

Labor force participation: 75 years of change, 1950–98 and 1998–2025

Women's labor force participation rates have increased significantly over the past 50 years, narrowing the gap between rates for women and men; however, aging will play a dominant role in the rates for 2015 and 2025

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Over the 1950–98 period, most of the increase in the Nation's labor force participation rate occurred between 1970 and 1990. (See table 1.) During this 20-year period, the participation rate (the proportion of the civilian noninstitutional population 16 years of age and older either at work or actively seeking work) jumped from 60.4 percent to 66.4 percent. This increase coincided with the entry of the baby-boom generation into the labor force, and, most notably, a 14.2-percentage point increase in the aggregate labor force participation rate for women.

It is tempting to ascribe all of the historical increase in the aggregate labor force participation rate to the rising labor force participation rate for women. However, other factors also need to be considered, including the changing age distribution of the population stemming from the baby-boom phenomenon and the changing composition of the population by race and Hispanic origin.¹

This article reviews historical labor force statistics to determine how the labor force has changed and which factors have affected its compositional changes between 1950 and 1998. It focuses on labor force trends of men and women. The article also discusses projected changes in the labor force from 2015 to 2025 among women and men by age, race, and ethnic origin, caused by the changing demographic composition of the population .

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Labor force participation trends

Women. Remarkable changes in age-specific labor force participation rates for women occurred in the United States from 1950 to 1998, reflecting the significant change in women's role in the world of work over the past 50 years. Labor force participation rates for women in 1950 were particularly low, compared with the rates in 1998. (See table 2.) The highest participation rate among all age groups in 1950 was 43.9 percent for those aged 16 to 24. By comparison that rate was lower than the rates for all age groups younger than age 65 in 1998. Also, in a pattern that persisted through 1970, the rates for women aged 25 to 34 were lower than those for women aged 16 to 24, because women generally left the labor force when they married or had their first child. Rates increased as women reached age 35 to 44 and rose even higher for those aged 45 to 54, as many women returned to work after bearing and rearing their children.

Women born during the 1926–45 period have dominated the history of labor force participation change during the 1950–98 period. From 1960 to 1970, when women were in age groups 16 to 24 and 25 to 34, they had the largest increase (8.5 percentage points for 16- to 24-year-olds and 9.0 percentage points for 25- to 34-year-olds) in labor force participation rates of all age groups. During the next 10 years, from 1970 to 1980, the same cohorts of women had the largest changes

Table 1. Civilian labor force participation rates by sex and age, 1950 to 1998 and projected, 2015 to 2025

[In percent]

