



Challenges Facing Low-Income DC Families

May 20, 2009

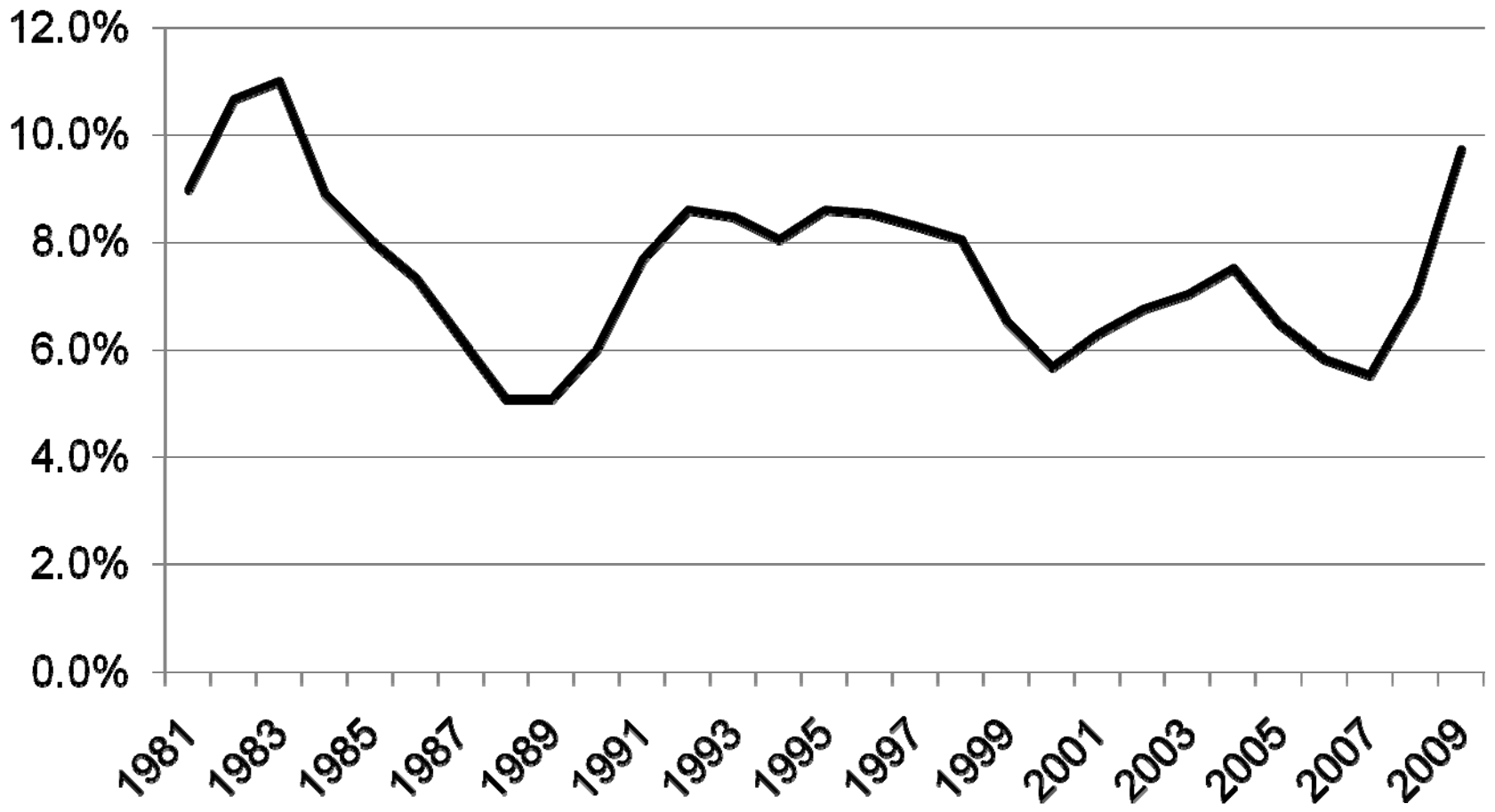
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WAWF Stepping Stones Research Briefing

