



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
 McCourt School of Public Policy  
 Center for Retirement Initiatives

## FAST FACT SHEET #5

### *How Have Employer Provided Pensions and Retirement Savings Changed?*

- ✓ While overall participation in employer-based plans has been flat or declining, there has been a shift from defined-benefit pensions to defined contribution plans in the private sector.  
 Economic Policy Institute, [Retirement Inequality Chartbook: How the 401\(k\) revolution created a few big winners and many losers](#), September 2013.
- ✓ In 1979, 28% of all private sector workers only participated in a defined benefit plan, but by 2011, 3% of all private sector workers only participated in a defined benefit plan.  
 Employee Benefit Research Institute, [FAQs About Benefits—Retirement Issues: What are the trends in U.S. retirement plans?](#)
- ✓ In 1979, 7% of all private sector workers only participated in a defined contribution plan, but by 2011, 31% of all private sector workers only participated in a defined contribution plan.  
 Employee Benefit Research Institute, [FAQs About Benefits—Retirement Issues: What are the trends in U.S. retirement plans?](#)
- ✓ Among those private sector workers who had retirement plans in 1979, 62% only had a defined benefit plan, 16% only had a defined contribution plan, and 22% had both. By 2011, however, 7% only had a defined benefit plan, 69% only had a defined contribution plan, and 24% had both.  
 Employee Benefit Research Institute, [FAQs About Benefits—Retirement Issues: What are the trends in U.S. retirement plans?](#)
- ✓ In 2014, 60% of private sector workers had access to a defined contribution plan, while 19% of private sector workers had access to a defined benefit plan.  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Retirement benefits: Access, participation, and take-up rates, private industry workers, National Compensation Survey](#), March 2014.
- ✓ Access to plans for private sector workers varies significantly based on firm size. 46% of workers in firms larger than 500 employees had access to a defined benefit plan, while 8% in firms with less than 100 employees had access to a defined benefit plan.  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Retirement benefits: Access, participation, and take-up rates, private industry workers, National Compensation Survey](#), March 2014
- ✓ Access to plans for private sector workers also varies significantly based on unionization. 71% of unionized private sector workers had access to a defined benefit plan, while 13% of non-unionized private sector workers had access to a defined benefit plan.  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Retirement benefits: Access, participation, and take-up rates, private industry workers, National Compensation Survey](#), March 2014
- ✓ In 2014, 83% of state and local government workers had access to a defined benefit plan, while 33% of state and local workers had access to a defined contribution plan.  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Retirement benefits: Access, participation, and take-up rates, State and local government workers, National Compensation Survey](#), March 2014
- ✓ Of those state and local government workers in unions in 2014, 95% had access to a defined benefit plan, with 86% participating. Of those workers not in unions, 75% had access to a defined benefit plan, with 65% participating.  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, [Retirement benefits: Access, participation, and take-up rates, State and local government workers, National Compensation Survey](#), March 2014