
SNAP & SNAP Incentive Fast Facts

To provide you with the best science and to reduce review time, please find the following science-approved facts or use in your campaigns and materials. After each fact you will also find fast facts based on the science that 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 and Produce Incentives

The [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) is the nation's largest nutrition assistance program, providing monthly benefits to more than [44 million people living in the U.S.](#) SNAP provides assistance to millions of low-income individuals and families each year. In fact, more than 1 in 10 families in the United States rely on SNAP benefits each month.

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.

While SNAP benefits are [100% federally funded](#), the program is administered by state and county agencies, and administrative costs are shared between the states and federal government. States may choose their own name for the program (i.e. "FoodShare" in WI) and some still refer to the benefits as food stamps. The federal government establishes the basic legal framework for the program and state legislatures may add provisions to adapt to needs in their states.

One key strategy to make a healthy diet more affordable and accessible for SNAP recipients is to provide produce incentives. Generally, in these programs, shoppers use SNAP benefits to purchase incentivized healthy products then receive a matching amount to purchase additional fruits and vegetables. Since 2005, numerous local and state governments have provided funding for SNAP produce incentive programs, mostly at farmers' markets. The 2008 farm bill authorized pilot projects to examine how SNAP could be used to promote health and nutrition through the use of incentives – this project was known as the [Healthy Incentives Pilot](#).

The 2014 farm bill brought this healthy incentive model to a national scale by establishing the [Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive \(FINI\) program](#). FINI provided \$100 million for grants to support produce incentive programs for SNAP recipients around the country. FINI-supported programs have increased access to healthy fruits and vegetables at a range of food retailers including farmers' markets, healthy corner stores and supermarkets. As of 2017, FINI has supported nutrition incentive projects in 45 states and the District of Columbia.

The most common [incentive types](#) include: (1) matching programs in which SNAP participants who made a SNAP eligible purchase received a matching amount to purchase fruits and vegetables and (2) "prescription or voucher programs," in which SNAP participants were written a "prescription" or provided a voucher for fruits and vegetables by their health care provider working in conjunction with a retailer who accepts the prescription or voucher for the produce.

SNAP Participation

FACT 1

According to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 2016, SNAP provided benefits to approximately 44.2 million people living in 21.8 million households each month across the United States. Nearly two-thirds of all SNAP participants were either children (44%), elderly adults (12%) or non-elderly adults with disabilities (9%). SNAP served an average of 9.2 million households with children each month, representing 43% of all SNAP households.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP benefits help put food on the table for millions of the most vulnerable people, including children.
- ▶ In 2016, more than 44 million people living in 21.8 million households across the United States received SNAP benefits.
- ▶ The majority of SNAP recipients are children and elderly or disabled adults.
- ▶ In 2016, two-thirds of all SNAP participants were children (44%), elderly (12%) or people with disabilities (9%).
- ▶ Close to half of households that participate in SNAP include at least one child.

Source:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2016. November 2017. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/ops/Characteristics2016.pdf>.

FACT 2

SNAP households with gross monthly income less than or equal to 50% of the Federal poverty guidelines received 56% of all benefits. Among SNAP households with at least one working-age, non-disabled adult, more than half worked while receiving SNAP – and more than 80% work in the year before or after receiving SNAP.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ More than half of all SNAP benefits go to households with gross incomes less than or equal to half of the poverty line.
- ▶ More than half of SNAP households with at least one working-age, able-bodied adult work while receiving SNAP benefits.
- ▶ More than 80% of able-bodied adults who receive SNAP benefits work in the year before or after receiving benefits.

Source:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Policy Basics: Introduction to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). March 2016. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

FACT 3

An analysis conducted by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities concluded that as an entitlement program, SNAP lowers the perceived and actual risks of working. Because of the program's structure, a household with earnings will receive a larger SNAP benefit than a household of the same size and gross income in which income comes from unearned sources.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ The way SNAP is set up encourages participants to work.
- ▶ To encourage employment, SNAP benefits are larger for households that have members who work than for households of the same size and income level that are not employed.

