Income and Assets of Social Security Beneficiaries by Type of Benefit

by Susan Grad*

The wealth of data in the Survey of Income and Program Participation provide a unique opportunity to identify major types of Social Security beneficiaries and to characterize their relative socioeconomic status. Five types of beneficiaries are identified: the two types of worker beneficiaries (retired workers and disabled workers), and the three major groups with benefits based on someone else's work record (aged wives, aged widows, and minor children). The different types of beneficiaries face very different economic circumstances. Retired workers and wife beneficiaries have the highest family incomes adjusted for family size. Aged widows and minor children have the lowest family incomes, with high proportions of poor and near poor. And disabled workers are in between, but also have high proportions of poor and near poor. Beneficiaries with high family incomes are very likely to live with relatives and to rely heavily on the relatives' income, including substantial income from non-means-tested sources other than Social Security. Beneficiaries with low family incomes are very likely to live alone or with nonrelatives, to rely heavily on Social Security and means-tested benefits, and to have low asset holdings. Poverty among beneficiaries tends to occur in only some months of a year, often because of income changes of other family members.

---

*Program Analysis Staff, Office of Research and Statistics, Office of Policy, Social Security Administration. The author presented this article as a paper at the 1988 Joint Statistical Meetings of the American Statistical Association (ASA) in New Orleans, August 22-25. The paper will appear in the **American Statistical Association 1988 Proceedings of the Social Statistics Section**, to be published by the ASA in the spring of 1989.

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is a major new household survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census. It collects a great deal of demographic and economic data longitudinally through a set of core questions asked every 4 months over a 2-1/2 year period and topical modules containing questions on various special topics. During the interviews, information is obtained about each of the previous 4 months. Through this design, the SIPP provides more reliable and comprehensive information about annual and subannual sources of income received than has been available in the past. In addition, the SIPP collects data on many topics not generally available from regular household surveys.

The wealth of data on economic status collected in the SIPP make it an especially valuable resource for studying the social and economic circumstances of Social Security beneficiaries and of the larger population from which beneficiaries come. Social Security benefits are a very important source of income to those who receive them. But Social Security was intended as a floor of protection, to be supplemented by other sources such as income from assets, employer pensions, earnings (subject to an earnings test), or means-tested benefits. To assess Social Security's role in income security, information is needed on the extent to which beneficiaries and their families have sources of income other than Social Security, and the resulting level of total income and level of reliance on Social Security benefits.

A major advantage of the SIPP survey for the Social Security Administration (SSA) is that it permits identification of different types of Social Security beneficiaries.[1] No previous household survey of the general population has contained the information necessary for this differentiation. The SSA has conducted special purpose surveys of particular beneficiary populations from time to time but has never surveyed the full range of beneficiaries and thus had comparable data on various types of beneficiaries at one point in time. A unique opportunity exists with SIPP to look at Social Security's role in income security not only for its beneficiary population as a whole but also for particular types of beneficiaries.

[1] Denton R. Vaughan, **A First Assessment of a Survey-Based Type of Benefit Classification for the Social Security Program** (Working Paper, forthcoming), Office of Policy, Office of Research and Statistics, Social Security Administration.

Five beneficiary types are of particular interest because they include so many individuals receiving such benefits and because they cover the major types of Social Security beneficiaries: the two types of worker beneficiaries (retired workers and disabled workers), and the three major groups with benefits based on someone else's work record (aged wives, aged widows, and minor children).[2] Retired workers are the largest group, numbering more than 20 million. Almost 5 million beneficiaries are aged widows; and disabled workers, aged wives, and minor children number about 3 million each.

This article takes a first look at the economic status of these five beneficiary groups, including average income and poverty rates, the composition of income and level of asset holdings of those with varying levels of income, and changes in poverty status over a 12-month period. The data analyzed come from three separate SIPP files: the first wave of the 1984 panel, covering the months June through December 1983; the fourth wave of the 1984 panel, covering the months May through November

[2] Wife benefits include those paid to a small number of separated and divorced wives. Widow benefits include those paid to a small number of persons who remarried after age 60.

1984, for its topical module on asset holdings; and the longitudinal research file, covering a 12-month period from the last half of 1983 to the last half of 1984.[3] The benefit categorization as of wave 1 is appended to all three files.

