

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 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.

Definitions

- ▶ **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** A federal program that provides nutrition benefits to under-resourced individuals and families that are used at stores to purchase food. The program is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) through its nationwide network of FNS field offices. Local FNS field offices are responsible for the licensing and monitoring of retail food stores participating in SNAP.¹
- ▶ **Farm Bill:** A comprehensive multi-year bill that addresses nutrition and agricultural policy issues. It is typically renewed every five years and is scheduled to be reauthorized in 2023. Nutrition is about four-fifths of the full cost of the legislation and includes SNAP and other critical nutrition and feeding programs.²
- ▶ **Food Security:** A household-level social or economic condition of limited access to sufficient food.³
- ▶ **Nutrition Security:** Having equitable and stable availability of, access to, affordability of, and use of foods and beverages that promote well-being and prevent and treat disease.⁴
- ▶ **Incentives:** Funded in the 2008 Farm Bill, the **Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP) Program** was a project to evaluate health and nutrition promotion if incentives provided to SNAP participants and at point of sale increased the purchase of fruits and vegetables. Building off the success of HIP, the **Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI) Program** was created in the 2014 Farm Bill to provide grants to eligible organizations to design and implement projects to increase produce purchases among families with low incomes who participated in SNAP by providing incentives at the point of purchase. The 2018 Farm Bill expanded FINI and renamed it the **Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)**, authorizing funds for nutrition incentive and produce prescription programs to income-eligible consumers participating in SNAP at the point of sale.

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Frequently Asked Questions. Accessed May 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/faq>.

2. Wilde P. The Nutrition Title's Long, Sometimes Strained, but Not Yet Broken, Marriage with the Farm Bill. Choices. 2016. Available at: https://www.choicesmagazine.org/UserFiles/file/cmsarticle_552.pdf.

3. Coleman-Jensen A, Rabbitt MP, Gregory CA, Singh A. Household food security in the United States in 2020. ERR-298. September 2021. US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=102075>.

4. Thorndike AN, Gardner CD, Bishop Kendrick K, Seligman HK, Yaroch AL, Gomes AV, Ivy KN, Scarmo S, Cotwright CJ, Schwartz MB; on behalf of the American Heart Association Advocacy Coordinating Committee. Strengthening US food policies and programs to promote equity in nutrition security: a policy statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2022; doi: 10.1161/CIR.0000000000001072.

SNAP Participation

FACT 1

In 2021, 41.5 million people participated in SNAP, up from 35.7 million people pre-pandemic (2019). The majority of SNAP benefits go to households with children, older adults, or those with disabilities. From October 2019 to February 2020 (pre-Covid-19 pandemic), 42% of SNAP participants were children, including 4.5 million infants and toddlers ages 0 to 4 years old.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ In 2021, more than 41 million people participated in SNAP, up from 36 million people pre-COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ SNAP participation increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ Most people who rely on SNAP are children, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- ▶ During the COVID-19 pandemic, SNAP helped more than 41 million people afford groceries.
- ▶ Almost half of all SNAP participants are children.
- ▶ More than 4 million infants and toddlers have an opportunity to thrive because of the SNAP benefits their families receive.

Source:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation and Costs. Data as of March 10, 2023. Available at: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNAPsummary-3.pdf>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2020. June 2022. Available at: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/Characteristics2020.pdf>

FACT 2

SNAP is focused on households with limited resources to purchase food and those most vulnerable, such as the elderly, children, and those with disabilities. About 92% of SNAP benefits go to households with incomes at or below the federal poverty line. Among SNAP households with at least one working-age, non-disabled adult, 55% worked while receiving SNAP and 74% worked in the year before or after receiving SNAP.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP is an essential resource for children, older adults, and people with disabilities.
- ▶ Ninety-two percent of SNAP benefits help people and families with low incomes.
- ▶ Most SNAP participants who can work do so.
- ▶ SNAP is an essential safety net to help families and their children after a job loss.

