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Food Stamp Program Access Study

Eligible Nonparticipants

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Abstract

Many food stamp-eligible nonparticipants are aware of the Food Stamp Program (FSP) and how to apply but do not realize that they are eligible. Nearly all eligible nonparticipating households surveyed in 2000 and 2001 knew of the FSP, but less than half thought they were eligible. Most nonparticipant households said that they would apply for food stamp benefits if they were sure they were eligible. Nonetheless, 27 percent would never apply. The main reason for not applying was a desire for personal independence. Some eligible nonparticipants were interested enough in receiving benefits to contact the food stamp office but did not get enough information or support to become participants. This report was produced as part of the Food Stamp Program Access Study, which is examining local food stamp office policies and practices as possible barriers to participation. The report focuses on one group of eligible households, those who are not participating in the FSP. As a group, these households generally have higher incomes and earnings and are more food secure than participants.

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Executive Summary

The Food Stamp Program Access Study examines the relationships between the food stamp participation decisions of eligible households and local food stamp office policies and practices that potentially affect access to the program. This report focuses on one group of eligible households, those who are not participating in the Food Stamp Program, and presents a descriptive analysis of their characteristics, experiences, and perceptions of the program.

The Food Stamp Program caseload declined dramatically in the late 1990s, a period characterized by an unusually strong economy and by major changes in the public assistance landscape following the welfare reform legislation of 1996. Studies have shown that the food stamp caseload declined not only because many households' circumstances improved enough to make them ineligible for benefits, but also because a smaller percentage of the potentially eligible households were participating in the program. This led policymakers and analysts to focus on the broad question of what factors influence FSP participation, including the possible role of local food stamp office policies and practices in encouraging or deterring households' participation decisions. The Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded Abt Associates Inc. and Health Systems Research, Inc. to conduct a national study of Food Stamp Program accessibility at the local office level. The study collected information describing the policies and practices in local food stamp offices, the characteristics of participant and nonparticipant households, and the reasons that some eligible households do not participate in the FSP.

This report, one of three reports prepared for the study, describes the experiences, perceptions, and circumstances of households that appear eligible to receive food stamp benefits, but have not applied for them.¹ A number of previous research studies have examined this issue, although this is the first national study conducted since full implementation of welfare reform. It is particularly instructive to compare findings from the current study with those obtained from a nationally representative survey of eligible nonparticipants conducted in 1996–1997, as welfare reform was being implemented (Ponza et al., 1999). Comparing the findings of the present study and the 1996 study gives some idea of how the population of eligible nonparticipants changed over that period.

The findings presented here are based on a random-digit-dialing telephone survey of households that were apparently eligible for food stamp benefits, but were not participating in the FSP. The survey was conducted in the geographic areas served by a nationally representative sample of 109 local food stamp offices. Data collection for the entire study occurred in 2000 and 2001. RDD interviewing took place between February and June 2001, though for convenience, we refer to this as the 2000 study.

Demographic Characteristics of Eligible Nonparticipant Households

Eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 were predominantly headed by females (74 percent) and by those who classified themselves as non-Hispanic white (53 percent). Half were headed by young or middle-aged persons (aged 20 to 49) and 31 percent were headed by individuals 60 or older. One-third of the households included children and 37 percent included elderly members.

¹ Gabor et al. (2003) describes for the 109 offices in the study the policies and practices that might be expected to affect FSP participation. Bartlett and Burstein (forthcoming, 2004) examine the extent to which particular policies and practices are associated with households' participation behavior.

The broad outlines of this pattern did not change between 1996 and 2000, but some moderate shifts in subgroup proportions can be seen. The nonparticipant population included a larger proportion of single-parent households and one-person households in 2000 than 1996. On the other hand, the 2000 nonparticipant population had smaller proportions of households made up of multiple adults with children, households with elderly members, and households headed by non-Hispanic whites.

Previous studies have noted that food stamp participation rates—that is, active food stamp recipients as a percentage of all eligible households—have been relatively low for households with elderly members and relatively high for single-parent households and households headed by blacks. All of these patterns are still visible in the 2000 data, but with some evidence that the differences in participation rates narrowed between 1996 and 2000. For example, the proportion of households with elderly members increased from 1996 to 2000 among active food stamp cases, while declining in the nonparticipant population. The proportions of single-parent households and households headed by blacks remained roughly constant in the active caseload while increasing among nonparticipants.

Economic Circumstances of Nonparticipant Households

By definition, food stamp eligible households have quite low incomes and limited assets. Half of the nonparticipant households in 2000 had some earnings; those households earned an average of about \$1,200 per month. Hardly any of the nonparticipant households received TANF or General Assistance (1 percent), but 31 percent received social security payments and 23 percent SSI. The pattern of income sources for nonparticipating households shows little change from 1996, except that the proportion with SSI income was considerably larger in 2000.

Compared to the active food stamp caseload, the eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 were more likely to have earnings and social security income, and the nonparticipants had higher average household incomes. This is expected, since research has long shown that food stamp participation rates are inversely related to income. Following another long-standing pattern, receipt of TANF or General Assistance is much more common among food stamp participants than nonparticipants.

Most of the nonparticipant households in 2000 lived on their own, with 50 percent renting and 42 percent owning their housing, although about a fifth either lived in public housing or received Section 8 subsidies. About three-fifths had a vehicle. Similarly, about two-thirds had some form of financial assets, most commonly a checking account; those who had such accounts reported an average value of about \$640. (No directly comparable statistics are available for 1996 or for active participants.)

Food Security of Nonparticipant Households

Based on commonly used measures of food security, the population of eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 had fairly high levels of food insecurity. About 45 percent reported experiencing food insecurity during the year prior to the survey and 25 percent experienced hunger at some point. These proportions are larger than those found in the 1996 survey of eligible participants, and also larger than the proportions indicated for low-income households by the 1999 Current Population Survey. Although the food security measure cannot be taken as a precise indicator of the need for food stamp benefits, these data do not suggest that the nonparticipants' level of need in 2000 was substantially less than in 1996, when participation rates were higher.

Awareness of the Food Stamp Program and Likely Eligibility

Most nonparticipation in the Food Stamp Program does not stem from a lack of basic awareness of the program. Nearly all nonparticipants (96 percent) said they knew of the program, two-thirds knew where to go to apply for food stamps, half had previously received food stamp benefits as adults, and 30 percent knew someone who was currently participating. Awareness was lower among households with elderly members, those with no children, and especially those who had no prior experience with the Food Stamp Program. Even among the latter group, however, 92 percent were aware of the program and 39 percent knew where to go to apply.

Not realizing the household's own likely eligibility for food stamps appears to be a more important impediment to participation than not knowing of the program's existence. Less than half (43 percent) of the nonparticipants knew of the program and thought they were eligible, even though they appeared likely to be eligible on the basis of information they provided in the survey. The lack of awareness of eligibility is not a new development, however, having been found at similar levels in several studies over the past two decades. In fact, the proportion of nonparticipants who believed that their household would be eligible for food stamp benefits was higher in the 2000 than the 1996 study.

Although the overall level of understanding of eligibility has not diminished, the data suggest that confusion about the post-welfare reform rules may affect a small proportion of households. Among those apparently eligible households who thought they were ineligible for food stamps or were unsure of their eligibility, 6 to 8 percent felt they were ineligible because they received a TANF lump-sum payment, because they had reached the TANF time limit, or because of their citizenship status.

Reasons Some Households Would Not Apply to the Food Stamp Program

Most nonparticipant households (69 percent) said that they would apply for food stamp benefits if they were sure they were eligible. Nonetheless, 27 percent would not apply even in those circumstances. Among households who had not previously received food stamps, 35 percent would not apply.

The vast majority (91 percent) of households who would not apply or were unsure whether they would apply were restrained by a desire for personal independence, feeling they "can get by without food stamps" or "do not like to rely on government assistance." In addition, 61 percent mentioned some aspect of the food stamp application or process or the program's participation requirements as an impediment to applying. Smaller proportions of respondents cited issues of stigma, low expected benefits, or previous negative experience with the program. These responses are quite similar to those found in the 1996 study, which suggests that there were no major shifts over the period in attitudes about applying to the Food Stamp Program.

Stigma Associated with Program Participation

Just over half of nonparticipants indicated that they perceived no social stigma associated with participating in the Food Stamp Program, responding negatively to all of four questions that asked about stigma-related experiences they might expect (such as being "treated disrespectfully using food stamps in stores"). About a third did respond positively to one or more of the questions, however, and 44 percent of those who said they would not apply even if they were eligible mentioned stigma as one factor.

Some observers have expressed concern that the public debate surrounding welfare reform and perhaps even some of the policies instituted after welfare reform might give food stamp participation a more negative public image and lead to greater social stigma. The data do not suggest an increasing prevalence of stigma, however. The extent of stigma perceived in 2000 is very similar to that measured in 1996 for households who had previously received food stamps, and actually lower in 2000 for households who had not previously participated. Curiously, among those nonparticipants who reportedly would not apply for benefits even if they were eligible, the proportion citing stigma as a reason was greater in 2000 than 1996.

“Near Applicant” Households

The final issue examined in the study was whether some eligible nonparticipant households might be sufficiently interested in receiving benefits to contact the food stamp office, but then never file an application. The study defined “near applicant” households as those who contacted an office within the six to twelve months prior to the survey but did not submit an application. This group turned out to be quite small but not trivial. The study estimate of 4.6 percent of nonparticipant households implies a nationwide total of about 290,000 near applicant households, a number roughly comparable to the households newly approved for benefits nationwide in a single month (314,000 in June 2000, the focal month for the study).

The small number of near applicants in the study sample (66) precludes generalization about such households, but the responses to survey questions may suggest hypotheses to be investigated in future research. When the near applicants in the study sample visited the welfare office, about half were specifically interested in the Food Stamp Program, often in conjunction with other programs such as medical assistance, and about a third did not have a specific idea of what programs might be applicable. About half obtained a food stamp application form during their visit to the office (but, by definition, did not submit the application). About half saw a caseworker, but only half of those felt they really learned what they needed to do to get food stamps. About three-quarters felt they had not accomplished the purpose of their visit, largely because they had not found out about their likely eligibility and had not applied for benefits.

These data suggest that some eligible nonparticipants—perhaps people with limited knowledge, motivation, or confidence—approach the Food Stamp Program but do not get enough information or support to become participants. The number of these near applicants appears to be small but their experiences may be worthy of further examination.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Food Stamp Program Access Study examines the relationships between the food stamp participation decisions of eligible households and local food stamp office policies and practices that potentially affect access to the program. This report focuses on one group of eligible households—those who are not participating in the FSP—and presents a detailed descriptive analysis of their characteristics, experiences, and perceptions of the program.

The Food Stamp Program (FSP), administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is the largest Federal food assistance program and the cornerstone of our nation's safety net for low-income persons. Its primary objective is to help low-income households obtain a more nutritious diet by increasing their food purchasing power. The program provides eligible households with electronic benefit transfer cards that are redeemable at authorized food stores for a preset dollar amount. Unlike other Federal income maintenance programs, the FSP has few categorical eligibility criteria, such as the presence of a child, a disabled person, pregnant women, or an elderly adult in the household. The majority of FSP recipients are children and approximately one-quarter are in households that receive cash assistance from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF) (Cunyngham, 2001).

Policy Setting

In 1996, Federal welfare reform legislation (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 or PRWORA) was enacted. This law replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a cash assistance entitlement program, with the block-granted, work-oriented Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. The FSP remained essentially a national entitlement program, though PRWORA made a number of important changes to the Food Stamp Program that reduced eligibility for some groups, established work requirements for a small group of adults without children, and limited future benefit increases for all participants.

National food stamp rolls decreased by 40 percent between 1994 and July 2000, from 27.5 million participants down to 16.9 million participants. Since July 2000, the low point of participation, food stamp rolls have increased fairly steadily, to an estimated 22.4 million participants in August 2003. Studies have shown that the food stamp caseload declined not only because many households' circumstances improved enough to make them ineligible for benefits, but also because a smaller percentage of the potentially eligible households were participating in the program. This led policymakers and analysts to focus on the broad question of what factors influence FSP participation, including the possible role of local food stamp office policies and practices in encouraging or deterring households' participation decisions.

Research Objectives

As part of an effort to more fully understand the factors that influence FSP participation, the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded Abt Associates Inc. and Health Systems Research, Inc. to conduct a study to systematically examine accessibility at the local office level using a nationally representative sample. The key issue concerned the extent to which

policies implemented at the local level, as well as local office practices, affect households' decisions to apply for food stamps and their decisions to continue participating once they are approved for food stamp benefits.

The study's three main objectives were to:

- describe the policies and practices in local food stamp offices that may affect FSP accessibility;
- examine how local policies and practices affect households' decisions to apply for food stamps and their decisions to continue receiving food stamps; and
- examine the reasons why some eligible households do not participate in the FSP.

This report, one of three reports prepared for the study, focuses on the third objective: describing the experiences, perceptions, and circumstances of households that appear eligible to receive food stamp benefits, but have not applied for them. A number of previous research studies have examined this issue, though this is the first national study conducted since full implementation of welfare reform. It is particularly instructive to compare findings from the current study with those obtained from a nationally representative survey of eligible nonparticipants conducted around the time PRWORA was passed (Ponza et al., July 1999).

Previous Research on Nonparticipant Households

Prior to the current study, only one other national survey of food stamp-eligible nonparticipant households had been conducted (Ponza et al., 1999), though several other research studies examined the nonparticipant population using data from nationally representative samples of households (Coe, 1983; Blaylock and Smallwood, 1984; GAO, 1988). These surveys all asked nonparticipant households why they weren't participating in the FSP.

Confusion about eligibility appears to have been a major factor affecting households' decisions to apply for food stamp benefits. Coe (1983) and GAO (1988), using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), found that approximately half of all nonparticipant households did not think they were eligible for food stamp benefits.² The National Food Stamp Program Survey (NFSPS), conducted by Ponza et al. (1999), found a somewhat higher percentage—72 percent—of apparently eligible nonparticipant households did not think they qualified for program benefits.³

Among PSID households that did not think they were eligible for FSP benefits, 34 to 39 percent believed that their income and/or assets were too high and 8 to 15 percent believed that they did not

² The Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), a national, longitudinal survey of families collected extensive data on household circumstances that allowed researchers to identify households that were apparently eligible for food stamps. In the 1980 and 1987 surveys, households that did not receive food stamp benefits were asked about the reasons for their nonparticipation in the previous year.

³ Ponza et al. (1999) used a random-digit-dial telephone survey to identify households that were apparently eligible for food stamp benefits, but were not participating in the FSP. Lengthy interviews were conducted with nonparticipant households in 1996-1997 to understand their circumstances and their reasons for not applying for food stamp benefits.

meet some other FSP eligibility requirement (Coe, 1983; GAO, 1988). Blaylock and Smallwood (1984), using data from the 1979 Survey of Food Consumption in Low-Income households (SFC-LI), also found that a substantial proportion (35 percent) of households thought their income and assets exceeded program limits.

Households that thought they were eligible for food stamp benefits reported a variety of reasons for not applying for benefits. The most often cited reason was related to a desire for independence—they did not need or want food stamps. In the PSID studies, between 36 and 41 percent reported that they didn't need food stamps or they just never bothered applying (Coe, 1983; GAO, 1988). Twenty-seven percent of nonparticipant households in the SFC-LI reportedly did not apply for food stamps because someone else needed them more. Respondents to the NFSPS cited several reasons related to a desire for independence—28 percent reported they did not need food stamps, 12 percent never bothered to apply, and 16 percent did not want to rely on government assistance.

The second most commonly cited reason for not applying to the FSP was the administrative hassles associated with application and participation. In the PSID studies, 17 to 27 percent of households reportedly did not apply to the FSP because of administrative issues, including long waits in the office and difficulty with obtaining the proper forms (Coe, 1983; GAO, 1988). Fifteen percent of NFSPS respondents did not apply due to the extensive paperwork required and the difficulty of getting to the office (Ponza et al., 1999).

Stigma associated with FSP participation also deterred a sizeable portion of households. In the PSID, 14-16 percent of households who thought they were eligible for the FSP cited stigma as the main reason they did not apply for benefits (Coe, 1983; GAO, 1988). In the NFSPS, 11 percent cited stigma as the most important reason for not applying (Ponza et al., 1999).

Among households that thought they were eligible for the FSP, 10 percent of NFSPS respondents in 1996-1997 reported that the benefits were too low to make it worthwhile applying (Ponza et al., 1999). This reason was cited by less than one percent of PSID respondents in 1979 and 1986 (Coe, 1983; GAO, 1988).

Numerous studies have examined how FSP participation rates vary by the demographic and economic characteristics of households.⁴ McConnell and Nixon (1996) summarized the findings from the different studies and showed that the results were fairly consistent. Participation rates through 2000 are also consistent with prior findings (Cunnyngham, 2002). Households with historically lower than average participation rates include those with elderly members, with a white or Hispanic household head, and households with earnings. Households with higher incomes, assets, and headed by individuals with relatively more education also have lower participation rates. In contrast, participation is highest among households with children, large households, those receiving public assistance, and those receiving higher than average FSP benefits. Multivariate analyses of the relationship between participation rate and household characteristics show similar findings, though race, the presence of children, and FSP benefit levels have significant effects in some, though not all studies. This suggests that the variation in participation rates among these subgroups may stem from a correlation between these characteristics and other characteristics that significantly affect participation rates.

⁴ Participation rates are defined as the number of individuals or households receiving FSP benefits divided by the number of individuals or households that are eligible to receive FSP benefits.

Study Methods

Sample Selection

The sampling for this nationally representative study involved two steps. Sampling was first conducted at the office level and then, using a random-digit-dialing (RDD) telephone survey, food stamp-eligible nonparticipant households living in the areas around the sampled local offices were identified and interviewed.

Sample of Offices

The sampling plan for the national sample of offices had three objectives: to achieve national representation; to include substantial variation in administrative practices both between and within States; and to support analysis across offices of the effects of administrative practices on caseload entry and exit.

Each State in the continental U.S. and the District of Columbia provided a complete list of local offices, along with caseload information for each office. In places where different sites served distinct segments of the local caseload (e.g. the elderly or TANF clients), these sites were combined to make a single office that served all segments of the local program population. Offices with caseloads less than 150 were excluded from the sampling frame because of the difficulties they would have presented in obtaining an adequate sample of applicants.⁵

To ensure a maximum distribution of sample offices throughout the States, the sample was then stratified by the seven FNS regions, and by State within each region. States with small populations were grouped together to ensure the representation of smaller states in the office sample. In large States, the sample was further stratified based on the degree of urbanicity (defined as offices located within Metropolitan Statistical Areas, or MSAs, vs. offices located outside MSAs).

Probability-proportional-to-size (PPS) sampling was used to draw a sample of 120 local food stamp offices. The sampled offices were located in 40 States and the District of Columbia. All selected States, with the exception of New York, agreed to participate in the research study. New York was unable to participate due to a pending lawsuit in New York City, concerning access to the Food Stamp Program, which was scheduled for trial during the data collection period. The final research sample included 109 local food stamp offices, located in 39 States and the District of Columbia.⁶

Sample of Eligible Nonparticipant Households

Eligible nonparticipants are households who are circumstantially eligible for the Food Stamp Program but are not participating in it. While Food Stamp Program applicants and participants in an office can

⁵ Our sampling design called for a sample in each office of 10 applicant households and 10 households due for recertification in the sample month. Assuming 7 percent turnover in caseload per month, the minimum office size required was 150 (10/.07). Of the 3,789 food stamp offices located in the continental United States and the District of Columbia, 430 had monthly caseloads below 150. These small offices accounted for only 0.44 percent of the total food stamp caseload.

⁶ Adjustments to the sampling weights were made to account for the nonparticipation of New York State. See discussion below.

be enumerated, no list or sampling frame exists for eligible nonparticipants. The sample frame was created from a random-digit-dialing telephone survey of the entire population in the catchment areas, or areas served by, the 109 sampled offices. Catchment areas were defined by the telephone prefixes (or ZIP codes, when telephone numbers were unavailable) of food stamp applicant and participant households.⁷ The use of a random-digit-dialing approach limits the sample to those with working telephones. Adjustments were made to correct for this limitation during creation of sample weights.

A list-assisted RDD sample of 72,711 telephone numbers was drawn using the GENESYS sampling system, which helped ensure that a high percentage of the sampled numbers belonged to residential households.⁸ Once a household was reached, a short screening questionnaire was administered to determine whether the household was apparently eligible for food stamps, but not currently receiving benefits. Households were screened out if they were current FSP participants or had applied for benefits in the prior month. Households were deemed to be presumptively eligible for food stamps if:

- Their gross household income was no more than 130 percent of the federal poverty level;
- Their financial assets were less than \$3,000 if the household included an elderly member and less than \$2,000 if there were no elderly members of the household; and
- All vehicles owned were at least five years old, unless they were used for business or to transport disabled persons.

This set of screening questions has been shown to be quite accurate in predicting FSP eligibility. Nonetheless, without collecting information on all factors that determine eligibility, some errors will be made, and households that are actually eligible will be screened out and others that are ineligible will be included (McConnell, 1997).

Data Collection

The list-assisted sample of 72,711 telephone numbers was released to the telephone interview center beginning in February 2001; interviewing was completed in June 2001. Screeners were completed with 16,825 households and of these, 1,374 (8 percent) were determined to be eligible for food stamp benefits, based on the screening criteria (table 1.1). An additional 28,933 telephone numbers were found to be nonworking or nonhousehold numbers, and thus ineligible for the survey. The resolution rate for the screener was 62.9 percent.

⁷ The lists of applicant and participant households were provided by the States or local offices sampled for the study. These lists were used to sample households for another component of the study.

⁸ The GENESYS sampling system, supported by Marketing Systems Group, is a hardware and software system that allows one to draw list-assisted RDD samples. In list-assisted RDD sampling, each prefix area is divided into 100 banks, each with 100 consecutive telephone numbers. A data base of residential directory listed telephone numbers is used to eliminate banks that contain no residential directory listed numbers. The GENESYS system also contains a ZIP code module that can be used to determine which prefix areas overlap with ZIP codes.

Table 1.1—Final status of eligible nonparticipant sample

Final status	Number	Percent
 Screener survey		
Screener complete—food stamp-eligible household	1,374	1.9%
Screener complete—household ineligible for food stamps	15,451	21.2
Ineligible telephone number—nonworking, nonhousehold	28,933	39.8
Incomplete screener	26,953	37.1
Total screener sample	72,711	100.0%
 Full interview survey		
Interview complete	1,323	96.3
Incomplete interview	51	3.7
Total interview sample	1,374	100.0%

Households that were determined to be eligible for food stamp benefits were asked to complete the full interview questionnaire. Questions focused on respondents' perceptions, motivations, and experiences with the Food Stamp Program, including their perceived eligibility, reasons they had not applied for food stamp benefits, previous experiences with the FSP, TANF, and Medicaid programs, and their perceptions of the costs and benefits of participation in the FSP. Detailed information on their demographic characteristics, economic situation, and food security status were also collected. The survey instrument is presented in Appendix A.

Of the 1,374 households selected for interview, 1,323 completed the survey resulting in a response rate of 96.3 percent.

Data Analysis

The analysis presented in this report is descriptive in nature, designed to examine the population of food stamp-eligible nonparticipant households in 2000. Tabulations address the issues of how needy these households are, why they say they are not participating in the FSP, and what characteristics or experiences may inhibit their participation. The analysis also examines how eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 differed from nonparticipant households surveyed 1996 and how they differed from households that received food stamp benefits.

Sampling weights are needed for this type of analysis and are constructed in two stages, reflecting the sample design. First-stage office weights were constructed for the final sample of 109 local food stamp offices that were selected with probability proportional to caseload size. The base sampling office weight equals the reciprocal of the probability of selection of the office. The sum of the base weights is thus conceptually equal to the total number of food stamp offices. It does not exactly equal the number of food stamp offices because of nonresponse (11 selections in New York State) and luck of the draw with regard to average caseload size.

In order to correct for nonresponse and sampling variability, the sample was grouped into cells defined by “super-region,” MSA status, and caseload size, and the base weights were adjusted so that they added up to the actual number of offices within each cell.⁹ The seven New York City offices were thus represented by other large urban offices in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. The four upstate New York offices were a mix of small, medium, and large offices, and were thus represented by other similar offices in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. The base weights of the sampled offices in these cells were appropriately increased.¹⁰

As every household within a site had an equal probability of selection, we could have assigned second stage weights that simply reflected the sampling fraction of phone numbers and the response rates in each site. Instead, we used second stage weights to achieve two objectives. First, we wished to correct for any idiosyncrasies in our sample of eligible nonparticipants that were due to our limited sample size or our methodology. To accomplish this, we raked the weights to reflect the distributions of a similar, but much larger, sample of eligible nonparticipant households in the Current Population Survey, with regard to the key characteristics of income relative to federal poverty level (FPL), household size, race/ethnicity of household head, and presence of elderly household members. Second, we wished the sample weights to sum to the number of eligible nonparticipant households as determined by studies which were able to measure eligibility more exactly.¹¹ We used the total reported in Cunyningham (2003) to accomplish this.

