Surveying Colorado's TANF Leavers: Getting Us Through the Rough Patches

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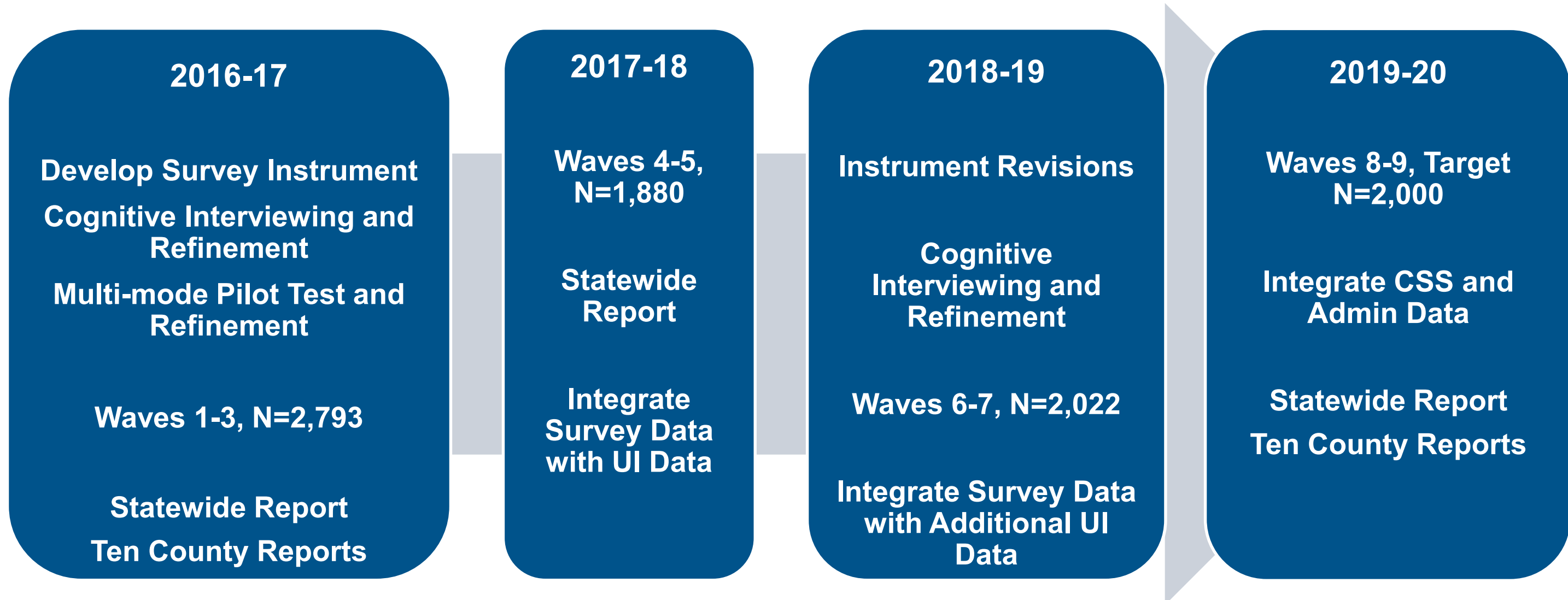
Purpose

Learn why and how the survey was developed, the data collection methodology, how data are being used, and ideas for learning more about your state's TANF population.

Agenda

- **Developing the Colorado Works Leavers Survey**

- **Data Collection Methodology (Activity #1)**

- **Key Findings (Activity #2)**

- **How Survey Findings are Being Used**

- **Future Plans**

General Timeline

2016-17

Develop Survey Instrument

Cognitive Interviewing and Refinement

Multi-mode Pilot Test and Refinement

Waves 1-3, N=2,793

Statewide Report

Ten County Reports

2017-18

Waves 4-5, N=1,880

Statewide Report

Integrate Survey Data with UI Data

2018-19

Instrument Revisions

Cognitive Interviewing and Refinement

Waves 6-7, N=2,022

Integrate Survey Data with Additional UI Data

2019-20

Waves 8-9, Target N=2,000

Integrate CSS and Admin Data

Statewide Report

Ten County Reports

Developing the Colorado Works Leavers Survey

Cognitive Interviewing
Pilot Test

Survey Content

WHAT DO YOU *REALLY* WANT TO KNOW?

