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Trends in Employee Tenure, 1983–2022

By Craig Copeland, Ph.D., Employee Benefit Research Institute

AT A GLANCE

This study examines data on employee tenure — the amount of time an individual has been with his or her current employer — of American workers. It uses U.S. Census Bureau data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), including the most recent January CPS data, to examine the tenure with current employers of wage and salary workers from 1983–2022.

While some believe current American workers change jobs more frequently than was the case for past generations, the data on employee tenure show that career jobs (individuals holding only one job for their entire career) never actually existed for most workers and continue not to exist for most workers. Furthermore, when the labor market has been the strongest, such as in 2022, the tenure of workers has tended to be shorter, as more individuals start new jobs by being newly employed or by changing jobs due to more opportunities from a tight labor market.

Here are the key findings:

- Over the past 40 (or nearly 40 years) years, the median tenure of all wage and salary workers ages 25 or older has stayed at approximately five years.
- This overall trend masks a small but significant decrease in median tenure among men and an offsetting increase in median tenure among women.
- The fact that the gender-distinct trends have generally moved in opposite directions has led to overall constancy in the tenure statistics. However, the median tenures by gender have been moving together in recent years.
- The distribution of tenure levels among workers ages 20 or older had been moving toward longer tenures until the most recent years. In 2020 and 2022, the share of workers with the shortest tenure levels increased, while the share with the longest tenure levels also increased. Those with the middle tenure levels showed decreases.
- The difference between private-sector and public-sector workers' tenure distributions is quite striking. While private-sector employers in general have been able to maintain a near-constant and small percentage of very long-term employees (25 or more years of tenure), public-sector employers saw this group grow significantly through 2004 before trending down through 2022. Consequently, public-sector employers have seen a significant share of their most experienced workers retire or otherwise leave their jobs.
- These tenure results indicate that, historically, most workers have changed jobs during their working careers, and all evidence suggests that they will continue to do so in the future. This persistence of job changing over working careers has several important implications — potentially reduced or no defined benefit plan payments due to vesting schedules, reduced defined contribution plan savings, lump-sum distributions that can occur at job change, and public policy issues both through lower retirement incomes of the elderly population and the loss of experienced, public-sector workers.
- Thus, it is clear from these results even with the up and downs in median tenure that workers will be faced with many decision points about their retirement benefits along their career paths, as workers will most likely *not* be with one company their entire career. The decisions made regarding retirement benefits will greatly impact their retirement security. As a consequence, employers need to account for these job changes when designing or providing education about retirement benefits.

Craig Copeland is Director of Wealth Benefits Research at the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI). Any views expressed in this report are those of the authors and should not be ascribed to the officers, trustees, or other sponsors of EBRI, Employee Benefit Research Institute-Education and Research Fund (EBRI-ERF), or their staffs. Neither EBRI nor EBRI-ERF lobbies or takes positions on specific policy proposals. EBRI invites comment on this research.

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Trends in Employee Tenure, 1983–2022

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Introduction

A common perception of past generations of American workers was that they held a career job, staying with the same employer for most of their working years and then retiring. In contrast, current American workers are viewed to change jobs more frequently. However, the data on employee tenure — the amount of time an individual has been with his or her current employer — show that workers of past generations are similar to current workers in terms of tenure.

The tenure data addressed in this *Issue Brief* show this historical fact while also demonstrating that the median tenure and the distribution of the amount of tenure workers have at a particular point in time are greatly affected by the labor market. In times of a strong labor market, the median tenure tends to decrease as more new hires occur, while in a weaker market, median tenure moves upward as fewer new hires occur and workers remain at their jobs as other opportunities are less available. This is a particularly important issue when the labor market is tight, at which time many workers change jobs, so that employers are faced with crucial hiring decisions and workers are having to make decisions on benefits after these job changes.

This article builds on previous Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) publications that have examined employee tenure data of American workers.[1] The latest data on employee tenure from the January 2022 Supplement to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) are examined and compared with trends from previous CPS data on employee tenure.[2] This includes the most recent data from just before the pandemic in January 2020 and well after its start in January 2022.

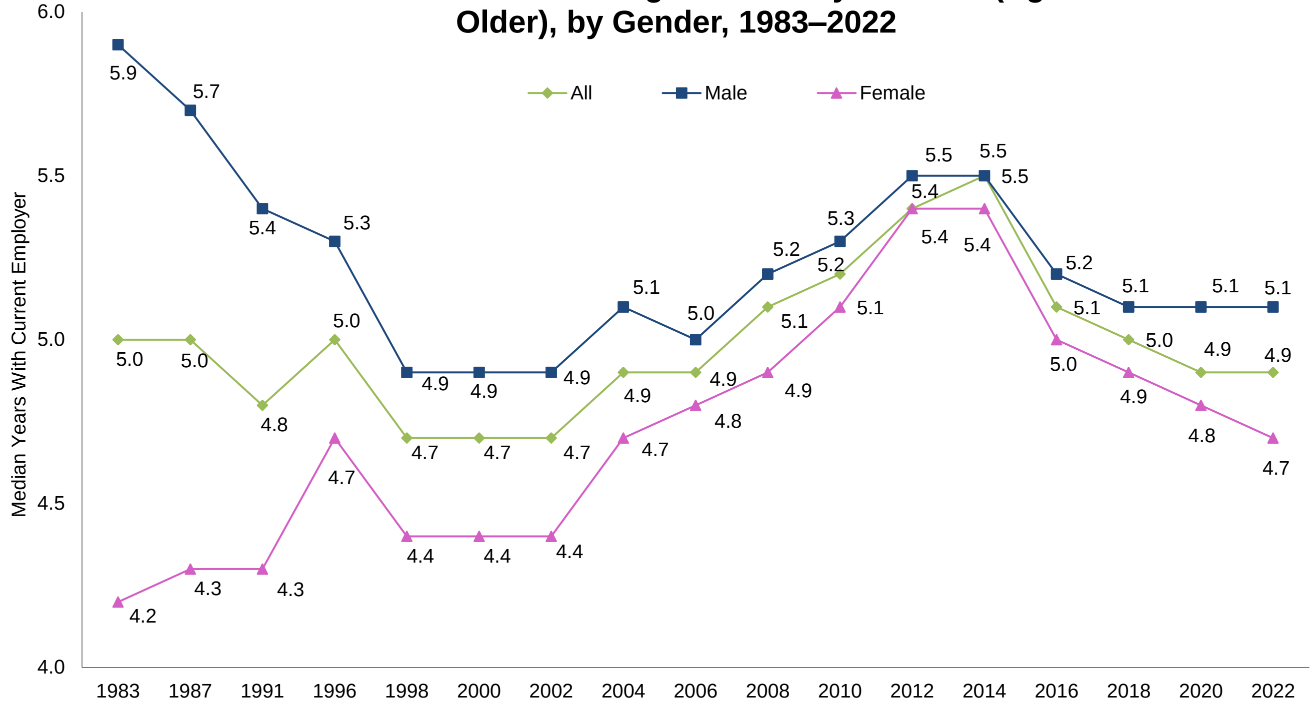
Overall Tenure

The median tenure for all wage and salary workers *ages 25 or older* in 2022 was just below its 1983 level at 4.9 years compared with 5.0 years. The 4.9 years in 2022 was at the low end of the range over the nearly 40-year period of this study, where tenure ranged from as high as 5.5 years in 2014 to as low as 4.7 years in the period around 2000 (Figure 1). The median tenure for *male* wage and salary workers was even lower, relatively, in 2022 at 5.1 years vs. 5.9 years in 1983. Tenure for males was as low as 4.9 years in the period around 2000. In contrast, the median tenure for *female* wage and salary workers increased from 4.2 years in 1983 to 5.4 years in 2014. The 2022 figure (4.7) was down from the high of 5.4 years in 2012 and 2014 and part of a continued decline since that time. Only the female median tenure in 2022 was below its 2020 level, while both the male and the overall numbers were unchanged.

Age and Gender — A closer examination of the median tenure of wage and salary workers ages 25–64 by age and gender shows that the median tenure for the oldest working males of this group (ages 55–64) declined steadily from a peak of 15.3 years in 1983 to as low as 9.5 years in 2006. In 2016 and 2018, median tenure for this group stood at 10.2 years before falling to 10.0 years in 2020 and 2022 (Figure 2).[3] The median-tenure trend became flatter for younger age categories, showing a smaller change in the tenure level across time. The 25–34-year-old-male tenure trend was virtually flat at around three years. Only the median tenure of males ages 45–54 showed a significant change from 2020 to 2022, where the value fell from 8.2 years in 2020 to 7.5 years in 2022.

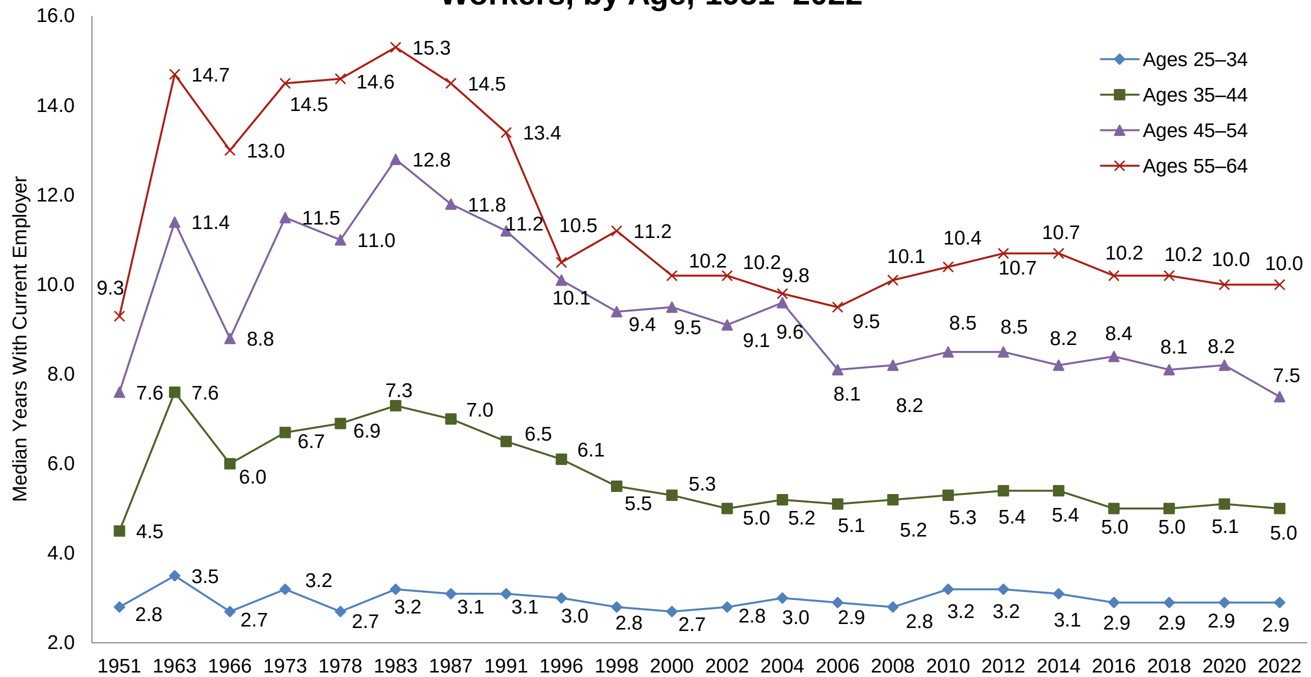
For female wage and salary workers ages 25–64, the median tenure increased across all age groups from 1983 to 2012 or 2014, where it peaked (Figure 3). Since 2014, the median tenure has been declining in each age group, including declines among those ages 35–64. Except for those ages 35–44, the median tenure has returned to the same as or below their 1983 levels. The largest decrease in median tenure from 2020 to 2022 was again for those ages 45–54, going from 6.8 years to 6.3 years.

Figure 1
Median Years of Tenure for Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 25 or Older), by Gender, 1983–2022



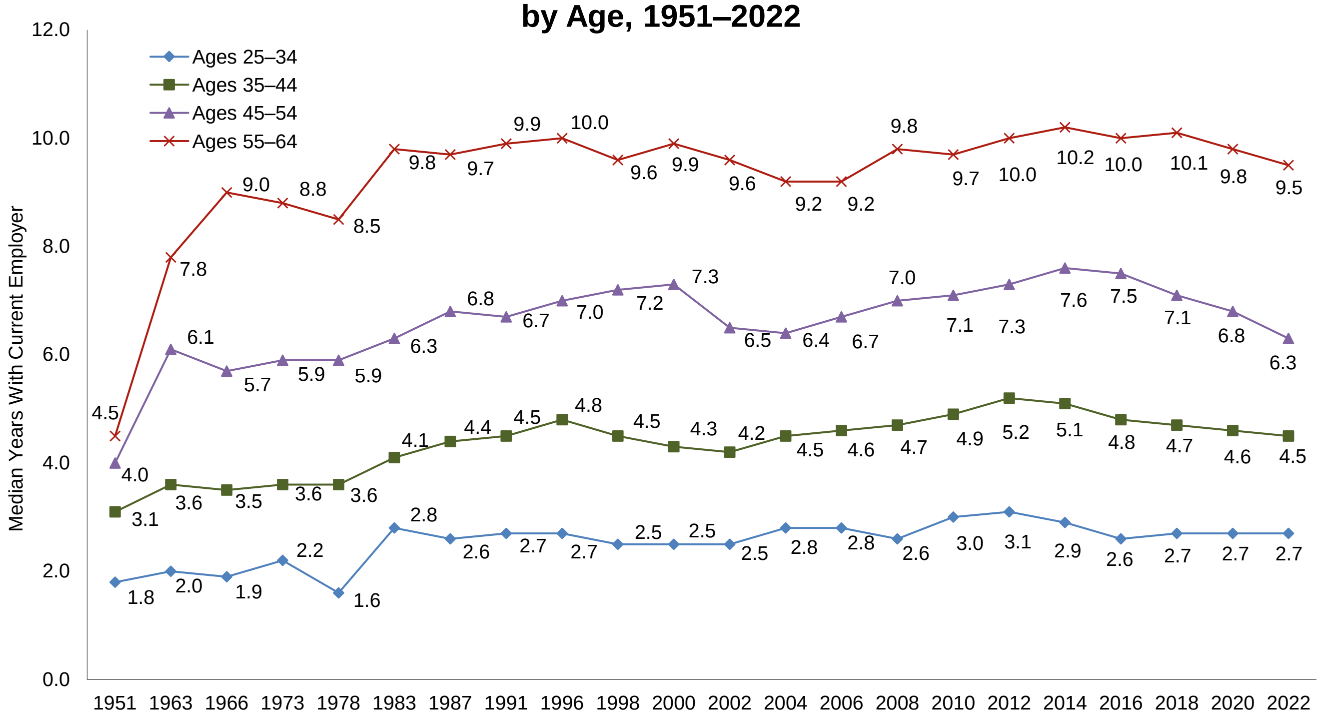
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employee Tenure," at www.bls.gov/news.release/history/tenure_09192002.txt, www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/tenure_09182012.pdf, and www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (all last viewed January 17, 2023).

Figure 2
Median Tenure Levels for Male Prime-Age (25–64) Workers, by Age, 1951–2022



Source: Data (for 1951, 1963, 1966, 1973, and 1978) from the Monthly Labor Review (September 1952, October 1963, January 1967, December 1974, and December 1979) and from press releases (for 1983, 1987, 1991, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2022) from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Figure 3
Median Tenure Levels for Female Prime-Age (25–64) Workers, by Age, 1951–2022



Source: Data (for 1951, 1963, 1966, 1973, and 1978) from the Monthly Labor Review (September 1952, October 1963, January 1967, December 1974, and December 1979) and from press releases (for 1983, 1987, 1991, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2022) from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Public vs. Private Sector — Among *all* wage and salary workers *ages 20 or older*, the median tenure level was relatively steady at 4.0 years to 4.5 years from 1983 to 2010. The median tenure increased since then, until 2018, to between 4.9 and 5.1 years (Figure 4).[4] The median tenure then fell back to 4.9 years in 2018 and to 4.8 years in 2022. *Private-sector* workers' median tenure held relatively steady from 1983 to 2002 at around 3.5 years. Subsequently, the median tenure trended upward, reaching 4.3 years in 2012 and 2014. The median tenure then fell to 4.1 years in 2016 and to 4.0 years from 2018–2022. In contrast, the median tenure for *public-sector* workers shows significantly more increases, going from 6.0 years in 1983 to 7.5 years in 1998 and reaching 8.3 years in 2012. Subsequently, the median tenure fell to 8.0 years in 2014 and 2016 and to 7.0 years in 2018 and 2022.

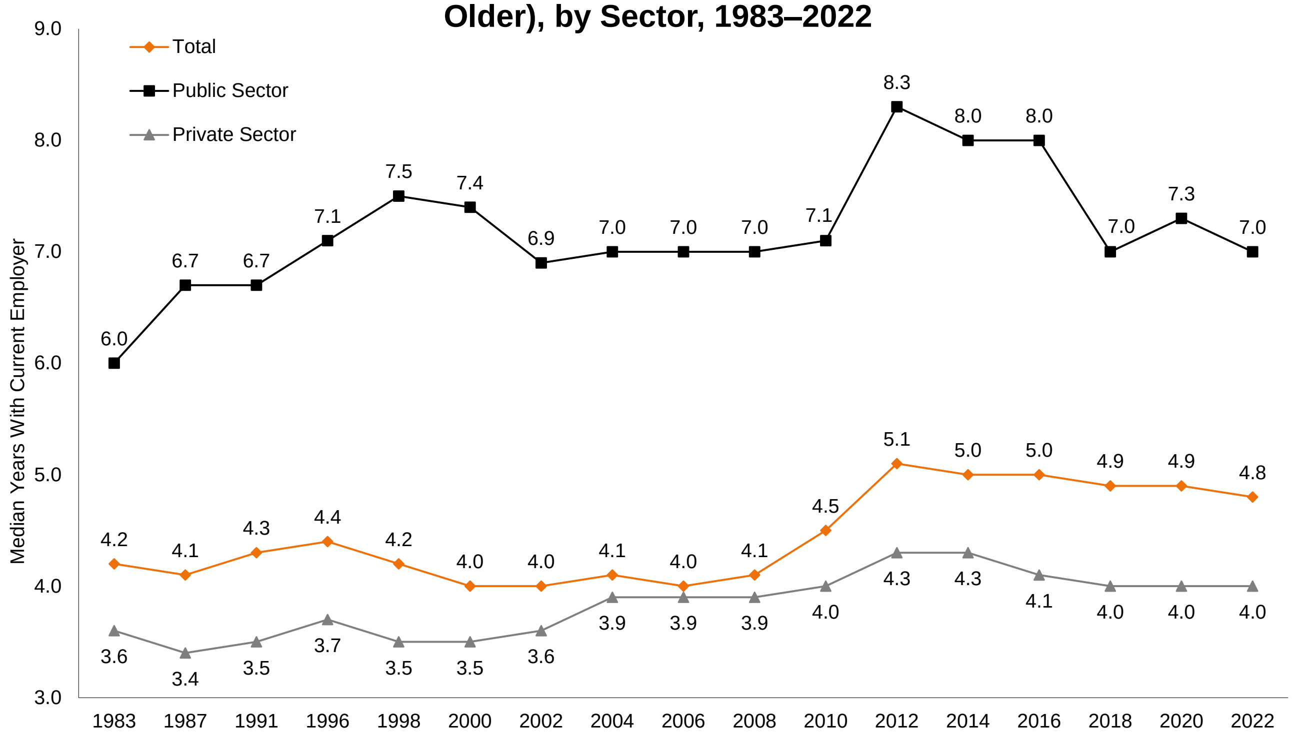
As a result of the increase in the median job tenure in the public sector, the *relative* median tenure to that of the private sector grew from 1.7 times larger in 1983 to 2.1 times larger in 1998 (calculations from Figure 4). However, this ratio has fallen back to 1.75 times larger in 2022 with the larger relative decrease in median tenure in the public sector.

For *male, private-sector* wage and salary workers ages 20 or older, the median tenure peaked in 2012 at 5.3 years. The median tenure level subsequently declined to 5.0 years in 2014, to 4.1 years in 2016, and to 4.0 years in 2018-2022 (Figure 5). In contrast, the median tenure of *female, private-sector* workers had a relatively consistent upward trend (except for slight dips in 1987 and 1998), from 3.1 years in 1983 to 4.6 years in 2014. Since then, it has declined to 4.0 years in 2016, where it remained in 2018–2022.

For *male, public-sector* workers, the median tenure had a flat-to-upward trend from 7.9 years in 1983 to 8.7 years in 2000 before falling back to 8.0 years by 2006, where it remained through 2010. The median tenure then increased to 8.5 years in 2012 and held there through 2016. In 2018, it fell back to its 2010 level of 8.0 years and has held there through 2022. *Female, public-sector* workers' median tenure level had the most significant upward trend, reaching a peak of 6.9 years in 1998. Median tenure for this cohort dipped to 5.9 years but increased again, reaching 8.3 years in 2012. It stood at 7.0 in 2018, in line with its 2010 level, before increasing to 7.3 in 2020 and falling back to 7.0 in 2022.

Figure 4

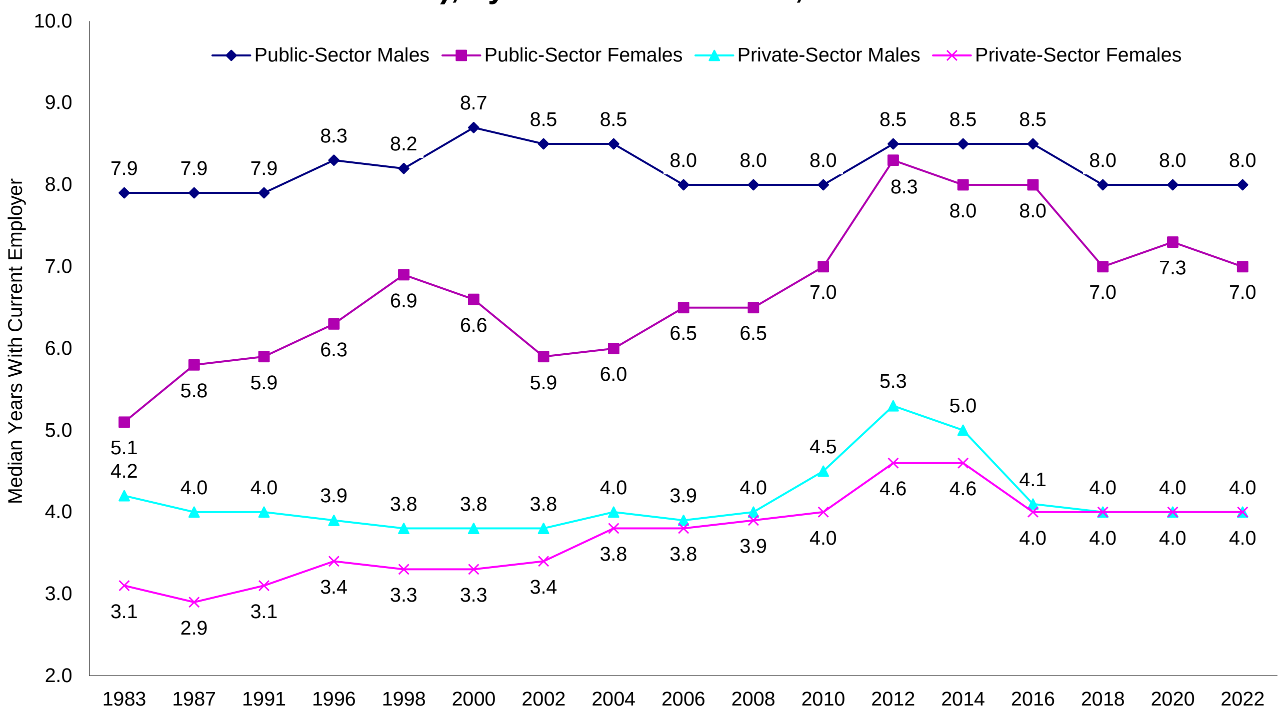
Median Tenure Levels for Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 20 or Older), by Sector, 1983–2022



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employee Tenure," at www.bls.gov/news.release/history/tenure_09192002.txt, www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/tenure_09182012.pdf, and www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (all last viewed January 17, 2023); and Employee Benefit Research Institute estimates from the January 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022 Current Population Surveys.

Figure 5

Median Tenure Levels for Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 20 or Older), by Sector and Gender, 1983–2022



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employee Tenure," and Employee Benefit Research Institute estimates from the January 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022 Current Population Surveys.

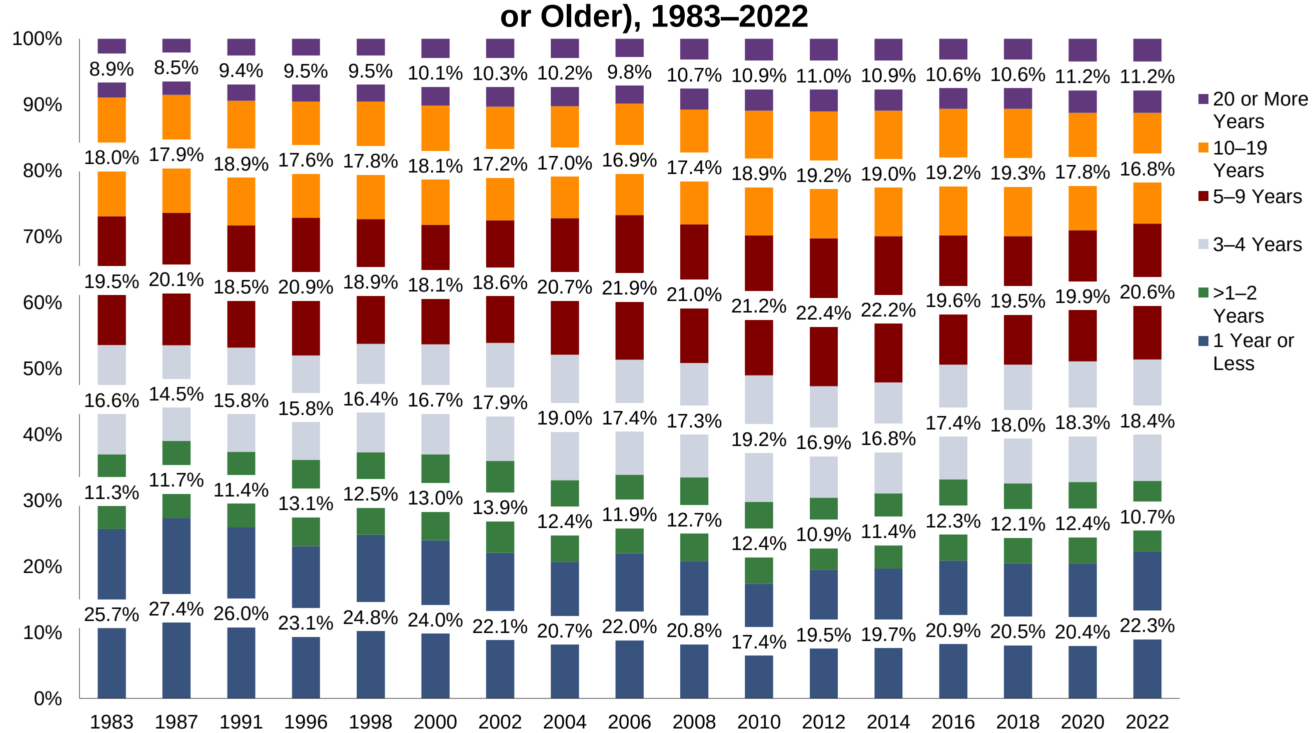
Tenure Distribution

The distribution of all wage and salary workers *ages 20 or older* across various levels of tenure was relatively stable, with the biggest change occurring among workers ages 20 or older with one year or less of tenure. In 1983, more than a quarter of that cohort — 25.7 percent — had a year or less of tenure. This trended as low as 17.4 percent in 2010's weak labor market and has since risen to 22.3 percent by 2022 (Figure 6). This 22.3 percent in 2022 is the highest percentage of workers with this lowest tenure level since 2006, just before the downturn in the economy in 2008. The cohort of workers with 20 or more years of tenure had the second largest change during the full period. In 1983, 8.9 percent of workers ages 20 or older had two decades or more of tenure. This peaked at 11.0 percent in 2012 and stood at 10.6 percent in 2016 and 2018, before increasing to 11.2 percent in 2020 and 2022.[5] As result, the share of workers in both the lowest and highest tenure categories were at their largest amount since 2000. The category of tenure showing the largest percentage decline was those with 10–19 years of tenure, showing that these workers appeared to be those moving the most since the pandemic started.

The tenure distribution changes from 2020 to 2022 among both males and females showed very similar movements to that of the overall distribution, with the exception of males with the largest tenures not continuing to increase in 2022 (Figure 7). However, the percentage of male workers with the shortest tenures (one year or less) did increase sharply in 2022 to 21.0 percent from 19.5 percent in 2020. This was the highest percentage of males with this level of tenure since 2006.

The uptick in the percentage of workers ages 20 or older with tenures of one year or less was even more pronounced for females, as the number jumped from 21.4 percent in 2020 to 23.7 percent in 2022 (Figure 8). This was the highest level of female workers with this level of tenure since 2000. The percentage of these female workers with 20 or more years of tenure also increased from 10.3 percent in 2020 to 10.7 percent in 2022 — the highest level across the entire study period. As with the overall distribution, the percentage of female workers with 10–19 years of tenure showed the largest decline since 2020, falling to 16.0 percent from 17.8 percent in 2020. Across the study period, the percentage with this level of tenure was only lower in 1983.

Figure 6
Employee Tenure Distribution: All Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 20 or Older), 1983–2022



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employee Tenure," at www.bls.gov/news.release/history/tenure_09192002.txt, www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/tenure_09182012.pdf, www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/tenure_09222020.htm, and www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (all last viewed January 17, 2023).

Figure 7
Employee Tenure Distribution: Male Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 20 or Older), 1983–2022

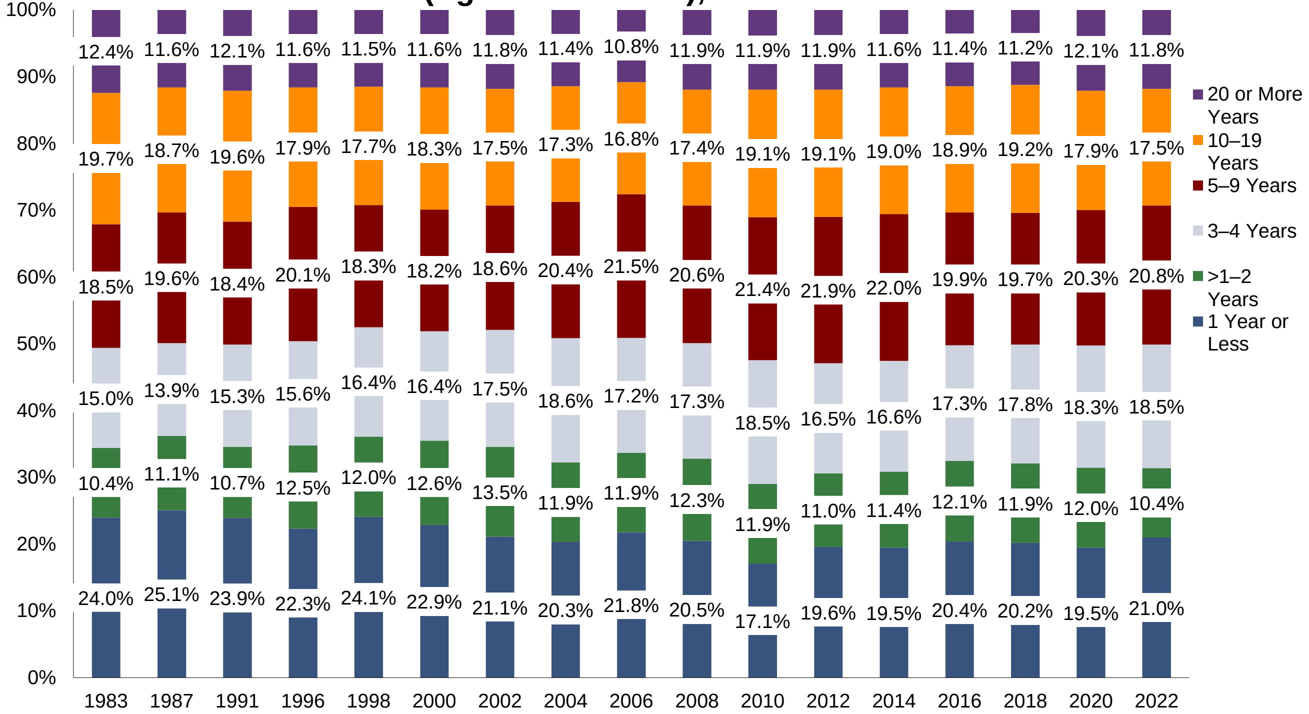


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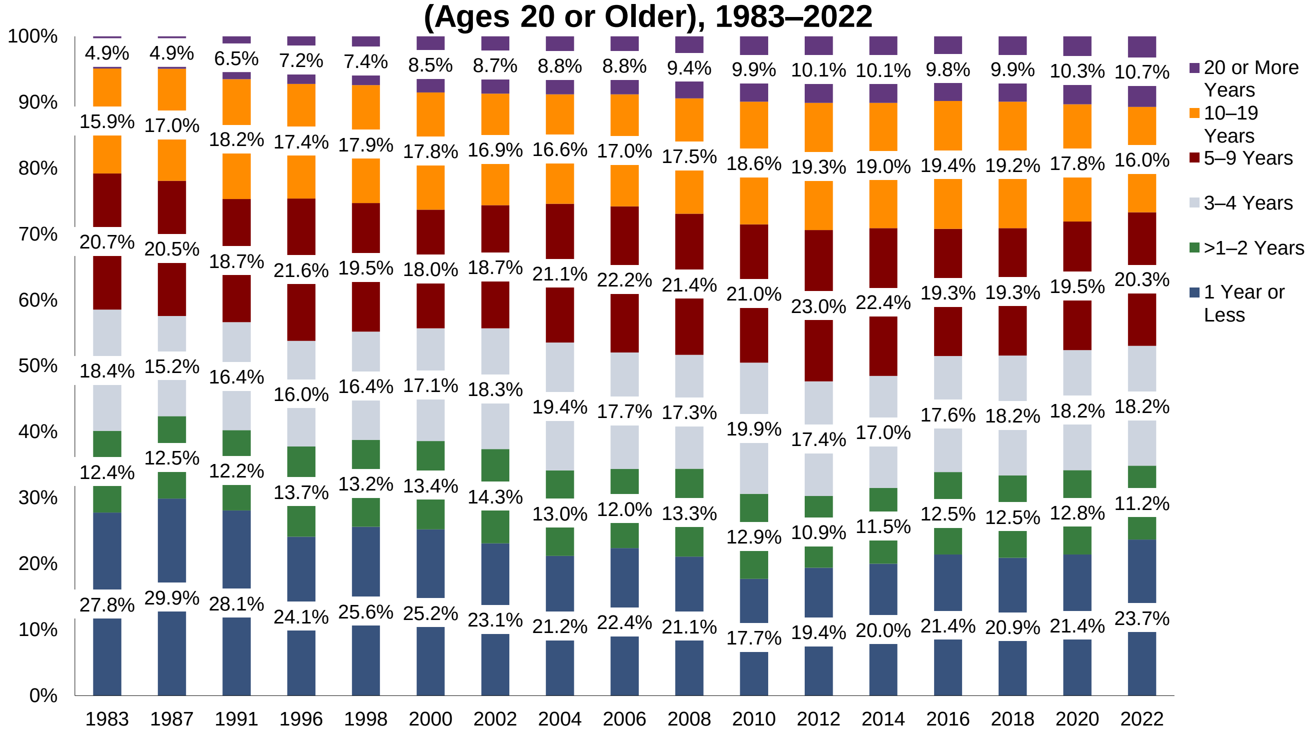
Figure 8
Employee Tenure Distribution: Female Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 20 or Older), 1983–2022

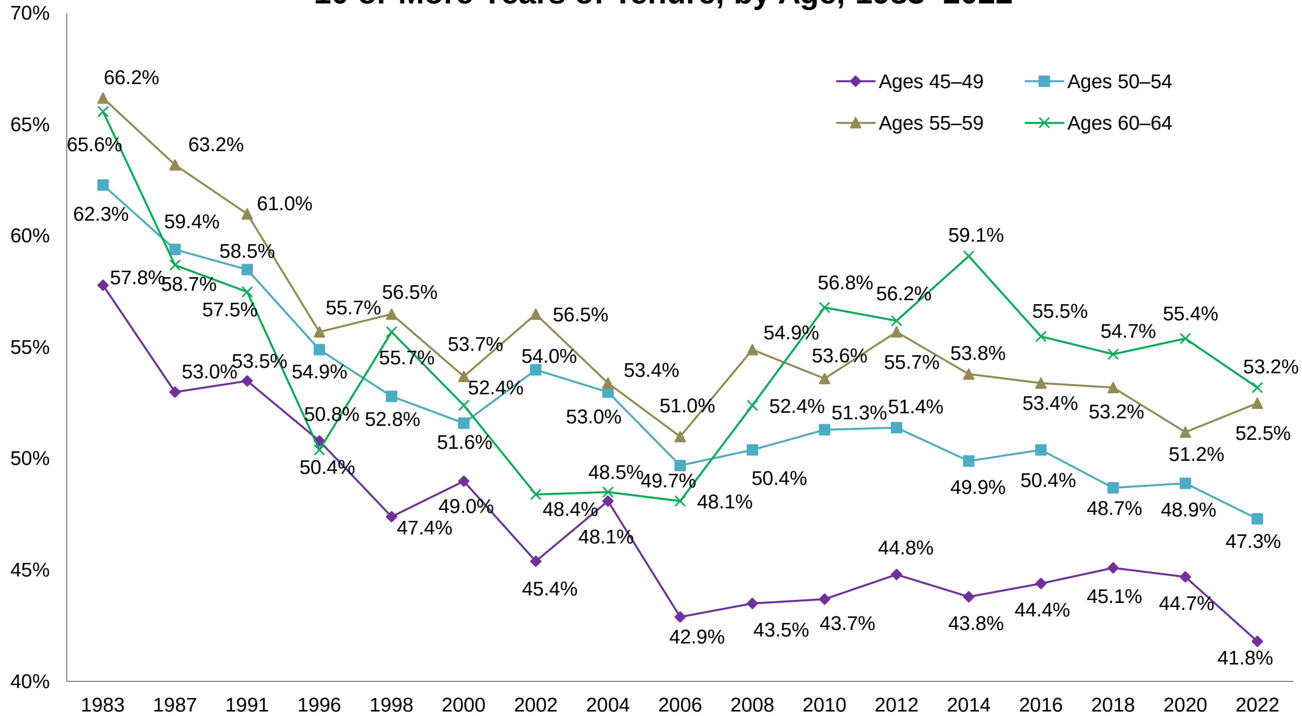


Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employee Tenure," at www.bls.gov/news.release/history/tenure_09192002.txt, www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/tenure_09182012.pdf, www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/tenure_09222020.htm, and www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (all last viewed January 17, 2023).

Share of Older Workers With Specific Levels of Tenure

Older male and female wage and salary workers (ages 45–64) with 10 or more years of tenure over the 1983–2022 period are examined in order to gain a better perspective on trends in career jobs by gender. Among the *male* age groups examined, a decrease of 12.4 percentage points (for those ages 60–64) was the minimum change between 1983 and 2022 in the share of workers with 10 or more years of tenure (calculated from Figure 9). Males ages 45–49 experienced the largest decline, from 57.8 percent in 1983 to 44.8 percent in 2022 (16.0 percentage points). Before 2022, the lowest point of the trends had been in 2006, but sharp declines in 2022 among workers ages 45–49 and 50–54 set new lows for these age cohorts. In contrast, the percentage of workers with 10 or more years of tenure among males ages 55–59 increased in 2022 back to near its 2014–2018 levels.

Figure 9
Percentage of Male Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 45–64) Who Had 10 or More Years of Tenure, by Age, 1983–2022

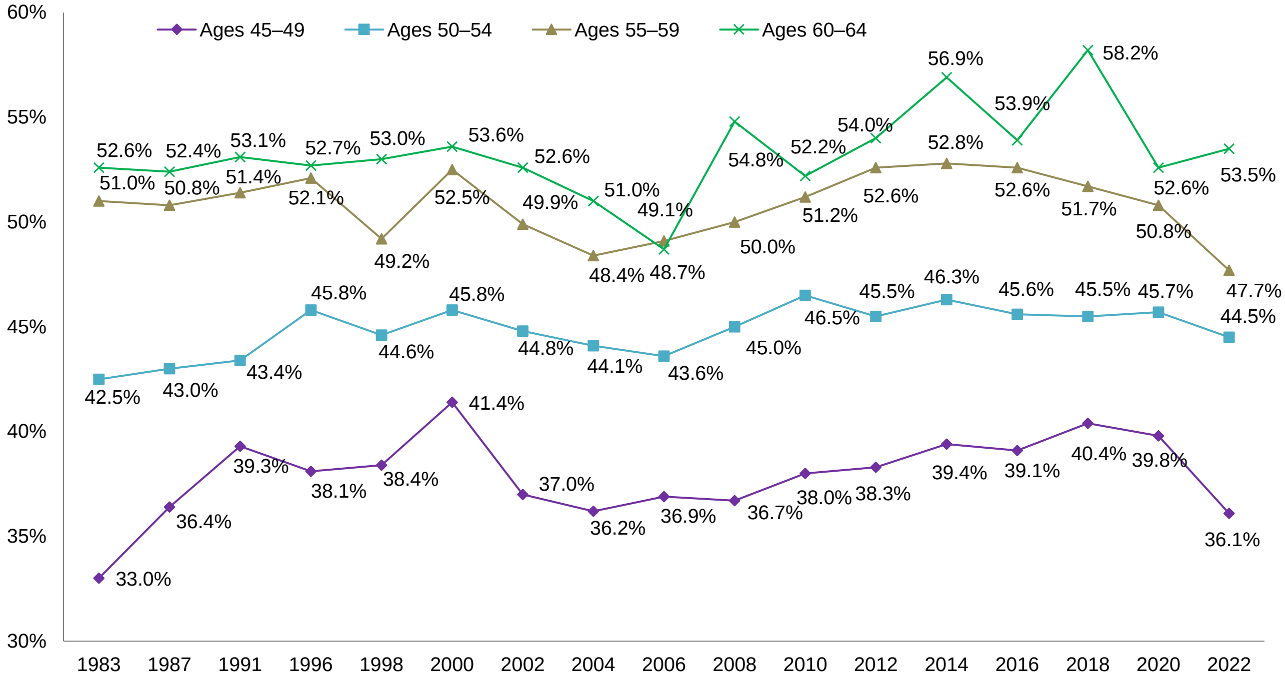


Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employee Tenure," at www.bls.gov/news.release/history/tenure_09192002.txt, www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/tenure_09182012.pdf, and www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (all last viewed January 17, 2023).

In contrast, the percentage of *female* wage and salary workers of these ages who had 10 or more years of tenure increased for each age group from 1983–2022, except for those ages 55–59 (Figure 10). After the decreases in the most recent years for those with 10 or more years of tenure, the largest increase from 1983–2022 was 3.1 percentage points for female workers ages 45–49. Furthermore, the 2022 levels, which decreased substantially among those ages 45–49 and 55–59, were at their lowest levels since 2006 or earlier. These declines for female workers in 2022 were similar to those of male workers, but the overall changes from 1983–2022 were very different, as the percentages for males showed considerable declines from 1983, whereas the percentages for females were much flatter over this time period.

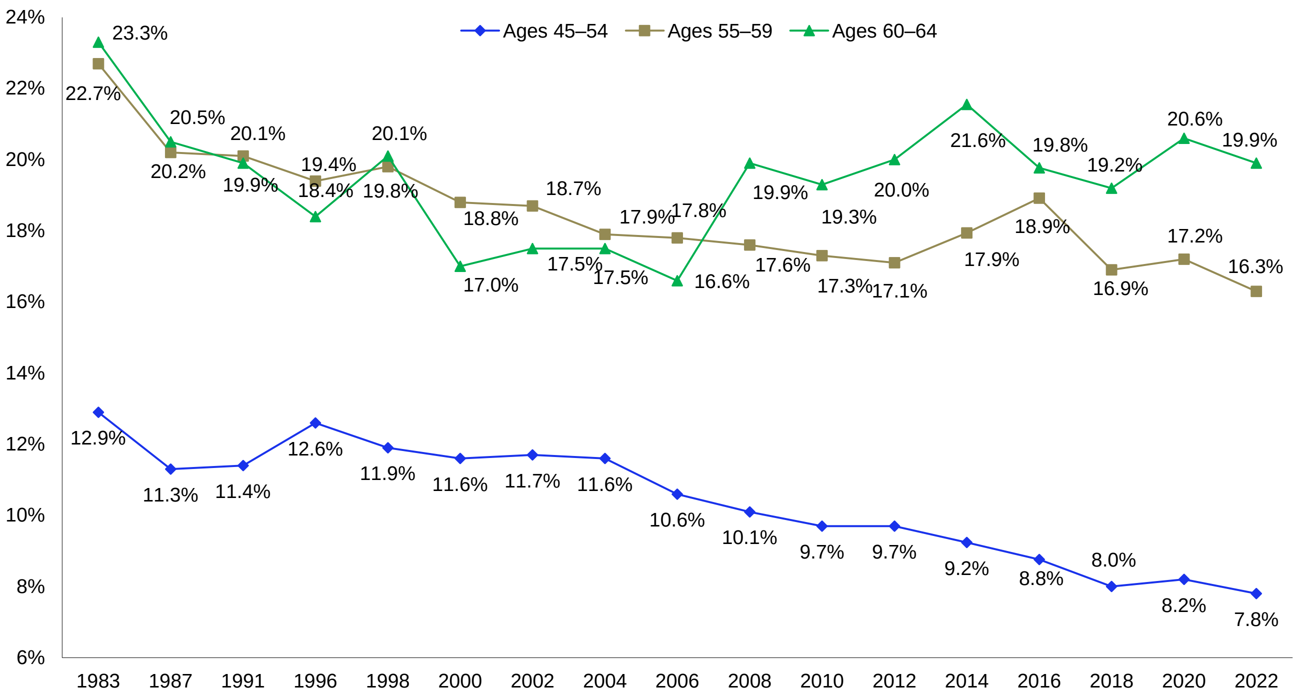
Among older wage and salary workers (ages 45–64), the percentage having the very longest tenures — 25 or more years — was lower in 2022 than in 2020 after increasing from 2018 (Figure 11). In fact, among those ages 45–54 and 55–59, the percentages of these workers with 25 or more years of tenure were at their lowest in 2022 during the time period from 1983–2022. In contrast, among those ages 60–64, the 2022 percentage was above its 2016 and 2018 levels. Over the entire 1983–2022 time period, the percentage with 25 or more years of tenure decreased markedly.

Figure 10
Percentage of Female Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 45–64) Who Had 10 or More Years of Tenure, by Age, 1983–2022



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employee Tenure," at www.bls.gov/news.release/history/tenure_09192002.txt, www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/tenure_09182012.pdf, and www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (all last viewed January 17, 2023).

Figure 11
Percentage of Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 45–64) Who Had 25 or More Years of Tenure, by Age, 1983–2022



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employee Tenure," and Employee Benefit Research Institute estimates from the January 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022 Current Population Surveys.

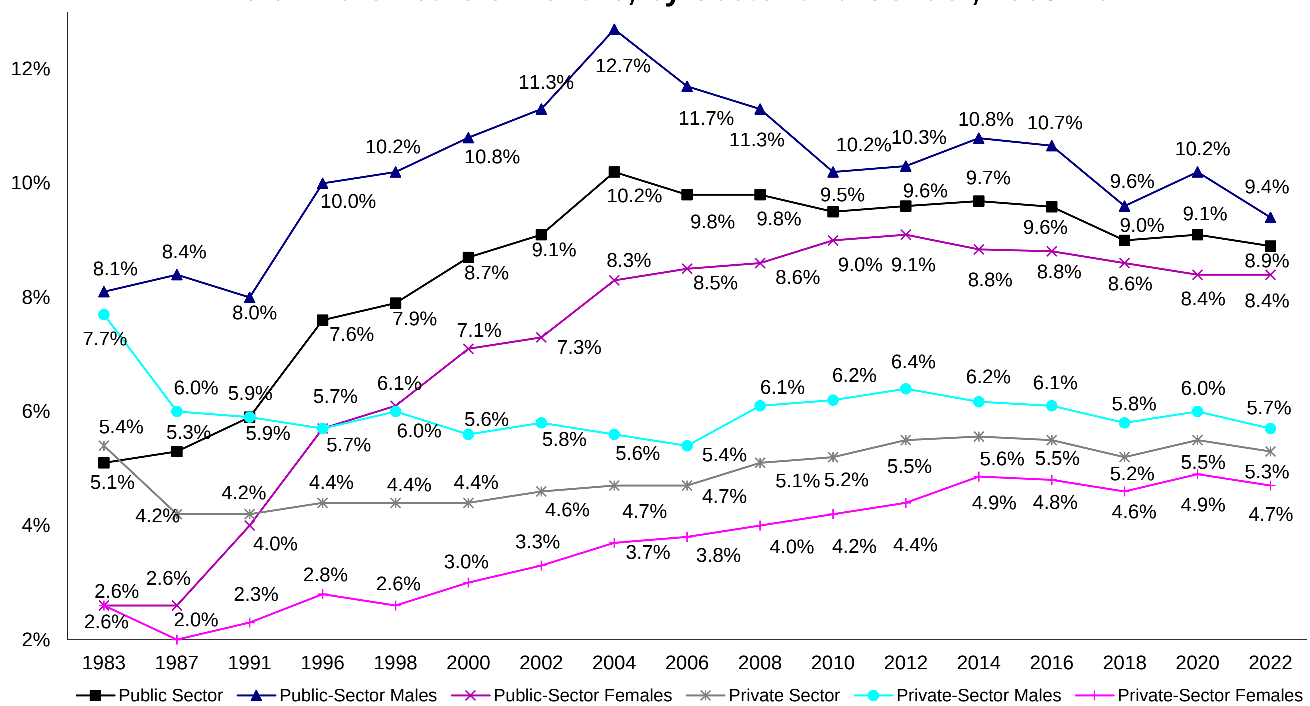
In addition to differences by age and gender, tenure distribution was also significantly different across employment sectors. Among the *longest-tenured, private-sector workers* (25 or more years), after a significant drop in 1987 from 1983, the percentage of all private-sector workers (male and female combined) with 25 or more years of tenure had a steady-to-upward trend from 1987–2014 before declining in 2016 and 2018 (Figure 12). In addition, in each group except for female, public-sector workers, there was an increase in the percentage with 25 or more years of tenure in 2020, before each group decreased or remained the same in 2022.

The substantial decline in the percentage of male, public-sector workers with 25 or more years of tenure from 2006–2022 resulted in an overall decline in this percentage for all public-sector workers in this time period. Consequently, the significant difference between the public and private sectors in the percentage of the longest-tenured workers narrowed — public-sector tenure was 117 percent higher in 2004 but 83 percent higher in 2010. This gap has continued to decline but at a much slower rate, reaching 73 percent in 2018 and 68 percent in 2022.

This result of a relatively higher percentage of long-tenure workers has implications for public-sector employers, as higher shares of their work forces are reaching ages where many will retire. Thus, at a time of growth in the nation's elderly population (which is more likely to need social services than the nonelderly population), the most experienced workers within government agencies providing these social services will likely be retiring. This issue seems to be diminishing in the most recent years, but the relatively higher levels of tenure among public-sector workers could still be a concern. The decrease in the most recent years is due to the longer-tenured workers already starting to retire, as the American population continues to age.

In contrast, despite increases in the proportion of females with the longest tenures, private-sector employers in general do not appear to be facing this same issue. Overall, they have employed a relatively consistent percentage of long-term workers from 1987–2006. Yet, this percentage trended upward after 2006 but remains relatively close to the pre-2008 levels. Thus, private-sector employers have remained in a similar position in terms of the portion of longest-tenured workers.

Figure 12
Percentage of Wage and Salary Workers (Ages 20 or Older) Who Had 25 or More Years of Tenure, by Sector and Gender, 1983–2022



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statictics, "Employee Tenure," at www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.toc.htm, viewed January 17, 2023, and Employee Benefit Research Institute estimates from the January 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022 Current Population Surveys.

Implications of Job Changes

These tenure results indicate that, historically, most workers have changed jobs during their working careers, and all evidence suggests that they will continue to do so in the future. In 2022, tenure had moved to shorter levels with the improving job market, which makes it clear that workers are going to have various points in their careers at which they will be faced with important benefit decisions. In particular, workers' potential incomes in retirement can be impacted in various ways from changing jobs, and this may have important implications for retirement security overall:

Defined Benefit Plans — Since defined benefit (DB) pensions that are final-average plans have formulas based on tenure and final average salary, workers who change jobs may not receive the maximum potential benefit from this type of plan because they do not remain with the same employer for extended periods. In fact, short-tenure workers (with less than five years in their jobs) may not qualify for any pension benefit at all due to five-year cliff vesting schedules. Since the median length of employment for all wage and salary workers ages 25 or older is 4.9 years, even the decreasing number of American workers who are currently participating in a final-average DB plan are unlikely to receive a significant benefit from the plan.

Defined Contribution Plans — When changing jobs and moving to a new defined contribution (DC) plan, the worker must decide whether to participate or, with an automatic enrollment plan, to opt out. If participating, the contribution amount and asset allocation must be determined. For workers changing jobs, they could repeat prior DC savings behavior (particularly if they were in an auto-escalation plan), or they might restart at the defaults of the new plan (or at a lower contribution rate and different asset allocation), which could stunt the savings progress from the prior job. Consequently, workers' savings could be curbed while beginning the process again.

Lump-Sum Distributions — A worker who changes employers must decide what to do with any retirement plan assets he or she has accumulated, a situation that has become more the norm due to the growth in employment-based retirement plans that have a lump-sum distribution option (both DC and DB).[6] Thus, benefit preservation becomes an important concern for these employees as well as for their plan sponsors. If employees do not retain these assets in some type of savings vehicle for retirement, they may forgo an important source of retirement income. Without this source of income, many workers may face financial difficulties in retirement.

Public Policy — These decisions on savings and benefit preservation also have important implications for public policy, as enrollments in means-tested welfare programs could increase significantly if large numbers of retirees prematurely exhaust their own savings reserves.[7] Furthermore, the share of long-tenured, public-sector employees is dropping during the period when social programs are beginning to face tremendous increases in enrollment. This suggests that the public sector will have fewer experienced workers that could impact the addressing of the challenges of the growing retiree population.

Conclusion

Over the past nearly 40 years, the median tenure of all wage and salary workers ages 25 or older has stayed at approximately five years. However, the overall trend masks a significant decrease in median tenure among men and an offsetting increase in median tenure among women. Furthermore, the distribution of tenure levels among workers ages 20 or older had been moving toward longer tenures until the most recent years, when shorter tenures have gained share. Therefore, the gender-distinct trends had generally moved in opposite directions, leading to overall constancy in the tenure statistics. However, the median tenures by gender have been moving together in recent years.

Since 2018, median tenure has trended downward. In addition, the distribution of worker tenure has shown a sizable increase in the lowest levels (two years or less) of tenure. These results indicate both that more individuals have jobs and that individuals who had been working changed jobs — potentially to better jobs — as the economy has improved, so that the overall tenure distribution has moved to shorter tenures.

The difference between private-sector and public-sector workers' tenure distributions is quite striking. While private-sector employers in general have been able to maintain a near-constant and small percentage of very long-term employees (25 or more years of tenure), public-sector employers saw this group grow significantly through 2004 before trending down through 2022. Consequently, public-sector employers have seen a significant share of their most experienced workers retire.

As for career jobs, the highest median tenure level for any age group (15.3 years in 1983 for males ages 55–64) certainly does not cover an entire lifetime career, since the median worker would not have started his or her current job until after age 40. Furthermore, the percentage of workers in both the 55–59 age group and the 60–64 age group with 25 or more years of tenure has been either just above or just below 20 percent at a time when these workers would be ending their working careers. Consequently, approximately 80 percent of workers at these ages have tenures less than 25 years, which would be less than a full working career.

An important qualifier on tenure data is that they do not measure job security. For instance, an increase in workers' median tenure may mean that job security has declined, because those with shorter tenures have been let go and no longer have jobs. However, the decline in median tenure could also mean workers feel more secure, have an increased ability to find other employment, and switch to better jobs.

Although tenure is not a good measure of job security, it does provide insight into how long workers choose to or are allowed to remain with their current employers. These ideas are particularly relevant in the current tight labor market. When unemployment remained high from 2009–2012, tenure levels were generally increasing. However, with the low unemployment rates and increased quit rates from 2020–2022, tenure has trended downward. Thus, it is clear from these results, even with the ups and downs in median tenure, that workers will be faced with many decision points about their retirement benefits along their career paths, as workers will most likely *not* be with one company their entire career. As a consequence, employers and benefits providers need to account for these job changes when designing retirement plans and participant advice or education programs.

Endnotes

[1] See Yakoboski, Paul, "Debunking the Retirement Policy Myth: Lifetime Jobs Never Existed for Most Workers," *EBRI Issue Brief,* no. 197 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, May 1998); Yakoboski, Paul, "Male and Female Tenure Continues to Move in Opposite Directions," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, February 1999): 1–4; Rajnes, David, "Update on Employee Tenure," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 22, no. 3 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, March 2001): 1–8; Copeland, Craig, "Employee Tenure," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 24, no. 3 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, March 2003): 1–10; Copeland, Craig, "Employee Tenure: Stable Overall, but Male and Female Trends Differ," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 26, no. 3 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, March 2005): 1–10; Copeland, Craig, "Employee Tenure, 2006," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 28, no. 4 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, April 2007): 1–11; Copeland, Craig, "Employee Tenure, 2008," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 31, no.1 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, January 2010): 1–12; Copeland, Craig, "Employee Tenure Trend Lines, 1983-2010," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 31, no.12 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, December 2010): 2–12; Copeland, Craig, "Employee Tenure Trends, 1983-2012," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 33, no.12 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, December 2012): 12–23; Copeland, Craig, "Employee Tenure Trends, 1983-2014," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 36, no. 2 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, February 2015): 2–13; Copeland, Craig, "Employee Tenure Trends, 1983-2016," *EBRI Notes*, Vol. 38, no. 9 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, September 20, 2017): 2–14; and Copeland, Craig, "Trends in Employee Tenure, 1983–2018," *EBRI Issue Brief*, no. 474 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, February 28, 2019).

[2] The latest data come from the January 2022 Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of approximately 60,000 households on demographics, labor force status, and other characteristics of the civilian, noninstitutionalized American population. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts this CPS supplement for the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Tenure levels for previous years come from various other supplements to the CPS. For a further discussion of the data sources, see the Bureau of Labor Statistics' "Employee Tenure Technical Note" at www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (last viewed January 17, 2023). Results of research from BLS and EBRI are

compiled in this article to present various trends in employee tenure. See the EBRI publications, op. cit., and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' "Employee Tenure" at www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (last viewed January 17, 2023).

[3] BLS reports that the results prior to 1983 are not directly comparable to those in 1983 and after. The results from those prior years are presented here to give an idea of the best estimate for tenure during that time. The tenure questions were again changed in 1996, so while the 1983 questions are close, the most consistent numbers across years start in 1996. The 2006 tenure release from BLS updated numbers going back to 1996 and made some very minor changes to some of the previously published data. See note in tables of the 2006 BLS press release on tenure at www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/tenure_09082006.pdf (last viewed January 17, 2023). BLS is now only reporting tenure levels back to 2008. See the Bureau of Labor Statistics' "Employee Tenure" at www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (last viewed January 17, 2023).

[4] This section focuses on workers ages 20 or older, whereas the prior section focuses on workers ages 25 or older or ages 25–64. Consequently, these numbers are not directly comparable. The different ages are a consequence of matching trends from prior years of Bureau of Labor Statistics analyses.

[5] The number of wage and salary workers ages 20 or older increased from 121.6 million in 2012, to 132.8 million in 2018, and to 136.6 million in 2020, before declining to 134.9 million in 2022. There were 78.9 million of these workers in 1983.

[6] See VanDerhei, Jack, and Craig Copeland, "The Changing Face of Private Retirement Plans," *EBRI Issue Brief*, no. 232 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, April 2001) for a presentation of the increased reliance of retirees on assets from defined contribution plans. The *Issue Brief* also discusses the growth of cash balance plans, which typically allow retirees to take lump-sum distributions. Also, see VanDerhei, Jack, and Craig Copeland, "ERISA At 30: The Decline of Private-Sector Defined Benefit Promises and Annuity Payments? What Will It Mean?" *EBRI Issue Brief,* no. 269 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, May 2004) for an analysis of the effect of changes in defined benefit plans on retirees' ability to maintain a similar lifestyle throughout retirement. See also Banerjee, Sudipto, "Annuity and Lump Sum Decisions in Defined Benefit Plans: The Role of Plan Rules," *EBRI Issue Brief*, no. 381 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, January 2013) for choices between annuities and lump-sum distributions from defined benefit plans.

[7] See Copeland, Craig, "How Are New Retirees Doing Financially in Retirement?," *EBRI Issue Brief,* no. 302 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, February 2007) for examination of how the retirees born in 1931–1941 were managing their wealth as they started their retirement years; Banerjee, Sudipto, "Asset Decumulation or Asset Preservation? What Guides Retirement Spending," *EBRI Issue Brief*, no. 447 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, April 3, 2018) for an examination over a longer time period of wealth changes among those in retirement; and Copeland, Craig, "Individual Retirement Account Balances, Contributions, Withdrawals, and Asset Allocation Longitudinal Results 2010–2016," *EBRI Issue Brief*, no. 462 (Employee Benefit Research Institute, October 22, 2018) for a look at the pace at which retirees are withdrawing assets from their individual retirement accounts (IRAs).

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