



## CENTER ON URBAN & METROPOLITAN POLICY

# Rewarding Work: The Impact of the Earned Income Tax Credit in Greater Des Moines

*"...working families live throughout the Des Moines metropolitan area, and the EITC is an important source of income for these families and their jurisdictions."*



### Findings

This year the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) will provide over \$30 billion to 18.4 million low-income taxpayers across the US, making it the largest federal aid program for working poor families. This study is the first to describe the spatial distribution of the EITC in 27 metropolitan areas across the country.<sup>1</sup> An analysis of the Des Moines region shows that:<sup>2</sup>

- **In 1997, over 20,000 residents of the Des Moines region earned nearly \$30 million in federal EITC refunds.** Residents of the city of Des Moines alone received \$14 million, a share of the region's EITC dollars roughly equal to the city's share of the region's population.
- **Compared to other regions studied, the working poor in the Des Moines region were more likely to be found outside the central city.** While most cities studied were home to a disproportionate share of their regions' EITC dollars, the benefits of the credit were more evenly shared between the city and suburbs in the Des Moines region.
- **The region's low-income working families were concentrated in and around the city of Des Moines, and in a few other communities throughout the metro area.** Working poor families could be found not only in Des Moines, but also in parts of Dallas County, including Perry, Linden, and Redfield. Large percentages of families also earned the EITC in the area around Hartford (Warren County).
- **Creating a refundable state EITC would contribute an additional \$5 million to the budgets of low-income working families in the Des Moines region.** Making the Iowa state EITC refundable at 20 percent of the federal credit would help make work pay for tens of thousands of low-income families in the region.

### I. Introduction

**D**espite a great deal of public and policy interest in the working poor and working families, particularly in the aftermath of welfare reform, there is little understanding of who the working poor are and where they live. Families may claim an Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) if they are working but not earning more than roughly 200 percent of the federal

poverty level. Therefore, this survey uses EITC receipt as a measure of the number and location of low-income working residents in a metropolitan area. This Des Moines survey is one of a series looking at the EITC and its value to 27 regions around the country. Using IRS data, this survey mapped the geographic distribution of the EITC to help these regions better understand where working poor

families in their areas live. This survey confirms that working families live throughout the Des Moines metropolitan area, and that the EITC is an important source of income for these families and their jurisdictions.

## II. What Is the EITC?

The EITC is a refundable income tax credit designed to make work pay for low-income families. Congress enacted the credit in 1975 in response to high unemployment and the burden that social security taxes imposed on low-wage workers. Substantial increases in the EITC were approved by Congress several times during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Between 1984 and 1996, the amount of dollars transferred to working families through the credit increased more than 10 times (Figure 1). In 1997, over 19 million families claimed more than \$30 billion in EITCs—an average of \$1,567 per family. The EITC is now the largest federal aid program targeted to the working poor.

### A. How Does the EITC Work?

#### Eligibility

The EITC is available to families whose incomes range from below the federal poverty line to roughly double the poverty line (see Figure 2). Families with two children could earn up to \$3,888 in EITC in 2000; families with one child are eligible for a credit of up to \$2,353. Very low-income workers with no children are eligible for a small EITC.

The size of the credit increases as earnings increase, up to a point, and then remains constant at a maximum level (based on the number of dependents) before declining with each additional dollar of income (see Figure 2). For example, a household with two children and earnings between \$9,700 and \$12,700 was eligible for a \$3,888 refund for tax year 2000.

Figure 1: Earned Income Tax Credit  
Number of Families and Amount of Credit  
1975 – 2001