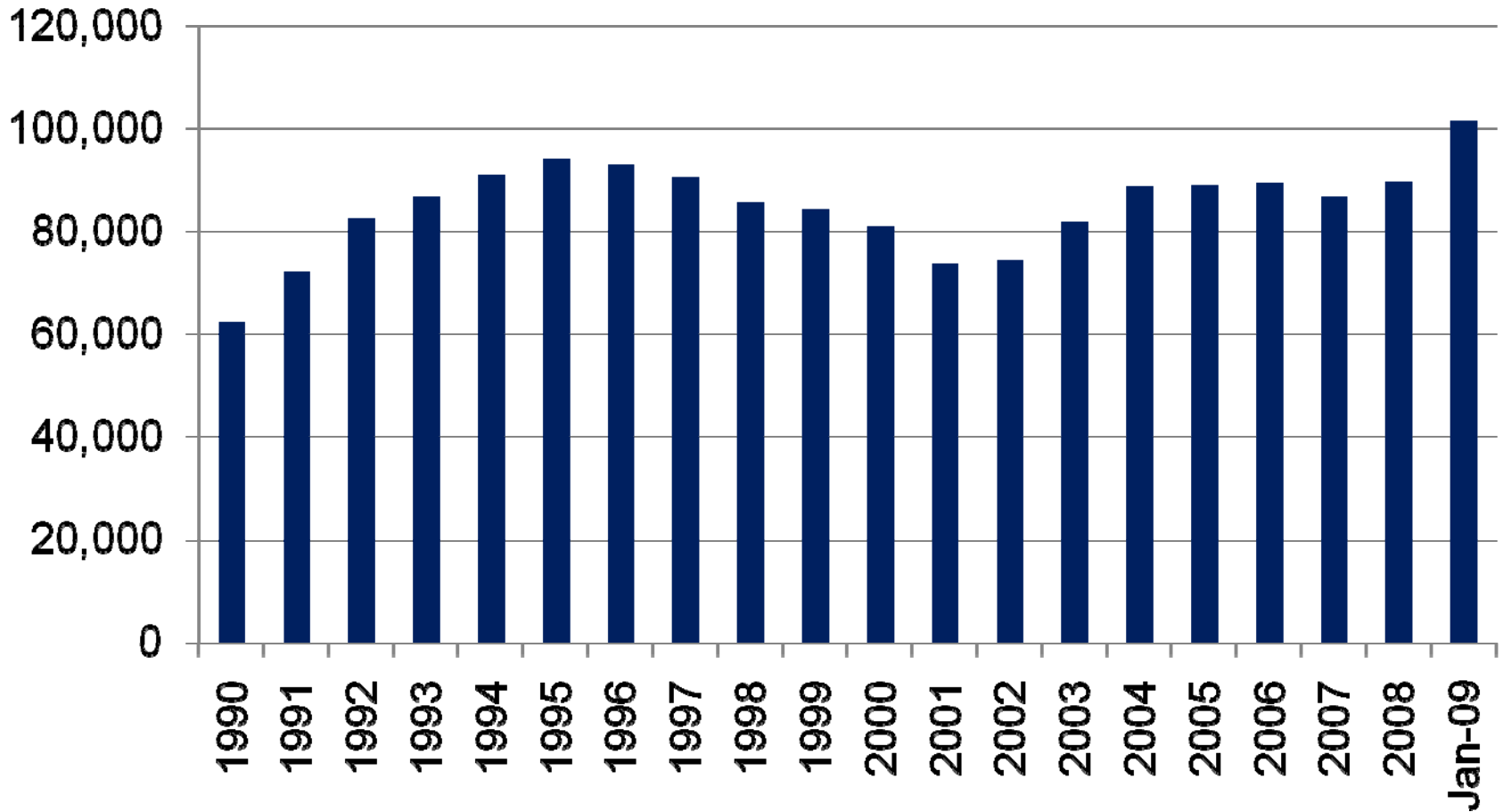
The Impact of the Recession in DC

- Sharply rising unemployment (though not out of the norm for large U.S. cities)
- Record-high food stamp caseloads
- This likely means an increase in poverty

