

Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2007

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Consumer Income

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Highlights

- An estimated 13.7 million parents had custody of 21.8 million children under 21 years of age while the other parent lived somewhere else.
- More than one-quarter (26.3 percent) of all children under 21 years of age lived with one of their parents, while the other parent lived outside the household.
- One-quarter (24.6 percent) of all custodial parents had incomes below poverty, while 18.2 percent of those who received at least some child support payments were below poverty.
- Custodial parents receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), formerly known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), fell from 22.0 percent to 4.3 percent during the past 14 years.
- About 62.7 percent of the \$34.1 billion in child support due was reported as received, averaging \$3,350 per custodial parent who was due support.
- About three-quarters (76.3 percent) of custodial parents due support received at least some payments in 2007, which included 46.8 percent who received the full amount and 29.5 percent who received a portion of the total due.
- Child support represented 47.9 percent of the average income for custodial parents below poverty who received full support.

- Over half (57.6 percent) of custodial parents received some type of noncash support from noncustodial parents on behalf of their children.
- Over one-quarter (27.3 percent) of custodial parents contacted a government office for issues related to collecting child support.

This report focuses on the child support income that custodial parents reported receiving from noncustodial parents living elsewhere and other types of support, such as health insurance and noncash assistance.¹ The most recent data in this report are from the Child Support Supplement to the April 2008 Current Population Survey (CPS). It provides demographic information about custodial parents as of 2008, as well as child support and other income or program data for the 2007 calendar year.² This report also shows the latest 14-year trends by comparing data collected from the 1994 April CPS and subsequent biennial surveys. (See text box "Limitations of the Data" for additional survey information.)

¹ The custodial parent is the parent with whom the children lived during the survey interview when the other parent lived outside the household, although there may be an equal joint- or split-custody arrangement.

² The population represented (the population universe) is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States, 15 years of age or older, who have their own children under 21 years old living with them while the other parent lives outside the household.

Current Population Reports

By
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Limitations of the Data

Since, in some states, child support can be ordered by a court until a child is 21 years old or completes college, this report covers parents' own children under 21 rather than applying the U.S. Census Bureau's usual definition of children as those under 18. Some children living with neither biological parent, such as those living with grandparents or foster parents, may also be eligible to receive child support but are not part of the universe in the Current Population Survey (CPS) Child Support Supplement.

Some households in the sample also participated in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the 2008 CPS, where additional supplemental information, such as income and health insurance coverage in the preceding year, was also collected. Changes made to the April CPS supplement in 1994 do not allow comparisons between these data and CPS data collected before that year. These changes included refining the screening of

potential respondents; restructuring the questionnaire to accommodate computerizing the survey; revising terminology that refers to types of child support agreements or awards; increasing the detail in questions about the amount of child support due, including overdue child support (back support); and adding new questions on pass-through payments (child support collected for public assistance recipients by a state enforcement office, some of which passes through to recipients). The amount of child support payments received by recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), formerly known as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), is likely underreported because some states retain some or all child support collected on behalf of children of custodial parents.

Additional information and detailed tables are available via the Internet at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/childsupport.html>.

Custodial Parents and Their Children

In spring 2008, an estimated 13.7 million parents had custody of 21.8 million children under 21 years of age while the other parent lived somewhere else.³ The number of custodial parents has remained statistically unchanged since 1994 (Table 1). The 21.8 million children living with their custodial parent represented over one-quarter (26.3 percent) of all 82.8 million children under 21 years old living in

families.⁴ Among White children in families, 22.4 percent lived with their custodial parents.⁵ The

⁴ A family is a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family. Beginning with the 1980 CPS, unrelated subfamilies (referred to in the past as secondary families) are no longer included in the count of families, nor are the members of unrelated subfamilies included in the count of family members. The number of families is equal to the number of family households; however, the count of family members differs from the count of family household members because family household members include any nonrelatives living in the household.

⁵ Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Therefore, two basic ways of defining a race group are possible. A group, such as Black, may be defined as those who reported Black and no other race (the race-alone or single-race concept) or as those who reported Black regardless of whether they also reported another race (the race-alone-or-in-combination concept). The body of this report (text, figures, and tables) shows data for people who reported they were the single race White and not Hispanic and people who reported the single race Black. Use of the single-race populations does not imply that it is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. The Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches. See Detailed Table 12 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html> for a listing of custodial parents by race group.

proportion of Black children in families who lived with their custodial parent while the other parent lived outside their household (48.2 percent) was more than twice as large as the proportion of White children. Among children of other races—including American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut, Asian or Pacific Islander, or other races—16.1 percent lived in custodial-parent families. Approximately one-quarter (25.4 percent) of Hispanic children, who may be any race, lived with their custodial parent.⁶

Demographic Characteristics

Mothers accounted for the majority of custodial parents (82.6 percent) while 17.4 percent were fathers, proportions statistically unchanged from 1994.⁷

⁶ See Detailed Table 11 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>. The proportion of Hispanic children in custodial-parent families (25.4 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of all children in custodial-parent families (26.3 percent).

⁷ See Detailed Table 4 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

³ The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

Table 1. Comparison of Custodial Parent Population and Those With Child Support Awarded, Due, and Received: 1993 to 2007
(Numbers in thousands as of spring of the following year. Parents living with own children under 21 years of age whose other parent is not living in the home. Amounts in 2007 dollars)

