

Getting Back to Work?

*A Survey of the Unemployed,
Welfare Recipients, and
Service Providers in
Stanislaus County*



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INTRODUCTION

As part of a study of unemployment, job growth, and welfare-to-work in Stanislaus County, the Center for Public Policy Studies surveyed welfare recipients, unemployment insurance recipients, and social service professionals in public agencies and private nonprofit organizations. The project team was interested in their experiences with work and unemployment. The team wanted to know such things as how much, over a broad period of time, do the unemployed and welfare recipients work? How much of the time are they out of work? What do they perceive as the obstacles and challenges they have to overcome to find and hold jobs? Do they want to work? How much do they want to work? Answers to these questions can provide important information to help public policy makers design policies and programs intended to reduce unemployment and to reduce dependency on public benefits programs.

A total of 323 welfare recipients were surveyed with the assistance of the Stanislaus County Community Services Agency (CSA)--previously known as the Department of Social Services. In this report we variously designate this group as welfare recipients or the CSA group. This group consisted of people who are either new public assistance applicants or current beneficiaries in the process of going through the transition from AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) to TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families). AFDC was the primary “welfare” program in the United States until the passage in 1996 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). This act established TANF as the core program in a welfare-to-work initiative. Welfare recipients (the CSA group) were given a seven-page survey that asked for responses to various questions about personal backgrounds, work history, employment barriers, and attitudes toward work.

A group of 70 unemployment insurance (UI) benefit recipients were surveyed through the Modesto office of the Employment Development Department. This group is variously referred to as the EDD group or the unemployed since they meet the criteria for being

considered unemployed. Each respondent was participating in a job search training program sponsored by the Private Industry Council. The seven-page questionnaire they completed was nearly identical to the one distributed to the CSA group. .

The third group queried consisted of 99 social service providers employed either by Stanislaus County or a private, nonprofit agency that delivers one or more services to the unemployed and welfare populations. Ninety-one of these providers work directly with their agency's clientele while the remaining eight hold managerial positions. The social service professionals were asked a series of questions about the people they serve: who they are, the job barriers they face, their work attitude, and work history.

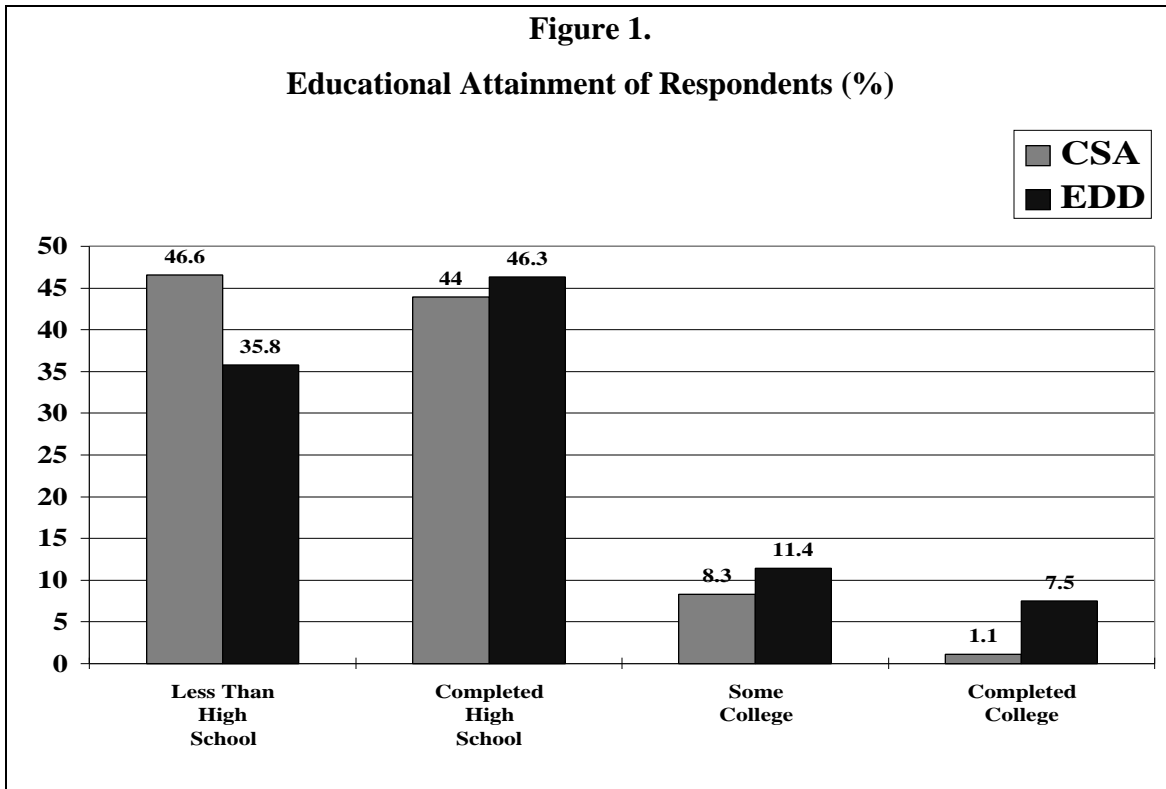
In the next section of the report, we develop profiles of the two out-of-work groups based on their responses to the questionnaire. Although the self-reported characteristics of the samples are not identical to the larger welfare and unemployment insurance recipient populations, they are close enough to give us the confidence that the information in this report is likely to be representative of these groups. In the following sections, we discuss the work history, employment obstacles, and skills, education, and training of welfare recipients and unemployment insurance recipients.

PROFILES

Working through the survey results, one is struck by both the similarities and differences between the two samples. While certain patterns and trends emerge, in all cases both groups exhibit significant diversity.

In broad patterns, the two groups are similar in educational attainment, ethnic composition, and length of residence in the county. By contrast, there are notable differences between the two in terms of age, sex, marital status, and numbers of children .

As Figure 1 indicates, **the educational attainment rates for both groups are quite low.** The EDD group—that is unemployment insurance applicants—tends to be somewhat better educated than the CSA group—that is, those receiving welfare benefits. More of the former have completed high school, attended college, and completed college. Nevertheless, more than 35% of both groups did not complete high school and fewer than 20% of either group has gone beyond high school.



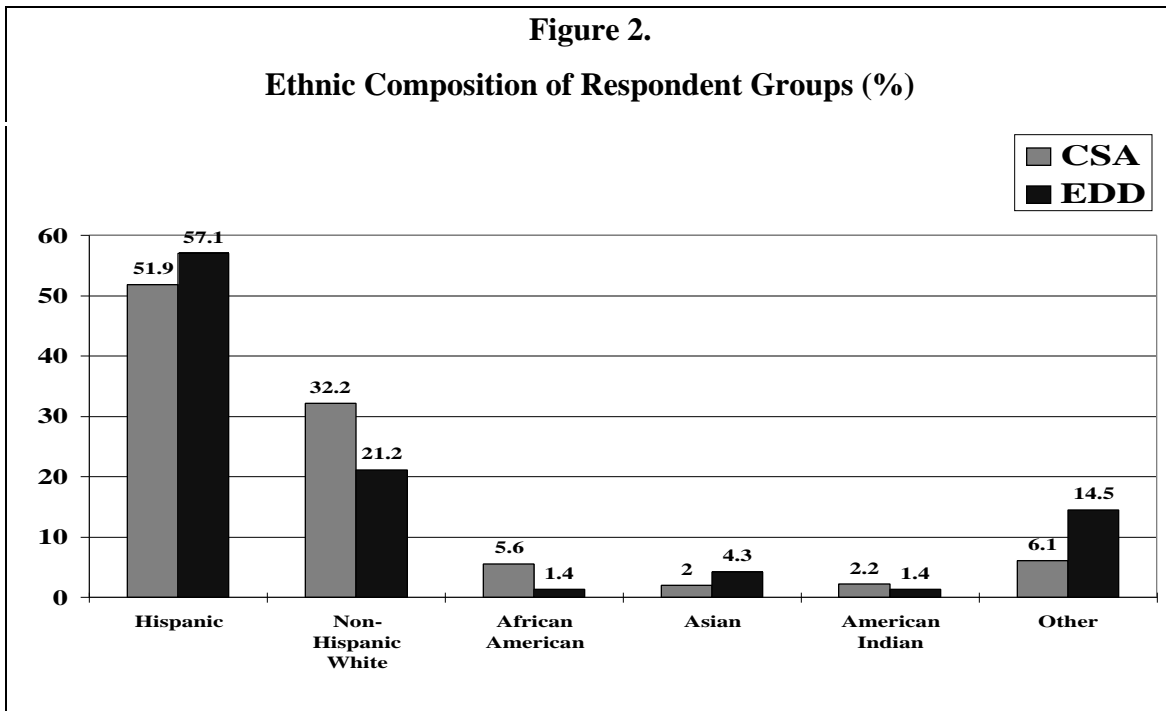
Of those who did not complete high school, 9% of the unemployment insurance recipients and 13% of the welfare recipients possess the GED. Another 11% of the EDD group and 6% of the CSA group have a trade or vocational certificate. Educational attainment levels are thus not perfect indicators of a person’s ability or skills. They are, however, good approximations.

