

# Work and Work-Related Activities of Mothers Receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families: 1996, 1998, and 2000

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## INTRODUCTION

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, also known as the Welfare Reform Act, dramatically changed the administration of and requirements for welfare programs. One of the goals of welfare reform was to “end dependence of needy parents upon government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.”<sup>1</sup> To help reach this goal, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) officially replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1997.

Unlike AFDC benefits, TANF benefits are tied to economic behavior, because the program requires that most adult recipients must “work” after 2 months of aid. TANF broadly defines work as labor force participation, such as working for the community or state in order to receive benefits (workfare), looking for employment or being employed. Work may also include work-related activities, such as schooling, vocational training, general skill development, or other types of training.

The data in this report provide insight into the work and work-related activities of mothers receiving TANF benefits, and examine how well TANF mothers' actions corresponded with the intent of Welfare Reform to end a needy mother's long-term dependence on government benefits. Using data collected by the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), this report focuses on training and

work activities of mothers who stated they received TANF benefits between August and November of 1998.<sup>2</sup> To place the 1998 data in context, it is compared with SIPP data from 1996 and 2000 for mothers receiving AFDC or TANF.<sup>3</sup>

## HIGHLIGHTS

- From 1996 to 2000, the number of mothers participating in AFDC/TANF decreased by about 50 percent.
- The percentage of all AFDC/TANF mothers in the labor force is consistent over time. However, the mothers who have participated in the AFDC/TANF program in 1996, 1998, or 2000 experience much greater variability in labor force attachment than

<sup>2</sup> SIPP is a longitudinal survey that follows the same individuals over time. The survey is conducted in waves of 4 months' duration, with one-fourth of sample members interviewed in each month of a wave. Sample members are asked about activities during the 4 months prior to the interview, which is known as the “reference period.” Individuals can leave and enter the survey over time. The focus of this report are the mothers who received TANF benefits on behalf of anyone within the nuclear family, such as the children, or the children and mothers during any month between August and November of 1998, when the Welfare Reform topical module was administered. A person is considered “on” welfare if there was any AFDC or TANF participation during a wave.

<sup>3</sup> These data were collected during wave 1 (April - July 1996), wave 8 (August - December 1998) and wave 12 (December 1999 - March 2000) of the 1996 SIPP. In this report, 1996 refers to wave 1, 1998 refers to wave 8, and 2000 refers to wave 12. Please note that the population of mothers for Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 1 is different than for the rest of the tables and figures. Table 1, Table 2, and Figure 1 take a cross-sectional look at all mothers in 1996, 1998, and 2000. The remainder of the tables and figures refer to the cohort of mothers in 1998. This is discussed in the section “An important note on making longitudinal comparisons.”

<sup>1</sup> *Green Book 2000.*

## Current Population Reports

By Brian J. O'Hara

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mothers who did not participate.

- The percent of TANF mothers participating in work-related activities in 1998 does not vary by race or ethnicity.
- TANF mothers who did not graduate from high school had comparatively poor work and work-related outcomes in 1998.
- The welfare office did not require the majority of work and work-related activities by mothers receiving TANF in 1998.

### Mothers' participation in AFDC or TANF programs decreased by over half

AFDC/TANF participation dropped by over half between 1996 and 2000 for all mothers. As Table 1 shows, slightly more than 8 percent of all mothers were AFDC recipients in 1996; this proportion fell to just less than 4 percent in 2000. This 50 percent reduction confirms the dramatic decline in welfare reciprocity over the 4-year period reported elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

### Labor force participation rates are stable among AFDC/TANF mothers

Figure 1 shows that the labor force behavior for mothers receiving AFDC in 1996 or TANF in 1998 and 2000 remained relatively stable. Note, however, that after the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, the percentage of TANF mothers who were looking

<sup>4</sup> Between the beginning of 1996 and 2000, the United States unemployment rate dropped from 5.6 percent to 4.0 percent (BLS 2002) indicating a strong economy. However, there is little agreement whether the decrease in welfare caseloads was due to a strong economy or welfare reform (Bell 2001).

