
SSI Payments to Lawfully Resident Aliens, 1978-79

by Lenna Kennedy and Jack Schmulowitz*

Under the supplemental security income program, persons who are not citizens of the United States but are otherwise eligible may, under current law, receive SSI payments if they have been lawfully admitted to the country for permanent residence or are permanently residing here under color of law. The report examines data on noncitizens among a group of recent SSI awardees, including their country of birth, length of residence in the United States, and certain demographic characteristics. The group is also compared with citizens awarded payments in the same period in terms of age, sex, income, and amount of SSI payment. In the 8 months from September 1978 to May 1979 about 6 percent of the 273,000 awards went to noncitizens. Almost half of them had lived in the United States at least 5 years at the time of the first award. As a group they are older than the citizens and have less income, as their higher SSI payments indicate.

Since 1974, the supplemental security income (SSI) program has made monthly cash payments to persons aged 65 or older, blind, or disabled whose income and resources are within the statutory limitations and who meet certain other conditions. In June 1979, about 4.2 million persons were receiving these payments.

Under another criterion of eligibility the applicant must be either a citizen of the United States or an alien

lawfully admitted for permanent residence or otherwise permanently residing in the United States under color of law (including any alien who is lawfully present in the United States as a result of the application of the provisions of section 203 (a) (7) or section 212 (d) (5) of the Immigration and Nationality Act).¹

Once an immigrant acquires permanent resident status and is a resident for at least 30 days, he is eligible for monthly SSI payments under the same conditions as a citizen. The amount of these payments will depend on the marital status, living arrangements, and income of the individual.

This article analyzes the extent to which aliens are represented among persons initially awarded SSI benefits from

*Division of Supplemental Security Studies, Office of Research and Statistics, Office of Policy, Social Security Administration. The study file was prepared by Donald L. Robin.

¹Section 1614 (a) (1) (B) of the Social Security Act. The cited sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act refer to political refugees from Communist-dominated countries and certain areas of the Middle East, as well as those granted parole status by the U.S. Attorney General.

mid-September 1978 to May 1979. Aliens and citizens are compared in terms of age, sex, incidence of earned and unearned income, living arrangements, amount of monthly SSI payment, and State of residence. For the aliens, the report also presents data on length of residence in the United States, country of birth, and the basis of admission—that is, whether they were Indochinese refugees, other political refugees, parolees, or other lawfully admitted aliens.

SSI Awardees, September 1978–May 1979

Information on the citizenship status of SSI recipients formerly was available only for a sample of cases from an ongoing administrative review conducted by the Social Security Administration. Beginning September 15, 1978, however, citizenship identification and first year of residence in the United States were annotated in the central record for each person awarded SSI payments.

During the first 8 months for which population data were available—mid-September 1978–May 1979—SSI payments were awarded to 17,900 persons lawfully admitted for permanent residence (table 1). They represented 6.6 percent of all 273,000 SSI awards during that period.² Of the re-

² An "award" is defined here as the initial determination of eligibility for individuals whose first month of eligibility is not earlier than January 1978.

Table 1.—Supplemental security income: Number of persons awarded federally administered payments, by citizenship status and reason for eligibility, September 1978–May 1979

Citizenship status and first year of residence	Total	Adults			Children	
		Aged	Blind	Disabled	Blind	Disabled
Total	272,893	105,159	3,375	136,223	888	27,248
U.S. citizens ¹	247,872	90,007	3,140	127,770	852	26,103
Aliens, total	17,901	12,846	156	4,513	19	367
Alien status:						
Conditionally admitted	3,777	2,798	36	843	5	95
Indochinese refugees	637	452	16	121	4	44
Other refugees ²	1,693	1,196	11	452	1	33
Paroled by Attorney General	1,325	1,073	8	233	.....	11
With deferred action	122	77	1	37	.....	7
Others lawfully admitted	14,124	10,048	120	3,670	14	272
Status not reported	7,120	2,306	79	3,940	17	778
First year of residence:						
All aliens	17,901	12,846	156	4,513	19	367
1977-79	7,842	6,708	56	948	6	124
1974-76	2,455	1,665	26	662	6	96
Before 1974	7,604	4,473	74	2,903	7	147
Conditionally admitted						
1977-79	3,777	2,798	36	843	5	95
1974-76	2,411	2,017	21	333	2	38
1974-76	515	317	7	156	2	33
Before 1974	851	464	8	354	1	24
Others lawfully admitted						
1977-79	14,124	10,048	120	3,670	14	272
1974-76	5,431	4,691	35	615	4	86
1974-76	1,940	1,348	19	506	4	63
Before 1974	6,753	4,009	66	2,549	6	123

¹ Includes some noncitizens residing in the United States before June 30, 1948 (considered lawfully admitted for permanent residence under Presidential amnesty).

