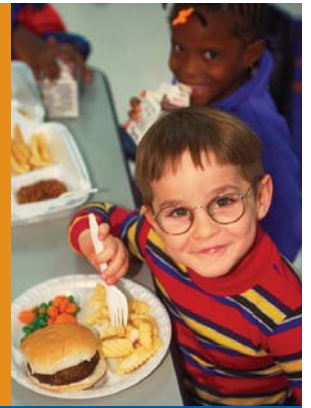


# Impacts of FOOD ASSISTANCE Policies



Highlights of RIDGE-funded research in the Southern Region

## Nine research projects analyze and assess the impacts of state and federal food assistance policies

Implementing sound policies that meet the food assistance needs of low-wealth people, families and households in a fiscally sound manner remains an important role of our federal and state governments. When new food assistance policies are enacted, careful assessments by the social sciences community are needed if the implications of these policy shifts are to be fully understood. Important RIDGE-supported research in the South has been dedicated to examining how changes in various programs, such as the Food Stamp Program, welfare assistance and dietary guidelines, have played out in the region, selected states or rural counties in the South.

### A County Level Analysis of Recent Food Stamp Caseload Changes in Tennessee

Fisseha Tegegne, Safdar Muhammad, Enefiok Ekanem and Surendra Singh  
Tennessee State University

Based on county-level data on food stamp caseload and unemployment in Tennessee, this study showed that unemployment rate and growth in retail jobs were important determinants of caseload changes. The study indicated that in times of economic difficulty, people would stay in the Food Stamp Program rather than leave and vice versa. The study suggests that policymakers focus on the local labor market and promote job creation in areas where opportunities have been limited.

### Food Stamp Dynamics Across Rural and Urban Landscapes in the Era of Welfare Reform

Domenico Parisi, Duane Gill, Steven Grice, Michael Taquino and Deborah Harris  
Mississippi State University

This research project revealed that in Mississippi, middle-aged African-American mothers are less likely to exit the Food Stamp Program than their counterparts. Recipients situated in rural settings are also less likely to exit the program than those in metropolitan settings. At the same time, individual and contextual characteristics are important factors in predicting exit from the Food Stamp Program.

### Assessing Food Security and Related Welfare Reform Outcomes in Two Southern States

Pamela Monroe and Carol O'Neil  
Louisiana State University  
and Janet Marsh, Clemson University

The purpose of this project was to better understand food security issues as they related to welfare reform in Louisiana and South Carolina. Through interviews with former welfare reliant and working poor women, researchers collected data that suggested a positive correlation between overweight and food insecurity in women, possibly as a result of resource cycling. The study also showed similarities between both groups of women, including poor diet, a lack of variety of foods and a general inability to adequately define a balanced diet.

### Community Capacity and Food Insecurity in the Era of Welfare Reform

Domenico Parisi, Duane Gill and Deborah Harris  
Mississippi State University

The general goal of this study was to examine the extent to which changes in welfare policy might have contributed to the decline in the use of food stamps in the state of Mississippi. The study showed that the manner in which the state implements its welfare policy and the extent to which communities can cope with the changes imposed by new

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legislation directly impacts the use of food stamps. The study suggests that Mississippi shift its focus on welfare policies from caseload reduction to poverty and social injustice so that those in need can receive adequate assistance.

### Private Food Assistance in the Deep South: Agency Profiles and Directors' Perceptions of Needs and Opportunities Under Charitable Choice

Suzie Cashwell, Western Kentucky University; John Bartkowski, Mississippi State University; and Patricia Duffy, Joseph Molnar, Vanessa Casanova and Marina Irimia-Vladu, Auburn University

This study of Mississippi and Alabama looked at what types of local community agencies provided food assistance to the poor and examined how knowledgeable the directors of those agencies were regarding Charitable Choice programs. The project revealed that about three-fourths of food agencies in the area were affiliated with a faith community. It also showed that a vast majority of food agency directors are uninformed about the general policies, key legal provisions and implementation status of Charitable Choice and stressed the need to close the information gap between policymakers and service organizations.

### Food Security Status of Non-Profit Food Assistance Recipients in Selected Southern States

Okwudili Onianwa, Alabama A&M University; Fisseha Tegegne, Tennessee State University; Godfrey Ejimakor, North Carolina A&T State University; and Andrew Zekeri, Tuskegee University

The objective of this research project was to assess the food security status of families who use non-profit food assistance agencies in selected Southern states. The results revealed that most users of such agencies were moderately or severely food insecure, though a majority of those users were not utilizing the Food Stamp Program. The study suggests that policies must be designed to encourage non-profit food assistance agencies to assist and encourage qualified families to take advantage of the Food Stamp Program.

### Factors Associated with Oklahoma Older Americans Act Nutrition Program Participants Ability to Shop, Cook and Feed Themselves

Janice Hermann, Oklahoma State University and Kimberly Quigley, Oklahoma Department of Human Services

This study looked at participants of the Oklahoma Older Americans Act Nutrition Program and evaluated whether

certain factors, such as mobility, finances, emotional well-being and living arrangement, affected their ability to shop, cook and feed themselves. A

significant difference was observed between participants on different types of meal programs, with 8 percent of congregate meal participants reporting the inability to shop, cook and feed themselves in comparison to 82 percent of home delivered meal participants. The study also notes the importance of social interaction and suggests providing programs that help establish social networks for both home delivered meal participants and the community as a whole.

### Meeting the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans: A "Daunting Challenge" for Food Stamp Recipients in Southeast Louisiana

Carol O'Neil and Jeffery Gillespie  
Louisiana State University

The purpose of this study was to determine whether food stamp recipients in southeast Louisiana could meet the 2005 Dietary Guidelines. Researchers priced items in food stores to estimate how much it would cost a minority population receiving food stamps to adhere to the guidelines. Among other things, the researchers found that the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan's two-week menu was greater than the average food stamp allotment. The study indicated that lack of money, lack of food stamps and nutrition education are among the challenges low-income individuals face in meeting the dietary guidelines.

### Exploring Health Literacy as a Factor Contributing to Adoption of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines Among Adults in the Mississippi Delta

Jamie Zoellner, Wendy Bounds and Carol Connell  
University of Southern Mississippi

The goal of this currently ongoing study is to explore nutrition literacy as a factor contributing to or inhibiting adoption of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines among Mississippi Delta residents. Researchers will use tools that assess people's capacity to obtain and understand nutrition information and will administer a food frequency questionnaire to assess adoption of dietary guidelines. The results of this study will identify a relationship between nutrition literacy and diet quality and will help educators develop culturally appropriate communication strategies to promote adoption of the 2005 Dietary Guidelines.