

Changing Demography of Social Safety Net Programs



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Supported by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE),
Administration for Children and Families



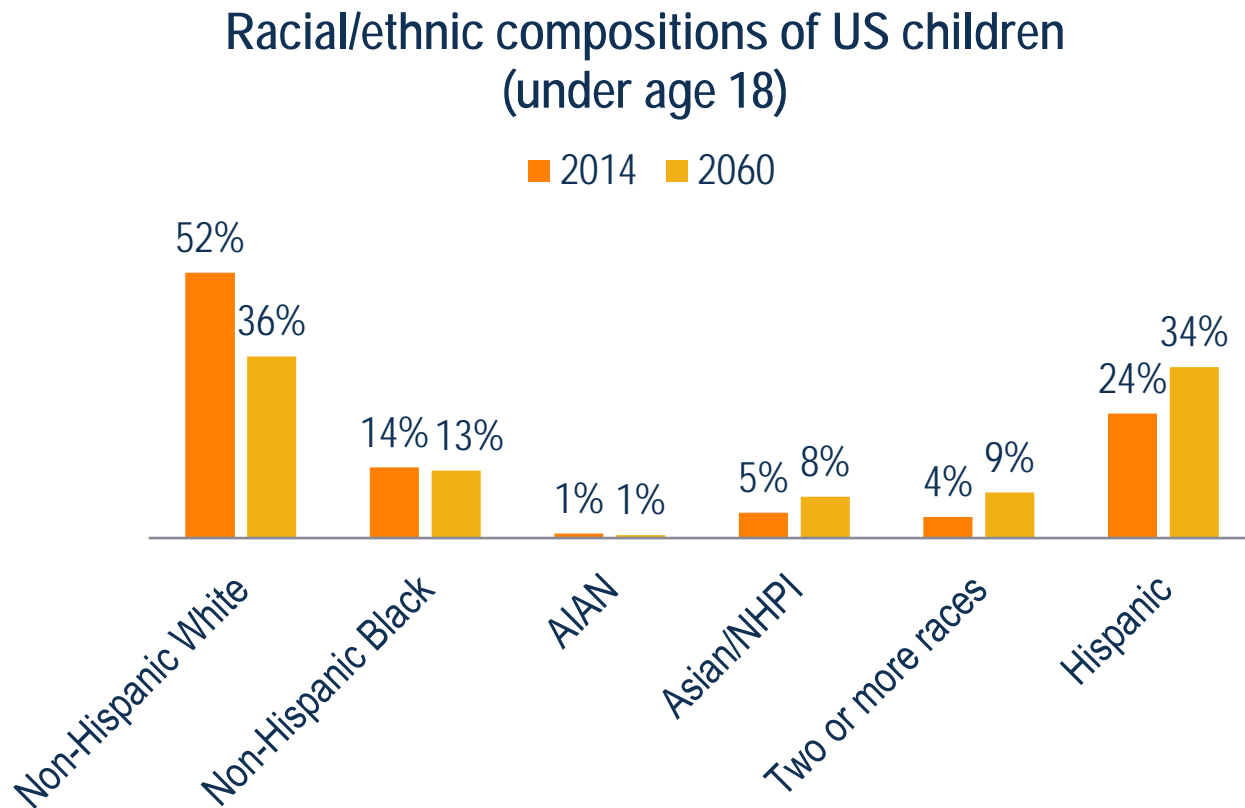
Acknowledgements

- Jodi Sandfort & Greg Fabiano for their input into this study and Chaeyung Jun, Christal Hamilton and Felix Ndashiyme for their research assistance.
- The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



The nation's old, predominantly white population is being replaced by children of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

➤ The ability of the safety net to adapt will determine how well these groups are able to successfully transition into stable, self-sufficient adults.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2014 National Projection



Study Aim and Research Design

Aim

- To examine the demographic changes in social safety-net program participation:
 - **Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**
 - **The Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
 - **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

Data & Methodology

The 1988–2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS)

