

The Impact of SNAP Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Time Limit Reinstatement in Nine States

Background

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to eligible low-income individuals and households in need. In order to receive SNAP, many individuals aged 16-59 must comply with general work requirements, which include registering for work, accepting suitable employment if offered, not voluntarily quitting a job or reducing work hours, and participating in Employment and Training (E&T) if referred by the State.

In addition, some SNAP participants who are subject to the general work requirement are also subject to time-limited benefits unless they fulfill additional work requirements. These individuals, referred to as Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD), include participants who are age 18-49, residing in a SNAP household without children, and not disabled or pregnant. ABAWDs are limited to 3 months of SNAP participation in any 36-month period unless they work or participate in qualifying work or training activities for at least 20 hours per week or comply with a workfare program.

States may seek waivers of the time limit for geographic areas that demonstrate a lack of sufficient jobs. This report examines what happened to ABAWDs when the ABAWD time limit was reinstated by many States following the Great Recession.

Key Findings

- Reinstatement of the ABAWD time limit substantially reduced SNAP participation among those subject to the time limit.
- The largest reduction typically occurred between the third and fourth month of time limit - reinstatement, the first month in which participants could lose SNAP.
- There was no evidence that the ABAWD time limit increased employment or annual earnings.
- One year after reinstatement, the most common outcome for those affected by the time limit was to not receive SNAP benefits and not be employed.

Methods

The study gathered data from nine States that had reinstated time limits in all or part of the State.

Study States and Month of Time Limit Reinstatement

States	Month of Reinstatement
Alabama, Colorado, Maryland, Missouri, Oregon, Tennessee	January 2016
Minnesota, Vermont	November 2013
Pennsylvania	March 2016

Study methods included:

- **Descriptive analysis of SNAP administrative data from all nine study States** to examine ABAWD characteristics and participation trends before and after time limit reinstatement and to assess the

extent to which ABAWDs met the work requirement or used time-limited benefits.

- **Regression analysis of administrative data** to estimate the impact of time limit reinstatement on SNAP participation and annual benefit payments. This analysis compared outcomes for a time limit cohort and a comparison cohort while controlling for other factors like socioeconomic characteristics and local unemployment rates.
- **Analysis of linked SNAP-Unemployment Insurance (UI) data in three States** to look at the impact of time limit reinstatement on employment and annual earnings.
- **Difference in difference sensitivity analysis** of a subset of key findings.
- **Interviews with Regional SNAP Directors.**

Findings

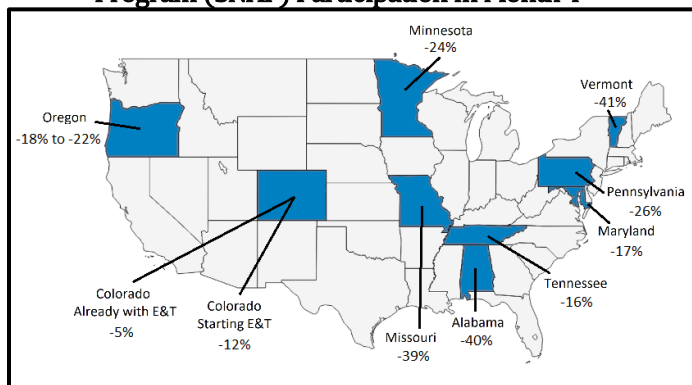
ABAWDs represented a small share of the caseload in the study States (4-9 percent of SNAP participants) and most lived alone. ABAWDs were more likely to be male and have lower income compared to other participants aged 18-49 but were of similar race and ethnicity. ABAWDs were more likely to be homeless and had somewhat lower educational attainment.

Few participants subject to the time limit (5 to 12 percent in study States) met the work requirement in the first month of time limit reinstatement. A higher share met the time limit after the departure of those who lost eligibility, mainly due to the reduction in the overall number of ABAWDs receiving SNAP. Among those who met the work requirement, three-fourths or more did so by working at least 20 hours per week.

Women and those with higher educational attainment were more likely to meet the work requirement. Homeless participants were much less likely to meet the work requirement.

Reinstatement of the time limit substantially reduced SNAP participation. The largest reduction typically occurred between the third and fourth month of time limit reinstatement, the first month in which participants could lose SNAP.

Percent Impact on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Participation in Month 4



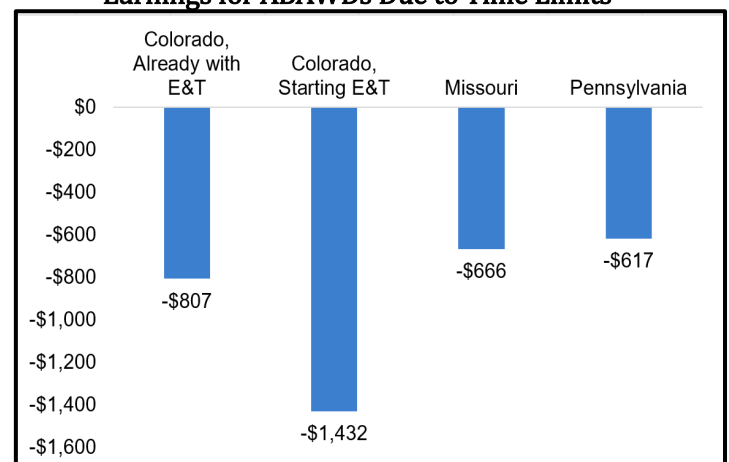
Participation patterns are different in Colorado, possibly due to mandatory E&T. In Colorado counties where mandatory E&T was in place prior to reinstatement of the time limit, there was a relatively small decline in participation after reinstatement. In Colorado counties where mandatory E&T was implemented concurrent with time limit reinstatement, participation began to decline the month before reinstatement and continued through

month 4.

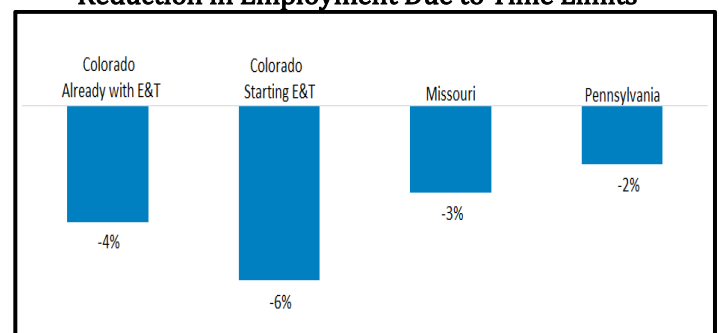
Reinstatement of the time limit led to statistically significant reductions in average annual benefits for ABAWDs in eight of nine study States. The impact on annual benefits ranged from -\$70 to -\$658.

Using linked SNAP and UI data, the study found a negative impact on ABAWDs' employment status and combined annual SNAP benefits and earnings. There was no evidence that reinstatement of the time limit improved employment or annual earnings for ABAWDs in the three States for which linked data was available.

Reduction in Combined Annual SNAP Benefits and Earnings for ABAWDs Due to Time Limits



Reduction in Employment Due to Time Limits



The main impact of time limit reinstatement was to change the extent to which ABAWDs received SNAP, regardless of employment. The most likely outcome for the time limit cohort was to not receive SNAP and not be employed four quarters after time limit reinstatement.

For More Information:

Wheaton, Laura et al. (2021) [The Impact of SNAP Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents \(ABAWD\) Time Limit Reinstatement in Nine States](https://www.fns.usda.gov/research-analysis). Prepared by the Urban Institute for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, 2021. Available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research-analysis>.