

Identifying Gaps in Data for Food Assistance Program Eligibility and Participation in Washington State

Courtney Schupp, UW Nutritional Sciences Program, MPH-Nutrition Student & Dietetic Intern



SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH · UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

excellent science, shared passion, enduring impact



Background

Almost 12% of Washingtonians experience food insecurity

Four agencies, Department of Health, Department of Social and Human Services, Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, administer 15 federally-funded food assistance programs

Programs measure participation and eligibility data, but data do not fully describe racial/ethnic and geographic disparities of participation

Data are inaccessible to community-level stakeholders, such as food banks and pantries, parent-teacher associations, and hunger relief organizations

WA state legislature passed a budget proviso requiring the four agencies to compile and report these data

Objectives

- Describe available eligibility and participation data for all food assistance programs with appropriate context
- Identify missing data and gaps in current data
- Recommend future uses for data

Methods

- Identify available eligibility and participation data on agencies' websites
- Contact agency representatives via email to determine data unavailable online
- Summarize available and missing data in:
 - (1) one-page "report card" for the state
 - (2) report suggesting next steps

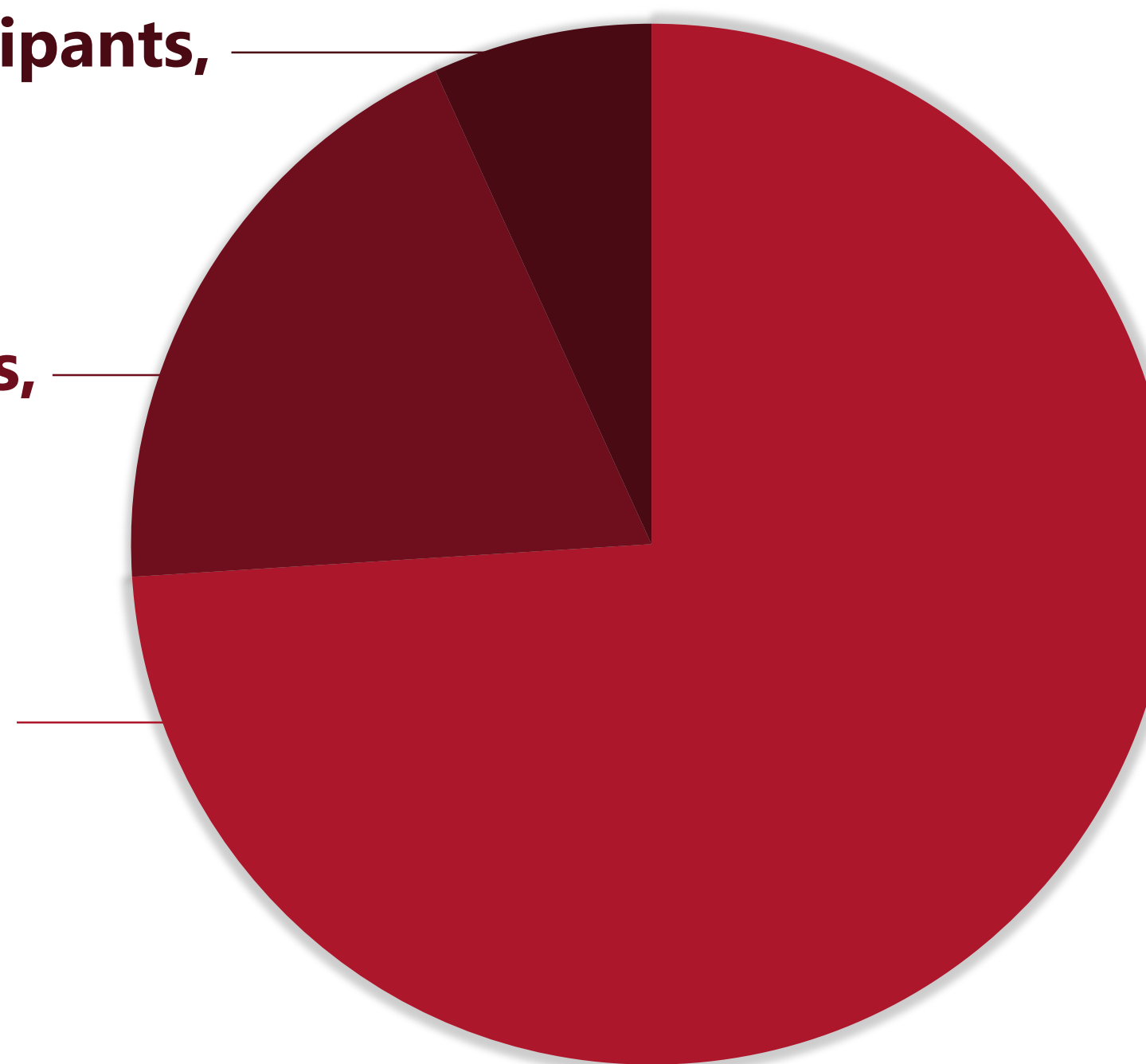
Findings

- All food assistance programs fall short of feeding all needy people
→ SNAP serves ~74% of eligible clients
- Most data are not disaggregated by geography, race/ethnicity, etc.
- Data collection was too tedious and unreasonable for community-level stakeholders
- Data were presented as static numbers with incomplete context

Eligible Non-Participants,
497,022 , 7%

Eligible Participants,
1,397,858 , 19%

**Non-Eligible
Washingtonians,**
5,393,120 , 74%



Data for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) with respect to all WA residents; 74% of eligible SNAP recipients (497,022 WA residents) do not participate in the program despite eligibility

Recommendations

- (1) Engage stakeholders in data collection
- (2) Collect more data for public release
- (3) Create user-friendly databases

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Claire Lane of the Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition and representatives of the four agencies that provided the data needed to complete this project.



**AntiHUNGER
& Nutrition
COALITION**