

2021 quick reference

Social Security retirement benefits



Full retirement age (FRA)*

Year born	FRA
1937 or earlier	65
1938–1942	65 + 2 months for every year after 1937 until 1943
1943–1954	66
1955–1959	66 + 2 months for every year after 1954 until 1960
1960 and later	67

Reduced benefits at age 62

FRA	Monthly benefits reduction
65	20%
66	25%
67	30%

Delayed retirement credits

Year of birth	Yearly increase to age 70
1939–1940	7.0%
1941–1942	7.5%
1943 or later	8.0%

Beneficiaries entitled to collect off your benefits when you file

Your spouse	Benefits amount
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age 62 or over Any age if caring for your child who is under age 16 or disabled before age 22 Age 60 if widower 	<p>Spousal: 50% of your primary insurance amount (PIA), reduced if taken before FRA and further reduced by any benefits he or she is entitled to based on own work history[†]</p> <p>Survivor: 100% of your benefits, but not less than 82.5% of your PIA[†], ‡</p>
Your unmarried child	Benefits amount
Under age 18, up to age 19 if in high school, or any age if disabled before age 22	<p>Child: 50% of your PIA[†]</p> <p>Survivor: 75% of your PIA[†]</p>
Your ex-spouse	Benefits amount
Age 62 or over provided that you were married at least 10 years, he or she is not currently married and not entitled to equal or higher benefits based on his or her own record or someone else's	<p>Spousal: 50% of your PIA, reduced if taken before FRA, and further reduced by any benefits he or she is entitled to based on own work history</p> <p>Survivor: 100% of your benefits, but not less than 82.5% of your PIA[†]</p>

2021 FICA amounts

Taxable earnings base	\$142,800
Earnings required to earn one credit	\$1,470

Historical cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs)

Year	COLA (%)	Year	COLA (%)
2012	3.6	2017	0.3
2013	1.7	2018	2.0
2014	1.5	2019	2.8
2015	1.7	2020	1.6
2016	0.0	2021	1.3

You will be subject to an earnings test if you collect Social Security retirement benefits prior to your FRA.

2021 retirement earnings limits

Under FRA — \$1 of benefits withheld for every \$2 in earnings above the limit	\$18,960/year
Year individual reaches FRA — \$1 of benefits withheld for every \$3 in earnings above the limit for months prior to attaining FRA	\$50,520/year
Month individual reaches FRA and beyond — No reduction	Unlimited

If you have provisional income that exceeds the thresholds listed below, you must include as much as 85% of your benefits as income for federal income tax purposes. Provisional income is made up of earnings (including pensions, dividends and taxable interest from all sources), interest on tax-exempt bonds and 50% of Social Security benefits.

Provisional income thresholds

Single or head of household	Married, filing jointly
Base amount \$25,000 = not taxed	Base amount \$32,000 = not taxed
\$25,000–\$34,000 = up to 50% taxable	\$32,000–\$44,000 = up to 50% taxable
Above \$34,000 = up to 85% taxable	Above \$44,000 = up to 85% taxable

* The age at which an individual is entitled to his or her entire primary insurance amount. † Family maximum applies.

‡ Assuming surviving spouse has attained FRA.

If you first become eligible for Social Security retirement benefits in 2021 through attaining age 62 or becoming disabled or dying before age 62, the table below shows how your PIA will be calculated.

2021 primary insurance amount

AIME	PIA (as % of AIME)
\$0–\$996	90%
\$996–\$6,002	\$896.40 plus 32% of the excess over \$996
\$6,002 or higher	\$2,498.32 plus 15% of the excess over \$6,002

If you work for an employer who does not withhold FICA taxes from your salary, such as a government agency, the pension you receive based on that work may reduce your Social Security retirement benefits through an alternate calculation of your PIA.

2021 windfall elimination provision adjustment

Years of substantial SS earnings	PIA factor for first \$996 of AIME
20 or fewer	40%
21	45%
22	50%
23	55%
24	60%
25	65%
26	70%
27	75%
28	80%
29	85%
30 or more	90%

Important acronyms

- **AIME (Average indexed monthly earnings)** – The dollar amount used to calculate your PIA. To arrive at your AIME, your actual past earnings are adjusted using an “average wage index,” so the value of past earnings in relation to your more recent earnings is more accurate.
- **FICA (Federal insurance contributions act) tax** – A payroll tax imposed by the federal government on both employees and employers to fund Social Security and Medicare.
- **FRA (Full retirement age)** – The age at which you are entitled to your entire primary insurance amount. Varies between age 65 and age 67 depending on the year in which you were born.
- **GPO (Government pension offset)** – A reduction to the spousal and/or survivor benefits of individuals who receive a pension from a federal, state or local government based on work where FICA tax was not withheld. Social Security benefits will be reduced by two-thirds the monthly Government pension.
- **PIA (Primary insurance amount)** – The full monthly Social Security retirement benefit to which you become entitled at FRA. All benefits based on your earnings record (including spousal and survivor benefits) are based on your PIA.
- **WEP (Windfall elimination provision)** – A different method of computing the PIA of an individual receiving a pension based on earnings not covered by Social Security (i.e., did not pay FICA tax while paying into the pension system). WEP closes a loophole that enabled people who worked in both covered and non-covered employment from appearing to be low-wage workers and receiving higher benefits.

Source: Social Security Administration. See www.ssa.gov for more information, restrictions and limitations about Social Security benefits. Information represents Social Security laws as of October 2020. Congress has made changes to the laws in the past and can do so at any time.

This material is provided for educational purposes only and does not constitute investment advice. The information contained herein is based on current tax laws, which may change in the future. BlackRock cannot be held responsible for any direct or incidental loss resulting from applying any of the information provided in this publication or from any other source mentioned. The information provided in these materials does not constitute any legal, tax or accounting advice. Please consult with a qualified professional for this type of advice.

© 2020 BlackRock, Inc. All Rights Reserved. **BLACKROCK** is a trademark of BlackRock, Inc. or its subsidiaries in the United States and elsewhere. All other trademarks are those of their respective owners.

Prepared by BlackRock Investments, LLC, member FINRA. This material is provided for educational purposes only. BlackRock is not affiliated with any third party distributing this material.

Not FDIC Insured • May Lose Value • No Bank Guarantee

205735T-1020