² Sec. 203 (a) (7) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

³ Sec. 212 (d) (5) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

mainder, 248,000 were citizens and citizenship status was not reported for 7,100 persons.³

The majority of the noncitizen awardees (14,100) were admitted under the regular immigration procedures; 3,800 were admitted conditionally. The conditionally admitted include refugees from Indochina, other political refugees, those present under the Attorney General's parole authority, and a small number placed in deferred status as a result of court orders.

Those who were not citizens were more likely to have been awarded SSI payments on the basis of age than of blindness or disability. Thirty-nine percent of all awards studied were made to aged persons. Seventy-two percent of the awards made to aliens went to aged persons—a proportion that was almost twice as high.

Duration of Residence in the United States

Forty-two percent of the 17,900 aliens who received their SSI payments for the first time during the study period had already been living in the United States for at least 5 years, with their first year of residence before 1974. Fourteen percent had arrived between 1974 and 1976. The remainder (44 percent) first lived in this country in 1977, 1978, or 1979 (table 1).

³ Some of these persons may be noncitizens; one reason for nonreporting was "citizenship status being developed."

Viewed separately, the conditionally admitted showed a different pattern. Less than one-fourth of them were residents before 1974, and over 60 percent had come to this country since 1977. The "other lawfully admitted" aliens had been living in the United States for a longer period—almost half for 5 years or more.

Age and Sex

The noncitizens were, in general, substantially older than the citizens awarded payments during the same period. Eight out of 10 of the former were aged 60 or older, and 4 out of 10 of the latter. Few of the aliens were under age 30 (6 percent compared with 25 percent of the citizens). At the other end of the age scale, more aliens were aged 75 or older, especially among the later arrivals (table 2).

The distribution by sex was similar for citizens and noncitizens. In both groups, about 56 percent of the awardees were women.

State of Residence

Although aliens made up only 7 percent of SSI awards nationwide, most were residing in a small number of States. As a result, they represented a larger proportion of awards in those States. Seven in 10 of the alien awardees were living in California, Florida, New York, and Texas, and they accounted for 15 percent of all awardees in California, 14

Table 2.—Supplemental security income: Number and percentage distribution of persons awarded federally administered payments, by citizenship status, age, sex, and race, September 1978–May 1979

Age, sex, and race	All awardees ¹	U.S. citizens ²	Aliens					
			Conditionally admitted			Others lawfully admitted		
			Total	1974–79	Before 1974	Total	1974–79	Before 1974
Total number	272,893	247,872	3,777	2,926	851	14,124	7,371	6,753
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age: ³								
Under 18	10.5	11.1	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.0	2.0	1.9
18–21	6.2	6.5	1.3	.7	3.3	1.7	1.2	2.3
22–29	6.6	7.0	2.1	1.6	3.6	2.4	1.7	3.2
30–39	6.3	6.6	1.7	1.4	2.8	2.7	1.9	3.6
40–49	7.9	8.2	3.6	2.0	8.9	3.8	1.5	6.3
50–59	15.9	16.4	7.5	5.2	15.4	9.4	4.5	14.8
60–64	10.5	10.4	12.1	11.7	13.3	12.6	10.6	14.7
65–69	15.5	14.1	32.9	34.4	27.4	34.3	38.9	29.3
70–74	7.5	6.8	19.1	21.9	9.4	16.4	21.7	10.5
75–79	5.4	5.2	9.8	10.8	6.2	8.4	10.4	6.3
80 and over	7.6	7.7	7.5	7.7	6.9	6.3	5.6	7.1
Sex:								
Men	44.2	44.3	43.3	44.4	39.8	41.3	41.9	40.6
Women	55.8	55.7	56.7	55.6	60.2	58.7	58.1	59.4
Race:								
White	64.3	66.0	32.2	21.7	68.2	45.2	23.6	68.8
Black	23.6	24.9	1.4	1.1	2.5	6.3	5.9	6.8
Other	3.5	2.2	19.6	19.6	19.6	21.8	27.8	15.2
Unknown	8.6	6.9	46.8	57.6	9.8	26.7	42.7	9.3

¹ Includes awards for which citizenship status was not reported.

² Includes some noncitizens residing in the United States before June 30, 1948 (concentrated in New York, 12 percent in Florida, and 8 percent in Texas (table 3)).

The same States, together with Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, accounted for more than 80 percent of the noncitizens—whether with conditional or regular admission and regardless of length of residence. This pattern no doubt reflects the extent of admissions at some of the most frequent points-of-entry (New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, and the Southwestern border), as well as the tendency of new immigrants to settle, at least initially, in areas where persons of similar ethnic backgrounds reside.

Country of Birth

The 15,000 noncitizens for whom a country of birth was reported to the central record had come to the United States from more than 100 different countries and territories. Table 4 presents data for the countries accounting for at least 200 SSI awardees. The greatest proportion (12.1 percent) came from Mexico; almost as many (11.7 percent) were from the Republic of the Philippines. Other countries sizably represented were Cuba (9.2 percent), the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, (8.8 percent), Korea (4.9 percent), and China (4.8 percent). Indochina (including Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) accounted for 4.4 percent.

Persons from the Philippines, Mexico, and Cuba together made up about one-third of the noncitizens awarded SSI payments during this period. Forty-eight percent of the conditionally admitted were born in Indochina or in the U.S.S.R.

sidered lawfully admitted for permanent residence under Presidential amnesty.

³ Age on birthday in 1978.

Overall, 42 percent of the noncitizen awardees had lived in the United States before 1974. This proportion varied widely according to country of birth. From four countries, more than half of the awardees studied had emigrated at least 5 years before: Mexico (74 percent), Italy (59 percent), Cuba (56 percent), and Haiti (51 percent). From seven other countries, less than 20 percent had been U.S. residents that long: Korea (14 percent), Turkey (12 percent), China (11 percent), India (8 percent), the Philippines (7 percent), the U.S.S.R. (5 percent), and Indochina (3 percent).

Awardees in May 1979

About 4 out of 5 of those awarded SSI payments in the period studied were still receiving them in May 1979—the end of the period. The same proportion held for citizens, although noncitizens were somewhat more likely to have retained eligibility (88 percent). Noncitizens were also more likely to be receiving a federally administered State supplementary payment.⁴ Seventy-one percent of the noncitizens had such payments but only 41 percent of the citizens. This difference in the receipt of these payments reflects the geographic concentration of the noncitizens in States with federally administered supplementation programs, especially California and New York.

Income. Once an individual has been determined to be

⁴ Data on citizenship status are not available for persons receiving supplementary payments under State-administered programs, although some of the study cases probably do get such payments.

categorically eligible for SSI payments, the amount of the payment that person receives depends on marital status, income, and living arrangements. Among the May 1979 recipients who were citizens, 50 percent were also receiving a

cash benefit under the old-age, survivors, and disability insurance (OASDI) program. The proportion was higher among those whose SSI eligibility is based on age (84 percent) than among the blind and the disabled (27 percent).

Table 3.—Supplemental security income: Number of persons awarded federally administered payments, by citizenship status and first year of residence and by State, September 1978–May 1979

