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The U.S. Safety Net since the Great Recession: Trends and Reforms, 2007–2017

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Abstract

The negative impacts of the Great Recession (GR, 2007–2009) on the lives of families with low incomes warrant social work concerns about how well anti-poverty policy responded to meet economic needs over this period and since. Given America's longstanding tension between welfare state adequacy and market-oriented policies, how well did the safety net respond to the economic downturn? Did GR-era changes reverse or accelerate trends in public assistance? This article examines key policy changes and indicators of caseloads, inclusion, and generosity for three anti-poverty policies: the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps), and the Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC) from 2007 to 2017. Our analysis shows a continuation of market-oriented U.S. anti-poverty policy. We argue that the re-emphasis of conditioning benefits on employment undermines the countercyclical feature of the social safety net and perpetuates the inequitable redistribution of public resources between those inside and outside of the labor market. We discuss social workers' role in strengthening the anti-poverty policies to improve the economic well-being of people with low incomes and the economic justice of the social safety net.

Key words: Great Recession; poverty; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Earned Income Tax Credit

June 2019 marks the ten-year anniversary of the ending of the Great Recession, spanned 18 months beginning December 2007 (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2010). During that period, the U.S. saw falling production and stock market value, increasing unemployment and poverty, and strained public budgets. Frontline social workers witnessed these conditions showing up in the day-to-day economic lives of persons who lost jobs, housing, income, and food security. The Great Recession and its aftermath warrant social work concern about the effectiveness of policy in supporting low-income populations. How did our means-tested safety net respond? Whether and how anti-poverty policy changed over this period offer insight into the well-being of the American poor as well as the robustness of our welfare state writ large. Just as the global oil crisis and recession of the 1970s weakened the post-World War II welfare states (Mishra, 1990), the weakening economy and increasing social need of the Great Recession of 2007–2009 certainly challenged social provision (Strier, 2013). Welfare states may become "crisis casualties" in an economic downturn, or economic turmoil may "mark a new opportunity to reconfigure and re-legitimize social policy" (Hemerijck, 2011, p. 89).

This article summarizes and analyzes changes to three major U.S. anti-poverty programs over the decade 2007–2017. We address two research questions: How did program rules change? And how did program reach – the number of clients served, the proportion of the needy served, and the value of benefits – change? These questions offer insight into a larger issue: did recession-sparked changes continue or interrupt the now decades-long trend towards diminishing entitlement to benefits and greater work-contingency? We begin with a brief background on the evolution of the American safety net and challenges posed by the Great Recession. Our first analysis is a narrative tracking major policy changes to three programs over the period 2007–2017: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program (SNAP), and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), representing cash, in-kind, and tax provisions. In the second analysis, we combine multiple sources of publicly accessible administrative and survey data to analyze trends in program caseloads, inclusion, and generosity. This work advances current knowledge in two ways. In examining policy design rather than individual microeconomic outcomes as the unit of analysis, it complements studies of observed changes in household benefit receipt (e.g. Bitler & Hoynes, 2016; Moffitt, 2015). Analyzing policy provides insight into political intent. Second, by extending past the end of the Great Recession through 2017, the analysis captures post-recession policy changes, which include repeals of temporary increases in benefit reach or generosity.

Background

Origin and Evolution of the US Welfare State. Observing the expansions and contractions of supports during times of crisis and recovery indicates the extent to which the welfare state serves the economy. Safety net programs in general, and the U.S. safety net in particular, exist within a tension between social protectionism and economic growth. In contrast to a universalistic approach organized around human needs of all citizens, the US welfare state is largely "residual" or "reluctant" in orientation, providing only for those who do not meet their own needs through market involvement (Wilensky & Lebeaux, 1958; Jansson, 2019). While a universalistic system might detract from the needs of the economy by supporting those who might otherwise be market workers, a market-oriented state plays important roles to support the capitalist system, particularly when the economy slows. First, welfare programs provide Keynesian stimulus, allocating resources that will then enter the economy, shoring up overall demand. Second, they reduce social disorder by providing sustenance when the market fails to do so. In market-oriented nations, welfare states support the needs of the overall economy by temporarily expanding generosity to absorb excess labor in times of crisis and then contracting programs to supply more workers as the economy improves (Piven & Cloward, 1971).