Survey Content (Contd. 1)

- **What do you *really* want to know?**
  1. Reasons for leaving Colorado Works
  2. Experiences and satisfaction with Colorado Works
  3. Perceived goal(s) of Colorado Works
  4. How participating in Colorado Works contributed to family's self-sufficiency goals
  5. Current employment status and wage rate

Survey Content (Contd. 2)

HOW CAN YOU FIND OUT?

Survey Content (Contd. 3)

- **How can you find out?**
  - Subject Matter Experts
  - CDHS
  - Feedback from county caseworkers and administrators
  - Existing surveys

Survey Specifications

- **How long should the survey be?**
- **Can you provide an incentive?**
- **Need for multilingual survey?**
- **What reading level should you try to achieve?**
- **Where do the records come from?**
  - How we defined a "Leaver"
  - How we handled duplicates
- **How many people should you survey?**
  - Target 5% overall confidence interval (CI), which is the range of how closely a statistic reflects what is true for the specified population.

Cognitive Interviewing

- **Learn how adults interpret, understand, and respond to the draft set of survey questions, including response options**
  - Used think-aloud approach and participants' paraphrasing of questions

Cognitive Interviews help you view the world from a respondent's perspective: Respondents don't have "barriers," they have "problems."
They are not "Leavers" –that is a term for researchers or those in the social service world

Cognitive Interviewing – Lessons Learned

- **Change from "satisfaction" to "helpfulness" to better reflect the usefulness of Colorado Works services**
  - Why? Participants struggled to differentiate between satisfaction and meeting expectations

- **Respondents suggested we use the word "problems" versus "barriers"**

- **Given multigenerational TANF participants, clarify repeatedly who we are calling about in child-only interviews**

- **Streamlined initial education options**

Cognitive Interviewing – Lessons Learned (Contd. 1)

- **Delete "The services I received while in Colorado Works increased my family's safety"**
  - The word "safety" did not resonate with respondents.

- **Omit "leave" and replace with "What is the main reason you and/or your children are no longer in Colorado Works?"**
  - Many said they did not "leave" the program, but were ejected.

- **Clarified option responses for leaving the program**

Question Revisions

Original	Revised
Are you receiving TANF benefits in your current state of residence?	Are you receiving TANF benefits where you live now?
What is the highest grade or year of school that you completed?	What is the last grade that you completed in school?
Are you the primary wage earner for your family?	Do you make the most money in your family?

More Question Revisions

Original
The Colorado Works program met my expectations.
The Colorado Works program exceeded my expectations.
The Colorado Works program met my needs.
Each individual item rated strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree.

Revised
Overall, did Colorado Works… Exceed your expectations, Meet your expectations, or Fail to meet your expectations

Pilot Test

- **Pilot test focused on response rate differences between three modes, and provided a test of the whole methodology**
  - 450 people randomly assigned to one of 3 modes (150 each mode)
    - Mailed surveys
    - Texted links to mobile-optimized web survey (remember county feedback about popularity of texting)
    - Telephone surveys (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews)
  - $20 Incentive

Cognitive interviews focused on content and word choice for questions and response options.

Pilot Test - Lessons Learned

- **Who starts and who finishes?**
  - Getting the link through email/text resulted in higher breakoff compared to getting a mailed invitation
  - Why?
    - Click on versus click through
    - Amount of information initially provided
- **Where did respondents stop?**
  - On web, 33% left on the landing page; 31% left at the first open-ended question.
  - On CATI, 56% left at the first question; 33% left at the first open-ended question

Pilot Test - Lessons Learned (Contd. 1)

Survey was too long (target was 15 minutes)

- Shortened instructions, transition statements, and displayed them only once

- Deleted items respondents did not use, weren't a problem, or didn't know what it was

- Moved first open-ended question because of high break off

- Captured only hourly wage data for employed respondents [weekly, monthly, and yearly options were confusing]

- Kept only three questions for respondents with a second job

Newest Survey Revisions

- **Greater focus on children**
  - Better capture impact of Colorado Works on children
  - Expanded childcare section to determine what assistance was needed and if the respondent was able to receive it
- **More Nuanced Look at Services for Adults**
  - Receipt of cash and/or supportive services
    - Received assistance (cash or items such as clothes or tools) for their job
    - Received or a bonus cash incentive for obtaining a job or working more hours
  - If used a service, helpfulness of assistance
  - If did not use a service, whether it was offered
- **If not with help from Colorado Works, how respondent obtained their job**

Still More Question Revisions

Original	Revised	Re-Revised
How much do the number of hours you work change from week to week? Hardly at all A little A fair amount A lot	**Do the <u>number</u> of hours you work change…?…** Every week A few times a month Once a month Less often Never, I have a set number of hours	**Do the number of hours you work change every week?** Yes No

Data Collection Methodology

Activity: Imagine you're administering or taking this survey.

