

ES 2.1 Means-Tested Assistance: AFDC and Food Stamps

Many poor children have depended on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)¹³ and the Food Stamp program for basic material needs. AFDC was a federal and state cash assistance program targeted at needy children and at certain others in these children's *households*.¹⁴ As a result of major welfare reform enacted in August 1996, the AFDC program has now been replaced by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF provides a block grant to states to design and administer their own welfare and work programs. Twelve percent of all children lived in families receiving AFDC or General Assistance in 1979, according to survey data (see Figure ES 2.1.B). The rate had increased to 14 percent by 1993, but had dropped to 9 percent by 1997.

The Food Stamp program provides *low-income* households with vouchers that can be exchanged for food. The welfare reform law includes significant new restrictions on Food Stamp eligibility for immigrants who have not become U.S. citizens. The percentage of all children living in households receiving Food Stamps remained fairly constant at around 15 percent from 1979 to 1989 (see Figure ES 2.1.B). The proportion had increased to 20 percent by 1993. In that year 14.2 million children lived in households receiving Food Stamps (see Table ES 2.1.B). However, the reciprocity rate had dropped back down to 15 percent by 1997.

Some details have been provided about the fertility and socioeconomic characteristics of mothers who received AFDC and Food Stamps during the early 1990's. Generally, mothers receiving aid are younger when they had their first child and have more children than mothers not getting AFDC or Food Stamps. Also, most are jobless and have very low household incomes. At least 40 percent of mothers receiving either AFDC or Food Stamps do not have a high school diploma.¹⁵

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin.¹⁶ The percentage of children receiving AFDC and Food Stamps varies substantially by *race/Hispanic origin*. According to 1992 data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics,¹⁷ only 5 percent of White, non-Hispanic children received AFDC and only 8 percent received Food Stamps (see Figure ES 2.1.C). In contrast, among Black, non-Hispanic children, 32 percent received AFDC and 42 percent received Food Stamps. Among Hispanic children, 18 percent received AFDC and 30 percent received Food Stamps.

There was also substantial variation among Hispanic children, depending on their descent. Among children of Cuban descent, only 8 percent received AFDC and 18 percent received Food Stamps. In contrast, among children of Puerto Rican descent, 28 percent received AFDC and 48 percent received Food Stamps. Among children of Mexican descent, 15 percent received AFDC and 30 percent received Food Stamps.

¹³ Includes General Assistance.

¹⁴ Needy children include those "who have been deprived of parental support or care because their father or mother is absent from the home continuously, is incapacitated, is deceased or is unemployed." See *Overview of Entitlement Programs: 1994 Green Book*. U.S. Congress, Committee on Ways and Means.

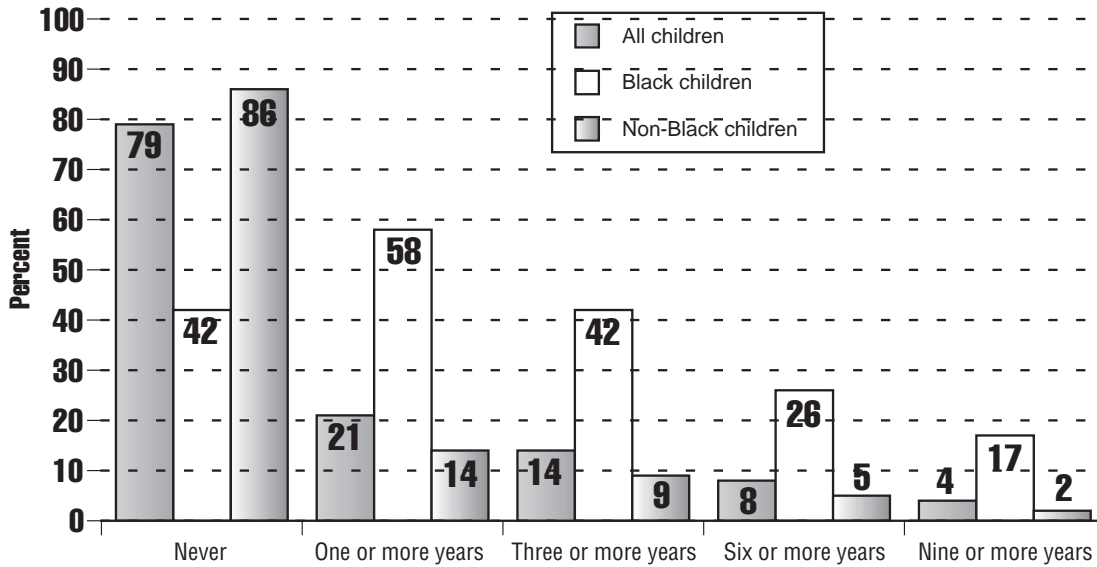
¹⁵ Mothers between the ages of 15-44.

