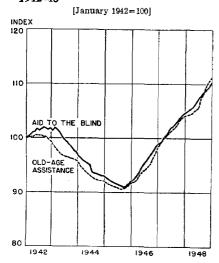
Notes and Brief Reports

Postwar Trends in Aid to the Blind

More persons were receiving aid to the blind in December 1948 than ever before. Nearly 86,000 recipients were assisted in the 48 States, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii-8 percent more than at the program's previous peak in September 1942. Though recent Bulletin articles have analyzed trends in recipient rates for old-age assistance 1 and aid to dependent children,3 a similar analysis of the aid to the blind program cannot be made because no current estimate of the number of blind persons in the United States is available. In general, however, the trend has been the same for all three programs; the similarity of the patterns for old-age assistance and aid to the blind is shown in the accompanying chart.

Trend in number of recipients of aid to the blind and old-age assistance, 1942-48



A sharp reduction in the number of recipients of aid to the blind began in the fall of 1942 and continued until September 1945, shortly after VJday. Case loads dropped 11 percent—from 79,000 in September 1942

to approximately 71,000 in September 1945. Since the close of World War II, the Nation-wide increase has been both uninterrupted and appreciable. In December 1948, 21 percent more recipients were on the rolls than in September 1945.

In most States, needy blind persons who are 65 years of age or over have some choice as to whether they will receive aid to the blind or old-age assistance. Consequently, the number of persons receiving aid to the

blind represents a considerable understatement of the number of blind persons receiving some form of assistance.

Among the more immediate factors responsible for the steady increase in the number of recipients of aid to the blind since the fall of 1945 are those related to the termination of hostilities. For many blind persons, as for many other types of dependent persons, an important source of support during the war was allowances from relatives serving in the armed forces. With demobilization, however, this service-connected income was no

Table 1.—Aid to the blind: Number of recipients, June and December 1945-481

State	1945		1946		1947		1948	
	June	Decem- ber	Јцре	Decem- ber	June	Decem- ber	June	Decem ber
Total	71, 109	71, 454	73, 945	76, 680	79, 033	81, 147	83, 346	85, 78
Total, approved plans	55, 465	55, 623	57, 616	59, 878	62, 085	63, 795	65, 797	67, 96
Alabama Arizona Arkansas Galifornia Colorado Connecticut Delaware District of Columbia Florida Georgia	757 450 1, 218 5, 415 468 130 (2) 200 2, 268 2, 020	791 468 1, 136 5, 501 442 135 9 193 2, 306 2, 016	850 531 1, 194 5, 904 447 138 48 197 2, 387 2, 099	926 589 1, 317 6, 210 425 139 92 204 2, 525 2, 171	1, 004 622 1, 473 6, 440 396 143 116 214 2, 654 2, 205	1, 069 651 1, 549 6, 863 385 138 124 217 2, 758 2, 216	1, 105 660 1, 631 7, 404 388 150 127 219 2, 861 2, 339	1, 16: 70' 1, 69' 8, 14: 39: 15: 13: 21: 2, 976 2, 42:
Hawaii Idaho Illinois Indiana Iowa Kansas Kentucky Louisiana Maine Maryland	64 206 5, 149 2, 025 1, 253 1, 062 1, 576 1, 367 815 438	62 199 5, 095 1, 926 1, 209 1, 046 1, 556 1, 364 808 432	62 202 4, 986 1, 929 1, 220 1, 080 1, 552 1, 393 778 455	65 203 4,893 1,917 1,241 1,118 1,590 1,429 765 467	67 215 4,855 1,909 1,223 1,126 1,705 1,513 731 467	78 204 4,730 1,915 1,206 907 1,849 1,576 704 465	78 199 4,642 1,901 1,207 858 1,890 1,643 678 464	90 204, 563 1, 856 1, 826 820 1, 938 1, 544 655 466
Massachusetts Michigan Minnesota Mississippi Missouri Montana Nebraska Nevada New Hampshire New Jersey	959 1, 251 947 1, 456 2, 916 324 447 28 269 534	1, 008 1, 274 948 1, 459 2, 817 337 435 29 278 532	1, 068 1, 330 947 1, 641 2, 915 359 439 24 284 550	1, 135 1, 369 942 1, 804 2, 872 366 453 27 293 573	1, 187 1, 425 981 2, 093 2, 830 393 458 27 289 589	1, 240 1, 466 1, 021 2, 093 2, 798 420 496 28 296 624	1, 257 1, 522 1, 053 2, 132 2, 800 444 522 29 300 632	1, 294 1, 558 1, 048 2, 389 2, 776 465 526 27 316 639
New Mexico New York North Carolina North Dakota Ohio Oklahoma Oregon Ponnsylvania Rhode Island South Carolina	246 2, 920 2, 334 113 3, 017 1, 847 370 12, 700 103 922	236 3, 036 2, 427 109 3, 041 1, 898 374 12, 985 108 969	245 3, 088 2, 587 119 3, 096 2, 014 368 13, 390 111 1, 039	3, 216 2, 706 123 3, 157 2, 214 382 13, 903 123 1, 107	296 3, 384 2, 835 127 3, 223 2, 444 384 14, 091 137 1, 192	401 3, 389 2, 999 122 3, 321 2, 571 382 14, 526 140 1, 278	416 3, 546 3, 271 121 3, 435 2, 586 14, 720 143 1, 311	422 3, 625 3, 471 116 3, 506 2, 611 379 15, 029 147 1, 342
South Dakota Tennessee Texas Utah Vermont Virginia Washington West Virginia Wisconsin Wyoming	220 1, 537 4, 625 127 144 954 583 823 1, 400	209 1, 548 4, 542 134 166 960 596 812 1, 377 116	214 1, 568 4, 885 141 165 981 634 842 1, 338	218 1, 639 5, 128 143 172 1, 069 647 859 1, 309 113	212 1, 716 5, 291 147 179 1, 115 642 876 1, 293 99	208 1, 834 5, 469 140 178 1, 176 648 883 1, 282 114	214 1, 939 5, 606 171 190 1, 197 674 879 1, 290 116	199 2, 079 5, 795 194 190 1, 323 689 877 1, 311 105

¹ Figures in italics represent programs administered without Federal participation. Alaska does not administer aid to the blind.

