Welfare Children in Tennessee: Who Are They and How Are They Doing?

A Report to the Tennessee Department of Human Services

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Introduction

This document presents an extensive statistical portrait of children in welfare households in Tennessee. When *Families First* was implemented in 1996, a major concern among policy makers and researchers was that imposing time limits and work requirements on welfare parents would unnecessarily harm children in the system. Fears of increased child poverty rates, diminished health and social well-being, or reductions in educational outcomes weighed heavily on the minds of these individuals. We address these fears in the pages that follow, relying on a number of rich data sources.

Despite ongoing concerns over the impact of welfare reform on children, relatively little research on the topic has been undertaken. A synthesis of this research reveals that welfare reform has had both positive and negative effects on children and that the effects may vary with the age of the child. A general theme among existing studies is that "there is little evidence that elementary-school-aged children are harmed by the welfare reform packages built into the (mid-1990s welfare reform) experiments" (Duncan and Chase-Lansdale, 2001, p. 403).[1] The same authors note that not all of the evidence has been positive, however. Adolescents, especially in experiments in Canada and Florida, have fared less well. In a summary of recent research, Grogger et al. (2002) note evidence of unfavorable impacts of welfare reform for adolescents, especially in regard to school performance. Further, Paxson and Waldfogel (1999) find that lower welfare benefits may lead to an increase in "substantiated mistreatment" of children. While the positive results have thus far outnumbered the negative, additional research is needed before any meaningful consensus can arise.

We begin in Section 1 with a detailed investigation of administrative data from the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) ACCENT records. We have built program histories for every child who participated in *Families First* between July 1997 and October 2001, as well as their caretakers and other ineligible children in their households. This data source provides the most thorough statistical portrait of children in welfare families in Tennessee.

Next, we examine a new source of survey data in Section 2: the first wave of the ongoing *Families First Longitudinal Survey* (FFLS). This survey permits a more detailed analysis of child well-being than does the administrative data as it was not designed to be a research tool. The FFLS data include a number of measures of child well-being for more than 2,500 current and former welfare families.

Finally, in Section 3 we present a series of multivariate statistical models that examine the influence of welfare program participation on child well-being at a more aggregated level. In this final section, we study county-level data on an array of indicators of child well-being, both before and after the implementation of *Families First*, controlling for other important factors to gauge the effects of welfare participation on child well-being.

[1] See Morris, et al. (2001), Mistry, et al. (2001), and Kalil, et al. (2001) for additional evidence in support of this conclusion.

Introduction

Key Findings from Administrative Data:

- *Families First* served 313,239 different children between July 1997 and October 2001.
- Nearly one-third of these children accumulated six months or less on the program rolls.
- Only slightly more than 7 percent of welfare children five years old or younger were actually born into the program. The presence of the Family Cap on benefit receipt certainly may have contributed to the low number of on-program births.
- Over 90 percent received Food Stamps or Medicaid/TennCare benefits while on the program.
- If every child ever on *Families First* returned to the program in October 2001 and remained on continuously, less than 4 percent would reach their lifetime limit by the end of 2004.
- Only about one-third of all welfare children have ever exited and reentered the program.
- About 9 percent of all welfare children were in assistance groups (AGs) that reached a short-term (18-month) time limit during our period of analysis.
- Most children were in AGs that were subject to work requirements (55 percent), while only about 27 percent were in AGs that were ever exempt from work requirements.

Key Findings from Survey Data:

- Welfare children are in good health, and their health has not deteriorated over time.
- Children in AGs who have met time limits were more likely to have had a recent dentist visit and to be up-to-date on their shots. However, they were also more likely to have skipped school or been suspended and were less likely to have had a recent well child check-up.
- Welfare exit and reentry does not have a discernible negative impact on child well-being.
- Similarly, parental work participation does not have a negative effect on child well-being.
- Children of respondents who had never been exempt from work requirements are not necessarily worse off than are other children.

Key Findings from the Multivariate Analysis of County Data:

- The percentage of children between ages 0 and 17 who are receiving welfare payments and the value of welfare payments as a share of county personal income have both fallen during the 1990s. These trends have not had dramatically negative effects on child well-being.
- Specifically, the rates of child poverty, adolescent birth, and juvenile court referral have all declined in part due to the reductions in welfare payments as a share of personal income. The only negative effects are slight reductions in value-added test scores in a few subjects.

Analysis of the Administrative Data

The first stage of our research makes use of the entire case history of welfare families in Tennessee, spanning the period from July 1997, when *Families First* was fully phased in, to October 2001. Thus, all children who have ever participated in Families First during this time period are included in the analysis of the administrative data. As shown in Figure 1.1, nearly 120,000 children have been on *Families First* or in *Families First* households each month. The early volatility in the child caseload, as exhibited by the dramatic increase and rather significant drop from mid-1997 and late 1998, is likely the result of incomplete data collection that occurred in the months following the implementation of *Families First*.

Figure 1.2 provides more detail about the children who have either been on *Families First* or who have lived in a participating household. Of the 313,166 children who have appeared at least once in the ACCENT database with a defined eligibility status during our period of analysis, nearly 96 percent are eligible for program participation. The remaining 4.42 percent are ineligible to receive benefits but are likely to be impacted by program rules and caretaker behavior.[2] As their well-being is presumably important to researchers and policy makers, we retain them in our data for this part of the analysis.[3] Figure 1.2 also reveals that approximately 3 percent of these children ever in *Families First* households are last observed as adults in the database, regardless of their eligibility status.

Figure 1.1: Monthly Child Enrollment in Families First

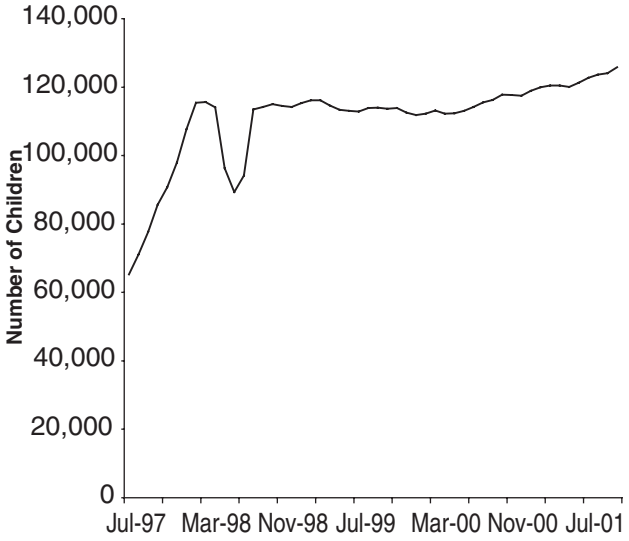
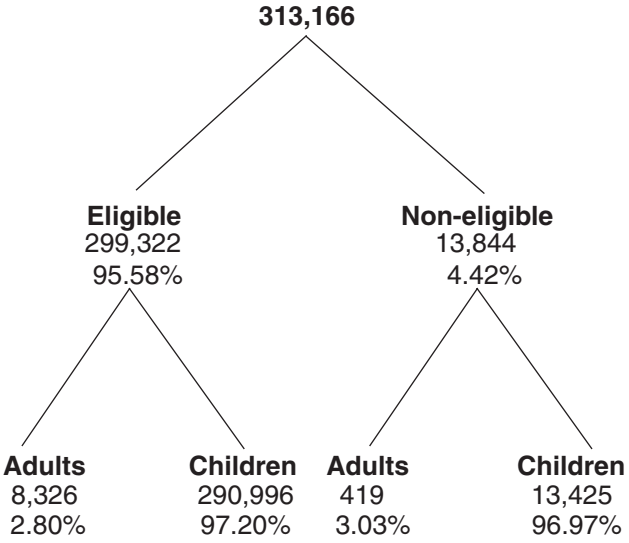


Figure 1.2: Total Number of Children with Defined Eligibility Status



[2] Obviously, to be included in the administrative data, all non-eligible children are in an assistance group with at least one eligible child, a caretaker who is expecting a child, or are an only child and are SSI eligible.

[3] From this point onward in Section 1, phrases such as "Families First children" should be interpreted as inclusive of children who are themselves ineligible, but living with eligible and participating families.

Analysis of the Administrative Data

Most *Families First* children accumulated less than one year of total months on the program during our period of analysis. As shown in Table 1.1, 31.33 percent were on the program for a total of six months or less (not necessarily in one continuous spell). Slightly more than 30 percent were on the program for more than 24 total months. Table 1.1 also shows that welfare duration differs rather significantly by child-only status. Assistance groups that are classified as child-only do not face time limits, work requirements that were designed to encourage the attainment of self-sufficiency, or any other incentives to leave the program. Over 21 percent of children in child-only cases were on the program for 49 months or more, compared to only 3.7 percent of non child-only cases.

Table 1.2 provides a detailed statistical summary of welfare children in Tennessee and is based on data from their last observation in the ACCENT database between July 1997 and October 2001. The first column of statistics reports values for all children. The second and third columns report statistics based on child-only status. The final two columns of the table report statistics based on whether or not a child is a member of an assistance group where the caretaker has ever been exempt from a work requirement. As one group, the children are nearly evenly split between boys and girls, and their predominant race is either black (56.23 percent) or white (41.51 percent). Only about 21 percent were less than two years old when last observed, the remainder being rather evenly distributed across older age categories. Most welfare children (56.37 percent) live in the four urban counties of Knox, Hamilton, Davidson, and Shelby. A substantial number of welfare children received program benefits without an eligible caretaker, as 17.53 percent of them were child-only cases.

Nearly 3 percent were disabled, but most of these (2.71 percent out of a combined 3.05 percent)

Table 1.1: Total Number of Months Children Have Participated in Families First

	All		Child-only		Not Child-only	
Months	Number of children	Percent	Number of children	Percent	Number of children	Percent
6 or less	98,141	31.33	9,081	16.54	89,031	34.47
7 to 12	55,671	17.78	6,269	11.42	49,392	19.12
13 to 24	63,651	20.33	9,572	17.43	54,078	20.94
25 to 36	39,554	12.62	8,053	14.66	31,501	12.20
37 to 48	34,787	11.11	10,101	18.39	24,686	9.56
49 or more	21,435	6.84	11,842	21.56	9,593	3.71
TOTAL	313,239		54,918		258,281	

Source: Authors' calculations using administrative records.
Note: Child-only status can not be determined for 40 children.

Analysis of the Administrative Data

were ineligible for *Families First* benefits. It should be noted that the receipt of disability benefits, likely through the federal Supplemental Security Disability Income (SSDI) program, makes a child ineligible for *Families First*.

Only slightly more than 7 percent of welfare children five years old or younger were actually born into the program. While the original program rules under *Aid to Families with Dependent Children* (AFDC) provided increased benefit payments when new children were born, revised rules after welfare reform have dramatically changed the treatment of newborns. The arrival of a new child does not necessarily lead to an increase in benefits as a result of the new Family Cap provisions.[4] Related to this are the findings that only about 6 percent of all welfare children were themselves minor parents, and less than 3 percent were caretakers of their own *Families First* assistance groups (AGs).

Children in child-only cases are more likely to be white and older, and are less likely to become a minor parent or caretaker of their own assistance group. For the most part, there are few discernible differences in the characteristics of children in AGs that were ever exempt from work requirements versus those in AGs that were never exempt. However, those children from ever-exempt AGs were more likely to be white, older and live in rural areas.

Figures 1.3 and 1.4 provide additional detail regarding the geographic distribution of welfare children in Tennessee. These figures also include detail on the distribution of the general child population for comparison purposes. District 8, Shelby County, contains the largest share of welfare children (33.5 percent); however, it contains only 18 percent of Tennessee's total child population. As a result, most of the remaining districts have much smaller ratios of welfare children to total children. This finding is also supported in Figure 1.4, as the Memphis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) contains nearly 35 percent of all *Families First* children and only 19.6 percent of the general child population. The other MSAs account for about 40 percent of welfare children and have welfare populations that are more proportional to their shares of the total child population. The remaining 25 percent of *Families First* children reside outside of the seven state MSAs, while 31 percent of the state's child population reside in these non-MSA counties.

Table 1.3 provides a portrait of *Families First* caretakers as distributed across children, using data as of their last observation in ACCENT records during our period of analysis. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority (95.93 percent) of all children have a female caretaker, and most children have a caretaker who is from the same ethnic group (as seen when compared with Table 1.2). The age distribution of Families First caretakers across children is quite broad. In terms of caretaker education, about 47 percent of children have a caretaker who has completed high school, while about 41 percent of children have a caretaker who has not completed high school. Most of the remaining 12 percent of children have a caretaker who has participated in some postsecondary education, but less than 1 percent of children have a caretaker who has obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher.

About one-half of the children had caretakers that were single as of their last observation. Only 14.19 percent of children had a married caretaker,

[4] For additional details, see Center for Business and Economic Research (2000).

