

RESEARCH NOTE

Involuntary Unemployed By Class*

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Using a nationally representative longitudinal dataset — the HRS — we found between the years 2010 to 2018, 55.3 percent of workers age 55 and up in the bottom half of the income distribution were forced to leave the workforce because of layoffs, plant closings, age discrimination, poor health, and family concerns. A lower, but still substantial share 32.4 percent in the next 40% of the income distribution – the middle class – were forced out of work in old age. Even the most prosperous older workers were forced to retire before they planned, 30.4 percent of those in the top 10% of the income distribution were forced to retire.

Table 1

	Share of involuntarily retired workers		
	Bottom 50 of income	Middle 40 of income	Top 10 of income
2010	66.5	40.3	27.5
2012	58.4	30.2	26.9
2014	56.9	35.3	28.6
2016	56.3	33	51.09
2018	38.2	23	18.1

Source: Author's calculations based on RAND HRS longitudinal File and Health and retirement study core files for 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018. Note: Retirees who cite business closure or change of ownership, layoffs, poor health, family care or quitting over problems at work as causes for leaving their last job before retirement are classified as involuntary retired. At the time of publication of this report, HRS had not yet released sample weights for wave 14 (2018). Author has used 2016 sample weights to produce the share of involuntarily retired workers in 2018. Panel attrition rate between consecutive waves is assumed to be low.

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