About 1 in 4 Americans participates in at least 1 of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) 15 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs at some point during the year. Together these programs, which vary by size, type of benefits provided, and target population, form a nutritional safety net for millions of children and low-income adults. These programs account for over 70 percent of USDA’s annual budget. USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS) conducts studies and evaluations of these programs.

This report uses preliminary administrative data from USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the agency responsible for managing the programs, to examine trends in the food and nutrition assistance programs through fiscal 2013 (October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013). The report uses ERS data to examine trends in the prevalence and severity of household food insecurity in the United States through 2012 and summarizes two recent ERS reports that examine the food security of two subpopulations of particular concern: (1) adults with disabilities and (2) households with children. The report also looks at trends in some of the indicators of economic and social conditions that affect participation in and spending on food and nutrition assistance programs.

Figure 1
USDA outlays, FY 2013
Food and nutrition assistance accounts for almost three-quarters of USDA outlays

Note: Total USDA outlays for FY 2013 were estimated at $155 billion.
Source: USDA, Office of Budget and Program Analysis, FY 2013 Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan.