



Adults' Environment and Behavior Attitudes Toward Welfare and Working Mothers

Some critics of the welfare system have argued that welfare programs contribute to the creation of a society in which the values and beliefs of people receiving public assistance are fundamentally different from those of people not receiving public assistance.

To examine attitudes toward welfare and working mothers, parents were asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the following statements: (i) Welfare makes people work less than they would if there weren't a welfare system; (ii) A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work; and (iii) When children are young, mothers should not work outside the home.

The responses reflect the attitudes of the parent or primary caregiver who knows the most about the health care and education of children in the household. Parents were classified as receiving public assistance if someone in their family was a beneficiary of the Temporary Assistance for

Needy Families program (or its predecessor) or the Food Stamp Program at the time of the survey.

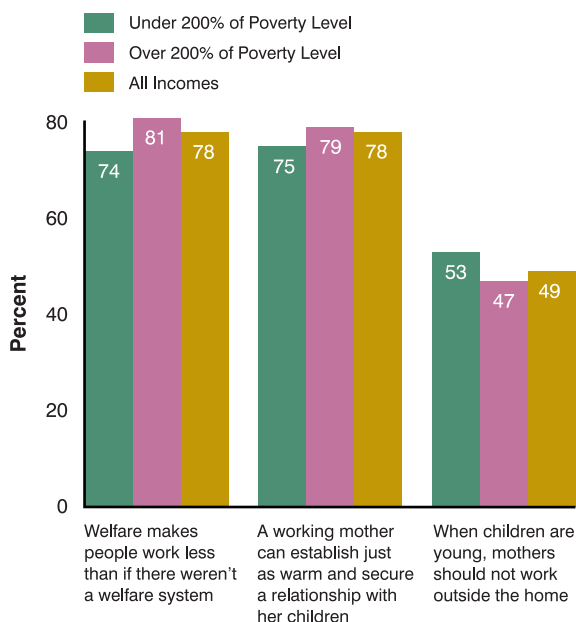
Nationally, 78 percent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that welfare provides a disincentive to work. Variation among the 13 states surveyed was slight: The greatest agreement was 81 percent, in Florida, while the least was 72 percent, in Massachusetts.

There was also little difference nationally by income group, although the difference was statistically significant. Seventy-four percent of parents with low family incomes (below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) agreed that welfare provides a work disincentive, compared to 81 percent of parents with higher family incomes. However, parents in families receiving public assistance were much less likely to agree that welfare provides a disincentive to work than parents in families not receiving public assistance: 64 percent versus 80 percent, respectively, a statistically significant difference.

Nationally, 78 percent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that working mothers can establish as warm and secure a relationship with their children as mothers who do not work. Again, there were only slight differences between the states, ranging from a low of 71 percent agreement in California to a high of 81 percent in Massachusetts and Minnesota.

There was also a statistically significant, but small, difference nationally by income, with 75 percent of parents from low-income and 79 percent of those from higher-income families agreeing or strongly agreeing that working mothers can establish as warm and secure a relationship with their children as mothers who do not work. There was almost no

Parents Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Regarding Welfare and Working Mothers, by Family Income, 1997



Source: Urban Institute



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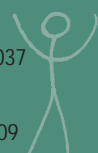


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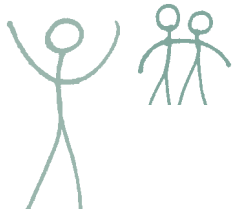
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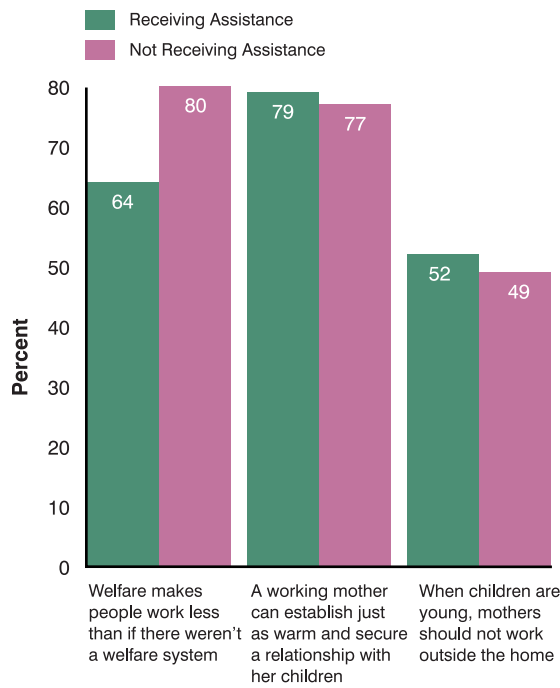


This *Snapshot* presents findings from the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF), a 1997 survey of 44,461 households with and without telephones that are representative of the nation as a whole and of 13 states. As in all surveys, the data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error.

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Parents Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Regarding Welfare and Working Mothers, by Welfare Status, 1997



Source: Urban Institute

difference in agreement between parents in families receiving public assistance (79 percent) and those in families not receiving assistance (77 percent).

Finally, only 49 percent of parents nationally agreed or strongly agreed that when children are young, mothers should not work outside the home. This statement provoked more varied responses by state than the other two, ranging from 43 percent agreement in Wisconsin to 59 percent agreement in California.

Nationally, 47 percent of higher-income parents agreed or strongly agreed that mothers of young children should not work, while 53 percent of low-income parents did, a statistically significant, but modest, difference. There was also very little difference in agreement by welfare status. Fifty-two percent of parents in families receiving public assistance agreed or strongly agreed, compared to 49 percent of parents in families not receiving assistance.

Parents (%) Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed with Statements Regarding Welfare and Working Mothers, 1997

Statement	AL	CA	CO	FL	MA	MI	MN	MS	NJ	NY	TX	WA	WI	US
Below 200% of poverty level														
Welfare makes people work less than if there weren't a welfare system	77.2	73.1	73.8	76.8	74.7	66.7	75.8	74.5	71.0	68.3	77.0	69.7	71.5	73.5
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children	79.0	64.4	73.5	76.4	80.3	79.3	75.1	75.8	70.0	71.4	71.3	68.9	79.3	75.0
When children are young, mothers should not work outside the home	44.4	65.6	60.4	52.8	55.0	45.8	50.8	41.9	55.6	55.8	55.0	61.0	48.7	53.3
Above 200% of poverty level														
Welfare makes people work less than if there weren't a welfare system	83.2	77.0	78.6	83.8	71.6	77.2	78.1	85.9	75.8	77.2	82.8	76.0	75.4	81.1
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children	77.6	76.8	76.6	79.1	81.5	80.0	83.3	77.1	82.8	82.5	77.6	78.5	80.5	79.4
When children are young, mothers should not work outside the home	45.7	53.2	47.4	45.9	41.9	45.2	40.8	46.4	46.6	43.0	45.0	52.2	40.9	46.7
All incomes														
Welfare makes people work less than if there weren't a welfare system	80.4	75.3	77.1	80.7	72.4	73.7	77.4	79.9	74.6	73.6	80.1	73.9	74.2	78.1
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children	78.3	71.3	75.7	77.9	81.2	79.7	80.9	76.4	79.4	77.9	74.6	75.3	80.1	77.6
When children are young, mothers should not work outside the home	45.1	58.9	51.6	49.0	45.5	45.4	43.7	44.0	49.0	48.4	49.8	55.1	43.1	49.4

Figures in color represent statistically significant differences from the national average at the .05 confidence level. Figures in black are not statistically significantly different from the national average. All figures in text, charts, and table are rounded.

Source: Urban Institute