

# Aid to Dependent Children in a Postwar Year

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*Of the children helped by the State-Federal program of aid to dependent children in its early years, the largest single group needed assistance because one or both parents had died. Today the emphasis has shifted in response to changing family composition and family characteristics, as well as the development of other programs to meet the needs of children, and aid to dependent children is becoming primarily a program for children deprived of support by the incapacity or estrangement of their parents. The following article analyzes these changes and their effect on the program.<sup>1</sup> Data relate to June 1948.*

A PRIME test of the usefulness of any program is its adaptability to changing conditions. To apply this test to aid to dependent children, we must look at the changes in the characteristics of the families aided in relation to the specific purpose of the program, and we must also look at the population changes and the growth of other programs that meet the needs of children. These changes would lead us to expect that, if the program has been fulfilling its purpose in the postwar years, the aid to dependent children rolls, compared with those before the war, would include relatively fewer children with father dead and more with father absent from the home. We might also expect to find more nonwhite children receiving assistance. These are, in fact, the most striking changes shown by studies of the characteristics of families receiving aid to dependent children in 1942 and in 1948.

The purpose of the program, as stated by Congress in 1935 in the Social Security Act, is to furnish financial assistance to needy children who are living with relatives in family homes but are deprived of normal support or care. The relatives with whom children may live and the circumstances under which children are considered to be dependent are defined more broadly in the Federal law

than they were in most of the earlier State laws providing for "widows' pensions" or "mothers' aid." The Federal Government will share in payments on behalf of needy children deprived of parental support or care because of the death, continued absence from home, or the physical or mental incapacity of either parent. The relatives with whom children may live include parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, and certain other relatives who are included by administrative interpretation.

In writing the Social Security Act, Congress recognized that differing conditions among the States have a bearing on their ability to furnish assistance to their needy children. Accordingly, it gave the States the responsibility for setting eligibility requirements, including the standards for determining need in their programs. Variations in the fiscal ability of States, in the number of needy children, and in attitudes about assistance have resulted in greater expansion of the program in some States than in others. Changes in the size and composition of the population, in cost of living, and in the sources and amount of family income have affected the need for assistance in all States.

## Postwar Developments Changes in Family Characteristics

The war and its aftermath brought marked changes in family composition and characteristics, many of which have particular significance

for a program aiding primarily children in broken families. Marriage rates increased to a record high in the first postwar year; the resulting sharp rise in the birth rate brought about a large increase during the decade in the child population, especially in the number of young children. The number of children under age 18 is estimated to have been 12 percent higher in 1948 than in 1940, and the number of children under 5 years, 40 percent higher. The total number of families increased about one-sixth. Nonwhite population increased at a greater rate than white but represented 10-11 percent of the total in both 1940 and 1948.<sup>2</sup>

In 1948, about 7 out of every 8 children under age 18 lived in two-parent families (sometimes with a parent and stepparent). Certain trends, however—including large-scale migration, hasty marriages, and separations—had increased the number of broken families. The divorce and illegitimacy rates rose to all-time peaks in the early postwar years and remained high in 1948 (table 1). War casualties added to the number of half-orphans and orphans. In April 1948, about 3.9 million children—a twelfth of the total number under age 18—were living with only one parent; about 1.3 million were living with relatives other than a parent; less than a half million lived with unrelated persons or in institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Because of greater migration among the nonwhite than the white population, changes in family composition and characteristics during the war and postwar years were probably

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this report, general population data, except as otherwise noted, are based on unpublished data of the Bureau of the Census and on the following Census releases: *Current Population Reports: Population Characteristics*, Series P-20, Nos. 10, 11, and 21; *Consumer Income*, Series P-60, No. 6. Data on white and nonwhite population under age 18 are based on estimates made by the Social Security Administration.

<sup>3</sup> The estimated number of married persons under age 18 is excluded from these counts.

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<sup>1</sup> Supplementary tables are included in Public Assistance Report No. 17, a somewhat more detailed report of this study.

**Table 1.—Rates for marriages, divorces, all births, and illegitimate births and the estimated number of children under age 18 and of children receiving aid to dependent children, 1939–48**

Year	Marriages per 1,000 unmarried females aged 15 and over <sup>1</sup>	Divorces per 1,000 married females aged 15 and over <sup>1</sup>	Births per 1,000 estimated female population aged 15–44 <sup>2</sup>	Estimated number of illegitimate births per 1,000 unmarried women aged 15–44 <sup>3</sup>	Estimated number of children under age 18 <sup>4</sup> (in millions)	Number of children receiving aid to dependent children in June <sup>5</sup> (in millions)
1939.....	73.9	8.5	71.3	7.0	( <sup>6</sup> )	.718
1940.....	82.9	8.7	73.5	7.1	41.2	.802
1941.....	88.8	9.4	77.6	7.7	41.2	.913
1942.....	93.6	10.1	86.0	7.9	41.3	.939
1943.....	83.8	11.0	89.3	8.2	41.9	.739
1944.....	76.8	12.1	84.5	8.9	42.3	.651
1945.....	84.5	14.5	82.2	10.0	42.7	.647
1946.....	120.7	17.8	98.3	11.0	43.2	.799
1947.....	106.8	13.7	110.1	12.1	44.8	1.009
1948.....	97.6	11.2	104.8	( <sup>7</sup> )	46.1	1.146

<sup>1</sup> National Office of Vital Statistics, *Provisional Marriage and Divorce Statistics, United States, 1948*, Nov. 4, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> National Office of Vital Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States, 1947* (part 1), and unpublished data for 1939 and 1948.

<sup>3</sup> National Office of Vital Statistics, *Illegitimate Births, 1938–47*, Feb. 15, 1950. Unmarried includes "never married," "widowed," and "divorced." Population estimated as of July 1 for each year by the Social Security Administration.

<sup>4</sup> Data for continental United States estimated by the Bureau of the Census, with allowance for underenumeration of children under 5 years of age in the 1940 census.

