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PORTRAITS OF SELECTED SUBGROUPS OF NEW AFDC  
RECIPIENTS: SPANISH-SPEAKING, PREGNANT,  
AND WORKING

**GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS  
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## SUMMARY

This report is based upon a sample survey of AFDC-Basic recipients whose cases opened in May 1978. Descriptions are presented of each of the following subgroups: Spanish-speaking; Pregnant (with no other children in care); and Working. Each description contrasts the specific new AFDC-Basic subgroup with all other new AFDC-Basic recipients.

### Spanish-speaking

Compared to English-speaking new AFDC-Basic recipients, Spanish-speaking new Basics received AFDC for more children, were less educated, lived in Massachusetts for fewer years, were more likely never to have married, had fewer sources of financial support, and were less likely to have been presently employed. The larger family responsibilities and poorer work histories of the Spanish-speaking new Basics are characteristics commonly associated with decreased ability to compete in the marketplace.

### Pregnant

Compared to other new AFDC-Basic recipients, pregnant (with no other child in care) new recipients were younger, less likely to be white, more likely never to have married, more likely to be living with relatives other than a husband, and more likely to have a poorer present and past work history.

### Presently working

Compared to other new Basics, those who were presently working were older, better educated, more likely to have been married, have better family employment histories, less likely to have applied for AFDC because of pregnancy, and more likely to have applied for AFDC because of an injury or illness of a family member or because of family size increase. Those who were presently working possessed characteristics generally associated with increased ability to compete in the marketplace, as these recipients are doing.

## INTRODUCTION

This report briefly describes the characteristics of new recipients of AFDC-Basic\*, and then provides portraits of three subgroups of new recipients:

- Spanish-speaking,\*\*
- Pregnant (with no other children in care); and
- Working.

Each portrait contrasts the specific new AFDC-Basic subgroup with all other new AFDC-Basic recipients.

## METHODOLOGY

The sample reported on here was drawn from AFDC-Basic cases which opened in May 1978. Questionnaires were distributed and returned from June through August 1978. The 70% (508)<sup>1</sup> response rate is excellent for a mail survey.

The survey presents a statistically accurate description--within known, relatively narrow parameters--of the entire May 1978 new AFDC-Basic population.<sup>2</sup> However, the description becomes less accurate--and the known parameters broader--as smaller subgroups within this population are isolated and described.<sup>3</sup> The percentages describing the new Basic population as a whole are thus more accurate estimates of true population values than the percentages describing Spanish-speaking, pregnant, and working new Basic subgroups.

\*A full report on this survey was published in November 1978. Copies are available from the Office of Research and Evaluation. Ask for "Survey of Case Openings in May 1978" by Donna Balboni.

\*\*This information was requested by the Hispanic-Portuguese Unit, which also asked that it be circulated.

- 23% of new Basics were living in extended households including grandparents or other relatives. 16% had spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend in the home, and 5% lived with other friends or boarders.
- 81% of the new Basic cases received AFDC for only one adult, including 76% for a female adult. 8% received AFDC for two adults, including 2% for a mother and disabled father. 9% of the cases did not include an adult.

#### Reason for AFDC Application

- Family break-up (separation, abandonment, or divorce) caused 42% of new Basics to apply for AFDC.
- 23% applied because of pregnancy.
- 13% applied because of other family changes (family size increase, illness or injury).
- 14% applied because of employment-related problems (Unemployment Compensation exhausted or inadequate, quit or fired from job, lay off, kept job but wage too low, strike, and so forth).
- 9% applied because they arrived in Massachusetts with no means of support.
- The average new Basic waited 3 months after these changes occurred before applying for AFDC.

## SPANISH-SPEAKING NEW RECIPIENTS OF AFDC-BASIC<sup>5</sup> (TABLE 1)

10% (49) of the sampled 478 AFDC-Basic recipients whose cases opened in May 1978 spoke Spanish most easily, 3% (12) spoke Portuguese, and 87% (416) spoke English or other languages.

### No Differences

Spanish-speaking new Basics were similar to new Basics who spoke English and other languages in: age, sex, percentage of women receiving AFDC because of pregnancy, living situation, number of adults in check, type of assistance received prior to AFDC, and number of months between life circumstance change and AFDC application.

