

Personnel in State and Local Public Assistance Agencies, June 1949*

IN June 1949 approximately 56,000 persons were employed in the State and local offices of public assistance agencies administering the public assistance and related welfare programs. Though this number was about 30 percent larger than that in December 1945, over the same period the number of cases receiving assistance increased by about 40 percent—from 2.7 to 3.7 million. It is therefore apparent that the increase in staff, though large, has not been proportionate to the rise in work loads.

This article gives a summary of the staffing situation in public assistance agencies as shown in semiannual reports on personnel that have been submitted to the Bureau of Public Assistance since December 1942. During the early war years, when State public assistance agencies were faced with acute staff shortages and high rates of turn-over, efforts to interpret the staffing problem were severely hampered by the lack of factual information on the size and composition of staff; on the number of vacancies and the types of positions in which vacancy rates were highest; on rates of personnel turn-over, by type of position; and on the size of the individual work loads that visitors were attempting to carry. To meet the demand for information of this kind, the Bureau of Public Assistance in 1942 asked State public assistance agencies to participate voluntarily in a reporting project designed to collect data on their personnel. The number of agencies responding to this request grew from 27 in December 1942 to 55 in December 1948. Beginning with the report for June 1949,¹ all State

agencies administering approved plans for the special types of public assistance were required to submit a semiannual report on personnel.

For the 6 months ended June 1949, reports were received from 59 agencies² in 51 States, including the District of Columbia, Alaska, and Hawaii (table 1). The reports cover, in addition to personnel administering the three special types of public assistance, most of the paid staff administering general assistance.³ Administration of the four assistance programs occupies most of the staff time in these agencies; in some, however, a substantial block of time is devoted to related welfare programs, such as child welfare services, foster care, and probation and parole.

Size of Staff and Distribution

Since the beginning of the reporting project, the Bureau has prepared estimates of the number of employees in public assistance agencies, based in part on reported data and in part on estimates for those agencies that did not submit reports. The estimates for earlier periods have now been revised on the basis of the reported information for June 1949 and are presented in chart 1 and table 2, together with the June 1949 data.

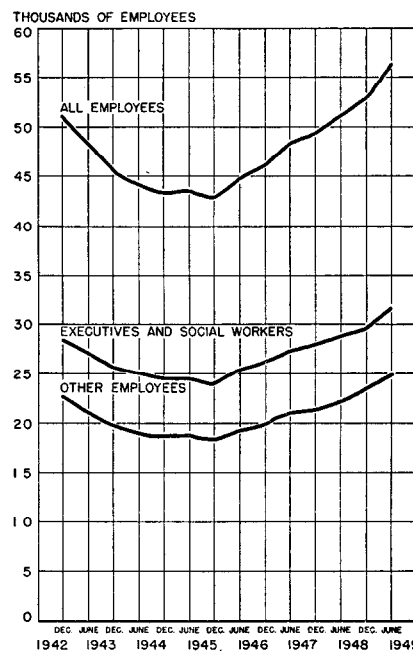
Part of the decline in staff during the war years 1942-45 occurred because the number of cases receiving assistance dropped substantially, particularly in aid to dependent children and general assistance. Some of the staff decline, however, reflected the

manpower shortage that prevailed throughout the Nation in all types of endeavor. The public assistance agencies' inability to recruit staff in sufficient numbers is reflected in the vacancy rates for that period, which were considerably higher than they are at present.

Since December 1945 the net increase in staff from period to period has been somewhat uneven. For the 6 months ended in June 1949, however, it was larger—both numerically and percentagewise—than for any previous period. Five-sixths of the agencies had staff increases during this period, though the California and New York agencies accounted for more than half the net increase of 3,300.

Approximately seven-eighths of the employees—49,000—work in local offices established in county, city, or other local government units, and the remaining one-eighth—7,300—are employees in the central and district offices of the State agencies. In about half the agencies, between 80 and 90

Chart 1.—Employees, by type of position, December 1942-June 1949



*Prepared by the Division of Statistics and Analysis, Bureau of Public Assistance, Social Security Administration.

¹ Form PA-2003, *Semiannual Statistical Report on Staff of Public Assistance Agencies*. The definitions and reporting instructions for this report had been coordinated in 1948 with those used by the Children's Bureau for a similar report on personnel administering child welfare services, submitted by most of the same State agencies.

