

Social Security Disability Insurance

National Academy of Social Insurance
Demystifying Social Security:
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The Arc

Today's Topics

- What is Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)?
- Who receives SSDI?
 - Eligibility
 - Beneficiary characteristics
- Why is SSDI important?
- Program trends and challenges

Social Security Act: Title II and Title XVI System

Income Maintenance

Health Coverage

**Social
Insurance**

Social Security
Old Age, Survivors and
Disability Insurance
(OASDI)
Title II

Medicare
Title XVIII

**Means-
Tested**

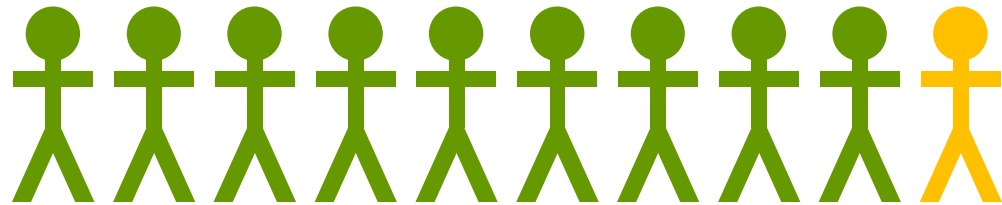
Supplemental
Security Income
(SSI)
Title XVI

Medicaid
Title XIX

Insures Most American Workers

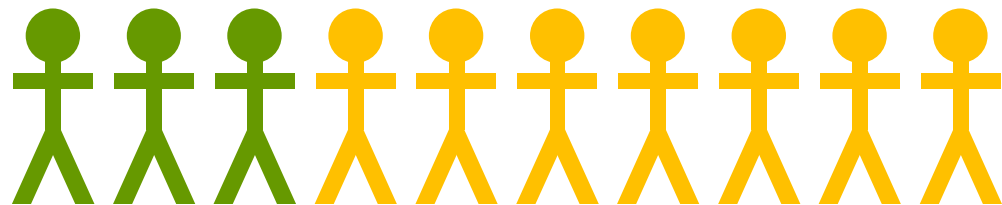
Social Security Disability Insurance:

9 in 10 workers age 21-64 in covered employment can count on DI benefits if they acquire a qualifying disability.



Employer-Based Long-Term Disability Insurance:

Only 3 in 10 civilian workers have access to any type of employer-based long-term disability insurance.



Necessary Insurance

- 4 in 10 adults can't cover a \$400 emergency
- Over 1 in 5 adults can't cover the current month's bills in full
- Over 1 in 4 adults skipped necessary medical care in 2017 because they couldn't afford it

(Federal Reserve Board, 2018)

What is Social Security Disability Insurance?

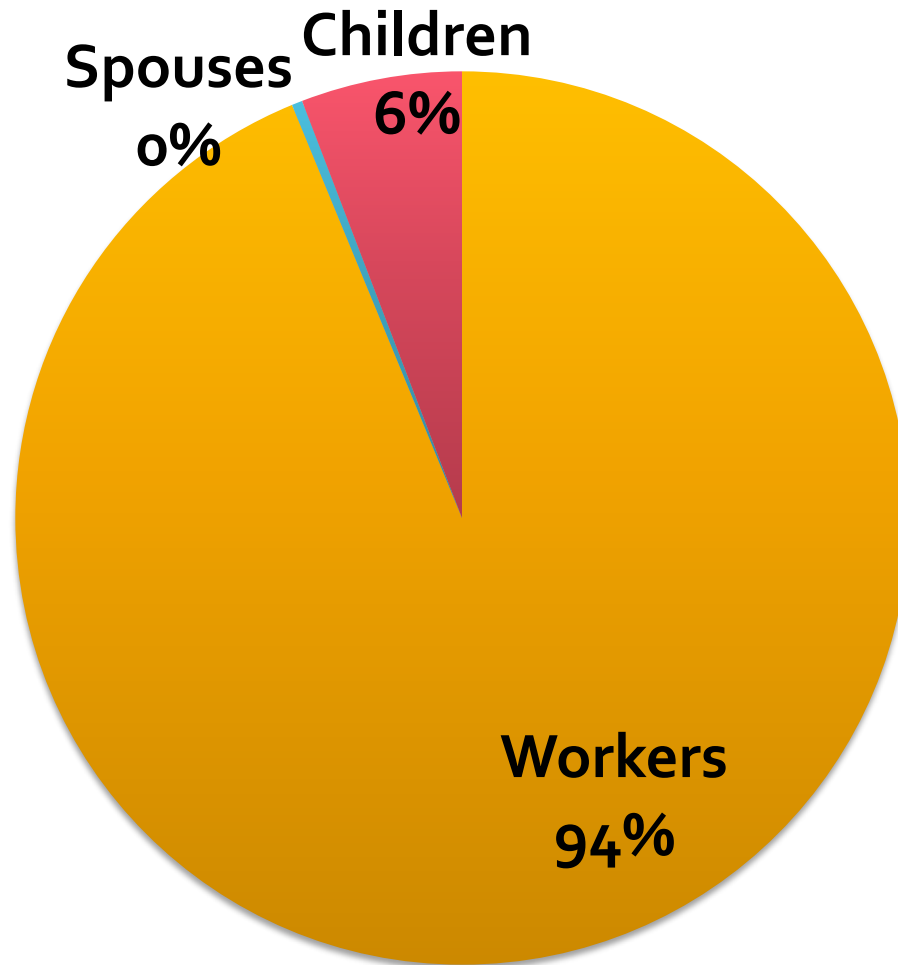
- Insures workers & their families in the event of qualifying disabilities
- Guaranteed monthly benefit
- No income or asset (resource) limits
- Part of the Social Security system:
 - Same underlying benefit structure
 - Same cost-of-living adjustment
 - Medicare (subject to 24 month wait)
- Benefits paid from DI Trust Fund

