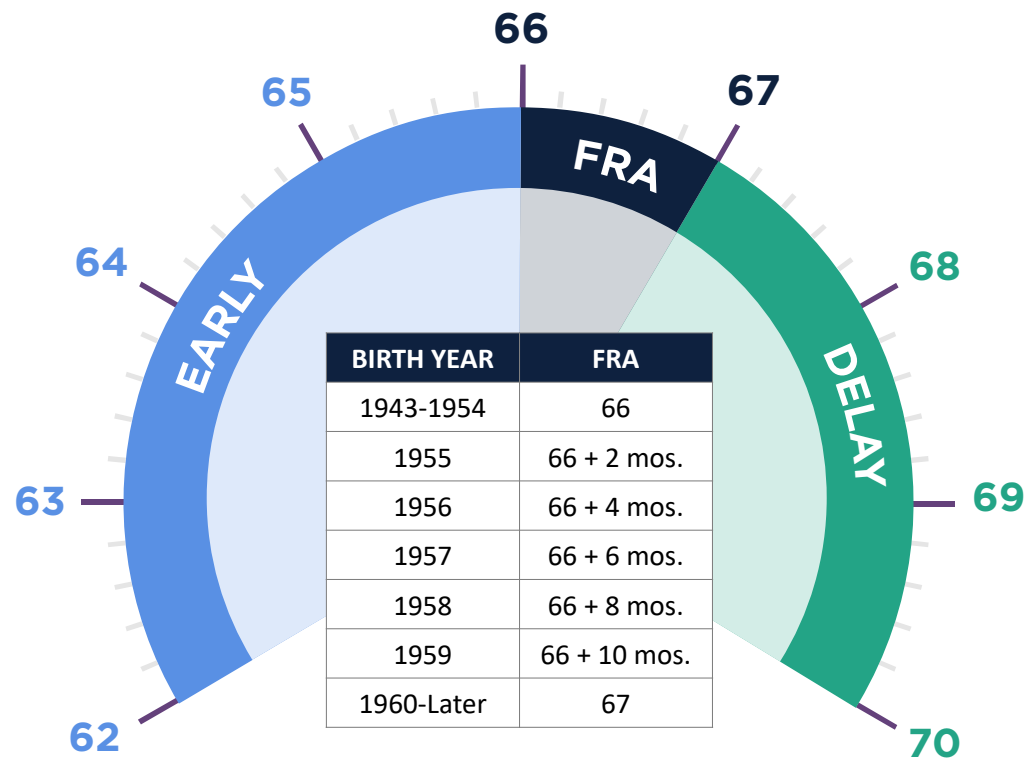


The Untapped Potential of Social Security: Claiming Strategies for Couples



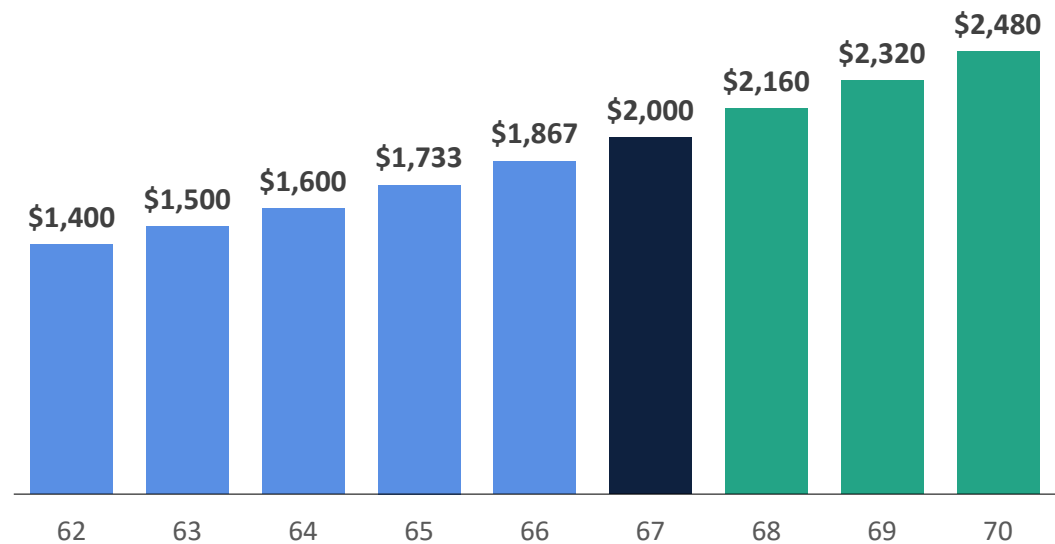
Your Full Retirement Age (FRA)



Source: Retirement Planner:
Benefits By Year Of Birth, ssa.gov, 2024

Early vs. Delayed Filing: How It Affects Your Social Security Benefit

Assumes a Benefit of \$2,000 at a Full Retirement Age (FRA) of 67¹



¹When to Start Receiving Retirement Benefits, ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10147.pdf, 2024

What vs. When

How much income will you need?



This chart is hypothetical and for illustrative purposes only.

- Spousal and Survivor Benefits
- Spousal Benefits for Divorced Spouses
- Survivor Benefits for Divorced Spouses



Spousal and Survivor Benefits



What Am I Entitled To?

The greater of:

- Your individual benefit
- Your spousal benefit
- If your spouse dies, the survivor benefit



General Guidelines for Claiming Spousal Benefits

- A couple must be married for at least one year
- The maximum spousal benefit is 50% of the higher-earning spouse's Social Security benefit
- The spousal benefit cannot be claimed until the higher-earning spouse files for benefits
- A spouse is entitled to the greater of their individual benefit or the spousal benefit, but not both
- Spousal benefits will be reduced if the lower-earning spouse files before their own FRA*

*Lower-earning spouse must be at least age 62 to claim spousal benefits.

Sources: Who can get Family benefits, [ssa.gov/family/eligibility](https://www.ssa.gov/family/eligibility), 7/25; Retirement Benefits, www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10035.pdf, 4/25

Individual Benefit vs. Spousal Benefit

Benefits at FRA:

John: \$3,820



Angela: \$1,616



Angela is entitled to the greater of:

Up to 50% of John's
benefit

\$1,910

Her own benefit

\$1,616

Source: Benefits For Your Family/Benefits For Your Spouse,
ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/planner/applying7.html, 1/24

Claiming Strategies for Married Couples

Split Strategy

- The higher-earning spouse delays filing and the lower-earning spouse claims earlier to receive a smaller but consistent income
- The spouse who delays claiming can wait until age 70 to receive the highest possible benefit

Split Strategy Example

Benefits at FRA:

Angela: \$1,616



John: \$3,820



Angela files for her
own benefit:



John delays until
age 70 to receive the
maximum benefit:



Source: Benefits For Your Family/Benefits For Your Spouse,
ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/planner/applying7.html, 1/24

Claiming Strategies for Married Couples

Delayed Strategy

- Both spouses delay claiming benefits until age 70 to maximize lifetime benefits

Claiming Strategies for Married Couples

Early Claiming Strategy

- If couples have shorter life expectancies, they may choose to claim benefits earlier, even at 62, to receive a lifetime of payments, albeit reduced

General Guidelines for Claiming Survivor Benefits

- The surviving spouse may be entitled to the greater of their individual benefit or the survivor benefit
- A couple must have been married for at least nine months (and the surviving spouse must not remarry before age 60)
- The surviving spouse must be at least age 60, but that's considered early filing (i.e., before FRA) and may potentially reduce the benefit amount

Survivor Benefit

John: \$3,820



Angela: \$1,910



If John passes away,
Angela is entitled to
the survivor benefit:

100% of John's benefit



Note: The benefit amounts shown on this slide do not reflect COLA increases, which could result in higher actual amounts. Source: Benefits For Your Family/Benefits For Your Spouse, ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/planner/applying7.html, 1/24

Claiming Strategies for Surviving Spouses

Maximizing Claiming Strategy

By waiting until FRA, the survivor receives

100%

of the deceased spouse's benefit

Claiming Strategies for Surviving Spouses

Early Claiming Strategy

- The surviving spouse can receive survivor benefits at 60, but that's considered early filing and may reduce the benefit amount

Claiming Strategies for Surviving Spouses

Switch Strategy

- If the surviving spouse's individual benefit is lower, they can file for that first, then switch to the higher survivor benefit at FRA
- Alternatively, if the survivor benefit is lower, they can file for that first and switch to their individual benefit later

How to Apply for Survivor Benefits

- **Contact:** Call the SSA at 1-800-772-1213 to schedule an appointment or visit your local Social Security office
- **Prepare documentation:**
 - Proof of death (often reported by a funeral home)
 - Your birth certificate or other identification
 - Marriage certificate
 - Social Security numbers for both you and the deceased



Benefits for Divorced Spouses

What Am I Entitled To?

The greater of:

- Your individual benefit
- Your spousal benefit



General Guidelines for Claiming Divorced Spousal Benefits

- You and your ex-spouse must have been married for a minimum of 10 consecutive years and divorced for at least two
- The higher-earning ex-spouse must qualify for Social Security retirement benefits
- You must be at least 62 years old
- You must be unmarried
- Your individual retirement benefit must not be higher than the ex-spouse's benefit
- The ex-spouse doesn't need to file for their benefits first

Claiming Strategy for Divorced Spouses

Maximizing Claiming Strategy



- To receive the maximum divorced spousal benefit, which is 50% of your ex-spouse's benefit at their full retirement age, you must wait until your own full retirement age to file

Claiming Strategies for Divorced Spouses

Early Claiming Strategy.

