

Notes and Brief Reports

Women Social Security Beneficiaries Aged 62 and Older, 1960-79*

Women's participation in the labor force has increased substantially over the past half century. In 1930, 10 million women were in the labor force. They represented 24 percent of all working age women and 22 percent of the total work force. By 1955 the number of women workers had doubled, and their labor-force participation rate had risen to 36 percent. By 1979 the number had more than quadrupled, the participation rate had risen to 51 percent, and women workers represented 41 percent of the total work force (table 1).

Major changes in the number and composition of the social security beneficiary group have occurred as the labor-force participation rate of women has increased.

* By Barbara A. Lingg, Division of OASDI Statistics, Office of Research and Statistics, Office of Policy, Social Security Administration.

Table 1.—Number of women aged 16 and over and number and percent of those in the labor force, 1930-79

Year ¹	[Numbers in millions]			
	Total number ²	Women		
		Number	In labor force	
			All women	Percent of—	Total labor force
1930 ³	44.1	10.4	24	22
1940.....	47.7	13.8	29	25
1947.....	52.4	16.7	32	27
1951.....	54.9	19.1	35	29
1955.....	57.6	20.6	36	30
1958.....	59.7	22.1	37	32
1961.....	62.5	23.8	38	33
1964.....	65.7	25.4	39	34
1967.....	69.0	28.4	41	35
1970.....	72.8	31.6	43	37
1973.....	77.2	34.6	45	38
1975.....	80.0	37.1	46	39
1977.....	82.6	40.1	49	40
1979.....	85.2	43.5	51	41
Percentage increase, 1930-79.....	85	318	.....	.....

¹ For 1947-49, data are annual averages; for 1930, data for April; and for 1940, data for March.

² Noninstitutionalized population.

³ Those aged 14 and over in 1930.

Source: Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1980, pages 156-157, and Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *1975 Handbook on Women Workers*, Bulletin 297, 1975, page 11.

This note briefly examines the effects of that increased labor-force participation on the types of social security benefits received by women aged 62 and over and the number of children receiving benefits based on their mothers' earnings. The benefit data are derived—on a 100-percent basis—from the social security Master Beneficiary Record, which contains detailed benefit data for all beneficiaries.

Benefit Entitlement

Generally, when a woman reaches age 62 she may become entitled to social security benefits as a retired or disabled worker based on her own earnings record, as a wife or widow based on her husband's earnings record, or as a dependent surviving parent based on her child's earnings record.¹ Some women are entitled simultaneously to a retired- or disabled-worker benefit and to a second payment from a wife's, widow's, or parent's benefit, which may be a larger amount. In such cases, they have dual entitlement but are classified and counted in the beneficiary statistics as retired workers or disabled workers. Under dual entitlement, the individual receives the retired- or disabled-worker benefit plus the difference between that benefit and the amount of the wife's, widow's, or parent's benefit. She cannot receive both the retired- or disabled-worker benefit and the full amount of the dependent or survivor benefit.²

To be eligible for a retired-worker benefit, a person must be fully insured—that is, he or she must have sufficient earnings in the requisite number of quarters of employment covered under the social security program. Before 1978, a wage and salary worker generally acquired a quarter of coverage by earning \$50 or more in covered employment in a calendar quarter. Beginning with 1978, quarters of coverage are based on the amount of annual earnings. In 1979, a worker was credited with one quarter of coverage, up to a maximum of four, for each \$260 of earnings. To be fully insured, the individual needs at least one quarter of coverage

¹ A small portion of women beneficiaries aged 62 and over are entitled to benefits as the disabled children of retired or deceased workers. They are excluded from the data examined here. Also excluded are women receiving "special age-72" benefits. Those benefits, financed mostly from general revenues, are payable to individuals who reached age 72 before 1972 and who do not qualify for a regular social security benefit.

² Disabled-worker benefits are converted to retired-worker benefits when the worker reaches age 65.

(acquired at any time after 1936) for each year after 1950 up to the year of attaining age 62.³ A woman who reached age 62 in 1960, for example, needed nine quarters to be fully insured; a woman who attained age 62 in 1979 needed 28 quarters. Under the disability program, additional requirements must be fulfilled for entitlement.⁴

Beneficiary Experience, 1960-79

The increased labor-force participation of women has resulted in a substantial increase in the number and proportion of women who are entitled to benefits based on their own earnings records. The number of women aged 62 and over receiving benefits as retired or disabled workers increased from 2.9 million—or 43 percent of all women beneficiaries in this age group—in 1960 to 9.0 million—or 56 percent—in 1979 (table 2).

Overall, the number of women beneficiaries aged 62 and over rose from 6.6 million in 1960 to 15.9 million in 1979, a 140-percent increase. The number of women

³ For men attaining age 62 before 1975, the quarters-of-coverage requirement was higher.

