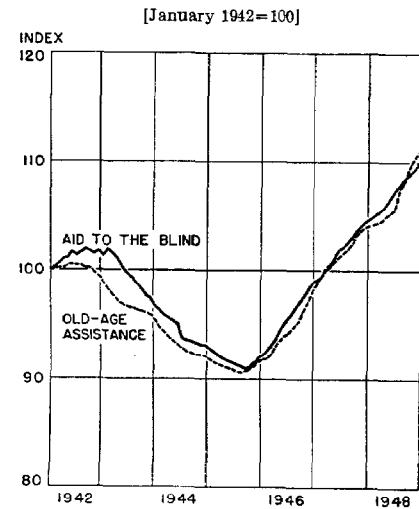


Notes and Brief Reports

Postwar Trends in Aid to the Blind

More persons were receiving aid to the blind in December 1948 than ever before. Nearly 86,000 recipients were assisted in the 48 States, the District of Columbia, and Hawaii—8 percent more than at the program's previous peak in September 1942. Though recent BULLETIN articles have analyzed trends in recipient rates for old-age assistance¹ and aid to dependent children,² a similar analysis of the aid to the blind program cannot be made because no current estimate of the number of blind persons in the United States is available. In general, however, the trend has been the same for all three programs; the similarity of the patterns for old-age assistance and aid to the blind is shown in the accompanying chart.

Trend in number of recipients of aid to the blind and old-age assistance, 1942-48



A sharp reduction in the number of recipients of aid to the blind began in the fall of 1942 and continued until September 1945, shortly after VJ-day. Case loads dropped 11 percent—from 79,000 in September 1942

¹ Walter M. Perkins, "Trends in Recipient Rates for Old-Age Assistance," *Social Security Bulletin*, October 1948.

² Elizabeth T. Ailing, "Trends in Recipient Rates for Aid to Dependent Children," *Social Security Bulletin*, November 1948.

to approximately 71,000 in September 1945. Since the close of World War II, the Nation-wide increase has been both uninterrupted and appreciable. In December 1948, 21 percent more recipients were on the rolls than in September 1945.

In most States, needy blind persons who are 65 years of age or over have some choice as to whether they will receive aid to the blind or old-age assistance. Consequently, the number of persons receiving aid to the

blind represents a considerable understatement of the number of blind persons receiving some form of assistance.

Among the more immediate factors responsible for the steady increase in the number of recipients of aid to the blind since the fall of 1945 are those related to the termination of hostilities. For many blind persons, as for many other types of dependent persons, an important source of support during the war was allowances from relatives serving in the armed forces. With demobilization, however, this service-connected income was no

