Fact Sheet: Rhode Island (2022)

Social Security Quick Facts

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Who Receives Benefits

- **Retirement benefits**: The largest group of beneficiaries in Rhode Island are its 164,439 retired workers, who account for 71.5 percent of all Social Security beneficiaries in the state.¹

- **Disability benefits**: Rhode Island has 34,539 residents who receive Social Security disability income, representing 15 percent of the state’s Social Security beneficiaries.²

- **Spousal and survivor benefits**: In Rhode Island, 16,436 spouses, former spouses, widows, widowers, and parents of deceased beneficiaries³ account for 7.1 percent of the state’s Social Security beneficiaries. An additional 14,604 children, representing 6.3 percent of the state’s Social Security beneficiaries, receive benefits.⁴

Impact

- **Economic engine.** Annual Social Security benefits to Rhode Islanders pump at least $4 billion into the state economy, with $3 billion paid annually to those receiving retirement benefits and their eligible family members, $400 million via survivors benefits, and an additional $600 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 Rhode Island.

- **Reduced poverty.** Social Security lifted 50,000 Rhode Islanders 65 or older out of poverty from 2018 through 2020. In fact, 34.2 percent of the state’s residents in this age group would be in poverty but for Social Security benefits; that number falls to 8.1 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

More than one in five Rhode Island residents—230,018 people—receives Social Security benefits. These payments inject more than $4 billion into the state’s economy every year.
Average Benefits

- **Retirement benefits**: In Rhode Island, the average Social Security retired worker benefit is $1,587 per month (about $19,000 annually). The national average monthly retirement benefit is $1,544.\(^8\)
- **Disability benefits**: In Rhode Island, the average Social Security disabled worker benefit is $1,260 per month (about $15,100 annually). The national average monthly disabled worker benefit is $1,277.\(^9\)

Reliance

- **At least half of income.** 73,471 Rhode Island residents, or 39 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.** 32,925 Rhode Island residents, or 17 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, 43 percent of Black Rhode Island residents 65 and older live in families that rely on Social for at least 90 percent of their income as compared with 15 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.