The unit of analysis for this article is the beneficiary. The focus, however, is on family or household income and assets of beneficiaries. Individuals living alone or with nonrelatives are considered families of one, in contrast to the Bureau of the Census convention of treating such persons as unrelated individuals.

The average family size of the five beneficiary groups ranged from 1.6 for aged widows to 4.8 for minor children. When comparing family incomes among groups with such different family sizes, some type of adjustment is needed to account for family size. One adjustment for family size is a per capita income measure that treats each person equally. Two major drawbacks of the per capita measure are that it does not account for economies of scale or of different need levels of children and adults. The equivalence scale built into the official poverty index takes these factors into account. Total family income is compared with per capita income and family income adjusted by the equivalence scale in the official poverty index (that is, family income divided by the ratio of the family's poverty threshold to the one-person poverty threshold). As will be seen, the way unit size is treated affects the relative income levels of the different beneficiary groups.

[3] The SIPP 1984 Panel (Preliminary) Longitudinal Research File was released by the Census Bureau for research to improve understanding and analysis of SIPP data. The data on the file are preliminary and should be analyzed and interpreted with caution. At the time the file was created, the Census Bureau was still exploring certain unresolved technical and methodological issues associated with the creation of this longitudinal data set. The Census Bureau does not approve or endorse the use of these data for official estimates.

Family Income

Family income was much higher for some beneficiary groups than for others. The median total family income of retired workers was about the same as that of disabled workers and wife beneficiaries, much higher than that of aged widow beneficiaries, and lower than that of minor child beneficiaries (table 1). Because family size varied greatly among beneficiary groups, the relative income levels of some beneficiary groups were markedly different when adjusted for family size. Retired workers and wife beneficiaries had the highest adjusted family incomes; minor child and widow beneficiaries had the lowest incomes; and disabled workers were in between. The per capita adjustment made a bigger difference to family income than the poverty index adjustment. The most dramatic change occurred between the total family income measure and the per capita income measure for minor child beneficiaries. Their total family income was the highest of the five beneficiary groups, and their per capita income was the lowest. The only difference in the rank order of the five groups by the two measures adjusting for family size was in the lowest two rankings. Minor children had the lowest family incomes by the per capita measure that depicts the needs of adults and children as equivalent. Widows had the lowest family incomes by the poverty index adjusted measure. The poverty index adjustment to family income, which is less extreme than the per capita adjustment because it accounts for differences in needs of adults and children and economies of scale, will be used in the remainder of this article.

Poverty

The SIPP provides annual poverty thresholds in each month that are adjusted by changes in the Consumer Price Index. Poverty rates are measured by comparing the annualized family income reported in a 4-month period with the average of the annual poverty thresholds in those months. These poverty rates differ somewhat from official poverty statistics based on annual family income reported in

Table 1.—Median monthly family income as a percent of retired-worker amount, by type of beneficiary

Type of beneficiary	Total family income	Per capita family income	Adjusted family income[1]
Retired-worker median	$1,209	$663	$1,011
Median as percent of retired-worker amount:			
Retired worker	100	100	100
Disabled worker	96	79	80
Aged wife	104	90	101
Aged widow	53	77	59
Minor child	119	50	67

[1] Using the equivalence scale in the poverty index.

the Current Population Survey. The official poverty rate for all persons in 1984 was 14.4 percent. The annual rate from SIPP was a somewhat lower 11.0 percent.[4] This difference is due in part to SIPP's more complete measurement of income from transfers [5] and to a better identification of the income unit.[6]

"Near poverty" thresholds are 25 percent higher. The difference between proportions with income below the poverty and near poverty lines indicates how many families are classified as not poor but have incomes only slightly over the poverty line.

Retired workers and wife beneficiaries had considerably lower rates of poverty than other beneficiary groups (9 percent and 7 percent, respectively, as shown in table 2). Retired workers were only half as likely to be poor as were disabled workers and only one-third as likely as widow or minor child beneficiaries. As large a group of retired workers and wife beneficiaries had incomes just above the poverty line as below it. Other beneficiary groups were not as concentrated just above the poverty line, when compared with those below it. Only 16 percent of retired workers and wife beneficiaries were poor or near poor, and as many as 37 percent of minor child beneficiaries and 41 percent of widow beneficiaries were poor or near poor.

