

Facts on Working Women

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U.S. Department of Labor
Women's Bureau



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20 FACTS ON WOMEN WORKERS

1. There were **105 million women** age 16 and over in the United States in 1997. Of that total, **63 million** were in the civilian labor force--persons working or looking for work.
2. Six out of every ten women age 16 and over --**59.8 percent**--were labor force participants in 1997. For women ages 20-54, seven out of ten were working or looking for work, as were half of the nation's female teenage population (see Table 1).
3. Women's share of the total labor force continues to rise. Women accounted for **46 percent** of total labor force participants in 1997 and are projected to comprise **47 percent** in the year 2006.
4. Between 1996 and 2006, women will account for **59 percent** of total labor force growth. Their labor force participation rate will increase from **59.3 percent** in 1996 to **61.4 percent** in 2006.
5. Labor force participation for women varies substantially by marital status (see Table 2).

Table 1

Labor Force Participation Rates
For Women, by Age Groups, 1997

<u>Age Groups</u>	<u>Participation Rates</u>
All women	59.8%
16 to 19 years	51.0
20 to 24	72.7
25 to 34	76.0
35 to 44	77.7
45 to 54	76.0
55 to 64	50.9
65 and over	8.6

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1998.

Table 2

Labor Force Participation Rates
For Women, by Marital Status, March 1997

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Participation Rates</u>
Divorced	74.5%
Never married	66.8
Married, spouse absent	65.3
Married, spouse present	62.1
Widowed	18.2

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unpublished data, March 1997.

6. The presence and age of children has much to do with the composition of the total female labor force. Fifty-two percent have no children; 24 percent have children 14 to 17 years old, none younger; 17 percent have children under six; and 9 percent have children under 3 years old.
7. Educational attainment is also a predictor of labor force participation and unemployment. Persons with higher levels of education are more likely to be in the labor force and display very low unemployment rates.

Table 3

Employment Status of Women, age 25 years and over, by Educational Attainment, 1997

<u>Educational Attainment</u>	<u>Participation Rate</u>	<u>Unemployment Rate</u>
Less than H.S. diploma	30.7%	9.6%
H.S. graduates, no college	56.8	4.3
College graduates	75.5	2.2

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1998.

8. Unemployment for all women in 1997 remained fairly low at **5.0 percent**. Black and Hispanic women had higher rates, however, but have now dropped below 10 percent--**9.9 percent** and **8.9 percent**, respectively. White women had the lowest rate--**4.2 percent**. The March 1996 rate for Asian and Pacific Islander women was **4.4 percent**.
9. The number of working women has doubled since 1970--from 30 million to **60 million** in 1997. The largest share still work in sales, technical, and administrative support jobs (see Table 4).

Table 4

Employed Women by Occupational Group, 1997 (in thousands)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Employed</u>
Total	59,873
Managerial and professional specialty	18,437
Technical, sales and administrative support	24,549
Service occupations	10,416
Precision production, craft and repair	1,256
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	4,540
Farming, forestry, and fishing	675

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1998.

10. **Secretaries and cashiers** are still the occupations where the largest numbers of women were employed.

Table 5

Leading Occupations of Employed Women, 1997 (numbers in thousands)

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number Employed</u>
Secretaries	2,989
Cashiers	2,356
Managers and administrators, n.e.c. ¹	2,237
Registered nurses	1,930
Sales supervisors/proprietors	1,780
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants	1,676

¹ n.e.c.--not elsewhere classified

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1998.

11. *Self-employment* is also an occupational option for many women. The number of self-employed women in nonagricultural industries has grown from 2.8 million in 1987 to 3.6 million in 1997. It has led many women to become successful entrepreneurs.

12. More and more women have become business owners. According to the latest data from the Bureau of the Census, women owned **6.4 million** businesses in 1992, representing a third of all domestic firms and 40 percent of all retail and service firms.

Women owned firms employed **13.2 million persons** and generated **\$1.6 trillion** in business revenues in 1992.

13. Of the 60 million employed women in 1997, **44 million or 74 percent** worked full time; and **16 million or 26 percent** worked part time. Full-time employment equates to working 35 hours or more per week.

14. In 1997, nearly 4 million women held more than one job. These women are known as *multiple job holders*. Multiple job holding is most prevalent among white women who were widowed, separated, divorced, and single.

15. Many women who are multiple job holders are also *contingent workers*. By contingent, we mean any job in which an individual does not have an explicit or implicit contract for long-term employment. Women accounted for half of all contingent workers in the U.S. in 1995.

Some examples of contingent workers are: part-time workers; the self-employed, such as independent contractors; temporary help agency workers; and workers provided by contract firms.

16. Overall, women continue to earn less than men. Median weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary women workers in 1997 were \$431 and \$579 for men. In other

words, women earned only **74 percent** of what men earned. Between the ages of 16 to 24, women earned 92 percent of what men earned-- \$292 and \$317, respectively.

Comparing the median weekly earnings of part-time workers, women earned more than men--\$153 and \$139, respectively. Between the ages of 16 to 24, however, their earnings are basically even--\$112 for women and \$114 for men.

As both groups age, the gap widens and mirrors the figure for women and men overall. For persons age 25 years and over, women earned 75 percent of what men earned.

17. Occupations with the highest median weekly earnings for women in 1997 were: lawyers, \$959; physicians, \$946; pharmacists, \$907; computer systems analysts and scientists, \$850; engineers, \$837; and college and university teachers, \$829.

18. Working wives contribute substantially to family income. In 1996, median income for married-couple families with the wife in the paid labor force was \$58,381, compared with \$33,748 for those without the wife in the paid labor force.

19. With women earning less than men, it is important that women have access to adequate health care and have sufficient retirement income.

Data from the Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor, reveal that in 1994 only 38 percent of women retirees received pension benefits and only 21 percent received health coverage that could be continued for life.

20. In 1996, 13.6 percent of women age 65 years and over lived below the poverty level, compared with only 6.8 percent of men in the same age group--2.5 million women and only 912,000 men.

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