



**United States
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Building a Healthy America: A Profile of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program





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Introduction

For more than 40 years, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has served as the foundation of America’s national nutrition safety net. It is the nation’s first line of defense against hunger and offers a powerful tool to improve nutrition among low-income people. **In fiscal year 2011, SNAP served nearly 45 million people, about one in seven Americans.**

Over the course of four decades, researchers and analysts—inside government and out—have built a substantial body of evidence that SNAP makes an important difference in the lives of low-income people.

- **It touches the lives of millions of people who need help to put food on the table.** Unlike most other assistance programs, SNAP is available to nearly anyone who qualifies with little income and few resources. Program rules do not limit benefits to families with children or the elderly or the unemployed. Nationwide standards for eligibility and benefits create a national nutrition safety net for low-income families and individuals wherever they live.
- **It supports those whose wages are too low to lift them out of poverty.** SNAP is an important work support: 75 percent of the people who receive benefits for a year or less—and about 40 percent overall—live in households with earnings. The Census Bureau indicates that SNAP would lift 3.9 million Americans—including 1.7 million children—out of poverty in 2010 if its benefits were included in the official measures of income and poverty.
- **It raises food expenditures and improves nutrient availability.** Participants in SNAP spend more on food than they would in the absence of the program. Providing benefits that can be spent only on food raises food expenditures more than an equal amount of cash. In addition, there is evidence that program participation can increase the availability of some nutrients in the home food supply. Recent studies have shown that the nutrient intake of low-income people differs little from higher-income people—a sharp contrast from 40 years ago.
- **It responds to changing economic conditions.** The program automatically expands to meet increased need when the economy is in recession and contracts when the economy is growing,

making sure that food gets to people who need it. SNAP benefits automatically flow to communities, States, or regions of the country that face rising unemployment or poverty, providing a boost for local economies. When the economy strengthens, SNAP participation declines.

- **It delivers benefits with a high degree of integrity.** The program effectively delivers benefits only to households that need them: more than 98 percent of all participating households are eligible for SNAP benefits. In fiscal year 2010, the program achieved the highest level of overall payment accuracy in its history: the national overpayment error rate—the percentage of SNAP benefit dollars issued in excess of the amounts for which households are eligible—fell to 3.05 percent; the underpayment error rate was less than 1.00 percent. Trafficking is the sale of SNAP benefits for cash, a practice that diverts benefits away from their intended purpose of helping low-income families access a nutritious diet. The extent of trafficking is also low, about one cent of every dollar issued.
- **It provides flexibility to States while ensuring the protection of a national safety net.** The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) continued the commitment to a national nutrition safety net and gave States a substantial new opportunity to streamline complex rules. In addition, States may also use SNAP’s waiver procedures to test changes to a variety of program rules.

KEY FACT:

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In fiscal year 2011, on average, SNAP provided \$134 per person to 44.7 million individuals in 21.1 million households each month.

As the time for reauthorization of SNAP again approaches, it is useful to take stock of its accomplishments, identify those features that have contributed to its success, and look for new opportunities to strengthen operations to achieve program goals more fully. To that end, this is a summary of past research on program operations and outcomes.

How SNAP Works

SNAP alleviates hunger and improves nutrition by increasing the food purchasing power of low-income households, enabling them to obtain a more nutritious diet by preparing food at home.

The program is available to nearly anyone with little income and few resources who qualifies. Program rules do not limit benefits to a specific group of people, such as the elderly, families with children, or the unemployed. As a result, the program serves a wide range of low-income persons, about half of whom are children.

KEY FACT:

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SNAP benefits, provided monthly via an electronic debit card, are available to most households with gross income less than 130 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines.

Nationwide standards for eligibility and benefits create a national safety net for low-income households.

Generally SNAP households must have monthly gross income less than 130 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines (\$2,422 for a family of four in fiscal year 2012), monthly net income less than 100 percent of the poverty guidelines, and assets of less than

\$2,000. Households with elderly (age 60 and older) and disabled members are exempt from the gross income limit and must have assets less than \$3,250. Categorical eligibility exempts households from the income and asset tests if all members receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), State General Assistance, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE), a State option, may extend the exemption from the asset and income tests to additional families receiving a TANF-funded benefit or service. Eligible households must also meet some nonfinancial criteria, including citizenship and work requirements. Almost all households that reside in States with BBCE would be eligible for SNAP under standard program rules.

National standards for application filing and processing also bolster the safety net. SNAP has standard procedures for application filing, interviews, verification of applicant information, and application processing that provide strong procedural protections for applicants and participants.

The program allows several deductions from income, to provide a better measure of disposable income available to purchase food and to encourage work. The deductions include a standard available to all households; an earned income deduction available to working households; a shelter deduction for those with

high shelter expenses; and dependent care, medical, and child support deductions for some with particular expenses. These deductions are subtracted from gross income to determine net income.

SNAP benefits are based on the Thrifty Food Plan, a minimal cost food plan that reflects current nutrition standards and guidance, the nutrient content and cost of food, and consumption patterns of low-income households. Maximum allotments vary by household size. In fiscal year 2012, the maximum allotment for a family of four is \$668 per month, including the benefit increase contained in The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act).

Maximum allotments are reduced by 30 percent of a household's net income. SNAP benefits are designed to be a supplement to food purchases made with the household's own income. As a result, benefits can vary across households of the same gross income and size.

Participating households receive monthly benefit allotments in the form of electronic debit cards (also known as EBT, or electronic benefit transfer). SNAP benefits are limited to the purchase of food items for use at home as well as seeds and plants to produce food. Alcohol and tobacco cannot be purchased with SNAP benefits. Many States use a single EBT card for SNAP and a variety of cash benefit programs. The cash benefits can be accessed through most ATMs, but SNAP benefits cannot be withdrawn as cash.

SNAP benefits are used at supermarkets, large and small grocery stores, convenience and specialty stores, and farmers markets. Benefits can be exchanged only at authorized food retailers. Nationwide, there were about 230,000 authorized retailers at the end of fiscal year 2011.

Benefits are 100 percent Federally funded, whereas administrative costs are shared between States and the Federal government. Although broad policy guidance is provided through USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), day-to-day administration is carried out by States or counties. States are responsible for the certification of households and issuance of benefits. FNS is responsible for the authorization and oversight of food retailers.

The program monitors performance through a national system of quality control and a set of participation indicators. The quality control system measures the accuracy of eligibility decisions and benefit determinations against program rules for a representative sample of cases. Other performance measures include the proportion of eligible households who receive benefits and the percentage of applications processed within required timelines.

Why SNAP Is Important

SNAP participation grows when the economy is weak, helping families put food on the table. As the number of unemployed persons and families living in poverty grew in the last few years, so did SNAP participation. When the economy improves, SNAP participation will decline. The face of SNAP has changed during the recent economic downturn as more newly unemployed or underemployed people rely on SNAP to feed their families. Although SNAP largely serves a vulnerable population—children, elderly, and individuals with disabilities—it is available to most individuals with low incomes who meet the eligibility criteria. At the end of fiscal year 2011, SNAP was serving about one in seven Americans.

SNAP helps prevent food insecurity. The number of households experiencing food insecurity, or difficulty getting enough food because of a lack of resources, was at record high levels in 2008 to 2010. Although the continued high levels of food insecurity are cause for concern, the fact that the numbers did not increase between 2008 and 2010, despite a significant increase in the poverty rate and number of unemployed persons, underscores the important role of SNAP in helping to prevent food insecurity.

SNAP lifts millions of people out of poverty. The Census Bureau has reported that 46.2 million people—15.1 percent of all those in the United States—lived in poverty in 2010. SNAP benefits have a powerful anti-poverty effect that is not reflected in the Nation’s official poverty statistics. The Census Bureau indicates that SNAP would lift 3.9 million Americans—including 1.7 million children—out of poverty if its benefits were included in the official measures of income and poverty. Another study found that the antipoverty effectiveness of SNAP accelerated over the decade, with about 2 million people lifted out of poverty each year through 2003, but that figure more than doubled to 4.5 million in 2009 because of the deep recession and the benefit increase in the Recovery Act.

SNAP provides a fiscal boost to the economy during an economic downturn. In addition to helping families during these tough economic times, SNAP has an added benefit of serving as an economic multiplier—meaning it puts critical dollars back into local economies. Every \$1 in new benefits generates up to \$1.80 in economic activity. Every time a family uses SNAP benefits to put healthy food on the table, it benefits the store and the employees where the purchase was made, the truck driver who delivered the food, the warehouses that stored it, the plant that processed it, and the farmer who produced the food. Each \$1 billion increase in SNAP benefits is estimated to create or maintain 18,000 full-time equivalent jobs, including 3,000 farm jobs.

KEY FACT:

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SNAP automatically responds to changes in the economy and plays a key role in supporting families during tough economic times.

Sources:

Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. “Household Food Security in the United States in 2010.” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, September 2011.

Hanson, Kenneth. “The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP.” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, October 2010.

Ziliak, James P. “Recent Developments in Antipoverty Policies in the United States.” Discussion Paper No. 1396-11. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Institute for Research on Poverty, September 2011.



Strengthening the Safety Net

Overview of SNAP Participation

The pattern of participation in SNAP over the last 35 years has closely followed the pattern of poverty and the economic cycle in the United States.

KEY FACT:

SNAP participation closely follows the pattern of poverty in America. As the number of persons in poverty rises, SNAP participation grows. As poverty falls, so does reliance on SNAP.

- SNAP participation declined slowly from 1983 to 1989, mostly because of a strong economy. It increased sharply from 1990 through 1994, driven by a slowing economy, Medicaid expansion, and changes increasing SNAP access.
- After reaching 28.0 million in March 1994, participation declined steadily, reaching a low of 16.9 million in July

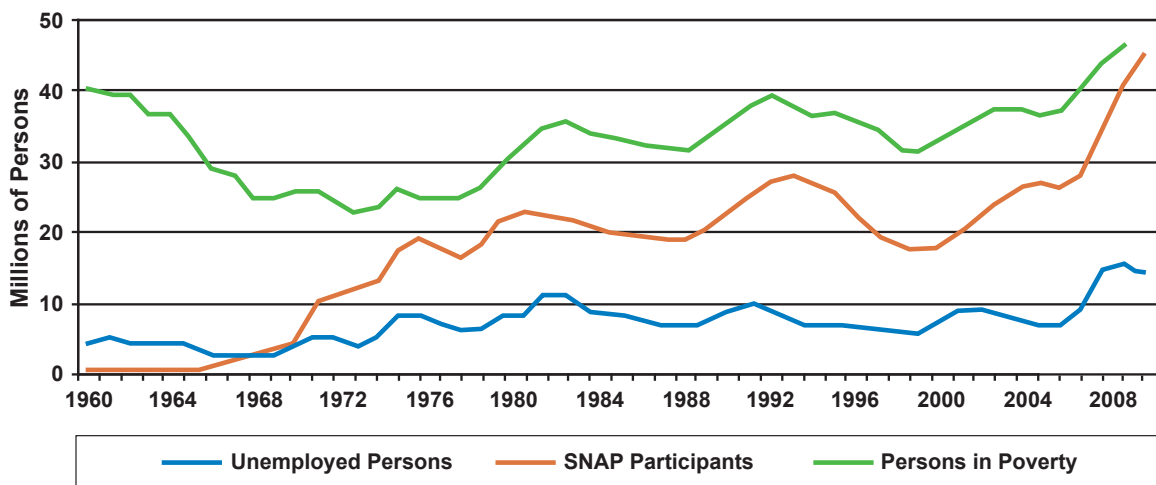
2000 in response to a strong economy, restrictions on the eligibility of noncitizens, time limits for nonelderly childless adults, and a lower participation rate among eligible people.

- Participation began rising in 2001 as unemployment and poverty increased. At the same time, eligibility was restored for many noncitizens, vehicle rules were improved, States had options to simplify their reporting requirements, and FNS encouraged improved access to program benefits.
- Participation has continued to grow during the economic downturn during the period 2008 through 2010. As the number of unemployed or underemployed persons and persons in poverty grew, so did SNAP participation, reaching 45 million in fiscal year 2011.

Sources:

FNS Program Operations data, Census Bureau (poverty), Bureau of Labor Statistics (unemployment)

SNAP Participation, Poverty, and Unemployment



Prevalence of Food Insecurity

Households are considered food insecure when their lack of financial resources does not allow them to fully meet their basic food needs at all times.

Food insecurity has been measured since 1995 using the Food Security Supplement to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. Established income and food assistance programs help to provide a safety net for many low-income families.

A record high number of American households experienced food insecurity in 2008 through 2010.

During calendar year 2010, 14.5 percent of all American households were food insecure, including 5.4 percent who experienced very low food security.¹ The percentage of households in the United States experiencing food insecurity jumped to 14.6 percent in 2008 and 14.7 percent in 2009. These three years have had the highest recorded levels of food insecurity since measurement began in 1995. Rates of food insecurity were substantially higher among households with children headed by single parents and among Black and Hispanic households. Food insecurity was more common in large cities and in the South and West.

Children were food insecure at times during the year in 3.9 million households, or 9.8 percent of households with children.

Although children are usually shielded from disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake, children along with adults experienced instances of very low food security in 386,000 households (1.0 percent of households with children) in 2010.

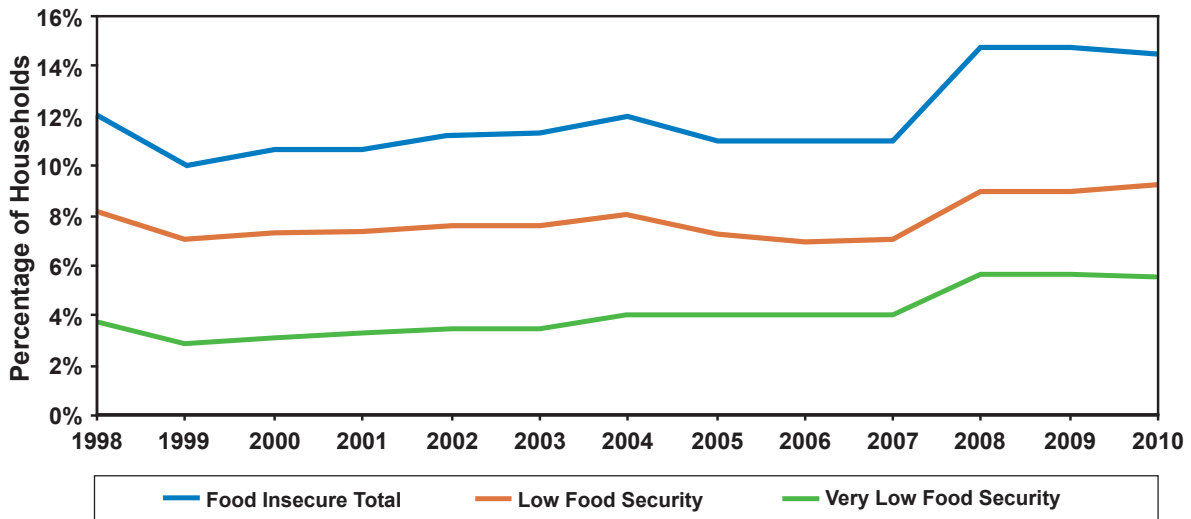
Source:

Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. "Household Food Security in the United States in 2010." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, September 2011.

