

Study: An Overview of the Working Lives of Older Baby Boomers, 1983 to 2010

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A new study shows that about two-thirds of individuals at the leading edge of the baby boom generation entered their fifties in long-term jobs, defined as those lasting 12 years or more.

Using longitudinal data, the study followed individuals from 1983, when they were aged 33 to 38, to 2010, when they were aged 60 to 65. Individuals were grouped in terms of the longest job they held and summary measures of their working lives were calculated.

The first group, accounting for 12% of the target population, were those whose longest job lasted five years or less. Individuals in this group, which researchers termed "marginally attached workers," typically had employment in 7 to 9 years over the 28-year study period. Over half of the jobs held by this group lasted one year or less and both annual and cumulative earnings tended to be modest.

The next group, which accounted for almost one-quarter of the target population, comprised workers whose longest job lasted between 6 and 11 years. Although individuals in this group were employed throughout most of the study period, they worked for an average of 8 to 10 different employers over that time. In some cases, job turnover was involuntary among these "mobile workers," with men in the group experiencing an average of 2.8 permanent layoffs and 2.6 temporary layoffs.

The third and largest group, which accounted for two-thirds of the target population, were "long-term job holders." Most of these individuals worked for the same employer for 20 years or more and most did not experience any permanent or temporary layoffs over the study period. Annual and cumulative earnings were considerably higher among this group than among mobile workers. Moreover, while mobile workers typically accumulated 3 to 4 years of pensionable service over the 20 years for which data were available, long-term job holders typically accumulated 7 to 13 years.

Three-quarters of the men in long-term jobs worked in the private sector, with one-quarter in the public or near public sectors (education, health care and social services). Women in this group, in turn, were more likely to work in the public or near public sectors.

Finally, the study shows that there has not been any decline in the incidence of long-term employment over the past quarter century, or conversely, any increase in the frequency of job changes.

The research paper "An Overview of the Working Lives of Older Baby Boomers", part of *Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series* (11F0019M), is now available from the *Browse by key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

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