



SSRC Selections

The Great Recession

Selections highlight research, evaluation reports, and other publications that inform the field about key issues in, and effective practices for, fostering economic self-sufficiency.

Brown, E., & Derr, M. K. (2015, February). *Serving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients in a post-recession environment* (OPRE Report No. 2015-05). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/serving-temporary-assistance-needy-families-tanf-recipients-post-recession-environment>

In this brief, the authors examined how states have responded to the evolving demands on TANF programs following the Great Recession. They also described opportunities for growth and improvement TANF programs may consider in a challenging post-recession environment, characterized by growing program demands and shrinking state and local budgets. The authors conducted telephone interviews with TANF administrators in 30 states and analyzed secondary data. From their findings they suggested: (a) redefining the vision and mission of state or local TANF programs, (b) making cost-neutral policy and program changes, (c) increasing program engagement, (d) improving business processes, and (e) using data to increase program awareness and performance.

Livermore, G., & Bardos, M. (2015, January). *How disability beneficiaries fared before and after the Great Recession* (DRC Data Brief No. 2015-01). Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research, Center for Studying Disability Policy.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/how-disability-beneficiaries-fared-and-after-great-recession>

In this brief, the authors described experiences of working age beneficiaries of Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance from 2006 to 2010 to assess the Great Recession's impact. They compared beneficiary experiences with those of working-age non-beneficiaries and analyzed differences in how they fared during the economic downturn. The authors hypothesized that in a post-recession environment, they would find that beneficiaries had been impacted differently than other working-age individuals due to beneficiaries' weak attachment to the labor force and the recession's minimal impact on Social Security Administration benefits. The authors also presented post-recession statistics through 2012 for selected measures of employment and economic well-being.

Danziger, S. K., Allard, S. W., Wathen, M. V., Burgard, S. S., Seefeldt, K. S., Rodems, R., & Cohen, A. (2014, January). *Food insecurity in the Detroit metropolitan area following the Great Recession* (National Poverty Center Policy Brief No. 39). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, National Poverty Center.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/food-insecurity-detroit-metropolitan-area-following-great-recession>

In this brief, the authors used data from the Michigan Recession and Recovery Study to examine food insecurity in the Detroit metropolitan area following the Great Recession. This region was hit much harder by the recession than many others, and the authors found that recovery has been slow. High unemployment rates persist, and food insecurity has remained particularly prevalent among low-income households. The authors identified key risk factors for food insecurity, including low educational attainment, health limitations, and financial hardship; and examined the use of public and private programs intended to reduce food insecurity. The authors concluded that food insecurity among low-income households fell eight percentage points over the 2-year period between the interviews they conducted for this study. Additionally, use of public programs was found to be high for low-income families and even higher for those with food insecurity.

Gleason, E., Nicoli, L. T., & Passarella, L. L. (2014). *Life after welfare: The effects of recession*. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland, School of Social Work, Family Welfare Research and Training Group.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/life-after-welfare-effects-recession-o>

In this report, the authors examined the outcomes of clients leaving the TANF Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program in Maryland during the Great Recession, when economic conditions were particularly harsh. Additionally, they drew comparisons in earnings and employment outcomes of clients who left TCA during three different periods: (a) the 2001 recession, (b) the recovery following this recession (2005-2007), and (c) the Great Recession. The authors found that those who exited TCA during the recovery period had the best employment and earnings outcomes. However, those who exited during the Great Recession displayed an “atypically positive” trend in employment participation and improved their earnings in the aftermath of the Great Recession. The authors concluded that this could be due to the group’s overall higher levels of educational attainment, but also noted that their employment was the lowest of the three groups with respect to time since exit. Ultimately, the study showed that TANF recipients are vulnerable to changes in the economic cycle, particularly recessions.

Gould-Werth, A. (2014, October). "The help that we get": Racial differences in private safety nets and the scarring effects of unemployment following the Great Recession (National Poverty Center Working Paper No. 14 – 01). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, National Poverty Center.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/help-we-get-racial-differences-private-safety-nets-and-scarring-effects-unemployment>

In this paper, the author highlighted the crucial role played by private safety nets in ameliorating the effects of unemployment following the Great Recession. The author argued that private resources are necessary during an economic downturn because they help connect the recently unemployed to new employment opportunities and quality training and education. Further, private resources provide a cushion for those who are long-term unemployed or underemployed. The author asserted that, because these private resources are unequally distributed along racial lines, African Americans who lose their jobs experience worse labor market outcomes and greater decreases in their well-being than white counterparts. The author concluded that job loss has the potential to be a turning point in the life course, similar in effect to incarceration, eviction, or high school completion, in which racial inequality is augmented.

