

# **The Self-Reliance Achievement Scale (SRAS)**

*Results of all Community Action Agencies  
in Minnesota: July 1, 2005, to June 30, 2006*

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# Summary

## **Introduction**

The Self-Reliance Achievement Scale (SRAS) is a tool used to measure the progress toward self-reliance and stability of low-income people. It is designed to track the progress of low-income Minnesota Community Action Agency clients and their families on 15 domains that are closely related to economic stability. This report describes the analysis of outcomes of 2,442 participants who were served between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006, and who consented to be part of this study.

## **Study focus**

The SRAS tool is used for a relatively small proportion of Community Action Agency participants. It is intended for those participants who receive some form of case management or self-sufficiency services where there is an expectation for multiple contacts with the agency and more intensive assistance or support.

## **Agency services**

In addition to the 2,442 SRAS participants reported here, nearly 300,000 residents statewide received Energy Assistance (often cash assistance to pay heating bills) through the Minnesota Community Action network and over 100,000 residents received weatherization, energy related repairs, food assistance or some form of crisis intervention or support. Information and assistance in the form of outreach or referral was provided to approximately 800,000 participants. While all agency participants receive some form of service, those described in this report represent clients who have consented to participate in this study of agency efforts to help individuals and families achieve greater long-term self reliance.

## **Background of study participants**

Most SRAS participants are White women in their 20s and 30s. The average age of participants is 35.9 years old. Twenty-one percent of SRAS participants have less than a high school education without a GED. The average household size of SRAS participants statewide is 3.6 people. In addition, about one-third (32%) of participants statewide are single parents.

Community Action Agencies serve low-income individuals and families who are likely to struggle to become self-reliant in terms of meeting their daily living needs. Not surprisingly, many participants were initially rated (their baseline SRAS scores) as having low levels of self-reliance. For example, during the current evaluation period 69 percent of participants were at low levels of self-reliance on the “hours of employment” domain at baseline, 57 percent were at low levels of self-reliance on the “housing affordability” domain at baseline, and 55 percent were at low levels of self-reliance in the “job retention and stability” domain at baseline.

## **Results**

This project has found clear positive changes in the lives of many of these participants. In fact, analysis of data on the 2,442 participants for whom baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings were available during the current evaluation period indicate that participants who received services from Community Action Agencies were most likely to show improvements in the following areas:

- 45% of participants who received services related to increasing their number of **hours of employment** improved on this domain from baseline to follow-up (compared to 24% of participants who did not receive services in this area)
- 40% of participants who received services related to **job stability and retention** improved on this domain from baseline to follow-up (compared to 23% of participants who did not receive services in this area)
- 35% of participants who received services related to their **household income sources** improved on this domain from baseline to follow-up (compared to 17% of participants who did not receive services in this area)

Furthermore, most participants who receive services from Community Action Agencies experienced an increase in self-reliance in multiple areas (domains) from baseline to follow-up. In fact, 73 percent of participants statewide have improved on at least one domain from baseline to follow-up. In addition, among participants who improved or maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up, 19 percent improved or maintained a high level of self-reliance in 12 to 15 domains and one-half (50%) improved or maintained a high level of self-reliance in 8 to 11 domains.

Services provided to low-income individuals by Community Action Agencies may also have spillover effects into other areas of participants' lives. This is demonstrated by the fact that a significant proportion of respondents who did not receive services in certain domains still experienced improvements in their self-reliance in these areas from baseline to follow-up. Specifically, nearly one-quarter (24%) of participants who did not receive services in the area of hours of employment, nearly one-quarter (23%) of participants who did not receive services in the area of job retention and stability, and 17 percent of participants who did not receive services in the area of household income sources nonetheless experienced improvements in their self-reliance in these areas from baseline to follow-up, most likely associated with improvements realized in other domains.

### **Conclusion**

These findings show that Minnesota Community Action Agencies are helping clients make progress toward greater self-sufficiency through an array of direct services, information, and referrals provided. In addition, the Self-Reliance Achievement Scale appears to be a useful tool in assessing participants' changes over time.



# Project history and background

Minnesota Community Action Agencies have been testing a new way to describe changes in the lives of the low-income people to whom they provide services. Policy-makers and funders are increasingly looking for solid evidence of results. The agencies also wanted better information about which of their programs are most and least effective with which types of participants. To this effort, the Results-Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) team (a collaboration of the Minnesota Community Action Association and the 27 Minnesota Community Action Agencies, Wilder Research, and the Office of Economic Opportunity at the Minnesota Department of Education, later moved to the Department of Human Services) designed the Self-Reliance Achievement Scale (SRAS) and began pilot tests in 2001. In 2002, 27 of 29 Community Action Agencies in Minnesota began using the Self-Reliance Achievement Scale (SRAS). This report describes the analysis of SRAS ratings for Community Action program participants statewide between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006.

The Self-Reliance Achievement Scale (SRAS) is a tool used to measure the progress toward self-reliance and stability of low-income people. It is designed to track the progress of low-income individuals and families on the following 15 domains closely related to economic stability:

- Hours of employment\*
- Job retention and stability
- Income sources\*
- Child support\*
- Earned Income Tax Credit\*
- Adequacy of income for food and shelter\*
- Financial credit
- Housing stability\*
- Housing affordability
- Household health insurance coverage
- Child care\*
- English proficiency
- Education

- Transportation\*
- Informal social support

*\*Note.* Items with an “\*\*” indicate those that have been included in the CAP visions protocol.

Each domain has three to six levels of self-reliance. The levels are designed to be very concrete and observable to promote consistency across raters (Community Action Agency staff who complete the SRAS ratings). In most cases, the scales are ordinal (i.e., in order from lower to higher levels of self-reliance – for example, the “hours of employment” levels are: working less than 15 hours per week, working 15 to 19 hours per week, working 20 to 24 hours per week, and so on). In addition, each scale has been split into two levels – low and high – such that participants whose ratings do not change from baseline to follow-up can still be assessed as having maintained at either a low or a high level of self-reliance.

The Self-Reliance Achievement Scale (SRAS) is intended as a managerial tool to be used for auditing participants’ cases, not to be used directly with clients. In general, agency staff have found the SRAS easy to use and thought-provoking. Most reported taking less than 15 minutes to complete the scale for each participant’s case. Agency staff also feel that use of this instrument encourages communication and coordination of services. The information in this report contains data collected for the purpose of learning more about whether the SRAS is an effective tool for measuring progress toward self-reliance for participants receiving services from Community Action Agencies.

### ***Making progress toward self-reliance***

Helping individuals and families move toward self-reliance is a long process that is not necessarily uniform or steady in the progress participants make. We expect participants’ SRAS scores to fluctuate as they work to resolve many hard-to-solve problems and barriers to self-reliance because many of the domains on the SRAS are interrelated. For example, if a participant makes significant progress toward self-reliance on the employment-related domains, it is likely that the same participant will experience increased self-reliance in other domains (such as household income sources) as a result. Conversely, if a participant experiences significant decline in self-reliance on any one domain (especially in the core areas of employment, housing, transportation, or child care), we would expect that their scores on other domains may also decrease as a result. In addition, participants can receive lower ratings on the “job retention and stability” domain if they have recently changed jobs, even if their new job will eventually help them to attain higher self-reliance because it is a promotion or higher paying job than they previously held.

Furthermore, the domains on the SRAS are not all created equal in terms of how easy it is for participants to achieve higher levels of self-reliance. For example, it may be much easier for participants to achieve higher self-reliance on the Earned Income Tax Credit<sup>1</sup> domain compared to domains that take longer time periods to show gains, such as education or financial credit. Therefore, we would not expect participants to show as much progress in some domains compared to others after receiving one to two years of service from Community Action Agencies.

### ***Services provided by Community Action Agencies***

The SRAS tool is used for a relatively small proportion of individuals who receive services from Community Action Agencies. It is intended for those participants who receive some form of case management or self-sufficiency services where there is an expectation for multiple contacts with the agency and more intensive assistance or support.

In addition to the 2,442 SRAS participants reported here, nearly 300,000 residents statewide received Energy Assistance (often cash assistance to pay heating bills) through the Minnesota Community Action network, and over 100,000 residents received weatherization, energy related repairs, food assistance or some form of crisis intervention or support. Information and assistance in the form of outreach or referral was provided to approximately 800,000 participants. While all agency participants receive some form of service, those described in this report represent clients who have consented to participate in this study of agency efforts to help individuals and families achieve greater long-term self reliance.

Between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006, the 27 Community Action Agencies participating in this demonstration project provided an average of 13.51 services per participant. Community Action Agencies provide direct services and they also guide people to many other services available in the community. The “information and referral” category of service was the most frequently provided service in 12 of the 15 domains and accounted for between 19 and 55 percent of services provided in each domain. Although information and referral was the most commonly reported service provided to participants, this category of service has not been included in the sections of the report focusing on individual domains due to the desire to highlight the direct services provided by Minnesota Community Action Agencies that are contributing to increased self-reliance for participants.

The direct services most frequently provided in each of the 15 domains are listed in the sections of the report that focus on the individual domains. Within each domain, we show any direct service that constitutes at least 4 percent of all services provided in that domain.

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<sup>1</sup> A federal program designed to give financial subsidy to low-income people who earn an income.

