



**ASSESSING THE FAMILY
CIRCUMSTANCES OF CURRENT
AND FORMER TANF
CHILD-ONLY CASES
IN SAN MATEO AND SANTA
CLARA COUNTIES
Grant Number 00ASPE351A**

FINAL REPORT

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Summary

Child-only cases represent about 40 percent of California's TANF caseload. In counties that have experienced especially high caseload reductions, such as San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties in the San Francisco Bay Area, child-only cases represent half or more of the total CalWORKs (California TANF program) caseload. The citizen children of undocumented parents make up as many as 40 percent of the child-only caseload. These families are very similar to aided adult families, in that there are needy parents in the household who are able to work but currently do not earn enough to support their families. Yet because the parents are barred from receiving assistance, these families rely on lower grants and are not able to access the services available to other families.

This report explores the characteristics and well-being of such undocumented immigrant child-only cases in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. Building on previous work on TANF leavers in these counties, The SPHERE Institute surveyed the parents of almost 800 citizen children who were currently and formerly aided on child-only CalWORKs cases. Comparing these findings to results from an earlier study of aided-adult leavers (citizens or legal immigrants), we review the demographic characteristics, the employment status, the economic circumstances and other measures of well-being for both the child-only and aided-adult cases. Finally, we assess which characteristics appear to be associated with exiting the child-only caseload for these families.

The major findings include:

- **The demographic characteristics of these current and former child-only cases present significant barriers to self-sufficiency.** Consistent with our sampling strategy, virtually all of the respondents reported being neither U.S. citizens nor legal permanent residents. The parents in these families have extremely low levels of education, with the majority not even reaching high school. Most of the respondents, usually mothers, had limited English proficiency, although their spouses (present in 32

to 44 percent of households) more commonly spoke English. Finally, these child-only families had significantly more children than the typical aided adult leaver.

- **Even among current cases, most families include at least one adult working, usually for low wages.** At least one parent is working full-time in 78 percent of child-only leaver households, and at least one parent is working part-time or full-time in 55 percent of current child-only cases. However, the mean wages for respondents and their spouses range from \$7.47 per hour to \$9.90 per hour, and a number of them work for below minimum wage.
- **Parents with English proficiency earn much more than those without.** Mean wages are as much as 50 percent higher for those very proficient in English, compared to those who are not. Most respondents would like additional education and training to improve their job prospects, and the majority by far indicate a desire for English as a Second Language (ESL) training.
- **Despite earning more on average than aided-adult leavers, child-only leavers have lower total income and much lower income relative to the poverty threshold (which takes family size into account).** These families also pay a larger share of their income on housing, even though they are much more likely to live in over-crowded extended family or multi-family households.
- **The majority of leavers appear to remain eligible for, but do not receive Food Stamps.** However, one family in four reports food insecurity and an equal share rely on food pantries or soup kitchens.
- **One in five children in child-only leaver families lack health insurance.** Since these children formerly received cash aid, they should be eligible for coverage through Medi-Cal, Healthy Families or Santa Clara County's extended coverage program, Healthy Kids. Very few respondents report any health coverage other than Medi-Cal, which provides only emergency services and pregnancy coverage to undocumented immigrants.
- **For child-only cases, the factors most predictive of leaving assistance are those tied to higher earnings.** For example, education and English proficiency matter, but their effects are seen primarily through their impacts on work and wage levels. Families with more children find it more difficult to leave aid, and like other welfare families, long-term recipients are more likely to continue to receive aid.

While welfare reform has largely ignored the citizen children of undocumented immigrant parents, these cases make up a large share of the remaining welfare caseload. Prior to September 11th, a new immigration amnesty program for at least some of these families appeared likely. If an amnesty did take place, these families would be good candidates for welfare-to-work programs.

Unfortunately, at present there are relatively few avenues available to serve these families through public assistance programs. However, additional outreach could help ensure that these families access health insurance coverage for their children and non-assistance Food Stamps for eligible household members, while services such as ESL and child care assistance could greatly benefit these families. With respect to government subsidized child care, undocumented parents of citizen children are not eligible for these services through the CalWORKs program, but they are eligible for federal child care block grant funds and state funds through the State Department of Education programs. These families also face transportation barriers that could be partially addressed by changes in asset limits for cars and the availability of driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants.

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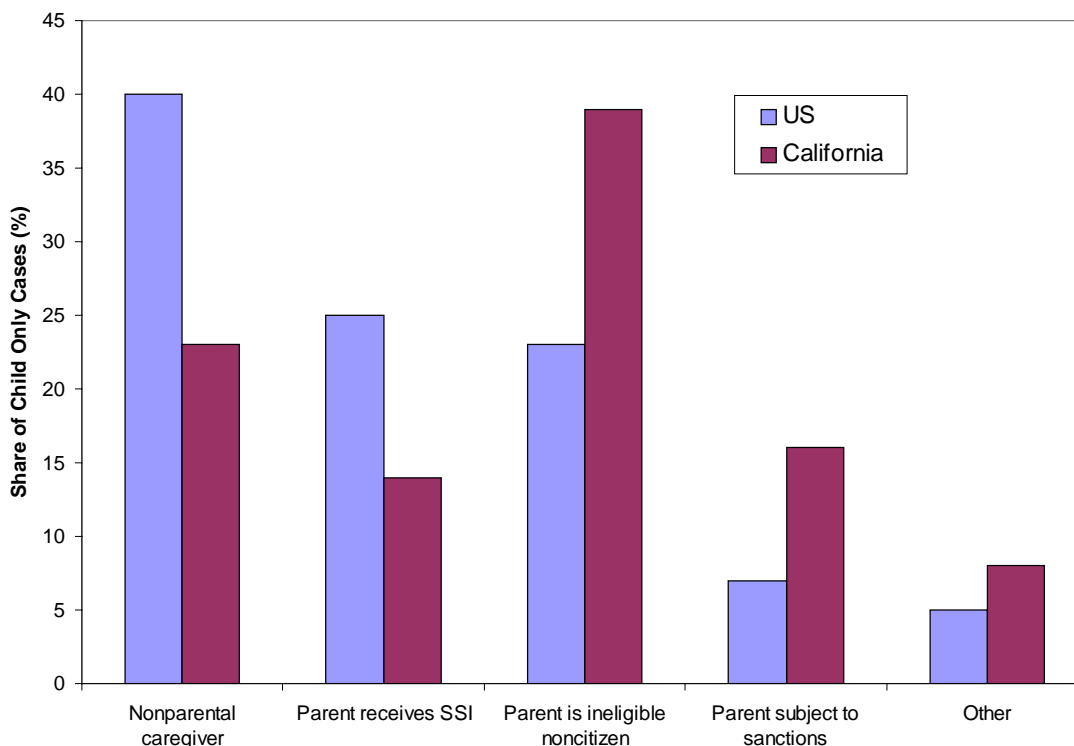
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1 Introduction

The rapid decline in welfare caseloads since 1996 has revealed a persistent set of cases largely untouched by welfare reform: so-called “child-only” cases. These cases, which have no aided adult on the grant, now make up one-third of the welfare caseload nationwide and an even larger share of cases in states with the greatest drop in aided adult cases. In California, where caseloads dropped slightly less than the national average, child-only cases rose from 23 percent of the caseload in June 1996 to 41 percent of the caseload five years later. In June 2001, California had 210,000 child-only cases (including cases where the adult was removed due to program sanction), which exceeded the *entire* caseload of any other state except New York.

The composition of California’s child-only caseload differs dramatically from the typical state (Figure 1.1). Elsewhere, child-only cases are most commonly families with non-needy

Figure 1.1 Reasons That Cases Are Child-Only, U.S. and California, FFY 2000



relative caregivers or with parents receiving disability income through Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). In California, the most common reason for children to qualify for TANF, but not their parents, is that the parent is an undocumented immigrant with citizen children.¹

Families with undocumented immigrant parents of citizen children are much like other needy TANF families who are served through CalWORKs, California's welfare to work program. However, the illegal status of these parents has three major consequences on their experience in CalWORKs. First, these cases are not subject to work participation requirements—for the simple reason that these parents are not legally allowed to work. Second, these families receive smaller grants, because the adult's income is counted for eligibility even though the grant does not cover the adult's needs. Finally, because the adults do not participate in CalWORKs activities, these families are not eligible for the associated supportive services offered through the program, including training, child care assistance, transportation assistance, and case management. The absence of these supportive services could have repercussions on their (citizen) children. Thus, in these cases, more than those with SSI and non-needy relatives, policymakers may be concerned about the economic well-being of children.

At the moment, welfare policy remains committed to aiding at least the citizen children in these families, although we do not assist them in increasing their self-sufficiency. Yet the undocumented status of these parents and the very fact that they are eligible for neither cash aid nor welfare-to-work assistance means we know very little about the circumstances facing these families. These adults are not included in the data systems that support welfare-to-work efforts, so we have no information on their barriers to employment, education, training or participation in activities to improve self-sufficiency. Nor do we know their children's school or child care

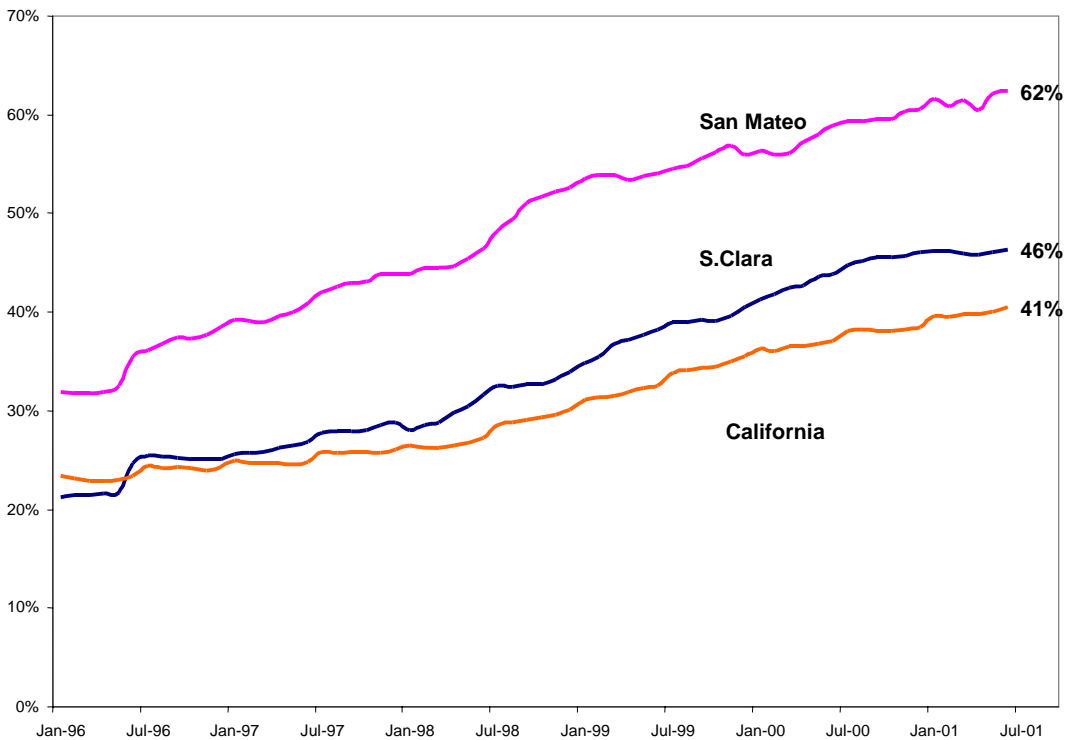
¹ Legal immigrants are eligible for California's TANF program regardless of date of entry into the U.S.

placement. Because the majority of the adults are undocumented, we are also unable to use administrative data to determine their earnings and employment trajectories.

