

## WHO ARE THE ILLINOISANS LIKELY TO LOSE FOOD ASSISTANCE IN 2018?

By Katie Buitrago & Suniya Farooqui

### RESOURCES ON THIS TOPIC

[Center for Budget and Policy Priorities](#)' report on the adults that were at risk of losing SNAP benefits in 2016 as waivers expired.

[Ohio Association of Food Banks](#)' comprehensive assessment of able-bodied adults without dependents and their participation in the Work Experience Program.

[The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law](#)'s article on SNAP's time limit.

### DATA SOURCES

Social IMPACT Research Center's analysis of the American Community Survey microdata

Survey data from childless adults at Lakeview Pantry

*Data on file with author, more information in Data Notes section*

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or food stamps) is an effective and efficient anti-hunger program. Not only does SNAP reduce hunger and poverty, it improves opportunity by leading to better health, education, and long-term well-being outcomes.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

There are big changes coming to SNAP in Illinois. On December 31st, certain SNAP recipients will only be able to receive food assistance for a total of three months within a 36 month period, whether or not they are experiencing hunger, if they are not working at least 20 hours per week.

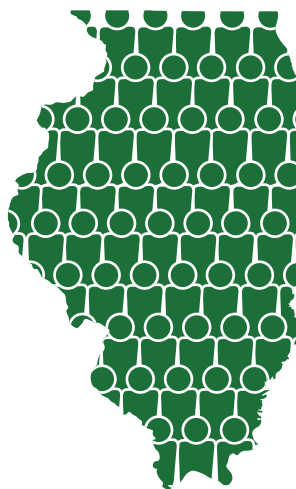
The group of people that will be impacted by this change will be adults without work-limiting disabilities who are not currently responsible for the care of children or other family members. The people who make up this group are sometimes referred to as ABAWDs, or able-bodied adults without dependents.

We analyzed Census and survey data to learn more about this group of men and women currently receiving SNAP to better understand who will be impacted and what they will be up against in 2018. **There are a total of 404,554 ABAWDs in Illinois receiving SNAP.**

- 64% are working.
- Nearly half work more than 20 hours per week.

## THERE ARE 203,740 ABAWDs WORKING LESS THAN 20 HOURS A WEEK WHO WILL LIKELY LOSE SNAP IN 2018.

**Of those individuals, the vast majority are underemployed or facing significant barriers to employment which will make meeting the 20 hour a week requirement difficult. The time limit puts them in danger of losing food stamps and going hungry.**



- ▶ 1 IN 5 WORK 11-20 HOURS PER WEEK.
- ▶ 1 IN 5 LACK HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE.
- ▶ 18% HAVE A DISABILITY.
- ▶ 64% HAVE ONLY A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE OR LESS.
- ▶ 1 IN 4 HAS NO HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE.
- ▶ OVER 2 IN 5 SPEND MORE THAN HALF OF THEIR INCOME ON RENT.

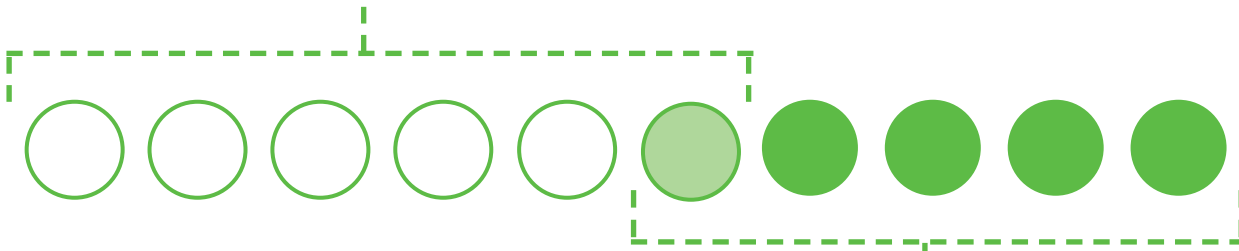
## WHY DOES THIS DATA MATTER NOW?