Group	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1998	2015	2025
Total, 16 and older	59.2	59.4	60.4	63.8	66.4	67.1	66.9	63.2
16 to 24	59.9	56.4	59.8	68.1	67.3	65.9	67.1	66.1
25 to 34	63.5	65.4	69.7	79.9	83.6	84.6	86.6	86.4
35 to 44	67.5	69.4	73.1	80.0	85.2	84.7	87.0	86.9
45 to 54	66.4	72.2	73.5	74.9	80.7	82.5	85.2	85.0
55 to 64	56.7	60.9	61.8	55.7	55.9	59.3	64.8	63.1
65 and older	26.7	20.8	17.0	12.5	11.8	11.9	14.5	14.0
Men, 16 years and older	86.4	83.3	79.7	77.4	76.1	74.9	72.2	68.8
16 to 24	77.3	71.7	69.4	74.4	71.5	68.4	68.9	68.1
25 to 34	96.0	97.5	96.4	95.2	94.2	93.2	93.1	93.0
35 to 44	97.6	97.7	96.8	95.5	94.4	92.6	92.2	92.1
45 to 54	95.8	95.7	94.3	91.2	90.7	89.2	88.4	88.3
55 to 64	86.9	87.3	83.0	72.1	67.7	68.1	69.1	67.7
65 and older	45.8	33.1	26.8	19.0	16.4	16.5	19.8	19.1
Women, 16 years and older	33.9	37.7	43.3	51.5	57.5	59.8	61.9	58.1
16 to 24	43.9	42.8	51.3	61.9	63.1	63.3	65.3	64.1
25 to 34	34.0	36.0	45.0	65.5	73.6	76.3	80.5	80.0
35 to 44	39.1	43.4	51.1	65.5	76.5	77.1	82.0	81.9
45 to 54	37.9	49.9	54.4	59.9	71.2	76.2	82.0	81.8
55 to 64	27.0	37.2	43.0	41.3	45.3	51.2	60.8	58.8
65 and older	9.7	10.8	9.7	8.1	8.7	8.6	10.3	9.9
White, 16 years and older	—	—	—	64.1	66.8	67.3	67.4	63.9
Black, 16 years and older	—	—	—	61.0	63.3	65.6	62.5	60.1
Asian and other, 16 years and older ¹	—	—	—	64.6	64.9	67.0	63.8	61.9
Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	—	—	—	64.0	67.0	67.9	65.1	63.1
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	—	—	—	63.7	66.3	67.0	67.1	63.5
White non-Hispanic	—	—	—	64.0	66.8	67.2	67.9	64.1
	Change							
	1950-60	1960-70	1970-80	1980-90	1990-98	1998-2015	2015-25	
Total, 16 and older .....	.2	1.0	3.4	2.6	.7	-.2	-3.6	
16 to 24	-3.5	3.4	8.2	-.8	-1.4	1.2	-1.0	
25 to 34	1.9	4.3	10.2	3.7	1.0	2.0	-.2	
35 to 44	1.9	3.7	6.9	5.2	-.5	2.2	-.1	
45 to 54	5.8	1.3	1.4	5.8	1.8	2.6	-.2	
55 to 64	4.2	.9	-6.1	.2	3.4	5.5	-1.8	
65 and older	-5.9	-3.8	-4.4	-.7	.1	2.5	-.4	
Men, 16 years and older	-3.1	-3.6	-2.3	-1.3	-1.2	-2.7	-3.4	
16 to 24	-5.6	-2.2	5.0	-2.9	-3.2	.6	-.9	
25 to 34	1.5	-1.1	-1.2	-1.0	-1.0	-.1	-.1	
35 to 44 .....	.1	-.9	-1.4	-1.0	-1.8	-.4	-.1	
45 to 54	-.1	-1.4	-3.1	-.5	-1.5	-.8	-.2	
55 to 64 .....	.4	-4.3	-10.8	-4.4	.4	1.0	-1.4	
65 and older	-12.7	-6.3	-7.8	-2.6	.0	3.3	-.7	
Women, 16 years and older	3.8	5.6	8.1	6.0	2.4	2.1	-3.8	
16 to 24	-1.1	8.5	10.6	1.2	.2	1.9	-1.1	
25 to 34	2.0	9.0	20.5	8.2	2.7	4.2	-.5	
35 to 44	4.3	7.7	14.4	11.0	.6	4.9	-.1	
45 to 54	12.0	4.5	5.5	11.3	5.0	5.8	-.2	
55 to 64	10.2	5.8	-1.7	4.0	5.9	9.7	-2.1	
65 and over	1.1	-1.1	-1.6	.6	.0	1.6	-.4	
White, 16 years and older	—	—	—	2.8	.5	.1	-3.6	
Black, 16 years and older	—	—	—	2.4	2.2	-3.0	-2.4	
Asian and other, 16 years and older ¹	—	—	—	.4	2.1	-3.2	-1.9	
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	—	—	—	2.6	.7	.1	-3.6	
White non-Hispanic	—	—	—	2.8	.4	.6	-3.8	

See footnotes at end of tables.

Table 1. Continued—Civilian labor force participation rates by sex and age, 1950 to 1998 and projected 2015 to 2025

[In percent]

Group	Difference between men and women's labor force participation rates							
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1998	2015	2025
Total, 16 and older	52.5	45.6	36.3	25.9	18.6	15.0	10.3	10.6
16 to 24	33.4	28.8	18.1	12.5	8.4	5.0	3.6	3.9
25 to 34	62.0	61.5	51.4	29.7	20.5	16.9	12.6	13.0
35 to 44	58.5	54.3	45.7	30.0	18.0	15.6	10.2	10.2
45 to 54	57.9	45.8	39.9	31.3	19.5	13.0	6.4	6.5
55 to 64	59.9	50.1	39.9	30.8	22.4	16.9	8.2	8.9
65 and older	36.1	22.3	17.1	10.9	7.7	7.8	9.5	9.3

¹ The "Asian and other" group includes (1) Asians and Pacific Islanders and (2) American Indians and Alaska Natives. The historical data are derived by subtracting "black" from the "black and other" group; projections are made

directly, not by subtraction.

NOTE: Dash indicates data not available.

in labor force participation of any age groups (20.5 percentage points for those aged 25 to 34 and 14.4 percentage points for those aged 35 to 44). This pattern continued from 1980 to 1998, but increases were very modest from 1990 to 1998, compared with previous years.

Men. In contrast to the labor force participation of women, those of men decreased significantly during the 1950–98 period. Men in each age group from 25 to 54 had labor force participation rates above 95 percent in 1950, and all groups experienced declines in labor force rates over the 1950–98 period. (See table 2.)

