

Appendix B – Background Information

In fiscal year 2018, SNAP provided financial support to help meet the nutrition needs of 19.7 million low-income households, comprising 39.6 million low-income individuals. Households received an average of \$256 per month, for a total direct cost of \$64.9 billion.¹ Previous research finds that labor force connection of SNAP recipients is high.² For example, USDA Report No. SNAP-16-CHAR indicates that one-third of all SNAP households and more than half (55 percent) of households with children had earnings. These statistics, however, include all SNAP participants, regardless of age and disability status. Rosenbaum analyzed SNAP Quality Control Household Characteristics data for fiscal year 2011 and prior years and found that among SNAP recipients from households with at least one working-age, nondisabled adult, more than half of such adults worked while receiving SNAP, and more than 80 percent worked in the year prior to or the year after receiving SNAP. The rates were even higher for families with children — more than 60 percent worked while receiving SNAP and almost 90 percent worked in the prior or subsequent year.³ Looking specifically at nondisabled adults without children, a more recent report found that at least 25 percent worked while on SNAP, with nearly 75 percent working in the year before or after receiving benefits. However, the authors noted that these recipients cycled in and out of unemployment and had limited education or training.⁴

¹ <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/34SNAPmonthly-7.pdf>
<https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/resource-files/SNAPsummary-7.pdf>

² See Carlson, S., Rosenbaum, D., & Keith-Jennings, B. (2016). Who Are the Low-Income Childless Adults Facing the Loss of SNAP in 2016? Washington D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Also, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2015, by Kelsey Farson Gray, Sarah Fisher, and Sarah Lauffer. Project Officer, Jenny Genser. Alexandria, VA, 2016 and Srinivasan, M. & Pooler, J. (2017). SNAP Participants Employment Patterns: Findings from the NHIS. Columbia, MD: IMPAQ International.

³ Rosenbaum, D. (2013). *The relationship between SNAP and work among low-income households*. Washington DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

⁴ Carlson, S., Rosenbaum, D., & Keith-Jennings, B. (2016). Who Are the Low-Income Childless Adults Facing the Loss of SNAP in 2016? Washington D.C.: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

While a subset of adult SNAP recipients must work or participate in an employment-related activity as a condition of receiving SNAP benefits, FNS does not require the majority of SNAP recipients—about 67 percent—to register for work or participate in qualifying education or job programs. This majority includes recipients younger than age 18, older than age 59, or those who have a serious disabling condition that precludes them from working.⁵ In addition to these groups, the Federal SNAP work requirements also exempt individuals who meet any of the following conditions:

1. Already work 30 or more hours per week
2. Needed at home to care for children under six years of age or disabled family members
3. Receive TANF benefits
4. Receive Federal unemployment insurance
5. Enrolled in school more than half-time, or
6. Participate in a drug or alcohol treatment program.

SNAP recipients who do not meet the above exemptions (“work registrants”) must meet the following requirements in order remain in compliance with Federal work requirements: (1) register for work; (2) participate in the SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) program if their State requires it; (3) provide information on their employment status; (4) accept offers of suitable employment; and (5) maintain no less than thirty hours of employment per week.

⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2017, by Kathryn Cronquist and Sarah Lauffer. Project Officer, Jenny Genser. Alexandria, VA, 2019.

Within the category of work registrants are members of a smaller subset, Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs). In addition to the general SNAP work requirements just mentioned, this population is subject to time-limited participation in SNAP unless they meet certain conditions. ABAWDs are 18 – 49 years of age, not disabled, and do not reside in a household with a minor. Since the passage of Federal welfare reform legislation in 1996, ABAWDs may only receive SNAP benefits for three of every 36 months unless they work at least 20 hours a week, participate in an employment and training activity for 20 hours per week (averaged monthly), or participate in workfare. States may seek waivers from FNS from the three-month time limit for ABAWDs in counties with high unemployment.

Under the SNAP E&T program, established by the Food Security Act of 1985, States receive a relatively small amount of Federal funding for E&T training. The Act lists allowable SNAP E&T activities and outlines the minimum requirements for all SNAP E&T programs. States have considerable flexibility regarding the design and delivery of SNAP E&T services, including who should participate. States also may exempt work registrants from mandatory participation in SNAP E&T programs based on county of residence or additional individual or household characteristics. States may also choose to focus SNAP E&T programs on recipients who volunteer to participate.

Because the resources for employment and training services for SNAP participants have always been modest in comparison to other State and Federal resources available for such activities, the

program scope has been limited.^{6,7} ABAWDs who cannot find a job and who want to participate in job training but have no opportunity to do so are at risk of losing their SNAP benefits.

The Survey of SNAP and Work focuses on SNAP recipients who are nondisabled and ages 18 to 69. This population includes work registrants and ABAWDs described above, as well as individuals not required to register for work or participate in SNAP work programs (because they are already working 30 hours or more - or are exempt for other reasons, such as receiving unemployment insurance benefits, caring for young children or disabled family members, or age 60 or older). The inclusion of SNAP participants age 60 or older provides for analyses that can illuminate the role of work for older SNAP participants not typically examined. While SNAP participants ages 60-64 are not subject to work requirements, labor force participation among individuals ages 60-64 increased over the last two decades and is projected to continue to increase.⁸ Moreover, while individuals ages 65-69 are eligible for Social Security, more than one-third of individuals in this age group are in the labor force.⁹ Given the high labor force participation among individuals ages 60-69, it is important to understand the employment of SNAP participants in this age group. The inclusion of SNAP participants ages 60-69 in the survey will illuminate the extent to which SNAP continues to serve as a critical work support for

⁶ Rosenbaum, D. (2013). *The relationship between SNAP and work among low-income households*. Washington DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

⁷ In August 2017, most States were operating voluntary SNAP E&T programs (U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS, unpublished report.)

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017). "Table 3.3 Civilian labor force participation rate, by age, sex, race, and ethnicity, 1996, 2006, 2016, and projected 2026 (in percent)." *Civilian labor force participation rate, by age, sex, race, and ethnicity*. Retrieved 20 November 2017, https://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_table_303.htm.

⁹ Kromer, B., & Howard, D. (2013). *Labor Force Participation and work Status of People 65 Years and Older*. U.S. Census Bureau Publication. Retrieved 20 November 2017, from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acsbr11-09.pdf>

individuals who are not subject to SNAP work requirements and may be eligible for Social Security and other benefits.