



Characteristics of Custodial Parents and Their Children

Who Receives Child Support (IV-D) Services and Who Doesn't?

By Elaine Sorensen

This brief describes the characteristics of custodial parents and their children who receive services from the child support (IV-D) program and compares them to other parents and children. It is based on a survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2018, which included 1,889 custodial parents and 5,328 of their children all of whom are under the age of 21.¹

Custodial parents who receive child support (IV-D) services – Three-quarters of custodial parents who receive IV-D services have a child support order. Among those who have a child support order, 58% received child support payments during 2017, and they received an average of \$5,381. Over 90% of custodial parents who received IV-D services are female. Their average age is 37 years old, and 78% of them worked in 2017.

Custodial parents who do not receive IV-D services – Less than half (40%) of custodial parents who do not receive IV-D services have a child support order. Among those with a child support order, less than half (42%) received child support payments in 2017, and they received an average of \$6,318. A large minority (38%) of custodial parents who do not receive IV-D services are male. Their average age is 40 years old, and 85% of them worked in 2017.

Custodial children who receive IV-D services – Over 80% of custodial children who receive IV-D services live with their unmarried mother, 61% live in poverty or near poverty, 52% receive Medicaid, 36% live in households that receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and 51% live in households that have children

STORY BEHIND THE NUMBERS



Through a deeper understanding of the trends in child support program data and other data that affects the program, the Story Behind the Numbers series aims to inform policy and practice and strengthen program outcomes.

participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Despite their relatively high level of poverty, only 5% of these children did not have health insurance in 2017.

Custodial children who do not receive IV-D services – Most custodial children who do not receive IV-D services live with their unmarried mother (62%), but a sizeable minority live with their unmarried father (24%). Just under half (49%) of these children live in poverty or near poverty, 36% receive Medicaid, 26% live in households that received SNAP benefits, 41% live in households that have children participating in the NSLP. Only 7% of these children did not have health insurance in 2017.

Other children – Nearly 80% of children who are not eligible for IV-D services live with their two married biological or adopted parents, less than 30% live in poverty or near poverty, 28% receive Medicaid, and 10% live in households that receive SNAP benefits. Only 6% of these children did not have health insurance in 2017.

Characteristics of Custodial Parents and Their Children

Who Receives Child Support (IV-D) Services and Who Doesn't?

Introduction

This brief describes the characteristics of custodial parents and their children who receive IV-D services and compares them, where possible, to other families with children. It uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct this analysis.

The U.S. Census Bureau, on behalf of OCSE, adds a Child Support Supplement to its Current Population Survey (CPS-CSS) every two years in April to collect information about the characteristics of custodial families. This survey provides information about custodial parents and their children regardless of whether they receive IV-D services. It provides key information about their demographic and economic characteristics, such as their poverty status and health care coverage. The Census Bureau publishes a report describing these data every two years, and the research community uses these data to examine a broad range of issues affecting custodial families.² This brief uses the 2018 CPS-CSS, the most recent data available.

In 2018, there were 12.9 million custodial parents and 22 million custodial children in the United States. This brief defines custodial parents as parents who have a child under the age of 21 living with them who has a parent living outside of the household. The child is referred to as the custodial child; the other parent is the noncustodial parent. These terms are used to simplify the language used in this brief. Understand that both parents may have legal custody and parenting time may be shared as well.

We examine the characteristics of custodial parents and their children by whether or not they receive child support services from the IV-D program. The IV-D program is a federal/state/local/tribal partnership authorized under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act that offers child support (IV-D) services. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) developed a method for identifying custodial parents in the CPS-CSS who received IV-D services in the 1990s.³ This method, with updates, has been used to describe families receiving IV-D services ever since, most recently using the 2016 survey.⁴ This brief continues to build upon the ASPE method by aligning key characteristics of custodial parents and their children in the IV-D program to child support administrative data. More information about this method is available in the Appendix.

The 2018 CPS-CSS was conducted in April 2018 and reflects the count and characteristics of custodial parents and their children as of that date. The survey measures other characteristics, such as their poverty rate, program participation rates, and health care coverage, for the 2017 calendar year.

The CPS-CSS only interviews biological or adopted parents about their child support; it does not interview grandparents, foster parents, or other relatives who are custodians of children who have a parent living elsewhere. In addition, the CPS-CSS limits custodial families to those who have a child under the age of 21 eligible for child support. In contrast, the IV-D program is more inclusive than that. It includes custodial families regardless of the relationship between the custodian and the child as long as that person has custody of the child. It also includes families where all of the custodial children are over 21 years old. These differences mean that this brief identifies fewer custodial families served by the IV-D program than reported by OCSE. Nonetheless, this brief is capturing most families in the child support (IV-D) program.

According to OCSE data reported by the Federal Case Registry, the IV-D program served 16.9 million children and 10.6 million custodial parents in April 2018.⁵ Using the CPS-CSS, this brief identifies 12.9 million custodial children under the age of 21 and 8 million custodial parents served by the IV-D program, or 76% of the children and 76% of the custodial parents in the IV-D program according to OCSE administrative records.

According to survey data collected by the Census Bureau in 2018,
there were
12.9 million
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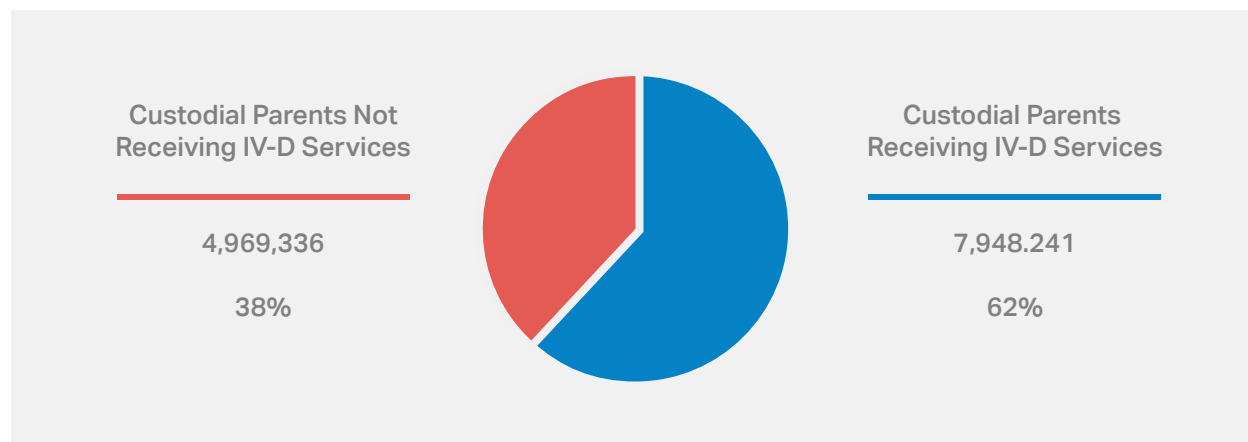


Characteristics of Custodial Parents

A. Custodial Parents' Receipt of Child Support (IV-D) Services

As of April 2018, there were 12.9 million custodial parents nationwide, 7.9 million (62%) of whom received IV-D services (Figure 1). The other 5 million custodial parents did not receive IV-D services.

Figure 1. Custodial Parents' Receipt of IV-D Services, 2018

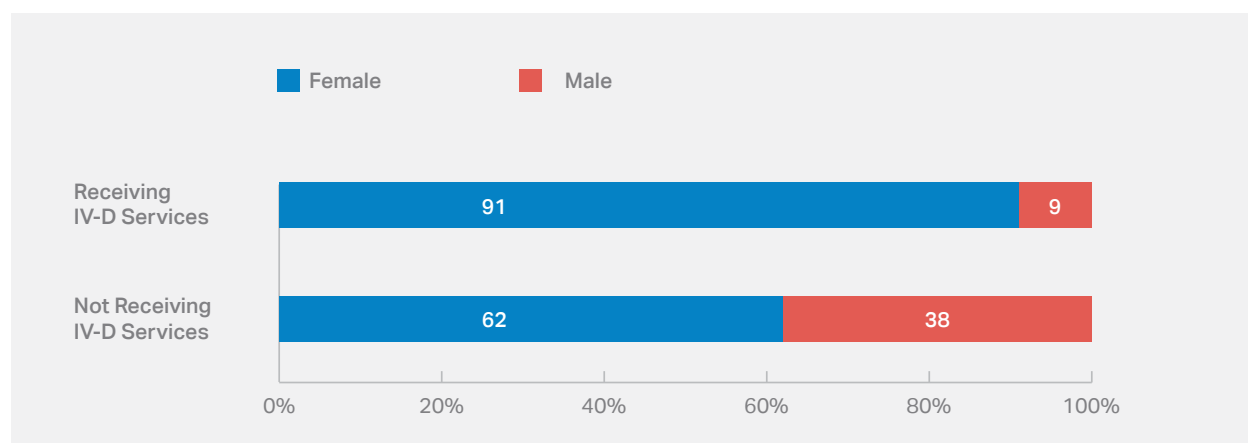


Source: All figures are based on the 2018 Current Population Survey-Child Support Supplement.

B. Sex of Custodial Parents

Custodial parents who receive IV-D services are significantly more likely to be female than custodial parents who do not receive IV-D services. In 2018, over 90% of custodial parents who received IV-D services were female; less than 10% were male (Figure 2). This contrasts sharply with custodial parents who did not receive IV-D services, 38% of whom were male.

