

Who Is On Public Assistance?

This information on public assistance households is from the Family Income Study, a five-year longitudinal survey of persons receiving, or at risk of receiving, public assistance. The study was requested by the 1987 Legislature (RCW 74.21.140, subsection IX). Unless otherwise specified, the information is from 1988, when the sample most accurately reflected Washington's public assistance population. For more information, contact Carol Webster or Greg Weeks at 866-6000, extension 6380.

Profile of Women on Public Assistance

- The median age was 29 years.
- The median age at first receipt of public assistance was 23 years.
- 77 percent were white; 23 percent were minorities.
- 59 percent lived in Western Washington urban areas.
- 52 percent had been teenage mothers.
- 52 percent were separated or divorced; 31 percent had never been married.
- 82 percent were not married at the time of their interview.
- The average number of children in each household was 2.
- 15 percent had an infant under 12 months old in the household.
- 58 percent had a youngest child 3 years old or older.
- The average age of the youngest child was 5 years.

Education and Training

- 41 percent had neither a high school diploma nor a G.E.D.
- 34 percent had only a high school diploma; 17 percent had only a G.E.D.
- 5 percent had a two-year or a four-year degree.
- 29 percent enrolled in school or training between the first and second annual Family Income Study interviews.

Employment

- 16 percent were unable to work due to a disability.
- 41 percent worked sometime before their interview.
- For those who did work, the median number of hours worked during the year was 456.
- For those who worked, the median hourly wage was \$4.52 in 1988 (and \$5.32 in 1991).

Income

- The median annual household income was 79 percent of the federal poverty level.

Health

- 27 percent had an overnight hospital stay in the previous year.

Profile of Children

- 24 percent had a chronic or recurring illness.
- 11 percent of children 6-12 years old, and 25 percent of children 13-18 years old, were absent from school at least once a week.
- 25 percent of children 6-12 years old, and 36 percent of children 13-18 years old, repeated a grade in school.
- 21 percent of children 13-18 years old had been suspended or expelled from school.