

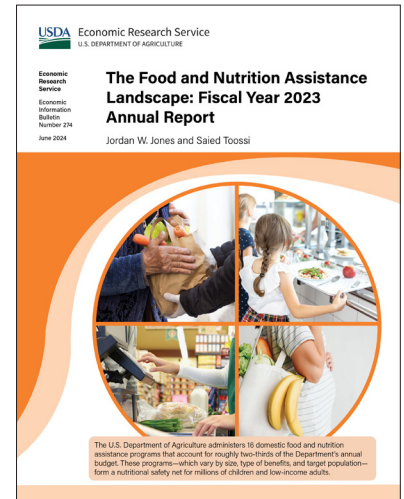


# The Food and Nutrition Assistance Landscape: Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report

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## What Is the Issue?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers 16 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs that affect the lives of millions of people and account for roughly two-thirds of USDA's annual budget. Over a typical year, about one in four people in the United States participates in at least one of these programs. In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2020, USDA implemented additional temporary programs and numerous policy changes that expanded the scope and coverage of existing programs. As a result, participation in and spending on these programs changed substantially. This report examined trends in USDA's largest domestic food and nutrition assistance programs through FY 2023 (October 1, 2022–September 30, 2023). The report also documented policy changes in FY 2023 and trends in economic and social indicators affecting participation in and spending on food and nutrition assistance programs. In addition, it summarized two 2023 USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS) reports including one that examined the prevalence of household food insecurity in the United States in 2022 and another that documented the share of households with school-aged children reporting that paying for school meals made it difficult to pay for other expenses after pandemic waivers allowing schools to serve free meals expired in 2022.



## What Did This Study Find?

Total Federal spending on USDA's food and nutrition assistance decreased substantially in FY 2023.

- Spending amounted to \$166.4 billion, 9.7 percent lower than the total of \$184.2 billion in FY 2022. Adjusted for inflation, spending was 13.0 percent lower than in FY 2022 and 54.5 percent higher than in FY 2019, the last full fiscal year before the pandemic.
- The decrease was driven by lower spending on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), child nutrition programs, and the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program.

SNAP spending decreased in FY 2023, even as participation levels rose.

- On average, 42.1 million people participated in SNAP each month, 2.3 percent more than in FY 2022. Overall reductions in benefit levels driven by the expiration of emergency allotments contributed to lower SNAP spending of \$112.8 billion, 5.6 percent less than in FY 2022.

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.

Participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) increased in FY 2023 among women, infants, and children. Fiscal year 2023 was the first year since 2009 that the number of infants participating in WIC increased.

- On average, 6.6 million people participated in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) each month, 5.0 percent more than in FY 2022. Total WIC spending was \$6.6 billion, 14.9 percent more than in FY 2022, reflecting an increase in participation and food costs.

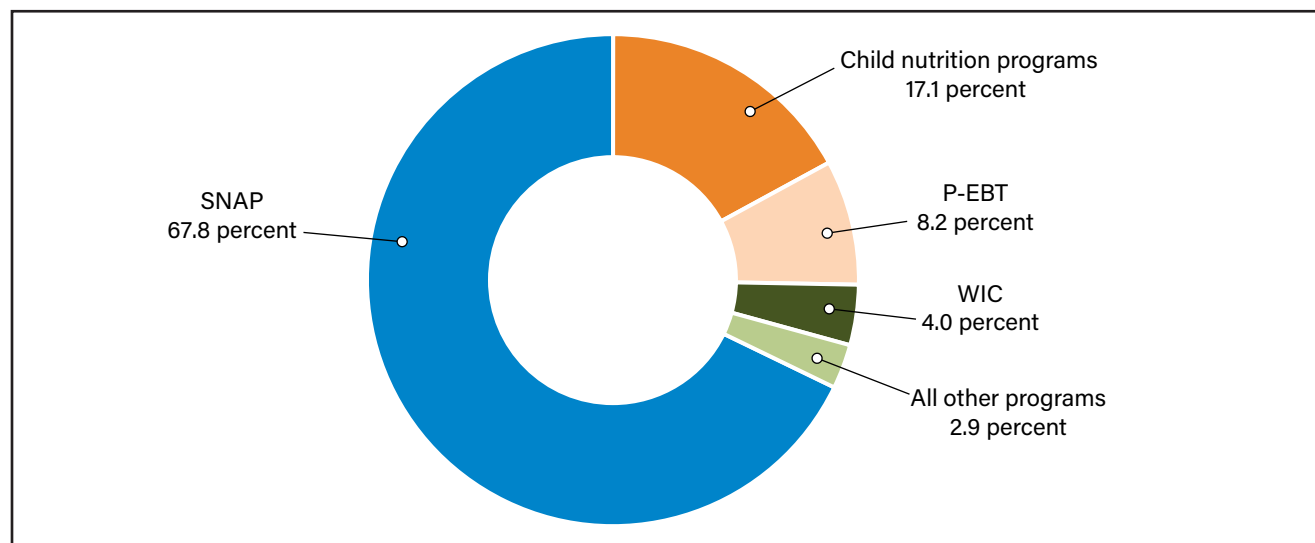
Total spending on the largest child nutrition programs declined in FY 2023, as did the number of meals served through these programs.

- A total of 8.8 billion meals were served across the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).
- Total spending on these programs was \$26.9 billion, 20.9 percent less than in FY 2022.

USDA continued to operate P-EBT through the end of FY 2023. P-EBT benefits were issued to eligible families at a cost of \$13.7 billion, 23.9 percent less than the amount issued in FY 2022.

### USDA food and nutrition assistance spending by program, FY 2023

SNAP accounted for about two-thirds of spending



FY = Fiscal year. SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Child nutrition programs = National School Lunch Program; School Breakfast Program; Child and Adult Care Food Program; Summer Food Service Program; related State administrative expenses; and other related child nutrition costs. P-EBT = Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer. All other programs = Nutrition family assistance grants to Puerto Rico, the Northern Marianas, and American Samoa; Commodity Supplemental Food Program; the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations; the Nutrition Services Incentive Program; the Special Milk Program; Disaster Feeding; The Emergency Food Assistance Program; and nutrition programs administration.

Note: The figure is based on preliminary data from the September 2023 *Program Information Report (Keydata)* released by USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in December 2023.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using USDA, FNS data.

## How Was the Study Conducted?

This report used preliminary data from USDA, Food and Nutrition Service to examine program trends through FY 2023. It compared FY 2023 program metrics to those from previous fiscal years. This report compared nominal dollar values over time in some instances and adjusted past dollar values for inflation in other instances to make more accurate historical comparisons. Data for FY 2023 came from the September 2023 *Program Information Report (Keydata)* released in December 2023. This report also used supplementary data to examine economic and social indicators.