Source:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). June 2022. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

FACT 3

SNAP participants with young children are at high risk of losing benefits when faced with recertification deadlines and other administrative burdens. This lapse in benefits, known as churning, increases the risk of food insecurity for families. One study of SNAP-participating households in Massachusetts with children younger than 6 years old found that 40.9% of households experienced churning in 2019. This lapse in benefits can also have a downstream effect on school meal eligibility.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ When families face administrative barriers to SNAP, young children are more likely to go hungry.
- ▶ Nearly half of SNAP-participating families with young children had inconsistent access to benefits because of administrative barriers in 2019.
- ▶ The more complicated it is to reapply for SNAP, the higher the risk of children and families going hungry.
- ▶ When families are unable to reapply for their SNAP benefits due to administrative barriers, it impacts their eligibility for free school meals.

Source:

Kenney EL, Soto MJ, Fubini M, Carleton A, Lee M, Bleich SN. Simplification of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Recertification Processes and Association With Uninterrupted Access to Benefits Among Participants With Young Children. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2022;5(9):e2230150. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.30150.

FACT 4

Tribal members are not allowed to participate in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and SNAP at the same time, though FDPIR benefits are lower than SNAP benefits.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Tribal members have to choose between participating in FDPIR or SNAP.
- ▶ Many tribal members living on reservations must enroll in FDPIR because rural and reservation communities lack access to SNAP offices or authorized food stores.
- ▶ FDPIR benefits are lower than SNAP benefits, but tribal members cannot enroll in both programs and lack meaningful access to SNAP offices or stores.
- ▶ Tribal members who live in rural and reservation communities without meaningful access to SNAP offices or authorized food stores receive fewer benefits to feed their families.
- ▶ Indigenous children and families living on their native lands receive fewer benefits than their non-tribal counterparts.

Source:

Duren CD. Program Highlight: Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, University of Arkansas. February 2019. Available at: <https://indigenousfoodandag.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Program-Highlight-FDPIR.pdf>.

SNAP Impact on Food Insecurity, Poverty, and Health Care

FACT 5

In 2021, more than five million households (5.1 million) had very low food security, meaning at least one person in the household did not have enough to eat. In 2021, approximately 274,000 households with children experienced very low food security. These households reported that children were hungry, skipped a meal, or did not eat for a whole day because there was not enough money for food.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ In 2021, more than 5 million families struggled to afford food for their families.
- ▶ In 2021, almost 300,000 families with children did not have enough for everyone to eat.
- ▶ Almost 300,000 children were hungry, skipped meals, or went a whole day without eating because their families did not have enough money for food in 2021.
- ▶ When families can't afford food, children go hungry.

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 2021, September 2022. Available at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=104655>

FACT 6

The Brookings Survey of Mothers with Young Children found that 12% of mothers who have children aged 5 and younger reported that their children didn't have enough to eat in April 2020. To combat the effects of the pandemic, Congress authorized a temporary raise in SNAP benefits and dedicated additional funding to support the increased demand for SNAP. These actions are, in part, why food insecurity did not grow worse during the pandemic.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ At the start of the pandemic, 12% of young children did not have enough to eat.
- ▶ Congress raised SNAP benefits in response to growing demand for the program during the pandemic.
- ▶ Congress' decision to raise SNAP benefits helped keep children and families from going hungry during the pandemic.
- ▶ The pandemic put immeasurable stress on parents and caregivers, but Congress' decision to raise SNAP benefits meant feeding children was one less thing parents and caregivers had to worry about.

Source:

Bauer L. Hungry at Thanksgiving: A Fall 2020 Update of Food Insecurity in the U.S.: Brookings Institution; November 23, 2020.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. USDA increases emergency SNAP benefits for 25 million Americans; ensures covid-19 relief reaches those struggling the most. Press release. April 1, 2021. Available at: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/04/01/usda-increases-emergency-snap-benefits-25-million-americans-ensures#:~:text=The%20Families%20First%20Coronavirus%20Response%20Act%20authorized%20emergency,to%20the%20maximum%20benefit%20for%20their%20household%20size.>

FACT 7

SNAP participation can reduce the likelihood of children experiencing food insecurity. An analysis of nearly 3,000 households with children found SNAP participation for six months was associated with an approximately one-third decrease in the likelihood of children being food insecure.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Participating in SNAP may reduce a child's risk of experiencing food insecurity.
- ▶ When parents and caregivers have access to SNAP, their children are less likely to experience hunger.
- ▶ Fewer children go hungry and skip meals because of SNAP.
- ▶ Six months of SNAP benefits can cut the likelihood of child hunger by more than 30%.

