

English Poor Laws

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A compulsory system of poor relief was instituted in England during the reign of Elizabeth I. Although the role played by poor relief was significantly modified by the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, the Crusade Against Outrelief of the 1870s, and the adoption of various social insurance programs in the early twentieth century, the Poor Law continued to assist the poor until it was replaced by the welfare state in 1948. For nearly three centuries, the Poor Law constituted "a welfare state in miniature," relieving the elderly, widows, children, the sick, the disabled, and the unemployed and underemployed (Blaug 1964). This essay will outline the changing role played by the Poor Law, focusing on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Origins of the Poor Law

While legislation dealing with vagrants and beggars dates back to the fourteenth century, perhaps the first English poor law legislation was enacted in 1536, instructing each parish to undertake voluntary weekly collections to assist the "impotent" poor. The parish had been the basic unit of local government since at least the fourteenth century, although Parliament imposed few if any civic functions on parishes before the sixteenth century. Parliament adopted several other statutes relating to the poor in the next sixty years, culminating with the Acts of 1597-98 and 1601 (43 Eliz. I c. 2), which established a compulsory system of poor relief that was administered and financed at the parish (local) level. These Acts laid the groundwork for the system of poor relief up to the adoption of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834. Relief was to be administered by a group of overseers, who were to assess a compulsory property tax, known as the poor rate, to assist those within the parish "having no means to maintain them." The poor were divided into three groups: able-bodied adults, children, and the old or non-able-bodied (impotent). The overseers were instructed to put the able-bodied to work, to give apprenticeships to poor children, and to provide "competent sums of money" to relieve the impotent.

Deteriorating economic conditions and loss of traditional forms of charity in the 1500s

The Elizabethan Poor Law was adopted largely in response to a serious deterioration in economic circumstances, combined with a decline in more traditional forms of charitable assistance. Sixteenth century England experienced rapid inflation, caused by rapid population growth, the debasement of the coinage in 1526 and 1544-46, and the inflow of American silver.

Grain prices more than tripled from 1490-1509 to 1550-69, and then increased by an additional 73 percent from 1550-69 to 1590-1609. The prices of other commodities increased nearly as rapidly -- the Phelps Brown and Hopkins price index rose by 391 percent from 1495-1504 to 1595-1604. Nominal wages increased at a much slower rate than did prices; as a result, real wages of agricultural and building laborers and of skilled craftsmen declined by about 60 percent over the course of the sixteenth century. This decline in purchasing power led to severe hardship for a large share of the population. Conditions were especially bad in 1595-98, when four consecutive poor harvests led to famine conditions. At the same time that the number of workers living in poverty increased, the supply of charitable assistance declined. The dissolution of the monasteries in 1536-40, followed by the dissolution of religious guilds, fraternities, almshouses, and hospitals in 1545-49, "destroyed much of the institutional fabric which had provided charity for the poor in the past" (Slack 1990). Given the circumstances, the Acts of 1597-98 and 1601 can be seen as an attempt by Parliament both to prevent starvation and to control public order.

The Poor Law, 1601-1750

It is difficult to determine how quickly parishes implemented the Poor Law. Paul Slack (1990) contends that in 1660 a third or more of parishes regularly were collecting poor rates, and that by 1700 poor rates were universal. The Board of Trade estimated that in 1696 expenditures on poor relief totaled £400,000 (see Table 1), slightly less than 1 percent of national income. No official statistics exist for this period concerning the number of persons relieved or the demographic characteristics of those relieved, but it is possible to get some idea of the makeup of the "pauper host" from local studies undertaken by historians. These suggest that, during the seventeenth century, the bulk of relief recipients were elderly, orphans, or widows with young children. In the first half of the century, orphans and lone-parent children made up a particularly large share of the relief rolls, while by the late seventeenth century in many parishes a majority of those collecting regular weekly "pensions" were aged sixty or older. Female pensioners outnumbered males by as much as three to one (Smith 1996). On average, the payment of weekly pensions made up about two-thirds of relief spending in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; the remainder went to casual benefits, often to able-bodied males in need of short-term relief because of sickness or unemployment.

