

# Welfare Indicators and Risk Factors

21st Report to Congress

March 2022



*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

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## Introduction

The Welfare Indicators Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-432) requires the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to prepare an annual report to Congress on indicators and predictors of “welfare dependence.” That Act directed HHS to address: (i) the rate of welfare dependence, (ii) the degree and duration of welfare reciprocity and dependence, and (iii) predictors of welfare dependence, specifically, benefits under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program (which replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program),<sup>i</sup> the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly the Food Stamp Program).<sup>ii</sup>

In 1997, a bipartisan Advisory Board authorized by the Welfare Indicators Act convened and recommended that a family be classified as being “dependent on welfare” if more than 50 percent of its total income in a one-year period comes from TANF, SNAP or SSI. This report provides data on program reciprocity using this definition as well as trends of indicators of economic insecurity for families which may be predictive of receipt of these benefits.

This twenty-first report on Welfare Indicators and Risk Factors provides data for indicators and risk factors through 2019 for most indicators and 2020 for select indicators. Note that since many of the data series in this report do not extend to 2020, they do not reflect the economic recession resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020.

### Programs Included in the Report

The **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families** program provides block grants to the states, the District of Columbia, territories, (henceforth referred to as states) and tribes to provide monthly cash benefits and services to eligible families with or expecting children. TANF was created under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), Public Law 104-193, to replace the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. Under TANF states have broad discretion to design programs and determine eligibility for benefits and services but states must engage families with a work eligible individual in work activities and meet minimum work participation rate requirements.<sup>iii</sup>

The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** provides eligible households with a monthly benefit to purchase food for home consumption. The Food Stamp Program was renamed the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program by Public Law 110-234, the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. To be eligible for SNAP benefits, households must meet federal income and asset requirements or be categorically eligible based on eligibility for TANF, SSI, or another state program.<sup>iv</sup>

The **Supplemental Security Income** program<sup>v</sup> provides monthly cash payments to low-income, low-resource individuals age 65 and older and to low-income, low-resource individuals under age 65 with a disability. The program was created in 1972 to care for the aged, blind or disabled. To qualify for SSI benefits, an individual or married couple must satisfy the program criteria for citizenship or qualified legal alien status, for income and assets as well as for age, blindness, or disability. Though the majority of recipients are adults, children with disabilities also are eligible.

### Measurement and Data Sources



This report uses data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and administrative data for the TANF cash assistance program, SNAP, and SSI to provide updated measures through 2019 for key indicators of dependence and through 2020 for select other indicators. Because program participation tends to be underreported in household surveys, this report supplements survey data with administrative records and a microsimulation model, the Transfer Income Model, version 3 (TRIM3).

Several risk factors associated with benefit receipt are also included, such as poverty status and employment, and provide useful context to indicators of reciprocity. Trends in nonmarital teen births are provided since the lower incomes of young and single parents affect the need for and use of program benefits. Data on risk factors are based on publications from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, National Vital Statistics Reports from the National Center for Health Statistics, the Survey of Income and Program Participation, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

## Key Findings

- The share of the population receiving more than half of their income from TANF, SNAP and SSI programs continued to decline as the economy expanded. In 2019, 3.3 percent (10.8 million) of the total population lived in households receiving more than half of their total annual income from TANF, SNAP and/or SSI, a decrease of 2.0 percentage points from the most recent peak of 5.3 percent in 2010.
- *TANF participation rate among eligible people declined in 2019.* Participation in the TANF program among eligible families declined for the eighth consecutive year, from 33.9 in 2011 to 21.3 percent in 2019. The SNAP participation rate by eligible households increased slightly to 83.8 percent in 2019, significantly below the historic peak in 2013 of 90.1 percent. SSI participation by eligible adults rose to 61.6 percent in 2019, up from a historic low of 58.2 percent in 2016.
- *Most families receiving benefits participated in the labor force.* In 2019 more than 60.6 percent of persons who received SNAP benefits lived in families with someone in the labor force. More than half of TANF recipients (56.8 percent) lived in families with someone in the labor force.
- *Key indicators of economic need, after improvements in 2019, lost ground in 2020.* In 2020, the percent of children in poverty rose to 16.1 percent from 10.5 percent in 2019. The food insecurity status of all households remained unchanged from 2019 to 2020, however for households with children the rate rose from 13.6 percent to 14.8 percent between 2019 and 2020.

The strength of the economy in 2019 in part contributed to the improvement to many of the indicators in this report, with unemployment at its lowest since the 1960s. The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to a sudden recession in 2020, leading to an increase in the official poverty rate. However, the economic well-being of low-income families did not decline substantially due to federal and state economic such as the American Rescue Plan enacted in response to the pandemic/recession/in 2020. The supplemental poverty rate – which includes tax credits and economic impact payments that are excluded from the official poverty rate - showed a decrease by 2.6 points between 2019 and 2020. The Census Bureau estimated that stimulus payments kept 11.7 million Americans out of poverty in 2020. TANF, SNAP, and SSI also had an antipoverty effect in 2020, each contributed to keeping 0.5, 2.9, and 2.7 million Americans out of poverty, respectively.<sup>vi</sup> Data on the effect of these trends on receipt of TANF, SNAP and SSI are

not yet available, and will be shown in future versions of this report.

A number of factors not discussed directly in this report contribute to receipt of SNAP, SSI, and TANF. In particular, federal and state rules on eligibility and receipt of benefits affect who can receive benefits, and how much benefits are available to participants. For example, states have flexibility with TANF to set income limits, benefits amounts, and other rules.<sup>vii</sup> With SSI, 44 states and the District of Columbia supplement federal funds to provide additional support to federally eligible recipients or to individuals ineligible for federal SSI payments because of income in excess of federal criteria.

# I. Welfare Dependence, Program Receipt and Participation

## Indicator 1. Degree of Dependence

### Definition

The proportion of individuals who receive more than half of their income from TANF, SNAP, or SSI.

### Measure in 2019

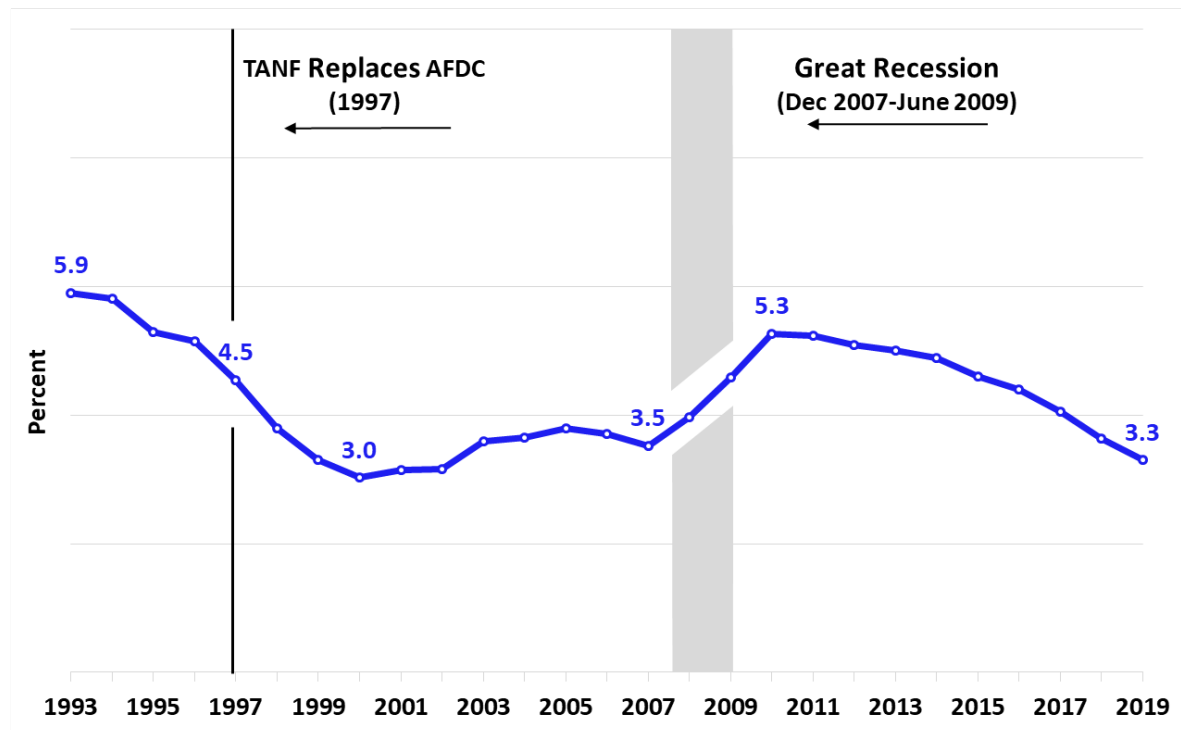
3.3 percent (10.8 million) received more than 50 percent of their income from TANF, SNAP, or SSI. 19.5 percent of all persons lived in households that received some level of TANF, SNAP or SSI assistance. See Appendix Table 3 for detailed estimates by demographic characteristics.

### Measure Over Time

Decrease of 0.3 percentage points from 2018. Since 2010, this indicator declined every year. See Appendix Table 1 for detailed historical estimates.

Figure 1 reports the national dependence rate over time.

**Figure 1. Dependency Rate: Percentage of the Population with More than 50 Percent of Income from AFDC/TANF, SNAP, or SSI, 1993 to 2019**



**Note:** AFDC recipients are included from 1994 to 1996, and TANF recipients are included beginning in 1997. Food Stamp recipients are included from 1994 to 2008; The 2008 Farm Bill (P.L. 110–234) changed the name of Food Stamps to SNAP.

