AARP Public Policy Institute

Fact Sheet

Why Social Security and Medicare Are Vital to Older Americans in the District of Columbia

Social Security and Medicare provide income and health security to older Americans aged 65 and older. Growing debt burdens, dwindling pensions, and increasing health care costs make these programs more important than ever. Here’s what they do for the District of Columbia.

Social Security in the District of Columbia

Older DC residents count on Social Security benefits earned through a lifetime of work
- A total of 75 percent, or 53,597, of older DC residents received Social Security in 2012. The average annual benefit was $13,700.
- Social Security accounted for 24 percent of the typical older DC resident’s family income.
- Low- and middle-income older adults in DC are even more reliant on Social Security’s earned benefit, typically receiving 52 percent of their family income from Social Security.

Social Security keeps middle-income older DC residents from falling into poverty
- Census data show about 16 percent, or 11,489, of older DC residents living in poverty.
- Without Social Security income, an additional 19 percent of older DC residents, or 14,008 people, would fall into poverty.

Social Security plays an important role in DC’s economy
- Social Security provided $1 billion in benefits to all DC residents and $0.7 billion in benefits to DC residents aged 65 and older in 2012.

Medicare in the District of Columbia

Medicare provides guaranteed health coverage, but out-of-pocket costs are high
- On average, DC’s Medicare beneficiaries spent an estimated $5,441 on out-of-pocket health care costs in 2012.
- In 2012, older DC adults enrolled in Medicare spent, on average, an estimated 11 percent of their income on out-of-pocket health care costs.

Medicare provides peace of mind for older DC residents
- Nearly 91 percent of older DC residents were enrolled in Medicare in 2011.

Medicare plays an important role in DC’s economy
- The Medicare program spent an estimated $0.8 billion on health care services for 68,000 older DC residents in 2012.