

# Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2009

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## Consumer Income

P60-240

### Highlights

- An estimated 13.7 million parents had custody of 22.0 million children under 21 years of age while the other parent lived somewhere else.
- About 1 in 6 custodial parents were fathers (17.8 percent).
- More than one-quarter (26.2 percent) of all children under 21 years of age in families lived with only one of their parents. About half (49.2 percent) of all Black children lived in custodial-parent families.
- Most custodial parents had one child (57.2 percent).
- Over one-quarter (28.3 percent) of all custodial parents had incomes below poverty.
- About half (50.6 percent) of all custodial parents had either legal or informal child support agreements.
- Custodial parents receiving the full amount of child support due declined between 2007 and 2009, from 46.8 percent to 41.2 percent.
- Of the \$35.1 billion in child support due in 2009, 61.0 percent was reported as received, averaging \$3,630 per custodial parent who was due support.
- Child support represented 62.6 percent of the average income for custodial parents below poverty who received full support.

- Over half (60.3 percent) of custodial parents received some type of noncash support from noncustodial parents on behalf of their children.

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.<sup>1</sup> The most recent data in this report are from the Child Support Supplement to the April 2010 Current Population Survey (CPS). It provides demographic information about custodial parents as of 2010, as well as child support and other income or program data for the 2009 calendar year.<sup>2</sup> The report also shows the latest 16-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).

<sup>1</sup> The custodial parent is the parent with whom the child(ren) lived during the survey interview when their other parent(s) lived outside the household, although there may be equal joint- or split-custody arrangements.

<sup>2</sup> 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

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## Limitations of the Data

Since child support can be ordered by a court in some states until a child is 21 years old or completes college, this report covers parents' own children under 21, rather than applying the Census Bureau's usual definition of children as those under 18 years of age. 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 CPS child support supplement.

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 to 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. Some households in the April CPS supplement sample also participated in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the 2010 CPS, where additional information, such as income and health insurance coverage in the preceding year, was also collected and matched to the respondent.

Additional information and detailed tables are available via the Internet at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/childsupport.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/childsupport.html)>.

## Custodial Parents and Their Children

In the spring of 2010, an estimated 13.7 million parents had custody of 22.0 million children under 21 years of age while the other parent lived somewhere else.<sup>3</sup> Although the population of the United States increased by 17.1 percent since 1994, the number of custodial parents was not statistically different from 1994 (Table 1).<sup>4</sup> The 22.0 million children living with their custodial parent represented over one-quarter (26.2 percent) of all 83.8 million children under 21

years old living in families.<sup>5</sup> Among White children in families, 22.4 percent lived with their custodial parents.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> 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 Current Population Survey, 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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 U.S. Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches. See Detailed Table 12 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)> for a listing of custodial parents by racial group.

The proportion of Black children in families who lived with their custodial parent while their other parent lived outside their household (49.2 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—12.9 percent lived in custodial-parent families. Approximately one-quarter (23.4 percent) of Hispanic children, who may be of any race, lived with their custodial parent.<sup>7</sup>

## Demographic Characteristics

The majority of custodial parents were mothers (82.2 percent), and about 1 in 6 (17.8 percent) were fathers, proportions which were not statistically different from 1994.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Detailed Table 11 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>. The proportion of Hispanic children in custodial-parent families (23.4 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of White children in custodial-parent families (22.4 percent).

<sup>8</sup> See Detailed Table 4 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements. Table P-1. Total CPS Population and Per Capita Income, [www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/people/P01AR\\_2009.xls](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/historical/people/P01AR_2009.xls).

Table 1.

**Comparison of Custodial Parent Population and Those With Child Support Awarded, Due, and Received: 1993–2009**

(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 2009 dollars. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf))

Item	1993		1995		1997		1999		2001		2003		2005		2007		2009			
	Number	Standard error	Number	Standard error	Number	Standard error	Number	Standard error	Number	Standard error	Number	Standard error	Number	Standard error	Number	Standard error	Number	Standard error		
<b>All Custodial Parents</b>																				
<b>Total</b> . . . . .	13,690	286	13,715	301	13,949	303	13,529	299	13,383	282	13,951	288	13,605	285	13,743	286	13,672	286	13,672	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	6,914	205	6,914	205
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	50.6	1.1	50.6	1.1
Due child support . . . . .	6,688	204	6,958	147	7,018	218	6,791	215	6,924	205	7,256	210	6,809	204	6,375	197	5,897	190	5,897	190
Average child support due (in dollars) . . . . .	5,234	124	5,684	148	5,527	121	6,121	175	6,111	285	5,952	108	6,135	134	5,534	118	5,955	156	5,955	156
Average child support received (in dollars) . . . . .	3,417	126	3,745	127	3,683	115	3,593	106	3,828	154	4,081	157	4,003	116	3,470	103	3,634	216	3,634	216
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	4,174	160	4,174	160
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	70.8	1.5	70.8	1.5
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	2,428	123	2,428	123
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	41.2	1.6	41.2	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	6,759	203	6,759	203
<b>Custodial Mothers</b>																				
<b>Total</b> . . . . .	11,505	264	11,607	278	11,872	281	11,499	277	11,291	260	11,587	264	11,406	262	11,356	261	11,237	260	11,237	260
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	6,174	1974	6,174	1974
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	54.9	1.2	54.9	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	5,278	180	5,278	180
Average child support due (in dollars) . . . . .	5,303	137	5,780	162	5,552	128	6,182	187	7,015	315	6,036	117	6,219	143	5,551	127	5,997	165	5,997	165
Average child support received (in dollars) . . . . .	3,479	139	3,791	133	3,706	123	3,693	113	4,073	161	4,174	171	4,021	122	3,471	110	3,702	237	3,702	237
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	3,723	152	3,723	152
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	70.5	1.6	70.5	1.6
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	2,217	117	2,217	117
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	42.0	1.7	42.0	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	5,063	176	5,063	176
<b>Custodial Fathers</b>																				
<b>Total</b> . . . . .	2,184	118	2,108	121	2,077	120	2,030	118	2,092	114	2,364	121	2,199	117	2,387	122	2,435	123	2,435	123
Awarded child support . . . . .	922	77	844	76	796	74	795	74	807	71	940	77	800	71	965	78	740	68	740	68
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	30.4	2.3	30.4	2.3
Due child support . . . . .	775	70	733	71	676	68	658	68	712	67	740	68	678	65	825	72	619	62	619	62
Average child support due (in dollars) . . . . .	4,714	256	4,859	277	5,282	376	5,555	484	5,114	307	5,214	260	5,378	379	5,420	298	5,601	475	5,601	475
Average child support received (in dollars) . . . . .	2,954	272	3,361	447	3,482	321	2,654	256	3,490	494	3,262	327	3,836	400	3,458	305	3,059	413	3,059	413
Received any child support . . . . .	569	60	527	60	479	58	427	54	480	55	530	58	505	56	611	62	451	53	451	53
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	72.9	4.5	72.9	4.5
Received full amount of child support . . . . .	288	43	270	43	295	45	248	42	278	42	342	46	292	43	371	48	211	36	211	36
Percent . . . . .	37.2	4.4	36.8	4.7	43.6	5.0	37.7	5.0	39.0	4.6	46.2	4.5	43.1	4.8	45.0	4.3	34.1	4.8	34.1	4.8
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	1,695	103	1,695	103

Note: All child support income amounts are adjusted to reflect 2009 dollars using the CPS-U-RS. For more information on the CPI, go to [www.bls.gov/cpi/cpirsdc.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cpi/cpirsdc.htm).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 1994 to 2010.

The distribution of custodial parents by marital status differed between mothers and fathers. About 44.2 percent of custodial mothers were currently divorced or separated and 36.8 percent had never been married. The remaining mothers consisted of 18.0 percent who were currently married (54.8 percent of whom were divorced but remarried), and 1.1 percent who were widowed.<sup>9</sup> Custodial fathers were more likely than custodial mothers to be divorced or separated (53.5 percent) and less likely to have never married (24.7 percent).<sup>10</sup>

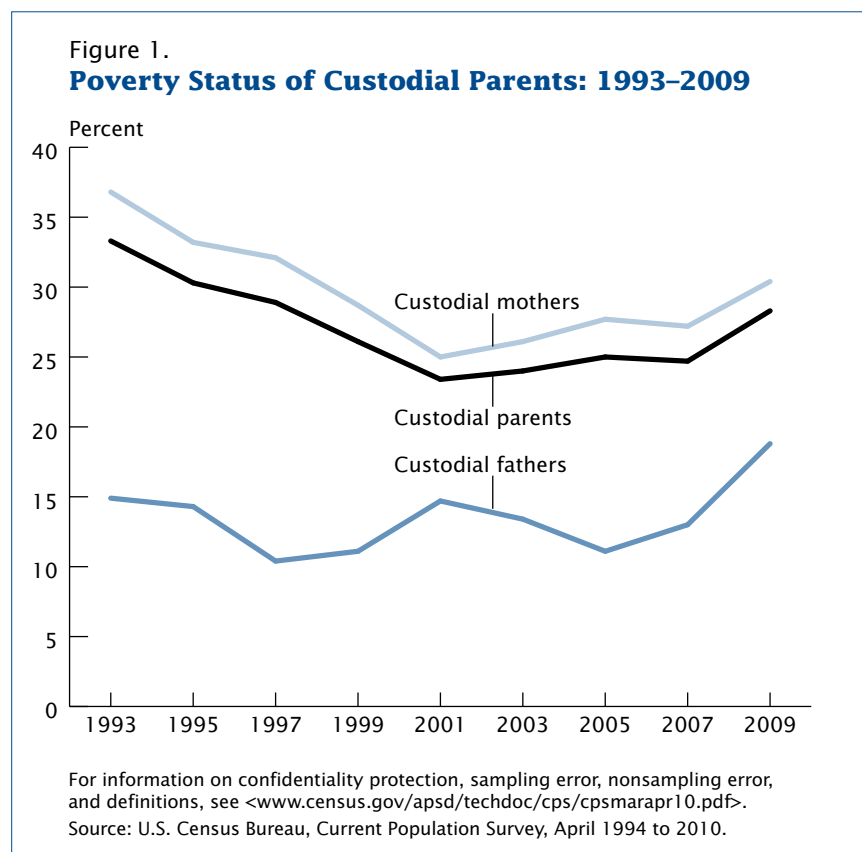
The age of custodial mothers has increased over the past 16 years. In 1994, one-quarter (25.4 percent) were 40 years or older. By 2010, the proportion had grown to over one-third (37.2 percent). The proportion of custodial mothers under 30 years of age decreased from 30.9 percent in 1994 to 26.5 percent by 2010.<sup>11</sup>

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 2010, the proportion of custodial mothers who had not graduated from high school decreased to 15.0 percent, and the proportion with at least

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> The proportion of custodial mothers who were divorced but remarried (54.8 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial fathers who were divorced or separated (53.5 percent).

<sup>11</sup> 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 years of age in 2010 (26.5 percent).



an associate's degree increased to 28.5 percent.

