

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

Definition: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a financial assistance program in the US that provides assistance to low income individuals and families to purchase food. Formerly known as “Food Stamps” SNAP is a federally funded aid program, but administered locally by the states. The average monthly SNAP benefit for all participating households is \$276 (US Department of Agriculture- Food and Nutrition Service-Office of Research and Analysis, 2010). To be eligible for SNAP, a household that is not categorically eligible and does not include an elderly or disabled member must have a monthly gross income that is at or below 130 percent of the poverty guideline (\$2,297 for a family of four in the contiguous United States in 2010). Households with elderly or disabled members are not subject to the gross income standard.

Rationale: Identifying the number of individuals and families utilizing SNAP can help in pinpointing levels of need and unmet need. For example, 86% of households receiving SNAP live either at or below the poverty line (US Department of Agriculture- Food and Nutrition Service-Office of Research and Analysis, 2010). By comparing the poverty levels of Newaygo County as compared to SNAP participation levels, one can begin to surmise the areas within the county where populations that could potentially benefit from SNAP benefits are likely to live and devise targeted strategies to either assist with enrollment and/or provide hunger relief services.




Furthermore, utilization of SNAP benefits is often concentrated among poorer households. Among all household utilizing SNAP in the US, 42% hand incomes less than half of the US poverty guidelines (US Department of Agriculture- Food and Nutrition Service-Office of Research and Analysis, 2010). To put this into some perspective, a household of three – one adult and two children, with income at half the national poverty guideline would mean an annual income of \$9,155 a year. It is therefore important to examine poverty levels and SNAP participation simultaneously to obtain a fuller understanding of community need.

Analysis: **Tables 1 and 2** below depict all households utilizing food stamps, those below the poverty line, and those with children. **Table 1** shows the trend within Newaygo County over the ACS 2007 and 2010 time periods. The percentage of all households utilizing the Food Stamp program increased from 2007 to 2010 (3-year estimates) which is categorized as becoming worse over time. However, this could be due to either an increased need for the program or simply, an increase in awareness about the program. The percentage of households living in poverty and those with children both decreased in terms of SNAP participation, which is categorized as an improvement over time. **Table 2** examines the same populations for 2010, however, they are compared to both the State of Michigan and the US. The percentage of total households utilizing SNAP in Newaygo County appear to be more than those in the US and

Michigan. The percentage of households living in poverty and utilizing SNAP does not appear to be statistically different across populations. However, the percentage of those households with children and utilizing SNAP in Newaygo County appears to be lower than those in the US and Michigan.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 depict SNAP participation among all households, households living in poverty, and households with children within Newaygo County, Michigan, and the US from 2005-07 to 2008-20 ACS 3-year estimates. **Figure 1** shows an overall increase in SNAP participation among all three populations. Overall, there remains to be a significantly higher percentage of households utilizing SNAP within Newaygo County than in Michigan and the US. **Figure 2** shows a relatively even percentage over time of those households living in poverty and utilizing SNAP at three levels. **Figure 3** shows little change over time among households with children utilizing SNAP in Michigan and in the US. However, there is a significant decrease in those households utilizing SNAP within Newaygo County. Further research and analysis would need to be conducted to understand why this drop occurred over the last six years.

Table 1: SNAP Participation: ACS 2007 to 2010 Trends

Measure	ACS 3 Year Estimates		Trend*
	2005-07	2008-10	
All Households	14.4%	18.0%	
Households Below Poverty	60.3%	50.2%	
Households with Children	61.4%	44.7%	

* Key to interpreting Trend



Improving – Statistically significant increase when comparing to 2007 and 2010









No Change - No statistically significant change when comparing 2007 and 2010



Declining – Statistically significant decrease when comparing to 2007 and 2010

Table 2: SNAP Participation: 2010 ACS Comparison to US and Michigan

Comparison Groups	ACS 2008 – 2010 Estimate	Newaygo County Compared to Benchmark*
All Households	18.0%	
US	10.3%	
Michigan	14.4%	
Households Below Poverty	50.2%	
US	53.8%	
Michigan	52.7%	
Households with Children	44.7%	
US	53.7%	
Michigan	52.7%	

