

# **Profiles of Welfare: Myths and Realities**

**A Report by the  
National Council of Welfare**

**Spring 1998**

**Canada**

**PROFILES OF WELFARE: MYTHS AND REALITIES**

**A Report by the  
National Council of Welfare**

**Spring 1998**

---

Copies of this publication may be obtained from:

National Council of Welfare  
2nd Floor, 1010 Somerset Street West  
Ottawa K1A 0J9  
(613) 957-2963  
FAX: (613) 957-0680  
E-MAIL: [ncw@magi.com](mailto:ncw@magi.com)

Également disponible en français sous le titre:  
Profil du bien-être social: mythes et réalités

© Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada 1998  
Cat. No. H68-44/1998E  
ISBN 0-662-26651-X

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
TEN QUICK QUESTIONS ABOUT PEOPLE ON WELFARE .....	1
ANSWERS TO TEN QUICK QUESTIONS ABOUT PEOPLE ON WELFARE .....	2
I. METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS .....	4
II. FAMILY TYPE AND FAMILY SIZE .....	8
III. REASONS FOR ASSISTANCE .....	14
IV. LENGTH OF CURRENT SPELL ON WELFARE .....	23
V. YOUNG, OLD AND IN-BETWEEN .....	32
VI. LEVEL OF EDUCATION .....	40
VII. OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME .....	46
VIII. HOUSING .....	53
CONCLUSION .....	60
APPENDIX: PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL STATISTICS .....	63
INDEX TO GRAPHS AND TABLES .....	77

## **TEN QUICK QUESTIONS ABOUT WELFARE**

Before reading this report, take a minute to test your knowledge about welfare. The answers appear on the back of this page, along with the appropriate references to data in the text.

Which of the following statements about welfare and welfare recipients are true?

1. Most people on welfare are young people who should be out working.
2. The welfare rolls have fallen significantly since Canada started coming out of the last recession in 1991.
3. Unmarried teenagers make up most of the single-parent mothers on welfare.
4. Long-term dependence on welfare is rare in Canada.
5. Almost all the people on welfare are adults.
6. Disability is not a major reason for people relying on welfare.
7. Many single-parent mothers have lots of kids in order to boost their welfare cheques.
8. Most people on welfare don't really have it so bad, because they get a break on their housing costs by living in subsidized housing.
9. Most people on welfare also have income from part-time work or Employment Insurance or government pensions.
10. People who are well educated almost never wind up on welfare.

## **ANSWERS TO TEN QUICK QUESTIONS ABOUT WELFARE**

All of the statements about welfare and welfare recipients on the preceding page are false. Here is the truth of the matter, with page references to more detailed information in the text. The percentages in the answers below refer to cases in the welfare database used in this report.

1. Only four percent of the heads of welfare cases in March 1997 were under age 20, and another 12 percent were between 20 and 25. (Table 8, page 36)
2. Welfare caseloads continued climbing after the recession ended because of continuing high unemployment. The first decline in total caseloads was in 1995. (Table 1, page 10)
3. Only three percent of the single parents on welfare in March 1997 were under age 20. (Graph I, page 34)
4. Fifty-four percent of the welfare cases in March 1997 had been on welfare continuously for 25 months or more. (Graph F, page 24)
5. Dependent children under 18 accounted for nearly 1.1 million of the people on welfare in March 1997. (Table 9, page 37)
6. Twenty-seven percent of the heads of welfare cases in March 1997 had a disability as a reason for being on welfare. (Graph C, page 15)
7. Nearly half of all single-parent families on welfare in March 1997 had only one child and another 31 percent had only two children. (Graph J, page 39)
8. Only seven percent of the welfare cases in March 1997 were in subsidized housing. (Graph O, page 53)
9. Only 29 percent of the welfare cases in March 1997 had outside income from work, government pensions, support payments, EI or other sources. (Graph M, page 46)

10. Education does not offer absolute protection from welfare. Eleven percent of the heads of welfare cases in March 1997 had attended some form of post-secondary education. (Graph K, page 41)

If you got seven or more answers correct, pat yourself on the back, but keep on reading. If you missed more than two or three answers, you definitely should read on.

The questions and answers in the quiz are related to myths, misconceptions and stereotypes about welfare and people on welfare. All these forms of misinformation stand in the way of understanding one of Canada's most important social programs, and they make it even more difficult to get public support for welfare reform in the best sense of the word.

The National Council of Welfare hopes that this report will dispel many of the myths about welfare and leave in their place a more realistic picture of the millions of Canadians who turn to welfare when they exhaust all other sources of income.

## I. METHODOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

For a number of years, the Social Program Information and Analysis Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada and its predecessors at Health and Welfare Canada have worked with provincial and territorial officials to assemble descriptive and statistical information on welfare programs. The National Council of Welfare has drawn on this store of knowledge on numerous occasions as background information in its published reports.

Several years ago, governments took a major step forward in a co-operative venture informally known as the social assistance profile project. The purpose of the project was to assemble a database of welfare statistics that was more or less standard for all provinces. The statistics included information on welfare cases by family type, family size, age group of the head of each case, reasons for assistance, the number of months spent on welfare, housing arrangements, levels of education of the head of case, and sources of income aside from welfare.

The first data were collected for March 1990, and subsequent data were collected for March 1992, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997.

The National Council of Welfare has long been concerned about the minimal amount of reliable and up-to-date information about social programs that is readily available to ordinary Canadians. It subsequently sought and received permission from officials of all provincial and territorial governments to have access to the database for research purposes.

This report is the end result of all these efforts. The National Council of Welfare greatly appreciates the work of the federal, provincial and territorial officials who collect and analyze information about welfare. We hope our report will add to public knowledge about welfare in Canada and will dispel many of the myths about welfare and welfare recipients.

The basic unit of analysis for most of Profiles of Welfare: Myths and Realities is the welfare case, as opposed to the individual welfare recipient. A welfare case consists of an unattached person on welfare or a family on welfare. Unattached people are defined as people living by themselves or in households where they are not related to other members by blood or marriage. Families are couples, married or living common law, or single parents and include



dependent children or other dependent relatives. A family's entitlement to welfare is based on family needs and family income. Except in cases of disability, it is rare for one member of a family to be on welfare and live in the same household with members of the family who are not on welfare.

Welfare recipients are the individuals who rely on welfare for income support. A family of four on welfare, for example, represents one welfare case and four individual welfare recipients. There is limited information in this report about individual welfare recipients except for a few pages about children and seniors in Chapter V and some of the statistics in the appendix.

Unattached persons and families can also be grouped into family types, such as unattached men, unattached women, couples without children, couples with children, and single-parent families. The family types used in this report are not identical to the family types used in Poverty Profile and most other publications of the National Council of Welfare. In the welfare system, a single-parent mother could be a mother of any age with dependent children of any age. In Poverty Profile, the category is limited to single-parent mothers under age 65 with children under age 18.

Much of the information about welfare caseloads by family type has been in the public domain for some time and it is repeated in Chapter II of this report for the convenience of readers and researchers. The same holds true for the historical information on welfare, poverty and unemployment found in the appendix.

The social assistance profile project database contains a wealth of information on welfare, but it is not without its limitations. Some of the data sets are available for all or most provinces for March of each of the six years. Other sets have sizable gaps, either in terms of the years represented or the number of provinces contributing data. Readers will note that the tables and graphs in this report refer to "95 percent samples" or "82 percent samples." That means that the data in the particular graph covered 95 percent or 82 percent of the total estimated national caseload of 1,494,800 as of March 1997.

Yukon, and the Northwest Territories did not supply data to the database for 1997, and New Brunswick did not supply data for some of the categories. Together, the three jurisdictions account for less than three percent of the total national caseload.

There are also gaps in the information provided by Nova Scotia, Ontario and Manitoba, the three provinces that have had two-tier welfare systems for all or most of the last 30 years. Nova Scotia and Manitoba have provided information on provincial welfare programs and not on welfare programs run by municipal governments. There were an estimated 17,400 cases of municipal welfare in Nova Scotia and about 16,400 cases of municipal welfare in Manitoba as of March 1997. Municipal caseloads in the two provinces make up just over two percent of the national caseload.

Most of the samples used in the text are 95 percent samples. That means the samples include all jurisdictions except New Brunswick, Yukon, the Northwest Territories and municipal welfare data in Nova Scotia and Manitoba.

In Ontario, the third province with a two-tier system in 1997, the database includes all provincial welfare cases and 85 percent of the cases on municipal welfare. The National Council of Welfare "grossed up" the municipal data to 100 percent.

Generally speaking, the variables in the database relating to demographic characteristics are consistent in all welfare systems in Canada. Other variables, such as reason for assistance and education, vary greatly from one province to another.

Reason for assistance is one of the most frequent variables used in cross-tabulations in the database, but the data have to be interpreted with great care. Even reasons for assistance such as employment or disability do not mean the same thing in all provinces. For example, some provinces categorize most single-parent families in a job-related category, while others consider single parenthood by itself as a reason for assistance, not just a family type.

Definitions of disability and whether a disabling condition is temporary or permanent vary greatly from province to province. Alberta has a provincially run program independent of the welfare system known as Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, and several other

provinces are pursuing the idea of splitting off programs for people with disabilities from the welfare system.

Some provinces have reasons for assistance in their welfare programs that are related to age, or they report large numbers of welfare cases in unspecified "other" categories.

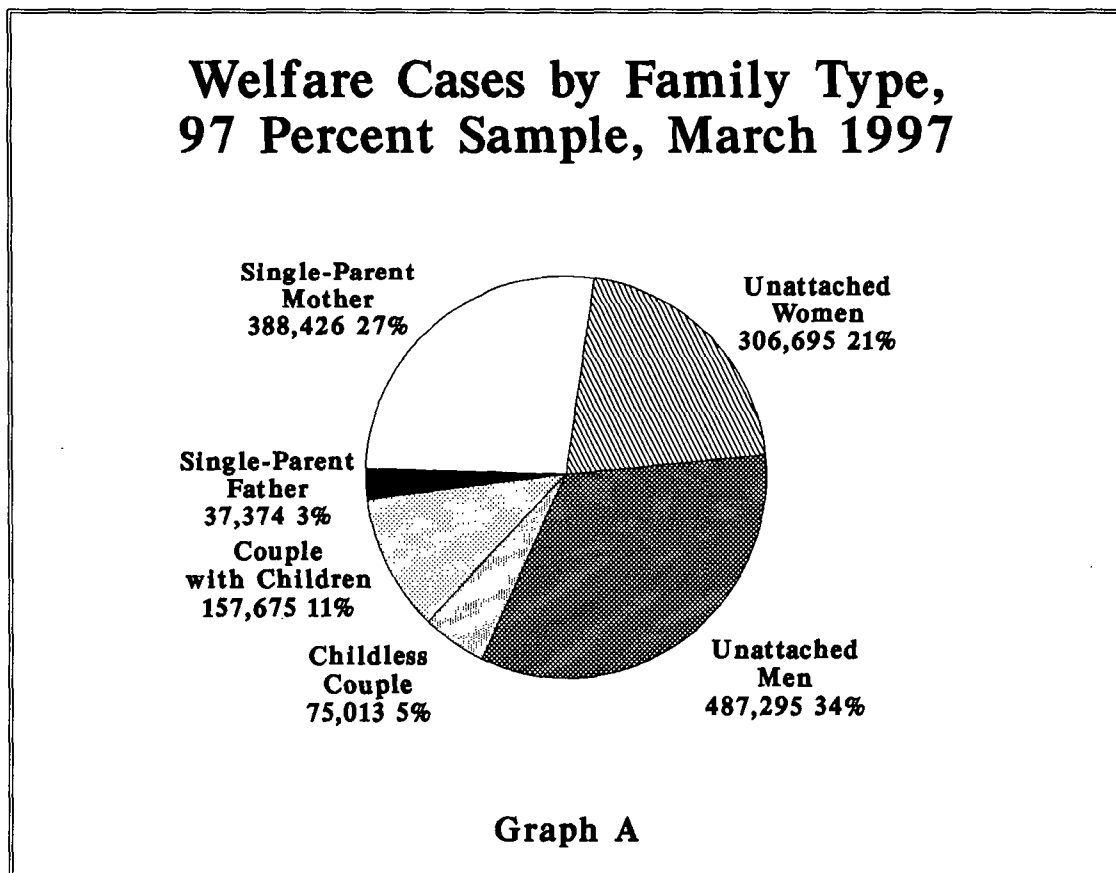
Most of the data supplied by the provinces was collected for March in each of the years in the database. A bit of the data from Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba was collected in some other month for some of the years. In all cases, the data represent a snapshot of the welfare caseload at a given point in time. They do not show how the welfare caseload changes from month to month, and they do not track movements on or off welfare.

Despite all these limitations, the database is by far the best source of statistical information on welfare that has been developed in recent years. The National Council of Welfare hopes that welfare officials across the country will continue providing information on a regular basis and that future versions of the database will add even more to our knowledge of one of Canada's most important and least understood social programs.

## II. FAMILY TYPE AND FAMILY SIZE

The chances of people having to rely on welfare at some point in their lives vary greatly by family type. The three most common family types on welfare are unattached men, unattached women, and families headed by single-parent mothers. In both good times and bad, these three family types are overrepresented on the welfare rolls.

Each welfare case consists of one or more individuals on welfare. By definition, all the welfare cases made up of unattached men and women consist of one person each. Welfare cases made up of families tend to be relatively small. The stereotype of welfare families with hordes of children is not even close to the truth.



Graph A on the previous page shows welfare cases by family type in March 1997 for all jurisdictions except Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The graph is also missing information from municipal welfare programs in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. Overall, the graph covers 1,452,779 cases or 97 percent of the estimated total national caseload as of March 1997.

Single-parent mothers and their children accounted for 388,426 welfare cases or 27 percent of the welfare cases in Graph A, unattached women represented 21 percent of the total, and unattached men represented 34 percent. The National Council of Welfare's annual publication Poverty Profile shows that single-parent mothers and unattached women and men are among the family types most likely to be poor, so it is not surprising that they are also among the most likely to be on welfare.

All three family types are overrepresented on the welfare rolls compared to their numbers in the population at large. Single-parent mothers made up 27 percent of the welfare cases in Graph A, but single-parent mothers in the population at large accounted for only six percent of all family types under 65. Unattached women were 21 percent of welfare cases, but only 12 percent of all family types under 65. Unattached men were 34 percent of welfare cases and 17 percent of all family types under 65.

One of the other intriguing differences in the graph is the fact that the number of unattached men on welfare is significantly higher than the number of unattached women on welfare. A look at the figures for the entire adult population under 65 shows a similar difference in the number of unattached men and women. Obviously, some unattached men are the fathers of the children of single-parent mothers. The men are living on their own, while the women are living with the children.

The distribution of welfare cases by family type did not change much in the years after the first figures were collected in 1990. Even though the welfare rolls swelled substantially in the wake of the recession of 1990-91, the proportions of different family types on welfare never changed more than a percentage point or two from one year to another.

Table 1 gives the details from March 1990 through March 1997. The figures cover all ten provinces, plus the two territories, and were compiled by officials of Human Resources Development Canada using information in addition to the information in the database. Only four

family types were estimated year after year: unattached persons, couples without children, single-parent families and couples with children. The totals for each year also include a handful of welfare cases that do not fit into one of the four standard categories.

**TABLE 1**  
**ESTIMATED WELFARE CASES BY FAMILY TYPE,**  
**ALL PROVINCES AND TERRITORIES, MARCH 1990-MARCH 1997**

	Unattached Persons	Couples without Children	Single Parents	Couples with Children	Total Cases
March 1990	597,800 57%	55,800 5%	309,400 29%	93,000 9%	1,056,000 100%
March 1991	710,000 57%	62,400 5%	349,400 28%	117,200 9%	1,239,000 100%
March 1992	840,900 57%	72,900 5%	408,200 28%	149,000 10%	1,471,900 100%
March 1993	924,500 57%	80,500 5%	441,500 27%	169,700 10%	1,616,200 100%
March 1994	948,700 57%	81,700 5%	465,600 28%	179,900 11%	1,675,900 100%
March 1995	928,300 56%	79,900 5%	472,500 28%	178,600 11%	1,659,200 100%
March 1996	869,300 55%	80,800 5%	454,500 29%	177,400 11%	1,582,000 100%
March 1997	822,600 55%	77,500 5%	429,600 29%	165,000 11%	1,494,800 100%

The number of welfare cases made up of unattached persons, for example, was estimated to be 597,800 or 57 percent of the total of 1,056,000 welfare cases in March 1990. The number

rose sharply over the next several years before peaking in March 1994, but the percentage of cases remained more or less the same from one year to the next.

The statistics for the other three family types followed the same pattern. As the recession took its toll, all family types were at greater risk of falling onto welfare. As the economy recovered from the recession, the risk of falling onto welfare declined for all family types.

Table 2 on the next page shows variations in family type by province using data for March 1997 from the social assistance profile project. The total of 1,452,779 cases shown in the table represents 97 percent of the estimated national total of 1,494,800 cases in Table 1.

The most glaring variations are in Nova Scotia and Manitoba, two provinces which have two-tier welfare systems. Under two-tier systems, provincial caseloads are made up of longer-term recipients, notably single-parent families and people with disabilities, and municipal caseloads are mostly short-term cases where the unattached person on welfare or the head of the family is considered to be employable.

Two of the rows in the table are labelled Nova Scotia Provincial and Manitoba Provincial to set them off from the other provinces. If municipal welfare statistics had been included, the percentages in Nova Scotia and Manitoba would likely have been much closer to the percentage totals shown in the bottom row of the table.

Ontario is also a two-tier welfare province, but it was able to provide statistics on most municipal welfare caseloads. The municipal figures that were provided were "grossed up" in the database to approximate the total caseload.

The table shows a number of smaller variations from province to province that relate to differences in the local economy, differences in welfare policy and demographic differences. The government of Alberta, for example, made a decision in 1993 to discourage young single people from applying for welfare and to steer them to other possibilities. That probably explains in large part why the percentage of unattached persons on welfare in Alberta is well below average.

**TABLE 2**  
**WELFARE CASES BY FAMILY TYPE, 97 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997**

	Unattached Persons	Couples without Children	Single Parents	Couples with Children	Total Cases
Newfoundland	17,386 48%	3,575 10%	7,985 22%	6,820 19%	35,886 100%
Prince Edward Island	2,992 53%	262 5%	1,640 29%	714 13%	5,614 100%
Nova Scotia Provincial	11,991 39%	902 3%	16,252 52%	1,864 6%	31,042 100%
New Brunswick	17,115 47%	2,944 8%	11,192 31%	4,926 14%	36,177 100%
Quebec	299,511 64%	25,947 6%	98,111 21%	46,806 10%	470,375 100%
Ontario	273,588 47%	28,816 5%	201,900 35%	73,491 13%	577,795 100%
Manitoba Provincial	11,554 46%	816 3%	12,119 48%	799 3%	25,431 100%
Saskatchewan	21,063 54%	1,618 4%	12,157 31%	4,286 11%	39,124 100%
Alberta	17,534 44%	1,997 5%	15,684 39%	4,878 12%	40,093 100%
British Columbia	121,256 63%	8,136 4%	48,760 25%	13,090 7%	191,242 100%
Totals	793,990 55%	75,013 5%	425,800 29%	157,675 11%	1,452,779 100%

The statistics for Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not include municipal welfare cases.

