

**Impact Employment Services  
1997 Client Assessment  
Data Analysis**

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**Report to Impact Employment Services**

**We are grateful for the support of Impact Employment Services and for the cooperation of their staff in this project.**

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## Executive Summary

- Nearly 60% of Impact's clients are single, never having been married, with approximately 20% more being widowed or divorced.
- Sixty-one percent of the clients have children. Of those clients with children, only 17.6% have legal custody of their child (or children).
- Seventy-seven percent of the homeless clients at Impact have been homeless between 1-2 times and 17% between 3-5 times.
- Thirty-six percent of the clients at Impact have spent over 1 year homeless. However, most frequently, the clients were homeless between 1-6 months.
- Fifty-three percent indicated that their homelessness was a result of their substance abuse.
- Sixty-six percent of the clients indicated some type of problem associated with substance abuse.
- Most frequently, clients had no income at all. However, the average monthly income was \$188.50.
- Eighty-four percent of the clients were presently unemployed, with another 9% working only part-time. Eighty-nine percent have full- or part-time work experience.
- Thirty-six percent of the clients had not been employed within the last year. Half of the clients had not had a job longer than 6 months at any one time.
- The most frequent reason for leaving their last job, cited by 24% of the clients, was substance abuse. The next most frequent reason was either being fired or laid off.

## **Introduction**

Gaining employment is a central step in regaining housing and arresting the downward fall of homeless persons. Most often, obtaining a job is a key component in an individual's attempt to obtaining housing. Impact Employment Services is an agency which works exclusively with homeless individuals, assisting them in finding employment. This places their client on the road to a positive end to their homeless experience.

Impact Employment Services assists their clients in several ways. Clients are aided in finding employment by receiving instruction on creating a resume and are also taught certain interviewing strategies. Clients are allowed to use Impact's wide array of services including use of a fax machine and telephones with personal message boxes, since they have no telephone of their own.

Impact assesses each client upon intake in an effort to gain an understanding of their needs, employment and otherwise, so that their counselors can best meet the specific needs of these clients. This report is a review of the data collected on a sample of the clients at Impact during the 1997 reporting year.

## **Methodology**

The data used in this analysis is a subset of the data collected by Impact on its clients during the 1997 reporting year. Impact assesses each of their clients upon acceptance to their program. The subset used here is a random sample of those clients who entered the program during 1997. For confidentiality purposes, each client is assigned a specific code upon

acceptance to the program. A list of the 1997 client codes served as the sampling frame from which a systematic random sample was selected. The sample which was drawn included 187 respondents, this represents 33% of the total 1997 clientele.

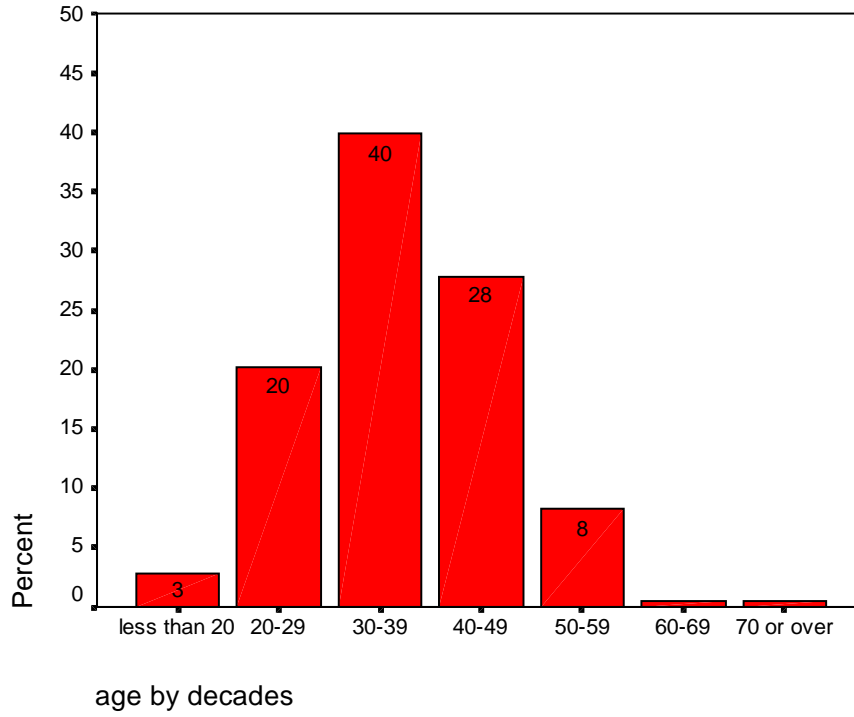
All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. The client assessment form obtained information from the clients regarding basic socio-demographic information, their residential history and needs, certain health and substance use issues, legal issues, and the client's work history and preferences. These issues are presented below.

## **Client Information**

This section describes the general characteristics of the clients at Impact Employment Services. At Impact, the average age was 37 years old. Exhibit 1, below, shows that 40% of the clients were between the ages of 30-39; eighty-eight percent were between 20 and 50, with very few falling outside of this range.

**Exhibit 1**

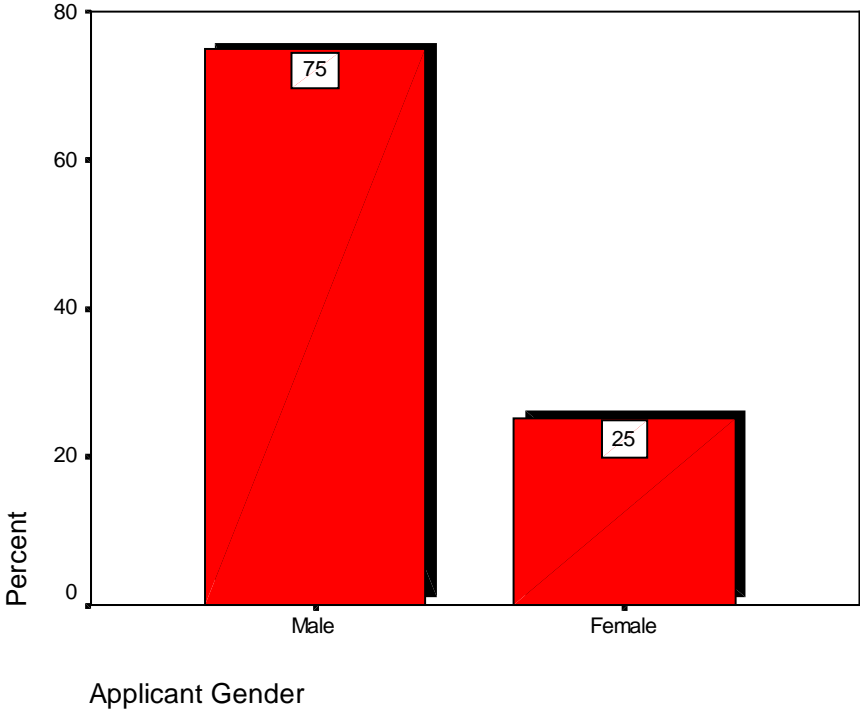
**Age of Clients**



N=183

Exhibit 2 shows the gender of the clients at Impact. It shows that 75% are male and 25% are female.

