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Despite Some Gains, Social Security Administration Data Show a Low Level of Workforce Participation Among SSI Recipients

By Daria Domin and Jaimie Timmons

According to the Social Security Administration (SSA), a total of 4,961,659 *blind and disabled recipients*¹ between the ages of 18 and 64 received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits in 2015. Out of the almost 5 million individuals receiving SSI benefits, only 6.3% worked (n=311,922).

Adults with disabilities between the ages of 40 and 64 were a significant demographic of people who receive SSI, constituting almost two thirds of recipients in 2015 (64%; n=3,167,307). However, only 3.5% (n=111,762) of SSI recipients with disabilities in this age group worked.

In comparison, younger SSI recipients (ages 18–39) constituted 36% (n=1,794,352) of the total SSI recipients. However, their workforce participation was over 3 times higher compared to the 40–64 age group, at 11.2%.

Despite the low level of workforce participation among SSI recipients, especially among the 40–64 age group, there was a slight increase in workforce participation among recipients between the ages of 18 and 39 in 2014, and this trend continued into 2015. The same trend was not evident in SSI recipients between ages 40 and 64.

Although there are observed age differences in workforce participation going back to 2010 (see Table 1), the overall low level of workforce participation among SSI recipients as a whole (6.3%), especially those between 40 and 64 (3.5%), is discouraging.

However, it is promising that younger SSI recipients joined the workforce in 2015 at slightly higher rates compared to their older counterparts, and that there were slight gains across all age groups from the prior year.

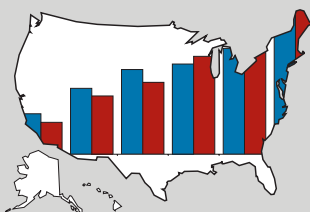
Table 1: Percentage of SSI Recipients Who Work (by Age Group)

Age Groups	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
18–21	8.3%	8.2%	8.0%	8.2%	8.6%	9.0%
22–25	13.6%	13.1%	13.1%	13.2%	13.6%	14.3%
26–29	12.8%	12.5%	12.4%	12.3%	12.8%	13.5%
30–39	9.4%	9.0%	8.8%	8.7%	8.9%	9.4%
40–49	5.7%	5.3%	5.2%	5.0%	4.9%	5.1%
50–59	3.6%	3.4%	3.3%	3.2%	3.1%	3.1%
60–64	2.7%	2.6%	2.5%	2.4%	2.3%	2.4%
18–64	6.4%	6.2%	6.1%	5.9%	6.0%	6.0%

¹Blind and disabled recipients is the terminology used in the Social Security Administration dataset/codebook.

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