



Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust

Congressman John B. Larson

Improving Social Security is Important for Women

Women face more barriers than men in ensuring economic security in retirement:

- There has been an ongoing and persistent gender pay gap, with women in 2020 earning on average 83% of what men earn (and it is lower for African American women [64%] and Hispanic women [57%] compared to the wages of white non-Hispanic men).¹ The wage gap dramatically reduces women's Social Security benefits later in life.
- Despite the increasing numbers of women in today's workforce, they are left behind and face greater barriers to economic security as they age. Women are not only breadwinners, they are the primary caregivers. Women are more likely to take time away from the workforce, work part-time or leave the workforce altogether, to care for family members.
- As a result, women have lower benefits from employer pensions and less in retirement savings, and the average annual Social Security benefit for retired women is about \$16,500 compared to almost \$20,600 for retired men.²

Social Security benefits are especially important for women:

- Social Security lifts 8.7 million women out of poverty. Without Social Security, 41.3 percent of older women would be living in poverty.³
- Social Security's progressive benefit formula helps to lessen the harm caused by the gender pay gap and the effect of caregiving – Social Security provides larger benefits, relative to earnings, for individuals with lower earnings than to those with higher earnings.
- Social Security's benefits cannot be outlived and are fully protected against inflation – protections which are critical for women, given their longer average lifespans.
- With longer life expectancies than men, elderly women tend to live more years in retirement and have a greater chance of exhausting other sources of income.⁴

Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust increases women's retirement security:

- The across-the-board benefit increase and the stronger minimum benefit particularly help lower-wage workers, including women.
- Women are particularly helped by two of the bill's provisions: adding caregiver credits for those who take time out of the workforce to care for children or other family members and improving widow benefits for dual-earner couples.
- Social Security's cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is vital for women, given their longer lifespans. The bill improves the COLA, and also provides a 5% increase to all who have been receiving benefits for at least 20 years.

¹ https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2021/09/AAUW_SimpleTruth_2021_-fall_update.pdf

² https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/chartbooks/fast_facts/2021/fast_facts21.pdf

³ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/social-security-lifts-more-americans-above-poverty-than-any-other-program>

⁴ <https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/factsheets/women-alt.pdf>