American's modern welfare state traces its origins to the Social Security Act of 1935, itself a response to the needs created by the economic collapse of the Great Depression. While reforms over the middle of the 20th century expanded the reach and generosity of the SSA's basic needs programs, a retrenchment started in the late 1970s and continued into the 21st century (Karger & Stoesz, 1993; Abramovitz, 2004). A prominent piece of legislation in this movement, the 1996 welfare reform, ended the previous entitlement cash assistance and replaced it with the work-contingent TANF program. Contemporaneous reforms expanded the EITC, which provides benefits only to those with earned income. These policies along with a strong macro economy contributed to a reduction in welfare caseloads and an increase in work participation among welfare recipients before the Great Recession (Pavetti, Rosenberg, & Derr, 2009).

The Great Recession and Economic Need. The Great Recession had several interrelated effects on US poverty. Unemployment grew rapidly, from a pre-recession seasonally-adjusted low of 4.4 percent in May 2007 to a high of 10.0 percent in October 2009. Unemployment remained high after the official end of the Great Recession in December 2009, staying at or about 9.0 percent until October 2011 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Poverty grew as well, from 12.3 percent in 2006 to 15 percent in 2011 and 2012 (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015), a typical pattern for the U.S. economy in which poverty lags the larger economic cycle. Together, higher unemployment and poverty increased the need for safety net supports.

Analysis and Findings

Our first analysis focuses on changes in TANF, SNAP, and EITC policy over the period 2007 through 2017. To analyze whether anti-poverty programs expanded – through more inclusive eligibility parameters or generous benefits– or contracted via more stringent program rules or limits in funding, we reviewed both the text of the measures from published governmental documents and reports and commentary from research and policy organizations (listed in Appendix Table).

Congress typically changes social welfare programs at periodic reauthorization of their enabling legislation (in the case TANF and SNAP) or as part of tax reform measures (for the EITC). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) also affected all three programs. Passed by a Democrat-majority Congress early in President Obama's first term, and also known as the "Stimulus Package" or "Recovery Act," ARRA directed over $800 billion in tax cuts, direct transfer payments, and government spending (Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, n.d.). The major goals of the act were job creation and economic growth. Spending started in 2009 with most funds expended in 2010 and 2011. We note ARRA reforms to our focal programs below.

Changes to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF Background. TANF is the major source of cash assistance for adults who are non-disabled, have no or low incomes, and have children. When it created the program in 1996, Congress established a six year reauthorization period. Reauthorization permits policy change but requires consensus between the House and Senate. When other issues are higher on the political agenda or when the chambers or members cannot agree on the reauthorization provisions, Congress extends funding rather than formally reauthorizing TANF. This happens more often than not; Congress has only reauthorized TANF once since its creation. The program has been on temporary expansions since 2010.

Under TANF, the federal government and states share expenses. Since 1996, the federal government has provided a fixed block grant to states each year. To receive federal TANF funds, states were required to contribute a minimum "maintenance of effort" (MOE) amount that paralleled their pre-1996 contributions. In 2017, TANF spending totaled $31.1 billion, a combination of $16.4 billion in federal funds and $14.7 billion in state funds (Schott, Floyd, & Burnside, 2019). States can use TANF funds for activities that support work and as well as to pay for other services for families. States have considerable flexibility in determining how funds are spent. Because of its block-grant funding mechanism and the fiscal pressures resulting from the Great Recession, the cash assistance provided by TANF has eroded over the past decade.

