Basic Facts About Child Support

June 2007

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More than 17 million children and their families received $24 billion in child support in 2006 through the help of the Child Support Enforcement Program. This federal-state partnership has been increasingly effective at collecting child support, now collecting $4.58 for every dollar spent. But the success of this program is in jeopardy.

Starting in October 2007, a federal funding cut will reduce state enforcement efforts by $6.7 billion over 10 years, which will deprive children of at least $11 billion in the support they are owed over the same decade.

Hurting millions of low-income children by cutting a program of proven effectiveness makes no sense.

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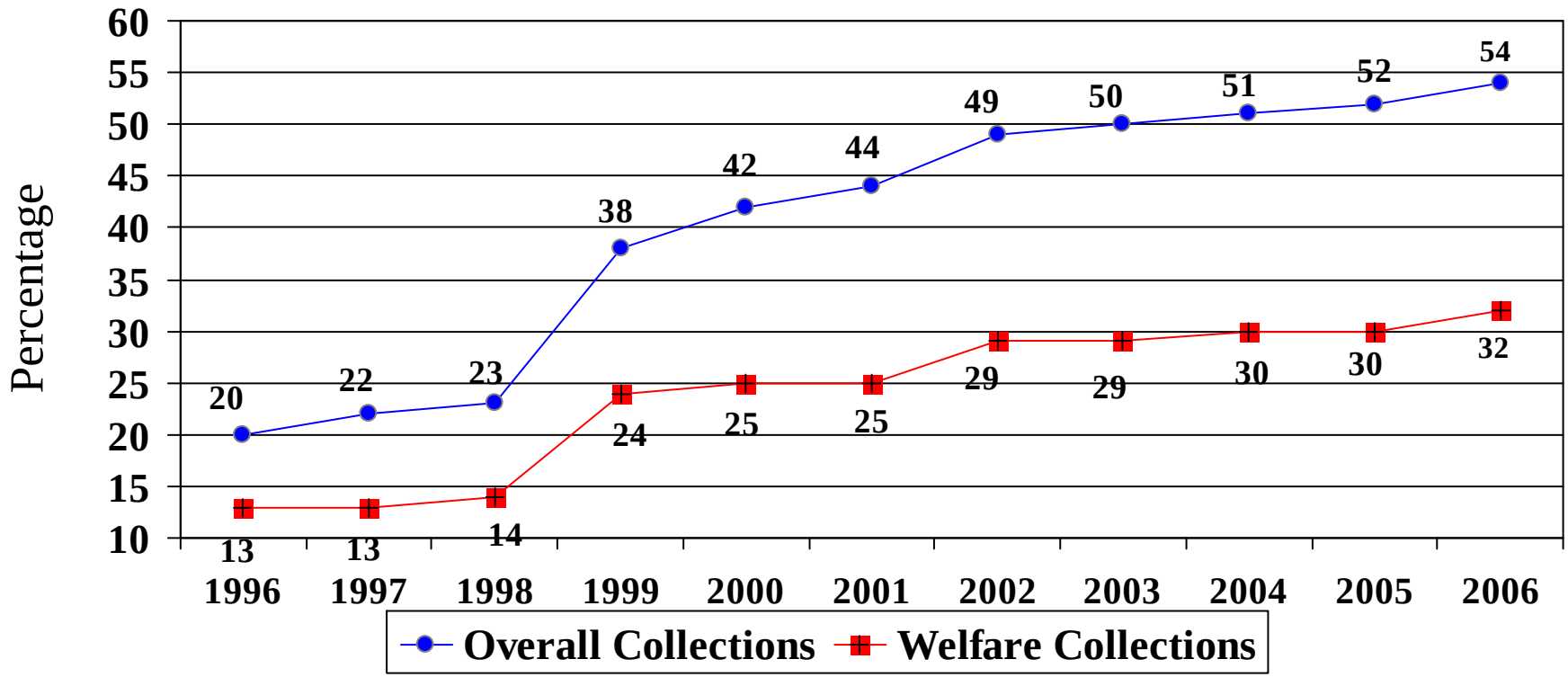
Because of federal and state investments, child support collection rates have more than doubled over the past decade.



