

Budgets and Benefits

- **SNAP is a key food benefit for many food-insecure residents** and provides an important platform for state and local food benefits. It can be difficult to enroll in the program and maintain benefits.

» This is especially true in recent years as **applications have gotten more complex** and state capacity to process applications has not increased to meet the need.

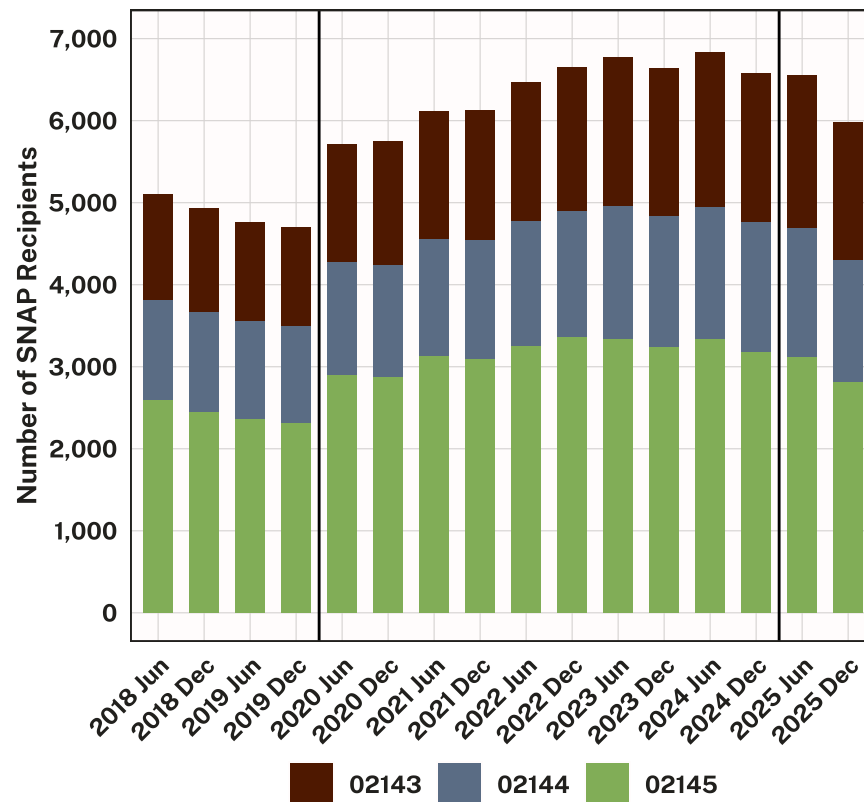
From late 2023 to mid-2024, **one in four applications was denied** because the applicant could not successfully complete the application process.



As of early 2026, **three in four calls to the DTA were blocked** due to high call volume and not enough staff to support people.

- **Food benefits and resources can be complex to navigate** both for residents and service providers.
- Food resources and policies change frequently, making **ongoing communications and Coalition work with partners and the public important** so they can stay coordinated and up-to-date.

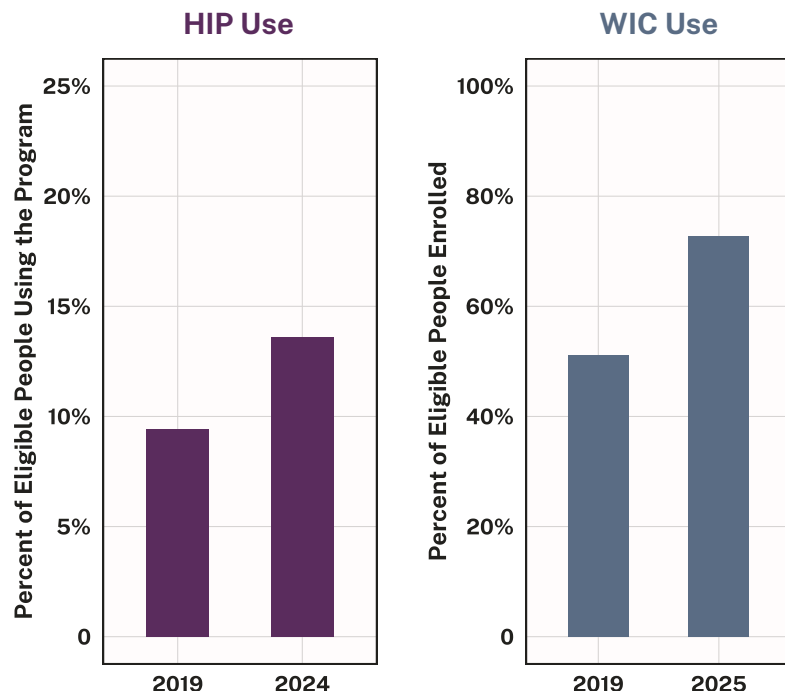
Number of SNAP recipients in Somerville increased from 2020-2024, but has declined more recently.



