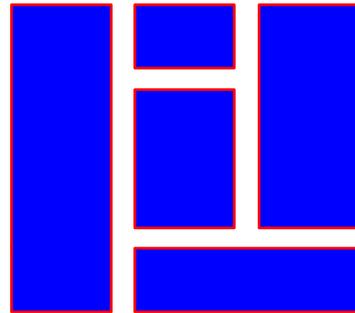


**Everett Henderson, Randy Capps, Kenneth Finegold**  
**The Urban Institute**

***Modeling the Impact of the  
2002-03 Legal Immigrant  
Food Stamp Restorations***



**Welfare Research and Evaluation Conference**  
**Washington, DC May 29, 2008**

Note: The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to USDA/ERS or to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders

# ***Policy History***

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- ***In 1996 Congress restricted food stamp eligibility for legal immigrants (i.e., **legal noncitizens**):***
  - **10 year work history required in most cases.**
  - **Exceptions for refugees, veterans, other small groups.**
  - **1998 legislation restored eligibility for pre-1996 legal immigrant children, the elderly and the disabled.**
- ***Legal immigrants' food stamp use fell precipitously from 1996 to 2000.***
- ***Food stamp use for citizen children with legal immigrant parents also fell.***



# ***Policy History***

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- ***Congress restored eligibility to SOME legal immigrants effective 2002-03.***
  - Disabled legal immigrants.
  - All legal immigrants with 5 years of U.S. residency (regardless of work history).
  - All legal immigrant children regardless of length of residency.
- ***The Food Stamp Program increased overall access to benefits since 2000:***
  - Rules for assets (e.g., vehicle ownership) relaxed.
  - Application process streamlined, simplified.
- ***From 1999-2000 to 2004 food stamp case-loads increased by 2.9 million family units\*.***



# ***Focus of Study***

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- ***How many legal immigrants were affected by the restorations?***
  - **Newly eligible legal immigrants in family units with other noncitizens.**
  - **Newly eligible legal immigrants in family units with citizen children.**
  - **Higher participation among legal immigrants and their citizen children.**



# ***Data and Methods***

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- ***Produced annual participation estimates using Current Population Survey and TRIM3 model***
  - **Model is maintained and developed at the Urban Institute under primary funding from the Office of the Assistant Secretary, Planning and Evaluation, Office of Health Policy.**
- ***Urban Institute-developed immigrant legal status imputations***
- ***Eligibility and participation modeled to reflect administrative totals***
- ***Able to simulate alternate policy environments and their impacts on eligibility and participation.***

Note: Information presented here is derived in part from the Transfer Income Model, Version 3 (TRIM3) and associated databases. TRIM3 requires users to input assumptions and/or interpretations about economic behavior and the rules governing federal programs. Therefore, the conclusions presented here are attributable only to the authors of this report.