For men aged 16 to 24 and 65 and older, decreases in participation rates were most evident in the 1950–70 period. In the 1950's, a sharp drop occurred in labor force participation for men 65 and older, as Social Security retirements affected labor force participation rates. Rates continued to drop through 1990, with the sharpest decline occurring in the 1970s. Since 1985, however, participation rates of men 65 and older have increased.² For other age groups, the changes were greatest between 1970 and 1990.

Labor force participation for men aged 25 to 64 increased between 1950 and 1960, but fell in the following decades. There has not been any conclusive research explaining the subsequent decreasing rates, but it is generally attributed to changes to laws and regulations relating to receipt of disability payments. Specifically, the Social Security Act was amended in 1960 to make individuals under age 50 eligible for disability payments.³ And, from 1960 to 1998, the labor force rates of men aged 25 to 34 dropped by 4.3 percentage points. For youth aged 16 to 24, the decline in rates likely reflects increases in school enrollment, although many students combine work and study.

Another reason for the decline in men's labor force participation rates, mainly older men, is that pensions and disability awards became more available.⁴ The decrease in participation for men 65 and older was 29.3 percentage points over the 1950–80 period, with most of the decrease occurring in the

1950's. During the 1970s, Social Security payments were over-adjusted for inflation and the decrease in labor force participation for men 65 and older was even greater than that in the 1960s. The decrease in participation was much lower in the 1980s after changes were made to the inflation adjustment procedure.⁵ Participation increased in the 1990s for this group of older men. Labor force participation rate decreases started in the 1960s for those 55 to 64.⁶ Since this time, some of the 20-percentage points decrease for men in this age group has to be attributed to the availability of Social Security benefits to men 62 years of age. By 1994, only half of the men aged 62 were in the labor force—a decrease from 75 percent in 1970. Since 1994, however, the rate has increased modestly.

Age-group differences between men and women. At all ages, the labor force participation rates of men are higher than those of women. The difference between men's and women's aggregate participation rates exceeded 50 percentage points in 1950. However, this difference was 15 percentage points in 1998, as men's rates fell and women's rates increased. By 1990, the labor force participation rates of women, 16 to 44, were more like those of men in 1990 than they were like those of women in 1950. In the 1950s and 1960s, the falling participation of men and the rising participation of women offset each other such that the overall participation did not change. In the 1970s and 1980s, participation rates of women increased faster than the decreased rates of men, but overall participation increased. In the 1990s, the changes, again, were of similar magnitude, so there was little increase in the aggregate rate from 1990 to 1998.

The labor force participation rates of women and men aged 16 to 24 never were as different as the rates of other age groups, reflecting even higher participation of young women, compared with other women and the lower participation of young men compared with other men. In 1950, the labor force participation rate for young men aged 16 to 24 was 77.3 percent. This rate was 20 percentage points lower than that for men 25 to 54, but still 33 percentage points higher than the rates for women aged 16 to 24. By 1998, the difference in labor

Table 2. Change in labor force participation by sex and age, 1950–98

Age group	Women			Men		
	1950	1998	Change	1950	1998	Change
16 and older	33.9	59.8	25.9	86.4	74.9	-11.5
16 to 24	43.9	63.3	19.4	77.3	68.4	-8.9
25 to 34	34.0	76.3	42.3	96.0	93.2	-2.8
35 to 44	39.1	77.1	38.0	97.6	92.6	-5.0
45 to 54	37.9	76.2	38.3	95.8	89.2	-6.6
55 to 64	27.0	51.2	24.2	86.9	68.1	-18.8
65 and older	9.7	8.6	-1.1	45.8	16.5	-29.3

force participation for men and women aged 16 to 24 was down from 33 percentage points to 5 percentage points.

The largest difference in labor force participation rates between men and women was for those aged 25 to 34 in 1950. Only 34 percent of women in this age group were in the labor force, compared with 96 percent of men. In 1998, this age group still had the largest participation rate gap between men and women, but the difference narrowed to 17 percentage points. Participation of women this age increased by 42 percentage points, while that of men dropped by 3 points.

The labor force participation rates of men and women 35 to 44 and 45 to 54 differed by more than 50 percentage points in 1950. In contrast, neither group differed by as much as 20 percentage points in 1998. Women's rates for both groups increased by 38 percentage points, while the rates for men decreased 5 points for those 35 to 44 and 7 points for those in the 45-to-54 age group. Men and women aged 55 to 64 had the second greatest difference in participation (nearly 60 percentage points) in 1950. By 1980 and 1990, the difference in labor force participation for that age group narrowed significantly, but it still became the group with the largest difference between men and women. In 1998, men and women aged 55 to 64 had a 17-percentage point difference in their labor force participation rates, the same as that for the 25- to 34-age group.

