



## Economic Review

# The Uneven Recovery in Prime-Age Labor Force Participation

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Prime-age individuals without a college degree had larger declines in their labor force participation during and after the recession, due in part to the disappearance of routine jobs.

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The labor force participation rate of prime-age individuals (age 25 to 54) in the United States declined dramatically during and after the Great Recession. Although the prime-age labor force participation rate has been increasing since mid-2015, it remains below its pre-recession level. Understanding the reasons for this decline requires detailed analysis; aggregate statistics on labor force participation may mask potential differences in labor market outcomes by sex or educational attainment.

Didem Tüzemen and Thao Tran identify these differences, finding that prime-age men and women without a college degree experienced larger declines in their labor force participation rates during the recession than their college-educated counterparts. The disappearance of routine jobs over the last few decades may explain these declines. In addition, they find that only prime-age women with a college degree have seen their labor force participation rate fully recover to its pre-recession level, although their participation rate remains well below that of both college-educated and non-college-educated men.

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