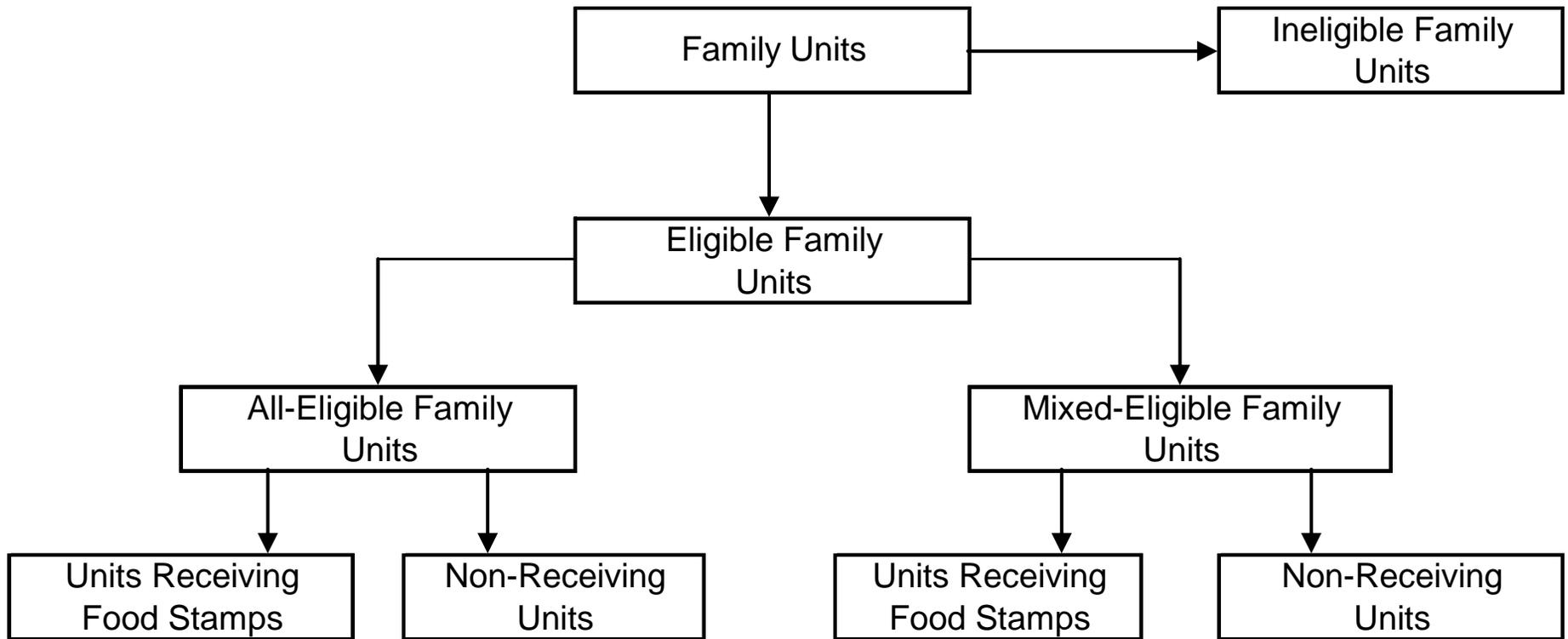
# ***Key Concepts: “Mixed” Units***

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- ***Mixed citizenship:***
  - One or more members is a U.S. citizen (native or foreign-born).
  - One or more members is a noncitizen (legal or illegal).
  - Usually adults are noncitizens, children are citizens.
  - Focus is on family units where adults are legal immigrants (i.e., legal NONcitizens).
- ***Mixed eligibility:***
  - One or more family members is ineligible for benefits, usually because not a citizen.
  - Family unit benefit allocations are lower.