The difference in labor force participation rates for men and women 65 and older was 36 percentage points in 1950. The participation rate for men was 45.8 percent, much lower than that for other age groups of men, but still higher than the participation rates for women in all age groups. The rates for men in this age group dropped significantly over the 1950–98 period, but the rate for women in the same age group changed little. In 1998, the difference in participation between men and women in this age group was 9.4 percentage points.

Race and Hispanic origin

The proportion of the U.S. population composed of Hispanics and Asians and Pacific Islanders increased significantly following the change in immigration laws in the mid-1960s and the surge in immigration that began around 1970.⁷ Because these groups have different labor force participation rates than

the white non-Hispanic population, the aggregate labor force rates have been affected.

The pattern of labor force participation rates for women by race differs from that of men. (See table 3.) Black and white non-Hispanic women have the highest labor force participation rates from age 25 to 44. Until the late 1980s, black women aged 30 to 44 had the highest labor force participation rates. Since then, the rates of white non-Hispanic women increased faster than those of black women and in the late 1990s, the participation rates for these groups were similar. The participation rates also were similar for black and white non-Hispanic women at older ages. Among young women aged 16 to 24, black women have had a pattern of lower labor force participation since 1972.⁸

Asian and other women have markedly lower labor force participation rates than black and white non-Hispanic women at each age group under age 45. The lower participation for young Asians, both men and women, generally is attributed to their high enrollment rates in post-secondary education. Hispanic women also have lower labor force participation than black and white non-Hispanic women at all age groups.

The aggregate labor force participation rate for Hispanic men, 80 percent, is highest of the four groups of men. (See table 4.) Because the Hispanic population is younger than the other groups, the relatively high participation at ages 16 to 24 tends to increase the aggregate Hispanic rate. The labor force participation rates of the Asian and other group are lowest at the younger ages. This apparently is a consequence of their higher than average tendency to enroll in school. For the age

Table 3. Labor force participation rates of women by age, race, and Hispanic origin, 1998

Age group	Black	White non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian and other
16 and older	62.8	59.9	55.6	59.2
16 to 24	56.8	67.9	53.2	49.9
25 to 34	79.6	78.5	64.5	67.8
35 to 44	79.9	78.1	67.9	72.9
45 to 54	74.0	77.8	64.7	74.3
55 to 64	48.5	52.5	41.8	49.1
65 and older	7.9	8.8	6.6	8.6

groups, 30 to 54, white non-Hispanic men have the highest labor force participation rates. For age groups older than age 24, black men consistently have the lowest participation rates.

Projections to 2025

The labor force projections through 2015 reflect the analyses underlying the 1998–2008 projections published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the November 1999 issue of the *Review*.⁹ BLS develops labor force projections for 128 age, sex, race, or Hispanic origin groups.¹⁰ The projections are prepared by combining projections of the population made by the Bureau of the Census¹¹ with labor force participation rate projections made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

For this article, the detailed labor force participation rates are held constant from 2015 through 2025. The projected changes in the labor force and the aggregate labor force participation rates between 2015 and 2025, therefore, reflect only the changes in the age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin composition of the population. For example, those aged 16 to 24 were more than 20 percent of the civilian noninstitutional population aged 16 and older in 1970 and 1980. With the aging of this baby-boom generation, the share of 16 to 24 year-olds in the population is projected to decline to 16 percent in 2015 and to less than 15 percent in 2025. (See table 5.) In contrast, persons 65 and older, who made up 14 percent of the population in 1970, are projected to account for 18 percent in 2015 and 23 percent in 2025. Given that labor force participation rates in 2015 for the younger group (the baby-boomer group) were 5 times as large as those for the older group, this shift in composition of the population is expected to have a negative effect on the aggregate labor force participation rate. Also, the share of the population aged 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 (two age groups that have high labor force participation) is projected to be lower in 2025 than in 1998. Because participation rates by race and Hispanic origin are different, the impact of different population growth rates by age among these groups significantly affects aggregate labor force participation rates.

The 1998–2015 projections for women show participation rates increasing for all age groups except for those aged 16 to 24. For men, participation rates are projected to hold relatively steady for groups between 25 and 64 years of age. The aggregate rate reflects changes in the age distribution of the population as well as changes in participation by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin and it is projected to decline slightly from 67.1 percent in 1998 to 66.9 percent in 2015.

Based on the assumption that labor force participation rates would remain unchanged at the detailed level, the 2015–25 projections show a decline of 4.5 percentage points in the aggregate labor force participation rate because of the continued aging of the population. Aggregate labor force participa-

tion rates for both men and women are projected to decline. Men and women also have projected decreases in labor force participation rates for each of the 10-year age groups, reflecting aging within these groups.

