

# **Former Clients of South Carolina's New Welfare Program: Trends and Issues in Surveys To-Date**

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## Assessment Objectives for Survey

- Reasons for leaving program
- Employment since leaving
- Barriers to employment
- Problems with transportation & child care
- Awareness & use of transitional benefits
- Use of other forms of assistance
- Deprivations before, during, & after program
- Beliefs regarding independence



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## Survey Design Considerations

- Include only those who would be affected by the new Family Independence Program
- Exclude those who will be studied by less expensive methods
- Ask only for information that could not be obtained by other methods
- Allow sufficient time after closure for leavers to have some experience with independence

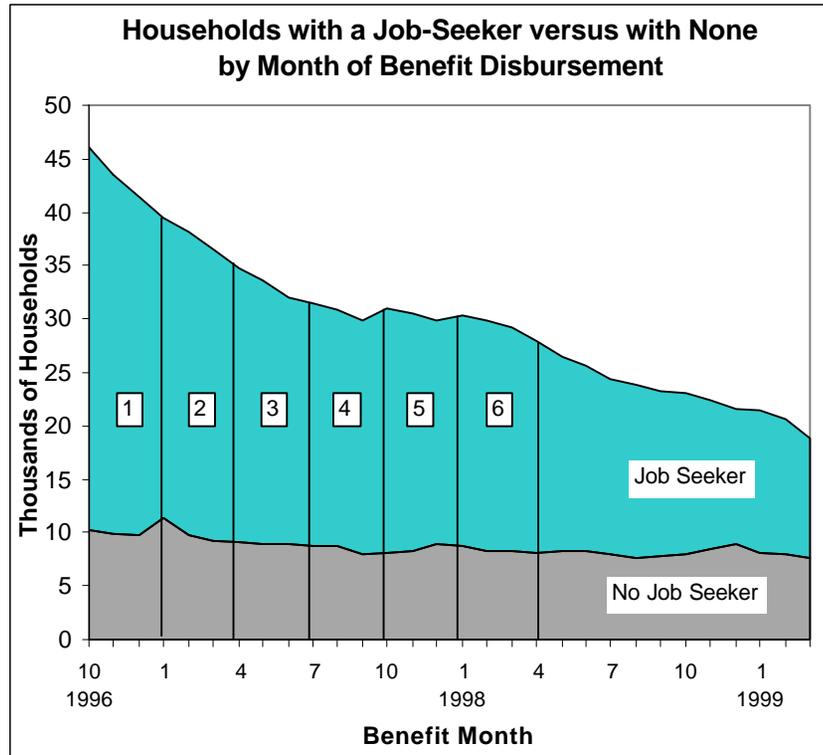


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## Trend: Fewer households meet the job-seeker criterion



Source: SC-DSS CHIP-Lite database

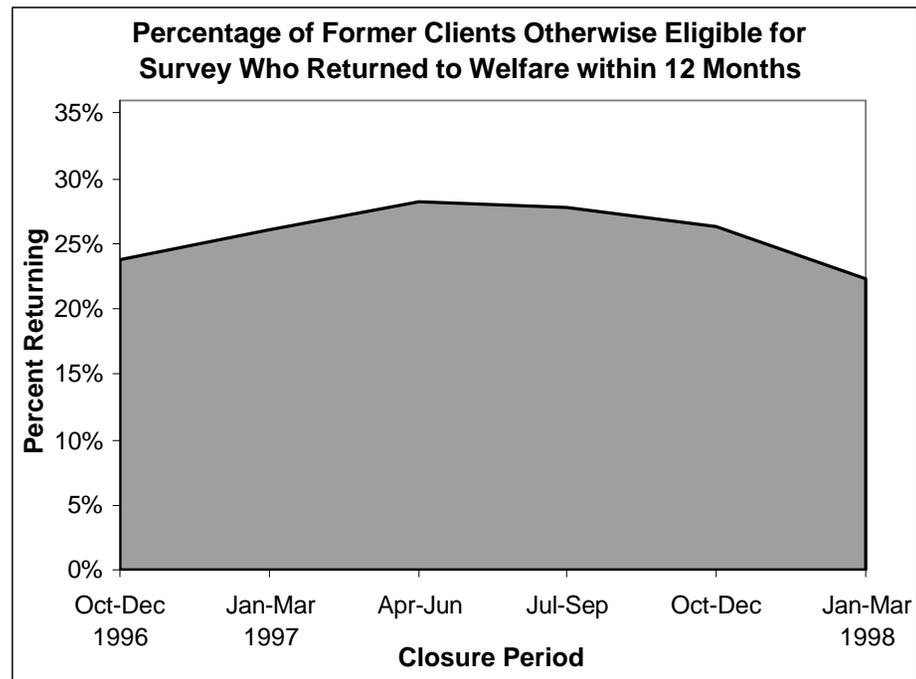


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## Trend: The proportion of the leaver population excluded from sampling due to re-enrollment has been relatively flat



Source: SC-DSS CHIP-Lite database



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**Issue: Is the added expense of home contacts really necessary?**



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## Achieving an Acceptable Response Rate

Without home visits, the response rate for telephone interviewing alone would have been 65%, not 77% (six surveys to-date)



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## **People who cannot be reached by telephone are different, and possibly more disadvantaged, than those interviewed by telephone**

- More of those interviewed in the home left welfare due to sanction (32.5%) than those contacted by phone (22.5%). Fewer left due to earned income (38.9%) than telephone interviewees (49.2%) .
- At the time of the interview (8 to 13 months after leaving welfare), fewer of the home respondents were employed (49.4%) than were telephone respondents (63.7%).
- Fewer of the home interview respondents had a vehicle to use (35.4%) than those reached by telephone (46.9%).