SSDI Beneficiaries & Average Monthly Benefit, June 2018

	Beneficiaries	Average monthly benefit
Disability Insurance	10,296,000	\$1,063
Disabled workers	8,623,000	\$1,198
Spouses	123,000	\$337
Children	1,550,000	\$369

Including ~1 million military veterans, 4.8 million women, 2.3 million African-Americans, and 1.2 million Latinx (2013).

DI Trust Fund: Annual Benefits Paid, 2017



*Percent of total
DI benefits paid.*

SSDI Eligibility: Disabled Workers

- To qualify, a disabled worker must:
 - Have worked in Social Security-covered jobs
 - Meet requirements for:
 - Recent work
 - Duration of work
 - Have a disability that meets the Social Security Act **definition of disability**
 - Have not reached full retirement age

SSDI Eligibility: Definition of Disability

- Medically determinable physical or mental impairment
 - Can be a single impairment or a combination of impairments, supported by evidence
- Expected to last at least 12 months or result in death
 - Does not have to be permanent
- Resulting in inability to perform Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)
 - In prior job or in any job in the national economy
 - Does not mean “no work”

2018 SGA = earnings up to \$1,180 / mo. (non-blind)
or \$1,970 / mo. (blind)

SSDI Eligibility: Application Process

- Applicant submits an initial application
- SSA field office processes, sends to state Disability Determination Service (DDS)
- If denied, 4 potential levels of appeal:
 - Reconsideration
 - Administrative Law Judge Hearing
 - Appeals Council Hearing
 - Federal Court

Most applicants are denied. Fewer than 4 in 10 are ultimately approved after all levels of appeal.

SSDI Eligibility & Benefits: How does the U.S. compare?