Source:

Mabli J, Worthington J. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation and Child Food Security. *Pediatrics*. April 2014; 133(4):610-619. 10.1542/peds.2013-2823

FACT 8

Prior to the pandemic, SNAP kept nearly 8 million people from poverty annually, including 3.6 million children.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP keeps children and families out of poverty.
- ▶ Before the pandemic, SNAP kept almost 8 million people—including more than 3 million children—out of poverty.
- ▶ Before the pandemic, SNAP kept over 3 million children fed and out of poverty.
- ▶ Before the pandemic, SNAP kept almost 8 million people out of poverty.

Source:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Policy Basics: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). June 2022. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

FACT 9

In one study, older adults who participated in SNAP were 30% less likely to reduce or forego prescribed medication due to out-of-pocket costs.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP keeps older adults from having to choose between buying food or buying their prescription medications.
- ▶ SNAP helps older adults afford their prescription medications.
- ▶ Older adults who participate in SNAP are 30% less likely to limit or stop taking medication due to costs.
- ▶ SNAP ensures that our parents and grandparents never have to decide between affording food and affording life-saving medications.

Source:

Srinivasan M, Pooler JA. Cost-Related Medication Nonadherence for Older Adults Participating in SNAP, 2013-2015. *Am J Public Health*. 2018;108(2):224-230. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2017.304176.

FACT 10

Participating in SNAP may lower annual health care costs for adults by reducing food insecurity. For example, a study conducted in 2017 found that annual health care costs for adults in SNAP were nearly 25% (about \$1,400) less than those of non-participants.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Participating in SNAP may lower participants' health care costs.
- ▶ SNAP helps lower health care costs by reducing food insecurity.
- ▶ Health care costs for SNAP participants are nearly 25% lower than non-participants.
- ▶ Participating in SNAP can reduce annual health care costs for an adult by about \$1,400.
- ▶ Helping families afford food to lead healthier lives helps lower the health care costs associated with food insecurity.

Source:

Berkowitz SA, Seligman HK, Rigdon J, Meigs JB, Basu S. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation and health care expenditures among low-income adults. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2017;177(11):1642-1649.

SNAP Access

FACT 11

SNAP participation is not maximized. In fiscal year 2019, 82% of eligible people received SNAP benefits, while the participation rate was 72% of eligible working-poor households. Across SNAP participation varied considerably from a low of 55% in Wyoming to a high of 100% in Illinois, Oregon, Rhode Island, Delaware, New Mexico, Vermont, Washington, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Participation in SNAP is not maximized—many who are eligible do not receive benefits.
- ▶ In 2019, only 82% of people who were eligible for SNAP received benefits.
- ▶ Among households with low incomes, 72% of people are eligible for SNAP but do not receive benefits.
- ▶ Wyoming has the lowest rate of SNAP participation at 55%.
- ▶ Illinois, Oregon, Rhode Island, Delaware, New Mexico, Vermont, Washington, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin have 100% SNAP participation.

Source:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Reaching those in need: estimates of state Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation rates in 2019. February 2023. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/estimates-program-participation-rates-2019>.

FACT 12

SNAP participants have described feeling stigma in relation to the enrollment process, personal and perceived societal views of program participation, and underlying issues related to race, gender, nationality, family structure, or age.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Parents and caregivers often feel stigmatized when trying to enroll in SNAP to feed their children.
- ▶ SNAP is meant to help people and families afford enough to eat, but the enrollment process can be stigmatizing and counterproductive.
- ▶ Societal views of SNAP often lead participants to feel stigmatized.
- ▶ Parents and caregivers often experience stigma related to race, gender, nationality, family structure, or age when trying to enroll for SNAP.

Source:

Bleich SN, Moran AJ, Vercammen KA, Frelter JM, Dunn CG, Zhong A, et al. Strengthening the public health impacts of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program through policy. *Ann Rev Pub Health*. 2020. 41:453-480. doi: 10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040119-094143.

