Foundation

Local nonprofits are vital lifelines for households experiencing food insecurity throughout Worcester County.

FOOD PANTRIES

Food pantries are a backbone of emergency food access. Worcester County Food Bank distributes donated food through a network of 115 partner agencies, and many additional small pantries operate outside the food bank network for populations in need, such as college students or veterans.

COMMUNITY FRIDGES

Community fridges, including WellStorm's Bridge Fridge in Southbridge and the four Woo Fridges in Worcester, offer around-the-clock access to fresh and shelf-stable foods without documentation requirements.

COMMUNITY MEAL PROGRAMS

Community meal programs provide essential nourishment along with social connection for those in need. Mustard Seed Catholic Worker in Worcester's Piedmont neighborhood operates a soup kitchen and food pantry. It serves hot meals every weekday and supports hundreds of individuals each month.

FOOD DISTRIBUTORS

Food distributors in the region help close the gap between surplus food and organizations serving residents. Rachel's Table rescues unserved prepared foods from restaurants, markets, and bakeries and distributes them to more than 30 shelters, soup kitchens, and pantries.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2024). DP03 Selected Economic Characteristics, 2019 and 2024 1-YR Estimates [American Community Survey]. <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2024.DP03?q=DP03:+Selected+Economic+Characteristics>
 WCAC Annual Reports. (n.d.). Worcester Community Action Council. Retrieved February 4, 2026, from <https://wcac.net/annual-reports/>
 Worcester County Insights. (2024). Households Receiving SNAP by Race/Ethnicity. Retrieved February 24, 2026. <https://www.worcestercountyinsights.org/economic-mobility/households-receiving-snap-by-race-ethnicity>

SNAP Demographics on Worcester County Insights

Worcester County Insights includes data on SNAP from the U.S. Census Bureau – specifically, the number and percentage of households by race and ethnicity that participate in SNAP, on a community-by-community basis. This measure compares households receiving SNAP to households of the same type – i.e., Black or African American households to other Black or African American households, etc. The data is from the 2022 American Community Survey, 5-YR estimates, and therefore measures 2018-2022.

Overall, across Worcester County, approximately 12% of Asian households, 25% of Black or African

American households, 12% of White households, and 38% of Hispanic or Latino households received SNAP in that survey. These are only estimates, based on responses to the Census Bureau's surveys. Still, they are a useful metric for understanding the basic demographic characteristics of SNAP households in Worcester County – data that is not otherwise included in the Department of Transitional Assistance's overall releases utilized above.