Among the race and Hispanic origin groups, those with the older populations have the greatest projected decrease in labor force participation rates. Thus, white non-Hispanics, which have the largest share of those 65 years and older, have the largest projected decrease in participation, 3.8 percentage points between 2015 and 2025. Hispanics and Asians and others, which consist of mostly younger age groups, have a projected decrease in participation of only 2 percentage points during the same period.

The effect of the changing age distribution of the population on the labor force and labor force participation rate is illustrated in table 6. If the 2025 population had the same age distribution as the 2015 population, the aggregate labor force participation rate would be 66 percent rather than 63 percent and the projected labor force level would have 8 million more persons. The 2015 population has 16 million fewer persons aged 65 years and older than does the 2025 population. (See table 5.) This swing, combined with the drop of 3.7 million people aged 45 to 54, induces the sharp drop in the labor force.

Comparisons of projected growth

Although the focus of this article has been on labor force participation rates, it also is informative to examine projected changes in the labor force. The projections show continued labor force growth over the 1998–2025 period, but at much lower rates of growth than the Nation has experienced since 1950. (See table 7.) Growth is projected at 1.0 percent yearly from 1998 to 2015, but only 0.2 percent yearly from 2015 to 2025 under the assumption that labor force participation rates remain unchanged at the detailed age level. The absolute growth projected between 2015 and 2025 under this assumption, 3.3 million, is relatively much smaller than the growth for any decade since 1950.

Women are projected to continue to increase their share of the labor force from 46.3 percent to 48 percent over the 1998–2015 period. This reflects rising labor force participation rates

Table 4. Labor force participation rates of men by age, race, and Hispanic origin, 1998

Age group	Hispanic	White non-Hispanic	Asian and other	Black
16 and older	79.8	75.0	75.5	69.0
16 to 24	70.6	71.5	54.5	56.0
25 to 34	94.0	94.5	88.9	87.1
35 to 44	91.4	94.0	91.8	85.0
45 to 54	86.7	90.6	89.4	79.9
55 to 64	70.2	69.0	71.3	57.4
65 and older	14.9	16.7	19.6	14.0

Table 5. Civilian noninstitutional population by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin, 1950 to 1998, and projected 2015–2025

[Numbers in thousands]

Group	Level							
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1998	2015	2025
Total, 16 years and older	104,995	117,245	137,085	167,745	189,164	205,220	242,940	262,095
Men	50,725	55,662	64,304	79,398	90,377	98,758	116,974	126,000
Women	54,270	61,582	72,782	88,348	98,787	106,462	125,966	136,095
Age								
16 to 24	19,223	20,460	29,841	37,178	33,421	33,237	38,487	39,093
25 to 34	23,013	21,998	24,435	36,558	42,976	38,778	41,063	42,636
35 to 44	20,681	23,437	22,489	25,578	37,719	44,299	38,618	42,994
45 to 54	17,240	20,601	23,059	22,563	34,373	25,081	41,798	38,116
55 to 64	13,469	15,409	18,250	21,520	20,720	22,296	39,423	39,619
65 and older	11,363	15,336	19,007	24,350	29,247	32,238	43,550	59,637
Race and Hispanic origin								
White, 16 years and older	—	—	—	146,122	160,625	171,478	195,657	206,982
Black, 16 years and older	—	—	—	17,824	21,477	24,373	31,559	35,416
Asian and other, 16 years and older ¹	—	—	—	3,835	7,061	9,369	15,724	19,698
Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	—	—	—	9,598	15,904	21,070	34,654	43,686
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	—	—	—	158,147	173,260	184,150	208,286	218,410
White non-Hispanic	—	—	—	136,847	146,535	151,406	164,599	167,685
Age of baby-boomers	birth to 4	birth to 14	6 to 24	16 to 34	26 to 44	34 to 52	51 to 69	61 to 79
Share (in percent)								
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1998	2015	2025
Total, 16 years and older	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Men	48.3	47.5	46.9	47.3	47.8	48.1	48.1	48.1
Women	51.7	52.5	53.1	52.7	52.2	51.9	51.9	51.9
Age								
16 to 24	18.3	17.5	21.8	22.2	17.7	16.2	15.8	14.9
25 to 34	21.9	18.8	17.8	21.8	22.7	18.9	16.9	16.3
35 to 44	19.7	20.0	16.4	15.2	19.9	21.6	15.9	16.4
45 to 54	16.4	17.6	16.8	13.5	13.3	16.7	17.2	14.5
55 to 64	12.8	13.1	13.3	12.8	11.0	10.9	16.2	15.1
65 and older	10.8	13.1	13.9	14.5	15.5	15.7	17.9	22.8
Race and Hispanic origin								
White, 16 years and older	—	—	—	87.1	84.9	83.6	80.5	79.0
Black, 16 years and older	—	—	—	10.6	11.4	11.9	13.0	13.5
Asian and other, 16 years and older	—	—	—	2.3	3.7	4.6	6.5	7.5
Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	—	—	—	5.7	8.4	10.3	14.3	16.7
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	—	—	—	94.3	91.6	89.7	85.7	83.3
White non-Hispanic	—	—	—	81.6	77.5	73.8	67.8	64.0

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 5. Continued—Civilian noninstitutional population by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin, 1950 to 1998, and projected 2015–2025

[Numbers in thousands]

Group	Change (in thousands)						
	1950–60	1960–70	1970–80	1980–90	1990–98	1998–2015	2015–25
Total, 16 years and older	12,250	19,840	30,660	21,419	16,056	37,720	19,156
Men	4,937	8,642	15,094	10,979	8,381	18,216	9,026
Women	7,312	11,200	15,566	10,439	7,675	19,504	10,129
Age							
16 to 24	1,237	9,381	7,337	-3,757	-184	5,250	606
25 to 34	-1,015	2,437	12,123	6,418	-4,198	2,286	1,572
35 to 44	2,756	-948	3,089	12,141	6,580	-5,681	4,376
45 to 54	3,361	2,458	-496	2,518	9,292	7,425	-3,682
55 to 64	1,940	2,841	3,270	-800	1,576	17,127	196
65 and older	3,973	3,671	5,343	4,897	2,991	11,312	16,087
Race and Hispanic origin							
White, 16 years and older	-	-	-	14,503	10,853	24,179	11,325
Black, 16 years and older	-	-	-	3,653	2,896	7,186	3,857
Asian and other, 16 years and older ¹	-	-	-	3,226	2,308	6,355	3,974
Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	-	-	-	6,306	5,166	13,584	9,032
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	-	-	-	15,113	10,890	24,136	10,124
White non-Hispanic	-	-	-	9,687	4,871	13,194	3,086
Annual growth (in percent)							
	1950–60	1960–70	1970–80	1980–90	1990–98	1998–2015	2015–25
Total, 16 years and older	1.1	1.6	2.0	1.2	1.0	1.0	.8
Men .....	.9	1.5	2.1	1.3	1.1	1.0	.7
Women	1.3	1.7	2.0	1.1	.9	1.0	.8
Age							
16 to 24 .....	.6	3.8	2.2	-1.1	-.1	.9	.2
25 to 34	-.5	1.1	4.1	1.6	-1.3	.3	.4
35 to 44	1.3	-.4	1.3	4.0	2.0	-.8	1.1
45 to 54	1.8	1.1	-.2	1.1	4.0	1.2	-.9
55 to 64	1.4	1.7	1.7	-.4	.9	3.4	.0
65 and older	3.0	2.2	2.5	1.8	1.2	1.8	3.2
Race and Hispanic origin							
White, 16 years and older	-	-	-	1.0	.8	.8	.6
Black, 16 years and older	-	-	-	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.2
Asian and other, 16 years and older ¹	-	-	-	6.3	3.6	3.1	2.3
Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	-	-	-	5.2	3.6	3.0	2.3
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	-	-	-	.9	.8	.7	.5
White non-Hispanic	-	-	-	.7	.4	.5	.2

¹ The "Asian and other" group includes (1) Asians and Pacific Islanders and (2) American Indians and Alaska Natives. The historical data are derived by subtracting "black" from the "black and other" group; projections are made

directly, not by subtraction.

NOTE: Dash indicates data not available.

Table 6. Effect population aging on the size of the labor force, 2025

Age group	Population distribution			2025 population distributed as in—			Labor force participation rates, 2025	2025 labor force, using population distributed as in—		
	2015	2025	Difference	2015	2025	Difference		2015	2025	Difference
Total, 16 years and older	100.0	100.0	—	262,095	262,095	—	—	173,630	165,754	–7,877
16 to 24	15.8	14.9	–0.9	41,522	39,093	–2,429	66.1	27,450	25,844	–1,606
25 to 34	16.9	16.3	–.6	44,301	42,636	–1,665	86.4	38,256	36,818	–1,438
35 to 44	15.9	16.4	.5	41,663	42,994	1,331	86.9	36,209	37,366	1,157
45 to 54	17.2	14.5	–2.7	45,094	38,116	–6,978	85.0	38,308	32,380	–5,928
55 to 64	16.2	15.1	–1.1	42,531	39,619	–2,912	63.1	26,818	24,982	–1,836
65 and older	17.9	22.8	4.8	46,984	59,637	12,653	14.0	6,589	8,364	1,775

Table 7. Civilian labor force by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin, 1950 to 1998 and projected 2015– 2025

[Numbers in thousands]