TANF and the ARRA of 2009. The ARRA included a $5 billion TANF emergency fund to support increased spending on families with children in poverty (Administration for Children and Families, 2012). The federal government reimbursed states for 80% of increased spending in three areas: basic cash or non-cash assistance, short-term benefits (such as one-time payments for rent or food), and subsidized employment. Increases had to be relative to spending in the same quarter in 2007 or 2008 and had to conclude by September 30, 2010. All states except North Dakota and Wyoming drew on the emergency fund for basic assistance or short-term benefits, totaling $3.7 billion in federal funds. The remaining $1.3 billion of emergency TANF funding subsidized employment (Administration for Children and Family, 2012). By building on existing supported employment programs or quickly launching new efforts, 38 states and the District of Columbia placed over a total of 250,000 workers into subsidized employment before the end of 2010 (Farrell, Elkin, Broadus, & Bloom, 2011).

State Changes to TANF after the Great Recession. After the end of the Great Recession, state TANF administrators reported struggling to meet high demand for assistance in the face of reduced federal funding (Brown & Derr, 2015). Although the overall economy started growing again in 2010, lingering high unemployment rates made it difficult for low-skilled or inexperienced workers to find jobs, hence increasing the need for TANF. At the same time, the ARRA TANF emergency funds expired at the end of fiscal year 2010, meaning states were again fully reliant on state funding and the ever-eroding federal block grants. As a result, after 2010 TANF effectively contracted as individual states worked to align smaller resources with larger needs. A nationwide scan of 30 states found that the majority reduced TANF staffing and many made program cuts (Brown & Derr, 2015).

Changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP Background. The U.S. federal government provides food assistance to economically needy families and individuals. Food assistance was known as Food Stamps until 2008 legislation changed the name of the program to SNAP. Because of the program's history as an effort to use excess farm production, the federal U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds the program and sets policy including eligibility requirements and benefit amounts. States administer the program, but – unlike TANF – SNAP is fairly uniform from state-to-state. For 2017, federal spent totaled $70.1 billion for SNAP payments for individuals (Office of Management and Budget, 2019). In addition to the Recovery Act, major legislative events for SNAP over the period 2007–2017 included the 2008 and 2014 Farm Bills (the congressional omnibus effort authorizing USDA programs).

The 2008 Farm Bill. Along with changing the name from Food Stamps to SNAP, the 2008 Farm Bill (formally the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008) increased access to food assistance and made support more generous (US Department of Agriculture, 2014). Specific changes included increasing the minimum benefit and changing the way certain expenses and assets are counted. The 2008 reforms also simplified and modernized state administration.

SNAP and the ARRA of 2009. The ARRA upped the monthly maximum SNAP allowance by about $20 per recipient and gave states more funding for administration (Dean & Rosenbaum, 2013). In addition to benefit increases, the ARRA temporarily suspended the three-month time limit in a three-year period for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD) and granted waivers for states to exempt 15% of ABAWD recipients from work requirements in high unemployment areas (Chang, 2015). The ARRA temporary expansion of benefits and eligibility ended in November 2013.

The 2014 Farm Bill. The 2014 Farm bill (Formally the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013) reauthorized the SNAP program. Congress directed the USDA to encourage SNAP participants to buy more fresh fruits and vegetables. The Bill also included provisions for pilot projects to encourage employment, foreshadowing other future efforts whereby benefits become conditional on work (Bolen, Rosenbaum, & Dean, 2014).

Changes to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

EITC Background. Since the 1990s, tax credits have become the largest mechanism for redistributing income to low- and moderate-income Americans with children. The EITC figures among the US's largest means-tested programs, totaling about $65 billion in 2017 (Internal Revenue Service, 2018). The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) administers the credit through the annual income tax reconciliation process. EITC credits are refundable, meaning that credits are paid out to tax filers who do not otherwise have federal income tax liability. In most cases, households receive their EITC credits in one lump-sum payment within the first four months of the calendar year (the tax filing deadline is April 15, but most EITC claimants file earlier).

EITC and the ARRA of 2009. The ARRA increased the EITC and made benefits more generous for larger families and those headed by married couples. Prior to 2009 the largest credits went to families with two or more children. The ARRA created a new, larger bracket for families with three or more children (Internal Revenue Service, 2013). It also addressed a longstanding concern, the so-called "marriage penalty" that arises because under many conditions EITC payments can be smaller for married couples relative to two unmarried adults filing separately. The ARRA built on previous attempts to address this by raising the phase-out point for couples further above that for single filers (Maag & Carasso, 2012).

Subsequent Post-Recessionary Federal Reforms. The 2010 tax bill (formally, the Tax Relief Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act of 2010) extended the expansions through 2010, and the 2012 tax bill (formally, the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 although it was not signed into law until January 2, 2013) extended them through 2017. The 2012 tax bill also specified that EITC refunds would not count toward asset limits for federal programs for the year after they were received (Flores & Hathaway, 2015), clarifying that tax filers would not lose eligibility if EITC-fed savings exceeded program asset limits. The 2015 tax bill (formally the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act, the PATH Act) permanently extended the EITC expansions. However, the PATH Act also includes a "program integrity" section that includes several changes affecting filers who claim EITC beginning with Tax Year 2016 returns. First, to prevent retroactive claims, individuals cannot file an amended return to claim EITC for prior years if a qualifying child did not have a Social Security Number in that prior year. Second, the IRS can bar an individual from claiming EITC for 10 years if the IRS finds they have fraudulently claimed the credit. Third, incorrectly claimed refundable credits will now be taken into account when determining the underpayment penalty. Finally, the 2017 tax law instituted a slower inflation adjustment measure for tax provisions, which contributes to a modest erosion of the EITC value over time (Huang, 2019).

Trends in Caseloads, Inclusion, and Generosity of Three Anti-Poverty Policies

This section assesses trends in the size of the TANF, SNAP and EITC programs over the period 2007–2017. We use three indicators: caseload, inclusion, and generosity. Tracking caseloads, or the total number of program participants, is a common way to present program response to economic cycles. But caseload alone provides little insight into unmet need. We hence follow Bruch, Meyers, and Gornick's (2018) approach and add inclusion and generosity as additional indicators of the safety net's size. Inclusion is a ratio of caseload divided by the annual estimated low-income populations in need, indicating the likelihood that families in need will receive support. Generosity is calculated by dividing total annual benefit spending by the annual number of program participation, indicating what recipient families on average receive. We collected program caseloads and spending from multiple sources of publicly accessible administrative data from the Census, IRS, USDA, and Administration for Children and Families. Table 1 provides details on the measure of each policy indicator and corresponding data sources. We adjusted generosity indicators for inflation and present all in 2017 dollars. Figure 1 displays caseload, inclusion and generosity trends for the three programs (see Table 2 for numbers underlying figures). For the data points of each indicator in Figure 1, we calculated the percent changes in the underlying ratios between the 2007 values and those of subsequent years. For example, an increase in inclusion from 0.30 in 2007 to 0.45 in 2017 indicated a 50% increase of 0.15 percentage points from 2007 to 2017. The calculation is: (0.45-0.30) / 0.30 = 0.5 = 50%.

TANF Trends. By design, TANF provisions are targeted toward families with children in poverty. While the poverty rate grew 20% from 2007 to 2010, families served by TANF increased only 9% during that period (Figure 1a). After 2011, the TANF caseload decreased annually to 1.40 million in 2017 (Table 2), an overall 20% decline in the caseload in the past decade. Notably, the ratio of families with children in poverty served by the TANF declined dramatically after the ARRA emergency funds ended in 2010. Over the 2007 to 2017 period, TANF inclusion decreased from 0.26 to 0.22, an overall 16% decline (Figure 1b). That is, TANF reached fewer and fewer families with children in poverty: only 22 out of every 100 families with children in poverty received TANF cash benefits in 2017. Generosity dropped after the ARRA as well. The average TANF benefit maintained a level of approximately $6,000 per household per year from 2007 to 2010 and then showed a decreasing trend afterward, from $6,272 in 2010 to $5,028 in 2017 (Table 2), an approximately 20% decline in benefit generosity (Figure 1c). Despite the temporary ARRA-funded expansion, TANF as a whole has contracted over the past decade and offers very limited support.

SNAP Trends. SNAP performed as a strong countercyclical tool to the economic crisis. The number of SNAP participating households with children increased from 5.9 million in 2007 to a peak at 10.2 million in 2013, and then decreased to 8.6 million in 2017 (Table 2), a net 46% increase in the caseload from 2007 to 2017 (Figure 1a). While the growth of caseload reversed in 2013, the ratio of the SNAP caseload to poverty increased from 0.66 in 2007 to 0.99 in 2017 (Table 2), an overall 50% increase from 2007 to 2017 (Figure 1b). In terms of generosity, the average SNAP benefit increased from $3,153 per household per year in 2007 to $3,945 in 2010 and then decreased annually to $3,088 in 2017 (Table 2). The sharp decrease between 2013 and 2014 can be attributed to the ending of ARRA temporary increased SNAP benefits in November 2013, and subsequent declines are likely driven by participants' higher average earnings.

EITC Trends. The expansion of EITC for larger families and those headed by married couples under the ARRA of 2009 explained the fast increase of the number of tax returns with earned income credits from 25 million in 2008 to 27.3 million in 2009 (Figure 1a and Table 2). Despite increasing economic needs due to persistently high unemployment and poverty rates in the following years, the caseload of EITC remained stable and did not show a clear countercyclical trend. Ongoing expansions in eligibility and benefit levels over the period 2007–2017 increased the inclusiveness and generosity of EITC gradually. The ratio of the number of returns with EITC to the number of adults age above 15 with low incomes steadily increased from 0.81 in 2007 to 0.87 in 2016, a 7.1% increase in the past decade (Table 2 and Figure 1b). The average credit received by tax returners also showed an overall increasing trend, from $2,388 in 2007 to $2,529 in 2016, a 6% increase during the same period (Table 2 and Figure 1c).

Discussion

Our analysis of anti-poverty policy changes and trends in reach over the period 2007–2017 indicates a pattern of expansion in response to the economic crisis followed by a contraction as the economy improved. TANF, which serves those seen as possible labor force participants typically while not employed, saw upticks in caseload and a very temporary increase in generosity over the ARRA-funded period, but more broadly declined in caseload, inclusion, and generosity over the full observation period. SNAP, which serves families who are low income regardless of employment status, saw considerable policy expansion. SNAP generosity rose sharply and then declined, but increases in caseload and inclusion proved more enduring. The increases in caseload and inclusion reflected ongoing improvements to SNAP delivery as well as no substantial changes in eligibility rules for families with children, though several legislative bills attempted to tighten work requirements. Finally, EITC, which serves low- and moderate-income workers, saw increased caseloads, inclusion, and generosity over the 2007–2017 period. However, the credit's contingency on earnings disqualifies persons who are long-term unemployed, which limited the countercyclical feature of EITC. Post-Recession tax bills made EITC provision permanent, extensions which future legislation may very well continue.