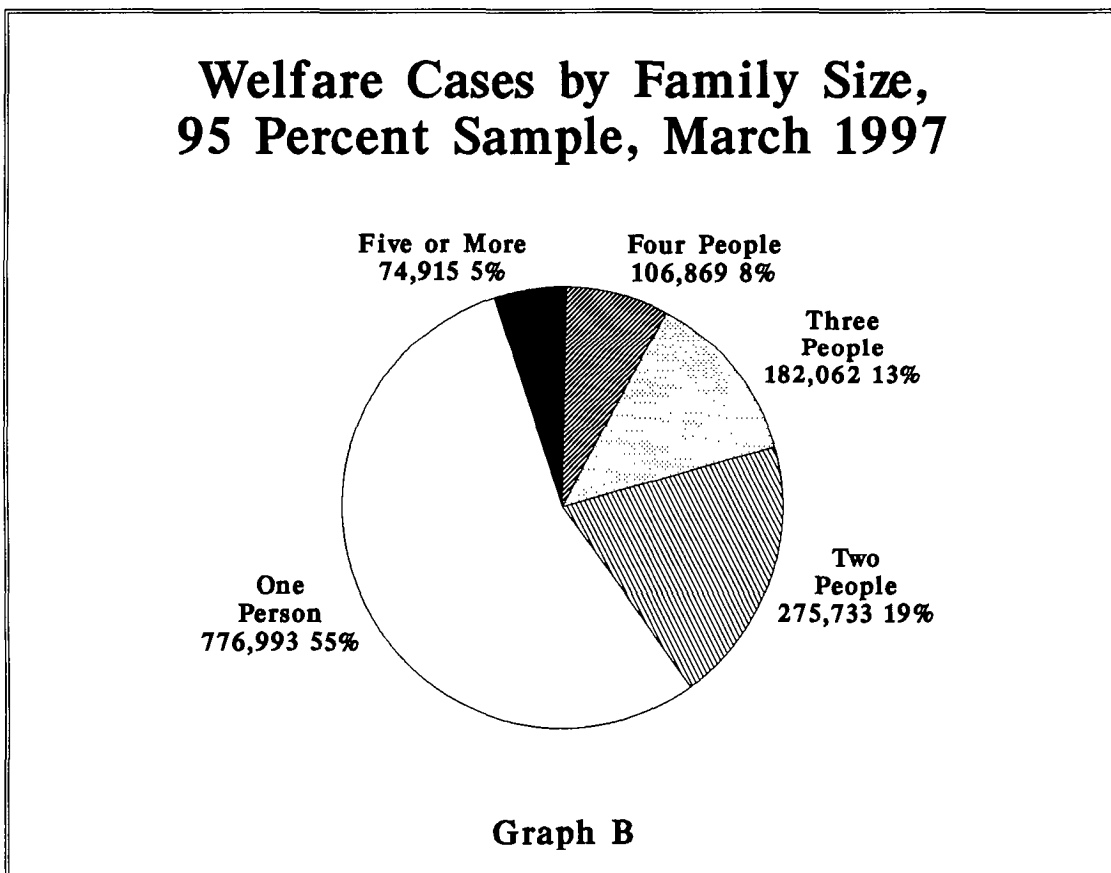
The statistics in the database on family type are also broken down by the number of people in each welfare case. The breakdown by family size is shown in Graph B. The sample



does not include New Brunswick cases or municipal welfare cases in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. The graph represents 95 percent or 1,416,602 of the estimated total of 1,494,800 cases.

By definition, all the people on welfare classified as unattached persons fall into the one-person category in Graph B. That category represented 55 percent of the cases on welfare. The two-person households in the graph consisted of couples without children or single parents with one child. The three-person households were single parents with two children or couples with one child, and so on.

What is most striking about the graph is that 95 percent of the welfare cases consisted of four persons or less. Only five percent of all welfare cases had five or more people. Among other things, that meant that most of the families with children on welfare were also small, as we will see in a later chapter of this report.



### **III. REASONS FOR ASSISTANCE**

People go on welfare for many reasons, but two common reasons are related to jobs or disabilities. Lack of work is the largest single reason people are on welfare, and it probably accounts for more than half of all welfare cases. Disability is the second most common reason and is a factor in perhaps one-quarter of all cases. Single parenthood is considered a distinct reason for assistance by some provincial governments, but not by others.

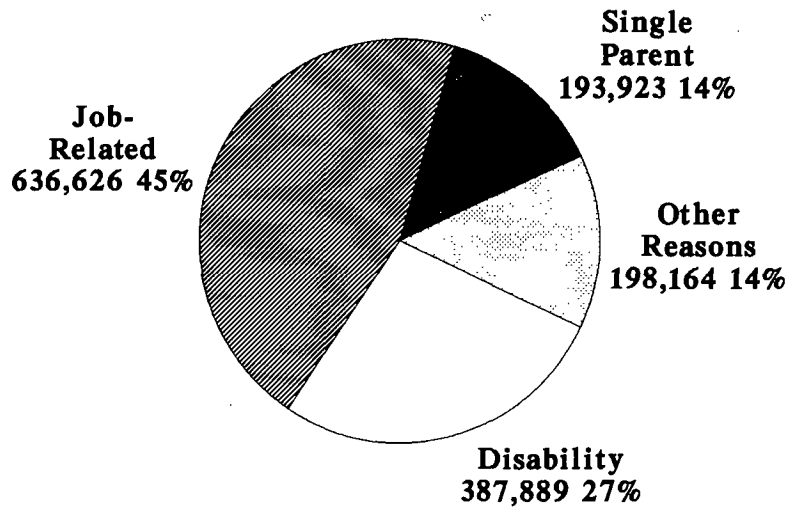
Reasons for assistance vary greatly by family type. Couples with children and unattached people are more likely to have job-related reasons for being on welfare. Couples without children are more likely to be on welfare by reason of disability.

Reasons for assistance also change with age. Cases headed by younger people tend to have job-related reasons for assistance. Disability is the leading reason for assistance for cases headed by people 50 and older. Age itself is considered a reason for assistance for some older people by some provincial governments.

Because of the differences in definitions from one province to another, the statistics on reasons for assistance must be used with caution. Some provinces have done away with most of the traditional reasons for assistance. They view the heads of most of their welfare cases as capable of joining the work force sooner or later, and they classify cases according to the amount of effort it will take for them to reach that goal. Data from these provinces has to be rearranged into the categories used in the welfare database, and the fit is not always a good one.

The latest available statistics on reasons for assistance are shown in Graph C on the next page. It shows that 45 percent of the welfare cases in March 1997 were job-related, 27 percent were related to disabilities, 14 percent gave single parenthood as the reason for assistance, and the remaining 14 percent had "other" reasons for assistance. New Brunswick cases and municipal welfare cases in Nova Scotia and Manitoba were not included. Overall, the graph covers 95 percent of the total estimated caseload of 1,494,800 as of March 1997.

## Welfare Cases by Reason for Assistance, 95 Percent Sample, March 1997

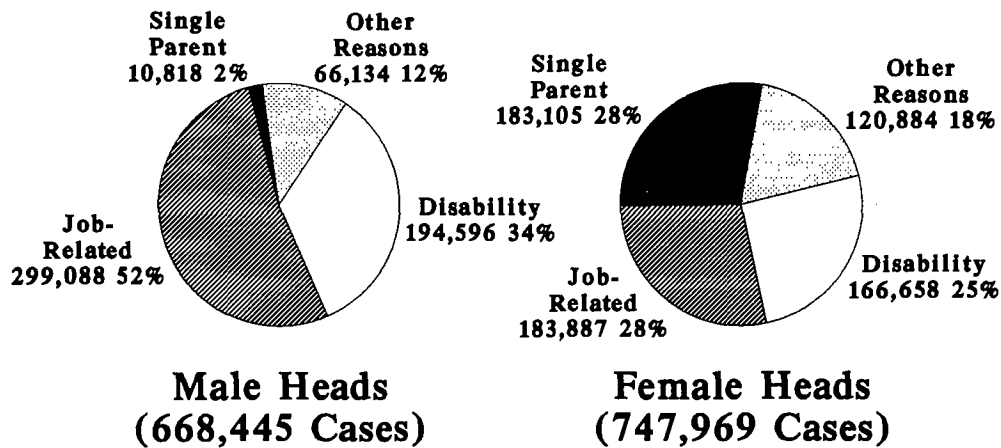


**Graph C**

One of the biggest inconsistencies is the way welfare programs classify single parents. Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Manitoba regard single parenthood as a reason for assistance by itself. Most other provinces classify all or most single parents in a job-related category, although none of them really expects all single parents in all circumstances to be in the paid labour force.

Since most single parents are women, the reasons for assistance attributed to single parents are one of the main differences between the sexes in the welfare statistics. Graph D on the next page gives the details. The graph has separate pies for cases headed by men and women for all provinces except New Brunswick and British Columbia and municipal welfare in Nova Scotia and Manitoba as of March 1997. The two pies together cover 82 percent of the total national caseload.

## Welfare Cases by Reason for Assistance and Sex of Head of Case, 82 Percent Sample, March 1997



Graph D

The pie on the left, representing unattached men on welfare and families headed by men, shows 52 percent of the welfare cases headed by men had job-related reasons for assistance. Single-parent fathers on welfare accounted for another two percent of cases. The combined total for the two categories was 54 percent.

The pie on the right, representing unattached women and families headed by women, shows 28 percent of the cases were headed by single-parent mothers and 28 percent of the cases were job-related. The two categories add up to 56 percent - close to the combined total of 54 percent for men.

British Columbia was unable to provide a breakdown of heads of cases by sex for March 1997, but it had a similar distribution of reasons for assistance in earlier years. In March 1994, for example, there were 127,270 welfare cases in British Columbia that were categorized as job-

related and another 52,059 cases categorized as single-parent cases for a total of 179,329 cases. The single parent category was discontinued, and the job-related category rose to 188,915 cases in 1995. The increase from 179,329 to 188,915 was about the same as the overall increase in welfare cases from one year to the next.

Aside from the differences in job-related reasons for assistance and single parenthood, there were differences in definitions of disability from province to province. Some provinces have special welfare programs for people with disabilities, such as the Financial Support Program in Quebec, which is clearly set apart from the Work and Employment Incentives Program for welfare cases where disability is not a factor. The lines between programs for able-bodied and disabled welfare recipients are less clear in some other provinces. Similarly, the period of time a person has to be incapacitated to qualify as disabled differs from province to province. The minimum period ranges from 90 days under provincial welfare in Manitoba to six months in Newfoundland to one year in New Brunswick.

Table 3 on the next page shows the number of welfare cases by province in March 1997 for each of the three main categories described above and for a fourth category that covers all other reasons. Many of the miscellaneous reasons for assistance are not specified in the database. The table also gives the percentage of the total caseload in each province for each of the four categories. The total represents 95 percent of the total estimated welfare caseload of 1,494,800 in March 1997.

The table does not show any job-related welfare cases in Nova Scotia. That is because the province was not able to provide a breakdown of its municipal welfare cases. If the municipal cases were included, the job-related percentages would probably have been close to average.

New Brunswick did not provide figures for March 1997, but a year earlier it classified 55 percent of its welfare cases as job-related and 45 percent as disability-related.

The other category in Quebec refers primarily to couples in "mixed" categories under the Work and Employment Incentives Program. The program classifies welfare recipients according to their willingness or ability to look for work or participate in work-related programs. The

mixed category applies where one spouse falls into one category and the other spouse into a different category.

**TABLE 3**  
**WELFARE CASES BY REASON FOR ASSISTANCE,**  
**95 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997**

	Job-Related	Disability	Single Parent	Other Reasons	All Reasons
Newfoundland	12,303 34%	8,719 24%	7,519 21%	7,345 20%	35,886 100%
Prince Edward Island	2,599 46%	2,247 40%	0 0%	768 14%	5,614 100%
Nova Scotia Provincial	0 0%	17,230 56%	13,284 43%	528 2%	31,042 100%
New Brunswick	Data Not Available				
Quebec	260,458 55%	109,975 23%	0 0%	99,942 21%	470,375 100%
Ontario	168,164 29%	190,394 33%	160,731 28%	58,505 10%	577,795 100%
Manitoba Provincial	1,203 5%	11,956 47%	11,631 46%	641 3%	25,431 100%
Saskatchewan	14,351 37%	11,870 30%	759 2%	12,144 31%	39,124 100%
Alberta	23,898 60%	8,902 22%	0 0%	7,293 18%	40,093 100%
British Columbia	153,650 80%	26,595 14%	0 0%	10,997 6%	191,242 100%
Totals	636,626 45%	387,889 27%	193,923 14%	198,164 14%	1,416,602 100%

The statistics for Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not include municipal welfare cases.

The other category in Ontario includes a large number of single parents. Many of the rest of the people in the other category are people 55 and older.

The small percentage of job-related cases in Manitoba is due to the absence of data on municipal welfare caseloads.

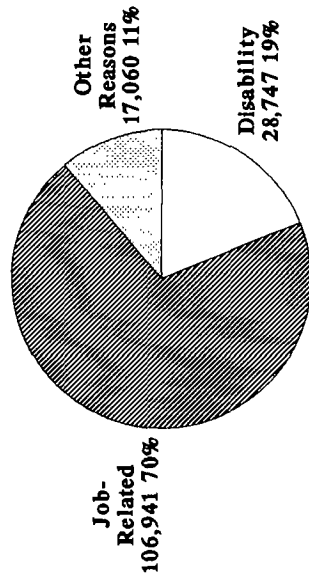
The category for other reasons in Alberta includes a number of people who are considered to be temporary additions to the welfare rolls. Many of these people have health problems or family responsibilities of one kind or another. The disability total is noticeably lower than in most other provinces, because Alberta has a program called Assured Support for the Severely Handicapped that is separate from welfare. A total of 20,796 people received AISH benefits in March 1997 in addition to the welfare cases related to disability.

In British Columbia, the job-related category is made up of all the cases that fall under Basic Income Assistance, and the disability category is made up of GAIN (Guaranteed Available Income for Need) for the Handicapped. The other category includes some people ages 60 to 65 and some people 65 and older who receive GAIN for Seniors. None of these categories is a perfect match with the categories used elsewhere.

In addition to the variations from province to province, there are also important variations in reasons for assistance by family type and age.

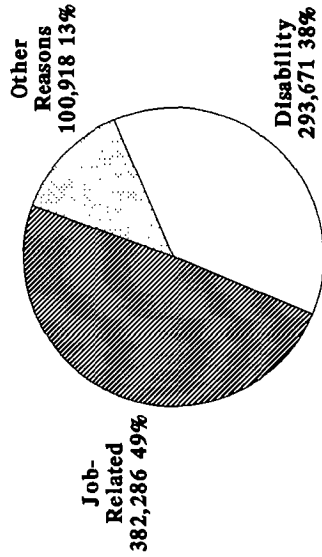
Graph E on the next page shows reasons for assistance according to family type. Among couples with children on welfare, job-related reasons for assistance accounted for 70 percent of total cases, and disability accounted for another 19 percent. Single parenthood and job-related reasons for assistance made up most of the pie for single-parent families on welfare. Disability was a more important reason for assistance among unattached persons on welfare and couples without children. Disability represented the reason for assistance for 38 percent of the unattached persons on welfare and 42 percent of the couples without children.

**Welfare Cases by Family Type  
And Reason for Assistance,  
95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



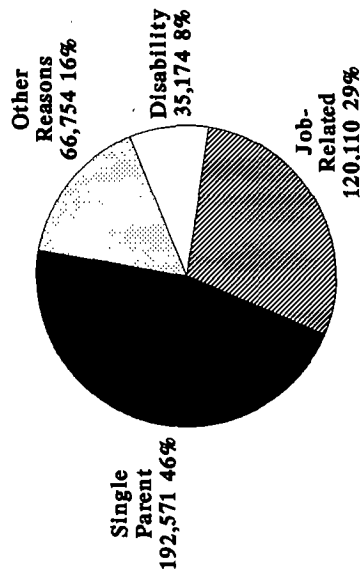
**Couples with Children  
(152,748 Cases)**

**Welfare Cases by Family Type  
And Reason for Assistance,  
95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



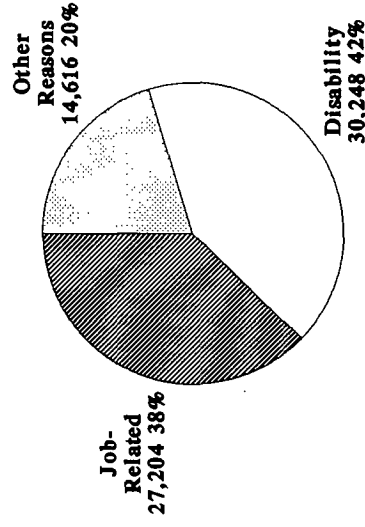
**Unattached Persons  
(776,875 Cases)**

**Welfare Cases by Family Type  
And Reason for Assistance,  
95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Single-Parent Families  
(414,608 Cases)**

**Welfare Cases by Family Type  
And Reason for Assistance,  
95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Couples without Children  
(72,069 Cases)**



**TABLE 4**  
**WELFARE CASES BY AGE GROUP AND REASON FOR ASSISTANCE,**  
**95 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997**

	Job-Related	Disability	Single Parent	Other Reasons	Totals by Age Group
Under 20	27,687 49%	5,260 9%	7,377 13%	16,203 29%	56,528 100%
20-24	96,880 57%	20,520 12%	29,890 18%	23,082 14%	170,373 100%
25-29	98,108 53%	27,862 15%	37,183 20%	22,249 12%	185,402 100%
30-34	106,479 50%	40,903 19%	41,770 20%	22,178 10%	211,331 100%
35-39	102,172 49%	48,896 24%	38,157 18%	18,212 9%	207,437 100%
40-44	82,311 49%	50,451 30%	23,071 14%	12,041 7%	167,874 100%
45-49	61,180 47%	49,667 38%	10,742 8%	7,875 6%	129,464 100%
50-54	42,757 41%	50,301 49%	4,141 4%	6,267 6%	103,465 100%
55-59	16,321 18%	50,078 56%	1,392 2%	21,471 24%	89,261 100%
60-64	2,214 3%	39,805 53%	177 0%	32,237 43%	74,432 100%
65 and Older	515 2%	4,145 20%	22 0%	16,342 78%	21,024 100%
Totals	636,626 45%	387,889 27%	193,923 14%	198,164 14%	1,416,602 100%

All three of the main reasons for people going on welfare - job-related reasons, disability and single parenthood - vary sharply with the age of the heads of welfare cases. Table 4 on the previous page gives the details.

