

**From:** Social Security Administration, Office of External Affairs <[oea.net.post@ssa.gov](mailto:oea.net.post@ssa.gov)>  
**To:** Kester, Tonykester@aging.sc.gov  
**Date:** 9/3/2015 1:18:18 PM  
**Subject:** For Labor Day – New disability statistics resources

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Dear Colleague:

The fictional detective Sherlock Holmes famously warned that theorizing without data is a mistake of the highest order. Over a century later, we rely on data more than ever before to shape public policy.

That's why I'm happy to announce the release of two rich online data resources for researchers, advocates, and policymakers concerning the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program. Our new [state SSDI fact sheets](#) and [national SSDI issue paper](#) make it easy to see exactly how this vital safety net is safeguarding workers and their families in every community across America.

As we commemorate Labor Day, this is a perfect time to focus attention on the disability protections that workers pay for through taxes on their earnings. The average person receiving SSDI payments today paid into the system for 22 years before becoming disabled.

Because the law requires us to apply a very strict definition of disability, those receiving SSDI payments are among the most severely disabled people in the country. For many, this earned benefit is the only thing standing between them and poverty.

#### *About the New Online Resources*

The repository of [state SSDI fact sheets](#) includes a separate fact sheet for every U.S. state, as well as for non-state Congressional districts like Washington, D.C. and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. For each state or jurisdiction, they show:

- How many disabled workers, children of insured workers, and spouses of insured workers are receiving SSDI benefits, and the relative sizes of these groups;
- The average annual SSDI benefit in relation to the poverty threshold;
- The total annual benefits for all SSDI beneficiaries; and
- A breakdown by Congressional district showing the number of disabled workers, children of insured workers, and spouses of insured workers receiving SSDI benefits; the average monthly benefit for these groups; and the total monthly benefits for the district.

The data-packed [national SSDI issue paper](#) describes five fundamental tenets that Congress used as a basis for establishing the DI program nearly 60 years ago. The authors then go on to examine whether and to what extent today's program adheres to these core principles. I think you will find it to be an informative and thought-provoking read, as well as a valuable research tool.

I hope you enjoy these new additions to our website! Please share them with your members and colleagues to help them learn more about how the SSDI program is fulfilling its inter-generational promise of support to America's workers and their families.

As always, I thank you for your interest in our programs and services, and for your dedication to the people we serve.

Sincerely,

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