



# Families Experiencing Homelessness: Connection to Benefit Programs, Child and Partner Separations

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# Homeless Families Research Briefs

- HHS's Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and ACF's Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) contracted with Abt to conduct additional analysis of the Family Options Study data
- Family Options Study followed 2,282 homeless families with children who entered shelter between 2010-2012 in 12 sites across the country
- Collected data at enrollment, 20 months, and 37 months later
- Not nationally representative, but has broad geographic coverage and similar to national homeless population



# Brief topics

## Briefs Using 20 Month Follow-up Data

- **Are Homeless Families Connected to the Social Safety Net?**
- Adolescent Well-Being after Experiencing Family Homelessness
- Young Children Experiencing Family Homelessness
- **Child and Partner Transitions Among Families Experiencing Homelessness**
- **Patterns of Benefit Receipt Among Families Who Experience Homelessness**

## Briefs Using 37 Month Follow-up Data

- Child Separation Among Families Experiencing Homelessness
- Characteristics of Families Experiencing Chronic Homelessness
- Earnings and Self-Sufficiency of Families Experiencing Homelessness
- Behavioral Health Improvements Among Adults in Families Experiencing Homelessness



# Are families participating in public benefit programs?

This brief examines whether homeless families are receiving benefits from program public programs, both while in shelter and 20 months after their shelter stay

