



SLOAN WORK AND FAMILY RESEARCH NETWORK BOSTON COLLEGE

Questions and Answers about Older Workers: A Sloan Work and Family Research Network Fact Sheet

Introduction

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared Fact Sheets which provide statistical answers to some important questions about work-family and work/life issues. This Fact Sheet includes statistics about Older Workers.



What proportion of the U.S. population is older?

- ✔ **Fact 1** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2003 21.9% of the population was 55 years old or older (U.S. Census Bureau (2), 2004-05).
- ✔ **Fact 2** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, of the people aged 55 or older in 2003, 56% were women (U.S. Census Bureau (2), 2004-05).
- ✔ **Fact 3** The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2010, people aged 55 or older will make up 24.7% of the U.S. population and by 2050 their portion of the population will grow to 31.5% (U.S. Census Bureau (3), 2004-05).
- ✔ **Fact 4** In 2000, 33,347,000 persons were 65 years old or older. Of those 41.9% had a disability (U.S. Census Bureau (1), 2003).



Are older people still working?

- ✔ **Fact 1** Between 2000 and 2015 "the highest growth rate in the U.S. workforce will be among workers aged 55 to 64" (Montenegro, Fisher, & Remez, 2002, p. 5).
- ✔ **Fact 2** "Workers aged 55+ were only 13 percent of the workforce in 2000, down from about 17 percent in 1950" (Rix, 2004, p. 4).
- ✔ **Fact 3** Of the Boomer's born between 1946 and 1964, 68% are working full time and 12% part-time (Remez, 2004, p. 2).

✔ **Fact 4** The percentage of married women in the labor force between the ages of 45–64 has increased from 44% in 1970 to 67.4% in 2003 (U.S. Census Bureau (5), 2004–05).

✔ **Fact 5** Eighty three and a half percent of married men between the ages of 45–64 were in the labor force in 2003 compared to only 67.6% of single men in that same age bracket (U.S. Census Bureau (5), 2004–05).

✔ **Fact 6** In 2003, 10.2% of women and 17.8% of men age 65 or older were employed in the labor force (U.S. Census Bureau (4), 2004–05).



How are older workers different from younger workers?

✔ **Fact 1** “Workers, 50 or older, are significantly more likely than younger workers to be independent self-employed workers (17 percent of older workers vs. 12 percent of younger workers) or small business owners (9 percent of older workers vs. 5 percent of younger workers) and thus, less likely than younger workers to be wage and salaried employees who work for someone else (74 percent of older workers vs. 83 percent of younger workers)” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 2).

✔ **Fact 2** “Compared with their younger counterparts, workers, 60 or more years old, are about twice as likely to own small businesses or to be self-employed” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 2).

✔ **Fact 3** “Overall (when combining the response of older men and women), older employees exhibit significantly greater commitment to their employers (32 percent high commitment) than younger employees under 50 years old (26 percent)” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 14).



What are the differences between older workers who are small business owners, wage and salaried employees and self-employed independents?

✔ **Fact 1** “Among older workers, (50 or older) 74 percent are wage/salaried workers, 17 percent are self-employed independents, and 9 percent are owners of small businesses” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 4).

✔ **Fact 2** “59 percent of small business owners work more than 40 hours weekly as do 52 percent of wage and salaried employees, in contrast to only 38 percent of self-employed independents who do so” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 6).

✔ **Fact 3** “Small business owners, 50 or older, are much more likely to have flexibility than wage and salaried employees, with independent self-employed workers falling in between” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 10).

✔ **Fact 4** “Small business owners (90 percent) are more likely than independent self-employed workers (83 percent) and wage and salaried employees (79 percent) to want to continue working in their current jobs in the coming year” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 11).



What are some characteristics of older workers?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “Wage and salaried employees (50 years or older) are more likely to belong to racial minorities (17 percent) than self-employed independents (8 percent) and small business owners (11 percent)” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 4).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “(B)usiness owners, 50 or more years old, are somewhat more likely to be legally married (68 percent wage and salaried; 60 percent self-employed; 77 percent small business owners)” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 4).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “(A)bout three-quarters (74 percent) of older wage and salaried workers have children” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 3).
- ✔ **Fact 4** In 2000, 5,772,000 grandparents 65 years old or older lived with one or more grandchild under the age of 18. Of this group, 42% were responsible for their grandchildren (U.S. Census Bureau (1), 2003).
- ✔ **Fact 5** “54 percent of small business owners, 50 or more years old, have four-year college degrees or more, while only 32 percent of wage and salaried employees and 39 percent of self-employed independents do” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 4).



What are some differences between older men and women?

- ✔ **Fact 1** In 2003, 12.4% of women 65 years old or older lived below the poverty level compared to 7.7% of men (U.S. Census Bureau (4), 2004-05).
- ✔ **Fact 2** In 2000, “approximately 7.5 million older women lived alone, compared with 2.4 million older men” (Gist & Hetzel, 2004, p. 3).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Older women earn 55 cents for every dollar that men earn from all hours worked at all jobs. If we compare hourly rates of pay at main jobs (with salaries converted to hourly rates), older women earn 69 cents for every dollar older men earn—still a substantial difference” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 6).
- ✔ **Fact 4** “Only 80 percent of the women compared with 91 percent of the men have access to health insurance through their employer” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 8).
- ✔ **Fact 5** “In 2002, older men were much more likely to be married than older women---73% of men, 41% of women. Almost half of all older women in 2002 were widows (46%)” (Administration on Aging (1), p. 1).
- ✔ **Fact 6** “Among those older employees who live with immediate family members (e.g., spouse, partner, and/or children), 46 percent of the men indicate that they are “very satisfied” with their family life, but only 32 percent of the women report this high level of satisfaction” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 12).

- ✔ **Fact 7** “about one of every eight male employees 50 or more years old (13 percent) exhibit self-reported symptoms of poor mental health compared to one of every five women (20 percent) in this age group” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsoupes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 14).
- ✔ **Fact 8** “(M)en, 50 or more years old, are more likely to have four-year college degrees or more education (38 percent) than women of the same age (28 percent)” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsoupes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 9** “(S)imilar percentages of older men (53 percent) and women (58 percent) report “high” satisfaction with their jobs” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsoupes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 12).

? What is the financial situation of older workers?

- ✔ **Fact 1** In 2003, 10.4% of persons 65 years old and older lived below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau (4), 2004-05).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “In 2002, the average (mean) annual income of older men is \$80,839 compared with \$64,444 for women. There is a similar disparity in median annual family income: \$66,300 for older men versus \$51,134 for older women” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsoupes, & Smyer (2), 2005, p. 3).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Small business owners (50 or more years old) have much higher annual earnings (\$114,102 average; \$65,000 median) than wage and salaried employees (\$52,635 average; \$52,635 median) or independently self-employed (older) workers (\$78,110 average; \$40,000 median)” (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsoupes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 5).
- ✔ **Fact 4** Of people 50 or more years old who are small business owners, wage and salaried employees or self-employed independents those “who are self-employed independents are the least likely to have personal health insurance” (89% are insured) (Bond, Galinsky, Pitt-Catsoupes, & Smyer (1), 2005, p. 6).

The Network has additional resources related to this topic.

1. You can find a topic page for **Research/Teaching** dedicated to Older Workers at:
<http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/academics.php> (choose ‘Older Workers’ from the Topics List).

If you are interested in this topic from the **State Policy** or **Workplace Practice** perspective,

- a) go back to our home page www.bc.edu/wfnetwork/
 - b) click on the appropriate user group
 - c) and choose ‘Older Workers’ from the Topics List
2. Our database of academic literature contains the citations and annotations of literature related to the issue of Older Workers. You can connect to this database at:
http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-0&local_base=BCL_WF



References

Administration on Aging (1). (nd). *Statistics: A profile of older Americans: 2003, marital status*. Retrieved February 22, 2005, from <http://www.aoa.gov/prof/statistics/profile/2003/5.asp>

"Data for this section were compiled primarily from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics" (1), as cited in *Statistics: A Profile of Older Americans: 2003*.

Bond, J., Galinsky, E., Pitt-Catsouphes, M., & Smyer, M. (1) (2005). *Context matters: Insights about older workers from the national study of the changing workforce*. Center on Aging & Work/Workplace Flexibility, Families and Work Institute.

This report presents the findings of in-depth analyses of the Families and Work Institute's 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW). It compares and contrasts the experiences of men and women, 50 and older, in the U.S. workforce. 'Older workers' are defined as those who were 50 or more years old in 2002.

For a direct link to this report go to: <http://agingandwork.bc.edu/template.php?name=highlights>

"The NSCW surveys representative samples of the nation's workforce once every five years (1992, 1997, 2002). Sample sizes average 3,500, including both wage and salaried employees and self-employed workers". Several of the questions in the National Study of the Changing Workforce were taken from or based upon questions in the Quality of Employment Survey (QES) conducted three times by the Department of Labor from 1969 to 1977 (Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2002, p. v).