<sup>5</sup> 42 States administered programs with Federal participation in 1939, 43 in 1940, 47 in 1941 and 1942, 48 in 1943, 49 in 1944, and 50 in 1945–48.

<sup>6</sup> Comparable data not available.

<sup>7</sup> Not available.

greater for nonwhite families. For Negroes, the largest nonwhite group, unusually extensive farm-to-city and interstate migration occurred during the war. In a survey in April 1947 of a sample of the Nation's population, the Bureau of the Census found little change since 1940 in the total number of nonwhite households in the South but a decrease of more than a third in the number of nonwhite households on Southern farms. Furthermore, the number of nonwhite households outside the South increased by about a half.

The proportion of nonwhite adults who in 1947 were reported as married but living apart from their spouses was about three times the proportion for white adults; the proportions of divorced persons did not differ significantly for the two groups. Widowhood was somewhat more frequent for nonwhite adults. Because of the less adequate provisions in many communities for medical care for nonwhite persons, it is not unreasonable to assume that incapacity of parents also occurred more frequently in nonwhite families. Estimates for 1940 and 1947 made by the National Office of Vital Statistics show an illegitimacy rate for nonwhite women roughly nine times the rate for white women in both years, although the 7-year increase in the rate was proportion-

ately higher for white than for nonwhite women.<sup>4</sup>

Although 1948 was a year of exceptionally high wage levels, broken families and those in which the wage earner was incapacitated had meager share in the national prosperity. Almost a fourth of the families headed by women, compared with less than 10 percent of those with male heads, had annual money incomes of less than \$1,000, including any assistance received. Broken families, because of their lower incomes, were more seriously affected than other families by the war and postwar increases in the cost of living. Disparity in the income of whites and nonwhites continued. The median money income of nonwhite families in 1948 was about half that of white families. More than one-fourth of nonwhite families, compared with less than one-tenth of white families, had total money incomes of less than \$1,000.

### Expansion in Other Programs

Many mothers find it impossible to carry the double responsibility of providing both care and support for their young children. Fortunately, Congress has provided benefits through

<sup>4</sup> National Office of Vital Statistics, *Illegitimate Births, 1938–47*, Feb. 15, 1950.

old-age and survivors insurance, veterans' programs, and other systems for some women and children when marriages are broken by death of the husband and father.<sup>5</sup>

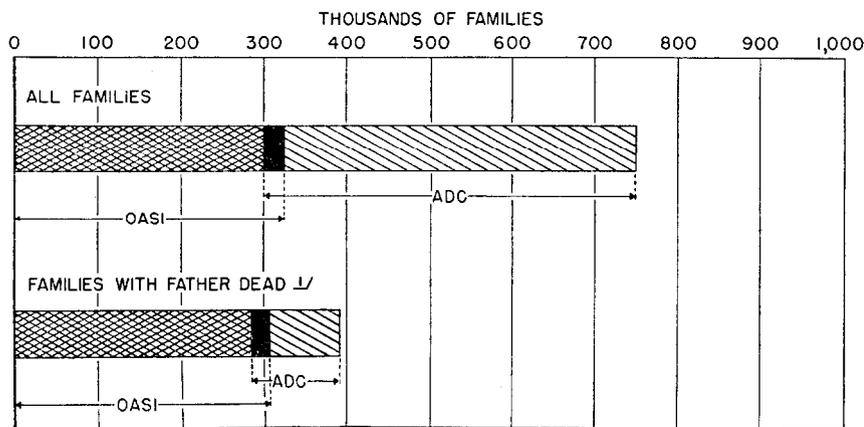
Child survivor benefits under old-age and survivors insurance were first paid in January 1940. By June 1948, more than half a million children and more than 300,000 families were receiving such benefits. Widowed mothers in 141,000 families received benefits. Benefits are available, however, to comparatively small proportions of the survivor children in States where the major employments—especially agricultural labor—are excluded from coverage under old-age and survivors insurance. In addition, because a large proportion of Negroes work at agricultural labor, in domestic service for private employers, or in casual employment, a smaller proportion of nonwhite than white families received these Federal insurance benefits.

In the past few years, Congress has liberalized the compensation and pensions paid to dependents of servicemen who died or are disabled. About 280,000 children received survivor benefits from the Veterans Administration in June 1948; some of these probably also benefited under the old-age and survivors insurance program. Child beneficiaries under the Veterans Administration program, unlike those receiving old-age and survivors benefits, undoubtedly follow the same geographical and racial patterns as do all children in the Nation, since servicemen come from all communities and occupational groups.

Although not all the families benefiting from the other provisions for children whose fathers are dead would have found it necessary to apply for assistance, these other programs have relieved aid to dependent children of part of the responsibility it would otherwise have to carry. On the other hand, more families than might have been expected had to seek aid to dependent children to supplement inadequate old-age and survivors insurance benefits, the formula

<sup>5</sup> Comparatively few children received or shared in benefits under State workmen's compensation programs and the railroad retirement and other retirement programs.

Chart 1.—Families with children under age 18 receiving old-age and survivors insurance benefits, aid to dependent children payments, or both in 50 States, June 1948



<sup>1</sup> Number of families with father dead receiving both types of payments partly estimated.

for which was established before the 1940-48 price increases. For children not eligible for insurance or compensation although a parent is dead or incapacitated and for children in families disrupted by the absence of a parent, aid to dependent children is the principal resource when support is not available through the family.

### Changes in Aid to Dependent Children, 1942-48

The nature of the changes that took place in families receiving aid to dependent children between the first year of the war and June 1948 is illustrated by comparing findings of a study made on a voluntary basis by 16 States in October 1942<sup>6</sup> with those of a study made in 1948 by all the States administering the program with Federal participation.<sup>7</sup> Changes in the 16 States do not necessarily correspond in extent with the changes in

<sup>6</sup> Agnes Leisy, "Families Receiving Aid to Dependent Children, October 1942," (Bureau Report No. 7, Part I), Bureau of Public Assistance; and "Characteristics and Incomes of Families Assisted by Aid to Dependent Children," *Social Security Bulletin*, July 1946.