* Key to interpreting Benchmark



Better – Newaygo County is performing statistically better when compared to benchmark

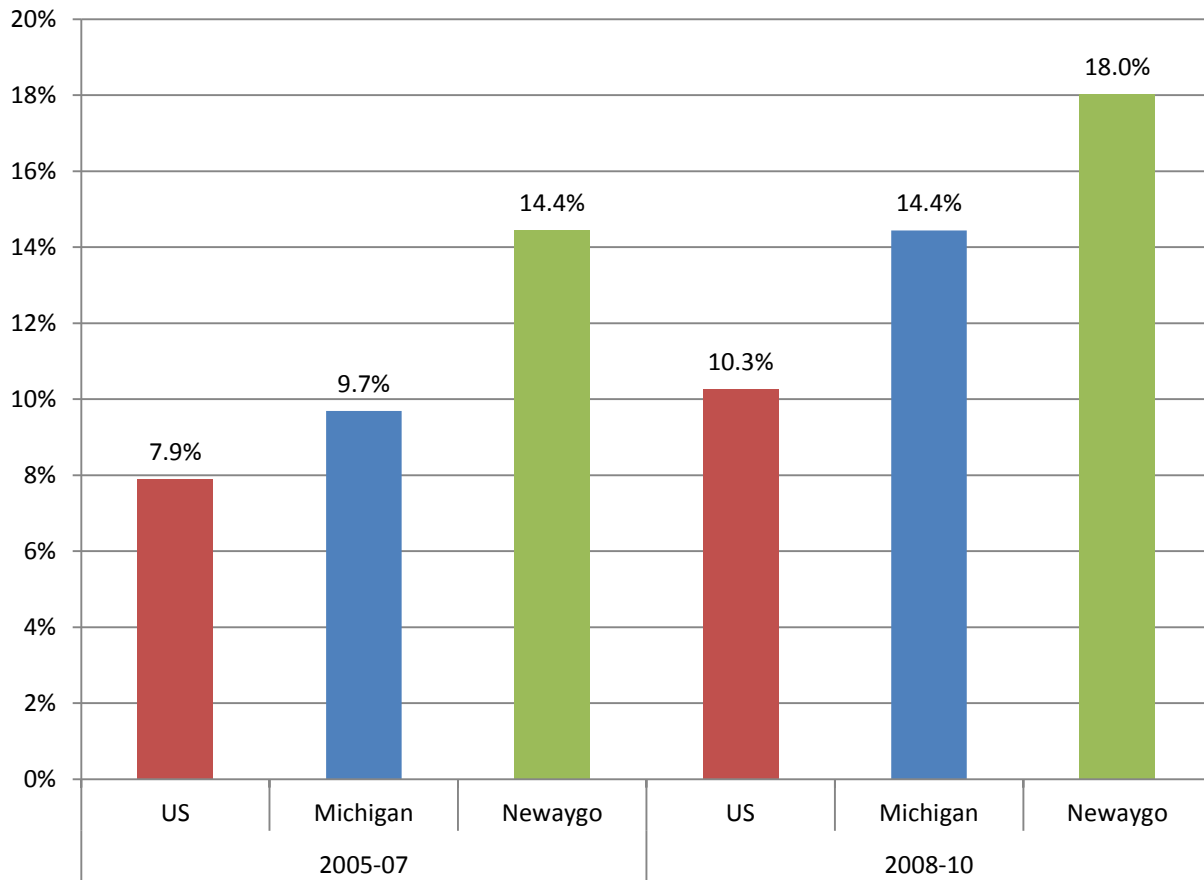


No Difference - there is no statistically significant difference between Newaygo County and benchmark