Half (49.9 percent) of custodial mothers were non-Hispanic White, more than one-quarter were Black (27.2 percent), and 19.9 percent were Hispanic. Custodial fathers were more likely than custodial mothers to be non-Hispanic White (62.6 percent), less likely to be Black (15.9 percent), and the proportion who were Hispanic (17.6 percent) was not statistically different.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The proportion of custodial mothers who were Hispanic (19.9 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of fathers who were Black (15.9 percent), both of which were not statistically different from the proportion of fathers who were Hispanic (17.6 percent). Hispanics may be any race, and in this report data for Hispanics overlap slightly with data for the Black population. Based on the 2010 CPS April supplement, 3.3 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 2010 CPS.

While the majority of custodial parents had one child (57.2 percent), custodial mothers were more likely than custodial fathers to have two or more children living with them in 2010 (44.1 percent and 37.1 percent, respectively).<sup>13</sup>

### Poverty

The poverty level for custodial parents declined between 1993 (33.3 percent) and 2001 (23.4 percent) (Figure 1). The 2009 poverty rate of all custodial parents (28.3 percent) was higher than 2001 and about twice that of the total population (14.3 percent).<sup>14</sup>

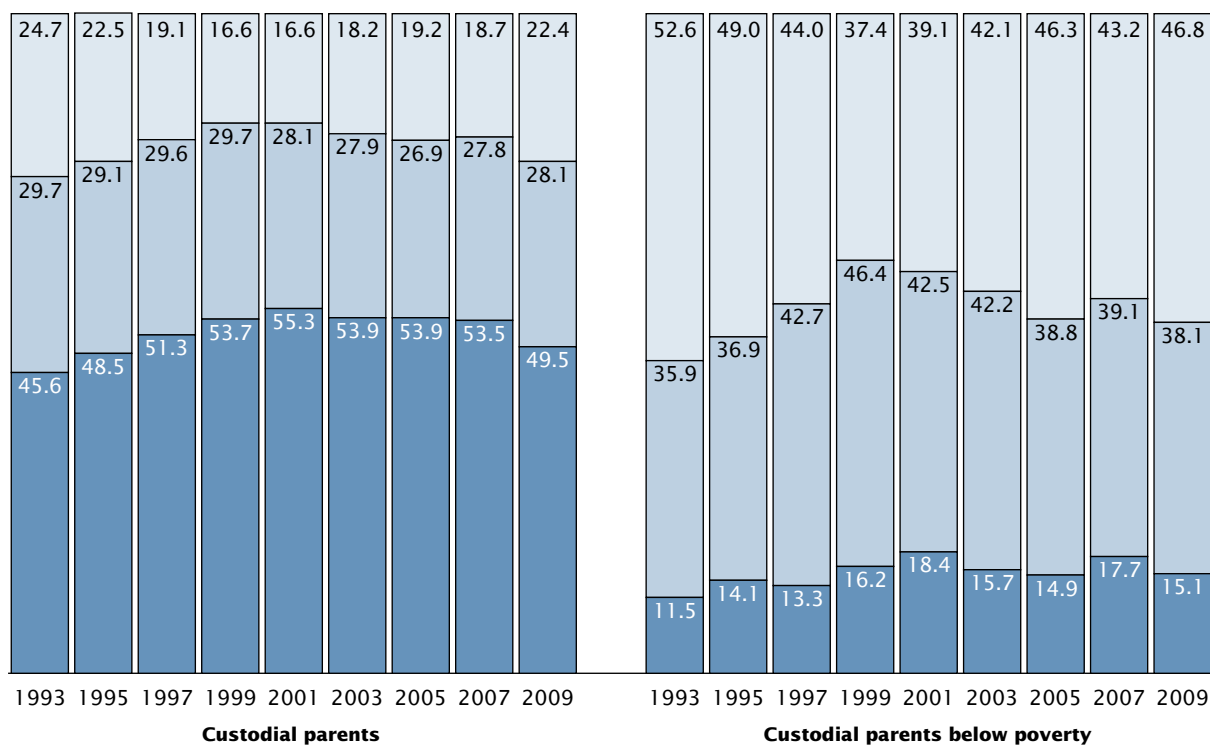
<sup>13</sup> See Detailed Table 4 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>.

<sup>14</sup> DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica C. Smith, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-238, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2009*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2010.

Figure 2.  
**Employment Status of Custodial Parents by Poverty Status:  
 1993–2009**

(Percent)

Did not work  
 Part-time or part-year  
 Full-time, year-round



Note: For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <[www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf)>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 1994 to 2010.

Poverty rates varied greatly among custodial-parent groups. The poverty rate of custodial mothers in 2009 (30.4 percent) was significantly higher than the poverty rate for custodial fathers (18.8 percent). Some of the highest poverty rates were found among custodial mothers who had less than a high school education (59.1 percent), participated in one or more public assistance programs (58.7 percent), had three or more children (51.5 percent), or were under

30 years of age (43.8 percent).<sup>15</sup> Custodial mothers with full-time, year-round employment or who had a bachelor's degree or higher tended to have much lower levels

<sup>15</sup> The poverty rate of custodial mothers with three or more children (51.5 percent) was not statistically different from that of mothers with less than a high school education (59.1 percent), mothers who participated in one or more public programs (58.7 percent), and mothers under 30 years of age (43.8 percent). The poverty rate of mothers with less than a high school education (59.1 percent) was not statistically different from the rate for mothers participating in one or more public programs (58.7 percent). Estimates for poverty for the total population are from the 2010 ASEC, for which the source of data and accuracy of the estimates is available at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/p60\\_238sa.pdf](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/p60_238sa.pdf)>.

of poverty (9.5 and 7.9 percent, respectively).<sup>16</sup>

### 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 then had no statistically significant changes through 2007.

<sup>16</sup> The poverty rate of custodial mothers with full-time, year-round employment (9.5 percent) was not statistically different than the rate for mothers with a bachelor's degree or higher (7.9 percent). See Detailed Table 4 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detaileddetails.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detaileddetails.html)>.