**Exhibit 2**  
**Gender**

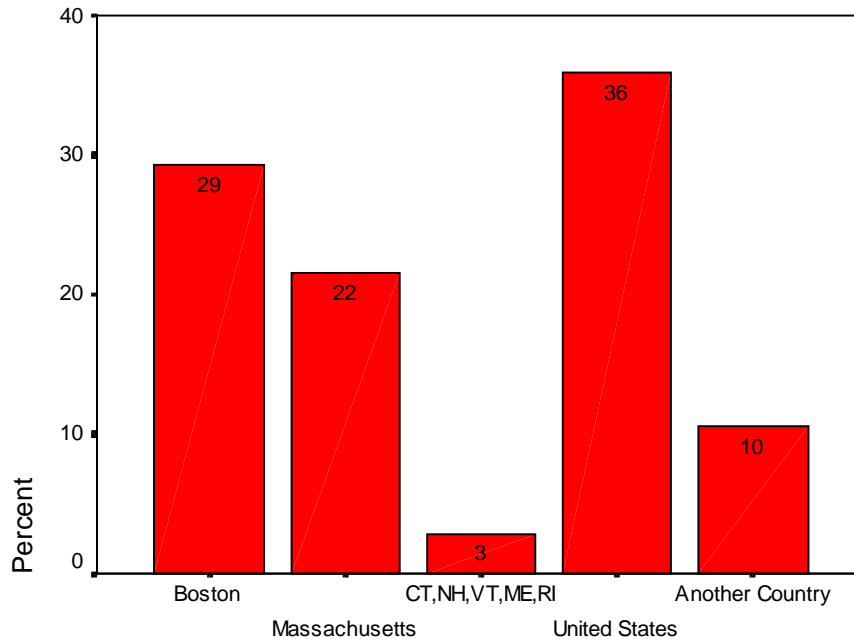


N=175

Twenty-two percent of Impact’s clients were born in Boston, 22% somewhere else in Massachusetts, and 39% in the United States, outside of Massachusetts, and 10% outside the U.S. Exhibit 3 shows how this is broken down.

**Exhibit 3**

**Client's Birthplace**



where were you born?

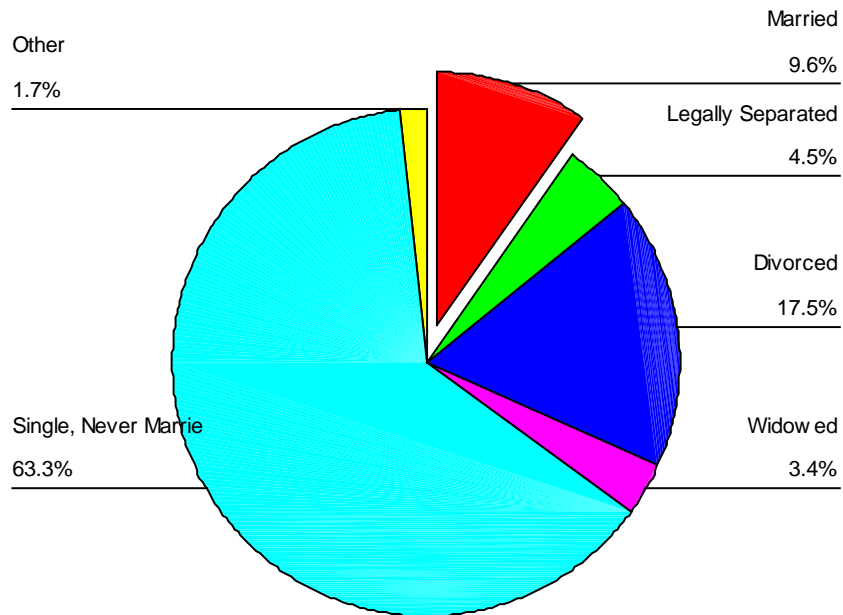
N=181

When the marital status of the clients is viewed, it is determined that nearly 63.3% are single, never having been married, with approximately 20% more being widowed or divorced.

Exhibit 4 shows this breakdown more clearly.



**Exhibit 4**  
**Marital Status**

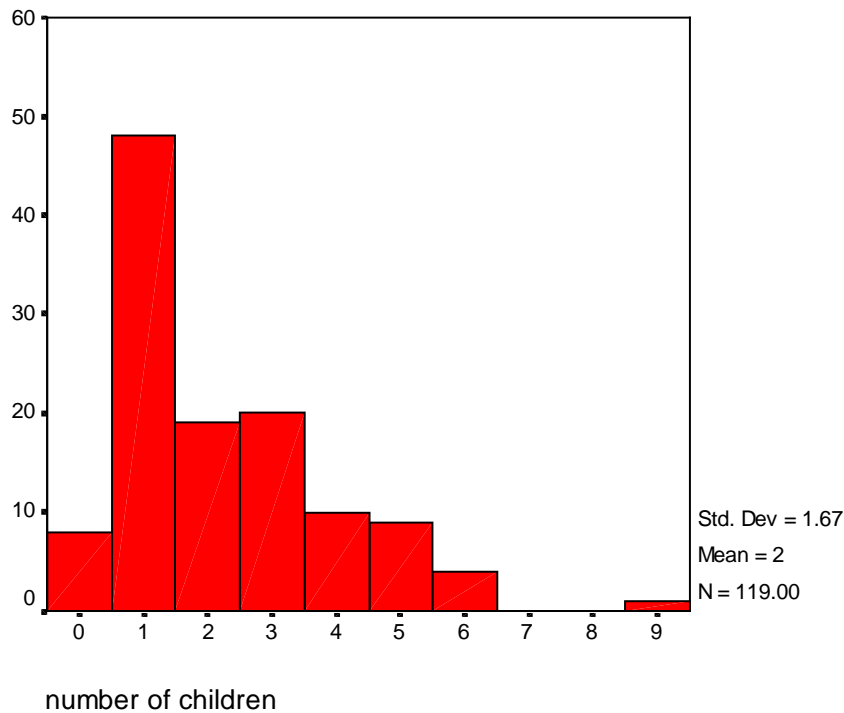


N=177

The average number of children the clients have is 2. Exhibit 5 is a graph of the number of children had by the clients at Impact.

**Exhibit 5**

**Number of Children**



Sixty-one percent of the clients had children. Although the average number of children is 2, most frequently, clients had only 1 child, and the majority had no more than 3 children. Of those clients with children, only 17.6% had legal custody of their child (or children).

