

The Nationwide Retirement Institute® 2021 Social Security Survey

June 2021

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This material should be regarded as general 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.





Research Method

**Audience:**

1,931 U.S. adults age 25+

**Survey Timing:**

April 19 – May 7, 2021

**Mode:**

20-minute online survey

**Weighting:**

Data are weighted to ensure results are projectable to the U.S. population of adults 25+

Method Statement *(to be included in all press materials):*

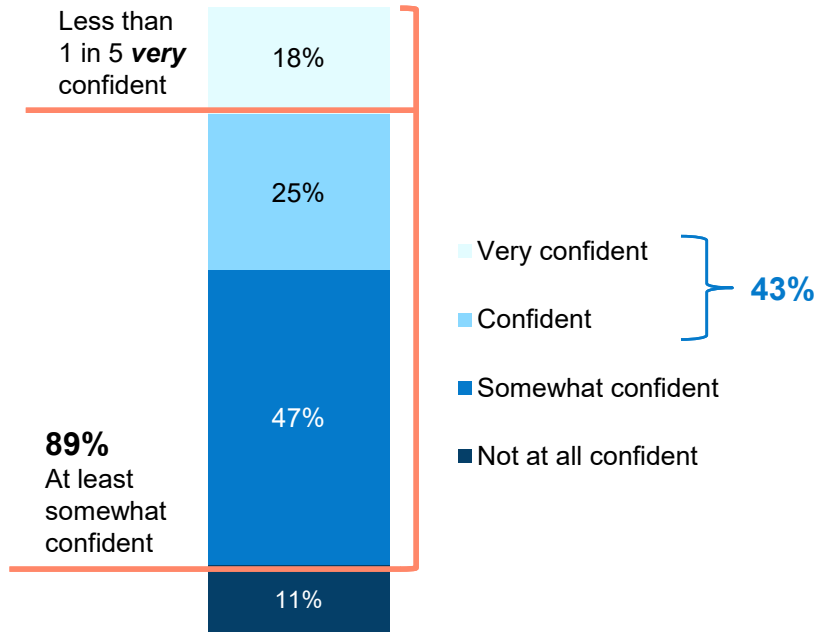
This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of Nationwide between April 19 and May 7, 2021 among 1,931 U.S. adults age 25+ (national sample) including 627 Millennials (age 25-40), 634 Gen Xers (age 41-56), and 670 Boomers+ (age 57+) and an oversample of 513 Black adults for a total of 604 Black adults. Data were statistically weighted as needed to bring them in line with the population of U.S. residents age 25+ from the 2020 Current Population Survey for age by gender, education, race/ethnicity, region, household income, marital status, and household size. To ensure the national sample was representative, the data were initially weighted by generation (Millennials 25-40, Gen Xers 41-56, and Boomers+ 57+) and then combined into a total 25+ group. Data for Black adults were weighted as needed for age by gender, education, region, household income, marital status, and household size. Our weighting algorithm also included a propensity score which allows us to adjust for attitudinal and behavioral differences between those who are online versus those who are not, those who join online panels versus those who do not, and those who responded to this survey versus those who did not.



Generally, Adults Are At Least Somewhat Confident in Their Knowledge of SS

However, only about 2 in 5 express strong confidence and less than 1 in 5 are very confident; Millennials and men are more likely to express confidence in their knowledge of Social Security

Confidence in Social Security Knowledge



% confident/very confident

Millennials are more likely than Gen Xers and Boomers+ to express confidence (52% vs. 39%, 42%)

Men are more likely to be confident in their knowledge of SS (51% vs. 35%)

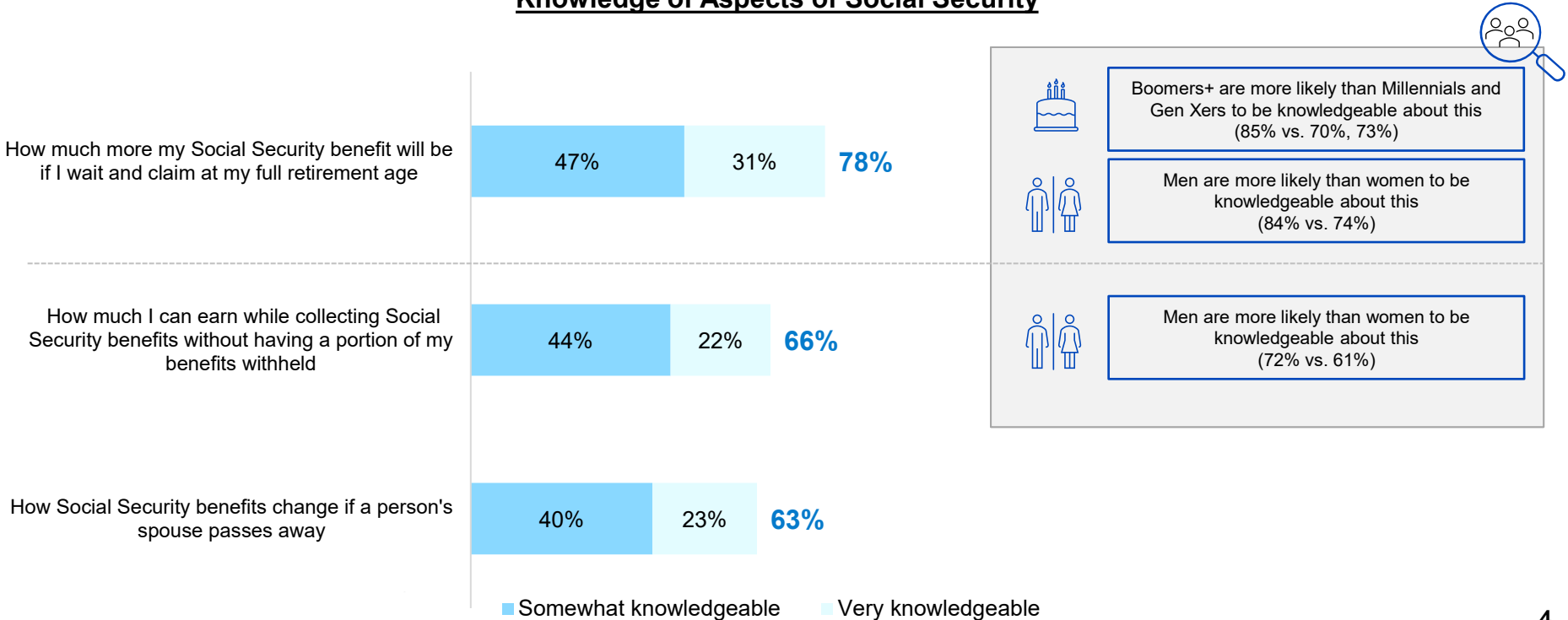
While those who currently receive SS are more likely than those who don't to be confident in their knowledge, still only half say they are confident/very confident (52% vs. 34%)