Analysis of the Administrative Data

Table 1.2: Characteristics of Families First Children as of the Last Observation

		Percentages				
		All	Child-only	Not Child-only	Ever-Exempt	Never-Exempt
Gender	Female	50.13	49.76	50.2	49.91	50.35
(N=312,763)	Male	49.87	50.24	49.8	50.09	49.65
	Black	56.23	51.94	57.14	49.39	61.01
Race/Ethnicity	Hispanic	1.44	2.06	1.31	1.36	1.28
(N=312,763)	Other	0.83	0.69	0.86	0.83	0.87
	White	41.51	45.31	40.7	48.42	36.84
	Infant to 2	20.88	9.26	23.34	15.78	27.12
Age	3 to 5	18.45	11.73	19.87	19.87	19.87
(N=312,763)	6 to 10	27.25	25.64	27.59	29.56	26.61
	11 to 15	20.08	29.11	18.17	21.71	16.4
	16 or older	13.34	24.26	11.03	13.08	10
Urban/Rural Residency Status	Urban	56.37	49.95	57.73	46.94	63.12
(N= 313,189)	Rural	43.63	50.05	42.27	53.06	36.88
Child-Only	Yes	17.53	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
(N=313,239)	No	82.47	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Disability Status	Disabled Eligible	0.34	0.6	0.28	0.36	0.24
(N=313,239)	Disabled Non-Eligible	2.71	3.68	2.51	3.81	1.86
	Not Disabled	96.92	95.72	97.21	95.82	97.9
Born on Families First (if 5 or younger)	Yes	7.33	6.59	7.41	8.39	7.04
(N=123,004)	No	92.67	93.41	92.59	91.61	92.96
Minor Parents	Yes	5.99	2.67	6.69	6.88	6.6
(N=313,239)	No	94.01	97.33	93.31	93.12	93.4
Caretaker of Own AG	Yes	2.65	0.75	3.05	2.81	3.17
(N=313,239)	No	97.35	99.25	96.95	97.19	96.83

Source: Authors' calculations using administrative records.

Notes: Child-only status can not be determined for 40 children.
Ever Exempt and Never-Exempt statistics exclude all child-only cases.
The sample sizes reported above represent a count of all Families First children for which each characteristic is reported; the sample sizes for child-only and work exemption status differ from those reported here.

Analysis of the Administrative Data

Table 1.3: Distribution of Children by Characteristics of Families First Caretakers and Assistance Groups as of the Last Observation

		Percent
Gender of Caretaker (N=313,189)	Female	95.93
	Male	4.07
Race/Ethnicity of Caretaker (N=313,189)	Black	55.35
	Hispanic	1.36
	Other	0.69
	White	42.60
Age of Caretaker (N=313,189)	Under 25	23.86
	25 to 30	27.32
	31 to 40	32.87
	41 or older	15.95
Education of Caretaker (N=260,096)	Less than High School	40.70
	High School	46.87
	Postsecondary	1.20
	Some College	9.34
	Bachelor's / Master's / Associate's degree	0.82
	Other / None	1.16
Marital Status of Caretaker (N=313,189)	Divorced	14.56
	Married	14.19
	Separated	19.76
	Single	49.69
	Widowed	1.80
Number of Adults in AG (N=313,173)	1	95.44
	2 or more	4.56
Number of Children in AG (N=312,798)	1	24.32
	2	32.40
	3	23.23
	4	11.45
	5 or more	8.59
		Mean ($)
Monthly Income (N=313,189)	Earned (N=313,239)	255.44
	Unearned	60.48
	Families First Benefits	172.78
	Income per child (N=312,798)	232.32

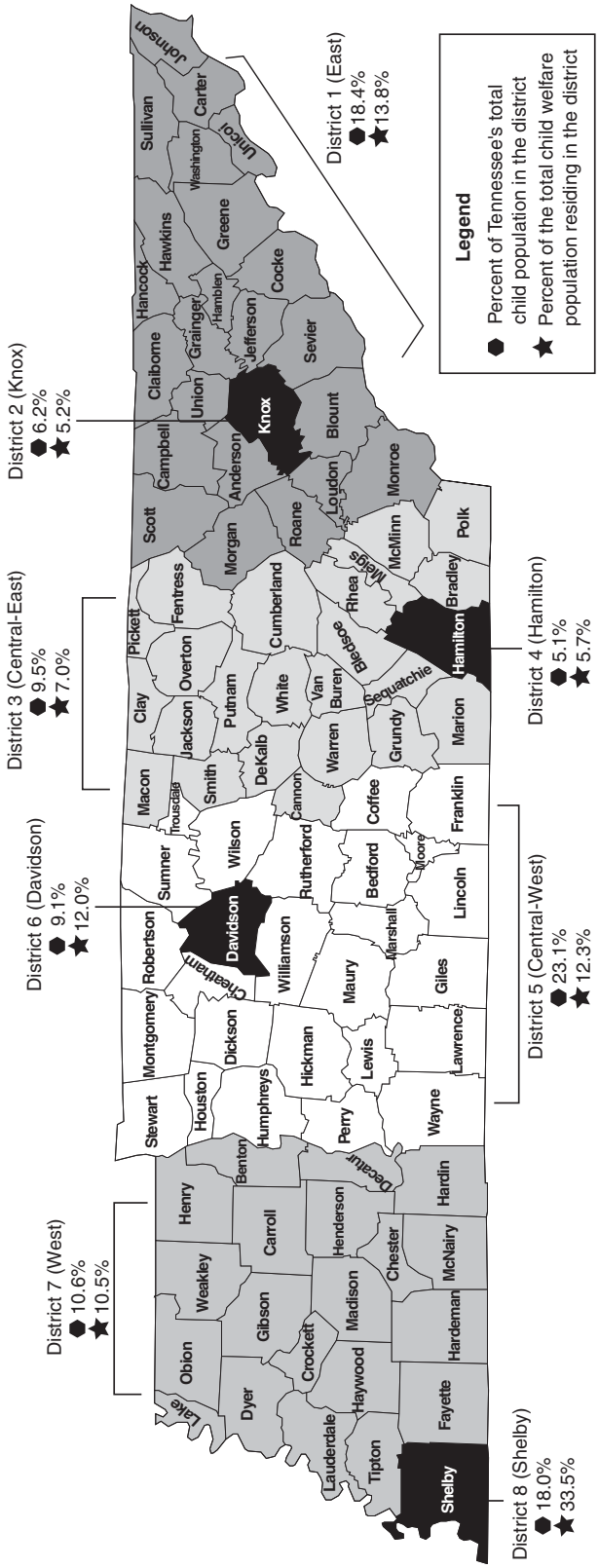
Source: Authors' calculations using administrative records.

Notes: The statistics reported in this table do not represent the percent of caretakers with each characteristic but instead report the percent of children with a caretaker with a particular characteristic.

Mean monthly incomes include caretakers with no earned income.

Analysis of the Administrative Data

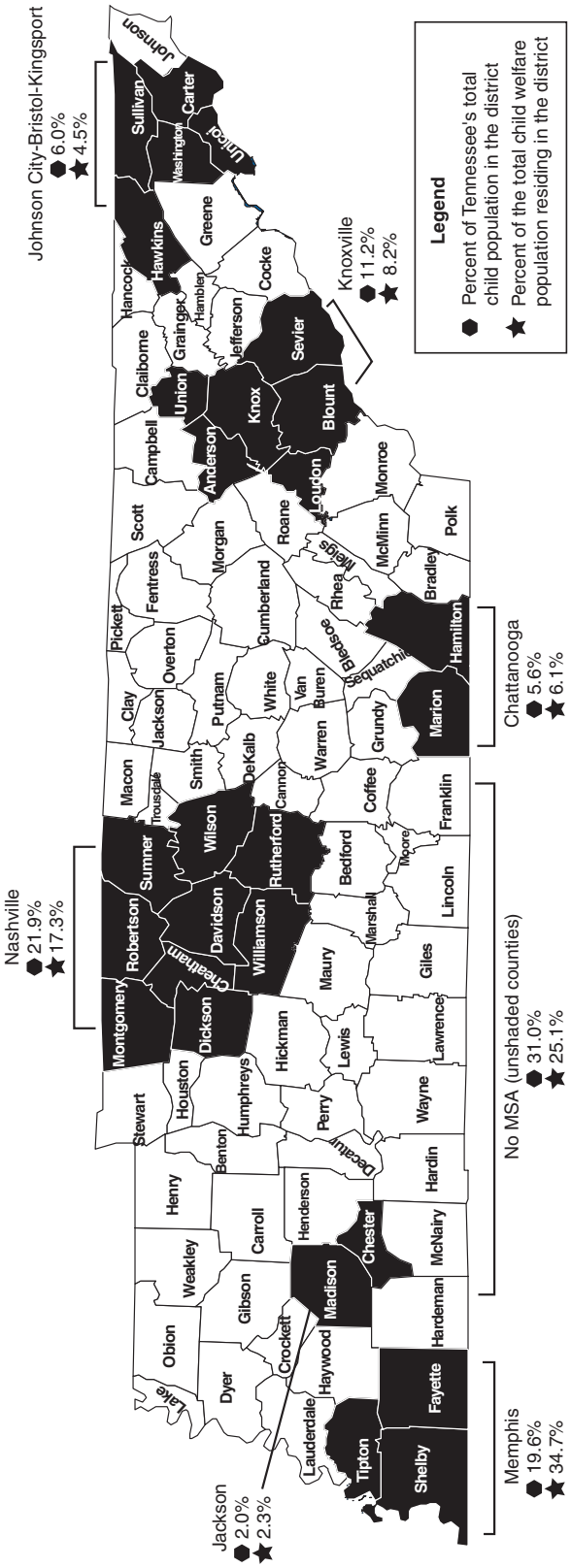
Figure 1.3: Distribution of Children by District (As of the Last Observation)



Source: Tennessee child population data is from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

Analysis of the Administrative Data

Figure 1.4: Distribution of Children by Metropolitan Statistical Area (As of the Last Observation)



Notes: The Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) boundaries are those used for the 1997 Economic Censuses and 2000 Census; MSA counties which are not in Tennessee are not included.
Source: Tennessee child population date is from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.

Analysis of the Administrative Data

and the remainder of the children either had divorced caretakers (14.56 percent), separated caretakers (19.76 percent), or widowed caretakers (1.80 percent). All but 4.56 percent of the children were members of an AG that had only one adult. Furthermore, the image of large welfare families is not supported by these data. Less than 9 percent of all *Families First* children were members of AGs that had five or more children. The most common number of children was two (32.40 percent).

The final section of Table 1.3 presents caretakers' average monthly income amounts from three sources. The average monthly amount of earned income ($255.44), unearned income ($60.48) and *Families First* benefits ($172.78) yielded an amount per child of $232.32.[5] *Families First* children were also likely to be receiving benefits from other sources (Table 1.4). As of their last observation, 8.28 percent of the children were in AGs that were receiving child support, 74.20 percent were receiving Food Stamps, and 95.58 percent were receiving Medicaid (TennCare) benefits.[6] More than 90 percent of all children ever on the program or in participating households between July 1997 and October 2001 received at least one of the latter two benefits at some point during their case history.

Table 1.4: Distribution of Children by Other Forms of Assistance Received By Assistance Groups

	Last Observation	Ever Participated
Child Support	8.28 (N=313,189)	
Food Stamps	74.20 (N=313,189)	92.13 (N=313,239)
Medicaid	95.58 (N=313,189)	98.13 (N=313,239)

Source: Authors' calculations using administrative records.

Our final set of statistics from administrative data sources relates to key program rules, specifically those regarding time limits and work requirements. In Table 1.5 we present a worst-case scenario regarding the lifetime limit of 60 months that a family can receive *Families First* benefits. Assuming that all children ever on the program were to immediately return to the program in October 2001 and remain on the program until their benefits were exhausted, only a very small number—less than 4 percent overall—would reach their lifetime limit by the end of 2004. Slightly more than one-third of all welfare children would reach their lifetime limit under this scenario by the end of 2005.

The imposition of time limits has led many to believe that families would be more likely to exit the program rolls prematurely in an effort to preserve benefits for future use. Such a behavioral response would presumably lead to greater cycling on and off the program, potentially leading to reduced stability and greater administrative costs.[7] However, as shown in Table 1.6, only a little more than one-third of all welfare children have ever exited and reentered the program. About 24 percent have reentered once, 8 percent twice, and just over 2 percent more than twice.

[5] These averages included caretakers with no earned income.

[6] The fact that the Medicaid participation rate is not 100 percent is somewhat surprising considering that all members of the FF assistance group are automatically eligible to receive medical benefits. Perhaps not all children participate because their caretaker has insurance through work or they are covered under an ex-spouse's insurance policy. There is also the possibility that the caseworker never told their caretakers about their eligibility for Medicaid.

[7] For more details regarding welfare reentry in Tennessee, see Bruce, Barbour, and Thacker (2001).

