Asset Holdings of the Newly Disabled: Findings From the New Beneficiary Survey

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About 3 out of 4 new disabled-worker beneficiaries or their spouses owned some type of financial asset in 1982, but the median value of these assets was quite small, according to data obtained by the Social Security Administration in its New Beneficiary Survey. A smaller majority reported owning their own homes, and home equity accounted for most of the reported wealth. Barely a tenth reported that they owned farms, businesses, or commercial property. Differences in age and marital status within the newly disabled population were associated with large differences in asset holdings. Married couples and older disabled workers generally were more likely to own each kind of asset, and generally reported higher values for these assets. Older married men—the largest subgroup among the disabled—are also relatively well-off, though their median asset portfolios were worth only $3,600 when home equity was excluded. Younger single men, the third largest subgroup, reported median total assets worth less than $50, however home equity was treated. The asset ownership rates and median values reported by the new disabled-worker beneficiaries are much lower for every type of asset considered than the rates and values reported by a comparable sample of new retired-worker beneficiaries.

The social security system was originally established in 1935 to provide benefits to retired workers. These benefits are sometimes referred to as one leg of a "three-legged stool" supporting retirees. The other two legs that provide income are private pensions, acquired through employment, and assets accumulated over the life cycle. Assets have a dual role, because they can both generate income and be drawn down gradually to replace lost earnings. Workers can prepare this three-part package gradually over a period of years before retiring.

The disability insurance (DI) part of the system was added considerably later, in 1956. Many of its features, including the formula for calculating benefit amounts, were copied directly from the older and larger retirement system. Although disabled-worker benefits and retired-worker benefits are generally calculated in the same manner, these beneficiaries are not necessarily in similar positions with respect to the other two legs of the stool. Most persons are never disabled during their working years, and hardly anyone plans on becoming disabled. Workers whose careers are cut short normally have only limited time to adjust their plans. Many of them, therefore, not only lose their earning power but have built up insufficient assets to offset the loss. The resulting pattern of asset holdings among the disabled can be expected to vary considerably and to be an important determinant of their financial well-being.

During the last months of 1982, interviews for the New Beneficiary Survey (NBS) were conducted with a national, representative sample of persons who had recently begun receiving social security benefits.[1] Included in the sample were the names of 3,599 men and 1,600 women, drawn from program records, who had a first disabled-worker payment between mid-1980 and mid-1981.[2] Information was collected on a wide variety of topics from both beneficiaries and their spouses, if any. This article provides a first

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[1]For a description of the NBS design, see Linda Drazga Maxfield, "The 1982 New Beneficiary Survey: An Introduction," **Social Security Bulletin**, November 1983, pages 3–11.

[2]In a few cases, these persons may have received social security benefits earlier as spouses, survivors, or as workers with previous periods of disability.

review of the type and value of asset holdings reported by the disabled-worker portion of the sample. It examines differences in the percentage of persons or couples owning these assets and the value of their holdings, contrasted along three demographic dimensions: marital status, age, and gender.

Differences along each dimension should have an impact on asset accumulation. The effect of age is fairly easy to predict. Workers disabled in the early or middle years of their working lives are presumably less prepared to get along without earnings. The majority of workers who become disabled, who are only a few years short of the normal retirement age, have had the time and incentive to build up their assets in much the same way as retired workers. However, their average asset holdings may reflect distinctive career patterns related to their eventual disabilities—such as earnings losses during the gradual onset of their health problems or characteristically lower-paying jobs.

Marital status can also be expected to have specific effects, primarily because the assets of married persons are counted on a per couple rather than an individual basis. Even after one partner becomes disabled, only part of the economic unit has lost its earnings capability. Married persons may therefore continue to accumulate or at least retain assets, thanks to spousal earnings. Single persons are less likely to be currently drawing on someone else's earnings, but their asset portfolios may reflect previous marriages. Widows and widowers are likely to have inherited most or all of the lifetime asset accumulations of their spouses, and divorced persons may have retained assets from property settlements. Workers who have never married, however, usually have only what they saved from their own earnings before they became unable to work.