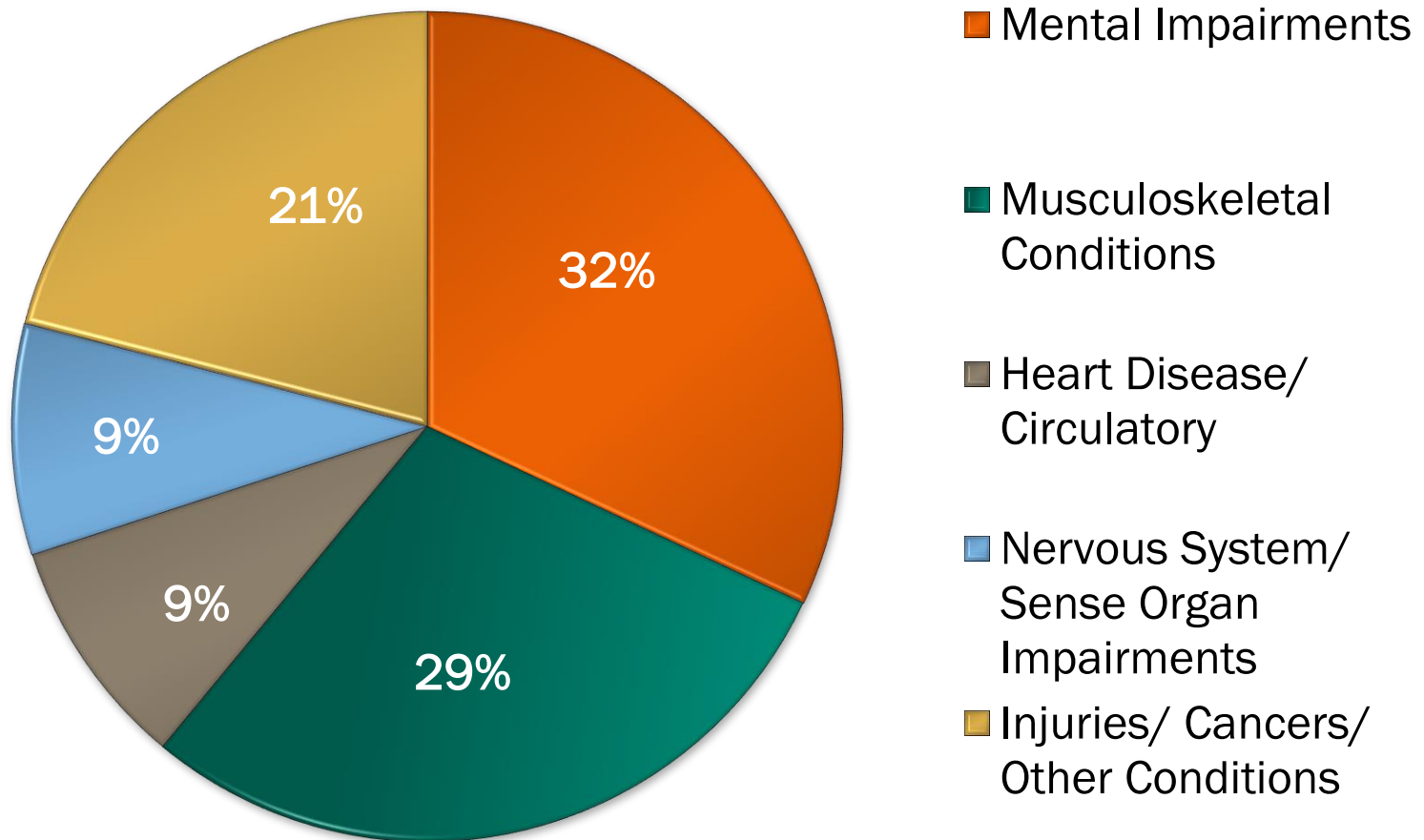
OECD Disability Policy Typology: Country Scores, 2007, In Descending Order (OECD Average = 25.8)

Sweden	37	Belgium	25
Norway	33	France	25
Portugal	33	Greece	25
Finland	32	Poland	25
Germany	32	Austria	24
Switzerland	32	Czech Republic	24
Denmark	28	Netherlands	24
Hungary	28	New Zealand	23
Luxembourg	28	Australia	21
Mexico	27	Japan	21
Spain	27	United Kingdom	21
Ireland	26	Canada	18
Italy	26	United States	17
Slovak Republic	26	Korea	15

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) describes the U.S. disability system—along with those of Korea, Japan, and Canada—as having:

“the most stringent eligibility criteria, including the most rigid reference to all jobs available in the labor market.”