Table 1.  
**AFDC/TANF Participation of Mothers: 1996, 1998, and 2000**

(Numbers in thousands)

Reciprocity status	All mothers	Not on AFDC/TANF	On AFDC/TANF
<b>1996</b>			
Total .....	37,129	34,095	3,034
Percent .....	100.0	91.8	8.2
Standard error .....	(X)	0.29	0.29
<b>1998</b>			
Total .....	38,253	36,197	2,056
Percent .....	100.0	94.6	5.4
Standard error .....	(X)	0.27	0.27
<b>2000</b>			
Total .....	38,568	37,059	1,509
Percent .....	100.0	96.1	3.9
Standard error .....	(X)	0.25	0.25

X represents no standard error.

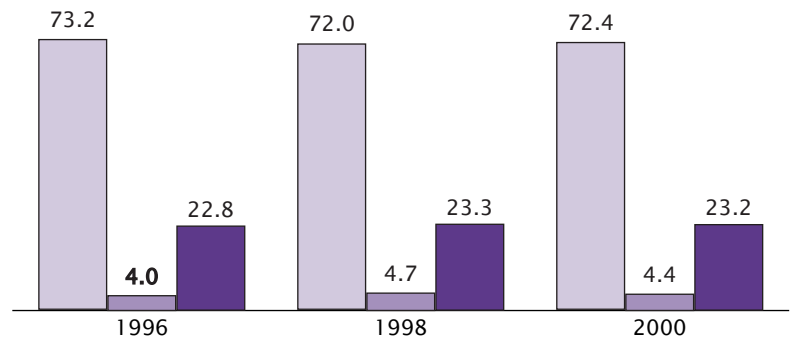
Notes: AFDC is the welfare program called Aid to Families of Dependent Children.  
TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

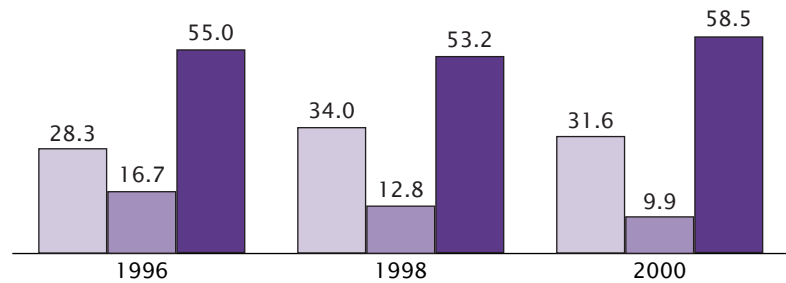
Figure 1.  
**Mothers by Reciprocity Status and Labor Force Participation: 1996, 1998, and 2000**

(In percent)

#### Not on AFDC or TANF during time period



#### On AFDC or TANF during time period



Note: AFDC is the welfare program called Aid to Families of Dependent Children.  
TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

Table 2.  
**Average Monthly Earnings of Working Mothers: 1996, 1998, and 2000**

Recipiency status	Number of mothers with earnings in interview period (thousands)	Percent of mothers who work	Earnings (2000 dollars)			
			Mean	Standard error (mean)	Median	Standard error (median)
<b>Not on AFDC or TANF</b>						
In 1996 .....	24,949	73.2	1,947	25	1,554	20
In 1998 .....	26,053	72.0	2,029	32	1,648	17
In 2000 .....	26,825	72.4	2,086	33	1,666	22
<b>On AFDC or TANF</b>						
In 1996 .....	860	28.3	806	195	472	40
In 1998 .....	700	34.0	885	75	724	66
In 2000 .....	477	31.6	894	75	738	76

Notes: Interview periods: interview 1 was used for the 1996 period, interview 8 for 1998, and interview 12 for 2000.

AFDC is the welfare program called Aid to Families of Dependent Children.

TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

for employment in 2000 was significantly lower than the percentage of AFDC mothers who were looking for employment in 1996.

On the other hand, when the labor force participation of mothers receiving AFDC or TANF is compared with mothers who are not recipients, the differences are significant. In each time period, the percentage of mothers who were not receiving AFDC or TANF and working was at least twice as high as that of AFDC or TANF recipients who were working. A recipient was also at least twice as likely to be out of the labor force and at least twice as likely to be looking for work than a nonrecipient.

For mothers who worked, the average monthly earnings significantly

differed between recipients and nonrecipients. Table 2 shows that the median monthly earnings ranged from \$1,554 to \$1,666 for nonrecipients and from \$472 to \$738 for recipients.<sup>5</sup> The median earned income of recipients and nonrecipients increased significantly from 1996 to 1998, but did not increase significantly between 1998 and 2000.