Table 1.—Aid to the blind: Number of recipients, June and December 1945-48¹

State	1945		1946		1947		1948	
	June	December	June	December	June	December	June	December
Total.....	71,109	71,454	73,945	76,680	79,033	81,147	83,346	85,787
Total, approved plans.....	55,465	55,623	57,616	59,878	62,085	63,795	65,797	67,961
Alabama.....	737	791	850	926	1,004	1,069	1,105	1,163
Arizona.....	450	468	531	589	622	651	660	707
Arkansas.....	1,218	1,136	1,194	1,317	1,473	1,549	1,631	1,699
California.....	5,415	5,501	5,904	6,210	6,440	6,863	7,404	8,148
Colorado.....	468	442	447	425	396	385	388	393
Connecticut.....	130	135	138	139	143	138	150	152
Delaware.....	(²)	9	48	92	116	124	127	131
District of Columbia.....	200	193	197	204	214	217	219	218
Florida.....	2,268	2,306	2,357	2,525	2,654	2,758	2,861	2,976
Georgia.....	2,020	2,016	2,099	2,171	2,205	2,216	2,339	2,429
Hawaii.....	64	62	62	65	67	78	78	90
Idaho.....	206	199	202	203	215	204	199	204
Illinois.....	5,149	5,095	4,986	4,893	4,855	4,730	4,642	4,562
Indiana.....	2,025	1,929	1,929	1,917	1,909	1,915	1,901	1,856
Iowa.....	1,253	1,209	1,220	1,241	1,223	1,206	1,207	1,208
Kansas.....	1,062	1,046	1,080	1,118	1,126	907	858	820
Kentucky.....	1,576	1,556	1,552	1,590	1,705	1,849	1,890	1,938
Louisiana.....	1,367	1,364	1,393	1,429	1,513	1,576	1,643	1,544
Maine.....	815	808	778	765	731	704	678	655
Maryland.....	438	432	455	467	467	465	464	466
Massachusetts.....	959	1,008	1,068	1,135	1,187	1,240	1,257	1,284
Michigan.....	1,251	1,274	1,330	1,369	1,425	1,466	1,522	1,538
Minnesota.....	947	948	947	942	981	1,021	1,053	1,045
Mississippi.....	1,456	1,459	1,641	1,804	2,093	2,063	2,132	2,389
Missouri.....	2,916	2,817	2,915	2,872	2,830	2,793	2,800	2,770
Montana.....	324	337	359	366	393	420	444	465
Nebraska.....	447	435	439	453	458	496	522	523
Nevada.....	28	29	24	27	27	28	29	27
New Hampshire.....	269	278	284	293	289	296	300	316
New Jersey.....	534	532	550	573	589	624	632	638
New Mexico.....	246	236	245	272	296	401	416	422
New York.....	2,920	3,036	3,088	3,216	3,384	3,389	3,546	3,625
North Carolina.....	2,334	2,427	2,587	2,706	2,835	2,999	3,271	3,471
North Dakota.....	113	109	119	123	127	122	121	116
Ohio.....	3,017	3,041	3,096	3,157	3,223	3,321	3,435	3,506
Oklahoma.....	1,847	1,898	2,014	2,214	2,444	2,571	2,586	2,611
Oregon.....	370	374	368	382	384	382	386	379
Pennsylvania.....	12,700	12,985	13,390	13,903	14,091	14,326	14,720	15,089
Rhode Island.....	103	108	111	123	137	140	143	147
South Carolina.....	922	969	1,039	1,107	1,192	1,278	1,311	1,342
South Dakota.....	220	209	214	218	212	208	214	199
Tennessee.....	1,537	1,648	1,568	1,539	1,716	1,834	1,939	2,079
Texas.....	4,625	4,542	4,885	5,128	5,291	5,409	5,606	5,795
Utah.....	127	134	141	143	147	140	171	194
Vermont.....	144	166	165	172	179	178	190	190
Virginia.....	954	980	981	1,069	1,115	1,176	1,197	1,323
Washington.....	583	596	634	647	642	648	674	689
West Virginia.....	823	812	842	839	876	835	879	877
Wisconsin.....	1,400	1,377	1,388	1,309	1,293	1,282	1,290	1,311
Wyoming.....	112	116	111	113	99	114	116	105

¹ Figures in italics represent programs administered without Federal participation. Alaska does not administer aid to the blind.

² First payments made November 1945.

longer available. Similarly, expanded wartime employment opportunities for some blind persons or members of their families with marginal employability ended with the war. As a result, many blind persons turned to public assistance for their maintenance.

Other factors have undoubtedly contributed to the increase in the number of persons receiving aid to the blind. Among these is the increase in the total population, particularly the steadily rising proportion of aged persons, since it is in this group that certain of the more prevalent types of blindness are found. It is also possible that some additions to the rolls are a direct consequence of curtailed activities for the prevention of blindness and conservation of sight among the civilian population during the war, when large numbers of medical personnel, including ophthalmologists, were assigned to the armed forces.

State Variations

In 1945 the wartime decline in recipient rolls either continued or leveled off in a majority of the States with programs of aid to the blind.