FACT 13

SNAP participation is estimated to reduce the likelihood of a household being food insecure. States that have adopted SNAP-supportive policies (e.g., exempting vehicles from SNAP asset calculations, simplifying reporting, providing online applications, and adopting broad-based categorical eligibility) generally have more SNAP-eligible participation than do states without these policies. States with SNAP-restrictive policies (e.g., eligibility restrictions for adult noncitizens, short recertification periods, drug testing, and fingerprinting during the application process) tend to have lower levels of SNAP participation among eligible individuals and households.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Policies that make SNAP easier to access increase participation in the program and reduce food insecurity.
- ▶ When states make it easier to access SNAP, fewer children and families go hungry.
- ▶ When states make it harder to access SNAP, more children and families go hungry.
- ▶ States have the power to reduce food insecurity by making SNAP more accessible.
- ▶ Many states have passed SNAP-supportive policies to make it easier for more families to receive benefits. Other states have made it harder.
- ▶ When parents and caregivers can apply for SNAP online, fewer children go hungry.

Source:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Using a policy index to capture trends and differences in state administration of USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Econ. Res. Rep. 244, US Dep. Agric., Econ. Res. Serv., Washington, DC. 2018. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=87095>

Improving Diet Quality and Promoting Nutrition Security in SNAP

FACT 14

Evidence suggests that SNAP participants have less than ideal diet quality than income-eligible non-participants, in part due to overly processed foods being less expensive and the lack of a nutritional focus on SNAP. Studies have found that SNAP participants consumed fewer fruit and vegetables and more added sugars and meat/meat alternatives compared with income-eligible non-participants.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP helps families afford food but does not do enough to help families afford healthy, nutritious food.
- ▶ Children and families receiving SNAP benefits consume fewer fruits and vegetables than those who do not receive SNAP, in part due to overly processed foods being less expensive and the lack of a nutritional focus on SNAP.
- ▶ Children and families receiving SNAP benefits consume more added sugars and meat than those who do not receive SNAP, in part due to overly processed foods being less expensive and the lack of a nutritional focus on SNAP.
- ▶ SNAP participants have worse diets than non-participants, in part due to overly processed foods being less expensive and the lack of a nutritional focus on SNAP.

Source:

Gleason S, Hansen D and Wakar B. Indicators of diet quality, nutrition, and health for Americans by program participation status, 2011–2016: SNAP Report 2021.

Leung CW, Ding EL, Catalano PJ, Villamor E, Rimm EB and Willett WC. *cp. Am J Clin Nutr.* 2012;96:977-988.

FACT 15

One study found that sugary beverages accounted for approximately 12% of total daily caloric intake (258 kcal) among SNAP participants, higher than that of SNAP-eligible non-participants (9%, 205 kcal) and SNAP-ineligible non-participants (6%, 153 kcal), in part due to aggressive marketing of sugary drinks and their cheaper cost.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP participants drink more sugary beverages than non-participants, in part due to aggressive marketing of sugary drinks and their cheaper cost.
- ▶ Sugary beverages account for about 12% of SNAP participants' daily calories, in part due to aggressive marketing of sugary drinks and their cheaper cost.
- ▶ Twelve percent of SNAP participants' daily calories come from sugary beverages, in part due to aggressive marketing of sugary drinks and their cheaper cost.

Source:

Nguyen BT and Powell LW. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation and sugar-sweetened beverage consumption, overall and by source. *Prev Med.* 2015:82-6.

FACT 16

In both SNAP and SNAP-eligible households, more money is spent on sugary beverages than any other food commodity, in part due to aggressive marketing of sugary drinks and their cheaper cost.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Households with low incomes spend more on sugary beverages than any other food or drink, in part due to aggressive marketing of sugary drinks and their cheaper cost.
- ▶ Children in families with low incomes consume sugary beverages more than children in families without low incomes, in part due to aggressive marketing of sugary drinks and their cheaper cost.

Source:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Foods Typically Purchased by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Households. November 2016. Available at: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/ops/SNAPFoodsTypicallyPurchased.pdf>.