Conclusion

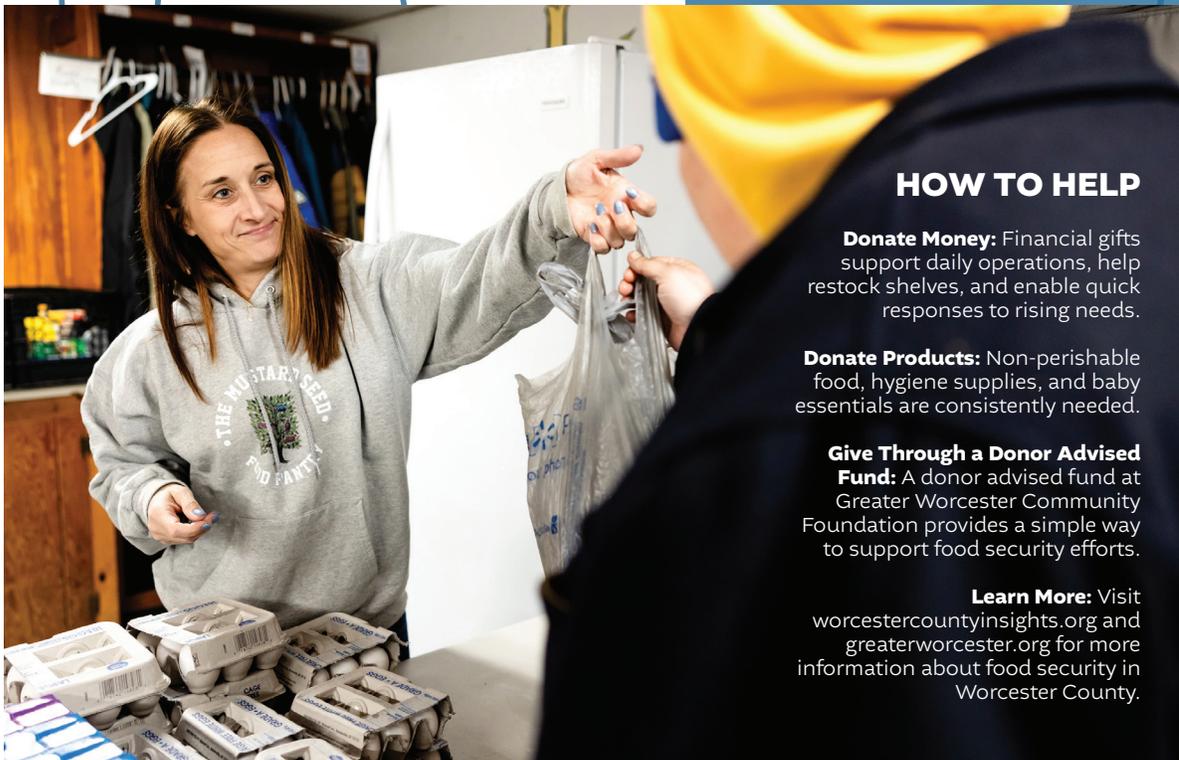
While the number of households and residents utilizing SNAP in Worcester County has grown since 2019, 2025 saw the first large decrease in these numbers over this time period. Tightened eligibility rules may continue to decrease SNAP utilization through 2026 – and reduced federal funding elsewhere could impact state SNAP programs. For example, Massachusetts' Healthy Incentives Program, which provides additional funds to SNAP beneficiaries buying fruits and vegetables from participating farms, could feel pressure from reduced federal funding in other parts of the Commonwealth's budget.

SNAP is one of many metrics measured across Worcester County Insights' "Economic Mobility" tab, which includes information on household income, housing cost burden, people living in poverty, and more. For more information about these, to read past Insights Insiders, and to view the wealth of other knowledge on this dashboard, please visit www.worcestercountyinsights.org.

Other Household Assistance in Worcester County: Data on LIHEAP

As we move through these winter months, it's important to note that SNAP is not the only assistance relied upon by households in Worcester County. The Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is another. LIHEAP relies on different eligibility criteria than SNAP – rather than 200% of the Federal poverty level, LIHEAP as administered through local agencies in Massachusetts requires household income below 60% of the state's median income level (so a four-person household is eligible for LIHEAP with an income below \$99,573 in FY2026).

LIHEAP is administered through local agencies spread throughout the state. South-Central Worcester County is covered by the Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC), while North-Central is covered by Making Opportunity Count Inc (MOC). **According to the WCAC's Annual Reports, nearly 13,000 households received LIHEAP assistance in its coverage area in 2024, a growth of about 10% since 2019.** The Federal Department of Energy's "Low-income Energy Affordability Data" tool (LEAD) shows that **average energy burden (the percentage of a household's annual income spent on energy costs) for households making 100% or less of Worcester County's Area Median Income is about 7% in the county. Statewide (using 100% or less of Massachusetts' Area Median Income), it is 6%.**



HOW TO HELP

Donate Money: Financial gifts support daily operations, help restock shelves, and enable quick responses to rising needs.

Donate Products: Non-perishable food, hygiene supplies, and baby essentials are consistently needed.

Give Through a Donor Advised Fund: A donor advised fund at Greater Worcester Community Foundation provides a simple way to support food security efforts.

Learn More: Visit worcestercountyinsights.org and greaterworcester.org for more information about food security in Worcester County.