As noted above, in implementing the approach for the eligible nonparticipant survey, households were screened to establish FSP income eligibility. This involved determining the number of household members and then asking whether the household’s monthly income was less than a certain dollar amount. The dollar amount was set at 130 percent of the poverty level for any given family size. All respondents included in the complete survey responded that their total income was less than the threshold amount. The main body of the survey collected more detailed information on income, including earnings and receipt of various types of unearned income. Using these responses, a second measure of household income was calculated and, as expected, some households appeared to have incomes above 130 percent of the poverty level. We excluded households whose reported detailed incomes exceeded 200 percent of the federal poverty level, though we retained those with incomes between 130 percent and 200 percent. Even if we excluded the latter group, we would still not have a true measure of FSP eligibility. The survey did not collect all the information necessary for a full determination of eligibility, and undoubtedly not all the reported information is accurate, as we did not require proof, such as wage receipts for verification of earnings. In addition, some households that were excluded on the income screening question would have provided detailed income information that resulted in a measure of total income equal to or less than 130 percent of poverty. In order to

⁹ The super-regions were defined as the seven FNS regions collapsed to five, by combining the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, and the Mountain Plains and Western.

¹⁰ To the extent that offices in New York City are similar to other large urban offices in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic (i.e., offices in New Jersey and Pennsylvania) along the dimensions measured in the study, bias will be minimized. If food stamp policies and practices in New York City are very different from other large, urban offices, the study will not accurately represent the practices in New York.

¹¹ While the sum of the weights does not have any effect on the analyses presented in this report, it becomes relevant when eligible nonparticipant households are combined with applicant or participant households, as is done in Bartlett and Burstein (forthcoming, 2004). Details of the weighting procedure are described in Appendix A of that report.

make certain that survey results were not affected by this aspect of the sampling methodology, all analyses were also conducted on a sample that excluded households with incomes greater than 130 percent of the poverty level. No substantial differences were noted in the results between the two approaches and thus the tables present analyses using the full sample of 1,220 households.

Organization of the Report

This report analyzes data from the random-digit-dialing (RDD) telephone survey of eligible nonparticipants in order to understand some of the reasons these households are not participating in the Food Stamp Program. Chapter Two examines the characteristics of the food stamp eligible nonparticipants, including demographic and economic characteristics. Details of their household composition and housing situation are analyzed. The chapter also examines the food security of respondents and their reported use of community support services. Chapter Three examines the knowledge and attitudes of respondents towards the Food Stamp Program in order to analyze their participation decisions. Their stated reasons for not applying for food stamp benefits are identified, as are details of their understanding of FSP eligibility rules and requirements. The chapter also examines perceptions of stigma associated with program participation. Chapter Four focuses on a group of particular interest to policy makers—persons who make some contact with the Food Stamp Program, but do not follow through and file a formal application. It examines their experiences with the Food Stamp Program, focusing on issues of customer satisfaction. Throughout the report, to the extent possible, comparisons are made to prior research on participation decisions of eligible nonparticipants. In particular, we examine differences in the eligible nonparticipant population before and after welfare reform.

Chapter Two

Characteristics of Food Stamp-Eligible Nonparticipants

This chapter examines the characteristics of households that were apparently eligible for food stamp benefits, but, for whatever reason, chose not to participate in the Food Stamp Program. The objective of the analysis is to understand who these nonparticipants are and what characteristics may inhibit program participation. The analysis also examines how needy these nonparticipants are, as defined by their economic circumstances and their level of food security.

As discussed in Chapter One, this analysis is based on a sample of households that were apparently eligible for food stamp benefits, based on their responses to several questions concerning their households' circumstances. Throughout this report, we often use a shorthand terminology, referring to these households as eligible nonparticipant households or simply nonparticipants. It must be kept in mind that we have only been able to approximate food stamp eligibility and some households have undoubtedly been misclassified.

In this chapter, we compare the sample of eligible nonparticipant households to two other populations. First, to the extent data are available, we compare the characteristics of the eligible nonparticipants to the characteristics of current food stamp recipients. An examination of the differences between these two groups may shed some light on the reasons nonparticipants are not currently participating in the Food Stamp Program. Second, we compare eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 to a comparable group of nonparticipants from 1996, obtained from a nationally-representative random-digit-dialing survey conducted for USDA by Mathematica Policy Research.¹²

As discussed in the previous chapter the proportion of food stamp eligible households participating in the FSP declined substantially between 1996 and 2000. The pool of food stamp eligible households also declined as the robust economy increased the incomes of many low-income households. However, the eligible nonparticipant population grew both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of all eligibles. At least some of the growth occurred because households that received food stamp benefits in 1996 left the food stamp rolls, though remained eligible for benefits (FNS, 2001). As a result of these shifts, we expect to see a shift in the characteristics of the eligible nonparticipant population between 1996 and 2000.

In comparing the 1996 and 2000 eligible nonparticipant populations we could not conduct tests of statistical significance as 1996 published reports do not contain standard errors. Instead, we established a criterion for a "meaningful" difference between the two years. Throughout the rest of this report, we only highlight changes between the two years if the difference is at least ± 5 percentage points.¹³

¹² The RDD survey was conducted between June 1996 and January 1997. Results are reported in Ponza et al. (1999).

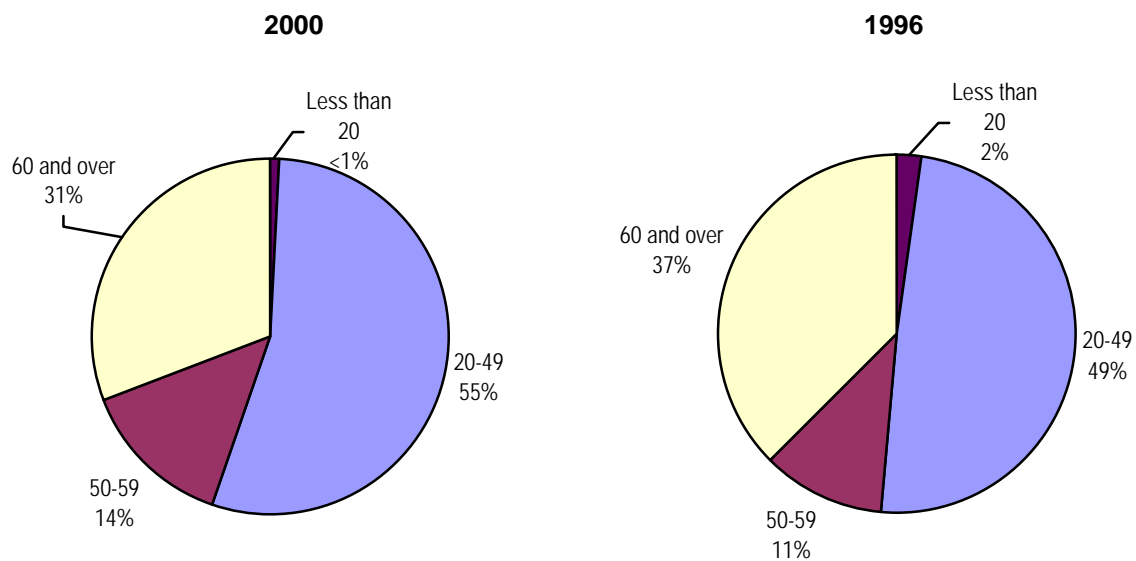
¹³ All differences discussed in the chapter are at least ± 5 percentage points as calculated using both the full analytic sample and the sample restricted to households whose incomes, calculated using the detailed information from the full survey, were equal to or below 130% of the federal poverty level.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the demographic characteristics of apparently eligible nonparticipants, examining the characteristics of the household head and household composition. In the second section, we turn to an analysis of the economic circumstances of nonparticipant households, focusing on earnings, unearned income, and assets. Information on their housing situation is also examined. The third section analyzes data on the food security of nonparticipant households and examines their use of community resources as an income supplement.¹⁴

Demographic Characteristics

Over half (55 percent) of nonparticipant households in 2000 were headed by an individual between the ages of 20 and 49 (figure 2.1).¹⁵ The heads of most (31 percent) of the remaining households were over 59 years old. The age of eligible nonparticipant household heads had declined somewhat since 1996, when 37 percent of household heads were over 59 years of age and just under half were 20 to 49 years old. Over a third (37 percent) of all nonparticipant households included one or more elderly members in 2000. This represents a decrease from 1996 when 44 percent of nonparticipant households had elderly members.

Figure 2.1—Age of case head, eligible nonparticipant households: 2000 and 1996



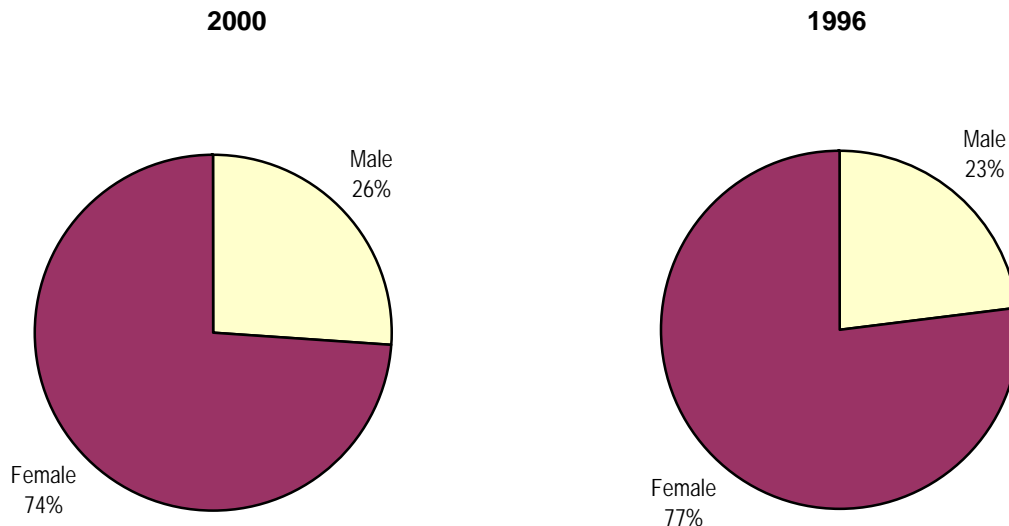
Eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 were three times more likely to be headed by a female than by a male (figure 2.2). This mirrors the gender distribution of household heads found among the population of Food Stamp Program participants in 2000, indicating that nonparticipant households were similar to households that received food stamp benefits along this dimension. The proportions of

¹⁴ Appendix B contains detailed tables on which exhibits and text are based.

¹⁵ All demographic characteristics are presented in table B.1 and household composition appears in table B.2.

female-headed and male-headed households among eligible nonparticipants in 1996 were similar to the corresponding proportions in 2000.

Figure 2.2—Gender of case head, eligible nonparticipant households: 2000 and 1996



A little over half of eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 were headed by individuals who reported their race as white, non-Hispanic (figure 2.3). About a quarter of households were headed by blacks and 12 percent were headed by Hispanics. The remaining 9 percent of households were headed by individuals belonging to other ethnic groups, including Asians, Native Americans and those of mixed-race heritage.

In 2000, eligible nonparticipant households were somewhat more likely than households receiving food stamp benefits to be headed by whites (53 vs. 47 percent) and by persons classified as “other” race (9 vs. 4 percent), and somewhat less likely to be headed by blacks (26 vs. 35 percent).¹⁶ These differences in the racial distributions of participants and nonparticipants indicate that blacks have a higher FSP participation rate than do whites, a finding that has been shown in numerous other studies.

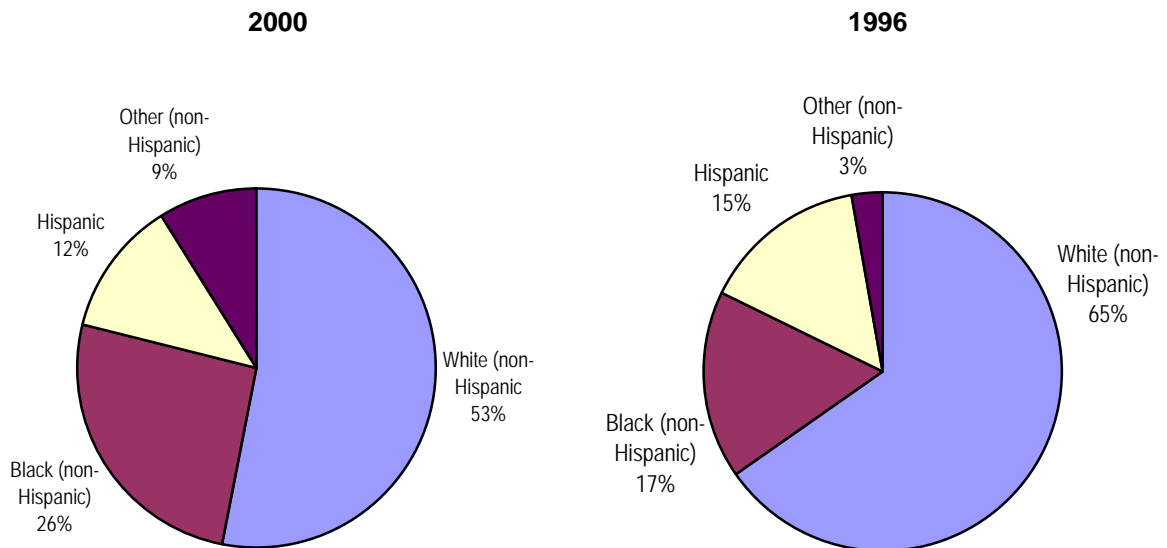
The racial/ethnic distribution of eligible nonparticipants appears to have changed somewhat during the four years after welfare reform was implemented. In 1996, almost two-thirds of nonparticipant households were headed by whites. By 2000, this figure had dropped to 53 percent. Conversely, the percentage of nonparticipant households headed by blacks increased from 17 percent in 1996 to 26 percent in 2000.

Between 1996 and 2000, the racial/ethnic distribution of households participating in the Food Stamp Program was essentially stable. This fact, combined with the changes observed in the racial/ethnic distribution of eligible nonparticipants, suggests that eligible blacks were much more likely to participate in the Food Stamp Program than eligible whites in 1996. By 2000, black-headed

¹⁶ See table B.1 for racial/ethnic distribution of heads of food stamp households.

households still had a higher participation rate than white-headed households, but the difference between the two groups was much smaller than four years before. Put another way, during the four years after welfare reform, the participation rate among blacks declined more than the participation rate among whites.

Figure 2.3—Ethnicity of case head, eligible nonparticipant households: 2000 and 1996



Almost all (95 percent) eligible nonparticipants in 2000 were U.S. citizens.¹⁷ A small proportion (3 percent) of households were headed by noncitizens and included children who were U.S. citizens. Essentially the same proportion of food stamp recipients were reported being U.S. citizens. English was the primary language of 94 percent of eligible nonparticipant households in 2000. Spanish-speaking households represented an additional 5 percent of these households. The remaining 1 percent of eligible nonparticipant households spoke some other language.¹⁸

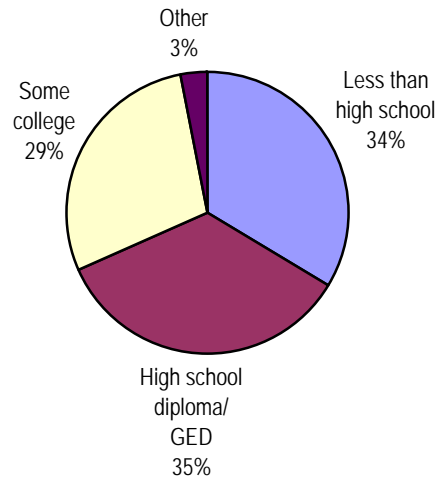
One-third of eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 were headed by persons with less than a high school education and an equal percentage were headed by high school graduates (figure 2.4). Almost 30 percent reported that they had attended college, though only 7 percent received an associate degree or higher.

In 1996, a similar number—36 percent—of household heads had completed less than a high school education. It is difficult to compare the educational status of other eligible nonparticipants in 2000 and in 1996 as the survey questions and response categories differed in the two surveys. In 2000, one possible response category was “some college.” This was not a separate response category in 1996 and it seems likely that those who completed high school and attended college, but did not receive a degree, were classified in the “high school diploma” category. Only those that completed an associate or BA degree (11 percent) were classified as “some college” in 1996.

¹⁷ Published reports do not provide information on citizenship for nonparticipants in 1996.

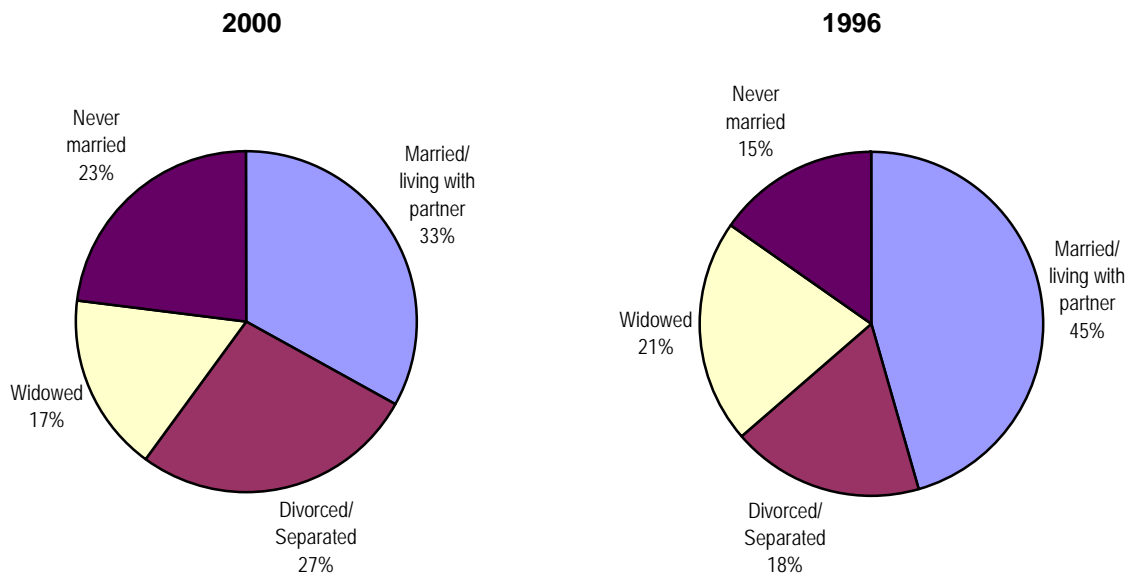
¹⁸ See tables B.1 and B.2.

Figure 2.4—Education of case head, eligible nonparticipant households in 2000



The marital status of eligible nonparticipant household heads appears to have changed somewhat between 1996 and 2000 (figure 2.5). In 2000, 33 percent of household heads reported being married or living with a partner. Almost one-quarter had never married and 27 percent responded that they were either separated or divorced. The remaining 17 percent were widowed. In contrast, more households—45 percent—were headed by married persons or persons living with partners in 1996. In addition, compared to 2000, fewer household heads in 1996 reported that they were divorced, separated, or never married and more household heads reported that they were widowed.

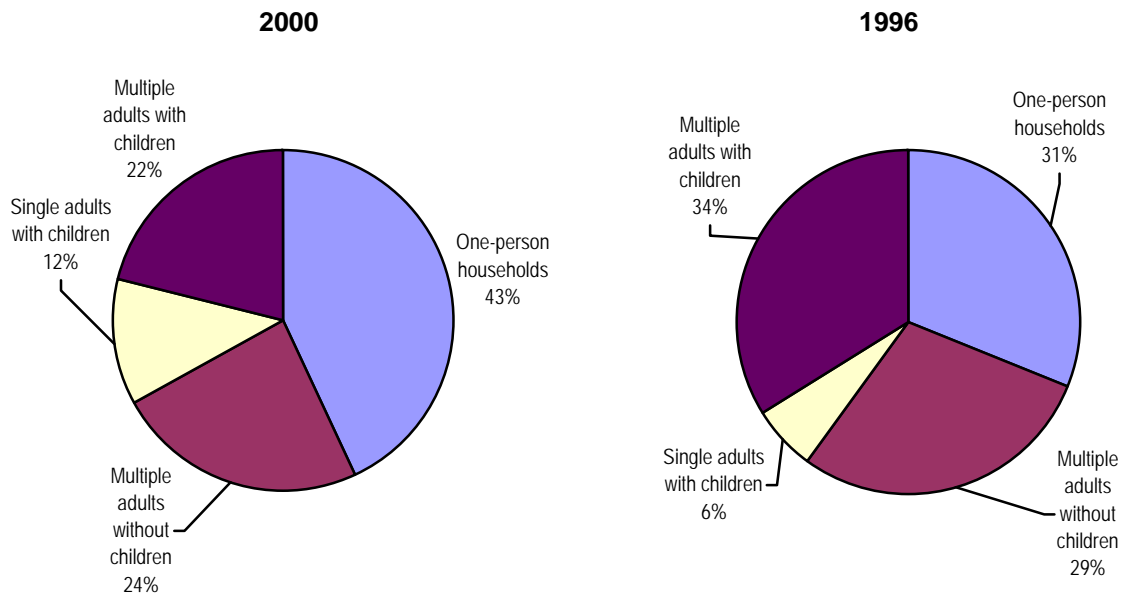
Figure 2.5—Marital status of case head, eligible nonparticipant households: 2000 and 1996



In 2000, two-thirds of FSP eligible nonparticipant households were childless. Most of these (43 of the 67 percent) were one-person households and most of them (47 of the 67 percent) contained at least

one elderly member or member with a disability (figure 2.6, table B.2). The other 33 percent of households included one or more children—22 percent in multiple-adult households and the remainder in households with one adult. About 18 percent of nonparticipant households included pre-school-aged children.

Figure 2.6—Composition of eligible nonparticipant households: 2000 and 1996



Eligible nonparticipant households were much less likely to include children than households receiving food stamps (table B.2). Just over half of all food stamp households contained children compared to only about a third of nonparticipant households. Food stamp recipient households were much more likely than nonparticipant households to be comprised of a single adult and children (39 percent vs. 12 percent), and were much more likely to include pre-school-aged children (28 percent vs. 18 percent). In contrast, nonparticipant households were more likely than recipient households to include multiple adults and children (22 percent vs. 12 percent). Similar percentages of participant and nonparticipant households were comprised of one adult. Thus, the typical food stamp household was likely to contain either one adult or one adult with children. In contrast, the typical nonparticipant household had no children and was most likely a single-person household.

The composition of FSP eligible nonparticipant households changed substantially between 1996 and 2000. The percent of households headed by single adults with children increased from 6 percent in 1996 to 12 percent in 2000. This change may be directly related to welfare reform. In the four years following welfare reform, the number of families, most of whom were single parent households, receiving welfare payments declined dramatically. Studies suggest that many of these families still remained eligible for food stamps. If they were uncertain of their eligibility status, or confused about the requirements for continued FSP participation, they might have left the food stamp rolls at the same time they left welfare. In this situation, we would expect to see an increase in the proportion of single parent families in the food stamp eligible nonparticipant population.