SSDI Beneficiaries: Most Common Disabilities

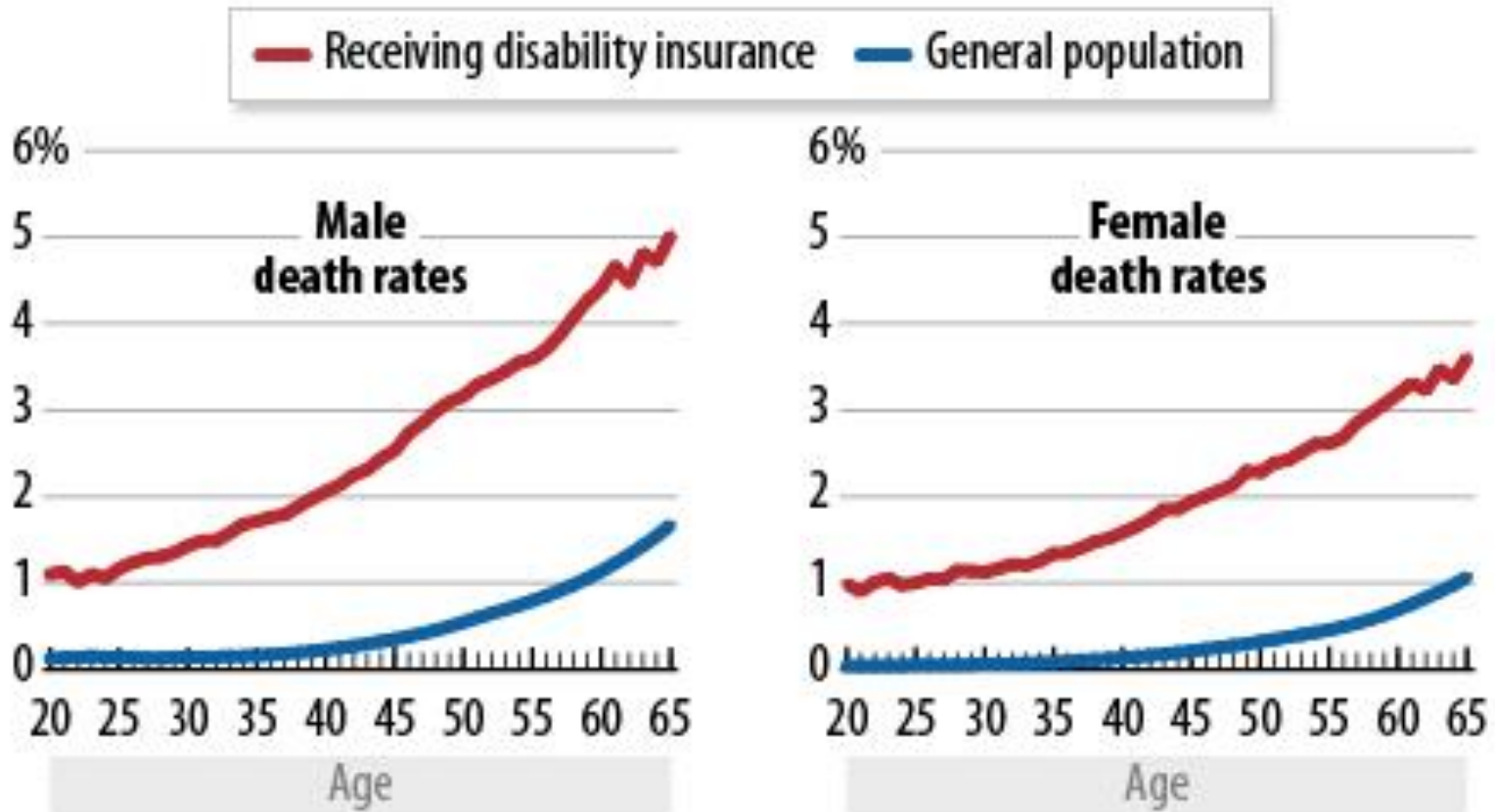


Source: V. Reno & E. Walker, NASI (2013), "Social Security Benefits, Finances, and Policy Options: A Primer."

SSDI Beneficiaries: Health Status

- **Nearly 7 in 10 SSDI-only beneficiaries report 2 or more limitations. 1 in 3 report 3 or more limitations.**
 - 88% Walking 3 blocks, climbing 10 steps, standing for 1 hour &/or crouching
 - 73% Grasping, reaching &/or lifting 10 pounds
 - 64% Speaking, hearing &/or seeing
 - 54% Concentrating
- **Some are terminally ill.**
 - About 1 in 5 male disabled worker beneficiaries and 1 in 7 female disabled worker beneficiaries die within the first 5 years of receiving benefits