⁴ For a detailed discussion of benefit eligibility requirements, see Department of Health and Human Services, Social Security Administration, *Social Security Handbook*, July 1978.

receiving benefits based on their own earnings records increased 213 percent during this 20-year period, while the number of women receiving benefits as dependents and survivors increased only 85 percent.

Social security benefit amounts are based on the worker's primary insurance amount (PIA). The PIA is related to the worker's earnings in covered employment, averaged over a period of time. The full PIA is payable to a retired worker at age 65 or to a disabled worker at any age. Retired workers who apply for and draw benefits before age 65 receive a reduced amount. The maximum reduction is 20 percent at age 62. Dependent and survivor beneficiaries receive certain proportions of the PIA. A widow may receive the full PIA, a wife up to 50 percent, and a parent up to 82.5 percent.

For retired women workers the PIA levels are considerably lower than those for retired men workers. At the end of 1977, the PIA was less than \$200 for 53 percent of the women, compared with 21 percent of the men. Forty-eight percent of the men had a PIA of \$300 or more but only 16 percent of the women's PIA's were that high (table 3). At the end of 1979, the average PIA for women retired workers was \$247.80, compared with \$344.50 for men (table 4).

These differences in the PIA reflect the lower earnings of women and their more sporadic participation in the

Table 2.—Number and percent of women beneficiaries aged 62 and over with benefits in current-payment status, by type of entitlement, 1960-79

[Numbers in thousands]

At end of year	Total number ¹	Entitlement based on—								
		Own earnings record				Husband's or child's earnings record				
		Number	Percent of total	Number entitled as—		Number	Percent of total	Number entitled as—		
				Retired workers	Disabled workers			Wives	Widows	Parents
1960	6,619	2,866	43.3	2,845	21	3,753	56.7	2,174	1,546	33
1961	7,162	3,185	44.5	3,160	25	3,977	55.5	2,247	1,697	33
1962	7,806	3,526	45.2	3,494	32	4,280	54.8	2,388	1,858	34
1963	8,283	3,804	45.9	3,766	38	4,479	54.1	2,436	2,009	34
1964	8,710	4,056	46.6	4,011	45	4,654	53.4	2,463	2,157	34
1965	9,143	4,327	47.3	4,276	51	4,816	52.7	2,475	2,308	33
1966	9,711	4,685	48.2	4,624	61	5,026	51.8	2,504	2,490	32
1967	10,084	4,929	48.9	4,859	70	5,155	51.1	2,479	2,645	31
1968	10,524	5,189	49.3	5,141	78	5,335	50.7	2,521	2,784	30
1969	10,924	5,449	49.9	5,363	86	5,475	50.1	2,524	2,922	29
1970	11,374	5,753	50.6	5,661	92	5,621	49.4	2,546	3,048	27
1971	11,853	6,077	51.3	5,975	102	5,776	48.7	2,576	3,174	26
1972	12,379	6,440	52.0	6,325	115	5,939	48.0	2,613	3,301	25
1973	13,015	6,880	52.9	6,754	126	6,135	47.1	2,678	3,433	24
1974	13,539	7,270	53.7	7,126	144	6,269	46.3	2,701	3,546	22
1975	14,010	7,586	54.1	7,424	162	6,424	45.9	2,745	3,659	20
1976	14,489	7,926	54.7	7,744	182	6,563	45.3	2,781	3,763	19
1977	15,012	8,302	55.3	8,106	196	6,710	44.7	2,824	3,868	18
1978	15,452	8,632	55.9	8,430	202	6,820	44.1	2,844	3,960	16
1979	15,914	8,980	56.4	8,778	202	6,934	43.6	2,856	4,063	15
Percentage change, 1960-79	140	213	.....	209	862	85	.....	31	162	-50

¹ Excludes special age-72 beneficiaries and adults receiving benefits because of childhood disability.

Table 3.—Number and percentage distribution of retired workers with benefits in current-payment status, by primary insurance amount and sex, December 31, 1977

Primary insurance amount	Retired workers			
	Total	Men	Women	
			All	With dual entitlement
Total number ¹	17,798,863	9,709,844	8,089,019	1,969,300
Total percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
\$114.30.....	12.5	5.6	20.8	40.5
114.40-119.90.....	1.0	.5	1.5	3.2
120.00-139.90.....	4.1	2.3	6.3	12.0
140.00-159.90.....	4.4	2.9	6.3	9.8
160.00-179.90.....	7.0	4.8	9.6	10.3
180.00-199.90.....	6.4	4.8	8.5	6.8
200.00-219.90.....	6.3	4.9	7.9	5.3
220.00-239.90.....	5.8	4.9	6.9	4.0
240.00-259.90.....	5.6	5.2	6.0	3.0
260.00-279.90.....	6.3	6.8	5.6	2.2
280.00-299.90.....	7.5	9.4	5.1	1.4
300.00-319.90.....	8.3	11.2	4.7	21.5
320.00-339.90.....	7.2	10.2	3.6	.....
340.00-359.90.....	6.2	9.2	2.7	.....
360.00-379.90.....	3.9	5.7	1.7	.....
380.00-399.90.....	2.9	4.3	1.1	.....
400.00 or more.....	4.7	7.2	1.7	.....

