



The Food Assistance Landscape: FY 2018 Annual Report

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What Is the Issue?

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers 15 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs that together affect the lives of millions of people. These programs also represent a significant Federal investment, accounting for over two-thirds of USDA's annual budget. This report uses preliminary data (which are subject to change as data are finalized) from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service to examine trends in food and nutrition assistance programs through fiscal year (FY) 2018. It also looks at trends in economic and social indicators that affect participation in and spending on food and nutrition assistance programs. In addition, the report highlights two recent ERS studies: one that examines the prevalence and severity of household food insecurity in the United States through 2017, and another that estimates the economic impacts of increased breastfeeding among participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

What Did the Study Find?

- Spending for USDA's 15 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs totaled \$96.1 billion in FY 2018, 3 percent less than in the previous fiscal year and 12 percent less than the historical high of \$109.2 billion set in FY 2013.
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) accounted for 68 percent of all Federal food and nutrition assistance spending in FY 2018 (see pie chart below). On average, 40.3 million people per month participated in the program, 4 percent fewer than in the previous fiscal year. Reflecting the decrease in participation, Federal spending for SNAP totaled \$65.0 billion, or about 5 percent less than in the previous fiscal year. This was also 19 percent less than the historical high of \$79.9 billion set in FY 2013.
- On average, 6.9 million people per month participated in WIC in FY 2018, 6 percent fewer than in the previous fiscal year. This was the largest single-year decrease in the program's history. The decrease in participation combined with a decrease in average per person food costs in FY 2018 lowered total spending on the program to \$5.3 billion, 6 percent less than in the previous fiscal year and 26 percent less than the historical high of \$7.2 billion set in FY 2011.
- On average, 29.7 million children participated in the National School Lunch Program each schoolday in FY 2018, 1 percent fewer than in the previous fiscal year and about 7

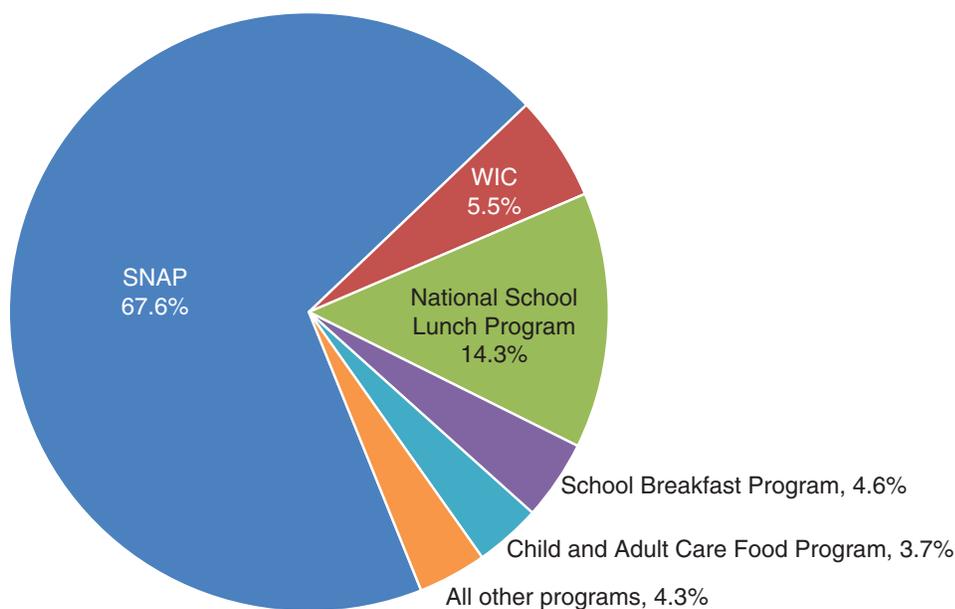
ERS is a primary source of economic research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

- percent fewer than in FY 2011. Over two-thirds (68 percent) of participants received a free lunch and another 6 percent received a reduced-price lunch.
- An average of 14.7 million children participated in the School Breakfast Program each schoolday in FY 2018, an increase of less than 1 percent from the previous fiscal year. This was the smallest annual percentage increase since 1982. Eighty percent of participants received a free breakfast and another 5 percent received a reduced-price breakfast.
- About 2 billion meals were served in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, a decrease of almost 1 percent from the previous year. This was the second consecutive year—and only the fourth time in the program’s history—that the number of meals served decreased.

Summary figure 1

USDA food and nutrition assistance expenditures by program, FY 2018

SNAP accounted for over two-thirds of food and nutrition assistance expenditures



SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

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

Note: Expenditures for all food and nutrition programs totaled \$96.1 billion. They include nutrition family assistance grants to Puerto Rico, the Northern Marianas, and American Samoa; the Commodity Supplemental Food Program; the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations; the Nutrition Services Incentive Program; the Summer Food Program; the Special Milk Program; Disaster Feeding; The Emergency Food Assistance Program; and nutrition programs administration.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.

How Was the Study Conducted?

This report uses preliminary data from USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)—the agency responsible for administering the food and nutrition assistance programs—to examine program trends through FY 2018 (October 1, 2017, to September 30, 2018).