Of the cohort of mothers from 1998, Table 3 shows that about

<sup>5</sup> The median dollar amounts are inflation adjusted to 2000 dollars. Derived from the average CPI-U, adjustment factors of 1.087 (1996) and 1.034 (1998) were applied to obtain real earnings in 2000 dollars. In August of 1996, legislation was passed to increase the minimum wage from \$4.25 to \$5.15. The change was fully implemented on September 1, 1997. Because minimum wages tend to affect low-income populations, part of the earnings growth is due to this increase.

3.8 million (10 percent) of all mothers were on AFDC or TANF during one or more of the interview periods in 1996, 1998, and 2000. About 5 percent of mothers were on AFDC or TANF during only one of the interview periods, compared with about 3 percent for mothers who were on AFDC or TANF for more than one time period.<sup>6</sup> Table 3 also shows that over 8 million (22 percent) of all mothers who were interviewed in 1998 (wave 8), were not interviewed in either 1996 (wave 1) or in 2000 (wave 12).

<sup>6</sup> About 2 percent of this cohort were on AFDC or TANF during 1996, 1998, or 2000 but were missing an interview. Therefore they could not be categorized as "only one time" or "more than one time" on welfare.

Table 3.  
**AFDC/TANF Participation of Mothers Across Time Periods: 1996, 1998, and 2000**

Reciency status	Number (thousands)	Percent	Standard error (percent)
All mothers in 1998.....	38,029	100.0	(X)
Not on AFDC/TANF at any time.....	34,232	90.0	0.36
Not on AFDC/TANF in any year and was in sample for 1996, 1998, and 2000 <sup>1</sup> .....	26,617	70.0	0.55
Not on AFDC/TANF in any year, but was out of sample in either 1996 or 2000 <sup>1</sup> .....	7,615	20.0	0.48
On AFDC/TANF at any time.....	3,797	10.0	0.36
On AFDC/TANF in only 1 year.....	1,801	4.7	0.25
In 1996 only.....	1,300	3.4	0.22
In 1998 only.....	311	0.8	0.14
In 2000 only.....	189	0.5	0.08
On AFDC/TANF in more than 1 year.....	1,289	3.4	0.22
In 1996 and 1998 only.....	458	1.2	0.13
In 1996 and 2000 only.....	101	0.3	0.06
In 1998 and 2000 only.....	170	0.4	0.08
In 1996 and 1998 and 2000.....	560	1.5	0.14
On AFDC/TANF in at least 1 year, but was out of sample in either 1996 or 2000 <sup>1</sup> .....	708	1.9	0.16

X represents no standard error.

<sup>1</sup>To be in sample means that the mother was interviewed in 1996, 1998, and 2000. To be out of sample means that the mother was not interviewed in 1996 or 2000.

Notes: This table represents the cohort of mothers that were in sample during interview 8, which occurred in 1998.

AFDC is the welfare program called Aid to Families of Dependent Children.

TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

By using the 1998 cohort of mothers who were in all three interview periods, a different perspective emerges on labor force participation. In Table 4, the cohort of mothers that existed in 1998 is divided into two groups: mothers who did not receive AFDC/TANF during 1996, 1998, or 2000, and mothers who received it at some time during those years. Of the mothers who were nonrecipients of AFDC or TANF, 61 percent were continuously attached to the labor force, compared with 29 percent of recipients who were continuously attached. Of the mothers who were nonrecipients, about 12 percent were

Table 4.  
**Labor Force Participation of 1998 Mothers by Receipt of AFDC/TANF Across Time Periods: 1996, 1998, and 2000**

Labor force participation of mothers	Number (thousands)	Percent	Standard error (percent)
<b>Not on AFDC or TANF during 1996, 1998, or 2000</b>			
Total.....	26,617	100.0	(X)
Continuously attached to the labor force.....	16,105	60.5	0.70
Continuously out of the labor force.....	3,256	12.2	0.47
In and out of the labor force.....	7,256	27.3	0.64
<b>Was on AFDC or TANF during 1996, 1998, or 2000</b>			
Total.....	3,090	100.0	(X)
Continuously attached to the labor force.....	890	28.8	1.91
Continuously out of the labor force.....	784	25.4	1.83
In and out of the labor force.....	1,416	45.8	2.10

X represents no standard error.