These percentages are similar to the educational attainment rates for all unemployment insurance applicants and all welfare recipients in Stanislaus County suggesting the

representativeness of our samples. They are also consistent with national data and suggest the role that low educational levels play in unemployment, poverty, and public assistance.

While the broad patterns of education are similar between the two, what is striking is the particularly high percentage of welfare recipients who have not completed high school. Among the general population of Stanislaus County, 31% have not graduated from high school. The EDD group shows a fairly similar rate of 36% of non-graduates but welfare recipients in this sample evidence an extremely high rate of 47% not graduating from high school.

We address the issue of education in greater detail below but note here that increased schooling is clearly a critical factor in improving employment prospects for many unemployment insurance and welfare recipients. At the same time, however, we should note that, for some, education is not the issue. Disability, divorce or separation, an ill child, and other factors may be more critical. The range of difficulties some face, particularly welfare recipients, is more fully discussed below in the section on employment barriers.

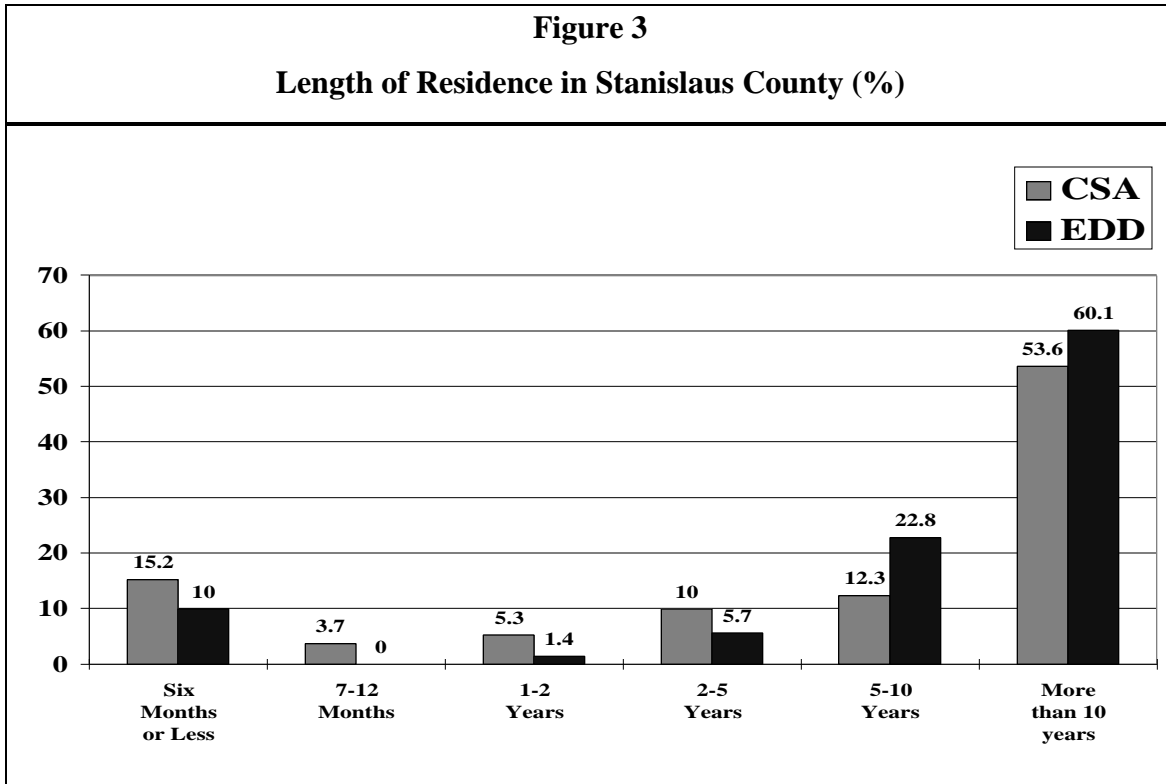


The ethnic composition of the two groups is also similar, though again not identical. In both instances, Hispanics account for a majority of respondents. Non-Hispanic Whites

account for approximately 30% of the CSA sample and about 22% of the EDD sample. In both groups, Asian-Americans and Native Americans each represent less than 3% of the sample while African-Americans account for 5.6% of the CSA sample and 1.4% of the EDD sample.

The ethnic breakdown for all unemployment insurance recipients in Stanislaus County is: Hispanics 50%; non-Hispanic White 44%, African Americans 2.6%, Asians 2.8%,

American Indian .6% (the remainder are identified as unknown). For all welfare recipients in the county the corresponding figures are: Non-Hispanic Whites 52.6%, Hispanics 31.2%, African Americans 5.9%, Alaskan, American Indian .6%, Asian 9.7% Thus our samples overrepresent Hispanics and underrepresent Non-Hispanic Whites and Asians.



A third trait shared by respondents of both groups is that they tend to be long-time residents of the county, as Figure 3 demonstrates. **A majority in both samples have lived in Stanislaus County for more than 10 years.** There are, of course, some differences and these indicate that the EDD group is marginally more stable. For instance, while only 10% of unemployment insurance recipients have lived in the county for less than two years, that is true of 24% of welfare recipients. Nevertheless, what is striking in both cases is that they tend to stay in the county.

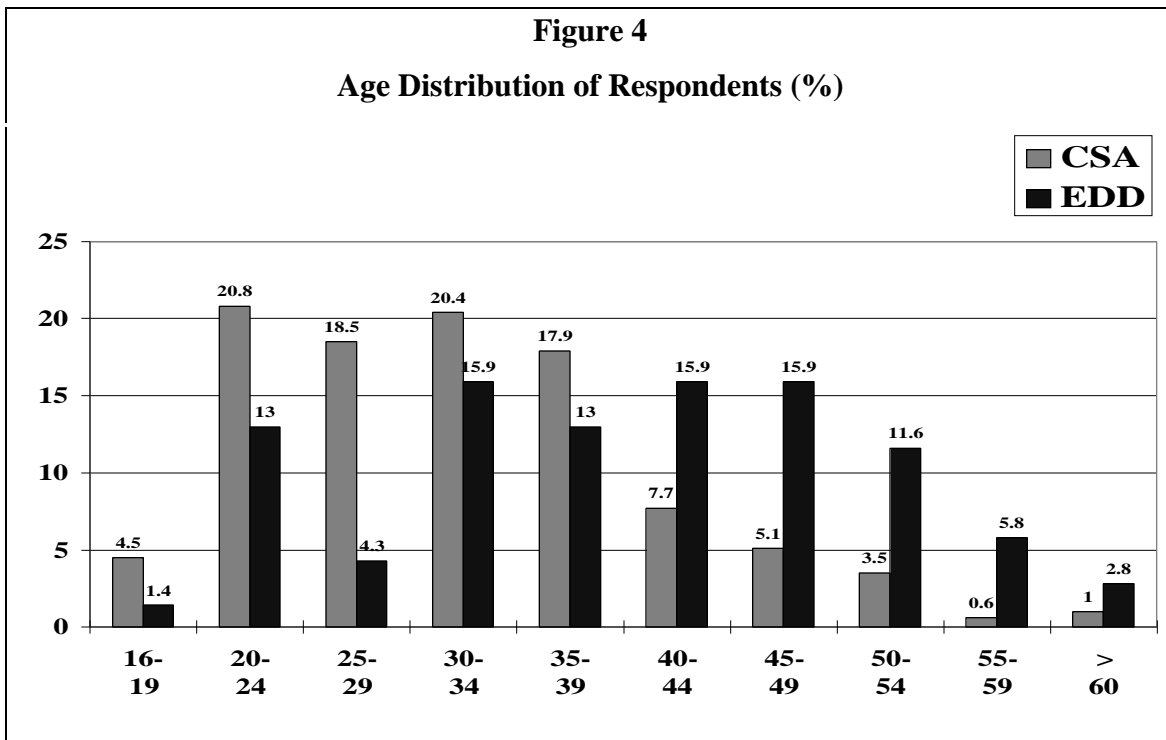
Although the data described above demonstrate that there are some differences between the unemployed and welfare recipients, the two respondent groups have much in common in terms of educational attainment, ethnic composition, and length of residence in the county. We now turn to those demographic characteristics which reveal significant differences between the groups: sex, age, marital status, and numbers of children.

The welfare program (specifically Aid to Families with Dependent Children) in this country was designed to provide temporary assistance to women with children who were facing difficult circumstances and needed some financial assistance to maintain the family. Originally, widows were the target group most in need of assistance. Over time, and particularly since the 1960s, unmarried women with children became the primary beneficiaries of welfare. Consequently, most adults on welfare are women. Among the respondents to this survey who are welfare recipients (the CSA group), 82% are women. (Approximately 70% of all AFDC/TANF recipients in Stanislaus County and in the state are children.) Among the EDD respondents (unemployment insurance recipients), half are male and half are female. For all of Stanislaus County, 53% of unemployment insurance recipients are male and 47% female.