Group	Level (in thousands)							
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1998	2015	2025
Total, 16 years and older	62,208	69,628	82,771	106,940	125,840	137,673	162,460	165,754
Men, 16 years and older	43,819	46,388	51,228	61,453	69,011	73,959	84,445	86,627
Women, 16 years and older	18,389	23,240	31,543	45,487	56,829	63,714	78,014	79,127
Age								
16 to 24	11,522	11,545	17,846	25,300	22,492	21,894	25,831	25,844
25 to 34	14,619	14,382	17,036	29,227	35,929	32,813	35,596	36,818
35 to 44	13,954	16,269	16,437	20,463	32,145	37,536	33,588	37,366
45 to 54	11,444	14,852	16,949	16,910	20,248	28,368	35,594	32,380
55 to 64	7,633	9,385	11,283	11,985	11,575	13,215	25,550	24,982
65 and older	3,036	3,195	3,222	3,054	3,451	3,847	6,301	8,364
Race and Hispanic origin								
White, 16 years and older	—	—	—	93,600	107,447	115,415	131,204	130,853
Black, 16 years and older	—	—	—	10,865	13,740	15,982	20,783	22,143
Asian and other, 16 years and older ²	—	—	—	2,476	4,616	6,278	10,473	12,757
Hispanic origin, 16 years and older ...	—	—	—	6,146	10,720	14,317	23,465	28,564
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	—	—	—	100,794	115,120	123,356	138,994	137,189
White non-Hispanic	—	—	—	87,633	97,818	101,767	110,223	105,204
Share (in percent)								
Age								
Total, 16 years and older	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Men, 16 years and older	70.4	66.6	61.9	57.5	54.8	53.7	52.0	52.3
Women, 16 years and older	29.6	33.4	38.1	42.5	45.2	46.3	48.0	47.7
16 to 24	18.5	16.6	21.6	23.7	17.9	15.9	15.9	15.6
25 to 34	23.5	20.7	20.6	27.3	28.6	23.8	21.9	22.2
35 to 44	22.4	23.4	19.9	19.1	25.5	27.3	20.7	22.5
45 to 54	18.4	21.3	20.5	15.8	16.1	20.6	21.9	19.5
55 to 64	12.3	13.5	13.6	11.2	9.2	9.6	15.7	15.1
	4.9	4.6	3.9	2.9	2.7	2.8	3.9	5.0
Race and Hispanic origin								
White, 16 years and older	—	—	—	87.5	85.4	83.8	80.8	78.9
Black, 16 years and older	—	—	—	10.2	10.9	11.6	12.8	13.4
Asian and other, 16 years and older .	—	—	—	2.3	3.7	4.6	6.4	7.7
Hispanic origin, 16 years and older ...	—	—	—	5.7	8.5	10.4	14.4	17.2
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	—	—	—	94.3	91.5	89.6	85.6	82.8
White non-Hispanic	—	—	—	81.9	77.7	73.9	67.8	63.5

See footnotes at end of table.

Table 7. Continued—Civilian labor force by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin, 1950 to 1998 and projected 2015–2025

[Numbers in thousands]

Group	Change (in thousands)						
	1950–60	1960–70	1970–80	1980–90	1990–98	1998–2015	2015–25
Total, 16 years and older	7,420	13,143	24,169	18,900	11,833	24,787	3,294
Men, 16 years and older	2,569	4,840	10,225	7,558	4,948	10,486	2,182
Women, 16 years and older	4,851	8,303	13,944	11,342	6,885	14,300	1,112
Age							
16 to 24	23	6,301	7,454	-2,808	-598	3,937	13
25 to 34	-237	2,654	12,191	6,702	-3,116	2,783	1,222
35 to 44	2,315	168	4,026	11,682	5,391	-3,948	3,777
45 to 54	3,408	2,097	-39	3,338	8,120	7,226	-3,214
55 to 64	1,752	1,898	702	-410	1,640	12,335	-568
65 and older	159	27	-168	397	396	2,454	2,063
White, 16 years and older	-	-	-	13,847	7,968	15,789	-350
Black, 16 years and older	-	-	-	2,875	2,242	4,801	1,360
Asian and other, 16 years and older ¹	-	-	-	2,140	1,662	4,194	2,285
Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	-	-	-	4,574	3,597	9,148	5,099
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	-	-	-	14,326	8,236	15,638	-1,805
White non-Hispanic	-	-	-	10,185	3,949	8,456	-5,018
Annual growth rate, (in percent)							
	1950–60	1960–70	1970–80	1980–90	1990–98	1998–2015	2015–25
Total, 16 years and older	1.1	1.7	2.6	1.6	1.1	1	.2
Men, 16 years and older .....	.6	1	1.8	1.2	.9	.8	.3
Women, 16 years and older	2.4	3.1	3.7	2.3	1.4	1.2	.1
Age							
16 to 24 .....	.0	4.5	3.6	-1.2	-.3	1	.0
25 to 34	-2	1.7	5.5	2.1	-1.1	.5	.3
35 to 44	1.5	.1	2.2	4.6	2	-.7	1.1
45 to 54	2.6	1.3	.0	1.8	4.3	1.3	-.9
55 to 64	2.1	1.9	.6	-.3	1.7	4	-.2
65 and older .....	.5	.1	-.5	1.2	1.4	2.9	2.9
Race and Hispanic origin							
White, 16 years and older	-	-	-	1.4	.9	.8	.0
Black, 16 years and older	-	-	-	2.4	1.9	1.6	.6
Asian and other, 16 years and older ¹	-	-	-	6.4	3.9	3.1	2.0
Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	-	-	-	5.7	3.7	2.9	2.0
Other than Hispanic origin, 16 years and older	-	-	-	1.3	.9	.7	-.1
White non-Hispanic	-	-	-	1.1	.5	.5	-.5

