

CHAPTER II
ELIGIBILITY OF LEGAL IMMIGRANTS
FOR WELFARE PROGRAMS

The federal government supports many welfare programs, but this paper focuses on the four--the Food Stamp program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Supplemental Security Income, and Medicaid--that accounted for about 85 percent of total federal spending for means-tested entitlement programs in 1994.¹ (A means-tested entitlement program pays benefits only to otherwise eligible people whose income and other financial resources fall below specific thresholds.) Because those programs contain many complex provisions, the sections that follow briefly explain each program before addressing the eligibility of noncitizens for benefits.

In general, most legal immigrants are eligible for all welfare programs that are available to citizens, although sponsored immigrants must meet a more restrictive means test involving the means of their sponsor as well. Other noncitizens classified as people residing under color of law are eligible only for certain programs. Illegal aliens, however, are generally not eligible for most welfare programs. Only in special cases, such as emergency medical assistance, are illegal aliens allowed to receive benefits.

FOOD STAMPS

The Food Stamp program provides households with coupons to purchase food, basing assistance on the household's income and the number of eligible recipients it has. Administered by the Department of Agriculture, the program is the largest of all federal food subsidies. Each month, eligible households receive coupons that they can exchange at most retail stores for all food items except alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and food that is hot and ready to eat.²

All legal immigrants--except nearly all of those who are classified as PRUCOL but are not parolees or refugees--are eligible for food stamps. Illegal aliens are not eligible for that assistance. However, any child born to a

1. Congressional Budget Office, *The Economic and Budget Outlook: Fiscal Years 1996-2000* (January 1995), Table 2-7.

2. For a detailed description of this program and all other entitlement programs discussed here, see House Committee on Ways and Means, *1994 Greenbook: Background Material and Data on Programs Within the Jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means*, Publication No. 103-27 (July 1994).

noncitizen residing in the United States is a citizen and thus eligible for food stamps, even if the child's parent is an illegal alien.³ The value of the food stamps issued to a household is based on the number of eligible recipients in it, not its size.

Formerly illegal aliens who were granted legal status under the Immigration Reform and Control Act may not participate in the Food Stamp program for five years. They are similarly prohibited from participating in other welfare programs.

Before receiving food stamps, immigrants who needed affidavits of support from a sponsor to enter the country face one more eligibility restriction known as deeming. Under that requirement, the means test for sponsored immigrants who apply for food stamps must include not only their own income and resources but part of their sponsor's as well. The deeming period lasts for three years from the time of an immigrant's entry into the country, even if the sponsor provides no resources to the immigrant.

AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is a joint federal/state program that provides means-tested cash benefits primarily to families with an absent parent. Two-parent families who are in need of aid because of an unemployed or disabled principal wage earner may also receive AFDC. Families qualifying for AFDC are eligible for Medicaid as well. States administer their AFDC programs, including setting benefit levels, subject to federal laws and regulations. The federal government funds half of each state's administrative costs and, on average, 55 percent of all benefits.

Legal permanent residents and noncitizens classified as PRUCOL are eligible for AFDC. (Among the latter are some people with PRUCOL status who are not eligible for food stamps.) Again, although illegal aliens are not eligible for AFDC, children born to them while they are residing in the United States are eligible. As with food stamps, the level of AFDC that a family receives is based on the number of eligible recipients in the family. For example, if a mother entered the country illegally with one child and had two children born in the United States, her family's payment would be based on a family size of two.

3. Children born in the United States to illegal aliens are potentially eligible for all programs because of their citizenship. A number of proposals have been made in recent years to alter the conditions under which children of noncitizens would be granted citizenship. See M.M. Lee, *U.S. Citizenship of Persons Born in the United States to Alien Parents*, CRS Publication 94-664 A (Congressional Research Service, August 1994).

Deeming procedures for AFDC are similar to those for the Food Stamp program. Sponsors' income and resources are subject to deeming for three years from the time of the immigrant's entry into the United States.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is a federally administered, means-tested program that provides cash benefits to aged, blind, or disabled people who are economically disadvantaged. In most states, people qualifying for SSI automatically qualify for Medicaid as well. A sizable number of states also give SSI recipients a supplemental payment in addition to the federal benefit. In many cases, the state supplement is administered by the federal government at the state's discretion.

Legal immigrants are eligible for SSI under the same rules as those for AFDC. Also like AFDC, the SSI program requires a deeming period, but if the disability that qualifies the immigrant for SSI benefits began after the date of immigration, deeming does not apply. The Congress temporarily increased the deeming period for SSI from three years to five years with passage of the Unemployment Compensation Amendments of 1993. That extension expires on October 1, 1996.

