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# Income of the Population Aged 55 and Older, 1976

by Susan Grad and Karen Foster\*

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This article inaugurates a biennial series of reports on the income of persons aged 55 and older. The survey on which it is based updates information on the broad economic picture for a cross-section of this population and forms the basis for an analysis of trends in the financial status of the group as a whole. In 1976, persons aged 55-61 were generally working full-time, not receiving income from pensions, and married. Those aged 73 and older were predominantly not working, mostly recipients of retirement pensions, and likely to be widows. Most persons aged 65 and older were receiving social security benefits; those with neither earnings nor a second pension constituted the largest subgroup and had the lowest median income. Married couples, as a group, were substantially better off financially than nonmarried persons because they were younger, two-person rather than one-person units, and had one member who was a man. Blacks were less likely than whites to receive pension income other than social security benefits, and their median benefits and earnings were both lower.

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As part of its statutory mandate to research the effectiveness of the social security program, the Social Security Administration, since 1941, has conducted periodic surveys of the economic situation of persons in their retirement years. The three surveys conducted from 1963 to 1972 were national in scope and sampled nonbeneficiaries as well as beneficiaries.<sup>1</sup>

This article marks the beginning of a biennial statistical series on the income of older persons. The series is intended (1) to provide up-to-date economic data on a cross-section of the older population and (2) to form the basis for an analysis of trends in the economic status of this population as a whole. The tables focus on the major sources and combinations of sources of income, the amounts received, and the relative importance of these amounts to total income according to age, marital status, and race.

The source of data for this series is the March Current Population Survey (CPS), which collects detailed informa-

tion annually on income and labor-force participation.<sup>2</sup> These cross-sectional data, together with longitudinal data from the Social Security Administration's Retirement History Study and data on social security beneficiaries from periodic cross-sectional surveys of new retirees,<sup>3</sup> provide a comprehensive picture of the income of aged persons. In future years, data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation will be included as well.<sup>4</sup>

This article examines data on the population aged 55 and older.<sup>5</sup> Inclusion of persons 7 years younger than the earliest age of eligibility for most retirement pensions<sup>6</sup> allows com-

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<sup>2</sup>For a detailed description of the basic CPS sample design, see the Bureau of the Census, *The Current Population Survey—Design and Methodology* (Technical Paper No. 40), 1978.

<sup>3</sup>See *Reaching Retirement Age: Findings From a Survey of Newly Entitled Workers, 1968-70* (Research Report No. 47), Office of Research and Statistics, Social Security Administration, 1976, and Lola M. Ireland et al., *Almost 65: Baseline Data from the Retirement History Study* (Research Report No. 49), Office of Research and Statistics, Social Security Administration, 1976.

<sup>4</sup>This survey is currently under development and pretest by the Office of the Secretary, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. It is expected to begin providing periodic data in the early 1980's.

<sup>5</sup>A more detailed set of tables is available in Susan Grad and Karen Foster, *Income of the Population 55 and Older, 1976* (Staff Paper No. 34), Office of Research and Statistics, Social Security Administration (in preparation).

<sup>6</sup>The term "retirement pensions" is used loosely here to include not only persons who have earned benefits as retired workers, but also dependent spouses, surviving mothers and widows, and persons receiving disability benefits.

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<sup>1</sup>For details on these surveys, see the following publications from the Office of Research and Statistics, Social Security Administration: Lenore A. Epstein and Janet H. Murray, *The Aged Population of the United States: The 1963 Social Security Survey of the Aged* (Research Report No. 1967, Lenore E. Bixby et al., *Demographic and Economic Characteristics of the Aged: 1968 Social Security Survey* (Research Report No. 45), 1975; and Susan Grad, *Income of the Population Aged 60 and Older, 1971* (Staff Paper No. 26), 1977.

**Table 1.—Labor-force participation: Number and percentage distribution of aged units, by age, marital status, and sex, 1976**

Labor-force participation	Units aged—					
	55-61	62-64	65 and older			
			Total	65-69	70-72	73 and older
Married couples						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	6,241	2,138	6,799	2,858	1,215	2,726
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100
Worked . . . . .	92	80	39	54	39	23
Full year, full-time <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	47	55	16	25	13	7
Less than full year, full time . . . . .	16	25	23	29	26	15
Did not work . . . . .	8	20	61	46	61	77
All nonmarried						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	3,522	1,613	10,522	3,038	1,610	5,875
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100
Worked . . . . .	66	49	14	27	15	7
Full year, full-time <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	42	26	4	8	3	2
Less than full year, full-time . . . . .	24	23	10	29	12	5
Did not work . . . . .	34	51	86	73	85	93
Nonmarried men						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	1,182	447	2,354	801	340	1,213
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100
Worked . . . . .	74	59	19	31	20	12
Full year, full-time <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	52	35	7	12	7	4
Less than full year, full-time . . . . .	21	25	12	19	13	8
Did not work . . . . .	26	41	81	69	80	88
Nonmarried women						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	2,340	1,166	8,168	2,237	1,269	4,662
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100
Worked . . . . .	62	45	12	26	14	5
Full year, full-time <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	37	23	3	7	2	1
Less than full year, full-time . . . . .	25	22	9	19	12	4
Did not work . . . . .	38	55	88	74	86	95

<sup>1</sup> Full year is 50-52 weeks of work in the year; full time is 55 or more hours a week.

parison of the preretirement and postretirement populations. In addition, trends in the preretirement population may be studied.

The unit of analysis in the tables is the aged unit—either a married couple living together or a nonmarried person. The advantage of this unit of analysis is that the economic status of all aged persons, including those living in nonaged households, can be observed directly and is not confounded by combining the resources of the aged with those of other family members.<sup>7</sup>

### Age

The population aged 55 and older includes persons in various stages of the work-retirement continuum—not retired, partly retired, and fully retired—who have, respectively, earnings but no pension income, earnings and a

<sup>7</sup>The unit of analysis for the Bureau of the Census is families and related individuals, and the age of the unit is the age of the head of the household.

pension, or one or more pensions but no earnings. Those aged 55-61 are, for the most part, working full-time and not receiving income from retirement pensions (tables 1 and 2). As the following tabulation shows, they are also likely to be

Marital status	Age				
	55-61	62-64	65 and over		
			Total	65-72	73 and older
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	9,763	3,751	17,321	8,720	8,601
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100
Married couples . . . . .	64	57	39	47	32
Nonmarried:					
Men . . . . .	12	12	14	13	14
Women . . . . .	24	31	47	40	54

members of intact married couples. Those aged 73 and older are likely not to be working, predominantly retirement pension recipients, and mostly women without husbands. Higher proportions of the population at the older

ages are eligible for pensions, experiencing work-related disabilities, facing mandatory retirement provisions, and widowed. Chart 1 illustrates the mix of earnings and pension receipt according to age and marital status.

In 1976 the majority of units aged 55-61 had earnings—

92 percent of the married couples and 66 percent of the nonmarried persons. Seventy-seven percent of the married couples and 42 percent of the nonmarried persons worked full-year, full-time. Forty-three percent of the married couples had two earners.

**Table 2.**—Source of income: Number and percent of aged units with money income from specified sources,<sup>1</sup> by age, marital status, and sex, 1976

Source of income	Units aged—						
	55-61	62-64	Total	65 and older			73 and older
				65-67	68-69	70-72	
	All units						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	9,763	3,751	17,321	3,700	2,194	2,824	8,601
Percent with—							
Earnings . . . . .	83	67	25	45	34	27	14
Wages and salaries . . . . .	75	60	19	38	27	21	9
Self-employment . . . . .	12	9	4	7	6	5	2
Retirement benefits . . . . .	23	56	92	86	93	94	94
Social security <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	13	49	89	82	89	90	90
Other than social security . . . . .	12	22	31	32	36	35	28
Other public pensions . . . . .	6	10	13	12	13	14	13
Railroad retirement . . . . .	1	2	3	2	2	4	4
Government employment . . . . .	6	8	9	10	11	10	9
Military . . . . .	3	2	1	2	2	1	1
Federal . . . . .	2	3	4	4	4	4	3
State/local . . . . .	1	4	5	5	5	5	4
Private pensions or annuities . . . . .	6	13	20	21	24	22	16
Income from assets . . . . .	55	58	56	57	56	57	55
Interest . . . . .	51	54	52	54	53	53	50
Other income from assets . . . . .	25	25	24	25	24	25	24
Dividends . . . . .	18	17	16	16	17	17	15
Rent or royalties . . . . .	9	11	10	10	10	10	11
Estates or trusts . . . . .	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Veterans' benefits . . . . .	8	5	6	5	5	4	7
Unemployment insurance . . . . .	8	6	2	4	2	1	1
Workers' compensation . . . . .	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Public assistance . . . . .	5	7	11	9	10	11	12
Supplemental security income . . . . .	4	6	10	7	10	10	11
Other public assistance . . . . .	2	2	2	2	1	1	2
Personal contributions . . . . .	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Married couples						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	6,241	2,138	6,799	1,857	1,002	1,215	2,726
Percent with—							
Earnings . . . . .	92	80	41	59	47	41	26
Wages and salaries . . . . .	84	70	31	49	38	31	17
Self-employment . . . . .	15	14	7	10	8	8	5
Retirement benefits . . . . .	22	52	93	86	93	97	98
Social security <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	12	43	90	81	90	93	95
Other than social security . . . . .	13	26	42	40	45	44	40
Other public pensions . . . . .	8	11	16	14	16	16	16
Railroad retirement . . . . .	1	2	4	3	2	5	5
Government employment . . . . .	7	10	12	12	14	11	12
Military . . . . .	3	2	2	2	2	2	3
Federal . . . . .	2	4	5	4	5	5	4
State/local . . . . .	1	4	6	6	7	6	6
Private pensions or annuities . . . . .	6	16	28	28	33	31	26
Income from assets . . . . .	64	67	66	66	66	65	67
Interest . . . . .	59	62	62	63	62	61	62
Other income from assets . . . . .	30	30	31	29	30	30	33
Dividends . . . . .	22	21	21	20	22	21	22
Rent or royalties . . . . .	11	12	13	12	12	11	14
Estates or trusts . . . . .	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
Veterans' benefits . . . . .	9	6	6	6	5	2	7
Unemployment insurance . . . . .	9	8	3	6	3	2	1
Workers' compensation . . . . .	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Public assistance . . . . .	2	3	6	4	6	6	7
Supplemental security income . . . . .	1	2	5	3	5	6	6
Other public assistance . . . . .	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Personal contributions . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	1