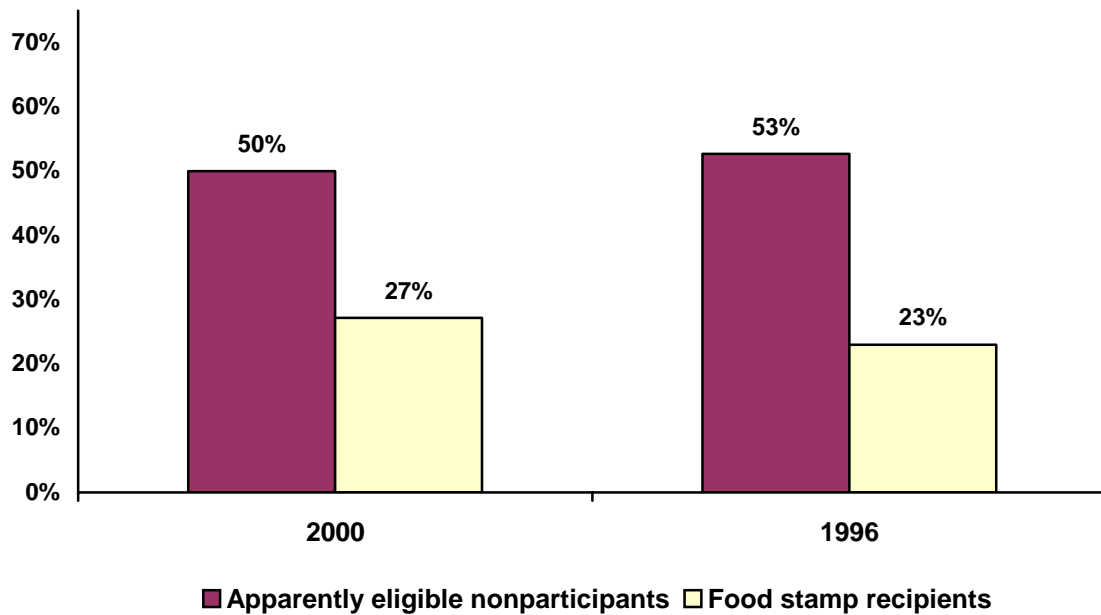
The percentage of nonparticipant households containing multiple adults and children declined over the four years, from 34 to 22 percent. This shift may have reflected the strengthened economy, which

enabled many low-income households to find employment and become self-sufficient. The increase in single-person households, from 31 percent in 1996 to 43 percent in 2000 may also have reflected the economic boom and the elderly and other one-person households that were left behind.

Economic Characteristics

Fifty percent of the FSP eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 reported that at least one household member was employed and received earnings in the month prior to the survey. In 1996, a similar proportion (53 percent) of eligible nonparticipant households reported receiving earnings (figure 2.7).¹⁹

Figure 2.7—Percent of households with earnings



Eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 were more likely than households receiving food stamp benefits to report receiving earnings. Even among households with earnings, nonparticipant households earned 60 percent more than food stamp recipient households—\$1,181 vs. \$749 per month. These differences in employment rates and earnings may help explain why some apparently eligible households were not participating in the Food Stamp Program. Because they were more likely to be employed and have higher earnings, nonparticipant households may have had different perceptions of need than households receiving food stamp benefits. Nonparticipant households may have had a more optimistic outlook on their future earnings potential and felt that they could manage without food stamp benefits, at least for the time being.

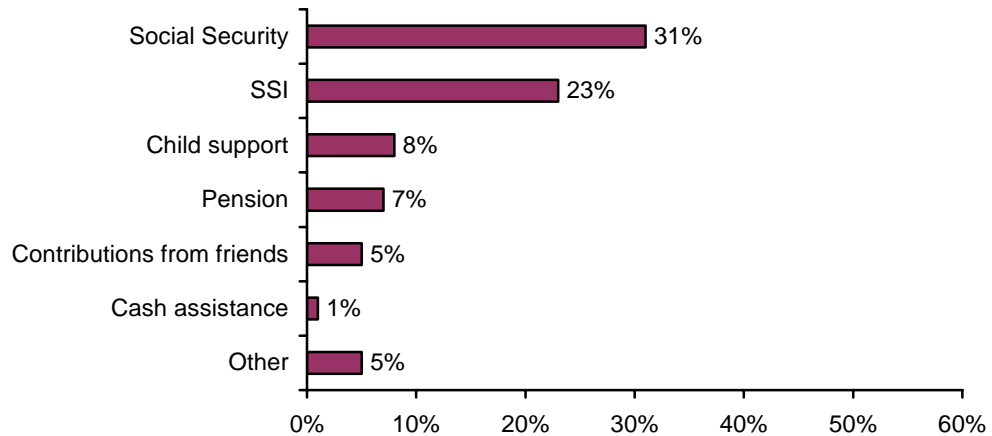
Eligible nonparticipant households received unearned income from a variety of sources during 2000 (figure 2.8).²⁰ Social security was the most common source of unearned income—31 percent of

¹⁹ Employment and earnings data are presented in table B.3.

²⁰ Data on unearned income are found in table B.4.

households reported receiving this type of income. A quarter of households received Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Few households participated in cash assistance programs, including TANF and General Assistance (GA). Receipt of other types of unearned income was reported by 10 percent or less of eligible nonparticipant households.

Figure 2.8—Unearned income of eligible nonparticipant households in 2000



Published data (Cunyngham, 2001) provide information on unearned income received by food stamp recipients, though somewhat less detail is available than from the survey of eligible nonparticipants. Food stamp households were much more likely than nonparticipant households to receive cash assistance in 2000. Just over 30 percent of food stamp households participated in TANF or GA programs. One-quarter of all food stamp recipient households received social security income and 32 percent received SSI income. A small percent of recipients reported other types of unearned income.

In both 1996 and 2000, few eligible nonparticipant households reported receiving cash assistance. The reporting of social security income and SSI differs in the two years. In 1996, 37 percent of households reported receiving social security income. However, in 2000, only about 31 percent received income from this source. In contrast, reported receipt of SSI income increased from 7 percent in 1996 to 23 percent in 2000. The observed decrease in the percent of food stamp nonparticipant households receiving social security income might indicate that these households, while remaining stable in absolute number, became a smaller portion of the nonparticipant pool. The increase in the percent of nonparticipants receiving SSI could be due, in part, to households leaving TANF to go on disability and being confused about their FSP eligibility. The observed differences could also be a result of measurement error caused by respondent confusion between the categories.

Total mean monthly income of eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 was \$982 (table B.5). As discussed in Chapter One, all households that completed the full interview reported total household income less than 130 percent of the poverty level in the screening interview. However, when more detailed questions were asked, and a second measure of income calculated, the total income of some households exceeded 130 percent of poverty. Excluding these households, average monthly income drops to \$777. Eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 had very low incomes, using both the full analytic sample and the restricted sample.

The financial assets of food stamp eligible nonparticipant households were quite low in 2000, as expected given the food stamp eligibility criteria. Households, except those with elderly members, are not eligible for food stamps unless their financial assets are \$2,000 or less. The financial assets of elderly households cannot exceed \$3,000.

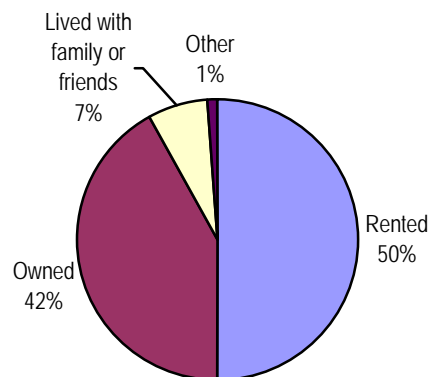
Sixty percent of eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 reported that they had a checking account, a third reported having a savings account, and 10 percent reported some other financial asset (table B.6). On average, the assets of nonparticipant households were just \$804. Among households with some financial assets, the average value across all accounts was \$915.

In order to be eligible for food stamp benefits in 2000, households could only own vehicles worth a limited amount, unless the vehicles were used to produce income directly or transport persons with disabilities. Eligibility criteria stipulated that the value of a vehicle in excess of \$4,650 was counted in the asset limit, effectively limiting the total value of cars or trucks a household could own.²¹ As a proxy for the eligibility criteria, the survey collected information on the age of the vehicle(s) owned by the household. Households with vehicles less than five years old were deemed to be ineligible for food stamps.

Nearly 40 percent of all nonparticipant households surveyed did not own any cars or trucks. The remainder reported that they owned at least one vehicle and 18 percent reported owning two or more vehicles.

Eligible nonparticipant households reported a variety of different housing arrangements in 2000 (figure 2.9). Half of all households rented their home or apartment and an additional 42 percent owned their own home. Nearly all other households reported living with family or friends. The asset limits for calculating food stamp eligibility exclude the value of homes owned by households, and thus home ownership is not inconsistent with food stamp eligibility.

Figure 2.9—Housing arrangements of eligible nonparticipant households in 2000



²¹ The 2002 Farm Bill changed the eligibility rules involving vehicles. The rules described here were in effect when the RDD survey was conducted.

One-fifth of nonparticipant households received government assistance with their housing expenses. Fifteen percent of all households reported living in public housing. An additional 4 percent of households received Section 8 housing subsidies that reduced their monthly rent.

Almost all (96 percent) households spent money for housing. Average non-zero expenditures were \$521 per month. For almost half of all households, this amount included all utility payments. Average expenditures for those households that paid separately for their utilities were \$220 per month.

Food Security

Food security measures a household's access to food that provides a nutritionally adequate diet for its members. Food secure households are those in which all household members have access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecure households, in contrast, have limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate food, due to limited resources to purchase food.

Data to measure food security were collected using a battery of eighteen questions developed by USDA in collaboration with other government agencies, academic experts, and private researchers. The survey questions all relate to conditions and behaviors known to describe households that are having difficulty meeting basic food needs. Using responses to these questions and the methodology described in Bickel et al. (2000), households were classified into three categories, reflecting the severity of deprivation in basic food needs: food secure; food insecure without hunger; and food insecure with hunger.

Somewhat over half of all food stamp eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 were food secure during the year prior to administration of the survey (figure 2.10).²² A quarter of nonparticipant households experienced hunger at some point during the year. Households with children were substantially less likely than households without children to be food secure (44 percent vs. 61 percent).

Food insecurity among food stamp eligible nonparticipant households appears to have increased in the years since welfare reform legislation was passed. In 1996, 34 percent of all eligible nonparticipant households experienced food insecurity (figure 2.10). By 2000, the prevalence of food insecurity among nonparticipant households had increased to 45 percent. Much of the increase over the four years was among households that experienced hunger—the prevalence of hunger increased from 14 percent of all nonparticipant households in 1996 to 25 percent in 2000.

The observed increase between 1996 and 2000 in levels of food insecurity does not necessarily indicate that poor households in general became more food insecure over time. Rather, observed food insecurity among nonparticipants increased as food stamp recipients left the FSP while remaining eligible for benefits.

Since food insecurity and hunger result from insufficient resources, the prevalence of these conditions is much greater among the low-income population than among other households. Using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), Andrews et al. (2000) report that 90 percent of all U.S. households were food secure during the twelve months prior to April 1999 and only 10 percent were food

²² Food security data are presented in table B.7.

insecure. Only three percent of all U.S. households experienced hunger during the year. The prevalence of food insecurity was much greater among households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level. One-third of low-income households experienced food insecurity during the twelve months prior to the survey. Eleven percent of them experienced hunger at some time (figure 2.11).

Figure 2.10—Food security status of eligible nonparticipant households

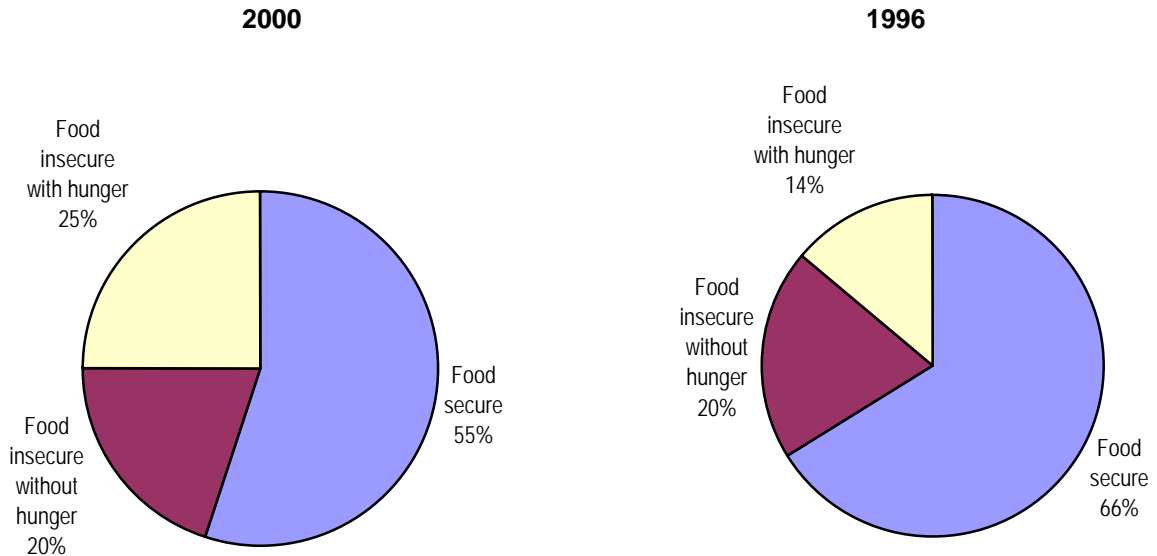
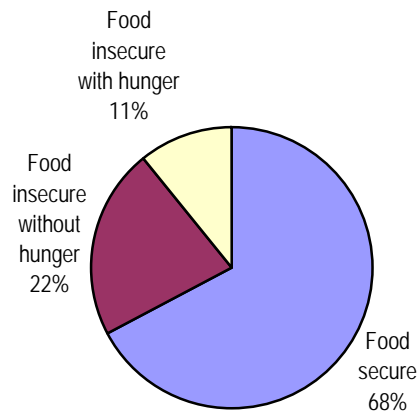


Figure 2.11—Food security status of households below 130 percent of poverty in 1999



Source: Andrews et al. (2000).

The prevalence of food insecurity and hunger reported in the 2000 survey of food stamp eligible nonparticipants (45 percent) is greater than that reported among households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level in the 1999 CPS survey (33 percent). Several factors may account for the observed differences. First, the time periods for the two surveys differ. The eligible nonparticipant

survey was conducted during early 2001 and the food security questions asked about households' experiences during the prior twelve months. The 1999 CPS survey was conducted in April 1999 and the food security questions pertained to the period between April 1998 and April 1999. According to CPS data, the prevalence of food insecurity among low-income households increased between 1995 and 1999. Food insecurity may have continued to increase for this group between 1999 and 2000. Second the group of households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level includes food stamp recipients who are less likely to be food insecure. Finally, in order to qualify for food stamps, households can have very limited assets—less than \$2,000 or \$3,000 (depending upon household composition) in total financial assets. Thus, food stamp eligible households are likely to have fewer resources available to purchase food than other low-income households. This may lead to greater food insecurity among the food stamp eligibles. This analysis suggests that many food stamp eligible nonparticipant households have a very real need for FSP benefits.

CPS data also show that the prevalence of food insecurity among households with incomes less than 130 percent of the poverty level increased in the latter half of the 1990s. However, in contrast to the findings from the eligible nonparticipant surveys, CPS data indicate that the prevalence of hunger among these households declined between 1995 and 1999 (Andrews et al., 2000).

A small proportion of eligible nonparticipant households turned to churches, food pantries, and soup kitchens to provide some of their food needs during the year prior to the survey (table B.8). Nine percent of households reported receiving food from a local church at least once and an equal percentage used food pantries and/or food banks as a source of some of their food needs. Very few households reported obtaining meals from soup kitchens.

Some households also received assistance in meeting other basic needs (table B.9). Nine percent of eligible nonparticipant households received free medical services in the year prior to the survey and 11 percent received help paying for their utilities. Small percentages of households received other types of assistance from organizations in their communities.

Summary

Eligible nonparticipant households were predominantly headed by females and by those who classified themselves as non-Hispanic white in the 2000 survey. Half were headed by young or middle-aged persons (aged 20 to 49) and 31 percent were headed by individuals 60 or older. Approximately 33 percent of the households included children and 37 percent included elderly members. Compared to food stamp recipient households, nonparticipant households were more likely to include multiple adults and less likely to include children. As the number of eligible nonparticipant households grew in the late 1990s, their demographics appear to have changed somewhat. Eligible nonparticipant households in 2000 had younger household heads and were more likely to be headed by blacks and less likely to be headed by whites than in 1996. In 2000, the proportions of nonparticipant households headed by single parents, the group most affected by welfare reform, were larger than in 1996.

Food stamp eligible households are, by definition, fairly poor. They have few financial assets. However, 42 percent of nonparticipant households owned their own home in 2000. Compared to food stamp participants, eligible nonparticipants were more likely to work and to report higher earnings. Nonparticipants were less likely to receive government assistance, particularly TANF and SSI, than

households receiving food stamp benefits. The economic well being of eligible nonparticipant households does not appear to have changed much between 1996 and 2000, at least along the dimensions measured in the surveys.

Households that were apparently eligible for food stamp benefits reported fairly high levels of food insecurity. In 2000, 45 percent experienced food insecurity during the year prior to the survey. Many—25 percent of all households—experienced hunger at some point. The level of food insecurity appears to have increased during the four years after welfare reform among food stamp eligible nonparticipant households. In 1996, 34 percent of all households reported periods of food insecurity and only 14 percent of all households experienced hunger. Eligible nonparticipant households also reported higher levels of food insecurity than other low-income households according to comparisons with CPS data.

Chapter Three

Food Stamp Program Knowledge and Attitudes of Eligible Nonparticipants

This chapter examines eligible nonparticipants' knowledge and attitudes about the Food Stamp Program to shed light on why these apparently eligible households are not participating in the program. The underlying assumption is that households make their decisions about applying for food stamp benefits based on their perceptions of the benefits and the costs of both applying and participating in the FSP. The nonparticipant survey collected detailed information, both directly and indirectly, on the various components of the costs and benefits. Respondents were asked directly whether they thought they were eligible for benefits and why they were not participating in the Food Stamp Program. To make informed decisions, households need to have accurate information about the program, including eligibility and participation requirements. Since previous research suggests that confusion about program requirements is a factor in the participation decision, the survey asked questions to measure the accuracy of households' understanding of program rules. The survey also explored households' perceptions of the costs of participation, examining not only the monetary or out-of-pocket expenses but also the psychological costs. The latter costs include perceptions of stigma connected with program participation and the difficulties or "hassles" associated with applying for benefits and complying with program requirements for continued receipt of food stamp benefits.

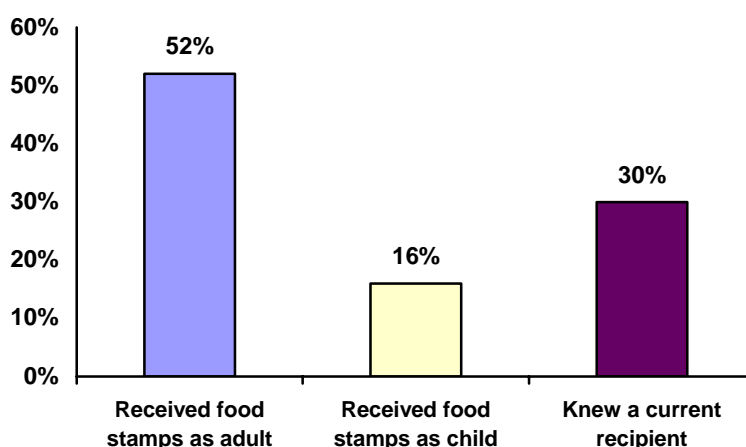
In the sections that follow we present results on eligible nonparticipants' awareness of the FSP, their perceived eligibility, their reasons for not applying, knowledge among those who would not apply even if they knew they were eligible, perceived application costs, and stigma. Responses are contrasted between groups of particular interest to policy makers: households with and without an elderly member (aged 60 or over); with and without dependent children (aged 18 or under); and with or without previous FSP experience (prior food stamp receipt by the household).

Awareness of the Food Stamp Program

Eligible nonparticipants were well aware of the existence of the Food Stamp Program, and may well have received food stamps themselves in the past or known someone who was currently receiving them. Virtually all (96 percent) of nonparticipants had heard of the program. Over half of respondent households had previously received food stamps as an adult (figure 3.1).²³ A smaller number of respondents had received food stamps as children—16 percent overall, including 6 percent who had not received food stamps as adults. Thirty percent had friends, relatives, neighbors, and/or co-workers who were currently receiving food stamps. Almost two-thirds of all respondents knew where to go to apply for food stamps.

²³ Data on awareness of the FSP are presented in table B.10.

Figure 3.1—Eligible nonparticipant households’ experiences with the Food Stamp Program



Some striking differences in FSP awareness can be seen across the population with regard to household composition, however. Households containing elderly individuals were significantly less likely to have received food stamps previously, to know anyone who received food stamps, or to know where to go to apply, than households without elderly individuals. Thus, while they knew the program existed, they did not have practical knowledge about how to participate. Households containing children, in contrast, scored significantly higher than other households on most measures of awareness.

Perceived Eligibility

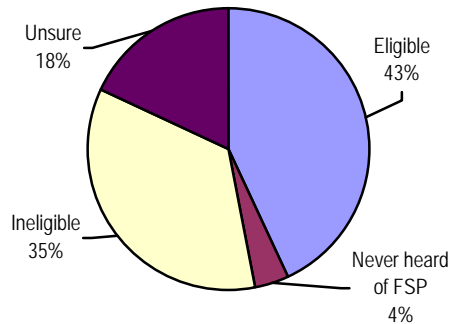
Somewhat under half of nonparticipants thought they might be eligible for food stamp benefits. One-third did not think they were eligible, 18 percent were unsure whether or not they would qualify for benefits, and a small percent had never heard of the FSP (figure 3.2).²⁴ Households that thought they were ineligible for food stamps or who were unsure about their eligibility had somewhat higher incomes (relative to the poverty level) and more assets than those who believed they were eligible for benefits (Bartlett and Burstein, forthcoming, 2004). Recall that these are all households that appeared eligible, based on their reported household size, income, and assets.

Prior studies that have examined reasons for FSP nonparticipation have documented that confusion about eligibility requirements is a significant factor in affecting households’ decisions to apply for benefits. Reviews of participation studies conducted during the 1980s and early 1990s, while not strictly comparable, suggest that about half of all households that appeared to meet the food stamp eligibility requirements, did not believe that they qualified for benefits (McConnell and Nixon, 1996; Bartlett et al., 1992). The National Food Stamp Program Survey, conducted in 1996, found a higher degree of confusion among households that appeared eligible for the FSP. Almost three-quarters (72

²⁴ See tables B.10 and B.11 for data presented in figure 3.2. Numbers in B.11 adjusted to include the 3.6 percent of nonparticipants who never heard of the FSP. For example, 44.8 percent think eligible (table B.11) * .9639 (heard of FSP, table B.10) = 43.2 percent of all nonparticipants think eligible (figure 3.2).

percent) of all apparently eligible nonparticipant households reported that they did not think they met the food stamp eligibility criteria (Ponza et al., 1999).

Figure 3.2—Perceived eligibility of nonparticipant households in 2000



There has been concern among policymakers that the new rules of welfare reform, for both cash assistance and food stamps, may have created additional confusion concerning eligibility requirements which could, in turn, impact households' decisions to apply for food stamp benefits. While the current survey shows that more than half the households that were apparently eligible for food stamps were uncertain about their status, confusion about eligibility rules does not appear to have increased in the four years after welfare reform.

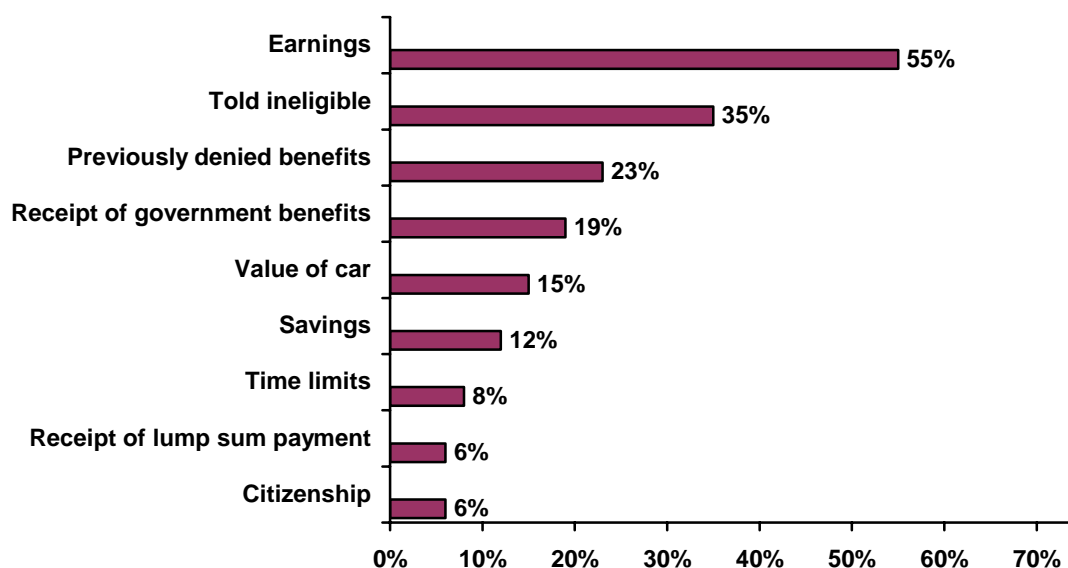
Among nonparticipants who thought they were not eligible for food stamps or were not sure, a third had actually been told by a food stamp office worker or "someone else" that they were probably not eligible (figure 3.3).²⁵ In about half (48 percent) of these cases, however, it was more than a year ago that they were so informed, and their circumstances may well have changed. Almost one-quarter had been denied benefits in the past and assumed that they were still ineligible.

