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Receipt of Food & Cash Assistance among Poor Children: Trends and Geographic Variation

Seth Williams & Matthew Lehnert

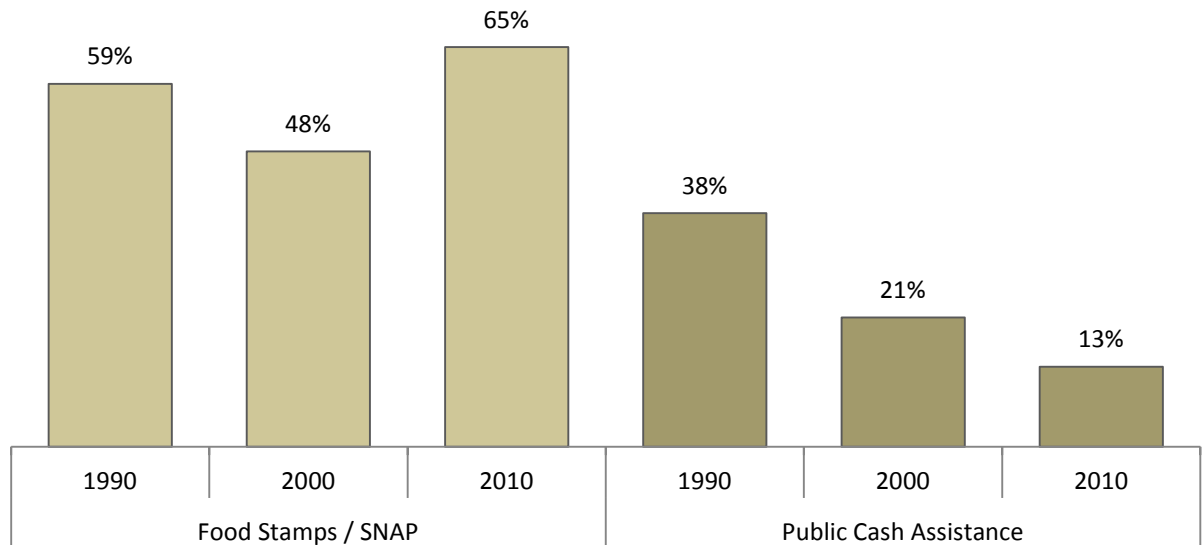
Receipt of Food & Cash Assistance among Poor Children

In 2010, nearly 2 million children living at or below the federal poverty threshold received food assistance (from SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps) *and* public cash assistance (including TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). Another 8.4 million receive SNAP assistance only, and about 100,000 receive cash assistance only. This family profile examines twenty year trends and geographic variation in the share of children below the federal poverty threshold who receive assistance from both public support programs. For information on who qualifies for TANF / SNAP assistance, see ‘Notes on Eligibility’ below.

Twenty Year Trend: 1990 - 2010

- The percentage of children in poverty who receive aid in the form of food assistance (food stamps / SNAP) has increased over the past two decades from 59% in 1990 to 65% in 2010.
- The share of poor children who receive public cash assistance (AFDC – Aid to Families with Dependent Children / TANF) has decreased over this time period from 38% in 1990 to 13% in 2010, as shown in Figure 1.
- 35% of poor children received both cash and food assistance in 1990, which fell to 12% in 2010 (not shown).

Figure 1. Percentage of Children in Poverty with Assistance, 1990, 2000, 2010



Source: 1990 IPUMS-CPS, 2000 IPUMS-CPS, 2010 ACS 1-year estimates.

References

Miriam King, Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Sarah Flood, Katie Genadek, Matthew B. Schroeder, Brandon Trampe, & Rebecca Vick. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 3.0. [Machine-readable database. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010.