Composition of Income

This section examines the composition of income of persons in the lowest, highest, and middle three quintiles of beneficiary adjusted family income groups. Income is differentiated by who receives it and the sources of income received. Table 3 shows the extent to which beneficiaries live with relatives and rely on the income of other family members. Minor children are excluded here because the individual income of those under age 15 is not available.

Table 2.—Percent of poor and near poor in a 4-month period, by type of beneficiary

Type of beneficiary	Percent poor	Percent poor or near poor
Retired worker	9	17
Disabled worker	19	30
Aged wife	7	15
Aged widow	26	41
Minor child	26	37

Table 3.—Percent of beneficiaries living with relatives and source of major share of adjusted family income, by income quintiles, and type of beneficiary

Major income source	Family income quintiles			
	Total	1	2–4	5
Retired worker				
Percent living with relatives	71	35	72	89
Total with relatives	100	100	100	100
Major share of family income from:				
Beneficiary	54	76	56	45
Other family members	46	24	44	55
Disabled worker				
Percent living with relatives	80	61	85	92
Total with relatives	100	100	100	100
Major share of family income from:				
Beneficiary	40	68	38	15
Other family members	60	32	62	85
Aged wife				
Percent living with relatives	97	86	98	100
Total with relatives	100	100	100	100
Major share of family income from:				
Beneficiary	6	8	5	8
Other family members	94	92	95	92
Aged widow				
Percent living with relatives	33	15	38	72
Total with relatives	100	100	100	100
Major share of family income from:				
Beneficiary	29	69	26	10
Other family members	71	31	74	90

[4] Patricia Ruggles, "The Economic Status of the Low-Income Elderly: New Evidence From the SIPP," paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Gerontological Society, Washington, DC, November 1987.

[5] Denton R. Vaughan, "Reflections on the Income Estimates From the Initial Panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation," paper delivered at the Social Science Research Council Conference on Individuals and Families in Transition: Understanding Change Through Longitudinal Data, Annapolis, MD, March 1988.

[6] John Coder, Dan Burkhead, Angela Feldman-Harkins, and Jack McNeil, **Preliminary Data from the SIPP 1983-84 Longitudinal Research File** (Working Paper No. 8702), Bureau of the Census, March 1987.

Table 4 shows the contribution of various types of income to family income. The lowest quintile cutoff of $490 per month, if annualized, was between the poverty and near poverty thresholds for a one-person family in 1983. The highest quintile cutoff of $1,601 per month was more than three times higher than the lowest quintile cutoff.

Widow beneficiaries were the only group in which most persons lived alone or with nonrelatives: 70-80 percent of worker beneficiaries and almost all wife beneficiaries lived with relatives, compared with only 33 percent of widow beneficiaries. Almost all wife beneficiaries at all income levels lived with relatives and derived most of their family income from other family members. Substantially more of all other types of beneficiaries with high family incomes than with low family incomes lived with relatives. And the high-income families were much more likely than low-income families to derive most of their income from other family members. For example, only 15 percent of widow beneficiaries with the lowest family incomes lived with relatives, compared with 72 percent with the highest family incomes. Only 31 percent of widows living with relatives with the lowest family incomes received most of their family income from other relatives, compared with 90 percent with the highest family incomes.

Table 4 shows the aggregate share of family income from five sources: Social Security benefits, property income, earnings, means-tested cash benefits, and all other sources. Social Security provided at least one-third of the income of all beneficiary groups. Families that did not supplement Social Security benefits with other sources of non-means-tested income were substantially worse off than those that did have these other sources of income.

Social Security was by far the most important income source for all groups of beneficiaries in the lowest quintile of family income. It contributed about 80 percent of the income for the three groups of aged beneficiaries and at least 72 percent of the income of disabled workers and minor child beneficiaries. Means-tested cash benefits were the second most important income source for all but minor child beneficiary families at the lowest quintile. Together, these two sources contributed 82-93 percent of total income.

The most important sources of income for those in the highest quintile varied by type of beneficiary. Earnings provided about half the family income of disabled workers and widow beneficiaries and three-fourths of minor children's family income. Earnings and Social Security benefits accounted for 88 percent of the family income of minor children. Earnings and property income were the two major sources for widow beneficiaries, accounting for 73 percent of their family income. Earnings, Social Security, and "other sources" provided 91 percent of the family income of disabled workers. High income retired workers and wife beneficiaries relied heavily on all four of the non-means-tested sources of income.

