

# Getting a Helping Hand —

## Long-Term Participants in Assistance Programs

In an average month during 1992, 34 million of us — or 13 percent — were participants in one or more of 7 programs: Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), General Assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicaid, food stamps, Federal or State rent assistance, and public housing.

The median duration of periods of participation in these programs was 8 months during the 1991-to-1993 period. This means that half of all participation periods lasted less than 8 months and half lasted longer.

In 1992, participating persons received a median of \$436 a month in family benefits from the combination of AFDC/General Assistance, SSI, and food stamps.

### Long-term participants

Twenty million Americans — or 8 percent — were “long-term participants.” In other words, they took part in one or more of the seven programs during *all 24 months* of 1991 and 1992. About 10 million participated every month in the food stamp program, while almost 7 million received aid the entire period from AFDC/General Assistance.

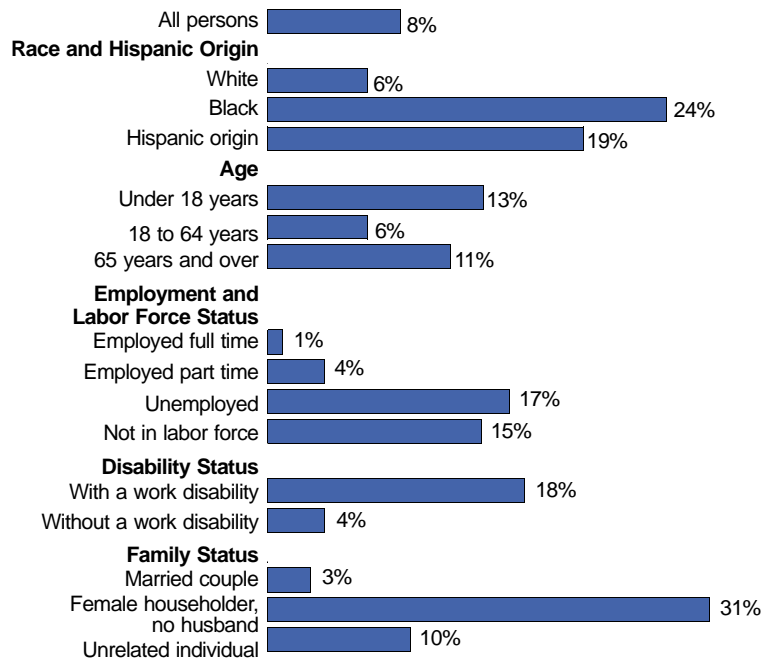
### Who were long-term participants?

Your chances of falling into this group differed by several factors, including your —

- **Age:** The youngest among us, children, were more likely than other age groups to get benefits on a long-term basis (see graph below). Their high rates of

### Who's Getting Long-Term Help?

Percent of Americans who participated in a major means-tested government assistance program all 24 months of 1991 and 1992, by characteristic



Note: Employment and labor force status category pertains only to persons aged 18 and over. Disability status category pertains only to persons aged 15 to 69 years. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

U.S. Department of Commerce  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS



SB/95-27  
Issued November 1995

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

participation reflect their relatively high poverty rates.

■ **Race and ethnicity:** Most long-term participants (58 percent) were White, while 36 percent were Black and 21 percent Hispanic.

One in four Blacks and about one in five Hispanics were long-term program participants, compared with 1 in 17 Whites. Blacks' and Hispanics' relatively high long-term participation rates can be explained by the fact they were almost three times as likely as Whites to have been poor in an average month of 1992 and much more likely than Whites to live in a family maintained by a woman without a husband present.

■ **Family type:** Persons in female-householder families were 10 times as likely to be long-term participants as those in married-couple families. Participants in female-householder families received a lower amount of aid in 1992 from the food stamps and AFDC/General Assistance programs separately than participants who were members of married-couple families. Yet the median amount of benefits they received from these programs combined (plus SSI) was higher (\$586 per month versus \$341). Why? Their family income was much more apt to be less than half their poverty level, making participation in more than one program and, therefore, higher combined benefits, more likely.

#### More information:

*Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1991 to 1993*, Current Population Reports, Series P70-46. Stock No. 803-044-00035-0. \$2. Additionally, detailed tables are on the Internet (<http://www.census.gov>). The data in both this Brief and in the above-mentioned report were collected by the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

#### Contacts:

Program participants —  
Martina Shea  
301-763-8578

Statistical Briefs —  
Robert Bernstein or  
Barbara Hatchl  
301-457-3011

*This Brief is one of a series that presents information of current policy interest. All statistics are subject to sampling variability, as well as survey design flaws, respondent classification and reporting errors, and data processing mistakes. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors, and analytical statements have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, use caution when comparing these data with data from other sources.*

### How Long People Get Assistance ....

Median duration (in months) of periods of participation in a major means-tested assistance program<sup>1</sup>: 1991 to 1993<sup>2</sup>

All persons ..... 7.9

#### Race and Hispanic Origin<sup>3</sup>

White ..... 7.6  
Black ..... 12.3  
Hispanic origin ..... 7.9

#### Age

Under 18 years ..... 7.8  
18 to 64 years ..... 7.8  
65 years and over ..... (4)

#### Employment and Labor Force Status

Employed full time ..... 6.4  
Employed part time ..... 7.7  
Unemployed ..... 7.0  
Not in the labor force ..... 15.0

#### Disability Status

With a work disability ..... 14.1  
Without a work disability ..... 7.4

#### Family Status

Married couple ..... 7.3  
Female householder ..... 14.9  
Unrelated individual ..... 10.8

### .... And How Much They Receive

Median amount of monthly family benefits<sup>5</sup>: 1992

All persons ..... \$436

#### Race and Hispanic Origin<sup>3</sup>

White ..... \$399  
Black ..... \$484  
Hispanic origin ..... \$478

#### Age

Under 18 years ..... \$531  
18 to 64 years ..... \$417  
65 years and over ..... \$198

#### Employment and Labor Force Status

Employed full time ..... \$224  
Employed part time ..... \$260  
Unemployed ..... \$403  
Not in the labor force ..... \$421

#### Disability Status

With a work disability ..... \$420  
Without a work disability ..... \$419

#### Family Status

Married couple ..... \$341  
Female householder ..... \$586  
Unrelated individual ..... \$192

<sup>1</sup>Includes AFDC, General Assistance, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance.

<sup>2</sup>Among those who began to participate after the start of 1991.

<sup>3</sup>Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

<sup>4</sup>Median spell duration is in excess of 28 months.

<sup>5</sup>Median monthly benefits include those from the AFDC, General Assistance, SSI, and Food Stamp programs only.