

Appendix A

Identification of Disabled Food Stamp Recipients

One major goal of this study is to determine the impacts of customer service waivers on food stamp recipients. A second goal is to ascertain whether the impacts of the customer service waivers are different for vulnerable compared with nonvulnerable recipients. As explained in the report, we define vulnerable recipients as those individuals who are either elderly (age 60 or older) or disabled.

To ensure that the study would have a sufficient number of vulnerable recipients to assess the impacts of the customer service waivers, the survey oversampled members of this group. This oversampling was accomplished by using State food stamp administrative files to identify older and disabled recipients. Identifying the elderly was straightforward, based on date-of-birth information in the administrative files. Identifying disabled recipients was more difficult because the State files did not have consistent measures of disability.

During the survey, interviewers asked sampled recipients whether they had a disability and, if so, its nature. Analysis of the responses and the administrative data reveals that the two measures of disability often do not correspond with one another. The results presented in the report are based on recipient self-reports of disability because we believe the self-reported information to be a more consistent and accurate measure of disability affecting EBT card use.

This appendix presents a comparison of the two measures of disability.

Administrative Measures of Disability

When the study team requested copies of State food stamp eligibility files, we asked for whatever information was available about the disability status of food stamp recipients. In both Minnesota and Pennsylvania, the files contain a variable indicating food stamp disability or incapacity. The administrative files provided by Alabama and Louisiana contain a work registration code that includes a number of categorical responses related to having a disability.

To be as consistent as possible in defining disability across the four States, the study defined five attributes as indicating a disability. These attributes could be identified using either the work registration information provided by Alabama and Louisiana or the disability information provided by Minnesota and Pennsylvania. They were as follows:

- Recipient is either a disabled veteran, the disabled surviving spouse of a veteran, or the disabled child of a veteran.
- Recipient either receives or is approved for Supplementary Security Income (SSI), and is therefore either aged, blind, or disabled.
- Recipient either receives or is approved for RSDI disability (separately identified only in Minnesota and Pennsylvania).
- Recipient is blind (separately identified only in Minnesota).
- Recipient is otherwise disabled.

The last category includes individuals who are disabled and receiving railroad retirement benefits, those who are unable to prepare or purchase their own meals, those who are disabled but not receiving SSI or veteran's benefits, and those who are certified as disabled by the State.

Using this definition of disability, table A-1 shows the percentages of disabled food stamp recipients in the four States. The first row shows the percentages of disabled recipients within each State's **total** food stamp caseload. The two nonwaiver States, Louisiana and Pennsylvania, both had about 32 percent of their caseload classified as disabled in November 1999. Alabama's percentage of disabled recipients was slightly lower, at 28.5 percent. Only 11.4 percent of Minnesota's food stamp caseload was disabled according to the State data.

As to the second row in table A-1 shows, new entrants are less likely to be classified as disabled than other food stamp recipients in each of the four States. We do not know why, but a possible explanation is that new food stamp cases are characterized by a recent change in financial circumstances, whereas the existing caseload displays longer-term financial hardship. We cannot test this hypothesis, but if individuals with disabilities are more likely to face long-term financial hardship than able-bodied individuals, this situation would produce the pattern of statistics found in table A-1.

We note that the results in table A-1 do not seem to correlate with whether a work registration variable or a disability variable was provided in the State files. The administrative files from both Minnesota and Pennsylvania contained a work registration variable; yet these two States differ considerably in the percentage of recipients who are disabled and in the difference in disability rates between the total caseload and new entrants.

