

Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, 1993 to 1995 Who Gets Assistance?

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Household Economic Studies

P70-77

INTRODUCTION

The August 1996 passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), also known as welfare reform, gave states considerable flexibility and greater responsibility in formulating and implementing initiatives to reduce welfare dependency and to encourage employment for members of low-income families with children. Under the PRWORA, most welfare recipients face a 60-month time limit in federal funding and must meet certain work requirements to receive assistance. Even prior to the enactment of PRWORA, however, several states modified their welfare programs under waivers granted by the federal government, which allowed them to implement innovative demonstration projects to move people from welfare to work.

Changes in the welfare system, both under waivers and the PRWORA, have increased the interest in information about the degree to which certain groups of people are involved in assistance programs, about the characteristics of program participants, about the kinds of programs they use, and about the intensity and extent of their participation. Of particular interest is how people's participation extends over time.

This report focuses on participation and on the characteristics of participants in the following means-tested public-assistance programs:¹

¹Means-tested programs are those that require income and/or assets of the individual or family to be below specified thresholds in order to qualify for benefits. These programs provide cash and noncash assistance to eligible individuals and families.

- Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)
- General assistance (GA)
- Food stamps
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Medicaid
- Housing assistance

The data cover calendar years 1993 and 1994, and the first 9 calendar months of 1995 (January to September),² a time just before federal welfare reform was enacted. The data provide a set of baseline estimates for the study of the effects of the reforms.³

²This report is an update of Randy Sherrod (1999), "Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Program Participation, Who Gets Assistance? 1993 to 1994" Current Population Reports, P70-69, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

³Data from the 1996 and later panels of SIPP will be used to study program participation in the post-reform era. Part of the PRWORA law directed the Census Bureau to field a new survey, whose purpose is to collect the data necessary to evaluate the impact of the change. To carry out that directive, the Census Bureau began conducting the Survey of Program Dynamics (SPD). The SPD will simultaneously describe the full range of state welfare programs along with social, economic, demographic, and family changes that will help or limit the effectiveness of the reforms. The Census Bureau is collecting data for households previously interviewed in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) from 1992-94 or 1993-95 for each of the 6 years from 1996 through 2001. Cross-sectional data from SPD were released after the 1997, 1998, and 1999 surveys. The first longitudinal file from SPD was released in the summer of 2001. For more information about SPD, see the SPD Web site, at www.sipp.census.gov/spd/

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The data come from the 1993 panel of the Survey of Income and Participation (SIPP).⁴ SIPP is a longitudinal survey, which means that, unlike periodic point-in-time surveys, such as the Current Population Survey, SIPP follows the same people over time, or longitudinally.⁵ This longitudinality enables SIPP to study a subject from two perspectives. First, it can look back at the history of a group of people over a span of time. Second, it can take cross-sectional views of a population of interest at regular intervals, such as monthly. SIPP is analogous to a video cassette recorder with a freeze-frame function.

SIPP's historical perspective is useful for examining a variety of concepts. One is gross-activity levels, such as how many people ever used a particular assistance program in a given year, even though not all of them used it at any particular time. Another is cumulative amounts, such as the number of months within a time period that an individual participated in one or more assistance programs. Yet another approach is to examine the number, timing, and duration of flows of people into and out of particular situations within a given time span, such as the length of time an individual continuously participates in a particular program or in assistance in general. SIPP's cross-sectional

⁴The sample of households in SIPP is divided into four interview groups called rotation groups. Each month, one of the four rotation groups is interviewed about the previous 4 months (the reference period). The 1993 SIPP panel covered the period from October 1992 to December 1995, but the data in this report cover only the months in which the full sample is present. Data for all four rotation groups (the full sample) are available only for 33 continuous reference months, the calendar months of January 1993 through September 1995. The Census Bureau will continue to follow the families who participated in the 1992 and 1993 SIPP panels in the Survey of Program Dynamics to provide post-reform longitudinal data.

⁵To ensure that the sample remains representative of the noninstitutionalized population of the United States, the survey attempts to follow people in the panel who move.

Accuracy of the Estimates

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and meet Census Bureau standards for statistical significance. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process, including the overall design of surveys, the testing of the wording of questions, the review of the work of interviewers and coders, and the statistical review of reports.

The SIPP employs ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but how it affects different variables in the survey is not precisely known. Moreover, biases may also be present when people who are missed in the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than the categories used in weighting (age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin). All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

Sample attrition, a type of nonresponse error, is another major concern in SIPP because of the need to follow the same people over time. Attrition reduces the available sample size. To the extent that those leaving the sample are systematically different from those who remain in the sample, survey estimates will be biased.

perspective captures changes over time in the level of an activity, such as in the proportion of the population receiving assistance in a given month. Each of these perspectives can be used to study populations, or segments of populations, existing at selected points in time.

The longitudinal properties of SIPP come at a cost, however. Over time, attrition reduces the available sample size; and, to the extent that it takes a larger bite out of certain kinds of sample members, the survey may grow increasingly unrepresentative of the population, leading to biases in the results. Statistical techniques (primarily reweighting) cannot entirely redress these potential imbalances. In terms of a video analogy, differential attrition not only causes the picture to become increasingly grainy, but increasingly distorted as well (see Appendix B

for a fuller discussion of the potential effects of attrition). The data in this report are particularly susceptible to such effects because, as discussed later, poverty is associated with program participation, and longitudinal surveys tend to lose relatively more poor people than higher income people.

These limitations may call for extra care in interpreting the longitudinal data in this report, but they do not destroy their usefulness. Absolute estimates (such as the number of program participants, the level of a participation rate, or the size of a monthly benefit) may not exactly reflect reality,⁶ but they do suggest a minimum or maximum value for

⁶For example, research on data for 1985 through 1993 shows that SIPP estimates of the numbers of recipients for AFDC (and also for food stamps) are lower than the numbers based on administrative data, and the extent of underestimation may have increased over time. See the source cited in Appendix B.

the object under study. More importantly, though individual estimates of the levels of a quantity at successive times may each miss their mark, they often miss it by a consistent degree, so that differences between them can reliably describe the timing and size of changes in the quantity. Averages of estimates (such as the “average monthly participation rate”), being

measures of central tendency, are somewhat protected from the distortions that may affect their components. Relative measures (such as the relative size of the participation rate for men compared with that for women, or the ratio of the number of food stamp participants to the number of medicaid participants) suggest the true nature of relationships. Both absolute and relative

measures can reveal the broad outlines, directions, size, and strength of trends and patterns, especially when they are applied as here (for the “length of participation” and “median spell length” measures) to the history of a group of people existing at a particular point in time.

The first section of the report examines the degree and scope of the involvement of groups of people in assistance programs. The second section looks at the duration of attachment to assistance and at the monthly benefits of program participants. Appendix A displays the detailed statistical tables analyzed in this report.

Description of Concepts

Average monthly participation rate for (a specified year): this is an annual-average measure of the monthly percentage of people who participated in at least one major means-tested program; it represents a weighted average of the 12 monthly (9 for 1995) participation rates for the year. People who participated in more than one program in a month are only counted once in the total number of participants for that month.

Participated 1 or more months in (a specified year): the percentage of people who ever participated at any time in at least one major means-tested program during a specified year.

Participated between 1 and 11 months: the percentage of people who participated in at least one program or another for a total of between 1 and 11 months (not necessarily consecutive) during the January 1993-September 1995 period.

Participated 12 or more months: the percentage of people who participated in at least one program or another for a total of 12 or more months (not necessarily consecutive) during the January 1993-September 1995 period, including people who participated in all 33 months of the period.

Participated all 33 months: the percentage of people who participated in at least one program or another for all 33 months of the January 1993-September 1995 period.

Spell of participation: an uninterrupted period of months in which an individual receives means-tested assistance, and which is preceded by 1 or more months of nonparticipation; a month is included in a spell if the individual receives assistance for all or any part of the month.

Median spell duration: that value for spell length that divides the distribution of spells by duration in half, one-half being shorter and one-half longer than the median.

Median monthly family benefit: that value that divides in half the distribution of the recipients of assistance, by their monthly family benefit amount in a specified year: one-half of the people in the distribution have benefits below the median, the other half have benefits above it. The monthly family benefit amount for an individual in a given year represents the amount for the last month in that year for which the family's receipt of the benefit was reported (not necessarily December); if the family participated in a program for only part of that month, then the benefit amount could underestimate the usual monthly benefit received by the family from that program.

HIGHLIGHTS

- About 40 million people (or 15 percent of the population) participated in major means-tested assistance programs in each month, on average, in 1995.⁷
- In 1995, individuals were more likely to participate in medicaid than in any of the other programs examined. Eleven percent of individuals participated in medicaid in an average month in 1995.
- The poor, in 1995, were much more likely to receive at least one type of major means-tested benefit than individuals who were not in poor families. About three in four of the poor received benefits in at least one month in 1995 compared with only one in eleven of the non-poor.
- Differences in the participation rates among various demographic groups are largely asso-

⁷Throughout this report, data for 1995 refer not to the entire calendar year, but to the 9 months from January through September.

ciated with differences in their poverty rates.

- Individuals in households maintained by women were approximately five times as likely to participate in means-tested programs, in an average month in 1995, as individuals in married-couple households (44 percent versus 9 percent).
- Adults (people age 18 and over) without a high school diploma were more than twice as likely as high school graduates, and more than five times as likely as those with some college, to participate in some type of means-tested programs in an average month in 1995 (participation rates were 25 percent, 10 percent, and 5 percent, respectively, for these groups).
- Unemployed people were much more likely to receive means-tested benefits in an average month in 1995 than were people with full-time jobs (26 percent compared with 4 percent).
- Children (people under 18 years of age) were more likely than people in other age groups to be long-term recipients of assistance programs (“long term” being defined as participating in all 33 months of the 1993-95 period examined in this report).
- Recipients of means-tested programs participated in housing assistance for a longer period of time (median duration of 7.8 months) than they did in food stamps or medicaid in the 1993-95 period.
- Within selected demographic groups (such as age groups and family types), higher average monthly program participation rates tended to be associated with the receipt of higher median family benefits.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

The focus in this section is on groups of people in the population at large. The discussion investigates their degree of involvement in assistance programs using three concepts, each of which explores a different aspect of program participation.⁸

- The **“average monthly program participation rate:”** These are annual-average rates—one for each of the years 1993, 1994, and 1995. The rate represents a weighted average of the twelve (nine for 1995) monthly (cross-sectional) measurements taken in the specified year of the proportion of people in the group who participated in assistance programs. (Rates are shown for 1995 even though they are 9-month averages because this number of months is sufficient to make them reasonably comparable to the 12-month averages for 1993 and 1994). Each of the component monthly rates in the average corresponds to the population existing in the month the measurement was taken. The measure tells what share of the group is on assistance, **on average, in any given month** during the year in question.
- The percentage of a group who **“participated 1 or more months in a (specified) year:”** These percentages are presented for each year 1993 and 1994. The measure repre-

⁸A person is considered to participate in a program if the person individually receives benefits from the program or is covered under the allotment of another person. If, for example, in a given month two people in a household received food stamps and two additional people in the household were covered by the food stamp program, then the number of people from that household who participated in the food stamp program for that month would be counted as “4.”

sents the proportion of people in a group who ever took part in any program at any time in a year. It is a measure of gross activity, and corresponds to the population existing at the end of the year in question. Data are not shown for 1995 because, unlike the data for 1993 and 1994, they had not achieved their full potential growth when their time base was truncated. The figure represents the share of the group that participated in assistance **at some time during the specified year.**

- The percentage of the population that **“participated for a (specified) number of months in the 33-month period between January 1993 and September 1995:”** This measure is based on the number of accumulated (not necessarily consecutive) months spent in assistance programs throughout the entire 33-month time span. It relates to the population existing at the end of the 33 months.