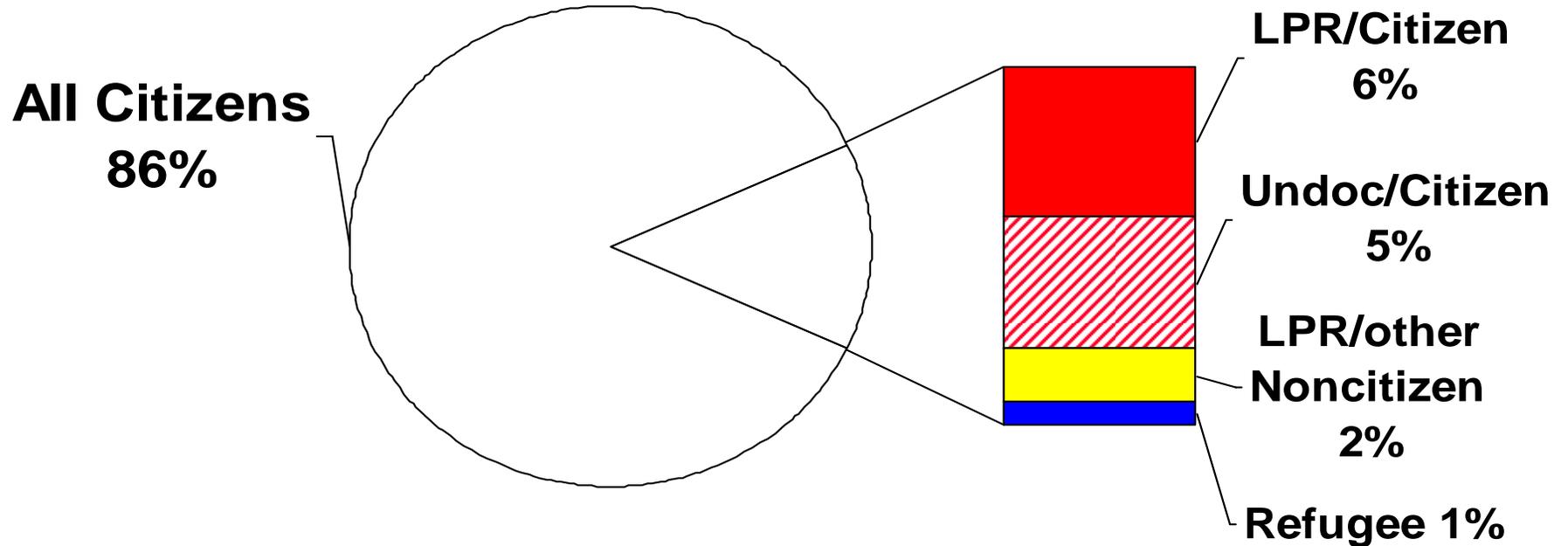


# Food Stamp Eligibility and Receipt Flowchart

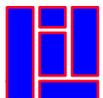


# 14 Percent of Food Stamp Eligible Family Units Include Noncitizens

Citizenship and Legal Status of Low-Income\* Food Stamp Eligible Units, 2004



**Total = 20 million eligible family units**



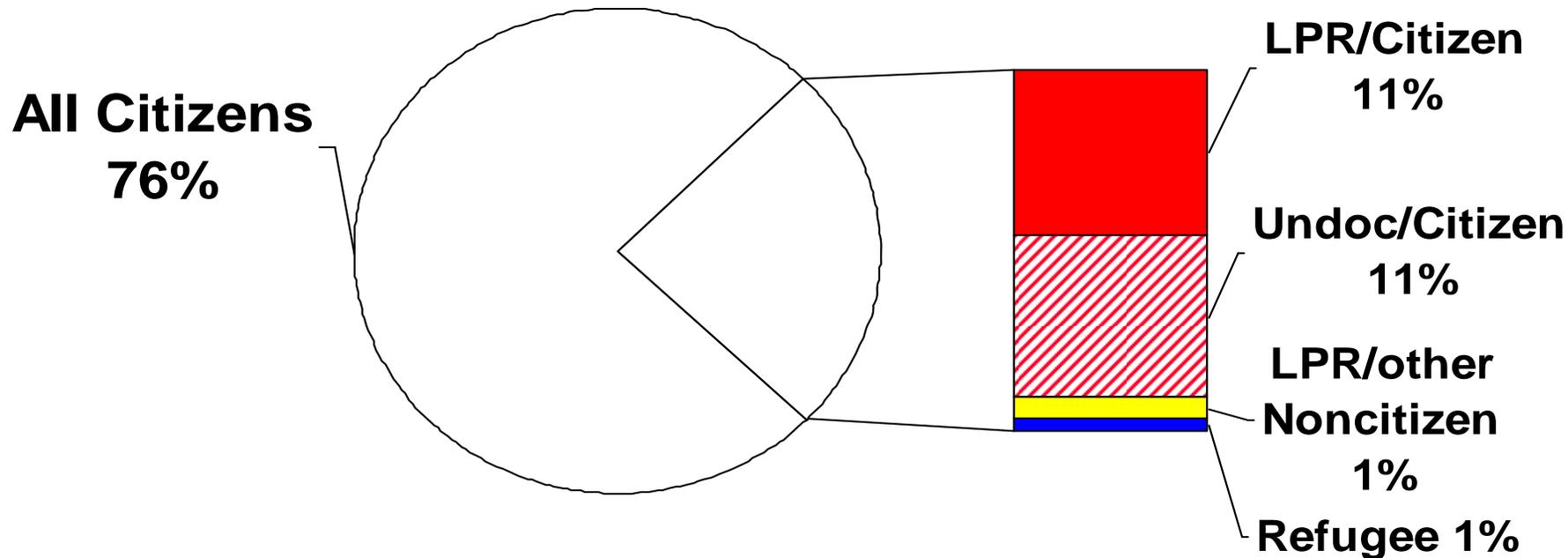
\* Low income units have family incomes below twice the federal poverty level