**Exhibit 6**

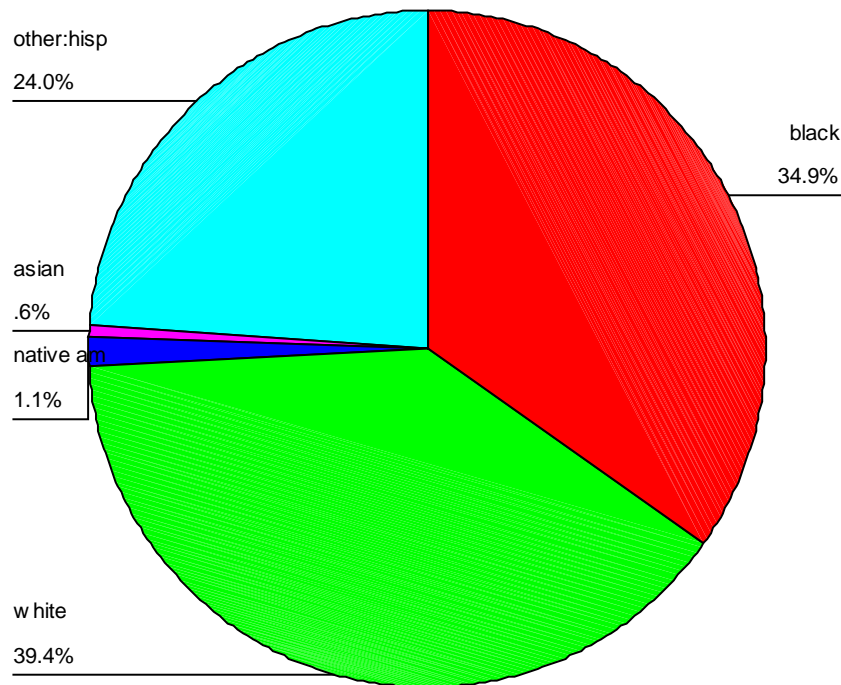
<b>Child Responsibilities</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Those who have children	61.1
Behind on child support payments	8.6
Supposed to pay child support	27.4

Of those with children, over 24% were supposed to pay child support, and approx. 9% were behind on those payments.

Exhibit 7 is a chart of the racial makeup of the clientele at Impact. There are nearly equal proportions of African-Americans and Whites (34.9% & 39.4%, respectively). Twenty-four percent are of some other race, which includes those of Hispanic or Latino origin (estimated at approx. 20%).

### Exhibit 7

#### Race of Client



N=175

English is the primary language for 84% of the clients. However, a total of 87.7% do speak English, although it may not be their primary language. Seven and a half percent speak

primarily Spanish. When asked whether they spoke any other languages which they could use in a job, approx. 30% indicated that they could.

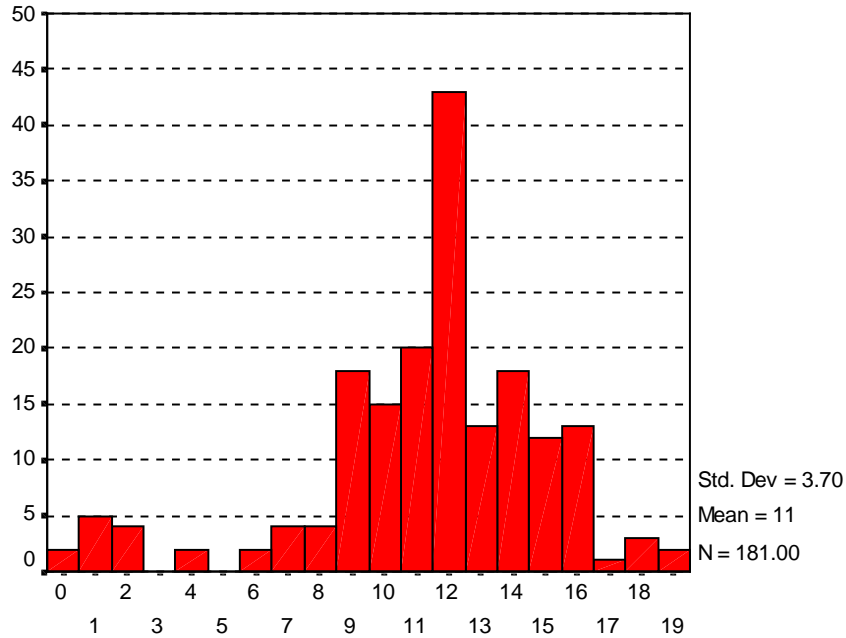
Seventy-five percent of the clients felt that they could read English very well, with another 20.8% indicating that they do so somewhat well. Only 4% felt that they read English somewhat poorly or very poorly.

About three-quarters of the clients indicated that they did not have a valid driver's license, making issues regarding transportation very important. Approximately 14% of the clients indicated that they had served in the U.S. armed forces.

Exhibit 8 is a chart showing the highest year of education completed by the client. The average number of years of education is 11. From the above graph, it can be seen that, most frequently, the highest year of education complete is 12. Those who have less than a high school level of education (12 years) represent 42%, while 58% have at least a high school education.

**Exhibit 8**

**Years of Education**



what is the highest year of school you completed?

From Exhibit 9 it can be noted that 56% of the clients indicated that they have a degree of some kind. Of those who have earned a degree, 25% have earned a 4-year college degree. This represents about 14% of the total clientele at Impact. Of all clients, 34.7% have earned a GED, and 54.3% have had some vocational or other specialized training.

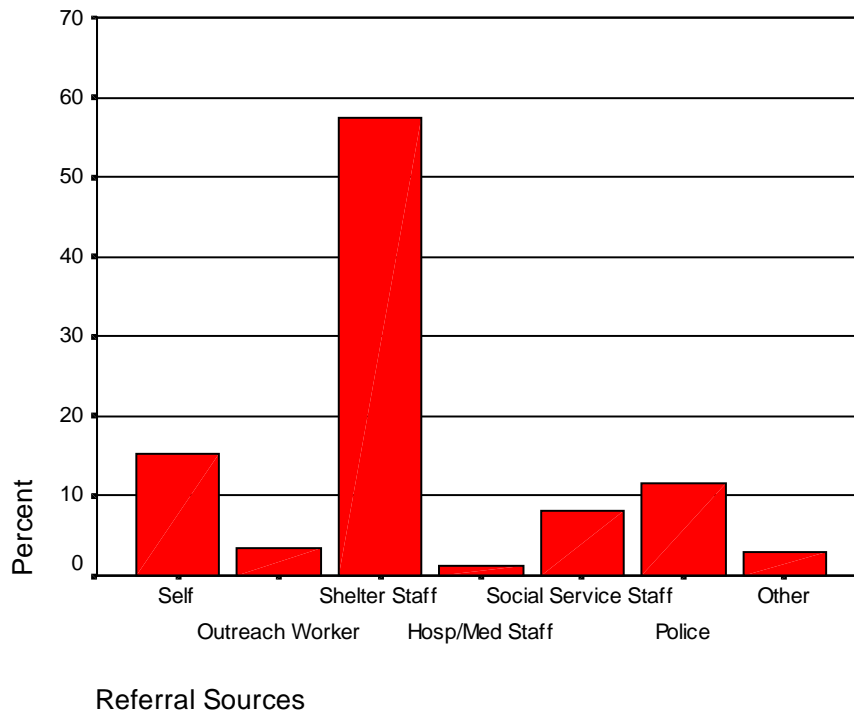
**Exhibit 9**

Degrees and Special Training	Percentage
Has a degree of some kind	56.1
Has earned a GED	34.7
Has some vocational or other specialized training	54.3

Clients at Impact are referred by a variety of sources. Exhibit 10 shows the sources of these referrals.

