Fact Sheet: District of Columbia (2022)

Social Security Quick Facts

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Who Receives Benefits

- **Retirement benefits**: The largest group of beneficiaries in the District of Columbia are its 59,696 retired workers, who account for 71.4 percent of all Social Security beneficiaries.\(^1\)

- **Disability benefits**: The District of Columbia has 12,740 residents who receive Social Security disability income, representing 15.2 percent of its Social Security beneficiaries.\(^2\)

- **Spousal and survivor benefits**: In the District of Columbia, 5,842 spouses, former spouses, widows, widowers, and parents of deceased beneficiaries\(^3\) account for 7 percent of Social Security beneficiaries.\(^4\) An additional 5,369 children, representing 6.4 percent of Social Security beneficiaries, receive benefits.\(^5\)

Impact

- **Economic engine**. Annual Social Security benefits to District of Columbia residents pump at least $1.4 billion into the economy, with $1 billion paid annually to those receiving retirement benefits and their eligible family members, $130 million via survivors benefits, and an additional $200 million paid through the disability program.\(^6\) Recipients buy goods and services with their Social Security benefits, increasing business sales—which help not only the companies making those sales but also the firms that supply them. The result is more jobs and income to businesses and workers in the District of Columbia.

- **Reduced poverty**. Social Security lifted 16,000 District of Columbia residents 65 or older out of poverty from 2018 through 2020. In fact, 36.6 percent of residents in this age group would be in poverty but for Social Security benefits; that number falls to 19.4 percent when Social Security income is included. Nationally, the program lifted 16.1 million people 65 and older out of poverty, reducing the proportion below the poverty line from 37.8 percent to 9 percent.\(^7\)
Average Benefits

- **Retirement benefits:** In the District of Columbia, the average Social Security retired worker benefit is $1,521 per month (about $18,300 annually). The national average monthly retirement benefit is $1,544.  

- **Disability benefits:** In the District of Columbia, the average Social Security disabled worker benefit is $1,136 per month (about $13,600 annually). The national average monthly disabled worker benefit is $1,277.

Reliance

- **At least half of income.** 28,124 District of Columbia residents, or 32 percent of individuals 65 and older, live in families that rely on the program for at least half of their income.

- **More than 90% of income.** 17,442 District of Columbia residents, or 20 percent of individuals 65 and older, live in families that rely on the program for at least 90 percent of their income.

- **Black individuals rely more on Social Security income.** Overall, 29 percent of Black District of Columbia residents 65 and older live in families that rely on Social for at least 90 percent of their income as compared with 3 percent of white residents.

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3. In certain circumstances where parents are dependent on their children for at least half of their income, the parents can receive parent’s benefits.
8. OASDI Number and Total Monthly Benefits for Beneficiaries, age 65 or older, 2020: https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2021/5j.html#table5.j6.
9. OASDI Number and Total Monthly Benefits for Beneficiaries, age 65 or older, 2020: https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2021/5j.html#table5.j8.