FACT 17

Unlike other federal nutrition assistance programs like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP); or school meals, all of which have nutrition standards, SNAP does not focus on diet quality or nutrition despite growing public support, including from SNAP participants.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP is the only federal nutrition assistance program that does not prioritize diet quality or nutrition.
- ▶ WIC, CACFP, and school meals all have nutrition standards to help participants lead healthier lives—SNAP does not.
- ▶ SNAP participants want increased access to healthy, nutritious foods.
- ▶ There is broad support among the general public and participants to strengthen nutrition standards for SNAP.

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:S193-S198. doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2016.07.024.

SNAP Incentives

FACT 18

People who receive SNAP benefits and who participated in HIP, which provided financial incentives for purchasing fruits and vegetables, ate almost a quarter of a cup (26%) more targeted fruits and vegetables per day than did 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:

- ▶ When it's easier to access and afford healthy options like fruits and vegetables, SNAP participants buy more nutritious foods.
- ▶ HIP increased daily fruit and vegetable consumption among SNAP participants by 26%.
- ▶ SNAP participants in HIP ate more fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ SNAP participants want healthier food options and will purchase them when given the option.
- ▶ Participants in HIP spent an average of \$2 more on fruits and vegetables per month.

Source:

Bartlett S, Klerman JA, Olsho L, et al. Evaluation of the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP) Final Report. Prepared by Abt Associates for the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service; September 2014. Available at: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/ops/HIP-Final.pdf>.

FACT 19

Impact findings from year two of the GusNIP program demonstrate that households participating in the nutrition incentive program purchased more than \$20 million in fruits and vegetables, representing a 415% increase over the dollar amount of fruits and vegetables purchased in the prior year. Participants also reported eating more fruits (1.08 cups/day) and vegetables (1.72 cups/day) than the average adult in the U.S. (0.96 cups/day of fruit and 1.57 cups/day of vegetables) and reported eating more fruits and vegetables the longer they were in the program.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ When a nutrition incentive program made it easier to purchase fruits and vegetables, SNAP participants spent 415% more on them.
- ▶ When it's easier to afford fruits and vegetables, SNAP participants eat more of them than the average U.S. adult.
- ▶ SNAP participants want to eat more fruits and vegetables, but healthy foods need to be affordable and accessible.

Source:

Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition. Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center (GusNIP NTAE): Impact Findings. January 2022. Available at: https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/media/euvdpb0q/gusnip-ntae-impact-findings_year-1.pdf.

FACT 20

SNAP incentives can increase spending on fruits and vegetables in grocery stores. A 2017 study conducted in a rural community found that shoppers with low incomes 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 participants who received incentives spent 15% more on fruits and vegetables than other participants.
- ▶ Parents and caregivers who rely on SNAP want to feed their children more fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Given the opportunity, parents and caregivers who rely on SNAP buy more fruits and vegetables for their families.
- ▶ SNAP incentives lead participants to spend more of their benefits.

Source:

Polacsek M, Moran A, Thorndike AN, et al. A supermarket double-dollar incentive program increases purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables among low-income families with children: The Healthy Double study. *J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2018; 50(3):217-228, doi: 10.1016/j.jneb.2017.09.013.

FACT 21

Discounts on produce may increase spending on these items. A 2019 study found that an immediate 50% discount on fruits and vegetables increased weekly spending on qualifying produce by 27%.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP participants buy more fresh produce when we make it affordable for them.
- ▶ When the cost of fresh fruits and vegetables is cut in half, SNAP participants spend 27% more on produce.

Source:

Moran A, Thorndike A, Franckle R, et al. Financial incentives increase purchases of fruit and vegetables among lower-income households with children. *Health Aff (Millwood).* 2019;38(9):1557-1566.

FACT 22

Produce coupons may increase produce sales and consumption. A 2020 study found that providing produce coupons to SNAP participants at corner stores led to 77% of shoppers reporting increases in produce consumption, while participating stores collectively experienced a 288% increase in produce items sold compared to the previous unincentivized year.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ In one study, providing SNAP participants with produce coupons led to a 77% increase in produce consumption and a 288% increase in sales of produce.
- ▶ When we make it easier for families to afford fresh produce, most SNAP recipients will buy it.
- ▶ When we make it easier to afford healthy produce, families want to buy it.
- ▶ Making fresh produce more affordable to families receiving SNAP benefits helps SNAP-eligible food retailers.