While we know little about the current child-only caseload, we know even less about child-only leavers. About 4 to 5 percent of the child-only caseload is leaving aid each month, but we know virtually nothing about the life events that lead to stopping aid receipt. They are less likely than other leavers to be discontinued due to higher earnings, but given that neither time limits nor work requirements apply to these families, we also know that they are not “pushed” off the rolls.

In San Mateo County and Santa Clara County, California, the motive for learning more about these families is unmistakable. Figure 1.2 illustrates the rapid rise in child-only cases as a share of the total caseload in each of these counties, compared to California overall. By September 1998, child-only cases represented the majority of TANF cases in San Mateo County,

Figure 1.2 Child-Only Cases As Share of Total TANF/CalWORKs Caseload



and the child-only share now stands at around 60 percent. Santa Clara saw its child-only caseload rise to 46 percent of the total.

This report draws on a unique survey of current and former child-only cases in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, focusing on cases with needy parents in the household, virtually all families with undocumented immigrant parents of citizen children. The survey was collected with three major objectives:

- (1) Determine the economic and life circumstances of children and families in cases where children are aided but their needy parents are not eligible for assistance;
- (2) Identify the factors associated with child-only cases that leave assistance; and,
- (3) Evaluate the supportive services needed to encourage and facilitate these families' self-sufficiency and well-being.

The report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 describes the survey methodology used to collect data on child-only families. The demographic characteristics of these cases are provided in Chapter 3, distinguishing between current and former child-only cases. Chapter 4 describes the employment and work activity of adults associated with child-only cases. The economic circumstances of child-only households are detailed in Chapter 5, and other measures of family well-being are provided in Chapter 6. We end with a summary and policy conclusions in Chapter 7.

2 Survey Data and Methodology

The findings in this report are drawn primarily from survey data collected in interviews of child-only CalWORKs cases in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties during the summer and early fall of 2001. These surveys were actually conducted as an extension of earlier surveys of former welfare recipients in San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. These original surveys provide a basis for comparing former welfare recipients who had been child-only cases to those who left the aided adult caseload. Below we describe the sampling methodology for the child-only surveys and then briefly describe the earlier sample of aided adults who left aid in these counties.

2.1. Survey of Current and Former Child-Only Cases in San Mateo and Santa Clara

The population for this study consisted of zero-parent “employable” child-only cash aid cases, identified through monthly administrative data from the Case Data System (CDS) in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.² In addition to dropping sanctioned cases where the adult would otherwise be eligible for assistance, this definition also excludes from the population all cases where parents were receiving SSI as well as non-needy caretaker relative cases. There were two subpopulations: (1) “current” child-only cases, which were active in February 2001, and (2) “leavers,” child-only cases that left aid for two or more consecutive months, with the first month off aid occurring between May 2000 and January 2001. Due to practical limitations, we then further limited the population to those reporting English or Spanish as their primary

² Starting with the implementation of a state-only two-parent program in October 1999, cases definitions were changed from family group (one-parent) and unemployed parent (two parent) aid units to two-parent, zero-parent and all other aid units. Zero parent cases were defined as those in which the parent(s) or caretaker(s) are excluded from or ineligible for cash assistance. Because California removes adults from the grant due to sanctions, it is possible to be a child-only case (no aided adult) without being a zero-parent case.

language. However, non-English, non-Spanish speakers represented only about one percent of the population and totaled fewer than 30 cases.

Table 2.1 details the population size, the sample size, and the number of completed interviews by county and case type. We drew a random sample of 750 current cases out of a total population of approximately 2,000 cases. This sample represents 37 percent of all the current child-only cases meeting our definition. However, since our sample was balanced between the two counties, the San Mateo sample represented over 85 percent of the current San Mateo population, but the Santa Clara sample represented only 23 percent of its population. In fact, we were unable to evenly split the leaver sample across the two counties, since the 180 cases we drew in San Mateo represented all of the cases that left aid in the preceding six months.

Table 2.1 Survey Population, Sample and Response Rate

	San Mateo	Santa Clara	Total
<u>Current Cases</u>			
Population	435	1604	2039
Sample	375 (86%)	375 (24%)	750 (37%)
Completed Interviews	297	270	567
Response Rate	79%	72%	76%
<u>Leavers</u>			
Population	180	579	759
Sample	180 (100%)	220 (38%)	400 (53%)
Completed Interviews	106	125	231
Response Rate	59%	57%	58%

The response rates were acceptable for the current caseload, but lower than we would have preferred for the leavers sample. The overall refusal rate was only 7.5 percent; the non-response largely reflects an inability to locate the recipients after they left aid. Not surprisingly,

child-only leavers were unusually difficult to locate. We did use statewide administrative data to locate any cases returning to aid within California, one of the few avenues available for tracing these families. Because the adults in these cases were typically undocumented immigrants, they did not have valid social security numbers, making them impossible to trace through DMV records, employment records, or credit agencies. Moreover, we suspect a number of these families returned to Mexico.³ With a relatively low response rate such as this, we are concerned about the representativeness of the sample. For this reason, we believe that findings on the leavers sample should be understood to represent outcomes for those leavers most tied to the local area.

To ensure the best response rate possible, interviews were conducted in English and (most usually) Spanish by the Survey Research Center at the University of California, Berkeley.⁴ The 40-minute survey was in the field from May 31, 2001 through October 14, 2001, and respondents received an incentive payment for agreeing to participate. Whenever possible, interviews were conducted over the telephone; however, approximately 15 percent were completed in person based on field tracing.

2.2. Comparison Sample of Aided Adult Leavers

The survey instrument used for the child-only interviews was an expanded version of an instrument developed by SPHERE for a study of aided adult recipients who left welfare in San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties during the last quarter of 1998.⁵ These leavers were interviewed 6, 12 and 18 months after they left aid. As a comparison for our sample of child-

³ If contact information was available, interviewers did attempt telephone surveys outside California and the U.S.

⁴ Given the sensitive nature of the population, the instrument and study methodology were submitted to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of California, Berkeley.

⁵ See David Mancuso, et al. *Examining Circumstances of Individuals and Families Who Leave TANF: Assessing the Validity of Administrative Data: Final 18-Month Report*, prepared by the SPHERE Institute for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. Available at www.sphereinstitute.org

only leavers, we have selected the 394 cases that interviewed 12 months after they left aid in San Mateo and Santa Clara.

The 12-month aided adult interviews were conducted late in 1999, approximately two years earlier than the child-only survey. By summer 2001, the economy in these Bay Area counties had worsened slightly compared with 1999. Unemployment rose from 2.0 percent to 2.8 percent in San Mateo and from 3.0 percent to 4.5 percent in Santa Clara. However, prior to September 11, the downturn had disproportionately affected highly skilled technology workers, and welfare caseloads continued to decline in the summer of 2001. Therefore, we do not believe the economic opportunities for low-income families had substantially changed over this two-year period.

3 Demographic Characteristics

As expected from the sample design, the adult respondents in our survey of child-only cases in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties appear to be predominantly immigrants without permanent resident status. In this section, we examine the demographic characteristics of the adult respondents (typically mothers) and their spouses, distinguishing between our two subgroups: the active (or current) cases and the leavers. We also compare them to our earlier sample of aided adult leavers.

The interviewed respondents were virtually all Spanish-speaking, Hispanic and non-citizens without legal permanent residency. As shown in Table 3.1, 94 percent of respondents identified their immigration status as holding neither U.S. citizenship nor a green card (indicating

Table 3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	<u>Child-Only</u>		Aided Adult
	Current	Leavers	Leavers
Ethnicity			
• African-American	<1%	0%	16%
• Hispanic/Latino	97	97	34
• White	1	1	25
• Other	1	2	25
Primary Language			
• Spanish	94	92	8
• English	6	9	75
• Other	0	0	17
Citizenship Status			
• Citizen	3	6	NA
• Legal Permanent Resident	3	6	NA
• Other	94	88	NA

legal permanent residency).⁶ Ninety-seven percent identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino, and most of these are Spanish speakers. There were only very minor differences between the current cases and the leavers on these dimensions, although not surprisingly, the child-only leavers differed strongly on these characteristics from the aided adult leavers surveyed for earlier studies.

One of the most striking differences between the child-only respondents and the aided adult group is the number of children per household. The average number of children in current and former child-only cases is 3.5 and 3.2 respectively, compared to only 2.0 among aided adult leavers (Table 3.2). In fact, 44 percent of current child-only cases have four or more children in the household, making these large families four times more common than among aided adult leavers. Child-only leavers fall between these two extremes, with 31 percent of households including four or more children. The difference in number of children may partially reflect the life stage of child-only recipients. Although the average age of respondents does not differ much between aided and unaided adults, child-only respondents were far less likely to be young mothers (under 25) or older adults (46 and older). In fact, the majority of these parents are between 25 and 35, in their peak childrearing years.

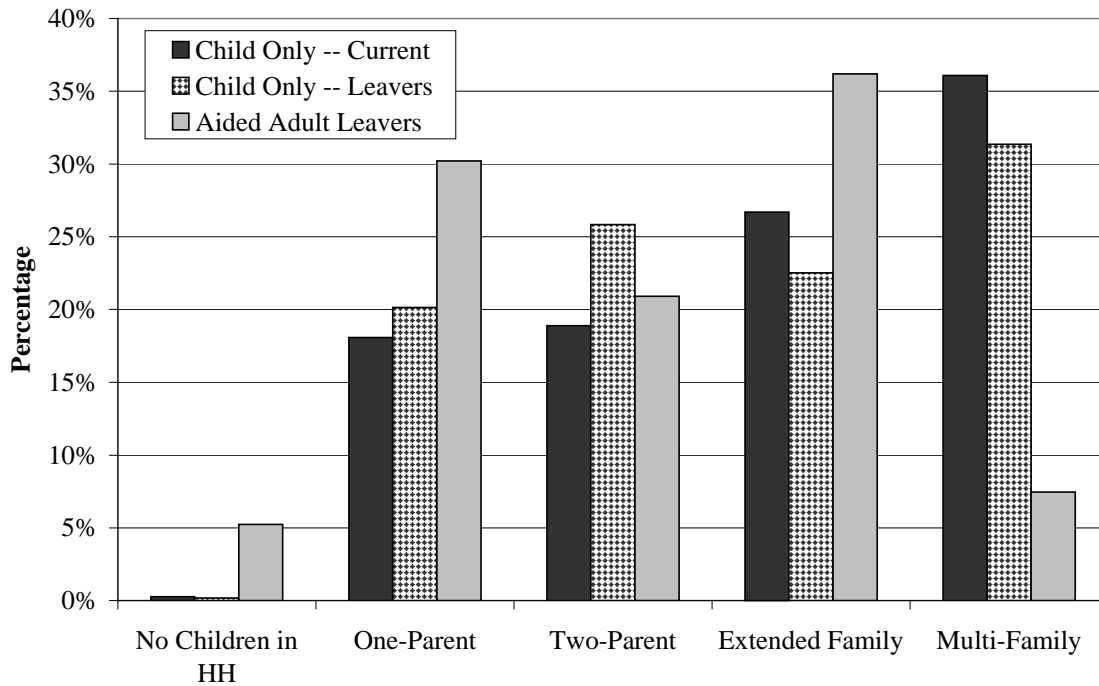
⁶ At the end of the interview, respondents were asked whether they were U.S. citizens, legal residents with green cards, “legal residents without green card,” or none of the above. Only 5 respondents refused to answer this question. We interpret the legal resident without green card response to mean the immigrant entered the country legally, with a tourist visa, for example. However, such entrants are not considered permanent residents, are not eligible for aid, and except in very limited cases, are not allowed to work in the U.S.

