

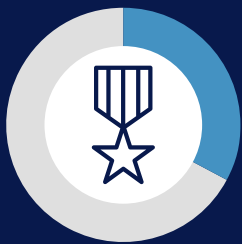
VIRGINIA VETERANS

SOCIAL SECURITY & SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

INTRODUCTION

For 90 years, Social Security has been the foundation of economic security for retired and disabled Americans and their families, including veterans. Social Security is part of the contract our government made with everyone in the workforce, including those who served in the military.

Under the Trump administration, cuts to Social Security's staffing, local offices and, most surprisingly, funding are threatening to break that contract. Virginia's veterans worked hard for this country and earned their Social Security benefits. To honor their sacrifice, we must protect Social Security.



**MORE THAN ONE THIRD OF
VIRGINIA VETERANS RELY ON
SOCIAL SECURITY.**

PRODUCED BY:



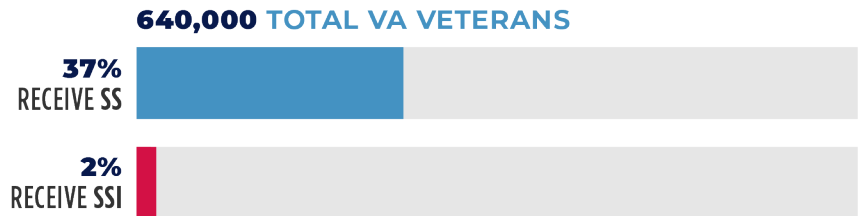
GROUNDING FACTS:

Virginia's Veterans Rely on Social Security

About 640,000 veterans live in Virginia. When they signed up to serve, the earned benefit of Social Security was part of their contract with the U.S. government.

More Than One-Third of Virginia Veterans Receive Social Security

Thirty-seven percent of Virginia veterans – 233,900 vets – receive income from Social Security, such as retirement benefits or disability benefits. About 10,600 veterans receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which supports low-income people with disabilities.



One in Seven Virginia Veterans Are Women

More than 94,000 of Virginia's veterans are women – one in seven Virginia veterans – with 17 percent receiving Social Security income.

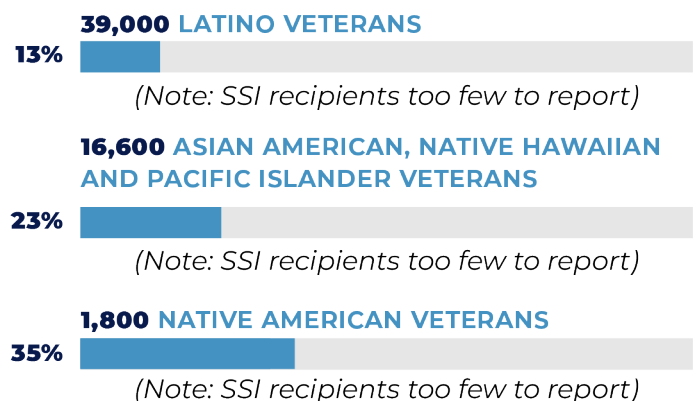
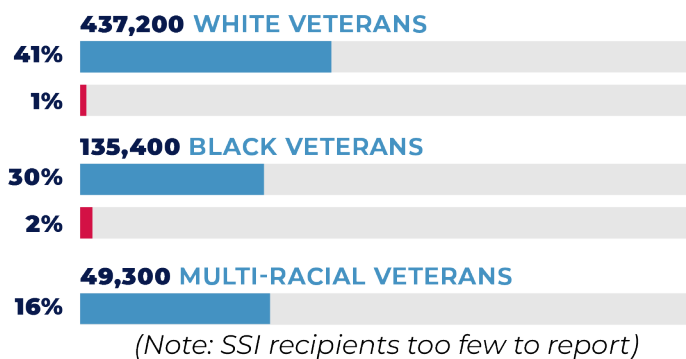


(Note: SSI recipients too few to report)

CONTEXT: Social Security and SSI are especially important for women, who tend to be paid less over a lifetime due to time spent out of the workforce for caregiving, discrimination and other factors.¹

Social Security Is a Promise to All Veterans

Virginia's veterans are diverse, and veterans in every racial/ethnic group have earned their Social Security benefits.



CONTEXT: For generations, military service has represented an important pathway toward fair treatment, opportunity and belonging for communities of color that faced discrimination in many other careers.² Today's military and veterans are increasingly diverse.³

Even Before Retirement Age, Veterans Depend on Social Security

55 percent of Virginia's veterans are under the age of 62 (the youngest age someone can start claiming Social Security retirement benefits). Veterans under 62 make up over one-third of all veterans who receive SSI (42 percent).