KEY FACT:

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With the severe economic downturn, food insecurity rose to record high levels in 2008 and remained essentially unchanged in 2009 and 2010.

Prevalence of Food Insecurity



¹ "Very low food security" means that at times during the year, the food intake of household members was reduced and their normal eating patterns were disrupted because the household lacked money and other resources for food.



Serving Americans in Need

Characteristics of SNAP Participants

Nearly half of SNAP participants are children. Forty-seven percent of all participants are less than 18 years old, and about half of all households include at least one child. Households with children receive 71 percent of all SNAP benefits. About 56 percent of the households with children are single parent families.

KEY FACT:

 Nearly 55 percent of SNAP participants are children or elderly. About 41 percent live in households with earnings.

Many SNAP participants are elderly or disabled. Eight percent of all participants are age 60 or older, 73 percent of whom live alone. About 16 percent of all households include an elderly member, and about 20 percent include a disabled member.

Forty-six percent of participants are nonelderly adults, divided about equally among childless adults, single parents, and adults living with children and at least one other adult.

Many participants work. About 30 percent of all households have earnings from a job; about 41 percent of all participants live in a household with earnings.

Few participants rely on cash welfare. About 8 percent receive cash TANF and 21 percent receive SSI.

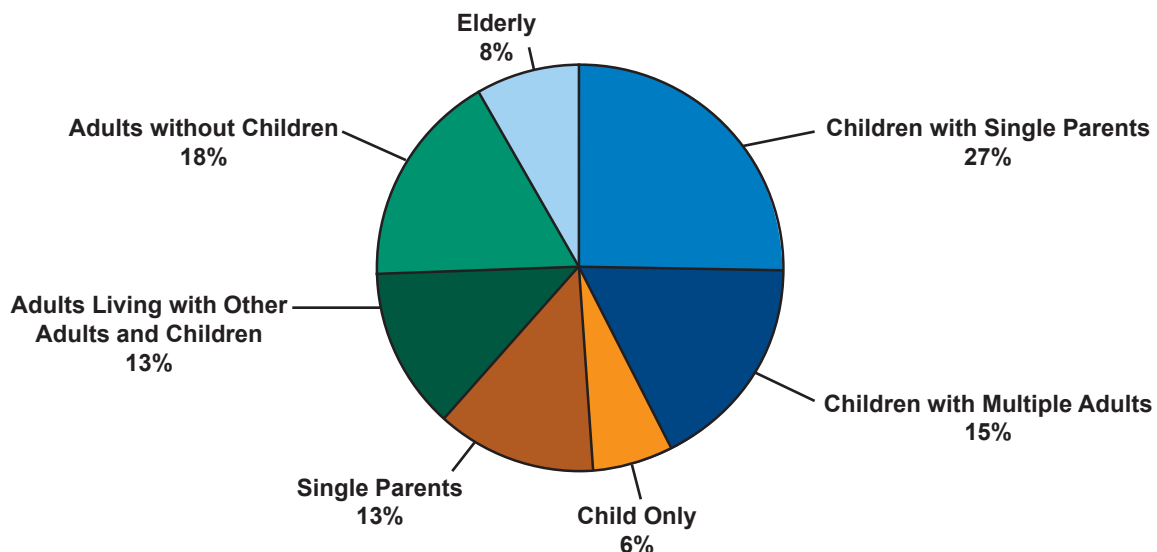
Nearly 40 percent of SNAP households receive the maximum allotment because they have little or no income. Nearly 20 percent of households have no gross income; another 19 percent have no net income.

About 4 percent of SNAP participants are noncitizens. All are legal immigrants admitted for permanent residence such as legal permanent resident aliens and refugees. Another 3 percent are naturalized citizens.

Source:

Eslami, Esa, Kai Filion, and Mark Strayer. "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Households: Fiscal Year 2010." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, September 2011.

Demographic Characteristics of SNAP Participants: FY 2010



Sources of Cash Income in SNAP Households

Many participating households are or have been part of the labor force: 30 percent have earnings, 21 percent receive Social Security, and 7 percent receive Unemployment Insurance and/or Workers Compensation.

Participating households receive cash from a variety of unearned sources that help them make ends meet: 21 percent receive SSI, 8 percent receive TANF, 10 percent receive child support, and 4 percent receive General Assistance.

Households with earned income now represent a larger portion of the total SNAP caseload than in the past. Over the past 10 years the percentage

of households with earned income has increased from 27 percent to 30 percent, whereas the share of households with unearned income has declined from 79 percent to 60 percent.

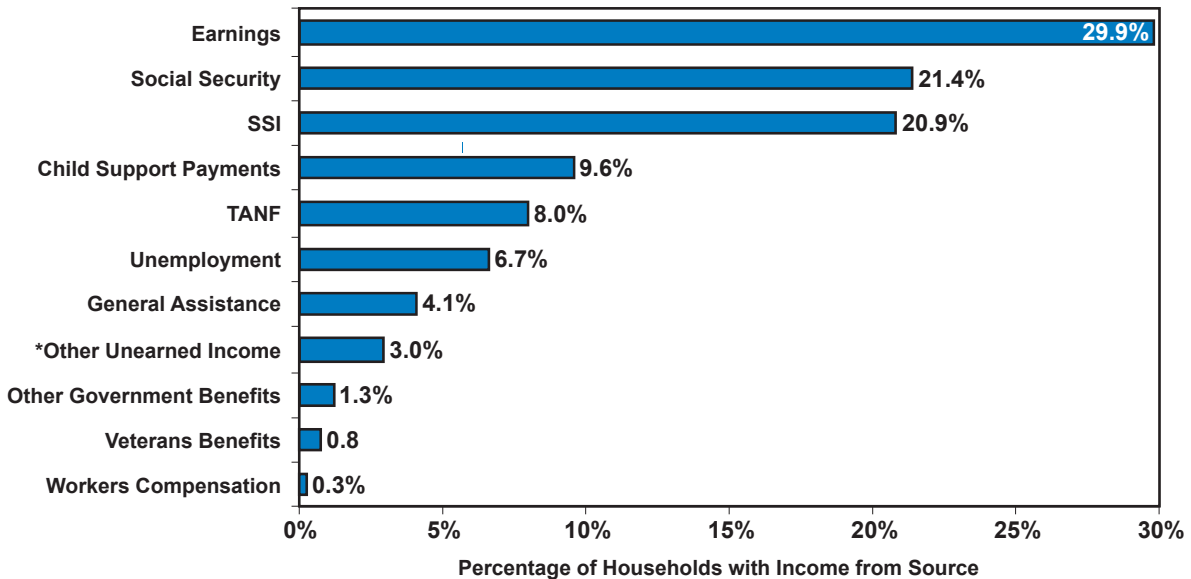
Source:

Eslami, Esa, Kai Filion, and Mark Strayer. "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Households: Fiscal Year 2010." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, September 2011.

KEY FACT:

Earnings from employment are the most common single source of income for SNAP households.

Sources of SNAP Household Income: FY 2010



*Other unearned income includes alimony, foster care payments, and dividend and interest payments. Other government cash benefits include Black Lung Benefits, Railroad Retirement payments, and USDA payments to farmers.

Income and Poverty Status of SNAP Households

SNAP households have little cash income. In fiscal year 2010, more than 43 percent of SNAP households had gross incomes at or below 50 percent of the poverty level (including 20 percent with no gross income), and only 15 percent had gross income above the poverty level.

SNAP makes a real impact on poverty. The value of SNAP benefits, when added to cash income, moved 13 percent of participating households above the poverty guideline in 2010. SNAP benefits had an even greater impact on the poorest households, moving 16 percent above 50 percent of the poverty guideline. On average, one-fourth of a SNAP household's monthly income came from SNAP.

KEY FACT:

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If SNAP benefits were counted as income, 13 percent of households would move above the poverty guidelines.

SNAP benefits have a powerful anti-poverty effect that is not reflected in the Nation's official poverty statistics. The Census Bureau has developed a Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) that uses a different calculation of income to measure poverty. The SPM adds to cash income the value of near-cash benefits, including SNAP and other assistance programs, and then subtracts taxes, work-related expenses, childcare expenses, out-of-pocket medical expenses, and child support payments. Including SNAP benefits in the calculation reduced the SPM-based poverty rate by 1.9 percentage points from 17.7 percent to 15.8 percent in 2009. In 2010, the Census Bureau indicates that SNAP would lift 3.9

million Americans—including 1.7 million children—out of poverty if its benefits were included in the official measures of income and poverty.

SNAP plays an important role in improving the welfare of children in low-income households. Participation in the program significantly reduces the depth and severity of child poverty. When SNAP was added to cash income in 2007, the percentage of working families with children below 50 percent of poverty dropped from 20 percent to 4 percent. The percentage of families with children at or above the Federal poverty guidelines increased from 26 to 45 percent when SNAP was added to cash income. Another study focusing on three States found that SNAP reduced child poverty by 3.4 to 5.1 percentage points in 2008.

Sources:

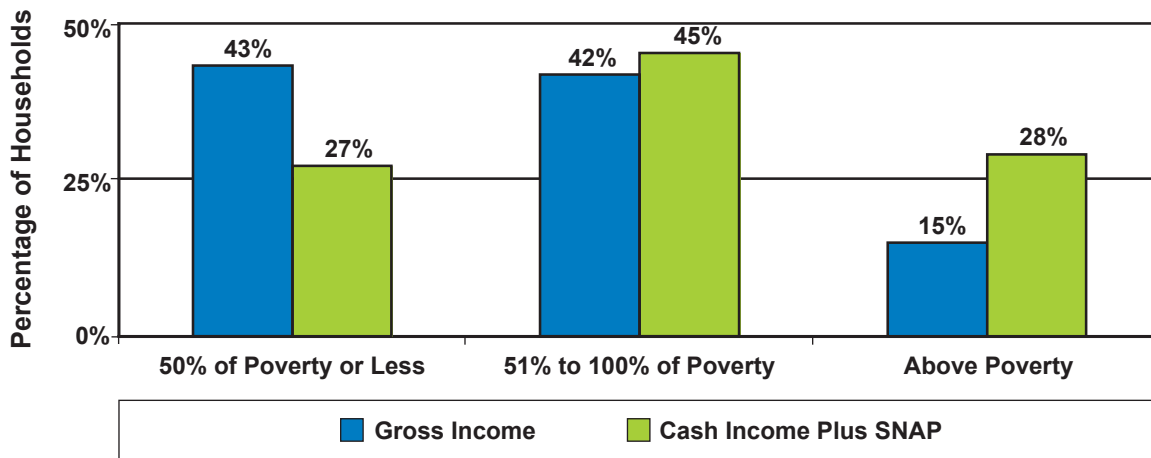
Eslami, Esa, Kai Filion, and Mark Strayer. "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Households: Fiscal Year 2010." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, September 2011.

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Wheaton, Laura, Linda Giannarelli, Michael Martinez-Schiferl, and Sheila Zedlewski. "The Effects of the Safety Net on Child Poverty in Three States." Low-Income Working Families Fact Sheet. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, July 2011.

Zedlewski, Sheila R., and Ei Yin Mon. "Many Low-Income Working Families Turn to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program For Help." Low-Income Working Families Fact Sheet. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, August 2009.

Poverty Status of SNAP Households: FY 2010



Deductions Available to SNAP Households

Eligibility for SNAP and determination of the benefit amount start with gross income, but certain expenses can be deducted. Deductions recognize that households have expenses that reduce funds available to purchase a nutritious diet. They also encourage certain behaviors, such as paying child support or working.

Most households take advantage of one or more deductions. In fiscal year 2010, nearly 71 percent deducted excess shelter expenses averaging \$364. For households without an elderly or disabled member, there is cap on the excess shelter deduction (\$459 in fiscal year 2010). Thirty percent of households deducted earned income, averaging \$201. Four percent deducted dependent care expenses. The 2008 Farm Bill eliminated the cap on the dependent care deduction. Four percent deducted allowable medical expenses, which is available only for individuals who are elderly or disabled. Only 2 percent of households took the deduction for child support payments paid to other non-household members. The standard deduction, which varies by household size, is available to all households (with the exception of some households in a few demonstrations). The 2008 Farm Bill increased the minimum standard deduction to \$144 in 2009 and indexed it to inflation.

Some households are not able to use the full value of deductions available to them.

Because net income cannot be less than zero, households with total deductions greater than their gross income can only claim a portion of the deductions available to them. In fiscal year 2010, about 20 percent of all participating households had zero gross income and received the maximum benefit without taking any deductions. Another 20 percent had sufficient deductions to offset their gross income and raise their benefit to the maximum.

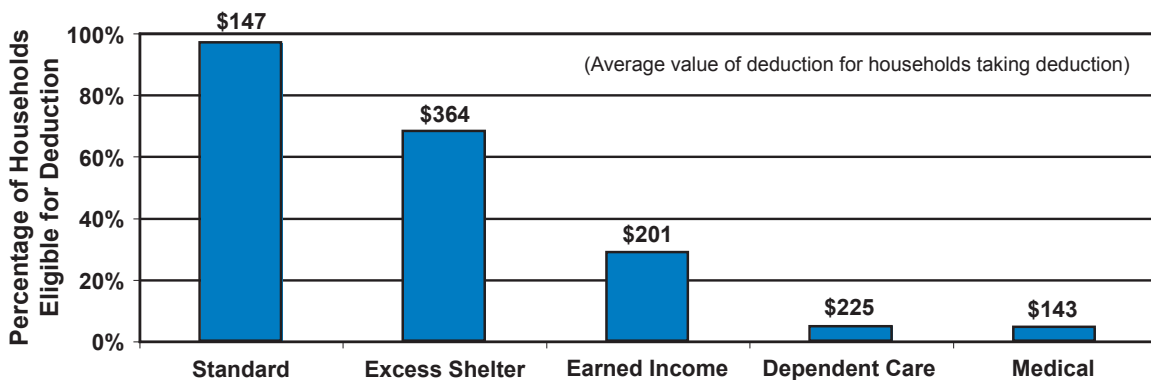
KEY FACT:

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The shelter deduction, taken by 71 percent of households and worth an average of \$364, is a key deduction in determining a household's net income.

Source:

Eslami, Esa, Kai Filion, and Mark Strayer. "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Households: Fiscal Year 2010." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, September 2011.

Frequency of Income Deductions: FY 2010



Changes in Characteristics of SNAP Participants

Over the past 20 years, earnings have replaced cash welfare as the most common income source among SNAP households. Earnings or earned income is defined as wages, salaries, or self-employment income. The percentage of households with cash

KEY FACT:

The most common income source for SNAP households is earned income.

welfare (formerly Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC], now known as TANF) fell from 42 to 8 percent between fiscal years 1990 and 2010, whereas the percentage with earnings rose from 19 to 30 percent.

