



## FACTS ABOUT THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF WORKING FAMILIES

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### OVERVIEW:

The labor force in the United States has changed dramatically over the past 40 years. The number of women entering the workforce and the incidence of dual-earner families have steadily increased, and this trend seems unlikely to change in the near future.

### CURRENT REALITIES:

In 1997,

- dual-earner families, i.e., families in which both the husband and wife work, made up **53.7 percent** of all families;
- **64.5 percent** of married couples with children under 18 were dual-earner;
- **58.6 percent** of families with children under 6 were dual-earner;
- “traditional” families, in which only the husband is employed, constituted only **18.7 percent** of all families and **28.2 percent** of families with children under 18;
- **70.7 percent** of married mothers (spouse present) with children under 18 were in the labor force;
- the labor force participation rate for mothers with children under 6 was **64.8 percent**; and
- the participation rate for married mothers with children under a year old was **59.2 percent**.

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics: Employment Characteristics of Families: March, 1998)

## HISTORICAL TRENDS:

### The Number of Two-Income Married-Couple Families Is on the Rise:



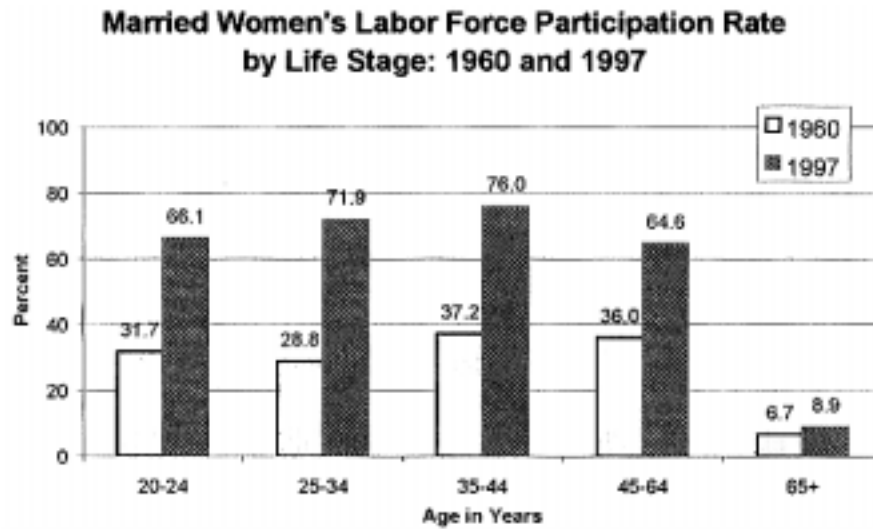
- The number of dual-earner, married-couple families has continued to rise, constituting 49.9 percent of families in 1986 and more than 56 percent in 1998.
- The most significant increase has been in married-couple families with children under the age of six. The percentage of such families increased almost 10 percent between 1986 and 1998, from 52.6 to more than 62 percent. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census)

### Women's Labor Force Participation Rates Continue to Rise:



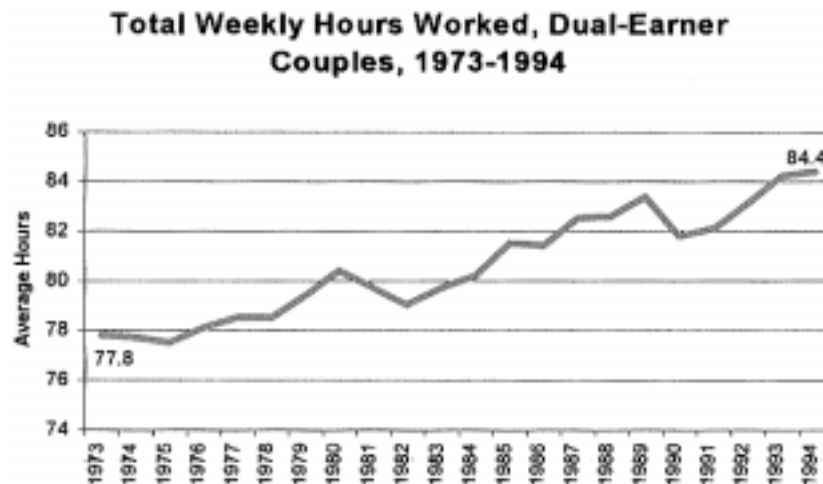
- In 1900, the labor force participation rate for all women was only 20 percent; by 1950 it had increased to almost 34 percent, and by 1997 the participate rate stood at more than 59 percent.
- Since 1900, married women have markedly increased their participation in the labor force. In 1900, less than 6 percent of married women were in the labor force, a proportion that increased to 20 percent in 1950 and to 61 percent in 1997 (Source: U.S Bureau of the Census).

**Married Women at Every Life Stage Are Increasing Their Labor Force Participation:**



- At every life stage, more married women are participating in the labor than in 1960.
- The most dramatic increase has been among married women aged 25-34. The overall labor force participation rate for this group increased more than 43 percent between 1960 and 1997, from 29 percent to 72 percent. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census)

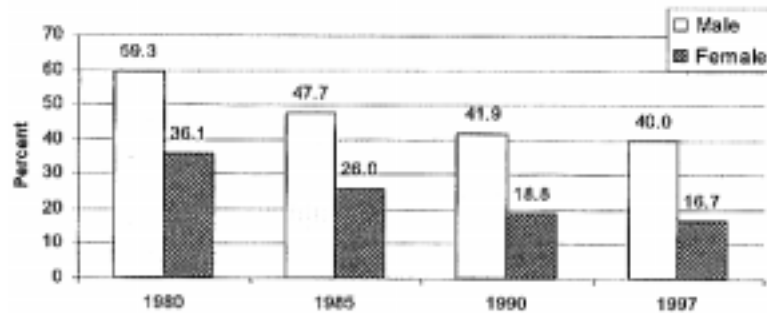
**Hours Worked by Both Husbands and Wives Is on the Rise:**



- The average number of hours worked by dual-earner couples has increased over the last 20 years.
- The total weekly hours worked by couples increased by six and a half hours between 1973 and 1994, from an average of less than 78 hours to more than 84 hours per week. (Source: General Social Survey. See Clarkberg, Marin and Phyllis Moen. *Working Families in Transition: Husbands' and Wives' Hours on the Job*, BLCC Working Paper #98-06)

## THE FUTURE

**Trends in High School Seniors Agreeing that "it is usually better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family," 1980-1997**



- The next generation seems unlikely to return to a traditional definition of marital roles.
- High school seniors, both men and women, have been increasingly disinclined to reserve wage earning to men and homemaking to women. (Source: Johnston, L., J. Bachman, and P. O'Malley. "Monitoring the Future: Questionnaire Responses from the Nation's High School Seniors." Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, 1981, 1986, 1991, and 1998)

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