

Old-Age Assistance: Children's Contributions to Aged Parents

by SAUL KAPLAN*

In early 1953, in a nationwide study of recipients of old-age assistance that was sponsored by the Bureau of Public Assistance, the States collected information concerning the contributions that recipients were receiving from their adult children. The effect on the old-age assistance program of these contributions and of children's support of other aged parents is discussed in the following pages.

TRADITIONALLY, contributions from their adult children have represented a major source of support for aged parents who can no longer maintain themselves through their own resources. Today, with the increase in industrial employment and urban living and in the mobility of the population, with the development of old-age insurance programs, and with the adoption of the old-age assistance program as a means of meeting the requirements of needy aged individuals, children's contributions are less frequently the major source of income for aged persons who are no longer regularly employed. Nevertheless, these contributions have a substantial effect on the cost of old-age assistance.

The help that children give needy parents affects the old-age assistance program in two ways. First, such help serves to reduce the amount of the assistance payment when the parents are assistance recipients. Second, to the extent that contributions are sufficient when added to parents' other income to wipe out the need for assistance, they reduce the number of persons receiving assistance.

Inferences on these two effects of children's contributions can be made from data obtained in a study of requirements, income, and social characteristics of old-age assistance recipients. This study was conducted from December 1952 to May 1953 as a joint project of the Bureau of Public Assistance and the State agencies in 49 of the 53 jurisdictions admin-

istering old-age assistance programs.¹

The present article attempts to answer the following major questions: How many old-age assistance recipients live in the same home as their children, and how many receive contributions from such children in the form of cash or of shelter or other contributions in kind? How many recipients have children living outside the home, and how many obtain contributions from such children? What is the value of children's contributions? How do the assistance payments of parents receiving contributions from their children compare with those of parents not receiving contributions?

The article also attempts to answer certain questions on the effect that children's support of needy parents has on the number of assistance recipients: Are aged parents less likely than childless individuals to receive old-age assistance? How many more assistance recipients would there be if each State's recipient rate for parents were as great as the rate for childless individuals? How is the total recipient rate in a State influenced by the extent of children's support of needy, aged parents? What

¹ For study data reported in earlier issues of the *Social Security Bulletin*, see Charles E. Hawkins, "Recipients of Old-Age Assistance: Income and Resources" (April 1956); Charles E. Hawkins, "Recipients of Old-Age Assistance: Their Requirements" (February 1957); and Frank J. Hanmer, "Recipients of Old-Age Assistance: Personal and Social Characteristics" (April 1957). See also *Recipients of Old-Age Assistance in Early 1953 (Part I—State Data)*, Public Assistance Report No. 26, June 1955.

economic and program differences among the States are associated with the wide interstate differences in the extent of children's support?

Description of Contributions

Almost 3 out of every 4 old-age assistance recipients in early 1953 had one or more children. Of every 1,000 of the 2.6 million recipients:

- 274 had no children.
- 41 had children in the same home as the recipient only.
- 460 had children living elsewhere only.
- 225 had children living both in the home and elsewhere.

Of the recipients sharing living arrangements with children, 59 percent lived in the children's home. Most of the others lived in their own homes with children present. Almost one-third of all parent-recipients received contributions from their children. Relatively far more of the recipients whose children were living in the home than of those with children elsewhere received contributions. More than half of those who had children only in the home receive contributions, compared with less than one-fifth of the recipients with children living elsewhere only (table 1). Recipients who had children liv-

Table 1.—Old-age assistance recipients: Number and percent receiving children's contributions, by status with respect to children, early 1953

Status	Number of recipients	Percent receiving contributions
Total.....	2,570,600	23.6
No children.....	705,300	-----
With children, total.....	1,865,200	32.5
Children in home only.....	104,700	50.8
Children elsewhere only.....	1,181,600	18.8
Children both in home and elsewhere.....	579,000	157.3

¹ Contributions received only from the children living in the home—46.2 percent; only from the children living elsewhere—4.7 percent; and from both children in the home and elsewhere—6.5 percent.

* Division of Program Statistics and Analysis, Bureau of Public Assistance.

Table 2.—Old-age assistance recipients: Number with contributions from children in the home or elsewhere and percentage distribution by type of contribution, early 1953

Location of children making contributions	Number	Percent ¹ receiving specified type of contribution		
		Cash	Shelter	Other contribution in kind
Total.....	² 606,700	28.2	62.0	43.4
In home.....	358,000	12.9	78.6	50.6
Elsewhere.....	286,200	45.2	33.8	33.3

¹ Sum of percentages exceeds 100 because some recipients received contributions of more than one type.

² Represents unduplicated number of individuals receiving contributions of one or more types from one or more children in the home or elsewhere.

ing at home and other children living elsewhere were most likely to receive contributions.

Because recipients with children outside the home made up the great majority (94 percent) of the recipients with children anywhere, the contributions received from such children represented a substantial proportion of the total. The number receiving some contributions from children outside the home amounted to 47.2 percent of the unduplicated total of those receiving contributions in cash or kind, 75.6 percent of those receiving cash, 25.8 percent of those receiving shelter, and 36.2 percent of those receiving other contributions in kind. Each of these percentages includes a small overlap, representing situations where recipients received contributions both from children in the home and from children elsewhere.

Type.—Shelter is the most frequent type of contribution received by recipients, and it is followed by other contributions in kind and cash. For every recipient in the 1953 study whose contribution from a child was in the form of cash, more than 2 obtained a contribution in the form of shelter.

Children in the home contribute shelter far more frequently than cash. Almost 4 out of every 5 recipients with contributions from children in the home received a contribution of shelter, compared with only about 1 out of 8 who received cash. Children living elsewhere, as might be

expected, contributed cash more frequently than shelter or other contributions in kind, as shown in table 2.

Factors related to cash contributions.—Recipients to whom their children made cash contributions represented approximately one-sixteenth of all recipients and one-eleventh of the recipients with children. Tabulations were made of survey data on the social characteristics of recipients with various types of cash income, including cash contributions from children. Data are not available on the characteristics of all recipients with contributions in cash or in kind; the characteristics associated with a high or low cash contribution rate are probably, though not necessarily, associated also with a high or low total contribution rate. As shown in table 3, the probability that old-age assistance recipients will obtain cash contributions from their children is associated with:

- Whether they are men or women; women receive cash contributions more frequently than men.
- Whether they are white or nonwhite; the white recipients receive cash contributions more often than the nonwhite.
- The size of the community they live in; recipients in metropolitan communities receive cash contributions more frequently than others.
- How old they are; the older the recipient, the more likely he is to receive a cash contribution from a child.
- Whether there are children in the home of the recipient; recipients with children in the home (including recipients living in the home of a son or daughter and recipients living in their own home with children present) receive cash contributions at a substantially greater rate than recipients with no children in the home.
- Their ability to take care of themselves; the less able they are to take care of their personal needs, such as feeding or dressing, the more frequently they receive a cash contribution from a son or daughter.

These factors, of course, do not operate singly. Thus, for example, recipients not able to care for their

Table 3.—Old-age assistance recipients: Number and percent receiving cash contributions from children, by characteristic, early 1953

Characteristic	Number	Percent receiving cash contributions from children
Total.....	2,570,600	16.5
Sex:		
Male.....	1,036,400	5.1
Female.....	1,534,300	7.4
Race:		
White.....	2,122,700	6.8
Nonwhite.....	447,900	4.6
Place of residence:		
Metropolitan area.....	1,062,600	7.7
Nonmetropolitan area.....	1,508,100	5.6
Age:		
65-69.....	543,500	5.2
70-74.....	768,500	6.3
75-79.....	638,100	6.5
80 and over.....	616,600	7.7
Living arrangements:		
In own home with children or in children's home.....	672,700	10.1
Other.....	² 1,897,900	5.1
Physical and mental condition:		
Able to care for self.....	2,110,200	6.1
Requiring considerable care from others.....	368,300	7.8
Bedridden.....	92,100	10.1

¹ Excludes 0.2 percent receiving cash contributions not recorded by amount.

² Of these, 62.8 percent had children and 8.1 percent of the group with children received cash contributions from them.

personal needs are more likely than other recipients to be women, to be of advanced age (75 or more), to live with children, and to receive cash contributions from them.

Value.—The value of children's contributions to old-age assistance recipients cannot be fully measured from the study data because money values were not reported for contributions in kind. Of the recipients with contributions, about 72 percent obtained contributions in kind only, and an additional group obtained contributions in both cash and kind. The value of the cash contributions can be estimated fairly accurately.

There was wide variation in the amounts contributed to the estimated 165,000² recipients who obtained cash contributions from their children, with considerable concentration at the small amounts. Among the re-

² The estimate is based on the number of cases in the sample with recorded amounts of cash contribution; not all the amounts of cash contributions were recorded. The total of 165,000 includes 125,000 with no spouse or spouse not receiving old-age assistance and 40,000 with a spouse receiving old-age assistance.

ipients with a spouse also receiving old-age assistance, 31.5 percent of the couples received less than \$10 a month and only 7.5 percent received \$50 or more. Among other recipients, 33.8 percent received less than \$10, compared with 6.8 percent whose contributions amounted to \$50 or more a month.

On the basis of the distribution of the contribution amounts for both groups of recipients shown in table 4, it is estimated that the average monthly contribution was \$19.78 for the recipients with no spouse or with a spouse not receiving old-age assistance and \$21.18 for the couples. Because of the relatively small number of recipients obtaining large contributions, the medians of \$13.92 for the "single" recipients and \$16.04 for the couples represent a closer approximation of what the typical recipient in each group might be expected to obtain in cash from his children.

For both groups of recipients the median cash contribution was lower for recipients sharing living arrangements with children than it was for recipients with other living arrangements. The median was \$15.44 for couples sharing living arrangements with children and \$16.46 for others; for "single" recipients the comparable medians were \$12.74 and \$15.45.

It is estimated that children's cash contributions amounted to about \$35 million in 1953 in the 49 States conducting the study. The value of contributions in kind cannot be estimated but was undoubtedly greater

Table 4.—Old-age assistance recipients receiving cash contributions: Percentage distribution, with and without spouse also receiving old-age assistance, by amount of contribution, early 1953

Monthly cash contribution	No spouse or spouse not receiving old-age assistance	Spouse receiving old-age assistance ¹
Total.....	100.0	100.0
Under \$5.00.....	12.1	9.6
5.00-9.99.....	21.7	21.9
10.00-14.99.....	20.7	16.4
15.00-19.99.....	9.7	10.3
20.00-24.99.....	10.4	14.6
25.00-34.99.....	12.1	10.3
35.00-49.99.....	6.4	9.3
50.00-74.99.....	4.5	6.0
75.00 or more.....	2.3	1.5

¹ Amounts shown represent the total for the couple.

Table 5.—Old-age assistance recipients: Distribution of States by percent of recipients with children outside the home and by percent with children in the home

Percent of recipients with children outside the home	Number of States with specified percent of recipients with children in the home				
	Total	11.6-18.1	18.3-22.2	22.4-30.2	31.0-48.3
Total number.....	49	12	12	13	12
36.7-55.3.....	12	6	5	1	0
56.5-69.2.....	12	2	5	3	2
70.2-75.4.....	13	2	1	5	5
75.7-85.3.....	12	2	1	4	5

because the recipients with such contributions outnumbered by far those receiving cash.

Presumably because of children's contributions, the parents who received contributions had smaller assistance payments, on the average, than those who did not. Among recipients with children in the home, the average assistance payment to those with no contributions from such children was \$51.86—\$14.54 greater than the average amount paid to those with contributions. Among recipients with children elsewhere, the average payment (\$50.30) to those receiving no contributions from such children was \$5.58 greater than the payment for those receiving contributions. Contributions of shelter and other contributions in kind exercised a greater influence in reducing assistance payments than cash contributions.

State variations.—The States vary widely in the proportions of recipients with children in the home and with children outside the home. Only 11.6 percent of the recipients in one State shared a home with children, and as many as 48.3 percent in another State; in the median State, 22.4 percent lived with children in the home. The percentage of recipients with children outside the home ranged from 36.7 to 85.3; in the median State, 70.2 percent had children outside the home. The States that have relatively few recipients with children outside the home also tend to have a low proportion with children in the home. The reverse is also true. States with a high percentage of recipients with children outside the home also tend to have a high per-

centage with children in the home (table 5).

Among recipients with children in the home, the percentage receiving contributions from such children ranged from 14.0 percent in one State to 83.9 percent in another; the median was 62.0. In the great majority of States (41), as in the country as a whole, the contributions of children in the home were most often in the form of shelter. In two States, shelter and other contributions in kind were about equally frequent. In four States other contributions in kind were most frequent, and in two States cash was most often contributed. The distribution of the States by the percentage of recipients who had children in the home and who received each type of contribution is shown in table 6.

Among recipients with children outside the home the proportion receiving contributions from such children ranged from 2.2 percent in one State to 36.3 percent in another; the median was 15.4 percent. Although in the country as a whole children outside the home contribute cash more frequently than shelter, this is not the pattern in most States. They made cash contributions most frequently in 18 States, shelter in 25 States, and other contributions in kind in six States. The national percentage with cash contributions from children outside the home is influenced by the relatively high percentage with such contributions in some States with large caseloads, where

Table 6.—Old-age assistance recipients with children in the home: Distribution of States by percent of such recipients receiving contributions from such children

Percent receiving contributions from children in home	Number of States by specified type of contribution			
	One or more types	Cash	Shelter	Other
Total number.....	49	49	49	49
Under 5.0.....	0	24	1	6
5.0-9.9.....	0	14	2	4
10.0-19.9.....	3	10	2	10
20.0-29.9.....	4	1	7	16
30.0-39.9.....	2	0	5	4
40.0-49.9.....	9	0	9	4
50.0-59.9.....	5	0	12	4
60.0-69.9.....	13	0	10	0
70.0-79.9.....	11	0	1	1
80.0-89.9.....	2	0	0	0

relatively few recipients have contributions in kind. In California, for example, which had 10.6 percent of all recipients in the 49 States participating in the study, 13.2 percent of the recipients with children outside the home received cash contributions, compared with 0.8 percent receiving shelter and the same low percentage for those getting contributions in kind. The number of recipients in California who obtained cash contributions from children living outside the home thus accounted for 17.4 percent of such recipients in the 49 States. Table 7 shows the distribution of the States by the proportion of old-age assistance recipients with children outside the home receiving each type of contribution from such children.

Effect of Children's Support of Aged Parents on Recipient Rates

Aged parents, especially those sharing homes with their children, are less likely than childless individuals to receive old-age assistance. In the country as a whole and in most States the recipient rate is smaller for aged parents than for childless individuals. Since there is no reason to believe that the independent income and resources of aged parents are greater than those of childless individuals, the lower recipient rate of the parents is believed to be caused by the support that many of them receive from their children.³

State differences in the extent of children's support of needy aged parents have a marked effect on old-age assistance recipient rates, since in nearly all States at least 70 percent of all aged persons are parents. Any factor, such as children's support, that affects the rate at which parents receive assistance is thus bound to have a significant effect on the total recipient rate in a State.

Because certain terms are used only in a specific sense in this section these special definitions are given in the following paragraphs.

³ A considerable amount of supporting detail has been omitted from this section of the article but has been incorporated in a technical supplement, which will be made available on request to the Bureau of Public Assistance.

Table 7.—Old-age assistance recipients with children outside the home: Distribution of States by percent of such recipients receiving contributions from such children

Percent receiving contributions from children outside home	Number of States by specified type of contribution			
	One or more types	Cash	Shelter	Other
Total number-----	49	49	49	49
Under 5.0.....	2	20	17	31
5.0-9.9.....	4	12	21	14
10.0-14.9.....	17	8	11	2
15.0-19.9.....	9	6	0	2
20.0-29.9.....	15	3	0	0
30.0-39.9.....	2	0	0	0

A *needy aged parent* is one whose resources plus income, if any, from earnings, retirement benefits, or other sources (excluding children's contributions) fall below the State's defined standard of economic security for aged persons. Under this concept, all parents receiving old-age assistance are needy individuals, but by no means all needy parents receive assistance.

A *needy parent is supported* by his children when the contributions he receives from them are sufficient, when added to his other income, to wipe out his need for assistance. In some States a parent is presumed to be supported by his children when the contributions he is expected to receive from them are sufficient, when added to his other income, to wipe out his need for assistance. Under this use of the term *support*, no aged person is considered to be supported by his children, even though he may receive contributions from them, so long as he receives old-age assistance. Unless otherwise specified, the term *support* includes both real and presumptive support.

Factors affecting recipient rates.—

If other things are equal, a State where many needy aged parents are supported by their children will have a lower recipient rate than a State where few needy parents are thus supported. The total recipient rate in a State is largely determined by three factors: (1) the State's standards for economic security, which determine the income and resources level below which an aged person is considered a needy individual; (2) the proportion of aged persons who are needy in relation to these stand-

ards; and (3) the proportion of needy parents who are supported by their children.

When assistance standards, the permitted maximum value for property owned by a recipient, and the proportion of persons who are needy are high and the proportion of needy parents who are supported by their children is low, a State will almost certainly have a high recipient rate. Similarly, when there are low assistance standards, a low maximum property value, a low proportion of aged persons who are needy, and a high proportion of needy parents who are supported by their children, a State will almost surely have a low recipient rate.

Differences among the States in the extent of children's support of aged persons are not known, but they can be inferred from estimated data on the percentages of aged persons in the population and among old-age assistance recipients who are parents. When the percentage of recipients who are parents is smaller than the percentage of all aged persons who are parents, the recipient rate for parents is necessarily smaller than the recipient rate for childless individuals in the State. If it is assumed that without children's support the recipient rate of parents would be at least as great as the recipient rate of childless individuals, the extent of children's support can be inferred from a comparison of the rates of the two groups of aged individuals. If the parent-recipient rate, for example, is only half the rate for childless recipients in a State, the number of parents receiving assistance would be doubled if the recipient rates of the two groups were equal; thus, the inferred number of aged parents being supported by their children would be at least equal to the number of parents presently receiving assistance.

If in each State aged parents received assistance at least as frequently as childless individuals, it is estimated that in 1953 there would have been at least half a million additional parents receiving assistance, representing more than a fourth of all the parents and more than a fifth of all aged persons receiving assistance. This is a minimum estimate because

it takes no account of the unknown number of parents supported by their children in the 13 States where it is estimated that parents receive assistance more frequently than childless individuals.⁴ The data for these 13 States suggest that without substantial children's support parents might in general receive assistance more frequently than childless individuals.

Children's support of aged persons not receiving assistance reduces considerably the cost of the old-age assistance program. It is estimated that without such support the cost of the old-age assistance program would be increased by \$200-\$300 million a year.

The lower the parent-recipient rate in relation to the childless-recipient rate in a State, the greater is the inferred number of parents supported by their children in relation to the number of parents receiving assistance. In the following discussion the term *relative parent-recipient rate* means the ratio of the parent-recipient rate to the childless-recipient rate; thus, a *relative parent-recipient rate* of 0.75 means that the proportion of parents receiving assistance (for example, 15 percent) is three-fourths as great as the proportion for the childless individuals (20 percent in this example).

With few exceptions the States where many needy aged parents are supported by their children (inferred from a low *relative parent-recipient rate*) have a low old-age assistance recipient rate, and States where few parents are supported by their children have a high recipient rate.

—20 of the 24 States with a low *relative parent-recipient rate* (0.75 or lower) had a low recipient rate (185 or fewer recipients per 1,000 aged individuals in June 1953).

—20 of the 24 States with a high *relative parent-recipient rate* (above 0.75) had a high recipient rate (more than 185 recipients per 1,000 aged individuals).

—Fully two-thirds of the total variation in old-age assistance recipient

rates may be explained on the basis of State variations in the *relative parent-recipient rate*. This degree of correlation is remarkably high for social data such as recipient rates, which are influenced by a multiplicity of social forces—some of them intangible and not lending themselves to quantitative representation.

Thus, the extent of children's support of aged persons in a State has a strong influence on the number of parents receiving assistance and on the total recipient rate.

In the States with a high rate of children's support for aged parents not receiving assistance, the cash contribution rate to assistance recipients from their children also tends to be higher than in other States. In other words, the forces that tend to keep relatively low the number of recipients with children also tend to increase the probability that, when an aged person with children does receive assistance, he will also receive some contribution from his children.

Factors affecting State variations in children's support.—Because of the strong impact of children's support of needy parents on old-age assistance recipient rates, it is important to analyze the factors that may account for the wide variations that are found among the States in the extent of children's support. These variations can be explained in large part on the basis of three factors: (1) the ability of children to contribute to the support of needy parents; (2) the level of the State's assistance standards for old-age assistance recipients; and (3) the extent to which needy parents have some income of their own, which, when supplemented by children's contributions, might be enough to wipe out their need for assistance.

State differences in the first factor—the ability of children to contribute to the support of needy parents—may be inferred from differences in per capita income. More children are likely to have enough income to support needy parents in high-income States than in low-income States; thus, in States with high per capita income, relatively many needy parents can be supported by their chil-

dren. In States with low per capita income, relatively few needy parents can be supported by their children. This hypothesis is supported by the following data:

—18 of the 24 States with a low per capita income (\$1,547 or less in 1953) had a low children's support level (as indicated by a *relative parent-recipient rate* greater than 0.75).

—18 of the 24 States with high per capita income (more than \$1,547 in 1953) had a high support level a *relative parent-recipient rate* of 0.75 or less).

—36 percent of the total variation among the States in the *relative parent-recipient rate* was explained by State variations in per capita income.

Differences among the States in the second factor—the level of State old-age assistance standards—are indicated by variations in the median requirements of recipients with no spouse or with a spouse who does not receive old-age assistance. In the country as a whole, such recipients constituted 78 percent of all recipients at the time of the 1953 study. When a needy parent's requirements are low, even a small contribution may be sufficient to wipe out his need for assistance; when his requirements are large, even a fairly sizable contribution from his children may not be sufficient for this purpose. Thus, the level of assistance requirements, in conjunction with the factor of per capita income, exercises an important influence on State variations in the extent to which parents are supported by their children. This conclusion is supported by the fact that 47 percent of the variation among States in the *relative parent-recipient rate* can be explained by the combination of the two factors—per capita income and assistance standards—compared with 36 percent that is explained on the basis of per capita income alone.

The variations among the States in the third factor—the extent to which needy parents have some income of their own—may be inferred from State differences in the proportion of aged persons receiving old-age and survivors insurance. Few needy parents are regularly employed,

⁴ No estimate has been made for Hawaii because of the absence of the kind of source data available for the other States participating in the study. Thus, the data in this section refer to 48 States although 49 participated in the study.

and the most common source of income of aged persons not in the labor market is old-age and survivors insurance benefits. The greater the number of needy parents with some income in a State and the greater their income, the greater becomes the probability that small supplementary contributions will be sufficient to wipe out parents' need for public assistance. The influence of old-age and survivors insurance on the children's support level is indicated by the following data:

- 16 of the 24 States with a low old-age and survivors insurance beneficiary rate (268 or fewer aged beneficiaries per 1,000 aged individuals in June 1953) had a low children's support level.
- 16 of the 24 States with a high old-age and survivors insurance rate (more than 268 aged beneficiaries per 1,000 aged individuals) had a children's support level that was high.
- 51 percent of the variation among States in the *relative parent-recipient rate* may be explained when the influence of the old-age and survivors insurance beneficiary rate is added to the two factors—per capita income and assistance standards.

The remaining 49 percent of the variation in the *relative parent-recipient rate* is the result of other factors that cannot be precisely measured. Among these factors are differences among the States in legislative and plan provisions on children's responsibility for the support of aged, needy parents and in lien and recovery provisions, if any. Restrictive provisions in these areas, like other restrictive provisions, serve to reduce the number of persons receiving old-age assistance without necessarily assuring that the needs of persons thus excluded from the program will be adequately met. The reduction in recipient rates produced by such restrictive provisions, under which many persons ineligible for assist-

ance may have unmet need, is obviously less desirable than the reduction of caseloads brought about by full employment, high income, adequate insurance benefits, and voluntary support from children who contribute to their parents without sacrificing the essential interests of their own families.

Summary

Of every 1,000 old-age assistance recipients in early 1953, 726 had one or more children. Forty-one had children in the same home as the recipient only, 460 had children living elsewhere only, and 225 had children both at home and elsewhere.

One-third of all recipients with children receive contributions from them in the form of cash or of shelter or other contributions in kind. Contributions are received more frequently by recipients with children in the home than by recipients with children elsewhere. Recipients with children both at home and elsewhere are most likely to receive contributions.

Children living in the home of the recipient contribute shelter more frequently than they do cash or other contributions in kind. Children living outside the home contribute cash more frequently than the other types of contributions.

Women receive contributions more frequently than men; persons of advanced age receive contributions more frequently than those in younger age groups; and persons not able to care for their personal needs receive contributions more often than recipients able to care for themselves.

Children's cash contributions to recipients amounted to an estimated \$35 million in 1953, and contributions in the form of shelter and other contributions in kind were undoubtedly greater in aggregate value than cash contributions.

In the country as a whole and in most States the recipient rate of aged parents is smaller than the recipient

rate of childless individuals, reflecting the effects of children's support of many needy parents.

Without children's support it is estimated that the number of recipients would have been increased in 1953 by at least half a million and that the cost of the program would have gone up by \$200-\$300 million.

States where relatively many needy parents are kept off the assistance rolls by virtue of real or presumed support from children tend to have low recipient rates, and States where few parents are actually or presumably supported by their children tend to have high recipient rates. Two-thirds of the total variation in recipient rates in 1953 can be explained on the basis of State variations in the ratio of the parent-recipient rate to the rate of childless recipients.

Differences among the States in the frequency of children's support of needy parents can largely be explained by (1) the ability of children to contribute to the support of needy parents, as inferred from State differences in per capita income; (2) the level of the State's assistance standards for recipients; and (3) the extent to which needy parents have some income of their own, which, when supplemented by children's contributions, might be enough to wipe out their need for assistance. Differences in this third factor may be inferred from State differences in the proportion of aged persons receiving old-age and survivors insurance benefits.

The frequency of children's support in the States is influenced upwards by high per capita income, low assistance standards, and a high old-age and survivors insurance beneficiary rate; it is influenced downwards by a low per capita income, high assistance standards, and a high old-age and survivors insurance beneficiary rate. The actual extent of support will reflect a combination of these factors plus other factors that cannot be precisely measured.