Source: OCSE Annual Reports to Congress and 2005 and 2006 Preliminary Data Reports

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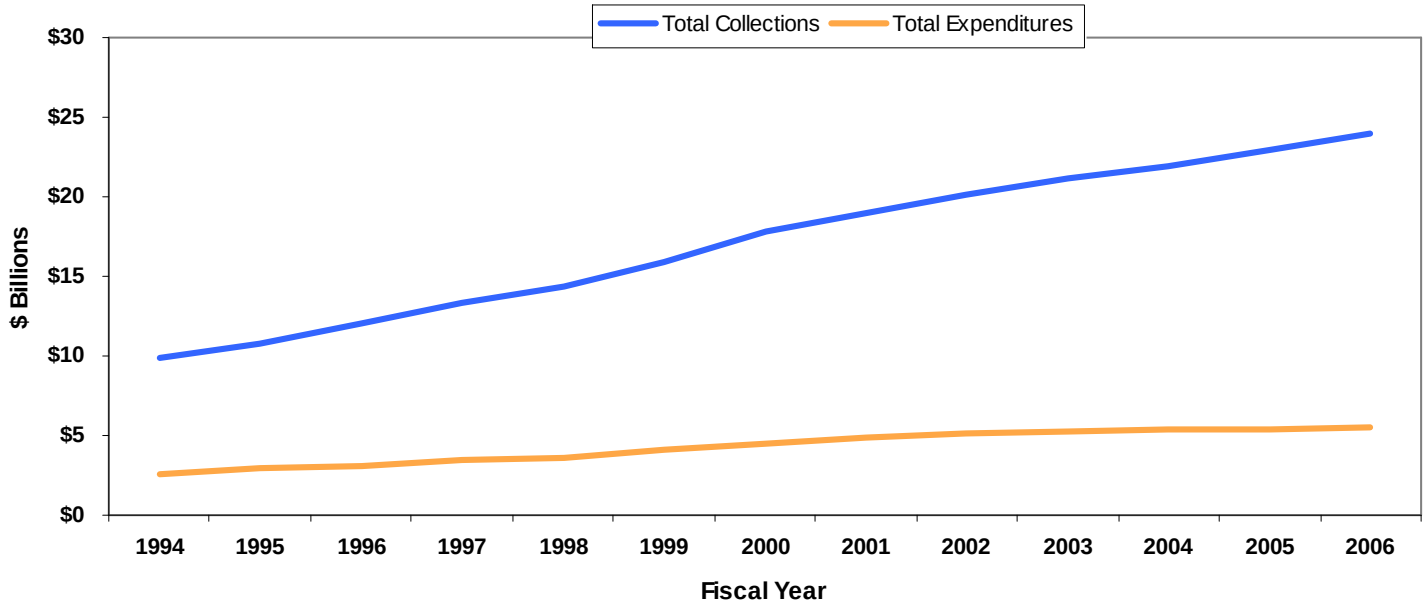
Total child support collections are growing much faster than expenditures.



Source: U.S. Office of Child Support Enforcement

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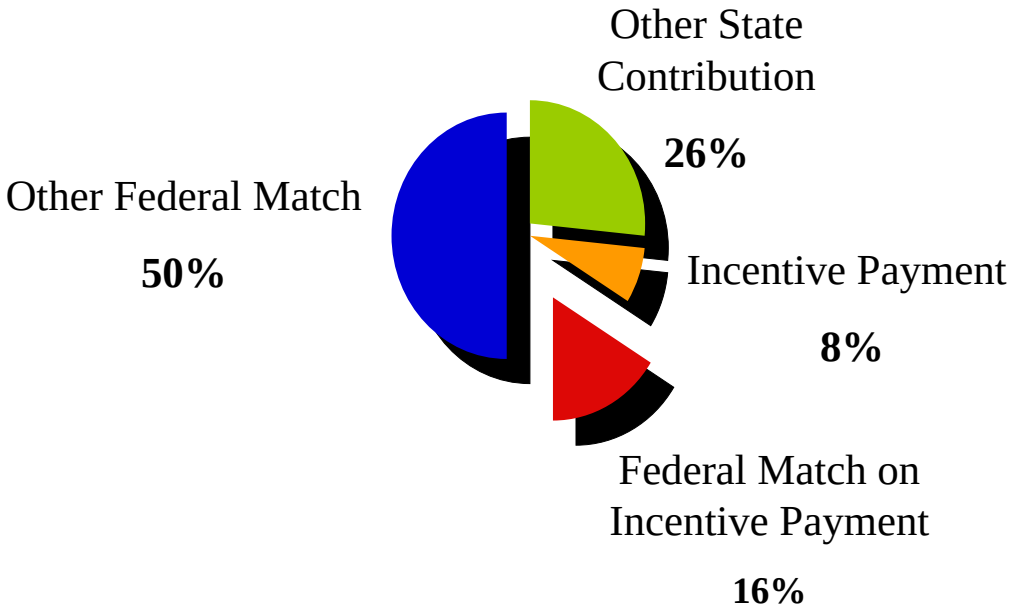
Breakdown of federal v. state contribution:

Losing the federal match on incentive payments will cost states $937 million in FY 2008 that they would otherwise invest in improved collections; over 10 years they will lose almost $7 billion.



Source: CLASP

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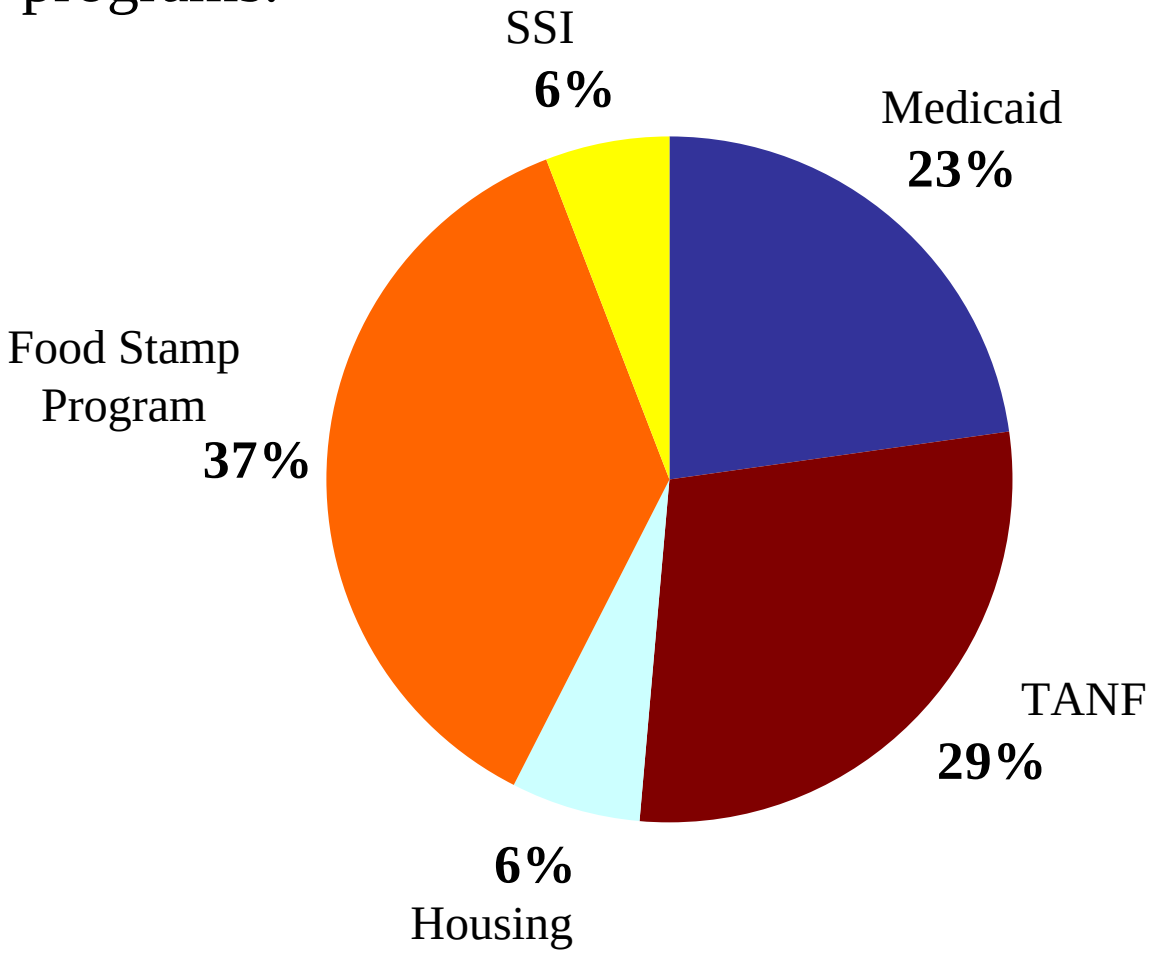
The child support program pays for itself. In 1999, taxpayers spent $4 billion to collect $18 billion, and saved $5 billion in other programs.



Percentages show the share of the $5b savings from each program.

Source: Urban Institute (2003)

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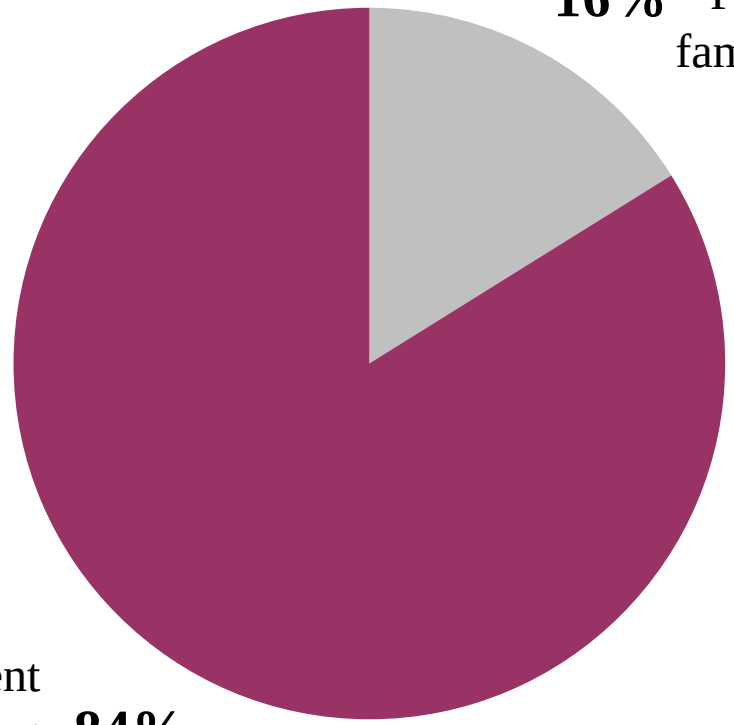
Most poor children growing up in single parent families receive support enforcement services from state and county child support programs funded under title IV-D – 17 million children and their parents.



Source: HHS (2003)

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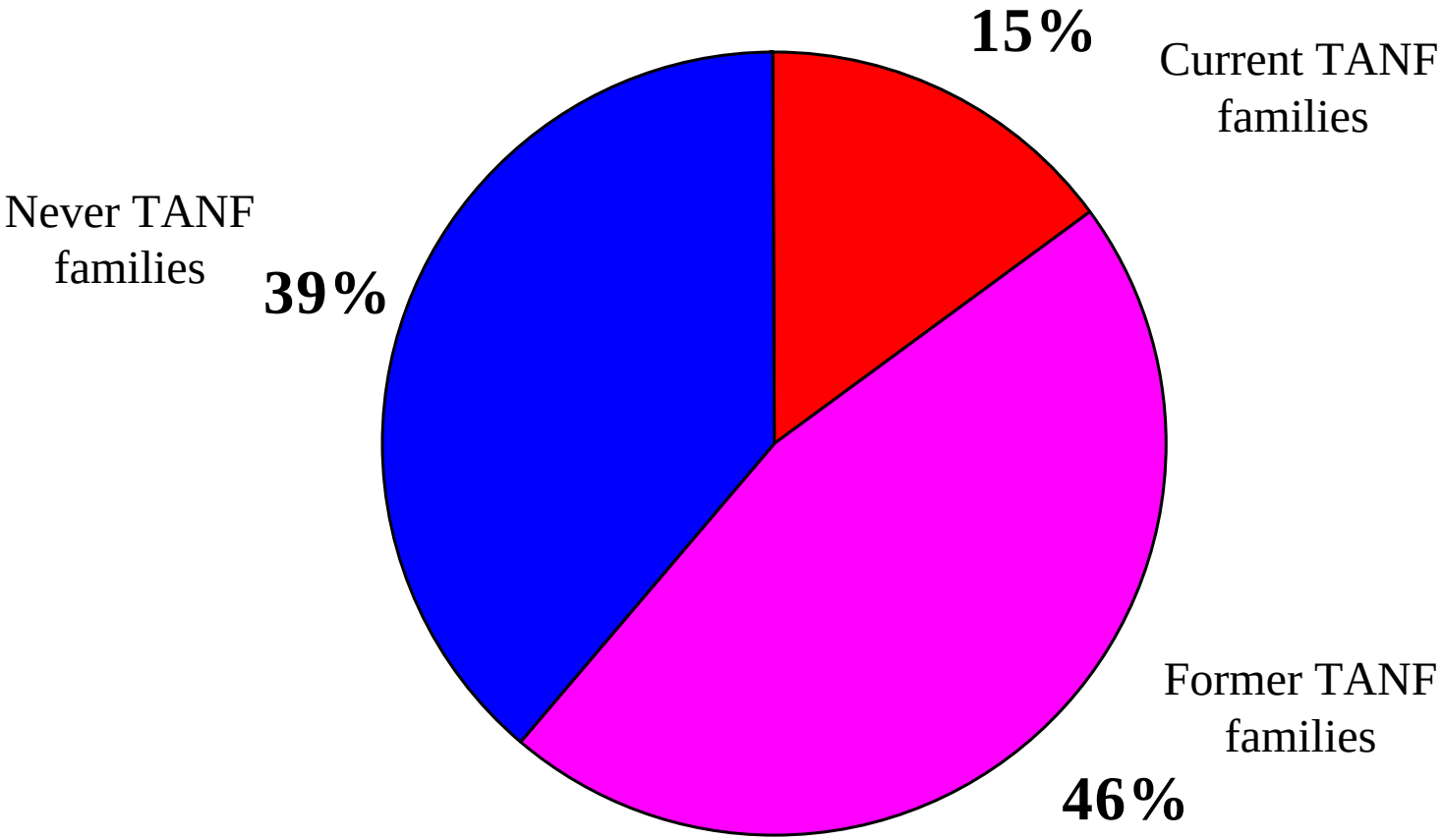
Families in the Child Support Caseload



