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# Food Assistance Landscape FY 2013 Annual Report

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***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. These programs account for over 70 percent of USDA's annual budget.***



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# The Food Assistance Landscape

## FY 2013 Annual Report

Victor Oliveira

### Overview

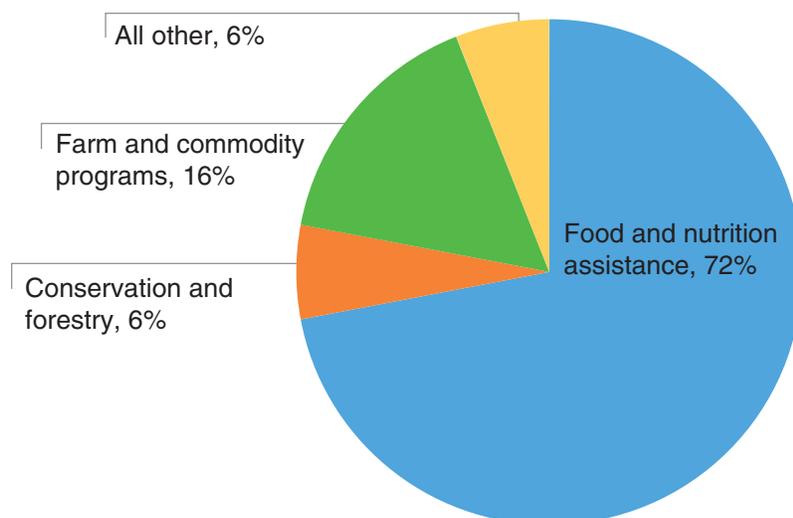
About 1 in 4 Americans participates in at least 1 of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) 15 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs at some point during the year. Together these programs, which vary by size, type of benefits provided, and target population, form a nutritional safety net 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*.

## Food Assistance Expenditures Increased Slightly

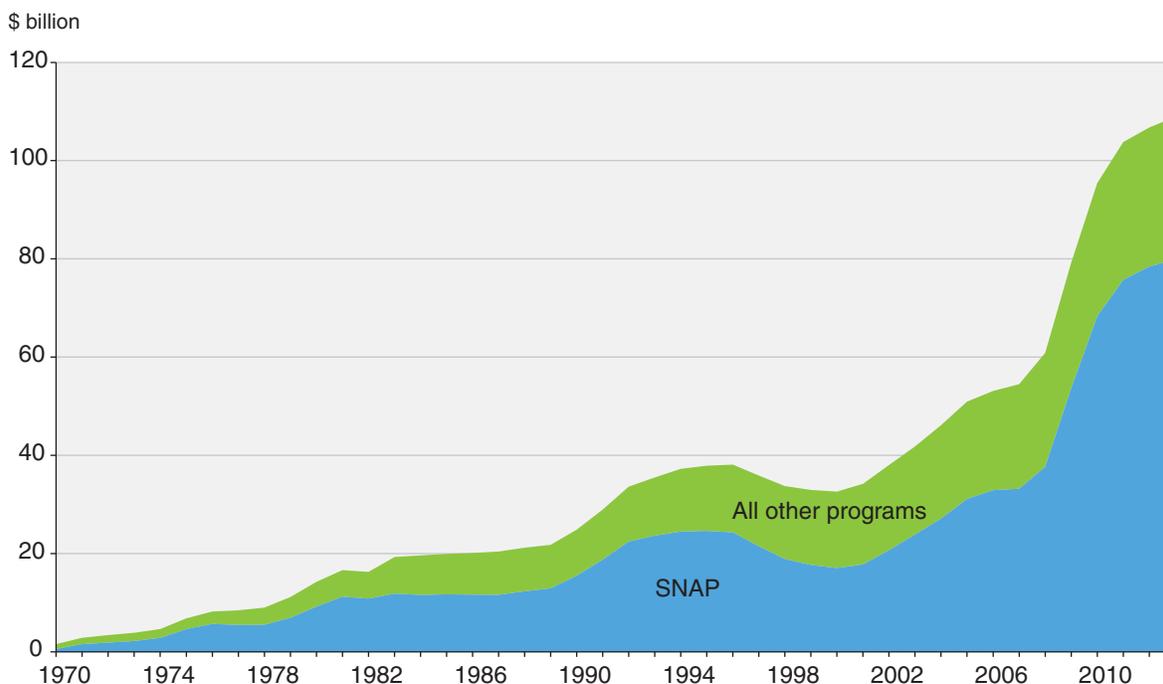
Federal expenditures for USDA's domestic food and nutrition assistance programs totaled \$108.9 billion in fiscal 2013 or 2 percent more than the previous fiscal year. This increase—the smallest in percentage terms since 2000—marked the 13th consecutive year in which food and nutrition assistance expenditures exceeded the previous historical record. (Note: all references to expenditures refer to nominal expenditures—i.e., not adjusted for inflation—except where specifically noted.)

The five largest programs in fiscal 2013—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the National School Lunch Program; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); the School Breakfast Program; and the Child and Adult Care Food Program—accounted for 96 percent of USDA's expenditures for food and nutrition assistance. In fiscal 2013, participation increased in some of these programs but decreased in others.

Figure 2

### USDA expenditures for food assistance, FY 1970-2013

*SNAP has driven most of the increase in expenditures over time*



SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Source: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.

## Rate of Growth in SNAP Participation Slowed

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—formerly the Food Stamp Program—is the cornerstone of USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs, accounting for almost three-quarters (73 percent) of all Federal food and nutrition assistance spending in fiscal 2013. The program provides monthly benefits for eligible participants to purchase food items at authorized food stores. Unlike other food and nutrition assistance programs that target specific groups, SNAP is available to most needy households with limited income and assets (subject to certain work and immigration status requirements). During fiscal 2013:

Table 1

**USDA nutrition assistance at a glance**

Program		FY 2012	FY 2013	Change
SNAP	Average monthly participation (millions)	46.6	47.6	2.2%
	Average benefit per person (dollars/month)	133.41	133.08	-0.3%
	Total annual expenditures (\$ billions)	78.4	79.8	1.8%
WIC	Average monthly participation (millions)	8.9	8.7	-2.8%
	• Women	2.1	2.0	-2.3%
	• Infants	2.1	2.0	-1.6%
	• Children	4.7	4.6	-3.5%
	Food cost per person (dollars/month)	44.98	43.45	-3.4%
	Total expenditures (\$ billions)	6.8	6.4	-5.6%
National School Lunch Program	Average daily participation (millions)	31.6	30.6	-3.2%
	• Free	18.7	18.9	1.0%
	• Reduced price	2.7	2.6	-6.2%
	• Full price	10.2	9.1	-10.1%
	Total expenditures (\$ billions)	11.6	12.2	5.1%
School Breakfast Program	Average daily participation (millions)	12.9	13.1	2.2%
	• Free	9.8	10.1	3.6%
	• Reduced price	1.0	1.0	-2.6%
	• Full price	2.0	2.0	-1.8%
	Total expenditures (\$ billions)	3.3	3.5	6.7%
Child and Adult Care Food Program	Meals served in:			
	• childcare centers (millions)	1,305.8	1,336.7	2.4%
	• family daycare homes (millions)	568.8	551.8	-3.0%
	• adult daycare centers (millions)	70.5	69.8	-0.9%
	Total expenditures (\$ billions)	2.9	3.0	4.4%
All programs	Total expenditures (\$ billions)	106.7	108.9	2.0%

SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Note: Figures are based on preliminary data provided by the Food and Nutrition Service as of December 2013 and are subject to change. Total program expenditures include figures from other programs not shown in the table.

