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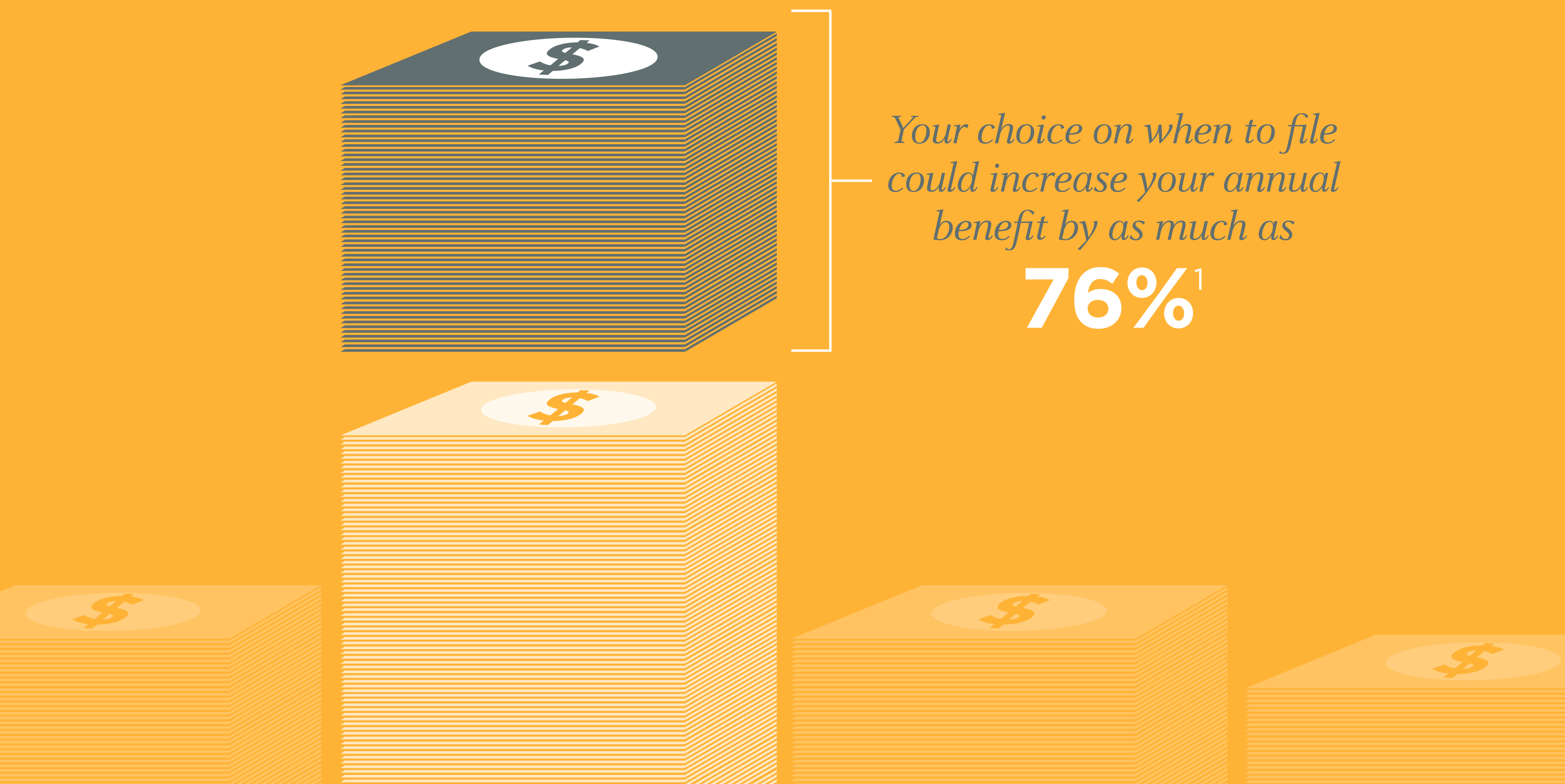
Social Security

Guide

NATIONWIDE RETIREMENT INSTITUTE®

Social Security

The choice of a lifetime



[1] Nationwide as of May 2015. Based on an individual with full retirement age of 66, comparing early filing at age 62 and receiving reduced benefits of 75% of primary insurance amount versus delayed filing at age 70 and receiving credits to increase benefits by 32% of primary insurance amount.

