

Open employment services for people with disabilities 1995: the first year of NIMS data

**Phil Anderson
Kim Wisener**

1996

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
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Contents

List of tables	vi
List of figures	xi
Acknowledgments	xiii
Summary	xv
1 Introduction: employment and people with disabilities	1
1.1 Disability in Australia	1
1.2 History of employment services in Australia	5
1.3 Types of employment services in Australia	6
1.4 What open employment services do	7
1.5 NIMS data system and its development	8
2 Service providers	11
2.1 Open employment site numbers	11
2.2 Staff numbers	12
2.3 Staff and client numbers	13
2.4 Service type	14
2.5 Open employment sites and predominant disability types	15
3 Clients: characteristics and job profiles	17
3.1 Client characteristics	17
3.2 Profile of jobs	23
3.3 Work experience trials	29
3.4 Workers without open employment agency support	31
4 Job experience of clients	37
4.1 Job history	37
4.2 Measures of job experience	40
4.3 Job experience by sex	42
4.4 Job experience by age	42
4.5 Job experience by Indigenous status	45
4.6 Job experience by non-English-speaking background	46
4.7 Job experience by type and nature of primary disability	47
4.8 Job experience and presence of other disability	52

4.9	Job experience and frequency of assistance required for activities of daily living	53
4.10	Job experience and type of living arrangement	54
4.11	Job experience and disability panel endorsement	55
4.12	Job experience, funding type and referral source	56
4.13	Job experience and primary source of income	58
4.14	Job experience, employment basis, occupation and industry	59
4.15	Job experience by State and Territory	61
4.16	Job experience and agency site characteristics	63
4.17	Job experience and multiple related factors: regression analyses	68
5	Client support	77
5.1	Total hours of support	77
5.2	Support for workers and non-workers	78
5.3	Client support and client characteristics	84
5.4	Client support and agency site characteristics	95
5.5	Regression analyses of support hours per week for workers and non-workers	97
6	Interstate comparisons	103
6.1	Agency sites	103
6.2	Clients	103
6.3	Client jobs	109
6.4	Client support	114
6.5	Type of service	115
6.6	Conclusion	116

Appendix 1: Previous studies of open employment services	117
A1.1 Types of employment services in Australia	117
A1.2 Types of employment services in the United States	118
A1.3 Open employment agencies: some previous Australian data	119
A1.4 Client profile	120
A1.5 Youth with disabilities	122
A1.6 Working conditions, job retention rates and wages	122
A1.7 Clients' feelings about working	124
A1.8 Client support	125
A1.9 Costs and benefits of open employment services	125
A1.10 Other employment service data	127
Appendix 2: Technical notes	133
A2.1 Records included in the NIMS database, 1995	133
A2.2 Calculation of client job and support measures	134
A2.3 Statistical analysis	137
Glossary	139
References	141

List of tables

Table S1:	Number of open employment sites by State and Territory, 1995	xvi
Table S2:	Number of sites by rural/remote classification, 1995	xvi
Table S3:	Number of clients receiving support by primary disability, 1995	xvii
Table S4:	Duration of jobs current as at the end of 1995	xviii
Table S5:	Job history of workers during 1995	xix
Table S6:	Mean hours of support per week per client for workers and non-workers, by primary disability type, frequency of ADL assistance required, age group, presence of other disability and funding type, 1995	xxiii
Table 1.1:	People with a handicap: severity of handicap by sex and age as a percentage of the Australian population of that sex and age, Australia, 1993	2
Table 1.2:	People aged 15 to 64 years living in households: living arrangement, main source of income and employment status, by severity of handicap and disability status (percentage distribution), Australia, 1993	3
Table 1.3:	Levels of disability and handicap in the Australian labour force, 1993	4
Table 2.1:	Number of open employment sites by State and Territory, 1995	11
Table 2.2:	Number of sites by location, 1995	11
Table 2.3:	Number of equivalent full-time staff, 1995	12
Table 2.4:	Number of sites: equivalent full-time (EFT) paid staff, 1995	12
Table 2.5:	Number of sites: distribution of paid and unpaid staff, 1995	13
Table 2.6:	Sites: total site staff numbers by number of clients, 1995	13
Table 2.7:	Service type, 1995	15
Table 2.8:	Sites grouped by client primary disability type: numbers of sites and clients, 1995	16
Table 3.1:	Number of clients by sex and age, 1995	17
Table 3.2:	Number of clients by primary disability type and frequency of ADL assistance, 1995	18
Table 3.3:	Number of clients receiving support by primary disability and whether episodic, 1995	18
Table 3.4:	Presence of other disability, 1995	19
Table 3.5:	Number of clients by non-English-speaking background, 1995	19
Table 3.6:	Number of clients by origin, 1995	20
Table 3.7:	Clients by disability panel status, 1995	20
Table 3.8:	Clients: disability panel status by age, 1995	21
Table 3.9:	Clients: disability panel status by sex, 1995	21
Table 3.10:	Clients: disability panel status by primary disability type, 1995	21
Table 3.11:	Clients: disability panel status by phase, 1995	22
Table 3.12:	Number of jobs per client during 1995	23
Table 3.13:	Jobs by industry, 1995	24
Table 3.14:	Jobs by occupation group, 1995	24
Table 3.15:	Jobs by employment basis, 1995	26
Table 3.16:	Duration of ongoing jobs as at the end of 1995	27
Table 3.17:	Duration of completed jobs, 1995	27