The majority of respondents who either believed they were ineligible or were unsure about their eligibility based their doubts on their employment or earnings. Smaller numbers of respondents had doubts based on receipt of other government benefits, the value of their car, or the amount in their savings account. The food stamp eligibility rules are fairly complicated and without a full certification interview, it is difficult for households to have an accurate assessment of their eligibility.

Two provisions in the TANF program appear to have created confusion among a small but potentially important fraction of households. Six percent of those who either thought they were ineligible for food stamps, or who were unsure about their eligibility, had received a lump sum cash payment that they erroneously believed affected their food stamp eligibility. Eight percent of apparently eligible households had reached the time limit for receipt of cash assistance and thought they were also no

²⁵ Detailed data are presented in table B.12.

Figure 3.3—Reasons for perceived ineligibility among eligible nonparticipant households who did not believe they were eligible for food stamp benefits*



*Includes the 53 percent of nonparticipant households who thought they were ineligible for food stamps or who were unsure about their eligibility.

longer eligible for food stamp benefits. Welfare reform did change the food stamp eligibility rules for non-citizens, and 6 percent of households reported that their citizenship status affected their perceived eligibility.

Households containing one or more elderly members differed significantly from other households in the reasons for perceived eligibility. More of them were unsure about their eligibility. These elderly households were more likely than other households to have based their doubts about eligibility on their savings and less likely to have based their doubts on their citizenship, previous application experience, or their earnings. Nonetheless, the predominant reason they doubted their eligibility was based on their earnings.

Among households with children, those that doubted they were eligible were significantly more likely to have been told they were ineligible or to have been denied benefits in the past than their counterparts among childless households. They were also more likely to suspect their earnings were too high, though somewhat less likely to think receipt of other government assistance made them ineligible. Households with children were also more likely than childless households to believe their citizenship status affected their eligibility.

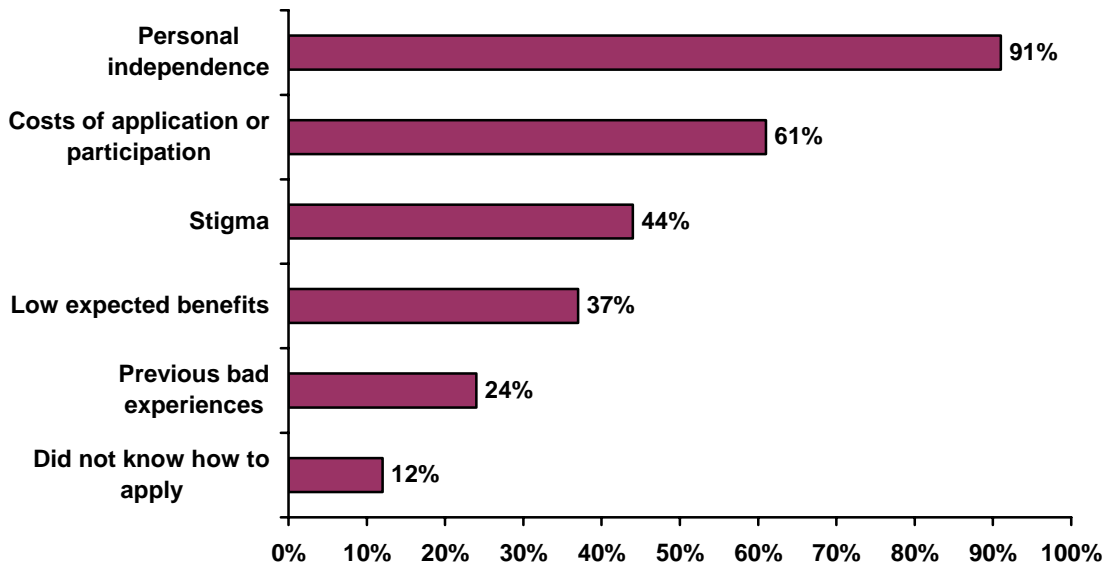
Finally, compared to other nonparticipants, previous food stamp recipients who believed they were not eligible for benefits were more likely to have based this belief on their earnings or on having been previously denied food stamp benefits or having been told they were ineligible. They were significantly less likely than others to be deterred by their savings.

Attitudes: Reasons for Not Applying

The great majority (69 percent) of respondents reportedly would apply for food stamps if they found out they were eligible (table B.11).²⁶ A quarter (27 percent) would not apply and the remainder were unsure. Previous food stamp recipients were more likely than other respondents to report that they would apply if they thought they were eligible (78 vs. 58 percent), as were households with children (74 vs. 67 percent). In contrast, households with elderly members would reportedly be less likely than other households to apply for food stamps, even if they know they were eligible (64 vs. 72 percent).

Respondents gave a variety of reasons for not wanting to apply, or being unsure about applying, for food stamp benefits, even if they knew for certain that they were eligible (figure 3.4).²⁷ By far the most common reasons given were related to a desire for *personal independence*. This includes households that reported they could get by on their own without food stamps (89 percent) and those that did not like to rely on government handouts (64 percent). These households did not turn to nongovernmental sources for food assistance. As discussed in the previous chapter, less than 10 percent of nonparticipant households received food assistance from food banks, food pantries, churches, or soup kitchens.

Figure 3.4—Reasons eligible nonparticipant households would not participate in the Food Stamp Program*



*Includes the 31 percent of nonparticipant households who would not necessarily apply to the FSP even if they knew they were eligible.

A related set of reasons that was cited by many respondents (44 percent) pertained to the *stigma* of being seen as food stamp dependent: they didn't want to be seen shopping with food stamps (20

²⁶ Excludes the 4 percent of nonparticipants who had not heard about the FSP prior to the interview.

²⁷ Detailed reasons are presented in tables B.13 and B.14.

percent), did not want people to know they needed financial assistance (24 percent), did not want to go to the welfare office (30 percent).

Perceived *costs of application or participation* were also given as reasons by a sizable fraction (61 percent). This includes those who felt that they would have to answer questions that were too personal (25 percent), the application process required too much paperwork (40 percent), it would require too much time away from work (22 percent) or from home and child care or elder care responsibilities (15 percent), it was too difficult to get to the food stamp office (13 percent), the work requirements were too difficult (7 percent), the program participation requirements were too difficult (16 percent).

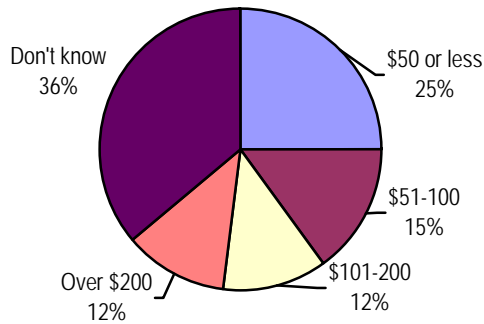
For over a third of respondents (37 percent), the *low expected benefits* were a factor: the food stamp benefits themselves were too small (21 percent), or applying for food stamps wasn't worth the effort because the households were not eligible for cash benefits (26 percent). A quarter of nonparticipants (24 percent) cited *previous bad experiences* as reasons for not applying—with the Food Stamp Program (21 percent) or with another government program (12 percent). Finally, a small fraction (12 percent) reported that they *did not know how to apply*.

Reasons cited for not wanting to apply for food stamps varied somewhat across population subgroups, generally in ways that might be expected given their characteristics. Former recipient households were more likely to be deterred by the costs of application and participation and by previous bad experiences with the FSP, while being very unlikely not to know how to apply. Households containing elderly individuals, who have lower FSP participation rates than other households, were less likely to cite previous bad experiences with the program. Households with children were less likely deterred by low FSP benefits.

Respondents to the 1996 survey of eligible nonparticipants reported similar, though not identical, reasons for not applying to the Food Stamp Program (Ponza et al., 1999). Examining the rank order of reasons, the most often cited factors were related to a desire for personal independence—not wanting to rely on government assistance or charity and feeling that they did not need food stamps. High costs of program participation, including excessive paperwork and the difficulty of obtaining transportation to the welfare office, were ranked second, followed by low expected benefits, previous bad experiences with the Food Stamp Program, and confusion about how to apply for benefits. In contrast to the findings of the 2000 survey of eligible nonparticipants, few respondents to the 1996 survey reported that stigma was a reason they did not apply to the FSP.

Among the 31 percent of nonparticipants that reportedly would not apply (or were not sure if they would apply) even if they found out they were eligible, over a third (36 percent) could not guess how much they would receive if they did apply, and a similar proportion (40 percent) thought they would receive no more than \$100 per month (figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5—Expected food stamp benefits among households that would not apply even if they knew they were eligible*



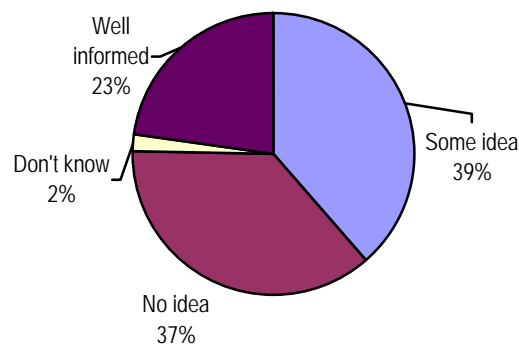
*These households comprise 31 percent of all nonparticipant households.

Knowledge of Program Requirements and Benefits

Lack of knowledge or misconceptions about Food Stamp Program application requirements and available benefits can affect households' decisions to seek program benefits. Inaccurate knowledge may lead some households to conclude that the costs of participating are too high or that the benefits are too low. Households that reported they would not apply for food stamps, even if they were eligible for benefits, were asked several questions to assess their knowledge about program requirements and rules.

Of the 31 percent of nonparticipant households who would not apply (or were unsure whether they would apply) even if they knew they were eligible, only a quarter believed they were well informed about what was required to get food stamp benefits, while over a third (37 percent) reportedly “[did] not have any idea about what is involved” (figure 3.6). The remainder believed they “[had] some idea about the process”.²⁸

Figure 3.6—Reported knowledge about food stamp application process among households that would not apply even if they knew they were eligible*

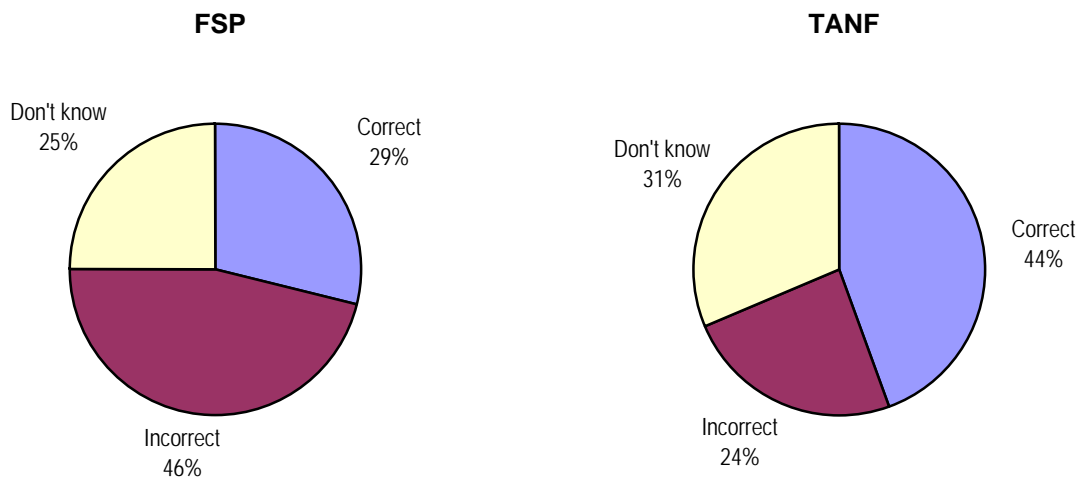


*These households comprise 31 percent of all nonparticipant households.

²⁸ Data on knowledge of program requirements and benefits are presented in table B.15.

Substantial misconceptions concerning the existence of time limits on the receipt of food stamp and TANF benefits were found among eligible nonparticipants (figure 3.7). Among the 31 percent of households that would not apply for food stamps (or were unsure whether they would apply) even if they were eligible, almost half believed there were limits on the length of time households could receive food stamps. Some of these households may have been correctly thinking about the three-month time limit imposed on able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDS) who do not fulfill their work requirements. However, it seems likely that most respondents had incorrect information. Less than a third of households correctly understood that there were no time limits for most FSP recipients.

Figure 3.7—Knowledge of time limits among households that would not apply even if they knew they were eligible*



*These households comprise 31 percent of all nonparticipant households.

Confusion about time limits in the TANF program also existed, but to a lesser extent than in the Food Stamp Program. Almost half the households correctly understood that the TANF program imposed limits on the length of time benefits could be received. One-quarter incorrectly believed that there were no TANF time limits.

This analysis suggests that confusion about time limits *may* be a factor in preventing some eligible households from applying to the FSP. There may, however, be equal confusion among households who reported they would apply to the program if they knew for certain they were eligible. The latter group was not asked about their knowledge of time limits, so it is not possible to estimate the impact confusion about time limits has on FSP applications.

Respondents in households containing elderly persons were much more likely to consider themselves uninformed about the process than other households. They were less likely to know about time limits, and more likely to express ignorance about food stamp time limits (rather than giving the incorrect answer). Conversely, respondents in households containing children were more likely than others to report that they had at least some idea about the application process. They were no better informed than others about FSP and TANF time limits. Finally, former FSP recipients were substantially less likely than other households to consider themselves uninformed about the process, though not significantly more likely to know about TANF time limits and the absence of FSP time limits.

The most common sources of information about the FSP among households that would not apply for benefits even if they were eligible was reportedly posters, flyers, and brochures (18 percent) and radio or television advertisements (15 percent).²⁹ Smaller numbers (ranging from 7 to 12 percent) reported hearing about the FSP through billboards or advertisements on buses, taxis, or trains; community group presentations; mail or telephone calls; or newspaper articles.

Attitudes: Perceived Time and Out-of-Pocket Cost of Application

The activities that must be completed to apply for food stamp benefits all impose some cost and burden on households. At least some time is required, and most applicants incur expenses in the course of visits to the welfare office. The survey asked respondents a series of questions concerning their perceptions of the time and costs that would be required to apply to the Food Stamp Program.³⁰

Among respondents who knew where they would have to go in order to apply for food stamps, the mean estimated travel time to the office was 24 minutes. Most respondents would drive their own car to the welfare office (figure 3.8). Nearly all of the remainder would have someone drive them or would take a bus or other public transportation. Some respondents would walk or take a cab. Over half (58 percent) of those that knew where the food stamp office was located reported that there was public transportation available to them, whether or not they chose to use it. About a sixth (15 percent) did not know whether or not the office was accessible by public transportation. For the remaining 28 percent of respondents, no public transportation was available. Twenty-four percent of respondents living in areas without transportation did not own a car, which could limit their ability to get to the welfare office.³¹

The majority of respondents (78 percent) reported that the food stamp office location was “very” or “somewhat” convenient for them.³² Of those that found the location “very” or “somewhat” inconvenient, the most common complaint was that it was “too far from home” (40 percent). Other common complaints were that the office was located “in a congested area with lots of traffic” (35 percent), and that it was difficult to find parking near the office (24 percent).

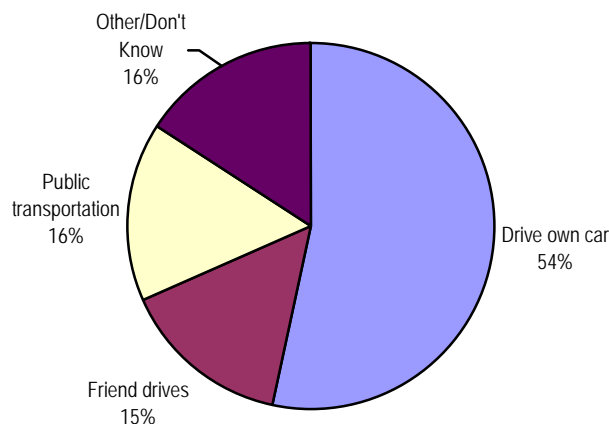
²⁹ See table B.16.

³⁰ Detailed data on perceived costs are presented in table B.17.

³¹ These questions were asked only of respondents who knew where the food stamp office was located. They represent 63 percent of all nonparticipants. There is no reason to suspect that their answers would differ from those of other nonparticipants.

³² Questions concerning the convenience of the office location were asked of the 63 percent of nonparticipants who knew where the welfare office was located.

Figure 3.8—Mode of travel to welfare office*



*Includes the 63 percent of nonparticipants who knew where the food stamp office was located.

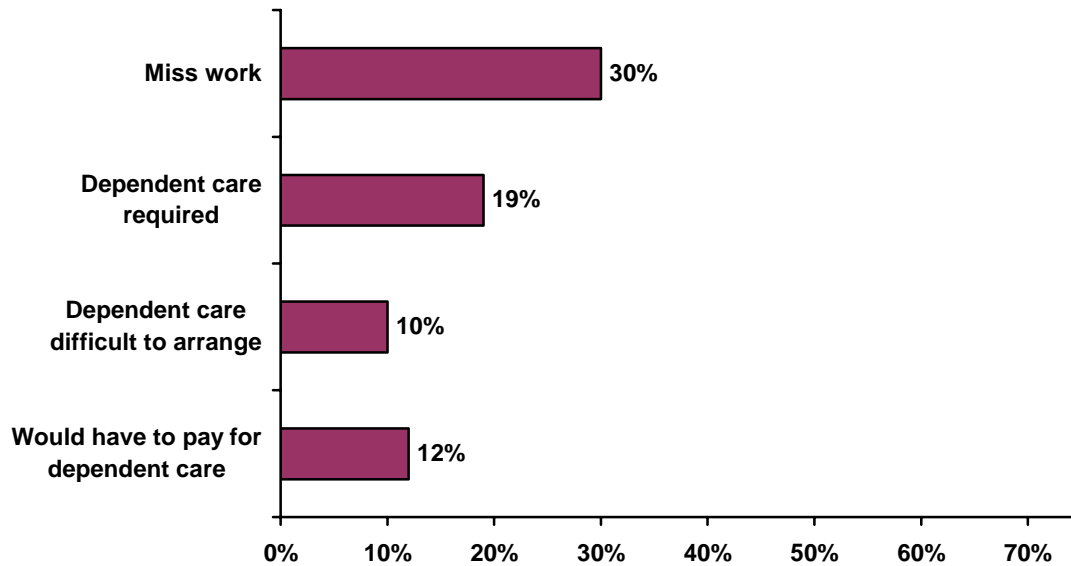
Regardless of whether they knew where the FSP office was located, respondents were asked how many trips they thought they would have to make to the office to complete the application process. Twenty-two percent did not have any idea about what would be required. Among those who did respond, they believed that, on average, they would need to make 2.4 visits to the welfare office. Their mean estimate of the total time required to complete the food stamp application process, including time spent traveling, waiting, filling out paperwork, and meeting with office staff, was just under 4 hours.

Eligible nonparticipants' estimate of the costs of applying for food stamps presumably plays a role in their overall assessment of the costs and benefits of participating in the FSP. This raises the issue of whether or not their assessment of the costs of applying are accurate. The findings suggest that the eligible nonparticipants had a fairly accurate picture of the effort that would be required to complete the food stamp application process, though they somewhat underestimated the time involved. Food stamp applicants who completed all application requirements and were approved for food stamps reported making 2.4 trips to the welfare office. They reported spending an average of 6.1 hours completing the application process (Bartlett and Burstein, forthcoming 2004).

Food stamp applicants incur costs if they miss work and are not compensated and/or if they need to find care for dependents when they visit the welfare office. A sizeable minority of households anticipated that they would incur some of these types of expenses during the course of applying for food stamp benefits (figure 3.9). Almost a third thought they would need to miss some work to apply, and a fifth would need to find care for their dependents, either children or elderly relatives. Of those that would need such care, over half would find it "somewhat" or "very" difficult to arrange, and nearly a two-thirds of them would have to pay for this arrangement.

Respondents from households with elderly members were less likely than other households to need to miss work or obtain care for their dependents in order to apply for food stamps. Respondents from households with children were more likely than other households to face both these barriers. Former FSP participants were more also likely than other households to require child or elder care.

Figure 3.9—Costs incurred during food stamp application process (percent of households incurring cost)



Attitudes: Stigma

The costs of applying for and participating in the Food Stamp Program include not only the monetary costs discussed above, but also psychological costs. Stigma is a commonly mentioned psychological cost of participation and, at least for some individuals, reportedly affects their decision to participate in the FSP. As discussed earlier in the chapter, among respondents who would not apply for benefits even if they knew they were eligible, 44 percent cited factors relating to stigma as a reason for their decision.

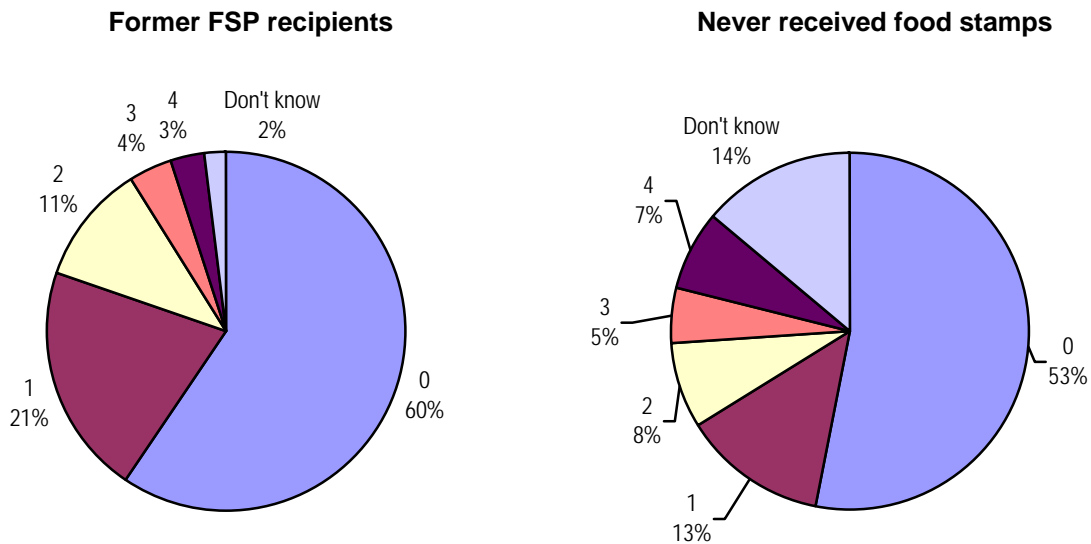
To measure the feelings of stigma associated with FSP participation, the survey asked a number of questions about whether eligible nonparticipant households had ever experienced stigma or expected that they would experience stigma if they received food stamp benefits. The responses to this series of questions indicate that many eligible nonparticipants associated stigma with FSP participation. Between 15 percent and 24 percent of eligible nonparticipants responded positively to each of the questions concerning stigma. Feelings of stigma associated with program participation were generally more common among nonparticipants who had never received food stamps than among those who had received them at some time in the past (table B.19).

Among current nonparticipants who received food stamps in the past, about a quarter (27 percent) reported that they were treated disrespectfully when using food stamps in a store, and 18 percent avoided telling people they got food stamps. Smaller shares reported being treated disrespectfully when they told people they received food stamps (12 percent), went out of their way to shop at a store where no one knew them (12 percent), or ever did anything to hide the fact that they received food stamps (7 percent). Fewer than 1 percent ever gave their food stamps to someone else because they were embarrassed to use them (table B18).

Feelings of stigma associated with food stamps were somewhat more common among those who had never received them. A quarter of these respondents reported that if they got food stamps, they might go out of their way so that people would not find out, and 19 percent thought they might not shop in certain stores because they wouldn't want people to know they used food stamps. Similar proportions believed they would be treated disrespectfully by people in stores (21 percent), and they would be treated disrespectfully by people who knew they got food stamps (20 percent) (table B.18).

Four of the questions relating to stigma were asked of both former recipients and those who had never received FSP benefits. Using responses to these questions, we created a "stigma index" with values ranging from 0 to 4, reflecting the number of positive responses to the items indicating feelings of stigma. Almost 40 percent of households that had previously received food stamp benefits, and a third of those that had never received benefits, reported experiencing some degree of stigma (figure 3.10). Feelings of stigma were somewhat more severe among those who had never received benefits, as indicated by the higher percentage who measured at the top of the index—6 percent of former participants compared to 12 percent of those who had never received food stamps responded positively to three or four of the stigma questions.³³ Not surprisingly, a substantial number (14 percent) of households that had never received food stamps did not know whether they would experience stigma.

