

Women in the Labor Force: A Databook

Introduction

A major development in the American workforce has been the increased labor force participation of women. In 1970, only about 43 percent of women age 16 and older were in the labor force; by 1999, that figure had risen to 60 percent. From 1999 to 2004, women's labor force participation rate receded slightly to 59.2 percent, still well above the rates that prevailed throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and much of the 1990s. Along with rising labor force participation, women also made substantial inroads into higher paying occupations. In 2004, half of all management, professional, and related occupations were held by women. Women's earnings relative to men's also have risen. From 1979 to 2004, women's earnings as a percent of men's increased by 18 percentage points, from 62 to 80 percent. The movement of women into the labor force and into higher paying occupations has gone hand in hand with their pursuit of higher education. For example, in 1970, only 11 percent of women age 25 to 64 had completed 4 or more years of college; by 2004, nearly 33 percent held a college degree.

This report presents historical and current labor force and earnings data for women and men from the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a national monthly survey of approximately 60,000 households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unless otherwise noted, data are annual averages from the CPS. For a detailed description of the source of the data and an explanation of concepts and definitions used, see the Technical Note at the end of this report.

Highlights

- In 2004, about 59 percent of women were in the labor force. Although the unemployment rate for women rose from 4.1 percent in 2000 to 5.4 percent in 2004, it remained relatively low by historical standards. The unemployment rates for white and Asian women were much lower than those of their black and Hispanic counterparts. (See tables 1, 2, and 3.)
- Since the early 1980s, women's and men's unemployment rates have been roughly similar. In 2000, the jobless rates for women and men were 4.1 and 3.9 percent, respectively.

Both figures were the lowest in 30 years. From 2000 to 2003, unemployment rates for both sexes rose but then declined in 2004. (See table 2.)

- From 1975 to 2000, the labor force participation rate of mothers with children under age 18 rose from 47 to 73 percent. From 2000 to 2004, the rate receded slightly to 71 percent. Mothers with older children (6 to 17 years of age) are more likely to participate in the labor force than are mothers of younger children (under 6 years of age). Unmarried mothers have higher participation rates than do married mothers. (See tables 6 and 7.)
- The educational attainment level of women age 25 to 64 rose substantially from 1970 to 2004. About 3 in 10 women in the labor force held college degrees in 2004, compared with about 1 in 10 in 1970. About 8 percent of women in the labor force were high school dropouts in 2004, compared with 34 percent in 1970. (See table 9.) Data from 1970 were from the March supplement to the CPS.
- Women held half of all management, professional, and related occupations in 2004. However, women's share of specific occupations within this broad category varied. For example, only 14 percent of architects and engineers and 29 percent of physicians and surgeons were women. In contrast, 86 percent of paralegals and legal assistants and 89 percent of dietitians and nutritionists were women. (See table 11.)
- Employed Asian women were more likely than employed white, black, or Hispanic women to work in management, professional, and related occupations (about 44 percent compared with 39, 31, and 22 percent, respectively). Hispanic and black women (30 and 27 percent, respectively) were more likely than white or Asian women (19 percent each) to work in service occupations. (See table 12.)
- In 2004, women accounted for more than half of all workers in each of the following industries: Financial activities, education and health services, and leisure and hospitality. Women were underrepresented (relative to their share of total employment) in mining, construction, and transportation and utilities. (See table 14.)

- In 2004, women who worked full time had median weekly earnings of \$573. Asian and white women earned more than their black and Hispanic counterparts (\$613 and \$584 compared with \$505 and \$419). In 2004, women's median weekly earnings were 80 percent of men's. Women's-to-men's earnings ratios were higher among black and Hispanic workers (89 and 87 percent, respectively) than among white and Asian workers (80 and 76 percent, respectively). (See table 16.) (Users should note that the comparisons of earnings in this report are made on a broad level and do not control for many factors that can be significant in explaining earnings differences.)
- Female college graduates age 25 and over earned about 76 percent more than women with only a high school diploma in 2004. This difference in earnings by education has increased sharply since 1979, when female college graduates earned 43 percent more than female high school graduates. Nonetheless, female college graduates who were full-time wage and salary workers had median weekly earnings that were only 75 percent of those of their male counterparts in 2004, \$860 versus \$1,143. (See table 17.)
- In 2004, approximately 26 percent of employed women usually worked part time, compared with about 11 percent of employed men. Over the past 35 years, the proportion of women who worked part time has changed little, and the proportion for men has edged up slightly. (See table 20.) (Part-time workers are defined as those who usually work less than 35 hours a week.)
- From 1976 to 2004, women in nonagricultural industries increased their average workweek by about 2 hours to 35.9 hours. Men's average workweek remained relatively unchanged over the same period and was 41.6 hours in 2004. (See table 21.)
- Nearly 60 percent of all women who worked at some time in calendar year 2003 worked full time and year round, compared with 41 percent in 1970. During the same period, the proportion of men who worked full time and year round grew from 66 to 73 percent. (See table 22.) These data were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and refer to work experience during the prior calendar year.
- Both wife and husband had earnings from work in 58 percent of married-couple families in 2003, compared with 44 percent in 1967. (See table 23.) These data were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.
- Working wives' contributions to family income grew by about 9 percentage points between 1973 and 2003. In 1973, wives' earnings accounted for 26 percent (median) of their families' incomes; by 2003, that share had grown to 35 percent. The proportion of wives earning more than their husbands also grew. In 1987, 18 percent of working wives whose husbands also worked earned more than their spouses; in 2003, this proportion was 25 percent. (See tables 24 and 25.) These data were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.
- In 2004, about 1.3 million female workers paid at an hourly rate had earnings at or below the Federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour; nearly half of these women were age 16 to 24. Among workers age 25 years and over who were paid hourly rates, about 2 percent of women had earnings at or below the minimum wage, twice the rate for men. (See table 26.)
- Women who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more in 2003 were slightly more likely than men to live in poverty; 6.0 percent of women were in poverty versus 4.7 percent of men. Moreover, among those who worked or looked for work for 27 weeks or more, black and Hispanic women were more than twice as likely as white and Asian women to live below the poverty level. Poverty rates generally decline with age; among those in the labor force for 27 weeks or more, about 1 in 10 women between the ages of 16 and 24 lived below the poverty level in 2003, compared with about 1 in 20 women age 25 and older. (See table 27.) Data are from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.
- Men were slightly more likely than women to have flexible schedules on their jobs in May 2001, and white women were more likely to have flexible schedules than either black or Hispanic women. Unmarried women were more likely to have flexible schedules on their jobs than married women, although the reverse was true for men. (See table 30.) Data are from the May 2001 Work Schedules supplement to the CPS.
- About 15 percent of both women and men reported working at home at least once per week as part of their main job in May 2001. Working at home was more common for parents than for nonparents. Women were slightly more likely than men were to be paid for work they did at home. Self-employment was fairly common among those who worked at home in May 2001: about 27 percent of women who worked at home were self-employed; the comparable figure for men was 33 percent. (See table 31.) Data are from the May 2001 Work Schedules supplement to the CPS.

