Store Survey of Large SNAP Retailers

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| This survey is being conducted for the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture as part of a study of the large retail chains participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps). All responses will be kept private to the extent allowed by law; no names will be used in our reports, and only aggregated results will be reported.  The study is authorized by the Agricultural Act of 2014, 7 U.S. Code § 2026 - Research, demonstration, and evaluations, (l) Cooperation with Program Research and Evaluation, which says “States, State agencies, local agencies, institutions, facilities such as data consortiums, and contractors participating in programs authorized under this Act shall— ‘‘(1) cooperate with officials and contractors acting on behalf of the Secretary in the conduct of evaluations and studies under this Act; and 2) submit information at such time and in such manner as the Secretary may require.’’  Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to:  U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service Office of Policy Support  Alexandria, VA 22302 Attn: Dr. Eric Sean Williams  **We thank you for your cooperation and participation in this very important study.** |

***SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS***

***This survey asks about loss prevention and SNAP violations. Misuse of SNAP in retail settings includes these types of violations:***

* ***SNAP benefits being accepted for non-food or hot food purchases.***
* ***Cash being provided as change for SNAP benefits.***
* ***SNAP benefits being exchanged for cash, usually at a lesser value.***
* ***SNAP purchases being returned for cash or store credit instead of being credited to the SNAP EBT card.***
* ***Stolen cards being used to make purchases at authorized SNAP retail stores.***
* ***Purchased cards being used to make purchases at authorized SNAP retail stores.***

***FNS recognizes that some violations can occur due to misunderstanding, lack of knowledge, and that stolen, purchased cards and non-receipted returns may not be detectable by SNAP retailers.***

***Please complete this electronic survey by either marking the appropriate answer or typing an answer in the space provided.***

# Surrounding Area

First, we have a few questions about the area surrounding this store.*[[1]](#footnote-1)*

1. Is there a public transportation stop (bus, subway, train, el, etc.) within half a mile of this store?

Yes

No

Not sure

1. Is there a major highway exit, interstate exit, or freeway exit within one mile of this store?

Yes

No

Not sure

1. Is this store:

A detached, free-standing building that is not located in a shopping center or strip mall

Located in a strip mall

Located in a shopping center

Located inside a shopping mall

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

1. Is the area surrounding this store primarily:

Commercial

Residential

Industrial

Tourist

Not sure

1. Is the area where this store is located a low crime, average crime, or high crime area?

Low crime

Average crime

High crime

Not sure

# Store Policies &Procedures

Next, we have a few questions about policies and procedures at this store.

1. Is it store policy to allow food items for return?

Yes

No

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

**IF NO, skip to 8**

**IF YES:**

6A. Are all food items allowed or only non-perishable food products?

All

Only non-perishable

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

1. Does your store allow non-receipted returns of food items?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

**IF YES:**

7A. Please estimate the percent of food returns your store accepts without a receipt.

Percent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_%

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

7B. For a non-receipted return of food, is this store’s policy for associates to first ask what form of payment was used in the purchase?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

7C. If the type of payment cannot be confirmed, what is possible? [Please mark all that apply.]

Return is refused

Customer is given a like item in exchange

Customer is given store credit for the item

Customer is given cash for the item

Customer is given their preference (like item, store credit, or cash)

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

1. Does the store have a policy when three or more payment cards (of any kind) are used by a customer?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

**IF YES:**  
8A. What is the policy? (Select the response that is closest to store policy.)

Accept the cards

Accept the cards and report it to a supervisor, store manager or security

Call in supervisor, store manager, or security to determine how to handle the situation

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. Does the store have a policy about a customer using three or more SNAP EBT cards?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

**IF YES:**

9A. What is the policy? (Mark the response that is closest to store policy.)

Accept the cards

Accept the cards and report it to a supervisor, store manager, or security

Call in supervisor, store manager, or security to determine how to handle the situation

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

1. Do you have any "Do-It-Yourself” (DIY) or self-checkouts?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Prefer not to answer

**IF YES**:

10A. Please estimate the percent of this store’s SNAP sales that are made at self-checkouts.

Percent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_%

Prefer not to answer

1. Is this store open 24-hours a day?

Yes

No

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

# SNAP in This store

*The first set of questions relates to SNAP use in this store.*

1. What is/are your source(s) of information about SNAP program requirements that apply to the store? (Please mark ALL that apply.)

