

# POVERTY & FAMILY SUPPORTS

## FACT SHEET

# Public Programs Lift Millions of Women and Children Out of Poverty

Updated October 2015

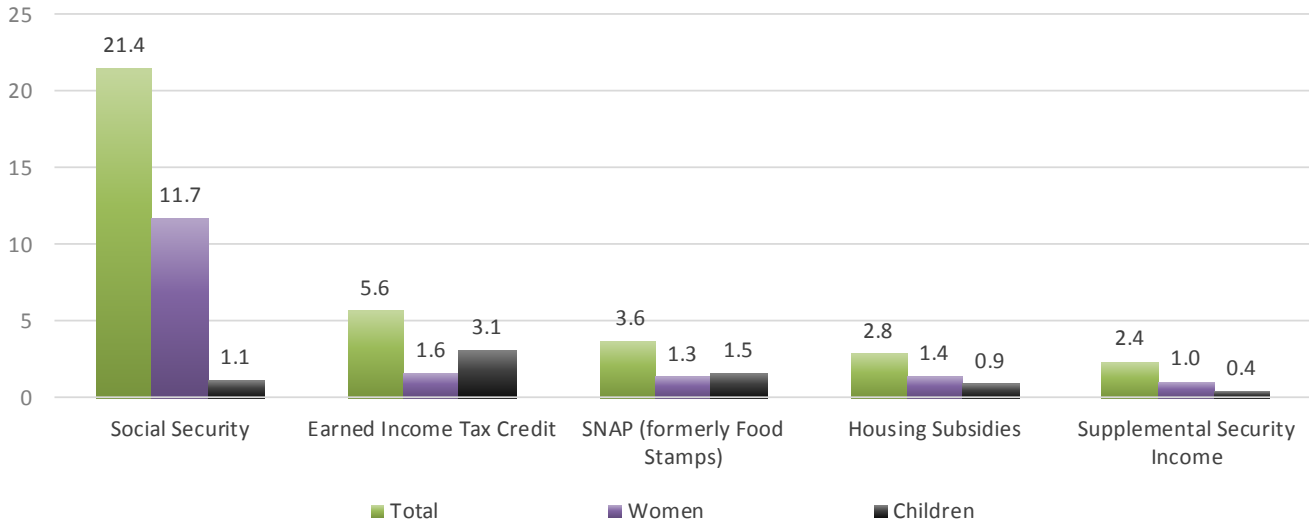
Amelia Bell, Katherine Gallagher Robbins, Julie Vogtman

*Public social insurance and safety net programs are critical to the economic security of women and families.<sup>1</sup> Some of these programs are counted in the official poverty measure and lift millions of people out of poverty. Others, primarily non-cash benefits like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) and tax credits like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), are not counted in the official poverty measure but boost the incomes of millions above the poverty line.<sup>2</sup>*

Social Security, the EITC, SNAP, unemployment insurance, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are five key programs that lifted families' incomes above the official poverty line in 2014.<sup>3</sup>

- **Social Security** is a social insurance program that protects workers and their families when income is lost due to retirement, disability, or death. It covers nearly all workers and their families, not just those with low incomes, but is the nation's most successful anti-poverty program. Social Security lifted more than 21.4 million people out of poverty:
  - o Nearly 14.5 million people 65 and older, including nearly 8.6 million older women;
  - o More than 5.8 million adults 18-64, including more than 3.1 million women; and
  - o More than 1.1 million children.
- The **EITC** supplements wages for low- and moderate-income working families. The EITC lifted the incomes of more than 5.6 million people above the poverty line:
  - o More than 2.5 million adults 18 and older, including almost 1.6 million women; and
  - o Nearly 3.1 million children.
- **SNAP** benefits help millions of families put food on the table. SNAP lifted the incomes of more than 3.6 million people above the poverty line, including:
  - o 388,000 people 65 and older, including nearly 276,000 women;
  - o More than 1.7 million adults 18-64, including almost 1.1 million women; and
  - o More than 1.5 million children.
- **Housing Subsidies** provide support to families who need assistance affording a place to live. Housing subsidies lifted the incomes of more than 2.8 million people above the poverty line:
  - o Nearly 2.0 million adults, including almost 1.4 million women 18 and older; and
  - o More than 867,000 children.
- **SSI** provides income support for low-income individuals who are elderly or living with disabilities. SSI lifted almost 2.4 million people out of poverty:
  - o Nearly 387,000 people 65 and older, including more than 241,000 women;
  - o Almost 1.6 million adults 18-64, including more than 792,000 women; and
  - o More than 406,000 children.

## Number of People Whose Incomes were Lifted Above the Poverty Line in 2014, by Program (in millions)



Source: Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2015

www.nwlc.org 

*Programs like Social Security, the EITC, SNAP, housing subsidies, and SSI work—they move millions of women and children out of poverty and improve the economic security of millions more. They need to be protected and strengthened—not cut.*

1 NWLC, Cutting Programs for Low-Income People Especially Hurts Women and Their Families (Feb. 2015), available at <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/cutting-programs-low-income-people-especially-hurts-women-and-their-families>.

2 NWLC, FAQs about the Census Bureau's Official Poverty Measure (Sept. 2015), available at <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/faqs-about-census-bureau%E2%80%99s-poverty-measures>.

3 All data on poverty are NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement 2015 (CPS ASEC) using CPS Table Creator, available at <http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html> (last visited Oct. 13, 2015).