

Washington State 2010 Child Support Order Review

Additional Analysis – February 2011

Discussion at the first workgroup meeting on January 21, 2011 included several issues. The following analysis is an attempt to provide additional information where possible using the existing sample data.

One point of discussion involved a comparison of orders from ¹eastern vs. ²western Washington, and possible differences by county. Sampled court orders were used for this additional analysis since they contain information identifying the county that entered the final order. Administrative orders do not contain jurisdictional information.

Of the total 646 court orders in the review sample - 460 orders (71%) were entered in western Washington and 186 orders (29%) were entered in eastern Washington.

The median net income of noncustodial parents (NCPs) for all court orders is \$2,122 and the median amount of child support per order is \$308 (14.5%).

Western Washington NCPs with court orders have a median net income of \$2,154 and a median order amount of \$317, or 14.7% of net income. Eastern Washington NCPs with court orders have a median net income of \$1,873 and a median order amount of \$287, or 15.3% of net income. The measured difference between regions for court orders shows that eastern Washington NCPs have a 15% lower median net income and a 10% lower median order amount.

The median net income of custodial parents (CPs) for all court orders is \$1,587. Western Washington CPs with court orders were found to have a median net income of \$1,624, while eastern Washington CPs with court orders have a median net income of \$1,405. This is a 15.6% difference in median net income between regions for CPs with court orders.

The deviation rate for all court orders in the sample was 25%. This deviation rate remained constant for both eastern and western Washington court orders (25% for both regions).

Deviation reasons for the two regions of the state show somewhat interesting differences. Eastern Washington court orders deviated for only two reasons – residential schedules and children from other relationships, while western Washington court orders deviated for these two reasons in 79% of cases but also deviated for numerous other reasons. Figure 1 displays these regional differences.

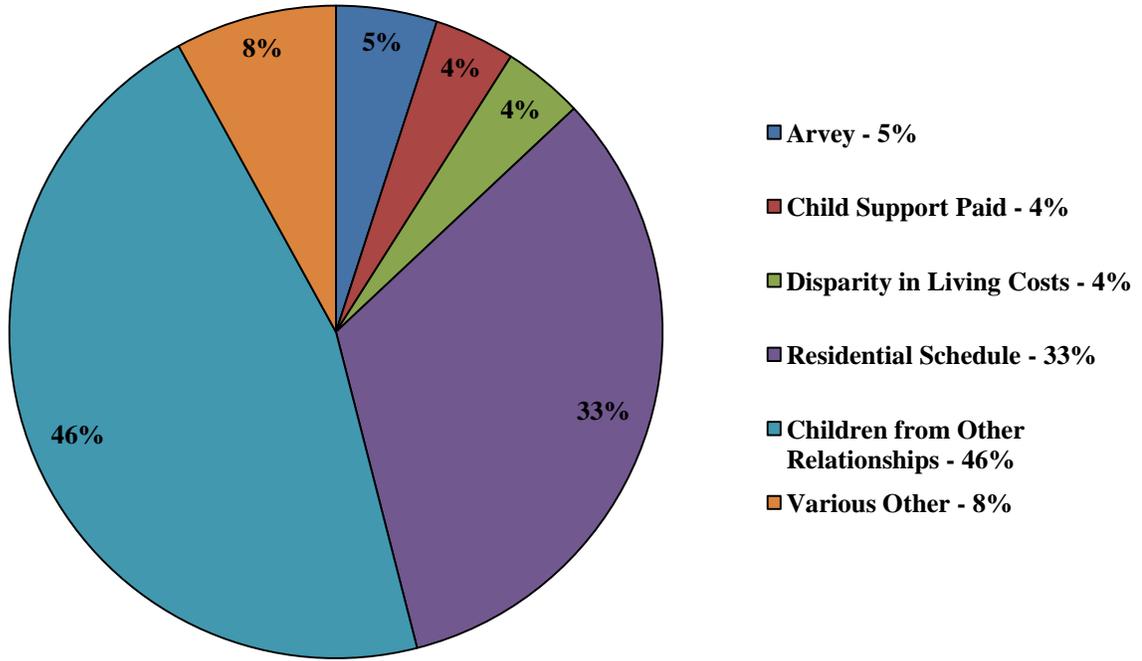
Additional analysis of deviations in court orders was completed for several individual counties. Figure 2 displays court order deviation rates for the eight most populated counties in the state, in order of total population. Unfortunately the sample database does not contain information that might definitively explain the larger disparities between counties.

¹ Counties of Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, and Whitman were considered to be “Eastern Washington”. All others were considered to be “Western Washington”.

² Ibid.

