

A Study of Supplemental Security Income Awardees

by Charles G. Scott*

Since its enactment in 1974, the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program has had a stable caseload of about 4 million recipients. Hidden by this unchanging total is the fact that nearly 9 million persons were served by the program from 1974 to 1986. This study explores some SSI program dynamics by following a group of SSI awardees for a period of 4 years from the initial receipt of award in 1981. Many of these awardees had previous contact with the program either through a previous award or a denial. About 60 percent of the awardees were eligible at the end of the 4-year period. Most persons who became ineligible did so within the first 6 months after the award.

*Division of Program Management and Analysis, Office of Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Administration.

The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is a cash assistance program designed to ensure a minimum level of income to aged, blind, and disabled individuals whose income and resources are below specified amounts. Beginning in January 1974, SSI replaced the previous Federal-State adult assistance matching grant programs—Old-Age Assistance, Aid to the Blind, and Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled. Under the new SSI program, children could be found eligible on the basis of blindness or disability.

The current SSI caseload consists of recipients transferred from the previous State adult assistance programs in addition to new recipients awarded payments under the SSI program that began in 1974. In December 1986, there were 4,269,184 SSI recipients. The year-end caseloads for December 1974-December 1986 are shown in the tabulation that follows:

December	Caseload
1974	3,996,064
1975	4,314,275
1976	4,235,939
1977	4,237,692
1978	4,216,925
1979	4,149,575
1980	4,142,017
1981	4,018,875
1982	3,857,590
1983	3,901,497
1984	4,029,333
1985	4,138,021
1986	4,269,184

These point-in-time caseload figures show a very small overall increase (less than 7 percent) since the end of the first year. These data portray SSI as a static social program and imply that a fixed group of individuals have been served since the establishment of the program. However, of the 4,269,184 recipients in December 1986, only 24 percent were transferred from the previous State programs. In this 13-year period, more than 6.9 million awards have been made in addition to the 3.2 million persons who were transferred from the former Federal-State assistance programs.

Even if it is assumed that some individuals have more than one award, it is evident that the program has served many millions more than the caseload data show. The following tabulation shows the number of awardees reported by the Social Security Administration (SSA), by year:

Year	Awardees
Total ¹	6,927,214
1974	890,768
1975	702,147
1976	542,355
1977	557,570
1978	532,447
1979	483,993
1980	496,137
1981 ¹	369,051
1982 ¹	306,069
1983	419,648
1984	554,251
1985 ¹	505,748
1986	567,030

¹Partly estimated; data were not available for some months.

This study was initiated to analyze some of the program dynamics resulting from the influx of new recipients. It follows the experience of a group of SSI awardees from before their awards through a 4-year postaward period.

Methodology

The study is based on a sample of 761 SSI awardees selected from the SSI 1-Percent Sample files for the period October-December 1981. The sample cases represent an estimated 76,100 awards during that 3-month period (see the Technical Note on page 12 for a discussion of the sample). Demographic and program data were extracted for these awardees from the following administrative data sources:

- SSI 1-Percent Sample: This file contains selected point-in-time information for current recipients, and is produced monthly from the Supplemental Security Record (SSR), the primary administrative file for the SSI program;
- SSR record displays: Where SSR data not contained in the SSI 1-Percent Sample file

were needed, hard copy displays of the SSR were obtained; and

- SSI recipient folders: Because some information collected by SSA is not needed for payment purposes, it is not placed on the SSR. The information on each recipient is contained in folders maintained by the agency. These folders were used for the study cases.

Preaward SSI Program Experience

Of the 76,100 payments awarded in October-December 1981, 22,800 were awarded on the basis of age and 53,300 were awarded on the basis of disability. In this study, an awardee was a person who received his/her first payment after filing an application. Although this process can often be straightforward, the road to an SSI award may have programmatic detours.

Program Experience Before Filing Application

Many of the awardees had applied for SSI payments before the application that resulted in their award. Of the 76,100 awardees in the study, 43 percent had previously applied for SSI payments and 17 percent had previously received an award. Further analysis shows that about 41 percent of the aged and 44 percent of the disabled had applied for SSI payments previously and 19 percent of the aged and 16 percent of the disabled had received awards (table 1).

The overall percentage of persons previously awarded SSI payments (17.3 percent) has some implications for SSA's awards

Table 1.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and previous program experience

Applicant status	Aged		Disabled ¹	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awards.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
No previous application.....	13,300	58.3	29,800	55.9
Previous application but no payment.....	5,100	22.4	14,700	27.6
Previous application and award ²	4,400	19.3	8,800	16.5

¹ Because of small sample size, blind recipients are included in the disabled group.

² An applicant found ineligible (denied), who later meets the eligibility criteria, normally must reapply

in order to receive SSI payments. A person who has received SSI payments and is no longer eligible generally must reapply if the period of ineligibility exceeds 12 months.

statistics. The SSA records show that in 1974-86, 6.9 million persons were awarded SSI payments. Because some persons had more than one award, the actual number of different individuals served in the first 13 years of the program is probably closer to 5.7 million persons.¹ When these 5.7 million persons were added to the 3.2 million persons transferred from the former State assistance programs, a total of 8.9 million persons would have been served by the program from January 1974 through December 1986.

Period Between Application and Award

Typically an award is made within weeks after the application is filed. However, some awards result from reversals—through the appeals process—of previously denied applications. About 4 percent of the 22,800 awards to the aged and 24 percent of the 53,300 awards to the disabled were the results of appeal reversals (table 1). Because the appeals process can be lengthy and eligibility is protected from the date

¹The 5.7 million total may be an upper limit figure because a few recipients had more than two awards.

of the application, these awardees received retroactive payments for back months of eligibility. For awardees whose applications had not been denied, the retroactive period consisted of the time required to process the application. The average period of retroactivity was only 1.2 months for aged awardees and 4.0 months for disabled awardees who had no appeals. The averages were much higher among awardees who had gone through the appeals process (table 2).

Demographic and Program Characteristics at Time of Award

Sex

Nearly three-fourths of the aged awardees were women, as were only one-half of the disabled awardees (table 3). One reason for this is that women are somewhat less likely than men to have been employed a sufficient length of time to qualify for Social Security at a benefit level in excess of SSI. A second reason is that women have a longer life expectancy than men and thus many more of them live beyond age 65.

Table 2.—Number of SSI awardees and average months of retroactive payments, by program category

Awardees	Aged	Disabled
Total number.....	22,800	53,300
Months of retroactive payments for—		
All awardees.....	1.2	4.0
With appeal reversals.....	5.0	9.3
Without appeal reversals.....	1.1	2.4

Age

Although many of the aged recipients were awarded SSI payments on or near attaining age 65—the first year they qualified as aged—a large percentage of these individuals came onto the program rolls after age 69. Study data did not indicate the change in their situation that caused them to apply after age 69.

The age groups for the disabled show a bimodal pattern. The two largest age groups among awardees were those aged 18-29 and 50-64 (table 4). One reason for this pattern is the nature of the disabilities among these applicants, a subject that is discussed later. A possible reason for the increase in the number of disabled recipients after age 18 is the requirement that income and resources of parents be "deemed"² to their children under age 18 when the children live in the same household as their parents.

Household

Information was gathered on the type of dwelling in which the awardee resides, the number of

²Deeming refers to the concept whereby the income and resources of person(s) responsible for the welfare of an eligible individual are considered in determining the eligibility and payment amount for an SSI recipient.

individuals living with the awardee, and the relationship of these persons to the awardee.³ The great majority of both the aged and the disabled awardees were living independently—that is, they were not in an institution (nor in any type of group arrangement (table 5)). Nearly one-half of the aged and more than one-half of the disabled lived in a house. A substantial percentage of the aged (34.2 percent) and disabled (24.8 percent) lived in an apartment. Smaller percentages of the awardees lived in rooms or mobile homes. Ten

³Information on household situations was obtained from recipient folders. About 75 percent of these folders were available. Results shown here are based on information in the available folders. Counts in the tables have been inflated to match the study totals.

percent of the aged and 12 percent of the disabled lived in some type of institution.

Of those awardees living independently, the aged awardees lived with fewer persons than did the disabled. Among the aged awardees, 44.8 percent lived alone; of the disabled group only 18.6 percent lived alone (table 6). Only 7.4 percent of the aged lived with four persons or more, and 20.3 percent of the disabled lived with four persons or more.