Item	1993		1995		1997		1999		2001		2003		2005		2007	
	Num-ber	Stan-dard error	Num-ber	Stan-dard error	Num-ber	Stan-dard error	Num-ber	Stan-dard error	Num-ber	Stan-dard error	Num-ber	Stan-dard error	Num-ber	Stan-dard error	Num-ber	Stan-dard error
All Custodial Parents																
Total	13,690	286	13,715	301	13,949	303	13,529	299	13,383	282	13,951	288	13,605	285	13,743	286
Awarded child support	7,800	219	7,967	232	7,876	231	7,945	232	7,916	219	8,376	225	7,802	218	7,428	213
Percent	57.0	1.1	58.1	1.1	56.5	1.1	58.7	1.1	59.1	1.1	60.0	1.0	57.3	1.1	54.0	1.1
Due child support	6,688	204	6,958	217	7,018	218	6,791	215	6,924	205	7,256	210	6,809	204	6,375	197
Average child support due (in dollars)	5,060	120	5,494	143	5,343	117	5,917	169	5,907	275	5,754	105	5,931	130	5,350	114
Average child support received (in dollars)	3,294	122	3,620	123	3,560	111	3,473	102	3,701	149	3,945	152	3,869	113	3,354	100
Received any child support	5,070	178	5,269	190	5,282	190	5,005	185	5,119	177	5,548	184	5,259	180	4,864	173
Percent	75.8	1.3	75.7	1.4	75.3	1.4	73.7	1.4	73.9	1.3	76.5	1.2	77.2	1.3	76.3	1.3
Received full amount of child support	2,466	125	2,945	142	3,240	149	3,066	145	3,093	138	3,290	143	3,192	140	2,986	136
Percent	36.9	1.5	42.3	1.6	46.2	1.6	45.1	1.6	44.7	1.5	45.3	1.5	46.9	1.5	46.8	1.6
Not awarded child support	5,889	192	5,747	198	6,074	203	5,584	195	5,466	183	5,576	185	5,803	189	6,315	197
Custodial Mothers																
Total	11,505	264	11,607	278	11,872	281	11,499	277	11,291	260	11,587	264	11,406	262	11,356	261
Awarded child support	6,878	207	7,123	220	7,080	219	7,150	220	7,110	208	7,436	213	7,002	207	6,463	199
Percent	59.8	1.2	61.4	1.2	59.6	1.2	62.2	1.2	63.0	1.1	64.2	1.1	61.4	1.1	56.9	1.2
Due child support	5,913	192	6,224	206	6,342	208	6,133	204	6,212	195	6,516	199	6,131	194	5,551	184
Average child support due (in dollars)	5,126	133	5,587	157	5,367	124	5,976	180	6,781	305	5,835	113	6,011	138	5,366	123
Average child support received (in dollars)	3,363	134	3,665	128	3,582	119	3,570	110	3,937	156	4,035	166	3,887	118	3,355	106
Received any child support	4,501	168	4,742	180	4,802	181	4,578	177	4,639	169	5,018	176	4,754	171	4,253	162
Percent	76.1	1.4	76.2	1.4	75.7	1.4	74.6	1.5	74.7	1.4	77.0	1.3	77.5	1.3	76.6	1.4
Received full amount of child support	2,178	118	2,674	136	2,945	142	2,818	139	2,815	132	2,948	135	2,900	134	2,615	127
Percent	36.8	1.6	43.0	1.6	46.4	1.6	45.9	1.7	45.3	1.6	45.2	1.5	47.3	1.6	47.1	1.7
Not awarded child support	4,627	170	4,484	175	4,792	181	4,349	172	4,181	160	4,151	160	4,404	165	4,893	173
Custodial Fathers																
Total	2,184	118	2,108	121	2,077	120	2,030	118	2,092	114	2,364	121	2,199	117	2,387	122
Awarded child support	922	77	844	76	796	74	795	74	807	71	940	77	800	71	965	78
Percent	42.2	2.7	40.0	2.8	38.3	2.8	39.2	2.8	38.6	2.7	39.8	2.5	36.4	2.6	40.4	2.5
Due child support	775	70	733	71	676	68	658	68	712	67	740	68	678	65	825	72
Average child support due (in dollars)	4,557	247	4,697	267	5,106	363	5,370	468	4,943	296	5,040	251	5,199	366	5,239	288
Average child support received (in dollars)	2,856	263	3,249	432	3,366	310	2,566	248	3,374	478	3,153	316	3,708	387	3,343	295
Received any child support	569	60	527	60	479	58	427	54	480	55	530	58	505	56	611	62
Percent	73.4	4.0	71.9	4.4	70.9	4.6	64.9	4.9	67.4	4.4	71.6	4.1	74.5	4.2	74.1	3.8
Received full amount of child support	288	43	270	43	295	45	248	42	278	42	342	46	292	43	371	48
Percent	37.2	4.4	36.8	4.7	43.6	5.0	37.7	5.0	39.0	4.6	46.2	4.6	43.1	4.8	45.0	4.3
Not awarded child support	1,262	90	1,263	93	1,281	94	1,235	92	1,285	89	1,424	160	1,399	93	1,422	94

Note: All child support income amounts are adjusted to reflect 2007 dollars using the Consumer Price Index Research Series Using Current Methods (CPI-U-RS). For more information on the CPI, go to <www.bls.gov/cpi/cpirsdc.htm>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 1994 to 2008.

The distribution of custodial parents by marital status differed between mothers and fathers. One-third (34.2 percent) of custodial mothers had never been married. The remaining mothers consisted of 45.1 percent who were currently divorced or separated, 19.0 percent who were currently married (most of whom [61.8 percent] were divorced but remarried), and 1.7 percent who were widowed.⁸ Custodial fathers were less likely than custodial mothers to report they had never married (20.9 percent) and more likely to be divorced or separated (57.8 percent).