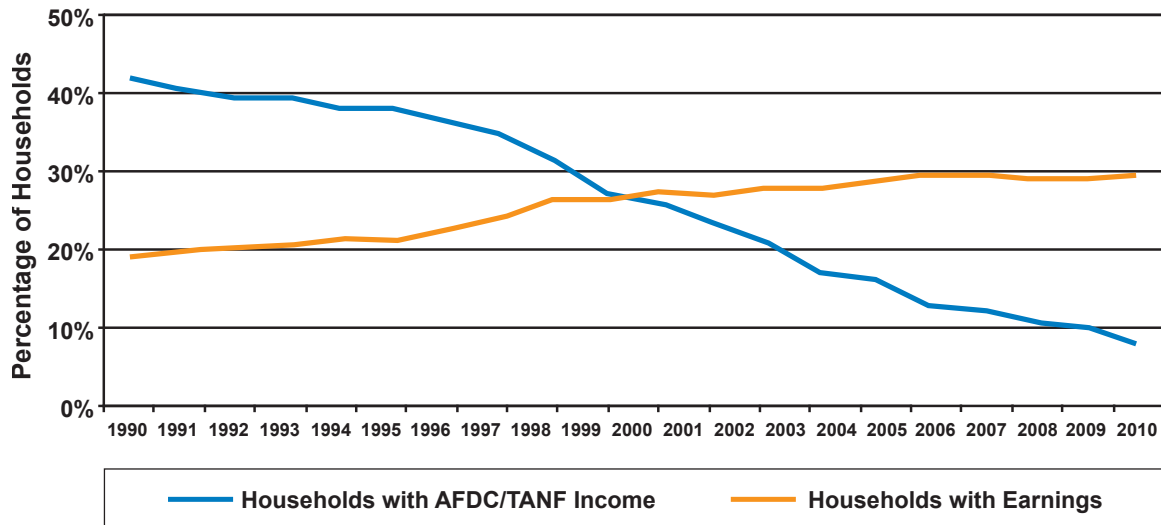
The proportion of SNAP households with no income has nearly tripled over the past 20 years.

The percentage of households with zero gross income has grown from 7 percent in fiscal year 1990 to 20 percent in fiscal year 2010. Similarly, the percentage of households with zero net income, after all applicable deductions, has doubled from 19 percent to 38 percent during the same time period.

Source:

Eslami, Esa, Kai Filion, and Mark Strayer. "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Households: Fiscal Year 2010." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, September 2011.

SNAP Households Receiving TANF Versus Earnings



Dynamics of SNAP Participation

Half of all new SNAP participants received benefits for 10 months or less in the mid 2000s, up from 8 months in the early 2000s. Single parent families and elderly individuals tended to stay in the program longer than did working poor individuals, childless adults without disabilities, and noncitizens. Seventy-four percent of new participants left the program within two years. This is an increase from 71 percent in the early 1990s.

Participants who stay on SNAP for longer periods of time account for a high proportion of the caseload in any single month. Half of SNAP participants in May 2004 were on the program for seven years. This is a sizable increase from May 2001, when the median length of participation was four years. A decade before, the median time spent on SNAP was more than eight years.

The elderly, disabled adults, and single parents and their children account for a larger proportion of long-term SNAP participants. Married parents and their children, able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs), and the working poor account for a smaller share. For example, elderly participants account for 5 percent of the caseload that has received SNAP for one year or less, but 15 percent of the caseload that has received SNAP for seven years or more. The working poor (individuals in households with earnings) account for 75 percent of the caseload that has received SNAP for one year or less, but 39 percent of the long-term SNAP participants.

More than half of SNAP participants who stopped receiving benefits returned within two years, and those who had longer prior periods of participation were

more likely to return than were those who previously received benefits for a short time.

SNAP serves substantially more individuals over the course of a year than is implied by the monthly average number of participants.

About 40 percent more individuals participated over the course of a year than participated in an average month, resulting in a turnover rate of 1.4 in the mid 2000s. The turnover rate was 1.3 in the early 1990s and 1.5 in the early 2000s.

KEY FACT:

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Half of all new SNAP participants leave the program within 10 months. More than half of those who leave return within two years.

Sources:

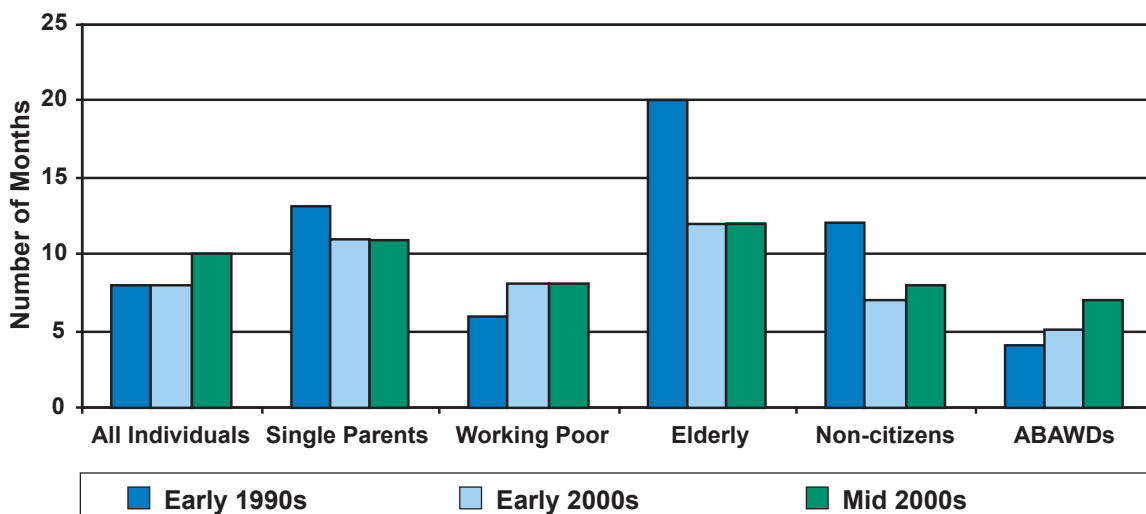
Cody, Scott, Laura Castner, James Mabli, and Julie Sykes. "Dynamics of Food Stamp Program Participation, 2001-2003." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, November 2007.

Gleason, Philip, Peter Schochet, and Robert Moffitt. "The Dynamics of Food Stamp Program Participation in the Early 1990s." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, April 1998.

Mabli, James, Stephen Tordella, Laura Castner, Thomas Godfrey, and Priscilla Foran. "Dynamics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation in the Mid-2000s." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Alexandria, VA: Decision Demographics, September 2011.

Median Length of SNAP Participation by Subgroups

(as measured from month of SNAP entry)



Participation in Multiple Nutrition Programs

Most families who participate in nutrition assistance programs do not enroll in every one. Among all people that participate in at least one of four major Federal nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, free or reduced-price school lunch and breakfast, and WIC²), only 6 percent live in families that receive all four, and 42 percent live in families that receive only one.

KEY FACT:

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About 42 percent of the people that receive benefits from the four largest FNS nutrition assistance programs participate in only one program.

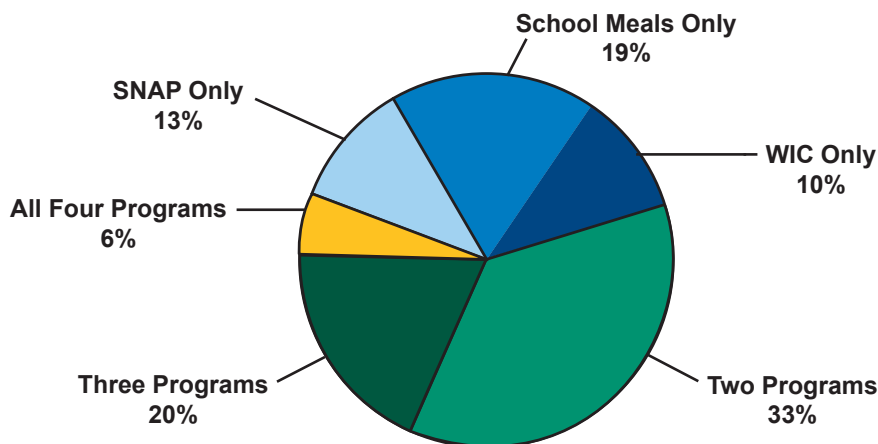
Forty-three percent of the participants in nutrition assistance programs receive SNAP. Thirteen percent receive only SNAP, 19 percent receive only school meals (lunch or breakfast), and 10 percent receive only WIC.

One-third of children that participate in school lunch also receive SNAP benefits. Virtually all children that receive a free or reduced-price school breakfast also receive free or reduced-price school lunch. Children living in households that receive SNAP benefits are automatically eligible for free school meals through the direct certification process.

Source:

Gothro, Andrew, and Carole Trippe. "Multiple Benefit Receipt Among Individuals Receiving Food Assistance and Other Government Assistance." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, July 26, 2010.

Individuals Participating in Multiple Nutrition Assistance Programs: FY 2006



Distribution of persons in households in 2006

²Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).



Ensuring Access

SNAP Participation Rates

One important measure of a program's performance is its ability to reach its target population, as indicated by the fraction of people eligible for benefits that actually participate.

After falling to a low of 54 percent in 2001 and 2002, SNAP's participation rate among eligible people has increased in recent years, reaching 72 percent in fiscal year 2009. Economic changes, increased outreach to low-income households, simplification of reporting requirements, a trend toward more categorical eligibility, less restrictive vehicular asset rules, and the restoration of eligibility to many legal noncitizens all contributed to this expansion.

The program provided 91 percent of the total benefits possible, an indication that benefits reach those most in need.

Although only 31 percent of eligible persons with incomes above 100 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines participated, 89 percent with incomes below poverty participated.

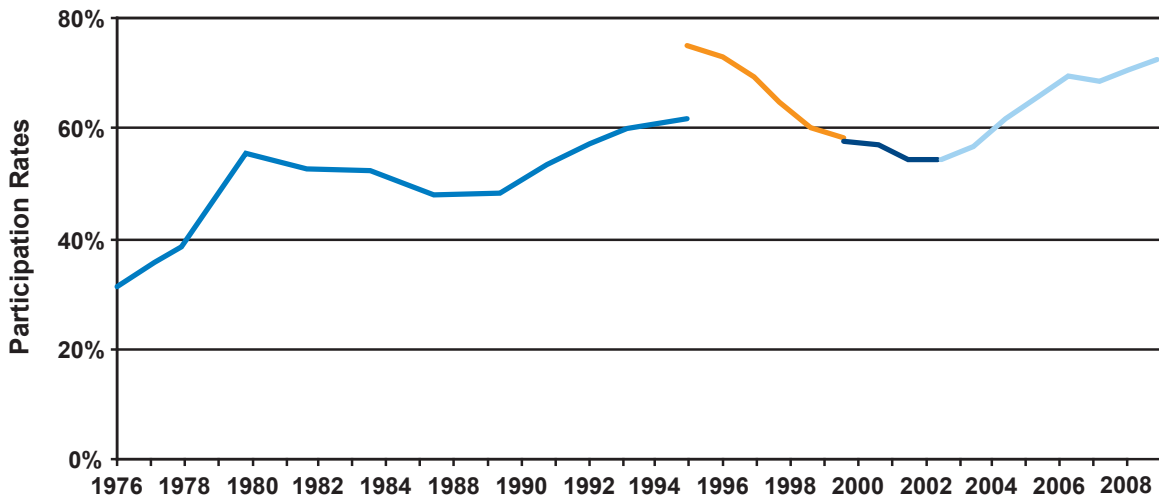
Source:

Leftin, Joshua, Esa Eslami, and Mark Strayer. "Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2009." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, August 2010.

KEY FACT:

The SNAP participation rate among all eligible individuals was 72 percent in fiscal year 2009.

SNAP Participation Rates Among Eligible Individuals



Breaks in the trend line represent transitions to improved estimation methods.

SNAP Participation Rates by Subgroups

Children have the highest SNAP participation rate among all demographic subgroups. At 92 percent, the participation rate of children was 20 percentage points higher than the overall participation rate of 72 percent in fiscal year 2009. Individuals in households with children participate at a significantly higher rate than do individuals who live in households without children.

KEY FACT:

 Historically, children have the highest SNAP participation rate and elderly have the lowest.

Participation rates are lowest among the elderly. Slightly more than one-third of eligible elderly (34 percent) receive benefits. Nondisabled childless adults subject to work registration requirements also participate at a lower rate (56 percent).

The vast majority (96 percent) of individuals who live in a household that receives TANF benefits participate in SNAP. In addition, SSI recipients have

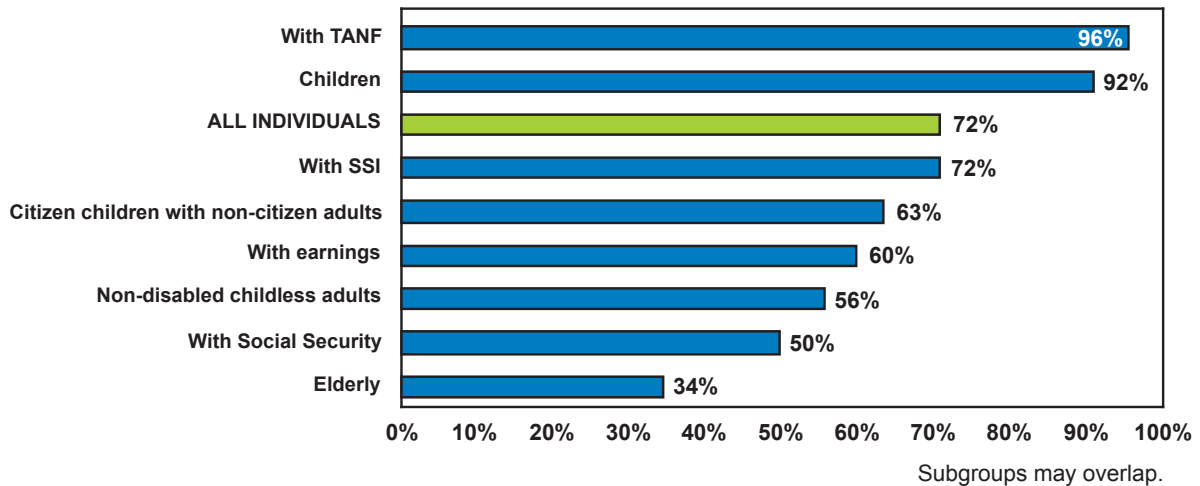
a 72 percent participation rate, whereas individuals who receive Social Security have only a 50 percent participation rate. Individuals who live in household with earnings participate at a rate of 60 percent.

