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Food Expenditures of Food Stamp Recipients

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the value of food received away from home by household members as guests or in payment for services was not available from the NFCS. It is included in the CES. And the value of home-produced food was not included in the CES.

Family Size

Both surveys indicate that as family size increases, total family food spending increases, but per person weekly food spending declines. This seems to confirm the notion of economies of family size. One-member families spent \$26.34 per person weekly, while families with six or nine members spent about \$15.50 per week. In the CES, one-person families spent \$15.50 compared with about \$9.00 for families with six or nine members. Both surveys showed that smaller families spent a much larger portion of their food dollar dining out.

Region

Both surveys showed that food spending was about 13 percent above the average in the North and about 8 percent below the average in the South. The NFCS showed the West having a greater influence on food expenditures than the North Central; the converse was true for the CES.

Urbanization

Both surveys showed that suburban households were larger and used food with higher money value than households in the central city and in non-metropolitan areas.

Comparison to National Income Accounts

The NFCS data appear to be pretty much in line with the U.S. Department of Commerce National Income Accounts (NIA) food expenditure data. Total food expenditures in the NIA series totaled \$224 billion in the spring quarter of 1977, whereas the NFCS expenditures totaled \$217 billion on an aggregate basis. Food at home was 5 percent greater in the NFCS while away-from-home eating was 2 percent less. ■

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) has grown from a pilot project in the early 1960's to this Nation's primary means of eradicating hunger. Questions often arise concerning what proportion of total food consumption is accounted for by food stamp recipients, and what effect the FSP has on the demand for particular food products.

The answers to these questions have important implications for both the food production and marketing sector. For example, if food stamp recipients consume relatively more of a particular product, the demand for that product may be strengthened disproportionately by increased participation in the FSP.

Proportion of Total At-home Food Dollar Spent by Type of Household

	Food stamp	Nonfood stamp
	Percent	
Red meats	27.5	29.0
Beef	12.0	15.7
Pork	10.8	8.6
All other meats	4.7	4.7
Poultry	6.3	4.7
Fish & seafoods	2.7	2.8
Eggs	3.5	2.6
Dairy products	13.8	13.8
Fresh milk & cream	9.3	8.1
Other	4.5	5.7
Fruits	5.4	6.5
Fresh	3.1	3.7
Processed	2.3	2.8
Vegetables	8.3	7.6
Fresh	4.4	4.5
Processed	3.9	3.1
Cereals & cereal products	5.2	3.2
Bakery products	7.6	8.8
Sugars & sweets	2.8	2.9
Fats & oils	3.3	2.9
Nonalcoholic beverages	7.1	7.2
Misc. prepared foods	6.5	8.0
Total	100.0	100.0

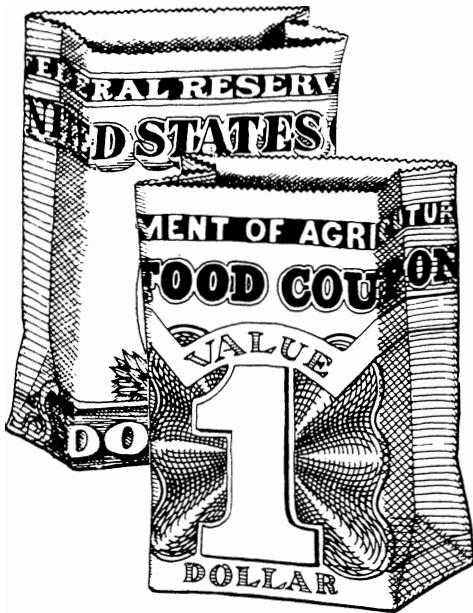
The 1973 Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) provides the most recent comprehensive information available on household food consumption. The proportion of the at-home food dollar allocated to various food groups by food stamp and non-food stamp households was estimated using these data.¹

Results indicate that food stamp households allocated a relatively higher proportion of their at-home food dollar to pork, poultry, eggs, cereal, and cereal

¹For another perspective on the data, see Food Expenditures by Food Stamp Participants and Nonparticipants, by Donald West in the June 1978 *National Food Review*.

