

IV. PARTICIPATION STATUS AMONG LOW-INCOME AND FOOD STAMP ELIGIBLE POPULATIONS

This chapter examines the participation rates of the low-income households and food stamp eligible households in our research sample and compares the characteristics of the participants to those of non-participants.

A. Participation Rates

As *Exhibit IV.1* shows, about half of all low-income households (LIHH) in either month 12 or month 36 received food stamps at some point during the 48-month panel. Of those who participated, over half received food stamps for at least 24 of the 48 months. Not surprisingly, participation rates are substantially higher for the food stamp eligible households. More than two-thirds of the sample eligible in either month 12 or month 36 received food stamps at some point during the panel period.

Exhibit IV.1: Percent Participating in FSP

	Low-income Households		Food Stamp Eligible Households	
	LIHH-12	LIHH-36	FSE-12	FSE-36
Participation in 48-Month Panel				
No participation	49.1	49.8	35.9	36.6
1 to 11 months	12.0	11.1	12.2	12.4
12 to 23 months	10.5	9.6	13.1	11.7
24 to 35 months	7.9	7.5	9.7	9.3
36 to 47 months	10.9	11.4	14.6	15.6
All 48 months	9.6	10.6	14.6	14.4
Participated in Month 12	34.3	33.0	46.5	42.9
Participated in Month 36	25.5	28.9	35.2	38.8

NOTE: LIHH-12 and -36 samples have gross income less than 130% FPL in month 12 and month 36, respectively; FSE-12 and -36 samples meet the FSP eligibility criteria in the respective month.

Examining the participation rates in a given month (month 12 or 36), we find that rates are substantially lower. For example, while 50 percent of households with low income in month 12 participated at some point during the 48-month period, only one-third participated in month 12.

We had expected households meeting the food stamp eligibility criteria in a given month to have the highest participation rate in the eligibility determination month than in another month. This is true for those who met the criteria for sample inclusion in month 12, but not true for those meeting the criteria in month 36. That is, households that met the low income or food stamp eligibility criteria in month 36 actually had higher participation rates in month 12 than in month 36, even though their income and earnings were lower in month 36, on average. This counterintuitive result is likely explained by the drop in food stamp participation rates that occurred in the late 1990s (see Exhibit I.1). Month 12 interviews were conducted between November 1996 and February 1997, shortly after PRWORA was enacted but before states had

an opportunity to implement many of the welfare reform provisions that might have affected food stamp participation. Month 36 interviews were conducted between November 1998 and February 1999, after most provisions had been implemented. TANF caseload reductions during this period caused in part by PRWORA policy changes (e.g., work requirements and mandatory sanctions for noncompliance) may have reduced food stamp participation rates since many who left TANF also left the food stamp program. The improvement in the economy over this period might also have contributed to the decline in the later years.

B. Characteristics of Participants and Non-Participants

This section examines the differences in characteristics between households participating in the FSP and those not participating. *Exhibit IV.2* presents selected characteristics of the participants and non-participants in both the LIHH and FSE groups. As expected, participant households are more disadvantaged than non-participant households. The heads of these households were more likely to be female, black, and divorced, separated, or never married. They also tended to be younger, had more children, lacked a high school diploma or GED, and had at least one member of the household who was disabled. Additionally, between 32 and 49 percent of all participant households were receiving TANF, depending on the sample, compared with 1 to 3 percent of non-participant households. Finally, participant households were substantially more likely to be receiving SSI, housing assistance, general assistance, WIC, and Medicaid, compared with non-participant households.

In comparing the characteristics of the participants of both household groups in month 36 with those samples defined in month 12, it is important to distinguish between characteristics that are static (e.g., sex, race, and ethnicity) and characteristics that might change due to the two-year difference (e.g., age, marital status, education levels, and size of household). Any differences in the former are due to differences in the sample; any differences in the latter are due both to differences in the sample and changes that occur within a household over time.

There are only slight differences in the static characteristics between the two points in time. Among the dynamic characteristics, food stamp participants and non-participants in month 36 tend to be older, as expected. Interestingly, the participants in the low-income and food stamp eligible households in month 36 were less likely to be receiving TANF, general assistance, or WIC, but were more likely to be receiving SSI. Also, among participants in month 36, about 13 percent had been on TANF in the past year, but left before month 36 (the difference between households who received TANF at some point in the past 12 months and those currently receiving TANF). This compares with under 1 percent of the group participating in month 12.

Another interesting finding is that 25 to 40 percent of the households that were not participating in the reference month actually participated in the FSP in at least one of the other months of the 48-month SIPP panel. Thus, many of the non-participants were familiar with the FSP.