- About 2.3 million women and 3.0 million men experienced job displacement between January 2001 and December 2003. Women who were displaced were roughly twice as likely as men to have left the labor force by January 2004 (20 percent versus 12 percent). (See table 32.) Data are from the January 2004 Displaced Worker supplement to the CPS.
- In 2004, among recent high school graduates, young women were more likely than young men to enter college (72 percent versus 61 percent). (For information on the labor force status of recent high school graduates and dropouts by school enrollment and sex, see table 33.) Data are from the October 2004 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.
- Almost 48 percent of women age 16 to 24 who were enrolled in either high school or college in October 2004 were in the labor force. This is slightly above the labor force participation rate of men enrolled in school. Young women not in school were less likely than their male counterparts to be in the labor force (73 percent versus 87 percent). Among young women who were not in school, labor force participation rates were dramatically lower and unemployment rates four times higher for those who had not completed high school than for those who had graduated from college. (See table 34.) Data are from the October 2004 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.
- In 1970, 2.2 percent of employed women were multiple jobholders, but by 1995, the rate had nearly tripled to 6.5 percent. Subsequently, the multiple jobholding rate for women trended downward, falling to 5.6 percent by 2004. The multiple jobholding rate for men also has declined in recent years, from 6.3 percent in 1998 to 4.9 percent in 2004. (See table 35.) Data were collected in the May CPS.
- In 2004, 5.6 percent of employed women were self-employed compared with 8.0 percent of men. During the 1976-2004 period, the percentage of women who were self-employed increased by 1.2 percentage points, while the percentage of men who were self-employed edged down by less than half a percentage point. In 2004, women made up about 38 percent of self-employed persons, compared with nearly 27 percent in 1976. (See table 36.)
- In 2003, foreign-born women (54 percent) were less likely to be in the labor force than native-born women (60 percent). The reverse was true for men. (See table 37.)
- Thirteen percent of female wage and salary workers were represented by unions in 2004, compared with 15 percent of men. Union attachment for both groups has fallen since 1983, when unions represented 18 percent of female wage and salary workers and nearly 28 percent of men. (See table 38.)

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Introduction

The past several decades have been marked by several notable changes in women's labor force activities compared to men's, including rising labor force participation, employment growth in higher-paying occupations, and earnings increases. In 1970, about 43 percent of women age 16 and older were in the labor force. By the late 1990s, the labor force participation rate of women had risen to 60 percent. Though it is still well above the rates that prevailed throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and much of the 1990s, the rate has receded slightly since 1999, to 59.3 percent in 2005. During the past several decades, women were increasingly employed in higher-paying occupations. In 2005, more than half of all the workers in management, professional, and related occupations were women. Women's earnings relative to men's also were substantially higher in 2005 than in previous decades. In 1979, among full-time workers, women's earnings were 62 percent of men's; by 2005 the ratio had grown to 81 percent. The movement of women into the labor force and into higher-paying occupations has gone hand in hand with their pursuit of higher education. For example, in 1970, about one-tenth of women age 25 to 64 in the labor force had completed 4 or more years of college; by 2005, one-third held at least a bachelor's degree.

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Highlights

- In 2005, just over 59 percent of women age 16 and over were in the labor force. Their unemployment rate declined to 5.1 percent in 2005 compared with 5.4 percent a year earlier. Although still a percentage point higher than it was in 2000, the unemployment rate for women remained low by historical standards. The unemployment rates for

white and Asian women were much lower than those of their black and Hispanic counterparts. (See tables 1, 2, and 3.)