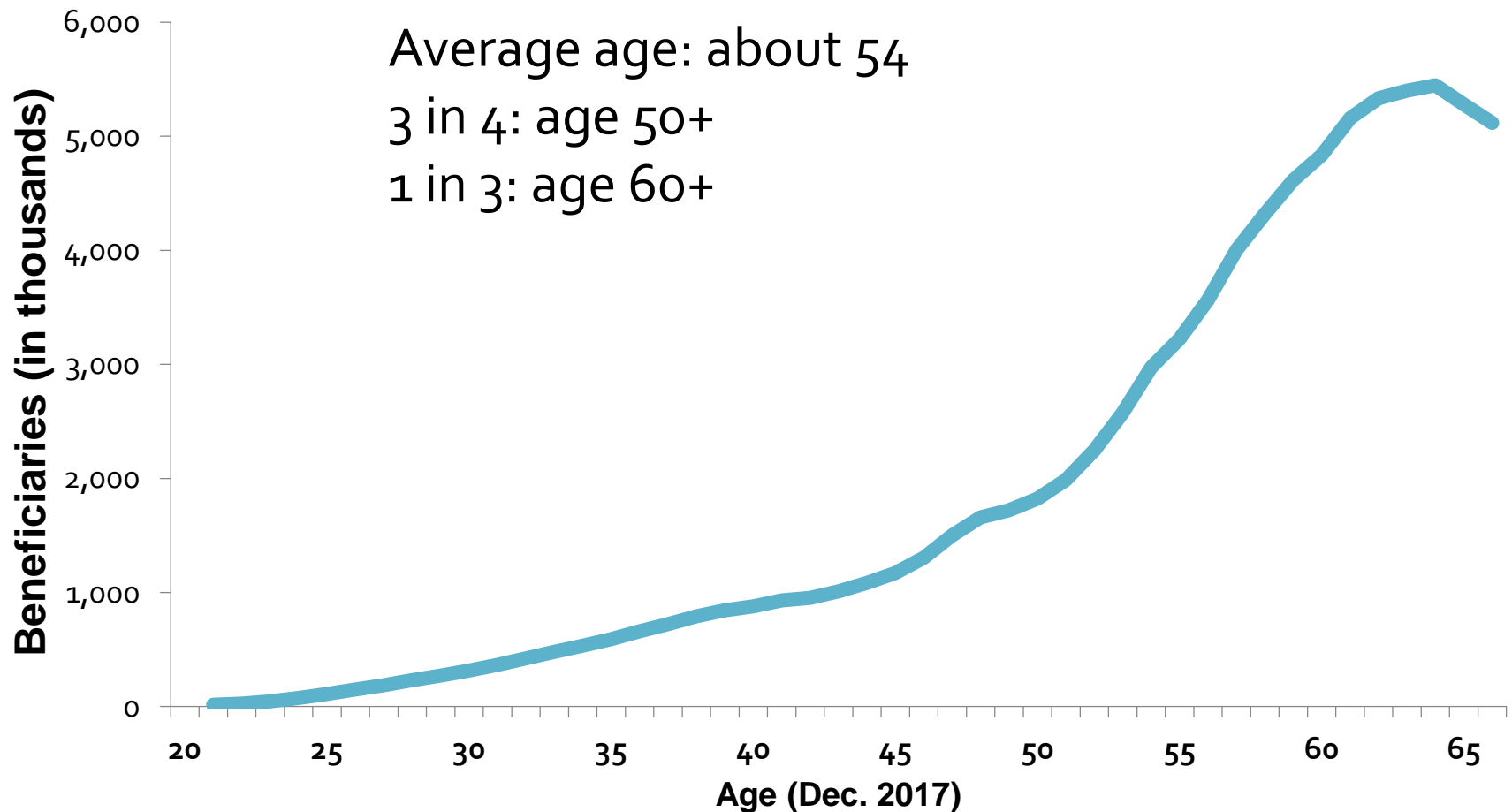
Death Rates Higher for SSDI Beneficiaries than for General Population



Source: CBPP based on data from the Social Security Administration

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities | cbpp.org

SSDI Disabled Worker Beneficiaries: Age



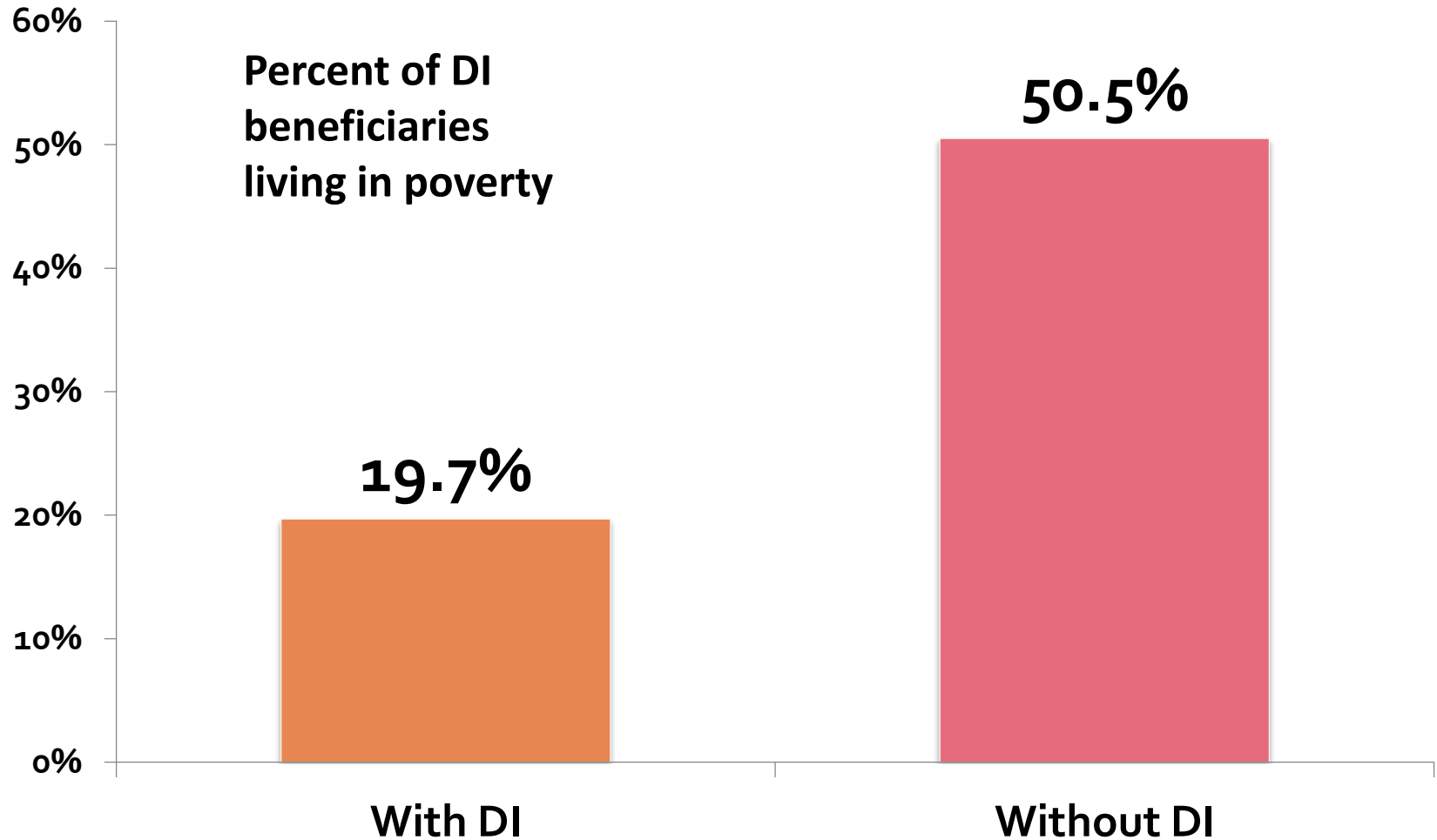
SSDI Beneficiaries: Education & Prior Work

- **Low educational attainment:** Most SSDI beneficiaries have a H.S. degree or less. Only 1 in 6 has a 4 year college degree or higher.
- **22 years of work in covered jobs, on average**
- **Typical past work:** Unskilled or semi-skilled jobs with moderate or light strength requirements, such as:
 - Cashier-Checker / Cashier
 - Nurse Assistant
 - Fast-Foods Worker
 - Home Attendant
 - Laborer
 - Material Handler
 - Packager, Hand
 - Stock Clerk
 - Cleaner, Housekeeping
 - Janitor

Why is SSDI Important?

- **Benefits comprise most/all of a majority of beneficiaries' income:**
 - The majority of personal income for over 4 in 5 non-institutionalized beneficiaries
 - The sole source of personal income for 1 in 3 non-institutionalized beneficiaries
- **Benefits reduce poverty:**
 - Poverty rates are higher among people with disabilities who do not receive SSDI, compared to SSDI beneficiaries
 - But: SSDI benefits are modest and many beneficiaries remain in or near poverty

Poverty Rates With and Without SSDI Benefits



Why is SSDI Important?

- Helps secure access to essentials: housing, food, clothing, transportation
- Prevents and reduces homelessness
- Prevents and reduces institutionalization
- Maintains health:
 - Access to Medicare
 - Help with out-of-pocket medical & disability-related expenses

SSDI Trends & Challenges

- Adequate funding to address operations including:
 - Historic hearings backlog
 - Customer service
 - Timely wage processing and recording
- DI Trust Fund solvency beyond 2032
- Opportunities for program enhancements