² In 45 States only one State agency submits reports; for six States, however, more than one agency is counted for the purpose of this reporting project, as follows: three each in Delaware and New Jersey and two each in Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia.

³ For general assistance, data exclude the following sizable group for whom no basis of estimate is available: all employees in Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Texas; all local office employees in Maine; and some local office employees in Illinois and Wisconsin.

Table 2.—Number of employees and net change, December 1942–June 1949

Semiannual period ended—	Number of employees, end of period	Net change during period	
		Number	Percent
December 1942.....	51,200		
June 1943.....	48,400	-2,800	-5
December 1943.....	45,600	-2,800	-6
June 1944.....	44,300	-1,300	-3
December 1944.....	43,400	-900	-2
June 1945.....	43,600	+200	(¹)
December 1945.....	42,900	-700	-2
June 1946.....	44,800	+1,900	+4
December 1946.....	46,100	+1,300	+3
June 1947.....	48,400	+2,300	+5
December 1947.....	49,400	+1,000	+2
June 1948.....	51,100	+1,700	+3
December 1948.....	53,000	+1,900	+4
June 1949.....	56,300	+3,300	+6

¹ Increase of less than 0.5 percent.

percent of the staff are in local offices. Of the six agencies that report no local office staff, four including the District of Columbia administer their programs through a central office. The local office staff of the remaining two agencies is included in the report of another State assistance agency.

The size of an agency—State and local office staff combined—is determined to a considerable extent by the number, size, and types of programs that are administered by the agency. About three-fourths of the agencies have fewer than 1,000 employees each, and half employ fewer than 500. The two largest agencies—New York with almost 11,000 employees and California with 5,800—account for about 30 percent of all public assistance workers. The distribution of agencies by size of staff in June 1949 is as follows:

Size of staff	Number of agencies
Total.....	59
Less than 100.....	10
100-499.....	19
500-999.....	15
1,000-1,499.....	8
1,500-1,999.....	1
2,000 or more.....	6

Personnel in public assistance agencies have been classified in two ma-

ior groups—those in executive and social work positions, who comprise somewhat more than half (56 percent) of all staff; and those in all other types of positions, principally clerical (table 3). Within these major groups, employees have been further classified by the type of position. The largest single class in the first group are case workers (visitors), who number 23,000 and represent two-fifths of all staff; they, together with a small class known as director-workers, are directly responsible for determining the original and continued eligibility of recipients of assistance. The director-workers combine the functions of visitor and executive head in small local offices, which are fairly numerous in some States. Other classes included in this first group are directors—the executive heads of State and local offices and their immediate assistants; supervisors, whose major function is the supervision of visitors; field representatives in State office positions with supervisory responsibility for the over-all administration of local offices; and all other employees in social work positions, such as special service consultants, child welfare consultants, and medical social workers.

The 2,600 case supervisors are somewhat unevenly distributed among States. Three-fifths work in six of the largest agencies,⁴ though these agencies employ less than half the visitors. Seven State agencies⁵ have no employees whose major function is case supervision; in these agencies, the function is performed by directors of local offices, senior visitors, or State field representatives. With one exception, these seven agencies have relatively small staffs.

⁴ California, Illinois, Massachusetts (Department of Public Welfare), Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania.

⁵ Idaho, Kentucky, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey (Board of Children's Guardians), North Dakota, Texas.

Special interest attaches to the number of field representatives employed by State agencies, in view of the requirement in the Social Security Act that a State agency must either administer or supervise the administration of State-wide plans for public assistance. Though State agencies use many methods to supervise local offices, there is general acceptance of the belief that field representatives provide a channel of direct communication between the State agency and local offices that is essential to effective supervision. It is apparent from the following tabulation that this number varies considerably among agencies. A similar variation may exist in the amount and character of the supervision that field representatives are expected to provide.

Average number of local offices per field representative	Number of agencies
Total.....	140
Less than 3.....	3
3-4.9.....	8
5-6.9.....	9
7-8.9.....	12
9-10.9.....	3
11 or more.....	5

¹ Excludes agencies with no local offices and those for which comparable information on field staff and local offices supervised is not available.

Factors other than the number of local offices to be supervised must, of course, be considered in determining the size of the field staff. Among these are the number and size of the programs administered by local offices; the physical size of the State; and the unique administrative arrangements that exist in some States.

Turn-over

Turn-over rates afford some measure of the staffing problem of public assistance agencies. High rates of turn-over create a serious situation,

¹ A signifies old-age assistance; B, aid to the blind; C, aid to dependent children; G, general assistance, excluding all local office employees in Maine and some local office employees in Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin for whom no basis of estimate is available; O, other welfare programs, excluding institutional care.

² As of last pay-roll period.

³ State office represents central office and regional or district supervisory offices; local offices represent offices of county, city, or other local government units or branch offices of State agency directly administering public assistance. Employees of agencies administering programs entirely through central offices—Delaware Old Age Welfare Commission and Commission for the Blind, District of Columbia Division of Public Assistance, and Massachusetts Division of the Blind—counted

as State-office employees. Local office staff reported by the Division of Old-Age Assistance in New Jersey and by the Department of Welfare and Institutions in Virginia administer aid to the blind under the supervision of the State Commission for the Blind.

⁴ Excludes employees who were separated but returned within period. Number of employees for 6-month period represents average of numbers for December 1948 and June 1949.

⁵ Not computed; base less than 50.

⁶ See footnote 1 for limitations.

⁷ Excludes employees in workshop for the blind.

⁸ Excludes local office employees working on general assistance.

⁹ Excludes 583 town and city welfare or service officers.

primarily because frequent reassignments of case load not only interrupt the continuity of the relationship between the agency and client but also involve expenditure of staff time in the induction and training of new staff. On the other hand, to the extent that separations from an agency permit replacements with better-qualified personnel, turn-over in staff affords an opportunity to improve administration. During the war years, however, when experienced workers left an agency it was often difficult if not impossible to find replacements of even equal competence.

Since December 1945, separation rates generally have been lower and accession rates higher than during the war (table 4). The rise in the accession rate during the first half of 1949 resulted from the relatively large increases in California and New York, since more than two-thirds of the other agencies reported a decline in accession rates. More than four-fifths of the agencies also had lower separation rates for this period than for the preceding 6 months. In 11 agencies, separations comprised more than a sixth of total staff during the first half of 1949; eight of these agencies, however, had no net loss in staff since accessions more than compensated for staff losses. Data by agency on accession and separation rates are shown in table 1 and on accession rates, in chart 2.

Turn-over rates generally are lower

Table 3.—Employees, by type of position, June 1949

Positions	Total		State office		Local offices	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Total.....	56,300	100	7,300	100	49,000	100
Executives and social workers.....	31,500	56	2,000	28	29,500	60
Directors.....	2,200	4	500	6	1,700	3
Director-workers.....	1,700	3	1,700	3
Case workers.....	23,100	41	300	5	22,800	47
Supervisors.....	2,600	5	100	2	2,500	5
Field representatives.....	700	1	700	9
All other social workers.....	1,200	2	400	6	800	2
Other employees.....	24,800	44	5,300	72	19,500	40
Specialists.....	1,900	3	1,100	14	800	2
Clerks.....	21,500	38	4,000	55	17,500	36
All others.....	1,400	3	200	3	1,200	2

for executive and social work personnel than for other employees. During the first half of 1949, accessions to the executive and social work group were at the rate of 16.8 per 100 employees; for other employees, the rate was 22.2. Similarly the separation rate for executive and social work employees was 10.6 per 100 employees and for other employees, 16.6. The following tabulation shows the distribution of agencies by rate of turn-over for each group of employees.

Rate per 100 employees, January-June 1949	Accessions		Separations	
	Executive and social work employees	Other employees	Executive and social work employees	Other employees
Total number of agencies.....	51	51	51	51
Rate:				
Less than 10....	18	2	33	8
10-19.....	27	28	16	26
20-29.....	5	14	2	13
30-39.....	1	6	0	4
40-49.....	0	1	0	0

¹ Excludes 8 agencies with less than 50 employees.

Provisional, temporary, and emergency employees comprised a large proportion—almost 60 percent—of the staff hired during the first half of 1949.⁶ The range in this proportion was from about a fourth in three agencies to upwards of three-fourths in five agencies. Frequently appointments are made on a provisional, temporary, or emergency basis because civil-service lists are exhausted or because persons on the registers are not interested in the jobs offered. During the war, many States carried on continuous recruitment programs but did not give examinations on a regularly planned basis because there were too few candidates for jobs. Complete information on the number of provi-

⁶ For purposes of this reporting project, a provisional employee is one who meets minimum qualifications and who is appointed on a noncompetitive basis for a limited period pending the establishment of a register; a temporary employee is appointed under the merit system to a position that is expected to last 6 months or less; an emergency employee is appointed, without regard to the establishment of a register, to meet an emergency and for a limited period.