Job-related reasons for assistance fall dramatically among older people on welfare. In the age group 20 through 24, there were 96,880 cases in March 1997 with job-related reasons for assistance or 57 percent of the welfare cases in that age group. In the age group 60 through 64, there were only 2,214 cases with job-related reasons or three percent of the cases.

Just the reverse was true of disability as a reason for assistance. Unattached people on welfare or heads of welfare cases with disabilities represented 20,520 cases or 12 percent of the total in the age group 20 through 24. The figures were up dramatically to 50,078 cases or 56 percent of the cases in the age group 55 through 59. One reason for the increase is that the risk of disability and ill health increases with age. Another reason for the increase is due to the cumulative nature of the welfare caseload. It includes people who were permanently disabled in their 20s, 30s, 40s or 50s and remained on welfare in the years that followed.

Finally, single parenthood as a reason for assistance is obviously related to the prime child-bearing years for women. The number of welfare cases citing single parenthood as the reason for assistance starts declining sharply among single parents in their 40s.

#### **IV. LENGTH OF CURRENT SPELL ON WELFARE**

Two of the big gaps in our knowledge of Canada's social safety nets are how often people rely on welfare and the length of each "spell" on welfare. A younger, able-bodied person might wind up on welfare for a few months at a stretch every few years when jobs are harder to get. An older person with chronic disabilities might find that welfare is the only realistic source of income year after year.

Tracing patterns of welfare use over the course of a person's life is difficult to do, especially as the composition of family members changes and people move from one province to another. The welfare database uses the next best alternative by reporting data on the length of a person's current spell on welfare or the amount of time the person had been on welfare continuously as of the time the data were collected.

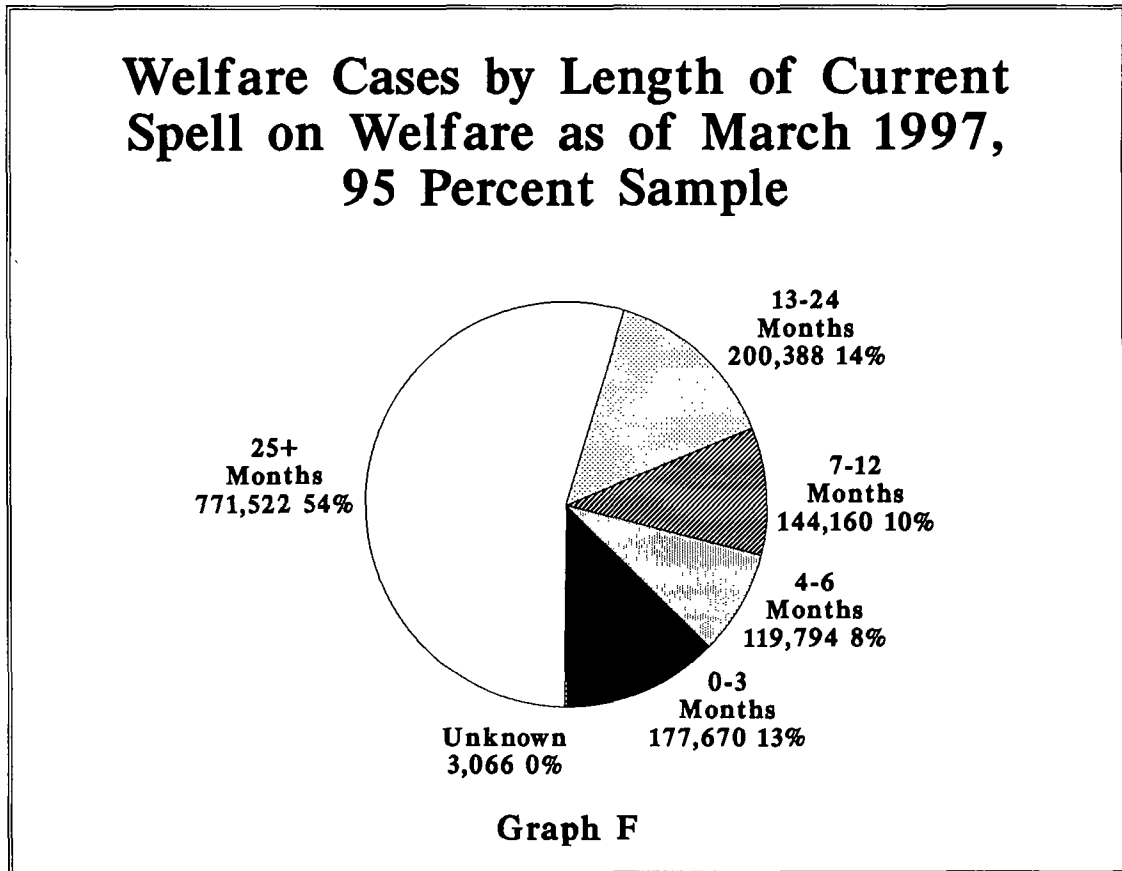
At the one end of the scale are people whose current period of time on welfare was three months or less. Some of them were undoubtedly on welfare for the first time in their lives, while others had relied on welfare sometime in previous years as well. At the other end of the scale are people whose current spell on welfare was for more than two years. Many of these people were no doubt out of the paid labour force for many years, but the database does not record spells of welfare for specific periods of time longer than two years.

The database shows very few differences in spells on welfare from one family type to the next, but there are huge differences when spells on welfare are compared to reasons for assistance. Cases with job-related reasons for assistance tend to have short spells on welfare, while welfare cases arising from disabilities tend to last longer.

The database also shows a rise in long-term cases in the years after 1990. Shorter-term cases appear to rise in bad economic times and fall in good times. However, the longer-term cases have been rising more or less steadily since 1990. The reasons for this are not altogether clear, but the pattern is very alarming.

Graph F shows the distribution of welfare cases by the length of time they were on welfare as of March 1997. The total cases in the graph cover 95 percent of the estimated

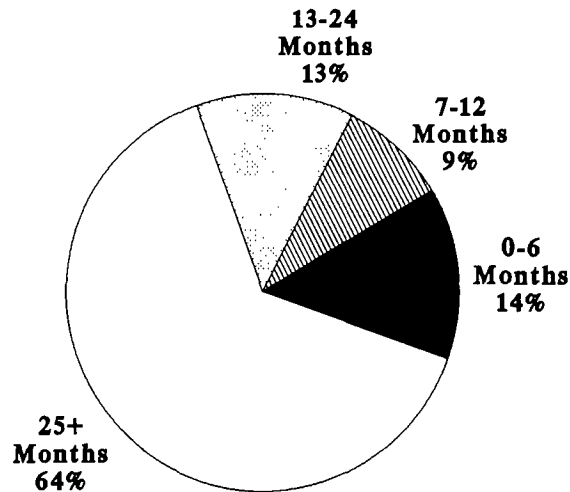
national total of 1,494,800 cases. Fifty-four percent of the cases in the graph had been on welfare for 25 months or more. Another 14 percent had been on welfare for 13 to 24 months.



The percentage of short-term cases probably would have been a bit higher if the database included data from municipal welfare programs in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. Municipal welfare rolls are made up primarily of able-bodied people who would normally be in the paid labour force. Their current spells on welfare would normally be relatively short.

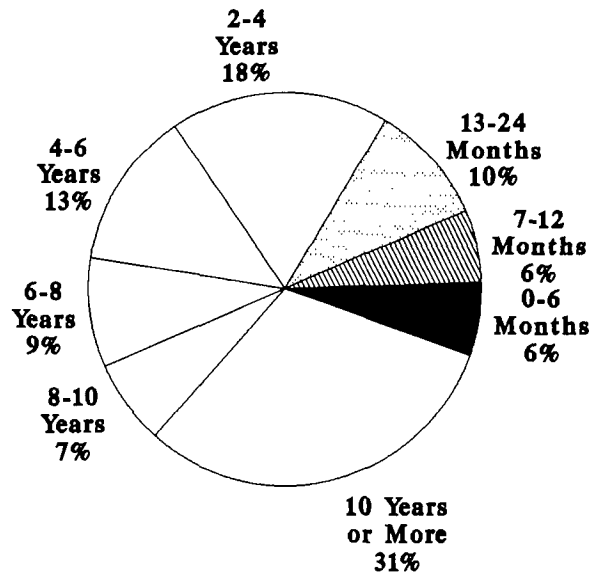
Quebec is the only province which has published statistics on the total amount of time people spent on welfare as well as the length of their current spells on welfare. Graph G on the next page compares the data from March 1997 with the total time spent on welfare over the period from January 1975 to September 1995.

## Welfare Cases in Quebec by Current Spell on Welfare as of March 1997



Graph G

## Welfare Cases in Quebec by Total Period of Time on Welfare, January 1975 to September 1995



The pie in the top half of the graph shows Quebec had a higher than average percentage of welfare cases where the current spell was 25 months or more. The March 1997 figure for Quebec was 64 percent, compared to the national average of 54 percent in Graph F. The percentage of welfare cases where the current spell was no more than six months was 14 percent in Quebec compared to the national average of 21 percent.

The pie in the bottom half of the graph reveals a different pattern when the measure used is the total time spent on welfare over a period of 20 years. The five white slices of the pie represent 25 months or more on welfare just as the single white slice in the pie at the top. As of September 1995, 18 percent of all cases had been on welfare for periods of time adding up to between two and four years, 13 percent were on welfare for four to six years, nine percent for six to eight years, seven percent for eight to ten years and 31 percent for ten years or more. The five white slices add up to 78 percent of the total Quebec caseload.

Among cases on welfare for short periods of time only, six percent were on welfare for a total of under six months sometime during the previous 20 years, compared to 14 percent with a current spell on welfare of under six months.

The differences between the pies are not surprising in light of the cumulative nature of many of the cases on welfare by reason of disability. People with severe disabilities and no other means of support aside from welfare would probably be on welfare year after year, not just for a year or two. The proportion of long-term disability cases would grow year after year as new people came onto the welfare roles.

The statistics on current spells on welfare are almost identical for all four family types, but there are striking differences when it comes to spells on welfare and reasons for assistance. People on welfare who are looking for work tend to have shorter rather than longer spells on welfare. People with disabilities and single parents tend to have longer spells on welfare. Table 5 on the next page shows the March 1997 data. The total of 1,416,602 represents 95 percent of the estimated national total of 1,494,800.

The columns of the table show the major reasons for assistance broken down by the length of the current spell on welfare. In all cases, the largest single group was on welfare for

25 months or more, but the relative size of this group varied greatly with the reason for assistance.

Forty-four percent of the job-related welfare cases, for example, had current spells on welfare of 12 months or less. The overwhelming majority of cases related to disability and 58 percent of the cases where single parenthood was given as the reason for assistance had current spells of 25 months or more.

**TABLE 5**

**WELFARE CASES BY LENGTH OF CURRENT SPELL ON WELFARE AND REASON FOR ASSISTANCE, 95 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997**

	Job-Related	Disability	Single Parent	Other Reasons	All Reasons
0-3 Months	120,343 19%	16,627 4%	20,701 11%	20,000 10%	177,670 13%
4-6 Months	77,626 12%	13,127 3%	13,080 7%	15,960 8%	119,794 8%
7-12 Months	85,471 13%	20,537 5%	18,010 9%	20,143 10%	144,162 10%
13-24 Months	101,607 16%	39,057 10%	28,025 14%	31,699 16%	200,388 14%
25+ Months	251,258 39%	296,903 77%	113,185 58%	110,177 56%	771,522 54%
Unknown	320 0%	1,638 0%	923 0%	185 0%	3,066 0%
Totals	636,626 100%	387,889 100%	193,923 100%	198,164 100%	1,416,602 100%

**TABLE 6**

**WELFARE CASES BY CURRENT SPELLS ON WELFARE,  
MARCH 1990 TO MARCH 1997**

	March 1990	March 1992	March 1994	March 1995	March 1996	March 1997	% Change, 1990-1997
0-3 Months	152,111 24%	238,643 25%	210,024 19%	198,048 18%	156,696 15%	143,287 15%	-5.8%
4-6 Months	69,100 11%	131,643 14%	123,987 11%	114,667 11%	98,277 10%	88,024 9%	27.4%
7-12 Months	70,597 11%	136,935 14%	143,098 13%	132,916 12%	120,786 12%	99,617 11%	41.1%
13-24 Months	81,606 13%	142,446 15%	186,337 17%	175,234 16%	159,933 16%	139,477 15%	70.9%
25 + Months	260,809 41%	305,968 32%	430,091 39%	461,336 42%	472,833 46%	472,763 50%	81.3%
Totals In Table	634,581 100%	961,767 100%	1,098,385 100%	1,086,545 100%	1,019,440 100%	946,225 100%	49.1%
Estimated National Totals	1,056,000	1,471,900	1,675,900	1,659,200	1,582,000	1,494,800	41.5%
Sample Size Shown in Table	60%	65%	66%	65%	64%	63%	

The table does not include New Brunswick or Quebec or municipal welfare cases in Nova Scotia and Manitoba.



The database also shows a trend to longer spells on welfare in recent years, presumably because of the difficulties in finding work in the aftermath of the last recession. Table 6 on the previous page shows current spells on welfare in eight provinces from March 1990 through March 1997. Quebec was excluded from the graph because data on current spells were not available for all six years, and New Brunswick did not provide data for any of the six years. The estimated total caseloads and the sample sizes are shown in the final rows for reference.

The number of welfare cases with current spells of 25 months or more rose from 260,809 cases in March 1990 to 472,763 cases in March 1997. That represented an increase of 81.3 percent, much higher than the overall rise in caseloads of 49.1 percent in the eight provinces.

The number of cases with spells of 13 through 24 months went up from 81,606 cases in 1990 and peaked at 186,337 cases in March 1994 before declining to 139,477 in March 1997.

The shorter-term spells on welfare peaked in 1992 or 1994 and fell through March 1997. The number of current spells of three months or less dropped sharply from 238,643 cases in March 1992 to 143,287 cases in March 1997. The 1997 figure was 5.8 percent lower than the comparable number of cases at the beginning of the recession in 1990.

Finally, there are significant differences in spells on welfare when the statistics are broken down by province as in Table 7 on the next page. The differences from one province to the next are starkest in the first and fifth columns, representing the shortest and longest spells on welfare.

The range of cases with current spells on welfare of three months or less went from four percent of cases in Newfoundland to 28 percent of cases in Alberta. The percentage of welfare cases with current spells of 25 months or more was highest in Newfoundland at 76 percent and lowest in Alberta at 25 percent.

The figures for Newfoundland and Alberta have changed very little since 1990 and apparently have little to do with the hard times that followed the last recession or changes in welfare policy by governments of the two provinces.

**TABLE 7**  
**WELFARE CASES BY LENGTH OF CURRENT SPELL ON WELFARE**  
**AS OF MARCH 1997, 95 PERCENT SAMPLE**

	0-3 Months	4-6 Months	7-12 Months	13-24 Months	25+ Months	Totals
Newfoundland	1,422 4%	1,252 3%	2,081 6%	3,857 11%	27,274 76%	35,886 100%
Prince Edward Island	704 13%	587 10%	574 10%	771 14%	2,978 53%	5,614 100%
Nova Scotia Provincial	3,299 11%	1,691 5%	1,342 4%	4,345 14%	18,405 59%	31,042 100%
New Brunswick	Data Not Available					
Quebec	34,383 7%	31,770 7%	44,545 9%	60,911 13%	298,759 64%	470,375 100%
Ontario	86,594 15%	48,580 8%	59,562 10%	86,708 15%	295,252 51%	577,795 100%
Manitoba Provincial	1,783 7%	1,836 7%	2,555 10%	3,497 14%	15,760 62%	25,431 100%
Saskatchewan	6,248 16%	3,777 10%	4,626 12%	5,628 14%	18,845 48%	39,124 100%
Alberta	11,351 28%	7,808 19%	5,299 13%	5,640 14%	9,995 25%	40,093 100%
British Columbia	31,886 17%	22,493 12%	23,578 12%	29,031 15%	84,254 44%	191,242 100%
Totals	177,670 13%	119,794 8%	144,162 10%	200,388 14%	771,522 54%	1,416,602 100%

The statistics for Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not include municipal welfare cases.

Newfoundland has long had very high rates of unemployment, and that might explain why its welfare caseload is so heavily laden with long-term welfare cases. Alberta has a program separate from welfare called Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped. One reason for the small proportion of long-term cases is that many people with severe disabilities who would be on the welfare rolls elsewhere in Canada rely on AISH in Alberta. The AISH caseload was 20,796 as of March 1997, far more than the number of Albertans with current spells on welfare of 25 months or more.

The percentages of short-term welfare cases would likely be higher in Nova Scotia and Manitoba if municipal welfare cases were included in the figures.

## **V. YOUNG, OLD AND IN-BETWEEN**

One of the sad realities of Canada in the 1990s is the large number of children living in welfare families. Nearly 1.1 million children under the age of 18 - about 15 percent of all children or one of every seven children - were on welfare as of March 1997. Most of the families with children on welfare were headed by single parents, and most of the families had only one or two children.

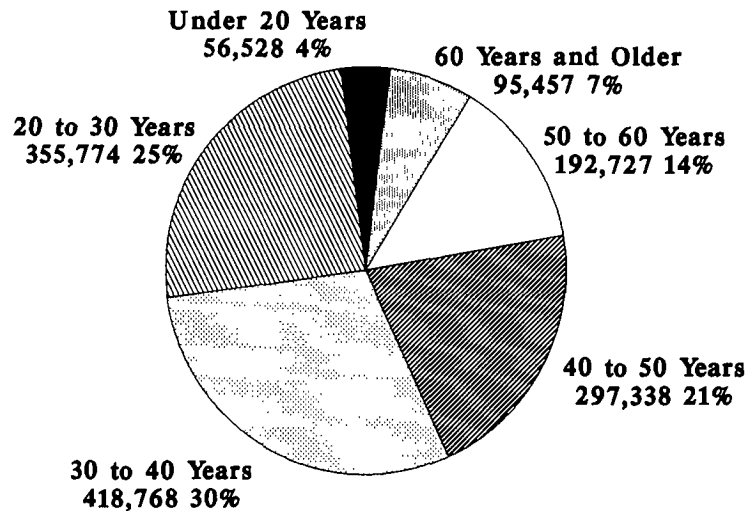
On the other hand, very few seniors have to rely on welfare because of income security programs that are run by the federal government. Many low-income people 65 and older receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Old Age Security pension rather than welfare. Some low-income people 60 to 65 qualify for Spouse's Allowances.

That leaves the people in the age groups in between. There are striking variations in the age groups of adults on welfare according to their family types. Many of the parents who head welfare families are under the age of 50. Many of the couples on welfare who have no children at home are over the age of 50. Unattached people tend to be more evenly distributed over the entire range of age groups.

