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Household
Economic Studies

Series P-70, No. 6

Economic Characteristics of Households in the United States:

Fourth Quarter
1984

Average Monthly
Data From the
Survey of
Income and Program
Participation



U.S. Department of Commerce
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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and Program Participation*

Issued January 1986



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.
X Not applicable.
B Base less than 200,000.
-

Economic Characteristics of Households in the United States: Fourth Quarter 1984

CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLDS

Children under the age of 18 accounted for 27 percent of the U.S. nonfarm population in the fourth quarter of 1984. They numbered 61 million: 49.3 million White, 9.5 million Black, and 2.2 million of other races. About 4.9 million were of Spanish origin, which includes persons in any race category. While most children (76 percent) lived in married-couple households, 24 percent lived in single-parent families, and 19 percent were in families with female householders with no husbands present. (See table A.)

Using the income of the household in which children live as an attribute of each child within the household and averaging this attribute for all children yields an average monthly household income for children under the age of 18 of \$2,470 for the fourth quarter of 1984. The average for White children was \$2,650, significantly higher than that of Black children and Spanish children, \$1,500 and \$1,640, respectively. (The difference between the household income of Black and Spanish children was not statistically significant.) The average household income for children living in married-couple households was \$2,820 per month, compared with only \$1,160 for children in female-householder families. (The term "female-maintained households" is also used for this type of family.) Thus, the average household income for the roughly 1 in 5 children residing in households without a

husband present was less than half that for children in married-couple households.

For Black children, 46 percent lived in female-householder families. The average household income for these children was \$860 per month, about 40 percent of the average for Black children living in married-couple households. About 24 percent of Spanish children were in families maintained by women with no husbands present. The average monthly household income for these children was \$790. (The difference between the household income levels for Black and Spanish children was not statistically significant.)

The lower average monthly household income levels for Black and Spanish children in general, and for children in families maintained by women without a husband present in particular, result in higher-than-average proportions of these groups participating in means-tested benefit programs.¹

The next four sections profile participation and other selected economic characteristics of households and children.

¹Means-tested programs include Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and other cash assistance; Supplemental Security Income (SSI); food stamps; Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); free or reduced-price school meals; Medicaid; VA pensions; public or subsidized rental housing; and energy assistance. Persons and families need not have income levels below the poverty level in order to participate in means-tested programs. For example, students in families with incomes between 125 and 195 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price school meals.

Table A. Children Under 18, by Race, Type of Household, and Mean Monthly Household Income: Monthly Average, Fourth Quarter 1984

(Numbers in thousands)

Race or Spanish origin	All households	Married-couple households	Female-maintained households	Other households
NUMBER OF CHILDREN				
Total	60,990	46,370	11,428	3,192
White	49,308	40,434	6,859	2,015
Black	9,459	4,052	4,347	1,060
Other races	2,223	1,884	222	117
Spanish origin ¹	4,850	3,471	1,168	211
MEAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Total	\$2,468	\$2,816	\$1,155	(NA)
White	2,653	2,894	1,321	(NA)
Black	1,504	2,155	864	(NA)
Other races	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
Spanish origin ¹	1,637	1,910	788	(NA)

NA Not available.

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

Participation in Means-Tested Programs

Overall, about 19.5 million children, or about 1 in 3, were members of a household that received means-tested benefits during the fourth quarter of 1984. The program with the highest participation rate was free and reduced-price school meals. About 23 percent of all nonfarm children lived in a household that participated in this program. (See table B.)

Participation rates for other means-tested programs were much lower than that of free and reduced-price school meals. The percentages of children living in households that participated in the Food Stamp and Medicaid programs or

received cash public assistance ranged between 11 and 16 percent. About 5 percent of children lived in public or subsidized rental housing, and about the same proportion lived in households that received food benefits from the WIC program.

