

**Research Report**

# **The Changing Picture of Who Claims Social Security Early**

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## Acknowledgments

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This report focuses on understanding characteristics associated with those who claim Social Security at age 62 and is the first in a two-part series. The second report uses factors associated with early claiming identified in this report to examine evidence on the short-, medium-, and long-term consequences of claiming early on economic security and well-being. Both reports were sponsored by AARP.

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and not those of AARP, the RAND Corporation, or persons or organizations providing support to these organizations. The views do not necessarily represent official policies of AARP or the RAND Corporation.

## Abbreviations

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DB	defined benefit
DC	defined contribution
DI	disability insurance
EEA	early eligibility age
FRA	full retirement age
HRS	Health and Retirement Study
OAI	Old-Age Insurance
OASI	Old-Age and Survivors Insurance

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# Executive Summary

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## BACKGROUND

From the early 1990s to 2010s, the fraction of individuals claiming Social Security retirement benefits at the early eligibility age (EEA) of 62 declined from over half of the eligible population to less than a third. Although claiming at 62 can make financial sense for some, Social Security benefit rules result in reduced monthly benefits of up to 30 percent relative to waiting to claim benefits until full retirement age. Such a considerable benefit reduction persists for life—and threatens financial security at later ages.

This report highlights differences over time between individuals who claim Social Security retirement benefits at age 62 and those who claim after age 62. It documents how these populations have changed in terms of education, labor force participation, pension plan participation, and wealth—and how demographic, employment, and economic characteristics relate to claiming age. This report is the first in a two-part series; the second report focuses on the later-in-life financial and well-being consequences of early claiming.

Philip Armour and David Knapp of the RAND Corporation update and expand a 2008 AARP Public Policy Institute study that focused on the characteristics of people who claim Social Security benefits at age 62. Using longitudinal data from 13 waves of the Health and Retirement Study from 1992 through 2016, Armour and Knapp identify demographic, employment, and economic characteristics associated with individuals who claim at 62 and compare them with those of people who claim after age 62.

Armour and Knapp also compare changes in the characteristics of more recent cohorts of individuals facing retirement with those of earlier cohorts, revealing three important trends that correlate with delayed claiming. First, people turning 62 today have more years of schooling, on average, than did 62-year-olds in the 1990s. Second, employer-provided retirement plans have shifted from traditional defined benefit plans with sharp years-of-service entitlements to 401(k)s and other defined contribution plans that individuals can draw from more flexibly. Finally,

there has been a noticeable increase in labor force participation in more recent cohorts, especially among women.

## KEY FINDINGS

The authors identify the demographic, employment, and economic characteristics associated with those who claim at the EEA and relate these characteristics to people who claim after it.

For both men and women, individuals who claim Social Security benefits at 62, as compared with those who claim later:

1. Have less education, on average;
2. Are more likely to live in rural areas;
3. Are more likely to already have a work-limiting health condition;
4. Have a lower reported likelihood of living to age 75;
5. Are less likely to have a job before turning age 62;
6. If employed before turning age 62, earn less, on average; and
7. If employed before turning age 62, are more likely to have a physically demanding job.

With respect to wealth and pension comparisons of age-62 claimers to later claimers, Armour and Knapp find individuals who claim Social Security benefits at 62:

1. Are substantially more likely to already be receiving pension income; and
2. Are less likely to have defined contribution plan assets.

The authors caution that even after accounting for the interrelationship of observable demographic, employment, and economic factors using regression analysis, these characteristics account for only a small fraction of the shift toward later claiming. Other reasons—such as longer life expectancy, a greater ability to work longer, better understanding of the financial benefits of waiting to claim Social Security benefits, and stronger incentives to delay claiming due to changes in

Social Security benefit rules—likely influence people to wait to claim their benefits.

Finally, although the novel coronavirus pandemic has not yet been associated with increases in claiming Social Security retirement benefits (Goss and Glenn 2020), as short-term furloughs turn into long-term unemployment, the findings in this

report suggest that employment losses may lead to earlier claiming—in particular among those with less education and those living in more rural areas. As the second report in this series makes clear, the financial consequences of early claiming can be long lasting.

## 1. Introduction

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In the early 1990s, approximately half of those collecting Social Security retirement benefits had claimed them at the earliest age—age 62—resulting in their lowest potential monthly benefit (Munnell and Chen 2015). Since then, longer life expectancies, an increase in the penalty for early claiming, and larger credits for delaying claiming after the full retirement age (FRA) have increased the advantages of claiming at later ages (Shoven and Slavov 2012). Claiming ages have been rising: today, less than a third of Social Security–eligible individuals claim upon turning age 62 (Purcell 2020). But today’s retirees differ from those in the 1990s in a number of ways. For example, those turning 62 today have more years of schooling, on average, than 62-year-olds in the 1990s. Typical employer-provided retirement plans have shifted from traditional defined benefit (DB) plans with sharp years-of-service entitlements to 401(k)s and other defined contribution (DC) plans that individuals can draw from more flexibly.

So, the question arises: are people claiming Social Security at later ages responding to the stronger incentives to claim later? Or are they claiming at older ages because of other differences? In other words, is it peoples’ claiming behavior that’s changing or their circumstances? Meanwhile, who is still claiming at age 62? Relatively little is known about who continues to claim at this earliest possible age, and how today’s early claimants differ from those who claimed early in previous cohorts.

This report seeks to understand how the prevalence of early claiming has changed in recent decades, what types of individuals and households claim early, and whether early claiming is related to financial or health shocks. We take a binary approach to classify claimants:

those who claim at age 62 (*age-62 claimants*) and eligible individuals who postpone claiming to later ages (*claimed later*). This is the first report of two on early claiming: this report focuses on the changing characteristics and causes of claiming early, and the second one focuses on the later-in-life financial consequences of early claiming.

Consistent with prior research, this report shows that, from the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s, there was a substantial decline in the likelihood of a given individual claiming Social Security retirement benefits at age 62 among both men and women, single or married. Past research on cohorts from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s found that in the year before turning 62, early claimants were less likely to be working, paid less if working, less healthy, and less educated; however, there were no substantial differences in wealth compared with those who claimed later (Li, Hurd, and Loughran 2008). Drawing on Health and Retirement Study (HRS) data spanning from 1992 to 2016, we find similar results, with certain characteristics of individuals entering their 60s persistently related to claiming at age 62, including

- Not working at age 60 or 61,
- Lower pay among the employed,
- A job requiring physical effort,
- Coverage by employer-provided *retiree* health insurance,
- Receipt of non–Social Security pension income before age 62,
- Not having DC plan assets,
- Lower educational attainment,
- Residence in rural areas, and
- Having a work-limiting health condition.

However, there have been changes among more recent cohorts, most notably in that earlier claimants are now generally less wealthy than those who postpone claiming. Increasing trends in labor force participation and DC plans, and declines in traditional DB pension income and employer-provided retiree health insurance coincide with the shift toward claiming later. But multivariable analyses indicate that these factors and a rich set of personal characteristics account for only a small fraction of this shift. The growth in delaying claiming after age 62 is not substantially associated with changes in the characteristics of retirees, instead suggesting that other explanations, such as the stronger incentives to delay claiming within Social Security or longer working lives in the economy at large, are driving people to wait to claim their benefits.

These multivariable analyses also indicate that economic factors, most notably not working

and having low earnings when turning 62, are strongly associated with early claiming even after accounting for other demographic, employment, and individual characteristics. Those working physically demanding jobs and residing in rural areas are also more likely to claim early across the cohorts under study. As of July 2020, the novel coronavirus pandemic has not been associated with increases in claiming Social Security retirement benefits (Goss and Glenn 2020). However, as short-term furloughs turn into long-term unemployment, and with the expiration of unemployment insurance benefit expansions, the findings in this report suggest that, if past patterns predict present claiming behavior, employment losses may lead to earlier claiming, in particular among those with less education and in more rural areas. As explored in the second report, the financial consequences of such early claiming can be long-lasting.

## 2. Background and Data

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This study contrasts those who choose to claim their Social Security retirement benefits at the early eligibility age (EEA) of 62 (the earliest age a worker can claim these benefits) and those who claim later.<sup>1</sup> Claiming at 62 allows for earlier receipt of benefits; however, benefits are adjusted downward in an actuarially fair way. That is, because individuals who claim benefits at the EEA can expect to receive them for more years than if they delayed claiming, their monthly benefit is lower, resulting in roughly the same total amount of lifetime benefits, *on average*. The longer one's life expectancy relative to average, the greater the advantage in delaying claiming. Indeed, the chief concern from policy researchers is that individuals may not be factoring in the advantages in delaying claiming and the risk of outliving one's resources that Social Security's retirement benefits (officially known as Old-Age

Insurance) insure against (Shoven and Slavov 2012). Thus, claiming at age 62 results in the smallest possible monthly benefit for workers, and the longer one lives, the greater the "loss" from claiming early.

But the terms of this insurance have changed: given rising life expectancies and the resulting pressure on Social Security's finances, Congress increased the Social Security FRA—the age at which benefits are not actuarially reduced. The legislation Congress approved in 1983 gradually increased the FRA from 65. Those born in 1955 will reach their FRA in 2021 at age 66 and 2 months. The 1983 reforms will continue to raise the FRA to 67 for those born in 1960 or later; further Congressional action would be needed to change the FRA beyond that. This rising FRA has direct implications for the reduction in monthly benefits from claiming at age 62, because the

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, we specifically focus on the decision of when to claim Social Security retirement benefits (Old-Age Insurance) and not other types of Social Security benefits, such as disability or survivor benefits, which can be claimed at earlier ages under certain circumstances. Indeed, a substantial line of research is focused on trends in Social Security Disability Insurance application and award, often among older workers approaching retirement (Autor and Duggan 2003; Duggan, Singleton, and Song 2007; Armour 2018). However, our concern in this report is over the tradeoff facing an older worker who will draw on Social Security retirement benefits. As discussed below, we therefore take steps to exclude those who receive or may expect to receive disability or other Social Security benefits before the full retirement age.

years between 62 and the FRA continue to rise, and the early claiming penalty rises with this difference. For those born before 1938, claiming at age 62 resulted in a benefit that was 20 percent lower than their FRA benefit. For those born after 1959, the benefit available at age 62 will be a full 30 percent lower than their full benefit.

Although substantially reduced, these age-62 benefits allow workers to access their Social Security wealth, and for those with few employment options, limited work capacity, or shorter life expectancies, these resources represent substantial economic support. But for those with the ability to claim later, the incentives to do so have increased substantially over time. Furthermore, since benefits increase with lifetime earnings, if workers both delay claiming and continue to work, lifetime Social Security benefits can rise even faster than delaying claiming alone, providing even greater economic security at older ages. The main questions of this report are as follows: What factors are associated with claiming at age 62? How has claiming behavior changed among more recent cohorts?

To study patterns in claiming Social Security benefits at age 62, we draw on the HRS, a nationally representative survey of Americans over the age of 50 and their partners or spouses. The HRS is a panel survey that began in 1992. It follows the same individuals over time and re-interviews them every two years, allowing researchers to track respondents as they leave the labor force and enter retirement. Furthermore, birth cohorts of new 51- to 56-year-olds are added every six years to ensure that the HRS remains nationally representative of the older US population over 50. Because the HRS is in its 28th year, this structure allows for comparisons of retirement pathways for different cohorts of workers, from those born in the 1930s, amidst the Great Depression, to Baby Boomers born through the 1950s. In order to conduct

comparisons, we define four cohorts in our primary analysis:

- a. Those born from 1931 through 1935 (Early HRS Cohort;<sup>2</sup> FRA was 65)
- b. Those born from 1936 through 1941 (Late HRS Cohort; FRA ranged from 65 to 65 and 8 months)
- c. Those born from 1942 through 1947 (War Babies; FRA ranged from 65 and 10 months to 66)
- d. Those born from 1948 through 1953 (Early Boomers; FRA was 66)

We developed these groupings to allow for comparisons across different cohorts while ensuring sufficient sample sizes for these comparisons to be statistically meaningful. The different FRAs within groups (b) and (c) results in variation in the benefit reduction for claiming at age 62, as well as variation in the benefit gain from claiming at later ages. The resulting sample sizes for each cohort are shown in table 2.1.