Notes: This is the cohort of 1998 mothers that were in sample all interview periods.

AFDC is the welfare program called Aid to Families of Dependent Children.

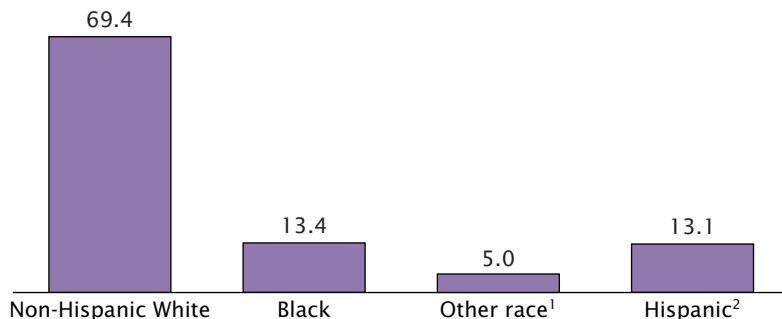
TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

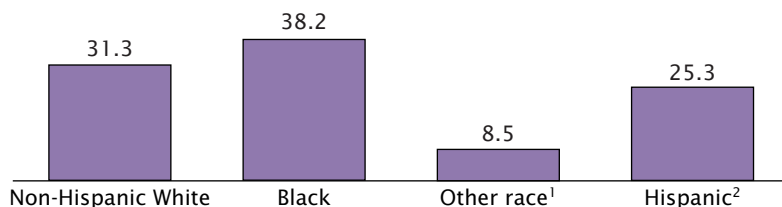
Figure 2.  
**Mothers by Receipt of TANF and Race and Hispanic Origin: 1998**

(In percent)

**Mothers not on TANF**



**Mothers on TANF**



AFDC is the welfare program called Aid to Families of Dependent Children.  
 TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

<sup>1</sup> Other race consists of: American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asians and Pacific Islanders.

<sup>2</sup> Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

**The plurality of mothers who receive TANF in 1998 are Black**

Figure 2 shows that Black mothers represented a higher share of recipients of TANF benefits than non-Hispanic Whites, people of other race,<sup>7</sup> or Hispanics (who may be of any race). Black mothers constituted 38 percent of total recipients of TANF benefits. Non-Hispanic Whites were 31 percent of TANF recipients, people of other race were 9 percent, and Hispanics constituted 25 percent of TANF recipients.

Blacks, people of other race, and Hispanics were overrepresented in the population of mothers receiving TANF benefits. Black mothers were 13 percent of mothers who did not receive TANF benefits, people of other race constituted 5 percent, and Hispanics were 13 percent of those who did not receive benefits. For each of these groups, the proportion receiving TANF benefits was significantly larger than the proportion of mothers who did not receive benefits.

continuously out of the labor force, compared with 25 percent of recipients who were continuously out. Mothers who moved in and out of the labor force constituted 27 percent of all nonrecipients and 46 percent of all recipients. Even though

Figure 1 shows that the percentage of labor force participation of welfare mothers is relatively constant, mothers who participated in welfare during 1996, 1998, or 2000 are more likely to be moving in and out of the labor force.

<sup>7</sup> Other race includes American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asians and Pacific Islanders.

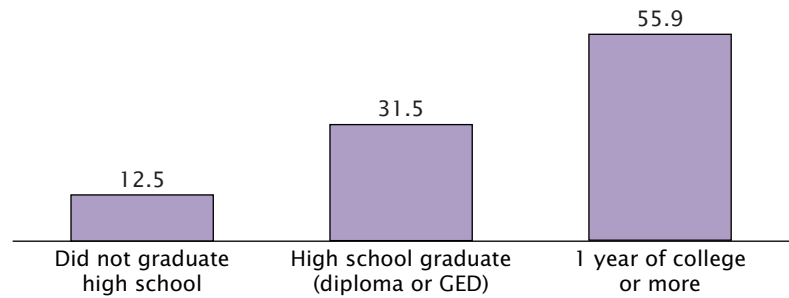
**Mothers with less education have a greater chance of receiving TANF in 1998**

The educational attainment of mothers receiving TANF in 1998 differs substantially from that of nonrecipients. Figure 3 shows that 42 percent of TANF mothers did not graduate from high school compared with only 13 percent of non-TANF mothers who did not graduate. While similar proportions of recipients and nonrecipients were high school graduates with no further schooling (36 and 32 percent, respectively), only about 23 percent of TANF mothers had at least 1 year of college, compared with 56 percent of non-TANF mothers.

