

Social Security: Vital to West Virginia Women and Families

Social Security is a family insurance plan that provides retirement benefits and life and disability insurance to West Virginia's working families.

- About 1 in 4 residents – about 436,800 people – receives disability, survivor, and/or retirement benefits from Social Security.
- 94 percent of residents 65 and older receive Social Security benefits.
- About 40,800 children receive Social Security benefits because of the loss of a parent's income due to death, disability or retirement.
- About 115,100 disabled workers and their family members receive Social Security benefits.
- About 49,300 widowed spouses receive Social Security survivor's benefits. (Nationally, women represent virtually all (99 percent) of spouses receiving survivor benefits.)

West Virginia women depend on modest Social Security benefits to get by.

- Women are a majority of both adult beneficiaries and beneficiaries 65 and older.
- The average Social Security benefit for women 65 and older is about \$11,500 per year, compared to about \$15,600 for men 65 and older.
- Older women rely more on income from Social Security than older men do. Median income for women 65 and older living alone is \$15,600 per year – and Social Security represents 77 percent of that amount. Median income for comparable men is \$20,900 – and Social Security represents 63 percent of that amount.

Social Security is a critical anti-poverty program for West Virginia women and families.

- Social Security lifted 207,000 residents out of poverty, including 12,000 children.
- Social Security dramatically reduced poverty rates for women 65 and older: from 59 to 11 percent for all women 65 and older, and from 79 to 21 percent for older women living alone.

Sources: Social Security Administration, Annual Statistical Supplement to the Social Security Bulletin, 2010, *available at* <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/>, and OASDI Beneficiaries by State and County, 2009, *available at* http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/oasdi_sc/2009/index.html. Calculations of Social Security's share of median income and impact on poverty based on U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement (2007-2010, averages over 3 or 4 years depending on sample size) (using CPS Table Creator II, *available at* http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstc/apm/cpstc_altpov.html).