Figure 3.10—Perceptions of stigma, based on four-item index, among eligible nonparticipants in 2000



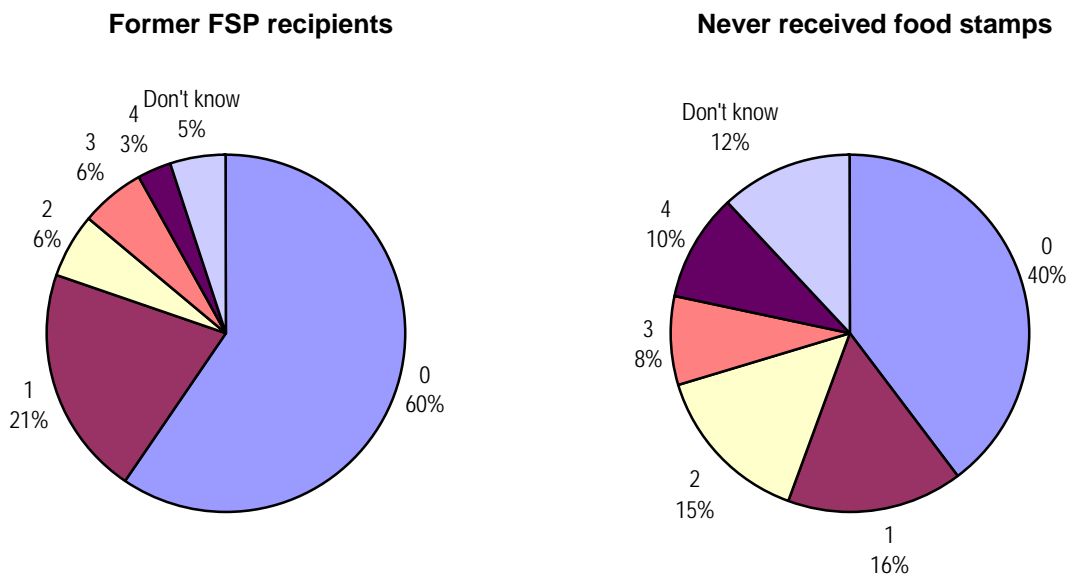
Since implementation of welfare reform, feelings of stigma associated with food stamp participation have remained essentially the same among those households that had previously participated in the Food Stamp Program (figure 3.11). However, among the group of eligible nonparticipants that had never received benefits, perceptions of stigma appear to have decreased. Ponza et al. (1999) reported that among households that had never received food stamp benefits in 1996, 49 percent reported some

³³ Individual categories do not sum to subtotals due to rounding.

feelings of stigma associated with participation in the FSP. In contrast, 33 percent of similarly defined households in 2000 reported such feelings.

One hypothesis advanced to explain part of the decline in the food stamp rolls is that welfare reform changed peoples' attitudes toward receiving government assistance, increasing the stigma associated with participation. Along the dimensions measured in this study, feelings of stigma associated with FSP participation do not appear to have increased. However, as shown earlier in the chapter, when asked directly why they wouldn't participate in the FSP, even if they were eligible, many respondents (44 percent) reported reasons relating to stigma and more nonparticipants reported being deterred from applying for food stamp benefits by factors relating to stigma in 2000 than in 1996. Two explanations could account for the apparent inconsistency in these two different measures. First, while there may not have been an overall increase in stigma associated with Food Stamp Program participation, stigma may be more likely to deter those who experience such feelings. Second, the questions used in the survey to measure stigma may not capture all facets of stigma associated with program participation.

Figure 3.11—Perceptions of stigma, based on four-item index, among eligible nonparticipants in 1996



Summary

Eligible nonapplicant nonparticipants were generally aware of the existence of the FSP, knew people who had received food stamps or had received food stamps themselves in the past, and knew how to get to the FSP office. They tended to be uncertain about their eligibility, but indeed it is hard to be certain without a certification interview. Strikingly, 69 percent said they would apply if they found out they were eligible. Those that would not apply or were unsure whether they would apply were restrained largely by a desire for personal independence, although the low expected benefit relative to both the monetary and psychological costs of application and participation also played a part. Nonparticipants estimated that the application process would take them two or three trips and just

under four hours. Among both former participants and other eligible households, between 30 and 40 percent felt some sense of stigma relating to the FSP. In the four years after welfare reform, feelings of stigma associated with program participation remained the same among eligible nonparticipant households who received benefits in the past. Somewhat surprisingly, feelings of stigma appear to have decreased among nonparticipant households who had never received benefits.

Chapter Four

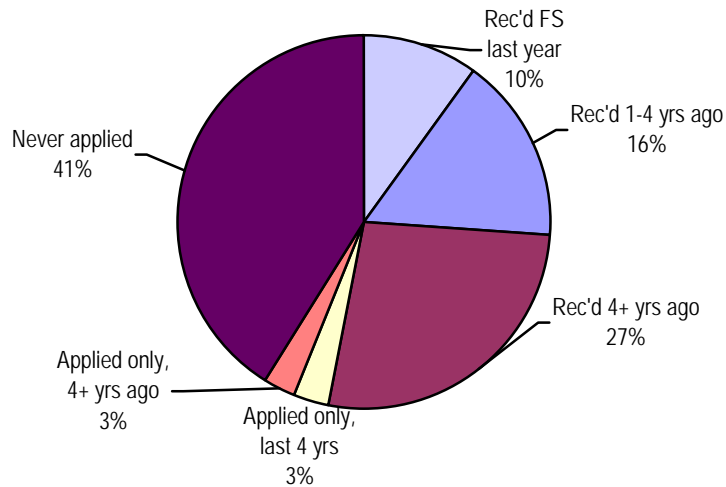
Food Stamp Program Experience And Satisfaction

A household’s view of the Food Stamp Program and its interest in applying for and participating in the program is likely to be influenced by prior experience with the FSP as well as other government assistance programs. If households’ previous experiences were positive, they felt the services they received were appropriate, and they were treated fairly and respectfully, they will probably be more likely to consider applying for benefits when their circumstances become strained. In the cost-benefit terminology, positive experiences reduce the psychological costs of participating in the Food Stamp Program.

This chapter examines the extent of eligible nonparticipant households’ previous contacts with the Food Stamp Program and with cash assistance, medical assistance, and the WIC program. For those with fairly recent experiences—within the four years prior to the survey—their satisfaction with the services they received is also examined.

Among current eligible nonparticipant households, experience with the Food Stamp Program was widespread (figure 4.1).³⁴ Over half—52 percent—received food stamps some time in the past. Ten percent received benefits within the year prior to the survey and 16 percent in the prior one to four years. For many households—27 percent—it had been more than four years since they received FSP benefits. Furthermore, among those that never received food stamps, an additional 7 percent applied at some point, including 3 percent who did so within the prior four years.³⁵

Figure 4.1—Prior FSP experience of potential applicants

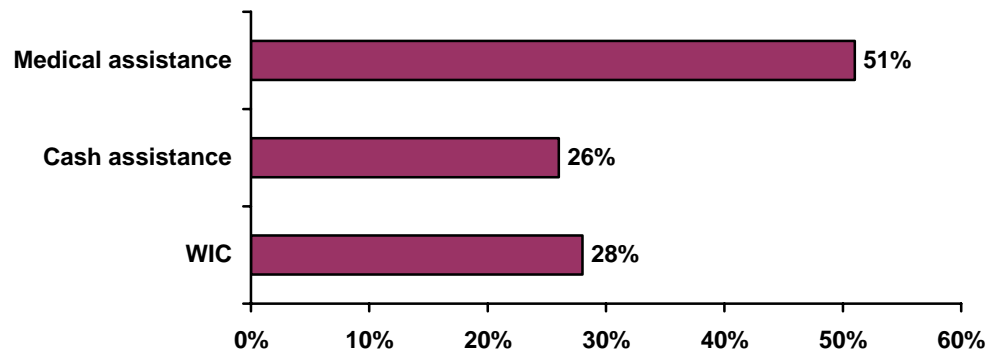


³⁴ Data in figures 4.1 and 4.2 are based on a sample of 1,206 respondents (unweighted).

³⁵ Individual categories do not sum to subtotals because of rounding—e.g., 3.45 percent applied in the last four years, 3.08 percent more than four years ago, for a subtotal of 7 percent.

Many households in this population had received other forms of government assistance (figure 4.2). A quarter (26 percent) of the households had received welfare or cash assistance, though for two-thirds of them four or more years had passed since they received any benefits. Medical assistance was received by half of all eligible nonparticipant households. Twenty-three percent reported that they were receiving it at the time of the survey and an additional 9 percent received some type of medical assistance within the year prior to the survey. A quarter of this population had received WIC benefits at some point. Six percent of all households reported that they were receiving benefits at the time of the survey and an additional 5 percent had participated in WIC during the prior year.

Figure 4.2—Prior receipt of other government assistance



Food Stamp Application Experience of Near Applicants

Eligible nonparticipant households include a small group of households that we have termed “near applicants.” They are households that contacted the local food stamp office within the six to twelve months prior to the survey to inquire about food stamp benefits, but never followed through by submitting an application. This group was of particular interest because while they had made an effort to find out about food stamp benefits, they decided not to apply. It seems likely that something happened to prevent their application, either a change in their circumstances or a change in their evaluation of the value of applying for benefits. A very small percentage of nonparticipants had made recent contact with the FSP office. The sample contained only 66 near applicant households, which represented 4.6 percent of all apparently eligible households. Due to the sample size, the frequencies shown for this group should be considered illustrative only.

Most (65 percent) near applicants knew, or “had some idea of,” the specific programs they were interested in when they contacted the food stamp or welfare office. Just over half were interested in the FSP when they came in. Half were interested in Medicaid and/or the related SCHIP, while smaller numbers came in explicitly for TANF, SSI, or General Assistance.

By definition, near applicants did not apply for food stamps when they visited or called the welfare office. With the exception of the Medicaid and SCHIP programs, they did not apply for other programs in large numbers. Half applied for Medicaid/SCHIP and about 40 percent of these were approved for benefits. Eight to 11 percent applied for TANF benefits, SSI, and General Assistance.

Half of all near applicants (49 percent) obtained a food stamp application form from the welfare office. Among those that did not, the usual reason given was that they did not ask for one, or that that no one suggested that they complete one, so they thought they would not be eligible.

Information about the Food Stamp Program was not readily available to most near applicants, according to their reports. Only 34 percent of near applicants reported that they were informed about the requirements for applying and participating in the FSP when they contacted the office.

Food Stamp Program Application Satisfaction: Near Applicants' Most Recent Visit

In order to understand the factors that may be inhibiting program participation, the survey asked a series of questions about near applicants' most recent contact with the welfare office.³⁶ The questions were directed to understanding how successful and satisfied these households were with their visit and what caused dissatisfaction.

While approximately two-thirds of near applicants (62 percent) reported that the hours the welfare office was open were "very" or "somewhat" convenient for them, 23 percent found the office hours "very" or "somewhat inconvenient" for their schedules (the rest did not have an opinion). Nearly all those who found the hours inconvenient reported that the office was only open during normal business hours, and for some this meant taking time off for work to get there.

Nearly half of near applicants (44 percent) were "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with the services provided by the receptionist or telephone operator, while 38 percent were "very" or "somewhat" dissatisfied (table B.20). About half of near-applicants (49 percent) spoke with a caseworker; their median wait to see the caseworker was 15 minutes. About half of near-applicants who saw a caseworker (53 percent) felt they really understood what they needed to do to get food stamps. While 41 percent of near applicants felt that the FSP application requirements were unreasonable, 38 percent felt that the requirements were reasonable. The remainder did not have an opinion.

About one-quarter (27 percent) of near applicants felt that they accomplished everything they set out to do in their most recent visit to the welfare office. The three-quarters of households that did not find their visits completely successful most often reported that they failed to find out if they were eligible or complete the application. Smaller numbers were unable to determine all the application requirements, or meet with a caseworker as they had hoped, while others were unclear about whether or not they had accomplished their goals.

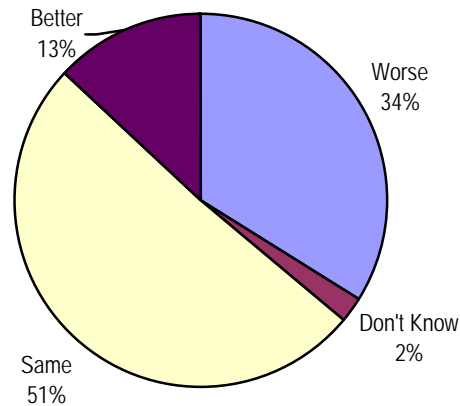
Near applicants appear to have faced some problems or barriers in their most recent visit to the welfare office. Getting to the office during the hours it was open was difficult for a sizeable minority of households. Others experienced difficulty in obtaining the necessary information. However, it must be kept in mind that near applicants represented only a very small percentage of all eligible nonparticipant households. Most eligible nonparticipant households did not even make an initial contact with the food stamp office.

³⁶ Analysis based on the sample of 66 "near applicant" respondents.

Overall Food Stamp Program Satisfaction

Households that had applied for food stamp benefits within the last four years, as well as near applicants, were asked a series of questions about their satisfaction with the services they received during their most recent visit to the welfare office.³⁷ As an overall measure of satisfaction, respondents were asked to compare their experiences at the food stamp office to their experiences in similar types of offices, such as the Division of Motor Vehicles, voter registration, WIC, the post office, or the unemployment office. About half of all households felt that they were treated about the same as at other government agencies (figure 4.3). A third, however, felt they were treated worse at the FSP office, while 13 percent felt they were treated better at the FSP office.

Figure 4.3—Treatment at food stamp office compared to other government offices among households with recent FSP experience*



*Includes the 5 percent of nonparticipant households that either applied for (but did not receive) FSP benefits within the prior four years or were near applicants.

Respondents were also asked to give their opinion about their satisfaction with specific aspects of their experience at the food stamp office. While a majority of households were reasonably satisfied with the services and treatment they received, a significant minority reported varying levels of dissatisfaction (see table B.21). Most agreed that their caseworker was knowledgeable about benefits and procedures (72 percent), and that their caseworker treated clients respectfully (66 percent). Only a third to a half, however, agreed with their caseworkers' decisions (38 percent), felt that their caseworker kept them well informed (53 percent), felt that the caseworker was helping to solve their problems (48 percent), and felt that the kinds of services they received from their caseworker were suitable (56 percent).

Eligible nonparticipants in 2000 who were either classified as near applicants or had applied for food stamp benefits within the last four years were less satisfied with the services they received at the welfare office than households that applied and were approved for benefits in 2000 (table B.21). Between 80 and 90 percent of approved applicants were satisfied with the services they received—

³⁷ Households that had applied for food stamps more than four years before the survey were not asked these questions. The intent was to examine satisfaction with the office after welfare reform was implemented.

they agreed strongly or somewhat with the statements that indicated satisfaction. Eligible nonparticipants in 2000 were much less inclined to “agree strongly” and much more likely to “disagree strongly” with the questions than approved applicants. This comparison suggests that one reason previous and near applicants did not follow through and apply for food stamp benefits may be that they were dissatisfied with their treatment at the food stamp office.

Summary

Over half of eligible nonparticipant households had some experience with the Food Stamp Program prior to their most recent contact—52 percent had received benefits in the past and an additional 7 percent had applied for benefits. Many nonparticipant households had also received other forms of government assistance, including medical assistance, cash assistance, and WIC benefits.

Near applicant households, defined as those who contacted the Food Stamp Program within the six to twelve months prior to the survey but did not submit an application, represent a small (66 households or 4.6 percent), though potentially interesting group of nonparticipant households. Many of these households appear to have faced some problems or barriers during their most recent visit to the welfare office. A sizeable minority had difficulty getting to the office when it was open. Others reported experiencing informational problems—weren’t informed about FSP benefits, weren’t given an application, or didn’t understand FSP application or participation requirements.

While a majority of households who were either near applicants or had applied for benefits in the past four years were reasonably satisfied with the services they received at the food stamp office, some were dissatisfied with one or more aspects of the treatment they received.

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Appendix A

Eligible Nonparticipant Survey Instrument

**A Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation
Eligible Non-Participant Survey (RDD)**

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I. SCREENING INTERVIEW

Introduction

Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling from Abt Associates in Amherst, Massachusetts on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture. We are conducting a nationwide study about people’s knowledge of the Food Stamp Program, and we are interested in talking with you even if you do not receive food stamps. May I please speak with a member of this household who is at least 18 years old?

The purpose of the study is to learn about people’s knowledge of the Food Stamp Program and any experiences they may have had with it. Also, why some people do not participate, even though they might be eligible for food stamp benefits. Your telephone number was randomly selected by a computer program so that I might ask you a few questions to determine if you qualify for our study. My questions should only take a couple of minutes of your time right now. Depending on your situation, I might ask you to complete a longer interview.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0536-0053. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 5 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

S1. Did you or anyone in your household receive food stamps or food stamp benefits last month?

- YES (END INTERVIEW).....1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED (END INTERVIEW)7
- DON’T KNOW (END INTERVIEW)8

S2. Did you or anyone in your household file a signed food stamp application last month?

- YES (END INTERVIEW).....1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED (END INTERVIEW)7
- DON’T KNOW (END INTERVIEW)8

S3. Last month, did everyone in your household receive TANF (INSERT NAME OF STATE PROGRAM), SSI, or General Assistance (INSERT NAME OF STATE PROGRAM) benefits or had you been approved to receive benefits?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON’T KNOW8

S4. How many people live in your household? By household I mean yourself and the people who live with you and share food with you. PROBE: Include any persons who live with you more than half of the time, even if they are not related to you.

_____ NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLD

LIVE ALONE.....1
 REFUSED (TERMINATE)7
 DON'T KNOW (TERMINATE).....8

S5. Do you live in a group home, such as a dormitory or nursing home?

YES (END INTERVIEW).....1
 NO.....2
 REFUSED (TERMINATE)7
 DON'T KNOW (TERMINATE)8

S6. Are you (or anyone else in your household) 60 years of age or older?

YES.....1
 NO.....2
 REFUSED (TERMINATE)7
 DON'T KNOW (TERMINATE)8

S7. Last month, was your total household income before taxes more or less than \$X,XXX per month? (CATI: FILL IN \$ AMOUNT HERE BASED ON # OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS FROM S4). PROBE: Income from all sources. Your best estimate is fine.

MORE THAN \$X,XXX PER MONTH (END INTERVIEW).....1
 LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO \$X,XXX PER MONTH.....2
 REFUSED (END INTERVIEW)7
 DON'T KNOW (END INTERVIEW)8

<u>People in Household</u>	<u>Income</u>
1	\$ 905.00
2	1,219.00
3	1,533.00
4	1,848.00
5	2,162.00
6	2,476.00
7	2,790.00
8	3,104.00
Each additional person:	+ \$ 315.00

S8. Do you (or anyone in your household) own a motor vehicle such as a car, truck, van or motorcycle? Please include any vehicles that you may be making payments on.

YES.....1
 NO (SKIP TO S10)2
 REFUSED (SKIP TO S10)7
 DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO S10)8

S8a. If yes, how many vehicles? _____ VEHICLES

S9. What is the year, make, and model of each vehicle?
Please tell me for each vehicle whether the vehicle is used primarily for either business or to transport a disabled person.

	YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	BUSINESS OR DISABLED TRANSPORT
VEHICLE 1	_____ REFUSED 97 DON'T KNOW 98	_____ REFUSED 97 DON'T KNOW 98	_____ REFUSED 97 DON'T KNOW 98	YES..... 1 NO..... 2 REFUSED 7 DON'T KNOW..... 8
VEHICLE 2	_____ REFUSED 97 DON'T KNOW 98	_____ REFUSED 97 DON'T KNOW 98	_____ REFUSED 97 DON'T KNOW 98	YES..... 1 NO..... 2 REFUSED 7 DON'T KNOW..... 8
VEHICLE 3	_____ REFUSED..... 97 DON'T KNOW .. 98	_____ REFUSED 97 DON'T KNOW .. 98	_____ REFUSED 97 DON'T KNOW .. 98	YES 1 NO 2 REFUSED 7 DON'T KNOW .. 8

IF MAKE OR MODEL UNKNOWN, ASK S9a. IF YEAR UNKNOWN, ASK S9b. OTHERWISE SKIP TO S10.

ASK S9a FOR A VEHICLE BEFORE GOING ON TO THE NEXT VEHICLE.

S9a. What is the approximate value of each vehicle owned?

Vehicle 1 \$ _____

Vehicle 2 \$ _____

Vehicle 3 \$ _____

ASK S9b FOR A VEHICLE BEFORE GOING ON TO THE NEXT VEHICLE.

S9b. (Is the vehicle/Are any of the vehicles) less than five years old? PROBE: That would be model year 1995 or earlier.

YES 1
NO..... 2
REFUSED..... 7
DON'T KNOW 8

IF NO HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS ARE AGED, 60+ (SEE S6) READ S10. IF HOUSEHOLD INCLUDES ONE OR MORE MEMBERS AGED 60+ READ S11 INSTEAD.

S10. Last month, did your household assets exceed \$2000? This would include any cash on hand and money in checking and savings accounts, savings certificates, stocks and bonds, individual retirement accounts (IRAs) and Keogh accounts.

- YES (END INTERVIEW).....1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED (TERMINATE)7
- DON'T KNOW (TERMINATE)8

S11. Last month, did your household assets exceed \$3000? This would include any cash on hand and money in checking and savings accounts, savings certificates, stocks and bonds, individual retirement accounts (IRAs) and Keogh accounts.

- YES (END INTERVIEW).....1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED (TERMINATE)7
- DON'T KNOW (TERMINATE)8

END INTERVIEW FOR THOSE NOT ELIGIBLE: (IF ELIGIBLE, CONTINUE WITH S12).

That is all the questions I have for you. On behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture, I want to thank you for participating in this interview.

CONTINUE IF RESPONDENT IS ELIGIBLE:

S12. If someone from your household were to apply for food stamp benefits, who would be the most likely person to go to the office and complete the application? PROBE: would it be you or someone else? NOTE: IF RESPONDENT SAYS MIGHT EQUALLY BE HIM/HER OR SOMEONE ELSE, CODE AS RESPONDENT.

- RESPONDENT1
- SOMEONE ELSE (SKIP TO S14).....2
- REFUSED.....7

S13. I would like to continue with the second portion of this interview. Your participation in the second portion of the interview is very important. It will help the Food Stamp Program officials understand how to better serve eligible families. Anything you tell us will be used for research purposes only and will be kept completely confidential. Your participation will not affect any benefits you are receiving now or at any time in the future. None of the information you provide will be given to the local food stamp office. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

- CONTINUE (SKIP TO SECTION II).....1
- SCHEDULE CALLBACK2
- REFUSED (TERMINATE)7

S14. Can I speak to that person?

- YES - ANSWERS PHONE (GO TO S15).....1
- NOT AVAILABLE.....2
- REFUSED (TERMINATE)7
- DON'T KNOW (SCHEDULE CALLBACK)8

S14a. I would like to complete the interview with this person. When is a good time to call back and who should I ask for? (SCHEDULE CALLBACK)

S15. Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling from Abt Associates in Amherst, Massachusetts on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture. We are conducting a nationwide study about Food Stamp Program participation. The purpose of the study is to learn about people's knowledge of the Food Stamp Program and any experiences they may have had with it. Also, why some eligible people do not participate. Your participation in the study is very important, even though you do not get food stamps.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is ____-____. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 30 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

II. INTERVIEW FOR ELIGIBLE NON-PARTICIPANTS

A. Knowledge of Food Stamp Program and Reasons for Nonparticipation

First, I'd like to ask you some questions about your experiences with food stamps, cash assistance, or other benefit programs.

A1. Have you or anyone in your household ever received (BENEFIT)?

IF YES TO A1, ASK A1a AND A1b:

A1a. How long ago did you last receive (BENEFIT)?

A1b. How much did you receive each month from (BENEFIT)?

IF NO TO A1, ASK A1c.

A1c. Have you or anyone in your household ever applied for (BENEFIT)?