Majorities Feel Knowledgeable About Certain Aspects of Social Security

But again, more are “somewhat” knowledgeable than are “very” knowledgeable

Knowledge of Aspects of Social Security



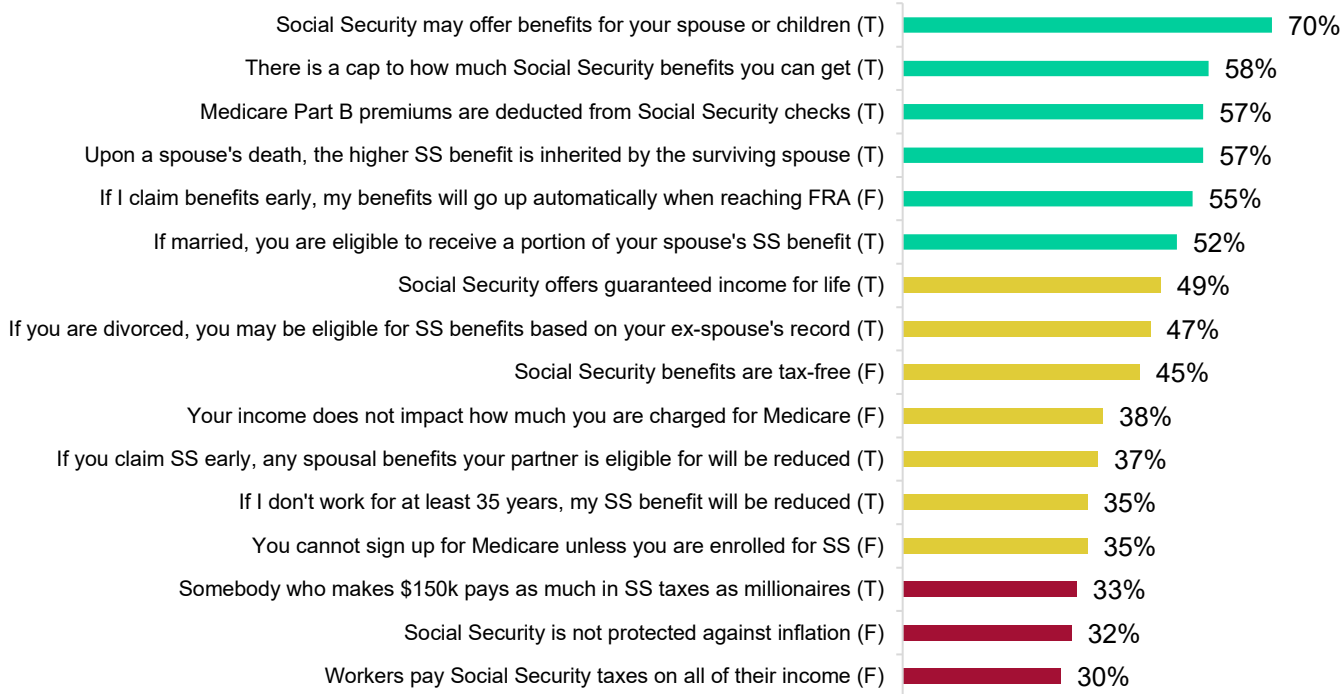


But When Tested About Specifics, Clear Gaps in Knowledge Exist

For all but one statement, less than two-thirds provided the correct response

Knowledge Testing Specific Statements About Social Security

% correct



Higher knowledge topics
 Moderate knowledge topics
 Lowest knowledge topics

In most cases, Boomers+ are more likely than Millennials and Gen Xers and Men are more likely than Women to provide the correct answer

Those who currently receive SS are more likely than those who don't to correctly answer some, but not all, of these statements – especially some of those in the moderate and lowest knowledge topic tiers

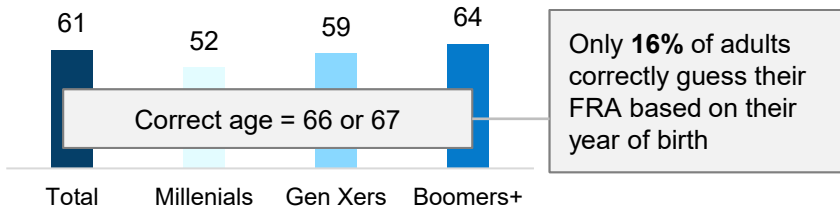


Many Express Uncertainty About Several Basic Social Security Details

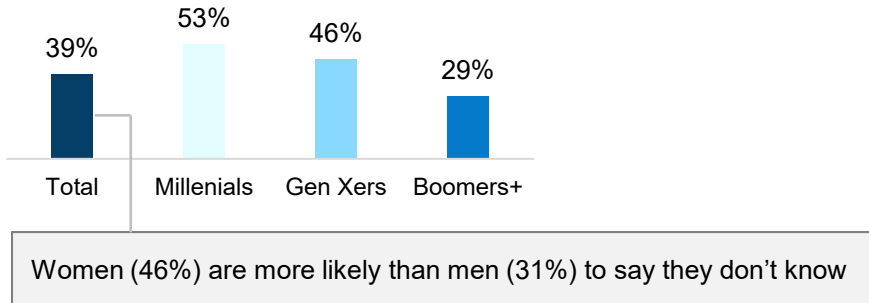
Women are especially likely to be uncertain about many aspects of Social Security; younger generations unsure of FRA

Age Believe You Are Eligible for Full Retirement Benefits

Average age provided

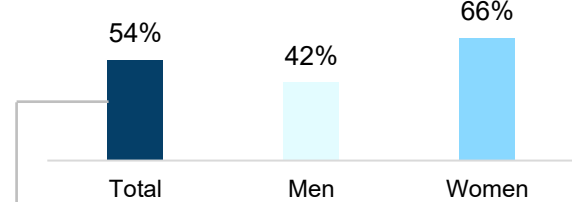


% "I don't know"



Percent of Income Is or Will be Replaced in Retirement by SS

% "Don't know / Not sure"

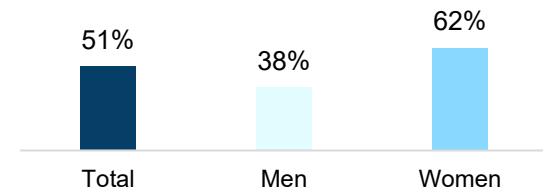


Those currently collecting SS (55%) are just as likely as those who aren't (53%) to not know or be unsure

