


Fast Facts from EBRI

Contact: John MacDonald, EBRI, (202) 775-6349, macdonald@ebri.org
FFE #70, Dec. 18, 2007

Retirement Plan Participation: Gender Differences

WASHINGTON—What percentage of working women participate in a retirement plan? How does this differ from men? How is the “gender gap” in retirement coverage changing?

The November 2007 *EBRI Issue Brief*, published by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI), provides answers to these and other questions. While there is still a “gender gap” in retirement participation rates, it has narrowed sharply as more women enter the work force. Here are some of the key findings concerning gender differences in employment-based retirement plan participation in 2006:

All wage and salary workers: Among all wage and salary workers age 21–64, women participated at *higher* levels. However, women participated in a plan at an overall *lower* level than men, since more women than men tend to work part-time and part-year.

- Women, all wage and salary workers: 44.9 percent participated in a retirement plan.
- Men, all wage and salary workers: 46.2 percent participated.

Full-time, full-year wage and salary workers: Workers in this category are considered to have the strongest connection to the work force, and in this category women have a slight edge over men. Participation levels among workers ages 21–64 in this category:

- Women: 54.4 percent participated in a retirement plan.
- Men: 51.4 percent participated.

Full-time, part-year wage and salary workers: Participation among workers ages 21–64:

- Women: 35.0 percent participated in a retirement plan.
- Men: 29.4 percent participated.

Part-time, full-year wage and salary workers: Participation among workers ages 21–64:

- Women: 26.4 percent participated in a retirement plan.
- Men: 18.2 percent participated.

Part-time, part-year wage and salary workers: Participation among workers ages 21–64:

- Women: 13.3 percent participated in a retirement plan.
- Men: 8.6 percent participated.

Earnings level: The proportion of women wage and salary workers ages 21–64 participating in a plan was higher than for men across all earnings levels, except for the very lowest earners (less than \$5,000 in annual earnings).

Overall, the *Issue Brief* reported that, in 2006, participation in employment-based retirement plans fell to 53 percent among full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 21–64 (those with the closest connection to the work force). This was down from 55 percent in 2005.

The complete November 2007 *EBRI Issue Brief* is available at www.ebri.org

Fast Facts from EBRI is issued occasionally by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute to highlight benefits information that may be of current interest. Established in 1978, EBRI is an independent nonprofit organization committed exclusively to data dissemination, policy research, and education on economic security and employee benefits. EBRI does not take policy positions and does not lobby.