## *Eligible participants*

Wilder Research was contracted to analyze and report on the implementation and findings from the Self-Reliance Achievement Scale (SRAS), which is currently being used to assess participants' progress toward self-reliance. Statewide, Community Action Agencies completed baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings that occurred at least one month apart with 2,442 individuals between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. Each participant represented in this study was rated on the SRAS at least twice by Community Action staff. A listing of agencies by number of participants follows.

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### **Community Action Agencies by number of participants**

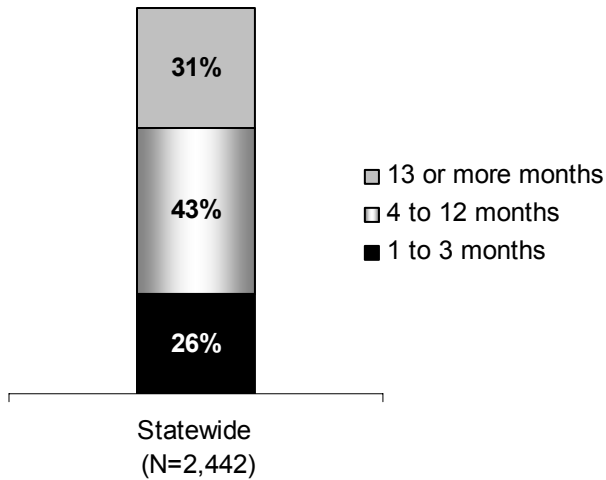
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Anoka County Community Action Program, Inc. (ACCAP)	390
Lakes & Pines Community Action Council, Inc.	297
Heartland Community Action Agency	238
West-Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc.	229
Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership	198
Inter-County Community Council (ICCC)	170
Minnesota Valley Action Council (MVAC)	129
Scott-Carver-Dakota CAP Agency, Inc. (SCD CAP)	120
Prairie Five Community Action Council (P-5)	109
Tri- County Action Program, Inc. (Tri-CAP)	94
Three Rivers Community Action Agency	90
Kootasca Community Action	70
Mahube Community Council	61
Otter Tail-Wadena Community Action Council (OTWCAC)	45
Olmsted Community Action Program	42
Community Action Duluth	30
Western Community Action	23
Community Action Partnership of Suburban Hennepin (CAPSH)	21
Bi-County Community Action Programs (Bi-CAP)	20
Other (agencies with less than 20 participants)*	66

\* Other agencies include: Tri-Valley Opportunity Council (TVOC), Semcac, Ramsey Action Programs (RAP), Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council (SMOC), Wright County Community Action (WCCA), Northwest Community Action (NW), Tri-County Community Action, Inc. (TCC), Community Action of Minneapolis.

The average amount of time between the baseline and follow-up ratings for individual participants included in this analysis was 339 days. Just over one-quarter (26%) of participants had one to three months between their baseline and follow-up ratings, 43 percent had 4 to 12 months between ratings, and 31 percent had 13 or more months between ratings (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

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**1. Amount of time between baseline and follow-up ratings**

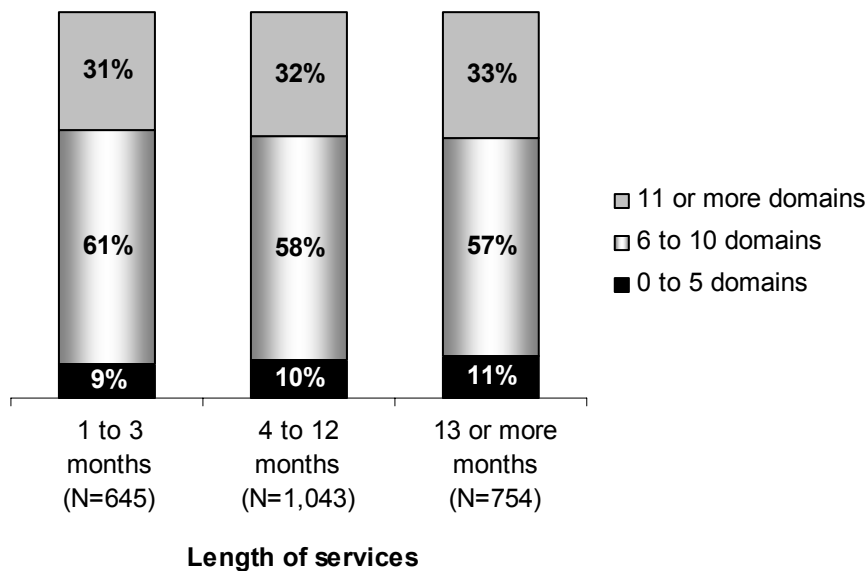


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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, totals in figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

In general, the longer participants receive services, the more likely they are to experience increases in self-reliance on multiple domains of the SRAS. Statewide, 31 percent of participants who received one to three months of services compared to 33 percent of participants who received more than one year of services experienced improvements or maintained a high level of self-reliance on 11 or more domains of the SRAS. During the current evaluation period, slightly lower proportions of participants improved or maintained a high level of self-sufficiency compared to the previous evaluation period (see Figure 2).

**2. Length of service time vs. number of domains participants improved or maintained a high level of self-reliance**



# Self-reliance gains

We have grouped participants into four categories for each domain on the Self-Reliance Achievement Scale (SRAS): declined, maintained-low, maintained-high, and improved. Participants who are categorized as “declined” on a particular domain were rated as having lower self-reliance in this area at follow-up compared to baseline. Participants who are categorized as “improved” on a particular domain were rated as having higher self-reliance in this area at follow-up compared to baseline. Participants who are given a rating of “maintained-low” were rated as having low self-reliance on that particular domain at baseline and did not show significant improvements from baseline to follow-up. Participants who are given a rating of “maintained-high” were already functioning at a high level of self-reliance on that particular domain at baseline and have stayed within the high self-reliance range from baseline to follow-up.

## *Domain 1: hours of employment*

The “hours of employment” domain on the SRAS relates to whether or not the participant is working and how many hours they are working per week. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Unemployed (N=837)
- Working less than 15 hours per week (N=124)
- Working 15 to 19 hours per week (N=100)
- Working 20 to 24 hours per week (N=126)
- Working 25 to 29 hours per week (N=104)
- Working 30 to 34 hours per week (N=126)

### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

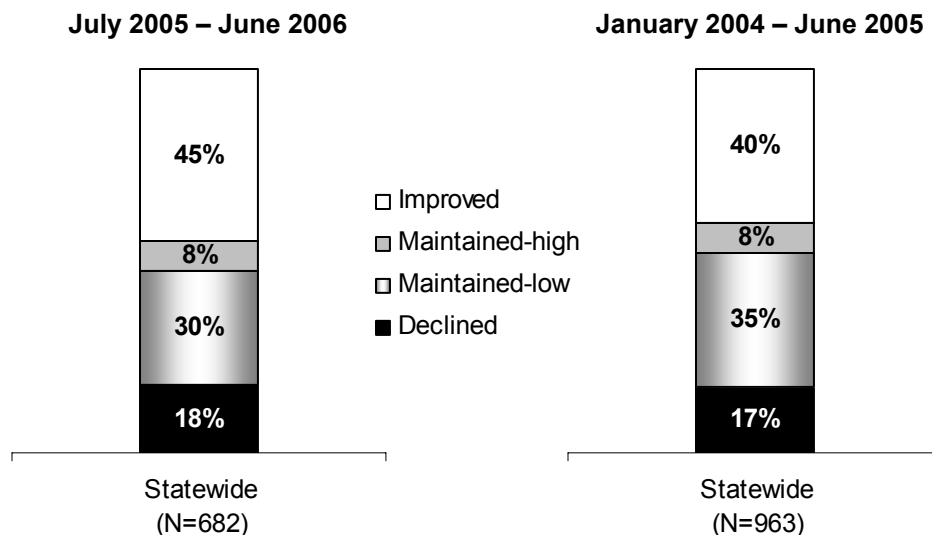
- Working 35 to 40 hours per week (N=400)
- Working more than 40 hours per week (N=225)

Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 2,233 services to 748 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top four direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Follow-up (26%)
- Job search activities (11%)
- Referral (10%)
- Job Club (4%)

Baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings are available for 682 participants who received services in this domain. Forty-five percent of the participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and 8 percent maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Thirty percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and 18 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. During the current evaluation period, a slightly higher proportion of participants improved their self-reliance and a slightly lower proportion of participants maintained a low level of self-reliance related to their hours of employment compared to the previous evaluation period (see Figure 3).<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Change in hours of employment from baseline to follow-up



<sup>3</sup> In general, our protocol for describing change since the previous evaluation is as follows: a 5 to 7 percent change is described as **slightly** higher or lower; an 8 to 10 percent change as **somewhat** higher or lower; and a greater than 10 percent change as **significantly** higher or lower.



