

Low-income single moms show greater earnings mobility than men, people with disabilities, others

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Credit: Georgia State University

Single mothers in Georgia who participate in the federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) experience greater

income mobility than males, whites and people with disabilities according to a study by Georgia State University economists.

Most single mothers on SNAP who start with no income experience substantial earnings mobility in subsequent years, according to the researchers.

"A common misperception is that many single black mothers on SNAP are trapped in poverty. However, we find that they, along with other single mothers, have greater earnings mobility than other SNAP beneficiary populations, including whites and single males," said co-author Mark Rider, an associate professor of economics. "Not surprisingly, people with disabilities experience the least earnings mobility among SNAP beneficiaries."

"There appear to be two different experiences among SNAP beneficiaries in Georgia," said co-author and Professor Sally Wallace, associate dean in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. "Eighty to 90 percent of those on SNAP earning nothing in 2000 appear to earn nothing over significant periods of time. In contrast, those who were earning even small levels of income in 2000 while on SNAP were found to enjoy considerable earnings mobility six and 13 years later."

The study, recently published in the Journal of Economics and Public Finance, is the first to explore the income mobility of SNAP participants using population-based data in Georgia. Professors David Sjoquist, Wallace and Rider, faculty in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, and Fiscal Research Center research associate Brett Mullins, matched administrative records for SNAP beneficiaries in Georgia with the state's records on employment and wages to track these changes. Their research covered the years 2000 to 2013.

These and additional findings in the study have implications for policies

whose aim is to improve the income mobility of low-income individuals:

- A substantial percentage of SNAP recipients appeared to be stuck or trapped with no earnings in the initial and final years of their observation period.
- The concentration of males, whites and people with disabilities with zero earnings at the beginning and end of the study remained higher than the overall SNAP sample.
- Even those [single mothers](#) with no earnings in 2000 had a much greater probability of escaping the zero earnings trap than the general population of SNAP recipients—nearly 30 percent greater.

"Our paper has identified low-income populations that deserve further study, but this is just the first step," said Wallace. "We expect future research will seek to identify the causal relationships between earnings mobility and social programs."

More information: Long-Run Earnings Mobility among Low-Income Individuals. [www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php ... epf/article/view/557](http://www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php...epf/article/view/557)

Provided by Georgia State University

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