Table 3.18:	Completed jobs by reason for job ending, 1995	27
Table 3.19:	Work experience trials: type of industry, 1995	29
Table 3.20:	Work experience trials: occupation group, 1995	29
Table 3.21:	Work experience trials: employment basis, 1995	30
Table 3.22:	Duration of ongoing work experience trials as at the end of 1995	30
Table 3.23:	Duration of completed work experience trials, 1995	30
Table 3.24:	Completed work experience trials by reason for ending	31
Table 3.25:	Workers without support: sex and age, 1995	31
Table 3.26:	Workers without support: primary disability type and frequency of ADL assistance required, 1995	32
Table 3.27:	Workers without support: nature of primary disability, 1995	32
Table 3.28:	Workers without support: presence of other disability, 1995	32
Table 3.29:	Workers without support: service type, 1995	33
Table 3.30:	Workers without support: industry type, 1995	33
Table 3.31:	Workers without support: occupation group, 1995	34
Table 3.32:	Workers without support: employment basis, 1995	35
Table 3.33:	Differences between workers without support and clients with support, 1995	35
Table 4.1:	Classification of job history for workers	37
Table 4.2:	Job history of workers during 1995	37
Table 4.3:	Workers, basis of employment of primary job by job history, 1995	39
Table 4.4:	Reason for job(s) ending, by job history, for workers who finished one or more jobs, 1995	39
Table 4.5:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by job history	41
Table 4.6:	Job history of workers during 1995 by sex	42
Table 4.7:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by sex	42
Table 4.8:	Job history of workers during 1995 by age group	43
Table 4.9:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by age group	43
Table 4.10:	Client job history during 1995 by whether Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or South Sea Islander	45
Table 4.11:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by whether Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or South Sea Islander	46
Table 4.12:	Job history during 1995 by non-English speaking background	46
Table 4.13:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by non-English speaking background	46
Table 4.14:	Client job history during 1995 by primary disability type	48
Table 4.15:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by primary disability type	48
Table 4.16:	Client job history during 1995 by episodic nature of primary disability	51

Table 4.17	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by nature of primary disability	52
Table 4.18:	Client job history during 1995 by presence of other disability	52
Table 4.19:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by presence of other disability	52
Table 4.20:	Client job history during 1995 by frequency of assistance required for activities of daily living	53
Table 4.21:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by frequency of assistance required for activities of daily living	53
Table 4.22:	Client job history during 1995 by type of living arrangement	54
Table 4.23:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by type of living arrangement	55
Table 4.24:	Client job history during 1995 by disability panel endorsement	55
Table 4.25:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by disability panel endorsement	56
Table 4.26:	Client job history during 1995 by funding type	56
Table 4.27:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by funding type	57
Table 4.28:	Client job history during 1995 by referral source	57
Table 4.29:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by referral source	58
Table 4.30:	Client job history during 1995 by source of income	58
Table 4.31:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by source of income	59
Table 4.32:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by basis of employment of primary job	59
Table 4.33:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by occupation group of primary job	60
Table 4.34:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by industry of primary job	61
Table 4.35:	Mean numbers of clients and workers per agency site by State, 1995	62
Table 4.36:	Mean number of workers by job history per agency site, and rates of job outcome by State, 1995	62
Table 4.37:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by State	63
Table 4.38:	Mean numbers of clients and workers per agency site by location, 1995	63
Table 4.39:	Mean number of workers by job history per agency site, and rates of job outcome by location, 1995	64
Table 4.40:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by location of agency site	64
Table 4.41:	Mean numbers of clients and workers per agency site by number of paid staff, 1995	65

Table 4.42:	Mean number of workers by job history per agency site, and rates of job outcome by number of paid staff, 1995	65
Table 4.43:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by number of staff for agency site	65
Table 4.44:	Mean numbers of clients and workers per agency site by type of site, 1995	66
Table 4.45:	Mean number of workers by job history per agency site, and rates of job outcome, by type of site, 1995	67
Table 4.46:	Workers, 1995: number of jobs, weeks to get job, time in work, hours of work and income earned from jobs, by type of site	67
Table 4.47:	Logistic regression model for clients having had a job during 1995	70
Table 4.48:	Linear regression model for income earned per support week from jobs during 1995	73
Table 5.1:	Number of support hours by support category and sex of client, 1995	77
Table 5.2:	Number of direct support hours by primary disability type and support category, 1995	78
Table 5.3:	Mean hours of support per client by job history, 1995	78
Table 5.4:	Workers, 1995: mean hours of support per worker by job history and number of jobs	79
Table 5.5:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for (1) clients without a job during support period, and (2) clients with a job at both start and end of support period ('job retained'), 1995	79
Table 5.6:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for clients with job at start, but without job at end, of support period ('job lost'), 1995	80
Table 5.7:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for clients without job at start, but with job at end, of support period('job gained'), 1995	82
Table 5.8:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for clients without job at start or end, but with job during the support period ('job gained and lost'), 1995	82
Table 5.9:	Support per client for workers and non-workers, by sex, 1995	84
Table 5.10:	Support per client for workers and non-workers, by age group, 1995	84
Table 5.11:	Support per client for workers and non-workers, by whether Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or South Sea Islander, 1995	86
Table 5.12:	Support per client for workers and non-workers, by non-English-speaking background, 1995	86
Table 5.13:	Support per client for workers and non-workers, by type of primary disability, 1995	87
Table 5.14:	Support per client for workers and non-workers, by episodic nature of primary disability, 1995	89
Table 5.15:	Support per client for workers and non-workers, by presence of other disability, 1995	89
Table 5.16:	Support per client for workers and non-workers, by frequency of ADL assistance required, 1995	89
Table 5.17:	Mean hours of support per client for workers and non-workers, by type of living arrangements, 1995	90
Table 5.18:	Mean hours of support per client for workers and non-workers, by disability panel endorsement status, 1995	90