Boomers+ (59%), who are more likely to be currently receiving SS, are in fact **more** likely than Millennials (50%) and Gen Xers (48%) to not know or be unsure

How Much Monthly SS Payment is Expected to Be

% "Not sure" among those not receiving SS



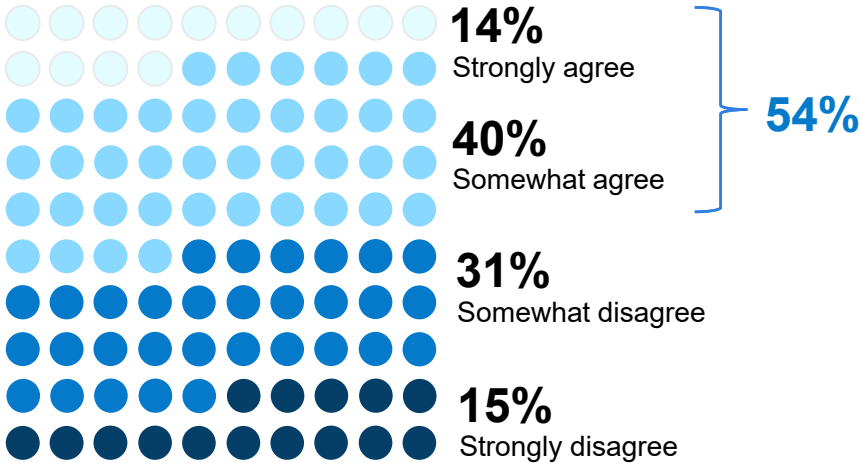


Only About Half Know Exactly How To Maximize Their Benefits

Less than 1 in 10 know all of the factors that determine the maximum Social Security benefit someone can receive

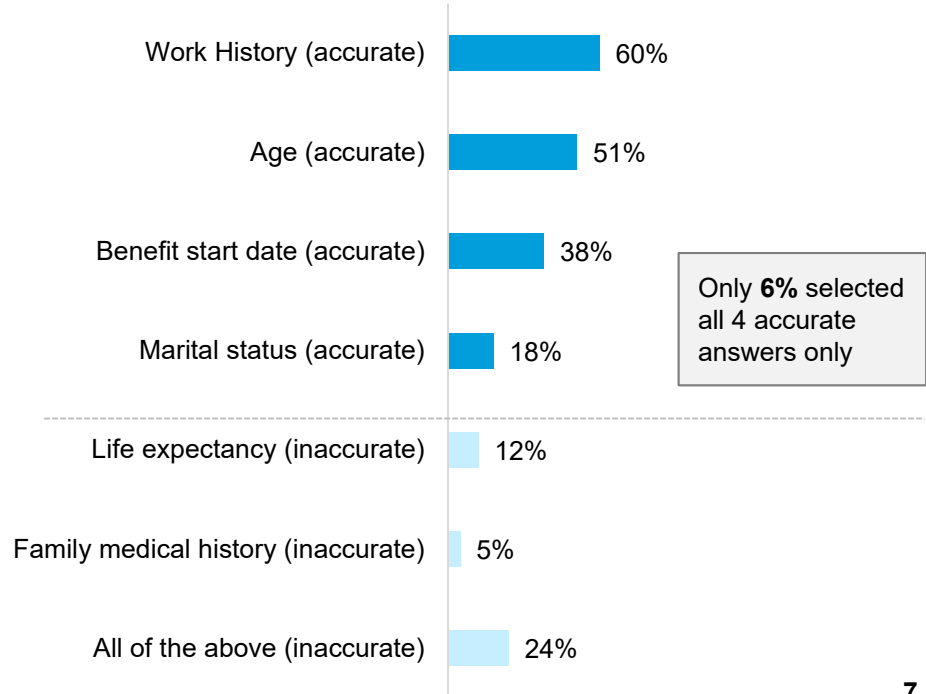
Agreement with Statement

I know exactly how to maximize my Social Security benefits



Men are more likely than women to agree (61% vs. 47%)

Factors that Determine Maximum SS Benefit Someone Can Receive



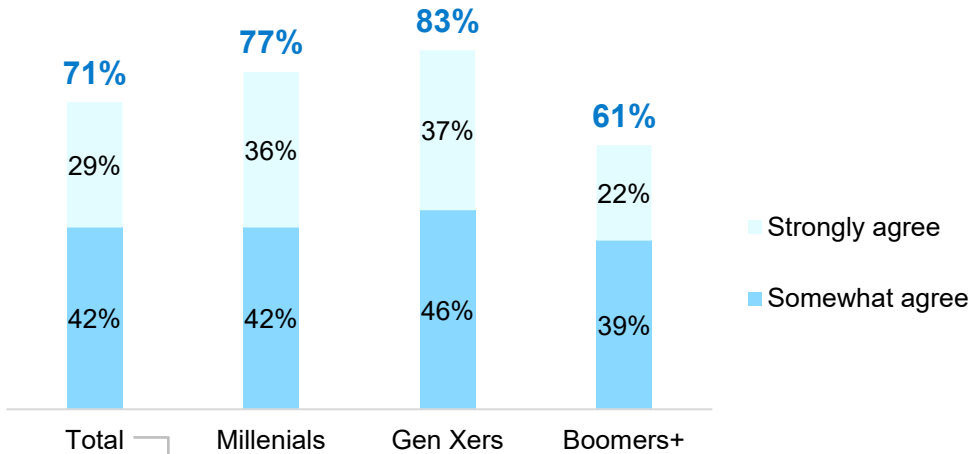


Confidence in Future of SS is Low, Especially for Younger Adults

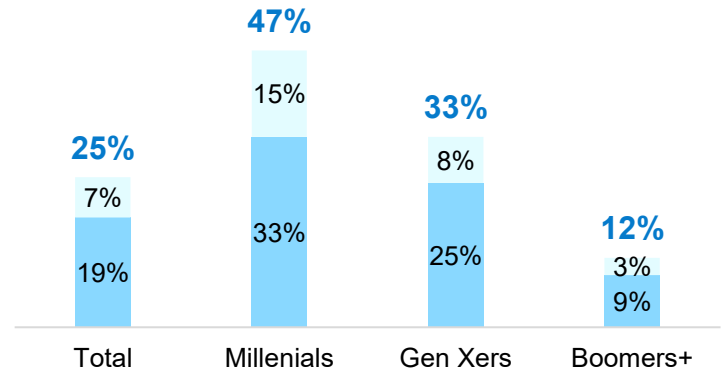
Majorities worry about the program running out of funding, even among Boomers+, and nearly half of Millennials think they won't get a dime of the benefits they've earned