<sup>7</sup> The 1948 study, like that in 1942, was planned by the Bureau of Public Assistance. The data were collected as of June in 26 States, as of May in 22 States, and as of an earlier month in 2 States. In this analysis, data for all States have been related to the June case load. Some 56,000 families, an eighth of the total number aided, were included in the sample.

the Nation as a whole, since their population changes differed somewhat from those in the remaining States.

### Increase in Nonwhite Recipients

An increase in the number of nonwhite recipients was the most conspicuous change occurring in the 16 States from 1942 to 1948. More nonwhite families received aid to dependent children in all but one of the 16 States. The number of Negro families on the rolls increased 46 percent, and the number of Indian families doubled. The proportion of nonwhite families of all races in the combined case load of the 16 States rose from 21 percent in 1942 to 30 percent in 1948, and the proportion of nonwhite children went up from 22 to 31 percent.

A drop in the actual number of white families aided in the 16 States partly explains the rise in the proportion of nonwhite families on the rolls. While the number of white children aided in these States rose a scant 1 percent, the white population under age 18 went up an estimated 6 percent. The number of white families receiving aid to dependent children decreased considerably more than 6 percent in half the 16 States but rose in 6 States.

### Change in Status of Father

Comparison of the findings of the two studies with respect to the status

of the parents indicates considerable shift in the reasons for the children's dependency. Since support by the father is the usual pattern of family support, the status of the father is considered in more detail than is the status of the mother.<sup>8</sup>

The most general change from 1942 to 1948 in the status of the father—the only one occurring in each of the 16 States—was a reduction in the number of families with father dead. The total number was a third lower in 1948 than in 1942 (table 2). Reductions in individual States ranged from a twelfth in Arkansas to a half in Illinois.

Families in which the parents were estranged were more numerous in 1948 than in 1942 in 13 of the 16 States; the total for all 16 went up a third. The numbers of families with parents divorced or legally separated and those with parents not

Table 2.—Status of father in families receiving aid to dependent children, October 1942 and June 1948, 16 States

Status of father	Percentage distribution of families		Percentage change in number of families	Number of States with—	
	1942	1948		Increases	Decreases
Total.....	100.0	100.0	+6.4	7	9
Dead.....	37.2	22.8	-34.7	0	16
Incapacitated.....	22.1	26.7	+28.5	10	6
Estranged.....	35.8	44.5	+32.4	13	3
Divorced or legally separated.....	11.1	13.0	+25.0	15	1
Deserting or separated without court decree.....	15.0	17.4	+23.5	11	5
Not married to mother.....	9.7	14.1	+54.6	15	1
Other status.....	4.9	6.0	+30.6	12	4
Absent—not incapacitated or estranged.....	3.2	3.3	+11.9	10	6
In home—not incapacitated.....	1.7	2.7	+64.5	13	3

<sup>8</sup> In families in which the natural fathers had died or been divorced and the mothers had remarried, the fathers reported in the study are stepfathers. In a very small proportion of families, they are adoptive fathers. In families with half-brothers and sisters the status of the father common to the larger number of the children was reported; in families in which different status applied to equal numbers of children, the status applying to the youngest child was used.

**Table 3.—Status of parents in families receiving aid to dependent children, 50 States, June 1948**

Status of father	Percent of families with father in specified status	Percent of families with mother								
		In home				Not in home				
		Total	Needed in home	Unemployed	Incapacitated	Total	Dead	Estranged	Incapacitated	Other reason
Total	100.0	87.3	65.3	16.3	5.7	12.7	6.6	3.6	1.0	1.4
Not in home	76.9	Mother only in home				Neither parent in home				
Dead	24.0	65.9	47.8	14.1	4.0	11.0	5.5	3.2	0.9	1.4
Estranged	45.5	20.9	14.4	4.9	1.5	3.1	2.2	.4	.2	.3
Incapacitated	3.4	39.3	29.0	8.2	2.2	6.2	2.3	2.5	.5	.8
Other reason	4.0	2.8	2.1	.5	.2	.6	.4	.1	.1	( <sup>1</sup> )
		2.9	2.3	.5	.1	1.1	.7	.1	.1	.2
In home	23.1	Both parents in home				Father only in home				
Incapacitated	19.8	21.4	17.5	2.2	1.7	1.7	1.1	0.4	0.1	( <sup>1</sup> )
Unemployed	1.4	18.8	15.6	1.9	1.3	1.0	.6	.3	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )
Other reason	1.9	1.0	.7	.1	.2	.4	.3	.1	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )
		1.6	1.2	.2	.2	.3	.2	.1	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )

<sup>1</sup> Less than 0.05 percent.

married increased in 15 States and were, respectively, 25 percent and 54 percent higher in 1948 for the States as a group. Families with fathers deserting or separated without court decree also were about a fourth more numerous in 1948, though only 11 of the 16 States aided a larger number of such families. Changes in the number of families with incapacitated fathers were less consistent among the States. Increases of more than 100 percent were reported in three States in contrast to decreases in six States; an over-all increase of 29 percent for the 16 States resulted.

### Family Characteristics, 1948

The four general family patterns that were found in the 16 States in both 1942 and 1948 appeared among all families receiving aid to dependent children in 1948 and in the same order of frequency.

### Relatives With Whom Children Were Living

In 1948, families with children living with their mothers—the traditional family type since the early days of mothers' aid—predominated, accounting for 66 out of every 100 families (table 3). Next in number were families with both parents in the home—21 out of 100. About half as large as this group of recipient

families was the group—11 in each 100—in which the children were living with other relatives and no parent was in the home. In the remaining small proportion of families—only 1.7 in 100—the children were living with the father, and the mother was dead or absent. The order varied only in Alaska and New Jersey, where the number of families in which the children lived with relatives other than parents exceeded the number with two parents in the home.