BENEFIT	A1. RECEIVED?				A1a. LAST RECEIPT	A1b. AMOUNT RECEIVED	A1c. APPLIED?			
	YES	NO	RF	DK			YES	NO	RF	DK
Food stamps	1	2	7	8	Still receiving..... 1 Within the last year 2 1-4 years ago 3 More than 4 years ago.. 4 DK..... 8	\$ _____ DK8	1	2	7	8
Welfare or cash assistance	1	2	7	8	Still receiving..... 1 Within the last year 2 1-4 years ago 3 More than 4 years ago.. 4 DK..... 8	\$ _____ DK8	1	2	7	8
Medical Assistance	1	2	7	8	Still receiving..... 1 Within the last year 2 1-4 years ago 3 More than 4 years ago.. 4 DK..... 8	\$ _____ DK8	1	2	7	8
WIC	1	2	7	8	Still receiving..... 1 Within the last year 2 1-4 years ago 3 More than 4 years ago.. 4 DK..... 8	\$ _____ DK8	1	2	7	8

A1d. IF APPLIED FOR FOOD STAMPS AND WAS NOT APPROVED: When was the last time you applied for food stamps?

_____ (SKIP TO A3)

YEAR
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

A1e. Was it more than 4 years ago?

YES1
 NO.....2
 REFUSED.....7
 DON'T KNOW8

IF A1 = YES OR A1c = YES FOR FOOD STAMPS, SKIP TO A3.

A2. Had you heard of food stamps or the Food Stamp Program before today's interview?

YES1
 NO (SKIP TO SECTION B).....2
 REFUSED (SKIP TO A5).....7
 DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO A5)8

A3. As far as you know, did your family ever receive food stamp benefits when you were a child?

YES1
 NO.....2
 REFUSED.....7
 DON'T KNOW8

A4. As far as you know, do any of your relatives, friends, neighbors, or co-workers currently receive food stamp benefits?

YES1
 NO.....2
 REFUSED.....7
 DON'T KNOW8

A5. Do you know where you would have to go to apply for food stamps or other assistance?

YES1
 NO.....2
 REFUSED.....7
 DON'T KNOW8

A6. Did you or someone else in your household contact the local welfare office to inquire about food stamps or welfare benefits within the last six months, that is, any time since (MONTH)?

YES (SKIP TO A6a)1
 NO.....2
 REFUSED.....7
 DON'T KNOW8

A6y. Did you or someone else in your household contact the local welfare office in the last twelve months, that is, any time since (MONTH)?

YES1
 NO (SKIP TO A7).....2
 REFUSED (SKIP TO A7).....7
 DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO A7).....8

A6a. Did you apply for food stamp benefits at the time you contacted the welfare office?

YES1
 NO (DEFINED AS NEAR APPLICANT)2
 REFUSED.....7
 DON'T KNOW8

A7. Do you think you may be eligible to receive food stamp benefits?

YES (SKIP TO A9)1
 NO.....2
 REFUSED (SKIP TO A9).....7
 DON'T KNOW8

A8. Why do you think you (may not be eligible/are unsure if you are eligible) for food stamps? Is it because?

	YES	NO	REF	DK
a. You have a job and think you are not eligible.	1	2	7	8
b. You earn too much money to be eligible.	1	2	7	8
c. You get other government benefits and are not eligible.	1	2	7	8
d. You have too much in savings to be eligible.	1	2	7	8
e. Your car is worth too much to be eligible.	1	2	7	8
f. You received a lump sum payment and think you are not eligible.	1	2	7	8
g. You reached the time limit on cash assistance.	1	2	7	8
h. You think you are not eligible because of your citizenship status.	1	2	7	8
i. A worker at the food stamp office told you that you were probably not eligible.	1	2	7	8
j. Someone else told you that you were not eligible.	1	2	7	8
k. You applied previously and were told you were not eligible.	1	2	7	8
l. Is there some other reason? (SPECIFY: _____)	1	2	7	8

IF "YES" TO ITEM i OR j, ASK A8a.

A8a. You said a worker or someone else told you that you were not eligible for food stamp. Was this within the...

- Last month1
- Last six months.....2
- Last year.....3
- More than one year ago4
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

A9. If you found out you were eligible for food stamp benefits, would you apply?

- YES (SKIP TO SECTION B)1
- NO (SKIP TO A10).....2
- REFUSED (SKIP TO A10).....7
- DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO A10).....8

A10. If you were to apply for food stamps, how much per month do you think you are eligible to receive in benefits? PROBE: Your best guess is fine.

- \$10 or less1
- Between \$11 and \$252
- Between \$26 and \$503
- Between \$51 and \$1004
- Between \$101 and \$1505
- Between \$151 and \$2006
- Between \$201 and \$3007
- Over \$3008
- DON'T KNOW 98

A11. Why (haven't you applied/wouldn't you apply) for food stamp benefits? I am going to read you a list of reasons people have provided for deciding not to apply for food stamps. Please listen to each statement and tell me whether it is a reason you (decided not to/would not) apply for food stamp benefits.

	YES	NO	RF	DK
a. You do not know how to apply.	1	2	7	8
b. The benefits are too small.	1	2	7	8
c. You are not eligible for cash assistance so it is not worth the effort.	1	2	7	8
d. You can get by on your own without food stamp benefits.	1	2	7	8
e. You do not like to rely on government assistance.	1	2	7	8
f. You do not want to be seen shopping with food stamps.	1	2	7	8
g. You do not want people to know you need financial assistance.	1	2	7	8

	YES	NO	RF	DK
h. You do not want to go to the welfare office.	1	2	7	8
i. You would have to answer questions that are too personal.	1	2	7	8
j. The application process requires too much paperwork.	1	2	7	8
k. It would require too much time away from work.	1	2	7	8
l. It would require too much time away from home and child care or elder care responsibilities.	1	2	7	8
m. It is too difficult to get to the food stamp office.	1	2	7	8
n. You had a previous bad experience with the Food Stamp Program	1	2	7	8
o. You had a previous bad experience with another government program	1	2	7	8
p. The work requirements are too difficult.	1	2	7	8
q. The requirements to participate in the program are too difficult.	1	2	7	8

A12. ASK ONLY IF R IS NEAR APPLICANT (A6a = 2):

	YES	NO	RF	DK
a. Your situation changed and you no longer needed food stamps.	1	2	7	8
b. A family emergency occurred which prevented you from completing the application process.	1	2	7	8
c. The application form was too difficult for you to complete.	1	2	7	8
d. You never heard from the food stamp office to tell you what to do.	1	2	7	8
e. You found out it would take a long time before you could receive any food stamps.	1	2	7	8
f. You had to wait too long when you visited the food stamp office	1	2	7	8
g. The other adults in your household would not cooperate with the application process.	1	2	7	8
h. You did not want the welfare office to contact your landlord or employer.	1	2	7	8

A13. Do you think there is a limit on the amount of time eligible households can receive food stamp benefits?

YES1
NO (SKIP TO A14).....2
REFUSED (SKIP TO A14).....7

DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO A14).....8

A13a. How many years do you think eligible households can receive food stamp benefits?

_____ YEARS

AS LONG AS THEY NEED THEM..... 96

REFUSED..... 97

DON'T KNOW 98

A14. What about TANF (INSERT NAME OF STATE PROGRAM) or welfare benefits? Do you think there is a limit on the amount of time eligible households can receive benefits?

YES1

NO (SKIP TO A15).....2

REFUSED (SKIP TO A15).....7

DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO A15).....8

A14a. How many years do you think eligible households can receive benefits?

_____ YEARS

AS LONG AS THEY NEED THEM..... 96

REFUSED..... 97

DON'T KNOW 98

A15. Have you seen or heard about the Food Stamp Program in any of the following places? Have you...

	YES	NO	REF	DK
Read any articles about the Program in the newspaper?.....	1	2	7	8
Hear any announcements or advertisements on the radio or TV?..	1	2	7	8
Seen any posters, flyers, or brochures?	1	2	7	8
Seen any billboards or advertisements on buses, taxis, or trains?	1	2	7	8
Heard any presentations by community groups?	1	2	7	8
Received any mail or telephone calls about food stamps?.....	1	2	7	8
Any thing else (SPECIFY: _____)?	1	2	7	8

A16. How much do you know about what you would have to do in order to get food stamp benefits? Would you say you ...

Are well informed about the process1

Have some idea about the process2

Do not have any idea what is involved3

REFUSED.....7

DON'T KNOW8

B. Household Composition/Characteristics

My next several questions are about the characteristics of your household. Your answers to these questions will tell me which questions I need to ask. Remember, all the information you tell me is for research purposes only and will remain confidential. Please tell me about your household situation.

B1. How many household members are. . . (MAKE SURE TOTAL MATCHES S4)

Under five years old? _____
Five to 17 years old?..... _____
18-59 years of age?..... _____
60 years of age or older?..... _____
TOTAL..... _____

B2. Is English the primary language spoken in your household?

YES (SKIP TO Q. B4)1
NO.....2

B3. What language do you and your family most often speak at home?

SPANISH.....1
CHINESE.....2
PORTUGUESE.....3
FRENCH.....4
ARABIC.....5
ITALIAN.....6
VIETNAMESE.....7
LAOTIAN.....8
CAMBODIAN.....9
HMONG.....10
OTHER (SPECIFY) _____.....11

B4. What is your date of birth?

_____/_____/_____
MONTH DAY YEAR

DON'T KNOW8

NO SECTION C.

D. Time/Cost of Application

My next several questions are about how much time it would take you and how much it would cost you to go to the food stamp office to find out about or apply for food stamps.

IF DON'T KNOW WHERE FOOD STAMP OFFICE IS LOCATED (A5 = NO), THEN SKIP TO D5.

D1. Approximately how many miles is it from your house to the food stamp office?

- _____ MILES
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

D1a. Approximately how much time would it take you to get to the food stamp office?

- _____ TOTAL HOURS
- OR
- _____ TOTAL MINUTES
- REFUSED..... 97
- DON'T KNOW 98

D2. If you were going to the food stamp office, how would you get there? (READ ITEM IF NECESSARY)

- Drive your own car1
- Take a bus or other public transportation (SKIP TO D3).....2
- Take a taxicab.....3
- Have someone drive you.....4
- Borrow a car.....5
- Walk.....6
- OTHER (SPECIFY) _____7

D2a. Is public transportation available to the food stamp office?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

D3. How convenient is the office location for you? Do you consider the location ...

- Very convenient (SKIP TO D5)1
- Somewhat convenient (SKIP TO D5)2
- Somewhat inconvenient3
- Very inconvenient4
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

D4. What, if anything, is wrong with the location of the office? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

- It is too far from home1
- It is in a congested area with lots of traffic2
- It is difficult to find parking3
- It is in an unsafe neighborhood.....4
- It is not easily accessible by public transportation.....5
- It costs too much to get there.....6
- The building is depressing7
- OTHER (SPECIFY) _____ 96
- REFUSED..... 97
- DON'T KNOW 98

D5. How many trips do you **think** you'd have to make to the food stamp office before you received food stamps or other assistance or were denied benefits?

- _____ NUMBER OF TRIPS
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

D6. Counting **all** the visits you think you would have to make to the food stamp office to apply for or see about food stamps or other assistance, how much time do you think you would have to spend? Count time traveling there and back as well as time spent waiting, filling out paperwork, meeting with program staff, etc.

- _____ total hours
- OR
- _____ total minutes
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

D7. Would you have to miss any work to apply for food stamps or other assistance?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

D8. Would you need child care or elder care when you went to apply for food stamps or other assistance?

- YES1
- NO (GO TO SECTION E).....2
- REFUSED (GO TO SECTION E).....7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO SECTION E)8

D8a. How easy would it be for you to arrange for child care or elder care?

Very easy.....	1
Somewhat easy.....	2
Somewhat difficult.....	3
Very difficult.....	4
REFUSED.....	7
DON'T KNOW	8

D8b. Would you need to pay for the care?

YES	1
NO.....	2
REFUSED.....	7
DON'T KNOW	8

E. Stigma

IF R HAS RECEIVED FOOD STAMPS (A1 = YES), ASK QUESTIONS E1 THROUGH E6.
OTHERWISE ASK QUESTIONS E7 THROUGH E10.

E1. My next questions are about how people feel about using food stamps. Have you ever done anything to hide that you got food stamps?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

E2. Have you ever avoided telling people you got food stamps?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

E3. Did you ever go out of your way to shop at a store where no one knew you?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

E4. Have you ever been treated disrespectfully when using food stamps in a store?

- YES1
- NO (SKIP TO E5)2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

E5. Were you ever treated disrespectfully when you told people that you received food stamps?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

E6. Have you ever given your food stamps to someone else because you were embarrassed to use them?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

SKIP TO SECTION F.

E7. The next questions are about how you might feel if you received food stamp benefits. Please answer

“yes” or “no”. If I got food stamps, I might go out of my way so people would not find out.”

YES1
NO.....2
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

E8. “I might not shop in certain stores because I don't want people there to know I use food stamps.”

YES1
NO.....2
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

E9. “People in stores would treat me disrespectfully when I use food stamps.”

YES1
NO.....2
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

E10. “People would treat me disrespectfully if they found out that I got food stamps.”

YES1
NO.....2
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

F. Prior Experience and Satisfaction with Food Stamp Office

IF R IS NEAR APPLICANT, A6 = 1 AND A6a = 2: My next set of questions are about your experiences at the Food Stamp or welfare office the last time you contacted the office to inquire about benefits. GO TO F1.

IF R RECEIVED FOOD STAMPS WITHIN THE LAST FOUR YEARS (A1 = YES AND A1a = 2 OR 3), OR R APPLIED FOR FOOD STAMPS WITHIN THE LAST 4 YEARS, A1d = 1996 OR AFTER, OR A1e = 2: My next set of questions are about your experiences at the Food Stamp or welfare office the last time you contacted the food stamp office. (SKIP TO F13.)

IF R NEVER APPLIED FOR FOOD STAMPS (A1c = NO) OR APPLIED MORE THAN 4 YEARS AGO (A1d LT 9/96 OR A1e = A, 7, OR 8), SKIP TO SECTION G.

F1. When you last contacted the food stamp or welfare office, did you know which specific programs you were interested in?

- YES1
- NO (SKIP TO F2)2
- SOME IDEA.....3
- REFUSED (SKIP TO F2)7
- DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO F2).....8

F1a. Which programs were you interested in?

PROGRAM:	YES	NO	RF	DK
Food Stamps	1	2	7	8
TANF (INSERT STATE NAME)	1	2	7	8
Medicaid	1	2	7	8
SCHIP (INSERT STATE NAME)	1	2	7	8
SSI	1	2	7	8
General Assistance (INSERT STATE NAME)	1	2	7	8
OTHER (SPECIFY: _____)	1	2	7	8

F2. When you last contacted the food stamp or welfare office, did you apply for (PROGRAM NAME FROM GRID)? (IF YES, ASK F2a.)

F2a. Were you approved for (PROGRAM NAME FROM GRID) when you last applied?

PROGRAM	F2. APPLIED?				F2a. APPROVED?			
	YES	NO	RF	DK	YES	NO	RF	DK
TANF (INSERT NAME OF STATE PROGRAM)	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
Medicaid	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
SCHIP (INSERT STATE NAME)	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
SSI	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
General Assistance (INSERT STATE NAME)	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
OTHER (SPECIFY) _____	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8

F3. Did you pick up or did they mail you a food stamp application?

YES (SKIP TO F5).....1
NO.....2

F4. What was the main reason you were not provided with a food stamp application? Was it because... (READ LIST. CIRCLE ONE.)

You did not want to apply.....1
You did not ask for an application.....2
No one suggested that you complete one, so you didn't think you'd be eligible3
You could not wait for an appointment4
The caseworker said you probably wouldn't be eligible5
DON'T KNOW 8

F5. How convenient for you were the hours the office was open? Would you say they were ...

Very convenient (SKIP TO F7).....1
Somewhat convenient (SKIP TO F7).....2
Somewhat inconvenient3
Very inconvenient4
REFUSED (SKIP TO F7)7
DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO F7)8

F6. What was the problem with the office hours at the Food Stamp Office? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY)

- It is open only during normal business hours1
- You would have to take time off from work to get there.....2
- It is difficult to schedule meetings with a caseworker at convenient times3
- It is not open evenings or weekends4
- There are few workers available at lunchtime when I could get there.....5
- Other problems (SPECIFY) _____6
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW 8

F7. When you last contacted the food stamp office, how satisfied were you with the services provided by the receptionist or telephone operator in letting you know about what to do next? Would you say...

- Very satisfied1
- Somewhat satisfied2
- Somewhat dissatisfied3
- Very dissatisfied4
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

F8. Did you speak with a caseworker?

- YES1
- NO (GO TO F9)2
- REFUSED (GO TO F9).....7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO F9).....8

F8a. How long did you wait to speak with a welfare caseworker or food stamp caseworker about your case?

_____ minutes

F9. Were you informed about the requirements for applying and participating in the Food Stamp Program?

- YES1
- NO (SKIP TO F10)2
- REFUSED (SKIP TO F10)7
- DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO F10).....8

F9a. How were you informed? (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY. READ LIST IF NECESSARY.)

- CASEWORKER TOLD ME ABOUT THEM1
- CASEWORKER OR OTHER OFFICE STAFF GAVE YOU WRITTEN MATERIALS LIKE PAMPHLETS OR BROCHURES.....2
- PICKED UP WRITTEN MATERIALS YOURSELF.....3
- RECEIVED MATERIALS IN THE MAIL AFTER YOUR VISIT.....4
- ATTENDED A GROUP MEETING WHERE BENEFITS AND GUIDELINES WERE EXPLAINED.....5
- WATCHED A VIDEO ON BENEFITS AND GUIDELINES.....6
- TOLD TO COME IN TO OFFICE.....7
- REFUSED..... 97
- DON'T KNOW 98

F10. After meeting or talking with the worker, did you feel that you really understood what you'd need to do to get food stamps, were you somewhat unsure, or had you no idea at all of what was required of you?

- Really understood1
- Somewhat unsure.....2
- No idea at all.....3

F11. In general, do you feel that the Food Stamp Program requirements are reasonable or unreasonable?

- REASONABLE.....1
- UNREASONABLE.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

F12. Overall, how successful was your contact with the office? Did you...

- Accomplish everything you expected to during that visit or telephone call, or did you (GO TO F13)1
- Accomplish some, but not all things that you expected to accomplish?2
- Or did you not accomplish anything3
- REFUSED (GO TO F13)7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO F13).....8

F12a. Can you tell me what you were not able to do during this contact? (CODE ALL THAT APPLY)

- FIND OUT IF ELIGIBLE1
- FIND OUT AMOUNT OF BENEFIT2
- GET LIST OF ALL REQUIREMENTS.....3
- COMPLETE AN APPLICATION.....4
- OTHER (SPECIFY) _____5
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

F13. Now, please tell me your opinions about the caseworker assigned to you at the food stamp office. As I read each statement, please tell me if you agree or disagree. FOR EACH ANSWER TO F13, ASK F13a.

F13a. Do you strongly (agree/disagree) or somewhat (agree/disagree)?

	F13. AGREE/DISAGREE				F13a. STRONGLY/SOMEWHAT			
	YES	NO	RF	DK	STRONGLY	SOMEWHAT	RF	DK
a. The kinds of services I received were suitable because of my needs	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
b. I agreed with my caseworker's decisions.	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
c. Overall, my caseworker kept me well informed.	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
d. I felt that my caseworker was doing his or her part to help solve my problems.	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
e. My caseworker was knowledgeable about food stamp benefits and procedures.	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
f. My caseworker treats clients respectfully.	1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8

F14. Compared to other public offices with which you have had contact, how would you rate the treatment you received at the food stamp office? Would you say you were treated better, the same, or worse than you were treated at other places such as the Division of Motor Vehicles, voter registration, WIC, the post office, or the unemployment office?

- BETTER1
- THE SAME2
- WORSE3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

G. Housing/Community

My next questions are about your housing situation.

G1. What best describes your living arrangement? Do you:

- Own or are you buying your own home (SKIP TO G4)1
- Rent your home or apartment2
- Live with family or friends and *not* pay rent.....3
- Live with family or friends and pay *part* of the rent4
- Live in a homeless shelter or shelter for domestic violence (SKIP TO G6)5
- Live on the street, or (SKIP TO G6)6
- Live in some other arrangement? (SPECIFY) _____7

G2. Do you live in public housing?

- YES (SKIP TO G4)1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

G3. Do you pay less rent because the government pays for part of it through a Section 8 housing subsidy?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

G4. Last month, what did your household spend on housing? (Please include rent or mortgage, and if applicable, home insurance, property taxes and water usage).

PROMPT: Your best estimate is fine.

- \$ _____ .00
- REFUSED..... 97
- DON'T KNOW 98

G5. Did that amount include any utilities, such as gas, heat or air conditioning, electricity, and water?

- YES (GO TO G7).....1
- SOME, BUT NOT ALL (ASK G5A).....2
- NO (ASK G5A).....3
- REFUSED (GO TO G7)7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO G7).....8

G5a. How much did your household pay for utilities last month? Please include all utilities such as gas, heat or air conditioning, electricity, and water that are not included in your housing costs. (PROMPT: Your best estimate is fine.)

- \$ _____ Total utilities (GO TO G7)
- REFUSED (GO TO G7)7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO G7).....8

G6. What length of time have you been living in a shelter or on the street?

_____ days
 _____ weeks
 _____ months
 _____ years
 REFUSED..... 97
 DON'T KNOW 98

G7. In the past 12 months, since (CURRENT MONTH, 1999), have you (or your children) received any of the following types of help from community organizations, neighborhood centers or religious organizations, other than friends or family?

	YES	NO	RF	DK
Shelter from an emergency shelter	1	2	7	8
Clothing or clothing vouchers	1	2	7	8
Money	1	2	7	8
Child care or help paying for child care	1	2	7	8
Transportation or help paying for transportation	1	2	7	8
Free medical services	1	2	7	8
Help paying your utilities, like electricity, gas or water	1	2	7	8
Help paying your phone bill or enabling you to use a telephone	1	2	7	8
Help paying for your rent	1	2	7	8
Legal aid or help paying for legal aid	1	2	7	8
Any other kind of help? (SPECIFY) _____	1	2	7	8

G8. In the past 12 months, since (CURRENT MONTH, 1999), did you or any other adults in your household ever get emergency food from a...

	YES	NO	RF	DK
Church	1	2	7	8
Food pantry	1	2	7	8
Food bank	1	2	7	8

IF “YES” TO ANY IN G8, ASK G9. OTHERWISE SKIP TO G10.

G9. How often did this happen — almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

- Almost every month.....1
- Some months but not every month.....2
- Only 1 or 2 months3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

G10. In the past 12 months, since (CURRENT MONTH, 1999), did you or other members of your household ever eat any meals at a soup kitchen?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

H. Employment Status

Many working families still qualify for food stamp benefits. My next several questions are about your job status last month. Again, I would like to remind you that your answers will remain strictly confidential.

H1. Last month, were you earning money from a job? Include any self-employment.

YES1
NO (SKIP TO H5).....2

H2. Last month, how many hours did you usually work per week? Include all jobs.

_____ HOURS
REFUSED..... 97
DON'T KNOW 98

H3. OMITTED

H4. How much money did you earn per hour, week or month from your job(s) before taxes and any other deductions?

\$ _____ per hour
OR
\$ _____ per week
OR
\$ _____ per month

IF ONE PERSON IN HOUSEHOLD, SKIP TO SECTION I.

H5. Last month, did anyone else in your household work at a job for pay, not including schoolchildren aged 17 or under?

YES1
NO (SKIP TO SECTION I)2
REFUSED (SKIP TO SECTION I)7
DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO SECTION I).....8

H6. IF YES: How many people in your household, besides yourself, worked at a job for pay last month?

_____ NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WORKED
REFUSED (SKIP TO SECTION I) 97
DON'T KNOW (SKIP TO SECTION I)..... 98

ASK H7a FOLLOWED BY H7b FOR EACH OTHER WORKING HOUSEHOLD MEMBER.

H7a. Last month, how many hours per week did each person usually work?

H7b. Last month, about how much money did this person earn per hour, week or month from their job(s) before taxes and any other deductions?

PERSON 1	PERSON 2	PERSON 3	PERSON 4
_____ HOURS REFUSED..... 97 DON'T KNOW 98	_____ HOURS REFUSED..... 97 DON'T KNOW..... 98	_____ HOURS REFUSED97 DON'T KNOW98	_____ HOURS REFUSED97 DON'T KNOW98
\$ _____ PER HOUR \$ _____ PER WEEK \$ _____ PER MONTH REFUSED97 DON'T KNOW98	\$ _____ PER HOUR \$ _____ PER WEEK \$ _____ PER MONTH REFUSED97 DON'T KNOW98	\$ _____ PER HOUR \$ _____ PER WEEK \$ _____ PER MONTH REFUSED97 DON'T KNOW98	\$ _____ PER HOUR \$ _____ PER WEEK \$ _____ PER MONTH REFUSED97 DON'T KNOW98

I. Income/Sources of Income

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your household income last month. I want to assure you that none of the answers you give me will be discussed with anyone.