Agreement with Statements

I worry about the Social Security program running out of funding in my lifetime



I will not get a dime of the Social Security benefits I have earned



Women are more likely than men to agree (77% vs. 64%)



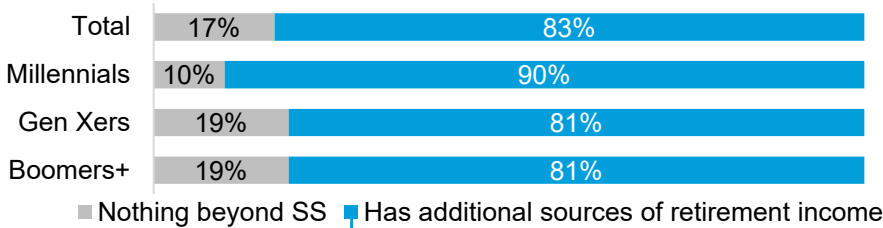
Even a majority of those who currently receive SS (62%) agree with this statement, though they are less likely than those who don't receive it (79%)



SS Not Expected To Be Primary Income Source in Retirement For Younger Adults

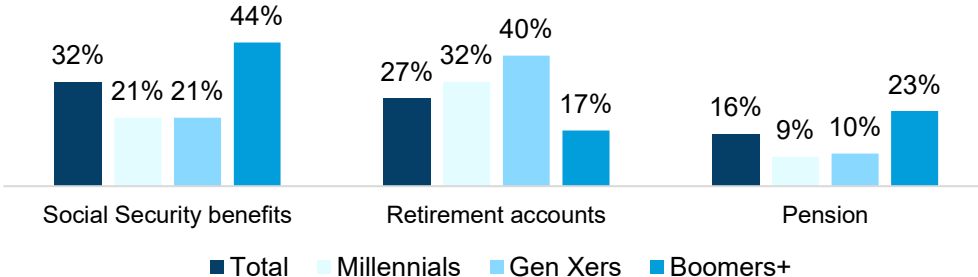
However, many younger adults feel that it *should* be enough on its own, indicating a disconnect between the ideal of the program and the reality for them

Sources of Retirement Income



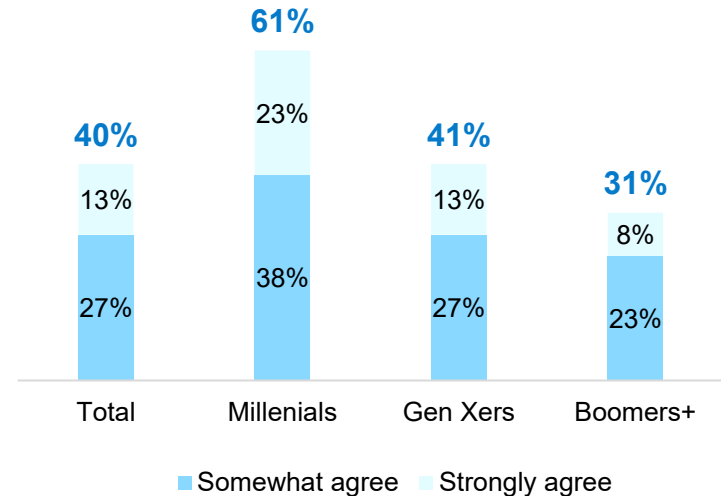
Primary Source of Retirement Income[^]

Among those who have additional sources of retirement income beyond SS



Agreement with Statement

Social Security on its own should be enough to help me live comfortably in retirement



[^]Only the top 3 are shown

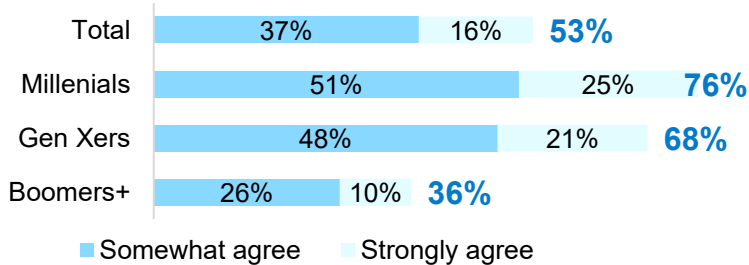


Younger Adults Expect to Need to Continue to Work Due to SS Limitations

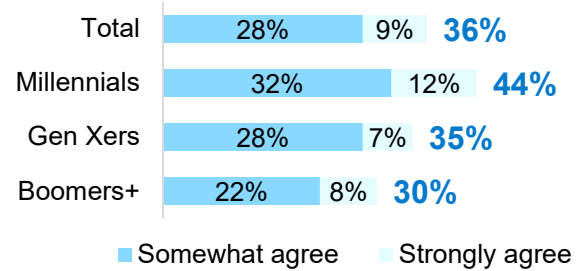
Perhaps because Social Security benefits cover/are expected to cover only about half of living expenses

Agreement with Statements

I need to continue working because Social Security won't pay enough

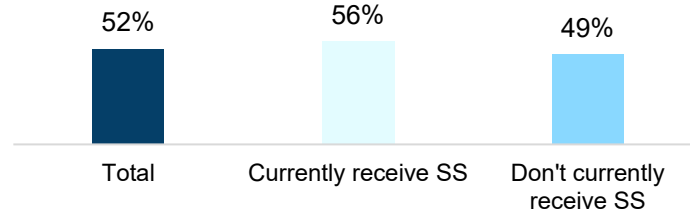


I plan on filing for Social Security benefits early, but continuing to work
Among those who don't currently collect SS