Table A-1— Food stamp cases disabled, based on State administrative files

Recipients	Total waiver	Total non-waiver	Waiver States		Nonwaiver States	
			Alabama	Minnesota	Louisiana	Pennsylvania
<i>Percent</i>						
Total caseload	20.0	32.4	28.5	11.4	32.6	32.2
New entrants	14.0	11.3	19.1	8.9	11.7	10.8

Survey Identification of Disability

Several questions in the Survey of New EBT Users asked about disabilities. First, in section A of the survey instrument, recipients were asked whether they were the person in their household who usually did grocery shopping with the EBT card. If not, the survey collected information about the shopper and then asked the recipient why that person did the shopping (question A8f). Of the 29 recipients who said somebody else did the shopping, 10 of them (34.5 percent) responded to question A8f by saying said that they had a disability that made it difficult or impossible for them to shop.⁶¹ Another 14 recipients, however, indicated a disability in response to question G8. Thus, 24 of the 29 recipients (82.8 percent) indicated a disability.

Question G8 of the survey asked **all** sampled recipients:

Do you have a disability that makes it hard for you to get around town, go shopping, or use the [STATE NAME] EBT Card?

Of the total sample of 1,632 new entrants, 419 (25.7 percent) said “Yes.”

The same question was asked of the 29 other individuals who usually shopped with the recipient=s EBT card. Four of the 29 (13.8 percent) said they had a disability.

For recipients and shoppers who said they had a disability, questions F8a and G8a asked, AWhat is the disability?@ Verbatim responses to this second question were postcoded into the series of disability codes shown in table A-2. The bulleted items in the table are the verbatim response categories; these responses have been organized into a series of summary disability descriptors, based mostly on functional impairments (for example, mental impairment, loss of mobility, loss of use of arms). Figure A-1 shows the distribution of self-reported disabilities across the summary categories. The most common responses, by far, related to loss of mobility.

Two of the survey respondents said they had a disability in response to question A8f, but they did not say they were disabled in response to question G8. To obtain as complete a measure as possible of the presence of disabled recipients in the sample, a new indicator variable for disability was created. This variable was set equal to A1@ if responses to either question A8f or G8 indicated a disability; otherwise, the variable was set equal to A0.” Across the four States, 405 of 1,632 respondents (or 24.8 percent of the sample) said they were disabled.⁶²

⁶¹The remaining responses were classified into the following categories: shopping is the responsibility of someone else in the household (13); inability to get to the store not related to a disability (5); and missing information (1).

⁶²Of the 419 recipients who said they had a disability, 16 gave information in response to question G8a suggesting that they did not have a true disability (e.g., not having a car, having a sore shoulder). These 16 recipients have been coded as not having a disability, leaving 405 recipients indicating a disability in either question A8f or G8a.

Table A-2—Disability codes based on self-reported Disability

Mental impairment

- Alzheimer’s disease, memory problem, brain damage
- Mental depression, bipolar depression, paranoid schizophrenic, anxiety, bad nerves
- Head injury

Loss of mobility

- Spinal cord injury, spinal fusion, paralysis, quadriplegic
- Stroke, heart attack
- Other heart problems (chest pain, large heart, blood pressure, blood clots, high cholesterol, aneurism)
- Bad/dislocated/herniated disk, back or hip problems, pinched nerve (in back)
- Cerebral palsy, in wheelchair, crippled, leg amputated, cannot walk, paraplegic
- Arthritis, osteoporosis, use a cane, torn cartilage in knee, leg problems
- Chronic pain, severe headaches, migraines
- Chronic fatigue syndrome(cfs), muscle fatigue, fatigue, weakness
- Frailty (old age, bedridden)
- Other (can’t get around, can’t drive, hernia)

Loss of use of arms

- Both arms amputated
- Arm problems, one arm amputated
- Other

Degenerative and chronic conditions

- AIDS, HIV, immune system diseases
- Cancer, tumor
- Renal disease/kidney failure, kidney dialysis
- Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy, seizures
- Stomach problems, thyroid, liver disease, shingles
- Allergies
- Other conditions that clearly affect current functionality
- Other conditions that don’t clearly affect current functionality