Settlement Act of 1662

One of the issues that arose in the administration of relief was that of entitlement: did everyone within a parish have a legal right to relief? Parliament addressed this question in the Settlement Act of 1662, which formalized the notion that each person had a parish of settlement, and which gave parishes the right to remove within forty days of arrival any newcomer deemed "likely to be chargeable" as well as any non-settled applicant for relief. While Adam Smith, and some historians, argued that the Settlement Law put a serious brake on labor mobility, available

evidence suggests that parishes used it selectively, to keep out economically undesirable migrants such as single women, older workers, and men with large families.

Relief expenditures increased sharply in the first half of the eighteenth century, as can be seen in Table 1. Nominal expenditures increased by 72 percent from 1696 to 1748-50 despite the fact that prices were falling and population was growing slowly; real expenditures per capita increased by 84 percent. A large part of this rise was due to increasing pension benefits, especially for the elderly. Some areas also experienced an increase in the number of able-bodied relief recipients. In an attempt to deter some of the poor from applying for relief, Parliament in 1723 adopted the Workhouse Test Act, which empowered parishes to deny relief to any applicant who refused to enter a workhouse. While many parishes established workhouses as a result of the Act, these were often short-lived, and the vast majority of paupers continued to receive outdoor relief (that is, relief in their own homes).

The Poor Law, 1750-1834

The period from 1750 to 1820 witnessed an explosion in relief expenditures. Real per capita expenditures more than doubled from 1748-50 to 1803, and remained at a high level until the Poor Law was amended in 1834 (see Table 1). Relief expenditures increased from 1.0% of GDP in 1748-50 to a peak of 2.7% of GDP in 1818-20 (Lindert 1998). The demographic characteristics of the pauper host changed considerably in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially in the rural south and east of England. There was a sharp increase in numbers receiving casual benefits, as opposed to regular weekly pensions. The age distribution of those on relief became younger -- the share of paupers who were prime-aged (20- 59) increased significantly, and the share aged 60 and over declined. Finally, the share of relief recipients in the south and east who were male increased from about a third in 1760 to nearly two-thirds in 1820. In the north and west there also were shifts toward prime-age males and casual relief, but the magnitude of these changes was far smaller than elsewhere (King 2000).

Gilbert's Act and the Removal Act

There were two major pieces of legislation during this period. Gilbert's Act (1782) empowered parishes to join together to form unions for the purpose of relieving their poor. The Act stated that only the impotent poor should be relieved in workhouses; the able-bodied should either be found work or granted outdoor relief. To a large extent, Gilbert's Act simply legitimized the policies of a large number of parishes that found outdoor relief both less and expensive and more humane than workhouse relief. The other major piece of legislation was the Removal Act of 1795, which amended the Settlement Law so that no non-settled person could be removed from a parish unless he or she applied for relief.

Speenhamland System and other forms of poor relief

During this period, relief for the able-bodied took various forms, the most important of which were: allowances-in-aid-of-wages (the so-called Speenhamland system), child allowances for laborers with large families, and payments to seasonally unemployed agricultural laborers. The system of allowances-in-aid-of-wages was adopted by magistrates and parish overseers throughout large parts of southern England to assist the poor during crisis periods. The most famous allowance scale, though by no means the first, was that adopted by Berkshire magistrates at Speenhamland on May 6, 1795. Under the allowance system, a household head (whether employed or unemployed) was guaranteed a minimum weekly income, the level of which was determined by the price of bread and by the size of his or her family. Such scales typically were instituted only during years of high food prices, such as 1795-96 and 1800-01, and removed when prices declined. Child allowance payments were widespread in the rural south and east, which suggests that laborers' wages were too low to support large families. The typical parish paid a small weekly sum to laborers with four or more children under age 10 or 12. Seasonal unemployment had been a problem for agricultural laborers long before 1750, but the extent of seasonality increased in the second half of the eighteenth century as farmers in southern and eastern England responded to the sharp increase in grain prices by increasing their specialization in grain production. The increase in seasonal unemployment, combined with the decline in other sources of income, forced many agricultural laborers to apply for poor relief during the winter.

