

Issuance of Social Security Statements

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To answer congressional questions about the Social Security Administration's (SSA) issuance of Social Security Statements.

Background

SSA provides *Social Security Statements* (Statement) to individuals who worked under the Social Security program. The Statement includes information about the individual's reported earnings and future Social Security benefits for the individual and his/her family. Section 1143 of the *Social Security Act* requires that SSA send Statements to individuals who are age 25 and older, who are not receiving Social Security benefits based on their own earnings records, and for whom the Agency can obtain current addresses. SSA mails the Statement about 3 months before the individual's birthday.

In May 2012, SSA implemented *my Social Security*, an online account where registered users can access their Statements online at any time. As of Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, there were about 38.8 million registered users of *my Social Security*. Because registered users can access their Statements anytime via *my Social Security*, SSA excludes them from receiving automatic Statements.

Results of Review

In FYs 2010 to 2018, SSA mailed approximately 381 million paper Statements (both automatic and on request). The Agency mailed about 252 million paper Statements in FYs 2010 to 2013 primarily to individuals who were age 25 and older and not receiving Social Security benefits. Between FYs 2014 and 2018, citing budgetary issues, the Agency reduced the number of paper Statements by modifying the age groups to whom SSA mailed Statements. This resulted in the Agency mailing only about 129 million paper Statements during this time period.

Moreover, the number of individuals who accessed their Statements online via *my Social Security* increased every year, ranging from 1.9 million in FY 2012 to 16.8 million in FY 2018. However, the percentage of registered *my Social Security* users who accessed their Statements online declined annually from 96 percent in FY 2012 to 43 percent in FY 2018.

The costs for printing and mailing paper Statements decreased from FY 2010 to 2018 because the Agency changed the age groups to whom it mailed paper Statements. In FY 2010, SSA spent about \$65 million to print and mail approximately 155 million Statements, and, in FY 2018, the Agency spent about \$7.6 million to print and mail about 14.6 million Statements.

Finally, the contract awarded to print and mail paper Statements allowed the Agency to vary the number of Statements mailed annually. The 5-year contract, scheduled to expire in August 2019, estimated the Agency would order 45 million Statements annually. However, it allowed for a 25-percent increase or decrease in Statements to allow flexibility if SSA decided to modify the age groups to whom it mailed Statements and avoid re-soliciting the contract.