Illinois is nearing a critical point in time. At the end of the year, childless adults will only be able to receive food assistance for a total of three months within a 36 month period if they are not working at least 20 hours per week. Currently, Illinois is able to provide food assistance to childless adults for as long as they are experiencing hunger because the state is receiving a time limit waiver from the federal government. Time limit waivers are available to states that are experiencing high rates of unemployment. Waivers are granted to states because finding a full time job within 3 months during an economic downturn may just not be possible and therefore should not be a requirement to receive food assistance.

In almost all parts of the state, unemployment hasn't improved significantly. As a result, Illinois is still eligible to receive a waiver in 2018 that would exempt nearly the entire state from implementing the three in 36 month time limit for this group of Illinoisans in need. The state remains eligible because there are simply not enough jobs available for everyone seeking employment. The problems that Illinois currently faces related to a slow economic recovery are compounded by the state budget crisis. The ABAWDs who are the focus of this report will bear the brunt of these colliding forces when the waiver expires at the end of 2017. **Without the time limit waiver in 2018, over 200,000 Illinoisans will lose food assistance and go hungry.**

# THE NUMBERS

OF THE **404,554** ABAWDS IN ILLINOIS RECEIVING SNAP, **64% ARE WORKING.**

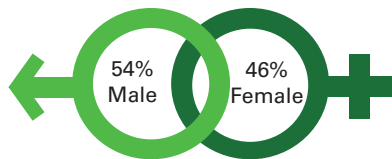


**HALF, OR 203,740, ARE WORKING LESS THAN 20 HOURS PER WEEK OR ARE NOT WORKING. THEY ARE AT RISK OF LOSING SNAP.**

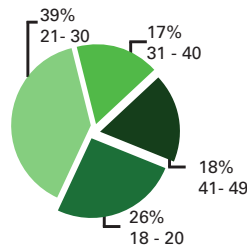
## THE CHARACTERISTICS

Illinoisans from across the state will be at risk of losing food assistance. A majority of people at risk of losing SNAP and experiencing hunger are people of color. Most are under the age of 30 and 64% have only a high school degree or less. Two in five have more than 50% of their household income going to rent. The people most at risk are individuals who face structural racism, are in precarious financial situations, and have significant barriers to employment.

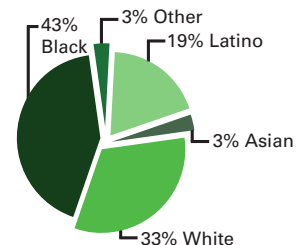
### GENDER



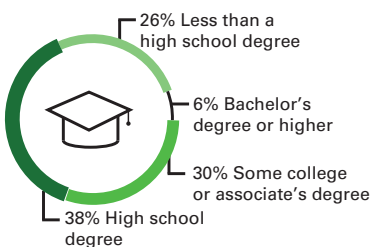
### AGE



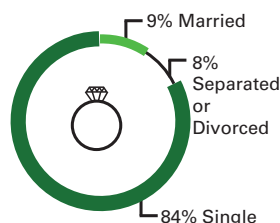
### RACE/ETHNICITY



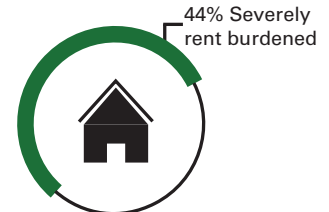
### EDUCATION



### MARITAL STATUS



### RENT BURDEN

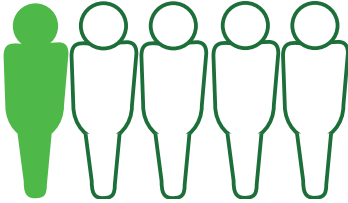


# THE INCOMPLETE PICTURE

So what are we missing? The bigger picture. Looking solely at Census and limited survey data provides an incomplete understanding of the challenges that ABAWDs will face in 2018 if nothing is done. Factors and conditions that serve as structural or systemic barriers to employment and effective responses to these challenges are important to consider as well.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

1 in 5 lack health insurance  
(higher than the Illinois average of 8%)



**State Budget Crisis:** The real and lasting impact of Illinois’s protracted budget crisis has eviscerated the programs and services that help people get back on their feet in its wake. The services that many Illinoisans have relied on in the past for stability and support in finding and keeping a job have turned hundreds of thousands of people away and left people with nowhere else to turn. Homeless services, employment & job training programs, mental health and addiction treatment services, and domestic violence and youth development programs all provide essential support for people with some of the most significant barriers to employment; yet these are the very programs that have been devastated by the state budget crisis.