Analysis of the Administrative Data

Table 1.5: Number of Children Who Could Attain 60 Countable Months

	Number of children	Percent	Cumulative percent
Oct-01	6	0.00	0.00
Nov-01	7	0.00	0.00
Dec-01	3	0.00	0.01
Jan-02	1	0.00	0.01
Feb-02	2	0.00	0.01
Mar-02	11	0.00	0.01
Apr-02	16	0.01	0.01
May-02	13	0.00	0.02
Jun-02	21	0.01	0.03
Jul-02	30	0.01	0.04
Aug-02	15	0.00	0.04
Sep-02	24	0.01	0.05
Oct-02	22	0.01	0.05
Nov-02	10	0.00	0.06
Dec-02	27	0.01	0.07
Jan-03	41	0.01	0.08
Feb-03	54	0.02	0.10
Mar-03	45	0.01	0.11
Apr-03	66	0.02	0.13
May-03	94	0.03	0.16
Jun-03	90	0.03	0.19
Jul-03	107	0.03	0.23
Aug-03	180	0.06	0.28
Sep-03	286	0.09	0.37
Oct-03	271	0.09	0.46
Nov-03	250	0.08	0.54
Dec-03	309	0.10	0.64
Jan-04	302	0.10	0.74
Feb-04	432	0.14	0.87
Mar-04	430	0.14	1.01
Apr-04	436	0.14	1.15
May-04	520	0.17	1.32
Jun-04	625	0.20	1.52
Jul-04	622	0.20	1.71
Aug-04	715	0.23	1.94
Sep-04	940	0.30	2.24
Oct-04	1123	0.36	2.60
Nov-04	1254	0.40	3.00
Dec-04	1684	0.54	3.54
Jan-05	2321	0.74	4.28
Feb-05	2954	0.94	5.22
Mar-05	4851	1.55	6.77
Apr-05	6405	2.05	8.82
May-05	7326	2.34	11.16
Jun-05	8744	2.79	13.95
Jul-05	9066	2.89	16.84
Aug-05	9490	3.03	19.87
Sep-05	10226	3.27	23.14
Oct-05	11037	3.52	26.66
Nov-05	10888	3.48	30.14
Dec-05	11584	3.70	33.84
Jan-06	12109	3.87	37.70
Feb-06	12370	3.95	41.65
Mar-06	13802	4.41	46.06
Apr-06	15010	4.79	50.85
May-06	14978	4.78	55.64
Jun-06	16297	5.20	60.84
Jul-06	18411	5.88	66.72
Aug-06	18198	5.81	72.53
Sep-06	16234	5.18	77.71

Note: 69,800 observations were either child-only cases or were from AGs which are exempt from time limits.

Analysis of the Administrative Data

Work requirements for caretakers were implemented to encourage workforce participation and increase-self-sufficiency, which would result in a reduction in the length of benefit receipt. The results from Table 1.7 indicate that children in AGs with a caretaker that has never been exempt from the work requirement have a significantly shorter duration of benefit receipt. Roughly 41 percent of those in never-exempt AGs have been on the program for 6 months or less, while only 21 percent of those in ever-exempt AGs fall into this category.

Information on the cycling patterns for children by the child-only status of their assistance groups and the work requirement status of their caretakers is also included in Table 1.6. Children in child-only cases are much less likely to have an occurrence of reentry during the period of analysis.

Table 1.6: Number of Times a Child's Assistance Group Has Exited and Returned to Families First

	All		Child-only		Not Child-only		Ever-Exempt		Never-Exempt	
Number of reentries	Number of children	Percent of children	Number of children	Percent of children	Number of children	Percent of children	Number of children	Percent of children	Number of children	Percent of children
0	204,912	65.42	47,221	85.98	157,655	61.04	47,534	55.25	110,121	63.93
1	76,088	24.29	6,678	12.16	69,406	26.87	24,773	28.80	44,633	25.91
2	25,059	8.00	911	1.66	24,148	9.35	10,214	11.87	13,934	8.09
3	5,947	1.90	90	0.16	5,857	2.27	2,860	3.32	2,997	1.74
4	1,118	0.36	14	0.03	1,104	0.43	584	0.68	520	0.30
5 or more	115	0.04	4	0.01	111	0.04	64	0.07	47	0.03
Total	**313,239**		**54,918**		**258,281**		**86,029**		**172,252**	

Source: Authors' calculations using administrative records.

Notes: Child-only status can not be determined for 40 children.
Ever-exempt and never-exempt statistics exclude all child-only cases.

Table 1.7: Total Number of Months Children Have Participated in Families First by Work Requirement Exemption Status

	Ever-Exempt		Never-Exempt	
Months	Number of children	Percent	Number of children	Percent
6 or less	18,227	21.19	70,804	41.10
7 to 12	15,161	17.62	34,231	19.87
13 to 24	21,006	24.42	33,072	19.20
25 to 36	14,815	17.22	16,686	9.69
37 to 48	12,100	14.07	12,586	7.31
49 or more	4,720	5.49	4,873	2.83
TOTAL	**86,029**		**172,252**	

Source: Authors' calculations using administrative records.
Note: Child-only cases were excluded from these calculations.

Analysis of the Administrative Data

Only 61 percent of children in non child-only cases have never exited and returned to the program, compared to nearly 86 percent of children in child-only cases. However, given their longer duration, child-only cases are probably less likely to leave the program and thus could not possibly experience reentry. Children in assistance groups that have never been exempt from work requirements are less likely to have ever exited and reentered the program.[8] This result is perhaps unsurprising considering caretakers who have never been exempt from work requirements have acquired the work experience and skills necessary to achieve self-sufficiency.

Interestingly, Table 1.8 shows that only 8.6 percent of all welfare children in Tennessee were in AGs that reached a short-term (18-month) time limit during our period of analysis. Most children had caretakers that were subject to work requirements (55.00 percent), while only 27.47 percent had caretakers that were ever exempt from work requirements, and only 17.53 percent were in child-only AGs. Of the sweeping changes to welfare policy during the late 1990s, then, it appears that work requirements have affected more children than time limits have. As the program gets older, however, the number of children in time-limit constrained AGs is likely to increase.

Given the implementation of time limits, work requirements and various other changes in the welfare program since July of 1997, we might expect the characteristics of welfare children to change over time as various types of assistance groups would be affected in different ways. Table 1.9 explores the possibility that the general composition of the population of welfare children has changed over time. Children were assigned to one of two groups. Group 1 represents those children who left the program permanently prior to January of 2000. Group 2 represents those children who either left the program some time later or were still on the program in October of 2001. Notice that the children in Group 2 are more likely to be black, younger, in a child-only assistance group, born onto *Families First* and are more likely to live in an urban area. However, the fact that more children in Group 2 were born on the program does not necessarily suggest that the Family Cap policy has failed. It may merely suggest that those children who are born on the program are members of assistance group with a longer duration of benefit receipt.

Table 1.8: Distribution of Children by Time Limit Exposure and Work Requirement Exemption Status

Time Limits (N=313,189)	Percentage	Work Requirement Exemption (N=313,199)	Percent
Ever reached 18-month limit	8.60	Ever exempt	27.47
Never reached 18-month limit	73.87	Never exempt	55.00
Child only case	17.53	Child only case	17.53

Source: Authors' calculations using administrative records.

[8] This result is consistent with the findings of Bruce, Deskins, and Thacker (Forthcoming).

Analysis of the Administrative Data

Table 1.9: Characteristics of Families First Children by Time of Their Last Observation

		Percentages		
		All	Group 1	Group 2
Gender	Female	50.13	49.68	50.33
(N=312,763)	Male	49.87	50.32	49.67
	Black	56.23	48.57	59.62
Race/Ethnicity	Hispanic	1.44	1.39	1.46
(N=312,763)	Other	0.83	0.96	0.77
	White	41.51	49.08	38.15
	Infant to 2	20.88	19.39	21.54
Age	3 to 5	18.45	17.43	18.9
(N=312,763)	6 to 10	27.25	25.96	27.83
	11 to 15	20.08	18.81	20.64
	16 or older	13.34	18.41	11.09
Urban/Rural Residency Status	Urban	56.37	49.56	59.39
(N= 313,189)	Rural	43.63	50.44	40.61
Child-Only	Yes	17.53	14.07	19.07
(N=313,239)	No	82.47	85.93	80.93
Disability Status	Disabled Eligible	0.34	0.38	0.32
(N=313,239)	Disabled Non-Eligible	2.71	2.57	2.78
	Not Disabled	96.92	97.05	96.9
Born on Families First (if 5 or younger)	Yes	7.33	3.78	8.77
(N=123,004)	No	92.67	96.22	91.23
Minor Parents	Yes	5.99	95.7	93.27
(N=313,239)	No	94.01	4.3	6.73
Caretaker of Own AG	Yes	2.65	96.59	97.69
(N=313,239)	No	97.35	3.41	2.31

Source: Authors' calculations using administrative records.

Notes: Group 1 represents those children who left the program prior to January of 2000. Group 2 represents those children who left the program during January of 2000 or some time after and also includes those who were still on the program in October of 2001.

The sample sizes reported above represent a count of all Families First children for which each characteristic is reported; the sample sizes for Group 1 and Group 2 differ from those reported here.

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Realizing that ACCENT was not originally intended as a data resource for research purposes, a group of research organizations across the state of Tennessee has collaborated to develop and administer a detailed survey of current and former welfare participants.[9] Three waves of this survey, the *Families First Longitudinal Survey* (FFLS), have been administered, but data from only the first wave are utilized in this report.[10] The survey data go far beyond administrative data in assessing overall child well-being. It should be noted, however, that when responding to questions about child well-being in the survey, participants were asked to consider all of their children collectively. Despite the lack of individual-level information in the data, the responses are quite interesting and useful.[11]

The FFLS was composed of a non-random sample of non-child-only cases that were active in January of 2001. Individuals participating in Family Services Counseling (FSC) or Adult Basic Education (ABE) participants were over-sampled in order to meet various research objectives of other organizations. A random sample of 2,700 active participants was drawn, along with over-samples of 774 participants from FSC and 185 participants from ABE. A total of 2,596 individuals responded to the first wave of the survey between February and December of 2001.[12]

The Adult Basic Education and Family Services Counseling programs are designed to provide extra assistance in the form of educational training and counseling services to the most needy welfare participants. As a result of the over sampling of participants in these programs, the children represented by the survey may face additional barriers impeding positive outcomes than does the average child represented in the administrative data. Sample weights have been developed which would control for the effects of the over sampling on the survey responses. However, the main focus of this analysis is the children of the survey respondents. Many of the statistics are reported as a share of children represented by the survey respondents, which makes the use of sample weights potentially inappropriate.[13] Tables 2.1 through 2.6 provide similar background information to that in Section 1 of this report. Because the FFLS is based on a cross-section of current and former participants, the composition of the sample may be quite different than that of the population presented in the administrative data above. When examining all current and former participants in Section 1, we were able to include all of the short-term recipients from the historical data. Focusing on a single point-in-time cross section increases the percentage of long-term recipients in the analysis.

The more than 2,500 respondents provide information on the number, ages, and relationships of more than 5,900 children in their households.[14] Their age distribution (Table 2.1) is slightly older than that for the entire history of *Families First*

[9] These organizations include the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Memphis, the UT College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service, the UT Center for Literacy Studies, UT-CBER, and DHS.

[10] The first draft of this report utilized data from the initial release of the first wave data. However, the revised version of the data for wave one has since become available and is used to update this analysis. For the most part the findings of the first draft are confirmed by this analysis.

[11] Future waves of the FFLS will contain child-specific responses to a number of useful questions regarding well-being.

[12] While preliminary analysis did not reveal severe survey non-response bias, a complete analysis has not yet been completed. The possibility remains that response was nonrandom, but we are confident that the results in this report are indeed representative.

[13] It should be noted that the analysis has been repeated using only the random sample. The vast majority of the results from this analysis are very similar to the ones presented here.

[14] Not all children in survey households are Families First eligible. Unlike with the administrative data, we cannot identify which or how many are not eligible.

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

children in Table 1.2 above. Nearly 96 percent of the survey children are sons or daughters (Table 2.2), the remainder being stepchildren, grandchildren, foster children, etc. Nearly 60 percent of these children are in households with single respondents (Table 2.3), and over 29 percent were in either separated or divorced households.

Table 2.4 reveals that almost 60 percent of the survey respondents reported being of African-American race. These respondents were responsible for roughly 65 percent of the children. Another 38 percent of respondents and 33 percent of children were white, leaving less than 2 percent in other racial categories. Unsurprisingly, nearly 98 percent of the respondents were female (Table 2.5). Male respondents were only responsible for 2.13 percent of the children in surveyed households.[15] Table 2.6 presents the age distribution of survey respondents along with the distribution of children according to the age of the respondents (not of the children themselves). These distributions are quite similar, but it is clear that older respondents tended to report slightly more children.

Table 2.1: Number of Children by Age

Age in years	Number	%
Less than 1	458	7.74
1	439	7.42
2	500	8.45
3	501	8.47
4	409	6.92
5	380	6.43
6	376	6.36
7	374	6.32
8	352	5.95
9	327	5.53
10	336	5.68
11	281	4.75
12	251	4.24
13	221	3.74
14	205	3.47
15	183	3.09
16	169	2.86
17	152	2.57
Total	**5,914**	

Table 2.2: Relationship to Caretaker

	Number	%
Son/Daughter	5,659	95.69
Step-child	13	0.22
Grandchild	102	1.72
Other relative	114	1.93
Foster child	5	0.08
Other non-relative	21	0.36
Total	**5,914**	

[15] Due to the nature of the survey, there is no way to easily identify whether these respondents represented single adult families.

