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Erika Mantz
UNH Media Relations

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Recommended Citation

Mantz, Erika, "UNH Research Finds Decrease in Use of Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Decreased for First Time Since Great Recession" (2015). *UNH Today*. 4681.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/4681>

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July 28, 2015

UNH Research Finds Decrease in Use of Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Decreased for First Time Since Great Recession

DURHAM, N.H. – The share of households receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits -- the program formerly known as food stamps – declined slightly between 2012 and 2013 (13.6 to 13.5 percent), according to new research from the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. This was the first decrease since the recession began in 2007.

“Despite the decline in SNAP receipt in 2013 the program remains an important support for populations at risk for food insecurity and hunger,” said researchers Jessica Carson and Paul Anskat. “There is substantial disagreement about the future of SNAP funding, making it an important time to assess the program’s reach.”

Although proposed cuts by Congress are unlikely to be enacted in 2015, cuts will be debated and are likely to be a major component of the Farm Bill reauthorization in 2018. In addition, Carson and Anskat note that the impact of a November 2013 reduction in funding is not yet visible in data.

“As debates continue and set the stage for reauthorization, the challenges of crafting fiscally responsible policy should be weighed carefully alongside the needs of the populations that use SNAP,” the researchers said.

Additional key findings are as follows:

- Across regions and place types (rural, suburban and city) SNAP receipt declined or leveled off, breaking the trend of yearly increases recorded in every region and place type since the recession began.
- The share of SNAP households containing one or more workers increased moderately to 77.6 percent (up 0.9 percent), driven by a sizable increase (3.4 percent) in suburban places.
- Rates of SNAP receipt remain especially high among single parents and non-white households (45.7 percent for single moms).
- Post-recession, SNAP receipt has become increasingly common among households with incomes just above the poverty line.

This analysis is based on data from the American Community Survey.

The full analysis can be found here: <https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/rates-of-snap-receipt>

The Carsey School of Public Policy conducts research, leadership development, and engaged scholarship relevant to public policy. They address pressing challenges, striving for innovative, responsive, and equitable solutions at all levels of government and in the for-profit and nonprofit

sectors.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 13,000 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

Media Contact: [Erika Mantz](#) | 603-862-1567 | UNH Media Relations | [@unhnews](#)

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