



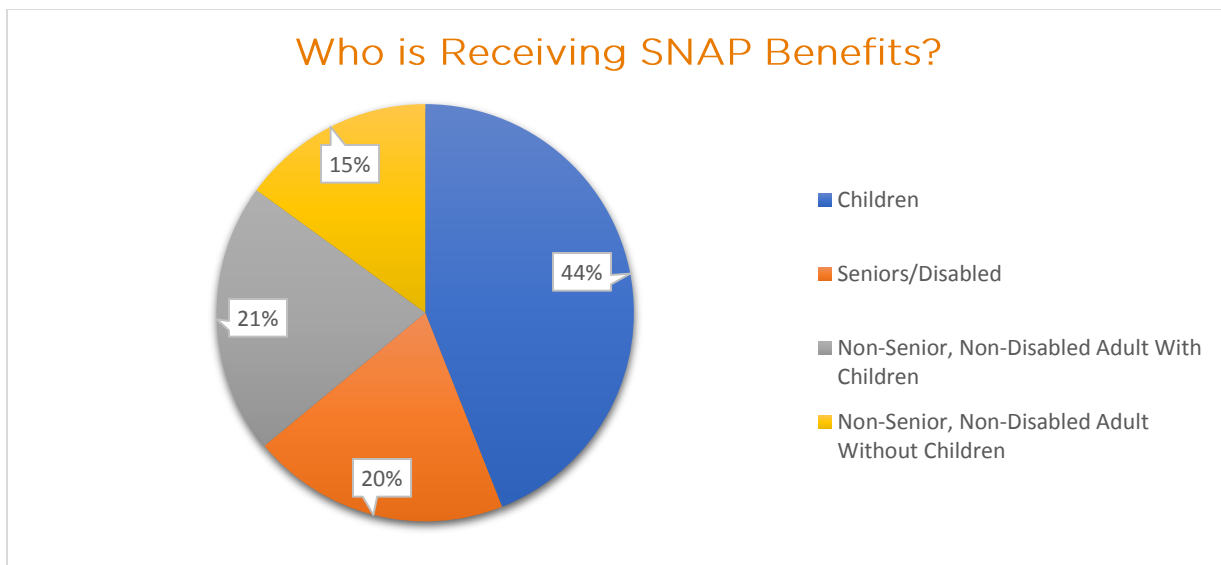
# SNAP & ABLE BODIED ADULTS WITHOUT DEPENDENTS (ABAWDS)

The USDA says it best: “Most SNAP participants who can work, do work.”

## THIS IS MAINLY A PROBLEM OF AWARENESS

Two-out-of-three people who get SNAP benefits are children, seniors, and people with disabilities who cannot work. Among adults on SNAP who are able to work – more than half are working already and about 4-out-of-5 work in the year before or after receiving SNAP.

We need to make sure that the program keeps working to feed people in America who are facing tough times and are unable to provide adequate nutrition to their families.



Source: USDA, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2015*.

## SNAP ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO WORK

SNAP is designed in a way to encourage people to work if they are able to work. Similar to the success of Earned Income Tax Credits, SNAP benefits are gradually phased out as people's income increases.

For every additional dollar a SNAP recipient earns, their SNAP benefit declines by around 30 cents, leaving a net increase in earned income – creating a strong incentive to work more hours or search for better paying jobs.



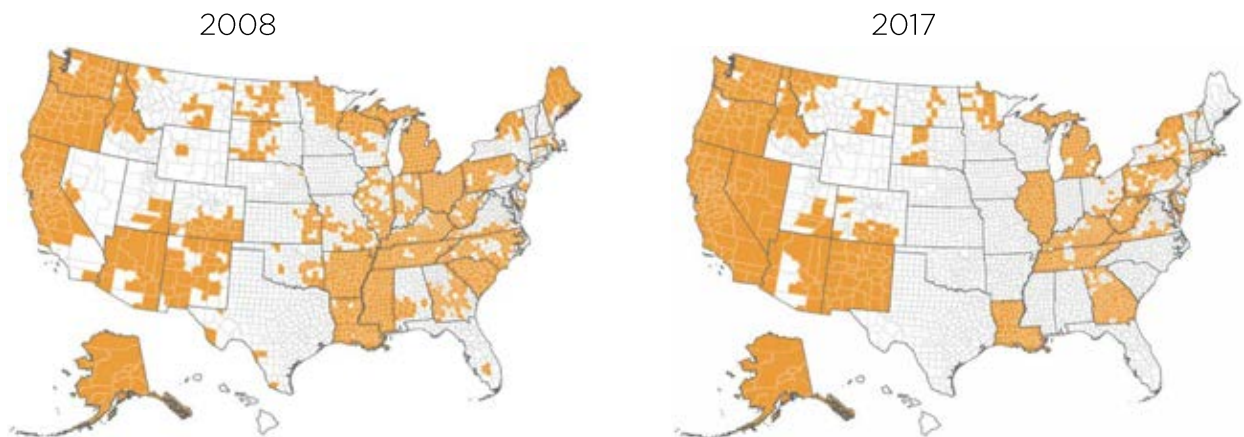
SNAP has sometimes been referred to as a trampoline, helping individuals when the need assistance and allowing them to bounce back to financial security. In fact, the average new household stays on SNAP for less than a year and most leave the program within two years.

### **THE ABAWD TIME LIMIT WAIVERS GIVE STATE FLEXIBILITY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THEIR POPULATION**

There are already strict limits on how long working age adults not raising children can receive SNAP benefits. These individuals are often referred to as able-bodied adults without dependents, or ABAWDs. Created in the 1996 welfare reform, SNAP benefits for ABAWDs are limited to 3 months in a 36-month period unless those individuals were employed or in a work or training program for at least 20 hours per week. Benefits are cut off after three months regardless of whether an individual is diligently searching for a job or willing to work or participate in a job training program. Under the rule, states are not required to offer or assist individuals in finding a work or job training slot, and most do not.

States with high unemployment rates have the option to waive these time limits in all or parts of their state where jobs are not available. The logic is simple – if there are not enough jobs in an area, it makes little sense to penalize people unable to find a job.<sup>1</sup> We saw this during the Great Recession as the program worked the way it was designed and in response to the extraordinary circumstances and increased need. Now that the economy is in better shape across the country, states are repealing time limit waivers and the number of states implementing waivers is at pre-recession levels.

### **Areas Covered by Time Limit Waivers in 2008 and 2017**



Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities Analysis of State Waivers, <http://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/states-have-requested-waivers-from-snaps-time-limit-in-high-unemployment>

<sup>1</sup> When Congress debated this ABAWD time limit, supporters made clear it was not intended to cut benefits for people willing to work. A co-author of the provision, then-Congressman John Kasich said, "It is only if you are able-bodied, if you are childless, and if you live in an area where you are getting food stamps and there are jobs available, then it applies." The rule allows waivers where jobs are not available.