A total of 21,500 persons were living in households with aged awardees and 102,200 persons were in households with disabled awardees (table 7). About one-fourth of the persons living with either the aged or disabled awardees were children—including sons and

Table 3.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and sex

Awardees	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Female.....	16,700	73.2	26,700	50.1
Male.....	6,100	26.8	26,600	49.9

Table 4.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and age group

Age group	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Under age 18.....	...	...	7,100	13.3
18-29.....	...	...	12,500	23.4
30-39.....	...	...	5,700	10.7
40-49.....	...	...	7,300	13.7
50-64.....	...	...	20,700	38.8
65.....	6,500	28.5	...	...
66-69.....	6,200	27.2	...	...
70-79.....	6,600	28.9	...	...
80 or older.....	3,500	15.4	...	...

Table 5.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by payment standard and program category

Payment standard	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees ¹	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Independent living:				
House.....	10,500	46.0	28,000	52.5
Apartment.....	7,800	34.2	13,200	24.8
Mobile home or room.....	2,400	10.5	5,800	10.9
Institutionalized.....	2,100	9.3	6,300	11.8

¹Only 75 percent of the recipients' folders were available. Percentages shown here are for these awardees and counts have been inflated to match study totals.

Table 6.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and number of persons in household

Payment standard	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Not independent.....	2,100	9.2	6,300	11.8
Independent.....	20,700	90.8	47,000	88.2
Living with:				
None.....	10,200	44.8	9,900	18.6
1 person.....	5,200	22.8	10,700	20.1
2 persons.....	2,400	10.5	8,900	16.7
3 persons.....	1,200	5.3	6,700	12.6
4 persons.....	1,100	4.8	4,800	9.0
5 persons or more.....	600	2.6	6,000	11.3

Table 7.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and relationship to other persons in household

Cohabitant	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total.....	21,500	100.0	102,200	100.0
Grandchild.....	5,700	26.4	3,700	3.6
Child.....	4,800	22.3	23,600	23.1
Spouse.....	4,400	20.5	9,800	9.6
In-law.....	2,400	11.2	2,300	2.3
Unrelated person.....	1,500	7.0	5,800	5.7
Aunt, uncle, niece, nephew....	900	4.2	5,800	5.7
Sibling.....	1,100	5.1	23,800	23.3
Parent.....	100	.5	24,600	24.0
Grandparent.....	...	...	2,400	2.3
Other relative.....	600	2.8	400	.4

daughters of all ages. When children are excluded from the analysis of household composition, the situation of both the aged and disabled awardees changes considerably. Aged awardees tended to be living with grandchildren (26.4 percent) or a spouse (20.3 percent). Among the disabled awardees, parents (24.0 percent) and siblings (23.2 percent) were most likely to be sharing the household. Only a small percentage of unrelated persons were in households with either aged or disabled awardees.

Income

The amount of income is used to determine both eligibility for and the amount of a person's SSI payment. For SSI purposes, income is anything an individual receives during a calendar month that can be used to meet his or her needs for food, clothing, or shelter. Income may be cash or in kind. Among aged awardees, Social Security benefits were the major source of income other than their SSI checks. Nearly three-fourths of the aged group were receiving Social Security benefits at the time of the award. About 20 percent of the aged had no income other than their SSI checks. Social Security benefits were also the major source of income for disabled SSI awardees, although the percentage receiving them (20.5 percent) was much lower than for the aged (table 8). The majority of the disabled awardees had no income other than their SSI checks. A small percentage of the aged (6.6 percent) and of the disabled (6.8 percent) had earned income. Another small percentage of each group had assistance based on need—mainly from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program. Because eligibility

for SSI precludes receipt of AFDC, the records of these recipients had not been updated, by the award month, to reflect the discontinuance of AFDC payments.

Disability

A disabled awardee is one who meets the Social Security Disability Insurance program definition of disability: unable to engage in substantial gainful activity by reason of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment that can be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months or to end in death. The most frequently cited diagnostic category was mental disorders.⁴ This category includes psychotic conditions, neurotic disorders, and mental retardation. More than one-half of

the awardees with mental disorders were mentally retarded (table 9).

