

Bureau of the Census Statistical Brief

Mothers Who Receive Food Stamps — Fertility and Socioeconomic Characteristics

This is the second in a series of three reports focusing on the fertility and childbearing patterns of women participating in various government welfare programs.

In summer 1993, there were 36 million mothers of childbearing ages (15 to 44 years old) living in the United States; 5.3 million of them (15 percent) were receiving food stamps to help them purchase food to provide a nutritionally adequate diet for their 13.7 million children.

(The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service estimates that, all in all, 27 million Americans participated in the food stamps program in an average month in 1993. This total includes men, women, and their dependent children.)

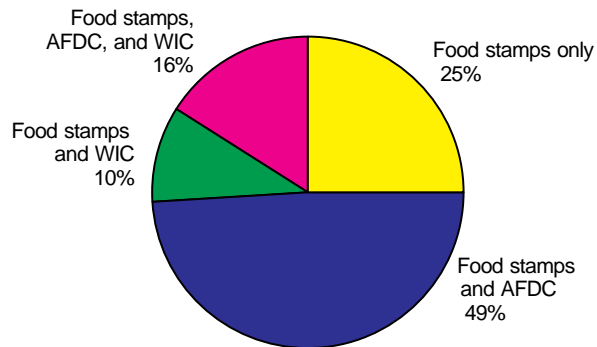


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Economics and Statistics Administration
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Three in Four Mothers on Food Stamps Also Receive Other Welfare Benefits

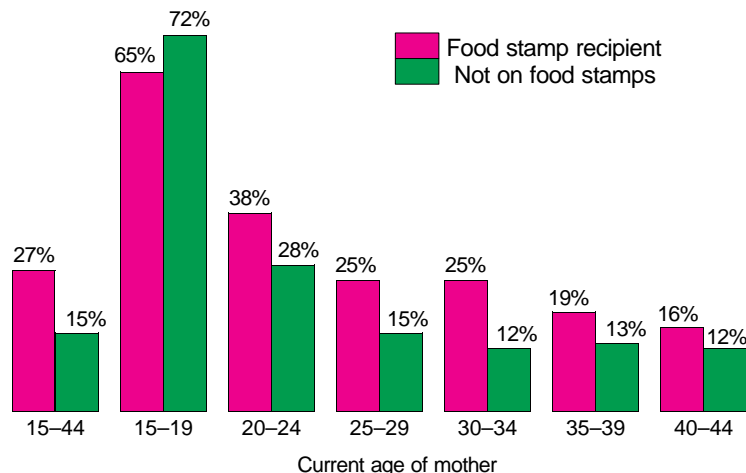
Percent distribution of mothers 15 to 44 years old currently receiving food stamps by government assistance program(s) they participated in: summer 1993



Note: AFDC stands for Aid to Families with Dependent Children. WIC stands for Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children.

Mothers Receiving Food Stamps Were Generally Younger When They Had Their First Child

Percent of mothers whose first birth occurred before they were 18 years old by current food stamp reciprocity status and current age: summer 1993



Many food stamp mothers participate in other welfare programs as well.

About one-half of mothers aged 15 to 44 on food stamps also received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC); another one-tenth were enrolled in the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). In addition, 1 in 6 participated in all three programs. About one-quarter of these recipients did not participate in AFDC or WIC payments. (See chart, front.)

Food stamp mothers are younger

On average, mothers aged 15 to 44 receiving food stamps were 30 years old; those in this age group not receiving them were 34. (See table.) Four percent of mothers on food stamps were teenagers; less than 1 percent were under 18 years old.

.... begin childbearing at earlier ages

Food stamp mothers were younger than nonfood stamp mothers when they gave birth for the first time (on average, 20 and 23 years old, respectively). (See table.) In fact, 27 percent of mothers on food stamps had their first birth before they turned 18 years old; the same was true for 15 percent of nonfood stamp mothers. (See chart, front.)

.... and have more children.

Mothers receiving food stamps had an average of 2.6 children each; non-food stamp mothers averaged 2.1. (See table.) Two in every three mothers on food stamps had their first birth out-of-wedlock, compared with about 1 in 4 who were not on food stamps. (See chart, right.) Nonetheless, the 8 million mothers not getting food stamps whose first birth was out-of-wedlock was more than all 5.3 million mothers on food stamps.

