

BARRIERS TO INDEPENDENCE AMONG TANF RECIPIENTS: COMPARING CASEWORKER RECORDS & CLIENT SURVEYS

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BACKGROUND



- Shift from check management to case management
- Mandatory assessment of employment skills for new TANF recipients (PRWORA, 1996)
- Barrier identification as a means to improve employment placements and stability
- Key issue is determining which barriers to measure, and how

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



- To what extent do clients' reports of barriers in a research survey correspond with caseworkers' documentation in their welfare case records?
- Is there a relationship between caseworker documentation of reported barriers and client characteristics?

METHODS: SAMPLE



- Random sample of single adults with children who received a TANF grant in Maryland in June 2002 (n=1,146).
- For this study, we include only those who responded to a telephone survey between August and October 2002 (n=819, 71.5% response rate).
- Weighted to represent true proportions of Baltimore City and non-Baltimore City cases in the June 2002 caseload.

METHODS: DATA SOURCES



- The TANF Caseload Survey, sponsored by ASPE
 - Included questions re: the prevalence and degree of various barriers over the previous year
 - Conducted through CATI by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR)
- The Client Automated Resource and Eligibility System (CARES), maintained by Maryland DHR
 - Program participation data
 - Electronic Case Narratives

METHODS: DATA CODING



- Case Narratives examined for personal/family and logistical/situational challenges which were recorded between July 2001 and December 2002.
- Three coders, with a quality control set of 24.4% and an overall average agreement rate of 98%.
- Example of a child mental health barrier:
 - “Client returned verification that she is needed in the home to care for her child who was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Mother is needed in the home to supervise and work with mental health providers to stabilize her child’s mood and behavior.”