Schaefer, A. (2014, Winter). *The long-term unemployed in the wake of the Great Recession* (National Issue Brief No. 68). Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, Carsey Institute.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/long-term-unemployed-wake-great-recession>

In this research brief, the author examined the characteristics of the long-term unemployed in the aftermath of the Great Recession. The author drew from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey to examine the demographic and economic characteristics of those who are long-term unemployed and to compare them with those who are short-term unemployed. The author found that between 2007 and 2013, the percentage of unemployed workers who could be considered "long-term unemployed" (seeking employment for longer than six months) more than doubled, increasing from 18.4% to 39.3%. The long-term unemployed were also more likely to live in urban areas than the short-term unemployed. Additionally, the urban long-term unemployed were found to be less likely to be poor than their rural counterparts. The urban long-term unemployed were also more often older, more racially diverse, better educated, and more likely to be married with children. The author argued that, ultimately, a better understanding of the characteristics of this population will contribute to more effective solutions to long-term unemployment.

Dubay, L., & Zarabozo, E. (2013, September). *Economic insecurity in children's lives: Changes over the course of the Great Recession* (Low-Income Working Families Discussion Paper No. 4). Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/economic-insecurity-childrens-lives-changes-over-course-great-recession>

In this report, the authors examined how children were affected by increasingly adverse economic conditions and growing economic insecurity among families over the course of the Great Recession.

They utilized data from the Current Population Survey to create two indexes: one of family economic insecurity and the other of social benefit receipt targeted to families. Using these two indexes, the authors analyzed changes over time in aggregate and separately for different groups of children. They concluded that children were immensely impacted by the Great Recession. In 2010, 22% of children were living in poverty, 16% had a parent who was unemployed or who had received unemployment insurance in the past year, and 21% lived in families that were food insecure. Each of these figures represents a marked increase from before the onset of the Great Recession. However, the authors also found that use of public programs increased during this period, and that increases in benefit use were highest among the populations most in need. The authors asserted that the full effects of the recession on children could not be captured in these numbers and that more must be done to address increases in child poverty in the wake of the recession.

Moffitt, R. A. (2013). The Great Recession and the social safety net. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 650(1), 143-166. doi: 10.1177/0002716213499532

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/great-recession-and-social-safety-net>

This article examined how the social safety net responded to the Great Recession. The author argued that the safety net responded significantly and favorably, pointing to significant growth in aggregate per capita expenditures in safety net programs. There was particularly strong growth in transfers in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Unemployment Insurance (UI), and Medicaid programs that were found to be consistent across demographic groups and family structures. However, in the low-income population, the author found that the increase in transfer amounts was not strongly progressive across income classes, with transfers to those just below or above the poverty line increasing slightly, compared to those at the bottom of the income distribution. The author suggested this was mainly because of the EITC program, which provides greater benefits to those with higher family earnings. The expansions of SNAP and UI benefitted those at the bottom of the income distribution to a greater extent.

Ratcliffe, C., & Zhang, S. (2012, October). *U.S. asset poverty and the Great Recession* (Opportunity and Ownership Facts No. 27). Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/us-asset-poverty-and-great-recession>

In this brief, the authors examined family economic security as measured by the net worth asset-poverty rate and how it has changed since the start of the Great Recession. They found that the asset-poverty rate increased as a result of the recession across all income levels and demographics. In fact, from 2007 to 2010, the number of asset-poor families increased by over 4 million as a result of the economic downturn. Additionally, the authors concluded that mid-aged families and minority families saw the largest increases in asset poverty. Specifically, they found that black non-Hispanic families and Hispanic families were twice as likely as white non-Hispanic families to be asset poor in 2010. However, the impact of the Great Recession was widespread, and the authors saw increases in asset poverty across the entire income spectrum.

Zedlewski, S., Waxman, E., & Gundersen, C. (2012). *SNAP's role in the Great Recession and beyond*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

<https://www.opressrc.org/content/snaps-role-great-recession-and-beyond>

As the Great Recession deepened, millions of Americans utilized SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, to help pay for food for their families. The authors of this brief summarized a roundtable discussion among experts, advocates, and government officials focused on SNAP's role during the Great Recession and in its aftermath, including its impact on poverty, food insecurity, and general health and well-being. The experts concluded that SNAP's large-scale growth in response to the recession and the current emphasis on deficit reduction has put the program at risk of being scaled back. However, experts found that Americans in need are turning to SNAP for more than food assistance. It is also "an antipoverty program, a work support, a promoter of health and nutrition, and an automatic stabilizer in recessions." Therefore, drawing upon the discussions at the roundtable, the authors encouraged policymakers to consider SNAP's crucial role before making any cutbacks.

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