## ***Domain 2: job retention and stability***

The “job retention and stability” domain on the SRAS relates to the length of time participants have held the same job. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Unemployed (N=829)
- Worked less than one month at current job (N=145)
- Worked one to two months at current job (N=141)

### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Worked three to five months at current job (N=167)
- Worked six months or longer at current job (N=758)

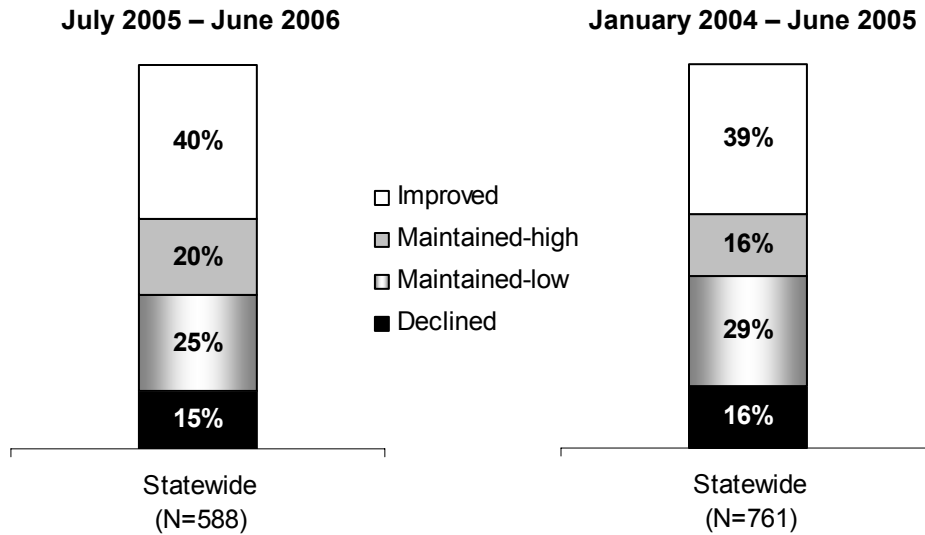
Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 1,764 services to 675 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top five direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Follow-up (31%)
- Referral (10%)
- Job search activities (8%)
- Vocational exploration (4%)
- Client advocacy (4%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 588 participants who received services in this domain. Forty percent of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and 20 percent maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. One-quarter (25%) maintained a low level of self-reliance and 15 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. The ratings from the current evaluation period did not change significantly from the previous period (see Figure 4).

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#### 4. Change in job retention and stability from baseline to follow-up



### ***Domain 3: household income sources***

The “household income sources” domain on the SRAS relates to the proportion of public cash benefits and earned income that make up the participants’ household income sources. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

#### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- No household income (N=118)
- Public cash benefits; no earned income for any household member (N=436)
- More than half public cash benefits with some earned income (N=188)

#### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- More than half earned income with some public cash benefits (N=343)
- Earned income; no public cash benefits for any household member (N=1,342)

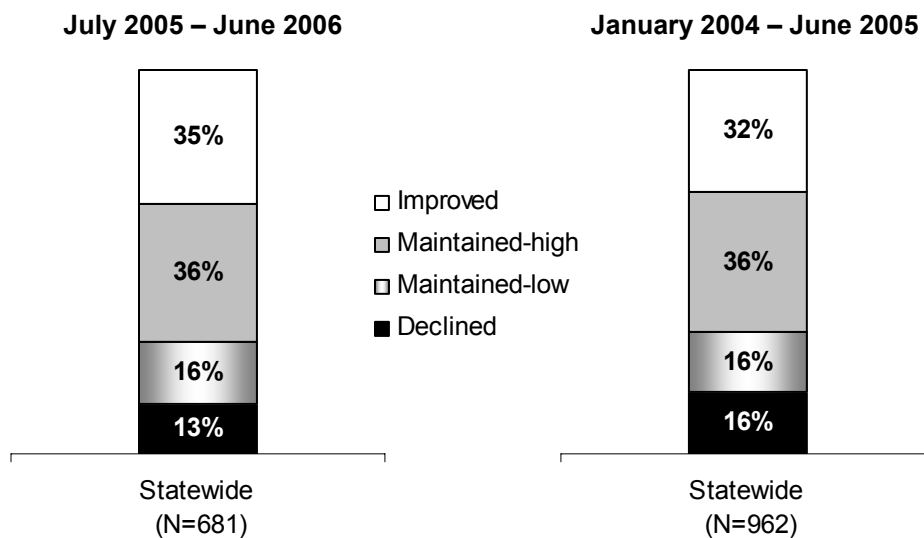
Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 1,760 services to 641 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top six direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Follow-up (28%)
- Referral (13%)
- Client advocacy (7%)
- Assistance with applying for a public subsidy program (6%)
- Assistance with assessing qualifications for public assistance (5%)
- Completing applications for assistance (5%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 681 participants who received services in this domain. Thirty-five percent of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and 36 percent maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. On the other hand, 16 percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and 13 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. The ratings from the current evaluation period did not change significantly from the previous evaluation period (see Figure 5).

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## 5. Change in household income sources from baseline to follow-up



## ***Domain 4: child support***

The “child support” domain on the SRAS relates to whether the participant is eligible for child support benefits and what proportion of their benefits they are currently receiving. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Eligible; no income benefit (N=447)

### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Eligible; partial or irregular benefit (N=257)
- Eligible; receives full benefit (N=248)

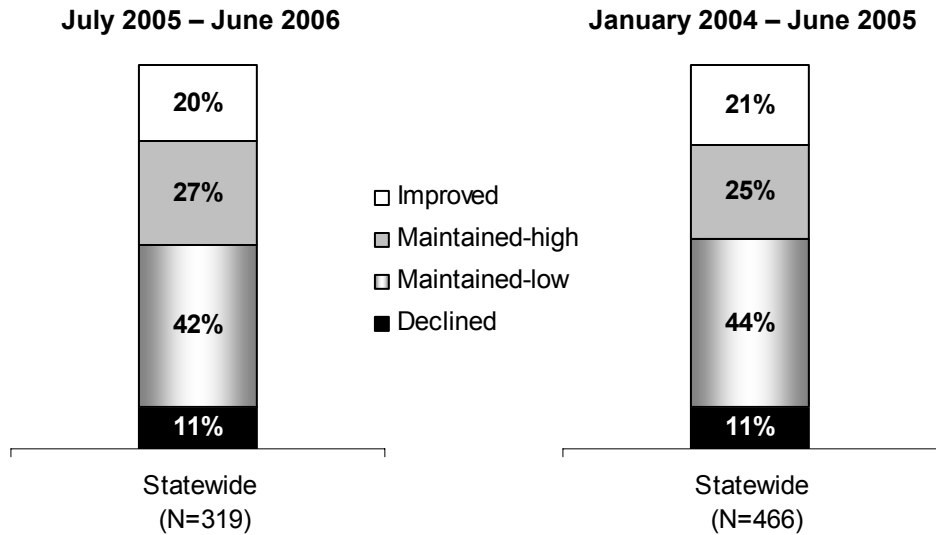
Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 997 services to 417 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top three direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Follow-up (36%)
- Referral (13%)
- Client advocacy (5%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 319 participants who received services in this domain. Twenty percent of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and just over one-quarter (27%) maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Forty-two percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and 11 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. The ratings from the current evaluation period did not change significantly from the previous evaluation period (see Figure 6).

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## 6. Change in child support from baseline to follow-up



### *Domain 5: Earned Income Tax Credit*

The “Earned Income Tax Credit” domain on the SRAS relates to whether or not participants are currently receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

#### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Eligible; no income benefit (N=189)

#### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Eligible; applied for benefit (N=139)
- Eligible; received or receiving benefit (N=864)

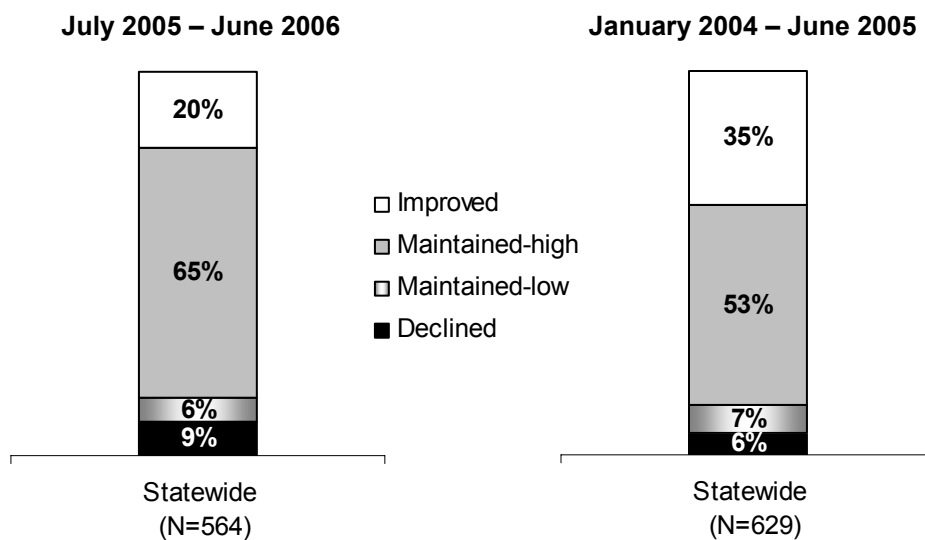
Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 1,834 services to 920 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top three direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Follow-up (17%)
- Referral (16%)
- Applying for Earned Income Tax Credit (10%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 564 participants who received services in this domain. Twenty percent of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and nearly two-thirds (65%) maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Only 6 percent of participants maintained a low level of self-reliance and 9 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. During the current evaluation period, a significantly lower proportion of participants improved their self-reliance and a significantly higher proportion of participants maintained a high level of self-reliance related to the Earned Income Tax Credit compared to the previous evaluation period (see Figure 7).