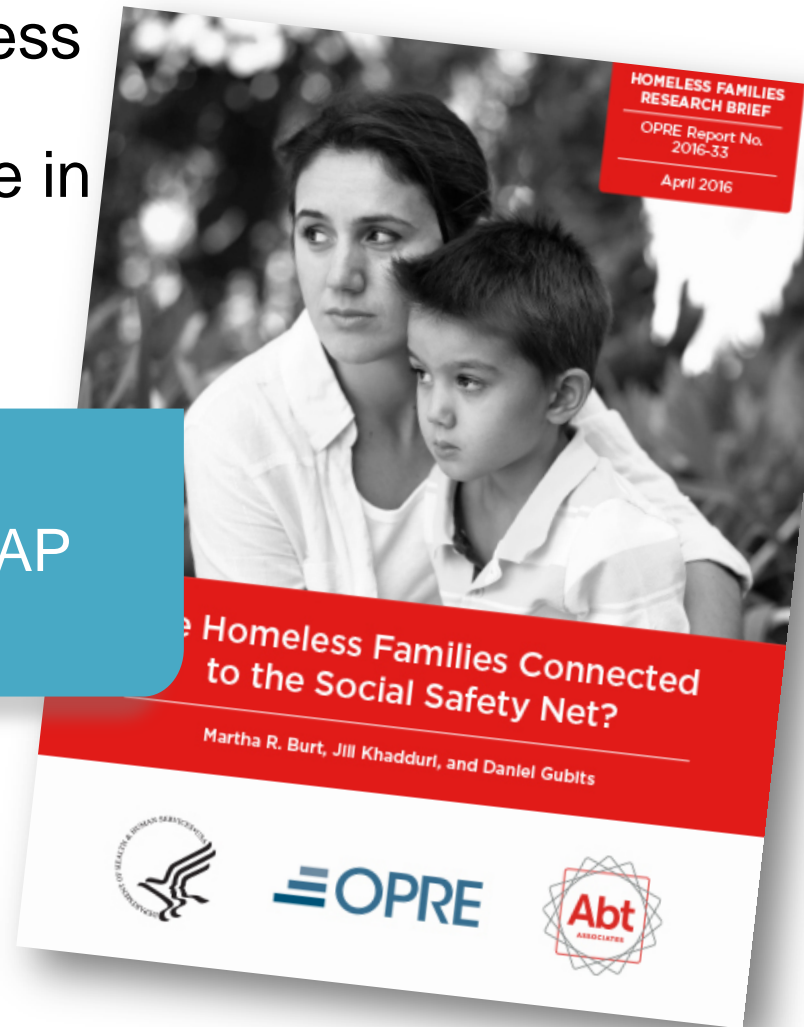
TANF cash assistance

Publicly funded health insurance

SNAP

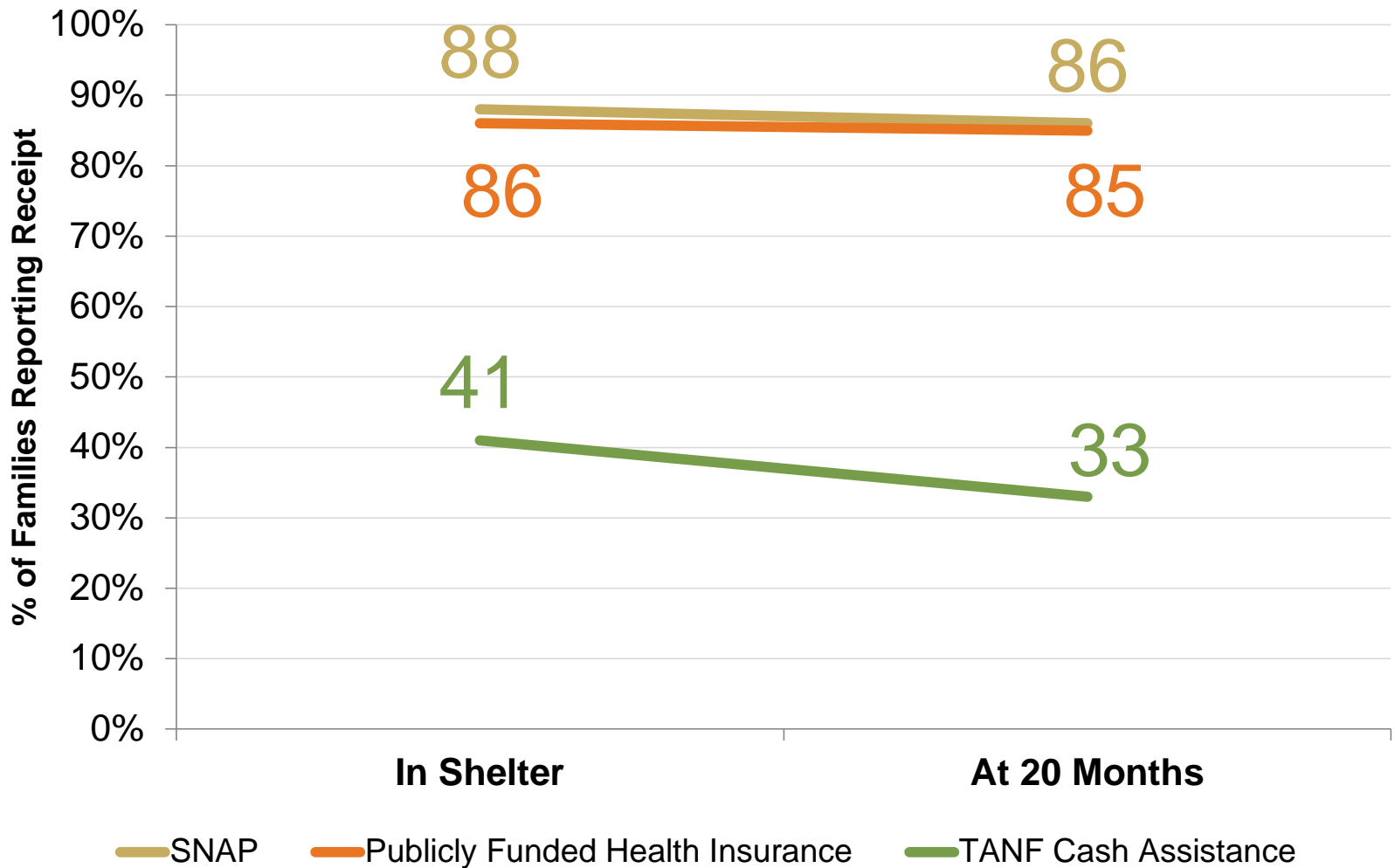
SSI and SSDI