Notes on Eligibility

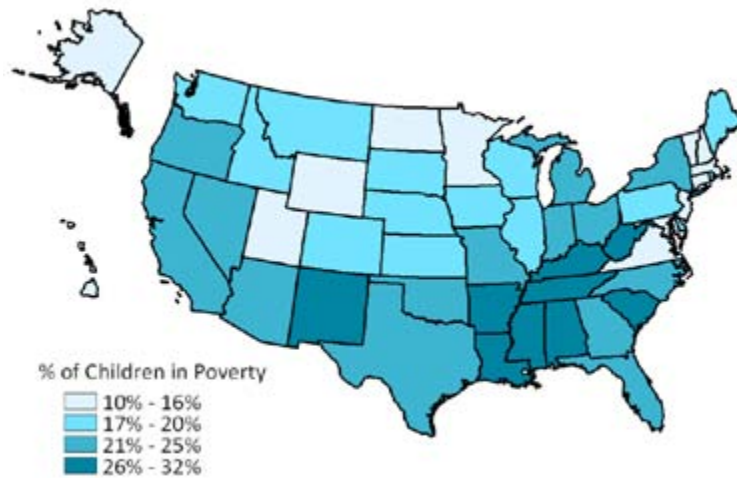
TANF is a federally funded program, where funds are distributed to states in the form of a block grant. How the funds are used is left to the discretion of each state, so long as it follows the basic guidelines laid out in federal law: “(1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families” (HHS). Only families with a dependent child 18 and under qualify. What constitutes a “needy family” varies markedly among states. For example, in 2010, the maximum monthly family income for a family of three (one parent and two children) was \$1,203 in California and \$393 in Florida. The federal poverty threshold for a family of three in 2010 was \$1,525 (Hahn, Golden, & Stanczyk, 2012).

SNAP eligibility is determined by the ratio of family income to the federal poverty threshold. To qualify, families’ gross income must be less than or equal to 130% of the federal poverty threshold, and their net income must be less than or equal to 100% of the poverty threshold. Certain exceptions are made for households with elderly people or people receiving certain disability payments. Cases where all members of a family receive TANF or SSI assistance result in automatic eligibility for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, 2012).

Geographic Variation in Child Poverty Rates, 2010

- States with the highest child poverty rates are located in the Southern region of the U.S. (Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, and New Mexico).
- The majority of states with the lowest poverty rates are found in the Northeast (Vermont, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, Maryland, and New Hampshire). Additional states with low child poverty rates include North Dakota, Minnesota, Wyoming, Utah, and Virginia.
- Table 1 presents the child poverty rate for each state.

Figure 2. Geographic Variation of Percentage of Children in Poverty, 2010

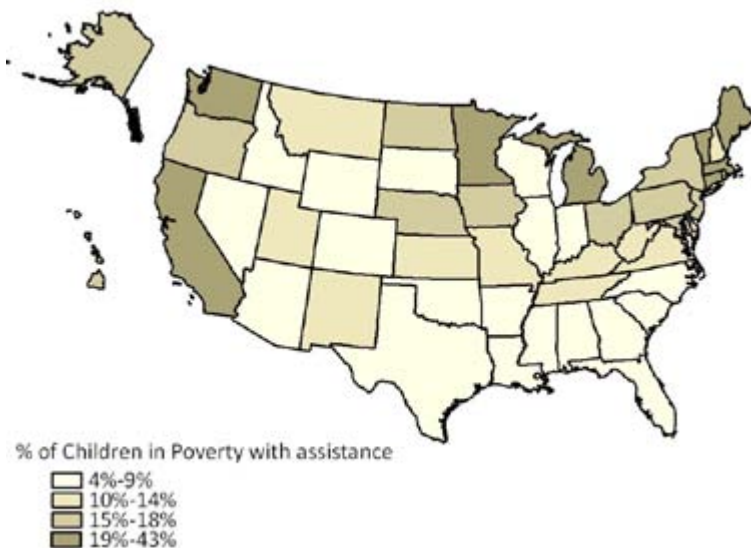


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2010

Geographic Variation in Percentage of Children in Poverty Receiving TANF and SNAP, 2010