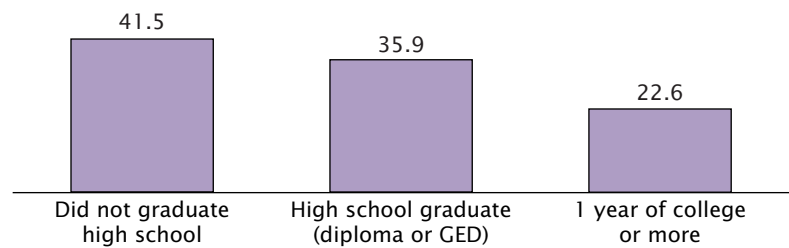
Figure 3.  
**Mothers by Receipt of TANF and Educational Attainment: 1998**

(In percent)

**Mothers not on TANF**



**Mothers on TANF**



TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

Table 5.  
**Work and Work-Related Activities of TANF Mothers by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1998**

(Numbers in thousands)

Activity status	All mothers	In training	In the labor force	Neither
<b>Non-Hispanic White</b>				
Total .....	635	116	295	300
Percent .....	100.0	18.2	46.4	47.3
Standard error .....	(X)	3.58	4.63	4.64
<b>Black</b>				
Total .....	774	92	300	437
Percent .....	100.0	11.8	38.7	56.4
Standard error .....	(X)	2.02	3.05	3.11
<b>Other race<sup>1</sup></b>				
Total .....	173	29	65	86
Percent .....	100.0	16.7	37.3	49.8
Standard error .....	(X)	4.08	5.3	5.48
<b>Hispanic<sup>2</sup></b>				
Total .....	513	57	162	329
Percent .....	100.0	11.1	31.6	64.2
Standard error .....	(X)	2.26	3.34	3.44

X represents no standard error.

<sup>1</sup>Other race consists of: American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asians and Pacific Islanders.

<sup>2</sup>Hispanics may be of any race.

Notes: TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Categories are not mutually exclusive across work and work-related activities.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

**Participation in work and work-related activities is similar across racial and ethnic groups for TANF mothers in 1998**

For non-Hispanic Whites, Blacks, and people of other races who received TANF benefits, there is no statistically significant difference in their work and work-related activities in 1998. However, there is a significant difference in labor force participation between non-Hispanic Whites and Hispanics who received TANF benefits (46 and 32 percent, respectively). Table 5 also shows that the proportions of mothers who are participating in a training program are statistically similar across all groups.

**TANF mothers without high school diplomas have comparatively poor work and work-related outcomes in 1998**

In 1998, TANF mothers without a high school degree were significantly less likely to receive training or participate in the labor force than other TANF mothers. Table 6 shows that about 64 percent of TANF mothers without a high school degree did not participate in either work or work-related activities. For TANF mothers with at least a high school diploma, slightly less than half were not working, looking for employment, or participating in training programs. There are no significant differences between TANF mothers with just a high school degree and TANF mothers with some college.

Table 6.  
**Work and Work-Related Activities of TANF Mothers by Educational Attainment: 1998**

(Numbers in thousands)

Activity status	All mothers	In training	In the labor force	Neither
<b>Did not graduate high school</b>				
Total TANF mothers .....	842	67	280	542
Percent .....	100.0	8.0	33.2	64.3
Standard error .....	(X)	1.73	3.00	3.05
<b>High school graduate (diploma or GED)</b>				
Total TANF mothers .....	728	123	314	352
Percent .....	100.0	16.9	43.2	48.4
Standard error .....	(X)	2.57	3.40	3.43
<b>1 year of college or more</b>				
Total TANF mothers .....	460	87	218	215
Percent .....	100.0	19.0	47.4	46.8
Standard error .....	(X)	3.39	4.31	4.31

X represents no standard error.

Notes: TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Categories are not mutually exclusive across work and work-related activities.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.



