



MATHEMATICA
Policy Research

Additional Food Assistance, Food Expenditures and Food Security? *Evidence from SEBTC*

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Goal of Nutrition Assistance ...

“ to alleviate hunger and malnutrition ... by increasing food purchasing power for all eligible households who apply for participation ”

Food Stamp Act of 1977,
as amended (P.L. 108-269)



... and the Implicit Theory

“ to alleviate hunger and malnutrition ... by increasing food purchasing power for all eligible households who apply for participation ”

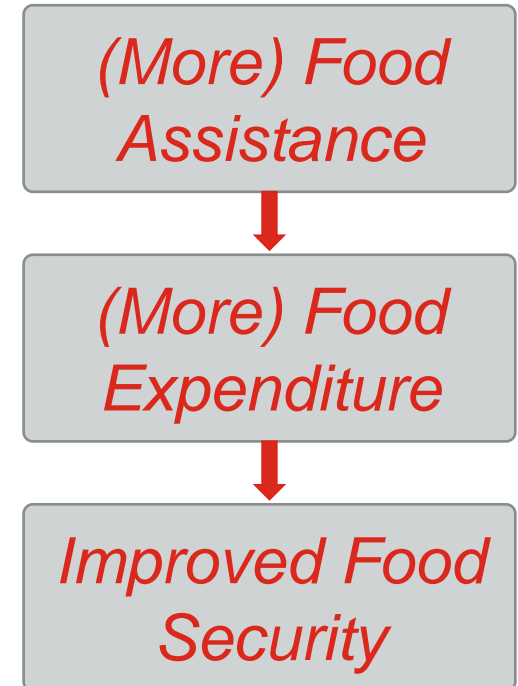
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... and the Implicit Theory

“ to alleviate hunger and malnutrition ... by increasing food purchasing power for all eligible households who apply for participation ”

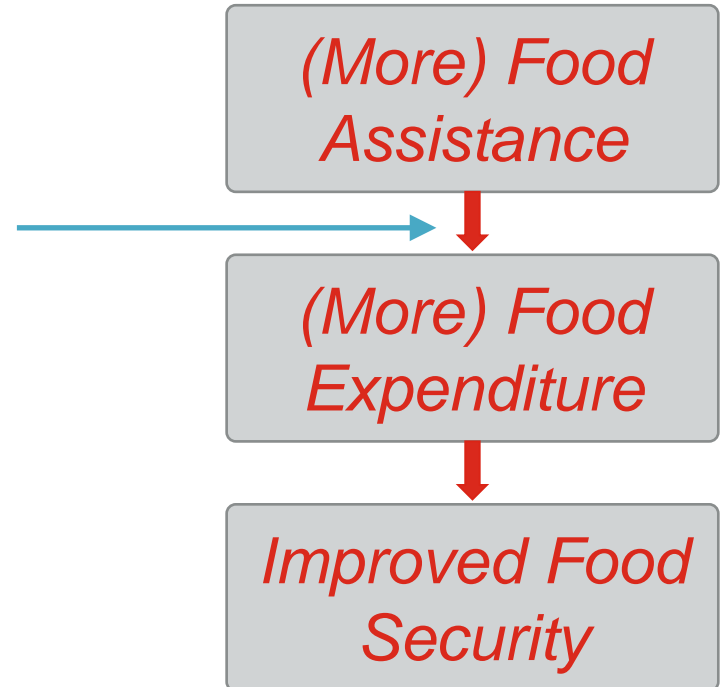
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... and the Implicit Theory

**This step might not work
(Southworth, 1945, and most
non-experimental analyses)**

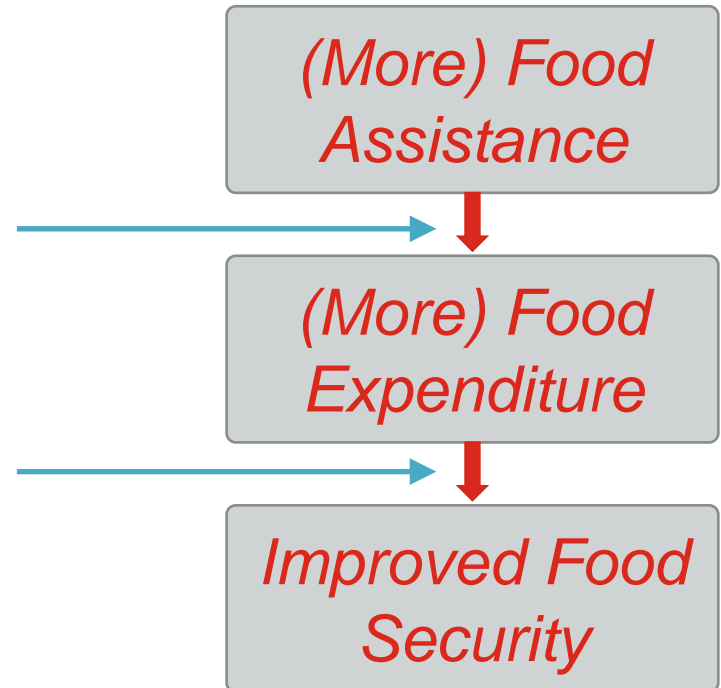




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**The less change in food
expenditure, the less
change in food security**