See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 2.—Source of income: Number and percent of aged units with money income from specified sources,<sup>1</sup> by age, marital status, and sex, 1976—Continued**

Source of income	Units aged						
	55-61	62-64	65 and older				73 and older
			Total	65-67	68-69	70-72	
	All nonmarried						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	3,522	1,613	10,522	1,843	1,195	1,610	5,875
Percent with . . . . .							
Earnings . . . . .	66	50	16	32	24	16	9
Wages and salaries . . . . .	60	46	11	26	19	12	5
Self-employment . . . . .	6	3	2	4	3	2	1
Retirement benefits . . . . .	24	61	92	87	93	91	93
Social security <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	17	57	88	84	89	88	88
Other than social security . . . . .	9	16	24	24	28	27	22
Other public pensions . . . . .	4	7	11	10	11	12	11
Railroad retirement . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	2	3	1	3	3	4
Government employment . . . . .	4	6	8	9	8	9	7
Military . . . . .	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Federal . . . . .	1	3	3	3	3	4	3
State local . . . . .	1	3	4	4	4	4	4
Private pensions or annuities . . . . .	5	9	14	15	17	16	12
Income from assets . . . . .	40	47	49	48	48	51	49
Interest . . . . .	37	43	45	44	45	47	45
Other income from assets . . . . .	17	18	20	20	19	21	20
Dividends . . . . .	11	12	12	13	13	13	12
Rent or royalties . . . . .	7	8	9	8	8	9	9
Estates or trusts . . . . .	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
Veterans' benefits . . . . .	7	5	6	4	6	6	7
Unemployment insurance . . . . .	6	4	1	2	1	1	( <sup>3</sup> )
Workers' compensation . . . . .	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Public assistance . . . . .	12	12	15	13	14	15	15
Supplemental security income . . . . .	4	6	10	7	10	10	11
Other public assistance . . . . .	2	2	2	2	1	1	2
Personal contributions . . . . .	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Under the social security, railroad retirement, and the government employee pension systems and some private pension plans, provisions exist for the receipt of retirement and/or survivor benefits before age 62. As many as 22 percent of the married couples and 24 percent of the non-married persons under age 62 received a pension in 1976.<sup>8</sup> Pension receipt for couples was more likely than not to be accompanied by some earnings (16 percent, compared with 6 percent). The reverse was true for nonmarried persons—only 7 percent had both a pension and earnings, compared with 17 percent receiving a pension but no earnings. Within this age group, having neither earnings nor a pension was uncommon for married couples (2 percent) but not for nonmarried persons (18 percent).

At ages 62–64, reduced social security retirement benefits and income from many private pension plans become available. Most of the units aged 62–64 had earnings (80 percent of the couples and 50 percent of the nonmarried persons), although the incidence of work was lower for this group than for units under age 62. The older group also had a lower incidence of full-year, full-time work than did those

aged 55–61 (55 percent, compared with 77 percent of married couples and 26 percent, compared with 42 percent, of nonmarried persons) and a lower incidence of two-earner couples (32 percent and 43 percent, respectively). On the other hand, the likelihood of pension receipt was two to three times greater among those aged 62–64 than among those under age 62 for earners and nonearners alike. Receipt of more than one pension was more likely among units aged 62–64 (16 percent) than among units aged 55–61 (3 percent). As for those under age 62, partial retirement was more common than full retirement for couples aged 62–64 (34 percent, compared with 18 percent) and less common for nonmarried persons aged 62–64. Twenty percent of the nonmarried persons had earnings and a pension; 41 percent had a pension but no earnings.

At ages 65 and older, the majority of units had pensions and no earnings (58 percent of the married couples and 79 percent of the nonmarried persons). Aged persons receiving both pensions and earnings made up the next largest group (35 percent of the married couples and 13 percent of the nonmarried persons). Few units had earnings and no pensions (6 percent of the married couples and 3 percent of the nonmarried persons). Largely as a consequence of the nearly universal coverage of the aged under the social security program, units with neither pensions nor earnings constituted the smallest subgroup. Thirty-nine percent of the

<sup>8</sup>The age used for a married couple is that of the husband unless he is under age 55 and the wife is aged 55 or older, in which case it is the age of the wife. A couple has a source of income or a combination of sources if either or both members have the source(s). The amount of income a couple receives from a source is the combined amount each member receives from that source.

married couples and 20 percent of the nonmarried persons aged 65 and older received more than one pension—generally social security benefits and a private pension. Only 16

percent of the married couples and 4 percent of the nonmarried persons worked full-year, full-time. Eleven percent of the married couples had two earners.

**Table 2.—Source of income: Number and percent of aged units with money income from specified sources,<sup>1</sup> by age, marital status, and sex, 1976—Continued**

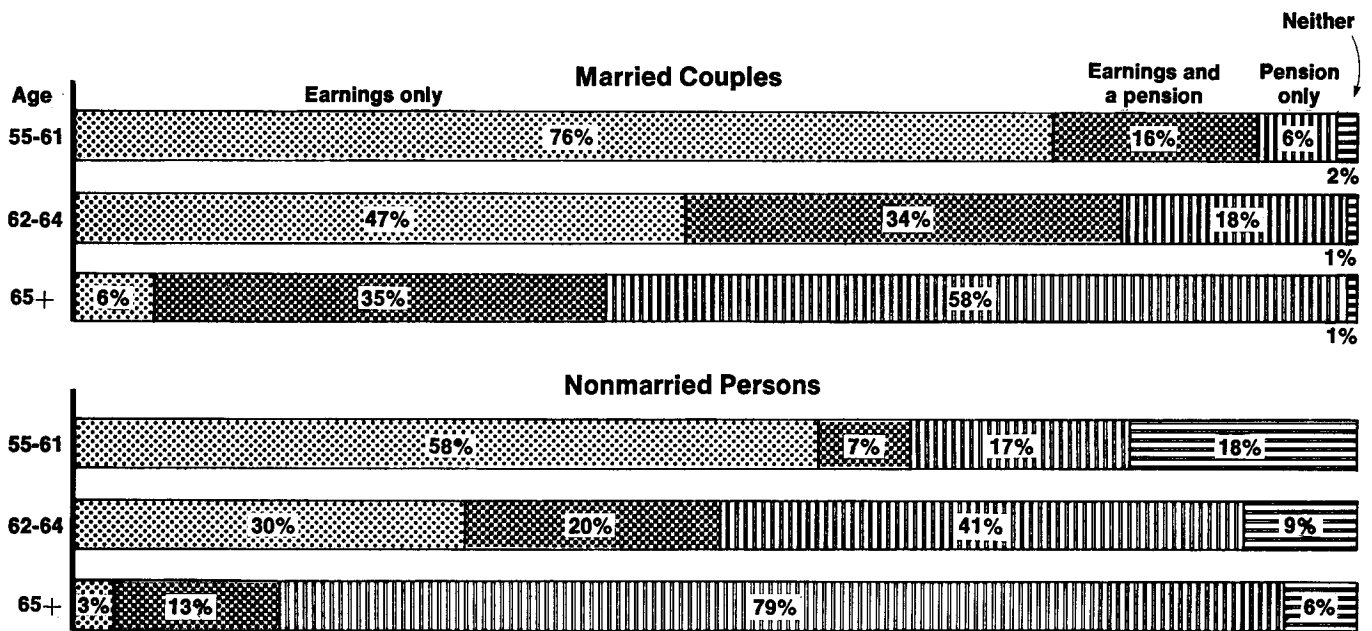
Source of income	Units aged—						
	55-61	62-64	65 and older				73 and older
			Total	65-67	68-69	70-72	
Nonmarried men							
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	1,181	447	2,353	474	327	340	1,213
Percent with—							
Earnings . . . . .	74	61	21	36	26	20	13
Wages and salaries . . . . .	66	54	13	25	18	13	7
Self-employment . . . . .	7	5	4	8	3	4	3
Retirement benefits . . . . .	18	53	92	86	91	90	95
Social security <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	10	49	87	81	85	85	91
Other than social security . . . . .	10	18	32	27	34	39	32
Other public pensions . . . . .	7	7	12	10	11	15	12
Railroad retirement . . . . .	1	1	4	1	4	3	5
Government employment . . . . .	6	6	8	9	8	12	7
Military . . . . .	4	1	2	2	1	1	2
Federal . . . . .	2	3	4	5	3	8	3
State/local . . . . .	1	2	3	2	3	4	3
Private pensions or annuities . . . . .	3	11	21	18	24	26	20
Income from assets . . . . .	33	45	44	37	33	46	48
Interest . . . . .	30	40	40	33	30	45	44
Other income from assets . . . . .	15	20	17	13	14	15	19
Dividends . . . . .	11	15	11	10	10	9	12
Rent or royalties . . . . .	5	8	7	4	4	7	8
Estates or trusts . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	2	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	1	( <sup>3</sup> )
Veterans' benefits . . . . .	8	8	7	8	10	5	7
Unemployment insurance . . . . .	7	6	1	4	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	1
Workers' compensation . . . . .	2	3	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	2	1	2
Public assistance . . . . .	7	7	15	12	17	17	14
Supplemental security income . . . . .	5	6	13	11	17	15	13
Other public assistance . . . . .	3	1	2	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	3	2
Personal contributions . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )
Nonmarried women							
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	2,340	1,166	8,168	1,369	868	1,269	4,662
Percent with—							
Earnings . . . . .	62	46	14	30	23	16	7
Wages and salaries . . . . .	57	43	11	26	19	12	7
Self-employment . . . . .	5	3	2	3	3	2	1
Retirement benefits . . . . .	27	64	92	87	93	92	93
Social security <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	21	59	88	84	91	89	88
Other than social security . . . . .	9	16	22	23	25	24	20
Other public pensions . . . . .	3	7	11	10	11	11	11
Railroad retirement . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	2	3	2	2	3	3
Government employment . . . . .	3	5	8	9	8	8	7
Military . . . . .	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	1	1	1	1
Federal . . . . .	1	2	3	3	3	3	3
State/local . . . . .	1	3	4	5	5	4	4
Private pensions or annuities . . . . .	6	9	12	14	15	13	10
Income from assets . . . . .	44	47	51	52	54	52	50
Interest . . . . .	40	44	47	48	51	48	45
Other income from assets . . . . .	17	18	21	22	22	23	20
Dividends . . . . .	11	11	13	14	14	15	12
Rent or royalties . . . . .	8	8	9	9	10	9	9
Estates or trusts . . . . .	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Veterans' benefits . . . . .	6	4	6	3	4	6	7
Unemployment insurance . . . . .	6	3	1	2	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	( <sup>3</sup> )
Workers' compensation . . . . .	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Public assistance . . . . .	14	14	15	14	13	14	15
Supplemental security income . . . . .	9	11	13	12	12	13	14
Other public assistance . . . . .	6	3	2	3	1	2	2
Personal contributions . . . . .	3	3	1	1	1	2	1