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.3: Marital Status of the Survey Respondent

Status	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Single, never been married	1,533	59.28	3,524	59.78
Engaged to be married	28	1.08	66	1.12
Married	218	8.43	508	8.62
Married, but separated or divorced	772	29.85	1,710	29.01
Widow	22	0.85	60	1.02
Widower	1	0.04	1	0.02
None of the above, living with a mate	12	0.46	26	0.44
Total number of respondents	**2,586**		**5,895**	

Table 2.4: Race/Ethnicity of the Survey Respondent

Race/Ethnicity	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
African-American	1,545	59.63	3,835	64.94
White	998	38.52	1,968	33.33
Hispanic	13	0.50	32	0.54
Asian/Pacific Islander	6	0.23	10	0.17
Multiracial	14	0.54	29	0.49
Native American	8	0.31	16	0.27
Other	6	0.23	11	0.19
No response	1	0.04	4	0.07
Total number of respondents	**2,591**		**5,905**	

Table 2.5: Gender of Survey Respondent

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Male	65	2.51	126	2.13
Female	2,528	97.49	5,783	97.87
Total number of respondents	**2,593**		**5,909**	

Table 2.6: Age of Survey Respondent

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
20 or younger	188	9.72	342	5.79
21 - 25	546	28.22	1,505	25.47
26 - 30	468	24.19	1,637	27.70
31 - 35	313	16.18	1,233	20.86
35 - 40	234	12.09	684	11.57
41 or older	183	9.46	496	8.39
No response	3	0.16	13	0.22
Total number of respondents	**1,935**		**5,910**	

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Tables 2.7 through 2.13 provide our first look at the well-being of children in welfare families, and all pertain to various aspects of health. Interestingly, less than 7 percent of all respondents (representing a similar percentage of the children) report that their children's health is less than good; i.e., either fair or poor. Most responses indicated either excellent or very good health. Not only are these children apparently in good health, but their health is relatively stable or improving relative to 12 months prior to the survey. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported that their children's health was about the same as 12 months ago, while most of the remainder reported that their children's health was either much or somewhat better.

The next two tables, 2.9 and 2.10, remind us that we are dealing with survey data. Despite the finding that child health is primarily good and improving, Table 2.9 gives us the somewhat disturbing result that one-third of the children in surveyed families had not been to see a dentist during the past 12 months. This result is somewhat surprising considering that dental care for children is covered by Medicaid; however, on the other hand, dental check ups are not a required activity under *Families First* policy. Alternatively, only just over 5 percent had not had a well-child checkup during the same period (Table 2.10). This low non-participation rate reflects the fact that well-child visits are mandatory to receive full benefits. On an equally positive note, Table 2.11 shows us that over 96 percent of them were up-to-date on their shots at the time of the survey.

As shown in Table 2.12, about 19 percent of the survey respondents reported that one or more of their children had a physical condition that limited their participation in activities. These respondents represented nearly 22 percent of all the children, but it is not clear how many from this group were limited by such a condition and how many of them were themselves eligible for *Families First* benefits. A slightly smaller but still significant percentage reported a learning or mental condition that limits the child's ability to do school work (Table 2.13).

Table 2.7: Children's Health Rating

Rating	Respondents	%	Kids	Kid %
Excellent	1,095	42.33	2,446	41.52
Very good	556	21.49	1,295	21.98
Good	756	29.22	1,755	29.79
Fair	161	6.22	359	6.09
Poor	18	0.70	36	0.61
Don't know	1	0.04	0	0
No response	0	0	0	0
Total number of respondents	**2,587**		**5,891**	

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.8: Children's Health Rating Compared to 12 Months Ago

Rating	Respondents	%	Kids	Kid %
Much better	371	14.34	811	13.74
Somewhat better	460	17.78	1,055	17.88
About the same	1,644	63.55	3,834	64.97
Somewhat worse	68	2.63	142	2.41
Much worse	6	0.23	15	0.25
Don't know	6	0.23	5	0.08
No response	32	1.24	39	0.66
Total number of respondents	**2,587**		**5,901**	

Table 2.9: Number of Dentist Trips by Children

Trips	Respondents	%	Kids	Kid %
0	1052	40.68	2,050	34.81
1	682	26.37	1,629	27.66
2	588	22.74	1,521	25.83
3	114	4.41	318	5.40
4	58	2.24	163	2.77
5 or more	61	2.36	166	2.82
Don't know	10	0.39	19	0.32
No response	21	0.81	23	0.39
Total number of respondents	**2,586**		**5,889**	

Table 2.10: Number of Well-child Checkups by Children

Checkups	Respondents	%	Kids	Kid %
0	151	6.49	337	5.72
1	790	33.96	1,864	31.62
2	658	28.29	1,423	24.14
3	325	13.97	703	11.93
4	270	11.61	641	10.87
5 or more	98	4.21	855	14.50
Don't know	24	1.03	62	1.05
No response	10	0.43	10	0.17
Total number of respondents	**2,326**		**5,895**	

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.11: Are Families First Children up to Date on Their Shots?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kid %
Yes	2,476	96.64	5,593	96.02
No	76	2.97	211	3.62
Don't know	5	0.2	11	0.19
No response	5	0.2	10	0.17
Total number of respondents	**2,562**		**5,825**	

Table 2.12: Do Any of Your Children Have a Physical Condition that Limits Their Participation in Activities?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kid %
Yes	487	18.82	1,270	21.54
No	2,093	80.87	4,615	78.26
Don't know	4	0.15	5	0.08
No response	4	0.15	7	0.12
Total number of respondents	**2,588**		**5,897**	

Table 2.13: Do Any of Your Children Have a Learning or Mental Condition that Limits Their Ability To Do School Work?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kid %
Yes	374	14.45	1,069	18.13
No	1,286	49.69	3,260	55.30
Do not have school aged children	924	35.70	1,554	26.36
Don't know	2	0.08	6	0.10
No response	2	0.08	6	0.10
Total number of respondents	**2,588**		**5,895**	

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Tables 2.14 through 2.19 provide similar information regarding education. While the vast majority of respondents reported that their children never skipped school, nearly 12 percent reported that their children have skipped school at least once (Table 2.14). A larger share reported that their children had been suspended once (11.81 percent) or two or more times (9.92). Nearly one in five respondents reported that their children have changed schools during the previous 12 months (Table 2.16). More than one-fourth reported that their children had ever been in special education, although it should be noted that the wording of this survey question permits the inclusion of gifted education in special education.

Approximately one in four respondents, representing nearly one-third of all of the children in surveyed families, reported that their children had participated in either a sports team, extracurricular lessons of some type, or a club or other organization (Table 2.18). Respondents whose children did not participate reported a number of reasons in Table 2.19. Having a child who was either too young (52.45 percent) or not interested (24.52 percent) were the most prominent reasons given, but lack of access to transportation (12.38 percent) and the inability to pay the requisite fees for participation (16.63 percent) were also common responses.

Table 2.14: How Often Do Children Skip School?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Never	1,480	87.52	3,827	86.37
Once	99	5.85	294	6.64
2 or more times	103	6.09	291	6.57
Does not apply	5	0.30	11	0.25
Don't know	2	0.12	1	0.02
No response	2	0.12	7	0.16
Total number of respondents	**1,691**		**4,431**	

Table 2.15: Have Any of Your Children Been Suspended or Expelled from School?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Never	1,320	77.97	3,299	74.39
Once	200	11.81	610	13.75
2 or more times	168	9.92	518	11.68
Does not apply	2	0.12	4	0.09
Don't know	2	0.12	3	0.07
No response	1	0.06	1	0.02
Total number of respondents	**1,693**		**4,435**	

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.16: How Many Times Did Your Children Change Schools in the Past 12 Months?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Never	1,348	79.62	3,498	78.87
Once	270	15.95	746	16.82
2 or more times	70	4.13	185	4.17
Does not apply	2	0.12	2	0.05
Don't know	2	0.12	3	0.07
No response	1	0.06	1	0.02
Total number of respondents	**1,693**		**4,435**	

Table 2.17: Have Any of Your Children Ever Been in Special Education?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Yes	414	24.48	1,221	27.54
No	1,267	74.93	3,195	72.07
Don't know	9	0.53	16	0.36
No response	1	0.06	1	0.02
Total number of respondents	**1,691**		**4,433**	

Table 2.18: How Many Respondents Have Children Who Have Participated in the Following Activities?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Sports team (n=2,593)	692	26.69	1,890	32.00
Lessons is music, dance, language or computers (n=2,592)	651	25.12	1,767	29.92
Clubs or organizations (n=2,587)	721	27.87	1,940	32.95

Table 2.19: Main Reasons Children Did Not Participate in Any of These Activities

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Child was not interested (n=2,043)	501	24.52	1,204	27.30
None avilable in the area (n=2,044)	144	7.05	361	8.18
Transportation problems (n=2,035)	252	12.38	632	14.39
Couldn't afford the fees (n=2,039)	339	16.63	851	19.35
Waiting list to get in (n=2,037)	39	1.91	94	2.13
Child too young (n=2,021)	1,060	52.45	2,003	45.87

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Tables 2.20 through 2.24 provide some more general detail regarding child well-being. More than half of the respondents noted that their children were cared for by someone other than the respondents themselves for more than 30 hours per week on average, suggesting that child care remains an important issue for welfare participants. On this same note, however, it is at least mildly refreshing to learn in Table 2.21 that less than 2 percent of all respondents reported their children either take care of themselves or stay alone with siblings under age 13 when other child care is not available. On the other hand, this may be a low estimate of the actual number of children who are left without adult supervision. On top of the general tendency to under-report socially stigmatized behavior, respondents may fear being reported to their caseworker or the Department of Children's Services and thus under-report the number of hours their children spend alone.

Over 66 percent of the survey respondents reported that they or their children participate in free or reduced-cost meals at school, perhaps assisting with the good health ratings in previous tables. More than three-fourths of the respondents reported that they either agree or strongly agree with the statement that they usually feel safe on their neighborhood streets. Unfortunately, however, nearly 14 percent disagreed and almost 5 percent strongly disagreed. Regarding the notion that "this is a good place to raise children," slightly fewer respondents agreed (Table 2.24).[16]

Table 2.20: In the Last Month, About How Many Hours Per Week Were Your Children Cared for by Someone Other Than Yourself?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
0-10	174	17.01	400	16.45
11-20	124	12.12	291	11.97
21-30	117	11.44	258	10.61
31-40	490	47.90	1,204	49.51
41 or more	64	6.26	145	5.96
Does not apply	26	2.54	61	2.51
Don't know	28	2.74	73	3.00
Total number of respondents	**1,023**		**2,432**	

Table 2.21: On the Occasions That Child Care is Not Available, Do Your Children Take Care of Themselves or Stay Alone with a Brother or Sister Aged 13 or Younger?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Yes	2	1.96	7	2.79
No	89	87.25	224	89.24
Don't know	0	0	0	0
Does not apply	11	10.78	20	7.97
No response	0	0	0	0
Total number of respondents	**102**		**251**	

[16] A number of additional tables from the survey data are presented in the Appendix in Table A.1.

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.22: Did You or Your Children Ever Receive Free or Reduced Cost Breakfasts and Lunches at School?

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Yes	1,729	66.71	4,401	74.48
No	822	31.71	1,440	24.37
Don't know	6	0.23	8	0.14
No response	35	1.35	60	1.02
Total number of respondents	**2,592**		**5,909**	

Table 2.23: I Usually Feel Safe on My Neighborhood Streets

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Strongly agree	676	26.15	1,455	24.70
Agree	1,383	53.50	3,056	51.88
No opinion	44	1.70	109	1.85
Disagree	349	13.50	926	15.72
Strongly disagree	129	4.99	340	5.77
No response	4	0.15	4	0.07
Total number of respondents	**2,585**		**5,890**	

Table 2.24: This is a Good Place to Raise Children

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Strongly agree	406	15.71	861	14.61
Agree	1,502	58.10	3,286	55.76
No opinion	84	3.25	211	3.58
Disagree	413	15.98	1,087	18.45
Strongly disagree	176	6.81	441	7.48
No response	4	0.15	7	0.12
Total number of respondents	**2,585**		**5,893**	

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

While the preceding analysis has revealed a number of important details regarding the child welfare caseload in Tennessee, little has yet been said about the impact of welfare participation and various *Families First* policies on child well-being. Tables 2.25 through 2.28 take the first step on this important mission. When possible we make use of administrative data merged with the survey data to define welfare participation, time limit, and work requirement histories.

Table 2.25 presents the distribution of children in various categories (according to their respondents' answers, of course) separately for those in families who have reached an 18-month time limit versus those who have not. Again, due to the snapshot nature of the survey sample which captures more long-term recipients as described above, nearly 7.35 percent of the children were in families that had reached an 18-month time limit by the time of the survey. Among the interesting differences presented in this table is the finding that, while child health ratings are similar across the time-limit categories, those who have met time limits were more likely to have had a dentist visit but were slightly less likely to have had a well-child checkup. They were also slightly more likely to be up-to-date on their shots. However, children in families who have met time limits were more likely to have skipped school or been suspended and were slightly more likely to have been cared for by someone other than their respondent for more than 30 hours per week.

Table 2.26 presents breakdowns of the same set of characteristics, this time separated by the number of spells on *Families First*. One relatively unexplored area involves the potential effects of cycling on and off welfare on child well-being. The first few panels of Table 2.26 do not reveal a reduction in health as the number of spells increases. Indeed, the data in Table 2.26 do not exhibit any uniform trends in well-being as the number of spells increases. In short, it is not clear from this analysis that welfare exit and reentry has a negative impact on child well-being. Results are similar to those in Table 2.27, which presents the same characteristics by three categories of welfare duration, although those with more previous welfare participation were likely to have more dentist visits and well child checkups. They were also more likely to have skipped school or been suspended.

