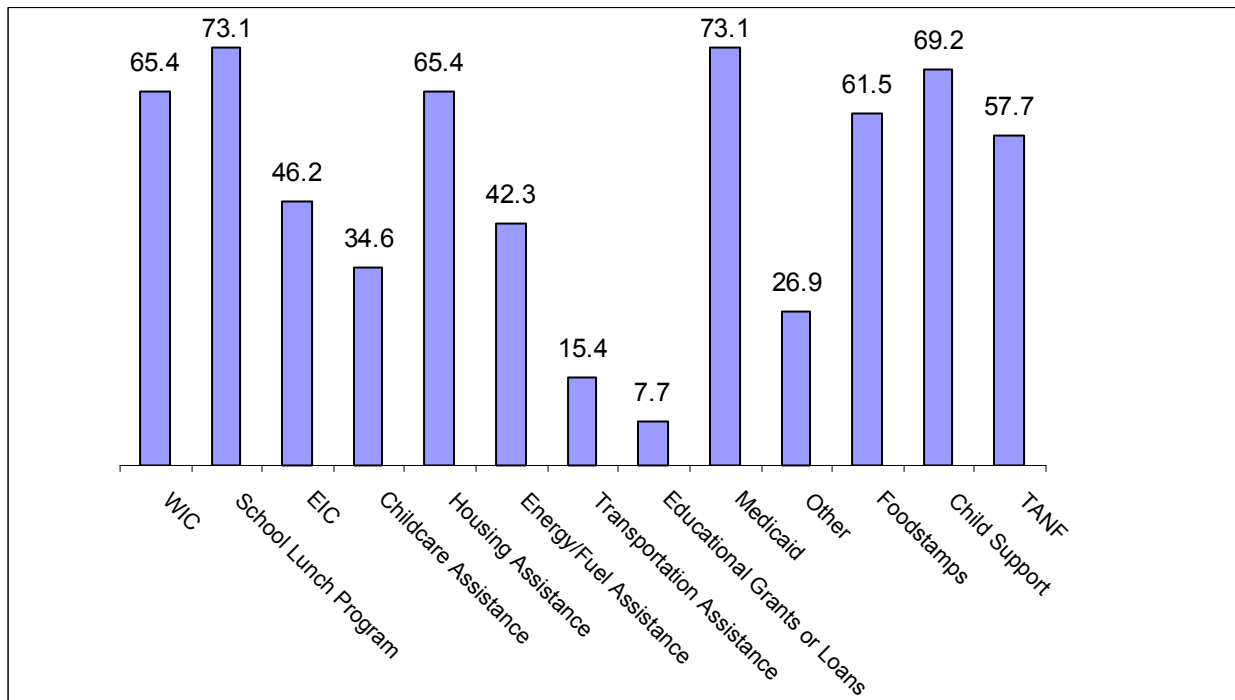


A Profile of Massachusetts Rural Families

Twenty-six families in a Massachusetts rural county participated in the Rural Families Speak Project. The main method of contact for families was through flyers and people in the following agencies: the local WIC, Housing Authority, Welfare to Employment program, food pantries, survival centers, and parent centers. The majority of the interviews took place in the families' home, the rest were at the University.

At the time of interview, the average rural Massachusetts family size was 3.23 members with an average total monthly income, not including food stamps, of \$1,201.52 or \$14,418.24 annually. According to the 2000 Federal Poverty Guidelines, the annual income for a family of three at 100% of poverty was \$1,179.17 monthly or \$14,150.00 annually. The number of children ranged from 1 to 5 with an average of 1.9 children. The average age of the youngest child was 3.38 years old. Seventy-one percent (70.8%) of families had come from families who received welfare. The chart below highlights the percentage of the Massachusetts rural families who responded "yes" to receiving various types of assistance.



The majority of mothers interviewed were Non-Hispanic White (73.1%), while 11.5% were Hispanic/Latina, and 15.4% were multi-racial. The average age of the mothers was 30.27 years. The marital status of the mothers varied with 50.0% single, 11.5% married, 11.5% living with a partner, 15.4% separated, and 11.5% divorced. Of the women in the sample, 26.9% had partners. Of the seven partners, five were Non-Hispanic White, one was African American, and one was Multi-racial. The average age of partners was 41.43 years old.

The mothers who participated in the study had various education levels, with 3.8% being college or university graduates, 38.5% having some college or Associates degrees, 3.8% having specialized technical, business or vocational training, 23.1% with a high school diploma or GED,

23.1% with some high school and 7.7% with an 8th grade education or less. The educational level of the partners varied with two having specialized technical, business or vocational training, three having a high school diploma or GED, one having some high school, and one with an 8th grade education or less.

The level of work participation for these Massachusetts rural families varied; 34.6% were currently working at time of the interview and 11.5% of the mothers were students. Three mothers were in search of a job. The overwhelming number of mothers (96.2%) interviewed had worked for pay at one point in their lives and started their first paying job on an average at 16 years of age.

The nine mothers who reported working were in different types of industries, including 4 in administrative support, 3 in service, and 2 in sales. The average time spent in the first job was 42 months with an average hourly wage of \$7.38 per hour. The average total number of hours worked per week for all jobs held by the mothers was 24.83 hours.

Four of the seven partners were working. The industries where the partners were employed were transportation, construction, and production. The average wage for partners' job was \$9.75 per hour and the average time committed to working for the partners was 44.17 hours per week.

For many rural families, housing is the largest monthly expense. Of these rural Massachusetts families, 88.0% of the families rented their place of residence, while 4.0% owned their own home, and 8.0% did something other than rent or own.

In terms of childcare care arrangements, 64.0% had some type of childcare arrangement each week. Some families had two (12%) or three (12%) different types of childcare arrangements.

When asked about the types of food eaten in the household, according to Food Security Module created by the USDA, 26.9% were considered food insecure with hunger, 50.0% were food insecure without hunger, 11.5% were marginally food secure, and 11.5% of rural Massachusetts families were food secure.

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