<sup>1</sup> Income from source ascertained from yes/no question imputed by CPS. A married couple's income considered to be from source if one or both persons' income from that source.

<sup>2</sup> May be receiving various types of OASDI benefit.

<sup>3</sup> Less than 0.5 percent.

Chart 1. Earnings and pension receipt for units aged 55 and older, by age and marital status



The likelihood of pension receipt and of receiving more than one pension was progressively higher in each succeeding age group; the likelihood of having earnings and the extent of labor-force participation among workers was progressively lower. This tendency may be an effect of aging, a cohort effect, or a combination of the two.

### Marital Status

As the following tabulation indicates, the economic picture for aged married couples differed substantially from

Item	Married couples	Nonmarried persons
Percent		
With earnings	41	16
With pension other than social security	42	24
With more than one pension	39	20
With full year, full-time work	16	4
Median amount		
Earnings	\$4,065	\$2,104
Social security benefit	4,090	2,410
Private pension	2,150	1,500
Government employee pension	4,990	3,070
Total money income	7,590	3,400

that for aged nonmarried persons. Couples aged 65 and older were more likely to receive earnings and to be engaged in full-year, full-time work. Although the members of the two groups were equally likely to be receiving social security benefits, couples were more likely than nonmarried persons to have a pension other than social security benefits and to receive more than one pension. Furthermore, the median amounts received from earnings and from each type of pension were greater for married couples. For these reasons, the median total money income for married couples

was more than double that for nonmarried persons (table 3).

It is not surprising that couples have higher rates of receipt of income from key sources and more income from these sources because they are two-person units, both members of which may be contributing income to the unit. In addition, as the next tabulation shows, married couples

Age	Married couples	Nonmarried persons
Total number (in thousands)	15,178	15,657
Total percent	100	100
55-61	41	22
62-64	14	10
65-69	19	19
70-72	8	10
73 and older	18	38

are younger on the average than nonmarried persons. Married couples had a much higher proportion of units aged 55-61 and a lower proportion of units aged 73 and older—ages associated with more full-time workers with high incomes and fewer retirees living on reduced incomes. Even when the median total money incomes of married and nonmarried men of the same age groups are compared, as in the tabulation that follows, the married individuals are shown to have a consistent advantage.

Age	Median total money income	
	Married men	Nonmarried men
55-61	\$13,200	\$7,730
62-64	10,200	5,910
65-69	6,650	4,000
70-72	5,930	4,190
73 and older	5,050	3,720

**Table 3.—Total money income: Number and percentage distribution of aged units, by age, marital status, and sex, 1976**

Money income	Units aged—						
	55-61	62-64	65 and older				73 and older
			Total	65-67	68-69	70-72	
	All units						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	9,763	3,751	17,321	3,700	2,197	2,824	8,601
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than \$1,000 . . . . .	4	3	2	1	1	2	2
1,000-1,999 . . . . .	4	4	8	6	5	5	10
2,000-2,999 . . . . .	5	10	18	13	15	17	22
3,000-3,999 . . . . .	5	8	15	12	14	15	17
4,000-4,999 . . . . .	4	6	10	8	9	10	11
5,000-5,999 . . . . .	4	6	9	8	8	9	9
6,000-6,999 . . . . .	4	5	7	8	7	7	6
7,000-7,999 . . . . .	4	5	5	6	6	6	4
8,000-8,999 . . . . .	4	4	4	5	6	5	4
9,000-9,999 . . . . .	4	4	3	4	3	4	2
10,000-10,999 . . . . .	4	5	3	3	3	4	2
11,000-11,999 . . . . .	3	3	2	3	3	2	2
12,000-12,999 . . . . .	4	4	2	3	2	2	1
13,000-13,999 . . . . .	3	2	2	3	3	2	1
14,000-14,999 . . . . .	3	3	1	2	2	2	1
15,000-19,999 . . . . .	16	13	4	7	6	5	3
20,000 or more . . . . .	24	15	4	8	6	4	3
Median income <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	<b>\$12,100</b>	<b>\$8,830</b>	<b>\$4,700</b>	<b>\$6,250</b>	<b>\$5,630</b>	<b>\$5,110</b>	<b>\$3,920</b>
	Married couples						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	6,241	2,138	6,799	1,857	1,002	1,215	2,726
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than \$1,000 . . . . .	2	1	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	1
1,000-1,999 . . . . .	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2,000-2,999 . . . . .	1	2	3	2	4	3	4
3,000-3,999 . . . . .	2	4	8	6	6	8	10
4,000-4,999 . . . . .	3	4	9	6	8	9	12
5,000-5,999 . . . . .	3	5	11	9	8	10	14
6,000-6,999 . . . . .	3	5	10	9	10	10	11
7,000-7,999 . . . . .	3	4	8	7	9	8	8
8,000-8,999 . . . . .	4	4	7	6	7	8	7
9,000-9,999 . . . . .	4	5	5	5	4	7	5
10,000-10,999 . . . . .	4	6	5	5	5	6	4
11,000-11,999 . . . . .	4	5	4	5	5	3	3
12,000-12,999 . . . . .	4	5	4	5	4	3	3
13,000-13,999 . . . . .	4	3	3	4	5	3	2
14,000-14,999 . . . . .	4	4	3	4	3	3	2
15,000-19,999 . . . . .	22	18	9	12	10	9	6
20,000 or more . . . . .	35	23	10	13	11	9	7
Median income <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	<b>\$16,490</b>	<b>\$12,750</b>	<b>\$7,890</b>	<b>\$9,710</b>	<b>\$8,620</b>	<b>\$8,140</b>	<b>\$6,780</b>

See footnotes at end of table.

Perhaps most important of all, the comparison of couples and nonmarried units is essentially one between two-person units containing a male member and one-person female units, since the nonmarried group was composed largely of women. (The proportion of women ranged from 66 percent of those aged 55-61 to 79 percent of those aged 73 and older.) Nonmarried women were measurably less well-off than nonmarried men. The ratio of the median total money income of nonmarried women to that of nonmarried men was 59 percent for those aged 55-61, 68 percent for those aged 62-64, and 83 percent for those aged 65 and older.

Thirty-eight percent of the nonmarried women aged 65 and older, compared with 27 percent of the nonmarried men and only 9 percent of the married couples, had incomes under the official poverty line.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>The money income of aged married couples and non-married persons is compared with the official poverty income lines for an aged couple or nonmarried person living alone, whether or not, in fact, they do so. For a discussion of this and other measures of poverty, see the statement of Mollie Orshansky, Office of Research and Statistics, Social Security Administration, before the House Select Committee on Aging, August 9, 1978.