¹ Excludes transitionally insured beneficiaries.

² \$300.00 or more.

labor force. Data from a 1972 study of the lifetime covered earnings of retired workers entitled to benefits show that 69 percent of the women, compared with 35 percent of the men, had lifetime covered earnings of less than \$40,000. Sixty-three percent of the men, but only 38 percent of the women, had 20 years or more of covered employment. Women tended to have lower earnings even when they worked the same number of years as men. Among workers who had 30 years or more in covered employment, for example, 48 percent of the women, compared with 84 percent of the men, had lifetime covered earnings of \$80,000 or more.⁵

Although the number of women who have worked long enough in covered employment to qualify for benefits based on their own earnings records has grown, these benefits are often lower than the benefits they would receive as dependents and survivors. At the end of 1977, 1.9 million women retired workers, representing 24 percent of the group who qualified for benefits based on their own earnings records, were dually entitled. Almost 1.2 million were dually entitled as retired workers and widows, and more than 700,000 were dually entitled as retired workers and wives. Both the number and percentage of women retired workers who have dual entitlement has increased substantially in recent years. In 1967, for example, about 760,000

⁵ Barbara A. Ligg, "Lifetime Covered Earnings and Quarters of Coverage of Retired and Disabled Workers, 1972," *Social Security Bulletin*, October 1977.

women retired workers (16 percent) were dually entitled (table 5).⁶ In 1977, 83 percent of the dually entitled women were entitled to PIA's of less than \$200 as retired workers. About 40 percent were entitled to the minimum PIA of \$114.30 (table 3).

Children Entitled on Mothers' Earnings Records

The effects of the increasing labor-force participation of women can also be seen in the number of children whose entitlement is based on their mothers' earnings records.⁷ In 1960 fewer than 100,000 children, representing only about 5 percent of all child beneficiaries, were receiving benefits on their mothers' earnings records (table 6). At that time, a child could be entitled to benefits only if the mother was both fully and currently insured.⁸ The 1967 Amendments to the Social

⁶ Part of this increase resulted from a change in the law, effective in 1973, that increased the possible benefit level for widows from 82.5 percent to 100 percent of the deceased husband's PIA.

⁷ An unmarried child or a retired, disabled, or deceased worker can become entitled to benefits if he or she is under age 18, a full-time student aged 18-22, or a disabled person aged 18 or over whose disability began before age 22.

⁸ A worker is currently insured if he or she has at least six quarters of coverage during the 13-quarter period ending with the quarter in which the worker died or became entitled to retirement or disability benefits.

Table 4.—Number of beneficiaries aged 62 and over, by type of benefit in current-payment status and sex, December 31, 1979

Type of benefit and sex ¹	Number	Average	
		Primary insurance amount	Monthly benefit amount
Retired workers and dependents.....	21,787,083	.....	.....
Retired workers.....	18,970,172	\$299.76	\$294.27
Men.....	10,192,475	344.50	326.75
Women.....	8,777,697	247.80	256.54
Wives.....	2,777,735	349.59	151.80
Husbands.....	39,176	244.04	116.01
Disabled workers and dependents.....	681,578	.....	.....
Disabled workers.....	600,647	325.98	324.84
Men.....	399,460	361.05	359.66
Women.....	201,187	256.36	255.72
Wives.....	78,746	387.55	109.80
Husbands.....	2,185	289.18	84.12
Survivors of deceased workers.....	4,095,277	.....	.....
Aged:			
Widows.....	4,014,926	296.33	270.68
Widowers.....	15,944	248.58	212.36
Disabled:			
Widows.....	37,733	312.05	191.64
Widowers.....	93	286.27	168.34
Widowed:			
Mothers.....	10,290	309.73	223.33
Fathers.....	250	223.30	137.97
Parents:			
Mothers.....	15,300	295.02	239.89
Fathers.....	741	292.55	214.65

¹ Excludes special age-72 beneficiaries and adults receiving benefits because of childhood disability.