For most groups of participants, participation rates increase as benefits increase; and, overall, participants receive higher benefits than would eligible nonparticipants. Households with earnings are eligible for a lower benefit, on average, and thus participate at a lower rate than the overall participation rate. But many eligible nonparticipants forgo a substantial benefit. Nearly 58 percent of all eligible nonparticipants would qualify for a monthly benefit of more than \$100, and nearly 35 percent would qualify for more than \$200.

Source:

Leftin, Joshua, Esa Eslami, and Mark Strayer. "Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Year 2002 to Fiscal Year 2009." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, August 2010.

Individual Participation Rates by Subgroups: FY 2009



SNAP Participation Rates by State

SSNAP participation rates vary widely among States. In fiscal year 2009, participation rates among all eligible persons ranged from a low of 53 percent in California to a high of 100 percent in Maine.

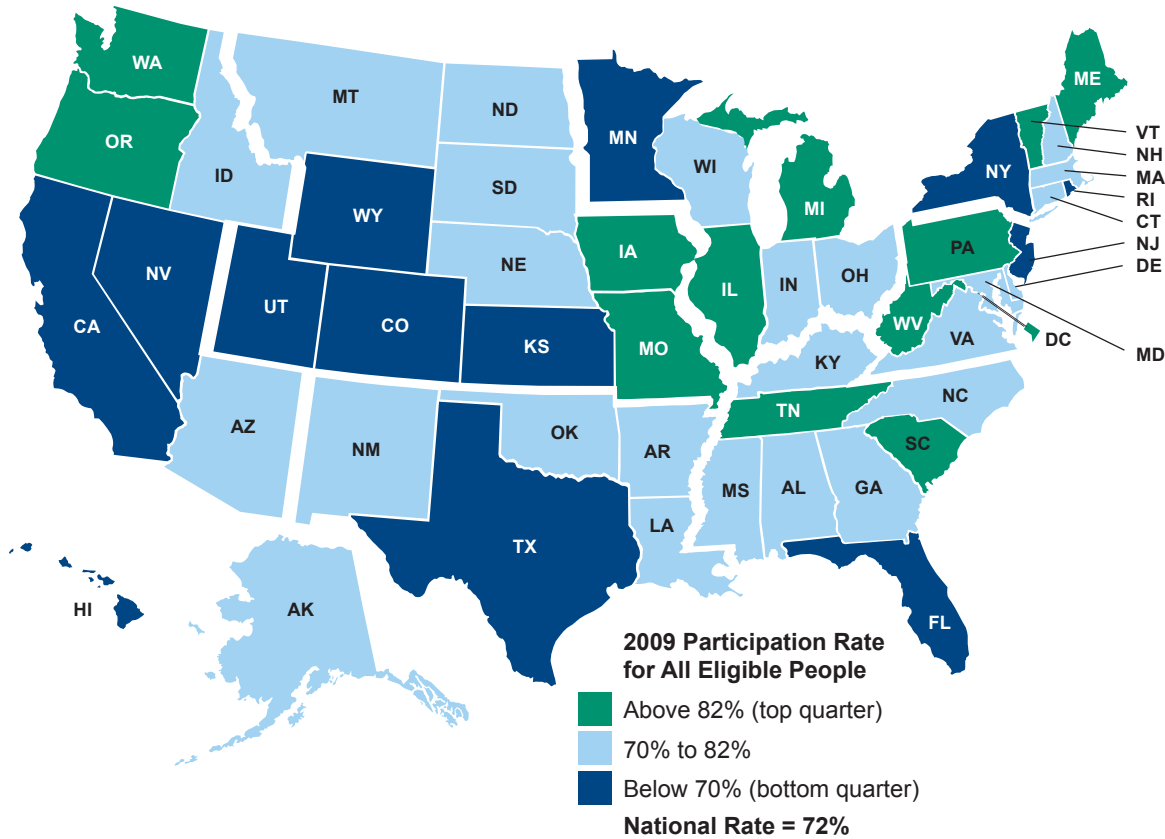
Some States have had consistently high and low rates relative to other States. From 2007 to 2009, Iowa, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Oregon, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia had significantly higher participation rates than rates in two-thirds of the States, whereas California, New Jersey, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming had significantly lower rates than rates in two-thirds of the States.

At 60 percent, the participation rate for the working poor (households with earned income) was lower than the rate for all eligibles in fiscal year 2009. The participation rate for the working poor was significantly lower than the rate for all eligible persons in 35 States. In no State was the rate for the working poor significantly higher than the rate for all eligible people.

Source:

Cunningham, Karen E. "Reaching Those in Need: State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2009." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, December 2011.

State SNAP Participation Rates: FY 2009



Reasons for Not Participating in SNAP

There are many potential reasons why people eligible for benefits may not apply. Five of the most common reasons cited in the research literature include lack of information about eligibility, a sense that benefits are not needed, dissatisfaction with the size of the benefit, the complexity of the application process, or the stigma attached to participation.

Most nonparticipation in SNAP does not stem from a lack of basic awareness of the program. Nearly all eligible nonparticipants (96 percent) know of the program, two-thirds know where to go to apply for benefits, and half have previously received SNAP as adults.

Lack of information about their eligibility is a more important reason for nonparticipation. Less than half of all apparently eligible nonparticipants think that they are eligible.

Most (69 percent) nonparticipants would apply for SNAP benefits if they knew that they were eligible. Nevertheless, 27 percent would not apply even if they knew they were eligible. The vast majority (91 percent) of these households who would not apply most often cite a desire for personal independence as their reason.

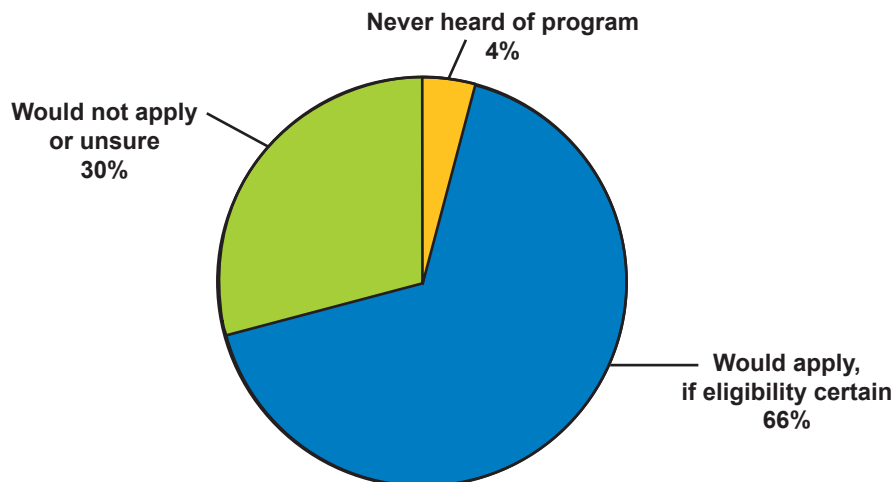
Among the elderly, low benefits are a major reason for not participating. Because low-income elderly are relatively better off than are the nonelderly, they tend to qualify for lower benefits. Moreover, food insecurity rates are lower among the elderly, indicating less need. Finally, the Elderly Nutrition Program's group and home delivered meals appear to substitute for SNAP benefits rather than complement them.

Sources:

Bartlett, Susan, and Nancy Burstein. "Food Stamp Program Access Study: Eligible Nonparticipants." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, December 2003.

Ponza, Michael, James Ohls, Lorenzo Moreno, Amy Zambrowski, and Rhoda Cohen. "Customer Service in the Food Stamp Program." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, July 1999.

Yanyuan Wu, April. "Why Do So Few Elderly Use Food Stamps?" Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy Studies, October 2009.



Combined Application Projects

Combined Application Projects (CAPs) were introduced as a means of improving access to SNAP for SSI recipients through streamlined procedures for providing SNAP benefits. Federal law provides that recipients of SSI who live alone or in households in which every member receives means-tested benefits are categorically eligible for SNAP. Potential CAP participants are identified either at intake, during recertification for SSI, or through a data match between SNAP and SSI administrative records. SSI data on income and household composition are used for eligibility determination and no face-to-face interviews are required.

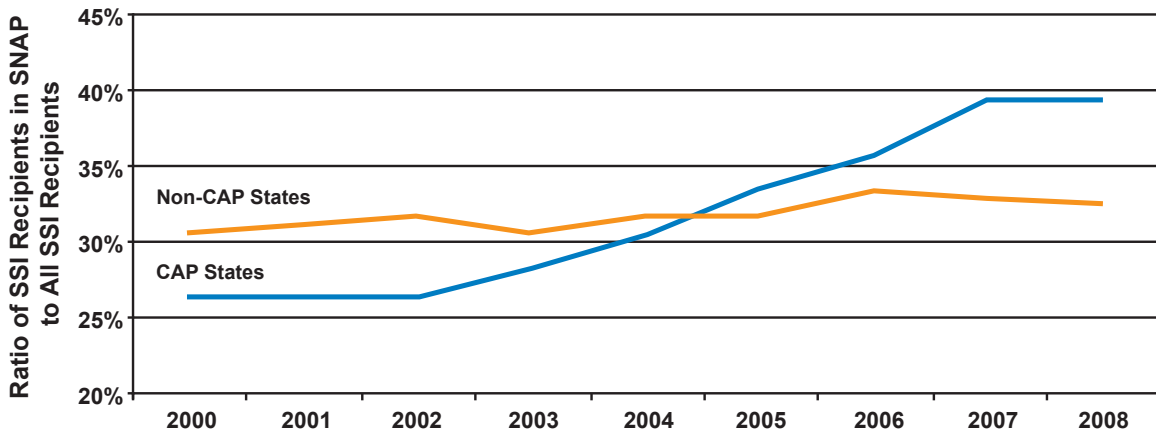
At the end of fiscal year 2011, 18 States had implemented CAP demonstrations and additional States have submitted applications or expressed interest in implementing CAPs. States may choose to provide a standard benefit that varies by shelter costs or a variable benefit that is calculated using two or

more standard shelter expenses. CAP procedures simplify enrollment and reporting for households and case management for State agencies.

CAPs are successful at increasing SNAP participation among SSI recipients. In CAP States, the percentage of one-person SSI cases participating in SNAP increased by 48 percent, whereas the percentage in non-CAP States remained relatively flat. The increase in participation among one-person SSI recipients in CAP States was much greater than the overall increase in SNAP participation in the CAP States during this same time period.

Source:

Murphy, Barbara. "Combined Application Projects: An Analysis of Their Impact on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program." Study submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Alexandria, VA: NMR Consulting, Inc., September 2010.





Ending Hunger and Improving Diet Quality

Reducing Food Insecurity

Federal and community food assistance programs are important resources for low-income households. The level of food insecurity has remained steady during the last three years, despite a significant increase in the rate of poverty in the United States, underscoring the important role of Federal nutrition assistance programs in helping to prevent food insecurity. During the month

KEY FACT:

.....
SNAP participation lowers the likelihood of being food insecure.

Households turn to SNAP when they are more severely food insecure. The prevalence of very low food security among households increases from around 8 percent one year prior to entering SNAP to nearly 20 percent in the four to six months prior to entry. Within a few months of entering SNAP, the prevalence of very low food security declines to around 12 percent. Another study has found that SNAP receipt reduces the likelihood of being food insecure by roughly 30 percent and reduces the likelihood of being very food insecure by 20 percent.

before the December 2010 food security survey was administrated, approximately 41 percent of food-insecure households and 42 percent of households with very low food security received SNAP.

Evidence suggests that the increase in SNAP benefits provided by the Recovery Act contributed to the ability of SNAP participants to increase their food expenditures and improve food security.

A recent study indicates that food expenditures by low-income households increased by more than 5 percent and food security improved by more than 2 percent between 2008 and 2009. These changes were considerably larger than changes for households with incomes above the SNAP eligibility range.

Sources:

Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. "Household Food Security in the United States in 2010." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, September 2011.

Nord, Mark, and Anne Marie Golla. "Does SNAP Decrease Food Insecurity? Untangling the Self-Selection Effect." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, October 2009.

Nord, Mark, and Mark Prell. "Food Security Improved Following the ARRA Increase in SNAP Benefits in 2009." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, April 2011.

Ratcliffe, Caroline, and Signe-Mary McKernan. "How Much Does SNAP Reduce Food Insecurity?" Washington, DC: Urban Institute, March 2010.

Adequacy of SNAP Benefits

	Benefits as a Percentage of the Maximum Allotment in FY 2010					
	Minimum Benefit	< 25% of Maximum	25–50% of Maximum	51–75% of Maximum	76–99% of Maximum	Maximum Benefit
Percentage of SNAP Households	3.8	4.6	13.9	17.8	19.9	40.0

SSNAP participants received a monthly benefit of about \$134, on average, per person in fiscal year 2010. SNAP benefit amounts are based on the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), a nutritious, minimal cost food plan that reflects current nutrition standards and guidance. Families with no net income receive the maximum allotment, the full cost of the TFP. Most SNAP households have income and receive a benefit equal to the difference between the maximum allotment and 30 percent of their net income. The maximum benefit for a family of four in fiscal year 2012 is \$668, or less than \$1.90 per person per meal. The minimum benefit, available only to one- and two-person households, is \$16 in fiscal year 2012.

On average, low-income people in the United States consume amounts of most vitamins and minerals that meet or exceed established nutrition standards. However, usual intake of several key nutrients is lower than recommended for a substantial number of individuals. One study reports, for example, that 93 percent of SNAP participants had adequate intakes of iron, but only 80 percent had adequate intakes of zinc and 61 percent had adequate intakes of vitamin C.

More than half (52 percent) of all SNAP households experienced food insecurity during 2010; about 20 percent experienced very low food security. The relationship between program participation and food security is complex. The program is intended to reduce

hunger by increasing household purchasing power. But households with the greatest difficulty meeting their food needs may be more likely to seek help than others.

More than half (54 percent) of food pantry users report SNAP participation in the last month. About 58 percent of emergency kitchen users report SNAP participation in the same timeframe.

Sources:

Cole, Nancy, and Mary Kay Fox. "Diet Quality of Americans by Food Stamp Participation Status: Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1999-2004." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, July 2008.

Coleman-Jensen, Alisha, Mark Nord, Margaret Andrews, and Steven Carlson. "Household Food Security in the United States in 2010." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, September 2011.

Eslami, Esa, Kai Filion, and Mark Strayer. "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Households: Fiscal Year 2010." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, September 2011.

KEY FACT:

Forty percent of SNAP households receive the maximum benefit for their household size.

Food Expenditures Among SNAP Participants

SNAP households spend about a quarter of their income on food. About 22 percent of income is spent on food at home and 2 percent on food away from home. In contrast, SNAP households spend about 43 percent of their income on housing.

KEY FACT:
.....
With an additional dollar of SNAP benefits, households would spend approximately 14 to 47 cents more on food.