Collecting Survey Data

- **Sample**
- **Translation (Spanish)**
- **Programing and Testing**
  - Desktop, laptop, IOS, Android
- **Fielding**
  - Email Invitation
  - Mail push-to-web
  - Text Invitation
  - Text reminder(s)
- **Help Desk**
- **Incentives ($20)**

Smartphone Completions
- 86% of child-only
- 90% of one parent
- 86% of two parent

Activity: Predicting Some Findings

Prediction #1

Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience in Colorado Works?	Frequency (Percent)
Very Satisfied	
Satisfied	
Dissatisfied	
Very Dissatisfied	
Total	

Findings #1

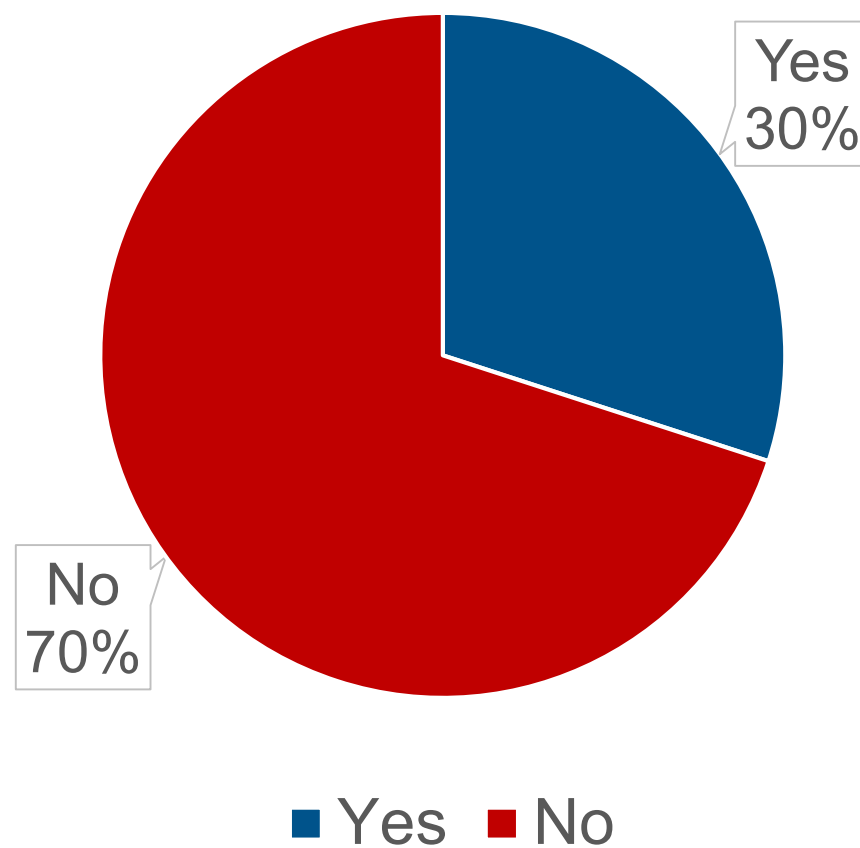| Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience in Colorado Works?	Frequency (Percent)
Very Satisfied	620 (31%)
Satisfied	1,020 (51%)
Dissatisfied	284 (14%)
Very Dissatisfied	95 (5%)
Total	2,019 (100%)