Table 2.

## Demographic Characteristics of Custodial Parents by Award Status and Payments Received: 2009

(Numbers in thousands, as of spring 2010. Parents living with own children under 21 years of age whose other parent is not living in the home. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf))

Characteristic	With child support agreements or awards										
	Total	Total	Percent	Due child support payments in 2009							
				Total	Average due (in dollars)	Average received (in dollars)	Percent received	Received all payments		Did not receive payments	
								Total	Percent	Total	Percent
<b>All Custodial Parents</b>											
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>13,672</b>	<b>6,914</b>	<b>50.6</b>	<b>5,897</b>	<b>5,955</b>	<b>3,634</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>2,428</b>	<b>41.2</b>	<b>1,724</b>	<b>29.2</b>
Standard error .....	286	205	1.1	190	156	216	1.6	123	1.6	103	1.5
<b>Sex</b>											
Male .....	2,435	740	30.4	619	5,601	3,059	54.6	211	34.1	168	27.1
Female .....	11,237	6,174	54.9	5,278	5,997	3,702	61.7	2,217	42.0	1,555	29.5
<b>Age</b>											
Under 30 years .....	3,304	1,458	44.1	1,210	3,881	2,180	56.2	444	36.7	391	32.3
30 to 39 years .....	4,924	2,667	54.2	2,357	5,529	2,825	51.1	880	37.3	720	30.5
40 years and over .....	5,444	2,789	51.2	2,330	5,208	2,330	44.7	1,104	47.4	612	26.3
<b>Race and Ethnicity<sup>1</sup></b>											
White alone .....	9,538	5,053	53.0	4,321	6,545	4,151	63.4	1,876	43.4	1,179	27.3
White alone, not Hispanic .....	7,127	3,976	55.8	3,410	6,754	4,136	61.2	1,517	44.5	927	27.2
Black alone .....	3,439	1,534	44.6	1,295	4,026	1,899	47.2	430	33.2	492	38.0
Hispanic (any race) .....	2,662	1,181	44.4	1,004	5,806	4,217	72.6	412	41.0	274	27.3
<b>Current Marital Status<sup>2</sup></b>											
Married .....	2,515	1,320	52.5	1,152	5,536	3,429	61.9	527	45.7	288	25.0
Divorced .....	4,589	2,719	59.3	2,388	7,102	4,736	66.7	1,037	43.4	627	26.3
Separated .....	1,679	699	41.6	529	5,782	3,025	52.3	213	40.3	176	33.3
Never married .....	4,737	2,096	44.2	1,763	4,709	2,420	51.4	611	34.7	603	34.2
<b>Educational Attainment</b>											
Less than high school diploma .....	1,998	844	42.2	708	4,528	1,939	42.8	214	30.2	291	41.1
High school graduate .....	4,555	2,129	46.7	1,796	5,728	3,335	58.2	740	41.2	486	27.1
Less than 4 years of college .....	4,825	2,656	55.0	2,289	6,038	3,975	65.8	1,107	48.4	555	24.2
Bachelor's degree or more .....	2,294	1,285	56.0	1,105	7,070	4,501	63.7	474	42.9	255	23.1
<b>Selected Characteristics</b>											
Family income below 2009 poverty level .....	3,876	1,823	47.0	1,524	4,905	2,593	52.9	550	36.1	513	33.7
Worked full-time, year-round .....	6,772	3,545	52.3	3,078	6,129	3,382	55.2	1,306	42.4	868	28.2
Public assistance program participation <sup>3</sup> .....	5,149	2,495	48.5	2,093	5,104	2,931	57.4	771	36.8	671	32.1
With one child .....	7,819	3,584	45.8	2,996	5,537	3,387	61.2	1,241	41.4	838	28.0
With two or more children .....	5,853	3,330	56.9	2,901	6,387	3,889	60.9	1,186	40.9	885	30.5
Child had contact with other parent in 2009 .....	9,138	4,979	54.5	4,301	6,070	4,262	70.2	2,043	47.5	1,014	23.6

<sup>1</sup> Includes those reporting one race alone and not in combination with any other race.

<sup>2</sup> Excludes 153,000 with marital status of widowed.

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 2010.

In 2009, full-time, year-round employment by custodial parents dropped to 49.5 percent (Figure 2). Over one-quarter (28.1 percent) of custodial parents were in the labor force working part-time or part-year, and 22.4 percent did not work in 2009. In 1993, the proportion of custodial parents without employment was higher (24.7 percent).

