

# US food stamp list tops 34 million for first time

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Reuters

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - For the first time, more than 34 million Americans received [food stamps](#), which help poor people buy groceries, government figures said on Thursday, a sign of the longest and one of the deepest recessions since the Great Depression

Enrollment surged by 2 percent to reach a record 34.4 million people, or one in nine Americans, in May, the latest month for which figures are available.

It was the sixth month in a row that enrollment set a record. Every state recorded a gain in participation from April. Florida had the largest increase at 4.2 percent.

Food stamp enrollment is highest during times of economic stress. The U.S. [unemployment](#) rate of 9.5 percent is the highest in 26 years.

Average benefit was \$133.65 in May per person. The economic stimulus package enacted earlier this year included a temporary increase in food stamp benefits of \$80 a month for a family of four.

Food stamp enrollment

Month Total

May 34.409 million

April 33.758 million

March 33.157 million

February 32.556 million

January 32.205 million

December 2008 31.784 million

November 2008 31.097 million

October 2008 31.050 million

September 2008 31.586 million (Reporting by Charles Abbott; Editing by Lisa Shumaker)

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