**Table 3.—Total money income: Number and percentage distribution of aged units, by age, marital status, and sex, 1976—Continued**

Money income	Units aged -						
	55 61	62 64	65 and older				
			Total	65 67	68 69	70 72	73 and older
	All nonmarried						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	3,522	1,613	10,522	1,843	1,195	1,610	5,875
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than \$1,000 . . . . .	9	5	3	2	2	3	3
1,000-1,999 . . . . .	9	9	12	11	8	8	14
2,000-2,999 . . . . .	13	20	28	23	25	28	30
3,000-3,999 . . . . .	10	12	20	17	21	20	21
4,000-4,999 . . . . .	8	8	10	10	10	10	11
5,000-5,999 . . . . .	6	8	7	8	9	9	7
6,000-6,999 . . . . .	5	5	5	7	5	5	4
7,000-7,999 . . . . .	5	6	3	3	5	4	3
8,000-8,999 . . . . .	4	4	3	3	5	3	2
9,000-9,999 . . . . .	5	2	2	3	2	1	1
10,000-10,999 . . . . .	4	4	1	2	1	2	1
11,000-11,999 . . . . .	3	2	1	2	1	2	1
12,000-12,999 . . . . .	3	3	1	1	1	1	1
13,000-13,999 . . . . .	2	1	1	1	1	1	( <sup>2</sup> )
14,000-14,999 . . . . .	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
15,000-19,999 . . . . .	6	5	2	2	2	2	1
20,000 or more . . . . .	5	3	1	2	1	1	1
Median income <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	\$5,260	\$4,450	\$3,360	\$3,770	\$3,740	\$3,550	\$3,130
	Nonmarried men						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	1,182	447	2,354	474	327	340	1,213
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than \$1,000 . . . . .	8	4	2	3	1	2	2
1,000-1,999 . . . . .	7	7	8	10	3	6	9
2,000-2,999 . . . . .	10	14	24	22	24	22	25
3,000-3,999 . . . . .	7	12	19	17	19	17	20
4,000-4,999 . . . . .	6	6	12	8	12	14	13
5,000-5,999 . . . . .	4	8	9	8	6	11	9
6,000-6,999 . . . . .	4	4	7	9	6	7	7
7,000-7,999 . . . . .	6	8	4	5	3	7	3
8,000-8,999 . . . . .	4	5	4	3	8	4	3
9,000-9,999 . . . . .	5	3	2	3	2	2	3
10,000-10,999 . . . . .	5	5	2	2	3	3	1
11,000-11,999 . . . . .	4	1	1	1	1	1	1
12,000-12,999 . . . . .	4	5	1	2	2	1	1
13,000-13,999 . . . . .	3	1	1	2	2	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )
14,000-14,999 . . . . .	3	2	1	1	2	( <sup>2</sup> )	1
15,000-19,999 . . . . .	10	9	2	2	3	1	2
20,000 or more . . . . .	9	6	2	3	3	2	2
Median income <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	\$7,730	\$5,910	\$3,870	\$3,900	\$4,200	\$4,180	\$3,720

See footnotes at end of table.

## Race

Blacks are among the most economically unfortunate of the aged as a result of their lifelong patterns of lower educational attainment, lower skilled jobs, and lower salaries. Regardless of age, black units were less likely to be receiving income from pensions other than social security benefits or income from assets (table 4). They had lower median earnings and lower median social security benefits, as the following tabulation shows.

Race and marital status	Median	
	Social security benefit	Earnings
White:		
All units . . . . .	\$2,940	\$3,020
Married couples . . . . .	4,170	4,190
Nonmarried persons . . . . .	2,480	2,170
Black:		
All units . . . . .	2,150	2,380
Married couples . . . . .	3,110	2,950
Nonmarried persons . . . . .	1,860	1,780



**Table 3.—Total money income: Number and percentage distribution of aged units, by age, marital status, and sex, 1976—Continued**

Money income	Units aged—						
	55-61	62-64	65 and older				73 and older
			Total	65-67	68-69	70-72	
	Nonmarried women						
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	2,340	1,166	8,168	1,369	868	1,269	4,662
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than \$1,000 . . . . .	10	6	3	2	2	3	4
1,000-1,999 . . . . .	10	9	13	11	10	9	15
2,000-2,999 . . . . .	15	22	29	24	25	30	31
3,000-3,999 . . . . .	11	13	20	18	21	21	21
4,000-4,999 . . . . .	9	9	10	10	10	10	10
5,000-5,999 . . . . .	7	7	7	8	10	8	6
6,000-6,999 . . . . .	6	6	4	6	5	4	3
7,000-7,999 . . . . .	5	5	3	5	4	3	2
8,000-8,999 . . . . .	4	4	2	3	4	2	2
9,000-9,999 . . . . .	5	2	1	3	2	1	1
10,000-10,999 . . . . .	4	4	1	2	1	1	1
11,000-11,999 . . . . .	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
12,000-12,999 . . . . .	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
13,000-13,999 . . . . .	2	1	1	1	1	1	( <sup>2</sup> )
14,000-14,999 . . . . .	1	1	1	1	1	1	( <sup>2</sup> )
15,000-19,999 . . . . .	4	4	2	2	2	2	1
20,000 or more . . . . .	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
Median income <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	\$4,540	\$3,990	\$3,230	\$3,730	\$3,600	\$3,420	\$2,990

<sup>1</sup>Rounded to nearest \$10.

<sup>2</sup>Less than 0.5 percent.

Accordingly, median total money income for black units was considerably less than that of white units in all age, marital-status, and sex categories (table 5). Black units aged 55-61 had a median income of \$5,210, compared with a median of \$12,930 for whites (a ratio of 0.4). Even though median total money income was considerably lower for both groups at ages 65 and older, a sizable differential—\$2,990 for blacks, compared with \$4,940 for whites (a ratio of 0.6)—continued to exist.

### Relationship Between Size and Sources of Income

The sources of income received by the aged and the contributions from these sources are good indicators of relative income size. Work status and pension receipt are important in determining the level of total money income, as are how many pensions and which types of pensions are received. Among the population aged 65 and older, units with earnings and no pension income had the highest median total money income of \$12,650 (table 6). Those with earnings and more than one pension also had a high median total money income (\$11,480) but this amount was lower than that received by earners without pension income because most of the former were social security beneficiaries, who are affected by the earnings test. Units receiving social security benefits as their only pension had a median income of \$3,660. Those whose only pension was a govern-

ment employee pension had a median income of \$8,970—an amount higher than that received by persons with more than one pension.<sup>10</sup>

For those receiving social security benefits and a second pension, median total money income according to the type of second pension was as follows. As can be seen, the type of second pension received by nonmarried persons made little

Second pension receipt	Median total money income	
	Married couples	Nonmarried persons
Social security and—		
Federal pension . . . . .	\$12,320	\$6,020
Railroad retirement, State/local, or military pension . . . . .	9,860	5,600
Private pension . . . . .	9,510	5,600

difference in the size of their median total money income. A Federal pension gave a considerable advantage to married couples.

Chart 2 illustrates the relationship between the sources of income received by social security beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and the amount of their total income. Median total money incomes are shown for those having the various source combinations.

<sup>10</sup>Federal, State, and local government and military pension plans use various formulas for calculating benefit levels, all based on length of service and level of recent earnings and producing up to 50 percent or more of recent pay with 30 years' service.

**Table 4.—Source of income, by race: Number and percent of aged units with money income from specified sources,<sup>1</sup> by age, marital status, and sex, 1976**