**Exhibit IV.2: Characteristics of Participants and Non-participants
(Percent of Household Participation Group, Unless Otherwise Noted)**

Head of Household Characteristics	Low-Income Households						Food Stamp Eligible Households					
	LIHH-12			LIHH-36			FSE-12			FSE-36		
	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference
Sex												
Male	29.1	49.2	-20.1 ***	28.9	49.4	-20.5 ***	26.6	48.2	-21.6 ***	28.3	46.1	-17.8 ***
Female	70.9	50.8	20.1 ***	71.1	50.6	20.5 ***	73.4	51.8	21.6 ***	71.7	53.9	17.8 ***
Race												
White	64.8	79.8	-15.0 ***	61.9	77.3	-15.4 ***	62.1	74.2	-12.1 ***	60.6	72.2	-11.6 ***
Black	30.9	15.9	15.0 ***	31.7	18.4	13.3 ***	33.1	21.8	11.3 ***	32.9	23.9	9.0 ***
Native American	1.9	2.1	-0.2	3.4	1.6	1.8 ***	1.9	2.3	-0.4	3.4	1.9	1.5 ***
Asian	2.5	2.2	0.3	3.0	2.8	0.2	2.9	1.7	1.2 *	3.1	2.0	1.1
Ethnicity												
Hispanic	18.8	12.6	6.1 ***	19.0	13.9	5.1 ***	19.6	15.0	4.6	18.8	17.2	1.6
Age												
18-25	10.8	10.2	0.6	6.4	5.2	1.3	10.5	10.7	-0.2	6.5	5.9	0.6
25-35	31.9	27.7	4.1 **	29.3	25.2	4.1 **	31.9	39.8	1.9	29.1	26.8	2.3
35-45	32.6	31.4	1.3	34.8	33.7	1.1	33.6	31.7	1.9	35.1	33.7	1.4
45-88	24.7	30.7	-6.1 ***	29.5	36.0	-6.5 ***	24.0	27.8	-3.8 *	29.3	33.6	-4.3
Marital Status												
Never married	32.9	28.0	4.9 ***	32.8	25.1	7.7 ***	34.3	31.5	2.8 *	33.8	29.0	4.8 **
Married	28.7	46.7	-18.0 ***	27.1	44.8	-17.7 ***	25.9	43.4	-17.5 ***	26.3	37.4	-11.1 ***
Divorced/separated	34.4	22.5	11.9 ***	35.3	26.5	8.8 ***	36.2	22.5	13.7 ***	35.1	30.6	4.5 ***
Widowed	4.0	2.8	1.2 *	4.8	3.6	1.2	3.5	2.6	0.9 *	4.8	3.0	1.8 **
Education Levels												
Less than high school	39.7	22.8	16.9 ***	41.3	24.0	17.3 ***	42.1	29.0	13.1 ***	42.2	32.2	10.0 ***
High school graduate/ GED	37.2	36.0	1.1	38.2	33.4	4.8 **	35.6	36.3	-0.7	38.5	34.2	4.3 *
Trade/vocational school	3.5	4.7	-1.2 *	3.7	4.4	-0.7	3.5	3.9	-0.4	3.8	3.7	0.1
Some college	13.8	18.7	-4.9 ***	12.0	18.9	-6.9 ***	12.8	18.3	-5.5 ***	11.3	18.0	-6.7 ***
College graduate	5.9	17.8	-11.9 ***	4.8	19.3	-14.5 ***	6.0	12.6	-6.6 ***	4.2	12.0	-7.8 ***

Exhibit IV.2: Characteristics of Participants and Non-participants (continued)

