

Notes and Brief Reports

Social Security Numbers Issued, 1937-71*

Social security numbers were first issued in late November 1936 to workers in industry and commerce covered by the Social Security Act. By the end of 1971, more than 200 million numbers had been issued to workers in covered employment, taxpayers, infants, school children, elderly retired persons, and others who wished to have a social security number for one reason or another. Some persons have been issued more than one number, but the actual count of those with multiple numbers is not known. Living social security number holders are estimated at about 150 million at the present time.

The original and still the primary reason for issuing numbers was to ensure that earnings in covered employment would be properly posted on an individual's earnings record. In recent years, however, social security numbers have been used for a variety of nonprogram uses, the most important of which is to identify taxpayers for Federal income-tax purposes.

More than 37 million social security numbers had been issued by the end of 1937. In the next dozen years, the number varied with the number of new entrants into covered employment. It reached a peak of 7.6 million in the war year 1942 but dropped to an average of 2.7 million in the postwar period 1946-50. Coverage of additional workers in 1951 and of still more in 1955 resulted in substantial growth in applications for numbers in 1951 and 1952 and in 1955 and 1956. During 1957-61, the average number issued annually was about 3.3 million.

In 1962 the Internal Revenue Service began its taxpayer registration program with the use of special IRS Form 3227, which was, in effect, an application for a social security number (though it did not expressly state that the number applied for was the social security number). In the 3-year period 1962-64, the average annual rate of issuances was 6.3 million, including those based on Form 3227. The 1963 total (8.6 million) was the

largest for any year from 1938 to 1971, and 2.8 million of that total represented Form 3227 applications.

Issuances of social security numbers continued at high levels in 1965 and 1966. The growth in these years reflected the many applications from elderly persons who wished to qualify for benefits under health insurance for the aged (Medicare) but did not have a social security number. Since that time, the average annual rate of issuances has held at about 6 million.

AGE OF APPLICANTS

In the early years of the program, the ages of workers in covered employment determined the age distribution of applicants for social security numbers. Soon, however, the majority of social security numbers were being issued to new entrants into the labor force. Each year since 1944, more than half the numbers have been issued to individuals under age 20. At present, about 5 out of every 6 social security numbers are issued to

TABLE 1.—Social security numbers issued, by age group, 1937-71

Year	Number issued (in thousands)	Percentage distribution, by age group				
		Under 15	15-19	20-49	50-64	65 and over
1937 ¹	37,139	0 2	9 5	78 2	13 0	1 1
1938.....	6,304	8	24 6	60 9	10 6	3 1
1939.....	5,555	7	32 7	55 3	8 9	2 4
1940.....	5,227	9	40 0	49 2	8 0	1 9
1941.....	6,678	1 6	46 0	44 0	7 0	1 4
1942.....	7,637	3 9	44 8	40 1	9 3	1 9
1943.....	7,426	7 8	41 4	38 3	10 0	2 5
1944.....	4,537	11 0	43 0	34 9	8 8	2 3
1945.....	3,321	10 7	45 1	34 9	7 4	1 9
1946.....	3,022	8 0	45 0	38 8	6 7	1 5
1947.....	2,728	6 9	52 5	32 9	6 4	1 3
1948.....	2,720	7 0	58 1	28 1	5 7	1 1
1949.....	2,340	6 1	58 8	28 8	5 3	1 0
1950.....	2,891	4 9	60 4	27 2	6 2	1 3
1951.....	4,927	4 7	46 8	32 0	12 2	4 3
1952.....	4,363	5 7	46 9	27 1	14 5	5 8
1953.....	3,464	7 0	57 2	25 1	7 7	3 0
1954.....	2,743	6 6	58 5	24 1	7 3	3 5
1955.....	4,323	6 9	50 3	23 4	12 1	7 3
1956.....	4,376	6 2	50 9	24 3	12 0	6 6
1957.....	3,639	6 9	59 0	20 4	8 7	5 0
1958.....	2,920	6 6	66 9	17 1	6 2	3 2
1959.....	3,388	5 9	72 9	14 8	4 6	1 8
1960.....	3,415	6 5	72 7	15 2	4 2	1 4
1961.....	3,370	7 3	71 2	15 0	5 0	1 5
1962.....	4,519	6 1	63 1	13 3	7 1	10 4
1963.....	8,617	27 6	44 9	9 0	8 1	10 4
1964.....	5,623	23 3	59 0	10 5	4 1	3 1
1965.....	6,131	17 7	57 2	9 7	3 1	12 3
1966.....	6,506	18 8	55 3	10 0	3 4	12 5
1967.....	5,920	26 0	57 4	11 4	3 1	2 1
1968.....	5,862	26 6	56 7	12 0	2 9	1 8
1969.....	6,289	28 7	55 0	12 3	2 6	1 4
1970.....	6,132	31 4	51 9	12 9	2 4	1 4
1971.....	6,401	36 9	48 8	11 2	2 0	1 1

¹ Includes about 17.2 million issued in November and December 1936

*Prepared by Herbert R. Tacker, Division of Statistics (OASDI), Office of Research and Statistics.

those in this age group. Beginning with 1942, more numbers have been issued annually to 16-year-olds than to individuals at any other single year of age.

