



## Questions and Answers about WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE: A Sloan Work and Family Research Network Fact Sheet

### Introduction

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared Fact Sheets that provide statistical answers to some important questions about work–family and work–life issues. This Fact Sheet includes statistics about Women in the Workforce. (Last updated: October 2009)



#### How many women are in the workforce?

- ✓ **Fact 1** “The labor force participation rate of all women ages 25 to 54, after rising sharply over the past half century, has been basically unchanged since the mid 1990s, plateauing at about 75%” (Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 2).
- ✓ **Fact 2** “In 1975, 47% of mothers with children under 18 participated in the U.S. labor force. By 2007, 32 years later, that proportion had risen to 71%” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 4).
- ✓ **Fact 3** “Over two–thirds (67.1 percent) of highly educated women in their thirties with a young child at home are in the labor force” (Boushey, 2005, p. 11).



#### Where are women working?

- ✓ **Fact 1** “Although 49 percent of wage and salaried employees are women, only 41 percent of (self–employed) independents and 31 percent of (small business) owners are” (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 47).
- ✓ **Fact 2** “...women are more likely to have white collar jobs as professionals (23% versus 16% for men) and in administrative support (22% versus 8% for men)” (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 7).
- ✓ **Fact 3** “Men are much more likely (43%) to have blue collar jobs in production, machine operation, and repair than women (10%)” (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 7).



#### What is the impact of women in leadership positions?

- ✓ **Fact 1** “The proportion of workers whose immediate boss is a woman has consistently increased over the last 10 years, from 21% to almost 25%” (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2005, p. 7).



### Do women want jobs with more responsibility?

✔ **Fact 1** “Since 1997, the desire to move to jobs with more responsibility among young workers has increased. This increase has been greater for young women—from 54% to 66%—than young men—from 61% to 67%” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 1).

✔ **Fact 2** In 2008, “among Millennial women (under 29) who did not want jobs with more responsibility, 31% cited concerns about the increased job pressure that goes along with greater responsibility at work, 19% said they already have a high-level job with a lot of responsibility, and 15% were concerned about not having enough flexibility to successfully manage work and personal or family life in a job with more responsibility” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 2).



### How do women’s education levels compare to those of men?

✔ **Fact 1** “In the 2005–2006 academic year (the most recent year for which data are available), women earned 58% of all bachelor’s degrees and 60% of master’s degrees. By comparison, men earned 42% of bachelor’s degrees and 40% of master’s degrees in 2005–2006. By 2016, women are projected to earn 60% of bachelor’s, 63% of master’s and 54% of doctorate and professional degrees” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 6).

✔ **Fact 2** “Between the late 50s and the mid 90s, men had an advantage over women in college graduation of about six to seven percentage points” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 5).

✔ **Fact 3** “In every year from 1940 through 2007, men 25 years old and older are at least somewhat more likely (in absolute terms) than women of the same ages to have completed four years of college or more. The differences between men and women are smallest in 2007 (1.5 percentage points) and, interestingly, in 1940 (1.7 percentage points) when college graduation rates were very low for everybody except the well-to-do” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 5).



### How does the income of women compare to the income of men?

✔ **Fact 1** “In 1979, the average full-time employed woman earned 62% of what men earned on a weekly basis. In the early 1990s, the wage gap narrowed, largely as a function of a decline in men’s wages. By 2007, however, the average full-time employed woman earned 80% of what men earned on a weekly basis, a big increase, but still a large gap” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 7).

✔ **Fact 2** “Employed women 20 to 24 years old in 2007 who were paid on an hourly basis earned 90% of what their male counterparts earned, and teenage women 16 to 19 years old earned 95% of what their male counterparts earned” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 8).



- ✔ **Fact 3** “The median hourly earnings of women (\$12.50) are significantly lower than men’s median hourly earnings (\$16.32) by nearly four dollars per hour” (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 8).
- ✔ **Fact 4** “In 2008, employed women in dual-earner couples contributed an average of 44% of annual family income. This reflects a significant increase from an average of 39% in 1997—only 11 years ago” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 8).
- ✔ **Fact 5** “Employees who work in administrative support positions earn significantly less on average than employees in other positions, and women are much more likely (22%) than men (8%) to work in such positions” (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 12).
- ✔ **Fact 6** “Tenure with an employer is predictive of earnings, and women have less tenure at their jobs on average (7 years) than men (8 years)” (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 11).