- An average 47.6 million persons per month participated in the program, the largest number to ever participate in the program and over 2.5 times the number participating in FY 2000.
- The number of participants increased by 2 percent over the previous year's participation numbers. This was the smallest percentage increase since fiscal 2007.
- About 15 percent of the Nation's population participated in the program each month.
- Benefits per person averaged \$133.08 per month, about the same as the previous year.
- Federal spending for the program totaled \$79.8 billion or 2 percent more than the previous record high of \$78.4 billion set the previous year.

### SNAP benefits to fall in fiscal 2014

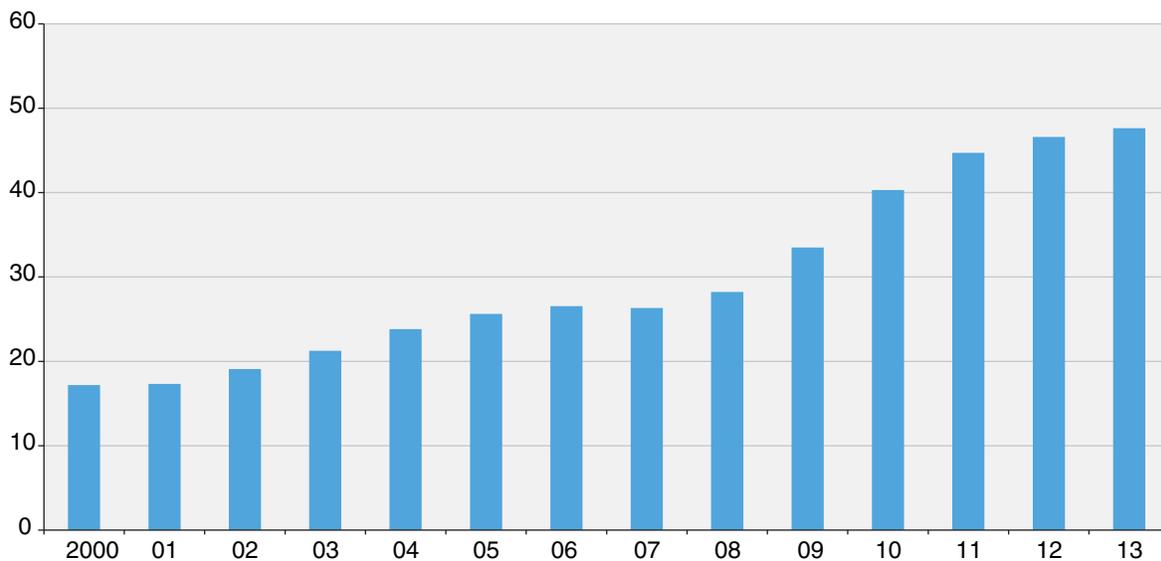
To help people affected by the Great Recession between December 2007 and June 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), also known as the Stimulus Act, temporarily increased benefit levels in SNAP beginning in April 2009 (maximum SNAP benefits increased by 13.6 percent). Benefits were to remain at the new higher level until SNAP's regular adjustments for inflation to the maximum benefits caught up to the maximum benefits set by ARRA. However, subsequent legislation pushed up the sunset of the ARRA benefit to November 1, 2013 (i.e., the beginning of fiscal 2014). At that time, SNAP benefits decreased by 5.4 percent for a family of four receiving a maximum allotment.

Figure 3

#### Average monthly SNAP participation, FY 2000-13

*Participation slows after increasing sharply around the time of the Great Recession*

Millions of people



Note: The Great Recession occurred from December 2007 to June 2009.

SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Source: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.

## WIC Participation Shrank

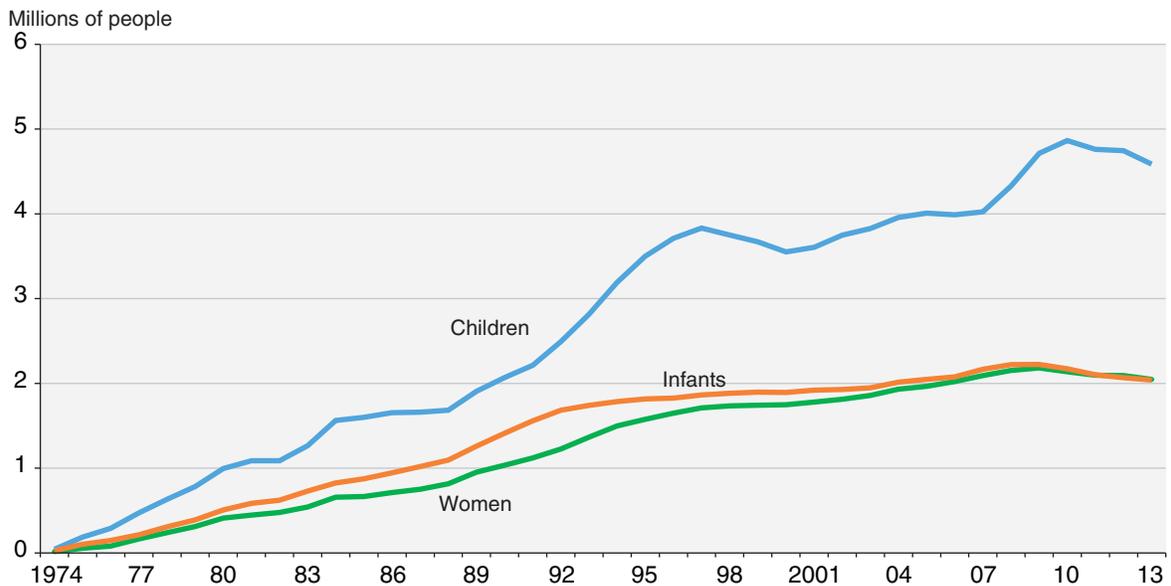
The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) helps safeguard the health of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women as well as infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk, by providing a package of supplemental foods, nutrition education, and health care referrals at no cost. To be eligible on the basis of income, applicants' income must be at or below 185 percent of poverty (a person who participates or who has certain family members who participate in other benefits programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) automatically meet the income eligibility requirement). During fiscal 2013:

- An average 8.7 million people per month participated in the program, or 3 percent less than the previous year—the largest 1-year decrease since the program began in 1974.
- Over half (53 percent) of all participants were children, 24 percent were women, and 23 percent were infants.
- Reflecting the continued decrease in U.S. births that began in 2008, the number of infants and women in the program each fell by 2 percent, and the number of children fell by 4 percent. This marked the third consecutive year—and only the third time in the program's 40-year history—that participation for all three groups fell.
- Food costs per person totaled \$43.45 per month, or about 3 percent less than in the previous fiscal year.
- Spending on the program totaled \$6.4 billion, a 6-percent decrease from the previous fiscal year.