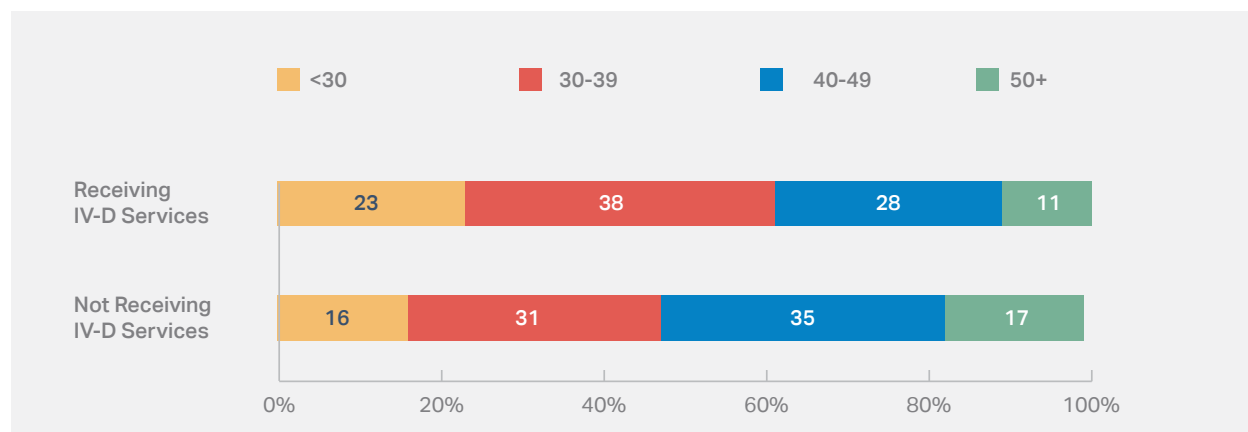
Figure 2. Sex of Custodial Parents, 2018



C. Age of Custodial Parents

Custodial parents who receive IV-D services are significantly younger than custodial parents who do not receive IV-D services. In 2018, the average age of custodial parents who received IV-D services was 37 years old, which was three years younger than the average age of custodial parents who did not receive IV-D services (40 years old) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Age of Custodial Parents, 2018

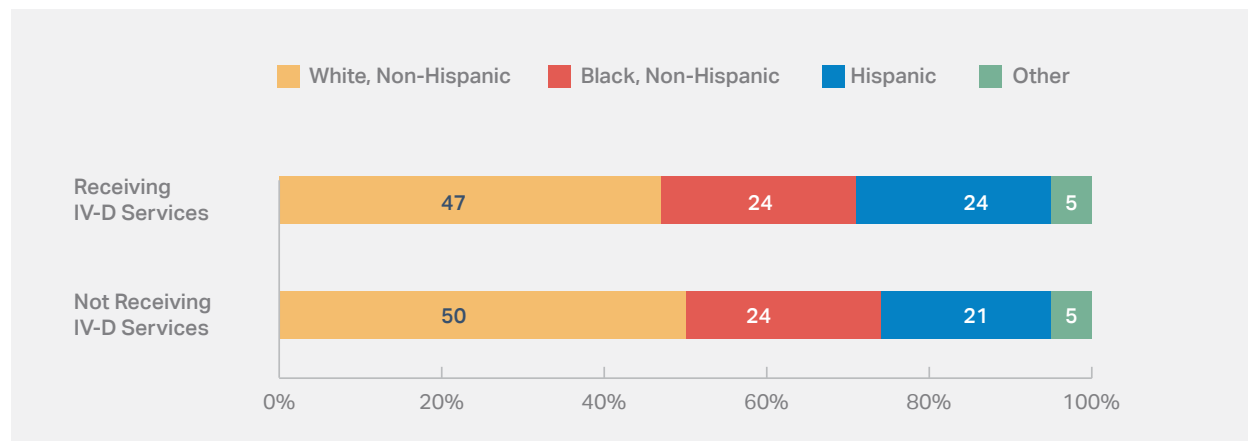


Note: Percentages do not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

D. Race and Ethnicity of Custodial Parents

The racial and ethnic composition of custodial parents who receive IV-D services is not significantly different than that of custodial parents who do not receive IV-D services. In 2018, 47% of custodial parents who received IV-D services were white, non-Hispanic; 24% were black, non-Hispanic; 24% were Hispanic; and 5% were none of the above (Figure 4).

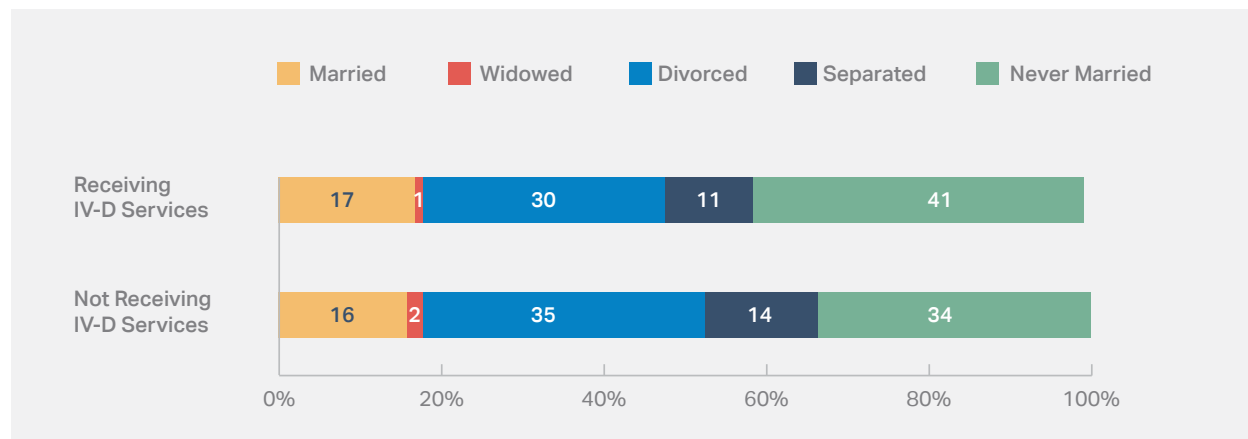
Figure 4. Race and Ethnicity of Custodial Parents, 2018



E. Marital Status of Custodial Parents

Custodial parents who receive IV-D services are significantly more likely to be never married and significantly less likely to be divorced than custodial parents who did not receive IV-D services. In 2018, 41% of custodial parents who received IV-D services were never married and 30% were divorced compared to 34% and 35%, respectively for custodial parents who did not receive IV-D services (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Marital Status of Custodial Parents, 2018

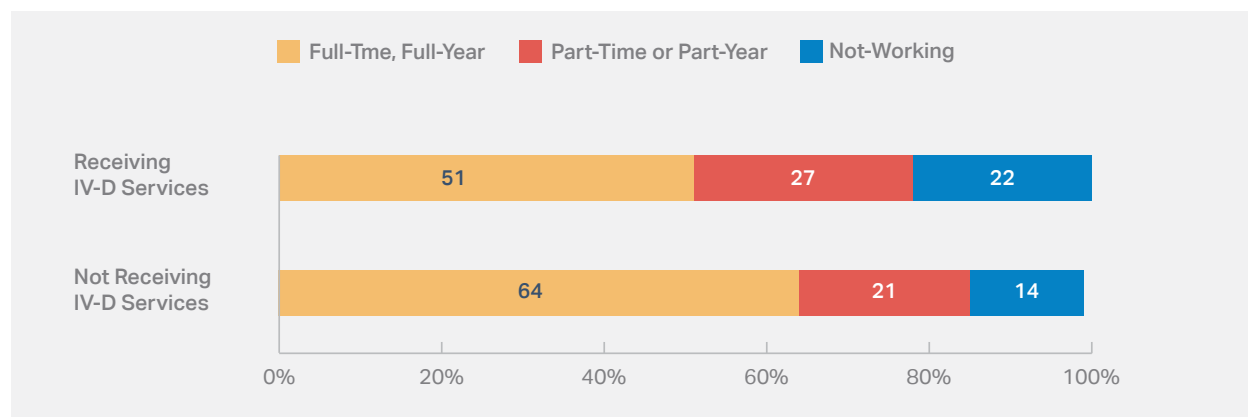


Note: Percentages do not always sum to 100% due to rounding.

F. Work Status of Custodial Parents

While the vast majority (78%) of custodial parents who receive IV-D services work during the year, they are significantly less likely to work than custodial parents who do not receive IV-D services (85%). They are also less likely to work full-time, full-year than custodial parents who do not receive IV-D services. In 2017, 51% of custodial parents who received IV-D services worked full-time, full-year compared to 64% of custodial parents who did not receive IV-D services (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Work Status of Custodial Parents, 2017

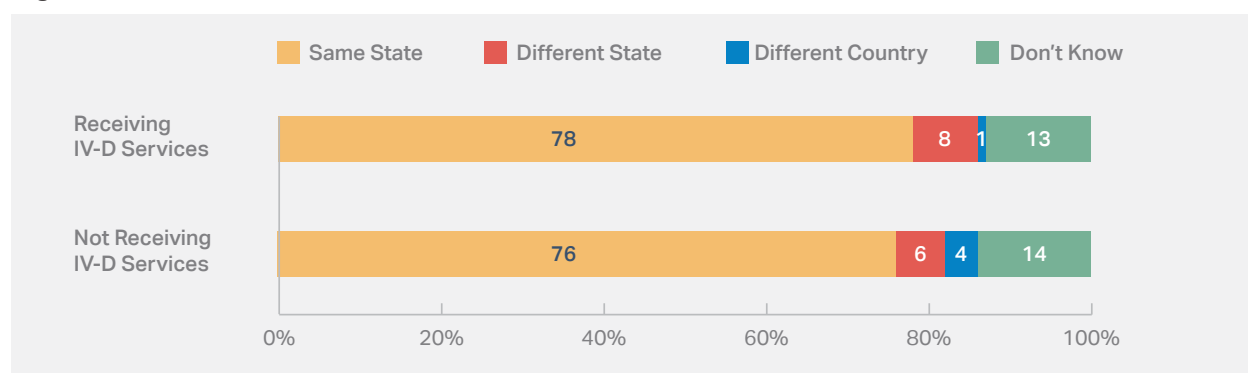


G. Residence of Noncustodial Parent

In general, when asked where the noncustodial parent lives, custodial parents respond similarly regardless of their IV-D status as shown in Figure 7. In 2018, 78% of custodial parents receiving IV-D services reported that they lived in the same state as the noncustodial parent, 8% said they lived in a different state, 1% said they lived in a different country, and 13% said they did not know where the noncustodial parent lived.