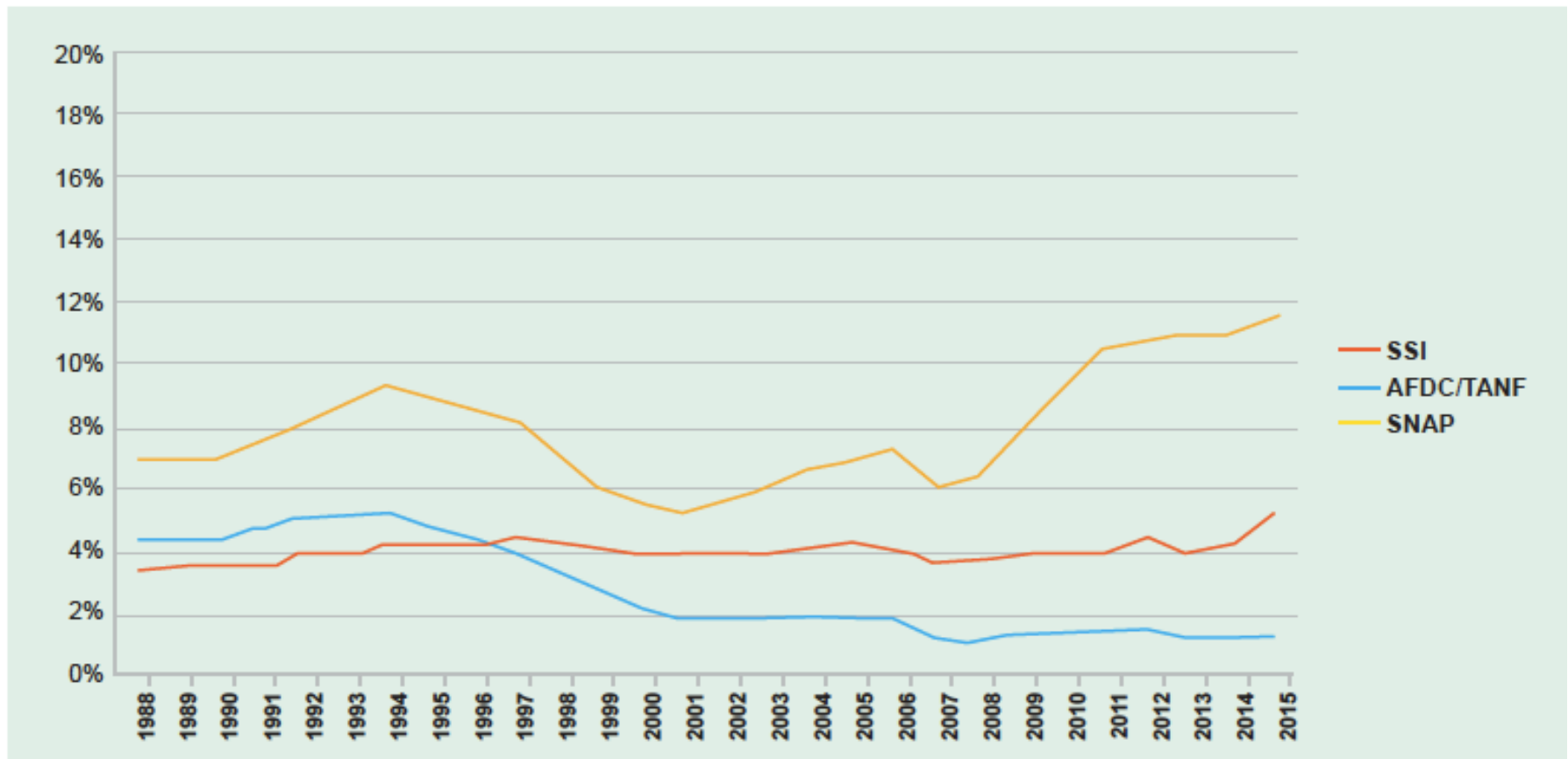
3-year moving average

Sampling weight



The share of AFDC/TANF participants among US population declined while the share of SNAP participants increased.