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All elg units, 2004

# 24 Percent of Eligible Family Units with Children Include Noncitizens

Citizenship and Legal Status of Low-Income\* Eligible Units with Children, 2004

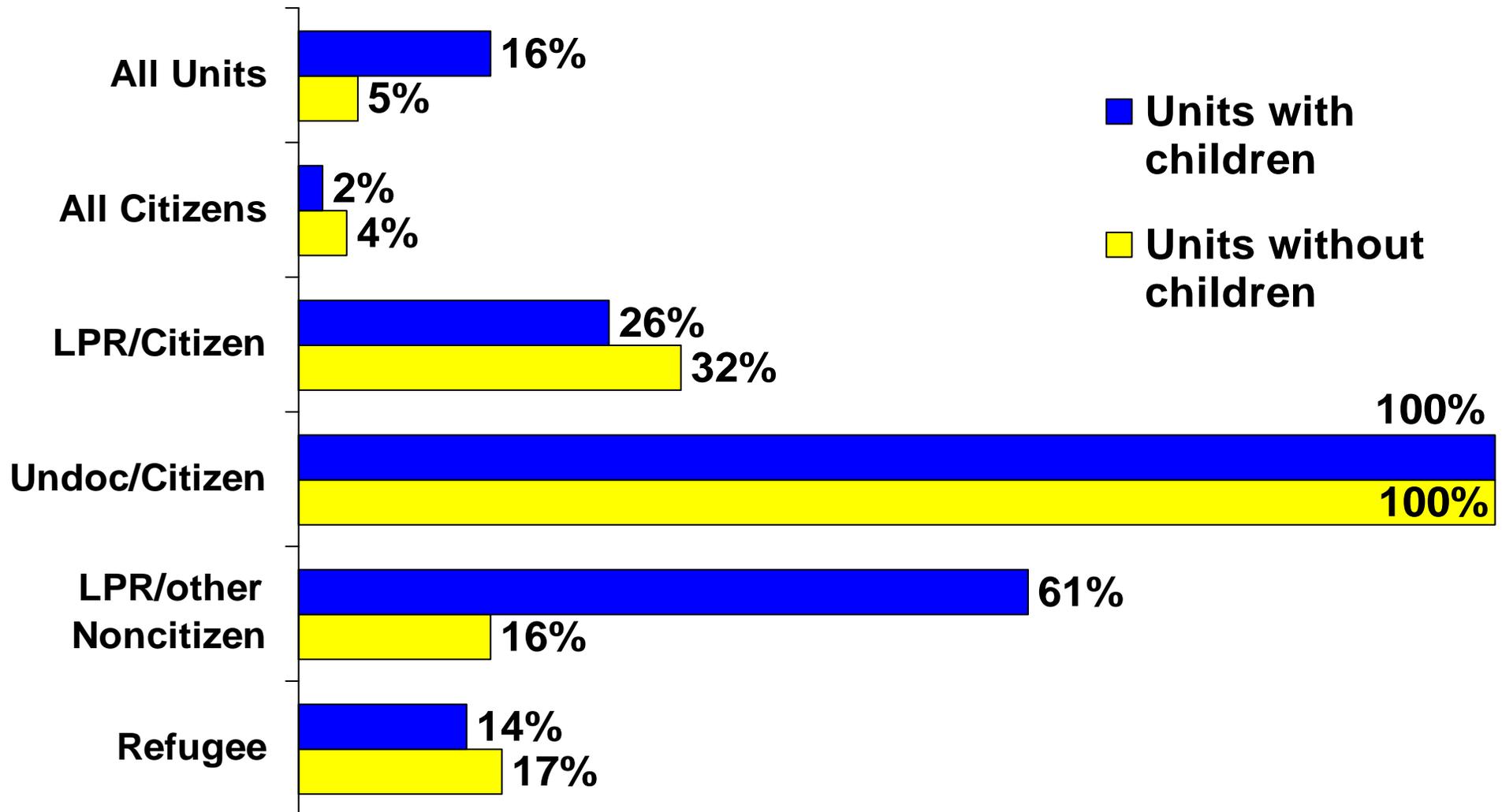


**Total = 8.8 million eligible family units with