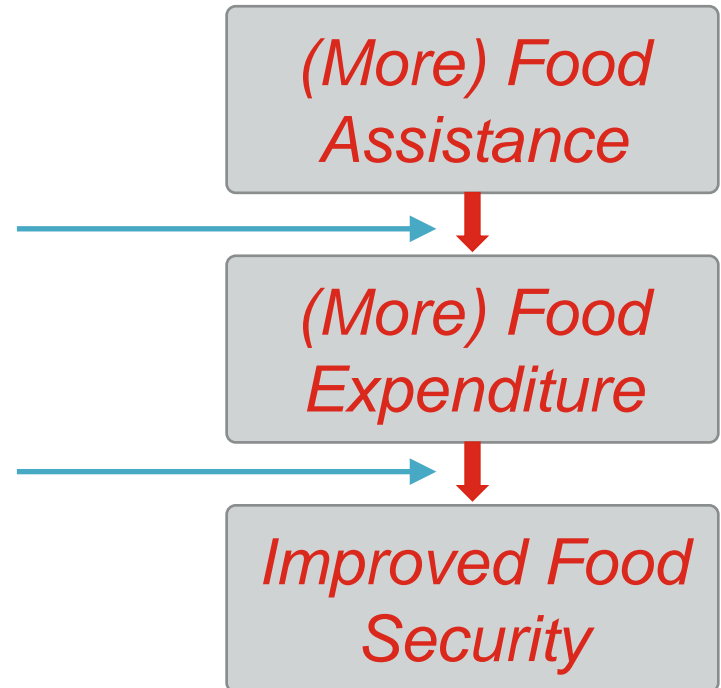




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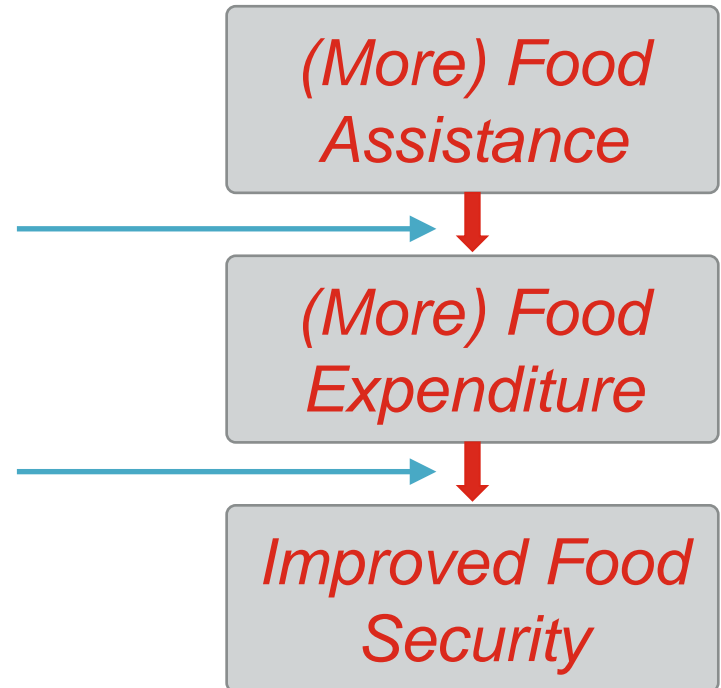
Today, new evidence on both steps from SEBTC



... and the Implicit Theory

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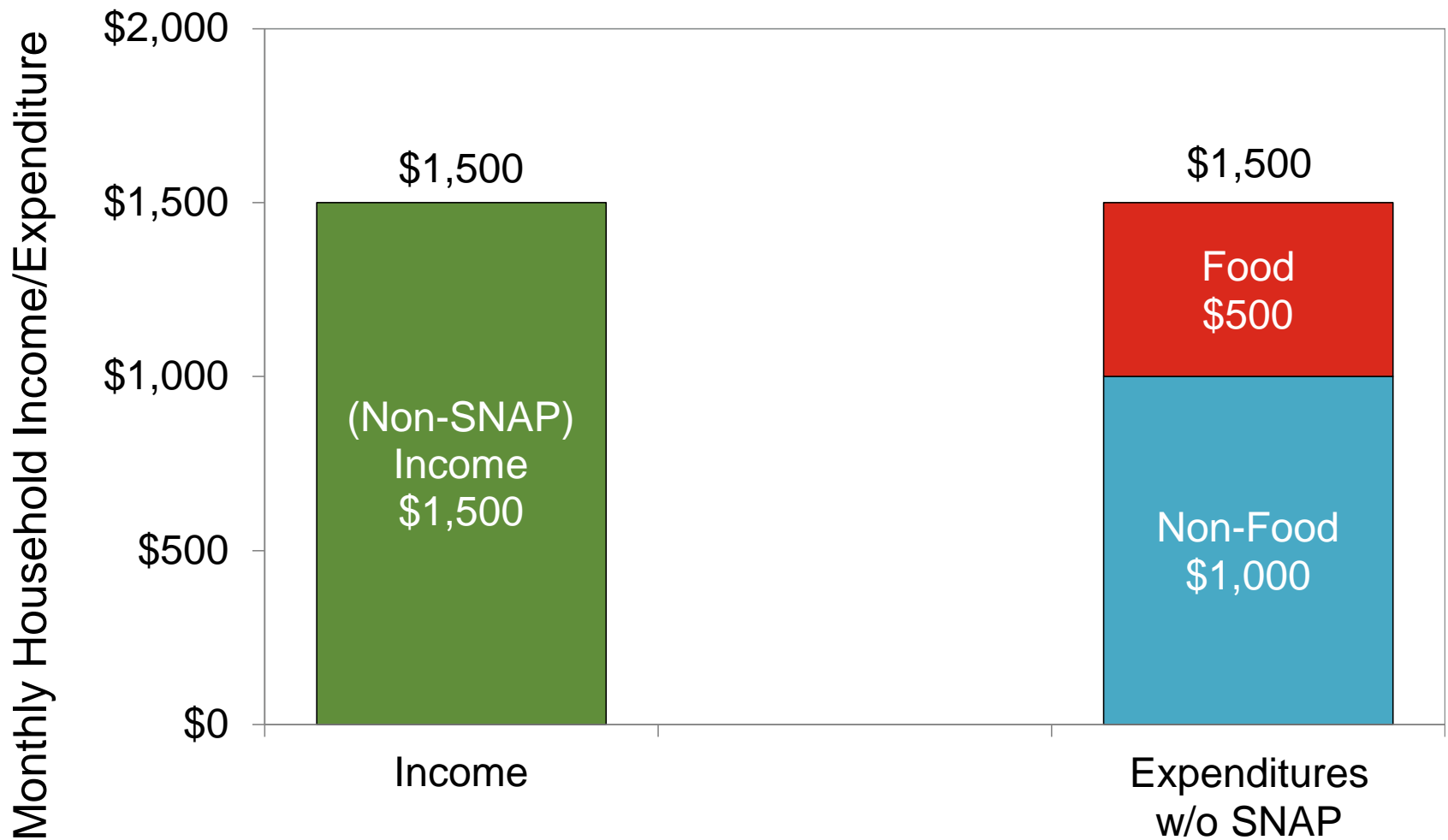
The less change in food expenditure, the less change in food security