Table 4.—Aggregate share of adjusted family income from particular sources, by type of beneficiary, and income level[1]

Family income sources	Retired worker	Disabled worker	Aged wife	Aged widow	Minor child
Total					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Social Security	40	38	40	37	35
Property income	21	6	23	18	4
Earnings	20	37	18	33	52
Means-tested income	1	3	1	2	2
All other sources	19	16	18	11	7
Lowest quintile					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Social Security	85	76	78	80	72
Property income	(2)	2	5	5	1
Earnings	3	4	4	3	15
Means-tested income	8	13	11	9	10
All other sources	4	5	2	3	2
Highest quintile					
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Social Security	24	17	22	14	14
Property income	29	9	33	25	5
Earnings	27	54	26	48	74
Means-tested income	(2)	1	(2)	(2)	(2)
All other sources	21	20	19	13	7

[1] Those with negative total income are excluded.
[2] Less than 0.5 percent.

Income from Assets

Assets not only provide income but also are a potential resource in addition to income. This section looks at the amount of asset holdings of beneficiaries. Table 5 shows median amounts of net worth (defined as financial assets and equity in homes, motor vehicles, businesses, and real estate), net worth other than home equity, and financial assets by themselves. For comparison, median monthly income is also reported. These amounts are shown for retired workers and for other beneficiaries as a percent of retired-worker amounts. Since asset amounts were asked for households, asset and income amounts are measured at the household level, adjusting for household size.

Retired workers had a median monthly household income of $1,012 in 1984. They had a median net worth of $57,224, net worth other than home equity of $20,268 and financial assets of $9,819. Wife beneficiary households were slightly better off than retired-worker households, having a similar level of income, but about 4 percent higher net worth, 12 percent higher net worth other than home equity, and 2 percent higher financial assets. The income of disabled-worker beneficiary households was 84 percent of that of retired-worker households (or only somewhat lower), but their asset amounts were much lower—only 33 percent of the net worth, 13 percent of the net worth other than home equity, and 1 percent of the financial assets of retired workers. Widow beneficiary households had only two-thirds of the income and substantially lower assets than retired-worker households—68 percent of the net worth, 43 percent of the net worth other than home equity, and 41 percent of the financial assets. Widow beneficiary households had lower income but higher assets than disabled-worker households. Minor child beneficiary households had similar incomes to widow beneficiary households but much lower net worth and almost no net worth other than home equity. When income and assets were both considered, retired workers and wife beneficiaries still had the highest incomes, and widow and minor child beneficiaries still had considerably less than the highest two groups. Disabled workers, on the other hand, were less well off than their income alone would indicate.

One way to evaluate the amount of assets available to beneficiaries is to compare them with monthly income. This comparison shows how long the assets would last if they were converted to income and spent, assuming that all of monthly income is spent. Assets will be measured here as net worth other than home equity because home equity is a large share of most people's net worth that is not easily converted to income. Table 6 shows ratios of net worth other than home equity to monthly income, by levels of income.

Disabled-worker and minor child beneficiary households at all income levels had much lower assets than other beneficiaries. Disabled workers had a median equivalent to only 1 month of income at the lowest quintile and to 9 months at the highest quintile. Minor child beneficiaries in the highest and lowest quintiles had a median of only 1 month of assets. Asset amounts in comparison with monthly income for the other

Table 5.—Median household income and assets, adjusted for household size, as a percent of retired-worker amount, by type of beneficiary

Type of beneficiary	Monthly income	Net worth	Net worth other than home equity	Financial assets
Retired-worker median	$1,012	$57,224	$20,268	$9,819
Median as percent of retired-worker amount:				
Retired worker	100	100	100	100
Disabled worker	84	33	13	1
Aged wife	98	104	112	102
Aged widow	66	68	43	41
Minor child	67	28	4	0

Table 6.—Median ratio of net worth other than home equity to monthly income, adjusted for household size, by income quintiles, and type of beneficiary

Type of beneficiary	Household income quintiles: Total	1	2–4	5
Retired worker	19	3	19	33
Disabled worker	3	1	4	9
Aged wife	21	3	22	33
Aged widow	13	3	20	28
Minor child	1	1	3	1

beneficiary groups varied by level of income and not by type of benefit received. The lowest quintile had a median of only 3 months of assets. The middle group had about 20 months and the highest quintile had about 30 months of assets. In the lowest quintile, approximately 30 percent of aged beneficiary households, 11 percent of disabled-worker households, and virtually no minor child beneficiary households had at least 1 year of assets. In contrast, in the highest quintile, about three-fourths of aged beneficiary households and two-fifths of disabled-worker and minor child beneficiary households had at least 1 year of assets. Not surprisingly, low assets tend to go with low incomes.

