



**National Report Prepared for Feeding America**

*January 2010*



**Chapter 7.1 – Clients: Use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

**(Excerpted from Hunger in America 2010)**

**[www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org)**

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Mathematica Reference No.: 06251-600

TABLE 7.1.1 (continued)

**7.1 USE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Clients were asked a series of questions relating to SNAP. The first asks whether the client or anyone in the household had *ever* applied for SNAP benefits, and the second asks whether the client or anyone in the household is *currently* receiving SNAP benefits.<sup>47</sup> Table 7.1.1 summarizes the findings from these and other questions related to the use of SNAP.

TABLE 7.1.1  
USE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Participation in SNAP	Pantry Client Households	Kitchen Client Households	Shelter Client Households	All Client Households
Client or anyone in the household had ever applied for SNAP benefits	70.8%	73.4%	77.3%	71.5%
Client or anyone in the household currently receiving SNAP benefits	40.7%	42.3%	42.0%	41.0%
Client or anyone in the household currently not receiving but received SNAP benefits during the previous 12 months <sup>a</sup>	6.2%	8.8%	13.5%	7.0%
Client or anyone in the household had applied for but had not received SNAP benefits during the previous 12 months	22.5%	21.5%	21.2%	22.2%
<b>SAMPLE SIZE (N)</b>	<b>42,441</b>	<b>13,552</b>	<b>5,092</b>	<b>61,085</b>
Number of weeks clients or their households have currently been receiving SNAP benefits (for those who are receiving)				
Less than 2 weeks	1.5%	3.3%	6.6%	2.0%
2-4 weeks	4.9%	7.2%	15.0%	5.8%
5-12 weeks	5.6%	8.6%	8.8%	6.3%
13-51 weeks	23.3%	26.1%	33.8%	24.3%
1-2 years (52-103 weeks)	13.7%	14.1%	16.2%	13.9%
2-4 years (104-207 weeks)	19.8%	17.0%	8.6%	18.8%
4 years or more	31.3%	23.6%	11.1%	29.1%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

<sup>47</sup> Because the first is a “lifetime” measure and the second is based on current circumstances, differences in the responses to these questions do not represent the percentage of clients that are denied participation in the program.

TABLE 7.1.1 (continued)

Participation in SNAP	Pantry Client Households	Kitchen Client Households	Shelter Client Households	All Client Households
Average number of weeks clients or their households have currently been receiving SNAP benefits	196.2	156.4	87.4	184.3
Median number of weeks clients or their households have currently been receiving SNAP benefits	104	52	26	52
Number of weeks during which SNAP benefits usually last <sup>b</sup>				
1 week or less	20.9%	17.9%	9.2%	19.8%
2 weeks	32.0%	28.7%	17.2%	30.8%
3 weeks	29.6%	28.3%	31.7%	29.5%
4 weeks	15.8%	21.6%	36.3%	17.7%
More than 4 weeks	1.7%	3.5%	5.5%	2.2%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Average number of weeks during the month over which SNAP benefits usually last <sup>b</sup>	2.6	2.8	3.4	2.7
Median number of weeks during the month over which SNAP benefits usually last <sup>b</sup>	2	3	3	3
<b>SAMPLE SIZE (N)</b>	<b>17,440</b>	<b>5,659</b>	<b>2,395</b>	<b>25,494</b>

SOURCE: This table was constructed based on usable responses to questions 30, 31, 32, 34, and 35 of the client survey.

NOTES: The percentages presented in this table are based only on usable responses, excluding missing, don't know, and refusal responses. All usable responses were weighted as described in Chapter 3 and in the Technical Appendix volume to represent all emergency food clients of the FA National Network. The sample sizes (N) also include missing data.

The second, third, and fourth rows of the first panel do not add up exactly to the first row due to varying item nonresponses to the question involved.

For the table section describing the number of weeks currently receiving SNAP benefits, missing, don't know, and refusal responses combined are 42.2% for pantry clients, 39.7% for kitchen clients, 42.9% for shelter clients, and 41.9% for all clients.

