

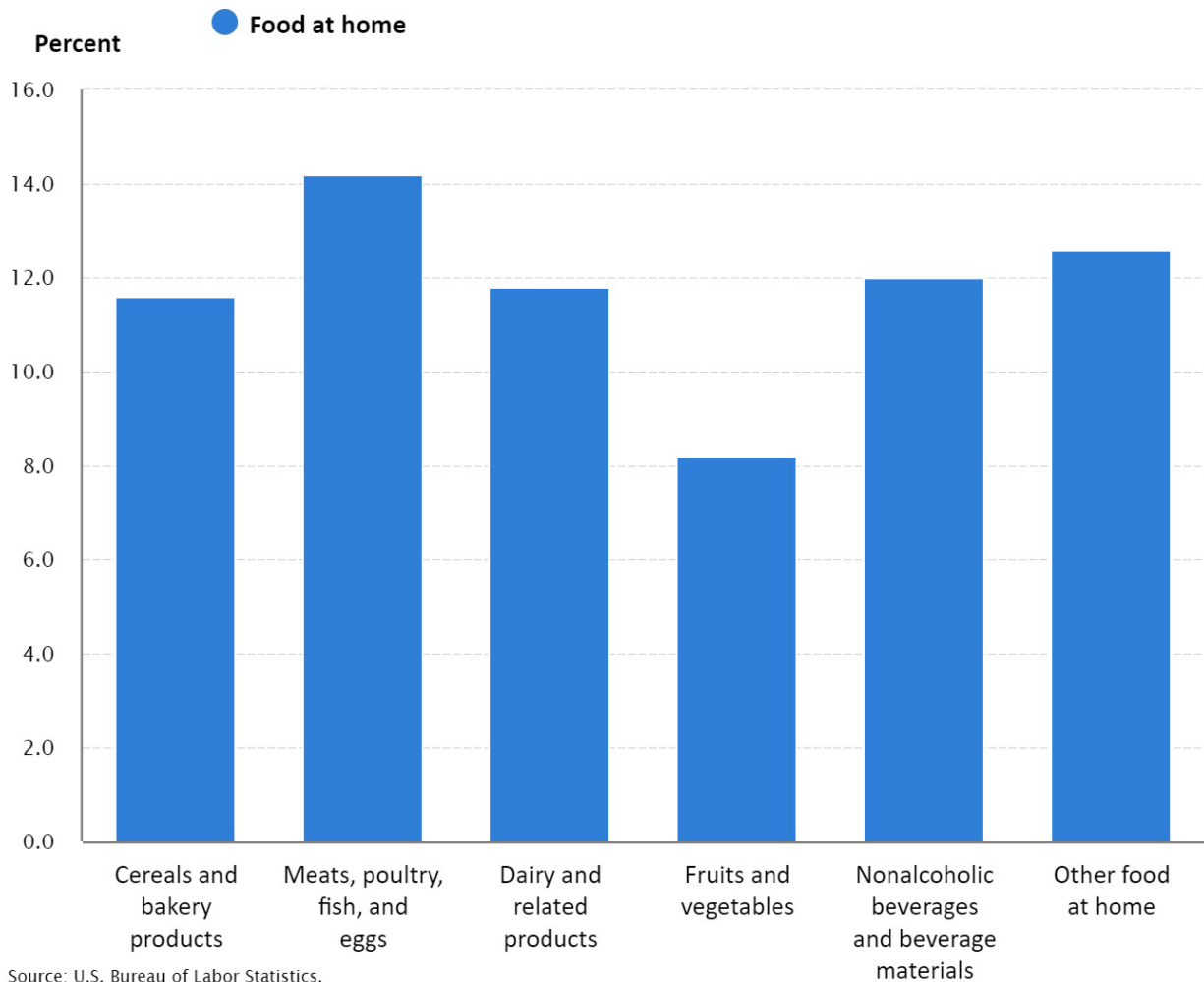


Food costs in Geneva, June 2022

RISING FOOD COSTS

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on food prices. According to the Consumer Price Index, the cost of food at home rose 11.9% from May 2021 to May 2022. Among the food categories, the price of meats, poultry, fish and eggs increased most dramatically - 14.2%. Here are the nationwide, 12-month increases reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

12-month percentage change, Consumer Price Index, selected categories, May 2022, not seasonally adjusted



Members of Congress have recognized the trend and its impact on families. As [Politico](#) reported on June 13, 2022:

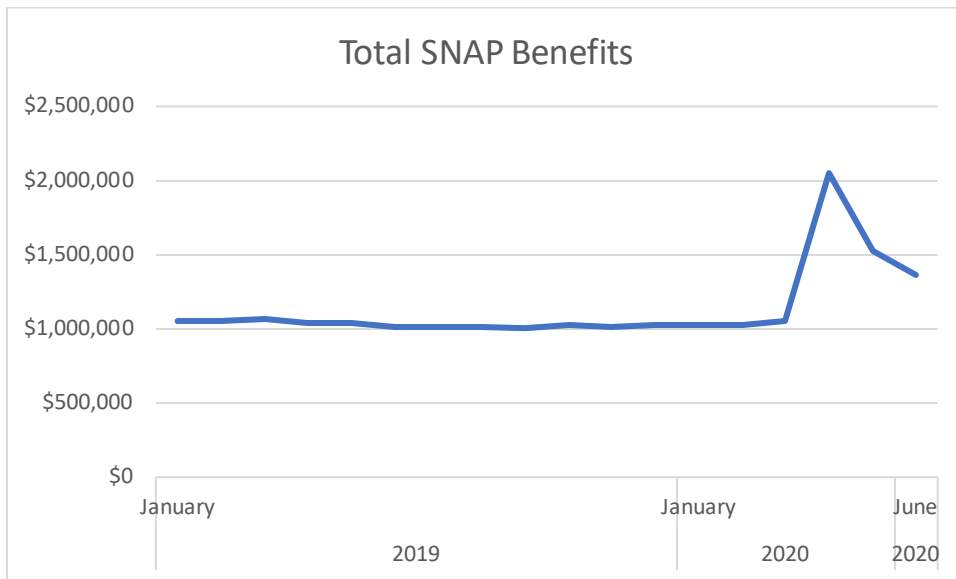
The House Rules Committee...will consider a bill to battle food and fuel inflation and meat industry consolidation, signaling the full chamber could vote on it as early as this week.

...The omnibus appropriations bill known as the Lower Food and Fuel Costs Act would create a meat and poultry special investigator within the USDA, create a food supply chain task force, authorize year-round sale of E15 grade ethanol fuel, provide subsidies to small meat producers and adjust conservation programs to include precision agriculture.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)

The Census Bureau's 2020 American Community Survey estimates that 22% of the households in the City of Geneva received SNAP benefits. Of households receiving such benefits, half (49%) included children under age 18.

The following chart shows the trendline of total SNAP Payments in Ontario County, January 2019 through June 2020:



The above chart, showing the most recent data available from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, shows a marked spike with the onset of the pandemic, after a period of declining SNAP benefits. (This data does not show the USDA increase in the maximum SNAP benefit enacted in October 2021.)

However, inflation and supply chain problems (most egregious with baby formula) are offsetting increases in SNAP increases.



COVID-19

For families with children of school age, rising grocery costs were compounded by shifting responsibilities, as classrooms closed and children stayed home during weekdays.

Increased SNAP benefits have been approved and extended for families across the state since April 2020, shortly after the onset of the pandemic.

From December 2020 to September 2021, SNAP recipients received a temporary 15-percent increase as part of federal COVID-19 pandemic relief initiatives.

In addition, the Geneva City School District has pledged to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students, kindergarten through 12th grade, through June 30, 2025. This program is funded, regardless of family income, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Community Eligibility Program.

CONCLUSION

The [Urban Institute](#), analyzing 2020 food costs across the country, found that SNAP benefits per meal in Ontario County equalled the cost of a moderately priced meal - \$2.38. More recent price hikes would indicate that SNAP benefits no longer cover the expense of modestly priced meals.

The increasing burden of food costs is one that Geneva 2030 should explore further, on an ongoing basis, as prices continue to rise and more data becomes available. But data is just a first step. New insights must translate into actions designed to reduce the burden of food insecurity and improve the lives of Geneva schoolchildren. Our exploration of data must be designed to yield positive change. It will be used to identify issues, root causes, strategies to address root causes, and metrics to measure the effectiveness of the intervention strategies.