Early education and child care





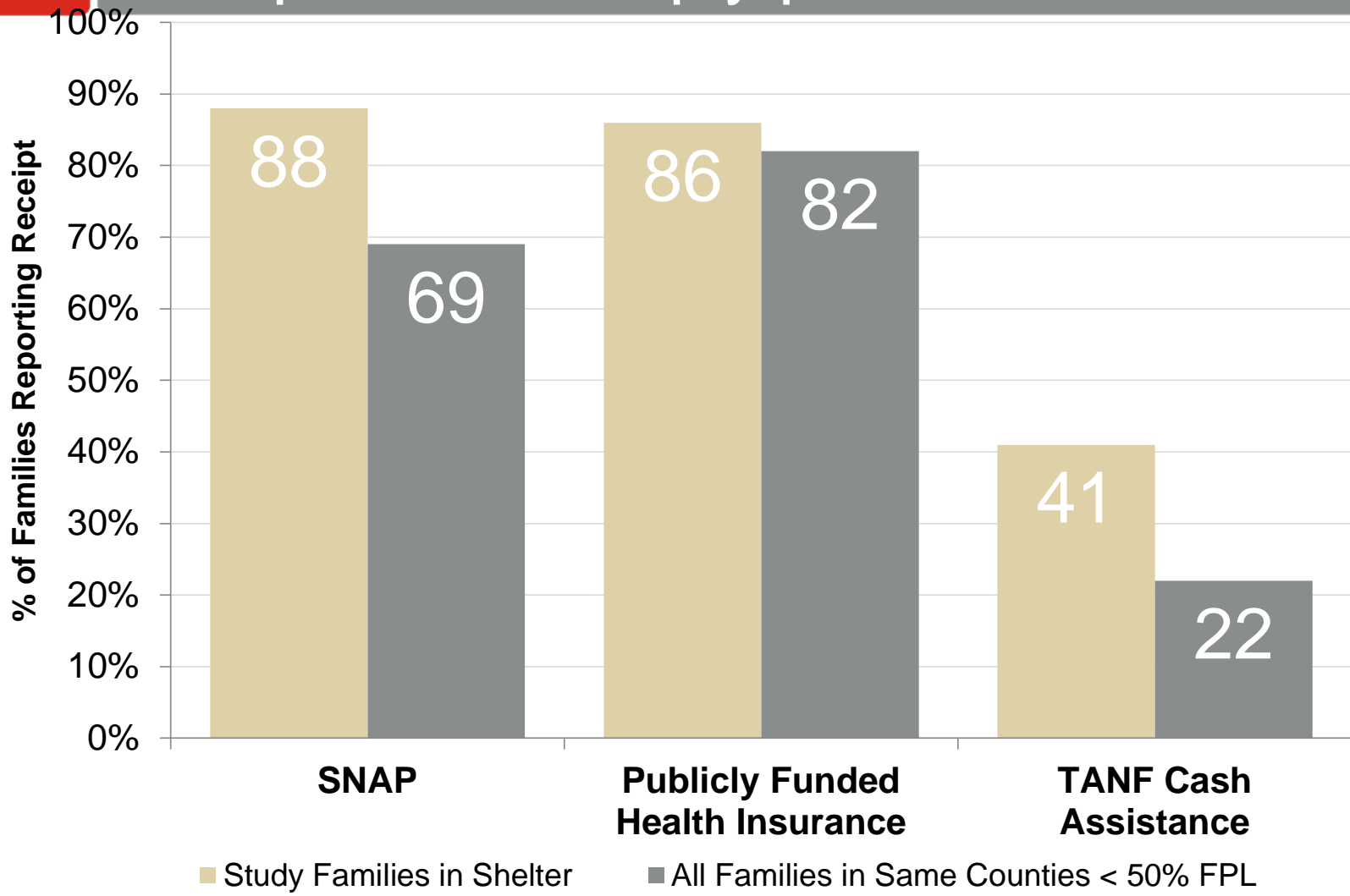
# Study families' receipt of benefits while in shelter and 20 months later