The appendix provides precise details on the sample construction, from the total HRS sample to the analytic sample used in this study. The key restrictions are as follows:

1. We restrict the sample to households in which workers and their spouses (if they have one) are observed in the HRS both before and after they reach age 62, in order to observe their characteristics prior to age 62 and whether they claimed at age 62.
2. We exclude those who received Social Security benefits (either disability or survivors') before the age of 62, as well as those who have applied for Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) benefits at ages 60–62 and thus may still be in the initial determination or appeals process.
3. Finally, we exclude those who are not eligible for Social Security retirement or spousal benefits at age 62.<sup>3</sup>

2 These names derive from the HRS's own naming convention, since these birth cohorts do not otherwise correspond to traditionally defined demographic groups. In particular, the original 1992 cohort is referred to as the HRS Cohort, with birth years ranging from 1931 to 1941, hence the Early HRS Cohort is the older group of this original HRS cohort and the Late HRS Cohort is the younger group.

3 These include infrequent workers, late-arriving immigrants, and those who work in noncovered employment like certain state or local government employees, which correspond to approximately 3 percent of those age 60–89 in the United States (Social Security Administration 2015).

Table 2.1  
**Number of Respondents, by Cohort and Claiming Age**

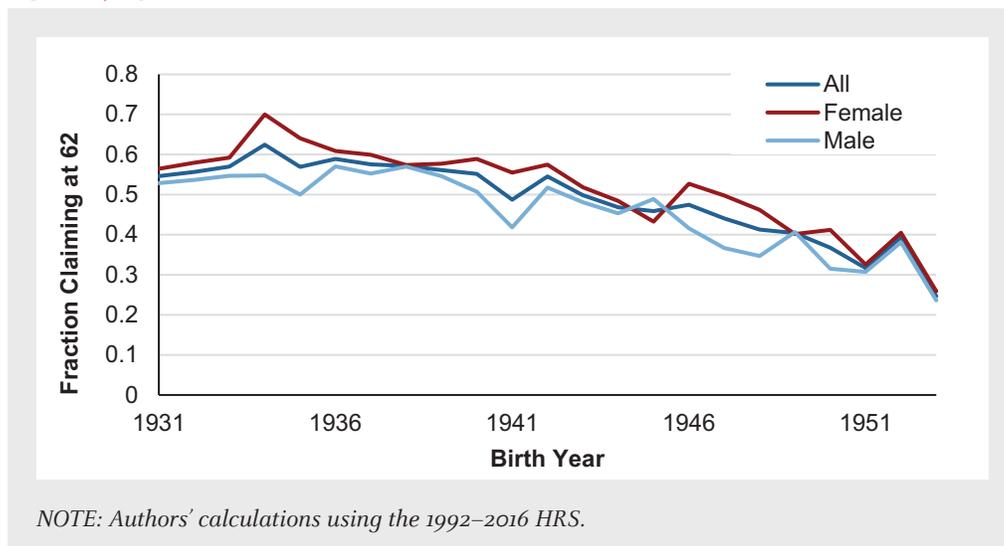
Gender	Cohort	Age-62 Claimants	Claimed Later	Total
<b>Men</b>	1: Early HRS, 1931-35	627 (48%)	669 (52%)	1,296
	2: Late HRS, 1936-41	668 (46%)	774 (54%)	1,442
	3: War Babies, 1942-47	281 (37%)	470 (63%)	751
	4: Early Boomer, 1948-53	266 (27%)	718 (73%)	984
	<b>Total Men</b>	<b>1,842 (41%)</b>	<b>2,631 (59%)</b>	<b>4,473</b>
<b>Women</b>	1: Early HRS, 1931-35	697 (54%)	584 (46%)	1,281
	2: Late HRS, 1936-41	701 (47%)	793 (53%)	1,494
	3: War Babies, 1942-47	374 (34%)	729 (66%)	1,103
	4: Early Boomer, 1948-53	291 (23%)	974 (77%)	1,265
	<b>Total Women</b>	<b>2,063 (40%)</b>	<b>3,080 (60%)</b>	<b>5,143</b>
<b>Total Men and Women</b>		<b>3,905 (41%)</b>	<b>5,711 (59%)</b>	<b>9,616</b>

These restrictions allow us to focus on individuals who face the choice between claiming Social Security retirement benefits at age 62 or delaying claiming, and thus for whom changing incentives to delaying claiming apply.

Across all cohorts, claiming at age 62 has become less frequent over the past two decades. In figure 2.1, we show the rates of age-62 claiming in our HRS analytic sample by each birth year. The figure demonstrates a gradual but persistent

decline, with substantially lower age-62 claiming rates among more recent cohorts. The result is that rates of early claiming are 30 percentage points lower for those born in 1953 compared with those born in 1931, a 55 percent decline. The appendix provides a comparison with Purcell (2020), an analysis based on administrative records; our levels and trends match closely, with slight differences arising from both sampling variability and a difference in the definition of those eligible to claim benefits at age 62.

Figure 2.1  
**Fraction of Eligible Age-62 Social Security Claimants Who Claim at Age 62, by Year of Birth**



### 3. Demographic, Health, and Employment Characteristics of Cohorts and Claimant Groups

In this section we compare the characteristics of those who claimed Social Security benefits at age 62 with those who claimed later. To avoid conflating how health or employment may change as a consequence of early claiming, we focus on characteristics in the interview before turning 62. Before we present these comparisons between age-62 claimants and those who claim later, we note that there are substantial underlying

differences across birth cohorts in our sample, independent of claiming age. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 provide a set of comparisons for selected variables for men and women in these cohorts at age 60.<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all statistics presented are weighted averages of characteristics at age 60; the appendix includes a description of our use of HRS weights.

Figure 3.1  
Select Characteristics at Age 60, by Birth Cohort, Men

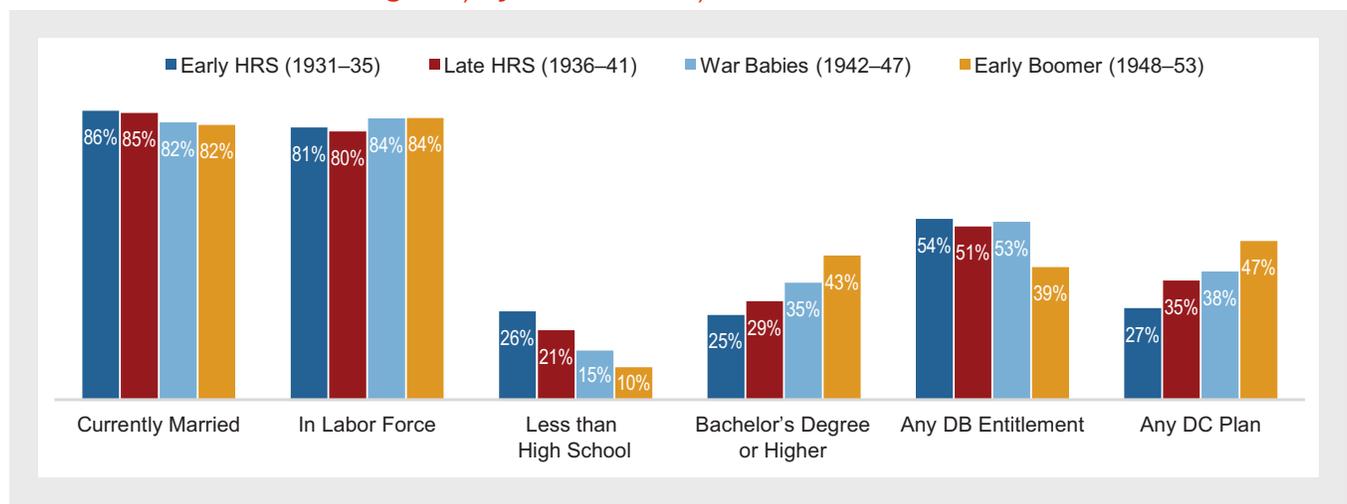
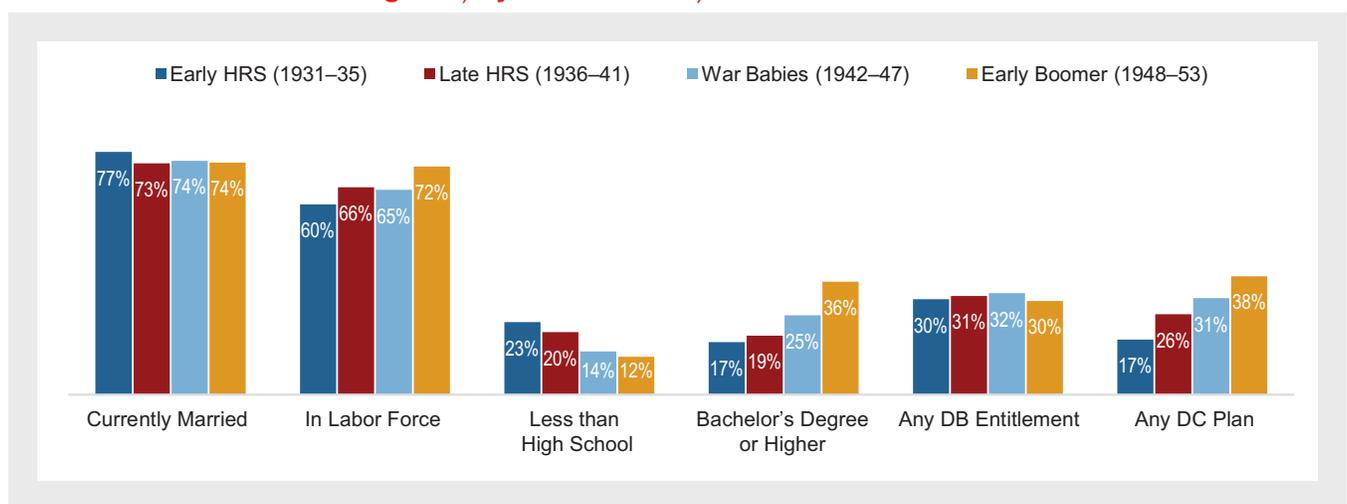


Figure 3.2  
Select Characteristics at Age 60, by Birth Cohort, Women



<sup>4</sup> Since the HRS interviews individuals every other year, characteristics observed in the wave before an individual reaches age 62 could correspond to age 60 or age 61. However, for the sake of brevity, we refer to these measures as “Age 60” measures throughout this report.

As shown in figure 3.1, there has been a substantial increase in educational attainment in more recent cohorts. For the 1931–35 birth cohort, about as many men had less than a high school education (26 percent) as had at least a bachelor’s degree (25 percent). But for the 1948–53 birth cohort, the share of the cohort with a bachelor’s degree (43 percent) was over four times the share who did not finish high school (10 percent). Other striking trends emerge in pension entitlements: whereas 54 percent of Early HRS men had a DB pension entitlement, less than 40 percent of Early Boomers did. However, 47 percent of these Early Boomers had assets in a DC plan, in contrast to just 27 percent of Early HRS men. There is also a slight decline in being married and slight increases in labor force participation and employment in more recent cohorts among these 60-year-old men. College attainment, DC plan assets, and being in the labor force are more frequent among those who delay claiming after age 62 in every cohort, suggesting that upward trends in these characteristics will themselves lead to individuals waiting past age 62 to claim their Social Security benefits.

Figure 3.2 shows the corresponding statistics for age-60 women in these birth cohorts. Although there are similar increases in DC plans and educational attainment, there are even more dramatic increases in labor force participation in more recent cohorts of older women. Unlike men, there has not been a substantial reduction in DB entitlement, which may indicate that women are more likely to work in the public sector (e.g., teaching), where DB pensions have remained common.

## DIFFERENCES IN DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS BY CLAIMING AGE

We now turn to how various demographic, economic, and employment factors differ across claimant groups, using a series of figures that present average characteristics, measured at age 60, by claiming age.<sup>5</sup> These averages are calculated separately for each of the four birth cohorts discussed above. They allow the reader to examine differences in characteristics by claiming status within a cohort and track how these differences change across cohorts.<sup>6</sup> Although not shown graphically, we discuss when these differences within cohorts between age-62 claimants and later claimants are statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

Consistent with figure 3.1, figure 3.3 shows that marriage rates among age-60 men are lower among more recent cohorts. Moreover, marriage rates declined more among age-62 claimants than delayed claimers. Whereas approximately 85 percent of age-60 men in the Early HRS cohort were married, regardless of their claim age, in more recent cohorts, age-62 claimants were 5 to 8 percentage points more likely to be single, a statistically significant difference. In contrast, the differences in the distribution of race and ethnicity by claiming age are not statistically significant in any of the four cohorts.

