



Region Forward Coalition: Food Insecurity and SNAP

Friday, July 28, 2023



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Agenda

- Changes in Food Insecurity & the Resource Landscape
- Rising Food Costs in 2022
- Recent Findings on SNAP Adequacy
- Looking Ahead

What is food insecurity?

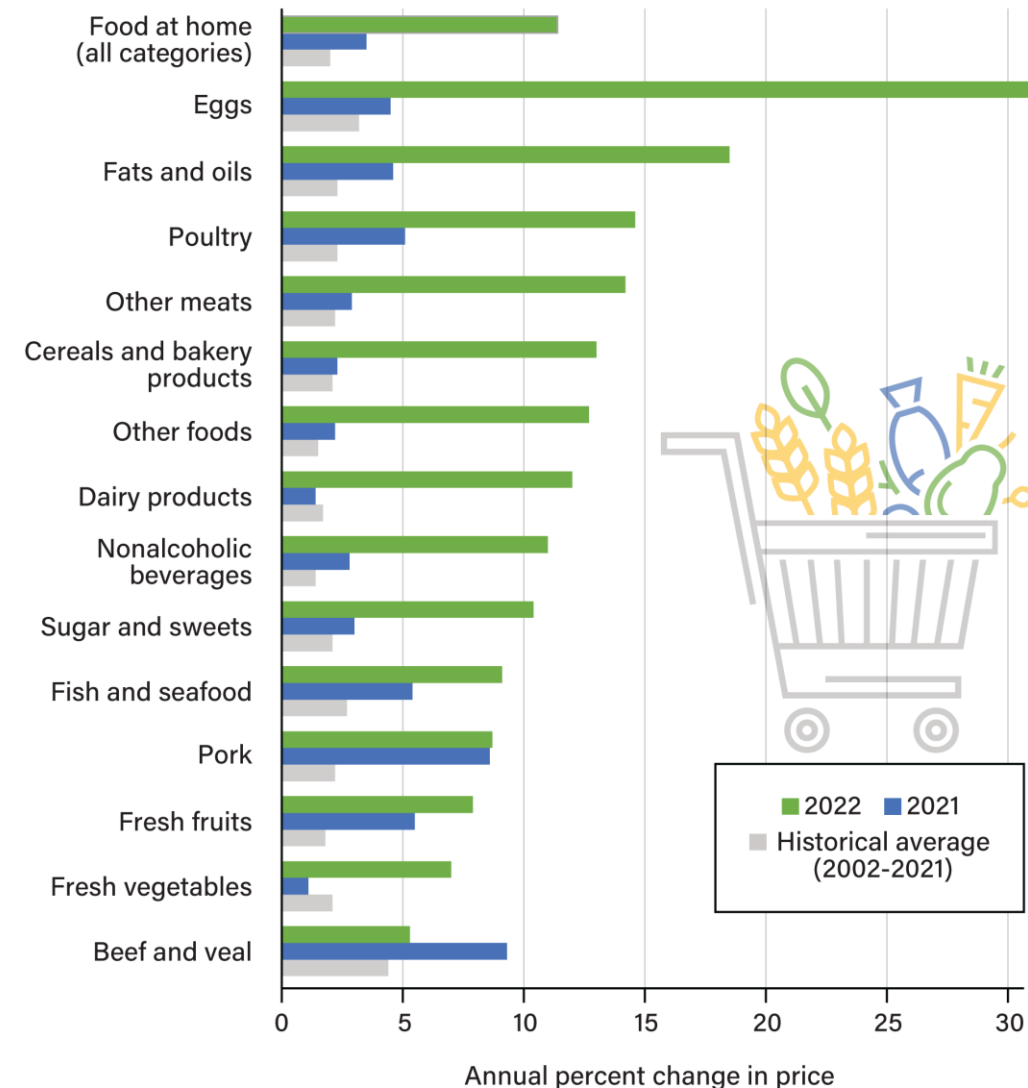
- Food insecurity is an **economic condition in which households lack access to adequate food because of limited money or other resources**
- Measured by USDA's 18-item survey in the Current Population Survey
- Who is at highest risk?
 - Households with children, multigenerational households,
 - Adults with a disability
 - Immigrant households
 - Black, Hispanic/Latinx and Native American households

Key federal supports expired, leaving families more vulnerable to food price pressures