Net worth other than home equity contains assets such as equity in a motor vehicle that one may not be able to do without. When comparing only financial assets to monthly income, aged beneficiary households had median amounts equivalent to only half as many months of income as they had in net worth other than home equity, and disabled-worker and minor child beneficiary households had medians equivalent to less than 1 month of income. No beneficiary group in the lowest quintile had median financial assets of as much as 1 month of income.

Change in Poverty Status

The analysis so far has been concerned with average measures of economic status over a 4-month period. One of the advantages of the SIPP is its measurement of income each month over a 2-1/2 year period so that one can look at change over time. This section looks at change in one measure of the economic status of beneficiaries over a 12-month period: poverty status.

The source of data is the SIPP longitudinal research file. Only those who were in the sample and receiving Social Security benefits in all 12 months were included. The proportion who were full-year beneficiaries was quite high—97-98 percent for retired workers, wives and widows, and 93 percent for disabled workers. A much lower proportion of minor children were full-year beneficiaries (61 percent). Preliminary analysis suggests a problem in the way Social Security benefits are reported for minor children that is causing too many of them to appear to be only part-year beneficiaries. Procedures to correct this problem have not been completed; therefore minor children will be excluded from this section.

Rates of poverty and change in poverty are measured by the proportions ever poor, sometimes poor, and always poor. Movements into or out of poverty of the sometimes poor are then examined for how much of a change in income resulted in a change in poverty status and whose income change would have resulted in a change in poverty status—the beneficiary or other family members. Poverty rates are shown

Table 7.—Poverty in a 12-month period of full-year beneficiaries, by living arrangement, and type of beneficiary

Poverty	Total: Retired worker	Total: Disabled worker	Total: Aged wife	Total: Aged widow	Alone all 12 months: Retired worker	Alone all 12 months: Disabled worker	Alone all 12 months: Aged wife	Alone all 12 months: Aged widow
Number (in thousands)	18,736	2,239	2,504	3,715	5,411	420	67	2,439
In any month	13	27	12	32	25	44	(1)	37
In some months	7	16	9	13	10	16	(1)	11
In all months	6	11	3	19	15	28	(1)	26

Poverty	Same number of relatives: Retired worker	Same number of relatives: Disabled worker	Same number of relatives: Aged wife	Same number of relatives: Aged widow	Change in number of relatives: Retired worker	Change in number of relatives: Disabled worker	Change in number of relatives: Aged wife	Change in number of relatives: Aged widow
Number (in thousands)	12,290	1,515	2,266	1,021	1,036	299	170	255
In any month	7	20	10	18	21	36	(1)	44
In some months	5	12	7	12	20	36	(1)	36
In all months	2	8	3	6	1	(2)	(1)	8

[1] Fewer than 50 unweighted cases.
[2] Less than 0.5 percent.

initially for three groups: those living with the same number of relatives all 12 months, those living alone all 12 months, and those whose family size changed during the year.[7] Thereafter, in order not to confuse changes in income with changes in family composition, the analysis of change in poverty status focuses on those whose family size did not change. Less than 10 percent of the poverty status changes from one month to the next involved a change in family size.

Similar to the previous finding concerning average poverty rates for a 4-month period, retired workers and wife beneficiaries were least likely to be poor in any month (12-13 percent), widow beneficiaries were most likely (32 percent), and disabled workers were in between (27 percent) (table 7). Most poverty among widow beneficiaries occurred in every month of the year. Most poverty among other beneficiaries was in only some months of the year.