There are significant differences by rurality,<sup>7</sup> with age-62 claimants 7 to 14 percentage points more likely to reside in rural locations than those who claim later, depending on the cohort. These differences are persistent across all the cohorts in the analysis and are always strongly statistically significant. Earlier claiming behavior by individuals in rural areas may

5 These averages are weighted using the HRS’s sampling weights as described in the appendix.

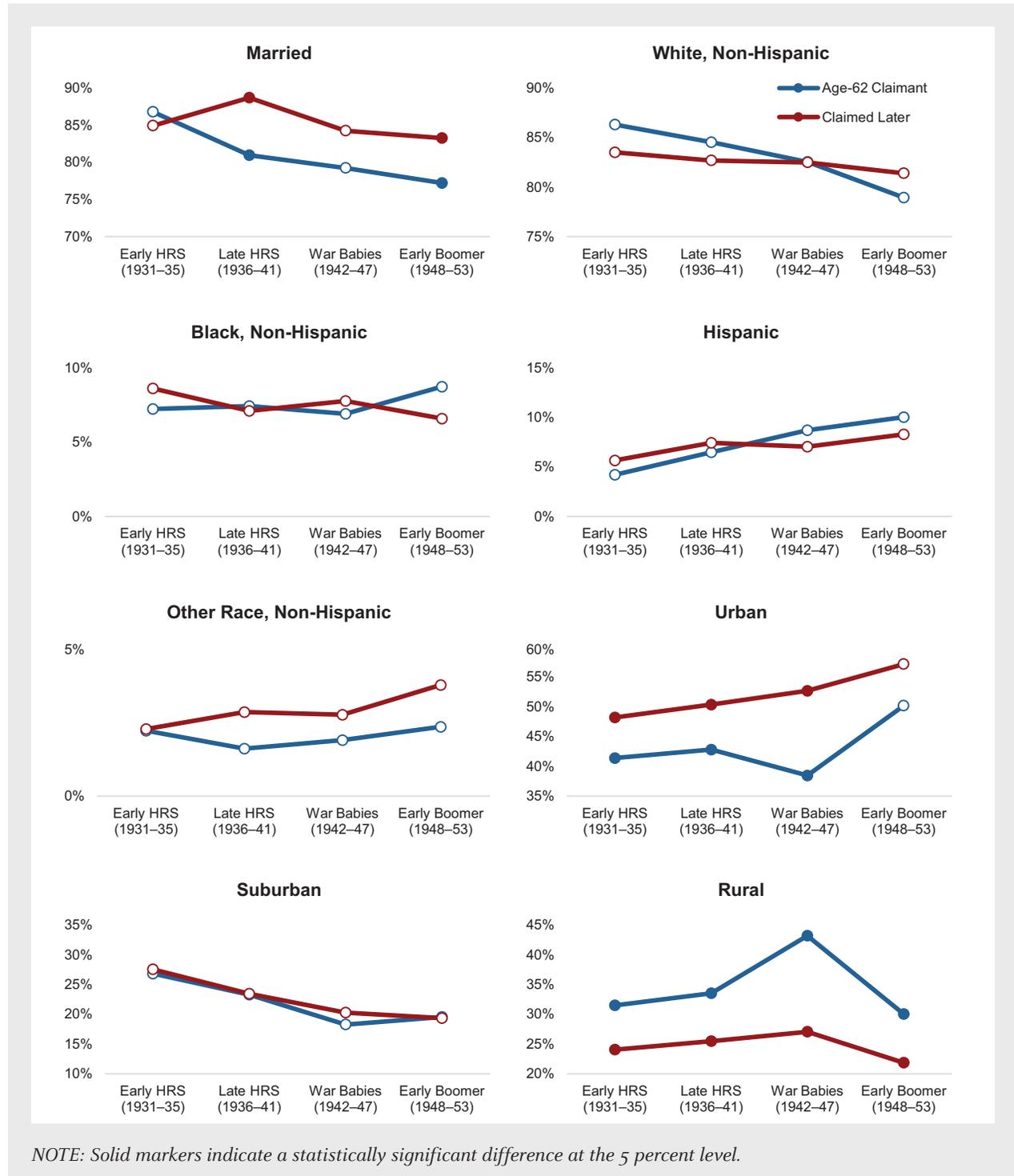
6 The comparisons presented below take averages of characteristics for age-62 claimants and those who delay claiming. An alternative approach would be to calculate what fraction within each characteristic claimed at age 62. For example, instead of calculating the fraction of age-62 claimants who reside in rural areas, which we show here, we could calculate what fraction of those residing in rural areas claim at age 62. We opt for the former approach, since the focus of this report is on how characteristics have changed over time, and many of the characteristics analyzed herein differ across cohorts, rendering interpretation of the rates of early claiming within a group complex since the group itself is shifting across cohorts. As an example, consider education: the fraction of those with less than a high school education who claim at age 62 has declined with more recent cohorts. However, whereas a quarter of the Early HRS cohort had not completed high school, only a 10th of the Early Boomer cohort had not completed high school, and thus “those who had not completed high school” represent a different group with different opportunities in different cohorts. By showing average characteristics separately by claimant group as we do in this report, the reader can observe the trends in these characteristics across claimant types.

7 In this context, urbanicity, sub-urbanicity, and rurality are measured according to the 2013 Beale Rural-Urban Continuum Code, with *urbanicity* defined as residing in a county in a metro area with a population of 1 million or more, *sub-urbanicity* defined as residing in a county in a metro area with a population from 250,000 to 1 million, and *rurality* being remaining counties. Note that this approach is an expansive definition of rurality, but more detailed definitions are not publicly available due to confidentiality concerns.

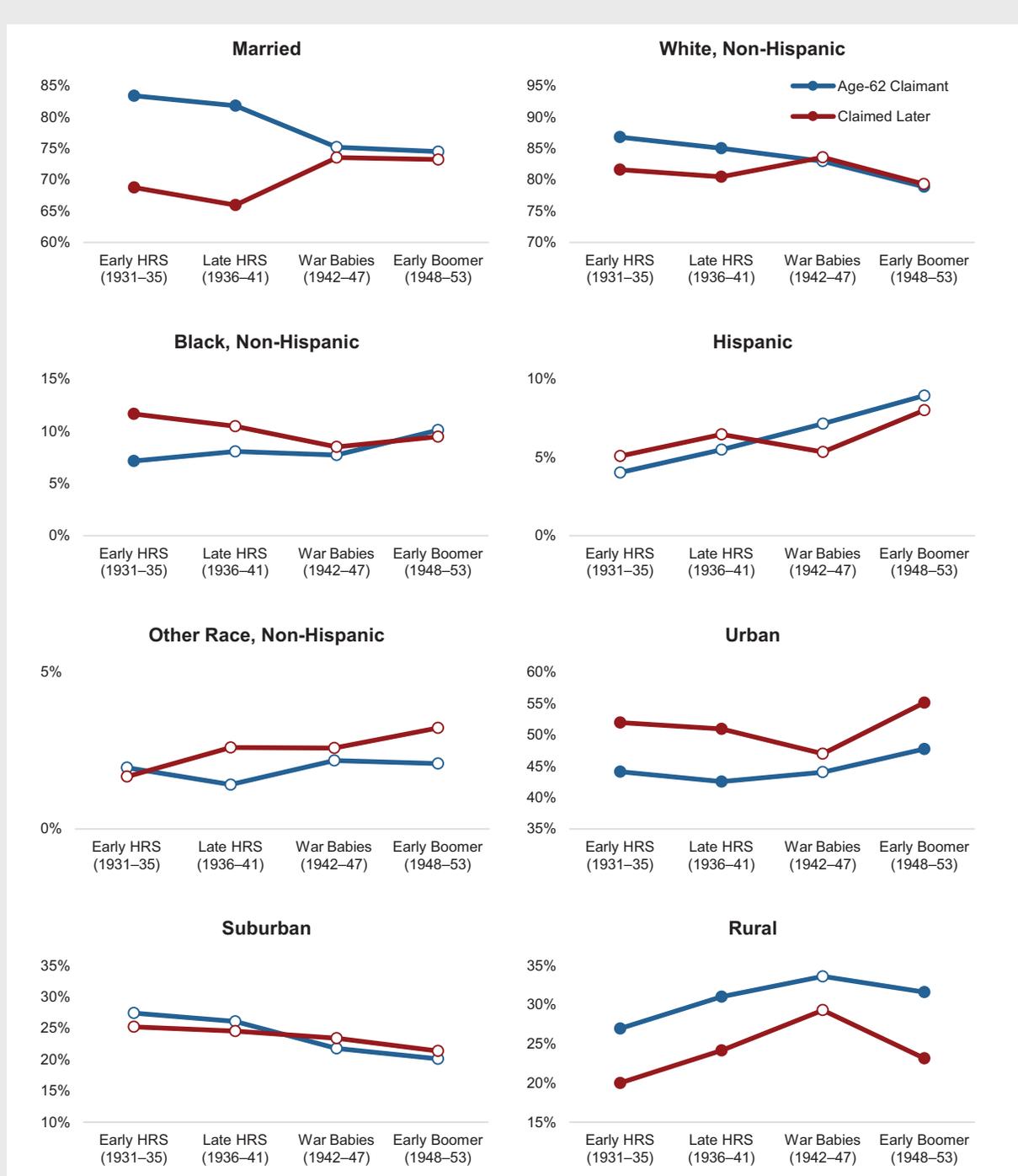
reflect differences in type of work (e.g., more physically demanding labor may limit being able to continue work), cost of living, expectations or goals (e.g., individuals may want to stop work earlier), or lack of information on benefits of delayed claiming.

Similar patterns arise among women in these cohorts, as shown in figure 3.4, with a few notable exceptions. Namely, in earlier cohorts, women claiming at age 62 were more likely to be married than those who postponed claiming until later ages, whereas in more recent cohorts,

**Figure 3.3**  
**Demographic Characteristics by Claim Age and Birth Cohort, Age-60 Men**



**Figure 3.4**  
**Demographic Characteristics by Claim Age and Birth Cohort, Age-60 Women**



NOTE: Solid markers indicate a statistically significant difference at the 5 percent level.

being married is just as common in both groups. This may reflect that, as more women work, their claiming behavior becomes less tied to their husband’s claiming behavior (e.g., less dependence on spousal benefits). Initial statistically significant differences by race, namely higher rates of

claiming at age 62 among White, non-Hispanic women, have disappeared among more recent birth cohorts as well. Patterns by rurality are similar to men, with age-62 claimants more likely to reside in rural areas and later claimants more likely to reside in urban areas.

As the multivariable analysis will show, rurality remains a persistent predictor of claiming at age 62. Given that rural residents disproportionately work in more physically strenuous jobs,<sup>8</sup> health and labor market opportunities may explain some of these differences. Next, we examine these characteristics.

Figure 3.5 examines trends across the cohorts in total years of education, the fraction of respondents reporting being in excellent health, the probability (from 0 to 100) expressed by respondents of living to at least age 75, and the percentage of respondents reporting a health condition that limits the type or extent of work that can be done.<sup>9</sup> All of these measures are measured at age 60, before respondents have a chance to claim Social Security retirement benefits.

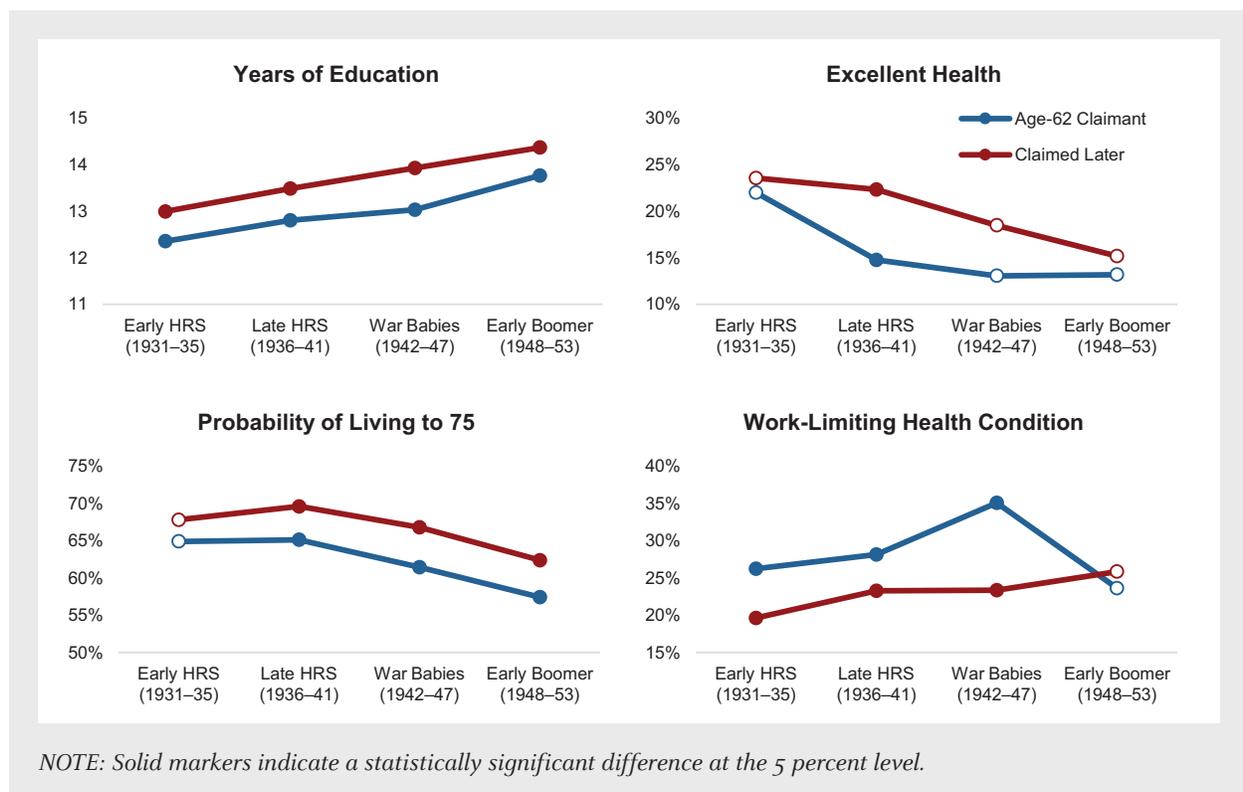
As seen in figure 3.3, educational attainment is generally increasing with more recent cohorts, and this pattern holds for both age-62 claimants and those claiming later. However, average

educational attainment is always higher for those claiming later, with these later claimants having 0.6 to 1 more years of education, on average, than age-62 claimants. This difference persists across all cohorts and is always statistically significant at the 1 percent level.