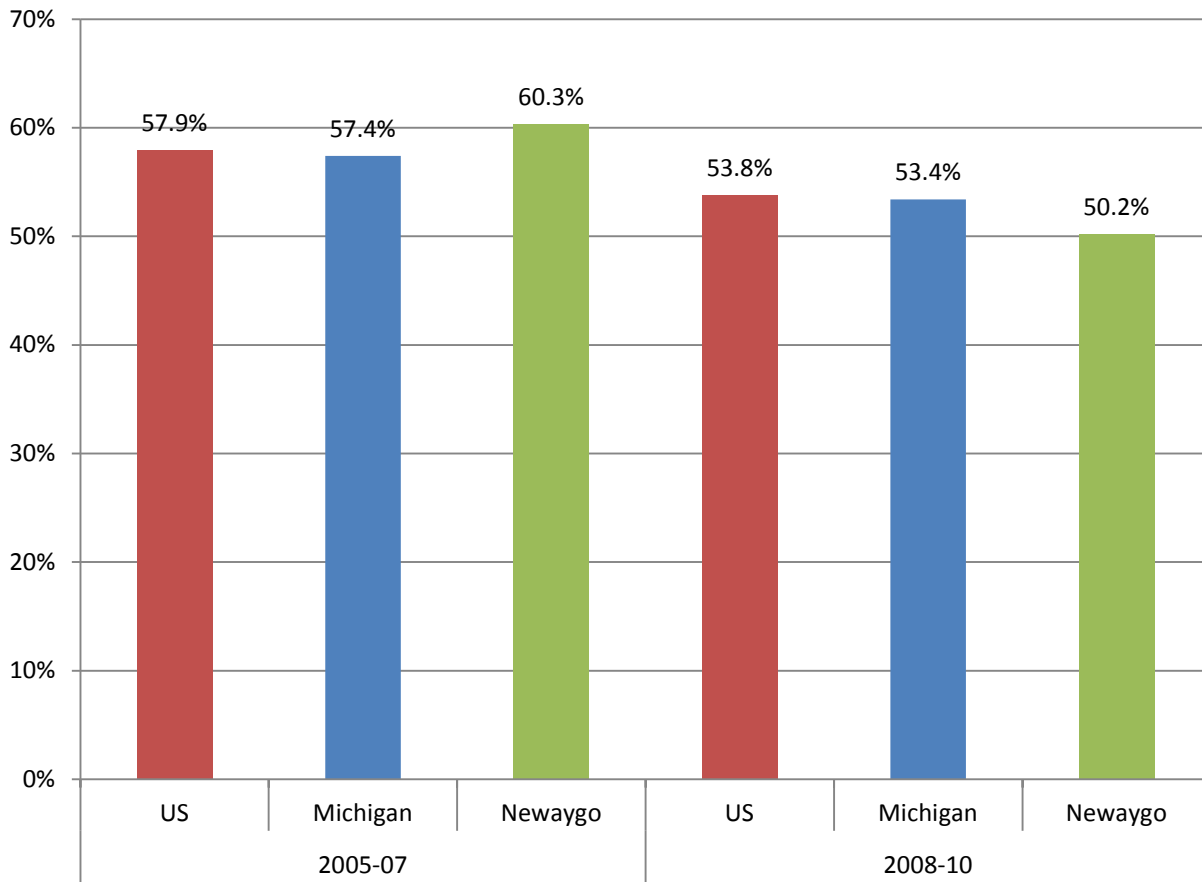
Worse – Newaygo County is performing statistically worse when compared to benchmark

Figure 1: SNAP Participation – All Households: United States, Michigan and Newaygo County – 2007 & 2010 Estimates