SNAP benefits increase household food expenditures and the increase is greater than what would occur with an equal benefit in cash. The most reliable estimates indicate that each additional dollar in SNAP benefits generates 14 to 47 cents of new spending on food. In contrast, an additional

dollar of cash generates 5 to 13 cents more food spending. Another study found that for each additional dollar of cash, an additional 7 to 8 cents is spent on food at home and an additional 2 to 3 cents for food away from home. This is less than the additional amount allocated to housing and transportation but more than that spent on apparel or health.

Vegetables, fruits, grain products, meat, and meat alternatives account for most of the money value of food used by SNAP households. These groups

account for nearly three-quarters of the money value of food used at home. Lower-cost red meats (7.8 percent) and milk and yogurt (7.6 percent) account for the largest shares of food at home.

Sources:

Castner, Laura, and James Mabli. "Low-Income Household Spending Patterns and Measures of Poverty." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, April 2010.

Cole, Nancy. "Evaluation of the Expanded EBT Demonstration in Maryland: Patterns of Food Stamp and Cash Welfare Benefit Redemption." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc., February 1997.

Fox, Mary Kay, William Hamilton, and Biing-Hwan Lin. "Effects of Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Nutrition and Health." Volume 4, Executive Summary of the Literature Review. Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc., November 2004.

Ohls, James, Barbara Cohen, and Rhoda Cohen. "Food Stamp Participants' Food Security and Nutrient Availability." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, July 1999.

Ohls, James, Michael Ponza, Lorenzo Moreno, Amy Zambrowski, and Rhoda Cohen. "Food Stamp Participants' Access to Food Retailers." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, July 1999.

Diet Quality of SNAP Participants

The diets of all Americans fall far short of the **Dietary Guidelines for Americans**. The overall average score on the Healthy Eating Index-2005³ (HEI-2005) was 58 out of a possible 100 in 1999–2004. SNAP participants scored slightly lower, with an overall score of 52, versus 56 for income eligible nonparticipants and higher-income nonparticipants. All groups had very low intakes of whole grains, dark green and orange vegetables, and legumes. All groups had high intakes of saturated fat, and too many discretionary calories came from solid fats, alcoholic beverages, and added sugars.

Increasing the amount SNAP participants can spend on food improves diet quality, but the improvement is very small. Most increases in the diet-quality measures are statistically significant, but nearly all increases associated with a 10 percent increase in food expenditures are less than 3 percent, and many are less than 1 percent. A 10 percent increase in spending on food increases a household’s HEI-2005 score by approximately 0.30 percent. A 10 percent increase in

food spending for SNAP participants correlates to increased intake of fruits and vegetables, high-fat dairy and milk products, and whole grains—including grains that are more nutrient dense.

Sources:

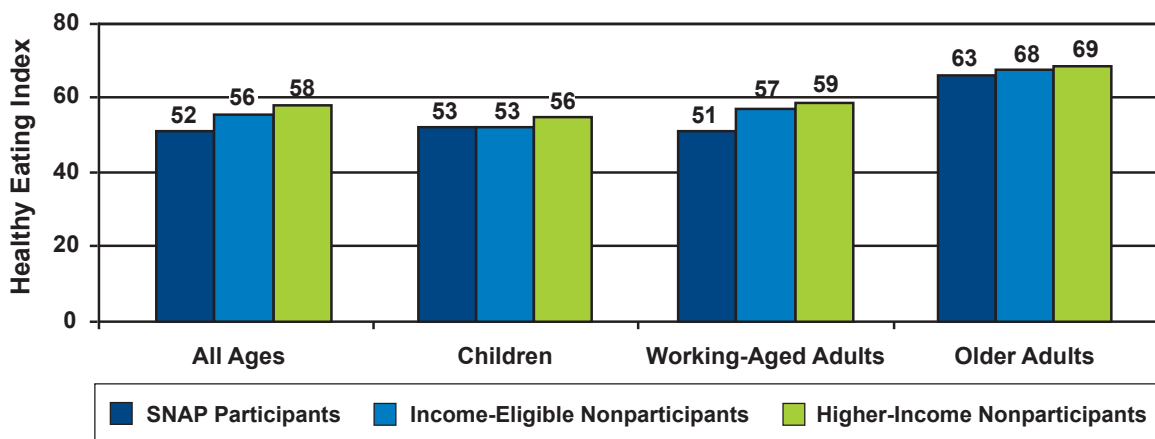
Castner, L, and Mabli, J. “Food Expenditures and Diet Quality Among Low-Income Households and Individuals.” Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, April 2010.

Cole, Nancy, and Mary Kay Fox. “Diet Quality of Americans by Food Stamp Participation Status: Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1999–2004.” Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc., July 2008.

KEY FACT:

.....
The diets of SNAP participants, as measured by the Healthy Eating Index, are similar to that of higher-income Americans.

Healthy Eating Index Scores by Subgroups: 1999 to 2004



³ The Healthy Eating Index (HEI) is a measure of diet quality that can be used to assess compliance with the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans and monitor changes in dietary patterns nationwide. Originally developed in 1995, the HEI was revised after the release of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans in 2005 (HEI-2005).

Food Choice

Across broadly defined food categories, there is little difference in the food choices made by low-income and higher-income families. However, families

at the high end of the income distribution spend more than twice as much on food at home as those at the low end.

Food Category	Percentage of Annual Food-at-Home Expenditures		
	All Units	Lowest 20 Percent of Income	Highest 20 Percent of Income
Cereal and bakery products	0.14	0.14	0.14
Meats, poultry, fish, eggs	0.22	0.23	0.21
Dairy products	0.10	0.10	0.11
Fruits and vegetables	0.19	0.18	0.20
Other food at home	0.35	0.35	0.35
All food at home	1.00	1.00	1.00
Value of food at home	\$3,624	\$2,270	\$5,683

Within food categories, SNAP participants do make some less healthful food choices, as compared to higher-income nonparticipants. For example, SNAP participants were slightly more likely to consume

foods recommended for occasional consumption and somewhat less likely to consume foods recommended for frequent consumption. However, more than half of all foods consumed by all Americans are foods that should be consumed only occasionally.

SNAP Participants' Food Choices	
Somewhat Less Likely to Consume	Somewhat More Likely to Consume
Whole grains	Cornbread or corn tortillas
Raw vegetables	Potatoes
Reduced-fat milk	Whole milk
Sugar-free soda	Regular soda
Foods suggested for selective or frequent consumption	Foods suggested for occasional consumption

SNAP participants were somewhat less likely to consume fruits or vegetables than other Americans. There were more differences among adults than among children.

Most SNAP participants have adequate usual intakes for most vitamins, minerals, and macronutrients. The exceptions are for Vitamin C, Vitamin A, magnesium, and Vitamin E. However, for the last two, most higher-income individuals also fail to meet the adequate usual intake level.

Sources:

Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2010, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Cole, Nancy, and Mary Kay Fox. "Diet Quality of Americans by Food Stamp Participation Status: Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1999-2004." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc., July 2008.

Trippe, Carole, and Daisy Ewell. "An Analysis of Cash Food Expenditures of Food Stamp Households." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, August 2007.

Hunger, Obesity, and SNAP Participation

Obesity is a nationwide problem that affects all segments of our population. According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), the prevalence of overweight and obesity among all persons age 20 to 74 has increased by 20 percentage points over the past three decades, from a rate of 48 percent in the 1970s to 68 percent in the mid 2000s. Between 1988–1994 and 2007–2008, the prevalence of obese adults has increased across all income and education levels.

Factors such as diet, physical inactivity, genetics, and environment contribute to overweight and obesity. Though low-income people are more vulnerable to obesity risk factors, including sometimes limited access to healthful and affordable foods, limited opportunities for physical activity, and high levels of stress, most obese adults are not low income.

Some observers have pointed to the paradox that hunger persists when a growing number of Americans are overweight and have suggested a possible link between the two. Families who run short on food may tend to eat more when they can because they are unsure when they will have sufficient food again. Because many studies indicate that binge eating can result in weight gain, overeating when food is plentiful may result in gradual gains over time. Because SNAP eligibility is related to poverty, researchers have been interested in how this “hunger-obesity paradox” plays out in the context of SNAP participation.

Existing research provides no consistent evidence of an association—and no evidence of a causal relationship—between SNAP participation and overweight or obesity. The potential effects of food assistance on obesity are tangled with the effects of poverty and socioeconomic status. Because poverty is highly correlated with SNAP participation and with obesity, independent effects are hard to determine. However, the most recent NHANES data from 2005–2008 show little difference between the overweight and obesity rates of those below 100 percent of the poverty level and those at higher levels of income.

Recent studies have found that SNAP participation does not increase either Body Mass Index (BMI) or the likelihood of being overweight or obese for the majority of SNAP participants—children, nonelderly men, and the elderly. For some subgroups,

SNAP participation has a negative association with the probability of being overweight. Nonelderly adult women, who account for 28 percent of the SNAP caseload, are the only group of participants for whom multiple studies show a correlation between SNAP participation and elevated BMI and obesity.

New research on program participation and obesity should explore ways program participation can encourage and promote healthy behaviors.

Additional research is needed to understand the pathways through which SNAP participation can help prevent obesity and to determine which policy changes may be needed.

KEY FACT:
.....
There is little evidence of a connection between SNAP participation and obesity.

Sources:

Larson, N., and M. Story. “Food Insecurity and Risk for Obesity Among Children and Families: Is There a Relationship?—A Research Synthesis.” Minneapolis, MN: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Healthy Eating Research, April 2010.

National Center for Health Statistics. “Health, United States 2010: With Special Feature on Death and Dying.” Hyattsville, MD: NCHS, 2011.

Ogden, C.L., M.D. Carroll, L.R. Curtin, M.A. McDowell, C.J. Tabak, and K.M. Flegal. “Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity in the United States, 1999–2004.” *JAMA*, vol. 295, 2006, pp. 1549–1555.

Ogden, C.L., M. Lamb, M. Carol, and K.M. Flegal. “Obesity and Socioeconomic Status in Adults: United States, 2005–2008.” NCHS Data Brief No. 50. Hyattsville, MD: NCHS, December 2010.

Sheldon, M., K.M. Gans, et al. “Availability, Affordability and Accessibility of a Healthful Diet in a Low-income Community, 2007–2008.” *Preventing Chronic Disease*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2010, p. A43.

Singh, G.K., M. Siahpush, and M.D. Kogan. “Rising Social Inequalities in US Childhood Obesity, 2003–2007.” *Annals of Epidemiology*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2010, pp. 40–52.

Ver Ploeg, Michele, and K. Ralston. “Food Stamps and Obesity: What Do We Know?” Report No. EIB-34. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, March 2008.

SNAP Nutrition Education

The goal of SNAP Nutrition Education (SNAP-Ed) is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP benefits will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPlate.

KEY FACT:

 All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands currently operate SNAP-Ed programs.

SNAP-Ed has grown dramatically over the past decade with increased concern about diet-related diseases.

The number of State agencies with approved SNAP-Ed Plans increased from 7 in fiscal year 1992 to 52 in fiscal year 2011.

Federal funds approved for SNAP-Ed have grown from \$661,000 in fiscal year 1992 to nearly \$380 million in fiscal year 2010. The passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 caps Federal funding of SNAP-Ed at \$375 million in fiscal year 2011 and then indexes it to inflation in future years.

FNS encourages coordinated and collaborative nutrition education that is integrated across programs and the country. Nearly 100 organizations, in partnership with State agencies, provide SNAP-Ed through hundreds of projects.

SNAP-Ed projects target a variety of audiences in diverse settings. The program is designed for families and individuals at any stage in the life span that are eligible for SNAP. Key nutrition objectives across audiences include the following:

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables; eat whole grains, and switch to fat-free or low-fat milk products.
- Increase physical activity and reduce time spent in sedentary behaviors as part of a healthy lifestyle.
- Maintain appropriate calorie balance during each stage of life—childhood, adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and older age.

Sources:

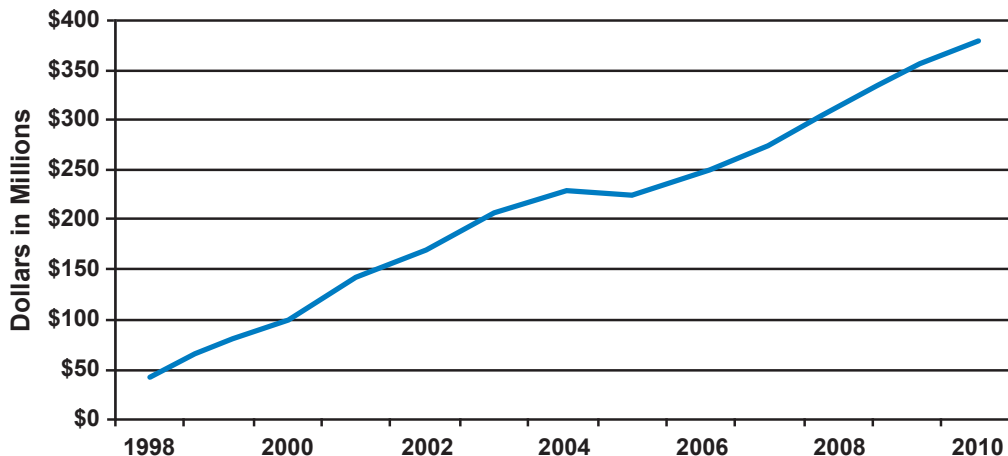
U.S. Department of Agriculture. “Nutrition Program Facts: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed).” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, August 3, 2011. Available online at <http://www.nal.usda.gov/snap/SNAP-EdFactsheet2011.pdf>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance.” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, March 2011. Available online at <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fsn/Guidance/FY2012SNAP-EdGuidance.pdf>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Nutrition Education Briefing Room.” Available online at http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/SNAP/Nutrition_Education.htm

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Nutrition Education website http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/nutrition_education/default.htm

Approved Federal Funding for SNAP Nutrition Education





Promoting Self-Sufficiency

SNAP Work Requirements

Most SNAP participants in fiscal year 2010 (60 percent) were not expected to work because of their age or disability. Nearly 47 percent of SNAP participants are children, another 8 percent are elderly, and about 6 percent are nonelderly adults receiving SSI disability payments. About 53 percent of the nonelderly, non-disabled adult SNAP participants were either working full- or part-time, living with another employed adult, or subject to a meaningful work requirement (e.g., through receipt of TANF or unemployment benefits). Together these groups account for 81 percent of all SNAP participants in fiscal year 2010.

Some SNAP participants are required to register for employment and comply with SNAP work requirements as a condition of eligibility. States reported 6.7 million new work registrants among the new SNAP participants in fiscal year 2010. SNAP work requirements include participating in an Employment and Training (E&T) program if referred, not voluntarily quitting or reducing work hours, and accepting an offer of employment.

States are required to establish a SNAP E&T program to help SNAP participants find work or gain the skills, training, and experience needed to obtain employment. In fiscal year 2010, States served 852,859 SNAP participants through E&T programs. Many persons subject to work registration are also subject

to time limited participation in SNAP. Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) are limited to 3 months of SNAP benefits within a 36-month period unless they meet specific work expectations, such as working 20 hours per week or participating in a work program. SNAP E&T programs can help ABAWDs meet these work expectations through workfare and work experience.

