

**The Employment Retention
and Advancement Project**

**Background Characteristics and Patterns of
Employment, Earnings, and Public Assistance Receipt
of Adults in Two-Parent Families**

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Overview

The national Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project tested the effectiveness of over a dozen innovative programs in eight states that were intended to promote steady work and earnings growth among current and former welfare recipients — that is, recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) — and other low-wage workers. The programs offered services primarily to single parents, but nine programs also offered services to adult members of two-parent families.

This report describes the background characteristics, employment and earnings patterns, and patterns of TANF and food stamp receipt for adult members of two-parent families in the ERA sample. Not much is known about the low-income two-parent population's need for employment retention and advancement services or about their responses to offered services. This population has particular policy relevance in that two-parent TANF cases include more family members and receive higher average monthly grants than do single-parent recipients. These families therefore require higher income (from employment of one or both parents) to achieve self-sufficiency.

Key Findings

- **In the ERA sample, retention and advancement is as important an issue for low-income two-parent family members as for single parents.** Most two-parent and single-parent sample members worked during the follow-up period, but only slightly more than half in each group were continuously employed for four or more quarters. This employment stability, in turn, is associated with other positive economic outcomes in both samples, including much higher average annual earnings and earnings progression during the follow-up period. Rates of TANF receipt declined steadily for both two-parent and single-parent sample members after study entry, but many members (and similar proportions) of both samples continued to receive food stamps during Year 3.
- **Men and women in two-parent families were equally likely to work during the follow-up period, but men earned more, on average.** Most men and women in two-parent families worked during the follow-up period, and a similar proportion of men and women experienced employment stability. Among two-parent sample members with stable employment, men had much higher annual earnings, but earnings were similar for men and women who never experienced stable employment.

The results suggest that adults in low-income single-parent and two-parent families have a roughly equivalent need for services to support employment retention and advancement and that this need does not differ substantially between men and women in two-parent families.

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About the Employment Retention and Advancement Project

The federal welfare overhaul of 1996 ushered in myriad policy changes aimed at getting low-income parents off public assistance and into employment. These changes — especially cash welfare’s transformation from an entitlement into a time-limited benefit contingent on work participation, in the form of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) — have intensified the need to help low-income families become economically self-sufficient and remain so. Although a fair amount is known about how to help welfare recipients prepare for and find jobs, the Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project is the most comprehensive effort thus far to ascertain which approaches help welfare recipients and other low-income people stay steadily employed and advance in their jobs. The study was conceived and funded by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; supplemental support has been provided by the U.S. Department of Labor. The evaluation is being conducted by MDRC.

Launched in 1999, the ERA project encompasses more than a dozen models and uses a rigorous research design to analyze the programs’ implementation and impacts on research sample members.¹ In total, over 45,000 individuals were randomly assigned to research groups — in each site, to either a program group, which received ERA services, or a control group, which did not — starting in 2000 in the earliest-starting test and ending in 2004 in the latest-starting test. The random assignment process ensured that when individuals entered the study, there were no systematic differences in sample members’ characteristics, measured or unmeasured, between the program and control groups in each site. Thus, any differences between them that emerge after random assignment (for example, in employment stability or average earnings) can be attributed to a site’s ERA program — in contrast to the services and supports already available in the site. These differences are known as “impacts.”

The aims, target populations, and services of the programs studied in ERA varied:

- **Advancement programs** focused on helping low-income workers (in most cases, workers currently or recently receiving welfare) move into better jobs by offering such services as career counseling and education and training.

¹Sixteen different ERA models were implemented and studied in eight states: California, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, and Texas.

- **Placement and retention programs** sought to help participants find and hold jobs and, in some cases, were aimed at “harder-to-employ” people, such as welfare recipients who had disabilities or substance abuse problems.
- **Mixed-goals programs** focused on job placement, retention, and advancement — in that order — and were targeted primarily to welfare recipients who were searching for jobs.

Prior ERA project reports describe the implementation and impacts of each ERA program, drawing on administrative and fiscal records, surveys of study sample members, and field visits to the participating sites, as well as using the strong random assignment designs (also known as “experimental” designs) embedded in each ERA model test. These reports address such questions as: What services were provided by the program? How were the services delivered? Who received them? How were implementation and operational problems addressed? To what extent did the program improve employment rates, job retention, advancement, and other key outcomes? Looking across the programs, which approaches were most effective, and for whom?

While the ERA project has identified some promising approaches that can help low-wage workers increase their employment stability and earnings, much more remains to be learned. This report focuses on ERA parents in low-income two-parent families, a group for whom little research is available. The analysis in this report is an example of the ways in which the rich ERA project databases are being used to provide further knowledge about how best to improve the employment retention and advancement of low-income individuals.

Acknowledgments

The Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) evaluation would not have been possible without the cooperation, commitment, and hard work of a wide range of administrators and staff in all the ERA sites. Notably, findings from all the sites in the evaluation contribute to addressing the study's key questions. All the sites stepped forward to innovate in a challenging and important area of social policy and practice.

Barbara Goldman, Gayle Hamilton, Cynthia Miller, Richard Hendra, Karin Martinson, and Alice Tufel reviewed multiple versions of the report and provided several useful suggestions. Noemi Altman and Edith Yang performed many key programming tasks, while Alexandra Brown provided excellent research assistance, report coordination, and administrative support. Robert Weber edited the final version, and David Sobel prepared the report for publication.

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The Authors

Executive Summary

The national Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project tested the effectiveness of over a dozen innovative programs in eight states that were intended to promote steady work and earnings growth among current and former welfare recipients — that is, recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) — and other low-wage workers.¹ The programs offered services primarily to single parents, but nine programs also offered services to adult members of two-parent families. Individuals who met the ERA eligibility criteria (which varied by program) were assigned at random to a program group or to a control group. Members of the program group were recruited for (and, for some programs, were required to participate in) the services offered by the ERA program. Control group members were not eligible for ERA services but could receive other services and supports, including the site’s standard welfare-to-work program or, in some cases, minimal assistance that welfare agencies offered to current or former recipients who found jobs.

This report describes the background characteristics, employment and earnings patterns, and patterns of TANF and food stamp receipt of adult members of two-parent families in the ERA sample. Across these nine programs, approximately 2,800 members of two-parent families entered the study sample — about 1,300 men and 1,500 women. Together, they constitute about 15 percent of the entire ERA sample in these sites. Members of two-parent families were excluded from the research sample analyzed in the recent ERA 12-program impact report,² but administrative data are available on sample members’ employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance. These data are analyzed in this report, since not much is known about the low-income two-parent population’s need for employment retention and advancement services. This population has particular policy relevance in that two-parent TANF cases include more family members and receive higher average monthly grants than do single-parent recipients. These families therefore require higher income (from employment of one or both parents) to achieve self-sufficiency and leave public assistance.

The report discusses findings for the two-parent sample as a whole and, separately, for men and women in the sample. The report also compares employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance among members of the two-parent sample with similar outcomes for the

¹ERA was conceived and funded by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is also supported by the U.S. Department of Labor.

²Richard Hendra, Keri-Nicole Dillman, Gayle Hamilton, Erika Lundquist, Karin Martinson, and Melissa Wavelet, *The Employment Retention and Advancement Project: How Effective Are Different Approaches Aiming to Increase Employment Retention and Advancement? Final Impacts for Twelve Models* (New York: MDRC, 2010).

combined sample of single parents in the nine ERA programs that included both two-parent and single-parent sample members.

Only one parent in each two-parent family was included in the sample, meaning that data were collected only for that individual. The ERA study left it up to each program to determine which member of the two-parent family to randomly assign. For many couples, the sample member is the family member who was first encountered by program staff during the random assignment period, which could have occurred for various reasons. For example, only one spouse or partner may have met the program's eligibility criteria (such as being employed full time) or, for voluntary programs, was motivated to participate. Alternatively, parents may have shown up at the program office at different times because of their work or child care responsibilities. For the analyses, ERA and control group members were grouped together, and the samples were pooled across the nine programs. The combined sample was then weighted so that the samples for each program test contributed equally to the results.

- **Most members of the ERA samples had recent employment before entering the study, and most received some type of public assistance.**

Over two-thirds of two-parent sample members worked in the year prior to random assignment, with slightly over half working in the quarter prior to random assignment. About two-fifths of the two-parent sample members received TANF in the year prior to random assignment, and over three-quarters received food stamps in that year.

The proportions of the two-parent and single-parent samples who were employed in both the year and the quarter prior to random assignment are fairly similar, but the two-parent sample's average annual earnings in the year prior to random assignment were higher than those of the single-parent sample members. In the year prior to random assignment, fewer members of the two-parent sample received TANF payments, compared with the single-parent sample.

Among two-parent sample members, men were more likely than women to have been employed in the year prior to random assignment, and they earned almost twice as much. Women were more likely than men to be long-term TANF recipients prior to random assignment and were more likely to have received both TANF and food stamps in the year prior to random assignment.

- **In the ERA sample, retention and advancement is as important an issue for low-income two-parent family members as for single parents.**

About 80 percent of the two-parent sample members worked in at least one quarter of the three-year follow-up period, but many worked only in a few quarters. Overall earnings for the sample were low, averaging about \$8,000 per year, reflecting the sample's tendency toward sporadic employment, but about 30 percent of two-parent sample members had earnings at or

above minimum wage levels (\$10,000 or more per year). Advancement — defined as positive earnings changes — occurred for some sample members and was concentrated among those who were able to maintain stable employment, defined in the report as an employment spell of at least four quarters.

Two-parent and single-parent sample members recorded similar patterns of employment and earnings during the three-year follow-up period. However, single-parent sample members earned about \$600 less per year — mainly because the two-parent sample included a slightly larger proportion of individuals with relatively high earnings.

Male and female two-parent sample members had similar employment levels over the three-year follow-up period, but male sample members earned, on average, \$3,300 more per year than women. This difference may be due to variation in the type of work, hours worked, wage rates, or overall skill/experience or to peculiarities of the sample. Men and women in the two-parent sample were equally likely to experience employment stability and earnings advancement.

- **ERA sample members were more likely to receive food stamps than TANF benefits during the follow-up period. Rates of receipt declined steadily for both types of assistance.**

About 51 percent of two-parent sample members received TANF during at least one quarter of the follow-up period. Receipt rates for the two-parent sample declined steadily over the follow-up period, from nearly 50 percent during the quarter of random assignment to around 10 percent in the last quarter of follow-up in Year 3. Most two-parent sample members (84 percent) received food stamps during the follow-up period. Receipt rates declined over the course of the follow-up, but about half the sample members were receiving food stamps in the last quarter of the follow-up period.

Members of the single-parent sample were more likely to receive TANF during the three-year follow-up period than the two-parent sample members, but both samples had similar levels of food stamp receipt. Patterns of receipt of food stamps are similar for the single-parent sample and the two-parent sample, including the proportions of the sample receiving assistance in the third year after random assignment. These relatively high food stamp receipt rates for both samples strongly suggest that most families in the ERA study continued to have low incomes from earnings and other sources after random assignment.

Female members of the two-parent sample were more likely than male sample members to receive TANF during the three-year follow-up period. There was little gender difference in food stamp receipt rates overall, but female sample members tended to receive food stamps during more months of follow-up and were more likely than male sample members to receive

food stamps during Year 3. Differences in both TANF and food stamp receipt among two-parent families that are represented by males in the sample and those represented by females (especially in Year 3) suggest that two-parent families vary in terms of their interaction with public assistance programs and, probably, in family income from earnings and other sources.

In conclusion, while these analyses identify differences between adults in low-income two-parent and single-parent families, the two groups are fairly similar in terms of both background characteristics and outcomes. Specifically, employment retention and advancement is as great a concern for two-parent family members in the sample as it is for members of the single-parent sample. While this analysis cannot speak to the effectiveness of the ERA programs for the two-parent family population, it does demonstrate a need equivalent to the single-parent family population's for services to support employment retention and advancement.