Prediction #2

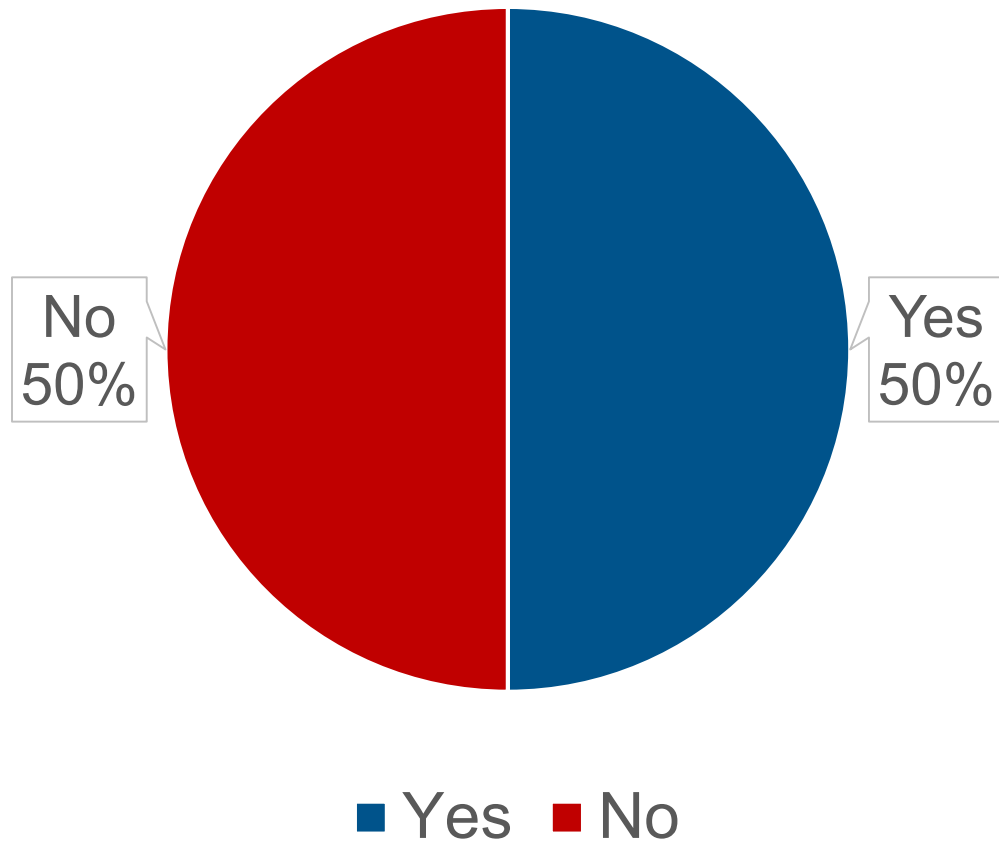## Were you aware of the Child Support Change?
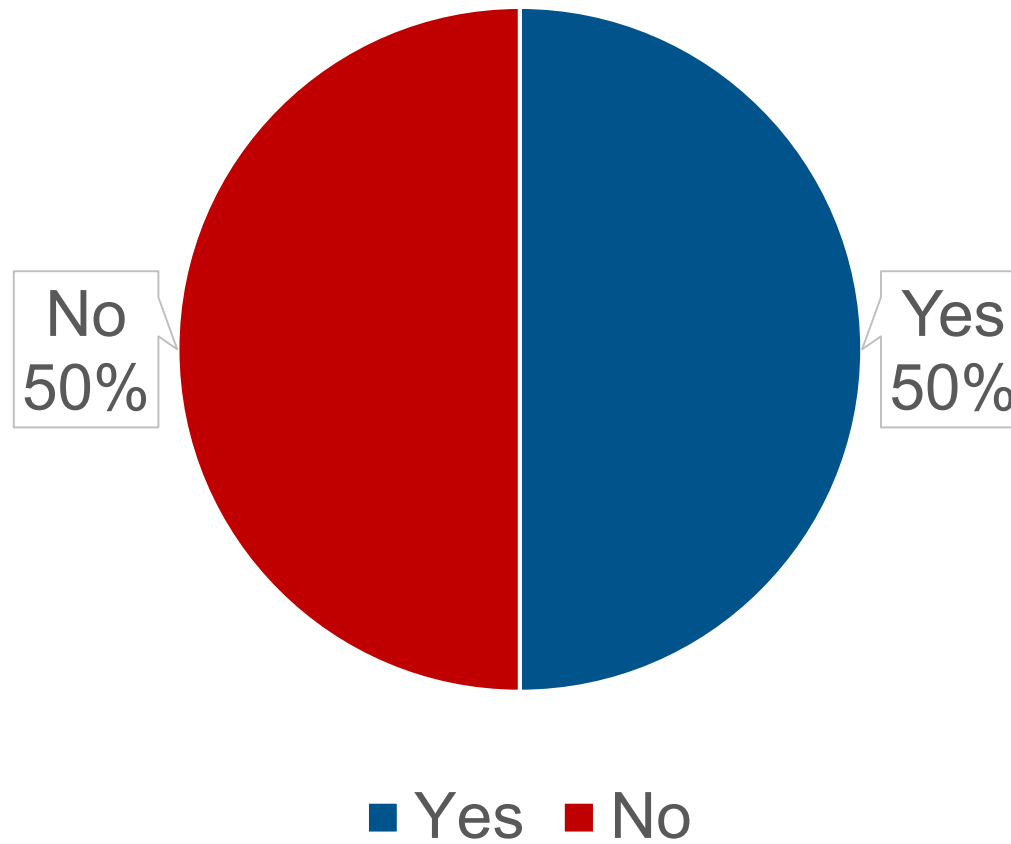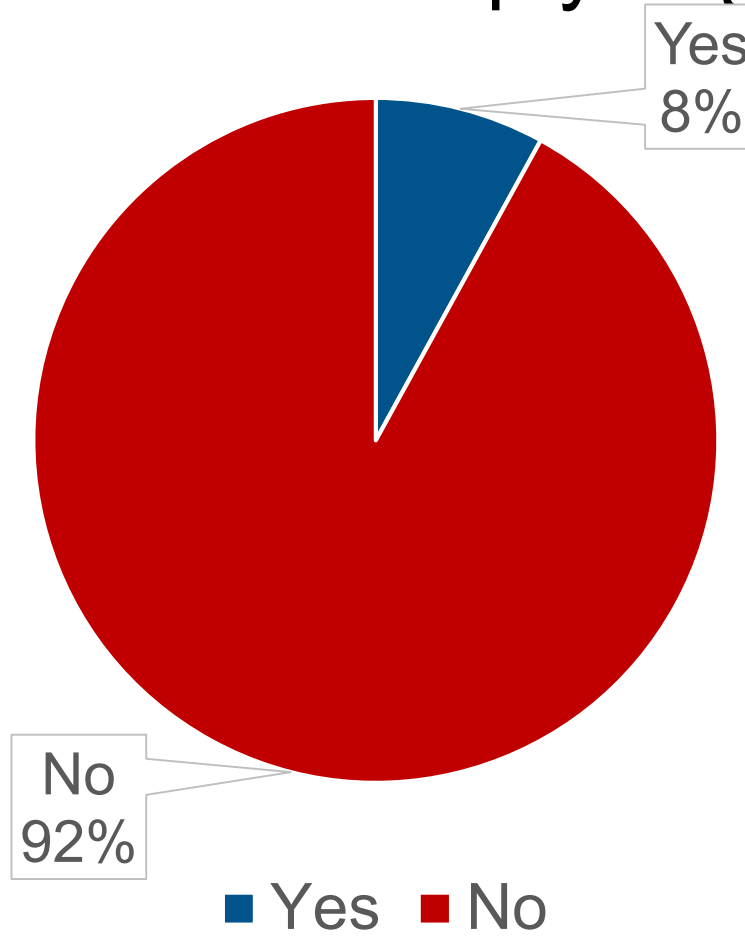
Findings #2