Table 4.—Accession and separation rates, June 1943-June 1949¹

Semiannual period ended—	Accessions per 100 employees	Separations per 100 employees
June 1943.....	15.3	19.0
December 1943.....	15.2	21.0
June 1944.....	16.4	16.8
December 1944.....	15.5	17.0
June 1945.....	14.9	13.7
December 1945.....	18.6	17.3
June 1946.....	20.5	16.3
December 1946.....	19.3	17.2
June 1947.....	17.9	13.7
December 1947.....	17.9	16.7
June 1948.....	16.6	13.1
December 1948.....	18.1	15.2
June 1949.....	19.2	13.3

¹ Based on data for varying numbers of reporting agencies in each 6-month period; excess of separations over accessions and of accessions over separations cannot be compared with net change shown in table 2, which includes estimates for agencies not reporting.

sional, temporary, and emergency employees in public assistance agencies is not available through this reporting project. For the States reporting the data, the proportion that such employees constituted of all employees was highest in 1947 and has since declined regularly. Incomplete data indicate that during the first half of 1949 such employees made up less than 15 percent of the total for all agencies.

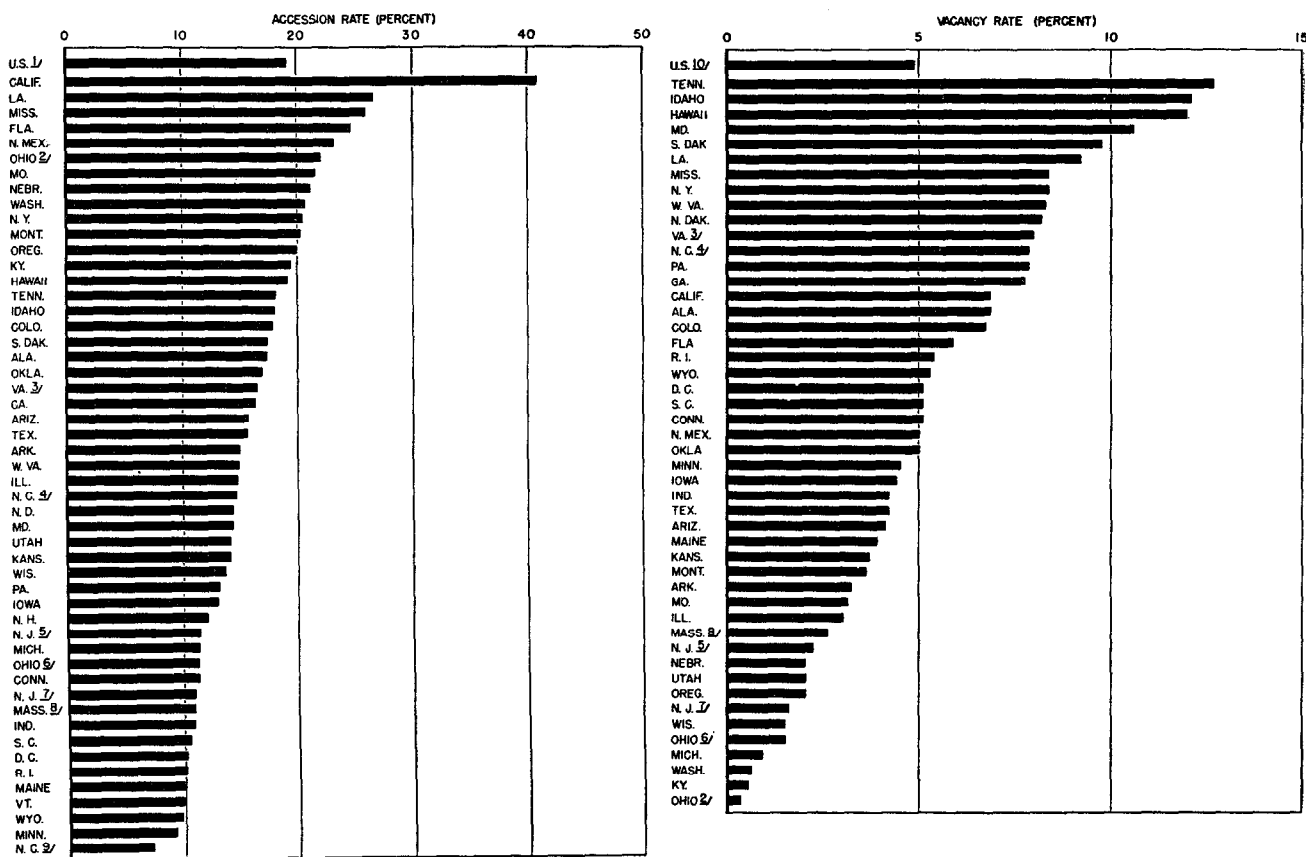
Vacancies

The fact that agencies are having less difficulty now than during the war years in recruiting staff is reflected in the lower vacancy rates that have been reported since the first half of 1947 (table 5) and in the relatively small increase in the number of vacancies despite a large increase in the number of positions. Thus, from June 1947 to June 1949, the number

Table 5.—Vacancy rates per 100 positions, by type of position, December 1942-June 1949

Semiannual period ended—	All positions	Executives and social workers	Other employees
December 1942.....	7.5	8.1	6.8
June 1943.....	6.8	7.8	5.4
December 1943.....	6.7	7.9	5.2
June 1944.....	7.1	8.5	5.2
December 1944.....	8.4	9.9	6.5
June 1945.....	7.5	8.9	5.6
December 1945.....	7.8	9.1	6.2
June 1946.....	7.2	8.3	5.7
December 1946.....	8.3	9.9	6.2
June 1947.....	6.2	7.2	5.0
December 1947.....	6.2	7.1	4.9
June 1948.....	5.8	6.8	4.6
December 1948.....	5.5	6.5	4.3
June 1949.....	5.8	6.2	5.4

Chart 2.—Accession rates, January–June 1949, and vacancy rates, June 1949



¹ 59 agencies in 51 States. Total includes Alaska, all agencies in Delaware, the Massachusetts Division of the Blind, Nevada, and the New Jersey and Virginia Commissions for the Blind, which are omitted from body of chart because base for each is less than 50.

² Division of Social Administration.

³ Department of Welfare and Institutions.

⁴ Board of Public Welfare.

⁵ Division of Old-Age Assistance.

⁶ Division of Aid for the Aged.

⁷ Board of Child Welfare.

⁸ Department of Public Welfare.

⁹ Commission for the Blind.

¹⁰ 59 agencies in 51 States. No vacancies in Alaska, the Delaware Commission for the Blind, New Hampshire, the New Jersey and North Carolina Commissions for the Blind, and Vermont.

of vacancies rose by only 300, from an estimated 3,200 in the earlier month to 3,500 in June 1949. Over the same 2-year period, the total number of positions increased from an estimated 51,600 in June 1947 to 59,800 in June 1949, or by about 8,000.

More than two-thirds of the agencies reported fewer vacancies in June 1949 than in the preceding December. The total number of vacancies for all agencies combined, however, increased by about 100 between the 2 months—principally because of the rise in the number of vacant positions in California and New York, which together accounted for more than two-fifths of all vacancies in June 1949.

Vacancy rates for June 1949 are shown by agency in table 1 and chart

2. In general, a relatively high vacancy rate indicates that an agency has a staffing problem. A low rate, however, does not always mean that optimum staffing, insofar as numbers are concerned, has been achieved. Thus in one agency the vacancy rate was less than 1 per 100 positions in December 1948 and June 1949. This agency, faced with a serious cut in its administrative appropriation in the first half of 1949, was obliged to lay off staff and to reduce the number of budgeted positions. As a result, though the vacancy rate remained low, the number of cases per visitor increased from about 200 in December to 250 in June.

As shown in table 5, vacancy rates in executive and social work positions are consistently higher than those for

all other positions, though for recent periods the difference between the two rates has narrowed somewhat. It is, of course, more difficult and takes a longer time to recruit for executive and social work positions than for other positions.