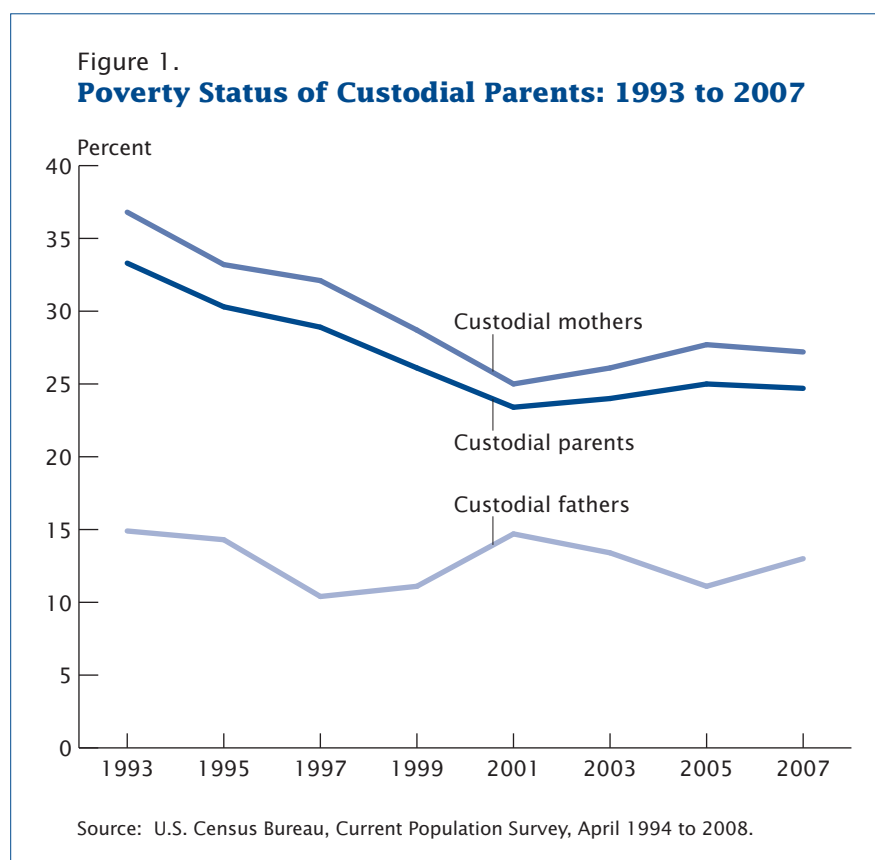
The age of custodial mothers has increased over the past 14 years. In 1994, one-quarter (25.4 percent) were 40 years or older. By 2008, the proportion had grown to over one-third (39.1 percent). The proportion of custodial mothers under 30 years of age decreased from 30.9 percent in 1994 to 25.8 percent by 2008.⁹

The educational level of custodial mothers has also increased during this period. In 1994, 22.2 percent of custodial mothers had less than a high school education and 17.1 percent had at least an associate's degree. By 2008, the proportion of custodial mothers who had not graduated from high school decreased to 15.5 percent and the proportion with at least an associate's degree increased to 26.9 percent.¹⁰

⁸ The current marital status of widowed includes custodial parents who have children from a previous marriage that ended in divorce or from a previous nonmarried relationship and their custodial children are not from their deceased spouse.

⁹ The proportion of custodial mothers who were 40 years or older in 1994 (25.4 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial mothers who were under 30 in 2008 (25.8 percent).

¹⁰ The proportion of custodial mothers with at least an associate's degree in 1994 (17.1 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial mothers who had not graduated from high school in 2008 (15.5 percent).



Half (50.2 percent) of custodial mothers were non-Hispanic White, more than one-quarter were Black (27.8 percent), and 18.0 percent were Hispanic. Custodial fathers were more likely than custodial mothers to be non-Hispanic White (71.6 percent) and less likely to be Black (11.4 percent) or Hispanic (12.1 percent).¹¹

While the majority of custodial parents had one child (56.6 percent), custodial mothers were more likely than custodial fathers to have two or more children living with them

¹¹ The proportion of custodial fathers who were Black (11.4 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion who were Hispanic (12.1 percent). Hispanics may be any race, and in this report, data for Hispanics overlap slightly with data for the Black population. Based on the 2008 CPS April supplement, 3.8 percent of Black custodial parents were Hispanic. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population and the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population are not shown in this report because of their small sample size in the April 2008 CPS.