² First payments made November 1945.

¹ Walter M. Perkins, "Trends in Reciplent Rates for Old-Age Assistance," Social Security Bulletin, October 1948.

² Elizabeth T. Alling, "Trends in Recipient Rates for Aid to Dependent Children," Social Security Bulletin, November 1948.

longer available. Similarly, expanded wartime employment opportunities for some blind persons or members of their families with marginal employability ended with the war. As a result, many blind persons turned to public assistance for their maintenance.

Other factors have undoubtedly contributed to the increase in the number of persons receiving aid to the blind. Among these is the increase in the total population, particularly the steadily rising proportion of aged persons, since it is in this group that certain of the more prevalent types of blindness are found. It is also possible that some additions to the rolls are a direct consequence of curtailed activities for the prevention of blindness and conservation of sight among the civilian population during the war, when large numbers of medical personnel, including ophthalmologists, were assigned to the armed forces.

State Variations

In 1945 the wartime decline in recipient rolls either continued or leveled off in a majority of the States with programs of aid to the blind.

Individual State trends since the fall of 1945 assume many different patterns. Broadly, however, they fall into three main groups. By far the largest group-almost three-fourths of the States with programs of aid to the blind-consists of States with generally rising case loads, though in many the changes were not continuously upward. An expanding case load does not always reflect, however, a real increase in the number of dependent blind persons but may reflect rather a transfer to the program of blind persons already receiving some other form of public assistance, chiefly old-age assistance. An illustration is found in Utah, where the number of recipients of aid to the blind remained at approximately 145 from early in 1946 to June 1948, when the number rose to 171, an increase of about 20 percent. This rise is explained by the fact that some aged blind persons who had been receiving old-age assistance transferred to the aid to the blind program when the new lien provisions became effective in old-age assistance. In Delaware the consistently growing case load reflects, in the main, a developing program which began operating under the Social Security Act in November 1945.

Included in the second and much smaller group, comprising nine States, are those in which there is no very significant postwar movement in cases, either upward or downward, except for small month-to-month shifts in the number of recipients.

For six States—Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, and Wisconsin—there is evidence that the number of recipients of aid to the blind is contracting. The postwar decline in some of these States is a continuation of a downward movement that had been in progress for some time. The reasons for these reductions necessarily vary from State to State.

More liberal provisions for the oldage assistance program have been responsible for some of the decline. In Colorado, for example, an eligible aged blind person without any income has since 1947 been able to get a much higher payment under old-age assistance than under aid to the blind.

The general decline in the number of recipients of aid to the blind in Wisconsin, commencing in 1941, is attributed in part to the improved economic situation during and after the war, and in part to the provision of vocational rehabilitation and training services enabling blind persons to become self-supporting. This State anticipates that the rolls will be maintained at a lower level than in the past for these reasons and also because some aged persons who become blind while they are receiving oldage assistance prefer to continue receiving aid under that program.

Individual States have made considerable effort not only to reduce the amount of blindness but also to render blindness less of a handicap for those whose vision cannot be restored. In some States with active programs for the prevention of blindness and for sight conservation, the State supervising ophthalmologist has studied the causes of loss of sight among those receiving aid to the blind (or among those on the State register for the blind) in order that recipients may be helped to avail themselves of services for medical eye treatment. Even among blind persons in the upper ages, who constitute the largest proportion of recipients of aid to the blind, there are some individuals who can be returned to economic usefulness through appropriate eye surgery. Moreover, full use of available services for vocational rehabilitation should increase self-support among employable blind persons and contribute to some reduction in the need for assistance.

Budget Summary, 1949-50

Security, Health, and Welfare Expenditures

The President, in his budget message for the fiscal year 1949-50, proposed additional measures for social welfare, health, and security.1 The immediate fiscal effects of the new proposals would be Federal outlays of \$6.5 billion from the general account and trust funds, as opposed to \$4.8 billion expected expenditures under present programs (table 1). The major part of the difference is attributable to proposed changes in old-age and survivors insurance and to the inclusion of disability insurance; it is estimated that outlays of the old-age and survivors insurance trust fund would be increased by \$1.5 billion in the fiscal year 1950 on these counts. An additional expenditure of \$150 mil-

¹ See "Social Security Recommendations: Excerpts from the President's Messages," Social Security Bulletin, January 1949.

Table 1.—Summary of estimated expenditures for social welfare, health, and security under present and proposed legislation, fiscal year 1949–50

[In mil	lions					
	Expenditures					
Source of funds	Total	Present legis-lation	Pro- posed legis- lation			
Total	\$6, 518	\$4, 784	\$1,734			
General funds. Trust funds, total. Old-age and survivors	2, 509 4, 009	2, 425 2, 359	84 1, 650			
insurance trust fund. Unemployment trust	2, 245	745	1, 500			
fund Railroad retirement ac-	1, 170	1,020	150			
count	317	317				
Federal employees' re- tirement funds	277	277				

Source: The Budget of the United States Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1950.