Corporate representatives

Notices received directly from the federal-level Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

Federal-level Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) website

Notices directly from state-level departments and organizations responsible for managing SNAP funds (such as the state Department of Children and Family Services)

Notices on state-level department and organization websites

Professional association meetings, newsletters or websites

Word of mouth

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

**IF ‘From Corporate Representatives’:**

12A How often do you meet or talk on the phone with your district manager or other company representatives (either formally or informally) to discuss SNAP-related issues (policies, procedures, fraud, etc.)?

At least once a week

At least once a month

At least once a quarter

At least once a year

Less than once a year

Never

Prefer not to answer

1. In this store does a SNAP EBT purchase takes less time, about the same amount of time, or more time to complete than a purchase made with another form of payment?

Less

Same

More

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

**IF ‘TAKES MORE TIME’:**

13A. Do any of these situations cause SNAP transactions to take more time? (Please mark ALL that apply.)

Some SNAP participants try to purchase non-permitted items

Some SNAP participants ask for cash

Some SNAP participants try to use expired cards

Some SNAP participants try to use an SNAP EBT card with insufficient funds

Some SNAP participants do not know their PIN

Some SNAP participants need to use multiple payment methods

Electronic approval of SNAP EBT transaction processing is sometimes slower or less reliable than other forms of tender

Other (Please describe): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. Approximately what percentage of this store’s total sales are accounted for by SNAP purchases?

Percent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_%

Prefer not to answer

# Loss Prevention in This Store

*Now we want to ask about this store’s loss prevention systems, beginning with security.*

1. Which of the following security measures are used in this store? (Please mark ALL that apply)

Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS)

Closed circuit television (CCTV)

Uniformed guards

Undercover LP agents

Signs/special signage

Public-view monitors (PVM)

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

**If YES to one or more security measures:**

15A. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "not effective at all" and 5 is "very effective," please answer the following questions.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 - Not at all effective | 2 – Slightly effective | 3 – Somewhat effective | 4 - Effective | 5 - Very effective | Not sure | Prefer not to answer |
| How effective are the store’s security measures in reducing shrink? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| How effective are the store’s security measures in limiting misuse of SNAP benefits? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Now we have some questions about your POS system.

1. Does this store have a POS system?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

**IF YES:**

16A. Can inventory for this store be monitored through the POS?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

16B. Is the POS system programmed to detect permitted products for purchase with SNAP benefits? Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

16C. Does the POS system lock the cash drawer during a SNAP EBT transaction?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

16D. Does the POS system require manager approval of a void?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

16E. Does the POS system require manager approval of use of a generic SKU (e.g., “grocery" instead of specific item)?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

16F. Does the POS system require a manager approval of an override?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

16G. Does the POS or timecard system require a photo clock-in for all staff with register access?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

16H. Does the POS have automatic logout for inactivity?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

16I. Does the POS record transaction revenues by form of tender?

Yes

No

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

16J. How long can a transaction be accessed in the POS?

1 day or less

2 to 7 days

8 to 14 days

15 to 30 days

1 to 3 months

4 to 6 months

7 to 9 months

10 to 12 months

More than 1 year

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

16K. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "not effective at all" and 5 is "very effective," please answer the following questions.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 - Not at all effective | 2 – Slightly effective | 3 – Somewhat effective | 4 - Effective | 5 - Very effective | Not sure | Prefer not to answer |
| How effective is this store’s POS in reducing shrink? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| How effective is this store’s POS in limiting misuse of SNAP benefits? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. Is video surveillance used at the POS?

Yes

No

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

**IF YES:**

17A. Does video surveillance at the POS monitor the area as a whole, individual check-out lanes, or both?

POS area

Individual check-outs

Both

Prefer not to answer

17B. Does video surveillance capture images of the cashiers/store associates, customers, or both? Cashiers/store associates

Customers

Both

Neither

Prefer not to answer

17C. Is video surveillance at the POS monitored in real time, recorded for later review, or both?

Monitored in real time

Recorded

Both

Prefer not to answer

17D. How long is video surveillance data retained by this store?

1 day or less

2 to 7 days

8 to 14 days

15 to 30 days

1 to 3 months

4 to 6 months

7 to 9 months

10 to 12 months

More than 1 year

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

17E. Does POS video surveillance data link electronically to individual transactions in the POS?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

17F. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "not effective at all" and 5 is "very effective," please answer the following questions.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 - Not at all effective | 2 – Slightly effective | 3 – Somewhat effective | 4 - Effective | 5 - Very effective | Not sure | Prefer not to answer |
| How effective is this store’s video surveillance system in reducing shrink? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| How effective is this store’s POS in limiting misuse of SNAP benefits? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

# Fraud and Theft

Next we have some questions on fraud and theft.

1. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "not a problem at all" and 5 is "a significant problem," how problematic are the following issues for this store?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 (Not a problem at all) | 2 – Rarely a problem | 3 – Sometimes a problem | 4 - Often a problem | 5 - A significant problem | Not sure | Prefer not to answer |
| Coupon fraud |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Employee theft |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Shoplifting |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Return fraud |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SNAP fraud |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Violent crime |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Bookkeeping/Processing errors |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. If employee fraud or theft is suspected, what corporate department is notified?

Prefer not to answer

1. In the past year, has the manager or a relevant supervisor of this store been notified by corporate or observed any of these situations involving cashiers/associates in this store? (Please mark ALL that apply)

Excessive overrides

Excessive use of generic SKUs (e.g., “grocery” instead of a specific item)

Excessive use of voids

Excessive use of register markdowns

Discrepancies between cash and other forms of tender

Cash reconciliation issues

Slow transaction time

High return volume

High return dollars

None of these

Prefer not to answer

**IF ‘None of these’ Skip to Q24:**

20A.Considering these situations over the last year, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is “not at all often” and 5 is “Always,” please describe how often these situations were resolved in these ways.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 - Not at all effective | 2 – Slightly effective | 3 – Somewhat effective | 4 - Effective | 5 - Very effective | Prefer not to answer |
| Disciplining the employee |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Re-training the employee |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Closer monitoring of employee performance |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Follow-up by in-store investigator |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Investigation involving corporate LP/AP |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Termination of an employee |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. In the past 12 months, how many times has this store used an investigator to look into a concern about fraud or theft in this store?

None

Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

**IF Response to Q24 is >0**:

21A. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "not important at all" and 5 is "very important”, please rate the importance of in-store investigation in protecting this store from fraud and theft.

1 – Not important at all

2 – Rarely important

3 – Somewhat important

4 – Important

5 – Very Important

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

21B. In this store, what types of issues necessitate involvement of an in-store investigator? (Please mark ALL that apply)

Suspected shoplifting

Suspected employee theft of inventory

Suspected employee theft at point-of-sale

Suspected employee theft through bookkeeping, data systems

Suspected SNAP fraud

Resolution of exception reports

Customer slips, falls, other injuries

Developing evidence for legal action

Vandalism, product damage

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

21C. From the following list of skills, experiences and background, which are the three most important for an effective in-store investigator? (Select up to three options)

Prior military service

Prior law enforcement experience

A college education

Prior retail investigative experience

Prior experience in this store

Personal characteristics such as inquisitiveness, persistence, attention to detail

Analytical and logic skills

Investigative skills, such as observation, thoroughness and objectivity

Intuitive skills/gut reaction

Ability to document and communicate findings and conclusions

Prefer not to answer

1. Has this store ever worked with law enforcement officials to investigate SNAP fraud in this store?

Yes

No

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

**IF YES:**

22A. In what ways has this store worked with law enforcement to investigate SNAP fraud?

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is "presents no challenge" and 5 is "presents a significant challenge," how much of a challenge do these types of SNAP violations pose to this store?

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 - Presents no challenge | 2 - Rarely a challenge | 3 - Occasionally a challenge | 4 – Often a challenge | 5 - Presents a significant challenge | Cannot be determined | Prefer not to answer |
| SNAP participants attempting to purchase non-food products with SNAP EBT cards |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SNAP participants getting cash as change for SNAP EBT purchases |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SNAP participants getting cash or non-SNAP items for SNAP EBT returns |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Stolen or purchased SNAP EBT cards being used to make purchases in the company’s stores |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**IF does not present a challenge (responses 1 or 2):**

23A. For items above that you identified as presenting little to no challenge, is that because:

SNAP participants purchasing non-food products with SNAP EBT cards

1 – This type of violation is rarely attempted

2 – This type of violation is not detectable

3 – Store practices/systems prevent this type of violation

4 – Some other reason, please describe? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

SNAP participants getting cash as change for SNAP EBT purchases

1 – This type of violation is rarely attempted

2 – This type of violation is not detectable

3 – Store practices/systems prevent this type of violation

4 – Some other reason, please describe? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

SNAP participants getting cash or non-SNAP items for SNAP EBT returns

1 – This type of violation is rarely attempted

2 – This type of violation is not detectable

3 – Store practices/systems prevent this type of violation

4 – Some other reason, please describe? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

Stolen or purchased SNAP EBT cards being used to make purchases in the company’s stores

1 – This type of violation is rarely attempted

2 – This type of violation is not detectable

3 – Store practices/systems prevent this type of violation

4 – Some other reason, please describe? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

**IF store practices/systems prevent this type of violation (response 3):**

23B What works best in preventing this type of violation?