ABAWDs account for only 10 percent of all participants in 2010. Many live in areas that have high unemployment or insufficient jobs and so do not face the three-month time limit. The Recovery Act suspended the three-month time limit on receipt of SNAP benefits for non-disabled adults without children from April 2009 through September 2010.

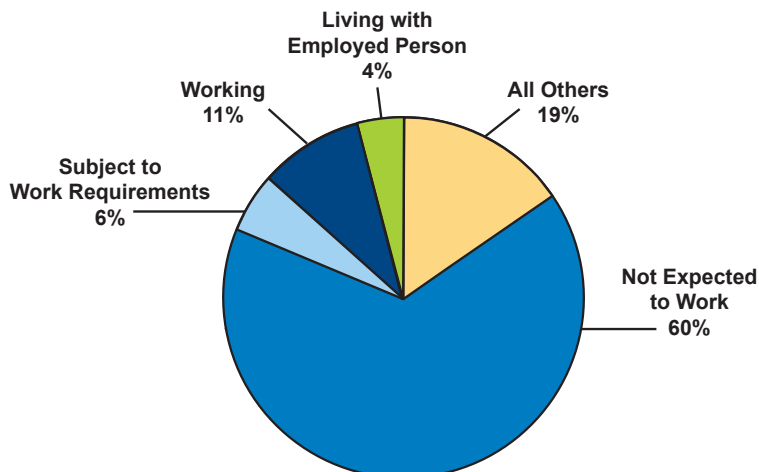
The Federal government provided States \$122 million in direct grants and another \$157 million to match State costs to operate E&T in 2010. The Federal government also matched \$54 million in State funds spent to reimburse E&T participants for dependent care, transportation, and other expenses.

Sources:

SNAP Quality Control Data, Fiscal Year 2010.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. "Fiscal Year 2012 Explanatory Notes." Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 2011.

Work Expectations and Effort Among SNAP Participants: FY 2010



SNAP Interaction with TANF

Most SNAP households do not receive TANF.

The proportion of the SNAP caseload receiving TANF declined steadily from 37 percent in fiscal year 1996 to 8 percent in fiscal year 2010. Nationally uniform SNAP benefit level rules help mitigate State-to-State variation in TANF benefit levels.

KEY FACT:

 Since welfare reform in 1996, fewer SNAP households receive TANF benefits each year.

SNAP policy options allow States to better coordinate the administration of SNAP and TANF:

- Many States have adopted a single application for all public assistance programs, including TANF and SNAP.

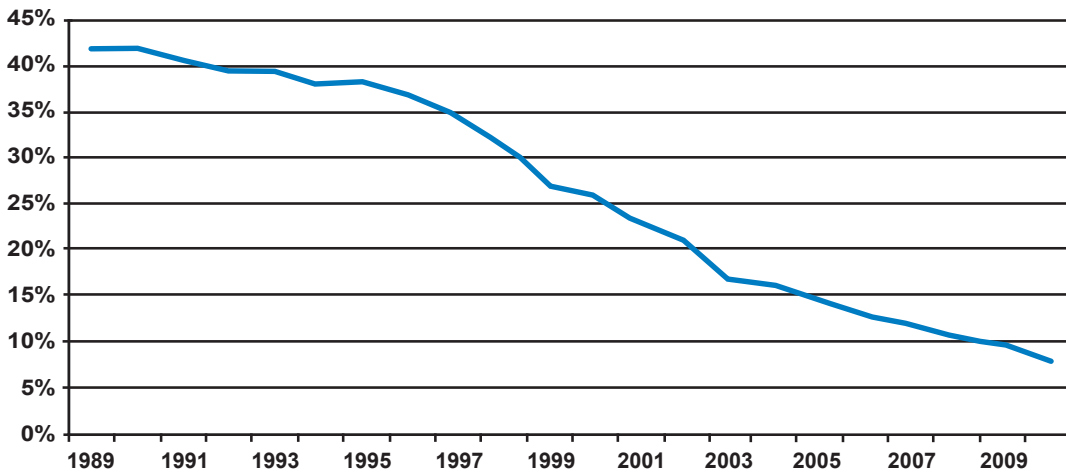
- SNAP eligibility has historically been linked to TANF cash assistance through categorical eligibility.
- At least 21 States have adopted transitional SNAP to help families leaving TANF keep their SNAP benefits.

Sources:

Eslami, Esa, Kai Filion, and Mark Strayer. "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Households: Fiscal Year 2010." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, September 2011.

SNAP Program Development Division. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program State Options Report, Ninth Edition." Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, November 2010.

Percentage of SNAP Households Receiving TANF





Improving Administrative Efficiency

SNAP Modernization

Over the years, many States have reorganized and modernized administrative processes and functions in response to increasing caseloads, budget constraints, and State legislative initiatives. These initiatives fundamentally change the ways SNAP agencies and staff process applications, manage caseloads, and interact with clients.

Because SNAP serves a vulnerable population with critical and immediate needs, it is designed with national standards for client rights and customer service. The most effective modernization efforts have focused on increasing access, improving customer service, and enhancing administrative efficiency consistent with those standards and existing statutory requirements.

Implementing Policy Changes

- Nearly all States have implemented policy options that have simplified or reduced the reporting requirements for SNAP clients.
- Most States received waivers of the Federal requirement to conduct face-to-face interviews with clients at initial certification or recertification.

Restructuring Administrative Functions

- Most States have implemented some type of organizational changes that simplify processes and improve access to SNAP. More than half of all States have out-stationed workers at convenient sites other than the local SNAP agency office. All States now offer a combined application that allows customers to apply for several benefit programs at one time through one form. A few States have made modifications that allow workers to telecommute from home or to telework or “port” work from one area of the state to another.
- Most States have established contractual relationships with commercial businesses to help restructure their administrative functions.

Expanding Applications of Technology

- Nationally, more than half the States have implemented or are planning to implement call centers, although functions of these centers vary widely by State.
- Most States have implemented or plan to implement online application and benefits tools.
- Several States use technology to reduce the use of paper in case files.
- Several States implemented data-sharing systems that use technology to electronically exchange customer data and documentation with one or more agencies.
- Some States have updated or are in the process of updating their management information systems from mainframe systems to web-based systems.

KEY FACT:

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As the program and its participants change over time, State SNAP agencies have “modernized” by making responsive adjustments to provide better access to people in need.

Partnering with Commercial Businesses and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

- Most states have established relationships with partner organizations, typically to conduct outreach and provide information about SNAP, to serve as supplemental access points, to provide application assistance, or to conduct follow-up activities with customers who need additional assistance.

Source:

Rowe, Gretchen, Sam Hall, Carolyn O’Brien, Nancy Pindus, and Robin Koralek. “Enhanced Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Certification: SNAP Modernization Efforts.” Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Urban Institute, June 2010.

Timeliness of SNAP Application Processing

SNAP has statutory deadlines for application processing. States must issue benefits to eligible destitute households within 7 days (expedited service); other eligible households are entitled to benefits within 30 days.

KEY FACT:

 In recent years, rising caseloads and declining resources are challenging States' abilities to process all applications in a timely manner.

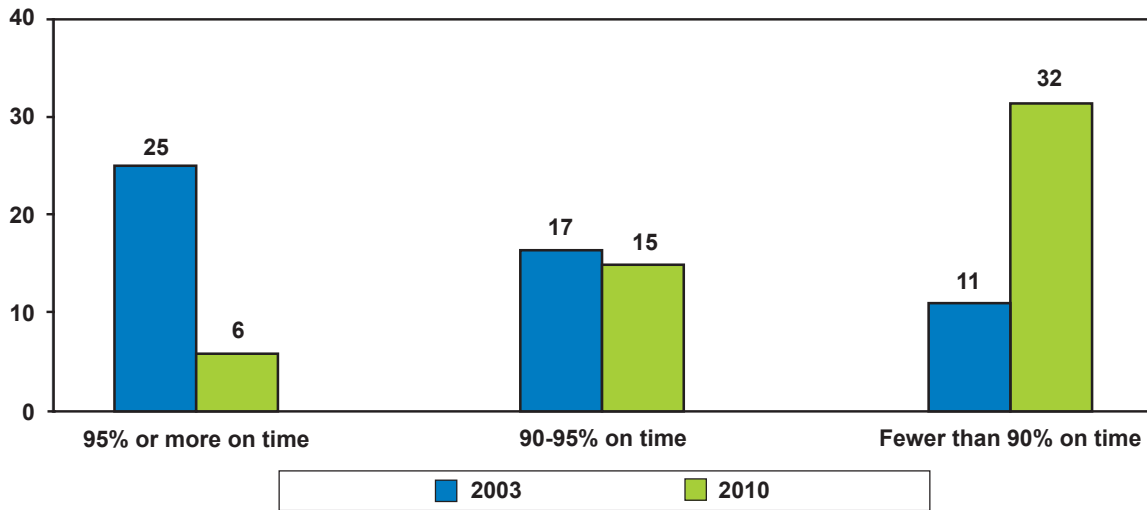
SNAP began routinely tracking application processing timeliness using quality control data in fiscal year 2003. Twenty-one States

processed 90 percent or more of their cases on time in fiscal year 2010. The number of States processing SNAP applications on time has declined over time with rising caseloads and frozen or declining State resources. The average timeliness rate in fiscal year 2010 was 86 percent, compared to an average timeliness rate of 91 percent in 2004.

FNS is working with the States to improve timeliness by requiring Corrective Action Plans and encouraging business process reengineering and certain policy options.

Source:
 SNAP Quality Control Data, Fiscal Years 2003 and 2010.

Number of States Processing SNAP Cases on Time



SNAP Payment Accuracy

SSNAP payment accuracy rates have improved for four years in a row, culminating in a combined payment error rate of 3.81 percent in fiscal year 2010, the lowest in program history. This is a combined error rate equal to the *sum* of overpayments (3.05 percent) and underpayments (0.75 percent). The net cost of erroneous payments to the Federal government (overpayments *minus* underpayments) is slightly less than 3 percent. The record low error rate has been achieved during a time of rising State caseloads. In the past 10 years, the error rate has declined by 56 percent although SNAP participation has grown by 134 percent.

Almost all (98 percent) households receiving SNAP were eligible for some benefit. Thus, the problem of erroneous payments is not so much one of determining eligibility but rather one of finely targeting benefits to the complicated and changing circumstances of low-income households.

Neither overpayments nor underpayments had much effect on overall household purchasing power. Most overpayments to eligible households are small relative to household income and official poverty standards. As a result, most SNAP households are poor and remain poor even when overpaid.

Sources:

SNAP Quality Control Data, Fiscal Years 1981 through 2010.

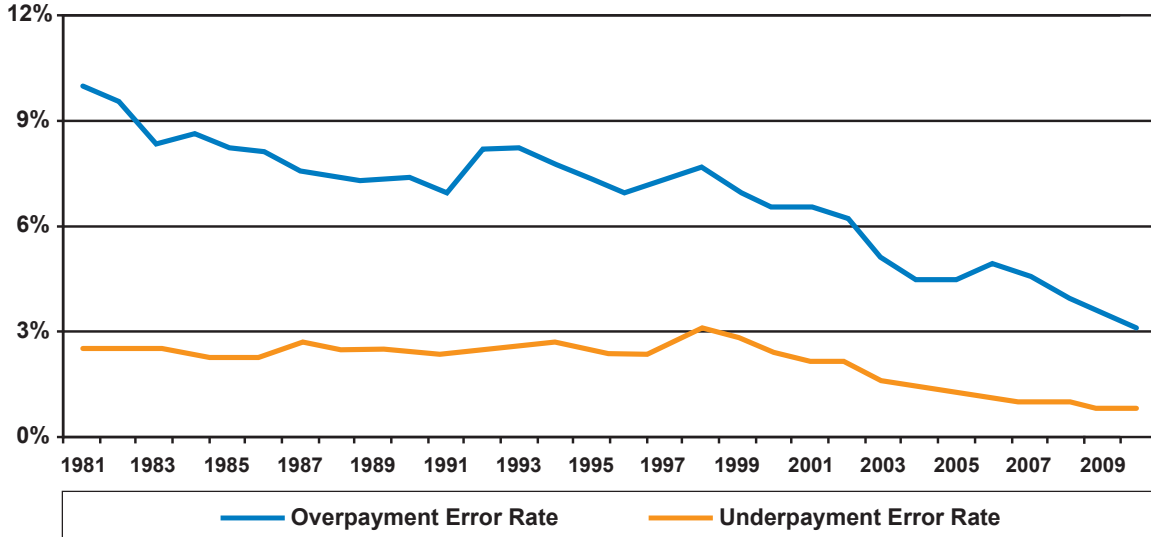
Mills, Gregory, Don Laliberty, and Christopher Rodger. "Food Stamp Certification Periods and Payment Accuracy: State Experience During 1997-2001." Report submitted to the Economic Research Service (E-FAN-04-012). Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc., November 2004.

Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation. "Impact of Food Stamp Payment Error on Household Purchasing Power." Alexandria, VA: Food and Nutrition Service, March 2005.

KEY FACT:

.....
SNAP payment error rates have declined over time, reaching a record low of 3.81 percent in fiscal year 2010.

SNAP Payment Error Rates



The Extent of SNAP Trafficking

Trafficking is the sale of SNAP benefits for cash, a practice that diverts benefits away from their intended purpose of helping low-income families access a

KEY FACT:

 About one cent of every SNAP benefit dollar is trafficked.

nutritious diet. To combat trafficking, the Food and Nutrition Service conducts undercover investigations of authorized food stores and uses powerful EBT-based tools to identify and sanction traffickers.

Since 1993 when the estimate was first generated, the SNAP trafficking rate has decreased substantially. The most recent analysis from 2006 to 2008 indicates that trafficking diverted one cent of each benefit dollar, or about \$330 million annually. While the dollar value of trafficked benefits increased during this timeframe, this reflects, in part, the substantial growth

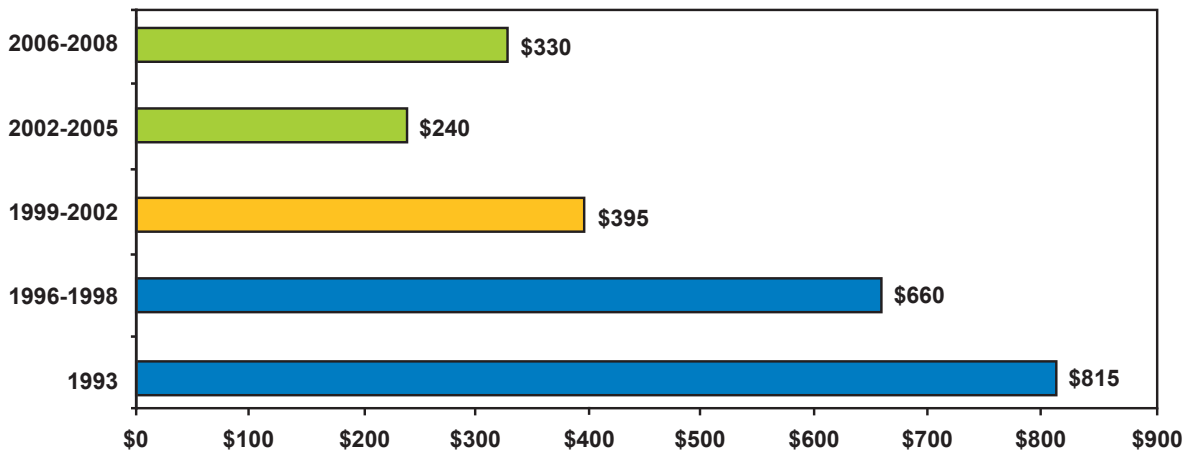
in SNAP participation since 2005. Between 2002–2005 and 2006–2008, annualized redemptions increased by 28 percent (from \$25.1 billion to \$32.1 billion) and annualized benefits trafficked increased by almost 37 percent (from \$241 million to \$330 million).