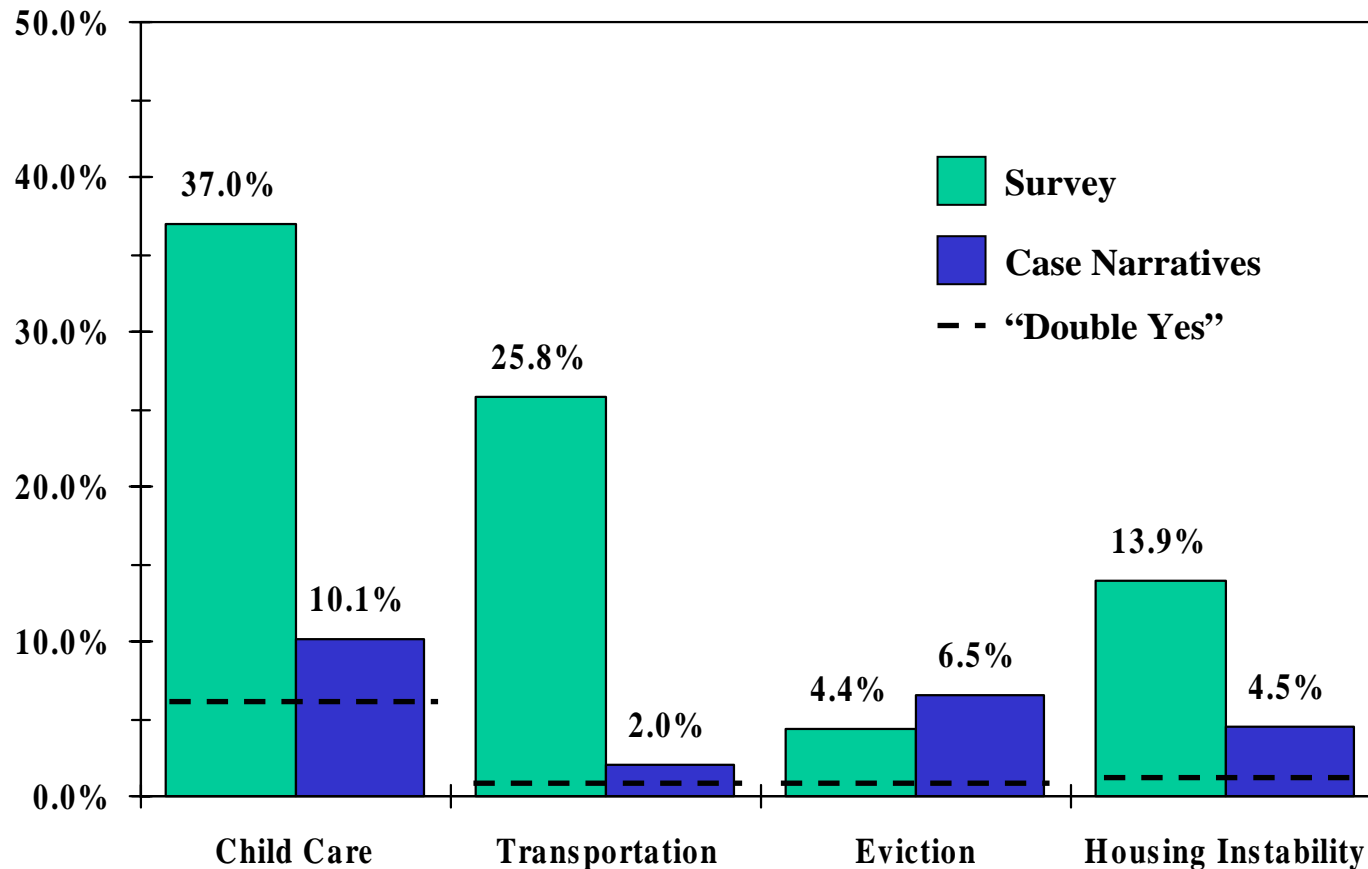
RESULTS: SUMMARY



- Case records generally indicate lower prevalence rates.
- The degree of survey-admin agreement depends on the type of barrier & the way it was measured.
- Documentation of barriers varies by demographic profile.
- Caseworkers are identifying and documenting barriers among those with the most difficult circumstances.