- Since the early 1980s, women's and men's unemployment rates have been roughly similar. In 2000, the jobless rates for women and men were 4.1 and 3.9 percent, respectively, and were at 30-year lows. The rates rose from 2000 to 2003, but then declined in the next 2 years. The unemployment rates for women and men were equal in 2005 at 5.1 percent. (See table 2.)
- From 1975 to 2000, the labor force participation rate of mothers with children under age 18 rose from 47 to 73 percent. By 2005, the rate had receded slightly to about 71 percent. In general, mothers with older children (6 to 17 years of age) are more likely to participate in the labor force than are mothers of younger children (under 6 years of age). Unmarried mothers have higher participation rates than married mothers. (See tables 6 and 7.)
- The educational attainment level of working women age 25 to 64 rose substantially from 1970 to 2005. About 3 in 10 women in the labor force held college degrees in 2005, compared with about 1 in 10 in 1970. About 8 percent of women in the labor force in 2005 were high school dropouts, compared with 34 percent in 1970. (See table 9.)
- In 2005, half of all persons employed in management, professional, and related occupations were women. The share of women in specific occupations within this broad category varied. For example, 6 percent of mechanical engineers and 32 percent of physicians and surgeons were women. In contrast, 95 percent of dietitians and 86 percent of paralegals and legal assistants were women. (See table 11.)
- Employed Asian women were more likely than employed white, black, and Hispanic women to work in management, professional, and related occupations (about 45 percent compared with 39,

- 30, and 22 percent, respectively). Hispanic and black women (31 and 27 percent, respectively) were more likely than white and Asian women (19 and 18 percent, respectively) to work in service occupations. (See table 12.)
- By industry, in 2005, women accounted for more than half of all workers within financial activities, education and health services, and leisure and hospitality. However, women were substantially underrepresented (relative to their share of total employment) in mining, construction, manufacturing, and transportation and utilities. (See table 14.)
 - Women who worked full time in 2005 had median weekly earnings of \$585. Asian and white women earned more than their black and Hispanic counterparts (\$665 and \$596 compared with \$499 and \$429, respectively). In 2005, women's median weekly earnings were 81 percent of men's. Women's-to-men's earnings ratios were higher among black and Hispanic women (89 and 88 percent, respectively) than among white and Asian women (80 and 81 percent, respectively). (See table 16.) (Users should note that the comparisons of earnings in the report are made on a broad level and do not control for many factors that can be significant in explaining earnings differences.)
 - In 2005, female college graduates age 25 and over earned about 79 percent more than women with only a high school diploma. This difference in earnings by education has increased sharply since 1979, when female college graduates earned 43 percent more than female high school graduates. Female college graduates who were full-time wage and salary workers had median weekly earnings that were 76 percent of those of their male counterparts in 2005, \$883 versus \$1,167. (See table 17.)
 - In 2005, approximately 25 percent of employed women usually worked part time—fewer than 35 hours a week. Comparatively, only about 11 percent of employed men usually worked part time. Since 1994, the proportion of employed women and men who usually work part time has remained little changed. (See table 20.)
 - From 1976 to 2005, the average workweek of women in nonagricultural industries increased by about 2 hours to 36.1 hours. Men's average workweek remained relatively unchanged over the same period and was 41.7 hours in 2005. (See table 21.)
 - Of all women who worked at some point during calendar year 2004, nearly 6 in 10 worked full time and year round, compared with about 4 in 10 in 1970. During the same 35-year period, the proportion of men who worked full time and year round grew from 66 to 74 percent. (See table 22.) These data were collected in the 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and refer to work experience during the prior calendar year.
 - Both the wife and husband had earnings from work in 57 percent of married-couple families in 2004, up from 44 percent in 1967. (See table 23.) These data also were collected in the 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.
 - In 2004, working wives' contributions to family income accounted for 35 percent (median) of their families' incomes, up by 8 percentage points from 1970, when wives' earnings accounted for 27 percent of the family total. The proportion of wives earning more than their husbands also has grown. In 1987, the first year data became available for wives' earnings compared to their husbands', 18 percent of working wives whose husbands also worked earned more than their spouses; in 2004, the proportion was 25 percent. (See tables 24 and 25.) These data, also collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS, reflect the earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.
 - In 2005, about 1.2 million women workers paid at an hourly rate had earnings at or below the Federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour; about half of these women were age 16 to 24. Among workers age 25 years and over who were paid hourly rates, 2 percent of women had earnings at or below the minimum wage, twice the rate for men. (See table 26.)
 - Women were slightly less likely than men to have flexible schedules on their jobs in May 2004. White women were more likely to have flexible schedules than either their black or Hispanic counterparts. Women without children under age 18 were more likely to have flexible schedules than women with children under age 18, although the reverse was true for men. (See table 29.) Data are from the May 2004 Work Schedules supplement to the CPS.
 - About 15 percent of both women and men reported working at home at least once per week as part of

their main job in May 2004. Working at home was more common for parents than for persons who were not parents. Women were slightly more likely than men to have a formal arrangement with their employer to be paid for the work they did at home than were men. While self-employment was fairly common among those who worked at home, women were less likely to be self-employed than were their male counterparts; about 29 percent of women working at home were self-employed versus 38 percent of men. (See table 30.) Data are from the May 2004 Work Schedules supplement to the CPS.

- About 1.7 million women and 2.1 million men experienced job displacement between January 2003 and December 2005. Women who were displaced were almost twice as likely as men to have left the labor force by January 2006 (21 percent versus 13 percent). (See table 31.) Data are from the January 2006 Displaced Worker supplement to the CPS.
- Among 2005 high school graduates, young women were slightly more likely than young men to enter college (70.4 versus 66.5 percent). (For information on the labor force status of recent high school graduates and dropouts by school enrollment and sex, see table 32.) Data are from the October 2005 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.
- About 48 percent of women age 16 to 24 who were enrolled in either high school or college in October 2005 were in the labor force. Men enrolled in school had a lower labor force participation rate (42.3 percent). Among those not enrolled in school, women were less likely to be in the labor force than men (74.6 versus 87.5 percent). Young women who had not completed high school and were not enrolled in school were significantly less likely to participate in the labor force (53.5 versus 73.2 percent) and nearly twice as likely to be unemployed (21.2 versus 11.5 percent) as were women 16 to 24 years of age who had a high school diploma only. (See table 33.) Data are from the October 2005 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.
- From 1970 to 1995, the rate of multiple jobholding among women nearly tripled, from 2.2 percent of employed women in 1970 to 6.5 percent in 1995. Since 1995, however, the multiple jobholding rate for women has trended downward, falling to 5.2 percent by 2005. The multiple jobholding rate for men also has trended downward over the past decade, from 6.3 percent in 1995 to 4.6 percent in 2005. (See table 34.) Data were collected in the May 2005 CPS.
- Over the past 30 years, the percentage of employed women who were self-employed has increased slightly, from 4.4 percent in 1976 to 5.4 percent in 2005, while the percentage of employed men who were self-employed has decreased slightly, to 7.8 percent in 2005 from 8.4 percent in 1976. In 2005, about 37 percent of all self-employed persons were women compared with 27 percent in 1976. (See table 35.)
- Foreign-born women were less likely to be in the labor force in 2005 than native-born women (53.8 versus 60.0 percent). Of those in the labor force, foreign-born women were more likely to be unemployed (6.3 percent) than their native-born counterparts (5.3 percent). The reverse was true for men for both labor force participation and the unemployment rate. (See table 36.)
- In 2005, about 13 percent of female wage and salary workers were represented by unions, compared with about 15 percent of men. Union attachment for both groups has fallen since 1983, when unions represented 18 percent of female wage and salary workers and nearly 28 percent for men. (See table 37.)