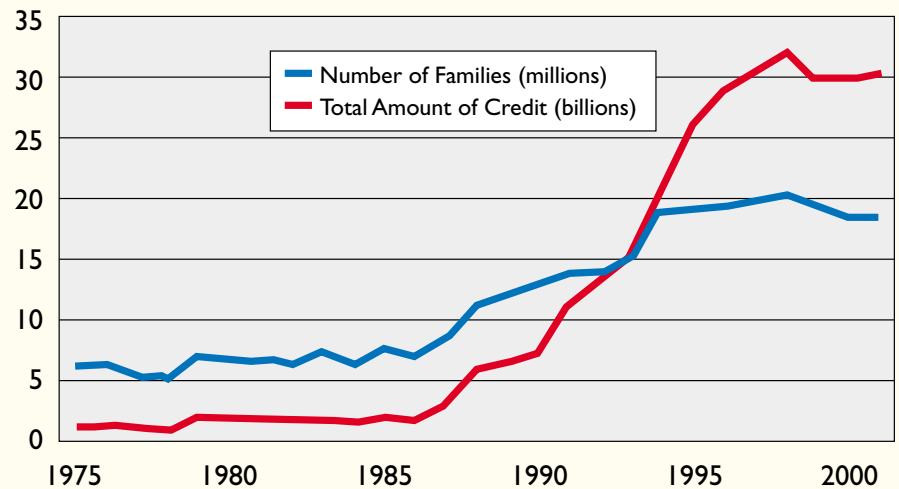


Figure 2: Size of the Credit Relative to Earned Income and Number of Dependents, 2000



The data analyzed in this survey are for tax years 1997 and 1998. In these years, the maximum credit available to families with two children was about \$3,700, and the maximum credit for families with one child was about \$2,250.

#### Applying

Workers must file a tax return and complete Schedule EIC in order to claim the credit. Taxpayers whom the IRS believes are eligible for the EITC are sent notices if they do not complete Schedule EIC. These taxpayers

may file amended returns, but low-income workers who are otherwise exempt from filing will not receive any notice unless they complete a tax return. Employers can also make the Advance EITC available to their employees, allowing eligible workers to earn a portion of their credit with each paycheck. Nearly all families, however, receive the credit in their tax refund check at the end of the year.

### B. Who Actually Claims the EITC?

In tax year 1998, half of all EITC dollars went to families who earned less than \$12,000.<sup>3</sup> The remainder went to families earning up to \$29,000.

Larger percentages of eligible families claim the EITC compared to traditional social welfare programs (TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid). Nevertheless, studies have found that many eligible households, particularly families with very low incomes, former welfare recipients, and those with language barriers, are not filing for the EITC.<sup>4</sup> Additional research also shows that many of those who are eligible have, at best, a vague understanding of how the EITC works. A recent study showed that minorities, particularly low-income Hispanic households, are less likely to know about the EITC than low-income non-Hispanic parents of any race.<sup>5</sup>

### C. Why Is the EITC Important?

A series of recent studies have provided strong evidence that the EITC significantly reduces poverty and income inequality while encouraging work and helping low-income families build assets for the future.

#### Lifts Families Out of Poverty

The EITC's success in moving families out of poverty is largely attributable to recent increases in the size of the credit and the number of working families eligible for the credit.<sup>6</sup> In 1993, the EITC helped lift 2.1 million people above the poverty line. By 1999, that figure had more than doubled to

Table 1: Who Can Get the Credit?

Occupation	Avg. Annual Salary in the Des Moines Region
Child Care Workers	\$15,670
Cooks	\$17,180
Tellers	\$17,430
Preschool Teachers	\$17,820
Security Guards	\$17,900
Fire Fighters	\$22,610
Dental Assistants	\$23,350

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

4.7 million people. In just that one year, the credit lifted 2.5 million children out of poverty—more than any other federal aid program.<sup>7</sup>

#### Increases Work

By restricting eligibility to families with earnings, the EITC promotes work. In 1984, prior to large increases in the EITC and changes in other federal transfer programs, 73 percent of single mothers with children worked at some point during the year. By 1996, 81 percent of single mothers were working at some point during the year. One study found that three-fifths of this increase in workforce participation by single mothers was attributable to increases in the EITC.<sup>8</sup> Researchers have also shown that the EITC increases work for those who previously received welfare.<sup>9</sup>

#### Supplements Wages

The wages and salaries of the working poor have not kept pace over the last 20 years with those earning larger incomes. Despite strong economic growth over the last decade, the income gap between rich and poor has widened.