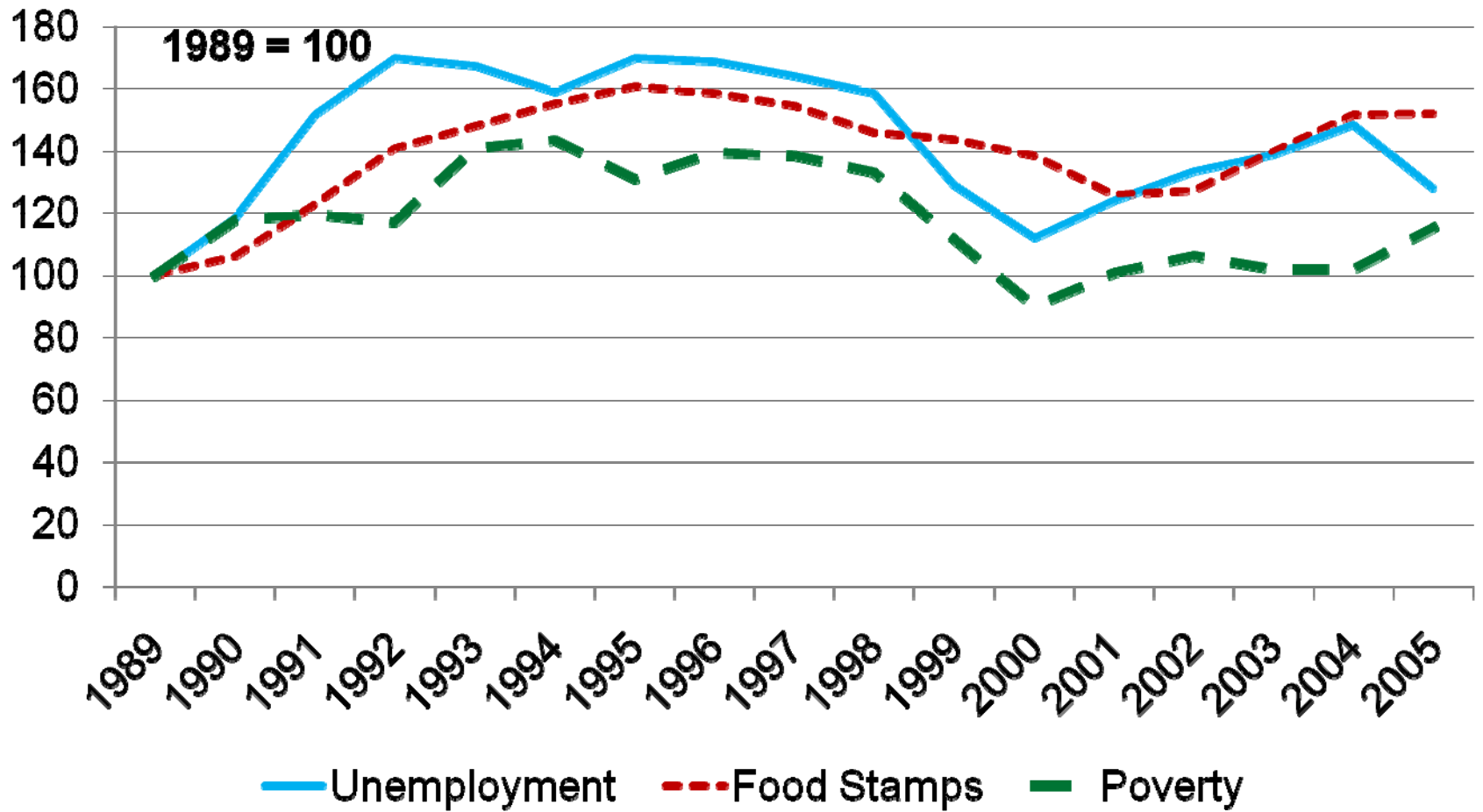
DC's Unemployment Rate Is Rising Sharply