Of all children under the age of 18, 1 in 5 lived in female-householder families. About 68 percent of the children in female-householder families received benefits. The percentages of children in these households receiving free or reduced-price school meals, food stamps, cash public assistance, or Medicaid varied between 38 and 54 percent. Eighteen percent of children lived in public or subsidized ren-

Table B. Children Under 18, by Race, Type of Household, and Receipt of Means-Tested Benefits: Monthly Average, Fourth Quarter 1984

(Numbers in thousands)

Type of benefit	All children			White children		
	All households	Married-couple households	Female-maintained households	All households	Married-couple households	Female-maintained households
NUMBER OF CHILDREN						
Received means-tested benefits, total . . .	19,534	10,105	7,795	12,023	7,287	3,995
Food stamps	8,772	2,963	5,153	4,760	1,955	2,567
Free and reduced-price school meals . . .	13,879	7,155	5,683	8,149	5,040	2,665
Medicaid	7,696	2,376	4,582	4,218	1,575	2,342
Public or subsidized rental housing . . .	3,165	967	2,043	1,377	527	820
WIC	3,196	1,845	1,134	1,903	1,335	483
Cash public assistance	8,314	2,719	4,732	4,429	1,683	2,384
PERCENT OF CHILDREN						
Received means-tested benefits, total . . .	32.0	21.8	68.2	24.4	18.0	58.2
Food stamps	14.4	6.4	45.1	9.7	4.8	37.4
Free and reduced-price school meals . . .	22.8	15.4	49.7	16.5	12.5	38.8
Medicaid	12.6	5.1	40.1	8.6	3.9	34.1
Public or subsidized rental housing . . .	5.2	2.1	17.9	2.8	1.3	12.0
WIC	5.2	4.0	9.9	3.9	3.3	7.0
Cash public assistance	13.6	5.9	41.4	9.0	4.2	34.8
Type of benefit	Black children			Spanish children		
	All households	Married-couple households	Female-maintained households	All households	Married-couple households	Female-maintained households
NUMBER OF CHILDREN						
Received means-tested benefits, total . . .	6,455	1,954	3,687	2,891	1,799	995
Food stamps	3,432	556	2,492	1,228	448	734
Free and reduced-price school meals . . .	4,888	1,417	2,926	2,340	1,494	770
Medicaid	2,959	423	2,139	1,128	325	747
Public or subsidized rental housing . . .	1,612	292	1,195	449	181	268
WIC	1,057	291	639	359	230	118
Cash public assistance	3,301	610	2,237	1,097	288	745
PERCENT OF CHILDREN						
Received means-tested benefits, total . . .	68.2	48.2	84.8	59.6	51.8	85.2
Food stamps	36.3	13.7	57.3	25.3	12.9	62.8
Free and reduced-price school meals . . .	51.7	35.0	67.3	48.2	43.0	66.0
Medicaid	31.3	10.4	49.2	23.3	9.4	64.0
Public or subsidized rental housing . . .	17.0	7.2	27.5	9.2	5.2	22.9
WIC	11.2	7.2	14.7	7.4	6.6	10.1
Cash public assistance	34.9	15.1	51.5	22.6	8.3	63.8

tal housing, while only 10 percent lived in households receiving food benefits from the WIC program.

Black and Spanish children in female-householder families had program participation rates that exceeded the rates overall for Black and Spanish children (table B); their proportion in program-participant households stood at about 85 percent for the fourth quarter of 1984. The average monthly household incomes for these children were significantly less than the overall average of \$1,160 for all children in female-householder families without husbands present.

While Black and Spanish children in married-couple households were, on average, better off economically than those in female-householder families, these children were members of households that had relatively high rates of participation in means-tested benefit programs. About 48 percent of the Black children and 52 percent of the Spanish children were in households receiving benefits, compared with 22 percent for all children in married-couple households (no statistically significant difference between the rates of participation for Black and Spanish children). For both Black and Spanish children in married-couple households, free and reduced-price school meals benefits were, by far, the most frequently received.

Labor Force Activity of Household Members

More than 3 of 4 children resided in households in which the householder was working at a full-time job during all weeks of the month. (See table C.) This proportion was somewhat higher for children in married-couple households (86 percent) and much lower for children in female-householder families (51 percent). Only 7 percent of children were in households where no member had any type of labor force activity.

Children in households with no labor force activity were concentrated in several situations: About 73 percent (3.2 million) were in female-householder families, and 40 percent were Black even though Black children constituted 16 percent of all children.

About 19 percent of all Black children resided in households with no members having labor force activity. The high proportion of Black children living in female-householder families (46 percent) and the high proportion of these children living in households with no member having labor force activity (34 percent) were major factors contributing to the high proportion of all Black children in this situation. Only 4 percent of Black children in married-couple households were in households without labor force activity.

Private Health Insurance Coverage

Overall, the SIPP found that 71 percent of the children under age 18 resided in households with one or more members covered by private health insurance. (See table D.) This health insurance included coverage through employer group health insurance plans and coverage by plans purchased independently by individuals.