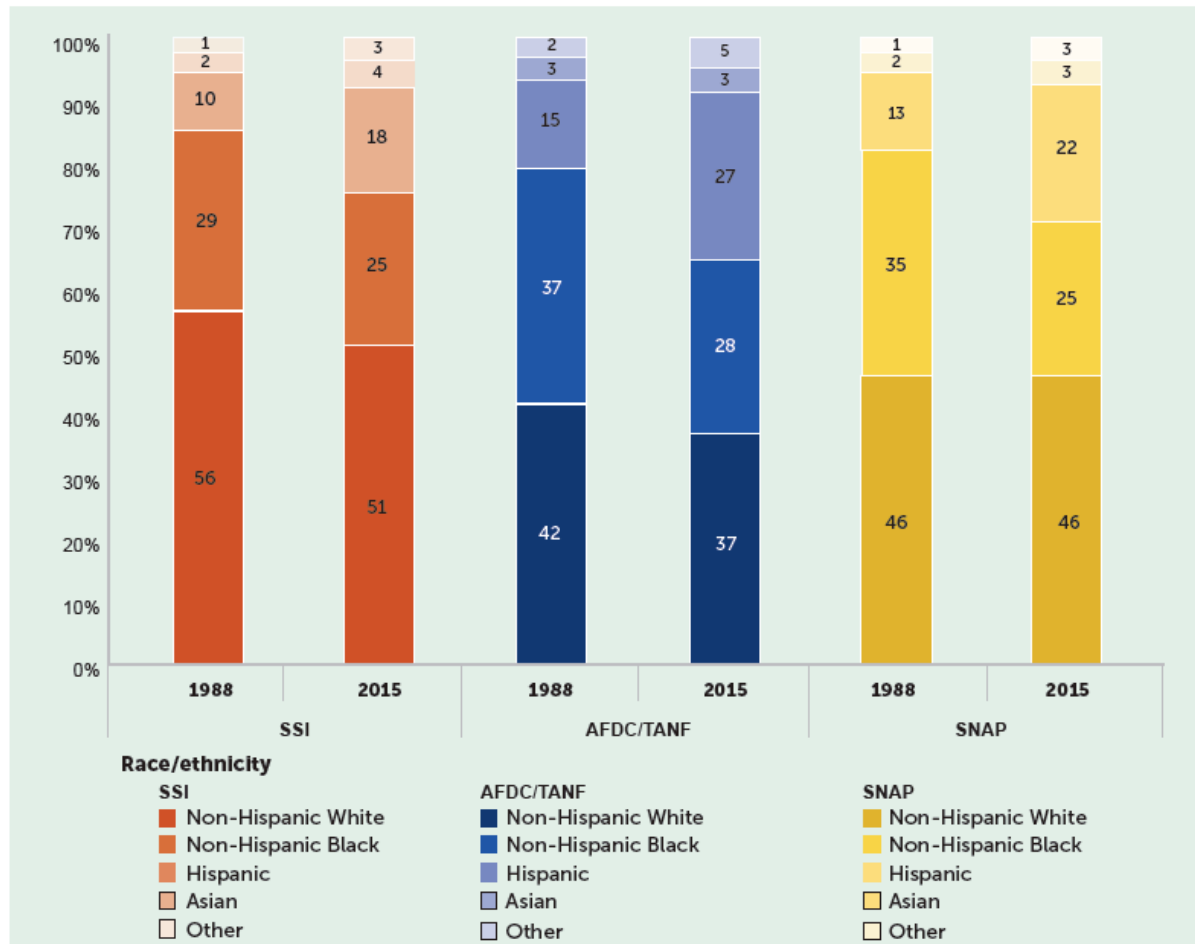
Figure 1. Percentage of U.S. population in social programs: 1988–2015





The share of non-Hispanic Blacks declined by 4-12% between 1988 & 2015.

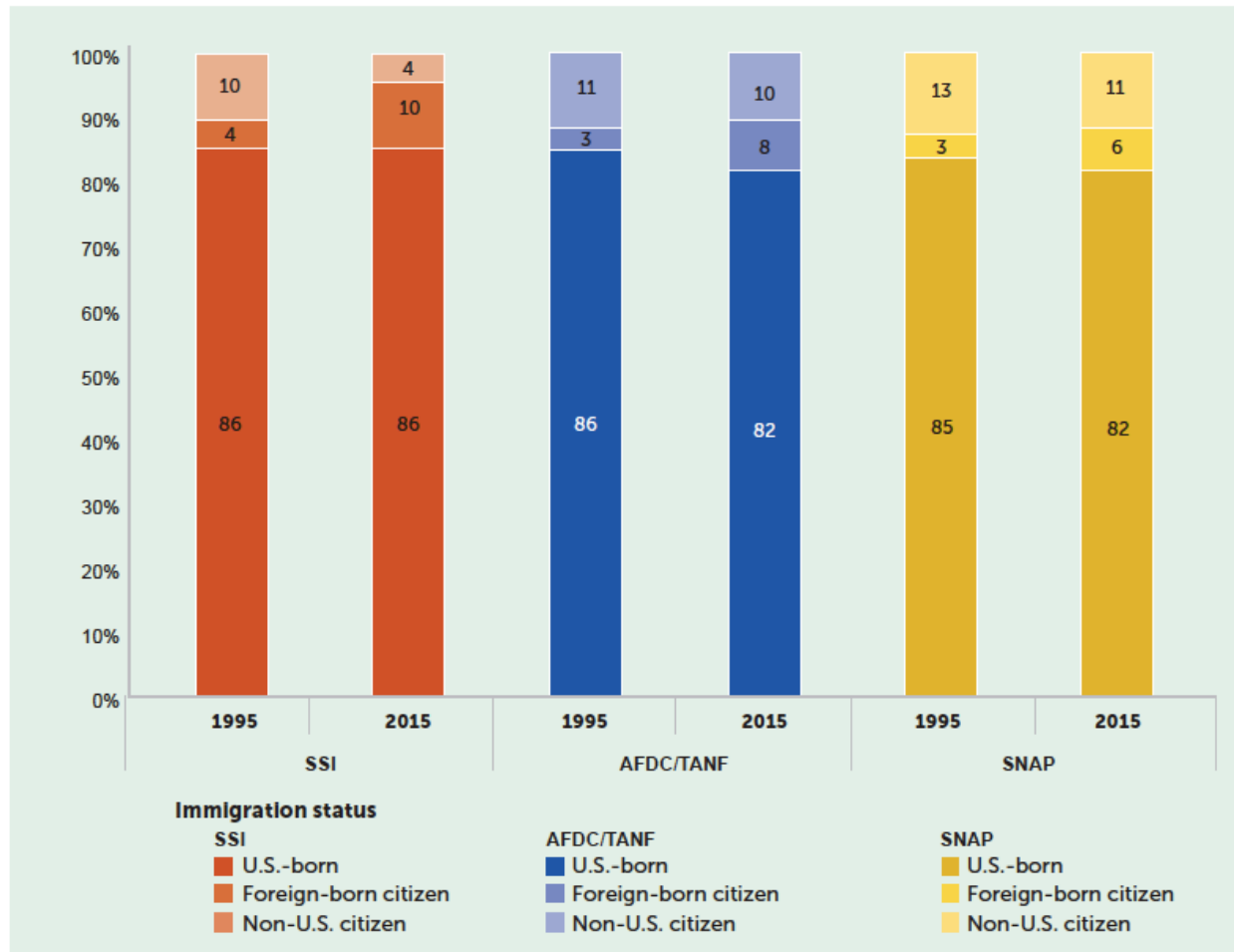
Figure 4. Race/ethnicity of participants by program participation: 1988–2015





The share of non-U.S.-born citizens in all 3 programs increased.