Last month, did you or anyone else in your household, including children, receive (INCOME SOURCE)? FOR EACH INCOME SOURCE RECEIVED, ASK a.

a. How much money did you and other household members receive last month from (INCOME SOURCE)?

INCOME SOURCE	RECEIVED?				a. AMOUNT RECEIVED
	YES	NO	RF	DK	
I1. Cash from a cash assistance program like TANF (INSERT NAME OF STATE PROGRAM) or General Assistance (INSERT NAME OF STATE PROGRAM)?	1	2	7	8	\$ _____
I2. Income from child support either directly from your child's other parent or through a government agency?	1	2	7	8	\$ _____
I3. Disability income through Supplemental Security Income--that is, SSI--or from some other source?	1	2	7	8	\$ _____
I4. Regular income from friends or relatives outside the household?	1	2	7	8	\$ _____
I5. Social Security checks from the government or Veteran's benefits?	1	2	7	8	\$ _____
I6. Any other retirement or pension, public or private?	1	2	7	8	\$ _____
I7. Money from any other source? This might include unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, alimony, foster child payments, rent from tenant or boarder and so on.	1	2	7	8	\$ _____

I8. Last month, did you or anyone in your household receive WIC, Women, Infants and Children Program, benefits such as food packages or vouchers for purchasing food?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....3
- DON'T KNOW4

19. SEE B1. IF CHILD/REN OF AGES 5-17 IN HOUSEHOLD, ASK: Last month, did any school-aged child in your household receive free or reduced-price breakfasts or lunches at school?

YES1
NO.....2
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

J. Assets

My next several questions ask about your household assets. Please remember that these questions are for research purposes only and will not be shared with anyone. Your responses to these questions will not affect your eligibility for benefits now or in the future.

J1. Do you have a checking account?

- YES1
- NO (GO TO J3).....2
- REFUSED (GO TO J3).....7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO J3)8

J2. How much money, on average, do you estimate is in your checking account?

- \$ _____
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

J3. Do you have a savings account?

- YES1
- NO (GO TO J5).....2
- REFUSED (GO TO J5).....7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO J5)8

J4. How much money do you have in savings accounts?

- \$ _____
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

J5. Do you have any other bank accounts or financial investments?

- YES1
- NO (GO TO SECTION K)2
- REFUSED (GO TO SECTION K)7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO SECTION K)8

J6. What is the approximate value **in total** of these other bank account and financial investments? Please include amounts in individual retirement accounts (IRAs), stocks, mutual funds, certificates of deposit (CDs), money market accounts, 401k accounts and elsewhere.

- \$ _____
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K. Food Security

My next set of questions are about the food eaten in your household. Over the past several years, USDA has been developing a set of questions to tell us about the food needs of adults and children. You may find some of these questions sensitive.

K1. Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the last 12 months:

- (I/We) have enough to eat and the kinds of food (I/we) want1
- (I/We) have enough to eat but not always the kinds of food (I/we) want2
- Sometimes (I/we) don't have enough to eat, or3
- Often (I/we) don't have enough to eat4
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW 8

Now I'm going to read you several statements that people have made about their food situation. For these statements, please tell me whether the statement was **often** true, **sometimes** true, or **never** true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months.

K2. The first statement is, "(I/We) worried whether (my/our) food would run out before (I/we) got money to buy more." Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- Often true1
- Sometimes true2
- Never true.....3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K3. "The food that (I/we) bought just didn't last, and (I/we) didn't have money to get more." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- Often true1
- Sometimes true2
- Never true.....3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K4. "(I/we) couldn't afford to eat balanced meals." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- Often true1
- Sometimes true2
- Never true.....3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

IF CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN THE HOUSEHOLD (SEE B1), ASK QUESTIONS K5 -K7. IF NO CHILDREN SKIP TO K8 :

K5. (I/we) relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed (my/our) child(ren) because (I was/we were) running out of money to buy food.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- Often true1
- Sometimes true2
- Never true.....3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K6. “(I/We) couldn’t feed (my/our) child(ren) a balanced meal, because (I/we) couldn’t afford that.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- Often true1
- Sometimes true2
- Never true.....3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

IF K2, K3 AND K4 EQUAL “NEVER” (3), AND K5 AND K6 EQUAL “NEVER” (3) OR BLANK, THEN SKIP TO SECTION L. OTHERWISE CONTINUE.

K7. My/Our child was/The children were not eating enough because (I/we) just couldn’t afford enough food.” Was that often, sometimes, or never true for (you/your household) in the last 12 months?

- Often true1
- Sometimes true2
- Never true.....3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K8. In the last 12 months, did you (you/you or other adults in your household) ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?

- YES (ASK K8a)1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K8a. How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

- Almost every month.....1
- Some months but not every month2
- Only 1 or 2 months3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K9. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K10. In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K11. In the last 12 months, did you lose weight because you didn't have enough money for food?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

IF NO TO K7, K8, K9, K10, AND K11, SKIP TO SECTION L.

K12. In the last 12 months, did (you/you or other adults in your household) ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

- YES (ASK K12a)1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

K12a. How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

- Almost every month.....1
- Some months but not every month2
- Only 1 or 2 months3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

IF CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN HOUSEHOLD (SEE B1), ASK K13-16, OTHERWISE SKIP TO SECTION L.

The next questions are about the children living in the household who are under 18 years old. You may find some of the following questions sensitive. I want to remind you that all of the information you give will remain confidential and in answering these questions you will help the food stamp program better understand the needs of families and children it seeks to serve.

K13. In the last 12 months, since (NAME OF CURRENT MONTH) last year, did you ever cut the size of (your child's/any of your children's) meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

YES1
NO.....2
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

K14. In the last 12 months did (your child/any of your children) ever skip a meal because there wasn't enough money for food?

YES1
NO (GO TO K15)2
REFUSED (GO TO K15)7
DON'T KNOW (GO TO K15).....8

K14a. How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

Almost every month.....1
Some months but not every month2
Only 1 or 2 months3
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

K15. In the last 12 months, (was your child/were the children) ever hungry but you just couldn't afford more food?

YES1
NO.....2
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

K16. In the last 12 months, did (your child/any of the children) ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

YES1
NO.....2
REFUSED.....7
DON'T KNOW8

L. Demographics

My last few questions are about the characteristics of your household. Remember, all information will remain confidential. Please tell me about your household situation.

L1. Are you...

Married and living with your (husband/wife) (GO TO L3).....	1
Separated or living apart from your (husband/wife)?	2
Divorced,.....	3
Widowed, or.....	4
Never married?.....	5
REFUSED.....	7
DON'T KNOW	8

L2. **IF NOT LIVING WITH SPOUSE:** Are you living with a partner?

YES	1
NO.....	2
REFUSED.....	7
DON'T KNOW	8

L3. **CODE GENDER WITHOUT ASKING. IF UNCLEAR, ASK:** Are you male or female?

MALE	1
FEMALE	2

L4. What was the last grade or year of school you completed?

SOME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (GRADES 1-8).....	1
COMPLETED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	2
SOME HIGH SCHOOL.....	3
COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL OR RECEIVED GED.....	4
TECHNICAL OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL.....	5
SOME COLLEGE.....	6
ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	7
BACHELOR'S DEGREE.....	8
ADVANCED DEGREE.....	9
NO FORMAL SCHOOLING	0
OTHER (SPECIFY: _____).....	96
REFUSED.....	97
DON'T KNOW	98

L5. Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? (READ LIST AND CODE ONE)

Hispanic or Latino	1
Not Hispanic or Latino	2

L6. Which of the following do you consider yourself to be? You may choose more than one. (READ LIST AND CODE ALL RESPONSES)

- White.....1
- Black or African American.....2
- Asian.....3
- American Indian or Alaska Native.....4
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.....5
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW.....8

L7. Were you born in the United States?

- YES (SKIP TO L8).....1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW.....8

L7a. Are you a United States citizen?

- YES.....1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW.....8

L8. SEE B1. IF THERE ARE CHILDREN UNDER 18 IN HOUSEHOLD, ASK: Were **all** the children in your household born in the United States?

- YES (SKIP TO L9).....1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW.....8

L8a. Are the children in your household ... (READ LIST)

- All US citizens.....1
- Are some, but not all US citizens, or are.....2
- None of the children in the household US citizens.....3
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW.....8

L9. Is anyone in your household disabled? By disabled, I mean unable to work or limited in the amount or type of work because of a mental or physical condition.

- YES.....1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW.....8

L10. The next questions are about the telephone numbers in your household. Do you have any other home phone numbers in addition to [FILL VAR: AREA CODE/TELEPHONE NUMBER FROM SAMPLE TELEPHONE NUMBER]? Don't count any cell phone or pager numbers.

- YES1
- NO (GO TO L13).....2
- REFUSED (GO TO L13).....7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO L13)8

L11. Is this second number for home use only, for business use only, or for both home and business use?

- HOME ONLY1
- BUSINESS ONLY (GO TO L13)2
- BOTH HOME AND BUSINESS.....3
- REFUSED (GO TO L13).....7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO L13).....8

L11a. Is this second number used only for computer or fax communication?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED (GO TO L13).....7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO L13).....8

L12. Do you have a third home phone number in addition to the two you have already told me about?

- YES1
- NO (GO TO L13).....2
- REFUSED (GO TO L13).....7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO L13)8

L12a. Is this third number for home use only, for business use only, or for both home and business use?

- HOME ONLY1
- BUSINESS ONLY (GO TO L13)2
- BOTH HOME AND BUSINESS.....3
- REFUSED (GO TO L13).....7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO L13).....8

L12b. Is this third number used only for computer or fax communication?

- YES1
- NO.....2
- REFUSED.....7
- DON'T KNOW8

L13. During the past 12 months, has your household been without telephone service for 1 week or more?

- YES1
- NO (GOT TO CLOSE).....2
- REFUSED (GO TO CLOSE)7
- DON'T KNOW (GO TO CLOSE).....8

L13a. For how long was your household without telephone service in the past 12 months?

_____ NUMBER
(IF ONE WEEK OR LESS, ENTER 0 FOR THE NUMBER)

ENTER PERIOD: _____

- DAY(S).....1
- WEEK(S)2
- MONTH(S).....3
- REFUSED.....7

These are all the questions I have for you. Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Appendix B

Supplemental Tables

Table B.1**Characteristics of Food Stamp-Eligible Nonparticipants and Food Stamp Recipients: 2000 and 1996**

Characteristic of Household Head	Apparently Eligible Nonparticipants		Food Stamp Recipients	
	2000 ^a	1996 ^b	2000 ^c	1996 ^d
Age				
Less than 20	0.4%	2.2%		
20 to 49	55.3	49.1		
50 to 59	13.6	11.2		
60 and over	30.7	37.4		
Gender				
Male	26.4	23.4	22.8	23.0
Female	73.6	76.6	77.2	77.0
Race/Ethnicity				
White (non-Hispanic)	52.8	65.2	47.0	46.1
Black (non-Hispanic)	26.1	16.9	35.1	34.8
Hispanic	11.9	15.0	13.9	15.5
Other (non-Hispanic)	9.2	2.7	4.1	3.6
Primary language				
English	94.2			
Spanish	4.5			
Other	1.3			
Citizenship				
U.S. citizen	94.9		94.7	90.3
Non-citizen	5.1		5.3	9.7
Education				
Less than high school	34.4	36.0		
High school diploma/GED	34.5	44.1		
Some college	28.5	11.4		
Other ^f	2.7	8.4		
Marital status				
Married or living with partner	33.1	45.2		
Divorced/separated	26.7	18.1		
Widowed	17.4	21.3		
Never married	22.8	15.4		
Unweighted N	1220	450	46,963	51,256

a Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation. Excludes households with missing data: age (5.2%); gender (5.9%); ethnicity (10.4%); language (1.3%); citizenship (5.9%); education (6.7%); marital status (6.1%).

b Ponza, et al. (1999), pages 22-23. Excludes households with missing data: ethnicity (1.5%); education (1.4%); marital status (0.8%).

c Cunnyngham (2001), pages 58, 60. Excludes households with nonparticipating household heads, for gender (only) excludes child-only households (5.2%), and excludes households with characteristics not reported: gender (6.1%); ethnicity (6.2%); citizenship (6.2%).

d Cody (1998), pages 55, 56. Excludes for gender (only) child-only households (3.3%), and excludes households with missing data: gender (0.8%); ethnicity (4.7%); citizenship (5.2%).

e In the 2000 survey of eligible non-participants, as required by OMB, respondents were able to report multiple races.

f Includes technical/vocational certificate and other.

Table B.2**Household Characteristics of Food Stamp-Eligible Nonparticipants and Food Stamp Recipients:
2000 and 1996**

	Apparently Eligible Nonparticipants		Food Stamp Recipients	
	2000 ^a	1996 ^b	2000 ^c	1996 ^d
Household Composition				
One-person households	42.5%	31.0%	42.9%	35.7%
Multiple adults without children	24.1	28.6	5.6	6.2
Single adults with children	11.5	6.0	38.9	42.4
Multiple adults with children	21.9	34.4	12.4	15.8
Households with elderly members	37.2	44.2	21.0	16.2
Households with members with disabilities	36.0		27.5	20.2
Households with elderly members or members with disabilities	55.9		45.0	33.8
Households with pre-school-aged children	17.6		28.0	33.7
Household size (mean)	2.3		2.3	2.5
Households headed by noncitizens with citizen children	3.1			
<i>Unweighted N</i>	1,220	450	46,963	57,256

a Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation. Excludes households (2.9%) with missing data.

b Ponza et al. (1999), pages 22-23.

c Cunnyngham (2001), pages 37, 55, 60. Excludes child-only households (5.2%).

d Cody (1998), pages 35, 52, 56. Excludes child-only households (3.3%) and unknown (0.3%).

Table B.3**Employment and Earnings of Food Stamp-Eligible Nonparticipants and Food Stamp Recipients: 2000 and 1996**

	Apparently Eligible Nonparticipants		Food Stamp Recipients	
	2000 ^a	1996 ^b	2000 ^c	1996 ^d
Earnings in previous month	49.8%	52.7%	27.2%	22.5%
Mean household earnings of those with positive earnings	\$1181	na	\$749	\$699
Mean household earnings of all households	\$540	na	\$204	\$158
Unweighted N	1,220	450	46,963	51,256

a Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation. Excludes households (3.2%) with missing data.

b Ponza, et al. (1999), pages 22-23.

c Cunyningham (2001), pages 33, 57.

d Cody (1998), pages 31, 54.

Table B.4**Unearned Income of Food Stamp-Eligible Nonparticipants and Food Stamp Recipients: 2000 and 1996**

Percent Receiving:	Apparently Eligible Nonparticipants		Food Stamp Recipients	
	2000 ^a	1996 ^b	2000 ^c	1996 ^d
Cash assistance ^e	1.1%	2.0%	31.2%	42.9%
Child support	7.6	na	6.6 ^f	4.9 ^f
Supplemental Security Income	23.0	6.8	31.7	24.1
Social security	30.7 ^g	37.2	25.5	19.3
Pension	6.7	na	na	na
Contributions from friends	4.5	na	3.6	4.1
Other unearned income	4.5	na	na	na
Unweighted N	1,220	450	46,963	51,256

a Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation. Excludes households with missing data: cash assistance (3.8%); child support (1.2%); SSI (4.0%); Social Security (4.0%); pension (4.1%); contributions from friends (4.5%); other (4.5%).

b Ponza, et al. (1999), pages 22-23.

c Cunyningham (2001), pages 33, 38.

d Cody (1998), pages 31, 36.

e TANF and General Assistance.

f Child Support Enforcement Payments.

g Includes Veteran's benefits.

Table B.5**Total Household Income of Food Stamp-Eligible Nonparticipants and Food Stamp Recipients:
2000 and 1996**

	Apparently Eligible Nonparticipants			Food Stamp Recipients
	2000 ^a	2000 Restricted Sample ^b	1996 ^c	2000 ^d
Mean monthly household income	\$982	\$777	\$829	\$620
Mean monthly household income as percent of Federal Poverty Level (FPL):				
Under 50% FPL	16.3%	22.4%	16.6%	33.0%
50-100% FPL	29.0	39.8	53.3	33.0
100-130% FPL	27.6	37.8	30.1	10.3
130-200% FPL	27.1	—	—	1.0
Unweighted N	927	716	450	46,963

a Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation. Excludes households with missing or incomplete data.

b Excludes households with income greater than 130% of poverty level as calculated using detailed income questions.

c Ponza, et al. (1999), pages 63.

d Cunyngnam (2001), pages 35, 57.

Table B.6**Assets of Food Stamp-Eligible Nonparticipants in 2000**

Asset	Households Reporting
<i>Vehicles</i>	
None	37.6%
One	44.7
Two or more	17.7
Unweighted N	1219
<i>Financial Accounts</i>	
Checking	59.7
Savings	32.3
Other financial asset	9.5
Mean amount in accounts	\$804
Mean (non-zero) amount in accounts	\$915
Unweighted N	1,078

Source: Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation.

Table B.7

Food Security Status: Food Stamp-Eligible Nonparticipant Households, Food Stamp Recipient Households, and U.S. Population

Food Security Status	Apparently eligible non-participant households		U.S. Total Households	U.S. Households Less than 130 Percent of Poverty Level
	2000 ^a	1996 ^b	1999 ^c	1999 ^c
<i>All households</i>				
Food secure	55.2%	65.8%	89.9%	67.7%
Food insecure without hunger	20.3	20.4	7.1	21.6
Food insecure with hunger	24.5	13.8	3.0	10.7
Unweighted N	1,125	436	NA	NA
<i>Households with children (under 18)</i>				
Food secure	44.2		85.2	59.7
Food insecure without hunger	29.9		11.5	30.0
Food insecure with hunger	25.5			
Unweighted N	511		NA	NA
<i>Households without children (under 18)</i>				
Food secure	60.8	76.0	92.6	73.9
Food insecure without hunger	15.3	12.5	4.6	15.1
Food insecure with hunger	23.8	11.5	2.8	11.0
Unweighted N	614	257	NA	NA

a Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation. Excludes households (6.6%) with missing data.

b Cohen et al. (1999), pages 44, 47, 51.

c Andrews et al. (2000), pages 7, 9.

Table B.8**Emergency Food Support Received by Food Stamp Eligible Nonparticipant Households in 2000**

Source of Aid	Percent Receiving
Churches	9.1%
Food pantry	7.4
Food bank	5.3
Soup kitchen	1.2
Unweighted N	1,174-1,178

Source: Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation.

Table B.9**Community Support Received by Food Stamp Eligible Nonparticipant Households in 2000**

Type of Assistance	Percent Receiving
Medical services	9.4%
Utilities	10.8
Rent	3.4
Transportation	4.4
Telephone	3.3
Child care	2.6
Cash	1.8
Clothing	2.5
Legal aid	1.2
Shelter	0.8
Unweighted N	1,178-1,184

Source: Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation.

Table B.10

Eligible Nonparticipant Households' Awareness of the Food Stamp Program

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Prior food stamp receipt	No prior food stamp receipt	Overall
Ever heard of FSP							
Yes	0.9565 (0.0139)	0.9684 (0.0090)	0.9642 (0.0149)	0.9638 (0.0096)	1.0000 (0.0000)***	0.9241 (0.0157)	0.9639 (0.0079)
No	0.0435 (0.0139)	0.0316 (0.0090)	0.0358 (0.0149)	0.0362 (0.0096)	0.0000 (0.0000)***	0.0759 (0.0157)	0.0361 (0.0079)
Received food stamps as adult							
Yes	0.4224 (0.0323)***	0.5855 (0.0362)	0.6470 (0.0379)***	0.4633 (0.0330)	1.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.5247 (0.0291)
No	0.5718 (0.0325)***	0.4138 (0.0362)	0.3530 (0.0379)***	0.5327 (0.0330)	0.0000 (0.0000)***	0.9944 (0.0044)	0.4726 (0.0291)
Don't know	0.0058 (0.0054)	0.0008 (0.0008)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0040 (0.0031)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0056 (0.0044)	0.0027 (0.0021)
Received food stamps as a child							
Yes	0.0238 (0.0099)***	0.2417 (0.0366)	0.2321 (0.0290)**	0.1246 (0.0327)	0.1942 (0.0319)*	0.1235 (0.0195)	0.1606 (0.0231)
No	0.9500 (0.0169)***	0.7205 (0.0364)	0.7215 (0.0305)***	0.8484 (0.0341)	0.7602 (0.0338)**	0.8566 (0.0198)	0.8060 (0.0236)
Don't know	0.0262 (0.0120)	0.0377 (0.0073)	0.0463 (0.0100)	0.0269 (0.0089)	0.0457 (0.0130)*	0.0199 (0.0054)	0.0334 (0.0073)
Know a food stamp recipient							
Yes	0.1987 (0.0235)***	0.3642 (0.0335)	0.3730 (0.0287)**	0.2673 (0.0329)	0.3645 (0.0321)***	0.2344 (0.0262)	0.3027 (0.0235)
No	0.6312 (0.0336)	0.5681 (0.0364)	0.5427 (0.0301)*	0.6162 (0.0329)	0.5196 (0.0364)***	0.6713 (0.0323)	0.5916 (0.0270)
Don't know	0.1701 (0.0258)***	0.0676 (0.0111)	0.0843 (0.0173)	0.1165 (0.0151)	0.1160 (0.0159)	0.0943 (0.0163)	0.1057 (0.0111)
Know where to apply							
Yes	0.5301 (0.0289)***	0.6935 (0.0272)	0.7660 (0.0300)***	0.5656 (0.0275)	0.8482 (0.0235)***	0.3946 (0.0295)	0.6326 (0.0235)
No	0.4388 (0.0316)***	0.2872 (0.0295)	0.2113 (0.0330)***	0.4102 (0.0281)	0.1357 (0.0221)***	0.5733 (0.0347)	0.3437 (0.0268)
Don't know	0.0311 (0.0126)	0.0193 (0.0084)	0.0227 (0.0134)	0.0242 (0.0084)	0.0160 (0.0072)	0.0321 (0.0129)	0.0237 (0.0069)
Unweighted N	434	786	540	680	673	547	1220

Notes: Table shows proportion with standard error in parentheses.

*** Statistically significant difference at 1 percent level.

** Statistically significant difference at 5 percent level.

* Statistically significant difference at 10 percent level.

Table B.11

Eligible Nonparticipant Households' Perceptions of Food Stamp Program Eligibility

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Prior food stamp receipt	No prior food stamp receipt	Overall
Thoughts on FSP eligibility							
Eligible	0.3977 (0.0392)	0.4775 (0.0341)	0.4476 (0.0335)	0.4482 (0.0394)	0.4863 (0.0354)*	0.4021 (0.0338)	0.4480 (0.0278)
Not eligible	0.3633 (0.0441)	0.3632 (0.0276)	0.3390 (0.0283)	0.3754 (0.0361)	0.3459 (0.0403)	0.3839 (0.0334)	0.3632 (0.0274)
Don't know	0.2391 (0.0279)**	0.1593 (0.0234)	0.2134 (0.0291)	0.1764 (0.0231)	0.1678 (0.0216)	0.2139 (0.0346)	0.1888 (0.0195)
Would apply if found out was eligible							
Yes	0.6398 (0.0375)*	0.7207 (0.0281)	0.7393 (0.0300)*	0.6664 (0.0318)	0.7795 (0.0216)***	0.5849 (0.0387)	0.6908 (0.0252)
No	0.3097 (0.0341)	0.2476 (0.0275)	0.2162 (0.0259)**	0.2979 (0.0307)	0.2016 (0.0220)***	0.3530 (0.0374)	0.2706 (0.0238)
Don't know	0.0504 (0.0152)	0.0317 (0.0079)	0.0445 (0.0130)	0.0357 (0.0090)	0.0190 (0.0049)***	0.0621 (0.0145)	0.0386 (0.0083)
Unweighted N	416	753	523	646	673	496	1169

Notes: Excludes households that never heard of the FSP. Table shows proportion with standard error in parentheses.

*** Statistically significant difference at 1 percent level.

** Statistically significant difference at 5 percent level.

* Statistically significant difference at 10 percent level.