As is readily evident from Figure 4 below, **welfare recipients are much younger than are unemployment insurance recipients.** Almost two-thirds of welfare recipients in our sample are under the age of 34 while almost two-thirds of the EDD respondent group are over the age of 34. Sixteen percent of the EDD group and 30% of the CSA group are under the age of 25. Once again, this difference is partly explained by the very nature of the program since, in most instances, to have received AFDC a couple or parent must have a dependent child under the age of 19.

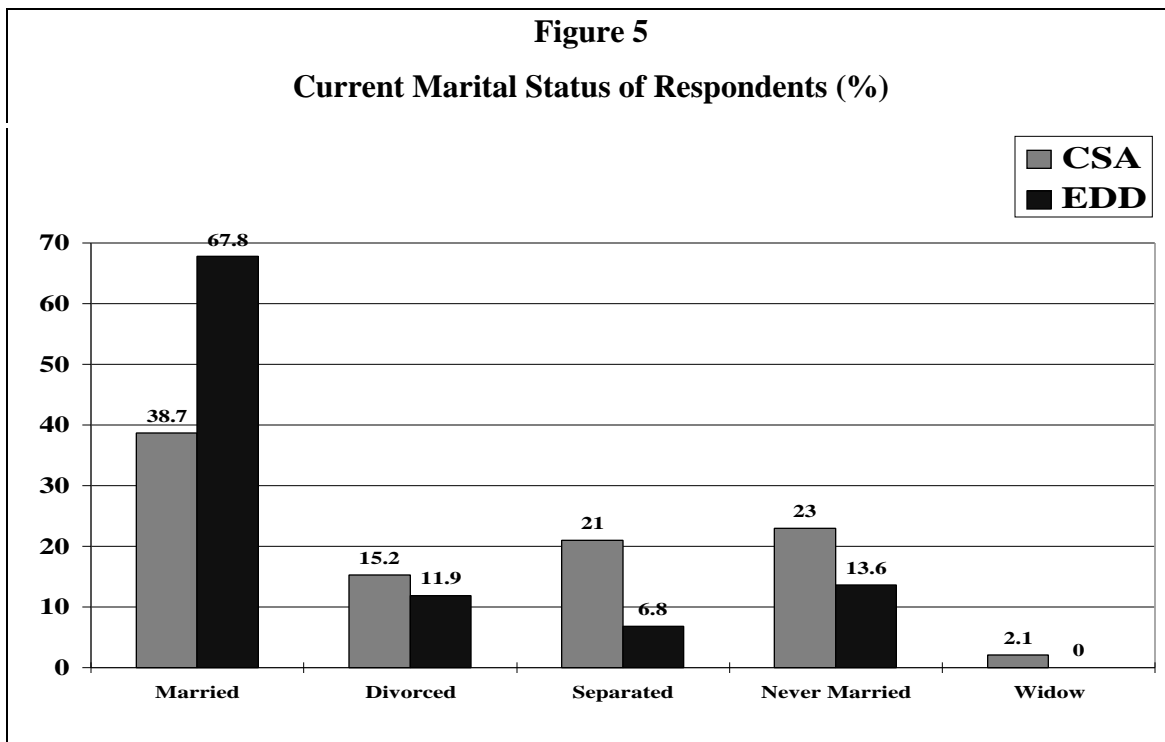
On the other hand, the CSA group is perhaps not quite as young as conventional wisdom has it. From letters to the editor, radio talk shows, and public opinion surveys, one has the impression that many believe the “welfare rolls” are populated solely by teenage mothers. However, only 4.5% of the CSA sample is under the age of 20 though this is still three

times the rate for the EDD sample. (The median age for all welfare recipients in the United States is about 29.) Of course, given the nature of the welfare program and



given the difficulties of a person with limited economic means to take care of herself and children, one would expect the welfare population to be younger.

One of the most striking differences between our two sample groups is the percentage who are married. While only 39% of the welfare recipients currently are married, 68% of the unemployment insurance recipients are married. Conversely, 36% of the former are divorced or separated compared to 19% of the latter. National studies of welfare recipients have shown that the single most common reason women turn to welfare is divorce or separation. These situations account for 42% of new welfare applicants.¹ Much like the general working population but in contrast to the welfare population, what we see with the unemployment insurance recipients is a more stable, less difficult marital situation. Relatively few are facing the challenges of divorce or separation. Several studies

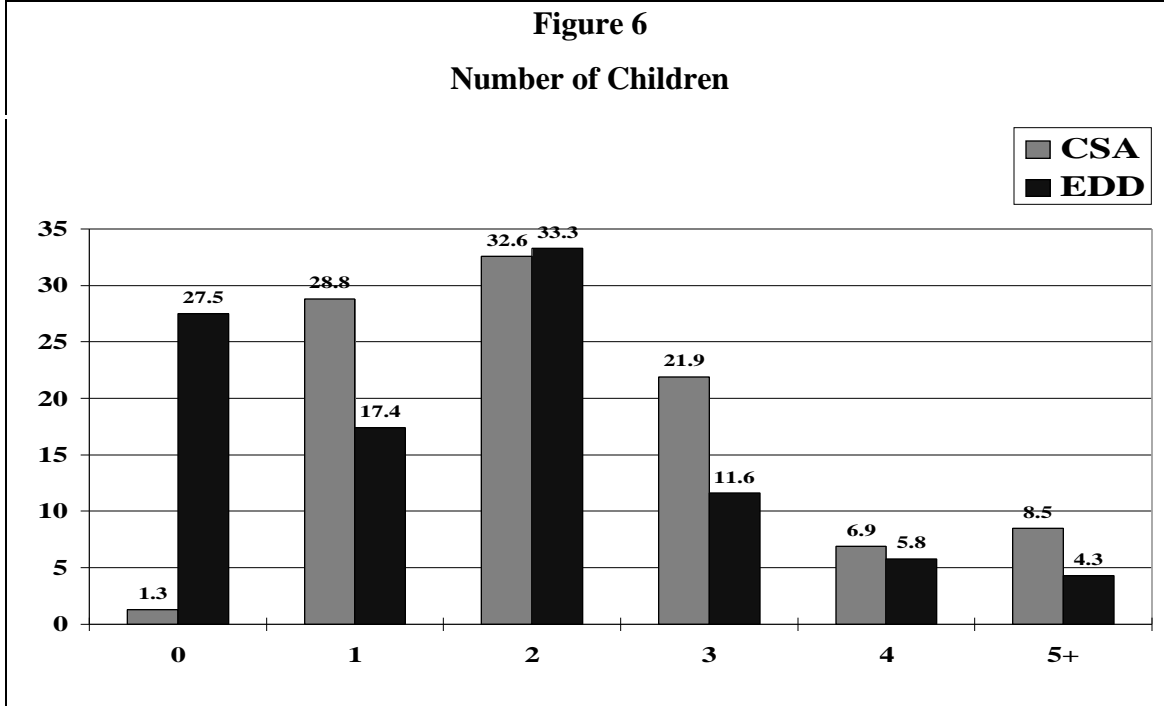


have shown that following divorce a woman's income drops dramatically.² If this woman also now has sole or primary child rearing responsibilities, welfare may be the only avenue of survival.

The final characteristic we used to compare the samples is family size. Here there are clear differences but they are not as striking as with the differences in marital status. In both groups, a sizable majority have fewer than three children: 78% of the EDD group and 63% of the CSA group. Prevailing opinion has it that welfare mothers are not only very young but have large families. While this is true of some, it is not true of most. In fact, 83% of our welfare recipient respondents had 1, 2 or 3 children, not much different than the general population.

¹ Jill Duerr Berrick. 1995. *Faces of Poverty: Portraits of Women and Children on Welfare*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 13

² Cf. G. J. Duncan & S. D. Hoffman. 1985. "A Reconsideration of the Economic Consequences of Marital Dissolution," *Demography*, 22.