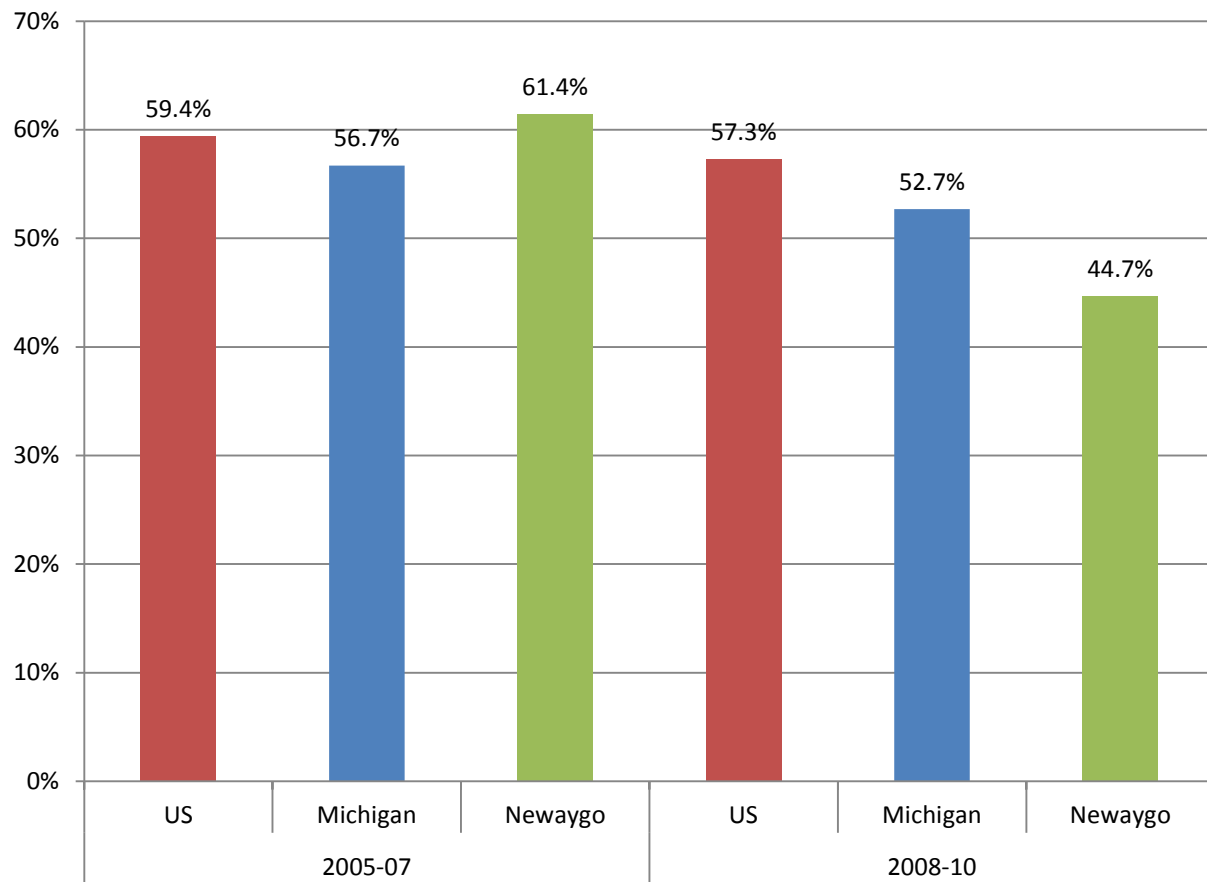
Source: American Community Survey

Figure 2: SNAP Participation – Households Below Poverty: United States, Michigan and Newaygo County – 2007 & 2010 Estimates



Source: American Community Survey

Figure 3: SNAP Participation – Households with Children: United States, Michigan and Newaygo County – 2007 & 2010 Estimates



Source: American Community Survey

References

US Department of Agriculture- Food and Nutrition Service-Office of Research and Analysis. (2010). *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2009*, by Joshua Leftin, Andrew Gothro, and Esa Eslami. Project Officer, Jenny Genser. Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/2009Characteristics.pdf>.