

# Labor Force Participation Rate of People 65 Years and Older: 2008 American Community Survey

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## Introduction

This report is one of a series produced to highlight results from the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS). The report series is designed to cover a variety of economic topics, such as poverty, occupation, home values, and labor force participation. This series provides information about the changing economic characteristics of the nation and states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The ACS also provides detailed estimates of demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics for congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. A description of the ACS is provided in the text box "What Is the American Community Survey?"

This report presents data on the labor force participation rate of people aged 65 and older at the national and state levels based on the 2008 ACS.<sup>1</sup> According to 2008 U.S. Census Bureau projections, the 65-and-older population is projected to increase by 79 percent from 2010 to 2030, representing 19 percent of the total population by 2030. Whether or not this population decides to participate in the labor force has important consequences for the nation, as the size of the labor force has a direct effect on the country's ability to produce goods and services. Furthermore, changes in the number of people

<sup>1</sup> The labor force participation rate represents the proportion of the 65-and-older population that is in the labor force. For a more in-depth explanation of labor force concepts, please see <[www.census.gov/acs/www/UseData/Def.htm](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/UseData/Def.htm)>.

## What Is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters. The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey.

Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. In 2008, the first set of multiyear estimates was released for data collected between January 2005 and December 2007. These 3-year estimates were published for geographic areas with populations of 20,000 and greater. The Census Bureau is planning to release the first 5-year estimates in late 2010 for the smallest geographic areas based on data collected between January 2005 and December 2009.

The data contained in this report are based on the ACS sample interviewed in 2008. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit <[www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www)>.

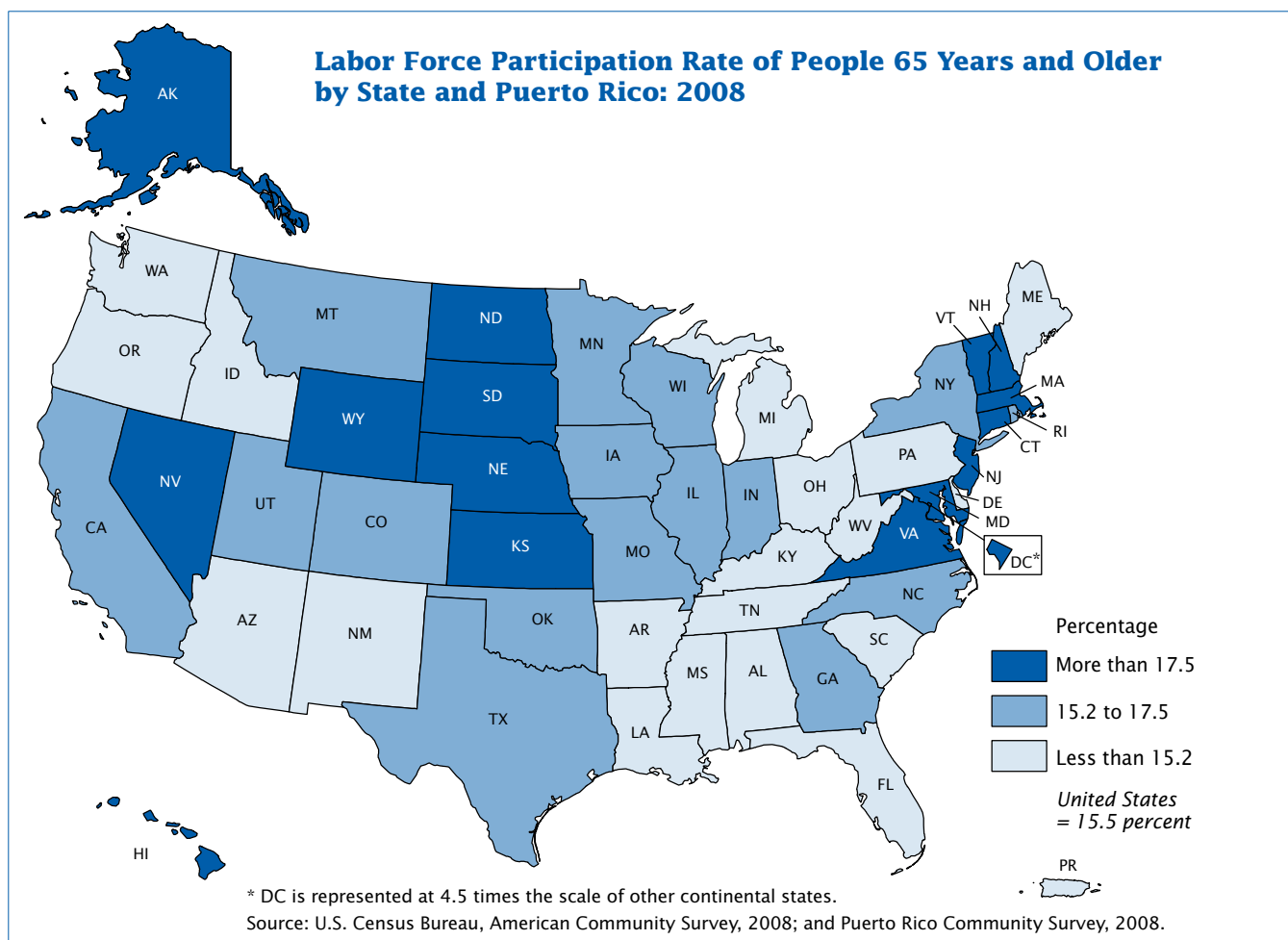
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## Labor Force Participation Rate of People 65 Years and Older by State and Puerto Rico: 2008