**Source:** The Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements and microsimulation model TRIM3.

## Indicator 2. Program Receipt and Family Labor Force Attachment

### Definition

In an average month, the percentage of recipients of TANF, SNAP, or SSI living in families with someone participating in the labor force, which includes people working, or unemployed and looking for work.

### Measure in 2019

- TANF: 56.8 percent lived in families with labor force participants.
- SNAP: 60.6 percent lived in families with labor force participants.
- SSI: 40.3 percent lived in families with labor force participants.

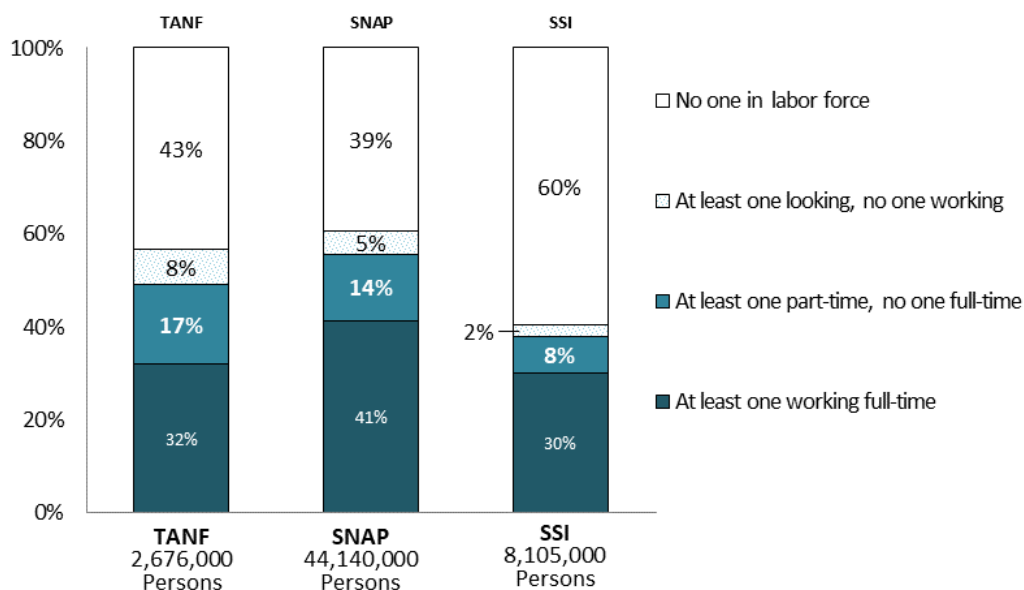
See Figure 2. See Appendix Tables 4 for detailed estimates by demographic characteristics.

### Measure Over Time

- TANF: Increase from 2018 by 2.8 percentage points, from 54.0 percent.
- SNAP: Decrease from 2018 by 0.6 percentage points, from 61.2 percent.
- SSI: Increase from 2018 by 1.1 percentage points, from 39.2 percent.

See Appendix Tables 4 and 5 for detailed estimates.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Recipients in Families with Labor Force Participants, by Program, 2019**



**Note:** Recipients are individuals or coresident family members who receive benefits in a month. Each column shows the population for a specific program, but columns are not mutually exclusive. The indicator measures, in an average month, the combination of individual benefit receipt and participation in the labor force of any relative in the household in the same month. Full-time workers usually work 35 hours or more per week. Part-time workers work less than 35 hours per week. “Looking for work” includes individuals who were unemployed or laid off.

**Source:** The Current Population Survey (CPS ASEC) and microsimulation model TRIM3.

### Indicator 3. Program Reciprocity

#### Definition

The percentage of the U.S. population who received or lived with a family member who received a cash benefits during the year from TANF or SSI, or benefits from SNAP. The time frame of study affects estimates of program receipt. The reciprocity rate of any of the three programs is measured annually and defined as receipt at any point during the year. Due to differences in availability of data, the reciprocity rate for each program is based on estimates of reciprocity during an average month during the year. Note, data for TANF and SSI are available for 2020, while data for SNAP are available for 2019.

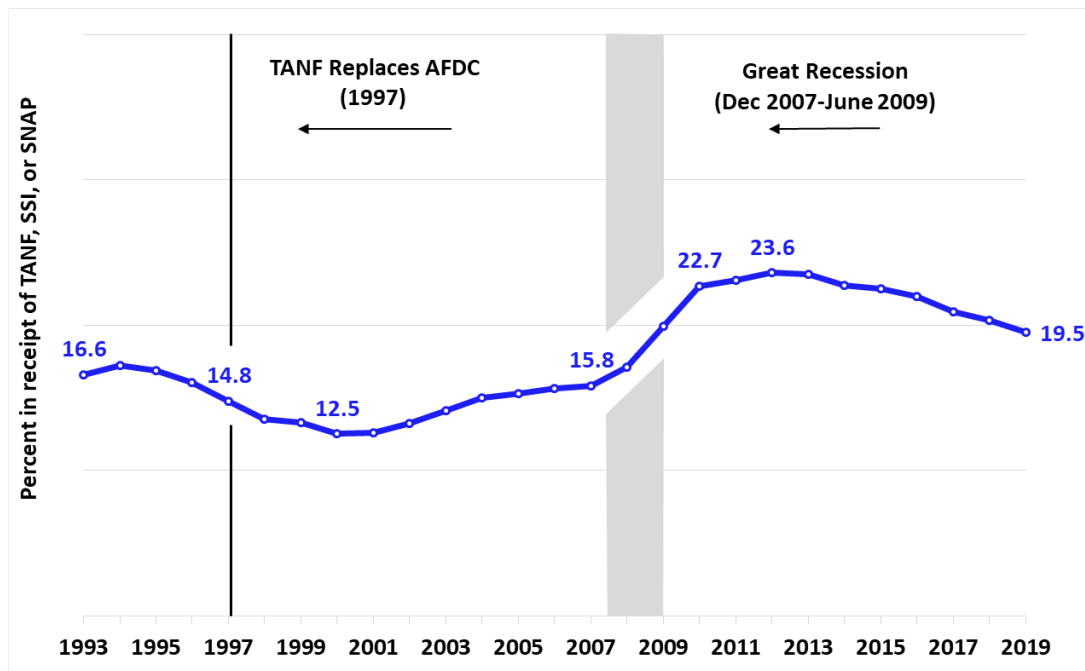
#### Measure in 2019/2020

- Overall: In 2019, 19.5 percent of the total population received or lived with a family member who received a benefit in any amount from TANF, SNAP, or SSI at any point during the year. See Figure 3.
- TANF<sup>viii</sup>: In 2020, less than 1 percent of the population (2.8 million)<sup>ix</sup> received TANF in an average month. See Figure 4. By age group, rates were:
  - Children: 2.8 percent (2.1 million).
  - Adults: 0.3 percent (740,000).
- SNAP: In 2019, 10.9 percent of the population (35.8 million) received SNAP in an average month. See Figure 5. By age group, rates were:
  - Children: 21.7 percent (15.8 million).
  - Prime working-age adults (18-59 years): 8.6 percent (15.5 million).
  - Adults age 60 or older: 7.8 percent (5.8 million).
- SSI: In 2020, 2.4 percent of the population (8 million) received SSI in an average month. See Figure 6. By age group, rates were:
  - Children: 1.5 percent (1.1 million).
  - Adults age 18 to 64: 2.3 percent (4.6 million).
  - Adults age 65 or older: 4.1 percent (2.3 million).

#### Measure over time.

- Overall: Decrease of 0.8 percentage points since 2018. Continued decrease from recent peak in 2012, when the rate was 23.6 percent. See Appendix Table 2.
- TANF: Decrease of less than one-half of a percentage point since 2019. Continued decrease since 1997 (when TANF replaced AFDC), when the rate was 4.0 percent. See Appendix Table 7.
- SNAP: Decrease of 1.1 percentage points since 2018. Continued decrease since recent peak in 2013, when the rate was 14.9 percent. Decreases for all age groups except adults age 60 or older, who saw steady increases since 2009. See Appendix Table 8.
- SSI: Decrease of less than one-half of a percentage point since 2019. Continued decrease since 2013, when the rate was 2.6 percent. Decreases for adults age 65 or older since 1993, when the rate was 6.4 percent. See Appendix Table 10.