SNAP participants purchasing non-food products with SNAP EBT cards [Text, Not sure, Prefer not to answer]

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

SNAP participants getting cash as change for SNAP EBT purchases

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

SNAP participants getting cash or non-SNAP items for SNAP EBT returns

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

Stolen or purchased SNAP EBT cards being used to make purchases in the company’s stores

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. If a SNAP violation or fraud issue is suspected in this store, to what department at the corporate level is it reported?

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. In the past 12 months, has this store reported a SNAP violation or fraud issue to corporate offices?

Yes

No

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. Which, if any, of these issues pose a concern to you about this store in the near future? (Please select ALL that apply.)

Coupon fraud

Credit card fraud

Debit card fraud

Employee theft

Organized crime

Return fraud

Self-Checkout theft

Shoplifting

SNAP fraud

Flash mob thefts

Armed robbery

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

26A. Does the store have future plans to increase resources in any of these loss prevention methods? (Please select ALL that apply.)

Loss prevention training

Surveillance

In-store investigation

Analytics/exception reporting

Liaison with law enforcement

Product protection

Other (Please describe):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

Prefer not to answer]

# Store Employees

*Now, we have some questions about this store's employees.*

1. Please indicate which methods are used in this store for hiring/selecting staff who have cash register access? (Please select ALL that apply.)

Reference checks

Criminal background checks

Internet/social media checks

Honesty tests/assessments

In-person interviews

Job-skill assessments (e.g., use of electronic registers, processing payments)  
Other (Please describe):+\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

1. How long does it typically take a new employee to complete training on SNAP requirements (including violations)?

0-15 minutes

16-30 minutes

30-60 minutes

More than 60 minutes

Prefer not to answer

1. How often do staff who operate registers receive updated or on-going training related to SNAP rules and regulations (including violations)?

At least once a week

At least once a month

At least once a quarter

At least once a year

Less than once a year

Never

Prefer not to answer]

1. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “not at all effective” and 5 is “very effective,” how effective is SNAP training in communicating to staff about SNAP rules and regulations (including violations)?

1 – Not at all effective

2 – Slightly effective

3 – Somewhat effective

4 – Effective

5 – Very effective

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. In the past year, did you receive any training on SNAP rules and regulations (including violations)?

Yes

No

Prefer not to Answer

**IF NO:**

33A. In what year did you last receive any training on SNAP rules and regulations (including violations)?

Year\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

1. Have SNAP training materials provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Food and Nutrition Service been used to train employees in this store?

Yes

No

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

**IF YES:**

32A. Using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “not at all effective” and 5 is “very effective,” how effective are the USDA SNAP training materials for store employees in communicating SNAP rules and regulations (including violations)?

1 – Not at all effective

2 – Slightly effective

3 – Somewhat effective

4 – Effective

5 – Very effective

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. On average, how many years has a full-time employee in this store been with the company (include prior company if an acquisition?

Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. On average, how many years has a part-time employee in this store been with the company (include prior company if an acquisition)?

Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Not sure

Prefer not to answer

1. In the past year how many employees have been disciplined or terminated from this store for any suspected or proven theft or fraudulent activities?

Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

1. In the past year how many employees have been disciplined or terminated from this store for any suspected or proven theft or fraudulent activities related to SNAP or EBT cards?

Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

1. Does this store have a hotline (or similar means) for employees to report concerns, awareness of employee theft, and similar issues?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

# Store Manager Background

*Finally, we'd like to know more about your background.*

1. How many years have you worked in retail?

Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

1. How many years have you worked in retail at the management level?

Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

1. How many years have you been working for your current employer (include time with former company in acquisition situation)?

Number:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to answer

*That completes our survey. Thank you again for your time and participation.*

1. Subheadings in italics are read by interviewers in the CATI version of the instrument. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)