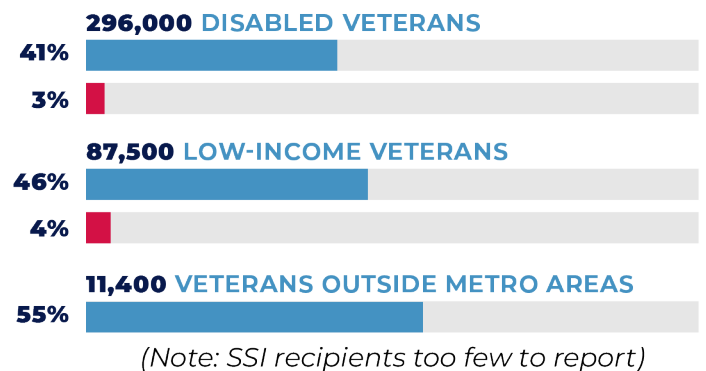
DEEP DIVE:

How Specific Factors Shape Veterans' Experience

For veterans, Social Security is the cornerstone of economic stability amid a rising cost of living. The benefits they earned through service are especially vital for disabled veterans, those with low incomes and those living outside of major metropolitan areas.

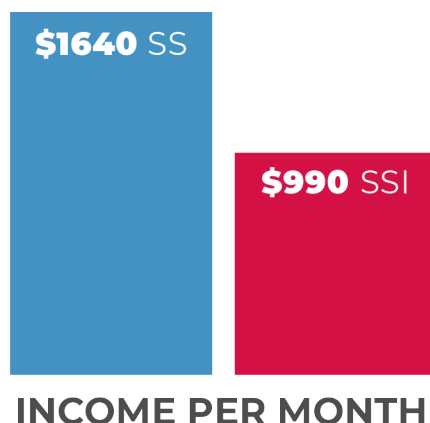
Social Security Supports Many Disabled, Low-Income & Rural Veterans

More than half of rural veterans and more than four in ten veterans with disabilities (including those with service-connected disabilities and non-service-connected disabilities) and low-income veterans receive Social Security. These groups can face barriers including higher medical costs, fewer providers where they live and longer travel to VA and other health care providers on top of everyday cost of living challenges.⁴



Without Social Security, Veterans Could Struggle to Make Ends Meet

For a veteran who is not in the labor force (for example, retired or not working due to disability), a typical monthly Social Security check is about \$1,640, and a typical SSI check is just \$990. A late or lost check could mean disaster for household budgets that are already stretched thin.



IN VIRGINIA, ONE MONTH OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WOULD PAY FOR:

- 3 months of groceries
- 1 monthly mortgage payment
- 5 weeks of rent
- Nearly one year of out-of-pocket medical expenses (average for an adult 65+)
- 5 weeks of in-home care from a home health aide (at 10 hours per week), or
- 6 weeks of transportation expenses, such as car payments, gas and bus fare

STORIES FROM THE FIELD:

Personal Stories of Veterans' Experience



"I've been lucky, I don't have a heartbreaking story to share, but I know too many people who do. Social Security and the VA are how they get by. When their checks don't show up on time, that puts their well-being at risk – housing, healthcare, groceries. No one who showed up for this country should have to worry about making ends meet."

Ken Sutton

Virginia Beach, VA

As a Navy Veteran, Ken Sutton knows what it is to sacrifice for his country, and has seen what his peers have gone through to access their benefits. Like so many other vets, Ken made Virginia Beach home, and earlier this year, when Social Security tried to get rid of call centers, witnessed friends and colleagues unable to get through and put their lives on hold while they navigated a new system. These kinds of pauses in services can't continue to happen. For those who have seen their retirement accounts dwindle due to the rising costs, and especially healthcare, their Social Security checks aren't going as far as they used to. And for those who have served, Social Security is an earned benefit too.



"Jen Kiggans says she supports military retirees and veterans but she's done little to actually ensure our benefits are protected. People budget around their Social Security. When politicians play games with it, they are gambling with our medicine, our groceries, and our basic necessities. Veterans like my father and I can't afford to be political talking points, and we need leaders who will fight for us. We hope Rep. Kiggans will reconsider and start protecting Social Security."

Bill Robinson

Isle of Wight, VA

Bill Robinson is a proud Army veteran and retired Department of Defense employee living in rural Isle of Wight, Virginia. As a disabled veteran, Bill relies on Medicare and Social Security to manage his own healthcare and expenses. In recent years, Bill became a full-time caregiver for his aging parents, both of whom moved in with him before passing away. Their final years required extensive care including home health services, palliative support, and residential assistance. Bill's father, also a veteran, needed his Social Security benefits to help cover basic necessities. Like many military families, Bill's household leaned on earned benefits to stay afloat during difficult times.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD:

Continued



“Social Security is a safety net that marks the U.S. as a modern society that cares about its citizens. Any cuts, especially to benefit the elite, are a blemish on our nation. They inflict hardship and suffering on those least able to sustain themselves.”

