

**Fact Sheet**

# The Changing Faces of America's Workers

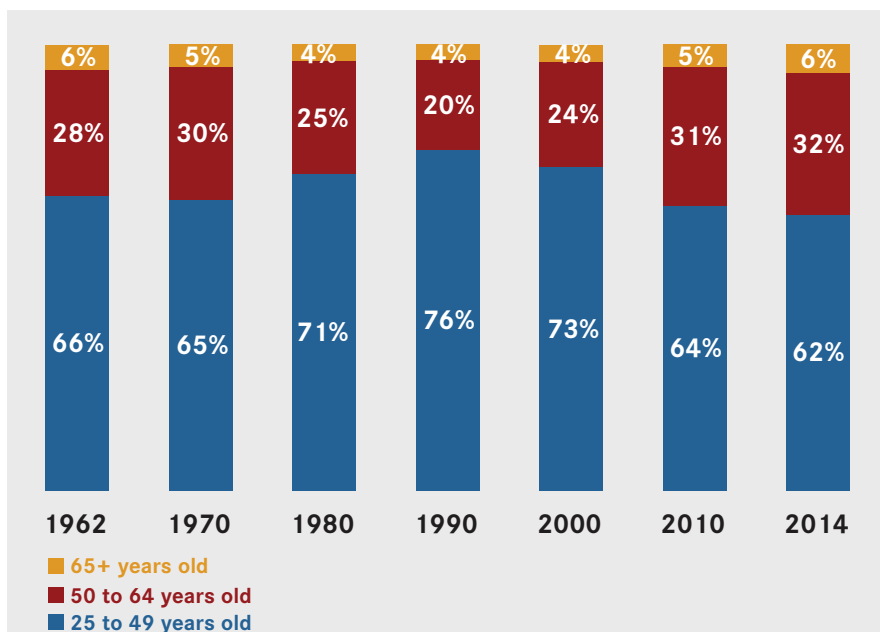
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## America's Labor Force Is Getting Older

The share of the labor force<sup>1</sup> ages 50-plus fell between 1962 and 1990, but it has expanded since then, rising from about one-quarter in 1990 to 38 percent in 2014 (figure 1).<sup>2</sup> Much of this change can be attributed to the aging of the baby boomers, the group born between 1946 and 1964, who entered the workforce starting in the late 1960s. In 1990, the boomers were between ages 26 and 44. Today, the oldest boomers are now in their sixties and many have retired; meanwhile, the tail end of the boomers turned 50 in 2014. In 2012, the median age of the labor force was 41.9 years, up from 34.8 years in 1982 and 40.5 years in 1960.<sup>3</sup>

*The composition of the total labor force has changed. Older workers—workers ages 50 and older—are playing a much larger role. Higher labor force participation rates among women of all ages, and the growing role of minorities in the labor force, have also changed the face of America's labor force over the past several decades.*

FIGURE 1  
Distribution of the Labor Force by Age, Ages 25 and Older, 1962-2014



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, March 2014.



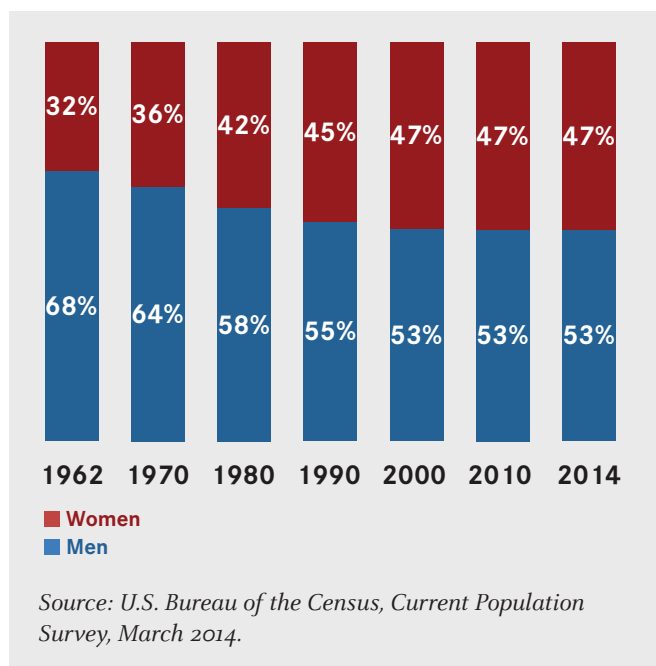
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### The Labor Force Is Now Almost Evenly Split between Women and Men

Women’s share of the labor force has expanded greatly since the end of World War II, rising rapidly from the 1960s through the 1980s (figure 2). In 1962, men were over two-thirds (68 percent) of labor force participants ages 25-plus. In 2014, the relative shares of men and women were 53 percent and 47 percent, respectively, the same as it has been since 2000. The ratio of men to women in the labor force was nearly identical in the younger (under age 50) and older (age 50 and over) age groups in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

**FIGURE 2**  
Distribution of the Labor Force by Sex, Ages 25 and Older, 1962-2014

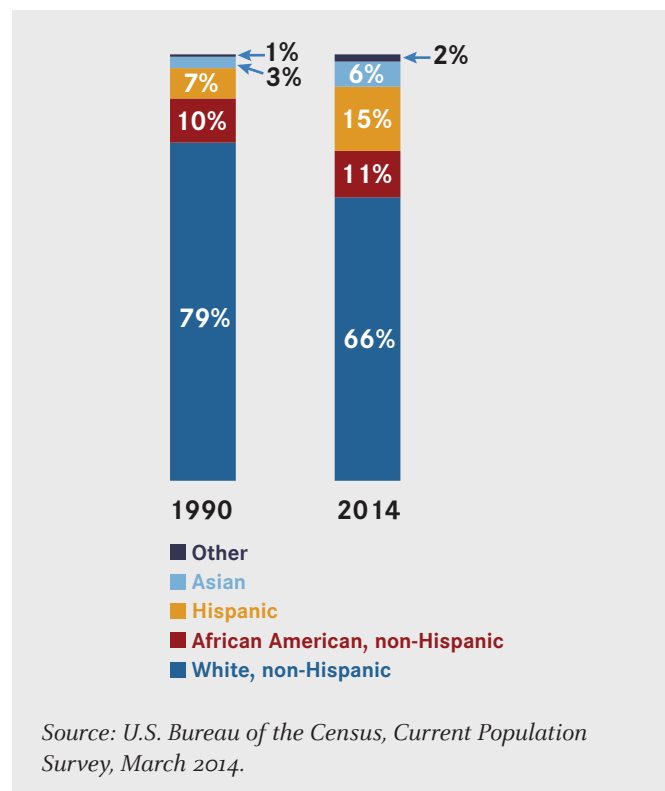


### Minorities Play a Larger Role in America’s Labor Force

Non-whites’ share of the total labor force has grown from one-fifth in 1990 to almost one-third today (figure 3). Much of this growth has been among Hispanics, whose share of the labor force has more than doubled over the past 2 decades, from 7 percent in 1990 to 15 percent in 2014. Asians’ share of the labor force over the same period has also doubled, from 3 percent in 1990 to 6 percent in 2014. African Americans have retained a nearly constant share of the labor force, rising only slightly from 10 percent in 1990 to 11 percent in 2014.

Minorities play a larger role in the younger workforce than in the workforce ages 50 and over. In 2014, Hispanics represented 19 percent of the workforce ages 25–49, compared with 10 percent of the workforce ages 50 and over. Among older workers in 2014, the shares of older African Americans, Asians, and whites were about 10 percent, 5 percent, and 74 percent, respectively.