The role of health is less straightforward. Self-reported excellent health is generally *declining* with more recent cohorts, with those who claim at age 62 less likely to report this highest category of health than those claiming later. However, this difference is only statistically significant for one cohort—the Late HRS cohort—and the difference nearly disappears for the Early Boomers. This difference is consistent with recent evidence using the HRS that shows a decline in health in more recent cohorts (Hudomiet, Hurd, and Rohwedder 2019).

The incentives to claim later rise with expected longevity, since one can enjoy the higher monthly benefits for more years. The HRS asks respondents

**Figure 3.5**  
**Educational Attainment and Health, by Claim Age and Birth Cohort, Age-60 Men**



8 In our analytic sample, 15 percent of age-60 rural workers work in jobs that do not require any physical effort. Of age-60 urban or suburban workers, over 23 percent work in jobs that do not require any physical effort.

9 Individuals with work-limiting health conditions who are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, or those who have applied for Social Security Disability Insurance benefits at or after age 60, are excluded from the analytic sample, potentially limiting the sample to those with less severe work-limiting health conditions.

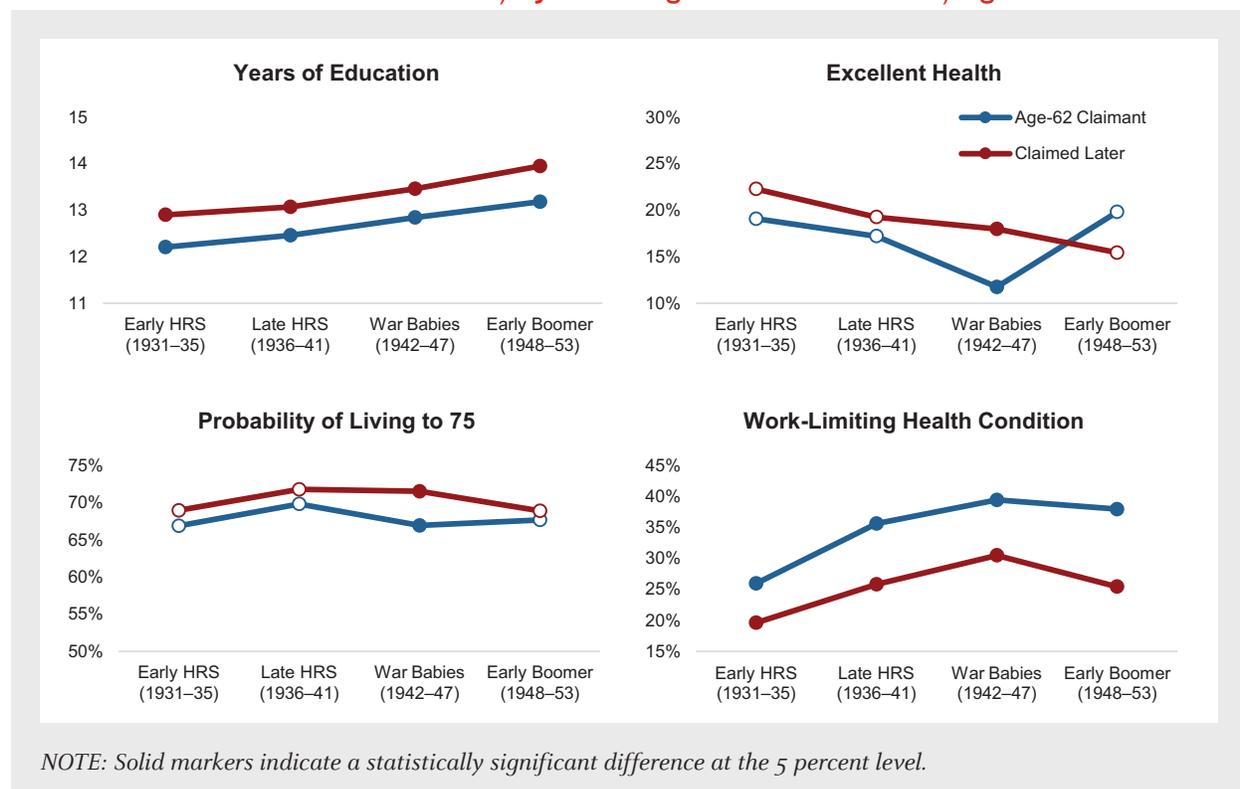
to report their perceived likelihood of living to at least age 75. Consistent with these incentives, men who postpone claiming report a likelihood of living to this age 5 percentage points higher than those who claim at age 62. This difference is persistent across cohorts and is statistically significant.

Workers may choose to claim benefits earlier because of health conditions that interfere with work. Indeed, the final panel of figure 3.5 finds that men who claim at age 62 are more likely to report a work-limiting health condition than those who claim later. This difference is statistically significant for the first three birth cohorts, rising to 12 percentage points for the War Babies cohort; however, it disappears entirely for the Early Boomers. We do not know what led to the elimination of this difference, but possibilities include changes in the nature of work, greater disability program participation leading up to age 62, or changes in the way the HRS asks about work-limiting disabilities.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 3.6 provides education and health comparisons for women. Although the patterns are broadly similar—higher education among later claimants, more likely to report excellent health among later claimants except for Early Boomers—there are two notable differences: although the reported likelihood of living to at least age 75 is higher for women claiming later, this difference is much smaller compared with men and is generally not statistically significant. Differences in the rates of work limitation, however, are large and statistically significant: women claiming at age 62 consistently report higher rates of work-limiting health conditions than those claiming later, with this difference growing in more recent cohorts.

Both education and work limitations predict early claiming, at least for most cohorts, and both have important implications for continued employment; in the next section, we explore employment patterns.

**Figure 3.6**  
**Educational Attainment and Health, by Claim Age and Birth Cohort, Age-60 Women**



10 Up until 2002, the HRS asked respondents about work-limiting disabilities in the employment section of the survey; from 2002 onward, the HRS has a separate section specifically devoted to disabilities.

## DIFFERENCES IN EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS BY CLAIMING AGE

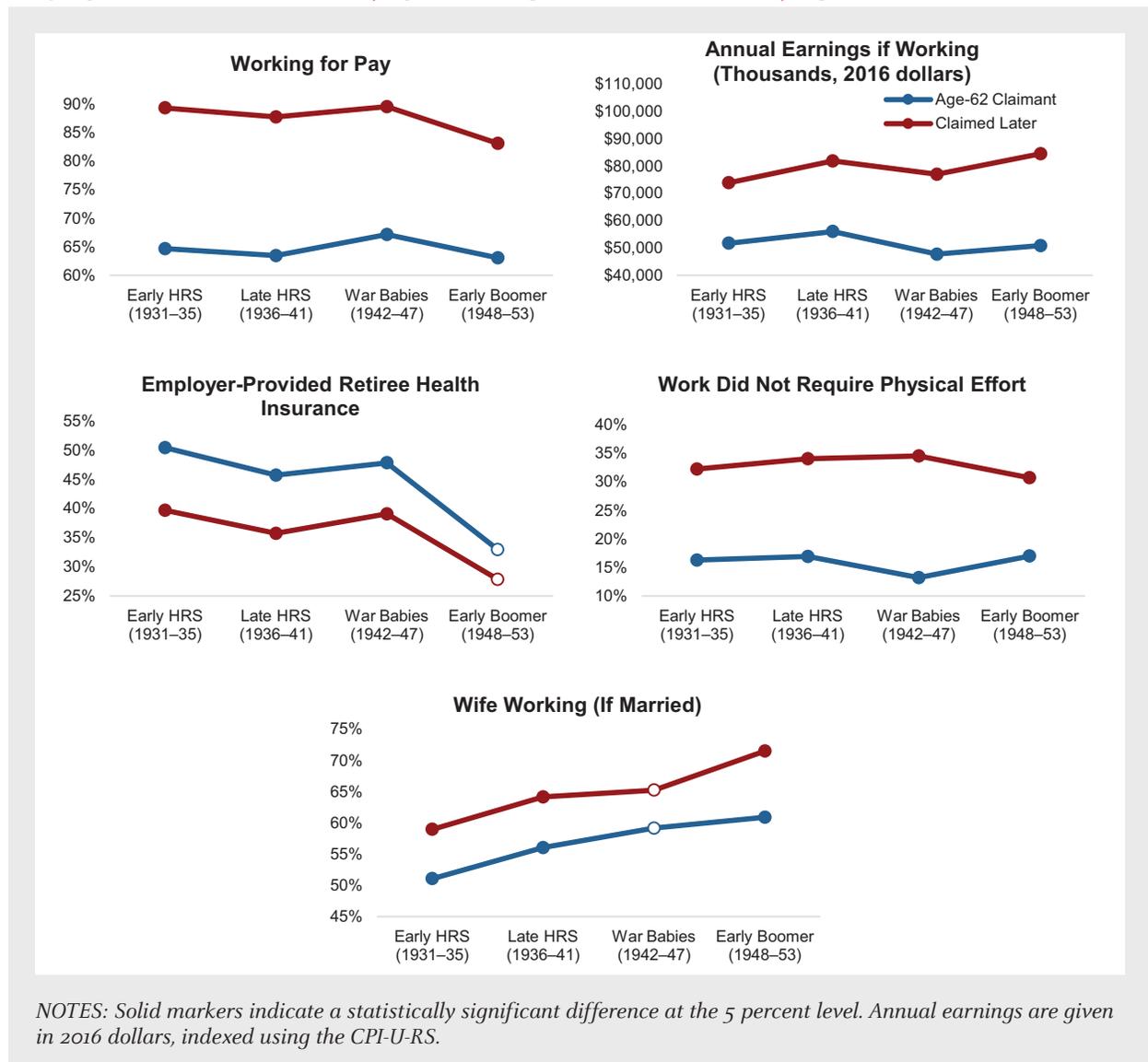
Figure 3.7 shows employment rates of men and their wives (if married, measured when the husband is age 60), annual earnings among workers, employer-provided retiree health insurance coverage, and whether his or her job requires physical effort.

Age-62 male claimants are 20 to 25 percentage points less likely to be employed than later claimants in the interview *before* their 62nd birthdays. Among those working at age 60, men who claim benefits at age 62 had annual earnings \$22,000 to \$34,000 less than those who claimed later. Although the gap in pre-62 employment narrowed with the Early Boomers, this earnings

gap increased, and both of these differences were highly statistically significant for all cohorts. Being employed at a high-paying job is thus a consistently strong predictor of delaying claiming past age 62.

Additionally, men claiming at age 62 are more likely to have employer-provided *retiree* health insurance (insurance provided by some employers that allows them to stay on employers' health insurance after retiring until they reach age 65) than those claiming later, potentially because individuals with this coverage may not need to wait until 65—the Medicare eligibility age—to retire with health insurance coverage. However, rates of retiree health insurance coverage are declining, and the difference between claimant

Figure 3.7  
Employment Characteristics, by Claim Age and Birth Cohort, Age-60 Men



groups is no longer statistically significant for the Early Boomers, some of whom may also have expanded health insurance coverage options due to the Affordable Care Act.

