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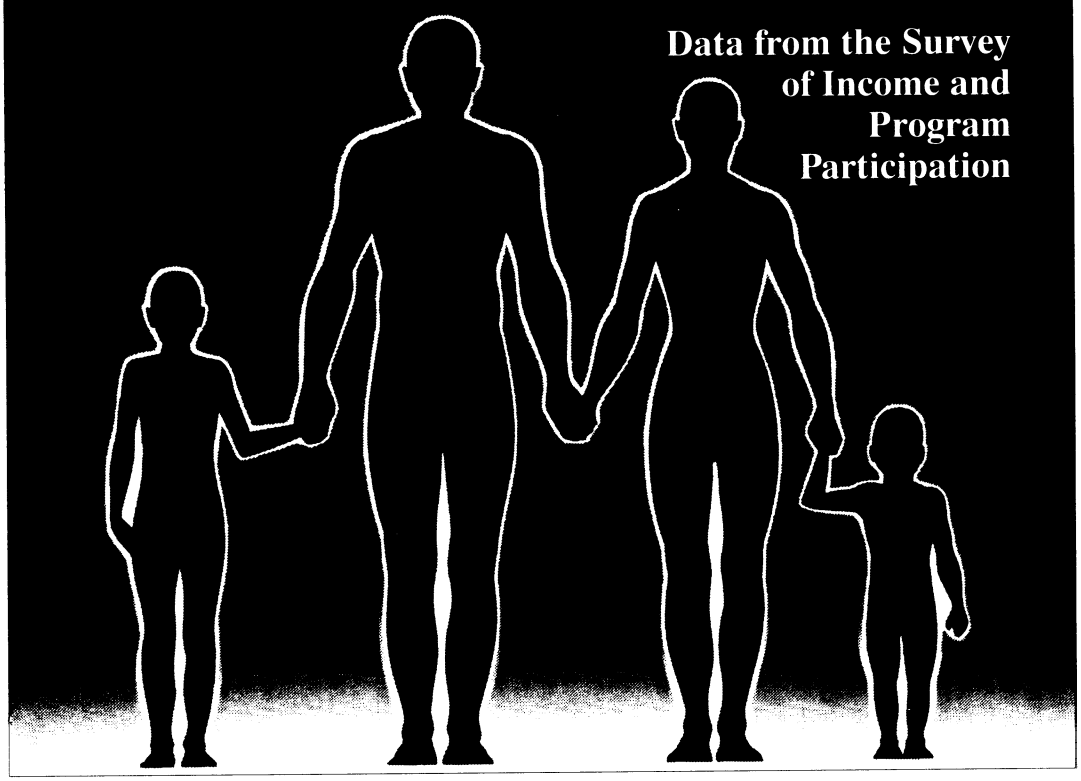
Characteristics of Recipients and the Dynamics of Program Participation: 1987–1988

Data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation



by Martina Shea

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
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This report was prepared under the general direction of **Kathleen S. Short**, Chief, Poverty and Wealth Statistics Branch. The tables for this report were programmed and prepared by **Victor M. Valdisera** and **Robert B. Clemons** under the general direction of **Angela M. Feldman-Harkins**, Chief, Computer Programming and Applications Staff. Statistical assistance was provided by **Eleanor F. Baugher, Viola S. Hughes,** and **Anna Podany**. Word processing assistance was provided by **Zana Colevas**. Overall direction was provided by **Charles T. Nelson**, Assistant Division Chief (Economic Characteristics), Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division.

Survey design and data operations were coordinated by **Donald Fischer**, Chief, Income Surveys Branch, Demographic Surveys Division. Data processing activities were directed by **Donna Riccini**, Chief, Income Surveys Programming Branch, Demographic Surveys Division.

Data collection was conducted by the Bureau of the Census interviewers under the overall direction of **Stanley D. Matchett**, Chief, Field Division.

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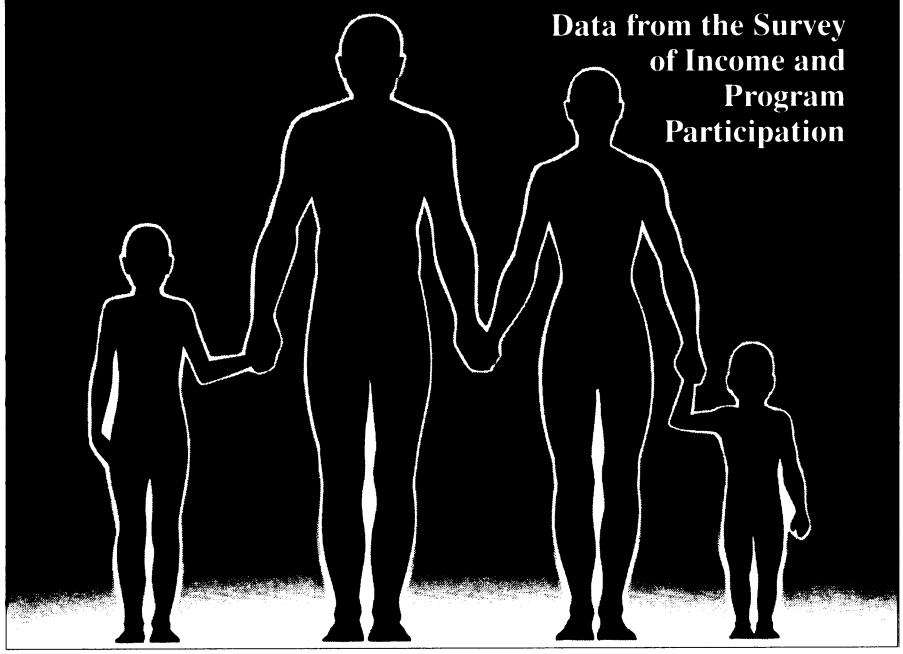

by Martina Shea

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Barbara Everitt Bryant, Director
Harry A. Scarr, Acting Deputy Director
William P. Butz, Associate Director for Demographic Programs

HOUSING AND HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC STATISTICS DIVISION
Daniel H. Weinberg, Chief

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Characteristics of Recipients and the Dynamics of Program Participation: 1987 and 1988

INTRODUCTION

This report uses data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) to examine the participation in various government assistance programs at a point in time and over a 28-month period. It presents data from the complete panel file of the 1987 SIPP[1] which covers the time period from October 1986 through April 1989. Descriptions of the SIPP program and the 1987 panel file are contained in appendixes B and E, respectively.

SIPP enables comparisons of the rates of program participation and the amounts of benefits received among persons of different demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. SIPP also allows analysis of the correlation among such characteristics. It also can be used to study the distribution of spell durations. This 'Survival Analysis' is discussed in appendix A.

