

Receipt of Assistance by Education

Austin Nichols

Education is not a panacea, yet it is the most effective means of economic advancement (Grawe 2008). Since the recent recession, job losses have been lower for the more highly educated (Loprest and Nichols 2011). Families that experience unemployment may receive various kinds of government assistance (Nichols and Zedlewski 2011; Zedlewski and Nichols 2012) but still have high poverty rates (Nichols and Callan 2011).

Individuals who finished college were far less likely to live in households where any member received food stamps (now called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program, or SNAP) or cash assistance than those with less education (Table 1), before and after the Great Recession. The rates of receipt of aid in households of advanced degree holders roughly doubled between 2007 and 2010, but still remained under 2 percent, while the rate for those with less than a high school education is 22 percent, and the rate for high school graduates is 13 percent, increasing by 8 and 6 percentage points, respectively, since 2007. The increases in aid are almost entirely in SNAP (Zedlewski 2011), not in cash assistance (Zedlewski, Loprest, and Huber 2011).

Table 1. Receipt of Food Stamps or Cash Assistance in Household, by Educational Attainment, Estimated Counts

	2007			2010		
	Any SNAP or cash assistance in household	Total	Percent receiving aid	Any SNAP or cash assistance in household	Total	Percent receiving aid
Children	9,049,421	60,958,210	14.8%	14,264,103	62,154,999	22.9%
Less than high school	6,332,382	45,079,905	14.0%	9,716,616	43,303,094	22.4%
High school graduate	5,245,747	69,702,330	7.5%	9,221,089	70,475,848	13.1%
Some college or associate's degree	2,823,391	62,875,374	4.5%	6,110,921	65,979,374	9.3%
Bachelor's degree	515,275	40,093,950	1.3%	1,336,842	41,967,272	3.2%
Advanced degree	136,322	20,395,951	0.7%	359,403	22,229,075	1.6%
Master's degree	101,682	14,894,445	0.7%	293,029	16,157,368	1.8%
Professional degree	24,864	3,013,024	0.8%	32,719	2,992,722	1.1%
Doctorate	9,776	2,488,481	0.4%	33,655	3,078,985	1.1%
Total	24,102,538	299,105,72	8.1%	41,008,974	306,109,662	13.4%

Source: Current Population Survey (CPS) (<http://www.stats.bls.gov/cps/>).

Notes: 2008 CPS data refer to 2007 income, and 2011 CPS data refer to 2010 income. No corrections for underreporting have been made to these data; see, for example, Lerman and Wiseman (2002) or GAO (2010) on underreporting of food stamps and other benefits in the CPS.

References

- GAO (Government Accountability Office). 2010. *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Fewer Eligible Families Have Received Cash Assistance Since the 1990s, and the Recession's Impact on Caseloads Varies by State*. GAO-10-164. Washington, DC: GAO.
- Grawe, Nathan. 2008. "Education and Economic Mobility." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/publications/1001157.html>
- Lerman, Robert I., and Michael E. Wiseman. 2002. "Restructuring Food Stamps for Working Families." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/publications/410557.html>
- Loprest, Pamela J., and Austin Nichols. 2011. "Less-Educated Continue to Lose Jobs in Recovery—Even in Low-Wage Industries." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/publications/412382.html>
- Nichols, Austin, and Thomas Callan. 2011. "Unemployment and Poverty." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/publications/412400.html>
- Nichols, Austin, and Sheila R. Zedlewski. 2011. "Is the Safety Net Catching Unemployed Families?" Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/publications/412397.html>
- Zedlewski, Sheila R. 2011. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Counters High Unemployment." Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=412365>
- Zedlewski, Sheila R., and Austin Nichols. 2012. "What Happens to Families' Income and Poverty after Unemployment?" Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Zedlewski, Sheila R., Pamela J. Loprest, and Erika Huber. 2011. "What Role Is Welfare Playing in This Period of High Unemployment?" Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=412378>