Source of income	Units, by age														
	All units			Married couples			Nonmarried persons								
							Total			Men			Women		
	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older
	White														
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	8,726	3,302	15,572	5,816	1,936	6,285	2,910	1,366	9,287	957	369	1,974	1,952	997	7,313
Percent with—															
Earnings . . . . .	85	68	25	93	81	40	69	50	15	75	60	20	66	46	14
Wages and salaries . . . . .	76	60	19	84	70	30	62	46	11	66	53	12	60	43	11
Self-employment . . . . .	12	10	4	15	15	7	6	4	2	8	6	4	6	3	2
Retirement benefits . . . . .	23	56	93	22	52	94	24	61	93	17	54	93	27	64	93
Social security <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	13	49	89	11	44	90	16	57	89	9	49	88	20	59	89
Other than social security . . . . .	13	23	33	14	27	43	10	17	25	10	18	34	10	17	23
Other public pensions . . . . .	7	10	13	8	12	16	5	8	11	7	9	12	4	8	11
Railroad retirement . . . . .	1	2	3	1	2	4	1	2	3	1	1	4	( <sup>3</sup> )	2	3
Government employment . . . . .	6	9	10	7	10	12	4	6	8	6	7	8	3	6	8
Military . . . . .	3	2	2	4	2	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	1
Federal . . . . .	2	4	4	2	4	5	2	3	3	2	4	4	1	2	3
State/local . . . . .	1	4	5	1	5	6	1	3	4	1	3	3	1	3	4
Private pensions or annuities . . . . .	6	14	21	6	17	30	5	10	15	4	10	23	6	10	13
Income from assets . . . . .	60	64	60	66	71	70	46	53	54	39	52	49	50	53	55
Interest . . . . .	55	59	56	61	67	66	42	49	50	35	47	45	45	50	51
Other income from assets . . . . .	27	28	26	31	33	33	19	21	22	16	24	19	20	20	23
Dividends . . . . .	20	19	18	24	23	23	13	14	14	12	18	13	13	12	14
Rent or royalties . . . . .	10	11	11	11	13	13	8	9	9	5	9	7	9	9	10
Estates or trusts . . . . .	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	( <sup>3</sup> )	2	2	2
Veterans' benefits . . . . .	8	5	6	9	6	6	7	5	6	9	8	7	6	3	5
Unemployment insurance . . . . .	8	6	2	9	8	3	6	4	1	7	6	1	6	3	1
Workers' compensation . . . . .	2	2	1	2	3	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	1
Public assistance . . . . .	4	5	9	2	2	4	9	9	12	6	5	12	10	10	12
Supplemental security income . . . . .	3	4	8	1	1	4	6	8	11	4	4	11	7	9	11
Other public assistance . . . . .	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	4	2	1
Personal contributions . . . . .	1	1	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	2	2	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	3	3	1
	Black														
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	924	420	1,552	357	183	439	567	237	1,113	211	77	337	356	161	776
Percent with—															
Earnings . . . . .	67	61	25	90	77	49	53	48	16	66	( <sup>4</sup> )	22	46	42	13
Wages and salaries . . . . .	65	58	23	86	72	45	51	47	14	65	( <sup>4</sup> )	19	43	41	12
Self-employment . . . . .	5	3	2	8	5	4	3	1	2	4	( <sup>4</sup> )	2	2	( <sup>3</sup> )	1
Retirement benefits . . . . .	23	53	87	22	45	93	24	60	84	22	( <sup>4</sup> )	86	25	64	83
Social security <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	17	49	83	14	39	90	19	57	80	14	( <sup>4</sup> )	80	22	61	80
Other than social security . . . . .	8	13	16	10	16	23	6	11	13	9	( <sup>4</sup> )	21	5	10	9
Other public pensions . . . . .	5	6	10	6	8	13	4	4	9	7	( <sup>4</sup> )	12	2	6	7
Railroad retirement . . . . .	1	2	4	1	3	5	( <sup>3</sup> )	2	3	1	( <sup>4</sup> )	5	( <sup>3</sup> )	3	2
Government employment . . . . .	4	4	7	5	6	9	3	3	6	5	( <sup>4</sup> )	7	2	3	5
Military . . . . .	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	5	( <sup>4</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	1	1
Federal . . . . .	2	2	3	4	3	3	1	1	3	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>4</sup> )	6	1	2	2
State/local . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	3	( <sup>3</sup> )	2	5	1	1	2	1	( <sup>4</sup> )	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	2
Private pensions and annuities . . . . .	3	8	6	4	10	11	3	7	4	2	( <sup>4</sup> )	9	3	4	2
Income from assets . . . . .	16	15	15	23	19	20	11	12	13	8	( <sup>4</sup> )	13	13	12	14
Interest . . . . .	13	12	11	21	18	14	8	8	10	6	( <sup>4</sup> )	11	10	7	10
Other income from assets . . . . .	7	5	7	10	5	10	5	4	5	5	( <sup>4</sup> )	5	5	6	6
Dividends . . . . .	3	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	3	1	1	2	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	3	( <sup>4</sup> )	1	2	( <sup>3</sup> )	3
Rent or royalties . . . . .	4	5	6	6	5	9	3	4	5	2	( <sup>4</sup> )	4	4	6	5
Estates or trusts . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>4</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	3
Veterans' benefits . . . . .	6	5	7	6	3	4	6	6	8	6	( <sup>4</sup> )	8	6	5	8
Unemployment insurance . . . . .	6	5	2	7	8	2	5	3	1	6	( <sup>4</sup> )	3	5	3	1
Workers' compensation . . . . .	3	2	1	4	1	2	3	3	1	5	( <sup>4</sup> )	3	1	1	1
Public assistance . . . . .	19	22	34	5	12	22	27	29	39	12	( <sup>4</sup> )	28	36	35	43
Supplemental security income . . . . .	11	19	29	4	12	21	16	24	32	8	( <sup>4</sup> )	23	21	28	36
Other public assistance . . . . .	9	5	7	3	1	4	13	9	8	5	( <sup>4</sup> )	6	18	11	9
Personal contributions . . . . .	1	1	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	1	2	2	1	1	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>4</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	3	2	1

<sup>1</sup> Income from source ascertained from yes/no question imputed by CPS. A married couple's income considered to be from source if one or both persons' income from that source.

<sup>2</sup> May be receiving various types of OASDI benefit.

<sup>3</sup> Less than 0.5 percent.

<sup>4</sup> Fewer than 100 sample cases—(160,000 weighted).

**Table 5.—Total money income, by race: Number and percentage distribution of aged units, by age, marital status, and sex, 1976**

Source of income	Units, by age														
	All units			Married couples			Nonmarried persons								
							Total			Men			Women		
	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older
	White														
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	8,726	3,302	15,572	5,816	1,936	6,285	2,910	1,366	9,287	957	369	1,974	1,952	997	7,313
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than \$1,000 . . . . .	4	3	2	1	1	1	8	5	3	7	5	2	9	6	3
1,000-1,999 . . . . .	3	4	7	1	1	1	7	8	11	5	6	8	9	9	11
2,000-2,999 . . . . .	4	8	17	1	2	3	11	18	26	9	10	21	13	21	28
3,000-3,999 . . . . .	4	7	15	2	3	7	9	13	20	7	14	18	10	12	21
4,000-4,999 . . . . .	4	5	10	2	3	9	8	7	11	6	4	13	9	8	10
5,000-5,999 . . . . .	4	6	9	3	4	11	7	8	8	5	8	9	8	7	7
6,000-6,999 . . . . .	3	5	7	2	5	10	6	5	5	4	4	7	6	6	4
7,000-7,999 . . . . .	4	5	5	3	4	8	5	6	4	5	6	4	5	6	4
8,000-8,999 . . . . .	4	5	5	3	4	7	5	5	3	5	6	4	5	5	3
9,000-9,999 . . . . .	4	4	3	4	5	6	6	3	2	7	3	3	6	3	1
10,000-10,999 . . . . .	4	6	3	4	6	5	5	5	1	5	5	2	4	4	1
11,000-11,999 . . . . .	3	4	2	4	5	4	3	2	1	3	1	1	3	3	1
12,000-12,999 . . . . .	4	5	2	4	5	4	4	3	1	4	5	2	4	3	1
13,000-13,999 . . . . .	4	2	2	4	3	3	3	1	1	3	2	1	2	1	1
14,000-14,999 . . . . .	3	3	2	4	5	3	2	2	1	3	3	1	1	2	1
15,000-19,999 . . . . .	17	13	5	22	18	9	7	6	2	11	10	2	4	4	2
20,000 or more . . . . .	26	16	5	36	25	10	6	4	1	11	7	2	3	3	1
Median income <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	\$12,930	\$9,640	\$4,940	\$16,830	\$13,160	\$8,150	\$5,900	\$4,830	\$3,500	\$8,630	\$6,580	\$4,090	\$5,100	\$4,320	\$3,370
	Black														
Total number (in thousands) . . . . .	924	420	1,552	357	183	439	567	237	1,113	211	77	337	356	161	776
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Less than \$1,000 . . . . .	8	4	2	4	3	( <sup>2</sup> )	10	5	3	8	( <sup>2</sup> )	3	11	6	3
1,000-1,999 . . . . .	11	6	16	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	2	17	11	21	14	( <sup>2</sup> )	9	19	12	26
2,000-2,999 . . . . .	14	21	32	3	6	8	21	32	42	15	( <sup>2</sup> )	41	25	33	43
3,000-3,999 . . . . .	9	11	18	5	10	21	12	12	17	8	( <sup>2</sup> )	20	15	17	16
4,000-4,999 . . . . .	7	11	7	5	10	13	8	12	5	10	( <sup>2</sup> )	7	7	12	4
5,000-5,999 . . . . .	4	8	8	3	8	16	4	8	5	4	( <sup>2</sup> )	7	5	7	4
6,000-6,999 . . . . .	5	6	4	7	8	8	3	5	2	3	( <sup>2</sup> )	3	4	5	2
7,000-7,999 . . . . .	7	6	3	6	6	9	7	6	1	10	( <sup>2</sup> )	3	5	2	( <sup>2</sup> )
8,000-8,999 . . . . .	3	3	2	5	5	4	2	2	2	2	( <sup>2</sup> )	4	2	3	1
9,000-9,999 . . . . .	3	2	1	7	4	1	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	1	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	1	2	( <sup>2</sup> )	1
10,000-10,999 . . . . .	4	3	1	6	5	1	4	2	7	( <sup>2</sup> )	1	1	1	3	( <sup>2</sup> )
11,000-11,999 . . . . .	4	2	1	6	2	2	3	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	7	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	1	2	( <sup>2</sup> )
12,000-12,999 . . . . .	2	1	1	3	2	3	1	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	2	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )
13,000-13,999 . . . . .	2	1	1	4	2	2	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )
14,000-14,999 . . . . .	2	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	3	3	2	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	2	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )
15,000-19,999 . . . . .	8	8	2	17	15	6	3	2	( <sup>2</sup> )	6	( <sup>2</sup> )	1	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )
20,000 or more . . . . .	7	5	1	16	10	3	1	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	2	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )	1	( <sup>2</sup> )	( <sup>2</sup> )
Median income <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	\$5,210	\$4,700	\$2,990	\$10,030	\$7,700	\$5,460	\$3,160	\$3,200	\$2,610	\$4,580	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$2,930	\$2,790	\$2,960	\$2,480

<sup>1</sup>Rounded to nearest \$10.

<sup>2</sup>Less than 0.5 percent.

<sup>3</sup>Fewer than 100 sample (160,000 weighted) cases.

Aged units without social security benefits made up a small minority of the population aged 65 and older. These nonbeneficiaries were a mixture of dissimilar types of individuals—those working full-time who had not yet retired, persons who had retired under another pension system, and those who had not earned a retirement pension. Almost twice as many nonbeneficiaries were not married as were married. Nonmarried nonbeneficiaries with earnings and/or pensions had median incomes substantially above the poverty line of \$2,730 for an aged person living alone, but a sizable number had incomes below it, as the following tabulation shows. Those with or without earnings who

Pension and earnings receipt	Percent below poverty line	
	Married couples	Nonmarried persons
Beneficiaries with—		
Pension and earnings . . . . .	1	( <sup>1</sup> )
Pension only . . . . .	1	5
Earnings only . . . . .	7	16
No pension or earnings . . . . .	19	47
Nonbeneficiaries with—		
Pension, with or without earnings <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	3	17
Earnings only . . . . .	5	24
No pension or earnings . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	83

<sup>1</sup>Less than 0.5 percent.