in 2008 (45.7 percent and 32.3 percent, respectively).¹²

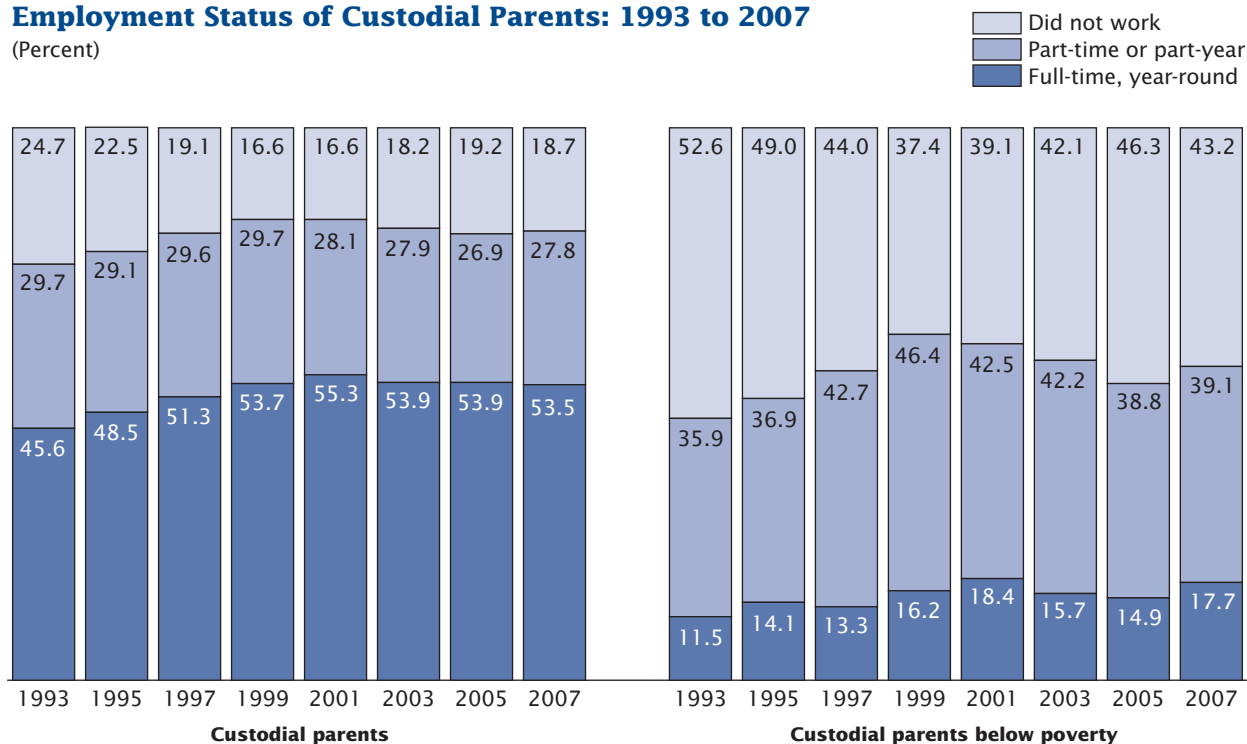
Poverty

About one-quarter (24.6 percent) of custodial parents and their children had 2007 incomes below the poverty level, about twice as high as the overall poverty rate for the total population (12.5 percent).¹³ The poverty rate of custodial parents declined between 1993 (33.3 percent) and 2001 (23.4 percent) and has remained statistically unchanged since (Figure 1). Poverty levels varied widely among custodial-parent groups. The poverty rate of custodial mothers fell from 36.8 percent in 1993 to 27.0 percent in 2007 and was

¹² See Detailed Table 4 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

¹³ DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith. *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*, Current Population Reports, P60-235, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2008.

Figure 2.
Employment Status of Custodial Parents: 1993 to 2007
 (Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 1994 to 2008.

significantly higher than the poverty rate for custodial fathers, 12.9 percent.¹⁴

Custodial parents who were young (under 30 years of age), Black, or never married tended to have higher poverty rates (about 35 percent) than their respective demographic complements, where poverty rates were about 20 percent. Custodial parents with full-time, year-round employment had a poverty rate of 8.1 percent, while custodial parents who did

¹⁴ The proportion of custodial parents below poverty in 2007 (24.6 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial mothers below poverty in 2007 (27.0 percent). The proportion of custodial parents below poverty in 1993 (33.3 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial mothers below poverty in 1993 (36.8 percent). The proportion of the total population below poverty (12.5 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial fathers below poverty (12.9 percent). Estimates for poverty for the total population are from the 2008 ASEC, whose source of data and accuracy of the estimates is available at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/p60_235sa.pdf>.

not work or who were participants in public assistance programs had poverty rates of about 57.0 percent in 2007.¹⁵

Employment and Participation in Government Assistance Programs

The level of full-time, year-round employment increased among custodial parents from 45.6 percent to 53.7 percent between 1993 and 1999 and has remained statistically unchanged since (Figure 2). Over one-quarter (27.7 percent) of custodial parents were in the labor force working part-time or part-year and 18.7 percent did not work in 2007. In 1993, the proportion of custodial parents without employment was higher (24.7 percent).

Among custodial parents in poverty, the proportion working either

¹⁵ See Detailed Table 4 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

full- or part-time increased from 47.4 percent in 1993 to 56.8 percent in 2007. The remaining 43.2 percent of custodial parents in poverty were not employed in 2007.¹⁶

Custodial mothers were less likely than custodial fathers to be employed full-time, year-round (49.8 and 71.7 percent, respectively). Conversely, custodial mothers were more likely than fathers to be employed part-time or part-year in 2007 (29.7 and 18.4 percent, respectively).¹⁷

Overall, rising employment rates of custodial parents were accompanied by declines in rates of participation in public assistance programs, which fell from 40.7 percent

¹⁶ The proportion of custodial parents below poverty who worked either full-time or part-time in 1993 (47.4 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of those who did not work in 2007 (43.2 percent).

¹⁷ See Detailed Table 4 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

to 31.5 percent between 1993 and 2007—dropping to 28.4 percent in 2001.¹⁸ The proportion of custodial parents receiving AFDC/TANF fell from 22.0 percent to 4.3 percent between 1993 and 2007. Food stamp receipt by custodial-parent families declined from 32.7 percent in 1993 to 21.2 percent in 2007.¹⁹

Agreements and Awards

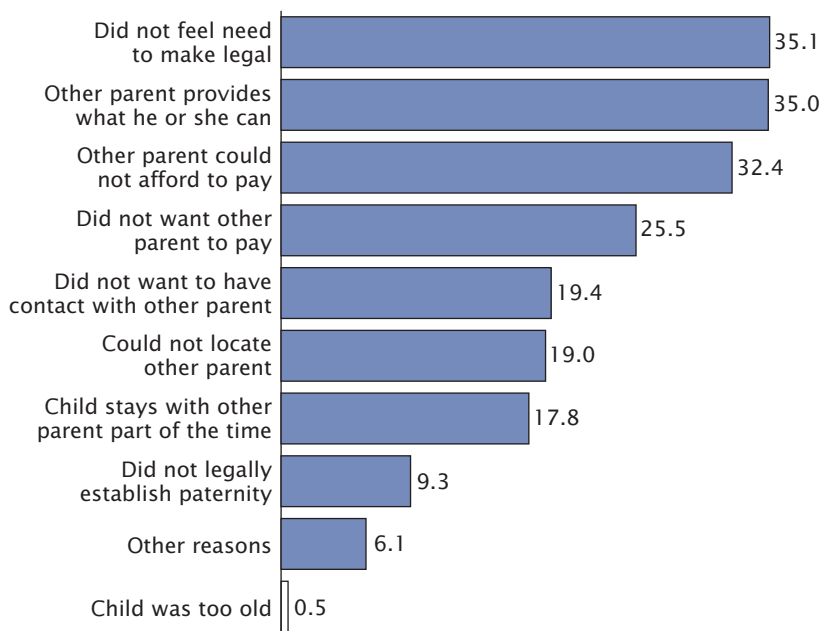
Of the 13.7 million custodial parents in 2008, 7.4 million, or 54.0 percent, had some type of agreement or court order to receive financial support from the noncustodial parent for their children (Table 1). The majority of these agreements (6.8 million) were reported by the custodial parent as formal legal agreements (established by a court or other government entity) and 600,000 were informal agreements or understandings.²⁰

When custodial parents without any agreements and those with informal agreements were asked why a formal legal agreement was not established, the reasons most

Figure 3.