Figure 4

### Average monthly WIC participation, FY 1974-2013

*The number of women, infants, and children participating in WIC each fell for the third consecutive year in FY 2013*



WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Source: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.

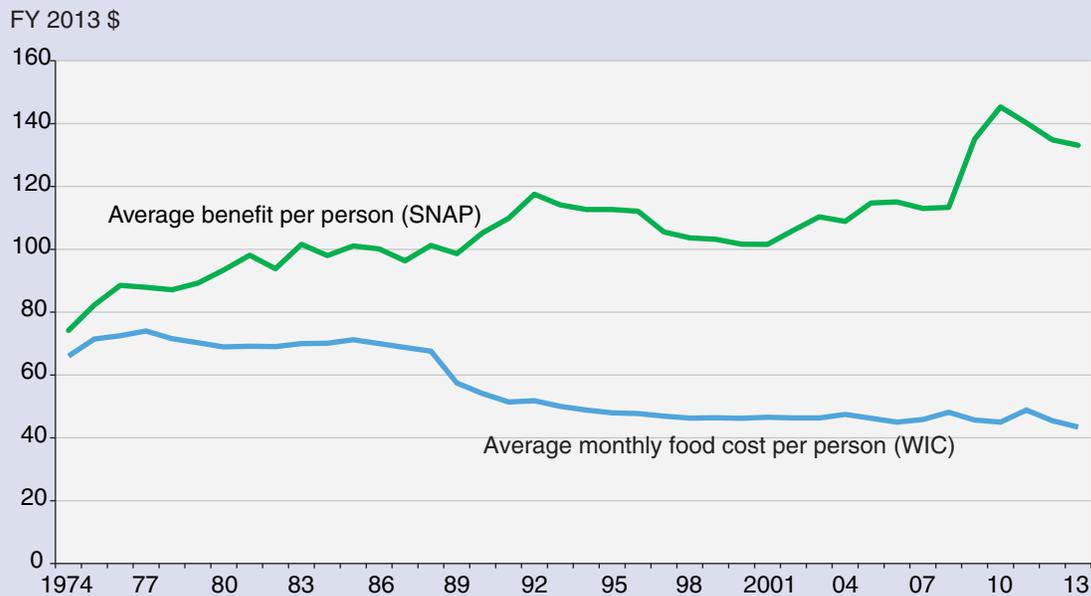
## Average monthly real SNAP and WIC per-person food costs have diverged over time

When WIC was initiated in 1974, the average monthly WIC food cost per person was similar to the average monthly SNAP benefit per person. However, real (i.e., after adjusting for inflation) food costs per person for SNAP and WIC have diverged significantly since then. In general, real per-person benefits for SNAP have trended upward while real per-person food costs for WIC have trended downward. WIC State agencies have reduced food costs through a variety of cost-containment measures, the most effective of which has been the use of infant formula rebates. Starting in the late 1980s, WIC State agencies have obtained significant discounts in the form of rebates from infant formula manufacturers for formula purchased through the program. In exchange for the rebates, a manufacturer is given the exclusive right to provide its product to WIC participants in that State. Rebates totaled \$1.7 billion in fiscal 2012.

Since the mid-1990s, real monthly food costs for WIC have remained relatively stable at about \$43-\$48 per person (2013 dollars). However, real per-person food benefits for SNAP continues to fluctuate, due in large part to legislative changes that either increased or decreased benefit levels. For example, the ARRA temporarily raised SNAP benefits starting in April 2009. In recent years real food costs for SNAP have decreased as inflation eroded the temporary increase from ARRA.

### Average real monthly food costs per person

*Differences in per-person food costs for WIC and SNAP have widened over time*



SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, based on USDA, Food and Nutrition Service data adjusted by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index for food at home.

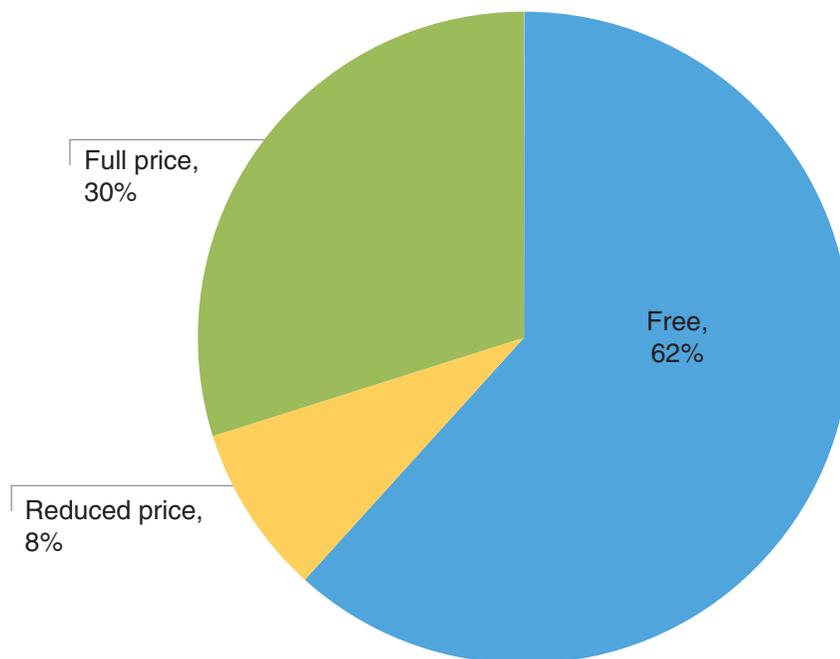
## Participation in National School Lunch Program Fell While Expenditures Increased

The National School Lunch Program provides nutritious lunches at low or no cost to students during lunch periods at school and snacks to children participating in after-school care programs. Schools that participate in the program receive cash and some commodities from USDA to offset the cost of providing food. In return, the schools must serve lunches that meet Federal nutrition requirements and offer free or reduced-price lunches to needy children. Any child at a participating school may enroll in the program. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal poverty guidelines are eligible for free meals, and those from families with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty guidelines are eligible for reduced-price meals. Children from families with incomes over 185 percent of the poverty guidelines pay full price, although their meals are still subsidized to a small extent. During fiscal 2013:

- An average 30.6 million children participated in the program each school day or 3 percent fewer than in the previous fiscal year. This marked the second consecutive annual decrease in average participation and the largest 1-year decrease since fiscal 1982.
- The percentage of participants that received free meals increased from 59 percent in fiscal 2012 to 62 percent in fiscal 2013. The percentage of participants that received reduced-price meals decreased from 9 to 8 percent, and the percentage of participants that paid full price fell from 32 percent to 30 percent.
- Despite the decrease in the number of participating children, spending for the program totaled \$12.2 billion or 5 percent more than in the previous fiscal year. This increase in expenditures reflected, at least in part, the percentage increase in free meals (which are more heavily subsidized)

Figure 5

### Share of school lunches served by type of reimbursement, FY 2013



Source: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.

served in the program as well as the implementation of the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 whereby, starting in October 1, 2012, schools serving meals that met updated nutrition requirements received an additional reimbursement of 6 cents per lunch. This was the first noninflationary increase in reimbursement rates in over 30 years.