Graph H on the next page shows the distribution of welfare cases in March 1997 by the age group of the head of the family or unattached person on welfare. The cases in the graph represent 95 percent of the estimated national caseload of 1,494,800 cases. New Brunswick welfare cases and municipal cases in Nova Scotia and Manitoba are not included.

People between the ages of 20 and 60 made up 89 percent of unattached people or heads of households on welfare. Only four percent were under age 20, and only seven percent were 60 or older.

## Welfare Cases by Age of Head of Family or Unattached Person, 95 Percent Sample, March 1997



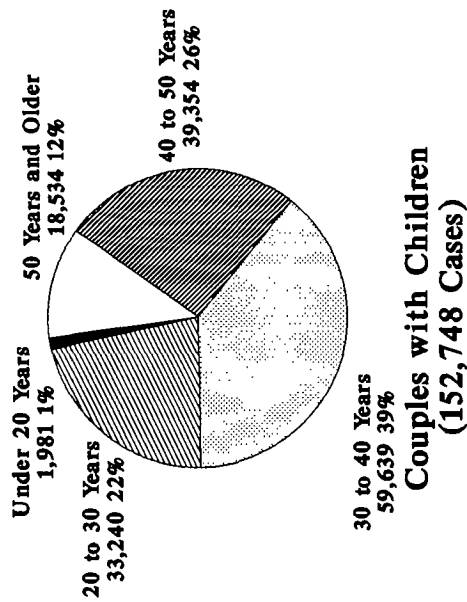
Graph H

The distribution of cases by age group differs noticeably for households with and without children, as shown in Graph I on the next page.

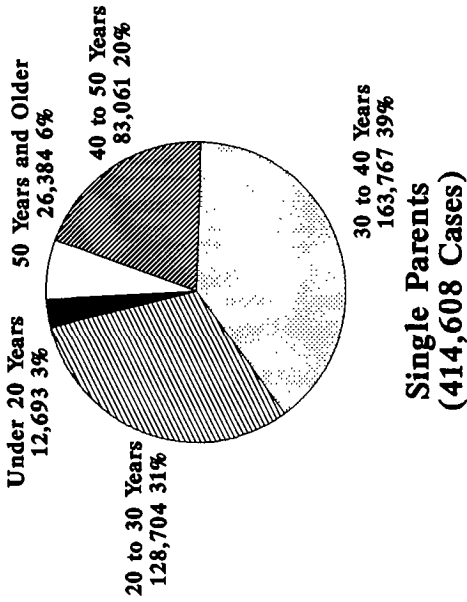
The two pies in the top half of the graph show welfare cases made up of couples with children and single-parent families. The slices of the pies for families headed by parents between the ages of 50 and 60 were combined with the slices of the pies for parents 60 and older because there were so few parents on welfare over age 60.

A total of 87 percent of the couples with children on welfare included parents in their 20s, 30s or 40s, and 91 percent of the single parents were also in their 20s, 30s, or 40s. That should come as no surprise, because most parents have children when they are in their 20s and 30s, and most children are still at home when their parents are in their 40s. What may come as a surprise is the fact that teenage single parents made up only three percent of all single parents on welfare.

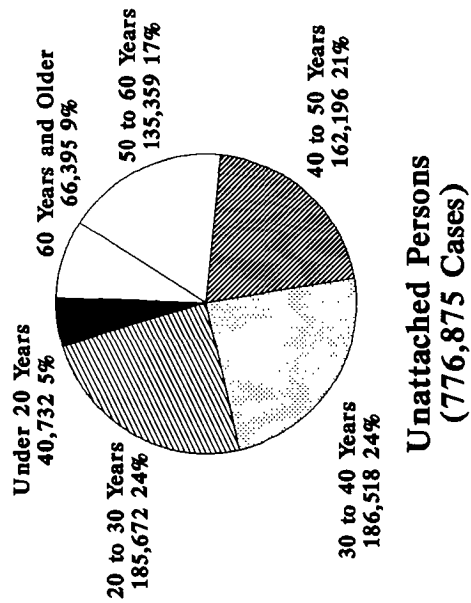
**Welfare Cases by Family Type & Age  
of Head, 95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



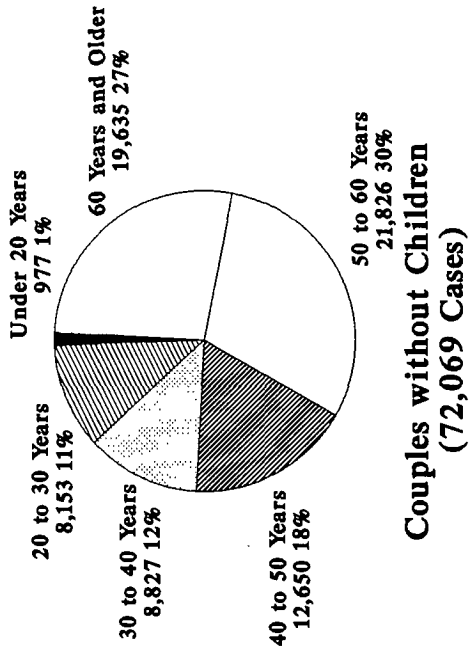
**Welfare Cases by Family Type & Age  
of Head, 95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Welfare Cases by Family Type & Age  
of Head, 95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Welfare Cases by Family Type & Age  
of Head, 95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Graph I**

The distribution is different for the unattached people and couples without children shown in the two pies in the bottom half of the graph. The distribution of unattached persons on welfare tends to be more even in the middle age groups compared to the distribution of families with children on welfare. The distribution of couples without children is heavily weighted in favour of older couples. Fifty-seven percent of the pie for the childless couples on welfare was made up of couples where the head of the family was at least 50 years old. The two white slices of the pie representing heads of cases 50 to 60 and 60 and older are huge compared to the white slices of the pies for the two types of families with children.

The distribution by age is roughly similar from province to province, as shown in Table 8 on the next page. The grand total is the same as in Graph H, but the figures are broken down by five-year rather than ten-year age groups.

For the provinces combined, 76 percent of the cases were headed by people in their 20s, 30s or 40s. Only four percent of case heads were under 20 and only one percent were 65 or older.

Seniors are unlikely to wind up on welfare because of the federal government's benefits for seniors and the supplementary benefits for older people provided by some provincial and territorial governments. Only 21,024 cases in March 1997 were headed by people 65 or older. Presumably, some of these people were recent immigrants or refugees 65 or older who did not qualify for the federal benefits paid to the vast majority of seniors.

**TABLE 8**

**WELFARE CASES BY AGE GROUP OF HEAD OF CASE, 95 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997**

	<20	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65+	All Ages
Newfoundland	2,003 6%	5,833 16%	5,158 14%	4,921 14%	4,454 12%	3,736 10%	3,059 9%	2,646 7%	2,269 6%	1,583 4%	224 1%	35,886 100%
Prince Edward Island	255 5%	605 11%	672 12%	757 13%	730 13%	592 11%	528 9%	421 7%	395 7%	310 6%	343 6%	5,614 100%
Nova Scotia Provincial	258 1%	3,118 10%	4,064 13%	4,544 15%	4,749 15%	3,847 12%	2,977 10%	2,718 9%	2,398 8%	1,985 6%	384 1%	31,042 100%
New Brunswick	Data Not Available											
Quebec	15,382 3%	48,899 10%	53,808 11%	65,259 14%	66,355 14%	58,292 12%	48,608 10%	42,738 9%	37,827 8%	29,237 6%	3,970 1%	470,375 100%
Ontario	22,932 4%	70,771 12%	78,411 14%	90,439 16%	87,779 15%	68,050 12%	49,404 9%	36,684 6%	31,048 5%	29,467 5%	12,809 2%	577,795 100%
Manitoba Provincial	1,133 4%	3,749 15%	3,658 14%	3,836 15%	3,633 14%	2,626 10%	2,026 8%	1,548 6%	1,367 5%	1,302 5%	549 2%	25,431 100%
Saskatchewan	2,626 7%	7,039 18%	6,051 15%	5,639 14%	4,882 12%	3,651 9%	2,847 7%	2,400 6%	2,110 5%	1,693 4%	186 0%	39,124 100%
Alberta	1,272 3%	5,138 13%	5,641 14%	6,285 16%	6,257 16%	4,670 12%	3,393 8%	2,827 7%	2,260 6%	1,819 5%	531 1%	40,093 100%
British Columbia	10,667 6%	25,221 13%	27,939 15%	29,651 16%	28,598 15%	22,410 12%	16,622 9%	11,483 6%	9,587 5%	7,036 4%	2,028 1%	191,242 100%
Totals	56,528 4%	170,373 12%	185,402 13%	221,331 15%	207,437 15%	167,874 12%	129,464 9%	103,465 7%	89,261 6%	74,433 5%	21,024 1%	1,416,602 100%

The statistics for Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not include municipal welfare cases.



Data on children were more difficult to extract from the welfare database, because some provinces did not provide detailed breakdowns by age group for members of welfare families under the age of 19. As an alternative, the National Council of Welfare did its own calculations using the data on family size. We assumed that there was one adult in each single-parent family and two adults in each two-parent family and that all the other members of the families were children.

The results for March 1997 are shown in Table 9. Because the calculations are estimates, the figures for each province and the totals were rounded to the nearest thousand. Because of the rounding, some of the totals appear to be off by 1,000.

<b>TABLE 9</b>			
<b>ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CHILDREN ON WELFARE, 97 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997</b>			
	Children in Single- Parent Families	Children in Two- Parent Families	Totals
Newfoundland	12,000	13,000	25,000
Prince Edward Island	3,000	2,000	5,000
Nova Scotia Provincial	30,000	4,000	35,000
New Brunswick	17,000	10,000	27,000
Quebec	156,000	92,000	248,000
Ontario	386,000	158,000	544,000
Manitoba Provincial	22,000	2,000	24,000
Saskatchewan	24,000	10,000	34,000
Alberta	29,000	11,000	40,000
British Columbia	82,000	26,000	108,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>761,000</b>	<b>329,000</b>	<b>1,090,000</b>
The statistics for Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not include municipal welfare cases.			

The table shows an estimated 1,090,000 children on welfare in March 1997 - 761,000 children in single-parent families and 329,000 children in two-parent families.

By way of comparison, there were a total of 1,481,000 children living in poverty or 20.9 percent of all children in 1996, when the last available figures were compiled by Statistics Canada. Low-wage or "working poor" families with children account for most of the difference between the number of children on welfare and the number of poor children.

However, the welfare database is made up of families with children who were on welfare during the month of March 1997, and who may not have been on welfare for the other 11 months of the year. The Statistics Canada figures represent families who were poor for the entire year. Some of them were on welfare the entire year, while some of the parents were in the paid labour force for all or most of the year.

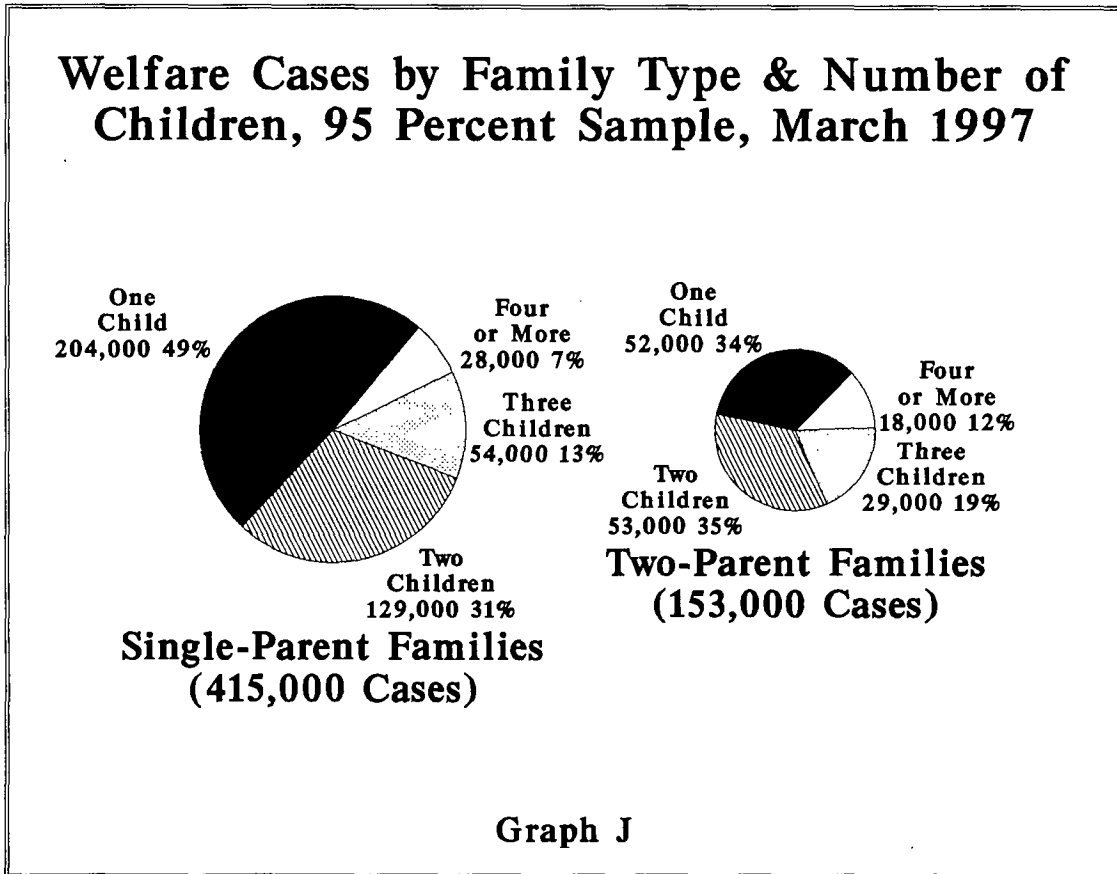
The number of children in two-parent families is deceptively low in Nova Scotia and Manitoba because of the lack of data from municipal welfare programs. Employable couples with children are normally on municipal rather than provincial welfare in the two provinces.

Graph J on the next page shows the number of welfare families with one, two, three and four or more children in single-parent families and two-parent families. The two pies in the graph are proportional to show that the number of single-parent families on welfare is larger than the number of couples with children on welfare.

The numbers are estimates by the National Council of Welfare, so the figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand. The graph shows 415,000 single-parent families with children on welfare as of March 1997 and 153,000 two-parent families with children on welfare. Detailed data were not available from New Brunswick, so the graph covers 95 percent of the estimated national caseload.

Nearly half of the single-parent families on welfare had only one child in the family, 31 percent had two children, 13 percent had three children, and only seven percent of the families had four or more children. This flies in the face of the myth about single-parent mothers having oodles of children in order to boost their welfare incomes.

The pattern was much the same for two-parent families on welfare. Thirty-four percent of the families had only one child, 35 percent had two children, 19 percent had three children, and only 12 percent had four or more children.



## **VI. LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

One of the more intriguing questions for welfare analysts in recent years is whether large numbers of able-bodied people are "trapped on welfare" because they lack the education or skills needed to get decent jobs or whether they wind up on welfare primarily because the economy is not creating enough jobs.

Most provincial governments have come to accept the trapped on welfare explanation and are placing greater emphasis on enhancing the employability of welfare recipients. A few provinces have taken extraordinary steps to get welfare recipients to upgrade their education or participate in training programs to improve their job readiness. Ontario has gone to the extreme of incorporating "workfare" into its welfare system. Under workfare, able-bodied people could be forced to do specific jobs as a condition of welfare. Most of the workfare jobs that are created in the months ahead are expected to be menial or dead-end jobs.

The statistics on education in the welfare database are far from conclusive, but they raise questions about some of these provincial efforts. They suggest that many heads of welfare cases have enough schooling to get at least a toehold in the work force, and they also suggest that disability or aging may be bigger problems than lack of education for many welfare recipients.

Roughly speaking, heads of cases with a high school education or better tend to have job-related reasons for being on welfare. People with less than a high school education are more likely to have a disability as a reason for assistance. The welfare database also shows that low levels of education are more of a problem in Atlantic Canada than in other parts of the country.

The data on education are less complete and less precise than the data in other chapters of this report.

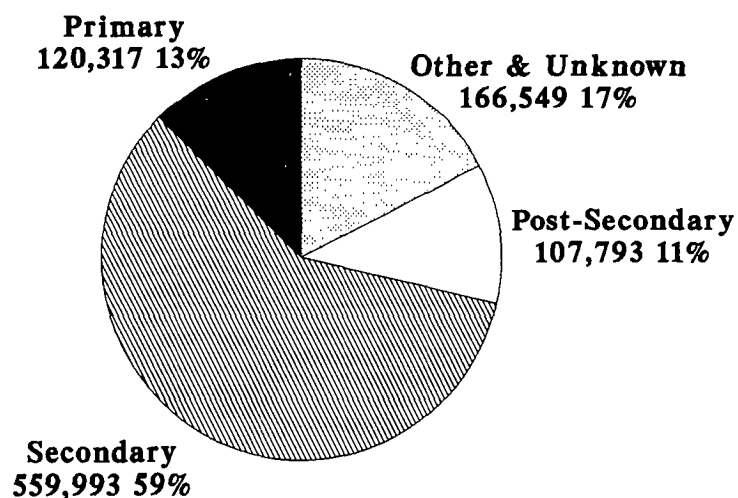
The database is missing information for British Columbia, most of the information for New Brunswick, municipal welfare cases in Nova Scotia and Manitoba, and provincial welfare cases in Ontario. A sizable number of cases fell into the "other and unknown" category. The provincial reports cover no more than 954,652 cases or 64 percent of the estimated national

caseload of 1,494,800 cases as of March 1997. For some cross-tabulations, the sample size drops to 43 percent.

The figures are less precise because of differences in provincial education systems and also because of ambiguities in the categories used in the database. Some provinces consider that "secondary school" starts in Grade 7, while others say it starts in Grade 9. Most provinces reported whether heads of welfare cases had attended a particular level of school rather than whether they had completed a particular level.

Finally, since education does not determine the size of a person's welfare cheque, welfare workers may not always ask if the information that they have on education is up to date. People who are on and off welfare several times over the course of the years, for example, could complete their education between spells on welfare and never have the change recorded in their welfare files.

### **Welfare Cases by Education of Head of Case, 64 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Graph K**

Graph K gives an overview of the available data in all provinces except British Columbia. Thirteen percent of the unattached persons or heads of families had no more than a primary school education, 59 percent had been to secondary school, and 11 percent had attended a college, university or technical school at the post-secondary level. The level of education of the remaining 17 percent of the cases is not known.

Some striking differences appear when the data are broken down by province as in Table 10 on the next page. The four Atlantic provinces had relatively high percentages of welfare cases where the head had only primary school education and relatively low percentages of cases where the head had some post-secondary education.

In other provinces, welfare cases where the head had been at least to secondary school were by far the most common.