It is the combination of low educational levels, marital difficulties, low income, and the need to care for children that leads most women on welfare to use it as part of a coping strategy. On the other hand, **in the EDD group, almost 28% have no children at all. At the other end of the spectrum, twice as many welfare recipients as unemployment insurance recipients have 5 or more children.**

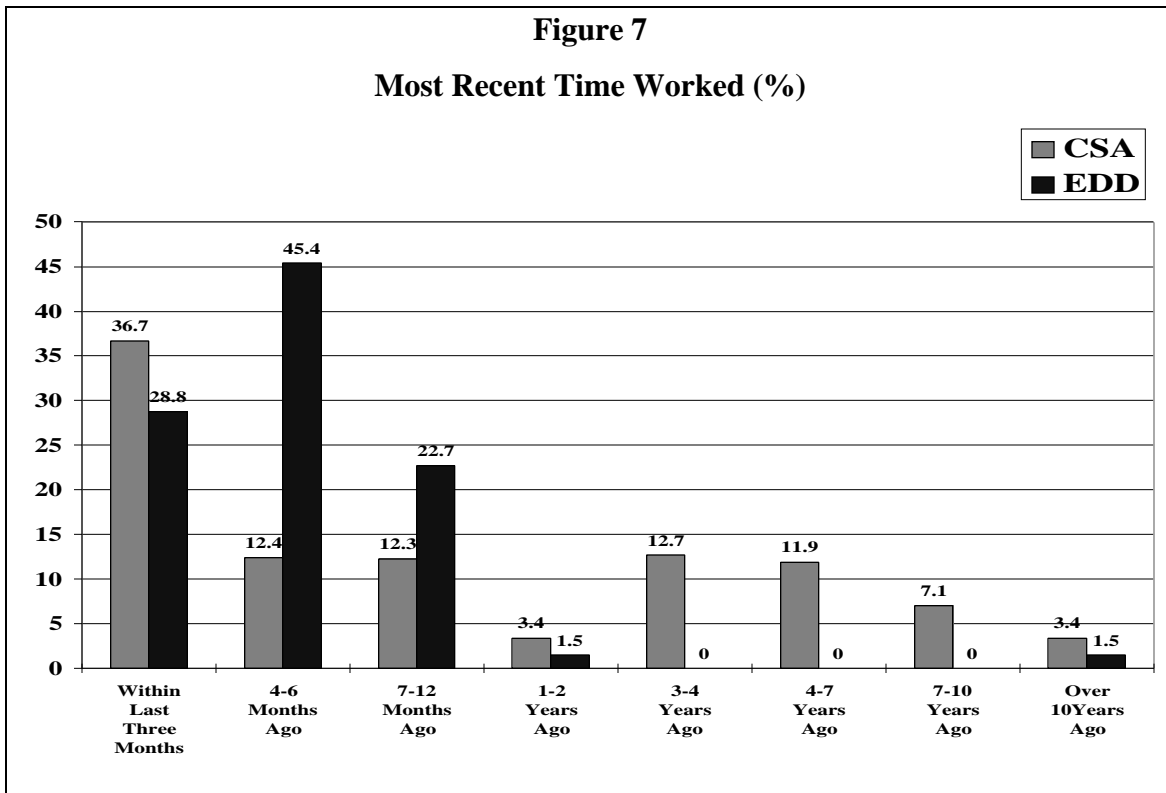
WORK HISTORY

Studies of welfare recipients consistently have shown that they have been involved in the labor market and have work histories. Even when on welfare, many continue to work because it is not easy to make ends meet on just welfare and food stamps. Based on interviews in Chicago, for instance, one study found that about 50% of welfare mothers worked while on welfare: most worked in jobs that paid them “off-the-books” though some worked with false Social Security numbers and some in illicit employment.³ Other

³ Kathryn Edin. 1991. “Surviving the Welfare System: How AFDC Recipients Make Ends Meet in Chicago.” *Social Problems* 38.

studies have offered even higher estimates of the percentage of women on welfare who do some work for pay.

For welfare recipients nationwide, the issue is less the failure or refusal to work. Rather, it is that they are employed for shorter periods of time and tend to be more “in and out” of the labor market. Is this also true for welfare recipients in Stanislaus County? What do they tell us about their employment history? And how does this compare to the work history for unemployment insurance recipients?



When asked if they have ever worked for pay, 85% of the welfare respondents to this survey said yes. Most have worked recently, as Figure 7 indicates. Sixty-one percent, in fact, have worked within the last year. But whereas virtually no one in the EDD group has been unemployed for more than one year, 39% of the CSA group have and almost 30% have been out of work for 3 years or more.

There is some relationship between a recipient's age and the most recent time worked as shown in Figure 8. For obvious reasons, the youngest group does not appear in the "more than 4 years ago" category. The two oldest groups show an interesting polarization. They dominate the longest out-of-work category but they are significantly represented in the briefest out-of-work category too. Nevertheless, comparing the distribution in Figure 8 with the CSA group in Figure 7, it is clear that the two oldest groups are the least representative of the general pattern for welfare recipients.

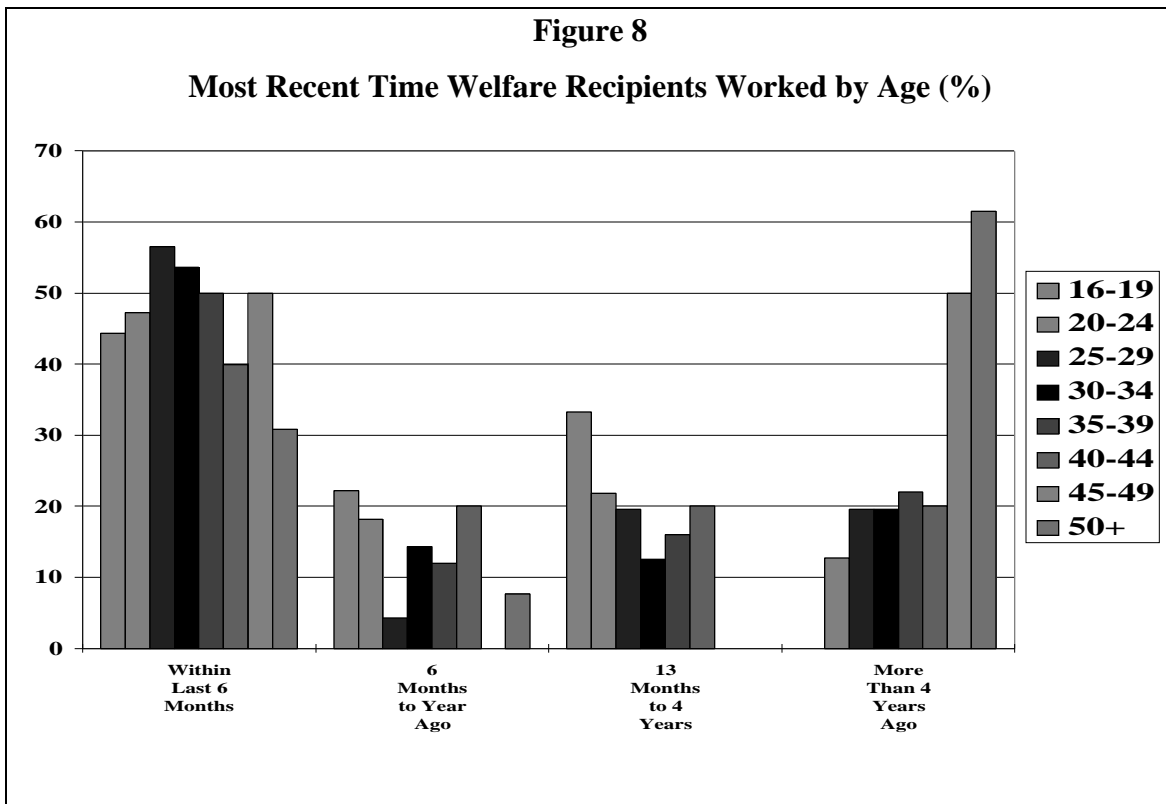
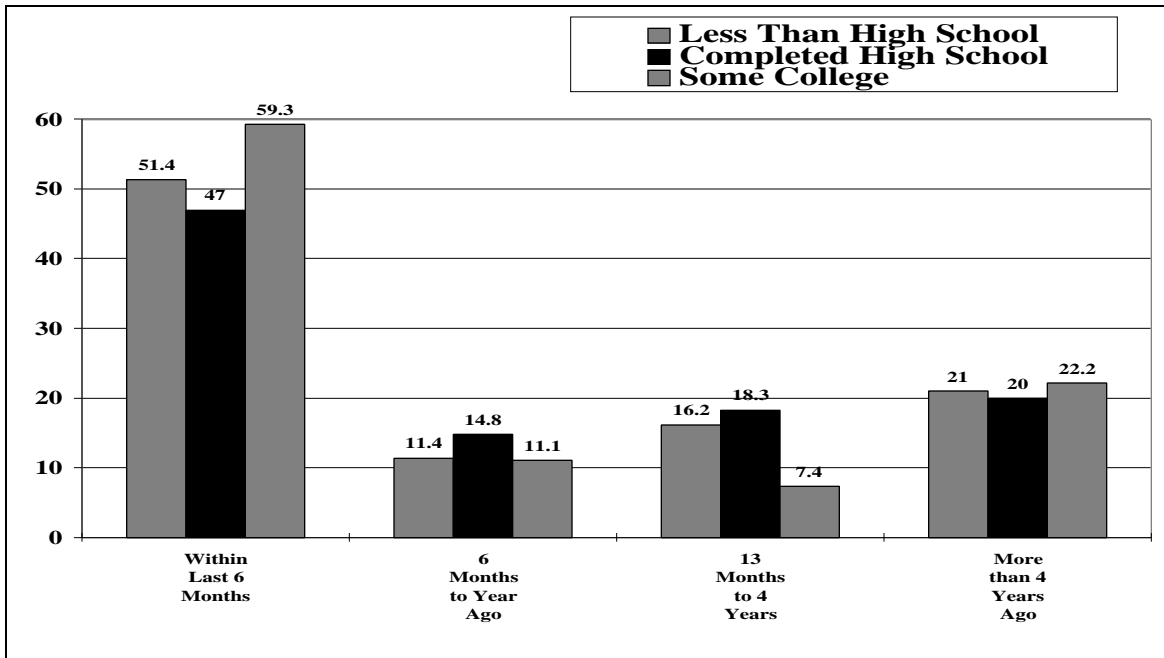


Figure 9
Most Recent Time Welfare Recipients Worked by Educational Attainment (%)



Interestingly, educational attainment appears to have very little to do with the length of time between jobs. The best educated welfare recipients are most likely to have worked quite recently. But only marginally more so than the least educated. On the other hand, the proportion that has been out of work the longest is essentially the same for each educational category.