Reasons No Legal Agreement Established for Custodial Parents: 2008

(Percent)



Notes: Universe is 6.5 million custodial parents without agreements or with informal agreements; excludes those with pending agreements. The total exceeds 100 percent because respondents could list more than one reason. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 2008.

¹⁸ Public assistance program participation includes those receiving at least one of the following: Medicaid, food stamps, public housing or rent subsidy, AFDC/TANF, or general assistance. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), more commonly known as the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, replaced the AFDC program with the TANF program. The proportion of custodial parents who participated in public assistance programs in 2001 (28.4 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion in 1999 (30.0 percent) or 2003 (30.3 percent).

¹⁹ The proportion of custodial parents participating in public assistance in 2007 (31.5 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial parents who received food stamps in 1993 (32.7 percent). The proportion of custodial parents who received AFDC in 1993 (22.0 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion receiving food stamps in 2007 (21.2 percent).

²⁰ An informal agreement is any written or verbal agreement or understanding that was never approved or ordered by a court or a government agency and is generally considered not legally binding. See Detailed Table 9 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

often cited were that they did not feel the need to go to court or get legal agreements, the other parent provided what he or she could for support, and they felt the other parent could not afford to pay child support (about 33 percent each).²¹

The percentage of custodial mothers who had child support agreements or awards was 59.8 percent in 1994, reaching 64.2 percent in 2004.²² Since that time, the percentage has declined to 56.9 percent in 2008. The proportion of custodial fathers with child

²¹ Respondents could choose more than one reason why a formal legal agreement was not established. See Figure 3.

²² The proportion of custodial mothers with a child support agreement in 2004 (64.2 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion in 2000 (62.2 percent) or 2002 (63.0 percent).

support agreements or awards has historically been lower than the proportion of custodial mothers and continued to be lower in 2008 (40.4 percent).

Child support award rates varied by other demographic custodial-parent characteristics. Custodial parents who were never married, separated, Black, Hispanic, or had less than a high school education had child support agreement rates of approximately 45 percent (Table 2). Higher rates of child support awards or agreements (about 60 percent) existed for custodial parents who were either non-Hispanic White, currently married, or divorced; had at least a bachelor's degree; or lived with two or more children from an absent parent in 2008.

Table 2.

Demographic Characteristics of Custodial Parents by Award Status and Payments Received: 2007

(Numbers in thousands, as of spring 2008. Parents living with own children under 21 years of age whose other parent is not living in the home)

Characteristic	With child support agreements or awards										
	Total	Total	Per- cent	Due child support payments in 2007							
				Total	Average due (in dollars)	Average received (in dollars)	Per- cent re- ceived	Received all payments		Did not receive payments	
								Total	Per- cent	Total	Per- cent
Total	13,743	7,428	54.0	6,375	5,350	3,354	62.7	2,986	46.8	1,511	23.7
Standard error	286	213	1.1	197	114	100	1.7	136	1.6	97	1.3
Sex											
Male	2,387	965	40.4	825	5,239	3,343	63.8	371	45.0	213	25.8
Female	11,356	6,463	56.9	5,551	5,366	3,355	62.5	2,615	47.1	1,298	23.4
Age											
Under 30 years	3,214	1,422	44.2	1,248	3,837	1,940	50.6	399	32.0	378	30.3
30 to 39 years	4,767	2,775	58.2	2,472	4,978	3,086	62.0	1,137	46.0	481	19.5
40 years and over	5,762	3,231	56.1	2,655	6,407	4,267	66.6	1,450	54.6	652	24.6
Race and Ethnicity¹											
White alone	9,519	5,471	57.5	4,780	5,650	3,710	65.7	2,323	48.6	1,081	22.6
White alone, not Hispanic	7,409	4,493	60.6	3,924	5,807	3,815	65.7	1,936	49.3	850	21.7
Black alone	3,431	1,563	45.6	1,276	3,980	2,185	54.9	532	41.7	362	28.4
Hispanic (any race)	2,334	1,052	45.1	911	5,430	3,267	60.2	408	44.8	248	27.2
Current Marital Status²											
Married	2,643	1,603	60.7	1,417	5,506	3,877	70.4	695	49.0	288	20.3
Divorced	4,790	3,010	62.8	2,640	5,823	3,756	64.5	1,352	51.2	643	24.4
Separated	1,712	798	46.6	633	6,116	3,419	55.9	270	42.7	132	20.9
Never married	4,380	1,904	43.5	1,587	4,163	2,207	53.0	629	39.6	420	26.5
Educational Attainment											
Less than high school diploma	2,104	898	42.7	716	4,621	2,047	44.3	260	36.3	215	30.0
High school graduate	4,776	2,479	51.9	2,080	4,872	2,868	58.9	854	41.1	492	23.7
Less than 4 years of college	4,585	2,657	57.9	2,326	5,278	3,371	63.9	1,107	47.6	555	23.9
Bachelor's degree or more	2,279	1,394	61.2	1,253	6,691	4,874	72.8	766	61.1	248	19.8
Selected Characteristics											
Family income below 2007 poverty level ..	3,375	1,580	46.8	1,278	4,380	2,352	53.7	514	40.2	392	30.7
Worked full-time, year-round	7,368	4,156	56.4	3,638	5,353	3,537	66.1	1,793	49.3	849	23.3
Public assistance program participation ³ ..	4,323	2,057	47.6	1,732	4,294	2,203	51.3	597	34.5	499	28.8
With one child	7,784	3,808	48.9	3,235	4,994	3,138	62.8	1,569	48.5	760	23.5
With two or more children	5,960	3,620	60.7	3,140	5,716	3,576	62.6	1,417	45.1	751	23.9
Child had contact with other parent in 2007	8,883	5,148	58.0	4,483	5,591	3,804	68.0	2,300	51.3	876	19.5

¹ Includes those reporting one race alone and not in combination with any other race.

² Excludes 218,000 with marital status of widowed.