**TABLE 10**  
**WELFARE CASES BY EDUCATION OF HEAD,**  
**64 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997**

	Primary	Secondary	Post-Secondary	Other & Unknown	All Levels
Newfoundland	12,709 35%	19,054 53%	2,691 7%	1,432 4%	35,886 100%
Prince Edward Island	1,790 32%	2,722 48%	765 12%	337 5%	5,614 100%
Nova Scotia Provincial	12,209 39%	13,421 43%	1,602 5%	3,810 13%	31,042 100%
New Brunswick	18,450 51%	13,603 38%	1,881 5%	2,243 6%	36,177 100%
Quebec	51,239 11%	262,933 56%	50,425 11%	105,778 22%	470,375 100%
Ontario Municipal	7,523 3%	181,659 67%	43,705 16%	38,031 14%	270,918 100%
Manitoba Provincial	4,258 17%	13,233 52%	1,085 4%	6,847 27%	25,431 100%
Saskatchewan	9,817 25%	24,451 62%	1,280 3%	3,576 9%	39,124 100%
Alberta	2,322 6%	28,917 72%	4,359 11%	4,495 11%	40,093 100%
British Columbia	Data Not Available				
Totals	120,317 13%	559,993 59%	107,793 11%	166,549 17%	954,652 100%

The statistics for Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not include municipal welfare cases.  
 The statistics for Ontario include municipal, but not provincial welfare cases.

The database shows striking differences in the reasons for assistance by level of education, as shown in Graph L on the next page. The data cover all provinces except New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia and municipal welfare cases in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. The cases shown in the graph add up to 647,557 or 43 percent of the estimated national total, and the three pies where the levels of education were reported added up to 521,282 cases or 35 percent of the national total.

The white slices of the pies show that job-related reasons for welfare increased with a person's level of education. Job-related reasons accounted for 34 percent of the cases where the head never got past primary school, 60 percent of the cases where the person went to secondary school, and 69 percent of cases where the person attended college or university.

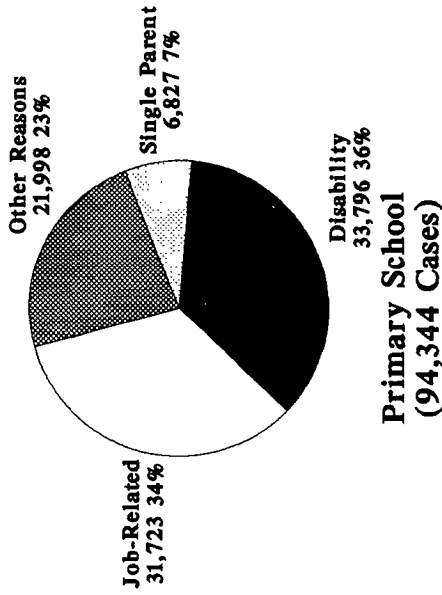
Conversely, disability as a reason for assistance declined sharply as the level of education rose. As shown in the black slices of the pies, disability accounted for 36 percent of the cases where the head of the household had no more than a primary school education. The comparable figures were 14 percent for heads of welfare cases who had been to high school and 11 percent for people who had been to college or university.

Even with the gaps and shortcomings in the database, it seems clear that many of the people on welfare who are poorly educated are people with disabilities. Some of them may face barriers that are more significant than a lack of schooling, and some of them may not be good candidates for conventional learning programs.

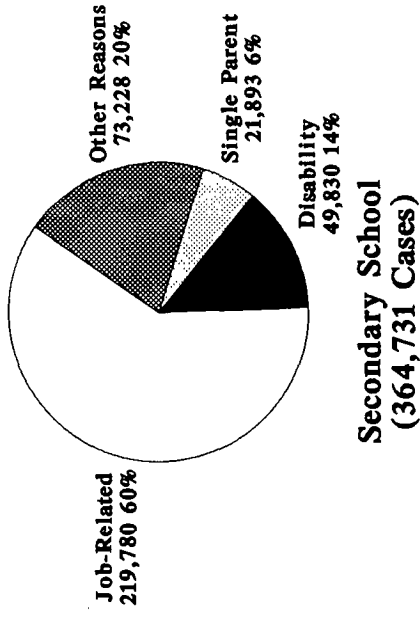
Meanwhile, many of the people who are well educated have job-related reasons for being on welfare. What they really need is more jobs rather than more schooling.



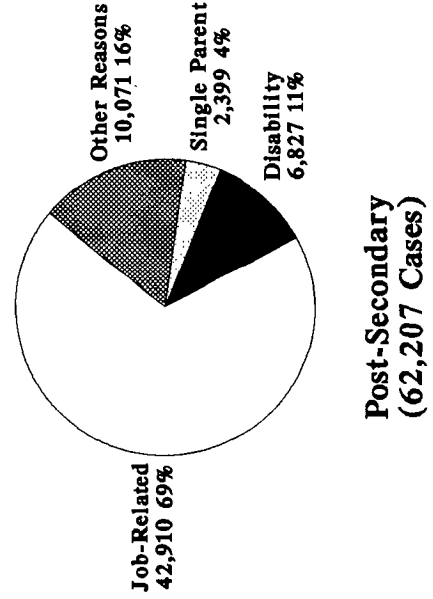
**Welfare Cases by Education  
& Reason for Assistance,  
43 Percent Sample, March 1997**



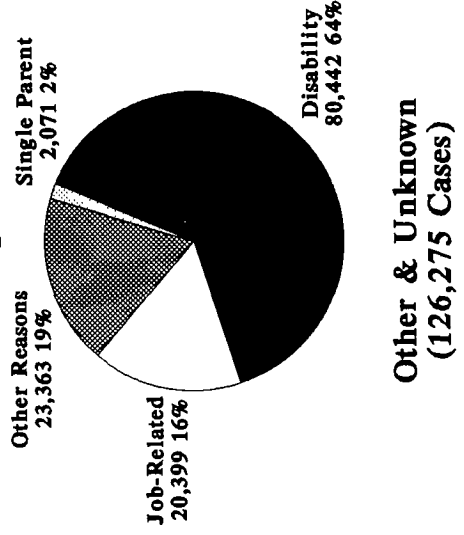
**Welfare Cases by Education  
& Reason for Assistance,  
43 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Welfare Cases by Education  
& Reason for Assistance,  
43 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Welfare Cases by Education  
& Reason for Assistance,  
43 Percent Sample, March 1997**

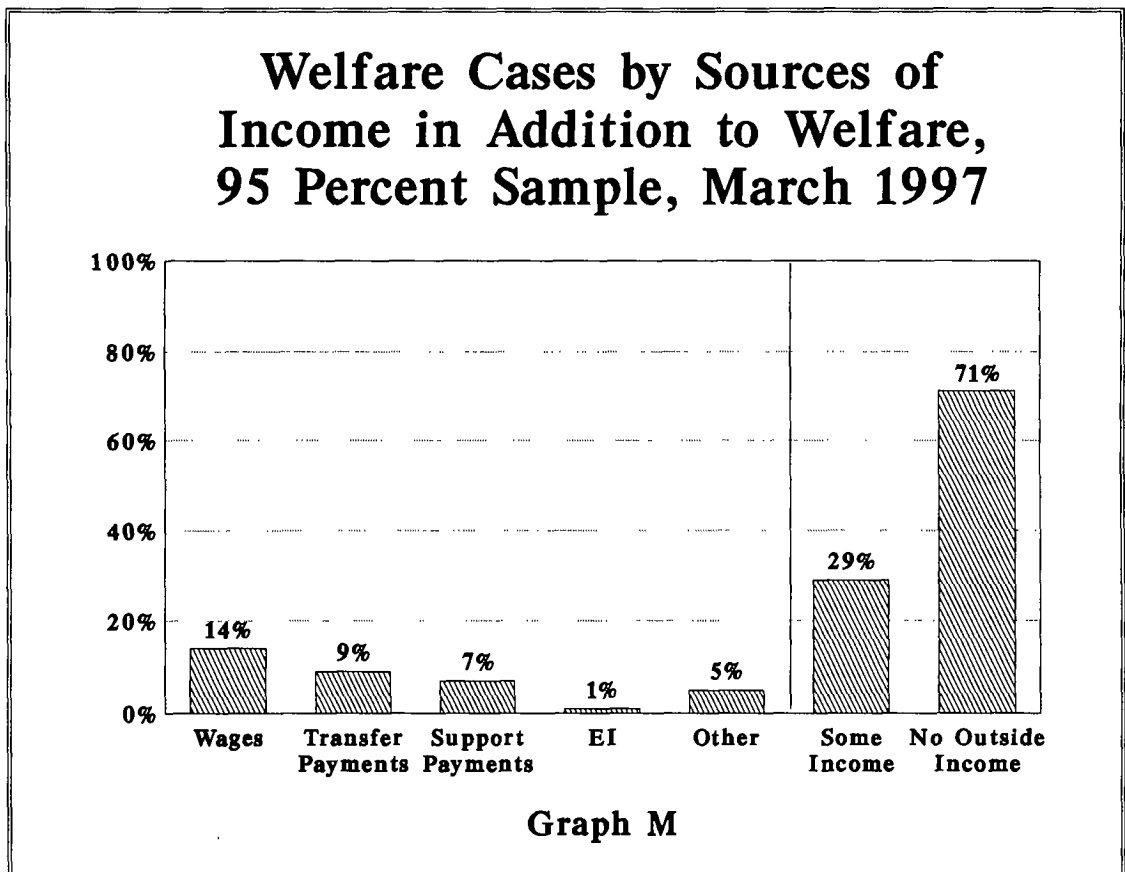


**Graph L**

## VII. OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME

Welfare is the social safety net of last resort, so it should come as no surprise that many welfare recipients do not have other major sources of income. At the same time, a small proportion of welfare recipients do get a few dollars from other sources to help make ends meet.

Graph M shows the percentage of welfare cases in all provinces except New Brunswick in March 1997 and municipal welfare programs in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. Overall, the graph covers 1,416,602 welfare cases or 95 percent of the estimated national caseload of 1,494,800.



The first five bars of the graph up to the vertical line show individual sources of outside income, and the two bars to the right of the vertical line show the percentage of cases with some outside income and the percentage of cases with no outside income.

The figures on top of the first five bars add up to 36 percent, but the sixth bar is only 29 percent. The difference is because some people on welfare had more than one individual source of outside income. Single parents, for example, could be working a few hours a month and receiving child support payments from a former spouse at the same time.

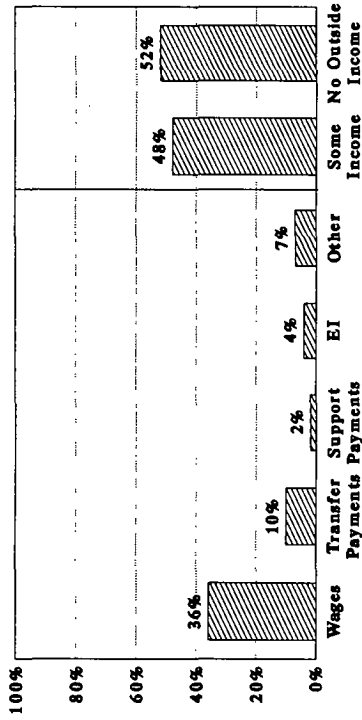
The bar representing transfer payments refers to benefits from a very short list of government income support programs, including federal pension programs for people 60 and older, Canada Pension Plan benefits, pensions for war veterans, and workers' compensation. It does not include the two broadest federal programs, the GST Credit for low-income people and the Child Tax Benefit for low-income and middle-income families with children. If the GST Credit and Child Tax Benefit were included, the bar of the graph for transfer payments would have been at or near 100 percent.

Only one percent of the welfare cases were getting Employment Insurance benefits. One reason the figure was so low is that people would normally have to see their EI benefits run out completely before they could qualify for welfare. The one percent of cases shown in the graph could include people who were just exhausting their EI benefits and going on welfare for the first time. It may also include people who needed help while they waited for their first EI cheques to come in and people who needed welfare to top up EI payments that were not enough to live on.

The two bars to the right of the vertical line shows that 29 percent of welfare cases had some form of income aside from welfare, and the other 71 percent had no outside income at all.

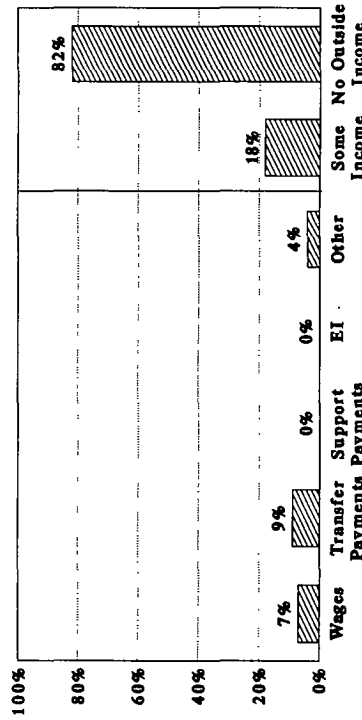
The proportions and the "mix" of outside incomes are noticeably different when the data are broken down by family type. Graph N on the next page shows the differences in detail. The graph covers all provinces except New Brunswick and British Columbia and municipal welfare programs in Nova Scotia and Manitoba - 1,225,360 cases in all or 82 percent of the estimated national caseload.

**Welfare Cases by Sources of  
Income in Addition to Welfare,  
82 Percent Sample, March 1997**



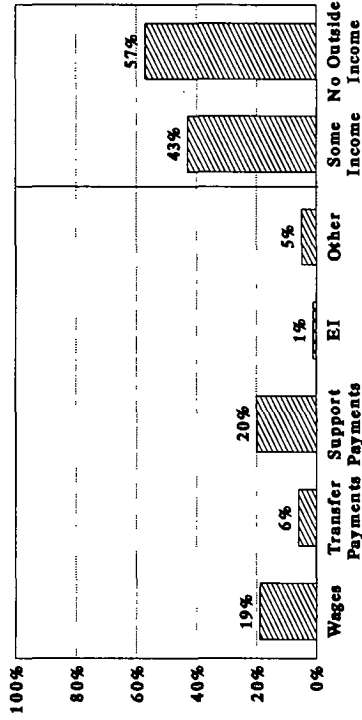
**Couples with Children  
(139,658 Cases)**

**Welfare Cases by Sources of  
Income in Addition to Welfare,  
82 Percent Sample, March 1997**



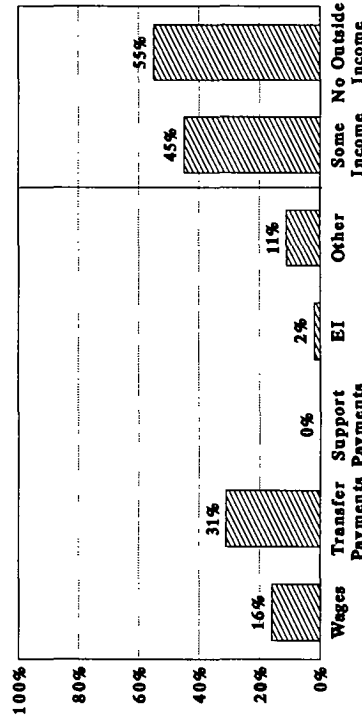
**Unattached Persons  
(655,623 Cases)**

**Welfare Cases by Sources of  
Income in Addition to Welfare,  
82 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Single-Parent Families  
(365,849 Cases)**

**Welfare Cases by Sources of  
Income in Addition to Welfare,  
82 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Couples without Children  
(63,934 Cases)**

There were some significant differences in the percentages of welfare cases with no other outside income. The figure was 52 percent for couples with children, 57 percent for single-parent families, and 55 percent for couples without children, but it was 82 percent for unattached persons.

Wages were a relatively common source of outside income for couples with children on welfare. Child support or alimony was the most common source of outside income for single-parent families on welfare, but wages were a close second. Transfer payments and wages were the main sources of outside income for the other two family types on welfare, but both percentages were extremely low for unattached persons.

**TABLE 11**  
**SOURCES OF OUTSIDE INCOME BY REASON FOR ASSISTANCE,**  
**82 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997**

	Job-Related	Disability	Single Parent	Other Reasons	Total Cases
Wages	89,053 18%	29,888 8%	42,559 22%	29,917 16%	191,817 16%
Transfer Payments	11,428 2%	66,534 18%	4,371 2%	28,921 15%	111,254 9%
Support Payments	12,860 3%	5,815 2%	49,220 25%	11,871 6%	79,766 7%
Unemployment Insurance	8,786 2%	1,252 0%	2,415 1%	1,571 1%	14,024 1%
Some Outside Income	120,017 25%	100,980 28%	86,903 45%	64,756 35%	372,655 30%
No Outside Income	362,959 75%	260,316 72%	107,021 55%	122,411 65%	852,707 70%
Totals	482,976 100%	361,296 100%	193,924 100%	187,166 100%	1,225,360 100%

Some of the differences in outside incomes among the four family types are due to differing reasons for assistance. Table 11 on the previous page breaks down some of the major sources of income according to the reasons for being on welfare. As in Graph N, the table covers 1,225,360 cases or 82 percent of the estimated national total in March 1997.

The first four rows of the table show the number and percentage of welfare cases which received outside income from specific sources. The next two rows show the number and percentage of cases with some outside income or no outside income.

One of the largest figures in the top part of the table is the 89,053 cases with job-related reasons for being on welfare which reported wage income. Even so, that figure represented only 18 percent of the 482,976 cases with job-related reasons for assistance.

Transfer payments were most important source of outside income for welfare cases related to disability. They were claimed by 66,534 cases or 18 percent of those with disability as a reason for assistance.

Wages and alimony or child support were both important sources of income for heads of cases claiming single parenthood as a reason for assistance.

The percentage of welfare cases reporting some outside income or no outside income also varied substantially by province, as shown in Table 12 on the next page.

The lowest percentages with some outside income were 20 percent of the cases in Newfoundland and 24 percent of the cases in Quebec. Both provinces also reported very low percentages of welfare cases with wage income.

The highest percentage of cases with outside income was 51 percent in Saskatchewan. That figure is misleading, however, because Saskatchewan reported some benefits for families with children as transfer payments. The 32 percent of cases with transfers is out of line with the data for other provinces.

**TABLE 12**

**WELFARE CASES WITH OUTSIDE INCOME, 95 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997**

	Wages	Transfer Payments	Support Payments	Employment Insurance	Other Income	Some Outside Income	No Outside Income	Total Cases
Newfoundland	1,126 3%	2,410 7%	2,324 6%	702 2%	1,225 3%	7,023 20%	28,866 80%	35,886 100%
Prince Edward Island	977 17%	818 15%	338 6%	147 3%	321 6%	2,538 45%	3,076 55%	5,614 100%
Nova Scotia Provincial	3,820 12%	3,311 11%	7,473 24%	146 0%	1,773 6%	11,904 38%	19,138 62%	31,042 100%
New Brunswick	Data Not Available							
Quebec	38,081 8%	34,945 7%	20,004 4%	5,206 1%	25,398 5%	113,552 24%	356,823 76%	470,375 100%
Ontario	110,789 19%	54,861 9%	44,657 8%	6,086 1%	31,652 5%	198,237 34%	379,557 66%	577,795 100%
Manitoba Provincial	3,768 15%	1,372 5%	1,659 7%	248 1%	436 2%	6,833 27%	18,598 73%	25,431 100%
Saskatchewan	4,985 13%	12,437 32%	1,129 3%	381 1%	997 3%	20,064 51%	19,060 49%	39,124 100%
Alberta	9,211 23%	1,100 3%	2,182 5%	729 2%	848 2%	12,504 31%	27,589 69%	40,093 100%
British Columbia	18,992 10%	9,382 5%	13,363 7%	2,271 1%	2,246 1%	41,839 22%	149,403 78%	191,242 100%
Totals	191,749 14%	120,636 9%	93,129 7%	15,916 1%	64,896 5%	414,494 29%	1,002,110 71%	1,416,602 100%

The statistics for Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not include municipal welfare cases.

