

Grays: Setup

If you're a citizen of the United States, ~~you have one of these cards with your social security number on it.~~

But what is ~~this number~~ ^{it} for and what does ~~it~~ ^{it} mean? Second question first:

you'll have a card like this with a number like this. Your Social Security account number

do the digits reveal?

Numerology

If you were born after 2011: the ~~number~~ ^{digits} means... nothing: ~~it's~~ ^{they're} just random. No fun at all.

But for oldsters born pre 2011, there is a pattern:

If you ~~ask~~ ^{ask} random people ~~on the street~~ ^{around you} their social security numbers (Note: do not recommend) ~~you'd find that~~ ^{you'll} the first three digits of these ~~around you~~ ^{cluster around a few values} clustered at ~~lot.~~

These reveal in which
~~This is because first three digits tell the state where~~
~~you applied for the number~~ *(well, where your parents*
~~probably applied for you, more on that later).~~ *you were assigned*
~~number covers small states and a range of numbers for the~~ *your*
~~populated states.~~ *number.*

next *tell*
The ~~remaining digits are roughly~~ when and ~~it what order~~
your ~~social security~~ number was assigned. Starting with
01-0001 (straight zeros are forbidden.) The last four
digits count up in a sensible way, 4159 comes after 4158,
but the first two numbers *don't.*

you'd
~~01-9997, 01-9998,~~ At 01-9999, you might expect 02-0001
next
next, skipping disallowed zeros, but no, ~~after 01-9999~~
comes 03-0001. Continue up to 03-9999 and you then go to
07 *09*
05-0001, then ~~seven~~ then ~~nine~~.

Probably
where you were
born but
not always.
(more on that
later)

See the pattern of odd numbers? Nope because 09-9999 rolls over to 10-0001 from there covering the even numbers until 98, when it starts over to use the skipped numbers.

Using this information you can look up where and when your number was assigned.

~~So the social security number tells you where and roughly when and in what order you were assigned your number. You can look it up in a database like so.~~

Now, what exactly is the number for?

Why / Tax Benefits and ID

The social security number is for the

~~The~~ social security program ~~was~~ started in the long long ago as a kind of mandatory pension:

of the great depression

The idea is citizens are required to pay in during their working lives and withdraw in their retirement. Now if

want to think about the program as a ~~social~~ ^{benefit} social the

government provides or ~~a~~ ^a bank account that is yours is... a

bit of a political hot topic we're going to skip over, but

either way ~~that's where this number got its start.~~ ^{is}

used to track what you put in and what you take out over your life.

As such

And when the program began you needed only to get a social security number when you started working to ~~pay into this~~

~~one program~~ *crack this*
one thing . But since that long long ago this number has become a kind of Ghost children

default national ID number
But the younger you are ~~watching this video~~ the more likely you've had a number from the moment your parents signed your birth certificate because for each child with a social security number ~~parents~~ *is* get a discount on their taxes.

is ~~parents~~ *that it was never meant to be. Parental*
Crazily, the system of counting children for tax rebates used to run on the *honor system*.

The US Tax Department told people:

1. We will give you a discount on your taxes for each child you have.

And

1. ~~Just~~ write your number of children down, and please
be honest, ~~but we'll never check.~~

*because we don't have a way
to track who is who before they start
paying taxes*

Which was just asking, nay, begging people to lie.

Which they they did, birthing on paper *millions* of phantom
children. Realizing this had gotten out of hand, ~~the tax~~
department ~~decided it should probably~~ *eventually* assign some kind of
unique number to each citizen to track them, and oh look
at this number just lying around...

"it's not supposed to be used for that" said the social
security department, but,

Yoink! Too late!

hacked

The tax department piggy-backs off of the work the social
security department assigning every citizen a unique
number *and highly encouraged every*
~~And since the tax department gives parents a~~
parent to
~~discount as soon as their children have that number,~~
~~pretty much all parents apply for it the instant their~~

beautiful baby / tax deduction is brought into ~~the~~ ^{the} world.

like banks and credit card companies
and landlords
Universality

After that happened

~~Once you can assume everyone has that number,~~ lots of
other places started pigging-backing off ~~of~~ ^{ed} the social
security number as well, using it as a ~~convenient~~ ^{an easy} way to
~~keep track of~~ ^{identify} and ~~an~~ individual over their life even if they

switch states or names. *Even regular shops with
sometimes ask for some of its digits
to identify you as you*

Side note here:

~~For viewers outside the United States who are watching a
video on social security Numbers cards, for some unknowable
reason, and might be confused about why Americans don't
just use their national ID card, it's because the United
States doesn't issue one -- and if it should is an
argument that comes up every election cycle but we're not
going to get into that now so moving right along...~~

the social security number

But ~~it~~ was never designed to be used this way: and you can tell because ~~the number~~ ^{*it*} has no security built into it.