- Food insecurity remained level during the pandemic
- Supports with significant impacts included enhanced unemployment, expanded child tax credit (CTC), and SNAP emergency allotments (temporary benefit increase) among others
- Many federal aid programs expired/ended in 2021, leaving families with fewer resources
 - Expanded child tax credit ended in December 2021
 - Universal free school meals ended by the summer of 2022
 - In March 2023, SNAP emergency allotments ended

Food price inflation rose substantially in 2022

- In 2022, food-at-home (food from grocery stores) prices increased by **11.4%**, the biggest increase since 1974
 - Annual average growth from 2002-2021 was 2%
- In 2023, prices are still increasing, though at a slower rate



Note: **Food at home** is typically bought from grocery stores or other food stores. The **Other foods** category includes soups, frozen and freeze-dried prepared foods, snacks, spices, seasonings, condiments, baby food, prepared salads, and other miscellaneous foods.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index data.

The Gap between SNAP Benefits and Meal Costs

Choose your own parameters or hover over the map to dynamically see meal costs.



October–December 2022



From October to December 2022, the maximum SNAP benefit participants received reflected the US Department of Agriculture's [fiscal year 2023 cost-of-living adjustment](#). It does not reflect the [emergency allotments](#) participants received in 2022.

STATE | RUCC #

NATIONAL AVERAGE