MEDICAID

Medicaid is a state-administered program that operates under federal guidelines to provide medical care to certain low-income populations. The program is jointly funded by the federal and state governments, with the federal rate of financial participation ranging from 50 percent to 80 percent. The states have considerable discretion in establishing criteria for program eligibility based on income and resources; in determining the amount, duration, and scope of covered services; and in determining methods of reimbursing providers.

Eligibility for Medicaid is tied to categorical eligibility for welfare. In other words, qualifying for welfare programs that are targeted toward particular groups generally also qualifies a welfare recipient for Medicaid. Therefore, the primary groups that the program serves are people receiving AFDC and SSI. Medicaid recipients who also receive benefits from those other welfare programs are referred to as cash recipients. States may opt to provide Medicaid coverage to "noncash" populations that include the medically needy. However, federal law requires states to provide coverage for certain pregnant women and children.

Legal immigrants are eligible for Medicaid under the same rules that apply to AFDC and SSI. All noncitizens, including illegal aliens, are eligible for emergency medical assistance. That assistance includes payments for the cost of childbirth.

Medicaid has no deeming period for sponsored immigrants per se, but a similar procedure applies to all Medicaid recipients. Spouses' or parents' income and resources for recipients under age 21--but not the income and resources of any other sponsors--are used in calculating the eligibility of potential recipients.

OTHER WELFARE PROGRAMS

All of the proposals that have been put forth to change the eligibility of noncitizens for welfare benefits address the Food Stamp program, AFDC, SSI, and Medicaid. But more than 50 other welfare programs are mentioned as well in one or more of the proposals dealing with federal welfare payments to noncitizens. Some of those programs are targeted toward children; they include the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, child welfare services, foster care and adoption assistance, the school lunch program, and the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Other programs provide a wide variety of services, such as low-income rental, energy, and legal assistance.

Uncertainty arises at times about which welfare programs immigrants are eligible for. In some cases--for example, WIC and the school lunch program--even illegal aliens receive benefits. Estimating utilization rates--and thus expenditures--for legal immigrants or illegal aliens is quite difficult. However, the amount of money spent on benefits for immigrants in these programs is much less than for the four major programs discussed earlier.

Legal immigrants and illegal aliens are also eligible to attend public schools and may be placed in a penal institution. Funding for those purposes, however, is provided primarily by states and localities.

CHAPTER III
PARTICIPATION OF LEGAL IMMIGRANTS
IN WELFARE PROGRAMS

The rates of participation of legal immigrants with different characteristics vary among the four major welfare programs. Furthermore, participation rates may differ within the same program depending on whether recipients are counted as individuals, families, or households.¹ Overall, the rate of participation of legal immigrants in the Food Stamp program and Aid to Families with Dependent Children is about the same as their representation in the general population. Legal immigrants are overrepresented, however, among recipients of Supplemental Security Income, constituting at least 10 percent of all recipients.