In Iowa, during the late 1990s, the average before-tax income of a family in the bottom fifth of the income distribution was around \$15,000. Adjusted for inflation, these families were actually earning about 7 percent

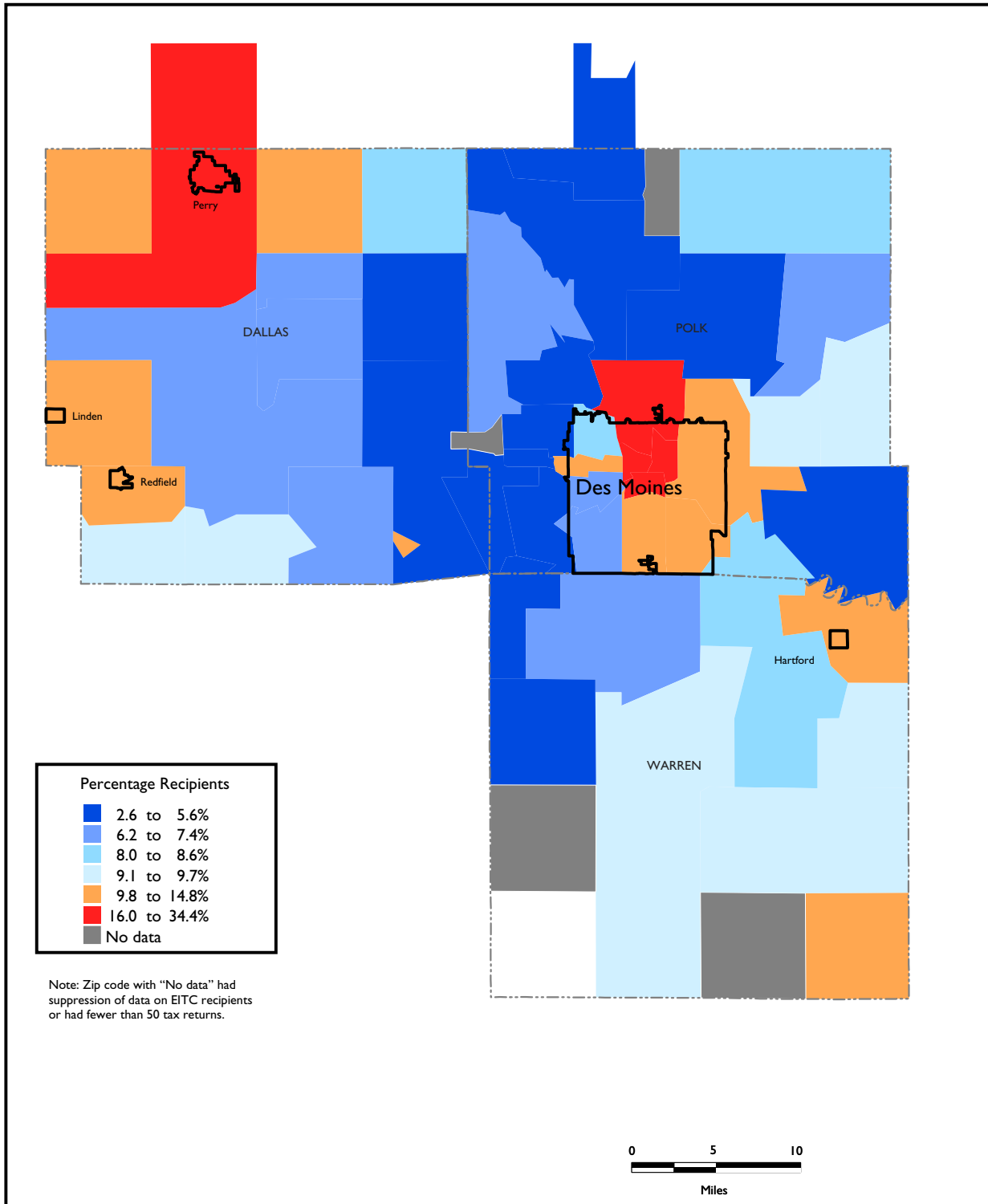
less than they were during the late 1970s. At the same time, families in the top fifth of the distribution had average before-tax income of nearly \$112,000, 20 percent more than during the late 1970s.<sup>10</sup> Research suggests that the EITC, by supplementing the wages of low-income working families, has curbed growth in national after-tax income inequality.<sup>11</sup>

#### Builds Wealth and Purchasing Power

EITC dollars represent additional income coming into the community, increasing families' purchasing power and helping them build assets for the future. The one study to investigate how families use the EITC found that over half of recipients planned to spend their refunds on investments like paying for tuition or other educational expenses, increasing their access to jobs through car repairs and other transportation improvements, moving to a new neighborhood, or putting money into a savings account. The study also found that the EITC helped the lowest-income families meet immediate needs such as utilities and rent.<sup>12</sup>