**Common types of training in 1998 include help to find employment**

The types of training fell into three general categories: finding employment, skills training, and traditional educational programs. Table 7 shows TANF mothers who are receiving training. Nearly three-fourths of TANF mothers who received training participated in job skills training, such as computer, clerical, machinery, and other vocational/job specific training. However, 62 percent of these mothers received training in how to find employment, which included help in resume writing, practice in interviewing, self-esteem building, advice on how to dress, and how to use job listings to find work. The least prevalent form of training was participation in educational programs (40 percent),<sup>8</sup> such as obtaining a G.E.D., taking college courses, literacy training, and taking courses in English as a second language.

**The majority of work activities in 1998 were voluntary choices**

Local welfare offices often require mothers receiving TANF to participate in some form of work activity. In a Community Work Experience Program (CWEP), or “workfare,”<sup>9</sup> the

<sup>8</sup> Individual states decide which types of training count as “work-related behavior.” Many states do not allow education programs to count as work-related activities.  
<sup>9</sup> Not all states require workfare participation.

Table 7.  
**Type of Training for TANF Mothers: 1998**

Types of training	Number (thousands)	Percent	Standard error (percent)
Total TANF mothers in training . . . . .	278	100.0	(X)
Training in how to find employment . . . . .	173	62.4	5.38
Job skills/Job training . . . . .	205	74.0	4.87
Traditional education programs . . . . .	111	39.9	5.44

X represents no standard error.

Notes: TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

state requires a mother to work for her benefits, so the mother typically receives her benefits in place of pay. In this case, the mother works the number of hours determined by her benefit divided by the minimum wage. This work activity is always required.

However, the majority of the TANF mothers who participated in the labor force did so voluntarily. As Table 8 shows, about 55 percent of mothers who were looking for work did so voluntarily compared with 45 percent who said that the welfare office required them to look for work. Of the mothers who worked, 68 percent did so voluntarily and 32 percent said they were required by the welfare office to work.

**TANF mothers who worked or had work-related activities in 1998 often received a subsidy**

TANF mothers involved in work and work-related activities

sometimes receive government subsidies to help them work or find work. As Table 9 shows, the most prevalent type of subsidy is for child care: 23 percent of TANF mothers who were involved in the labor force or were training received this type of subsidy. Nineteen percent of TANF mothers received some other type of subsidy, which included subsidies for training, transportation, and direct subsidies to an employer. However, over two-thirds (69 percent) of mothers who were in the labor force or training received no subsidies.

**Some TANF mothers must fulfill additional requirements to receive benefits in 1998**

As Table 10 shows, 58 percent of all mothers receiving TANF were required by the local welfare office to report on their own behavior that was not directly related to work. Of these mothers, 54 percent had to regularly go into the



Table 8.  
**Types of Labor Force Participation of TANF Mothers by Welfare Office Requirements: 1998**

(Numbers in thousands)

Labor force activities	Workfare			Looking for work			Worked		
	Number	Percent	Standard error (percent)	Number	Percent	Standard error (percent)	Number	Percent	Standard error (percent)
Total mothers receiving TANF in the labor force.....	116	100.0	(X)	351	100.0	(X)	569	100.0	(X)
Not required by welfare office to participate in a work activity.....	—	—	—	194	55.3	6.22	389	68.4	4.57
Required by welfare office.....	116	100.0	(X)	157	44.7	6.22	180	31.6	4.57

X represents no standard error.

— represents zero because workfare is always required.

Notes: TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Labor force categories are not mutually exclusive.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

Table 9.  
**Subsidies for Work and Work-Related Activities: 1998**

Type of subsidy	Number (thousands)	Percent	Standard error (percent)
Total mothers receiving TANF in the labor force.....	881	100.0	(X)
Child care subsidy.....	201	22.8	3.31
Other subsidy.....	164	18.6	3.07
No subsidy.....	605	68.6	3.66

X represents no standard error.

Notes: TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

Table 10.  
**Nonwork Requirements Made by the Welfare Office: 1998**

Nonwork requirements	Number (thousands)	Percent	Standard error (percent)
Total mothers receiving TANF.....	2,029	100.0	(X)
Nonwork requirements.....	1,171	57.7	2.57
Asked about income regularly.....	1,097	54.1	2.59
Other requirements.....	232	11.4	1.65
Does not have nonwork requirements.....	858	42.3	2.57

X represents no standard error.

Notes: TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

welfare office to make a report on current income and any family or address changes; about 11 percent had to report other activities, such as paternity tests, drug tests, requirements to live with responsible adults, and other unspecified requirements. Forty-two percent of all mothers on TANF had no regular obligations to the welfare office in order to receive benefits.