Source:

Wolkomir S, Cai L. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Includes Earnings Incentives. Center in Budget and Policy Priorities, March 2018. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-includes-earnings-incentives>.

SNAP Impact on Food Insecurity, Poverty and Health Care

FACT 4

In 2016, more than six million households had very low food security, meaning at least one person in the household did not have enough to eat. A 2013 USDA analysis found that participating in SNAP for six months was associated with a 6.3 percentage point decrease in households that experienced very low food security.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ 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:

Coleman-Jensen A, Rabbitt MP, Gregory CA, and Singh A; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Household Food Security in the United States in 2016, September 2017. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84973/err-237.pdf?v=42979>.

Mabli J, Ohls J, Dragoset L, Castner L, Santos B. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Measuring the Effect of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation on Food Security. August 2013. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/Measuring2013.pdf>.

FACT 5

SNAP participation decreased the percentage of SNAP households that were food insecure by 6–17%, according to a 2015 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%.

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 J, Ohls J. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation is associated with an increase in household food security in a national evaluation. *J Nutr.* 2015; 145(2):344-51, doi: 10.3945/jn.114.198697.

FACT 6

Among households that receive SNAP, food insecurity rates are up to 30% 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%.
- ▶ Expansion of SNAP benefits can reduce food insecurity.
- ▶ Temporary expansion of SNAP benefits under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 eliminated food insecurity for nearly 530,000 households.

Source:

Executive Office of the President of the United States. Long-term benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. December 2015. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/documents/SNAP_report_final_nonembargo.pdf.

FACT 7

In a rural immigrant population, SNAP-participating households were more than two times less likely to report child hunger than households that did not participate in SNAP.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Among a rural immigrant population, child hunger was lower in households that received SNAP benefits compared to those that didn't participate in SNAP.
- ▶ Among a rural immigrant population, child hunger was more common in households that did not receive SNAP benefits, compared to those that did.

Source:

Sharkey JR, Dean WR, Nally CC. Child hunger and the protective effects of supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) and alternative food sources among Mexican-origin families in Texas border colonias. *BMC Pediatr.* 2013; 13:143, doi: 10.1186/1471-2431-13-143.

FACT 8

SNAP removed 8.4 million people from poverty in 2015. The reduction was particularly pronounced for children: the number of children in poverty fell 28% due to receipt of SNAP benefits.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP plays a critical role in reducing poverty in America.
- ▶ SNAP helps reduce the number of children in poverty.
- ▶ In 2015, the number of children in poverty fell by 28% as a result of receiving SNAP benefits.

Source:

Wheaton L, Tran V. The Antipoverty Effects of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Urban Institute; February 2018. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/antipoverty-effects-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>.

FACT 9

A review by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that low-income adults participating in SNAP have lower overall health care expenditures and Medicaid/Medicare costs, compared to non-participants.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Participation in SNAP is linked with lower health care costs.
- ▶ Low-income adults that participate in SNAP have lower health care costs than those who don't participate in SNAP.

Source:

Carlson S, Keith-Jennings B. SNAP is Linked with Improved Nutritional Outcomes and Lower Health Care Costs. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2018. <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/1-17-18fa.pdf>.

FACT 10

Lower family income, higher disability-related expenses and the challenges of providing needed assistance and care to disabled family members undermine the economic well-being of people with disabilities and their families. People with disabilities are at least twice as likely to live in poverty and struggle to put enough food on the table as people without disabilities. Disabling or chronic health conditions may be made worse by insufficient food or a low-quality diet.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ People with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty, endure material hardships and experience food insecurity.
- ▶ Disabling or chronic health conditions may be made worse by insufficient food or a low-quality diet, yet people with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty than those without.

Source:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. SNAP provides needed food assistance to millions of people with disabilities. Published 2017. <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/6-14-17fa.pdf>. Accessed September 11, 2020.

FACT 11

More than 1 in 4 SNAP participants, equivalent to over 11 million individuals in 2015, had a functional or work limitation or received federal government disability benefits, according to a Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of data from the 2015 National Health Interview Survey.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP provides needed food assistance to millions of people with disabilities.
- ▶ More than 1 in 4 SNAP participations had a functional or work limitation or received federal government disability benefits.

