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Who's Supporting the Kids?

More and more children are living in homes without fathers. By spring 1990, 10 million women aged 15 and over maintained families with children under age 21 whose fathers were absent from the home. About 5.7 million had been awarded child support, leaving a large number without financial support from the children's father. About 3.2 million of these families— 1 in 3 lived in poverty.

This Brief examines the characteristics of women receiving child support payments, the amount they received, and visitation rights and residence of absent fathers. This Brief does not provide data on men with children from an absent mother. The questions were not asked of these men as the survey sample size was not large enough to provide reliable data for this universe. Data come from the April 1990 supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), which collected income data covering 1989. The survey was conducted by the Bureau of the Census and sponsored, in part, by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement.

One-half of women due support actually received full amount.

Five million women were supposed to receive child support payments in 1989. Only about one-half received the full amount due them. The remainder were about evenly split between those receiving a portion of what they were due and those who received nothing.

A total of \$11.2 billion was paid in child support in 1989, \$5.1 billion less than was due. The mean amount received by all those due payments in 1989 was \$2,252. If the full amount due was paid, the mean amount would have been \$3,292.

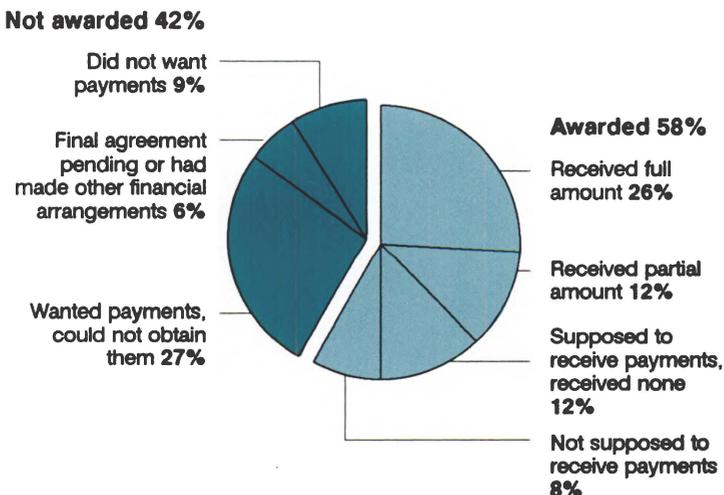
Mothers with child support awards had a significantly lower poverty rate than those without

awards (24 versus 43 percent). Also, never-married mothers with children from an absent father had a poverty rate of 54 percent, compared with 23 percent for those who had been married before.

Support varies by group.

- **Marital history.** Women who have been married before were three times as likely to be awarded child support as those who have never been married (72 versus 24 percent).
- **Race and Hispanic origin.** While 68 percent of White women were awarded child support, only 35 percent of Black women received such awards. The award rate for Hispanic-origin women was 41 percent.

Child Support Award Status of Women With Children From an Absent Father: Spring 1990



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U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Amount of Child Support Received Varies

Mean dollar amount of child support received in 1989 by women aged 15 and over who received payments, by selected demographic characteristics.

All women receiving payments	\$2,995
Divorced and separated	\$3,268
Never-married	\$1,888
White	\$3,132
Black	\$2,263
Hispanic origin	\$2,965
Four or more years of college	\$4,850
High school diploma (or some college)	\$2,900
No high school diploma	\$1,754
Below poverty line	\$1,889
Above poverty line	\$3,304

- **Education.** The award rate rises with the mother's educational level, from 37 percent (no high school diploma) to 75 percent (4 or more years of college).

Fathers have visitation rights.

Over half (55 percent) of absent fathers had visitation privileges; another 7 percent had joint custody with the mother. The remaining 38 percent had neither. Having joint custody, or at least visitation privileges, made it more likely for absent fathers to make the child support payments they owed. About 90 percent of those with joint custody and 79 percent with visitation rights paid child support; 45 percent with neither provision did.

Absent fathers usually live in same State as their children.

About 64 percent of absent fathers lived in the same State as their children. Another 26 percent lived in another State; the remainder lived either overseas or at an unknown address. Proximity seemed to increase the chances of payment: 81 percent of absent fathers living in the same State who were supposed to pay did so, compared with 66 percent living in another State, and 47 per-

cent living either abroad or at an unknown address.

Fewer than half of women are awarded health care benefits.

Forty percent of women with child support awards in 1990 had health insurance benefits included in their award. About one-third of fathers required to provide health insurance benefits as part of the award, though, did not do so. On the other hand, some fathers (7 percent) not required to provide health insurance benefits as part of the award did so anyway.

Close to 1 in 3 sought government help in obtaining child support.

About 2.9 million of the 10 million women with children from an absent father had, at some time, contacted a government agency for assistance in obtaining child support. About 1 million women received aid in finding the father, establishing paternity, or establishing support obligations. About the same number got help in enforcing the support order or obtaining collection. The remainder tried to get help, but did not.

More information

Child Support & Alimony: 1989, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 173. For sale by U.S. Government Printing Office. Call Customer Services at the Census Bureau (301-763-4100) for ordering information.

Contacts:

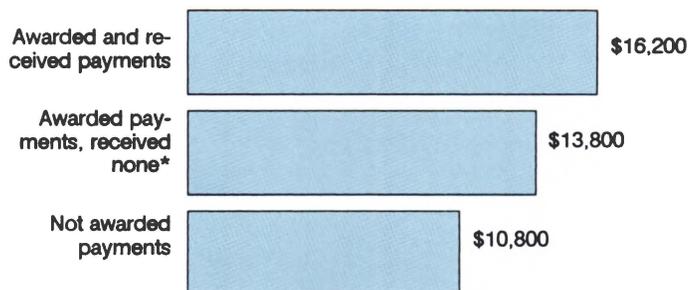
Child Support -
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This Brief is one of a series that presents information of current policy interest. It may include data from businesses, households, or other sources. All statistics are subject to sampling variability as well as survey design flaws, respondent classification and reporting errors, and data processing mistakes. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors, and analytical statements have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, caution should be used when comparing these data with data from other sources.

Women Who Were Awarded and Received Child Support Have Highest Incomes

Total money income of women with children from absent fathers, by child support award status: 1989



* Excludes a small number of women who were awarded payments but were not supposed to receive them in 1989.