### Exhibit 10

#### Referral Source



N=171

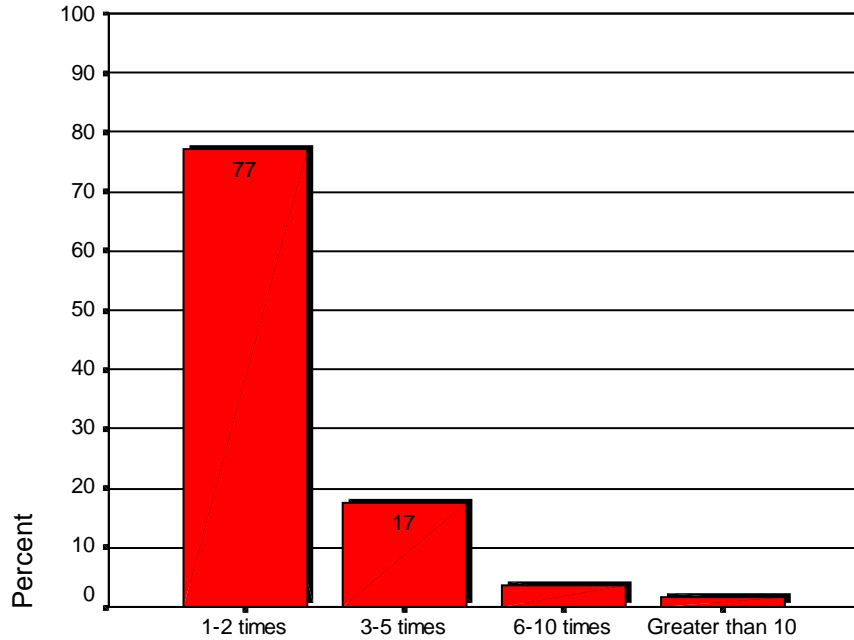
A majority of the clients are referred by shelter staff (57.3%). However, clients are being referred by many others sources as well.

## Residential History and Needs

This next section details the residential history of the clients at Impact. Exhibit 11 is a graph indicating the number of times the client has been homeless.

**Exhibit 11**

**Number of Times Homeless**



how many times have you been homeless?

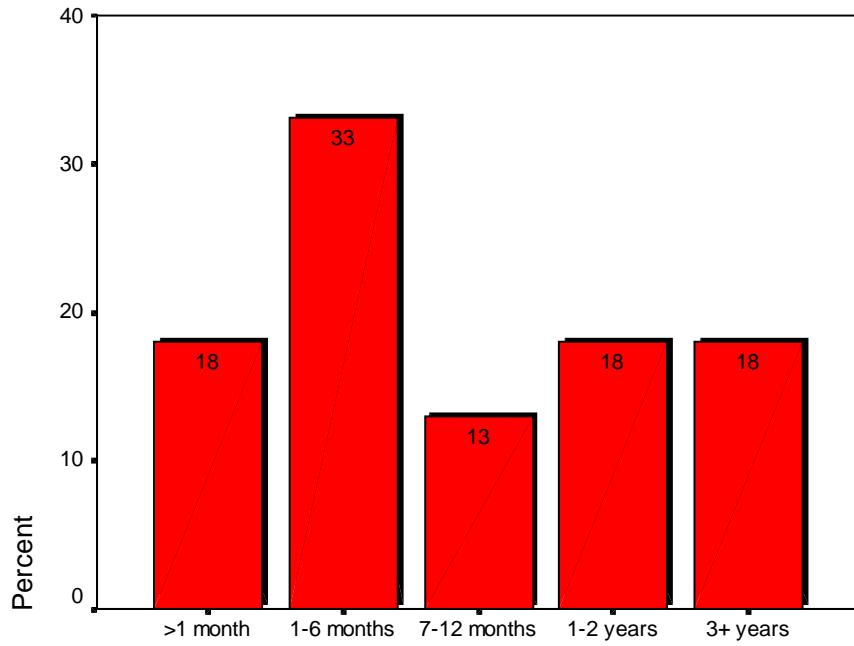
N=166

As can be seen from Exhibit 11, 77% of the homeless clients at Impact have been homeless between 1-2 times and 17% between 3-5 times. Only 6% have been homeless more than 5 times.

When we look at the total amount of time the clients have been homeless since they were 18 years of age, we find that 36% have spent over 1 year homeless. However, most frequently, the clients were homeless between 1-6 months. Exhibit 12 breaks this down more precisely.

**Exhibit 12**

**Amount of Time Spent Homeless**



how long have you been homeless?

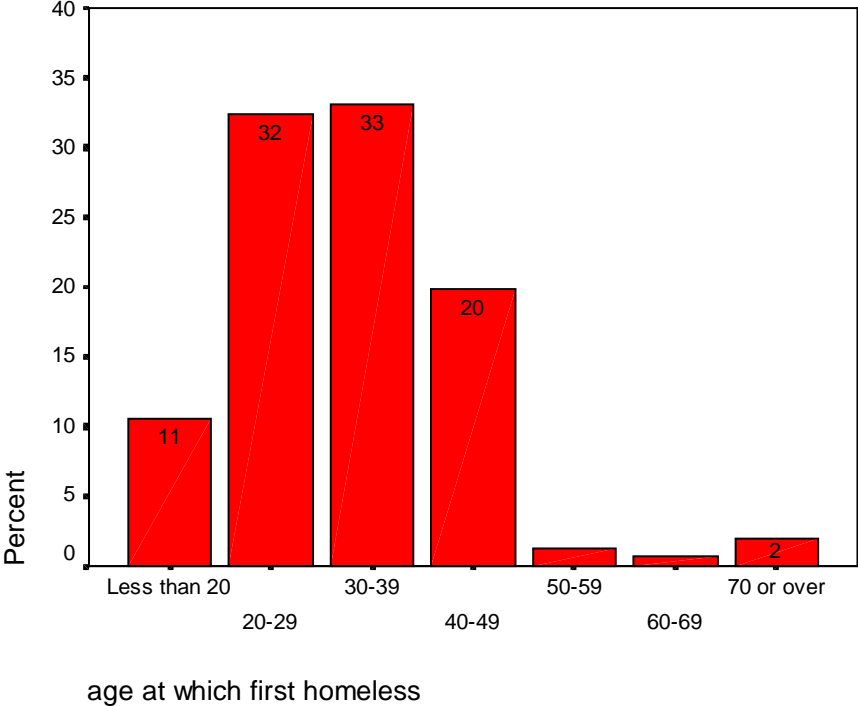
N=139



The age at which the client first became homeless provides an interesting picture of when homelessness is first being experienced by the clients at Impact.

