
Economic Policy Institute

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REPORT ONLINE: [*Social Security and the Income of the Elderly*](#)

Majority of Elderly Recipients Rely on Social Security for Most of Their Income

Study breaks out data by state, age, race, and gender

Nationally, the median elderly Social Security recipients, age 65 and over, rely on Social Security for two-thirds of their income, according to a new study released today by the Economic Policy Institute. The study, co-authored by Michael Ettlinger, director of the Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN) and EPI economist Jeff Chapman, shows the degree to which elderly recipients rely on Social Security, broken down by state, race, and sex.

The findings illustrate how the high reliance on Social Security by elderly cuts across boundaries of sex, race, or state of residence. Almost two-thirds of the elderly recipients (over 15 million individuals and couples) rely on Social Security for a half or more of their income and a third rely on it for 90 percent or more of their income.

“The reliance of the elderly on Social Security is likely to be just as great in the future, and cuts in their benefits would sharply reduce their standard of living,” said co-author Michael Ettlinger.

Replacing the current system’s prescribed benefit levels with a system that is susceptible to risks inherent in private stock market investment returns would have a significant impact on the quality of life for those who do not secure the best-performing investments.

“The majority of the current elderly could ill-afford such a gamble,” said co-author Jeff Chapman. “For the elderly of the future, ending up on the losing side of this bet would have a devastating impact on their quality of life.”

EPI has attached a list of state-level research organizations for information on Social Security reliance in specific states.

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The Economic Policy Institute is an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute – or “think tank” – that researches the impact of economic trends and policies on working people in the United States and around the world.

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