Tables 2.28 and 2.29 get at the issue of the respondents' work participation and its effects on welfare children. Children of working respondents (as defined in the survey data) were more likely to have had dentist visits and slightly less likely to have had well-child checkups, but other characteristics were largely similar. Unsurprisingly, children of working respondents were more likely to be in child care for longer hours each week. It is not clear that a parent's work participation has a negative effect on these measures of child well-being. To take a more careful look at welfare policies surrounding work effort, Table 2.29 divides the families by whether or not the respondent had ever been exempt from a work requirement.[17] Again, no dramatic differences arise between the two groups. Children of respondents who had never been exempt from work requirements are not necessarily worse off than are other children.[18]

[17] It should be noted that exemptions from work requirements could be either short or long term exemptions. The structure of the administrative data makes identifying the type of exemption difficult; therefore, this analysis makes no attempt to compare child outcomes by the length of the exemption.

[18] The lack of findings on effects of exemptions on child well-being could have been the result of two trends canceling each other out. Exempted families would be likely to have more "troubles," but being exempted may allow them to deal with them more effectively.

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

The remaining tables in this section further divide the children by their respondent's marital status (Table 2.30), monthly income (Table 2.31), and educational achievement (Table 2.32). To summarize the findings from this exercise, the respondent's marital status (single vs. other) does not correspond with noticeably better or worse child well-being. Having monthly income greater than the sample mean of $558 also yields no discernible differences, with the sole exception being that higher income families report being cared for by someone else more often than lower income families (presumably due to respondent's income-generating activity). Children of respondents with more than a high school education, as shown in Table 2.32, are quite similar to other children except that they are more likely to have been cared for by others.

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.25: Select Survey Child Outcomes by 18-month Time Limit Experience

	Reached Time Limit		Did Not Reach Time Limit	
	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %
Children's Health Rating				
Excellent	153	35.42	2,281	41.96
Very good	106	24.54	1,186	21.82
Good	156	36.11	1,594	29.32
Fair	13	3.01	343	6.31
Poor	4	0.93	32	0.59
Children's Health Rating Compared to 12 Months Ago				
Better	116	26.79	1,743	32.01
Same	315	72.75	3,506	64.39
Worse	2	0.46	152	2.80
Number of Dentist Trips By Children				
0	101	23.33	1,939	35.69
1	150	34.64	1,474	27.13
2	115	26.56	1,399	25.75
3 or more	67	15.47	580	10.67
Number of Well-child Checkups By Children				
0	28	6.47	308	5.66
1	185	42.73	1,676	30.81
2	80	18.48	1,331	24.47
3 or more	137	31.64	2,055	37.81
Are Families First Children Up To Date On Their Shots?				
Yes	424	99.07	5,152	95.82
How often do children skip school?				
Never	256	85.62	2,537	87.60
1 or more	43	14.38	350	12.09
Have any of your children been suspended or expelled from school?				
Never	218	72.91	2,190	75.54
Once or more	81	27.09	705	24.32
In the last month, about how many hours per week were your children cared for by someone other than yourself?				
0-10	22	11.18	376	16.87
11-20	35	17.77	256	11.48
21-30	23	11.67	235	10.54
31-40	106	53.81	1,094	49.08
41 or more	2	1.02	143	6.42

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.26: Select Survey Child Outcomes by the Number of Families First Spells

	Spells = 1		Spells=2		Spells=3+	
	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %
Children's Health Rating						
Excellent	1,213	41.80	758	39.23	463	44.78
Very good	624	21.50	456	23.60	212	20.50
Good	861	29.67	594	30.75	295	28.53
Fair	184	6.34	114	5.90	58	5.61
Poor	20	0.69	10	0.52	6	0.58
Children's Health Rating Compared to 12 Months Ago						
Better	946	32.52	623	32.19	290	28.05
Same	1,827	62.81	1,275	65.89	719	69.54
Worse	94	3.23	37	1.92	23	2.22
Number of Dentist Trips By Children						
0	1,115	38.45	590	30.54	335	32.40
1	727	25.07	597	30.90	300	29.01
2	750	25.86	520	26.92	244	23.60
3 or more	279	9.62	213	11.02	155	14.98
Number of Well-child Checkups By Children						
0	167	5.74	104	5.39	65	6.27
1	858	29.50	661	34.28	342	33.01
2	743	25.55	436	22.61	232	22.39
3 or more	1,112	38.24	691	35.84	389	37.57
Are Families First Children Up To Date On Their Shots?						
Yes	2,766	96.21	1,813	95.57	997	96.52
How often do children skip school?						
Never	1,203	87.11	997	86.92	593	88.91
1 or more	172	12.45	150	13.08	71	10.65
Have any of your children been suspended or expelled from school?						
Never	1,024	73.99	866	75.50	518	77.66
Once or more	356	25.73	281	24.50	149	22.33
In the last month, about how many hours per week were your children cared for by someone other than yourself?						
0-10	188	16.20	158	19.80	52	11.11
11-20	126	10.87	104	13.03	61	13.03
21-30	133	11.47	68	8.53	57	12.18
31-40	581	50.10	376	47.12	243	51.93
41 or more	76	6.55	37	4.65	32	6.84

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.27: Select Survey Child Outcomes by Cumulative Welfare Duration

	1 year or less		2 to 3 years		More Than 3 Years	
	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %
Children's Health Rating						
Excellent	336	43.24	1,025	42.64	1,073	39.93
Very good	184	23.68	548	22.80	560	20.84
Good	215	27.67	668	27.79	867	32.27
Fair	40	5.15	148	6.16	168	6.25
Poor	2	0.26	15	0.62	19	0.71
Children's Health Rating Compared to 12 Months Ago						
Better	270	34.75	765	31.79	824	30.57
Same	455	58.56	1,558	64.75	1,808	67.09
Worse	28	3.60	63	2.61	63	2.34
Number of Dentist Trips By Children						
0	349	44.86	949	39.48	742	27.65
1	192	24.68	634	26.37	798	29.73
2	157	20.18	598	24.88	759	28.28
3 or more	63	8.09	209	8.70	375	13.96
Number of Well-child Checkups By Children						
0	43	5.53	144	6.00	149	5.53
1	207	26.64	700	29.15	954	35.41
2	197	25.35	565	23.53	649	24.09
3 or more	321	41.31	963	40.07	908	33.72
Are Families First Children Up To Date On Their Shots?						
Yes	740	95.36	2,276	95.99	2,560	96.31
How often do children skip school?						
Never	308	91.12	308	91.12	1,043	89.37
1 or more	30	8.88	30	8.88	119	10.20
Have any of your children been suspended or expelled from school?						
Never	295	87.28	933	79.95	1,180	69.70
Once or more	43	12.73	230	19.71	513	30.30
In the last month, about how many hours per week were your children cared for by someone other than yourself?						
0-10	53	17.20	149	13.89	196	18.76
11-20	32	10.38	118	10.99	141	13.49
21-30	40	12.98	118	11.00	100	9.58
31-40	157	50.96	555	51.72	488	46.70
41 or more	22	7.14	70	6.52	53	5.08

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.28: Select Survey Child Outcomes by Respondent's Work Status

	Working		Not Working	
	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %
Children's Health Rating				
Excellent	844	41.45	1,600	41.56
Very good	448	22.00	845	21.95
Good	633	31.09	1,121	29.12
Fair	97	4.76	262	6.81
Poor	14	0.69	22	0.57
Children's Health Rating Compared to 12 Months Ago				
Better	657	32.22	1,206	31.27
Same	1,337	65.57	2,495	64.69
Worse	36	1.77	121	3.14
Number of Dentist Trips By Children				
0	674	33.09	1,372	35.66
1	586	28.77	1,043	27.11
2	518	25.43	1,002	26.05
3 or more	246	12.08	401	10.41
Number of Well-child Checkups By Children				
0	124	6.07	213	5.54
1	658	32.21	1,205	31.32
2	484	23.69	938	24.38
3 or more	748	36.61	1,448	37.65
Are Families First Children Up To Date On Their Shots?				
Yes	1,940	96.13	3,648	95.95
How often do children skip school?				
Never	1,105	87.63	1,693	87.31
1 or more	150	11.9	243	12.54
Have any of your children been suspended or expelled from school?				
Never	955	75.55	1,457	75.14
Once or more	309	24.45	478	24.65
In the last month, about how many hours per week were your children cared for by someone other than yourself?				
0-10	132	11.52	267	20.79
11-20	134	11.71	157	12.22
21-30	133	11.62	125	9.74
31-40	639	55.86	563	43.83
41 or more	84	7.34	61	4.75

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.29: Select Survey Child Outcomes by Respondent's Work Requirement Exemption Status

	Ever Exempt		Never Exempt	
	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %
Children's Health Rating				
Excellent	1,016	40.24	1,418	42.42
Very good	552	21.86	740	22.14
Good	770	30.50	980	29.31
Fair	177	7.01	179	5.35
Poor	10	0.40	26	0.78
Children's Health Rating Compared to 12 Months Ago				
Better	825	32.68	1,034	30.84
Same	1,627	64.44	2,194	65.43
Worse	65	2.58	89	2.66
Number of Dentist Trips By Children				
0	822	32.57	1,218	36.45
1	765	30.31	859	25.70
2	666	26.39	848	25.37
3 or more	256	10.14	391	11.71
Number of Well-child Checkups By Children				
0	157	6.22	179	5.35
1	801	31.74	1,060	31.66
2	600	23.77	811	24.22
3 or more	936	37.09	1,256	37.53
Are Families First Children Up To Date On Their Shots?				
Yes	2,380	96.24	3,196	95.92
How often do children skip school?				
Never	1,159	86.36	1,634	88.18
1 or more	183	13.64	210	11.33
Have any of your children been suspended or expelled from school?				
Never	1,032	76.73	1,376	74.26
Once or more	310	23.05	476	25.69
In the last month, about how many hours per week were your children cared for by someone other than yourself?				
0-10	167	18.73	231	15.06
11-20	115	12.90	176	11.49
21-30	90	10.08	168	10.96
31-40	410	45.96	790	51.52
41 or more	44	4.94	101	6.59

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.30: Select Survey Child Outcomes by Respondent's Marital Status

	Single		Other	
	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %
Children's Health Rating				
Excellent	1,521	43.40	919	38.83
Very good	753	21.48	535	22.60
Good	994	28.36	755	31.90
Fair	222	6.33	137	5.79
Poor	15	0.43	21	0.89
Children's Health Rating Compared to 12 Months Ago				
Better	1,147	32.66	709	29.92
Same	2,242	63.84	1,583	66.79
Worse	85	2.42	72	3.04
Number of Dentist Trips By Children				
0	1,250	35.63	795	33.66
1	913	26.03	714	30.23
2	934	26.62	575	24.34
3 or more	378	10.78	269	11.37
Number of Well-child Checkups By Children				
0	202	5.76	135	5.70
1	997	28.42	863	36.44
2	842	24.00	577	24.37
3 or more	1,409	40.17	781	33.00
Are Families First Children Up To Date On Their Shots?				
Yes	3,333	96.39	2,243	95.53
How often do children skip school?				
Never	1,647	87.00	1,141	87.9
1 or more	239	12.63	155	11.94
Have any of your children been suspended or expelled from school?				
Never	1,420	74.89	982	75.65
Once or more	475	25.06	313	24.12
In the last month, about how many hours per week were your children cared for by someone other than yourself?				
0-10	228	14.19	171	20.87
11-20	183	11.39	108	13.18
21-30	180	11.21	74	9.03
31-40	829	51.61	373	45.54
41 or more	103	6.39	42	5.13

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.31: Select Survey Child Outcomes by Respondent's Monthly Income

	Income < $558		Income > $558	
	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %
Children's Health Rating				
Excellent	1,015	42.42	827	42.22
Very good	558	23.32	409	20.88
Good	649	27.12	617	31.50
Fair	154	6.44	93	4.75
Poor	17	0.71	13	0.66
Children's Health Rating Compared to 12 Months Ago				
Better	732	30.54	704	35.81
Same	1,561	65.12	1,208	61.44
Worse	75	3.13	44	2.24
Number of Dentist Trips By Children				
0	889	37.10	630	32.21
1	634	26.46	555	28.37
2	608	25.38	540	27.61
3 or more	246	10.26	217	11.09
Number of Well-child Checkups By Children				
0	124	5.19	128	6.49
1	700	29.31	588	29.82
2	605	25.34	505	25.61
3 or more	930	38.95	727	36.85
Are Families First Children Up To Date On Their Shots?				
Yes	2,270	96.27	1,864	95.64
How often do children skip school?				
Never	1,472	88.89	1,326	85.83
1 or more	181	10.93	213	13.79
Have any of your children been suspended or expelled from school?				
Never	1,272	76.81	1,140	73.64
Once or more	383	23.12	405	26.17
In the last month, about how many hours per week were your children cared for by someone other than yourself?				
0-10	169	19.13	141	14.24
11-20	114	12.92	108	10.91
21-30	91	10.31	114	11.51
31-40	399	45.20	517	52.23
41 or more	37	4.20	77	7.78