Taken together, these changes illustrate Frances Fox-Piven and Richard Cloward's (1971) classic critical analysis of the role of relief systems vis a vis the economy. In times of economic turmoil, relief to the unemployed provides sustenance and quells potential unrest, "then, as turbulence subsides, the relief system contracts, expelling those who are needed to populate the labor market" (1971, p. 3). Insofar as the Great Recession offered an opportunity for strengthening the social safety net, this opportunity was not realized, but by and large the safety net was not a "crisis casualty" either. Instead, policymakers doubled down on the trend of helping the working poor while paying scant attention to those outside of the labor market. Indeed, the only ARRA provisions made permanent were those to the EITC, which – by definition – supports only those who work in the market. And although SNAP caseloads, both nominally and in terms of inclusion of families in poverty, remain above pre-recession levels, recent changes further expand the earlier pilot efforts to enforce work among SNAP recipients. Specifically the 2018 Farm Bill (Formally the Agriculture

Improvement Act of 2018), requires states to develop their SNAP employment and Training (SNAP E&T) programs and case management services to assist recipients in participating in work activities.

Policy and Practice Implications for Social Workers

What is the role of social workers in the evolution of the welfare state and specifically the anti-poverty safety net? We believe our profession has important roles to play in shaping future policy directions for our welfare state alongside implementing its programs responsibly. The professional code of ethics calls social workers to “advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions to meet basic human needs and promote social justice” (National Association of Social Workers, 2017). This analysis reinforces observations that our safety net serves the market economy, a trend that shows no sign of slowing despite the economic calamities of the Great Recession. Social workers should critically analyze this relationship and work to create systems that support human well-being rather than market growth. As noted in one of the profession’s Grand Challenges, the growth in the economy over the past few decades has yielded extreme economic inequality (Lein, Romich, and Sherraden, 2015).

Specifically, social workers have an important vantage point from which to note that a work-contingent safety net leaves many people out. The well-documented increase in the numbers of Americans without income from either earnings or public assistance and those who live in extreme poverty raises particular cause for concern, as this severe economic deprivation leads to unsafe living conditions for adults and vulnerable children, among other potential hazards (Seefeldt, 2015; Shaefer & Edin, 2013). We should not tolerate a system that creates great wealth for some while not meeting the basic needs of others. Social workers should expose the weaknesses in our economy and demand more inclusive policies.

As means-tested social assistance programs become more conditional on labor market participation, frontline social workers, service providers, or program managers often face a dilemma between meeting performance criteria (e.g., employment rate) and meeting diverse needs of families in poverty in their case and program management practices. Social workers can initiate innovative, client-centered service approaches at the local level, particularly for those with substantial barriers to employment (e.g., mental or physical issues, domestic violence, and homelessness). For example, County Welfare Directors Association of California has lead a reform for CalWORKs (California version of TANF) from a work-first service approach toward a family-tailored service approach that supports unique family needs and goals (Simmons, Hufft, Nicolai, & Navarro, 2017). Evidence from this practice can inform current TANF reauthorization debates on the controversial "universal engagement approach," which instead uses case management to implement strict work requirements and severe sanctions (Schott & Pavetti, 2018). In light of the increasing economic inequality and in preparation for the next economic recession, social workers should advocate for more inclusive and adequate anti-poverty provisions at local, state, and federal levels to improve the lives of economically vulnerable populations.

In addition to enhancing the social safety net to individuals who face barriers to employment, social workers should also promote changes that ensure living wages and improve job quality for low-wage workers. For example, social workers can work with local employers, training providers, and education institutions to design job training programs focusing on job skills and occupations that meet the demands of the local labor markets. Social workers can be involved in efforts that provide adequate supportive services (i.e., subsidized child care, transportation, job retention services, and training for advanced job skills), accessible paid time off, predictable work schedule, and inflation-adjusted minimum wage for working families, so that low-wage workers can have better supports to stabilize their employment, advance their job prospects, and maintain their families.

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Table 1. Indicator description and data sources.

