



HEATHER SCHREIBER'S

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SOCIAL SECURITY ADVISOR

Social Security Planning for Retirement

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Focusing on Social Security's Future

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2024 Mid-Year Frequently Asked Questions

It hardly seems possible that we are almost midway through 2024, yet here we are. One of my favorite issues of *Social Security Advisor* is the one in which I answer frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Why is this the case? I talk to thousands of financial and tax professionals throughout the year, and many of those conversations inspire the topics that appear within these pages. Some FAQs, from advisors or consumers, contain similar themes, while others venture into entirely new territory, often caused by confusing updates or rules (e.g., our [April 2024 coverage](#) of Social Security's struggles with expanding overpayments).

However they reach me, by phone, email, or face-to-face during my travels around the country, I appreciate and welcome every conversation. They become the backbone of my continued desire for all of us — *planners, pre-retirees, or those who already have reached that milestone* — to get the answers to worrisome uncertainties so that we are better equipped to navigate our retirement journeys.

With that lead-in, here are the best of the mid-year Social Security and Medicare FAQs as posed by advisors and consumers in the first half of 2024.

Social Security's Struggles

My clients often raise concerns about Social Security going "broke" and, therefore, may express a desire to claim as soon as possible, believing they might be protected from any future benefit cuts. What can be done to address this fear and the associated desire to claim earlier than may have been the case otherwise?

It is essential that seniors (and future beneficiaries) understand what is happening with the Social Security trust funds. That begins with realizing there is no chance that Social Security will ever totally run out of money — *as in zilch, zip, zero*. Lacking funds to pay any benefits is impossible.

Even with trust fund reserves projected to become depleted in 2033, as of the latest report (see Bob Wright's article in this issue), ongoing revenue from payroll taxes collected from current workers and their employers, as well as income taxes collected on outgoing benefits and interest income, will be enough to pay about 79% of promised benefits — *equating to roughly \$1,600 a month for a retiree expecting \$2,000 a month*.

Social Security has never missed paying expected monthly benefits since the first check was cut in 1940, despite being on the brink of insolvency before now.

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