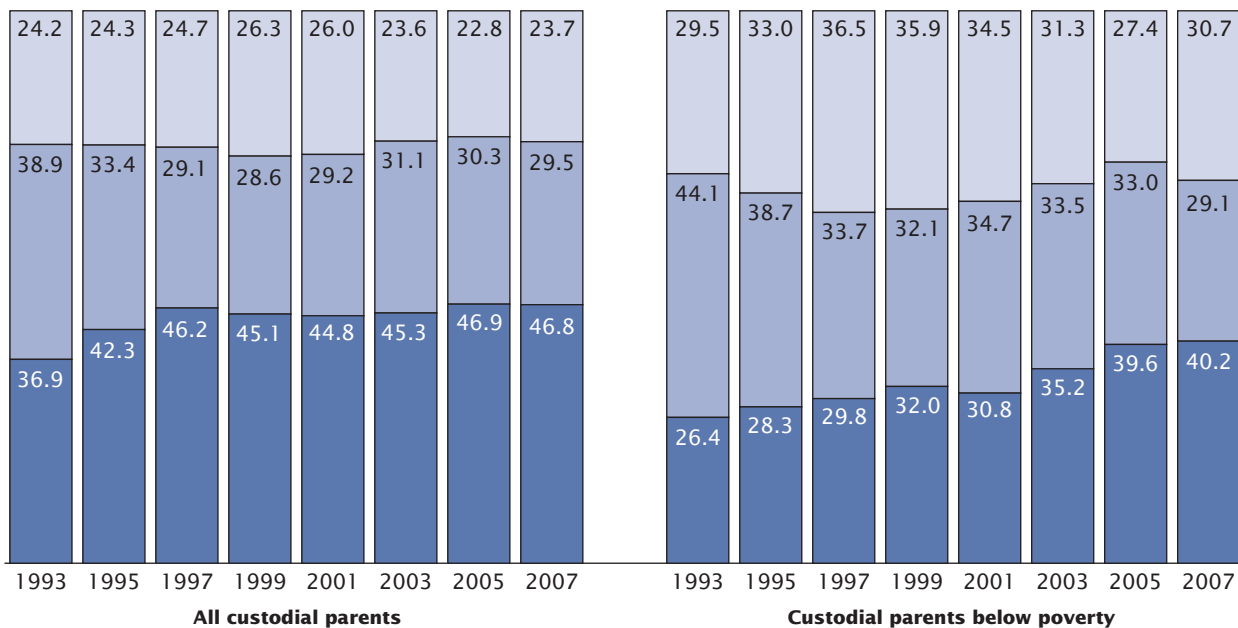
³ Received either Medicaid, food stamps, public housing or rent subsidy, TANF, or general assistance.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 2008.

Figure 4.
Custodial Parents Receiving Full, Part, or No Child Support Payments Due by Poverty Status: 1993 to 2007

(Percent)

Did not receive payments
 Part payment
 Full payment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 1994 to 2008.

Child Support Receipt

Of the 7.4 million custodial parents with child support agreements or awards, 6.4 million (85.8 percent) were due child support payments in 2007. The remaining 1.1 million custodial parents with child support agreements or awards were not due child support payments because either the children were too old, the noncustodial parent had died, the family lived together part of the year before the interview, or some other reason. Seven of every eight custodial parents who were due child support were mothers (87.1 percent) and 1 in 8 were fathers (12.9 percent) (Table 2).

The proportion of custodial parents due child support who received the full amount increased from 36.9 percent in 1993 to 46.2 percent in 1997 and has remained statistically unchanged since (Figure 4). In 2007,

another 29.5 percent of custodial parents received some, but not all, payments that were due. Overall, 76.3 percent of custodial parents due support received at least some payments in 2007 and 23.7 percent received no child support.

Receipt of child support due differed by demographic group. For the 1.3 million custodial parents below the poverty level and due child support in 2007, 69.3 percent received at least some child support payments. This included 40.2 percent who received all support that was due—an increase from 26.4 percent in 1993—and 29.1 percent who received less than the full amount of child support due—a decrease from 44.1 percent in 1993.²³

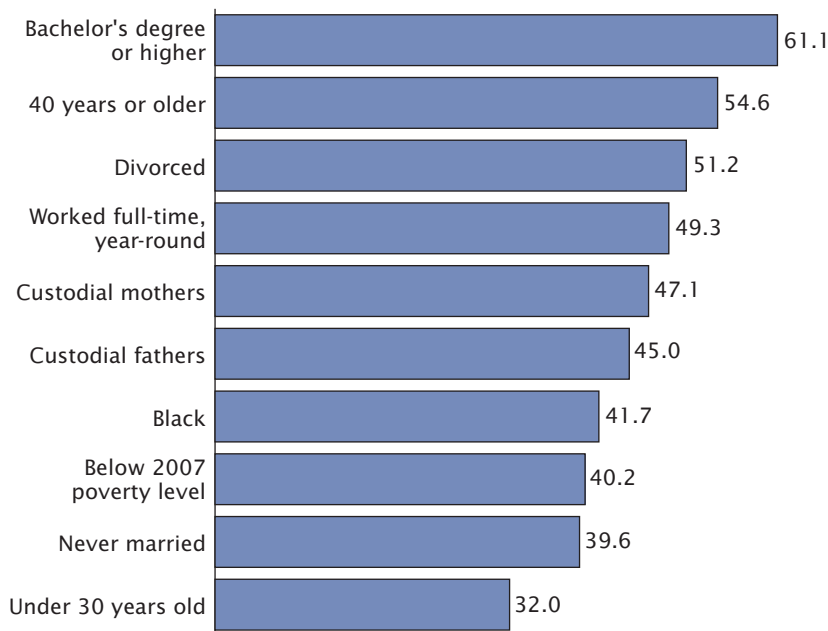
²³ The proportion of custodial parents below poverty receiving the full amount of child support in 2007 (40.2 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion who received less than the full amount due in 1993 (44.1 percent). The proportion

The proportion of custodial mothers (47.1 percent) who received full payments in 2007 was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial fathers receiving full payments (45.0 percent).