Food Stamp Recipients in DC Also Are on the Rise



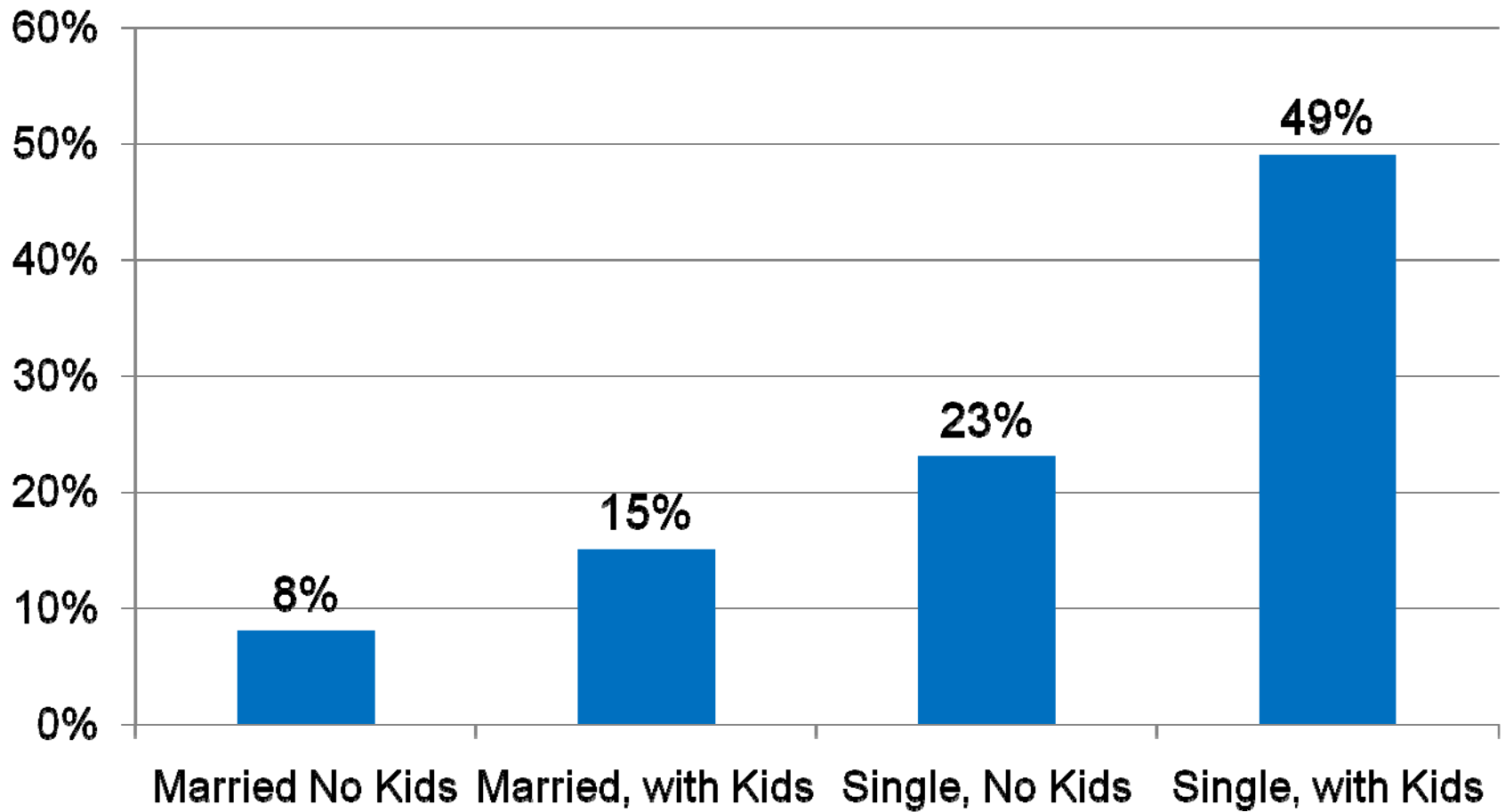
Unemployment, Food Stamps, And Poverty Change Together



Poverty Among Single-parent Families

- Single parents with children face very high rates of poverty in DC
- Many have limited job experience, though a notable share work full-time
- Even full-time work does not guarantee as escape from poverty