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## 7. Change in Earned Income Tax Credit from baseline to follow-up



### ***Domain 6: adequacy of income for food and shelter***

The “adequacy of income for food and shelter” domain on the SRAS relates to the participants’ ability to meet their food and/or housing expenses. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

#### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Unable to meet food and housing expenses during the last month (N=376)
- Able to meet food or housing expenses during the last month (N=577)

## **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Able to meet both food and housing expenses during the last month (N=1,475)

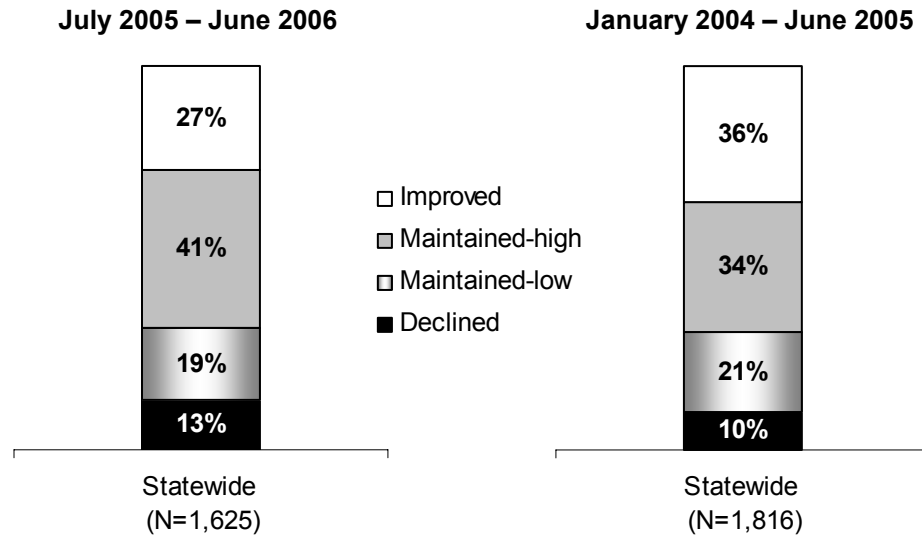
Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 5,489 services to 2,005 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top eight direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Energy Assistance Program enrollment (16%)
- Follow-up (13%)
- Referral (12%)
- Emergency food assistance (7%)
- Budgeting (7%)
- Nutrition assistance program enrollment [WIC, MAC, NAPS] (6%)
- Client advocacy (4%)
- Obtaining vouchers for food or clothing (4%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 1,625 participants who received services in this domain. Just over one-quarter (27%) of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and 41 percent maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Nineteen percent of participants maintained a low level of self-reliance and 13 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. During the current evaluation period, a somewhat lower proportion of participants improved their self-reliance and a somewhat higher proportion of participants maintained a high level of self-reliance related to the adequacy of income for food and shelter compared to the previous evaluation period (see Figure 8).

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## 8. Change in adequacy of income for food and shelter from baseline to follow-up



### *Domain 7: financial credit*

The “financial credit” domain on the SRAS relates to the participants’ credit ratings and their level of established credit. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

#### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- No credit (N=179)
- Poor credit (N=674)

#### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Restoring or beginning to establish credit (N=468)
- Good or restored credit (N=509)

Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 2,660 services to 1,018 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top six direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Follow-up (22%)
- Budgeting (12%)

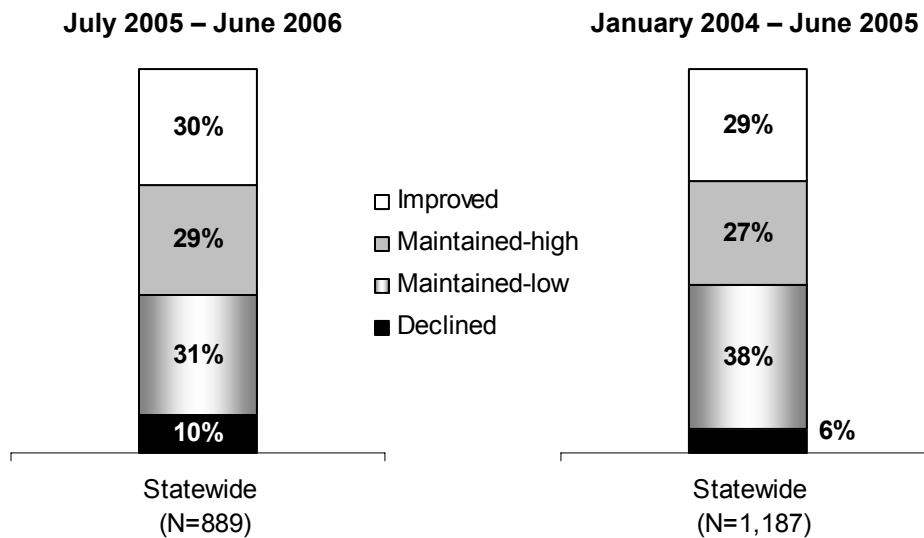


- Referral (11%)
- Assistance obtaining credit reports (7%)
- Client advocacy (6%)
- Mentoring (5%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 889 participants who received services in this domain. Thirty percent of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and 29 percent maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Thirty-one percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and 10 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. During the current evaluation period, a slightly lower proportion of participants maintained a low level of self-reliance related to financial credit compared to the previous evaluation period (see Figure 9).

---

**9. Change in financial credit from baseline to follow-up**



## ***Domain 8: housing stability***

The “housing stability” domain on the SRAS relates to the type and stability of housing arrangements the participants are currently living in. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Homeless (N=101)
- Emergency shelter, doubled up, or notice of eviction or foreclosure (N=236)

### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Transitional housing (time-limited) (N=80)
- Subsidized rental housing (N=559)
- Market-rate rental housing (N=728)
- Homeownership (N=728)

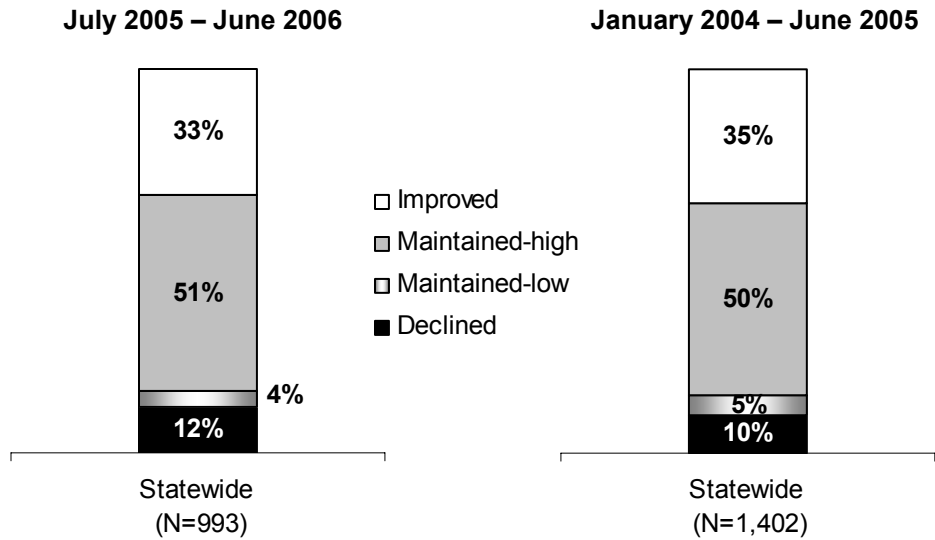
Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 2,665 services to 1,005 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top five direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Follow-up (20%)
- Referral (15%)
- Client advocacy (13%)
- Housing grant (4%)
- Relocation assistance (4%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 993 participants who received services in this domain. One-third (33%) of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and just over one-half (51%) maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Only 4 percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and 12 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. The ratings from the current evaluation period did not change significantly from the previous evaluation period (see Figure 10).

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## 10. Change in housing stability from baseline to follow-up



### *Domain 9: housing affordability*

The “housing affordability” domain on the SRAS relates to the percentage of participants’ income being spent on housing costs. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

#### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Pays more than half of household income for housing (N=439)
- Pays between 30 and 50 percent of household income for housing (N=636)

#### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Pays less than 30 percent of household income for housing (N=806)

Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 2,955 services to 1,071 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top six direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

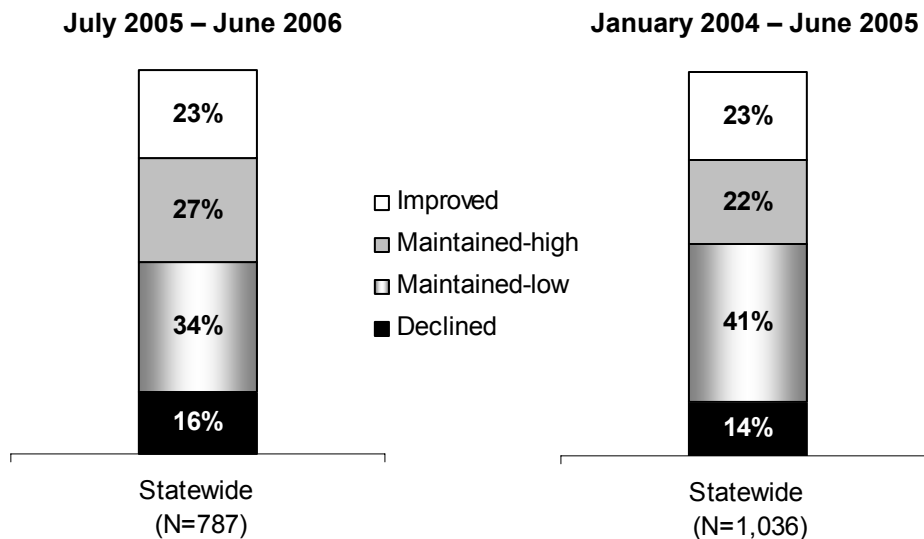
- Follow-up (19%)
- Referral (12%)
- Budgeting (8%)

- Rental assistance (8%)
- Client advocacy (7%)
- Assistance with applying for a public subsidy program (5%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 787 participants who received services in this domain. Almost one-quarter (23%) of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and just over one-quarter (27%) maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Just over one-third (34%) maintained a low level of self-reliance and 16 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. During the current evaluation period, a slightly higher proportion of participants maintained a high level of self-reliance related to their housing affordability and a slightly lower proportion maintained a low level of self-reliance related to housing affordability compared to the previous evaluation period (see Figure 11).

