
42 U.S. Code § 415

Computation of primary insurance amount

For the purposes of this subchapter—

(a) Primary insurance amount

(1)

(A) The primary insurance amount of an individual shall (except as otherwise provided in this section) be equal to the sum of—

(i) 90 percent of the individual's average indexed monthly earnings (determined under subsection (b)) to the extent that such earnings do not exceed the amount established for purposes of this clause by subparagraph (B),

(ii) 32 percent of the individual's average indexed monthly earnings to the extent that such earnings exceed the amount established for purposes of clause (i) but do not exceed the amount established for purposes of this clause by subparagraph (B), and

(iii) 15 percent of the individual's average indexed monthly earnings to the extent that such earnings exceed the amount established for purposes of clause (ii),

rounded, if not a multiple of \$0.10, to the next lower multiple of \$0.10, and thereafter increased as provided in subsection (i).

(B)

(i) For individuals who initially become eligible for old-age or disability insurance benefits, or who die (before becoming eligible for such benefits), in the calendar year 1979, the amount established for purposes of clause (i) and (ii) of subparagraph (A) shall be \$180 and \$1,085, respectively.

(ii) For individuals who initially become eligible for old-age or disability insurance benefits, or who die (before becoming eligible for such benefits), in any calendar year after 1979, each of the amounts so established shall equal the product of the corresponding amount established with respect to the calendar year 1979 under clause (i) of this subparagraph and the quotient obtained by dividing—

(I) the national average wage index (as defined in section 409(k)(1) of this title) for the second calendar year preceding the calendar year for which the determination is made, by

(II) the national average wage index (as so defined) for 1977.

(iii) Each amount established under clause (ii) for any calendar year shall be rounded to the nearest \$1, except that any amount so established which is a multiple of \$0.50 but not of \$1 shall be rounded to the next higher \$1.

(C)

(i) No primary insurance amount computed under subparagraph (A) may be less than an amount equal to \$11.50 multiplied by the individual's years of coverage in excess of 10, or the increased amount determined for purposes of this clause under subsection (i).

(ii) For purposes of clause (i), the term “years of coverage” with respect to any individual means the number (not exceeding 30) equal to the sum of (I) the number (not exceeding 14 and disregarding any fraction) determined by dividing (a) the total of the wages credited to such individual (including wages deemed to be paid prior to 1951 to such individual under section 417 of this title, compensation under the Railroad Retirement Act of 1937 [45 U.S.C. 228a et seq.] prior to 1951 which is creditable to such individual pursuant to this subchapter, and wages deemed to be paid prior to 1951 to such individual under section 431 of this title) for years after 1936 and before 1951 by (b) \$900, plus (II) the number equal to the number of years after 1950 each of which is a computation base year (within the meaning of subsection (b)(2)(B)(ii)) and in each of which he is credited with wages (including wages deemed to be paid to such individual under section 417 of this title, compensation under the Railroad Retirement Act of 1937 or 1974 [45 U.S.C. 228a et seq., 231 et seq.] which is creditable to such individual pursuant to this subchapter, and wages deemed to be paid to such individual under section 429 of this title) and self-employment income of not less than 25 percent (in the case of a year after 1950 and before 1978) of the maximum amount which (pursuant to subsection (e)) may be counted for such year, or 25 percent (in the case of a year after 1977 and before 1991) or 15 percent (in the case of a year after 1990) of the maximum amount which (pursuant to subsection (e)) could be counted for such year if section 430 of this title as in effect immediately prior to December 20, 1977, had remained in effect without change (except that, for purposes of subsection (b) of such section 430 of this title as so in effect, the reference to the contribution and benefit base in paragraph (1) of such subsection (b) shall be deemed a reference to an amount equal to \$45,000, each reference in paragraph (2) of such subsection (b) to the average of the wages of all employees as reported to the Secretary of the Treasury shall be deemed a reference to the national average wage index (as defined in section 409(k)(1) of this title), the reference to a preceding calendar year in paragraph (2)(A) of such subsection (b) shall be deemed a reference to the calendar year before the calendar year in which the determination under subsection (a) of such section 430 of this title is made, and the reference to a calendar year in paragraph (2)(B) of such subsection (b) shall be deemed a reference to 1992).

(D) In each calendar year the Commissioner of Social Security shall publish in the Federal Register, on or before November 1, the formula for computing benefits under this paragraph and for adjusting wages and self-employment income under subsection (b)(3) in the case of an individual who becomes eligible for an old-age insurance benefit, or (if earlier) becomes eligible for a disability insurance benefit or dies, in the following year, and the national average wage index (as defined in section 409(k)(1) of this title) on which that formula is based.

(2)

(A) A year shall not be counted as the year of an individual’s death or eligibility for purposes of this subsection or subsection (i) in any case where such individual was entitled to a disability insurance benefit for any of the 12 months immediately preceding the month of such death or eligibility (but there shall be counted instead the year of the individual’s eligibility for the disability insurance benefit or benefits to which he was entitled during such 12 months).

