

Known Bias:

Is All Measurement Error the Same?

by Lindsay M. Monte & Dan A. Lewis
Institute for Policy Research
Northwestern University

*Presented at 11th Annual ACF/OPRE
Welfare Research and Evaluation Conference
May 2008*

QUESTIONS

- Are welfare receipt reporting errors random?
 - And if not...
 - Do the errors follow explainable patterns?
 - Are those errors consistent over time?
-

The Illinois Families Study (IFS)

- Survey of a representative sample of ~1300 women in Illinois who were receiving welfare in 1998
 - Annual survey data from 1999-2003
 - Complemented by full administrative records of work, welfare and program receipt
 - IFS sample is 85% black, ~31 years old (1999), ~60% have a HS diploma or GED
-

Measures Compared

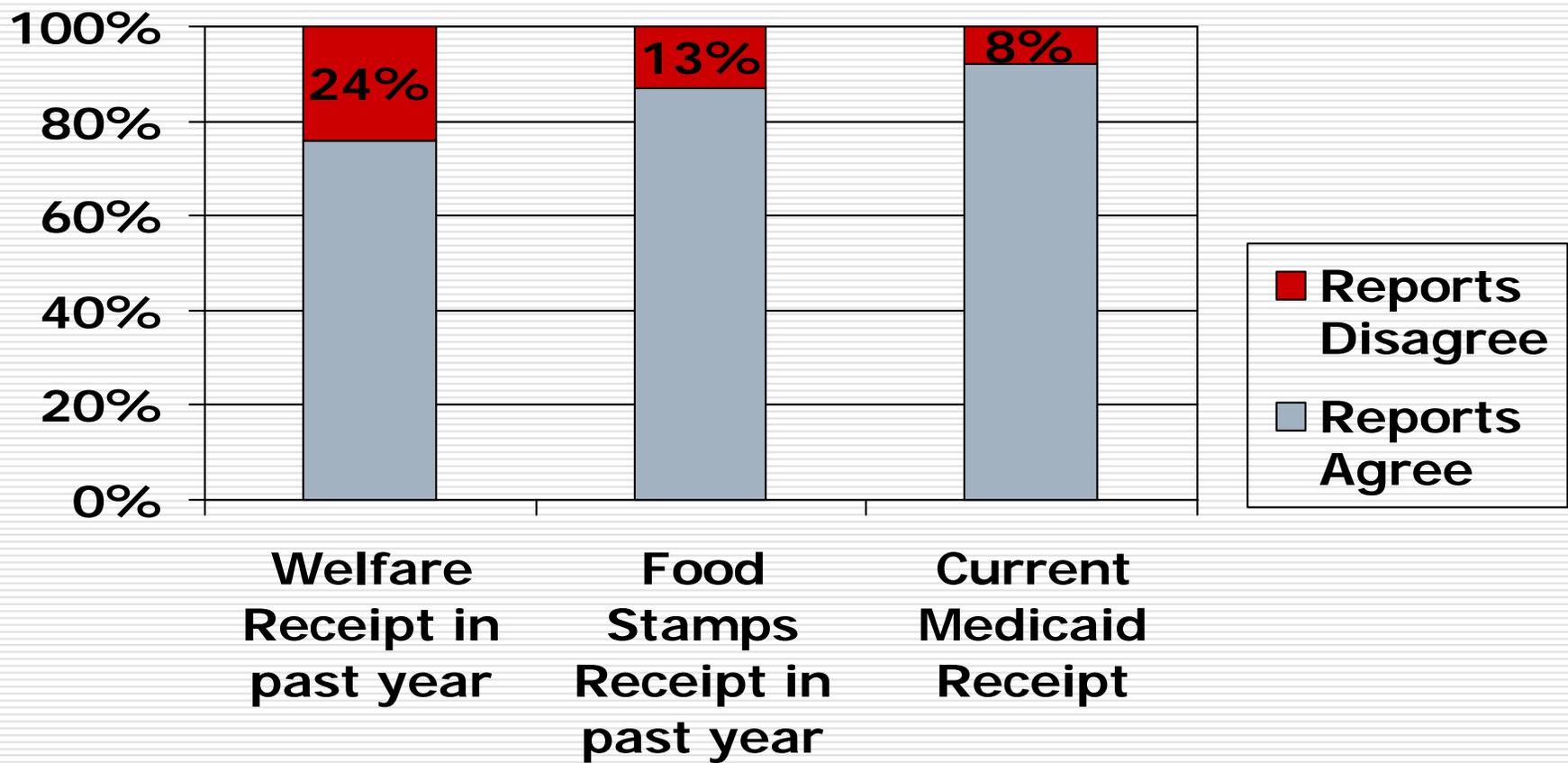
Self Report Items

1. In 1998, did you receive TANF or AFDC (meaning the cash grant only)?
2. In 1998, did you receive food stamps?
3. Do you receive Medicaid?

