
Highlights, December 2003

In December 2003, there were 323,682 SSI disabled beneficiaries who were working—5.6 percent of the total SSI disabled caseload. Included in this count were 71,097 section 1619(b) participants who do not receive an SSI payment but have special SSI recipient status for Medicaid purposes. Over four-fifths (82.3 percent) of the workers had amounts of earned income below the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level of \$810 per month; 25.0 percent earned \$65 or less.

Geographic Distribution

Among the states, the percentage of disabled workers varied from a low of 2.6 percent in Alabama to a high of 18.5 percent in South Dakota. In general, the percentage of disabled workers was higher in the northern states than in the southern states.

Demographic Characteristics

The majority of these disabled workers were male (53.1 percent). Half (50.2 percent) had unearned income; 43.6 percent were receiving Social Security benefits. Comparable figures for all disabled recipients in December 2003 were 45.0 percent male, 37.7 percent with unearned income, and 30.2 percent receiving Social Security benefits.

Diagnosis

Disabled workers are more likely to have certain impairments than other disabled recipients. Almost two-thirds (65.0 percent) of the workers had a mental disorder, including 42.5 percent who were diagnosed with mental retardation. By comparison, 56.3 percent of all disabled recipients were diagnosed with a mental disorder, including 22.0 percent with mental retardation.

Section 1619

The greatest use of work incentive provisions was by participants under section 1619—27.3 percent of disabled workers. This included 5.3 percent under section 1619(a) and 22.0 percent under section 1619(b).

Other Work Incentives

Use of other work incentive provisions continued to have a smaller, but measurable, impact. In December 2003, 3.8 percent of the SSI disabled workers had some of their income excluded under one of these provisions—plans for achieving self-support (PASS), 0.5 percent; impairment-related work expenses, 2.3 percent; or blind work expenses, 0.9 percent.

Plans for achieving self-support permit an SSI recipient to set aside income and resources to help obtain the training or education necessary for certain specified occupational goals. In December 2003, 438 PASS participants had earnings, which averaged \$720 per month. However, exclusions under a PASS are not limited to earnings. Of the 1,705 disabled recipients with a PASS, 69.3 percent did not have any earnings reported for December 2003. For this group, the PASS excluded unearned income such as Social Security benefits. Out of all PASS participants, 448 had a PASS that excluded only resources.