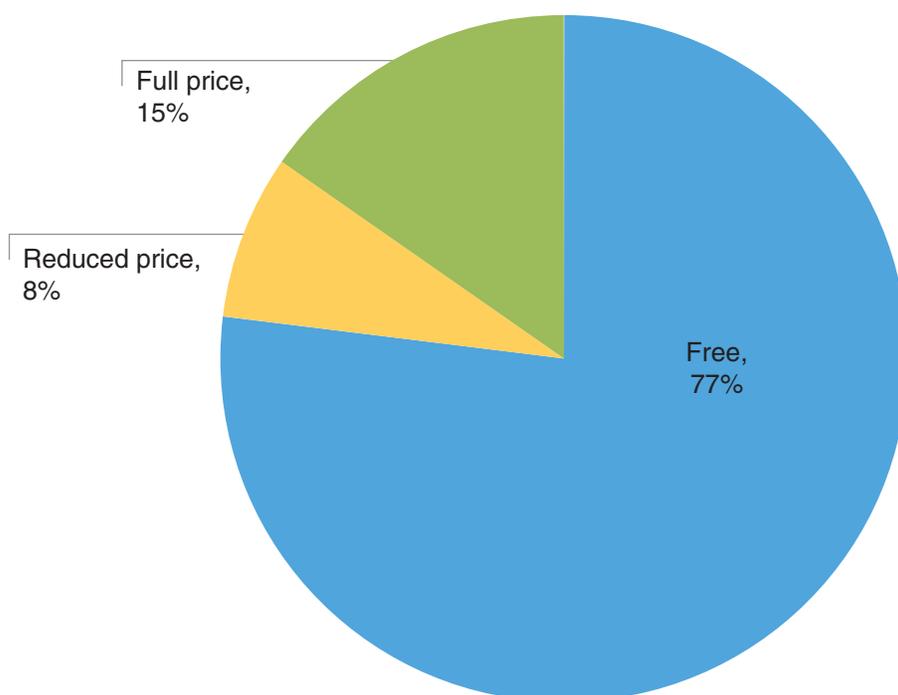
## Participation in School Breakfast Program Increased Slightly

The School Breakfast Program provides low-cost breakfasts to schoolchildren, and students from low-income families receive free or reduced-price meals (eligibility requirements are the same as those for the National School Lunch Program). Schools that participate in the program receive cash from USDA to offset the cost of providing food. Participating schools receive higher “severe need” reimbursements when 40 percent or more of their lunches were served free or at a reduced price during the second preceding school year. During fiscal 2013:

- An average of 13.1 million children participated in the program each school day, or 2 percent more than the previous fiscal year. This was the smallest percentage increase since 2000.
- The percentage of participants that received free meals increased from 76 percent in fiscal 2012 to 77 percent in fiscal 2013, while the percentage of participants that paid full price decreased from 16 percent in fiscal 2012 to 15 percent in fiscal 2013. The percentage of participants that received reduced-price meals remained at 8 percent in fiscal 2013.
- Spending totaled \$3.5 billion or 7 percent more than in the previous year, making the School Breakfast Program the fastest growing of all the major food assistance programs in terms of expenditures.

Figure 6

### Share of school breakfasts served by type of reimbursement, FY 2013



Source: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.

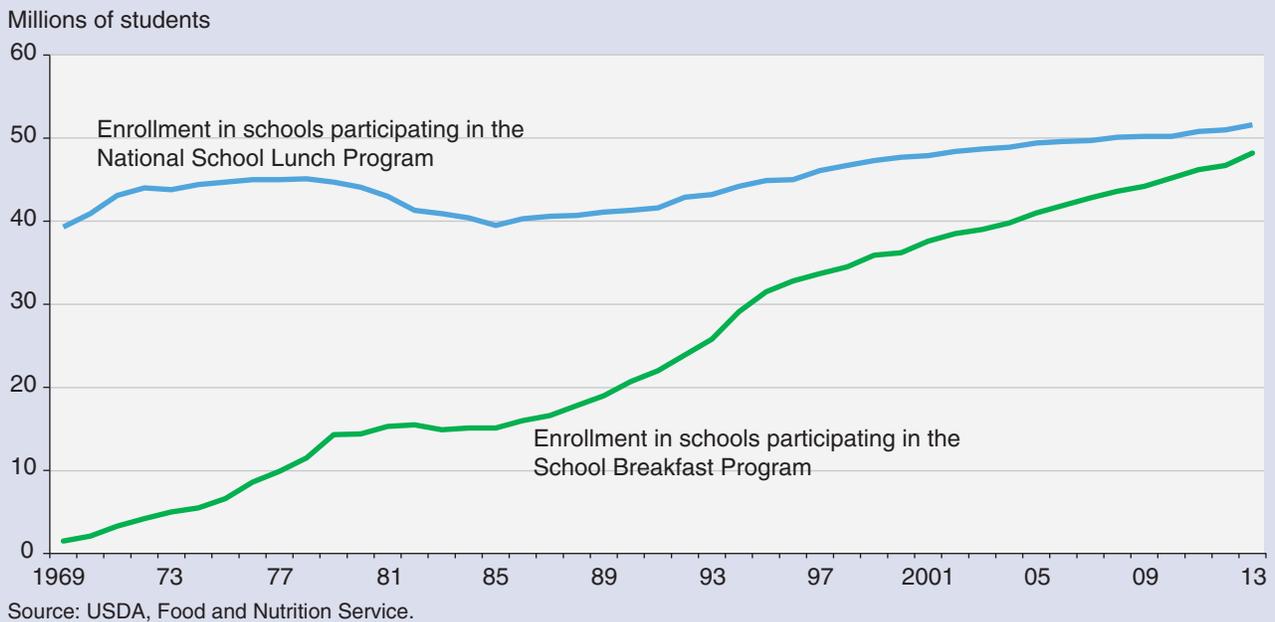
## Availability gap in the school meals programs narrows

The National School Lunch Program was established in 1946 and has been widely available in nearly all public schools and many private schools since the 1970s. The School Breakfast Program is a much newer program—it wasn't granted permanent authorization until 1975—and it was at first targeted to schools in low-income areas that had a greater need for subsidized breakfasts. Throughout its history, the number of children participating in the School Breakfast Program has been much smaller than the number of children participating in the National School Lunch Program. For example, in fiscal 2013, the average daily number of children participating in the School Breakfast Program was only 43 percent of the number of children participating in the National School Lunch Program. The number of participants in the two programs is determined by the availability of the program—that is, the number of students enrolled in schools that offer the school meals—and by the percentage of students in those schools who choose to participate. The School Breakfast Program started out with much lower numbers of participants than the National School Lunch Program had. As the breakfast program funding increased—and grants to schools to help start up the program became more available—the number of schools participating in the breakfast program steadily grew and the number of students with access to the program began approaching that of the National School Lunch Program. By FY 2013, the School Breakfast Program was available to about 94 percent of the students who had access to the National School Lunch Program.