Monte D. Pursifull

Virginia Beach, VA

Monte Pursifull spent 30 years in the U.S. Army, serving everywhere from Colorado and Indiana to three years behind the Iron Curtain with the Berlin Brigade. He led soldiers at Fort Monroe, trained service members from multiple branches, and finished his career as the senior sergeant major and commandant of the noncommissioned officers academy for his field, overseeing 4,000 soldiers.

When Monte retired in 2005, his service didn't stop. For nearly two decades, he has designed training for the Department of Defense, NATO, the FBI, and U.S. Navy intelligence. A husband of almost 50 years, father of four, and grandfather of four, Monte says Social Security is not a handout. It's an earned benefit. He's deeply concerned about politicians who talk about cutting it, warning that it would harm the very people who served and worked their entire lives to contribute.

APPENDIX:

Methodology

The data analysis uses the 2019-2023 American Community Survey accessed via [IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota](#). We use a five-year dataset to have a sufficient sample size to analyze state-level data. Racial groups include people who identify as Latino and/or Hispanic and Latinos may be of any race. People are identified as having a disability in this analysis if they responded that they have difficulty in one or more of the following six realms: vision, hearing, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living. People may have multiple disabilities. This is a limited definition of disability that excludes a portion of disabled people. While people across the income spectrum may have difficulty making ends meet, in this analysis we define “low-income” as having household income below 200 percent of the federal poverty line.

	Total population	Receives Social Security		Receives SSI	
		Population	Share	Population	Share
Nonveterans	6,238,300	1,124,700	18.0%	150,900	2.4%
Veterans	640,300	233,900	36.5%	10,600	1.7%
Men veterans	546,200	218,300	40.0%	9,500	1.7%
Women veterans	94,100	15,600	16.6%	1,100	1.2%
Native American veterans	1,800	600	35.2%	*	*
Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander veterans	16,600	3,800	23.0%	*	*
Black veterans	135,400	40,600	30.0%	3,300	2.4%
Latino veterans	39,000	5,200	13.3%	*	*
Multiracial veterans	49,300	7,800	15.7%	*	*
White veterans	437,200	181,100	41.4%	6,300	1.4%
Low income veterans (below 200% federal poverty line)	87,500	40,100	45.8%	3,600	4.2%
Metro area veterans	472,100	156,000	33.0%	6,900	1.5%
Nonmetro area veterans	11,400	6,300	54.7%	*	*
Disabled veterans	296,100	120,400	40.7%	7,400	2.5%
Under 62 veterans	354,200	10,100	2.9%	4,500	1.3%
62 and older veterans	286,200	223,800	78.2%	6,200	2.2%

Source: National Partnership for Women & Families analysis using American Community Survey 2019-2023 five-year dataset via IPUMS.org. Racial groups include people who identify as Latino and/or Hispanic and Latinos may be of any race.

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- ¹ National Partnership for Women & Families. (2025, March). *America's Women and the Wage Gap*. Retrieved 7 August 2025, from <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/americas-women-and-the-wage-gap.pdf>
- ² Congressional Research Service. (2019, June 5). Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity in the Armed Services: Background and Issues for Congress. Retrieved 7 August 2025, from <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44321.pdf>. See also Library of Congress. (n.d.) *Legacies of Service: Celebrating Native Americans*. Retrieved 7 August 2025, from <https://www.loc.gov/collections/veterans-history-project-collection/serving-our-voices/diverse-experiences-in-service/legacies-of-service-celebrating-native-americans/>; Hallsell, T. (2024). "It is encouraging to see this much progress"; *Malmstrom Air Force Base and Civil Rights Activism in Great Falls, Montana, 1947-1984*. Retrieved 7 August 2025, from <https://www.malmstrom.af.mil/Portals/43/20240300%20%28U%29%20Hist%20TAH%20MAFB%20and%20CR%20Activism%20in%20GF.pdf>
- ³ Shaeffer, K. (2023, November 8). *The changing face of America's veteran population*. Pew Research Center Publication. Retrieved 7 August 2025, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/11/08/the-changing-face-of-americas-veteran-population/>
- ⁴ Goodman, N., Morris, M., Morris, Z., & McGarity, S. (2020, October). *The Extra Costs of Living with a Disability in the U.S. — Resetting the Policy Table*. National Disability Institute Publication. Retrieved 7 August, 2025, from: <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/extra-costs-living-with-disability-brief.pdf>; U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2024, May 15). *VA Health Care: Opportunities to Improve Access for Veterans Living in Rural Areas*. Retrieved 7 August 2025, from <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-107559>