Source: Family Options Study baseline and follow-up survey data



# Study families' receipt of benefits compared to deeply poor families

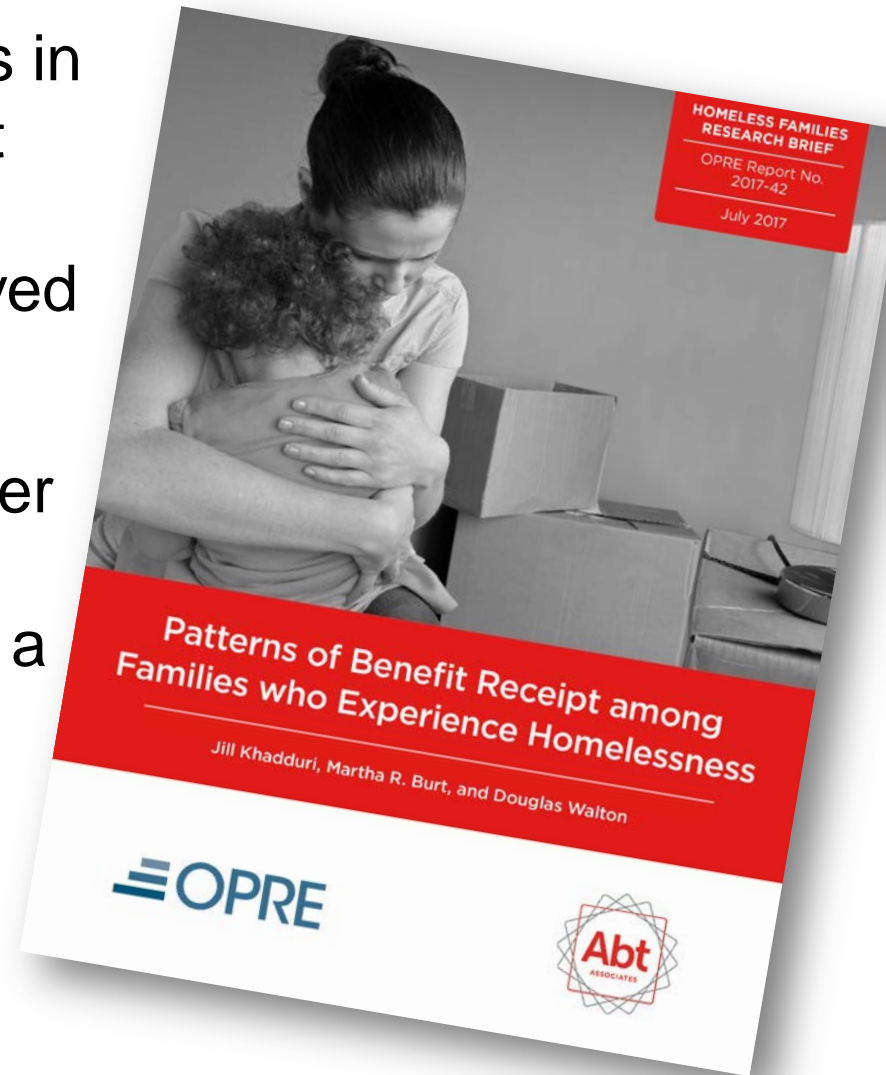


Sources: Family Options Study baseline data and ACS data



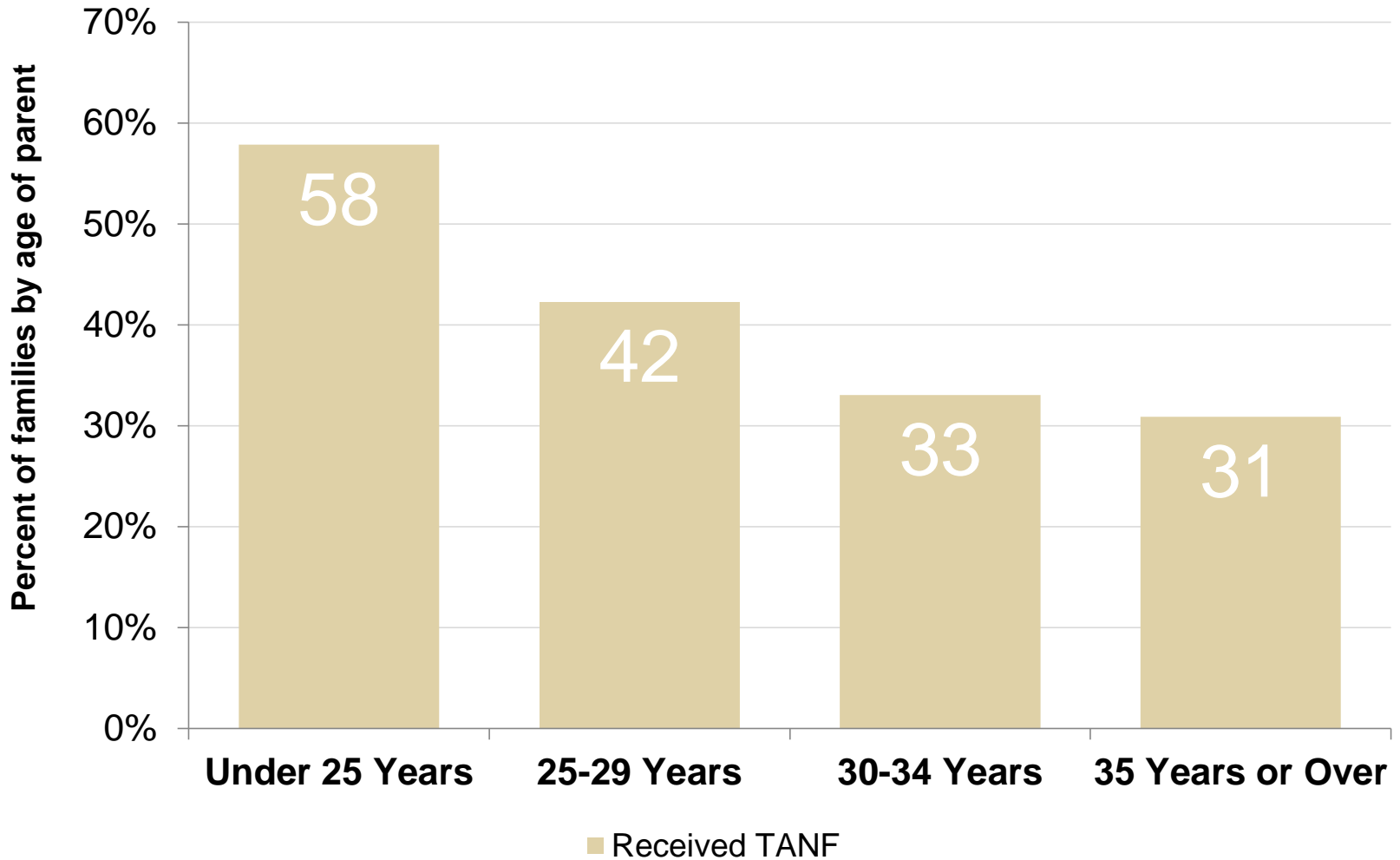
# Patterns of Benefit Receipt Among Families Who Experience Homelessness

