

CHAPTER VII: FOOD STAMP RECIDIVISM

This chapter presents findings on the sample members who reported that they were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys. These respondents were asked a limited set of questions about their current situation. They were not asked any of the questions about adverse events or perceptions of life after Food Stamps.

Of the 1998-1999 leavers, 46 respondents (16.2 percent) were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys. Of the 1999-2000 leavers, 41 respondents (14.5 percent) indicated that they were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys. Given the small number of recidivists, we present only a limited analysis of their characteristics and situation.

A. Objectives of the Analysis

The major goal of the analysis is to determine how many of the ABAWD leavers are having difficulty staying off Food Stamps, and to highlight the reasons for recidivism. Another goal is to examine whether some groups of ABAWD leavers are having more difficulty than others in staying off Food Stamps.

B. Recidivism Rates by Respondent Characteristics

Recidivism Rates by Type of County

- Exhibit VII-1 shows the recidivism rates among the samples by type of county.
- In the 1998-1999 sample, there was not a major difference in recidivism rates between the non-exempt counties and the counties exempt under the 15 percent provision. The recidivism rate was slightly higher in counties exempt due to high unemployment.
- In the 1999-2000 sample, however, recidivism was much higher in the exempt counties than in the non-exempt counties. The rate was especially high in counties that were exempt due to high unemployment.

**Exhibit VII-1
Recidivism Rates by Type of County**

	1998-1999 Leavers			
Status at the Surveys	Exempt- 15 Percent (N = 73)	Exempt- Unemployment (N = 90)	Non- Exempt (N = 122)	Total (N = 284)
Currently receiving Food Stamps	17.2%	13.9%	17.2%	16.2%
Not receiving Food Stamps	82.8%	86.1%	82.8%	83.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	1999-2000 Leavers			
Status at the Surveys	Exempt- 15 Percent (N = 54)	Exempt- Unemployment (N = 97)	Non- Exempt (N = 132)	Total (N = 283)
Currently receiving Food Stamps	14.8%	21.6%*	9.1%*	14.5%
Not receiving Food Stamps	85.2%	78.4%	90.9%	85.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Differences between types of counties statistically significant at the .05 level

Recidivism Rates by Gender

- Exhibit VII-2 shows recidivism rates by gender. The data indicate that, in the 1998-1999 sample, the recidivism rate was about the same for females and males.
- In the 1999-2000 sample, recidivism was much higher among females (20 percent) than among males (7.3 percent).

**Exhibit VII-2
Recidivism Rates by Gender**

	1998-1999 Leavers		1999-2000 Leavers	
Status	Females (N = 141)	Males (N = 142)	Females (N = 160)	Males (N = 123)
Currently receiving Food Stamps	16.7%	15.7%	20.0%*	7.3%*
Not receiving Food Stamps	83.3%	84.3%	80.0%	92.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Differences between females and males statistically significant at the .05 level

Recidivism Rates by Ethnicity

- Exhibit VII-3 shows recidivism rates by ethnicity. The data indicate that the recidivism rate was about the same for blacks and whites in both surveys.

Exhibit VII-3
Recidivism Rates by Ethnicity

Status	1998-1999 Leavers		1999-2000 Leavers	
	Black (N = 228)	White (N = 55)	Black (N = 221)	White (N = 60)
Currently receiving Food Stamps	16.2%	16.6%	14.5%	15.0%
Not receiving Food Stamps	83.8%	83.4%	85.5%	85.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Differences between blacks and whites NOT statistically significant at the .05 level

Recidivism Rates by Education

- Exhibit VII-4 shows recidivism rates by educational level. In the 1998-1999 sample, respondents who had not completed high school had about the same recidivism rate as respondents who had completed high school only. In the 1999-2000 sample, recidivism was somewhat higher among high school drop-outs.

Exhibit VII-4
Recidivism Rates by Education

Status	1998-1999 Leavers		1999-2000 Leavers	
	Did not Complete High School (N = 162)	Completed High School (N = 122)	Did not Complete High School (N = 140)	Completed High School (N = 143)
Currently receiving Food Stamps	15.8%	16.7%	16.4%	12.6%
Not receiving Food Stamps	84.2%	83.3%	83.6%	87.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Differences between drop-outs and completers NOT statistically significant at the .05 level

Recidivism Rates by Age

- Exhibit VII-5 shows recidivism rates by age. In the 1998-1999 sample, respondents aged 35-39 had the highest rate of recidivism (23.9 percent), followed by respondents aged 25-29 (17.9 percent), and respondents aged 18-24 (16.7 percent). Overall, 18-24 year olds had about the same recidivism rate as respondents aged 25 or older.
- In the 1999-2000 sample, recidivism was lowest for respondents aged 35-39.