The wide variation among States in the proportion of families in which children were living with specified relatives may be seen from the ranges in the following tabulation.

Relative with whom children were living	Percent of families receiving aid to dependent children	
	Low	High
Two parents	9.4 (Conn.)	40.6 (W. Va.)
Natural or adoptive	7.1 (Conn.)	37.2 (W. Va.)
Mother and stepfather	0 (Wis., Alaska)	9.7 (Calif.)
Father and stepmother	0 (25 States)	.5 (Iowa)
Mother only	42.1 (W. Va.)	83.2 (Conn.)
Father only	.3 (Mass.)	4.2 (Hawaii)
Other relative	5.3 (N. Y.)	18.3 (Okla.)

### Status of Parents

Of the reasons recognized in the Social Security Act for a parent's

failure to provide support or care for the child, absence from the home far outranked any other. Death and incapacity of one or both parents were about equally important in explaining the children's need for assistance. As would be expected, need for assistance usually resulted from the death, incapacity, or absence of the father rather than of the mother. Fathers were dead, absent, or incapacitated in almost 97 families in 100; mothers in only 18 of 100 families. In most instances, but not in all, absence of a parent indicated a breakdown in the marital relations of the parents, because of divorce, separation without court decree or desertion, or that the father had not been married to the mother. For the purposes of this discussion, these three reasons for absence are grouped together under the classification "estrangement."

*Status of the father.*—In every 100 families receiving aid to dependent children in June 1948 in the 50 States, 45 of the fathers were reported in one of the three classifications that are grouped together under estrangement, 24 were dead, and 23 were incapacitated. Approximately one-fifth of the families with father dead received assistance to supplement old-age and survivors insurance benefits. If these families are excluded from the total number of aid to dependent children families with father dead, the remaining group would be the smallest of the three major family types classified by status of the father.

The children's need for assistance in the country as a whole and in each of 38 States resulted most often from the father's estrangement from the family; in the other States this reason ranked second. Death of the father was most often reported in 11 States for families needing assistance (only six States if families also receiving old-age and survivors insurance benefits are excluded); death was second in importance in 20 States, as it was for the 50 States combined. Incapacity had first place only in West Virginia and ranked below both estrangement and death in 31 States.

In most of the families with incapacitated fathers, the fathers were in the home in the study month; probably most of the remaining incapacitated fathers were absent for

medical treatment, though a few might have been divorced or not married to the mother.<sup>9</sup>

Of the 45 fathers in each 100 families who were reported as estranged, 11 were divorced or legally separated from the mothers, 19 had deserted or were separated without court decree, and 15 had not married the mother of the children.

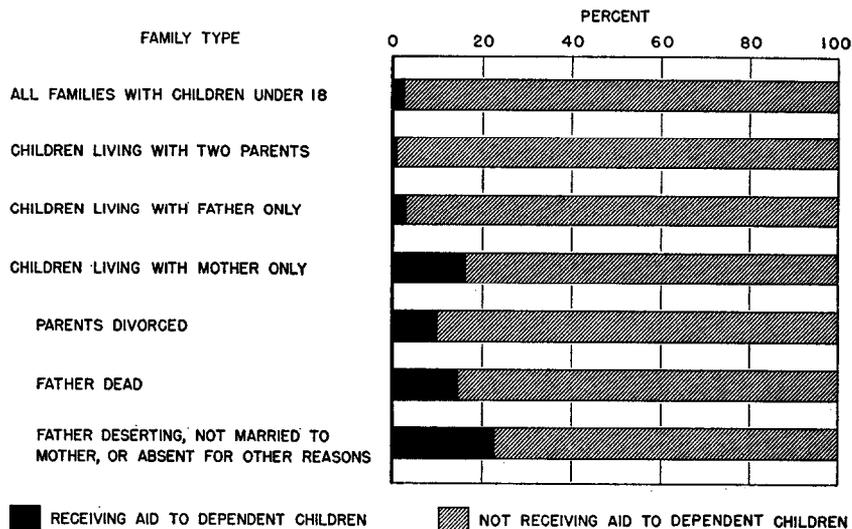
In 21 States, as in all States combined, desertion of the father ranked first among the types of estrangement; deserting fathers comprised more than two-fifths of the estranged fathers. Divorced fathers represented a fourth of the estranged fathers and in 20 States were the largest group among those estranged. The States with the largest proportion of aid to dependent children families with divorced fathers tended to be States in which the proportion of white families on the rolls was higher than for the Nation as a whole; Hawaii is the outstanding exception. The relative importance of divorce and desertion is affected by State differences in the ease with which divorce may be obtained and in the policies defining the circumstances under which children of deserting fathers may receive aid to dependent children. States with exceptionally small proportions of families with fathers divorced usually had this ratio offset by high proportions with fathers deserting. Divorces were doubtless pending in some of the families with fathers deserting or with parents separated without court decree.

Fathers not married to the mothers made up about one-third of all estranged fathers, the smallest group in half the States and the largest group in only eight States. In four of these eight States, more than half the case load was nonwhite; in two, however, white families outnumbered nonwhite families more than 5 to 1.

Families with fathers absent for military service, because of imprisonment, and for miscellaneous reasons other than incapacity and estrangement accounted for only 4 percent of

<sup>9</sup> If more than one status was applicable, the status primarily responsible for the children's deprivation of support or care was reported. Some of the parents reported as deserting were doubtless also incapacitated.

Chart 2.—Families of specified type receiving aid to dependent children as a proportion of estimated number of families of the same type in the total population, June 1948



the families in the 50 States but were more numerous in some States than were families with fathers divorced or not married to the mother.

In 3 percent of all the families, the father was living at home and not incapacitated. In roughly 2,000 families—less than half of 1 percent of the total—the father was reported to be needed in the home. The instructions for the study specified that a parent should be thus classified only if he had responsibility for caring for small children or for ill adults. Mothers were dead, away from home, or at home but incapacitated in all but 10 of the families with fathers reported as needed in the home. Most of the other fathers living at home were stepfathers.

