

WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE

In 2011, 58.1 percent of women aged 16 and older were in the labor force (either employed or not employed and actively seeking employment) compared to 70.5 percent of men.¹⁵ Between 1970 and 2000, women's participation in the labor force increased from 43.3 to 59.9 percent and has remained relatively stable through 2011. Among women with children under 18 years of age, 70.9 percent were in the labor force in 2011, up from 47.4 percent in 1975 (data not shown). Labor force participation is higher among women with older children and those who have never been married or are divorced or separated. In 2011, labor force participation ranged from 59.8 percent among married

mothers with children under 3 years of age to 80.0 percent among unmarried or separated mothers with children aged 6–17 years.

Although the average annual rate of unemployment (not employed and actively seeking employment) for persons aged 16 and older was lower among women than men in 2011 (8.5 versus 9.4 percent, respectively; data not shown), the median weekly earnings of full-time workers aged 25 and older was \$168 more for men than women (\$886 versus \$718). Earnings rise dramatically with increasing education but the gender gap in earnings persists with female full-time workers earning 19 to 25 percent less than male full-time workers at every level of education. For example, while women with a high

school diploma or equivalent earned a weekly average of \$554 in 2011, their male counterparts earned an average of \$720. Only about half of the gender pay gap can be explained by differences in industry and occupation.¹⁶

Women were more likely than men to be among the working-poor, defined as those who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks but lived below the official poverty level. In 2011, 7.6 percent of women aged 16 and older were working poor compared to 6.7 percent of men. Among women, the working-poor rate was highest among women aged 16–19 and 20–24 years (15.7 and 18.3 percent, respectively) and among Black and Hispanic women (14.5 and 13.8 percent, respectively; data not shown).

Labor Force Participation Among Mothers, by Marital Status and Age of Youngest Child, 2011

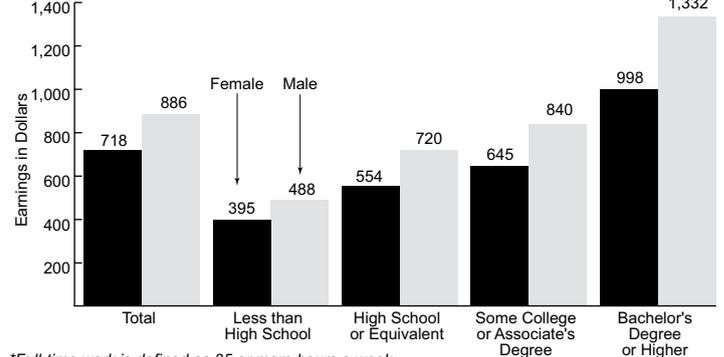
Source I.10: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey



*Includes never-married, divorced, separated, and widowed persons.

Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Workers* Aged 25 and Older, by Educational Attainment Level and Sex, 2011

Source I.10: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey



*Full-time work is defined as 35 or more hours a week.