While most welfare recipients have worked, perhaps even continue to work at odd jobs, the duration of a “regular” job tends to be brief. Almost 2/3 of our respondents said they worked for less than a year at their last job. By contrast, 56% of the EDD respondents said they have worked for more than one year. If you compare the percentages of the groups who have worked for more than 5 years at the same job, the differences are stark: 29% for unemployment insurance recipients but only 13% for welfare recipients.

Figure 10
Duration of Last Job

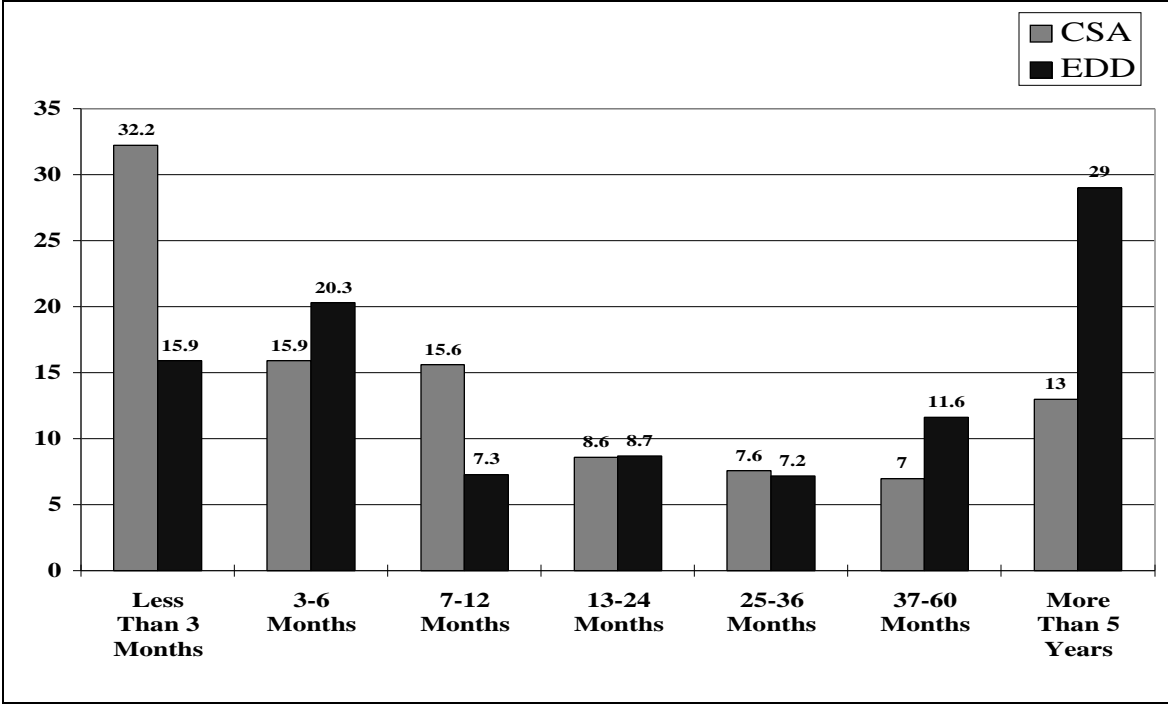


Figure 11

Duration of Last Job for Welfare Recipients by Age

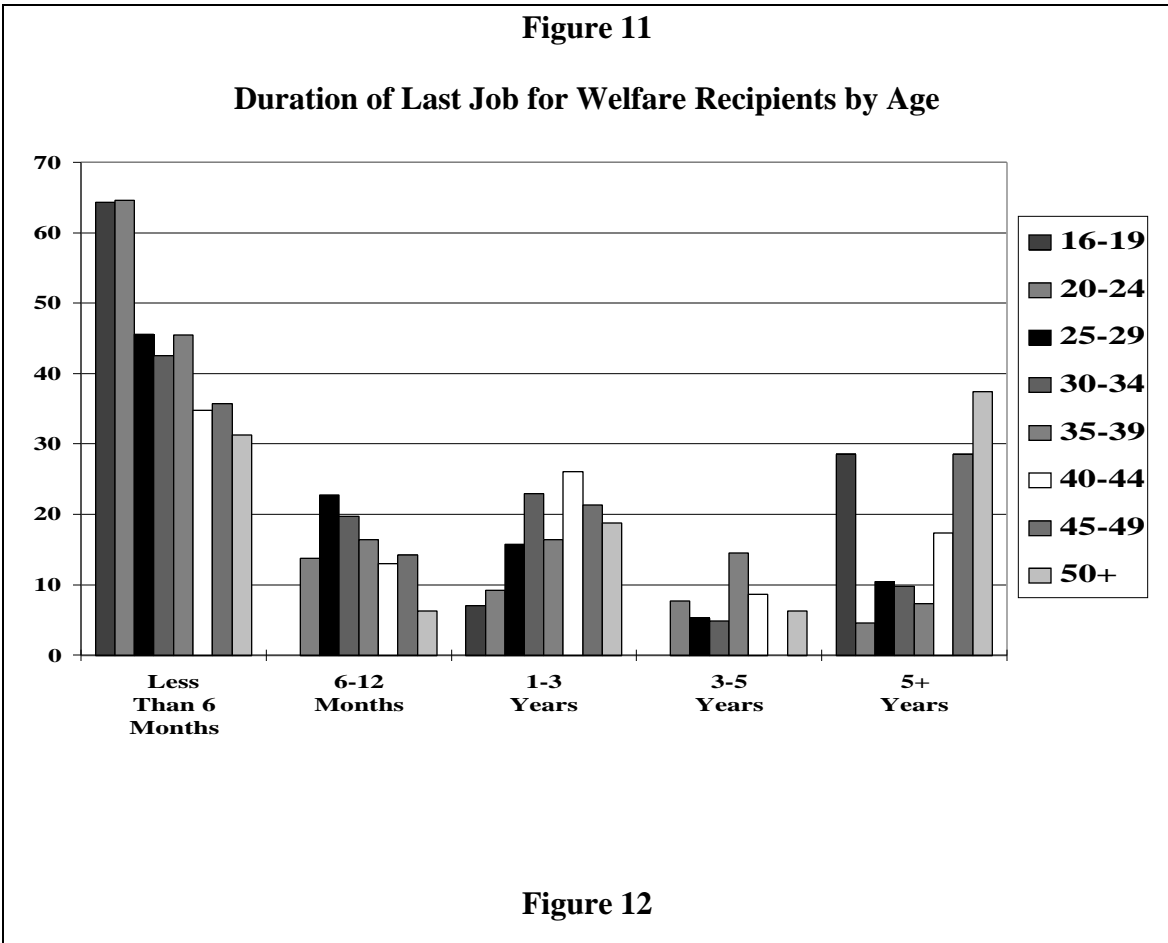
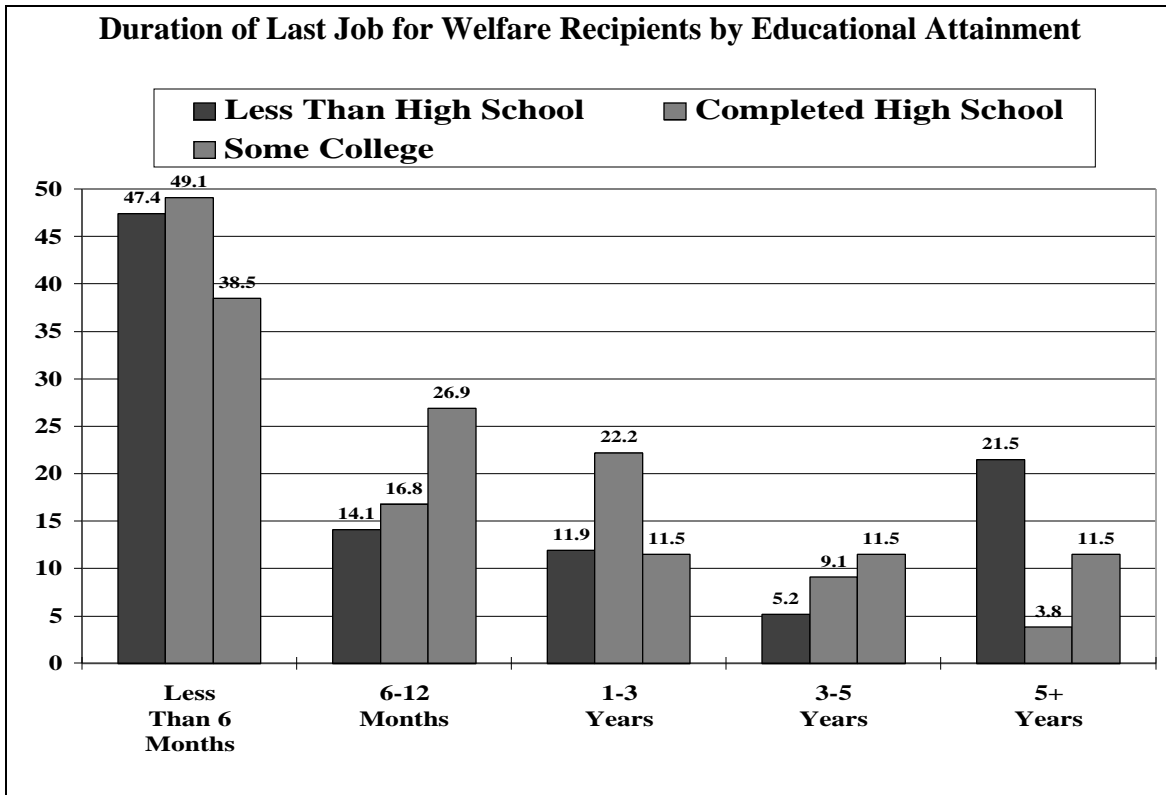