Administrative Data Measures

1. Any cash grant received ever in 1998 calendar year
 2. Any food stamps grant received ever in 1998 calendar year
 3. Receive Medicaid in month of interview
-

Report Concordance, 1999



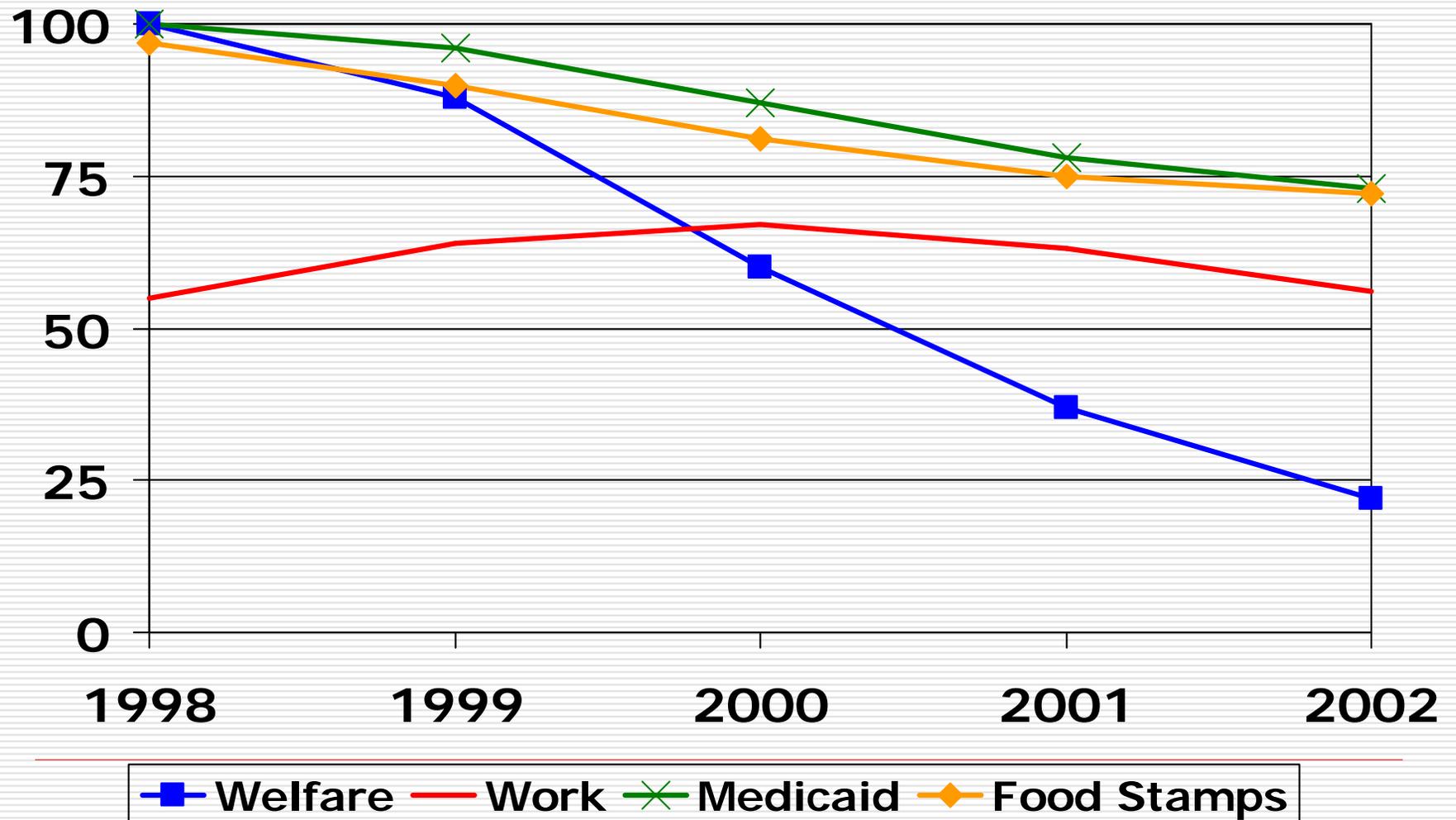
Who accurately reports their program receipt at the first interview (1999)?

(Only significant findings shown, parentheses indicate sig at .1 level)

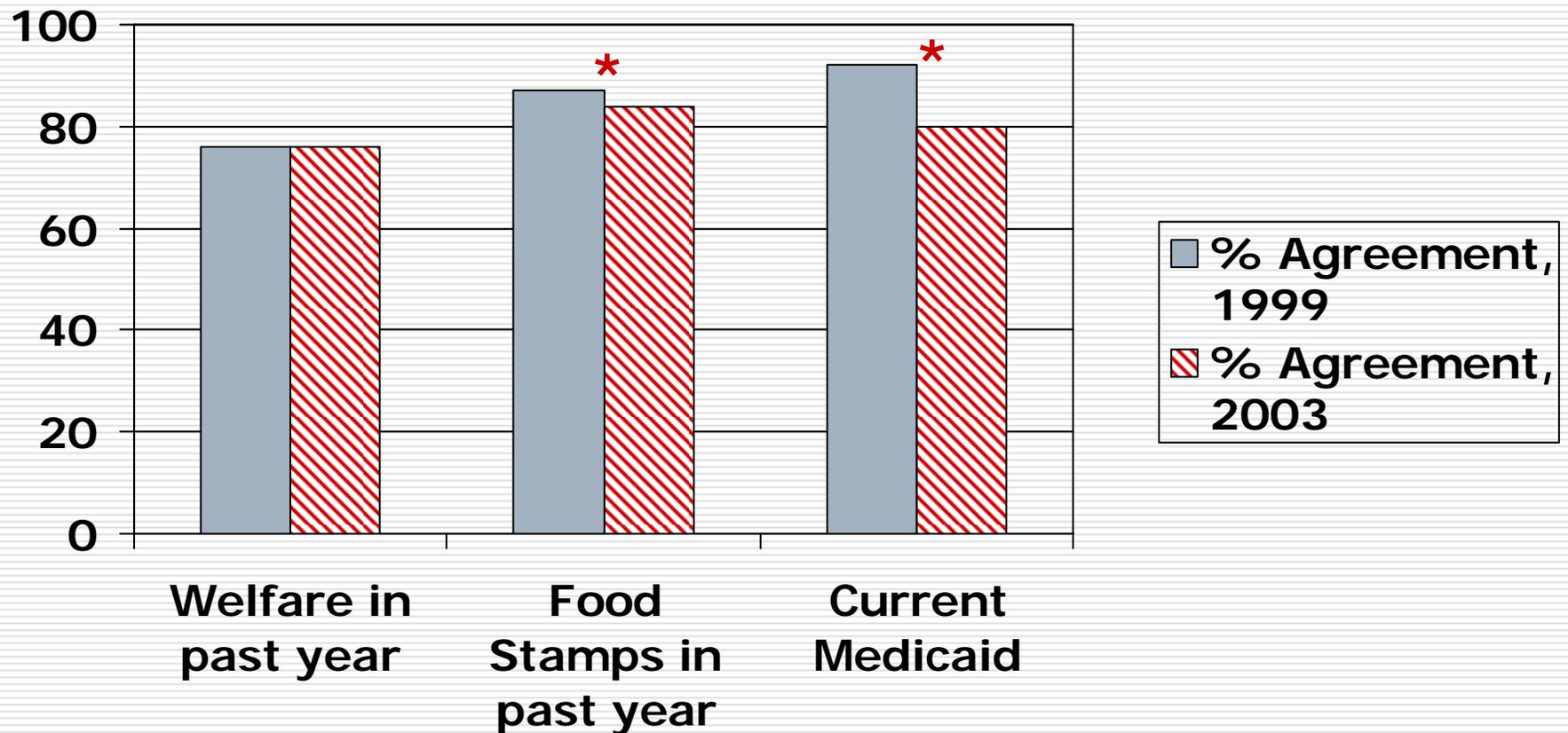
	Reports concur	Reports DO NOT concur
Welfare in the past year	Drug or Alcohol Abusers, (Long-term welfare recipients)	Older women, Women with at least a HS diploma or GED, Women with recent employment
Food Stamps in the past year	Long-term welfare recipients	Older women, Married women
Current Medicaid	(Women with recent employment)	

NOTE: All models include measures of addiction, welfare receipt duration, recent employment, self-efficacy, depression, education, race, ethnicity, Chicago residence and marital status

Trends in work & program receipt over time, 1998-2002



Changes in rates of Concordance, 1999-2003



* = stat. significant change

Changes in Accuracy of Welfare Reporting, 1999-2003

	Reports concur	Reports DO NOT concur
Welfare in the past year, 1999	"Troubled" recipients (addicts & long-term dependent)	"Best case scenario" (older, more education, recent employment)
Welfare in the past year, 2003	"Best case scenario" (more education, recent employment)	"Troubled" recipients (long-term dependent)

Changes in Accuracy of Food Stamps and Medicaid Reporting, 1999-2003

	Reports concur	Reports DO NOT concur
Food stamps in the past year, 1999	Long-term welfare recipients	Older women, Married women
Food Stamps in the past year, 2003		Women with recent employment, Married women, (Depressed women)

	Reports concur	Reports DO NOT concur
Current Medicaid, 1999	(Women with recent employment)	
Current Medicaid, 2003	(Women with low self-efficacy)	Women with recent employment, Married women

In 2002, % of sample working, receiving social programs

	N	Working	Receiving Welfare	Receiving Food Stamps	Receiving Medicaid
<i>FULL SAMPLE</i>	1324	56%	22%	72%	73%
Working in 2002	794	100%	19%	71%	72%
Welfare in 2002	246	49%	100%	100%	99%

Summary: Key Findings

1. Self-report error is not randomly distributed across individuals
 2. Interaction of personal characteristics and program involvement predicts accuracy of reports
 3. Stigma of welfare appears to grow over time
 4. Significant under-reporting of food stamps and Medicaid receipt among welfare reform "success" stories
-