**FIGURE 3**  
Distribution of the Labor Force by Race and Ethnicity, Ages 25 and Older, 1990 and 2014

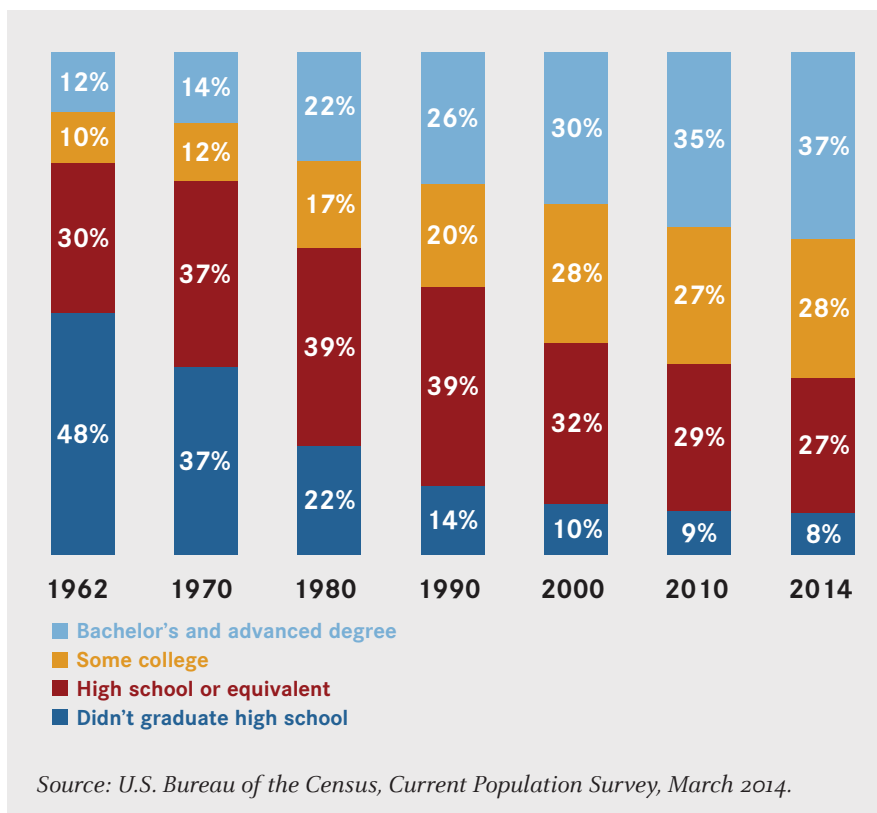


## Education

Today's labor force is more educated than in past decades (figure 4). In 1962, more than three-quarters (78 percent) of the workforce of all ages had a high school education or less; by 2014, the share of workers in that category was about one-third (35 percent). During the same period, the share of the workforce with some college or higher grew from 22 percent in 1962 to 65 percent in 2014.

In the 2014 workforce, younger workers have slightly higher educational attainments than older workers. Among workers ages 25–49 in 2014, about 25 percent completed their educations with a high school diploma (9 percent did not complete high school), and about 38 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (28 percent had some college). By comparison, among workers ages 50-plus in 2014, about 29 percent finished their educations with a high school diploma (8 percent did not complete high school) and 36 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher (27 percent had some college).

**FIGURE 4**  
**Distribution of the Labor Force by Educational Attainment, Ages 25 and Older, 1962–2014**



- 1 People who are in the labor force are either working (the vast majority) or looking for work.
- 2 Calculated from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, March 2014 Annual Social and Economic Supplement.
- 3 Mitra Toossi, "Labor Force Projections to 2022: The Labor Force Participation Rate Continues to Fall," *Monthly Labor Review* (December 2013), table 6, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2013/article/labor-force-projections-to-2022-the-labor-force-participation-rate-continues-to-fall.htm>. For data from earlier decades, see Howard N. Fullerton, Jr., and John Tschetter, "The 1995 Labor Force: A Second Look," *Monthly Labor Review* (November 1983), <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1983/11/art1full.pdf>.
- 4 Women's labor force participation rates peaked at 60 percent in 1999 before starting to decline slowly to 58 percent in 2012 (latest year available). See U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*, May 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2013.pdf>.

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