The panel file contains monthly information on the program participation status of individuals as well as on many other characteristics which can vary over the panel, such as residence and income. Efforts were made during the life of the panel to follow persons who moved to ensure that the sample remained representative of the noninstitutional population of the United States. Persons are characterized by the income and poverty status of their respective family unit based on living arrangements each month during the period of study.

It should be noted that some longitudinal estimates presented here are based on responses of persons who were interviewed in all seven waves of the 1987 panel. Other longitudinal estimates are based on respondents interviewed in all waves of a particular calendar year. Insofar as persons who left the panel differed in their program participation from those who did not, these longitudinal estimates may be biased.[2]

Five sets of weights were used in this report. Monthly weights for calendar years 1987 and 1988 were used in deriving average monthly participation figures and monthly family benefits for each year. Estimates of the number of persons who ever participated during the panel and who participated all of 1987 and 1988 were based on the 1987 panel weight. Calendar year weights for 1987 and 1988 were used to obtain estimates of the number of persons who ever participated during a given year.[3]

The program participation data in this report refer to the following programs: (1) Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), (2) General Assistance, (3) Supplemental Security Income (SSI), (4) food stamps, (5) public or subsidized rental housing, (6) Medicaid, (7) Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), (8) Social Security or Railroad Retirement Income, (9) Veterans' compensation or pensions, and (10) unemployment compensation.

The descriptive analysis does not cover the key social insurance programs of Social Security or Railroad retirement income, nonmeans-tested Veterans' compensation or pensions, and unemployment compensation. However, data on these programs are included in the detailed tables 4 and 5. The tables in this report show data for persons rather than for families or households. Persons are considered participants in AFDC, General Assistance, Veterans' compensation or pensions or food stamp assistance if they are the primary recipient or if they are covered under another person's allotment. Persons receiving SSI payments or unemployment compensation are considered to be participants in an assistance program as are persons covered by Medicaid[4] or WIC or living in public or subsidized rental housing. Persons are counted as participants in the Social Security or Railroad Retirement program if they are covered on their own, jointly with a spouse, or through a parent.

Persons are counted as participants in a major assistance program if they live in public housing or are beneficiaries of one of the following programs: AFDC, General Assistance, SSI, Medicaid, food stamps, and

[1]The wave files were used only to extract the month weights necessary for cross-sectional estimates.

[2]See appendix E for further discussion.

[3]Estimates of the percent of persons participating in an average month were similar if not identical using either the month or the calendar year weights. For example, the percentage of persons participating in a major assistance program in an average month of 1987 was 11.4 percent, independent of whether the 1987 month weights or the calendar year weight were used. There were differences in estimates of aggregates from these two sets of weights. However, in most cases they were not large. For example, the average monthly number of persons who received benefits from one or more major assistance program was 27.4 million in 1987 using the month weights, compared to 27.1 million using the calendar year weight.

[4]Medicaid coverage is determined in a two-step procedure: The initial procedure counts as covered all persons and their dependents who report to be covered. The second procedure further looks for Medicaid coverage through AFDC and Federal SSI programs.

Federal or State rent assistance. They are considered participants in means-tested programs if they partake in one of the above programs or in WIC or means-tested Veterans' benefits. Benefit amounts from major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, and food stamp benefits. Benefit amounts from means-tested programs additionally include any benefits received from WIC and means-tested Veterans' compensation.

HIGHLIGHTS

(The numbers in parentheses denote the 90-percent confidence intervals)

- The average monthly number of persons who participated in one or more major assistance programs was 27.4 (±1.3) million in 1987 and 27.0 (±1.4) million in 1988, constituting roughly 11 (±0.6) percent of the populations.
- In 1987, 34.9 (±1.6) million persons, or 14.8 (±1.1) percent of the population, participated at least 1 month in a major assistance program. The corresponding number for 1988 was 33.8 (±1.6) million, or 14.2 (±1.2) percent.
- During all months of 1987 and 1988, 17.1 (±1.2) million persons participated in a major assistance program constituting 7.4 (±0.5) percent of the population.
- Median monthly family benefits from cash assistance and the Food Stamp program combined were about $360 (±8.80) in 1987 and in 1988.
- When income is defined to include all money income plus the value of food stamps, 50.7 (±2.9) percent of participants in means-tested programs received at least half of their income from benefits in an average month during 1987, and 31.1 (±2.7) percent received all of their income from benefits.
- Of the assistance programs considered, the Medicaid and Food Stamp programs had the highest average monthly participation in both years.
- Females had significantly higher participation rates than males. For females, 16.6 (±1.0) percent participated at least 1 month during 1987 in a major assistance program compared to 13.0 (±1.0) percent of males.
- Persons in female-householder families were five times as likely as persons in married-couple families to have participated in a major assistance program for at least 1 month in 1987 or 1988.
- In 1987, 10.8 (±0.7) percent of White persons participated in a major assistance program compared to 28.5 (±3.2) percent of persons of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race) and 40.2 (±1.7) percent of Black persons.
- Children were more likely to have participated in major assistance programs during an average month in 1987 or 1988 than elderly persons and nonelderly adults. They were also more likely to have participated at least 1 month in either year in major assistance programs.
- In an average month in 1987, 20.8 (±1.5) percent of persons 18 years of age and older without a high school diploma participated in major assistance programs compared to 7.3 (±0.8) percent of those with a high school diploma, and 2.9 (±0.5) percent of persons with some years of college.
- Unemployed workers had substantially higher average monthly participation rates in major assistance programs than employed persons and those out of the labor force.
- The presence of a work disability increased the likelihood of participating in major assistance programs from 6.5 (±0.6) to 21.0 (±2.1) percent in an average month in 1987.
- Poor persons participated at least 1 month in a major assistance program 74.4 (±2.8) percent in 1987, compared to only 7.5 (0.6) percent of the nonpoor.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION IN THE UNITED STATES: 1987 AND 1988

Approximately 27 million persons participated in a major assistance program in an average month during 1987 and 1988, representing roughly 11 percent of the population. The numbers of persons who ever participated during 1987 and 1988 were significantly higher, 34.8 million and 33.8 million, respectively, demonstrating substantial mobility. As can be seen in table A and figure 1, participation in both years was highest for Medicaid and food stamps, followed by AFDC and other cash assistance. In 1987, average monthly Medicaid coverage was 17.5 million, representing 7.3 percent of the population. In the same year, 21.8 million persons were covered for at least 1 month by Medicaid.

