

New Research Finds That Individuals Ages 55 or Older in the American Labor Force Are Increasingly Becoming Older and More Diverse

- Labor Force Participation Rates of Those Ages 55-64 Have Surpassed Their Pre-Pandemic Levels, While Those Ages 65 or Older Have Not Reached These Levels -

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(Washington, D.C.) – A new research report, published today by the Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI), finds that among working Americans ages 55 or older, the labor force is aging. The research found that workers ages 65 or older make up a larger portion of the age 55 or older workforce than they did in 2000. The percentage of those ages 65 and older increased from 23% of the age 55 or older workforce in 2000 to 29.5% in 2023. This happened while the labor force participation rates of those ages 55-64 surpassed pre-pandemic levels, while the labor force participation rates of those ages 65 or older did not.

Key findings in the new research report, “Trends in Labor Force Participation and Employment of Americans Ages 55 or Older” include:

- In 2022 and 2023, among males, the labor force participation rates of those ages 60-64 increased but declined for those ages 75 or older. Increases in the labor force participation rates of females ages 55-59 and 70-74 also were seen in 2022 and 2023, but the labor force participation rates decreased for females ages 60-64 in 2023.
- After rising to its highest point since 2001, in 2022, the male share of the labor force ages 55 or older decreased in 2023. The female share of the labor force ages 55 or older has generally fallen since 2010, though it did increase slightly in 2023. Despite this, females ages 55 or older are still a higher share of the labor force than they were in the late 1990s.
- In 2022 and 2023, the labor force participation rates of those ages 70-74 trended toward 2019 levels but did not quite reach these rates. The labor force participation rates of those ages 55-59 and ages 60-64 surpassed 2019 levels in 2023. In contrast, the labor force participation rate of those ages 75 or older in 2023 stayed at its 2021 level, below its 2019 level, while the labor force participation rate of those ages 65-69 decreased in 2023 to below its 2022 and 2019 levels.
- Across the age categories of 55 or older, 65 or older and 75 or older, Hispanic Americans had the highest labor force participation rate in 2023 compared with White and Black Americans, despite having some of the lowest rates in 2000. Conversely, White Americans, who tended to have the highest labor force participation rates in 2000, had some of the lowest rates compared with Hispanic and Black Americans by 2023.

- From 2000-2023, the share of the labor force of Americans ages 55 or older who were Hispanic grew from 5.9% to 13.3%. At the same time, the share of this population that was White decreased from 87.4% to 80.7%.

“The movement of the Baby Boom generation out of the age groups younger than 65 has made the composition of the older workforce even older. At the same time, the older workforce is becoming more diverse, as a smaller share of White Americans comprise the ages 55 or older population. These are important considerations for employers to understand, as older workers and a more diverse work force calls for additional or new answers to the optimal design of employee benefit plans,” explained Craig Copeland, director, Wealth Benefits Research, EBRI.

To view a summary of the research report, visit <https://www.ebri.org/publications/research-publications/issue-briefs/content/trends-in-labor-force-participation-and-employment-of-americans-ages-55-or-older>.

The Employee Benefit Research Institute is a non-profit, independent and unbiased research organization that provides the most authoritative and objective information about critical issues relating to employee benefit programs in the United States. The organization also coordinates activities for the Center for Research on Health Benefits Innovation, Financial Wellbeing Research Center, and Retirement Security Research Center, and produces a variety of leading industry surveys during the year. For more information, visit www.ebri.org.

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(Media Note: To receive the complete research report, email Ron Dresner at dresner@ebri.org).