

Chapter 2 The Economic and Employment Status of Families

A high proportion of the women and men who headed the families in this study were employed either steadily or during some periods over the two years following their exits from TANF or Food Stamps. These workers made a high commitment to paid work. At both interviews, over fifty percent of the employed worked 40 hours or more per week at both interviews. Although their average earnings improved in these two years, their wages were low and many workers still had incomes below the Federal Poverty Guidelines. One reason for their low wages was that their jobs were predominantly in low-wage fields such as service and clerical work. Although many workers had some job-related benefits, they rarely had a package of benefits along with a sufficiently high wage to define their jobs as 'good jobs.' However, a high proportion said they were satisfied with their jobs and considered themselves better off than when they were on welfare.

Employment Status

A substantial proportion of people in this study held a job at each point of contact. Administrative Record Data on the 756 families that we were able to contact at both points show that 71 percent of TANF leavers, 55 percent of TANF diverted and 68 percent of Food Stamp leavers had reported earnings when they left or were diverted from assistance in the first quarter of 1998. (Table 2.1)

In the larger sample of 970 respondents, who we first contacted between 12 and 15 months after leaving or being diverted from TANF or Food Stamps, two-thirds were employed. Food Stamp leavers were the most likely to be employed (69 percent) and those diverted from TANF were least likely to be employed (60 percent). (Table 2.1)

Six months later, at the second contact with 756 respondents, 72 percent were employed. Again, Food Stamp leavers were the most likely to be employed (75 percent) and TANF diverted were the least likely to be employed (66 percent). (Table 2.1)

Table 2.1 Employment Status of Respondents at AFS Case Closure, at First Survey, and at Second Survey

	At case closure		At first survey		At second survey		
	Administrative Data (n=756)		Survey Data (n=970)		Survey Data (n=756)		
	Employed	Not employed	Employed	Not employed	Employed	Not employed	No answer
TANF leaver	71%(150)	29% (60)	64% (182)	36% (101)	71% (149)	28% (59)	1% (2)
TANF diverted	55% (90)	45% (74)	60% (124)	40% (83)	66% (109)	33% (55)	<1% (1)
Food Stamp	68%(259)	32% (123)	69% (330)	31% (150)	75% (286)	24% (93)	<1% (2)
Total	66%(499)	34%(257)	66% (636)	34% (334)	72% (544)	27% (207)	1% (5)

Source: Oregon Dept. of Employment Wage Data; First and second surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

Survey data show employment status at particular points in time. A more continuous history of employment is found in Oregon Department of Employment records

that contain reports from employers about employees' earnings and hours worked every calendar quarter. Eighty-three percent of respondents had earnings in at least one of the seven quarters. That means that only 17 percent of respondents did not work at all after leaving the programs.

Some of these workers cycled in and out of paid work over the 6 to 8 months between Survey 1 and Survey 2. Fifty-eight percent of those we interviewed were in paid work at both surveys, while 19 percent were not employed at either time. (Table 2.2) These survey results are substantially the same as the Department of Employment data showing that 17 percent were not employed during the survey period.

Table 2.2 Employment Status of Respondents: First Survey to Second Survey

Employed at both survey times	439 (58%)
Employed at First survey, not at second survey	101 (13%)
Employed at Second survey, not at first survey	62 (8%)
Not employed at either survey	143 (19%)
No answer	10 (2%)
Totals	756 (100%)

Source: First and Second Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

Another indicator of stable work attachment over time comes from a survey question about the number of months that respondents have been at their present jobs. In the first survey (12 to 15 months after program exit), 33 percent of respondents had been working at their present job for less than 6 months, while another 25 percent had been on the current job for 7 to 12 months. Forty-two percent had from 13 months to more than five years of job tenure, suggesting a stable employment pattern. Six months later, those respondents reporting this longer job tenure had increased to 47 percent. Of course, a short time on the job does not necessarily mean an unstable work history. Instead, it could mean a recent move to another job.

Usual hours of work per week provide another view of commitment to work. In the first and second surveys, 76 percent to 79 percent of employed respondents were working more than 30 hours per week. Over 50 percent were working 40 or more hours. This strong commitment provides a context for the findings on earnings, which we discuss in the next section.

