



Work, Social Assistance, and Lone Motherhood

An Analysis of Trajectories from
the Survey of Labour and Income
Dynamics

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Introduction

- In Ontario, 1995 changes included:
 - 22% reduction in benefits
 - Reduction in assets exemptions
 - Workfare
 - Lone parents with children “employable”
- Followed similar changes in Alberta (1993)
- Foreshadowed proposed changes in BC

A decorative graphic at the top of the slide consists of two rows of circles. The top row has two circles: a solid light purple one on the left and an outlined light purple one on the right. The bottom row has three circles: a solid light purple one on the left, an outlined light purple one in the middle, and a solid light purple one on the right. The word "Introduction" is written in black text over the first two circles of the top row.

Introduction

- Changes assume
 - Work is the route to exit from social assistance
 - Work is available and pays well enough
 - That there is a welfare/work “choice”
- Neglect conflict between caring & earning
- Absence of universal child care
- Women’s position in the labour force

Literature Review



- Econometric models of social assistance/work choice or duration
- Qualitative evidence that work and welfare are often combined (Edin and Lein, 1996; Davies et al. 2001).
- Work may not be the most important route off of welfare (Bane and Ellwood, 1994).



Welfare and the Life Course

- Welfare state policies are life course policies
 - Institutionalised men's 'tripartite' life course
 - Women's life courses more characterised by interaction between family and work domains
 - Social assistance may come into play when women's life courses do not follow prescribed patterns (Daly and Rake, 2003).



Welfare and the Life Course

- A dynamic approach
- Risk approaches (Beck, 1992; 1999)
 - Fractured work and family trajectories
 - Increasing diversity of life courses
 - Increasing importance of individual decision-making and risk

Research questions



- What work and family events are associated with beginning and leaving social assistance?
 - Work endings and beginnings
 - Marriage endings and beginnings
 - Birth of children
- Are there well-defined trajectories through lone motherhood and social assistance?



Methodology

Data: SLID Panel 2 (1996-2001)

- Individual and family characteristics
- Timing data for
 - Family events
 - Employment events
 - Monthly social assistance receipt

Methodology



LIFEHIST “State Space’ analysis (Rajulton, 1998)

- Probabilities and mean duration between events
- Social assistance, marriage, employment beginnings and endings (recurrent events)
- Births of first child (non-recurrent)
- Lone mother: Female major income earner in lone parent census family, aged 15-59 in 1996.
- Social assistance spell: “two-month rule” (Stewart and Dooley, 1996)



Data Issues

- Different time metrics for different events
 - Social assistance available in months
 - Employment available in months
 - Timing of births available in years (except for 1st)
- Ending of common-law relationships observed, but not their beginnings
- Under-reporting of SA, EI receipt
- Seam effects (Kapsalis, 2001)

Trajectories and Transitions

Transitions Associated with the Start of Social Assistance (Unweighted N = 427)