- Although you can start drawing benefits at age 62, this is considered early filing and will reduce your spousal benefits

Filing for Divorced Spousal Can Be Advantageous

	Benefit at FRA	Joyce is entitled to the greater of:
Dominic, 70 	\$2,939	Up to 50% of Dominic's FRA benefit \$1,470
Joyce, 67 	\$1,029	Her own benefit \$1,029

- The spousal is \$441/mo. more than Joyce's individual benefit
- She could receive \$5,292 more annually or \$105,840 over 20 years¹

This chart is hypothetical and for illustrative purposes only.

¹This amount could be higher with potential cost-of-living adjustments (COLA).

Delayed Credits Can't Close the Gap: The Spousal Benefit Is Still Higher

Age	% of FRA	Dominic	Joyce	
62	-30%	\$2,057	\$720	Eligible, but benefits are reduced due to early filing
63	-25%	\$2,204	\$771	
64	-20%	\$2,351	\$823	
65	-14%	\$2,547	\$891	
66	-7%	\$2,743	\$960	
67	100%	\$2,939	\$1,029	Filing at FRA: Divorced Spousal Benefit: \$1,469
68	108%	\$3,174	\$1,111	
69	116%	\$3,428	\$1,200	
70	124%	\$3,644	\$1,275	Delayed filing: Joyce's individual benefit at 70 is \$194 less than the full spousal benefit.

Source: Effect of Early or Delayed Retirement on Retirement Benefits, ssa.gov/OACT/ProgData/ar_drc.html
 This chart is hypothetical and for illustrative purposes only.

“That Sounds Great, But...”


- “My ex-spouse and I are *not* on good terms. Will they know if I apply for the spousal benefits?”
- “If my ex-spouse files for spousal benefits, is that going to affect my individual benefits, or my new spouses?”
- “Social Security spousal benefits aren’t covered in our divorced agreement. Am I still eligible?”

How Can I Find Out my Ex-Spouse's Benefit?

- A Social Security rep can provide estimates of the benefit you may receive as a divorced spouse, based on your ex-spouse's earnings record
- Call your local Social Security office or the national customer service line (800-772-1213) to make an appointment

How to Apply for Divorced Spousal Benefits

- **Contact:** Call the SSA at 1-800-772-1213 to schedule an appointment or visit your local Social Security office
- **Apply online:** <https://www.ssa.gov/apply>
- **Prepare documentation:**
 - Your marriage certificate
 - Your divorce decree



Survivor Benefits for Divorced Spouses

What Am I Entitled To?

The greater of:

- Your individual benefit
- Up to 100% of the survivor benefit



General Guidelines for Claiming Divorced Survivor Benefits

- The marriage must have lasted for at least 10 years
- The surviving former spouse must be age 60 or older
- Remarrying before age 60 may make the surviving former spouse ineligible to collect on their deceased former spouse's record

Claiming Strategies for Divorced Surviving Spouses

- Maximizing Strategy
- Early Strategy
- Switch Strategy

MSJ(F0

Make this a strategy.

Miller, Stephanie J (Hartford F, 2025-06-30T19:22:33.782

You Might Be
Thinking...

“

My ex-spouse remarried.
If I file for divorced survivor
benefits, will this affect
their family?

How to Apply for Divorced Survivor Benefits

- **Contact:** Call the SSA at 1-800-772-1213 to schedule an appointment or visit your local Social Security office
- **Prepare documentation:**
 - Your birth certificate
 - Your marriage certificate and final divorce decree
 - Your ex-spouse's death certificate
 - Your Social Security number and that of your ex-spouse (if available)

Main Idea



You have choices—make them count.
Explore your Social Security options
and create a plan that supports your
retirement goals.

Summary

- **Spousal and Survivor Benefits**
Flexibility to help maximize income and strengthen survivor protection
- **Spousal Benefits for Divorced Spouses**
Divorce doesn't eliminate eligibility for spousal benefits
- **Survivor Benefits for Divorced Spouses**
Divorced spouses may still receive survivor benefits

Next Steps

1 Download and review your Social Security statement by logging into ssa.gov/myaccount.

2 Estimate what your monthly income needs will be in retirement.

3 Meet with your financial professional & tax professional to evaluate your overall portfolio and create an income plan.

DISCLOSURES

The preceding is not intended to be a recommendation or advice. This material should be regarded as educational information on Social Security and is not intended to provide specific advice. If you have questions regarding your particular situation, you should contact the Social Security Administration and/or your legal or tax advisors.

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