Nevertheless, significant changes have occurred from time to time in the age distribution of those issued social security numbers. Many of the factors affecting the number of issuances have also affected the proportion of applicants at various age levels. The proportion aged 50 and over rose sharply in 1951 and 1952, for example, and again in 1955 and 1956 when coverage was broadened to include the self-employed, farmworkers, and others. The proportion aged 65 and over increased to 10.4 percent in 1962 and 1963 during IRS registration and to 12.5 percent for 1965 and 1966, during the Medicare enrollment period.

The biggest change has been the increase in the proportion of social security numbers issued to youngsters under age 15—from 6 percent of the total in 1947–62 to 25 percent for the period 1963–70. The proportion in this age group has increased each year since 1965; in 1971 it was nearly 37 percent of the total. The principal rea-

TABLE 3.—Social security numbers issued to women, by age group, 1937–71

Year	Number issued (in thousands)	Percentage distribution, by age group				
		Under 15	15-19	20-49	50-64	65 and over
1937	10,158	0 1	13 7	78 5	7 3	0 4
1938	2,294	5	27 6	63 8	7 1	1 0
1939	2,264	3	34 7	57 8	6 3	.9
1940	2,147	.3	40 4	52 9	5 8	.6
1941	2,976	5	42 8	51 1	5 2	.4
1942	4,090	1 6	40 1	50 3	7 5	.5
1943	4 521	3 6	36 5	49 2	9 7	1 0
1944	2,707	5 7	39 9	44 4	8 9	1 1
1945	1,815	6 0	45 2	39 0	7 8	1 1
1946	1,590	5 4	48 3	38 1	7 3	.9
1947	1,429	4 4	52 9	35 2	6 8	.7
1948	1,415	4 4	56 3	32 4	6 8	.6
1949	1,227	3 7	57 0	32 8	5 9	.6
1950	1,485	3 0	56 6	32 4	7 0	1 0
1951	2,507	2 8	43 6	36 3	13 4	3 9
1952	2,071	3 9	48 7	32 0	11 8	3 6
1953	1,800	4 4	54 4	30 0	8 8	2 4
1954	1,444	4 1	56 2	28 2	8 8	2 7
1955	2,019	5 2	51 7	27 0	11 6	4 5
1956	1,985	4 5	53 5	25 3	11 8	4 9
1957	1,846	4 5	56 1	23 9	10 9	4 6
1958	1,536	4 2	62 2	21 6	8 7	3 3
1959	1,743	3 7	68 1	19 3	6 9	2 0
1960	1,752	4 1	68 5	19 3	6 5	1 6
1961	1,705	4 7	67 8	18 8	7 0	1 7
1962	2,410	3 9	56 0	15 4	9 8	14 9
1963	4,878	21 7	37 7	11 1	13 3	16 2
1964	2,916	19 3	55 2	13 1	7 1	5 3
1965	3,385	13 5	51 3	11 2	4 9	19 1
1966	3,612	14 0	50 3	11 6	5 2	18 9
1967	3,065	21 3	57 1	13 1	5 1	3 4
1968	3,006	22 0	57 2	13 1	4 7	3 0
1969	3,184	24 3	56 5	12 7	4 1	2 4
1970	3,128	27 3	54 2	12 5	3 7	2 3
1971	3,279	33 3	50 6	11 0	3 1	1 8