Regional differences in relief expenditures and recipients

Table 2 reports data for fifteen counties located throughout England on per capita relief expenditures for the years ending in March 1783-85, 1803, 1812, and 1831, and on relief recipients in 1802-03. Per capita expenditures were higher on average in agricultural counties than in more industrial counties, and were especially high in the grain-producing southern counties -- Oxford, Berkshire, Essex, Suffolk, and Sussex. The share of the population receiving poor relief in 1802-03 varied significantly across counties, being 15 to 23 percent in the grain-producing south and less than 10 percent in the north. The demographic characteristics of those relieved also differed across regions. In particular, the share of relief recipients who were elderly or disabled was higher in the north and west than it was in the south; by implication, the share that were able-bodied was higher in the south and east than elsewhere. Economic historians typically have concluded that these regional differences in relief expenditures and numbers on relief were caused by differences in economic circumstances; that is, poverty was more of a problem in the agricultural south and east than it was in the pastoral southwest or in the more industrial north (Blaug 1963; Boyer 1990). More recently, King (2000) has argued that the regional differences in poor relief were determined not by economic structure but rather by "very different welfare cultures on the part of both the poor and the poor law administrators."

Causes of the Increase in Relief to Able-bodied Males

What caused the increase in the number of able-bodied males on relief? In the second half of the eighteenth century, a large share of rural households in southern England suffered significant declines in real income. County-level cross-sectional data suggest that, on average, real wages for day laborers in agriculture declined by 19 percent from 1767-70 to 1795 in fifteen southern grain-producing counties, then remained roughly constant from 1795 to 1824, before increasing to a level in 1832 about 10 percent above that of 1770 (Bowley 1898). Farm-level time-series data yield a similar result -- real wages in the southeast declined by 13 percent from 1770-79 to 1800-09, and remained low until the 1820s (Clark 2001).

Enclosures

Some historians contend that the Parliamentary enclosure movement, and the plowing over of commons and waste land, reduced the access of rural households to land for growing food, grazing animals, and gathering fuel, and led to the immiseration of large numbers of agricultural laborers and their families (Hammond and Hammond 1911; Humphries 1990). More recent research, however, suggests that only a relatively small share of agricultural laborers had common rights, and that there was little open access common land in southeastern England by 1750 (Shaw-Taylor 2001; Clark and Clark 2001). Thus, the Hammonds and Humphries probably overstated the effect of late eighteenth-century enclosures on agricultural laborers' living standards, although those laborers who had common rights must have been hurt by enclosures.

Declining cottage industry

Finally, in some parts of the south and east, women and children were employed in wool spinning, lace making, straw plaiting, and other cottage industries. Employment opportunities in wool spinning, the largest cottage industry, declined in the late eighteenth century, and employment in the other cottage industries declined in the early nineteenth century (Pinchbeck 1930; Boyer 1990). The decline of cottage industry reduced the ability of women and children to contribute to household income. This, in combination with the decline in agricultural laborers' wage rates and, in some villages, the loss of common rights, caused many rural household's incomes in southern England to fall dangerously close to subsistence by 1795.

North and Midlands

The situation was different in the north and midlands. The real wages of day laborers in agriculture remained roughly constant from 1770 to 1810, and then increased sharply, so that by the 1820s wages were about 50 percent higher than they were in 1770 (Clark 2001). Moreover, while some parts of the north and midlands experienced a decline in cottage industry, in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire the concentration of textile production led to increased employment opportunities for women and children.