Custodial mothers were less likely than custodial fathers to have been employed either full- or part-time in 2009 (76.0 and 85.1 percent, respectively).<sup>17</sup> Among custodial parents in poverty, the proportion working either full- or part-time increased from 47.4 percent in 1993 to 56.8 percent in 2007, which was not statistically different from 2009 (53.2 percent). Approximately 46.8 percent of custodial parents in poverty were not employed in 2009.<sup>18</sup>

Alongside the recent decrease in full-time, year-round employment among custodial parents, the rate of participation in at least one public assistance program increased from 31.5 percent in 2007 to 37.7 percent in 2009. Custodial mothers were twice as likely to participate in at least one public assistance program (41.3 percent) as custodial fathers (20.9 percent).<sup>19</sup> Specifically, receipt of benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition

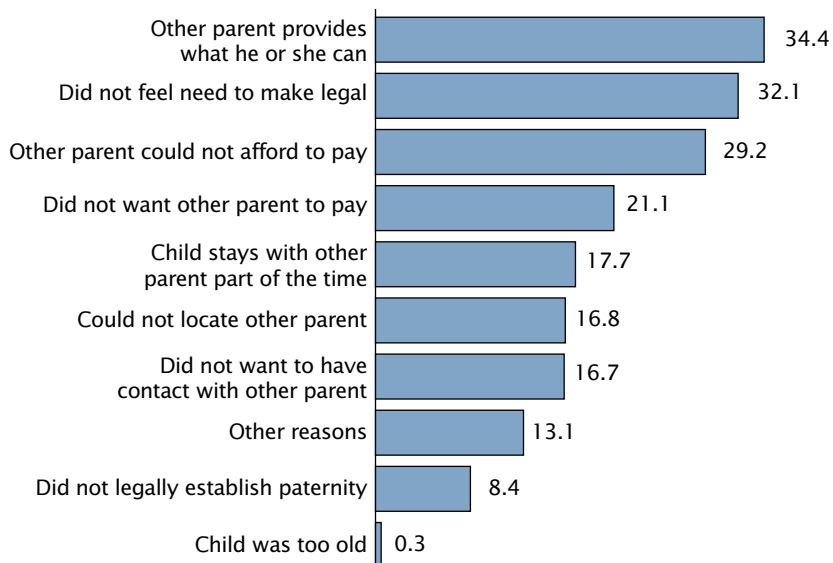
<sup>17</sup> See Detailed Table 4 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>.

<sup>18</sup> 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 both the proportion of those who did not work in 2009 (46.8 percent) and the proportion below poverty (53.2 percent), which were not statistically different from each other.

<sup>19</sup> Public assistance program participation includes those receiving at least one of the following: Medicaid, food stamps, public housing or rent subsidy, TANF or AFDC, 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.

Figure 3.  
**Reasons No Legal Agreement Established for Custodial Parents: 2010**

(Percent)



Note: Universe is 7.2 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.

For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <[www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf)>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 2010.

Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly referred to as food stamps, increased from 23.5 percent in 2007 to 32.3 percent in 2009 for custodial mothers, while 6.8 percent received TANF benefits, general assistance, or other welfare.<sup>20</sup>

### Agreements and Awards

The proportion of custodial parents with a court order or some type of agreement to receive financial support from the noncustodial parent was 50.6 percent in 2010 (Table 2).

<sup>20</sup> The proportion of custodial parents participating in public assistance in 2009 (31.5 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial mothers who received food stamps in 2009 (32.3 percent). The proportion of custodial fathers participating in at least one public assistance program in 2009 (20.9 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial mothers receiving food stamps in 2007 (23.5 percent).

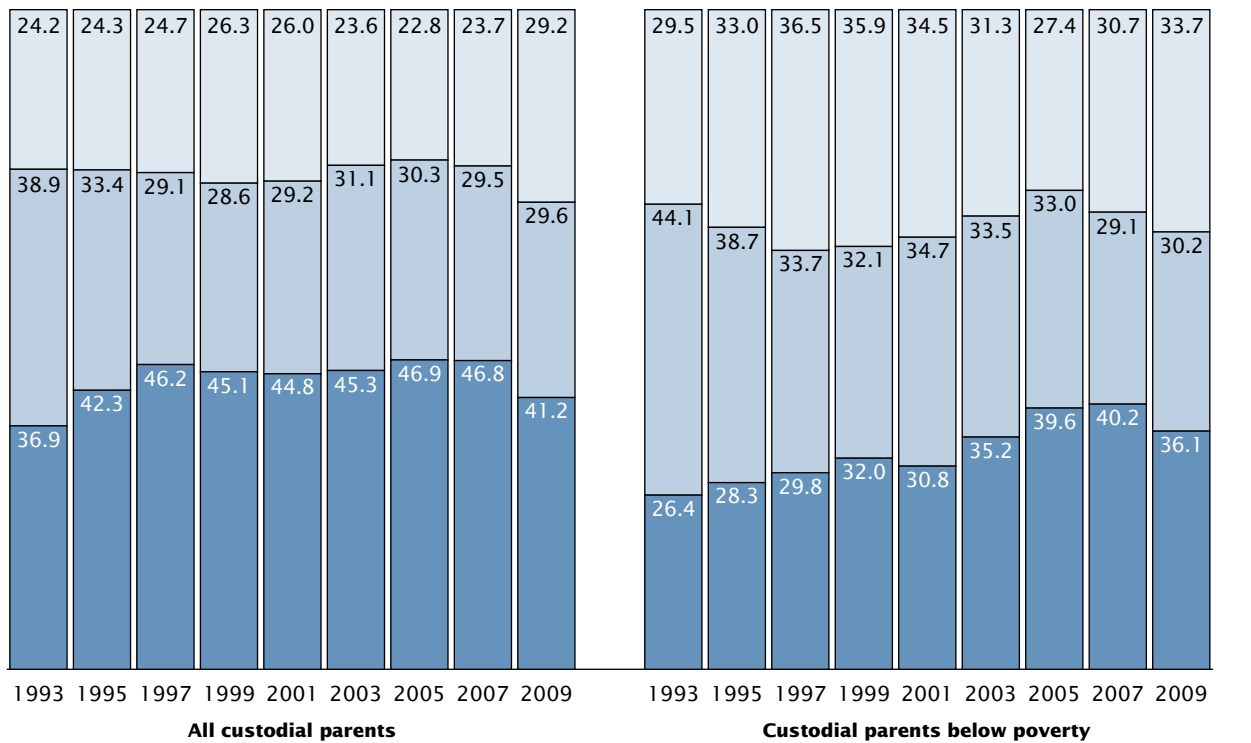
The agreements for the majority (90.9 percent) of these 6.9 million parents were reported by the custodial parent as formal legal agreements—established by a court or other government entity—while 9.1 percent were informal agreements or understandings.<sup>21</sup>

When custodial parents without any agreements and those with informal agreements were asked why a formal legal agreement was not established, the two reasons most often cited were that they did not feel the need to go to court or get legal agreements and that the other parent provided what he or

<sup>21</sup> 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](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>.

Figure 4.  
**Custodial Parents Receiving Full, Part, or No Child Support Payments Due by Poverty Status: 1993–2009**

(Percent)



Note: For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <[www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apspd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf)>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 1994 to 2010.

she could for support (about 33 percent each).<sup>22</sup>

The percentage of custodial mothers who had child support agreements or awards in 1994 was 59.8 percent and reached 64.2 percent in 2004.<sup>23</sup> Since that time, the percentage has declined to 54.9 percent in 2010. The proportion of

<sup>22</sup> Respondents could choose more than one reason why a formal legal agreement was not established. See Figure 3. The proportion that responded that they did not feel the need to go to court or get legal agreements (32.1 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion who responded that the other parent could not afford to pay (29.2 percent).

<sup>23</sup> The proportion of custodial mothers with agreements in 2004 (64.2 percent) was not statistically different from the estimates for 2000 (62.2 percent) and 2002 (63.0 percent).

custodial fathers with child support agreements or awards has historically been lower than the proportion of custodial mothers and continued to be lower in 2010 (30.4 percent).

Child support award rates varied by other demographic custodial-parent characteristics. Custodial parents who were never married, separated, Black, Hispanic, had less than a high school education, had one child, or were high school graduates had child support agreement rates of approximately 45 percent (Table 2). Higher rates of child support awards or agreements (about 55–60 percent) existed for custodial parents who were either non-Hispanic White,

divorced, married, had some college, had at least a bachelor's degree, or lived with two or more children from an absent parent in 2010.

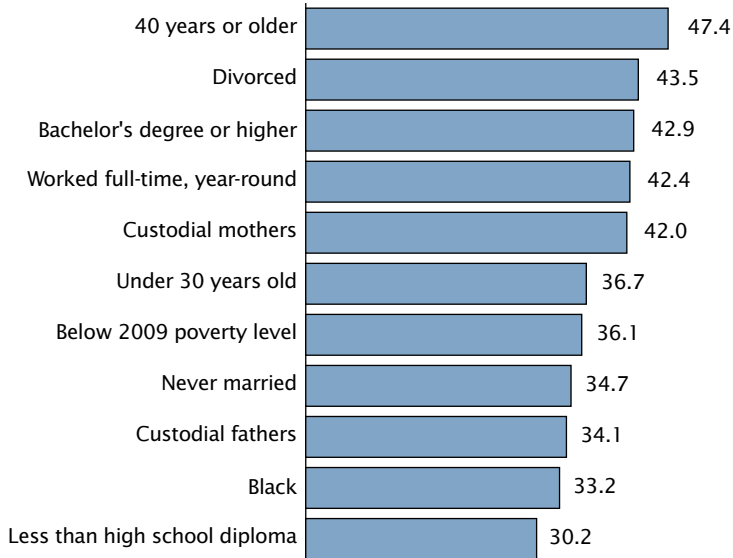
### Child Support Receipt

Of the 6.9 million custodial parents with child support agreements or awards, 5.9 million (85.3 percent) were due child support payments in 2009. The remaining 1.0 million custodial parents with child support agreements or awards were not due child support payments because either the child(ren) was too old, the noncustodial parent had died, the family lived together part of the year before the interview, or some other reason. Nine



Figure 5.  
**Custodial Parents Due Child Support Receiving Full Amount by Selected Characteristics: 2009**

(Percent)



Note: For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <[www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf)>.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 2010.

of every 10 custodial parents (89.5 percent) who were due child support were mothers (Table 2).

The proportion of custodial parents due child support payments who received any payments—either full or partial—decreased between 2007 and 2009, from 76.3 percent to 70.8 percent. Those who received the full amount of child support due fell from 46.8 percent in 2007 to 41.2 percent in 2009 (Figure 4). An additional 29.6 percent of custodial parents received partial child support payments in 2009. Custodial parents due child support from noncustodial parents and who received no payments increased to 29.2 percent in 2009, up from 23.7 percent in 2007.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The proportion of custodial parents who received partial child support payments in 2009 (29.6 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion receiving no child support payments in 2009 (29.2 percent).

Receipt of child support due differed by demographic group. For the 1.5 million custodial parents below the poverty level and due child support in 2009, 66.3 percent received at least some child support payments. This included 36.1 percent who received all support that was due, an increase from 26.4 percent in 1993, and 30.2 percent who received less than the full amount of child support due, a decrease from 44.1 percent in 1993.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The proportion of custodial parents below poverty in 2009 who received full support (36.1 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion receiving less than full support (30.2 percent). The proportion of custodial parents below poverty who received the full amount of child support in 2009 (36.1 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion receiving less than the full amount due in 1993 (44.1 percent). The proportion 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 2009 (30.2 percent).

The proportion of custodial mothers who received full payments in 2009 (42.0 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial fathers receiving full payments (34.1 percent) (Figure 5).