**Exhibit 13**

**Age at Which Client First Experienced Homelessness**

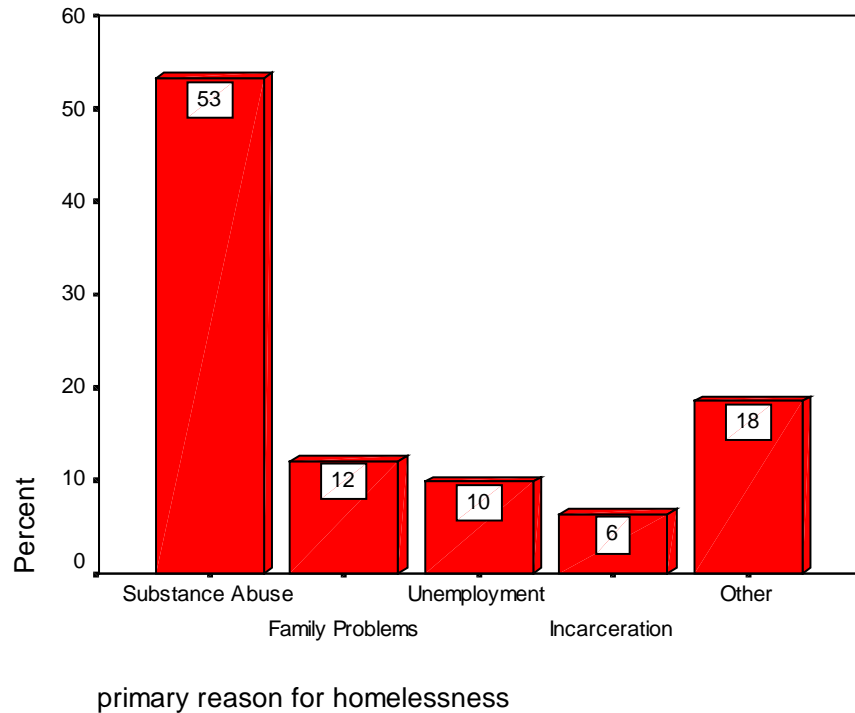


N=151

For the majority of the clients, homelessness is first experienced between the ages of 20 and 39, with nearly equal numbers first being homeless in their 20s as in their 30s.

When asked to indicate the primary reason for their homelessness, a variety of responses were obtained. These responses are displayed in general terms in Exhibit 14.

**Exhibit 14**  
**Reason Homeless**



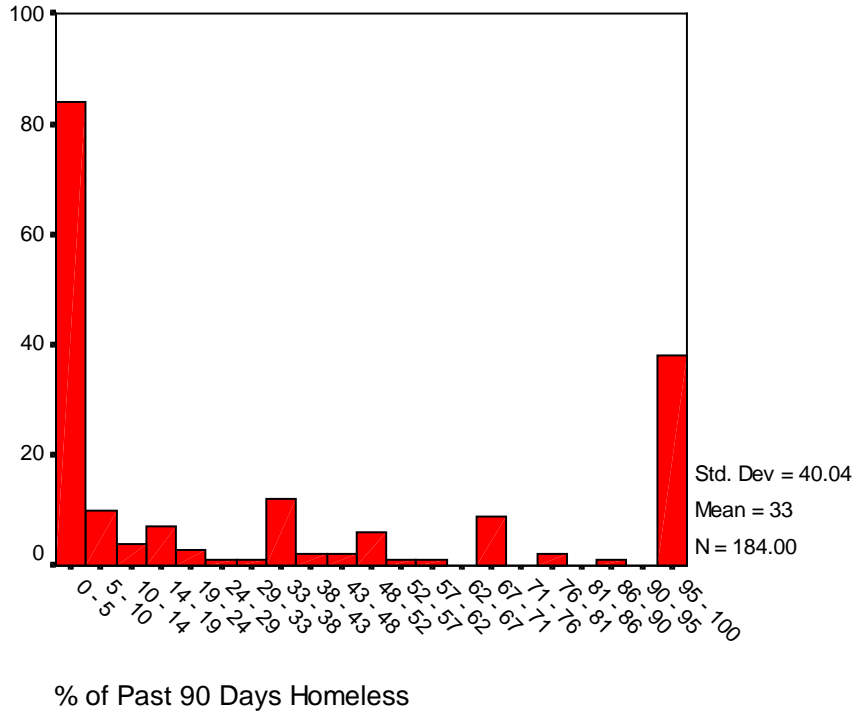
N=173

Without going into further detail, 53% indicated that their homelessness was a result of their substance abuse. This was by far the most frequent response. Other reasons which were cited with some frequency were family problems, unemployment, and incarceration.

Clients were also assessed as to where they had been staying for the three months prior to their arrival at Impact. Exhibit 15 displays the percentage of the past 90 days that the client was homeless.

**Exhibit 15**

**Percent of Time Homeless in Past 3 Months**



According to this graph, a majority of the clients had not spent any time without somewhere to stay during the 90 days prior to their coming to Impact. On average, clients had spent approximately one-third of the past 90 days homeless. However, Exhibit 16 shows the percentage of time the client spent somewhere other than a residence of their own during the previous 3 months.

**Exhibit 16**

**Percent of Time Not in Own Residence in Past 3 Months**

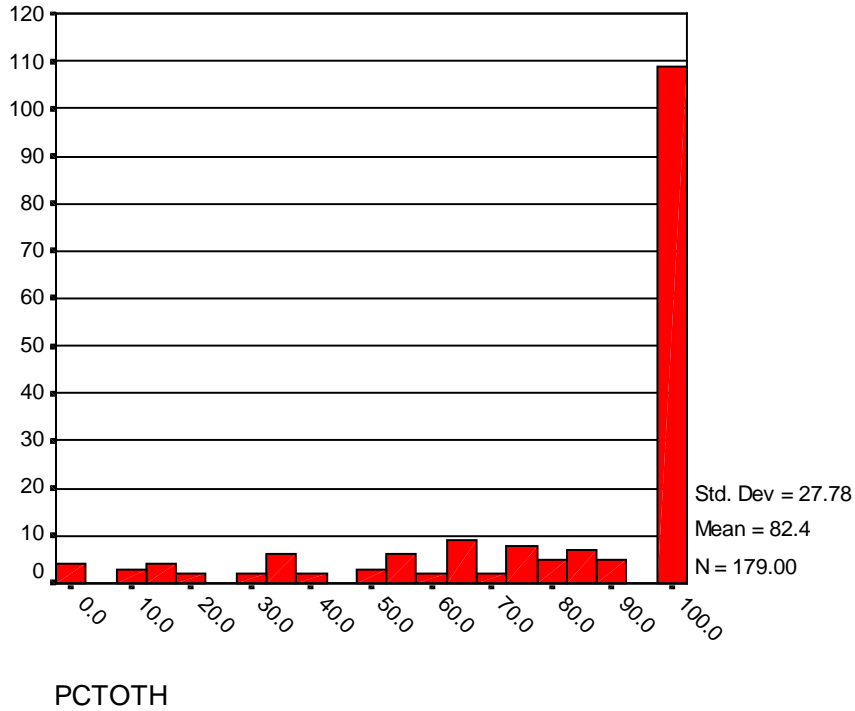
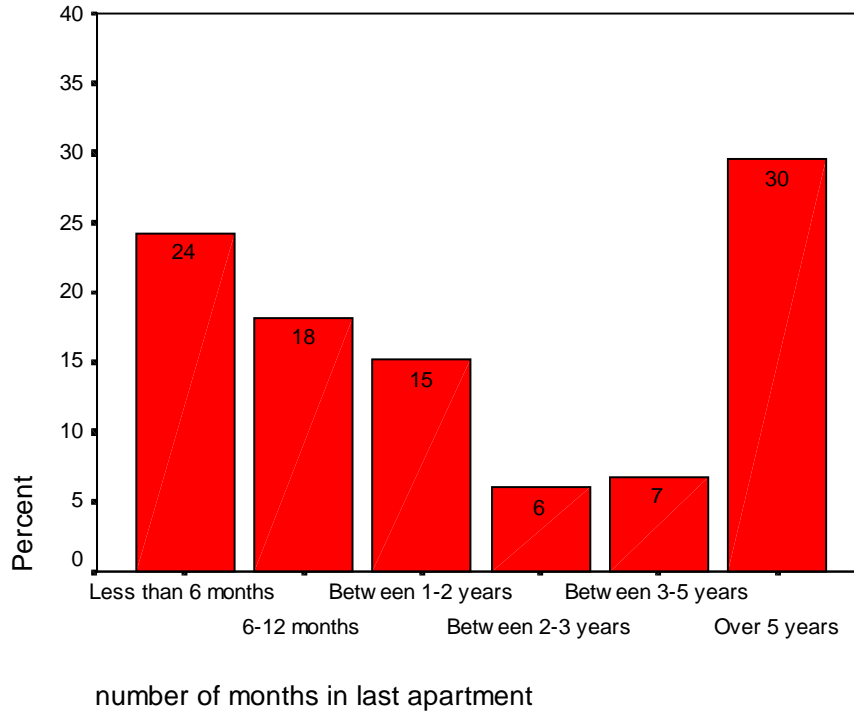