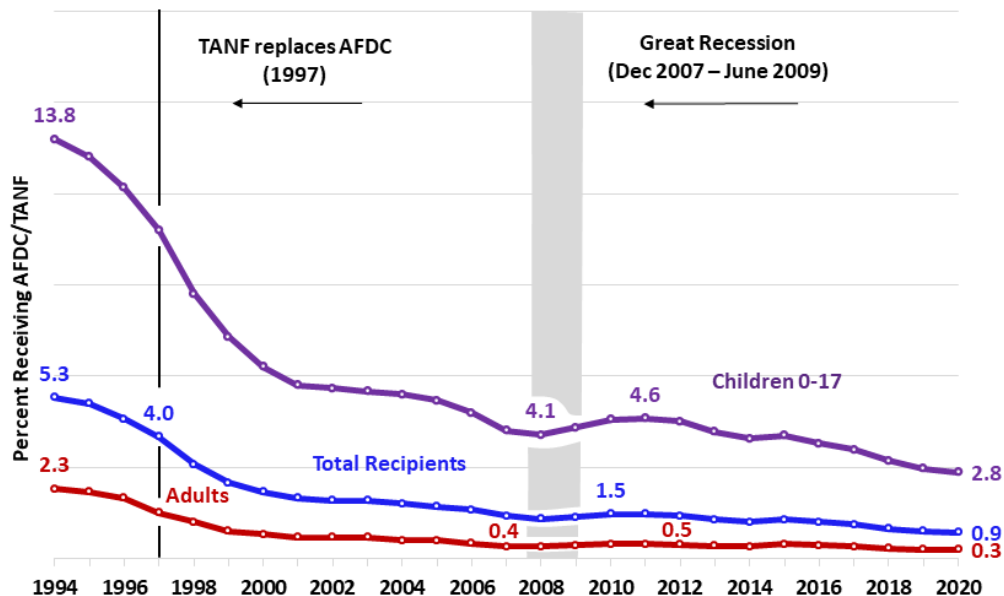
**Figure 3. Annual Reciprocity Rate for TANF, SSI, or SNAP, 1993 to 2019<sup>x</sup>**



**Note:** AFDC recipients are included from 1993 to 1996. Food Stamp recipients are included from 1993 to 2007.

**Source:** The Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements and microsimulation model TRIM3.

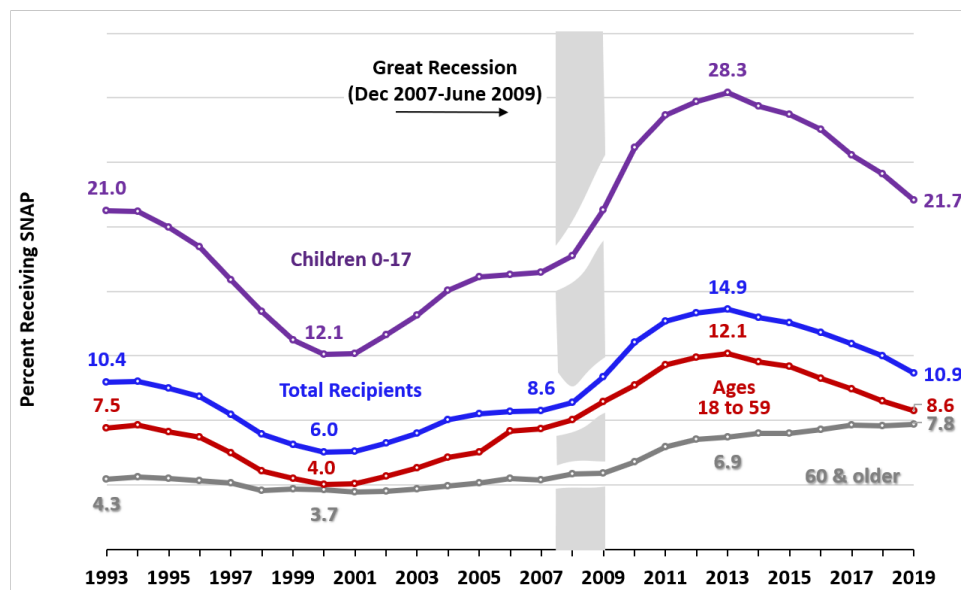
**Figure 4. Percentage of Persons Who Received AFDC or TANF Cash Assistance in an Average Month, 1994 to 2020<sup>xi</sup>**



**Note:** Recipients are expressed as the fiscal year average of monthly caseloads from administrative data.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance. The average number of adults and children who received TANF in 1998 and 1999 are estimated using data from the National Emergency TANF Data Files and thereafter from the National TANF Data Files.

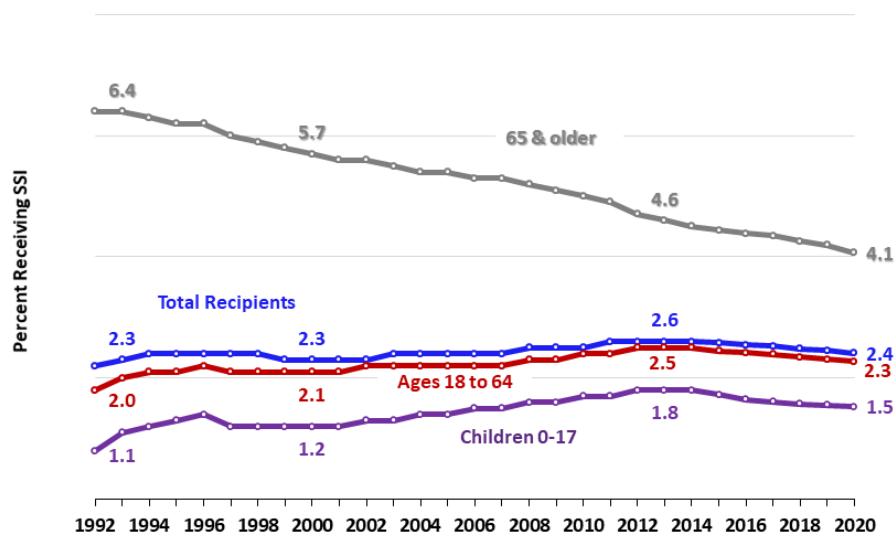
**Figure 5. Percentage of Persons Who Received Food Stamp or SNAP Benefits in an Average Month, 1993 to 2019** <sup>xii</sup>



**Note:** Estimates are fiscal year averages using monthly caseload data from administrative records. Percentages are calculated based on population statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Office of Policy Support, Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households and the FNS National Data Bank.

**Figure 6. Percentage of Persons Who Received Income from SSI in an Average Month, 1992 to 2020** <sup>xiii</sup>



**Note:** SSI data are reported as of December of each year. December population figures used as the denominators are obtained by averaging the U.S. Census Bureau's July 1 population estimates for the current and the following year.

**Source:** Social Security Administration, Office of Research, Evaluation and Statistics, SSI Annual Statistical Report, 2020. Population denominators for the percentage in each category are from the U.S. Census Bureau.

## **Indicator 4. Program Participation Among Those Eligible**

### **Definition**

In an average month, the percentage of people who receive a benefit among those that are eligible. For SSI, estimates only include adults age 65 and older and disabled adults under 65; estimates do not include children. Note data for TANF, SNAP, and SSI are available for 2019.

### **Measure in 2019**

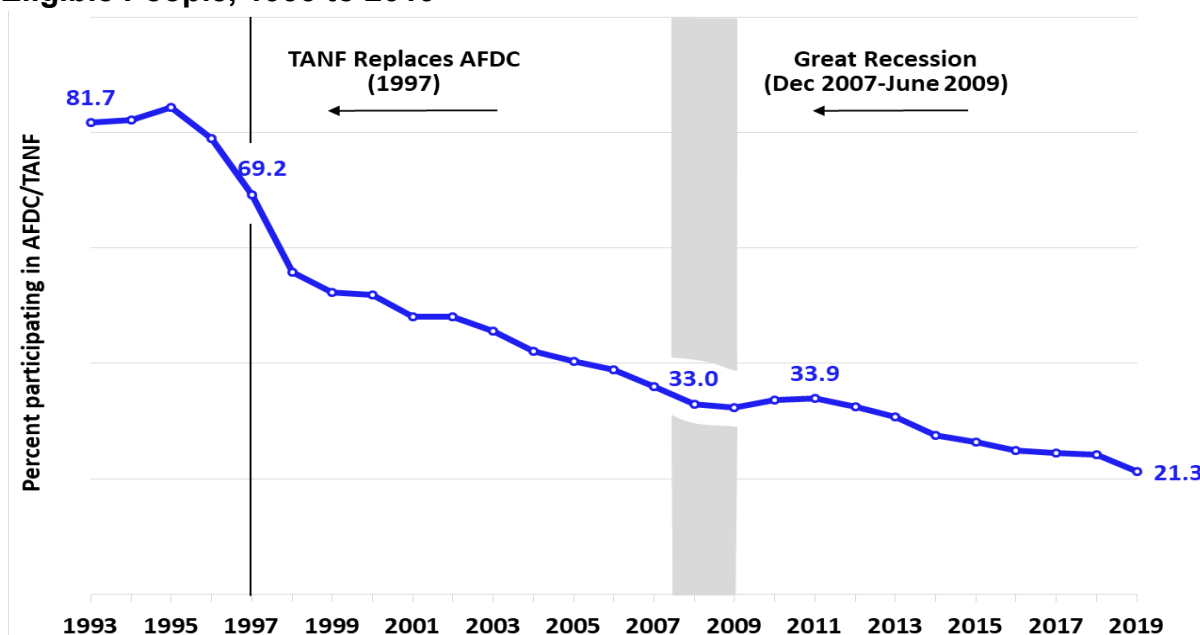
- TANF: In 2019, 21.3 percent of people eligible for TANF received it. See Figure 7.
- SNAP: In 2019, 83.8 percent of people eligible for SNAP received it. See Figure 8.
- SSI: In 2019, 61.6 percent of adults eligible for SSI received it. See Figure 9. By eligibility category, participation rates were:
  - Adults age 65 and older: 52 percent.
  - Adults with disability: 72.7 percent.

### **Measure Over Time**

- TANF: Decrease of 2.9 percentage points since 2018. Continued decrease since 2011, when the rate was 33.9 percent. See Appendix Table 11.
- SNAP: Increase of 0.4 percentage points since 2018. This is a net 6.3 percentage point decrease since the recent peak in 2013, when the rate was 90.1 percent. See Appendix Table 12.
- SSI: Increase of 0.4 percentage points since 2018. Continued increase since 2016, when the rate was 58.2 percent. Among adults 65 or older, the rate has declined since 2017, when the rate was 54.2 percent. Among adults under 65 with a disability the rate continued to rise from 2016, when the rate was 64.9 percent. Note, the number eligible for SSI among adults under 65 with a disability declined steadily from 2016 by 1 million, which influences the participation rate. See Appendix Table 13.