Table 5.19:	Mean hours of support per client for workers and non-workers, by funding type, 1995	91
Table 5.20:	Mean hours of support per client for workers and non-workers, by referral source, 1995	91
Table 5.21:	Mean hours of support per client for workers and non-workers, by source of income, 1995	91
Table 5.22:	Mean hours of support per worker, by basis of employment for primary job, 1995	92
Table 5.23:	Mean hours of support per worker, by occupation group of primary job, 1995	94
Table 5.24:	Mean hours of support per worker, by industry of primary job, 1995	94
Table 5.25:	Mean hours of individual support per support staff full-time equivalent, and per client for workers and non-workers, by State of agency site, 1995	95
Table 5.26:	Mean hours of individual support per support staff full-time equivalent, and per client for workers and non-workers, by location of agency site, 1995	95
Table 5.27:	Mean hours of individual support per support staff full-time equivalent, and per client for workers and non-workers, by number of paid staff at agency site, 1995	96
Table 5.28:	Mean hours of individual support per support staff full-time equivalent, and per client for workers and non-workers, by type of site, 1995	96
Table 5.29:	Linear regression model for mean hours of support per week for workers, 1995	98
Table 5.30:	Linear regression model for mean hours of support per week for non-workers, 1995	100
Table 6.1:	Number of staff per agency site by State, 1995	103
Table 6.2:	Number of clients by State and size of agency site, 1995	104
Table 6.3:	Clients: sex by State, 1995	105
Table 6.4:	Clients: age by State, 1995	106
Table 6.5:	Clients: primary disability type by State, 1995	107
Table 6.6:	Clients: episodic nature of primary disability by State, 1995	107
Table 6.7:	Clients: other disability by State, 1995	108
Table 6.8:	Clients: frequency of assistance required for activities of daily living by State, 1995	108
Table 6.9:	Clients: non-English speaking background by State, 1995	109
Table 6.10:	Clients: Indigenous origins by State, 1995	109
Table 6.11:	Client jobs: industry group by State 1995	110
Table 6.12:	Client jobs: occupation group by State, 1995	111
Table 6.13:	Client jobs: employment basis by State, 1995	112
Table 6.14:	Client jobs: mean, minimum and maximum hourly wage rates by State, 1995	113
Table 6.15:	Client jobs: hourly wage ranges by State, 1995	113
Table 6.16:	Client direct support hours given by State by number of clients, 1995	114
Table 6.17:	Client direct support hours given by State by number of jobs, 1995	115
Table 6.18:	Type of client funding by State, 1995	116

Table A1.1:	Estimated net cost (in Australian dollars) per client per annum to Government	126
Table A1.2:	Percentage of self-reported disability in the CES Register	128
Table A1.3:	Percentage of disability in CES register	128
Table A1.4:	Number of consumers, service type by auspice by time period, Commonwealth, States and Territories (excluding Western Australia), 1995	129
Table A1.5:	Service recipients, sex by primary disability type by age, Commonwealth, States and Territories (excluding Western Australia), 1995	130
Table A1.6:	Number of Commonwealth-funded CSDA services, service type by State and Territory, 1995	131

List of figures

Figure S1:	Number of clients by sex and age, 1995	xvii
Figure S2:	Number of clients with and without jobs, 1995	xviii
Figure S3:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for (1) clients without a job, and (2) clients with a job the start and a job at the end of 1995 ('job retained')	xxii
Figure S4:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for clients who gained and kept a job during 1995	xxii
Figure 2.1:	Total site staff numbers by number of clients, 1995	14
Figure 3.1:	Number of clients by sex and age, 1995	17
Figure 3.2:	Number of clients by primary disability type and frequency of assistance required for activities of daily living, 1995	19
Figure 3.3:	Percentage of jobs by industry, 1995	25
Figure 3.4:	Percentage of jobs by occupation group, 1995	25
Figure 3.5:	Percentage of jobs by basis of employment, 1995	26
Figure 3.6:	Duration of all completed real jobs as at end of 1995	28
Figure 4.1:	Job history of workers during 1995	38
Figure 4.2:	Workers, 1995: mean hours of work by age group	44
Figure 4.3:	Workers, 1995: mean wage rate per hour by age group	44
Figure 4.4:	Workers, 1995: mean income earned from jobs per work week and per week of the support period, by age group	45
Figure 4.5:	Job history during 1995 by primary disability type	47
Figure 4.6:	Workers, 1995: mean percentage of the support period in work, by primary disability type	49
Figure 4.7:	Workers, 1995: mean hours of work per week by primary disability type	50
Figure 4.8:	Workers, 1995: mean wages per hour by primary disability type	50
Figure 4.9:	Workers, 1995: income earned from jobs per work week and per week of the support period, by primary disability type	51
Figure 5.1:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for (1) clients without a job during the support period, and (2) workers in the 'job retained' category, 1995	80

