

Making smart Social Security decisions if you are divorced

If you are divorced, you will generally receive the greater of:

- **Your own retirement benefit** based on your individual earnings record, or
- **The spousal benefit:** Up to 50% of your former spouse's full benefit, provided that certain requirements are met—even if your former spouse has remarried



Qualifying requirements

In order to qualify for spousal benefits based on your former spouse's earnings record, there are a number of requirements that need to be met:

- You must be age 62 or older and not currently married, and your marriage must have lasted for 10 years or longer
- Your Social Security benefits based on your own earnings record must be less than the spousal benefit available under your former spouse's earnings record
- If your former spouse qualifies for Social Security benefits and is age 62 or older but hasn't applied for benefits, you can receive benefits based on his/her earnings record if you have been divorced for at least two years

Note: If you have remarried, you are ineligible to collect spousal benefits based on your former spouse's earnings record. However, if your subsequent marriage ends due to death, divorce or annulment, your eligibility to receive benefits based on your former spouse's earnings record is restored. If you have had multiple spouses, you can only receive benefits based on one former spouse's earnings record at any given time.

Sources: ssa.gov, "Retirement Benefits - 2022," and "Benefits Planner - Retirement - Benefits for Your Family," accessed November 7, 2022.

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Survivors benefits

If your former spouse is deceased, you may be entitled to survivors benefits at age 60*. The benefit amount is based on your former spouse's Social Security benefit and your age. For example:

- **If you are at Full Retirement Age or older:**

You would receive 100% of your deceased former spouse's benefit amount

- **If you are age 60* up to Full Retirement Age, but not including Full Retirement Age:**

You would receive a percentage (ranging from 71.5% to 99%) of your deceased former spouse's benefit amount

Keep in mind, the Full Retirement Age used to calculate survivors benefits may not be the same as the Full Retirement Age used to calculate retirement benefits. Please check with the Social Security Administration for complete details.

Other things to consider:

If you remarry after you reach age 60*, your remarriage will not affect your eligibility for survivors benefits. However, if your current spouse is receiving Social Security benefits, you may want to apply for benefits based on his or her record if it is higher than your survivors benefit. If you are receiving survivors benefits and you are also eligible for retirement benefits based on your own earnings record, you can switch to your own retirement benefit as early as age 62, if it is higher.

ACTION PLANNER **Action steps**

- ☐ **Talk to your financial professional** about the role Social Security will play in your overall retirement income plan. A financial professional can help you understand your options and make a more informed decision about one of your most valuable retirement benefits.
- ☐ **Work with the Social Security Administration** for a full discussion of your available benefits and options. The examples included here are not meant to be exhaustive.
- ☐ **Consult with your qualified tax advisor before making any decisions.** These strategies can get complex.

Your financial professional can also work with you to position your investments to help provide for your income needs throughout retirement.

*Age 50 if you are disabled.

Source: ssa.gov, "If You Are the Survivor," accessed November 7, 2022.

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