<sup>2</sup>Not shown separately, base too small to compute.

<sup>3</sup>Not computed; base too small.

**Table 6.—Pension receipt: Number, median total money income, and percent below poverty line<sup>1</sup> of units aged 65 and over, by response to whether income from earnings or assets and marital status, 1976<sup>2</sup>**

Pension receipt	All units					Married couples					Nonmarried persons				
	Total	Earnings		Income from assets		Total	Earnings		Income from assets		Total	Earnings		Income from assets	
		Yes	No	Yes	No		Yes	No	Yes	No		Yes	No	Yes	No
Number (in thousands)															
Total .....	17,321	4,402	12,919	9,684	7,637	6,799	2,171	4,028	4,511	2,282	10,522	1,631	8,891	5,167	5,355
No benefit .....	1,333	648	685	489	844	446	374	71	263	182	888	274	614	226	662
One benefit .....	11,237	2,743	8,494	5,666	5,571	3,728	1,616	2,122	2,183	1,545	7,509	1,127	6,382	3,482	4,026
Social security only <sup>3</sup> .....	10,631	2,616	8,015	5,267	5,363	3,517	1,533	1,984	2,032	1,485	7,114	1,083	6,031	3,235	3,879
Private pensions or annuities only .....	110	58	52	93	17	42	34	7	39	2	68	24	44	53	15
Government employee pension only <sup>4</sup> .....	255	47	208	197	58	85	33	52	70	15	169	14	155	126	43
Railroad retirement only .....	242	22	220	109	133	84	15	69	41	43	158	7	151	68	90
More than one benefit <sup>5</sup> .....	4,751	1,011	3,740	3,529	1,222	2,626	781	1,844	2,070	555	2,125	230	1,896	1,459	666
Social security and Federal pension .....	388	62	326	258	129	185	41	144	147	37	203	21	182	111	92
Social security and railroad retirement, State, local, or military pensions .....	1,046	228	818	723	323	512	163	349	377	135	534	66	469	346	189
Social security and private pensions or annuities .....	3,240	706	2,533	2,478	762	1,881	564	1,318	1,503	379	1,358	142	1,216	975	383
Median total money income															
Total .....	\$4,700	\$8,560	\$3,860	\$6,660	\$3,150	\$7,890	\$10,730	\$6,570	\$9,800	\$5,390	\$3,370	\$5,450	\$3,130	\$4,650	\$2,680
No benefit .....	3,180	12,650	1,780	13,680	2,100	15,070	17,150	( <sup>6</sup> )	19,200	6,800	2,130	6,790	1,700	6,480	1,770
One benefit .....	3,740	6,710	3,290	5,140	2,940	6,120	8,620	5,150	7,700	4,790	3,010	4,860	2,870	3,880	2,620
Social security only <sup>3</sup> .....	3,660	6,550	3,210	4,960	2,910	5,970	8,320	5,040	7,410	4,740	2,960	4,770	2,820	3,770	2,600
Private pensions or annuities only .....	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )
Government employee pension only <sup>4</sup> .....	8,970	( <sup>6</sup> )	7,910	10,650	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	6,750	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )
Railroad retirement only .....	4,830	( <sup>6</sup> )	4,640	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )
More than one benefit <sup>5</sup> .....	7,800	11,480	7,060	8,830	5,440	9,820	12,470	8,820	10,860	7,160	5,680	7,980	5,430	6,540	4,240
Social security and Federal pension .....	8,360	( <sup>6</sup> )	8,020	10,660	( <sup>6</sup> )	12,320	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	6,020	( <sup>6</sup> )	5,650	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )
Social security and railroad retirement, State, local, or military pensions .....	7,210	11,880	6,510	8,430	4,710	9,860	13,560	8,170	11,390	( <sup>6</sup> )	5,600	( <sup>6</sup> )	5,240	6,850	3,880
Social security and private pensions or annuities .....	7,840	11,100	7,120	8,740	5,580	9,510	11,770	8,620	10,440	7,110	5,600	( <sup>6</sup> )	5,390	6,320	4,280
Percent below poverty line															
Total .....	25	8	31	10	44	9	5	11	3	20	36	15	40	16	55
No benefit .....	49	13	83	13	69	16	5	( <sup>6</sup> )	1	38	65	24	83	27	78
One benefit .....	32	10	39	15	49	13	7	18	5	24	41	15	46	21	58
Social security only <sup>3</sup> .....	33	11	40	16	50	14	7	19	6	24	43	16	47	22	60
Private pensions or annuities only .....	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )
Government employee pension only <sup>4</sup> .....	10	( <sup>6</sup> )	13	5	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	14	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )
Railroad retirement only .....	12	( <sup>6</sup> )	13	( <sup>6</sup> )	16	2	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	18	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )
More than one benefit <sup>5</sup> .....	3	1	3	1	6	1	1	1	( <sup>6</sup> )	3	5	( <sup>6</sup> )	5	3	9
Social security and Federal pension .....	2	( <sup>6</sup> )	2	2	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )	3	( <sup>6</sup> )	4	( <sup>6</sup> )	( <sup>6</sup> )
Social security and railroad retirement, State, local, or military pensions .....	6	1	7	3	12	2	1	3	1	( <sup>6</sup> )	9	( <sup>6</sup> )	10	5	17
Social security and private pensions or annuities .....	2	1	2	1	5	1	1	1	( <sup>6</sup> )	2	3	( <sup>6</sup> )	3	2	7

<sup>1</sup>The money income of aged married couples and nonmarried persons is compared with the official poverty income lines for an aged couple or nonmarried persons living alone, whether or not they do so in fact. In 1976 the poverty line was \$3,445 for two persons aged 65 and older, \$2,730 for one person aged 65 and older, \$3,826 and \$2,959 for two and one person units under age 65, respectively.

<sup>2</sup>Income from source ascertained from yes/no question imputed by CPS. A married couple's income considered to be from source if one or both persons' income

from that source.

<sup>3</sup>May be receiving various types of OASDI benefit.

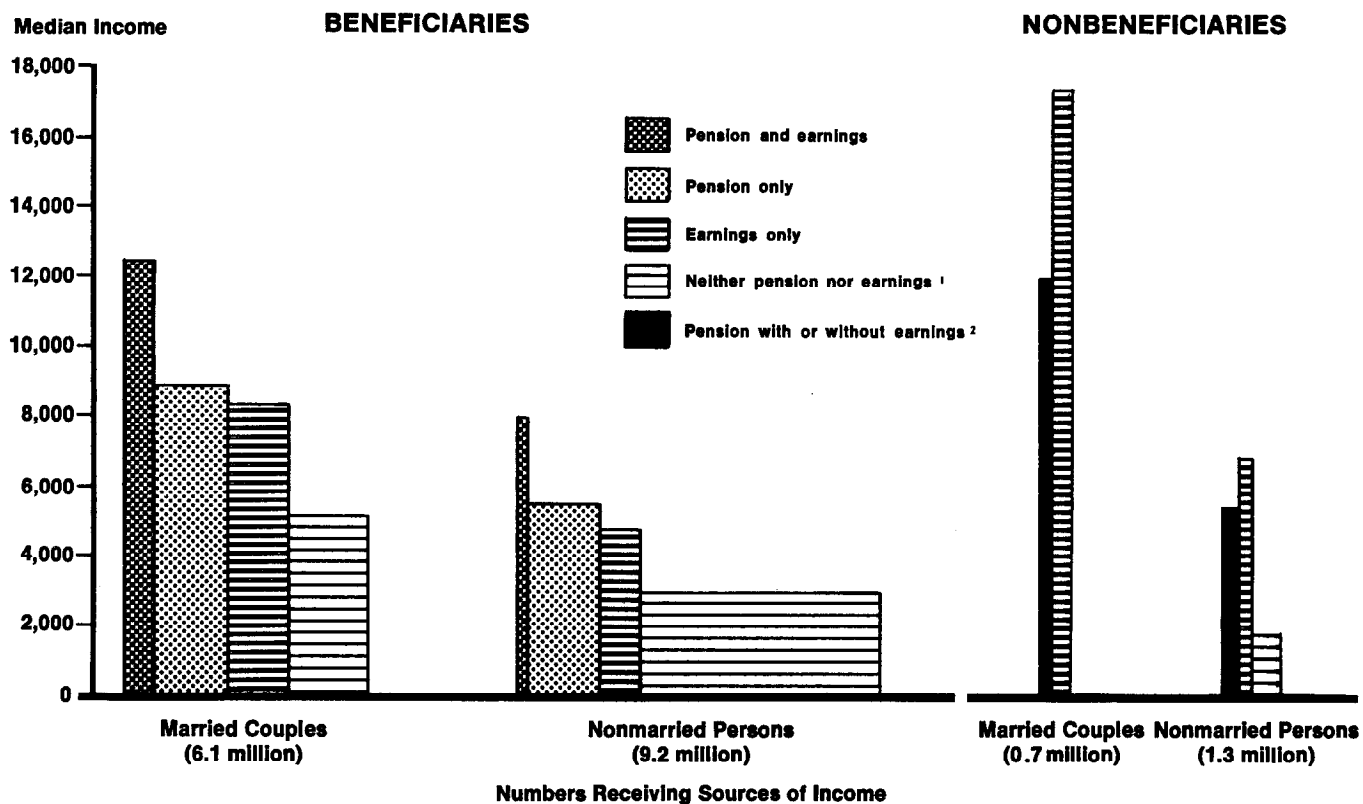
<sup>4</sup>Includes Federal, State, local, and military pensions.