About 40 percent of the disabled awardees in this study had a "developmental disability"—a mental or physical condition incurred before age 22 that may continue indefinitely. This term includes persons with mental retardation, cerebral palsy, autism, epilepsy, sensory impairments, congenital disabilities, or traumatic accidents. The age groupings of disabled awardees described above revealed a bimodal pattern. If developmental disability is arrayed by age, at least part of the reason for this bimodal distribution becomes clearer. The younger disabled awardees were more likely to be developmentally disabled than were the older awardees (table 10).

Although the small sample size does not permit an extensive analysis, many other differences exist between these two disability subgroups. Developmentally disabled persons are more likely to have a representative payee, are less likely to have Social Security benefits, and are less likely to have

resources than are other SSI awardees. They are also less likely to leave the SSI rolls within 4 years of their awards.

Table 9.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by disease classification

Disease classification	Number	Percent
All disabled awardees ¹	53,300	100.0
Endocrine, nutritional, metabolic	3,300	6.2
Mental disorders	21,300	40.0
Psychotic conditions	6,600	12.4
Neurotic disorders	3,300	6.2
Mental retardation	11,400	21.4
Nervous system and sense organs	7,100	13.3
Circulatory system	6,500	12.2
Respiratory system	2,500	4.7
Musculoskeletal and connective	5,100	9.6
Other	7,500	14.1

¹ Only 69 percent of the administrative records used contained the appropriate diagnosis. Percentages shown here are for these awardees and counts have been inflated to match study totals.

⁴The administrative records used in this study contained the appropriate diagnosis for only 367 (69 percent) of the 533 disabled awardees. The percentages shown in table 9 are based on the diagnoses for these cases. Counts shown in tables 9 and 10 have been inflated to match the study totals. Diagnoses are based on the **International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision, Clinical Modification, 1979 (ICD-9-CM)**.

Table 8.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and source of income

Source of income	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees	22,800	¹ 100.0	53,300	¹ 100.0
With no income	4,500	19.7	29,700	55.7
With income	18,300	80.3	23,600	44.3
Earned	1,500	6.6	3,600	6.8
Unearned income:				
Social Security	16,900	74.1	10,900	20.5
Assistance based on need	2,000	8.8	6,400	12.0
Other	2,600	11.4	5,900	11.1

¹ Awardees may have more than one type of income and therefore percentages do not add to 100. Incomes shown were not always counted against awardees' payment amounts. The SSI

program permits a general income exclusion of \$20 per month and a further exclusion of the first \$65 of earned income plus one-half of the earned income above \$65.

Payment Amounts

The amount of the federally administered SSI payment depends on a variety of factors including the availability of a State supplement. In 1981, 41 States and the District of Columbia provided a supplement to some categories of SSI recipients, and 16 of these States and the District of Columbia opted for Federal administration. The remaining 25 States administered the supplement themselves.⁵ Tables 11, 12, and 13 show the distributions for Federal SSI

⁵State-administered supplements are not included in this study. These data are reported to SSA in summary form by the 27 States that administer their own supplements and cannot be analyzed on a case-by-case basis.

Table 10.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by age group and developmental disability status

Age	All disabled		Developmentally disabled		Nondevelopmentally disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	53,300	100.0	21,000	100.0	32,300	100.0
Under 18.....	7,100	13.3	5,000	23.8	2,100	6.5
18-29.....	12,500	23.4	7,300	34.8	5,200	16.1
30-39.....	5,700	10.7	2,400	11.4	3,300	10.2
40-49.....	7,300	13.7	1,700	8.1	5,600	17.3
50-64.....	20,700	38.8	4,600	21.9	16,100	49.8

Table 11.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and amount of combined payments

Payment status and amount	Combined Federal-State payments			
	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Not receiving Federal or State payments.....	500	2.2	3,500	6.6
Receiving either Federal or State payments.....	22,300	97.7	49,800	93.4
Less than \$20.....	2,300	10.1	1,500	2.8
\$20-\$59.....	5,700	25.0	5,000	9.4
\$60-\$99.....	3,000	13.2	3,300	6.2
\$100-\$149.....	4,500	19.7	4,000	7.5
\$150-\$199.....	3,000	13.2	12,600	23.6
\$200-\$249.....	1,000	4.4	5,800	10.9
\$250-\$299.....	1,400	6.1	12,200	22.9
\$300-\$399.....	1,200	5.3	3,100	5.8
\$400 or over.....	200	.9	2,300	4.3

