

More American Households Rely on Government Benefit Programs

This infographic uses statistics from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) to show differing levels of government benefit program participation in American households during and after the recession. As illustrated below, participation in government benefit programs grew during the recent economic downturn (December 2007 to June 2009). Where people

must have an income below a certain level to qualify (“means-tested”), this was true in programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, and Medicaid. For programs such as Social Security or Medicare, where income is not a qualifier for receiving assistance (known as “non-means-tested”), this was also true.

Household Participation Rate in Selected Government Benefit Programs



Means-Tested Programs

Means-tested programs require the income and assets of an individual or family to fall below specified thresholds in order to qualify for benefits.

Medicaid: medical assistance to the needy. Families with dependent children, the aged, blind, and disabled who are in financial need are eligible for Medicaid. It may be known by different names in different states.

SNAP (Food Stamps): nutrition assistance to low-income individuals and families.

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): nutrition assistance to low-income women and children, from pregnancy up to child's fifth birthday.

Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI): federal income supplement program designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people with little or no income.

Non-Means-Tested Programs

Non-means-tested programs provide benefits to those who qualify without regard to income.

Social Security: income replacement program that provides income to retirees, disabled workers, and surviving children and spouses based on previous work history and contributions.

Medicare: federal program which helps pay health care costs for people age 65 and older, and for certain people under age 65 with long-term disabilities.

Unemployment compensation: temporary financial assistance to unemployed workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own, and meet the requirements of state law.

Veteran's compensation: monetary benefit paid to veterans with disabilities, or to their survivors, when those disabilities are a result of active military service.

Worker's compensation: form of insurance that provides compensation and medical care for employees who are injured in the course of employment.

40%

Increase in SNAP Participation Rate

14%

Increase in Medicaid Participation Rate

Note: Percents don't add to 100, since households can participate in more than one program.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (2008).
<http://www.census.gov/sipp/tables/quarterly-est.html>