

Labor Force Participation

Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging

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Fact Sheet

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Highlights

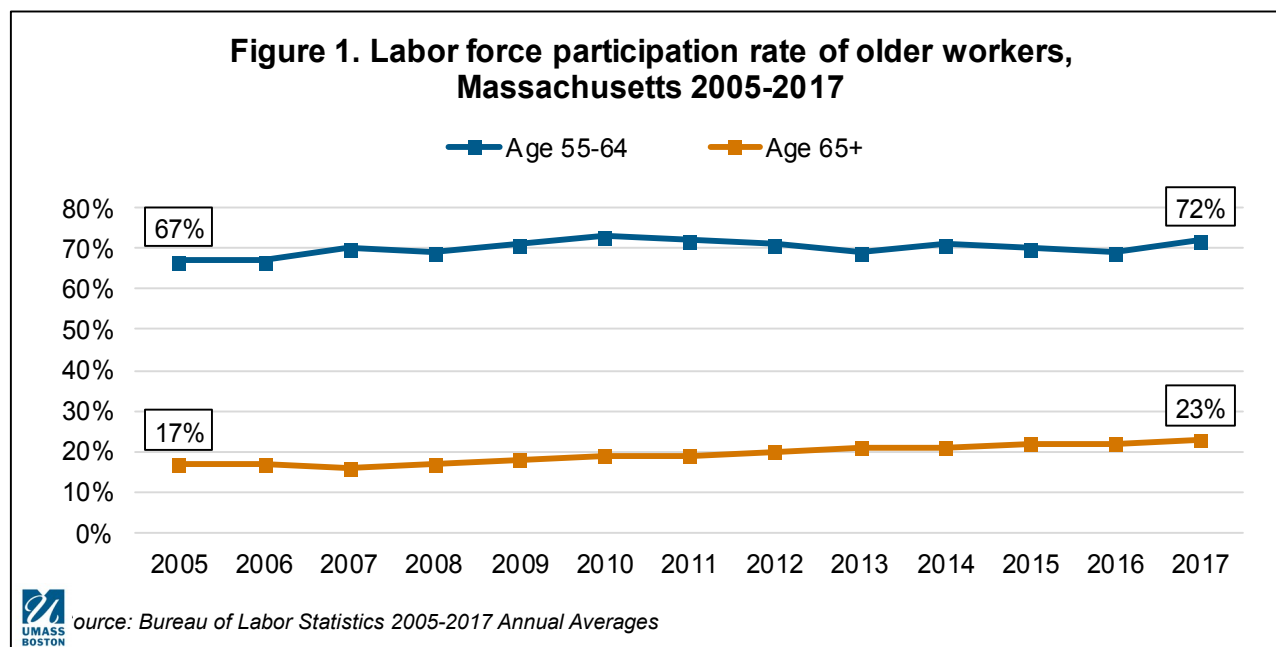
In 2017, 72% of Massachusetts adults age 55-64 and 23% age 65 and over were participating in the labor force.

People age 55 and over make up nearly one-quarter of the Massachusetts labor force.

In Massachusetts, males age 55 and older have higher participation in the labor force than their female counterparts.

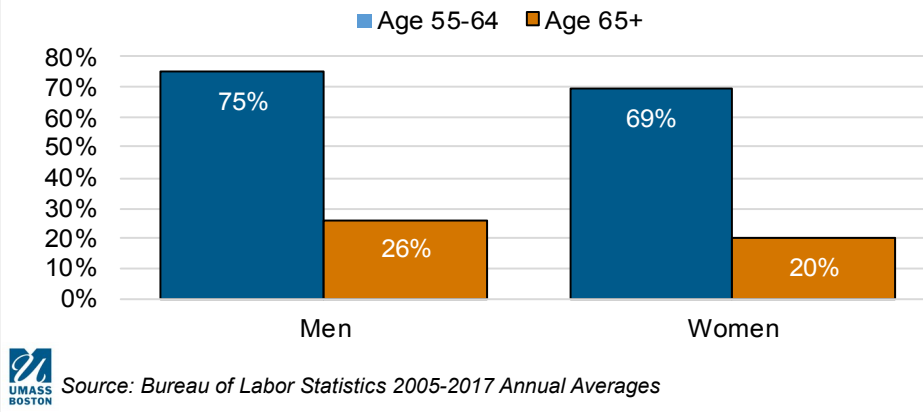
Older Massachusetts Workers, 2005-2017

The labor force consists of individuals who work for pay or work in a family business, and individuals who are unemployed or laid off and looking for work. Older adults who participate in the labor force maintain the benefits associated with working, such as income and continued activity. Yet many seniors are unable to work or choose not to work for pay. Although the majority of those aged 55 to 64 participate in the labor force, fewer Massachusetts adults age 65 and over work for pay (see **Figure 1**). Little change in age-specific labor force participation rates has occurred over the past 10 years in Massachusetts. In general, younger older adults participate in the workforce at a higher rate than older seniors (72% versus 23% in 2017).



Additionally, gender patterns of participation are evident: male workers have higher participation rates than similarly aged female workers (see **Figure 2**). In 2017, 75% of men age 55-64 were in the labor force, compared to 69% of women age 55-64. Again, both male and female workers age 65 and older had lower participation rates than their younger counterparts (26% of males 65 and older and 20% of females age 65 and older in 2015).

Figure 2. Gender patterns of participation among older workers, Massachusetts 2017



Massachusetts employers increasingly rely on older adults. **Figure 3** shows the percentage of the total Massachusetts labor force made up of older workers. Workers age 55-64 represented 18% of the workforce in 2017 and workers age 65 and older made up an additional 7%. Currently, nearly one-quarter of the Massachusetts labor force is age 55 or older, reflecting the aging of the Massachusetts workforce. Over the past 10 years, the percent of workers age 55-64 has grown 5 percentage points and the proportion of workers 65 and older has increased almost two thirds.

Figure 3. Figure 3. Percentage of the labor force made up of older workers, Massachusetts 2005-2017