Des Moines MSA:  
EITC Recipients as a Percentage of  
Total Tax Returns by Zip Code, 1998



Data Source: U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

### III. Findings: The Value of the EITC in Greater Des Moines

This study examines the spatial distribution of the EITC in the Des Moines region, which is defined as the Des Moines Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This area includes roughly 460,000 people living in three Iowa counties (Dallas, Polk and Warren). The EITC data used for this study, which are publicly available through the Internal Revenue Service, reflect actual credits claimed by taxpayers for the tax years 1997 and 1998 (see Appendix D for further information on the data).<sup>13</sup>

#### **A. In 1997, over 20,000 residents of the Des Moines region earned nearly \$30 million in federal EITC refunds.**

Of the \$30 million in EITC refunds flowing into the Des Moines region in 1997, \$25 million was earned by working families from Polk County (see Appendix A). In that year, the EITC boosted the earnings of low-income families in the city of Des Moines alone by \$14 million. Particularly large refunds were earned by families living in the River Bend (\$2.2 million) and Greater Southside (\$3.3 million) neighborhoods. The substantial amounts of EITC dollars flowing to these small communities contributed to the economic well-being of working Des Moines families and their neighborhoods.

The benefits of the EITC extended to communities beyond Des Moines as well. Working poor families in the remainder of Polk County earned almost \$11 million. Low-income workers living in a few small communities in Dallas and Warren counties also earned large EITC refunds. For instance, families from the Hartford area of Warren County, which is 15 miles south of Des Moines, earned credits worth nearly \$1 million. EITC

refunds earned by working residents of Perry, 30 miles northwest of Des Moines in Dallas County, boosted incomes by a total of \$1 million.

The average EITC for families in the Des Moines region in 1997 was \$1,399. Families in the city of Des Moines claiming the EITC earned an average credit of \$1,427, while those in Des Moines's suburbs earned, on average, \$1,375 in credits.

#### **B. The region's low-income working families were concentrated in and around the city of Des Moines, and in a few other communities throughout the metro area.**

In 1998, more than one out of every eight (13.6 percent) taxpayers in Des Moines earned an EITC refund. Neighborhoods with much higher concentrations of working poor families were found throughout the central city. For example, in the River Bend neighborhood, more than one out of every three taxpayers benefited from the EITC. In parts of both the Capital Park and Union Park neighborhoods, nearly one quarter of all workers earned the credit. By contrast, in the city's western neighborhoods, such as Frisbee Park and Westwood, generally less than 6 percent of families received the EITC.

There were a few communities outside Des Moines that were home to significant numbers of low-income workers who benefited from the EITC. Many working poor families were concentrated in the area of Dallas County around the city of Perry, where one out of every six tax filers benefited from the EITC. In the Hartford area, southeast of Des Moines in Warren County, rates of EITC receipt were around 13 percent, relatively high for the region's suburbs.

#### **C. Compared to other regions studied, the working poor in the Des Moines region were more likely to be found outside the central city.**

The city of Des Moines received a share of the region's EITC dollars roughly equal to its share of the region's population. In contrast, across the 27 cities studied, the typical city received a share of the region's EITC dollars equal to about one and a half times its share of the region's population (see Appendix C). This indicates that relative to other regions, working poverty in greater Des Moines is less confined to the central city, and more likely to be found in places throughout the region. In this respect, the Des Moines region was similar to larger regions such as Los Angeles, San Antonio and San Diego.

The overall rates of EITC receipt in the city of Des Moines and the Des Moines region were lower than in other places studied. While 13.6 percent of Des Moines families earned the EITC, 24 percent of families in the typical city received the credit. The typical region saw 12.6 percent of workers benefit from the EITC, while 9.8 percent of the Des Moines region's workers did. Among the regions and cities studied, Oakland—with 16 percent of families in the city and 9.5 percent of families in the region earning the credit—was most similar to Des Moines in the share of families earning the EITC.