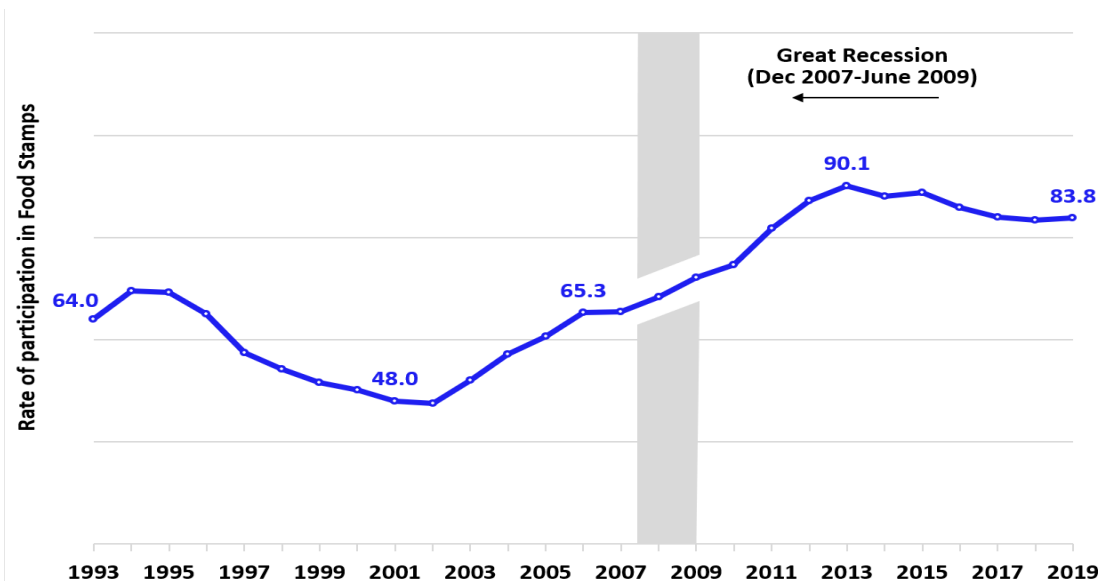


**Figure 7. Rates of Participation in AFDC/TANF Cash Assistance, Among Eligible People, 1993 to 2019<sup>xiv</sup>**



**Source:** Administrative caseload data is from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. The participation fraction is from microsimulation model TRIM3 and its input data the Current Population Survey's Annual and Social Economic Supplement.

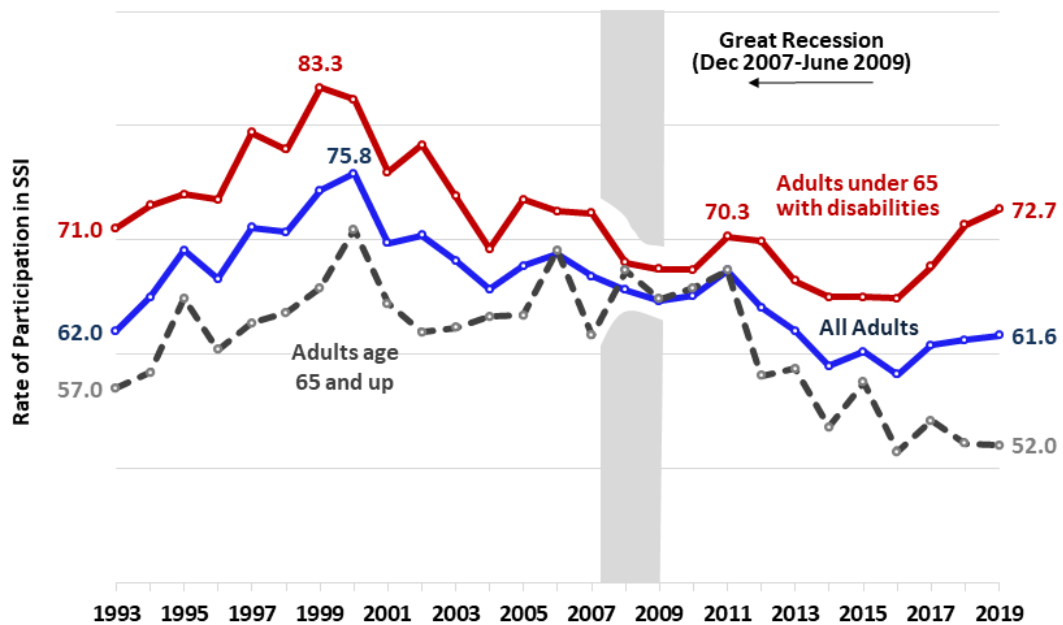
**Figure 8. Rates of Household Participation in Food Stamps or SNAP Among Eligible Households, 1994 to 2019<sup>xv</sup>**



**Notes:** Participant and eligibility totals represent monthly averages. Estimates from 2010 through 2015 should not be compared with prior estimates. Estimates for the following years are methodologically consistent: September 1980 to August 1994, September 1994 to September 1999, FY 1999 to FY 2002, FY 2002 to FY 2009, and FY 2010 to FY 2018.

**Source:** SNAP Program Operations data, SNAP Quality Control data, and CPS ASEC.

**Figure 9. Rate of Participation in the SSI Program, Among Eligible Adults, 1993 to 2019<sup>xvi</sup>**



**Note:** Data is an average monthly percentage of eligible adults and disabled. Eligible adults are individuals age 18 to 64 with low-income, low resources and a disability or adults age 65 and older with low income and low resources.

**Source:** The Current Population Survey, (CPS ASEC) and microsimulation model TRIM3.

## Indicator 5. Multiple Program Receipt

### Definition

This indicator is measured in two ways. The first measure is the percentage of the *total population* that received benefits from more than one of TANF, SNAP or SSI in an average month. The second measure is the percentage of *recipients* of TANF, SNAP, or SSI who received benefits from one or more than one program in an average month. Indicators 3 and 4 examine reciprocity annually, while this indicator looks at reciprocity in an average month due to data limitations. This affects the interpretation and actual estimate – for example, in an average month, 12.7 percent of the population received any benefit from TANF, SNAP or SSI, compared to 19.5 percent over the course of the year, as shown in Indicator 3.

Since TANF and SSI are generally mutually exclusive, multiple program participation reflects participation in two programs (either SNAP and TANF or SNAP and SSI).<sup>xvii</sup> Because the income threshold for eligibility is typically lower for TANF than it is for SNAP, generally families that are eligible for TANF are also eligible for SNAP.<sup>xviii</sup> <sup>xix</sup> Though SSI payments are generally higher than TANF, the level of income received by SSI recipients is such that many households that include an SSI recipient also qualify for SNAP.<sup>xx</sup>

### Measure in 2019

- Overall: In 2019, 6.2 million individuals received assistance from TANF and SNAP or SSI and SNAP, representing 1.9 percent of the population. For specific program combinations, 0.5 percent of the population received benefits from TANF and SNAP, and 1.4 percent received benefits from SSI and SNAP. See Figure 10.<sup>xxi</sup>
- TANF: In 2019 1.2 percent of all program recipients were getting assistance only from TANF and another 3.8 percent or 1.6 million were multiple program recipients getting assistance from both TANF and SNAP. See Figure 11.
- SNAP: In 2019 more than 3 out of 4 (75.7 percent) of the total 41.4 million program recipients was getting assistance from SNAP only.
- SSI: In 2019 8.2 percent of all program recipients were getting assistance only from SSI and another one out of ten (11.1 percent, 4.6 million) were multiple program recipients getting assistance from both SSI and SNAP. See Figure 11.

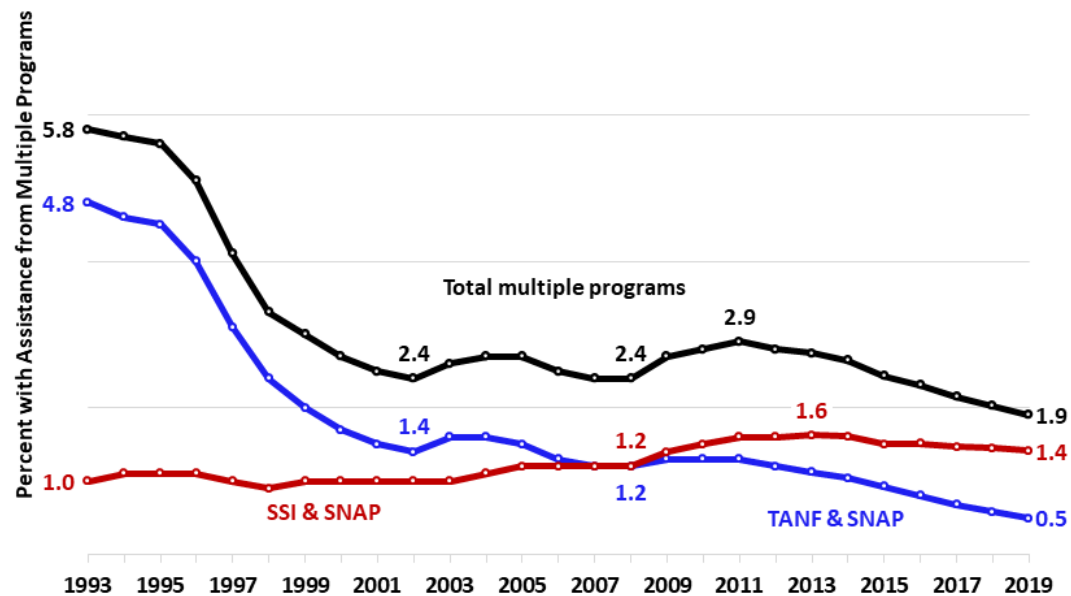
### Measure Over Time

- Overall: The proportion of the total population that received benefits from multiple programs declined from 2.0 percent in 2018 to 1.9 percent in 2019. Prior to 2020, the percentage of total multiple program recipients declined every year since a peak of 2.9 percent in 2011. See Figure 10 and Appendix Table 14.
- TANF and SNAP: The proportion of the population that received benefits from both TANF and SNAP declined 0.1 percentage point from 0.6 percent in 2018 to 0.5 percent in 2019. Prior to 2019, the percentage receiving both TANF and SNAP declined nearly every year since a peak of 1.3 percent in 2009.
- SSI and SNAP: The proportion of the population that received benefits from both SSI

and SNAP declined 0.1 percentage point from 1.5 percent in 2018 to 1.4 percent in 2019. Prior to 2019, the percentage receiving both TANF and SNAP declined nearly every year since a peak of 1.6 percent in 2013 and 2014.

See Appendix Tables 14 and 15 for historical estimates and estimates by demographic group.

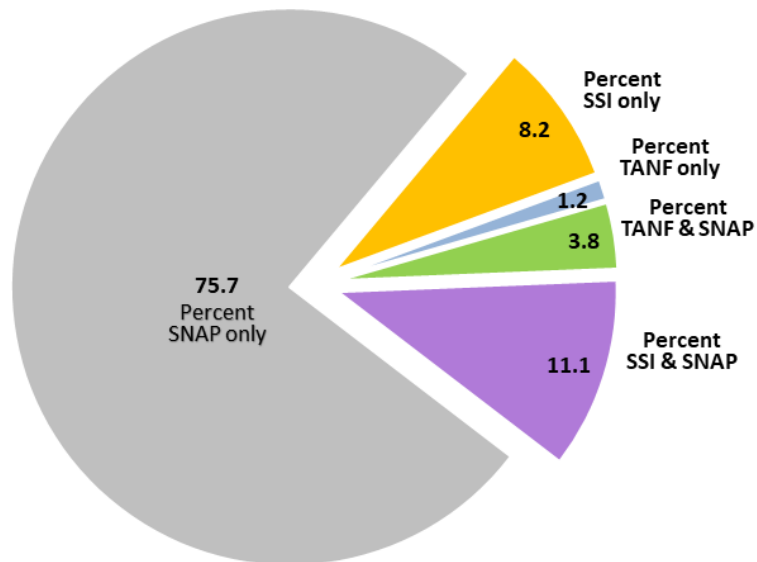
**Figure 10. Percentage of the Population Who Received Assistance from AFDC/TANF and SNAP, or received assistance from SSI and SNAP, 1993 to 2019** <sup>xxii</sup>



**Note:** Data is an average monthly percentage of the population. AFDC, TANF, and SNAP receipt are based on the family or recipient unit while SSI receipt is based on individuals.

**Source:** The Current Population Survey (CPS ASEC) and microsimulation model TRIM3.

**Figure 11. The Distribution of Program Recipients by Program for TANF, SNAP, and SSI, 2019**



**Note:** Universe is individuals who received a benefit in any amount from TANF, SNAP or SSI in an average month in 2019. TANF and SNAP receipt are based on the family or recipient unit while SSI receipt is based on individuals.

**Source:** The Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement and microsimulation model TRIM3.

## Indicator 6. Program Receipt Duration

### Definition

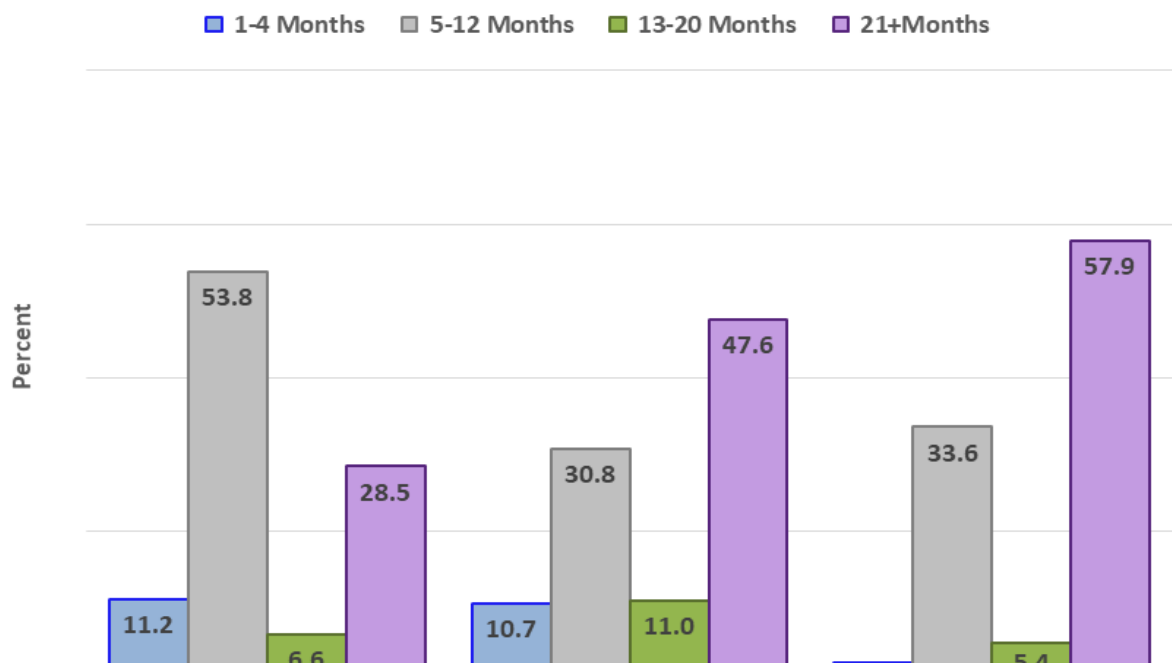
The percentage of program recipients getting assistance for a given number of months. The measure is based on estimates for recipients of TANF, SNAP, and SSI during the 2017-2018 period.

### Measure during 2017-2018

- TANF: In the two years of 2017-2018, 65.0 percent of TANF participants received TANF for 12 months or less and 28.5 percent of received TANF for 21 months or more.
- SNAP: In the two years of 2017-2018, 41.5 percent of SNAP participants received SNAP benefits for 12 or less months and 47.6 percent received SNAP for 21 or more months.
- SSI: In the two years of 2017-2018, 36.6 percent of SSI participants received SSI benefits for 12 or less months, and 57.9 percent received SSI for 21 or more months

Figure 12 shows the percentage of persons who received TANF, SNAP, or SSI benefits by the number of months that program's benefits were received. See Appendix Table 16 for rates by race, age group and family structure.

**Figure 12. Duration of TANF, SNAP, and SSI Receipt Over 24 Months, 2017-2018**



**Note:** Data is restricted to individuals in both waves of the 2018 SIPP panel survey who participated in TANF, SNAP, or SSI for at least one month during the period and are limited to respondents from whom data were collected in both waves covering all 24 months of the two-year period. SNAP estimates may differ from USDA estimates due to methodological differences.

**Source:** The Survey of Income and Program Participation 2018.

## **II. Risk Factors, Social and Economic Context**

### **Indicator 7. Employment Among the Low-Skilled Population**

#### **Definition**

The percent of working age adults (18-65) with a high school education or less who were employed at any time over the calendar year, in either full time or part time work.

#### **Measure in 2020**

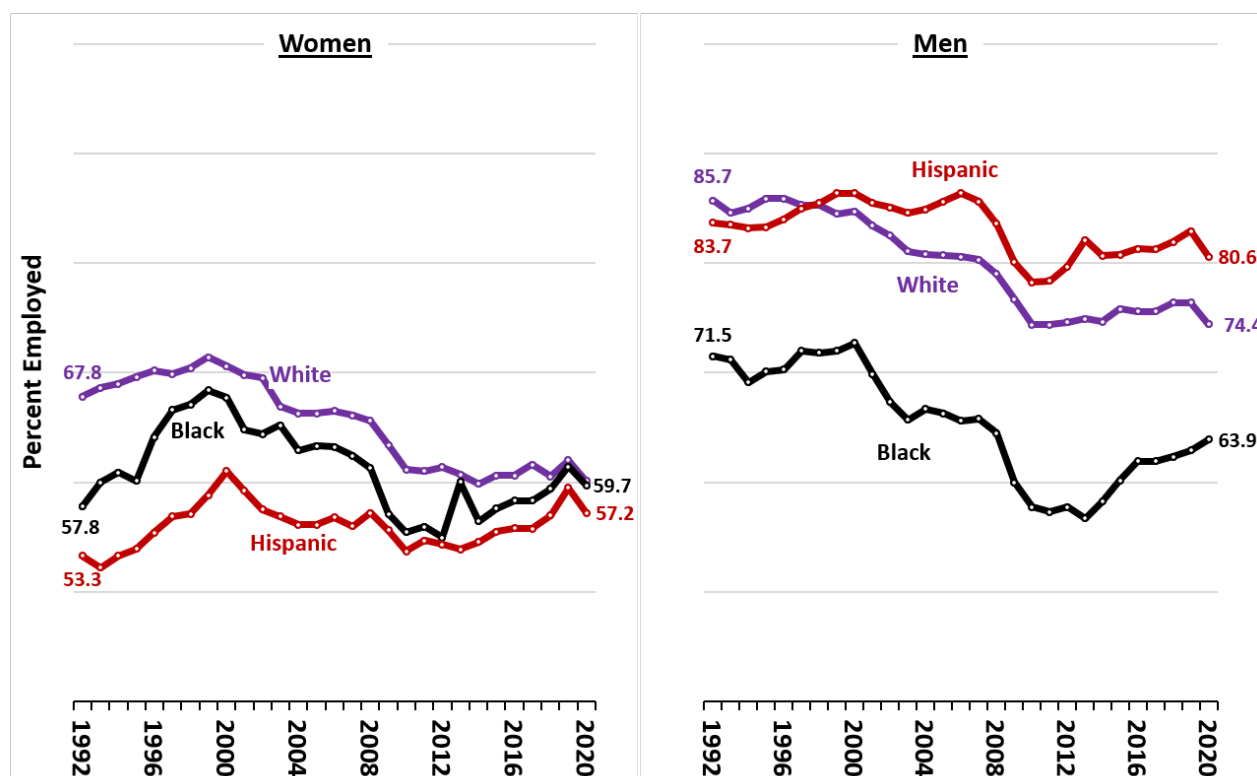
- Women: By race and ethnicity
  - Black: 59.7 percent of population employed.
  - White: 60.1 percent of population employed.
  - Hispanic: 57.2 percent of population employed.
- Men: By race and ethnicity
  - Black: 63.9 percent of population employed.
  - White: 74.4 percent of population employed.
  - Hispanic: 80.6 percent of population employed.

#### **Measure Over Time**

- Women: By race and ethnicity
  - Black: Decreased from 61.4 percent in 2019 to 59.7 percent in 2020. Prior to 2020, the percentage employment of black women had increased every year except one from a low of 55.0 percent in 2012.
  - White: Decreased from 62.0 percent in 2019 to 60.1 percent in 2020. Prior to 2020, the percentage employment of white women had reached a low of 59.8 percent in 2014.
  - Hispanic: Decreased from 59.5 percent in 2019 to 57.2 percent in 2020. Prior to 2020, the percentage employment of Hispanic women had reached a low of 53.7 percent in 2010.
- Men: By race and ethnicity
  - Black: Increased from 62.9 in 2019 to 63.9 percent in 2020. Prior to 2020, the percentage employment of black men had increased every year but one from a low of 56.7 percent in 2013.
  - White: Declined from 76.4 percent in 2019 to 74.4 percent in 2020. Prior to 2020, the percentage employment of white men had followed an upward trend from a low of 74.4 percent in 2010.
  - Hispanic: Decreased from 82.9 percent in 2019 to 80.6 percent in 2020. Prior to 2020, the percentage employment of Hispanic men had increased most years from a low of 78.3 percent in 2010.

Figure 13 shows the employment rate of adults with a high school degree or less education by gender, race, and ethnicity. See Appendix Table 17 for historical estimates.

**Figure 13. Percentage of Adults Employed Any Time During the Year, Ages 18 to 65 with a High School Degree or Less Education, by Race and Ethnicity, 1992 to 2020**



**Note:** Data include both full and partial year employment. Beginning in 2002, estimates for Whites and Blacks are for persons reporting a single race only.

**Source:** The Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements.



## **Indicator 8. Poverty Rates**

### **Definition**

The percent of the civilian non-institutionalized population living in families whose income is below the official poverty thresholds which are dependent upon the size of the family. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes, cash income from TANF and SSI and excludes noncash benefits.<sup>xxiii</sup>

### **Measure in 2020**

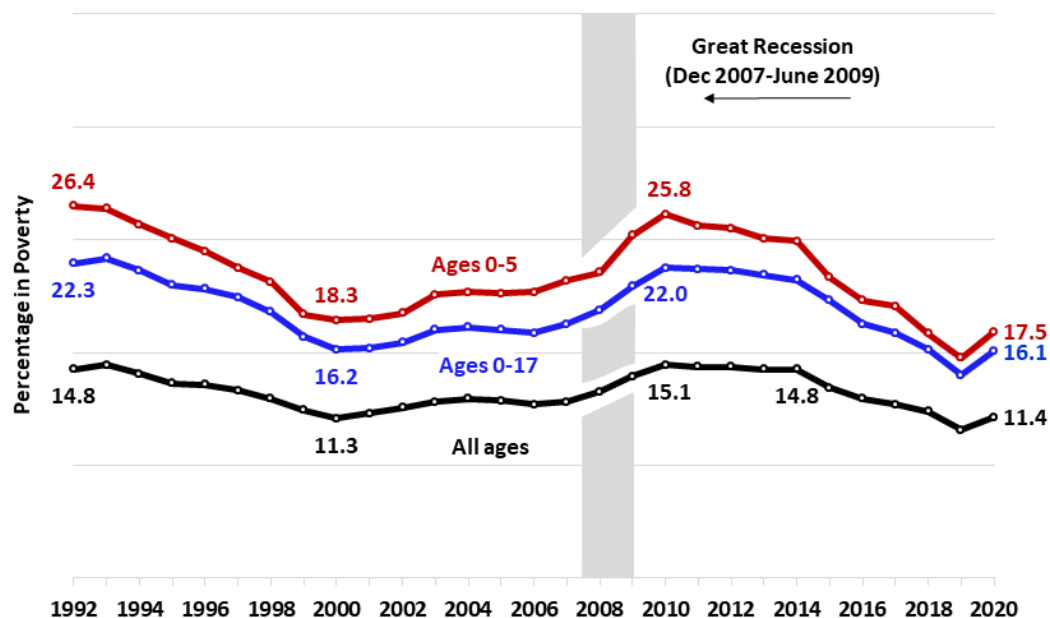
- All ages: In 2020, 11.4 percent of the population or 37.2 million individuals were living in a family with income below poverty.
- Children ages 0-5: In 2020, 17.5 percent of all children under 6 years of age or 4.0 million were living in families with income below poverty.
- Children ages 0-17: In 2020, 16.1 percent of all children under 18 years of age or 11.6 million were living in families with income below poverty.

### **Measure Over Time**

- All ages: The official poverty rate increased from 10.5 percent in 2019 to 11.4 percent in 2020. Prior to 2020, poverty rates had declined nearly every year from a peak of 15.1 percent in 2010.
- Children ages 0-5: The poverty rate for children under 6 increased from 15.6 percent in 2019 to 17.5 percent in 2020. Prior to 2020, poverty declined every year since a peak of 25.8 percent in 2010.
- Children ages 0-17: The poverty rate for children under 18 increased from 14.4 percent in 2019 to 16.1 percent in 2020. Prior to 2020, poverty declined every year since a peak of 22.0 percent in 2010.

Figure 14 shows the official poverty rate for persons of all ages, for children under 18, and for the youngest children ages zero to five years. Appendix Table 18 provides historical poverty rates by select demographics.

**Figure 14. Percent of People in Official Poverty by Age, 1992 to 2020**



**Note:** The poverty universe is based on the civilian non-institutionalized population living in the United States. Individuals ages 0-14 are excluded if not related to the householder.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: Current Population Reports*.

## **Indicator 9. Food Insecurity**

### **Definition**

The percentage of households by food security status. Food secure households have consistent, dependable access to enough food for active, healthy living while food insecure households are those which have difficulty at some time during the year providing enough food for all their members due to a lack of money and other resources. Food insecure households can be further broken down between those having low and very low food security. Very low food security, the more severe case, applies to households in which food intake for one or more members was reduced and eating patterns were disrupted due to a lack of money or resources.

### **Measure in 2020**

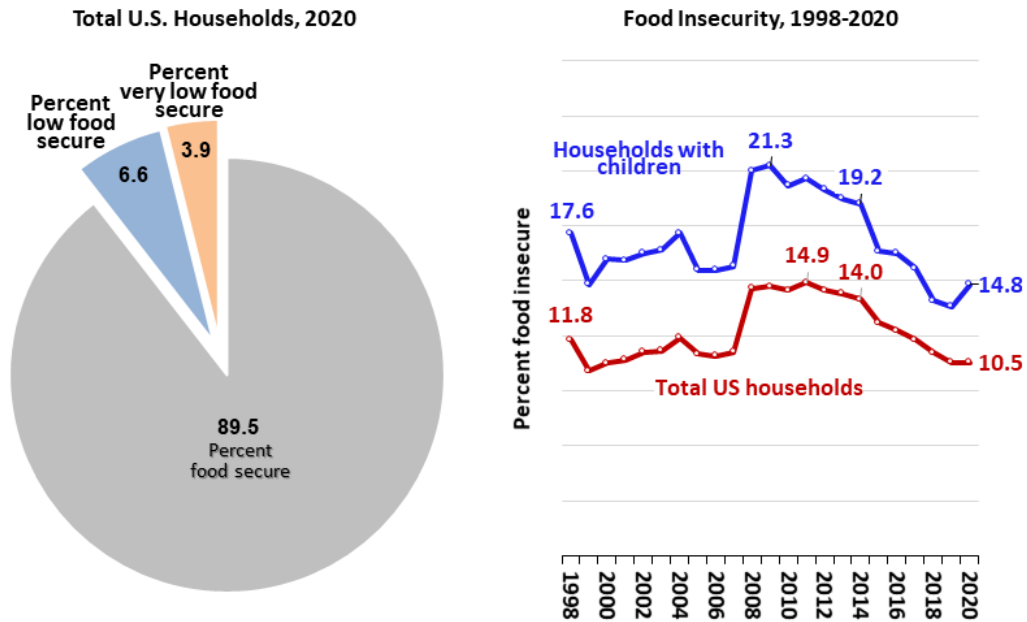
- All households: In 2020, 10.5 percent of U.S. households (13.8 million) were food insecure, with 6.6 percent having low food security and 3.9 percent having very low food security.
- Households with children: In 2020, 14.8 percent of households with children were food insecure, with 11.0 percent having low food security and 3.8 percent having very low food security.

### **Measure Over Time**

- All households: The percent of households that were food insecure remained at 10.5 percent in 2019 and 2020, the lowest level since 2000. The food insecure rate for all households declined every year since a high of 14.9 percent in 2011.
- Households with children: The percent of households with children that were food insecure increased from 13.6 percent in 2019 to 14.8 in 2020. Prior to 2020, the food insecure rate for households with children declined every year but one from a high of 21.3 percent in 2009.

Figure 15 reports the percentage of households with different food security statuses, with historical trends. See Appendix Table 19 for more details.

**Figure 15. Percentage of Households Classified by Food Security Status, 2020 and from 1998 to 2020**



**Source:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Household Food Security in the United States in 2020.

## **Indicator 10. Nonmarital Teen Births**

### **Definition**

Birthrates by age for unmarried teens are the ratio of the number of births per 1,000 unmarried teens. In this report we present these ratios for 15 to 17 year olds and for older unmarried teens 18 to 19 year olds, two groups that are at particularly high risk of living in poverty.

### **Measure in 2019**

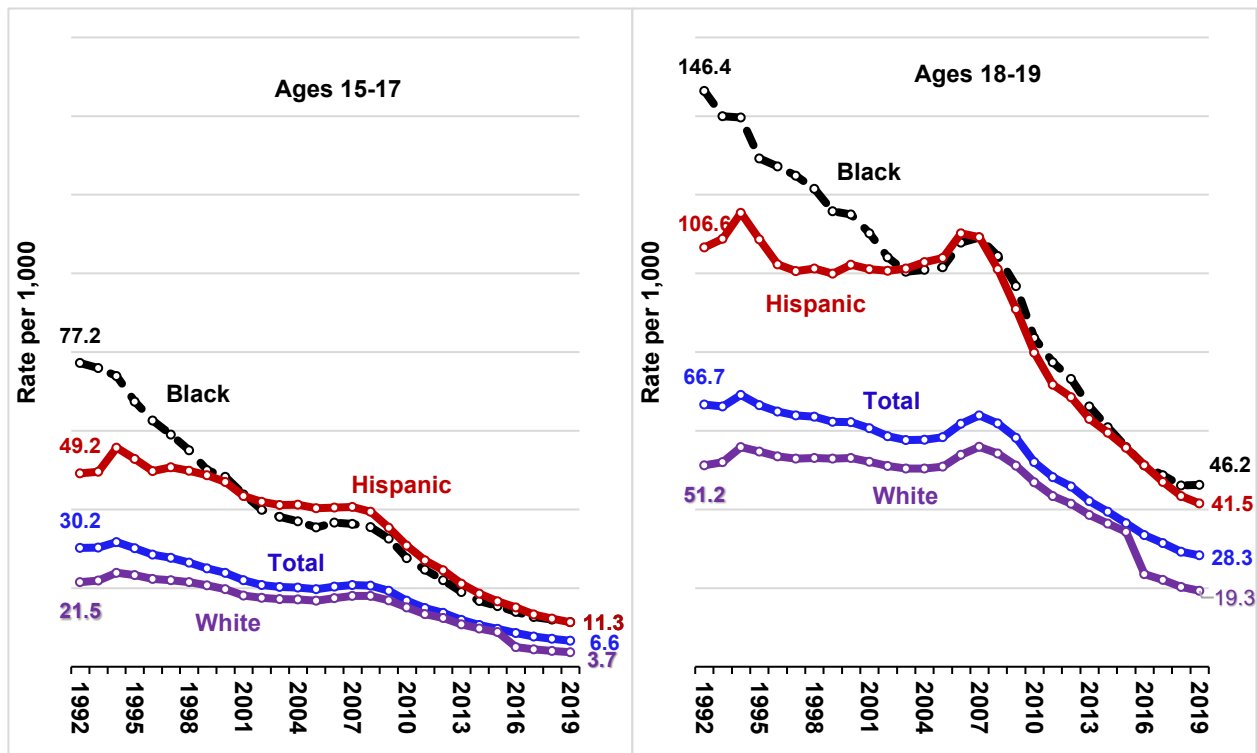
- 15 to 17: By race and ethnicity
  - All: 6.6 per thousand.
  - Black: 11.3 per thousand.
  - White: 3.7 per thousand.
  - Hispanic: 11.3 per thousand.
- 18 to 19: By race and ethnicity
  - All: 28.3 per thousand.
  - Black: 46.2 per thousand.
  - White: 19.3 per thousand.
  - Hispanic: 41.5 per thousand.

### **Measure Over Time**

- 15 to 17: By race and ethnicity. See left-hand side of Figure 16.
  - All younger teens: Decrease by 78.1 percent from 30.2 per thousand in 1992.
  - Black: Decrease by 85.4 percent from 77.2 per thousand in 1992.
  - White: Decrease by 82.8 percent from 21.5 per thousand in 1992.
  - Hispanic: Decrease by 77.0 percent from 49.2 per thousand in 1992.
- 18 to 19: By race and ethnicity. See right-hand side of Figure 16.
  - All older teens: Steady decrease interrupted by an uptick in 2007 followed by more rapid decrease producing an overall cumulative decrease of 57.6 percent from 66.7 per thousand in 1992.
  - Black: Steady rapid decrease interrupted by an uptick in 2007 for an overall cumulative decrease of 68.4 percent from 146.4 per thousand in 1992.
  - White: Steady modest decrease interrupted by an uptick in 2007 followed by more rapid decrease producing an overall cumulative decrease of 62.3 percent from 51.2 per thousand in 1992.
  - Hispanic: Rapid decrease beginning after an uptick in 2007 for an overall cumulative decrease of 61.1 percent from 106.6 per thousand in 1992.

Figure 16 below illustrates the birth rate among unmarried teens by age, race, and ethnicity. See Appendix Table 21 for detailed historical estimates.

**Figure 16. Births per 1,000 Unmarried Women Ages 15-17 Years and 18-19 Years by Race and Ethnicity: 1990-2019**<sup>xxiv</sup>



**Note:** Data are available beginning in 1990 for Hispanic women.

**Source:** National Center for Health Statistics, "Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States, 1940-1999," *National Vital Statistics Reports*: Vol. 48 (16) 2000 and Vol. 68 (13), November 27, 2019.

## Technical Notes

Program receipt and participation data in this report are from the Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement. CPS data on program eligibility and participation are augmented by administrative records and by the Transfer Income Model, version 3 (TRIM3), microsimulation model that accounts for the underreporting of benefit receipt in the household survey. CPS data for calendar year 2013 relied on a split panel design to test redesigned income questions. This report relies on the combined subsamples for this year.

TRIM was first operational in 1973. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funded the development of the second generation of the TRIM model in 1978. Other support for TRIM2 came from the Congressional Budget Office, the U.S. Department of Labor, and private foundations. The updated TRIM3 was introduced in 1997 and allows researchers and members of the public to access policy rules and simulation results over the internet. TRIM3's primary input data come from each year's Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. TRIM3 corrects for underreporting of benefits in survey data to provide a more complete picture of the current safety net. For methodological details see <http://trim.urban.org/T3New.php>.

Key features of TRIM3 are its detailed modeling of program rules, and its ability to capture and mimic a program's actual rules concerning eligibility with extensive modeling of state variations. The TRIM3 model draws from a database of eligibility and benefit rules for each state. The source of detailed program data for TANF is the Urban Institute's [Welfare Rules Database](#), which is derived from an annual review of state regulations and caseworker manuals.

### **TANF**

For TANF, analysts matched the percentage of the SNAP caseload that has TANF income according to the SNAP administrative data. For cross-program benefit receipt there is no annual administrative data. The microsimulation model used in this report applied the rules of each state's TANF program to data from the CPS. Non-cash benefits funded by TANF were not modeled. Program participation was modeled to come close to the actual caseload in terms of overall size and key characteristics.

TANF receipt and participation no longer include small "worker supplement" payments paid through SNAP as these were typically valued at under \$50 per month. Beginning with FY 2017 and this volume, small worker payments (automatically generated by program rules in some states) are not included in the calculation of the caseload and participation rates of TANF basic cash assistance. The background is that these payments were a tiny part of the caseload over the past decade, however, the number of families getting these "worker supplement" payments grew each year.

Some states provide cash assistance to families with multiple barriers to employment through solely state-funded programs (SSFs). In this report, cash assistance from an SSF is counted as cash income and not TANF assistance. SSFs are distinct from TANF.

There have been small changes in estimating methodology over time, due to model improvements and revisions to the CPS. Beginning in 2004, estimates include families receiving assistance

under separate state programs (SSPs). These SSPs are modeled together with TANF benefits, with no distinction made between the two funding sources. Since 2004 TRIM3 excludes from the unit non-parental caretakers whose income would make the unit ineligible, potentially increasing the number of child-only units.



## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-193) repealed the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and created a block grant program of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in its place. The mandatory start date for TANF was July 1, 1997, but most states made the transition from AFDC before that date.

<sup>ii</sup> The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) re-named the Food Stamp Program as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as of October 1, 2008. The name change had no effect on the type of benefits or how they are made available to eligible households.

<sup>iii</sup> The federal block grant and state maintenance of effort (MOE) funding levels for TANF are not inflation adjusted. Consequently the value of the program's resources has declined over time. In addition, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (Public Law No: 109-171) provided states an incentive to find more MOE expenditures to count toward caseload reduction credit.

<sup>iv</sup> Broad-based categorical eligibility (BBCE) is a policy in which households may become categorically eligible for SNAP when they qualify for non-cash TANF assistance or another benefit funded by state maintenance of effort (MOE) funds. See <[www.fns.usda.gov/snap/clarification-characteristics-broad-based-categorical-eligibility-programs-memo](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/clarification-characteristics-broad-based-categorical-eligibility-programs-memo)>

<sup>v</sup> For SSI's annual report and detailed descriptions of the program see <<https://www.ssa.gov/oact/ssir/index.html>>

<sup>vi</sup> Fox, Liana E. and Kalee Burns. (2021). The Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2020. U.S. Census Bureau Report P60-275.

<sup>vii</sup> For details on state TANF policies, see Shantz, Katie, Ilham Dehry, Sarah Knowles, Sarah Minton, and Linda Giannarelli (2020). Welfare Rules Databook: State TANF Policies as of July 2019, OPRE Report 2020-141, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>viii</sup> TANF includes separate state programs (SSPs) funded with maintenance-of-effort dollars. Cash welfare income from "general assistance" or solely-state-funded programs (SSFs) do not count as TANF. Units that receive only small "worker supplement" benefits are excluded because these benefits are not captured in the CPS survey nor modeled in TRIM3. Amounts up to \$50 were considered "small" for this purpose. For example in 2017, 23,000 SSP cases in Massachusetts were excluded as families received a supplemental benefit of no more than \$4 each month. The state with the largest number of "worker supplement" cases was California. Almost all of California's 150,000 SSP cases were excluded due to receiving a \$10 supplemental nutrition benefit. In total, the adjustment excludes 230,000 SSP and TANF units across ten states.

<sup>ix</sup> In calendar year 2017 the total number of participants in TANF was 2,676,400, excluding assistance units receiving only 'worker-supplement' payments valued at \$4 to less than \$50. For a comparison of the TANF caseload with 'worker-supplement' payment cases see ACF caseload data at <[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/2017\\_recipient\\_tanssp.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ofa/2017_recipient_tanssp.pdf)>

<sup>x</sup> Reciprocity in Figure 4 is annual, based on benefits received any time during the year and differs from receipt of benefits in an 'average month' presented in subsequent sections. Annual rates tend to be higher given the longer time horizon for observing benefit receipt.

<sup>xi</sup> In Figure 5 and throughout the report, estimates do not include residents of the U.S. territories. Due to changes in cash benefit policies, beginning in 2000 estimates include cash assistance from

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separate state programs (SSPs) and by 2017, SSP recipients comprised 30 percent of total recipients. However, TANF estimates do not include income from solely state-funded programs (SSFs) which is considered separate. Where possible, income from an SSF program is treated as cash. Population denominators were retrieved from the U.S. Census Bureau.

<sup>xii</sup> In Figure 6 and throughout the report, SNAP estimates do not include residents of the U.S. territories. From 1975 to 1983 the number of participants includes the Family Food Assistance Program (FFAP) that was largely replaced by the Food Stamp Program in 1975. From 1975 to 1983 the number of FFAP participants averaged 88,000.

<sup>xiii</sup> Figure 7. Due to the fact that SSI data are reported each year in December, the denominator used to calculate rates are based on the average of the U.S. Census Bureau's July 1st population estimates for the current and subsequent year.

<sup>xiv</sup> Figure 8. Participation rates are estimated by the microsimulation model (TRIM3) developed and maintained at the Urban Institute under primary funding from Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). Beginning in 2017, assistance units receiving only “worker supplement” payments were excluded from microsimulation analyses so that basic cash assistance could be estimated accurately. Specifically, assistant units receiving only “worker supplement” payments were excluded from both the numerator and the denominator in calculating the TANF “take-up” or participation rate.

As previously noted, the model accounts for the number of families who lost aid due to time limits, but families staying off TANF to conserve their time-limited assistance months are not accounted for specifically. A limitation of the model is that assistance units subject to full-family sanctions are counted as *eligible* but nonparticipating rather than counted as ineligible. The numbers of eligible and participating families exclude each of the following: units in the U.S. territories, non-custodial parent units, pregnancy-only units, and units with no cash benefits.

<sup>xv</sup> SNAP eligible households are estimated from a Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. model that uses data from the Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement to simulate program eligibility. SNAP caseload data are from USDA, FNS program operations caseload data. Small changes have been made to the methodology over time with some model improvements addressing revisions to the CPS. The model was revised in 1994 to produce more accurate and lower estimates of eligible households. Prior years show higher estimates of eligibles and lower participation rates relative to the revised estimate for 1994 and estimates for subsequent years.

<sup>xvi</sup> Errata is necessary regarding SSI participation rates in this volume. Previously published rates for 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 were inflated by 0.1 percentage point to a maximum of 0.4 percentage points. Corrected, updated participation rates are provided in Appendix A-11 and reflected in Figure 9. For data years 2013 through 2016, a coding error increased self-employment income beyond the eligibility limit for the self-employed. Prior to the correction the error had the effect of over-estimating participation from 0.1 to 0.4 percentage points.

SSI participation rates are estimated by the TRIM model which is periodically revised and improved. The model was revised in 1997 and 1998 to more accurately exclude ineligible immigrants. Thus an increased participation rate in 1997 is partly due to a revision in estimating methodology. In 2004 TRIM's methods for identifying individuals eligible for SSI due to disability were improved resulting in more eligibles for this category. The CPS provides limited information on disability status which may underestimate the size of the adult population with a disability. Misidentifying or under-counting the population of eligibles will—to a greater or lesser extent—have the effect of inflating participation rates. Researchers drawing from the Survey of Income and

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Program Participation and economists at the Social Security Administration estimate SSI participation among eligible, non-elderly adults at between 40 percent and 80 percent.

<sup>xvii</sup> Families who receive TANF and individuals who receive SSI can receive SNAP benefits, but most states do not permit the same individual to receive assistance from both TANF and SSI, i.e., at the individual level TANF and SSI are generally mutually exclusive. Only four states include SSI recipients and their SSI income in the TANF assistance unit (Idaho, New Hampshire, West Virginia, and Wisconsin). Including an SSI recipient in the TANF assistance unit may reduce the value of cash assistance or render the family ineligible for TANF. SSI is an individual-level benefit and so if one individual in a family receives SSI but the remaining family members meet the eligibility criteria for TANF, the remaining family members may receive TANF assistance. State level rules are described in the Welfare Rules Databases which is released annually and can be found here: <<https://wrd.urban.org/wrd/databook.cfm> >

<sup>xviii</sup> Under federal rules, families are eligible for SNAP benefits if their *gross* income is less than 130 percent of the poverty line using the federal poverty guidelines, about \$28,236 for a parent with two children in 2020. The SNAP gross income test does not apply to households with elderly or disabled members. However, SNAP also has a net income test.

<sup>xix</sup> All but four states limit earned income to below 85 percent of the poverty line for initial TANF eligibility, a value of \$18,462 for a family of three in 2020. Many states limit income to below 50 percent of the poverty line for TANF, about \$10,860 annually for a family of three. Some states use only a gross income test to assess eligibility for TANF while a number of states use net income or multiple tests. Income limits expressed as percentages of the federal poverty guideline are based on a family of three and drawn from the *Welfare Rules Databook as of July 2019*; Table I.E.4 “Maximum Income for Initial Eligibility for a Family of Three, July 2019.” For details see <<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/welfare-rules-databook-state-tanf-policies-as-of-july-2019>>

<sup>xx</sup> SSI eligibility is more complex because of income set-asides and disability status, but the maximum benefit in 2020 was \$783 monthly for an individual, a value lower than the poverty guideline for one person (\$12,760 a year or \$1,063 monthly). See SSA’s “Supplemental Security Income Program Description and Legislative History” at <<https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2018/ssi.html>> and “SSI *Federal Payment Amounts*, SSI Monthly Payment Amounts, 1975-2020” at <<https://www.ssa.gov/oact/cola/SSIamts.html>> For the federal poverty guidelines see <<https://aspe.hhs.gov/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-and-federal-register-references> >

<sup>xxi</sup> The percentage of individuals who received assistance from any one program in an average month (12.7 percent) is lower than the percentage that received assistance at some point over the course of a year (19.5 percent in 2019) shown in Figure 3.

<sup>xxii</sup> Figure 11. For multiple program receipt across years the researchers sought to match the percentage of the SNAP caseload that has TANF income according to the SNAP administrative data. There are no national administrative data on the overlap between these programs on an annual basis.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Money income used to compute poverty status includes (before taxes): earnings, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, social security, supplemental security income, public assistance, veterans' payments, survivor benefits, pension or retirement income, interest, , dividends, rents, royalties, income from estates, trusts, educational assistance, alimony, child support, assistance from outside the household, and other miscellaneous sources. Money income does not include: capital gains or losses, <sup>320</sup>noncash benefits (e.g. food stamps and housing

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subsidies), and tax credits. <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>.

<sup>xxiv</sup> In Figure 16 rates are per 1,000 unmarried women in the specified group. Race categories include women of Hispanic ethnicity. Beginning in 1980, the National Center for Health Statistics began tabulating births by the race of the mother. Prior to 1980, data were tabulated by the race of the child. Trends in non-marital births may be affected by changes in the reporting of marital status on birth certificates and in procedures for inferring non-marital births when marital status is not reported.

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## Appendix Tables