Introduction

This report describes the background characteristics, employment and earnings patterns, and patterns of receipt of TANF¹ and food stamps among adult members of two-parent families who participated in the national Employment Retention and Advancement (ERA) project. ERA tested the effectiveness of programs that were intended to promote steady work and earnings growth among current and former welfare recipients and other low-wage workers. From 2000 to 2003, a total of 16 innovative programs were implemented in eight states as part of ERA and were studied using a random assignment evaluation design, a methodology that allows practitioners and policymakers to have a high degree of confidence in the results. Individuals who met the ERA eligibility criteria (which varied by program) were assigned at random to a program group or to a control group. Members of the program group were recruited for (and, for some programs, were required to participate in) the services offered by the ERA program. Control group members were not eligible for ERA services but could receive other services and supports, including the site's standard welfare-to-work program or, in some cases, minimal assistance that welfare agencies offered to current or former recipients who found jobs.

The final impact report from the ERA study presents effectiveness estimates for 12 of the 16 ERA programs over a three- or four-year follow-up period for the main group of individuals targeted for services: low-income single mothers.² (See Box 1 for a description of these programs and their target populations.) Nine of these 12 programs also targeted services to adult members (parents) of two-parent families.³ Across these nine programs, approximately 2,800 members of two-parent families entered the study sample. Together, they constitute about 15 percent of the entire ERA sample in these sites. Members of two-parent families were excluded from the research sample analyzed in the final impact report, but administrative data are available on sample members' employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance. This report serves as the document of record from the ERA study for analyzing employment and public assistance outcomes for sample members in two-parent families.

The findings in this report should be of interest to administrators of employment programs for low-income adults and to policymakers. Adults in two-parent families are a unique

¹This report uses "TANF" (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and "welfare" interchangeably.

²See Hendra et al. (2010). Findings for programs that targeted "harder-to-employ" individuals are presented in other reports.

³The nine ERA programs represented in the two-parent family sample are those in Eugene and Medford, Oregon; Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club (EJC); Riverside (County, California) Phase 2: Training Focused and Work Plus; Riverside Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS); Salem, Oregon; South Carolina; and Texas. The Chicago and Los Angeles Reach for Success (RFS) ERA programs had only three two-parent family members in their samples and were excluded from the analysis. Although half of Cleveland's sample members were married or partnered, most of them had no dependent children.

Box 1

ERA Programs and Target Populations

Chicago:* A private, for-profit provider delivered a combination of services to promote career advancement to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients who had worked at least 30 hours per week for at least six consecutive months.

Cleveland:* A nonprofit provider delivered such retention services as supervisory trainings, office hours, and biweekly lunch meetings at the work site to workers who earned less than \$13 per hour and who had been in their current jobs for less than six months.

Eugene, Oregon: Welfare, community college, and workforce agency staff implemented a team-based case management model that targeted newly employed former TANF recipients and delivered retention and advancement services tailored to participants' career interests.

Los Angeles Enhanced Job Club: Welfare staff provided job search workshops promoting a targeted job search method designed to help TANF recipients who were required to search for employment find a job in line with their careers of interest.

Los Angeles Reach for Success:* County welfare staff implemented flexible and individualized employment stabilization and retention services, followed by a combination of services to promote advancement, to newly employed TANF recipients working at least 32 hours per week.

Medford, Oregon: Welfare, community college, and workforce agency staff implemented a team-based case management model that targeted newly employed former TANF recipients and employed participants of the Oregon Food Stamp Employment and Training program and the Employment Related Day Care program; they also delivered retention and advancement services tailored to participants' career interests and circumstances.

Riverside (County, California) Post-Assistance Self-Sufficiency (PASS): Community-based organizations, a community college, and a county welfare agency delivered family-based support services and, if needed, reemployment services to individuals who left TANF due to increased earnings.

Riverside Training Focused (Phase 2): County workforce staff implemented an education and training model that connected newly employed TANF recipients working at least 20 hours per week to education and training activities with the option of reducing or eliminating their required work hours.

Riverside Work Plus (Phase 2): County welfare staff implemented an education and training model that connected newly employed TANF recipients working at least 20 hours per week to education and training activities with *no* option of reducing or eliminating their required work hours.

*NOTE: This program did not include members of two-parent families in its research sample.

(continued)

Box 1 (continued)

Salem, Oregon: Welfare and community college staff implemented a team-based case management model that targeted TANF applicants and delivered job search assistance combined with career planning; once a client was employed, individual and group meetings promoted retention and advancement.

South Carolina: For individuals who left TANF, for any reason, between October 1997 and December 2000, county welfare staff provided case management services and individualized incentives focused on reemployment, support services, job search, and career counseling.

Texas: Three sites in Texas (Corpus Christi, Forth Worth, and Houston) implemented a team-based case management model that targeted TANF applicants and recipients and delivered monthly stipends of \$200 for those who maintained full-time employment and completed activities related to an employment plan.

For further information about these programs, see Hendra et al. (2010) and, at the end of this report, “MDRC Publications on the Employment Retention and Advancement Project.”

subgroup within the ERA study sample. The ERA two-parent sample members include a high proportion of men, have potentially two wage-earners in the family, and tend to have larger families than single parents. At present, not much is known about the needs of the low-income two-parent population — particularly those who are current or former welfare recipients — for employment and retention services or about their response to offered services. Similarly, research has been limited on whether service needs and outcomes differ for men and women in such low-income two-parent families — or for mothers in two-parent families compared with single mothers. The findings in this report address these issues. A few previous evaluations of welfare-to-work programs that have included two-parent cases in their study samples found that these recipients had different outcomes and responded differently to the interventions than study participants in single-parent families.⁴ It was suggested that these differences may be due to the different treatment received by two-parent families in the welfare system; to differences in the resources available to recipients in two-parent families (for example, the presence of a second adult family member); and/or to differences in family composition, gender, or other characteristics between recipients in single-parent families and those in two-parent families.

Results for low-income two-parent families in the ERA sample are also of interest for programmatic and policy reasons. Specifically, to avoid sanctions affecting the size of their TANF block grant, states are required to have 90 percent of their two-parent family cases, but

⁴Riccio, Friedlander, and Freedman (1994); Freedman, Knab, Gennetian, and Navarro (2000); Scrivener et al. (2002); Gennetian, Miller, and Smith (2005).

only 50 percent of all family cases, meeting work participation requirements.⁵ In addition, adults in two-parent families who receive TANF benefits are required to perform (collectively) 55 hours per week of qualifying work activities, compared with 30 hours per week for single-parent recipients. Thus, the ability of programs to engage TANF recipients in two-parent families and to help them work steadily may have a disproportionate effect on the funding available to states to finance their assistance programs.⁶ Moreover, on average, two-parent TANF cases include more family members and, therefore receive higher average monthly grants than single-parent cases. To promote self-sufficiency, then, programs need either to help both adults in two-parent TANF cases find and keep jobs or to assist one adult family member in finding and keeping jobs that generate relatively high earnings. Finally, two of the stated goals of the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 are to support the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. Having steady employment and earnings above poverty level for at least one parent in the two-parent family are necessary components of supporting families.

The analysis reported here examines the ERA sample of members of two-parent families to address the following questions:

- **What are the background characteristics of the two-parent sample members, including gender, age, family composition, educational attainment, prior employment, and history of cash assistance receipt?**
 - How do these background characteristics differ from those of the single-parent sample?
 - How do these background characteristics differ between men and women in the two-parent sample?
- **What are two-parent sample members' patterns of employment and earnings during the three years following random assignment?**

⁵States receive caseload reduction credits that act to lower participation rate requirements, and so the actual participation rates for both two-parent and single-parent cases vary across years and states. For example, in 2006, the median all-families participation rate across the states was 4.5 percent, while the median two-parent family participation rate was 33.2 percent. In addition, the 2006 reauthorization of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) reset the reference year for calculations of the caseload reduction credits, from 1996 to 2006, which will likely reduce the number of states receiving any credits and the size of the credits for those states that do achieve caseload reductions.

⁶Several states have not met their adjusted two-parent participation rate requirement in one or more years since the enactment of PRWORA. In addition, several states have avoided the PRWORA requirements by serving two-parent cases in a Separate State Program (SSP) that counts toward the states' Maintenance of Effort (MOE; the required state funding contribution for assistance programs) but is not subject to the PRWORA requirements. The 2006 reauthorization of PRWORA removed the exemption from the participation requirements for states' MOE-SSP programs.

- What proportion of the two-parent sample attained stable employment and/or earnings growth?
- To what extent do sample members who attained stable employment differ from sample members with unstable employment in terms of
 - The individuals' characteristics?
 - Other employment and public assistance outcomes?
- How do the two-parent sample members' patterns of employment and earnings differ from single-parent sample members' patterns?
- How do the employment and earnings patterns of men and women in the two-parent sample differ?
- **What are two-parent sample members' patterns of receipt of TANF benefits and food stamps?**
 - How do these patterns differ from those of the single-parent sample members?
 - How do these patterns differ between male and female members of the two-parent sample?

These questions are addressed via a descriptive analysis of members of two-parent families who were randomly assigned as part of the ERA project. While the results presented here compare employment, earnings, and public assistance outcomes among different groups of sample members, as well as associations between characteristics and/or outcomes, the analysis is nonexperimental, and so tests and inferences regarding causality are not appropriate.

Data and Methods

The Analysis Sample

The nine ERA programs randomly assigned a total of 2,819 two-parent family members to ERA and control groups: 1,283 men and 1,536 women. Only one parent in each two-parent family was included in the sample, meaning that data were collected only for that individual. The ERA study left it up to each program to determine which member of the two-parent family to randomly assign. For many couples, the sample member is the family member who was encountered first by program staff during the random assignment period, which could have occurred for various reasons. In addition, while one member of the two-parent family was randomly assigned and was followed over the course of the evaluation period, both parents in families assigned to the program group were potentially eligible to participate in the ERA

program. That is, either or both may have received ERA services, and so there is some likelihood that the spouse or partner of the sample member participated instead of or in addition to the sample member.⁷ Due to this uncertainty, program-control group outcome differences for the two-parent sample are difficult to interpret as program effects. Therefore, the analysis presented below is descriptive and focuses on patterns of employment, earnings, and receipt of public assistance for the two-parent sample as a whole.

For the analysis, ERA and control group members were grouped together,⁸ and the samples were pooled across the nine programs. The combined sample was then weighted so that the samples for each program test contributed equally to the results.⁹ The single-parent samples were pooled and weighted in a similar fashion (that is, equal contribution, by sample), except that the three Texas samples were not combined for the construction of weights.¹⁰ Appendix Table A.1 shows the distribution of the analysis sample across sites.

Data Sources

Baseline data were collected from sample members at their time of random assignment and include information on demographic characteristics, prior employment, and prior public assistance receipt. Employment and earnings of two-parent sample members were measured after random assignment using statewide unemployment insurance (UI) wage records, while

⁷Data regarding program participation or service receipt were not collected for members of the two-parent sample.

⁸Even though it is difficult to interpret program-control group differences in employment and earnings outcomes, they were estimated for programs in which the two-parent sample is of sufficient size to support the estimation of program-control differences, in order to examine whether employment and earnings differences between the ERA and control groups would prevent pooling the two-parent sample across research groups. The results, presented in Appendix Table A.2, show that there are no systematic differences in employment and earnings outcomes between the sample members in the ERA group and those in the control group for any of these program tests.

⁹Most of the ERA programs had one sample. The Riverside Training Focused and Riverside Work Plus programs were evaluated using a three-way random assignment design, and so they share a sample, referred to as “Riverside Phase 2.” The ERA Texas program had three samples: Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, and Houston. Due to the small number of two-parent sample members in Fort Worth and Houston, the weights were adjusted so that the three Texas samples are counted as a single sample for the purposes of weighting. Thus, the combined two-parent sample is the result of pooling eight ERA samples and weighting each sample equally to estimate characteristics and outcomes for the ERA two-parent sample members. As shown in Appendix Table A.1, the samples have different proportions of men and women. To control for these differences, separate weights were applied to men and women within each sample to equalize the gender ratios. The final weights are adjusted so that each sample’s contribution to the pooled sample is equal (that is, each sample contributes one-eighth of the total two-parent sample and one-eighth of the gender subsamples).