Want to learn more?
Find the full assessment here:



- Use of some programs has increased despite complex applications and rising incomes in Somerville. This suggests **efforts to help residents navigate resources have been successful** in recent years.



“A part from the food [pantry], a part from food stamps (SNAP), a part from what I’m going to pick up, and a part from WIC, I could say that I live well, I don’t live badly. If it weren’t for the high rent, I could say we’re doing fine.”

– East Somerville Parent [translated from Spanish]

“...food was a lot less expensive, and I had a really good full-time job. And it wasn’t like it is now, trying to pay for groceries. It’s just shocking.”

– Somerville resident

Options for stretching food budgets are limited for residents without nutrition benefits. For individuals who are ineligible for or not enrolled in food assistance programs, few intermediate supports exist between market food and emergency food assistance.

The **Somerville Mobile Farmers Market** program provides **low-cost produce** for all residents, including people who don’t qualify for benefits and people looking to stretch their benefit dollars.

- From 2019 to 2025, the market had a 60% increase in shoppers per week (as measured by number of transactions).
- About 40% of all transactions are paid for with benefits.

A shopper at the Council on Aging location listed the many benefits of the market: “*Vegetables are great, selection is great, prices are good, people are friendly, I’m up here a lot anyway.*”

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC ACCESS TO FOOD:

- Expand City-led efforts to **connect and inform service providers** by strengthening the City’s capacity to help residents navigate increasingly complex applications and maximize benefit use.
- Expand the **Somerville Mobile Farmers Market** by adding a location in a higher need neighborhood or extending the season.
- Extend the **SNAP match to other nutrition benefits at farmers markets** such as WIC and Senior Farmers Market coupons.

What benefits are available to Somerville residents and how useful are they?



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Funding: Federal

Local Operator: Mass DTA

Use: Most locations, most food

Dollar Value: \$\$\$



Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)

Funding: Federal

Local Operator: Cambridge Health Alliance

Use: Large groceries, WIC food

Dollar Value: \$\$\$



SUN Bucks (formerly Summer EBT)

Funding: Federal

Local Operator: Mass DTA

Use: Most locations, most food

Dollar Value: \$\$



Health-Related Social Need Benefits (HRSN)

Funding: Federal, State

Local Operator: Cambridge Health Alliance

Use: Meals or fresh produce at most grocers

Dollar Value: \$\$



Healthy Incentives Program (HIP)

Funding: State

Local Operator: Mass DTA

Use: Farmers markets, fresh produce only

Dollar Value: \$\$



Farmers Market Coupons

Funding: Federal

Local Operator: Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services

Use: Farmers markets only, most foods

Dollar Value: \$



SNAP Match Program

Funding: City

Local Operator: Davis, Union, Winter farmers markets

Use: Farmers markets above; most foods

Dollar Value: \$



Somerville Mobile Farmers Market

Funding: City

Local Operator: City of Somerville

Use: SMFM locations, fresh produce only

Dollar Value: \$

Application Difficulty	Least Difficult →				
	1				
SNAP					
WIC					
SUN Bucks					
HRSN Benefits					
HIP					
Farmers Market					
SNAP Match					
Somerville Mobile Market					

Difficulty of Use					
SNAP					
WIC					
SUN Bucks					
HRSN Benefits					
HIP					
Farmers Market					
SNAP Match					
Somerville Mobile Market					

Age and Health Status Limitations on Eligibility					
SNAP					
WIC					
SUN Bucks					
HRSN Benefits					
HIP					
Farmers Market					
SNAP Match					
Somerville Mobile Market					

Open Regardless of Immigration Status	Eligiblty Limited by Immigration Status
WIC	SNAP
SUN Bucks	HRSN Benefits
Farmers Market	HIP
Somerville Mobile Market	SNAP Match