Percent of Expenses [Expect] SS Benefits to Cover

Average



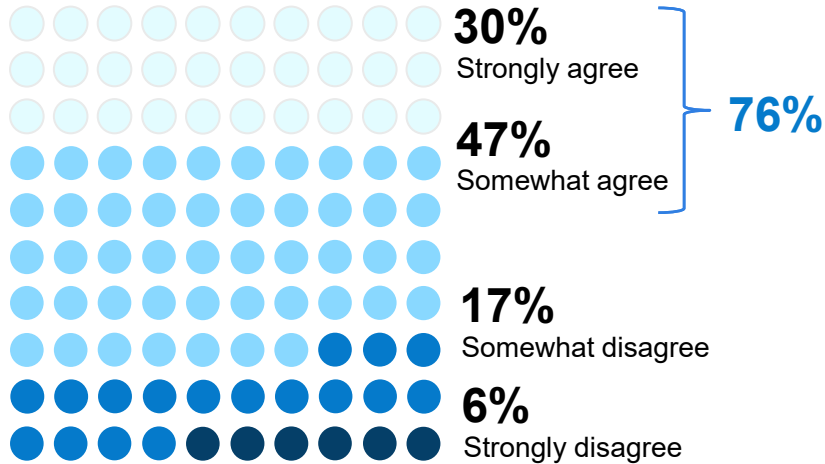


Most Agree the System Needs to Change and Support Certain Measures To Do So

Millennials are especially likely to support these measures

Agreement with Statement

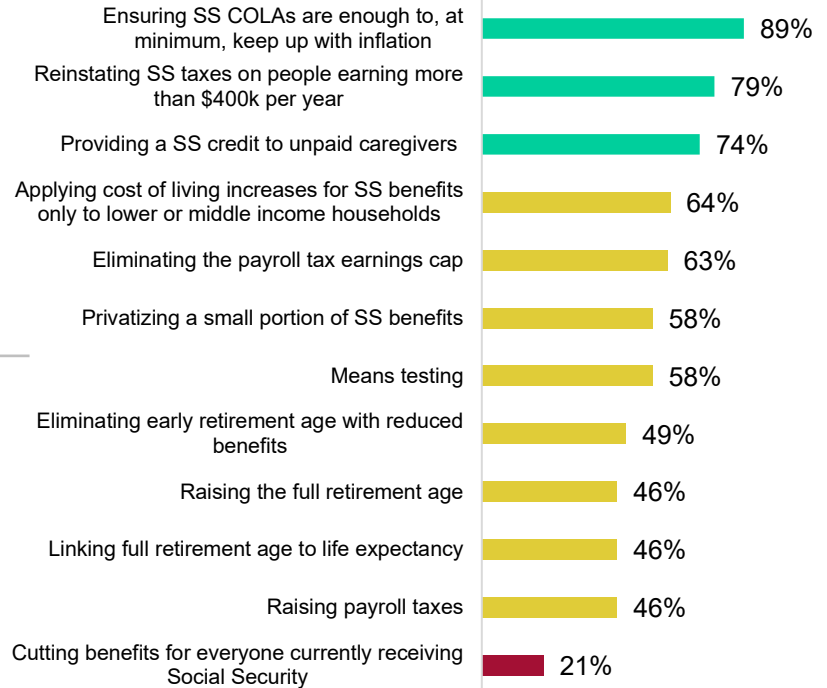
The Social Security system needs to change



Support for SS measures

% Strongly/somewhat support

Higher support
Moderate support
Lower support



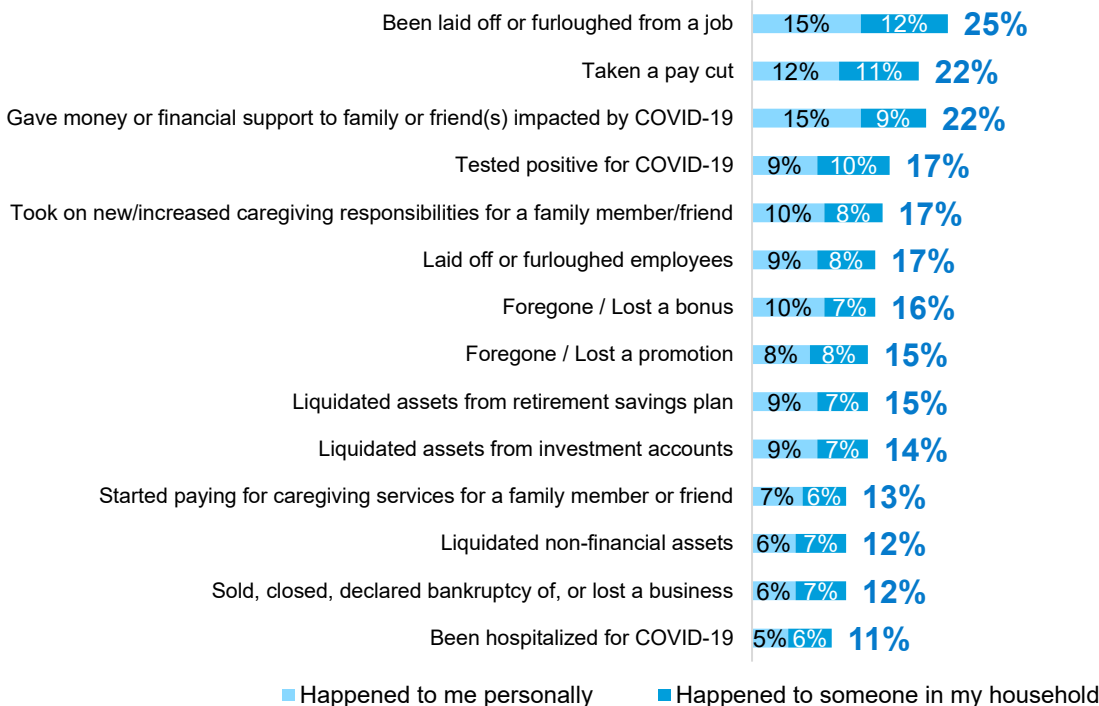
With the exception of eliminating the payroll tax earnings cap and raising payroll taxes, Millennials are more likely than Boomers+ (and often Gen Xers as well) to support all of the “moderate” and “lower” support measures. And, Millennials this year are more likely than Millennials last year to support cutting benefits for those currently receiving SS (46% vs. 29% in 2020).