Analysis of FFLS Survey Data

Table 2.32: Select Survey Child Outcomes By Respondent's Educational Achievement

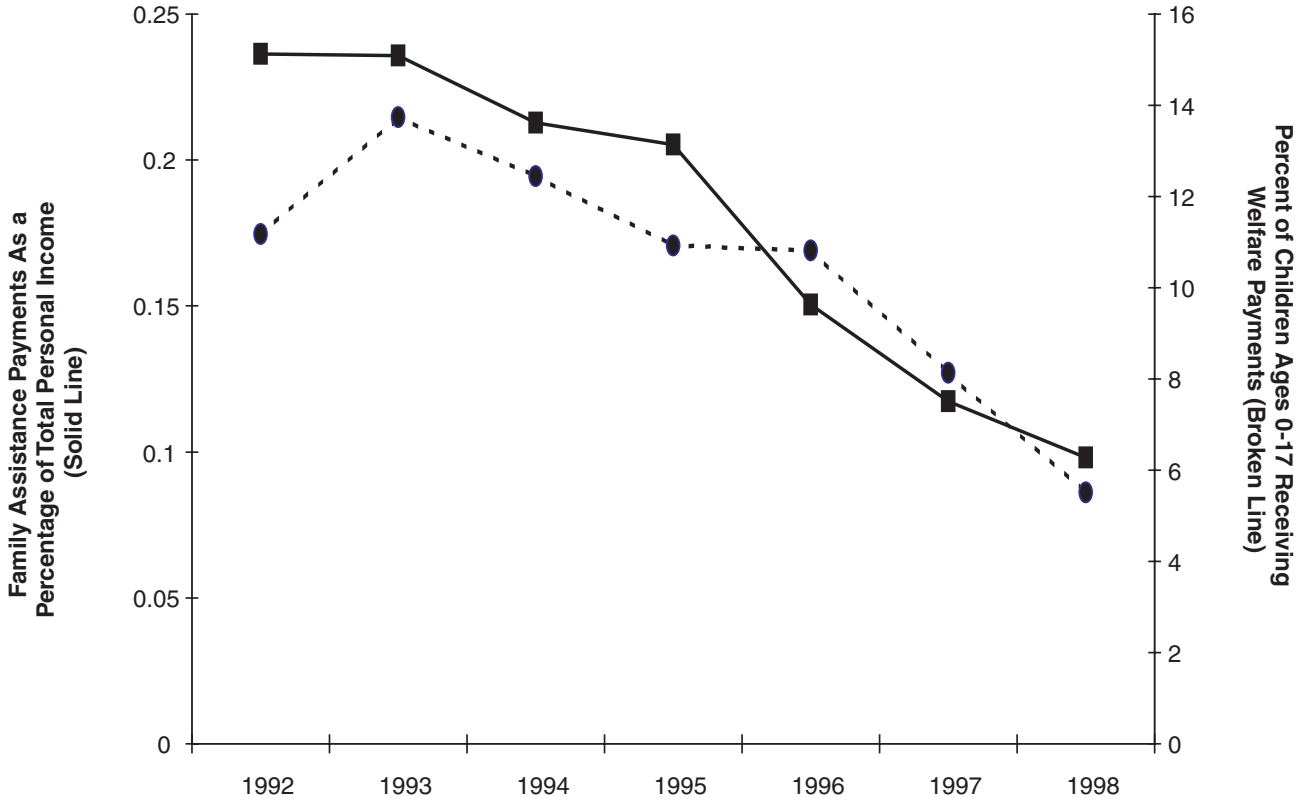
	Post High School		High School or Less	
	Kids	Kids %	Kids	Kids %
Children's Health Rating				
Excellent	1,407	42.10	435	43.07
Very good	764	22.86	203	20.10
Good	983	29.41	283	28.02
Fair	170	5.09	77	7.62
Poor	18	0.54	12	1.19
Children's Health Rating Compared to 12 Months Ago				
Better	1,175	35.04	261	25.84
Same	2,054	61.26	715	70.79
Worse	88	2.63	31	3.07
Number of Dentist Trips By Children				
0	1,186	35.48	333	33.00
1	835	24.98	354	35.08
2	899	26.89	249	24.68
3 or more	392	11.73	71	7.04
Number of Well-child Checkups By Children				
0	199	5.95	53	5.23
1	920	27.49	368	36.33
2	883	26.38	227	22.41
3 or more	1,293	38.63	364	35.94
Are Families First Children Up To Date On Their Shots?				
Yes	3,172	95.95	962	96.10
How often do children skip school?				
Never	2,128	87.64	670	86.68
1 or more	292	12.02	102	13.20
Have any of your children been suspended or expelled from school?				
Never	1,814	74.62	598	77.36
Once or more	613	25.21	175	22.64
In the last month, about how many hours per week were your children cared for by someone other than yourself?				
0-10	254	19.26	56	10.08
11-20	174	13.20	48	8.64
21-30	123	9.34	82	14.77
31-40	576	43.71	340	61.26
41 or more	93	7.06	21	3.78

Multivariate Analysis of County-Level Data

While the preceding investigation of administrative and survey data provides many important and useful results regarding child well-being, those data sources do not permit an adequate assessment of the effects of *Families First* on child outcomes. Furthermore, they do not permit an analysis of the changes in these possible effects before and after *Families First* was implemented. Future survey data will better serve the first of these goals on a micro level, but no good micro data exist that can allow us to compare the effects of AFDC with those of *Families First*. To approach these issues with currently available information at a more aggregated level, we now present an analysis of county-level data to gain a better sense of the potential impacts of welfare participation on various measures of child well-being.

Figure 3.1 presents simple statewide averages, calculated across 95 county observations in seven separate years, of our two key measures of AFDC and *Families First* participation. The first, measured on the left scale, is the amount of total family assistance payments in the county (either AFDC or *Families First*, depending on the year of the observation) as a share of total county personal income. The second, measured on the right scale, is the percentage of all children between the ages of 0 and 17 who received welfare payments in each year. Both of these series exhibit noticeable downward trends during the middle 1990s. It is interesting to note that the downward trend actually began before *Families First* was implemented in 1996. While the new program rules undoubtedly contributed to these trends, the remarkably strong state and national economic

Figure 3.1: Welfare Measures



Multivariate Analysis of County-Level Data

situation also played a key role. It should also be noted that the timing of the caseload and spending declines is very consistent with national trends.

Our focus in this section is on the effects of this reduction in program payments and participation on key measures of child well-being as measured by indicators of health, social well-being, and education. Of key concern to those who opposed the 1996 policy changes was the fear that time limits, work requirements, and other rule changes would unnecessarily harm children in welfare families. Figure 3.2 presents statewide averages for our first three outcome measures:

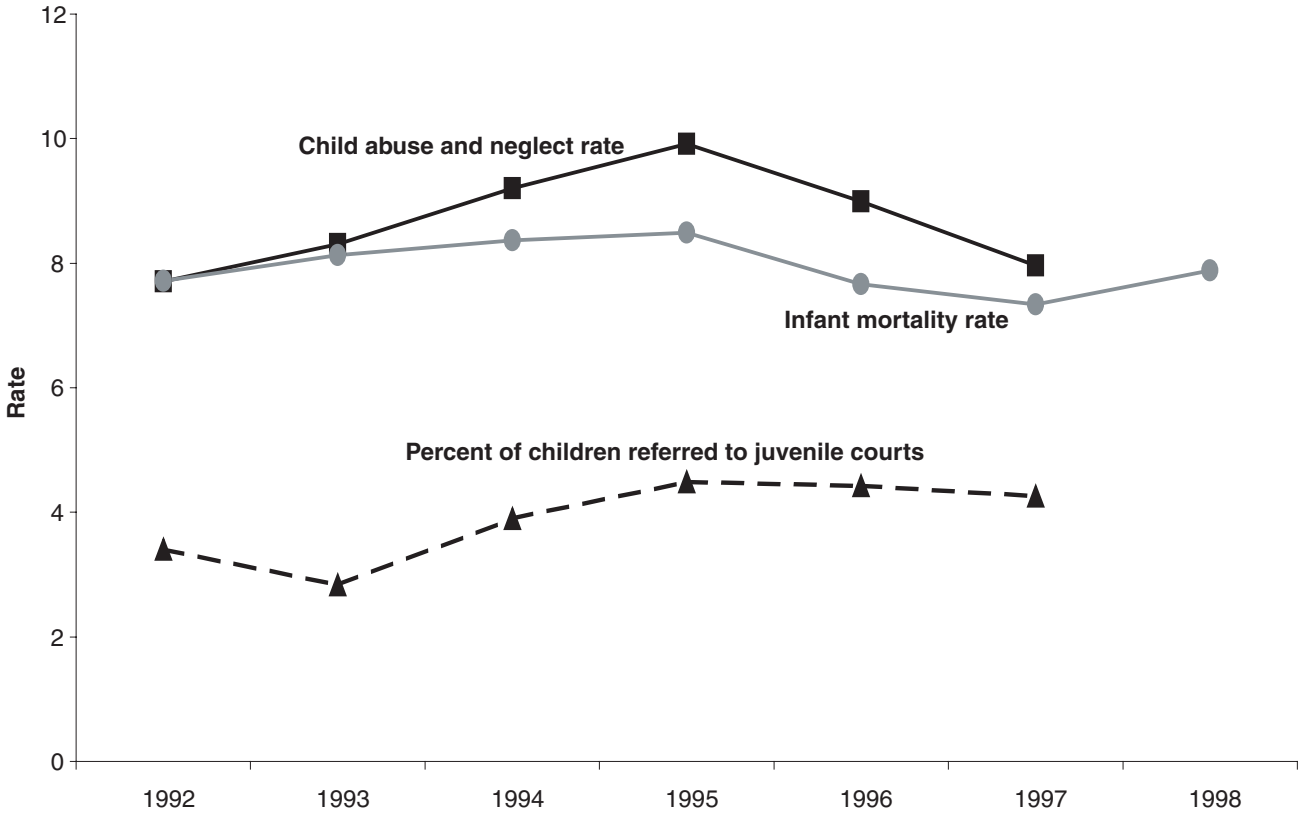
1) The number of cases of reported child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children between the ages of 0 and 17;

2) The infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births; and

3) The percent of children between the ages of 0 and 17 who had been referred to juvenile courts.

Note that infant mortality rates are available for 1992-1998, while data for the other two indicators in Figure 3.2 are only available through 1997. Despite slight increases during the middle of our time period, the remaining series in Figure 3.2 appear to have remained fairly stable. Most importantly, the downward trend in program participation shown in Figure 3.1 does not appear to have caused an obvious increase in any of these measures of child well-being.

Figure 3.2: Outcome Measures Part 1



Multivariate Analysis of County-Level Data

Figure 3.3 presents annual averages for four additional outcome measures:

1) The child death rate per 100,000 children between the ages of 1 and 14;

2) The percentage of children between the ages of 0 and 17 who were living in poverty;

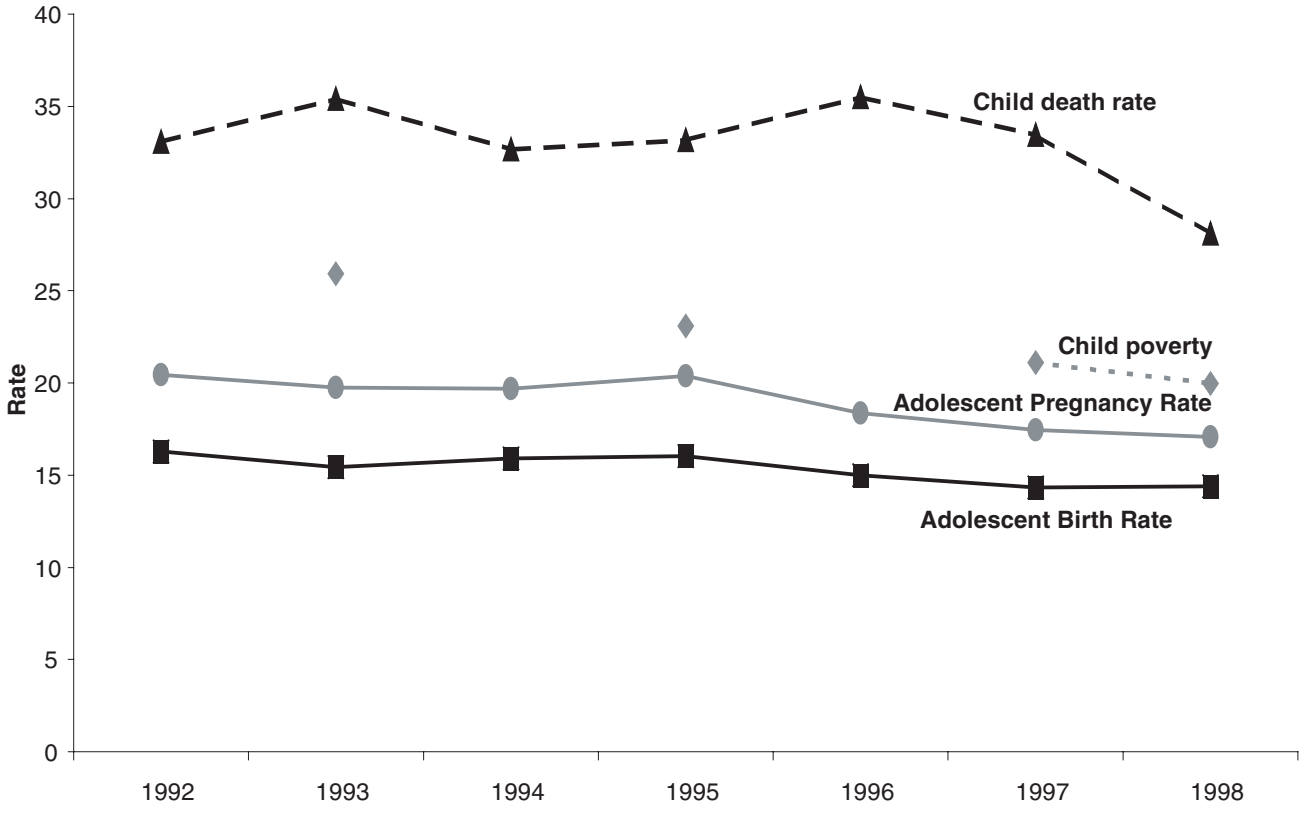
3) The adolescent pregnancy rate per 1,000 females between the ages of 0 and 17; and

4) The adolescent birth rate per 1,000 females between the ages of 0 and 17.