**Health-related Barriers to Employment:** None of the ABAWDs at risk of losing food assistance have a social security disability designation or have otherwise been determined “unfit to work” by the government, but many have disabilities or physical or mental health problems that interfere with their ability to find and keep a job.

## DISABILITY



*including cognitive difficulty, vision difficulty, hearing difficulty, self-care difficulty and ambulatory difficulty)*

### Snapshot: People at risk of losing SNAP assistance at Lakeview Pantry

In a snapshot of ABAWDs who receive services from one food pantry on the north side of Chicago, we found that:

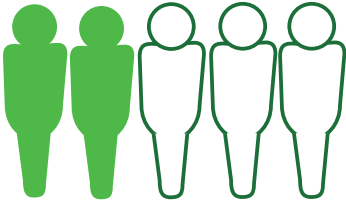
- 29% report that physical health problems (theirs or their family’s) have interfered with their ability to find and keep work.
- Most frequently reported physical health problems include asthma (12%), high blood pressure (10%), HIV/AIDS (10%), obesity and other (18%).
- Most frequently reported mental health problems include depression (28%), anxiety (27%), bipolar disorder (23%) and OCD (11%).
- 10% reported they (or someone in the household) have drug/alcohol problems
- 11% report they (or someone in household) have experienced domestic violence in the last year

**Racial Disparities:** When it comes to jobs and income, the place where you live matters. The resources in your neighborhood influence the availability of accessible jobs and the quality of your school. So much of our lives revolve around where we live and many communities in our state are highly segregated by race. Unequal education funding based on the community in which you live contributes to subpar educational opportunities for people of color, leading to lower rates of high school completion, lower rates of college attendance and completion, lower wages, and higher unemployment. At every level of educational attainment, black people are far more likely to be unemployed and those who are employed earn significantly less than white workers. When a time limit is introduced to food assistance, any community that is already facing inequity and disadvantage will see more of its neighbors go hungry.

- Poverty rates are 2 to 3 times higher for Illinoisans of color, and people of color fare far worse on nearly every measure of well-being.<sup>4</sup>
- Employers are more likely to hire a white job seeker with a felony than a black job seeker with no record.<sup>5</sup>
- Illinoisans of color have unemployment rates that are 1.4 to 2.4 times higher than white Illinoisans.<sup>6</sup>

## CRIMINAL RECORD

2 in 5 of Illinoisans have an arrest or conviction record



**A Lifetime Sentence:** Due to the limits of the data, we do not know how many ABAWDs have a criminal background, but they are likely disproportionately represented in the 45 percent of adults in Illinois (approximately 4.4 million people) who have an arrest or conviction record.<sup>7</sup> Having a record creates a significant and lasting barrier to employment and opportunity that does not end with time served. Statutory bars to employment and the biases and hesitancy of employers to hire people with criminal backgrounds are barriers that last a lifetime.

- In Illinois, there are over 800 laws on the books that prohibit the hiring of people with certain convictions for certain jobs and occupational licenses.<sup>8</sup>
- More than 90% of companies rely on background checks for their hiring decisions and eliminate applicants from consideration based on their backgrounds above and beyond the restrictions required by law.<sup>9</sup>

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE BY COUNTY

Pulaski	7.7%
Alexander	7%
Hardin	6.8%
Johnson	6.4%
Union	6.0%
Massac	5.9%
Pope	5.6%

**Unequal Access to Employment:** Jobs are not readily available for all job seekers in Illinois. Some communities, especially those in less-populated areas, are reeling from major employers leaving town, while inner-city neighborhoods are plagued with disinvestment and lack of opportunity. A closer look at county or community-level unemployment data or employment to population ratio would help us better understand the hardship experienced by different groups of people living in different parts of the state. This type of analysis was beyond the scope of this report but the following data points provide a window into this disparity.