Case Loads per Visitor

A question of continuing concern to public assistance administrators in their efforts to attain efficient operation of their programs relates to the number of cases that should be assigned to a visitor. Attempts to provide an answer to this question have not been too successful in terms of supplying a standard against which each agency can measure its own practice. They have, however, brought

to light the many factors that must be considered in determining the size of visitors' work loads. Among the more important are the standards of work performance that an agency expects to maintain, the quality of staff, and the amount and kind of clerical services available to handle routine tasks. In addition, the number and types of eligibility factors that must be explored to determine eligibility for assistance, the frequency with which determinations of continued eligibility must be made, and the volume of applications in relation to cases receiving assistance have an important bearing on the number of cases a visitor can carry. In the last analysis, however, the weight that an individual administrator can give to these factors, either singly or collectively, is determined by the amount of money available to the agency for administration.

The data on the number of cases per visitor are estimated and thus are subject to some margin of error. Most workers in most agencies carry case loads comprising different types of assistance cases; usually the amount of time required to handle an old-age assistance case is less than that for cases of aid to dependent children or general assistance. As a result, other things being equal, average case loads per visitor are likely to be higher in agencies that have a relatively large proportion of old-age assistance cases in their total case loads. In the tabulation shown below, agencies have been classified by the average number of assistance cases per visitor without regard to the types of programs ad-

ministered. In the three agencies with average case loads per visitor of 300 or more, old-age assistance cases comprise from 75 to 90 percent of the total load. Among the four agencies at the other extreme—those in which the average case load is less than 100—are two that do not administer old-age assistance and two in which old-age assistance cases comprise less than half the total case load.

Number of assistance cases per visitor	Number of agencies
Total.....	152
Less than 100.....	4
100-149.....	11
150-199.....	13
200-249.....	13
250-299.....	8
300 or more.....	3

¹Data for 3 agencies (Commissions for the Blind in New Jersey, North Carolina, and Virginia) combined with those for another agency. Not computed for Delaware Board of Public Welfare and Delaware Commission for Blind because number of cases is less than 1,000 or for Alaska and Massachusetts Departments of Public Welfare because of the relatively large number of part-time employees.

To eliminate the effect of program differences, therefore, average case loads have been estimated by program. The estimates of case load per visitor by program show, on the average, how many cases of a given type a full-time visitor would carry if she worked on one program only. The wide range in the average case load per visitor, both by agency and by program, is shown in table 6 and in the following tabulation.

While these data do not supply the

Agency	Number of cases per visitor, ¹ June 1949			
	Old-age assistance	Aid to dependent children	Aid to the blind	General assistance
Highest.....	44 ¹	241	515	506
Median.....	224	113	228	108
Lowest.....	107	49	100	44

¹ Equivalent full-time visitor if she were working on 1 program only.

answer to the question of how many cases a visitor can or should carry, they show how many cases, on the average, visitors do carry. As such, the data afford a point of departure for further exploration of the factors underlying these wide differences among agencies and their significance in terms of efficient administration.

Table 6.—State public assistance agencies, by number of cases per visitor,¹ June 1949

Number of cases per visitor	Number of State agencies ²			
	Old-age assistance	Aid to dependent children	Aid to the blind	General assistance
Total number of agencies.....	49	45	25	27
Cases:				
Less than 100.....	0	16	0	11
100-149.....	6	18	6	8
150-199.....	11	9	4	4
200-249.....	8	2	7	2
250-299.....	14	0	2	1
300 and over.....	10	0	6	1

¹ Equivalent full-time visitor if she were working on one program only.

² Excludes agencies in which total case load for specified program was less than 1,000.

Notes and Brief Reports

Why Insured Older Workers Have Quarters Without Wage Credits

The average monthly wages, and therefore the monthly insurance benefits, of many beneficiaries under old-age and survivors insurance are low because in the years before they became entitled to benefits they received no wage credits in some calendar quarters. This fact is shown by the wage records regularly maintained by

the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, but the wage records do not show why these persons had no work in covered jobs in some quarters. The reasons—unemployment and layoffs, disability, work in noncovered employment, retirement before entitlement—are important, however, in an appraisal of the probable effectiveness of various plans for raising average monthly wages and benefits under the insurance program.

To obtain this information the Bu-

reau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, in the course of a survey of 442 primary beneficiaries in the Boston metropolitan area late in 1946, interviewed 250 primary beneficiaries with no wage credits in some of their divisor quarters.¹ The 442 beneficiaries in the survey formed a 26-percent sample of all persons in the Boston

¹ For the primary beneficiaries studied, the divisor quarters included all calendar quarters after 1936 and before the worker became entitled, excluding, for workers who attained age 65 before 1939, any quarter after that in which age 65 was attained.