In States in which stepfathers were not held responsible for the support of their stepchildren, aid to dependent children was given because the children had been deprived of support from their natural father by death or divorce or because the natural parents had not married.

*Status of the mother.*—In more than 18 percent of the families the mother was either dead, incapacitated, or absent from the home (table 3). Mothers were dead in somewhat less than 7 percent of all families and incapacitated in about as many more.

They were deserting or divorced in 3.6 percent of the families and absent for reasons other than estrangement and incapacity in 1.4 percent.

An incapacitated mother was the only parent in the home in 4 percent of the families. Fathers maintained homes for a few of the children whose mothers were dead or absent; most such children lived with other relatives.

Although the status of the mother contributed to the dependency of the children in all these families, it is probable that few of the families would have been aided because of deprivation of care by their mothers if the fathers had been able to provide support. Some of the children living with other relatives doubtless were partly supported by their fathers. However, only the families in which the children lived with the father only and those living with both parents in which the father was needed in the home can be assumed to have received aid to dependent children solely because of the mother's status. These two groups combined represented less than 2 percent of all families.

Mothers who were not incapacitated were living at home in slightly more than 80 percent of all the families in 1948. In 65 percent of the families, mothers were needed in the home to care for children or members of the

family who were aged or sick and to do the housework; in 16 percent, mothers were either employed or available for work.

### Comparison With General Population

A survey of the population made by the Bureau of the Census in April 1948 on a sample basis provides national data on the various types of families with children in the total population. On the basis of these estimates, the families receiving aid to dependent children in June 1948 represented slightly more than 1 in 50 of all families with children (chart 2). Families receiving aid to dependent children with two parents in the home—chiefly those with incapacitated fathers—represented only about 1 in 200 of such families in the population. This ratio does not measure the extent, however, to which families with incapacitated fathers are aided, since the total number of such families is unknown. The ratio is significant only as an indication of the infrequency of two-parent families on the rolls.

Larger proportions of the broken families in the population were on the rolls. About 16 percent of all families with mother only in the home were aided. Not quite 10 percent of such families in which the parents were divorced received assistance. Among families receiving aid to dependent children, those made up of widowed mothers and their children represented about 14 percent of the families of this type in the country. The remaining group of families with the mother the only parent in the home—those with fathers deserting or not married to the mother, incapacitated and away from home, or absent for other reasons—represented 21 percent of similar families in the population.

As might be expected, broken families in which the father was the only parent in the home had the smallest representation on the aid to dependent children rolls; less than 1 in 30 of these families were aided. The number of families in the population in which children are living with other relatives with neither parent in the home is unknown.

It is not possible to determine the

proportions of all families or of specified types that need aid to dependent children. The proportions will differ from State to State and from time to time. The different representation of the various types of broken families on the rolls in 1948 seems, however, to correspond to the differences among these family types in probable need. The proportion of mother-child families with fathers divorced is small because many such fathers support their children. Families that fathers have deserted, including families in which the mothers are unmarried, are probably more often without other resources than any of the others.

For each of the family types below, the number of children aided per family was larger than the average number of children in all families of the same type in the population.

Parent in home	Average number of children per family	
	Total population <sup>1</sup>	Receiving aid to dependent children
All families with children.....		2.54
Mother only.....	1.87	2.49
Both parents.....	2.08	3.16
Father only.....	1.65	2.52

<sup>1</sup> Based on data from Bureau of the Census: *Current Population Reports: Population Characteristics*, Series P-20, No. 21. Population data for all families and families with neither parent in the home are not available.

The comparison indicates that need for assistance is greater in families with several children than in smaller families, either because it is harder for the mothers in large families to leave home to take employment or because it is less possible for them to earn enough to meet the necessary expenses for such families.

### Race

Of every 100 families receiving aid to dependent children under the Social Security Act in June 1948, 69 were white and 31 were of other races. Almost 30 percent of the families were Negro, slightly more than 1 percent were Indian, and less than one-half of 1 percent were of other races.

In Alaska, Hawaii, and the District of Columbia, 8 or 9 out of every 10 families receiving help under the pro-

gram were nonwhite. In four other States—Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, and South Carolina—more than half of the families were nonwhite. In 29 States, nonwhite families constituted from one-tenth to one-half, and in 13 States less than one-tenth, of the case load. Only Vermont had no nonwhite families in the study sample.

In eight States more than half and in Alaska all the nonwhite families were Indian. Twenty-eight States made payments to some Indian families, who constituted, however, less than 2 percent of the assistance families in 16 of these States and 2-5 percent in seven States. Indian families made up the following proportions of the case load in the remaining States: Alaska, 88; South Dakota, 27; Montana, 26; North Dakota, 15; and Oklahoma, 10.

Some nonwhite families other than Negro and Indian families were assisted by 22 States. In only three States, however, did families of these other races constitute as much as 1 percent of the families—79.2 percent in Hawaii, 2.5 percent in Wyoming, and 1 percent in Washington.

*Status of father in white and nonwhite families.*—The number of white and nonwhite families with father dead, estranged, and incapacitated was reported by 31 States—all those in which 15 percent or more of the total case load was nonwhite (table 4). The distribution of white families among the three main classifications

Table 4.—*Status of father in families receiving aid to dependent children, by race, 31 States, June 1948*<sup>1</sup>

Status of father	Percentage distribution of families	
	White	Non-white
Total.....	100.0	100.0
Dead.....	26.5	17.5
Incapacitated.....	30.2	10.5
Estranged.....	35.3	66.4
Divorced or legally separated.....	12.7	5.4
Deserting or separated without court decree.....	15.3	30.1
Not married to mother.....	7.4	30.8
Other status.....	8.0	5.6
Absent—not incapacitated or estranged.....	4.2	3.6
In home—not incapacitated.....	3.8	2.0

<sup>1</sup> Excludes States in which less than 15 percent of the families receiving aid to dependent children were nonwhite.

was much more even than was the distribution of nonwhite families. The largest group—those with fathers estranged—comprised little more than one-third of the white but almost two-thirds of the nonwhite families. Families with fathers incapacitated accounted for 30 percent of the white but only 10.5 percent of the nonwhite families. Families with fathers incapacitated represented the smallest of the three groups of nonwhite families and of all families; but among white families the number with fathers incapacitated was larger than the number with fathers dead. Of all families with fathers incapacitated in the case loads of these 31 States, only about 1 in 6 was nonwhite.

