
About 54% of full-time adult workers are in a retirement plan: EBRI

By Editor Test Wed, Nov 9, 2011

"White, more highly educated, higher-income, and married workers are more likely to participate than their counterparts," the EBRI's October 2011 Issue Brief said.

The October 2011 *Issue Brief from the Employee Benefit Research Institute* examines the level of participation by workers in public- and private-sector employment-based pension or retirement plans, based on the U.S. Census Bureau's March 2011 Current Population Survey (CPS), the most recent data currently available (for year-end 2010).

Among the major findings:

Sponsorship rate: Among all working-age (21-64) wage and salary employees, 54.2 percent worked for an employer or union that sponsored a retirement plan in 2010. Among full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 21-64 (those with the strongest connection to the work force), 61.6 percent worked for an employer or union that sponsors a plan.

Participation level: Among full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 21-64, 54.5 percent participated in a retirement plan.

* **Trend**—This is virtually unchanged from 54.4 percent in 2009. Participation trends increased significantly in the late 1990s, and decreased in 2001 and 2002. In 2003 and 2004, the participation trend flattened out. The retirement plan participation level subsequently declined in 2005 and 2006, before a significant increase in 2007. Slight declines occurred in 2008 and 2009, followed by a flattening out of the trend in 2010.

* **Age**—Participation increased with age (61.4 percent for wage and salary workers ages 55-64, compared with 29.2 percent for those ages 21-24).

* **Gender**—Among wage and salary workers ages 21-64, men had a higher participation level than women, but among full-time, full-year workers, women had a higher percentage participating than men (55.5 percent for women, compared with 53.8 percent for men). Female workers' lower probability of participation among wage and salary workers results from their overall lower earnings and lower rates of full-time work in comparison with males.

* **Race**—Hispanic wage and salary workers were significantly less likely than both white and black workers to participate in a retirement plan. The gap between the percentages of black and white plan participants that exists overall narrows when compared across earnings levels.

* **Geographic differences**—Wage and salary workers in the South and West had the lowest participation levels (Florida had the lowest percentage, at 43.7 percent) while the upper Midwest, Mid-Atlantic, and Northeast had the highest levels (West Virginia had the highest participation level,

at 64.2 percent).

* ***Other factors***—White, more highly educated, higher-income, and married workers are more likely to participate than their counterparts.