Stores that redeem the majority of SNAP benefits continue to have the lowest trafficking rates. The vast majority of supermarkets, 99.5 percent, do not knowingly traffic SNAP benefits. Supermarkets, super stores, and large grocers—where rates of trafficking are very low—redeem slightly more than 87 percent of all benefits. Small grocers and convenience stores—which have higher rates of trafficking, from 13 to 16 percent—redeem about 6 percent of benefits.

Source:

Mantovani, Richard, and Hoke Wilson. “The Extent of Trafficking in SNAP 2006–2008.” Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, January 2011.

Average Annual Value of SNAP Benefits Trafficked*
 (\$ in millions)



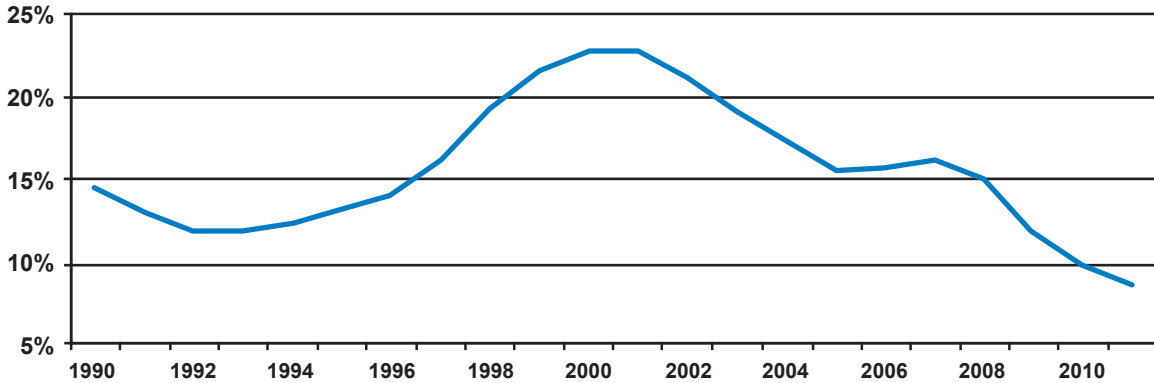
* The estimation methodology has become progressively comprehensive since 1996–1998. The same method is used for generating the 2002–2005 and 2006–2008 estimates.

SNAP Administrative Costs

In fiscal year 2011, the total cost of administering SNAP was \$6.9 billion. These costs were shared between the Federal government (\$3.4 billion) and State governments (\$3.5 billion).⁴ Sixty-five percent of those costs were for certification. Total administrative

costs as a percentage of total program costs are negatively correlated with the SNAP caseload, tending to rise as the SNAP caseload falls and to fall as the caseload increases.

SNAP Administrative Costs as a Percentage of Total Program Costs



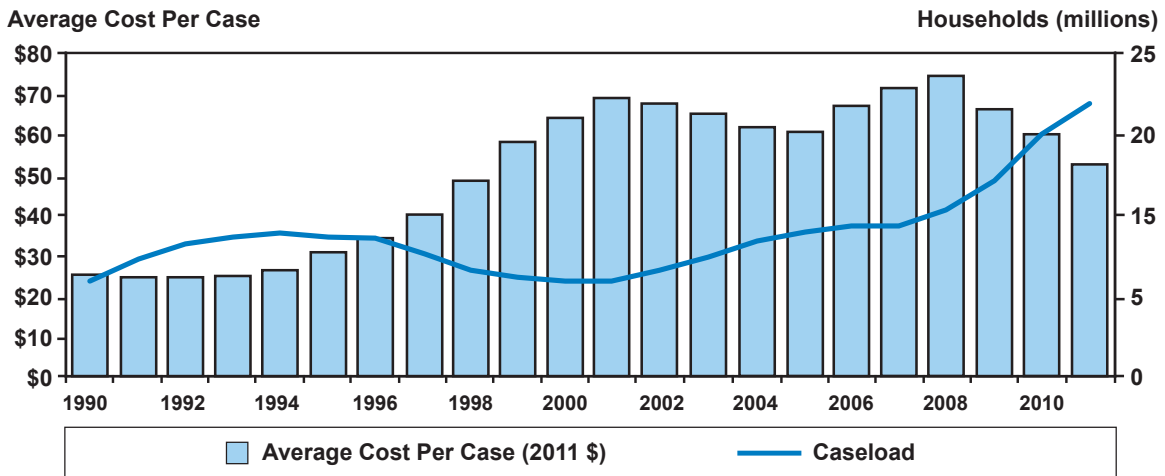
The average monthly administrative cost per case tends to be lower when caseloads are increasing and higher when caseloads decline because costs such

as office space leases and equipment are fixed and workforce adjustments lag behind caseload changes.

Source:

FNS Program Operations data.

Average Monthly Administrative Cost Per SNAP Household



⁴ Beginning in 1998, legislation required that some States pay a total of \$197 million in administrative costs before the Federal government starts reimbursing 50 percent of these States' administrative expenses.

State SNAP Policy Options

SNAP policy options provide States with flexibility to simplify the eligibility process and their program operations, improve coordination with other programs such as TANF or Medicaid, and encourage participation among target groups such as working families. All States have implemented at least a few policy options.

Some policy options are widely implemented by most States. Since the 2002 Farm Bill, most States have chosen to expand their simplified reporting systems to include households with earned income. Now most households are required to report changes in income between certification and scheduled reporting periods only when countable income rises above 130 percent of the poverty level. Using a mandatory Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) and aligning the definitions of income and resources with TANF and Medicaid policy are two other widely implemented options. Most States have also chosen to waive the requirement for a face-to-face interview at certification or recertification. Households are interviewed by telephone instead.

With rising caseloads, many States have implemented broad-based categorical eligibility to simplify SNAP administration. By the beginning of fiscal year 2012, 43 States had adopted BBCE. In these States, households that receive a TANF-funded noncash service are categorically eligible for SNAP. Although many States have raised the gross income and resource limits, these policies have not substantially expanded

eligibility. Almost all (97 percent) SNAP recipients in States that have adopted BBCE are also eligible under the standard rules limiting income. States elect to implement BBCE to simplify the administration of SNAP by no longer verifying resources. States have the broad authority to place limits to prevent households that receive large lump sum payments such as lottery winnings—and so do not need assistance—from receiving SNAP.

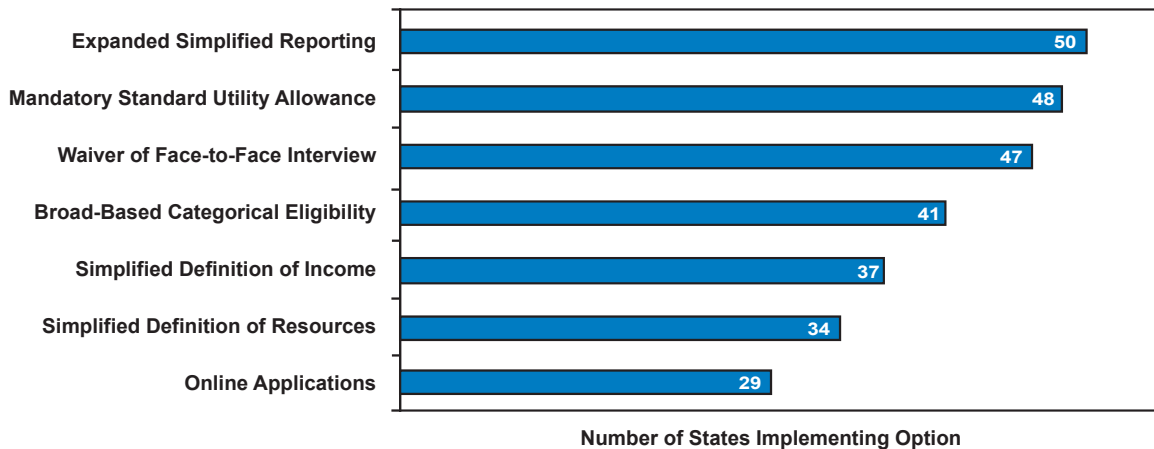
The least popular policy options are child support disqualification and simplified determination of deductions. States say they do not choose some options because they believe they would complicate program rules, affect only a few participants, or result in little or no benefit to participants. Data are limited on the effect of policy options on program administration, operations, costs, error rates, and participant satisfaction.

Sources:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, SNAP, Program Development Division. “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program State Options Report, Ninth Edition.” Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, November 2010.

U.S. Government Accountability Office. “Food Stamp Program: Farm Bill Options Ease Administrative Burden, but Opportunities Exist to Streamline Participant Reporting Rules Among Programs.” Report No. GAO-04-916 to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, U.S. Senate. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, September 2004.

Common Policy Options, November 2010





Delivering Benefits Effectively

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)

On June 17, 2009, EBT became the sole method of SNAP issuance and the only way for participants to buy eligible food using SNAP benefits. In accordance with the 2008 Farm Bill, food stamp paper coupons were de-obligated. All States have efficiently delivered SNAP benefits using EBT cards with personal identification numbers since June 2004. Some States use multiprogram EBT cards to issue benefits for additional programs such as TANF, Child Care, and WIC.

EBT has revolutionized the way that FNS combats fraud in the program. FNS continues to grow its Anti-fraud Locator using the EBT Retailer Transactions (ALERT) application, which monitors and tracks electronic retail transactions and identifies potentially high-risk retailers based on patterns in transaction data commonly associated with trafficking. This information

is used to better target investigations. Increasingly, retailers are being sanctioned based on EBT transaction data.

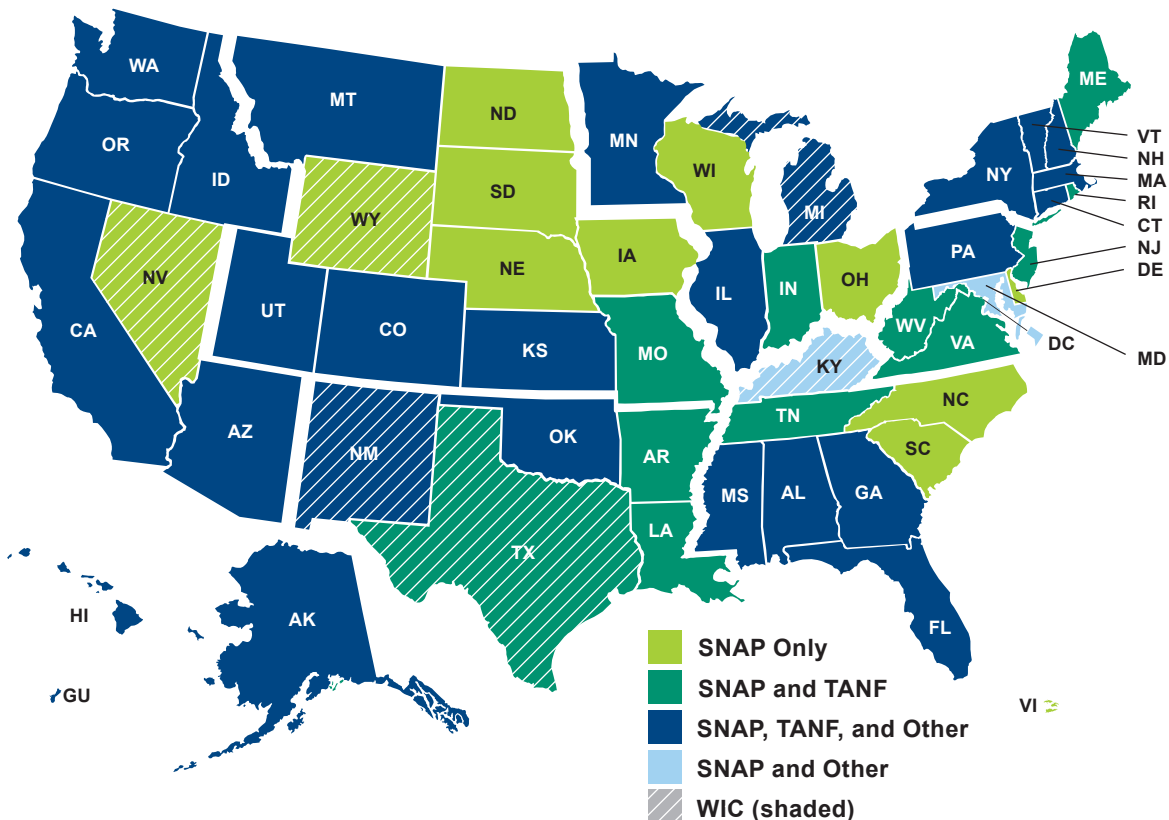
Sources:

Benefit Redemption Division, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. "We Welcome SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefit Redemption Division 2010 Annual Report." Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, May 2011.

Benefit Redemption Division, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. "Food Stamp Electronic Benefit Transfer Systems: A Report to Congress." Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, October 2003.

KEY FACT:

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EBT is the sole method for participants to buy food using SNAP benefits.



Authorized SNAP Stores

Nationwide, there were over 231,000 stores authorized to accept and redeem SNAP benefits at the close of fiscal year 2011. To qualify as an

KEY FACT:

.....
The number of SNAP authorized retailers increased almost 42 percent between fiscal years 2006 and 2011.

authorized SNAP retailer, the store must either (1) stock and sell food for home preparation and consumption in all four categories of staple foods—namely, breads/cereals, dairy products, fruits/vegetables, and meat/fish/poultry (two must include perishable foods)—

or (2) obtain more than 50 percent of gross total sales from the sale of one or more staple food categories.

Virtually all authorized stores meet the program's criteria for eligibility, indicating that the authorization process works well in screening out ineligible stores. An annual review of a nationally representative sample of stores found that 99 percent were eligible in fiscal year 2009.