State	All awardees ¹	U.S. citizens ²	Aliens				
			Total	Status		First year of residence	
				Conditionally admitted ³	Others lawfully admitted	Before 1974	1974–79
Total	272,893	247,872	17,901	3,777	14,124	7,604	10,297
Alabama	7,794	7,581	15	2	13	4	11
Alaska	229	212	11	2	9	4	7
Arizona	2,023	1,858	105	6	99	82	23
Arkansas	3,796	3,562	15	10	5	4	11
California	40,778	33,264	6,265	1,253	5,012	2,746	3,519
Colorado	1,894	1,709	86	59	1,369	17	69
Connecticut	2,029	1,832	153	28	125	58	95
Delaware	709	673	13	5	8	6	7
District of Columbia	1,220	1,146	38	7	31	18	20
Florida	12,679	10,798	1,546	374	1,172	822	724
Georgia	9,186	8,916	50	18	32	12	38
Hawaii	847	595	243	22	221	62	181
Idaho	580	558	8	.....	8	4	4
Illinois	9,270	8,463	645	171	474	179	466
Indiana	3,921	3,825	35	9	26	13	22
Iowa	2,403	2,334	29	15	14	6	23
Kansas	1,576	1,523	29	16	13	8	21
Kentucky	5,801	5,619	22	10	12	1	21
Louisiana	6,311	5,912	111	50	61	38	73
Maine	1,719	1,665	21	3	18	14	7
Maryland	3,795	3,488	240	112	128	41	199
Massachusetts	8,896	8,032	687	92	595	329	358
Michigan	8,320	7,824	306	62	244	108	198
Minnesota	2,143	2,027	64	35	29	7	57
Mississippi	5,299	5,213	7	.....	.....	1	6
Missouri	5,972	5,770	70	38	32	12	58
Montana	565	535	11	6	5	4	7
Nebraska	1,187	1,147	14	7	7	4	10
Nevada	828	753	48	3	45	22	26
New Hampshire	468	450	11	2	9	5	6
New Jersey	8,689	7,566	896	113	783	330	566
New Mexico	1,404	1,288	48	8	40	32	16
New York	24,913	20,777	3,484	657	2,827	1,353	2,131
North Carolina	9,066	8,867	26	7	19	8	18
North Dakota	371	360	2	1	1	1	1
Ohio	8,443	8,065	190	85	105	33	157
Oklahoma	2,708	2,547	16	11	5	1	15
Oregon	1,774	1,656	80	23	57	25	55
Pennsylvania	12,930	12,389	302	135	167	76	226
Rhode Island	1,078	907	145	13	132	59	86
South Carolina	5,896	5,783	22	5	17	3	19
South Dakota	655	641	2	.....	2	1	1
Tennessee	7,332	7,121	32	16	16	6	26
Texas	16,240	14,345	1,246	152	1,094	898	348
Utah	504	456	27	12	15	8	19
Vermont	776	766	4	.....	4	4	.....
Virginia	6,269	6,006	174	40	134	24	150
Washington	3,247	2,966	203	42	161	71	132
West Virginia	2,629	2,571	5	4	1	.....	5
Wisconsin	5,489	5,287	94	43	51	37	57
Wyoming	142	136	5	.....	5	3	2
Unknown	4	2	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Northern Mariana Islands	96	86	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

¹ Includes awards for which citizenship status was not reported.
² Includes some noncitizens residing in the United States before June 30, 1948 (considered lawfully admitted for permanent residence under Presidential amnesty).

³ Includes Indochinese refugees, other refugees, Attorney General's parole, and deferred status aliens.

Table 4.—Supplemental security income: Number of aliens awarded federally administered payments, by country of birth and citizenship status, September 1978–May 1979

Country of birth	All aliens	Citizenship status					
		Conditionally admitted			Others lawfully admitted		
		Total	1974–79	Before 1974	Total	1974–79	Before 1974
Total	17,901	3,777	2,926	851	14,124	7,371	6,753
Country reported	15,020	3,429	2,826	603	11,591	7,076	4,515
China	726	189	173	16	537	475	62
Colombia	252	16	8	8	236	124	112
Cuba	1,378	387	240	147	991	368	623
Dominican Republic	529	18	8	10	511	260	251
Greece	221	22	12	10	199	122	77
Haiti	250	9	3	6	241	120	121
India	230	38	33	5	192	179	13
Indochina	667	562	549	13	105	101	4
Cambodia	34	30	22	8	4	4	.....
Laos	128	111	111	.....	17	16	1
Vietnam	505	421	416	5	84	81	3
Italy	371	25	6	19	346	146	200
Jamaica	321	18	11	7	303	165	138
Korea	737	104	84	20	633	551	82
Mexico	1,813	189	57	132	1,624	408	1,216
Portugal	446	30	17	13	416	250	166
Philippines	1,752	118	108	10	1,634	1,529	105
Turkey	317	116	110	6	201	170	31
China (Taiwan)	408	93	59	34	315	218	97
U.S.S.R.	1,325	1,083	1,070	13	242	189	53
All other	3,277	412	278	134	2,865	1,701	1,164
Country not reported	2,881	348	100	248	2,533	295	2,238

¹ Separate listing limited to countries with 200 or more aliens.

Their OASDI monthly benefits averaged \$175 (table 5).