Table 2.3 Hours of Work Per Week of Employed Respondents at First Survey and at Second Survey

Hours per week	First Survey	Second Survey
50 or more	9.28 % (59)	10.1% (55)
40 to 49	45.75% (291)	43.7% (238)
30 to 39	24.06% (153)	22.9% (125)
20 to 29	11.64% (74)	13.6% (74)
19 or less	8.49% (54)	9.7% (53)
Don't know	.79% (5)	-
Total Employed	100% (636)	100% (545)

Source: First and Second Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

Earnings and Earnings Growth

Despite employment and long hours of work, earnings were low. The average or mean monthly take-home pay of the full sample of those employed 12 to 15 months after leaving assistance (636) was \$990.24. Six months later the average monthly take-home pay was \$1,016.32, an increase in monthly income of \$26.06. The median income of the full sample of those employed 12 to 15 months after leaving assistance was \$957.50. Six months later it was \$1,000, an increase in monthly income of \$42.50. Differences between the mean and median incomes are small. (Table 2.4)

Table 2.4 Mean (Average) Take-Home (Net) Earnings of Employed Respondents

At first survey (n=970)		At second survey (n=756)	
Number with earnings	Average take-home pay/month	Number with earnings	Average take-home pay/month
65% (636)	\$990.24	69% (525)	\$1,016.32

Source: First and Second Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

Table 2.5 Median Take-Home (Net) Earnings of Employed Respondents

At first survey (n=970)		At second survey (n=756)	
Number with earnings	Average take-home pay/month	Number with earnings	Average take-home pay/month
65% (636)	\$957.50	69% (525)	\$1,000.00

Source: First and Second Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

We examined earning differences between the two TANF groups and between the TANF groups and the Food Stamp leavers because of the assumption that TANF leavers might be less well connected to the labor force than the other groups and might have more difficulty increasing their earnings. A comparison of the earnings among the three leaver groups (based on the mean earnings of the whole sample) shows that at 12 to 15 months after program exit TANF leavers were earning about \$40 more per month than those

diverted from the TANF program and about \$13 more per month than Food Stamp leavers. Differences among the groups based on average monthly net earnings were about the same at 18 to 21 months after exit. At the second point of contact, the TANF leavers were earning about \$24 more than the TANF diverted, and just over \$35 more than Food Stamp leavers. This difference between the TANF leavers and Food Stamp leavers is \$40 per month if median earnings are used instead of means. (Table 2.6)

Table 2.6 Number and Percentage of Employed Respondents' Mean and Median Earnings by Leaver Group

	At first survey-full sample (636 of 970)			At first survey-respondents replying to both (504 of 756)			At second survey (545 of 756)		
	Number with earnings	Mean take-home pay/month	Median take-home pay/month	Number with earnings	Mean take-home pay/month	Median take-home pay/month	Number with earnings	Mean take-home pay/month	Median take-home pay/month
TANF leaver	64% (182)	\$1,018.85	\$997.50	65% (136)	\$988.50	\$1,000.00	71% (149)	\$1,039.82	\$1,040.00
TANF diverted	60% (124)	\$979.32	\$900.00	63% (103)	\$945.99	\$895.00	66% (109)	\$1015.47	\$1,000.00
Food Stamp leaver	69% (330)	\$1,005.87	\$1,000.00	69% (265)	\$1,018.50	\$1,000.00	75% (287)	\$1004.67	\$1,000.00
Totals	N=636	\$990.24	\$957.50	N=504	\$995.60	\$1000.00	N=545	\$1016.32	\$1000.00

Source: First and Second Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

These reported average take-home earnings were below the 1999 Federal Poverty Level for a family of three (\$1,157/month). The Federal Poverty Guidelines are calculated on family gross income from all sources, including earnings before taxes. Our data are for take-home earnings. Therefore, we do not know that these families *are* living below the Federal Poverty Guidelines. But the earnings data do mean that, on average, the money families have to spend on a monthly basis from earnings is not sufficient to raise them above the federal poverty level, a strong indication that their wages are low.