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Introduction

The past several decades have been marked by notable changes in women's labor force activities compared to men's, including increased labor force participation, employment growth in higher paying occupations, and gains in real earnings. In 1970, about 43 percent of women aged 16 and older were in the labor force; by the late 1990s, the labor force participation rate of women had risen to 60 percent. Though still well above the rates that prevailed throughout the 1970s, the 1980s, and much of the 1990s, the participation rate for women has receded slightly since 1999, to 59.4 percent in 2006. As women's labor force participation has increased, so has their employment in higher paying occupations. In 2006, half of all workers in management, professional, and related occupations were women. Women's earnings relative to men's also were substantially higher in 2006 than in previous decades. In 1979, among full-time workers, women's earnings were approximately 62 percent of men's; by 2006, the ratio had grown to about 81 percent. The increased movement of women into the labor force and into higher paying occupations has gone hand in hand with their pursuit of higher education. For example, in 1970, just over one-tenth of 25- to 64-year-old women in the labor force had completed 4 or more years of college; by 2006, one-third held at least a bachelor's degree.

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Highlights

- In 2006, approximately 59 percent of women were in the labor force. The unemployment rate for women declined to 4.6 percent in 2006, down half a percentage point from a year earlier. Although higher than its most recent low

of 4.1 percent in 2000, the unemployment rate in 2006 was low by historical standards. Unemployment rates for women varied among the major race and Hispanic ethnicity groups in 2006. Asian women had the lowest rate (3.1 percent), followed by white (4.0 percent), Hispanic (5.9 percent), and black women (8.4 percent). (See tables 1, 2, and 3.)

- Since the early 1980s, women's and men's unemployment rates have been roughly similar. In 2000, the jobless rates for women and men were at 30-year lows—4.1 and 3.9 percent, respectively. The rates rose from 2000 to 2003 but have declined each year since. The unemployment rates for women and men were the same in 2006 (4.6 percent). (See table 2.)
- From 1975 to 2000, the labor force participation rate of mothers with children under age 18 rose from 47 to 73 percent. By 2004, the rate had receded to about 71 percent, where it remained through 2006. In general, mothers with older children (6 to 17 years of age, none younger) are more likely to participate in the labor force than mothers with younger children (under 6 years of age). Unmarried mothers have higher participation rates than married mothers, 76.4 versus 68.4 percent, respectively. (See tables 6 and 7.) (Data are from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS.)
- The educational attainment of women in the labor force aged 25 to 64 rose substantially from 1970 to 2006. One-third of these women held college degrees in 2006, compared with about one-tenth in 1970. Only about 8 percent of women were high school dropouts in 2006, down from 34 percent in 1970. (See table 9.)
- In 2006, women accounted for 50.6 percent of all persons employed in management, professional, and related occupations, somewhat more than their share of all employed workers (46.3 percent). The share of women in specific occupations within this broad category varied. For example, 7 percent of engineering managers and 33 percent of lawyers were women. In contrast, 91 percent of registered nurses and 83 percent of social workers were women. (See table 11.)

