

Highlights of Women at Work

In the United States in 1985 ...

... 71.4% of all women between the ages of 20 and 44 participated in the paid labor force in 1985. The total number of women in the civilian labor force averaged 51.1 million, or 54.5% of all women 16 years and over.

... In 1985, 31.5 million women held full-time, year-round jobs.

... One out of every five families with children was maintained by a woman. 34.5% of these families lived in poverty. More than half of the families headed by black and Hispanic women lived in poverty.

... Over half the children under 18 had a mother who worked outside the home. In all, twenty million mothers of school aged children were employed in the paid workforce, including 8 million mothers with children under age 6.

... The mothers of 48% of the nation's babies under one year old held paid positions. More than half the mothers of toddlers under 3 years old were also employed both outside and inside their homes.

... Organized (outside the home) child care facilities were available for less than one out of every four children under 6 with working mothers. The others were cared for by a variety of at-home arrangements. About 37% of the kids were cared for by another woman, in her own home. In all, forty-four percent of the children of employed mothers are cared for this way.

... 'Women's' jobs are still sharply segregated from those held by men. A few women have entered managerial occupations, however.

... Earnings of men and women also remained sharply different. Thirteen percent of full-time women workers earned more than \$25,000, compared to 46% of the men.

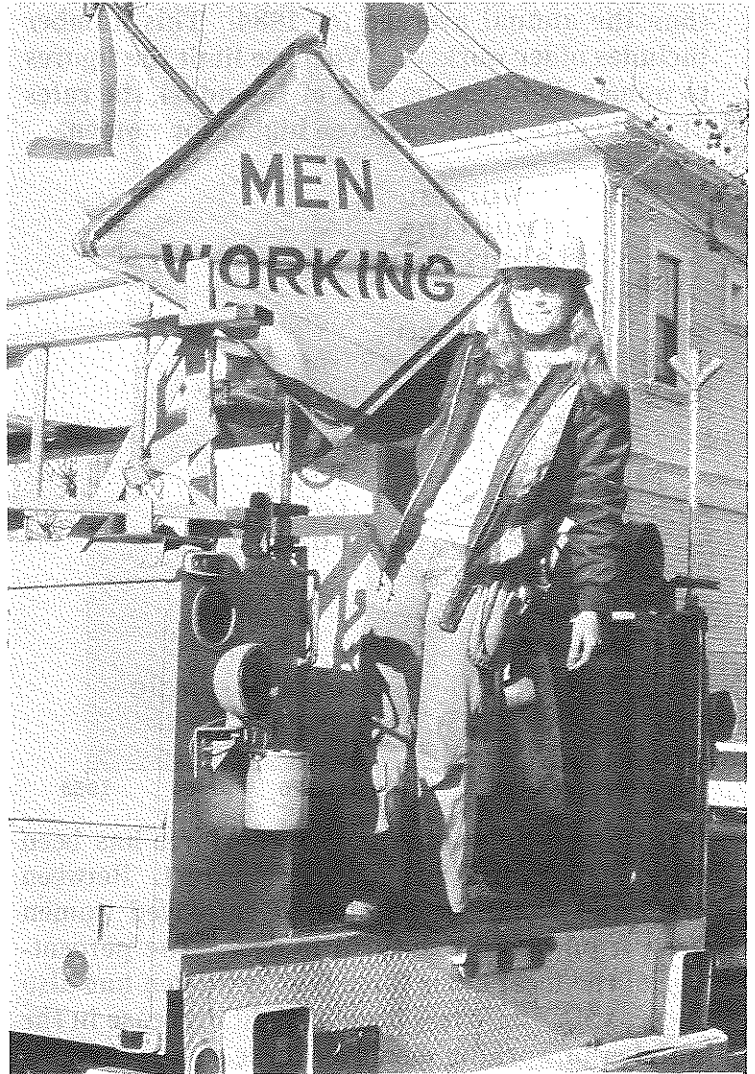


Photo Credit: Sandy Thacker

... The median earnings for full-time secretarial work in 1979 was \$10,260. One out of every nine women workers was in this position in 1979.

