

Report

The economics of Social Security

Even before 2020, there were questions about the solvency of Social Security. Add in growing levels of political gridlock preventing needed improvements to the program's viability, and it may come as no surprise that 7 in 10 Americans worry about the Social Security program running out of funding during their lifetime.¹ While benefits likely won't stop altogether, planning now for possible changes may help soften any future impacts.

Social Security is primarily financed through a dedicated payroll tax. There are also two other sources that fund this pool of money:

- Taxes on some recipients' benefits
- Interest earned on the pool of money

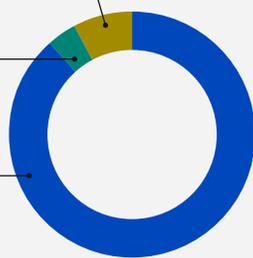
SOCIAL SECURITY FUNDING AND OUTPUT, 2020²

Incoming funding = \$968.3 billion

Interest,
\$73.3B

Tax on
benefits,
\$39.0B

Payroll
taxes,
\$856.0B



Outgoing
benefits paid =
\$961.0 billion

For decades, the pool of money was greater than the amount of money paid out in the form of benefits. As a result, there is also a surplus fund. But beginning in 2021, due to increased longevity and a decrease in the number of workers per beneficiary, Social Security began tapping into the surplus fund to meet its obligations.

If changes are not made to the existing system, the surplus fund will be depleted by 2033. The original pool of money will still be funded by payroll taxes, benefit taxes and interest, but beneficiaries would begin receiving reduced benefits.

The latest Board of Trustees report estimates that benefits will remain **fully payable until at least 2033**, with **76% of benefits payable thereafter**.²

These estimates assume that everything stays the same. But it's more likely that Congress will pass amendments to help address Social Security's long-term funding shortfalls. Unless and until that happens, however, you can prepare by taking action.

ACTIONABLE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

- 1 Understand what your essential income needs will be during retirement.
- 2 Plan in advance for a potentially reduced amount of Social Security benefits. Save in taxable, tax-deferred and tax-free accounts so you have the flexibility to minimize your taxes in retirement.
- 3 Take advantage of any employer-sponsored plans that are available to you, and contribute at a level that at least maximizes any employer match that is offered.



If your estimated Social Security benefits don't cover your essential income needs, talk to your financial professional to learn whether guaranteed income from an annuity is an appropriate option for you.

WHAT IS AN ANNUITY?

An annuity is a financial product that provides a source of guaranteed income in retirement. It is:

A long-term, tax-deferred retirement savings option

Able to provide protected income for your spouse after you're gone

Issued by an insurance company

Purchased through a licensed financial professional

All guarantees and protections of a variable annuity are subject to the claims-paying ability of the issuing insurance company.

Withdrawals made before age 59½ may be subject to a 10% early withdrawal federal tax penalty; ordinary income taxes may apply.

Four types of annuities

1

IMMEDIATE ANNUITIES

Immediate guaranteed income

Convert a lump sum into an ongoing, guaranteed stream of income. Guaranteed payments begin within the first year and typically continue for a set period of time or for your lifetime, as chosen by you.

2

FIXED ANNUITIES

Guarantees, but with less chance for growth

Give a guaranteed interest rate to help provide predictable growth for your investment. Your principal investment is guaranteed.

3

VARIABLE ANNUITIES³

Greater opportunity for growth tied to underlying investment options.

Create potential for long-term growth based on the performance of the chosen investment option(s) within your variable annuity.

4

FIXED INDEXED ANNUITIES

Guaranteed protection with growth potential

Protect principal in a down market. Also provide some opportunity for growth tied to the performance of an underlying index.



Talk with your financial professional about your estimated Social Security benefits and whether an annuity can provide an additional source of guaranteed income.



¹ "The Nationwide Retirement Institute 2021 Social Security survey," conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of the Nationwide Retirement Institute. This online survey was conducted April 19 - May 7, 2021, among 1,931 U.S. adults age 25 or older.

² "The 2021 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds," Social Security Administration (August 2021).

³ Variable annuities have fees and charges that include mortality and expense, administrative fees, contract fees and the expense of the underlying investment options.

This material is not a recommendation to buy or sell a financial product or to adopt an investment strategy. Investors should discuss their specific situation with their financial professional.

Annuities have limitations. They are long-term vehicles designed for retirement purposes. They are not intended to replace emergency funds, to be used as income for day-to-day expenses or to fund short-term savings goals. Please read the contract for complete details. Protections and guarantees are subject to the claims-paying ability of the life insurance company. Consult with your financial professional for more information.

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