Sex and family status. In 1987 and 1988, females were more likely than males to participate in a major assistance program. As shown in table B, the average monthly participation rate as well as the proportion of persons who participated for at least 1 month was 3 percentage points higher for females than for males in both years. Females were also more likely than males to participate for a prolonged period of time in a major

Figure 1.
Program Participation Rates for Selected Programs: 1987 and 1988

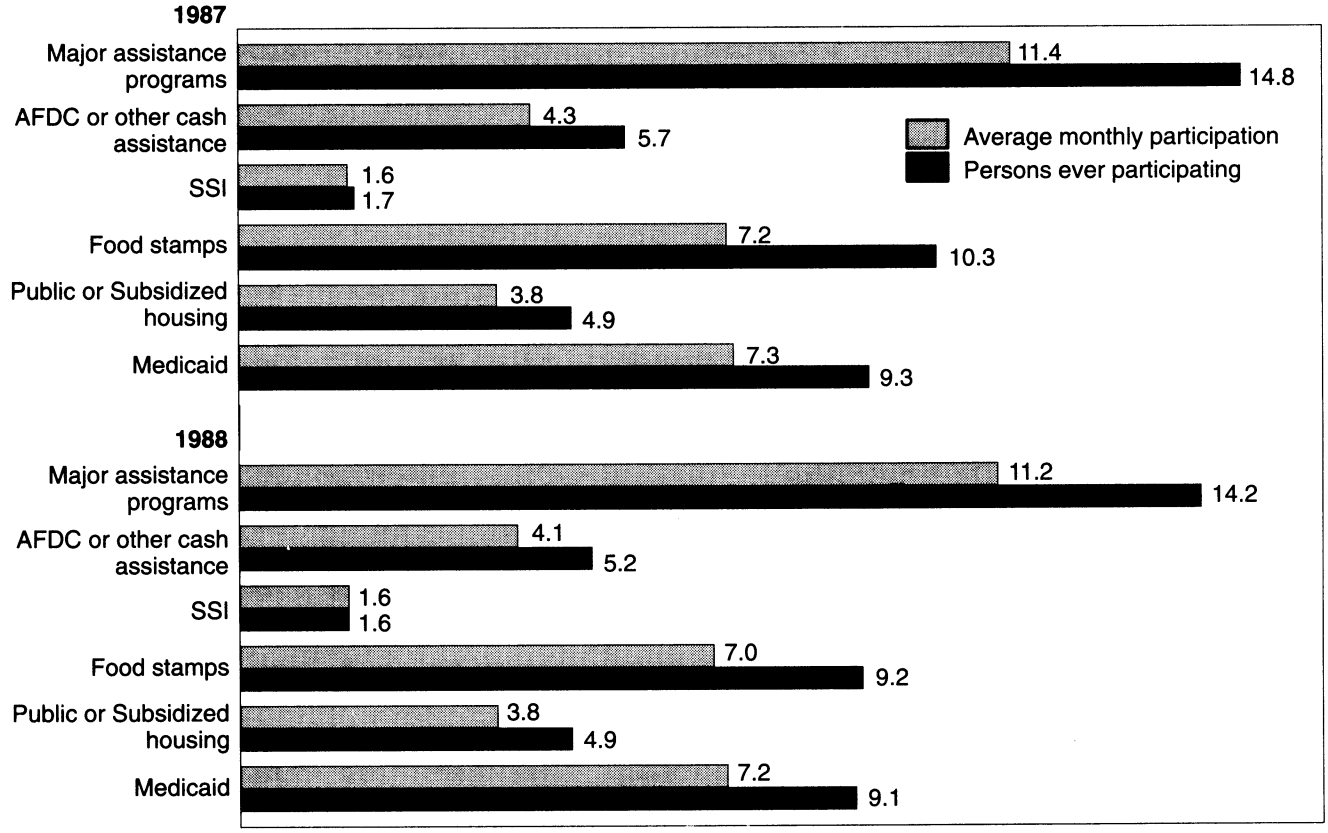

Table A. **Program Participation Status: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Status	Major assistance programs[2]		AFDC or other cash assistance programs		SSI		Food stamps		Public or subsidized rental housing		Medicaid	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1987												
Average monthly participation	27,412	11.4	10,385	4.3	3,831	1.6	17,365	7.2	9,222	3.8	17,474	7.3
Persons ever participating	34,856	14.8	13,432	5.7	4,060	1.7	24,221	10.3	11,424	4.9	21,767	9.3
1988												
Average monthly participation	27,027	11.2	9,919	4.1	3,817	1.6	16,934	7.0	9,313	3.8	17,502	7.2
Persons ever participating	33,773	14.2	12,347	5.2	3,804	1.6	21,918	9.2	11,555	4.9	21,615	9.1

[1]Bases for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance.

Table B. **Program Participation Status, by Sex and Family Status: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Sex and family status	1987						1988					
	Major assistance programs[2]		AFDC or other cash assistance programs		Food stamps		Major assistance programs[2]		AFDC or other cash assistance program		Food stamps	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Average monthly participation												
Total	27,412	11.4	10,385	4.3	17,365	7.2	27,027	11.2	9,919	4.1	16,934	7.0
Sex												
Male	11,364	9.7	4,091	3.5	7,244	6.2	11,203	9.5	3,940	3.3	6,980	5.9
Female	16,048	13.0	6,294	5.1	10,121	8.2	15,824	12.7	5,979	4.8	9,954	8.0
Family status												
In families	23,323	11.2	10,052	4.8	15,822	7.6	22,903	10.9	9,594	4.6	15,444	7.4
In married-couple families	10,350	6.2	2,544	1.5	6,528	3.9	9,952	5.9	2,293	1.4	5,817	3.4
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	12,277	37.4	7,366	22.5	9,065	27.6	12,238	36.5	7,167	21.4	9,434	28.1
Unrelated individuals	4,089	12.6	332	1.0	1,543	4.8	4,124	12.5	325	1.0	1,489	4.5
Persons ever participating												
Total	34,856	14.8	13,432	5.7	24,221	10.3	33,773	14.2	12,347	5.2	21,918	9.2
Sex												
Male	14,714	13.0	5,338	4.7	10,334	9.1	14,323	12.4	5,052	4.4	9,284	8.0
Female	20,142	16.6	8,094	6.7	13,888	11.4	19,450	15.9	7,295	6.0	12,634	10.3
Family status												
In families	30,190	14.7	12,890	6.3	22,242	10.8	29,067	14.1	11,888	5.7	20,123	9.7
In married-couple families	15,230	9.1	3,758	2.2	10,480	6.3	14,601	8.7	3,656	2.2	8,908	5.3
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	14,102	43.7	8,889	27.5	11,341	35.1	13,502	41.5	7,930	24.4	10,791	33.1
Unrelated individuals	4,666	15.8	542	1.8	1,979	6.7	4,707	15.2	459	1.5	1,795	5.8