Household Characteristics	Low-Income Households						Food Stamp Eligible Households					
	LIHH-12			LIHH-36			FSE-12			FSE-36		
	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference
Household Composition												
Average adults (#)	1.66	1.78	-0.13 ***	1.78	1.83	-0.05	1.6	1.7	-0.1 ***	1.7	1.8	-0.1
Average children (#)	1.86	1.19	0.67 ***	1.88	1.25	0.63 ***	1.9	1.2	0.7 ***	1.9	1.2	0.7***
Member with disability	28.8	8.5	20.3 ***	32.5	8.9	23.6 ***	33.5	16.9	16.6 ***	33.3	14.3	19.0***
Elderly member	11.9	10.4	1.5	13.4	11.6	1.8	12.5	15.4	-2.9	13.8	13.7	0.1
ABAWDs only	6.0	23.3	-17.2 ***	5.8	19.6	-13.8 ***	4.1	19.9	-15.8 ***	5.8	19.4	-13.6***
Number of Children												
No children	25.0	44.5	-19.5 ***	27.2	44.6	-17.4 ***	24.1	44.6	-20.5 ***	27.0	44.8	-17.8 ***
One child	19.6	18.8	0.8	19.0	15.6	3.3 **	19.7	18.6	1.1	19.0	16.7	2.3
Two or three children	41.7	30.5	11.2 ***	38.8	33.0	5.8 ***	41.5	29.2	12.3 ***	38.5	31.3	7.2 ***
Four or more children	13.6	6.2	7.4 ***	15.1	6.7	8.3 ***	14.7	7.5	7.2 ***	15.5	7.2	8.3 ***
Youngest Child's Age												
1 year and under	18.0	12.4	5.7 ***	16.7	9.1	7.7 ***	17.4	13.3	4.1 **	16.8	9.8	7 ***
2 to 4	21.9	12.9	9.1 ***	18.2	13.7	4.5 ***	23.1	12.4	10.7 ***	18.4	13.9	4.5 **
5 and over	35.0	30.3	4.7 ***	37.9	32.6	5.3 ***	35.5	29.6	5.9 **	37.8	31.5	6.3 ***
Benefits												
Food Stamps												
Ever received (48 months)	100.0	25.2	74.8 ***	100.0	30.0	70.0 ***	100.0	32.9	67.1 ***	100.0	40.0	60.0 ***
Average months (#)	34.4	3.2	31.2 ***	38.8	4.4	34.5 ***	35.6	4.5	31.2 ***	39.3	5.9	33.4 ***
Cash Assistance												
SSI	36.8	18.5	18.3 ***	43.7	21.1	22.6 ***	38.7	24.4	14.3 ***	43.9	27.3	16.6 ***
TANF	40.9	1.9	39.0 ***	32.1	1.0	31.0 ***	48.7	2.9	45.8 ***	33.1	1.3	31.8 ***
General assistance	8.0	0.4	7.6 ***	3.6	0.2	3.4 ***	7.9	0.5	7.4 ***	3.6	0.3	3.3 ***
Other assistance	1.4	0.3	1.1 ***	0.7	0.2	0.5 *	1.5	0.4	1.1 *	0.3	0.3	0
TANF in past 12 months	41.7	2.3	39.4 ***	44.9	4.7	40.2 ***	49.3	4.2	45.1 ***	45.9	6.4	39.5 ***
Other Benefits												
Housing assistance	31.2	7.6	23.6 ***	32.1	7.6	24.6 ***	33.7	10.9	22.8 ***	33.1	11.1	22 ***
WIC	27.9	9.1	18.8 ***	24.1	9.1	14.9 ***	28.8	11.2	17.6 ***	24.3	10.6	13.7 ***
Medicaid	87.1	23.3	63.8 ***	87.8	23.8	64.0 ***	90.3	33.8	56.5 ***	87.9	33.3	54.6 ***
Medicare	16.4	12.0	4.4 ***	20.6	13.7	6.8 ***	14.9	16.7	-1.8	20.2	17.3	2.9 **
Sample Size	1163	2224		900	2111		928	1066		847	1351	

NOTES: * Significant at 0.10 level; ** Significant at 0.05 level; *** Significant at 0.001 level. LIHH-12 and -36 samples have gross income less than 130% FPL in month 12 and month 36, respectively; FSE-12 and -36 samples meet the FSP eligibility criteria in the respective month.

As discussed in Chapter I, the low participation rates in the FSP have raised concerns among policy makers. From Exhibit IV.2, it appears that those not participating in the program are less disadvantaged than participants and presumably have better employment prospects. A significant share of non-participants (19 to 23 percent, depending on the sample) are ABAWDs, meaning they are not disabled, have no children, and are between the ages of 18 and 50. A large share are also married (37 to 47 percent), and have at least some college education (30 to 38 percent).

C. Income and Earnings by Participation Status

This section examines participants' and non-participants' income and earnings outcomes. *Exhibit IV.3* lists income and earnings statistics by participation status for the low-income and food stamp eligible household groups. Not surprisingly, in all four samples (LIHH-12, LIHH-36, FSE-12, and FSE-36), means of the income measures for participants are substantially below those for non-participants. Differences are less pronounced in the month when the income or food stamp eligibility status is determined.

Differences in mean earnings mirror those for income, although they are slightly larger. This is because participants' earnings comprise a smaller share of total income than non-participants'. As discussed in Section IV.B, participants were more likely to have received means-tested cash assistance, such as TANF, SSI, and general assistance, which is included in income, but not in earnings.

Variability in monthly income and earnings, as measured by the standard deviation over 48 months, is higher in each of the non-participant samples than in each of the participant samples. This is a clear indication that the temporary nature of low-income status is an important reason for non-participation. Similarly, in all of the samples, participant households have mean income and earnings below 130% of FPL in a higher number of months than non-participants, and the share with income below that standard in all 48 months is also larger.

Mean monthly income and earnings, as a percent of poverty, over the 48-month panel period, is lower for the samples defined in month 36 than for those defined in month 12. Those with low-income during the later years, when the economy was stronger, were less likely to be employed over the 48-month period and slightly more disadvantaged than those with low-income during the earlier years. The strong economy during the late 1990s likely pushed many of the low-income families from the 12-month sample out of the low-income sample by month 36, keeping only the more disadvantaged.