¹⁶ Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

¹⁷ The Panel Study of Income Dynamics excludes children who migrated to the United States after 1990. Consequently, it understates recent migrants' share of the Hispanic population. This is likely to lead to a lower estimate of receipt of transfers for Hispanics than a more representative survey such as the Current Population Survey.

Figure ES 2.1.A

Percentage of children under age 6 in 1982 receiving any AFDC^a benefit, by number of years and by race:^b 1982-1991



^a Receipt of AFDC by families of children who were under age 6 in 1982 was monitored for the decade beginning in 1982 and ending in 1991. The figure displays the percentage who participated in AFDC by number of years participating over the 10-year period (minimum is zero; maximum is 10 years).

^b Estimates for Blacks and non-Blacks include Hispanics of those races. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: Estimates supplied by Greg J. Duncan, Northwestern University, based on data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics.

Table ES 2.1.A

Number and percentage of children in the United States under age 18 in families receiving AFDC or General Assistance: Selected years, 1979-1997

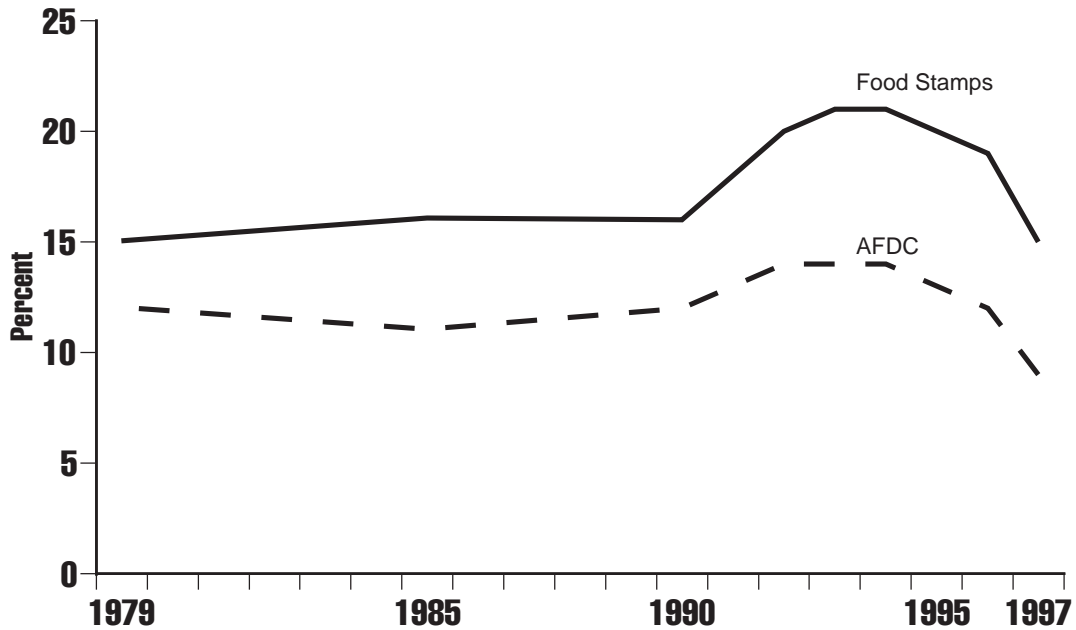
	1979	1989	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Number (in thousands)	7,228	7,116	9,440	9,463	8,656	7,490	6,201
Percent	12	11	14	13	12	11	9

Sources: Estimates for 1979-1994 based on analysis of the March 1980, 1990, 1994, and 1995 *Current Population Surveys*. Estimates for 1995-1997 provided by U.S. Census Bureau.