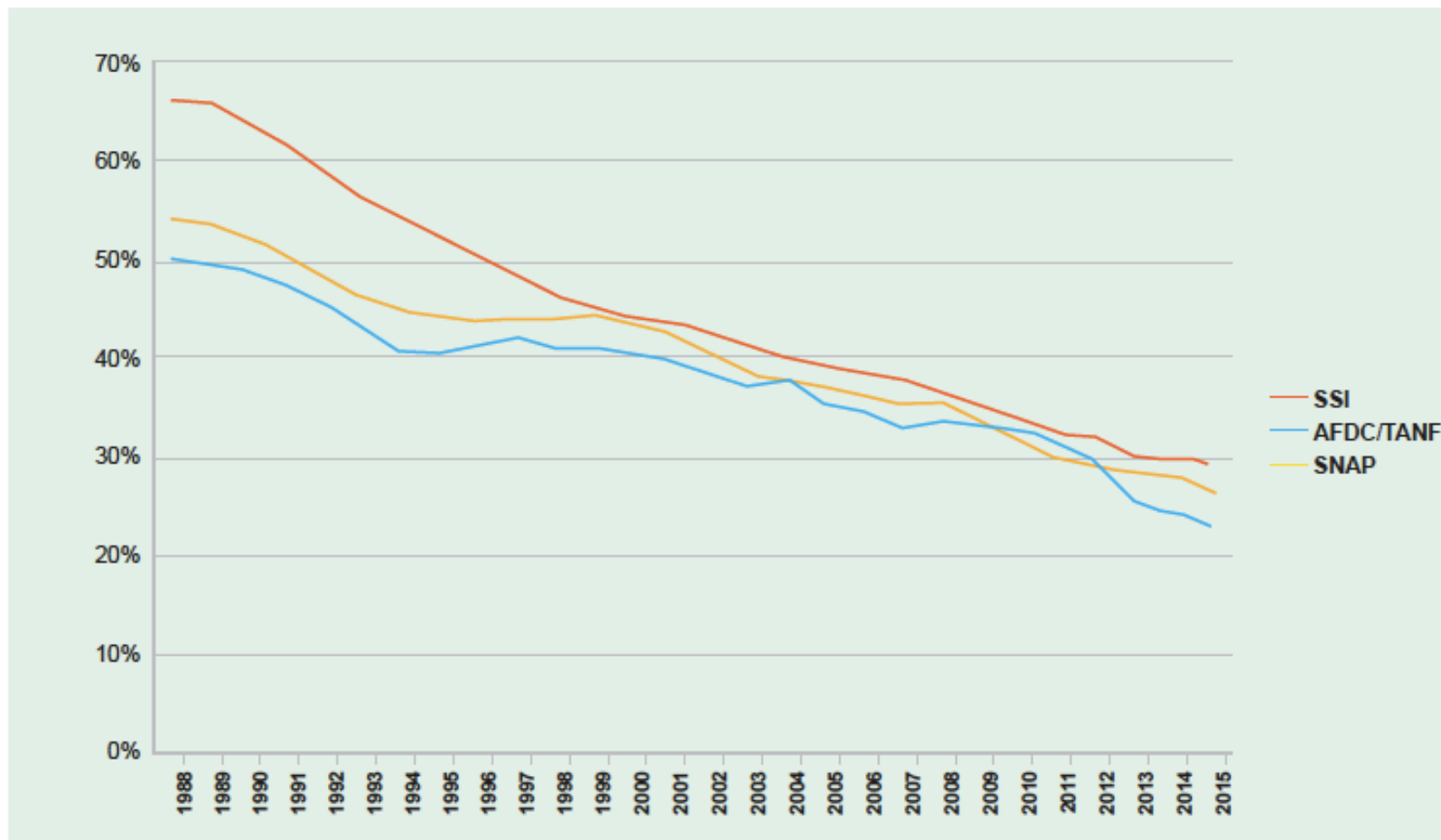
Figure 5. Immigration status by program participation: 1995 vs 2015





The share of high school dropouts in all 3 programs sharply declined.

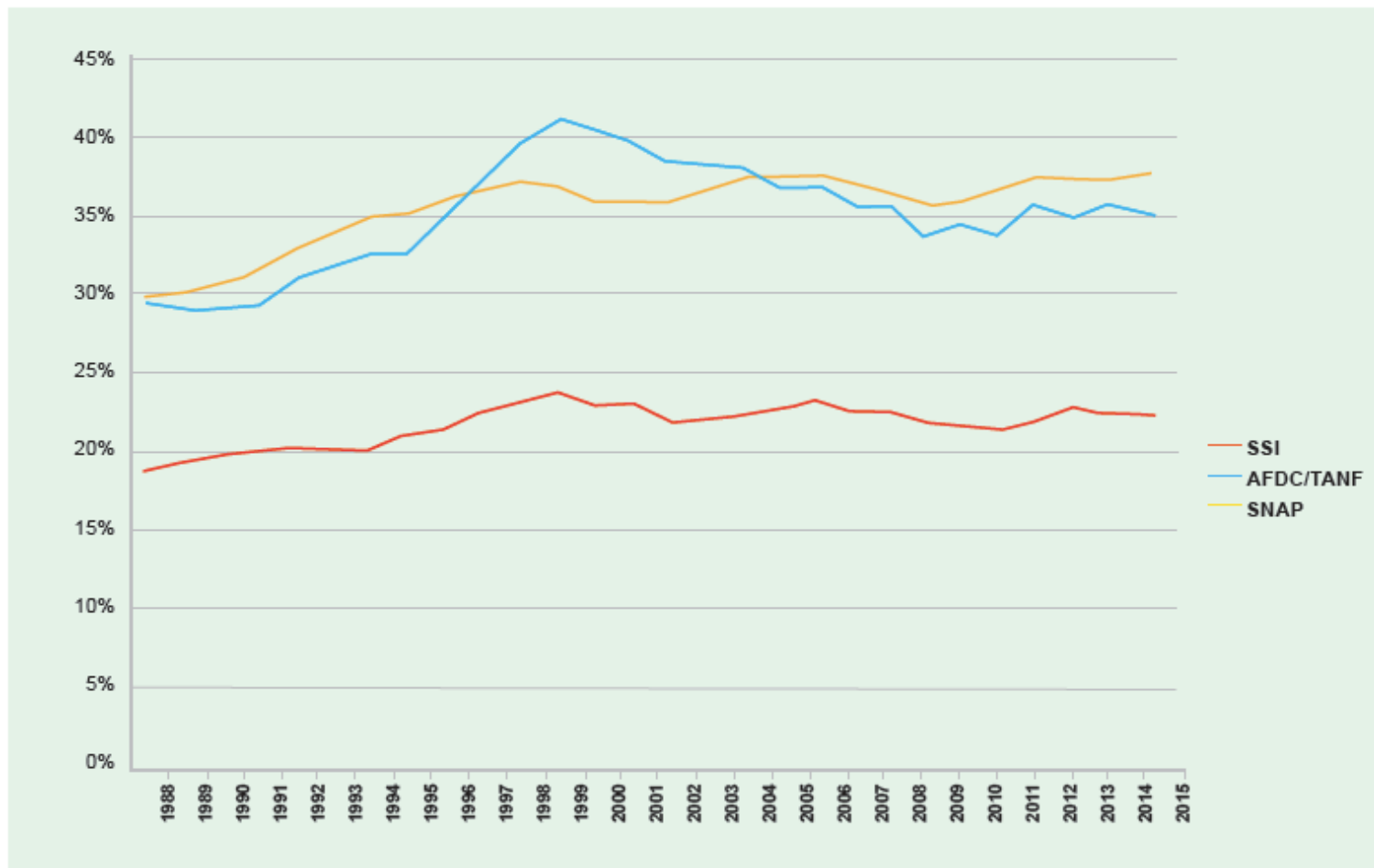
Figure 6. Percentage of high school dropouts by program participation: 1988–2015





The share of employed among TANF declined after 1996; the share of employed in SNAP increased.

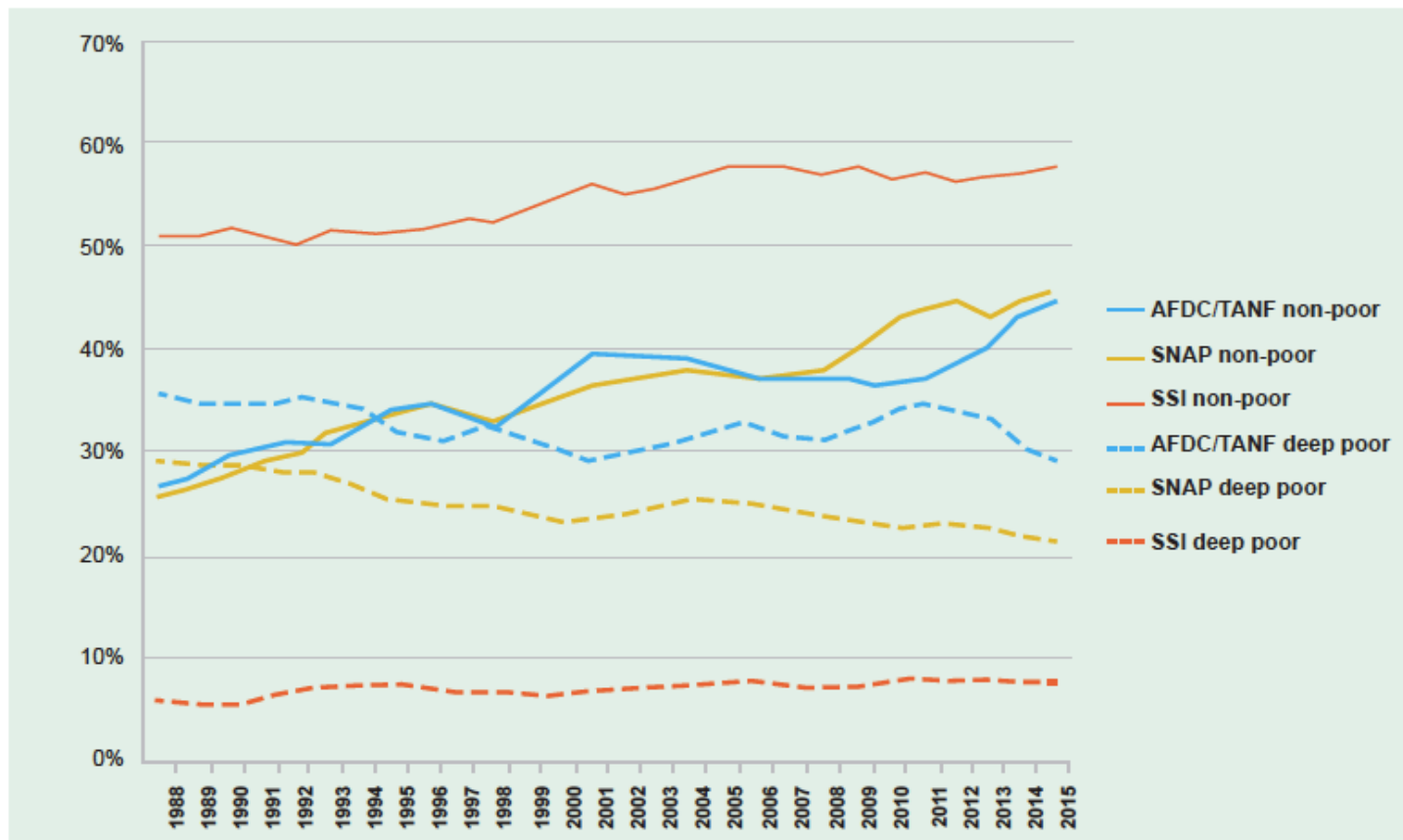
Figure 7. Percentage of employed by program participation: 1988-2015





The share of non-poor increased while the share of deep poor declined for TANF and SNAP.

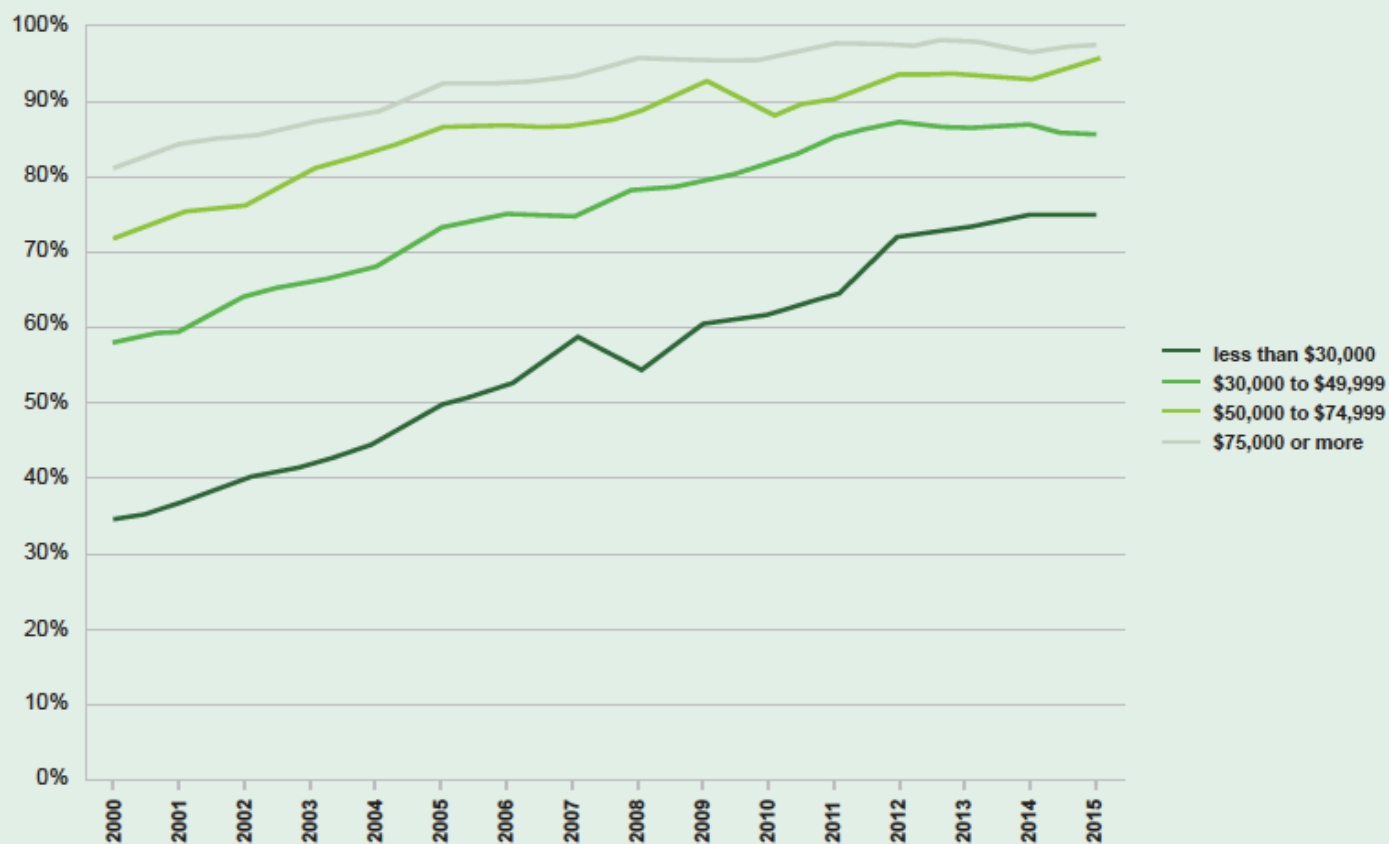
Figure 8. Percentage of people in deep poverty and above the federal poverty level (non-poor) by program participation: 1988–2015