**Exhibit IV.3: Income and Earnings Statistics, by Participation Status
(Percent of Household Participation Group, Unless Otherwise Noted)**

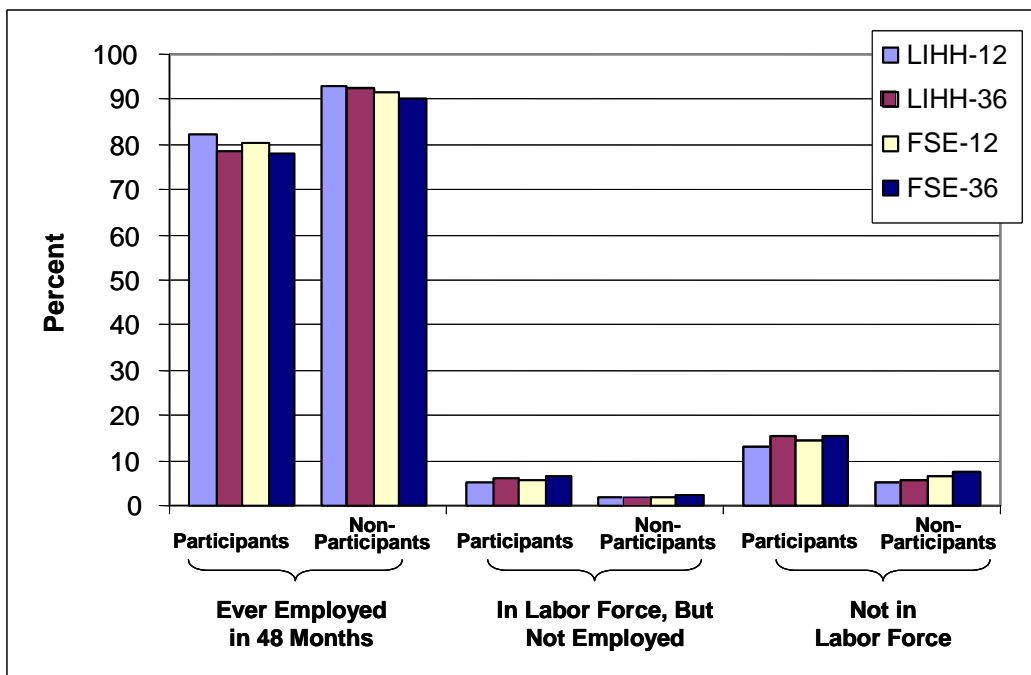
	Low-income households						Food Stamp Eligible Households					
	LIHH-12			LIHH-36			FSE-12			FSE-36		
	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference	Participants	Non-Participants	Difference
Mean Income As Percent of Poverty												
Month 12	68.7	84.5	-15.8 ***	85.0	163.7	-78.7 ***	62.6	82.7	-20.1 ***	83.0	126.7	-43.7 ***
Month 36	101.9	180.6	-78.7 ***	67.4	92.6	-25.2 ***	95.6	159.3	-63.7 ***	63.8	89.4	-25.6 ***
Months 6-17	75.2	128	-52.8 ***	82.3	169.2	-86.9 ***	69.9	113.1	-43.2 ***	80.5	128.5	-48.0 ***
Months 30-41	104.8	183	-78.2 ***	78.3	135	-56.7 ***	103.5	164.4	-60.9 ***	75.5	116.7	-41.2 ***
Months 1-48	93.2	164.1	-70.9 ***	82.3	159	-76.7 ***	89.4	146.8	-57.4 ***	79.9	127.3	-47.4 ***
Standard dev. over 48 months	1.7	2.6	-0.9 ***	1.7	3.1	-1.4 ***	2.1	3.1	-1.0 ***	1.7	2.3	-0.6 ***
# Months below 130% FPL	38.9	26.3	12.6 ***	41.2	28.2	13.0 ***	39.8	28.6	11.2 ***	41.7	31.8	9.9 ***
% below 130% of FPL for 48 months	32.7	9.9	22.8 ***	39.1	11.5	27.6 ***	35.4	13.0	22.4 ***	40.6	16.7	23.9 ***
Mean Earnings As Percent of Poverty												
Month 12	30.9	64.5	-33.6 ***	45.4	137	-91.6 ***	25.6	60.0	-34.4 ***	44.4	100.8	-56.4 ***
Month 36	67.8	150.6	-82.8 ***	32.9	70.1	-37.2 ***	61.4	127.3	-65.9 ***	31.1	66.2	-35.1 ***
Months 6-17	37.2	109.1	-71.9 ***	42.9	141.9	-99.0 ***	31.7	87.3	-55.6 ***	42	101.9	-59.9 ***
Months 30-41	69.2	153.8	-84.6 ***	41.9	109.7	-67.8 ***	64.1	133.2	-69.1 ***	40.3	90.5	-50.2 ***
Months 1-48	56.6	136.9	-80.3 ***	44.3	131.8	-87.5 ***	51.2	117.3	-66.1 ***	41.8	100.6	-58.8 ***
Standard dev. over 48 months	1.8	2.7	-0.9 ***	1.7	3.1	-1.4 ***	1.9	3.3	-1.4 ***	1.8	2.4	-0.6 ***
# Months below 130% FPL	41.9	30.0	11.9 ***	43.9	31.6	12.3 ***	42.6	32.5	10.1 ***	44.1	34.9	9.2 ***
% below 130% of FPL for 48 months	48.5	17.5	31.0 ***	55.8	19.7	36.1 ***	51.6	21.8	29.8 ***	56.6	26.1	30.5 ***
Labor Force Statistics												
% with no earnings over 48 months	17.9	7.1	10.8 ***	21.4	7.6	13.8 ***	19.8	9.0	10.8 ***	21.9	9.9	12.0 ***
Mean % of months with earnings	56.8	80.3	-23.5 ***	51.3	77.9	-26.6 ***	53.1	76.9	-23.8 ***	50.1	75.3	-25.2 ***
% with no LFP over 48 months	12.9	5.3	7.6 ***	15.2	5.8	9.4 ***	14.3	6.6	7.7 ***	15.6	7.6	8.0 ***
Mean % of months with labor force participation	69.2	87.7	-18.5 ***	64.9	85.9	-21.0 ***	66.5	84.3	-17.8 ***	64.1	83.2	-19.1 ***
Sample Size	1163	2224		900	2111		928	1066		847	1335	

