

Public Assistance Receipt in the Past 12 Months for Households: 2008 and 2009

Issued October 2010

American Community Survey Briefs

ACSBR/09-13

INTRODUCTION

This report presents data on public assistance receipt at the national and state levels based on the 2008 and 2009 American Community Surveys (ACS). Public assistance income, or welfare, provides cash payments to poor families and includes general assistance and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1997. Public assistance income does not include Supplemental Security Income (SSI), noncash benefits such as food stamps, or separate payments received for hospital or other medical care (vendor payments). To qualify for public assistance benefits, the income and/or assets of an individual or family must fall below specified thresholds. However, unlike AFDC benefits, TANF benefits are time-limited, require most adult recipients to work, and give states increased flexibility in program design.

The ACS questions on participation in public assistance were designed to identify households in which one or more current members received public assistance during the past 12 months. These data are for households, not individuals. If any person living at the sample address at the time of the interview received public assistance, the household is included in the count.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECEIPT

In 2009, 3.0 million households had received public assistance during the past 12 months, an increase of about

0.4 million from the 2008 estimate. Among the states with the highest public assistance participation in 2009 were Alaska (6.3 percent), Maine (4.9 percent), Washington (4.1 percent), and Michigan (3.9 percent), as well as the District of Columbia (5.3 percent).¹ Although not statistically different when compared with some other states, states with the lowest public assistance participation rates included Louisiana (1.3 percent), Wyoming (1.5 percent), and Alabama (1.6 percent).

The public assistance participation rate for U.S. households was 2.6 percent in 2009—0.3 percentage points higher than in 2008. Fourteen states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had a statistically higher participation rate when compared to the national average in 2009. These states were concentrated in the Northeast (Maine, Vermont, Pennsylvania, New York, and Connecticut) and West (Alaska, Washington, Hawaii, California, and Oregon). The remaining states included Michigan, Oklahoma, Ohio, and Minnesota.

¹ Alaska's and Maine's 2009 ACS public assistance participation rates were not statistically different from the rate for the District of Columbia (5.3 percent). Washington's 2009 ACS public assistance participation rate was not statistically different from the rates for Michigan (3.9 percent), Hawaii (3.7 percent), and Vermont (3.6 percent). Michigan's 2009 ACS public assistance participation rate was not statistically different from the rates for Washington (4.1 percent), Hawaii (3.7 percent), California (3.7 percent), and Vermont (3.6 percent). The District of Columbia's 2009 ACS public assistance participation rate was not statistically different from the rates for Alaska (6.3 percent) and Maine (4.9 percent).

By
Shelley K. Irving

Public Assistance Receipt in the Past 12 Months for Households by State and Puerto Rico: 2008 and 2009