The only significant difference between custodial parents' reports about the residence of noncustodial parents by IV-D status was the percent of noncustodial parents living abroad. Among custodial parents not receiving IV-D services, 4% of them said that the noncustodial parent lived in a different country compared to 1% among custodial parents receiving IV-D services, a statistically significant difference.

Figure 7. Residence of Noncustodial Parents, 2018

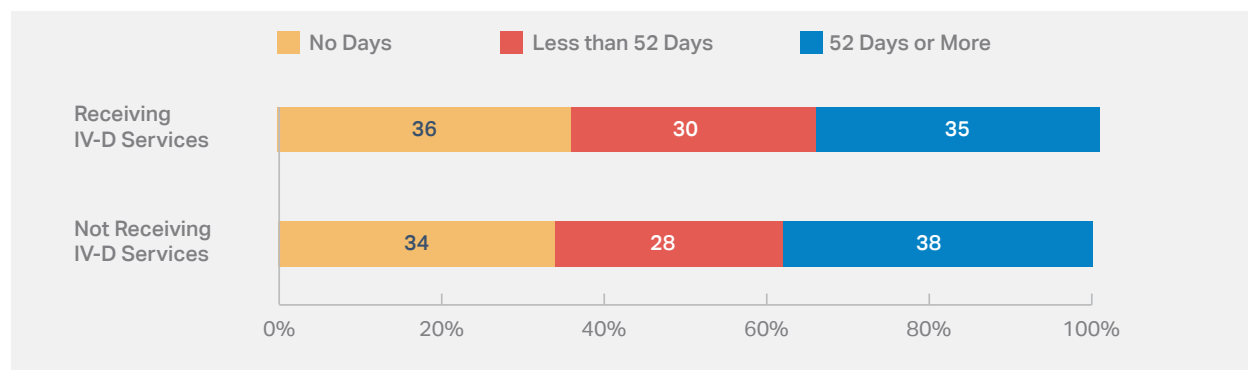


H. Contact Between Noncustodial Parents and Their Youngest Custodial Child

Custodial parents are asked how many days the noncustodial parent spent with their youngest custodial child during the prior year. In 2017, the amount of time that noncustodial parents spent with their youngest custodial child according to custodial parents did not vary significantly by the IV-D status of the custodial parents.

Custodial parents receiving IV-D services reported that 35% of noncustodial parents spent at least 52 days in 2017 with their youngest custodial child (Figure 8). Among custodial parents not receiving IV-D services, the figure was 38%, an insignificant difference.

Figure 8. Custodial Parents' Reports of the Amount of Time Noncustodial Parents Spent with Their Youngest Child in Common in 2017



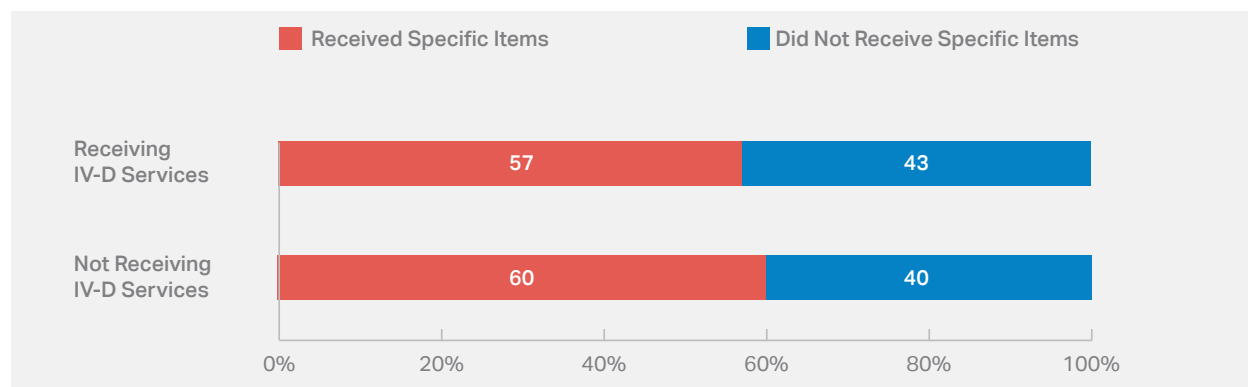
Custodial parents receiving IV-D services also reported that 30% of noncustodial parents spent some time with their youngest custodial child in 2017, but less than 52 days. Among custodial parents not receiving IV-D services, this figure was 28%, an insignificant difference.

Finally, 36% of noncustodial parents did not spend any time with their youngest custodial child in 2017 according to custodial parents receiving IV-D services. This figure is 34% among custodial parents not receiving IV-D services, an insignificant difference.

I. Assistance with Specific Items

If custodial parents report that they had “any kind of contact” with the noncustodial parent of their youngest custodial child in the prior year, they are also asked whether the noncustodial parent provided any of the following specific items in the prior year: gifts, clothes or diapers, food or groceries, money for child care, or money for medical expenses. In 2018, 57% of custodial parents receiving IV-D services reported that they had contact with the noncustodial parent and they received at least one of these items in 2017 (Figure 9). Among custodial parents not receiving IV-D service, this figure is 60%, an insignificant difference.

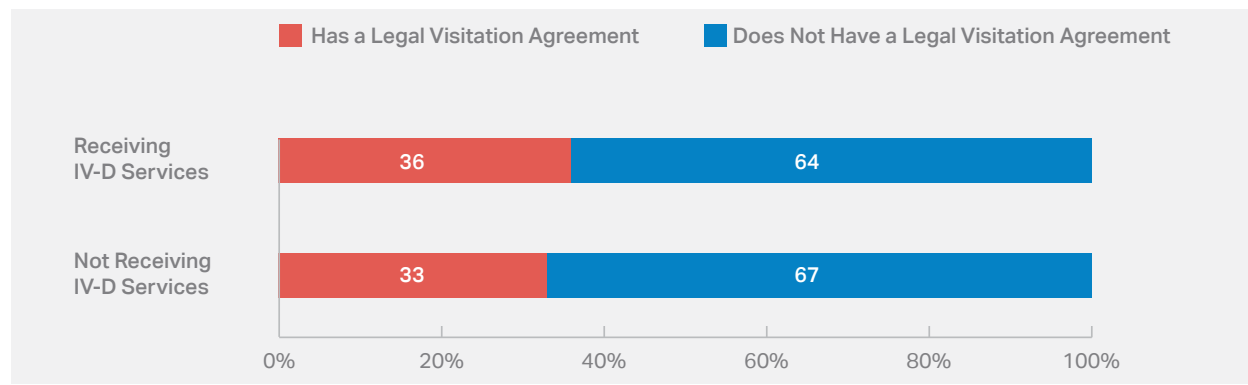
Figure 9. Custodial Parents’ Receipt of Specific Items from Noncustodial Parent in 2017



J. Legal Visitation Agreements

Examining legal visitation agreements among custodial parents with a child support order, 36% of custodial parents receiving IV-D services who have a child support order also had a legal visitation agreement in 2018 (Figure 10). Among custodial parents not receiving IV-D services who have a child support order, this figure is 33%, a statistically insignificant difference.

Figure 10. Whether or Not Custodial Parents with a Child Support Order Have a Legal Visitation Agreement, 2018



K. Child Support Order and Receipt

The CPS-CSS asks custodial parents whether each of their custodial children are covered by a financial order.⁶ Using this information, we estimate that 75% of custodial parents who received IV-D services had a child support order as of April 2018 (Table 1). In contrast, 40% of custodial parents who did not receive IV-D services had a child support order.

OCSE's FY 2018 Annual Report shows that there were 13.9 million child support cases that were open at the end of FY 2018 and that 12.2 million of these cases, or 87%, had a child support order.⁷ This figure is considerably higher than our estimate reported above that indicates 75% of custodial parents who received IV-D services had a child support order as of April 2018. There are several reasons for this difference. First, cases with a child support order as reported in OCSE's Annual Report are not necessarily financial orders that require the payment of a positive amount of support. About 1 million cases in FY 2018 had a zero dollar order.⁸ In addition, about 3 million cases in FY 2018 had an order for arrears only.⁹ Using child support administrative data, we estimate that most of the arrears-only orders (82%) are for children over 20 years old (see Appendix Table A.2). As noted above, custodial parents whose custodial children are all 21 years old or older are not included in the survey conducted by the Census Bureau. We find that once you focus on financial orders with a positive dollar amount, child support administrative data shows that about 75% of custodial parents with children under the age of 21 have an order with a dollar amount (see Appendix Table A.3).

The CPS-CSS does not ask custodial parents about the total amount of child support payments they received in 2017. Instead, it asks custodial parents to report how much child support they received for the children who are covered by an order that is associated with their youngest child with an order. If the custodial parent does not have an order for any of his/her custodial children, then the CPS-CSS asks custodial parents how much child support they received for their youngest custodial child. This means that if a custodial parent has a second or higher number of child support orders, payments received for those orders are not captured by the CPS-CSS. In addition, if a custodial parent does not have a child support order, any child support payments received for his/her children other than the youngest child are not captured by the CPS-CSS.

Given the limitations of the CPS-CSS in capturing child support received, we supplement this information with results about child support collected from the March 2018 CPS-Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC). In the ASEC, every adult is asked whether they received income last year from a long list of possible sources, including child support. If the adult says yes to this question, the ASEC asks how much they received. In general, we think the CPS-CSS does a better job of capturing the amount of child support received because it asks more detailed questions about child support received than the ASEC. Therefore, if the CPS-CSS questions about child support receipt cover all of the custodial children a custodial parent has (that is, whether they have one order or one child and no orders), then we use the CPS-CSS questions to measure child support received. On the other hand, if the CPS-CSS questions only cover some of the custodial children a custodial parent has (that is, they have no orders and they have two or more children or they have two or more orders), we use the maximum value of child support received as reported in either the CPS-CSS or the CPS-ASEC as our measure of child support received.