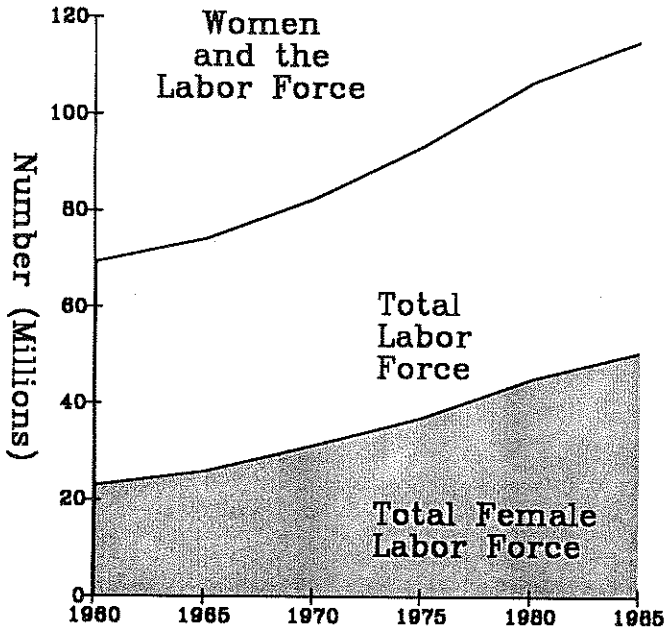
... Nine percent of the Armed forces were women.

... College enrollment of women is now nearly equal to that of men. Large numbers of women still choose subjects to study that are different than men and will lead to lower paying jobs.

... Younger women are increasingly delaying marriage and childbirth to attend college and establish careers. By 1995, 61.4 million women are projected to be in the labor force -- a participation rate of 60 percent.

WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE

Over half of all adult American women participate in the labor force, compared to about three-quarters of the adult men. In 1985, an average of 51.1 million women (54.5%) were employed in the civilian paid labor force, about 1.3 million more than the annual average for 1984. This number includes older workers. When we limit the figures to women between the ages of 16 and 64, the rates of paid employment are even higher for women.



The number of women in the workforce has been climbing steadily, as shown in Figure 1. Between 1950 and 1985, the number of employed women grew from about one-third to 64%. The percentage of the total labor force that is women has also increased. There has been a slight decrease in the number of working men over these same years.

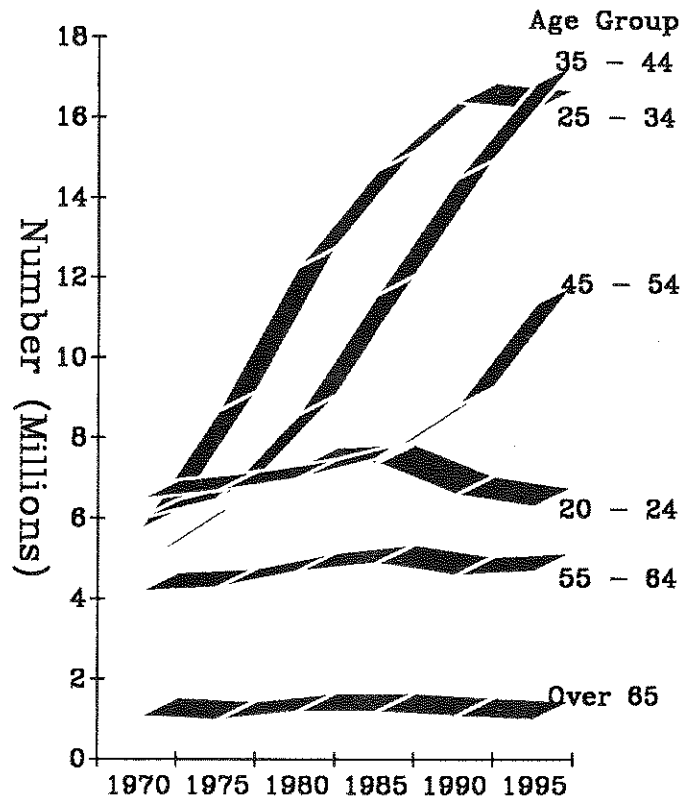
Women in every age group are working outside the home. Almost 70% of women in their early twenties are gainfully employed. Figure 2 shows the trends. Experts are also predicting that the numbers of women between the ages of 25 and 55 in the labor force will continue to grow dramatically in the next few years.

MARITAL STATUS

Women are participating in the paid labor force regardless of their marital status. Figure 3 summarizes some of the trends. The largest group of women workers has always been single women,

but each year more and more married women, whether or not their husbands are present, are entering the paid labor force. By 1980, more than half of all married women, an increase of nearly 6.4 million over the past decade, were employed outside the home.