- This brief examines differences in family characteristics of benefit receipt after controlling for the community in which family stayed in ES
- The brief also considers whether there is a connection between benefit receipt 20 months after a shelter stay and recent experiences with unstable housing





# Receipt of TANF cash assistance while in shelter by age of parent

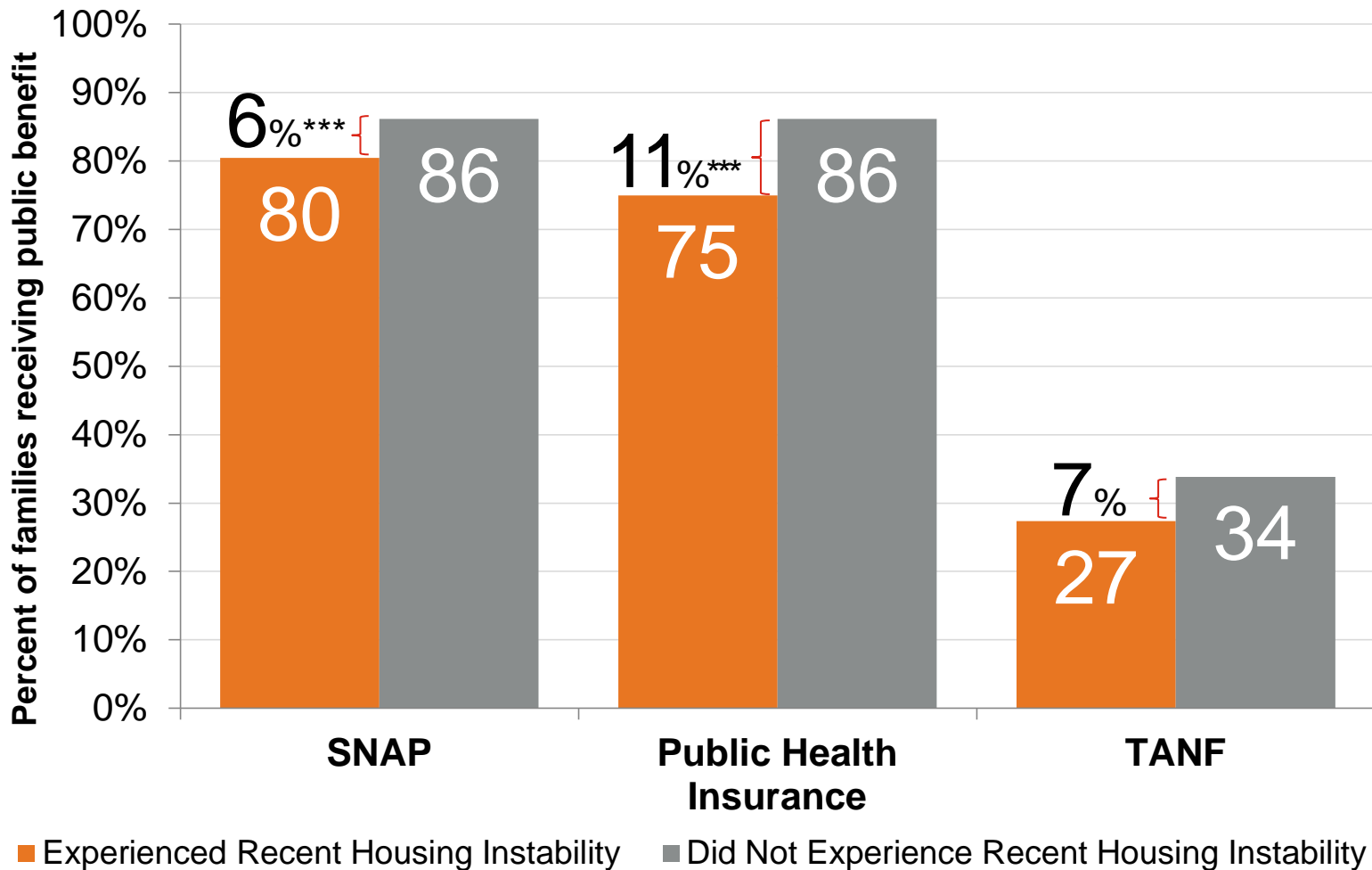


Source: Family Options Study baseline survey data





# Benefit receipt and housing instability 20 months after shelter stay



Source: Family Options Study 20 month follow up survey data.  
Note: \*\*\*/\*\*/\* denotes statistical significance at .01/.05/.10 level.