Ok, so there's this neat trick that ~~many numbers~~ ^{*most ID use*} pull...

Security

...where they can check themselves to see if ~~they are~~ ^{*they're*} ~~correct.~~ ^{*invalid*}

The simplest ~~version of this~~ ^{*way*} is ^{*to*} have the last couple ^{*digits*} numbers match the sum of the others. All kinds of ID cards and bar codes do this to:

1. First, check the was ~~typed in~~ ^{*entered*} correctly so accounts don't get mixed up and
2. To make it hard for fraudsters to guess valid numbers.

For example

Try to buy something online by guessing a credit card number and ~~the merchant will know immediately the number~~

and the instant you type the last digit the website already knows it's

an ^{number}

~~is~~ invalid before having to check with the credit card company.

Your library card probably has this kind of built-in security

But because the Social Security number started life as a literal account number a hundred years ago, it's just a number.

Which means, you can take your social security number, add one and there's very likely someone about your age in your state using that number. It also means any errors when entering or copying that number ~~on any form~~ can't

automatically be caught, *and that all kinds*

of fraud and identity theft are easier

~~So it's pretty trivial to use a fake number if you're working when you're not supposed to.~~ *to commit*

~~And if you're trying to commit identity fraud, and you~~

Just knowing

~~know where and when someone was born and can look information up in a database, you already have five out of the nine digits ~~you need.~~~~ *get 2*

~~It doesn't help that the card the number is printed on has no security either.~~

The Physical Card

The physical card that banks or employers

~~The card itself is just a literal pice of cardboard, depending on when it was issued, not even laminated, with ~~just your name and number printed on it~~~~

and landlords ask to see also has no security.

Older cards had

~~Cards issued between 1946 and 1972 have 'not to be used for identification' printed right on them -- because, there's nothing identifying you on the card. Unlike say, a passport with your photo and description and secure numbers and wireless ID chips.~~

But the social security department gave up on printing that because so many companies and departments request to see the card, because unlike passports, every citizen will have a social security card.

or drivers' licences they know

All this means your social security card and number probably has less security than your library card, ~~yet still is used everywhere because everyone has one.~~

*while being - vastly - more important
Except, not everyone.
to safe-guard*

Exceptions

There are working, adult, ~~tax paying~~ Americans who don't have a card and don't pay social security. To become one of them you'll need to meet ^{etc} ~~a few~~ requirements:

First you must

- Never have received any social security benefits and give up your rights to getting any in the future.

Which seems fair. In addition you must also:

- Be a member of a religion is opposed to the idea of social security. Usually because it's a kind of insurance, and insurance is a kind of gambling.

Hmmm. That's harder, but you could always just *start* your own religion if you were really serious about avoiding taxes. But ~~be aware~~, your new religion must also:

- Provide for its elderly and dependent members.

Which means you have to re-create a social security program of sorts in your religion (while also being against social security). But if that contradiction doesn't daunt you. Lastly:

- Your religion must have existed continuously since 1950.

which kills dead your plans.

~~Ab, well that's that. The government really doesn't want~~

~~you to be able to get out of the program, and these~~

These 'exceptions' were pretty much hand written for the Amish and

Mennonites, and so it goes for all the other exceptions that exist

you're missing
So unless you want to undergo a *serious* change in lifestyle, you're ~~paying into social security.~~

~~Except... there's all kinds of other exceptions.~~

~~Railroad workers~~

~~Going back to the start and take a look at this list of numbers and there's an odd inclusion: rail road workers.~~

~~If you have a number that starts with <???~~ then you're either born after 2011 and got one of the new random numbers ~~or you're really old and used to work on the rail road, which starting in the late 1800s, long before the social security program, had it's own program to take care of it's members in old age -- and so it goes with a bunch of other programs as well --~~

Other unions

*some
railroad workers,*

Firefighters, Police, Teachers in Chicago, many not pay

into social security depending on what the situation is

and if it had a pension that
~~with their union is, and the story behind all of them is~~

~~the same <???~~ their program existed before social

security existed and they might not pay into the system.

Conclusion

And that's the social security number

~~A number that's universal except for those who don't have~~

~~it for a program that's universal except for where it~~

~~isn't.~~

~~OK, so here we are today, with a number that's assigned to~~

~~all citizens -- except when it isn't -- being used for~~

~~what it was never intended to be: a unique ID for every~~

~~citizen.~~

*for a program that's
universal, except when it's
not, and a set of important
digits used for what they
were not intended.*

Footnote: Check Digits