To understand why, consider a household budget ...

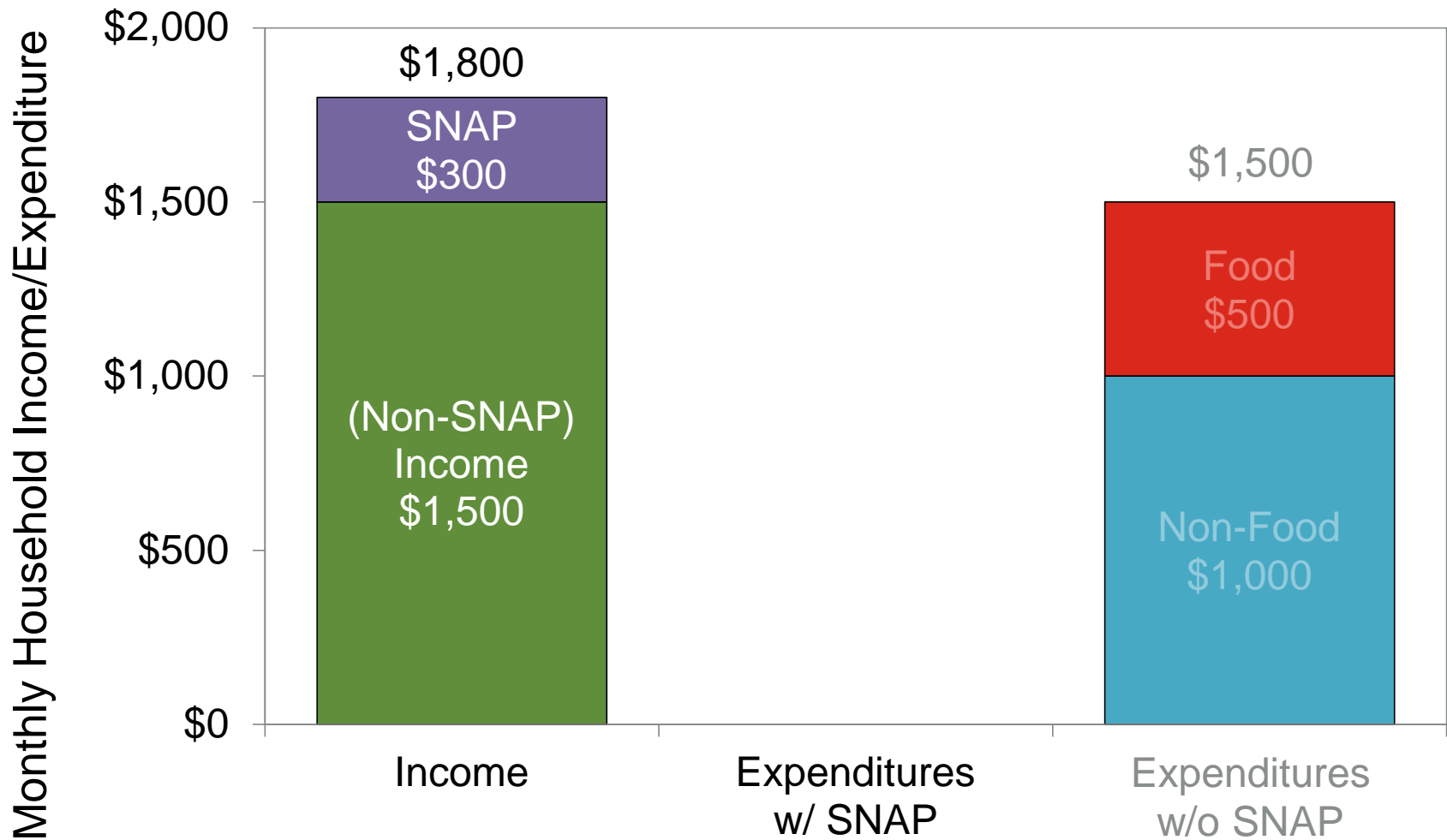


Budget without SNAP



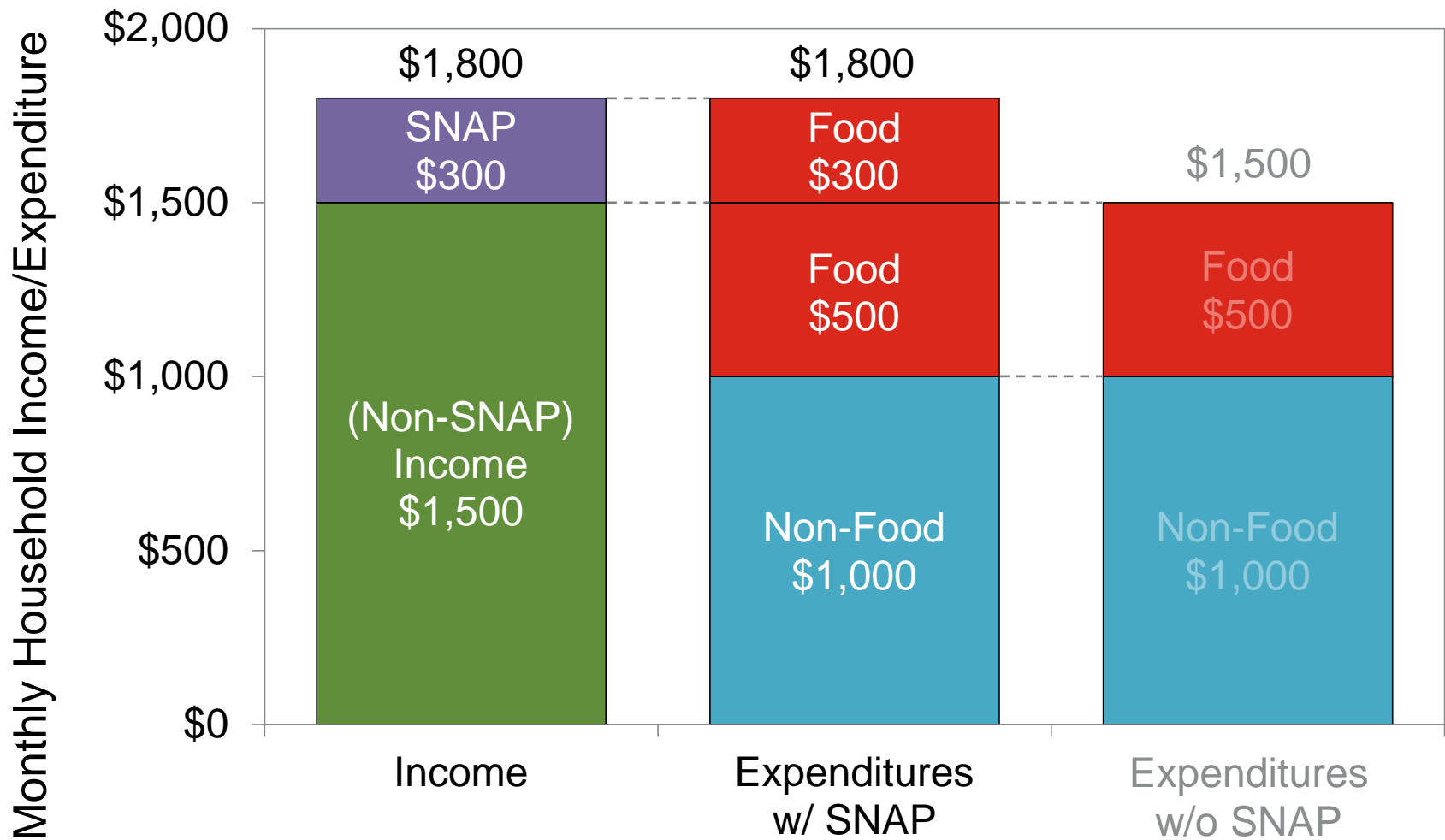


Income with SNAP



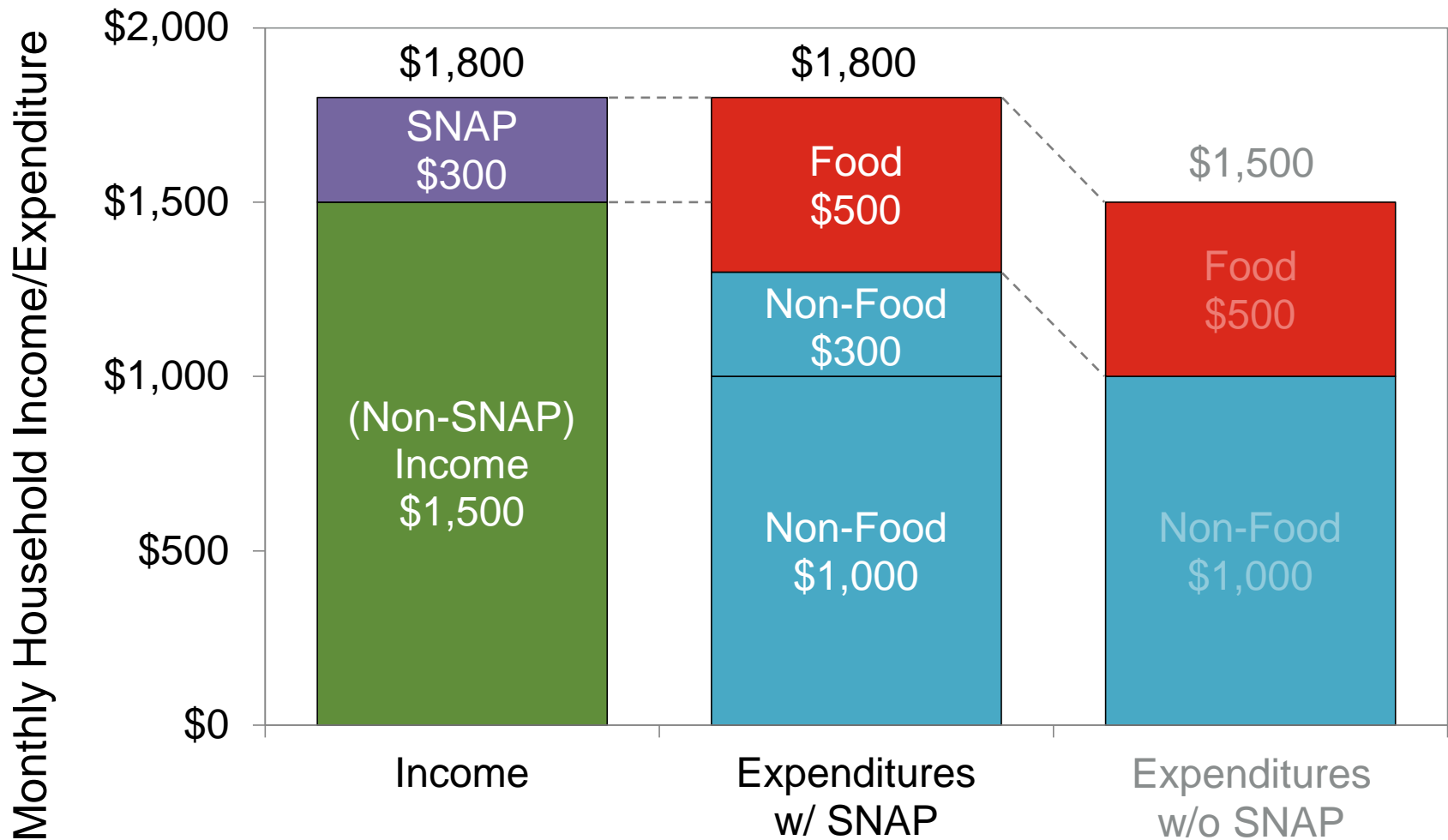


... According to the Implicit Theory



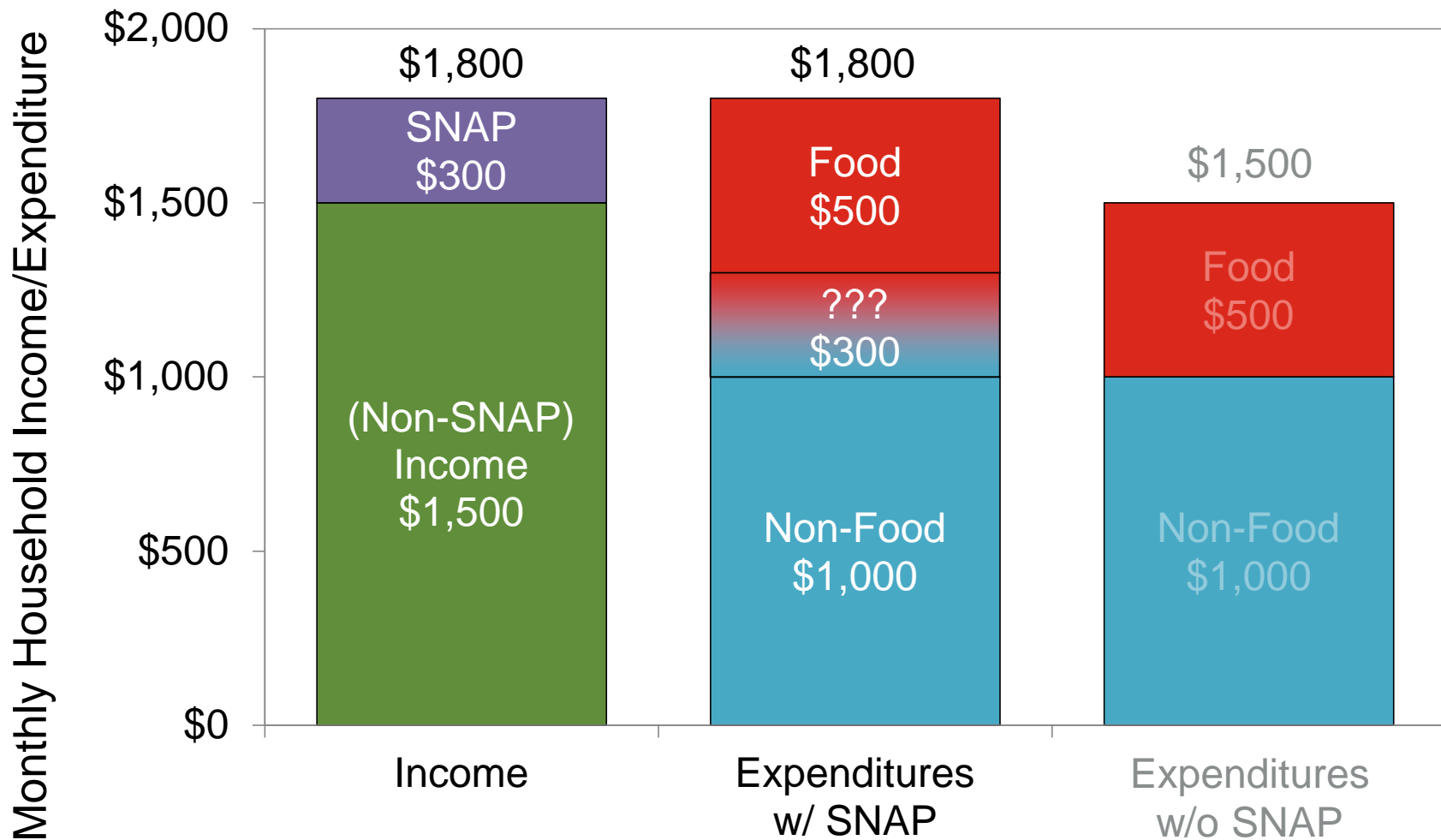


