



EBRI News

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New Research from EBRI:

More Americans Age 55 and Older Are Working Full Time

WASHINGTON—As an increasing percentage of older Americans are in the labor force, the trend toward more full-time, full-year work among older workers occurs across virtually every demographic group, according to an article published today by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI).

These trends mark a significant change in behavior for individuals age 55 and older, the article says, and are likely driven by their need to obtain affordable employment-based health insurance (as opposed to unaffordable or unavailable coverage in the individual market) and the need to continue to accumulate savings in employment-based defined contribution retirement plans.

Both trends of increased labor force participation and increased full-time, full-year work are likely to continue, since private-sector employers have been phasing out retiree health insurance for younger workers and are continuing to shift out of defined benefit pensions and into defined contribution retirement plans, says the article in the August 2007 *EBRI Notes*, available at www.ebri.org

The article includes these points:

- Those age 55 or older in the labor force increased from about 29 percent in 1993 to 38 percent in 2006. For those ages 65–69, the percentage increased from about 18 percent in 1985 to 29 percent in 2006.
- The percentage of workers age 55 or older who work full time, full year steadily increased from 54 percent in 1993 to 64 percent in 2005.
- The percentage of male workers age 55 or older working full time, full year increased from about 61 percent in 1993 to nearly 70 percent in 2005. Female workers had an even larger percentage point increase, going from nearly 47 percent in 1993 to about 59 percent in 2005.
- Each five-year age group among workers 55 or older showed an increase in the percentage working full time, full year. However, as the workers became older, the likelihood that they were working full time, full year decreased. Workers ages 65–69 had the largest percentage point increase in working full time, full year, from 36 percent in 1987 to nearly 49 percent in 2005.
- Across each race/ethnicity category, the percentage of workers age 55 or older working full time, full year increased from 1987 to 2005. Black workers had the largest percentage point increase, from nearly 53 percent in 1987 to nearly 68 percent in 2005. White workers this age had the lowest levels working full time, full year (63 percent) in 2005 and had one of the smallest increases in the percentage having this work status from 1987 to 2005.

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