Some of the lowest rates of receiving all child support that was due in 2009 belonged to custodial parents who were either Black (33.2 percent), had never been married (34.7 percent), or had less than a high school education (30.2 percent), rates not statistically different from each other.<sup>26</sup>

Custodial parents in the following groups tended to have some of the higher rates of receiving all child support payments that were due in 2009: 40 years or older (47.4 percent), divorced (43.5 percent), married (45.7 percent), attended some college (45.2 percent), had at least a bachelor's degree (42.9 percent), worked full-time, year-round (42.4 percent), or worked either full-time, year-round or part-time (42.1 percent).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The proportion of Black custodial parents who received all child support due (33.2 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of Hispanic custodial parents who received full support (41.0 percent).

<sup>27</sup> An estimated 56.9 percent of widowed custodial parents received all child support they were due, but their extremely small sample size and large standard error limits accurate comparisons with other demographic subgroups for this statistic. All rates of receiving full support in this paragraph are not statistically different from each other except for 42.1 percent of custodial parents working either full- or part-time was statistically different from 47.4 percent of parents 40 years or older. The proportion of custodial parents working full-time, year-round and receiving full support (42.4 percent) and the proportion working full-time, year-round or part-time and receiving full support (42.1 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial parents who did not work and received full support payments (37.5 percent). The proportions of custodial parents receiving full support who were high school graduates (41.2 percent), attended some college (45.2 percent), obtained an associate's degree (40.5 percent), or a bachelor's degree or higher (42.9 percent) were not statistically different from each other.

## Custody and Visitation

A majority (83.2 percent) of the 5.9 million custodial parents due child support payments in 2009 had arrangements for joint child custody or visitation privileges with the noncustodial parent, not statistically different from the proportion who had such arrangements in 1993 (85.6 percent). Among this group, 72.8 percent received at least some child support payments in 2009. Of the custodial parents due child support who did not have either joint custody or visitation arrangements, 60.5 percent received full or partial child support payments.<sup>28</sup>

For the 7.8 million custodial parents without any agreements, or with agreements but not due child support, 68.2 percent had arrangements with the noncustodial parent for visitation privileges or some type of shared custody.

## Amount of Child Support Received

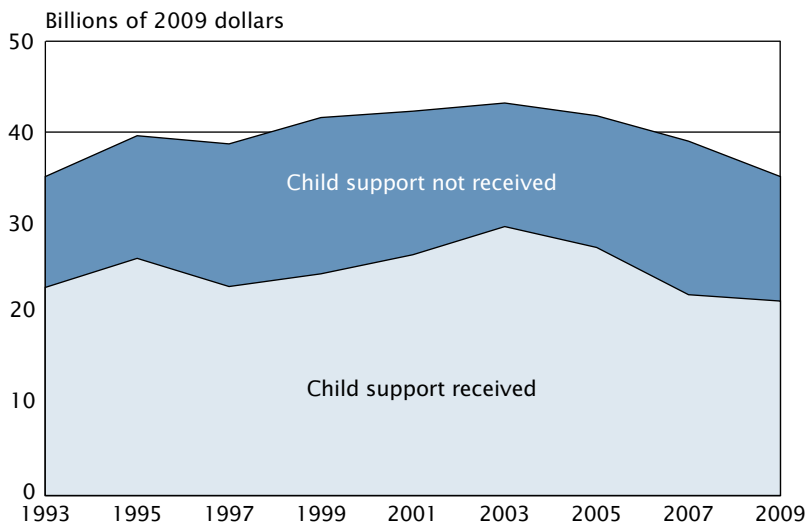
In 2009, the 5.9 million custodial parents who were due child support under the terms of legal awards or informal agreements were due an annual average of \$5,960, or approximately \$500 per month. The median amount of child support due in 2009 was \$4,450. A total of \$35.1 billion in child support payments was due custodial parents who had agreements for support.<sup>29</sup>

The average amount of child support received by custodial parents who were due support payments in 2009 was \$3,630, or about \$300 per month. The median annual amount of child support received was lower, \$1,760, as half of custodial parents due support received less than that amount and half

<sup>28</sup> See Detailed Table 9 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>.

<sup>29</sup> See Detailed Table 1 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>.

Figure 6.  
**Average Aggregate Child Support Received and Not Received for Child Support Due: 1993–2009**



Note: For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <[www.census.gov/aprd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf](http://www.census.gov/aprd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf)>.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 1994 to 2010.

In 2010, the CPS ASEC began asking a series of additional questions about a variety of topics in order to develop a Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) to serve as an additional indicator of economic well-being. Included were questions that asked respondents if they had children living elsewhere and how much child support they paid during the previous calendar year.

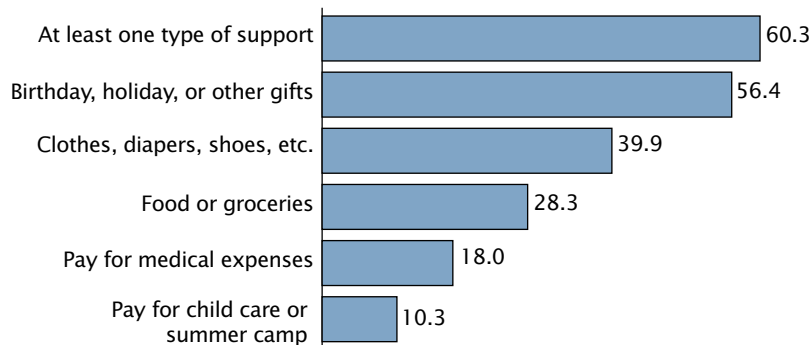
Preliminary analysis of these data show that respondents to these questions reported paying an annual average of about \$6,200 in child support for their children during 2009.