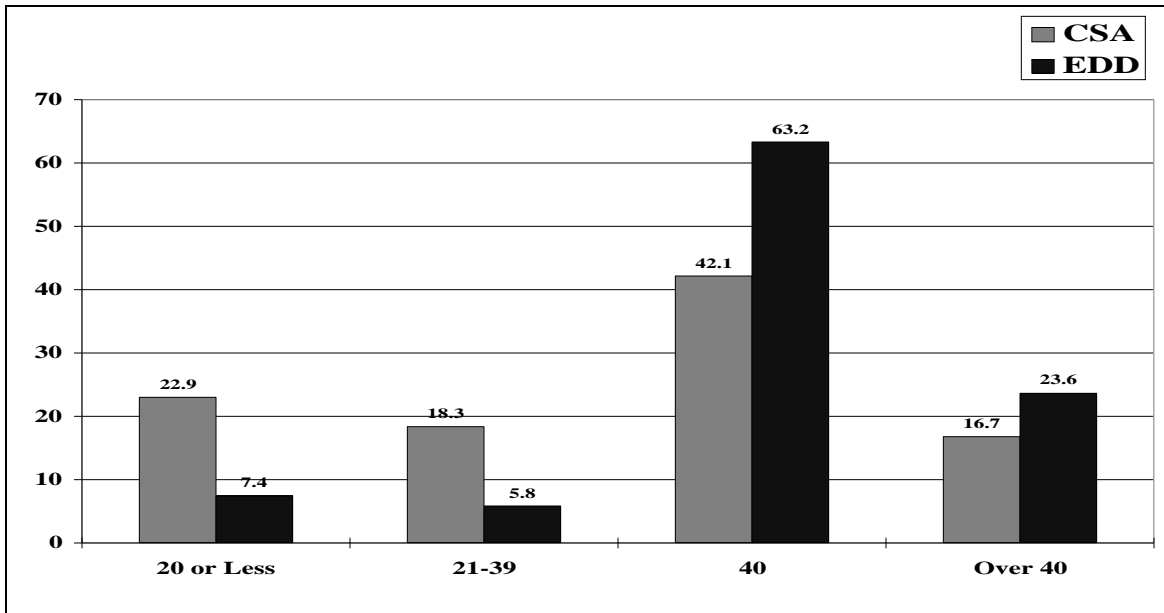
Figure 12



Figures 11 and 12 indicate a relationship between age and duration of the last job for welfare recipients but very little relationship between educational attainment and job duration. Comparing the shortest and longest durations we see that except for one apparent anomaly--the youngest having worked the second longest, the older the welfare recipient the longer the job lasted. This may reflect better job skills, more maturity, and more experience on the part of older workers.

The tendency in this survey for age to explain more than education among welfare recipients may reflect the rather narrow range of educational attainment since the great majority of the welfare respondents have not gone beyond high school.

Figure 13
Number of Hours Per Week Worked At Last Job



When unemployment insurance and welfare recipients do work, most work full-time. People in the EDD group are, however, more likely to work full-time when they work than are people in the CSA group--87% compared to 59%. Nevertheless, welfare recipients, when they work, generally are employed full-time and only 23% typically work for less than 20 hours per week. If we return to Figure 7, we remember that some 60% of welfare recipients have worked within the last year but 30% have been without work for 3 years or more. Most welfare mothers, then, seem to be working quite a bit but using welfare to manage those times when a job disappears, or when they are laid off or fired. On the other hand, about 1/3 of welfare recipients are not working frequently.

This raises an interesting question as to how much more we can expect welfare recipients, particularly welfare mothers, to work. LaDonna Pavetti, a senior research associate with the Urban Institute and a leading social policy researcher, addressed this difficult question.⁴ Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, she constructed complete employment and welfare histories for 511 women between the ages

⁴ LaDonna Pavetti. 1997. "How Much More Can They Work? Setting Realistic Expectations for Welfare Mothers." The Urban Institute, A Report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, July.

of 18 and 27. She also constructed employment histories for 1,533 women between the ages of 18 and 27 who have never received welfare to provide a comparison.

Approximately 95% of all welfare recipients in the national sample had worked. But compared to non-recipients they experienced shorter periods of employment and longer periods of joblessness. Pavetti concludes by estimating that if “women on welfare were to follow the same employment paths as women with similar characteristics who never used welfare, their employment would increase by 30 percent.”

Getting welfare mothers into the workforce and helping them retain their jobs does therefore show some potential to reduce welfare dependency. It is equally clear, however, that there are limits to this strategy. One reason is that most women who receive welfare do so for short periods of time and then work full-time or close to it. **Welfare mothers who work the least often typically face a number of hurdles that cannot easily be dealt with through job placement and training strategies.** It is also important to remember that family relationships—particularly separation or divorce—have at least as much to do with why women go on welfare as do job skills and work experience.

Two other items related to work were included in the survey. We asked the respondents if they are or have been working part-time whether they would prefer to have full-time employment. **Eighty percent of the EDD group and 93% of the CSA group say they would prefer full-time work.** This would reinforce the notion that many welfare recipients are prepared to work assuming they can find the appropriate situation. Among the EDD group, it is mostly the females who would prefer to work part-time. Virtually all males indicated they prefer full-time work but 35% of the women preferred part-time work.

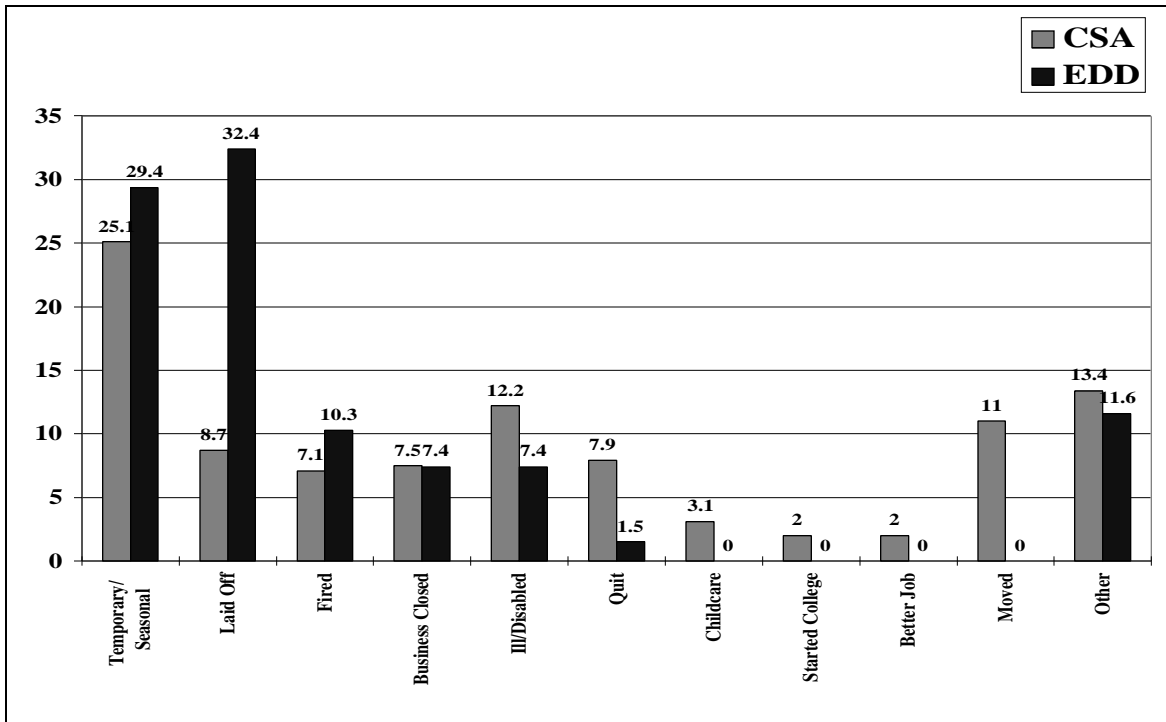
In a separate survey, we asked social service professionals to indicate whether the unemployed they serve are or are not looking for work. Overwhelmingly they said they

were looking for work. On the other hand, about 1/4 of the respondents to this survey said that 25% or more of their clients were unemployed and not looking for work. **This reinforces data reported above which would indicate that 60% to two-thirds of the welfare population is actively looking to be in the labor force and most likely will be for varying durations.** However, about one-third to 40% either consistently have serious difficulties finding or holding a job or are simply not actively looking.

