

**TRENDS IN SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION RATES:
FISCAL YEAR 2010 TO FISCAL YEAR 2013 – SUMMARY**

Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income individuals purchase food so they can obtain a nutritious diet. This report is the latest in a series on SNAP participation rates, which estimate the proportion of people eligible for benefits under Federal income and asset rules who actually participate in the program. This report presents estimates of participation rates for fiscal year (FY) 2013, comparing them to estimates of participation rates for FYs 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Findings

On average, 51 million individuals were eligible for benefits each month in 2013, and 43 million received them. Overall, the program served 85 percent of all eligible individuals in 2013, up from 83 percent in 2012.

As in past years, those eligible for higher benefits participated at higher rates than other eligible individuals. Participation rates were also relatively high for children and individuals in households with incomes below the poverty line.

In contrast, participation rates for the elderly and individuals living in households with incomes above poverty (but still eligible) were much lower – 41 percent and 42 percent, respectively.

The participation rate for individuals in households with earnings was lower than average at 74 percent. The participation rate for eligible noncitizens was 64 percent.

The participation rates for individuals in households receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for

Needy Families (TANF) were all close to the overall average, at 82 percent.

While participation rates varied considerably among subgroups of eligible individuals, rates increased between 2010 and 2013 for every subgroup except TANF recipients. The participation rate among TANF recipients declined slightly from 84 percent in FY 2010 to 82 percent in FY 2013.

Methodological Notes

Estimates of participants (numerator) in this report are based on SNAP administrative data for FY 2010 through FY 2013, while estimates of eligible individuals (denominator) are based on Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement data for calendar year (CY) 2010 through CY 2014. Differences between these two data sources result in some estimated participation rates exceeding 100 percent.

Individuals in households with income or assets above the Federal SNAP limits are removed from the participant count unless every member receives cash benefits from SSI, TANF, or State general assistance.

For More Information

Eslami, Esa. (2015). *Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Year 2010 to Fiscal Year 2013*. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (available online at www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis).