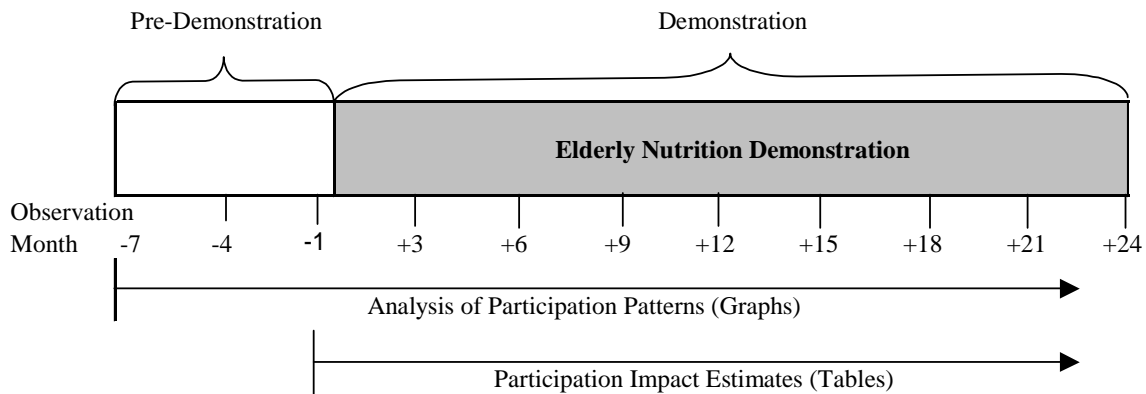


## II. CHANGES IN PARTICIPATION PATTERNS

To identify how elderly participation patterns changed after the demonstrations were implemented, we examined administrative FSP caseload data for each state. Caseload data were collected at three-month intervals starting seven months before each demonstration was implemented (Figure 1). This gives us three observation points prior to the demonstration (the seventh month prior, the fourth month prior and the month immediately prior to implementation). Given the varying start dates of the demonstrations, we have between four to seven observation points after the implementation of the demonstration. Using the data from these observation points, we examine how the number of elderly participants in the demonstration counties changes from before to after the demonstrations are implemented.

FIGURE 1

### OBSERVATION MONTHS USED IN ANALYSIS



The “impact” of each demonstration, however, cannot be computed by simply computing the pre-to-post change in participation. Some of the changes observed may have happened anyway. Instead, we need to compare the actual changes with an estimate of what those changes would have been in the absence of the demonstration. To do this, we examine elderly participation in similar counties in the same state (the comparison sites). For example, if the participation in the demonstration site increases by 10 percent after the demonstration is implemented, but participation in the comparison sites increases by 5 percent in the same period, we may conclude that half of the observed change (5 percentage points) is due to the demonstration.

The comparison sites used in this analysis were selected as those that were most similar to the demonstration site in terms of factors that affect elderly FSP participation. The key factors

examined include historic FSP participation trends, the size of the elderly population, racial composition, and population density of each comparable site in the state.<sup>1</sup>

Table 2 summarizes the results of the initial participation analysis. For each state, we present the rate of growth in elderly FSP participation in the demonstration areas. As an estimate of what the growth would have been without the demonstration, we present the analogously measured rate of growth in the comparison sites. The difference is our initial measure of the impact of the demonstration.

The remainder of this section describes the participation trends in each of the six Elderly Nutrition Demonstration states. For each state, two types of analysis are conducted:

1. ***Analysis of Participation Patterns.*** The analysis of participation patterns (depicted in graphs throughout the report) examines participation trends from before each demonstration starts until the last observation month (see Figure 1).
2. ***Initial Impact Estimates.*** Initial impact estimates (detailed in tables throughout the report) are computed by examining the change in participation from the last month prior to the demonstration to the last observation month (see Figure 1).

The discussion in this section is organized around the three demonstration models designed by USDA: (1) the Simplified Eligibility model, (2) the Application Assistance model, and (3) the Commodity Alternative Benefit model.

## **A. SIMPLIFIED ELIGIBILITY DEMONSTRATION**

The simplified eligibility model is intended to encourage elderly participation by making it easier to apply for food stamps. Under the standard FSP application process, seniors are required to present a substantial amount of documentation to verify FSP eligibility, including medical bills, housing expenses, and proof of income. The simplified eligibility model seeks to reduce the burden of the application process by eliminating some of the documentation requirements. Only one of the six Elderly Nutrition Demonstration states—Florida—adopted the Simplified Eligibility Model.

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<sup>1</sup> For additional details on the selection of comparison sites, see Sing, Merrile, et al., “Design a Plan for Evaluating the Food Stamp Program’s Elderly Nutrition Pilot Demonstration.” Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., January 30, 2002.

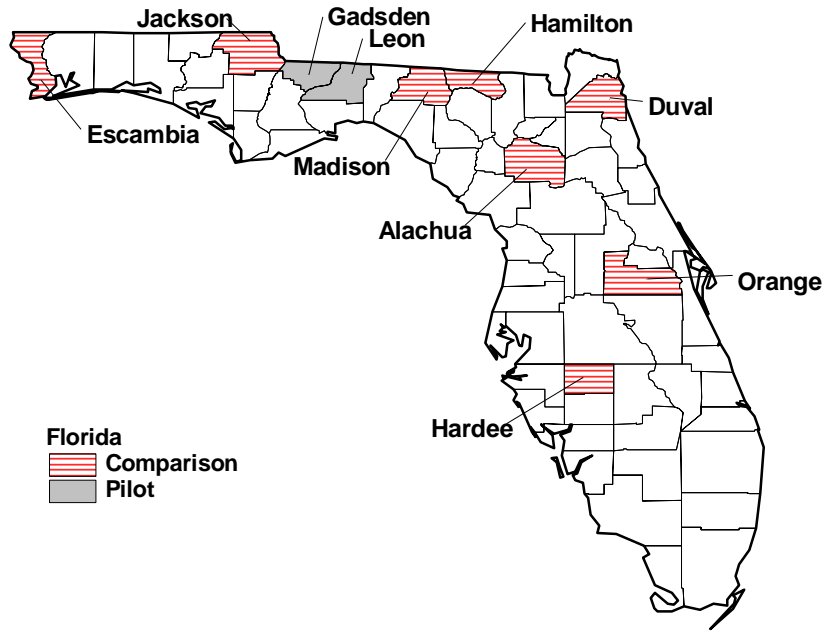
TABLE 2  
PERCENT GROWTH IN ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION IN  
DEMONSTRATION AND COMPARISON SITES<sup>a</sup>

| State                                | Months After Implementation |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                                      | 3                           | 6    | 9    | 12   | 15   | 18   | 21   |
| <b>Simplified Application</b>        |                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Florida                              |                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Demonstration Counties               | 1.8                         | 4.3  | 7.9  | 8.6  | 11.2 | 19.9 | 25.9 |
| Comparison Counties                  | 0.6                         | 1.1  | 2.7  | 1.4  | 2.4  | 3.7  | 7.0  |
| Growth Attributed to Demonstration   | 1.2                         | 3.2  | 5.2  | 7.2  | 8.8  | 16.2 | 18.9 |
| <b>Application Assistance</b>        |                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Arizona                              |                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Demonstration Counties               | 12.2                        | 21.1 | 27.8 | 36.9 | 47.6 |      |      |
| Comparison Counties                  | 7.6                         | 10.5 | 14.3 | 20.3 | 25.2 |      |      |
| Growth Attributed to Demonstration   | 4.6                         | 10.5 | 13.5 | 16.6 | 22.4 |      |      |
| Maine                                |                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Demonstration County                 | 3.6                         | 18.5 | 27.4 | 32.7 | 39.7 | 44.2 | 46.4 |
| Comparison Counties                  | -1.5                        | -0.3 | 4.6  | 4.0  | 5.8  | 12.2 | 13.5 |
| Growth Attributed to Demonstration   | 5.1                         | 18.8 | 22.8 | 28.7 | 33.9 | 32.0 | 32.9 |
| Michigan                             |                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Demonstration County                 | 2.9                         | 6.3  | 9.4  | 14.5 |      |      |      |
| Comparison Counties                  | 3.2                         | 4.5  | 6.3  | 8.7  |      |      |      |
| Growth Attributed to Demonstration   | -0.2                        | 1.8  | 3.1  | 5.8  |      |      |      |
| <b>Commodity Alternative Benefit</b> |                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Connecticut                          |                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Demonstration Towns                  | 0.3                         | 2.1  | 4.5  | 6.0  |      |      |      |
| Comparison Towns                     | 0.6                         | 1.2  | 3.6  | 4.1  |      |      |      |
| Growth Attributed to Demonstration   | -0.2                        | 1.0  | 0.9  | 1.9  |      |      |      |
| North Carolina                       |                             |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Demonstration County                 | 13.1                        | 19.9 | 23.8 | 35.5 |      |      |      |
| Comparison Counties                  | 0.5                         | 7.5  | 9.5  | 10.9 |      |      |      |
| Growth Attributed to Demonstration   | 12.6                        | 12.4 | 14.3 | 24.6 |      |      |      |

<sup>a</sup>Percent growth is computed relative to elderly FSP participation in the last month before the demonstration is implemented

FIGURE 2

FLORIDA PILOT AND COMPARISON SITES



## 1. Florida

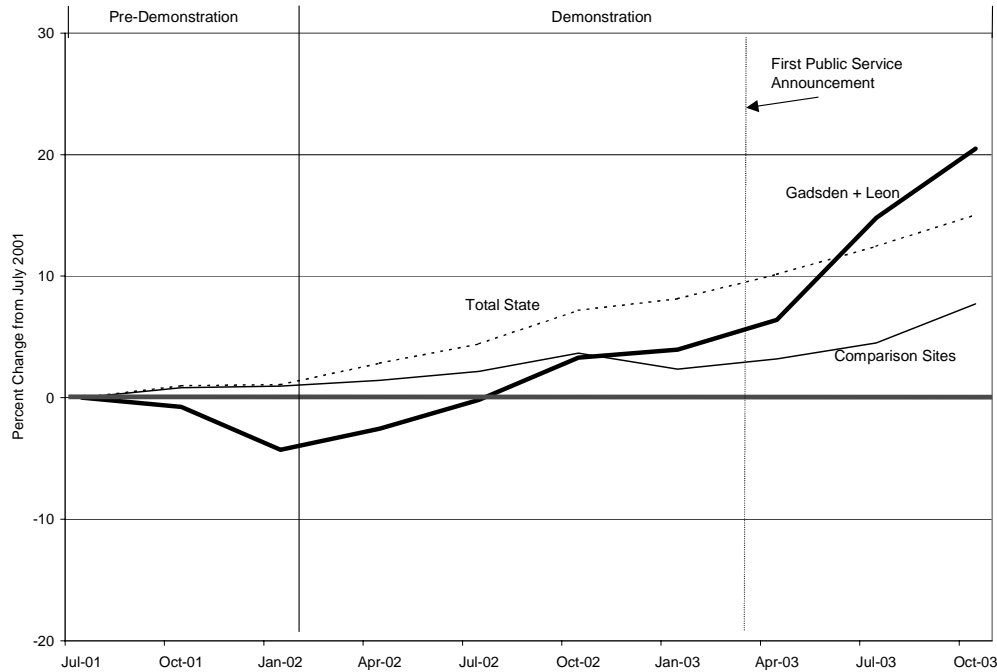
Florida's simplified eligibility demonstration was implemented in February 2002 in Gadsden and Leon counties (Figure 2). Under the demonstration, elderly applicants do not have to provide documentation verifying earnings, SSI or social security income, medical expenses, or asset holdings (the Florida demonstration does require that applicants verify their citizenship status). In addition to the simplified rules, the state also created simplified one-page applications for elderly clients. These applications were used in the two demonstration counties as well as in Alachua and Jackson Counties (both of which are in the comparison group). Also as part of the demonstration, a televised public service announcement promoting the FSP to elderly clients was aired in the pilot counties starting in March 2003.

### a. Participation Patterns

The general participation trends show elderly participation increasing after the demonstration was implemented. In July 2001, seven months prior to the start of the demonstration, there were 1,241 elderly households participating in the FSP in Leon and Gadsden counties, combined. This number declined slightly through January 2002 (Figure 3). After the Simplified Eligibility demonstration was implemented, the number of participating households began to increase.

FIGURE 3

FSP PARTICIPATION PATTERNS OF ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS IN FLORIDA



Prior to July 2003, the growth rate in elderly FSP participation in the demonstration counties was relatively low. However, starting in July, the number of elderly households in the demonstration counties began to increase substantially. This sharp increase was not observed in the comparison sites or in the state as a whole.

When we examine the demonstration counties separately, we see similar trends. Both counties experienced a slight increase in elderly participation in the first year (Figure 4). Starting in July 2003, participation in both counties increases substantially and at rates faster than those of the comparison sites and the state as a whole.

**b. Initial Impact Estimates**

To compute the initial impact estimate for Florida, we estimate change relative to the last month of the pre-demonstration period. Between January 2002 and October 2003, elderly FSP participation in the demonstration counties increased by 25.9 percent (Table 3). In the comparison counties, elderly FSP participation grew by only 7 percent in the same period. By subtracting the change observed in the comparison sites from the change in the demonstration sites, our initial estimate is that the demonstration increased elderly participation by 18.9 percent.

There is little evidence that the impacts observed in the demonstration counties are driven by the simplified application component of the demonstration. The simplified application, which

FIGURE 4

FSP PARTICIPATION PATTERNS OF ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS IN GADSDEN AND LEON COUNTIES

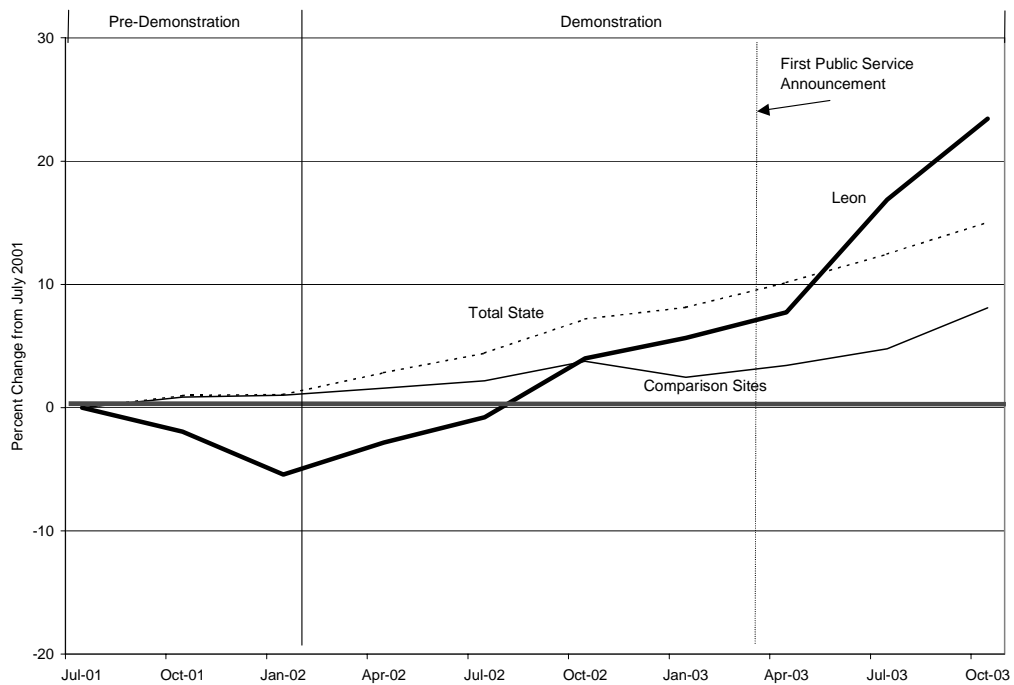
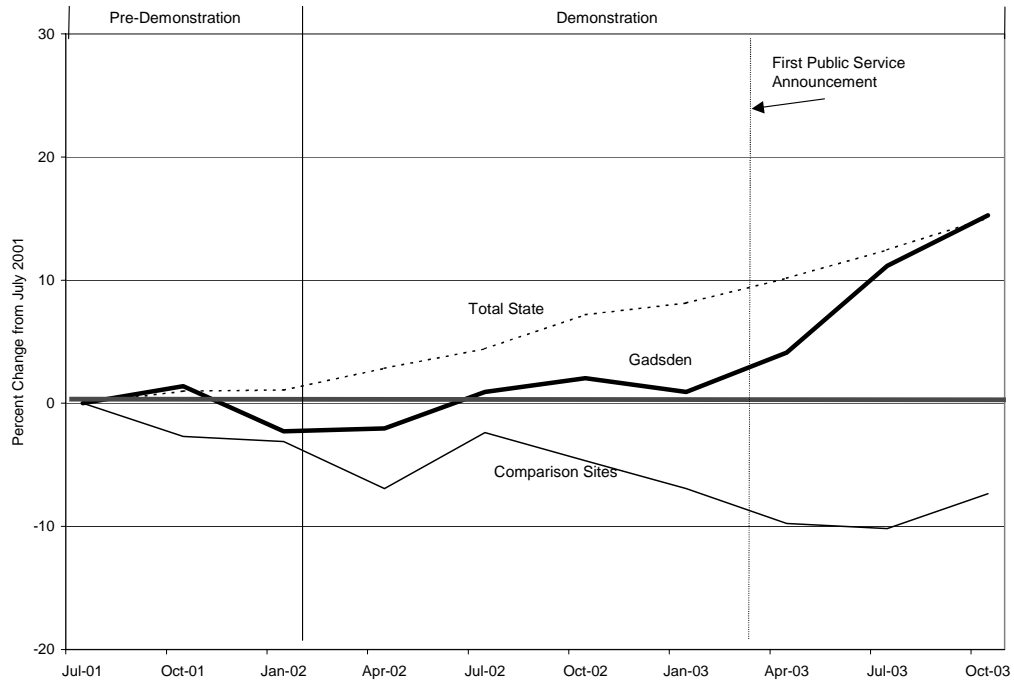