#### **D. Creating a refundable state EITC would contribute an additional \$5 million to the budgets of low-income working families in the Des Moines region.**

Iowa makes a small non-refundable EITC available to low-income workers, but because the credit can only be used to offset tax, many working poor families do not receive the full value of the credit. Iowa could convert its current non-refundable state EITC into a

*“Policymakers in the Des Moines region can leverage this investment by partnering with community institutions to preserve the value of the EITC, and by building on the federal credit at the state level.”*

refundable credit that encourages work and boosts the purchasing power of low-income working families. Such a credit would not only help to make work pay for low-income residents of the Des Moines region, but also it would relieve the burden of Iowa state income taxes on poor families.<sup>14</sup> At 20 percent of the federal credit, an Iowa refundable state EITC would add over \$5 million to the incomes of the region’s working poor in 2001. Families living in the city of Des Moines would earn an additional \$2.5 million.<sup>15</sup> By creating a refundable state EITC, Iowa would be joining ten states that have already made similar commitments to their working families.

#### **IV. What Des Moines Can Do To Leverage the EITC Locally**

**T**his study confirms that the EITC is a significant federal antipoverty support for working poor residents of the Des Moines region. Policymakers in the Des Moines region can leverage this investment by partnering with community institutions to preserve the value of the EITC, and by building on the federal credit at the state level. There are five things that Des Moines’s communities can do right now to maximize the use and value of the EITC.

##### **1. Help low-income taxpayers learn about and file for the EITC**

In 1997, the average EITC for Des Moines families claiming the credit was around \$1,400. Still, evidence suggests that many working families eligible for the credit fail to claim it. In 2000, the City of Chicago launched an education and outreach campaign to increase awareness of the EITC among low-wage workers and their employers, and to make free tax preparation available to eligible families through volunteer organizations. The campaign also alerted employers that their lower-wage workers could qualify for the Advance EITC which,

by adding a portion of the value of a worker’s anticipated EITC to each paycheck, serves to boost the take-home pay of eligible families throughout the year.

##### **2. Support community organizations that preserve the value of the EITC**

According to researchers, over half of all families who receive the federal EITC file their taxes through a tax preparation service.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, many of these services charge an exorbitant fee and even offer “refund anticipation loans”: high-interest loans that—often for \$100 and more—give taxpayers their money only a few days sooner than the Treasury would. The Center for Law and Human Service’s Tax Counseling Project and the Tax Assistance Project in Chicago, as well as the Community Action Project of Tulsa County in Oklahoma, are examples of organizations that are helping EITC recipients who need assistance in filing their returns to receive the full value of the credit. States and localities can also help recruit volunteers for the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, which provides free individual tax preparation for taxpayers claiming the EITC.

##### **3. Help families use the EITC as a gateway to financial services**

According to the Federal Reserve, 22 percent of families with less than \$25,000 in income (the majority of the EITC-eligible population) lack a bank account of any kind.<sup>17</sup> By not having this most basic access to mainstream financial services, these families must often rely on high-cost check cashing or other alternative financial services that consume large portions of their small incomes, and make it even more difficult for them to put aside small amounts of savings for the future. The average federal EITC refund in Des Moines of \$1,399 represents a large initial deposit that, with cooperation from local banks and credit unions, could help many lower-income fami-

lies open an account and begin to build modest amounts of savings. Some states and counties, including those in California and Missouri, are working with banks to make low-cost accounts available to families making the transition from welfare to work. Cities and towns in the Des Moines region, as well as the state of Iowa, could make similar efforts on behalf of “unbanked” low-income working families, making it possible for them to receive their tax refunds via Direct Deposit.

#### 4. Enact a refundable Iowa state EITC

With over 20,000 families in the Des Moines region receiving an EITC in 1998, a Iowa state refundable EITC set at 20 percent of the federal credit could provide \$5 million or more to the area’s working families. Ten states

currently make a refundable EITC available to their low-income working families through their state income tax. Because refundable state EITCs support families moving from welfare to work, Iowa could finance such a credit with unspent federal TANF dollars, or count state expenditures on a refundable credit toward its “maintenance of effort” required under TANF. In addition to supporting welfare-to-work efforts, state earned income credits help to reduce poverty among working families with children while allowing these lower-income families to share in the benefits of state income tax cuts. Importantly, with a state EITC set at 20 percent of the federal credit, Iowa would join 23 other states that have exempted their working poor families from state income taxes.<sup>18</sup>

#### 5. Use local data to identify eligible families who aren't claiming the EITC

While significant percentages of working families are aware of and file for the EITC, new entrants into the labor force—especially individuals making the transition from welfare to work—may not be aware of the credit. Data from the IRS and the Iowa Department of Revenue and Finance could make it possible for researchers to identify neighborhoods where EITC participation rates are unexpectedly low and target these areas for outreach. Using this type of data from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, researchers at the University of Wisconsin’s Employment and Training Institute were able to identify neighborhoods in Milwaukee where low percentages of the low-income families filed for the EITC.<sup>19</sup>

Appendix A: Value of Claimed EITCs for the Des Moines Region, 1997

County	Value of EITCs Claimed	Share of Regional Total Value of EITCs Claimed	Share of Regional Population
Dallas	\$2,145,000	7.3%	8.3%
Polk	\$24,952,000	85.3%	82.5%
Warren	\$2,145,000	7.3%	9.2%
<b>Regional Total</b>	<b>\$29,242,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Internal Revenue Service, 1997 ZIP Code files.

Appendix B: Profile of EITCs Received for the Des Moines Region, 1998

County	Avg. Adjusted Gross Income	Total Number of Returns	Total Number of EITCs Claimed	% of Taxpayers Filing for EITC
Dallas	\$38,745	16,102	1,464	9.1%
Polk	\$56,130	175,617	17,505	10.0%
Warren	\$38,002	17,492	1,463	8.4%
<b>Regional Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>209,211</b>	<b>20,432</b>	<b>9.8%</b>

Source: Internal Revenue Service, E-File Demographics.



Appendix C: Estimates for 27 Regions and Cities

	Region		Central City		City Share of Regional EITC Value	City Share of Regional Population
	% of Taxpayers Filing for EITC	Value of EITCs Claimed (Millions of Dollars)	% of Taxpayers Filing for EITC	Value of EITCs Claimed (Millions of Dollars)		
Akron	11.2	54.3	20.3	27.7	51.1	31.4
Atlanta	15.8	423.2	25.4	67.0	15.8	11.0
Baltimore	13.9	242.1	28.0	123.0	50.8	26.6
Boston	8.9	321.8	15.1	53.4	16.6	9.5
Denver	10.7	147.0	16.9	52.0	35.4	26.3
<b>Des Moines</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>47.9</b>	<b>44.4</b>
Detroit	11.8	348.2	32.3	161.3	46.3	21.8
Gary	13.2	57.3	33.6	19.0	33.1	17.8
*Grand Forks	11.6	7.0	11.7	4.2	60.1	48.7
Hartford	8.8	65.1	31.6	20.6	31.6	11.7
Indianapolis	12.9	146.0	16.4	88.6	60.7	49.4
Los Angeles	21.2	1238.1	24.6	509.0	41.1	39.1
Louisville	14.7	105.8	24.0	41.1	38.8	25.8
Macon	22.6	54.6	35.2	20.7	38.0	35.9
Miami	27.2	393.1	32.3	61.5	15.6	17.4
Milwaukee	10.7	116.7	21.9	78.7	67.4	40.0
New Orleans	25.4	253.8	36.0	125.2	49.3	35.9
Oakland	9.5	130.7	15.9	35.5	27.2	16.1
Philadelphia-Camden	12.2	403.4	24.1	209.3	51.9	29.4
Providence	12.6	74.3	23.6	26.5	35.6	16.7
Saint Louis	13.5	252.4	29.6	70.7	28.0	13.5
San Antonio	23.0	264.9	24.9	195.9	74.0	73.9
San Diego	14.3	253.3	14.4	113.8	44.9	44.0
San Jose	7.9	85.6	11.1	47.4	55.4	52.5
*Savannah	21.6	44.0	24.2	35.7	81.3	48.7
*Seattle	8.2	119.1	8.7	36.3	30.5	23.5
Washington D.C.	10.8	362.5	18.9	76.9	21.2	11.5
<b>Median for all 27 Regions:</b>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>\$146.0</b>	<b>24.0%</b>	<b>\$53.4</b>	<b>41.6%</b>	<b>26.6%</b>

Source: Internal Revenue Service

\*Denotes a central city where a large percentage of zip codes extend beyond the municipal boundaries. See Appendix D.