The Political Economy of the Poor Law, 1795-1834

A comparison of English poor relief with poor relief on the European continent reveals a puzzle: from 1795 to 1834 relief expenditures per capita, and expenditures as a share of national product, were significantly higher in England than on the continent. However, differences in spending between England and the continent were relatively small before 1795 and after 1834 (Lindert 1998). Simple economic explanations cannot account for the different patterns of English and continental relief.

Labor-hiring farmers take advantage of the poor relief system

The increase in relief spending in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was partly a result of politically-dominant farmers taking advantage of the poor relief system to shift some of their labor costs onto other taxpayers (Boyer 1990). Most rural parish vestries were dominated by labor-hiring farmers as a result of "the principle of weighting the right to vote according to the amount of property occupied," introduced by Gilbert's Act (1782), and extended in 1818 by the Parish Vestry Act (Brundage 1978). Relief expenditures were financed by a tax levied on all parishioners whose property value exceeded some minimum level. A typical rural parish's taxpayers can be divided into two groups: labor-hiring farmers and non-labor-hiring taxpayers (family farmers, shopkeepers, and artisans). In grain-producing areas, where there were large seasonal variations in the demand for labor, labor-hiring farmers anxious to secure an adequate peak season labor force were able to reduce costs by laying off unneeded workers during slack seasons and having them collect poor relief. Large farmers used their political power to tailor the administration of poor relief so as to lower their labor costs. Thus, some share of the increase in relief spending in the early nineteenth century represented a subsidy to labor-hiring farmers rather than a transfer from farmers and other taxpayers to agricultural laborers and their families. In pasture farming areas, where the demand for labor was fairly constant over the year, it was not in farmers' interests to shed labor during the winter, and the number of able-bodied laborers receiving casual relief was smaller. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 reduced the political power of labor-hiring farmers, which helps to account for the decline in relief expenditures after that date.

The New Poor Law, 1834-70

The increase in spending on poor relief in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, combined with the attacks on the Poor Laws by Thomas Malthus and other political economists and the agricultural laborers' revolt of 1830-31 (the Captain Swing riots), led the government in 1832 to appoint the Royal Commission to Investigate the Poor Laws. The Commission published its report, written by Nassau Senior and Edwin Chadwick, in March 1834. The report, described by historian R. H. Tawney (1926) as "brilliant, influential and wildly unhistorical," called for sweeping reforms of the Poor Law, including the grouping of parishes into Poor Law unions, the abolition of outdoor relief for the able-bodied and their families, and the

appointment of a centralized Poor Law Commission to direct the administration of poor relief. Soon after the report was published Parliament adopted the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which implemented some of the report's recommendations and left others, like the regulation of outdoor relief, to the three newly appointed Poor Law Commissioners.

By 1839 the vast majority of rural parishes had been grouped into poor law unions, and most of these had built or were building workhouses. On the other hand, the Commission met with strong opposition when it attempted in 1837 to set up unions in the industrial north, and the implementation of the New Poor Law was delayed in several industrial cities. In an attempt to regulate the granting of relief to able-bodied males, the Commission, and its replacement in 1847, the Poor Law Board, issued several orders to selected Poor Law Unions. The Outdoor Labour Test Order of 1842, sent to unions without workhouses or where the workhouse test was deemed unenforceable, stated that able-bodied males could be given outdoor relief only if they were set to work by the union. The Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of 1844 prohibited outdoor relief for both able-bodied males and females except on account of sickness or "sudden and urgent necessity." The Outdoor Relief Regulation Order of 1852 extended the labor test for those relieved outside of workhouses.