Table 3.2 Household Characteristics

	<u>Child-Only</u>		<u>Aided Adult</u>
	<u>Current</u>	<u>Leavers</u>	<u>Leavers</u>
Respondents' Age			
Mean	32	31	33
Share Aged:			
• 25 or Less	21	24	28
• 26 to 35	55	56	33
• 36 to 45	21	17	24
• 46 or Greater	3	3	15
Number of Children			
Mean	3.5	3.2	2.0
Share of All Households with			
• 1 child	9%	14 %	34%
• 2 children	21	27	37
• 3 children	26	28	18
• 4 or more children	44	31	11
Household Structure			
Share with Spouse/Partner	32	44	40
Share of All Households with			
• No Children in HH	<1%	<1%	5%
• One-Parent	18	20	30
• Two-Parent	19	26	21
• Extended Family	27	23	36
• Multi-Family	36	31	8

The household structure for child-only recipient families is also very different than that seen for aided adults (Table 3.2 and Figure 3.1). In particular, child-only cases were a third less likely to be one-parent households. Child-only leavers were somewhat more likely than either current child-only cases or aided adult leavers to be two-parent households. Yet the largest differences are not in the presence of a spouse or partner, especially among leavers, where 44 percent of child-only leavers and 40 percent of aided adult leavers resided with a spouse or partner. (Only 32 percent of current child-only respondents resided with a spouse or partner.) Rather, the major difference is in the presence of other adults in the household: 63 percent of

Figure 3.1 Household Structure



current child-only respondents and 54 percent of child-only leavers live in either extended family households (where there are other adult relatives in the home) or in multi-family households (where the family resides with another unrelated or only distantly related family). In fact, fully one-third of current child-only cases and nearly as many child-only leavers resided in multi-family households, compared to only 8 percent of aided adult leavers. Thus, shared housing is a much more common strategy among the child-only recipients than among others.

Finally, we examine aid history. Because the respondents themselves were not eligible to receive aid, we consider the aid history for the focal children, who were the basis of the initial sample selection. Table 3.3 considers two different measures of time on aid, both drawn not from the survey but from administrative data available from the Medi-Cal Eligibility Data System (MEDS). The first measure is simply months on aid between January 1991 (the earliest data available) and either the date the case left aid (for leavers) or February 2001 (for current

Table 3.3 Focal Child’s Time on Aid As of Exit Date or February 2001

	<u>Child-Only</u>	
	Current	Leavers
Months on Aid		
• Mean	55	43
• Median	52	32
• Percentage on aid 36 months or more	61%	47%
Share of Life on Aid		
• Mean	72%	55%
• Median	80%	56%
• Percentage on aid 50% of life or more	76%	56%

cases). However, the ages of the focal children may differ substantially, and since time on aid cannot exceed the child’s age, we also calculated what share of his or her life the child was on aid. This corrects for differences in months on aid caused by the truncation by child’s age.

Not surprisingly, children whose CalWORKs case exited assistance had shorter time on aid, by either measure. The average child on current cases had received aid for about a year longer than the average child among the leavers. Many of these cases are long-term recipients, with 47 percent of children on leavers’ cases and 61 percent on current cases having received aid for three years or more. Most of these children had also spent at least half of their lives on aid. Among current cases, more than half of the children had spent 80 percent or more of their lives on aid.

4 Employment, Employability and Service Needs of Parents

Child-only cases are not subject to the work participation requirements that apply to aided adults participating in CalWORKs. Although they are able-bodied parents, the undocumented immigrant population interviewed for this study cannot be required to work because they are not legally permitted to work in this country. Nevertheless, many of these parents are employed, and like other parents, their ability to reach self-sufficiency through work depends on the barriers to stable work and higher wages faced by these families. Obviously, the most significant barrier is their legal status. However, should these adults be legalized through an immigration amnesty, they will still face other important barriers to work. In this chapter, we

Table 4.1 Employment Activity of Respondents and Spouse/Partners

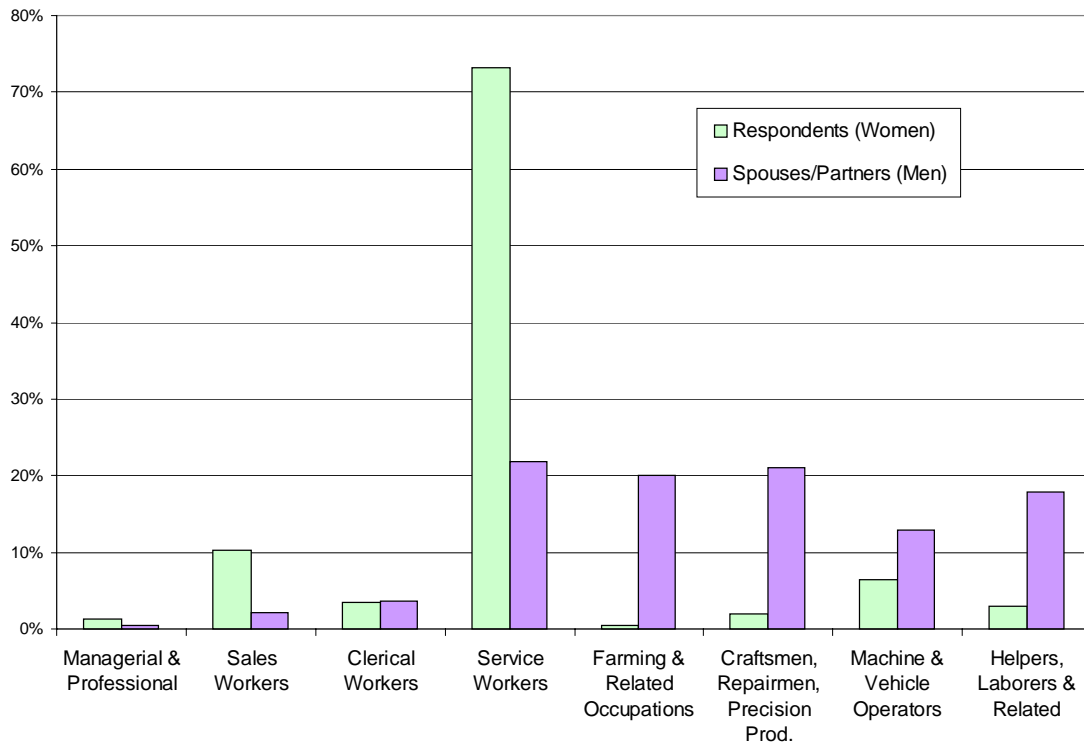
	Child-Only		Aided Adult
	Current	Leavers	Leavers
Respondent:			
• Not in Prior 6 Months	27%	10%	7%
• Worked, But Not Currently	33	23	30
• Currently Part-Time	18	13	13
• Currently Full-Time	22	54	50
Has Spouse/Partner	32%	44%	40%
Spouse/Partner:			
• Not in Prior 6 Months	5%	<1%	-
• Worked, But Not Currently	17	5	-
• Currently Part-Time	16	2	-
• Currently Full-Time	62	92	-
Respondent or Spouse/Partner			
• Not in Prior 6 Months	20%	4%	-
• Worked, But Not Currently	26	9	-
• Currently Part-Time	18	9	-
• Currently Full-Time	37	78	-

review the work activities of these families and then discuss the factors related to the employability and the service needs of the parents.

4.1. Employment, Wages and Benefits

Work participation is quite high among adults associated with child-only cases. For leavers, the work activity of respondents from child-only cases is very similar to that of the aided adult leavers, as shown in Table 4.1. In each case, around 65 percent of respondents worked either full- or part-time. Work participation is lower for respondents associated with current cases, but we still see more than 40 percent of these adults working. Work activity is even higher when one also accounts for the spouses or partners of the respondents.⁷ Over 90 percent

Figure 4.1 Occupations of Child-Only Respondents and Spouses



⁷ Work activity and related questions were not asked for spouse/partners in the aided adult survey.

of the spouses in families that left the child-only cases worked full-time. The majority of spouses in current child-only case families also worked full-time, and more than three-quarters worked full- or part-time. Of course, fewer than half of families included a spouse/partner, but as Table 4.1 shows, if we consider the activities of both the respondent and her spouse or partner, more than half of current child-only cases and 86 percent of child-only leavers have at least one parent employed.

Given their lack of legal work status, the respondents and their spouses have limited occupational choices. More than 70 percent of the working respondents (mothers) are employed as service workers. (Figure 4.1) They most commonly work as maids, janitors and cleaners

Table 4.2 Most Common Industries and Occupations for Child-Only Respondents

<u>Top Five Industry Codes</u>			
<u>Respondent</u>		<u>Spouse</u>	
Services to Dwellings & Other Bldgs	26%	Construction	25%
Private Household Services	18%	Landscape & Horticulture	19%
Eating and Drinking Places	18%	Services to Dwellings & Other Bldgs	9%
Hotel & Motel Services	4%	Eating & Drinking Places	8%
Family Child Care Homes	3%	Furniture & Fixture Manufacture	4%
	70%		64%
<u>Top 10 Occupations</u>			
<u>Respondent</u>		<u>Spouse</u>	
Maids & Housemen, Not Hhld	22%	Groundskeepers & Gardeners	18%
Child Care Workers, Private Hhld	10%	Construction Laborers	11%
Janitors & Cleaners	9%	Janitors & Cleaners	7%
Private Hhld Cleaners	7%	Cooks	4%
Cashiers	5%	Roofers	4%
Kitchen Workers, Food Prep.	4%	Maids & Housemen, Not Hhld	3%
Family Child Care Providers	4%	Assemblers	3%
Cooks	3%	Kitchen Workers, Food Prep.	3%
Food Counter & Related	3%	Vehicle Washers	3%
Waiters & Waitresses	3%	Painters	2%
	71%		58%

serving dwellings and hotels and motels. Other common occupations include restaurant workers such as cashiers, food preparation and counter workers, cooks and waitresses; and child care providers in private households or family child care homes. These industries and occupations account for 70 percent of the respondents' employment situations, as shown in Table 4.2. The spouses' jobs cover a broader range of occupations, but construction and landscape workers together account for 40 percent of the employed spouses.