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Figure ES 2.1.B

Percentage of children in the United States under age 18 living in families receiving AFDC or General Assistance, and in households receiving Food Stamps: Selected years, 1979-1997



Sources: Estimates for 1979-1994 based on analysis of the March 1980, 1990, 1994, and 1995 Current Population Surveys. Estimates for 1995-1997 provided by U.S. Census Bureau.

Table ES 2.1.B

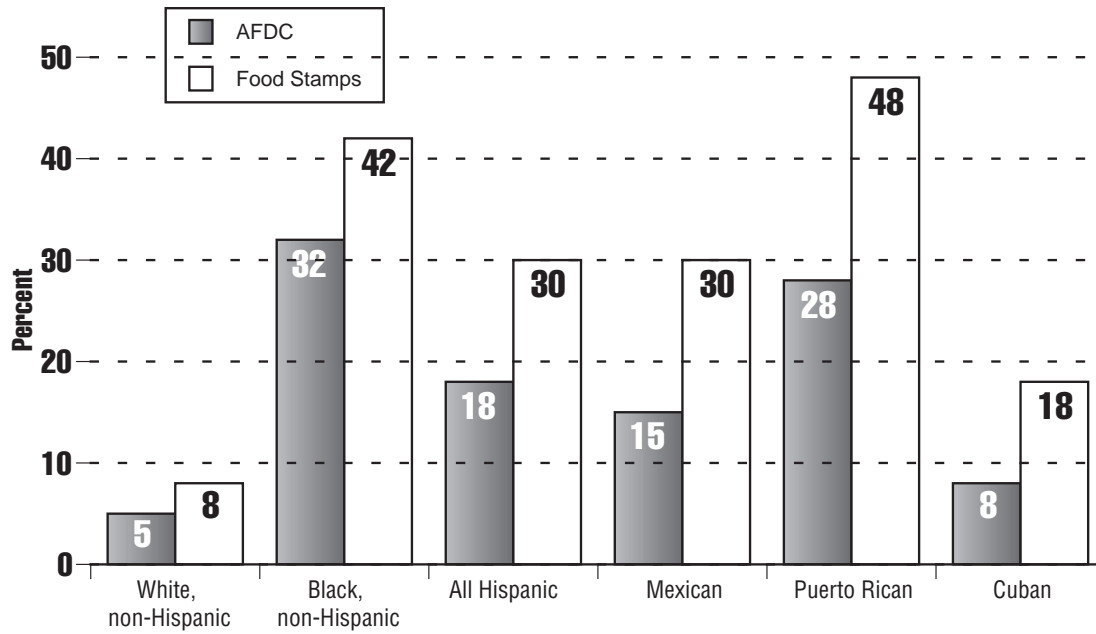
Number and percentage of children in the United States under age 18 in households receiving Food Stamps: Selected years, 1979-1997

	1979	1989	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Number (in thousands)	9,336	9,696	14,193	13,677	13,115	12,272	10,987
Percent	15	15	20	19	18	17	15

Sources: Estimates for 1979-1994 based on analysis of the March 1980, 1990, 1994, and 1995 Current Population Surveys. Estimates for 1995-1997 provided by U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure ES 2.1.C

Percentage of children in the United States under age 18 in households receiving AFDC and Food Stamps, by race/ethnicity^a and by descent: 1992



^a Estimates for Hispanic children exclude those migrating to the United States after 1990.

Source: Unpublished estimates supplied by Sandra Hofferth, University of Michigan, based on data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics.

ES 2.2 Child Support Nonpayment

The issue of child support has gained in importance in recent years. In 1998, an estimated 14 million parents had custody of 22.9 million children under 21 years of age whose other parent lived elsewhere.¹⁸ As rates of divorce and nonmarital births have risen, an increasing proportion of children and their *custodial* parents depend on this source of income for financial support and suffer when it is not forthcoming. Often times when noncustodial parents do not support their children financially, it is left to the government to step in and provide support in the form of AFDC/TANF, Food Stamps, and other forms of assistance. There has, however, been a decline in the proportion of custodial parents participating in at least one public assistance program from 40.7 percent in 1993 to 34.1 percent in 1997.¹⁹

In many cases, and particularly where nonmarital births are concerned, families who should be receiving child support from the noncustodial parent lack a court order establishing how much is owed. In 1997, 44 percent of custodial parents lacked a court order. Among custodial parents with a court order who were owed child support, 41 percent received the full amount.²⁰

Some custodial parents receive their child support payments directly from the noncustodial parent or that parent's employer. Other parents use the Child Support Enforcement program to establish and enforce child support orders. Since fiscal year 1992, collections made by child support enforcement agencies have increased by nearly 80 percent, from 8 billion in fiscal year 1992 to \$14.4 billion in fiscal year 1998.