Proportion of Expenditures for Specified Food Groups, by Source

	Food stamp households	Nonfood stamp households
	Percent	
Red meats	3.4	96.6
Beef	2.8	97.2
Pork	4.5	95.5
All other meats	3.6	96.4
Poultry	4.7	95.3
Fish & seafoods	3.5	96.5
Eggs	4.8	95.2
Dairy products		
Fresh milk & cream	4.1	95.9
Other	2.9	97.1
Fruits		
Fresh	3.0	97.0
Processed	3.0	97.0
Vegetables		
Fresh	3.5	96.5
Processed	4.5	95.5
Cereals & cereal products	5.7	94.3
Bakery products	3.1	96.9
Sugars & sweets	3.5	96.5
Fats & oils	4.1	95.9
Nonalcoholic beverages	3.5	96.5
Misc. prepared foods	2.9	97.1
Total	3.6	96.4



products. Households not receiving food stamps spent a higher percentage of their food-at-home money on beef, fresh and processed fruits, and bakery products.

Percentage allocations for total dairy products by the two groups were approximately the same—13.8 percent. However, within this category, food stamp households spent more on fresh milk and cream, while nonparticipants bought relatively more cheese, yogurt, ice cream, and other dairy products.

Food stamp participants allocated relatively more to processed vegetables, but less to fresh and processed fruits and fresh vegetables than did households not receiving stamps. Similarly, recipients of food stamps allocated more to the purchase of fats and oils products than did nonparticipants.

These food expenditure allocations demonstrate several general food-buying traits of FSP participants. Perhaps the most important finding is that FSP participants, in general, tend to buy the lower priced foods.

The conclusions based on the CES data are largely supported by a more recent study in which cash register receipts from eight supermarkets were used to compare the purchase patterns of food stamp and non-food stamp customers.² These case study data reinforce the expenditure patterns shown in the broader survey data.

Food stamp recipients were again found to purchase relatively more cereal, flour, and grain products. Participants also spent a larger share of their food dollar on eggs and fats and oils products. In turn, non-FSP households spent proportionally more on dairy products, nonalcoholic beverages, and sugars and sweets.

The ESCS study also provides data on additional food groupings. For example, recipients bought a higher proportion of baby food than did nonparticipants. These higher expenditures may be attributed to differences in average household size. In 1976, food stamp households averaged 3.0 persons, compared with an average size of 2.89 persons in households not receiving stamps.

Dry beans, peas, and nuts—important and relatively inexpensive sources of protein—were purchased more by FSP households. Fruits and vegetables were disaggregated to check for differences in allocation to individual products. Food stamp customers allocated a smaller percentage to all categories, except potatoes.

The ESCS eight-store study does not statistically represent the Nation as a whole. However, the results are similar to the 1973 CES nationwide survey, and provide a preview of what may be found in the 1978 Nationwide Food Consumption Survey.

The proportion of total food expenditures in each category attributable to food stamp and non-food stamp households shows the relative importance of food stamp purchases for each food category. Purchases by the participating households accounted for an average 3.6 percent of total expenditures for the selected foods. ■

Proportion of Total Food Purchases Accounted For by Specific Food Groups

	Combined eight stores	
	Food stamp households	Nonfood stamp households
Baby food ¹	0.6	0.3
Milk, cheese, ice cream	7.4	8.5
Eggs	1.8	1.6
Dry beans		
peas and nuts	2.1	1.8
Meat, poultry and fish ²	33.6	30.2
Dark green, deep yellow vegetables	1.0	1.4
Citrus fruits, tomatoes	5.1	5.5
Potatoes (white)	2.3	2.0
Other vegetables and fruits	10.3	12.1
Cereal	5.5	4.7
Flour	2.5	1.9
Bread	2.0	2.4
Other bakery products	4.2	4.7
Fats, oils	4.0	3.9
Sugar, sweets	4.4	4.5
Tea, coffee, cocoa	3.8	4.5
Soft drinks, punches, ades	3.7	3.2
Miscellaneous foods	4.6	5.9
Accessories ³	1.1	.9
Total	100.0	100.0

¹The milk, cheese, ice cream group includes infant formulas. All other baby foods are included in this category.

²Fish defined as fin and shellfish.

³Includes baking powder, yeast, vinegar, salt, artificial sweeteners, spices and condiments.

²“Do Food Stamp and Other Customers Buy the Same Products in Supermarkets?” Paul E. Nelson, AER 421, ESCS/USDA, March 1979.

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