

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION RATES: FISCAL YEARS 2010 AND 2011 – SUMMARY

Background

The 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. The report presents participation rates for fiscal year (FY) 2011 and revised participation rates for FY 2010 using the FY 2011 methodology.

Findings

On average, 52 million individuals were eligible for benefits each month in 2011, and 41 million received them. While the program served 79 percent of all eligible individuals, the program provided 92 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 between 1 and 50 percent of poverty, 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 were much lower – 39 percent and 42 percent, respectively.

The participation rate for nondisabled childless adults subject to work requirements was 78 percent, while eligible noncitizens participated at a rate of 52 percent. The participation rate for individuals in households with earnings was also

lower than average at 67 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 and March 2012 and SNAP administrative data for FY 2010 and FY 2011. 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 cited in this report are not consistent or comparable to those presented in prior year reports because of methodological improvements (see Appendix D). The improvements include the following:

- Improving the accuracy of the household definition;
- Recoding as citizens any children who were born after their mother arrived in the United States;
- Refining the TANF simulation; and
- Revising the net income imputation to more accurately model net income estimates.

For More Information

Eslami, Esa, and Cunyningham, Karen. (2014). *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011*. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the Food and Nutrition Service (available online at www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis).