

Family and Household Characteristics

The previous section focused on the national and State data for the AFDC program as a whole. This section examines the characteristics of the cases within that caseload. The result is an evolving picture of the *typical* AFDC case, although a somewhat incomplete picture. Information about many characteristics which researchers might consider essential were not collected in the Administrative data for the program on a consistent basis.

Average Number of AFDC Recipients per Case

- From 1965 to 1996 the average case size fell by one-third from 4.17 to 2.78 recipients per case. Most of that decline in case size occurred before 1982 (Table 3.1).
- The growth in the number of *people* participating in AFDC has been smaller than the growth in the number of *cases* because case sizes have been getting smaller over time. This is most apparent by looking at 1977 and 1982 in Table 2.1. While the number of cases in those two years is the same, the number of participants fell by over six percent (from 11.1 million to 10.4 million). The number of child recipients fell by nearly 11 percent (from 7.8 million to 7.0 million).
- The number of children per case fell by over 40 percent from its peak in 1967 of 3.28 children per case to the 1996 average of 1.91 children per case. Most of that decline occurred during the 1970s.
- The average number of adults per case remained within a range of .89 to 1.00 between 1973 and 1994. Most recently, there has been a downward trend in the number of adults per case. The 1996 average of .87 adults per case is the lowest proportion in the period from 1962 to 1996.

Table 3.1
Average Number of AFDC Recipients per Case, 1962 – 1996

Fiscal Year	Average Number per Case of:								
	All Recipients	All Adults	All Children	Basic Recipients	Basic Adults	Basic Children	U-P Recipients	U-P Adults	U-P Children
1962.....	3.89	0.88	3.01	3.85	0.88	2.97	4.61	0.98	3.64
1963.....	4.04	0.99	3.05	3.96	0.94	3.01	5.36	1.70	3.66
1964.....	4.13	1.03	3.09	4.02	0.98	3.05	5.69	1.91	3.78
1965.....	4.17	1.04	3.13	4.05	0.98	3.07	5.80	1.90	3.90
1966.....	4.16	1.03	3.14	4.06	0.97	3.09	5.85	1.88	3.98
1969.....	4.00	1.01	2.98	3.93	0.97	2.96	5.46	1.84	3.62
1970.....	3.88	1.01	2.87	3.82	0.97	2.85	5.36	1.92	3.44
1971.....	3.77	1.02	2.75	3.70	0.97	2.73	5.08	1.93	3.15
1972.....	3.64	1.01	2.64	3.59	0.96	2.63	4.76	1.88	2.87
1973.....	3.53	0.98	2.55	3.49	0.95	2.54	4.65	1.86	2.79
1974.....	3.42	0.95	2.47	3.39	0.93	2.46	4.59	1.80	2.79
1975.....	3.30	0.94	2.36	3.26	0.91	2.35	4.54	1.84	2.70
1976.....	3.18	0.90	2.28	3.13	0.86	2.27	4.39	1.86	2.52
1977.....	3.09	0.92	2.18	3.03	0.87	2.16	4.43	1.92	2.50
1978.....	3.01	0.90	2.11	2.96	0.86	2.10	4.45	1.92	2.53
1979.....	2.95	0.89	2.06	2.90	0.86	2.04	4.42	1.91	2.51
1980.....	2.91	0.90	2.01	2.85	0.86	1.99	4.36	1.91	2.44
1981.....	2.88	0.92	1.97	2.81	0.86	1.95	4.22	1.87	2.35
1982.....	2.92	0.97	1.95	2.83	0.91	1.93	4.22	1.87	2.34
1983.....	2.92	0.99	1.93	2.82	0.92	1.90	4.20	1.87	2.33
1984.....	2.92	1.00	1.92	2.81	0.92	1.88	4.26	1.90	2.36
1985.....	2.93	0.99	1.94	2.82	0.92	1.90	4.33	1.89	2.43
1986.....	2.93	0.99	1.95	2.83	0.92	1.91	4.35	1.89	2.46
1987.....	2.92	0.97	1.95	2.83	0.91	1.91	4.38	1.88	2.50
1988.....	2.91	0.96	1.95	2.82	0.90	1.92	4.42	1.88	2.54
1989.....	2.90	0.95	1.95	2.82	0.90	1.92	4.44	1.87	2.57
1990.....	2.88	0.93	1.95	2.80	0.88	1.92	4.41	1.84	2.57
1991.....	2.88	0.93	1.95	2.79	0.88	1.91	4.29	1.80	2.49
1992.....	2.86	0.92	1.93	2.76	0.86	1.90	4.19	1.74	2.45
1993.....	2.84	0.92	1.91	2.74	0.86	1.88	4.15	1.73	2.42
1994.....	2.82	0.92	1.90	2.72	0.85	1.86	4.16	1.74	2.42
1995.....	2.80	0.90	1.90	2.70	0.84	1.86	4.14	1.69	2.44
1996.....	2.78	0.87	1.91	2.68	0.82	1.87	4.12	1.65	2.47

Note: Data include Territories. The denominators for the Basic and U-P averages include only the cases of that type.
Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research And Evaluation.

Trends in AFDC Family Size

- Table 3.2 shows the proportion of AFDC cases of each family size. There has been a substantial change in the proportions of the caseload that make up small and large families. In 1967 and 1969 over one-third of families had five or more recipients. By 1995, only one in ten families had that many members. In 1967, one-quarter of AFDC cases included only one or two people. By 1995, nearly half of AFDC cases were of that size.

Number of Adults in AFDC Cases

- Figure 3.1 illustrates the proportion of AFDC families that had zero, one, and two adults in the unit, over time (also Table 3.3). These data are also shown by State for recent years in Table 2.7 in the previous chapter.
- Perhaps the most noteworthy trend is the increase in recent years in the proportion of cases that counted no adults in the assistance unit. Nationally, nearly one in five AFDC cases did not include an adult in 1995. Between 1988 and 1996, the proportion of cases with no adults more than doubled from 9.6 percent to 21.5 percent. The conditions under which an AFDC case might have no eligible adult were discussed at Table 2.7 on page 8 of Chapter 2.

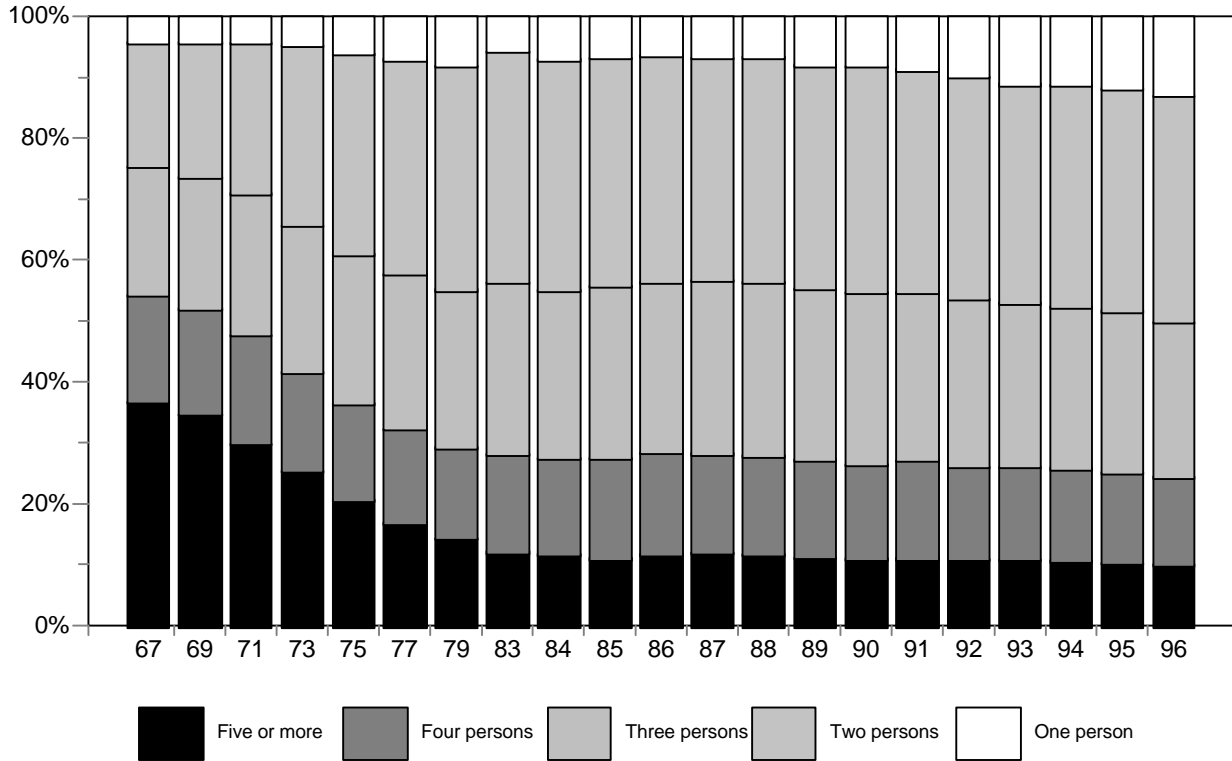
Table 3.2
Number of Members per AFDC Family by Proportion of Families
Selected Years, 1967 – 1996

[in percent]

Fiscal Year	Percentage of Families with				
	One Member	Two Members	Three Members	Four Members	Five plus Members
1967.....	4.2	20.5	21.1	17.5	36.8
1969.....	4.2	22.1	21.6	17.4	34.6
1971.....	4.3	24.6	23.4	17.8	29.5
1973.....	4.7	29.6	23.9	16.3	25.4
1975.....	6.1	32.9	24.5	15.9	20.7
1977.....	6.9	35.4	25.4	15.4	16.9
1979.....	8.1	36.7	25.9	15.0	14.3
1983.....	5.8	37.8	28.1	16.0	12.1
1984.....	9.5	41.0	25.4	12.5	11.6
1985.....	9.5	39.6	24.8	14.2	11.9
1986.....	6.4	37.2	28.1	16.7	11.7
1987.....	7.6	36.1	27.7	16.3	12.2
1988.....	8.2	38.4	26.8	14.6	12.0
1989.....	11.3	33.4	21.0	14.0	12.2
1990.....	10.7	33.5	26.8	15.9	13.1
1991.....	8.6	36.6	27.7	15.9	11.1
1992.....	9.9	36.4	27.6	15.1	10.9
1993.....	11.0	36.0	27.1	15.2	10.8
1994.....	11.2	36.4	26.5	15.2	10.7
1995.....	11.8	36.5	26.6	14.9	10.3
1996.....	13.1	37.1	25.4	14.4	10.0

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients*, 1996; and earlier reports.

Figure 3.1
Size of AFDC Assistance Units, Selected Years 1967 – 1996



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients, 1996*, and earlier reports.

Table 3.3
Number of Adults per AFDC Family by Proportion of All Families
Selected Years, 1967 – 1996
[in percent]

Fiscal Year	Percentage of Families with		
	No Adults	One Adult	Two Adults
1967	9.2	78.3	12.5
1969	9.5	78.6	11.9
1971	9.9	77.2	12.9
1973	10.4	80.0	9.6
1975	12.3	80.8	6.9
1977	14.1	78.8	7.2
1979	14.9	78.9	6.2
1981	13.9	79.3	6.8
1982	12.3	80.5	7.2
1983	8.5	81.3	10.2
1984	12.4	78.3	9.3
1985	12.0	79.1	8.9
1986	11.9	79.3	8.8
1987	9.6	80.6	9.8
1988	9.6	81.2	9.2
1989	10.6	81.6	7.8
1990	11.6	81.4	7.0
1991	12.8	79.6	7.6
1992	14.8	77.4	7.8
1993	15.8	76.1	8.1
1994	17.2	74.5	8.3
1995	18.9	73.8	7.3
1996	21.5	70.8	7.7

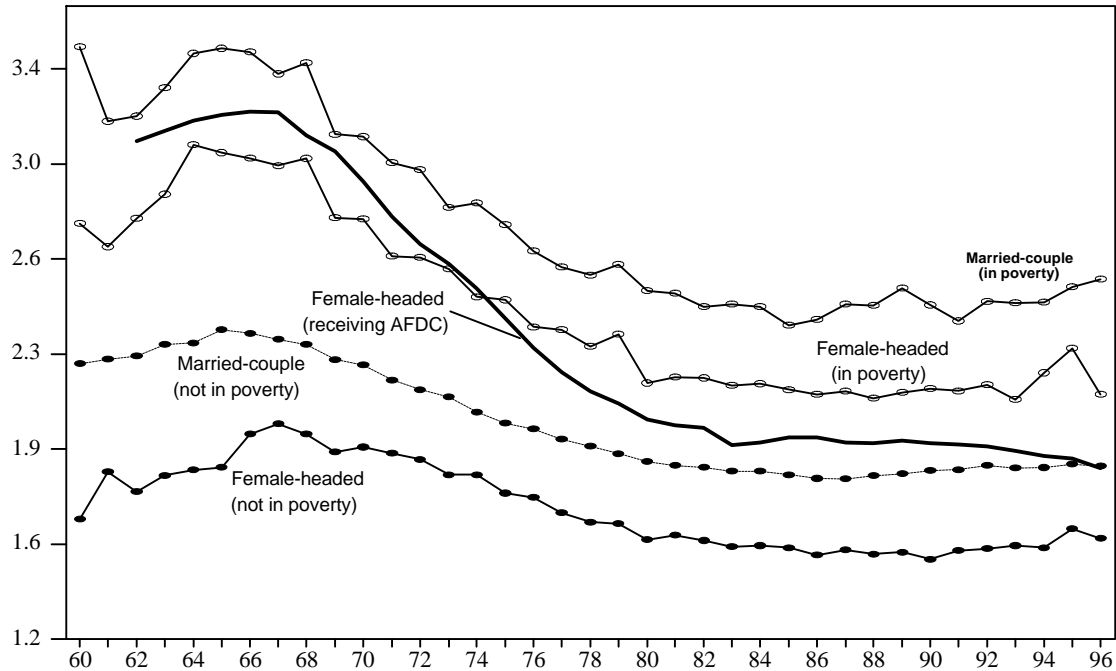
Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients, 1996*; and earlier reports.

Number of Children in AFDC Cases

- The average number of children per AFDC case has been declining since the late 1960s. Figure 3.2 summarizes this trend and compares the number of children in AFDC families with other categories of families.
- Table 3.4 shows the proportion of families with different numbers of children over time.
- Two trends are leading to the reduction in the number of children per case: The increase in the proportion of cases that have only one child, and the decrease in the proportion of cases that have four or more children.
- In 1967, 25 percent of AFDC cases had one child; by 1996, 44 percent of AFDC cases had one child.
- In 1967, over one-third of cases had four or more children; by 1975, 20 percent had four or more, and by 1985 on ten percent had that many children.
- General population trends only partially explain the decline in the number of children per case. For example, the increase in the proportion of AFDC families with only one child occurred while there was little change in the proportion of single-child families in the general population. However, there was a substantial reduction in the number of large families in the general population--a trend that is consistent with the reduction in the number of large AFDC families. Among families with children in the general population, the proportion with three or more children fell from 40 percent in 1970 to 20 percent in 1994.¹

¹ Data on family size in the general population are calculated from Table 74, Families by Number of Own Children under 18 Years Old: 1970 to 1994. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1995. Percentages of families with three or more children are calculated by excluding families that have no children.

Figure 3.2
Average Number of Children per Family
For Families with Related Children Under 18 by Living Arrangement, 1960 – 1996
 (In millions)



Note: For 1960-74 the average number of children per married-couple family is estimated based on all male-headed families of which during this period they comprised 98-99 percent.
 Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Quarterly Public Assistance Statistics, 1992-1993* and earlier years; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Poverty in the United States: 1996," *Current Population Reports, Series P60-198* and earlier years.

Table 3.4
Number of Children per AFDC Family by Proportion of All Families
Selected Years, 1967 – 1996
[in percent]

Fiscal Year	Percentage of Families with			
	One Child	Two Children	Three Children	Four or more
1967	24.8	22.4	18.2	34.5
1969	26.6	23.0	17.7	32.5
1971	29.7	24.5	18.0	27.9
1973	33.8	25.5	16.3	24.4
1975	37.9	26.0	16.1	20.0
1977	40.3	27.3	16.1	16.3
1979	42.5	28.0	15.5	13.9
1983	43.4	29.8	15.2	11.6
1984	44.1	29.6	15.5	10.0
1985	42.7	30.7	16.1	9.5
1986	42.7	30.8	15.9	9.8
1987	42.7	30.5	16.2	10.1
1988	42.5	30.2	15.8	9.9
1989	41.8	29.3	15.4	9.6
1990	42.2	30.3	15.8	9.9
1991	42.2	30.1	16.2	10.1
1992.....	43.4	30.2	15.5	10.1
1993.....	42.8	29.9	15.5	9.8
1994	42.6	30.0	15.6	9.6
1995	42.4	30.4	15.5	9.6
1996	43.9	29.9	15.0	9.2

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients, 1996*; and earlier reports.

Age Distribution of Child Recipients

- Table 3.5 shows the percentage of AFDC child recipients that fall within certain age groupings.
- In the 1967 to 1971 period, a much smaller proportion of children fell into the 0-1 and 2-5 age groupings than in recent years.
- The average age of child recipients declined from 1983 to 1991, and has leveled off since that time.
- The proportion of children aged 0-1 declined beginning in 1992. At the same time, the proportion of children aged 13-17 began to increase.

Table 3.5
Trends in Ages of AFDC Child Recipients
1967 – 1996

Fiscal Year	Age of Child ¹				Median Age
	0-1	2-5	6-12	13-17	
	(Percentage of AFDC Children)				(Years)
1967	9.7	23.3	41.5	25.5	8.5
1969	9.0	22.9	42.2	25.9	8.6
1971	10.2	23.3	39.7	26.8	8.5
1983	13.6	27.9	36.4	22.1	7.4
1984	13.9	28.7	36.6	20.8	7.2
1985	13.9	29.1	36.4	20.6	7.2
1986	14.4	28.6	36.9	20.1	7.1
1987	14.2	28.7	37.5	19.6	7.1
1988	13.4	28.7	37.7	20.2	7.3
1989	11.6	29.2	37.4	21.8	7.5
1990	16.2	29.5	37.1	17.2	6.7
1991	16.7	29.5	36.9	16.9	6.6
1992	16.3	30.0	36.7	17.0	6.6
1993	15.7	31.1	36.1	17.1	6.5
1994	15.2	30.7	36.1	18.0	6.7
1995	14.1	30.8	36.4	18.7	6.8
1996	13.9	29.9	37.5	18.7	7.0

¹ Unborn children were counted in the years 1967, 1969, and 1983.

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients, 1996*; and earlier reports.

Age of the Youngest Child in the AFDC Family

- There was little change in the age distribution of the youngest child in an AFDC family between 1983 and 1995 (Table 3.6).
- In 1996, a little under 60 percent of all AFDC families had at least one pre-school aged child.

Table 3.6
Trends in Age of Youngest Child in the AFDC Family
1983 – 1996

Fiscal Year	Age of Youngest Child in AFDC Family							Median	
	Unborn ¹	0-2	3-5	6-11	12-15	16-17	Unknown	Age	
			(Percentage of AFDC Families)						(Years)
1983.....	–	37.9	21.7	24.1	10.6	3.9	1.8	4.7	
1984.....	–	37.7	22.6	23.9	10.9	4.0	0.9	4.6	
1985.....	–	37.8	22.6	23.6	11.2	3.7	1.1	4.6	
1986.....	–	38.1	22.5	24.1	10.6	3.8	0.8	4.6	
1987.....	–	38.3	22.0	24.4	10.4	4.3	0.7	4.6	
1988.....	–	37.4	21.7	24.4	9.9	4.2	2.4	4.7	
1989.....	–	35.1	21.4	23.7	10.0	3.8	6.0	5.1	
1990.....	2.4	38.9	21.1	23.0	9.4	3.4	1.9	4.2	
1991.....	2.0	39.7	20.4	23.2	9.7	3.5	1.5	4.2	
1992.....	2.0	40.0	21.2	23.1	9.3	3.5	0.8	4.1	
1993.....	1.9	40.1	21.4	22.7	9.6	3.7	0.5	4.1	
1994.....	1.8	38.9	21.6	22.7	9.8	3.5	1.7	4.3	
1995.....	1.8	36.9	22.9	23.4	9.8	3.7	1.5	4.5	
1996.....	1.5	34.7	23.5	24.4	10.6	3.8	1.5	4.8	

¹Families who qualified for AFDC solely because of an unborn child were not counted until 1990.

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients, 1996*; and earlier reports.

Age of Female Adult Recipients

- The age distribution of adult female recipients shifted slightly towards an older caseload in recent years (Table 3.7). For example, in 1990, 43.7 percent of adult women were age 30 or over. By 1996, the proportion of women aged 30 or over had increased to 48.6 percent.
- Minor parents remained a relatively small fraction of the caseload throughout the period between 1985 and 1995. The proportion of female adult recipients who were age 18 or younger reached its peak in 1991, at 4.3 percent, and was at its lowest in 1995 at 2.3 percent.

Table 3.7
Trends in Ages of Adult Female AFDC Recipients
1985 – 1996

Fiscal Year	Age of Adult Female ¹						Median
	18 and under	19-25	26-29	30-34	35-39	40 and up	Age
	(Percentage of AFDC Adult Females)						(Years)
1985.....	3.1	34.5	19.3	17.8	11.9	13.3	28.6
1986.....	3.3	33.6	20.0	18.1	12.0	13.0	28.6
1987.....	3.3	32.2	20.4	18.9	11.9	13.3	28.8
1988.....	3.4	32.2	19.4	19.5	12.0	13.4	29.0
	18 and under	19-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40 and up	
1989.....	3.8	26.9	25.0	19.9	11.7	12.6	28.9
1990.....	4.2	27.5	24.6	19.8	12.2	11.7	28.7
1991.....	4.3	27.2	23.8	20.0	12.6	12.1	28.9
1992.....	3.8	28.3	23.3	20.2	12.5	11.8	28.8
1993.....	3.8	28.1	22.5	20.0	13.5	12.3	29.0
1994.....	2.6	27.9	22.2	20.4	13.9	12.9	29.4
1995.....	2.3	27.8	21.7	19.6	14.9	13.6	29.6
1996.....	2.4	26.5	21.9	19.9	14.6	14.1	29.8

¹ From 1985 to 1988, the age categories tabulated for those under 30 were 19-21, 22 -25 and 26-29; from 1989 on, the under 30 categories were single years of age up to 19 and then 21-24 and 25-29.

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients, 1996*; and earlier reports.

Distribution of AFDC Families by the Race of the Parent

- Over the period between 1983 and 1995 roughly equal proportions of cases had either white or African American parents (Table 3.8).
- The proportion of cases headed by Hispanic parents increased substantially between 1983 and 1995, nearly doubling from 10.5 percent of cases to 20.7 percent.

Table 3.8
Distribution of AFDC Families by Race of Parent
1983 – 1996

Fiscal Year	Race of Parent					
	White	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Native-American	Unknown
1983.....	36.5	38.3	10.5	1.3	0.9	12.6
1984.....	36.6	36.7	10.7	1.8	0.9	3.9
1985.....	40.8	41.6	13.6	2.4	1.2	2.2
1986.....	39.7	40.7	14.4	2.3	1.3	1.4
1987.....	38.8	39.8	15.5	2.6	1.3	2.0
1988.....	38.8	39.8	15.7	2.4	1.4	1.9
1989.....	38.4	40.1	15.9	2.7	1.3	1.5
1990.....	38.1	39.7	16.6	2.8	1.3	1.5
1991.....	38.1	38.8	17.4	2.8	1.3	1.6
1992.....	38.9	37.2	17.8	2.8	1.4	2.0
1993.....	38.3	36.6	18.5	2.9	1.3	2.2
1994.....	37.4	36.4	19.9	2.9	1.3	2.1
1995.....	35.6	37.2	20.7	3.0	1.3	2.2
1996.....	35.9	37.2	20.7	3.0	1.3	2.2

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients, 1996*, and earlier reports.

Distribution of AFDC Children by Race

- The proportion of recipient children who were either white or African-American remained somewhat consistent from 1983 to 1996, with each group varying within a five percentage point range (Table 3.9).
- Hispanic children began to comprise a greater percentage of the caseload over the time period, increasing from 12.6 percent of children in 1983 to 22.4 percent in 1996.
- While only a small percentage of recipients are identified as Asians, this group became an increasing proportion of the caseload throughout most of the period.

Table 3.9
Distribution of AFDC Children by Race
1983 – 1996

Fiscal Year	Race of Child					
	White	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Native-American	Unknown
1983.....	33.7	40.9	12.6	1.8	1.1	9.9
1984.....	34.1	40.4	13.0	2.3	1.1	9.2
1985.....	34.6	41.9	14.5	2.9	1.1	5.0
1986.....	35.1	42.0	15.6	3.1	1.3	3.0
1987.....	34.4	41.1	16.9	3.4	1.3	3.0
1988.....	33.8	41.3	17.4	2.9	1.3	3.2
1989.....	33.5	41.4	17.1	3.8	1.3	2.9
1990.....	33.1	41.4	17.7	3.9	1.3	2.7
1991.....	33.5	40.1	18.5	3.7	1.3	2.9
1992.....	33.9	38.5	18.7	3.9	1.6	3.4
1993.....	33.7	38.0	19.5	3.8	1.4	3.7
1994.....	33.0	37.9	21.2	3.6	1.4	2.9
1995.....	31.2	38.5	22.2	4.1	1.5	2.4
1996.....	31.6	38.4	22.4	3.8	1.4	2.4

Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients, 1996*, and other reports.

Citizenship Status of Adult AFDC Recipients

During the past 20 years large numbers of immigrants have entered the United States under various laws. These immigrants often lack high levels of education and valuable skills and are thus forced to accept low-wage jobs. Some, particularly among refugee groups, have become AFDC recipients. Illegal immigrants are not and never have been eligible for assistance.

Table 3.10 shows that:

- Since 1983 an increasing proportion of adult AFDC recipients have been non-citizens, and
- In 1996 approximately 13.3 percent of adult AFDC recipients were non-citizens.

Table 3.10
Citizenship Status of Adult AFDC Recipients
1983 – 1996

Year	Percent of Adult Recipients		Percent Change		Number of Adult Recipients		
	Citizen	Non-Citizen	Citizen	Non-Citizen	Citizen	Non-Citizen	Total
1983.....	91.0	9.0	–	–	3,310	327	3,637
1984.....	93.7	6.3	3.0	-30.0	3,373	227	3,600
1985.....	93.4	6.6	-0.3	4.8	3,373	238	3,612
1986.....	93.4	6.6	0.0	0.0	3,489	247	3,736
1987.....	92.9	7.1	-0.5	7.6	3,546	271	3,817
1988.....	93.4	6.6	0.5	-7.0	3,517	249	3,765
1989.....	93.0	7.0	-0.4	6.1	3,444	259	3,703
1990.....	91.9	8.1	-1.2	15.7	3,578	315	3,893
1991.....	91.2	8.8	-0.8	8.6	3,799	367	4,166
1992.....	90.7	9.3	-0.5	5.7	4,023	412	4,435
1993.....	89.2	10.8	-1.7	16.1	4,105	497	4,602
1994.....	87.3	12.7	-2.1	17.6	4,025	585	4,610
1995.....	86.8	13.2	-0.6	3.9	3,741	569	4,310
1996.....	86.7	13.3	-0.1	0.8	3,410	523	3,934

Source: Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of AFDC Recipients, 1996*, and earlier reports.