The income gap in internet access is narrowing.

Figure 10. Percentage of households with internet access by income level: 2000–2015



Data source: Perrin, A., and M. Duggan. Americans' Internet Access: 2000–2015. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2015. Available at <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/06/26/americans-internet-access-2000-2015/>. Accessed April 17, 2017.



Key Findings

- Participation in cash assistance declined steadily, and SNAP became one of the critical social safety net programs during tough economic times.
- The racial/ethnic composition of safety net program participants is changing.
- The shares of college graduates and non-poor in safety net programs are increasing.



Policy recommendations

- Track changing demographic characteristics of clients using state/local administrative data.
- Provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services that reflect the needs of diverse clients.
- While providing online services for safety net programs is helpful for those with access to the Internet, traditional services (telephone or in-person) are still needed for those with limited Internet access.

Questions and comments?

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Our report is available!



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July 2017

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Changing Demography of Social Safety Net Programs

The demographic characteristics of America are changing as the nation's old, predominantly white population is replaced by children of racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. In fact, many demographers predict a majority-minority society by 2043. This shift, considered by some to be a "third demographic transition" (Lichter 2013), will have consequences throughout the nation's social safety net programs as low-income children from diverse backgrounds, who are more likely to be from diverse backgrounds (Jiang et al., 2017), transition into adulthood. As a consequence, we expect that individuals and families receiving social services will have increasingly diverse backgrounds, including mixed immigration status and limited English-language proficiency. The ability of the safety net to adapt will determine how well these groups are able to successfully transition into stable, self-sufficient households.

At the same time, the mechanics of the administration of social safety net programs are being transformed, with technology and performance management incorporated increasingly into administrative systems. Modernization, along with substantive modifications to program components and delivery, has effected considerable change in how clients experience the safety net, the structure of work performed by front-line staff, and the benefits and costs related to program operation in the states (Hefflin et al. 2013).

Yet there is little rigorous analysis of the changing landscape. Often, research and policy decisions about the safety net assume either that future caseloads will look demographically similar to those of the past 20 years or that transaction costs, barriers, and organizational capacity will remain constant. Correspondingly, during the Great Recession, states undertook, in their social services programs, many cost-savings measures that were not formally assessed or evaluated. Although there was increased emphasis on use of evidence-based information in decision-making, much remains unknown about how to ensure the most efficient and effective use of public funds (Brown and Derr 2015).

If the knowledge gap is to be addressed, it will be important to look specifically at the demographic changes to date in social program participation. In this brief, we use data from

the 1988–2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). These programs have in recent years undergone considerable changes with respect to eligibility criteria for non-U.S. citizens, particularly by way of welfare reform legislation in 1996: The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act generally barred legal permanent residents (LPRs) who were resident as of enactment of the law (August 22, 1996) from SNAP and SSI eligibility and allowed eligibility for TANF at state option. New LPRs (those who entered after enactment of the law) were also not eligible for SNAP and SSI benefits, with exceptions for refugees and asylees. Individuals with military service or a substantial work history—generally 10 or more years, documented by Social Security or other employment records—were eligible for the full range of programs (Wasem 2014). Nonimmigrants, such as aliens on temporary visas, and unauthorized aliens were barred from almost all federal programs (Wasem 2014). For each program, we document how characteristics of the caseload have changed with respect to demographic characteristics (household size, marital status, race/ethnicity, immigration status, metropolitan residency), education, employment, and poverty status.



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