Those living alone were much more likely to be poor at some point than those living with relatives: 25 percent of retired workers, 44 percent of disabled workers, and 37 percent of widows living alone, compared with 8 percent, 22 percent, and 21 percent, respectively, of those who lived with relatives. Most poverty among those living alone lasted all 12 months; most poverty among those living with relatives lasted less than 12 months. Thus, beneficiaries living alone, regardless of the type of benefit received, were more likely to be poor and more consistently poor than beneficiaries living with relatives.

Poverty status may change when no change in income has occurred among families who are so close to the poverty line that they drop below it as the poverty thresholds increase each month due to inflation. Changes in poverty status of 4-6 percent of retired workers, disabled workers, and wives, and 11 percent of widows were of this type (table 8). Poverty status changes occurred with income changes of less than 5 percent among another 8-12 percent of nonwidow beneficiaries and 18 percent of widows. Most poverty status changes involved a change of 25 percent or more in family income.

When referring to part-year poverty of beneficiaries, one's first tendency is to think of the beneficiary's income as the source of the change. However, the income of other family members may be the source of the change. Table 9 identifies whether income of the beneficiary or of other family members changed enough to have resulted in a poverty status change for the beneficiary or other family members. This was determined by calculating the family's poverty status if only the beneficiary's or

[7] The size of the family was not a variable on the original longitudinal research file. Changes in family size were determined by the size of the family poverty thresholds and changes from one month to the next.

Table 8.—Poverty status changes, by size of income change, and type of beneficiary[1]

Size of income change	Retired worker	Disabled worker	Aged wife	Aged widow
Number of poverty status changes (in thousands)	2,037	589	370	810
Total percent	100	100	100	100
No change	6	4	5	11
Less than 5 percent	12	8	10	18
5-9 percent	5	10	9	5
10-24 percent	20	22	23	11
25-49 percent	20	22	25	15
50 percent or more	37	34	28	40

[1] Full-year beneficiaries living with relatives whose family size remained the same.

Table 9.—Poverty status changes, by source of income change large enough to have changed poverty status, and type of beneficiary[1]

Source of income change	Retired worker	Disabled worker	Aged wife	Aged widow
Number of poverty status changes (in thousands)	1,104	471	325	348
Relatives	67	85	70	84
Beneficiary	31	20	32	21
Both	11	6	18	6

[1] Full-year beneficiaries living with relatives whose family size remained the same.

the other family members' income had changed and comparing it with the previous month's poverty status.

Among retired workers living with the same number of relatives all 12 months, 67 percent of poverty status changes would have occurred if only the income of the other family members had changed, compared with only 31 percent if only the beneficiary's income had changed. Eleven percent had large enough changes in either the beneficiary's income or the income of other family members to result in a poverty status change. And 13 percent had changes in beneficiary and other family income that were too small by themselves but that together were large enough to change the family's poverty status. For all beneficiary groups, changes in family income were the most important source of change in poverty status.

Many users of SIPP data have noticed more change occurring between survey waves than within waves. The much greater tendency for income of other family members than of the beneficiary to have changed enough to change the family poverty status held up both between and within waves. The size of the income change associated with a change in poverty status was lower within waves than between waves. This finding suggests that the levels in table 8 be used somewhat cautiously.

Summary

The SIPP data have provided a first look at the relative economic status of various types of Social Security beneficiaries. They have shown that the different types of Social Security beneficiaries face very different economic circumstances. Retired workers and wife beneficiaries have the highest family incomes adjusted for family size. Aged widows and minor children have the lowest family incomes, with high proportions of poor or near poor. And disabled workers are in between, but also have high proportions of poor or near poor. Retired-worker and wife beneficiary households also have considerably more asset holdings than disabled-worker or widow beneficiary households.

Beneficiaries with high family incomes are very likely to live with relatives and to rely heavily on the relatives' income. The high-income families tend to have non-means-tested sources of family income other than Social Security amounting to substantial proportions of their total income and to have high asset holdings. Conversely, beneficiaries with low family incomes are very likely to live alone or with nonrelatives, to rely heavily on Social Security and means-tested benefits, and to have low asset holdings.

A majority of ever-poor beneficiaries (with the exception of widow beneficiaries) are poor in only some months of a year. This situation is not consistent with the stereotype of beneficiaries living on fixed incomes. But the change in poverty status is often due to a change in the income of other family members rather than of the beneficiary. And in some cases, a change in poverty status occurs with little or no change in income as the cost of living rises.