Differences in asset holdings by gender are difficult to anticipate because they are confounded by differences in marital status. Assets can be acquired in a variety of ways—through gifts, inheritance, court awards, skillful investment, or simply winning a lottery—but for most persons and couples they primarily represent accumulated earned income. Women have historically earned less than men, but their asset levels will reflect this directly only when the assets of never-married women are compared with those of never-married men (assuming the wage gap is independent of marital status). Widowed and divorced women may have a history of lower personal earnings than widowed or divorced men, but their assets may also reflect earnings of the former spouse; this can be expected to benefit former wives more than former husbands. The assets of the currently married reflect the earnings of nondisabled spouses, and it is not obvious if couples with disabled wives or disabled husbands might be expected to have more assets. Husbands tend to earn more, and might accumulate more before disability, but disabled wives may have more savings from the earnings of their nondisabled husbands.

Characteristics of the Newly Disabled

Using these categories, who are the recently disabled? Table 1 shows a very nonrandom distribution along each dimension. First, they are relatively old. The upper age category, 55–64, comprises less than a quarter of the working-age years but includes just over half the new disabled-worker beneficiaries; only about a quarter of the total group were below the age of 45. Second, they are disproportionately likely to be men. The population is about equally divided, but only 29 percent of these disabled workers are women. Third, they are likely to be married—single persons are outnumbered about two to one overall.[3] The single group is quite diverse, with about a third never married, a third divorced, and the others either separated or widowed.

The asset tables that follow divide the newly disabled along all three of these demographic dimensions, but it should be kept in mind that individual effects cannot always be seen clearly because the factors

[3]The "single" part of the sample includes a few persons who were still married but legally separated or otherwise living apart from their spouses. These beneficiaries were not asked about the absent spouse's assets.

Table 1.—Composition of new disabled-worker beneficiary population, by gender, marital status, and age

Subgroup	Number	Percent
All persons	224,874	100.0
Men	159,022	70.7
Women	65,852	29.3
Married	148,049	65.8
Single	76,825	34.2
Divorced	26,766	11.9
Separated	10,271	4.6
Widowed	15,443	6.9
Never married	24,297	10.8
Older (aged 55–64)	112,753	50.1
55–59	65,020	28.9
60–64	47,733	21.2
Younger (under age 55)	112,076	49.8
Under 35	30,139	13.4
35–44	25,206	11.2
45–54	56,730	25.2
Older married men	65,435	29.1
Older married women	16,018	7.1
Younger married men	51,079	22.7
Younger married women	15,472	6.9
Older single men	14,807	6.6
Older single women	16,493	7.3
Younger single men	27,657	12.3
Younger single women	17,868	7.9

are not evenly or independently distributed. Therefore, the eight subgroups vary greatly in size. The largest group—older married men—comprises 29 percent of the total, compared with less than 7 percent for the smallest group. In fact, the majority of the newly disabled beneficiaries are in the two subgroups of married men.

Moreover, marital status is distributed quite differently by sex. Disabled women are about equally likely to be currently married or single, while only about a quarter of the men are unmarried. The distribution by age and sex is fairly balanced among newly disabled workers who were married at the time of interview, but it is very uneven among those who were not (table 2). The majority of single men are younger than age 55, and slightly more than half of them have never been married. Single women are older, on average, and much more likely to be widowed. On the other hand, the proportions of divorced or separated men and women are not very different—though, other things being equal, women tend to be somewhat older.

These differences in marital status lead to marked differences in the age distribution of these beneficiaries. Because widows and widowers tend to be older, and the never-married much younger, single women in a given age range are older on the average than single men. This tendency has only a small effect in the constricted age 55–64 range of the older group, but the younger disabled workers are not very comparable to each other; the median age of the men is only 34, a full decade less than that of the women.

It would be desirable to disentangle the effects of age and marital status by presenting the different marital status groups separately, but some of them (such as younger widowers and older never-married women) are very small. The NBS sample cannot support a systematic cross-classification of asset variables by detailed marital status, and so they are combined throughout this article. A contrast of levels along any one dimension may therefore reflect the influence of others.