Figure 5.2:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for workers in the 'job lost' category, 1995	81
Figure 5.3:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for workers in the 'job gained' category, 1995	81
Figure 5.4:	Mean hours of support per four-week period for workers in the 'job gained and lost' category, 1995	83
Figure 5.5:	Mean hours of support per week for workers and non-workers, by age group, 1995	85
Figure 5.6:	Workers, 1995: hours of support per 100 hours of work, by age group	85
Figure 5.7:	Workers, 1995: hours of support per \$100 of wages, by age group	86
Figure 5.8:	Mean hours of support per week for workers and non-workers, type of primary disability, 1995	87
Figure 5.9:	Workers, 1995: hours of support per 100 hours of work, by type of primary disability	88
Figure 5.10:	Workers, 1995: hours of support per \$100 of wages, by type of primary disability	88
Figure 5.11:	Workers, 1995: mean hours of support per week, by occupation group of primary job	92
Figure 5.12:	Workers, 1995: hours of support per \$100 wages, by occupation group of primary job	93
Figure 5.13:	Workers, 1995: hours of support per 100 hours of work by occupation group of primary job	93
Figure 6.1:	Size of agency site (number of clients per site) by State, 1995	104
Figure 6.2:	Age of clients by State, 1995	105
Figure 6.3:	Primary disability type by State, 1995	106
Figure 6.4:	Employment basis by State, 1995	112
Figure 6.5:	Mean hourly wage by State, 1995	114
Figure A2.1:	Records included in the NIMS database for 1995	133

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The NIMS system is funded and supported by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services. Departmental staff have had a longstanding role in ensuring the smooth operation of the system, and have provided considerable feedback and ideas. This role included chairing the Steering Committee which coordinated the implementation of the NIMS system.

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Summary

This report presents data on open employment services and their clients funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, in 1995.

Data were collected via a new system—the National Information Management System (NIMS) for open employment services. The design of the system originated with service providers wishing to improve and share management information and to collate national data. Front-end software captures data for local use and transmission for central collation. The development and implementation of the system were financially supported by the Department. The Institute became involved during the implementation phase and is now Data Manager of the system, working alongside an independent Industry Development Manager representing service providers in the ongoing use and development of the system.

Employment and people with disabilities

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the subject matter of the report, outlining the origin and purpose of open employment services and the population that they serve.

In 1993, according to a major ABS survey of disability in Australia, there were an estimated 368,300 people in Australia, aged from 5 to 64 years, who had a 'severe or profound handicap', meaning that they needed regular or occasional support with activities of daily living—self-care, mobility or verbal communication. It is argued that this is a relevant estimate of the broad target population for disability support services—under the Commonwealth/State Disability Agreement these services are targeted towards people with ongoing support needs. At present there is not a definition of the target group, nor of 'severity' of disability, which readily enables population data to be compared with service data, or which rates the complexity of needs of service clients.

People with a handicap (not necessarily severe) had much higher rates of unemployment than the rest of the population; in the 1993 ABS survey, some 21.0% of people with a handicap were unemployed, compared with an estimate of 12.7% in that survey for the labour force overall.

This inequality illustrates the potential role of specialist services, which aim to help people with a disability to obtain and retain employment.

Under the Commonwealth *Disability Services Act 1986* employment services fall into two main categories: open employment services and business services providing supported employment. In an **open employment service**, clients receive support from a service outlet but are directly employed by another organisation not funded under the Act. Open employment services include Competitive Employment Training and Placement (CETP) services, Individual Supported Job (ISJ) services and some enclave services. The other group of employment services are **business services** providing supported employment; clients of these services are employed by the same organisation that provides the employment support.

This report covers the activities of the open employment services (CETP, ISJ and some enclave services). Limited data and research have been available to date on these services and their clients in Australia.

Service providers

Chapters 2 and 3 describe open employment services and their clients.

At the end of 1995 there were 244 open employment sites using the NIMS system of which 228 had provided data for 1995. All States and Territories had open employment sites, with three-quarters of them being in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland (Table S1). Some 66% of sites were in urban areas, 30% in rural areas and the remaining 4% in remote areas (Table S2).

Table S1: Number of open employment sites by State and Territory, 1995

State	Number	Per cent
New South Wales	71	31.1
Victoria	56	24.6
Queensland	54	23.7
Western Australia	28	12.3
South Australia	7	3.1
Tasmania	4	1.8
Australian Capital Territory	5	2.2
Northern Territory	3	1.3
Total	228	100.0

Note: The number of sites equals the number of NIMS software systems installed.

Table S2: Number of sites by rural/remote classification, 1995

Classification	Number	Per cent
Urban	150	65.8
Rural	69	30.3
Remote	9	3.9
Total	228	100.0

Client numbers for 1995 ranged from 5 to 310 per site with an average of 82. Most (83%) sites had between 1 and 10 staff with the average being 5 paid support staff and 1 administration staff.

Clients

A total of 18,527 clients were recorded as having received some support during 1995. Of these, 70% were receiving a CETP service, and 25% an ISJ service.

Almost two-thirds (64%) of these 18,527 clients were male (Figure S1). The age of clients ranged from 15 years to 64 years with 91% being aged 44 years or less. Approximately 2% of clients were identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, which is similar to their representation in the general Australian population.