As Table 11 shows, about 10 percent of mothers on TANF either expected their TANF benefits to be cancelled soon or actually had them cancelled during the months the interview covered (August/November 1998). Eighty-eight percent of the mothers receiving TANF benefits did not have an expectation that their benefits would be cancelled.

Under TANF, many states experimented with their delivery of welfare benefits by issuing a debit card to be used at an ATM

machine. Table 12 shows that 20 percent of TANF mothers received their payments in this way.

**An important note on making longitudinal comparisons**

The primary sample for most of this study is the SIPP sample members present during August through November of 1998 who also answered questions on SIPP's Welfare Reform Topical Module. However, the analysis was not wholly restricted to this group. To place welfare reform in context, some tables use estimates based on cross-sectional views, while others only consider the mothers from 1998. For instance, Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 1 are concerned with mothers in general, so a cross-sectional "snapshot" of all welfare mothers is more appropriate. Tables 3 and 4 give a past and a future context to the 1998 cohort of mothers that is the focus of the analysis.

This difference in the sample examined between Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 1 with the rest of the analysis causes slightly different results, because two populations are defined for 1998. The population used in Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 1 comes from the main (core) SIPP survey, and includes any mother who was part of the interview period for waves 1, 8, and 12. All subsequent tables and figures, beginning with Table 3 and Figure 2, use the population that includes any mother who was interviewed for wave 8, as well as the welfare reform topical module. The latter population has about 225,000 fewer mothers (and 27,000 fewer TANF mothers).

In surveys, each person interviewed represents multiple people

Table 11.  
**Cancellation of TANF Benefits: 1998**

Benefit cancellation	Number (thousands)	Percent	Standard error (percent)
Total mothers receiving TANF . . . . .	2,029	100.0	(X)
No expectation of benefits being cancelled . . . . .	1,791	88.2	1.67
Benefits cancelled in the last 4 months or the mother expects them to be cancelled soon . . . . .	199	9.8	1.55
Does not know or not reported . . . . .	40	2.0	0.72

X represents no standard error.

Note: TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

Table 12.  
**Use of Debit Cards in the Administration of Payments to TANF Mothers: 1998**

ATM use	Number (thousands)	Percent	Standard error (percent)
Total mothers receiving TANF . . . . .	2,029	100.0	(X)
ATM card not used . . . . .	1,580	77.9	2.16
ATM card used . . . . .	403	19.8	2.07
Does not know or not reported . . . . .	46	2.3	0.78

X represents no standard error.

Note: TANF is the welfare program called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 1996 panel.

in the population. SIPP represents the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population. For SIPP, each person interview represents, on average, 2,000 to 4,000 people. Sample weights are used to inflate the number of people interviewed to equal the number of people in the population. The sample weights used in this report represent the U.S. civilian population as of the last reference month of the eighth interview for Table 3 and beyond. This affects the interpretation of Tables 3 and 4. For instance, Table 3 does not say that there were 38 million mothers in 1996, 1998, and 2000. Instead it shows that of the 38 million mothers who were interviewed in 1998, 8 million were not interviewed in 1996 or in 2000. It also shows

that, of this cohort, 3 percent were on AFDC or TANF in 1996, but not in 1998 or in 2000.

The design of this report also caused people to be reported as "missing" for Tables 3 and 4. If a person was interviewed in 1998, but was not interviewed in 1996 or in 2000, then the person is considered "out of sample" or "missing" for that time period. Other research suggests that poor families<sup>10</sup> and families on welfare<sup>11</sup> tend to leave surveys more often than other families. Because poor mothers are more likely to receive welfare, it is likely that this report underestimates the number of

<sup>10</sup> Huggins and Winters 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Hernandez 1998 finds that longitudinal weights correct much of this differential loss in the Survey of Program Dynamics.

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TANF mothers. Thus, future work with longitudinally weighted files may show slightly different results.

## **ACCURACY AND RELIABILITY OF THE DATA**

This report is one of a series that presents information of current policy interest. 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 the Census Bureau's standards for 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, testing the wording of questions, reviewing the work of interviewers and coders, and conducting 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 procedure partially corrects for bias because of 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.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, contact John Boies, Demographic Statistical Methods Division, at 301-457-4182, [John.L.Boies@census.gov](mailto:John.L.Boies@census.gov).

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## **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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