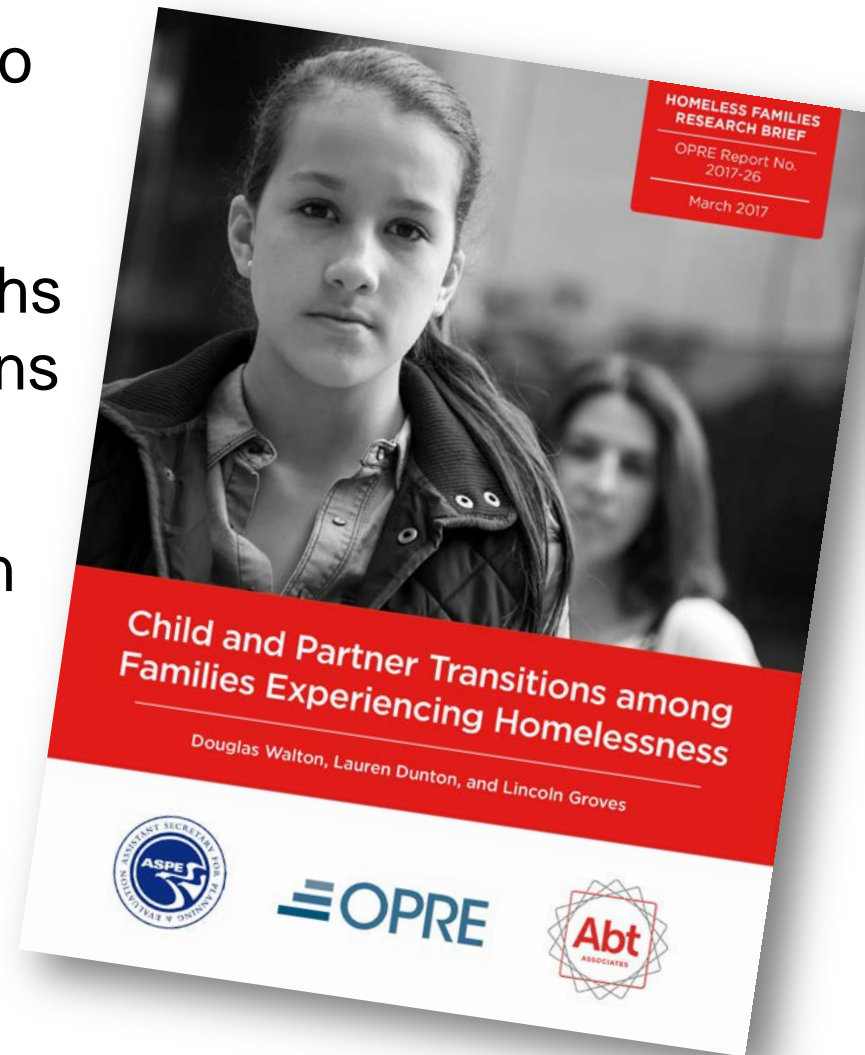
## Main findings – benefit receipt

- Lacking support of benefit programs does not set families who use emergency shelter apart from other deeply poor families that remain housed
- Continued housing instability after a shelter stay may make families susceptible to either losing or having difficulty accessing public benefits