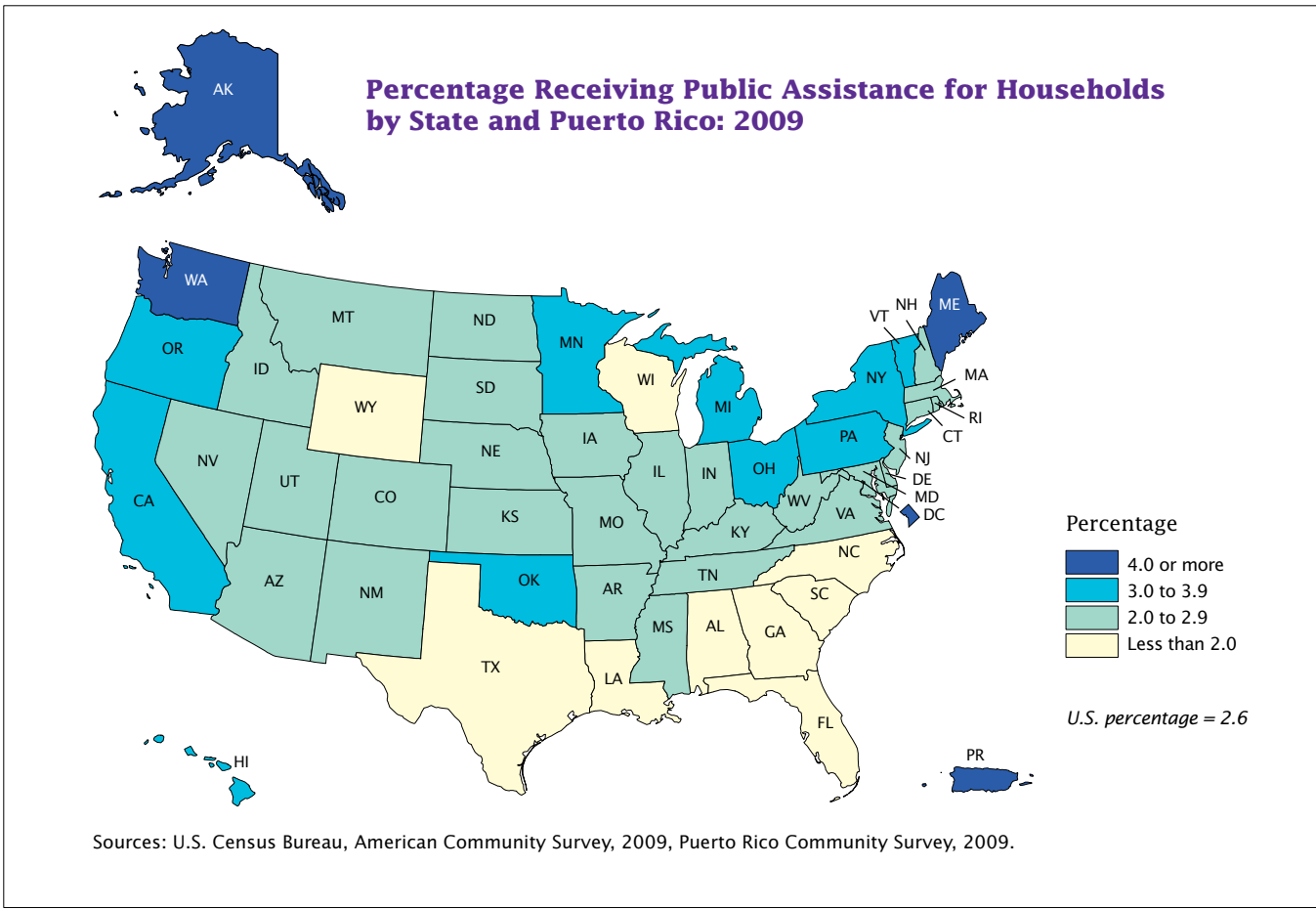
Area	Public assistance receipt in 2008				Public assistance receipt in 2009				Change in public assistance receipt (2009 less 2008)			
	Estimate	Margin of error ¹ (±)	Percent	Margin of error ¹ (±)	Estimate	Margin of error ¹ (±)	Percent	Margin of error ¹ (±)	Estimate	Margin of error ¹ (±)	Percent	Margin of error ¹ (±)
United States . . .	2,649,499	26,671	2.3	0.1	3,009,319	28,071	2.6	0.1	*359,820	38,721	*0.3	–
Alabama	22,608	2,338	1.2	0.1	29,804	2,639	1.6	0.1	*7,196	3,526	*0.4	0.2
Alaska	14,902	1,682	6.3	0.7	14,993	2,262	6.3	0.9	91	2,819	0.1	1.2
Arizona	47,519	3,588	2.1	0.2	57,416	4,182	2.5	0.2	*9,897	5,510	*0.4	0.2
Arkansas	22,098	2,160	2.0	0.2	23,257	2,627	2.1	0.2	1,159	3,401	0.1	0.3
California	395,008	10,756	3.2	0.1	449,059	10,015	3.7	0.1	*54,051	14,697	*0.4	0.1
Colorado	33,597	2,947	1.8	0.2	37,466	3,057	2.0	0.2	3,869	4,246	0.2	0.2
Connecticut	36,922	2,742	2.8	0.2	38,919	3,025	2.9	0.2	1,997	4,083	0.2	0.3
Delaware	7,349	1,160	2.2	0.4	8,567	1,542	2.6	0.5	1,218	1,930	0.4	0.6
District of Columbia	10,686	1,636	4.3	0.6	13,308	1,984	5.3	0.8	*2,622	2,571	*1.1	1.0
Florida	96,884	5,482	1.4	0.1	115,630	5,168	1.7	0.1	*18,746	7,534	*0.3	0.1
Georgia	45,775	3,547	1.3	0.1	57,584	3,608	1.7	0.1	*11,809	5,060	*0.3	0.1
Hawaii	13,466	1,778	3.1	0.4	16,443	2,130	3.7	0.5	*2,977	2,775	0.6	0.6
Idaho	13,758	1,732	2.4	0.3	15,193	1,672	2.7	0.3	1,435	2,407	0.3	0.4
Illinois	87,947	5,057	1.8	0.1	111,669	5,728	2.3	0.1	*23,722	7,641	*0.5	0.2
Indiana	65,145	3,995	2.6	0.2	68,643	4,151	2.8	0.2	3,498	5,761	0.1	0.2
Iowa	27,096	2,426	2.2	0.2	29,483	2,907	2.4	0.2	2,387	3,786	0.2	0.3
Kansas	25,769	2,842	2.3	0.3	28,182	2,637	2.6	0.2	2,413	3,877	0.2	0.3
Kentucky	40,520	3,201	2.4	0.2	42,486	3,497	2.5	0.2	1,966	4,741	0.1	0.3
Louisiana	21,748	2,130	1.3	0.1	22,468	2,138	1.3	0.1	720	3,018	–	0.2
Maine	25,405	2,604	4.7	0.5	26,669	2,406	4.9	0.4	1,264	3,545	0.2	0.7
Maryland	33,169	3,280	1.6	0.2	41,470	3,352	2.0	0.2	*8,301	4,690	*0.4	0.2
Massachusetts	66,470	4,514	2.7	0.2	70,320	4,365	2.8	0.2	3,850	6,279	0.1	0.3
Michigan	131,772	4,692	3.5	0.1	147,919	6,773	3.9	0.2	*16,147	8,240	*0.4	0.2
Minnesota	63,058	3,347	3.0	0.2	66,091	4,162	3.2	0.2	3,033	5,340	0.2	0.3
Mississippi	19,925	2,129	1.8	0.2	27,666	2,392	2.5	0.2	*7,741	3,202	*0.7	0.3
Missouri	53,787	3,929	2.3	0.2	55,963	3,627	2.4	0.2	2,176	5,347	0.1	0.2
Montana	7,905	1,335	2.1	0.4	8,728	1,203	2.3	0.3	823	1,797	0.2	0.5
Nebraska	16,055	2,232	2.3	0.3	15,482	1,818	2.2	0.3	–573	2,879	–0.1	0.4
Nevada	20,192	1,919	2.1	0.2	26,176	2,707	2.7	0.3	*5,984	3,318	*0.6	0.3
New Hampshire	12,053	1,680	2.4	0.3	14,663	2,163	2.9	0.4	2,610	2,739	0.5	0.5
New Jersey	64,838	3,553	2.1	0.1	76,828	4,092	2.4	0.1	*11,990	5,419	*0.4	0.2
New Mexico	18,473	2,300	2.5	0.3	18,027	2,108	2.4	0.3	–446	3,120	–0.1	0.4
New York	214,142	8,210	3.0	0.1	224,674	7,769	3.1	0.1	10,532	11,304	0.1	0.2
North Carolina	56,035	3,667	1.6	0.1	64,936	4,165	1.8	0.1	*8,901	5,549	*0.2	0.2
North Dakota	5,197	1,125	1.9	0.4	6,155	1,211	2.2	0.4	958	1,653	0.3	0.6
Ohio	118,763	4,887	2.6	0.1	150,463	5,757	3.3	0.1	*31,700	7,552	*0.7	0.2
Oklahoma	46,465	3,271	3.3	0.2	47,863	2,797	3.3	0.2	1,398	4,304	–	0.3
Oregon	36,149	2,827	2.5	0.2	51,179	4,011	3.4	0.3	*15,030	4,908	*1.0	0.3
Pennsylvania	158,603	6,549	3.2	0.1	161,311	5,903	3.3	0.1	2,708	8,816	–	0.2
Rhode Island	10,940	1,505	2.7	0.4	9,218	1,396	2.3	0.3	–1,722	2,053	–0.5	0.5
South Carolina	29,542	2,646	1.7	0.2	29,891	2,906	1.7	0.2	349	3,930	–	0.2
South Dakota	7,005	1,070	2.2	0.3	7,520	1,091	2.4	0.3	515	1,528	0.2	0.5
Tennessee	58,193	3,356	2.4	0.1	65,543	3,673	2.7	0.2	*7,350	4,976	*0.3	0.2
Texas	132,310	5,150	1.6	0.1	155,207	6,067	1.8	0.1	*22,897	7,958	*0.2	0.1
Utah	12,695	1,669	1.5	0.2	19,194	1,908	2.2	0.2	*6,499	2,535	*0.7	0.3
Vermont	7,349	1,160	2.9	0.5	9,121	1,475	3.6	0.6	1,772	1,876	0.7	0.7
Virginia	49,535	3,969	1.7	0.1	60,292	3,952	2.0	0.1	*10,757	5,601	*0.4	0.2
Washington	87,372	4,576	3.4	0.2	103,993	5,106	4.1	0.2	*16,621	6,857	*0.6	0.3
West Virginia	17,147	1,940	2.3	0.3	19,865	2,044	2.7	0.3	2,718	2,818	0.4	0.4
Wisconsin	37,559	2,912	1.7	0.1	43,101	3,002	1.9	0.1	*5,542	4,182	*0.2	0.2
Wyoming	2,599	801	1.2	0.4	3,221	837	1.5	0.4	622	1,159	0.3	0.6
Puerto Rico	64,826	3,266	5.5	0.3	70,263	3,446	5.9	0.3	*5,437	4,748	*0.5	0.4

* Statistically different at the 90 percent confidence level.

– Represents or rounds to zero.

¹Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Surveys, 2008 and 2009, Puerto Rico Community Surveys, 2008 and 2009.



Twenty-one states had statistically lower participation rates when compared to the national average in 2009. Ten of them were located in the South (Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Texas, Maryland, Virginia, and Arkansas). The remaining states were Wyoming, Wisconsin, Colorado, Nebraska, North Dakota, Utah, Rhode Island, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, and New Jersey.

Twenty states (Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington,

and Wisconsin), the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had increases in the number and percentages of households receiving public assistance between 2008 and 2009. In Hawaii, the number of households receiving public assistance grew, but the rate was statistically unchanged. In all the remaining states, the rates and the number of households receiving public assistance were not statistically different from the 2008 estimates.

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

Data presented in this report are based on people and households that responded to the ACS in 2008

and 2009. The resulting estimates are representative of the entire population. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. Due to rounding, some details may not sum to totals. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the “2009 ACS Accuracy of the Data” document located at <www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/accuracy2009.pdf>.

WHAT IS THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit www.census.gov/acs/www.