¹⁰The three single-parent Texas samples are large enough to sustain individual weights, which is the preferred alternative when pooling samples. The effect of this difference in weighting schemes between the single-parent and two-parent samples on the results presented here is negligible, as shown in Appendix Table A.5.

public assistance receipt was measured using state and county TANF and food stamp payment records. All sample members have follow-up data for at least three years, which constitutes the study period for this analysis. For employment and earnings outcomes, all the data pertain to the member of the two-parent family who was randomly assigned, so family-level outcomes, such as family income, cannot be examined. However, TANF and food stamp outcomes pertain to the entire family. Earnings, TANF, and food stamp amounts are in nominal (non-inflation-adjusted) dollars.

Estimation Methods

The estimates presented here — except for those pertaining to background characteristics in the next section — are regression-adjusted by geographic location of the program to control for differences in the labor market conditions and other site-level variations.¹¹ This adjustment balances the effect of differences in employment, earnings, and public assistance receipt among the 10 locations represented in the two-parent sample so that the pooled estimates more accurately reflect the outcomes experienced by the sample as a whole and to ensure that subsample comparisons (for example, between men and women) are not confounded by locational effects. Estimates presented in the report’s tables do not control for other characteristics of sample members that were measured at random assignment (such as educational attainment, prior employment, and prior receipt of public assistance).¹²

For most outcomes, tests of statistical significance were performed on differences between groups. Since these analyses are exploratory in nature with limited statistical controls, statistical significance is reported on the basis of whether or not the probability that the difference occurred by chance is 10 percent or less (that is, the p-value is 0.10 or less). Only statistically significant differences are discussed in the text.

¹¹There is a covariate for each site — Eugene, Los Angeles EJC, Medford, Riverside Phase 2, Riverside PASS, Salem, South Carolina, Corpus Christi, Fort Worth, and Houston. Even though Riverside Phase 2 and Riverside PASS operated in the same county, the evaluations occurred at different points in time, requiring separate covariates to control for locational effects. Also, while the three Texas sites are treated as one site for weighting, the three sites do vary in terms of labor market conditions and other characteristics and so are controlled for separately. Additionally, in order to estimate outcomes by sample (single-parent or two-parent) and by gender for the two-parent sample, covariates for gender and sample are included in the regression.

¹²In order to assess the sensitivity of the employment and earnings estimates to cross-site differences in the composition of the sample and to provide information about similarities and differences between comparison groups (for example, single-parent and two-parent family members) in earnings and employment outcomes when differences in background characteristics that may influence outcomes are controlled for or held constant, estimates controlling for background and other characteristics are shown in Appendix Tables A.3 and A.4.

Limitations of the Analysis

The ERA study interviewed several thousand single parents, at 12 months and at 42 months after random assignment. Members of the two-parent sample were excluded from the 12- and 42-month survey samples in order to conserve resources.¹³ Therefore, no information was collected for the two-parent family sample members regarding participation in employment-related services, such as career counseling or education and training. Also, the second parent in the sample member's family was not included in the data collection for the study. Therefore, it is not possible to examine the interactions between the employment patterns of two-parent sample members and (1) the receipt of program services, financial incentives, participation mandates, and/or program messages or (2) the employment and earnings of the other parent in the family.

In theory, even though only one member of the couple was randomly assigned, it might be possible to infer patterns of employment and earnings for two-parent families by combining the results for men and women. Estimating results for families in this way would be justified if (1) most sites had an even distribution of men and women in the two-parent sample, suggesting that the selection of the family member in the two-parent sample was random, and/or (2) men and women had similar levels of TANF and food stamp receipt at the time of random assignment, suggesting similar levels of family income and similar family decisions to receive publicly funded financial assistance. However, neither of these conditions is true for the ERA two-parent sample. Only one of the sites, Medford, had a two-parent sample that was evenly divided by gender. In three sites (Eugene, Los Angeles EJC, and Riverside Phase 2), men made up more than 55 percent of the two-parent sample, whereas the other sites had a majority of women. In addition, comparisons of public assistance receipt before random assignment (a family-level measure) indicate a difference between the families represented by men and those represented by women. These observed differences suggest underlying differences among the two-parent families in the ERA sample that may have determined which adult member of the family was more in contact with welfare office staff and, thus, was the family member who was randomly assigned.

¹³The 12- and 42-month surveys were intended as primary data sources for estimating impacts of ERA programs in individual sites. Budget constraints limited the number of survey responses per site, and most sites would have lacked sufficient two-parent survey samples to estimate impacts reliably. It was therefore decided to limit the survey sample to single parents, to maximize the statistical power of impact estimates for this subgroup.

Characteristics of the Sample Members at Baseline

As shown in Table 1, the total two-parent research sample includes 2,819 parents: 1,283 men (45.5 percent) and 1,536 women (54.5 percent). At baseline, or the time of random assignment, over 60 percent of the two-parent sample members had at least a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Over two-thirds of them worked in the year prior to random assignment, with slightly over half working in the quarter prior to random assignment. About two-fifths of the two-parent sample members received TANF in the year prior to random assignment, and over three-quarters received food stamps in that year.

Comparison of the Two-Parent and Single-Parent Samples

On average, at the time of random assignment, the members of the two-parent sample were older and had more children than the members of the single-parent sample (Table 1). A larger proportion of the two-parent sample members had a youngest child under age 3, in contrast to the single-parent sample members, whose youngest child was more likely to be age 6 or older.

The proportions of the two-parent and single-parent samples who were employed in the year and the quarter prior to random assignment are fairly similar, but the two-parent sample's average annual earnings in the year prior to random assignment were higher than the single-parent sample's. In the year prior to random assignment, fewer members of the two-parent sample received TANF payments, compared with the single-parent sample, but two-parent sample members had larger average monthly payments, reflecting their larger family sizes. At random assignment, two-parent sample members were more likely to have had a short-term TANF receipt history (that is, less than two years total prior receipt), while single-parent sample members were more likely to have had a long-term history (two years or longer total prior receipt). The two-parent and single-parent samples had about the same rate of food stamp receipt in the year prior to random assignment, with the two-parent sample having a larger average monthly payment.

Comparison of Men and Women in the Two-Parent Sample

The male and female members of the two-parent sample are fairly similar in terms of background characteristics, including age and number of children (Table 1). There are differences, however, between the men and women in the two-parent sample in terms of pre-random assignment employment. Men were more likely than women to have been employed in the year prior to random assignment, and they earned almost twice as much. There are also gender differences in pre-random assignment public assistance receipt of the sample members' families. Women were more likely than men to be long-term TANF recipients prior to random

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Table 1

Selected Characteristics of Sample Members at the Time of Random Assignment

Characteristic	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
<u>Demographic characteristics</u>				
Average age (years)	31.2	33.1	29.6	29.8
Race/ethnicity (%)				
Hispanic	31.9	32.5	31.4	29.0
Black, non-Hispanic	12.4	10.9	13.7	29.7
White, non-Hispanic	50.3	50.3	50.4	37.8
Other	5.3	6.2	4.5	3.5
Average number of minor children	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.0
Age of youngest child (%)				
2 or under	52.7	53.1	52.3	42.2
3 to 5	21.5	21.6	21.3	23.0
6 or over	25.9	25.3	26.4	34.9
High school diploma/GED certificate or higher (%)	62.1	62.4	61.8	59.7
<u>Receipt of public assistance</u>				
Total prior AFDC/TANF receipt (%)				
None	31.5	36.7	27.1	23.1
Less than 2 years	49.1	51.8	46.9	46.9
2 years or more	19.4	11.5	26.0	30.0
Ever received TANF in year prior to random assignment (%)	42.2	40.3	43.8	47.5
Number of months receiving TANF in year prior to random assignment	2.7	2.5	2.9	3.6
Average monthly TANF payment in year prior to random assignment (\$)	232	225	237	200
Ever received food stamps in year prior to random assignment (%)	76.0	72.4	79.0	76.9
Number of months receiving food stamps in year prior to random assignment	6.0	5.4	6.4	6.6
Average monthly food stamp payment in year prior to random assignment (\$)	217	208	225	189

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristic	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
Employment and earnings				
Employed in quarter prior to random assignment ^a (%)	51.6	55.1	48.6	52.1
Employed in quarter of random assignment ^a (%)	59.3	61.4	57.6	59.3
Employed in year prior to random assignment ^a (%)	68.8	71.6	66.4	71.2
Average earnings in the prior to random assignment ^a (\$)	5,447	7,343	3,864	4,765
Sample size	2,819	1,283	1,536	18,936

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on ERA Baseline Information Forms, automated records, and administrative data.

NOTES: Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

^aThis information is based on unemployment insurance (UI) records.

assignment and were more likely to have received both TANF and food stamps in the year prior to random assignment, with a higher average number of months of receipt and larger average monthly payments than men.

Employment and Earnings Patterns in the Follow-Up Period

- Most of the two-parent sample members worked in at least one quarter of the three-year follow-up period, but many worked only in a few quarters. Overall earnings for the sample were low, reflecting the sample’s tendency toward sporadic employment, but about 30 percent of sample members had earnings at or above minimum wage levels (\$10,000 or more per year). Advancement — defined as positive earnings changes — occurred for some sample members and was concentrated among those who were able to maintain stable employment.**

As shown in Table 2, over 80 percent of the two-parent sample members were employed at some point during the three-year follow-up period. However, most sample members experienced at least one spell of joblessness, as reflected by the average quarterly employment rate of just over 50 percent for the two-parent sample. Figure 1 shows that, over the course of the follow-up period, the proportion of two-parent sample members employed in a given quarter declined from 58 percent in the quarter of random assignment to 48 percent in the last quarter of Year 3. However, these averages for the two-parent sample mask large disparities in employment levels: close to a third of the sample worked in over 75 percent of the quarters (more than

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Table 2

Employment and Earnings in the Cumulative Follow-Up Period (Years 1-3)

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
<u>Employment</u>				
Ever employed (%) ●■	81.0	79.4	82.6	83.1
Average quarterly employment (%)	50.9	51.8	50.0	51.2
Percentage of quarters employed ^a				
Never employed	19.0	20.6	17.4	16.9
1% - 25%	16.7	15.6	17.7	18.5
26% - 50%	15.7	14.2	17.3	16.1
51% - 75%	16.2	14.2	18.2	16.2
76% - 100%	32.4	35.4	29.4	32.4
Number of quarters until first employment spell ●	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.2
Average number of employment spells ●■	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3
Average length, longest employment spell (quarters) ■	5.3	5.5	5.2	5.3
Quarters in longest employment spell ^a (%)				
Never employed	19.0	20.6	17.4	16.9
1-2 quarters	16.8	15.3	18.3	19.1
3-4 quarters	14.7	12.9	16.4	15.3
5-8 quarters	21.0	19.9	22.0	21.2
9-12 quarters	28.5	31.3	25.8	27.6
Average number of unemployment spells ●■	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3
Average length, longest unemployment spell (quarters)	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.1
Quarters in longest unemployment spell ^a (%)				
Never unemployed	19.0	20.9	17.1	18.5
1-2 quarters	18.6	19.1	18.1	20.2
3-4 quarters	15.1	13.3	16.9	14.1
5-8 quarters	18.1	17.0	19.3	20.1
9-12 quarters	29.1	29.6	28.6	27.0
Employed entire follow-up period (%) ■	19.0	20.9	17.1	18.5
Had employment spell of at least 4 quarters (%)	56.7	57.2	56.1	56.0
<u>Earnings</u>				
Average annual earnings (\$) ●■	7,925	9,597	6,254	7,334
Average annual earnings category ^a (%)				
\$0	19.0	20.6	17.4	16.9
\$1 - \$1,999	19.9	16.2	23.6	21.8
\$2,000 - \$4,999	15.3	12.7	17.9	15.4
\$5,000 - \$9,999	14.9	13.6	16.1	16.6
\$10,000 - \$14,999	10.7	9.5	12.0	11.6
\$15,000 - \$19,999	7.8	9.2	6.5	8.8
\$20,000 or higher	12.3	18.3	6.4	8.8