Table 2.—Marital status and median age of currently single new disabled-worker beneficiaries, by gender and age

Marital status	Men: Total	Men: Under age 55	Men: Aged 55–64	Women: Total	Women: Under age 55	Women: Aged 55–64
	Percent					
Total unmarried....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Divorced	35.1	33.7	37.7	34.5	36.6	32.3
Separated...........	12.2	10.8	14.8	14.8	16.7	12.7
Widowed...........	12.1	4.8	25.6	30.0	19.0	41.9
Never married	40.5	50.6	21.6	20.7	27.7	13.0
	Median age					
Total unmarried....	48	34	59	54	44	59
Divorced	51	42	59	53	45	59
Separated...........	51	40	58	52	46	58
Widowed...........	58	52	60	58	51	59
Never married	30	27	58	36	29	59

Patterns of Total Asset Ownership

The various assets reported in the NBS are consolidated here into 10 categories (table 3).[4] Four kinds of financial assets are examined separately: bank accounts (savings, checking, and credit union); funds and certificates (money market accounts, certificates of deposit (CD's), and All Savers certificates); securities (stocks, bonds, and mutual fund shares); and retirement accounts (Individual Retirement Account (IRA) and Keogh). Commercial assets are divided into three groups: farms (including farm land rented out), businesses (including professional practices), and commercial property. This last category combines rental housing outside the home, vacation homes (which are at least potentially rentable), commercial or industrial property other than own business, and other nonfarm land. Equity in owner-occupied homes is treated separately because of its importance. Finally, table 3 also shows the percentage of newly disabled workers reporting that they had life insurance or owned motor vehicles. Because of the difficulties in obtaining accurate valuations in a sample survey, the NBS did not attempt to value these two assets.

Certain assets are quite widely held. Bank accounts and motor vehicles are reported by about three-fourths of the newly disabled, while insurance and owned homes are reported by about two-thirds. The other assets are much less common; retirement accounts and the various commercial assets are held by fewer than 1 in 16 of the disabled. However, these overall levels conceal great disparties among population subgroups.

Perhaps the most striking finding is the overwhelming advantage of being married. Regardless of age or sex, married disabled workers and their spouses are more likely to report owning every kind of asset. The only single group that approaches them is the older single women (most of them formerly married) who are actually more likely to have money market funds or certificates than are the younger married groups (30 percent, compared with 17–18 percent) and almost as likely to have bank accounts (73 percent and 76–77 percent, respectively). These women are considerably less likely to report any other kind of asset, however.

As expected, the effects of age at disability are also

[4] To provide a complete presentation of all asset variables, the data analyzed here were derived by imputation on the basis of answers to other items in certain cases when respondents proved unable or unwilling to provide the value of specific assets.

Table 3.—Patterns of asset ownership: Percent of new disabled-worker beneficiaries, by type of asset held, gender, and marital status[1]

Asset	Total	Men				Women			
		Older		Younger		Older		Younger	
		Married	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single
Any financial assets	73.9	86.0	56.8	76.8	49.9	83.9	73.3	77.9	59.9
Bank accounts	73.2	85.5	55.6	76.0	49.6	82.7	73.3	76.9	59.0
Money market accounts and certificates	20.4	33.8	11.9	17.0	5.1	30.3	17.6	16.8	8.4
Securities	12.1	17.6	5.9	12.3	4.0	15.1	8.1	15.9	6.2
Retirement accounts	6.1	11.2	2.1	5.5	1.5	8.3	1.5	8.2	.5
Any commercial assets	10.5	14.7	4.6	13.2	3.5	11.6	5.4	15.3	2.3
Commercial property	6.5	9.6	2.0	8.4	2.3	5.9	4.2	8.0	1.4
Business or practice	2.8	3.2	.6	4.4	.8	3.6	.5	6.8	.5
Farm	2.2	3.4	2.0	2.1	.6	3.4	.8	2.1	.4
No financial or commercial assets	25.6	13.4	42.6	22.5	49.4	15.6	26.4	21.3	39.8
Own home	62.5	82.9	29.9	75.1	15.8	84.6	48.4	78.3	30.6
No financial, commercial, or home assets	16.4	4.8	36.7	10.4	44.7	5.2	17.7	6.9	31.9
Insurance	68.9	82.3	52.6	76.6	34.5	84.4	60.5	85.6	43.9
Motor vehicle(s)	78.1	92.1	60.1	91.5	47.3	94.6	52.7	93.6	46.6

[1]Assets of married disabled-worker beneficiaries include the assets of their spouses.

clear-cut, though not always so striking. When marital status and gender are held constant, older disabled workers are consistently most likely to have a given asset (with the notable exception of businesses and professional practices and a few minor differences mainly among married women). The magnitude of the disparity between older and younger groups differs from asset to asset, but the differences are generally smaller than those associated with marital status. Unsurprisingly, then, the older married subgroups have much higher asset ownership rates than the younger single groups. More than 95 percent of older married men (and their wives) have some sort of financial, commercial, or home asset, while only a narrow majority, about 55 percent, of their younger single counterparts report any asset at all.