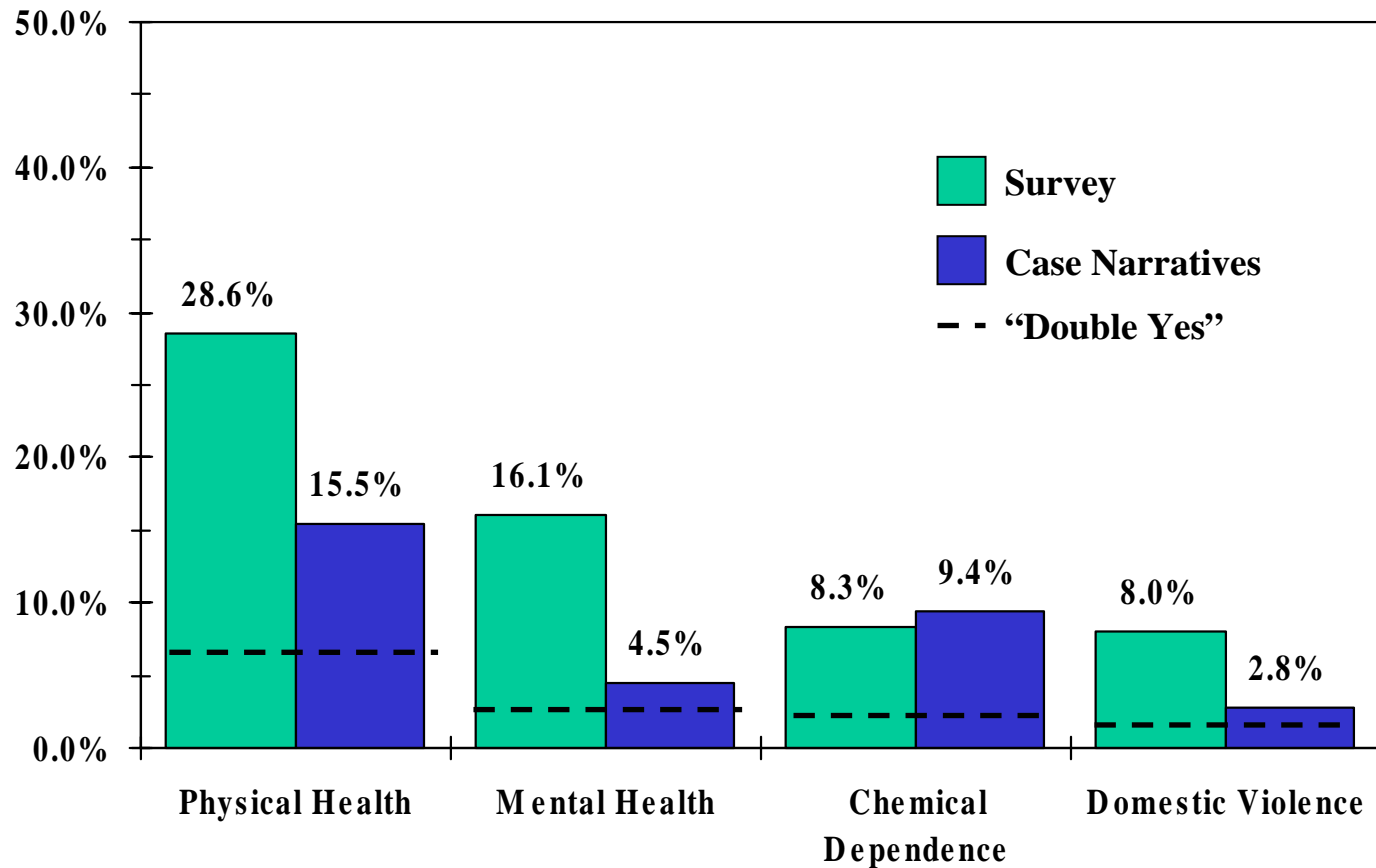
RESULTS: BARRIER PREVALENCE

Logistical & Situational Self-Reported Barriers



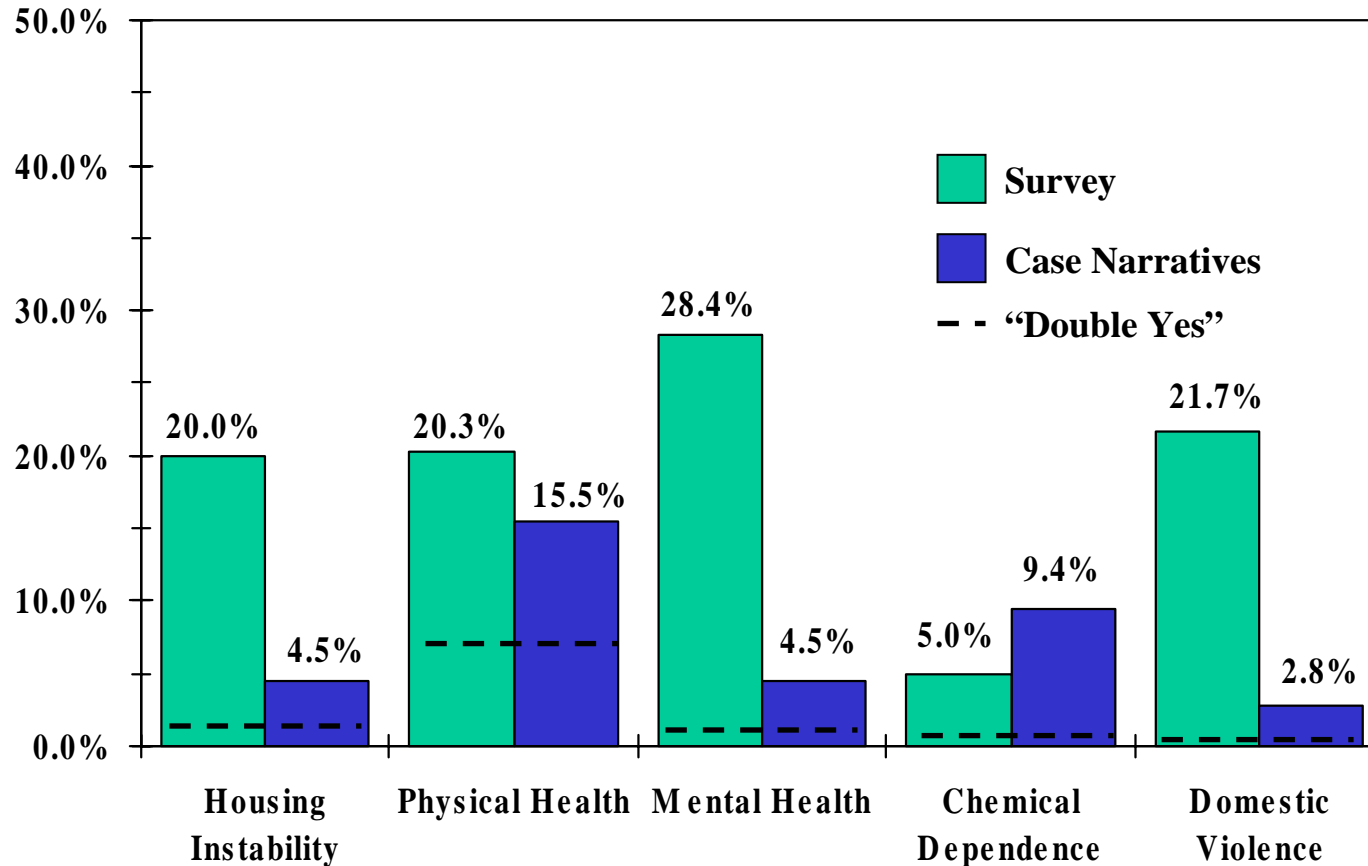
RESULTS: BARRIER PREVALENCE

Personal & Family Self-Reported Barriers



RESULTS: BARRIER PREVALENCE

Researcher-Assessed Barriers



RESULTS: BARRIER PREVALENCE

Self-Reported Barriers	Spearman Rho
Logistic & Situational	
Child Care	0.226***
Transportation	0.120**
Housing-Eviction	0.162***
Housing-Instability	0.151***
Personal and Family Barriers	
Physical Health	
Payee	0.376***
Child	0.283***
Other family member	0.153***
Mental Health	
Payee	0.218***
Child	0.204***
Chemical Dependence	
Alcohol	NA
Alcohol - Ever Diagnosed	0.181***
Drugs	0.248***
Drugs - Ever Diagnosed	0.371***
Any	0.230***
Alcohol or Drugs - Ever Diagnosed	0.376***
Domestic Violence	0.235***

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Researcher-Assessed Barriers	Spearman Rho
Logistic & Situational	
Housing-Instability	0.213***
Personal and Family Barriers	
Payee Physical Health	0.428***
Payee Mental Health	0.133***
Chemical Dependence	
Alcohol	-0.010
Drugs	0.257***
Any	0.229***
Domestic Violence	0.155***