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
Average annual earnings of \$10,000 or more (%) ■	30.9	36.9	24.9	29.3
Average quarterly earnings (\$) ●■	1,981	2,399	1,563	1,834
Average quarterly earnings in employed quarters (\$) ●■	2,609	3,095	2,123	2,463
Average quarters with earnings of \$2,500 or more ■	3.8	4.4	3.3	3.7
Number of quarters earning above \$2,500 ^a (%)				
Never employed	19.0	20.6	17.4	16.9
No quarters with earnings above \$2,500	19.4	13.5	25.2	21.8
1-2 quarters	16.0	14.6	17.4	15.6
3-4 quarters	9.3	9.7	8.8	10.3
5-8 quarters	15.6	16.5	14.7	15.6
9-12 quarters	20.8	25.1	16.4	19.7
Average quarters with earnings of \$3,500 or more ●■	3.0	3.7	2.3	2.8
Number of quarters earning above \$3,500 ^a (%)				
Never employed	19.0	20.6	17.4	16.9
No quarters with earnings above \$3,500	29.6	21.2	38.0	32.9
1-2 quarters	14.6	13.6	15.6	14.9
3-4 quarters	8.4	9.3	7.5	9.2
5-8 quarters	12.5	14.3	10.7	12.9
9-12 quarters	15.9	21.0	10.8	13.3
<u>Earnings change, Year 1 to Year 3</u>				
Not employed in either Year 1 or Year 3 ^a (%)	20.6	22.3	19.0	18.9
Earnings decreased ^a (%)	35.3	34.8	35.8	37.8
No longer employed	16.8	16.2	17.3	18.2
Earnings decreased by less than \$250	2.2	1.6	2.7	2.8
Earnings decreased by \$250 or more	16.4	17.0	15.8	16.8
Earnings increased ^a (%)	43.8	42.5	45.0	42.8
Became employed	9.4	7.7	11.1	8.7
Earnings increased by less than \$250	3.0	2.6	3.3	2.7
Earnings increased by \$250 or more	31.4	32.3	30.6	31.4
Sample size	2,819	1,283	1,536	18,936

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on unemployment insurance (UI) records.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted, with covariates indicating site only.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

Symbols are used to indicate the results of tests of statistical significance of differences: ● indicates that the difference between single-parent and two-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ■ indicates that the difference between male and female members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less.

^aThis measure was not tested for statistical significance.

nine quarters) in the follow-up period, while almost a fifth were not employed at all during that time (Table 2).

Earnings

Table 2 also shows that two-parent sample members earned about \$7,900 per year during the follow-up period.¹⁴ As with indicators of employment level, there were great disparities in average annual earnings: nearly 40 percent never worked for pay or had average annual earnings of less than \$2,000, whereas 30 percent had annual average earnings of \$10,000 or more. Members of the two-parent sample earned \$2,500 or more (which is roughly equivalent to full-time [40 hours per week], minimum wage employment) during an average of 3.8 quarters of the three-year follow-up period, with more than a third of the sample having earnings of \$2,500 or more in five or more quarters. Most of these sample members also had earnings of \$3,500 or more per quarter — roughly equivalent to full-time employment with wages of \$7 or more per hour (Table 2).

Earnings Change

Over three years, the average quarterly earnings of two-parent sample members increased, rising from about \$1,500 in the quarter of random assignment to \$2,200 in the last quarter of the follow-up period (Figure 1). Over 40 percent of the two-parent sample experienced some form of earnings progression over the course of the follow-up period. Not quite 10 percent experienced earnings progression by becoming employed; that is, they were not employed in Year 1 but were employed for at least one quarter in Year 3. The other sample members who experienced earnings progression had higher quarterly earnings in the last year of the follow-up period than in the first year, with most increasing their quarterly earnings by \$250 or more (Table 2).

Employment Stability

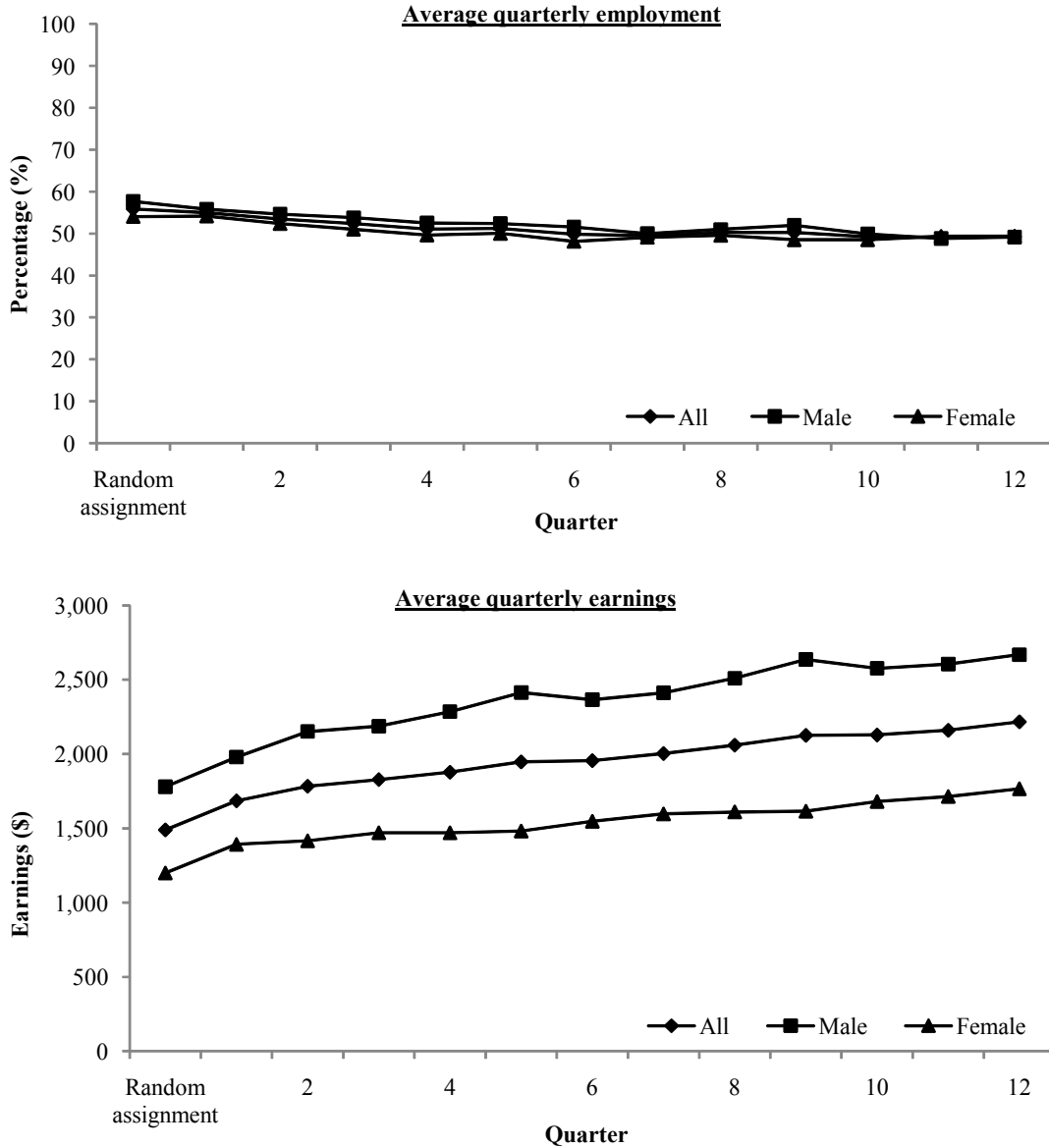
As measured by having an employment spell of at least four quarters in duration, more than half the two-parent sample members experienced at least some employment stability during the follow-up period (Table 2). In theory, the group of sample members with no episode of stable employment could have been employed in up to three-fourths of the quarters in the follow-up period. However, as shown in Table 3, most of the two-parent sample members with no episode of stable employment worked very little, if at all (an average quarterly employment rate of 14 percent), and had extremely low annual earnings (\$816).

¹⁴The average earnings estimates include zero amounts for sample members who did not work (had no earnings).

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Figure 1

Trends in Employment and Earnings of Two-Parent Sample Members in the Cumulative Follow-Up Period (Years 1-3)



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on unemployment insurance (UI) records.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted, with covariates indicating site only.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

Having an episode of employment stability (that is, at least four consecutive quarters of employment) is associated with other positive labor market outcomes. Over half the two-parent sample with an episode of employment stability had annual average earnings of \$10,000 or more, while none of the sample members without an episode of employment stability reached this level of earnings.¹⁵ Another positive outcome associated with employment stability is earnings progression; over 60 percent of the two-parent sample members with an episode of employment stability experienced earnings progression over the course of the follow-up period, compared with about a fifth of the sample members without employment stability (Table 3).

It is useful to consider whether two-parent sample members with an episode of stable employment differ in background characteristics from those without stable employment. The main difference between those with and without an episode of employment stability is their employment experiences in the year prior to random assignment: the last two rows of Table 3 show that 83 percent of those with an episode of employment stability after random assignment worked in the year before random assignment, compared with slightly over half the sample members without an episode of employment stability after random assignment. Likewise, for those with an episode of employment stability, average earnings in the year before random assignment were almost three times the average earnings of those without an episode of employment stability (Table 3).

Comparison of the Two-Parent and Single-Parent Samples

- **Overall, the two-parent and single-parent samples had similar employment and earnings patterns over the follow-up period, including similar levels of employment stability and earnings progression.**

Two-parent and single-parent sample members recorded similar patterns of employment and earnings during the three-year follow-up period (Table 2). On average, single-parent sample members began their first employment spell after random assignment somewhat earlier (0.3 quarter) than two-parent sample members. However, single-parent sample members earned about \$600 less per year — mainly because the two-parent sample included a slightly larger proportion of individuals with relatively high earnings.

¹⁵In theory, annual earnings of \$10,000 could be achieved without stable employment by earning \$5,000 in, say, the first and last quarters of the year. However, as shown in Table 2, many of the sample members — regardless of whether or not they ever had an episode of employment stability — never had quarterly earnings of at least \$2,500, and even fewer ever had quarterly earnings of at least \$3,500. Additionally, many of the sample members who did not experience an episode of employment stability were never employed or worked in only one or two quarters during the follow-up period. Thus, at least for this sample, employment stability may be a necessary condition in order to have annual average earnings of \$10,000 or more.

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Table 3

Employment, Earnings, and Selected Characteristics of Sample Members,
by Whether They Ever Had an Employment Spell of Four Quarters or Longer

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample						Single-Parent Sample	
	Total		Male		Female		Yes	No
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Employment (Years 1-3)								
Average quarterly employment (%) ♦♦♦♦	78.9	14.0	80.9	12.5	77.0	15.5	78.7	16.1
Number of quarters until first employment spell ♦♦♦♦	1.1	6.7	1.1	7.0	1.2	6.5	1.1	5.9
Average number of employment spells ♦♦♦♦	1.4	1.0	1.4	0.9	1.5	1.1	1.5	1.1
Average number of unemployment spells ♦♦♦♦	1.0	1.5	0.9	1.5	1.0	1.6	1.0	1.6
Average length, longest unemployment spell (quarters) ♦♦♦♦	2.1	9.3	2.0	9.6	2.3	9.1	2.1	8.9
Earnings (Years 1-3)								
Average annual earnings (\$) ♦♦♦♦	13,224	816	15,873	882	10,576	751	12,264	1,084
Average annual earnings of \$10,000 or more (%) ♦♦♦♦	54.4	-0.5	64.0	-0.5	44.8	-0.5	51.6	0.9
Average quarterly earnings (\$) ♦♦♦♦	3,306	204	3,968	220	2,644	188	3,066	271
Average quarterly earnings in employed quarters (\$) ♦♦♦♦	3,893	886	4,611	989	3,176	782	3,652	955
Average quarters with earnings of \$2,500 or more ♦♦♦♦	6.5	0.3	7.3	0.4	5.6	0.3	6.3	0.5
Average quarters with earnings of \$3,500 or more ♦♦♦♦	5.2	0.2	6.2	0.3	4.1	0.1	4.8	0.3
Earnings change, Year 1 to Year 3								
Not employed in either Year 1 or Year 3 ^a (%)	1.7	45.7	1.9	50.1	1.6	41.2	1.7	40.7
Earnings decreased ^a (%)	35.4	35.2	34.9	34.7	35.9	35.7	37.8	38.0
No longer employed	8.6	27.5	7.0	28.8	10.2	26.2	9.3	29.6
Earnings decreased by less than \$250	3.3	0.7	2.5	0.5	4.1	0.9	4.1	1.2
Earnings decreased by \$250 or more	23.5	7.0	25.4	5.5	21.6	8.6	24.4	7.2
Earnings increased ^a (%)	62.4	19.1	62.6	15.1	62.2	23.1	59.7	21.4
Became employed	8.3	10.6	7.4	7.7	9.2	13.5	6.6	11.4
Earnings increased by less than \$250	4.3	1.2	3.7	1.1	4.9	1.3	4.0	1.1
Earnings increased by \$250 or more	49.8	7.3	51.4	6.3	48.1	8.4	49.0	8.9