aged 65 and older who participate in the labor force would alter the pool of experienced workers available to employers and the number of people solely relying on income from savings and social security.

The data contained in this report are based on an ACS sample that was selected for interview in 2008 and are estimates of the actual figures that could have been obtained by interviewing the entire population using the same methodology. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level unless noted otherwise. Due to rounding, some details may not sum to totals. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and

sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the “2008 ACS Accuracy of the Data” document located at [www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/ACS/accuracy2008.pdf](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/ACS/accuracy2008.pdf).

### Labor Force Participation Rate

Nationally, 15.5 percent of people aged 65 and older participated in the labor force in 2008.

The labor force participation rate for the 50 states and the District of Columbia ranged from 23.2 percent for Alaska to 11.2 percent for West Virginia. Twenty-four states had a labor force participation rate greater than the national labor force participation rate of 15.5 percent. The labor force participation rate

for Alaska (23.2 percent) was not statistically different from the rates for Wyoming, the District of Columbia, Vermont, Nebraska, or South Dakota but was higher than the rates of the other 45 states. Fourteen states had a labor force participation rate lower than the national labor force participation rate of 15.5 percent. The labor force participation rate for West Virginia (11.2 percent) was lower than the rates of the other 49 states and the District of Columbia.

For men and women, the labor force participation rates at the national level were 20.5 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively. Men had a higher labor force participation rate than women in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For men, the labor force

## Labor Force Participation Rate of Men and Women Aged 65 and Older by State and Puerto Rico: 2008

(In percent. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www))

Area	Total	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Men	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)	Women	Margin of error <sup>1</sup> (±)
<b>United States . . .</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Alabama . . . . .	13.5	0.6	18.8	1.0	9.7	0.6
Alaska . . . . .	23.2	3.0	28.7	4.3	17.9	3.2
Arizona . . . . .	13.5	0.7	17.2	1.0	10.6	0.8
Arkansas . . . . .	13.6	0.8	17.7	1.2	10.6	1.0
California . . . . .	15.2	0.3	20.4	0.4	11.3	0.3
Colorado . . . . .	17.1	0.7	22.5	1.4	12.8	0.8
Connecticut . . . . .	19.7	0.7	26.5	1.3	14.8	0.9
Delaware . . . . .	14.7	1.4	18.6	2.1	11.8	1.6
District of Columbia . . . . .	21.6	2.4	26.0	3.9	18.7	3.2
Florida . . . . .	13.8	0.3	17.8	0.5	10.7	0.3
Georgia . . . . .	16.3	0.6	22.5	1.0	11.9	0.7
Hawaii . . . . .	18.1	1.1	23.8	1.9	13.8	1.3
Idaho . . . . .	14.4	1.2	19.1	1.8	10.5	1.4
Illinois . . . . .	16.4	0.4	21.2	0.6	13.1	0.5
Indiana . . . . .	16.1	0.5	20.8	0.9	12.8	0.7
Iowa . . . . .	17.5	0.7	22.7	1.1	13.7	0.9
Kansas . . . . .	19.1	0.8	25.6	1.3	14.5	1.0
Kentucky . . . . .	13.3	0.6	17.5	1.1	10.2	0.7
Louisiana . . . . .	15.1	0.7	20.0	1.2	11.6	0.8
Maine . . . . .	15.1	1.0	19.9	1.5	11.5	1.2
Maryland . . . . .	19.6	0.6	26.3	1.2	14.9	0.7
Massachusetts . . . . .	18.2	0.6	23.7	1.0	14.4	0.6
Michigan . . . . .	12.6	0.4	16.1	0.6	10.0	0.5
Minnesota . . . . .	16.4	0.6	21.4	1.0	12.6	0.6
Mississippi . . . . .	13.5	0.8	18.8	1.6	9.8	0.9
Missouri . . . . .	15.6	0.5	19.6	0.9	12.7	0.6
Montana . . . . .	16.8	1.3	20.9	2.1	13.4	1.4
Nebraska . . . . .	20.4	1.0	27.9	1.8	15.0	1.1
Nevada . . . . .	19.2	1.2	22.4	1.7	16.4	1.5
New Hampshire . . . . .	18.0	1.4	23.3	2.4	14.0	1.4
New Jersey . . . . .	18.5	0.6	24.9	0.9	13.9	0.6
New Mexico . . . . .	15.2	1.2	19.3	1.6	12.0	1.4
New York . . . . .	15.4	0.3	20.6	0.5	11.8	0.4
North Carolina . . . . .	15.5	0.4	20.7	0.8	11.8	0.5
North Dakota . . . . .	17.8	1.2	22.2	2.2	14.5	1.5
Ohio . . . . .	15.1	0.4	19.9	0.7	11.8	0.5
Oklahoma . . . . .	16.7	0.7	21.9	1.3	12.9	0.7
Oregon . . . . .	12.7	0.7	16.4	1.1	9.8	0.9
Pennsylvania . . . . .	15.0	0.4	20.4	0.6	11.2	0.4
Rhode Island . . . . .	15.9	1.4	22.3	2.3	11.5	1.5
South Carolina . . . . .	14.6	0.7	18.8	1.2	11.6	0.8
South Dakota . . . . .	20.0	1.5	26.8	2.4	14.7	1.7
Tennessee . . . . .	15.2	0.6	20.3	0.9	11.5	0.7
Texas . . . . .	17.1	0.3	23.3	0.6	12.5	0.4
Utah . . . . .	15.6	1.1	20.8	1.8	11.3	1.1
Vermont . . . . .	21.0	1.7	26.5	2.5	16.8	2.0
Virginia . . . . .	17.7	0.6	23.8	0.9	13.2	0.7
Washington . . . . .	14.2	0.5	18.5	0.9	10.7	0.6
West Virginia . . . . .	11.2	0.8	13.6	1.4	9.5	0.9
Wisconsin . . . . .	15.4	0.5	19.4	0.8	12.4	0.6
Wyoming . . . . .	21.9	1.9	25.6	3.4	18.8	2.1
Puerto Rico . . . . .	7.1	0.5	10.8	0.8	4.3	0.5

<sup>1</sup> Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008; and Puerto Rico Community Survey, 2008.

participation rate ranged from 28.7 percent for Alaska to 13.6 percent for West Virginia. For women, the labor force participation rate ranged from 18.8 percent for Wyoming to 9.5 percent for West Virginia.