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Red – High Correlation

Blue – Low Correlation

RESULTS: DEMOGRAPHICS

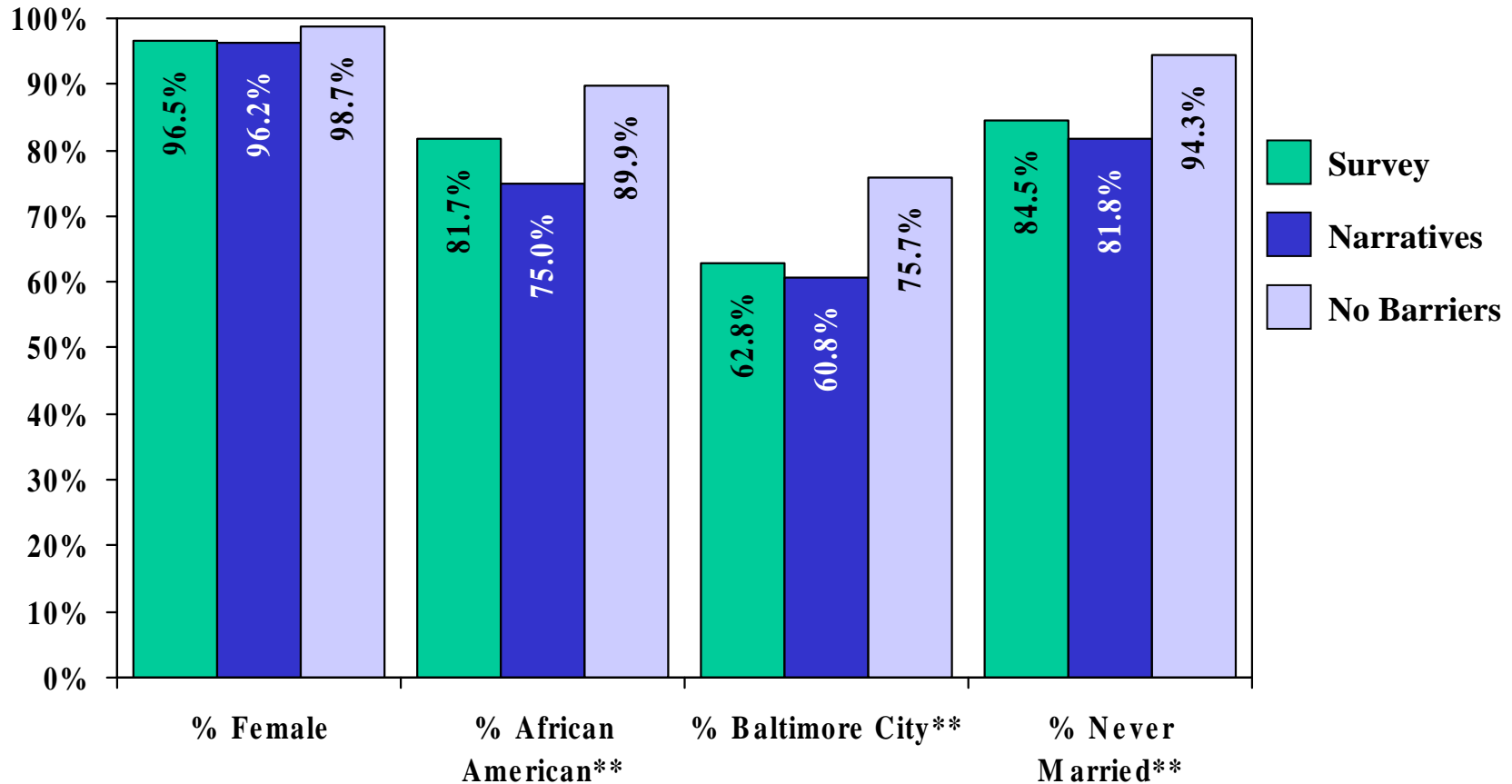


Three subgroups of sample members:

- **“Survey”** - Those reporting at least one barrier in the caseload survey, but with no barriers indicated in the case narrative (n=306)
- **“Narrative”** - Those for whom at least one barrier was documented in the case narrative, regardless of disclosure in the survey (n=354)
- **“No barriers”** - Those for whom no barriers were reported in the survey or recorded in the case narrative (n=159)

RESULTS: DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic Characteristics by Barrier Disclosure Type