Among custodial parents who received IV-D services and had a child support order, 58% received child support payments in 2017 for an average of \$5,381 (Table 1).¹⁰ Even among those custodial parents who received IV-D services but did not have an order, 15% of them reported that they received child support payments and the average amount received was \$3,563 in 2017. Median values for the amount of child support received in 2017 are also reported in Table 1. The median amount divides the population in half. For custodial parents who received IV-D services and had a child support order, half of them received less than \$3,600 in 2017; half received more than that amount. This means, however, that roughly half of custodial parents with children under 21 in the IV-D program did not receive any child support in 2017.

Table 1. Custodial Parents' Order Status and Receipt of Child Support Payments

	All Custodial Parents	
	Receive IV-D Services	Do Not Receive IV-D Services
Number of Custodial Parents	7,948,241	4,969,336
% who Have A Child Support Order	75%	40%
Number of Custodial Parents with a Child Support Order	5,985,621	1,987,681
% who Received Child Support Payments in 2017	58%	42%
Average Amount Received in 2017	\$5,381	\$6,318
Median Amount Received in 2017	\$3,600	\$4,200
Number of Custodial Parents w/o a Child Support Order	1,962,620	2,981,655
% who Received Child Support Payments in 2017	15%	7%
Average Amount Received in 2017	\$3,563	\$6,164
Median Amount Received in 2017	\$2,720	\$4,800

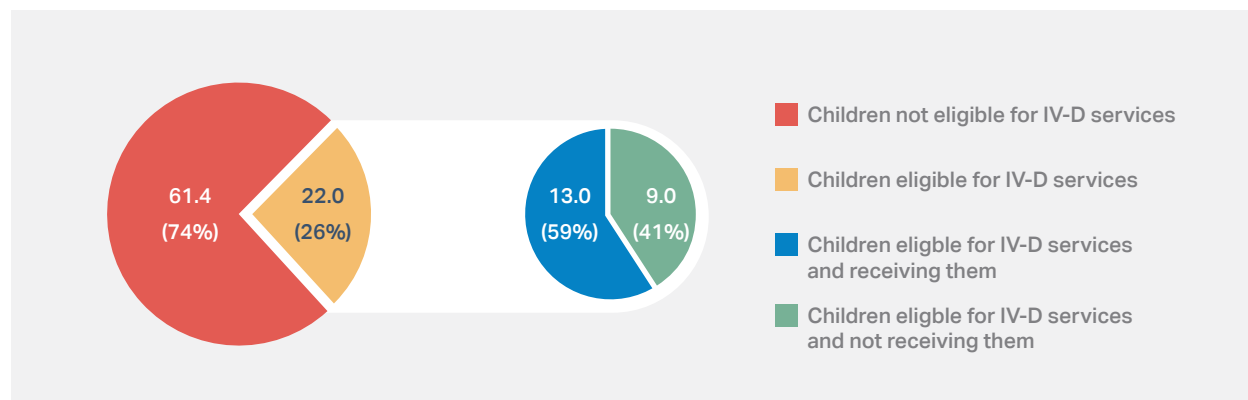
Turning to custodial parents who do not receive IV-D services, Table 1 shows they are significantly less likely to receive child support than custodial parents who receive IV-D services. If custodial parents do not receive IV-D services, only 42% of custodial parents with an order and 7% of custodial parents without an order received child support payments in 2017. Among those who received child support, the average and median amounts received by custodial parents not receiving IV-D services were higher than the amounts received by custodial parents receiving IV-D services.

Characteristics of Custodial Children

A. Children's Receipt of Child Support (IV-D) Services

According to the CPS-CSS, there were 83.4 million children under 21 years old living in the United States as of April 2018.¹¹ Twenty-six percent of these children (22 million) lived with one parent and their other parent lived elsewhere.¹² Of these children, 59% (13 million) received IV-D services (Figure 11).

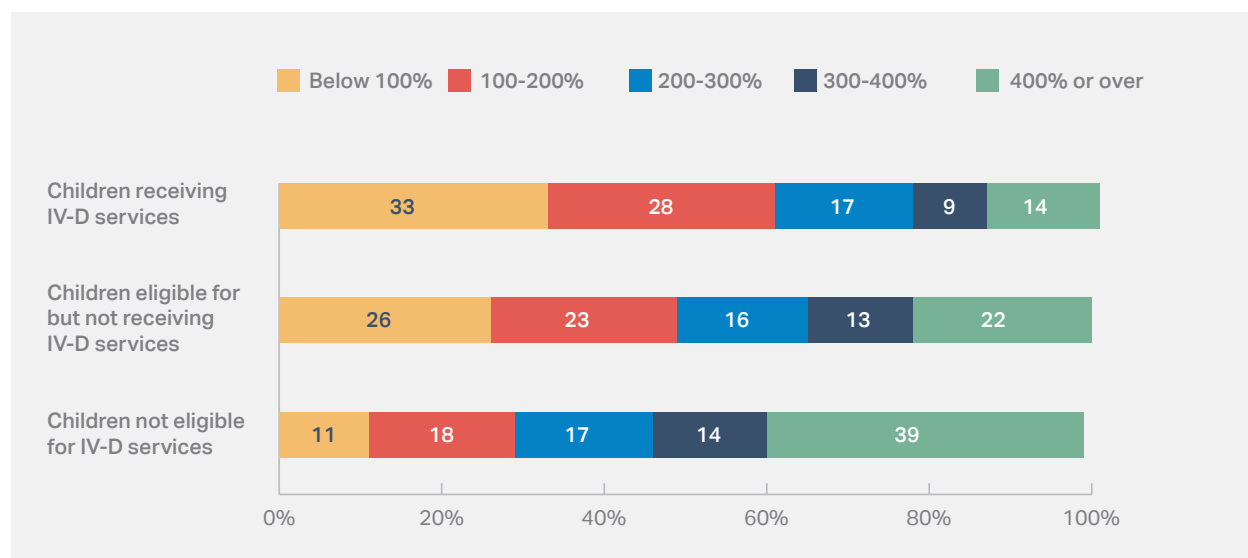
Figure 11. Children's Receipt of Child Support (IV-D) Services, 2018 (numbers are in millions)



B. Children's Poverty Status

Each year, the Census Bureau publishes poverty thresholds by size and composition of the family unit. For example, in 2017, the poverty threshold was \$24,858 for a family with two parents and two children. An important measure of economic well-being is to compare family income to these poverty thresholds. If a family's income is below 100% of the poverty threshold, the family is said to live in poverty; if it is between 100 and 200% of the poverty threshold, the family is considered to live near poverty.

Figure 12. Poverty Status of Children Under 21 Years Old, 2017



As Figure 12 shows, children receiving IV-D services tend to live in families with lower incomes than other children. In 2017, 33% of children who received IV-D services lived in poverty; another 28% lived near poverty. About 17% had family incomes between 200 and 299% of the poverty threshold, 9% had family incomes between 300 to 399% of the poverty threshold, and 14% had family incomes at 400% of the poverty threshold or higher.

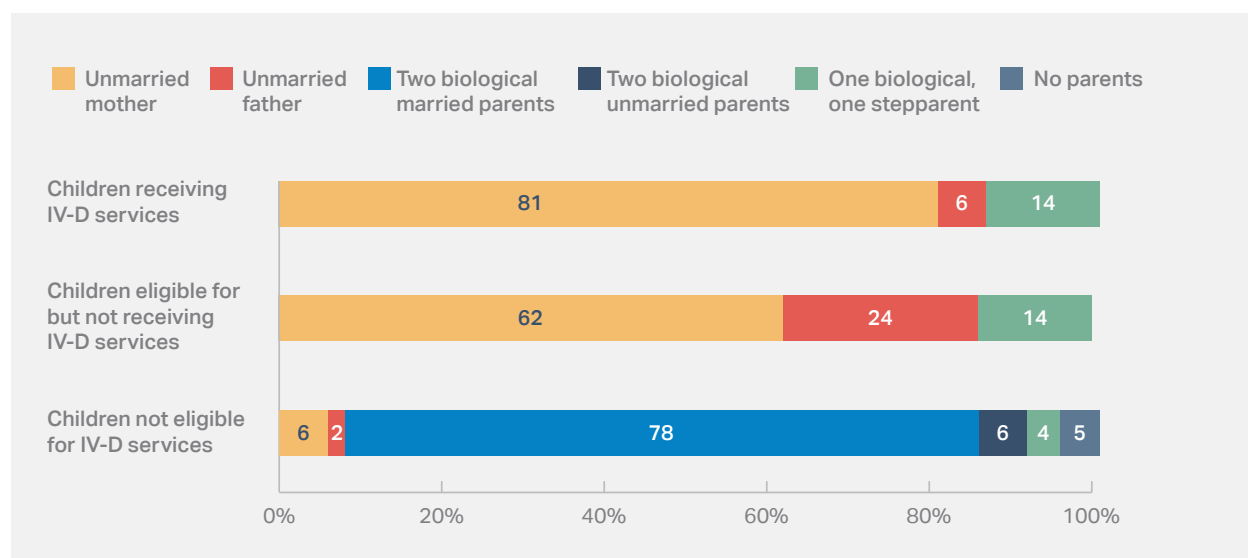
Children who are eligible for IV-D services but did not receive them are significantly less likely to be poor than children who receive IV-D services. As Figure 12 shows, 26% of these children lived in poverty in 2017 and another 23% lived near poverty. At the other extreme, 22% of these children had family incomes above 400% of the poverty threshold in 2017.

Children who are not eligible for IV-D services are significantly less likely to be poor and more likely to live in families with incomes above 400% of the poverty threshold than children eligible for IV-D services. Only 11% of these children were poor and 39% lived in families with incomes above 400% of the poverty threshold in 2017.

C. Children's Living Arrangements

Children receiving IV-D services are significantly more likely to live with their unmarried mother than other children. Over 80% of children who received IV-D services lived with their unmarried mother and their father lived elsewhere; only 6% lived with their unmarried father and their mother lived elsewhere (Figure 13). Another 14% lived with a biological parent and a stepparent and their other biological parent lived elsewhere. By definition, none of these children lived with two biological parents and none lived apart from both parents.

Figure 13. Living Arrangements of Children Under 21 Years Old, 2018



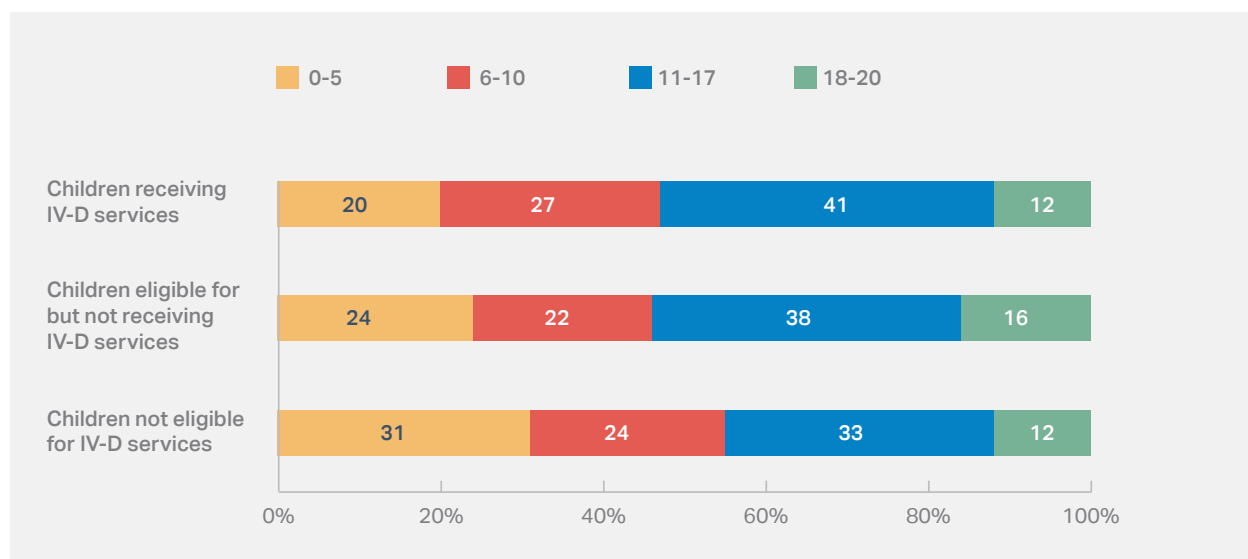
Although most children eligible for IV-D services who did not receive them lived with their unmarried mother and their father lived elsewhere (62%), nearly one-quarter (24%) of them lived with their unmarried father and their mother lived elsewhere. Another 14% lived with a biological parent and a stepparent and their other biological parent lived elsewhere. Again, none of these children lived with two biological parents and none lived apart from both parents.

In contrast to children eligible for IV-D services, 78% of children not eligible for IV-D services lived with their two married biological or adopted parents. Another 6% lived with their two unmarried biological or adopted parents. About 12% lived with one biological parent (an unmarried mother, unmarried father, or a biological parent and stepparent) and the other biological parent was either deceased or not acknowledged as a legal parent; 5% lived apart from both parents but were living with family members.

D. Children's Age Distribution

Children receiving IV-D services are much less likely to be under 6 than other children. Only 20% of children receiving IV-D services are under the age of 6 compared to 24% of children who are eligible for IV-D services but not receiving them and 31% of children not eligible for child support (Figure 14). On the other hand, 68% of children receiving IV-D services are between the ages of 6 and 17 compared to 60% of children eligible for IV-D services but not receiving them and 57% of children not eligible for IV-D services.

Figure 14. Age of Children Under 21 Years Old, 2018



E. Program Participation Among Children's Families or Households

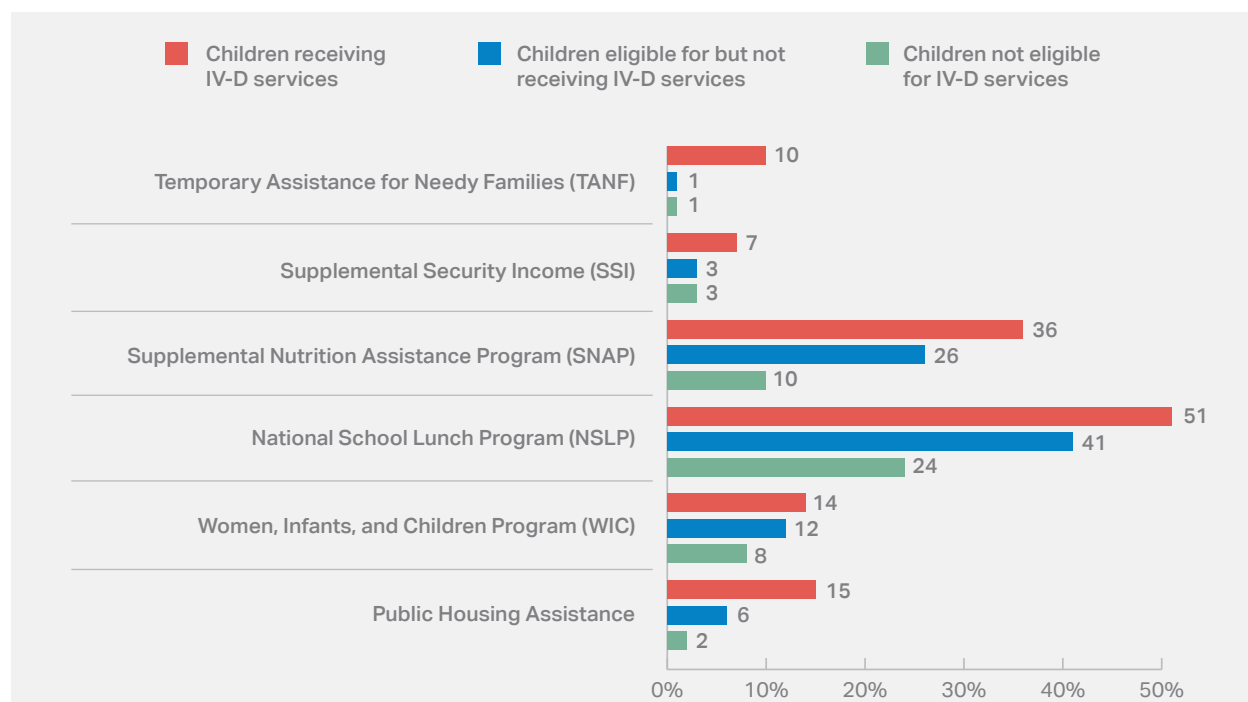
In this section, we examine whether children's families or households were participating in certain means-tested benefit programs. These data are self-reported and may not reflect actual program participation. Other research shows that the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, which relies on self-reports, tends to underreport the extent to which families and households receive means-tested benefits.¹³ We examine participation in six means-tested programs: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC), and public housing assistance.

Among children receiving IV-D services, 10% of their families received TANF, 7% received SSI, 36% of their households received SNAP, 51% of their households had children in the NSLP, 14% participated in WIC, and 15% received public housing assistance (Figure 15).

In general, participation in means-tested benefit programs was significantly lower among the families and households of children eligible for IV-D services but did not receive them. Only 1% of these families received TANF, 3% received SSI, 26% of their households received SNAP, 41% of their households had children in the NSLP, 12% of their households participated in WIC, and 6% of their households received public housing assistance.

Turning to children not eligible for IV-D services, they lived in families and households that were even less likely to participate in means-tested programs than children eligible for IV-D services. Only 1% of these families received TANF, 3% received SSI, 10% of their households received SNAP, 24% of their households had children in the NSLP, 8% of their households participated in WIC, and 2% of their households received public housing assistance.

Figure 15. Program Participation Among Children's Families and Households, 2017



F. Children's Medical Coverage

In this section, we examine the type of medical coverage that children had during 2017. We divide medical coverage into six types: Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Military Health Care, private health insurance provided by someone outside the household, employer-provided health insurance provided by someone inside the household, and direct purchase of health insurance provided by someone inside the household.¹⁴ We selected these categories to highlight the extent to which children are covered by private health insurance by someone who lives outside of the household. This category includes noncustodial parents who are providing private health insurance for their children.

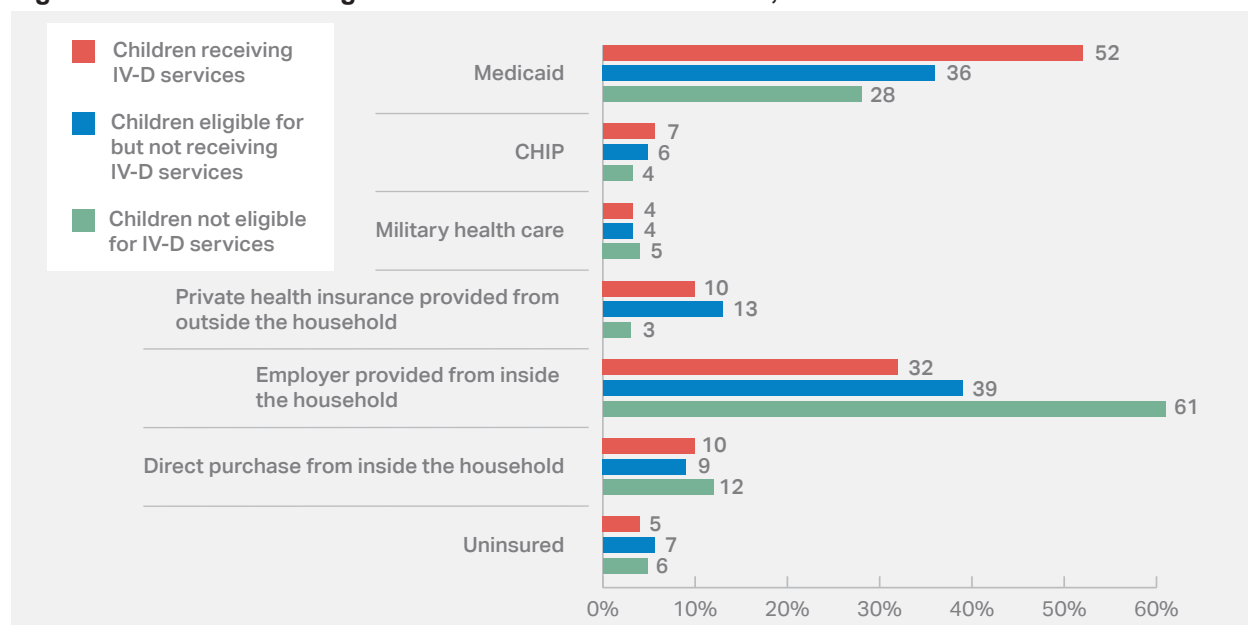
Figure 16 reports the percent of children who received each type of medical coverage at any time during 2017. Since children may have more than one type of medical coverage at any one time and at different times during the year, these categories are not mutually exclusive. Figure 16 also reports the percent of children who were uninsured throughout 2017.

