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Rate for Employed Males in US Hits New Low

By Jim Meyers
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Only 66.8 percent of American men had jobs in 2010, the lowest percentage on record. And overall, just 45.4 percent of Americans held a job last year, posing a serious challenge for financing the nation's social programs.

The overall employment figure of 45.4 percent is the lowest level since 1983, when women began entering the workforce in large numbers, according to a USA Today analysis.

The bulk of Americans who are not working has shifted from children to adults. In 2000, the nation had about the same number of children and non-working adults. Since then, however, the number of non-working adults has grown by 27 million, while the country added only 3 million children under age 18.

Several factors are contributing to the low employment percentages. Men are dropping out of the workforce as jobs in construction and manufacturing disappear. Until the 1960s, more than 80 percent of men had jobs. The percentage of women with jobs, which had been steadily rising, leveled off between 1995 and 2010, when it was 56 percent.

Also, 77 million Baby Boomers are beginning to move from the workforce into retirement.

USA Today observes that retirees are more expensive to support than children. The average public school education costs $10,000 a year, while the average retiree receives $25,000 a year in benefits.

John Goodman, president of the National Center for Policy Analysis, declared: "No matter how wealthy you are, you have a problem if half the population is not working and depending on those who are."