The proportion of respondents with income below the Federal Poverty Guidelines was further examined in both survey interviews. The resulting statistics are not completely comparable because 1) there was a change in the way the question was asked: Survey 1, was based on yearly income and Survey 2 on previous month's income; and 2) the first year's annual income included between one to three months when the family could have been on cash assistance which would pull their annual income down. Nevertheless, the general trend in poverty rates is, we believe, accurate. (Table 2.7 and Table 2.8)

**1999 Federal Poverty Guidelines
for the 48 Contiguous States and
the District of Columbia**

Number in Family	Gross Monthly Income	Gross Yearly Income
1	\$687	\$8,240
2	\$922	\$11,060
3	\$1,157	\$13,880
4	\$1,392	\$16,700
5	\$1,627	\$19,520
6	\$1,862	\$22,340
7	\$2,097	\$25,160
8	\$2,332	\$27,980
Over 8 add for each child	+\$235	+\$2,820

Source: US Dept of Health and Human Services ASPE.
<http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/poverty/99poverty.htm>

The data in Table 2.7 and Table 2.8 show that while the proportions of respondents with incomes above the Federal Poverty Guidelines increased over time, the proportion still below the guidelines remained very high.

Table 2.7 Respondents With Family Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Guidelines (as Measured by 1998 Annual Income: First Survey)

	Living BELOW poverty level	Living ABOVE poverty level	Don't know
TANF leavers	72.5% (205)	24.5% (69)	3% (9)
TANF diverted	66% (137)	32% (66)	2% (4)
Food Stamp leavers	57% (276)	40% (191)	3% (13)
Total	64% (618)	33% (326)	3% (26)

Source: First Survey of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

Table 2.8 Respondents With Family Incomes Below the Federal Poverty Guidelines (as Measured by Last Month’s 1999 Earnings: Second Survey)

	Living BELOW poverty level	Living ABOVE poverty level	Don’t know
TANF leavers	55% (115)	43% (91)	2% (4)
TANF diverted	46% (74)	52% (86)	2% (4)
Food Stamp leavers	45% (171)	54% (206)	1% (5)
Total	48% (360)	50% (383)	2% (13)

Source: Second Survey of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

To increase our understanding, we asked another question to gauge changes in disposable income: In the last six months has your household income from all sources gone up, gone down, or stayed about the same? Nearly half reported no change in their household income from all sources. One-third of respondents reported gains in their household income and about one-fifth reported that their household income from all sources had gone down. (Table 2.9)

Table 2.9 Respondents Who Reported Changes in Earnings in the Previous Six Months (18 to 21 months after leaving assistance.)

	At second survey
Earnings increased in the last 6 months	31.6% (239)
No change in earnings over the last 6 months	48.6% (368)
Earnings decreased in the last 6 months	19.6% (148)
No Answer	<1% (1)
Totals	100% (756)

Source: Second Survey of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

To further examine earnings growth, we looked at the average or mean earnings of 439 individuals (of 756 or 58 percent) who reported employment at both telephone surveys. Again, we found only modest earnings increases between the first and second surveys, even for those who apparently sustained their employment effort. (Table 2.10)

Table 2.10 Average Monthly Earnings of 439 Respondents Who Were Employed at Both Phone Surveys

Employed at Both Surveys (439)						
	At first survey			At second survey		
	Number with earnings	Mean take-home pay/month	Median take-home pay/month	Number with earnings	Mean take-home pay/month	Median take-home pay/month
TANF leaver	56%(117)	\$1,045.02	\$1,000.00	56%(117)	\$1,096.79	\$1,100.00
TANF diverted	54%(88)	\$978.52	\$900.00	54%(88)	\$1,085.17	\$1,000.00
Food Stamp leaver	61%(234)	\$1,028.30	\$1,000.00	61%(234)	\$1,059.37	\$1,100.00
Totals	439	\$1,022.73	\$1,000.00	439	\$1,074.00	\$1,050.00

Source: First and Second Phone Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

The earnings data reported above come from the survey telephone interviews in response to a question on usual monthly take-home earnings. These findings are confirmed by Oregon Department of Employment gross wage data reported quarterly by employers to the state. Some types of employment are excluded from these reports, including self-employment, agricultural employment in small firms, and household domestic employment. In Table 2.11 we present mean and median quarterly earnings for the fourth quarter of 1998 and the third quarter of 1999, approximating the beginning and concluding of our survey period. The data are for the 756 respondents who participated in both surveys.