**Exhibit VII-5
Recidivism Rates by Age**

	1998-1999 Leavers				
Status	18-24 (N = 191)	25-29 (N = 27)	30-34 (N = 10)	35-39 (N = 20)	40+ (N = 35)
Currently receiving Food Stamps	16.7%	17.9%	11.0%	23.9%	9.0%
Not receiving Food Stamps	83.3%	82.1%	89.0%	76.1%	91.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	1999-2000 Leavers				
Status	18-24 (N = 175)	25-29 (N = 26)	30-34 (N = 18)	35-39 (N = 24)	40+ (N = 40)
Currently receiving Food Stamps	13.7%	11.5%	22.2%	8.3%	20.0%
Not receiving Food Stamps	86.3%	88.5%	77.8%	91.7%	80.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

C. Reasons for Going Back on Food Stamps

Reasons for Going Back on Food Stamps, by Type of County

- Exhibits VII-6 and VII-7 show the most common reasons given by the recidivists for going back on Food Stamps.
- As indicated, the most common reason was being laid off or fired from a job (36 percent of recidivists in the 1998-1999 sample and 46 percent of recidivists in the 1999-2000 sample).
- The next most common reason for recidivists in the 1998-1999 sample was illness or disability -- cited by 11.7 percent of the recidivists. Illness or disability was mentioned by 17.4 percent of the recidivists from exempt counties, but by only 4.3 percent of the recidivists from non-exempt counties.
- In the 1999-2000 sample, the second most common reason for being back on Food Stamps was quitting a job (19.5 percent).
- In the 1998-1999 sample, about 13 percent of the recidivists from exempt counties mentioned housing problems as a reason for going back on Food Stamps, compared to none of the recidivists from non-exempt counties.

Exhibit VII-6
Reasons for Going Back on Food Stamps,
by Type of County, 1998-1999 Leavers

Reason for Going Back on Food Stamps	Exempt (N = 26)	Non-Exempt (N = 20)	Total (N = 46)
Divorce/separation	8.7%	4.3%	6.8%
Laid off from job or fired	30.4%	43.5%	36.1%
Quit job	8.7%	8.7%	8.7%
Decrease in hours worked or wages	8.7%	0.0%	4.9%
Your illness/disability	17.4%	4.3%	11.7%
Illness/disability of a family member	8.7%	4.3%	6.8%
Housing problems	13.0%	0.0%	7.4%
Irregular child support payments	4.3%	0.0%	2.5%
Loss of financial support from relatives/friends	4.3%	13.0%	8.1%
Child care problems	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%
Pregnancy/new child	4.3%	8.7%	6.2%
Change in household composition	0.0%	8.7%	3.8%

Exhibit VII-7
Reasons for Going Back on Food Stamps,
by Type of County, 1999-2000 Leavers

Reason for Going Back on Food Stamps	Exempt (N = 29)	Non-Exempt (N = 12)	Total (N = 41)
Laid off from job or fired	55.2%	25.0%	46.3%
Quit job	10.3%	41.7%	19.5%
Your illness/disability	13.8%	0.0%	9.8%
Needed Food Stamps for children	3.4%	25.0%	9.8%
Decrease in hours worked or wages	6.9%	8.3%	7.3%
Illness/disability of a family member	0.0%	16.7%	4.9%
Housing problems	3.4%	0.0%	2.4%
Loss of financial support from relatives/friends	3.4%	0.0%	2.4%
Other	6.9%	0.0%	4.9%

D. Barriers to Leaving Food Stamps

Barriers to Leaving Food Stamps, by Type of County

- Exhibits VII-8 and VII-9 show the barriers identified by recidivists to leaving Food Stamps.

- In both rounds of surveys, the most common barrier to leaving Food Stamps was “can’t find a job that pays enough.”

Exhibit VII-8
Barriers Keeping Recidivists from Leaving Food Stamps and Staying Off
Food Stamps, by County, 1998-1999 Leavers

Barriers	Exempt (N = 26)	Non- Exempt (N = 20)	Total (N = 46)
Lack of job skills	21.7%	39.1%	29.3%
Lack of education	8.7%	26.1%	16.2%
Lack of reliable or affordable child care	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%
Lack of transportation	0.0%	4.3%	1.9%
Can’t find job that pays enough	30.4%	43.5%	36.1%
Can’t find job with health insurance	0.0%	4.3%	1.9%
Can’t find job w/regular hours/enough hours	0.0%	8.7%	3.8%
Available jobs are short-term or seasonal	0.0%	4.3%	1.9%
Disability or illness	26.1%	13.0%	20.4%
Disability/illness of a child/other family member	8.7%	0.0%	4.9%
No barriers- prefer to stay at home with children	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%

Exhibit VII-9
Barriers Keeping Recidivists from Leaving Food Stamps and Staying Off
Food Stamps, by County, 1999-2000 Leavers