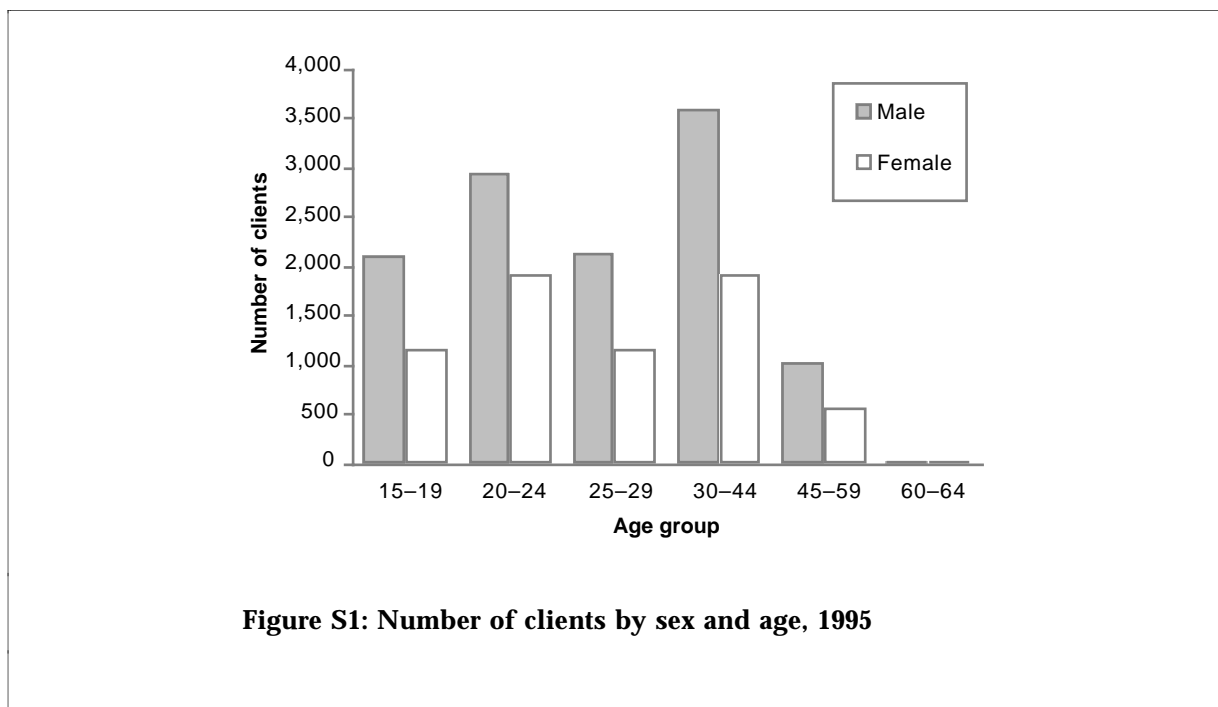


Figure S1: Number of clients by sex and age, 1995

All disability types were represented among clients (Table S3). Over half (55%) of clients had intellectual/learning as their primary disability type, followed by psychiatric (17.5%) and physical (12%). Nearly one-quarter (23%) of clients had another significant disability in addition to their primary disability.

Table S3: Number of clients receiving support by primary disability, 1995

Primary disability type	Number	Per cent
Acquired brain injury	652	3.5
Deaf and blind	20	0.1
Hearing	669	3.6
Intellectual / learning	10,164	54.9
Neurological	620	3.3
Physical	2,232	12.0
Psychiatric	3,233	17.5
Speech	63	0.3
Vision	862	4.7
Not known	12	0.1
Total	18,527	100.0

At the end of 1995 about 60% (11,089) of clients had been through the disability panel process with 11% referred by the panel, 49% endorsed and less than 1% rejected. Disability panels comprise representatives of three Commonwealth departments—Social Security; Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs; and Health and Family Services. The panels were established in 1991 to assess and refer people with a disability to appropriate rehabilitation, training, education, or employment services, and to coordinate delivery of services.

Client jobs

The number of clients who had a job during 1995 ('workers') was 8,924 or 48% of all clients (Figure S2). The total number of jobs was 11,529 with 21% of workers having had more than one job.

Jobs undertaken by clients were spread across all industry types, with those in manufacturing (16%) and retail (13%) being the most common. The majority of jobs were as labourer/workers (65%) followed by clerks (12%) and sales/personal services workers (11%). The average length of a job at the end of 1995 was 74 weeks (Table S4). About two-thirds (64%) of jobs were on a permanent regular basis.

Table S4: Duration of jobs current as at the end of 1995

Job duration	Number	Per cent
<3 months	1,358	18.3
3–6 months	1,294	17.4
6–9 months	886	11.9
9–12 months	903	12.1
12–18 months	896	12.1
18–24 months	649	8.7
24–36 months	599	8.1
>36 months	849	11.5
Missing	3	0.0
Total	7,437	100.0

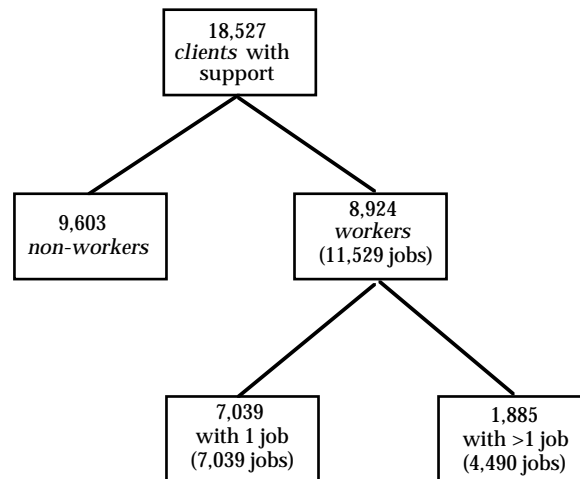


Figure S2: Number of clients with and without jobs, 1995

Client job experience

Chapter 4 presents a more detailed analysis of the experience of these workers (Table S5).