For the table section describing the number of weeks SNAP benefits usually last, missing, don't know, and refusal responses combined are 40.5% for pantry clients, 38.9% for kitchen clients, 45.7% for shelter clients, and 40.6% for all clients.

Due to possible nonresponse bias, estimates with missing, don't know, and refusal responses greater than 10% should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>a</sup> During the period of data collection, many childless able-bodied adults without disabilities faced time limits on their participation in SNAP.

<sup>b</sup> Most SNAP households (67 percent) receive less than the maximum SNAP benefit with the expectation that they can contribute some of their own funds for food purchases. In other words, program benefits are not designed to last the full month in all households.

Overall, 71.5% of the clients have ever applied for, and 41.0% are currently receiving, SNAP benefits.<sup>48, 49</sup> More information includes:

- 47.8% of the clients who are receiving SNAP benefits have been receiving them for more than two years.
- For 80.2% of the clients who are receiving SNAP benefits, the benefits last for three weeks or less. For 50.6%, they last for two weeks or less.
- On average, SNAP benefits last for 2.7 weeks.

As shown in Table 7.1.1N, the data reviewed above imply that substantial numbers of FA clients participate in SNAP.

TABLE 7.1.1N

## USE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

	Pantry Client Households	Kitchen Client Households	Shelter Client Households	All Client Households
Client or anyone in the household had ever applied for SNAP benefits	8,460,900	1,086,800	828,900	10,371,300
Client or anyone in the household currently receiving SNAP benefits	4,911,500	618,500	504,500	6,034,500
<b>ESTIMATED TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENT HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>11,952,412</b>	<b>1,481,154</b>	<b>1,072,628</b>	<b>14,506,194</b>

NOTE: See Appendix A for the estimated number of people served in subgroups of FA clients.

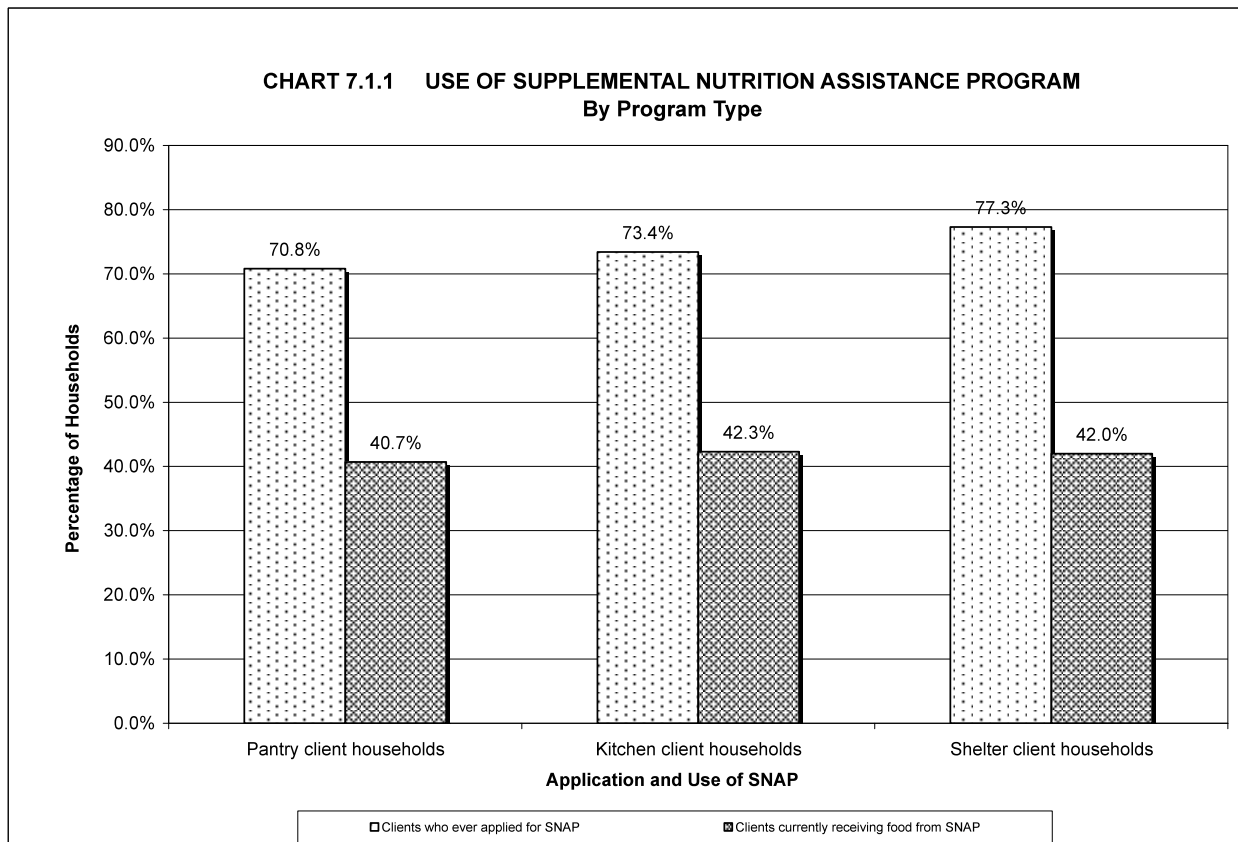
<sup>48</sup> Caution should be used when comparing these estimates, as one question asks whether the respondent has *ever* applied for SNAP benefits, while the other asks whether the respondent is *currently* receiving benefits.