As might be expected, the coverage rate for this type of health insurance varied significantly by type of household. About 81 percent of the children in married-couple families had private health insurance coverage, compared with only 40 percent for children in households maintained by women with no husbands present.

Within these types of households the coverage varied by race. Both Black and Spanish children were less likely to be covered by private health insurance than White children; this was true for both married-couple households and female-maintained households. These lower rates in part reflect the

Table C. Children Under 18, by Race, Type of Household, and Specific Labor Force Activity of Household Members: Monthly Average, Fourth Quarter 1984

(Numbers in thousands)

Race or Spanish origin	Householder worked full time, all weeks			No household member with labor force activity		
	All households	Married-couple households	Female-maintained households	All households	Married-couple households	Female-maintained households
NUMBER OF CHILDREN						
Total	47,767	39,798	5,870	4,392	898	3,224
White	40,752	35,340	3,918	2,312	512	1,678
Black	5,506	3,103	1,859	1,774	169	1,468
Spanish origin ¹	3,240	2,738	348	631	135	490
PERCENT OF CHILDREN						
Total	78.3	85.8	51.4	7.2	1.9	28.2
White	82.6	87.4	57.1	4.7	1.3	24.5
Black	58.2	76.6	42.8	18.8	4.2	33.8
Spanish origin ¹	66.8	78.9	29.8	13.0	3.9	42.0

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

Table D. Children Under 18, by Race, Type of Household, and Private Health Insurance Coverage of Household Members: Monthly Average, Fourth Quarter 1984

(Numbers in thousands)

Race or Spanish origin	All households	Married-couple households	Female-maintained households
NUMBER OF CHILDREN			
Total	43,512	37,339	4,594
White	37,619	33,332	3,144
Black	4,602	2,856	1,365
Spanish origin ¹	2,361	2,044	236
PERCENT OF CHILDREN			
Total	71.3	80.5	40.2
White	76.3	82.4	45.8
Black	48.7	70.5	31.4
Spanish origin ¹	48.7	58.9	20.2

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.

smaller proportions of Black and Spanish children residing in households with a householder working full time.

Disability Status of Householder

One other factor that may affect the economic status of a household is the disability status of the householder. (See table E.) Many of these households have reduced capacity for employment and thus generally lower income levels. About 6.4 million children under the age of 18 lived in households where the householders had physical, mental, or other health conditions that limited the kinds or amounts of work they could do. Children living in female-maintained households were more likely to have a disabled householder (15 percent) than those in married-couple households (9 percent). The proportion of Black children residing with disabled householders (16 percent) was higher than comparable rates for White and Spanish children (9 and 11 percent, respectively). (These two rates were not statistically different.)

QUARTERLY AVERAGES

The detailed tables 1 through 9 that follow this section contain additional information concerning the economic

characteristics of households and persons for the fourth quarter of 1984. The data in these tables reveal that the average monthly income of the Nation's 84.9 million nonfarm households was \$2,330, and that about 3 percent of these households were receiving unemployment compensation payments. (See table 5.) Data in these tables also show that men working full time for the month averaged earnings of \$2,120 per month and women working full time averaged \$1,280. (See table 3.) About 9.3 million households had a disabled householder, and the average income of these households, \$1,740 per month, was 75 percent of the overall household average. (See table 7.)

Data contained in tables 8 and 9 provide estimates of household participation in government assistance programs and the income levels for households receiving specific sources of income. Table 8 shows that 1.1 million households with a householder over the age of 65 received food stamps during the fourth quarter of 1984 and that 2.3 million female-householder families with children also received food stamps during that period. Together these households accounted for 56 percent of the 6.1 million receiving food stamps. Table 9 shows that 28 percent of all households were receiving Social Security benefits and that these households averaged \$1,720 per month. This table also shows that more than 1 in 5 households receiving Social Security had monthly incomes of less than \$600 per month.

Table E. Children Under 18 Residing With a Disabled Householder, by Race and Type of Household: Monthly Average, Fourth Quarter 1984

(Numbers in thousands)

Race or Spanish origin	All households	Married-couple households	Female-maintained households
NUMBER OF CHILDREN			
Total	6,412	4,252	1,668
White	4,631	3,361	1,002
Black	1,519	653	647
Spanish origin ¹	516	272	204
PERCENT OF CHILDREN			
Total	10.5	9.2	14.6
White	9.4	8.3	14.6
Black	16.1	16.1	14.9
Spanish origin ¹	10.6	7.8	17.5

¹Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race.