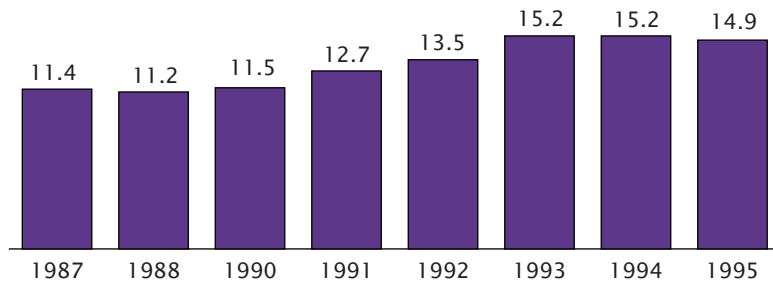
Program Usage: 1993 to 1995

Of the estimated 263 million noninstitutionalized civilians living in the United States in 1995, approximately 40 million, or 14.9 percent, participated in one or more major means-tested assistance programs, on average, during each of the first 9 months of 1995. As Figure 1 shows, the annual-average monthly participation rate increased noticeably from about 11 percent in the 1987-90 period to 15.2 percent in 1993 and 1994. The average monthly participation rate in 1995 was 14.9 percent.⁹

⁹The difference between the participation rates in 1994 and 1995 is not statistically significant.

Figure 1.

Average Monthly Participation Rate in Major Means-Tested Programs: 1987-88 and 1990-95
(Percent)



Note: The 1989 SIPP data are not available for analysis, while the 1995 SIPP data are available only from January to September.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation.

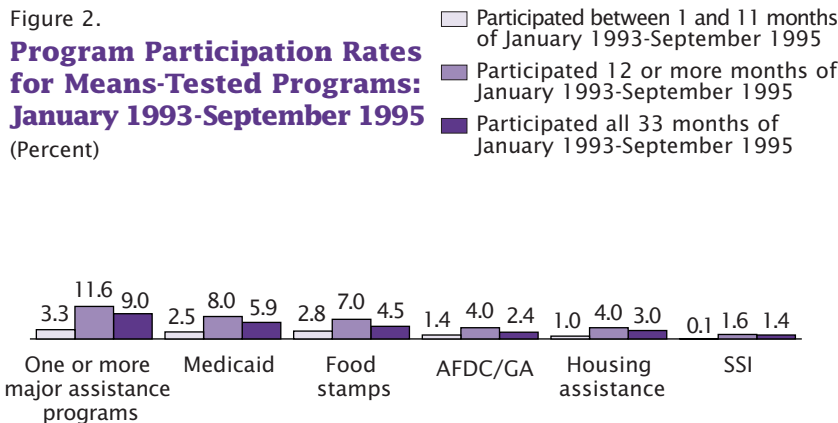
A small proportion of the population existing at the end of the 1993-95 period participated in means-tested programs on a long-term basis, with about 9.0 percent having participated in each month of the period (Figure 2). About 15 percent of people under 18 years old participated each month of the 1993-95 period, compared with 6.2 percent of people 18 to 64 years old, and 9.7 percent of people 65 years and older (Figure 3).

Medicaid Has the Highest Participation Rate

As Figure 4 illustrates, individuals were more likely to participate in medicaid than in any of the other programs examined in this report. In 1993, 13.6 percent of the population participated in medicaid in at least 1 month; in 1994, 14.1 percent of people did so (Figure 4). Continuing a relationship observed for 1993 and 1994, the average monthly participation rate in 1995 for medicaid (11.2 percent) was higher than that for AFDC or GA, food stamps, housing assistance, or SSI (Figure 5). More people (about 5.9 percent of the population) participated in medicaid in all 33 months than in any other program (see Figure 2).¹⁰

Figure 2.

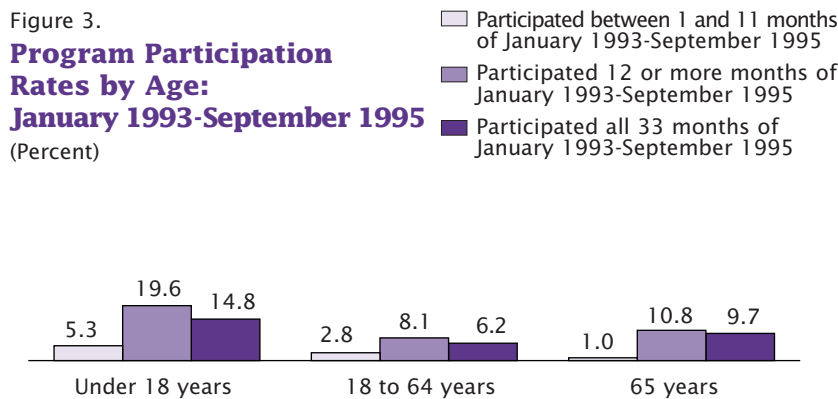
Program Participation Rates for Means-Tested Programs: January 1993-September 1995
(Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 3.

Program Participation Rates by Age: January 1993-September 1995
(Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

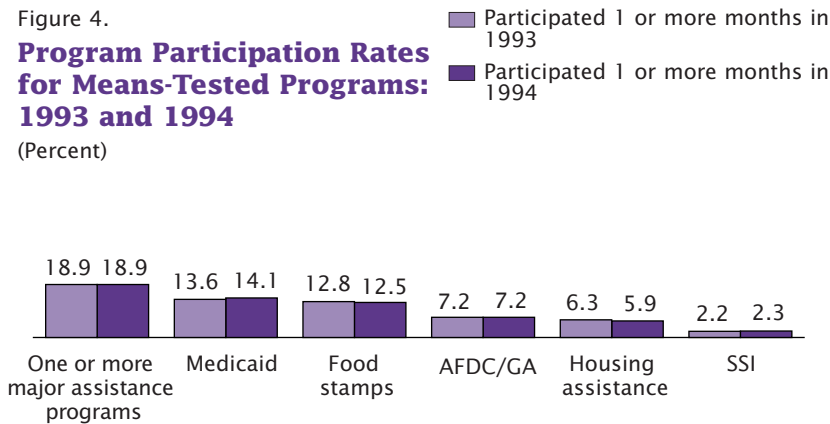
An estimated 29 million people received medicaid benefits in an average month of 1995; almost 16 million of these recipients were children. In fact, 22.0 percent of children under age 18 received medicaid, compared with 7.0 percent of people 18 to 64 years, and 8.0 percent of people 65 years old

¹⁰There is no statistical difference in medicaid participation for 1 or more months between 1993 and 1994. The average participation rate for housing assistance in 1995 and the long-term participation rate for food stamps in the 1993-95 period were not significantly different.

Figure 4.

Program Participation Rates for Means-Tested Programs: 1993 and 1994

(Percent)

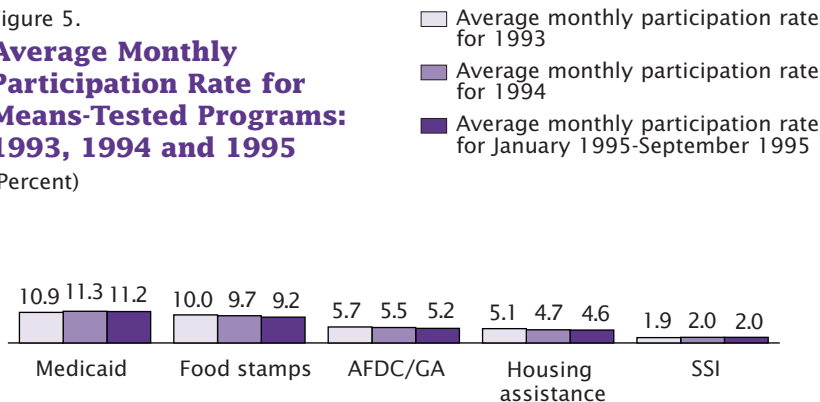


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 5.

Average Monthly Participation Rate for Means-Tested Programs: 1993, 1994 and 1995

(Percent)

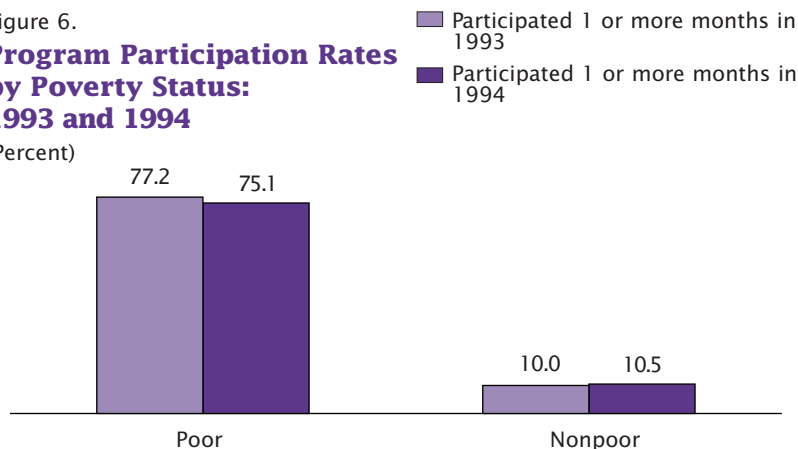


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 6.

Program Participation Rates by Poverty Status: 1993 and 1994

(Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

and over (see Appendix A, Table A-5).¹¹

Between Half and Three Quarters of the Poor Receive Means-Tested Assistance

Figure 6 shows that 77.2 percent and 75.1 percent, respectively, of the poor (those with family incomes under the poverty thresholds¹²) received benefits during at least one month of 1993 and 1994, compared with 10.0 percent and 10.5 percent of the nonpoor. Additionally, 60.2 percent of the poor received at least one type of major means-tested benefit in an average month of 1995, compared with 6.9 percent of the nonpoor (Figure 7).¹³

The poor also tended to be long-term participants in means-tested programs: 65.0 percent of the poor, compared with 4.7 percent of the nonpoor, participated in 12 or more months; and 55.6 percent of the poor, compared with 3.0 percent of the nonpoor, participated in all 33 months during the period of January 1993-September 1995 (Figure 8).

Program Participation Varies by Race and Ethnic Origin

The likelihood of receiving means-tested assistance and of being in the programs for various times differed among racial groups. In 1993

¹¹There is no statistical difference between the percentage of people age 18 to 64 and the percentage of people age 65 years and older who received medicaid benefits.