Table B.12

Reasons for Perceived Food Stamp Program Ineligibility

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Prior food stamp receipt	No prior food stamp receipt	Overall
Told they were ineligible							
Yes	0.2819 (0.0430)*	0.4041 (0.0496)	0.4648 (0.0612)**	0.2997 (0.0334)	0.4878 (0.0585)***	0.2176 (0.0324)	0.3547 (0.0361)
No	0.7181 (0.0430)*	0.5959 (0.0496)	0.5352 (0.0612)**	0.7003 (0.0334)	0.5122 (0.0585)***	0.7824 (0.0324)	0.6453 (0.0361)
Previously denied FSP benefits							
Yes	0.1639 (0.0268)**	0.2825 (0.0389)	0.3712 (0.0506)***	0.1663 (0.0258)	0.3515 (0.0496)***	0.1140 (0.0212)	0.2345 (0.0284)
No	0.8361 (0.0268)**	0.7175 (0.0389)	0.6288 (0.0506)***	0.8337 (0.0258)	0.6485 (0.0496)***	0.8860 (0.0212)	0.7655 (0.0284)
Told ineligible or previously denied							
Yes	0.3465 (0.0394)	0.4392 (0.0484)	0.5395 (0.0561)***	0.3329 (0.0319)	0.5645 (0.0534)***	0.2340 (0.0336)	0.4017 (0.0337)
No	0.6535 (0.0394)	0.5608 (0.0484)	0.4605 (0.0561)***	0.6671 (0.0319)	0.4355 (0.0534)***	0.7660 (0.0336)	0.5983 (0.0337)
Doubts due to earnings							
Yes	0.4560 (0.0479)**	0.6116 (0.0413)	0.6639 (0.0307)***	0.4911 (0.0386)	0.6051 (0.0381)*	0.4907 (0.0482)	0.5487 (0.0307)
No	0.5440 (0.0479)**	0.3884 (0.0413)	0.3361 (0.0307)***	0.5089 (0.0386)	0.3949 (0.0381)*	0.5093 (0.0482)	0.4513 (0.0307)
Doubts due to government benefits							
Yes	0.2126 (0.0443)	0.1767 (0.0340)	0.1340 (0.0283)*	0.2198 (0.0337)	0.2158 (0.0384)	0.1658 (0.0330)	0.1912 (0.0269)
No	0.7874 (0.0443)	0.8233 (0.0340)	0.8660 (0.0283)*	0.7802 (0.0337)	0.7842 (0.0384)	0.8342 (0.0330)	0.8088 (0.0269)
Doubts due to value of car							
Yes	0.1339 (0.0394)	0.1608 (0.0341)	0.1941 (0.0391)	0.1279 (0.0323)	0.1599 (0.0334)	0.1397 (0.0347)	0.1499 (0.0305)
No	0.8661 (0.0394)	0.8392 (0.0341)	0.8059 (0.0391)	0.8721 (0.0323)	0.8401 (0.0334)	0.8603 (0.0347)	0.8501 (0.0305)

Table B.12

Reasons for Perceived Food Stamp Program Ineligibility

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Prior food stamp receipt	No prior food stamp receipt	Overall
Doubts due to savings							
Yes	0.1764 (0.0530)*	0.0798 (0.0205)	0.0841 (0.0259)	0.1362 (0.0348)	0.0416 (0.0172)***	0.1984 (0.0422)	0.1188 (0.0262)
No	0.8236 (0.0530)*	0.9202 (0.0205)	0.9159 (0.0259)	0.8638 (0.0348)	0.9584 (0.0172)***	0.8016 (0.0422)	0.8812 (0.0262)
Doubts due to lump sum payment							
Yes	0.0678 (0.0207)	0.0601 (0.0199)	0.0592 (0.0207)	0.0652 (0.0208)	0.0512 (0.0134)	0.0755 (0.0281)	0.0632 (0.0157)
No	0.9322 (0.0207)	0.9399 (0.0199)	0.9408 (0.0207)	0.9348 (0.0208)	0.9488 (0.0134)	0.9245 (0.0281)	0.9368 (0.0157)
Doubts due to citizenship							
Yes	0.0288 (0.0130)**	0.0801 (0.0180)	0.1244 (0.0249)***	0.0268 (0.0087)	0.0632 (0.0181)	0.0554 (0.0119)	0.0594 (0.0109)
No	0.9712 (0.0130)**	0.9199 (0.0180)	0.8756 (0.0249)***	0.9732 (0.0087)	0.9368 (0.0181)	0.9446 (0.0119)	0.9406 (0.0109)
Doubts due to time limits							
Yes	0.0925 (0.0250)	0.0678 (0.0223)	0.0669 (0.0219)	0.0832 (0.0181)	0.0873 (0.0214)	0.0680 (0.0187)	0.0778 (0.0130)
No	0.9075 (0.0250)	0.9322 (0.0223)	0.9331 (0.0219)	0.9168 (0.0181)	0.9127 (0.0214)	0.9320 (0.0187)	0.9222 (0.0130)
Unweighted N	253	401	272	382	351	303	654

Notes: Table shows proportion with standard error in parentheses.

*** Statistically significant difference at 1 percent level.

** Statistically significant difference at 5 percent level.

* Statistically significant difference at 10 percent level.

Table B.13**Detailed Reasons Eligible Nonparticipant Households would not Participate in the Food Stamp Program**

Reason	Proportion
Can get by without food stamps	88.5%
Do not like to rely on government assistance	63.6
Do not want to be seen shopping with food stamps	20.0
Do not want people to know need financial assistance	24.4
Do not want to go to welfare office	30.0
Have to answer personal questions	25.1
Too much paperwork to apply	40.0
Would require too much time away from work	22.1
Would require too much child care/elder care	15.4
Too difficult to get to office	12.9
Work requirements too difficult	7.4
FSP participation requirements too difficult	16.4
Benefits too small	20.7
Not eligible for cash assistance, so not worth it	26.1
Previous bad experience with FSP	21.3
Previous bad experience with other government program	11.6
Don't know how to apply	12.3
Unweighted N	333

Table B.14

Reasons Households Would Not Apply for Food Stamp Benefits

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Prior food stamp receipt	No prior food stamp receipt	Overall
Expected benefits:							
\$50 or less	0.2596 (0.0620)	0.2389 (0.0517)	0.1360 (0.0423)**	0.2918 (0.0500)	0.3259 (0.0720)	0.1980 (0.0469)	0.2478 (0.0391)
\$51-\$100	0.0396 (0.0160)***	0.2329 (0.0532)	0.1675 (0.0527)	0.1430 (0.0343)	0.1476 (0.0547)	0.1514 (0.0344)	0.1499 (0.0312)
\$101-\$200	0.0608 (0.0251)**	0.1656 (0.0431)	0.1662 (0.0374)	0.1027 (0.0298)	0.1542 (0.0412)	0.0993 (0.0299)	0.1207 (0.0216)
Over \$200	0.1091 (0.0458)	0.1247 (0.0301)	0.2492 (0.0603)***	0.0663 (0.0287)	0.1063 (0.0331)	0.1254 (0.0331)	0.1180 (0.0228)
Don't know	0.5308 (0.0627)***	0.2379 (0.0523)	0.2810 (0.0549)	0.3962 (0.0500)	0.2659 (0.0517)**	0.4259 (0.0521)	0.3637 (0.0399)
Desire for personal independence							
Yes	0.9231 (0.0307)	0.9064 (0.0344)	0.8884 (0.0326)	0.9235 (0.0316)	0.8655 (0.0517)	0.9441 (0.0219)	0.9136 (0.0239)
No	0.0769 (0.0307)	0.0936 (0.0344)	0.1116 (0.0326)	0.0765 (0.0316)	0.1345 (0.0517)	0.0559 (0.0219)	0.0864 (0.0239)
Costs of application/participation							
Yes	0.5954 (0.0667)	0.6227 (0.0463)	0.6329 (0.0612)	0.6023 (0.0514)	0.7491 (0.0708)**	0.5233 (0.0539)	0.6110 (0.0420)
No	0.4046 (0.0667)	0.3773 (0.0463)	0.3671 (0.0612)	0.3977 (0.0514)	0.2509 (0.0708)**	0.4767 (0.0539)	0.3890 (0.0420)
Low expected benefits							
Yes	0.4367 (0.0643)	0.3176 (0.0493)	0.2860 (0.0417)*	0.4014 (0.0520)	0.3943 (0.0685)	0.3527 (0.0417)	0.3689 (0.0412)
No	0.5633 (0.0643)	0.6824 (0.0493)	0.7140 (0.0417)*	0.5986 (0.0520)	0.6057 (0.0685)	0.6473 (0.0417)	0.6311 (0.0412)
Stigma							
Yes	0.4412 (0.0603)	0.4478 (0.0617)	0.4985 (0.0728)	0.4239 (0.0537)	0.4065 (0.0718)	0.4693 (0.0577)	0.4449 (0.0497)
No	0.5588 (0.0603)	0.5522 (0.0617)	0.5015 (0.0728)	0.5761 (0.0537)	0.5935 (0.0718)	0.5307 (0.0577)	0.5551 (0.0497)

Table B.14

Reasons Households Would Not Apply for Food Stamp Benefits

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Prior food stamp receipt	No prior food stamp receipt	Overall
Bad Experiences							
Yes	0.1504 (0.0338)**	0.3092 (0.0517)	0.3180 (0.0746)	0.2105 (0.0363)	0.4730 (0.0566)***	0.0934 (0.0351)	0.2408 (0.0310)
No	0.8496 (0.0338)**	0.6908 (0.0517)	0.6820 (0.0746)	0.7895 (0.0363)	0.5270 (0.0566)***	0.9066 (0.0351)	0.7592 (0.0310)
Don't know how to apply							
Yes	0.1059 (0.0351)	0.1373 (0.0437)	0.0910 (0.0390)	0.1367 (0.0434)	0.0316 (0.0211)***	0.1823 (0.0452)	0.1238 (0.0333)
No	0.8941 (0.0351)	0.8627 (0.0437)	0.9090 (0.0390)	0.8633 (0.0434)	0.9684 (0.0211)***	0.8177 (0.0452)	0.8762 (0.0333)
Unweighted N	253	401	272	382	351	303	654

Notes: Table shows proportion with standard error in parentheses.

*** Statistically significant difference at 1 percent level.

** Statistically significant difference at 5 percent level.

* Statistically significant difference at 10 percent level.

Table B.15

Knowledge of Program Requirements Among Those Who Would Not Apply Even if Eligible

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Prior food stamp receipt	No prior food stamp receipt	Overall
Self-assessed knowledge							
Well-informed	0.1267 (0.0332)***	0.3105 (0.0552)	0.2598 (0.0473)	0.2202 (0.0394)	0.4627 (0.0550)***	0.0846 (0.0277)	0.2314 (0.0313)
Some idea	0.2977 (0.0468)**	0.4522 (0.0517)	0.5763 (0.0662)***	0.3109 (0.0459)	0.4389 (0.0588)	0.3520 (0.0510)	0.3857 (0.0315)
No idea	0.5437 (0.0565)***	0.2336 (0.0477)	0.1640 (0.0450)***	0.4469 (0.0571)	0.0892 (0.0281)***	0.5435 (0.0515)	0.3671 (0.0393)
Don't know/Refused	0.0319 (0.0171)*	0.0036 (0.0004)	0.0000 (0.0000)**	0.0220 (0.0106)	0.0093 (0.0041)	0.0199 (0.0120)	0.0158 (0.0075)
FSP time limit knowledge							
Correct	0.3019 (0.0567)	0.2822 (0.0433)	0.2689 (0.0523)	0.2992 (0.0440)	0.3169 (0.0641)	0.2741 (0.0487)	0.2907 (0.0358)
Incorrect	0.3430 (0.0408)***	0.5470 (0.0533)	0.5618 (0.0746)	0.4189 (0.0486)	0.4979 (0.0748)	0.4346 (0.0532)	0.4592 (0.0380)
Don't know/Refused	0.3550 (0.0566)***	0.1708 (0.0368)	0.1693 (0.0476)	0.2819 (0.0537)	0.1853 (0.0445)	0.2913 (0.0516)	0.2501 (0.0371)
TANF time limit knowledge							
Correct	0.3160 (0.0768)**	0.5438 (0.0453)	0.5324 (0.0608)	0.4117 (0.0507)	0.5354 (0.0722)	0.3889 (0.0531)	0.4458 (0.0360)
Incorrect	0.2675 (0.0558)	0.2243 (0.0374)	0.2338 (0.0471)	0.2464 (0.0420)	0.1815 (0.0387)	0.2818 (0.0518)	0.2429 (0.0342)
Don't know	0.4165 (0.0698)**	0.2319 (0.0418)	0.2337 (0.0476)	0.3418 (0.0512)	0.2831 (0.0538)	0.3293 (0.0511)	0.3114 (0.0353)
Unweighted N	128	205	136	197	156	177	333

Notes: Table shows proportion with standard error in parentheses.

***Statistically significant difference at 1 percent level.

**Statistically significant difference at 5 percent level.

*Statistically significant difference at 10 percent level.

Table B.16**Source of Information about the Food Stamp Program: Eligible Nonparticipant Households that would not Apply Even if Eligible**

Source of Information	Percent Reporting
Posters, flyers, brochures	18.3%
Announcements/advertisements on radio and TV	14.8
Newspaper articles	11.6
Mail or telephone calls	11.2
Presentations by community groups	9.0
Billboards or advertisements on buses, taxis, or trains	7.2
Unweighted N	329-333

Table B.17

Perceived Time and Out-of-Pocket Costs of Application

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Prior food stamp receipt	No prior food stamp receipt	Overall
Mode of transportation							
Drive self	0.5007 (0.0406)	0.5548 (0.0385)	0.6784 (0.0366)***	0.4419 (0.0476)	0.5215 (0.0374)	0.5770 (0.0628)	0.5379 (0.0335)
Friend drives	0.1661 (0.0360)	0.1377 (0.0246)	0.1343 (0.0257)	0.1550 (0.0257)	0.1621 (0.0215)	0.1095 (0.0309)	0.1466 (0.0176)
Public transportation	0.1703 (0.0467)	0.1541 (0.0476)	0.0844 (0.0218)**	0.2102 (0.0599)	0.1562 (0.0493)	0.1661 (0.0551)	0.1592 (0.0410)
Other transportation	0.1592 (0.0325)	0.1476 (0.0314)	0.0998 (0.0246)**	0.1865 (0.0293)	0.1547 (0.0308)	0.1431 (0.0426)	0.1513 (0.0236)
Don't know	0.0036 (0.0036)	0.0057 (0.0043)	0.0031 (0.0031)	0.0064 (0.0048)	0.0054 (0.0040)	0.0043 (0.0043)	0.0051 (0.0031)
Convenience of FSP office location							
Convenient	0.7239 (0.0400)*	0.8066 (0.0271)	0.7986 (0.0271)	0.7693 (0.0326)	0.7714 (0.0284)	0.8061 (0.0452)	0.7816 (0.0249)
Inconvenient	0.2761 (0.0400)*	0.1934 (0.0271)	0.2014 (0.0271)	0.2307 (0.0326)	0.2286 (0.0284)	0.1939 (0.0452)	0.2184 (0.0249)
Unweighted N	254	580	432	402	583	251	834
Need to miss work to apply for FSP							
Yes	0.1479 (0.0278)***	0.3965 (0.0384)	0.4803 (0.0458)***	0.2164 (0.0290)	0.3259 (0.0316)	0.2776 (0.0301)	0.3030 (0.0265)
No	0.8521 (0.0278)***	0.6035 (0.0384)	0.5197 (0.0458)***	0.7836 (0.0290)	0.6741 (0.0316)	0.7224 (0.0301)	0.6970 (0.0265)
Need to get child/elder care to apply for FSP							
Yes	0.1061 (0.0199)***	0.2851 (0.0308)	0.2756 (0.0296)***	0.0981 (0.0188)	0.2325 (0.0355)**	0.1385 (0.0212)	0.1873 (0.0190)
No	0.8939 (0.0199)***	0.7149 (0.0308)	0.7244 (0.0296)***	0.9019 (0.0188)	0.7675 (0.0355)**	0.8615 (0.0212)	0.8127 (0.0190)
Unweighted N	422	755	520	657	651	526	1177

Notes: Table shows proportion with standard error in parentheses.

*** Statistically significant difference at 1 percent level.

** Statistically significant difference at 5 percent level.

* Statistically significant difference at 10 percent level.

Table B.18

Perceptions of Stigma

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Overall
Former FSP recipients:					
Acted to hide receipt of food stamps					
Yes	0.0281 (0.0167)**	0.0894 (0.0238)	0.1325 (0.0363)***	0.0273 (0.0117)	0.0710 (0.0173)
No	0.9719 (0.0167)**	0.9106 (0.0238)	0.8675 (0.0363)***	0.9727 (0.0117)	0.9290 (0.0173)
Avoided telling people about receiving food stamps					
Yes	0.1072 (0.0342)**	0.2064 (0.0295)	0.2074 (0.0358)	0.1549 (0.0326)	0.1767 (0.0237)
No	0.8905 (0.0343)**	0.7901 (0.0289)	0.7867 (0.0349)	0.8439 (0.0327)	0.8202 (0.0238)
Don't Know	0.0023 (0.0021)	0.0035 (0.0034)	0.0059 (0.0058)	0.0012 (0.0011)	0.0031 (0.0025)
Went out of way to shop where no one knows them					
Yes	0.0778 (0.0270)	0.1335 (0.0270)	0.1518 (0.0329)	0.0918 (0.0239)	0.1168 (0.0221)
No	0.9222 (0.0270)	0.8665 (0.0270)	0.8482 (0.0329)	0.9082 (0.0239)	0.8832 (0.0221)
Treated disrespectfully when using food stamp in store					
Yes	0.1187 (0.0349)***	0.3270 (0.0315)	0.3166 (0.0325)	0.2276 (0.0562)	0.2646 (0.0317)
No	0.8813 (0.0349)***	0.6543 (0.0344)	0.6723 (0.0357)	0.7579 (0.0595)	0.7223 (0.0340)
Don't Know	0.0000 (0.0000)*	0.0187 (0.0107)	0.0112 (0.0079)	0.0145 (0.0112)	0.0131 (0.0075)
Treated disrespectfully telling people received food stamps					
Yes	0.0425 (0.0159)***	0.1486 (0.0239)	0.1673 (0.0259)**	0.0804 (0.0247)	0.1167 (0.0166)
No	0.9441 (0.0204)***	0.8365 (0.0285)	0.8215 (0.0298)**	0.9028 (0.0281)	0.8688 (0.0199)
Don't Know	0.0135 (0.0129)	0.0149 (0.0074)	0.0112 (0.0079)	0.0168 (0.0097)	0.0145 (0.0065)
Given food stamps to others—too embarrassed to use them					
Yes	0.0000 (0.0000)**	0.0080 (0.0039)	0.0100 (0.0054)	0.0024 (0.0024)	0.0056 (0.0027)
No	1.0000 (0.0000)**	0.9920 (0.0039)	0.9900 (0.0054)	0.9976 (0.0024)	0.9944 (0.0027)
Sample Size	196	468	357	307	664

—Continued

Table B.18

Perceptions of Stigma

	Elderly household members	No elderly household members	Children in household	No children in household	Overall
<i>No Previous FSP Experience:</i>					
Would go out of way to prevent others knowing about food stamp receipt					
Yes	0.2416 (0.0407)	0.2427 (0.0394)	0.1841 (0.0354)*	0.2607 (0.0272)	0.2422 (0.0244)
No	0.7293 (0.0387)	0.7322 (0.0393)	0.7937 (0.0381)*	0.7109 (0.0317)	0.7309 (0.0268)
Don't Know	0.0291 (0.0221)	0.0251 (0.0103)	0.0222 (0.0166)	0.0284 (0.0147)	0.0269 (0.0117)
Would go out of way to shop where no one knows them					
Yes	0.2173 (0.0389)	0.1681 (0.0366)	0.1687 (0.0380)	0.1976 (0.0284)	0.1905 (0.0239)
No	0.7811 (0.0393)	0.8187 (0.0365)	0.8091 (0.0408)	0.7992 (0.0286)	0.8016 (0.0235)
Don't Know	0.0016 (0.0016)	0.0132 (0.0079)	0.0222 (0.0166)	0.0033 (0.0026)	0.0079 (0.0045)
Stores would treat me disrespectfully for using food stamps					
Yes	0.1650 (0.0334)	0.2103 (0.0329)	0.2138 (0.0471)	0.1819 (0.0267)	0.1896 (0.0233)
No	0.6767 (0.0553)	0.7475 (0.0337)	0.7304 (0.0472)	0.7104 (0.0340)	0.7152 (0.0278)
Don't Know	0.1583 (0.0410)***	0.0422 (0.0111)	0.0559 (0.0191)*	0.1077 (0.0247)	0.0951 (0.0194)
People would treat me disrespectfully for receiving food stamp					
Yes	0.1807 (0.0323)	0.1937 (0.0250)	0.1666 (0.0469)	0.1946 (0.0184)	0.1878 (0.0187)
No	0.7010 (0.0528)	0.7786 (0.0258)	0.7854 (0.0482)	0.7297 (0.0296)	0.7432 (0.0264)
Don't Know	0.1183 (0.0384)**	0.0277 (0.0104)	0.0480 (0.0200)	0.0757 (0.0240)	0.0690 (0.0201)
Sample Size	231	302	177	356	534

Notes: Table shows proportion with standard error in parentheses.

*** Statistically significant difference at 1 percent level.

** Statistically significant difference at 5 percent level.

* Statistically significant difference at 10 percent level.

Table B.19**Perceptions of Stigma among Eligible Nonparticipants: 1996 and 2000**

	2000 ^a			1996 ^b		
	Total	Former FSP participants	Never participated	Total	Former FSP participants	Never participated
Avoided/would avoid telling people about receiving food stamps	20.8 %	17.7%	24.2%	27.6%	18.4%	33.4%
Gone/would go out of way to shop where no one knows them	15.3	11.7	19.1	20.8	12.7	26.0
Have been/would be treated disrespectfully using food stamp in stores	22.9	26.5	19.0	23.0	18.7	25.8
Have been/would be treated disrespectfully by people if received food stamps	15.0	11.7	18.8	19.8	12.0	24.7
Have acted to hide food stamp receipt		7.1			12.1	
Have given food stamps away		0.6			0.0	
Stigma index						
0	56.5%	59.6%	52.9%	47.3%	59.5%	39.9%
1	16.9	20.7	12.7	17.8	21.4	15.7
2	9.6	10.8	8.3	11.5	5.8	15.1
3	4.2	3.8	4.6	6.8	5.7	7.5
4	4.8	2.6	7.1	7.5	2.9	10.4
Missing	8.1	2.4	14.4	9.1	4.6	11.5
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.1%
Mean	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.7	1.2
Sample sizes	1198	664	534	450	174	275

a Study of Program Access and Declining Food Stamp Participation.

b Ponza et al. (1999), pp. 68-69.

Table B.20**Near Applicants' Satisfaction with Most Recent Visit to Food Stamp Office**

Satisfaction with services of receptionist/telephone operator

Very satisfied	17.5%
Somewhat satisfied	26.8
Somewhat unsatisfied	23.8
Very dissatisfied	13.9
Don't know	18.0
Total	100.0%

Understanding of food stamp application requirements

Really understood	53.2%
Somewhat unsure	33.4
No idea at all	10.2
Don't know	3.1
Total	100.0%

Reasonableness of food stamp requirements

Reasonable	38.3%
Unreasonable	41.5
Don't know	20.2
Total	100.0%

Overall success of visit to food stamp office

Accomplished all expected	26.6%
Accomplished some things	17.2
Did not accomplish anything	40.2
Don't know	15.9
Total	100.0%

Unweighted N65-66

Table B.21

Satisfaction with Services Provided by Food Stamp Caseworker

Aspect of Performance	Recent and "Near Applicants": 2000						FSP Participants: 1996					
	Agree Strongly	Agree Some-what	Disagree Some-what	Disagree Strongly	Don't Know	Total	Agree Strongly	Agree Some-what	Disagree Some-what	Disagree Strongly	Don't Know	Total
Services suitable to needs	23.0%	32.5%	9.8%	22.9%	11.7%	100.0%	55.1%	31.8%	4.9%	8.2%	0.0%	100.0%
Agreed with caseworker's decisions	19.4	18.2	16.1	35.9	10.4	100.0	52.9	28.4	5.8	12.7	0.2	100.0
Caseworker kept respondent well informed	31.5	21.8	7.3	29.0	10.4	100.0	57.7	21.1	4.3	16.4	0.5	100.0
Caseworker helped to solve respondent's problems	30.4	17.5	13.4	27.1	11.7	100.0	61.0	20.1	5.3	13.6	0.0	100.0
Caseworker knowledgeable about FSP benefits and procedures	46.1	25.6	7.2	6.6	14.5	100.0	67.1	22.5	3.6	3.4	3.4	100.0
Caseworker treats clients respectfully	52.6	13.7	10.0	13.1	10.6	100.0	69.6	18.7	2.5	9.1	0.2	100.0
Unweighted N						100						314