Figure 1. Court Order Deviations by Region

Western Washington Deviation Reasons



Eastern Washington Deviation Reasons

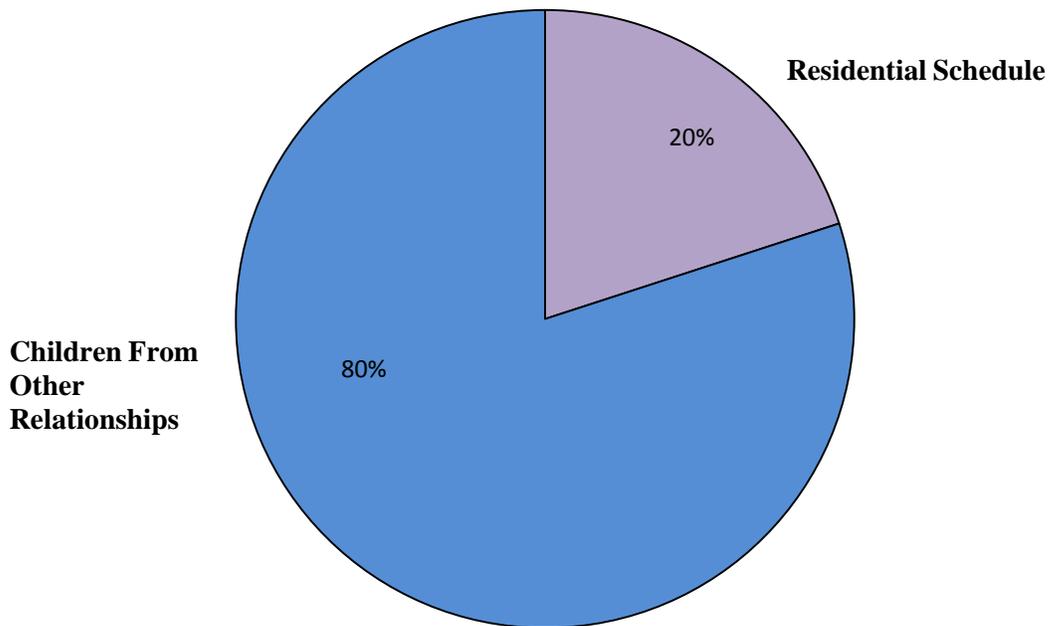
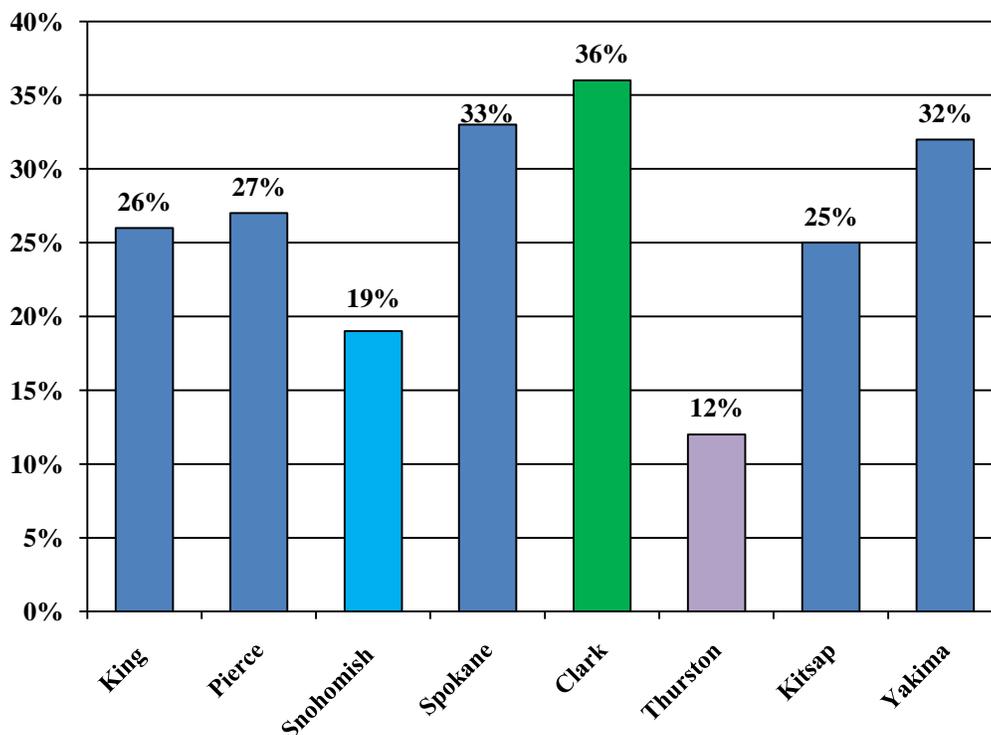


Figure 2. Court Order Deviation Rates by County



Ages of children and amounts ordered per child for all orders (both court and administrative) were reviewed. Out of a total of 1,497 children for whom support was ordered; 1,130 children or 75% were under the age of 12, and 367 children or 25% were age 12 or older. The average age for all children in the sample was 6.78 years. The median support amount ordered per child was \$216. For children under the age of 12 the median amount of support ordered was \$187.50, and the median support ordered for children age 12 or over was \$312.00. The difference between support amounts for the two age groups is 66.4%.

While the difference in support amounts between children's age groups seems relatively large, a further review of all orders showed that combined median net income (both NCP and CP) for orders with children under age 12 was \$2,862, while combined median net income for orders with children age 12 or over was \$4,287 – showing a difference in income of 50% between parental groups. Median net income for NCPs with all children on the order under age 12 was \$1,516, while median NCP net income for orders with children over age 12 was \$2,366 – or a total difference of 56%.

This result is not unexpected when compared with the U.S. Census Bureau data for estimated median net monthly income by age group. This information is used to impute income for individuals when completing the WSCSS worksheets. The Census Bureau data shows an approximate 50% increase in income for age group 25-34 compared to age group 15-24.

Figure 3 displays information comparing NCP income and median support amounts.

Figure 3. NCP Income Matched to Child Age & Support Amount