The incidence of dual receipt of both SSI and OASDI benefits was much smaller among the alien recipients—only 9 percent for the conditionally admitted and 23 percent for the others. An even more substantial difference is seen when length of residence is considered. Among all alien awardees, those who had lived in the United States more than 5 years were receiving an OASDI benefit in about 2 out of 5 cases. As expected, almost none of the more recent immigrants had such income.

The rate of OASDI benefit receipt for the blind and the disabled aliens with more than 5 years residence was the same as that for citizens or a little higher. Aged citizens received social security benefits to a greater extent than aged aliens—84 percent, compared with 55 percent. Since aged persons made up the majority of the alien awardees, the lower rate of concurrent receipt in this group reduced the average for all aliens.

The younger immigrants might have worked long enough in this country to acquire the necessary coverage for disability insurance benefits (20 quarters out of the last 40 quarters before onset of disability). Because the aged aliens in the study may have been old on arrival, they would have had less opportunity to acquire OASDI coverage. Similarly, most of the recent immigrants did not have income from social security benefits.

Among those who were OASDI beneficiaries the amounts of their benefits were about the same for all the subgroups of

the study population—from \$182 for the “other lawfully admitted” aliens with more than 5 years’ residence to \$160 for those recently arrived.

When unearned income other than social security is examined, the aliens—particularly those recently arrived—appear to have more than the citizens. The proportions were 13–15 percent for the 1974–79 immigrants, 11–12 percent for those who arrived before 1974, and 10 percent for the citizens.

In the SSI program, “unearned income” includes a wide range of cash benefits, pensions, or compensation payments. Such income also includes “support and maintenance in kind” that must be considered if the recipient regularly receives some basic needs free or at reduced cost. Up to one-third of the maximum Federal payment level may be charged as unearned income in such cases.⁵

As table 5 shows, more of the alien recipients than of the citizens had income in the form of support and maintenance in kind—10 percent for the conditionally admitted, 6 percent for the other aliens, and only 4 percent for the citizens. The rates were also higher for recent immigrants than for those who had lived in the United States 5 years or longer.

This pattern reflects the degree of economic dependency of refugees, particularly political refugees. Often they bring little in the way of resources with them, and language as well

⁵ This one-third ceiling was established to match the statutory one-third reduction applicable to recipients living in the household of another and receiving support and maintenance there.

Table 5.—Supplemental security income: Number of persons awarded federally administered payments, September 1978–May 1979 and receiving SSI payments in May 1979: Percent concurrently receiving other income and average monthly amount of other income, by citizenship status and type of income and by reason for eligibility and first year of residence

Reason for eligibility and first year of residence	All awardees	With other income							
		Percent				Average monthly amount			
		Social security benefits	Other unearned income		Earned income	Other unearned income			Earned income
			Total	Support and maintenance in kind		Social security benefits	Total	Support and maintenance in kind	
All awardees ¹									
Total	217,617	47.3	9.8	4.4	3.3	\$174.93	\$80.47	\$63.97	\$105.40
Aged	91,440	76.0	4.5	2.5	3.6	174.24	90.28	63.29	111.26
Blind and disabled	126,177	26.6	13.7	5.6	3.1	176.37	78.13	64.19	100.41
United States citizens ²									
Total	196,440	49.6	9.6	4.3	3.4	\$174.91	\$80.23	\$63.84	\$99.19
Aged	77,851	84.4	3.5	1.9	3.8	174.30	93.75	61.77	99.03
Blind and disabled	118,589	26.7	13.7	5.8	3.1	176.17	77.94	64.29	99.33
Aliens conditionally admitted									
Total	3,395	9.2	14.6	9.6	.8	\$179.16	\$92.63	\$68.49	\$203.72
Aged	2,580	8.6	13.0	9.7	.8	175.67	95.92	69.32	227.13
Blind and disabled	815	11.3	19.8	9.3	.7	187.59	85.76	65.76	114.00
First year of residence:									
1974–79	2,706	1.0	15.3	10.7	.6	162.48	93.06	68.71	206.52
Aged	2,180	.8	14.1	10.7	.6	148.94	95.67	69.08	228.28
Blind and disabled	526	1.9	20.2	10.5	.6	185.50	85.50	67.16	105.00
Before 1974	689	41.7	12.2	5.4	1.7	180.73	90.52	66.75	199.75
Aged	400	51.3	7.3	4.0	2.3	177.88	98.58	72.87	225.33
Blind and disabled	289	28.4	19.0	7.3	1.0	187.84	86.27	62.09	123.00
Other lawfully admitted aliens									
Total	12,352	22.5	12.0	6.1	2.3	\$180.17	\$80.72	\$65.50	\$225.03
Aged	9,081	23.0	10.6	5.6	2.8	176.01	79.55	65.21	243.15
Blind and disabled	3,271	21.2	15.9	7.5	1.2	192.69	82.88	66.11	105.87
First year of residence:									
1974–79	6,699	2.4	13.3	7.0	2.0	158.66	78.67	66.19	266.67
Aged	5,538	2.2	12.7	6.7	2.2	151.28	75.72	65.42	282.54
Blind and disabled	1,161	3.4	16.2	8.4	1.0	179.26	89.72	62.10	105.42
Before 1974	5,654	46.3	10.5	5.0	2.7	181.53	83.78	64.35	188.80
Aged	3,543	55.4	7.4	3.8	3.6	177.54	89.81	64.62	205.60
Blind and disabled	2,111	31.1	15.7	6.9	1.2	193.49	79.02	64.10	106.08