Social Security—It's more than a monthly check.

As you approach retirement, you'll likely face a host of decisions that could significantly impact your financial future. One of the critical decisions you'll make is filing for Social Security, which plays an important role in your broader retirement income plan.

Social Security is designed to provide older Americans and disabled persons with a portion of the financial support needed to cover essential retirement expenses. The program offers many benefits, such as:

- **Lifetime retirement income**
- **Payments indexed for inflation**
- **Certain spousal and survivor benefits**
- **Preferential tax treatment**

With benefits like these, it's easy to see why Social Security is so important to your financial plan for retirement.

Making a sound decision about Social Security benefits is critical for ensuring your financial security in retirement. It also requires a greater understanding of how Social Security income fits into your overall retirement plan. Along with this guide, your financial advisor can provide the information you need to make a decision that's right for you.

Social Security opportunities

Your decision about when and how to file for Social Security benefits is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. That's why we call it the choice of a lifetime.

Your Social Security decision will no doubt impact the amount of essential and discretionary income you have during retirement. And the decision you make is largely permanent (although you have a 12-month window to change your decision).

Regardless of your income level, Social Security is a significant component of your overall portfolio, and it provides an opportunity you don't want to overlook. As a portion of your lifetime retirement income — and one that is indexed for inflation — Social Security takes on added importance as pensions and personal assets continue to be on the decline.

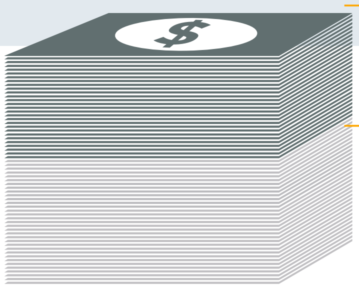
Not only can Social Security help fill the gap by covering basic retirement expenses, but you can also grow your baseline and increase your benefits through options like delayed filing and maximizing survivor benefits.

While the importance of your Social Security decision cannot be understated, your advisor can assist you with the process. **The Social Security 360® program from Nationwide gives you and your advisor greater visibility on many perspectives of Social Security.** With insight to your filing options, you and your advisor can build a retirement income plan around your individual needs.

Please note that Nationwide® does not provide legal, tax or accounting advice. You should consult with your accounting or tax professional for guidance regarding your specific financial situation.

What if you want to change your filing decision?

You can apply to withdraw your filing application within 12 months of starting benefits. If approved, you are required to repay all benefits you and your family members have already received. You are limited to one withdrawal per lifetime.



Social Security may represent almost

43%

of your annual retirement income[2]

[2] 2015 The Retirement Income Reference Book using 2014 data, LIMRA.

Understanding your benefits

For many years, 65 was the default age for retirement, because that's when full Social Security benefits used to begin.

Times have changed. Today, full Social Security benefits start between age 66 and 67 for most Americans. Plus, you now have the option to get reduced benefits as early as age 62, or delay your benefits up to age 70 to increase your monthly Social Security income.

Many Americans file for Social Security at 62 — as soon as they are eligible.[3] Filing early may make sense for some people, but it's important to understand the limitations and the opportunity that you may miss to increase your Social Security income.

Should you file early?

LIMITATIONS
Filing for benefits at age 62 means you may receive a reduced monthly benefit from Social Security.

OPPORTUNITY
Delaying benefits up to age 70 could help you grow your Social Security income by as much as 76%.*

* Nationwide as of May 2015. Based on an individual with full retirement age of 66. This calculation compares early filing at age 62 and receiving reduced benefits of 75% of primary insurance amount versus delayed filing at age 70 and receiving credits to increase benefits by 32% of primary insurance amount.

Other considerations for filing early

Filing early also may impact the options that members of your family may be eligible for, including:

- Benefits for your spouse
- Benefits for surviving spouse
- Benefits for dependent children

Most importantly, your Social Security decision should be coordinated with your overall retirement income plan in mind. How and when you file will have a lasting effect on your financial situation throughout retirement.

[3] 2015 The Retirement Income Reference Book using 2014 data, LIMRA.

Social Security concerns

Whenever you face important decisions that affect your future, some concerns may also arise. With these decisions, it's important to get the facts straight and sort out any misconceptions you may have.