Table 12.— Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and amount of Federal payment

Payment status and amount	Federal payment			
	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Not receiving Federal payment.....	4,700	20.6	5,200	9.8
Receiving Federal payment.....	18,100	79.4	48,100	90.2
Less than \$20.....	2,500	11.0	1,800	3.4
\$20-\$59.....	5,100	22.4	5,000	9.4
\$60-\$99.....	2,400	10.5	3,100	5.8
\$100-\$139.....	2,600	11.4	3,500	6.6
\$140-\$219.....	3,600	15.8	17,700	33.1
\$220-\$263.....	.....	.....	2,500	4.7
\$264.....	1,900	8.3	14,500	27.2

payments, federally administered State supplementary payments, and a combination of the two. The amounts reflect payments projected for the month following the award month. The maximum monthly Federal SSI payment at the end of 1981 was \$264. For those awardees in the study who were located in the 16 States (and the District of Columbia) offering a federally administered State supplement at that time, the supplement amounts ranged from \$1 to \$231 per month.

Aged awardees had lower combined SSI and State supplement payment amounts than disabled awardees. Nearly one-half of the aged awardees received combined Federal-State payments of less than \$100, and fewer than one-fifth of the disabled awardees received payments of less than \$100. The principal reason for this difference in percentages between aged and disabled awardees is the higher incomes of the aged awardees, primarily from Social Security benefits.

A few of the awardees were receiving neither a Federal nor State payment. These individuals were not scheduled to receive a payment beyond the award month because they were eligible for payments only on a retroactive basis—that is, their eligibility ended before SSA could make a payment. Despite their later loss of eligibility,

they did receive a payment for the specific period during which they were eligible.

Although a large majority of the awardees received a Federal payment, 13 percent did not receive Federal monies. Typically, this nonpayment occurs when income is high enough that the person is eligible only for a State supplement. Federal payments were much larger for disabled awardees than for the aged. Again, this difference reflects the higher incomes of aged awardees. About 27 percent of the disabled received the maximum Federal payment; only 8.3 percent of the aged received the maximum payment (table 9).

State supplementation payments were received by 45.2 percent of the aged awardees. Only 35.5 percent of the disabled awardees received such a payment. The size of the payments did not vary much between the two groups.

Alien Status

Another criterion of eligibility for SSI payments is that the recipient must be either a U.S. citizen or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence or otherwise

permanently residing in the United States under "color of law."

Persons are "lawfully admitted" if they follow the regular immigration procedures. Other persons may receive SSI payments if they are considered to be permanent residents under color of law. This group of individuals originally consisted of refugees who, for humanitarian reasons, were not required to follow the regular immigration procedures. This definition of permanent residents under color of law was broadened to include groups other than refugees.

Since October 1980, the income and resources of a lawfully admitted alien's sponsor have been considered in determining that alien's eligibility and payment amount. A sponsor is an individual who has signed an affidavit of support as a condition of the alien's admission for permanent residence in the United States. Consideration of a sponsor's income and resources is called "sponsor-to-alien deeming." This type of deeming can take place within a 3-year period from the time the alien is admitted to the United States for permanent residence or granted

permanent residence status by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Sponsor-to-alien deeming does not apply to aliens admitted under color of law.

About 16 percent of the aged awardees and 5 percent of the disabled awardees were lawfully admitted resident aliens. In the preceding section on income, it was stated that nearly 20 percent of the aged awardees had no income at the time of their SSI award. The majority of these aged awardees were lawfully admitted resident aliens, which explains, in part, why some aged awardees are not eligible for Social Security benefits—the most common form of income received by aged awardees.

Representative Payment

When it is evident that a recipient is not able to manage or direct the management of benefit payments in his/her own best interests, a person or organization may be selected to receive those payments on behalf of the recipient. Such representative payees are accountable for their use of benefits. Among the aged awardees, only 3 percent had representative payees, and 33 percent of the disabled awardees had a representative payee, typically a parent.

