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New UNH Analysis Finds EITC Key in Reducing Poverty for Young Adult Parents

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(HTTPS://WWW.UNH.EDU/UNHTODAY/NEWS/2020/03/31/NEW-UNH-ANALYSIS-FINDS-EITC-KEY-REDUCING-POVERTY-YOUNG-ADULT-PARENTS)

DURHAM, N.H.—Young adult parents (age 18-24) are disproportionately poor compared to both other young adults and older parents, and an estimated two-thirds of those who are poor receive the earned income tax credit (EITC), according to new research (https://carsey.unh.edu/publication/EITC-safety-net-young-adult-parents) by the Carsey School of Public Policy at the University of New Hampshire. More than nine in 10 of them report participating in a safety net program.

“More than four in five young adult parents participate in at least one major safety net program,” said Jess Carson, research assistant professor with the Carsey School’s Vulnerable Families Research Program. “The most widely used of these programs, and the most effective at reducing poverty, is the EITC. “Given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on unemployment, the EITC may be affected.”

Carson noted that 10% of poor young adult parents work in retail-related industries and 16% are in key service industries. “These industries are hard hit by the pandemic and lost earnings will affect these parents’ credit values under current EITC structure.”

Programs like the EITC are especially effective at reducing young-parent poverty. Carson estimates that under the Supplemental Poverty Measure, poverty for this group would increase by 6.7 percentage points without the EITC.

“Reliance on the EITC is near universal among poor young adults and those dollars go far in protecting these families and their children,” she said. “Policymakers could protect these credits though, perhaps by allowing filers to report prior year earnings, counting unemployment benefits as income or extending the credit to family caregivers even if they have no earned income.”

The Carsey School of Public Policy conducts research, leadership development, and engaged scholarship relevant to public policy. They address pressing challenges, striving for innovative, responsive, and equitable solutions at all levels of government and in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors.

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