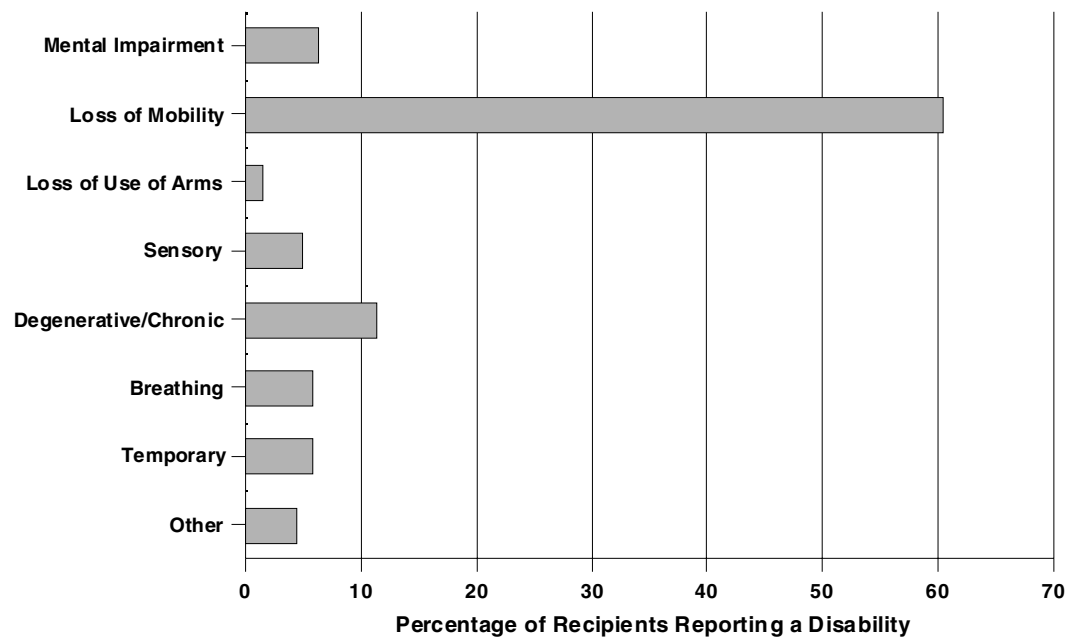
Breathing problems

- Emphysema, hard to breathe, lung disease, chronic lung disease
- Asthma
- Acute asthmatic bronchitis

Temporary disability

- Had operation/surgery, waiting for operation/surgery
 - In accident
 - Pregnant
 - Temporary pain (e.g., before surgery)
 - Other
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Figure A-1
Distribution of self-reported disabilities



Note: Percentages based on unweighted data.

Correspondence Between State Files and Self-Reported Disability

Table A-3 shows the correspondence between the two sources of information on disability. According to State administrative files, 508 recipients, or 31.1 percent of the sample, were disabled, whereas only 405 recipients, or 24.8 percent of the sample, said they were disabled. Summing along the diagonal in the table, 74.3 percent (15.1 plus 59.2 percent) of sampled recipients gave responses in agreement with information from the State files; the remaining 25.7 percent did not.

The percent in table A-3 represent percentages of the entire sample of 1,632 food stamp recipients. If one considers just those 508 recipients listed as disabled on the State files, 261 of them (51.4 percent) said they were not disabled, at least not to an extent that makes it hard for them to get around town, go shopping, or use their EBT card. Conversely, 158 of the 1,124 recipients (14.1 percent) not listed as disabled on State files said they had a disability.

Table A-3—Disabled recipients: survey vs. State counts

Survey Response	State Administrative Files		Total
	Disabled	Not Disabled	
Disabled	247 (15.1%)	158 (9.7%)	405 (24.8)
Not disabled	261 (16.0%)	966 (59.2%)	1227 (75.2%)
Total	508 (31.1%)	1124 (68.9%)	1632 (100.0%)

Frequencies are unweighted totals. Percentages, shown in parentheses, are also unweighted.

One goal of this study is to determine whether EBT customer service waivers have a different impact on vulnerable than on nonvulnerable recipients. As noted, vulnerable recipients include those who are either elderly or disabled. We are faced with a choice of which measure of disability to use—self-reported, or as indicated on State administrative files. We believe it makes more sense to use recipients' self-reports of disability in the analysis. Self-reporting is more likely to capture disabilities that truly make it more difficult for recipients to use the EBT card. Further, the survey measure of disability is more consistent across the four study States than are the administrative file measures.