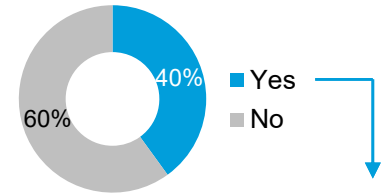
COVID Impacts Multiple Aspects of Life, From Job Loss to Caregiving Duties

One-quarter of adults ages 25+ say they and/or someone in their household was laid off or furloughed. In fact, among those who were ever out of the workforce for an extended period of time, one-third say they were during the pandemic, especially Millennials and Gen Xers

Impacts from COVID-19

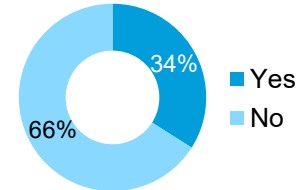


Ever Out of Workforce for Extended Period of Time



Out of Workforce for Extended Period During COVID-19 Pandemic

Among those who have ever been out of the workforce for an extended period of time



Millennials are more likely than Gen Xers and both are more likely than Boomers+ to have been out of the workforce for an extended time period during the pandemic (68% vs. 48% vs. 12%)



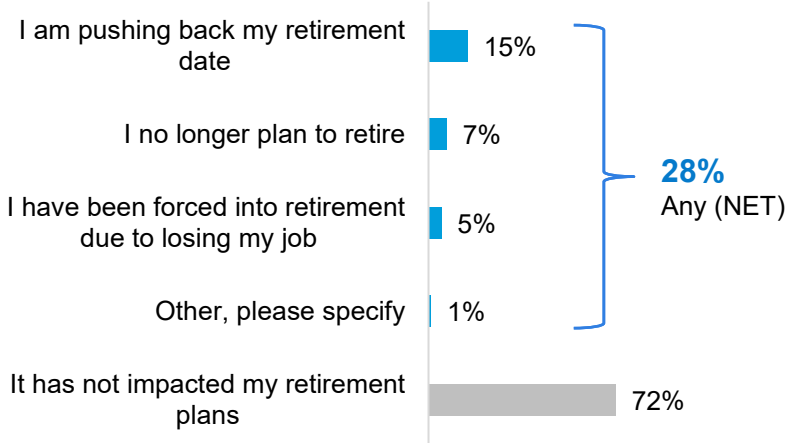


More Than 1 in 4 Say COVID Has Impacted Retirement Plans

And, nearly 2 in 5 are reevaluating their retirement plans to assess the financial impacts of COVID, especially younger generations – suggesting that for these groups in particular, long-term financial impacts may linger from this time period

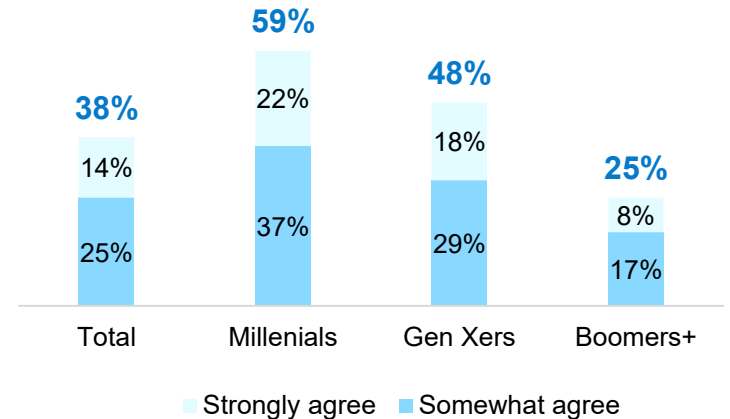
COVID-19 Impact on Retirement

Among those who are not retired



Agreement with Statement

I am reevaluating my retirement (plans) to assess the financial impact of COVID-19



Compared to the 2020 Nationwide Harris Poll COVID Flash poll[^] the proportion who say COVID has impacted retirement plans has decreased (28% vs. 38% in 2020), and the proportion who say they are reevaluating their retirement plans has also decreased (38% vs. 42% in 2020)

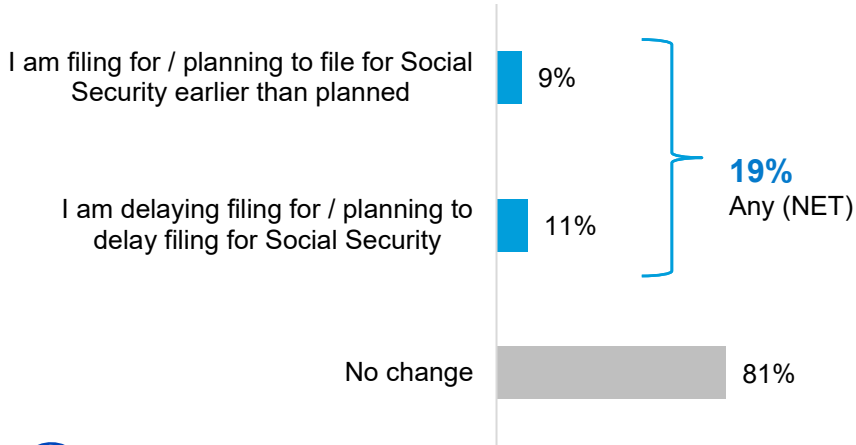
[^]Nationwide Harris Poll COVID Flash Poll conducted online among 1,798 U.S. adults 24+ including 1,332 who are not retired, May 15-19, 2020.



Nearly 1 in 5 Say COVID Has Impacted Social Security Filing Plans

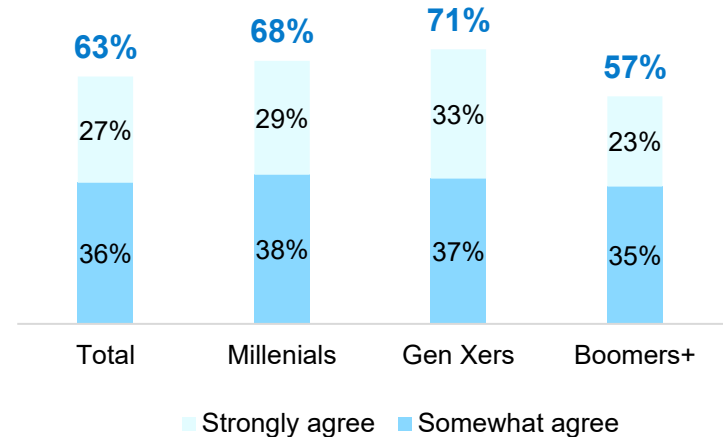
Majorities across generations agree that the government shouldn't penalize people who claim early by reducing Social Security benefits because COVID has forced so many people into retirement, especially younger generations

COVID-19 Impact on Social Security Filing



Agreement with Statement

Because COVID-19 has forced many people into retirement, the government shouldn't penalize people by reducing Social Security benefits for those who claim early



Compared to the 2020 Nationwide Harris Poll COVID Flash poll[^] the proportion who say COVID has impacted Social Security filing plans has remained flat (19% vs. 18% in 2020)