Women in the Labor Force



Just as the divorce rate in the United States has increased, so has the proportion of divorced women in the labor force. In 1985, 75 percent of divorced women were in the labor force, compared with 65 percent of women who had never married, 54 percent of married women with a husband present, and 21 percent of widows.

WORKING MOTHERS

Each day more and more mothers, with children in all age groups, have been taking on the additional role of wage earner. For many women, there is no choice -- their paycheck is an economic necessity. But there are also noneconomic reasons that so many women are now gainfully employed. There have been substantial positive changes in society's acceptance of working mothers and of women's desires and expectations of being productive, independent adults. These are but two of many important reasons.

Among women with children under 18, 20 million, or 62%, were in the labor force in 1985. More than 8 million women were mothers of children under age 6. Of all children under 18 in 1985, well over half, 33.5 million, had a mother in the labor force. Of these, more than 9 million children were under age 6, and 14.7 million were 6 to 13.

Black mothers have the highest labor force participation rates. Two out of three Black mothers, 69.3%, compared to 1 out of 2 white women, 52.3%, and 2 out of 5, 45.8%, mothers of Hispanic origin, held paid jobs. Women with babies under 1 year old have increasingly joined or rejoined the labor force. In 1975, 31 percent of such women were in the labor force; 10 years later, 48 percent were working or seeking work. Half the mothers with toddlers under age 3 were in the labor force in March 1985.

WOMEN WHO MAINTAIN FAMILIES

Most women with children have a husband to contribute to the family income. The number of single-parent families, however, has almost doubled since 1970: about 1 out of 5 families with children are now maintained by a woman, and 6.3 million women with 11.2 million children un-

der 18 maintained their own families in March 1985. Sixty-eight percent of these women were in the labor force, compared with 59 percent in 1970. In only 15 years, the number of employed women responsible for children under age 18 doubled from 3 million to 6 million. The baby-boom generation became young adults during the 1970's, a period marked by record numbers of divorces and women remaining unmarried; consequently, there are more women with major economic responsibilities and the need to work.

WHERE WOMEN WORK

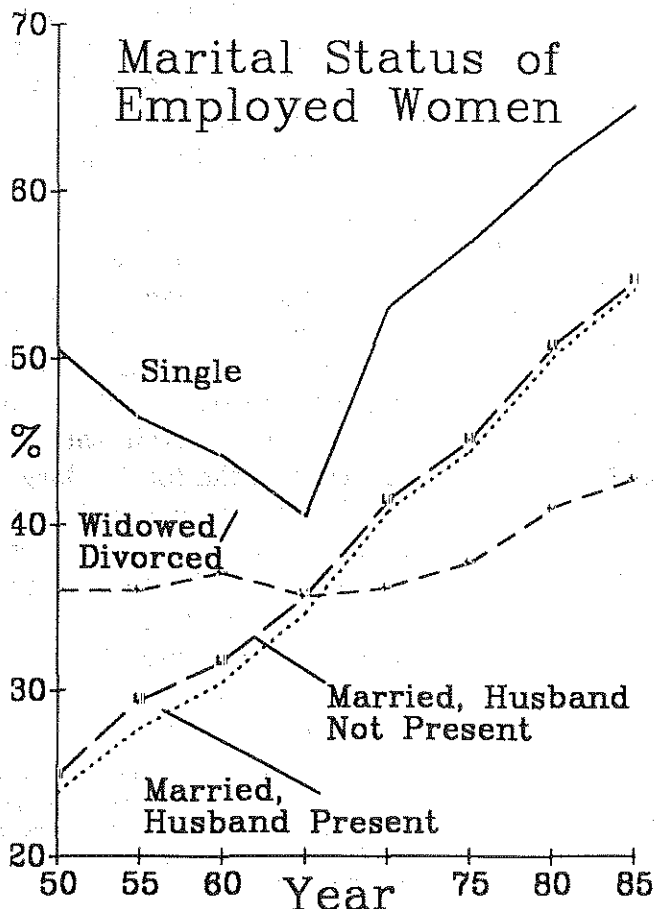
By and large, most women continue to be employed in traditional occupations. While the distribution of jobs for both women and men across occupations has changed over the years, sometimes dramatically, the labor market overall remains sharply segregated by sex.