<sup>5</sup>Includes a small number with combinations of pensions not listed below.

<sup>6</sup>Fewer than 100 sample cases—(160,000 weighted).

<sup>7</sup>Less than 0.5 percent.

Chart 2.—Median income of units aged 65 and older, by source of income, 1976



<sup>1</sup>Not computed for married nonbeneficiaries; base too small.

<sup>2</sup>Not computed separately for nonbeneficiaries with pensions and earnings or pension only; base too small.

were receiving a pension had a median total money income of \$5,300; 17 percent had incomes below the poverty line, as indicated in the tabulation on page 26. Those with earnings and no pension had a median total money income of \$6,790; 24 percent had incomes below the poverty line. Almost half the nonmarried nonbeneficiaries had neither a pension nor earnings. Of these, 83 percent had incomes below the poverty line. Married nonbeneficiaries were, for the most part, fairly well-off both in terms of high median total money incomes and low proportions with incomes below the poverty line.

The great majority of those aged 65 and older were receiving social security benefits. Nonmarried persons with neither earnings nor a second pension were by far the most numerous subgroup of beneficiaries. They also had the lowest median income among beneficiaries, and 47 percent had incomes below the poverty line. Social security benefits and a second pension and social security benefits plus earnings were about equally advantageous in terms of median total money income, but those with the latter combination included a much higher proportion of units with incomes below the poverty line. The smallest beneficiary group—those with social security benefits, a second pension, and earnings—had the highest median total money income and included few units with incomes below the poverty line.

Another component of retirement income for the aged is income from assets. This source provided income to approximately half the older population, regardless of age, but many units received only small amounts and the proportion of total income it represented was low. The median amount of asset income for those aged 65 and older was \$870; for three-fifths of the units in this group, asset income amounted to less than one-fifth of total income. The difference in median total income for those with and without asset income, however, was greater than might have been expected on the basis of the median amount received from this source. Median total money income of recipients of asset income was \$6,660, compared with \$3,150 for nonrecipients. One piece of evidence that recipients of asset income are advantaged in other ways is that 36 percent of those aged 65 and older with asset income had more than one pension, compared with only 16 percent of the nonrecipients of asset income.

At the other extreme are persons who receive little more than their social security benefit, which was not intended, by itself, to provide an adequate retirement income. About 20 percent of the beneficiaries aged 55–64 and almost 30 percent of those aged 65 and older received almost all (90 percent or more) of their income from social security benefits (tables 7 and 8). Twenty-one percent of the married

**Table 7.—Percent of income from source, by marital status: Number and percentage distribution of aged units with income from specified sources, 1976**

Percent of income <sup>1</sup>	Units, by age											
	Married couples						Nonmarried persons					
	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older
	Retirement pensions <sup>2</sup>			Private pensions or annuities			Retirement pensions <sup>2</sup>			Private pensions or annuities		
Total number (in thousands) ...	1,365	1,104	6,333	371	348	1,881	845	986	9,632	174	145	1,394
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1-19 .....	30	24	7	54	42	44	11	8	3	32	( <sup>3</sup> )	36
20-39 .....	27	23	12	20	35	39	13	13	8	23	( <sup>3</sup> )	39
40-59 .....	14	14	17	13	17	14	16	18	16	13	( <sup>3</sup> )	18
60-79 .....	11	10	20	7	3	2	17	16	18	14	( <sup>3</sup> )	5
80 or more .....	18	29	44	6	4	( <sup>4</sup> )	43	44	56	18	( <sup>3</sup> )	2
50 or more .....	35	45	72	20	15	6	67	68	83	37	( <sup>3</sup> )	1
90 or more .....	15	21	33	3	2	( <sup>4</sup> )	36	36	45	11	( <sup>3</sup> )	1
	Social security <sup>5</sup>			Earnings			Social security <sup>5</sup>			Earnings		
Total number (in thousands) ...	720	908	5,962	5,708	1,701	2,700	588	902	9,056	2,311	799	1,595
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1-19 .....	35	33	12	2	7	23	9	11	4	5	12	26
20-39 .....	25	28	20	3	6	22	13	19	12	4	8	22
40-59 .....	15	18	24	5	10	19	19	22	22	6	13	21
60-79 .....	10	10	21	10	14	17	20	14	19	9	10	10
80 or more .....	14	12	23	80	62	19	39	33	43	77	57	20
50 or more .....	31	30	56	93	82	46	68	56	73	89	75	39
90 or more .....	10	9	18	69	50	13	32	28	34	68	47	15
	Government employee pension <sup>6</sup>			Public assistance			Government employee pension <sup>6</sup>			Public assistance		
Total number (in thousands) ...	425	204	758	117	65	396	140	86	775	411	192	1,536
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1-19 .....	21	26	21	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	36	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	12	10	18	21
20-39 .....	37	23	30	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	28	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	26	14	23	27
40-59 .....	15	19	21	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	16	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	27	8	19	24
60-79 .....	13	15	17	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	6	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	18	5	6	4
80 or more .....	13	17	10	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	14	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	16	62	34	24
50 or more .....	33	38	39	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	25	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	49	72	52	34
90 or more .....	10	8	4	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	13	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	10	59	32	24

<sup>1</sup>Units with zero or negative amounts of total income excluded from all distributions. Units with negative amount from earnings or income from assets or with both social security and railroad retirement, or with both government employee pension and private pension or annuity excluded from respective distributions.  
<sup>2</sup>Includes social security benefits, railroad retirement, government employee

pensions, and private pensions or annuities.  
<sup>3</sup>Fewer than 100 sample cases—(160,000 weighted).  
<sup>4</sup>Less than 0.5 percent.  
<sup>5</sup>May be receiving various types of OASDI benefit.  
<sup>6</sup>Includes Federal, State, local, and military pensions.

couples and 44 percent of the nonmarried persons aged 65 and older who were social security beneficiaries and/or public assistance recipients relied on these sources combined for almost all of their income.

### The Future

These data provide baseline information on the income of aged persons. One issue of future interest resulting from women's increasing labor-force participation is the level of their retirement incomes. Another is the future of early retirement, given the current difficulties encountered by both private and public plans in financing adequate pensions.

Several pieces of legislation in the past several years have

directly affected the economic status of the aged. In the 1972 amendments to the Social Security Act, benefits were protected from the effects of inflation by automatic cost-of-living increases tied to the consumer price index. This provision was revised in the 1977 amendments so that cost-of-living increases will be wage indexed for those already on the benefit rolls to maintain approximately the same replacement rate as that of persons retiring in 1976. The Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 placed more controls on private pension systems to ensure the pension rights being earned under these plans. In 1978 the Age Discrimination in Employment Act raised the mandatory-retirement age to 70. These provisions need to be studied to determine their effects on the economic situation of persons in their retirement years.

**Table 8.**—Percent of income from source for nonmarried persons: Number and percentage distribution of aged units with income from specified sources, by sex, 1976

Percent of income <sup>1</sup>	Units, by age											
	Nonmarried											
	Men						Women					
	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older	55-61	62-64	65 and older
	Retirement pensions <sup>2</sup>			Private pensions or annuities			Retirement pensions <sup>2</sup>			Private pensions or annuities		
Total number (in thousands) . . .	210	238	2,155	39	46	486	635	748	7,477	135	99	908
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1-19 . . . . .	10	14	3	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	26	11	7	3	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	42
20-39 . . . . .	10	12	7	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	46	14	14	8	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	35
40-59 . . . . .	12	12	17	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	23	17	20	16	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	15
60-79 . . . . .	12	17	17	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	5	19	16	18	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	5
80 or more . . . . .	55	45	55	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>4</sup> )	39	44	56	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	3
50 or more . . . . .	70	66	83	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	15	66	68	83	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	13
90 or more . . . . .	49	36	46	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>4</sup> )	32	36	45	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	2
	Social security <sup>5</sup>			Earnings			Social security <sup>5</sup>			Earnings		
Total number (in thousands) . . .	114	216	2,004	867	267	468	475	686	7,052	1,444	532	1,127
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1-19 . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	17	7	2	9	26	10	9	4	6	13	26
20-39 . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	21	12	2	10	23	15	18	12	5	7	22
40-59 . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	20	27	5	6	17	19	23	21	7	17	23
60-79 . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	9	19	7	8	10	20	16	19	9	12	10
80 or more . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	32	35	84	66	24	36	34	45	73	52	19
50 or more . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	49	70	93	80	41	65	59	74	86	73	38
90 or more . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	29	28	76	57	18	29	28	36	64	42	14
	Government employee pension <sup>6</sup>			Public assistance			Government employee pension <sup>6</sup>			Public assistance		
Total number (in thousands) . . .	67	26	183	86	32	342	73	60	592	325	160	1,194
Total percent . . . . .	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1-19 . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	9	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	22	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	13	9	15	21
20-39 . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	23	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	33	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	27	15	26	26
40-59 . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	20	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	23	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	29	10	17	24
60-79 . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	21	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	3	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	18	6	6	4
80 or more . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	28	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	20	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	13	61	37	26
50 or more . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	62	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	29	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	45	71	52	35
90 or more . . . . .	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	13	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	19	( <sup>3</sup> )	( <sup>3</sup> )	9	58	34	25

<sup>1</sup>See footnotes to table 7.