Source:

Snelling AM, Yamamoto JJ, Belazis LB, Seltzer GR, McClave RL, Watts E. Incentivizing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program purchases with fresh produce in corner stores to reduce food inequity in underserved areas of Washington DC. *Health Equity*. 2020;4(1):386-393.

FACT 23

Dollar-matching programs are a potentially effective strategy for increasing fresh produce purchases. A dollar-matching program in Michigan providing SNAP participants with an incentive for fresh produce purchases found that SNAP participants' spending on fresh produce was significantly higher at stores that implemented the incentive in 2015 (7.4% higher) and in 2016 (2.2% higher) than at stores that did not implement the incentive.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Dollar-matching SNAP incentives help more families afford fresh, nutritious produce.
- ▶ Dollar-matching incentives make it possible for more children and families receiving SNAP benefits to eat healthy, nutritious produce.
- ▶ A dollar-matching program significantly increased SNAP participants' spending on fresh produce.

Source:

Rummo PE, Noriega D, Parret A, Harding M, Hesterman O, Elbel BE. Evaluating a USDA program that gives SNAP participants financial incentives to buy fresh produce in supermarkets. *Health Affairs*. 2019;38(11):1816-1823. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2019.00431

FACT 24

Incentives for purchasing more fruits and vegetables can improve diet quality. A randomized controlled trial conducted among SNAP-eligible individuals found that pairing incentives for purchasing more fruits and vegetables with restrictions on the purchase of less nutritious foods (e.g., sugary drinks, sweet baked goods, and candies) improved diet quality, reduced consumption of sugar drinks and sweets, and increased fruit intake compared with individuals who made purchases with no restrictions or incentives.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Providing incentives to buy more fruits and vegetables and restricting the purchases of less healthy foods improves diet quality, reduces consumption of sugary drinks and sweets, and increases fruit intake.
- ▶ When we make it easier to eat healthy food and drinks, diet quality improves.
- ▶ Providing affordable, nutritious alternatives to less healthy foods improves diet quality.

Source:

Harnack L, Oakes JM, Elbel B, Beatty T, Rydell S, French S. Effects of subsidies and prohibitions on nutrition in a food benefit program: a randomized clinical trial. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2016;176(11):1610-1618.

Modernizing Technology - Benefit Redemption and Online Purchasing

FACT 25

The 2014 Farm Bill authorized a SNAP Online Purchasing Pilot, which rolled out in eight states in 2019, starting in New York. The pilot was to test the feasibility of accepting SNAP benefits for online grocery transactions before expanding nationally, but instead was rapidly expanded to 49 states and the District of Columbia due to the COVID-19 pandemic, increased participation in SNAP, and the need for socially distanced food shopping and delivery. By March 2021, more than 1.5 million households were using their SNAP benefits to purchase groceries online through participating retailers.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Modernizing SNAP helped keep children and families fed during the pandemic.
- ▶ When families can redeem their SNAP benefits online, more families are fed.
- ▶ We have the capacity to rapidly update and improve SNAP to make it easier for families to access and afford food.
- ▶ Two years after the launch of a pilot program to provide online SNAP shopping, more than 1.5 million participating households were purchasing groceries online.

Source:

United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. Fact Sheet: Biden-Harris Administration's Actions to Reduce Food Insecurity Amid the COVID-19 Crisis [press release]. Washington, DC: March 3, 2021. Available at: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/03/03/biden-harris-administrations-actions-reduce-food-insecurity-amid>.

FACT 26

The online SNAP purchasing pilot shows promise for increasing healthy purchases by simplifying shopping; expanding grocery options; reducing unhealthy impulse purchases; addressing transportation barriers; and with changes to marketing practices when shopping online, improving the visibility of nutrition-related information.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Being able to redeem SNAP benefits online makes it easier for more families to live healthier lives.
- ▶ Online purchasing makes it easier for SNAP participants to purchase healthy foods by simplifying shopping, expanding grocery options, limiting unhealthy impulse purchases, and addressing transportation barriers.
- ▶ We need to make nutrition-related information more visible for online SNAP shoppers.