Child poverty data are only available in assorted years, while the others are available for the entire 1992-1998 time period. The feared increase in child poverty rates is not observed in our data. In fact, child poverty rates exhibit a marked downward trend during our period of analysis, having fallen by more than five percentage points between 1993 and 1998. Of course, it remains to be seen whether welfare reform had a hand in this reduction in child poverty. We will return to this thought below.

As with the outcomes in Figure 3.2, the other three measures in Figure 3.3 exhibit stable, and possibly declining, trends over the period of analysis. If any departure from stability can be discerned, it would be that the 1996 welfare program changes, or other concurrent changes, may have slightly reduced the rates of adolescent births, adolescent pregnancy, and child death.

Figure 3.3: Outcome Measures Part 2



Multivariate Analysis of County-Level Data

Our remaining indicators of child well-being involve education and are shown in Figures 3.4 and 3.5. Figure 3.4 presents annual average value-added test scores for grades 3 through 8, relative to the national norm, in five key subject areas: math, reading, science, social studies, and language arts. Each of these trends rises at least a little in the later years following a slight decrease during the mid-1990s. If the welfare program rule changes have had deleterious effects on children's education, these data do not reveal such a causal effect.

Figure 3.5 shows annual averages of four additional education outcomes:

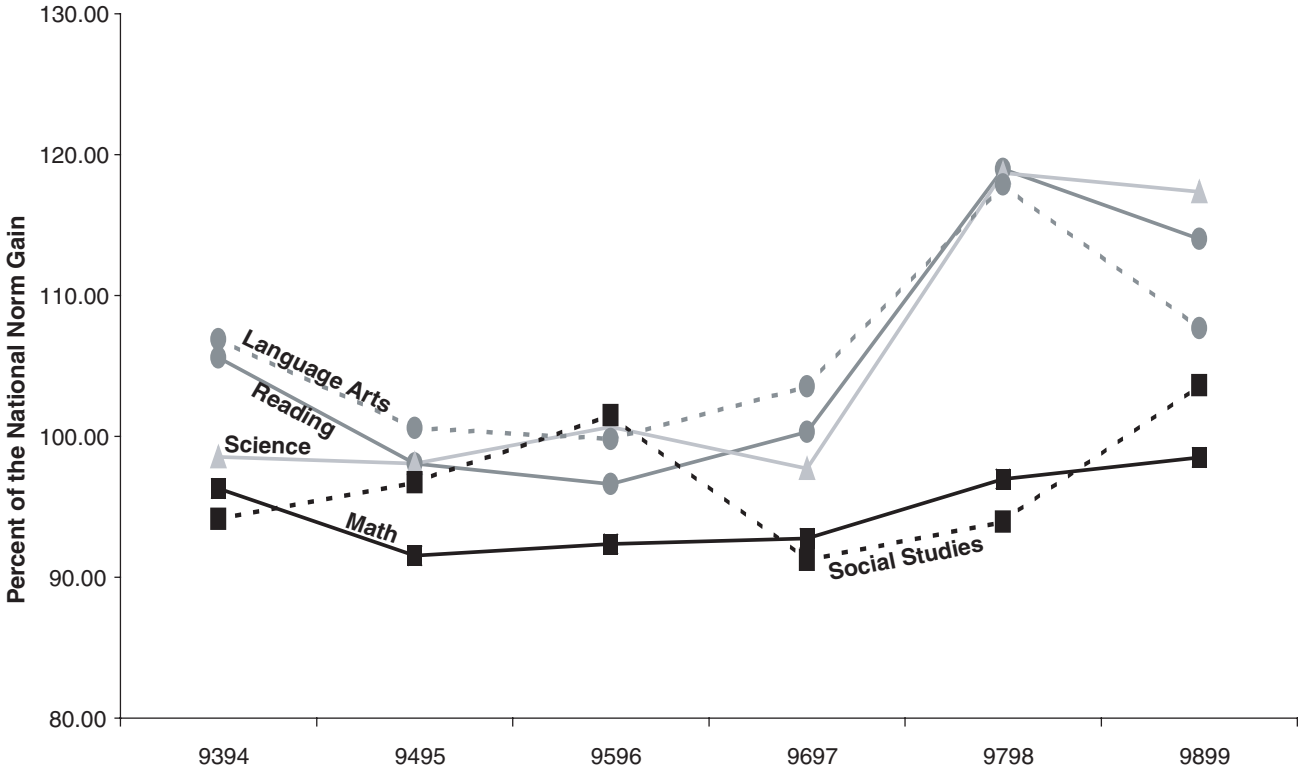
1) The school cohort dropout rate, calculated as the total number of students who should have been in the graduating senior class but who dropped out during grades 9 through 12, as a share of the class' 9th grade enrollment (left scale);

2) The number of student retentions (i.e., students being "held back" a year) as a fraction of average daily membership across all grades (left scale);

3) The school event dropout rate, calculated as the annual total number of dropouts of grades 9 through 12 as a share of total enrollment in those grades (left scale); and

4) The average daily attendance rate for all grades as a fraction of average daily membership (right scale).

Figure 3.4: Value-Added Test Scores



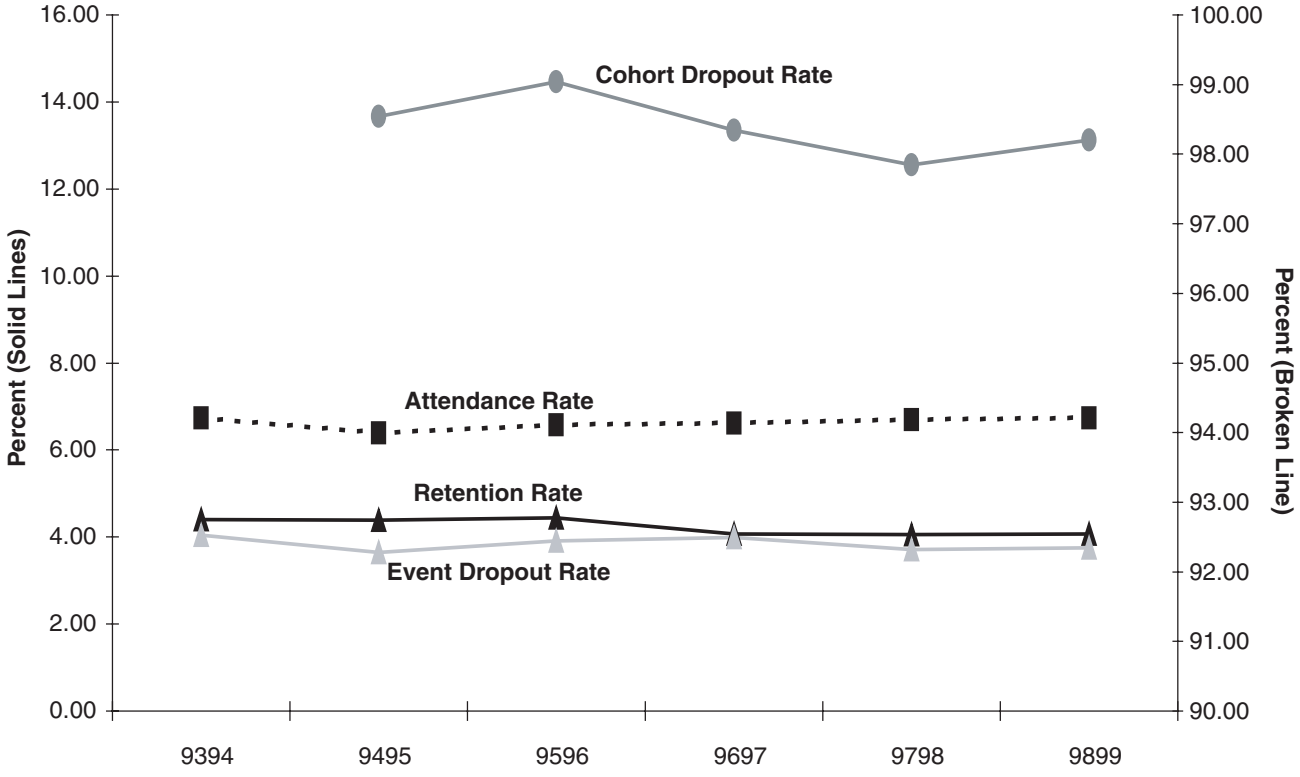
Multivariate Analysis of County-Level Data

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these series all exhibit remarkable stability over time. Welfare program changes do not appear to have had observable effects on these indicators of child well-being.

To be sure, these figures are only illustrative at best. To more accurately gauge the effects of program changes on overall measures of child well-being, a multivariate strategy that controls for other factors of child well-being is necessary. Given our use of panel or longitudinal data for all Tennessee counties across time, our preferred multivariate statistical method consists of either fixed or random effects panel regressions. The choice between fixed and random effects is based on a standard Hausman test. Both methods are similar to ordinary least squares regressions, but the fixed or random effects are intended to control for any unobservable county-specific factors that might affect the various measures of child well-being.

Our list of observable county-level control variables includes per capita personal income, average age, the unemployment rate, and the percentage of a county's residents that are either black, Hispanic, or some other non-white race. In addition, for our analysis of education outcomes, we also control for student-to-teacher ratios, education expenditures per pupil, and the percentage of student enrollment that is receiving some form of special education. All regressions also include indicators for the year of the observation. A full list of variable names, definitions, and sources appears in the Appendix, while the full results of the multivariate analysis are shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Figure 3.5: Education Outcomes



Multivariate Analysis of County-Level Data

Our first notable finding is that, after controlling for other factors, child welfare participation (i.e., the percent of children between the ages of 0 and 17 receiving welfare payments) has no statistically discernible effect on all but two of our outcome measures. Specifically, this indicator exerts a positive effect on relative value-added test scores in science and social studies (Table 3.2). As child welfare participation falls, value-added scores in these areas fall as a result. The measured effects are indeed quite small: a rather large 10-percent reduction in child-welfare participation, from the mean value of 10.59 percent to a new value of 9.53 percent (all else held constant), would reduce the average value-added score relative to the national norm by a miniscule 0.4 percent in either of these areas. Changes in this measure of welfare participation have had no statistically significant and independent effects on the other outcome measures in our analysis.

Our other measure of welfare participation, total welfare payments as a share of total personal income, has a positive and statistically significant effect on five of our outcome measures: the adolescent birth rate, the percent of children referred to juvenile courts, and the child poverty rate in Table 3.1, and relative value-added scores in reading and language arts in Table 3.2. The downward trend in this measure of welfare participation, as shown in Figure 3.1, has had a downward effect on these five indicators. In other words, as welfare payments have fallen as a share of personal income, child well-being has improved in some areas (via lower adolescent birth rates, a lower percentage of children referred to juvenile courts, and lower child poverty rates) and worsened in others (via lower reading and language arts scores).

These effects are also quite small, however. A 10-percent reduction in welfare payments as a share of personal income, from a mean of around 0.18 percent to a new value of 0.16 percent (all else held constant), would reduce the adolescent birth rate by 1.12 percent and the percentage of children referred to juvenile courts by 1.63 percent. A similar change would also reduce child poverty by 2.18 percent — our largest measured effect in the presence of other control variables. In terms of education outcomes, a 10-percent reduction in welfare payments as a share of personal income would reduce relative value-added scores in reading and language arts, but only by a very small 0.69 and 0.48 percent, respectively.

A number of our other control variables have statistically significant effects on child well-being, the bulk of which are relatively unsurprising. A detailed analysis of these other factors is left to the reader.

To summarize the findings of our analysis of county-level data, it appears that the reductions in child welfare participation and welfare payments as a share of personal income have not had dramatically negative effects on child well-being. Indeed, the rates of child poverty, adolescent birth, and juvenile court referral have all declined as a result of reductions in welfare payments as a share of personal income. The only negative effects from the reductions in our welfare measures are very slight reductions in relative value-added test scores in a few subject areas. Of course, these findings must be tested with individual-level data that will be available in future surveys.