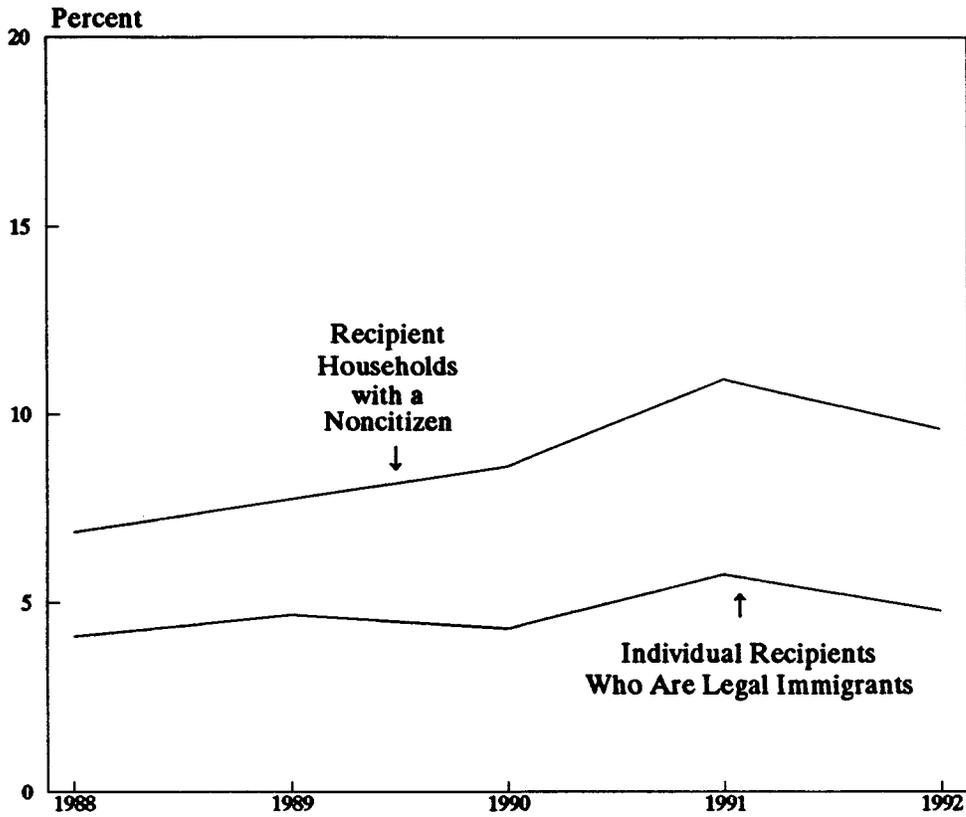
The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that, under current law, the federal government would pay benefits to legal immigrants in 1996 in the following amounts: \$1.6 billion for the Food Stamp program, \$1.3 billion for AFDC, and \$2.4 billion for SSI. Many legal immigrants receive assistance from more than one program.

FOOD STAMPS

Legal immigrants are represented among those individuals living in households that receive food stamps in about the same proportion as their share of the general population. In 1992, 4.8 percent of food stamp recipients were legal immigrants; between 4 percent and 5 percent of the people permanently living in the United States were estimated to be noncitizens. The percentage of food stamp recipients in 1992 who were not citizens was up from 4.1 percent in 1988 but down from a high of 5.7 percent in 1991 (see Figure 3). An average of over 1.2 million recipients each month in 1992 were not citizens. The Department of Agriculture collects information on the immigration status of noncitizen recipients, and its data show that in 1992, about three-fourths of those recipients were legal permanent residents; the rest were refugees (see Table 2).

1. The distinction between what share of individual recipients and what share of cases are legal immigrants (cases being households for the Food Stamp program and families for the AFDC program) is important in estimating savings. Eliminating the eligibility of legal immigrants for welfare programs will save more if it decreases the number of cases that consist only of legal immigrants, rather than reducing the size of existing cases that consist of both immigrants and citizens.

FIGURE 3.
PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS WHO HAVE AT LEAST ONE NONCITIZEN, AND PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUAL RECIPIENTS WHO ARE LEGAL IMMIGRANTS, 1988-1992



SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office using data from the Food Stamp program.

**TABLE 2. AVERAGE NUMBER OF MONTHLY FOOD STAMP RECIPIENTS,
BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS AND HOUSEHOLD TYPE,
JULY AND AUGUST 1992 (In millions)**

Household Type	Citizen	Legal Permanent Resident	Refugee	All Recipients
All Households	24.6	0.9	0.3	25.9
All-citizen	23.4	0	0	23.4
Mixed	1.3	0.5	0.1	1.8
All-noncitizen	0	0.4	0.2	0.7
Percentage of All Recipients	95	4	1	100

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office using monthly averages from the Food Stamp program for July and August 1992.

However, mixed households--those with at least one noncitizen--constitute a significantly higher percentage of all households receiving food stamps than the share of individual recipients accounted for by noncitizens. In 1992, about 9.6 percent (or about 1 million in all) of the roughly 10.3 million households receiving food stamps each month had at least one member who was not a citizen. In 1988, there were only about 500,000 such households, or about 6.9 percent of the total. However, as Figure 3 shows, the 1992 figures are lower than those for 1991.

There are some major differences in the characteristics of recipient households with and without noncitizens (see Table 3). During the 1988-1992 period, households composed totally of noncitizens received food stamps for a slightly longer average length of time compared with mixed households or households with all citizens.² In terms of size, mixed households were larger than households composed only of citizens, although that characteristic might be the result of poorer immigrants moving in with relatives. The average size of recipient households with all noncitizens was actually smaller than households with all citizens.