Among children receiving IV-D services, the largest source of medical coverage was Medicaid in 2017, with 52% of children under age 21 receiving Medicaid that year. The next largest source of medical coverage for these children was employer-provided health insurance from someone within their household (32%). Another 10% were covered by the direct purchase of health insurance from someone within their household. Just 10% had private health insurance provided by someone outside their household. Presumably, most of these children are receiving health insurance from their noncustodial parent. About 5% of children under age 21 who were served by the IV-D program were uninsured throughout 2017.

Among children eligible for IV-D services but not receiving them, 36% were covered by Medicaid and 39% were covered by employer-provided health insurance from someone inside their household. Thirteen percent of these children had private health insurance from someone outside their household and 7% were uninsured throughout 2017.

Among children not eligible for IV-D services, the largest source of medical coverage was employer-provided health insurance from someone inside their household (61%). Twenty-eight percent of these children received Medicaid. Six percent were uninsured throughout 2017.

Figure 16. Medical Coverage of Children Under 21 Years Old, 2017



Appendix: Method for Identifying IV-D Custodial Parents in the CPS-CSS

This appendix explains how we identify custodial parents who receive IV-D services using the CPS-CSS. The approach builds upon the methodology developed by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), United States Department of Health and Human Services, but deviates in two important ways. First, custodial parents who receive Medicaid are no longer automatically assumed to receive IV-D services. Second, the number of custodial parents receiving IV-D services identified by the ASPE approach are adjusted to meet targets developed using child support administrative data.

Below, we first describe the ASPE methodology for identifying custodial parents who receive IV-D services. Then, we describe the adjustment regarding Medicaid, the targets developed from child support administrative data, and the method used to meet those targets.

ASPE Methodology for Identifying Custodial Parents in the CPS-CSS Who Receive IV-D Services

The ASPE methodology relies on responses to specific questions in the CPS-CSS to identify custodial parents who receive IV-D services. Below, we list the nine questions in the CPS-CSS that we use to identify custodial parents who receive IV-D services. All of these items either reference the IV-D program or custodial parents who respond are highly likely to be in the IV-D program.

- PES300: This question asks respondents if the noncustodial parent was supposed to make any payments for their child between January 1 and December 31, 2017. If respondents answered that they didn't know because the Child Support Enforcement Office had filed the paperwork, then they were included in the IV-D program (PES300=4).
- PES302: Respondents who reported that the noncustodial parent was supposed to make any child support payments between January 1 and December 31, 2017, (PES300=1 or 3) were asked if any of their child support payments were supposed to be deducted from the noncustodial parent's paycheck (PES302). They were also asked PES303, which asked whether any of their payments were supposed to be sent to them by the court (PES303=2), by direct deposit (PES303=3), by the noncustodial parent's place of employment (PES303=4), or other method (PES303=5). If custodial parents reported that their payments were supposed to be deducted from the other parent's paycheck (PES302=1) and they reported that they were supposed to be sent these payments by the court, by direct deposit, or by the noncustodial parent's employer, they were included in the IV-D program (PES302=1 and PES303 in (2-4)).
- PES303: Respondents who reported that the noncustodial parent was supposed to make any child support payments between January 1 and December 31, 2017, (PES300=1 or 3) and these payments were supposed to be sent to them by the child support, welfare, or any other public agency were included in the IV-D program (PES303=1).
- PES326: Respondents with an agreement were asked if any child support was passed onto them by the TANF program. If they said yes, they were included in the IV-D program (PES326=1).
- PES341: Respondents were asked who was supposed to provide health insurance for the child. If they replied that they didn't know because the Child Support Enforcement Office filed the paperwork, they were included in the IV-D program (PES341=6).

- PES343: Respondents without an agreement were asked if any child support was passed onto them by the TANF program. If they said yes, they were included in the IV-D program (PES343=1).
- PES376: Respondents were asked if a legal agreement about child support was pending. If they replied that they didn't know because the Child Support Enforcement Office or TANF may have filed papers, then they were included in the IV-D program (PES376=3).
- PES400: Respondents were asked if they had ever contacted a child support or IV-D office, a department of social services, a welfare office, or any state or local government agency about anything to do with child support. If respondents answered yes, they were included in the IV-D program (PES400=1).
- PES401: Respondents were asked if they had ever been contacted by one of the agencies mentioned above about anything to do with child support. If respondents answered yes, they were included in the IV-D program (PES401=1).
- PES650A: If respondents indicated that a government or public agency had collected any child support on their behalf, then they were included in the IV-D program (PES650A=1).

In addition, the ASPE methodology includes custodial parents in the IV-D program if the custodial parent's family received TANF or other public assistance in the prior year (FINC_PAW=1). These respondents were included in the IV-D program since TANF recipients are required to cooperate with the IV-D program as a condition of receiving TANF, and all state TANF programs have automated referral systems that refer TANF recipients to state IV-D programs for services.

Changes Made Related to Medicaid

The original ASPE methodology assumed that all custodial parents who received Medicaid were also in the IV-D program. ASPE made this assumption because custodial parents who receive Medicaid are required to cooperate with the IV-D program as a condition of receiving Medicaid. However, the cooperation requirement by itself does not mean that Medicaid recipients are automatically enrolled in the IV-D program. The state Medicaid program must refer cases to the IV-D program for Medicaid recipients to be enrolled in the IV-D program. While most state Medicaid programs refer cases to the IV-D program, the number that do not increased after the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010. Thus, we decided it was no longer tenable to assume that all custodial parents who received Medicaid were in the IV-D program.

We continue to assume that custodial parents who receive Medicaid and live in most states are included in the IV-D program, but the following states and the District of Columbia appear to receive relatively few, if any, Medicaid referrals: AK, CA, DC, HI, MD, MA, MS, NV, NJ, NY, PA, VT, VA. Thus, custodial parents who receive Medicaid and live in these states are not automatically assumed to be in the IV-D program. However, if these custodial parents are selected to be in the IV-D program based on responses to CPS-CSS questions discussed above or if they are selected to be in the IV-D program as discussed below, they are included in the IV-D program. We identified these states using line 1c and line 33 of the OCSE-157 form. Line 1c asks states to report the number of Medicaid-only cases that they have. Medicaid-only cases are defined as cases where the custodial children are receiving Medicaid but are not current or former recipients of TANF (Title IV-A) or Foster Care (Title IV-E). Line 33 asks states to report the number of children in their state who are eligible for Medicaid. We examined the ratio of line 1c to line 33 for FY 2010 to FY 2018 for each state and the nation. The national average of this ratio was .28 during FY 2010 to FY 2018, which means that 28% of children eligible for Medicaid had a Medicaid-only case with the IV-D program. All states with a ratio of less than .13 during this period were assumed to have relatively few Medicaid referrals.

Developing Targets for Custodial Parents

We used child support administrative data to create targets for the number of custodial parents in the IV-D program who are biological or adopted parents and have custodial children under the age of 21. We also created additional targets that divide this population by sex and order status. The development of these targets is discussed below.

We started with data from the Federal Case Registry (FCR). OCSE generates numerous reports from the FCR each month. One report tabulates the number of unique persons served by the IV-D program by participant type, by order status, by age categories for the participants, and by state. We use this report to determine the number of custodial parents in the IV-D program in the states and the District of Columbia as of April 2018. We omit those in the territories since the CPS-CSS does not interview people in the territories. Going forward, whenever we discuss custodial parents in the IV-D program we are referring to those in the states and the District of Columbia.

The first row of Table A.1 shows that there were 10.6 million custodial parents in the IV-D program as of April 2018 according to the FCR; 9.8 million of these custodial parents were women and .8 million were men.¹⁵ These numbers are bolded to indicate that they are based on the full universe of unique persons from the FCR.

Table A.1. Number of Custodial Parents in the IV-D Program by Gender, Order Status, and Age of Youngest Custodial Child: 2018

	Total	Male	Female
Number of Custodial Parents (excluding territories)	10,643,027	832,383	9,810,644
Number of Custodial Parents with an Order	8,997,251	665,516	8,331,735
Percent of CPs w/ order who are male/female	100%	7%	93%
Percent of CPs with kids < 21	82%	84%	80%
Percent of CPs w/ order who have a child <21	80%		
Sex Composition of CPs w/ order for a child < 21	100%	8%	92%
Sex Composition of CPs w/ order and kids >= 21	100%	6%	94%
Number of CPs with kids<21	8,582,631	699,929	7,882,702
With order	7,208,476	558,785	6,649,691
Without order	1,374,156	141,144	1,233,011
Number of CPs with kids>=21	2,060,396	132,454	1,927,941
With order	1,788,775	108,669	1,680,106
Without order	271,620	23,785	247,835
Percent of CPs with kids<21 and 40+ age gap	6%		7%
Number of CPs w kids <21 and w/ 40+ age gap	514,712	-	514,712
With order	410,599	-	410,599
Without order	110,784	-	110,784
Number of CPs w kids <21 and w/o 40+ age gap	8,067,919	699,929	7,367,990
With order	6,797,877	558,785	6,239,092
Without order	1,263,372	141,144	1,122,227

Source: Federal Case Registry (bolded numbers) and a random sample drawn from the FCR in April 2018.

The second row of Table A.1 uses the same FCR report as the first row to show the number of custodial parents with an order who are in the IV-D program. As of April 2018, there were nearly 9 million custodial parents with an order in the IV-D program. This FCR report does not report custodial parents with an order by sex. To generate these numbers, we used a random sample of the FCR that was drawn in April 2018.¹⁶ Using this random sample, we find that 93% of custodial parents in the IV-D program who have an order were female and 7% were male. Using these percentage figures, we estimate that there were .7 million male custodial parents with an order and 8.3 million female custodial parents with an order in the IV-D program as of April 2018.

Our next task was to estimate the number of custodial parents in the IV-D program who have custodial children under the age of 21. We used the same random sample from the FCR as discussed above to estimate the percent of custodial parents in the IV-D program who had custodial children under 21. As shown in Table A.1, we estimate that 82% of custodial parents in the IV-D program had at least one custodial child under the age of 21 as of April 2018. This percentage figure varied by the sex of the custodial parent: 84% of male custodial parents and 80% of female custodial parents had custodial children under 21.

Our goal is to generate targets for custodial parents by sex and order status, so our next task was to use the random sample to estimate the percent of custodial parents with an order who have a child under 21.¹⁷ We used the random sample from the FCR and found that 80% of custodial parents with an order have a child under 21. Next, we estimated the sex composition of custodial parents with an order for those with custodial children under the age of 21 and for those with custodial children over the age of 20. These percentages are used to generate estimates of custodial parents by their sex and order status for those with children under the age of 21 and those with children over the age of 20. These figures are displayed in the middle section of Table A.1. We estimate that there were 8.6 million custodial parents in the IV-D program who had custodial children under the age of 21 and 7.2 million of them had a child support order.

Next, since the CPS-CSS only interviews biological and adopted parents about custodial children, we need to develop an estimate of the percent of custodial parents in the FCR who are the biological or adopted parents. Unfortunately, the FCR does not include this type of information. Thus, we used the same random sample from the FCR discussed above and estimated the percent of female custodial parents with custodial children under the age of 21 who have an age gap of at least 40 years with their youngest custodial child. We consider this group to be a rough estimate of the percent of female custodial parents with custodial children under 21 who could not be the biological parents of their youngest custodial child. Seven percent of the female custodial parents with children under 21 years old fit this description.

Based on our estimate discussed above, we assume that 94% of custodial parents with children under 21 years old are the biological or adopted parents of their children. Based on this figure, we estimate that there were 8.1 million custodial parents in the IV-D program who are biological or adopted parents with at least one custodial child under 21 as of April 2018 (Table A.1). Among these 8.1 million custodial parents, 6.8 million had a child support order.

We want to align our CPS-CSS estimates of the number of custodial parents in the IV-D program by sex and order status to the results presented in Table A.1, but the CPS-CSS asks custodial parents about child support orders that require the other parent to provide financial support for their custodial children.¹⁸ On the other hand, the order indicator in the FCR that each custodial parent is assigned can reflect orders that do not necessarily require financial support, such as medical support-only orders.

Although the FCR does not indicate the type of order a custodial parent has, data provided by the states in the OCSE-157 form do. States report the number of cases with orders established for zero cash support in line 2c and the number of cases with arrears-only orders in line 2e of the OCSE-157. Using these data (excluding territories), we estimate the percent of cases with zero cash orders, the percent of cases with arrears-only orders, and the percent of cases with nonzero current support orders. We average the data from FY 2017 and FY 2018 to approximate April 2018. Our results are reported in Table A.2: 9% of cases with an order were for zero cash, 24% were for arrears-only, and 66% were for nonzero current support orders.

Table A.2. Number of Custodial Parents with an Order by Gender, Order Type, and Age of Youngest Custodial Child: 2018

	Number of Custodial Parents with an Order	Type of Order		
		Zero Cash Order	Arrears-Only Order	Nonzero Current Support Order
Percent of cases with an order by order type		9%	24%	66%
Number of CPs with an order	8,997,251	827,298	2,192,574	5,977,379
Number of CPs with an order and kids >=21	1,788,775		1,788,775	
Number of female CPs with an order and kids >=21	1,680,106		1,680,106	
Number of male CPs with an order and kids >=21	108,669		108,669	
Number of CPs with an order for a child < 21	7,208,476	827,298	403,798	5,977,379
Percent of CPs with an order for a child < 21 by order type		11%	6%	83%
Number of female CPs with a 40+ age gap	410,599	47,123	23,001	340,475
Number of female CPs without a 40+ age gap	6,239,092	716,045	349,496	5,173,551
Number of male CPs without a 40+ age gap	558,785	64,130	31,302	463,353

Source: OCSE-157, lines 2, 2c, and 2e from FY 2017 and 2018 (first row of numbers); Federal Case Registry (bolded number); and a random sample drawn from the FCR (remaining figures).

Based on data from the FCR, we know that there were nearly 9 million custodial parents in the IV-D program who had a child support order as of April 2018 (Table A.1 and Table A.2). Using the percentage of cases by order type displayed in Table A.2, we estimate that .8 million of these custodial parents had a zero cash order, 2.2 million had an arrears-only order, and 6 million had a nonzero current support order.

We assume that custodial parents who have an order and all of their custodial children are over 20 years old have an arrears-only order. We think this is a reasonable assumption since none of these parents should have a current support order. It is possible that some of them may have a zero cash order, but we are assuming this number is inconsequential. Table A.1 shows that, using the random sample from the FCR, we estimate that there were nearly 1.8 million custodial parents with an order and all of their custodial children were over the age of 20; 1.7 million were female, .1 million were male. These figures are transferred to Table A.2 in the first column of numbers as well as in the column for arrears-only orders.

Turning to custodial parents with an order who have at least one custodial child under 21 years old, using the random sample of the FCR, we estimate that there were 7.2 million of these custodial parents in the IV-D program as of April 2018. This is reported in both Table A.1 and Table A.2. We estimate that .8 million of these parents have a zero cash order (Table A.2), .4 million have an arrears-only order, and 6 million have a nonzero current support order. Below these numbers, we provide the percent of custodial parents with an order who have a custodial child under the age of 21 by their order type. Among custodial parents with an order who have a custodial child under 21, we estimate that 11% have a zero cash order, 6% have an arrears-only order, and 83% have a nonzero current support order. We apply these percentages to the various subgroups listed in the final rows of Table A.2 to produce estimates for each of these subgroups.

The top panel of Table A.3 shows our final targets for the number of biological and adopted custodial parents with children under 21 years old who are in the IV-D program as of April 2018 using the estimates shown in Tables A.1 and A.2. We estimate that there were 8.1 million biological and adopted custodial parents with custodial children under 21 years old in the IV-D program as of April 2018. That is our overall target. We also created targets for subgroups of these custodial parents based on their sex and financial order status. Using the terminology in Table A.2, we define a financial order as having a nonzero current support order or an arrears-only order. As explained above, we use this categorization of orders because the CPS-CSS asks about financial orders.

Table A.3. Estimated Number of Biological and Adopted Custodial Parents with Children under 21 years old who Receive IV-D Services According to 2018 Child Support Administrative Data and 2018 CPS-CSS

Using 2018 Child Support Administrative Data	Total	Male	Female
Number of Custodial Parents	8,061,249	699,929	7,361,320
Have a financial order	6,017,702	494,655	5,523,048
Do not have a financial order	2,043,547	205,275	1,838,272
Using 2018 CPS-CSS: Initial Estimates Using ASPE Approach with Medicaid Modification			
Number of Custodial Parents	6,835,156	1,058,502	5,776,654
Have a financial order	5,079,304	794,077	4,285,227
Do not have a financial order	1,755,852	264,425	1,491,427
Ratio of CPS-CSS Results to Administrative Data			
Number of Custodial Parents	85%	151%	78%
Have a financial order	84%	161%	78%
Do not have a financial order	86%	129%	81%

Source: Federal Case Registry, OCSE-157, and the 2018 CPS-CSS.

The middle section of Table A.3 presents the initial estimates of the number of biological or adopted custodial parents with custodial children under 21 years old who are in the IV-D program according to the 2018 CPS-CSS using the ASPE approach and the Medicaid modification discussed above. It shows that the ASPE approach with the Medicaid modification identifies only 85% of the population of biological and adopted custodial parents with custodial children under 21 who are in the IV-D program. It also shows that the ASPE approach identifies too many male custodial parents and too few female custodial parents.

Developing Targets for Custodial Children

Since this brief discusses the characteristics of custodial children in the IV-D program, we wanted to make sure that our estimate for the number of custodial children in the IV-D program using the 2018 CPS-CSS was approximately the same as that found in the FCR. As of April 2018, the FCR report discussed above indicates that there were 13.8 million custodial children under 21 in the IV-D program. We used the same logic discussed above to estimate the percent of custodial children whose custodian is not their biological or adopted parent. If the child has a custodial mother who has an age gap of 40 or more years with her youngest custodial child, then we assume that the custodial parent is not the biological or adopted parent of the child. Using this approach, we estimate that 6% of custodial children live with a custodian who is not their biological or adopted parent. Thus, our target for the total number of custodial children under the age of 21 who live with their biological or adopted parent and are in the IV-D program as of April 2018 is 12.9 million (94% of 13.8 million).

In addition to the overall target for the number of custodial children, we have information about the number of custodial children each custodial parent has and the age distribution of custodial children from the random sample of persons in the FCR. We used this information to develop targets for custodial children under 21 who we think have a biological or adopted custodial parent and are in the IV-D program.