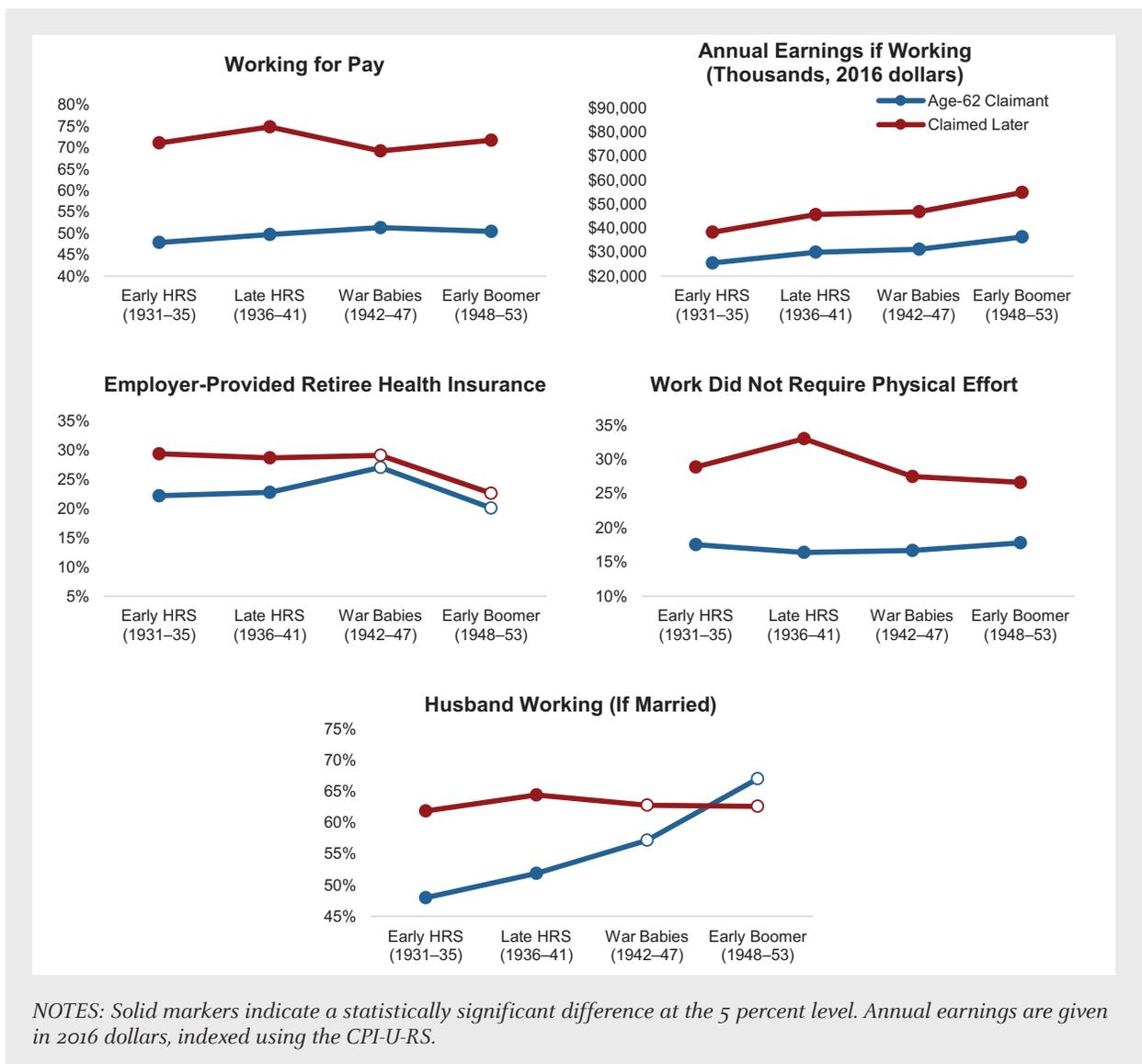
Those claiming later are more likely to have jobs at age 60 that did not require physical effort.<sup>11</sup> Given that those who claim at age 62 are also more likely to have a work-limiting health condition across most cohorts, this finding speaks to how the difficulty of one’s job when turning 62 predicts early claiming. As with the employment and earnings differences, these differences in

physical effort are highly statistically significant at the 0.1 percent level.

In addition to being more likely to be employed themselves, age-60 married men who waited to claim were also more likely to have wives who were employed than married men who claimed at age 62. This difference was statistically significant for all but the War Babies cohort, ranging from 6 to 11 percentage points.

Figure 3.8 shows very similar patterns among women, with two exceptions. First, employer-

**Figure 3.8**  
**Employment Characteristics, by Claim Age and Birth Cohort, Age-60 Women**



11 Respondents were asked how often the following statement regarding their job was true: “My job requires lots of physical effort. Is this true all or almost all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, or none or almost none of the time?” If they responded “none or almost none of the time,” we designate their work as not requiring physical effort.

provided retiree health insurance: women claiming at age 62 were *less* likely to have employer-provided retiree health insurance coverage, whereas age-62 claimant men were more likely to have this coverage. However, this difference in retiree health insurance coverage was not statistically significant. Second, married women who claimed later were statistically significantly more likely to be married to men who were working, but for War Babies and Early Boomers, this difference had disappeared.

Table 3.1 summarizes the major findings from figures 3.3 to 3.8.

**Table 3.1**  
**Conclusions from Demographic, Education, Health, and Employment Comparisons**

Across birth cohort and gender, relative to those who delay claiming until later ages, those who claim at age 62

- Have less education on average;
- Are more likely to live in rural areas;
- Are more likely to already have a work-limiting health condition;
- Have a lower reported likelihood of living to age 75;
- Are less likely to have a job leading up to age 62;
- If employed at age 60, earn less on average;
- If employed at age 60, are more likely to have a physically demanding job; and
- If male, are more likely to be covered by employer-provided retiree health insurance.

These results together describe important economic differences between age-62 claimants and those who claim later: right before turning 62, early claimants were less likely to be employed; if employed, they earned less and were more likely to work in physically demanding jobs; and their spouses were generally less likely to be employed, at least in earlier cohorts for women. One job-related factor shown in figure 3.7 above is positively associated with age-62 claiming: male early claimants were more likely to be covered by retiree health insurance, although this greater coverage has diminished for recent cohorts. This factor suggests that access to benefits normally tied

to employment, such as group health insurance, may relate to earlier claiming. In the next section, we explore how other forms of retirement support or financial resources differ across claimant groups.

### **DIFFERENCES IN PENSION ENTITLEMENTS AND WEALTH BY CLAIMING AGE**

Figures 3.9 and 3.10 show rates of homeownership and pension entitlement by claimant type for age-60 men and women.

Homeownership rates are high among men, and higher among those who claim at age 62. This difference is large and statistically significant at the 1 percent level in the Early HRS cohort. In subsequent cohorts, differences in homeownership are smaller and not statistically significant. For women, the same statistically significant difference holds for the Early HRS cohort: female age-62 claimants were 7 percentage points more likely to own a home than the later claimants in this cohort. However, this difference disappears for later cohorts.

Age-62 claimants are substantially more likely to *already* be receiving pension income from a non-Social Security DB pension, be it private or public. That is, over a quarter of those claiming at age 62 are already receiving pension income from a prior job, consistent with prior research findings that a substantial minority of early claimants are tapping into their Social Security wealth as soon as they can, just as they have their other retirement resources (Burkhauser, Couch, and Phillips 1996). This difference is highly statistically significant and is even larger with more recent cohorts than for the Early HRS cohort. Combined with the retiree health insurance findings in figures 3.7 and 3.8 above, and the higher rates of homeownership among early claimants, these results suggest that at least some early claimants choose to claim at age 62 because they can afford to or have strong incentives to retire: they own their home, they can continue to be covered by their employers' health insurance, and they already have nonemployment income in the form of DB pension income.

Similarly, those who claim at age 62 are more likely to report being entitled to future DB pension income at age 60. However, as seen in figure 3.9, DB prevalence declines in the Early

Figure 3.9  
Homeownership and Pension Entitlements, by Claim Age and Birth Cohort, Age-60 Men

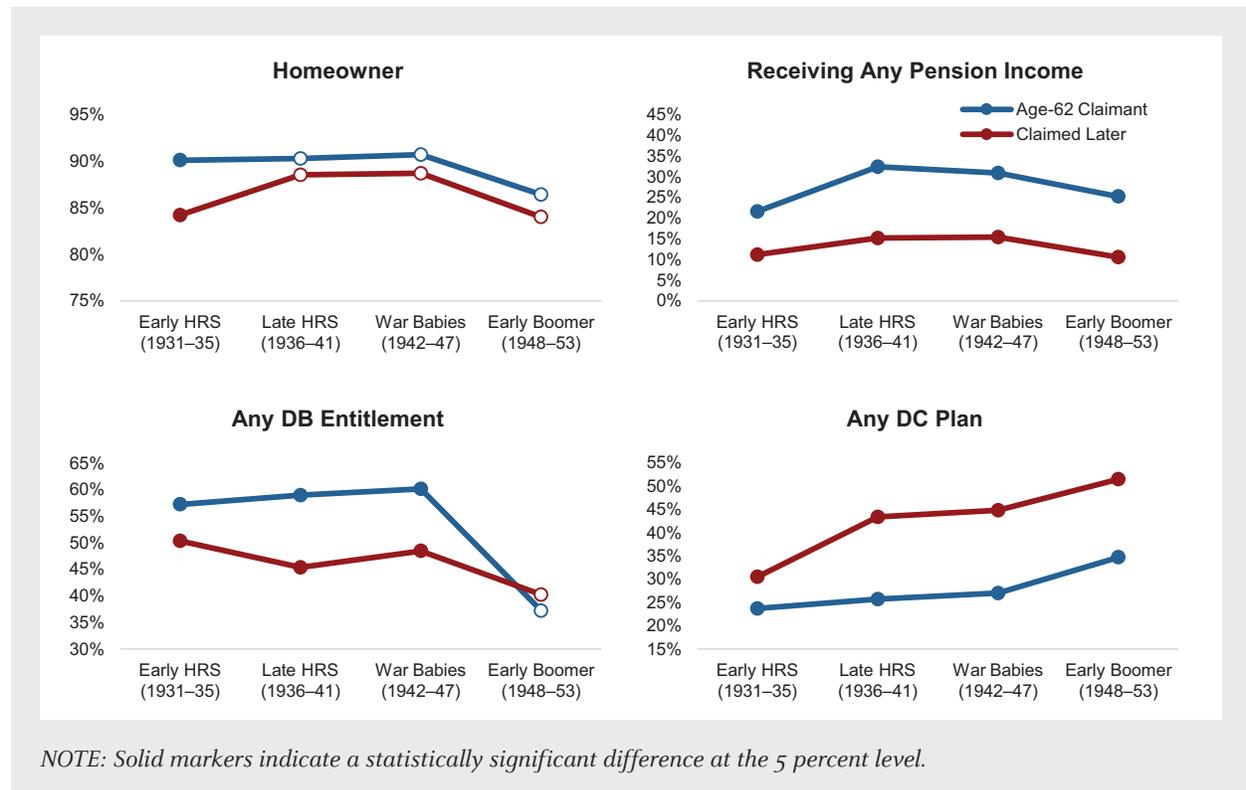
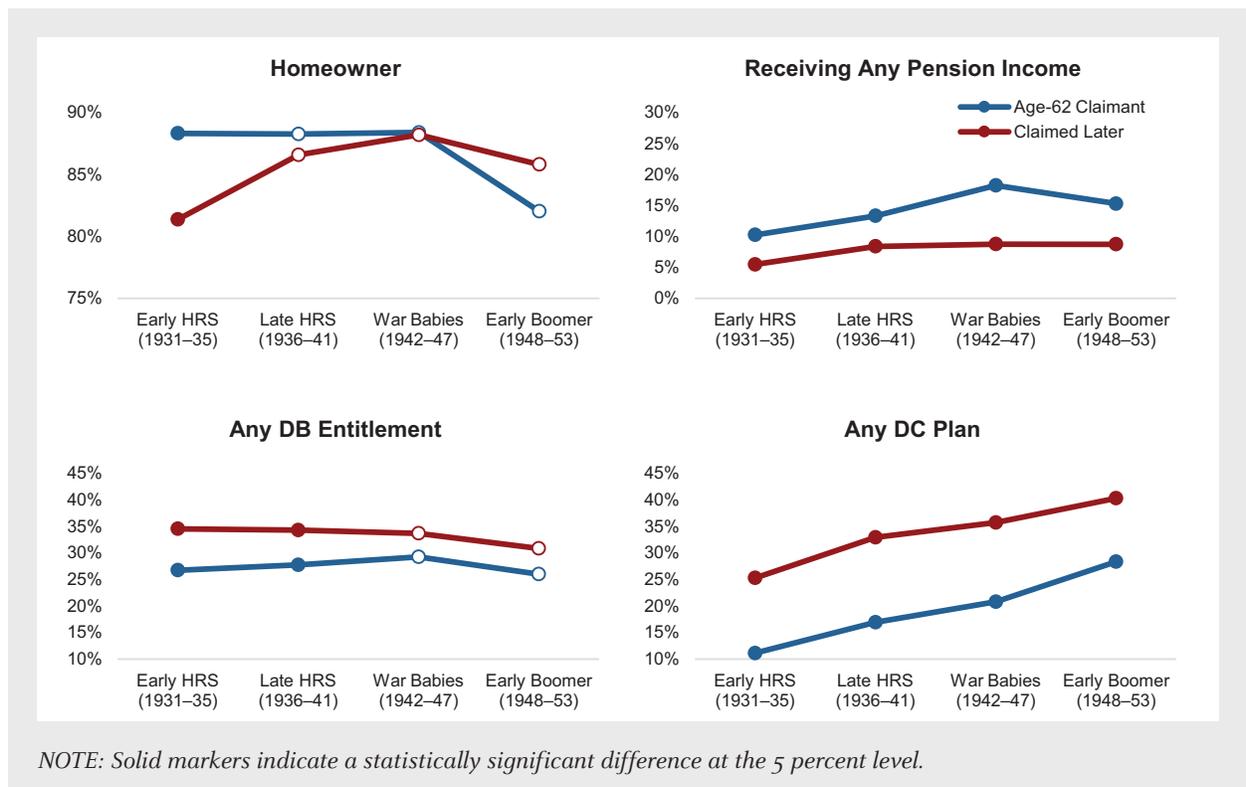