- The 7 southern-most counties in Illinois continue to have some of the highest unemployment rates in the state—far higher than the statewide average of 4.4%.<sup>10</sup>
- Of the nation’s largest metro areas, Chicago has the greatest racial disparity in young adult employment rates—among 20- to 24-year-olds, the Chicago area’s employment rate is 47% for blacks and 73% for whites.<sup>11</sup>

## THE SOLUTIONS

**First and foremost, the Governor should seek a SNAP time limit waiver from the federal government in 2018 to prevent over 200,000 Illinoisans from going hungry.** The Governor should continue to request time limit waivers when the state is eligible due to high unemployment in subsequent years. In addition to this immediate short-term solution, state policymakers must support proven programs and policies that address the most common barriers to work, promote full employment, and level the playing field to create true opportunity for people of color. Here are just a few ideas:

- Reduce the collateral consequences of criminal records—like statutory bars to employment, education, and housing—that impede successful reentry for people with criminal records.
- Ensure fair and equitable access to quality jobs by investing in pathways to employment for everyone out of work through high quality employment & training programs, subsidized and transitional jobs, on-the-job training, and adult basic education.
- Adequately fund services that provide people the support they need to be successful in work such as homeless prevention, mental health and addiction treatment services, and domestic violence programs.

## DATA NOTES

*Census Data:* Social IMPACT Research Center pulled data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) which draws samples from the American Community Survey (ACS). Using the 1-year ACS 2015, IMPACT was able to estimate the number of ABAWDs in Illinois. Only SNAP recipients with no dependents, ages 18 to 49 receiving no Supplemental Security Income were included in the sample. After getting our sample, IMPACT looked at the differences between ABAWDs working all hours compared to those working only 20 hours per week. IMPACT further looked at the differences between these groups by sex, race, and marital status.

*Lakeview Pantry Survey Data:* In Spring 2017, IMPACT assisted Lakeview Pantry (a food pantry on the north side of Chicago) to conduct a client survey to better understand the experiences and barriers that their clients face, and to explore opportunities to better meet their needs. Lakeview Pantry has allowed IMPACT to include in this white paper aggregate data on individuals who would likely lose food assistance if Illinois does not receive a time limit waiver in 2018 (adults age 18 to 49 who do not have children and do not report that they are not working due to a disability).

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Gregory, C., and Deb, P. (2015). *Does SNAP improve your health?* Food Policy Volume 50, January 2015: 11-19
- 2 Hoynes, H., Schanzenbach, D., Almond, D. (2012). *Long Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net*. NBER Working Paper No. 18535 Issued in November 2012
- 3 Gassman-Pines, A. and Bellows, L., *SNAP Recency and Educational Outcomes* (2015). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2701380> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2701380>
- 4 Buitrago, K., Rynell, A., & Tuttle, S. (2017). *Cycle of Risk: The Intersection of Poverty, Violence, and Trauma in Illinois*. Heartland Alliance. Available at [www.heartlandalliance.org/povertyreport](http://www.heartlandalliance.org/povertyreport).
- 5 Pager, D. (2003). *The Mark of a Criminal Record*. American Journal of Sociology
- 6 Buitrago et. al., *op. cit.*
- 7 The estimate of the number of adults in Illinois with an arrest or conviction record comes from the author's analysis of Bureau of Justice Statistics data based on a method developed by the National Employment Law Project.
- 8 The Council of State Governments, Justice Center. (2016). [The National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction Database](#)
- 9 Rodriguez, M. N., & Emsellem, M. (2011). [65 Million "Need Not Apply" The Case for Reforming Criminal Background Checks for Employment](#). New York, NY: The National Employment Law Project
- 10 Illinois Unemployment Rate by County. (2017). Illinois Department of Employment Security, Economic Information & Analysis Division. Accessed online at: <http://www.ides.illinois.gov/LMI/Local%20Area%20Unemployment%20Statistics%20LAUS/countymap.pdf>
- 11 Ross, M., & Svajlenka, N. P. (2016) *Employment and disconnection among teens and young adults: the role of place, race, and education*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

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