About 40 percent of custodial parents in each of the following groups received full child support: those who were never married, those who were Black, or those in poverty (Figure 5). Thirty-two percent of those under 30 received all the child support they were due. Larger proportions of custodial parents who were divorced (51.2 percent), 40 years of age or older (54.6 percent), or who had at least a bachelor's degree

of custodial parents below poverty who received full support in 1993 (26.4 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion receiving less than the full amount due in 2007 (29.1 percent).

Figure 5.
Custodial Parents Due Child Support Receiving Full Amount by Selected Characteristics: 2007
 (Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 2008.

(61.1 percent) received full child support in 2007.²⁴

Custody and Visitation

A majority (81.7 percent) of the 6.4 million custodial parents due child support payments in 2007 had arrangements for joint child custody or visitation privileges with the noncustodial parent. This is a decrease from 1993, when 85.6 percent of custodial parents due support had joint custody or visitation arrangements. Among this group, 78.3 percent received at least some child support payments

²⁴ The proportion of custodial parents under 30 receiving full support (32.0 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial parents below poverty receiving full support (40.2 percent). The proportion of divorced custodial parents receiving full support (50.2 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial parents 40 years and older receiving full support (54.6 percent), which also was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial parents with at least a bachelor's degree who received full support (61.1 percent).

in 2007. Of the custodial parents due child support who did not have either joint custody or visitation arrangements, 67.2 percent received child support payments.²⁵

For the 7.4 million custodial parents without any agreements, or with agreements but not due child support, 65.4 percent had arrangements with the noncustodial parent for visitation privileges or some type of shared custody.

Amount of Child Support Received

In 2007, the 6.4 million custodial parents who were due child support under the terms of legal awards or informal agreements were due an annual average of \$5,350, or an average of \$445 per month. The median amount of child support due in 2007 was \$4,400.

²⁵ See Detailed Table 9 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

An aggregate of \$34.1 billion in child support payments were due custodial parents who had agreements for support.²⁶

The average amount of child support received by custodial parents who were due support payments in 2007 was \$3,350, or about \$280 per month. The median annual amount of child support received was lower, \$2,200, as half of custodial parents due support received less than that amount and half received more. About one-quarter (23.4 percent) of custodial parents due support received \$5,000 or more in annual child support payments, while over one-third (36.6 percent) received less than \$1,000 in 2007. An aggregate of \$21.4 billion of child support due was reported as received, accounting for 62.7 percent of the \$34.1 billion that was due. The 2007 proportion was not statistically different from the ratio in 1993, when \$22.0 billion of the \$33.8 billion (65.1 percent) of child support due was reported as received (Figure 6).²⁷

In 2007, custodial mothers received \$18.6 billion of the \$29.8 billion in support that was due (62.5 percent), and custodial fathers received \$2.8 billion of the \$4.3 billion that was due (63.8 percent). The proportions of child support received by mothers and fathers were not statistically different from each other.

²⁶ See Detailed Table 1 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

²⁷ Overall, custodial parents reported receiving \$22.9 billion directly from the noncustodial parent for support of their children in 2007, which included \$1.6 billion received by parents without current awards or agreements. Custodial parents receiving child support without current awards include those with awards for children past the age of eligibility for payments, those with awards officially starting after 2007, and those with no awards (no legal or nonlegal awards). They represented 600,000 custodial parents and received an average of \$2,500 in child support in 2007. Amounts from 1993 are in 2007 Consumer Price Index Research Series Using Current Methods (CPI-U-RS) adjusted dollars.

Child Support and Income

The average amount of child support received by the 4.9 million custodial parents who received at least some of the support they were due (\$4,400) represented 12.9 percent of their average annual income in 2007 (\$34,100). Child support represented 7.8 percent of income for the 1.9 million parents who received part of the full support they were due and 15.4 percent for the 3.0 million custodial parents who received all child support that they were due. The poverty rates among these groups were not statistically different from each other (about 18 percent).

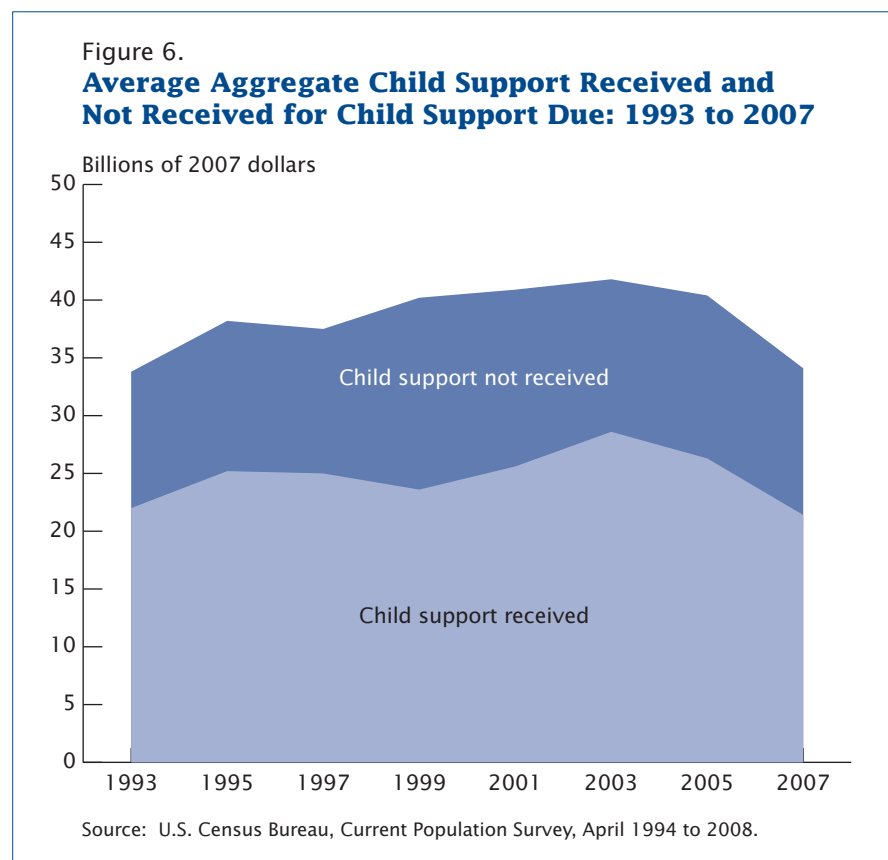
Child support represented a higher proportion of income for some lower-income parents. For example, among custodial parents below the poverty level who received full payments, the average child support received represented 47.9 percent of their average income.²⁸

The 2007 average individual income for the 1.5 million custodial parents who received no child support payments was \$29,300; and among the 6.3 million custodial parents with no support agreements, the average individual income was \$28,500, amounts not statistically different from each other.