¹ Includes awards for which citizenship status was not reported.

² Includes some noncitizens residing in the United States before June 30, 1948 (con-

sidered lawfully admitted for permanent residence under Presidential amnesty).

as other barriers may prevent them from quickly establishing independence. In the interim they receive help from their sponsors, relatives, or charitable organizations—income the SSI program considers as in kind.

About 3 percent of the citizens had earnings in May 1979. The corresponding figure for regularly admitted aliens was 2 percent; for the conditionally admitted, the proportion was less than 1 percent. As expected, the proportion of aliens with earnings rose with length of residence.

Living arrangements. Used as a determinant of Federal

payment amount, the term “living arrangements” does not denote the type of housing or indicate who shared living quarters with the SSI recipient. Rather, it indicates the financial arrangements for obtaining housing. An eligible individual who owns or rents a home or pays a proportionate share of joint living expenses is considered to be living in his or her own household and is eligible for the full Federal SSI payment level (less any countable income). If the individual is living in a household headed by a person other than a spouse and receives both support and maintenance there,

Table 6.—Supplemental security income: Number and percentage distribution of persons awarded federally administered payments, September 1978–May 1979, and receiving SSI payments in May 1979, by living arrangements and citizenship status

Living arrangements	All awardees ¹	U.S. citizens ²	Aliens					
			Conditionally admitted			Others lawfully admitted		
			Total	1974–79	Before 1974	Total	1974–79	Before 1974
Total number	217,617	196,440	3,395	2,706	689	12,353	6,699	5,654
Total percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Own household	79.3	81.1	68.8	68.6	69.6	51.4	35.0	70.8
Another's household	16.7	14.7	30.3	30.8	28.2	47.7	64.5	27.9
Institutional care covered by Medicaid	4.0	4.2	.9	.6	2.1	.9	.5	1.3

¹ Includes awards for which citizenship status was not reported.

² Includes some noncitizens residing in the United States before June 30, 1948 (con-

sidered lawfully admitted for permanent residence under Presidential amnesty).

the maximum Federal payment is two-thirds of the "own household" amount.⁶ A person in an institution who is

receiving more than half his or her support from Medicaid is eligible for a Federal payment of \$25.

⁶ At the time of this study the monthly Federal payment levels were: In own household, \$189.40 for an individual, \$284.10 for a couple; in another's household, \$126.27 for an individual, \$189.40 for a couple.

Table 6 shows the distribution of awardees in the study period by living arrangements. Among the citizens, about 15 percent were classified as "living in another's household."

Table 7.—Supplemental security income: Number of persons awarded federally administered payments, total and aged, September 1978–May 1979, and receiving SSI payments in May 1979, by type of payment and by citizenship status

Type of payment	All awardees ¹	U.S. citizens ²	Aliens					
			Conditionally admitted			Others lawfully admitted		
			Total	1974–79	Before 1974	Total	1974–79	Before 1974
Total								
Number of awardees								
Total	217,617	196,440	3,395	2,706	689	12,353	6,699	5,654
Federal SSI payments	198,221	178,084	3,326	2,679	647	11,750	6,611	5,139
Federal SSI payments only	123,738	115,970	1,221	951	270	3,367	1,645	1,722
Federal SSI and State supplementation	74,483	62,114	2,105	1,728	377	8,383	4,966	3,417
State supplementation	93,879	80,470	2,174	1,755	419	8,986	5,054	3,932
State supplementation only	19,396	18,356	69	27	42	603	88	515
Average monthly payment								
Total	\$115.64	\$111.40	\$185.68	\$196.85	\$141.84	\$160.13	\$182.27	\$133.89
Federal SSI payments	97.08	95.08	137.27	147.15	96.36	113.54	129.30	93.26
State supplementation	62.87	61.33	79.64	78.54	84.23	71.50	72.29	70.49
Aged persons								
Number of awardees								
Total	91,440	77,851	2,580	2,180	400	9,081	5,538	3,543
Federal SSI payments	78,064	65,195	2,527	2,158	369	8,608	5,464	3,144
Federal SSI payments only	47,516	43,018	939	791	148	2,415	1,342	1,073
Federal SSI and State supplementation	30,548	22,177	1,588	1,367	221	6,193	4,122	2,071
State supplementation	43,924	34,833	1,641	1,389	252	6,666	4,196	2,470
State supplementation only	13,376	12,656	53	22	31	473	74	399
Average monthly payment								
Total	\$86.68	\$75.00	\$186.31	\$196.31	\$131.80	\$158.20	\$182.20	\$120.69
Federal SSI payments	65.44	56.55	138.03	147.05	85.28	110.99	127.78	81.81
State supplementation	64.07	61.73	80.07	79.32	84.18	72.06	73.93	68.89

¹ Includes awards for which citizenship status was not reported.

² Includes some noncitizens residing in the United States before June 30, 1948 (con-

sidered lawfully admitted for permanent residence under Presidential amnesty).

This proportion was twice as high for the conditionally admitted aliens (30 percent), and even higher for the other lawfully admitted aliens (48 percent). Recent arrivals were more likely to live in another's household than those with longer residence. Few of the aliens were in Medicaid-supported institutions—less than 1 percent compared with 4 percent of the citizens.

Persons "in another's household," like those receiving "support and maintenance in kind," are dependent on someone else for a good part of their basic needs. This fact may reflect to some extent the process of adjustment in a new country. A study of Indochinese refugees receiving SSI payments found that a high proportion of them were "in another's household" when they first arrived in this country.⁷ Later data indicate some drop in this proportion as the refugees became self-supporting and moved out of the initial sponsorship situations.

Amounts of SSI payment. In May 1979, the average Federal SSI payment made to the awardees studied was \$97. This figure varied with citizenship status and first year of residence. Among citizens, the average was \$95, the conditionally admitted aliens received \$137, and the other aliens received \$114 (table 7). In the latter two groups, those with longer residence had lower payments. This pattern reflects the combined effects of lack of income and the incidence of "one-third reduction" cases among the noncitizen recipients.

Lack of other income results directly in a higher SSI payment. The category "living in another's household," although initially reducing the payment one-third (to \$126

during the study period), does include by definition persons who have so little income that they cannot share expenses. For these individuals, the SSI payment remains at about the two-thirds level. The net effect of these two factors is that SSI payments to aliens are generally higher than those to citizens.

Approximately 94,000 awardees were receiving, in addition to the Federal SSI payment, federally administered State supplements. About 19,000 of these persons got only the State payment because their income exceeded the Federal payment level. Among the citizens, 23 percent of those with State supplementation received only the State payment. For all aliens, this proportion was 6 percent; for those admitted between 1974 and 1979, the proportion was less than 2 percent.

Summary

Data on citizenship status and length of residence for those awarded SSI payments from September 1978 to May 1979 indicated that 1 in 16 was not a citizen. Among the noncitizens, almost half had lived here at least 5 years.

As a group, the aliens are older than the citizens awarded SSI payments during the same period and have less income, except for the in-kind support and maintenance that they are likely to receive from relatives or friends. Although they come from many countries, almost one-third were born in the Philippines, Cuba, or Mexico. They have tended to settle in a limited number of States. In terms of SSI program characteristics, noncitizens receive, on the average, higher Federal payments—a reflection of their lack of income. Many more of the alien awardees are living in "another's household" and receiving substantial support from that person.

⁷Lenna D. Kennedy, *Indochinese Refugees Receiving SSI Payments, January 1976* (Research and Statistics Note No. 23), Office of Research and Statistics, Social Security Administration, 1976.