The percentage of legal immigrants who receive food stamps may be rising because of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Before the act was passed, the fear of being discovered most likely deterred some illegal aliens from applying for food stamps to which their children were entitled. After starting the legalization process under IRCA beginning in May 1987, illegal aliens could apply for benefits for their children with no fear of deportation. Five years after legalization, the parents themselves would have become eligible for food stamps, but that outcome in most cases would fall largely outside the 1988-1992 period covered by the table.

IRCA cannot explain the whole increase in reciprocity rates, however. If it could, one would expect to see the number of mixed households rising but not the number of households composed totally of noncitizens, because IRCA prohibited aliens who had been legalized from receiving benefits for five years. However, the phenomenon of legalized aliens obtaining benefits for their children who are citizens may help to explain the growth in the gap between the percentage of individual recipients who are noncitizens and the percentage of households with at least one noncitizen. (The reason is that legalized aliens do not contribute to the number of individual recipients before 1993--only their children who are citizens do.) In addition, because of IRCA's five-year restriction on the eligibility of legalized aliens for participation in the Food

2. All members of a household and not just those who are food stamp recipients are included in determining whether a household is "all-citizen," "mixed," or "all-noncitizen."

TABLE 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF CITIZEN AND IMMIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS, 1988-1992

Household Type	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
All-Citizen					
Number (Thousands)	6,400	6,500	7,100	8,000	9,100
Average monthly benefit (Dollars)	128	130	149	162	170
Average years receiving benefits	a	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.9
Average number of household members	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.6
Mixed					
Number (Thousands)	310	310	460	640	610
Average monthly benefit (Dollars)	162	164	178	195	185
Average years receiving benefits	a	1.6	2.0	1.7	1.6
Average number of household members	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.3	3.0
All-Noncitizen					
Number (Thousands)	150	240	210	340	350
Average monthly benefit (Dollars)	81	85	95	122	131
Average years receiving benefits	a	2.1	2.3	2.4	1.7
Average number of household members	1.9	1.9	1.7	2.0	1.9
Unknown					
Number (Thousands)	200	170	210	230	220
Average monthly benefit (Dollars)	93	98	117	119	131
Average years receiving benefits	a	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.9
Average number of household members	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.0	1.9

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on monthly averages for the Food Stamp program in July and August of each year.

NOTE: All members of a household and not just those who are recipients are included in determining whether a household is "all-citizen," "mixed," or "all-noncitizen."

a. Not available.

Stamp program, the growth in the number of noncitizen recipients cannot be attributed to IRCA.

AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN

The participation rate of legal immigrants in AFDC is similar to their rate of participation in the Food Stamp program. In 1992, 4.7 percent of recipients of AFDC were legal immigrants--about 620,000 people (see Table 4). Again, that figure is approximately the same as the percentage of the U.S. population who are legal immigrants. However, the percentage of AFDC recipients who are not citizens has been increasing since 1984 (see Figure 4).

The growth in the number of families receiving AFDC who have at least one member who is not a citizen has been more substantial. In 1992, over 500,000 families from the total AFDC caseload--roughly 11 percent--included a noncitizen (see Table 5).³ In 1984, there were only 240,000 families with a noncitizen, or about 6.5 percent of the caseload. Most of the increase in families with noncitizens receiving AFDC benefits, however, has occurred since 1989 (see Figure 4). In that year there were almost 290,000 families, constituting 7.6 percent of the caseload.

In four-fifths of the families with noncitizens receiving AFDC payments in 1992, the noncitizens were legal permanent residents or refugees. The other one-fifth comprised about 100,000 families with illegal aliens and their children who were citizens. Families with noncitizens receiving AFDC when the data were collected in 1992 had been receiving AFDC for a shorter period than families composed only of citizens--an average of 2.6 years compared with 3.1 years, respectively.

Families with noncitizens, however, received larger AFDC payments--\$504 a month, on average, which is about 41 percent higher than the average for families without noncitizens. The larger average AFDC payments came about primarily because noncitizens lived mainly in states with higher-than-average benefits (for example, New York and California).