Four-Year Followup

This section discusses the varying lengths of time the awardees in the study remained in the SSI program and the reasons why some of them became ineligible for an SSI payment. These events were followed for the 4-year study period, beginning with the month of award.

In ongoing program operations, when a recipient becomes ineligible for an SSI payment, he/she may have payment(s) "suspended" for

Table 13.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and amount of federally administered State supplemental payment

Payment status and amount	Federally administered State supplemental payment			
	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Not receiving a State payment.....	12,500	54.8	34,400	64.5
Receiving a State payment...	10,300	45.2	18,900	35.5
Less than \$20.....	2,100	9.2	4,900	9.2
\$20-\$59.....	2,600	11.4	6,400	12.0
\$60-\$99.....	1,900	8.3	1,900	3.6
\$100-\$139.....	1,500	6.5	900	1.7
\$140 or over.....	2,200	9.6	4,800	9.0

up to 12 months—which means that during that year payments can be resumed without the need to file a new application. If a suspension continues beyond 12 months, eligibility is “terminated” and a new application is generally required before payments can begin. This article takes a longer range view and distinguishes between those who were in the program at the end of the 48-month study period (regardless of whether a suspension or termination occurred) and those who were ineligible at the end of the study period. For purposes of this study, the term closure (or closed case) is used to describe the cases of individuals who were not in payment status at the end of the 48-month study period, no matter what the reason for that nonpayment status.

Ineligible Awardees

During the study period, 30,900 of the 76,100 awardees (about 41 percent) became ineligible for an SSI payment (table 14). The time at which the case closure occurred shows a definite pattern. During the first 6 months following their awards, about 18 percent of the awardees became ineligible. After the first 6 months, the pattern shows greater variation, although the numbers never come near those for the initial period after the awards. This variation suggests that the SSI program serves as a short-term income source for many awardees. The ineligibility rates also differ between the aged and the disabled groups of awardees. The overall closure rate was about the same for the aged (38.2 percent) as it was for the disabled (41.7 percent). However, only one-third of the aged became ineligible during the first 6 months; in that same period, one-half of the disabled SSI awardees became ineligible for a payment.

The proportion of awardees who became ineligible during the study period varied by other characteristics. Case closures occurred most often among males and older awardees in either eligibility category (table 15). Awardees with other sources of income were more likely to become

ineligible than were awardees with no other sources of income.

Reasons for Ineligibility

Excess income was the most often cited reason for an awardee to become ineligible for an SSI payment. Social Security benefits

Table 14.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and time elapsed after award

Eligibility status and elapsed time	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Became eligible during study.	14,100	61.8	31,100	58.3
Became ineligible during study.....	8,700	38.2	22,200	41.7
Months 1-6.....	2,900	12.8	11,000	20.6
Months 7-12.....	900	3.9	2,600	4.9
Months 13-18.....	1,200	5.3	1,900	3.6
Months 19-24.....	1,100	4.8	1,700	3.2
Months 25-30.....	300	1.3	1,400	2.6
Months 31-36.....	900	3.9	1,000	1.9
Months 37-42.....	700	3.1	1,700	3.2
Months 43-48.....	700	3.1	900	1.7

Table 15.—Number and percent of SSI awardees who became ineligible, by sex, age, and income status

Characteristic	Total	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	76,100	30,900	40.6
Sex			
Male.....	32,700	16,500	50.5
Female.....	43,400	14,400	33.2
Age			
Under 18 years.....	7,100	1,900	26.8
18-29.....	12,500	3,600	28.8
30-39.....	5,700	2,600	45.6
40-49.....	7,300	3,800	52.1
50-64.....	20,300	10,200	50.2
65.....	6,800	1,700	25.0
66-69.....	6,300	2,300	36.5
70-79.....	6,600	2,800	42.4
80 or older.....	3,500	2,000	57.1
Income status			
Other income source during period.	54,600	25,100	46.0
No other income source during period.....	21,500	5,800	27.0

were the most common source of that income (table 16). Of those awardees who became ineligible during the first 6 months after their award, more than one-half received Social Security benefits that made their income exceed the specified limit for eligibility. The mechanism by which the Social Security benefits caused the ineligibility differed between the disabled awardees and the aged. Because of the 5-month waiting period required before the payment of Social Security disability insurance benefits can begin, many disabled SSI recipients become ineligible for SSI payments when their Social Security benefits begin, usually in the first or second month after the award. Aged recipients are more likely to be receiving their Social Security benefits at the time of the SSI award and thus become ineligible when their Social Security benefits increase at a later date.