Although program availability rates have converged, student participation rates—the percentage of students in schools that offer the National School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program who receive school meals—remain far apart. For example, in FY 2013, about 59 percent of all children enrolled in schools offering the National School Lunch Program participated in the program while only 27 percent of all children enrolled in schools offering the School Breakfast Program participated in that program. That is, the participation rate among students in the School Breakfast Program is less than half that of students in the National School Lunch Program.

### Availability of the School Meals Programs, FY 1969-2013

*The gap in the availability of the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program is narrowing*



## Child and Adult Care Food Program Expanded Slightly

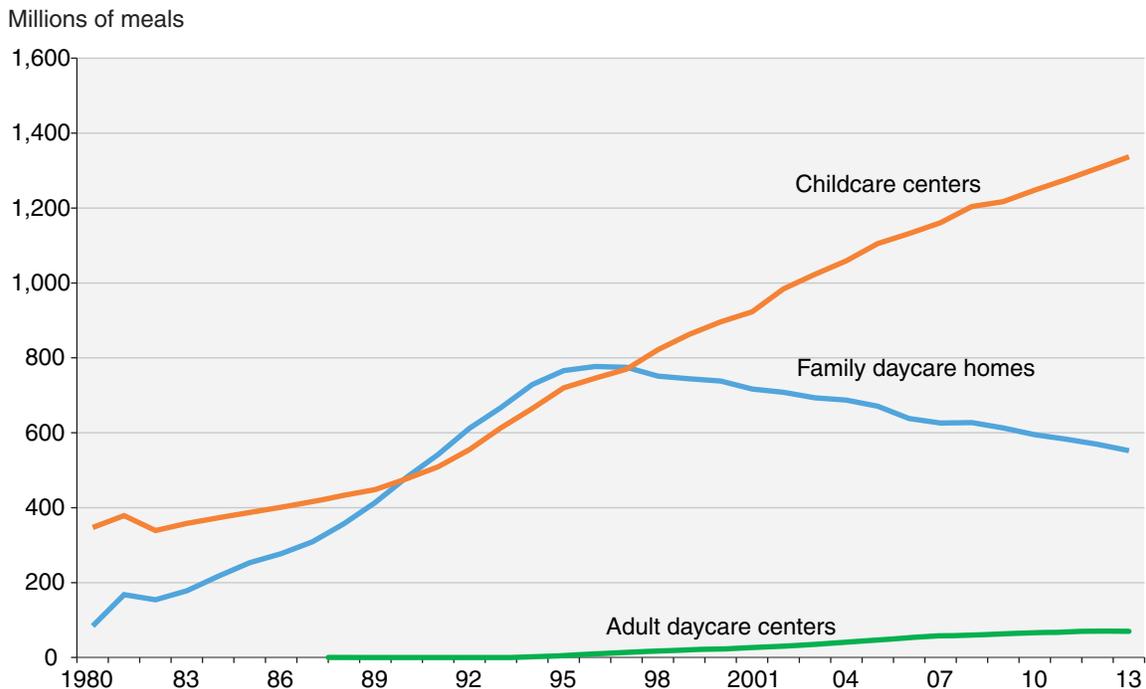
The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) subsidizes healthy meals and snacks in participating childcare centers, daycare homes, and adult daycare facilities. Care providers are reimbursed for each type of qualifying meal (breakfast, lunch/supper, or snack) they serve. In addition to cash reimbursement, USDA makes donated agricultural foods or cash (in lieu of donated foods) available to institutions participating in CACFP. During fiscal 2013:

- A total of almost 2 billion meals were served, or 1 percent more than in the previous year.
- The number of meals served increased by 2 percent in childcare centers while the number of meals served in family daycare homes decreased by 3 percent and the number of meals served in adult daycare centers fell by 1 percent. The decline in the number of meals served in family daycare homes continues a trend that began in FY 1997. The decrease in the number of meals served in adult daycare centers was the first since the program started to include adult daycare centers in fiscal 1988.
- Program expenditures totaled \$3 billion or 4 percent more than in the previous year. This marked the 15th consecutive year that program expenditures increased.

Figure 7

### Meals served in the CACFP by type of provider, FY 1980-2013

*Number of meals served in family daycare centers and adult daycare centers decreased in FY 2013*



CACFP = Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Source: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.

Table 2

**U.S. food security at a glance**

Food security status	2011	2012
	<i>Thousands</i>	
All households	119,484	121,546
• Food-secure households	101,631	103,914
• Food-insecure households	17,853	17,632
— With low food security	11,014	10,679
— With very low food security	6,839	6,953
All households with children	38,803	39,201
• Households with food-insecure children	3,862	3,910
— Households with very low food security among children	374	463
	<i>Percent</i>	
All households		
• Food-secure households	85.1	85.5
• Food-insecure households	14.9	14.5
— With low food security	9.2	8.8
— With very low food security	5.7	5.7
All households with children		
• Households with food-insecure children	10.0	10.0
— Households with very low food security among children	1.0	1.2

Source: *Household Food Security in the United States in 2012*, ERR-155, USDA, Economic Research Service, September 2013.

## Prevalence of Food Insecurity Unchanged

Food security—access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life—is one of several conditions necessary for a population to be healthy and well nourished. Food-insecure households are those that at times lack adequate food for one or more household members because they have insufficient money or other resources for food. In the more severe range of food insecurity, described as very low food security, the food intake of one or more household members was reduced and their eating patterns were disrupted at times during the year because the household lacked money and other resources for food.

USDA monitors household food security in the United States through an annual survey sponsored by ERS. Household food security status is based on responses to a questionnaire about food-insecure conditions experienced by household members in the last 12 months. The most recent available data are from the December 2012 survey. During 2012:

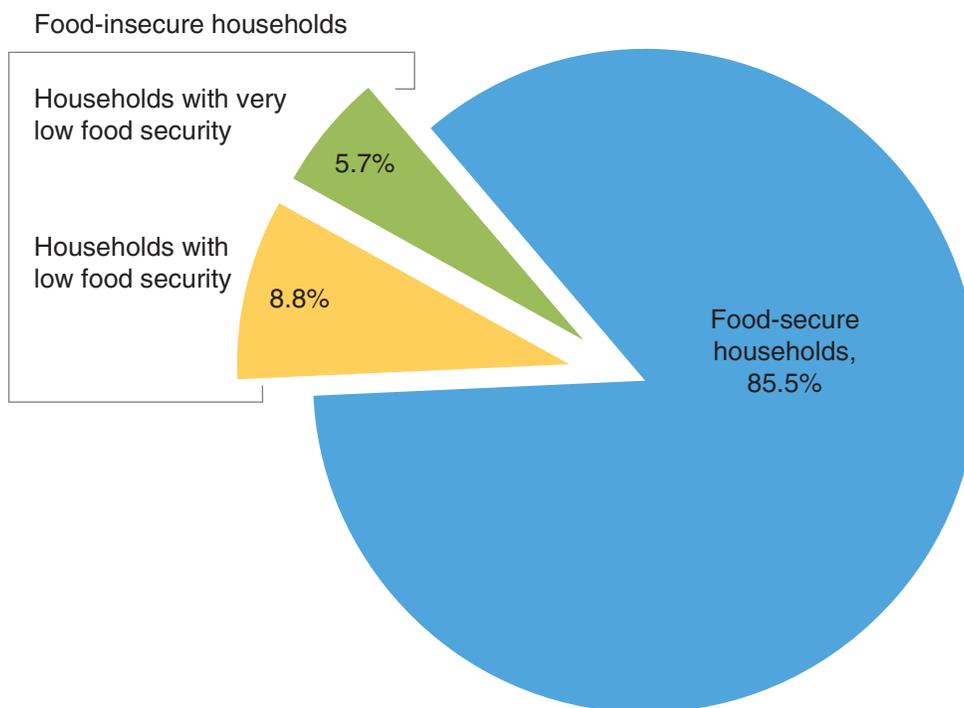
- An estimated 14.5 percent of U.S. households (or 17.6 million households) were food-insecure at least some time during the year, essentially unchanged from the previous year.