The growing gap between the percentage of individual recipients who are noncitizens and the percentage of cases with at least one noncitizen is more apparent in the AFDC program than in the Food Stamp program. A possible explanation for that larger disparity is that the children of legalizing aliens have

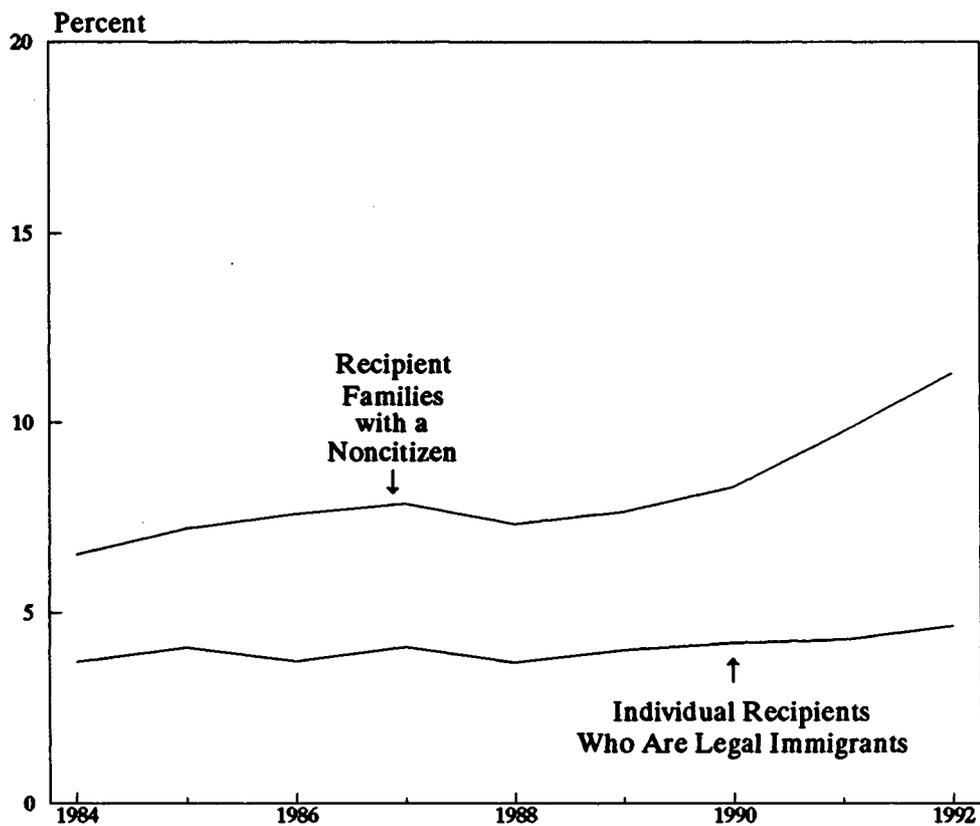
3. As is true of the Food Stamp program, all members of a family and not just those who are AFDC recipients are included in determining whether a family is "all-citizen," "mixed," or "all-noncitizen."

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS OF AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN, BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS AND FAMILY TYPE, 1992 (In millions)

Family Type	Citizen	Legal Permanent Resident	Refugee	All Recipients
All Families	12.9	0.4	0.2	13.5
All-citizen	12.0	0	0	12.0
Mixed	0.9	0.3	0.1	1.3
All-noncitizen	0	0.1	0.1	0.2
Percentage of All Recipients	95	3	1	100

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on data from the AFDC program.

FIGURE 4.
PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES RECEIVING AFDC WHO
HAVE AT LEAST ONE NONCITIZEN, AND PERCENTAGE OF
INDIVIDUAL RECIPIENTS WHO ARE LEGAL IMMIGRANTS,
1984–1992



SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office using data from the AFDC program.

NOTE: AFDC = Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

TABLE 5. CHARACTERISTICS OF CITIZEN AND IMMIGRANT FAMILIES RECEIVING AFDC, 1992

Family Type	1992
All-Citizen	
Number (Thousands)	4,230
Average monthly benefit (Dollars)	358
Average years	3.11
Average number in family	2.87
Mixed	
Number (Thousands)	450
Average monthly benefit (Dollars)	500
Average years	2.62
Average number in family	2.93
All-Noncitizen	
Number (Thousands)	90
Average monthly benefit (Dollars)	523
Average years	2.32
Average number in family	3.06
Unknown	
Number (Thousands)	20
Average monthly benefit (Dollars)	345
Average years	2.32
Average number in family	2.67

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on data from the AFDC program.

NOTES: All members of a family and not just those who are recipients are included in determining whether a family is "all-citizen," "mixed," or "all-noncitizen."

AFDC = Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

a higher rate of receipt of AFDC than of food stamps compared with the general population.

