

**TRENDS IN SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PARTICIPATION RATES:
FISCAL YEAR 2010 TO FISCAL YEAR 2014 (SUMMARY)**

Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income individuals alleviate hunger and 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) 2014, comparing them to estimates of participation rates for FYs 2010 through 2013.

Findings

On average, 51 million individuals were eligible for benefits each month in 2014, and 42 million received them. Overall, the program served 83 percent of all eligible individuals in 2014, down from 85 percent in 2013.

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

In contrast with these rates, but also as in past years, participation rates for the elderly and individuals living in households with incomes above poverty (but still eligible) were much lower – 42 percent and 38 percent, respectively.

The participation rate for individuals in households with earnings was lower than average at 70 percent. The participation rate for eligible noncitizens was 55 percent.

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

Needy Families (TANF) were close to the overall average, at 83 and 82 percent, respectively.

While participation rates varied considerably among subgroups of eligible individuals, rates increased between 2010 and 2014 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 2014. Participation rates fell slightly or held steady for most groups between 2013 and 2014.

Methodological Notes

Estimates of participants (numerator) in this report are based on SNAP administrative data for FY 2010 through FY 2014, 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 2015. 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

Farson Gray, Kelsey and Karen Cunyngnam. (2016). *Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates: Fiscal Year 2010 to Fiscal Year 2014*. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (available online at www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis).