
Notes and Brief Reports

A Look at the Economic Status of the Aged Then and Now*

With this issue, the **Social Security Bulletin** commences its 45th year of publication. Writing in volume 1, numbers 1-3 in the March 1938 issue, Social Security Board Chairman Arthur J. Altmeyer—one of the chief technical architects of the Social Security Act—expressed his hope that the **Bulletin** would promote general understanding of the contribution of the Social Security programs in the United States.¹

The 1935 Social Security Act committed the Federal Government to provide a level of economic security for the underprivileged. In addition to administering those programs initiated by the Act—Old-Age Insurance (title II), Unemployment Insurance (title III), and a Federal-State matching fund program for assistance to the aged, the blind, and the fatherless (titles I and X)—the Social Security Board was responsible for studying and making recommendations as to “methods of providing economic security through social insurance, and as to legislation and matters of administrative policy concerning old-age pensions, unemployment compensation . . . and related subjects.”²

The **Bulletin** was intended to record developments in the programs administered by the Social Security Board, as well as in health and welfare services programs administered by other Federal agencies. In addition, Chairman Altmeyer continued, “It is with the aim of fulfilling its own responsibilities for study and administration and of facilitating the efforts of other agencies concerned with the social services that the Board has started publication of the **Social Security Bulletin**.”³

A comparison of the topics discussed in that first issue of the **Bulletin** with those of concern today presents some striking contrasts and similarities. The featured article in that first issue was devoted to an assessment of the economic status of the aged. Its findings—and the

methods used to count the numbers of persons reliant on different income sources—are, of course, in marked contrast to what is known about the economic circumstances of the aged today. Other articles in the first issue described administrative developments in all the programs administered by the Social Security Board and many of the themes presented—from the need for more simplified forms to debate over extending Social Security coverage—are still familiar. To provide an understanding of the needs of the population the Social Security Act would serve, a feature article in the first issue of the **Bulletin**, by Marjorie Shearon of the Social Security Board’s Bureau of Research and Statistics, attempted to quantify the economic status of the aged in 1936 and 1937.

Nearly 8 million persons were aged 65 or older when the **Bulletin** began publication. At that time, no indepth studies nor detailed program statistics were available for that segment of the population. Payroll deductions began in 1937 for the Old-Age Insurance program, but benefit payments would not begin until 1940.

The Shearon article reported that although the Supreme Court had confirmed the constitutionality of old-age insurance, some debate over it continued: “Opinion in the press and elsewhere has been divided as to the need of the aged for special consideration and protective legislation. Many individualists still believe that provision for old age should be a matter of personal initiative and that, by and large, only the improvident find it necessary to seek public or private charity.”⁴

Shearon explained, “In evaluating such statements and in arriving at a quantitative conception of the extent to which persons aged 65 and over are dependent upon others for support, it would be highly desirable if we could ascertain the economic status of each person in this age group.” However, she noted, “Clearly no direct method of determining the means of support of the aged is possible.”⁵

Lacking any form of comprehensive survey or other data on the income of the elderly, Shearon used often crude techniques to estimate the number of persons who might be expected to be receiving income from different sources. She assumed no overlap between income receipt from the different sources; that is, she assumed

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¹ Arthur J. Altmeyer, “Social Security and the Social Services,” **Social Security Bulletin**, March 1938, page 2.

² *Ibid.*, page 1.

³ *Ibid.*, page 2.

⁴ Marjorie Shearon, “Economic Status of the Aged,” **Social Security Bulletin**, March 1938, page 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*

that none of those who had income from savings, for example, also had income from employment. Her totals undoubtedly underestimated the number of persons without income and overestimated the total of those with income. Today, of course, the Bureau of the Census collects detailed information about the amounts and kinds of income received by different segments of the population.

Shearon's estimates will be compared in this article primarily with 1979 income data from the March 1980 Current Population Survey.⁶ To be comparable with the 1936-37 data, this note will count a person as having had income from a given source regardless of how small that income was. The primary unit of analysis in this note is individual persons. Data on the relative importance of different types of income is not yet available for 1979. Therefore, data on the importance of different income sources is occasionally presented using 1978 income data from the March 1979 Current Population Survey. The analysis of the 1978 data is based on aged units—married couples where at least one spouse was 65 or older and unmarried persons—rather than individuals.⁷ Like all household surveys, the Current Population Survey finds that respondents tend to underreport income, particularly when the amounts received are small. However, the survey unquestionably provides more accurate estimates than the techniques available in 1937.

Overall Findings

Shearon divided the population into two groups: The "self-dependent," those who sustained themselves on the basis of earnings, income from assets, veterans' benefits, or public or private pensions and the "dependent," those who relied on public assistance, private social agencies, or support from friends and/or relatives.

Of the estimated 7.6 million noninstitutionalized persons aged 65 or older in the United States and territories of Alaska and Hawaii in January 1937, Shearon estimated that roughly one-third (2.7 million) were self-dependent (table 1). She noted, "It is assumed that such persons were essentially self-sustaining and able at least to subsist on their income." However, she continued, "Possibly one-half of them (1.4 million) were partially dependent upon friends and relatives for a more comfortable living and received some aid in the form of food, clothing, shelter, spending money, medical care, or recreation."⁸ In 1979, about 97 percent of those

⁶ Bureau of the Census, "Money Income of Families and Persons in the United States: 1979," *Current Population Reports* (Series P-60, No. 129), 1981.

⁷ For detailed analysis of the income of the aged in 1978, see Susan Grad, *Income of the Population Aged 55 and Over, 1978* (Staff Paper No. 41), Office of Research and Statistics, Office of Policy, Social Security Administration, 1981.

⁸ Marjorie Shearon, "Economic Status of the Aged," page 6.

Table 1.—Dependency status of population aged 65 and older, 1937 and 1978

Status	1937	1978
Total number (in thousands)	7,620	23,743
Total percent	100	100
Self-dependent	35.1	96.8
Dependent	66.0	3.2
Public or private assistance or other	18.5	1.7
No income	47.5	1.5

Source: Marjorie Shearon, "Economic Status of the Aged," *Social Security Bulletin*, March 1938 and Susan Grad, *Income of the Population Aged 55 and Over* (Staff Paper No. 41), Office of Research and Statistics, Office of Policy, Social Security Administration, 1981, tables 1, 29, and 30.

aged 65 and older were self-dependent. Most of the difference can be traced to Social Security benefits and more widespread reliance on income from savings and investment, and, to some extent, private pensions.

The other two-thirds of the aged in 1937 were dependent. Nearly one-fifth of the aged relied almost entirely on public assistance or aid from private social agencies. The remainder, 47 percent of the noninstitutionalized population, were without apparent means of support: "Presumably, these 3.5 million persons must be wholly dependent on friends or relatives."⁹ Shearon found the validity of this estimate to be confirmed in an earlier study by the New York State Commission on Old Age Security, which indicated that 50.4 percent of persons aged 65 and older in New York State in 1929 were primarily dependent on friends or relatives for support.

Today, the Current Population Survey indicates that only 1.5 percent of the 23.7 million persons aged 65 and older have no income of their own and an additional 1.7 percent rely on public assistance for more than 90 percent of their income.¹⁰

The Self-Dependent

In 1937, the three most frequent sources of income for the self-dependent were earnings, income from assets or property, and government or private pensions. In contrast, the most common source of income in 1979 was, of course, Social Security benefits, followed by income from assets or property, government or private pensions, and earnings, as shown in table 2.

The 1937 estimate of the number of persons with employment income was taken from the specially created cabinet-level Committee on Economic Security, which planned President Franklin D. Roosevelt's social programs, and a private New York institute, both of which calculated that about 1 million persons aged 65 and

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Bureau of the Census, "Money Income," and Susan Grad, *Income of the Population Aged 55 and Over*.

Table 2.—Sources of support for the noninstitutionalized population aged 65 and older, 1936-37 and 1979

Source	1936-37	1979
Total number (in thousands)	7,620	23,743
Total percent	100	¹ 100
With income	54.3	98.5
Earnings	13.1	17.2
Property (asset) income	15.4	67.9
Veterans' benefits, workers' or unemployment compensation . . . . .	.6	4.1
Social Security or Railroad Retirement . . . . .	. . .	89.6
Other retirement income	6.7	26.3
Private pensions or annuities only	5.1	17.0
Military pensions only . . . . .	.3	.8
Federal civil service pensions only . . . . .	.4	2.5
State or local pensions only . . . . .	.9	5.2
Multiple pensions . . . . .	. . .	.7
Federal, State, or local public assistance	17.3	8.5
Other	1.2	1.5
No income	47.5	1.5

¹ Data do not add to 100 percent because of overlapping receipt of income from multiple sources.

Sources: Data derived from Marjorie Shearon, "Economic Status of the Aged," *Social Security Bulletin* and Bureau of the Census, "Money Income of Households and Families, 1979," *Current Population Reports* (Series P-60, No. 129), 1981, table 55.

older were employed. Shearon considered these estimates reasonable. She indicated that numerous factors had decreased the number of aged in gainful occupations, reported as 2.2 million in the 1930 census.

She speculated that among the factors explaining the decrease would be "fixation in the public mind" of 65 as the retirement age, "after which persons are usually adjudged 'unemployable'" as well as "underwriting requirements of group insurance schemes which militate against older workers," and increased competition for new jobs as the Nation struggled out of the Depression from "younger, stronger, more adaptable workers, especially in the mechanized trades."¹¹

In retrospect, that estimate of the number of employed persons seems somewhat low. The 1940 census found that 2.1 million persons aged 65 and older, or 23 percent of that population, were "gainful workers."¹² Although that figure, like today's estimates of the labor force, includes persons who were unemployed but seeking work, it does not seem probable that fully half the aged labor force was out of work, even at the peak of the Depression.

Shearon's estimate of income from assets was even more approximate than the earnings data. Her analysis of Federal Trade Commission data from 1912 through 1923 indicated that about four-fifths of all persons dying in those years had estates too small to probate; the average value of the remaining one-fifth was about \$250. She reasoned that somewhat less than one-fifth of the aged, say 15 percent, would have wealth of as much

as \$250, since they would no longer be accumulating savings but would instead be drawing on capital. She acknowledged, however, that \$250—equivalent to \$1,435 in 1980 dollars—would be "entirely inadequate to provide an independent living during old age."¹³ Thus, many less than 15 percent of the aged in 1937 were likely to have been supported primarily by asset income.

Although a much larger fraction of the aged today have some asset income, this is still a primary income source for very few. Detailed analysis of the 1979 Current Population Survey found that 62 percent of the units aged 65 and older had some asset income in 1978. Only 39 percent of those, or 24 percent of the total number of units aged 65 or older, had income from assets amounting to more than \$1,500 a year.¹⁴ And only 7 percent of the units with asset income received at least half their total income from this source.¹⁵

The number of aged with pension or private annuity income, even excluding Social Security, has increased even more dramatically than the portion with earnings and asset income, although the total with government or private pensions is still relatively small.

One of Shearon's most detailed data sources was for civil service and other Federal pensions. For example, she found that 24,727 persons were receiving military pensions (including 160 persons from the Coast Guard's Life Saving Service). About 10,000 former civil servants who had been involuntarily separated after more than 30 years of service were receiving annuities. An "other Federal employees" category of annuitants included 553 retired Lighthouse Service workers, 80 foreign service officers, 24 Department of Justice judges, and 9 Coast and Geodetic Survey commissioned officers. In all, less than 1 percent of the aged population were receiving Federal civil service or military retirement pensions, compared with about 3 percent in 1979. An additional 0.6 percent were receiving veterans' benefits, compared with about 4 percent in 1979.

The only other sources of income for the self-dependent in 1937 were State and/or local pensions and private pensions and annuities. The data available from State reports for 1937 indicated that 5,771 persons aged 65 and older were receiving benefits from the 11 States with plans for employees other than policemen, firemen, and teachers. (The number of beneficiaries per State ranged from 37 in Maine and 50 in Colorado to 2,941 in New York.)

Estimates from the National Education Association suggested that about 7,000 teachers aged 65 or older were receiving benefits from 59 local systems. An estimated 25,000 policemen and firemen were assumed to

¹¹ Marjorie Shearon, "Economic Status of the Aged," page 7.

¹² Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1956, 1956, table 234.

¹³ Marjorie Shearon, "Economic Status of the Aged," page 8.

¹⁴ Susan Grad, *Income of the Population Aged 55 and Over*, tables 1 and 27.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, table 29.

be receiving retirement benefits under various local plans. This latter estimate was derived from the number of policemen and firemen counted in the 1930 census (204,700). Shearon then assumed that all were covered by retirement systems, and that the ratio of retirees to active workers was 10–15 percent. Thus, she calculated that between 20,500 and 30,750 policemen and firemen were aged 65 or older and were retired. Shearon used the figure 25,000—roughly the midpoint of the range—as the basis for her estimate. An estimate of 10,000 other municipal retirees was similarly calculated.

In sum, about 0.9 percent of those aged 65 and older were estimated to be receiving State or local pensions in the mid-1930's. Today, approximately 5 percent of the aged are beneficiaries of some 5,788 State and local plans.¹⁶

Shearon guessed that about 150,000 persons (including 53,000 pensioners of the largest railroads) were receiving private industrial pensions at the end of 1936. A private survey had suggested that Canada and the United States together might have a total of 175,000 persons receiving such pensions. The estimate of 150,000 pensioners in the United States was derived “by considering the ratio of the total population of the United States to that in Canada and the ratio of group insurance business in the two countries. It [was] assumed that 5 percent of total industrial pensioners may be Canadians and that approximately 10 percent are under 65.”¹⁷ Shearon noted, however, that the 150,000 figure might be too high, because at the beginning of 1935, only 116,145 pensioners, including those under age 65, in both the United States and Canada were receiving pensions under plans operated by 145 companies and about 50 railroads, as well as under all industrial group annuity contracts.

She also reported that the total number of employees covered by these various plans at the beginning of 1935 was about 2.5 million or 5 percent of the civilian labor force.¹⁸ Today, about half of all full-time private wage and salary workers, or 30 percent of the total civilian labor force, is in employment covered by private industrial plans.¹⁹

In addition to those covered by private industrial plans, Shearon calculated that 35,000 were receiving benefits from other private pensions and that 204,000

were receiving income from private insurance annuities. Thus, 5 percent of all aged individuals were estimated to be receiving income from all these private sources in 1937, compared with 17 percent of aged individuals in 1979.²⁰ Even now, however, only 2 percent of the aged units rely on private pensions or annuities for 50 percent or more of their income.²¹

The biggest difference in income sources of the aged between 1937 and now is, of course, the availability of Social Security benefits. As indicated earlier, the Current Population Survey reported that 90 percent of the noninstitutionalized population aged 65 and older now receive Social Security and/or railroad retirement benefits.²² In 1978, for 58 percent of the aged units, Social Security represented at least half of all income, and for 23 percent, it represented at least 90 percent of all income.²³

The Dependent

As noted above, in 1937, about two-thirds of the population aged 65 and older was classified as being dependent: 17 percent were estimated to be relying primarily on public assistance programs or private charity and almost 50 percent had no means of support except friends or relatives.

Today, only 9 percent of all aged individuals receive State or Federal public assistance (primarily Supplemental Security Income) and only 1.5 percent report having no income.²⁴ And only 1.7 percent of all aged persons rely on public assistance for 90 percent or more of their income.²⁵ Thus, very roughly, only 3 percent or so of those aged 65 or older could be called dependent in the same sense used in 1937.

Among those receiving income from sources other than friends or relatives in 1936–37 were:

- About 9,000 aged blind persons receiving public assistance payments under the Social Security Act.
- About 1,116,000 persons receiving old-age assistance, also under the Social Security Act.
- About 200,000 aged persons receiving State-administered general relief, poor relief, or old-age assistance *not* under the Social Security Act.

In addition, about 58,000 aged persons were estimated to be participating in Federal programs administered by the Works Progress Administration.

Shearon also estimated that 10,000 persons could be receiving income from private charities, although she

¹⁶ Bureau of the Census, “Money Income” and Committee on Education and Labor, U.S. House of Representatives, **Pension Task Force Report on Public Employee Retirement Systems** (Committee Print, 95th Congress, 2nd Session), March 1978.

¹⁷ Marjorie Shearon, “Economic Status of the Aged,” page 10.

¹⁸ The number of “gainful workers” (that is, the civilian labor force in the year) was 52.9 million. Bureau of the Census, **Statistical Abstract, 1956**, page 197.

¹⁹ Daniel J. Beller, “Coverage Patterns of Full-Time Employees Under Private Retirement Plans,” **Social Security Bulletin**, July 1981, page 3. The total civilian labor force was 103 million in 1979. Bureau of the Census, **Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1980, 1980**, page 395.

²⁰ Bureau of the Census, “Money Income,” table 55.

²¹ Susan Grad, **Income of the Population Aged 55 and Over**, table 29.

²² Bureau of the Census, “Money Income,” table 55.

²³ Susan Grad, **Income of the Population 55 and Over**, table 29.

²⁴ Bureau of the Census, “Money Income,” table 55.

²⁵ Derived from Susan Grad, **Income of the Population 55 and Over**, tables 1 and 31.

acknowledged that this estimate was probably too high. She explained: "Pressure on private agencies is so great and limitation of funds so pronounced that it is clear the aged can count on little from this source." She added that the 10,000 estimate could be "doubled or trebled without changing the fact that the number of aged who receive regular support from private *organized* charity is negligible."

The Institutionalized Population

The institutionalized population also was considered dependent in 1937. Because this population is excluded from the Current Population Survey, the source of most of the current data cited here, it is being treated separately.

Shearon estimated that in 1936-37, about 196,000 persons—or 2.5 percent of those aged 65 and older—were institutionalized. These included:

- 17,000 in State and Federal homes for veterans and State homes for civilians.
- 72,000 in hospitals for mental illness.
- 2,000 in correctional institutions.
- 50,000 in local homes, almshouses, county homes, poor farms, and infirmaries.

Shearon noted: "In these various local institutions are to be found the friendless and destitute of all ages, the infirm, delinquent, dependent and defective. County homes and poor farms, which have been condemned in the main as expensive to operate and as socially inadequate to meet the needs of the aged, will probably be supplanted in time and the aged who are without friends or relatives or homes of their own and who require institutional care will be provided for in more appropriate ways."²⁶

In 1976, the most recent year for which survey data are available, about 1 million persons or about 4 percent of those aged 65 and older were institutionalized in long-term care facilities, according to a special Census survey.²⁷ Of these, 94 percent were in nursing homes. The remainder were in facilities for the physically or mentally handicapped or other facilities. The majority—60 percent—were in facilities operated by proprietary organizations. Thirty percent were in institutions operated by churches or other nonprofit groups, and 10 percent were in facilities operated by Federal, State, or local public agencies.

As shown in table 3, the most common source of financial support for these persons was Medicaid, received by 48 percent of the institutionalized residents.

²⁶ Marjorie Shearon, "Economic Status of the Aged," page 15.

²⁷ Bureau of the Census, "1976 Survey of Institutionalized Persons: A Study of Persons Receiving Long-Term Care," **Current Population Reports** (Special Studies Series P-23, No. 69), 1981.

Table 3.—Selected sources of support for the institutionalized population aged 65 and older, 1976

Source	1976
Total number	1,028,000
Total percent	100
With no support	8.4
With support ¹	91.6
Insurance or annuity	1.7
Retirement plan	4.7
Social Security	41.9
Medicare	5.3
Supplementary Security Income	6.2
Medicaid	47.5
Veterans' benefits	3.9
Other Federal programs . . . . .	.8
State or local assistance	4.1
Families	31.1

¹ Percents add to more than 100 because of overlapping receipt of income from multiple sources and because only selected categories are included.

Source: Bureau of the Census, "1976 Survey of Institutionalized Persons: A Study of Persons Receiving Long-Term Care," **Current Population Reports** (Special Studies Series P-23, No. 69), 1981, pages 110-111.

About 42 percent had some Social Security income, and 31 percent received support from their families.

As in 1937, the aged were not likely to be found in correctional institutions. As of September 1981, only 176 persons aged 65 or older were in Federal prisons (less than 1 percent of the total Federal prison population), according to administrative records.²⁸ A 1979 survey indicated that only 1,160 persons aged 66 or older were in State correctional facilities.²⁹

Program Administration, 1938

Unemployment Insurance

The "outstanding event" of January 1938, the **Bulletin** noted, was the start of full operation of the unemployment compensation program in 21 States and the District of Columbia.³⁰ This came at a time when unemployment was increasing again—it would reach 19 percent in 1938—after falling from a peak of 25 percent in 1933 to 14.3 percent in 1937.³¹ The large volume of applications for unemployment compensation led to "problems whose existence had been known or anticipated by only a relatively small group directly concerned with the administration of the program," according to a review of the startup operation.³² Noting that all States were experiencing some difficulties, the **Bulletin** reported that some were working 7-day weeks. However,

²⁸ Unpublished data from the Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons.

²⁹ Unpublished data from the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

³⁰ Bureau of Research and Statistics, "Social Security in Review," **Social Security Bulletin**, March 1938, page 3.

³¹ Bureau of the Census, **Statistical Abstract**, 1956, table 235, 1956.

³² Bureau of Research and Statistics, "Social Security in Review," page 3.