For the reasons given earlier, the increase in and the widening gap between the two measures of AFDC reciprocity by noncitizens arise in part from the effects of IRCA. The influence of IRCA might also be seen in the slight dip in 1988 in the percentage of families with at least one noncitizen. Illegal aliens who under IRCA could apply for legalization between May 1987 and April 1988 increased their chances for a successful application by not being on AFDC. That circumstance may have led to a decrease in AFDC families before the number started rising.⁴

Roughly one-half of the rise in the percentage of families with noncitizens receiving AFDC can be attributed to IRCA. CBO obtained that estimate by projecting to 1992 the pre-IRCA trend in the growth of the percentage of families with noncitizens receiving AFDC. If the pre-IRCA trend had continued, that percentage would have been 10.1 percent, compared with an actual percentage of 11.3 percent. Therefore, roughly 1.2 percentage points of the 3.5 percentage-point increase between 1987 and 1992 in the share of families with a noncitizen might be attributed to the effects of IRCA.

The provision of IRCA prohibiting legalized aliens from receiving AFDC for five years after legalization could have influenced the trend starting in mid-1992 in the receipt of welfare by noncitizens. In the near future, as legalized aliens come onto the welfare rolls, the percentage of individual recipients who are noncitizens is projected to grow. Indeed, the recent increase in the percentage of AFDC recipients who are noncitizens from 4.7 percent in 1992 to 5.1 percent in 1993 was in large part caused by aliens being given legal status under IRCA. (In 1993, more than 30,000 permanent residents who had gained legal status under IRCA were receiving benefits compared with less than 5,000 in 1992.)

Yet despite their increasing numbers, legalized aliens coming onto the AFDC rolls will have a more limited effect on costs than might appear at first glance. Many of them already have citizen children who are recipients. In fact, about 75 percent of the legalized aliens entering the AFDC system in 1993 were adults. Therefore, the parents' entry might not generate many new cases of families receiving AFDC benefits, although it would increase the average family size per case for the purpose of computing benefits. Because the additional expense of a new family member is less than the expense of the

2. A similar dip in cases with a subsequent increase can be found in data from Los Angeles County documenting the number of AFDC recipients who were citizen children of illegal or legalized parents during the same period. That information was provided by reports compiled by Los Angeles County.

children already on welfare, AFDC costs should increase significantly less than the percentage increase in recipients.

Some of those legalized aliens, however, will become citizens, decreasing the number of families with a noncitizen. The end result should be a narrowing of the gap between the percentage of families with a noncitizen member receiving AFDC and the percentage of AFDC recipients who are noncitizens. At the least, the future should see a lessening of the rate at which they diverge.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

As noted earlier, the rate of participation of legal immigrants in SSI is higher than in the other three major welfare programs. When the category of legal immigrants receiving SSI is broken down further by reason of eligibility, for example, large differences are apparent among the subgroups in the percentage of recipients who are not citizens.

Approximately 12 percent of the 5.9 million SSI recipients in 1993 were legal immigrants (see Table 6). However, about 29 percent of the over 1.4 million of those recipients in the program for the aged were noncitizens compared with 6 percent of noncitizen recipients in the program for the blind and disabled. The percentage of recipients in the program for the blind and disabled who were legal immigrants was slightly larger than that same percentage for either the Food Stamp or AFDC program.

The percentage of SSI recipients who were legal immigrants but were not also receiving Social Security payments was higher still. Elderly immigrants are much less likely to qualify for Social Security than the native-born population because they have much less work experience in the United States. As a result, at the end of 1993, legal immigrants made up only about 10 percent of the SSI recipients in the program for the aged who were receiving Social Security benefits, but they constituted 63 percent of the aged SSI recipients who did not qualify for Social Security. Because SSI payments for the aged, on average, are more than twice as high for people who are not receiving Social Security benefits, immigrants accounted for over 45 percent of all SSI payments under the program for the aged in August 1994.

The percentage of legal immigrants in the program for the aged is increasing, especially among those who are not receiving Social Security benefits and who are more likely to be eligible for SSI (see Figure 5). That increase is the result, in part, of a rise in the number of native-born citizens receiving Social Security. From 1989 to 1993, the number of citizens receiving SSI under the aged program decreased from 1.2 million to 1 million; at the