We note the sample design for the Survey of New EBT Users oversampled vulnerable recipients, based on age and the State administrative file measure of disability. Does using different measures of disability for sampling and analysis create problems? The answer is it does not. The administrative file measure served as a proxy for identifying disabled recipients in the food stamp population, increasing the number of sampled disabled recipients. The sample weights take the oversampling into account, so the analysis may use any measure of disability that is consistent across the sampling strata.

With the new self-reported measure of disability, we have a smaller sample of disabled recipients (405 rather than 508) to analyze. Paradoxically, our estimate of the prevalence of disability in the population of new food stamp entrants increases. Table A-4 compares the prevalence of disability using both measures. The percentages of disabled recipients based on the survey measure are higher than those based on State data in all States except Alabama. This is because the previously nonvulnerable recipients who now indicate a disability have larger sample weights than the vulnerable sample, due to the original oversampling of vulnerable recipients. In contrast, those previously vulnerable recipients who did not indicate a disability during the survey have relatively small sample weights. The relative sizes of the two groups of recipients and their sample weights lead to the results in table A-4. A similar situation appears in table A-5, which compares two measures of vulnerability based on the different measures of disability.

Table A-4—New food stamp cases measured as disabled (percentages)

Source	Total waiver	Total non-waiver	Waiver States		Nonwaiver States	
			Alabama	Minnesota	Louisiana	Pennsylvania
Based on State disability data	14.0	11.3	19.1	8.9	11.7	10.8
Based on survey disability data	16.4	14.9	16.9	16.1	12.6	17.1
Difference	(2.4)	(3.6)	2.2	(7.2)	(0.9)	(6.3)

Consideration of Alternative Shoppers

As noted previously, 29 of the 1,632 food stamp recipients in the survey did not use the EBT card for shopping; rather, another person did their EBT shopping for them. Of the 29 recipients, 24 said they were disabled in response to either question A8f or G8, and the numbers in tables A-4 and A-5 reflect these disabled recipients.

The study seeks to determine how the customer service waivers affect use of the EBT card. Because the 29 recipients do not do their own shopping, the self-reported disability status of the alternative shoppers, rather than of the recipients, should be used to identify disabled or vulnerable card users. Table A-6 presents the final percentages of cases measured as disabled or vulnerable, based on the shoppers' reporting of their own disability status. Of the 29 alternate shoppers, 4 reported that they were disabled.

In table A-6, the final count of the of disabled shoppers is 385, down from 405 disabled recipients. The count of 385 disabled shoppers begins with the 405 disabled recipients, subtracts the 24 disabled recipients among the group of 29 recipients who do not do their own shopping, and then adds in the four alternate shoppers who said they were disabled. The final count of vulnerable shoppers is 526, down from 534. The decrease in the number of vulnerable shoppers is less than the decrease in the number of disabled shoppers because the vulnerable group includes elderly individuals, who remain classified as vulnerable regardless of their disability status.

Table A-5—New food stamp cases measured as vulnerable (percentages)

Source	Total waiver	Total non-waiver	Waiver States		Nonwaiver States	
			Alabama	Minnesota	Louisiana	Pennsylvania
Based on State disability data	18.4	14.0	24.6	12.3	13.3	14.6
Based on survey disability data	19.6	17.1	20.2	19.0	14.3	19.9
Difference	(1.2)	(3.1)	4.4	(6.7)	(1.0)	(5.3)

Table A-6—EBT card users measured as disabled or vulnerable (percentages)

Recipients	Total waiver	Total non-waiver	Waiver States		Nonwaiver States	
			Alabama	Minnesota	Louisiana	Pennsylvania
Disabled shoppers	16.0	14.4	16.3	15.8	12.2	16.6
Vulnerable shoppers	19.4	16.9	20.0	18.7	14.0	19.8