Table 2.11 Quarterly Earnings by Leaver Group: Means and Medians for Fourth Quarter 1998 and Third Quarter 1999. Respondents to Both Surveys (n=756)

	Fourth quarter 1998			Third quarter 1999		
	Number with earnings	Mean earnings	Median earnings	Number with earnings	Mean earnings	Median earnings
TANF leaver	70% (146)	\$3,150.96	\$3,216.07	67% (141)	\$3,320.40	\$3,412.11
TANF diverted	66% (109)	\$2,910.08	\$2,780.00	55% (91)	\$3,706.09	\$3,413.57
Food Stamp leaver	67% (257)	\$3,425.18	\$3,358.37	66% (251)	\$3,576.21	\$3,380.00

Source: Oregon Department of Employment

The quarterly gross earnings from Department of Employment data reported in Table 2.11 are comparable to the monthly net earnings from survey data reported in Tables 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.10.

Averages or means tell us about this group as a whole. But what about individual families? What proportion of respondents had earnings gains during the period of the study? To answer these questions we again used wage data files from the Oregon Department of Employment because these figures provide detailed information about wages reported for every quarter in the tracking period rather than simply the respondents' reports of earnings on the two days that we interviewed them by phone. We used the wage data to evaluate earning gains and losses over almost two years: January 1998 to September 1999, which is the period after respondents left assistance to the time of our second interview.

We calculated earnings trend lines for each respondent who participated in both surveys. Earnings increased for 369 respondents (49 percent) and decreased for 182 respondents (24 percent). There were no reported earnings, or earnings for only one or two quarters for 206 respondents (27 percent), which resulted in too few reports to calculate trend lines. These data are further clues to the very diverse economic and employment experiences of these respondents, as one-half improved their incomes over this period, while the other half had earnings declines or so few quarters of earnings that trends could not be calculated

Job Advancement

Earnings increases came from pay raises, increased hours and promotions. Of respondents reporting pay increases, just less than half had earned raises, one-fifth worked more hours, and 15 to 17 percent had received a promotion. (Table 2.12)

Table 2.12 Reasons Given for Earnings Increase: Employed Respondents *

	At first survey	At second survey
Earn more, work more hours	19% (96)	19% (103)
Earn more, got a raise	46% (232)	44% (239)
Earn more, got a promotion	17% (88)	15% (80)
Do not earn more	34% (173)	35% (190)

Source: First and Second Phone Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

* Totals do not sum to 100% because respondents could choose more than one reason.

The Oregon minimum wage was raised from \$6.00 to \$6.50 on January 1, 1999. This increase created an upward lift on most low-wage jobs. There is little question that this public policy change is one of the most important explanations for the finding that respondents received raises during the course of the study.

Supervising others indicates a position that is relatively higher in a work organization than non-supervising. Of the sample that responded to both surveys, ten percent of respondents held supervisory positions at both points in time. Seven percent of the sample who had not held supervisory positions at the first survey had moved up by the second survey. Holding a supervisory position usually indicates that job advancement has occurred. Such promotion may offer opportunities for further moves up a job ladder. However, we know from the in-depth interviews that most of these supervisory positions involve minimal

authority, and often involve supervision of only a few other low-wage workers. Thus we must interpret “supervisory responsibilities” as an uncertain indicator of job advancement. (Table 2.13)

Table 2.13 Number and Percentage of Respondents Who Reported Supervisory Responsibilities

Supervised at both survey times	78	(10%)
Supervised at first survey, not at second survey	41	(5%)
Supervised at second survey , not at first survey	57	(7%)
Not employed at first survey, supervised at second survey	17	(2%)
Subtotal of number with any supervisory responsibilities	193	(24%)
No supervisory responsibilities at either first survey or second survey	563	(76%)
Totals	756	(100%)

Source: First and Second Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

Type of Job

The vast majority of respondents hold jobs in low wage occupations. Most have jobs in health and human services, clerical, retail, agricultural and food service sectors, all largely female dominated jobs. This helps explain the relatively low earnings of respondents and how long they stay in their jobs. The main notable exception to this pattern are the 114 (19 percent) who were in blue collar/semi-skilled manufacturing positions and the 28 (4 percent) in white collar “other” jobs (such as insurance agent and auditor) or professional/technical jobs. Only four were small business owners. (Table 2.14)