## Appendix D: Methodology

The data for this study were derived from two IRS files (described below). This study uses a 1998 file to map the percentage of taxpayers who received the EITC. In order to determine the actual amount of EITC dollars that went into each jurisdiction, we needed to use a more detailed data file. The 1997 IRS zipcode file is the most recent year for which these detailed data are available.

The 1997 file contains information by zip code on the total number of individual income tax filers, the number of filers with certain tax items (salaries and wages, interest, Schedule C, Schedule F) and total amounts for those items for tax year 1997 returns. Among these are the number of filers who claimed the Earned Income Credit, and the total amount of Earned Income Credit claimed. We used these data to calculate the amount of Earned Income Credit that flowed into each county in 1997, as well as the average EITC amount per county. The data are available online at [http://www.irs.gov/tax\\_stats/soi/zip-codes.html](http://www.irs.gov/tax_stats/soi/zip-codes.html).

The 1998 file contains similar information by zip code, including the total number of filers and the number of filers claiming the EITC, but does not provide the total amount of EITC claimed per zip code. Since these data were for a more recent tax year, we used them to calculate the percentage of filers receiving the EITC in a given zip code, and throughout a given county. These data are based on returns received by the IRS between January 1, 1999 and December 31, 1999; nearly all of these returns were for tax year 1998. The data are available online at [http://www.irs.gov/elec\\_svs/demogrfx.html](http://www.irs.gov/elec_svs/demogrfx.html).

Although the raw data are reported at the zip code level, most of the data in the study are characterized at the county or city level. To calculate the county totals we simply aggregated zip codes based on the county names provided in the IRS file. Estimating accurate totals for smaller levels of geography, i.e. cities, was more difficult. Because zip codes are determined by the United States Postal Service and are designed to facilitate the delivery of mail, their borders very often do not coincide with municipal boundaries. In some cities, zip codes more or less match the actual jurisdictional lines; in others, zip codes that cover large parts of a city extend well into neighboring cities and towns. We used GIS (Geographic Information System) to determine which zip codes fit well enough within a given city's boundaries to associate with that city. If a zip code's center was inside the city's boundaries, then the zipcode was included. In a few cases, where there were a large number of zip codes that extended beyond the city's boundaries in an unusual manner, we included all zip codes that were within, or intersected with, the city's boundaries. In these instances, the total amount of EITC flowing into the central city may be slightly overstated, but the regional totals are as accurate as for other regions. These cities are marked with an asterisk in Appendix C.

## Endnotes

- 1 The regions included in this survey series were selected because they are areas where the Annie E. Casey Foundation and John S. Knight Foundation are involved in initiatives aimed at improving the lives of working poor families.
- 2 The 'EITC' referenced throughout this survey is the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. All references to EITCs claimed or the value of EITCs claimed are for the tax year to which we refer.
- 3 David Campbell, Michael Parisi, and Brian Balkovic (2000). "Individual Income Tax Returns, 1998." *Statistics of Income Bulletin*, Fall 2000. US Department of the Treasury.
- 4 See John Karl Scholz (1994). "The Earned Income Tax Credit: Participation, Compliance, and Antipoverty Effectiveness." *National Tax Journal* 48: 64–85. Scholz found that between 80 and 86 percent of those eligible actually claim the credit. His study was based on 1990 data. Significant increases in the value of the EITC have probably altered actual participation rates. Also see Carolyn J. Hill, V. Joseph Hotz, Charles H. Mullin, John Karl Scholz (1999). "EITC Eligibility, Participation, and Compliance Rates for AFDC Households: Evidence from the California Caseload." [http://www.jcpr.org/wpfiles/hotz\\_eitc.pdf](http://www.jcpr.org/wpfiles/hotz_eitc.pdf)
- 5 Katherin Ross Phillips (2001). "Who Knows About the Earned Income Tax Credit?" Urban Institute. [http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/series\\_b/b27/b27.html](http://newfederalism.urban.org/html/series_b/b27/b27.html)
- 6 Between 1993 and 1999, the number of families receiving the EITC increased by 29 percent. The number of people lifted out of poverty by the EITC increased by 124 percent over the same time period.

