
Changes in Occupation Structure and Opportunities for Older Workers

Gary Burtless

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Planning Meeting on Work, the Workplace, and Aging

National Academy of Sciences

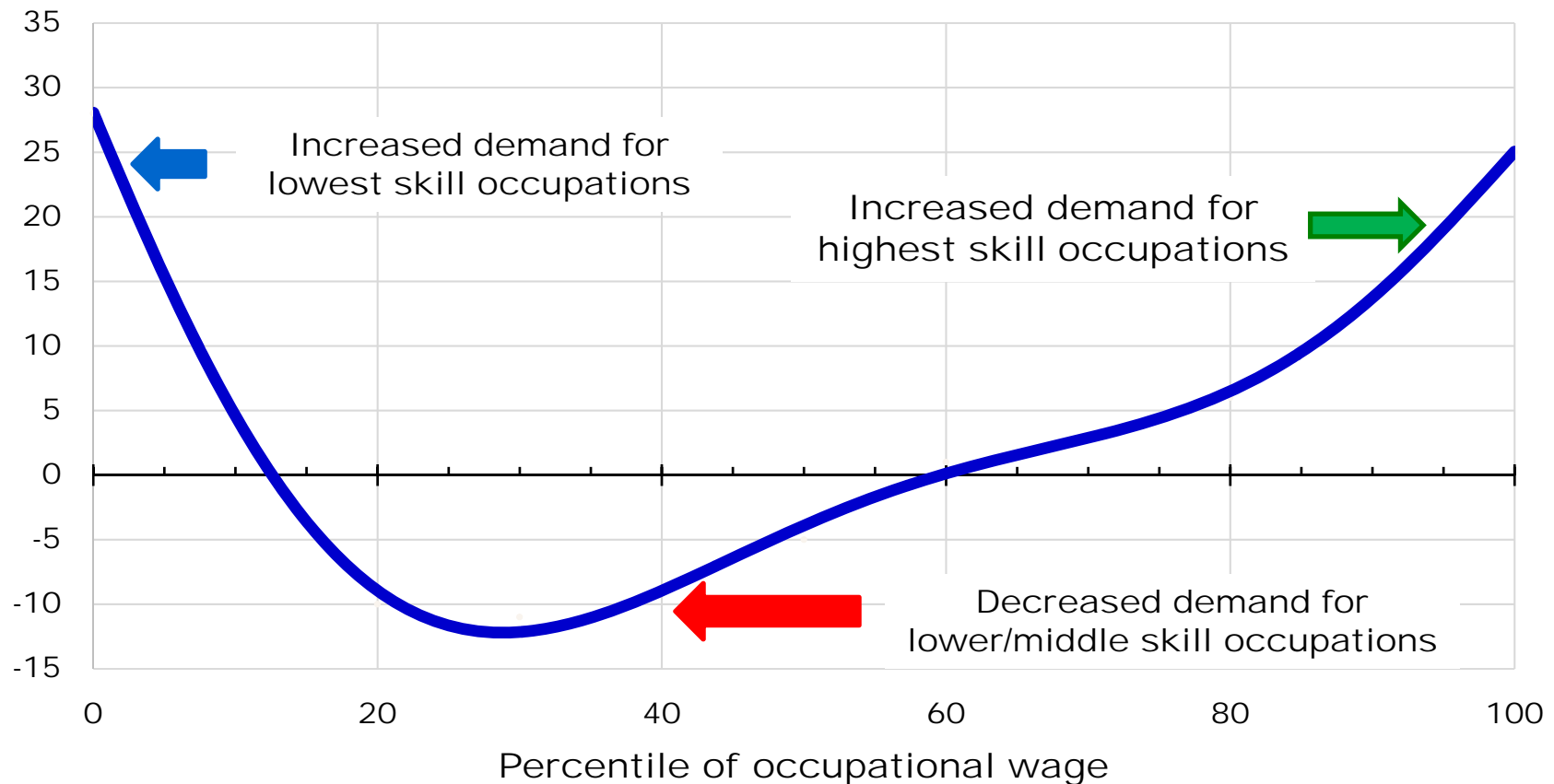
September 5-6, 2019

Occupation structure

- Increase in relative size of occupations requiring college diploma / advanced degree
 - **Shrinkage of occupations in which workers perform routine tasks requiring middle skills**
 - Shrinkage of occupations requiring low skill repetitive work *EXCEPT* for in-person services: These occupations are expanding
 - **But is this relevant for demand for older workers?**
 - The workers remaining in workforce to later ages tend to be better educated
-

