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America’s Greatest Problem: Baby Boomer “Retiremagedon”

After the fall of Germany in World War II and the return of hundreds of thousands of American troops to their home country, a massive boom in population occurred, resulting in roughly 75 million people born in between the years 1946 and 1964. This drastic boom in population, while not a major problem at the time, will reach its climax very soon when the majority of these “baby boomers” reach the age of 65, the national age of retirement. Once this time is reached, the social security platform will collapse, and a major economic panic will almost surely ensue.

The Social Security Act of 1935 put in to effect the Social Security system. This system was meant to allow the country to be able to provide for those not able to provide for themselves, whether through old age (designated as anything over 65) or through disabilities.[[1]](#footnote-1) This was done by taking a pay-roll tax from the current working population’s wages, half of which came from the worker and half from the employer. It also gave a specified amount of money to states to directly aid aged citizens. This idea of the government providing a form of welfare was not unheard of before this Act was established, but this Act allowed a solid foundation to be set for welfare going forward. And while the Act was applauded during its conception, it is generally looked at now as somewhat of an ominous beast that is rearing its head to the forefront of the U.S. economy.

The reason that Social Security will become an issue when the “baby boomer” persons retire is based on how the system itself works. When the roughly 75 million Americans reach the age of 65, there will be a larger amount of non-working members of the American population than there are working, which will cause the system to fail. The consequences of this would echo into the lives of this over-age population, who are expecting to receive the benefits they were promised from the moment they were born, and into which a portion of their salary from the day they started working until then has gone. With the possible absence of government aid once retirement is reached, many who reach that age will either have to continue working to earn wages to provide for themselves and their family, or have saved enough before that time to last the rest of their lives. Of course, no one requires people to retire at the age of 65, and many claim that the age of retirement will increase in the coming years, reaching 70 before too long.

To counteract this rising problem, government interest groups such as the AARP have proposed various short-term solutions which would lessen the impact the social security problem would create. One such proposal is longevity indexing. This is a process that takes into account that the average lifespan of Americans is gradually increasing and thus “would automatically modify Social Security to pay smaller monthly benefits as lifespans increase.”[[2]](#footnote-2) While this does provide a solution to the strain Social Security would see once the baby boomers retire, it is somewhat of an unfair way of handling the situation since it unjustly favors the more well-off citizens who are the ones living longer over those who are less well-off who would likely not see an increase in life expectancy. Another possible solution that the AARP proposes is to increase the payroll tax cap. While this would solve a large amount of the possible problems that would arise, raising taxes is considered a bad idea by the general public. The majority of the American population (the middle class) would receive an increase in taxes equal to that received by the upper-class, yet the former would be much more effected than the latter. This idea of unfair taxing has always been an issue, and is another problem being addressed by the government, especially by current presidential candidates such as Bernie Sanders.[[3]](#footnote-3) Thus, if the payroll tax cap were to increase, it would solve one problem but add exponentially to another.

Personally, I believe that there are very few if not no options that would eliminate the potential problem all together, but there are several “solutions” that would temporarily prolong what many believe is inevitable. One such temporary solution, which is extremely graphic and which I do not condone myself, would be something akin to an “optional genocide”. This would involve giving the option to those who are very old and who are relying solely on government funding to continue living to be humanly euthanized so as to relieve the economic stress. Another, more reasonable option would be to change how social security worked to a way where social security could only be given to those who truly need it by localizing it to what would essentially government funded retirement homes. These homes would provide all of the benefits of social security, but only to those who personally enrolled in it, thus again relieving the constant rising of social security spending and containing it to small areas which would be government funded with the money already being allocated to the states for similar purposes.

Overall, the potential Social Security problem that could occur during the aptly named “baby boomer retiremagedon” is a something that cannot not be completely fixed by adjusting the system already in place, but by completely overhauling or removing all together a retirement plan that is no longer economically viable in for the 21st century.

1. <https://www.ssa.gov/history/35act.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/work-and-retirement/social-security/2012-06/The-Future-Of-Social-Security.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://berniesanders.com/issues/income-and-wealth-inequality/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)