- A total of 5.7 percent of all households (7.0 million households) had very low food security—the most severe food-insecure condition monitored by USDA. Typically, households classified as having very low food security experienced the condition in 7 months of the year, for a few days in each of those months.
- Children were food-insecure at times during the year in 10 percent (3.9 million households) of all households with children. In about 1.2 percent of households with children (463,000 households), one or more children experienced very low food security. In households with very low food security among children, caregivers reported that children were hungry, skipped a meal, or did not eat for a whole day because there was not enough money for food.
- The typical food-secure household spent 26 percent more for food than the typical food-insecure household of the same size and composition.
- Fifty-nine percent of food-insecure households in the month prior to the survey participated in one or more of the three largest food and nutrition assistance programs (i.e., SNAP, National School Lunch Program, or WIC).

Figure 8

**U.S. households by food security status, 2012**

*An estimated 14.5 percent of Americans were food-insecure at least some time during the year in 2012*



Source: *Household Food Security in the United States*, ERR-155, USDA, Economic Research Service, September 2013.

## Economic and Social Indicators Related to Participation in Food Assistance Programs

Economic and social conditions affect participation in and spending on food assistance programs by influencing (1) the size of the eligible population, (2) the rate of participation among eligible people, and (3) benefit levels. The extent to which the programs respond to changing economic and social conditions affects the lives of millions of Americans and has Federal budgetary implications.

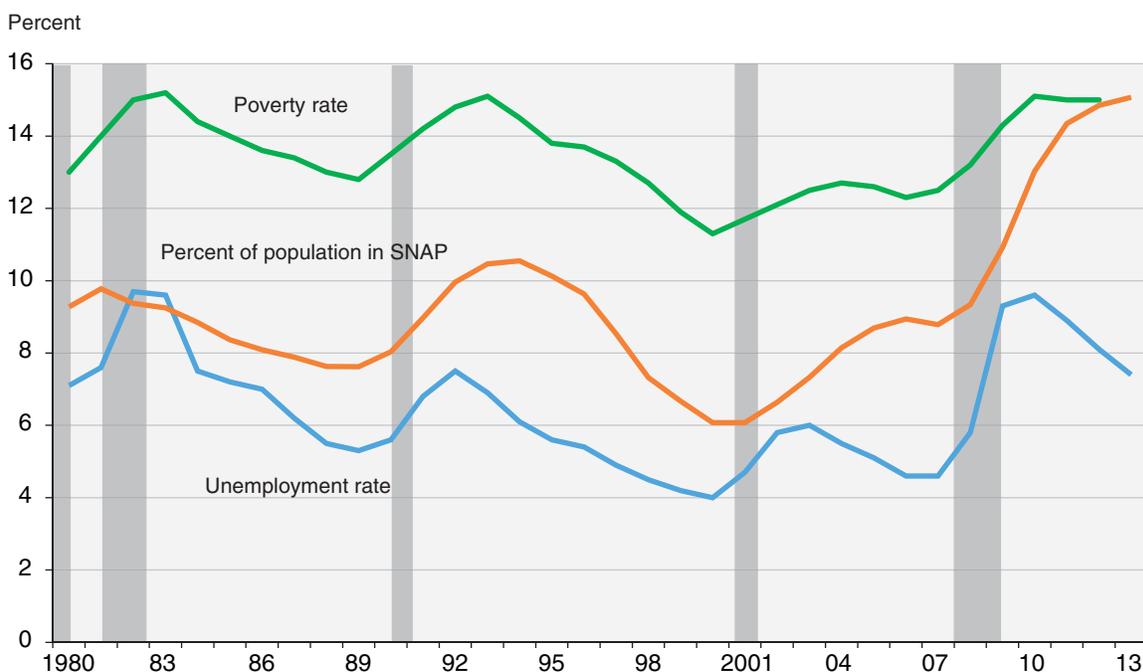
As means-tested programs, the number of persons eligible for USDA’s food and nutrition assistance programs is inherently linked to the economy. In particular, there is a strong association between economic conditions and SNAP caseloads. SNAP is one of the Nation’s primary countercyclical programs, expanding during economic downturns and contracting during periods of economic growth. In general, the percentage of the population in SNAP closely tracks the poverty rate. This important relationship emerges because to be eligible for the program, monthly gross income (i.e., a household’s total income before deductions) generally must be at or below 130 percent of poverty, and monthly net income (after allowable deductions) must be at or below 100 percent of poverty. The percentage of the population in SNAP also generally tracks the unemployment rate.

The percentage of the population in SNAP increased in both fiscal 2012 and 2013, even as the unemployment rate fell for the third consecutive calendar year—a result inconsistent with the historic relationship between the two variables. The improvement of economic conditions during the early stage of recovery, when the unemployment rate starts to fall, takes longer to be felt by lower educated, low-wage workers who are receiving SNAP benefits. For example, the poverty rate in 2012 (the latest year

Figure 9

### Percentage of population in SNAP and selected economic indicators, 1980-2013

*Several economic indicators track the percentage of population in SNAP*



Note: Gray vertical bars indicate recession. SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Recessions: January 1980 to July 1980, July 1981 to November 1982, July 1990 to March 1991, March 2001 to November 2001, December 2007 to Jun3 2009.

Source: USDA, Food and Nutrition Service; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; and U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 3

**Selected economic and social indicators, 2010-2013**

Indicator	2010	2011	2012	2013
Population in July (millions)	309.3	311.6	313.9	316.1
Births (thousands)	3,999	3,954	3,958 (PR)	NA
School enrollment (thousands)	54,876	54,956 (PJ)	55,091 (PJ)	55,288 (PJ)
Prekindergarten-grade 8 (thousands)	38,716	38,909 (PJ)	39,115 (PJ)	39,334 (PJ)
Grades 9-12 (thousands)	16,160	16,047 (PJ)	15,976 (PJ)	15,954 (PJ)
Unemployed persons (thousands)	14,825	13,747	12,506	11,460
Unemployment rate (percent)	9.6	8.9	8.1	7.4
Persons in poverty (millions)	46.3	46.2	46.5	NA
Poverty rate (percent)	15.1	15.0	15.0	NA
Children in poverty (millions)	16.3	16.1	16.1	NA
Poverty rate for children (under 18)	22.0	21.9	21.8	NA
People without health insurance (percent)	16.3	15.7	15.4	NA
Median household income (2012 dollars)	51,892	51,100	51,017	NA
CPI for all items (percent change)	1.6	3.2	2.1	1.5
CPI for food (percent change)	0.8	3.7	2.6	1.4
CPI for food at home	0.3	4.8	2.5	0.9
CPI for food away from home	1.3	2.3	2.8	2.1
Real GDP (percent change)	2.5	1.8	2.8	1.9
TANF recipients in June (thousands)	4,346	4,389	4,002	3,684

CPI = Consumer Price Index; GDP = Gross Domestic Product; TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

NA = Data not available; (PJ) = Projected; (PR) = Provisional.