children**

\* Low income units have family incomes below twice the federal poverty level



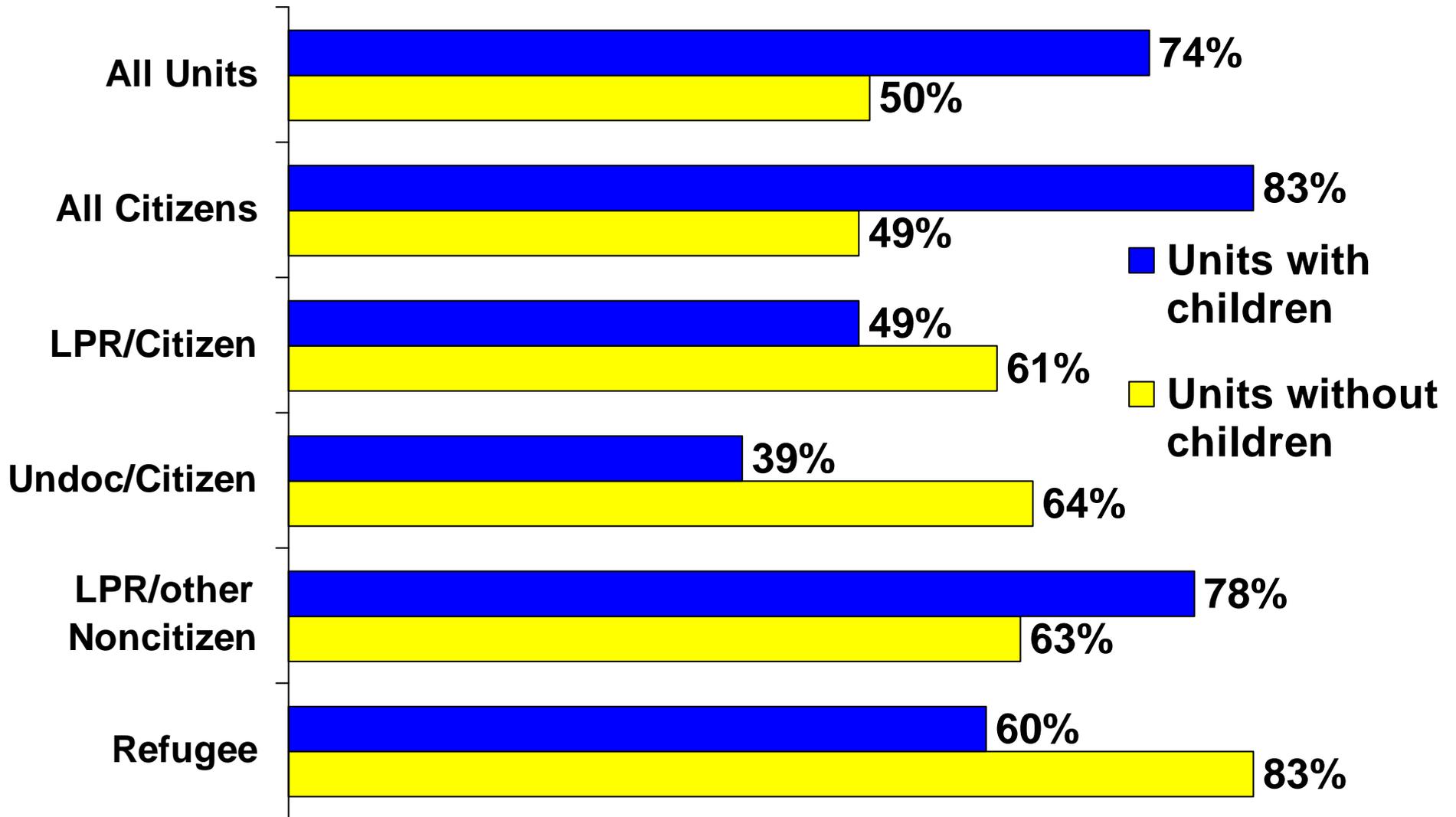
# **Mixed Eligibility\* Rate for Low-Income Eligible Units with Children - 2004**



\* In mixed eligible units some members are eligible for food stamps, and others are ineligible.