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample						Single-Parent Sample	
	Total		Male		Female		Yes	No
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
<u>Demographic characteristics</u>								
Average age (years) ♦♦♦	30.8	31.6	32.2	33.7	29.4	29.4	31.8	33.2
Race/ethnicity ^a (%)								
Hispanic	33.7	29.6	35.0	27.7	32.4	31.5	31.6	25.2
Black, non-Hispanic	22.5	16.2	21.3	16.3	23.7	16.0	30.6	28.6
White, non-Hispanic	38.4	48.7	37.5	48.9	39.3	48.5	33.7	40.7
Other	4.8	4.5	5.4	5.6	4.2	3.5	3.2	4.5
High school diploma/GED certificate or higher (%) ♦♦♦	59.9	56.7	57.8	59.7	62.1	53.8	59.7	54.8
Average number of minor children ♦	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.0	1.9
Age of youngest child ^a (%)								
2 or under	54.5	51.8	56.2	50.7	52.7	52.9	32.4	31.5
3 to 5	21.9	20.5	21.9	20.8	21.9	20.2	24.2	20.4
6 or over	23.0	27.5	21.2	28.2	24.9	26.8	42.7	47.3
Total prior AFDC/TANF receipt ^a (%)								
None	32.8	30.9	37.1	35.1	28.6	26.7	26.3	26.8
Less than 2 years	45.1	51.2	46.4	54.6	43.8	47.7	47.7	43.8
2 years or more	18.3	15.5	12.1	7.8	24.5	23.3	23.1	26.5
Employed in the year prior to random assignment (%) ♦♦♦♦	82.8	53.0	87.2	52.7	78.3	53.3	82.0	58.2
Average earnings in the year prior to random assignment (\$) ♦♦♦♦	7,647	2,711	9,959	3,465	5,336	1,956	7,311	3,417
Sample size	1,671	1,148	769	514	902	634	11,233	7,703

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on administrative records and ERA Baseline Information Forms.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted, with covariates indicating site only.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

Symbols are used to indicate the results of tests of statistical significance of differences: ♠ indicates that the difference between two-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♦ indicates that the difference between male members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♥ indicates that the difference between female members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♣ indicates that the difference between single-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less.

^aThis measure was not tested for statistical significance.

During Years 1 to 3, about the same proportion of each sample (56 percent to 57 percent) experienced an episode of employment stability — that is, an employment spell of at least four quarters (Table 2). Among single parents, the main difference between sample members with and without an episode of employment stability is their employment experiences in the year prior to random assignment. That is, like the two-parent sample, most of the single-parent sample members who had an employment spell lasting four or more quarters during the follow-up period (82 percent) had worked for pay in the year before random assignment, whereas fewer of those without an episode of employment stability (58 percent) had been recently employed (Table 3).

Comparison of Men and Women in the Two-Parent Sample

- **Male and female two-parent sample members had similar employment levels over the three-year follow-up period, but male sample members had higher earnings. Men and women in the two-parent sample were equally likely to experience employment stability and earnings advancement.**

Similar proportions of men and women in the two-parent sample were employed in each quarter of the follow-up period (Figure 1).¹⁶ While the average quarterly employment rate was similar for men and women, with about half of each subgroup employed during any follow-up quarter, the distribution of the sample members in total quarters employed varied by gender. That is, a greater proportion of men never worked during the follow-up period, but men were also more likely to have worked in over 75 percent of the quarters in the follow-up period. In contrast, women were more likely than men to have experienced low-to-moderate employment stability, working between 25 percent and 75 percent of the quarters in Years 1 to 3 (Table 2).

On average, men earned \$3,300 more per year than women (Table 2).¹⁷ About one-fourth of women had average annual earnings of \$10,000 or more, compared with over one-third of men. Average quarterly earnings increased for both subgroups over the follow-up

¹⁶Female members of the two-parent sample were less likely than males to be employed prior to random assignment. Controlling for this difference, along with other differences in background characteristics and pre-random assignment employment experiences, the differences between female and male sample members' employment rates are much larger, with female sample members consistently working more than male sample members (Appendix Table A.3). That is, among those who were employed prior to random assignment, female sample members were more likely than male sample members to be employed during the follow-up period.

¹⁷Inasmuch as average earnings for males includes more zero values — since males were more likely than females never to have worked — the difference between male and female earnings is likely understated. Comparing average quarterly earnings during quarters with employment, which does not include zero values, male sample members' average is close to \$1,000 more than the female sample members' average, translating to an annual difference of \$4,000.

period, with the difference by gender in quarterly earnings increasing over the course of the 12 quarters (three years). A larger proportion of men earned at least \$2,500 (full-time, minimum-wage level) in five or more quarters, while female sample members were more likely to have never had a quarter with earnings of \$2,500 or more (Table 2).¹⁸

For both men and women, having an episode of stable employment — that is, a spell lasting at least four quarters — was associated with other positive labor market outcomes, including earnings progression (Table 3). Gender differences in earnings are relatively large among sample members with employment during four or more consecutive quarters. Among these sample members, men earned over \$5,000 more per year than women (\$15,873, compared with \$10,576) while having only slightly higher average quarterly employment rates (80.9 percent, compared with 77.0 percent). The gender difference in earnings is even more apparent in the average quarterly earnings in quarters with employment (that is, average earnings ignoring “zeros” for quarters without employment): the average for male sample members (\$4,611) is more than \$1,000 greater than the average for female sample members (\$3,176).¹⁹ In contrast, the gender difference in average earnings for those who never had an episode of employment stability during the follow-up period is about \$100, as is the difference in average quarterly earnings in quarters with employment.

About 60 percent of both the men and the women with employment stability experienced some form of positive earnings change. Among those without employment stability, earnings progression was fairly rare, in part because about two-fifths were jobless in both the first and the third year of the follow-up period. As with the full sample, both male and female sample members with an episode of employment stability after random assignment were much more likely to have worked for pay before random assignment than those who did not have an episode of employment stability after random assignment.

¹⁸Prior to random assignment, female members of the two-parent sample were less likely to work than males and had lower earnings, on average. Controlling for this and other differences in background characteristics and pre-random assignment employment experiences reduced the difference between male and female sample members’ earnings (Appendix Table A.4).

¹⁹Some of the gender difference is likely due to the larger amount of employment experience that male sample members had, compared with female sample members. However, when controlling for differences in background characteristics and pre-random assignment employment experiences (Appendix Table A.4), the gender difference in the earnings of sample members with stable employment persists, even though differences in employment levels reverse (that is, female sample members have a higher average quarterly employment rate). Thus, some of the gender difference is due to other factors not measured in the data, such as differences in hours worked or in the types of jobs held. (In general, for example, men are more likely to be employed in higher-paying industries, such as construction or manufacturing, while women are more likely to be employed in lower-paying, service sector industries.) In addition, some or all of the gender difference may be due to the unmeasured family-level differences that resulted in either the male or the female member of the two-parent family becoming the family’s representative in the sample.

Public Assistance Patterns in the Follow-Up Period

- **About half the two-parent sample received TANF during one or more months of the three-year follow-up period, while over 80 percent received food stamps. Receipt rates for both types of assistance declined steadily over the follow-up period. Sample members who received public assistance before random assignment were more likely than nonrecipients to receive benefits during the last year of follow-up.**

As shown in Table 4, about 51 percent of two-parent sample members received TANF during at least one quarter of the follow-up period. Figure 2 shows that the receipt rates for the two-parent sample declined steadily over the follow-up period, from nearly 50 percent during the quarter of random assignment to around 10 percent in the last quarter of Year 3. Those who received TANF in Year 3 averaged almost seven times as many months of TANF receipt over the follow-up period than sample members who did not receive TANF in Year 3. Table 5 shows that the longer-term recipients also had higher average monthly grants both before random assignment and during the follow-up period. Sample members who received TANF in Year 3 were more likely to have a TANF receipt history than sample members who did not receive TANF in Year 3. Yet family composition at random assignment — in terms of the number of children and the age of the youngest child — was similar for both recipients and nonrecipients of TANF in the third year after random assignment.

As shown in Table 6, most two-parent sample members (84 percent) received food stamps during the follow-up period. Receipt rates declined over the course of the follow-up, but about half the sample members were receiving food stamps in the last quarter of the follow-up period (Figure 2). Table 7 shows that those who received food stamps in Year 3 received food stamps for 27 months, on average, across Years 1 to 3 (three-quarters of the follow-up period), whereas nonrecipients averaged 7 months of food stamp receipt. The average monthly food stamp amount — about \$350 — was fairly similar for both groups, but sample members who were receiving food stamps in Year 3 had slightly higher payments in the year prior to random assignment. Compared with nonrecipients, food stamp recipients in Year 3 were more likely to have received food stamps in the year before random assignment and were more likely to have received TANF for two years or longer. Family composition, in terms of the number of children, was similar for both recipients and nonrecipients of food stamps in the third year after random assignment, but two-parent sample members who received food stamps in Year 3 were slightly more likely to have had a youngest child age 2 or younger at the time of random assignment.

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Table 4

TANF Receipt by Two-Parent and Single-Parent Sample Members

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
<u>Cumulative three year follow-up period</u>				
Ever received TANF (%) ●■	51.1	48.9	53.4	60.1
Average number of months received TANF ●■	6.7	6.3	7.0	8.2
Average annual TANF income (\$) ●	948	915	981	1,065
Among recipients:				
<i>Average number of months received TANF ●</i>	<i>12.5</i>	<i>12.1</i>	<i>12.9</i>	<i>13.7</i>
<i>Average annual TANF income (\$) ●</i>	<i>1,804</i>	<i>1,773</i>	<i>1,835</i>	<i>1,774</i>
<u>First year after random assignment</u>				
Ever received TANF (%) ●	46.4	46.0	46.7	55.5
Average number of months received TANF ●	3.4	3.5	3.4	4.2
Average annual TANF income (\$) ●■	1,452	1,552	1,351	1,616
Among recipients:				
<i>Average number of months received TANF ●■</i>	<i>7.2</i>	<i>7.4</i>	<i>7.0</i>	<i>7.7</i>
<i>Average annual TANF income (\$) ●■</i>	<i>3,114</i>	<i>3,316</i>	<i>2,913</i>	<i>2,923</i>
<u>Second year after random assignment</u>				
Ever received TANF (%) ●■	28.7	26.6	30.9	34.0
Average number of months received TANF ●■	2.0	1.8	2.1	2.5
Average annual TANF income (\$) ●	834	780	888	964
Among recipients:				
<i>Average number of months received TANF ●</i>	<i>6.7</i>	<i>6.6</i>	<i>6.8</i>	<i>7.2</i>
<i>Average annual TANF income (\$) ●</i>	<i>2,913</i>	<i>2,931</i>	<i>2,895</i>	<i>2,843</i>
<u>Third year after random assignment</u>				
Ever received TANF (%) ●■	18.8	14.5	23.1	21.9
Average number of months received TANF ●■	1.3	1.0	1.6	1.6
Average annual TANF income (\$) ■	559	414	703	614
Among recipients:				
<i>Average number of months received TANF</i>	<i>6.9</i>	<i>7.0</i>	<i>6.8</i>	<i>7.2</i>
<i>Average annual TANF income (\$) ●</i>	<i>3,087</i>	<i>3,126</i>	<i>3,047</i>	<i>2,954</i>
Sample size	2,819	1,283	1,536	18,936

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on administrative records.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted, with covariates indicating site only.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