¹²The poverty threshold for a family of three with one related child was \$11,631 in 1993, \$11,929 in 1994, and \$12,267 in 1995. Data on poverty thresholds by family size and number of related children under 18 years for the reported years can be found at www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/threshold.html.

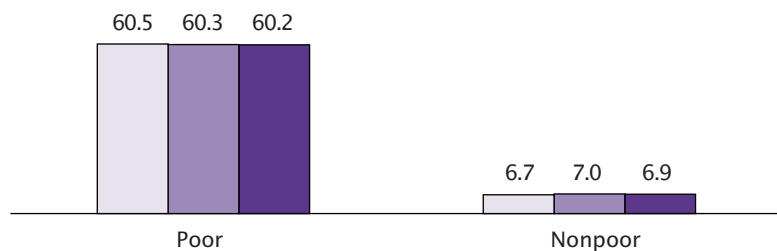
¹³There is no statistical difference in program participation rates of the non-poor between 1993 and 1994.

Figure 7.

Average Monthly Participation Rate by Poverty Status: 1993, 1994, and 1995

(Percent)

- Average monthly participation rate for 1993
- Average monthly participation rate for 1994
- Average monthly participation rate for January 1995-September 1995



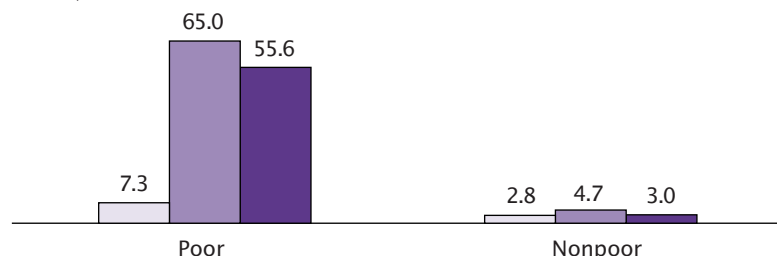
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 8.

Program Participation Rates by Poverty Status: January 1993-September 1995

(Percent)

- Participated between 1 and 11 months of January 1993-September 1995
- Participated 12 or more months of January 1993-September 1995
- Participated all 33 months of January 1993-September 1995



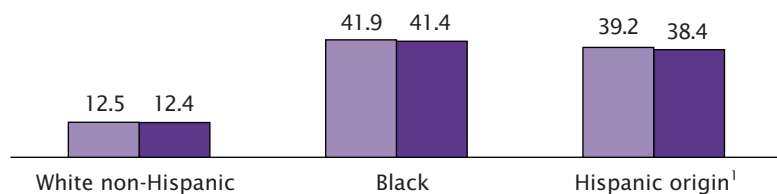
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 9.

Program Participation Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1993 and 1994

(Percent)

- Participated 1 or more months in 1993
- Participated 1 or more months in 1994



¹Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

and 1994, about 41 percent of Blacks and 12 percent of White non-Hispanics participated in a means-tested program for at least 1 month (Figure 9). In 1995, the average monthly participation rate for Blacks, 35.0 percent, was almost four times that of White non-Hispanics, 9.2 percent (Figure 10).¹⁴

The percentage of Blacks receiving assistance in all 33 months of the 1993-95 period was far greater than the percentage of White non-Hispanics: 24.8 percent compared with 4.6 percent (Figure 11). The corresponding figures for 12 or more months of participation were 30.4 percent for Blacks and 6.4 percent for White non-Hispanics.

The likelihood of receiving means-tested assistance also varied by Hispanic-origin status.¹⁵ Individuals of Hispanic origin were around three times as likely as White non-Hispanics to receive benefits for at least 1 month in 1993 and 1994 (see Figure 9). In 1994, for example, 38.4 percent of Hispanics participated for at least 1 month in a program compared with 12.4 percent of White non-Hispanics. Similarly, the average monthly participation rate in 1995 for people of Hispanic origin, 30.6 percent, was over three times that of White non-Hispanics, 9.2 percent (Figure 10). As shown in Figure 11, people of Hispanic origin were much more likely than White non-Hispanics to be long-term participants, with 20.4 percent of Hispanics participating all 33 months compared with only 4.6 percent of White non-Hispanics.¹⁶

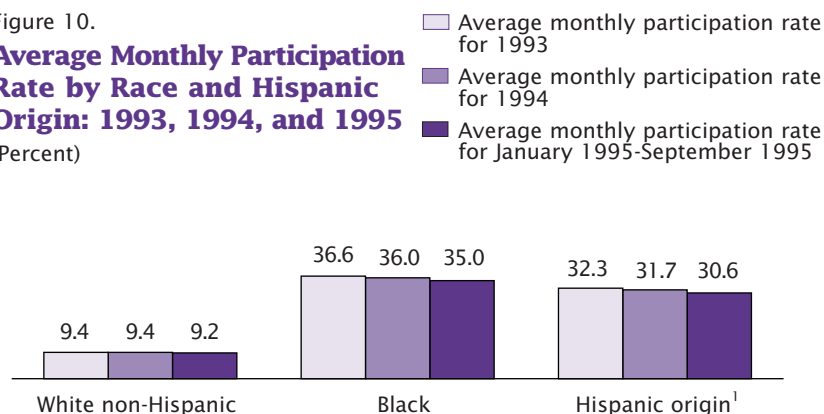
¹⁴There is no statistical difference in program participation rates for Whites or Blacks between 1993 and 1994.

¹⁵Hispanics may be of any race. The information on the Hispanic population shown in this report was collected in the 50 states and the District of Columbia and therefore does not include residents of Puerto Rico.

¹⁶The participation rates in 1993 and 1994 are not statistically different for non-Hispanic Whites. The same statement is true for Hispanics.

Figure 10.

Average Monthly Participation Rate by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1993, 1994, and 1995
(Percent)



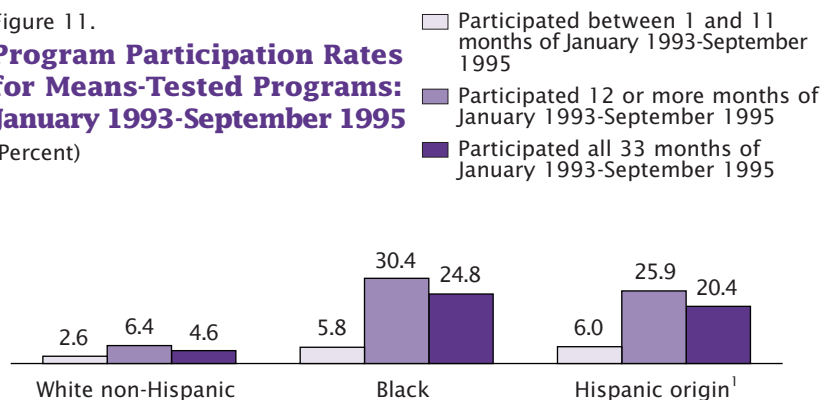
¹Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Although Blacks and Hispanics have significantly higher program participation rates than White non-Hispanics, the actual number of White non-Hispanics receiving means-tested assistance exceeded the separate numbers of Blacks and Hispanics. In 1994, about 13 million Blacks and 10 million Hispanics participated in a program for at least 1 month, compared with 24 million White non-Hispanics. Similarly, during the 1993-95 period, approximately 9.5 million Blacks and 6 million Hispanics received means-tested assistance for 12 or more months, compared with 12 million White non-Hispanics.

Figure 11.

Program Participation Rates for Means-Tested Programs: January 1993-September 1995
(Percent)



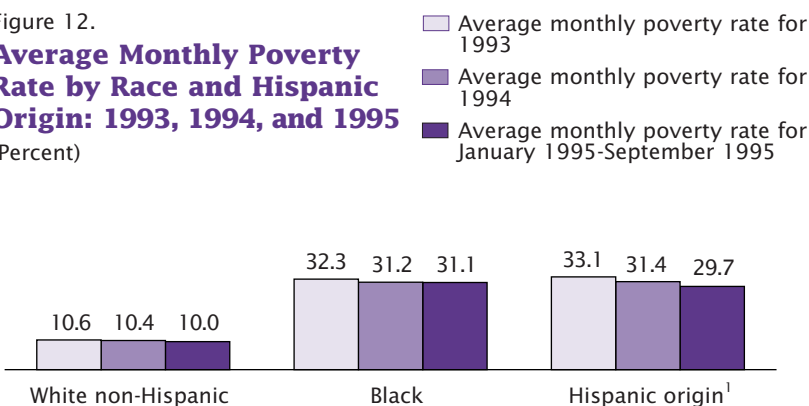
¹Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Differences among the racial and Hispanic-origin groups in program participation can, in part, be explained by differences in poverty rates. Poverty and participation in major means-tested assistance programs are closely related (see Figure 7 and 8). In 1995, the average monthly poverty rates for Blacks, 31.1 percent, and for people of Hispanic origin, 29.7 percent, were about three times the poverty rate for White non-Hispanics, 10.0 percent (Figure 12).¹⁷ Moreover, Figure 13 illustrates that Blacks (12.5 percent) and people of Hispanic origin (11.0 percent) were more likely than White non-Hispanics (2.2 percent) to be poor for all 33 months of 1993-95.

Figure 12.

Average Monthly Poverty Rate by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1993, 1994, and 1995
(Percent)



¹Hispanics may be of any race.

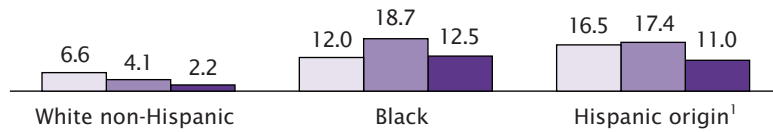
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

¹⁷There is no statistical difference between the average monthly poverty rates for Blacks and Hispanics.

Figure 13.

Poverty Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin: January 1993-September 1995
(Percent)

- Poor between 1 and 11 months of January 1993-September 1995
- Poor 12 or more months of January 1993-September 1995
- Poor all 33 months of January 1993-September 1995



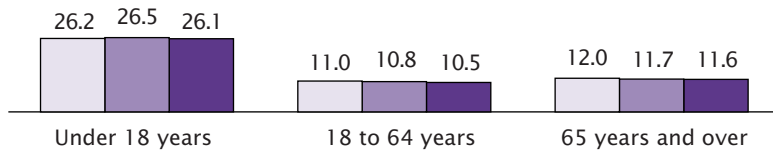
¹Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 14.

Average Monthly Participation Rate by Age of Individual: 1993, 1994, and 1995
(Percent)

- Average monthly participation rate for 1993
- Average monthly participation rate for 1994
- Average monthly participation rate for January 1995-September 1995



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 15.

