

SNAP Fast Facts

To provide you with the best science and to reduce review time, please find the following science-approved facts for use in your campaigns and materials. After each fact, you will find fast facts based on the science, which can be cut and pasted word-for-word without need for additional science review. Please note that any change in wording will result in the need to run your documents through science review before release.

About the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps) is the nation's largest nutrition assistance program, providing monthly cash benefits to [more than 43 million Americans](#). SNAP provides assistance to millions of low-income individuals and families each year.

The SNAP benefit formula takes into account a household's income and expenses, phases out benefits as earnings rise, and includes a deduction for earned income to reflect the cost of work-related expenses and to encourage SNAP participants to work while they are receiving benefits ("[The Relationship Between SNAP and Work Among Low-Income Households](#)." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2013.).

The Farm Bill authorized pilot projects to examine how SNAP could be used to promote health and nutrition through the use of incentives – additional dollars earned for the purchase of eligible fruits and vegetables or other healthful foods among SNAP participants. This program is known as the Healthy Incentives Pilot.

The most common incentive types include: (1) Matching programs in which SNAP participants who make a SNAP eligible purchase receive a matching amount to purchase fruits and vegetables and (2) "Prescription or voucher programs," in which SNAP participants are written a "prescription" or provided a voucher for fruits and vegetables by their health care provider.

General Facts

FACT 1

SNAP benefits support vulnerable populations — nearly one in two households receiving SNAP benefits include children, individuals with disabilities or the elderly. In 2014, nearly seven million households had *very low* food security, meaning at least one person in the household did not have enough to eat. Participating in SNAP for six months was associated with 6.3 percentage decrease in households that experienced very low food security.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP benefits help put food on the table for millions of the most vulnerable people, including children.
- ▶ SNAP helps households improve food security, reducing the number of people who skip meals because they don't have the money or resources to buy enough food.

Source:

Executive Office of the President of the United States. [Long-term benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#). December 2015.

Mabli, James, Jim Ohls, Lisa Dragoset, Laura Castner, and Betsy Santos. [Measuring the Effect of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) Participation on Food Security](#). Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, August 2013.

FACT 2

SNAP benefits lowered the overall poverty rate by 1.4 percentage points or 4.6 million people in 2015.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP plays a critical role in reducing poverty in America.

Source:

Renwick, Trudi, Fox, Liana. The Supplemental Poverty Measure. Prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2016/demo/p60-258.html>.

FACT 3

SNAP plays an important role in boosting the economy of low-income communities, with every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generating \$9 for the local economy. Additionally, an increase of \$1 billion in SNAP expenditures is estimated to increase economic activity (GDP) by \$1.79 billion.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Increases in SNAP benefits help boost the local economy and overall economic activity.
- ▶ GDP increased by \$1.79 billion for every \$1 billion increase in SNAP spending.

Source:

Hanson, Kenneth. [The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier \(FANIOM\) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP](#). ERR-103. U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv. October 2010.

FACT 4

Among households that receive SNAP, food insecurity rates are up to 30 percent lower than they otherwise would be. Additionally, temporary expansion of SNAP benefits under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 eliminated food insecurity for nearly 530,000 households.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP benefits reduce food insecurity and help households rise out of poverty.
- ▶ SNAP reduces food insecurity – the inability to pay for enough food – by up to 30 percent.

Source:

Executive Office of the President of the United States. [Long-term benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#). December 2015.

FACT 5

SNAP participation decreased the percentage of SNAP households that were food insecure by 6-17 percent, according to a study that examined the association between SNAP participation and household food security. SNAP participation also decreased the percentage of households experiencing severe food insecurity by 12-19 percent.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP plays a critical role in improving the health and well being of households by reducing food insecurity.
- ▶ SNAP participation decreases the percentage of SNAP households that do not have enough to eat.

Source:

Mabli, James and Ohls, Jim. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Is Associated with an Increase in Household Food Security in a National Evaluation. *J. Nutr.* February 2015 145: 344-351; first published online December 10, 2014. doi:10.3945/jn.114.198697

Public Support for SNAP

FACT 6

There is broad public support for expanding use of SNAP incentive programs to improve diets.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Surveys show that there is broad stakeholder support for policies that align SNAP purchases with broader national health goals to improve diets and reduce food insecurity.
- ▶ A wide range of stakeholders support policies to strengthen the nutritional impact of the SNAP program.

Source:

Leung CW, R.-I. S. (2015, 03 11). Support for Policies to Improve the Nutritional Impact of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in California. *American Journal of Public Health*.

Leung CW, M. A. (2017, 02). Improving the Nutritional Impact of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Perspectives From the Participants. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 52(2s2), S193-S198.

Leung CW, H. E. (2013, 01). A Qualitative Study of Diverse Experts' Views about Barriers and Strategies to Improve the Diets and Health of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Beneficiaries. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 113(1), 70-76.

Blumenthal SJ, H. E. (2013). Strategies to improve the dietary quality of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries: an assessment of stakeholder opinions. *Public Health Nutrition*, 17(12), 2824-2833.

SNAP Incentives

FACT 7

According to the Healthy Incentives Pilot study, SNAP incentives helped to increase overall Healthy Eating Index – a key measure of Americans’ diet quality – as well as the fruit and vegetable components of the HEI score.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ When SNAP participants were given an incentive to purchase more fruits and vegetables, they improved their Healthy Eating Index scores – a key measure of diet quality.
- ▶ SNAP incentives can help people eat more fruits and vegetables and increase the quality of their diet.