The chances of receiving food stamps differ by the race, ethnicity, and nativity of the mother.

- *Race:* About 1 in 3, or 1.9 million, Black mothers of childbearing ages

were food stamp recipients, compared with 1 in 9, or 3.2 million White mothers. Despite these differences in reciprocity rates, Black food stamp mothers did not have significantly more children than their White counterparts. (See table.)

- *Hispanic origin:* One in four (or 1.1 million) Hispanic mothers aged 15 to 44 were getting food stamps. By comparison, about 1 in 7 (or 4.2 million) non-Hispanic mothers were food stamp recipients. Although both Hispanic and non-Hispanic mothers on food stamps were an average of 20 years old when they had their first child, Hispanic women had about 0.5 more children, on average, than non-Hispanic women. (See table.) About 3 in 10 Hispanic mothers on food stamps were born outside the United States.

- *Nativity:* About 13 percent (or 546,000) of the Nation's 4.2 million foreign-born mothers aged 15 to 44 were on food stamps, compared to 15 percent of (or 4.8 million) U.S.-born mothers. Native- and foreign-born mothers on food stamps each had higher fertility rates than their counterparts who were not food stamp recipients. (See table.) Approximately three-quarters of the foreign-born mothers on food stamps were not U.S. citizens.

About 4 in 10 food stamp mothers have never been married.

About 2.1 million (or 39 percent) of the Nation's 5.3 million mothers receiving food stamps had never been married. These never-married mothers had an average of 2.3 children each.

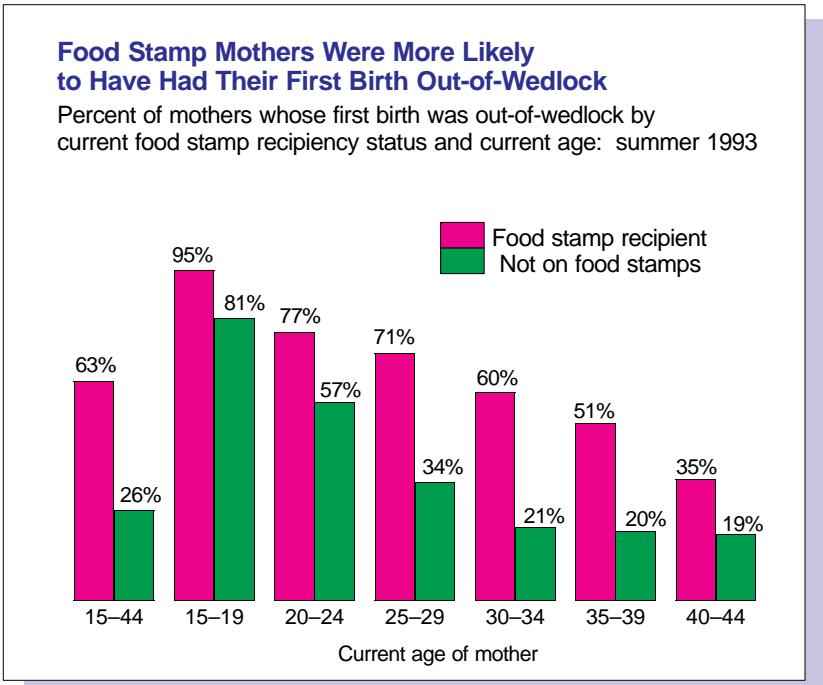
A similar proportion of food stamp mothers (38 percent or 2 million) were currently married. They had an average of 2.8 children each. Over half of these women (1.1 million) had their husband present in the household, while the remaining 906,000 were either separated or had absent husbands.

The remaining 23 percent of mothers receiving food stamps were either widowed or divorced. (See table.)

About 4 in 10 food stamp mothers do not have a high school diploma.

A similar proportion of food stamp mothers (40 percent) had completed high school (but did not attend college) and another 19 percent had attended college for at least 1 year.

About 1 in 8 food stamp mothers were currently enrolled in school; these women, on average, had 2.2 children each and were 29 years old. (See table.) Only 7 percent of



these students were teenagers; this suggests that a large proportion of mothers on food stamps who are enrolled in school are trying to resume their education while attempting to provide a minimum level of nutrition for their families.