Finally, the high percentage of support payments in Nova Scotia is due to the fact that the only data reported were from provincial welfare. If municipal welfare statistics had been available, the percentage of cases with support payments probably would have been close to the average shown in the bottom row. However, the figures for Manitoba are close to average even without municipal caseload statistics.

New Brunswick did not provide information to the database for 1997, but the figures for previous years were in line with the national averages. In March 1996, for example, 14 percent of New Brunswick's welfare cases had wage income, nine percent had transfer payments, two percent had support payments, two percent had Employment Insurance benefits and two percent had other sources of income. Thirty percent of the province's caseload had some form of outside income, and the remaining 70 percent had no outside income.

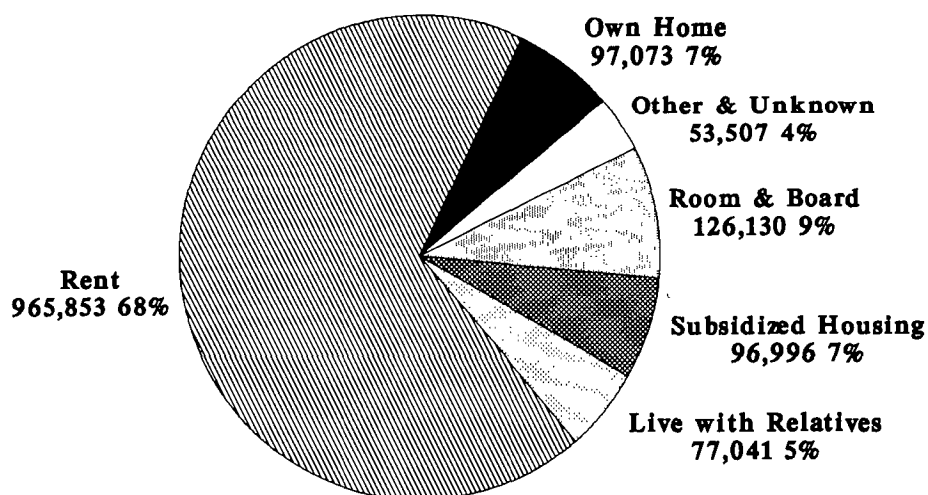


## VIII. HOUSING

Housing is one of the biggest financial burdens for people on welfare and for low-income people in general. Housing that is decent, affordable and suitable to a family's needs is not always easy to find. Many families on fixed incomes have to scrimp on other essentials to be able to have better housing.

The housing arrangements of people on welfare depend in large part on provincial welfare and housing policies and to a lesser extent on traditional housing patterns that vary from one part of the country to another. Home ownership has long been the preference in Atlantic Canada, and the percentage of welfare cases living in their own homes is higher there than in other parts of the country.

### Welfare Cases by Housing Type, 95 Percent Sample, March 1997



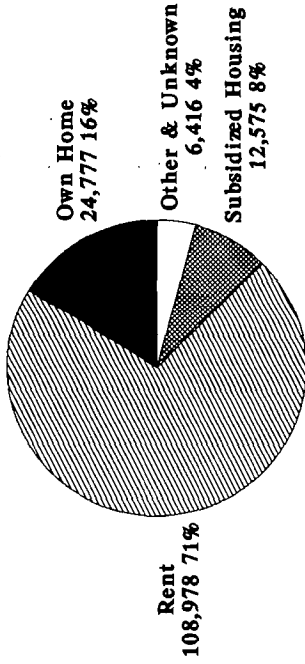
Graph O

Most of the unattached individuals and families on welfare are renters rather than homeowners. As Graph O shows, 68 percent of all welfare cases in March 1997 were in rental housing and seven percent were in subsidized housing, which could be considered a form of rental housing. The graph covers welfare cases in all provinces except for New Brunswick and municipal welfare cases in Nova Scotia and Manitoba and represents 95 percent of the estimated national caseload.

The housing arrangements of welfare cases differ noticeably by family type, as shown in Graph P on the next page. The two pies in the top half of the page represent couples with children and single-parent families. The categories room and board and living with relatives were so small that they were included with the "other and unknown" category for the two types of families with children. In both types of families, rental housing is the most common arrangement by far. A small portion of families on welfare own their own homes or live in subsidized housing. Presumably, many of the homeowners were living in their own homes at the time they went on welfare and it was better for them to stay put and keep paying their mortgages rather than to move.

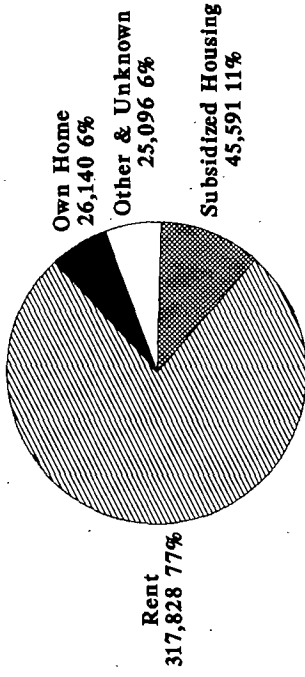
The two pies in the bottom half of the graph show housing arrangements for unattached persons and couples without children. Among unattached persons, the two slices of the pie for room and board and living with relatives are fairly small, but they represented most of the welfare recipients who were boarding or living with relatives in March 1997. Among couples without children, 23 percent were homeowners, 69 percent were renters and the rest were in other arrangements.

**Welfare Cases by Family Type & Housing  
95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



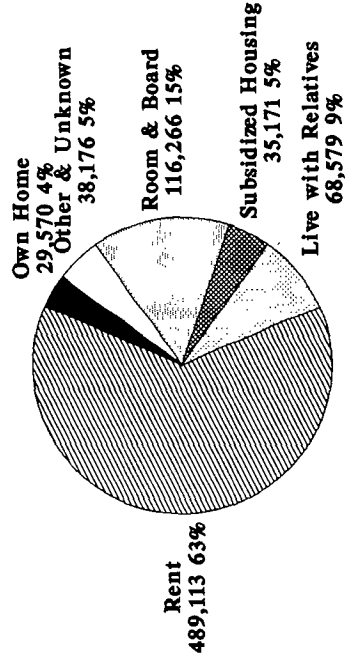
**Couples with Children  
(152,748 Cases)**

**Welfare Cases by Family Type & Housing,  
95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



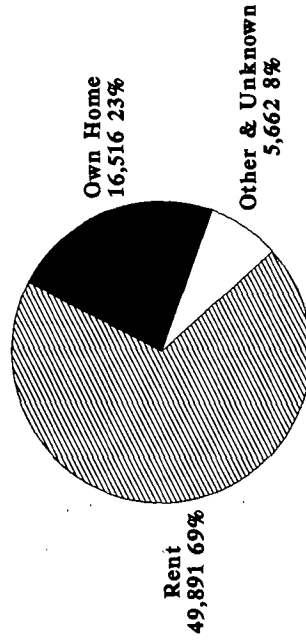
**Single-Parent Families  
(414,608 Cases)**

**Welfare Cases by Family Type & Housing,  
95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Unattached Persons  
(776,875 Cases)**

**Welfare Cases by Family Type & Housing,  
95 Percent Sample, March 1997**



**Couples without Children  
(72,069 Cases)**

**Graph P**

The types of housing for welfare cases vary enormously with the reasons for assistance, as shown in Table 13. Job-related welfare cases accounted for 50 percent of the renters in the table and 50 percent of the cases living with relatives. Both figures are noticeably higher than the 45 percent of job-related cases overall shown in the bottom row of the table. Conversely, job-related welfare cases made up only 39 percent of the cases in their own homes, 21 percent of the cases in subsidized housing and two percent of the cases in residential centres.

<b>TABLE 13</b>					
<b>WELFARE CASES BY HOUSING AND REASON FOR ASSISTANCE, 95 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997</b>					
	Job-Related	Disability	Single Parent	Other Reasons	All Reasons
Own Home	38,059 39%	33,653 35%	11,903 12%	13,458 14%	97,074 100%
Rent	478,474 50%	213,138 22%	144,208 15%	130,033 13%	965,853 100%
Subsidized Housing	20,001 21%	34,684 36%	31,667 33%	10,940 11%	97,291 100%
Room & Board	52,437 41%	56,781 45%	2,921 2%	14,957 12%	127,096 100%
Living with Relatives	39,711 50%	28,036 35%	2,393 3%	10,045 13%	80,185 100%
Residential Centres	251 2%	12,287 90%	16 0%	1,132 8%	13,686 100%
Other Housing & Unknown	7,691 22%	9,310 26%	817 2%	17,599 50%	35,416 100%
Totals	636,626 45%	387,889 27%	193,923 14%	198,164 14%	1,416,602 100%

There are striking differences in the column for welfare cases with disability as the reason for assistance. Disability was cited as the reason for assistance in 27 percent of all welfare cases, but it accounted for 35 percent of the welfare cases living in their own homes, 36 percent of the cases in subsidized housing, 45 percent of the cases in room and board arrangements, 35 percent of the cases living with relatives, and 90 percent of the cases living in residential centres. The only type of housing where people with disabilities on welfare were under-represented - and then only slightly - was rental housing.

Single parents on welfare made proportionately more use of subsidized housing and were much less likely to board or to live with relatives.

Finally, there are interesting variations in the housing arrangements of welfare cases from one province to another. They are partly due to local or regional housing preferences, partly a function of the availability of subsidized housing, and partly the result of housing options that are promoted by provincial welfare officials - such as "encouraging" single people to make room and board arrangements rather than having their own apartments. Table 14 on the next page shows the differences in detail.

The proportion of homeowners among welfare cases was highest in the Atlantic provinces - presumably because of the region's long-standing preference for home ownership. The percentage of welfare cases living in their own homes was well above the average of seven percent. Meanwhile, the percentage of renters in the Atlantic provinces was well below the average of 68 percent.

The same pattern was evident in the New Brunswick statistics for March 1996. Nineteen percent of the New Brunswick cases owned their own homes, 49 percent lived in rental housing, 18 percent were in room and board arrangements, 12 percent lived with relatives, and the remaining two percent were other and unknown.

The percentage of welfare cases in rental housing was extremely high in Alberta and British Columbia.

Room and board arrangements were more common in Quebec and Saskatchewan than in other provinces.

**TABLE 14**

**WELFARE CASES BY TYPE OF HOUSING, 95 PERCENT SAMPLE, MARCH 1997**

	Own Home	Rent	Room & Board	Subsidized Housing	Live with Relatives	Other & Unknown	All Housing Types
Newfoundland	7,210 20%	11,828 33%	1,898 5%	3,211 9%	10,188 28%	1,551 4%	35,886 100%
Prince Edward Island	734 13%	3,060 55%	357 6%	0 0%	664 12%	799 14%	5,614 100%
Nova Scotia Provincial	4,479 14%	17,698 57%	2,128 7%	1,836 6%	0 0%	4,901 16%	31,042 100%
New Brunswick	Data Not Available						
Quebec	34,526 7%	290,890 62%	68,715 15%	10,674 2%	60,167 13%	5,403 1%	470,375 100%
Ontario	34,383 6%	410,167 71%	41,449 7%	69,223 12%	0 0%	22,571 4%	577,795 100%
Manitoba Provincial	1,059 4%	11,647 46%	424 2%	5,542 22%	2,010 8%	4,749 19%	25,431 100%
Saskatchewan	2,759 7%	22,550 58%	4,479 11%	2,399 6%	3,047 8%	3,890 10%	39,124 100%
Alberta	2,419 6%	33,519 84%	0 0%	4,111 10%	0 0%	44 0%	40,093 100%
British Columbia	9,504 5%	164,494 86%	6,680 3%	0 0%	965 1%	9,599 5%	191,242 100%
Totals	97,073 7%	965,853 68%	126,130 9%	96,996 7%	77,041 5%	53,507 4%	1,416,602 100%

The statistics for Nova Scotia and Manitoba do not include municipal welfare cases.

The overwhelming majority of welfare cases in subsidized housing were in Ontario: 69,223 out of the total of 96,996. A closer look at the database shows that most of them were unattached people or single-parent families. This is presumably because of Ontario's policies on subsidized housing and the availability of subsidized housing to people under 65.

Finally, the percentage of welfare cases living with relatives was proportionately the highest in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Quebec. However, a number of the Manitoba cases listed as other and unknown were young people on welfare with no housing costs who were living at home with their parents.

## CONCLUSION

Profiles of Welfare: Myths and Realities is a gold mine of new statistical information about welfare in Canada. The National Council of Welfare is very pleased to be able to put this information into the public domain with the co-operation of federal and provincial officials. Every person who reads this report will learn something new. And every person will be reminded that popular notions about welfare and welfare recipients are sometimes quite far removed from the truth.

There are literally hundreds of observations that could be made from the information in the social assistance profile project database. In our view, three of the most important observations are as follows:

- \* There is no such thing as a "typical" welfare case.
- \* Welfare is a vital support for children as well as adults.
- \* Welfare has become a long-term source of income for a surprisingly large number of Canadians.

First and foremost, we hope that the people who read this report will be struck by the diversity of welfare caseloads in Canada. The welfare rolls are made up of older people as well as younger people, people with disabilities as well as people who are able-bodied, and people who are well educated as well as people who are poorly educated. Every chapter of this report is testimony to the varied backgrounds and circumstances of people on welfare. They differ in their reasons for assistance, family types and sizes, housing arrangements, length of time on welfare, and outside sources of income. Stereotypes about welfare are certain to be inappropriate.

Given all the publicity about child poverty in recent months, it should come as no surprise that more than one million of the people on welfare as of March 1997 were children under the age of 18. They were on welfare for one simple reason: their parents or guardians were on welfare.



Some readers may find this point too obvious to mention, but it is not always obvious in the development of welfare policies in all provinces. Ontario, for example, did not exempt families with children when it arbitrarily slashed its welfare rates in October 1995. Other provinces talk of improving government benefits for children to "take children off welfare" without acknowledging that it is impossible to do so without taking their parents off welfare at the same time.

Perhaps the most disturbing data in the database was information about the length of current spells on welfare. As of March 1997, 54 percent of the welfare cases had been on welfare continuously for 25 months or more. Supplementary data from Quebec suggest that a sizable number of these cases could be on welfare for many years at a stretch. Given the low levels of income provided by welfare, it seems unlikely that people would consciously choose to live on welfare year after year. It is sad to think that governments have been unable to come up with better ways of managing the economy and creating more job opportunities for the people who are willing and able to take advantage of them.

That brings us to the larger issue raised by this profile of welfare caseloads: What do we do with all the new information? The National Council of Welfare has never supported the idea of simply counting poor people and then walking away. The whole point of the exercise has to be finding better ways of fighting poverty.

The welfare database gives us a good snapshot of caseloads in Canada as of March 1997. It does not tell us, however, precisely how or why the people on welfare got there in the first instance or predict how and when they might get off welfare in the future.

We would hope that social policy analysts both inside and outside government will use the database as a spur to continue pursuing their own research and developing new policy options. Among the most urgent options are dealing with the problem of long-term dependency on welfare, finding more and better jobs for people, improving financial support for single parents, and promoting government income supports for people with severe disabilities that are more appropriate than welfare.

We would also hope that ordinary Canadians express their support for governments dealing with these larger issues. Better welfare policies are in the interest of all Canadians,

because everyone is at risk of falling on welfare at some point in their lives. The numbers speak for themselves: the estimated 1,494,800 welfare cases as of March 1997 represented an estimated 2,774,900 individual children, women and men or nearly ten percent of Canada's population.

Losing a job, losing a spouse, and losing good health are some of the reasons that people go on welfare. The biggest myth of all would be to assume that most of us are immune to any of these personal tragedies or the many other misfortunes that can lead to reliance on welfare.

## APPENDIX

### HISTORICAL PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL STATISTICS

The pages that follow contains historical data for Canada and each province and territory. Each page consists of a graph showing the trends of recent years and a table with figures for all or most of the years from 1980 through 1997.

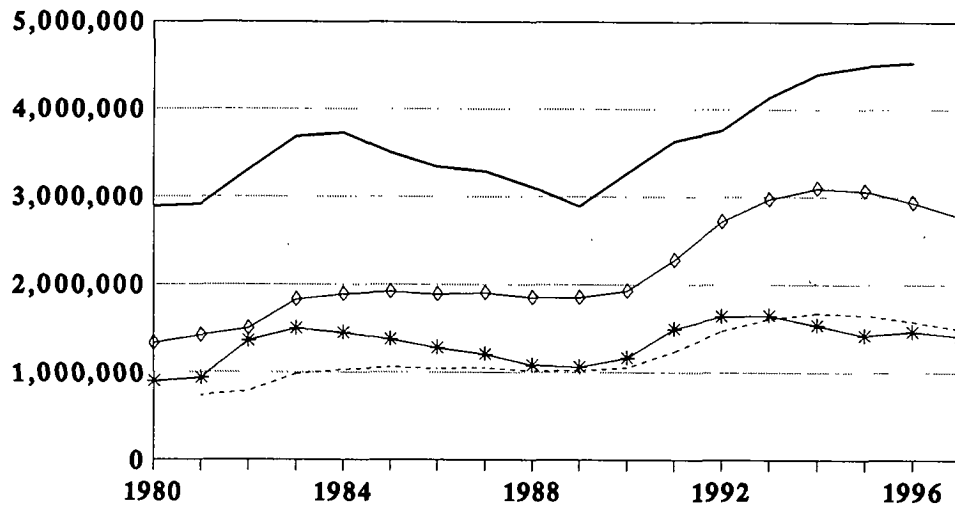
The information on the number of welfare recipients and the number of welfare cases was supplied by Human Resources Development Canada from information obtained from provincial and territorial officials. There are no caseload statistics for 1980, because there are none that are fully consistent with the statistics kept in subsequent years. Welfare statistics for Yukon and the Northwest Territories were published as combined figures prior to 1983, so there are no separate figures for earlier years.

The unemployment statistics are annual averages rounded to the nearest 1,000 that were calculated by Statistics Canada and published in Historical Labour Force Statistics. The Bureau does not collect unemployment statistics for the two territories. The unemployment figures cover Canadians 15 years old or older, including seniors, but the bulk of the labour force consists of people under the age of 65.