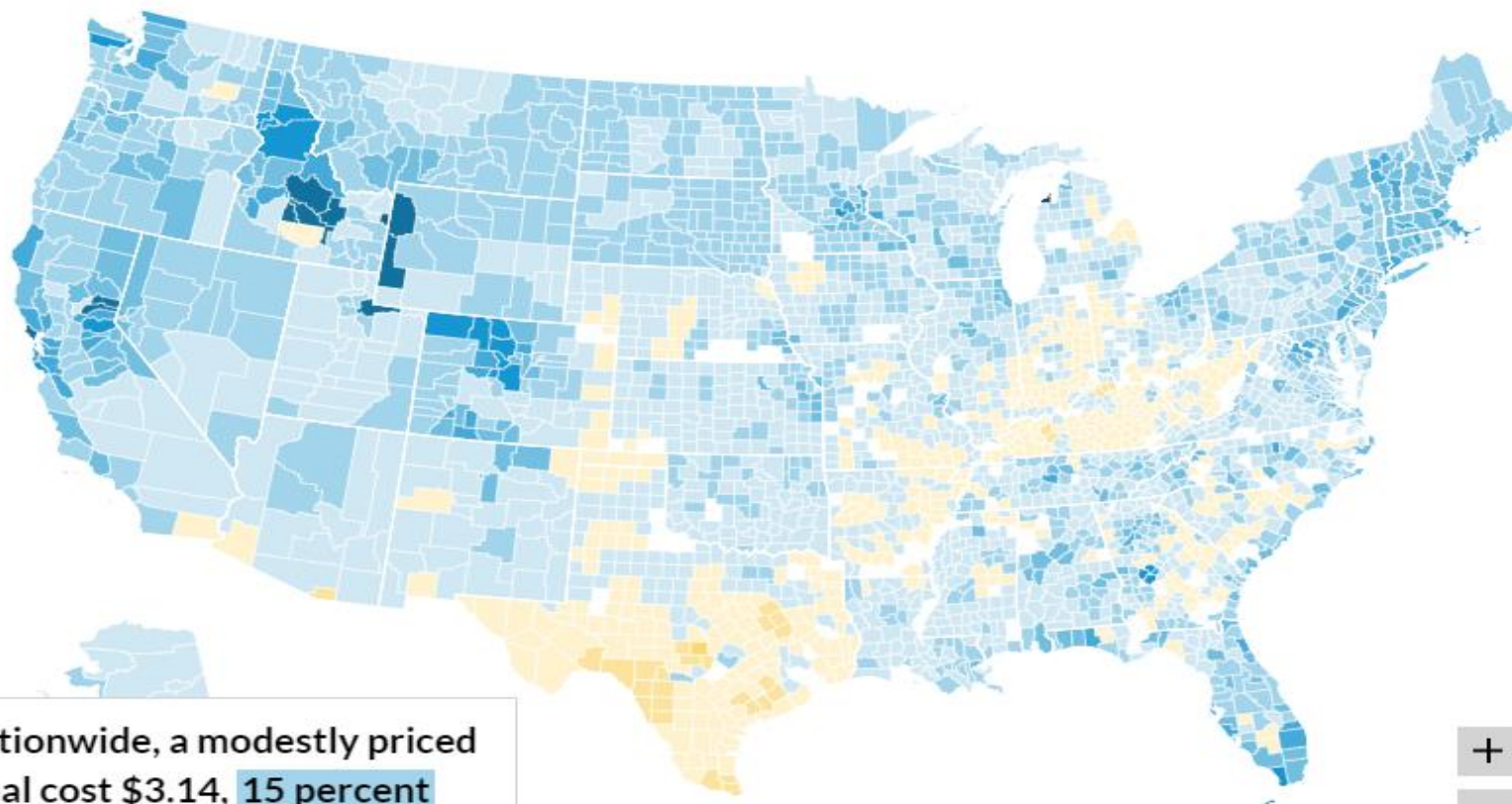
\$2.74

SNAP benefit per meal

\$3.14

Average meal cost

COMPARE TIME PERIODS



Nationwide, a modestly priced meal cost \$3.14, 15 percent more than the SNAP benefit.

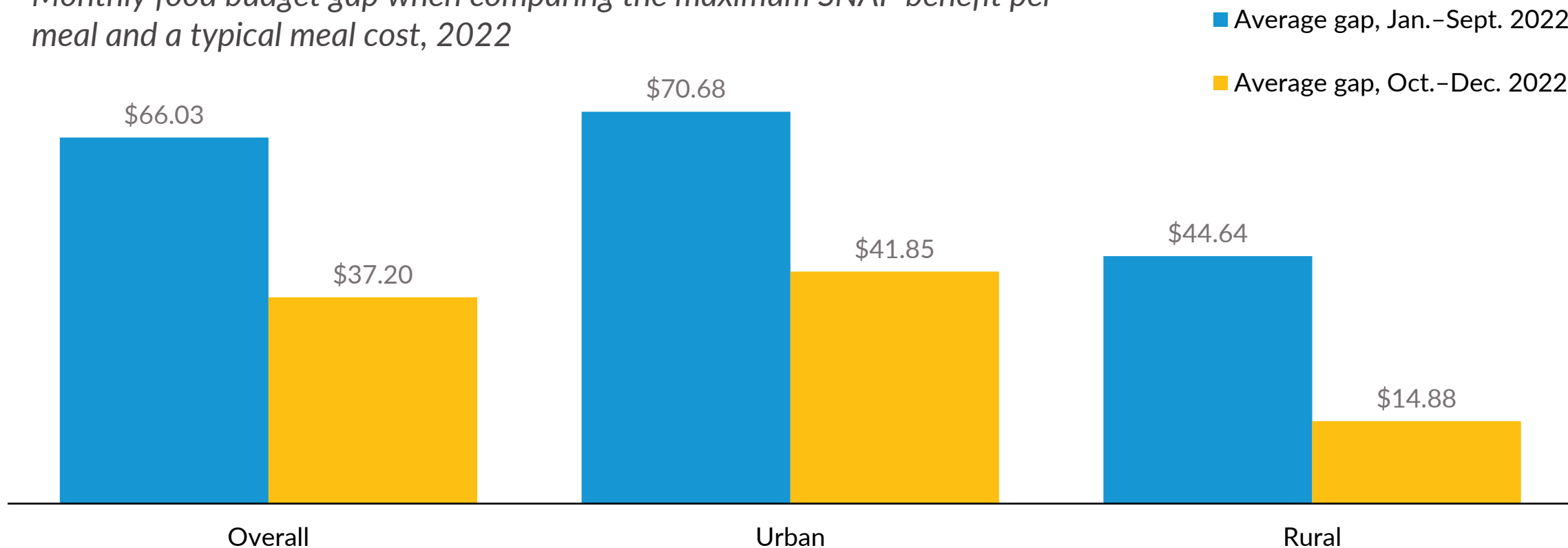


Rapid food price inflation in 2022 eroded the adequacy of SNAP benefits

- SNAP benefits are adjusted every fiscal year (October 1) through a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) to respond to inflation
- However, families experienced the peak of food price inflation in the summer of 2022, prior to the COLA that year
- We found that prior to the COLA, **99 percent of counties** had a gap between SNAP benefits and meal costs
- After the COLA, this went down to **78 percent of counties**
- Nationally, the gap between SNAP benefits and meal costs dropped from **\$0.71 per meal** (29 percent) to **\$0.40 per meal** (15 percent)

The Fiscal Year 2023 COLA Narrowed the Gap between SNAP Benefits and Meal Costs

Monthly food budget gap when comparing the maximum SNAP benefit per meal and a typical meal cost, 2022



Source: Authors' calculations of 2021 Census Bureau estimates of SNAP participation by county; Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap data, including NielsenIQ county-level food price data, adjusted for state and local taxes and Office of Management and Budget geographic classifications; fiscal years 2022 and 2023 US Department of Agriculture (USDA) maximum benefit allotments; and [Rural-Urban Continuum Codes](#).