- Employed Asian women were more likely to work in the higher paying (on average) management, professional, and related occupations than employed white, black, or Hispanic women (about 46 percent compared with 39, 31, and 22 percent, respectively). Hispanic and black women were more likely than white and Asian women to work in service occupations (31 and 27 percent for Hispanic and black women, respectively, compared to 19 percent for both Asian and white women). (See table 12.)
- By industry, women accounted for more than half of all workers within financial activities, education and health services, and leisure and hospitality in 2006. However, women were substantially underrepresented (relative to their share of total employment) in mining, construction, manufacturing, and transportation and utilities. (See table 14.)
- Women who worked full time in 2006 had median weekly earnings of \$600. This was 80.8 percent of the \$743 median weekly earnings of men. Earnings of Asian and white women (\$699 and \$609, respectively) were higher than the earnings of their black and Hispanic counterparts (\$519 and \$440, respectively). Within race groups, women's-to-men's earnings ratios were higher among black and Hispanic women (87.8 and 87.1 percent, respectively) than among white and Asian women (80.0 and 79.3 percent, respectively). (See table 16.)
- In 2006, female college graduates aged 25 and older who worked full time earned about 81 percent more than women with only a high school diploma. This difference in earnings by education has increased sharply since 1979, when female college graduates earned 43 percent more than female high school graduates. (See table 17.)
- In 2006, approximately one-fourth of employed women usually worked part time—fewer than 35 hours a week. Comparatively, only about one-tenth of employed men usually worked part time. For the past 10 years, the proportions of both employed women and men who usually work part time has been relatively stable. (See table 20.)
- Women in nonagricultural industries worked an average of 36.2 hours per week in 2006. The average workweek for women has increased by about 2 hours since 1976. Men's average workweek (41.7 hours) remained relatively unchanged over the same period. (See table 21.)
- Of all women who worked at some point during calendar year 2005, 6 in 10 worked full time and year round, compared with about 4 in 10 in 1970. During the same 35-year period, the proportion of men who worked full time and year round grew from 66 to 74 percent. (See table 22.) (These data were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and refer to work experience during the prior calendar year.)
- Both the wife and husband had earnings from work in 57 percent of married-couple families in 2005, up from 44 percent in 1967. Couples in which only the husband worked represented 18 percent of married-couple families in 2005, compared with 36 percent in 1967. (See table 23.) (These data were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.)
- In 2005, working wives' contributions to family income accounted for 35 percent (median) of their families' incomes, up by about 8 percentage points from 1970, when wives' earnings accounted for 27 percent of their families' total incomes. The proportion of wives earning more than their husbands also has grown. In 1987, 18 percent of working wives whose husbands also worked earned more than their spouses; in 2005, the proportion was 26 percent. (See tables 24 and 25.) (These data were collected in the Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.)
- In 2006, about 1.1 million women workers paid at an hourly rate had earnings at or below the prevailing Federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour. This was about 3 percent of all women paid at an hourly rate. About half of these women were aged 16 to 24. Among workers aged 25 years and older who were paid hourly rates, 1.8 percent of women had earnings at or below the minimum wage, twice the rate for men. (See table 26.)
- Among workers who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks in 2005, women were slightly more likely than men to live in poverty—6.1 percent versus 4.8 percent, respectively. Of these women, blacks and Hispanics were more than twice as likely as whites and Asians to live below the poverty level. Poverty rates for women in the labor force 27 weeks or more generally decline with age: roughly 1 in 10 such women aged 16 to 24 lived below the poverty level in 2005, compared with about 1 in 30 such women aged 45 and older. (See table 27.) (Data are from the 2006 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.)
- About 15 percent of both women and men reported working at home at least once per week as part of their main job in May 2004. Working at home was more common for parents than for nonparents. Women were slightly more likely than men to have a formal arrangement with their employer to be paid for the work they did at home than were men. While self-employment was fairly common among those who worked at home, women who worked at

home were less likely to be self-employed than were their male counterparts; about 29 percent of women working at home were self-employed versus 38 percent of men. (See table 31.) (Data are from the May 2004 Work Schedules supplement to the CPS.)

- About 1.7 million women and 2.1 million men were displaced from a job between January 2003 and December 2005. Women who were displaced were roughly twice as likely as men to have been out of the labor force at the time of the survey in January 2006 (21 percent versus 13 percent). (See table 32.) (Data are from the January 2006 Displaced Worker supplement to the CPS.)
- Among 2006 high school graduates, young women and young men were about equally likely to be enrolled in college in October (66.0 and 65.5 percent, respectively). (See table 33.) (Data are from the October 2006 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.)
- About 45 percent of women aged 16 to 24 who were enrolled in either high school or college in October 2006 were in the labor force. Men enrolled in school had a slightly lower labor force participation rate (41.1 percent). Among those not enrolled in school, women were less likely to be in the labor force than men (75.1 versus 87.9 percent). (See table 34.) (Data are from the October 2005 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.)
- Among 16-to-24-year-old women who were not enrolled in school, those who did not have a high school diploma were significantly less likely to participate in the labor force than those who had a high school diploma only (52.9 versus 72.9 percent). The high school dropouts also were twice as likely to be unemployed (25.9 versus 12.5 percent). (See table 34.) (Data are from the October 2005 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.)
- During the last 5 years, the multiple jobholding rate for women has hovered around 5.5 percent. The multiple jobholding rate for men has been slightly lower, holding at roughly 5.0 percent. (See table 35.) (Data were collected in the May CPS.)
- Over the past 30 years, the percentage of working women who were self-employed has increased slightly (from 4.4 percent in 1976 to 5.5 percent in 2006), while the percentage of employed men who were self-employed has edged down (from 8.4 percent in 1976 to 7.9 percent in 2006). In 2006, about 38 percent of all self-employed persons were women compared with only 27 percent in 1976. (See table 36.)
- In 2006, foreign-born women were less likely to be in the labor force than native-born women (55.3 versus 60.0 percent, respectively). Of those in the labor force, foreign-born and native-born women were about equally likely to be unemployed (4.7 and 4.6 percent, respectively). Among men, foreign-born men were more likely to be in the labor force than native-born men (81.7 percent versus 72.0 percent, respectively) and less likely to be unemployed (3.5 percent versus 4.8 percent). (See table 37.)
- About 12 percent of female wage and salary workers were represented by unions in 2006, compared with about 14 percent of men. Union attachment for both sexes has fallen since 1983, when unions represented 18 percent of female wage and salary workers and nearly 28 percent of men. (See table 38.)

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Introduction

The past several decades have been marked by notable changes in women's labor force activities. Since the 1970s, women's labor force participation has risen substantially, particularly among women with children, and a larger share of women work full time and year round than ever before. In addition, women have increasingly attained higher levels of education: among women ages 25 to 64 who are in the labor force, the proportion with a college degree more than tripled from 1970 to 2007. Women's earnings as a proportion of men's also have grown over time. In 1979, women working full time earned 62 percent of what men did; in 2007, women's earnings were 80 percent of men's.

This report presents historical and current labor force and earnings data for women and men from the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a national monthly survey of approximately 60,000 households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unless otherwise noted, data are annual averages from the CPS. Users should note that the comparisons of earnings in this report are on a broad level and do not control for many factors that can be significant in explaining earnings differences. For a detailed description of the source of the data and an explanation of concepts and definitions used, see the Technical Note at the end of this report.

Highlights

- In 2007, 59 percent of women were in the labor force, and this share has been quite stable over the past few years. Women's labor force participation rate peaked at 60 percent in 1999, following several decades in which women increasingly entered the labor market. (See tables 1 and 2.)
- The unemployment rate for women was 4.5 percent in 2007. Although higher than its most recent low of 4.1 percent in 2000, the unemployment rate for women in 2007 was relatively low by historical standards. Unem-

ployment rates for women varied by race and Hispanic ethnicity in 2007. Asian women had the lowest rate (3.4 percent), followed by white (4.0 percent), Hispanic (6.1 percent), and black (7.5 percent) women. (See tables 1, 2, and 3.)

- From March 1975 to March 2000, the labor force participation rate of mothers with children under age 18 rose from 47 percent to a peak of 73 percent. (These data were collected in the March CPS.) By 2004, the rate for these mothers had receded to 71 percent, where it remained through 2007. In general, mothers with older children (6 to 17 years of age, none younger) are more likely to participate in the labor force than mothers with younger children (under 6 years of age), and unmarried mothers have higher participation rates than married mothers. In 2007, 76 percent of unmarried mothers were in the labor force, compared with 69 percent of married mothers. (See tables 6 and 7.)
- The educational attainment of women in the labor force aged 25 to 64 rose substantially from 1970 to 2007. Thirty-five percent of these women held college degrees in 2007, compared with 11 percent in 1970. Only 7 percent of women were high school dropouts in 2007, down from 34 percent in 1970. (See table 9.)
- In 2007, women accounted for about 51 percent of all persons employed in management, professional, and related occupations, somewhat more than their share of all employed workers (46 percent). The share of women in specific occupations within this broad category varied in 2007. For example, 8 percent of engineering managers and 33 percent of lawyers were women. In contrast, 92 percent of registered nurses and 82 percent of social workers were women. (See table 11.)
- Employed Asian women were more likely (47 percent) to work in the higher paying management, professional, and related occupations in 2007 than

were employed white (40 percent), black (31 percent), or Hispanic (23 percent) women. Hispanic women (31 percent) and black women (27 percent) were more likely than white and Asian women (each 19 percent) to work in service occupations. (See table 12.)

- In 2007, women accounted for more than half of all workers within several industry sectors: financial activities, education and health services, leisure and hospitality, and other services. However, women were substantially underrepresented (relative to their share of total employment) in agriculture, mining, construction, manufacturing, and transportation and utilities. (See table 14.)
- Women who worked full time in wage and salary jobs had median usual weekly earnings of \$614 in 2007. This represented 80 percent of men's median weekly earnings (\$766). Earnings of Asian (\$731) and white (\$626) women were substantially higher than the earnings of their black (\$533) and Hispanic (\$473) counterparts. Women's-to-men's earnings ratios were higher among blacks (89 percent) and Hispanics (91 percent) than among whites (79 percent) and Asians (78 percent). (See table 16.)
- In 2007, female full-time wage and salary workers with only a high school diploma had median usual weekly earnings of \$512. This represented 80 percent of the earnings for women with an associate degree (\$640), and 55 percent of those for women with a bachelor's degree or higher (\$932). (See table 17.)
- In 2007, 25 percent of employed women usually worked part time—fewer than 35 hours per week. In comparison, about 11 percent of employed men usually worked part time. (See table 20.)
- Women in nonagricultural industries worked an average of 36.1 hours per week in 2007. The average workweek for men in nonagricultural industries was 41.6 hours. (See table 21.)
- Of all women who worked at some point during calendar year 2006, 61 percent worked full time and year round, compared with 41 percent in 1970. During the same period, the proportion of men who worked full time and year round grew from 66 to 75 percent. (See table 22.) (These data were collected in the 2007 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and refer to work experience during the prior calendar year.)
- Both the wife and husband had earnings from work in 57 percent of married-couple families in 2006, up from 44 percent in 1967. Couples in which only the husband worked represented 18 percent of married-couple families in 2006, compared with 36 percent in 1967. (See table 23.) (These data were collected in the 2007 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.)
- In 2006, working wives' contributions accounted for 36 percent of their families' incomes, up by 9 percentage points from 1970, when wives' earnings accounted for 27 percent of their families' total incomes. The proportion of wives earning more than their husbands also has grown. In 1987, 18 percent of working wives whose husbands also worked earned more than their spouses; in 2006, the proportion was 26 percent. (See tables 24 and 25.) (These data were collected in the 2007 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.)
- In 2007, approximately 1.2 million women paid at an hourly rate had earnings at or below the prevailing Federal minimum wage. This was 3 percent of all women paid at an hourly rate. Among women 25 years and older who were paid hourly rates, 2 percent had earnings at or below the minimum wage, compared with 7 percent of women aged 16 to 24. (On July 24, 2007, the Federal minimum wage level rose from \$5.15 to \$5.85 an hour. Data in this report reflect the average number of workers who earned \$5.15 or less from January 2007 through July 2007 and those who earned \$5.85 or less from August 2007 through the end of the year.) (See table 26.)
- Among workers who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks in 2006, women were slightly more likely than men to live in poverty—5.8 percent compared with 4.5 percent. Black and Hispanic women who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more were significantly more likely than their white or Asian counterparts to be among the working poor. The poverty rates for black and

Hispanic women were 12.0 percent and 9.8 percent, respectively, compared with 4.8 percent and 3.4 percent, respectively, for white and Asian women. (See table 27.) (Data are from the 2007 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.)

- From January 2005 to December 2007, 1.6 million women and 2.0 million men were displaced from jobs they had held for at least 3 years. The women were somewhat less likely than the men to have found a new job at the time of the survey in January 2008: the reemployment rate for women was 64 percent, compared with 70 percent for men. Women were almost twice as likely as men to have left the labor force, 20 and 11 percent, respectively. (See table 32.) (Data are from the January 2008 Displaced Worker supplement to the CPS.)
- Among 2007 high school graduates, young women (68 percent) were slightly more likely than young men (66 percent) to be enrolled in college in October 2007. (See table 33.) (Data are from the October 2007 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.)
- In October 2007, 45.6 percent of women aged 16 to 24 who were enrolled in either high school or college were in the labor force. Young men of the same age group who were enrolled in school had a lower labor force participation rate (39.6 percent). Among those not enrolled in school, women (73.0 percent) were less likely to be in the labor force than men (87.9 percent). (See table 34.) (Data are from the October 2007 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.)
- Among 16- to 24-year-old women who were not enrolled in school, those who did not have a high school diploma (48.6 percent) were significantly less likely to participate in the labor force than those who had a high school diploma but no additional education (71.0 percent). Of those in the labor force, the high school dropouts were more likely to be unemployed than the high school graduates (19.0 percent, compared with 12.4 percent). (See table 34.) (Data are from the October 2007 School Enrollment supplement to the CPS.)
- In May 2007, the multiple jobholding rate for women was 5.7 percent, the same as a year earlier. The May 2007 multiple jobholding rate for men was lower, at 4.9 percent. Multiple jobholding rates for both women and men have edged down since the mid-1990s, when they were at or near 6.5 percent. (See table 35.) (Data were collected in the May CPS.)
- Since 1976, the percentage of working women who were self employed has trended up (from 4.4 percent to 5.4 percent in 2007), while the percentage of employed men who were self employed has edged down (from 8.4 percent to 7.7 percent). In 2007, 38 percent of all self-employed persons were women, compared with 27 percent in 1976. (See table 36.)
- In 2007, foreign-born women (54.9 percent) were less likely than native-born women (60.1 percent) to be in the labor force. Of those in the labor force, foreign-born and native-born women were about equally likely to be unemployed (4.6 and 4.5 percent, respectively). Among men, the foreign born (81.9 percent) were more likely to be in the labor force than the native born (71.6 percent); the foreign born also were less likely to be unemployed (4.1 percent, compared with 4.9 percent). (See table 37.)
- About 12 percent of female wage and salary workers were represented by unions in 2007, compared with 14 percent of men. Union attachment for both sexes has fallen since 1983, when unions represented 18 percent of women and 28 percent of men in wage and salary jobs. (See table 38.)

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Introduction

The past several decades have been marked by notable changes in women's labor force activities. Women's labor force participation is significantly higher today than it was in the 1970s, particularly among women with children, and a larger share of women work full time and year round than in past decades. In addition, women have increasingly attained higher levels of education: among women aged 25 to 64 who are in the labor force, the proportion with a college degree roughly tripled from 1970 to 2008. Women's earnings as a proportion of men's earnings also have grown over time. In 1979, women working full time earned 62 percent of what men did; in 2008, women's earnings were 80 percent of men's.

This report presents historical and current labor force and earnings data for women and men from the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a national monthly survey of approximately 60,000 households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unless otherwise noted, data are annual averages from the CPS. Users should note that the comparisons of earnings in this report are on a broad level and do not control for many factors that can be significant in explaining earnings differences. For a detailed description of the source of the data and an explanation of concepts and definitions used, see the Technical Note at the end of this report.

Highlights

- In 2008, 59.5 percent of women were in the labor force, and this share has been relatively stable over the past several years. Women's labor force participation rate peaked at 60 percent in 1999, following several decades in which women increasingly entered the labor market. (See tables 1 and 2.)
- In 2008, the overall unemployment rate for women was 5.4 percent, but rates varied by race and Hispanic ethnicity. Asian women had the lowest rate (3.7 percent), followed by white (4.9 percent), Hispanic (7.7 percent), and black (8.9 percent) women. (See tables 1, 2, and 3.)
- From March 1975 to March 2000, the labor force participation rate of mothers with children under age 18 rose from 47 percent to a peak of 73 percent. (These data were collected in the March CPS.) By 2004, the participation rate for mothers had receded to 71 percent, where it remained through 2008. (See tables 6 and 7.)
- In general, mothers with older children (6 to 17 years of age, none younger) are more likely to participate in the labor force than mothers with younger children (under 6 years of age), and unmarried mothers have higher participation rates than married mothers. In 2008, 76 percent of unmarried mothers were in the labor force, compared with 69 percent of married mothers. (See tables 6 and 7.)
- The educational attainment of women aged 25 to 64 in the labor force rose substantially from 1970 to 2008. Thirty-six percent of these women held college degrees in 2008, compared with 11 percent in 1970. Only 7 percent of women were high school dropouts in 2008, down from 34 percent in 1970. (See table 9.)
- In 2008, women accounted for 51 percent of all persons employed in management, professional, and related occupations, somewhat more than their share of total employment (47 percent). The share of women in specific occupations within this broad category varied. For example, 8 percent of construction managers and 34 percent of lawyers were women, while 61 percent of accountants and 79 percent of social workers were women. (See table 11.)
- Employed Asian women were more likely (46 percent) to work in the higher paying management, professional, and related occupations in 2008 than were employed white (41 percent), black (31 percent), or Hispanic (24 percent) women. Meanwhile, Hispanic women (31 percent) and black women (28 percent) were more likely than white and Asian women (each 19 percent) to work in service occupations. (See table 12.)
- In 2008, women accounted for more than half of all workers within several industry sectors: financial activities, education and health services, leisure and hospitality, and other services. However, women were

substantially underrepresented (relative to their share of total employment) in agriculture, mining, construction, manufacturing, and transportation and utilities. (See table 14.)