Of all workers, 45% had a job at both the beginning and end of 1995 (termed 'job retained'), and 34% gained a job during 1995 and remained in employment at the end of the year ('job gained and retained'). A further 8% were employed at the beginning of the year but not at the end ('job lost'), and the remaining 13% had work at some time during the year but started and finished the year unemployed ('job gained and lost').

Table S5: Job history of workers during 1995

Job history	With one job during 1995		With more than one job during 1995		All workers	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Job retained	3,174	35.6	846	9.5	4,020	45.1
Job lost	546	6.1	170	1.9	716	8.0
Job gained and retained	2,346	26.3	661	7.4	3,007	33.7
Job gained and lost	973	10.9	208	2.3	1,181	13.2
Total	7,039	78.9	1,885	21.1	8,924	100.0

The overall net gain in the number of workers was 48% (2,291) over the year (1995).

In order to analyse different aspects of a person's job experience, four sets of measures were calculated. These were:

- time in work (in weeks, per time in support, hours per work week, hours per week)
- mean wage (wage per hour, wage per work week, mean income per support week)
- number of jobs per worker
- number of weeks to obtain a job.

Among workers, the average time worked per week was 26.1 hours and the average hourly and weekly rates of pay were \$8.97 and \$229. On average, workers spent about three-quarters (72.7%) of the year with a job (or of their period in support, if less than a year). Their average income per support week was \$168.

In order to explore the inter-relationships among these measures of job experience and other key factors describing the clients or the agencies, multivariate analyses were carried out. The purpose of such analyses is to isolate the effect of each factor, allowing for the effects which other influential factors may have.

Client factors which appeared to be related to one or more of these measures of job experience include: sex, age, Indigenous status, primary disability type, presence of another disability, living arrangements, and need for continual assistance with activities of daily living (ADL assistance).

Women with a disability were less likely to have had a job, and those who had a job on average earned less income from work than men with a disability, largely because they worked fewer hours per week. The likelihood of employment was lowest for 15 to 19 year-olds, and increased with age. Workers in the 25 to 29 age group had the highest earnings from jobs.

People identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or South Sea Islander were less likely to have had a job than other clients. However, for workers, there were no statistically significant differences by Indigenous status in wages or hours worked. Non-English-speaking background did not appear to be a factor related to job experience.

Clients with an intellectual/learning disability were more likely to have had a job than those with a physical, neurological or psychiatric disability, or an acquired brain injury; however, their average rate of pay per hour was the lowest of all groups. Despite having

above-average hourly rates of pay, workers with a psychiatric disability had the lowest mean income from jobs, because on average they worked fewer hours per week.

Clients with more than one disability were less likely to have had a job than clients with one disability only, and those who were employed tended to earn less income from jobs.

There is not a widely accepted overall 'summary' measure of severity of disability. However, other factors, such as living arrangements and the frequency of ADL assistance required, which may be surrogates for such a severity measure, were statistically significant in their relationship to job experience. People who lived alone or with family were more likely to have been employed, and if employed to have a greater income from work, than people with other living arrangements.

The likelihood of getting a job increased with decreasing agency site client-to-staff ratio. People who required continual assistance with activities of daily living had a similar rate of employment to other clients; however, this appeared to be because they were more likely to be supported by an agency site with a low client-to-staff ratio, and thus overall received more hours of support than average. The average income from work for these clients was less than that for other clients.

Clients with endorsement by a disability panel were more likely to get a job than clients who were referred, rejected or not considered by a panel. However, workers who had been rejected by a panel had the highest average income from work.

There was a complex association between funding type and job experience. After controlling for other factors, the chance of an ISJ client getting a job is similar to that for a CETP client, but subsequent job experience is not as favourable.

Job experience varied considerably with State and Territory, even after controlling for other factors. The Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory had the highest rates of clients with jobs, and along with South Australia the highest average income for workers. Of the four largest States, Western Australia had the highest employment rate and New South Wales the highest mean income from work.

Agencies in remote areas had a higher percentage of clients with a job, but these jobs were much more likely to be casual or temporary employment. Workers in urban areas tended to have higher rates of pay and to earn more income from jobs over the year.

The interrelationships among all these factors are complex. The multivariate analysis demonstrates that there appear to be many factors influencing people's job experience. This indicates that there is not likely to be a simple predictive model of factors leading to successful job experience.

Client support

Chapter 5 provides a detailed analysis of the support provided by agencies to clients, and the factors relating to it.

Support can be categorised as:

- support given directly to a client; and
- other support including general administration, general job search and travel.

The analysis in Chapter 5 focuses on the former, because the recording of the 'other' category is optional in the data system. Of the recorded support times, approximately two-thirds of support hours go directly to the client.