Table 5.—Number and percent of women retired workers with dual entitlement, by type of secondary benefit in current-payment status, 1960-77

At end of year	Total		Women retired workers also receiving benefits as—				Parents
			Wives		Widows		
	Number	Percent of all women retired workers	Number	Percent of all entitled to wife's benefits because of age	Number	Percent of all entitled to widow's benefits	
1960.....	302,646	10.6	159,032	6.8	141,218	8.4	2,396
1961.....	330,727	10.5	159,587	6.6	169,264	9.1	1,876
1962.....	421,535	12.1	204,445	7.9	214,371	10.4	2,719
1963.....	496,639	13.2	238,081	8.9	255,408	11.3	3,150
1964.....	571,144	14.2	269,657	9.9	297,929	12.1	3,558
1965 ¹	611,610	14.3	282,940	10.3	324,930	12.3	3,740
1966 ¹	699,080	15.1	315,550	11.2	379,440	13.2	4,090
1967 ¹	760,950	15.7	334,200	11.8	422,480	13.8	4,270
1968 ¹	831,760	16.3	354,750	12.4	472,590	14.5	4,420
1969 ¹	909,720	17.0	376,520	13.0	528,660	15.3	4,540
1970 ¹	966,780	17.1	388,210	13.3	573,950	15.9	4,620
1971 ¹	1,060,120	17.7	411,710	13.8	643,730	16.9	4,680
1972 ¹	1,170,286	18.5	477,333	15.5	688,087	17.3	4,866
1973.....	1,361,360	20.2	562,111	17.7	794,001	22.2	5,248
1974 ¹	1,516,326	21.3	554,844	17.1	956,662	21.4	4,820
1975.....	1,660,451	22.4	616,669	18.4	1,038,992	22.3	4,790
1976 ¹	1,812,008	23.4	669,792	19.5	1,137,251	23.4	4,965
1977.....	1,939,451	23.9	742,174	20.9	1,193,071	23.8	4,206

¹ Distributions by type of secondary benefit estimated.

Security Act eliminated this requirement making it possible for children to become entitled based on their mothers' earnings records on the same basis as they could on their fathers'. Because of the legislative change and the increasing labor-force participation of women, the number of children receiving benefits as a result of their mothers' earnings had risen to 308,000, or 8 percent of all child beneficiaries, in 1968.

At the end of 1977 about 654,000 children—13 percent of all child beneficiaries—were receiving ben-

efits based on their mothers' earnings records. About 62 percent were surviving children; 32 percent were children of disabled women workers. Only about 6 percent were children of retired women workers, and most of them were students and disabled children aged 18 or older. During the period 1968-77, the number of children receiving benefits because of the retirement or death of a mother increased about 80 percent while the number of children receiving benefits because their mothers became disabled increased about 250 percent.

Table 6.—Number and percent of child's benefits in current-payment status based on earnings records of women workers, by basis for entitlement and age of child beneficiary, end of year 1960-77

Basis for entitlement and age of child beneficiary	1960		1965		1968		1971		1974		1977	
	Number	Percent of all child's benefits	Number	Percent of all child's benefits	Number	Percent of all child's benefits	Number	Percent of all child's benefits	Number	Percent of all child's benefits	Number	Percent of all child's benefits
Total.....	96,264	4.8	182,503	5.9	307,593	8.1	459,695	10.7	576,065	12.1	654,060	12.9
Retirement of worker.....	10,689	4.0	16,837	3.7	21,747	4.2	26,806	4.8	34,823	5.6	38,367	5.6
Under age 18.....	2,242	1.0	2,505	.7	3,974	1.2	5,652	1.6	8,105	2.1	9,576	2.5
Disabled, aged 18 and over.....	8,447	15.7	13,523	15.5	15,106	15.9	16,806	16.4	18,985	16.3	20,134	15.4
Student, aged 18-22 ¹.....	.....	.....	809	2.4	2,667	3.3	4,348	4.5	7,733	6.5	8,657	5.5
Disability of worker.....	4,813	3.1	35,118	6.3	60,523	7.7	95,932	9.9	153,532	12.2	209,516	13.7
Under age 18.....	4,524	3.0	32,352	6.1	52,251	7.3	82,821	9.5	131,826	11.7	176,227	13.3
Disabled, aged 18 and over.....	289	9.8	1,003	11.1	1,595	12.5	2,152	13.9	3,163	15.1	4,760	15.8
Student, aged 18-22 ¹.....	.....	.....	1,763	10.7	6,677	10.8	10,959	12.8	18,543	15.7	28,529	16.1
Death of worker.....	80,762	5.1	130,548	6.3	225,323	9.0	336,957	12.1	387,710	13.4	406,177	14.1
Under age 18.....	78,995	5.2	116,205	6.4	191,384	9.5	282,920	12.8	318,575	14.2	316,375	15.0
Disabled, aged 18 and over.....	1,767	3.7	5,506	5.4	9,206	6.8	12,319	7.3	16,427	8.1	21,171	8.7
Student, aged 18-22 ¹.....	.....	.....	8,837	5.7	24,733	7.4	41,718	10.4	52,708	11.9	68,631	12.9

¹ Benefits were first payable in 1965.