Despite the persisting difference between the earnings of men and women, little difference is noted in the assets of disabled men and disabled women when age and marital status are controlled. Older couples in which the wife is disabled are slightly less likely to hold most assets than older couples in which the husband is disabled (with equally slight exceptions for businesses, homes, insurance, and vehicles), but the reverse is usually true for those younger than age 55, and the differences are almost always quite small. Among single disabled workers, the disparities are generally greater and the pattern is fairly consistent, but it is the women who are generally more likely to have a given asset. This difference probably reflects both the higher average age of women and their greater likelihood of having been married.

Patterns of Home Ownership

The most important asset owned by many persons is their own home. In addition to the value of owner equity, often the largest though not the most liquid single asset, tenure also has an important impact on current expenditures. Most disabled persons who do not own their homes are renters, generally subject to increasing costs over time and sometimes exposed to a risk of sudden changes in housing expenses. Mortgage payments can vary from nominal to onerous, but they are usually stable and predictable, and homes owned free and clear provide relatively inexpensive and secure shelter (though they do entail some maintenance and tax costs). Newly disabled workers vary drastically in how likely they are to own unmortgaged homes (table 4). At one extreme, half of all older wives report ownership and no debt; at the other, fewer than 1 out of 12 younger single men does so.

Again, marital status and age emerge as very important determinants but gender does not. Nearly half of the older married workers own their homes free and clear, and most of the others are paying off mortgages on homes that they own. Only 1 out of 6 does not own the home in which he or she lives. The somewhat lower proportions of the younger married and older unmarried who own their homes outright are fairly similar (ranging from 20 percent to 29 percent), but the presence or absence of a spouse makes a great difference in indebtedness. Slightly more than half of the younger married disability insurance beneficiaries are still paying off the mortgages on their homes, a situation that could be expected, given their position in the life cycle. On the other hand, most of the older unmarried beneficiaries who have not paid off their home mortgages do not own homes at all. Presumably it is difficult to take out or pay off a mortgage without some contribution from a nondisabled spouse's earnings.

Table 4.—Patterns of home ownership: Percent of new disabled-worker beneficiaries, by ownership status, median equity, age group, gender, and marital status

Subgroup	Own free and clear		Own, in debt		Nonowner	
	Percent	Median equity	Percent	Median equity	Percent	Median equity
All newly disabled	27.7	$35,000	34.8	$27,000	37.2	(1)
All older (aged 55–64)	39.3	40,000	31.9	31,000	28.5	(1)
All younger (under age 55)	16.0	30,000	37.8	25,000	46.0	(1)
All men	27.6	39,000	36.2	28,000	35.8	(1)
All women	27.9	32,000	31.4	25,000	40.5	(1)
All married	34.1	39,000	45.8	29,000	19.7	(1)
All single	15.3	28,000	13.7	18,000	70.9	(1)
Older married men	43.7	40,000	39.2	34,000	16.7	(1)
Older married women	49.8	35,000	34.8	29,000	15.2	(1)
Younger married men	20.5	35,000	54.7	26,000	24.6	(1)
Younger married women	22.5	30,000	55.8	28,000	21.5	(1)
Older single men	19.9	30,000	10.0	18,000	69.5	(1)
Older single women	28.8	30,000	19.6	20,000	51.6	(1)
Younger single men	6.6	18,000	9.3	15,000	84.0	(1)
Younger single women	12.4	25,000	18.2	21,000	69.4	(1)

[1]By definition, no equity in these cases.

Differences between disabled men and disabled women are important, but only among unmarried beneficiaries. In the older group, women are about half again as likely to own paid-off homes and twice as likely to be buying. The pattern is similar for those younger than age 55, but the relative advantage of women is even greater.

When the amount of equity in the home, rather than the simple fact of ownership, is examined, much the same pattern of differences emerges. Even when tenure and indebtedness are held constant, older persons and married persons have more equity; however, differences in the equity reported by men and women are inconsistent. Younger single men are not only the least likely to own their homes (only 16 percent), but report the lowest median equity when they report ownership. As might be expected, median equity is always greater when there is no mortgage, but the difference is not very large. The disabled who have not yet paid off their homes are financially much more similar to paid-up homeowners than to nonowners.