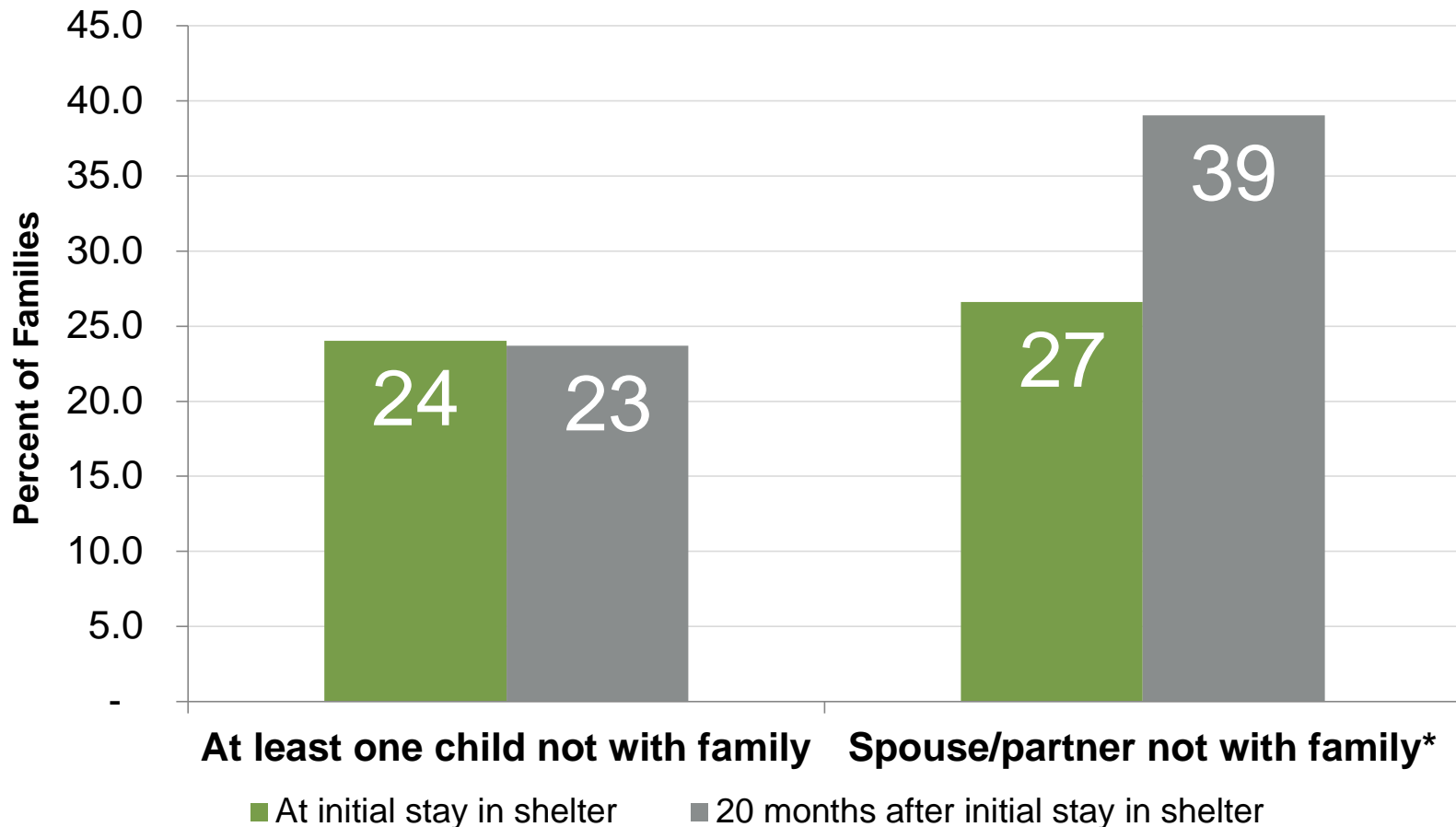
# Child and Partner Transitions Among Homeless Families

- This brief examines the extent to which parents were separated from their children or adult partners in shelter and 20 months later, and considers reunifications that occur within 20 months
- About 30% of families staying in emergency shelter reported separation from at least one family member





# Separations of children and partners during a family's stay in ES shelter and 20 months later



\*Among the 37 percent of families reporting a spouse/partner The spouse/partner difference is statistically significant at .01 level