"Progress in this direction is being reported by all the States. Some delay, however, will be inevitable for a long time to come in a number of cases, either because of the failure of the worker to supply all the necessary information on his claim for benefits, because of delays on the part of the agency in obtaining records from delinquent employers, or because of disputes as to the benefit rights of the worker."³³

Other problems noted were "the interrelationship between unemployment and relief, administrative difficulties in the payment of benefits to workers who move across State lines, the problem of compensation for partial unemployment, and the inapplicability of unemployment compensation to protection against loss of income during periods of illness and disability."³⁴

The **Bulletin** also reported that "the relationship of sickness to problems of economic security and to possible development of a national health program" had been discussed in a recent report of a Presidentially appointed committee. The committee stated, "It is cause for grave concern, and for action, that the poor of our cities experience sickness and mortality rates as high as were the gross rates of 50 years ago A large proportion of the population—certainly one-third and perhaps one-half—is too poor to afford the full cost of adequate medical care on any basis."³⁵

Old-Age Insurance

Although monthly old-age insurance cash benefits would not begin for several years, the **Bulletin** noted "the enormous task of assigning account numbers to the workers covered by the program." Some 37.8 million numbers had been assigned by February 1938.³⁶ However, "The problem of recordkeeping for approximately 35 million potential beneficiaries has just begun."³⁷

The first Advisory Council had been appointed and had visited the Baltimore headquarters of the Social Security Board "to observe the process involved in setting up and maintaining the wage records of the millions of workers who are accumulating rights to benefits," and "expressed itself as being favorably impressed with the efficient way in which these operations are being conducted."³⁸

³³ Bureau of Research and Statistics, "Unemployment Compensation: Review of the Month," **Social Security Bulletin**, March 1938, page 17.

³⁴ Bureau of Research and Statistics, "Social Security in Review," page 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, page 4.

³⁶ According to unpublished data, in 1979 there were 205 million active Social Security accounts; more than 262 million numbers had been issued. Division of OASDI Statistics, Office of Research and Statistics, Office of Policy, Social Security Administration.

³⁷ Bureau of Research and Statistics, "Old-Age Insurance: Review of the Month," **Social Security Bulletin**, March 1938, page 75.

³⁸ Bureau of Research and Statistics, "Social Security in Review," page 4.

Claims for lump-sum death benefits were being processed at the rate of a thousand per day; the average benefit paid was \$31.68, or about \$182 in 1980 dollars. In 1981, about 5,400 lump-sum death payments were processed daily; the average award was \$253.³⁹

And even then, concern was being expressed about the size of the balance in the reserves. The **Bulletin** noted that several bills addressing Social Security financing had been introduced in Congress and that the issue had been discussed recently by the Advisory Council. The council, however, was not convinced that "immediate change is of greater importance than mature analysis." The council recommended that "still" further data be gathered.⁴⁰

Simplified tax collection forms and extensions of coverage were the concerns expressed by small businessmen in 1938. To the notion of extending coverage, President Roosevelt replied that he "was opposed to immediate extension of these programs to include all groups of the population." He remarked that "England has taken 27 years to work out its social security system and has amended its law almost every year."⁴¹

Assistance for the Needy

The **Bulletin** also reported that the transition was being made quickly from State to Federal financing of assistance for the needy aged, blind, and dependent. By January 1938, there were 35 States with plans approved by the Social Security Board for all three types of assistance and only one—Virginia—had not had a plan approved for at least one program.

"This comparative promptness in enacting old-age assistance legislation may possibly be explained by one or more of several circumstances," the **Bulletin** reported. "The dependent aged have always represented a large proportion of that population which is in need of public or private assistance. Prior to the Depression, many of the aged were cared for by their children. During and since the Depression, the care for the dependent aged has become more and more a public responsibility, since many children, because of reduced economic circumstances, are no longer able to support their parents."⁴²

The **Bulletin** continued, "Added to this fact . . . is the fact that [the aged] are, for the most part, unemployable and cannot, therefore, be aided through employment programs. It is only natural, therefore, that States should welcome a program by which part of

³⁹ Unpublished data, Division of OASDI Statistics, Office of Research and Statistics, Office of Policy, Social Security Administration.

⁴⁰ Bureau of Research and Statistics, "Old-Age Insurance," page 76.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Bureau of Research and Statistics, "Special Types of Public Assistance," **Social Security Bulletin**, March 1938, page 44.

the large cost of the care of this dependent group is met with Federal funds.”⁴³ Total assistance expenditures under the Social Security Act in January 1938, were \$39.5 million, of which \$31.2 million was for old-age assistance.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Ibid.*, page 45.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Over 4 decades later, the **Social Security Bulletin** continues as the journal of record for those programs for which the Social Security Administration (the Board’s successor agency) is responsible. During this period the scope and administration of the programs have changed with the Nation’s economy and as the demographics of the population the Act was designed to serve changed.