For additional information about the SPM and the data collected, please see <[www.census.gov/hhes/povmeas/methodology/supplemental/research.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/povmeas/methodology/supplemental/research.html)>.

received more. About one-quarter (23.3 percent) of custodial parents due support received \$5,000 or more in annual child support payments, while less than one-third (29.2 percent) received no child support payments in 2009. A total of \$21.4 billion of child support due was reported as received,

about 61.0 percent of the \$35.1 billion that was due. The 2009 proportion and amounts were not statistically different from 1993, when \$22.9 billion of the \$35.0 billion (65.4 percent) of child support

Figure 7.  
**Noncash Support Received by Custodial Parents: 2010**  
 (Percent)



Notes: Total exceeds 100 percent because respondents could list more than one type. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see <[www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf](http://www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmarapr10.pdf)>. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, April 2010.

due was reported as received (Figure 6).<sup>30</sup>

In 2009, custodial mothers received \$19.5 billion of the \$31.7 billion in support that was due (61.5 percent), and custodial fathers received \$1.9 billion of the \$3.5 billion that was due (54.3 percent). The proportions of child support received by mothers and fathers were not statistically different from each other.

<sup>30</sup> Overall, custodial parents reported receiving \$23.4 billion directly from the noncustodial parent for support of their children in 2009, which included \$2.0 billion received by parents without current awards or agreements. The \$23.4 billion received by custodial parents in 2009 was not statistically different from the \$22.9 billion received by custodial parents with agreements and due support in 1993. 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 2009, and those with no awards (no legal or nonlegal awards). They represented 600,000 custodial parents and received an average of \$3,240 in child support in 2009, an amount not statistically different from the average child support due custodial parents in 2009 (\$3,630). Amounts from 1993 are in 2009 CPI-U-RS adjusted dollars.

### Child Support and Income

The average amount of child support received by the 4.2 million custodial parents who received at least some of the support they were due (\$5,140) represented 16.1 percent of their average annual individual income in 2009 (\$32,000). Child support represented 8.8 percent of income for the 1.7 million parents who received part of the full support they were due and 20.8 percent for the 2.4 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 24 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 in 2009 represented 62.6 percent of their average annual individual income.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See Detailed Tables 4, 5, and 6 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>.

The average individual 2009 income for the 1.7 million custodial parents who had support agreements but received no child support payments was \$30,200, and among the 6.8 million custodial parents with no support agreements, the average individual income was \$29,000, amounts not statistically different from each other.

### Health Insurance

Of the 6.9 million custodial parents who had child support awards or agreements in 2009, 51.9 percent of their agreements specified who was to provide health insurance for their children. In 44.1 percent of these 3.6 million agreements, the noncustodial parent provided the health insurance coverage.<sup>32</sup> Among the 2.7 million custodial parents with agreements where health insurance was not included in the child support award, 11.7 percent received health care coverage for their children from the noncustodial parent. For the 6.8 million custodial parents without a child support agreement, 18.0 percent had health insurance coverage for their children through the noncustodial parent. Overall, approximately 3.1 million noncustodial parents provided some type of health insurance for their children in 2009.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> 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.

<sup>33</sup> See Detailed Table 8 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>. The number of custodial parents with child support agreements or awards in 2009 (6.9 million) was not statistically different from the number without agreements (6.8 million).

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## Noncash Child Support

At least one type of noncash support, such as gifts or coverage of expenses, was received from the noncustodial parent by 60.3 percent of all custodial parents on behalf of their children. The proportion of custodial mothers receiving noncash support (58.1 percent) was lower than that of custodial fathers (70.4 percent). Custodial parents with a child support agreement or award were more likely than those without awards to receive noncash support (63.9 percent and 56.6 percent, respectively).<sup>34</sup>

The most common type of noncash support was gifts for birthdays, holidays, or other occasions (56.4 percent), followed by clothes (39.9 percent), food or groceries (28.3 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).<sup>35</sup>

## Contact With Government for Assistance

In 2010, 26.8 percent of all custodial parents had ever contacted a child support enforcement office (IV-D office), state department of

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<sup>34</sup> The proportion of all custodial parents receiving some type of noncash support (60.3 percent) was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial mothers receiving some type of noncash support (58.1 percent), which was not statistically different from the proportion of custodial parents without awards receiving noncash support (56.6 percent).

<sup>35</sup> 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](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>.

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 29.4 percent during this time, from 13.0 million to 9.2 million. Contacts were made for many reasons and the reasons provided most often were to collect child support that was due (26.4 percent), to establish a legal agreement or court award (23.7 percent), to obtain welfare or public assistance (17.8 percent), and to locate the noncustodial parent (12.7 percent).<sup>36</sup>

## SOURCE OF THE DATA

The population represented (the population universe) in the Child Support Supplement to the April 2010 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 2010 April biennial supplements to the CPS. The Census Bureau conducts the April supplement sponsored, in part, by the Office of Child Support Enforcement of the Department of

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<sup>36</sup> See Detailed Table 2 at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/detailedtables.html)>.

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 details). 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

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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/source09.pdf](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/source09.pdf)> or by contacting Rebecca Hoop of the Demographic Statistical Methods Division via e-mail at [dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov](mailto:dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov).

## **MORE INFORMATION**

Detailed tabulations, related information, and historic data are available on the Internet at the Child Support Page on the Census Bureau's website at <[www.census.gov/hhes/www/childsupport/childsupport.html](http://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](mailto:Timothy.Scott.Grall@census.gov)>.