Multivariate Analysis of County-Level Data

Table 3.1: Multivariate Regression Results - Non-Education Outcomes

	Child Abuse and Neglect Rate	Birth Rate	Juvenile Court Referral	Death Rate	Mortality Rate	Pregnancy Rate	Child Poverty
Welfare income	4.454	**9.602**	**3.279**	-16.775	-2.385	9.907	**29.965**
	(5.570)	***(5.672)***	***(1.631)***	*(31.857)*	*(5.634)*	*(6.320)*	***(3.182)***
Percent of children	0.112	0.028	-0.033	0.552	-0.009	0.006	0.002
on Families First	*(0.086)*	*(0.096)*	*(0.025)*	*(0.570)*	*(0.101)*	*(0.107)*	*(0.056)*
Per capita income	-0.196	0.060	0.067	-1.013	-0.156	-0.104	**-0.269**
	(0.169)	*(0.298)*	*(0.054)*	*(0.708)*	*(0.112)*	*(0.333)*	***(0.141)***
Average age	0.120	-0.977	-0.079	-0.833	0.232	**-2.289**	-0.231
	(0.297)	*(1.020)*	*(0.104)*	*(1.142)*	*(0.176)*	***(1.136)***	*(0.700)*
Unemployment rate	0.031	**-0.282**	-0.030	-0.253	**0.190**	**-0.313**	0.077
	(0.109)	***(0.126)***	*(0.031)*	*(0.654)*	***(0.112)***	***(0.140)***	*(0.060)*
Black	-0.033	**-0.120**	0.002	**0.334**	**0.138**	-0.297	-0.281
	(0.049)	***(0.401)***	*(0.017)*	***(0.181)***	***(0.028)***	*(0.446)*	*(0.203)*
Hispanic	0.840	0.742	0.036	1.238	0.883	1.342	-0.907
	(0.914)	*(1.613)*	*(0.282)*	*(4.450)*	*(0.715)*	*(1.797)*	*(0.806)*
Other	0.151	-1.734	-0.015	-8.198	0.000	-1.537	**2.598**
	(1.464)	*(3.637)*	*(0.493)*	*(5.865)*	*(0.898)*	*(4.053)*	***(0.627)***
Constant	3.774	51.791	4.915	**80.652**	-0.453	**107.808**	31.870
	(11.895)	*(37.115)*	*(4.106)*	***(46.372)***	*(7.193)*	***(41.355)***	*(26.343)*
N =	561	655	561	630	630	655	376
Years	92-97	92-98	92-97	92-98	92-98	92-98	93,95,97,98
Model	Random	Fixed	Random	Random	Pooled OLS	Fixed	Fixed

Note: Bold type indicates a coefficient is statistically significant at the 10 % level. Standard errors are in parenthesis.

Multivariate Analysis of County-Level Data

Table 3.2: Multivariate Regression Results - Education Outcomes

	Retention Rate	High School Cohort Dropout Rate	High School Event Dropout Rate	Attend-ance Rate	Math	Reading	Science	Social Studies	Lan-guage Arts
Welfare income	1.299	7.163	-4.844	0.431	18.615	**42.159**	-2.472	14.739	**29.585**
	(2.004)	*(7.242)*	*(3.100)*	*(1.164)*	*(11.648)*	***(11.690)***	*(15.829)*	*(14.305)*	***(15.999)***
Percent of children	0.016	0.020	-0.003	-0.006	0.099	0.148	**0.380**	**0.338**	0.021
on Families First	*(0.023)*	*(0.089)*	*(0.032)*	*(0.012)*	*(0.124)*	*(0.124)*	***(0.168)***	***(0.152)***	*(0.170)*
Elementary student/	0.060			-0.012	0.453	-0.671	-0.161	0.491	0.077
teacher ratio	*(0.09)*			*(0.05)*	*(0.53)*	*(0.53)*	*(0.71)*	*(0.65)*	*(0.72)*
Secondary student/		-0.136	**-0.138**						
teacher ratio		*(0.16)*	***(0.07)***						
Expenditures	0.344	-0.254	0.429	**-0.418**	**-8.140**	**-5.534**	**-9.044**	**-8.583**	**-8.758**
per pupil	*(0.33)*	*(1.03)*	*(0.53)*	***(0.20)***	***(2.04)***	***(2.05)***	***(2.78)***	***(2.51)***	***(2.81)***
Special education	-0.041	-0.008	**-0.095**	0.010	-0.091	-0.032	0.252	-0.248	-0.186
	(0.03)	*(0.11)*	***(0.05)***	*(0.02)*	*(0.20)*	*(0.20)*	*(0.28)*	*(0.25)*	*(0.28)*
Average age	**-0.233**	**-0.743**	-0.386	0.384	**5.151**	-4.172	**-7.780**	**-6.888**	-1.745
	(0.12)	***(0.31)***	*(0.80)*	*(0.31)*	***(3.08)***	*(3.09)*	***(4.18)***	***(3.78)***	*(4.23)*
Per capita income	0.037	0.177	-0.092	-0.024	0.847	0.444	1.068	-0.092	0.722
	(0.07)	*(0.19)*	*(0.15)*	*(0.06)*	*(0.58)*	*(0.58)*	*(0.78)*	*(0.71)*	*(0.79)*
Unemployment rate		0.043	-0.024						
		(0.15)	*(0.07)*						
Black	**0.088**	0.036	0.625	-0.049	**7.891**	0.757	**8.186**	3.328	**7.747**
	(0.02)	*(0.05)*	*(0.59)*	*(0.23)*	***(2.29)***	*(2.30)*	***(3.12)***	*(2.82)*	***(3.15)***
Hispanic	0.032	-0.750	1.298	-0.155	-5.759	-8.462	-6.254	-3.137	-1.456
	(0.51)	*(1.28)*	*(1.59)*	*(0.61)*	*(6.08)*	*(6.11)*	*(8.27)*	*(7.47)*	*(8.36)*
Other	-0.563	-0.552	-2.112	0.824	-11.998	0.392	-21.380	9.764	-14.582
	(0.62)	*(1.54)*	*(3.13)*	*(1.17)*	*(11.69)*	*(11.73)*	*(15.89)*	*(14.36)*	*(16.06)*
Constant	**9.649**	**39.916**	19.001	**82.414**	-136.558	**273.857**	**347.436**	344.414	138.432
	(5.44)	***(12.71)***	*(31.11)*	***(12.03)***	*(120.37)*	***(120.81)***	***(163.59)***	*(147.83)*	*(165.34)*
N	469	375	469	469	469	469	469	469	469
Years	9394-9899	9495-9899	9394-9899	9394-9899	9394-9899	9394-9899	9394-9899	9394-9899	9394-9899
Model	Random	Random	Fixed	Fixed	Fixed	Fixed	Fixed	Fixed	Fixed

Note: Bold type indicates a coefficient is statistically significant at the 10 % level. Standard errors are in parenthesis.

Conclusions

Families First has affected a large number of children in Tennessee since its inception. Despite fears that the welfare reforms enacted in 1996 would unnecessarily harm welfare children, available data do not support such a conclusion. In fact, time limits and work requirements might have actually enriched the well-being of children in welfare families. As Tennessee provides a relatively generous array of support services, these results substantiate the earlier findings of Morris, et al. (2001) that programs with more work supports have more success in generating the positive child outcomes. Perhaps the most notable finding in this report is that reducing welfare payments in a county as a share of personal income actually reduces child poverty rates, all else equal. Concerns of high or growing child poverty should be at least slightly allayed by this result.

To be sure, much work remains to be done in this area. A large body of literature exists suggesting that the effects of various aspects of the home environment on child well-being are sensitive to the age of the child. Thus, future waves of the FFLS must be used to more carefully and thoroughly analyze the impact of various program elements on specific measures of child well-being, using individual-level data. Further, children who have left the program should be compared with those who remain on the rolls, and they should be followed through time as they form their own families. Combining richer survey data on an individual basis with a multivariate approach such as that used in the third section of this report will enable more conclusive statements about the effects of welfare and welfare reform on child well-being.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Additional Survey Questions

Cares about doing well in school.

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
All of the time	1,043	61.75	2,708	61.17
Most of the time	416	24.63	1,117	25.23
Some of the time	200	11.84	542	12.24
None of the time	27	1.60	58	1.31
Don't know	1	0.06	0	0
No response	2	0.12	2	0.05
Total number of respondents	1,689		4,427	

Only works on school work when forced to.

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
All of the time	261	15.45	674	15.22
Most of the time	154	9.12	418	9.44
Some of the time	319	18.89	922	20.83
None of the time	950	56.25	2,406	54.35
Don't know	3	0.18	5	0.11
No response	2	0.12	2	0.05
Total number of respondents	1,689		4,427	

Does just enough school work to get by.

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
All of the time	226	13.40	568	12.86
Most of the time	203	12.04	520	11.77
Some of the time	345	20.46	1,001	22.66
None of the time	906	53.74	2,321	52.55
Don't know	3	0.18	3	0.07
No response	3	0.18	4	0.09
Total number of respondents	1,686		4,417	

Always does homework.

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
All of the time	1,019	60.62	2,653	60.21
Most of the time	373	22.19	1,013	22.99
Some of the time	228	13.56	601	13.64
None of the time	56	3.33	135	3.06
Don't know	3	0.18	2	0.05
No response	2	0.12	2	0.05
Total number of respondents	1,681		4,406	

Appendix

Table A.1: Additional Survey Questions, continued

Seems genuinely upset about going to school.

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
All of the time	167	9.93	416	9.42
Most of the time	146	8.68	377	8.54
Some of the time	256	15.22	690	15.63
None of the time	1,107	65.81	2,922	66.20
Don't know	3	0.18	5	0.11
No response	3	0.18	4	0.09
Total number of respondents	1,682		4,414	

They get along with other kids.

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Often true	1,867	72.50	4,223	71.83
Sometimes true	632	24.54	1,506	25.62
Never true	58	2.25	127	2.16
Don't know	11	0.43	13	0.22
No response	7	0.27	10	0.17
Total number of respondents	2,575		5,879	

They generally sleep well.

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Often true	2,073	80.60	4,713	80.25
Sometimes true	441	17.15	1,053	17.93
Never true	53	2.06	100	1.70
Don't know	3	0.12	4	0.07
No response	2	0.08	3	0.05
Total number of respondents	2,572		5,873	

They are honest and trustworthy.

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Often true	1,677	65.10	3,654	62.16
Sometimes true	757	29.39	1,923	32.72
Never true	70	2.72	187	3.18
Don't know	61	2.37	92	1.57
No response	11	0.43	22	0.37
Total number of respondents	2,576		5,878	

They seem to be well adjusted to their lives.

	Respondents	%	Kids	Kids %
Often true	1,973	76.56	4,451	75.76
Sometimes true	538	20.88	1,299	22.11
Never true	50	1.94	106	1.80
Don't know	10	0.39	10	0.17
No response	6	0.23	9	0.15
Total number of respondents	2,577		5,875	

Appendix

Table A.2: Variables Used in County-Level Analysis

Name	Availability	Source*	Definition
Control Variables:			
Welfare Income	90-99	1	Welfare payments / personal income
Percent of Children on Families First	92-98	3	Children ages 0-17 receiving welfare payments (%)
Per Capita Income	90-99	1	Per capita income
Average Age	90-99	6	Average age of total population
Unemployment Rate	90-99	5	Adjusted annual average county unemployment rate
Black	90-99	6	Percent of the population that is black
Hispanic	90-99	6	Percent of the population that is Hispanic
Other	90-99	6	Percent of the population that is neither White, Black, nor Hispanic
Elementary Student-Teacher Ratio	9394-9899	2	Number of students per elementary school teacher
Secondary Student-Teacher Ratio	9394-9899	2	Number of students per secondary school teacher
Expenditures per Pupil	9394-9899	2	Total school expenditures per student.
Special Education	9394-9899	2	Students receiving special education services (%)
Outcome Measures:			
Child Abuse and Neglect Rate	92-97	3	Per 1,000 Children ages 0-17
Adolescent Birth Rate	92-98	3	Per 1,000 Females ages 0-17
Juvenile Court Referral Rate	92-97	3	Children 0-17 referred to juvenile courts (%)
Child Death Rate	92-98	3	Per 100,000 children ages 1-14
Infant Mortality Rate	92-98	3	Per 1,000 live births
Adolescent Pregnancy Rate	92-98	3	Per 1,000 females ages 10-17
Child Poverty	89,93,95,97,98	6	Estimate of the percent of those 0-17 in poverty
Retention Rate	9394-9899	2	Retentions / average daily membership, all grades
High School Cohort Dropout Rate	9495-9899	2	Total school dropouts of grades 9-12 / 9th grade enrollment
High School Event Dropout Rate	9394-9899	4	Total school dropouts of grades 9-12 / Average daily membership
Attendance Rate	9394-9899	2	Average Daily Attendance all grades / Average daily membership
Math	9394-9899	4	Value added score: Percent of the national norm gain in math, grades 3-8
Reading	9394-9899	4	Value added score: Percent of the national norm gain in reading, grades 3-8
Science	9394-9899	4	Value added score: Percent of the national norm gain in science, grades 3-8
Social Studies	9394-9899	4	Value added score: Percent of the national norm gain in social studies, grades 3-8
Language Arts	9394-9899	4	Value added score: Percent of the national norm gain in language arts, grades 3-8

***Source References:**

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2. Health Information Tennessee (HIT), http://hitspot.utk.edu
3. Kids Count Score, data reported by HIT.
4. Tennessee Department of Education, www.state.tn.us/edu.html
5. Tennessee Department of Employment Security
6. U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov