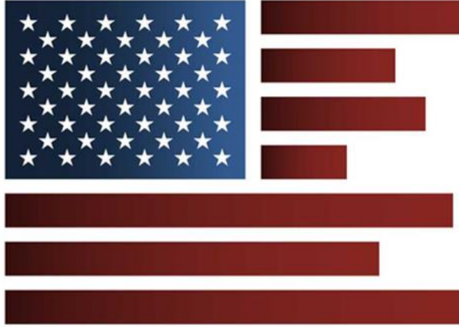


STATE of the UNION

A stylized graphic of the American flag. It features a blue canton with white stars on the left and horizontal stripes on the right. The stripes are dark red, with the top three stripes being shorter than the bottom three, creating a stepped effect.

SAFETY NET

Linda Burton
Duke University

Gender and America's Safety Net Reach

**Linda Burton, Marybeth Mattingly,
Juan Pedroza, and Whitney Welsh**

TWO QUESTIONS

- Four key social insurance programs of disadvantaged Americans (safety net): public health insurance, the Earned Tax Credit (ETC); food stamps, and cash assistance.
- What does population-based data tell us about gender and the safety? How wide is the divide and what does it mean?
- The devil is in the details—the kin quagmire and “caretaker families”

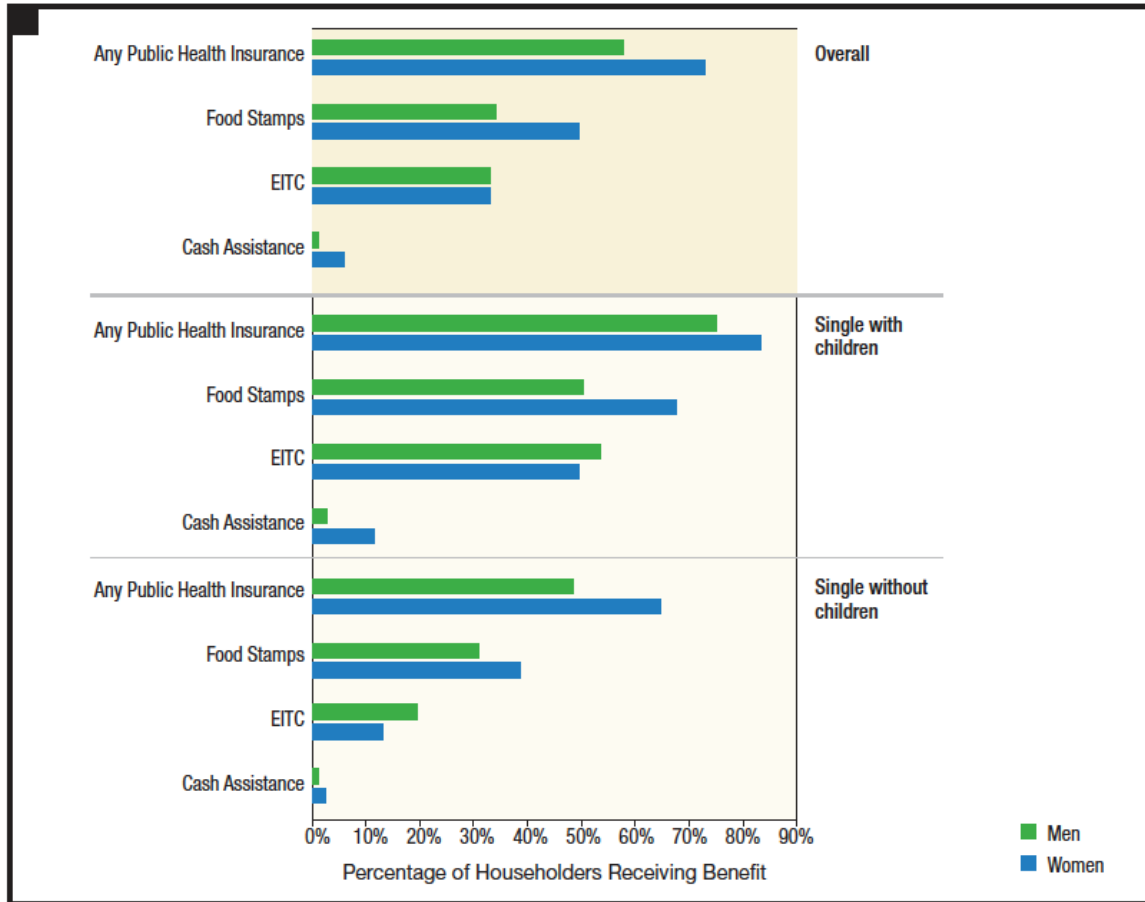
What We Might Expect

- We might expect safety net use to be greater among women for several reasons:
 - Poor women's incomes are often further below the poverty threshold than men's.
 - More so than men, poor women are often single parents.
 - Poor women's social networks may facilitate safety net access.