These occupations and industries are available to undocumented workers in part because they offer very low wages. The child-only respondents reported a mean hourly wage of \$8.42 per hour, \$2.00 per hour less than the average for aided adult leavers (Table 4.3).⁸ Working respondents associated with ongoing child-only cases reported even lower mean wages. More striking perhaps is the fact that 20 percent of employed leavers and 35 percent of current child-only respondents earned less than the prevailing minimum wage of \$6.25 per hour. In contrast, only 7 percent of aided adult leavers reported sub-minimum wages, even though the prevailing

Table 4.3 Wages of Child-Only and Aided Adult Respondents

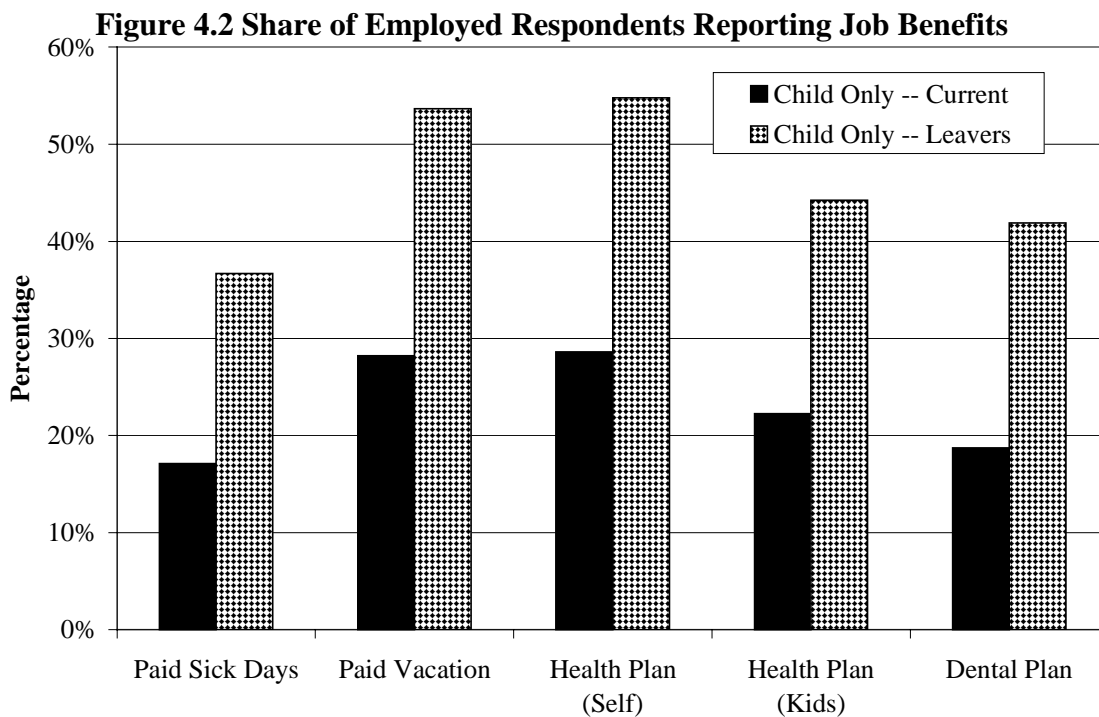
	<u>Child-Only</u>		Aided Adult
	Current	Leavers	Leavers
Respondent's Hourly Wage			
• Mean	\$7.47	\$8.42	\$10.45
• Median	\$7.00	\$8.14	\$9.46
Share Earning Below Minimum	35%	20%	7%
Spouse's Hourly Wage			
• Mean	\$9.48	\$9.90	-
• Median	\$8.40	\$9.44	-
Share Earning Below Minimum	17%	8%	-

⁸ Since the aided adult data was collected two years earlier than the child-only data, wages and other income data have been adjusted to reflect 2001 dollars.

minimum was lower (\$5.75) in 1999, when the aided adults were surveyed, than in 2001 (\$6.25) when the child-only cases were surveyed.

The spouses and partners of the child-only respondents had somewhat higher wages. The mean wage for spouses of current respondents was \$9.60 per hour, and that of child-only leavers was a bit higher still, at \$9.90 per hour on average. The spouses were also less likely to make less than the minimum wage: only 17 percent of working spouses associated with current cases and 8 percent of those associated with child-only leavers made less than \$6.25 an hour.

Despite the low wages, a number of these jobs do offer benefits. Child-only leavers are much more likely to receive benefits than are current child-only respondents, suggesting that the receipt of such benefits may be an important step in exiting assistance. As Figure 4.2 shows, the most common benefits are paid vacation and employee health coverage, both available to over half of the leavers. Fewer can receive dependent health coverage or dental coverage. In each



case, employed respondents with current child-only cases are about half as likely to be offered benefits. Employee health coverage is the most common benefit offered to the current child-only respondents, but this accounts for only 29 percent of such employees.

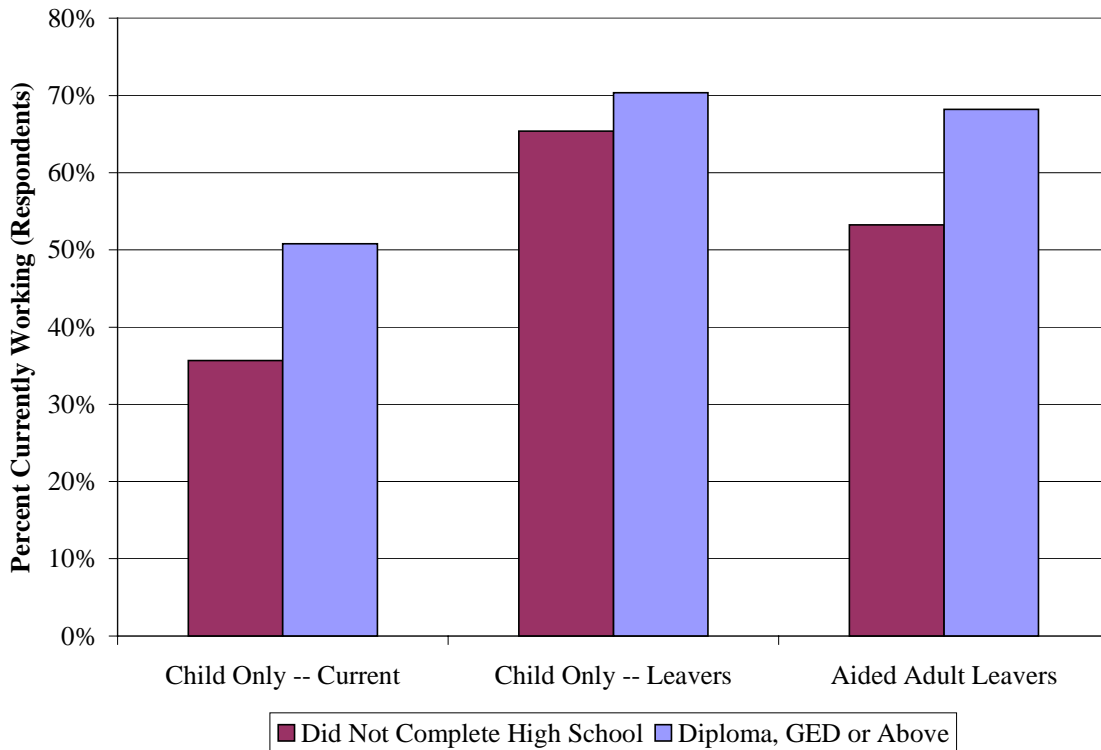
4.2. Education and English Proficiency

After their immigration status, the most important employment barriers these families face are education and English proficiency. Table 4.4 shows the educational attainment of respondents and their spouse/partners. The majority of adults associated with both current and former child-only cases have no more than an 8th grade education, and 75 to 80 percent have not completed high school or GED, either in the U.S. or in their country of origin. Leavers have somewhat more education than do adults in current case families, but the differences are small. As expected, the likelihood that a respondent is employed rises with education (see Figure 4.3), but the relationship is less strong among the child-only respondents, especially leavers, than it

Table 4.4 Educational Attainment of Child-Only and Aided Adult Respondents

	<u>Child-Only</u>		Aided Adult
	Current	Leavers	Leavers
Respondent's Education Level			
• 8 Years or Less	57%	48%	13%
• Some High School	26	26	34
• Diploma or GED	11	20	29
• Beyond High School	6	6	24
Spouse's Education Level			
• 8 Years or Less	67	60	-
• Some High School	16	11	-
• Diploma or GED	8	23	-
• Beyond High School	9	6	-

Figure 4.3 Share of Respondents Employed By Level of Education



was for aided adult respondents.

The same pattern holds for English proficiency, which is provided in the top two rows of Table 4.5. Only 13 percent of respondents were very proficient in English; the majority of

Table 4.5 English Proficiency and Employment of Child-Only Respondents and Spouses

	<u>English Proficiency</u>		
	Very Proficient	Some English	None
English Proficiency			
• Respondent	13%	39%	46%
• Spouse/Partner	77	16	7
	Percent Employed by English Proficiency		
Child-Only -- Current			
• Respondent	51%	42%	36%
• Spouse/Partner	77	76	81
Child-Only -- Leavers			
• Respondent	68	76	58
• Spouse/Partner	94	96	88

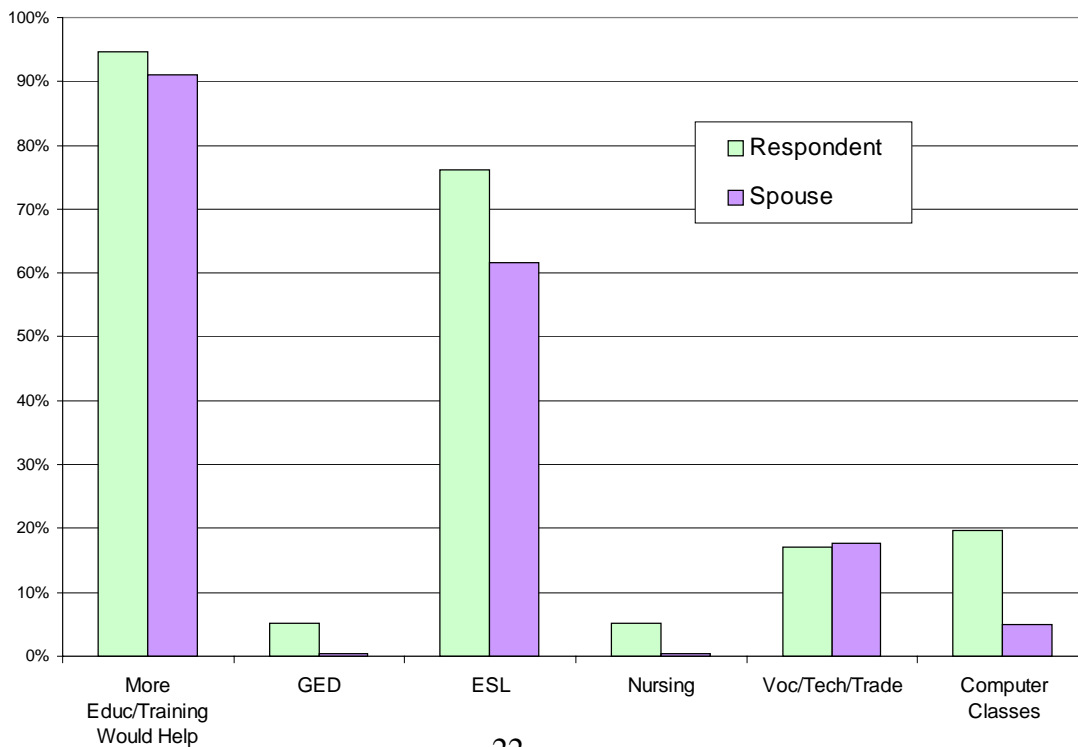
Table 4.6 English Proficiency and Wages of Child-Only Respondents and Spouses

Mean Wage By English Proficiency			
	Very Proficient	Some English	None
Child-Only--Current			
• Respondent	\$7.97	\$7.93	\$6.93
• Spouse	\$11.99	\$8.68	\$8.03
Child-Only--Leavers			
• Respondent	\$10.84	\$8.18	\$7.53
• Spouse	\$10.31	\$9.96	\$8.87

respondents had no English. Their spouses tended to be much more proficient, with 77 percent very proficient. As the lower panel of Table 4.5 demonstrates, the share employed is not closely related to English proficiency.