# Participation Rate for Low-Income Eligible Units with Children - 2004



# ***What was the Effect of the Restorations on Legal Immigrant Families with Children?***

Differences in 2004 eligibility and participation among low-income\* units with children, simulated with and without the 2002-2003 restorations:

	Eligible units		Mixed eligible units		Median Annual Benefit	Participating units	
	1000s	Rate	1000s	Rate		1000s	Rate
Citizens with Legal Imms.	-30	-2%	-361	-35%	\$662	**	**
No Citizens***	81	44%	56	16%	\$274	69	13%
Refugee (All or Mix)	**	**	**	**	\$344	**	**

\* Unit income below 200% federal poverty level.

\*\* Fewer than 25,000 units affected.

\*\*\* Include at least one legal immigrant.



# ***What was the Effect on Legal Immigrant Families WITHOUT Children?***

Differences in 2004 eligibility and participation among low-income\* units without children, simulated with and without the 2002-2003 restorations:

	Eligible units		Mixed eligible units		Median Annual Benefit	Participating units	
	1000s	Rate	1000s	Rate		1000s	Rate
Citizens with Legal Imms.	**	**	**	**	\$365	**	**
No Citizens***	97	15%	**	**	\$154	70	5%
Refugee (All or Mix)	**	**	**	**	\$21	**	**

\* Unit income below 200% federal poverty level.

\*\* Fewer than 25,000 units affected.

\*\*\* Include at least one legal immigrant.



# ***What Would Have Been the Effect of a Restorations to ALL Legal Immigrants?***

Differences in 2004 eligibility and participation among low-income\* units with children, simulated with no restoration and a full restoration:

	Eligible units		Mixed eligible units		Median Annual Benefit	Participating units	
	1000s	Rate	1000s	Rate		1000s	Rate
Citizens with Legal Imms.	-26	-2%	-515	-51%	\$833	**	**
No Citizens**	70	38%	**	**	\$1,345	62	14%
Refugee (All or Mix)	**	**	**	**	\$344	**	**

\* Unit income below 200% federal poverty level.  
 \*\* Fewer than 25,000 units affected.  
 \*\*\* Include at least one legal immigrant.

# ***How Many Legal Immigrants Benefited from the Restorations?***

**Difference from eligibility/participation simulated without 2002-2003 restorations among low-income\* INDIVIDUAL legal immigrants, 2004:**

<b>Eligibility Transition Category</b>	<b>Number of Individuals</b>	<b>Percent of Newly Eligible</b>
<b>Total Net Newly Eligible Individuals</b>	<b>1,034,079</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Individuals in units that...</b>		
Became Eligible at All	528,414	51.1%
Became Fully Eligible	506,180	48.9%
Remained Mixed	124,947	12.1%
<b>Individuals Who Lost Eligibility</b>	<b>125,462</b>	<b>-12.1%</b>
<b>Total New Recipients</b>	<b>779,049</b>	<b>75.3%</b>

**\*Universe: Individuals residing in units that are below 200% of the federal poverty level.**



# ***Summary of Findings***

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- ***“Mixed eligible” families—legal immigrant parents & citizen children—were largest group affected.***
- ***A net of 305,000 mixed-eligible families with children were restored to full eligibility in 2004.***
- ***97,000 more legal immigrant families without children become eligible, and 70,000 more participated.***
- ***The restoration extended eligibility to about 1 million more legal immigrants; 779,000 more participated.***
- ***This was 2/3 as many as would be affected by a full restoration to all legal immigrants.***



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