Notes: COLA = cost-of-living adjustment. SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Monthly meal costs equal per meal cost multiplied by 3 meals a day for 31 days. Per meal cost equals weekly meal expenditures (using Current Population Survey data) divided by 21 (3 meals x 7 days a week).

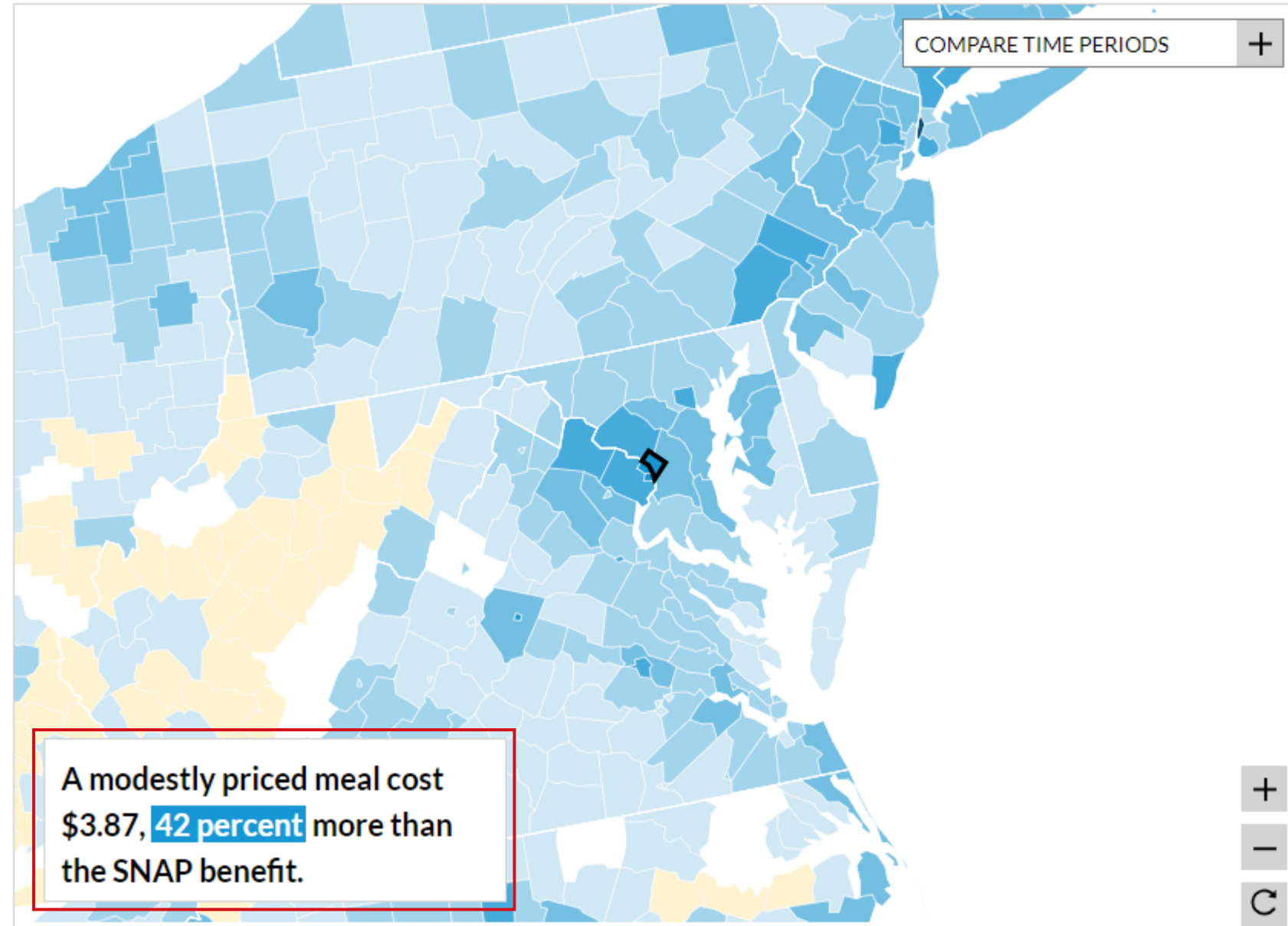
In urban areas like Washington, D.C., meal costs were **42% higher** than the maximum SNAP benefit