### Differences

Compared to English-speaking new AFDC-Basic recipients, Spanish-speaking new Basics:

- received AFDC for more children (1.8 children-English, 2.4-Spanish);
- completed fewer years of school (51% high school graduates-English, 10%-Spanish);
- lived in Massachusetts for fewer years (5% less than 1 year-English, 49%-Spanish);
- were more likely never to have married (25% never married-English, 41%-Spanish);
- applied for AFDC for different reasons (5% arrival in Massachusetts with no means of support-English, 37%-Spanish);

- less likely to be white (including those of Hispanic origin) (91% white-Not Pregnant, 83%-Pregnant);
- more likely never to have married (15% never married-Not Pregnant, 74%-Pregnant);
- more likely to be living with relatives other than a husband (18%-Not Pregnant, 41%-Pregnant);
- less likely to have received Food Stamps before applying for AFDC (21%-Not Pregnant, 10%-Pregnant);
- more likely to have waited longer between a life circumstance change and the date of AFDC application (2.5 months-Not Pregnant, 3.6 months-Pregnant);
- employed for less time at last job (15 months-Not Pregnant, 8 months-Pregnant), earned less at last job (\$3.46 per hour-Not Pregnant, \$2.78-Pregnant), more likely to have been service workers (24%-Not Pregnant, 33%-Pregnant)<sup>7</sup>; and
- less likely to be presently employed (15%-Not Pregnant, 5%-Pregnant)<sup>8</sup>.

#### PRESENTLY WORKING NEW RECIPIENTS OF AFDC-BASIC (Table 3)

13% (62) of the 478 new AFDC cases sampled in May were presently working.

#### No Differences

Working new Basics were similar to other new Basics in number of adults and children in the AFDC check, race, sex, and living situation.

Now Working

26% (62) of May's 241 new AFDC-UF cases were working at the time of the survey. These were compared with the remaining group (179) of new AFDC-UF recipients who were not working, and no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups.

TABLE II

NEW RECIPIENTS OF AFDC-BASIC IN MAY 1978: COMPARISON OF PREGNANT  
(WITH NO OTHER CHILDREN IN CARE) RECIPIENTS WITH OTHER RECIPIENTS

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>All New Recipients (N=478)</u>	<u>Pregnant With No Other Children in Care (N=96)</u>	<u>Not Pregnant (N=378)</u>
<u>Demographics</u>			
Average Age of Recipient	29 yrs.	21 yrs.**	30**
Educational Level:			
Some high school or less	45%	46%	45%
High school graduate or G.E.D.	35	42	33
Attended college	11	7	12
Race or Ethnic Origin			
White (including Hispanics)	89%	83%*	91%*
Other	10	16	9
Language:			
English	84%	88%	84%
Spanish	10	11	10
Portuguese	3	1	3
Other	3	0	3
Residence in Massachusetts:			
5 years or more	81%	82%	81%
Less than 1 year	10	4*	11*
1 year to 5 years	8	13	7
Marital Status of Recipient:			
Divorced or separated	30%	14%**	35%**
Never married	27	74%**	15%**
Married, living apart	25	9*	29*
Married, living with spouse	16	2*	18*
Living situation:			
Husband/boyfriend or wife/girlfriend	16%	9%	17%
Other relatives	23	41%**	18%**
Nobody else	56	43%**	60%**

\*Differences marked with a single asterisk should be regarded as merely suggesting, rather than establishing, significant differences between the populations from which the data were collected. For these differences either one of two conditions exists:  $p < .05$ , or the number of cases in the subgroup characteristic is small.

\*\*Differences marked with two asterisks are sufficiently large as to indicate reliable differences between the populations from which the data were collected. ( $p < .01$ )



Table II (Continued)