¹ The "Asian and other" group includes (1) Asians and Pacific Islanders and (2) American Indians and Alaska Natives. The historical data are derived by subtracting "black" from the "black and other" group; projections are made

directly, not by subtraction.

NOTE: Dash indicates data not available.

for women and relatively constant rates for men. From 2015 to 2025, however, with participation rates for both women and men held at the 2015 rates, the proportion of women in the labor force holds steady at 48 percent.

These projections indicate that the labor force will become more diverse. White non-Hispanics are projected to continue

to decline as a share of the labor force, but that decline will be more precipitous than that in the past. Their share is projected to decline to 64 percent in 2025, down from 74 percent in 1998 and 82 percent in 1980. Hispanics (of all races) would be the second largest group in 2025, accounting for 17 percent of the total labor force. By 2010, Hispanics are projected

to have a greater share of the labor force than blacks. At 11.6 percent in 1997, the share of blacks in the labor force is projected to increase by 1.8 percentage points over the 1998–2025 period. Asians and others would account for 7.7 percent of the labor force in 2025, up from 4.6 percent in 1998. Hispanics and Asians and others will continue to be the fastest growing groups, but the rate of growth of these two groups is expected to be much lower than experienced between 1980 and 1998.

THE PROJECTIONS INDICATE significant changes in labor force trends between 1998 and 2025. For instance, a change from growth in aggregate labor force participation is expected to decline; the overall labor force participation rate has been increasing since 1950. Although the aggregate participation rate for men has declined over the 1950–98 period, continued growth in the participation rate for women has enabled the overall rate to increase from decade to decade. □

Notes

¹ The civilian labor force consists of employed and unemployed persons (excluding Armed Forces personnel) actively seeking work. Historical data for this series are from the Current Population Survey, 1947–98, conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

² Howard N Fullerton, Jr., “Labor force 2006: slowing down and changing composition,” *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1997, p 29.

³ See John Bound and Timothy Waidmann, “Disability Transfers and the Labor Force Attachment of Older Men: Evidence from the Historical Record,” No. 90–182 (Michigan, Population Studies Center, University of Michigan, 1990); and Barbara D. Bovbjerg, “Social Security Reform: Raising Retirement Ages Improves Program Solvency But May Cause Hardship for Some,” testimony before the Special Committee on Aging, United States Senate, July 15, 1998 (Washington, General Accounting Office). In 1956, women were made eligible for early retirement at age 62 and disability insurance began for disabled workers 50 and older.

⁴ See Richard A. Ippolito, “Toward Explaining Early Retirement After 1970,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, July 1990, pp. 556–69.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ The analysis is complicated by the redesign of the Current Population Survey implemented in 1994. The survey is now counting more

older women and men in the labor force due to the improved questionnaire design.

⁷ Neither the Hispanic origin nor the Asian and Pacific Islander groups are homogeneous. For example, the Hispanic group includes Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans, as well as other groups. They live in different parts of the country, have different levels of education, and also have different patterns of occupational employment. The Asian and Pacific Islander group includes Hawaiians, Chinese, Koreans, Asian Indians, and Filipinos, among others.

⁸ These data are available at the Bureau of Labor Statistics website: <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/ep/labor.force/cla8098.txt>

⁹ See Howard N Fullerton, Jr., “Labor force projections to 2008: steady growth and changing composition,” *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1999, pp. 19–32.

¹⁰ The race and Hispanic origin categories correspond to those promulgated in the Office of Management and Budget Directive No. 15, 1978.

¹¹ Frederick W. Hollmann, Tammany J. Mulder, and Jeffrey E. Kallan, “Population Projections of the United States, 1999 to 2100: Methodology and Assumptions,” Working Paper No. 38 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1999).