The greater proportion of estranged fathers among the nonwhite families reflects the differences in family characteristics mentioned above—the larger proportion of nonwhite adults who were married but living apart from their spouses and higher illegitimacy rates. Desertion was twice as prevalent, and cases in which the father was not married to the mother four times as prevalent, among the nonwhite families as among the white. Divorce was the only reason for estrangement that occurred less frequently among nonwhite than white families, partly because nonwhite persons more often cannot afford divorce.

The average number of children in the nonwhite families receiving aid to dependent children in June 1948 was 2.51 as compared with 2.55 in the white families. The average for Negro families was the same as for all nonwhite families; that for Indians was 2.43 and for families of other races 2.84. The distribution by race for children and for families corresponded closely.

Race	Percentage distribution		Average number of children per family
	Families	Children	
All races.....	100.0	100.0	2.54
White.....	68.8	69.1	2.55
Nonwhite.....	31.2	30.9	2.51
Negro.....	29.5	29.2	2.51
Indian.....	1.3	1.2	2.43
Other.....	.4	.4	2.84

The 792,000 white children aided in all States in June 1948 represented

about 20 in each 1,000 white children in the population; the 354,000 nonwhite children, about 56 in each 1,000 nonwhite children, or almost 3 times the rate for white children (chart 3). Rates for white children ranged from less than 10 per 1,000 in four States to more than 50 in two States. For nonwhite children, rates ranged from less than 20 per 1,000 in four States to more than 100 per 1,000 in nine States.<sup>10</sup> Rates for nonwhite families were lower than those for white families in four States and in eight States were less than twice the rate for white families, despite the generally lower income status of the nonwhite population. Rates for the nonwhite families tended to be higher than those for white families in Northern States, especially in States with large urban centers. In fact, more than a third of all nonwhite children receiving aid to dependent children in June 1948 lived in four Northern States that together had less than one-sixth of the estimated nonwhite population under age 18. Migration of nonwhite families to Northern cities in the 1940's not only increased the case loads in some of the Northern States but, for many of the nonwhite families who migrated, increased both the need for assistance and the possibility of receiving it, thus increasing the case load for the Nation.

### State Differences in Recipient Rates

Recipient rates for children with fathers of a specified status provide the best available basis for interstate comparison of the program's coverage of the various family types. Such rates must be based on the entire child population because State population data are not available for intercensal years by family type.

Since the children in each type of family receiving aid to dependent children represent only a small proportion of all children in a State, such rates are not meaningful for a single

<sup>10</sup> Rates were not computed for Alaska, for which population data are not available, and for 10 other States in which the size of the study sample or the nonwhite population was too small to yield reliable rates.

State. It is of only slight interest, for example, to know that in Arizona about 7.3 children with fathers incapacitated received assistance for each 1,000 total child population. The ratio becomes more significant, however, if it is compared with the ratios in neighboring States—2.6 in California and 17.5 in New Mexico.

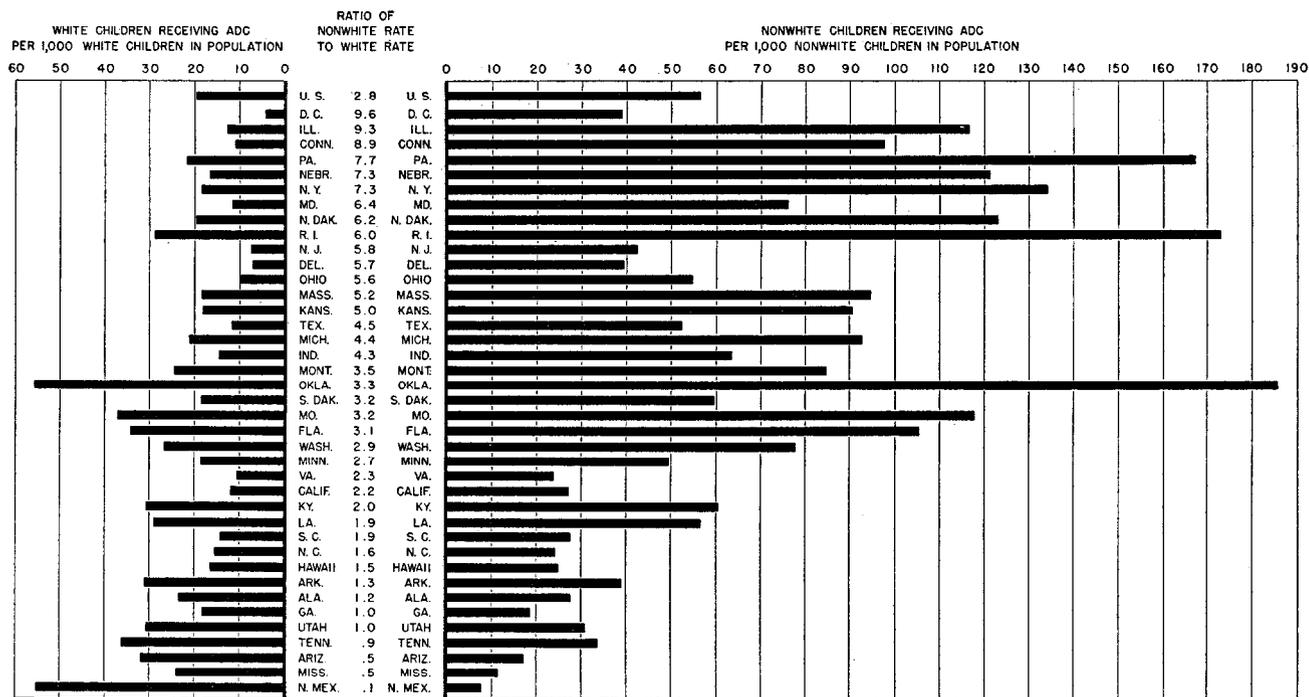
State variation was greatest in rates for children with fathers incapacitated and least for children with fathers dead. For children with fathers incapacitated and for those with fathers estranged, the variation in rates was even greater than the variation in total recipient rates. Since total rates are the sums of the rates for the various family types, explanation of differences in the separate rates helps to explain why some States were aiding more than 50 children in each 1,000 in the population and other States fewer than 12 per 1,000. Some of the reasons for variation are the same for all rates—for example, the different conditions in States to which Congress gave recognition in the Social Security Act. Other explanations, especially the diversity of State policy, affect certain rates only.