Value of Assets

Mere ownership of an asset is not as important as the amount of assets held, of course. Even when mortgage debt is subtracted to estimate net equity, the relative importance of home ownership tends to overshadow differences among other types of assets.[5]

[5]Because the NBS did not obtain values for motor vehicles, consumer durables, insurance policies, and other miscellaneous assets, the values presented here correspondingly underestimate the total asset portfolio in some cases. The lack of information on consumer credit and other liabilities aside from mortgage debt render it impossible to make exact estimates of net worth.

When this special asset is excluded from the comparisons, most of the average portfolio of newly disabled beneficiaries is held in the most frequently reported types of assets (table 5). Bank accounts, which are generally highly liquid but relatively low-yielding, are not only frequently held but accounted for almost two-thirds of the total reported asset value. Most of the remainder is held in the form of money market funds and CD's (17 percent) and the various types of commercial assets (9 percent). The IRA's and Keogh accounts, which are specifically intended to provide supplementary support after retirement or disability onset, are owned by 6 percent of the beneficiaries but account for an even more modest 2 percent of the average portfolio.

Again, these overall rates reflect a balance between differences in average asset value among subgroups, distributed in much the same way as differences in ownership. The older disabled and the married disabled are not only more likely to hold specific assets, but also to report higher values. Most of the limited average holdings of younger and single groups are held in bank accounts; in the subgroups that are both younger and single, the proportion exceeds 80 percent. While all the older and married groups keep the majority of their average portfolios in bank accounts, they have comparatively much larger shares in more sophisticated financial and commercial forms. Contrasts between the married and single groups are especially clear-cut for retirement accounts and commercial assets.

The "average" value of asset holdings is somewhat difficult to characterize. Because only a small minority of the newly disabled have substantial amounts, the mean is strongly skewed upward by a few, rather atypical

Table 5.—Average share of financial and commercial assets in asset portfolio (excluding home equity): Percent of new disabled-worker beneficiaries, by type of asset, age group, gender, and marital status[1]

Subgroup	Bank accounts	Money market accounts and certificates	Securities	Retirement accounts	Commercial property	Business or practice	Farm
All newly disabled	65.9	17.3	5.1	2.3	5.3	2.2	1.9
All older (aged 55-64)	61.0	22.0	5.2	3.0	5.1	1.5	2.2
All younger (under age 55)	71.7	11.7	4.9	1.4	5.6	3.2	1.5
All men	64.3	18.0	5.0	2.5	5.7	2.2	2.2
All women	69.6	15.4	5.3	1.6	4.5	2.3	1.2
All married	60.9	19.4	5.4	2.8	6.3	2.9	2.2
All single	79.4	11.6	4.1	.7	2.7	.4	1.1
Older married men	56.2	24.5	5.5	3.7	5.8	1.8	2.6
Older married women	61.1	21.0	4.5	3.5	5.4	2.4	2.1
Younger married men	66.4	13.7	4.9	1.7	7.3	3.8	2.1
Younger married women	64.9	12.0	7.8	2.1	6.4	5.9	.9
Older single men	75.6	14.1	5.0	1.1	1.9	.1	2.2
Older single women	73.5	16.7	4.7	.3	3.9	0	.9
Younger single men	84.8	6.2	3.1	1.1	3.1	.7	1.1
Younger single women	82.0	10.9	4.1	.2	1.6	.7	.6

[1]Assets of married disabled-worker beneficiaries include the assets of their spouses.

wealthy cases. Differences are therefore shown in terms of medians (rounded to the nearest $100 to deemphasize small, statistically unreliable differences), representing the position of the person midway between the highest and lowest values (table 6).

These median asset levels are generally very low. When the value of a home is excluded, the average new beneficiary has only $400 in assets. Even the best-off subgroup—older married men—reports only $3,600, while in many of the single groups the average person has no reported assets. Commercial assets are so rarely held that no subgroup has a nonzero median value. The inclusion of home equity raises the level of asset holdings considerably, especially for the older and married groups. Home ownership rates among single disabled workers are so low, however, that the median portfolio value remains insignificant (except for the older women). Indeed, the median younger single man has virtually no net worth, even if home equity is counted, when the variables measured by the NBS are combined.