Most mothers on food stamps are jobless

Unlike mothers not receiving food stamps, most food stamp mothers (78 percent) did not have a job during the month preceding the survey. On average, jobless food stamp mothers supported 2.6 children each, no more than food stamp mothers who had a job. (See table.)

.... and have very low family incomes.

Of those mothers who reported having family income, about two-thirds who were on food stamps lived in families with monthly incomes of less than \$1,000; these low-income mothers supported an average of 2.6 children each. In contrast, 8 percent of nonfood stamp mothers lived in families with similar incomes; low-income mothers who were not on food stamps had an average of 2.2 children each. Three in every four food stamp mothers were below the poverty level, supporting about 10.7 million children. (See table.)

One-half of food stamp mothers reside in central cities

Food stamp and nonfood stamp mothers were equally apt to live in metropolitan areas (77 percent). But while food stamp mothers were twice as likely to live in central cities as in suburbs (52 percent versus 25 percent), nonfood stamp mothers were twice as likely to live in suburbs as in central cities (51 percent compared with 26 percent). (See table.)

.... and about 1 in 5 live in the East North Central Division.

The East North Central Division consists of five States: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. It was home to 1 million food stamp mothers — the highest total of the Nation's nine divisions.

About this series of Briefs

This is the second in a series of three Statistical Briefs on mothers of child-bearing ages who participated in welfare programs designed to assist families needing economic support to provide basic nutrition for themselves and their children. The first Brief, *Mothers Who Receive AFDC Payments — Fertility and Socioeconomic Characteristics* (SB/95-2), was released in March 1995. The final Brief, to be issued later this year, will focus on mothers in the WIC program. The data in these Briefs were collected in the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) between June and September 1993.

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This Brief is one of a series that presents information of current policy interest. It may include data from businesses, households, or other sources. All statistics are subject to sampling variability, as well as survey design flaws, respondent classification errors, and data processing mistakes. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors, and analytical statements have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, use caution when comparing these data with data from other sources. For information on the source of data and the accuracy of estimates, including the use and computation of standard errors, see the "Source and Accuracy Statement for the 1993 Public Use Files from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)."

What is the Food Stamp Program?

The Food Stamp Program provides low-income households with coupons that can be used at most grocery stores in place of cash. Food stamps are meant to ensure that recipients have access to a nutritionally adequate diet. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the Food Stamp Program at the Federal level through its Food and Nutrition Service; State welfare agencies administer the program at the State and local levels. The amount of food stamps a household receives is based on USDA's Thrifty Food Plan, which is an estimate of how much it costs to provide households with nutritious, low-cost meals. This estimate changes every year to keep pace with inflation.

Food Stamp Mothers Versus Nonfood Stamp Mothers

Mothers 15 to 44 years old by food stamp reciprocity status and selected fertility and socioeconomic characteristics: summer 1993