Source: Family Options Study baseline and follow-up survey data

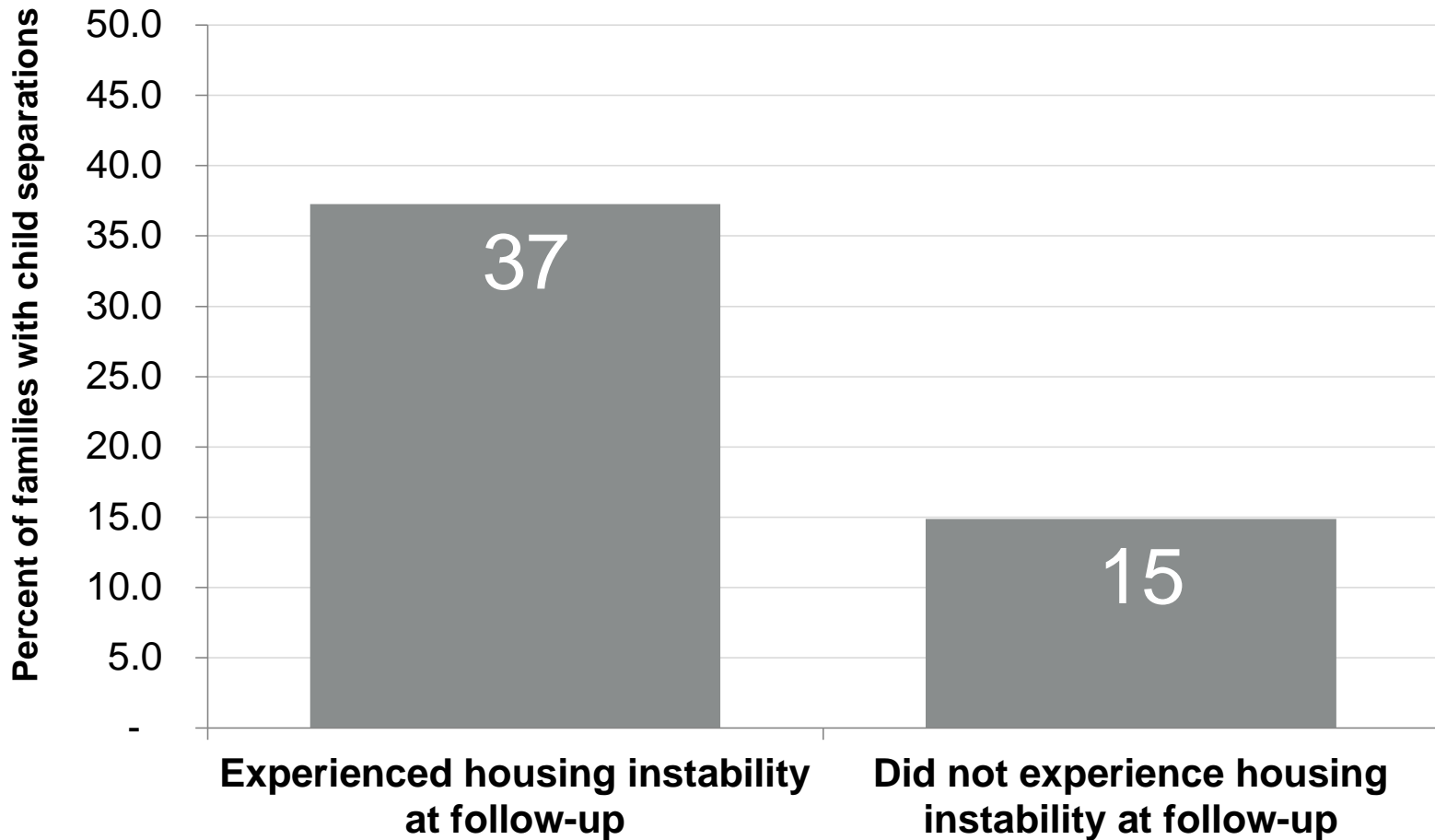


# Homeless families continue to experience family transitions

- The stable overall rate of child separation masks the churning occurring within families.
  - Eight percent of families reported at least one child who was not with the family while in shelter had returned to the family
  - Ten percent of families reported a child who was with the family in shelter was no longer with the family 20 months later
- Adult partners also separated and re-joined families during this period.
- Placements involving the child welfare system were rare at the time families were staying in emergency shelter but increased over time



# Housing instability is related to family separation 20 months later



*Note:* "Housing Instability" is defined as at least one night homeless or doubled up in the past 6 months, or in emergency shelter in the past 12 months. Difference is statistically significant at .05 level.

*Source:* Family Options Study follow-up survey data



# Main findings – family transitions

- Families experience significant instability in their composition during and 20 months after a stay in emergency shelter
- Housing instability and family separations appear to be related
  - Families who reported subsequent housing instability were more likely to report separation from their children 20 months later
  - A relationship may exist between housing instability and family transitions across time, especially child separations



# Published briefs

Available on OPRE's website:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/homeless-families-research-briefs>



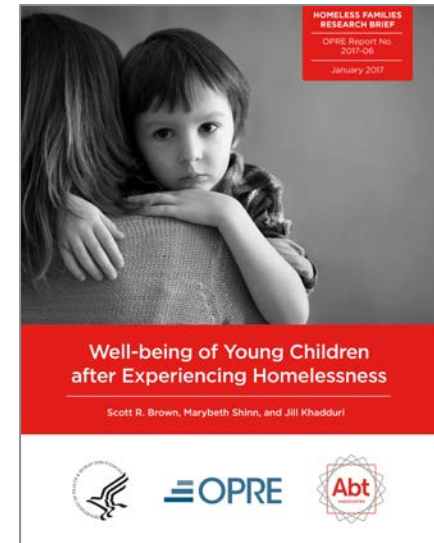
Are Homeless Families Connected to the Social Safety Net?



Adolescent Well-Being After Experiencing Homelessness



Child and Partner Transitions Among Families Experiencing Homelessness



Well-being of Young Children After Experiencing Homelessness





Questions?