

**TRENDS IN SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION RATES:
FISCAL YEAR 2010 TO FISCAL YEAR 2012 – SUMMARY**

Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income individuals purchase food so that they can obtain a nutritious diet. This report is the latest in a series on SNAP participation rates, which measure the proportion of people eligible for benefits under Federal income and asset rules who actually participate in the program. The report presents participation rates for fiscal year (FY) 2012 and revised participation rates for FYs 2010 and 2011 using the FY 2012 methodology, as described below.

Findings

On average, 51 million individuals were eligible for benefits each month in 2012, and 42 million received them. While the program served 83 percent of all eligible individuals, the program provided 96 percent of the benefits that all eligible individuals could receive. This is because individuals with lower income, who are eligible for higher benefits, participated at higher rates than other eligible persons.

Participation rates were relatively high for children, individuals in households with incomes below the poverty line, and recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), following historical trends. At least 90 percent of all eligibles from these groups participated.

In contrast, participation rates for elderly and individuals living in households with incomes above poverty (but still eligible) were much lower – approximately 42 percent for both groups.

The participation rate for eligible noncitizens was 56 percent. The participation rate for

individuals in households with earnings was also lower than average at 72 percent. Individuals in rural households participated at a higher rate (88 percent) than individuals in urban households (77 percent).

Methodological Notes

Estimates in this report are based on Current Population Survey data from March 2011 through March 2013 and SNAP administrative data for FY 2010 through FY 2012. Individuals in households with income or assets above the Federal SNAP limits are removed from the participant count unless every member receives cash Supplemental Security Income, TANF, or State General Assistance benefits.

The participation rates for FY 2010 and 2011 cited in this report differ slightly from those published in previous reports presenting participation rates for 2010 and 2011. In particular, all rates presented in this report rely on more recent Survey of Income and Program Participation data when estimating asset eligibility for SNAP than the February 2014 report on participation rates for FYs 2010 and 2011. Other than this change, the methodology used to develop these estimates is consistent with those used in the earlier report.

For More Information

Eslami, Esa. (2014). *Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Year 2010 to Fiscal Year 2012*. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the Food and Nutrition Service (available online at www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis).