



Fast Facts from EBRI

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Lump-Sum Retirement Distributions: Some Facts, Figures

WASHINGTON—How many U.S. residents have received a lump-sum distribution from a retirement plan? What has been the average amount of the distribution? Have men or women received more distributions? What has been the racial breakdown of these distributions? Have the distributions all been voluntary?

Answers to these questions and others about lump-sum distributions are in the January 2006 *EBRI Issue Brief*, available at www.ebri.org. In general, this research found, the majority of lump-sum retirement distributions are small (less than \$10,000), and tend to go to women more than men, whites more than minorities, and private-sector workers rather than public-sector employees. All the numbers below provide a snapshot for individuals' most recent distribution through 2003:

- How many Americans have received a lump-sum distribution: 15.9 million.
- *Average* (mean) distribution in 2003 dollars: \$30,072.
- *Median* distribution (half above, half below) in 2003 dollars: \$8,118.
- Percentage of distributions less than \$10,000: 55 percent.
- Highest mean distribution, by age: Near-retirees, ages 61–64 (\$63,911).
- Lowest mean distribution, by age: Youngest workers, ages 16–21 (\$15,298).
- Distributions by gender: to women, 53 percent; to men, 47 percent.
- Distributions by race: to whites, 87 percent; to blacks, 6 percent; to Hispanics, 4 percent.
- Distributions by date: from 1994–1998, 25 percent; from 1990–2003, 42 percent.
- Distributions by sector: from a private-sector employer, 81 percent; from a public-sector employer, 17 percent.
- Distributions by choice: voluntary distribution, 62 percent; required distribution, 38 percent (Under federal regulations, private-sector retirement plan sponsors can require workers to take a lump-sum payment or roll over their balance into an Individual Retirement Account, or IRA, at termination if the value of their account is less than \$5,000.).

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