On the other hand, there is a strong relationship between English proficiency and wages, as shown in Table 4.6. For both respondents and spouses in current and leaver cases, wages rise

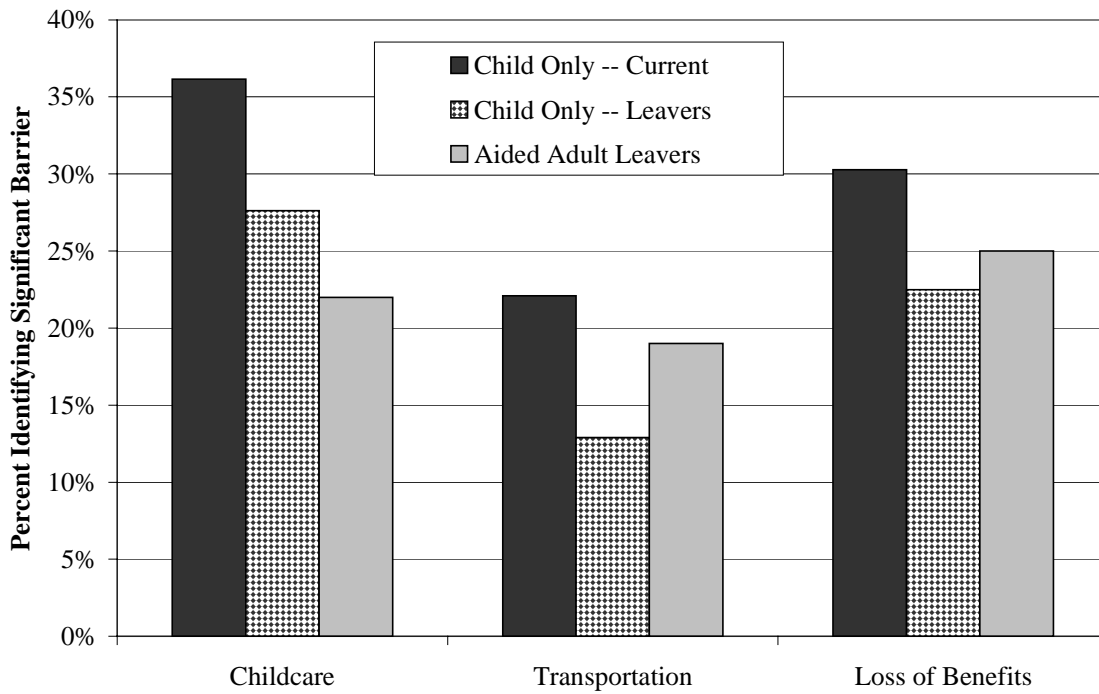
Figure 4.4 Share of Child-Only Respondents Reporting Education or Training Programs Would Help Them Advance in Employment



significantly with English proficiency. The difference in wages for those who are very proficient in English compared to those with no English can be worth \$3.00 to \$4.00 per hour among those who are working. Given the low wages of those with no English, English proficiency can raise wages by as much as 50 percent.

It is not surprising, then, that respondents clearly believe that stronger English ability would allow them to improve their employment situation, either by allowing them to get a job or to increase their wages. More than three-fourths of respondents identified English as a Second Language (ESL) as the training or education program they think would be most helpful in advancing their economic status (Figure 4.4). Responses on additional education and training were very similar between the current and former child-only cases.

Figure 4.5 Share of Respondents Reporting Barriers to Employment



4.3. Other Barriers to Employment

Respondents were also asked whether they perceived child care, transportation or the loss of benefits to be major barriers to their employment, shown in Figure 4.5. For child-only families, child care is the most commonly reported barrier out of these three, and child-only families were more likely than aided adult leavers to perceive child care to be a major barrier. This is particularly true of current child-only responses, where 42 percent of those not working see child care as a major barrier, compared to only 24 percent of those working.

There are a number of explanations for this difference between child-only and aided adult leaver families. First, as we saw in Chapter 3, child-only families are typically larger than aided adult families. Within the child-only group, leavers have fewer children than families currently on aid, consistent with this being a less common barrier among leaver families. Indeed, Figure

Figure 4.6 Share of Respondents Working By Number of Children in Household

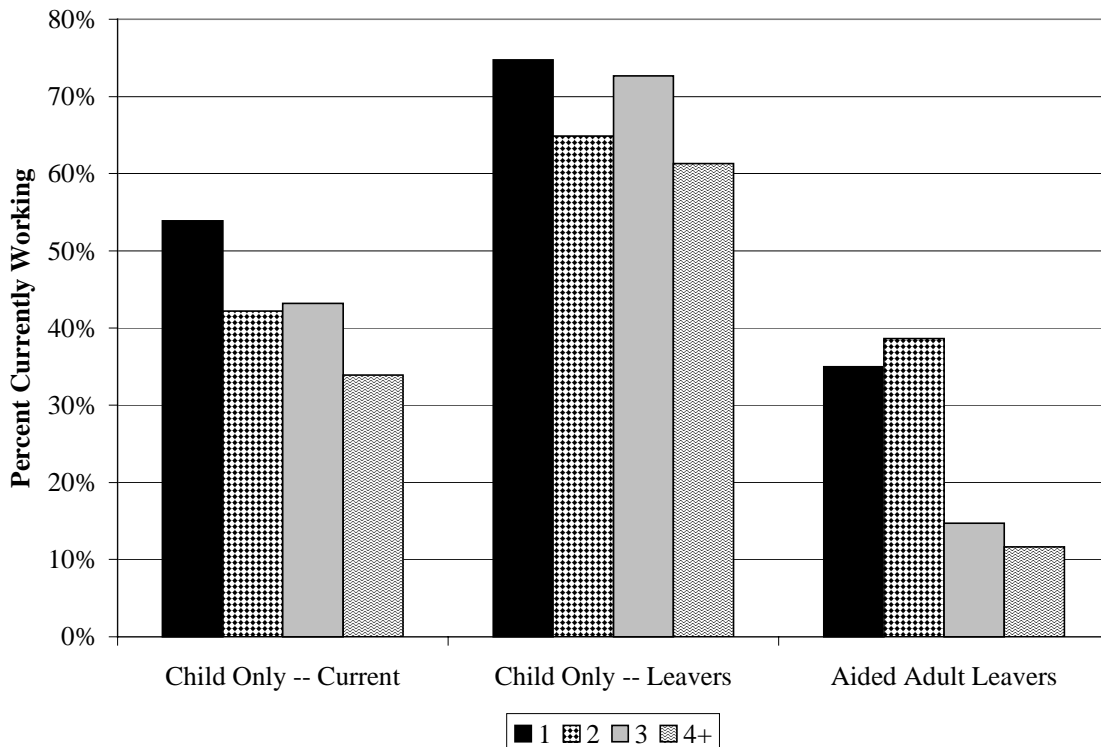


Table 4.7 Primary Child Care Arrangements Used For Work

Primary Child Care Arrangement			
	Child-Only Current	Child-Only Leavers	Aided Adult Leavers
Share Using Any Arrangement	33%	54%	74%
Primary Arrangement			
• Head Start	4%	4%	4%
• Formal Daycare	13	12	19
• Extended Daycare	5	1	14
• Adult Relative	44	48	41
• Family Daycare/Sitter	23	32	17
• Non-Adult Relative	11	3	5

4.6 shows that respondents in families with fewer children were generally more likely to be working than those with more children. This was true for both the current cases and the leavers. Second, unlike aided adult families, parents in these child-only families are not eligible for child care assistance through the CalWORKs program. As a result, child-only families are much less likely to use any child care arrangement. When they do use child care, the patterns are not significantly different from those of aided adult leavers, although the child-only families are much more likely to use informal care by non-relatives (family day care and sitters). (Table 4.7).

The likelihood of transportation being a major barrier was not significantly different between aided adult leavers and current child-only respondents, but child-only leavers cited transportation as a barrier less often than the other two groups. Child-only leavers were twice as likely as current child-only respondents to have access to a car, and respondents who have access to a car are much less likely to report transportation barriers.

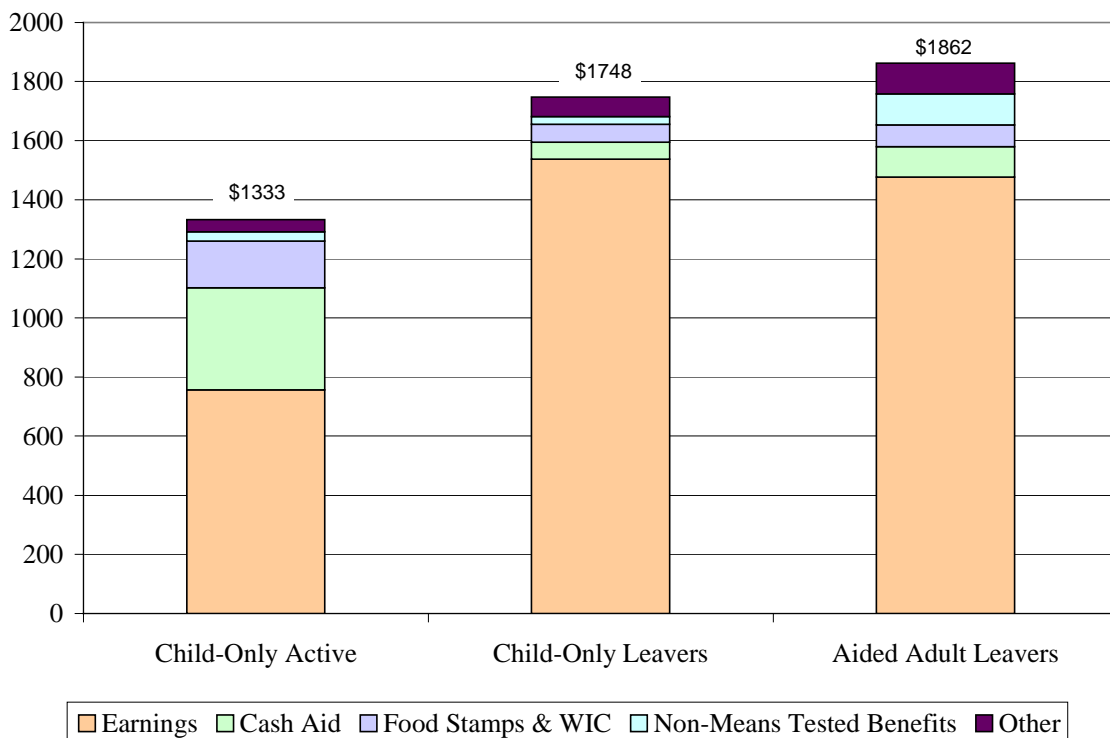
5 Economic Circumstances Of Families

The TANF/CalWORKs system supports citizen children of undocumented immigrants and other ineligible adults to provide a safety net for these children. Yet because the parents cannot be aided, the public assistance provided to these families is lower than that provided to similar families with aided adults. In this chapter, we examine the economic resources and income security available in the households of families currently or formerly receiving child-only CalWORKs grants.

