

Data Note

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SSA work incentives enrollment, 1990-2004

To encourage employment for individuals with disabilities, the Social Security Administration (SSA) offers special provisions that limit the impact of work on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. These provisions are called work incentives and include the Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE), and Blind Work Expenses (BWE).

PASS, IRWE, and BWE allow individuals to set aside money, resources, and expenses to be excluded from total earned income calculations. PASS allows people to set aside money and resources to be used for attaining a work goal such as going back to school, finding a better job, or starting a business. IRWE allows people to exclude expenses that are necessary for work, such as wheelchairs, transportation, or specialized equipment. BWE allows the exclusion of expenses such as service animals, income taxes, and visual/sensory aids.

The table below displays the national mean number of people enrolled per state in these work incentive programs from 1990 to 2004:

Work Incentives Enrollment, 1990-2004

Year	PASS	IRWE	BWE
1990	44	106	86
1991	70	128	85
1992	115	153	87
1993	159	169	86
1994	203	186	86
1995	202	195	87
1996	92	192	83
1997	39	189	81
1998	21	182	75
1999	20	187	78
2000	27	184	76
2001	31	173	71
2002	34	158	66
2003	35	152	61
2004	32	137	57

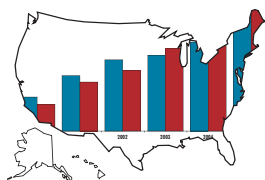
A notable trend is the sharp drop in the number of people enrolled in the PASS program in 1996. This decline followed a publication of the General Accounting Office that criticized SSA for being too lenient in accepting applicants into a program they deemed to be ineffective for achieving the goal of self-support. The procedures for acceptance were then reevaluated by SSA and amended, resulting in fewer approvals in subsequent years.

References

Social Security Administration. (n.d.) Work incentives. www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityresearch/workincentives.htm

U.S. General Accounting Office. (1996). PASS program: SSA work incentive for disabled beneficiaries poorly managed (GAO/HEHS-96-51). Washington, DC: Author.

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