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### 11. Change in housing affordability from baseline to follow-up



### *Domain 10: household healthcare insurance coverage*

The “household healthcare insurance coverage” domain on the SRAS relates to the type (public vs. private) and amount of health insurance coverage currently provided to participants’ household members. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

#### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- No insurance for any household members (N=162)

- Public health insurance for some household members (N=269)
- Mix of public and private health insurance for some household members (N=115)
- Private health insurance for some household members (N=56)

### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Public health insurance for all household members (N=1,177)
- Mix of public and private health insurance for all household members (N=320)
- Private health insurance for all household members (N=334)

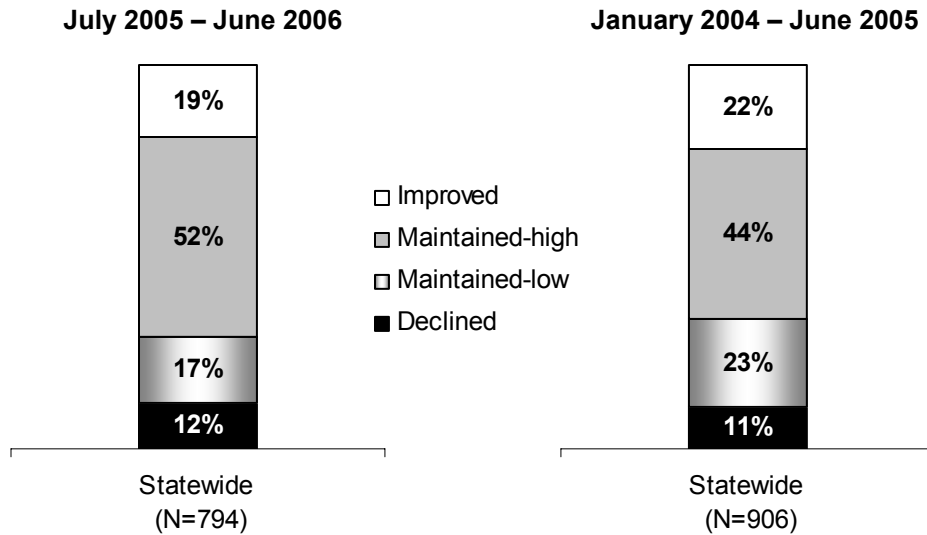
Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 1,875 services to 764 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top six direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Follow-up (26%)
- Referral (13%)
- Client advocacy (10%)
- Assistance in applying for a public subsidy program (8%)
- Health insurance counseling and assistance (7%)
- Completing insurance applications (4%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 794 participants who received services in this domain. Nineteen percent of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and just over one-half (52%) maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Seventeen percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and 12 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. During the current evaluation period, a somewhat higher proportion of participants maintained a high level of self-reliance related to their household health insurance coverage and a slightly lower proportion maintained a low level of self-reliance related to household health insurance coverage compared to the previous evaluation period (see Figure 12).

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## 12. Change in household health insurance coverage from baseline to follow-up



### *Domain 11: child care*

The “child care” domain on the SRAS relates to participants’ access to child care and whether or not they are receiving child care subsidies. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

#### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Child care not available (N=53)
- Child care available; inadequate to meet need (N=63)

#### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Child care available; adequate with subsidy (N=337)
- Child care available; adequate without subsidy (N=267)

Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 2,268 services to 828 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top eight direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

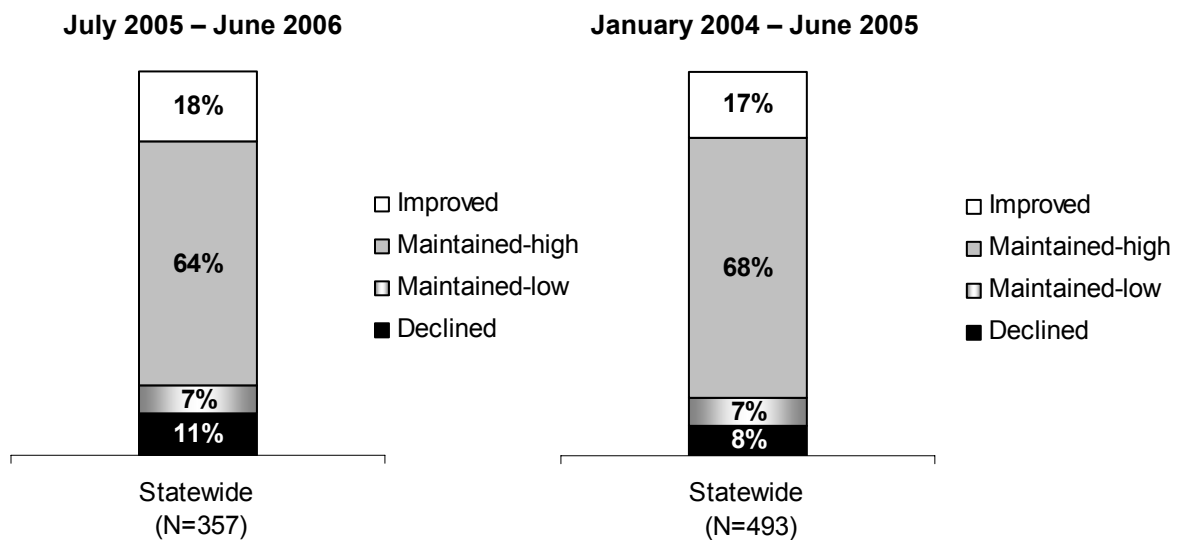
- Follow-up (15%)
- Child care subsidy (11%)

- Referral (10%)
- Assistance with applying for a public subsidy program (8%)
- Head Start wraparound child care (7%)
- Child care in center (4%)
- Child care by a non-licensed relative (4%)
- Assistance with searching for a child care provider (4%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 357 participants who received services in this domain. Eighteen percent of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and nearly two-thirds (64%) maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Only 7 percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and 11 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. The ratings from the current evaluation period did not change significantly from the previous evaluation period (see Figure 13).

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### 13. Change in child care from baseline to follow-up



## ***Domain 12: English proficiency***

The “English proficiency” domain on the SRAS relates to participants’ functional English skills. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- No skills/inadequate skills (N=48)
- Limited skills (N=48)

### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Functional skills with some support (N=93)
- Functional skills; no support needed (N=2,251)

Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 307 services to 167 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top six direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

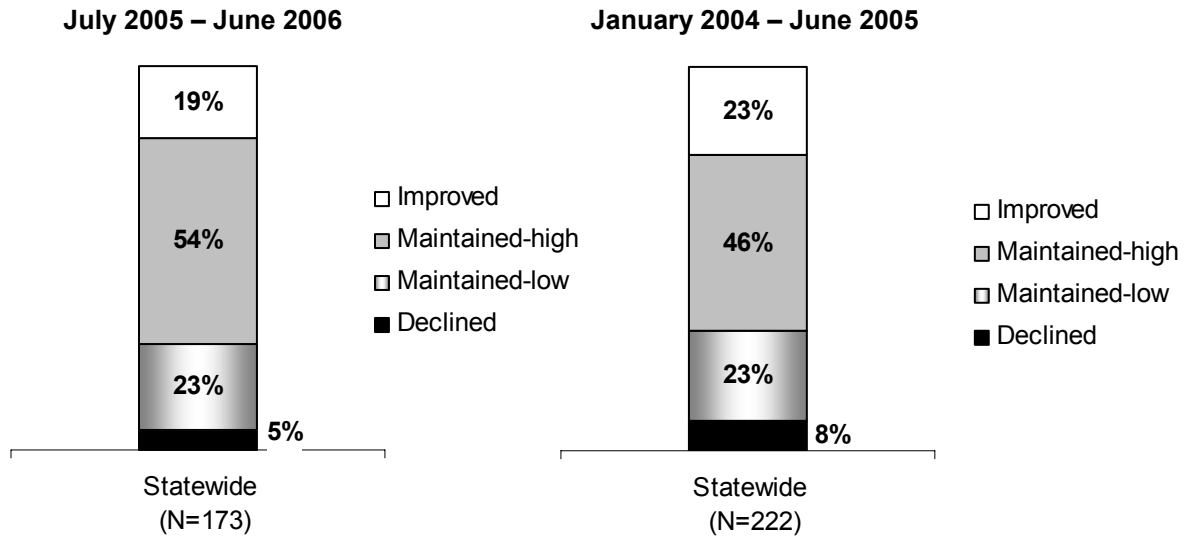
- Follow-up (15%)
- Translation services (13%)
- Referral (12%)
- Client advocacy (7%)
- Mentoring (5%)
- ESL/English proficiency training (4%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 173 participants who received services in this domain. Nineteen percent of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and 54 percent maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Just under one-quarter (23%) maintained a low level of self-reliance and 5 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. During the current evaluation period, a somewhat higher proportion of participants maintained a high level of self-reliance related to their English proficiency related to English proficiency compared to the previous evaluation period (see Figure 14).