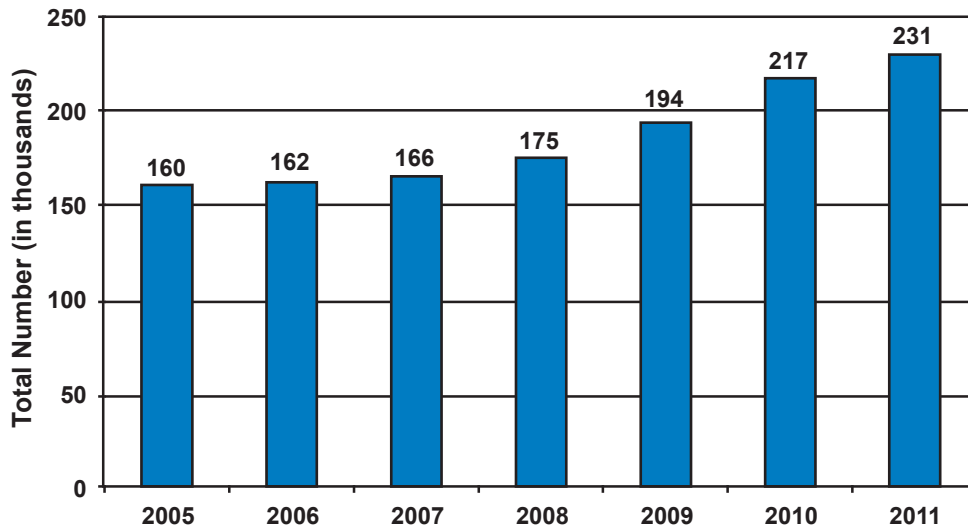
The majority of authorized stores are **supermarkets and super stores; small, medium, and large groceries; and convenience stores**. In fiscal year 2010, 17 percent of all authorized stores were supermarkets or super stores, 15 percent were grocery stores, and 36 percent were convenience stores. Most other authorized firms were specialty food stores or combination markets.

Sources:

Benefit Redemption Division, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. "We Welcome SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefit Redemption Division 2010 Annual Report." Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, May 2011.

Benefit Redemption Division, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. "Retail Store Eligibility: USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program." Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, updated December 22, 2010.

SNAP Authorized Retailers



Access to Food Retailers

Most SNAP benefits are redeemed at supermarkets and super stores. In fiscal year 2010, 83 percent of benefits were redeemed in supermarkets or super stores, 6 percent were redeemed at grocery stores, and 4 percent were redeemed at convenience stores.

The type of store at which SNAP participants buy food is important because store type often determines the cost and selection of foods available.

Supermarkets supply, on average, a wider variety of high quality food at lower cost.

About one-third of low-income households usually shop for food within a mile of where they live.

Another third shop at stores that are between one and four miles away. Many participants, however, do not shop at the store nearest to them. For those who do not usually shop in their own neighborhoods, the most common reasons they do not are high prices (47 percent) and a lack of nearby stores (51 percent).

Distances to the nearest store are greater and access to supermarkets is more difficult for rural households. The reported average distance to a participant's most-used store ranges from 2.5 miles in urban areas to 14.4 miles in rural areas. An earlier study found that the share of redemptions in supermarkets varied from 80 percent in suburban areas to 64 percent in central cities to 53 percent in rural areas. Approximately 96 percent of SNAP households, however, shop at a supermarket or superstore at some time during the month.

The new SNAP Retailer Locator finds stores that welcome SNAP benefits. The SNAP Retailer Locator (www.snapretailerlocator.com/) is an easy-to-use web-based search application in which participants can enter a street address, city, and State or a zip code and a map of the closest authorized stores will appear. The application also delivers a list of the names, addresses, and distances to each retailer.

KEY FACT:

.....
In fiscal year 2010, 83 percent of SNAP benefits were redeemed in supermarkets or super stores.

Sources:

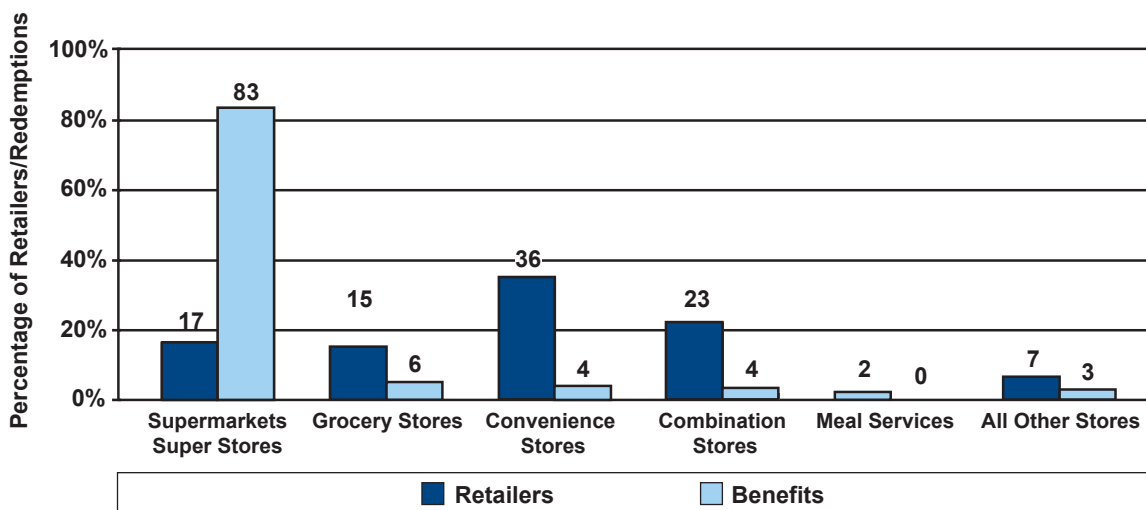
Benefit Redemption Division, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. "We Welcome SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefit Redemption Division 2010 Annual Report." Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, May 2011.

Kaufman, Phil, James MacDonald, Steven Lutz, and David Smallwood. "Do the Poor Pay More for Food?" AER No. 759. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, November 1997.

Mantovani, R. E., L. Daft, T. Macaluso, J. Welsh, and K. Hoffman. "Authorized Food Retailer Characteristics Study: Technical Report IV (Authorized Food Retailers' Characteristics and Access Study)." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: ORC/MACRO, 1997.

Ohls, J. C., M. Ponza, L. Moreno, A. Zambrowski, and R. Cohen. "Food Stamp Participants' Access to Food Retailers: Final Report." Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, 1999.

Distribution of Authorized Retailers and Benefits Redeemed: FY 2010



Benefit Redemption Patterns

SSNAP benefits are used to buy food for home consumption and only from authorized food stores. The vast majority of benefits are redeemed at supermarkets and super stores. Purchases at supermarkets and supercenters account for nearly two-thirds of all transactions and more than 80 percent of all redemptions. About 40 percent of households redeem benefits only in supermarkets and supercenters. Only 4 percent of all households never shop in a supermarket, but they tend to receive relatively small benefits.

KEY FACT:

.....
Eighty percent of SNAP benefits are redeemed within two weeks of issuance.

SNAP participants shop frequently, making about 10 SNAP purchases per month with an average transaction of about \$30. About 80 percent of benefits are spent within two weeks of issuance, regardless of amount,

and more than 97 percent are spent by the end of the month. The average EBT balance carried over to the next month is slightly more than \$8.

Households redeem SNAP benefits at many (four on average) different stores. About 25 percent of SNAP households redeem benefits at six or more stores, whereas 16 percent redeem benefits at only one store. Following the benefit increase in the Recovery Act, households shopped at more stores and became less exclusive in the types of stores they used. The average number of stores in which benefits were redeemed increased from 3.8 to 4.4, and the percentage of households redeeming in six or more stores increased from 23 percent to 30 percent.

Most SNAP households augment their food purchases by using cash. About 75 percent of SNAP participants use some of their own money, in addition

to SNAP benefits, to purchase food. Most participants report that they often use careful shopping practices—comparing prices across stores, looking for store specials, and stocking up on bargains—to stretch their food buying resources.

SNAP benefits are almost always redeemed in places in or near participants' home States. Although allowable, out-of-state redemptions are relatively rare. Only 4 percent of all SNAP households redeemed any benefits outside their State of residence. These transactions accounted for fewer than 2 percent of all transactions.

For most households, SNAP benefits cannot be used in restaurants. Restaurant meals are available *only* to the elderly, disabled, and or homeless in the few States that elect to operate a meals program; less than 0.1 percent of SNAP benefits are redeemed at restaurants. On average, these participants made only one restaurant purchase each month, with a total value of less than \$9.50. Virtually all (99.8 percent) households that used their SNAP benefits in a restaurant also redeemed benefits in a supermarket, grocery store, or other retailer.

SNAP benefits cannot be converted into cash and are not used in casinos or on cruise ships. There are no authorized casinos or cruise ships, and SNAP benefits cannot be withdrawn as cash from ATMs.

Sources:

Castner, Laura, and Juliette Henke. "Benefit Redemption Patterns in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program." Report submitted to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, February 2011.

Trippe, Carole, and Daisy Ewell. "An Analysis of Cash Food Expenditures of Food Stamp Households." Report submitted to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, August 2007.

SNAP in Farmers Markets

At the end of fiscal year 2010, a total of 1,611, or 26 percent of, farmers markets were authorized to accept SNAP benefits. SNAP authorized farmers markets represented about 0.7 percent of the total number of authorized retailers, and farmers market SNAP redemptions accounted for 0.01 percent of total SNAP redemptions in 2010. However, these numbers represent a 263 and 49 percent increase, respectively, from the previous five fiscal years, and trends indicate that these numbers will continue to rise.

In general, SNAP farmers market outreach efforts have focused on identifying and eliminating barriers to participation. Technological barriers are one of the impediments to increased farmers market participation in SNAP because farmers markets typically lack electricity and telephone lines to operate government-provided EBT equipment. To assist farmers markets, FNS supports scrip projects that allow a market to obtain one FNS authorization to accept SNAP benefits for all eligible vendors at the market using a single point-of-sale (POS) terminal. The scrip (paper, tokens, or receipts) is purchased at the centrally located POS terminal with SNAP benefits and is exchanged for eligible food products at the market. Many markets also use this process for credit and debit card customers.

The informal and transitory nature of many farmers markets makes it difficult for them to accept SNAP benefits without government support. As a result, FNS conducted a cost benefit analysis to assess the feasibility of equipping all farmers markets nationwide with wireless EBT POS equipment. This analysis focuses on requiring centralized operation of a single EBT terminal to issue scrip. The goal for this analysis was to demonstrate better stewardship of Federal funds by appropriating market time and money more efficiently and centralizing processing and accounting functions. The report concluded that the cost to equip all farmers markets with wireless EBT point-of-sale equipment is \$4 million.

KEY FACT:

.....
Between FY 2006 and FY 2010 there was a 263 percent increase in the number of authorized farmers markets and a 49 percent increase in SNAP redemptions at farmers markets.

Source:

Benefit Redemption Division, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. "We Welcome SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefit Redemption Division 2010 Annual Report." Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, June 2011.

Disaster Assistance

The Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) operates under special eligibility and issuance rules. States must submit a formal request for the operation of the D-SNAP in areas affected by a disaster.

- Benefits are provided to existing SNAP households who qualify for replacement or supplemental benefits and to non-SNAP households temporarily eligible under D-SNAP rules because of their disaster-related expenses. State certification staff determines eligibility.

KEY FACT:

.....
 The amount of D-SNAP benefits issued depends on the number and magnitude of disasters during the year. The spike in 2006 is the result of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the Gulf Coast.

- The monthly income eligibility limit is the poverty level plus the standard deduction and excess shelter cap—\$2,151 for a family of three in fiscal year 2012.

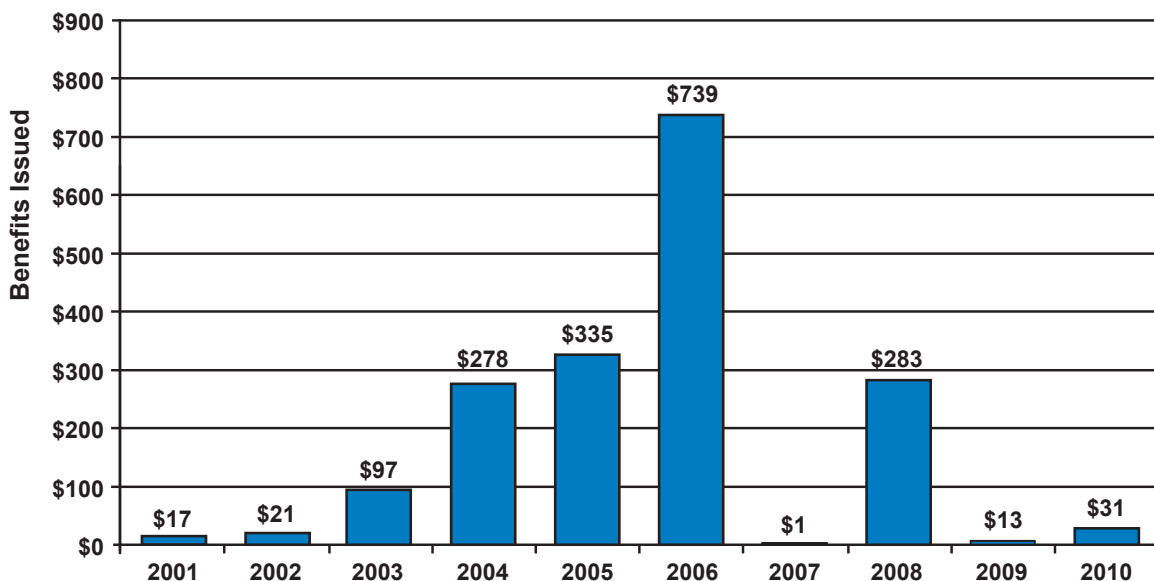
- Take-home income plus liquid assets (e.g., checking or savings accounts), less nonreimbursed disaster-related expenses during the disaster benefit period, must be less than or equal to the eligibility limit. Eligible households receive the equivalent of one month’s maximum benefit for their household size.
- Households that experienced ongoing loss of income because of the disaster may be eligible to apply for and receive SNAP benefits under regular program rules after the disaster benefit period has ended.

FNS provides other emergency food assistance to disaster victims by providing food commodities to shelters, congregate feeding sites, and pertinent local relief organizations such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army and by distributing food packages directly to households.

Source:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. “Fiscal Years 2003-2011 Explanatory Notes.” Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 2011.

D-SNAP Assistance
 (Dollars in millions)



Looking Forward

The current authorization of SNAP, provided through the 2008 Farm Bill, ends on September 30, 2012.

FNS looks forward to working with Congress, State agencies, and advocates to reauthorize SNAP through the upcoming Farm Bill. Our goal is to continue improving access to the program, easing the administrative burden for States, improving oversight and monitoring of program operations, and providing SNAP benefits to millions of Americans.

For More Information

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www.fns.usda.gov/ora

Many of the reports and studies referenced in this document can be found at
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/SNAP/SNAP.htm>



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