“Hollowing out” of occupational skill structure: The Share of Middle-Skill Jobs Has Fallen Since 1980

Percent change in employment share, 1980s to 2005

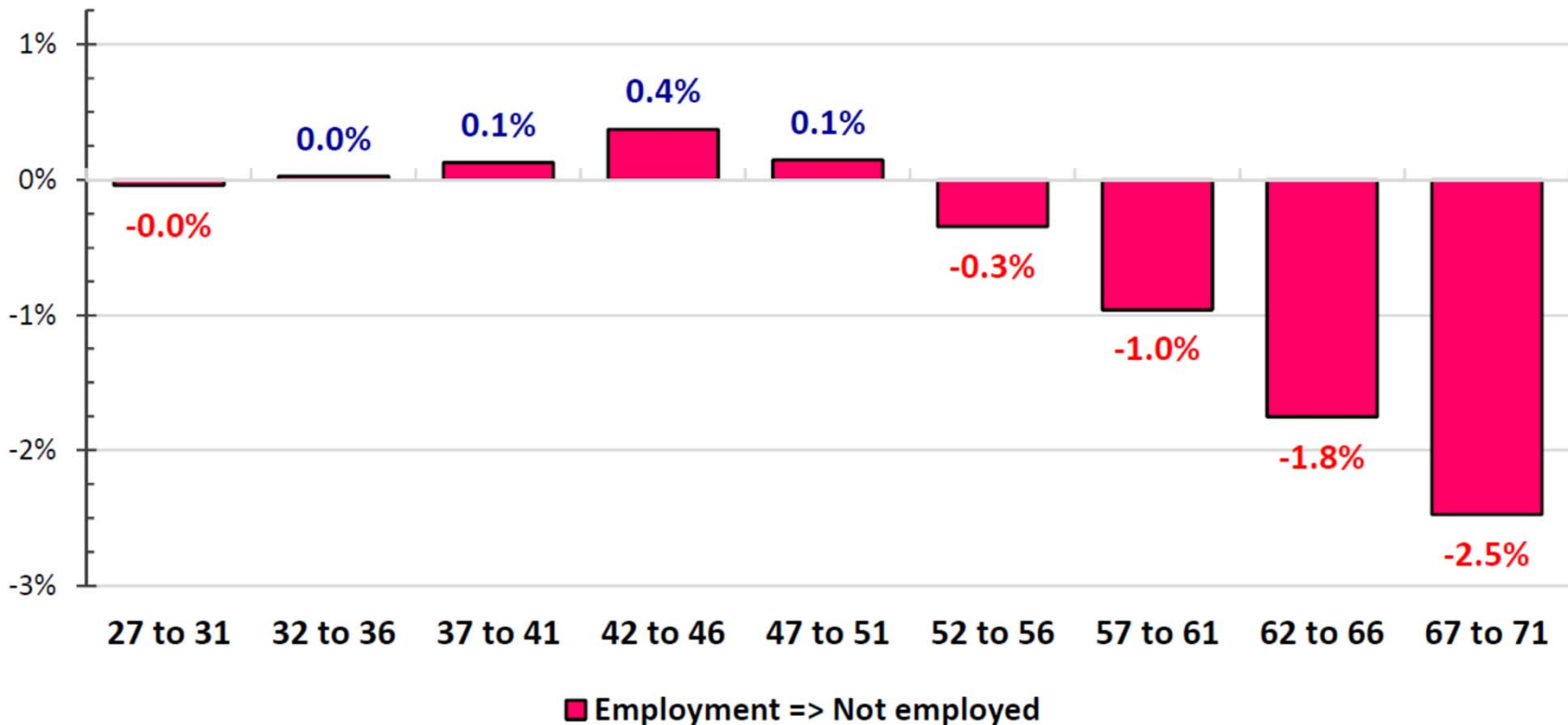


Participation and employment rates of Americans 62+ continue to rise

- They even rose—though very slowly—during and immediately after the Great Recession
 - The rate of increase picks up steam in tighter job markets
 - The challenges facing future aged workers:
 - Business cycle downturns
 - Employer discrimination against older job applicants
 - Verified in randomized controlled trials
 - “Skills mis-match” is unlikely to be the key problem facing older workers / job applicants
-

Change in Monthly Transition Rate from Employment to Joblessness, 1994 – 2014: Women