Source:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. SNAP provides needed food assistance to millions of people with disabilities. Published 2017. <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/6-14-17fa.pdf>. Accessed September 11, 2020.

Public Support for SNAP Incentives

FACT 12

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, Musicus AA, Willett WC, Rimm EB. Improving the nutritional impact of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: perspectives from the participants. *Am J Prev Med.* 2017; 52(252):S193-S198, doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2016.07.024.

Blumenthal SJ, Hoffnagle EE, Leung CW, et al. Strategies to improve the dietary quality of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries: an assessment of stakeholder opinions. *Public Health Nutr.* 2014; 17(12):2824-33, doi: 10.1017/S1368980013002942.

Leung CW, Hoffnagle EE, Lindsay AC, et al. A qualitative study of diverse experts' views about barriers and strategies to improve the diets and health of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries. *J Acad Nutr Diet.* 2013; 113(1):70-6, doi: 10.1016/j.jand.2012.09.018.

SNAP Incentives

FACT 13

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 S, Klerman J, Olsho L, et al; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP): Final Report. September 2014. <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/HIP-Final.pdf>.

FACT 14

The Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) grants provide fruit and vegetable incentive purchases to SNAP beneficiaries. Early data from the first year of this multi-year program shows that over 25,000 SNAP households have purchased more than half a million dollars in produce, 62% of participants purchased more fruits and vegetables, 90% report the intent to increase produce consumption and 63% are eating less chips, cookies and candy.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ As a result of Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant program, over 25,000 SNAP households have purchased more than half a million dollars in fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ The vast majority of SNAP recipients who participated in Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) programs say they intend to eat more fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ The majority of SNAP recipients who participated in Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) programs have purchased more fruits and vegetables and are eating less chips, cookies and candy.

Source:

Fitzgerald K. Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program (FINI) 2015: Grocery, Corner Store, Food Hub and Delivery Route Results. February 2017. https://fairfoodnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/FINI-Project-Grocery-Report_digital-2.pdf.

FACT 15

Studies have found that incentives may lead to longer-term behavior change. A 2013 study found that participants who received a 50% discount on fruits and vegetables purchased more than three times as much which translates into 50% more fruits and vegetables than those who did not receive the discount. The participants who received the incentive continued to report eating more fruits and vegetables four weeks after the discount program ended. A 2017 study found that providing education about incentives increased their use and led to greater reported fruit and vegetable intake two months after the incentive program ended.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ People given incentives to buy fruits and vegetables continued to purchase and eat more of those items even after the incentive program ended.
- ▶ Even after fruit and vegetable incentive programs end, people may still continue to buy and eat healthier food.

Source:

Geliebter A, Ang IY, Bernales-Korins M, et al. Supermarket discounts of low-energy density foods: effects on purchasing, food intake, and body weight. *Obesity*. 2013; 21(12):E542-8, doi: 10.1002/oby.20484.

Cohen AJ, Richardson CR2, Heisler M3, et al. Increasing use of a healthy food incentive: A waiting room intervention among low-income patients. *Am J Prev Med*. 2017; 52(2):154-162, doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2016.11.008.

FACT 16

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 Electronic Benefits Transfer* (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 EBT 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:E163, doi: 10.5888/pcd10.130113.

* Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) is an electronic system that allows a recipient to authorize transfer of their government benefits from a Federal account to a retailer account to pay for products received. EBT is used in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. EBT has been implemented in all states since June of 2004. Usually a recipient has a debit-like card with benefits loaded onto the card to purchase items at retailers.

FACT 17

SNAP incentives can increase spending on fruits and vegetables in grocery stores. A 2017 study conducted in a rural community found that low-income shoppers who received an incentive spent 15% more on fruits and vegetables than those who did not receive the incentive. Spending was greater for SNAP-eligible individuals who redeemed their incentive coupons.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP incentives can increase spending on fruits and vegetables in grocery stores.
- ▶ Grocery stores may see higher sales of fruits and vegetables when shoppers are offered incentives to buy those items.