Individual State trends since the fall of 1945 assume many different patterns. Broadly, however, they fall into three main groups. By far the largest group—almost three-fourths of the States with programs of aid to the blind—consists of States with generally rising case loads, though in many the changes were not continuously upward. An expanding case load does not always reflect, however, a real increase in the number of dependent blind persons but may reflect rather a transfer to the program of blind persons already receiving some other form of public assistance, chiefly old-age assistance. An illustration is found in Utah, where the number of recipients of aid to the blind remained at approximately 145 from early in 1946 to June 1948, when the number rose to 171, an increase of about 20 percent. This rise is explained by the fact that some aged blind persons who had been receiving old-age assistance transferred to the aid to the blind program when the new lien provisions became effective in old-age assistance. In Delaware the consistently growing case

load reflects, in the main, a developing program which began operating under the Social Security Act in November 1945.

Included in the second and much smaller group, comprising nine States, are those in which there is no very significant postwar movement in cases, either upward or downward, except for small month-to-month shifts in the number of recipients.

For six States—Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, and Wisconsin—there is evidence that the number of recipients of aid to the blind is contracting. The postwar decline in some of these States is a continuation of a downward movement that had been in progress for some time. The reasons for these reductions necessarily vary from State to State.

More liberal provisions for the old-age assistance program have been responsible for some of the decline. In Colorado, for example, an eligible aged blind person without any income has since 1947 been able to get a much higher payment under old-age assistance than under aid to the blind.

The general decline in the number of recipients of aid to the blind in Wisconsin, commencing in 1941, is attributed in part to the improved economic situation during and after the war, and in part to the provision of vocational rehabilitation and training services enabling blind persons to become self-supporting. This State anticipates that the rolls will be maintained at a lower level than in the past for these reasons and also because some aged persons who become blind while they are receiving old-age assistance prefer to continue receiving aid under that program.

Individual States have made considerable effort not only to reduce the amount of blindness but also to render blindness less of a handicap for those whose vision cannot be restored. In some States with active programs for the prevention of blindness and for sight conservation, the State supervising ophthalmologist has studied the causes of loss of sight among those receiving aid to the blind (or among those on the State register for the blind) in order that recipients may be helped to avail themselves of services for medical eye treatment. Even among blind persons in the up-

per ages, who constitute the largest proportion of recipients of aid to the blind, there are some individuals who can be returned to economic usefulness through appropriate eye surgery. Moreover, full use of available services for vocational rehabilitation should increase self-support among employable blind persons and contribute to some reduction in the need for assistance.

Budget Summary, 1949-50

Security, Health, and Welfare Expenditures

The President, in his budget message for the fiscal year 1949-50, proposed additional measures for social welfare, health, and security.¹ The immediate fiscal effects of the new proposals would be Federal outlays of \$6.5 billion from the general account and trust funds, as opposed to \$4.8 billion expected expenditures under present programs (table 1). The major part of the difference is attributable to proposed changes in old-age and survivors insurance and to the inclusion of disability insurance; it is estimated that outlays of the old-age and survivors insurance trust fund would be increased by \$1.5 billion in the fiscal year 1950 on these counts. An additional expenditure of \$150 mil-

¹ See "Social Security Recommendations: Excerpts from the President's Messages," *Social Security Bulletin*, January 1949.

Table 1.—Summary of estimated expenditures for social welfare, health, and security under present and proposed legislation, fiscal year 1949-50

[In millions]

Source of funds	Expenditures		
	Total	Present legislation	Proposed legislation
Total.....	\$6, 518	\$4, 784	\$1, 734
General funds.....	2, 509	2, 425	84
Trust funds, total.....	4, 009	2, 359	1, 650
Old-age and survivors insurance trust fund.....	2, 245	745	1, 500
Unemployment trust fund.....	1, 170	1, 020	150
Railroad retirement account.....	317	317	-----
Federal employees' retirement funds.....	277	277	-----

Source: *The Budget of the United States Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1950.*