APPROACH

- Head of Household Reports of Safety Net Use in the 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey
- Receipt refers to 2016 calendar year
- EITC, SNAP, TANF receipt and dollar amount
- Receipt of Public Health Insurance
- Universe restricted to heads of household living below the official poverty threshold

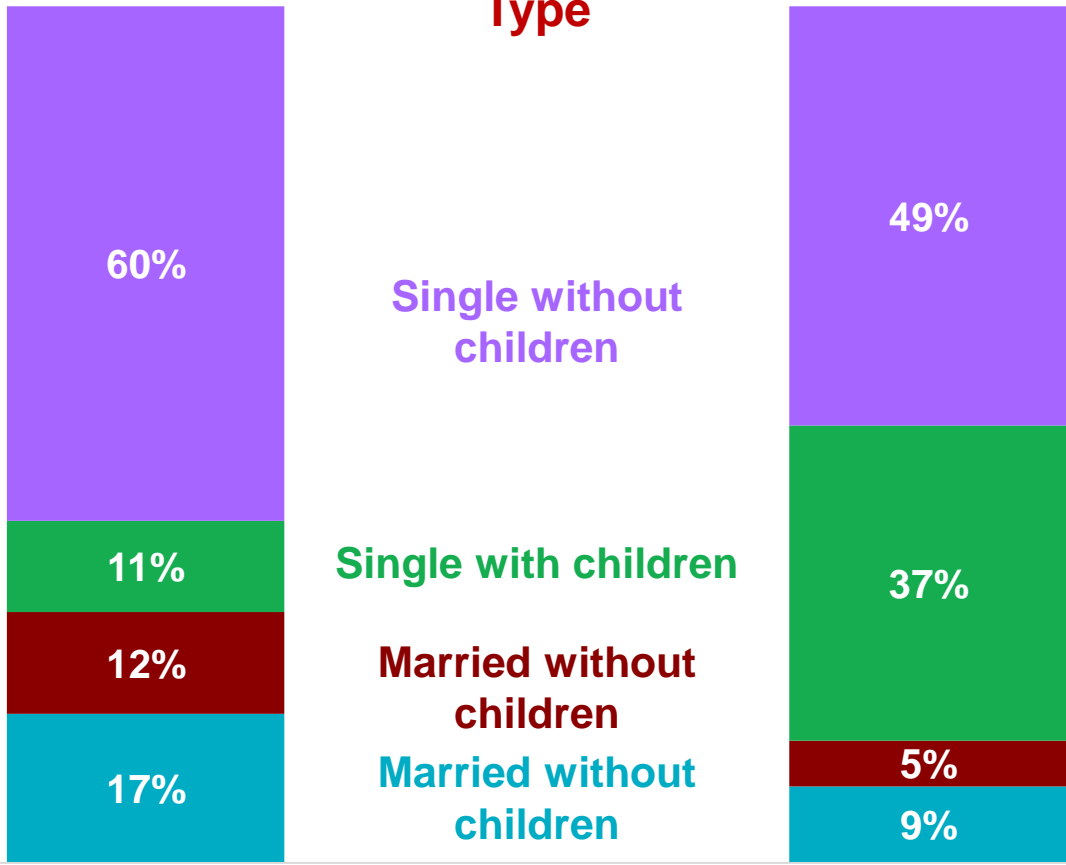
Percentage Receiving Safety Net Benefits in 2016, by Program & Family Type



Median Amount Received in 2016, by Program & Family Type

	Program	Men	Women
Overall	Food Stamps	\$2,160	\$2,400
	EITC	\$2,400	\$3,150
	Cash Assistance	\$2,160	\$2,439
Single with Children	Food Stamps	\$3,180	\$3,912
	EITC	\$3,359	\$3,359
	Cash Assistance	\$2,832	\$2,527
Single without Children	Food Stamps	\$1,584	\$1,632
	EITC	\$338	\$338
	Cash Assistance	\$1,326	\$2,244

Men and Women Below Official Poverty Line in 2016, by Family Type



Male

Female

What else do we know?

- Ethnographic research suggests men may have more difficulty accessing the safety net:
 - They do not have the same networks to connect them
 - Men's safety net use is often more stigmatized
 - Men sometimes forego benefits so as not to reduce the mother's safety net receipt
 - Incarceration factor
 - Stretched too thin - - kin quagmire and caretaker families

Key Take Aways

- Because women have primary responsibility for the care of children, women use social safety net programs more often than men.
- Gender differences in safety net use cannot be fully explained by gender differences in family type. The obstacles to engaging with the safety net are often greater for single fathers than single mothers, and single mothers are more likely to receive cash and food assistance.
- Although some of these gender differences are rooted in differences in eligibility and could thus be straightforwardly addressed, others rest on gender norms and other cultural differences that especially stigmatize safety net use among men.
- Keeping it relative: Context will have it's say!