About two-thirds (68%) of all direct support hours were given to people with an intellectual/learning disability, who were the largest group and also had the highest mean support per client. Clients with a psychiatric disability received 11% of total direct support and clients with a physical disability received 9%.

People who had jobs (workers) received more support than other clients (2.3 vs 0.9 hours per week). For non-workers, the amount of support received declined with the length of

time they were receiving support (Figure S3). This also occurred during the subsequent unemployed period of clients who had a job or jobs which finished in 1995.

For workers, the pattern of support varied with time, but this variation depended on their job history. There were peaks of support around the time of job gain (Figure S4). Workers who had only one job which was retained, or gained and retained, during 1995 received levels of support which tended to decline the longer they stayed with the job. In contrast, workers who had only one job which ended during 1995 received higher and more consistent levels of support during the period they were in work.

Workers who had more than one job also tended to have higher levels of support than those who had only one job (Figure S4).

The support received by clients did not vary significantly with sex or Indigenous status. For clients without a job, those from a non-English-speaking background tended to receive slightly more support than others, but this was not true for workers.

Support received did vary with age for both workers and non-workers (Table S6). The 15 to 19 age group received the highest level of support, and there was a general decline in support with older age groups.

Without controlling for other factors, on average clients with an intellectual/learning disability or an acquired brain injury received more support than those with a neurological, psychiatric or physical disability. However, after controlling for other factors, clients with a psychiatric disability had the highest mean level of support. This result appeared to be related to the fact that these clients were older than average, less likely to be a client of a site with a low client-to-staff ratio and, to a lesser extent, less likely to require frequent or continuous ADL assistance for activities of daily living. This means that, overall, clients with a psychiatric disability received considerably less support than clients with an intellectual/learning disability; however, a worker with a psychiatric disability received, on average, more support than a worker of the same age with an intellectual/learning disability needing the same frequency of ADL assistance and supported by a site with a similar client-to-staff ratio.

Workers with more than one disability received a higher level of support than other workers, but this was not so for non-workers. Both workers and non-workers who needed frequent or continual ADL assistance received more support.

Clients referred or endorsed by a disability panel received more support than other clients, particularly if they had a job. ISJ workers received more support than CETP workers.

Levels of support per client varied from State to State. Working clients of remote agencies received more support than other workers, possibly related to their pattern of working in more jobs, and in jobs more of a casual nature. However, non-working clients received much less support in rural and remote areas than in urban areas. As might be expected, lower client-to-staff ratios were strongly associated with higher levels of support per client.

As with job experience, there were many factors influencing the level of support received.