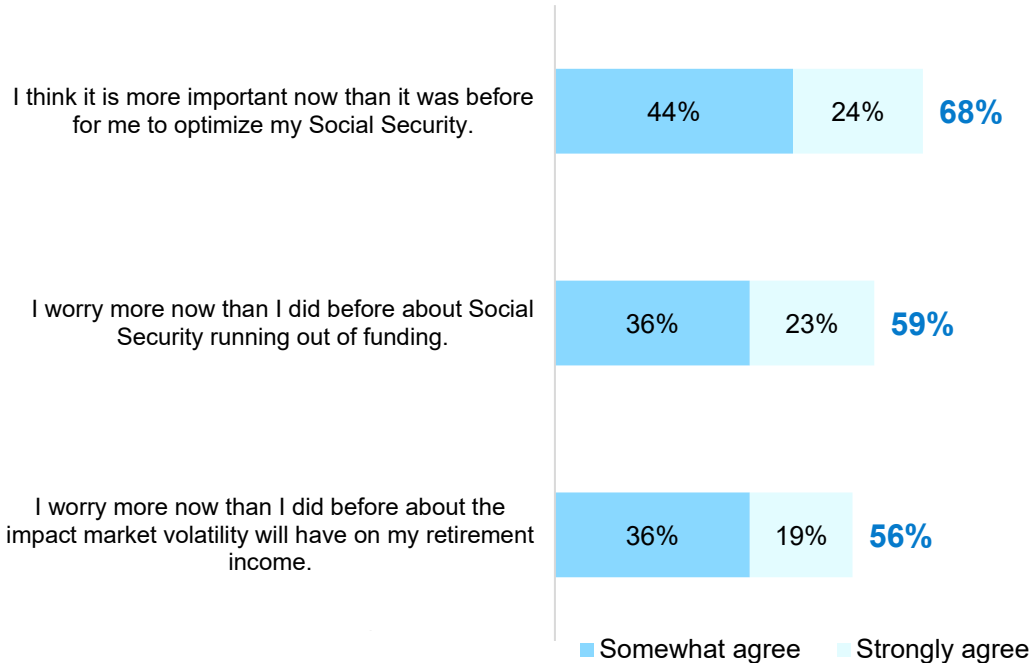
[^]Nationwide Harris Poll COVID Flash Poll conducted online among 1,798 U.S. adults 24+, May 15-19, 2020.



COVID Heightens Worries About SS Funding, Market Volatility Impact

Younger generations and women are especially likely to hold these views

Agreement with Statements about COVID Impacts on Social Security and Retirement



Millennials and Gen Xers are more likely than Boomers+ to agree with all of these statements



Women are more likely than men to agree with all of these statements



Compared to the 2020 Nationwide Harris Poll COVID Flash poll[^] the proportion who agree that it is more important to optimize SS has increased (68% vs. 63% in 2020), while the proportion who worry more about SS running out of funding and worry more about the impact of market volatility on retirement income have remained steady (59% vs. 62% in 2020 and 56% vs. 57% in 2020, respectively)

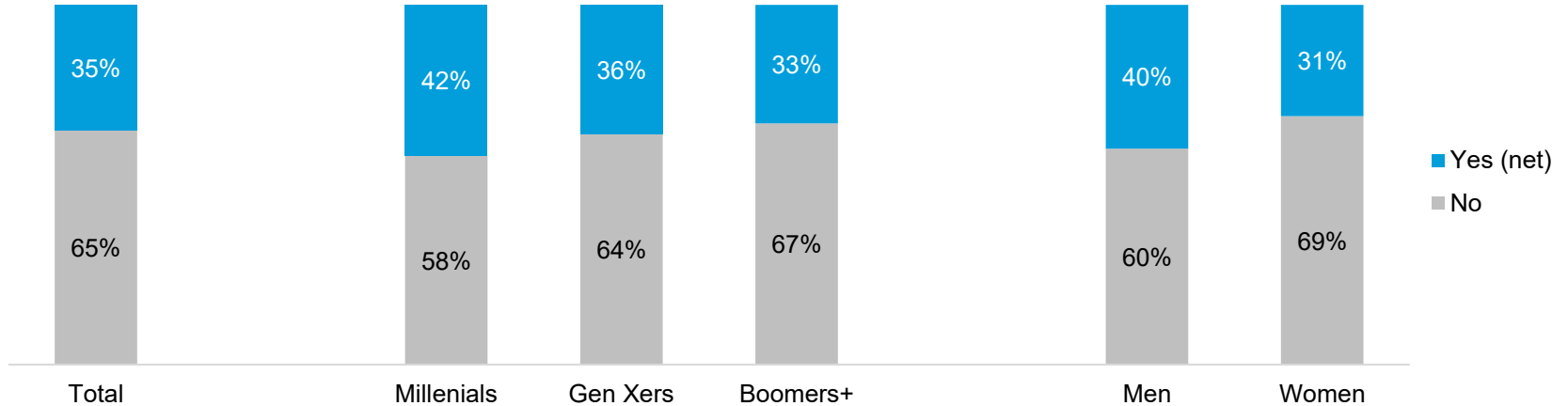
[^]Nationwide Harris Poll COVID Flash Poll conducted online among 1,798 U.S. adults 24+, May 15-19, 2020.



More Than One-Third of Adults Work with a Financial Professional

Younger adults and men are more likely to work with one

Currently Working with a Financial Professional**



Gen Xers are more likely this year to say they work with a financial professional** (36% vs. 27% in 2020)

**Note that we changed from “financial advisor” to “financial professional (e.g., e.g., Certified Financial Planner (CFP), broker, financial advisor working at an insurance agency, etc.)” this year which could impact trending of this and other responses where this new term is used

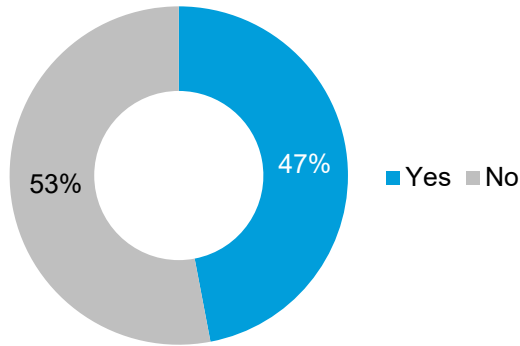


About Half Who Work with an FP Say They Provide Social Security Advice

However, a majority who haven't been advised on Social Security say it isn't something they expect

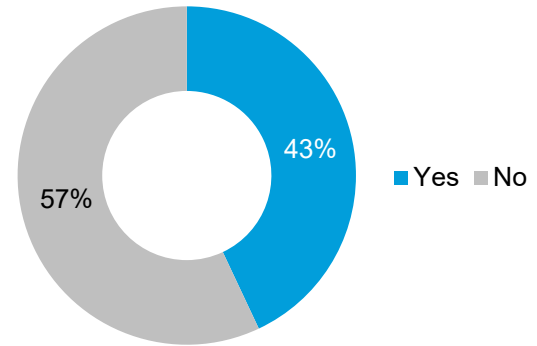
Financial Professional Provided Advice on How/When to File for SS Benefits