<sup>49</sup> There is a tendency for underreporting of SNAP participation in many surveys. See Gundersen, C. and B. Kreider. "Food Stamps and Food Insecurity: What Can Be Learned in the Presence of Nonclassical Measurement Error?" *Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2008, pp. 352-382.

Columns in this table do not add up exactly to the column total. This discrepancy occurs because tables showing percentage distributions are weighted with the monthly weight, while the number of clients presented in this table is estimated at the annual level. Because the relationship between the monthly and annual weights varies across individuals depending on the frequency of visits to program sites, applying annual estimates to a monthly snapshot of percentage distributions results in small discrepancies in column totals.

Key findings are:

- About 6 million FA households participate in SNAP.
- This number includes: approximately 5 million pantry households, 0.6 million kitchen households and 0.5 million shelter households. (Because of rounding, numbers do not sum to the total.)



SNAP use is known to differ according to household composition. Table 7.1.2 examines the relationship between household structure and the characteristics presented in Table 7.1.1

TABLE 7.1.2  
USE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM,  
BY PRESENCE OF ELDERLY OR CHILDREN

Participation in SNAP	Senior Clients at Program Sites	Households with Seniors	Households with Children Younger than 18	Households with Children Ages 0-5
Client or anyone in the household had ever applied for SNAP benefits	55.8%	59.2%	73.4%	74.3%
Client or anyone in the household currently receiving SNAP benefits	31.4%	33.1%	44.1%	47.3%
Client or anyone in the household currently not receiving but received SNAP benefits during the previous 12 months <sup>a</sup>	2.9%	3.5%	7.4%	8.4%
Client or anyone in the household had applied for but had not received SNAP benefits during the previous 12 months	20.3%	21.2%	20.7%	17.2%
<b>SAMPLE SIZE (N)</b>	<b>9,532</b>	<b>12,150</b>	<b>20,890</b>	<b>9,742</b>
Number of weeks clients or their households have currently been receiving SNAP benefits (for those who are receiving)				
Less than 2 weeks	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	1.5%
2-4 weeks	2.5%	3.3%	5.1%	5.6%
5-12 weeks	2.5%	3.4%	5.7%	6.7%
13-51 weeks	14.1%	17.4%	24.2%	25.4%
1-2 years (52-103 weeks)	13.9%	14.6%	13.9%	15.0%
2-4 years (104-207 weeks)	25.7%	23.1%	19.1%	19.5%
4 years or more	40.1%	37.0%	30.8%	26.3%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Average number of weeks clients or their households have currently been receiving SNAP benefits	240.7	219.1	190.9	156.3
Median number of weeks clients or their households have currently been receiving SNAP benefits	104	104	78	52
Number of weeks during which SNAP benefits usually last <sup>b</sup>				

TABLE 7.1.2 (continued)