*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

RESULTS: DEMOGRAPHICS

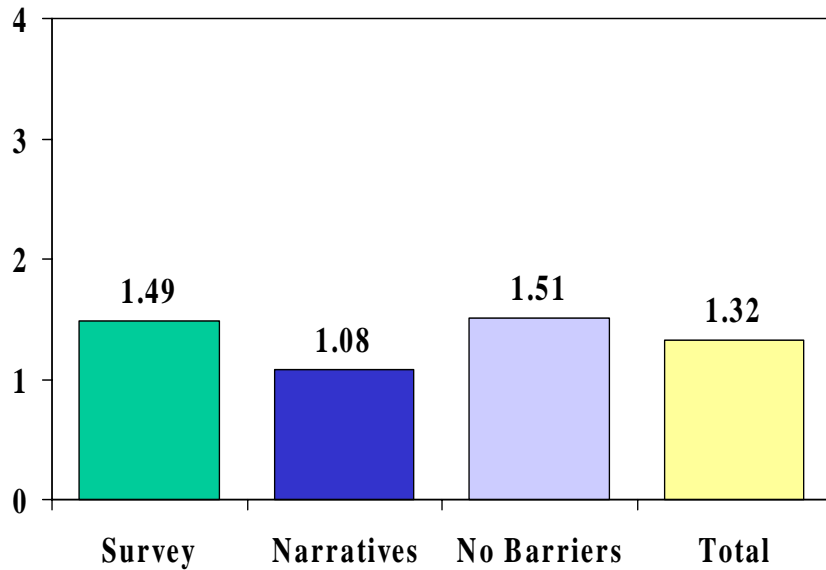
Demographic Characteristics by Barrier Disclosure Type

	Survey	Narratives	No Barriers	Total
Average Age***	28.10	32.72	28.47	30.17
Average Age at First Birth***	20.54	23.04	20.39	21.60
Average Number of Children	1.90	1.89	1.71	1.86
Average Age of Youngest Child***	4.30	5.78	4.85	5.05

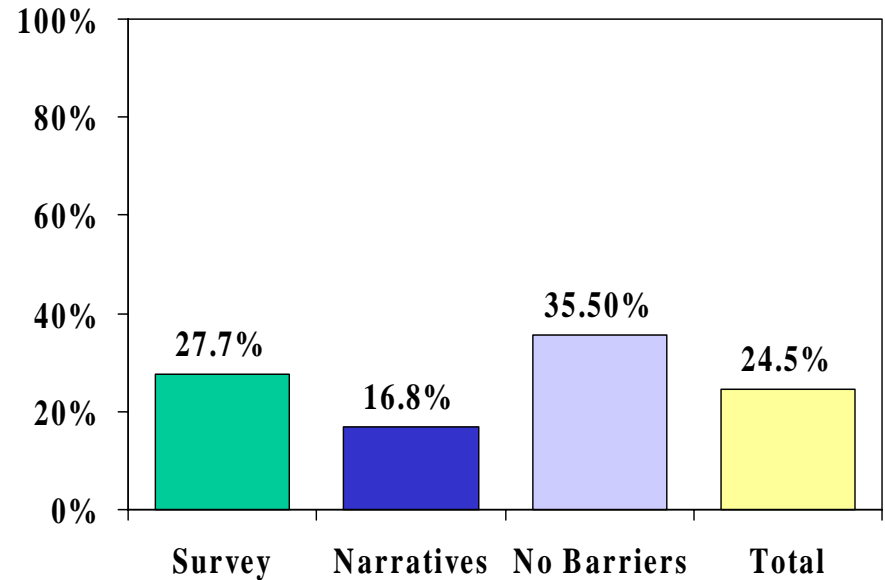
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