Source:

Bartlett, Susan, Jacob Klerman, Lauren Olsho, et al. Evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP): [Final Report](#). Prepared by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, September 2014.

FACT 8

People who receive SNAP benefits and who participated in the Healthy Incentives Pilot Study that provided financial incentive for purchasing fruits and vegetables ate almost a quarter of a cup more targeted fruits and vegetables per day than non-participants. They also spent more of their SNAP benefits on targeted fruits and vegetables – \$12.05 versus \$10.86 on average each month.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Financial incentives can help SNAP recipients improve their diets and eat more fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ SNAP recipients who were given incentives to buy more fruits and vegetables ate almost a quarter of a cup more of fruits and vegetables per day.
- ▶ SNAP recipients who are given incentives to buy more fruits and vegetables spend more of their SNAP benefits on these healthy foods.

Source:

Bartlett, Susan, Jacob Klerman, Lauren Olsho, et al. Evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP): [Final Report](#). Prepared by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, September 2014.

FACT 9

According to the Healthy Incentives Pilot study, households participating in HIP reported spending \$78.17 each month on all fruits and vegetables, \$6.15 more than households that did not participate in the program. Two-thirds of HIP households said they bought larger amounts and a greater variety of fruits and vegetables because of HIP. Additionally, these households ate more fruits and vegetables.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ When SNAP recipients are given incentives to purchase fruits and vegetables, they will spend more of their budget on these healthy foods.
- ▶ When given incentives to purchase more fruits and vegetables, SNAP recipients will add a greater variety of healthful foods to their diets.
- ▶ SNAP incentives can help people eat a greater variety of healthy foods.

Source:

Bartlett, Susan, Jacob Klerman, Lauren Olsho, et al. Evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP): [Final Report](#). Prepared by Abt Associates for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, September 2014.

FACT 10

People who participated in the Healthy Incentives Program and ate more fruits and vegetables while decreasing their consumption of refined grains had higher Healthy Eating Index Scores – a key measure of Americans' diet quality. Additional studies have shown that eating more fruits and vegetables can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and cancer.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP incentives can help people improve their diets.
- ▶ Eating more fruits and vegetables can improve overall health for SNAP recipients and can reduce the incidence of heart disease and cancer.

Source:

LEW Olsho, JA Klerman, PE Wilde, S Bartlett. Financial incentives increase fruit and vegetable intake among Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participants: a randomized controlled trial of the USDA Healthy Incentives Pilot. *The American journal of clinical nutrition* 104 (2), 423-435

He FJ, Nowson CA, Lucas M, MacGregor GA. Increased consumption of fruit and vegetables is related to a reduced risk of coronary heart disease: meta-analysis of cohort studies. *J Hum Hypertens* 2007;21: 717-28.

He FJ, Nowson CA, MacGregor GA. Fruit and vegetable consumption and stroke: meta-analysis of cohort studies. *Lancet* 2006;367:320-6.

World Cancer Research Fund. Food, nutrition, physical activity, and the prevention of cancer: a global perspective. Washington (DC): American Institute for Cancer Research; 2007

FACT 11

SNAP incentives can increase low-income shoppers' use of farmers' markets. Under the New York City's Health Bucks Program, SNAP recipients were given a \$2 coupon for every \$5 spent using SNAP benefits at participating farmers' markets. When a \$2 financial incentive was distributed with EBT, use of SNAP benefits increased at participating New York City farmers' markets. Farmers' markets in New York City that offered incentives to SNAP recipients averaged higher daily Electronic Benefits Transfer sales than markets without the incentive.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP incentives helped to increase overall shopping at farmers' markets by low-income shoppers.
- ▶ Farmers' markets that offered incentives to people who receive SNAP benefits saw higher daily Electronic Benefits Transfer sales than farmers' markets that did not offer the incentive.

Source:

Baronberg S, Dunn L, Nonas C, Dannefer R, Sacks R. The Impact of New York City's Health Bucks Program on Electronic Benefit Transfer Spending at Farmers Markets, 2006–2009. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2013;10:130113. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd10.130113>

FACT 12

SNAP recipients who were given incentives to purchase fruits and vegetables at a farmers' market reported greater family and community involvement when shopping at the farmers' markets.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Farmers' markets can help SNAP participants feel a greater sense of community.

Source:

[Understanding the Experiences of Low-Income Individuals Receiving Farmers' Market Incentives in the United States: A Qualitative Study](#). Mateja R. Savoie Roskos, PhD, MPH, RD, Heidi Wengreen, PhD, RD, Julie Gast, PhD, MCHES, Heidi LeBlanc, MS, Carrie Durward, PhD, RD *Health Promotion Practice* Vol 18, Issue 6, pp. 869 - 878 First Published July 2, 2017

FACT 13

A study in North Carolina that examined associations between Body Mass Index (BMI) percentile and the accessibility of food venues found that kids who lived closer to a farmers' market were associated with having a lower BMI, while those who lived closer to fast-food restaurants were associated with having a higher BMI.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Living closer to farmers' markets is associated with lower Body Mass Index — a key measure of body fat — amongst youth.
- ▶ According to a study in North Carolina, kids who live closer to farmers' markets were associated with having a lower BMI.

Source:

Jilcott, S., Wade, S., McGuirt, J., Wu, Q., Lazorick, S., & Moore, J. (2011). The association between the food environment and weight status among eastern North Carolina youth. *Public Health Nutrition*, 14(9), 1610-1617. doi:10.1017/S1368980011000668