We also asked respondents in each group what is the minimum hourly salary they would be willing to accept. Seventy-six percent of welfare recipients said they would accept \$6 per hour or less and 97% said they would accept \$8 per hour or less. By contrast, only 4.5% of the EDD group said they would accept under \$6 per hour and only 47% said they would accept \$8 per hour or less. The majority would go no lower than \$9 per hour and a quarter would go no lower than \$12 per hour.

Two points should be made regarding the expectations of the welfare recipients. On a positive note, wage expectations ought not prevent welfare recipients from finding employment. They clearly do not have unrealistically high expectations. In fact, their wage expectations are probably not out of line with what employers in this area pay to low skill workers. However, it is also unrealistic to expect that such wages would allow a person to be able to maintain a family. More research needs to be done on this point but more “life” counseling and more knowledge about the cost of living might help welfare recipients—or potential recipients—better understand the challenges before them. And more skills on the part of workers and better wages will also be necessary.

Figure 14
Reasons Why Last Job Ended (%)



Why did employment come to an end? As the data in Figure 14 indicate, for most unemployment insurance recipients work ended because they were laid off or because the work was temporary or seasonal. These two factors explain 62% of terminations.

Employment Development Department data for Stanislaus County indicate that 61% of UI recipients have been told they will be recalled. For these, unemployment tends to be short-term and recurrent. Another one-quarter of UI recipients left their last job because the business closed, they became ill or disabled, or because they were fired.

For welfare recipients the picture is somewhat more complex. As is true of the EDD group, many in the CSA group left work because it was temporary or seasonal. But for welfare recipients this accounts for only about 1/4 of job endings. Health reasons, moving, transportation problems, personal problems, childcare, and quitting were all factors as were finding a better job and starting college.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND JOB RETENTION

The debate about welfare reform has drawn attention to what many refer to as barriers or obstacles to employment. Some of these obstacles arise from decisions made by individuals, such as drug or alcohol abuse or the refusal to engage in job training or other educational programs. Many of the barriers arise because the individual comes from an economically marginal situation. Should a problem arise, such as a car needing repairs, the situation might move the person into poverty. This in turn might create a condition in which child care, transportation, or health needs, for instance, might force a person to turn to welfare to get through the difficult times. Many people are just making it from day to day and a doctor's bill or a car that quits working are enough to push them into a situation where they can't make it to work or the job doesn't pay enough to cover basic expenses. A more dramatic change such as divorce or separation can be extremely difficult to deal with.

Because of the existence of many barriers, it is useful in designing appropriate public policy to come to an understanding of what might be preventing some people from seeking, obtaining, or keeping a job.

Consistent with information presented above about the low educational attainment levels of both welfare and unemployment insurance recipients, significant percentages of both respondent groups report that "too little education," "lack of technical skills," and "difficulties with English" hamper them in getting employment. Although in all cases the

Table 1.
Percent Who Report A Barrier to Employment

Barrier	Welfare Recipients N=323	Unemployment Insurance Recipients N=70
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Affordable Child Care	27.2%	10.0%
Transportation	24.5	8.6
Too Little Education	21.4	15.9
Lack Technical Skills	21.1	18.6
Inadequate Clothing	19.5	2.9
Difficulties with English	15.2	14.3
Disability/Ill Health	14.2	7.1
Lack of Job Information	13.0	10.0
No Telephone	11.5	1.4
Inadequate Experience	11.5	0.0
Problems at Home	9.0	2.9
Lack of Health Insurance	8.0	5.7
Cannot Read or Write	6.2	8.6
Misdemeanor/Felony Conviction	5.9	4.3
Ill Child	4.6	0.0
Alcohol/Drug Use	3.4	1.4
Move Frequently	3.4	0.0

rates are higher for welfare recipients, many people in both groups acknowledge a need for more education and more work-related, technical skills.

Beyond the education/training area, what stands out in Table I is the difference between the two groups. Earlier we noted that two important differences between welfare and unemployment insurance recipients are their ages and their marital experiences. Welfare recipients tend to be younger and are much more likely to be divorced or separated. These two conditions are very much linked to their current unemployment. The differences in Table 1 help us extend our understanding of the plight facing many welfare mothers. Affordable child care and problems with transportation are the top two employment obstacles they identify.

No one in the EDD group was unavailable to work because of the need to care for a sick child, only 10% said that affordable child care is a problem, 57% have no children needing childcare, and only 15% have more than 1 child needing child care. By contrast, 5% of welfare recipients said they had to stay home to care for an ill child, 27% said that affordable childcare is a problem, 79% have at least one child needing childcare, and 43%

have more than one child needing care. **Child care is simply not much of an issue for unemployment insurance recipients but a critical one for welfare recipients.**

A similar situation exists with regard to transportation. Whereas only 9% of the EDD group reported having no reliable car, 25% of the CSA group said they have no reliable personal transportation. Only 6% of welfare recipients said they cannot use public transportation so this is a potential option. It is not clear from our survey how well public transportation serves their needs. This is an important issue that requires further investigation.

Several other problems emerge as significant concerns for welfare recipients but are not very important for unemployment insurance recipients. These include the absence of suitable clothing, poor health or disabilities, inadequate job experience, and the lack of a telephone.

For a somewhat different perspective on the issue of employment obstacles, we turn to the results of a survey of 99 social service professionals. **Three-quarters of the respondents indicated that childcare was a very significant problem. As with the welfare recipients, this was rated as the number one problem.** Also consistent with responses by welfare recipients, professionals rated limited skills, low education levels, and limited English ability as serious problems.

Beyond these similarities, however, the service providers have a different view.

Problems listed as significant by service providers not listed by either welfare recipients or unemployment insurance recipients are inability to cope with daily problems, low motivation, and poor work habits. Social service professionals also believe that alcohol and drug abuse and felony convictions are more serious problems than reported by welfare recipients. The basic difference in responses between welfare recipients and social service professionals is that whereas the former see barriers primarily in structural terms (childcare, transportation, education) the latter understand barriers to be a combination of structural, attitudinal and, behavioral factors.

SKILLS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In this section we return to the topics of skills, education, and job training examining them in more detail. First, we report responses by social service professionals regarding their perceptions of the skill levels of welfare recipients and the unemployed compared to the county's workforce. Second, we discuss responses by welfare and UI recipients concerning their recent and current education and job training activities.

We asked social service professionals to rate the skills of the general workforce, the unemployed, and welfare recipients in five skill categories: technical, basic, interpersonal, personal, and thinking. This list of skills was adapted from a similar list developed by the U.S. Department of Labor. Technical skills refer to the use of computers, complex machinery, and special equipment. Basic skills are defined as the ability to read, write, do math, listen, and speak. Interpersonal skills involve teamwork, adjusting to supervision, and working in a diverse environment. Personal skills refer to responsibility, adaptability, and ability to cope with stress. Thinking skills include the ability to learn, to solve problems, and to make decisions. For each of these skill categories, we asked the respondents to indicate whether they believe individuals in the group are generally good, adequate, or poor at the particular skill.

Table 2
Social Service Professionals Perceptions of Skill Levels*

Workforce							
Unemployed	Welfare Recipients						
Skill Category	% Rated Good	% Rated Adequate	% Rated Poor	% Rated Good	% Rated Adequate	% Rated Poor	% Rated Good
Technical Skills	18.7	48.4	25.3	3.3	16.5	57.1	5.5
Basic Skills	37.8	38.9	15.6	5.6	25.6	43.3	4.4
Interpersonal Skills	25.8	48.3	16.9	2.2	23.3	48.9	4.4
Peronal Skills	29.5	45.5	12.5	5.8	30.2	34.9	5.6
Thinking Skills	30.7	48.9	10.2	3.4	30.7	29.5	7.9

*Remaining Percentage Responded "Don't Know"