Historical debate about the effect of the New Poor Law

Historians do not agree on the effect of the New Poor Law on the local administration of relief. Some contend that the orders regulating outdoor relief largely were evaded by both rural and urban unions, many of whom continued to grant outdoor relief to unemployed and underemployed males (Rose 1970; Digby 1975). Others point to the falling numbers of able-bodied males receiving relief in the national statistics and the widespread construction of union workhouses, and conclude that the New Poor Law succeeded in abolishing outdoor relief for the able-bodied by 1850 (Williams 1981). A recent study by Lees (1998) found that in three London parishes and six provincial towns in the years around 1850 large numbers of prime-age males continued to apply for relief, and that a majority of those assisted were granted outdoor relief. The Poor Law also played an important role in assisting the unemployed in industrial cities during the cyclical downturns of 1841-42 and 1847-48 and the Lancashire cotton famine of 1862-65 (Boot 1990; Boyer 1997). There is no doubt, however, that spending on poor relief declined after 1834 (see Table 1). Real per capita relief expenditures fell by 43 percent from 1831 to 1841, and increased slowly thereafter.

Beginning in 1840, data on the number of persons receiving poor relief are available for two days a year, January 1 and July 1; the "official" estimates in Table 1 of the annual number relieved were constructed as the average of the number relieved on these two dates. Studies conducted by Poor Law administrators indicate that the number recorded in the day counts was less than half the number assisted during the year. Lees's "revised" estimates of annual relief recipients (see Table 1) assumes that the ratio of actual to counted paupers was 2.24 for 1850-

1900 and 2.15 for 1905-14; these suggest that from 1850 to 1870 about 10 percent of the population was assisted by the Poor Law each year. Given the temporary nature of most spells of relief, over a three year period as much as 25 percent of the population made use of the Poor Law (Lees 1998).

The Crusade Against Outrelief

In the 1870s Poor Law unions throughout England and Wales curtailed outdoor relief for all types of paupers. This change in policy, known as the Crusade Against Outrelief, was not a result of new government regulations, although it was encouraged by the newly formed Local Government Board (LGB). The Board was aided in convincing the public of the need for reform by the propaganda of the Charity Organization Society (COS), founded in 1869. The LGB and the COS maintained that the ready availability of outdoor relief destroyed the self-reliance of the poor. The COS went on to argue that the shift from outdoor to workhouse relief would significantly reduce the demand for assistance, since most applicants would refuse to enter workhouses, and therefore reduce Poor Law expenditures. A policy that promised to raise the morals of the poor *and* reduce taxes was hard for most Poor Law unions to resist (MacKinnon 1987).

The effect of the Crusade can be seen in Table 1. The deterrent effect associated with the workhouse led to a sharp fall in numbers on relief -- from 1871 to 1876, the number of paupers receiving outdoor relief fell by 33 percent. The share of paupers relieved in workhouses increased from 12-15 percent in 1841-71 to 22 percent in 1880, and it continued to rise to 35 percent in 1911. The extent of the crusade varied considerably across poor law unions. Urban unions typically relieved a much larger share of their paupers in workhouses than did rural unions, but there were significant differences in practice across cities. In 1893, over 70 percent of the paupers in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and in many London Poor Law unions received indoor relief; however, in Leeds, Bradford, Newcastle, Nottingham and several other industrial and mining cities the majority of paupers continued to receive outdoor relief (Booth 1894).

Change in the attitude of the poor toward relief

The last third of the nineteenth century also witnessed a change in the attitude of the poor towards relief. Prior to 1870, a large share of the working class regarded access to public relief as an entitlement, although they rejected the workhouse as a form of relief. Their opinions changed over time, however, and by the end of the century most workers viewed poor relief as stigmatizing (Lees 1998). This change in perceptions led many poor people to go to great lengths to avoid applying for relief, and available evidence suggests that there were large differences between poverty rates and pauperism rates in late Victorian Britain. For example, in York in 1900, 3,451 persons received poor relief at some point during the year, less than half of the 7,230 persons estimated by Rowntree to be living in primary poverty.