Participation in SNAP	Senior Clients at Program Sites	Households with Seniors	Households with Children Younger than 18	Households with Children Ages 0-5
1 week or less	35.7%	31.9%	13.5%	10.2%
2 weeks	29.9%	29.4%	32.7%	32.1%
3 weeks	19.1%	22.0%	35.3%	36.4%
4 weeks	14.0%	14.8%	16.9%	19.5%
More than 4 weeks	1.3%	1.9%	1.6%	1.7%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Average number of weeks during the month over which SNAP benefits usually last <sup>b</sup>	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.8
Median number of weeks during the month over which SNAP benefits usually last <sup>b</sup>	2	2	3	3
<b>SAMPLE SIZE (N)</b>	<b>2,696</b>	<b>3,767</b>	<b>3,767</b>	<b>3,767</b>

SOURCE: This table was constructed based on usable responses to questions 3, 6a, 6b, 6c, 7, 30, 31, 32, 34, and 35 of the client survey.

NOTES: The percentages presented in this table are based only on usable responses, excluding missing, don't know, and refusal responses. All usable responses were weighted as described in Chapter 3 and in the Technical Appendix volume to represent all emergency food clients of the FA National Network. The sample sizes (N) also include missing data.

The second, third, and fourth rows of the first panel do not add up exactly to the first row due to varying item nonresponses to the question involved.

For the table section describing the number of weeks currently receiving SNAP benefits, missing, don't know, and refusal responses combined are 46.8% for elderly clients at program sites, 46.5% for households with seniors, 39.6% for households with children younger than 18, and 35.3% for households with children ages 0-5.

For the table section describing the number of weeks SNAP benefits usually last, missing, don't know, and refusal responses combined are 43.6% for elderly clients at program sites, 43.8% for households with seniors, 38.0% for households with children younger than 18, and 33.7% for households with children ages 0-5.

Due to possible nonresponse bias, estimates with missing, don't know, and refusal responses greater than 10% should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>a</sup> During the period of data collection, many childless able-bodied adults without disabilities faced time limits on their participation in SNAP.

<sup>b</sup> Most SNAP households (67 percent) receive less than the maximum SNAP benefit with the expectation that they can contribute some of their own funds for food purchases. In other words, program benefits are not designed to last the full month in all households.

## Key findings include:

- 33.1% of clients living in households with seniors are currently receiving SNAP benefits. This compares to 44.1% of households with children younger than 18 and 47.3% of households with children ages 0 to 5.
- The median number of weeks during the month over which SNAP benefits usually last is 2 weeks for clients in households with seniors, 3 weeks for clients in households with children younger than 18, and 3 weeks for clients in households with children ages 0 to 5.

Differences in food prices, employment opportunities, and availability of transportation with which to travel to SNAP application offices may create differences in program eligibility and application and participation in the program across the metropolitan status of clients' residences. Table 7.1.3 tabulates residential location with program use.

TABLE 7.1.3  
USE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM,  
BY URBAN/METROPOLITAN STATUS

Participation in SNAP	All Clients	Urban/Metropolitan Status		
		Central city	Metro, Not Central city	Nonmetro
Client or anyone in the household had ever applied for SNAP benefits	71.5%	72.3%	68.3%	74.4%
Client or anyone in the household currently receiving SNAP benefits	41.0%	41.7%	37.8%	44.2%
Client or anyone in the household currently not receiving but received SNAP benefits during the previous 12 months <sup>a</sup>	7.0%	7.6%	6.5%	6.0%
Client or anyone in the household had applied for but had not received SNAP benefits during the previous 12 months	22.3%	21.7%	22.9%	23.0%
<b>SAMPLE SIZE (N)</b>	<b>60,990</b>	<b>29,257</b>	<b>16,736</b>	<b>14,997</b>



TABLE 7.1.3 (continued)