Barriers	Exempt (N = 29)	Non- Exempt (N = 12)	Total (N = 41)
Can't find job that pays enough	69.0%	58.3%	65.9%
Can't find job w/regular hours/enough hours	24.1%	0.0%	17.1%
Lack of job skills	6.9%	16.7%	9.8%
Disability or illness	6.9%	16.7%	9.8%
Lack of reliable or affordable child care	3.4%	8.3%	4.9%
Lack of transportation	3.4%	8.3%	4.9%
Can't find job with health insurance	6.9%	0.0%	4.9%
Lack of education	0.0%	8.3%	2.4%
Available jobs are short-term or seasonal	3.4%	0.0%	2.4%
Disability/illness of a child/other family member	0.0%	8.3%	2.4%
Other	10.3%	0.0%	7.3%

E. Other Findings on Recidivists

Employment Situation and Barriers

- Exhibit VII-10 presents employment data for respondents who were back on Food Stamps at the time of the survey. Overall, 33.5 percent of the recidivists from the 1998-1999 sample and 19.5 percent of the recidivists from the 1999-2000 sample were working at a job for pay.
- (Not shown in the exhibit) Almost 49 percent of the 1998-1999 recidivists who were not currently working said that they had worked for pay in the last 12 months. For the 1999-2000 recidivists who were not working, 69.7 percent had worked for pay in the past 12 months. Among the 1998-1999 recidivists who were not currently working, 30 percent cited physical or mental health problems as a reason for not working. The percentage for the 1999-2000 recidivists who were not working was 24.4 percent.

Exhibit VII-10 **Respondents Back on Food Stamps at Follow-Up -- Percent Working**

County	1998-1999 Leavers
Exempt- 15 Percent (N = 12)	36.4%
Exempt- Unemployment (N = 12)	45.5%
Non-exempt (N = 21)	24.7%
Total (N = 46)	33.5%
County	1999-2000 Leavers
Exempt- 15 Percent (N = 8)	50.0%
Exempt- Unemployment (N = 21)	9.5%
Non-exempt (N = 12)	16.7%
Total (N = 41)	19.5%

Receipt of Assistance by Recidivists

- Exhibit VII-11 presents data on the receipt of public assistance and other sources of support by recidivists, by type of county.
- The data indicate that 9.3 percent of the recidivists in the 1998-1999 sample were receiving cash assistance and 76.4 percent were receiving Medicaid. The comparable percentages for recidivists in the 1999-2000 sample were 2.4 percent and 70.7 percent, respectively.

- Almost 39 percent of the recidivists from the 1998-1999 sample and 34 percent of the recidivists from the 1999-2000 sample were enrolled in WIC.
- About 20 percent of the recidivists from the 1998-1999 sample but only 10 percent of the recidivists from the 1999-2000 sample were receiving SSI.

EXHIBIT VII-11 BENEFITS AND OTHER SUPPORT RECEIVED IN THE HOUSEHOLD, BY TYPE OF COUNTY (RECIDIVISTS)

Benefits/Support	1998-1999 Leavers			1999-2000 Leavers		
	Exempt (N = 26)	Non- Exempt (N = 20)	Total (N = 46)	Exempt (N = 29)	Non- Exempt (N = 12)	Total (N = 41)
Cash assistance	13.0%	4.3%	9.3%	3.4%	0.0%	2.4%
Medicaid	78.3%	73.9%	76.4%	62.1%	91.7%	70.7%
Child support from a child's parent	17.4%	13.0%	15.5%	24.1%	16.7%	22.0%
Social Security	21.7%	8.7%	16.1%	6.9%	0.0%	4.9%
SSI	26.1%	13.0%	20.4%	6.9%	16.7%	9.8%
Money from retirement/pension fund	4.3%	0.0%	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
WIC supplemental nutrition benefits	34.8%	43.5%	38.6%	34.5%	33.3%	34.1%
School lunch program	34.8%	39.1%	36.7%	24.1%	50.0%	31.7%
Rent subsidy or public housing	34.8%	30.4%	32.9%	6.9%	8.3%	7.3%
Free housing from a parent/relative	17.4%	21.7%	19.3%	27.6%	41.7%	31.7%
Help in paying bills from someone who lives with you	13.0%	17.4%	14.9%	3.4%	16.7%	7.3%
Help in paying bills from someone who does not lives with you	21.7%	21.7%	21.7%	24.1%	25.0%	24.4%
Gifts of money from family or friends	4.3%	21.7%	11.9%	17.2%	16.7%	17.1%
Shots or vaccinations from the health department	34.8%	39.1%	36.7%	31.0%	41.7%	34.1%

F. Discussion of the Findings

The findings show that 14-16 percent of the ABAWD leavers were back on Food Stamps at the time of the surveys. This is consistent with the administrative data presented later in the next chapter of the report. On the positive side, about 5 out of 6 of the leavers had managed to stay off Food Stamps. The findings would suggest that females are perhaps having a somewhat more difficult time. Most of the recidivism seems to be related to problems in finding or keeping jobs, and in getting jobs that pay enough and have enough work hours.