Exhibit 16 shows that the majority of the clients had spent each of the 90 days prior to coming to Impact in a place which was not their own residence. On average, clients spent over 82% of the previous 3 months somewhere other than their own place.

Exhibit 17 shows the length of time the client spent in their last place of residence. Thirty percent of the clients had lived in their previous residence over 5 years. However, 42% had not been there over 1 year.

**Exhibit 17**

**Length of Time in Last Residence**



N=132

**Health and Substance Use Issues**

This section deals with issues concerning the health of the client along with their substance use. Twenty-three percent said that they have health problems of some kind.

Approximately 28 percent indicated that they were seeing a mental health provider at the time of assessment.

Exhibit 18 is a chart which displays issues concerning substance abuse. Sixty-six percent of the clients indicated some type of problem associated with substance abuse. The proportion of clients having received treatment for drugs and alcohol is similar, approx. 50%.

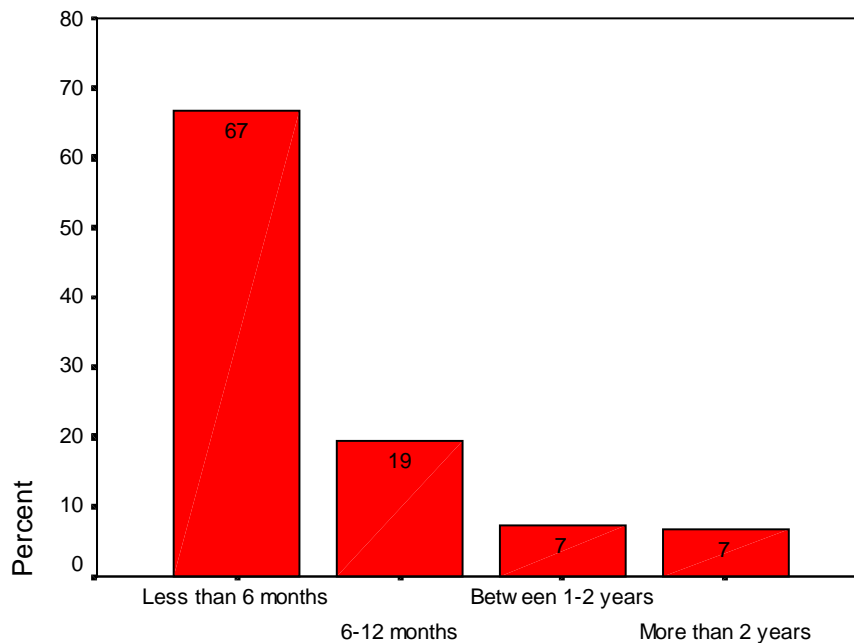
**Exhibit 18**

<b>Substance Abuse Issues</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Has received detox or other treatment for alcohol	48.6
Has received detox or other treatment for drugs	52.5
Others have worried about their drinking in the past 6 months	24.5
Drug abuse has created problems between themselves and others in the past 6 months	34.6
Any indication of a substance abuse problem	66.3

Exhibit 19 is a graph of the client’s last voluntary abstinence from alcohol. A large majority (67%) indicated that their last voluntary abstinence from alcohol was less than 6 months.

**Exhibit 19**

**Length of Last Voluntary Abstinence from Alcohol**



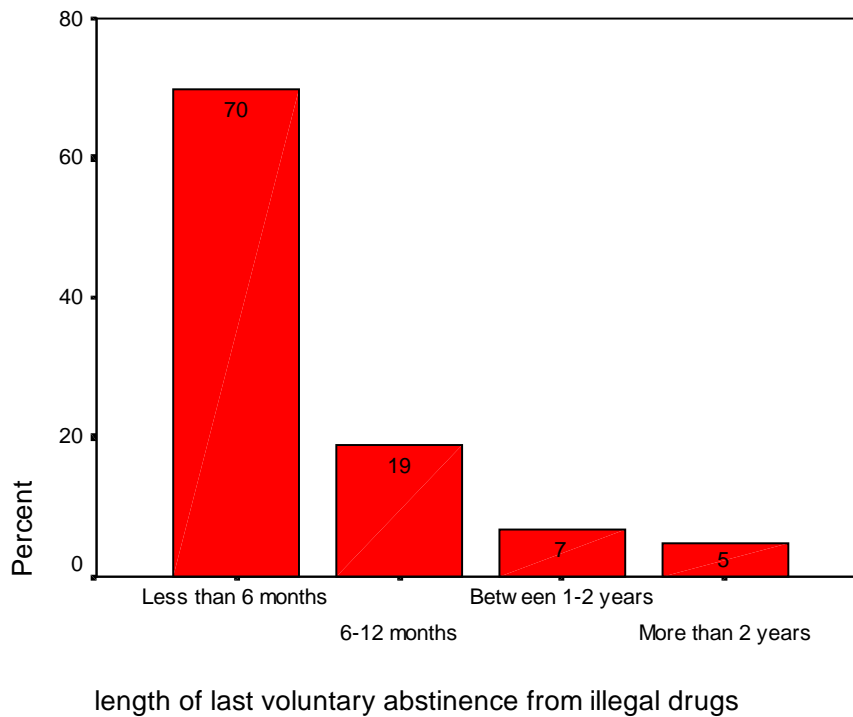
length of last voluntary abstinence from alcohol

N=150

Exhibit 20 is a graph of the length of the client's last voluntary abstinence from illegal drugs. The proportions in this exhibit are nearly identical to those in Exhibit 19. By far, the length of voluntary abstinence from illegal drugs was most frequently less than 6 months.

**Exhibit 20**

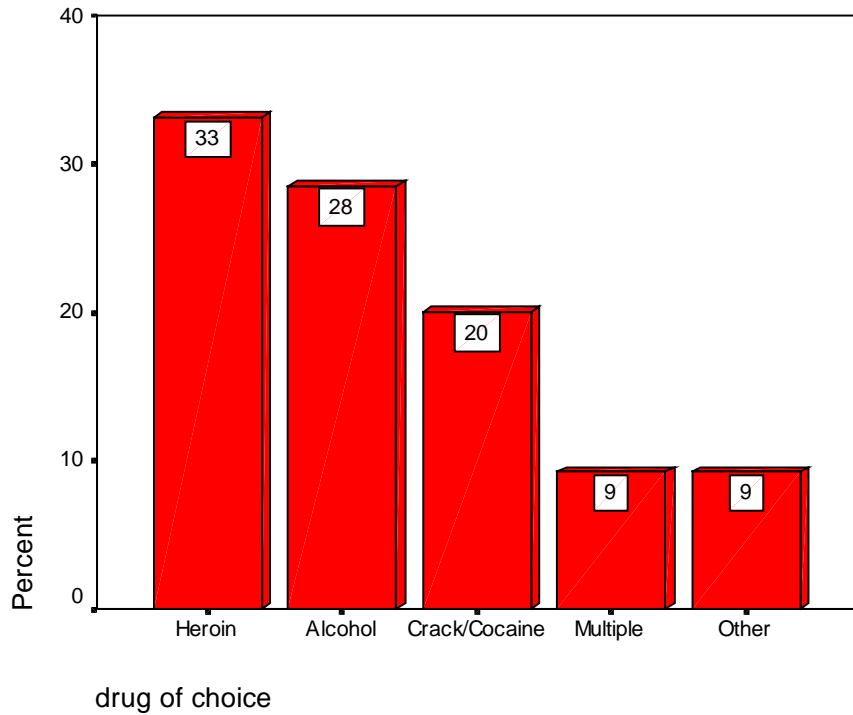
**Length of Last Voluntary Abstinence from Illegal Drugs**



N-149

When asked to identify their drug of choice, the clients provided a variety of responses. These responses are displayed in general terms in Exhibit 21 below.

**Exhibit 21**  
**Client's Drug of Choice**



N=130

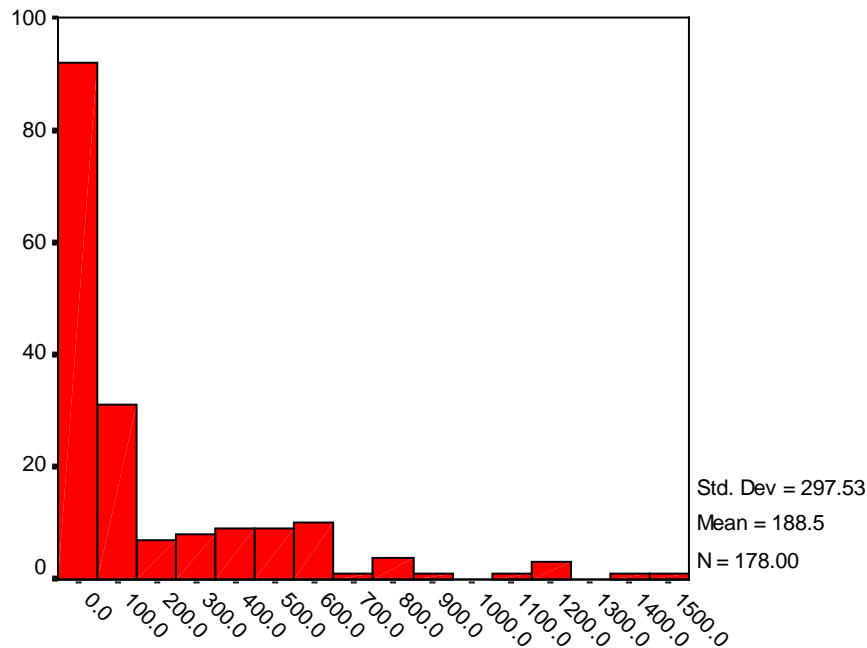
Heroin was the most frequently cited drug of choice at 33%, followed by alcohol at 29% and crack or cocaine at 20%. Nine percent of the clients listed multiple drugs, and the same amount listed some other drug, including marijuana.

In this section, clients were also assessed as to their approximate monthly income. Exhibit 22 is a display of the distribution of client incomes.



### Exhibit 22

#### Estimated Monthly Income at Assessment



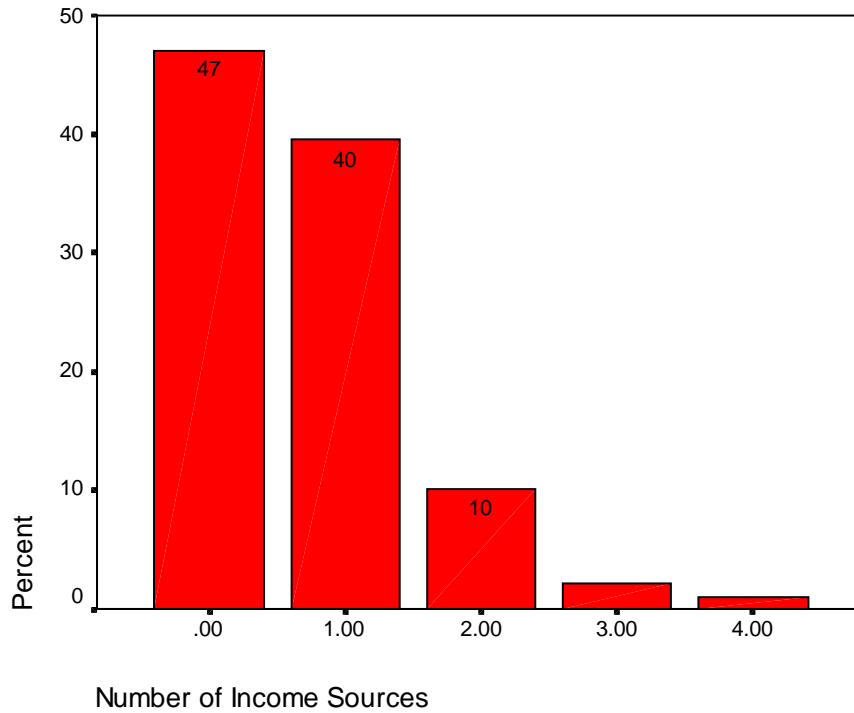
what is your approximate monthly income?

Most frequently, clients had no income at all. However, the average monthly income was \$188.50. (Note: One client's monthly income was reported to be over \$4000, this was omitted from the above chart because it skewed the distribution.)

Exhibit 23 displays the number of income sources which contribute to the income displayed in Exhibit 22. Forty-seven percent of the clients have no source of income, while another 40% have just one source. Possible sources used in the construction of the above chart are Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, TAFDC, child support, unemployment benefits, family, friends, panhandling, food stamps, and employment income.

**Exhibit 23**

**Number of Sources of Income**



N=187

**Legal Issues**

This section deals with the client’s legal issues, as displayed in Exhibit 24 below.

**Exhibit 24**

<b>Legal Issues</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Client on probation	24.6
Client on parole	5.2
Client currently pending arraignment	6.5
Some other legal problem	8.7
Criminal record of any other type	29.0
Charges related to drugs, violence, arson, or larceny	40.7
Any criminal record	55.1

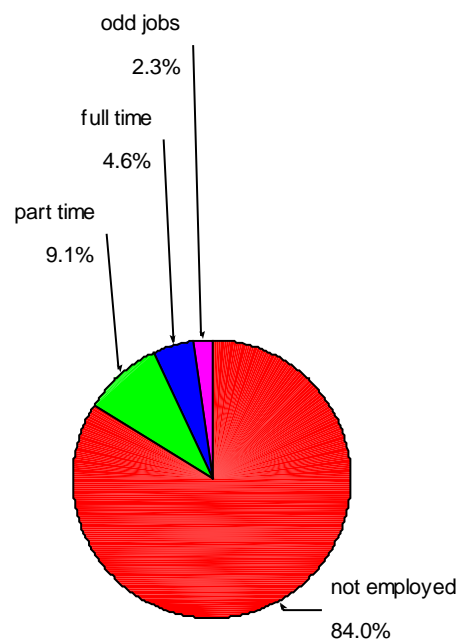
Exhibit 24 shows that nearly 25% of the clients were on probation. Over half (55.1%) indicated that they had a criminal record.