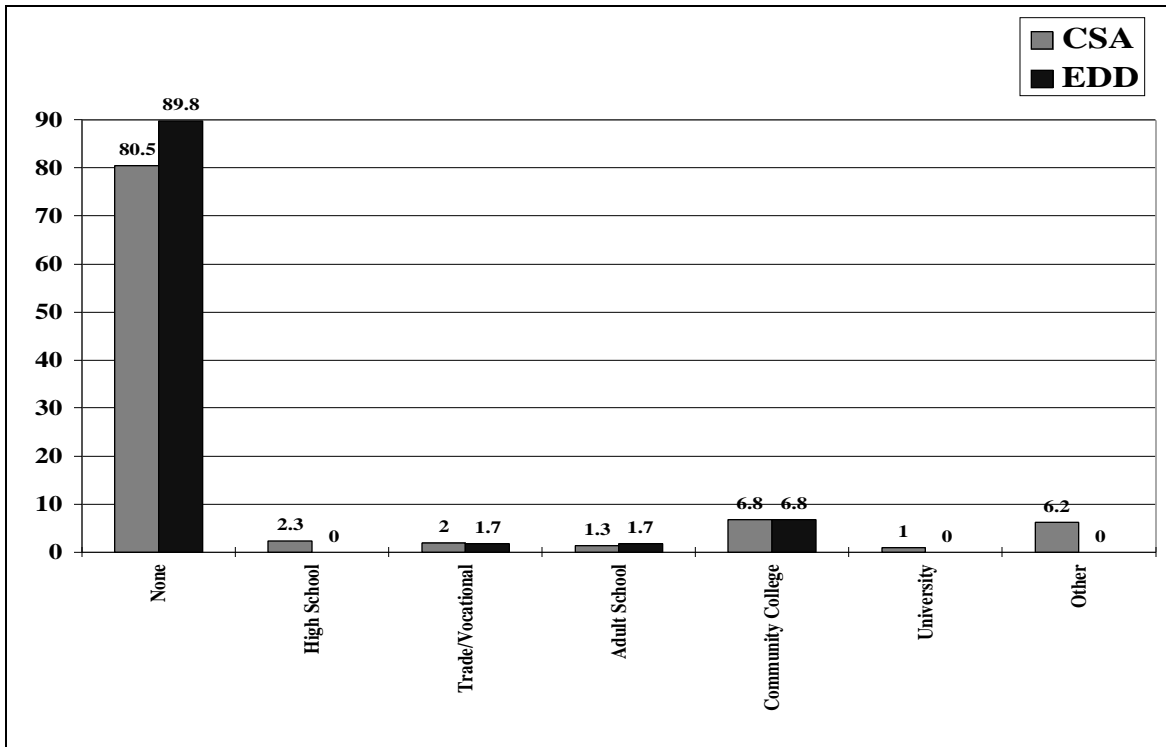
As is evident from the data in Table 2, social service professionals are concerned about the skill levels for all segments of the county's population. By and large, even the general workforce is seen as no more than adequate. But as one might expect, social service providers are profoundly troubled by the skill levels of the unemployed and welfare recipients. **At least 60% of the 99 social service professionals who responded to this survey rated welfare recipients as poor in every skill category and approximately 3/4 of the professionals rated welfare recipients as poor in both technical and basic skills.**

The unemployed were also perceived as deficient in all skill categories but not as deficient as welfare recipients. Because the respondents to this questionnaire are more likely to work with welfare recipients than with the unemployed, we must also take note of the higher don't know responses (i.e. the residual percentages) to questions about the unemployed. Nevertheless, the pattern is clear and it is one that ought to evoke serious concern.

We've seen from responses to several items given to us by unemployment insurance recipients, welfare recipients, and social service providers that inadequate education, inadequate skills, and inadequate job preparation all contribute to problems of obtaining and retaining jobs (and also serve to reduce wages). Given this, it would be useful to know whether the unemployed and welfare recipients are engaging in education or job training programs to improve their skills.

Unfortunately, as the results displayed in Figures 15 and 16 dramatically show, **almost none of the EDD group is attending school or participating in job training programs.** This in spite of the fact that by their own admission there is a need to improve skills.

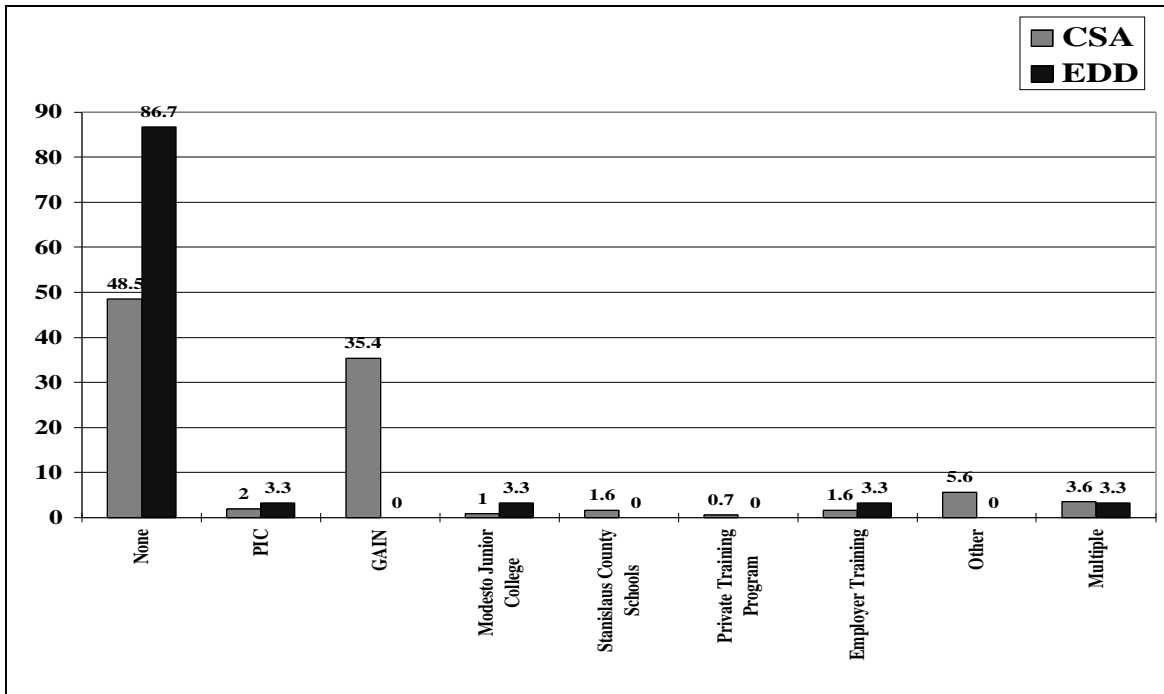
Figure 15
Type of School Currently Attending



Few among the welfare recipients are attending schools, though considerably more than among the UI recipients. **A majority of the CSA group is, however, involved in some sort of a training program** as can be seen in Figure 16. Most of these attend GAIN training. GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence) was California’s attempt under AFDC to increase the employability of welfare recipients through remedial education, vocational training, and work experience.

The current version of welfare through the TANF program is much more geared to getting welfare recipients into the labor market and help keep them there. However, it is not clear at this point whether the program adequately provides for the type of education and

Figure 16
Type of Job Training Program Currently Attending



training that would provide welfare recipients with the skills and attitudes to obtain and retain the type of job which would provide a livable wage. In any event, it seems clear that more effort needs to be expended to increase the skill levels of UI and welfare recipients.

•CONCLUSION

This report describes the results of surveys taken of two subsets of “out-of-work” individuals in Stanislaus County: unemployment insurance recipients and welfare recipients. For additional perspective, we also surveyed social service providers employed by the county or by nonprofit agencies. The purpose of the surveys was to complement other work being done by the Center for Public Policy Studies to develop a complete picture of the conditions faced by individuals out-of-work.

The survey suggests interesting similarities and differences between unemployment insurance recipients and welfare recipients. Both groups tend to be characterized by low educational attainment levels, by similar ethnic backgrounds, and by their relatively long residence in the county.

Welfare recipients generally face many more obstacles and difficulties than do UI recipients. First among these is a much greater degree of marital instability. Welfare recipients also face more difficult childcare situations as well as more difficulty with transportation and health and have less adequate work histories.

Close to two-thirds of UI recipients face recurrent but relatively short-term unemployment. Most of these are seasonal workers who in many--but not all--instances would prefer steadier work. Nevertheless, they do not typically face long-term unemployment prospects. On the other hand, perhaps a quarter to a third of UI recipients do indeed face bleaker economic prospects and are much in need of improved skills.

About 60% to two-thirds of welfare recipients do have work histories but many work for relatively short periods of time. They are in and out of the workforce and on and off public assistance. Consistent with other studies of welfare recipients, this survey suggests that many of these individuals can benefit from additional education, job training, job skills, and job retention programs.

Some of these same people are not so much in need of additional training and education as they are in need of assistance to cope with one or more other barriers--transportation, adequate work clothing, childcare, disability, and the like. For many, these are solvable problems with some amount of external aid.

Based on the results from this survey and comparing them to results from the literature, we would estimate that at least 33% to 40% of welfare recipients face very imposing barriers to employment who will need substantial assistance to fare well on their own. A problem though is that the mere existence of a "barrier" does not explain very much since many with such obstacles nevertheless do work.

More needs to be done to identify those recipients most likely to benefit from education programs and more work needs to be done to identify those who need assistance with other barriers. Policy makers and program managers must also learn from other programs

currently grappling with how best to help recipients retain the jobs they find. Workfare-oriented programs to date have not been terribly successful. For the current version of workfare to work, substantial effort will have to be expended to best understand how to restructure the delivery of services to better meet the needs of those struggling.

Results from these surveys as well as the existing literature also strongly suggest the need for early intervention. Some people face an accumulation of adversities that can be extremely difficult to solve when addressed as an adult employment problem. Learning how to better identify these problems and how to better intervene at earlier stages in a person's life may be more promising.

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