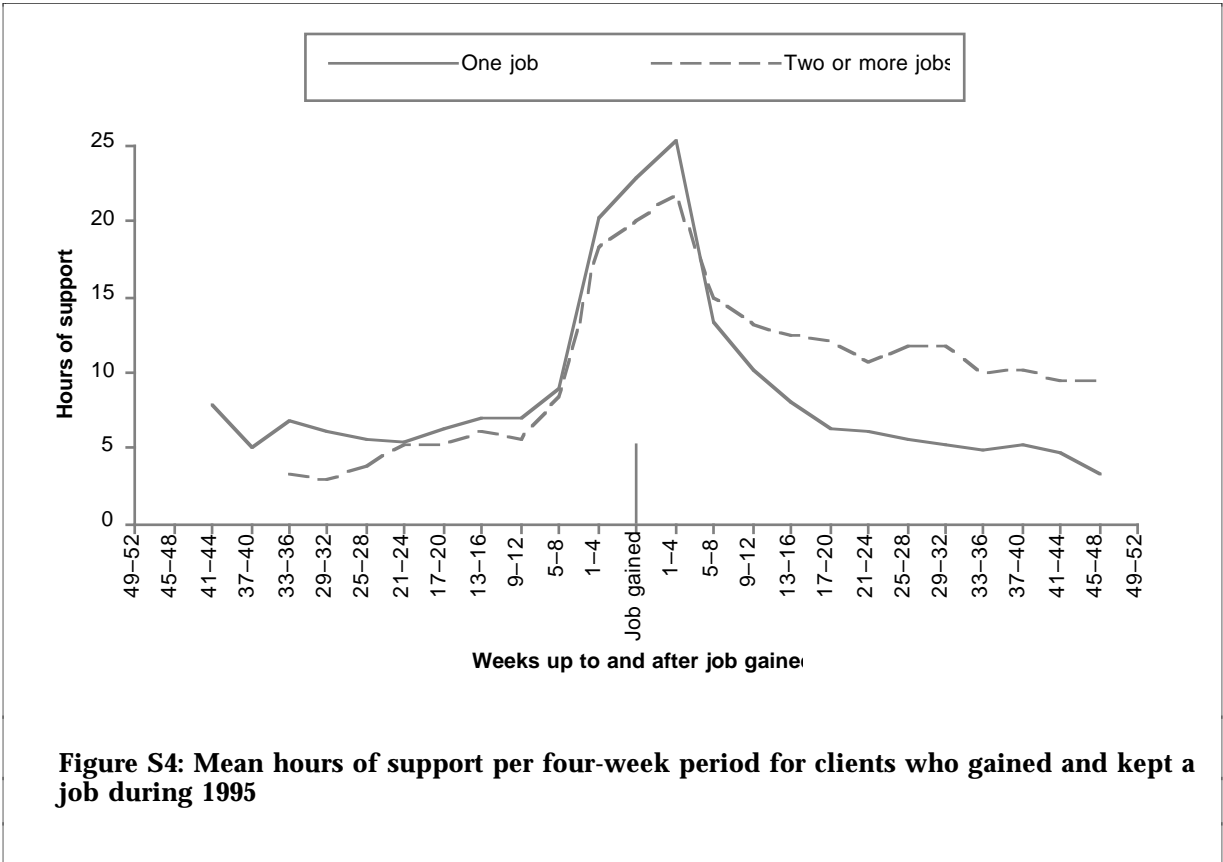
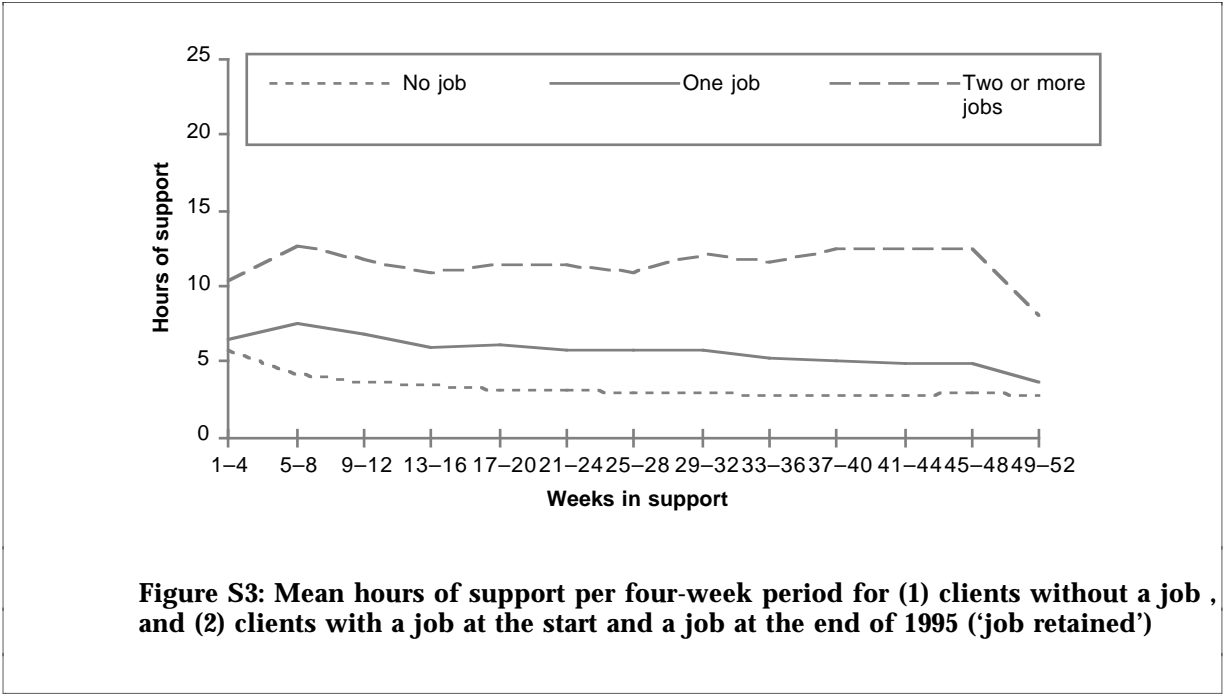


Table S6: Mean hours of support per week per client for workers and non-workers, by primary disability type, frequency of ADL assistance required^(a), age group, presence of other disability and funding type, 1995

	Non-workers	Workers		Non-workers	Workers
Primary disability			Age group		
Intellectual/learning	1.0	2.7	15–19	1.1	2.8
Physical	0.8	1.7	20–24	1.0	2.5
Acquired brain injury	1.2	2.5	25–29	0.9	2.2
Deaf and blind	0.4	2.2	30–44	0.8	2.0
Vision	0.8	1.0	45–59	0.7	1.7
Hearing	0.8	1.3	60–64	0.8	1.7
Speech	1.5	1.3	65–69	0.3	0.8
Psychiatric	0.8	1.7			
Neurological	0.8	2.1	Other disability		
			Yes	1.0	2.7
Frequency of ADL assistance required			No	0.9	2.1
Not at all	0.8	1.7			
Occasionally	0.8	1.8	Funding type		
Frequently	1.1	2.9	CETP	0.8	1.8
Continually	1.5	4.2	ISJ	1.3	3.5

(a) Frequency of assistance required in the areas of daily living, i.e. self-care, mobility and/or verbal communication (called 'level of support required' in the NIMS data dictionary).

Interstate comparisons

Chapter 6 compares key statistical data, tabulated on a State by State basis.

A number of agency site and client characteristics varied from State to State:

- size of agency site
- sex and age distributions of clients
- disability types of clients
- presence of another disability
- frequency of assistance required for activities of daily living
- non-English-speaking background and Indigenous origin
- funding type
- employment basis
- industry and occupation of client jobs.

As discussed above, most of these characteristics were associated with both variation in client job experience and in the amount of open employment support received. Therefore, it was not surprising that job experience, wages and support also varied among States. However, multivariate analyses showed that there was statistically significant interstate variation in job experience and support even allowing for other factors. This suggests that there are characteristics of States not included in the NIMS system (e.g. economic indicators) and that these characteristics are associated with both job experience and the support provided by agencies to clients.