5.1. Income

The average monthly income for current child-only households, child-only leavers and aided adult leavers is summarized in Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1. In both, total income is broken into five major sources: earnings; cash aid (CalWORKs, General Assistance and Supplemental

Figure 5.1 Monthly Household Income by Source



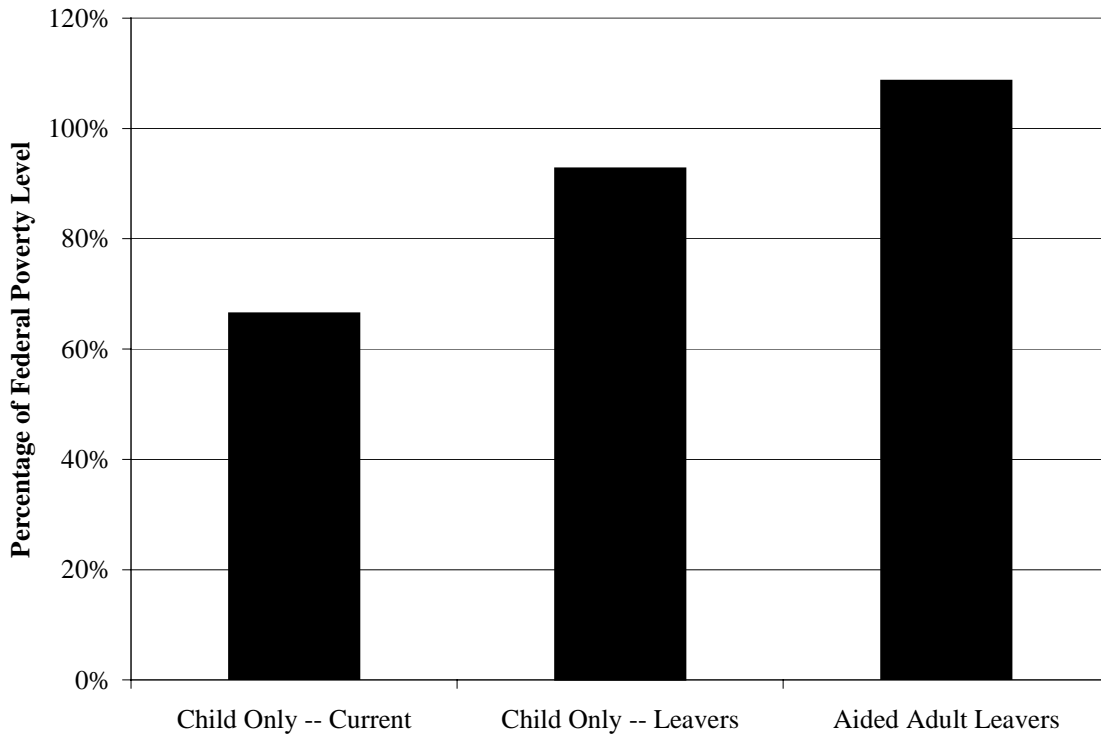
Security Income); Food Stamps and WIC; Social Security, unemployment insurance, workers compensation and other non-means tested benefits; and other sources including child support and money from friends and relatives.

At \$1748 monthly, child-only leavers have about \$100 less income per month than aided adult leavers, though both have substantially higher income than current child-only households, as one would expect. For all three groups, earnings make up the largest share of income: 57 percent, 88 percent and 79 percent respectively. Child-only leavers have more earnings than aided adult leavers in absolute terms as well as in percentage terms, in part because a higher share of child-only households have any earnings. Obviously, the active cases have more income from cash aid and Food Stamps. On average, these households receive \$345 in cash aid and \$158 in Food Stamps each month, together accounting for 38 percent of household resources. Some child-only leavers still receive Food Stamps, but averaged across all

Table 5.1 Average Monthly Income by Source, Dollars and Percentage

	Child-Only Current	Child-Only Leavers	Aided Adult Leavers
Average Income by Source			
• Earnings	\$ 757	\$1537	\$1477
• Cash Aid	345	58	102
• Food Stamps and WIC	158	61	74
• Non-Means Tested Benefits	31	25	104
• Other	42	67	104
Total	\$1333	\$1748	\$1862
Share of Income from Source			
• Earnings	57%	88%	79%
• Cash Aid	26	3	5
• Food Stamps and WIC	12	4	4
• Non-Means Tested Benefits	2	1	6
• Other	3	4	6

Figure 5.2 Income as Share of Federal Poverty Level



respondents, this only accounts for \$61 per month, a bit less than that received by aided adult leavers. Child-only leavers are less likely than aided adult leavers to receive non-means tested benefits such as unemployment insurance. Cash aid continues to make up a small share of leaver families' income, because some cases had returned to aid.

The relatively modest differences in total income mask greater differences in income compared to the poverty level, because child-only respondents reside in larger families than aided adult leavers. Figure 5.2 presents the median income as a share of the federal poverty level for each group, thus taking into account family size. One year after exit, the median aided adult leaver household had income at 109 percent of poverty. Yet the median child-only leaver only reached 93 percent of the federal poverty level. The distribution of income relative to poverty is detailed in Table 5.2. As this table shows, the majority of current child-only households were

Table 5.2 Distribution of Income Relative to Poverty

	Child-Only Current	Child-Only Leavers	Aided Adult Leavers
Income Relative to Federal Poverty Guidelines			
• 70% or Below	53%	34%	24%
• 71 to 100%	20	22	22
• 101 to 130%	15	15	16
• 131 to 185%	8	15	21
• 186 to 250%	3	8	11
• 251% or More	1	7	6

very poor, defined as income below 70 percent of the poverty threshold. One-third of child-only leavers were very poor as well.

In further examining the very poor child-only leavers, we found that about two-thirds of these households had earned income (that is, at least one person was working), and in about 10 percent of the cases the children were back on aid at the time of the survey. Very poor leavers also had more children (making them more likely to live in poverty for any given income level). In light of their very poor status, they were also more likely to live in extended family or multi-family housing arrangements.

5.2. Housing Conditions

Housing is typically the largest single expense for child-only recipient families, especially in the high cost housing markets in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Over 95 percent of the child-only respondents indicated that they were renting their homes or apartments. Table 5.3 shows the median housing cost and the share of income required to cover housing costs. The median current child-only case paid approximately \$600 per month, less than that paid by the median aided adult leaver.⁹ Child-only leavers paid substantially more for housing,

⁹ The cost of housing for aided adult leavers is adjusted for inflation from the 1999 survey, but does not account for price increases in excess of inflation.

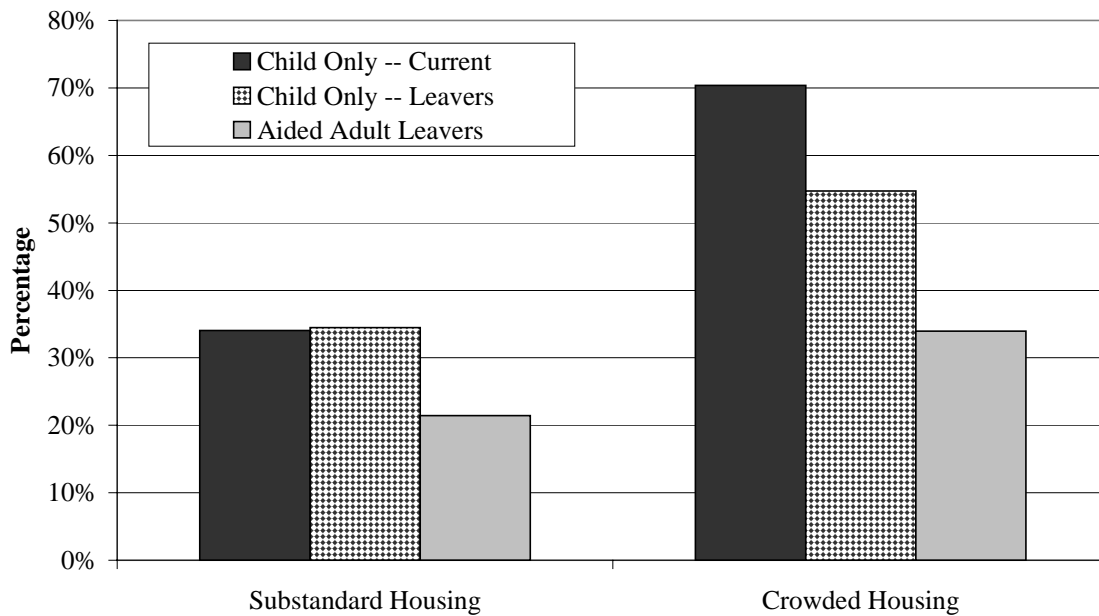
Table 5.3 Monthly Housing Costs

	Child-Only Current	Child-Only Leavers	Aided Adult Leavers
Median Housing Cost	\$600	\$760	\$654
Housing Cost Relative to Total Income	55%	49%	39%

\$760 per month at the median. This reflects in part the larger families associated with child-only cases. In combination with their slightly lower incomes, the child-only leavers spent a much higher percentage of their income on housing than did the aided adult leavers (39 percent compared to about 55 percent).

In addition to paying a large share of their income for housing, child-only respondents also commonly reported inadequate housing conditions. Figure 5.3 shows the proportion of respondents who reported living in substandard housing conditions and crowded housing

Figure 5.3 Incidence of Crowded and Substandard Housing



conditions. Housing was considered substandard if the respondent reported one or more of the following conditions: (1) a leaky roof or ceiling; (2) a toilet, hot water heater, or other plumbing that does not work; or (3) rats, mice, roaches, or other insects. Housing conditions were defined as crowded if the ratio of household members to rooms (excluding bathrooms) is greater than one. About one-third of the child-only families (both active and leavers) reported living in substandard housing, compared to about one-fifth of the aided adult leavers – even though the latter group reported lower average housing costs than did the child-only leavers. A very high percentage of the child-only families reported living in crowded housing conditions. Recall that child-only families were, on average, larger than the families of the aided adult leavers, and also were more likely to be living in multi-family housing arrangements. However, it is important to note that crowded housing conditions are extremely common among immigrant households in California, regardless of aid receipt.¹⁰

5.3. Food Insecurity

Food insecurity and use of food assistance are additional indicators of the economic circumstances of these child-only families. Respondents were asked whether the household had sufficient food to eat and whether they had enough money to buy the food they need.¹¹ Child-only respondents were slightly less likely to report food insecurity than were aided adult leavers. In each group, around 30 percent of respondents reported that in the last six months there was sometimes or often not enough food to eat in their household. Around one in four child-only respondents also reported using food pantries, food banks or soup kitchens in the past six

¹⁰ Moller, Dardia and Johnson (2002) found that households headed by foreign-born Hispanics were 26 times more likely to be crowded than households headed by native-born non-Hispanics, holding other factors constant.