NOTES: * Significant at 0.10 level; ** Significant at 0.05 level; *** Significant at 0.001 level.

LIHH-12 and -36 samples have gross income less than 130% FPL in month 12 and month 36, respectively; FSE-12 and -36 samples meet the FSP eligibility criteria in the respective month

Exhibit IV.4 presents statistics on household labor force status over the 48-month period. The first set of bars shows the percent that was ever employed during the 48 months by household group and participation status. As this exhibit shows, the vast majority of households were employed at some point over the four years. However, non-participants had higher employment rates than participants. While differences were not large, the low-income household groups had higher employment rates than the food stamp eligible groups, and the groups defined in month 12 had higher rates than the groups defined in month 36. Interestingly, between 13 and 16 percent of participants were never in the labor force during the 48 months. This means that they reported either not seeking work or were unable to work due to an injury, illness, or disability in all 48 months.

**Exhibit IV.4: Labor Force Status over 48-Month Panel
Percent Distribution**



NOTE: LIHH-12 and -36 samples have gross income less than 130% FPL in month 12 and month 36, respectively; FSE-12 and -36 samples meet the FSP eligibility criteria in the respective month.

Exhibit IV.5 presents historical and future reported income of in the months before and after the months when we used our model to determine food stamp eligibility, months 12 and 36. For the group assessed to have low income at month 12, the SIPP contains 11 months of pre earnings and income information and 36 months of post information. For the group assessed to have low income at month 36, the SIPP contains 35 months of pre information and 12 months of post information. Putting both groups together, we have 35 months of pre data and 36 months of post data for both participants and non-participants for the low-income households (Graph A) and food stamp eligible households (Graph B).

In the 24 months around the reference month for which the monthly income lines from the two samples overlap (-11 to +12), average incomes of the month 12 groups are very similar to those of the month 36 groups. While the mean monthly income for participant households in the FSE-12 sample is somewhat lower than mean monthly income for the corresponding group in the FSE-36 sample in the 12 months prior to the reference month, it seems that these relationships are reasonably stable over this period, and we can roughly view the entire graphic as representing the monthly income series for the six-year period beginning three years before the reference month and ending three years later.