Let's look at two of the most common concerns people have about Social Security — solvency and longevity.

Common concern #1: **Will Social Security be there for you?**

When people talk about Social Security these days, many say they don't believe the program will be around for them in the future. This concern is not unfounded — the Social Security Administration paid more in benefits than received in tax income in 2014 (the most recent year of data available).

The Social Security Board of Trustees says that based on the theoretical combined trust fund reserves and current assumptions[4]:

Full benefits are payable to at least 2034

79% of benefits payable afterward

But legislation is likely to change going forward, with the goal of extending the solvency of Social Security beyond the current assumptions. Potential policy proposals seek to achieve this goal in different ways, including:

- **Link cost-of-living increases to different inflation indexes**

  Possibility of increasing solvency without significant effect on most Americans, although current retirees will see smaller annual benefit increases.

- **Increase full retirement age beyond 67**

  Expected to impact workers age 45 and younger to allow time to plan for retiring later.

- **Increase or eliminate wage cap for payroll taxes**

  Raises the amount of earned income that would be subject to Social Security taxes; the 2016 cap is set at earned income up to $118,500.

- **Increase payroll taxes**

  Currently set at 12.4% — split evenly between workers and employers.

Learn more: Read the comprehensive list of proposals in the report from the Social Security Administration's Chief Actuary Office, "Summary of Provisions That Would Change the Social Security Program" available at socialsecurity.gov

[4] Source: 2015 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds.

Common concern #2: **Will you be there for Social Security?**

You may worry that you won't live long enough to reap the benefits of Social Security if you wait to file. Truth is, nearly 50% of pre-retirees underestimate their life expectancy — with over 30% guessing wrong by five years or more.[5]

	MALE 65 YEARS OLD	FEMALE 65 YEARS OLD
50% chance of reaching age[6]	86	89
25% chance of reaching age[6]	93	95

For married couples, there is a 50% chance one spouse will reach age 93.

Understanding break-even points

Longer life expectancies mean you will likely need Social Security income for a longer period of time. So it may make sense to take advantage of delaying rules that can grow your monthly benefit, while helping you accumulate more benefits over the course of your retirement.

There are times, however, when it makes sense to start Social Security benefits sooner — even if reduced. For everyone, there is a break-even point — typically between 12 to 15 years from the start of Social Security benefits — where accumulating higher benefits over a shorter period outweighs collecting smaller benefits over a longer period.

For a single person, life expectancy primarily determines when this break-even point may occur. For a couple, a break-even analysis is complicated by the different life expectancies of each individual. Typically, this analysis would look at all possible life expectancy combinations and focus on a strategy that would provide the largest lifetime benefit to both spouses for as long as either spouse is alive.

[5] Society of Actuaries longevity study, 2011.
[6] 2015 LIMRA Retirement Income Reference Book.

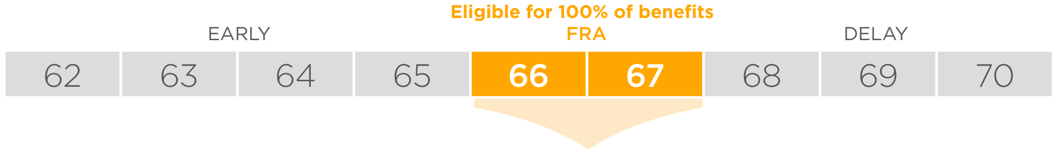
Social Security

Basics

Everyone's Social Security decision is a personal one. And the opportunity to enhance retirement income is tremendous. So before you make the choice of a lifetime, it's important to understand the basics. Let's discuss some important terms to know and rules you'll need to consider as part of your decision.

Full Retirement Age (FRA)

This is the age when you are eligible to begin receiving the entirety of the monthly Social Security retirement benefit you are eligible for based on your lifetime employment record (which is your primary insurance amount; more on that below). Historically, full retirement age occurred in the year you turned 65 for those born prior to 1942. FRA began gradually increasing to 67, starting with people born in 1943 or later. Early filing can occur starting at age 62 up to full retirement age. But you can delay filing up to age 70 in order to increase your benefit amount.



birth year	**1943 – 54**	**1955**	**1956**	**1957**	**1958**	**1959**	**1960** and later
	66	66 +2 mos	66 +4 mos	66 +6 mos	66 +8 mos	66 +10 mos	67

Primary Insurance Amount (PIA)

Quite simply, your PIA is the amount of your monthly Social Security benefit at FRA. The formula for calculating PIA benefits differs from formulas typically used to determine pension benefits, which are often based on your top five or last three earnings years, for instance.

PIA is based on lifetime Social Security-covered earnings adjusted for inflation.

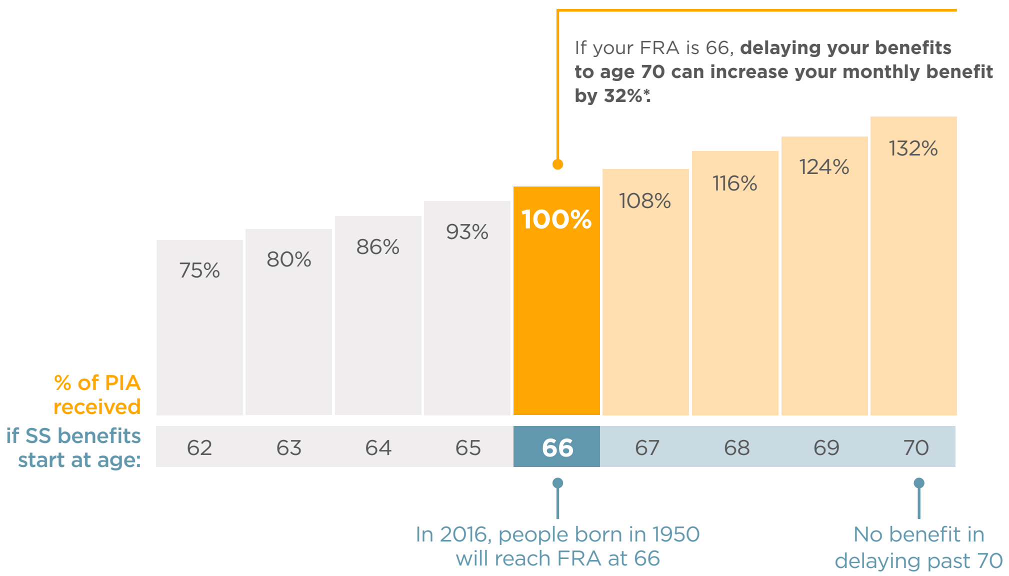
- Average indexed monthly earnings over highest 35 years of earnings
- Benefit reflects a percentage of average monthly earnings
- Higher earners receive a smaller percentage than low-wage earners

PIA is capped at $2,639 for 2016. The PIA is also subject to cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), which protect against inflation.

To obtain your current PIA, download your current benefit statement at ssa.gov/myaccount

When you file can change your monthly benefit

Making a decision about when to file varies based on your individual situation. Your options include early filing, delayed filing or opting to file for benefits at full retirement age. The longer you wait to file, the more your monthly benefit will be. So the decision about when to file can significantly impact your retirement income. That's why the pros and cons of each option should be carefully considered.



Pre-eligibility increases are based on the average wage index. Post-FRA increases are based on CPI.

* Annual cost-of-living adjustments may result in a greater percentage increase.

Providing for yourself and your loved ones

The Social Security rules offer opportunities to extend benefits based on your family situation. Family members who depend on you may be eligible for Social Security benefits based on your work record, so it's good to know which benefits apply to your situation. The family rules make it possible to optimize your income during retirement and provide income to a surviving spouse when one spouse passes away.

Benefits for spouses

Spousal benefits are among the most common available. Spouses are eligible for benefits based on their spouse's earnings record, and for a nonworking spouse these benefits may represent significant dollars. To be eligible for spousal benefits, you must be 62 and married for at least one year. Benefits can be significant, up to 50% of the working spouse's PIA.

Eligibility

- Eligible at 62
- Married for at least one year
- One spouse must file for the other to claim benefits

Benefits

- Up to 50% of spouse's PIA

Benefits for surviving spouses

Married couples should also be aware of survivor benefits, especially since these benefits can significantly affect lifetime earnings from Social Security. A surviving spouse is eligible based on the deceased spouse's record. To be eligible for survivor benefits, you must be 60 years old and married for at least nine months.[7]

A surviving spouse is eligible to receive up to the greater of what the deceased spouse would have received if still alive or 82.5% of the spouse's PIA. Plus, a surviving spouse is able to elect widow benefits without electing retirement benefits.