Average Monthly Participation Rate by Sex: 1993, 1994, and 1995
(Percent)

- Average monthly participation rate for 1993
- Average monthly participation rate for 1994
- Average monthly participation rate for January 1995-September 1995



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Children Under 18 Years Are More Likely to Receive Means-Tested Assistance Than People in Other Age Groups

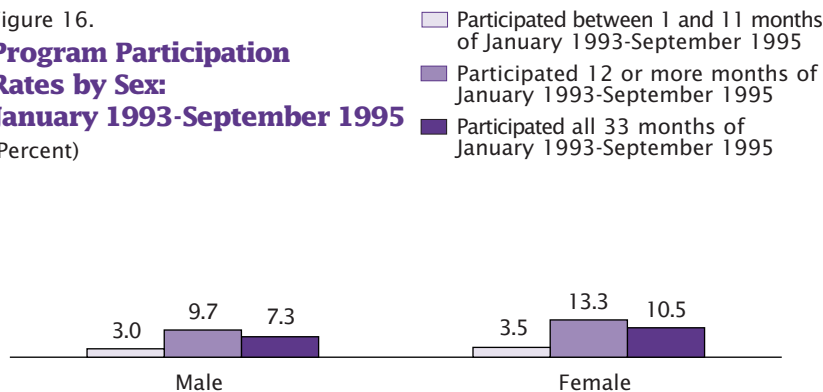
Figure 14 illustrates that children under 18 years of age were more than twice as likely to receive means-tested benefits as people in the other age groups. In an average month during 1995, 26.1 percent (18 million) children received some type of means-tested benefit, compared with 10.5 percent (17 million) people aged 18 to 64 years old and 11.6 percent (4 million) people 65 years and older.¹⁸ Children also tended to be long-term participants, with 19.6 percent (13 million) collecting benefits in 12 or more months, and 14.8 percent (10 million) collecting benefits in all 33 months of the 1993-95 period (see Figure 3).

Men and Women Differ in Program Participation

Women were more likely than men to receive means-tested benefits. Figure 15 shows that in 1995, 17.1 percent of women (23 million) participated in an average month, compared with 12.5 percent of men (16 million). Women were also more likely than men to receive means-tested benefits in each month of the 1993-95 period—10.5 percent compared with 7.3 percent (Figure 16).

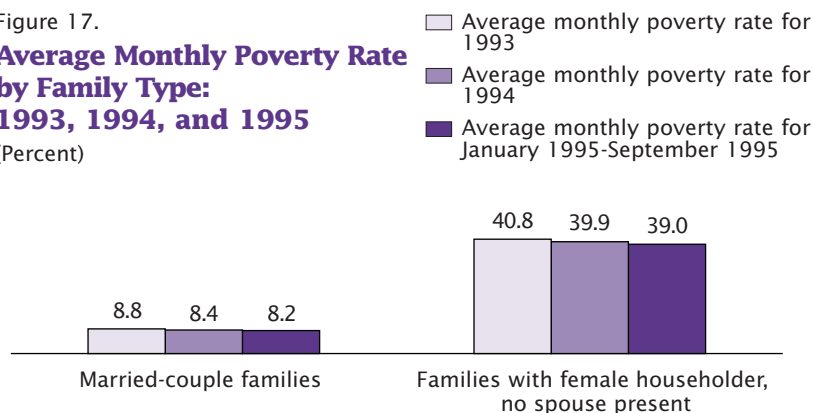
¹⁸There is no statistical difference between the percentage of people age 18 to 64 and the percentage of people age 65 years and older who received means-tested benefits.

Figure 16.
Program Participation Rates by Sex: January 1993-September 1995
 (Percent)



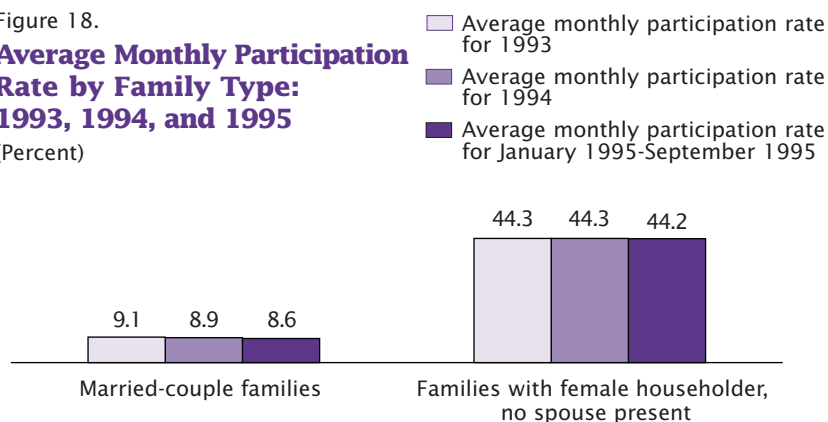
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 17.
Average Monthly Poverty Rate by Family Type: 1993, 1994, and 1995
 (Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 18.
Average Monthly Participation Rate by Family Type: 1993, 1994, and 1995
 (Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Families Maintained by Women Have Higher Participation Rates

Families maintained by women with no spouse present have higher poverty rates and lower incomes than married-couple families. During January-September 1995, households maintained by women had an average monthly poverty rate of 39.0 percent, compared with an average monthly poverty rate of 8.2 percent for people in married-couple families (Figure 17). Reflecting this finding, individuals in female-maintained families were much more likely to participate in major means-tested programs, in an average month in 1995, than were people in married-couple families—44.2 percent compared with 8.6 percent (Figure 18).¹⁹ Similarly, about half (50.1 percent) of individuals in families maintained by women participated in means-tested programs for at least 1 month of 1994, in contrast with 12.3 percent of individuals in married-couple families (Figure 19). Furthermore, individuals in families maintained by women were about six times as likely as individuals in married-couple families to receive benefits in all 33 months of the 1993-95 period—29.6 percent compared with 4.6 percent (Figure 20).

Those With Less Education Have Higher Participation Rates

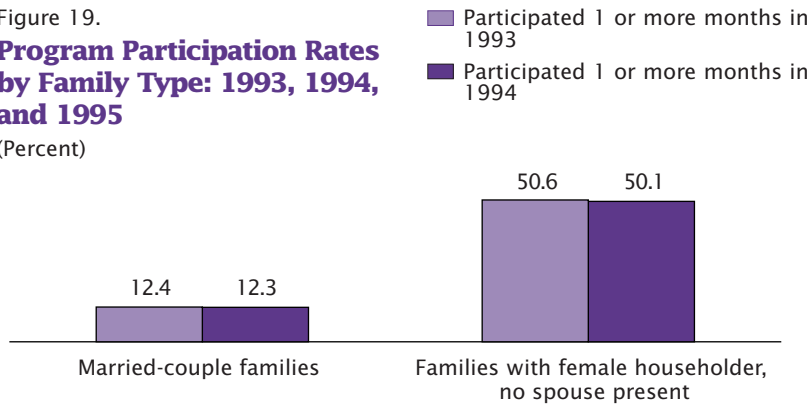
For people age 18 and over, lower educational attainment was associated with greater program participation. The percentage of individuals with less than 4 years of high school receiving benefits in at least 1 month of 1994 (30.9 percent)

¹⁹There is no statistical significance between the average monthly participation rate and average monthly poverty rate for married-couple families.

Figure 19.

Program Participation Rates by Family Type: 1993, 1994, and 1995

(Percent)

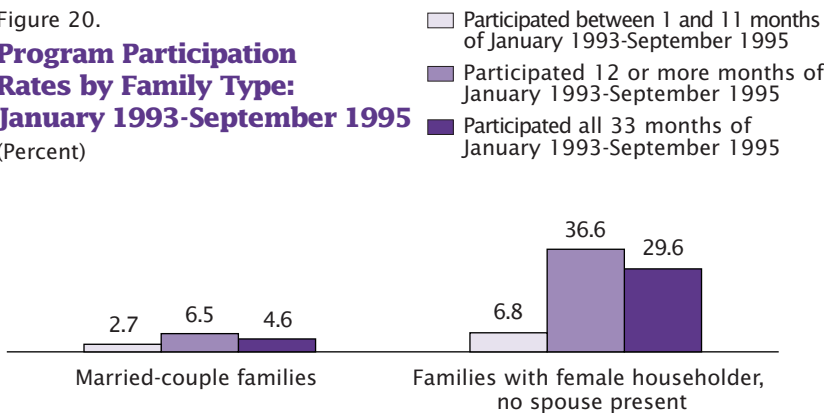


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 20.

Program Participation Rates by Family Type: January 1993-September 1995

(Percent)

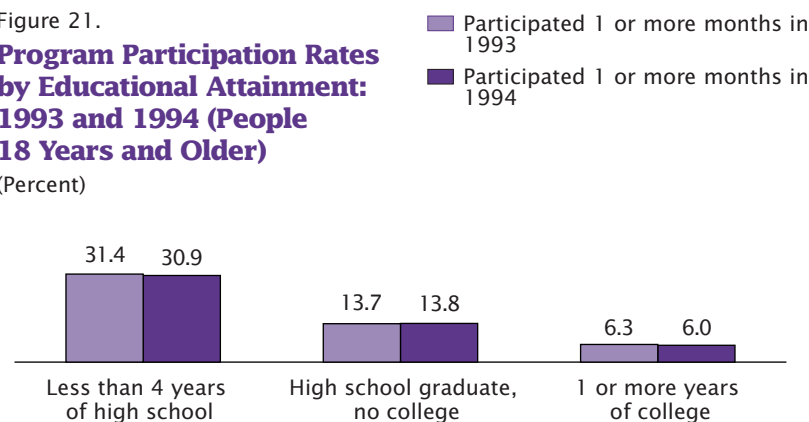


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 21.

Program Participation Rates by Educational Attainment: 1993 and 1994 (People 18 Years and Older)

(Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

was a little more than double the corresponding percentage of high school graduates (13.8 percent) (Figure 21). During an average month of 1995, about 1 in 4 people (24.8 percent) with less than 4 years of high school received means-tested benefits, compared with 1 in 10 high school graduates (10.3 percent) and less than 1 in 20 individuals (4.5 percent) with at least 1 year of college (Figure 22). Individuals who did not graduate from high school also were more likely than high school graduates and people with at least some college to receive benefits during the entire 33-month period of 1993-95—18.9 percent compared with 5.6 percent and 2.1 percent (Figure 23).

The Unemployed and Those Out of the Labor Force Are More Likely Than the Employed to Receive Means-Tested Benefits

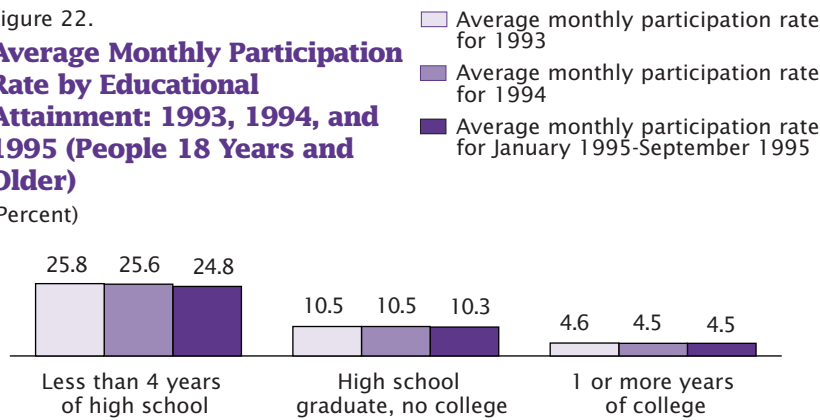
People without jobs—unemployed or out of the labor force—were much more likely to receive means-tested benefits in an average month of 1995 than were either full-time workers or part-time workers. For people 18 years and older, nearly 26 percent of the unemployed received means-tested benefits in an average month of 1995, compared with 21.0 percent of those out of the labor force, 3.7 percent of full-time workers, and 9.3 percent of part-time workers (Figure 24).

In addition to receiving means-tested benefits, the unemployed may also receive unemployment compensation. In an average month of 1995, only 18.5 percent of the unemployed received unemployment compensation, but 10.6 percent received AFDC or GA, 2.4 percent received SSI, 17.6 percent received food stamps, 16.7 percent

Figure 22.

Average Monthly Participation Rate by Educational Attainment: 1993, 1994, and 1995 (People 18 Years and Older)

(Percent)

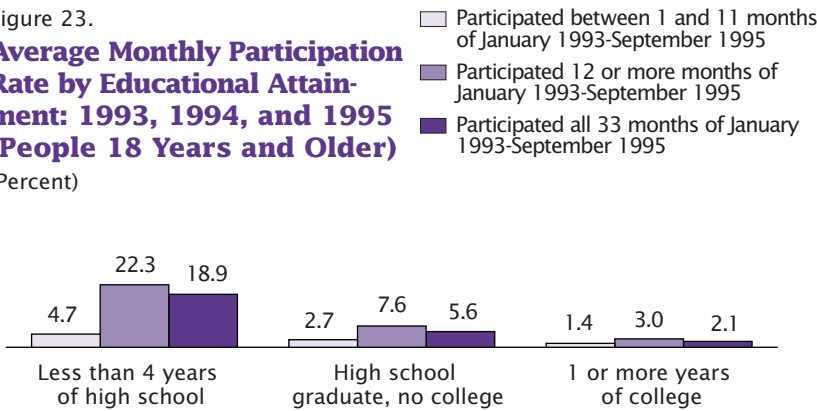


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 23.

Average Monthly Participation Rate by Educational Attainment: 1993, 1994, and 1995 (People 18 Years and Older)

(Percent)

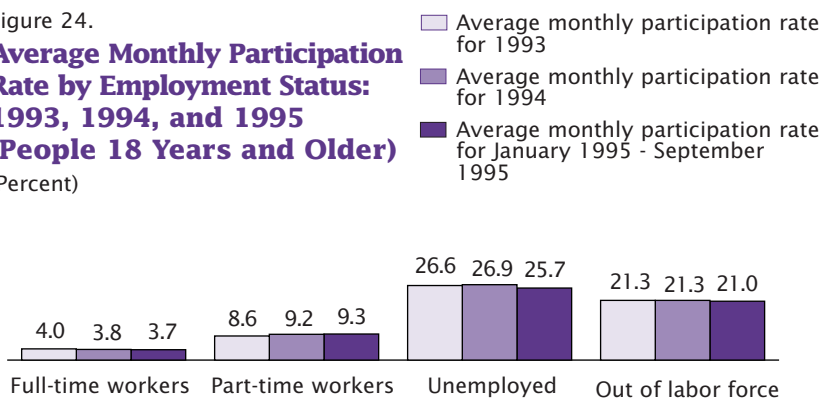


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Figure 24.

Average Monthly Participation Rate by Employment Status: 1993, 1994, and 1995 (People 18 Years and Older)

(Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

received medicaid, and 9.8 percent received housing assistance.²⁰

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

This section looks at the characteristics of the recipients of assistance. Two concepts are examined:

- Median duration of program participation for the 1993-95 period:** This is a measure of average spell length. A spell is an uninterrupted period of time (measured in months) in which an individual receives means-tested assistance, and which is preceded by a month or more of nonparticipation. Each recipient has one or more such spells.²¹ The measure examines all the spells throughout the 33-month period of the recipients in the population existing at the end of the period. The median is the value for spell length that divides the distribution of spells (not recipients) into two equal parts.²² The data address the question: "how long, on average, do recipients stay in programs continuously once they enter them."

- Median monthly family benefits in (specified year):** The monthly benefit amount for each recipient represents the amount of the benefit received by the individual's family in the last month for which they reported

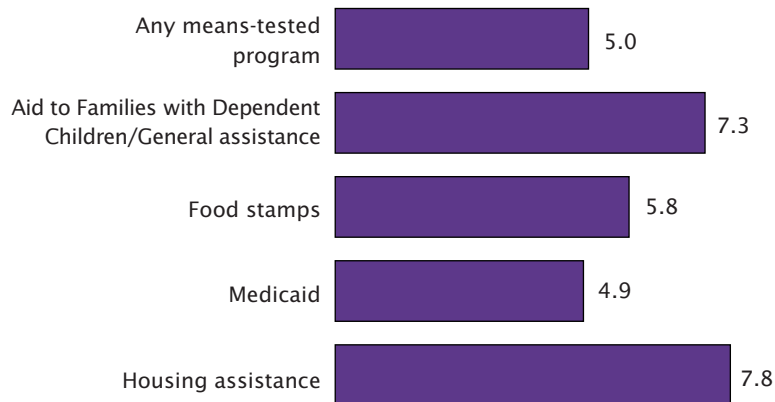
²⁰There is no statistical significance between the average monthly participation rates for AFDC/GA and housing assistance. The participation rates for medicaid, food stamps, and unemployment compensation do not differ significantly.

²¹Median duration for each program is derived only for those who begin participating in each program at some point in the survey, while those who are already in the program before the start of the survey (i.e., the left-censored cases) are excluded from the analysis.

²²The median for a group of recipients cannot be computed when more than half of the spells for the group were continuing in the 33rd month.

Figure 25.

**Median Spell Length (in months) by Program:
January 1993-September 1995**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

that they received benefits.²³ The data are restricted to recipients who are members of families (data are shown for 1995 because the definition of “monthly benefit amount” means that the 1995 data are reasonably comparable with the data for 1993 and 1994). The median is the amount that divides recipients into two equally-sized groups, one consisting of those whose monthly family benefit falls below the median, the other of recipients whose benefit rises above it. The data refer to the population of recipients living in families existing at the end of the year specified.

²³It is not known how the data are affected by families who do not participate in the program for the entire last month for which they report that they received benefits from the program. If partial-month participation is associated with partial receipt of benefits, then the use of such partial amounts to represent an “average” or “usual” monthly benefit would result in a downward bias in the data.

Median Duration of Participation Differs by Program

For people who received assistance during the 1993-1995 period, Table A-7 in Appendix A presents data on the median duration of spells of program participation over the course of the 33 months, by type of program and selected demographic characteristics of participants.

The data on spell length must be used with caution, because duration of program participation for a means-tested program is derived only for persons who began participating in the program at some point in the life of the SIPP survey. Persons already on programs at the start of the survey are excluded from the analysis. How this exclusion affects the data is not known.

As shown in Figure 25, among all program participants, the median spell length for participation in general was 5.0 months. The median spell length for housing assistance was 7.8 months, significantly longer than that for food stamps or medicaid, but not significantly dif-

ferent from the median for AFDC/GA.²⁴

Within specific groups of participants, housing assistance was the longest continuously used program for Hispanics (12.6 months), children under 18 years old (12.4 months), people in families with a female householder with no spouse present (13.1 months), and poor people (13.5 months).²⁵

Spell Duration Also Differs by Demographic Group

Table A-7 also reveals that the median spell length for participation in general in means-tested assistance programs varied by demographic group. People 65 years and over had the highest median duration, 7.7 months, compared with 5.1 months for people aged 18 to 64 years, and 4.6 months for people under 18 years. By education, individuals who did not graduate from high school remained on means-tested programs longer (7.1 months) than high school graduates (4.9 months) and people with at least some college (4 months).²⁶

People in families maintained by a female householder, with no spouse present, had a median spell duration of 7.2 months, which was greater than the 4 months for people in married-couple families. Not

²⁴The median spell duration for SSI was not determined, because more than half of the spells were still in progress at the end of the survey. The overall median spell duration does not differ from those of food stamps and medicaid. The medians for housing assistance and AFDC/GA do not differ statistically.

²⁵There are no statistical differences among the median spell durations for housing assistance for any of the demographic groups specified here.

²⁶There is no statistical difference between the median spell duration for people under 18 years of age and the medians for those 18 to 64 years of age, high school graduates, and those with at least 1 year of college education. The medians for the elderly and those without a high school degree do not differ statistically.

surprisingly, the median for people who were not in the labor force (7.5 months) was greater than that for people employed full-time (3.8 months).²⁷

Variations across demographic groups in median spell durations were evident as well for specific programs. Children remained on food stamps (7.2 months) and housing assistance (12.4 months) longer than people 18 to 64 did (5.0 months and 7.1 months, respectively); people 65 and over participated in medicaid the longest (7.8 months) of any age group.²⁸

By race and Hispanic origin, White non-Hispanics had shorter stays on AFDC/GA and housing assistance (5.4 months and 7.1 months, respectively) than did Blacks (8 months and 11.8 months, respectively) or Hispanics (7.6 months and 12.6 months, respectively). They also spent less time at a stretch in the food stamp program (5.3 months) than Blacks (7.6 months).²⁹

By educational attainment, people with at least a year of college spent less time than people with lower

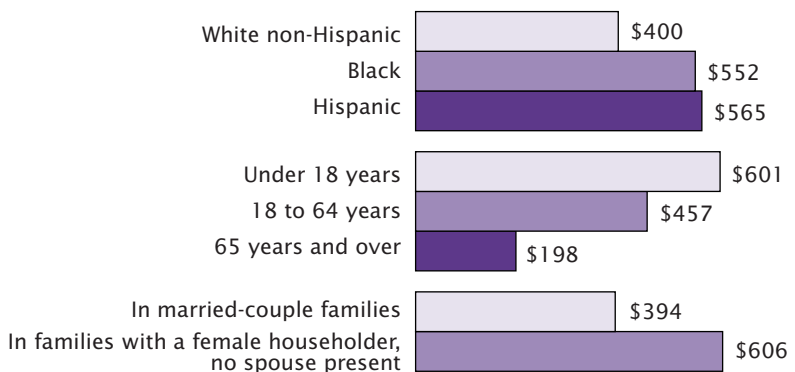
²⁷The median for those in families maintained by female householders does not differ from the median for those who are not in the labor force. The medians for those in married-couple families and those who are employed full time are not significantly different.

²⁸The median for food stamps for children does not differ statistically from the median for housing assistance for those age 18 to 64 years and the median for medicaid for persons 65 and over. The medians of food stamps and housing assistance for people 18 to 64 do not differ statistically from each other. The median of food stamps for persons age 18 to 64 years does not differ from the medians of medicaid for children and for adults age 18 to 64 years.

²⁹The median of AFDC/GA for non-Hispanic Whites does not differ from their median for food stamps nor from the median of food stamps for Hispanics. The median of AFDC/GA for Blacks does not differ from that for Hispanics and does not differ from their median of food stamps or the median of housing assistance for Whites. The median of AFDC/GA for Hispanic does not differ statistically from their median for food stamps nor the median of food stamps for blacks or the housing assistance for non-Hispanic Whites. The median of housing assistance for blacks and Hispanics do not differ significantly.

Figure 26.