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## 14. Change in English proficiency from baseline to follow-up



### *Domain 13: education*

The “education” domain on the SRAS relates to participants’ education levels as needed for employment and potential job advancement. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

#### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Education not adequate to meet employment needs (N=304)

#### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Education adequate for current employment but not for work advancement (N=950)
- Education adequate for current employment and advancement (N=728)

Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 2,279 services to 913 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top five direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

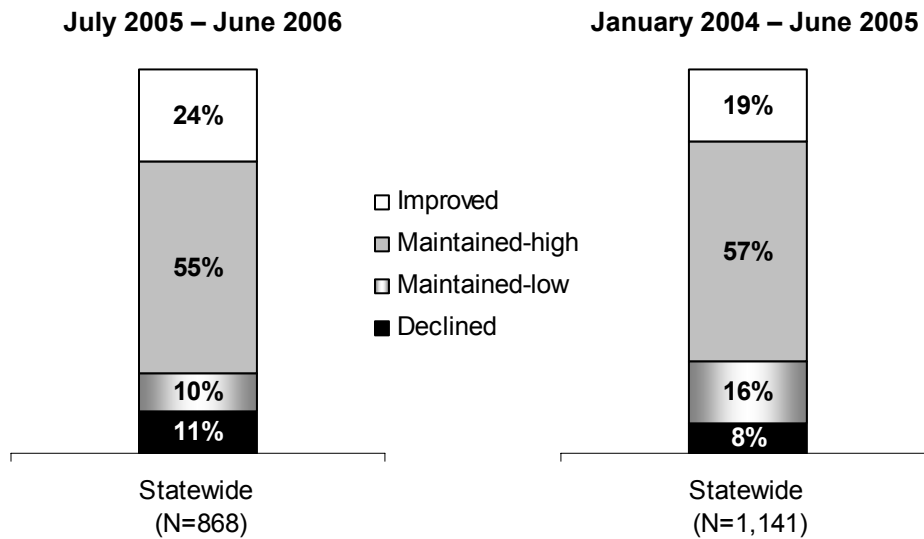
- Follow-up (21%)
- Referral (13%)
- Education/participant support services (12%)
- Education/career counseling (7%)

- Mentoring (4%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 868 participants who received services in this domain. Almost one-quarter (24%) of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and 55 percent maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Ten percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and 11 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. During the current evaluation period, a slightly higher proportion of participants improved their level of education and a slightly lower proportion maintained a low level of self-reliance related to education compared to the previous evaluation period (see Figure 15).

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**15. Change in education from baseline to follow-up**



***Domain 14: transportation***

The “transportation” domain on the SRAS is related to the adequacy of participants’ transportation to meet daily living needs. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

**Lower levels of self-reliance**

- Transportation not adequate to meet daily needs (N=299)
- Transportation adequate to meet some but not all daily needs (N=547)

**Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Transportation adequate to meet daily needs (N=1,590)

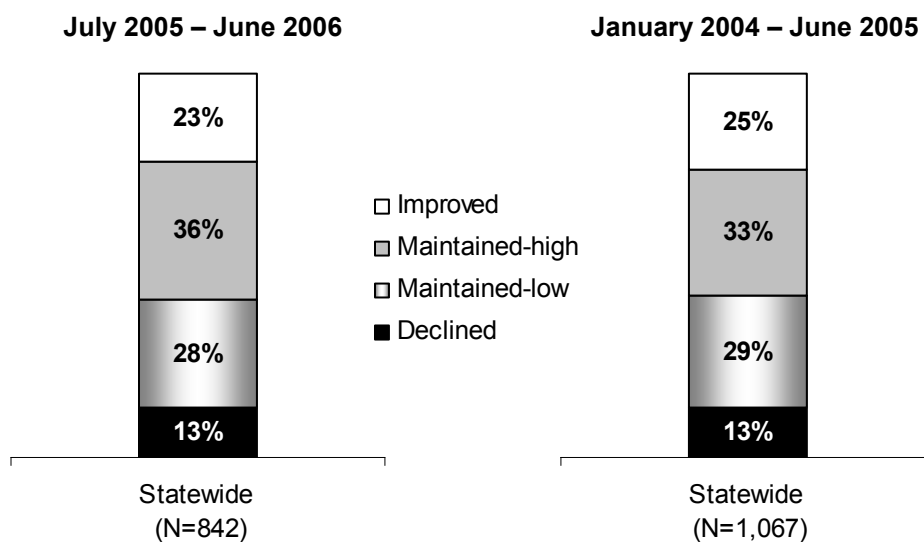
Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 2,231 services to 817 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top six direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Follow-up (20%)
- Arranging reliable transportation (12%)
- Referral (11%)
- Gas voucher (10%)
- Client advocacy (5%)
- Arranging ride sharing (4%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 842 participants who received services in this domain. Nearly one-quarter (23%) of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and 36 percent maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Twenty-eight percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and 13 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. The ratings from the current evaluation period did not change significantly from the previous evaluation period (see Figure 16).

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**16. Change in transportation from baseline to follow-up**



## ***Domain 15: informal social support***

The “informal social support” domain on the SRAS relates to the amount of social support participants receive from family and friends. The levels of self-reliance (with the number of participants who started at this level in parentheses) on this domain are:

### **Lower levels of self-reliance**

- No support from family or friends (N=114)
- One family member or friend they can turn to in crisis (N=536)

### **Higher levels of self-reliance**

- Two or more family members or friends they can turn to in crisis (N=1,777)

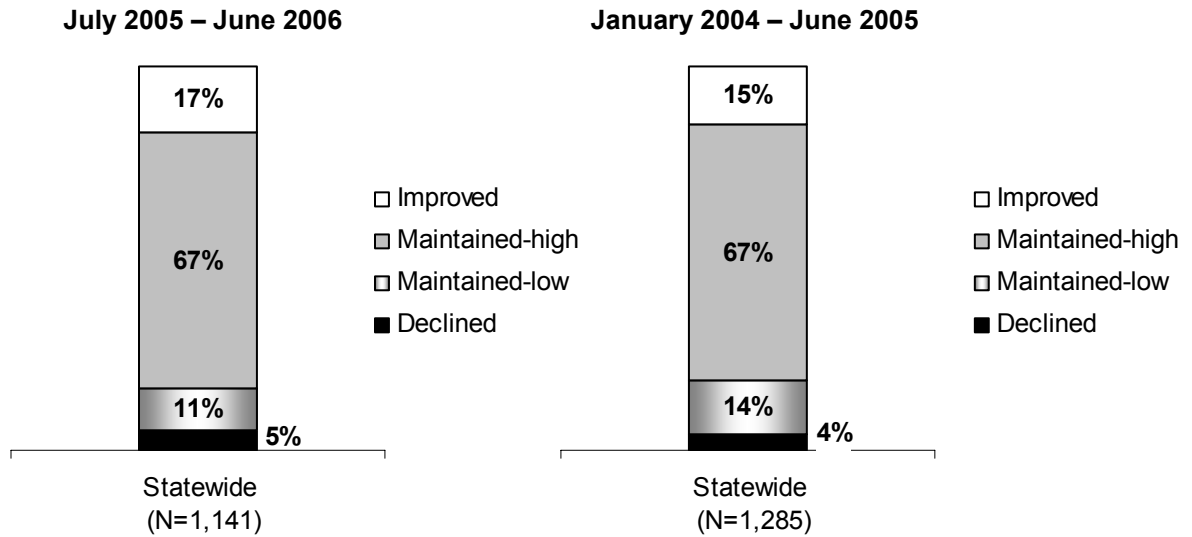
Minnesota Community Action Agencies provided 4,157 services to 1,283 participants in this domain between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2006. The top seven direct services provided under this domain follow. The figures in parentheses show the percent that each service represents of all services provided in this domain.

- Participation in a Head Start parent group (22%)
- Identifying support (15%)
- Follow-up (9%)
- Personal development (7%)
- Referral (6%)
- Developing personal routines for well-being (4%)
- Mentoring (4%)

We have both baseline and follow-up SRAS ratings for 1,141 participants who received services in this domain. Seventeen percent of participants improved their self-reliance on this domain and two-thirds (67%) maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. Eleven percent maintained a low level of self-reliance and only 5 percent declined from baseline to follow-up. The ratings from the current evaluation period did not change significantly from the previous evaluation period (see Figure 17).

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## 17. Change in informal social support from baseline to follow-up



### *Overall gains in self-reliance*

Community Action Agencies serve low-income individuals and families who struggle to become self-reliant in terms of meeting their daily living needs. Many participants were initially rated (their baseline SRAS scores) as having low levels of self-reliance. For example, 69 percent of participants were at low levels of self-reliance on the “hours of employment” domain at their baseline ratings. The ratings for the current evaluation period did not change significantly from the previous evaluation period. Figure 18 shows the percent of participants who received low baseline self-reliance ratings on each SRAS domain.