(B) In the case of an individual who was entitled to a disability insurance benefit for any of the 12 months before the month in which he became entitled to an old-age insurance benefit, became reentitled to a disability insurance benefit, or died, the primary insurance amount for determining any benefit attributable to that entitlement, reentitlement, or death is the greater of—

(i) the primary insurance amount upon which such disability insurance benefit was based, increased by the amount of each general benefit increase (as defined in subsection (i)(3)), and each increase provided under subsection (i)(2), that would have applied to such primary insurance amount had the individual remained entitled to such disability insurance benefit until the month in which he became so entitled or reentitled or died, or

(ii) the amount computed under paragraph (1)(C).

(C) In the case of an individual who was entitled to a disability insurance benefit for any month, and with respect to whom a primary insurance amount is required to be computed at any time after the close of the period of the individual's disability (whether because of such individual's subsequent entitlement to old-age insurance benefits or to a disability insurance benefit based upon a subsequent period of disability, or because of such individual's death), the primary insurance amount so computed may in no case be less than the primary insurance amount with respect to which such former disability insurance benefit was most recently determined.

(3)

(A) Paragraph (1) applies only to an individual who was not eligible for an old-age insurance benefit prior to January 1979 and who in that or any succeeding month—

- (i) becomes eligible for such a benefit,
- (ii) becomes eligible for a disability insurance benefit, or
- (iii) dies,

and (except for subparagraph (C)(i) thereof) it applies to every such individual except to the extent otherwise provided by paragraph (4).

(B) For purposes of this subchapter, an individual is deemed to be eligible—

- (i) for old-age insurance benefits, for months beginning with the month in which he attains age 62, or
- (ii) for disability insurance benefits, for months beginning with the month in which his period of disability began as provided under section 416(i)(2)(C) of this title,

except as provided in paragraph (2)(A) in cases where fewer than 12 months have elapsed since the termination of a prior period of disability.

(4) Paragraph (1) (except for subparagraph (C)(i) thereof) does not apply to the computation or recomputation of a primary insurance amount for—

(A) an individual who was eligible for a disability insurance benefit for a month prior to January 1979 unless, prior to the month in which occurs the event described in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) of paragraph (3)(A), there occurs a period of at least 12 consecutive months for which he was not entitled to a disability insurance benefit, or

(B) an individual who had wages or self-employment income credited for one or more years prior to 1979, and who was not eligible for an old-age or disability insurance benefit, and did not die, prior to January 1979, if in the year for which the computation or recomputation would be made the individual's primary insurance amount would be greater if computed or recomputed—

- (i) under this subsection as in effect in December 1978, for purposes of old-age insurance benefits in the case of an individual who becomes eligible for such benefits prior to 1984, or
- (ii) as provided by subsection (d), in the case of an individual to whom such section applies.

In determining whether an individual's primary insurance amount would be greater if computed or recomputed as provided in subparagraph (B), (I) the table of benefits in effect in December 1978, as modified by paragraph (6), shall be applied without regard to any increases in that table which may become effective (in accordance with subsection (i)(4)) for years after 1978 (subject to clause (iii) of subsection (i)(2)(A)) and (II) such individual's average monthly wage shall be computed as provided by subsection (b)(4).

(5)

(A) Subject to subparagraphs (B), (C), (D) and (E), for purposes of computing the primary insurance amount

(after December 1978) of an individual to whom paragraph (1) does not apply (other than an individual described in paragraph (4)(B)), this section as in effect in December 1978 shall remain in effect, except that, effective for January 1979, the dollar amount specified in paragraph (3) of this subsection shall be increased to \$11.50.

(B)

(i) Subject to clauses (ii), (iii), and (iv), and notwithstanding any other provision of law, the primary insurance amount of any individual described in subparagraph (C) shall be, in lieu of the primary insurance amount as computed pursuant to any of the provisions referred to in subparagraph (D), the primary insurance amount computed under subsection (a) of this section as in effect in December 1978, without regard to subsections (b)(4) and (c) of this section as so in effect.

(ii) The computation of a primary insurance amount under this subparagraph shall be subject to section 104(j)(2) of the Social Security Amendments of 1972 (relating to the number of elapsed years under subsection (b)).

(iii) In computing a primary insurance amount under this subparagraph, the dollar amount specified in paragraph (3) of subsection (a) (as in effect in December 1978) shall be increased to \$11.50.

(iv) In the case of an individual to whom subsection (d) applies, the primary insurance amount of such individual shall be the greater of—

(I) the primary insurance amount computed under the preceding clauses of this subparagraph, or

(II) the primary insurance amount computed under subsection (d).

(C) An individual is described in this subparagraph if—

(i) paragraph (1) does not apply to such individual by reason of such individual's eligibility for an old-age or disability insurance benefit, or the individual's death, prior to 1979, and

(ii) such individual's primary insurance amount computed under this section as in effect immediately before November 5, 1990, would have been computed under the provisions described in subparagraph (D).

(D) The provisions described in this subparagraph are—

(i) the provisions of this subsection as in effect prior to July 30, 1965, if such provisions would preclude the use of wages prior to 1951 in the computation of the primary insurance amount,

(ii) the provisions of section 409 of this title as in effect prior to August 28, 1950, and

(iii) the provisions of subsection (d) as in effect prior to December 20, 1977.

(E) For purposes of this paragraph, the table for determining primary insurance amounts and maximum family benefits contained in this section in December 1978 shall be revised as provided by subsection (i) for each year after 1978.

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