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>All New Recipients (N=478)</u>	<u>Pregnant With No Other Children in Care (N=96)</u>	<u>Not Pregnant (N=378)</u>
<u>Other Sources of Assistance</u>			
Assistance Prior to Application:			
Food Stamp	19%	10%*	21%*
Job	17%	13%	18%
Medicaid	16%	17%	16%
Unemployment Compensation	2%	4%	2%
<u>Reason for AFDC Application</u>			
Family breakup	42%	7%*	50%*
Pregnancy	23%	88%**	7%**
Employment related	14%	8%	15%
Other family change	13%	0%**	16%**
Arrival in Massachusetts with no means of support	9%	1%	11%
Months before application	2.7	3.6*	2.5*
<u>Employment History</u>			
Ever worked	83%	82%	83%
Now working	13%	5%*	15%*
Last Employment:			
Hours per week	33	32	33
Hourly wage	\$3.34	\$2.78	\$3.46
Duration in months	13	8*	15
Type of Work			
Semi-skilled	30%	29%	31%
Clerical and Sales	30	32	31
Service Workers	26	33	24
Professional and Technical	6	0	7
Skilled Workers	3	3	3
Unskilled Workers	3	3	3
Self Employed and Managers	2	1	2
Place			
Manufacturer	32%	28%	32%
Retail or Wholesale Store	26	30	25
Seller of Services	22	22	23
Government Agency	11	13	10
Insurance or Real Estate	5	3	6
Builder	1	0	2
Transportation Business	1	3	1
Public Utility	1	1	1
Undefined and not able to categorize	1	0	1

Table III (Continued)

<u>Characteristic</u>	All New Recipients (N=478)	Now Working (N=62)	Not Now Working (N=409)
<u>Demographics (cont'd.)</u>			
Adults in AFDC Check:			
Zero	9%	15%	8%
One	81	74	82
Two	8	11	8
<u>Other Sources of Assistance</u>			
Assistance Prior to Application:			
Food Stamp	19%	24%	18%
Job	17%	60%**	10%**
Medicaid	16%	21%	15%
Unemployment Compensation	2%	3%	2%
<u>Reason for AFDC Application</u>			
Family breakup	42%	48%	40%
Pregnancy	23%	6%*	26%*
Employment related	14%	21%	13%
Other Family change	13%	23%*	12%*
Arrival in Massachusetts with no means of support	9%	3%	10%
Months before application	2.7	1.8	2.9
<u>Employment History</u>			
Ever worked	83%	100%**	82%**
Last Employment:			
Hours per week	33	28	33
Hourly wage	\$3.34	\$3.65	\$3.27
Duration in months	13	12	13

## NOTES

1. Of these 508, only 478 were included in the analysis because responses indicated the remainder were not actually "new" recipients.
2. Given the sample size (478) and a relative absence of skewness in the data, one can be 98% confident that the population's true characteristics are within  $\pm 5\%$  of those observed in the sample. However, generalizations from those observed proportions which are highly skewed are less reliable.
3. At best one can be 95% confident that the true subpopulation characteristics are within  $\pm 14\%$  of the observed sample percentages. Due to the fact that not every respondent answered every questions, there are some characteristics for which the sum of case subgroups is less than the sum of all new recipients in Table I-III; reliability of estimates is, of course, further decreased for characteristics when data are missing.
4. As appropriate, normal curve ratio tests on differences in proportions ( $z$  test) or "t"-tests for differences in means were performed. Due to small sample sizes and to the lack of normality in the sampling distribution for extreme proportions, a relatively stringent criterion has been adopted ( $p < .01$ ) for establishing a significant difference. Those differences which meet a less stringent ( $p < .05$ ) criterion have been indicated in Table I-III, but should be regarded with caution.
5. "Spanish-speaking recipients" were defined as those who indicated that they spoke the Spanish language most easily. This "Spanish-speaking" group represents only a subgroup of the larger New Basic Hispanic population. This subgroup is probably less familiar with the English language and less assimilated into American society. Caution is therefore warranted regarding generalizations to the total new AFDC-Basic Hispanic population.
6. No tests of statistical significance were performed on characteristics of last employment (e.g. work week, hourly wage, duration in months, type of work or place of work) because of the decreased reliability of comparisons based upon small subgroups of cases. Nevertheless, a few conspicuous differences have been reported to highlight the work experiences of the subgroup. These differences are merely suggestive, and should not be generalized to the entire new AFDC population.
7. Ibid.
8. This difference should be regarded as merely suggesting, rather than establishing a significant difference between the Pregnant and Not Pregnant New Basic subgroup populations. For although  $p < .01$ , the small number of cases in the subgroups necessitates caution.
9. Ibid.
10. Family size increase does not include pregnancy.
11. Although 251 UF cases were returned, only 241 were included in the analysis because responses indicated the remainder were not actually "New"; i.e. 10 of those surveyed indicated that they had been on AFDC some time, even though they were listed by the department as new cases.