Table 2.14 Occupations of Respondents at First Phone Survey

1. Medical/caretaking	# Employed	Subtotal	Total
Elder care			
Care-taker	21		
Medical assistant (elderly specified)	4		
Certified Nursing Assistant (elderly usually specified)	25		
Visiting nurse	1		
Total elder care		51	
Disabled care			
Care-taker	9		
Teacher's aide - developmentally disabled	4		
Total disabled care		13	
Other medical			
Treatment center aide	4		
Counselor and program director	4		
Certified medical assistant	4		
Licensed practical nurse	1		
Unit assistant - patient care	5		

Phlebotomist	1	
Massage therapist	1	
Total other medical	20	
Total medical/caretaking, patient contact jobs		84
2. Child care provider		25
3. Education		
Teacher's aide	14	
Library assistants	5	
Pre-school teacher	2	
Teachers, trainers, other	5	
Total Education		26
4. Other human services		
Housing advocate, human service aid	5	
Family resource manager	2	
Total other human services		7
5. Clerical		
Cashiers	28	
Receptionists and hostesses	26	
Office assistants	43	
Customer services, telemarketing, collections	18	
Secretaries, administrative assistants	10	
Bank teller	2	
Total clerical		127
6. White collar - other		
Loan officer	2	
Account executive	1	
Insurance agent	1	
Controller	1	
Tax auditor, preparer	2	
Draftsman	1	
Legal assistant	3	
Driver's license services	1	
Telecommunicator for police	1	
Total white collar other		13
7. Retail sales		
Sales associate	25	
Shipping, receiving, stocking	15	
Total retail sales		40
8. Personal services, hair stylist, manicurist		11
9. Services-housekeepers, janitors, cleaners		22
10. Food service		
Food server and bar tender	36	
Deli worker, sandwich artist	15	
Cook	7	

Cook's assistant	5	
Bus person, dishwasher	3	
Total food service		66
11. Professional/technical		
Lab and engineering technologist	8	
Artist and craft-person	6	
Total professional/technical		14
12. Manager and supervisor		
Office manager	10	
Store manager (e.g. Dairy Queen, newspaper route)	14	
Sales and deli assistant manager	7	
Other (minimum wage)	2	
Nursery (plant)	4	
Supervisor - customer service, janitor, construction	14	
Total managerial and supervisory		51
13. Blue collar		
Manufacturing		
Assemblers, production (computer, wood products, etc)	43	
Welder, machine and other maintenance	11	
Construction - painter, dry wall	11	
General labor, flagger, gas pumper	11	
Total manufacturing		76
Other blue collar		
Auto mechanic and apprentice	6	
Carpenter	4	
Butcher	1	
Yard maintenance, gardener	5	
Truckers, bus drivers	19	
Public safety officer	3	
Total other blue collar		38
Total blue collar		114
14. Agriculture		
Fruit and vegetable packer	8	
Tree planter, farm and ranch hands	17	
Total agriculture		25
15. Small business owner		4
Total occupation specified		629

Source: First Phone Survey of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

Job-Related Benefits

Job-related benefits such as health insurance paid sick leave, and paid vacations are important additions to pay and are components of what we usually label “good jobs.” We asked survey respondents if their jobs included such benefits. Only those who were employed

at both the first survey and the second survey were included in this analysis in order to show change or persistence in access to benefits. Between one-third and one-half of the employed received job-related benefits at both points in time. Respondents were most likely to receive paid vacation (50 percent at both points in time) and least likely to receive paid sick leave (33 percent at both points in time). Forty percent received employer-provided health insurance at both interview times. In-depth interviews revealed, however, that the contributions to the insurance required from employees often made this insurance prohibitively expensive. (Tables 2.15, 2.16, 2.17)

Table 2.15 Number and Percentages of Employed Respondents Who Have Health Insurance at Current Job *

Yes at both phone contacts:	176	(40%)
No at first, yes at second:	51	(12%)
Yes at first, no at second:	32	(7%)
No at both phone contacts:	177	(41%)
Total	436	(100%)

Source: First and Second Phone Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study
 *Numbers vary slightly among the “Benefits at Current Job” tables because not everyone answered all three questions at both surveys.