The Declining Role of the Poor Law, 1870-1914

Increased availability of alternative sources of assistance

The share of the population on relief fell sharply from 1871 to 1876, and then continued to decline, at a much slower pace, until 1914. Real per capita relief expenditures increased from 1876 to 1914, largely because the Poor Law provided increasing amounts of medical care for the poor. Otherwise, the role played by the Poor Law declined over this period, due in large part to an increase in the availability of alternative sources of assistance. There was a sharp increase in the second half of the nineteenth century in the membership of friendly societies -- mutual help associations providing sickness, accident, and death benefits, and sometimes old age (superannuation) benefits -- and of trade unions providing mutual insurance policies. The benefits provided workers and their families with some protection against income loss, and few who belonged to friendly societies or unions providing "friendly" benefits ever needed to apply to the Poor Law for assistance.

Work relief

Local governments continued to assist unemployed males after 1870, but typically not through the Poor Law. Beginning with the Chamberlain Circular in 1886 the Local Government Board encouraged cities to set up work relief projects when unemployment was high. The circular stated that "it is not desirable that the working classes should be familiarised with Poor Law relief," and that the work provided should "not involve the stigma of pauperism." In 1905 Parliament adopted the Unemployed Workman Act, which established in all large cities distress committees to provide temporary employment to workers who were unemployed because of a "dislocation of trade."

Liberal welfare reforms, 1906-1911

Between 1906 and 1911 Parliament passed several pieces of social welfare legislation collectively known as the Liberal welfare reforms. These laws provided free meals and medical inspections (later treatment) for needy school children (1906, 1907, 1912) and weekly pensions for poor persons over age 70 (1908), and established national sickness and unemployment insurance (1911). The Liberal reforms purposely reduced the role played by poor relief, and paved the way for the abolition of the Poor Law.

The Last Years of the Poor Law

During the interwar period the Poor Law served as a residual safety net, assisting those who fell through the cracks of the existing social insurance policies. The high unemployment of 1921-38 led to a sharp increase in numbers on relief. The official count of relief recipients rose from 748,000 in 1914 to 1,449,000 in 1922; the number relieved averaged 1,379,800 from 1922 to 1938. A large share of those on relief were unemployed workers and their dependents,

especially in 1922-26. Despite the extension of unemployment insurance in 1920 to virtually all workers except the self-employed and those in agriculture or domestic service, there still were large numbers who either did not qualify for unemployment benefits or who had exhausted their benefits, and many of them turned to the Poor Law for assistance. The vast majority were given outdoor relief; from 1921 to 1923 the number of outdoor relief recipients increased by 1,051,000 while the number receiving indoor relief increased by 21,000.

The Poor Law becomes redundant and is repealed

Despite the important role played by poor relief during the interwar period, the government continued to adopt policies, which bypassed the Poor Law and left it "to die by attrition and surgical removals of essential organs" (Lees 1998). The Local Government Act of 1929 abolished the Poor Law unions, and transferred the administration of poor relief to the counties and county boroughs. In 1934 the responsibility for assisting those unemployed who were outside the unemployment insurance system was transferred from the Poor Law to the Unemployment Assistance Board. Finally, from 1945 to 1948, Parliament adopted a series of laws that together formed the basis for the welfare state, and made the Poor Law redundant. The National Assistance Act of 1948 officially repealed all existing Poor Law legislation, and replaced the Poor Law with the National Assistance Board to act as a residual relief agency.