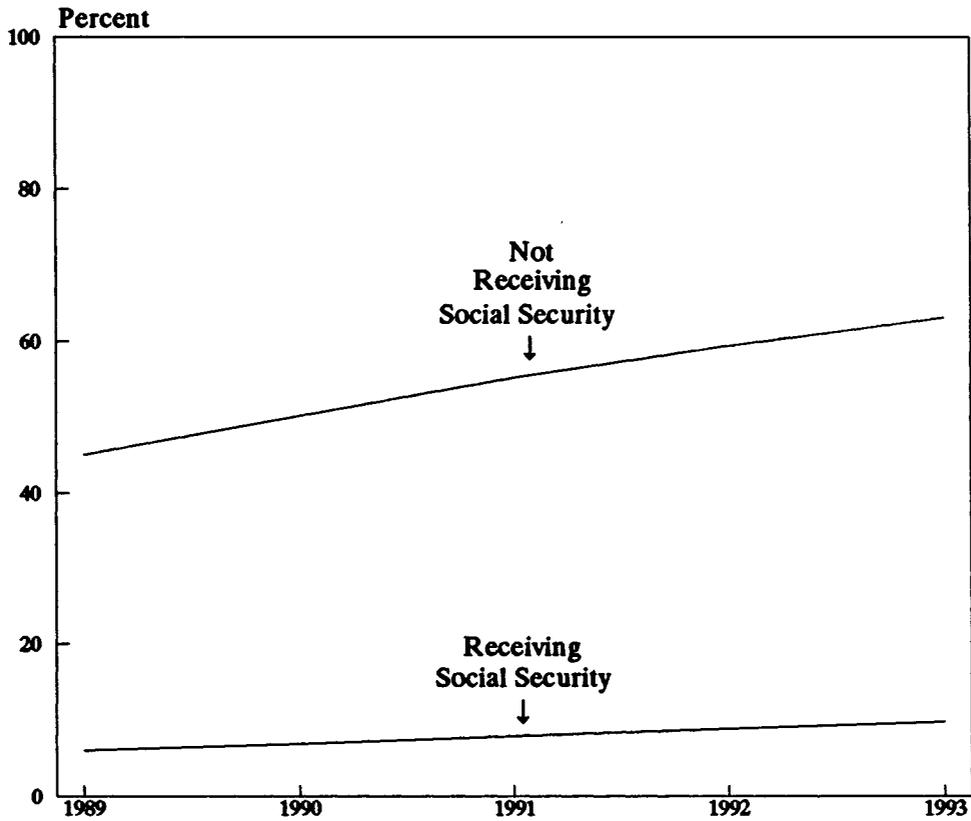
TABLE 6. NUMBER OF SSI RECIPIENTS, BY PROGRAM CATEGORY, CITIZENSHIP STATUS, AND RECEIPT OF SOCIAL SECURITY, 1993 (In thousands)

Social Security Status	Aged			Blind and Disabled			Total, Both Categories		
	Citizen	Legal Immigrant	Percentage Immigrant	Citizen	Legal Immigrant	Percentage Immigrant	Citizen	Legal Immigrant	Percentage Immigrant
All SSI Recipients									
Total	1,040	420	29	4,210	270	6	5,250	680	12
Under age 65	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	3,630	210	6	3,630	210	6
65 and over	1,040	420	29	580	50	9	1,620	470	22
Recipients Getting Social Security									
Total	850	90	10	1,380	50	4	2,240	140	6
Under age 65	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	1,000	40	4	1,000	40	4
65 and over	850	90	10	390	10	3	1,240	100	8
Recipients Not Getting Social Security									
Total	190	330	63	2,820	210	7	3,010	540	15
Under age 65	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	2,630	170	6	2,630	170	6
65 and over	190	330	63	190	40	18	380	370	49

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on data from the Social Security Administration.

NOTE: SSI = Supplemental Security Income; n.a. = not applicable.

FIGURE 5.
PERCENTAGE OF SSI RECIPIENTS IN THE PROGRAM
FOR THE AGED WHO ARE LEGAL IMMIGRANTS,
BY RECEIPT OF SOCIAL SECURITY, 1989-1993



SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office using data from the Social Security Administration.

NOTE: SSI = Supplemental Security Income.

same time, the number of noncitizens in a similar situation increased from 250,000 to 420,000.

The percentage of all SSI recipients who are legal immigrants has been increasing as well, a trend that is expected to continue. Applications for SSI among the population of legal immigrants are increasing significantly. In the first half of the 1980s, legal immigrants filed, on average, about 60,000 applications per year; in contrast, they filed an estimated 162,000 applications in 1993 (see Table 7). Approximately one-half of all applications for the program for the blind and disabled are eventually rejected. The rejection rate for the program for the aged is about 28 percent.