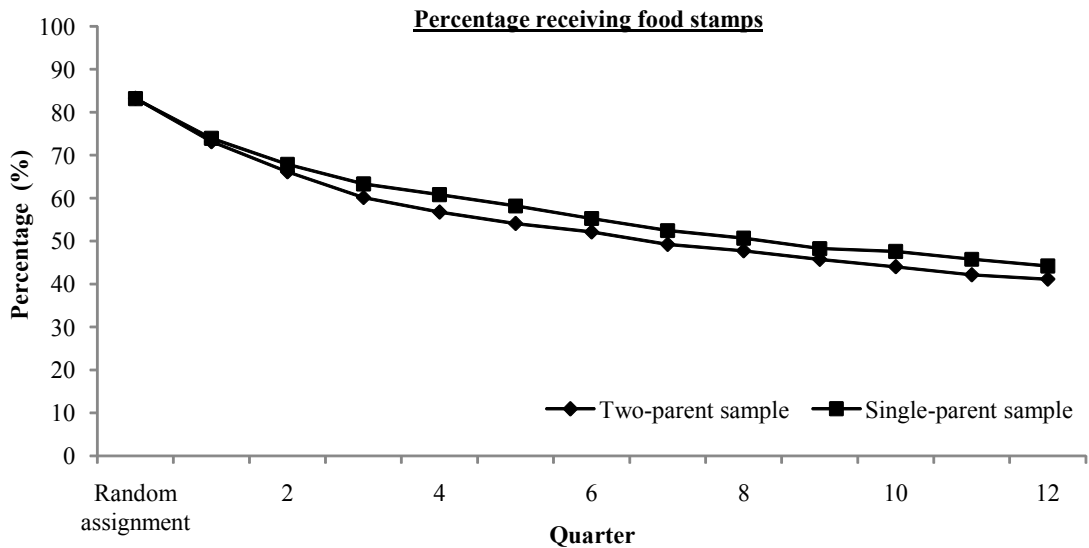
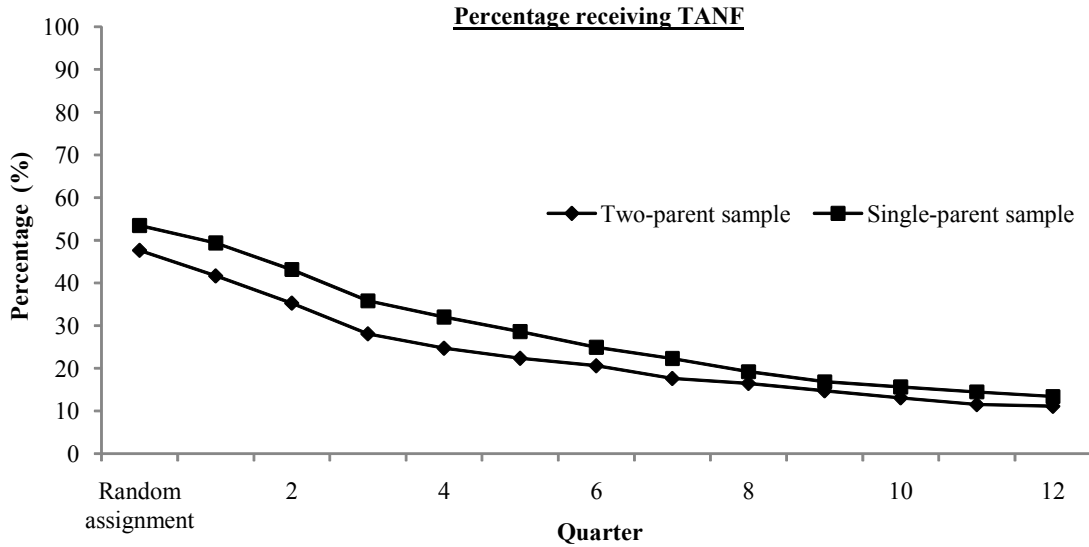
The italicized measures do not include the full report sample.

Symbols are used to indicate the results of tests of statistical significance of differences: ● indicates that the difference between single-parent and two-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ■ indicates that the difference between male and female members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less.

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Figure 2

Trends in TANF and Food Stamp Receipt of Two-Parent and Single-Parent Sample Members in the Cumulative Follow-Up Period (Years 1-3)



SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on administrative records.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted, with covariates indicating site only.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

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Table 5

TANF Participation and Family Composition of Sample Members,
by Whether They Received TANF in Year 3 of the Follow-Up Period

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample				Single-Parent Sample	
	Total		Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
History of cash assistance receipt						
Total prior AFDC/TANF receipt ^a (%)						
None	22.3	35.1	27.7	38.7	16.9	31.5
Less than 2 years	52.0	46.7	56.4	48.7	47.7	44.7
2 years or longer	22.3	15.2	13.2	8.8	31.4	21.5
In the year prior to random assignment:						
Ever received TANF (%) ♦♦♦♦	52.7	36.7	53.1	35.4	52.2	38.1
Average number of months received ♦♦♦♦	3.6	2.4	3.5	2.2	3.7	2.5
Average monthly grant (\$) ♦♦♦♦	283	182	281	181	285	184
TANF receipt, Years 1 to 3						
Average number of months received ♦♦♦♦	20.1	3.6	21.3	3.8	19.0	3.5
Average monthly grant (\$) ♦♦♦♦	501	339	521	356	477	320
Family composition						
Average number of minor children ♦♦♦	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.2
Age of youngest child ^a (%)						
2 or under	53.5	52.7	55.2	52.8	51.7	52.7
3 to 5	21.5	21.1	18.2	22.0	24.8	20.1
6 or over	24.7	25.8	26.4	24.6	22.9	27.0

(continued)

Table 5 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on administrative records and ERA Baseline Information Forms.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted, with covariates indicating site only.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

Symbols are used to indicate the results of tests of statistical significance of differences: ♦ indicates that the difference between two-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♦ indicates that the difference between male members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♥ indicates that the difference between female members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♣ indicates that the difference between single-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less.

^aThis measure was not tested for statistical significance.

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Table 6

Food Stamp Receipt by Two-Parent and Single-Parent Sample Members

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
<u>Cumulative 3-year follow-up period</u>				
Ever received food stamps (%) ■	83.6	81.5	85.6	84.3
Average number of months received food stamps ●■	17.4	16.0	18.8	18.6
Average annual food stamps income (\$) ●■	2,020	1,852	2,189	1,787
Among recipients:				
<i>Average number of months received food stamps ●■</i>	<i>20.8</i>	<i>19.7</i>	<i>22.0</i>	<i>22.1</i>
<i>Average annual food stamps income (\$) ●■</i>	<i>2,414</i>	<i>2,280</i>	<i>2,548</i>	<i>2,122</i>
<u>First year after random assignment</u>				
Ever received food stamps (%) ●	78.3	77.6	79.0	79.7
Average number of months received food stamps ●■	7.0	6.8	7.2	7.4
Average annual food stamps income (\$) ●■	2,395	2,325	2,465	2,039
Among recipients:				
<i>Average number of months received food stamps ●■</i>	<i>9.0</i>	<i>8.8</i>	<i>9.1</i>	<i>9.3</i>
<i>Average annual food stamps income (\$) ●</i>	<i>3,049</i>	<i>2,997</i>	<i>3,101</i>	<i>2,568</i>
<u>Second year after random assignment</u>				
Ever received food stamps (%) ●■	62.2	57.6	66.9	65.3
Average number of months received food stamps ●■	5.6	5.0	6.1	6.0
Average annual food stamps income (\$) ●■	1,919	1,739	2,099	1,731
Among recipients:				
<i>Average number of months received food stamps ●■</i>	<i>8.9</i>	<i>8.7</i>	<i>9.1</i>	<i>9.1</i>
<i>Average annual food stamps income (\$) ●</i>	<i>3,062</i>	<i>2,998</i>	<i>3,126</i>	<i>2,636</i>
<u>Third year after random assignment</u>				
Ever received food stamps (%) ●■	51.5	44.3	58.7	54.4
Average number of months received food stamps ●■	4.8	4.1	5.5	5.2
Average annual food stamps income (\$) ●■	1,747	1,491	2,003	1,590
Among recipients:				
<i>Average number of months received food stamps</i>	<i>9.3</i>	<i>9.2</i>	<i>9.4</i>	<i>9.5</i>
<i>Average annual food stamps income (\$) ●</i>	<i>3,358</i>	<i>3,302</i>	<i>3,415</i>	<i>2,861</i>
Sample size	2,819	1,283	1,536	18,936

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on administrative costs.

NOTES: Estimates were regression-adjusted, with covariates indicating site only.

Results shown here were estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample was weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample was weighted by site.

The italicized measures do not include the full report sample.

Symbols are used to indicate the results of tests of statistical significance of differences: ● indicates that the difference between single-parent and two-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ■ indicates that the difference between male and female members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less.

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Table 7

Receipt of Public Assistance, Food Stamp Participation, and Family Composition of Sample Members,
by Whether They Received Food Stamps in Year 3 of the Follow-Up Period

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample				Single-Parent Sample	
	Total		Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
History of cash assistance receipt						
Total prior AFDC/TANF receipt ^a (%)						
None	35.1	29.1	40.8	32.7	29.5	27.4
Less than 2 years	42.8	53.1	44.8	54.2	40.8	43.1
2 years or longer	19.0	14.6	11.3	9.1	26.7	26.7
In the year prior to random assignment:						
Ever received food stamps (%) ♦♦♦♣	81.0	66.6	80.5	62.6	81.4	79.5
Average number of months received ♦♦♦♣	6.9	4.3	6.7	4.0	7.1	7.0
Average monthly grant (\$) ♦♦♦♣	238	189	233	182	242	194
Food stamp receipt, Years 1 to 3						
Average number of months received ♦♦♦♣	27.3	7.3	27.5	7.2	27.0	27.5
Average monthly grant (\$) ♦♦♦♣	348	362	349	362	347	283
Family composition						
Average number of minor children ♠♣	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.0
Age of youngest child ^a (%)						
2 or under	55.0	51.1	56.5	51.0	53.5	32.2
3 to 5	19.9	22.2	18.0	24.1	21.8	23.1
6 or over	24.3	26.8	24.4	24.9	24.2	43.5

(continued)

Table 7 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on administrative records and ERA Baseline Information Forms.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted, with covariates indicating site only.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

Symbols are used to indicate the results of tests of statistical significance of differences: ♠ indicates that the difference between two-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♦ indicates that the difference between male members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♥ indicates that the difference between female members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♣ indicates that the difference between single-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less.

^aThis measure was not tested for statistical significance.

Comparison of the Two-Parent and Single-Parent Samples

- **Members of the single-parent sample were more likely to receive TANF during the three-year follow-up period than the two-parent sample members, but both samples had similar levels of food stamp receipt. Patterns of receipt are similar for the single-parent sample and the two-parent sample, including the proportions of the sample receiving assistance in the third year after random assignment.**

In each quarter of the follow-up period, a higher proportion of the single-parent sample members received TANF payments, compared with the two-parent sample, but the percentage of each sample who received payments declined over the observation period at similar rates (Figure 2). Like the two-parent sample, single-parent sample members who received TANF in Year 3 were more likely to have a TANF receipt history prior to random assignment, to have received TANF in many more months of the follow-up period, and to have had larger grant amounts than the single-parent sample members who did not receive TANF in Year 3 (Table 5). Single-parent sample members who received TANF in Year 3 were more likely to have had a youngest child under age 2 at random assignment and were less likely to have a youngest child age 6 or older, compared with nonrecipients (Table 5). On average, over three years, single-parent and two-parent sample members received food stamps during about half the follow-up months, with single parents averaging about one additional month of assistance (Table 6). Receipt rates declined for both samples over the follow-up period, with the two-parent sample having a slightly steeper drop. Around 50 percent of both the two-parent and the single-parent sample received food stamps in Year 3. For the single-parent sample, longer-term food stamp receipt is also associated with pre-random assignment assistance receipt and with having a youngest child under age 2 at the time of random assignment (Table 7).