Table 1

Relief Expenditures and Numbers on Relief, 1696-1936

Year	Expend. on Relief (£s)	Real expend. per capita 1803=100	Expend. as share of GDP (Slack)	Expend. as share of GDP (Lindert)	Number relieved (Official) 1 000s	Share of Pop. relieved (Official)	Number relieved (Lees) 1 000s	Share of pop. relieved (Lees)	Share of paupers relieved indoors
1696	400	24.9	0.8						
1748-50	690	45.8	1.0	0.99					
1776	1 530	64.0	1.6	1.59					
1783-85	2 004	75.6	2.0	1.75					
1803	4 268	100.0	1.9	2.15	1 041	11.4			8.0
1813	6 656	91.8		2.58					
1818	7 871	116.8							
1821	6 959	113.6		2.66					
1826	5 929	91.8							
1831	6 799	107.9		2.00					
1836	4 718	81.1							
1841	4 761	61.8		1.12	1 299	8.3	2 910	18.5	14.8

1846	4 954	69.4			1 332	8.0	2 984	17.8	15.0
1851	4 963	67.8		1.07	941	5.3	2 108	11.9	12.1
1856	6 004	62.0			917	4.9	2 054	10.9	13.6
1861	5 779	60.0		0.86	884	4.4	1 980	9.9	13.2
1866	6 440	65.0			916	4.3	2 052	9.7	13.7
1871	7 887	73.3			1 037	4.6	2 323	10.3	14.2
1876	7 336	62.8			749	3.1	1 678	7.0	18.1
1881	8 102	69.1		0.70	791	3.1	1 772	6.9	22.3
1886	8 296	72.0			781	2.9	1 749	6.4	23.2
1891	8 643	72.3			760	2.6	1 702	5.9	24.0
1896	10 216	84.7			816	2.7	1 828	6.0	25.9
1901	11 549	84.7			777	2.4	1 671	5.2	29.2
1906	14 036	96.9			892	2.6	1 918	5.6	31.1
1911	15 023	93.6			886	2.5	1 905	5.3	35.1
1921	31 925	75.3			627	1.7			35.7
1926	40 083	128.3			1 331	3.4			17.7
1931	38 561	133.9			1 090	2.7			21.5
1936	44 379	165.7			1 472	3.6			12.6

Notes: Relief expenditure data are for the year ended on March 25. In calculating real per capita expenditures, I used cost of living and population data for the previous year.

Table 2

County-level Poor Relief Data, 1783-1831

	Per capita relief spending (s.)	Per capita relief spending (s.)	Per capita relief spending (s.)	Per capita relief spending (s.)	Percent of population relieved 1802-03	Share of Recipients over 60 or Disabled 1802-03	Percent of land in arable farming c. 1836	Share of Pop Employed in Agric 1821
County	1783-5	1802-03	1812	1831	1802-03	1802-03	c. 1836	1821
North								
Durham	2.78	6.50	9.92	6.83	9.3	22.8	54.9	20.5
Northumberland	2.81	6.67	7.92	6.25	8.8	32.2	46.5	26.8
Lancashire	3.48	4.42	7.42	4.42	6.7	15.0	27.1	11.2
West Riding	2.91	6.50	9.92	5.58	9.3	18.1	30.0	19.6
Midlands								

Stafford	4.30	6.92	8.50	6.50	9.1	17.2	44.8	26.6
Nottingham	3.42	6.33	10.83	6.50	6.8	17.3	na	35.4
Warwick	6.70	11.25	13.33	9.58	13.3	13.7	47.5	27.9
Southeast								
Oxford	7.07	16.17	24.83	16.92	19.4	13.2	55.8	55.4
Berkshire	8.65	15.08	27.08	15.75	20.0	12.7	58.5	53.3
Essex	9.10	12.08	24.58	17.17	16.4	12.7	72.4	55.7
Suffolk	7.35	11.42	19.33	18.33	16.6	11.4	70.3	55.9
Sussex	11.52	22.58	33.08	19.33	22.6	8.7	43.8	50.3
Southwest								
Devon	5.53	7.25	11.42	9.00	12.3	23.1	22.5	40.8
Somerset	5.24	8.92	12.25	8.83	12.0	20.8	24.4	42.8
Cornwall	3.62	5.83	9.42	6.67	6.6	31.0	23.8	37.7
England & Wales	4.06	8.92	12.75	10.08	11.4	16.0	48.0	33.0

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