Legal immigrants applying for SSI tend to arrive in this country when they are beyond or near the end of their working years, which is why in many cases they do not qualify for Social Security benefits. Among those nondisabled immigrants who arrived after January 1974 who were receiving SSI from the aged program, about 79 percent were age 60 or over when they entered the United States (see Table 8). For immigrants receiving assistance under the blind and disabled program, that figure was just over 8 percent. In fact, almost 40 percent of the blind and disabled recipients who were legal immigrants came to the United States when they were under 40 years of age. The available data did not allow CBO to determine the age at residency for noncitizen recipients of SSI immigrating before 1974. Therefore, the table excludes approximately 20 percent of immigrant recipients. That exclusion serves to overstate the degree to which noncitizen SSI recipients enter the country when they are already elderly.

MEDICAID

All legal immigrants who receive AFDC and most legal immigrants who receive SSI are also eligible for Medicaid. However, data on immigration status do not exist for Medicaid recipients who do not receive cash benefits and thus are not participants in those programs. By comparing the demographic characteristics of people receiving cash and noncash benefits, however, it is possible to estimate how many noncash recipients are not citizens. Combining the data for people receiving cash benefits with the estimates for noncash recipients leads to an estimate of 6.5 percent of all Medicaid recipients being legal immigrants. In 1996, that percentage will translate into approximately 2.4 million people.

In addition, some legal immigrants receive emergency medical assistance. There are no data on the citizenship status of those recipients.

TABLE 7. NUMBER OF SSI APPLICATIONS FILED BY LEGAL IMMIGRANTS, BY PROGRAM CATEGORY, 1982-1993 (In thousands)

Year	Blind and Disabled	Aged	Total, Both Categories	Percentage Change from Preceding Year
1982	30.2	21.3	51.5	n.a.
1983	31.7	23.9	55.6	8.0
1984	30.8	31.1	61.9	11.3
1985	38.4	30.8	69.2	11.8
1986	39.4	32.5	71.9	3.9
1987	38.7	38.2	76.9	7.0
1988	40.9	46.2	87.1	13.3
1989	52.2	49.4	101.6	16.7
1990	59.6	58.9	118.5	16.6
1991	68.0	67.9	135.9	14.7
1992	87.1	67.0	154.1	13.4
1993 ^a	85.3	76.8	162.1	5.2

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office using data from the Social Security Administration.

NOTE: SSI = Supplemental Security Income; n.a. = not applicable.

a. Figures for this year are estimated.

TABLE 8. DISTRIBUTION OF SSI RECIPIENTS WHO ARE LEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND WHO ENTERED THE UNITED STATES AFTER JANUARY 1974, BY AGE AT ENTRY, PROGRAM CATEGORY, AND RECEIPT OF SOCIAL SECURITY, AUGUST 1994

Age at Entry	Aged		Blind and Disabled		Total, Both Categories	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Receiving Social Security						
Under 40	0	0	11,750	50	11,750	21
40-44	10	a	2,830	12	2,840	5
45-49	1,920	6	3,370	14	5,290	9
50-54	8,280	25	3,020	13	11,300	20
55-59	9,660	29	2,160	9	11,820	21
60-64	8,280	25	560	2	8,840	16
65-69	3,750	11	0	0	3,750	7
70 and over	<u>1,360</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>a</u>	<u>1,370</u>	<u>2</u>
Subtotal	33,260	100	23,700	100	56,960	100
Not Receiving Social Security						
Under 40	0	0	76,360	39	76,360	15
40-44	0	0	17,600	9	17,600	3
45-49	1,620	1	23,180	12	24,800	5
50-54	11,080	4	30,590	15	41,670	8
55-59	39,820	13	32,400	16	72,220	14
60-64	94,330	30	16,390	8	110,720	22
65-69	88,720	28	670	a	89,390	17
70 and over	<u>78,280</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>960</u>	<u>a</u>	<u>79,240</u>	<u>15</u>
Subtotal	313,850	100	198,180	100	512,030	100
Total						
Under 40	0	0	88,110	40	88,110	15
40-44	10	a	20,430	9	20,440	4
45-49	3,540	1	26,550	12	30,090	5
50-54	19,360	6	33,610	15	52,970	9
55-59	49,480	14	34,560	16	84,040	15
60-64	102,610	30	16,950	8	119,560	21
65-69	92,470	27	670	a	93,140	16
70 and over	<u>79,640</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>970</u>	<u>a</u>	<u>80,610</u>	<u>14</u>
Total	347,110	100	221,880	100	568,990	100

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on data from the Social Security Administration.

NOTE: SSI = Supplemental Security Income.

a. Less than 0.5 percent.