Bond, J., Galinsky, E., Pitt-Catsouphes, M., & Smyer, M. (2) (2005). *The diverse employment experiences of older men and women in the workforce*. Center on Aging & Work/Workplace Flexibility, Families and Work Institute.

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Gist, Y.J., & Hetzel, L.I. (2004). *We the people: Aging in the United States*. Census 2000 special reports. U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, U.S. Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/censr-19.pdf>

"Census 2000, taken April 1, 2000, counted 281,421,906 people in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The questionnaire included seven questions for each household: name, sex, age, relationship, Hispanic origin, race, and whether the housing unit was owned or rented. In addition to these seven questions, about 17 percent of the households got a much longer questionnaire including questions about ancestry, income, mortgage, and size of the housing unit. Census 2000 not only counted the population, but also sampled the socio-economic status of the population, providing a tool for government, educators, business owners, and others to get a snapshot of the state of the nation."

Sample description taken from: <http://www.census.gov/mso/www/c2000basics/00Basics.pdf>

Montenegro, X.P., Fisher, L., & Remez, S. (2002). *Staying ahead of the curve: The AARP work and career study, A national survey conducted for AARP by RoperASW*. AARP. Washington, DC, AARP. Retrieved October 20, 2004, from http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/econ/d17772_multiwork.pdf

"The findings for this report are based on a total of 2,518 telephone interviews. General sample interviews were conducted among 1,500 workers age 45 to 74, who are either working or looking for work. To have sufficient representation among low-incidence populations, oversample interviews were conducted among African-American, Hispanic, and Asian workers in the target age group. In total, the survey includes interviews with 404 African Americans, 400 Hispanics, and 400 Asians...The interviews were conducted between May 8, 2002 and June 30, 2002." (14-15)

Remez, S. (2004, May). Retirement redux: *Boomers envision their retirement*. Retrieved October, 2004, from <http://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org/articles/international/RemezPPT.pdf>

"The survey was conducted by telephone, between October 9, 2003, and November 26, 2003...The survey was conducted among a nationally representative sample of 1,200 people, 38 to 57 years of age. Oversamples were also included to yield a total, when combined with those from the general sample, of at least 300 African American and 300 Hispanics interviews. Random-digit-dialing (RDD) procedures were used to select a nationally representative sample (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) of households who were screened to identify people 38 to 57 years of age." (p. 107-108)

Rix, S.E. (2004). *Aging and work: A view from the United States* (No. #2004-02). Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute.

"This report examines Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data and reviews many of the recent studies and surveys on older workers. Its purpose is to explore trends in the employment and retirement of older Americans over the past 50 years; highlight some of the factors behind those trends; describe where and under what circumstances older persons in the United States are employed; speculate on what the future may hold for older workers; and identify policies and programs that do or could encourage labor force attachment at later ages." (p. i)

U.S. Census Bureau (1). (2003). Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2003. Table No. 38: Persons 65 Years Old and Over-- Grandparents, Disability Status, and Language Spoken at Home: 2000. Retrieved on January 19, 2006 from: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/pop.pdf>

The chief source of these data is the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The sample includes employed full-time wage and salary workers 16 years old and over in the US. Excludes the self-employed. Data relate to the primary job. For description of data sources, see <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/labor.pdf>

U.S. Census Bureau (2). (2004-05). Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2004-05. Table No. 11: Resident Population by Age and Sex: 1980 to 2003. Retrieved on January 19, 2006 from: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/04statab/pop.pdf>

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U.S. Census Bureau (3). (2004-05). Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2004-05. Table No. 12: Resident Population Projections by Sex and Age: 2005 to 2050. Retrieved on January 19, 2006 from: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/04statab/pop.pdf>

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U.S. Census Bureau (4). (2004-05). Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2004-05. Table No. 31: Persons 65 Years Old and Older—Characteristics by Sex: 1990 to 2003. Retrieved January 19, 2006 from: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/04statab/pop.pdf>

The chief source of these data is the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The sample includes employed full-time wage and salary workers 16 years old and over in the US. Excludes the self-employed. Data relate to the primary job. For description of data sources, see <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/labor.pdf>

U.S. Census Bureau (5). (2004-05). Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2004-05. Table No. 577: Labor Force Participation Rates by Marital Status, Sex, and Age: 1970 to 2003. Retrieved January 19, 2006 from:
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/04statab/labor.pdf>

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