Statistics are from five surveys, 313 home and 1,689 telephone respondents.



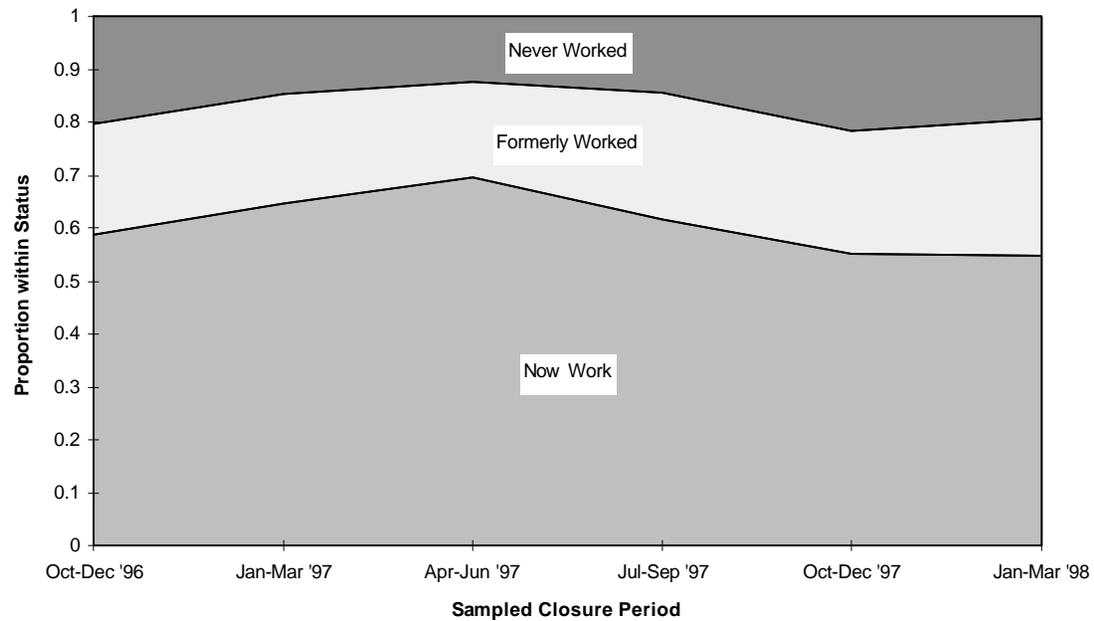
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## Trend: Employment 7 to 13 months after welfare climbed among the first 9 months of leavers then declined in subsequent samples

Respondents' Work Status  
within Each of the Six Samples of Closed Cases



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**Issue: How much time should elapse before a survey can assess job retention among former clients?**

Over six surveys, clients who were unemployed at the interview, but were formerly employed, said they kept their jobs for 4.8 months on average. The standard deviation for this average was 3.6 months.

If survey interviews were timed to occur about 12 months after leaving welfare, this would capture 95% of the job losses, according to the estimates above.



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## Some Trends

- Many former clients indicate uncertainty about living independently

--about 57% have shown negative scores on our belief index overall

- A few former clients had problems with housing

--7.8% had to move because they could not afford their housing

--1.6% made use of a homeless shelter since leaving welfare

- Some experienced a loss of utility service

--15.9% had an interruption in heat, electricity, or water service since leaving welfare