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**18. Percent of participants who received low self-reliance ratings on each domain at baseline**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Percent of participants who received a low rating at baseline (N=720-2,440)</b>
Hours of employment	69%
Housing affordability	57%
Job retention and stability	55%
Child support	47%
Financial credit	47%
Adequacy of income for food and shelter	39%*
Transportation	35%
Household income sources	31%
Informal social support	27%
Household health insurance coverage	25%
Child care	16%
Earned Income Tax Credit	16%
Education	15%
Housing stability	14%
English proficiency	4%

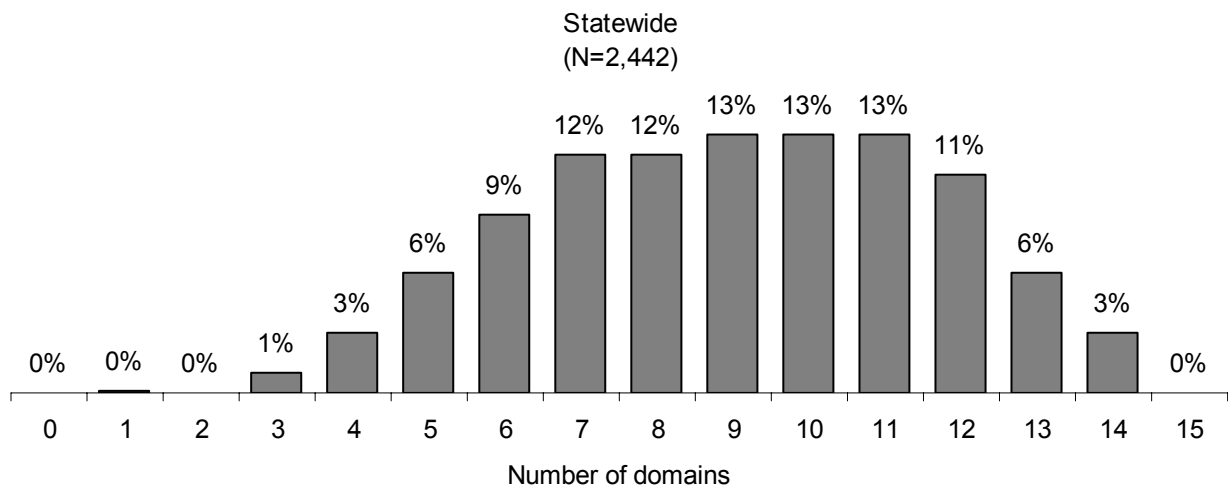
**Note:** Percentages were calculated based on those participants for whom valid baseline ratings were available.

\* A slightly lower percentage (39% vs. 45%) of participants received low self-reliance ratings related to “adequacy of income for food and shelter” in 2005-06 compared to the 2004-05 evaluation period. This is the only domain in which the 2005-06 rating differed from the 2004-05 rating by 5 or more percentage points.

Most participants who receive services from Community Action Agencies experience an increase in their self-reliance from baseline to follow-up. In fact, nearly one-quarter (73%) of participants statewide have improved on at least one domain from baseline to follow-up. Furthermore, when we look at participants who improved or maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up, we find that 19 percent of participants improved or maintained a high level of self-reliance in 12 to 15 domains, one-half (50%) improved or maintained a high level of self-reliance in 8 to 11 domains, 29 percent improved or maintained a high level of self-reliance in four to seven domains, and only 1 percent improved or maintained a high level of self-reliance in three or fewer domains (see Figure 19).

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**19. Number of domains participants improved in or maintained a high level of self-reliance from baseline to follow-up**



Throughout this report, we have analyzed participants’ progress toward self-reliance within specific domains of the Self-Reliance Achievement Scale (SRAS) based on the amount of services they have received in that domain. However, because of the significant overlap among domains, these domain-specific analyses do not capture the whole picture of how services provided by Community Action Agencies are related to participants’ progress toward self-reliance.

Other factors contribute to participants’ progress on specific domains in addition to the number of services they have received in that domain. First, services participants receive in all domains are likely to affect their improvement on specific domains. For example, a participant may receive services under the domain of “housing affordability” and these services may also have a positive impact on their self-reliance score on the “housing stability” domain. Furthermore, participants who did not receive services in a particular domain were frequently rated as having improved in that domain from baseline to follow-up. This finding suggests that there may be an overall positive effect on participants’ self-reliance when they receive *any* services from Community Action Agencies (see Figure 20).

**20. Participants who did not receive services in a specific domain and were rated as having improved in that domain**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Number of participants who did <u>not</u> receive services in domain</b>	<b>Percent whose ratings improved from baseline to follow-up</b>
Hours of employment	1,360	24%
Job retention and stability	1,452	23%
Household income sources	1,746	17%
Financial credit	941	15%
Housing affordability	1,094	13%
Child support	633	13%
Earned Income Tax Credit	628	12%
Adequacy of income for food and shelter	803	12%
Child care	363	12%
Education	1,114	11%
Housing stability	1,439	11%
Transportation	1,594	9%
Household health insurance coverage	1,639	9%
Informal social support	1,286	6%
English proficiency	2,267	2%

In addition, it is important to remember that participants who started out with more significant barriers to self-reliance are likely to have received more services compared to participants who were already fairly self-reliant, but the participants with low baseline scores are also likely to be the hardest to serve, so caution should be used when trying to draw a direct link between amount of services and progress toward self-reliance.

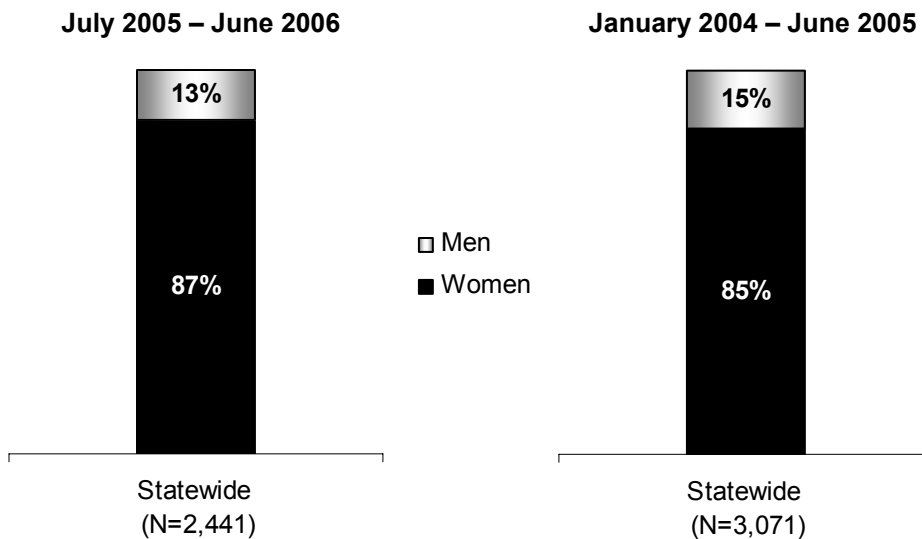


# Characteristics of participants served

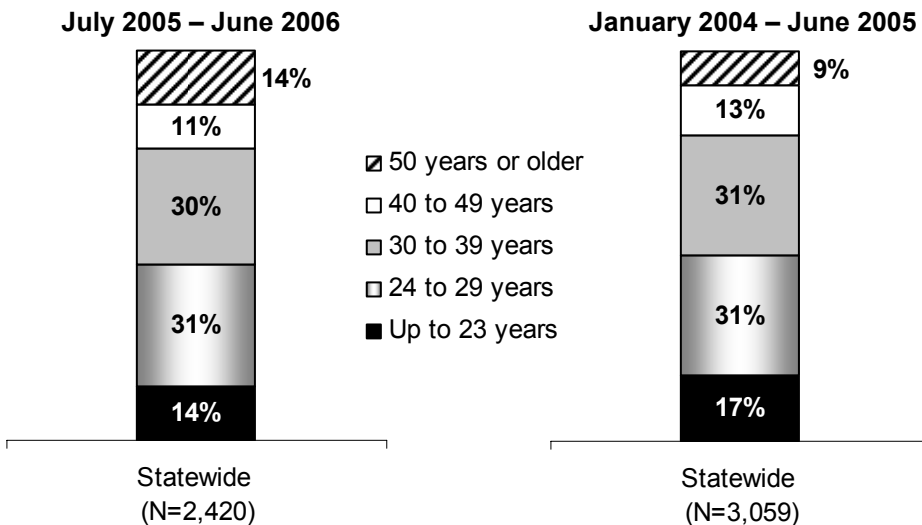
## *Gender, age, race, and ethnicity*

Most participants are White women in their 20s and 30s. The average age of participants is 35.9 years old. Eleven percent of participants are of Latino ethnicity and 7 percent are African Americans (see Figures 21, 22, 23, and 24).