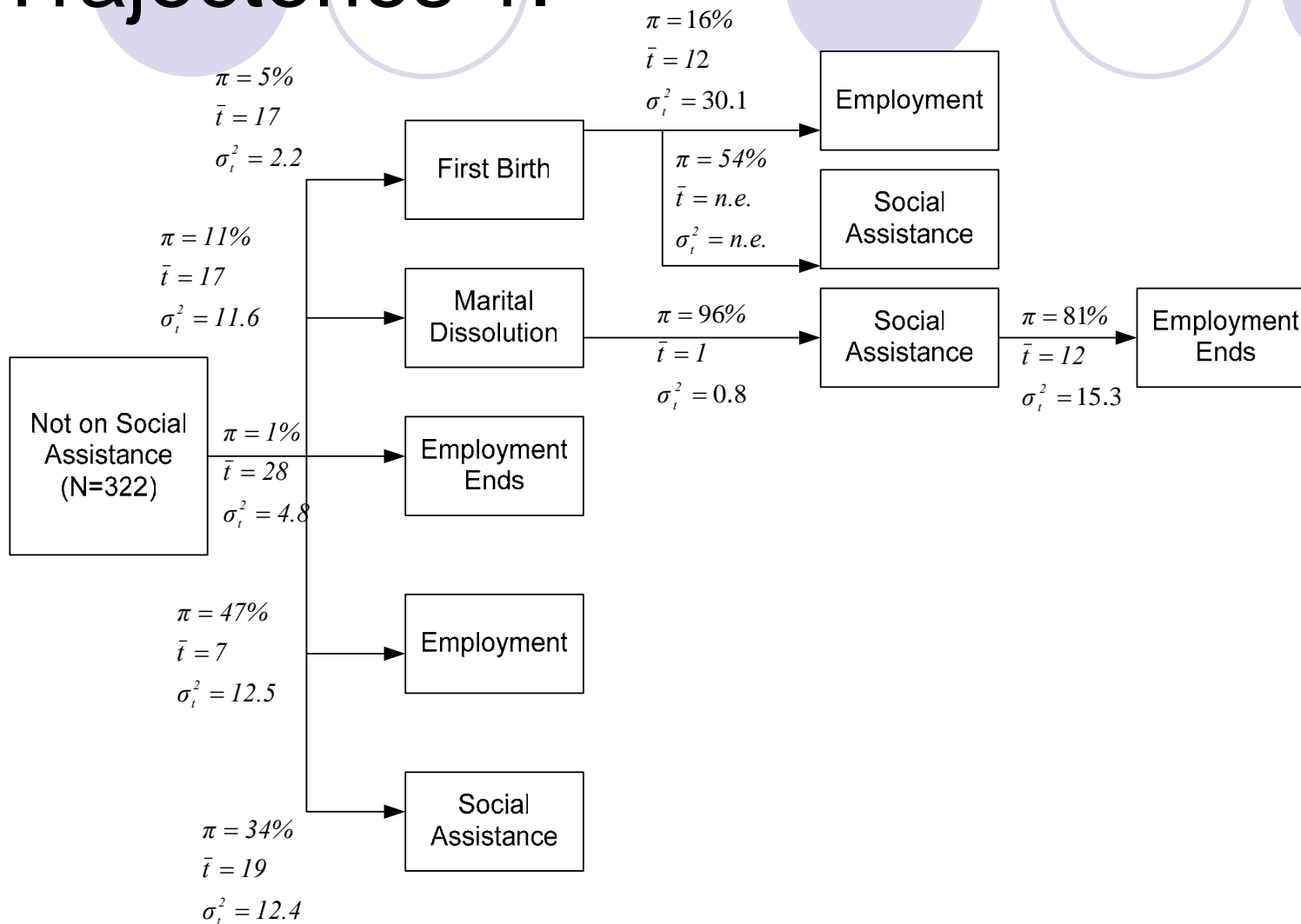
SA Started within 6 months of marital dissolution	21.6%
SA Started within one year of first birth	22.5%
SA Started within one year of job ending	48.0%
None of the above	25.2%

Transitions Associated with Ending of Social Assistance (Unweighted N = 322)

SA Ended within 6 months of marriage	5.0%
SA Ended within 6 month of job beginning	55.3%
SA Ended within 6 months of marriage and job beginning	3.6%
None of the above	35.0%