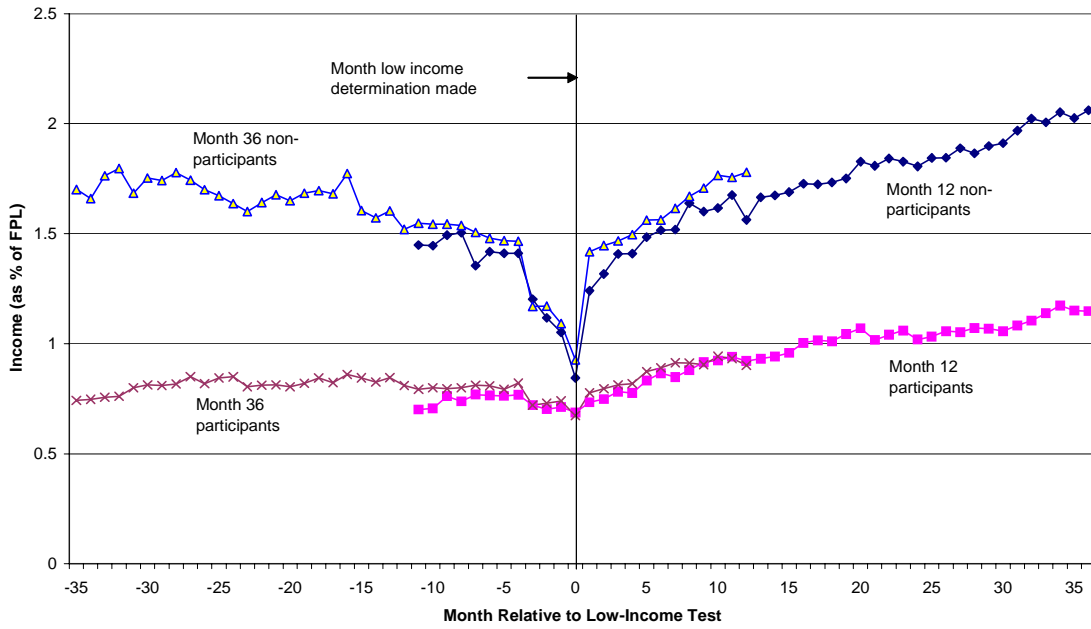
From this exhibit, several findings emerge:

- Non-participant household income, while chronically low, is substantially higher than mean participant income, and then drops by considerably more over the four months or so leading up to the reference month.
- After the reference month, growth is substantially greater for non-participants than for participants (represented by the steeper slope for non-participants). From month zero to month 36, mean non-participant household income increases by 122 percentage points of FPL for the LIHH-12 sample and 104 percentage points for FSE-12, while mean participant household income increases by 46 and 44 percentage points for the LIHH-12 and FSE-12 samples, respectively.
- The growth in income for non-participants is consistent with the idea that expectations of higher future income explain why some eligible non-participant households do not participate. While these expectations might partly be based on higher past income, non-participants likely have other information that is relevant to their expectations about future income.

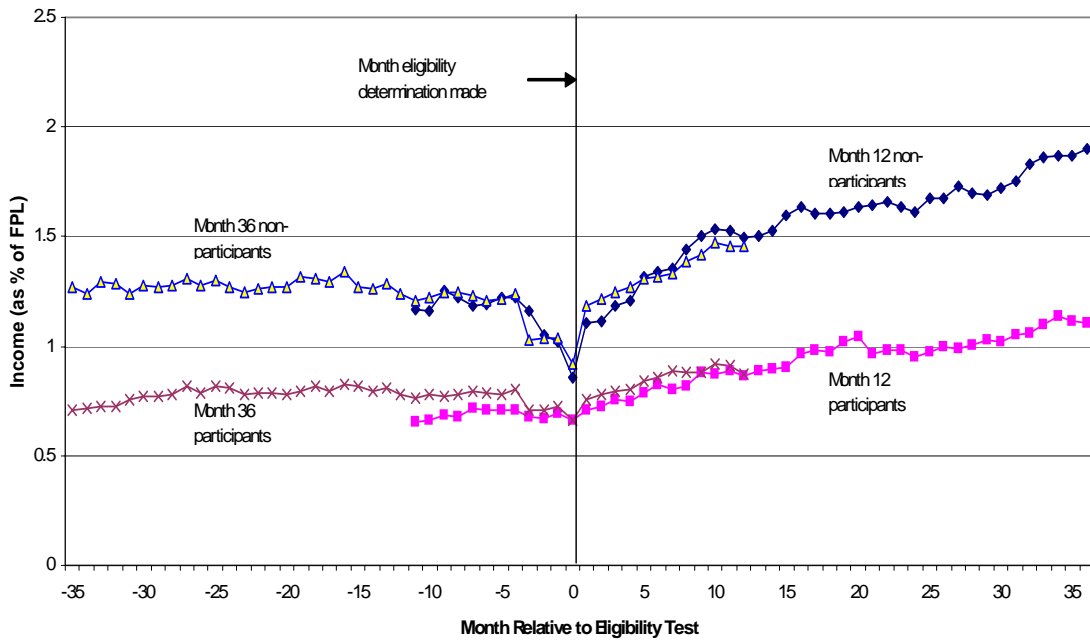
Overall, the series for both participants and non-participants show that mean income in the reference month is lower than in all other months (the “V” at month zero), but this feature is much more pronounced for non-participants than for participants. This visually illustrates the temporary nature of low-income for many non-participants in these two samples.