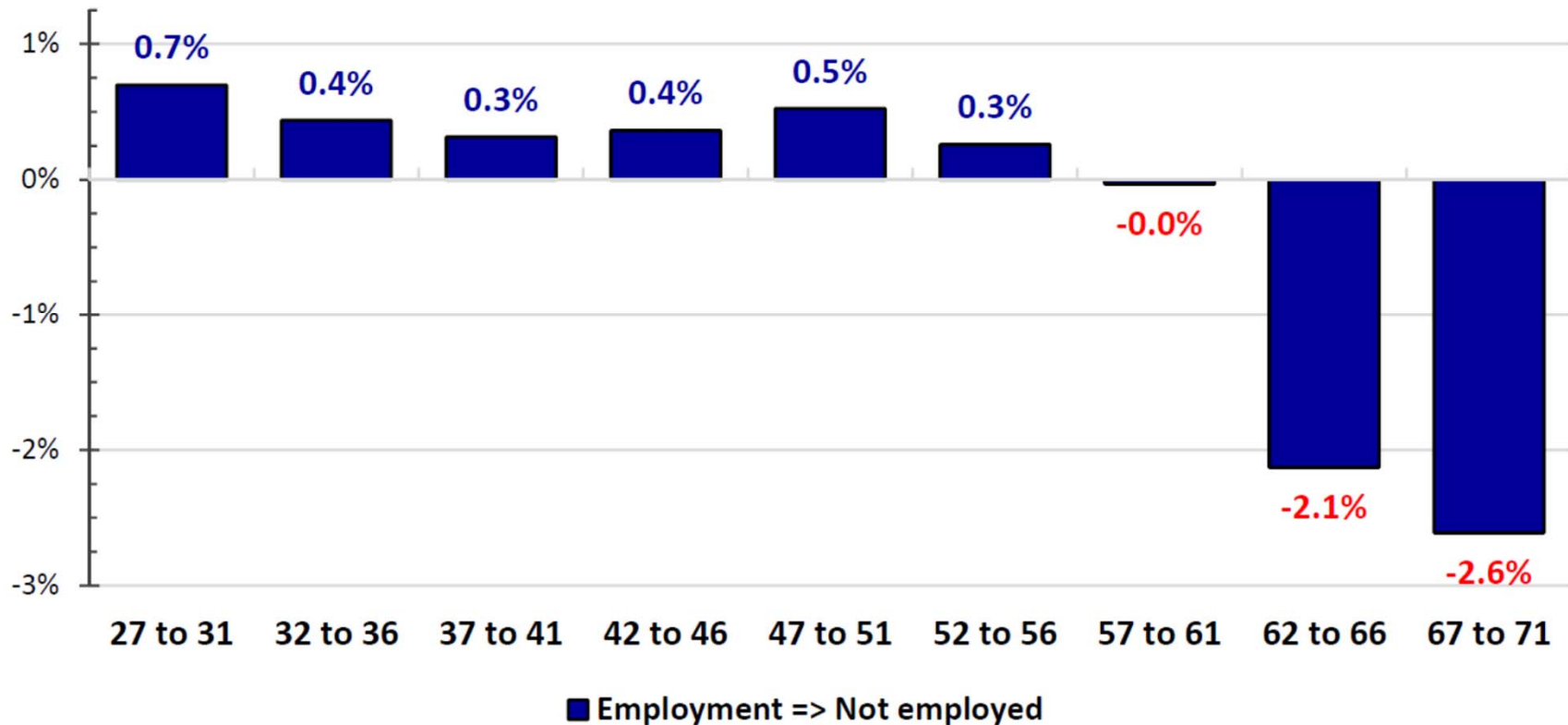
Change in women's E => Joblessness exit rate by age group



Source: Burtless (2016), "LABOR FORCE DYNAMICS IN THE GREAT RECESSION AND ITS AFTERMATH: IMPLICATIONS FOR OLDER WORKERS" Chestnut Hill, MA: Retirement Research Center at Boston College.

Change in Monthly Transition Rate from Employment to Joblessness, 1994 – 2014: Men

Change in men's E => Joblessness exit rate by age group



Source: Burtless (2016), "LABOR FORCE DYNAMICS IN THE GREAT RECESSION AND ITS AFTERMATH: IMPLICATIONS FOR OLDER WORKERS" Chestnut Hill, MA: Retirement Research Center at Boston College.