- States with the *highest* percentage of poor children with both TANF and SNAP assistance are predominately located in the Northeast (D.C., Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut). Other states include Michigan, California, Minnesota, and Washington.
- States with the *lowest* percentage of children in poverty receiving both forms of assistance are mostly found in the South (Louisiana, Georgia, Arkansas, Texas, and Mississippi).
- Of the five states with the *highest* percentage of children who receive both forms of assistance, D.C. (43%), Vermont (32%), Maine (30%), Massachusetts (21%), Michigan (21%), three have poverty rates below the national average (21%), Vermont (16%), Maine (19%), and Massachusetts (14%).
- Among states with the *highest* child poverty rates (Table 1, quartile 4), an average of 12% of children receive both forms of assistance. Whereas among states with the *lowest* child poverty rates (Table 1, quartile 1), an average of 16% receive both forms of assistance.
- Table 2 shows the state by state comparisons.

Figure 3. Geographic Variation of Percentage of Children in Poverty with Assistance, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2010

Table 1. Child Poverty by State

Ranking	State	Percentage
1	Mississippi	32%
2	New Mexico	30%
3	D.C.	29%
4	Alabama	28%
5	Arkansas	27%
5	Louisiana	27%
6	West Virginia	26%
6	Tennessee	26%
6	Kentucky	26%
6	South Carolina	26%
7	Oklahoma	25%
7	Georgia	25%
7	Texas	25%
8	North Carolina	24%
8	Arizona	24%
8	Florida	24%
9	Michigan	23%
9	Ohio	23%
10	Oregon	22%
10	Indiana	22%
10	Nevada	22%
10	California	22%
United States		21%
11	Missouri	21%
11	New York	21%
12	Rhode Island	20%
12	Illinois	20%
12	Montana	20%
13	South Dakota	19%
13	Maine	19%
14	Wisconsin	18%
14	Delaware	18%
14	Nebraska	18%
14	Washington	18%
14	Pennsylvania	18%
14	Idaho	18%
14	Kansas	18%
15	Iowa	17%
15	Colorado	17%
16	Utah	16%
16	Vermont	16%
17	Virginia	15%
17	Minnesota	15%
18	North Dakota	14%
18	Massachusetts	14%
18	Wyoming	14%
18	Alaska	14%
18	New Jersey	14%
19	Connecticut	13%
19	Maryland	13%
19	Hawaii	13%
20	New Hampshire	10%

Table 2. Children in Poverty with Assistance by State

Ranking	State	Percentage
1	D.C.	43%
2	Vermont	32%
3	Maine	30%
4	Massachusetts	21%
4	Michigan	21%
5	Connecticut	20%
6	California	19%
6	Minnesota	19%
6	Washington	19%
7	Iowa	18%
7	Nebraska	18%
8	Alaska	17%
8	New York	17%
8	Oregon	17%
8	Pennsylvania	17%
9	Hawaii	16%
9	Maryland	16%
9	Ohio	16%
9	Rhode Island	16%
10	New Jersey	15%
10	North Dakota	15%
11	Missouri	14%
12	Montana	13%
United States		12%
13	New Mexico	12%
13	Tennessee	12%
13	Virginia	12%
14	Delaware	11%
14	Kansas	11%
14	New Hampshire	11%
15	Kentucky	10%
15	Utah	10%
15	West Virginia	10%
16	Arizona	9%
16	Indiana	9%
16	South Dakota	9%
16	Wisconsin	9%
16	Wyoming	9%
17	Colorado	8%
17	Nevada	8%
17	North Carolina	8%
18	Alabama	7%
18	Florida	7%
18	Illinois	7%
18	Oklahoma	7%
18	South Carolina	7%
19	Mississippi	6%
19	Texas	6%
20	Arkansas	5%
21	Georgia	4%
21	Idaho	4%
21	Louisiana	4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2010

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