U.S. Census Bureau: Population, poverty, household income, and health insurance data.

National Center for Education Statistics: School enrollment data.

National Center for Health Statistics: Birth data.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: CPI, and unemployment data.

U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis: GDP data.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: TANF data.

available) was about the same as during the 2 previous years, suggesting that while unemployment was falling, many low-income households did not share in the economic growth. During previous economic recessions, the unemployment rate fell before SNAP participation decreased (a lagged response). It is possible that as the economy continues to recover, SNAP participation will follow but with a longer lag than following previous recessions.

Changing demographics, like changing economic conditions, can affect participation in USDA's food assistance programs. While the U.S. population continues to increase, the number of births has fallen each year since 2007. Participation in WIC is heavily influenced by the number of births. The participation of pregnant women (up to 9 months before birth), infants and breastfeeding women (up to 1 year following birth) and nonbreastfeeding postpartum women (6 months following birth) in WIC all occur within a short window surrounding a birth event. In total, these groups comprised almost half of all WIC participants in fiscal 2013. As children age, the group of potential WIC participants is less dependent on the number of recent births, and more influenced by births in earlier periods. Participation in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs is influenced by school enrollment, which, in turn, is impacted by the number of births in the more distant past.

## ERS Research Update

ERS is one of the premier sources of economic research on food and nutrition assistance programs in the United States. This research is conducted internally by ERS staff as well as through a portfolio of ERS-funded extramural research projects and partnerships. ERS has compiled an electronic database of over 900 peer-reviewed reports, available at: [www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-and-nutrition-assistance-research-database/research-reports-articles-database.aspx](http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-and-nutrition-assistance-research-database/research-reports-articles-database.aspx)

Each year, ERS releases summary national statistics on household food security, food spending, and use of Federal food and nutrition assistance programs by food-insecure households. In 2013, two ERS reports provided additional detailed information on the food security of adults with disabilities and households with children.

***Food Insecurity Among Households With Working-Age Adults With Disabilities, ERR-144, January 2013.*** This study used 2009 and 2010 data to examine the prevalence and severity of household food insecurity by the presence of adults age 18-64 with disabilities. The study focused on two groups of households that include adults with disabilities: (1) households with a working-age adult with a disability that prevented work (referred to as *not in labor force-disabled*); and (2) those with a working-age adult with a specified disability (hearing, vision, mental, physical, self-care, or going-outside-home disability) that are not necessarily work-limiting (referred to as *other reported disabilities*). Persons with disabilities who are unable to work due to their disability may be more severely disabled or have poorer health than persons with disabilities who are not reported to be unable to work due to disability.

Food insecurity was most prevalent among households with an adult who was *not in labor force-disabled* (34 percent), followed by those with a working-age adult with *other reported disabilities* (25 percent). Households with no working-age adult with a disability had a much lower prevalence of food insecurity (12 percent).

Very low food security, the more severe range of food insecurity characterized by disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake, was also more common among households with adults with disabilities than among other households: 17 percent of households with a member who was *not in labor*

*force-disabled* had very low food security and 12 percent of households with a working-age adult with *other reported disabilities* had very low food security. Among households with no working-age adults with disabilities, 5 percent had very low food security.

Households that include working-age adults with disabilities comprise a large share of food-insecure households. While about 16 percent of all U.S. households with working-age adults included a working-age adult with a disability, an estimated 32 percent of households with food insecurity included a working-age adult with a disability and nearly 38 percent of households with very low food security included a working-age adult with a disability.

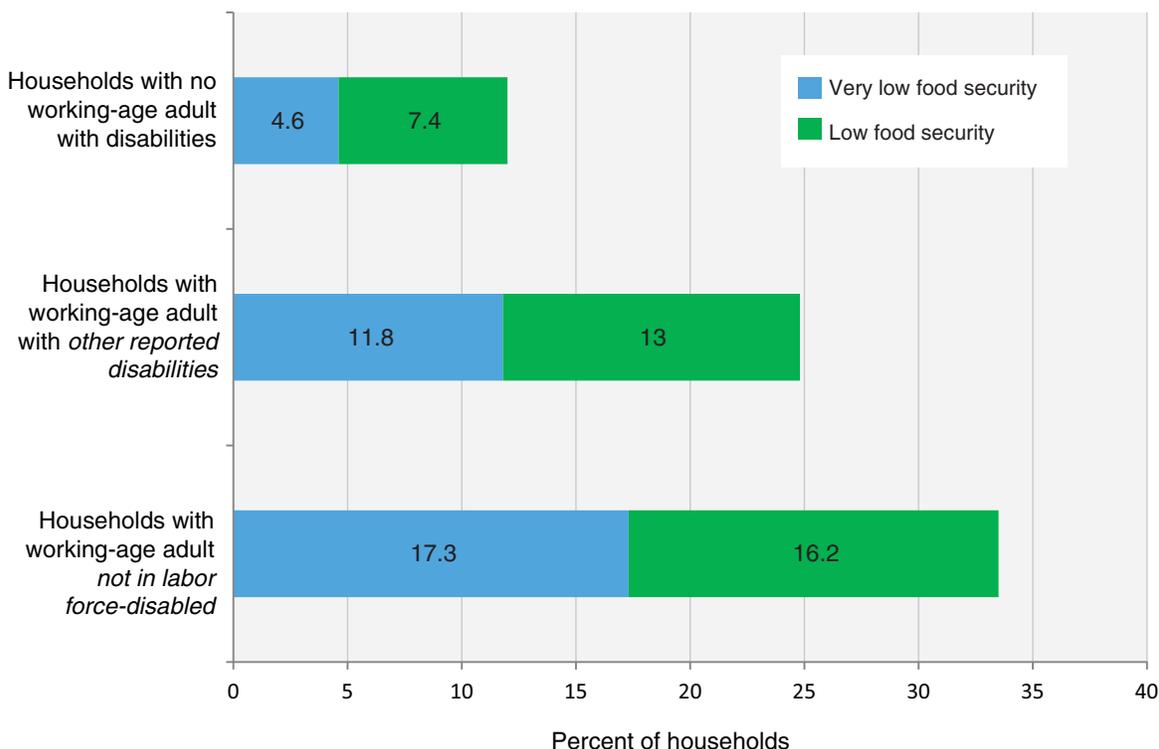
Whether disabilities prevented employment was an important factor related to food insecurity among households that included adults with disabilities. Vision, mental, and physical disabilities were related to higher odds of food insecurity than were hearing, self-care, and going-outside-home disabilities.

