

## *Fast Facts from EBRI*

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### **How Debt Has Increased for Older American Families**

WASHINGTON—How much debt do older American families have? How has it changed over time? What does it mean?

A study by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI) shows that nearly 61 percent of American families with family heads age 55 and older had debt in 2004, almost 5 percentage points higher than in 2001 and about 7 percentage points higher than in 1992.

Further, the debt of families with family heads over age 75 has increased over time as well. An article in the September 2006 *EBRI Notes*, which contains these numbers, says that the increasing debt levels could have serious implications for the future retirement security of older Americans, as their debt levels are rising at a time when their earning ability is declining. The *EBRI Notes* article is available at [www.ebri.org](http://www.ebri.org)

Here is a look at the recent rise of debt among families with a family head age 55 or older and age 75 or older:

	1992	2001	2004
<b>Families With Debt</b>			
Family head age 55 or older	54%	56%	61%
Family head age 75 or older	32%	29%	40%
<b>Average Family Debt</b>			
Family head age 55 or older	\$29,309	\$41,294	\$51,791
Family head age 75 or older	\$ 7,769	\$ 9,549	\$20,234
<b>Median Family Debt</b>			
(midpoint, half above, half below)			
Family head age 55 or older	\$14,498*	\$24,497*	\$32,000*
Family head age 75 or older	\$4,218*	\$ 5,326*	\$14,800*
Source: <i>EBRI Notes</i> , September 2006.			
* For families with debt.			

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