These low median values show that many of the disabled who report some assets have them in such small amounts that they can neither significantly supplement social security income nor provide much security to fall back on. However, medians for the whole population are so low that it is difficult to examine differences for several types of asset. Thus, a second set of median values has been calculated for each asset type, using only the values reported by the newly disabled who own the appropriate asset. Although this makes the average holdings of younger and single persons appear considerably larger than before, they are still substantially less than median amounts for older and married persons. This is consistently true for financial, commercial, and home assets.

Comparison With Retired Workers

Although their benefits are calculated in the same way as those of disabled workers, retired workers generally have much larger asset holdings, as was reported in an earlier article in this series.[6] The lower levels of asset holdings among the disabled have led to the use of somewhat different categories in discussing the assets of new beneficiaries who are disabled. However, selected results are presented in identical format in table 7 to contrast the retired with the older disabled (who were able to work until near the age of retirement) and the younger disabled.

The differences are clear, consistent, and substantial. Not one single asset is more likely to be reported by either of the disabled groups, and their median net worth is much lower. For example, newly retired married men and their wives have median financial and commercial assets of $20,000, compared with only $3,600 and $300, respectively, for their older and younger disabled counterparts. The contrast is even more extreme among single men: The retired have a relatively low median asset value of $3,500, but (after rounding to the nearest $100) the median single disabled man has none at all. The retired hold more assets regardless of sex and/or marital status. The older married disabled come closer than the younger

[6]Sally R. Sherman, "Assets of New Retired-Worker Beneficiaries: Findings From the New Beneficiary Survey," **Social Security Bulletin**, July 1985, pages 27–43.

Table 6.—Average value of assets held by new disabled-worker beneficiaries, by type of asset, age group, gender, and marital status

Subgroup	Financial assets	Commercial assets	Own home (equity)	Asset portfolio: Excluding home	Asset portfolio: Including home
	Median value for all disabled				
All newly disabled	$300	$0	$14,000	$400	$18,000
All older (aged 55–65)	1,100	0	22,000	1,400	30,000
All younger (under age 55)	100	0	3,000	100	6,800
All men	300	0	15,000	400	20,000
All women	200	0	9.000	300	13,300
All married	1,000	0	25,000	1,200	32,000
All single	0	0	0	0	200
Older married men	2,500	0	30,000	3,600	41,000
Older married women	1,900	0	29,000	2,100	37,100
Younger married men	200	0	20,000	300	23,000
Younger married women	600	0	21,000	700	25,800
Older single men	0	0	0	0	200
Older single women	200	0	0	200	6,300
Younger single men	0	0	0	0	0
Younger single women	0	0	0	0	200
	Median value, when any held				
All newly disabled	$1,300	$17,000	$30,000	$1,800	$26,300
All older (aged 55–64)	3,100	20,000	35,000	4,200	35,500
All younger (under age 55)	500	14,000	26,000	600	18,300
All men	1,600	20,000	32,000	2,100	29,300
All women	1,000	12,000	29,000	1,100	21,800
All married	2,300	20,000	33,000	3,500	35,400
All single	400	7,000	24,000	400	3,300
Older married men	5,000	24,000	38,000	6,900	45,000
Older married women	4,000	15,000	35,000	5,300	39,300
Younger married men	700	20,000	28,000	1,100	26,000
Younger married women	1,100	10,000	29,000	1,700	28,000
Older single men	800	(1)	28,000	900	8,100
Older single women	600	10,000	25,000	700	13,500
Younger single men	200	5,000	15,000	200	500
Younger single women	200	(1)	23,000	200	3,000

[1]Reported by fewer than 20 persons in sample.

or single disabled to the asset levels of retired workers, especially in home ownership rates, but they are much more likely to be paying off their mortgages.

Summary

This article has reported on the asset portfolios of married couples and single persons who had recently begun receiving disabled-worker benefits. It contrasted groups differing by age, marital status, and sex, using data from the New Beneficiary Survey conducted by the Social Security Administration. Generally, the older disabled (aged 55–64) were better off financially than the young, and married beneficiaries were better off than those who were widowed, separated, divorced, or never married. However, the differences in the level of assets reported by men and women were small and inconsistent.

Ownership of at least some type of financial asset was fairly widespread, but the median value was often quite small:

(1) The most common financial asset was a savings, checking, or credit union account. The proportion reporting at least one of these ranged from 85.5 percent of older married men to 49.6 percent of younger single men.