Exhibit IV.5: Monthly Household Income for Current Month Participants and Non-participants

A) LIHH Sample



B) FSE Sample



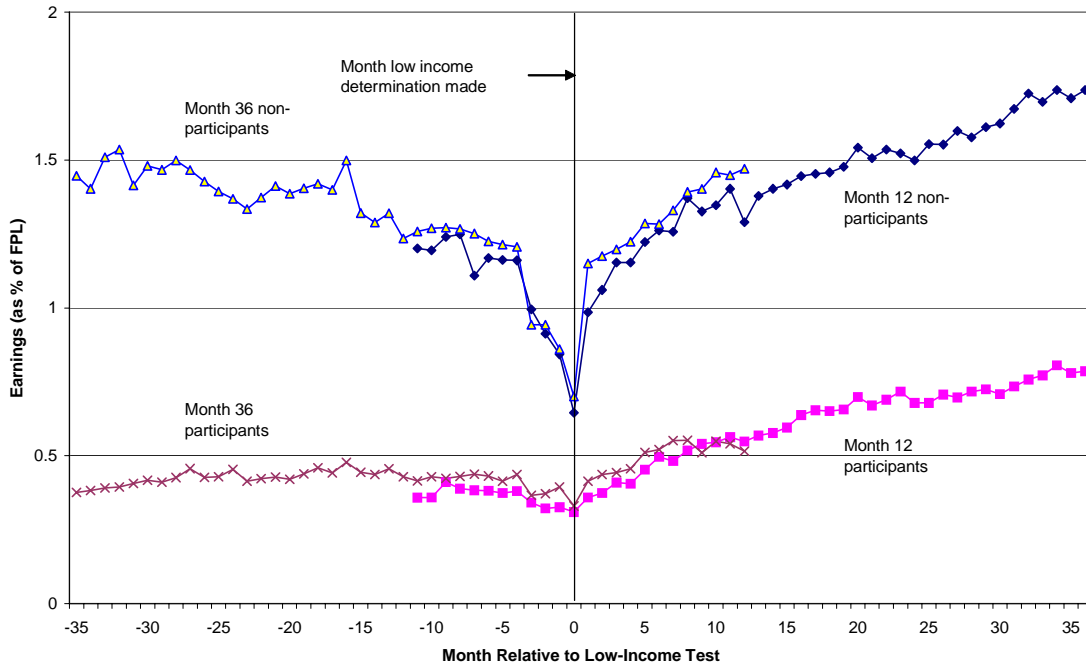
NOTE: LIHH-12 and -36 samples have gross income less than 130% FPL in month 12 and month 36, respectively; FSE-12 and -36 samples meet the FSP eligibility criteria in the respective month.

The next set of graphs (*Exhibit IV.6, A and B*) show the historical and future earnings relative to the reference month for the low-income and food stamp eligible households. The patterns for earnings are almost identical to those presented in Exhibit IV.5, although mean earnings are, of course, lower for both participants and non-participants.

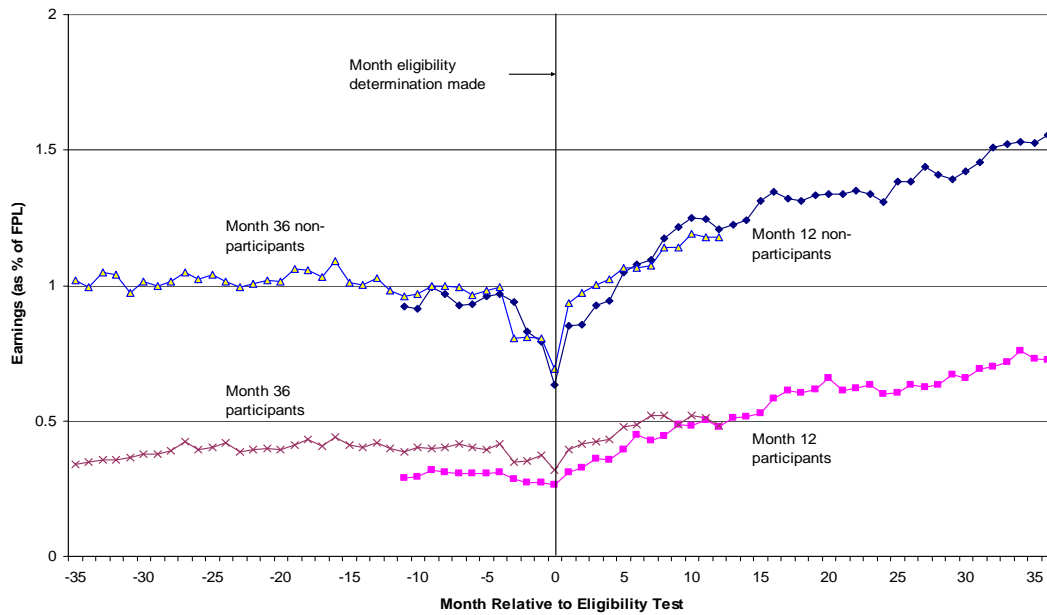
After the reference month, growth in earnings as a percent of FPL (109 percentage points for LIHH-12 and 92 percentage points for FSE-12 from month 0 to month 36) is lower than growth of income for the non-participant households (122 and 104 percentage points, respectively), suggesting that some non-participant households might receive increases in unearned income. It is likely that later mean income growth for non-participants includes growth in public income support, and that some of these households become participant households in later months. Growth in earnings for participant households is about the same as growth in income (47 percentage points for LIHH-12 and 40 to 41 percentage points for FSE-12).