Comparison of Men and Women in the Two-Parent Sample

- **Female members of the two-parent sample were more likely than male sample members to receive TANF during the three-year follow-up period, but there was little gender difference in food stamp receipt rates. Female sample members were also more likely than male sample members to be longer-term recipients of both TANF and food stamps. For both men and women, longer-term receipt of public assistance is associated with pre-random assignment receipt.**

As shown in Tables 4 through 7, there were differences by gender in the receipt of TANF and food stamps during Years 1 to 3, with female sample members generally receiving assistance longer and receiving more in total benefits. Differences grew larger over time. In

Year 3, 59 percent of women received food stamps during at least one month, compared with 44 percent of men (Table 6). By about 8 percentage points (23 percent to 15 percent), women were also more likely to receive TANF benefits during Year 3 (Table 4). However, public assistance is a characteristic of the sample member's family (assistance unit), and so these differences in public assistance receipt indicate differences between the sample members' families. As discussed above, there were underlying differences among the two-parent families in the ERA sample, which may have determined which adult member of the family was most in contact with welfare office staff and, thus, was the family member randomly assigned, resulting in the gender difference in public assistance receipt described here.

Summary and Conclusion

The ERA two-parent sample is fairly similar to the ERA single-parent sample in age and educational attainment and other background characteristics and in levels of employment and food stamp receipt in the year prior to random assignment. Two-parent sample members had higher average earnings, however, and were less likely to have received TANF payments in the year prior to random assignment. Among two-parent sample members, men were more likely to have been employed in the year prior to random assignment, while women were more likely to have received public assistance during that year and also had a longer receipt period and higher payment amounts.

Almost all of two-parent sample members (about 80 percent) were employed during at least one quarter of the follow-up period, but most experienced at least one spell of joblessness. Earnings were generally low for two-parent sample members; only about 30 percent had earnings above full-time minimum wage levels for an entire year. Some of the two-parent sample members increased their earnings over the follow-up period, with earnings progression being strongly tied to employment stability. The two-parent sample's employment and earnings patterns are similar to those of the single-parent sample, but this finding may not be generalizable to all two-parent and single-parent cases because of the unique aspects of sample intake for ERA. Men and women in the two-parent sample differed in their employment and earnings patterns, including higher quarterly and annual earnings for men. These differences may be due to variation in the type of work, hours worked, wage rates, overall skill/experience, or the peculiarities of the sample.

Single parents and members of two-parent families exited from TANF rapidly during the follow-up period, but many members of both samples continued to receive food stamps during Year 3. These relatively high food stamp receipt rates for both samples strongly suggest that most families in the ERA study continued to have low incomes from earnings and other sources after random assignment. For both TANF and food stamps, similar proportions of the single-parent and two-parent samples had long-term receipt during the follow-up period.

However, additional study is required to determine whether the factors behind the long-term receipt of two-parent families are similar to those affecting single-parent families. Differences in both TANF and food stamp receipt among two-parent families that are represented by males in the sample and those represented by females (especially in Year 3) suggest that two-parent families vary in terms of their interaction with public assistance programs and, probably, in family income from earnings and other sources.

In conclusion, while this analysis identifies differences between adults in low-income two-parent and single-parent families, the two groups are fairly similar in terms of both background characteristics and outcomes. Specifically, employment retention and advancement is as great a concern for two-parent family members in the sample as it is for members of the single-parent sample. While this analysis cannot speak to the effectiveness of the ERA programs for the two-parent family population, it does demonstrate a need equivalent to the single-parent family population's for services to support employment retention and advancement. In addition, differences in earnings and public assistance receipt that were found for sample members with or without stable employment after random assignment suggest a general need for different types of services targeted according to employment history.²⁰ Finally, whether or not adults in two-parent families respond differently than single parents to employment-related interventions (as is suggested by the literature) is still an open question. As states increasingly serve both two-parent and single-parent families in the same program, differential effects for two-parent families should be considered. Although, as demonstrated in this report, the needs and challenges faced by low-income two-parent families appear to be similar to those of single-parent families, the most effective employment retention and advancement services may differ for these groups.

²⁰This association is also noted in other ERA studies. For more information, see Hendra et al. (2010) and Miller, Deitch, and Hill (2010).

Appendix A

Supplementary Tables

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table A.1

The Distribution of the Research Sample Across Sites

Site	Unweighted			Weighted		
	Two-Parent Sample		Single-Parent Sample	Two-Parent Sample		Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Eugene	265	169	96	1,179	160	192
Los Angeles EJC	207	118	89	1,183	160	192
Medford	464	234	230	1,164	160	192
Riverside Phase 2 ^a	483	300	183	3,029	160	192
Riverside PASS	455	192	263	2,770	160	192
Salem	316	127	189	1,504	160	192
South Carolina	259	28	231	2,776	160	192
Texas	372	115	255	5,331	160	192
Corpus Christi	234	84	150	1,727	117	113
Fort Worth	68	19	49	1,572	26	37
Houston ^b	70	12	56	2,032	17	42
Sample size	2,821	1,283	1,536	18,936	1,283	1,536

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on ERA Baseline Information Forms.

NOTES: Counts may not sum as indicated due to rounding.

^aRiverside Phase 2 includes the Training Focused and Work Plus programs.

^bTwo of Houston's two-parent sample members are missing gender information.

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Appendix Table A.2

Cumulative Impacts on Employment and Earnings^a

Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Eugene (Years 1-3)</u>				
Ever employed (%)	93.8	94.1	-0.3	0.926
Average quarterly employment (%)	62.9	63.5	-0.6	0.881
Average annual earnings (\$)	9,458	10,210	-752	0.472
Sample size (total = 265)	138	127		
<u>Los Angeles EJC (Years 1-3)</u>				
Ever employed (%)	79.7	82.6	-2.9	0.612
Average quarterly employment (%)	45.7	47.6	-1.9	0.689
Average annual earnings (\$)	7,437	8,540	-1,103	0.409
Sample size (total = 207)	102	105		
<u>Medford (Years 1-3)</u>				
Ever employed (%)	90.8	91.9	-1.1	0.651
Average quarterly employment (%)	68.6	68.2	0.4	0.897
Average annual earnings (\$)	12,454	11,778	676	0.394
Sample size (total = 464)	222	242		
<u>Riverside Phase 2 (Years 1-4)</u>				
Training Focused				
Ever employed (%)	92.0	92.4	-0.3	0.907
Average quarterly employment (%)	55.9	60.2	-4.3	0.287
Average annual earnings (\$)	9,182	10,189	-1,007	0.361
Sample size (total = 255)	130	125		
Work Plus				
Ever employed (%)	96.9	92.4	4.5 *	0.078
Average quarterly employment (%)	63.4	60.2	3.2	0.377
Average annual earnings (\$)	11,425	10,189	1,236	0.207
Sample size (total = 353)	228	125		
<u>Riverside PASS (Years 1-4)</u>				
Ever employed (%)	87.1	88.5	-1.4	0.650
Average quarterly employment (%)	54.1	50.8	3.3	0.278
Average annual earnings (\$)	9,277	8,044	1,233	0.165
Sample size (total = 455)	265	190		

(continued)

Appendix Table A.2 (continued)

Outcome	ERA Group	Control Group	Difference (Impact)	P-Value
<u>Salem (Years 1-3)</u>				
Ever employed (%)	79.1	83.9	-4.8	0.294
Average quarterly employment (%)	47.3	48.1	-0.8	0.843
Average annual earnings (\$)	7,026	7,320	-294	0.748
Sample size (total = 316)	167	149		
<u>South Carolina (Years 1-4)</u>				
Ever employed (%)	71.8	73.3	-1.5	0.743
Average quarterly employment (%)	46.6	42.3	4.4	0.251
Average annual earnings (\$)	6,070	5,883	187	0.812
Sample size (total = 259)	128	131		
<u>Texas - Corpus Christi (Years 1-4)</u>				
Ever employed (%)	80.4	83.5	-3.1	0.501
Average quarterly employment (%)	44.8	49.1	-4.3	0.265
Average annual earnings (\$)	5,709	5,898	-189	0.802
Sample size (total = 234)	112	122		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on state administrative records.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for pre-random assignment characteristics of sample members.

The p-value indicates the likelihood that the difference between the program and control groups arose by chance.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as follows: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; * = 10 percent.

Rounding may cause slight discrepancies in calculating sums and differences.

Averages for dollar amounts includes zero values for those with no earnings, TANF grants, or food stamp benefits.

^aThe follow-up period ranges from three to four years, depending on the site.

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Appendix Table A.3

**Employment and Earnings in the Cumulative Follow-Up Period (Years 1-3),
Controlling for Pre-Random Assignment Characteristics**

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
<u>Employment</u>				
Ever employed (%) ●■	82.0	79.8	84.1	84.4
Average quarterly employment (%) ■	51.0	49.5	52.6	51.3
Percentage of quarters employed ^a				
Never employed	18.0	20.2	15.9	15.6
1% - 25%	16.9	17.2	16.6	19.1
26% - 50%	16.5	16.0	17.0	16.8
51% - 75%	16.8	15.3	18.4	17.0
76% - 100%	31.8	31.4	32.2	31.5
Number of quarters until first employment spell ●■	3.4	3.6	3.1	3.0
Average number of employment spells ●■	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.4
Average length, longest employment spell (quarters) ■	5.3	5.1	5.4	5.2
Quarters in longest employment spell ^a (%)				
Never employed	18.0	20.2	15.9	15.6
1-2 quarters	17.4	17.5	17.3	19.9
3-4 quarters	15.6	15.0	16.2	16.2
5-8 quarters	21.5	20.4	22.6	21.7
9-12 quarters	27.5	26.9	28.1	26.5
Average number of unemployment spells ●	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.3
Average length, longest unemployment spell (quarters) ■	5.2	5.4	5.0	5.1
Quarters in longest unemployment spell ^a (%)				
Never unemployed	18.1	17.0	19.2	17.5
1-2 quarters	19.5	19.9	19.0	21.0
3-4 quarters	15.8	14.6	16.9	14.9
5-8 quarters	18.4	18.5	18.3	20.7
9-12 quarters	28.3	30.0	26.7	25.9
Employed entire follow-up period (%)	18.1	17.0	19.2	17.5
Had employment spell of at least 4 quarters (%) ■	56.5	54.3	58.7	56.0
<u>Earnings</u>				
Average annual earnings (\$) ●■	7,392	8,075	6,709	7,001
Average annual earnings category ^a (%)				
\$0	18.0	20.2	15.9	15.6
\$1 - \$1,999	21.2	19.7	22.6	23.2
\$2,000 - \$4,999	16.5	15.2	17.9	16.3
\$5,000 - \$9,999	15.6	14.7	16.6	17.3
\$10,000 - \$14,999	10.7	8.6	12.9	11.4
\$15,000 - \$19,999	7.3	7.6	6.9	8.4
\$20,000 or higher	10.6	14.0	7.2	7.8

(continued)

Appendix Table A.3 (continued)

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
Average annual earnings of \$10,000 or more (%) ■	28.6	30.2	27.0	27.5
Average quarterly earnings (\$) ●■	1,848	2,019	1,677	1,750
Average quarterly earnings in employed quarters (\$) ●■	2,457	2,693	2,221	2,377
Average quarters with earnings of \$2,500 or more	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.6
Number of quarters earning above \$2,500 ^a (%)				
Never employed	18.0	20.2	15.9	15.6
No quarters with earnings above \$2,500	21.1	17.8	24.4	23.3
1-2 quarters	17.0	16.6	17.4	16.5
3-4 quarters	9.3	9.9	8.7	10.7
5-8 quarters	15.6	15.9	15.3	15.6
9-12 quarters	18.9	19.6	18.2	18.3
Average quarters with earnings of \$3,500 or more ●■	2.8	3.1	2.5	2.6
Number of quarters earning above \$3,500 ^a (%)				
Never employed	18.0	20.2	15.9	15.6
No quarters with earnings above \$3,500	32.6	27.7	37.6	35.1
1-2 quarters	15.4	15.0	15.8	15.5
3-4 quarters	8.1	8.7	7.5	9.3
5-8 quarters	11.8	12.5	11.2	12.5
9-12 quarters	14.0	15.9	12.0	12.0
<u>Earnings change, Year 1 to Year 3</u>				
Not employed in either Year 1 or Year 3 ^a (%)	19.5	21.9	17.1	17.6
Earnings decreased ^a (%)	36.3	35.7	36.8	38.5
No longer employed	17.3	17.3	17.2	18.5
Earnings decreased by less than \$250	2.2	1.6	2.9	2.8
Earnings decreased by \$250 or more	16.8	16.8	16.8	17.1
Earnings increased ^a (%)	44.1	42.3	45.9	43.5
Became employed	9.5	8.6	10.4	9.0
Earnings increased by less than \$250	3.3	2.8	3.7	2.8
Earnings increased by \$250 or more	31.3	30.9	31.7	31.7
Sample size	2,819	1,283	1,536	18,936

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on unemployment insurance (UI) records.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics and pre-random assignment employment, earnings, and public assistance receipt.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

Symbols are used to indicate the results of tests of statistical significance of differences: ● indicates that the difference between single-parent and two-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ■ indicates that the difference between male and female members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less.