Health Insurance

Of the 7.4 million custodial parents who had child support awards or agreements in 2007, 56.6 percent had agreements that specified who was to provide health insurance for their children. In 44.5 percent of these 4.2 million agreements, the absent parent provided the health

²⁸ See Detailed Tables 4, 5, and 6 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.



insurance coverage.²⁹ Among the 2.6 million custodial parents with agreements where health insurance was not included in the child support award, 13.5 percent received health care coverage for their children from the noncustodial parent. For the 6.3 million custodial parents without a child support agreement, 17.1 percent had health insurance coverage for their children through the noncustodial parent. Overall, approximately 3.3 million noncustodial parents provided some type of health insurance for their children in 2007.³⁰

²⁹ Health insurance coverage could be through either a health maintenance organization, a regular insurance policy, or some other plan. In many states, one or both parents could be obligated in a child support agreement to carry health insurance for their children. If the custodial parent is required to carry the coverage, the noncustodial parent may be required to contribute toward the cost of family coverage.

³⁰ See Detailed Table 8 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

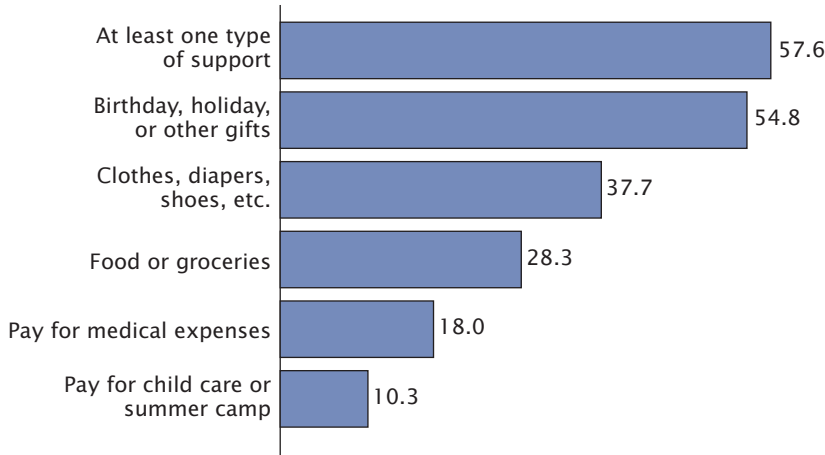
Noncash Child Support

At least one type of noncash support, such as gifts or coverage of expenses, was received by 57.6 percent of all custodial parents on behalf of their children. The proportion of custodial mothers receiving noncash support (55.8 percent) was lower than that of custodial fathers (66.6 percent). Custodial parents with a child support agreement or award were more likely than those without awards to receive noncash support (61.5 percent and 52.9 percent, respectively).³¹

The most common type of noncash support was gifts for birthdays, holidays, or other occasions (54.8 percent); followed by clothes (37.7 percent); food or groceries (28.3

³¹ The proportion of all custodial parents receiving some type of noncash support (57.6 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial mothers receiving some type of noncash support (55.8 percent).

Figure 7.
Noncash Support Received by Custodial Parents: 2008
 (Percent)



Note: Total exceeds 100 percent because respondents could list more than one type.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 2008.

percent); medical expenses other than health insurance (18.0 percent); and full or partial payments for child care or summer camp (10.3 percent) (Figure 7).³²

Contact With Government for Assistance

In 2008, 27.3 percent of all custodial parents had ever contacted a child support enforcement office (IV-D office), state department of social services, or other welfare or TANF office for child-support-related assistance. This was a decrease from 1994, when 42.2 percent of custodial parents contacted a government agency for help. In addition, the total number of individual contacts for related assistance decreased 23.3 percent during this time, from 13.0 million to 10.0 million. Contacts were made for many reasons, and the reasons provided most often were to collect child support that was due and to establish a legal agreement or court award (about 26

³² The total of percentages exceeds 100 because more than one type of noncash support may have been received. See Detailed Table 10 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

percent each), to obtain welfare or public assistance (15.3 percent), and to locate the noncustodial parent (11.4 percent).³³

Source of the Data

The population represented (the population universe) in the Child Support Supplement to the April 2008 CPS is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized people in Census 2000). Approximately 0.4 percent of all children under 21 years old were institutionalized in Census 2000.

The estimates in this report are from the 1994 through 2008 April biennial supplements to the CPS. The Census Bureau conducts the April supplement sponsored, in part, by the Office of Child Support

³³ See Detailed Table 2 at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html>.

Enforcement of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Data from the April 1992 and earlier supplements are not directly comparable with data from 1994 and later years because of changes made to the questionnaire (see text box “Limitations of the Data” for more detail). Because of changes made to the allocation procedures, data for custodial parents due and receiving child support were revised starting with the April 1994 survey. Reported estimates may differ from those published previously due to these changes.

Accuracy of the Estimates

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling error and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level. This means the 90 percent confidence interval for the difference between estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling error in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. To minimize these errors, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures in sample selection, the wording of questions, interviewing, coding, data processing, and data analysis.

The CPS weighting procedure uses ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other

than age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

Further information on the source of the data and accuracy of the estimates, including standard errors and confidence intervals, can be

found at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/source07.pdf> or by contacting Rebecca Hoop of the Demographic Statistical Methods Division via e-mail at <dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov>.

More Information

Detailed tabulations, related information, and historical data are available on the Census Bureau's

child support Web page at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/childsupport.html>.

For additional questions or comments, contact Timothy Grall at 301-763-6685 or via e-mail at <Timothy.Scott.Grall@census.gov>.

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