Source:

Olzenak K, French S, Sherwood N, Redden JP, Harnack L. How online grocery stores support consumer nutrition information needs. *J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2020;52(10):952-957.

Jilcott Pitts SB, Ng SW, Blitstein JL, Gustafson A, Niculescu M. Online grocery shopping: promise and pitfalls for healthier food and beverage purchases. *Public Health Nutr.* 2018;21(18):3360-3376.

FACT 27

There is a need to better understand the barriers to adoption of online purchasing facing elderly, immigrant, rural, and tribal communities to ensure equitable access to benefits. These barriers include cost, limited availability of online grocery services and limited retailer participation, limited internet access, and delivery fees.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ There are still barriers to online SNAP purchasing that we must overcome.
- ▶ Online purchasing is an important step to making SNAP more accessible, but older adult, immigrant, rural, and tribal communities continue to face barriers.
- ▶ Providing online ordering is not enough—rural communities still lack enough SNAP-participating food retailers with healthy, nutritious options.
- ▶ SNAP's online shopping program is not accessible to everyone due to barriers such as cost, limited availability of online retailers, limited internet access, and delivery fees.

Source:

Trude ACB, Lowery CM, Ali SH, Vedovato GM. An equity-oriented systematic review of online grocery shopping among low-income populations: implications for policy and research. *Nutrition Reviews.* 2022. 80; 1294-1310. <https://doi.org/10.1093/nutrit/nuab122>

FACT 28

The primary barriers to more farmers markets and vendors accepting SNAP are technological, financial, and regulatory. For example, the cost of the technology to accept SNAP benefits is often prohibitive for smaller retailers, regardless of whether a traditional point-of-sale terminal or a smartphone are used to process SNAP benefits.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Many farmers markets and smaller vendors who want to accept SNAP cannot afford to due to barriers such as technology, cost, and regulation.
- ▶ Smaller retailers and farmers markets struggle to afford the needed technology to accept SNAP benefits.
- ▶ Barriers such as technology, cost, and regulations keep small retailers and farmers from accepting SNAP benefits.
- ▶ SNAP participants should be able to shop at farmers markets, but barriers keep vendors from accepting benefits.

Source:

Blaustein Rejto D. SNAP at Farmers Markets Growing, but Limited by Barriers. June 2015. Available at: <https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/snap-at-farmers-markets-growing-but-limited-by-barriers/>.

SNAP Benefit Adequacy and Issuance

FACT 29

Research shows that SNAP benefits are often not adequate to last a family the entire month and three-fourths of benefits are exhausted by mid-month.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ SNAP does not provide families with enough benefits to afford food for an entire month.
- ▶ Many parents and caregivers run out of SNAP benefits to feed their families before the end of the month.
- ▶ SNAP benefits are meant to last families an entire month, but they are almost fully exhausted by mid-month.

Source:

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

Castner L, Wakar B, Wroblewska K, Trippe C and Cole N. Benefit redemption patterns in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Fiscal Year 2017. 2020. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/benefit-redemption-patterns-fy-2017>.

FACT 30

The average SNAP household (two people) received \$239 in monthly benefits in 2019. This averages to about \$1.40 per meal, which does not cover the cost of a meal in 99% of U.S. continental counties and the District of Columbia.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Monthly SNAP benefits average \$1.40 per meal, which does not cover the cost of a full meal for most people.
- ▶ SNAP participants are expected to feed themselves for \$1.40 per meal.
- ▶ Most SNAP participants do not receive enough benefits to cover the average cost of a meal.

Source:

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. SNAP Household State Averages for SNAP Benefits (FY 2019). Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/SNAP-household-state-averages/2019>

Waxman E, Gundersen C, Thompson M. How Far Do SNAP Benefits Fall Short of Covering the Cost of a Meal? February 2018. Available at: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/how-far-do-snap-benefits-fall-short-covering-cost-meal>

FACT 31

A recent study found that 61% of SNAP participants viewed the cost of healthy food as a barrier to the adequacy of SNAP benefits.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Most participants think that SNAP does not do enough to ensure they can afford healthy, nutritious foods.
- ▶ Two-thirds of participants think that SNAP does not do enough to ensure they can afford healthy, nutritious foods.
- ▶ Cost is a major barrier for SNAP participants who want to purchase healthier foods.
- ▶ Two-thirds of SNAP participants say cost is a barrier to affording healthy food.

