Presentation of the Trustees Report
A Journalism Roundtable

Social Security 2019 Technical Panel

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Highlight What You Want to Highlight

If you want the public and press to focus on something other than date at which trust fund runs dry, tell them that

...on one page
...with three bullets
...a chart (or two)

2015 blog post

Trust Fund Reserve Gains One Year for Projected Depletion Date

2018 press release

Social Security Combined Trust Fund Reserves Depletion Year Remains 2034 Says Board of Trustees

Disability Fund Improves by Four Years
Press release from Boston Fed on President Rosengren's (16-page, 17-footnote) speech in Hong Kong:

• Rosengren disagreed with the view that the market turbulence at the end of 2018 was caused by the Fed’s ongoing balance sheet reduction.

• He also said “it is unrealistic to expect the Fed’s balance sheet to return to the size it was before the financial crisis,” as some have suggested, because factors not related to monetary policy impact the balance sheet’s growth.

• Rosengren also emphasized that central banks may need to turn to balance sheet tools to stimulate the economy during the next recession, given a low-rate environment with limited room to reduce rates before they reach zero.

• He described the Fed’s post-crisis approach to monetary policy implementation as requiring a larger balance sheet.

Don’t Put the Print Version Online

Design a version of the summary for online users – with [hyperlinks].
Graphic design can help

Boring...or interesting?
Complicated...or comprehensible?
Old fashioned...or modern?
Social Security Trustees Report: 1998 vs 2018

Chart C—Income and Cost Rates
[percentage of taxable payroll]

Chart B—OASDI and HI Income and Cost as Percentages of Their Respective Taxable Payroll
Listen to Jonathan Schwabish on charts

Better Presentations
A Guide for Scholars, Researchers, and Wonks

Jonathan Schwabish
Make charts that are easy to share

Real Median Household Income: 1967 to 2017

Median household income was $61,400 in 2017, an increase in real terms of 1.8 percent from the 2016 median of $60,300. This is the third consecutive annual increase in median household income.

Note: The data for 2013 and beyond reflect the implementation of the redesigned income questions. Income rounded to nearest $100.
FAQs

What about them?

Do them.

Why?

Makes it easier to understand the basics.

How?

Short questions. Short answers.

See https://www.brookings.edu/series/the-hutchins-center-explains/

What?

Perhaps separate basics of Social Security finance from what’s new.
Blog posts or explainers

• Fertility

• Immigration

• Productivity
Social media

Some good experiments:

Facebook Live with Steve Goss
https://www.facebook.com/socialsecurity/videos/10156690568145288/

Reddit with Steve Goss
https://www.facebook.com/socialsecurity/videos/10156690568145288/

Do more. Twitter? Short videos? Graphics to share on social media?
Learn from others

Bank of England: Making monetary policy understandable

Census Bureau press kit: Income, Poverty, Health Insurance

Elmendorf era at Congressional Budget Office
• Health care spending blog  https://www.cbo.gov/publication/45175
• Immigration blog  https://www.cbo.gov/publication/45176
• A dozen (very short) videos:  https://www.brookings.edu/research/doug-elmendorf-unleashed/

Raj Chetty
https://opportunityinsights.org/national_trends/

National Academy of Social Insurance video
https://www.nasi.org/learn/social-security/just-the-facts