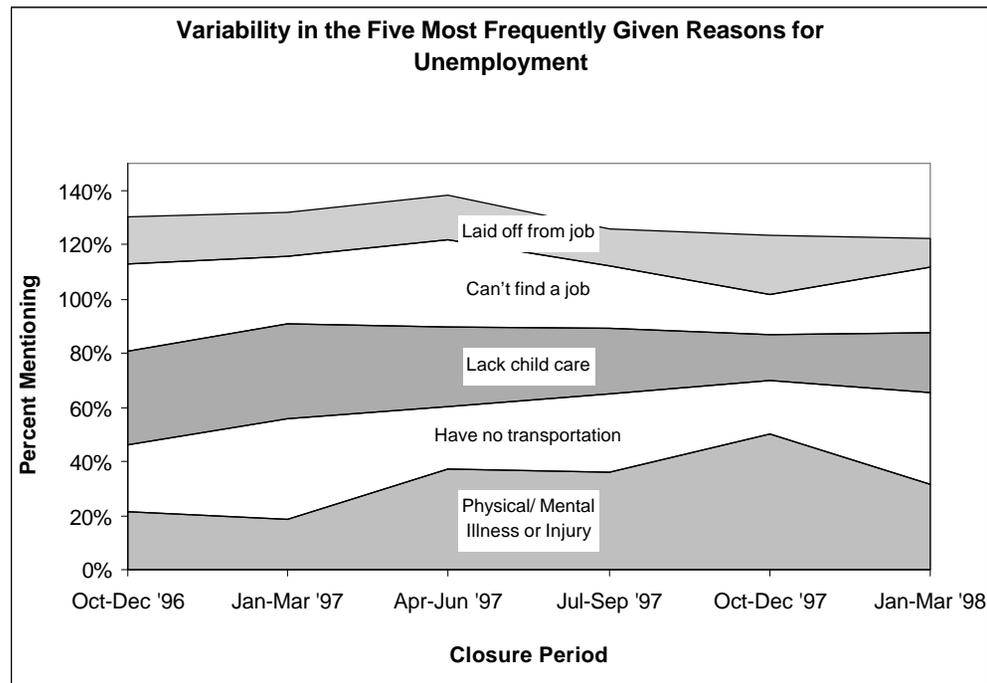


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## Trend: Illness or injury has been an increasingly common reason given for unemployment among former clients



Note: Respondents could give multiple reasons for unemployment

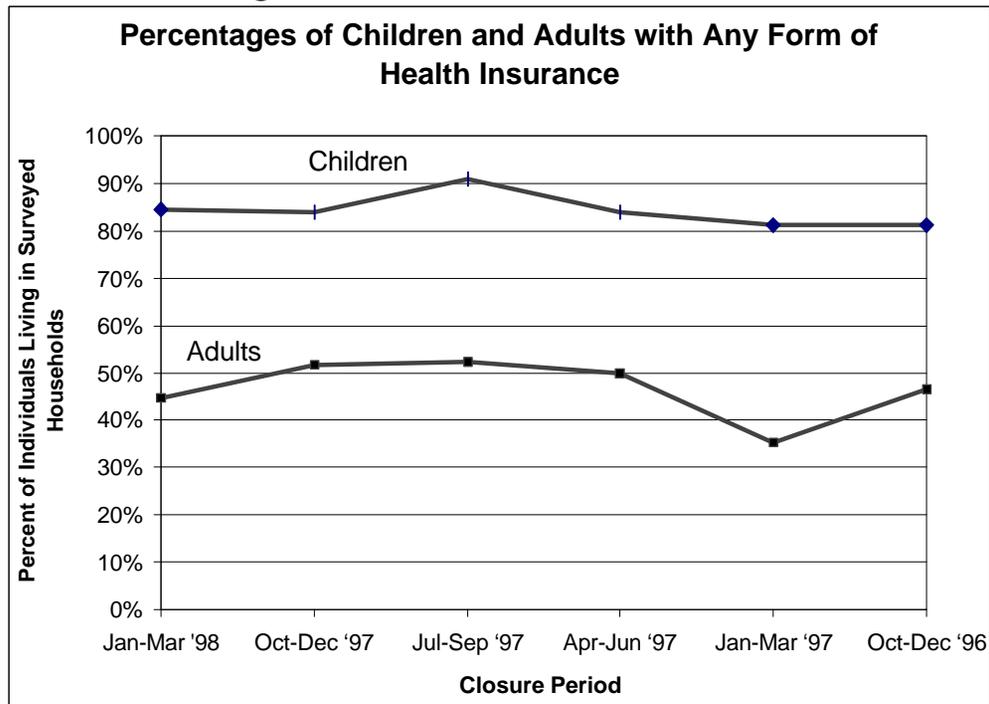


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Trend: Over 80% of the children in surveyed households were covered by health insurance, but at most, only half of the adults had coverage



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**403 respondents (16.7%) said that there was a time since leaving welfare when they had no way to buy food. Patterns of Food Stamps use after welfare tell only part of the story:**

Food Stamps Use	Problem Buying Food After Welfare?		p two-tailed z
	No, n=2014	Yes, n=403	
Gap after close, restart	30.0%	31.0%	--
None before close	8.0%	9.2%	--
Stopped at close	9.5%	11.1%	--
>=1 month after close, stopped	15.2%	19.4%	<.05
Continuous until interview	37.3%	29.2%	<.002

Data are from six survey samples combined with Food Stamps administrative records.



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## Issue: Better budgeting skills would help former clients keep food on the table

	Percent
Food Stamps were not enough to pay for food	27.5%
Had unexpected or emergency expenses	17.6%
Other reasons	17.6%
Spent all money on things other than food	15.7%
Lost job or lost job that provided food	15.7%
Had a hard time budgeting	13.7%
Quit Food Stamps & realized later still needed them	5.9%
Lost financial help from relative or friend	2.0%
Don't know, can't say	2.0%
Had more people to feed	0.0%

Source: 51 respondents in sixth SC survey



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