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA | RUCC 1 ⓘ

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

\$2.73 SNAP benefit per meal

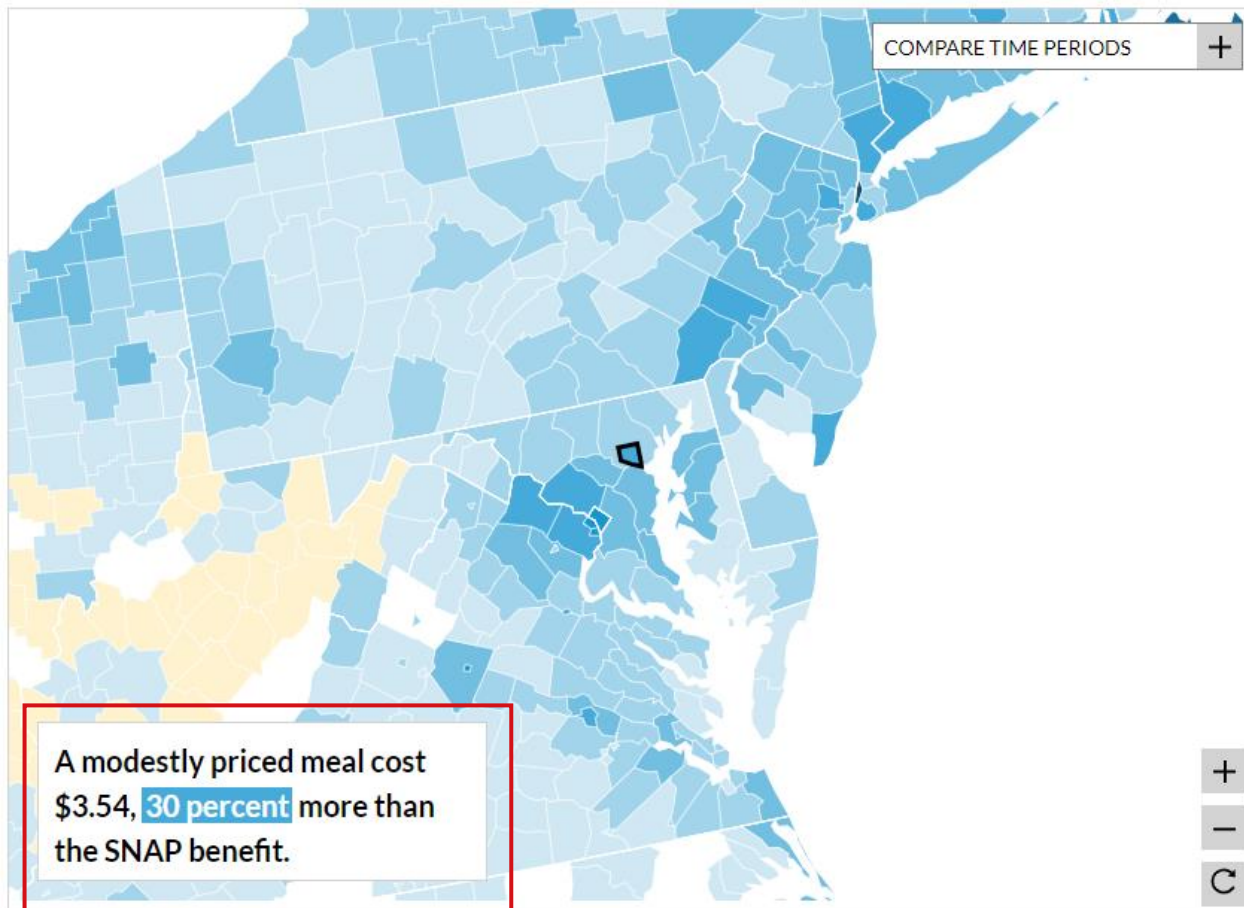
\$3.87 Average meal cost



MARYLAND | RUCC 1 ⓘ
BALTIMORE CITY

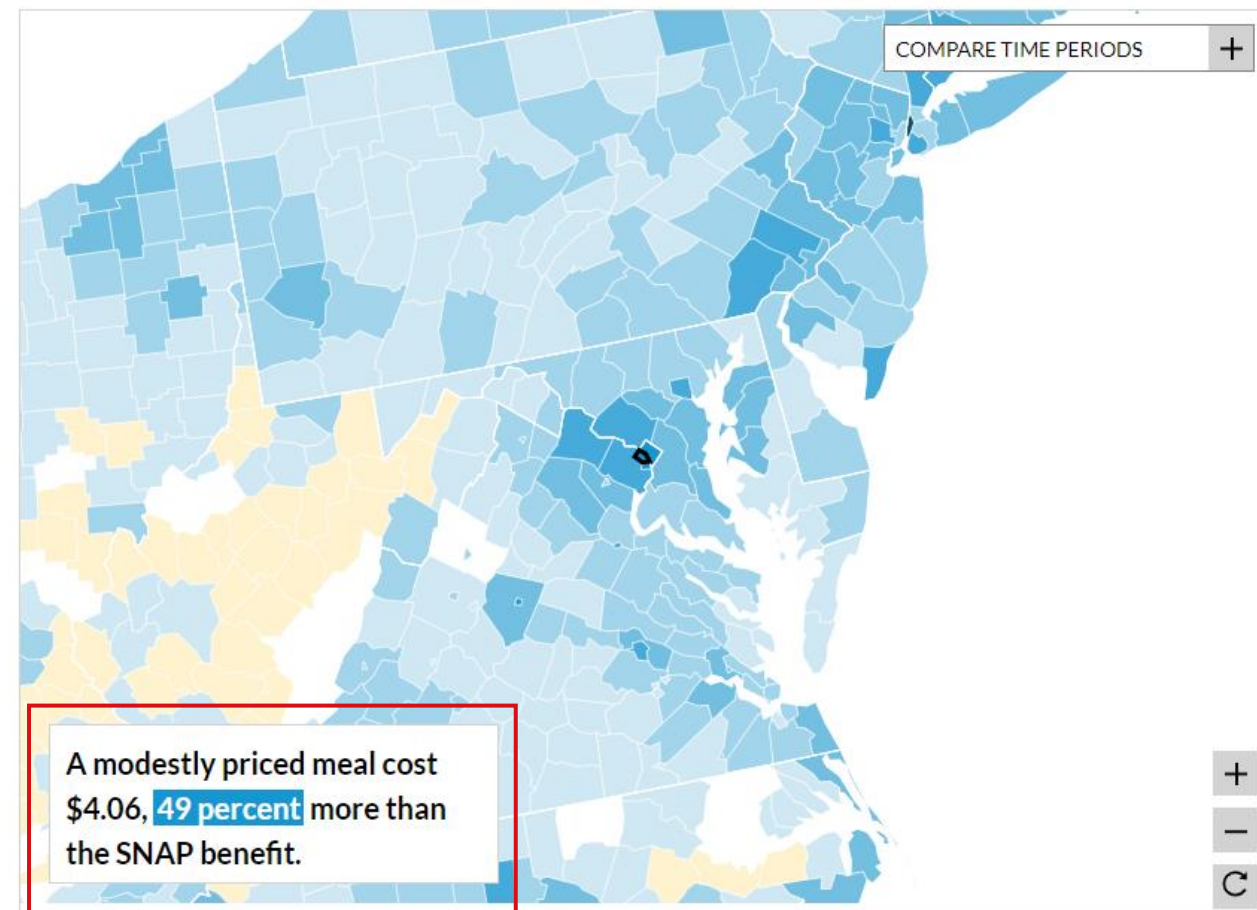
\$2.73 SNAP benefit per meal

\$3.54 Average meal cost

VIRGINIA | RUCC 1 ⓘ
ARLINGTON COUNTY

\$2.73 SNAP benefit per meal

\$4.06 Average meal cost



It's now more important than ever to strengthen SNAP policy

- With the end of the public health emergency and a return to SNAP eligibility requirements, after October 2023, **between 500,000-1 million people** are expected to lose SNAP coverage ([CBPP](#))
 - These work requirements have been proven to be ineffective, as they **do not** improve employment rates or earnings ([Urban](#))
- In the Farm Bill, currently up for reauthorization, more than 80 percent of spending is earmarked for nutrition programs like SNAP, and some policymakers have called for cuts to SNAP spending
- Losing SNAP could increase food insecurity

Policy recommendations

- Remove strict time limits for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) on SNAP benefits
- Allow for two COLAs per year when inflation is high
- Ensure SNAP benefits cover the cost of a modestly priced meal throughout the US

Thank you! Questions?

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