Table 2.16 Number and Percentages of Employed Respondents Who Have Paid Sick Leave at Current Job *

Yes at both phone contacts:	141	(33%)
No at first, yes at second:	35	(8%)
Yes at first, no at second	38	(9%)
No at both phone contacts	212	(50%)
Total	426	(100%)

Source: First and Second Phone Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study
 *Numbers vary slightly among the “Benefits at Current Job” tables because not everyone answered all three questions at both surveys.

Table 2.17 Number and Percentage of Employed Respondents Who Have Paid Vacation at Current Job

Yes at both phone contacts:	215	(50%)
No at first, yes at second:	38	(9%)
Yes at first, no at second:	36	(8%)
No at both phone contacts:	141	(33%)
Total	430	(100%)

Source: First and Second Phone Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study
 * Numbers vary slightly among the “Benefits at Current Job” tables because not everyone answered all three questions at both surveys.

A relatively small proportion of respondents accrued additional health insurance, vacation and sick leave benefits between the first and second interview, and almost as many lost benefits (likely from changing jobs) between the first and second telephone interview.

Good Jobs or Bad Jobs?

A good job has traditionally been defined as one that is full time, stable, pays a wage that can sustain a family and has benefits. In order to assess the proportion of clients who had “good jobs” we defined a good job as one that was at least 35 hours/week, had take-home earnings equal to or greater than \$1,200 a month, had predictable hours and had sick leave, paid vacation and health insurance. We also examined jobs with all these criteria that paid \$1,500 or more a month. The number and proportion of clients with good jobs using the \$1,200/month criteria at the first telephone contact was very low: 11 percent of TANF leavers, 5.8 percent of TANF diverted, and 9.4 percent of Food Stamp leavers. At the earnings level of \$1,500 we lost just about half of those respondents, revealing that only 6 percent of TANF leavers, 3.9 percent of TANF diverted, and 3.5 percent of Food Stamp recipients, met the higher criteria. There was little change six months later at the second phone interview in the number and percentage of respondents with good jobs. (Table 2.18)

Table 2.18 Percent of TANF Leavers, TANF Diverted, and Food Stamp Leavers With “Good” Jobs - Based on Six Components *

	At first survey (970)	At second survey (756)	At first survey (970)	At second survey (756)
	> or = 1,200/month		> or = 1,500/month	
TANF leavers	11% (31)	13.8% (29)	6% (17)	6.7% (14)
TANF diverted	5.8% (12)	4.3% (7)	3.9% (8)	3% (5)
Food Stamp leaver	9.4% (45)	11.8% (45)	3.5% (17)	5.5% (21)

Source: First and Second Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

* Percentages based on total samples; n in parentheses

Using a less rigorous definition of a good job, as one having only health insurance as a benefit, and predictable hours, but retaining the two different income levels, the proportions with good jobs increases somewhat, but still remains low. Fewer than one in five have a “good job” at the \$1,200/month level and fewer than one in twelve have a good job at either phone contact at the \$1,500/month level. (Table 2.19)

Table 2.19 Percent of Food Stamp Leavers, TANF Leavers and TANF Diverted with “Good” Jobs--Based on Three Components *

	At first survey (970)	At second survey (756)	At first survey (970)	At second survey (756)
	> or = 1,200/month		> or = 1,500/month	
TANF leavers	13.8% (39)	16.2% (34)	6.7% (19)	7.1% (15)
TANF diverted	10.1% (21)	11.6% (19)	5.8% (12)	7.9% (13)
Food Stamp leaver	13.8% (66)	18.1% (69)	4.8% (23)	7.9% (30)

Source: First and Second Surveys of Welfare and Food Stamp Leaver and Diverted Study

* (Percentages based on total samples; n in parentheses)

Better Off?

The answer to the question of whether former clients are better off in the paid work force is, “yes and no.” In spite of low wages and dead-end jobs that lack benefits for many, most of the respondents expressed some satisfaction with their present job situations. In the first telephone survey, almost all TANF leavers and TANF diverted said that they were better off working than on cash assistance. Approximately 83 percent of the TANF and Food Stamp groups were satisfied with their jobs. When in the second survey we asked more detailed questions about job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, the answers were more varied. For example, only 43 percent were satisfied with the benefits on their jobs, but 60 percent were satisfied with their wages. A much more complex picture of satisfaction emerged in the face-to-face interviews with former agency clients. This nuanced picture is described in the companion report on the in-depth interviews.