Eligibility

- Married for at least 9 months[8]
- Benefits can be taken as early as age 60
- Currently married or remarried after age 60

Benefits

- Eligibility is based on when each spouse files for benefits
- Survivor benefits are separate from benefits earned on a surviving spouse's own work record

[7] There are exceptions where the survivor can receive benefits younger than 60. E.g. a surviving spouse has a disability, children in care under 16

[8] Find exceptions to this rule on the Social Security website (ssa.gov).

If you've been divorced

Divorced persons may be eligible for benefits based on the ex-spouse's record. However, certain rules apply. The couple must have been married for at least 10 years, and their spouse claiming the benefits must be currently unmarried. Benefits can begin at age 62.

Similar to married couples, one ex-spouse must also have filed for benefits in order for the other to file for divorced spouse benefits. But this rule only applies if the divorce was finalized within the previous two years. After two years, a divorced spouse becomes independently entitled, eliminating the requirement of the ex-spouse filing for benefits. The ex-spouse need only be eligible to file. The earnings test is also eliminated.

Eligibility

- Married for at least 10 years
- Currently unmarried if within 2 years of divorce
- Ex-spouse must also file for benefits
- After 2 years, the ex-spouse filing requirement is eliminated

Benefits

- Spousal and survivor benefits
- No impact on ex-spouse's benefit
- Not subject to the family maximum

Benefits for other family members

Social Security also considers the needs of other family members beyond spouses, so they may be eligible for benefits too. There is a family maximum limit that applies to retirement benefits, which is based on a percentage of the earner's average wages and uses a formula similar to that used to calculate PIA. It's best to work with your advisor to create an optimal strategy that addresses the needs of you and your family.

	Eligibility	Benefits
Dependent Children	Under 18 if unmarried; 18 and 19 if still attending primary or secondary school; 18 and older if disabled (as long as disability started before age 22)	50% of parent's PIA or 75% of deceased parent's PIA
Disabled Individuals	May qualify for individual, spousal and survivor benefits	Individual, spousal and survivor benefits
Dependent Parents	Age 62 or older upon death of primary support provider if providing at least 50% of support to the parent. (except those with children under 16)	82.5% of PIA for one parent 75% of PIA for each of two parents

Social Security

Filing Options

All of the opportunities Social Security offers to retirees and their families are great. But the many rules make it complicated for individuals to find the right opportunities for them.

Navigating the rules

Finding your way to the right Social Security filing decision is not something you have to do on your own. Your financial advisor can provide valuable guidance as you navigate the rules.

Moreover, with the Social Security 360 Analyzer℠ from Nationwide, your advisor can map out the ideal filing strategy that offers you the opportunity for highest cumulative returns, plus show you how other strategies may vary in terms of monthly and cumulative income.

Filing terms to know

As you approach your Social Security filing decision, it's helpful to understand many of the terms you'll encounter and how the different options work. Generally, flexibility around your options increases once you reach full retirement age which you should consider as you weigh your decision to delay Social Security benefits or start them early.

Deemed filing

- File for all eligible benefits
- Individual benefits must be claimed with spousal benefits
- Benefits will be reduced

At or after FRA

Standard filing

- File for any eligible benefit without reductions

Voluntary Suspension

- Allows you to enable others to claim benefits off of your earnings record while your own benefits are suspended to earn delayed retirement credits

File restricted

- Allows you to begin survivor benefits while earning delayed retirement credits

Impact of new law on Social Security filing options

Recent changes

On November 2, 2015, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 was signed into law. This created major changes to Social Security-claiming rules surrounding the Restricted Application and the Voluntary Suspension, particularly for spouses.

What's changing

Restricted Application: The new law phases out restricted applications. Previously, an individual eligible for a spousal benefit could elect to receive that benefit while allowing his or her own retirement benefit to grow, then switching to that retirement benefit once maximized. As the law is phased in, restricted applications will no longer be available. Whenever an individual files, he is claiming all eligible benefits, with no opportunity for delayed retirement credits post-filing. This is called deemed filing.