Table ES 2.2.A shows the proportion of custodial mother families who had court orders for child support but received no support at all for selected years between 1978 and 1991. Table ES 2.2.B shows similar estimates for 1993 to 1997, though changes in child support questions render these estimates incomparable to estimates for earlier years.

Differences by Marital Status. Women who were separated or never married were substantially less likely to have court orders for child support than those who were divorced or who had remarried.²¹ In 1997, rates of nonpayment for those who had court orders ranged from 26 percent among divorced women to 45 percent among never-married women.

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin.²² In most years, eligible White custodial mother families experienced lower rates of nonpayment than either Black or Hispanic families. For example, in 1997, the most recent year for which estimates are available, the percentage of eligible custodial mother families receiving no payment was 27 percent for Whites, 47 percent for Blacks, and 37 percent for Hispanics (see Table ES 2.2.B).

Differences by Poverty Status. Women who are poor are less likely to have received child support payments. In 1997, rates of nonpayment for eligible custodial mothers were 45 percent among poor mothers and 26 percent among nonpoor mothers (see Table ES 2.2.B).

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, P-60, No. 212.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Estimates for Whites and Blacks include Hispanics of those races. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Differences by Educational Attainment. The data indicate that the more education a woman acquires, the greater her chances are for receiving child support payments (see Table ES 2.2.B). Eighteen percent of women with a bachelor’s degree or more did not receive child support payments compared to almost half (45 percent) of women with less than a high school diploma.

Table ES 2.2.A

Percentage of eligible women^a in the United States who are not receiving child support, by marital status and by race and Hispanic origin:^b Selected years, 1978-1991

	1978	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991 ^c
Total	28	23	24	26	24	25	24
Marital status							
Married	32	25	28	32	27	28	24
Divorced	27	23	24	25	22	23	22
Separated	27	16	13	16	26	20	26
Never-married	19	27	24	24	17	27	26
Race and Hispanic origin^b							
White	27	23	23	25	23	24	22
Black	37	23	31	28	27	30	30
Hispanic	35	29	37	32	25	30	31

^a Eligible women are those with court orders for child support.

^b Estimates for Whites and Blacks include Hispanics of those races. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

^c Estimates for 1991 were produced using somewhat different assumptions than in previous years and should not be contrasted with earlier estimates.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-23, Nos. 112, 140, 141, 154, and 167 (Table 1 in each) and Series P-60, No. 173, (Table 1). Data for 1991 from *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 187, (Table 1).

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Table ES 2.2.B

Percentage of eligible women^a in the United States who are not receiving child support,^b by marital status, race and Hispanic origin,^c poverty status, and educational attainment: Selected years 1993–1997^d

	1993	1995	1997
Total	29	30	32
Marital status			
Married	26	28	25
Divorced	24	24	26
Separated	34	31	34
Never-married	41	44	45
Race and Hispanic origin^c			
White	25	27	27
White, non-Hispanic	24	25	25
Black	39	41	47
Hispanic	35	42	37
Poverty status			
Poor	35	38	45
Nonpoor	26	27	26
Educational attainment			
Less than high school diploma	38	45	45
High school graduate	29	33	35
Some college, no degree	27	26	29
Associate degree	31	22	21
Bachelor's degree or more	20	21	

^a Eligible women are those with court orders for child support.

^b Custodial parents are those living with own children under 21 years of age whose other parent is not living in the house. These data reflect that child support is frequently ordered until a child is 21 or completes college.

^c Estimates for Whites and Blacks include Hispanics of those races. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

^d Starting with the April 1994 CPS questionnaire, revisions were made to the questions surrounding child support awards and the receipt of payments.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, Nos. 196, and 212.