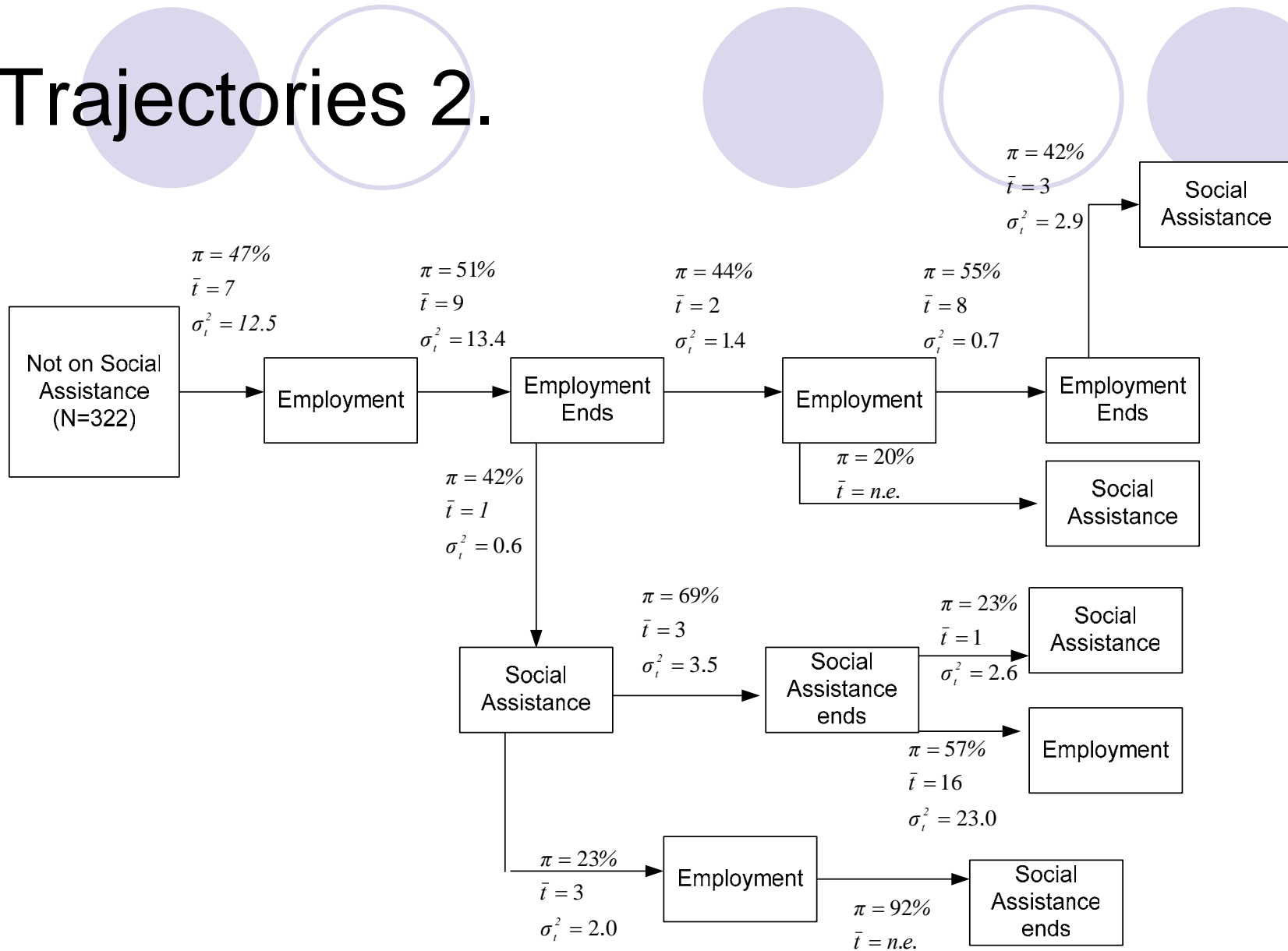
Note: Totals do not sum to 100

Trajectories 1.