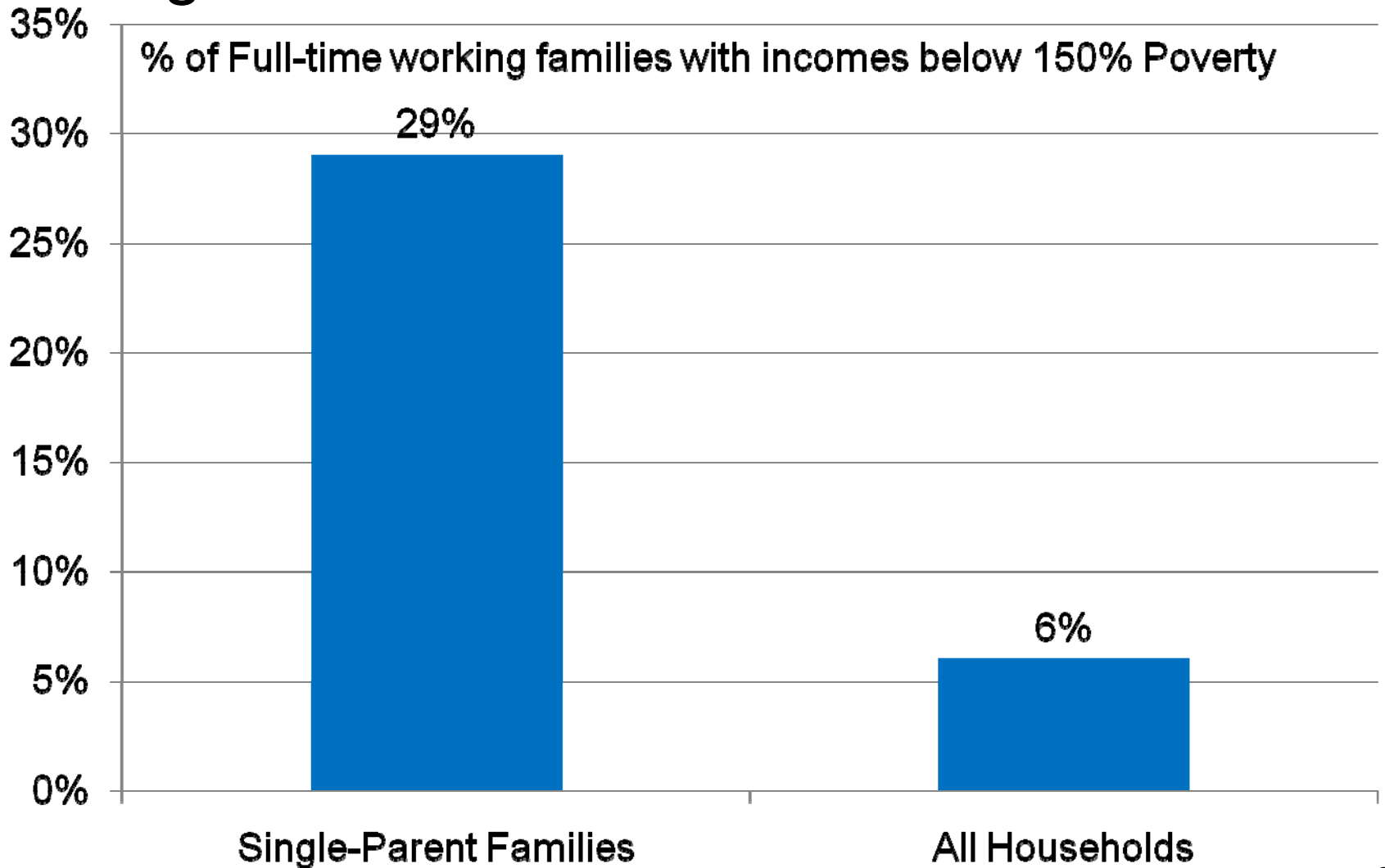
DC Residents Below 150% of Poverty 2006-2007



Work Among DC's Low-Income Single-Parent Families

- 55% have little or no work (less than 260 hours)
- 17% work part-time
- 28% work full-time

Full-Time Work Leaves Many DC Single-Parent Families with Low Incomes



DC's TANF Program Needs Improvements to Help Families Succeed

- One-third of DC Children Are Supported by TANF
- Who is on TANF in DC?
- What is TANF Supposed to provide?
 - Cash assistance to meet basic needs (health care, child care, and food stamps also are provided)
 - Employment readiness services
 - Supportive services (e.g., substance abuse)