Participation in SNAP	All Clients	Urban/Metropolitan Status		
		Central city	Metro, Not Central city	Nonmetro
Number of weeks clients or their households have currently been receiving SNAP benefits (for those who are receiving)				
Less than 2 weeks	2.0%	2.4%	1.8%	1.2%
2-4 weeks	5.8%	6.0%	6.5%	4.2%
5-12 weeks	6.3%	6.8%	5.7%	5.6%
13-51 weeks	24.1%	25.0%	25.6%	19.3%
1-2 years (52-103 weeks)	13.9%	13.9%	14.2%	13.3%
2-4 years (104-207 weeks)	18.8%	18.8%	18.1%	20.0%
4 years or more	29.1%	27.1%	28.2%	36.4%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Average number of weeks clients or their households have currently been receiving SNAP benefits				
	184.7	179.7	184.7	226.1
Median number of weeks clients or their households have currently been receiving SNAP benefits				
	52	52	52	104
Number of weeks during which SNAP benefits usually last <sup>b</sup>				
1 week or less	19.7%	18.8%	18.8%	23.6%
2 weeks	30.8%	29.9%	33.9%	28.6%
3 weeks	29.6%	29.0%	30.0%	30.7%
4 weeks	17.7%	19.5%	15.5%	15.9%
More than 4 weeks	2.2%	2.7%	1.8%	1.2%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Average number of weeks during the month over which SNAP benefits usually last <sup>b</sup>				
	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.6
Median number of weeks during the month over which SNAP benefits usually last <sup>b</sup>				
	3	3	3	2
<b>SAMPLE SIZE (N)</b>	<b>25,451</b>	<b>12,685</b>	<b>6,133</b>	<b>6,633</b>

SOURCE: This table was constructed based on usable responses to questions 30, 31, 32, 34, and 35 of the client survey.

NOTES: The percentages presented in this table are based only on usable responses, excluding missing, don't know, and refusal responses. All usable responses were weighted as described in Chapter 3 and in the Technical Appendix volume to represent all emergency food clients of the FA National Network. The sample sizes (N) also include missing data.

The second, third, and fourth rows of the first panel do not add up exactly to the first row due to varying item nonresponses to the question involved.

TABLE 7.1.3 (continued)

For the table section describing the number of weeks currently receiving SNAP benefits, missing, don't know, and refusal responses combined are 41.9% for elderly clients at program sites, 41.2% for households with seniors, 43.8% for households with children younger than 18, and 41.1% for households with children ages 0-5.

For the table section describing the number of weeks SNAP benefits usually last, missing, don't know, and refusal responses combined are 40.6% for elderly clients at program sites, 40.1% for households with seniors, 42.3% for households with children younger than 18, and 39.5% for households with children ages 0-5.

Due to possible nonresponse bias, estimates with missing, don't know, and refusal responses greater than 10% should be interpreted with caution.

The differences between estimates for households living in an urban area and households living in a nonmetropolitan area are statistically significant at the 0.05 level for all levels of participation in SNAP for households receiving SNAP benefits for less than 2 weeks up to 51 weeks, for households receiving SNAP benefits for over 4 years, for households whose SNAP benefits last 1 week or less or 2 weeks, and for the average and median duration of receipt.

The differences between estimates for households living in a suburban area and households living in a nonmetropolitan area are not statistically significant at the 0.05 level for clients who are currently receiving SNAP benefits, clients who have applied for but have not received benefits in the last 12 months, clients who have been receiving benefits for 1-2 years, and clients whose benefits usually last for 2 weeks. The differences between estimates for households living in a suburban area and households living in a nonmetropolitan area are statistically significant at the 0.05 level for all other responses.

<sup>a</sup> During the period of data collection, many childless able-bodied adults without disabilities faced time limits on their participation in SNAP.

<sup>b</sup> Most SNAP households (67 percent) receive less than the maximum SNAP benefit with the expectation that they can contribute some of their own funds for food purchases. In other words, program benefits are not designed to last the full month in all households.

#### Key findings include:

- 41.7% of clients served at programs in central cities are currently receiving SNAP benefits. This compares to 37.8% of clients served in suburban areas and 44.2% of those served in nonmetropolitan areas.
- The median number of weeks during the month over which SNAP benefits usually last is 3 weeks for clients served at programs in central cities, 3 weeks for clients served in suburban areas, and 2 weeks for clients served in nonmetropolitan areas.