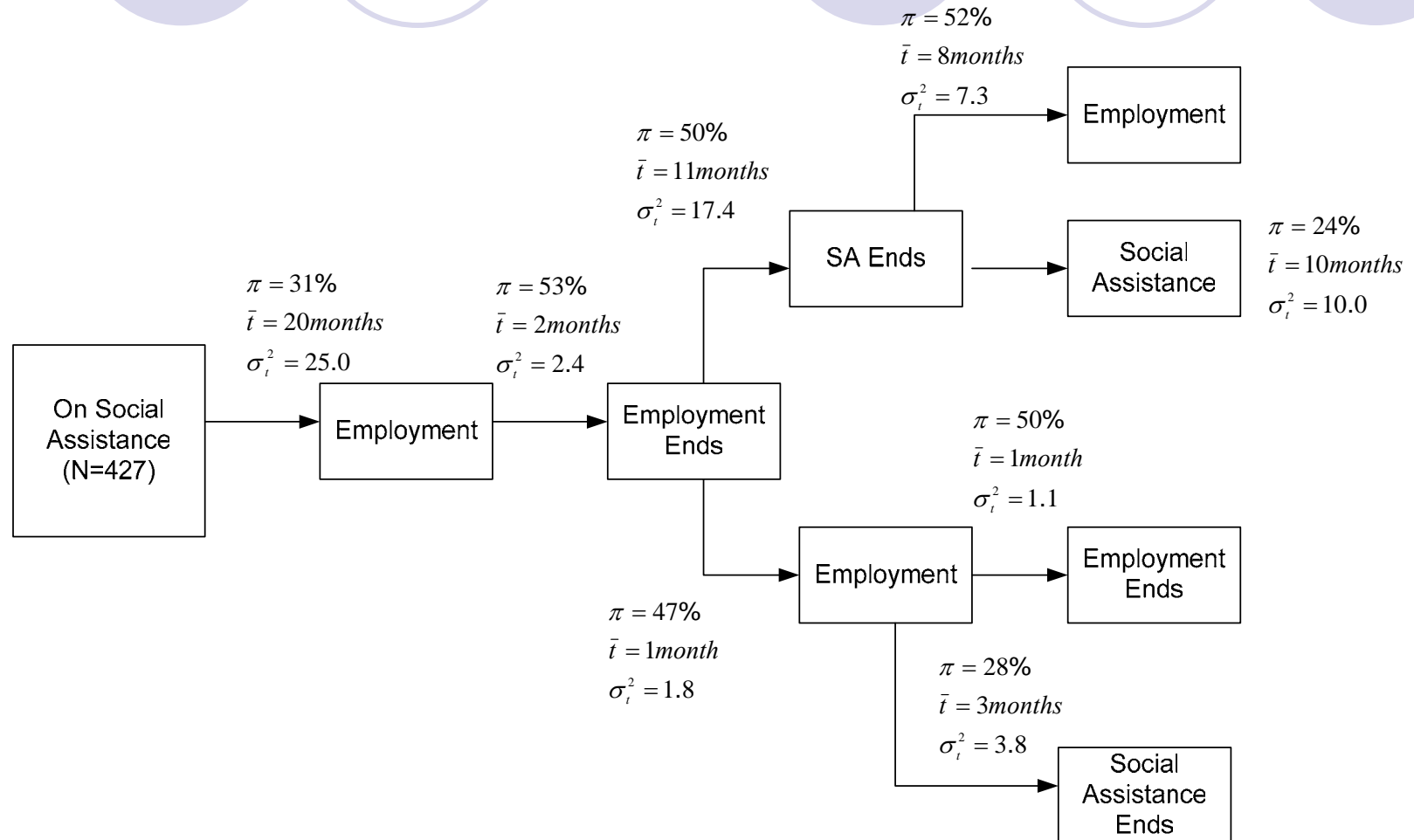
Note: π = Probability of transition, \bar{t} = Mean duration of last state (months), σ_t^2 = Variance of t

Trajectories 2.