RESULTS: EMPLOYMENT

Average # of Quarters Worked
in Past Year***



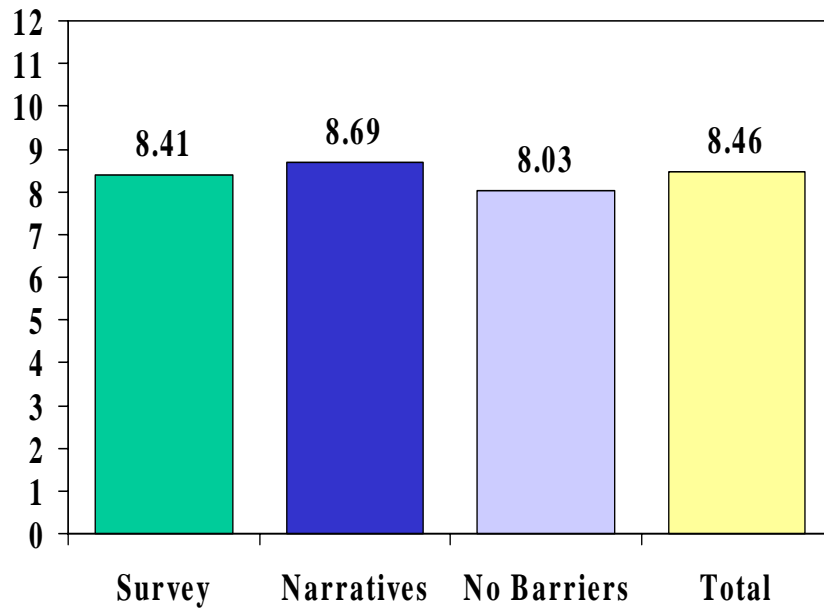
% Currently Employed at Time of
Disclosure***



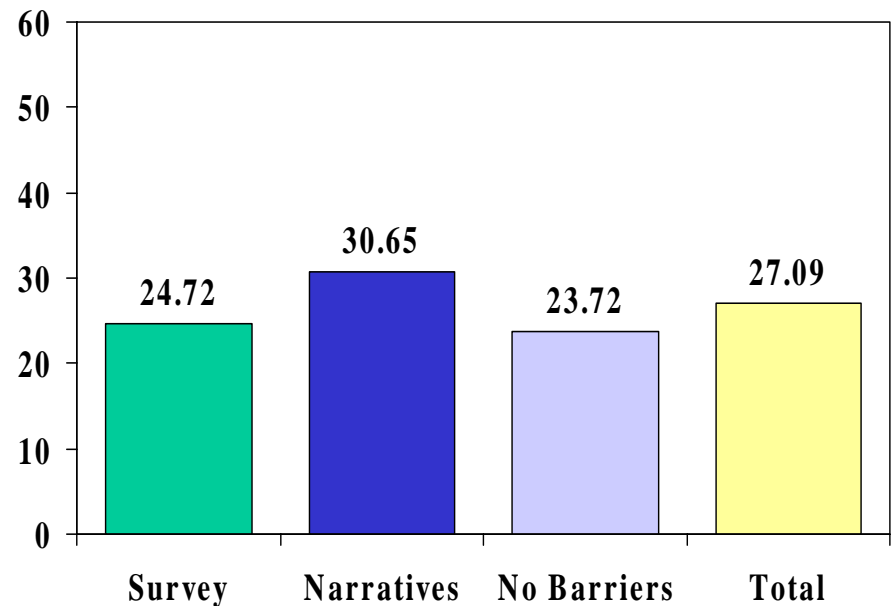
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

RESULTS: TANF PARTICIPATION

Average # of Months of TANF Receipt
in Past Year



Average # of Months of TANF Receipt
Counting Toward 60-month Limit*



*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

CONCLUSIONS



- Overall, there is a good deal of correspondence between survey-identified and worker-documented employment barriers, but a low rate of “true positives”.
- The degree of agreement depends on the type of barrier and the method of measurement.
- Administrative data generally indicate lower prevalence rates than self-reported survey data.

CONCLUSIONS



- TANF recipients with administratively-documented employment barriers have a different profile than those who do not.
- TANF caseworkers are identifying and documenting barriers among those having the greatest difficulty transitioning off of welfare.

IMPLICATIONS



- Policy:
 - Review and refine existing client assessment, barrier detection and barrier removal protocols and processes.
 - Include validated scales or measures for sensitive topics
- Further Research:
 - The relationship between documentation of employment barriers and TANF clients' actual employment and welfare outcomes.

THANK YOU!

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