- Women who worked full time in wage and salary jobs had median usual weekly earnings of \$638 in 2008. This represented 80 percent of men's median weekly earnings (\$798). Earnings of Asian (\$753) and white (\$654) women were substantially higher than the earnings of their black (\$554) and Hispanic (\$501) counterparts. Women's-to-men's earnings ratios were higher among blacks (89 percent) and Hispanics (90 percent) than among whites (79 percent) and Asians (78 percent). (See table 16.)
- In 2008, female full-time wage and salary workers aged 25 and older with only a high school diploma had median usual weekly earnings of \$520. This represented 79 percent of the earnings for women with an associate degree (\$661), and 54 percent of those for women with a bachelor's degree or higher (\$955). (See table 17.)
- In 2008, 25 percent of employed women usually worked part time—fewer than 35 hours per week. In comparison, 11 percent of employed men usually worked part time. (See table 20.)
- Women in nonagricultural industries worked an average of 36.1 hours per week in 2008. The average workweek for men in nonagricultural industries was 41.2 hours. (See table 21.)
- Of all women who worked at some point during calendar year 2007, 62 percent worked full time and year round, compared with 41 percent in 1970. During the same period, the proportion of men who worked full time and year round grew from 66 to 75 percent. (See table 22.) (These data were collected in the 1971 and 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and refer to work experience during the prior calendar year.)
- Both the wife and husband had earnings from work in 58 percent of married-couple families in 2007, up from 44 percent in 1967. Couples in which only the husband worked represented 18 percent of married-couple families in 2007, compared with 36 percent in 1967. (See table 23.) (These data were collected in the 1968 and 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.)
- In 2007, working wives contributed 36 percent of their families' incomes, up by 9 percentage points from 1970, when wives' earnings accounted for 27 percent of their families' total incomes. The proportion of wives earning more than their husbands also has grown. In 1987, 18 percent of working wives whose husbands also worked earned more than their spouses; in 2007, the proportion was 26 percent. (See tables 24 and 25.) (These data were collected in the 1971, 1988, and 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.)
- In 2008, approximately 1.5 million women paid at an hourly rate had earnings at or below the prevailing Federal minimum wage. This represented 4 percent of all women paid at an hourly rate. Among women 25 years and older who were paid hourly rates, 3 percent had earnings at or below the minimum wage, compared with 10 percent of women aged 16 to 24. (On July 24, 2008, the Federal minimum wage level rose from \$5.85 to \$6.55 an hour. Data in this report reflect the average number of workers who earned \$5.85 or less from January 2008 through July 2008 and those who earned \$6.55 or less from August 2008 through the end of the year.) (See table 26.)
- Among workers who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks in 2007, women were slightly more likely than men to live in poverty—6 percent, compared with 5 percent. Black and Hispanic women who were in the labor force for 27 weeks or more were significantly more likely than their white or Asian counterparts to be among the working poor. The poverty rates for black and Hispanic working women were 12 percent and 11 percent, respectively, compared with 5 percent and 4 percent, respectively, for white and Asian women. (See table 27.) (Data are from the 2008 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the CPS and reflect earnings and work experience of the prior calendar year.)
- Among 2008 high school graduates, young women (72 percent) were somewhat more likely than young men (66 percent) to be enrolled in college in October 2008. (See table 33.) (Data are from the October 2008 School Enrollment Supplement to the CPS.)
- In October 2008, 45 percent of women aged 16 to 24 who were enrolled in either high school or college were in the labor force. Young men of the same age group who were enrolled in school had a lower labor force participation rate (39 percent). Among those not enrolled in school, women were less likely to be in the labor force than men (74 percent, compared with 85 percent). (See table 34.) (Data are from the October 2008 School Enrollment Supplement to the CPS.)
- Among 16- to 24-year-old women who were not en-

rolled in school, those who did not have a high school diploma were significantly less likely to participate in the labor force than those who had a high school diploma but no additional education (50 percent, compared with 71 percent). Of those in the labor force, the high school dropouts were more likely to be unemployed than the high school graduates (25 percent, compared with 13 percent). (See table 34.) (Data are from the October 2008 School Enrollment Supplement to the CPS.)

- In May 2008, 5.6 percent of employed women held more than one job, nearly the same as the previous year. The May 2008 multiple jobholding rate for men was lower, at 4.9 percent. Multiple jobholding rates for both women and men have declined since the mid-1990s. (See table 35.) (Data were collected in the May CPS.)
- Since 1976, the percentage of working women who were self-employed has trended up (from 4.4 percent in 1976 to 5.2 percent in 2008), while the percentage of men who were self-employed has edged down (from 8.4 percent to 7.6 percent). In 2008, 38 percent of all

self-employed persons were women, compared with 27 percent in 1976. (See table 36.)

- In 2008, foreign-born women were less likely than native-born women to be in the labor force (55 percent, compared with 60 percent). Of those in the labor force, native-born women were less likely to be unemployed (5.3 and 6.0 percent, respectively). Among men, the opposite was true. Foreign-born men were more likely than the native born to be in the labor force (81 percent, compared with 71 percent) and somewhat less likely to be unemployed (5.7 and 6.2 percent, respectively). (See table 37.)
- Thirteen percent of female wage and salary workers were represented by unions in 2008, compared with 15 percent of men. Union attachment for both sexes had been on a downward trend since 1983, when unions represented 18 percent of women and 28 percent of men in wage and salary jobs. Over the past 2 years, however, union representation has increased slightly among both women and men, from lows in 2006 of 12 percent and 14 percent, respectively. (See table 38.)