Were you aware of the Child Support Change?

Prediction #3

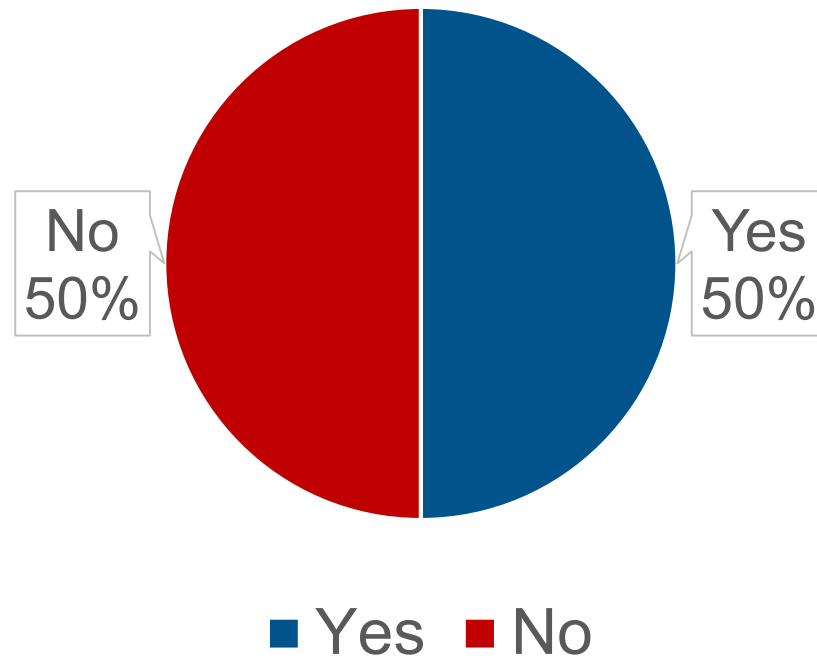## Did Colorado Works Help you get this job?

