# Millions of men are ditching the workforce and experts are sounding the alarm

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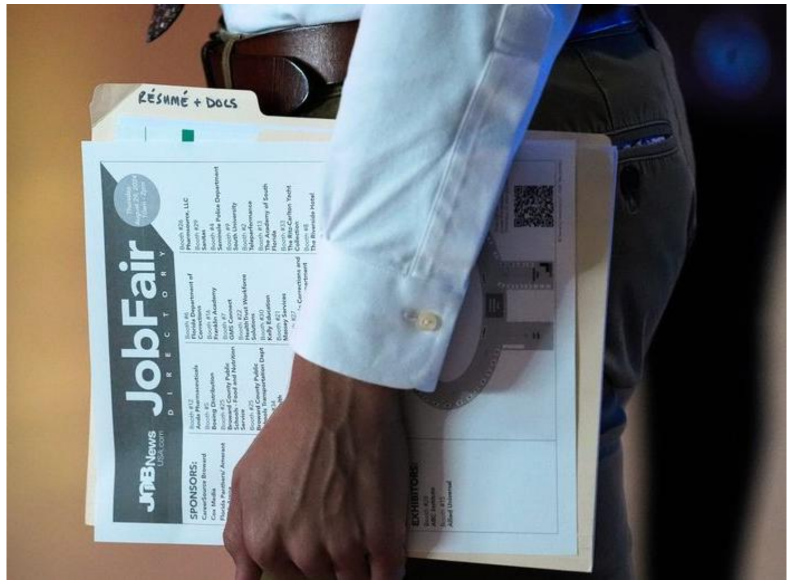


Men are dropping out of the workforce at an alarming rate. Analysts say it's threatening the nation's social stability.

The latest Bureau of Labor Statistics breakdown found that 44.07 million of 132.8 million eligible men older than 15 — or 33.2% — were not in the labor force last month. That's 9 million more out-of-work men (29%) than in 2012.

The number of men opting not to work jumped by 891,000 over the preceding 12 months alone, as the economy sheds manufacturing and finance jobs.

"The American economy has gradually moved away from some of the industries that historically provided good jobs to men without college degrees," said Scott Beaulier, a University of Wyoming economist. "Meanwhile, much of the recent employment growth has occurred in areas such as healthcare and education, where women make up a much larger share of the workforce."

Mr. Beaulier cited research showing that men who stay home in their 30s to play video games or seek social media fame find it "progressively harder" to return to traditional work — and are more likely to end up incarcerated.

The share of eligible men participating in the workforce dropped from 77.5% in 1976 to 66.8% last month, the lowest nonpandemic reading since 1948. Meanwhile, the share of eligible women in the workforce has climbed from 47.3% in 1976 to 56.4%, boosted by growing fields, such as healthcare.

The American Staffing Association says increased retirements, recent immigration restrictions and a surge in boys struggling academically have driven the trends.

The recruiting industry trade group estimates that the number of men leaving the workforce after turning 65 has jumped by 99% since 2000, compared with a 71% increase among women. Currently, 53% of people entering the workforce are women and 47% are men.

"Decreased workforce participation among men poses serious issues for the economy," said Noah Yosif, the staffing association's chief economist. "Bringing more men into the workforce is just as important as preserving the gains of women within it."

Other factors include robotics and artificial intelligence-led automation reducing male-dominated industrial jobs in mining, manufacturing and assembly lines.

Analysts say the decline in working men adds to skilled worker shortages, reduces the national GDP, shrinks the Social Security tax base and increases male suicide and depression rates.

"A large body of research consistently reports that men who are out of work do little productive activity," said Siri Terjesen, an associate business dean at Florida Atlantic University. "Women have become more economically independent and have a larger share of household earnings, but they face a smaller pool of economically stable partners."

Ms. Terjesen said most unemployed men "spend a lot of time on their screens" rather than embrace caregiving, household chores or civic roles traditionally filled by women.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, men make up about 90% of active registered apprentices, especially in construction, manufacturing and IT. At the same time, they are a shrinking minority of the educated white-collar workforce.

Walter Block, a libertarian economist teaching at Loyola University New Orleans, estimates that men now make up roughly 42% of four-year college undergraduates, down from 47% in 2011. He noted that 47% of women aged 25-34 held a bachelor's degree or higher in 2024, compared with 37% of male peers.

"Not only are men dropping out of the workforce, they are also dropping out of colleges and universities," Mr. Block said. "Rampant feminism has taken over our society, much to its great harm."

Brad Wilcox, a University of Virginia sociologist who studies family issues, called it a "catastrophic decline."

“Stagnant pay, absent fathers and the allure of digital distractions all seem to have a hand in this flight from work,” Mr. Wilcox said. “It’s a major problem because men who don’t work full-time are more depressed, less happy and less likely to form strong and stable families.”

**Addicted influencers**

Research shows that young men who choose idleness over work are more likely to become addicted to drugs, pornography and video games.

“Many of these men are mired in substance use, particularly cannabis and opioids,” said Keith Humphreys, a Stanford University psychologist and addiction researcher. “This is bad for their health and also lessens their chance of longer-term success in employment or education.”

A June 1 report that Mr. Humphreys co-wrote at the conservative Institute for Family Studies found that “economically inactive men” were several times more likely than their employed peers in 2022 to abuse opioids, cannabis, tobacco, alcohol, sedatives and methamphetamine.

Financial expert Mark Minnella, co-founder of the National Christian Association of Financial Consultants, described them as lifelong children.

“Work builds purpose, discipline and responsibility,” Mr. Minnella said. “When large numbers of able-bodied men disconnect from work, they often disconnect from responsibility.”

Public health data shows that up to 107 American men kill themselves each day, representing roughly 80% of all suicides.

Shane Winnings, an Afghanistan War veteran who leads the Christian men’s group Promise Keepers, blamed popular culture themes that shame “toxic masculinity” and encourage stay-at-home fatherhood for adding to this trend. At the same time, he noted efforts to install women in military and first-responder roles long filled by men.

“In every century before this one, there was no question about these roles,” Mr. Winnings said. “Today, they are challenged, and the result is a nation that is more anxious, depressed, suicidal, medicated and addicted than ever before.”

Not every analyst agreed with the narrative that men are in decline, however. Some pointed out that women on average still earn less money than men, making companies more likely to hire them.

“We shouldn’t assume every nonworking man is dysfunctional,” said Peter Earle, a senior economist at the free-market American Institute for Economic Research. “Some are students, caregivers, disabled or financially able to remain outside the workforce.”

Aqualus Gordon, a psychology professor specializing in men’s issues at Maryville College in Tennessee, said the feminist renegotiation of gender roles has created a post-pandemic “masculinity crisis” of young men seeking social media fame rather than a 9-to-5 career.

He said that has left many boys and men to find role models in “grifters and ill-informed” online influencers.

“Some of them take the perspective that it’s not worth it to get a traditional job,” Mr. Gordon said.

White House spokesman Kush Desai said that last month’s 89.2% workforce participation rate for men aged 25 to 54 “remains above its monthly average over the last 10 years,” which included a dip during the pandemic.

“And the Trump administration is focused on investing in workforce training and accelerating economic growth to get more working-age Americans off the sidelines and playing an active role in America’s resurgence,” Mr. Desai said in an emailed statement.

**Help wanted**

According to the experts, it’s unclear that the job market for men will improve anytime soon.

“For a variety of reasons, good-paying jobs for unskilled workers are scarce,” said Michael New, a social research professor at the Catholic University of America. “I do not see any cultural shifts on the horizon that are going to motivate working-age men to rejoin the workforce.”

Most finance experts say things will only change when the nation invests more money in vocational programs — and in an education system that promotes rather than minimizes skilled trades.

“We market four-year colleges with campus tours,” said Donald Thompson, managing director of the Center for Organizational Effectiveness at Workplace Options in North Carolina. “We market the trades with a pamphlet.”

Mr. Thompson does not have a traditional college degree. He said an honest sales pitch for skilled trades in schools should include informing boys that an apprentice electrician “earns from week one,” finishes his training debt-free and earns $60,000 to $80,000 a year by his mid-20s.

New York University finance instructor Angelica Gianchandani called on employers to redefine the value of such careers to help younger men survive AI dismantling the corporate career ladder.

“What has to happen is a change in structure, not just sentiment,” Ms. Gianchandani said. “Lead with new pathways into trades and vocational work, not only four-year degrees.”