Figure 3.10  
Homeownership and Pension Entitlements, by Claim Age and Birth Cohort, Age-60 Women



Boomer cohort, and this difference in DB pension entitlements by claimant group disappears for men in this cohort. For women, figure 3.10 shows DB entitlement was never as common, and the difference in DB pension entitlements is no longer statistically significant starting with the War Babies cohort. In contrast, having any DC assets was uncommon for the earliest cohort under study—the Early HRS cohort—due in large part to the fact that DC plans emerged in the early 1980s and grew in popularity thereafter. DC asset ownership therefore has grown with more recent cohorts. Those who delay claiming, who may potentially require liquid assets to finance delays in claiming (Goda et al. 2018), are more likely to hold DC assets. For men, this difference has grown across cohorts, while for women, it has stayed relatively stable as this form of pension entitlement has grown. In other words, wealth in the form of pension entitlements and homeownership strongly differs across claimant types, but the composition of these differences has changed over time: early claimants in the 1990s were more likely to be homeowners and have DB entitlements, whereas DC plans are increasingly associated with later claiming in more recent cohorts. Since DC plans often include employer matches, individuals participating in these plans may have a continued incentive to work and thus delay claiming past age 62.

Available resources in retirement are not limited to employer-provided pensions or Social Security alone. Figure 3.11 shows how wealth holdings—in particular, liquid wealth—differ across claimant groups and cohorts for men and women. We define *liquid wealth* as household resources that are cash or near-cash and are thus relatively easy to access for those age 60. In the HRS, we operationalize this measure as the sum of the net value of individual retirement accounts (IRAs); the net value of DC plans; the net value of stocks, mutual funds, and investment trusts; the value of checking, savings, or money market accounts; the value of certificates of deposit (CDs), government savings bonds, and treasury bills; the net value of other bonds or bond funds; and the net value of all other savings. We define liquid wealth at the household level since the majority of these wealth

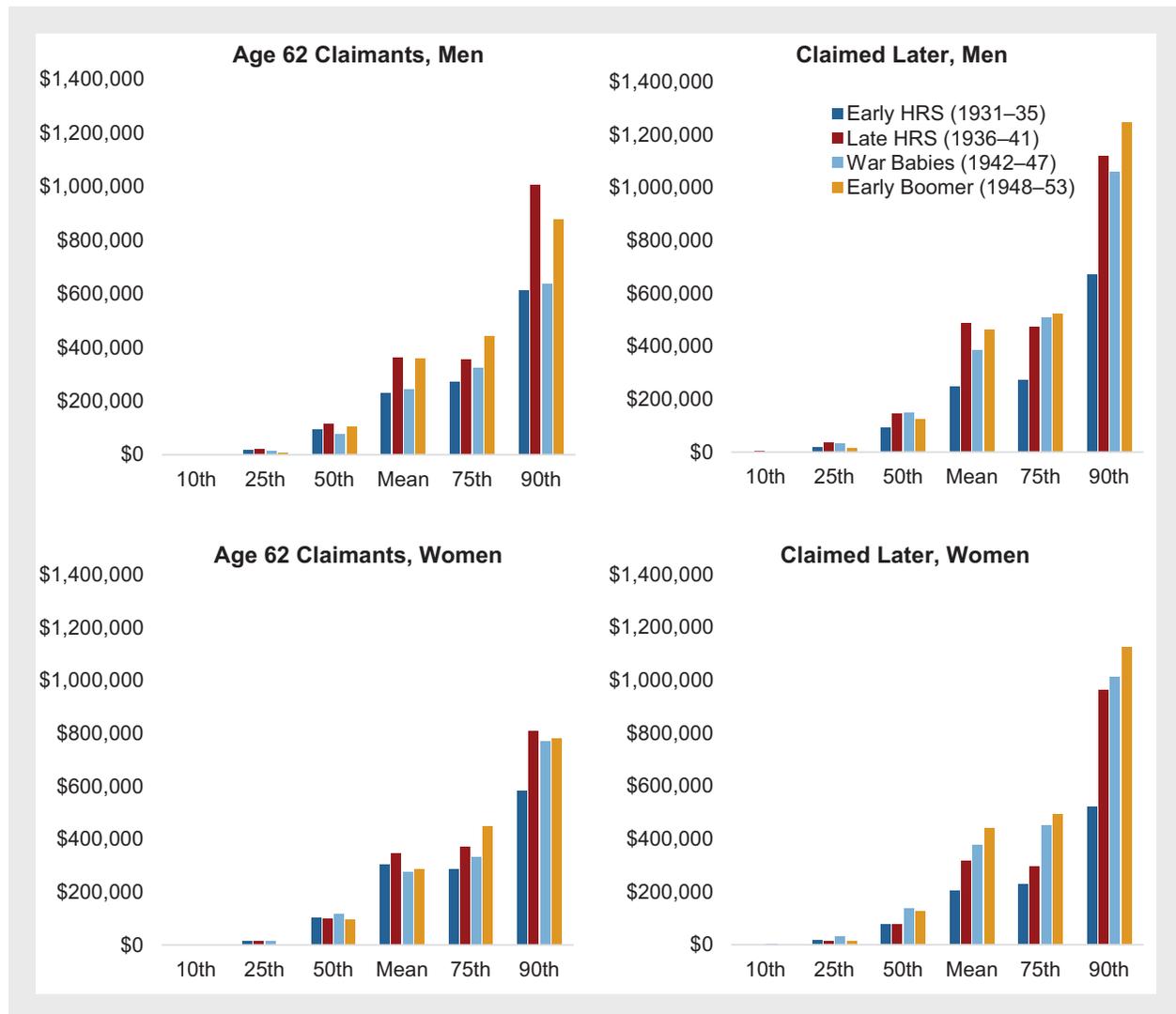
measures are elicited in the HRS at the household level, with the exception being DC plans, which we aggregate to the household level.

In addition to the average, we include five points in each wealth distribution—the 10th, 25th, 50th (median), 75th, and 90th percentiles—since wealth distributions are strongly skewed and substantial average wealth holdings can belie that a substantial fraction of a population has zero such wealth. All wealth statistics are inflated to 2016 dollars with the CPI-U-RS index.

As anticipated, liquid wealth is highly skewed: mean liquid wealth is substantially higher than median liquid wealth across men and women, all the cohorts under study, and claimant types. For men born after 1935, later claimants have higher average liquid wealth than age-62 claimants. In the Early HRS cohort, which had high levels of early claiming, there were similar levels of liquid wealth across claimant types. Indeed, for women in this cohort, age-62 claimants tended to be wealthier than those who claimed later. However, in more recent cohorts, those who claimed later tended to be wealthier on average. This average calculation obscures a striking pattern: wealth differences widen in the top half of the wealth distribution, with wealth at the 90th percentile of later claimants approximately \$300,000 larger than among age-62 claimant Early Boomers.

In earlier cohorts, age-62 claimants had about as much wealth as later claimants: among Early HRS men, the median liquid wealth of later claimants was only 0.4 percent higher than that of age-62 claimants. For Early Boomer men, however, later claimants were wealthier: median liquid wealth for later claimants was 23 percent higher than that of age-62 claimants. So today, in contrast to prior cohorts, later claimants are wealthier: men claiming early today typically have less wealth than their contemporaries who claim later, whereas men claiming early 25 years ago had about the same wealth as their contemporaries who claimed later. Being wealthier is now a predictor of claiming later. This difference is even starker at the high end of the distribution: in the Early HRS cohort, 90th percentile wealth for male later claimants was only 10 percent higher than for age-62 claimants,

Figure 3.11  
Age-60 Liquid Wealth Statistics, by Claim Age, Birth Cohort, and Sex, 2016 Dollars



whereas it's 42 percent higher for later claimants among Early Boomers.

The pattern is even more striking for women: in the Early HRS cohort, female later claimants had *less* wealth than their age-62 claimants, whereas in the Early Boomer cohort, they had substantially *more*. At the median in the Early HRS cohort, women who claimed later had 27 percent *less* liquid wealth than those who claimed at age 62. At the median in the Early Boomer cohort, women who claimed later had 31 percent *more* liquid wealth than their contemporaries who claimed at age 62. At the 90th percentile in the Early HRS

cohort, women who claimed later had 11 percent *less* liquid wealth than their contemporaries who claimed at age 62; at the 90th percentile in the Early Boomer cohort, they had 44 percent *more* liquid wealth.

To sum up, in the 1990s, both at the median and at the top of the distribution, those who claimed at age 62 had as much or more liquid wealth than those who delayed claiming. But in the 2010s, those who claimed at age 62 had substantially less liquid wealth.

Table 3.2 summarizes the major conclusions from the pension and wealth analyses.

**Table 3.2**  
**Conclusions from Pension and Wealth Comparisons**

Relative to those who delay claiming until later ages, those who claim at age 62

- Are more likely to own their home in the 1931–35 birth cohort, although not for more recent cohorts;
- Are substantially more likely to already be receiving pension income;
- Have historically, for men, been more likely to have a DB pension entitlement, except for the younger Early Boomer generation;
- Are less likely to have DC plan assets; and
- Were just as wealthy in the 1990s, but age-62 claimants in the 2010s have substantially less wealth than people who claim after age 62.

**SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES BY DETAILED CLAIMING AGE**

In addition to the comparisons between those who claim at age 62 and those who claim later, we conducted an analysis of the exact age of claiming (in years) when individuals claimed Social Security. In more recent cohorts, fewer people have been claiming at age 62, but at which ages are they now claiming? We also analyzed the differences in characteristics at each claiming age. However, both for length considerations and for issues with comparability (e.g., to examine claiming behavior up to the FRA, we must further limit our sample to those we observe reaching age 66, not just age 63; we focus on those with an FRA of exactly 65 or 66), we provide a summary of the findings from that analysis in table 3.3.

**Table 3.3**  
**Conclusions from Detailed Claiming Age Analysis**

Examining precise claim age among those claiming later showed

- More recent cohorts are shifting from claiming at age 62 to claiming at age 65 or older, not at ages 63 or 64;
- Among men claiming after age 62, living in rural areas is most common among those claiming at ages 63 and 64; and
- The later one claims, the more likely the claimant has DC plan assets or a job requiring no physical effort.