- 7 The increasing contribution of the EITC to the safety net contrasts sharply with trends in other federal aid programs in the 1990s. Social security insurance, for example, lifted 300,000 less people out of poverty in 1999 than it did in 1993. Food stamps helped about 700,000 less people in 1999 than in 1993. And means-tested cash benefits, mainly TANF, lifted 600,000 less. See "Poverty and Income Trends: 1999," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- 8 For increase in labor market participation see Nada Eissa and Jeffrey Liebman (1996). "Labor Supply Response to the Earned Income Credit." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, CXI, 605–647. Another set of estimates by Bruce Meyer and Dan Rosenbaum suggest that more than 60 percent of the increase in annual employment of single mothers was due to increases in the EITC. Welfare waivers contributed one-sixth and AFDC benefit cuts about one-eighth. Changes in Medicaid, employment training, and child care programs played a smaller role. <http://dsl.nber.org/papers/w7363.pdf>
- 9 V. Joseph Hotz, Charles H. Mullin, and John K. Scholz (2000). "The Earned Income Tax Credit and Labor Market Participation of Families on Welfare." Joint Center on Poverty Research. [http://www.jcpr.org/wpfiles/hotz\\_mullin\\_scholz\\_final.pdf](http://www.jcpr.org/wpfiles/hotz_mullin_scholz_final.pdf)
- 10 The income distributions by state are from the Current Population Survey. The data was pooled for larger sample sizes. The years analyzed were 1978–1980 and 1996–1998. See Jared Bernstein, Elizabeth C. McNichol, Lawrence Mishel, and Robert Zahradnik (2000). "State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Economic Policy Institute. <http://www.cbpp.org/1-18-00sfp.htm>.
- 11 Jeffrey B. Liebman (1998). "The Impact of the Earned Income Credit on Incentives and Income Distribution." From *Tax Policy and the Economy*, Volume 12, (James Poterba, Editor), MIT Press. <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/jeffreyliebman/tpaeetc.pdf>
- 12 Timothy M. Smeeding, Katherin Ross Phillips, and Michael O'Connor (2000). "The EITC: Expectation, Knowledge, Use, and Economic and Social Mobility." Center for Policy Research, Working Paper Series No. 13. <http://www-cpr.maxwell.syr.edu/pdf/wp13.pdf>
- 13 The IRS data on the EITC, and the data presented in this survey, reflect credits claimed, and not necessarily dollars refunded. Some EITC offsets tax owed, and does not result directly in a refund. The overwhelming majority of credit amounts claimed are, however, refunded to taxpayers—in 1997, over 80 percent of all EITC amounts were refunded.
- 14 A recent study found that Iowa levied state income tax on two-parent families of four with a below-poverty level income in 2000. See Robert Zahradnik, Nicholas Johnson and Michael Mazerov (2001). "State Income Tax Burdens on Low-Income Families in 2000: Assessing the Burden and Opportunities for Relief." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <http://www.cbpp.org/3-1-01sfp.pdf>
- 15 These estimates are based on calculations for the State of Iowa by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (See <http://www.cbpp.org/11-11-99sfp.pdf>).
- 16 "Earned Income Tax Credit: Profile of Tax Year 1994 Credit Recipients," General Accounting Office. GAO/GGD-96-122BR. [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/aces/aces160.shtml](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces160.shtml); "Nationwide Analysis of the Individual Tax Return Records for Partial Tax Year 1998," Internal Revenue Service Publication 3493. <http://ftp.fedworld.gov/pub/irs-utl/p3493.pdf>.
- 17 Arthur B. Kennickell, Martha Starr-McCluer, and Brian Surette. "Recent Changes in U.S. Family Finances: Results from the 1998 Survey of the Consumer Finances." *Federal Reserve Bulletin*, January 2000.
- 18 In 23 of 42 states that levy income taxes, a working two-parent family of four with a poverty-level income has zero or negative tax liability. See Zahradnik (2001).
- 19 Lois M. Quinn and John Pawasarat (2001). "The Milwaukee Neighborhood Indicators/Asset Mapping Project: Employment and Income Growth in Central City Milwaukee Neighborhoods." University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, Employment and Training Institute. <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/ETI/reports/dor99.htm>

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#### **Note**

This survey is available on the Brookings Institution's website at: [www.brookings.edu/urban](http://www.brookings.edu/urban). Also available are similar surveys for 26 other metropolitan regions.



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