Voluntary Suspension: Prior the new rule, an individual could file for benefits, then suspend receipt of benefits, allowing their benefit to grow while a spouse could claim benefits based on his or her work record. The new law causes a voluntary suspension to stop all benefits payable under the earnings record of the person whose benefit was suspended. In other words, the spouse will no longer be able to collect a spousal benefit during the time in which the wage earner's benefit is suspended.

How the rule change will be implemented, and who will be impacted:

Married: The impact on planning for couples is nuanced. With the rules being phased in, there are now three sets of individuals who will be impacted differently, depending upon their birth dates. In addition, with a married couple, each member of the couple could fall under a different set of rules, depending upon birth date.

Legislative changes by date of birth				
Individual DOB	Grandfathered	**May 1, 1950,** or earlier	On or before **January 1, 1954**	**January 2, 1954,** or after
Strategies available	Anybody who has already executed a restricted application or voluntary suspension will not be impacted by legislative changes	"File and Suspend" available as long as voluntary suspension occurs before **April 30, 2016**	Restricted application available after individual reaches full retirement age	"File and Suspend" and Restricted Application strategies no longer available
Planning implications		Couples in this situation have a short window of opportunity to take advantage of "File and Suspend" and should consider planning accordingly prior to the April 30, 2016 deadline	Restricted applications create opportunity for one member of a couple to claim a spousal benefit and grow his own benefit; couples should consider planning to capture these benefits	Social Security continues to be a significant component of retirement income, and the need to carefully consider how and when to file for Social Security is as important as ever

Widow: Notably all of these changes concern the interaction between retirement and spousal benefits, and do not include widow benefits. So, widows will continue to have the opportunity to restrict an application to only widow or only retirement benefits and later switch to the other benefit.

Divorced: The impact on divorced cases is very similar to married. The important client situations to consider are for those born on or before January 1, 1954, who still have access to the restricted application, and related spousal benefits, and those born after, who do not.

Single: There generally is no impact on Social Security filing for individuals, with one notable exception. Clients born on or before May 1, 1950, who are planning on delaying filing past Full Retirement Age, should file and suspend as soon as eligible. The suspension must be received on or before April 30, 2016 in order to fall under the old rules. Suspending benefits under the old rules should preserve the option to request a retroactive lump-sum payment should the client's circumstances change while benefits are suspended.

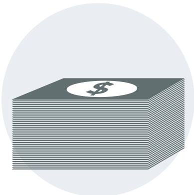
Social Security

Considerations

The filing rules are just one aspect of Social Security you should know. There are also a few more topics that can influence your filing decision. From taxation, to working in retirement, to government pensions, these are considerations that should be carefully examined.

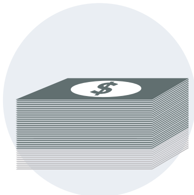
How taxes affect Social Security

When you plan for retirement, it's important to consider how various income sources are taxed as it can affect how much money you'll actually have for retirement expenses. **At most, 85% of your Social Security benefit will be taxed,** making it one of the more tax-efficient sources of income for retirees.



FULLY TAXABLE
RETIREMENT INCOME

- Pension income
- Traditional retirement accounts (401(k), IRA)
- Interest and dividend income



PARTIALLY TAXABLE
RETIREMENT INCOME

- **Social Security — up to 85% taxed**
- Immediate annuity income
- Cash-value of life insurance

TAX-FREE
RETIREMENT INCOME

- Roth IRAs and 401(k)s
- Interest from municipal bonds
- Loans from life insurance policies

The portion of Social Security income that is taxable varies with each individual, and is dependent on your adjusted gross income and the amount of Social Security benefits you receive. Filing early for Social Security forces you to be more dependent on assets that could be fully taxed. On the other hand, when Social Security is a larger part of your retirement income plan, you can potentially reduce your taxable income and increase the amount of money you are able to keep.

Please note that Nationwide does not provide legal, tax or accounting advice. You should consult with your accounting or tax professional for guidance regarding your specific financial situation.

How delaying benefits can lower taxes.

In this example, Steven and Marie want an annual income in retirement of $90,000 before tax. If they delay filing for Social Security benefits and rely less on income that is fully taxable, their taxable income can decrease by 47%.

Steven & Marie receive:	Reduced benefits[9]	Maximum benefits[10]	
Target pre-tax income	$90,000	$90,000	
Social Security benefits	**$30,690**	**$54,014[11]**	**Delayed filing increases their Social Security income by 76%**
Traditional retirement income	$59,310	$35,986	
Provisional income[12]	$74,655	$62,993	
Total taxable income (other income[13] + income after SS income test)	**$85,397**	**$58,130**	**Their taxable income decreases by 47%**

This example is for illustrative purposes only.

If you work in retirement

For those of you who have worked for many years, you may look forward to relegating your work clothes to the back of the closet. Or, you may want to work part-time to reach a desirable income during retirement or because you enjoy work. Maybe you view retirement as a time to pursue new careers and opportunities.

If you plan to work while collecting Social Security benefits, some of your benefits may be withheld if you start collecting before full retirement age or in the year you reach full retirement age. That money can be recouped at full retirement age when you begin receiving these withheld benefits.

Once you pass FRA, the Social Security Administration no longer limits the amount of earnings you can receive.

IF YOU'RE UNDER FRA FOR THE FULL YEAR

$1 of benefits withheld for every $2 of earnings above annual limit ($15,720 in 2016)

IN THE YEAR YOU REACH FRA

$1 of benefits withheld for every $3 of earnings above annual limit ($41,880 in 2016)

IN THE MONTH YOU REACH FRA AND BEYOND

No limit on earnings

Future benefits increased based on amount of benefits withheld

[9] Both filed early at age 62.

[10] Couple maximized Social Security benefits by Steven delaying until age 70 and Marie delaying until 69.

[11] Assumes a 62-year-old married couple. Average life expectancy of 86 for the husband; 89 for the wife. Primary Insurance amounts of $2,400 and $1,300. Individual calculations may vary.

[12] Provisional income includes 50% of Social Security benefits, ordinary income, dividends and capital gains and nontaxable interest income.

[13] Refer to IRS publication 915 for the definition of other income.

If you are a government employee

Pensions are a traditional source of retirement income for many Americans, but some pensions can affect your Social Security benefit. Payroll taxes are used to fund Social Security, and this appears on your pay statement as FICA (Federal Insurance Contribution Act) or OASDI (Old Age, Survivor and Disability Insurance). If you work for an employer that does not withhold FICA taxes from your wages, such as some government agencies or nonprofit organizations, the pension you receive from that employer may reduce the amount of benefits you get from Social Security.

Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)

This provision reduces your PIA if you receive a pension from an employer that did not withhold FICA taxes. WEP changes the formula used to calculate your benefit amount, resulting in a lower Social Security benefit than you otherwise would receive.

If you have 30 years or more of substantial earnings that are subject to FICA taxes, this provision does not apply because you worked the required amount of time to be eligible for full benefits.

Government Pension Offset (GPO)

As a government employee, not only are your own Social Security benefits subject to reduction, but benefits you can collect as a spouse or widow could also be reduced. If you receive a pension based on work where FICA taxes were not paid, spousal or survivor benefits will be reduced by two-thirds of your pension. This could result in a complete elimination of spousal or survivor Social Security benefits.

How GPO can affect spousal benefits

As an example, let's look at Cara and Kevin as they plan for retirement. Cara worked for the government throughout her career and is entitled to a pension of $2,100. Kevin worked for an employer who withheld FICA taxes, and his PIA is $2,000. The government pension offset on Cara's pension income is $1,400 (two-thirds of her $2,100 pension). This will eliminate her spousal benefit and reduce her survivor benefit.

	CARA'S BENEFIT BEFORE GPO	CARA'S BENEFIT AFTER $1,400 GPO
Spousal benefit	$1,000	$0
Survivors benefit	$2,000	$600

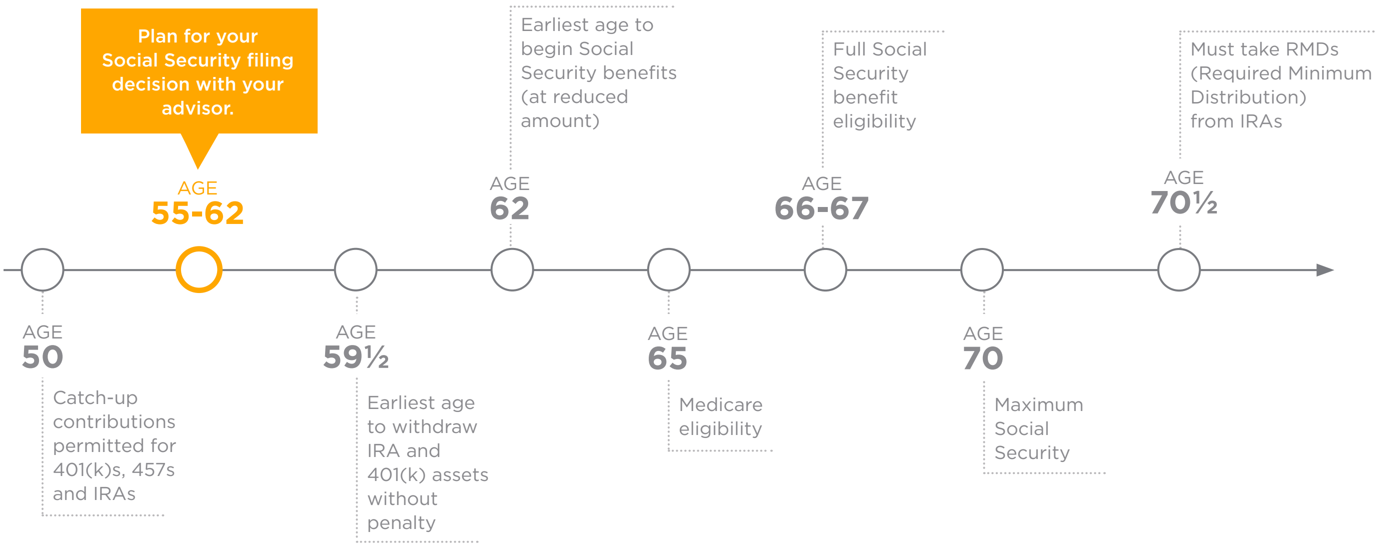
Getting Started

Now that you've covered the details of Social Security, you're in a good place to start planning for your Social Security decision. You've also got your financial advisor as a guide for you as you plan your strategy.

When is the best time to start planning?

As you look ahead to your life before and during retirement, you will see many pivotal decisions about your retirement finances and income. The choices you make will impact the direction your retirement takes.

Filing for Social Security is one of the early decisions you'll see. As you now know, the first big decision for many comes at age 62, when you're initially eligible to file for Social Security benefits. So the years before 62, starting at age 55, is generally the best time to talk with your advisor and start planning for this decision, and all of the other financial decisions that will soon follow.



How your advisor can help you make the right decisions:

- **Discuss the filing options** that may apply to your specific situation
- **Create a personalized Social Security filing options report** for you to help illustrate the different decisions you can make
- **Put your Social Security options in a broader context** with your overall retirement plan and help you make the best decision for your situation

Your next steps

Now you understand the decision you make about Social Security is personal. There's no formula or calculator that will make the right decision for you. Your individual situation is different from everyone else's, so personal attention is key.

At this point, your next move is to start the decision-making process by scheduling a Social Security planning meeting with your financial advisor. The Social Security 360® program from Nationwide gives you and your advisor greater visibility to the many perspectives of Social Security. Together, you can decide when and how to file for benefits.

Prepare for your Social Security planning meeting

- **Download and bring copies of the Social Security statements for you and your spouse** to the planning meeting; download a copy of your statement when you register for a "My Social Security" account at ssa.gov/myaccount.
- **Complete the Social Security Client Questionnaire** included with this brochure; your answers will help to facilitate a discussion about your specific options.
- **Review the enclosed sample of the Social Security 360 Analyzer report;** Our Social Security 360 Analyzer tool translates the personal information you provide to your own filing strategy overview, including calculations of WEP and GPO.

Remember, Social Security is a choice of a lifetime that can greatly impact the quality of your retirement. That's why it helps to work with your advisor to arrive at a decision that's best for you.

Clients

Talk to your financial advisor to learn more about making a Social Security decision that meets your needs.

Financial professionals

For more information, call the Retirement Institute Income Planning Team at 1-877-245-0763 or visit nationwidefinancial.com/socialsecurity.

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