TABLE 3  
TRENDS IN ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION  
AFTER IMPLEMENTATION, FLORIDA

|  | Jan 2002 House-<br>holds | Percent Change from January 2002 |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|  |                          | 2002                             |      |      | 2003 |      |      |      |
|  |                          | Apr                              | Jul  | Oct  | Jan  | Apr  | Jul  | Oct  |
| <b>Demonstration Counties</b>                      |                          |                                  |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Gadsden County                                     | 429                      | 0.2                              | 3.3  | 4.4  | 3.3  | 6.5  | 13.8 | 17.9 |
| Leon County  | 734                      | 2.7                              | 4.9  | 9.9  | 11.7 | 13.9 | 23.6 | 30.5 |
| Combined   | 1,163                    | 1.8                              | 4.3  | 7.9  | 8.6  | 11.2 | 19.9 | 25.9 |
| <b>Comparison Counties</b>                         |                          |                                  |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Total  | 10,634                   | 0.6                              | 1.1  | 2.7  | 1.4  | 2.4  | 3.7  | 7.0  |
| <b>Simplified Application Counties</b>             |                          |                                  |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Alachua County                                     | 999                      | -0.3                             | -0.7 | 0.4  | 1.0  | 2.5  | 2.3  | 3.0  |
| Jackson County                                     | 396                      | -3.3                             | 0.8  | -0.8 | -3.5 | -6.1 | -6.8 | -1.5 |
| Combined   | 1,395                    | -1.1                             | -0.3 | -0.3 | -0.3 | 0.1  | -0.3 | 1.7  |
| Total State  | 125,715                  | 1.7                              | 3.3  | 6.1  | 7.0  | 9.0  | 11.3 | 13.8 |
| Cumulative Impact Estimate<br>(Pilot – Comparison) | n.a.                     | 1.2                              | 3.2  | 5.2  | 7.2  | 8.8  | 16.2 | 18.9 |

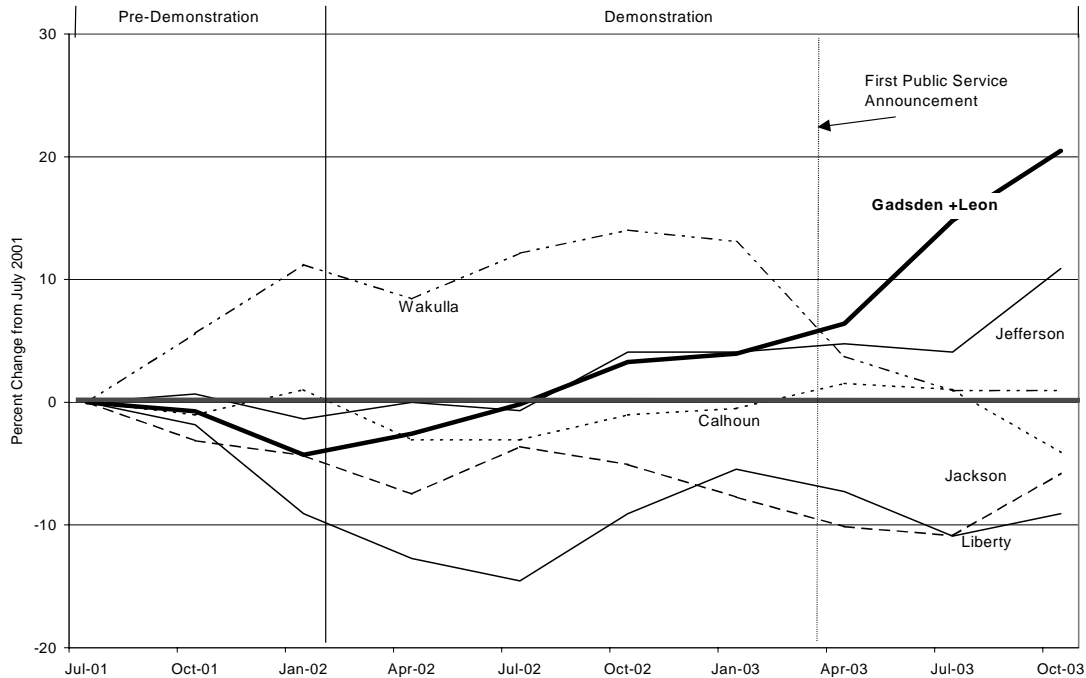
was used in both demonstration counties, was also adopted in Alachua and Jackson Counties. Elderly FSP participation in Alachua and Jackson Counties remained relatively flat, growing at rates lower than the other comparison sites and the rest of the state (Table 3).

On the other hand, the public service announcement developed as part of the demonstration’s outreach initiatives appears to explain much of the growth in participation that started in July 2003. The announcement was aired in Gadsden and Leon counties over three periods: (1) March 24 through May 11, 2003 (2) July 28 through August 26, 2003, and (3) October 20 through October 27, 2003. In the announcement, the Secretary of Florida’s Department of Children and Families explains that seniors may be eligible for food assistance. He does not mention the Food Stamp Program by name, nor does he explain the eligibility requirements, but he does provide contact information for the FSP. When MPR staff visited the Florida demonstration in December 2003, it was clear that the public service announcement had succeeded in reaching its target population. All of the respondents we interviewed believed that the announcement had an impact on participation.

Since the public service announcement is considered outreach as opposed to simplified eligibility, we are interested in whether the apparent impacts are derived from the change in eligibility rules, outreach or both. While it may be that the results after July 2003 reflect the impact of enhanced outreach only, it also is possible that the public service announcement increases participation *because* of the simplified eligibility rules. That is, without the simplified eligibility rules, many seniors who are led to the program by the announcement might abandon the application process if it had the traditional, more-cumbersome eligibility requirements.

FIGURE 5

ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION PATTERNS IN COUNTIES SURROUNDING GADSDEN AND LEON



To explore this, we examined the participation patterns in the counties surrounding Gadsden and Leon. Seniors residing in these counties may have seen the public service announcement aired in the Tallahassee area, and if so, we may observe a spill-over effect with similar increases in participation in those counties.<sup>2</sup> If we do observe a spill-over effect, then there is evidence that the outreach works without the simplified eligibility rules.

Five counties surround the demonstration sites: Jackson, Calhoun, Liberty, Wakulla and Jefferson. In two of the five counties—Jackson and Jefferson, elderly FSP participation increased after the airing of the public service announcement (Figure 5). In Jackson county, the increase is smaller than the monthly fluctuation observed in earlier months. However, in

<sup>2</sup>At this point, we are uncertain whether we should expect spillover effects in surrounding counties. MPR has not seen the public service announcement and we do not have complete information on the extent to which the public service announcement reached these other counties. The PSA was produced by Florida Impact, the non-profit subcontractor used by the demonstration to conduct outreach. The announcement directed clients to contact Florida Impact, not the Department of Children and Families, and it is unclear whether Florida Impact staff would still refer clients not residing in the demonstration area to DCF. Once we review the announcement and get specifics on where the announcement could be viewed, we will have a better sense of whether spill-over effects would be expected.



Jefferson county (which is somewhat close to Tallahassee), there is a relatively large increase in participation between July and October.

If Jefferson County is the only county with major exposure to the announcement, then there is evidence that outreach has an impact even without the simplified eligibility rules. If, however, major exposure occurred in the other counties, then there is evidence that the simplified eligibility rules are essentially a necessary condition for successful outreach. Future analysis of the results in Florida will further explore the extent to which the public service announcement was viewed in surrounding counties.

## **B. APPLICATION ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATIONS**

The application assistance model uses strategies designed to provide seniors with direct assistance in applying for food stamps. Under this demonstration, eligibility rules remain unchanged, but application assistants work with seniors to collect documentation, complete the application form, and work with the local FSP office.

Three states are implementing demonstrations based on the application assistance model: Arizona, Maine and Michigan. In all three states, the model appears to be working. In Arizona and Maine, the two states in which assistants travel to meet with clients in various venues, elderly participation in the demonstration sites grew substantially faster than in the comparison sites. In Michigan, where the assistants are based in senior centers, the estimated impacts are smaller, but this may be the result of the closure of several key senior centers during the demonstration. The remainder of this section summarizes the results for each of the application assistance states.

### **1. Arizona**

Arizona's application assistance program—the Food Assistance and Nutrition to Seniors (FANS) demonstration—uses paid application assistants to work one-on-one with elderly applicants. The demonstration operates in two counties: Pinal and Yavapai (Figure 6). While some demonstration activities began in Yavapai County in July 2002, the demonstration was not fully operational until September 2002. Application assistants provide information about the FSP and nutrition education materials to low-income seniors, prescreen them for food stamp eligibility, and inform them about other community resources. Assistance often takes place in senior centers, although outreach posts also have been established with faith-based organizations, libraries, alternative food assistance sites, and county health departments. A small percentage of FANS clients are served through home visits.

#### **a. Participation Patterns**

In February 2002, there was a combined total of 918 elderly clients living in Pinal and Yavapai counties. Elderly FSP participation in both counties grew at a modest pace before the demonstration started in September 2002, a pace similar to that of the rest of the state (Figure 7). After the demonstration started the rate of growth accelerated. Participation growth in the

FIGURE 6

ARIZONA PILOT AND COMPARISON COUNTIES FSP

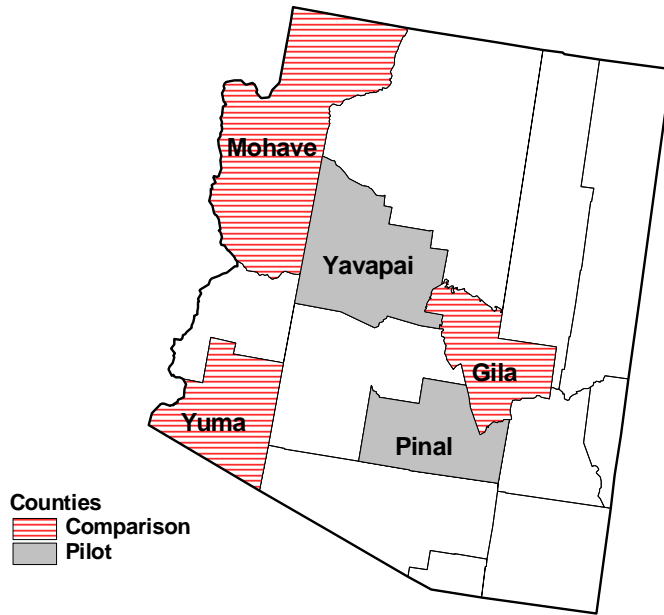
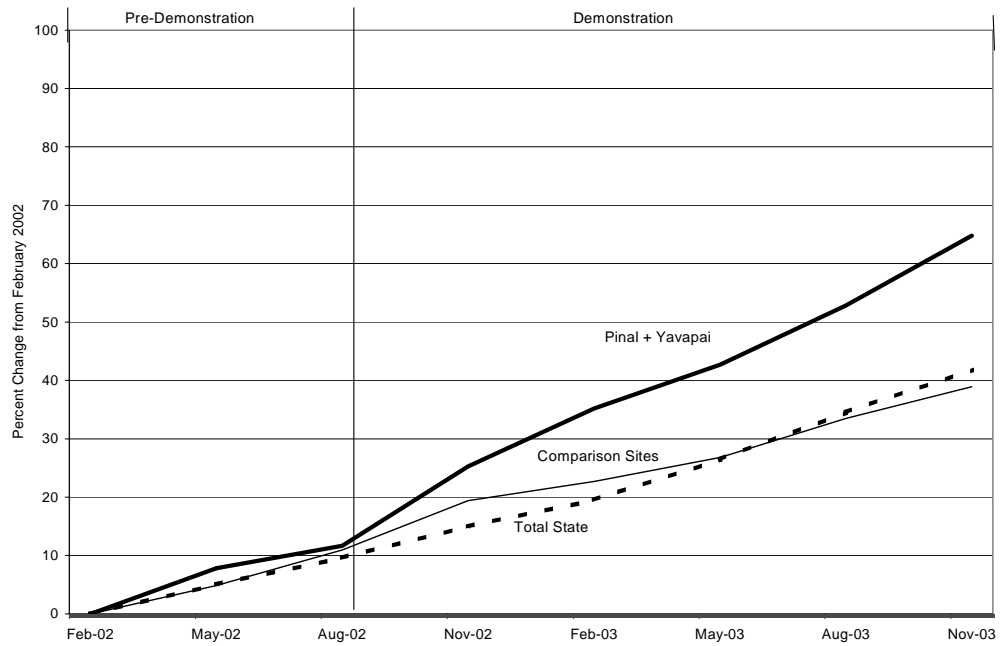


FIGURE 7

FSP PARTICIPATION PATTERNS OF ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS IN ARIZONA



comparison counties also was significant, although much less than that of the demonstration counties. Indeed, there are factors leading to substantial increases in total FSP participation (elderly or otherwise) statewide. Between February 2002 and November 2003, elderly FSP participation increased by 41.8 percent and total FSP participation (not shown) increased by 48.5 percent statewide.

Figure 8 presents the participation trends for the demonstration counties separately. In Pinal County, participation trends are similar to those in comparison sites as well as in the state as a whole. Alternatively, in Yavapai County, the growth rate (80 percent by November 2003) far exceeds that of the comparison group. This suggests that trends in Yavapai County are driving the overall results for the FANS demonstration.

#### **b. Initial Impact Estimates**

The initial impact estimate of the FANS project is computed by comparing participation changes after August 2002 in the demonstration sites with those in the comparison sites (Table 4). The number of elderly FSP households increased by 47.6 percent in the demonstration counties during this period, and by 25.2 percent in the comparison counties. This suggests that FANS has led to a 22.4 percent increase in elderly FSP participation.

To get a better sense of the amount of the increase in elderly FSP participation due to the demonstrations, we examined the number of FANS-generated applications submitted for the FSP. The total number of approved applications does not necessarily reflect the impact of the demonstration since some FANS applicants may have applied for food stamps in the absence of FANS. However, the number of applications likely serves as a good upper-bound for the impact of the demonstration.

By June 2003 (the latest month for which we have application data), a combined total of 223 FANS applications were approved for food stamps (Table 5). This implies a maximum net demonstration impact of 21.8 percent. The total increase in elderly participation between August 2002 and August 2003 was 36.9 percent, suggesting that the approved applications can explain a significant portion of the increase in elderly households. Indeed, the proportion explained by the approved applications is *higher* than the impact estimate computed by subtracting comparison site trends from demonstration site trends (16.6 percent). Thus, there is substantial evidence that the higher participation trend in the demonstration counties is explained by the demonstration.

The relatively low number of applications in Pinal County is likely the result of staffing issues in that county. In terms of the approach to application assistance, the demonstration in Pinal and Yavapai Counties are fundamentally the same. However, some of the application assistance positions in Pinal County remained vacant for several months. Moreover, staff in Pinal appear (to MPR) to be less motivated than staff in Yavapai County. While there may be other factors at play, we suspect that differences in staffing explain much of the difference in the number of applications submitted.

FIGURE 8

FSP PARTICIPATION PATTERNS OF ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS  
IN PINAL AND YAVAPAI COUNTIES SEPARATELY

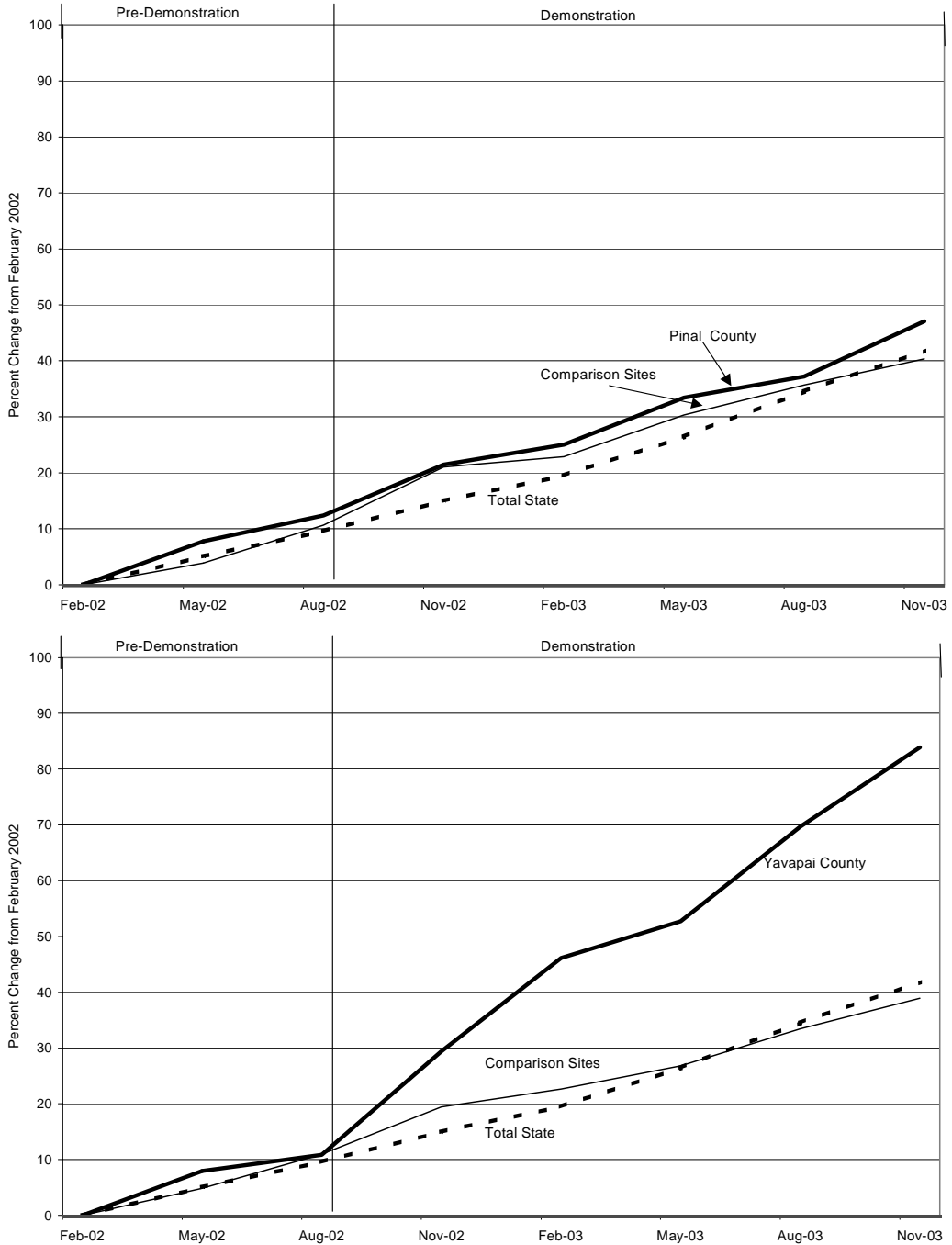


TABLE 4  
TRENDS IN ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION  
AFTER IMPLEMENTATION, ARIZONA

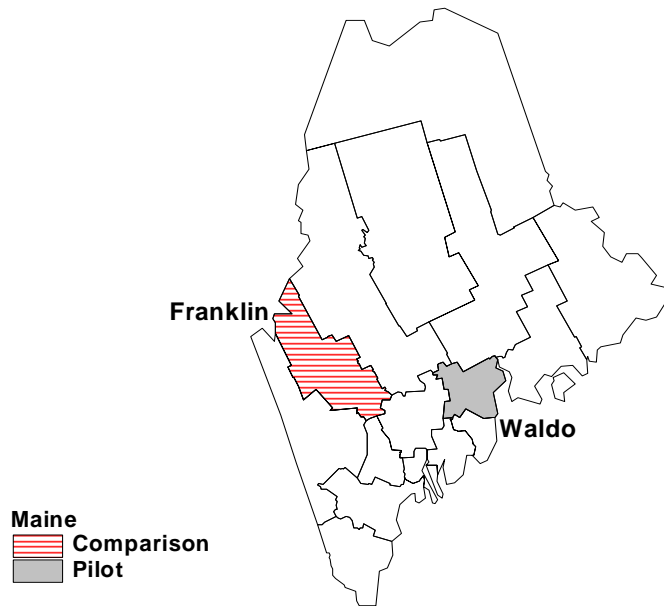
|  | August 2002<br>House-holds | Percent Change from August 2002 |      |      |      |      |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
|  |                            | 2002                            | 2003 |      |      |      |
|  |                            | Nov                             | Feb  | May  | Aug  | Nov  |
| <b>Demonstration Counties</b>                      |                            |                                 |      |      |      |      |
| Pinal County                                       | 535                        | 8.0                             | 11.2 | 18.7 | 22.1 | 30.8 |
| Yavapai County                                     | 490                        | 16.7                            | 31.8 | 37.8 | 53.1 | 65.9 |
| Combined   | 1,025                      | 12.2                            | 21.1 | 27.8 | 36.9 | 47.6 |
| <b>Comparison Counties</b>                         |                            |                                 |      |      |      |      |
| Comparison Counties                                | 1,366                      | 7.6                             | 10.5 | 14.3 | 20.3 | 25.2 |
| Total State  | 12,582                     | 4.9                             | 9.1  | 15.4 | 22.7 | 29.4 |
| Cumulative Impact Estimate<br>(Pilot – Comparison) | n.a.                       | 4.6                             | 10.5 | 13.5 | 16.6 | 22.4 |

TABLE 5  
CHANGE IN ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION EXPLAINED BY  
APPROVED FANS APPLICATIONS, ARIZONA

| County         | August 2002<br>Households | Percent<br>Change,<br>August 2002 –<br>August 2003 | Cumulative<br>Impact<br>Estimate,<br>August 2003 | Cumulative FANS<br>Applications, June 2003 |          | Approved<br>Applications as<br>a Percent of<br>August 2002<br>Households |
|----------------|---------------------------|--|--|--|----------|--|
|                |                           |  |  | Submitted                                  | Approved |  |
| Pinal County   | 535                       | 22.1   | -0.6   | 74   | 47       | 8.8  |
| Yavapai County | 490                       | 53.1   | 35.4   | 288  | 176      | 35.9   |
| Combined       | 1,025                     | 36.9   | 16.6   | 362  | 223      | 21.8   |

FIGURE 9

MAINE PILOT AND COMPARISON COUNTIES



**2. Maine**

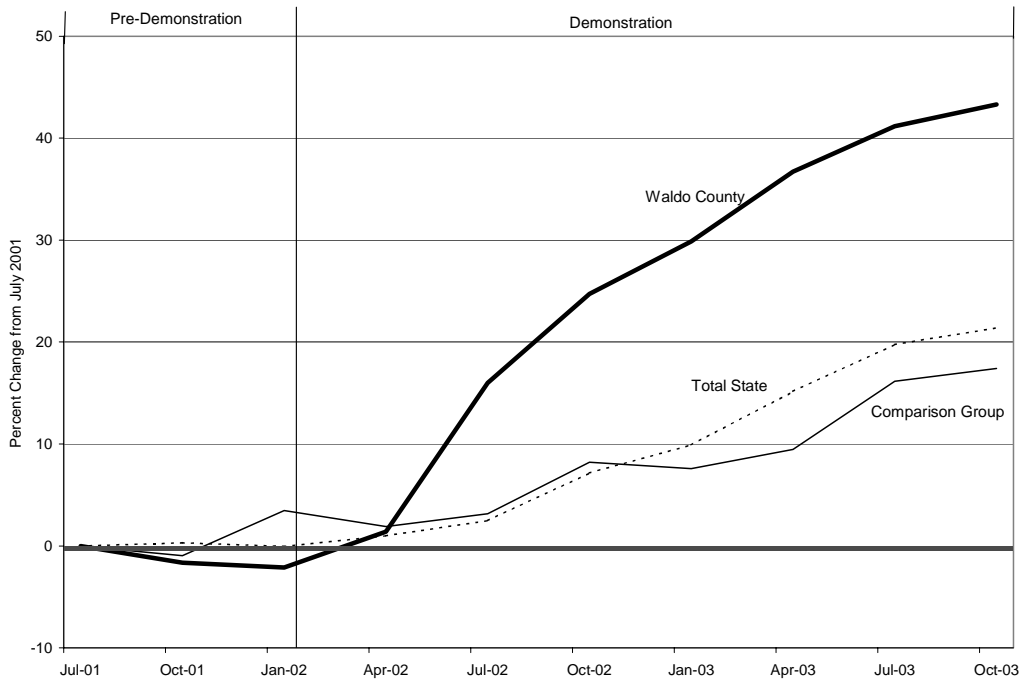
Maine’s application assistance demonstration—Food Assistance Connecting Eligible Seniors (FACES)—was implemented in Waldo County in February 2002. The FACES program employs three part-time application assistants who help low-income seniors complete applications for the FSP. Most often, the assistance is provided in the seniors’ homes, and the application assistant takes responsibility for submitting the FSP completed application and supporting documentation. Figure 9 shows the demonstration and comparison counties in Maine.

**a. Participation Patterns**

In July 2001, there were 425 elderly households in Waldo County participating in the FSP. This number declined slightly in the months leading up to implementation of the FACES program (Figure 10). After implementation, the number of participating elderly households increased rapidly. In the comparison county and in the rest of the state, elderly FSP participation increased over the same period. While these increases were generally large, they were much smaller than the increase observed in Waldo County.

FIGURE 10

FSP PARTICIPATION PATTERNS OF ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS IN MAINE



**b. Initial Impact Estimates**

The initial impact estimate of the FACES program is computed by comparing participation changes after January 2002 in the demonstration county with changes in the comparison county (Table 6). The number of elderly FSP households increased by 46.4 percent in Waldo County during this period, and by 13.5 percent in the comparison county. This suggests that FACES led to a 32.9 percent increase in elderly FSP participation.

The rate of growth in the number of elderly FSP households in Waldo County is leveling off. The graph in Figure 11 reflects an average quarterly growth rate of 7 percent in the first year but only 3 percent in the second year (through October). One possible explanation for this leveling is that it reflects the inherent limit in the total number of eligible households in a rural area like Waldo County. The initial large increase in participation likely reflects the success of the FACES program in reaching the pre-existing group of eligible nonparticipants. If the number of eligible households was static (that is, no new households became eligible over time), then the assistants would have a decreasing pool of eligible households to work with – households which, almost by definition, are hard-to-serve. The number of eligible households is not static, as each month circumstances change and elderly households become newly eligible. Hence, after the initial success of the application assistance program, the remaining pool of non-participants shrinks, and it is composed of the hard-to-serve and the newly-eligible. At some point, we would expect to see the quarterly growth rate level out.

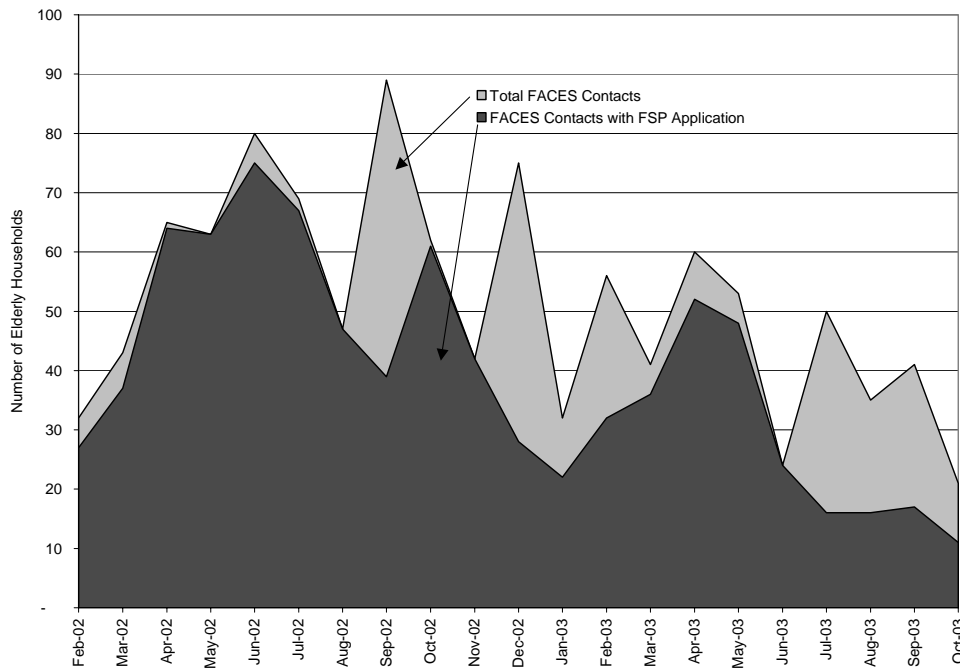
TABLE 6

TRENDS IN ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION  
AFTER IMPLEMENTATION, MAINE

|  | Jan 2002<br>House-<br>holds | Percent Change from January 2002 |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|  |                             | 2002                             |      |      | 2003 |      |      |      |
|  |                             | Apr                              | Jul  | Oct  | Jan  | Apr  | Jul  | Oct  |
| Waldo County (Demonstration)                       | 416                         | 3.6                              | 18.5 | 27.4 | 32.7 | 39.7 | 44.2 | 46.4 |
| Comparison Counties                                | 327                         | -1.5                             | -0.3 | 4.6  | 4.0  | 5.8  | 12.2 | 13.5 |
| Total State  | 12,273                      | 1.0                              | 2.5  | 7.2  | 10.0 | 15.2 | 19.8 | 21.4 |
| Cumulative Impact Estimate<br>(Pilot – Comparison) | n.a.                        | 5.1                              | 18.8 | 22.8 | 28.7 | 33.9 | 32.0 | 32.9 |

FIGURE 11

MONTHLY NUMBER OF ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS SERVED  
BY FACES APPLICATION ASSISTANTS





Another possible explanation of the growth rate leveling in Waldo County involves administrative phenomena. During much of the second year of the demonstration, the FACES program was using fewer than three application assistants as one or more of the assistants were either on sick leave or personal leave. Figure 11 reflects the total number of new contacts with elderly households made by FACES application assistants each month. The monthly number declined in the second year of the demonstration, with the low in June 2003 reflecting the peak of the application assistant shortage. That said, the total number of contacts in months with full staff are still lower in the second year than in the first. Moreover, the proportion of elderly households for whom an FSP application was submitted decreased over time.

The recent implementation of electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards in Maine is another potential explanation of the leveling of participation. Because of the technology involved, EBT cards can be intimidating to seniors and may act as a deterrent to the program. Maine's EBT program went operational state-wide in June 2003, around the time we see a tapering of participation in the Waldo County and across the state. However, based on discussions with both Waldo County and state staff, there is little evidence that seniors are opting out of the FSP as a result of EBT cards. Indeed, staff were surprised by how few problems arose.

We suspect that the trends presented in Figures 10 and 11 reflect the combined phenomena of the finite population of elderly households and the staffing shortages. The initial success of FACES is likely due to the large build up of eligible households that needed assistance with the application process. The decline in the growth rate likely reflects the project approaching a steady state and the periodic staffing shortages.

### **3. Michigan**

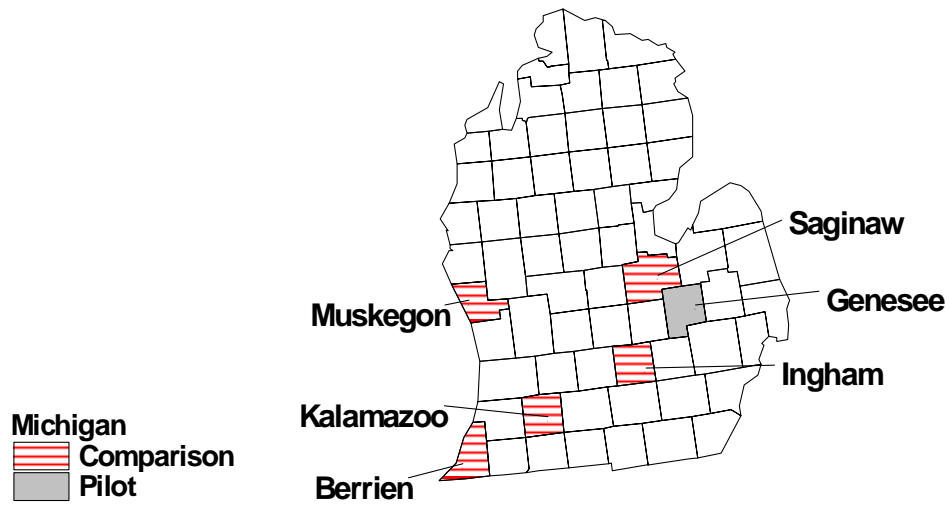
Michigan's application assistance pilot features an on-line application form that can be accessed at all senior centers in the pilot site, Genesee County. Senior center staff assist elderly applicants in understanding FSP eligibility rules and help them complete an FSP application. The on-line application is referred to as Michigan's Coordinated Access to Food for the Elderly (MiCAFE). To make the process easier for the applicant, senior center staff enter the applicant data into the on-line system. This pilot was implemented in November 2002. Figure 12 shows the demonstration and comparison counties in Michigan.

#### **a. Participation Patterns**

In April 2002, there were 2,160 elderly FSP households in Genesee County. The number increased slightly before the demonstration was implemented in November. After implementation, steady growth in the number of elderly households continued (Figure 13). The growth observed in Genesee County is somewhat larger than the growth observed in the comparison counties (and even larger compared with the state as a whole).

FIGURE 12

MICHIGAN PILOT AND COMPARISON COUNTIES



Note: No pilot or comparison counties are in Michigan's Upper Peninsula

FIGURE 13

FSP PARTICIPATION PATTERNS OF ELDERLY FSP HOUSEHOLDS IN MICHIGAN

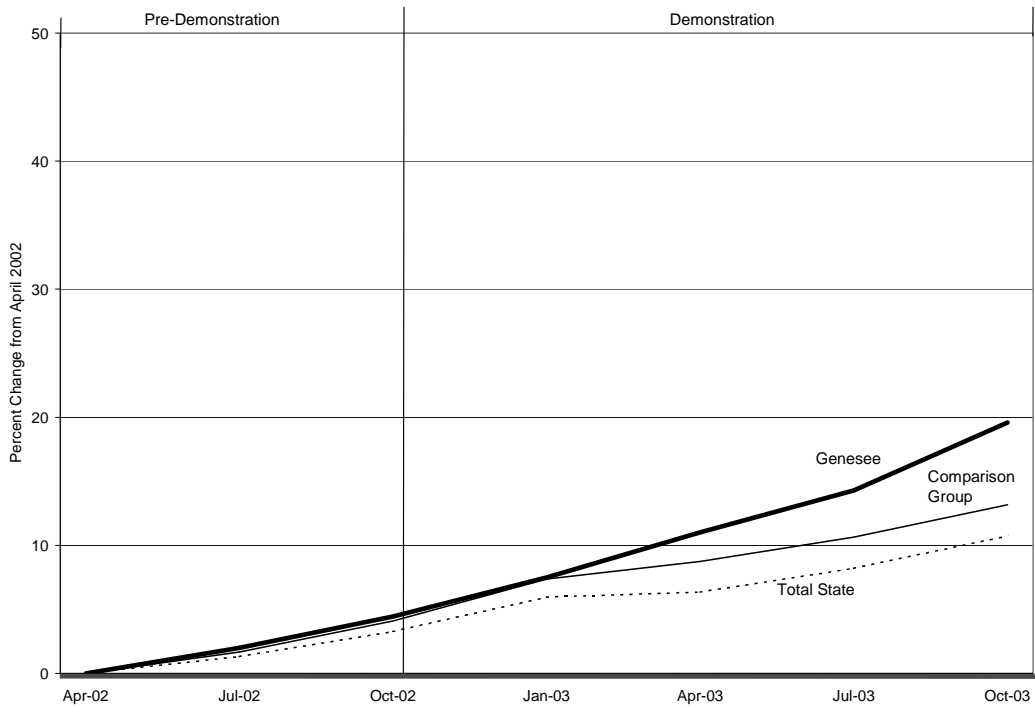


TABLE 7  
TRENDS IN ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION  
AFTER IMPLEMENTATION, MICHIGAN

|  | October 2002<br>Households | Percent Change from<br>October 2002 |     |     |      |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|
|  |                            | Jan                                 | Apr | Jul | Oct  |
| Genesee County (Demonstration)                     | 2,256                      | 2.9                                 | 6.3 | 9.4 | 14.5 |
| Comparison Counties                                | 5,288                      | 3.2                                 | 4.5 | 6.3 | 8.7  |
| Total State  | 49,787                     | 2.6                                 | 3.0 | 4.8 | 7.2  |
| Cumulative Impact Estimate<br>(Pilot – Comparison) | n.a.                       | -0.2                                | 1.8 | 3.1 | 5.8  |

**b. Initial Participation Impact**

The initial impact estimate of the MiCAFE program is computed by comparing participation changes after November 2002 in the demonstration sites with changes in the comparison sites (Table 7). By October 2003, the number of elderly FSP households increased by 14.5 percent in Genesee County, compared with only 8.7 percent in the comparison counties. This yields an initial impact estimate of 5.8 percent.

Given that this impact estimate is computed for Genesee County as a whole, it likely underestimates the effects of the demonstration. Shortly after MiCAFE was implemented in Genesee County, the city of Flint closed its senior centers. This effectively cut off from the demonstration the densest population center in Genesee County. As a result, the most appropriate measure of the impact of the demonstration would be to compute the percent change in participation *only for those areas served by the demonstration*. The data we have currently do not contain sufficient information to examine participation in sub-regions of Genesee County.

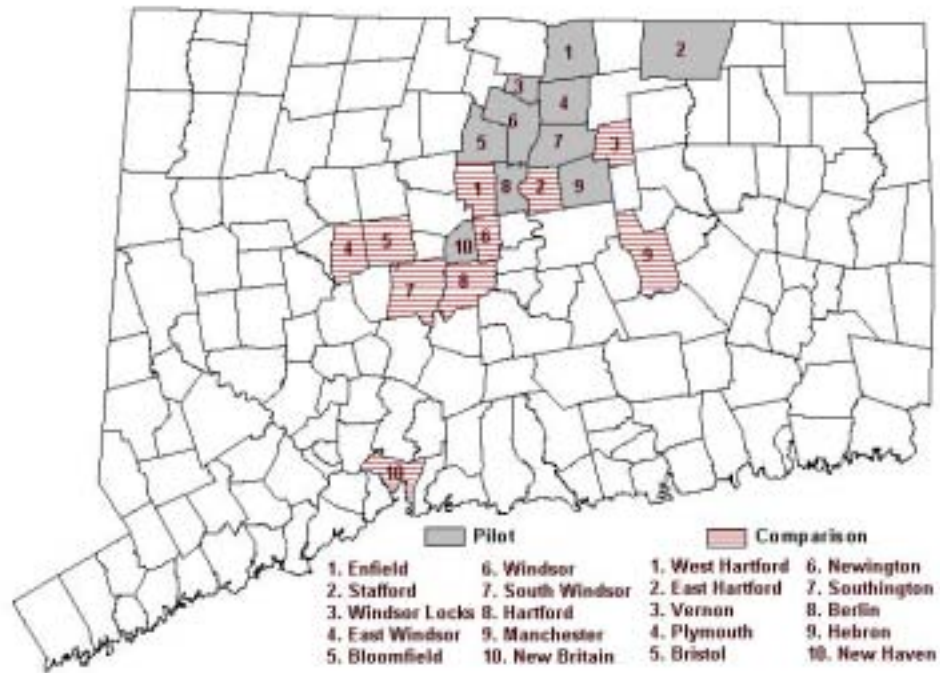
**C. COMMODITY ALTERNATIVE BENEFIT**

Under the Commodity Alternative Benefit model, elderly FSP households have the option of receiving packages of commodities each month instead of getting benefits through an EBT card. Two states – Connecticut and North Carolina – have implemented commodity alternative benefit demonstrations. Local nonprofit organizations are responsible for ordering, storing, and distributing the commodity packages. Most participants must pick up their commodity packages at a central distribution point, although some home-bound clients can have packages delivered.

The total cost to the demonstration of each commodity package cannot exceed the average per-person benefit paid to elderly clients in the demonstration county. Commodity costs are computed based on USDA bulk prices. Thus, if elderly individuals in a pilot site receive an average FSP benefit of \$40, then the demonstration can distribute packages whose contents cost

FIGURE 14

CONNECTICUT PILOT AND COMPARISON TOWNS



\$40. The cost of the packages will be the same for all participants, regardless of the benefit amounts for which they are eligible.

**1. Connecticut**

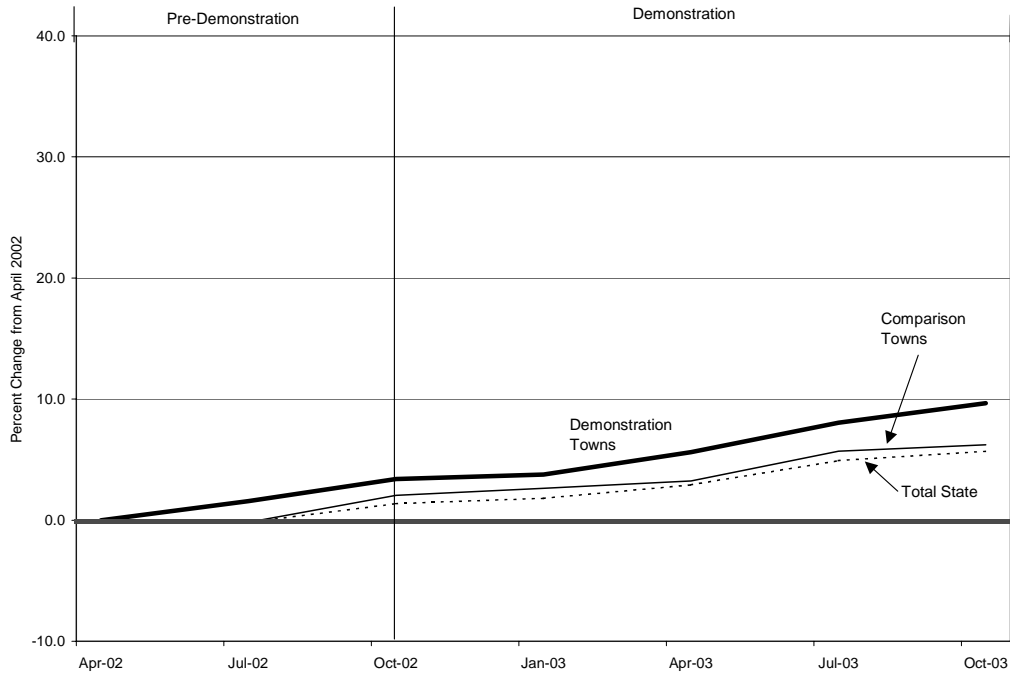
Connecticut’s commodity pilot—the Food Connection—offers commodities packages to elderly households in the Hartford area. The packages are assembled and distributed by the Community Renewal Team (CRT), a local food distribution organization. Clients can pick up their packages at the local congregate meals site; or, if they participate in the Meals on Wheels program, they can have the packages delivered to their homes. To reduce the weight of the commodity packages, CRT distributes packages twice a month, with each package containing half of the monthly contents. The Food Connection began serving clients in 10 pilot towns in November 2002. Figure 14 shows the pilot and comparison towns in Connecticut.

**a. Participation Patterns**

Elderly FSP participation patterns in the demonstration towns show some growth, but the growth rates are similar to those in the comparison towns. In April 2002, there was a combined total of 3,618 elderly households participating in the FSP in the 10 Hartford-area towns participating in the demonstration. This number increased slightly by October 2002, the month immediately prior to implementation (Figure 15). By October 2003, the number of elderly FSP households was less than 10 percent higher than the April 2002 number.

FIGURE 15

FSP PARTICIPATION PATTERNS OF ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS IN CONNECTICUT



The total number of households participating in the demonstration is relatively small. In January 2003, three months after implementation, only 184 of the 3,754 elderly FSP households in the demonstration towns were participating in The Food Connection (Table 8). Relatively few of the 184 households were new to the FSP; most were existing FSP households that converted to the demonstration. By October 2003, the number of households participating in The Food Connection was *lower* than the number in January 2003.<sup>3</sup>

**b. Initial Impact Estimates**

Our initial impact estimate for The Food Connection is computed by comparing the change in elderly FSP participation after October 2002 in the demonstration towns with the change observed in the comparison towns. Between October 2002 and October 2003, the number of elderly households increased by 6.0 in the demonstration towns, while the number in the comparison towns increased by 4.1 percent (Table 9). Thus, the initial estimate is that The Food Connection increased participation by 1.9 percent. Given this small impact estimate, combined

<sup>3</sup> The distribution of demonstration households across the 10 Hartford-area demonstration towns is generally proportional to the distribution of the elderly FSP population in general. The bulk of demonstration households are in the city of Hartford. Trends in participation are similar across demonstration towns.

with the relatively low number of households entering the FSP and selecting the commodity alternative, it appears that the Connecticut demonstration is having little or no impact in increasing the number of elderly FSP clients.

TABLE 8  
ELDERLY FSP HOUSEHOLDS PARTICIPATING IN COMMODITIES  
DEMONSTRATION, CONNECTICUT

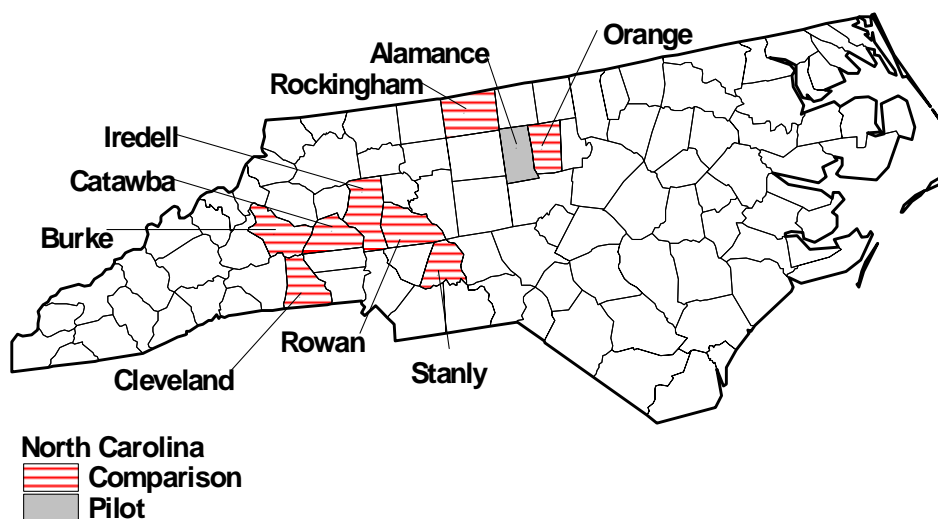
|  | 2002  |       | 2003  |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|  | Oct   | Jan   | Apr   | Jul   | Oct   |
| Total Elderly FSP Households in Demonstration Towns          | 3,741 | 3,754 | 3,821 | 3,909 | 3,967 |
| Elderly Households Participating in Regular FSP              | 3,741 | 3,570 | 3,631 | 3,716 | 3,793 |
| Elderly FSP Households in The Food Connection                | 0     | 184   | 190   | 193   | 174   |
| Percent of All Elderly FSP Households in The Food Connection | 0.0   | 4.9   | 5.0   | 4.9   | 4.4   |

TABLE 9  
TRENDS IN TOTAL ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION  
AFTER IMPLEMENTATION, CONNECTICUT

|   | October 2002 FSP House-holds | Percent Change from October 2002 |     |     |     |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
|   |                              | Jan                              | Apr | Jul | Oct |
| Demonstration Towns                             | 3,741                        | 0.3                              | 2.1 | 4.5 | 6.0 |
| Comparison Towns                                | 2,870                        | 0.6                              | 1.2 | 3.6 | 4.1 |
| Total State                                     | 15,358                       | 0.4                              | 1.5 | 3.5 | 4.3 |
| Cumulative Impact Estimate (Pilot – Comparison) | n.a.                         | -0.2                             | 1.0 | 0.9 | 1.9 |

FIGURE 16

NORTH CAROLINA PILOT AND COMPARISON COUNTIES



## 2. North Carolina

North Carolina’s commodity demonstration, called the Commodity Alternative Benefit (CAB) Program, was implemented in Alamance County in November 2003. Most participating seniors pick up their packages (which are distributed once a month) from Vocational Trades of Alamance (VTA), the centrally located distribution warehouse. A small number of clients have the packages delivered to their homes. Figure 16 shows the pilot and comparison counties in North Carolina.

### a. Participation Patterns

In April 2002, seven months prior to the demonstration, there were 426 elderly households participating in the FSP in Alamance County. This number increased by 3.8 percent by October 2002—the month immediately prior to implementation (Figure 17). Once the demonstration started, the number of elderly FSP households in Alamance County increased at an even faster rate. By October 2003, the number of elderly households was 40.6 percent higher than the number in April 2002.

A relatively large percentage of the elderly FSP households in Alamance County participate in CAB program (Table 10). In January 2003, 210 of the 500 elderly households (42.0 percent) in Alamance County participated in the demonstration. Many of these CAB households were ongoing clients who were participating in the FSP prior to the demonstration. In the first month of the demonstration, 130 of the 442 ongoing clients signed on to participate in the CAB program.

FIGURE 17

FSP PARTICIPATION PATTERNS OF ELDERLY HOUSEHOLDS IN CONNECTICUT

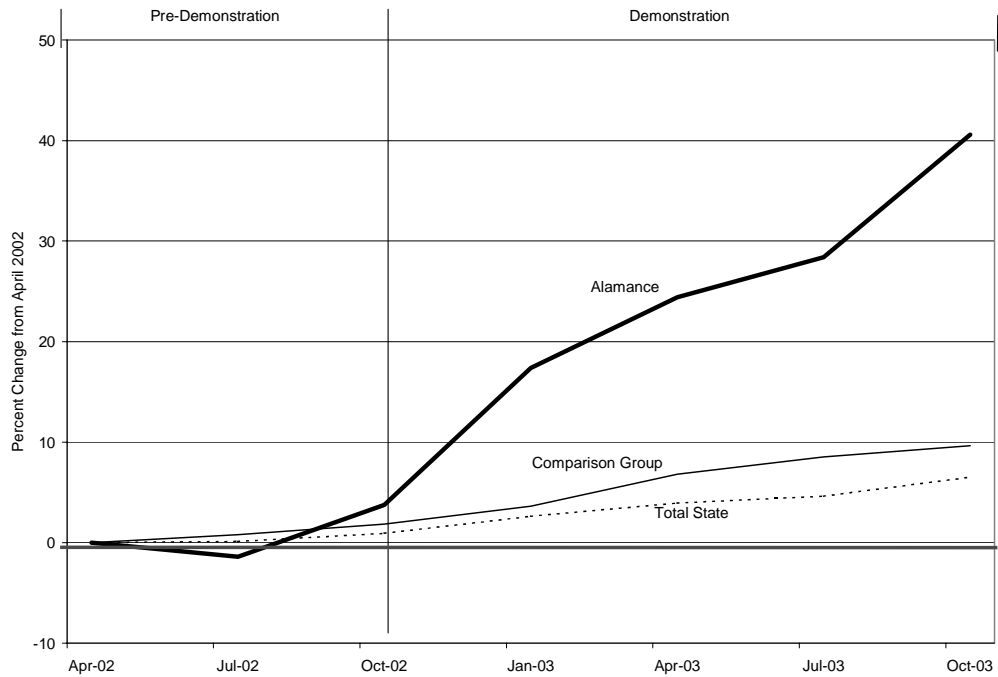


TABLE 10

ELDERLY FSP HOUSEHOLDS PARTICIPATING IN COMMODITIES DEMONSTRATION, NORTH CAROLINA

|   | 2002 | 2003 |      |      |      |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
|   | Oct  | Jan  | Apr  | Jul  | Oct  |
| Total Elderly FSP Households in Alamance County | 442  | 500  | 530  | 547  | 599  |
| Elderly Households Participating in Regular FSP | 442  | 290  | 285  | 292  | 318  |
| Elderly FSP Households Participating in CAB     | 0    | 210  | 245  | 255  | 281  |
| Percent of All Elderly FSP Households in CAB    | 0.0  | 42.0 | 46.2 | 46.6 | 46.9 |



TABLE 11

TRENDS IN ELDERLY FSP PARTICIPATION AFTER  
IMPLEMENTATION, NORTH CAROLINA

|  | October<br>2002 FSP<br>Households | Percent Change from<br>October 2002 |      |      |      |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|
|  |                                   | Jan                                 | Apr  | Jul  | Oct  |
| Alamance County (Demonstration)                    | 442                               | 13.1                                | 19.9 | 23.8 | 35.5 |
| Comparison Group                                   | 3,322                             | 0.5                                 | 7.5  | 9.5  | 10.9 |
| Total State  | 43,962                            | 1.7                                 | 3.0  | 3.7  | 5.5  |
| Cumulative Impact Estimate<br>(Pilot – Comparison) | n.a.                              | 12.6                                | 12.4 | 14.3 | 24.6 |

**b. Initial Impact Estimates**

The initial impact estimate for the CAB program is computed by comparing the change in elderly FSP participation after October 2002 in the demonstration towns with the change observed in the comparison towns. Between October 2002 and October 2003, the number of elderly households increased by 35.5 percent in the demonstration towns, while the number in the comparison towns increased by 10.9 percent (Table 11). Thus, the initial estimate is that CAB increased participation by 24.6 percent.