## Work History and Preferences

This next section deals with the client's prior work history. Issues such as past full- or part-time employment, job search activities, and present work status were measured. Exhibit 25 is a chart which displays the client's work status at the time of their assessment. Eighty-four percent of the clients were presently unemployed, with another 9% working only part-time.

### Exhibit 25

#### Client's Employment Status at Assessment



N=175

Exhibit 26 shows that 93.5% of the clients at Impact have ever worked full-time, while only about half (49.6%) have ever worked part-time. Approximately 80% of the clients indicated that they were actively looking for work at the time that they arrived at Impact.

**Exhibit 26**

<b>Work History</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Has ever worked full-time	93.5
Has ever worked part-time	49.6
Has full- or part-time work experience	89.3
Is actively looking for work	78.9

Exhibit 27 is a graph of the last time the client had a job of any kind. Fifteen percent of the clients had been employed within the month prior to their coming to Impact, and 51% had been employed within the last 6 months. However, 36% of the clients had not been employed within the last year.

**Exhibit 27**

**Time Since Last Job**

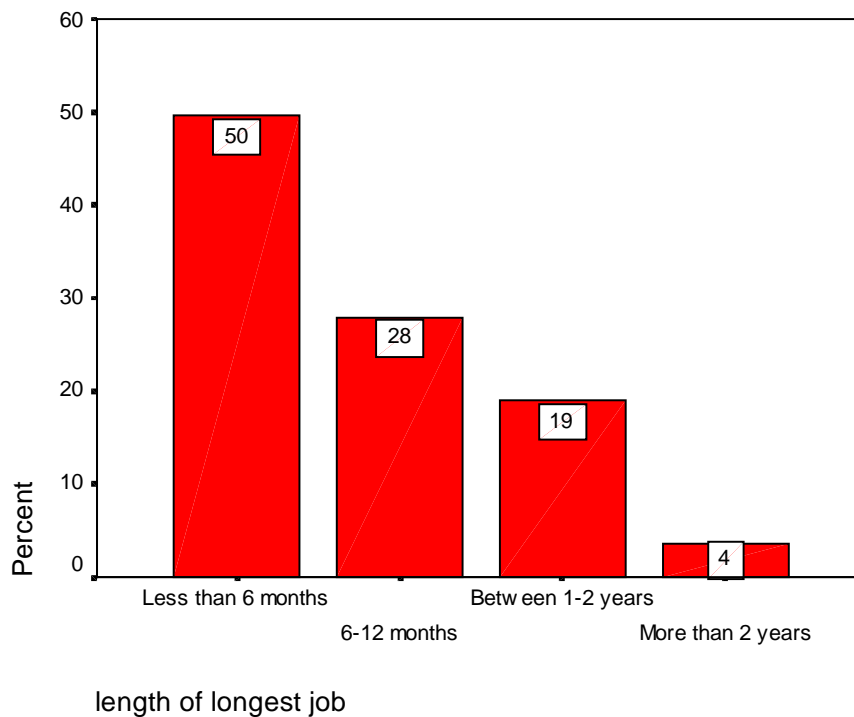


N=161

Exhibit 28 displays the length of the client’s longest job. Half of the clients had not had a job longer than 6 months. Also, only 23% had had a job over a year.

**Exhibit 28**

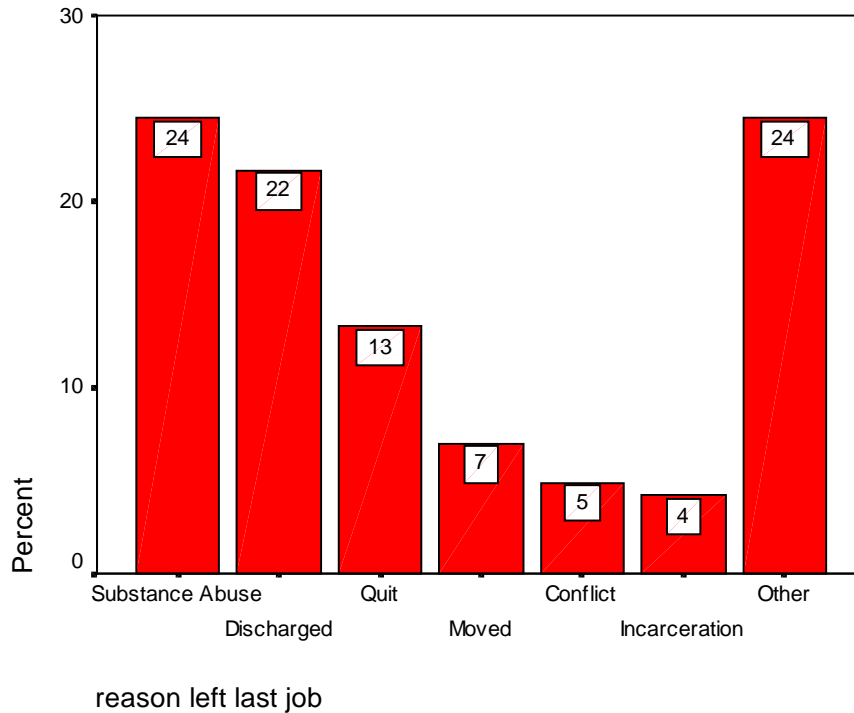
**Length of Longest Job**



N=111

Exhibit 29, below, concerns the reasons why the client left their last job. A variety of responses were obtained in this area. Exhibit 29 displays these responses in general terms.

**Exhibit 29**  
**Reason Left Last Job**



N=143

As can be seen from Exhibit 29, 24% of the clients cited substance abuse as the reason for leaving their last job. Another 22% indicated that they had been discharged, and 13% said that they had quit or resigned. Other reasons which were indicated with some frequency were having moved to another location, conflict with either management or co-workers, and incarceration. Although specific reasons were not cited for having been discharged, it is possible that it may have been due to conflict at work or issues concerning substance abuse. It is assumed that there is some overlap between these categories.

Clients were also assessed as to their job search activities. Exhibit 30 shows that 25.2% of the clients attempted to get help with finding a job.

### **Exhibit 30**

<b>Previous Employment Assistance</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Attempted to get help finding a job	25.2
Received help from an agency	46.3
Is still receiving help from an agency	21.1

Of those who attempted to get help finding a job, 46.3% received help from an agency, and approximately half of those (21.1%) were still receiving help.

### **Conclusion**

This report has identified general characteristics of the clients at Impact Employment Services. Much had been learned about the clientele which will provide greater ability to the counselors at Impact to assist their clients in finding employment, putting them on the road to obtaining housing. Understanding specific characteristics of homeless unemployed persons is a key aspect of Impact's approach to providing employment assistance to this population.

### **Appendix**