[1]Bases for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance.

assistance program. Table C shows that 8.7 percent of females participated each month in 1987 and 1988, compared to 6.0 percent of males.[5]

The differences between the sexes in the receipt of assistance reflect eligibility rules[6] as well as differences in income. In 1987, the male poverty rate was 12.0 percent, as compared to 15.0 percent for females.[7] The difference in poverty status and program participation, is correlated with family type. Most single-parent families have a female householder (84.9 percent in 1987)[8], and participation in major assistance programs is higher for persons in female-householder families than for persons in married-couple families and unrelated individuals. In an average month during 1987, persons in female-householder families had a 37.4 percent participation rate, compared to 6.2 percent for persons in married-couple families and 12.6 percent for unrelated individuals (table B). This pattern was repeated for those who participated at least 1 month in 1987 or 1988 and those who participated all of 1987 and 1988. Furthermore, persons in female-householder families were about 15 times as likely as persons in married-couple families to have received AFDC or other cash assistance in an average month, and over seven times as likely to have received food stamps (see table B).

[5]The difference in females and males who participated in each month of 1987 and 1988 is not significantly different from three.

[6]Based on FY 1987 data compiled by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 87 percent of children who participated in AFDC were eligible because a parent was continuously absent from home. The absent parent was the father in the vast majority of cases.

[7]U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No.163, *Poverty in the United States: 1987 U.S.* Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1989.

Official poverty estimates are derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and differ from SIPP estimates. See appendix E for a discussion of these differences.

[8]Ibid.

Table C. **Long-Term Program Participation Status, by Sex and Family Status: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Sex and family status	Persons participating all of 1987 and 1988 in major assistance programs[2]	
	Number	Percent
Total	17,137	7.4
Sex		
Male	6,759	6.0
Female	10,378	8.7
Family status		
In families	14,444	7.1
In married-couple families	5,625	3.4
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	8,578	27.5
Unrelated individuals	2,693	9.5

[1]Bases for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include ADFC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance.

Median family benefits from food stamps and AFDC or other cash assistance were somewhat higher for participants in married-couple families than for participants in female-householder families in both 1987 and 1988, as shown in table D. However, except between married-couple and female-householder families in the median amount of food stamp benefits received in 1987, these differences were not statistically significant. Still, it is not surprising, given that, on average, female-householder families are smaller than other families[9] (2.97 versus 3.21 persons in 1987) and family benefit amounts depend in part on family size.

Unlike benefits from a particular assistance program, the median sum of benefits from cash assistance plus Food Stamp programs was higher for persons in families with a female householder than for persons in married-couple families. As can be seen in table D, median combined family benefits for persons in female-householder families amounted to $486 in 1987, which is substantially higher than the $268 received by their counterparts in married-couple families. In 1988, the benefit amounts were $466 and $284, respectively. This suggests that female-householder families drew benefits from more programs or from a different mix of programs than married-couple families, rather than more benefits from any given program. Households composed entirely of recipients of AFDC or SSI are automatically eligible for food stamps as long as they meet food stamp employment-related requirements.[10] Multiple program participation through "categorical" eligibility explains in part the higher combined median benefits of female-householder families compared to married-couple families. In addition, not only is the poverty rate of persons in female-householder families significantly higher than that of persons in all other families (38.3 versus 7.4 percent in 1987)[11], but persons in female-householder families were also significantly more likely to have family incomes below one-half of their respective poverty thresholds (18.6 versus 2.3 percent in 1987)[12]. Such low income levels make multiple program participation, and therefore higher combined benefits, more likely.

Race and Hispanic origin. There was a strong association between race and Hispanic origin and the likelihood of receiving means-tested assistance. Whites had significantly lower participation rates than Blacks, and persons of Hispanic origin[13] had rates intermediate between Whites and Blacks. In 1987, 8.0 percent of White persons participated in a major assistance

[9]Ibid.

[10]U. S. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. Cash and Noncash Benefits for Persons With Limited Income: Eligibility Rules, Recipient and Expenditure Data, FY 1986-88. Report for Congress No. 89-595 EPW, compiled by Vee Burke. Washington, DC 1989. 86 p.
[11]U. S. Bureau of the Census, op.cit.
[12]U. S. Bureau of the Census, op.cit.
[13]Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Table D. **Median Monthly Family Benefits, by Family Status: 1987 and 1988**[1]

Family status	1987				1988			
	Major assistance programs[2]	ADFC or other cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps	Major assistance programs[2]	AFDC or other cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps
All persons receiving benefits	$358	$373	$268	$148	$361	$341	$286	$157
Family status								
In families	390	379	297	155	398	350	317	164
In married-couple families	268	395	241	166	284	372	314	172
In families with a female householder, no spouse present	486	373	335	152	466	348	334	164
Unrelated individuals	169	190	230	46	179	184	232	41

[1]Standard errors are provided in appendix D, table D-6.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, and food stamps.

program in an average month, compared to 33.7 percent of Blacks and 22.1 percent of persons of Hispanic origin. As shown in table E, this pattern of differences held also for persons who ever participated during 1987 and 1988 and for those who participated during all of 1987 and 1988. Over one-fourth of all Blacks received assistance from a major assistance program during all 24 months of 1987 and 1988. The comparable figures for Whites and persons of Hispanic origin were 4.6 percent and 14.6 percent, respectively.

In both years, the median sum of means-tested family benefits was higher for Black and Hispanic-origin participants than for their White counterparts (see table F). Whites received median benefits of $318 in 1987 ($347 in 1988), compared to $379 ($366) for Blacks and $396 ($409) for persons of Hispanic origin. In contrast, the median benefits from AFDC and other cash assistance received by Black participants were substantially lower than those received by their White and Hispanic-origin counterparts.[14]

Compared to Black and Hispanic-origin participants, a smaller proportion of White participants had incomes that consisted mainly of benefits, as can be seen in table G. When income is defined to include money income plus the value of food stamps and WIC benefits, 45.8 percent of White participants received more than 50 percent of monthly income from means-tested programs in 1987, compared to approximately 57 percent of Blacks and Hispanic-origin persons. A similar pattern can be observed for 1988. Furthermore, while benefits constituted the only income for 26.2 percent of White participants in 1987, they did so for approximately 38 percent of Hispanic-origin and Black participants.

The differences between Whites, Blacks, and persons of Hispanic origin in the likelihood of receiving means-tested assistance result from differences in poverty status and its correlates, such as family type. In 1987, 33.1 percent of Blacks and 28. 2 percent of persons of Hispanic origin lived in poverty as compared to 10.5 percent of Whites. In the same year less than 10 percent of Whites lived in female-householder families without a spouse present, compared to 36.1 percent of Blacks and 18.6 percent of persons of Hispanic origin.[15]

Despite significantly higher participation rates for Blacks and persons of Hispanic origin, most participants

[14]The median benefits from AFDC and other cash assistance received by Whites were not significantly different from those received by their Hispanic-origin counterparts in both 1987 and 1988.

[15]U. S. Bureau of the Census, op.cit.

Table E. **Program Participation Status, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and Hispanic origin	Average monthly participation in major assistance programs[2]				Persons ever participating in major assistance programs[2]				Persons participating all of 1987 and 1988 in major assistance programs[2]	
	1987		1988		1987		1988			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	27,412	11.4	27,027	11.2	34,856	14.8	33,773	14.2	17,137	7.4
Race and Hispanic origin										
White	16,258	8.0	16,138	7.9	21,556	10.8	21,075	10.5	8,921	4.6
Black	9,775	33.7	9,635	32.9	11,434	40.2	11,153	38.5	7,227	25.9
Hispanic origin[3]	4,197	22.1	4,324	22.0	5,097	28.5	5,137	27.3	2,539	14.6

[1]Bases for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps Medicaid, and housing assistance.
[3]Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Table F. **Median Monthly Family Benefits, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1987 and 1988**[1]

Race and Hispanic origin	1987		1988	
	Major assistance programs[2]	AFDC or other cash assistance	Major assistance programs[2]	AFDC or other cash assistance
All persons receiving benefits	358	373	361	341
Race and Hispanic origin				
White	318	394	347	382
Black	379	294	366	270
Hispanic origin[3]	396	406	409	359

[1]Standard errors are provided in appendix D, table D-6.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, and food stamps.
[3]Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Table G. **Average Monthly Participation in Means-Tested Programs,[1] by Monthly Family Benefits as a Percent of Family Income, Race and Hispanic Origin: 1987 and 1988**

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and Hispanic origin	1987		1988	
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution
All persons				
Total	22,071	100.0	21,387	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	10,889	49.3	10,876	50.8
50 percent and above	11,182	50.7	10,512	49.2
100 percent	6,872	31.1	6,283	29.4
White				
Total	13,187	100.0	12,837	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	7,147	54.2	6,889	53.7
50 percent and above	6,038	45.8	5,948	46.3
100 percent	3,459	26.2	3,326	25.9
Black				
Total	7,804	100.0	7,640	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	3,328	42.6	3,652	47.8
50 percent and above	4,475	57.3	3,988	52.2
100 percent	2,962	38.0	2,592	33.9
Hispanic origin[3]				
Total	3,389	100.0	3,501	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	1,451	42.8	1,458	41.6
50 percent and above	1,938	57.2	2,044	58.4
100 percent	1,277	37.7	1,263	36.1

[1]Means-tested programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, WIC, and means-tested veterans' compensation or pensions.

[2]Based on money income excluding capital gains, plus the value of food stamps and WIC, and before taxes.

[3]Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

were White. During an average month in 1987, 59.3 percent of all participants in major assistance programs were White. The respective percentages for Blacks and persons of Hispanic origin were 35.7 and 15.3, respectively.

Age. Children had higher average monthly rates of participation in major assistance programs than persons in other age groups, reflecting their higher likelihood of living in poverty. As shown in table H, 18.3 of all children participated during an average month in 1987 in at least one major assistance program, while 8.3 percent of the nonelderly adults and 12.6 percent of the elderly did so. In the same year, the poverty rate of children was 20.6 percent, compared to 10.8 percent for nonelderly adults and 12.2 percent for the elderly.[16]

The elderly were more likely than other age groups to participate in SSI, due to its eligibility rules that require financially needy persons to be aged, blind, or disabled in order to qualify. Elderly participants also differed significantly from those in other age groups in their likelihood of participating in a major assistance program for the entire 1987-1988 period. As can be seen in tables H and I, of 4.0 million elderly who ever participated in major assistance programs during 1987, 2.7 million or roughly 68 percent participated during the entire 2-year period. Although not statistically different, the respective rates for nonelderly adults and children were 45 and 49 percent.

Table J shows median monthly family benefits from major assistance programs, both combined and separately. They were substantially higher in both years for children than for nonelderly adults, and were also higher for nonelderly adults than for the elderly.[17]

In 1987, benefits from AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, WIC, means-tested Veterans assistance and food stamps accounted for over one-half of total family income for 56.1 percent of participating children (see table K). The proportions of nonelderly adults is nearly the same as children while the proportion of elderly who received over one-half of their income from those benefits was smaller, 40.5 percent. Benefits constituted the only income component for approximately 35 percent of all participating children and nonelderly adults, and 19.3 percent of elderly participants.

Education. Education of those 18 years and older is highly correlated with program participation. Table L shows that 20.8 percent of persons without a high school diploma participated in a major assistance program during an average month in 1987, compared with 7.3 percent of high school graduates without college and 2.9 percent of persons with at least 1 year of college. Moreover, 15.6 percent of all persons who had not completed high school participated in a major assistance program during all of 1987 and 1988, compared to 4.6 percent of high school graduates and 1.6 percent of persons who attended college.

In both 1987 and 1988, median family benefits from SSI were significantly larger for adults with a high school diploma than for those without.

[16]U. S. Bureau of the Census, op. cit.

[17]The sample of child recipients of SSI is too small for a meaningful assessment.

Table H. **Program Participation Status, by Age: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Age	1987				1988			
	Major assistance programs[2]		SSI		Major assistance programs[2]		SSI	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Average monthly participation								
Total	27,412	11.4	3,831	1.6	27,027	11.2	3,817	1.6
Age								
Under 18 years[3]	11,608	18.3	3	-	11,417	17.9	15	-
18 to 64	12,260	8.3	2,071	1.4	11,954	8.0	2,013	1.3
65 years and over	3,544	12.6	1,757	6.2	3,656	12.8	1,789	6.3
Persons ever participating								
Total	34,856	14.8	4,060	1.7	33,773	14.2	3,804	1.6
Age								
Under 18 years[3]	14,680	23.3	-	-	14,355	22.7	24	-
18 to 64	16,141	11.1	2,213	1.5	15,497	10.5	1,962	1.3
65 years and over	4,035	15.1	1,847	6.9	3,921	14.4	1,818	6.7

[1]Bases for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance.
[3] In the case of SSI, data in the SIPP is only collected for persons who are at least 15 years of age. The 'under 18 years' category therefore contains only 15 to 17 year old recipients of SSI.

Table I. **Long-Term Program Participation Status, by Age: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Status	Persons participating all of 1987 and 1988 in major assistance programs[2]	
	Number	Percent
Total	17,137	7.4
Age		
Under 18 years	7,185	11.4
18 to 64	7,213	5.0
65 years and older	2,738	10.9

[1]Bases for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance.

Employment and Disability Status. Table N shows data on the relationship between the employment status of persons 18 years and older and their participation in major assistance programs. The average monthly program participation rate of unemployed persons was 26.9 percent in 1987, followed by 17.8 percent for persons out of the labor force, 6.4 percent for those employed part-time, and 2.8 percent for full-time workers. Unemployed workers also had the highest probability of participating at least 1 month in a given year, 37.4 percent in 1987. This was followed by 20.6 percent for persons who were out of the labor force, 10.2 percent for the part-time employed, and 4.5 percent for full-time workers.

There was no significant difference between the unemployed and persons out of the labor force in terms of their propensity to participate for a prolonged period of time in a major assistance program. The share of unemployed who participated the entire 1987-1988 period in a major assistance program was 14.6 percent, statistically indistinguishable from the 13.4 percent of persons out of the labor force who participated. The shares of full-time and part-time employees who participated in each month of the 2-year period were significantly lower, 1.2 and 3.7 percent, respectively.

As shown in table N, the presence of a work disability in persons 15 to 69 years of age increased the average monthly participation rate for major assistance programs from 6.5 to 21.0 percent in 1987. Over 26 percent of persons with a disability participated at least 1 month in 1987 and 16.5 percent participated in all months of 1987 and 1988. The respective shares for persons without a disability were 9.3 and 3.6 percent.[18]

Median monthly family benefits from major assistance programs were significantly higher for persons without a work disability than for persons with a work disability, as can be seen in table O. In 1987, a work disability was associated with a median monthly family benefit of $288 for participants of major assistance programs. Participants without a work disability realized a median benefit of $371 during the same year. Although

[18]The discrepancy in participation between persons with and without a work disability was largely due to differential recipiency of SSI. For example, persons with a work disability were 40 times as likely as persons without a work disability to participate in SSI in an average month of 1987.

Table J. **Median Monthly Family Benefits, by Age: 1987 and 1988**[1]

Status	1987				1988			
	Major assistance programs[2]	AFDC or other cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps	Major assistance programs[2]	AFDC or other cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps
All persons receiving benefits	$358	$373	$268	$148	$361	$341	$286	$157
Age								
Under 18 years	461	390	B	169	455	378	B	185
18 to 64 years	321	319	333	136	339	308	352	144
65 years and older	160	58	170	29	162	58	182	29

[1]Standard errors are provided in appendix D, table D-6.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, and food stamps.

Table K. **Average Monthly Participation in Means-Tested Programs,[1] by Monthly Family Benefits as a Percent of Family Income, and Age: 1987 and 1988.**

(Numbers in thousands)

Age	1987		1988	
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution
All persons				
Total	22,071	100.0	21,387	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	10,889	49.3	10,876	50.8
50 percent and above	11,182	50.7	10,512	49.2
100 percent	6,872	31.1	6,283	29.4
UNDER 18 YEARS				
Total	5,382	100.0	5,017	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	2,362	43.9	2,247	44.8
50 percent and above	3,020	56.1	2,769	55.2
100 percent	1,912	35.5	1,682	33.5
18 TO 64 YEARS				
Total	12,611	100.0	12,429	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	6,101	48.4	6,171	49.7
50 percent and above	6,509	51.6	6,256	50.3
100 percent	4,172	33.1	3,952	31.8
65 YEARS AND OLDER				
Total	4,078	100.0	3,941	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	2,426	59.5	2,457	62.3
50 percent and above	1,652	40.5	1,485	37.7
100 percent	788	19.3	650	16.5

[1]Means-tested programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, WIC, and means-tested veterans' compensation or pensions.
[2]Based on money income excluding capital gains, plus the value of food stamps and WIC, and before taxes.

Table L. **Program Participation Status, by Educational Attainment: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Status	Average monthly participation in major assistance programs[2]				Persons participating all of 1987 and 1988 in major assistance programs[2]	
	1987		1988			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	27,412	11.4	27,027	11.2	17,137	7.4
Educational attainment (persons 18 years and older)						
Less than 4 years of high school	8,936	20.8	8,748	20.5	6,147	15.6
High school graduate, no college	4,917	7.3	4,959	7.4	2,698	4.6
1 or more years of college	1,951	2.9	1,903	2.8	1,106	1.6

[1]Bases for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include ADFC or other cash assistance, SSI, and food stamps.

Table M. **Median Monthly Family Benefits, by Educational Attainment: 1987 and 1988**[1]

Status	1987				1988			
	Major assistance programs[2]	ADFC or other cash cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps	Major assistance programs[2]	AFDC or other cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps
All persons receiving benefits	$358	$373	$268	$148	$361	$341	$286	$157
Educational attainment (persons 18 years and older)								
Less than 4 years of high school	278	330	225	119	286	304	248	121
High school graduate, no college	288	302	306	118	299	295	315	127
1 or more years of college	291	310	338	117	296	299	353	100

[1]Standard errors are provided in appendix D, table D-6.
[2]Major assistance programs include ADFC or other cash assistance, SSI, and food stamps.

Table N. **Program Participation Status, by Employment and Disability Status: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Employment and disability status	Average monthly participation in major assistance programs[2]				Persons ever participating in major assistance programs[2]				Persons participating all of 1987 and 1988 in major assistance programs[2]	
	1987		1988		1987		1988			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	27,412	11.4	27,027	11.2	34,856	14.8	33,773	14.2	17,137	7.4
Employment status (persons 18 years and over)										
Employed full-time	2,610	2.8	2,642	2.8	4,000	4.5	4,227	4.6	1,070	1.2
Employed part-time	1,301	6.4	1,385	6.7	2,087	10.2	1,833	8.8	739	3.7
Unemployed	1,549	26.9	1,155	23.8	2,656	37.4	1,837	34.5	1,012	14.6
Not in the Labor force	10,344	17.8	10,427	17.9	11,432	20.6	11,522	20.5	7,129	13.4
Disability status (persons 15 to 69 years)										
With a work disability	5,700	21.0	5,493	20.9	6,629	26.1	6,343	25.9	4,001	16.5
With no work disability	9,240	6.5	8,998	6.2	13,065	9.3	12,414	8.7	4,993	3.6

[1]Bases for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance.

disability did not make a statistically significant difference for AFDC and SSI recipients in 1988, the relationship between disability status and benefits can be observed for the separate programs.

Residence. Persons in central cities were much more likely than persons in suburban areas to participate in major assistance programs in an average month. Persons living outside of metropolitan areas were more likely to participate than suburban residents but were less likely than central city residents to do so (see table P). Seventeen percent of central city residents participated in a major assistance program during an average month in 1987, followed by 14.3 percent of persons who were living outside a metropolitan area, and 6.0 percent of suburban residents. Nearly 21 percent of central city residents participated in a major assistance program at some time during 1987[19] and 12.1 percent participated during all of 1987 and 1988. Suburban residents had the lowest rates of participation: 8.7 percent participated in major assistance programs for at least 1 month in 1987 and 3.8 percent participated all months in 1987 and 1988. The relative participation rates reflect in part the differences in the likelihood of being poor between central city, suburban, and nonmetropolitan residents. In 1987 the poverty rate for central city residents was 18.6 percent, followed by 16.9 percent for nonmetropolitan residents, and 8.5 percent for suburban residents.[20]

Median combined family benefits were higher for participants living in central cities ($425 in 1987) than for those living in the suburbs ($307) and for those living in nonmetropolitan areas ($281), as can be seen in table Q. Again, the relationship between participants' characteristics (in this case residence) and median family benefits (which is observed for a combination of programs), is not always observed for individual programs. It is possible that living in a metropolitan area in general and in a central city in particular facilitates the access to multiple programs or that metropolitan residents participate in a different mix of programs. Also, there is some evidence that social disapproval or stigma associated with welfare use is stronger in rural than in urban areas.[21] [22]

Income status.[23] The data in table R show that poverty and participation in major assistance programs were indeed closely related. The poor, i.e. those with a family income-to-poverty ratio of less than 1, had an average monthly participation rate in major assistance programs of 54.3 percent in 1987. In contrast, the rate for the nonpoor was 4.8 percent. The percentages of persons who participated at least 1 month during a given year and of those who participated all months during 1987 and 1988 vary similarly with the ratio of income to poverty threshold. The nonpoor had a 7.5 percent probability to ever participate in 1987 and a 2.6 percent probability to participate during all of 1987 and 1988. The corresponding numbers for the poverty population were 74.4 and 52.1 percent.

The ratios of premeans-tested incomes-to-poverty thresholds were negatively correlated with participation over the whole range of observations, ranging from a 68.5 average monthly participation rate for those with family premeans-tested cash incomes of less than

[19]The proportion of central city residents who participated sometime during 1987 in major programs did not differ significantly from the proportion of nonmetropolitan residents who did so.

[20]U.S. Bureau of the Census, op.cit.

[21]Rank, Mark and Hirschl, Thomas, *A Rural-Urban Comparison of Welfare Exits: The Importance of Population Density* Rural Sociology 53 (2): 190-206.

[22]The relative impact of likely determinants on combined benefit levels can only be assessed in a multivariate framework.

[23]In calculating average monthly participation, income status was determined by forming the ratio of family income-to-poverty threshold that pertained during the month of participation. In calculating the number of persons who ever participated during a given year, income status was determined by the ratio of total family income during the 12 months of the year to the sum of the 12 monthly poverty thresholds. Likewise, in determining the number of persons who participated all of 1987 and 1988, income status was obtained by forming the ratio of total family income during the 24 months of 1987 and 1988 to the sum of the 24 monthly thresholds.

Table O. **Median Monthly Family Benefits, by Disability Status: 1987 and 1988**[1]

Status	1987				1988			
	Major assistance programs[2]	ADFC or other cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps	Major assistance programs[2]	AFDC or other cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps
All persons receiving benefits	$358	$373	$268	$148	$361	$341	$286	$157
Disability status (persons 15 to 69 years)								
With a work disability	288	276	300	94	317	290	334	89
With no work disability	371	365	322	156	370	316	353	165

[1]Standard errors are provided in appendix D, table D-6.

[2]Major assistance programs include ADFC or other cash assistance, SSI, and food stamps.

Table P. **Program Participation Status, by Residence: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Residence	Average monthly participation in major assistance programs[2]				Persons ever participating in major assistance programs[2]				Persons participating all of 1987 and 1988 in major assistance programs[2]	
	1987		1988		1987		1988			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	27,412	11.4	27,027	11.2	34,856	14.8	33,773	14.2	17,137	7.4
Residence										
Metropolitan	19,455	10.6	19,238	10.4	24,208	13.5	22,487	12.8	12,344	7.0
Central city	12,925	17.0	12,804	16.2	14,876	20.8	13,381	19.3	8,328	12.1
Non-central city	6,530	6.0	6,434	6.0	9,333	8.7	9,106	8.6	4,016	3.8
Nonmetropolitan	7,957	14.3	7,789	13.7	10,647	19.1	9,600	17.4	4,793	8.6

[1]Basis for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance.

Table Q. **Median Monthly Family Benefits, by Residence: 1987 and 1988**[1]

Residence	1987				1988			
	Major assistance programs[2]	ADFC or other cash cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps	Major assistance programs[2]	AFDC or other cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps
All persons	$358	$373	$268	$148	$361	$341	$286	$157
Residence								
Metropolitan	392	381	297	147	399	353	313	156
Central city	425	385	299	148	431	341	313	159
Non-central city	307	380	278	139	318	379	314	145
Nonmetropolitan	281	318	210	154	280	288	235	157

[1]Standard errors are provided in appendix D, table D-6.
[2]Major assistance programs include ADFC or other cash assistance, SSI, and food stamps.

one-half of their respective thresholds to a participation rate of 1.2 percent for those with premeans-tested cash incomes of three times the poverty level or more.[24]

As shown in table S, median family benefits from one or more major assistance programs were substantially higher for poor participants than for non-poor participants, $392 versus $271 in 1987 and $395 versus $265 in 1988. Table S also depicts median family benefits of participants by detailed categories of family premeans-tested cash income-to-poverty ratios. As expected, median benefits from means-tested programs were related to the "severity" of poverty prior to the receipt of means-tested assistance. In 1987, median benefits ranged from $142 for those with a premeans-tested income-to-poverty ratio between .75 and .99 to $513 for those with a ratio below .50.

Looking at participants in means-tested programs (table T), a significantly larger proportion of the poor than the nonpoor received over one-half of their monthly

[24]This negative relationship does not exist over the whole range of values if means-tested transfer income is taken into account, due to the redistributional effects of transfer payments.

income from benefits. In 1987, 64.9 percent of the poor participants had incomes consisting mostly of benefits, but only 15.9 percent of the non-poor participants had such incomes. In 1988, the percentages were 62.7 and 16.4 percent, respectively. Furthermore, 42.6 percent of all poor participants had income consisting solely of benefits in 1987, compared to 3.0 percent of all non-poor participants.

Table R. **Program Participation Status, by Income Status: 1987 and 1988**[1]

(Numbers in thousands)

Income status	Average monthly participation in major assistance programs[2]				Persons ever participating in major assistance programs[2]				Persons participating all of 1987 and 1988 in major assistance programs[2]	
	1987		1988		1987		1988			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	27,412	11.4	27,027	11.2	34,856	14.8	33,773	14.2	17,137	7.4
Family income-to-poverty ratio[3]										
Under 1.00	17,354	54.3	16,979	55.6	19,082	74.4	17,900	73.6	11,753	52.1
Under .50	6,886	54.2	6,713	56.1	5,992	76.3	6,069	79.7	3,811	59.2
.50 to .74	5,924	63.4	5,470	64.5	6,956	84.3	6,312	80.8	4,274	60.6
.75 to .99	4,544	45.8	4,795	47.6	6,135	64.2	5,519	62.1	3,668	40.5
1.00 and above	10,058	4.8	10,048	4.7	15,773	7.5	15,873	7.4	5,384	2.6
1.00 to 1.24	3,034	26.9	2,848	25.9	4,076	40.3	4,367	43.4	1,832	19.1
1.25 to 1.49	1,699	15.0	1,872	15.9	2,959	26.9	3,215	27.1	1,119	10.4
1.50 to 1.99	1,969	7.9	1,860	7.5	3,398	14.8	2,941	12.6	988	4.3
2.00 to 2.99	1,940	3.9	1,838	3.7	3,195	6.3	3,031	6.0	892	1.8
3.00 and over	1,416	1.3	1,630	1.4	2,145	1.9	2,319	2.0	553	0.5
Family premeans-tested cash income-to-poverty ratio[4]										
Under 1.00	19,356	56.0	18,942	57.2	21,183	75.2	20,433	74.8	13,406	52.9
Under .50	13,296	68.5	12,787	69.8	13,066	86.7	12,465	88.5	9,420	73.2
.50 to .74	3,298	48.5	3,226	50.7	4,415	76.8	4,055	71.1	2,251	43.6
.75 to .99	2,762	33.0	2,929	34.8	3,702	50.3	3,913	52.0	1,735	23.7
1.00 and above	8,056	3.9	8,084	3.9	13,672	6.6	13,340	6.3	3,731	1.8
1.00 to 1.24	2,137	20.6	2,074	20.3	3,229	33.7	3,231	36.6	1,283	14.0
1.25 to 1.49	1,250	11.5	1,264	11.4	2,510	24.5	2,250	20.5	492	5.0
1.50 to 1.99	1,604	6.5	1,602	6.5	2,956	13.1	2,879	12.4	686	3.1
2.00 to 2.99	1,767	3.6	1,643	3.3	2,890	5.8	2,779	5.5	756	1.6
3.00 and over	1,299	1.2	1,502	1.3	2,088	1.8	2,201	1.9	514	0.4

[1]Bases for percentages can be found in the detailed tables.
[2]Major assistance programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, Medicaid, and housing assistance.
[3]Based on money income excluding capital gains and before taxes.
[4]Based on money income excluding capital gains and means-tested government cash transfers, and before taxes.

Table S. Median Monthly Family Benefits, by Income Status: 1987 and 1988[1]

Income status	1987				1988			
	Major assistance programs[2]	ADFC or other cash cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps	Major assistance programs[2]	AFDC or other cash assistance	SSI	Food stamps
All persons receiving benefits	$358	$373	$268	$148	$361	$341	$286	$157
Family income-to-poverty ratio[3]								
Less than 1.00	392	374	219	155	395	350	229	167
Under .50	395	286	306	213	401	268	253	213
.50 to .74	496	488	306	153	449	439	323	164
.75 to .99	254	528	174	99	270	510	200	100
1.00 or more	271	335	297	99	265	308	317	101
1.00 to 1.24	254	440	339	91	249	366	351	91
1.25 to 1.49	240	309	274	116	352	416	310	114
1.50 to 1.99	286	304	295	93	266	270	314	129
2.00 to 2.99	276	314	237	93	250	248	269	129
3.00 and over	297	290	298	91	291	265	340	86
Family premeans-tested cash income-to-poverty ratio[4]								
Less than 1.00	402	381	279	153	409	362	295	160
Under .50	513	391	338	161	510	380	353	178
.50 to .74	198	284	158	124	204	241	159	133
.75 to .99	142	284	139	112	152	286	161	115
1.00 or more	179	288	225	96	195	231	243	107
1.00 to 1.24	139	256	161	85	127	238	169	90
1.25 to 1.49	163	279	202	116	164	162	221	116
1.50 to 1.99	198	294	225	107	220	250	232	128
2.00 to 2.99	224	280	225	75	230	215	266	128
3.00 and and over	265	290	298	100	245	214	306	86

[1]Standard errors are provided in appendix D, table D-6.
[2]Major assistance programs include ADFC or other cash assistance, SSI, and food stamps.
[3]Based on money income excluding capital gains and before taxes.
[4]Based on money income excluding capital gains and means-tested government cash transfers, and before taxes.

Table T. Average Monthly Participation in Means-Tested Programs,[1] by Monthly Family Benefits as a Percent of Family Income, and Poverty Status: 1987 and 1988

(Numbers in thousands)

Poverty status	1987		1988	
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution
All persons				
Total	22,071	100.0	21,387	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	10,889	49.3	10,876	50.8
50 percent and above	11,182	50.7	10,512	49.2
100 percent	6,872	31.1	6,283	29.4
Poor				
Total	15,676	100.0	15,121	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	5,510	35.1	5,636	37.3
50 percent and above	10,167	64.9	9,486	62.7
100 percent	6,682	42.6	6,064	40.1
Nonpoor				
Total	6,395	100.0	6,266	100.0
Monthly family benefits as a percent of family income[2]				
Under 50 percent	5,380	84.1	5,240	83.6
50 percent and above	1,014	15.9	1,026	16.4
100 percent	190	3.0	219	3.5

[1]Means-tested programs include AFDC or other cash assistance, SSI, food stamps, WIC, and means-tested veterans' compensation or pensions.
[2]Based on money income excluding capital gains, plus the value of food stamps and WIC, and before taxes.