Exhibit IV.6: Monthly Household Earnings for Current Month Participants and Non-participants

A) LIHH Sample



B) FSE Sample



NOTE: LIHH-12 and -36 samples have gross income less than 130% FPL in month 12 and month 36, respectively; FSE-12 and -36 samples meet the FSP eligibility criteria in the respective month.

D. Possible Reasons for Non-Participation

In this section, we focus on the non-participating food-stamp eligible households to understand better why they might not be participating in the FSP. In *Exhibit IV.7*, we classified all non-participant households into six mutually exclusive categories, with households placed in the first category that describes their situation, in the order presented. As the graphs presented in Section IV.D illustrated, it appears that reported gross income in many non-participant households falls briefly under 130 percent of FPL. The time required to apply for food stamps may discourage households eligible for only a few months from applying. Also, these households are likely to be less aware of their eligibility, if they are eligible for only a short time. In Exhibit IV.7, we classify households as being “temporarily below 130% FPL” if their reported income fell below 130 percent of FPL at any time during the SIPP reference wave (wave 3 for the FSE-12 households and wave 9 for the FSE-36 households), but their reported income was above 130 percent at any point in both the prior SIPP wave (wave 2 and 8 for the respective FSE samples) and the subsequent SIPP wave (wave 4 and 10, respectively). About 23 percent of all non-participants fell into this category.

Another possible reason might be that households had been participating in the program, but stopped receiving the benefits temporarily, perhaps due to administrative issues that arose (e.g., they failed to report their income or failed to show up for their recertification appointment). We defined households as being “temporarily off food stamps” if they did not report food stamp receipt in the reference wave, but reported receipt in the prior and subsequent SIPP waves. We found that only 2 to 4 percent of non-participant households (who were not temporarily below 130% FPL) were in this temporarily non-recipient category.

Between 14 and 16 percent of the non-participating FSE households (who did not fall in the first two categories) were ABAWDs. Possibly, they were not eligible due to the three-month time limit, but more likely were not participating because ABAWDs have historically had low participation rates, relative to other groups.²³

Exhibit IV.7: Non-Participant Households Status

Category	FSE-12	FSE-36
1. Temporarily Below 130% FPL	22.8%	23.5%
2. Temporarily Off Food Stamps	3.8%	2.3%
3. ABAWD	15.8%	13.9%
4. Receiving Other Means-Tested Benefits	35.4%	36.0%
SSI	19.7%	24.2%
Medicaid	18.1%	17.4%
WIC	6.3%	5.9%
Housing Assistance	5.5%	5.5%
AFDC/TANF	1.8%	0.7%
5. Income Less Than 130% FPL for 48 Months	2.2%	3.48%
6. Other	20.2%	20.69%
Total Non-Participants	100.0%	100.0%

NOTE: FSE-12 and -36 samples meet the FSP eligibility criteria in the respective month.

²³ In 1995, 42 percent of ABAWDs participated in the FSP, compared with 85 percent of individuals in households with children (Rosso 2001)

These three possible explanations account for 40 to 42 percent of all non-participants, leaving 58 to 60 percent still “unexplained.” Somewhat surprisingly, 35 to 36 percent of all non-participants did not fall into one of the three previous categories, yet were receiving another means-tested benefit (i.e., SSI, Medicaid, WIC, housing assistance, and/or TANF). This is a group that USDA might be able to reach with more extensive outreach efforts and increased coordination with other agencies and offices. Among the means-tested programs, the SSI and Medicaid programs had the highest levels of enrollment, followed by WIC and housing assistance (only a small percentage of households receiving TANF were not participating in the FSP). Interestingly, the vast majority (about 96 percent) of the SSI households were comprised of adults on SSI; about 29 percent were adults living alone.

A small share – 2 to 3 percent – were not receiving any means-tested benefits, but had income below 130% FPL in all 48 months. While this group appears to be eligible for food stamps in all months and in need of food stamp benefits, they were not receiving any means-tested assistance. Another 20 to 21 percent did not fall into one of the five preceding categories. Perhaps this group’s expected long-term income, discussed in the next section, is higher than reflected in their current income and affected their participation.