Findings #3

Did Colorado Works Help you get this job?
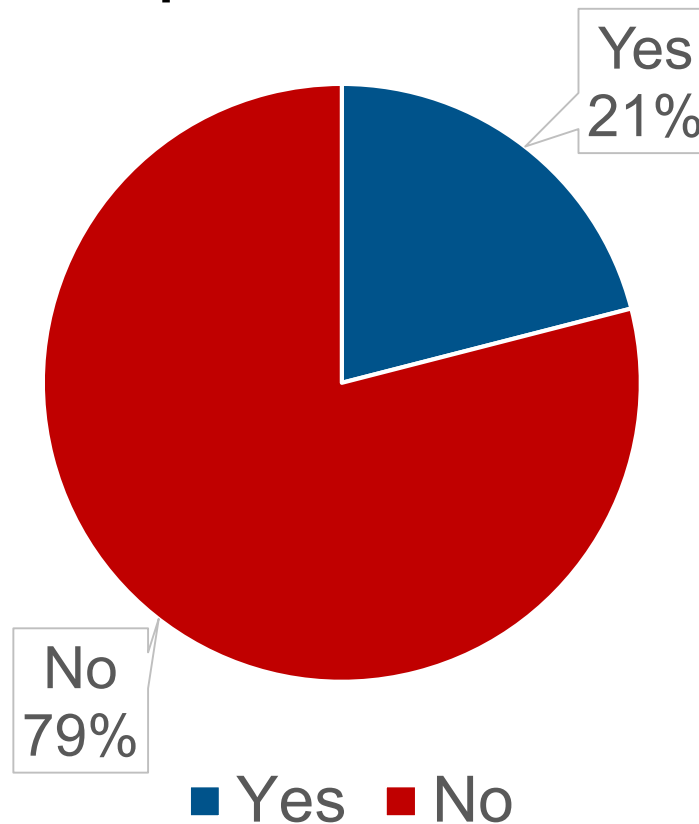

Yes
8%

No
92%

■ Yes ■ No

Prediction #4

Were you working for pay when you first started Colorado Works? This could include babysitting, housekeeping, or part-time or temporary jobs.
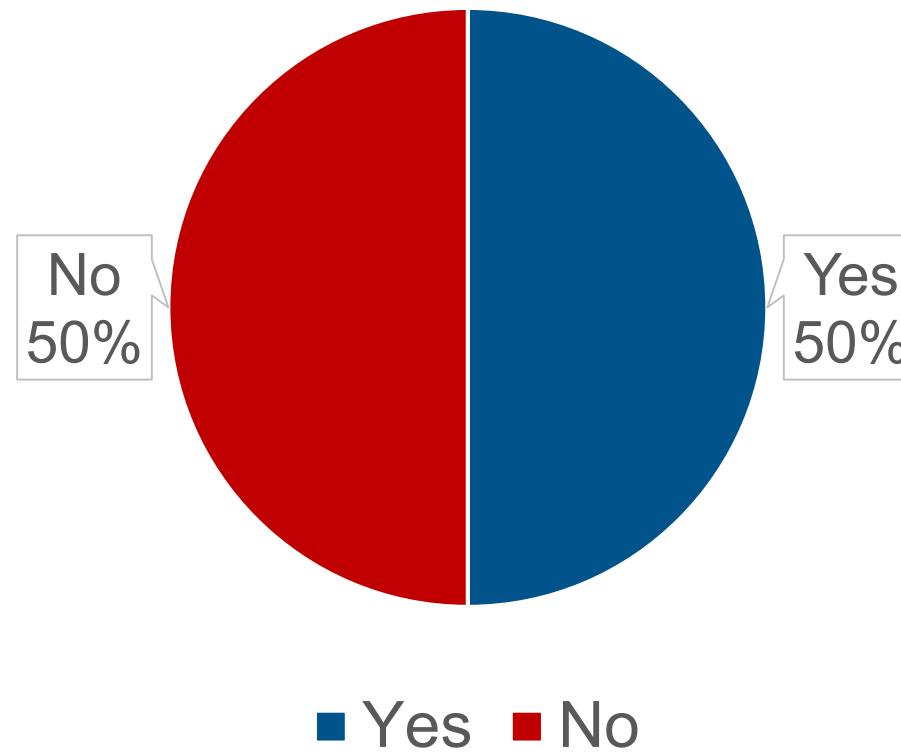