Median Monthly Benefits in 1995 for People Receiving Benefits by Selected Characteristics (in dollars)



Note: Amounts include only Aid to Families with Dependent Children, General Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, and food stamps.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

educational levels in the medicaid program. The median spell duration of medicaid for those with at least a year of college education was 4.0 months, compared with 7.1 months and 5.4 months for those who did not graduate from high school and those who graduated from high school but had no college. The median spell length of housing assistance for persons with college attainment was also shorter than the median for those who did not graduate from high school.³⁰

Individuals in families maintained by female householders, no spouse present, remained in the AFDC/GA (7.9 months), food stamps (7.6 months), and medicaid (5.5 months) programs longer than their counterparts in married-couple

families (5.9 months, 4.8 months, and 4.0 months, respectively).³¹

Higher Monthly Benefit Amounts Are Associated With Higher Average Monthly Participation

Table A-8 shows the median monthly family benefit amounts received in 1993, 1994, and 1995 by the groups of program participants listed in Table A-1.³² For many of the groups, higher average monthly participation rates for assistance programs in general were associated with higher median monthly

³¹The median of AFDC/GA for people in married couple families does not differ from their median of food stamps and housing assistance nor from the median of food stamps and medicaid for families maintained by female householders. The median of food stamps for married-couple families does not differ from that of medicaid for persons in families maintained by a female householder. The medians of AFDC/GA and food stamps for persons in families maintained by a female householder do not differ significantly.

³²Median monthly benefit amounts include AFDC/GA, SSI, and food stamps only. The Consumer Price Index (CPI-U) compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics was used to express the 1993 and 1994 monthly benefit amounts in terms of 1995 dollars.

family benefits in 1995, a consequence, perhaps, of the likely relationship of both of these measures to lower family incomes and higher poverty rates. For example, Figure 26 shows that in 1995 Blacks, whose average monthly participation rate was 35.0 percent, had a median monthly family benefit of \$552, significantly greater than the \$400 for White non-Hispanics whose average monthly participation rate was 9.2 percent. Likewise, children under 18 years old, whose average monthly participation rate was 26.1 percent, received a median monthly family benefit of \$601, significantly greater than the \$198 for the elderly whose average monthly participation rate was 11.6 percent. In 1995, people in families with a female householder, no spouse present, had an average monthly participation rate of 44.2 percent and received a median monthly family benefit of \$606; in comparison, people in married-couple families had an average monthly participation rate of only 8.6 percent and a median monthly benefit of \$394.³³

³³The median monthly family benefits for White non-Hispanics and married-couple families do not differ significantly. The medians for children and those in families maintained by female householders are also not statistically different.

COMMENTS FROM DATA USERS

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of data users. If you have suggestions or comments, please write to:

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APPENDIX A.

Table A-1.
Average Monthly Program Participation Rates for Any Means-Tested Programs by Selected Characteristics: 1993-95

Characteristics	Program participation rates (in percent)					
	Any major means-tested programs ¹					
	1993	Standard error	1994	Standard error	1995	Standard error
Total number of recipients²	39,162	670	39,514	669	38,995	682
As percent of the population	15.2	0.3	15.2	0.3	14.9	0.3
Race and Hispanic Origin³						
White	11.7	0.3	11.8	0.3	11.6	0.3
Not of Hispanic origin	9.4	0.3	9.4	0.3	9.2	0.6
Black	36.6	0.9	36.0	0.9	35.0	0.4
Hispanic origin	32.3	1.1	31.7	1.1	30.6	1.1
Not of Hispanic origin		0.0	13.2	0.3	12.6	0.3
Age						
Under 18 years	26.2	0.6	26.5	0.6	26.1	0.6
18 to 64 years	11.0	0.3	10.8	0.3	10.6	0.3
65 years and over	12.0	0.7	11.7	0.7	11.6	0.7
Sex						
Men	13.0	0.4	13.0	0.4	12.5	0.4
Women	17.2	0.4	17.3	0.4	17.1	0.4
Educational Attainment (people 18 years and over)						
Less than 4 years of high school	25.8	0.9	25.6	0.9	24.8	0.9
High school graduate, no college	10.5	0.4	10.5	0.4	10.3	0.4
1 or more years of college	4.6	0.3	4.5	0.3	4.5	0.3
Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)						
With a work disability	25.0	1.0	25.5	1.0	25.3	1.0
With no work disability	8.7	0.3	8.5	0.3	8.3	0.3
Residence						
Metropolitan	14.7	0.3	14.7	0.3	14.5	0.3
Central city	23.0	0.6	22.4	0.6	22.0	0.6
Noncentral city	9.3	0.3	9.5	0.3	9.2	0.3
Nonmetropolitan	17.0	0.6	16.6	0.6	16.1	0.6
Region						
Northeast	14.8	0.6	14.6	0.6	14.5	0.6
Midwest	12.5	0.5	12.6	0.5	12.2	0.5
South	16.5	0.5	16.4	0.5	16.0	0.5
West	16.7	0.6	16.8	0.6	16.5	0.6
Family Status						
In families	15.6	0.3	15.6	0.3	15.3	0.3
In married-couple families	9.1	0.3	8.9	0.3	8.6	0.3
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	44.3	1.0	44.3	0.9	44.2	1.0
Unrelated individuals	12.8	0.7	12.4	0.7	12.3	0.4
Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years and over)						
Employed full-time	4.0	0.2	3.8	0.2	3.7	0.2
Employed part-time	8.6	0.7	9.2	0.7	9.3	0.8
Unemployed	26.6	1.9	26.9	2.2	25.7	2.3
Not in labor force	21.3	0.6	21.3	0.6	21.0	0.6
Marital Status (people 18 years and over)						
Married	6.6	0.3	6.2	0.3	5.9	0.3
Separated, divorced, or widowed	19.6	0.8	19.6	0.8	19.1	0.8
Never married	15.6	0.7	15.6	0.7	15.6	0.7
Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio						
Under 1.00	60.5	0.9	60.3	0.9	60.2	1.0
1.00 and over	6.7	0.2	7.0	0.2	6.9	0.2

¹Major means-tested programs include Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), General Assistance, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, medicaid, and housing assistance.

²In thousands.

³People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Table A2.

Average Monthly Program Participation Rates for Aid to Families With Dependent Children or General Assistance by Selected Characteristics: 1993-95

Characteristic	Program participation rates (in percent)					
	Aid to Families with Dependent Children/General Assistance					
	1993	Standard error	1994	Standard error	1995	Standard error
Total number of recipients¹	14,675	446	14,438	441	13,755	441
As percent of the population	5.7	0.2	5.5	0.2	5.2	0.2
Race and Hispanic Origin²						
White	3.8	0.2	3.7	0.2	3.4	0.2
Not of Hispanic origin	2.8	0.1	2.6	0.1	2.4	0.3
Black	16.4	0.7	16.4	0.7	15.6	0.3
Hispanic origin	13.7	0.8	12.9	0.8	12.3	0.8
Not of Hispanic origin	4.8	0.2	4.7	0.2	4.3	0.2
Age						
Under 18 years	13.2	0.5	12.9	0.5	12.5	0.5
18 to 64 years	3.4	0.2	3.3	0.2	3.0	0.2
65 years and over	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1
Sex						
Men	4.5	0.2	4.3	0.2	4.1	0.2
Women	6.8	0.3	6.7	0.3	6.3	0.3
Educational Attainment (people 18 years and over)						
Less than 4 years of high school	6.5	0.5	5.9	0.5	5.5	0.5
High school graduate, no college	2.9	0.2	3.0	0.2	2.7	0.2
1 or more years of college	1.2	0.1	1.2	0.2	1.1	0.1
Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)						
With a work disability	6.4	0.6	6.3	0.5	5.5	0.5
With no work disability	3.2	0.2	3.1	0.2	3.0	0.2
Residence						
Metropolitan	5.9	0.2	5.9	0.2	5.6	0.2
Central city	10.4	0.4	9.9	0.4	9.7	0.4
Noncentral city	3.1	0.2	3.2	0.2	2.8	0.2
Nonmetropolitan	4.8	0.3	4.4	0.3	3.9	0.3
Region						
Northeast	6.4	0.4	6.0	0.4	5.9	0.4
Midwest	5.4	0.3	5.3	0.3	4.9	0.3
South	4.5	0.3	4.3	0.3	4.0	0.3
West	7.3	0.4	7.4	0.4	7.0	0.4
Family Status						
In families	6.5	0.2	6.4	0.2	6.1	0.2
In married-couple families	2.2	0.1	2.2	0.1	2.0	0.1
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	26.3	0.9	24.9	0.8	24.1	0.8
Unrelated individuals	0.7	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.4	0.1
Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years and over)						
Employed full-time	0.4	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.1
Employed part-time	1.8	0.3	2.0	0.4	1.8	0.4
Unemployed	10.4	1.3	11.3	1.5	10.6	1.6
Not in labor force	6.3	0.4	6.0	0.4	5.5	0.4
Marital Status (people 18 years and over)						
Married	1.4	0.1	1.3	0.1	1.2	0.1
Separated, divorced, or widowed	5.0	0.4	4.8	0.4	4.3	0.4
Never married	5.1	0.4	4.9	0.4	4.5	0.4
Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio						
Under 1.00	29.7	0.9	28.3	0.9	27.6	0.9
1.00 and over	1.2	0.1	1.4	0.1	1.3	0.1

¹In thousands.²People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Table A3.

Average Monthly Program Participation Rates for Supplemental Security Income by Selected Characteristics: 1993-95

Characteristic	Program participation rates (in percent)					
	Supplemental Security Income					
	1993	Standard error	1994	Standard error	1995	Standard error
Total number of recipients¹	4,841	264	5,106	270	5,275	281
As percent of the population	1.9	0.1	2.0	0.1	2.0	0.1
Race and Hispanic Origin²						
White	1.4	0.1	1.5	0.1	1.5	0.1
Not of Hispanic origin	1.3	0.1	1.3	0.1	1.4	0.2
Black	4.5	0.4	4.7	0.4	4.9	0.2
Hispanic origin	3.0	0.4	2.9	0.4	3.0	0.4
Not of Hispanic origin	1.8	0.1	1.8	0.1	1.9	0.1
Age						
Under 18 years	-	-	-	-	-	-
18 to 64 years	2.0	0.1	2.1	0.1	2.2	0.1
65 years and over	5.5	0.5	5.4	0.5	5.3	0.5
Sex						
Men	1.4	0.1	1.4	0.1	1.3	0.1
Women	2.4	0.2	2.5	0.2	2.7	0.2
Educational Attainment (people 18 years and over)						
Less than 4 years of high school	7.5	0.5	7.7	0.5	7.7	0.5
High school graduate, no college	1.9	0.2	2.0	0.2	2.2	0.2
1 or more years of college	0.8	0.1	0.9	0.1	0.9	0.1
Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)						
With a work disability	9.3	0.7	10.0	0.7	10.6	0.7
With no work disability	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.1
Residence						
Metropolitan	1.7	0.1	1.9	0.1	1.9	0.1
Central city	2.7	0.2	2.7	0.2	2.8	0.2
Noncentral city	1.1	0.1	1.3	0.1	1.3	0.1
Nonmetropolitan	2.4	0.2	2.3	0.2	2.4	0.2
Region						
Northeast	1.9	0.2	1.9	0.2	1.9	0.2
Midwest	1.2	0.2	1.3	0.2	1.3	0.2
South	2.4	0.2	2.5	0.2	2.6	0.2
West	2.0	0.2	2.0	0.2	2.1	0.2
Family Status						
In families	1.4	0.1	1.5	0.1	1.5	0.1
In married-couple families	0.9	0.1	0.9	0.1	1.0	0.1
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	3.4	0.4	3.4	0.3	3.7	0.4
Unrelated individuals	4.5	0.4	4.7	0.4	4.8	0.3
Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years and over)						
Employed full-time	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1
Employed part-time	0.9	0.2	1.1	0.3	1.2	0.3
Unemployed	1.9	0.6	1.5	0.6	2.4	0.8
Not in labor force	6.9	0.4	7.1	0.4	7.3	0.4
Marital Status (people 18 years and over)						
Married	1.0	0.1	1.1	0.1	1.1	0.1
Separated, divorced, or widowed	5.9	0.5	6.1	0.5	6.3	0.5
Never married	3.6	0.3	3.8	0.4	4.8	0.4
Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio						
Under 1.00	6.2	0.5	6.7	0.5	7.3	0.5
1.00 and over	1.1	0.1	1.1	0.1	1.1	0.1

- The sample size is too small for analysis.

¹In thousands.

²People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Table A-4.

Average Monthly Program Participation Rates for Food Stamps by Selected Characteristics: 1993-95

Characteristic	Program participation rates (in percent)					
	Food stamps					
	1993	Standard error	1994	Standard error	1995	Standard error
Total number of recipients¹	25,713	570	25,383	564	24,072	565
As percent of the population	10.0	0.2	9.7	0.2	9.2	0.2
Race and Hispanic Origin²						
White	7.4	0.2	7.2	0.2	6.8	0.2
Not of Hispanic origin	5.7	0.2	5.4	0.2	5.0	0.4
Black	26.0	0.9	25.6	0.8	23.7	0.3
Hispanic origin	22.9	1.0	21.9	1.0	21.0	1.0
Not of Hispanic origin	8.5	0.2	8.3	0.2	7.6	0.2
Age						
Under 18 years	19.6	0.6	19.3	0.6	18.2	0.6
18 to 64 years	6.9	0.2	6.6	0.2	6.2	0.2
65 years and over	4.2	0.4	4.1	0.4	3.9	0.4
Sex						
Men	8.4	0.3	8.2	0.3	7.7	0.3
Women	11.5	0.3	11.2	0.3	10.6	0.3
Educational Attainment (people 18 years and over)						
Less than 4 years of high school	15.3	0.7	14.8	0.7	14.0	0.7
High school graduate, no college	6.2	0.3	6.1	0.3	5.8	0.3
1 or more years of college	2.4	0.2	2.3	0.2	2.1	0.2
Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)						
With a work disability	15.1	0.8	14.6	0.8	14.2	0.8
With no work disability	5.7	0.2	5.6	0.2	5.2	0.2
Residence						
Metropolitan	9.5	0.3	9.4	0.2	9.0	0.2
Central city	15.8	0.5	15.2	0.5	14.4	0.5
Noncentral city	5.5	0.3	5.5	0.3	5.1	0.3
Nonmetropolitan	11.5	0.5	10.7	0.5	9.8	0.5
Region						
Northeast	8.9	0.5	8.6	0.5	8.6	0.5
Midwest	8.7	0.4	8.5	0.4	7.8	0.4
South	11.5	0.4	11.4	0.4	10.6	0.4
West	10.0	0.5	9.6	0.5	9.1	0.5
Family Status						
In families	10.8	0.3	10.6	0.2	9.9	0.2
In married-couple families	5.5	0.2	5.2	0.2	4.8	0.2
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	34.9	0.9	33.8	0.9	32.4	0.9
Unrelated individuals	5.2	0.4	4.9	0.4	4.7	0.3
Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years and over)						
Employed full-time	1.8	0.2	1.7	0.2	1.6	0.2
Employed part-time	4.9	0.6	5.4	0.6	4.9	0.6
Unemployed	19.9	1.8	20.2	2.0	17.6	2.0
Not in labor force	12.6	0.5	12.3	0.5	11.9	0.5
Marital Status (people 18 years and over)						
Married	3.9	0.2	3.7	0.2	3.3	0.2
Separated, divorced, or widowed	11.2	0.6	11.1	0.6	10.4	0.6
Never married	8.9	0.5	8.6	0.5	8.3	0.5
Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio						
Under 1.00	49.6	1.0	48.3	1.0	47.2	1.0
1.00 and over	2.6	0.1	2.8	0.1	2.5	0.1

¹In thousands.²People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Table A-5.

Average Monthly Program Participation Rates for Medicaid by Selected Characteristics: 1993-95

Characteristic	Program participation rates (in percent)					
	Medicaid					
	1993	Standard error	1994	Standard error	1995	Standard error
Total number of recipients¹	27,984	590	29,332	598	29,370	612
As percent of the population	10.9	0.2	11.3	0.2	11.2	0.2
Race and Hispanic Origin²						
White	8.1	0.2	8.5	0.2	8.5	0.2
Not of Hispanic origin	6.4	0.2	6.8	0.2	6.8	0.5
Black	26.8	0.9	27.5	0.9	27.2	0.3
Hispanic origin	23.4	1.0	23.0	1.0	22.2	1.0
Not of Hispanic origin	9.4	0.2	9.9	0.2	9.5	0.2
Age						
Under 18 years	21.2	0.6	22.1	0.6	22.0	0.6
18 to 64 years	6.8	0.2	7.1	0.2	7.0	0.3
65 years and over	8.1	0.6	8.0	0.6	8.0	0.6
Sex						
Men	8.8	0.3	9.2	0.3	9.0	0.3
Women	12.8	0.4	13.2	0.4	13.2	0.4
Educational Attainment (people 18 years and over)						
Less than 4 years of high school	17.5	0.7	17.8	0.7	17.4	0.8
High school graduate, no college	6.4	0.4	6.7	0.4	7.0	0.4
1 or more years of college	2.7	0.2	2.8	0.2	8.0	0.4
Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)						
With a work disability	18.9	0.9	20.0	0.9	20.3	0.9
With no work disability	4.8	0.2	5.0	0.2	5.0	0.2
Residence						
Metropolitan	10.6	0.3	11.1	0.3	11.1	0.3
Central city	17.0	0.5	17.0	0.5	17.1	0.5
Noncentral city	6.5	0.3	7.0	0.3	6.9	0.3
Nonmetropolitan	11.6	0.5	11.9	0.5	11.6	0.5
Region						
Northeast	10.9	0.5	10.9	0.5	10.9	0.5
Midwest	9.1	0.4	9.5	0.4	9.5	0.4
South	10.5	0.4	11.1	0.4	11.0	0.4
West	13.4	0.6	13.9	0.6	13.8	0.6
Family Status						
In families	11.4	0.3	11.8	0.3	11.7	0.3
In married-couple families	5.8	0.2	6.1	0.2	6.0	0.2
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	36.1	0.9	36.3	0.9	36.3	0.9
Unrelated individuals	7.7	0.5	7.9	0.5	8.2	0.3
Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years and over)						
Employed full-time	1.2	0.1	1.4	0.1	1.4	0.1
Employed part-time	4.6	0.5	5.4	0.6	5.8	0.6
Unemployed	16.0	1.6	17.0	1.8	16.7	2.0
Not in labor force	15.9	0.6	16.1	0.6	16.0	0.6
Marital Status (people 18 years and over)						
Married	3.5	0.2	3.5	0.2	3.5	0.2
Separated, divorced, or widowed	13.6	0.7	13.9	0.7	13.7	0.7
Never married	10.5	0.6	11.0	0.6	11.0	0.6
Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio						
Under 1.00	47.0	0.9	47.7	1.0	48.4	1.0
1.00 and over	4.1	0.2	4.6	0.3	4.7	0.3

¹In thousands.²People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Table A6.

Average Monthly Program Participation Rates for Housing Assistance by Selected Characteristics: 1993-95

Characteristic	Program participation rates (in percent)					
	Housing assistance					
	1993	Standard error	1994	Standard error	1995	Standard error
Total number of recipients¹	13,044	423	12,206	408	12,159	417
As percent of the population	5.1	0.2	4.7	0.2	4.6	0.2
Race and Hispanic Origin²						
White	3.5	0.2	3.3	0.1	3.3	0.2
Not of Hispanic origin	2.8	0.1	2.6	0.1	2.6	0.3
Black	14.9	0.7	13.2	0.7	12.6	0.3
Hispanic origin	10.9	0.7	10.0	0.7	9.5	0.7
Not of Hispanic origin	4.4	0.2	4.1	0.2	4.0	0.2
Age						
Under 18 years	8.0	0.4	7.4	0.4	7.3	0.4
18 to 64 years	3.8	0.2	3.4	0.2	3.3	0.2
65 years and over	5.2	0.5	5.2	0.5	5.2	0.5
Sex						
Men	4.4	0.2	3.9	0.2	3.8	0.2
Women	5.7	0.2	5.4	0.2	5.4	0.2
Educational Attainment (people 18 years and over)						
Less than 4 years of high school	9.0	0.6	8.4	0.5	8.1	0.5
High school graduate, no college	3.6	0.3	3.5	0.3	3.4	0.3
1 or more years of college	1.9	0.2	1.7	0.2	1.7	0.2
Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)						
With a work disability	6.6	0.6	6.5	0.6	6.5	0.6
With no work disability	3.4	0.2	3.0	0.2	2.9	0.2
Residence						
Metropolitan	5.3	0.2	4.9	0.2	4.9	0.2
Central city	9.1	0.4	8.3	0.4	8.1	0.4
Noncentral city	2.9	0.2	2.6	0.2	2.6	0.2
Nonmetropolitan	4.2	0.3	3.9	0.3	3.9	0.3
Region						
Northeast	5.9	0.4	5.6	0.4	5.7	0.4
Midwest	4.6	0.3	4.4	0.3	4.2	0.3
South	5.0	0.3	4.2	0.3	4.1	0.3
West	4.9	0.4	4.9	0.4	5.0	0.4
Family Status						
In families	4.8	0.2	4.4	0.2	4.4	0.2
In married-couple families	2.5	0.1	2.0	0.1	2.0	0.1
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	15.4	0.7	15.0	0.7	15.4	0.7
Unrelated individuals	6.3	0.5	6.1	0.5	5.9	0.3
Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years and over)						
Employed full-time	1.8	0.2	1.6	0.2	1.5	0.2
Employed part-time	3.1	0.4	3.0	0.4	3.1	0.5
Unemployed	9.1	1.3	9.0	1.4	9.8	1.6
Not in labor force	7.1	0.4	6.7	0.4	6.7	0.4
Marital Status (people 18 years and over)						
Married	2.1	0.2	1.7	0.1	1.6	0.1
Separated, divorced, or widowed	7.4	0.5	7.3	0.5	7.3	0.5
Never married	6.0	0.4	5.6	0.4	5.6	0.4
Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio						
Under 1.00	20.8	0.8	20.0	0.8	20.0	0.8
1.00 and over	2.1	0.1	1.9	0.1	1.9	0.1

¹In thousands.

² People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Table A7.
**Median Duration of Spells of Program Participation and Standard Errors by Program:
 1993-95**

[In months]

Characteristic	Any Means-tested programs ¹		AFDC/GA		Supplemental Security Income ²		Food stamps		Medicaid		Housing assistance	
	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error
All recipients³	5.0	0.4	7.3	0.4	(X)	(X)	5.8	0.4	4.9	0.6	7.8	0.6
Race and Hispanic Origin												
White	4.8	0.4	5.9	0.7	(X)	(X)	5.3	0.4	4.8	0.6	7.3	0.5
Not of Hispanic origin ⁴	4.8	0.4	5.4	0.8	(X)	(X)	5.3	0.5	5.2	0.6	7.1	0.5
Black	6.1	1.1	8	0.3	(X)	(X)	7.6	0.3	5.3	0.6	11.8	0.8
Hispanic origin ⁴	4.9	1.3	7.6	0.8	(X)	(X)	5.5	1.3	3.9	0.1	12.6	2.0
Not of Hispanic origin	5.0	0.4	7.2	0.4	(X)	(X)	5.8	0.4	5.3	0.5	7.6	0.6
Age⁵												
Under 18 years	4.6	0.6	7.7	0.5	(X)	(X)	7.2	0.6	4.3	0.9	12.4	1.5
18 to 64 years	5.1	0.5	6.3	1.8	(X)	(X)	5.0	0.5	5.2	0.7	7.1	0.6
65 years and over	7.7	0.9	(B)	(B)	(X)	(X)	5.6	2.8	7.8	0.6	7.9	1.3
Sex												
Men	4.4	0.5	5.8	0.8	(X)	(X)	5.2	0.7	4.2	0.9	7.1	0.9
Women	5.6	0.6	7.8	0.5	(X)	(X)	6.4	1.1	5.4	0.7	9.4	2.8
Educational Attainment (people 18 years and over)												
Less than 4 years of high school ..	7.1	0.5	6.3	1.8	(X)	(X)	5.9	0.8	7.1	0.4	10.2	1.7
High school graduate, no college ..	4.9	0.7	6.7	4.3	(X)	(X)	4.8	0.5	5.4	0.7	6.0	2.3
1 or more years of college	4.0	0.1	4.6	1.9	(X)	(X)	4.1	1.0	4.0	0.2	5.5	3.1
Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)												
With a work disability	7.4	0.6	6.7	4.5	(X)	(X)	6.7	1.9	7.5	0.4	10.9	1.2
With no work disability	4.3	0.6	6.0	0.8	(X)	(X)	4.7	0.5	3.9	0.1	5.8	1.6
Residence												
Metropolitan	5.3	0.5	7.6	0.4	(X)	(X)	6.6	1.0	5.4	0.7	9.8	5.1
Central city	5.7	0.8	7.7	0.4	(X)	(X)	7.3	0.4	6.0	1.0	11.3	1.2
Noncentral city	4.9	0.7	7.2	0.6	(X)	(X)	5.6	0.5	4.8	1.0	6.9	6.4
Nonmetropolitan	4.5	0.6	4.9	0.6	(X)	(X)	4.7	0.6	4.2	0.8	6.3	7.4
Region												
Northeast	4.0	0.1	7.7	0.5	(X)	(X)	6.2	1.5	4.9	3.5	8.9	3.0
Midwest	4.4	0.7	7.1	0.8	(X)	(X)	5.2	0.8	5.9	1	7.5	0.7
South	5.1	0.7	6.0	2.2	(X)	(X)	6.3	1.1	4.0	0.1	5.3	1.5
West	6.2	1.6	7.7	0.7	(X)	(X)	5.6	0.8	6.9	1.7	13.2	1.5
Family Status												
In families	4.9	0.4	7.4	0.4	(X)	(X)	5.8	0.4	4.6	0.6	8	0.7
In married-couple families	4.0	0.1	5.9	1.0	(X)	(X)	4.8	0.4	4.0	0.1	5.0	1.7
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	7.2	0.4	7.9	0.5	(X)	(X)	7.6	0.6	5.5	0.8	13.1	0.7
Unrelated individuals	5.7	2.2	3.8	0.4	(X)	(X)	5.8	4.0	7.8	0.5	7.4	0.9
Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years and over)												
Employed full-time	3.8	0.1	3.8	0.2	(X)	(X)	3.7	0.2	3.7	0.1	3.9	0.1
Employed part-time	6.2	1.9	6.7	1.6	(X)	(X)	4.6	0.7	6.6	2.3	8.0	2.1
Unemployed	6.1	1.8	7.7	1.0	(X)	(X)	6.7	2.4	4.8	2.9	7.9	2.3
Not in labor force	7.5	0.4	7.4	0.7	(X)	(X)	7.0	0.6	7.4	0.3	11.2	1.0
Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio												
Under 1.00	7.4	0.4	7.8	0.5	(X)	(X)	7.5	0.4	7.2	0.3	13.5	0.9
1.00 and over	3.9	0.1	5.5	0.9	(X)	(X)	4.1	0.5	3.9	0.1	4.0	0.1

X Not applicable.

¹Major means-tested programs include Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), General Assistance, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), food stamps, medicaid, and housing assistance.

²Median duration cannot be computed when more than half of the spells are continuing in the last month of data collection. (This situation is especially likely to occur for elderly recipients whose incomes from other sources are unlikely to rise over time.)

³Median duration for each program is derived only for those who begin participating in each program at some point in the survey, while those who are already in the program before the start of the survey (i.e., the left-censored cases) are excluded from the analysis.

⁴Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

⁵Age, educational attainment, and other variables are measured at the time the spells begin.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

Table A8.

Median Monthly Family Benefits of Program Participants (in 1995 Dollars) by Selected Characteristics: 1993-95

Characteristic	Monthly Family Benefits (in 1995 dollars)					
	1993		1994		1995	
	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error	Median	Standard error
All recipients¹	499	4.0	489	3.5	490	3.5
Race and Hispanic Origin²						
White	457	5.0	447	3.5	457	3.0
Not of Hispanic origin	411	6.5	410	4.5	400	9.5
Black	576	4.0	557	9.5	552	6.5
Hispanic origin	573	18.5	572	13.0	565	10.0
Age						
Under 18 years	621	4.5	604	6.5	601	3.5
18 to 64 years	457	2.0	456	3.5	457	3.0
65 years and over	210	3.5	206	4.5	198	10.0
Sex						
Men	504	8.0	493	5.5	510	11.5
Women	497	5.5	486	6.0	487	3.5
Educational Attainment (people 18 years and over)						
Less than 4 years of high school	444	7.0	445	5.5	440	8.5
High school graduate, no college	407	11.0	397	10.5	416	15.0
1 or more years of college	432	13.0	445	11.0	419	17.0
Disability Status (people 15 to 64 years old)						
With a work disability	472	5.0	467	7.0	457	1.5
With no work disability	479	9.5	461	7.0	474	10.5
Residence						
Metropolitan	532	6.0	536	6.0	542	10.0
Central city	591	7.5	580	5.0	580	8.5
Noncentral city	457	5.0	460	8.0	473	12.0
Nonmetropolitan	412	10.0	364	6.5	362	10.5
Region						
Northeast	616	11.5	627	13.5	601	14.0
Midwest	554	9.5	500	5.0	521	19.5
South	388	2.0	378	6.0	374	7.5
West	648	7.0	642	7.5	620	10.5
Family Status						
In families	546	6.5	527	7.0	534	9.5
In married-couple families	388	2.0	391	4.5	394	7.0
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	399	4.5	616	3.0	606	2.5
Unrelated individuals	174	13.5	193	13.0	189	10.5
Employment and Labor Force Status (people 18 years and over)						
Employed full-time	242	7.0	246	10.5	260	9.5
Employed part-time	306	6.0	307	6.5	312	13.0
Unemployed	468	6.5	459	9.0	517	26.0
Not in labor force	474	3.5	471	3.5	457	-
Marital Status (people 18 years and over)						
Married	621	8.0	604	9.5	601	6.0
Separated, divorced, or widowed	368	11.0	369	7.5	371	12.0
Never married	373	12.0	382	10.0	356	16.0
Family Income-to-Poverty Ratio						
Under 1.00	574	7.0	556	7.0	559	7.5
1.00 and over	359	11.5	374	8.0	377	8.5

- The sample size is too small for analysis.

¹Median monthly family benefits are calculated only for recipients who have reported or imputed amounts for AFDC, General Assistance, SSI, and food stamps only and are expressed in 1995 dollars using the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U).

²People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1993 Panel.

THE EFFECT OF SAMPLE ATTRITION ON PROGRAM PARTICIPATION RATES

SIPP contains nonsampling errors common to most surveys, as well as errors that stem from SIPP's longitudinal design. Undercoverage in household surveys is primarily due to within-household omissions, with the omission of entire households being less frequent. SIPP experiences some differential undercoverage of demographic subgroups; for example, the coverage ratio of Black men over 15 years of age is much lower than that for White men in the same age group.³⁴

Sample attrition, a type of nonresponse error, is another major concern in SIPP because of the need to follow the same people over time. Attrition reduces the available sample size as the survey progresses. To the extent that those leaving the sample are systematically different

from those who remain in the sample, survey estimates will be biased. Of particular concern in this report, is the number of low-income households. Panel data generally yield a lower estimate of the number of low-income households over time.³⁵ Because of the association between low household income and program participation (as described in this report), a disproportionate and continuing loss from the sample over time of people in low-income households could result in a growing understatement of both the absolute and relative estimates of the program-participant universe. This potential understatement could introduce errors into intertemporal comparisons of program participation data, such as those described in this report.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted to investigate the various sources of nonsampling error in SIPP. The results of the research are summarized in the SIPP Quality Profile (1998).³⁶ The research includes, for example, the SIPP Record Check Studies (Marquis and Moore, 1989a,b, 1990; Marquis et al., 1990) that compared SIPP responses on program participation with administrative records. Using point-in-time estimates of underreporting in January of each year, for 1985 through 1993, results show that SIPP estimates of the numbers of recipients for AFDC (and also for food stamps) are much lower than the numbers based on administrative data, and the extent of underestimation may have increased over time.³⁷

³⁴U.S. Census Bureau. Survey of Income and Program Participation User's Guide 2001, 3rd Edition. Washington, DC.

³⁵Sae-Ung, Smanchai and Franklin Winters (1998). "Analysis of Nonresponse Effects on Income and Poverty Time Data from SIPP." Draft Paper.

³⁶For methodology surrounding SIPP, see Source and Accuracy Statement for the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) 1992 Panel 7-Wave Longitudinal File (www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/sourceac.htm) and SIPP Quality Profile 1998, SIPP Working Papers, Number 230, 3rd Edition, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC. (www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/workpapr/wp230.pdf)

³⁷Shea, M. (1995). "SIPP Data Quality," Internal Census Bureau memorandum to VJ. Huggins, February 10.

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