Characteristic	Receiving food stamps					Not receiving food stamps				
	Mothers Number (thousands)	Confidence interval ¹	Births per 1,000 mothers	Mean age of mothers in years— at time of survey		Mothers Number (thousands)	Confidence interval ¹	Births per 1,000 mothers	Mean age of mothers in years— at time of survey	
Total	5,303	245	2,577	30.1	19.9	30,473	505	2,101	34.2	22.5
Age										
15 to 19 years	204	49	1,352	18.3	16.7	541	80	1,107	18.0	16.4
20 to 24 years	1,162	117	1,912	22.3	18.3	2,319	165	1,446	22.3	18.9
25 to 29 years	1,150	117	2,413	27.2	19.5	4,734	232	1,869	27.3	21.5
30 to 34 years	1,335	126	2,836	31.8	20.4	7,094	281	2,110	32.1	23.0
35 to 39 years	922	105	3,172	36.9	21.2	8,071	298	2,235	37.0	23.6
40 to 44 years	530	79	3,173	41.8	22.2	7,714	292	2,361	41.9	23.2
Race										
White	3,176	192	2,536	30.2	20.4	25,250	476	2,089	34.3	22.8
Black	1,903	150	2,653	29.9	19.1	3,826	210	2,125	33.4	20.5
Hispanic Origin										
Hispanic ²	1,060	112	3,020	30.6	20.0	3,129	191	2,378	33.0	21.2
Not Hispanic	4,242	221	2,466	30.0	19.9	27,344	489	2,069	34.3	22.7
Marital Status										
Currently married	1,994	153	2,811	31.0	20.1	24,448	471	2,164	34.5	23.0
Married, husband present	1,087	113	2,838	30.7	19.9	23,212	463	2,159	34.6	23.1
Married, husband absent ³	906	104	2,778	31.3	20.3	1,236	121	2,250	34.0	21.0
Widowed or divorced	1,244	121	2,653	33.4	20.7	3,617	204	2,033	36.4	21.2
Never married	2,065	156	2,305	27.3	19.3	2,408	168	1,561	26.8	20.0
Educational Attainment										
Not a high school graduate	2,169	159	2,892	29.6	18.8	4,095	217	2,407	32.0	19.4
High school, 4 years	2,141	158	2,377	30.2	20.4	12,182	358	2,075	33.9	21.5
College: 1 or more years	992	108	2,318	31.0	21.3	14,196	382	2,034	35.0	24.3
Enrollment in School										
Enrolled in school	628	86	2,215	29.1	19.8	2,581	174	1,922	31.7	21.3
Not enrolled in school	4,674	231	2,625	30.2	19.9	27,892	492	2,117	34.4	22.6
Labor Force Status										
Worked all or some weeks	1,159	117	2,536	31.2	19.9	21,204	448	2,042	34.8	22.6
No job last month	4,144	218	2,588	29.8	19.9	9,269	318	2,235	32.6	22.3
Monthly Family Income⁴										
Less than \$500	1,635	139	2,511	30.0	20.0	605	85	1,965	31.2	20.7
\$500 to \$999	1,797	145	2,649	30.0	19.9	1,753	144	2,317	32.2	20.5
\$1,000 to \$1,499	924	105	2,788	31.4	19.9	2,714	178	1,986	32.2	21.2
\$1,500 and over	861	101	2,363	29.1	19.8	25,000	475	2,103	34.6	22.9
Poverty Level⁴										
Below poverty level	3,962	214	2,708	30.2	19.8	3,221	193	2,414	31.3	20.4
Above poverty level	1,255	122	2,191	29.8	20.1	26,851	486	2,064	34.5	22.8
Division										
New England	179	46	2,361	28.5	20.1	1,501	133	2,033	35.0	23.8
Middle Atlantic	793	97	2,525	29.9	20.4	4,137	218	2,014	34.5	23.3
East North Central	969	107	2,664	29.9	19.9	5,449	248	2,067	33.8	22.5
West North Central	287	59	2,911	29.3	19.3	2,298	164	2,159	34.3	22.7
South Atlantic	879	102	2,472	30.3	19.4	5,431	248	2,001	34.2	22.3
East South Central	392	68	2,385	31.0	19.2	1,804	146	1,962	34.1	21.4
West South Central	695	91	2,641	30.1	19.7	3,186	192	2,189	34.2	22.0
Mountain	208	50	2,623	28.5	19.3	1,545	135	2,379	34.6	22.5
Pacific	900	103	2,588	30.8	20.9	5,121	241	2,216	33.7	22.5
Metropolitan Residence										
Metropolitan	4,082	217	2,575	29.9	19.9	23,476	465	2,082	34.2	22.8
In central cities	2,766	179	2,673	30.1	19.7	8,040	298	2,087	33.7	22.2
Suburbs	1,316	125	2,368	29.6	20.4	15,436	396	2,080	34.5	23.1
Nonmetropolitan	1,220	120	2,584	30.7	19.9	6,997	279	2,162	33.9	21.6
Place of Birth										
Native born	4,757	233	2,520	29.8	19.7	26,776	486	2,074	34.2	22.5
Foreign born	546	81	3,072	32.7	21.8	3,697	207	2,291	33.9	23.0

¹Represents the 90-percent confidence interval (1.6 standard error) of the estimated population. ²Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

³Includes separated women. ⁴Excludes those who did not report income.