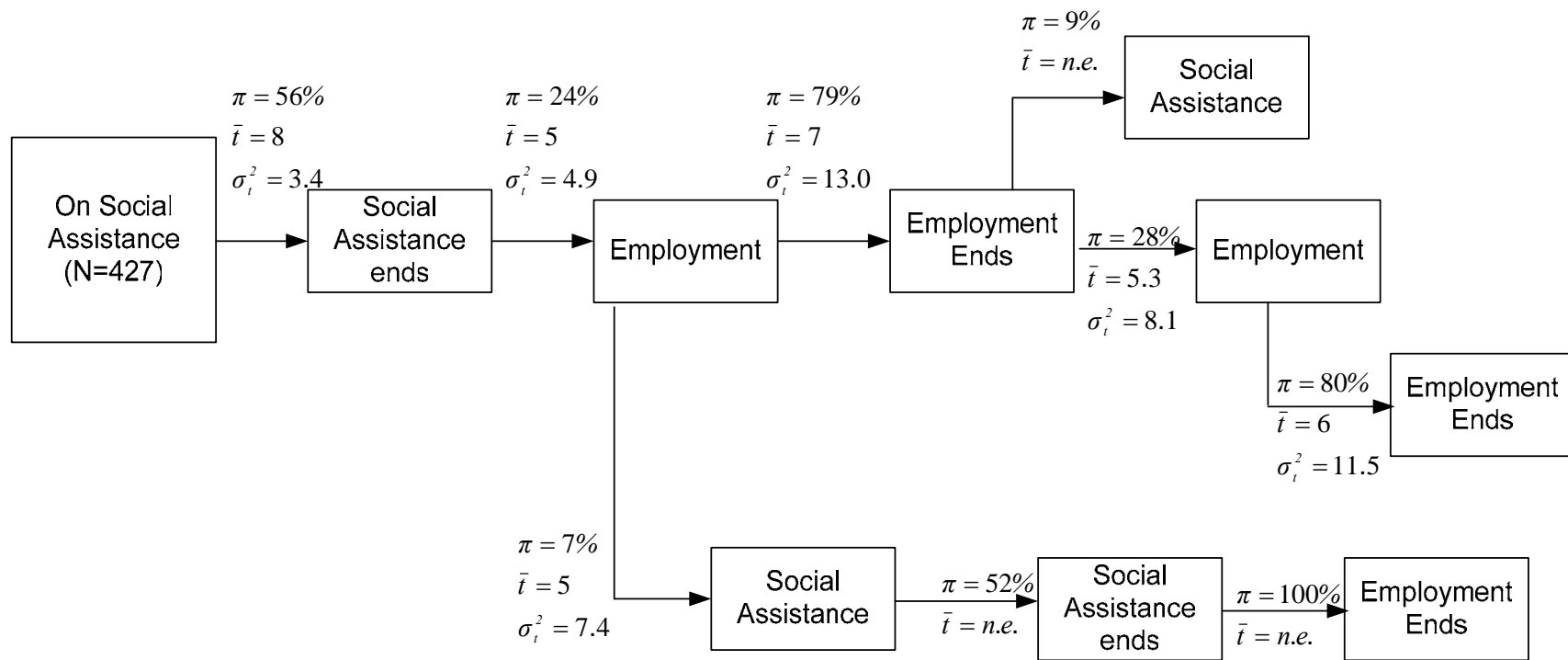
Note: π = Probability of transition, \bar{t} = Mean duration of last state (months), σ_t^2 = Variance of t

Trajectories 3.



Note: π = Probability of transition, \bar{t} = Mean duration of last state (months), σ_t^2 = Variance of t

Trajectories 4.



Note: π = Probability of transition, \bar{t} = Mean duration of last state (months), σ_i^2 = Variance of t



Conclusions

- More than anything, women had varied paths between family, work, and social assistance events
- Births and marital dissolutions are important events associated with entrance to social assistance
- But for many women, no precipitating event is identified



Conclusions

- Work is an important part of these women's trajectories through lone motherhood and welfare
- For some, work and welfare were concurrent
- Work appears to be an important route off of social assistance
- But for many, this work was discontinuous, leading to return spells.