### Technical Note

This note describes the source of data for the present series, compares it with the data sources for three previous surveys of the aged conducted by the Social Security Administration, and discusses the reliability of the estimates.

#### Source of Data

The data base for this series is the March Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the Bureau of the Census.<sup>11</sup> The CPS samples a large cross-section of households in the United States each year (65,000 in March 1977). The March supplement gathers detailed information on income and labor-force participation for each person in the sample households aged 14 or older. For this study, a

subsample of those persons aged 55 and older was created and arranged into aged units. A separate data record was prepared for each married couple living together, at least one member of which was aged 55 or older, and for each nonmarried person that old.

The Social Security Administration conducted national studies on the income of aged persons in 1963, 1968, and 1972. In 1963 and 1968, the Social Security Administration administered its own questionnaires and added benefit-record data for the survey respondents to the information thus obtained. The 1963 sample consisted of half the March CPS sample and the full Quarterly Household Survey sample, which represented the civilian population aged 62 and older living in the United States. The 1968 study used the 1967 and 1968 panels of the Current Medicare Survey sample, which includes all Medicare enrollees aged 65 and over. For the 1972 study, data from the March CPS for the population aged 60 and older was matched

<sup>11</sup>For a detailed description of the basic CPS sample design, see the Bureau of the Census, *op. cit.*

with benefit-record data. This new series is based on CPS data alone.

The transition from the use of surveys conducted by the Social Security Administration plus benefit-record information to exclusive reliance on the CPS resulted from changes in the CPS and in the kind of information needed on the income of the aged. Before 1963, not much research on the income of the aged had been conducted. The Social Security Administration broke new ground by collecting a wide range of information specifically on the aged. Currently, the basic parameters of the economic situation of the aged are well known and a need exists for up-to-date time-series data to monitor changes over a period of time. The CPS is an ongoing survey available for public use approximately 1 year after the date of data collection. In addition to its timeliness, the CPS has become more useful for studies of the aged because its income section has been expanded to include more detail on the receipt of retirement income and the amounts obtained from specific sources.

The advantages of adding benefit-record data have been twofold. This procedure provided a check on the accuracy of survey information on the receipt of social security benefits and the size of the benefits. It also expanded available information in such program-related areas as whether a person is receiving reduced benefits, whether a married woman is dually entitled because her benefit is low compared with that of her husband, and who is receiving the minimum benefit. A long delay was incurred, however, in matching record and survey data. For this reason the matching procedure has been dropped.

Although the CPS has periodically changed its sampling design and questionnaire as improvements in survey and computer technology have occurred and needs for data have changed, it is basically a consistent source of data for time-series analyses. Because of expediency as well as data needs, the three previous surveys of the aged were conceived separately. The result has been differences in the populations sampled, the sampling technique used (area probability sampling versus random sampling from a population list), whether or not record data were added, the match rate obtained, and the definition and measurement of some key variables. Disparities such as these make the surveys less useful as data points in a time series. Researchers should infer changes from 1963 to 1977 with caution.

## Reliability of the Estimates

Because the data in this article are based on a sample of the older population, all reported statistics—counts, percentages, and medians—are only estimates of population parameters and may deviate somewhat from their true values—that is, from the values that would have been obtained from a complete census employing the same schedules, instructions, and enumerators.<sup>12</sup> Particular care

<sup>12</sup>Most of the discussion of estimation procedures has been excerpted from Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports* (Series P-60, No. 114), July 1978.

should be exercised in the interpretation of figures based on relatively small numbers of cases as well as on small differences between figures. As in any survey work, the results are subject to errors of response and nonreporting and to sampling variability.

The standard error is primarily a measure of sampling variability—that is, of the variation that occurs by chance because a sample of the population rather than the entire population is surveyed. As calculated for this article, the standard error also partly measures the effect of response and enumeration errors but does not measure systematic biases in the data. The chances are about 68 out of 100 that an estimate from the sample will differ by less than one standard error from the results given by a complete census. The chances are about 95 out of 100 that the difference will be less than twice the standard error.

The figures presented in table I are approximations of the standard errors of estimated percentages of households. They provide an indication of the order of magnitude of the standard errors rather than the precise standard error for any specific item.

**Standard error of estimated percentages.** The reliability of an estimated percentage, computed by using sample data for both numerator and denominator, depends on both the size of the percentage and the size of the total on which the percentage is based. Use of table I in calculating the standard error of a single percentage is illustrated as follows:

An estimated 8 percent of the units aged 65 and older had total money incomes of \$15,000 or more in 1976 (table 3). Because the base of this percentage is approximately 17,321,000—the number of units aged 65 and older—interpolation in table I shows that the standard error of the estimated 8 percent is approximately 0.2 percent. The chances are about 68 out of 100 that the estimate would have shown a figure differing from a complete census by less than 0.2 percent. The chances are about 95 out of 100 that the estimate would have shown a figure differing from a complete census by less than 0.4 percent. This 95-percent confidence interval therefore would range from 7.6 percent to 8.4 percent.

For a difference between two sample estimates, the standard error is approximately equal to the square root of the sum of the squares of the standard errors of each estimate considered separately. This formula will represent the actual standard error accurately for the difference between

**Table I.**—Approximate standard errors of estimated percentages of households, 1967-77

[68 chances out of 100]

Size of base (in thousands)	Estimated percentage				
	2 or 98	5 or 95	10 or 90	25 or 75	50
100	1.4	2.2	3.1	4.5	5.2
250	.9	1.4	2.0	2.8	3.3
500	.6	1.0	1.4	2.0	2.3
1,000	.5	.7	1.0	1.4	1.6
2,500	.3	.4	.6	.9	1.0
5,000	.2	.3	.4	.6	.7
10,000	.14	.2	.3	.4	.5
25,000	.09	.14	.2	.3	.3
40,000	.07	.11	.2	.2	.3
60,000	.06	.09	.13	.2	.2
80,000	.05	.08	.11	.2	.2



two estimates of the same characteristics in two different areas or for the difference between separate and uncorrelated characteristics in the same area. If, however, a high positive correlation exists between the two characteristics, the formula will overestimate the true standard error.

A comparison of the difference in the proportion of units aged 62-64 and 65 and older who had total money incomes of \$15,000 or more in 1976 illustrates how to calculate the standard error of a difference between two percentages:

Eight percent of the 17,321,000 units aged 65 and older and 28 percent of the 3,751,000 units aged 62-64 had total money incomes of \$15,000 or more in 1976—a difference of 20 percentage points. The standard errors of these percentages are 0.2 and 0.8, respectively. The standard error of the estimated difference of 20 percentage points is about

$$0.8 = \sqrt{(0.2)^2 + (0.8)^2}$$

The chances are about 68 out of 100 that the difference is between 19.2 and 20.8 percentage points and about 95 out of 100 of being between 18.4 and 21.6 percentage points. Since the confidence interval around the difference does not include zero, a statistically significant difference exists between the proportions who are aged 62-64 and 65 and older with incomes of \$15,000 or more.

**Confidence limits of medians.** The sampling variability of an estimated median depends on the distribution as well as on the size of the base. Confidence limits of a median based on sample data may be estimated as follows: (1) The standard error of a 50-percent characteristic is determined by means of the appropriate base in table I, (2) the standard error determined in step 1 is added to and subtracted from 50 percent, and (3) the confidence interval for the median corresponding to the two points estimated in step 2 is then read off the distribution of the characteristic. A two-standard-error confidence limit may be determined by finding the values corresponding to 50 percent plus and minus twice the standard error shown in table I. This procedure may be illustrated as follows:

The median total money income of the estimated 17,321,000 units aged 65 and older in 1976 was \$4,700 (table 3). Table I shows that the standard error of 50 percent of these units expressed as a percentage is about 0.4 percent. As interest usually centers on the confidence interval for the median at the two-standard-error level, it is necessary to add and subtract twice the standard error obtained in step 1 from 50 percent. This procedure yields limits, rounded to the nearest percentage, of 49 and 51 percent. Forty-nine percent of the units aged 65 and over had total money incomes of less than \$4,600, and 51 percent had total money incomes of less than \$4,800. Thus, the chances are about 95 out of 100 that a census would have shown the median to be more than \$4,600 but less than \$4,800.

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## Program Operations

Continued from page 2

recipients than families in the basic program.

Despite a 3.8-percent drop in the number of recipients since January 1978, payments declined only 0.1 percent (\$578,000). The average payment was \$3.73 lower per family a year earlier and \$3.27 lower per recipient.

**Emergency assistance.** The emergency assistance program, which provides temporary help for critical needs to AFDC families and other needy families with children, aided 37,283 families in January 1979—17 percent more than in December. Payments rose 3 percent to \$6.3 million. The average payment per family was \$169.04 (it was \$191.49 in December). About two-thirds of the families assisted were AFDC families.

Thirteen of the 23 States that furnish such assistance, reported aiding more families. Connecticut had the largest rise, with 3,510 families receiving help; 386 families were

aided in December. The severe winter and the subsequent need for fuel subsidies accounted for the emergency assistance rises in Ohio and Connecticut.

In January 1978, emergency assistance had aided about 5,000 (13 percent) fewer families, and the cost was about \$1.1 million (18 percent) lower.

**General assistance.** The State and locally financed general assistance programs aided 776,674 persons in January—down 1.9 percent from December but 6.8 percent below the January 1978 figure. Twenty-six of the 42 States reporting had added 14,400 recipients to the rolls since December. The largest rises were in seven States, which each added more than 1,000 recipients. January payments totaled \$100.9 million, up 3 percent from the previous month but 1.6 percent below the January 1978 total.