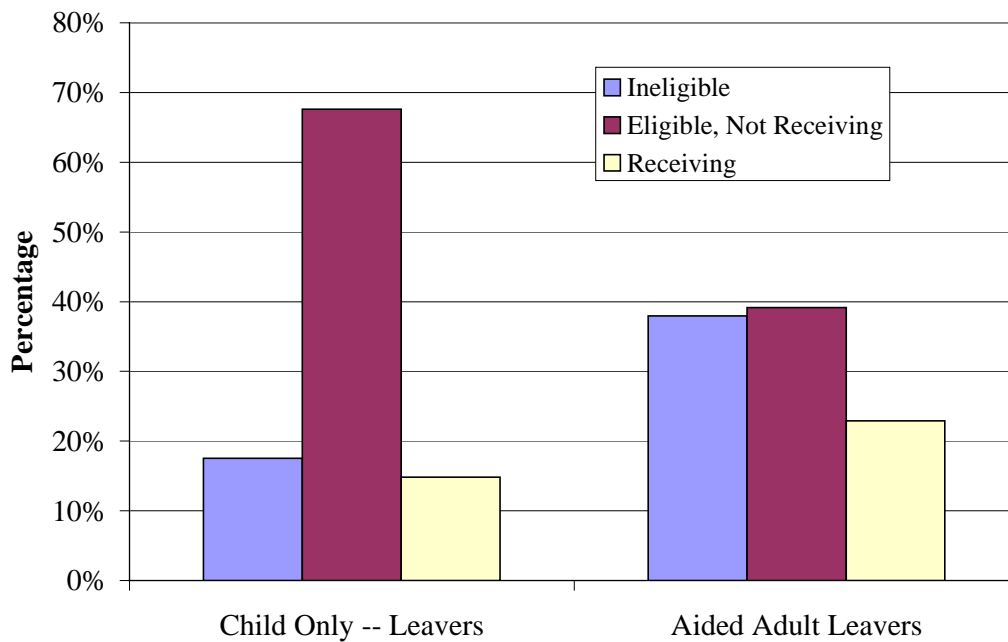
¹¹ The child-only survey used the standard 6-item subset of the 12-month food security scale developed by USDA (see USDA 2000); these questions differed slightly from those used in the aided adult survey.

Table 5.4 Food Insecurity

	Child-Only Current	Child-Only Leavers	Aided Adult Leavers
Food Insecure	27%	26.0%	31%
Food Insecure with Hunger	14%	12%	-
Used Soup Kitchen or Food Pantry	27%	24%	-

months, suggesting that these families do rely on private charity in addition to any assistance from public programs.

The survey also asked about Food Stamps receipt, and based on income information (but without asset information) we also calculated the expected eligibility of these families for Food Stamps. As with CalWORKs, the undocumented immigrant adults are not eligible for Food Stamps, but their currently or formerly aided children would be eligible if the family meets the



income eligibility criteria. Figure 5.4 shows the estimated proportion of leaver households receiving Food Stamps, ineligible for Food Stamps, and eligible for but not receiving Food Stamps. About 60 percent of the child-only leaver households appeared eligible for but did not receive Food Stamps, compared to about 40 percent of the aided adult leavers.

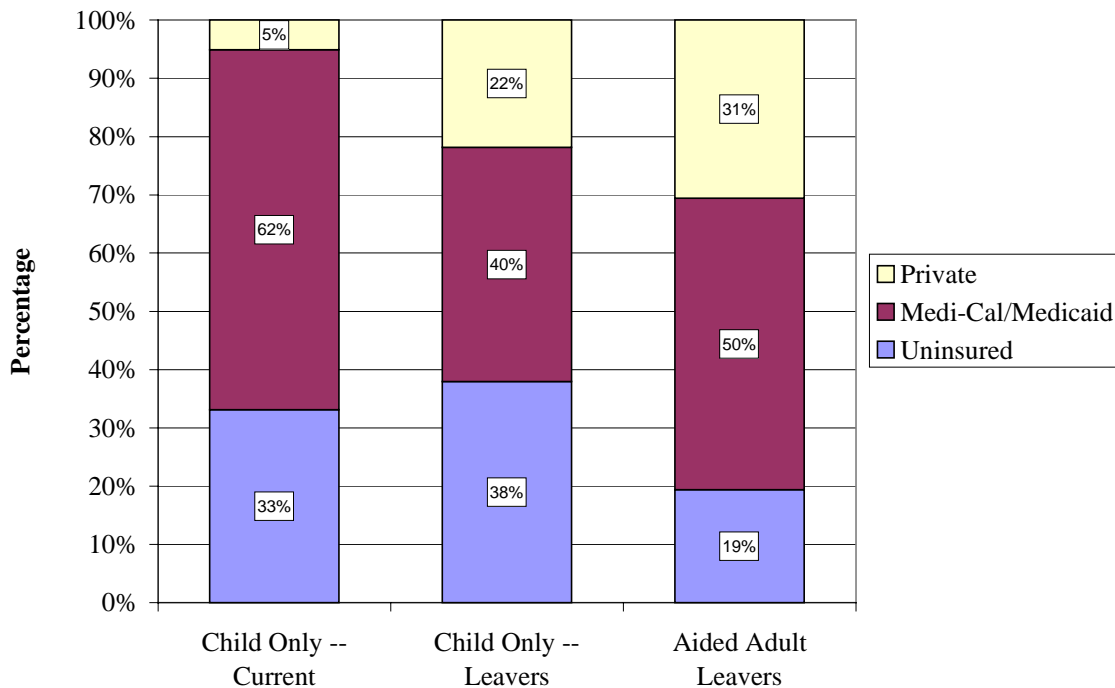
6 Other Measures of Family Well-Being

This study seeks to understand the circumstances of child-only CalWORKs families with needy parents ineligible for aid. Therefore, the survey instrument also covered other, non-financial measures of child and family well-being. The most relevant of these from a policy perspective is health insurance coverage. However, respondents were also asked about their children's psychosocial well-being, as well as the degree of alcohol and drug abuse and domestic violence in the household. This chapter reviews findings on these questions.

6.1. Health Insurance

Among adult respondents, there are high rates of non-coverage for health insurance. Around one-third of respondents with current child-only cases and 38 percent of leavers report no health insurance, as shown in Figure 6.1. However, this probably understates the real share of

Figure 6.1 Respondents' Health Insurance Coverage



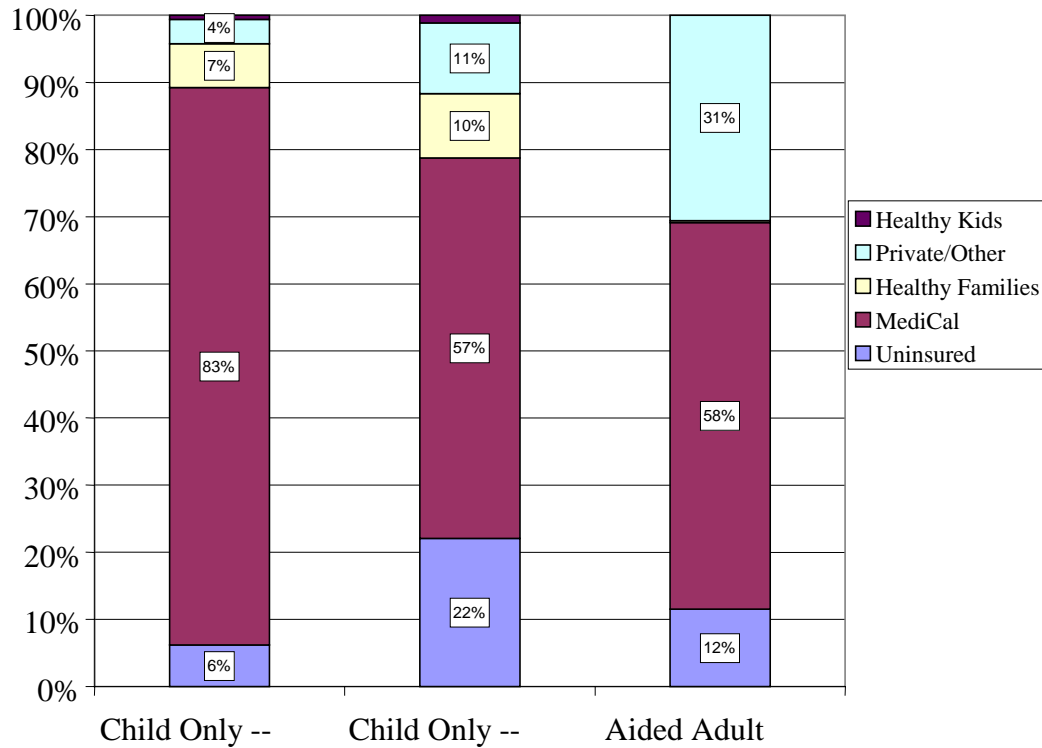
uninsured adults in this group. Fifty-five percent of respondents in current child-only cases and 36 percent of former child-only respondents report coverage through Medi-Cal. Yet undocumented immigrants are only eligible for emergency and pregnancy-related coverage from Medi-Cal, so most of these respondents cannot in fact rely on Medi-Cal for ongoing health coverage. Only a small fraction of current child-only respondents and 22 percent of child-only leavers report private health insurance coverage.

While there are few insurance options for the parents in these households, all of the focal children should qualify for public health insurance.¹² In addition to Medi-Cal, Healthy Families (California's state children's health insurance program) is available for children in families earning less than 250 percent of the federal poverty level (which includes 95 percent of child-only leaver families). Moreover, in 2000, Santa Clara County established the Healthy Kids program (also known as the Children's Health Initiative) to guarantee that "no uninsured child who is a resident of Santa Clara County, and whose parents have an income at or below 300% of the federal poverty level, shall be turned away from receiving health coverage."

As a result of these policies, the children in current and former child-only cases are much more likely than their parents to have health coverage, as shown in Figure 6.2. Private health insurance coverage is rare among these families, as expected. However, some parents report lack of any insurance coverage for their children, despite the fact that eligibility for health coverage is near 100 percent in this population. For example, even though these children are categorically eligible for Medi-Cal while on CalWORKs, 6 percent of children on current cases are reported to lack coverage. This is a concern only if mothers do not get the medical care these children may need because they are not aware of their coverage. Nevertheless, 22 percent of children from former child-only cases are also reported to be uninsured.

¹² Focal children were selected from those aided on the CalWORKs case.

Figure 6.2 Children's Health Insurance Coverage



Only 7 percent report Healthy Families coverage, and just under 1 percent report Healthy Kids coverage. This suggests that only about one in four families eligible for Healthy Families or Healthy Kids had taken it up by summer 2001. Healthy Kids was not available at the time of the aided adult survey, and Healthy Families had just begun. Even with fewer options for coverage, only about 10 percent of the children in the aided adult households lacked coverage.

6.2. Other Child and Family Well Being Measures

As other measures of family well-being, respondents were asked about their experiences with domestic violence in the last six months, as well as the incidence of alcohol and drug abuse in the households. These responses are summarized on Table 6.1. Physical violence occurred very infrequently, but in about 15 to 20 percent of the cases there was some type of other abuse, such as verbal or emotional abuse. Excessive alcohol use (more than five drinks at a time) and

Table 6.2 Other Indicators of Respondents' Well-Being

	Child-Only Current	Child-Only Leavers
Domestic Violence		
In last 6 months experienced:		
• Physical abuse	7%	12%
• Verbal or emotional abuse	18	26
Excessive alcohol use (frequency):		
• Never	95%	92%
• Yearly	2	4
• Monthly	2	3
• Weekly	>1	2
Illegal drug use (frequency):		
• Never	99%	99%
• Yearly	0	0
• Monthly	>1	0
• Weekly	>1	>1

use of illegal drugs (including marijuana, cocaine, heroine and other drugs) was also very infrequent. Aided adult leavers were not asked comparable questions.

Finally, respondents were asked a number of questions about certain aspects of the focal child's psychosocial behavior and well being, summarized in Table 6.2. It is difficult to interpret these reports in the absence of a reference group. However, incidence of each of these behaviors

Table 6.1 Child Psychosocial Indicators

Focal Child's Psychosocial Behaviors	Age	Child-Only Current	Child-Only Leavers
• Often Feels Worthless/Inferior	6-12	5%	17%
• Never Cares About School	6-17	10	8
• Often Doesn't Get Along With Others	6-17	11	15
• Often Feels Sad Or Depressed	6-17	5	6
• Often Lies Or Cheats	12-17	10	4

is low. Interestingly, a higher proportion of leavers report some of these problems than did the respondents in the active caseload. Clearly, the success of the leavers does not have a clear translation to the behaviors of their children

7 Factors Associated With Being A Leaver

This final section uses regression analysis to assess which factors are related with child-only cases exiting aid. Unlike aided adult cases, child-only cases do not receive welfare-to-work services or transitional benefits, nor are they subject to participation requirements, sanctions or time limits. Therefore, the determinants of leaving aid are those most associated with having income exceed eligibility limits. One notable exception is the probability that undocumented immigrants returned to their country of origin. Although we attempted to trace leavers even if they went to Mexico or another country, our success in locating leavers overall was low. Thus, these regressions should be considered suggestive of the reasons families leave aid other than leaving the state, primarily work.

The dependent variable for these regressions is the probability of being off aid in June 2001. This definition is slightly different than the survey definition of current versus leaver, which was based on status in February 2001. Since surveys were conducted in the summer of 2001, we feel this leaver definition more appropriately matches the survey data for the purpose of the regressions. In particular, we wanted to examine the role of work in determining whether or not a case left aid. Work observed some months *after* a case left aid does little to suggest the importance of work at the decision point, so we chose a definition of being off aid that was contemporaneous with the work status reported in the survey.

The regression results are presented in Table 7.1. The three specifications differ by whether or not we included measures of work activity and if so, whether we looked only at employment or looked at wages. Given the yes/no nature of the dependent variable, we conducted logistic regressions. However, the logistic results are transformed to be analogous to

Table 7.1 Regression Results on Probability of Being Off Aid

Probability of Case Being Off Aid in June 2001 (Bold indicates statistically significant at the .05 level)			
Characteristic	(1)	(2)	(3)
Respondent			
Completed high school	6.8 %	5.0 %	3.3 %
Younger than 25	9.3 %	10.5 %	9.7 %
3 or more children	- 9.6 %	- 7.4 %	- 6.6 %
English proficient	1.8 %	0.5 %	- 1.6 %
Access to car	20.9 %	13.8 %	12.5 %
Working		25.6 %	
Working, Wage LT \$8.00/hr			18.5 %
Working, Wage GE \$8.00/hr			40.7 %
Spouse present	2.6 %	- 10.6 %	- 14.3 %
Spouse			
Completed high school	5.9 %	6.3 %	3.4 %
English proficient	9.4 %	2.6 %	0.2 %
Access to car	11.2 %	4.5 %	4.0 %
Working		30.9 %	
Working, Wage LT \$8.00/hr			34.6 %
Working, Wage GE \$8.00/hr			43.5 %
Focal Child On Aid			
50% or more of life	- 17.8 %	- 14.1%	- 12.4 %
N	758	758	758

the results from linear regression results.¹³ This transformation permits much simpler interpretation of the regression results. We will focus primarily on the third specification.

Starting with the characteristics of the respondents, the children of young mothers were 10 percent more likely to be off aid than the children of mothers over 25, in all of the specifications. On the other hand, this effect is offset if there are three or more children in the household. If the focal child received aid for more than half of his or her life prior to February

¹³ This transformation involves calculating for each observation in the sample, the change in the predicted probability of being on or off aid resulting from switching each binary variable from “one” to “zero.” These changes in predicted probabilities are then averaged across all observations.

2001, the child is 12 percent more likely to still receive aid in June 2001, controlling for other factors.

Surprisingly, the mother's English proficiency has no clear effect on the probability of being off aid in June 2001. Whether or not she has a high school diploma is significantly correlated with leaving aid in the first two specifications, but not the third, suggesting that the mother having a high school diploma has a small benefit in getting employment, but its role in getting off aid functions by helping the mother receive a higher wage.

Work is clearly the critical factor in determining who is on and off aid. Compared to a mother who is not working, a mother who makes up to \$8.00 per hour is 18 percent more likely to have her child off aid in June 2001. The higher the wage, the greater the likelihood of being off aid – rising to 41 percent for mothers earning over \$8.00 compared to non-working mothers. Even after controlling for employment and wages, access to a car still appears to be correlated with being off aid, increasing the probability by 12 percent. As the first two specifications show, access to a car helps ensure a greater probability of employment and a higher wage for those who are employed, but its significance even after controlling for these factors suggests that people who get off aid and stay off aid are more likely to build up sufficient assets to afford a car.

The presence of a spouse in the household does not alone have a significant effect on the probability of being off aid. A working spouse raises the probability of being off aid by at least 20 percent (combining the 34.6 percent coefficient on spouse earning less than \$8.00 per hour minus the 14.3 percent coefficient on spouse present). If he earns more than \$8.00 per hour, the likelihood of being off aid rises by 29 percent instead (43.5 percent minus 14.3 percent). In contrast, a non-working spouse drops the likelihood by 14 percent.

8 Conclusions

8.1. Summary of Findings

Current and former CalWORKs child-only cases with undocumented parents constitute a relatively disadvantaged segment of the population. Even when compared to the welfare population in general, their household demographic characteristics suggest high barriers to employment. For example, they have a smaller proportion of adults who use English as their primary language, a higher proportion of families with a large number of children, and much lower levels of education. In addition, the parents' status as undocumented immigrants constitutes another barrier to employment and to employment-related services – for example, they are not eligible for CalWORKs employment services. Table 8.1 summarizes some of the

Table 8.1 Comparison of Key Outcomes For Child-Only Leavers, Relative to Current Child-Only Cases and Aided Adult Leavers

	Child-Only Leavers Compared To:	
	Current Child- Only Cases	Aided Adult Leavers
HH Has Earnings	↑	↑
Income Relative to FPL	↑	↓
Housing Quality	□	↓
Housing Crowding	↑	↓
Food Security	□	□
Health Insurance (Self)	□	↓
Health Insurance (Child)	↓	↓
Domestic Violence	↑	
Alcohol/Illegal Drug Use	□	
Focal Child Behavior/Well-Being	□	

findings about child-only families, comparing child-only leavers to current child-only cases and to aided adult cases.¹⁴

Child-only families have a surprisingly high level of work activity. There is little difference in the percentage of survey respondents currently working, for example, between the child-only leavers and aided adult leavers. When looking at the households, moreover, we found that 89 percent of the child-only leavers had earned income, compared to 77 percent of the aided adult leavers. While the difference may be due to the larger percentage of two-parent families in the child-only group, the proportion of child-only households with someone working is very high by any measure.

The demographic variables apparently come more into play when considering the findings related to the level of wages. Both the average hourly wages and the median monthly household earned income of the child-only leavers were significantly lower than the corresponding amounts for the aided adult leavers. This resulted in a similar gap in total household income. In relation to the federal poverty level, the median income of the child-only households currently on CalWORKs was 67 percent of the poverty level, while the median for the leavers was 92 percent of the poverty level, compared to 109 percent for the aided adult leavers. Consistent with their lower incomes, child-only families reported worse housing conditions and experienced more food insecurity than did the aided adult leavers. With respect to this latter point, we note that 60 percent of the child-only leavers reporting food insecurity were estimated to be eligible for Food Stamps but were not receiving them – almost twice the rate estimated for the aided adult leavers reporting food insecurity.

The tenuous economic security of the child-only families is even more apparent when we consider that, among the leavers, about one-third had household incomes below 71 percent of the

¹⁴ All highlighted increases are statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

poverty level. In only 10 percent of these cases had the children returned to CalWORKs. Most of the households had someone who was working, at least part-time, but clearly their earnings were relatively low.

Even though work activity is relatively high for child-only households (particularly the leavers), employment – getting a job, retaining it, and moving to a better occupation – remains as the key means of moving out of poverty. In this respect, we note that child care was cited most often by respondents as the principal barrier to full-time employment.

The survey also revealed a relatively low level of proficiency in English, both for respondents and their spouses or partners. In our multiple regression analysis, where we controlled for the effects of other factors, the spouse's proficiency in English, but not the respondent's, was related to the probability of leaving aid, largely through its role in leading to work and to higher wages. If we look only at the relationship of wages and English proficiency, we find that very proficient English speakers had wages as much as 50 percent higher than those without any English. We also found that a large percentage of respondents indicated the desire for ESL courses, both for themselves and their spouses.

8.2. Policy Implications

Policy prescriptions involving our target population are particularly difficult, given the immigration status of the parents. In considering potential actions, policymakers must reconcile their views on the propriety of providing services to undocumented parents with the less controversial objective of providing a minimum level of economic and social support for citizen children. We can see the tension between these two forces in the current policy context, where – for example – citizen children of undocumented parents are eligible for grants but as child-only cases they get lower family grants than other children in the CalWORKs program. In the Medi-

Cal program, they are eligible for the same benefits as other children, but their parents are eligible only for emergency services. With respect to government subsidized child care, undocumented parents of citizen children are eligible for federal child care block grant funds and state funds through the State Department of Education programs, but are not eligible for federal or state funds provided through the CalWORKs program. With respect to ESL, undocumented persons may enroll in courses in the public school system.

We have highlighted four areas where our findings could have policy implications: child care, instruction in ESL, post-exit take-up of Food Stamps, and transportation.

Child Care. Many undocumented parents have been able to arrange for child care, but – as noted above – child care was the predominant work barrier cited by respondents in our survey. Thus, some form of state assistance probably would have an effect on the employment prospects of these parents, which in turn would help them to achieve self-sufficiency. Such care cannot be provided as an employment support through the CalWORKs program, but – as noted above – other federal and state funds can be used to provide child care for citizen children of undocumented immigrant parents. In addition, child care for these children ages 0-5 could be supported with Proposition 10 funds, administered through the California Children and Families Commission, which has identified school readiness as a key outcome.

Addressing the Language Barrier. Undocumented parents are eligible for ESL courses in Adult Education programs and community colleges, but our surveys indicate that – in spite of acknowledging the need for such instruction – they frequently fail to enroll. This points to the need for better outreach activities to make sure the undocumented parents are aware of these opportunities, as well as case management to facilitate access.

Food Stamps. The low take-up rate for Non-Assistance Food Stamps is similar to what we have found in our research on other CalWORKs leavers. While this is probably due, in part, to the stigma sometimes associated with Food Stamps, it suggests that policymakers give consideration to outreach activities, including the provision of information on post-assistance benefits to recipients while they are on aid.

Addressing Transportation Barriers. Our findings revealed a significant association between access to a car and employment. In the CalWORKs program, the counties have taken different approaches to addressing transportation barriers. These include activities designed to facilitate access to a car, such as funds for car repairs (sometimes provided through CalWORKs diversion programs, as opposed to the program itself). We also note two bills introduced in the California Legislature in 2001: AB 144 (Cedillo) would have increased the asset limit for an automobile for CalWORKs and Food Stamps recipients from \$4,650 to \$15,000 if needed for employment or preparation for employment. The bill was vetoed by the Governor because of cost considerations. More specifically related to undocumented persons, AB 60 (Cedillo) would, in effect, allow undocumented persons who are applying for legal residency to obtain a driver's license. The bill passed the Legislature but was withdrawn and returned to the Assembly in anticipation of a veto.

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