About 10 percent of the aged and 9 percent of the disabled died during the study period. About 12 percent of the aged and 9 percent of the disabled became ineligible for such reasons as leaving the country, admission to a public institution, moving into a Medicaid facility, excess resources, cessation of disability, and failure to provide needed documentation.

Of those awardees who became ineligible, about 3 percent reapplied for payments during the study period. These applications resulted in denials, since the closed cases, by definition, were not in payment status at the end of the study period.

Awardees with Interrupted Eligibility

Some of the awardees who were in payment status at the end of the 4-year study had, nevertheless,

experienced interruptions (suspensions or terminations) in their eligibility during the 48 months. Twenty-five percent of the aged awardees and 20 percent of the disabled awardees had such interruptions (table 17). The main reason, once again, was excess income. Typically, a temporary increase in long-term income or a one-time payment caused the interruption. Most of these interruptions were for periods short enough that the awardee did not have to reapply to have payments reinstated. Very few (1 percent) of the aged and disabled whose payments were interrupted were off the program rolls for a period (generally more than 1 year) that required them to reapply.

Four-Year Program Costs

By reviewing the total program costs for a group of recipients over time, it is possible to compute an average cost figure for that group. This kind of analysis is useful for estimating the impact of proposed legislative changes. As the data in table 18 show, the average 4-year payment for an aged SSI awardee was \$5,201, most of which (70 percent) was paid from Federal funds. The mean 4-year payment for a disabled awardee was \$7,601, 87 percent of which was paid from Federal funds. Program costs also vary by demographic characteristics. The costs to the Federal Government are

Table 16.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees, by program category and reason for ineligibility

Reason for ineligibility	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Remained eligible	14,100	61.8	31,100	58.3
Became ineligible	8,700	38.2	22,200	41.7
Social Security income.....	2,000	8.8	8,700	16.4
Other income	1,600	7.0	4,000	7.5
Death	2,400	10.5	4,600	8.6
Other reasons.....	2,700	11.9	4,900	9.2

Table 17.—Number and percentage distribution of SSI awardees with interrupted eligibility, by program category and reason for interruption

Eligibility status	Aged		Disabled	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All awardees.....	22,800	100.0	53,300	100.0
Not interrupted.....	17,000	74.6	42,400	79.5
Interrupted.....	5,800	25.4	10,900	20.5
For excess income.....	4,700	20.6	8,600	16.1
For other reasons.....	1,100	4.8	2,300	4.3

considerably more when an award is made to a younger person than when it is made to an older person (table 19). Costs to the State are not affected as much by the awardee's age, probably because the higher incomes of the aged (principally from Social Security benefits) are deducted first from the Federal portion of the SSI benefit.

Table 18.—Average payment amount during study period, by program category and source of funds

Source of funds	Aged	Disabled
Total	\$5,201	\$7,601
Federal funds.....	3,632	6,606
State funds.....	1,569	995

Table 19.—Average cost during study period, by age, sex, and source of funds

Age and sex	Average cost	
	Federal	State
Age		
Under 18 years.....	\$9,998	\$706
18-29	7,589	1,453
30-39	5,901	839
40-49	5,289	445
50-64	5,499	1,074
65	5,318	1,463
66-69	3,638	1,893
70-79	2,499	1,557
80 or older.....	2,749	1,036
Sex		
Male	\$5,305	\$993
Female.....	6,024	1,298

Conclusion

This study has provided a description of SSI awardees. Some of the most important facets of this description include:

- From January 1974 to December 1986, the SSI program served about 9 million persons.
- About 17 percent of the awardees in the study had been eligible for SSI payments before the study period.
- About 43 percent of the aged awardees did not receive their awards until they were aged 70 or older.
- The great majority of SSI awardees lived independently—that is, they were not institutionalized. Only about 10 percent of the aged and 12 percent of the disabled were institutionalized at the time of their award. Many of the aged SSI awardees lived alone (45 percent). Only 19 percent of the disabled awardees lived alone.
- More than 80 percent of the aged awardees had some form income at the time of award. Typically, this income was in the form of Social Security benefits. Of the 20 percent of the aged awardees who had no income, the majority were aliens. Only 44 percent of the disabled SSI awardees had any income at the time of award.
- Among the disabled awardees, 40 percent had a developmental disability.
- The majority of the awardees in this study (59 percent) were receiving payments at the end of the study period. Of those

who were ineligible for payments at the end of the 48-month period, nearly one-half had become ineligible during the first 6 months following their award. Many of these individuals, particularly in the disabled group, became ineligible because they began to receive Social Security benefits, indicating that SSI serves in a temporary income-support role for some persons while they are waiting for their Social Security disability insurance benefits to begin.

Technical Note

The cases in this study were identified from the SSI 1-Percent Sample file, a file that is extracted each month from the Supplemental Security Record (SSR)—the main computer file used in administering the SSI program. Certain digits of the Social Security number of each recipient were used to achieve a random sample of SSI awardees for the last 3 months of 1981. Although the awardees selected in this manner are representative of all SSI awardees in late 1981, they may not be representative of awardees before or after that time period.

Estimates based on the SSI 1-Percent Sample may differ from the figures that would have been obtained had all, rather than a sample, of the records been used. These differences are termed sampling variability. The standard error is a measure of sampling variability—that is, the variation that occurs by chance because a sample is used. The standard error is used to describe confidence intervals. The confidence interval represents the extent to which the sample results can be relied on to describe the results that would

occur if the entire population (universe) rather than the sample had been used for data compilation.

In about 68 percent of all possible probability samples with the same selection criteria, the universe value would be included in the interval from one standard error below to one standard error above the sample estimate. Similarly, about 95 percent of all possible samples will produce estimates within two standard errors, and about 99 percent will produce estimates within two-and-one-half standard errors.

Tables I and II provide approximations of standard errors of the estimates shown in this article. Table I presents approximate standard errors for the estimated number of recipients from the 1-Percent Sample file. Table II presents approximations of standard errors for the estimated percentage of persons from the 1-percent file. Linear interpolation may be used to obtain values not specifically shown.

The reliability of an estimated percentage depends on both the size of the percentage and the size of the number on which the

Table II.—Approximations of standard errors of estimated percentages of persons from a 1-percent file

Size of base (inflated)	Estimated percentage				
	2 or 98	5 or 95	10 or 90	20 or 75	50
1,000	4.7	7.3	10.1	14.5	16.8
10,000	1.5	2.3	3.2	4.6	5.3
50,000 .....	.7	1.0	1.4	2.1	2.4
100,000 .....	.5	.7	1.0	1.5	1.7

percentage is based. The standard errors are expressed as percentage points and the bases are shown as inflated to the actual size of the universe from which the sample was drawn. To illustrate: The study data show that 58.3 percent of the 22,800 aged awardees filed no previous application for an SSI payment. For a base of 10,000, table II shows a standard error of 5.3 percent for an estimate of 50 percent. For a base of 50,000, the standard error for the same estimate is 2.4 percent. Because the figures in table II do not cover the exact estimates that are being evaluated, it is necessary to interpolate between the values shown in that table. This

interpolation results in a standard error of 5.1 percent. The limits for a 95-percent confidence interval (two standard errors) are therefore 58.3 percent plus or minus 10.2 percent, or 68.5 and 48.1, respectively. Thus, the procedure for defining 95-percent confidence intervals as the estimate plus or minus two standard errors—in this case, 58.3 percent plus or minus 5.1 percent—produces intervals having a 95-percent chance of containing the actual percentage of aged awardees who had not filed previous applications.

Table I.—Approximations of standard errors of estimated numbers of persons from a 1-percent file

Size of estimate (inflated)	Standard error
500	250
1,000	300
2,500	500
5,000	800
7,500	900
10,000	1,100
25,000	1,700
50,000	2,400
75,000	3,000
100,000	3,400