



JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE DEMOCRATS



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ECONOMIC FACT SHEET

UPDATED MAY 2006

SOCIAL SECURITY FACTS

How many families receive Social Security?

- 48 million people receive Social Security benefits each month.
- 1 in 6 Americans receives benefits.
- Nearly 1 in 4 households has some income from Social Security.

Who gets Social Security?

- 30.4 million retired workers.
- 4.7 million widows and widowers.
- 6.5 million disabled workers.
- 4.0 million children.

How much are average monthly benefits?

- Retired worker: \$1,002
- Spouse of a retired worker: \$499
- Disabled worker and family: \$1,571
- Aged widow or widower: \$966
- Surviving child: \$656
- Widowed mother with two children: \$2,049

How important are Social Security benefits?

- More than 90 percent of people aged 65 or older get Social Security.
- Nearly 2 in 3 recipients get half or more of their income from Social Security.
- About 1 in 5 recipients gets all of their income from Social Security.

How is Social Security financed?

- Workers and employers each pay 6.2 percent of wages (a combined 12.4 percent) up to the taxable maximum (\$94,200 in 2006).
- Social Security also receives revenue from the income taxation of benefits of some higher-income beneficiaries and from interest on assets in the Trust Funds.
- About 76 percent of Social Security revenues from payroll taxes, income taxes on benefits, and interest went to pay current benefits and administrative expenses in 2005. The remainder was credited to the Trust Funds.
- Administrative expenses are less than 0.7 percent of total receipts.

Does Social Security face a financial crisis in the future?

- Assets in the Social Security Trust Funds were \$1.86 trillion at the end of 2005.
- Assets in the Trust Funds will peak at over \$3.7 trillion (in 2006 dollars) by the end of 2021.
- The Social Security Trust Funds will remain solvent until 2040 (2052 according to CBO).
- Even after 2040/2052, Social Security will still be able to pay 70 to 80 percent of scheduled benefits from annual tax revenues.

Estimates of Social Security's Solvency		
	Congressional Budget Office ¹	Social Security Administration ²
Solvency Measure		
Year in which annual spending exceeds annual tax revenue	2020	2017
Year in which annual spending exceeds total receipts (tax revenue plus interest income)	2033	2027
Year in which Trust Funds can no longer pay full benefits	2052	2040
Percentage of scheduled benefits payable when Trust Funds can no longer pay full benefits	78% in 2052	74% in 2040
¹ Congressional Budget Office, <i>Updated Long-Term Projections for Social Security</i> , Mar. 2005. ² 2006 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Disability Insurance Trust Funds.		

What is the size of the Social Security shortfall?

- The present value of the cumulative Social Security shortfall over the next 75 years is \$4.6 trillion (or 0.7 percent of cumulative GDP) according to the 2006 Social Security Trustees' Report. (Present value is the amount today that, with interest, could make up the difference between future cost and revenue.) In 2005, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the shortfall was 0.4 percent of cumulative GDP.
- To put that in perspective, the 75-year cost of making the Administration's tax cuts permanent is about 2 percent of GDP – three to five times the size of the Social Security shortfall.
- The 2006 Trustees' Report also provides an estimate of \$13.4 trillion for the size of the shortfall over an infinite future. The American Academy of Actuaries has said that estimates over an infinite future are misleading and make the financial condition of Social Security appear worse than it is.
- The estimates of the present value of the shortfall over both the 75-year projection window and an infinite future are higher than the figures reported in the 2005 report, largely due to a lower assumed real interest rate.

Note: Data on Social Security recipients as of December 31, 2005, from Social Security Administration, Office of the Chief Actuary, "Fact Sheet on the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program," January 3, 2006.