The statistics on poor people under 65 were calculated by Statistics Canada using the Bureau's 1986 base version of its low income cut-offs for each year from 1980 through 1996. The figures for 1997 will not be published until late in 1998. The National Council of Welfare and most other social policy research groups regard the low income cut-offs as poverty lines, even though Statistics Canada does not. The category poor people under 65 was chosen for this report because welfare is by and large a social safety net for people under 65. Low-income seniors are normally able to take advantage of federal, provincial and territorial income support programs for the elderly.

Information on the number of welfare cases and the number of individuals on welfare is collected once a year, normally in March. The figures in the tables are snapshots of welfare at one point in time and may not reflect caseloads during other months of the year. The unemployment and poverty statistics cover the entire year.

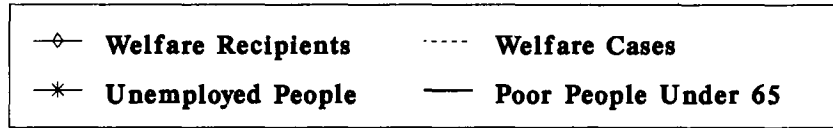
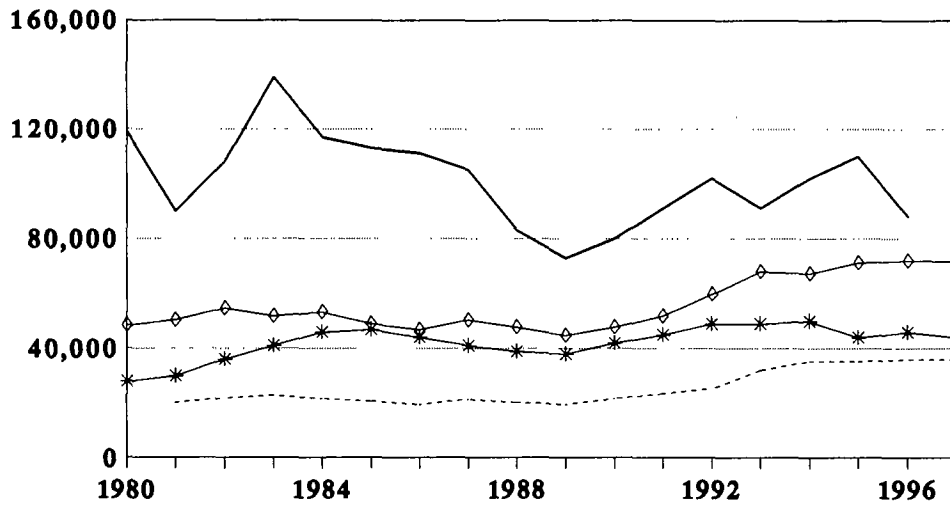
# Canada



◆ Welfare Recipients      - - - Welfare Cases  
 \* Unemployed People      — Poor People Under 65

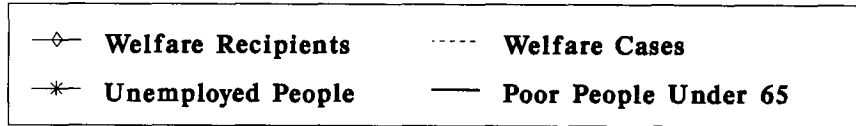
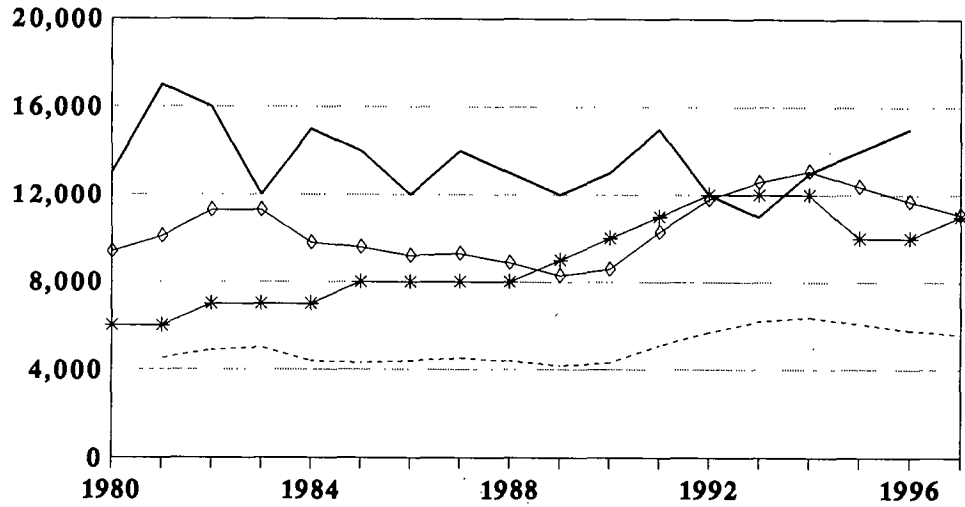
	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	1,334,000	n/a	900,000	2,894,000
1981	1,418,400	734,300	933,000	2,910,000
1982	1,502,800	788,100	1,363,000	3,303,000
1983	1,832,900	985,000	1,504,000	3,687,000
1984	1,894,900	1,028,500	1,450,000	3,728,000
1985	1,923,300	1,058,000	1,381,000	3,501,000
1986	1,892,900	1,048,900	1,283,000	3,339,000
1987	1,904,900	1,051,700	1,208,000	3,285,000
1988	1,853,000	1,018,400	1,082,000	3,110,000
1989	1,856,100	1,022,100	1,065,000	2,888,000
1990	1,930,100	1,056,000	1,164,000	3,267,000
1991	2,282,200	1,239,000	1,492,000	3,637,000
1992	2,723,000	1,471,900	1,640,000	3,756,000
1993	2,975,000	1,616,200	1,649,000	4,139,000
1994	3,100,200	1,675,900	1,541,000	4,408,000
1995	3,070,900	1,659,200	1,422,000	4,498,000
1996	2,937,100	1,582,000	1,469,000	4,535,000
1997	2,774,900	1,494,800	1,414,000	n/a

# Newfoundland



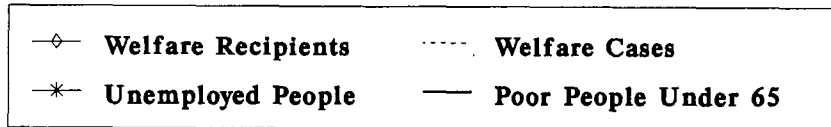
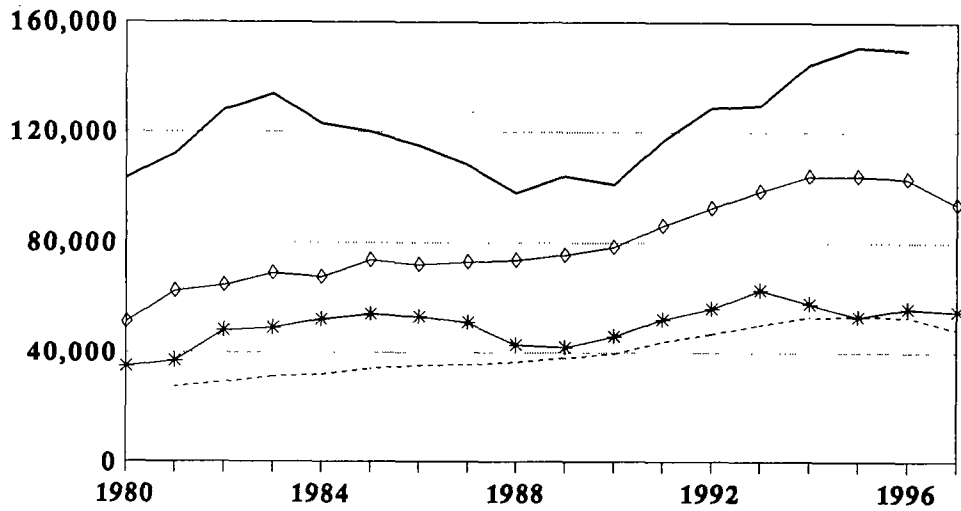
	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	48,500	n/a	28,000	119,000
1981	50,400	20,400	30,000	90,000
1982	54,700	22,000	36,000	108,000
1983	51,900	22,900	41,000	139,000
1984	53,300	21,800	46,000	117,000
1985	49,100	20,900	47,000	113,000
1986	47,000	19,700	44,000	111,000
1987	50,500	21,400	41,000	105,000
1988	47,900	20,300	39,000	83,000
1989	44,800	19,600	38,000	73,000
1990	47,900	21,700	42,000	80,000
1991	51,800	23,500	45,000	91,000
1992	59,800	25,600	49,000	102,000
1993	68,100	32,200	49,000	91,000
1994	67,400	35,400	50,000	102,000
1995	71,300	35,400	44,000	110,000
1996	72,000	36,000	46,000	88,000
1997	71,900	36,000	44,000	n/a

# Prince Edward Island



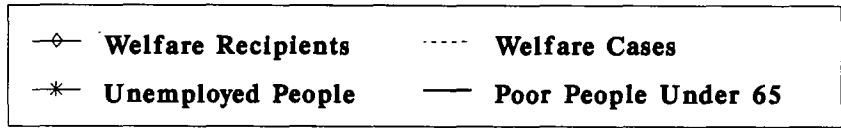
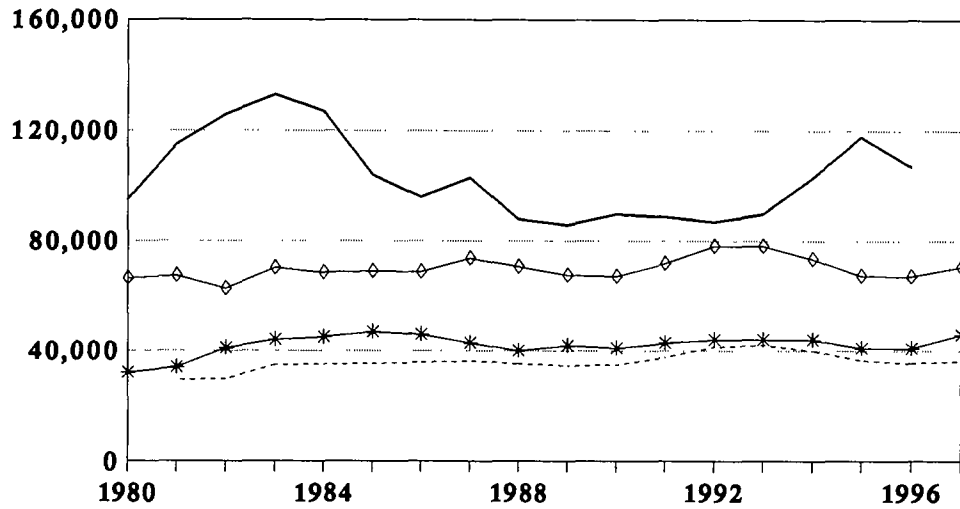
	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	9,400	n/a	6,000	13,000
1981	10,100	4,500	6,000	17,000
1982	11,300	4,900	7,000	16,000
1983	11,300	5,000	7,000	12,000
1984	9,800	4,400	7,000	15,000
1985	9,600	4,300	8,000	14,000
1986	9,200	4,400	8,000	12,000
1987	9,300	4,500	8,000	14,000
1988	8,900	4,400	8,000	13,000
1989	8,300	4,200	9,000	12,000
1990	8,600	4,300	10,000	13,000
1991	10,300	5,100	11,000	15,000
1992	11,800	5,700	12,000	12,000
1993	12,600	6,200	12,000	11,000
1994	13,100	6,400	12,000	13,000
1995	12,400	6,100	10,000	14,000
1996	11,700	5,800	10,000	15,000
1997	11,100	5,600	11,000	n/a

# Nova Scotia



	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	51,200	n/a	35,000	103,000
1981	62,400	27,700	37,000	112,000
1982	64,600	29,200	48,000	128,000
1983	69,000	31,400	49,000	134,000
1984	67,500	32,200	52,000	123,000
1985	73,600	34,300	54,000	120,000
1986	72,100	35,300	53,000	115,000
1987	73,000	35,600	51,000	108,000
1988	73,800	36,600	43,000	98,000
1989	75,600	38,100	42,000	104,000
1990	78,400	39,600	46,000	101,000
1991	86,200	44,000	52,000	117,000
1992	92,600	46,800	56,000	129,000
1993	98,700	50,200	63,000	130,000
1994	104,000	53,100	58,000	145,000
1995	104,000	53,200	53,000	151,000
1996	103,100	52,900	56,000	150,000
1997	93,700	48,400	55,000	n/a

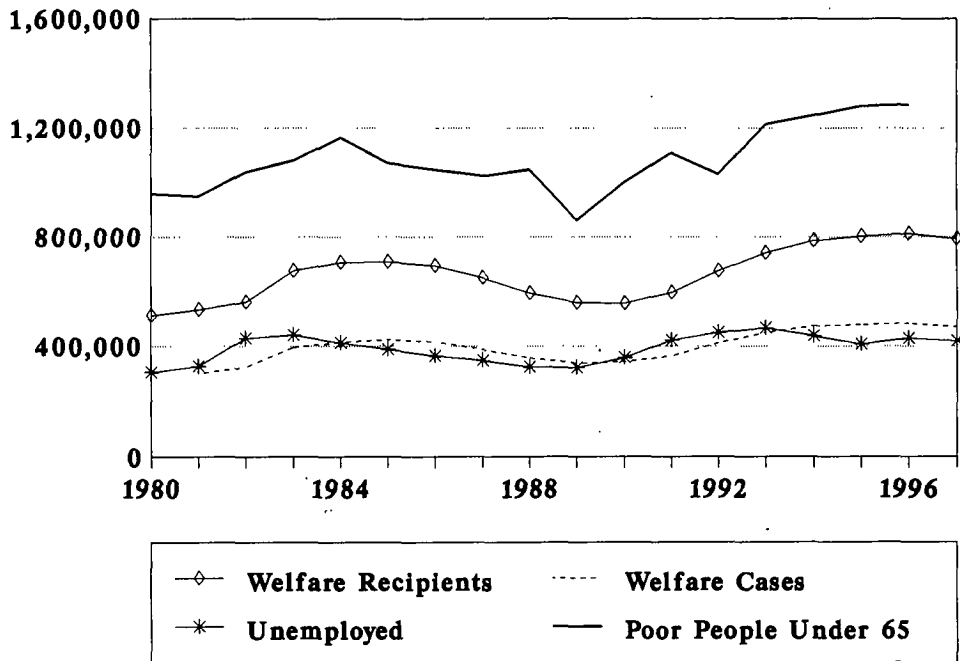
# New Brunswick



	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	66,300	n/a	32,000	95,000
1981	67,400	29,600	34,000	115,000
1982	62,700	29,700	41,000	126,000
1983	70,100	35,000	44,000	133,000
1984	68,600	35,100	45,000	127,000
1985	69,100	35,400	47,000	104,000
1986	68,800	35,800	46,000	96,000
1987	73,700	36,400	43,000	103,000
1988	70,600	35,400	40,000	88,000
1989	67,700	34,600	42,000	86,000
1990	67,200	34,800	41,000	90,000
1991	71,900	37,800	43,000	89,000
1992	78,200	41,500	44,000	87,000
1993	78,100	42,100	44,000	90,000
1994	73,500	40,000	44,000	103,000
1995	67,400	36,500	41,000	118,000
1996	67,100	35,500	41,000	107,000
1997	70,600	36,200	46,000	n/a

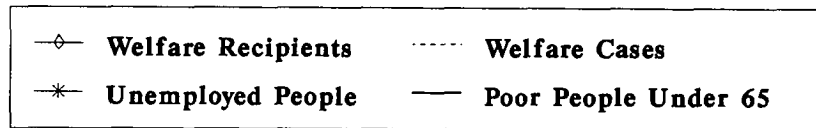
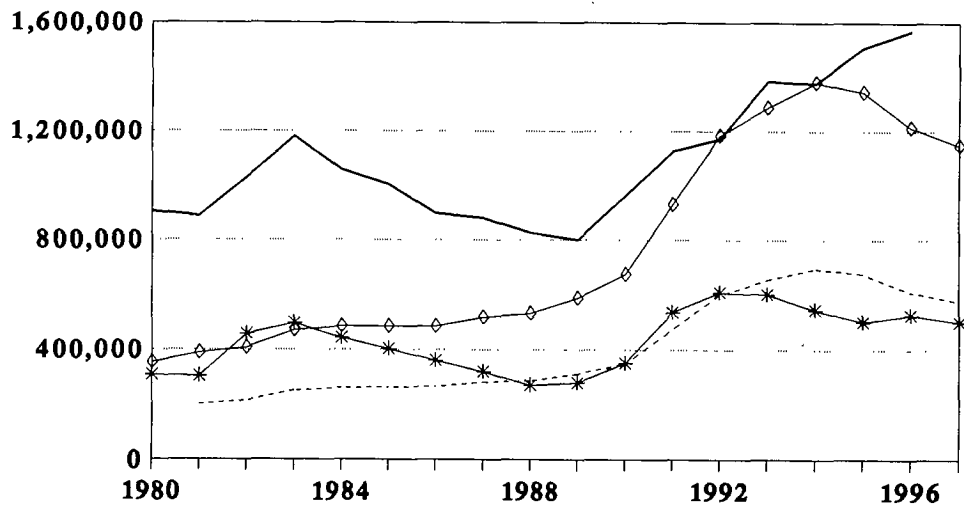