### 21. Gender of participants

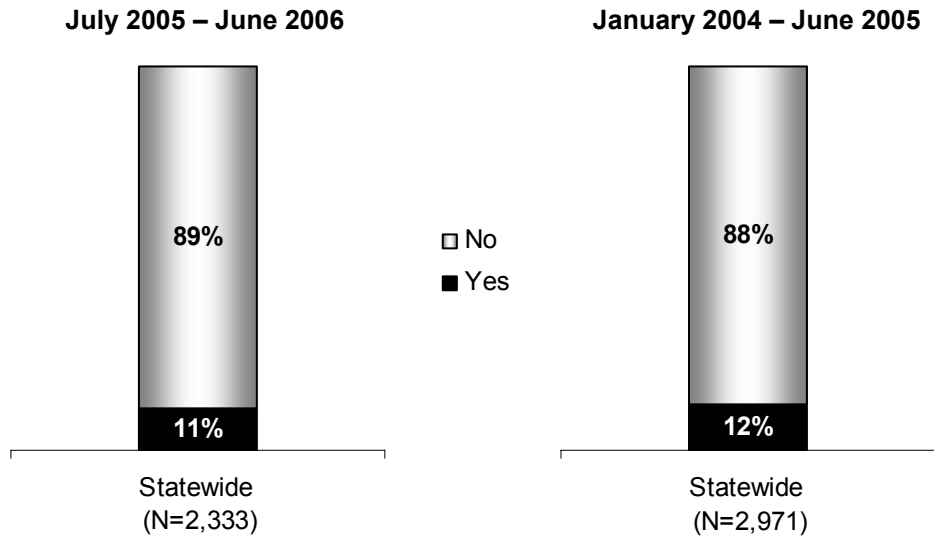


### 22. Age of participants



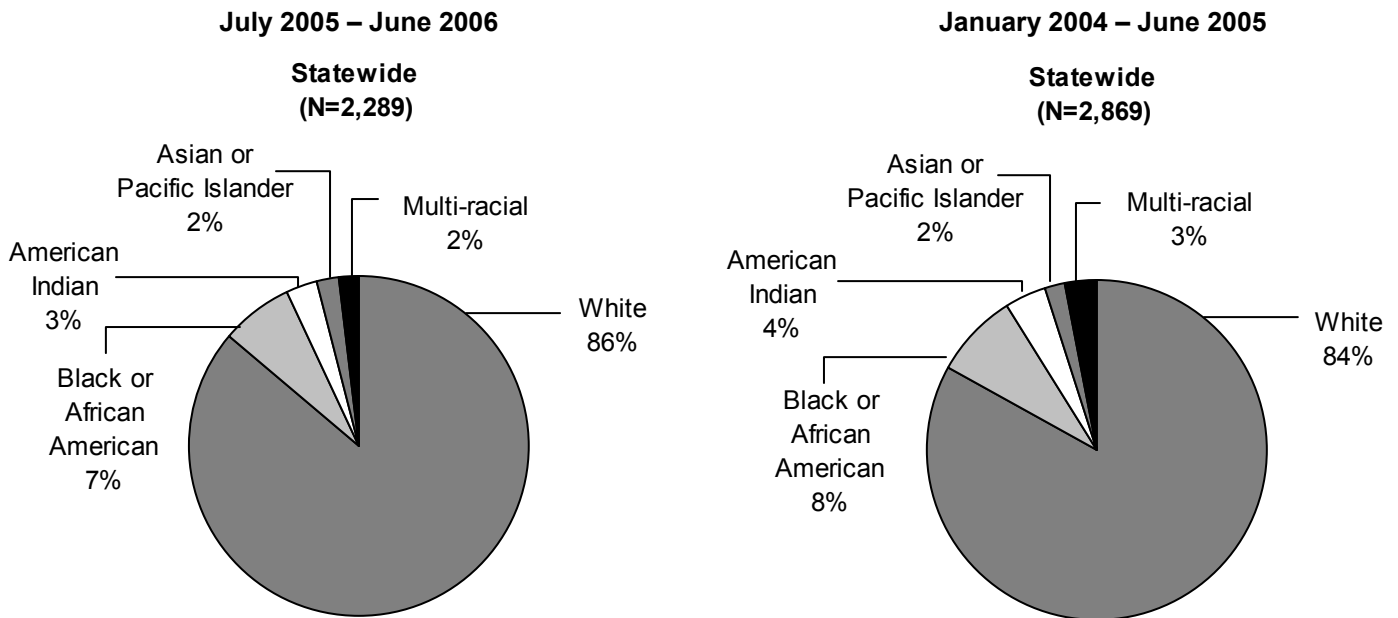
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### 23. Participants of Latino ethnicity



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### 24. Race of participants



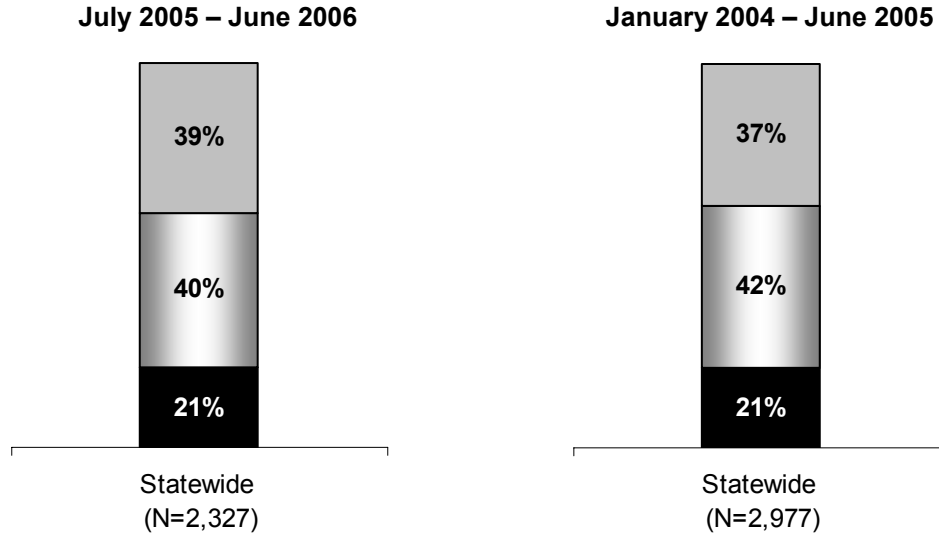
It is interesting that SRAS participants are different from the overall population of Community Action Agency program participants (across all programs, not just those specific to the SRAS project) in several ways. First, only 62 percent of all Community Action Agency clients are female compared to 87 percent of SRAS participants. In addition, individuals under the age of 24 make up 49 percent of all Community Action clients (likely due to Head Start programs) but account for only 17 percent of all clients whose families were assessed with the SRAS. Finally, SRAS participants are more likely to be White compared to Community Action Agency clients in general (84% vs. 63%, respectively).

### ***Education***

Twenty-one percent of SRAS participants have less than a high school education without a GED. Forty percent have a high school diploma or GED. Thirty-nine percent have some college or more education (see Figure 25). SRAS participants have a higher level of education, on average, compared to Community Action Agency clients overall (21% vs. 37%, respectively, who have less than a high school education).

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#### **25. Educational attainment of participants**

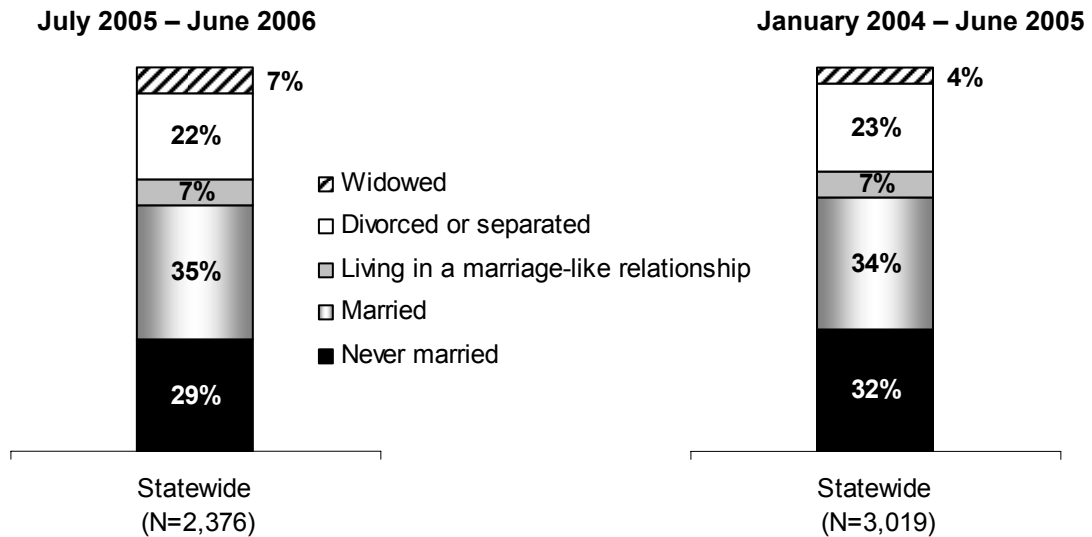


## *Marital status and single parents*

Just over one-third (35%) of participants are married and another 7 percent are living in a marriage-like relationship. Twenty-nine percent have never been married and 22 percent are separated or divorced. Seven percent are widowed (see Figure 26). In addition, nearly one-third (32%) of participants statewide are single parents. This is higher than the just over one-quarter (26%) of all clients from Community Action Agencies statewide who are single parents.

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### 26. Marital status of participants



## Household size

Seventy-one percent of participants have a household size between two and five people. Sixteen percent of participants live alone and an additional 13 percent of participants live in households with six or more household members. SRAS participants tend to have larger households than Community Action Agency clients in general. For example, only 16 percent of SRAS participants statewide live alone compared to 29 percent of all Community Action Agency clients statewide (see Figure 27).

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### 27. Participants' household size