Even though some women have made progress in entering occupations predominantly held by men in the past, especially managerial and professional specialty occupations, the majority of women are still in traditional "female" occupations and the actual number of women in higher-paying jobs is relatively small.

As the accompanying tables show, women continue to be overrepresented in clerical and service occupations and underrepresented in production, craft, and labor occupations.

While more and more women work outside home, the sobering truth is that large numbers of women work in lower paid service or clerical positions (hold a 'secondary' economic status). At the same time, more and more women have been the prime economic and social support of families. There continues to be minimal financial and social assistance to women in their child-caring and household worker roles.

Many women today are well-educated, tend to have more resources, may have smaller families or no families, may be better off in terms of overall health, financial status, and well-being than ever before. But, for many others in America, there is a long way to go toward achieving economic and social equality.



Facts and Figures about Women at Work

WHERE WOMEN WORK

The top twenty occupations where women worked full-time in 1979 show that most women continued to work in female-dominated occupations.

JOB TITLE	Number	Avg. Wage
Secretaries	2,299,268	\$10,622
Bookkeepers, accounting and auditing clerks	941,889	\$10,420
Managers & administrators	908,962	\$13,952
General office clerks	707,031	\$10,160
Registered nurses	633,030	\$14,834
Nursing aides, attendants, orderlies	523,673	\$ 8,433
Assemblers	420,019	\$10,021
Cashiers	372,426	\$ 8,777
Sewing machine operators	364,808	\$ 7,464
Teachers, elementary	340,397	\$13,411
Typists	332,860	\$ 9,553
Sales workers, commodities	315,384	\$ 8,130
Supervisors, gen. office	281,505	\$13,093
Supervisors, sales occ.	268,783	\$10,848
Accountants and auditors	261,714	\$13,629
Machine operators	251,640	\$ 9,815
Bank tellers	245,789	\$ 8,458
Waiters and waitresses	234,769	\$ 6,554
Production inspectors, checkers, examiners	223,749	\$10,481
Data entry keyers	212,932	\$10,217

COLLEGE EDUCATED MEN AND WOMEN

Despite the growth in labor force participation and equal employment opportunity for women workers, statistics show that men and women with five or more years of college still had substantially different job patterns and earnings in 1980. This table shows that only 10 of the top 20 jobs held by each sex were the same for both sexes with advanced educational training. Examining this list also shows that the relative rank of each of these occupations was different for educated men and women. And the wage gap for the same occupation is striking.

JOB TITLE	Rank	WOMEN		MEN	
		Average	Wages	Rank	Wages
			\$18,462		\$33,919
Teachers, elementary	1	16,094	5	25,642	
Managers & administrators	2	20,003	1	38,915	
Teachers, secondary	4	16,419	8	20,446	
Social workers	5	16,873	20	20,113	
Administration, school	6	19,855	6	25,989	
Teachers, post-secondary	7	19,130	4	25,642	
Physicians	8	41,516	3	71,972	
Lawyers	10	26,319	2	47,635	
Accountants & auditors	14	17,055	9	31,549	
Administrators, public	17	23,432	17	30,266	

Changing Patterns of Women's Work

The changing nature of technology and of the American economy has produced profound changes in the patterns of employment for women. Many jobs previously held by tens of thousands of women are disappearing. Four of the five fast declining occupations in the United States in the last decade were in female-dominated jobs. Stenographers lost the most ground, followed by private household workers and sewing machine operators, a major industrial occupation for women. Another industrial occupation in the textile trades, pressing machine operators, was also among the major occupations with severe losses.

Job Growth, Too

On the other hand, female dominated jobs were also among the ten fastest growing jobs, with medical assistants ranking third and registered nurses ranking 10th among the top ten jobs with major growth.

In general, jobs were growing fastest in the service sector, where again, "women's work" dominated. Cashiers, registered nurses, waitresses (and waiters), nurses aides and orderlies, and retail salespersons were in the top ten largest growth jobs. Kindergarten and elementary school teachers and accountants and auditors were the two jobs in the professional categories with largest growth. Women are 44% of all accountants and auditors.

Sources used in this report: *Women in the American Economy* by Cynthia M. Taeuber and Victor Valdisera, Bureau of the Census, Special Studies Series P-23, No. 146 and *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1987*, Bureau of the Census.