# Quebec



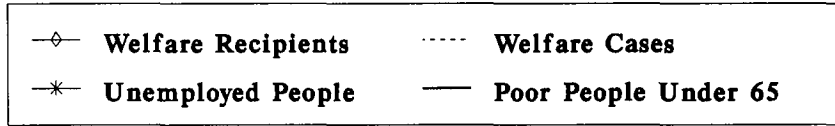
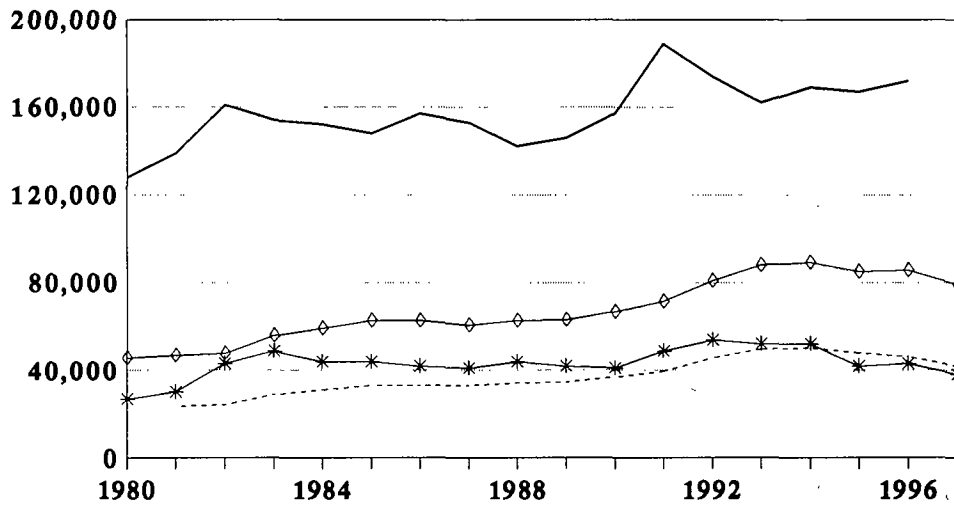
	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	511,900	n/a	306,000	959,000
1981	532,900	302,300	327,000	949,000
1982	561,900	325,400	428,000	1,038,000
1983	675,800	396,800	441,000	1,080,000
1984	705,900	415,300	412,000	1,165,000
1985	708,700	424,400	390,000	1,072,000
1986	693,900	416,100	365,000	1,048,000
1987	649,600	390,100	349,000	1,024,000
1988	594,000	357,900	325,000	1,048,000
1989	559,300	340,700	324,000	861,000
1990	555,900	343,900	359,000	1,000,000
1991	594,900	366,200	423,000	1,109,000
1992	674,900	413,400	450,000	1,032,000
1993	741,400	450,700	467,000	1,214,000
1994	787,200	473,000	438,000	1,248,000
1995	802,200	479,400	408,000	1,283,000
1996	813,200	483,100	430,000	1,288,000
1997	793,300	470,400	420,000	n/a

# Ontario



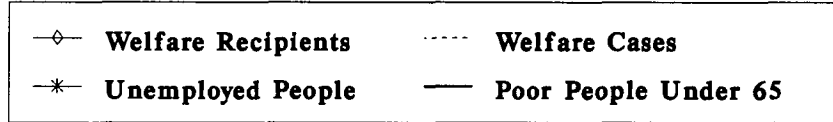
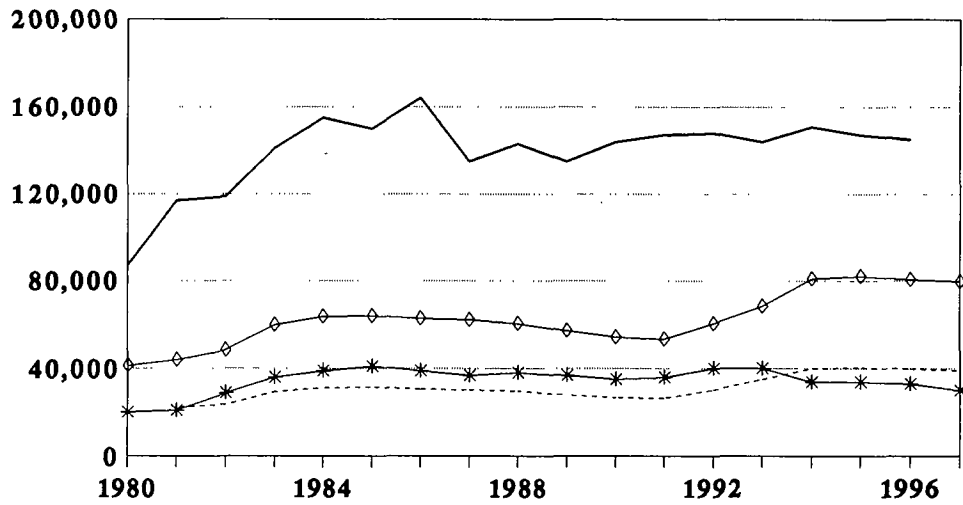
	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	354,800	n/a	310,000	903,000
1981	389,800	203,100	305,000	887,000
1982	406,800	214,900	458,000	1,028,000
1983	471,200	253,100	497,000	1,181,000
1984	484,600	261,500	442,000	1,057,000
1985	485,800	264,900	404,000	1,002,000
1986	485,800	266,400	361,000	896,000
1987	518,400	283,400	321,000	880,000
1988	533,500	288,200	272,000	826,000
1989	588,200	314,400	280,000	801,000
1990	675,700	349,200	351,000	962,000
1991	929,900	474,900	538,000	1,128,000
1992	1,184,700	600,800	609,000	1,173,000
1993	1,287,000	656,900	604,000	1,384,000
1994	1,379,300	696,800	547,000	1,376,000
1995	1,344,600	678,400	501,000	1,505,000
1996	1,214,600	611,900	528,000	1,570,000
1997	1,149,000	578,300	502,000	n/a

# Manitoba



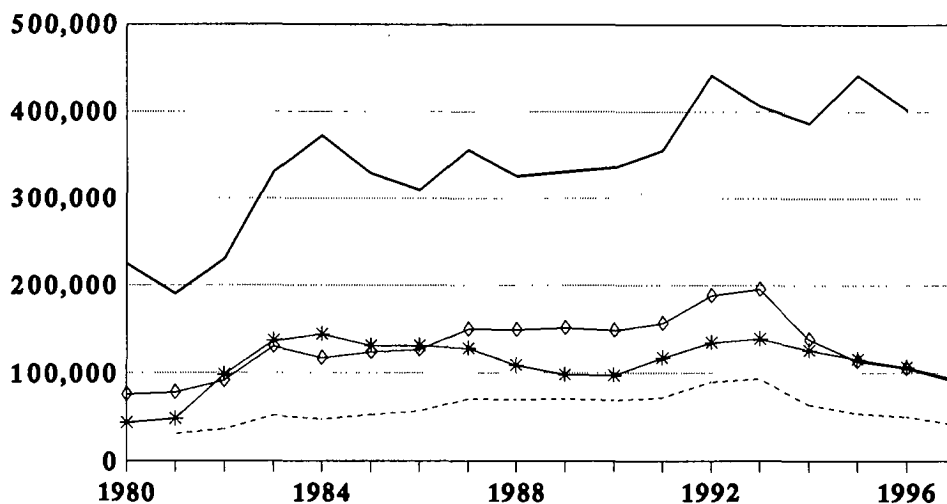
	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	45,600	n/a	27,000	128,000
1981	46,900	23,600	30,000	139,000
1982	47,800	24,100	43,000	161,000
1983	55,900	29,000	49,000	154,000
1984	59,200	31,100	44,000	152,000
1985	62,800	33,100	44,000	148,000
1986	62,600	33,000	42,000	157,000
1987	60,600	33,200	41,000	153,000
1988	62,700	34,300	44,000	142,000
1989	63,000	34,500	42,000	146,000
1990	66,900	36,800	41,000	157,000
1991	71,700	39,400	49,000	189,000
1992	80,900	45,600	54,000	174,000
1993	88,000	49,800	52,000	162,000
1994	89,300	50,400	52,000	169,000
1995	85,200	48,000	42,000	167,000
1996	85,800	46,200	43,000	172,000
1997	79,100	41,800	38,000	n/a

# Saskatchewan



	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	41,400	n/a	20,000	87,000
1981	43,800	22,600	21,000	117,000
1982	48,400	23,600	29,000	119,000
1983	59,700	29,500	36,000	141,000
1984	63,700	31,400	39,000	155,000
1985	64,000	31,600	41,000	150,000
1986	62,700	30,800	39,000	164,000
1987	62,100	30,500	37,000	135,000
1988	60,300	29,900	38,000	143,000
1989	57,200	28,000	37,000	135,000
1990	54,100	26,800	35,000	144,000
1991	53,400	26,700	36,000	147,000
1992	60,400	30,500	40,000	148,000
1993	68,200	35,000	40,000	144,000
1994	81,000	40,200	34,000	151,000
1995	82,200	40,400	34,000	147,000
1996	80,600	39,800	33,000	145,000
1997	79,700	39,100	30,000	n/a

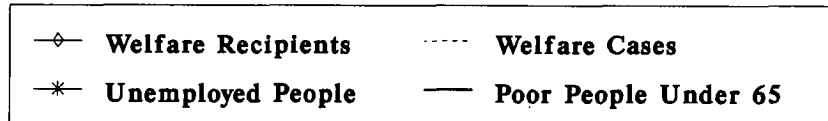
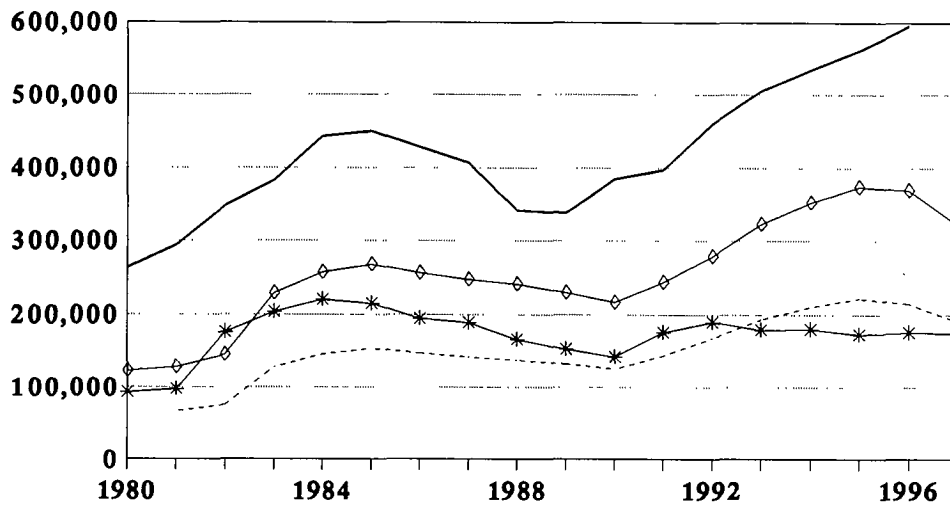
# Alberta



◇ Welfare Recipients      - - - Welfare Cases  
 \* Unemployed People      — Poor People Under 65

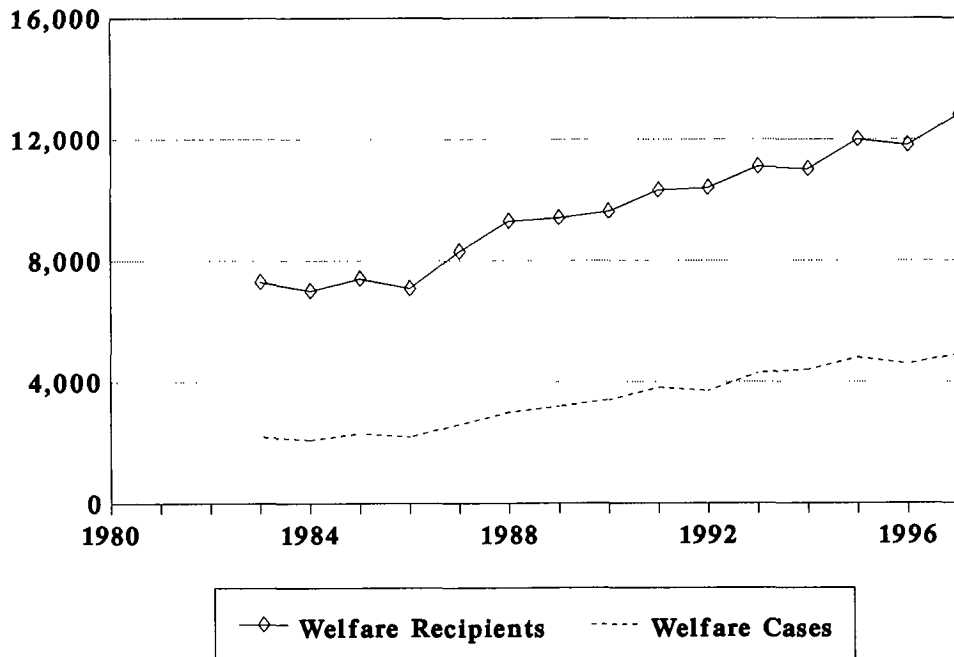
	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	76,100	n/a	44,000	225,000
1981	78,100	31,500	48,000	191,000
1982	91,700	36,300	98,000	230,000
1983	130,600	51,500	137,000	331,000
1984	117,100	47,000	144,000	373,000
1985	124,100	52,600	131,000	329,000
1986	126,600	57,000	131,000	310,000
1987	150,500	71,200	128,000	357,000
1988	149,800	69,900	109,000	326,000
1989	151,700	71,200	98,000	331,000
1990	148,800	69,300	97,000	336,000
1991	156,600	72,500	117,000	356,000
1992	188,300	89,600	135,000	442,000
1993	196,000	93,600	139,000	407,000
1994	138,500	64,500	126,000	387,000
1995	113,200	54,100	116,000	442,000
1996	105,600	50,500	107,000	402,000
1997	89,800	41,700	93,000	n/a

# British Columbia



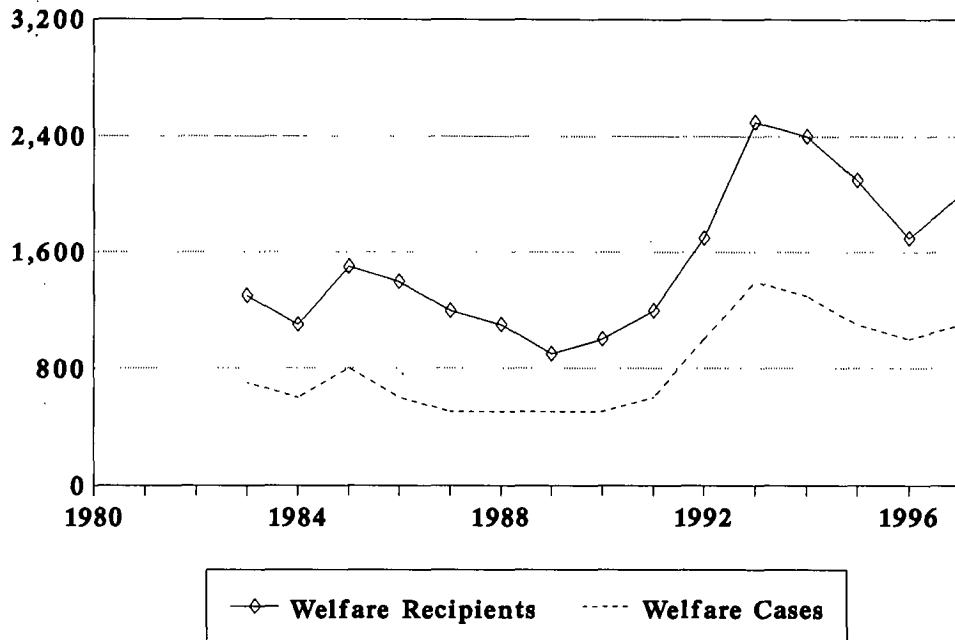
	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases	Unemployed People	Poor People Under 65
1980	122,800	n/a	93,000	263,000
1981	128,000	66,300	97,000	294,000
1982	144,900	75,200	176,000	349,000
1983	228,800	127,900	203,000	383,000
1984	257,100	146,000	220,000	443,000
1985	267,600	153,400	215,000	450,000
1986	255,700	147,600	194,000	428,000
1987	247,700	142,300	189,000	407,000
1988	241,100	138,000	166,000	342,000
1989	230,000	133,000	153,000	339,000
1990	216,000	125,700	142,000	385,000
1991	244,000	144,500	176,000	397,000
1992	279,300	167,700	190,000	461,000
1993	323,300	193,800	179,000	506,000
1994	353,500	210,400	180,000	535,000
1995	374,300	221,800	173,000	562,000
1996	369,900	214,700	176,000	596,000
1997	321,300	191,200	175,000	n/a

# Northwest Territories



	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases
1980	Figures not available until 1983	
1981		
1982		
1983	7,300	2,200
1984	7,000	2,100
1985	7,400	2,300
1986	7,100	2,200
1987	8,300	2,600
1988	9,300	3,000
1989	9,400	3,200
1990	9,600	3,400
1991	10,300	3,800
1992	10,400	3,700
1993	11,100	4,300
1994	11,000	4,400
1995	12,000	4,800
1996	11,800	4,600
1997	12,800	4,900

# Yukon



	Welfare Recipients	Welfare Cases
1980	Figures not available until 1983	
1981		
1982		
1983	1,300	700
1984	1,100	600
1985	1,500	800
1986	1,400	600
1987	1,200	500
1988	1,100	500
1989	900	500
1990	1,000	500
1991	1,200	600
1992	1,700	1,000
1993	2,500	1,400
1994	2,400	1,300
1995	2,100	1,100
1996	1,700	1,000
1997	2,000	1,100



**INDEX TO GRAPHS AND TABLES**

<b><u>Variable</u></b>	<b><u>Page Numbers</u></b>
Family Type	8, 10, 12, 20, 34, 39, 48, 55
Reasons for Assistance	15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 27, 45, 49, 56
Provincial Breakdowns	12, 18, 30, 36, 37, 43, 51, 58
Current Spell on Welfare	24, 25, 27, 28, 30
Education	41, 43
Other Sources of Income	46, 48, 49, 51
Housing	53, 55, 56, 58
Age	21, 33, 34, 36
Children	37, 39
Family Size	13, 39

**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WELFARE**

Mr. John Murphy (Chairperson)

Canning, Nova Scotia

Mr. Armand Brun (Vice-Chairperson)

Shediac, New Brunswick

Ms. Doris Bernard

Radisson, Quebec

Ms. Olive Crane

Mt. Stewart, Prince Edward Island

Ms. Helen Margaret Finucane

Regina, Saskatchewan

Mr. Charles H. Forsyth

Hamilton, Ontario

Mr. Bruce Hardy

Surrey, British Columbia

Ms. Dana Howe

Windsor, Ontario

Mr. David S. Northcott

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Ms. Lorraine Tordiff

Fort Smith, Northwest Territories

Ms. Claudette Toupin

St. Bruno, Quebec

\*\*\*\*\*

Director: Steve Kerstetter

Senior Researcher and Policy Adviser: Joanne Roulston

Consultant: Helen Berry

Liaison Officer: Carole Lanthier Bayram

Publications Officer: Anna Kyle

## NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WELFARE

The National Council of Welfare was established by the Government Organization Act, 1969, as a citizens' advisory body to the federal government. It advises the Minister of Human Resources Development on matters of concern to low-income Canadians.

The Council consists of members drawn from across Canada and appointed by the Governor-in-Council. All are private citizens and serve in their personal capacities rather than as representatives of organizations or agencies. The membership of the Council has included past and present welfare recipients, public housing tenants and other low-income people, as well as educators, social workers and people involved in voluntary or charitable organizations.

Reports by the National Council of Welfare deal with a wide range of issues on poverty and social policy in Canada, including: income security programs, welfare reform, medicare, poverty lines and poverty statistics, the retirement income system, taxation, labour market issues, social services and legal aid.

On peut se procurer des exemplaires en français de toutes les publications du Conseil national du bien-être social, en s'adressant au Conseil national du bien-être social, 2<sup>e</sup> étage, 1010 rue Somerset ouest, Ottawa K1A 0J9.