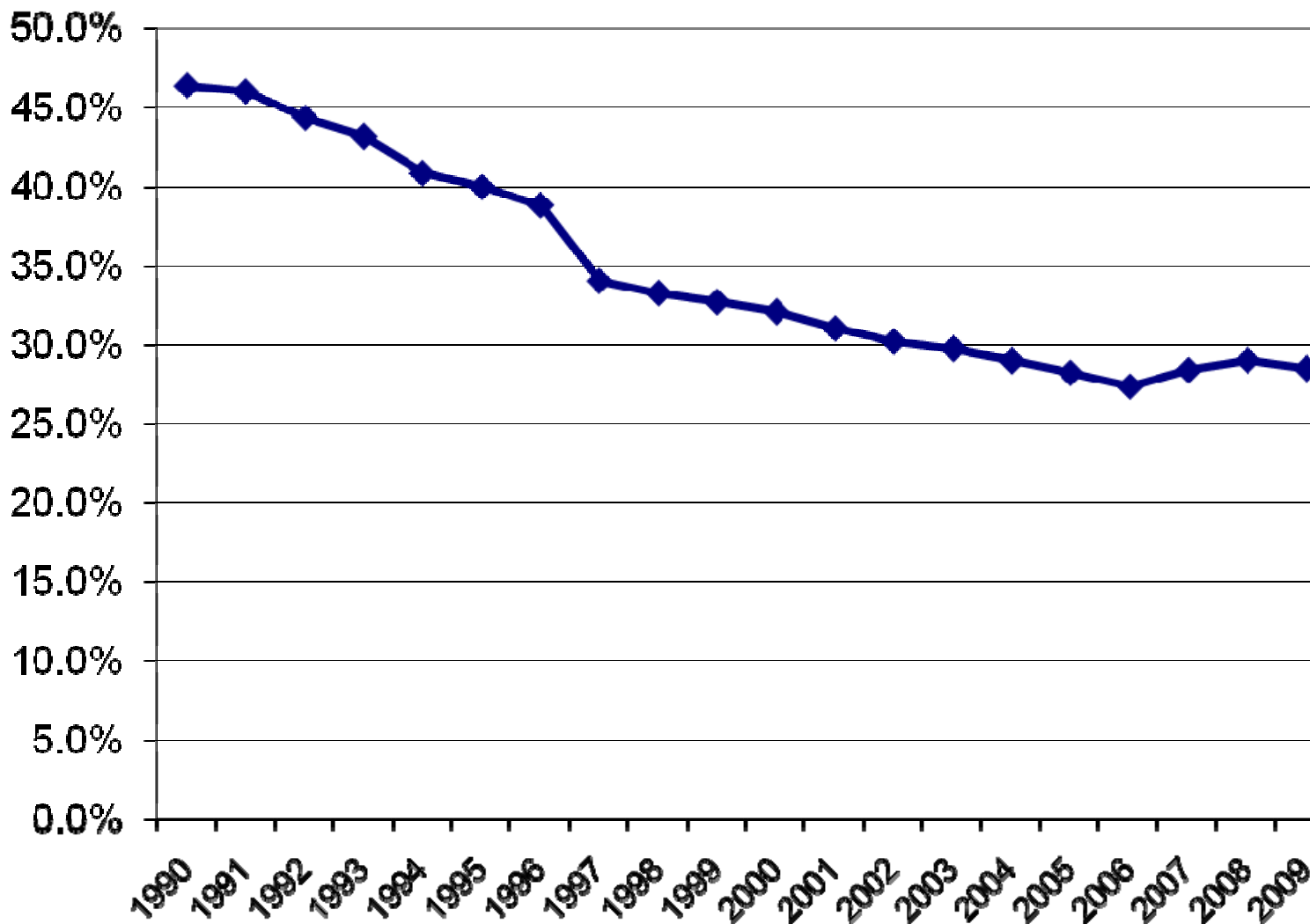
TANF Employment Services Are One-Size Fits All

- Most families are referred to TANF employment vendors providing limited services
- Other education and training options exist, but referrals are inconsistent and limited
- There is little incentive to refer clients to training or to help them find high-wage jobs
- Many recipients end up in low-wage jobs that don't last ₁₁

TANF Cash Benefits Are Inadequate

- Maximum TANF benefit is \$428/month for a family of three — 28 percent of poverty.
- Even with food stamps, families are well below poverty
- In focus groups, TANF recipients bring up inadequacy of assistance as common problem
- Most TANF families do not get housing assistance

TANF Benefits as a Percent of the Federal Poverty Line, 1990-2009



TANF Benefits and Federal Poverty Line for a family of three, adjusted for inflation to equal 2009 dollars