Using the random sample of the FCR, we examined custodial parents with children under 21 (custodial mothers were further limited to those without an age gap of more than 40 years between themselves and their youngest custodial child). We determined the total number of custodial children these custodial parents had and then classified them by the number of custodial children the custodial parent had (i.e., one custodial child, two custodial children, or three or more custodial children). As shown in Table A.4, 38% of these custodial children were the sole custodial child, 34% had one custodial sibling, and 28% had two or more custodial siblings. Using these percentages and the overall target for custodial children, we estimated the number of custodial children under the age of 21 who we think have a biological or adopted custodial parent by the number of children their custodial parent has. These numbers are reported in Table A.4.

Table A.4. The Distribution of Custodial Children by the Number of Custodial Children They Live With and their Age Distribution Using 2018 Child Support Administrative Data

	Percent	Number
Total Number of Custodial Children	100%	12,970,701
Custodial Children live with		
one custodial child	38%	4,972,147
two custodial children	34%	4,418,117
three or more custodial children	28%	3,580,438
Age of Custodial Children		
0-5 years old	20%	2,609,557
6-10 years old	27%	3,551,089
11-17 years old	41%	5,292,455
18-20 years old	12%	1,517,601

Source: Federal Case Registry (bolded number) and a random sample drawn from the Federal Case Registry in 2018

We also examined custodial children under the age of 21 by their age distribution using the random sample of the FCR. We determined the percentage of custodial children under the age of 21 who fell into the following four age categories: 0-5, 6-10, 11-17, and 18-20. These percentages were determined for all custodial children under 21. Table A.4 shows that 20% of custodial children under 21 were 0 to 5 years old, 27% were 6 to 10 years old, 41% were 11 to 17 years old, and 12% were 18 to 20 years old. Using these percentages and the overall target for custodial children, we estimated the number of custodial children under the age of 21 in each of the four age categories. These numbers are reported in Table A.4.

Using Predicted Probabilities to Align CPS-CSS Estimates to Targets

To align the number of custodial parents and custodial children found in the 2018 CPS-CSS to the targets discussed above, we generated a predicted probability of being in the IV-D program for each custodial parent in the 2018 CPS-CSS using logistic regression models. We estimated logistic regression models for custodial parents by their sex and order status. The following explanatory variables were included in the logistic models:

- Work status of the custodial parent in 2017 (full-time/full-year, employed but not full-time/full-year, not employed in 2017);
- Whether someone in the parents' household received SNAP in 2017;
- Whether someone in the parent's household received public housing assistance in 2017;
- Number of custodial children (one child, two children, three or more children);
- Poverty status of the custodial family;
- Educational attainment of the custodial parent (less than high school, high school graduate, some college, bachelor's degree, more than a bachelor's degree);
- Age of the custodial parent (under 30, between 30 and 39, between 40 and 49, 50 or older);
- Marital status of the custodial parent (currently married, widowed, divorced, separated, never married);
- Whether the custodial parent lived in a metropolitan or other area (city, suburb, rural area, or area not identified);
- Race/ethnicity of the custodial parent (Hispanic, Black non-Hispanic, White non-Hispanic, Other Race non-Hispanic).

Since the modified ASPE approach identified too many male custodial parents as being in the IV-D program, we reached administrative targets for them by selecting a subset of this group based on their predicted probability of being in the IV-D program. The opposite was true of female custodial parents, and so we used their predicted probabilities to select female custodial parents who had not been identified to be in the IV-D program by the modified ASPE approach to reach administrative targets. To reach administrative targets for custodial children, we adjusted the number of custodial parents selected above depending on the number of custodial children they had and the ages of the custodial children.

Table A.5 shows our entire set of targets and final estimates of the number of custodial parents and custodial children who are in the IV-D program according to the 2018 CPS-CSS *after* we align to child support administrative targets. Our estimate of the number of custodial parents in the IV-D program as of April 2018 is 7.9 million, which is 1% below our administrative target (i.e., 8.1 million). Our estimate of the number of custodial children in the IV-D program as of April 2018 is 13.0 million, which is slightly above our administrative target (i.e., 12.97 million). As Table A.5 shows, all of the other results are within 5% of our targets.

Table A.5 Targets and Final Results

Custodial Parents	Targets	Final Results	Percentage Difference
Number of Custodial Parents	8,061,249	7,948,241	1%
Has Order	6,017,702	5,985,621	1%
Female	5,523,048	5,475,057	1%
Male	494,655	510,564	-3%
No Order	2,043,547	1,962,620	4%
Female	1,838,272	1,759,855	4%
Male	205,275	202,765	1%
Custodial Children			
Number of Custodial Children	12,970,701	12,989,859	0%
Number of Custodial Children the Child Lives with			
Lives with one custodial child	4,972,147	4,981,217	0%
Lives with two custodial children	4,418,117	4,378,839	1%
Lives with three or more custodial children	3,580,438	3,629,803	-1%
Age Distribution of Custodial Children			
0-5 years old	2,609,557	2,660,520	-2%
6-10 years old	3,551,089	3,535,934	0%
11-17 years old	5,292,455	5,264,435	1%
18-20 years old	1,517,601	1,528,970	-1%

Endnotes

- 1 The Census survey used in this brief is the Current Population Survey-Child Support Supplement (CPS-CSS), conducted in April 2018. The number of custodial parents who were interviewed in this survey was 1,889, as reported in Table 1 of Appendix F of the Technical Documentation for the 2018 CPS-CSS. However, the Census Bureau imputed an additional 1,437 responses to the supplement so that the sample size for this survey is 3,326. Please see endnote 13 for our definition of custodial children.
- 2 This is the most recent Census report. Grall, Timothy. (2020). Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2017. Current Population Reports, P60-269, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.
- 3 This is the most recent Census report. Grall, Timothy. (2020). Custodial Mothers and Fathers and Their Child Support: 2017. Current Population Reports, P60-269, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.
- 4 Matthew Lyon. (1999). Characteristics of Families Using Title IV-D Services in 1995. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/characteristics-families-using-title-iv-d-services-1995>
- 5 Sorensen, Elaine, Arthur Pashi, and Melody Morales. (2018). Characteristics of Families Served by the Child Support (IV-D) Program: 2016 Census Survey Results. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/iv_d_characteristics_2016_census_results.pdf
- 6 We exclude custodial parents and children in the territories from the FCR numbers because the U.S. Census Bureau does not interview people in the territories for the CPS-CSS.
- 7 See endnote 19 for how we define a child support order. Our definition of a child support order is different than the definition used by the U.S. Census Bureau in their report on custodial parents.
- 8 Office of Child Support Enforcement, Preliminary Report FY 2018. Table P-2.
- 9 Based on unpublished tabulations of line 2c of the OCSE-157 Form for FY 2018.
- 10 Based on unpublished tabulations of line 2e of the OCSE-157 Form for FY 2018.
- 11 The percent of custodial parents in the IV-D program who have a child support order and received child support payments (58%) may seem low to readers who are familiar with OCSE's Annual Reports to Congress. In OCSE's FY 2018 Annual Report, Table 3 shows that 8.7 million cases in FY 2018 had a child support order and a collection during FY 2018. It also shows that 12.2 million cases with an order were open at the end of FY 2018. The ratio of these two numbers is over 70%. However, this ratio overstates the percent of cases with an order that received child support payments in FY 2018. To accurately estimate the percent of cases with an order that had a collection during FY 2018, the denominator should reflect the number of cases with an order that were open at any time during FY 2018, not the number that were open at the end of the year.
- 12 We limit our definition of children to those who are identified as living with other family members. If a person is under the age of 21 but is living on their own or with non-family members, the person is not included as a child in this brief. This is the same definition of children as used by the U.S. Census Bureau in its report that uses the CPS-CSS, published in 2020 (see endnote 1 for the citation).
- 13 We define custodial children slightly differently than the U.S. Census Bureau, which causes us to report a slightly higher number of custodial children than reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. We report that there are 22.0 million custodial children in 2018; the U.S. Census Bureau reports that there are 21.9 million custodial children. The key variable that identifies custodial children in the CPS-CSS is a variable called `suppresp`. This variable is the line number of the custodial parent. If this variable is positive, both we and the Census Bureau assume that the child is a custodial child (i.e., they have a custodial parent). But the Census Bureau further limits these children using a variable called `a_famrel`, which summarizes the family relationships among the reference person who answers the questions in the basic survey and other family members. If a custodial child is the reference person (i.e., `a_famrel=1`), then the Census Bureau assumes these children are not custodial children. We're not sure why the Census Bureau does this. We include custodial children who are reference persons as long as they are not currently married.
- 14 Meyer, Bruce D., Wallace K. C. Mok, and James X. Sullivan. 2015. The Under-Reporting of Transfers in Household Surveys: Its Nature and Consequences. Chicago: University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy. <https://harris.uchicago.edu/files/underreporting.pdf>

- 15 We have not included Medicare as a category of medical coverage because less than .5% of the children under 21 were reported to have received Medicare in 2017.
- 16 One percent of the custodial parents in the FCR as of April 2018 had unknown sex. These were allocated as male and female based on the percentage of male and female custodial parents.
- 17 The random sample of individuals from the FCR was selected based on the last two digits of their Social Security number. There are approximately 1 million people in the random sample.
- 18 We underestimate the number of custodial parents with children under 21 who have an order because we only count orders for their children under 21. We do this to be comparable to the CPS-CSS, which only examines the order status of custodial children under 21. We estimate this affects less than 1% of custodial parents with children under 21 in the IV-D program.
- 19 The CPS-CSS asks custodial parents, for each of their custodial children, the following question: Has there ever been any kind of legal arrangement that says that child's other parent should provide financial support (pes150)? Four responses are possible to this question: yes, no, the legal arrangement is pending, and there is an arrangement but I don't know if it is legal. If a custodial parent responds to this question with any answer other than no, we assume the child has a financial order. If a custodial parent says no to this question, they're asked the following question: Has there ever been any other kind of agreement or understanding that says that the other parent should help support the child (pes152)? If the custodial parent responds yes to this question, we assume the child has a financial order. We assume a custodial parent has a financial order if any of her or his custodial children has a financial order.