Source:

Gearing M, Dixit-Joshi S and May L. Barriers that contain the adequacy of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) allotments: Survey Findings. 2021. Available at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/barriers-constrain-adequacy-snap-allotments>.

Strengthening Requirements for SNAP-Authorized Retailers to Promote Healthier Retail Food Environments

FACT 32

SNAP-authorized stores, which in many cases are convenience stores or small grocers, often offer comparatively fewer fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain-rich foods, and low-fat dairy products in communities with lower incomes (high SNAP-eligible) than food retailers in communities with higher incomes.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Stores that accept SNAP benefits are often small grocers or convenience stores.
- ▶ Stores that accept SNAP benefits have fewer healthy food products available than other retailers.
- ▶ SNAP participants often have reduced access to fresh fruits and vegetables and other nutritious foods.
- ▶ Communities with more SNAP participants often have fewer food retailers to choose from, and the food retailers they do have access to offer few fresh and nutritious options.

Source:

Caspi CE, Pelletier JE, Harnack L, Erickson DJ, Laska MN. Differences in healthy food supply and stocking practices between small grocery stores, gas-marts, pharmacies and dollar stores. *Public Health Nutr.* 2016;19(3):540-547.

Laska MN, Caspi CE, Pelletier JE, Friebur R, Harnack L. Lack of healthy food in small-size to mid-size retailers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, 2014. *Prev Chronic Dis.* 2015;12:E135.

Racine EF, Batada A, Solomon CA, Story M. Availability of foods and beverages in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-authorized dollar stores in a region of North Carolina. *J Acad Nutr Diet.* 2016;116(10):1613-1620.

FACT 33

Small stores are capable of stocking healthier products but may need additional support. One study examined 57 small stores across four states and found small stores are capable of stocking healthier products but could benefit from technical and infrastructure support, incentives to shift to healthier items, and efforts to drive consumer demand for the healthier products.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Many stores want to provide healthier options for SNAP recipients, but they cannot afford to stock them.
- ▶ SNAP-participating retailers need support to stock healthier options for their communities.
- ▶ We can help small stores stock healthier foods by providing technical and infrastructure support, incentives to stock healthier items, and assistance in driving consumer demand.

Source:

Karpyn A, DeWeese RS, Pelletier JE, et al. Examining the feasibility of healthy minimum stocking standards for small food stores. *J Acad Nutr Diet.* 2018;118(9):1655-1663.

FACT 34

Sugar-sweetened beverage marketing during the SNAP benefit issuance period may exacerbate disparities in diet quality in households participating in SNAP. One study in three cities in New York state found increases in sugar-sweetened beverage marketing during the SNAP benefit issuance period compared to other days of the month.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Beverage companies may target SNAP recipients by marketing sugary drinks when benefits are issued.
- ▶ When families see more advertisements for sugary drinks around the time they receive their monthly SNAP benefit, they are more likely to purchase them.
- ▶ When companies market sugary drinks to SNAP participants, it may lead to less nutritious diets.

Source:

Moran AJ, Musicus A, Gorski Findling MT, et al. Increases in sugary drink marketing during Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefit issuance in New York. *Am J Prev Med.* 2018;55(1):55-62.

FACT 35

There is support for exploring healthy retail marketing strategies. A recent report, sharing diverse stakeholder input from Iowa, indicated strong stakeholder support for further work to explore promoting healthy retail marketing strategies and recommended studying the feasibility of including evidence-based product-placement strategies and restrictions on the marketing of unhealthy products by SNAP retailers.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Most people want to make it easier for SNAP recipients to eat healthier.
- ▶ Most people want to make it harder for food and beverage companies to market unhealthy food and drinks to SNAP recipients.

Source:

Buckingham-Schutt L, Johnson J, Schwartz C, Uram J, Daly E, Ramos C. Strategies to Improve Healthy Eating in SNAP: An Iowa Perspective. The Harkin Institute, Drake University and Center for Science in the Public Interest; 2021. Available at: <https://harkinstitute.drake.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/103/2021/01/SNAP-in-Iowa.pdf>.