

Social Security Administration Data Show a Record Low Level of PASS Usage Among SSI Recipients

By Daria Domin and Jaimie Timmons

The Social Security Administration (SSA) offers a set of work incentives for Supplemental Security income (SSI) beneficiaries. Work incentive employment supports help SSI recipients go to work by minimizing the risk of losing their SSI or Medicaid benefits (Social Security Administration, 2018). One such incentive, the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), allows approved individuals to set aside earned or unearned income and resources to achieve an employment goal. The money or resources set aside are excluded from SSI income and resource tests and can be used to pay for goods or services needed to reach the goal, such as education, vocational training, starting a business, or purchasing work-related equipment (Social Security Administration, 2017).

The number of recipients enrolled nationally in any SSA work incentive program between 2000 and 2016 remains low and has been declining. In particular, the PASS incentive program has seen decreased enrollment in the last fifteen years - a 50% decrease from 2000 to 2016 in the number of individuals who enrolled. This is especially notable considering SSA reported providing benefits to 4,845,735 blind and disabled* SSI recipients aged 18-65 in 2016. Furthermore, there are only 692 PASS users enrolled nationwide, making it the least used incentive of those offered. Please refer to Table 1 for more details on three SSI work incentives.

Despite SSAs investment in the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program, SSI work incentives remain profoundly underutilized as a path towards employment for SSI recipients.

Table 1. Number of People Enrolled Nationally in Three Work Incentive Programs from 2000–2016 (Even Years Only)

Work Incentives	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016
PASS	1,382	1,721	1,598	1,583	1,559	1,393	1,116	862	692
IRWE	9,402	8,047	6,874	5,650	4,572	3,491	3,157	3,040	3,128
BWE	3,895	3,385	2,827	2,370	1,925	1,847	1,410	1,145	1,068

* The term "blind and disabled recipients" is how the SSA describes their beneficiaries.

REFERENCES

Social Security Administration (2017). *Working While Disabled—A Guide to Plans for Achieving Self-Support*. Publication No. 05-11017. Retrieved from www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-11017.pdf

Social Security Administration (2018). *Supplemental Security Income Work Incentives*. Retrieved from www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-work-ussi.htm

SUGGESTED CITATION

Domin, D., & Timmons, J. (2019). Despite Some Gains, Social Security Administration Data Show a Low Level of Workforce Participation Among SSI Recipients. DataNote Series, Data Note 61. Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Boston, Institute for Community Inclusion.