■ Yes ■ No

Findings #4

Were you working for pay when you first started Colorado Works? This could include babysitting, housekeeping, or part-time or temporary jobs.

Yes
21%

No
79%

■ Yes ■ No

Prediction #5

Were you working for pay when you left Colorado Works?

No 50% Yes 50%

■ Yes ■ No

Findings #5

Were you working for pay when you left Colorado Works?

No
50%

Yes
50%

■ Yes ■ No
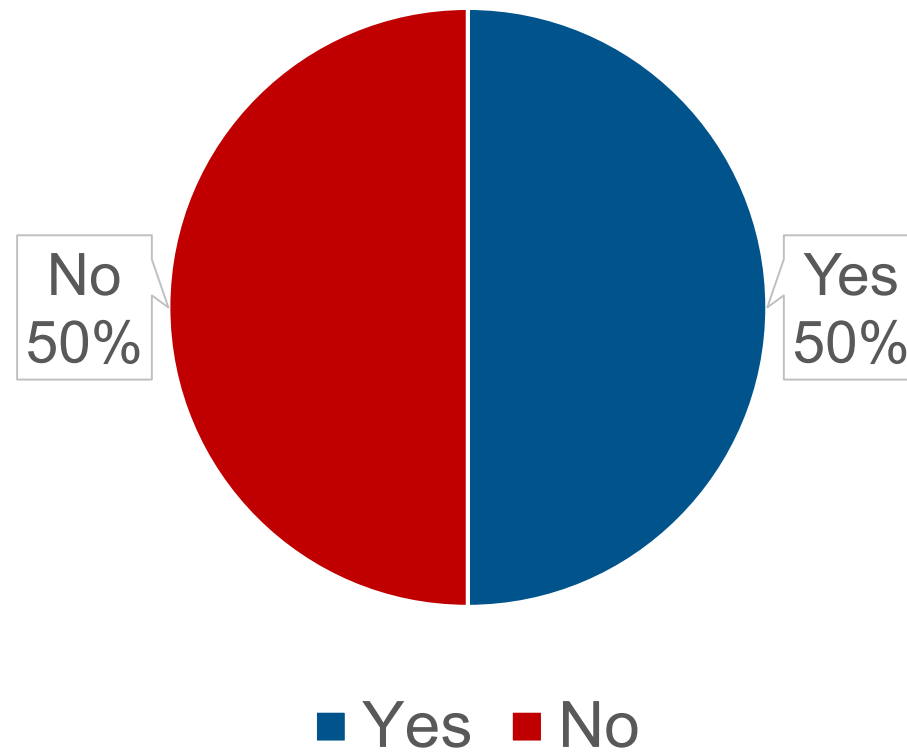
Childcare Needs

Childcare Assistance in Colorado Works	Needed	Received
Cash assistance for childcare	538 (70%)	291 (55%)
Help finding a childcare provider	436 (57%)	253 (59%)

Children and Stability

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The services I received while in Colorado Works helped my children.	961 (48%)	852 (42%)	154 (8%)	53 (3%)
The services I received while in Colorado Works added stability to my life.	749 (37%)	927 (46%)	262 (13%)	78 (4%)
The time and effort that I put into the program was worth it.	680 (34%)	989 (49%)	264 (13%)	84 (4%)

How Survey is Being Used

How CDHS has Used the Data

- **Inform strategic planning**
- **Outreach to county administrators**
  - Interactive workshops to support counties in using data
- **Guide caseworker (and other) training and support**
  - Respond to needs of overwhelmed staff (educate on strong customer service results in survey and more focused areas for growth)
  - Trauma-informed self-care classes to manage stress and reduce burnout
- **Integrate survey data with UI data**
- **Collaborate with Child Support Services**
  - New survey questions
  - Focus groups in three counties with CPs and NCPs
- **Share information/ideas with grant writers (data to drive funding and programmatic requests)**

Future Plans

Questions?

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Additional Findings

What were their Needs

- **What did you hope Colorado Works would do for you and/or your family? What needs did you hope Colorado Works would meet?**

  - Financial assistance

  - Employment or increased hours or job opportunities

  - Child care or child assistance

  - Increased independence

  - Housing

Helpfulness of Services

- **Colorado Works was very helpful or helpful in assisting with job search, preparing for a job, and exploring or planning for careers they were interested in (74-78%)**

- **Respondents that used specific services offered by Colorado Works rated the following as very helpful or helpful:**
  - 89% - obtaining assistance related to college or trade classes
  - 89% - referrals to other services
  - 87% - high school or equivalent completion
  - 87% - finding transportation,
  - 79% - accessing housing benefits or assistance

Barrier to Employment	Big Problem	Medium Problem	Small Problem	Not a Problem
Transportation issues	32%	16%	14%	39%
Childcare Issues	29%	13%	15%	43%
Unstable housing	22%	12%	12%	55%
Mental health problems	19%	15%	12%	54%
Need or want to remain home with my children	14%	17%	22%	47%
Physical health problems	12%	11%	15%	62%
Criminal background	9%	8%	11%	73%
Lack work experience	7%	10%	15%	68%

Employment and Income

Income at Time of Survey is…	Child-Only	One Parent	Two Parent
Higher	17%	29%	34%
About the same	56%	40%	38%
Lower	27%	32%	28%

CSS Additions

Child Support Integration

- **Needed to measure awareness and effect of 2017 Colorado policy change to full pass through**
- **Collaborative revisions with questions for the three groups of former Colorado Works recipients affected by the change:**
  1) Have a child support order established and have received payments from the NCP
  2) Have a child support order established and have <u>not</u> received payments from the NCP, and
  3) Could, but have not, established a child support order.

Child Support Questions

- **All – Were you aware of the Child Support change**

- **Order established, receipt of payment(s)**
  - Aware received/still receiving payments separate from TANF
  - If no Child Support while on Colorado Works, would have cut down on: food, housing, clothing, transportation, utilities, health care, education, child care, entertainment, other
  - Improved relationship between child and NCP
  - Since started receiving Child Support, has child's parent stopped giving a) other financial support b) other non-financial support

Child Support Questions (Contd. 1)

- **Order established, no receipt**
  - Before taking survey, aware Child Support would have been paid to you directly
  - [if yes] Knowing Child Support would be paid directly to me, encourages me to communicate with my child's parent about Child Support

- **No order established**
  - Before taking survey, aware Child Support would have been paid to you directly
  - [If yes] Knowing Child Support would be paid directly to me encourages me to engage with Child Support Services in establishing an order.

Child Support Focus Groups

- **Focus groups with CPs and NCPs**
  - Awareness of policy change
  - Impressions of CSS
  - Support desired from CSS
  - Impact of the policy change

- **Additional analyses to explore factors that influence NCP payment behavior**

Child Support Pass Through Impact

Receiving Child Support has improved the relationship between my child(ren) and the parent who pays Child Support.

Agreement	Frequency (Percent)
Strongly Agree	51 (12%)
Agree	116 (27%)
Disagree	117 (28%)
Strongly Disagree	139 (33%)
Total	423 (100%)

Child Support Pass Through and Other Support from NCP

Since you've started receiving Child Support, has the child's parent stopped giving:

Support that Stopped	Yes	No	N/A
Other Financial Support	169 (40%)	80 (19%)	175 (41%)
Other Non-financial Support	138 (33%)	89 (21%)	192 (46%)

Communication Impact
Child Support Pass Through

Please rate your agreement with this statement. Knowing that Child Support would be paid directly to me, encourages me to communicate with my child's parent about Child Support.

Agreement	Frequency (Percent)
Strongly Agree	30 (22%)
Agree	60 (44%)
Disagree	27 (20%)
Strongly Disagree	19 (14%)
Total	136 (100%)

Payment Knowledge Impact
Child Support Pass Through

Please rate your agreement with this statement. Knowing that Child Support would be paid directly to me encourages me to engage with Child Support Services in establishing an order.

Agreement	Frequency (Percent)
Strongly Agree	74 (39%)
Agree	87 (46%)
Disagree	17 (9%)
Strongly Disagree	12 (6%)
Total	189 (100%)