

Men without work
Nicholas Eberstadt

A systematic investigation of why men are dropping out of the workplace, omitting some important variables.

Male participation in the American workplace has been decreasing rather consistently since World War II. Eberstadt sees this as a major social problem that requires explanation and resolution.

He has compiled an extensive analysis with a great many graphs to attempt to explain the situation. There are a great number of factors to take into account. A statistician would attempt to put together a regression analysis, parameterizing all of the major factors and looking for the linear equation that best relates the dependent variable, male employment, to the independent ones. However it is not quite that simple.

The major dependent variable is called EPOP - employment to population ratio. After World War II almost all able-bodied men – upwards of 95% – in the 25 to 54 year age bracket were working. Those that were not working were considered unemployed, looking for work. There were, as always, a few men who were permanently out of the workplace. These include men with deep physical and mental impairments, by birth, accident or war.

However, even in this Halcyon postwar period there were different ways to look at it. Another choice for an independent variable might have been men aged 20 years and older, embracing student and retiree populations.

Many independent variables suggest themselves, among them:

- Education – the fact that men spend more of their working years acquiring an education
- Educational attainment – the fact that there is more workplace demand for better educated men
- Technology – the changing nature of the workplace
- Immigration background – some people came to this country seeking work, others found themselves here and may or may not want to work.
- Marriage – married men have a stronger incentive to work
- Children – men with children have a stronger incentive to work
- The entry of women into the workplace – more competition
- Race and ethnicity – lingering prejudice against certain groups
- Criminality – arrest, conviction and incarceration history
- Welfare and unemployment income – Social Security Disability, Medicare, WIC, AFDC, food stamps and many other government programs.

Eberstadt makes several strong arguments. The first is the observation that the statistics for the above-named independent variables come from a number of different sources and are not compatible. For example, many men convicted of felonies are given suspended sentences and therefore do not experience incarceration. Some statistics capture this distinction, some don't. Government welfare programs do not keep good statistics. Though Eberstadt does not say so, there is a strong will on the part of many to avoid doing so. His first argument would be that there is a need for reliable, compatible data collection in order to study the situation.

His strongest argument is that the percentage of the population under control of the criminal justice system skyrocketed in the 1970s and 1980s. The percentage of young men with a criminal background went from under 2% to over 5%. For young black men that went over 20%. It is difficult for people with a criminal background to get jobs. Eberstadt does not dwell on the fact that men become socialized to a life of crime while in prison. While this is definitely true, it is the harder phenomena and to parameterize.

The book concludes with a call to action. He would like to see a higher level of entrepreneurialism in America – more new businesses that might employ young people. He would like to lessen the stigma against employing men with

criminal backgrounds. He would like to see fewer disincentives to work. He contends that if men can get along adequately by tapping into the various welfare programs available, they will not bestir themselves to work.

Lastly, delightfully, Eberstadt has invited comment from Henry Olson and Jared Bernstein, other students of the problem who have somewhat different point of view. They each contribute five page essays gently criticizing Eberstadt's article and the book concludes with Eberstadt's last words.

That's the book review. It deserves five stars for what it is. Here is an independent opinion of what it does not include but should.

My first and most significant observation is that Eberstadt is an American Enterprise Institute colleague of Charles Murray, the author of [\[\[ASIN:030745343X Coming Apart -The State of White America, 1960-2010\]\]](#) and [\[\[ASIN:0684824299 Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life\]\]](#). Murray's willingness to be more politically incorrect allows him to better illuminate these problems.

The entrance of women into the workplace represents more than competition for men. It is a profound social change. Working women do not need men to take care of them. They have less inclination to get married and have fewer children. Whereas women have found a place for themselves in a man's world, men have absolutely not found positions in the former women's world. Men **are not** taking the place of mothers.

As Murray said in "Coming Apart," the things that give meaning to a man's life are belonging to a community, commitment to a family, meaningful work and religion. Absent these, there is not much purpose in life. I would advocate that Eberstadt consider the diminished role of men in American life as one of the explanations for their diminished work.

There has been a jihad against men in the University and the workplace. Men are routinely accused of sexual harassment and discrimination. It makes the workplace less attractive to them. Fewer of them go to college – the professoriate is increasingly feminine, and hostile to men. Four recent books on the topic are [\[\[ASIN:1455566381 Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging\]\]](#), [\[\[ASIN:1935965891 Sexual Utopia in Power\]\]](#), [\[\[ASIN:B003WT26I0 Is There Anything Good About Men?: How Cultures Flourish by Exploiting Men\]\]](#) and [\[\[ASIN:B01MZ6YAWG No Campus for White Men: The Transformation of Higher Education into Hateful Indoctrination\]\]](#)

Technology relentlessly decreases the workplace demand for strength, bravery and tolerance of unpleasant working conditions. Male jobs such as mining, construction, warehousing and stevedoring are in increasingly less demand. There is more on the horizon. Over the road trucking is being targeted for driverless vehicles.

New jobs are more intellectually demanding. Nursing, librarianship, restaurant management and almost any kind of white-collar work require computer competence as well as domain specific skills. Being a cubical rat also requires more of a docile temperament. Testosterone is a liability.

Eberstadt discusses the possibility of lingering racial discrimination. In bringing race into the equation, he should revisit The Bell Curve. Two additional decades of work have not resulted in one iota of change in the science of intelligence. The gaps separating Asians, Whites, Hispanics and Blacks remain immutable. What have changed are the demographics of these groups. Asians and whites are having the fewest children, and the smartest among them are having fewer than the slower. Eberstadt needs to grapple with the reality that the workforce is getting dumber just as the workplace demands more and more intelligence. [\[\[ASIN:0957391331 Helmuth Nyberg\]\]](#) is one of the few social scientists to address this problem head on.

To add – International comparisons