TABLE 2.—Social security numbers issued to men, by age group, 1937–71

Year	Number issued (in thousands)	Percentage distribution, by age group				
		Under 15	15-19	20-49	50-64	65 and over
1937	26,981	0 2	7 9	75 3	15 2	1 4
1938	4,010	1 0	22 9	59 2	12 6	4 3
1939	3,291	1 1	31 3	53 5	10 6	3 5
1940	3,080	1 3	39 8	46 7	9 4	2 8
1941	3,702	2 5	45 5	38 4	8 5	2 1
1942	3,547	6 6	50 2	28 4	11 4	3 4
1943	2,905	14 4	48 9	21 5	10 5	4 7
1944	1,830	18 7	47 7	20 9	8 6	4 1
1945	1,506	16 3	45 0	28 8	6 9	3 0
1946	1,432	10 8	41 4	39 5	6 1	2 2
1947	1,299	9 7	32 0	30 4	5 9	2 0
1948	1,305	9 8	60 1	23 4	5 0	1 7
1949	1,113	8 6	60 9	24 4	4 7	1 4
1950	1,406	6 9	64 4	21 7	5 3	1 7
1951	2,420	6 7	50 1	27 6	10 9	4 7
1952	2,292	7 4	45 3	22 6	16 9	7 8
1953	1,664	10 0	60 1	19 8	6 5	3 6
1954	1,299	9 4	61 2	19 4	5 7	4 3
1955	2,304	8 3	49 0	20 4	12 5	9 8
1956	2,391	7 7	48 6	23 4	12 2	8 1
1957	1,793	9 4	62 0	16 7	6 5	5 4
1958	1,384	9 2	72 1	12 1	3 4	3 2
1959	1,645	8 3	78 0	10 0	2 1	1 6
1960	1,663	9 0	77 2	10 9	1 8	1 1
1961	1,665	10 1	74 6	11 2	2 9	1 2
1962	2,109	8 6	71 2	10 9	4 0	5 3
1963	3,739	35 2	54 4	6 2	1 4	2 8
1964	2,707	27 5	63 2	7 7	9	7
1965	2,746	23 0	64 5	7 9	.8	3 8
1966	2,894	24 8	61 6	8 0	1 1	4 5
1967	2,855	31 0	57 8	9 5	1 0	7
1968	2,856	31 4	56 0	10 9	1 1	.6
1969	3,105	33 2	53 4	12 0	1 0	4
1970	3,004	35 8	49 5	13 2	1 0	5
1971	3,122	40 6	46 7	11 4	9	4

sons for this shift are (1) the IRS requirement that banks show the social security number in reporting interest on savings accounts, including those of children and (2) the issuance of numbers to students, usually in the ninth grade, to assist school systems in their recordkeeping.

SEX OF APPLICANTS

Of the 200 million social security numbers issued since the beginning of the program, 107 million were issued to men and 93 million to women. When the 1936 and 1937 initial registration period is excluded, however, the figures are 80 million for men and 83 million for women. Starting in 1942, when World War II brought many women into the labor force, more social security numbers have been issued to women than to men in all but 3 years—1952, 1955, and 1956. The coverage extensions in 1951 and 1955 were probably responsible for these exceptions.

Marked differences appear, however, when the age distribution is related to sex. More boys than girls under age 15 have been issued social security

numbers each year since the beginning of the program. On the other hand, beginning in 1943, women have outnumbered men among applicants in the group aged 50 and over in all years except the 3 years 1952, 1955, and 1956 when there were more men than women in all age groups.

Social Security Abroad

Medical Care Agreement With French Doctors*

An agreement that was reached on October 28, 1971, between the national doctors' association and the French social security agencies in charge of medical care requires that doctors who participate in the French national health program undertake to curb rising costs of medical care. The new agreement, which replaces former multiple agreements of social security agencies with doctors at the regional level, was authorized by law on July 16, 1971. The provisions of the new accord became effective on November 1, 1971, and will continue in force until May 1, 1975, at which time the signatories will decide whether to renew it for an additional period. The October accord has nationwide application and is binding upon all French medical practitioners except those who specifically decide to withdraw from the system.

By authorizing the conclusion of a national long-term agreement between the medical care agencies and the representative national medical associations, the French Government seeks to introduce the principle of self-discipline for the medical profession by making doctors accountable for the cost of the health care they prescribe. The October agreement also provides penalties for physicians whose fees exceed established norms.

FRENCH HEALTH INSURANCE

Health insurance under the French social security system provides both cash and medical care

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benefits to insured workers and their families. Approximately 15.2 million workers are covered for sickness insurance under the general system (*régime général*) and affiliated groups. An additional 5.2 million workers are insured under other government programs.

The health insurance system provides the patient with freedom of choice of doctor. The doctor charges the patient on a "fee-for-service" basis. The cost of medical service is nominally controlled by an agreement between the doctors and their associations and the social security funds.

An insured person can obtain reimbursement of a certain portion of the doctor's bill according to a "fee schedule" or "nomenclature" incorporated into such an agreement. The reimbursement is 75 percent for medical fees and hospitalization costs and for laboratory analysis or tests. It is also 75 percent for most pharmaceutical products but is higher for certain medicines recognized as indispensable or particularly expensive. For "scheduled diseases" (21 are now listed), the amount payable by the patient can be waived and the social security system may absorb the entire cost of care.

PREVIOUS LEGISLATION

Before the new agreement, relationships between French doctors and the social security medical care funds were governed by the decree of May 12, 1960. This decree provided that medical expenses would be reimbursed on the basis of a schedule of fees agreed upon by the professions concerned (physicians, dentists, pharmacists, and paramedical groups) and according to a general nomenclature binding on both the practitioners and the social security organizations. These provisions were embodied into a standard agreement submitted each year for signature by the most representative regional medical associations and medical care agencies.

The agreements set up a schedule of maximum fees for reimbursement purposes. It guaranteed the insured person reimbursement of a fixed proportion (75-100 percent) of his health expenditures, including doctor's fees, drugs, laboratory fees, and thermal treatment. The regional agreement covered all doctors practicing in a given region whether or not they were affiliated with