^aThis measure was not tested for statistical significance.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table A.4

Employment, Earnings, and Selected Characteristics of Sample Members,
by Whether They Ever Had an Employment Spell of Four Quarters or Longer,
Controlling for Pre-Random Assignment Characteristics

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample				Single-Parent Sample	
	Total		Male		Female	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Employment (Years 1-3)						
Average quarterly employment (%) ♦♦♦♦	77.2	16.9	77.9	15.2	76.5	18.6
Number of quarters until first employment spell ♦♦♦♦	1.5	5.8	1.6	6.0	1.4	5.6
Average number of employment spells ♦♦♦♦	1.5	1.1	1.4	1.1	1.5	1.1
Average number of unemployment spells ♦♦♦♦	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.5	1.0	1.5
Average length, longest unemployment spell (quarters) ♦♦♦♦	2.3	8.9	2.2	9.2	2.4	8.7
Earnings (Years 1-3)						
Average annual earnings (\$) ♦♦♦♦	12,049	1,198	13,768	839	10,329	1,558
Average annual earnings of \$10,000 or more (%) ♦♦♦♦	49.5	0.9	55.2	-1.2	43.8	3.1
Average quarterly earnings (\$) ♦♦♦♦	3,012	300	3,442	210	2,582	389
Average quarterly earnings in employed quarters (\$) ♦♦♦♦	3,570	974	4,047	969	3,093	980
Average quarters with earnings of \$2,500 or more ♦♦♦♦	6.0	0.5	6.5	0.4	5.6	0.7
Average quarters with earnings of \$3,500 or more ♦♦♦♦	4.6	0.3	5.3	0.2	3.9	0.4
Earnings change, Year 1 to Year 3						
Not employed in either Year 1 or Year 3 ^a (%)	2.9	41.2	3.3	44.8	2.5	37.7
Earnings decreased ^a (%)	34.5	38.6	33.5	38.4	35.5	38.7
No longer employed	8.3	28.9	6.7	30.3	10.0	27.5
Earnings decreased by less than \$250	3.3	0.8	2.4	0.6	4.2	1.0
Earnings decreased by \$250 or more	22.9	8.8	24.4	7.5	21.4	10.2
Earnings increased ^a (%)	62.3	20.1	63.0	16.9	61.6	23.4
Became employed	9.2	9.7	9.1	7.3	9.3	12.0
Earnings increased by less than \$250	4.4	1.8	3.8	1.7	5.0	1.9
Earnings increased by \$250 or more	48.7	8.7	50.0	7.8	47.4	9.5

(continued)

Appendix Table A.4 (continued)

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample						Single-Parent Sample	
	Total		Male		Female		Yes	No
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Demographic characteristics								
Average age (years) ♦♦	31.7	32.0	33.3	34.0	30.0	30.1	31.3	32.0
Race/ethnicity ^a (%)								
Hispanic	32.6	28.9	33.4	27.1	31.9	30.6	31.8	25.9
Black, non-Hispanic	23.9	18.3	24.1	19.3	23.7	17.3	31.7	30.2
White, non-Hispanic	38.3	47.7	36.6	47.0	40.0	48.5	32.6	38.9
Other	4.7	4.0	5.2	5.0	4.1	3.0	3.1	4.1
High school diploma/GED certificate or higher (%) ♦♦♦	58.0	57.1	53.1	57.8	62.8	56.5	56.5	52.8
Average number of minor children ♦	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.3	2.0	1.9
Age of youngest child ^a (%)								
2 or under	56.9	53.1	63.0	57.4	50.8	48.8	37.7	38.2
3 to 5	21.5	21.9	21.6	22.9	21.5	21.0	24.3	22.3
6 or over	21.1	24.9	14.8	19.5	27.4	30.4	37.2	38.6
Total prior AFDC/TANF receipt ^a (%)								
None	31.3	30.5	34.4	35.3	28.2	25.7	26.0	26.9
Less than 2 years	45.2	50.4	47.2	54.5	43.2	46.4	49.1	45.8
2 years or more	20.5	16.3	15.2	7.6	25.9	25.0	22.2	24.7
Employed in the year prior to random assignment (%) ♦♦♦♦	84.5	55.4	90.0	55.9	79.0	54.9	82.3	59.7
Average earnings in the year prior to random assignment (\$) ♦♦♦♦	7,611	2,666	9,930	3,317	5,293	2,014	7,104	3,297
Sample size	1,671	1,148	769	514	902	634	11,233	7,703

(continued)

Appendix Table A.4 (continued)

SOURCES: MDRC calculations based on administrative records and ERA Baseline Information Forms.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted using ordinary least squares, controlling for background characteristics and pre-random assignment employment, earnings, and public assistance receipt.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site.

Symbols are used to indicate the results of tests of statistical significance of differences: ♦ indicates that the difference between two-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♦ indicates that the difference between male members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♥ indicates that the difference between female members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ♣ indicates that the difference between single-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less.

^aThis measure was not tested for statistical significance.

The Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Appendix Table A.5

**Employment and Earnings in the Cumulative Follow-Up Period (Years 1-3),
Using an Alternative Weighting Strategy for the Single-Parent Sample**

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
<u>Employment</u>				
Ever employed (%) ●■	80.9	79.4	82.5	83.0
Average quarterly employment (%)	50.9	51.8	50.0	51.2
Percentage of quarters employed ^a				
Never employed	19.1	20.6	17.5	17.0
1% - 25%	16.6	15.6	17.7	18.5
26% - 50%	15.7	14.2	17.3	16.0
51% - 75%	16.2	14.2	18.2	16.5
76% - 100%	32.4	35.4	29.4	32.2
Number of quarters until first employment spell ●	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.2
Average number of employment spells ●■	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.3
Average length, longest employment spell (quarters) ■	5.3	5.5	5.2	5.3
Quarters in longest employment spell ^a (%)				
Never employed	19.1	20.6	17.5	17.0
1-2 quarters	16.8	15.3	18.3	18.9
3-4 quarters	14.6	12.9	16.4	15.5
5-8 quarters	21.0	19.9	22.0	21.2
9-12 quarters	28.5	31.3	25.8	27.4
Average number of unemployment spells ●■	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3
Average length, longest unemployment spell (quarters)	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.1
Quarters in longest unemployment spell ^a (%)				
Never unemployed	19.0	20.9	17.1	18.3
1-2 quarters	18.6	19.1	18.1	20.5
3-4 quarters	15.1	13.3	16.9	14.3
5-8 quarters	18.1	17.0	19.2	19.9
9-12 quarters	29.1	29.6	28.6	27.0
Employed entire follow-up period (%) ■	19.0	20.9	17.1	18.3
Had employment spell of at least 4 quarters (%)	56.6	57.2	56.1	55.9
<u>Earnings</u>				
Average annual earnings (\$) ●■	7,927	9,598	6,256	7,333
Average annual earnings category ^a (%)				
\$0	19.1	20.6	17.5	17.0
\$1 - \$1,999	19.9	16.1	23.6	21.9
\$2,000 - \$4,999	15.3	12.7	17.8	15.4
\$5,000 - \$9,999	14.9	13.6	16.2	16.6
\$10,000 - \$14,999	10.7	9.4	12.0	11.6
\$15,000 - \$19,999	7.8	9.2	6.5	8.7
\$20,000 or higher	12.3	18.3	6.4	8.9

(continued)

Appendix Table A.5 (continued)

Outcome	Two-Parent Sample			Single-Parent Sample
	Total	Male	Female	
Average annual earnings of \$10,000 or more (%) ■	30.9	36.9	24.9	29.2
Average quarterly earnings (\$) ●■	1,982	2,400	1,564	1,833
Average quarterly earnings in employed quarters (\$) ●■	2,609	3,095	2,123	2,460
Average quarters with earnings of \$2,500 or more ■	3.8	4.4	3.3	3.7
Number of quarters earning above \$2,500 ^a (%)				
Never employed	19.1	20.6	17.5	17.0
No quarters with earnings above \$2,500	19.3	13.5	25.2	22.0
1-2 quarters	16.0	14.6	17.4	15.5
3-4 quarters	9.2	9.7	8.8	10.2
5-8 quarters	15.6	16.5	14.7	15.6
9-12 quarters	20.8	25.1	16.5	19.7
Average quarters with earnings of \$3,500 or more ●■	3.0	3.7	2.3	2.8
Number of quarters earning above \$3,500 ^a (%)				
Never employed	19.1	20.6	17.5	17.0
No quarters with earnings above \$3,500	29.5	21.1	37.9	33.2
1-2 quarters	14.6	13.6	15.6	14.6
3-4 quarters	8.4	9.3	7.5	9.2
5-8 quarters	12.5	14.3	10.7	13.0
9-12 quarters	15.9	21.0	10.8	13.1
<u>Earnings change, Year 1 to Year 3</u>				
Not employed in either Year 1 or Year 3 ^a (%)	20.7	22.3	19.0	18.9
Earnings decreased ^a (%)	35.3	34.8	35.8	37.6
No longer employed	16.7	16.2	17.3	18.1
Earnings decreased by less than \$250	2.2	1.6	2.7	2.8
Earnings decreased by \$250 or more	16.4	17.0	15.7	16.7
Earnings increased ^a (%)	43.8	42.6	45.1	42.9
Became employed	9.4	7.7	11.1	8.7
Earnings increased by less than \$250	3.0	2.6	3.3	2.8
Earnings increased by \$250 or more	31.5	32.3	30.7	31.4
Sample size	2,819	1,283	1,536	18,936

SOURCE: MDRC calculations based on unemployment insurance (UI) records.

NOTES: Estimates are regression-adjusted, with covariates indicating site only.

Results shown here are estimated from samples pooled across sites. The two-parent sample is weighted by site and gender. The single-parent sample is weighted by site, counting the three Texas sites as one site instead of three sites.

Symbols are used to indicate the results of tests of statistical significance of differences: ● indicates that the difference between single-parent and two-parent sample members is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less; ■ indicates that the difference between male and female members of two-parent families is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.1 or less.

^aThis measure was not tested for statistical significance.

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MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social and education policy research organization dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through its research and the active communication of its findings, MDRC seeks to enhance the effectiveness of social and education policies and programs.

Founded in 1974 and located in New York City and Oakland, California, MDRC is best known for mounting rigorous, large-scale, real-world tests of new and existing policies and programs. Its projects are a mix of demonstrations (field tests of promising new program approaches) and evaluations of ongoing government and community initiatives. MDRC's staff bring an unusual combination of research and organizational experience to their work, providing expertise on the latest in qualitative and quantitative methods and on program design, development, implementation, and management. MDRC seeks to learn not just whether a program is effective but also how and why the program's effects occur. In addition, it tries to place each project's findings in the broader context of related research — in order to build knowledge about what works across the social and education policy fields. MDRC's findings, lessons, and best practices are proactively shared with a broad audience in the policy and practitioner community as well as with the general public and the media.

Over the years, MDRC has brought its unique approach to an ever-growing range of policy areas and target populations. Once known primarily for evaluations of state welfare-to-work programs, today MDRC is also studying public school reforms, employment programs for ex-offenders and people with disabilities, and programs to help low-income students succeed in college. MDRC's projects are organized into five areas:

- Promoting Family Well-Being and Children's Development
- Improving Public Education
- Raising Academic Achievement and Persistence in College
- Supporting Low-Wage Workers and Communities
- Overcoming Barriers to Employment

Working in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada and the United Kingdom, MDRC conducts its projects in partnership with national, state, and local governments, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.