... According to an Alternative Theory



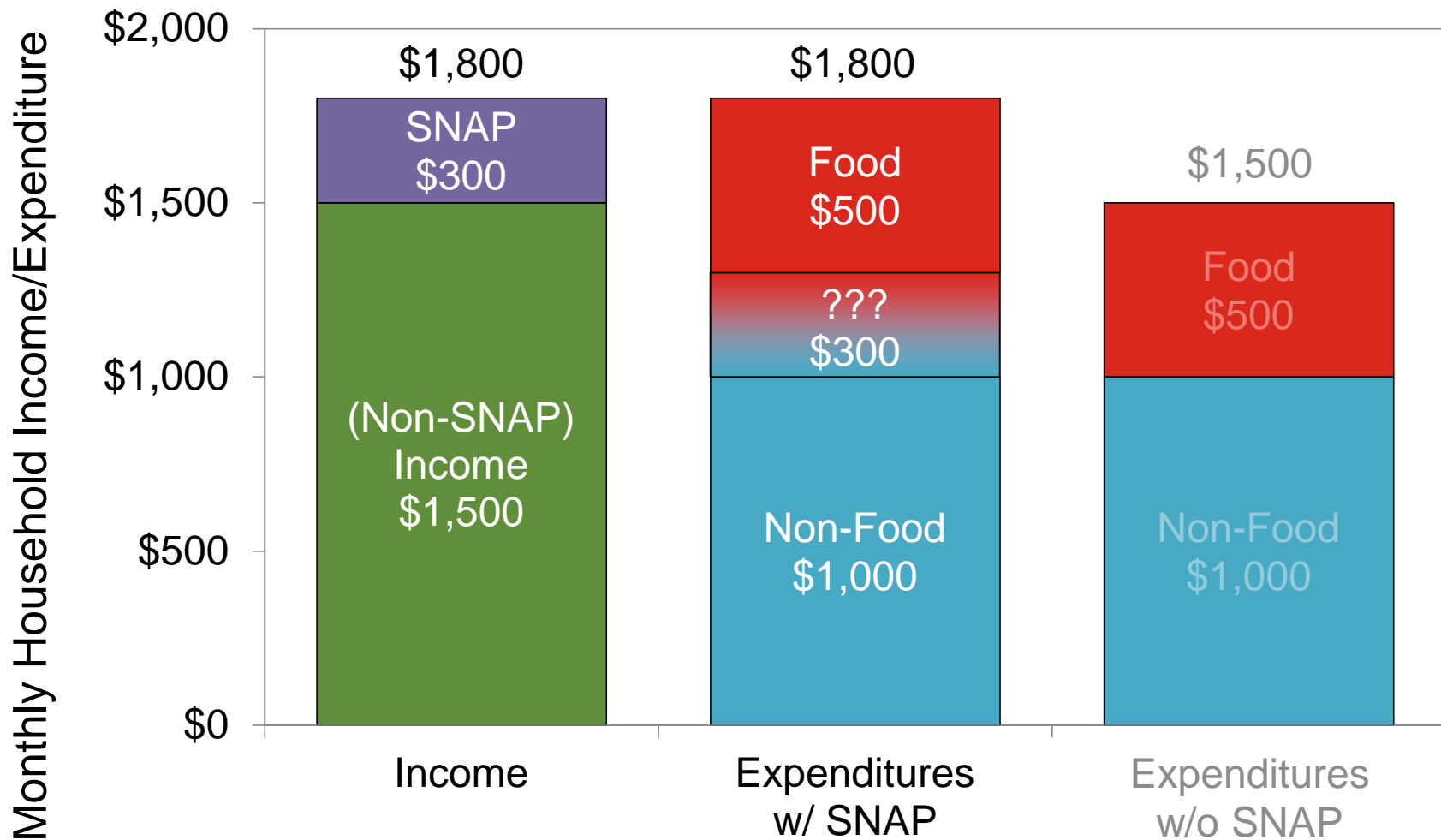


What is the Food/Non-Food Split?





What is the Food/Non-Food Split?



How would you know?



Ideally, ...

For households receiving SNAP



Flip a coin...

Heads... Gets SNAP



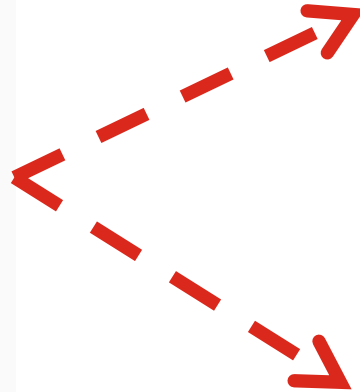
Tails... Does Not Get SNAP





Ideally, ...

For households
receiving SNAP



Heads... Gets SNAP



Tails... Does Not Get SNAP



Flip a coin...

Can't do that; SNAP is an entitlement



Ideally, ...

For households receiving SNAP



Heads... Gets SNAP



Tails... Does Not Get SNAP



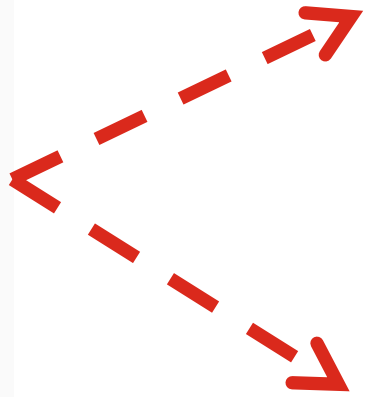
Flip a coin...

*Can't do that; SNAP is an entitlement
With SEBTC, we can get close ...*



SEBTC is Close to Ideal

Households receiving free or reduced price school meals



Summers of 2011, 2012, and 2013: \$60



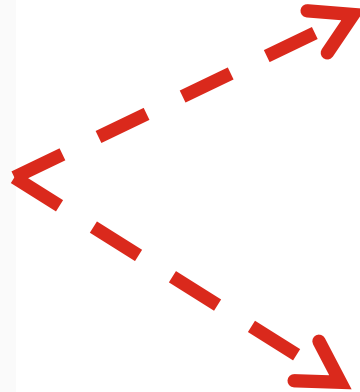
Summers of 2011 and 2012: no SEBTC benefit
Summer of 2013: \$30

Randomized to ...



SEBTC is Close to Ideal

Households receiving free or reduced price school meals



Summers of 2011, 2012, and 2013: \$60



Summers of 2011 and 2012: no SEBTC benefit
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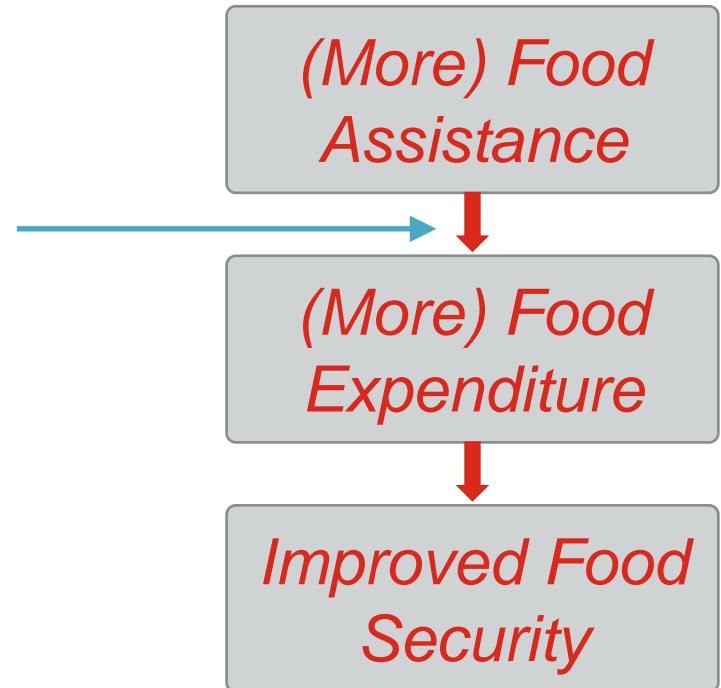
Randomized to ...

Very large survey (>50,000 households) collecting data on income, expenditure, and food security



SEBTC Evidence on the Theory

Compare food expenditure
for households w/ varying
SEBTC benefits





SEBTC Evidence: Impact on Food Expenditure

$$52\% = \frac{\$47 \text{ increase in food expenditure}}{\$91 \text{ benefit received}}$$

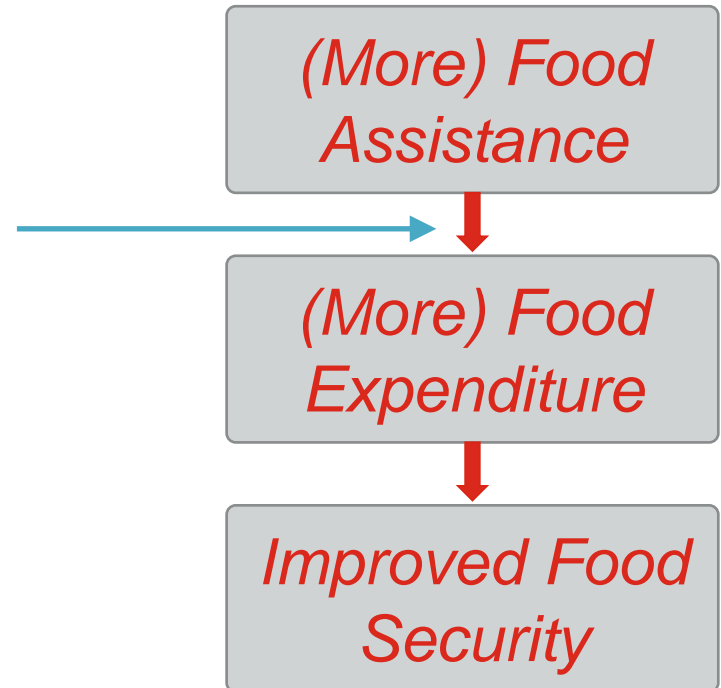
Source: Averages from SEBTC 2012;
i.e., \$60 per school age child vs. no SEBTC benefit

Less than all; much more than regular income (~10%)



SEBTC Evidence: Impact on Food Expenditure

*So in net, half of food assistance
goes to food expenditure*

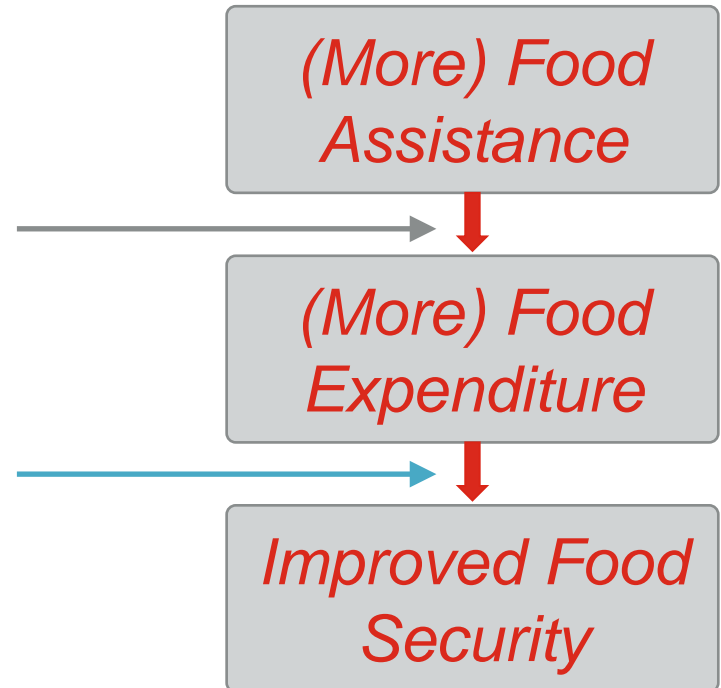




SEBTC Evidence on the Theory

So in net, half of food assistance goes to food expenditure

How much does the increased food expenditure improve food security?



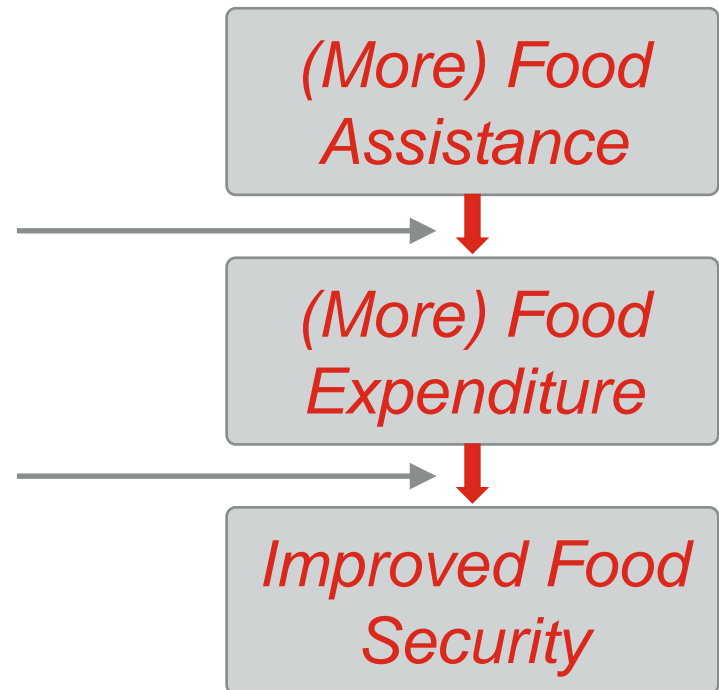


SEBTC Evidence: Impact on Food Security

*So in net, half of food assistance
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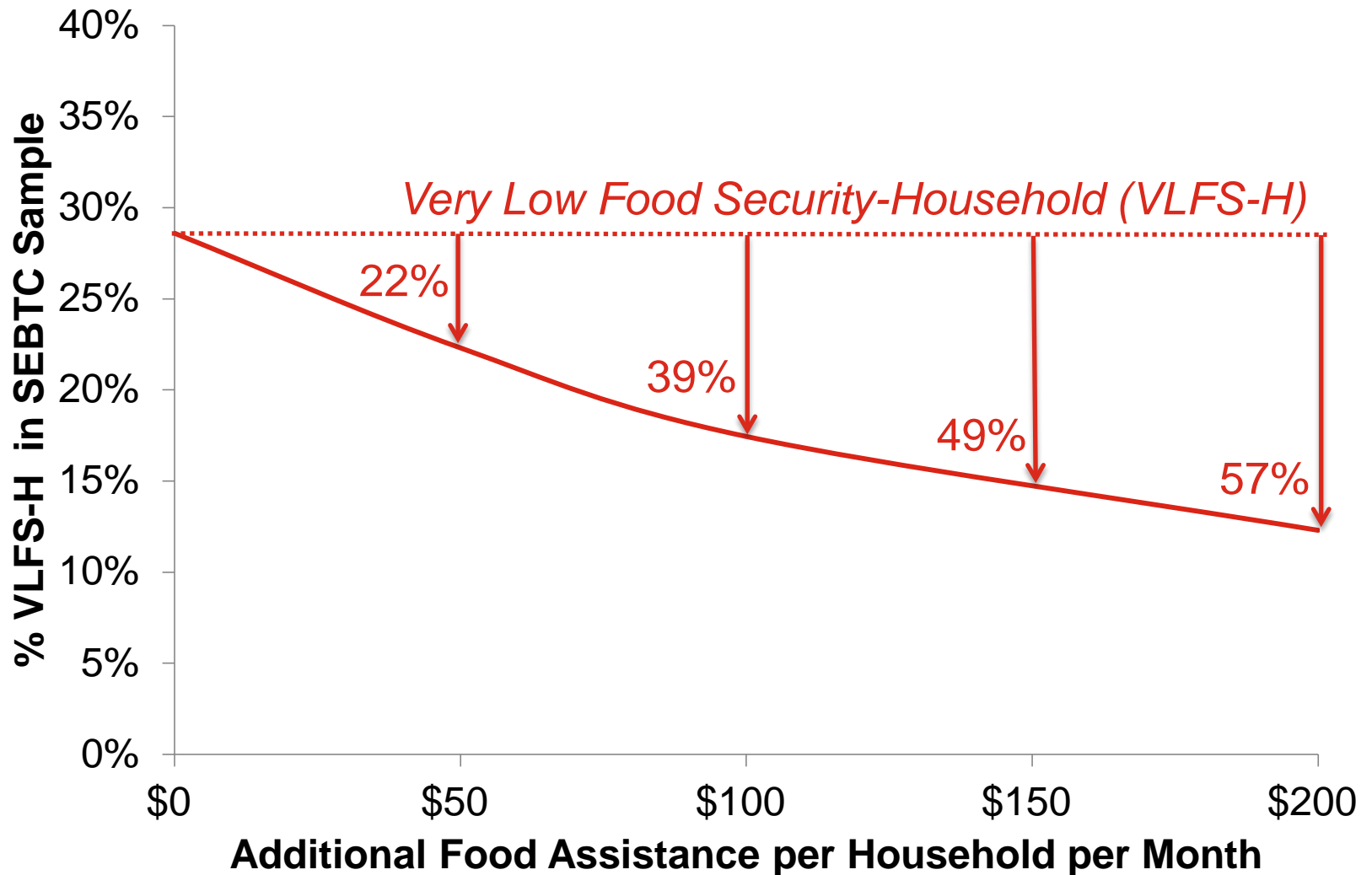
How much does the increased food
expenditure improve food security?

**Again, compare food security for
households w/ varying SEBTC
benefit amounts**





SEBTC Evidence: Impact on Food Security





Summary of SEBTC Evidence

So in net, half of food assistance goes to food expenditure

*And it improves food security—a lot;
e.g. \$100 more per month cuts VLFS-H by 39%*

