



## AP<sup>®</sup> United States Government & Politics 2002 Sample Student Responses

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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the examination.

- a) The figure shows that, since 1965, the government has decreased its spending on benefits for children, while increasing those for the elderly. In 1965, about 37% of welfare spending was spent on children, which decreased to less than 25% by 1985. In contrast, the elderly received 21% of benefits in 1965, which increased to 33% in 1985.
- b) Two main factors explain this trend. First is the growing population of older people, while it has not yet peaked, it has definitely been expanding. Second is that the elderly have a much larger say in government than children. The elderly vote in high numbers while children can't vote and their younger parents vote less than the elderly. The elderly also have political action committees to promote their causes while children don't.
- c) Because elderly people vote more and are increasing in size, representatives pay more attention to what the <sup>elderly</sup> want, since representatives know they need the support of the elderly to be reelected. Political activism causes the concerns of the elderly to be heard more, so politicians spend more money on the elderly to make them happy. This money has to come from somewhere, so cuts are made from programs of less vocal people, like children. Also, even if the government was not increasing the amount of benefits per person, the number of elderly persons is going up, so spending would increase on them, while children, in comparison, have not been expanding as fast in the <sup>general</sup> population.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the examination.

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The United States government has social welfare spending for both the elderly and children. According to the Washington Post National Weekly Edition the percentage of children receiving benefits from the government has decreased, whereas that of the elderly has increase. This is between the years 1965 to 1986.

There are political factors that explain this trend. The baby boom after WWII means that now there are many more elderly people. All of these people get money from the government for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. In recent years the number of children being born has decreased, so the government is spending less money on them.

The programs the government sets up that give money to citizens are called entitlements. The more elderly people on Social Security and such programs means that less money gets put into other funds. Luckily, the amount of money spent for children has decreased only because the number of children has decreased. Basically, the benefits have switched sides; what used to go to the children now goes to the elderly and what used to go to the elderly now goes to the children. The once 37 percent of welfare for children is now only about 25 percent. In contrast, the 21 percent going to the elderly is at approximately 35 percent. Both of these percentages will probably continue in their respective directions.

In the figure given about the distribution of Government benefits, 1 major point sticks out, since around 1979 the amount of social welfare given out to the elderly has surpassed the amount given to children.

Two factors that have brought around this shift in Welfare spending are the aging of the American population; Meaning that since 1979 that the average age of Americans is getting older. The other being that the cost of providing the entitlements to the elderly has grown increasingly expensive.

These factors have changed the distribution of welfare greatly. With the growing population of elderly people in America, the current programs such as Social Security and Medicare are having to cover more and more people. These ~~programs~~ programs are growing very expensive in the modern day, with healthcare costs going up tremendously. Also Social Security is so expensive that the program is in great financial trouble, and its future is unsure.