Source: OCSE 2006 Preliminary Data Report

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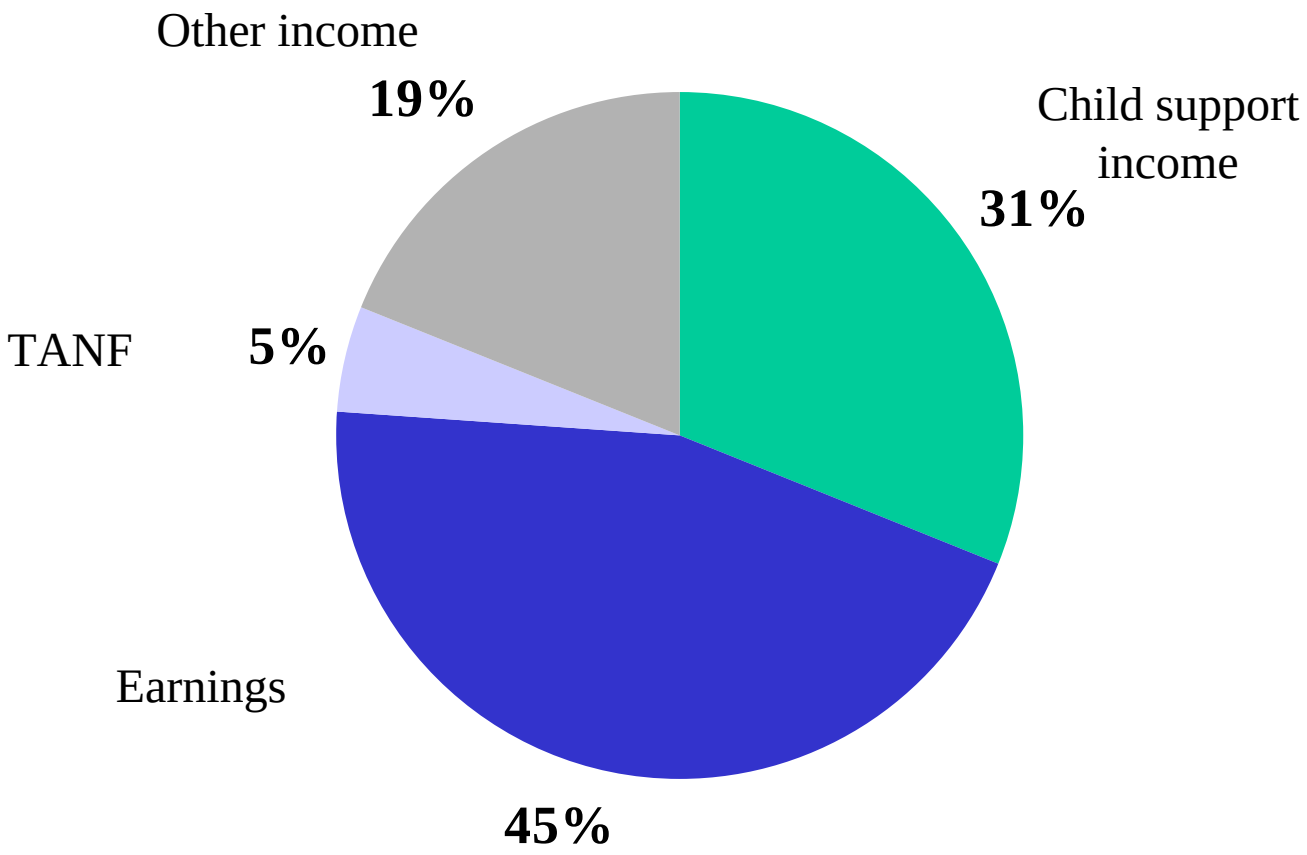
Child support is 31% of family income of poor single mother families when received – the second largest source after earnings.



Source: Urban Institute analysis of the March 2006 Current Population Survey

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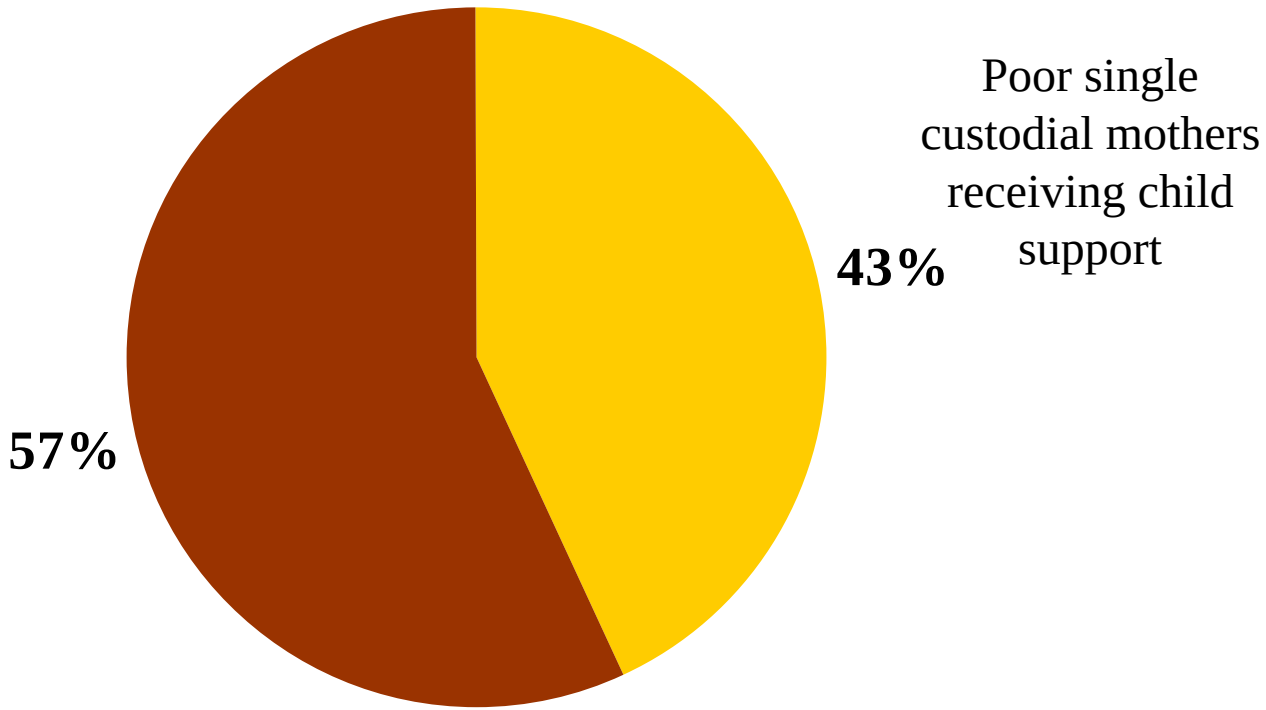
43 percent of poor single custodial mothers receive child support.



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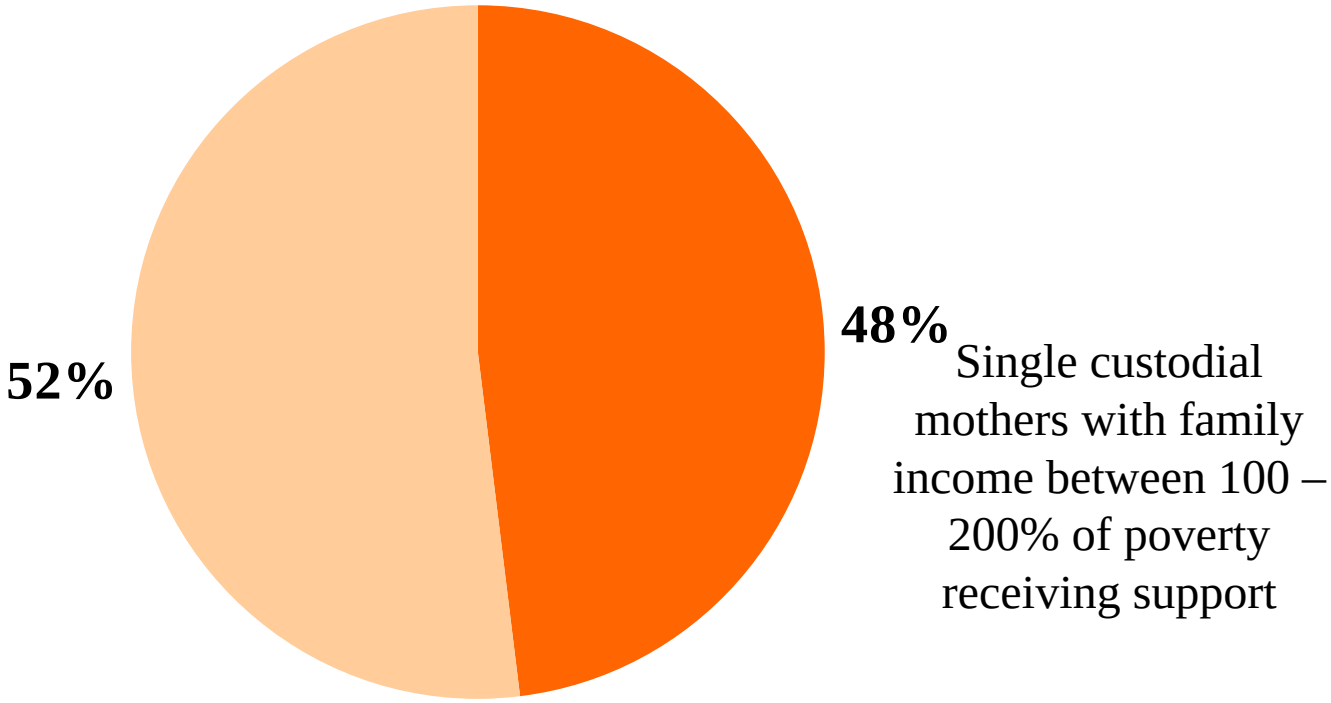
Source: Urban Institute analysis of the 2004 Current Population Survey-Child Support Supplement

Nearly half of near poor single custodial mothers receive child support.



Source: Urban Institute analysis of the 2004 Current Population Survey-Child Support Supplement

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