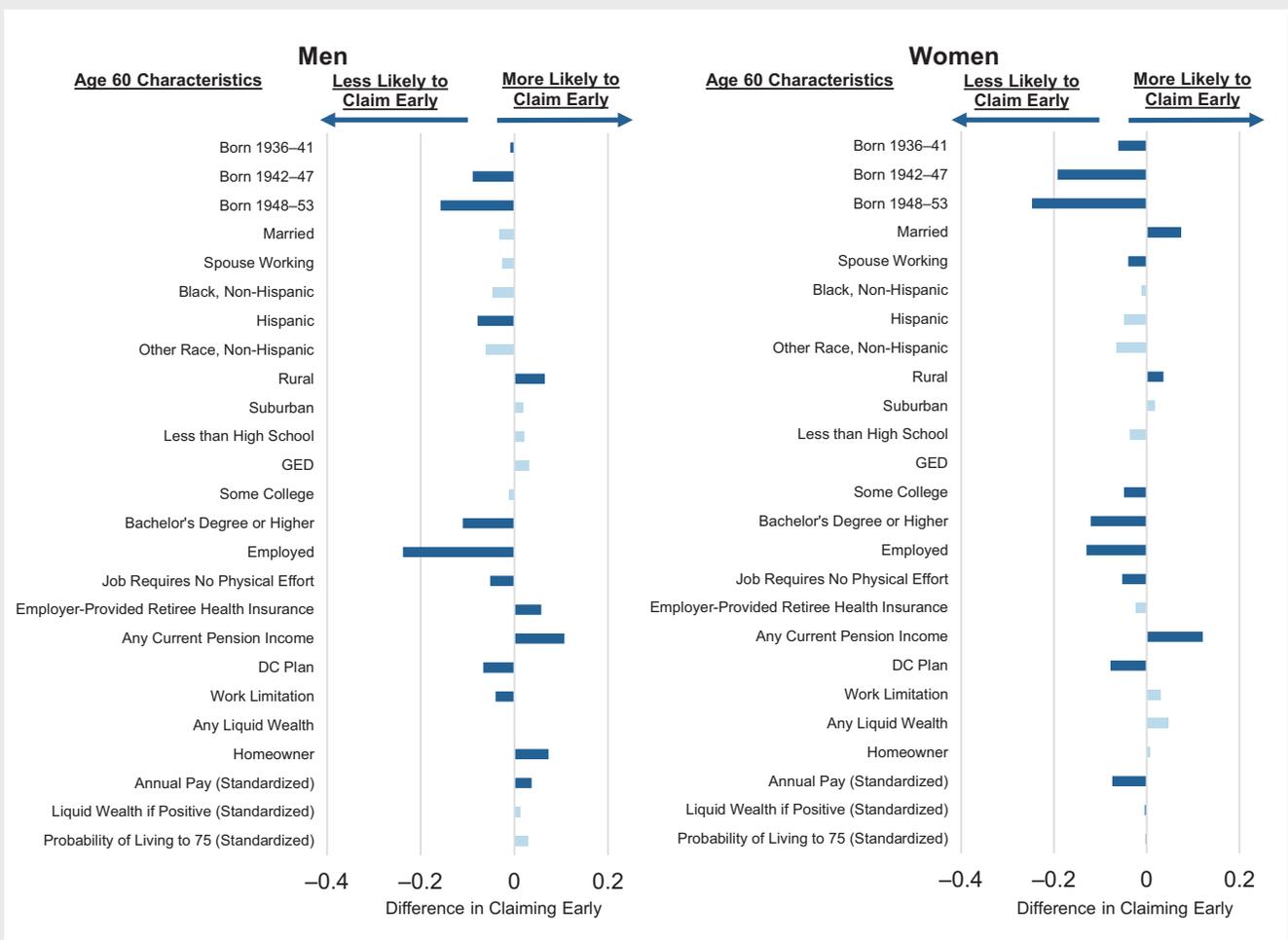
**MULTIVARIABLE ANALYSIS OF CORRELATES WITH AGE-62 CLAIMING**

All of the above analyses have focused on contrasting averages (or, in the case of wealth, distributional statistics) of characteristics between age-62 claimants and later claimants. We conducted these comparisons one at a time, yet many of these characteristics are clearly correlated with one another (e.g., whether one’s job requires physical effort and one’s level of education). In this section we therefore seek to answer the following questions: When including all of these characteristics in a single analysis, which ones remain statistically significant? Has the trend toward claiming after age 62 been primarily associated with shifts in demographics, employment, health, pension entitlements, wealth, and other observable characteristics, or do more recent cohorts claim later even accounting for changes in all of these factors?

To account for the correlation across variables, we run multivariable linear probability regressions,<sup>12</sup> estimating the average effect of each characteristic on the likelihood of claiming benefits at age 62, holding other characteristics constant. We separately estimate these regressions by gender, since the above analyses indicated important differences by gender. All the variables included in the regressions are shown in figure 3.12, which illustrates the marginal effect on the likelihood of claiming early. For example, an estimate of 0.1

12 We estimate linear probability models (LPM) for clarity and transparency: marginal effects are easily interpretable in LPM models. Both probit and logit approaches provide quantitatively similar results, without any differences in statistical significance. Furthermore, for men, only 0.97 percent of predicted likelihoods are outside of the range of zero to one, and only 1.17 percent of women have predicted likelihoods outside of this range, suggesting only small deviations from the linear specification. Due to comparisons across cohorts, the results reported here correspond to unweighted regressions, although using age-60 weights does not substantively change the results.

Figure 3.12  
**Estimated Effects on Likelihood of Claiming at Age 62, Linear Probability Model**



NOTES: Shaded bars are statistically significant at the at least 5 percent level. Estimates and standard errors are provided in appendix table A.1. "GED" is General Education Degree. The reference cohort is those born from 1931-35.

signifies that the variable increases the likelihood of claiming at age 62 by 10 percentage points. An estimate of  $-0.1$  corresponds to a decrease in the likelihood of claiming at age 62 by 10 percentage points.

All but three of the variables are binary: they take the value of either zero or one, and the coefficient reflects the effect when that variable is equal to one. The three continuous variables—annual pay if employed, liquid wealth if in a household with positive wealth, and the perceived likelihood of living to age 75—have been standardized to have a zero mean and a standard deviation of one, and hence the estimate corresponds to a one-standard-deviation increase in that variable. As in the above

bivariate analysis, all variables are measured in the interview directly before turning 62.

Bars that are bold are statistically significant at least at the 5 percent level per Huber-White robust standard errors. Shaded bars correspond to estimates that are not statistically significant.

Many of the significant predictors for early claiming in the tabulations from earlier sections are statistically significant in this multivariable setting: for men, rurality remains a strong predictor, as does having employer-provided retiree health insurance, age 60 receipt of pension income, and homeownership. For women, rurality, age 60 receipt of pension income, and being married predict early claiming.

What is positively associated with claiming later in this multivariable context? For both men and women, six factors are strongly associated with delaying claiming: having a bachelor’s degree (or some college attainment for women), being employed at age 60, earning more in one’s age-60 job, having a DC plan, not living in a rural area, and having no pension income at age 60. That is, those with stronger attachments to the labor market, with high education and high earnings, are more likely to delay claiming Social Security retirement benefits, especially men whose job does not require physical effort and married women whose husbands are employed. Difficulty in continued work may also explain those living in rural areas who claim earlier, although rurality remains significant even when controlling for other covariates. The difficulties in participating in the labor market in rural areas—longer commuting times, disproportionately physically demanding occupations, and lower costs of living—may all factor into the decision to claim earlier. Furthermore, those who are already receiving pension income are more likely to claim as soon as they can.

Finally, we note that, even controlling for a rich range of variables (including sociodemographic characteristics, pension entitlements, employment and job characteristics, health and mortality expectations, and wealth), younger birth cohorts are less likely to claim at age 62 than older cohorts. For women, being in the most recent

birth cohort under study—the Early Boomers (e.g., reaching FRA from 2014 to 2018)—has the largest effect of any variable studied; for men, it is second only to being employed at age 60. Table 3.4 compares the cohort estimates from regressions with control variables to regression estimates derived without control variables. This comparison thus shows the extent to which trends in the underlying characteristics of individuals approaching retirement (e.g., pension entitlements, job characteristics, educational attainment) can explain the shift toward later claiming.

For both men and women, including the control variables shown in figure 3.12 does decrease the estimated cohort differences. That is, trends in these characteristics do account for some of the shift toward claiming after age 62. However, the cross-cohort differences remain large: for men, the shift toward later claiming did not begin until those in the War Babies cohort born after 1943. Without controls, men born from 1943 through 1947 were 11 percentage points less likely than the Early HRS cohort to claim at age 62. With controls, this difference dropped to 8.9 percentage points, so the controls accounted for less than 20 percent of the difference. For the Early Boomers, born from 1948 through 1952, controls accounted for 26 percent of the difference, leaving Early Boomer men still nearly 16 percentage points less likely to claim at age 62 than men with similar characteristics in the Early HRS cohort. Findings for women were similar: the shift toward

**Table 3.4**  
**Estimated Cohort Effects on Likelihood of Claiming at Age 62, Linear Probability Models with and without Controls**

Birth Year	Men		Women	
	Regression <i>without</i> Control Variables	Regression <i>with</i> Control Variables	Regression <i>without</i> Control Variables	Regression <i>with</i> Control Variables
1936–41	-0.0206 (0.0191)	-0.00890 (0.0196)	-0.0749*** (0.0190)	-0.0611*** (0.0189)
1942–47	-0.110*** (0.0225)	-0.0891*** (0.0226)	-0.205*** (0.0199)	-0.192*** (0.0205)
1948–53	-0.213*** (0.0198)	-0.158*** (0.0213)	-0.314*** (0.0183)	-0.247*** (0.0198)

NOTE: Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.1

claiming after age 62 was stronger, with a smaller fraction explained by observable characteristics.

Although figure 3.12 and table 3.4 show that the characteristics that consistently predict early claiming, such as educational attainment and DC assets, matter across cohorts, the

general trend toward claiming later cannot be explained by shifts in these characteristics alone. Responsiveness to incentives within Social Security to delay claiming, greater knowledge of these incentives, and the ability to work at later ages remain as possible explanations for this shift.

## 4. Conclusion

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This report catalogues differences between individuals who claim Social Security retirement benefits as soon as they are eligible for it—at age 62—and those who delay claiming. It tracks how these populations have changed over time in terms of education, labor force participation, pension entitlements, and wealth; and how demographic, employment, and economic characteristics predict claiming age.<sup>13</sup>

Although prior work has conducted similar analyses based on claimants from 1992 to 2006 (Li, Hurd, and Loughran 2008), this report not only updates past analyses but also focuses on the *changes* in early claiming with more recent claimants, leading up to those reaching their full retirement age in 2018. Since that earlier study, many more older workers are delaying claiming past age 62, and the composition of the age-62 claimant population has changed. In contrast to this earlier study, which found that early claimants and later claimants had similar levels of wealth, those claiming at age 62 today tend to be substantially less wealthy than later claimants.

A central takeaway of this analysis is that more recent cohorts differ overall in ways that were associated with claiming later in earlier cohorts. For example, for those born before 1936, both higher education and DC plan ownership were more common among later claimants. And those born after 1948 had higher educational attainment and were more likely to have DC plans compared with earlier birth cohorts. Hence, we may expect

that, because of these differences alone, more recent cohorts would claim later. However, these differences cannot fully explain the large shift toward claiming later. Indeed, the majority of the shift to later claiming is unexplained by the observable economic, employment, health, and sociodemographic measures in this analysis. Possible remaining explanations for this shift include stronger incentives to delay claiming, better knowledge about these incentives, and a greater ability to work longer.

But despite the general shift away from claiming early, many older workers still claim once they turn 62. Multivariable analyses show that many of the characteristics that predicted age-62 claiming in earlier cohorts continue to predict claiming Social Security: age-62 claimants, compared with later claimants, tend to live in rural areas, work in jobs that require physical effort, have lower earnings, and have lower educational attainment. Stronger predictors include whether individuals are already receiving other pension income when they turn 62, whether they have a DC plan, and, most importantly, employment and earnings in the years before turning 62. These results imply that workers with physically demanding jobs who suffer labor market shocks in their 60s may respond to these shocks by claiming early.

Given the ongoing global pandemic and accompanying severe disruptions to the labor market, this report's findings suggest that, absent other forms of support, workers currently close to

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13 Although we present differences based on what is consistently significant, either substantively or statistically, or is referenced in the Social Security claiming literature, we also examined a range of other factors that were not found to be significant either descriptively or within the multivariable framework. These factors include whether respondents report providing care to an elderly parent, providing care to a spouse, having lost health insurance since the last interview, having become newly disabled since the last interview, having experienced worsening self-reported health since the last interview, having taken on any additional debt since the last interview, having taken on at least \$1,000 of debt since the last interview, having experienced a rise in mortgage payments, having experienced a rise in health expenditures, or having lost one's job.

age 62 may begin to rely on Social Security earlier than they would have otherwise.

Understanding *who* claims early, both historically and among more recent cohorts, is the first piece in a larger puzzle. The second report in this series

uses these consistent predictors of early claiming to provide evidence on the short-, medium-, and long-term consequences of claiming early on economic security and well-being.

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# Appendix A: Sample Construction, Comparisons, and Weights

## SAMPLE CONSTRUCTION

We restricted the sample to reflect the population of interest; that is, individuals eligible for Social Security retirement benefits who have not previously received Social Security disability benefits. The sample started with 42,053 individuals in the RAND HRS (1992–2016, Version 1), and we show how many are dropped with each successive restriction parenthetically:

1. Individuals must have responded to a survey at the age of 60 or 61 (25,891 dropped), and again at the age of 63 or older (2,994 dropped).
2. Respondents cannot have received any Social Security benefits before the age of 62 (2,774 dropped).
3. Respondents cannot have applied for Social Security disability benefits at the ages of 60 or 61 so that we can account for any applications or appeals still in process (226 dropped). We also dropped people who applied for Social Security disability benefits at age 62 but did not also claim Old-Age Insurance (OAI) benefits (80 dropped).
4. Respondents must have a sufficient work history, or be married to someone with sufficient work history, to be eligible for Social Security Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) benefits (497 dropped).
5. Respondents must have been born from 1931 through 1953 (89 dropped).

Final sample size: 9,616

We note also that we rely on Gustman et al. (2014) measures of DC wealth through 2010, with 2012–16 DC balances drawn from the first four DC balances self-reported by respondents.

## COMPARISON TO RATES OF AGE-62 CLAIMING FROM OTHER SOURCES

We can compare our estimated age-62 claiming rates among eligible men and women to those of Purcell (2020) for validation. As a note, the exact sample construction used here is similar, but not identical, to Purcell's, in particular regarding the treatment of Social Security DI applicants. In particular,

Figure A.1  
Fraction of Age-62 OAI-Eligible Claimants Who Claim at Age 62, by Year Turning 62, HRS Calculation versus Purcell (2020), Men

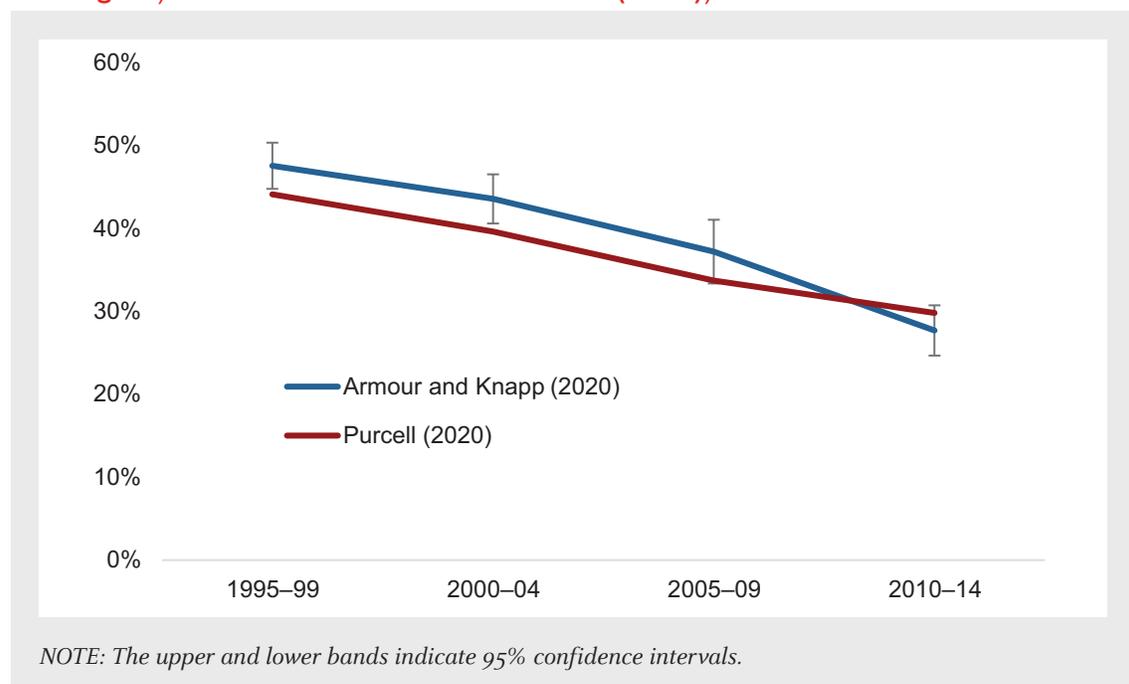
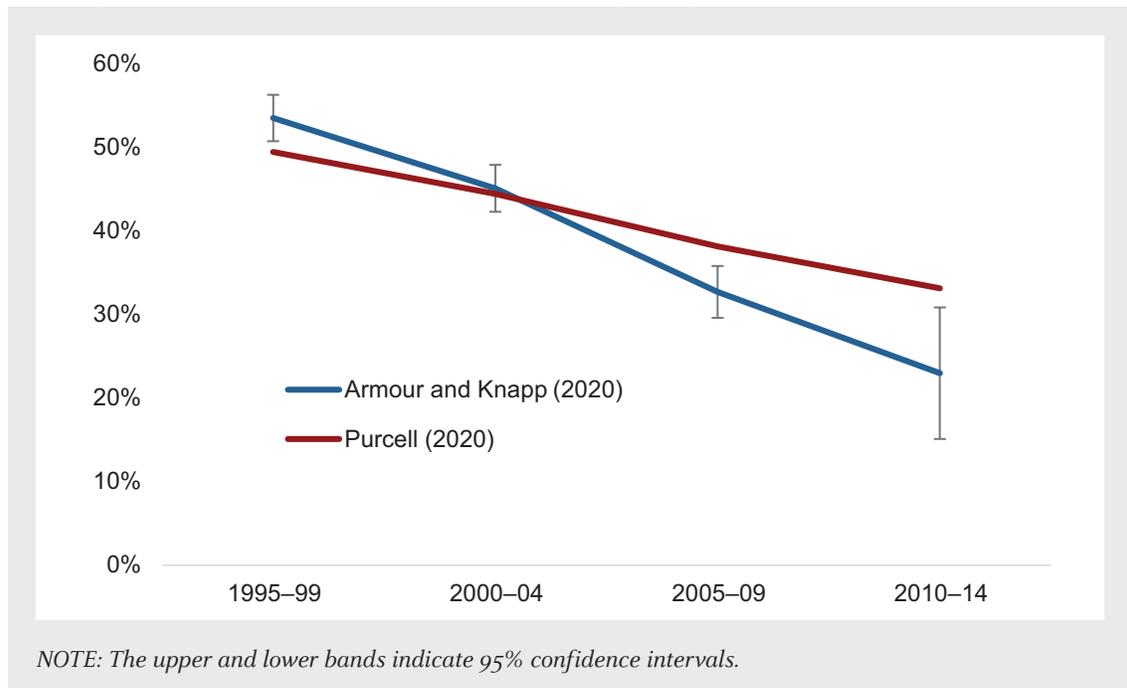


Figure A.2  
**Fraction of Age-62 OAI-Eligible Claimants Who Claim at Age 62, by Year Turning 62, HRS Calculation versus Purcell (2020), Women**



Social Security DI applicants are excluded from our analysis, and only individuals who report receipt of Social Security retirement income at age 62 are counted as age-62 claimants. Furthermore, Purcell (2020) uses Social Security administrative data, whereas we rely on self-reported survey data with a relatively small sample of individuals; the tradeoff is that we have information on a rich array of characteristics. Nevertheless, our age-62 claim rates are broadly similar, with a few notable discrepancies: in earlier cohorts, claiming at age 62 appears to be overestimated in our sample, while for later cohorts, it is underestimated, leading to an exaggeration in the cohort trends in declining age-62 claiming.

## WEIGHTS

The HRS is not immediately nationally representative due to two factors: stratification of the sampling design to ensure adequate samples by race/ethnicity, and post-stratification reweighting to reflect population-level distributions by sex, race/ethnicity, and birth cohort using Census measures of these populations. As such, the HRS provides stratification variables and both person-level and household-level weights for cross-sectional analyses in order to allow for national representativeness in any particular wave. Researchers seeking to conduct longitudinal analyses—following individuals across waves—choose their weighting scheme according to their research design (e.g., base-year or terminal-year weighting). This context presents a difficult scenario: we seek to conduct analyses across waves, since our focus is on characteristics at age 60, which will be in different waves depending on birth cohort and even interview timing within birth cohort.

Fortunately, stratification and post-survey weighting are constructed at the HRS cohort level (e.g., War Babies, Early Boomers). Therefore, our weighting scheme follows a two-step approach:

1. For each of our four cohorts, identify the earliest wave at which any member of that cohort reaches age 60 or 61.
2. Use the person-level weight and stratification variable for that earliest wave as the weight in within-cohort comparisons.

The result is that some individuals' weights as used may differ from their weight in the wave in which they turn age 60, but all weights in our within-cohort calculations correspond to the same cross-sectional wave.

The regression, however, specifically compares across HRS cohorts. Because any weighted analysis would require drawing on weights for different waves (a set of individuals from earlier cohorts do not overlap in the HRS with later cohorts), we run our regressions without weights. However, we include cohort, race/ethnicity, and sex in the regression to limit bias from a lack of weighting, and specifications that rely on a weighting scheme that use weights from the age 60 or 61 wave across all respondents produce qualitatively identical results with only minor quantitative differences, none of which are statistically significant.

Table A.1

**Linear Probability Model Estimates Predicting Claiming Social Security at Age 62**

Age 60 Characteristics	Men		Women	
	No Controls	Controls	No Controls	Controls
<b>Born 1936-41</b>	-0.0206 (0.0191)	-0.00890 (0.0196)	-0.0749*** (0.0190)	-0.0611*** (0.0189)
<b>Born 1942-47</b>	-0.110*** (0.0225)	-0.0891*** (0.0226)	-0.205*** (0.0199)	-0.192*** (0.0205)
<b>Born 1948-53</b>	-0.213*** (0.0198)	-0.158*** (0.0213)	-0.314*** (0.0183)	-0.247*** (0.0198)
<b>Married</b>		-0.0326 (0.0233)		0.0744*** (0.0187)
<b>Spouse Working (If Married)</b>		-0.0256 (0.0165)		-0.0398** (0.0160)
<b>Black, Non-Hispanic</b>		-0.0476* (0.0249)		-0.0111 (0.0209)
<b>Hispanic</b>		-0.0786*** (0.0286)		-0.0479* (0.0264)
<b>Other Race, Non-Hispanic</b>		-0.0601 (0.0436)		-0.0649 (0.0400)
<b>Rural</b>		0.0649*** (0.0184)		0.0362** (0.0168)
<b>Suburban</b>		0.0188 (0.0186)		0.0178 (0.0164)
<b>Less than High School</b>		0.0203 (0.0267)		-0.0369 (0.0230)
<b>GED</b>		0.0307 (0.0355)		-0.000863 (0.0358)
<b>Some College</b>		-0.0114 (0.0217)		-0.0487*** (0.0177)
<b>Bachelor's Degree or Higher</b>		-0.110*** (0.0211)		-0.121*** (0.0190)
<b>Employed</b>		-0.238*** (0.0203)		-0.130*** (0.0177)

Age 60 Characteristics	Men		Women	
	No Controls	Controls	No Controls	Controls
Job Requires No Physical Effort		-0.0519*** (0.0189)		-0.0527*** (0.0168)
Employer-Provided Retiree Health Insurance		0.0575*** (0.0156)		-0.0243 (0.0159)
Any Current Pension Income		0.107*** (0.0206)		0.121*** (0.0231)
Any DC Plan		-0.0668*** (0.0161)		-0.0779*** (0.0158)
Work Limitation		-0.0403** (0.0180)		0.0300* (0.0160)
Any Liquid Wealth		-0.0164 (0.0300)		0.0480* (0.0263)
Homeowner		0.0726*** (0.0230)		0.00809 (0.0207)
Annual Pay (Standardized)		-0.0372*** (0.00823)		-0.0743*** (0.0119)
Liquid Wealth if Positive (Standardized)		0.0116 (0.0110)		-0.00430 (0.0108)
Probability of Living to 75 (Standardized)		-0.0101 (0.00747)		-0.00226 (0.00707)
Constant	0.484*** (0.0139)	0.676*** (0.0441)	0.544*** (0.0139)	0.563*** (0.0364)
<b>Observations</b>	4,473	3,897	5,143	4,776
<b>R-squared</b>	0.029	0.159	0.060	0.143

NOTE: Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.1

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