*Variation in need.*—Differences in the prevalence of need constitute a justifiable reason for the wide disparity in State recipient rates. State data on the proportions of families with income at specified levels would best serve to measure difference in need, but such data are not available. Average per capita income is the best substitute, even though averages of the personal income of all people in the States permit only rough inferences as to the proportions of the State populations that are needy.

For children with fathers dead, with fathers estranged, and with fathers incapacitated, six of the 12 States with lowest per capita income had recipient rates above the median; two more of these States had rates above the median for two of the three family types. Since per capita income also reflects State fiscal ability, lower rates in some of the other States were doubtless explained by inadequacy of assistance funds.

Differences in the extent of old-age and survivors insurance coverage in

Chart 3.—Recipient rates for white and nonwhite children receiving aid to dependent children, selected States,<sup>1</sup> June 1948



<sup>1</sup> Excludes 10 States for which base is too small for reliable rates, and Alaska.

States with predominantly industrial or agricultural population account for some of the variations in need for children with fathers dead. The number of survivor children receiving insurance benefits under that program in June 1948 was larger than the number of fatherless children receiving aid to dependent children in all but six rural States; in six of the industrialized States, child survivor beneficiaries outnumbered fatherless children receiving assistance more than 3 to 1.<sup>11</sup>

Explanations other than difference in the extent of need and in fiscal ability are required to explain rates that seem to have no relation to per capita income or that vary greatly among the three family types. Among the low-income States, Georgia and North Carolina, for example, ranked thirteenth and seventeenth

<sup>11</sup> The number of child survivor beneficiaries in a State was estimated to be the same proportion of all child beneficiaries that child survivor beneficiaries in the Nation were of all child beneficiaries. No adjustment could be made for the small proportion who qualified because of an insured mother who had died.

from the top, respectively, in rates for children with fathers dead, twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth in those for children with fathers incapacitated, but forty-fourth and forty-fifth in the rates for children with fathers estranged. Similarly, of the States with high per capita income, the District of Columbia and Illinois ranked forty-ninth and thirty-eighth, respectively, in rates for children with fathers dead, forty-third and fortieth in rates for children with fathers incapacitated, but twenty-first and tenth in rates for children with fathers estranged.

*Race.*—Because estrangement of parents is more frequent among nonwhite than white families, variation among States in the proportion of the population that is nonwhite explains some of the State differences in rates for children with fathers estranged. Rates for nonwhite children with fathers estranged were more than four times the rates for white children in 19 of the 26 States for which nonwhite rates are valid. The rates for nonwhite children were more than 10 times those for the white children in

seven States with substantial proportions of nonwhite and urban population. Recipient rates for children with fathers dead also tended to be higher in the States with the largest proportion of the population nonwhite, since fewer nonwhite workers in these States are covered by old-age and survivors insurance. In no State, dead higher than Pennsylvania's however, was the ratio of nonwhite to white rates for children with fathers 5.5.

*Diversity in State policy.*—A State's recipient rates for children of the various family types depend partly on the specific definitions in law or policy that describe eligibility under the State program. Rates for children with fathers incapacitated or absent from the home vary considerably because of the different qualifications used in defining incapacity and continued absence from the home. Rates for children with fathers dead, on the other hand, show less variation.

In the earlier years of the program, aid to dependent children was regarded as a program to meet only such need as was expected to be of long

duration. In some States the evidence of the predicted duration of a parent's absence was the fact that he had already been away from home for a specified time. In 1948, at the time of the study, California was the extreme example of such policy. The law in this State, since amended, specified that to be eligible on the grounds of a father's absence, a child must have been deprived of his support by his continued absence for at least 3 years (unless the child had been abandoned for a year by both parents). Similarly, a father's incapacity was recognized as a reason for aiding his children only if he had tuberculosis or a permanent physical disability.

At the time of the study, eligibility was limited in a substantial number of States to situations in which need was expected to exist for at least 3 months and in some States for a longer time. Several States—among them some with the lowest recipient rates for children with estranged fathers—required that families with fathers deserting or parents separated must wait 6 months before the children were eligible for aid to dependent children; one State required a year. A year's absence for fathers serving prison sentences was specified in at least two States.

In families in which the parents were separated, not married, or the father was deserting, State agencies generally instructed their workers to help the mothers get support from the absent fathers. Though many agencies left to the mothers the decision about taking legal action, a few required that the mother initiate action against deserting fathers; Nebraska made such action an alternative to waiting 6 months to be eligible. New Jersey required that deserting fathers be indicted before the children were eligible.

Partly because it is difficult in many instances to predict the duration of absence due to desertion and the duration of incapacity, many States by 1948 had removed time limits for establishing eligibility (as California did in 1949), relying instead on the establishment of the fact of actual absence or incapacity and resulting need. In their staff manuals, some State agencies point out that absence of a parent may cause immediate need, and that

the period just following a parent's departure from the home frequently is especially difficult for the remaining parent and the children.

