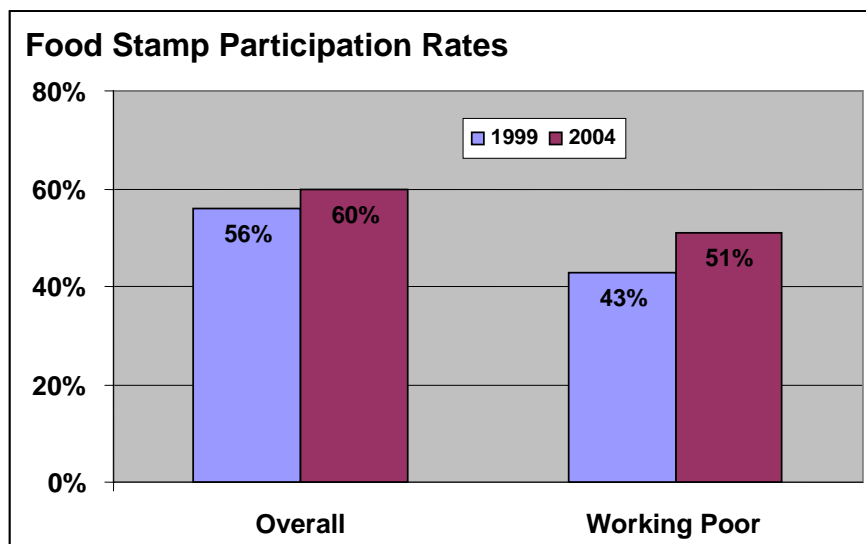


The Food Stamp Program is an important source of support for low-income working families. Among all food stamp households, more rely on paychecks (2.9 million) than depend on welfare (1.6 million). Recent policy reforms and expanded outreach were intended to improve program access for working families. The latest information on trends in program participation indicates some progress towards this goal.

- **The Food Stamp Program serves more working families and individuals.** The number of households with earnings increased 41 percent between 1999 and 2004, substantially faster than the 28 percent increase in the number of households without earnings.
- **Earnings are the single most common source of income among food stamp households.** Nearly 29 percent of all food stamp households had earnings in 2004. Over 9 million participants (39 percent) lived in households with earnings.
- **The Food Stamp Program reaches a larger share of the eligible working poor.** Participation rates among individuals living in households with earnings increased to 51 percent in 2004, up from 43 percent in 1999. The participation rate among the working poor increased twice as much as the overall rate between 1999 and 2004. As a result, the gap between the participation rate among the eligible working poor and among all eligibles shrank.



Sources: Barrett and Poikolainen (2006). [Food Stamp Program Participation Rates: 2004](#). Report prepared for the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.

Poikolainen (2005). [Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 2004](#). Report prepared for the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.