

A longitudinal study of low-income families' food stamps utilization

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Purpose

- To examine low-income families' use of food stamps and how it relates to financial resources, welfare receipt, need for various services, social structural factors, demographic characteristics, and geographic proximity to food stamps offices

Theoretical Framework

- Aday's and Andersen's behavioral model of use of health services

Hypotheses

- Likelihood of food stamps utilization is positively associated with TANF receipt, need for other financial support, family earnings, residence in metropolitan area, ethnic minority background, being female, and number of dependent children
- Such likelihood is negatively associated with education level, occupational skill level, age, and being married.

Sample

- Data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) 2004 Panel
- Longitudinal records of 8 interview waves (only the fourth month of each interview wave)
- 54,703 non-elderly adults (average household income reaching no more than 130% of federal poverty level)
- 305,183 person-waves for data analysis

Data Analysis

- STATA Generalized Estimating Equations (GEE)
 - Binomial Family and Logit Link options
 - Unstructured autoregressive correlation
- Sampling weights provided by SIPP
- No indication of multicollinearity

Descriptive Results

	Percent	Mean
Food stamps utilization		
Yes	2.9%	
No	97.1%	
TANF recipient		
Yes	0.04%	
No	99.96%	
Informal aid		
% from child support		0.69%
% from money given by relatives / friends		0.03%
% from in-kind assistance		0.06%
Family earnings (% of poverty threshold)		33.56%

	Percent	Mean
Resided in a metropolitan area		
Yes	68.1%	
No	31.9%	
Education level		2.8
Occupational skill level		4.5
Married		
Yes	58.2%	
No	41.8%	
Disabled		
Yes	5.0%	
No	95.0%	
Age		39.71
Total number of children under 18 in family		0.87

Multivariate Analysis results

Variables	eb
TANF recipient (no)	6.45**
Percentage from child support	1.00**
Percentage from money given by relatives or friends	.99*
Percentage from in-kind assistance	1.00
Family earnings	.88**
Metro (no)	.89
African American (White)	1.71**
Hispanic (White)	.98
Asian (White)	.29
Other minorities (White)	1.53**

Variables	eb
Education level	.74**
Occupational skill level	.92**
Female (male)	3.69**
Married (no)	.40**
Disabled (no)	1.71**
Age	.98**
Total number of children under 18 in family	1.53**

Variables	eb
2nd wave (1st wave)	1.26**
3rd wave (1st wave)	1.27**
4th wave (1st wave)	1.10
5th wave (1st wave)	1.02
6th wave (1st wave)	1.30**
7th wave (1st wave)	.69
8th wave (1st wave)	.91
Wald $\chi^2 = 4715.87^{**}$	
** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$	

Implications

- A strong tie was found between participation in TANF and participation in SNAP
 - Policymakers should reconsider current policy severing administrative ties between TANF and SNAP.
 - Increase public awareness of food stamps programs

- The buffering effect of relatives' and friends' support
 - Interventions to re-establish and promote low-income families' support networks
 - Informal child care can play some role in establishing financial independence
 - Program of home visits by various agency representatives charged with identifying low-income families and the services appropriate for them
 - Not seek to substitute family and friends' support for formal food stamps programs