Time limits determining eligibility of children on the grounds of a parent's incapacity varied among the States from only the time necessary to permit determination of eligibility and completion of the payment to 6 months. The degree of incapacity required also varied substantially, from incapacity so serious as to prevent any gainful employment in a few States to West Virginia's requirement—any condition of body or mind that makes a parent physically, mentally, or socially inadequate to provide the necessities of life for his child. Oklahoma, which had the highest recipient rate for children with incapacitated fathers, specifically included emotional disability in its definition of incapacity.

Some of the States recognized partial incapacity and the unavailability of work that a parent can do as grounds for giving aid to dependent children. Such States supplemented earnings of the incapacitated father from part-time or limited employment to bring family support up to assistance standards. The assistance agencies in these States point out that the assurance that assistance will be available when earnings are insufficient is an incentive to incapacitated parents to accept employment leading to their maximum possible economic and personal rehabilitation.

Even this fragmentary discussion of policies makes it obvious that some children with a parent absent from the home or incapacitated are at least temporarily ineligible for aid to dependent children, even though they are needy. In some of the States with low recipient rates, children not eligible for aid to dependent children benefit from payments of general assistance to their families. The very wide difference in the availability of general assistance is indicated, however, by the range among the States from 3 cents to \$3.48 in annual per capita expenditures for this program in 1948. Lack of provision for general assistance undoubtedly has led some States to establish broader limits on eligibility for aid to dependent children, since Federal participa-

tion is available for this program but not for general assistance. Thus, six of the 12 States with lowest per capita expenditures for general assistance were among the 12 States with highest recipient rates for children with incapacitated fathers.

## Community and National Responsibility

Population changes and the expansion of other programs for support of children whose fathers are dead have left aid to dependent children primarily a program for children deprived of support by the incapacity or estrangement of their parents. The extension of old-age and survivors insurance coverage and increase in benefits provided in bills now before Congress will reduce still more the proportion of aid to dependent children families with fathers dead. The problem of caring for families with the father incapacitated or estranged is, however, a continuing one. Such families may need financial assistance no less than do those with the father dead; many of them may also need some type of service from their communities.

In 31 States in 1948, fewer families were receiving aid to dependent children because of the father's incapacity than because the father was estranged or dead. The explanation in some States may be encouraging; incapacity is temporary for many parents, and substantial proportions of the children of incapacitated parents leave the rolls when they have received assistance only a short time. Another, less encouraging, explanation may be the rigid definitions of eligibility; in some States a family cannot be accepted for aid to dependent children until the parent's disability is so serious that a physician can say with certainty that it will continue for a specified period.

The predominance on the rolls of children with parent estranged has brought to assistance agencies, and to the legislators and board members who share in determining assistance policy, problems that were not of their making. Because divorce, desertion, and illegitimacy reflect the relinquishment by living parents of part or all of their normal responsi-

bility for support and care of their children, public concern for the children is mingled with censure of the parents. Conflicting attitudes about providing assistance result. The conflict is intensified, if, in the same community in which such children receive aid to dependent children, other families—not eligible because the fathers are at home and working—are living at substandard levels.

The early mothers' aid and aid to dependent children programs frequently excluded by their definitions of eligibility some of the families with parents estranged. In a few situations of flagrant parental neglect, children were removed from their homes, but too many other children suffered from the double neglect of a parent and of the community. Furthermore, opportunities denied the children increased the probability of recurring dependency in the next generation.

Estrangement of parents frequently begins some time before the family is known to the assistance agency. In some families, final estrangement might have been avoided if counseling, financial assistance, or other services had been available to the parents when the problems first arose. Delay lessens the possibility of reconciliation of the parents and also of obtaining support for the children in families in which permanent estrangement cannot be prevented.

State and local assistance agencies with the help of Federal funds have attempted to provide assistance for children eligible under the Social Security Act for whom no other public

provisions have been made. By 1948 most State legislatures had dropped some of the previous restrictions limiting eligibility under the State programs and had materially improved the levels of assistance. The continued increase in the aid to dependent children case load since June 1948—about 45 percent by May 1950—has not resulted from liberalization in policy, since California is the only State that has broadened its eligibility conditions to a marked extent since 1948, while a number of States have added restrictions. In most States the increase in the load seems to be the result of declining employment opportunities for marginal workers, especially women and children.

As States shorten or delete time limits in their eligibility requirements, they make financial assistance available more nearly at the time of crisis—when it is most needed. Receipt of assistance increases the likelihood that the family will get service if it is needed, as well as money, and the time that assistance is needed is shortened thereby.

Assistance agencies, however, are handicapped—as are most other service agencies—by too few staff members equipped to give the needed services and by case loads that are too large. In 19 of the 42 agencies administering aid to dependent children and reporting the number of visitors in June 1948, the average visitor had more than 200 assistance cases—aid to dependent children as well as other types.

Family breakdown and illness are challenges to many agencies. Pre-

vention is the most constructive attack. A frequent gap in community services is the provision for general assistance for families during temporary unemployment or other emergency. Agencies in communities where this lack occurs are precluded from giving assistance to such families in periods of stress that may lead to family breakdown. There are occasional reports that unemployed fathers who are not estranged have stayed away from home so that their children might receive aid to dependent children. Obviously such a subterfuge is demoralizing for the family, whether or not it succeeds in obtaining assistance. The Federal Government has no share in general assistance and almost none in the cost of medical care. The Social Security Administration believes that Federal grants should be made to States for assistance to any needy child regardless of the cause of his need.

In spite of limited staff, funds, and community facilities, children on the aid to dependent children rolls are relieved from many of the privations and humiliations that their poverty would otherwise have added to those resulting from the loss or illness of a parent. Mothers partly relieved of financial strain are usually better able to give their children companionship and supervision. The children are getting more schooling than their parents did. Older children leave the rolls to help share immediately or later the responsibility for younger brothers and sisters, and eventually the larger responsibilities of their own families and communities.