The influence of disability on earnings and income appears to have especially detrimental effects on food security. Lower capacity for employment and lower income are large parts of the reason that households with adults who have disabilities are more likely to experience food insecurity. Disabilities

Figure 10

**Prevalence of food insecurity by disability status**

*Food insecurity most prevalent among households with an adult with disability that prevented work*



Notes: Working-age adults with *other reported disabilities* are those reported to have one or more of the following disabilities: hearing, vision, mental, physical, self-care, or going-outside-home disability, but no indication that their disability prevented them from working.

Food insecurity includes households with low and very low food security.

Source: *Food Insecurity Among Households With Working-Age Adults With Disabilities*, ERR-144, USDA, Economic Research Service, January 2013.

affect the earning potential of persons with disabilities and also affect the employment of other household adults who may need to provide care for the member with a disability.

However, even with annual income accounted for, disability was associated with a substantially higher likelihood of food insecurity. The findings suggest that costs associated with disability are an important factor affecting food insecurity. The prevalence of food insecurity among households with a member *not in the labor force-disabled*, and income more than three times the poverty line was equivalent to the prevalence of food insecurity in households with no adults with disabilities and with incomes twice the poverty line. These statistics suggest that households with adults who have disabilities face high expenses that reduce resources available for the household food budget. Thus, even households with moderate incomes face a high likelihood of food insecurity due to costs associated with disability.

***Food Insecurity in Households With Children: Prevalence, Severity, and Household Characteristics, 2010-11, EIB-113, May 2013.*** This report averaged 2 years of data (2010-11) to examine the prevalence and severity of food insecurity in households with children age 0-17 by selected household characteristics. Food security is especially important for children because their nutrition affects not only their current health, but also their physical, mental, and social development—and thus their future health and well-being.

Results from the study suggest that employment is a key determinant of food insecurity in households with children. The prevalence of food insecurity among children in households headed by an unemployed adult (26 percent) was 3 ½ times as high as in households headed by one or more adult employed full time (7 percent). However, three-quarters of households with food-insecure children had one or more adult in the labor force, either full time (60 percent) or part time (15 percent).

Educational attainment is also strongly associated with food insecurity in households with children. For households headed by an adult with less than a high school diploma, the prevalence of food insecurity among children (24 percent) was over six times as high as for households headed by an adult with at least a 4-year college degree (4 percent).

Disabilities are also an important risk factor for food insecurity in households with children. Food insecurity among children was more than twice as prevalent in households with an adult who was unable to work due to disability (21 percent) and in households with a working-age adult with other reported disabilities (18 percent) as in households with no working-age adult with a disability (9 percent).

Food insecurity among children was three times as prevalent in households headed by single women (19 percent) as in households headed by married couples (6 percent). Food insecurity among children was more than 2.5 times as prevalent for households headed by non-Hispanic Blacks (16 percent) and Hispanics (17 percent) as for those headed by non-Hispanic Whites (6 percent).

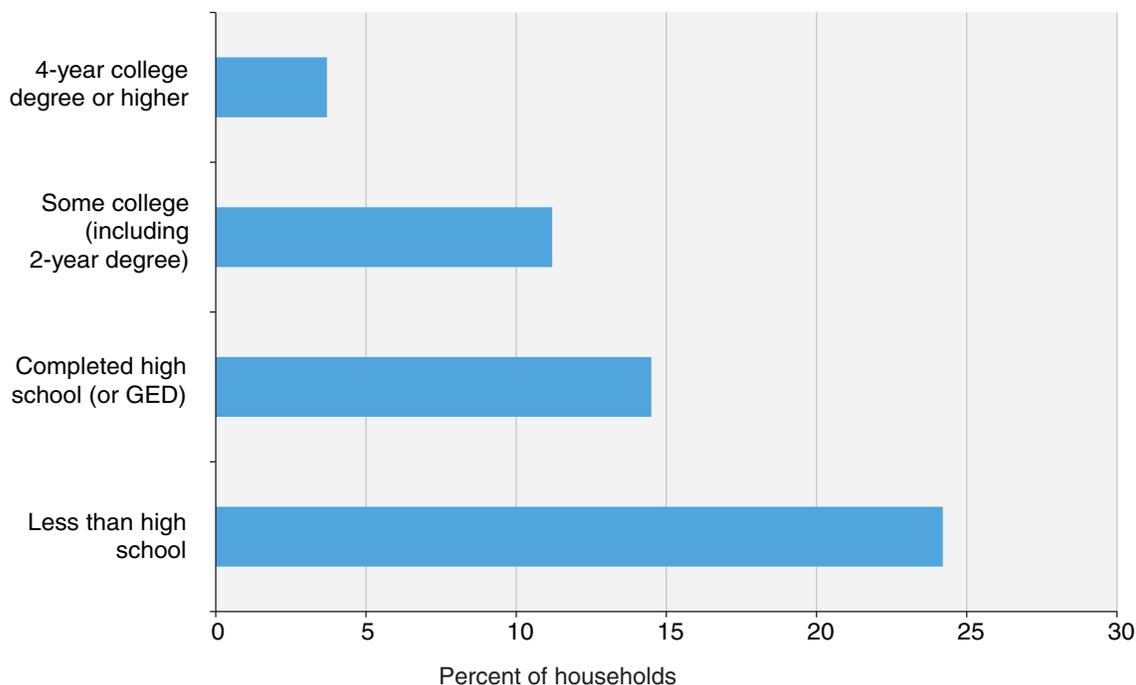
Federal food and nutrition assistance programs provided benefits to 84 percent of low-income households with food-insecure children (low-income households are those with incomes below 185 percent of the Federal poverty line). Children in about 70 percent of low-income households with food-insecure children received free or reduced-price school meals in 2010-11, about 42 percent of low-income households with food-insecure children received SNAP benefits, and about 25 percent received WIC benefits. Many households received assistance from multiple programs, although about 31 percent reported receiving only free or reduced-price school meals.

Low-income households not receiving assistance from any of the programs were less likely to be food insecure (12 percent) than those that did receive assistance (approximately 23-30 percent, depending on the mix of programs). This difference suggests that low-income households with greater food security are less likely to choose to participate in food assistance programs.

Figure 11

**Prevalence of food insecurity among children, by educational attainment of most educated adult in the household, 2010-11 average**

*Educational attainment of adults is strongly associated with food insecurity among children*



Source: *Food Insecurity in Households With Children*, EIB-113, USDA, Economic Research Service, May 2013.

Information on food assistance research can be found on the ERS website at [www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodnutritionassistance](http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodnutritionassistance) and on the FNS Office of Research and Analysis website at [www.fns.usda.gov/ora/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/). Information on USDA's food assistance programs can be found at [www.fns.usda.gov/fns/](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/). For more information on this report, contact Victor Oliveira at [victoro@ers.usda.gov](mailto:victoro@ers.usda.gov).