(2) Other financial assets were held much less frequently. Older married men (and their wives) were consistently most likely to have these assets, and younger single persons were least likely to report such assets. High and low ownership rates ranged from 33.8 percent to 5.1 percent for money market funds and CD's, from 17.6 percent to 4.0 percent for securities, and from 11.2 percent to 0.5 percent for retirement accounts.

(3) The median value of these financial assets was only $300. Older disabled married men and their wives reported the highest median

Table 7.—Comparative financial status of retired-worker and disabled-worker beneficiaries, by beneficiary status, type of asset, and marital status

Asset	Beneficiary status: Retired-worker	Disabled-worker, aged 55–64	Disabled-worker, under age 55
	Percent of married men and their wives		
Bank accounts	92	86	76
Money market accounts and certificates	52	34	17
Securities	30	18	12
Retirement accounts	16	11	5
Farm, business, or practice	14	6	6
Commercial property	14	10	8
Own home	87	83	75
No mortgage	60	44	20
With mortgage	27	39	55
Median asset portfolio:			
Excluding home	$20,000	$3,600	$300
Including home	68,300	41,000	23,000
	Percent of married women and their husbands		
Bank accounts	92	83	77
Money market accounts and certificates	52	30	17
Securities	27	15	16
Retirement accounts	15	8	8
Farm, business, or practice	12	7	9
Commercial property	10	6	8
Own home	88	85	78
No mortgage	63	50	22
With mortgage	25	35	56
Median asset portfolio:			
Excluding home	$15,700	$2,100	$700
Including home	64,700	37,100	25,800
	Percent of single men		
Bank accounts	74	56	50
Money market accounts and certificates	31	12	5
Securities	21	6	4
Retirement accounts	6	2	1
Farm, business, or practice	8	3	1
Commercial property	8	2	2
Own home	48	30	16
No mortgage	35	20	7
With mortgage	13	10	9
Median asset portfolio:			
Excluding home	$3,500	$0	$0
Including home	17,000	200	0
	Percent of single women		
Bank accounts	85	73	59
Money market accounts and certificates	40	18	8
Securities	21	8	6
Retirement accounts	7	1	0
Farm, business, or practice	6	1	1
Commercial property	4	4	1
Own home	58	48	31
No mortgage	43	29	12
With mortgage	15	20	18
Median asset portfolio:			
Excluding home	$5,100	$200	$0
Including home	30,100	6,300	200

[1]Assets of married disabled-worker beneficiaries include the assets of their spouses.

values ($2,500), but for single men and women, they were less than $50.

Ownership of commercial assets was relatively uncommon, with rates ranging from 15.3 percent (younger married women and their husbands) to only 2.3 percent (younger single women), and commercial property, farms, and businesses made up less than 10 percent of the value of the average asset portfolio. Married disability insurance beneficiaries were more likely to report such assets, but differences by age and gender were not consistent.

Most of the wealth reported by the newly disabled beneficiary population was held in the form of equity in their own homes, with a median value of $14,000 out of a median asset portfolio of $18,000. However, this equity was very unevenly distributed. Because home ownership and indebtedness rates varied greatly by age and marital status, the median equity for older and married persons was much greater. Contrastingly, younger disabled workers had a home equity of only $3,000, and the majority of the unmarried had no home equity at all.

As a result of low ownership rates and median values, the disabled had relatively few assets overall. These rates and values are much lower than those reported by a comparable sample of newly retired workers. Disabled workers were less likely to report owning every type of asset examined, and they had much lower median asset values. These differences were particularly large when equity in owner-occupied homes was excluded from consideration.

The generally large age and marital status effects resulted in substantial differences within the newly disabled population:

(1) Older married men, who are the largest disabled subgroup (29 percent) had more assets than any of the other subgroups. Financial assets with a median value of $5,000 were reported by 86 percent of these men, commercial assets with a median value of $24,000 were reported by 15 percent, and owned homes with a median equity of $38,000 were reported by 83 percent. These couples had asset portfolios with a median worth of $41,000 when homes were included, and $3,600 when they were not. Rates and values for the 7 percent of new disabled-worker beneficiaries who are older married women were generally slightly lower, but very similar.

(2) Younger single men, who are the third largest newly disabled subgroup (12 percent), were the worst off. Only 50 percent had financial assets with a median value of $200, 4 percent had commercial assets worth $5,000, and 16 percent had homes with a median equity of $15,000. Their median asset portfolio was worth less than $50. Older single men and younger single women (15 percent of the total) had only slightly larger asset levels than the younger single men.