Among those who work with a financial professional



SS Advice Something Expected from Financial Professional

Among those who work with a financial professional but haven't been advised on SS



Millennials who work with an FP are more likely than Gen Xers and both are more likely than Boomers+ to say their FP provides advice about how/when to file for Social Security (68% vs. 52% vs. 32%)

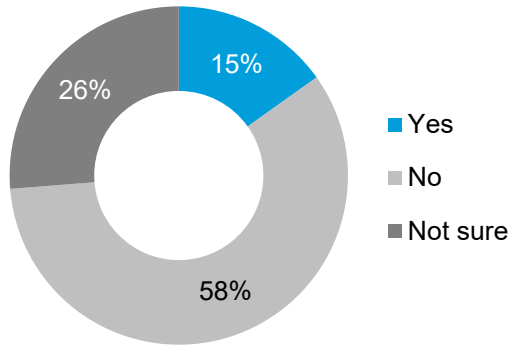


Less Than 1 in 5 Without an FP Plan To Ask One About SS, With 1 in 4 Unsure

Most with a financial professional or who plan to ask one about Social Security would switch financial professionals if theirs couldn't show them how to maximize their Social Security benefit

Plan on Asking FP About SS Benefits

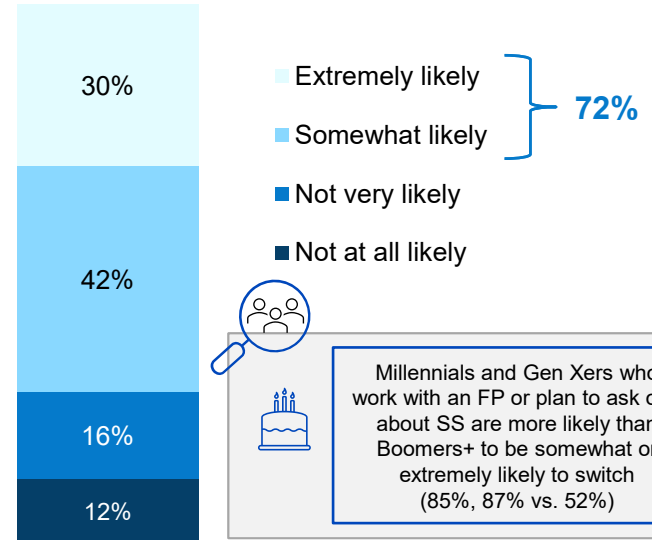
Among those who do not work with a financial professional



Millennials and Gen Xers who don't work with an FP are more likely than Boomers+ to say they plan to ask a financial professional about Social Security benefits or to be unsure (27%, 24% vs. 6%; and 40%, 35% vs. 17%, respectively)

Likelihood to Switch FPs if Theirs Couldn't Show How to Maximize SS Benefits

Among those who work with a financial professional or plan to ask one about SS



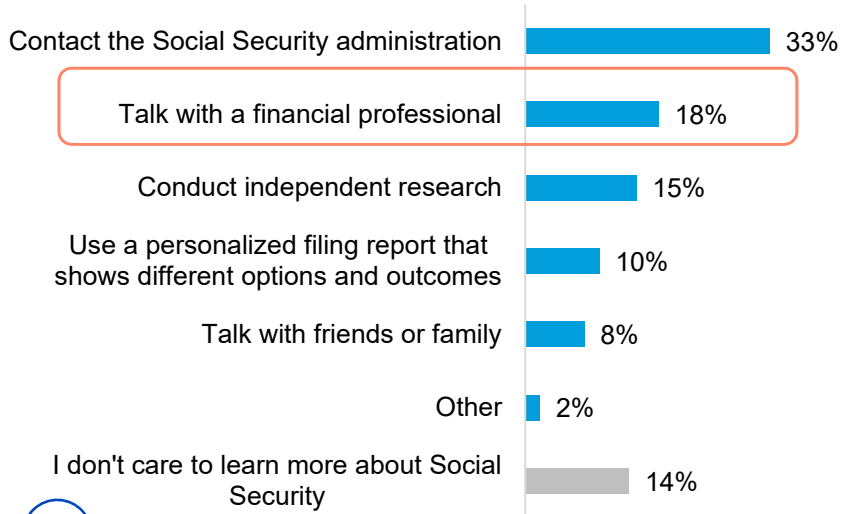
Millennials and Gen Xers who work with an FP or plan to ask one about SS are more likely than Boomers+ to be somewhat or extremely likely to switch (85%, 87% vs. 52%)



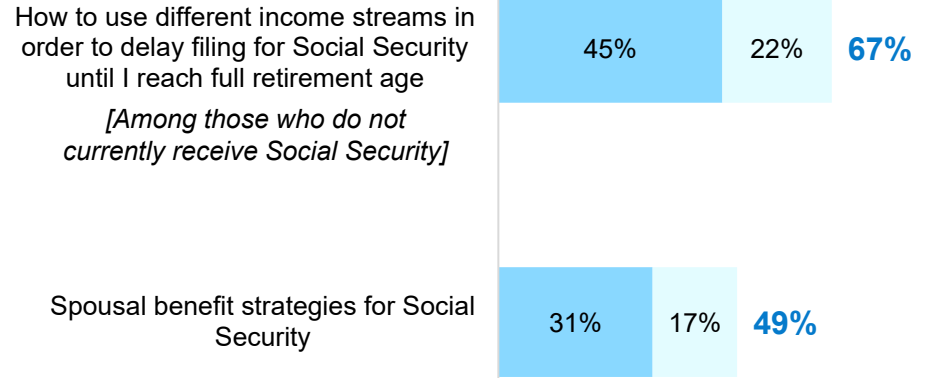
Contacting SS Admin Preferred Over FP for Learning About SS

Two-thirds who aren't yet collecting SS are interested in discussing with an FP how to use different income streams to delay filing until they reach full retirement plan, and around half are interested in discussing spousal benefits

How Prefer to Learn More About SS



Interest in Talking to a Financial Professional About...



Millennials and Gen Xers are more likely than Boomers+ to say they prefer to learn more about Social Security from a financial professional (27%, 23% vs. 11%)



Millennials and Gen Xers are more likely than Boomers+ to be interested in both of these discussions (71%, 70% vs. 57%; and 70% vs. 61% vs. 32%, respectively)



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