Indicator	Description	Data Source
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)		
Inclusion	the annual number of families receiving TANF divided by the annual estimated number of low-income families with children (pre-tax and transfer family income below 100% federal poverty line)	Administration for Children and Families (ACF), TANF Caseload Data, 2007 – 2017 Integrated Public Use Microdata (IPUM) Series, Current Population Survey: Version 6.0
Generosity	the annual total TANF expenditure on basic assistance divided by the annual number of families receiving TANF	ACF, TANF Financial Data, 2007 – 2017 ACF, TANF Caseload Data, 2007 – 2017
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)		
Inclusion	the annual number of families with children receiving SNAP divided by the annual estimated number of low-income families with children (pre-tax and transfer family income below 130% federal poverty line)	(USDA) Characteristics of SANP households, 2007 – 2017 Integrated Public Use Microdata (IPUM) Series, Current Population Survey: Version 6.0
Generosity	the annual total SNAP benefits divided to the annual average number of SNAP participants	USDA, SNAP Participation and Costs USDA, Characteristics of SANP households, 2007 – 2017
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)		
Inclusion	the annual number of returns with earned income credit divided by the estimated number of low-income individuals age 15+ with earned income (pre-tax and transfer family income below 200% federal poverty line)	Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Individual Income Tax Returns, 2007– 2016 Integrated Public Use Microdata (IPUM) Series, Current Population Survey: Version 6.0
Generosity	the annual total credits received by all returns with earned income credit divided by the annual number of returns with earned income credit	IRS, Individual Income Tax Returns, 2007– 2016

Table 2. Poverty rate, caseload, inclusion, and generosity, 2007–2017

Year	Poverty Rate	TANF			SNAP			EITC		
		Caseload	Inclusion	Generosity	Caseload	Inclusion	Generosity	Caseload	Inclusion	Generosity
2007	12.5	1,753,891	0.26	6236.56	5,896,110	0.66	3152.66	24,970,376	0.81	2388.28
2008	13.2	1,692,893	0.25	5875.34	6,306,784	0.71	3193.17	25,007,059	0.83	2372.75
2009	14.3	1,795,775	0.25	5970.70	7,475,519	0.78	3865.82	27,388,200	0.83	2537.26
2010	15.1	1,910,680	0.23	6271.61	8,945,703	0.85	3945.04	27,776,521	0.83	2456.88
2011	15.0	1,921,243	0.22	5498.83	9,798,213	0.91	3797.15	28,314,220	0.84	2502.36
2012	15.0	1,876,426	0.23	5121.96	9,986,838	0.94	3621.64	28,185,550	0.83	2483.09
2013	14.8	1,751,067	0.21	5239.56	10,215,296	0.97	3502.75	29,125,095	0.84	2503.66
2014	14.8	1,652,996	0.21	5312.27	9,786,020	0.95	3243.43	28,881,720	0.85	2511.29
2015	13.5	1,634,061	0.21	4872.36	9,519,111	0.94	3249.04	28,372,696	0.86	2557.83
2016	12.7	1,523,824	0.21	4990.09	9,228,219	0.97	3186.07	27,659,275	0.87	2529.02
2017	12.3	1,403,945	0.22	5028.44	8,588,949	0.99	3087.89	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

Appendix Table. Sources for Policy Change Analysis

	General policy and budget information	TANF	SNAP	EITC
Government Agencies and Offices				
Congressional Budget Office	X	X		
Department of Agriculture			X	
Department of Health and Human Services	X	X		
Government Accountability Office		X		X
Internal Revenue Service	X			X
Office of Management and Budget	X		X	
Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board	X			
Research and Policy Organizations				
Brookings Institution	X			X
Center for Budget & Policy Priorities	X	X	X	X
Center for Law and Social Policy		X		
Mathematica Policy Research		X		
National Council of State Legislatures		X		X
Tax Policy Center	X			X
Urban Institute	X	X		X

Note: The authors conducted searches on the websites of these agencies and organizations. Some sources were used for general policy and budget information (including information about the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009), whereas others were used only for one of the three policies. Some sources provided background information only;

the article bibliography contains specific works cited

Figure 1. Percentage changes in caseload, inclusion, and generosity.