#### Does having children affect the rate at which women participate in the labor force?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “Among mothers with very young children (under 3 years of age), there was a small decline in the labor force participation rate between the peak year of 1998 (62%) and the most recent year for which figures are available, 2005 (59%)” (Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “The recession of the early 2000s was harder on women than the recessions of the 1980s or 1990s...Compared to 1984, prime-age women (25–45) were 3.5 percentage points more likely to be employed in 2000, but only 0.8 percentage points more likely to be employed in 2004. Thus, women were overall less likely to be in the labor force in 2004, compared to 2000 (3.5 percent versus 0.8 percent)” (Boushey, 2005, p. 7).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “In 2004, prime-age women (25–45) with children at home were 9.2 percentage points less likely to be in the labor force than were women without children, down from a 9.9 percentage-point penalty in 2000” (Boushey, 2005, p. 2).
- ✔ **Fact 4** “In 2004, among women with any children, the business cycle penalty (the labor market’s effect on participation rates) was 7.6 percentage points for women with a high-school degree and 3.4 percentage points for women with a college degree, while women with an advanced degree have only a 0.5 percentage point penalty” (Boushey, 2005, p. 13).
- ✔ **Fact 5** “Nearly three-quarters of women with a graduate degree who have a child under age 18 at home are in the labor force, a rate higher than all other educational groups in this age range, except for women with some college...Only 67.7 percent of women with a high-school degree who have a child at home are in the labor force” (Boushey, 2005, p. 11).



✔ **Fact 6** “Ninety–six point eight percent of women aged 25 to 45 with children are *not* women in their mid– to late–thirties who have advanced degrees” (Boushey, 2005, p. 11).



### What are people’s opinions about the impact of working mothers on society?

✔ **Fact 1** “A 44% plurality of at–home moms consider the increase in working mothers bad for society while about half as many (22%) say it is good for society and the remainder take a neutral position (31%). By contrast, working moms are split almost evenly between positive (34%), negative (34%), and neutral (31%) views of how this trend is affecting society” (Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 4).

✔ **Fact 2** “Twenty–four percent of mothers with a college degree say more working mothers is a good thing for society, up from 9% in 1997. Mothers with no more than a high school diploma are about equally likely to say this trend is a good thing for society now (32%) as did so a decade ago (27%)” (Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 4).



### What are people’s opinions about the impact of working mothers on their children?

✔ **Fact 1** “At–home mothers (44%) are more likely than employed mothers (30%) to say an at–home mom is the ideal situation for children. The at–home group is narrowly divided over whether part–time (41%) or no outside work (44%) is the ideal situation for children. Just one–in–ten says a full–time working mother is ideal for the children” (Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 5). Close to a duplicate

✔ **Fact 2** “A majority of working mothers (52%) say that a mother working part–time is ideal for children. Three–in–ten say a mother who doesn’t work outside the home would be ideal for children and about one–in–ten (11%) say that a full–time working mother is ideal for children” (Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 5).

✔ **Fact 3** “Mothers working full–time give themselves slightly lower ratings as parents, on average, than do at–home mothers or mothers employed part–time” (Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 2).

✔ **Fact 4** “About four–in–ten (42%) adults say an at–home mother is the ideal situation for children; a nearly identical proportion (41%) say a mother working part–time is ideal and just 9% say a mother working full–time is ideal for children” (Pew Research Center, 2007, p. 8).



### How have opinions changed about mothers who work and their relationships with their children?

✔ **Fact 1** “The percentage of all employees of all ages who agree (strongly or somewhat) that it’s better for all involved if ‘the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children’ has dropped significantly and substantially over the past three decades—from 64% in 1977 to 41% in 2008, a decline of 23 percentage points. Nevertheless, it is important to note that two in five employees still endorse traditional gender roles” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 9).



✔ **Fact 2** “...women under 30 years old are less likely (31%) than older women (41%) to feel that men should earn the money and women should take care of the home and children” (Bond, Thompson, Galinsky, & Prottas, 2002, p. 5).

✔ **Fact 3** “In 1977, 70% of men in dual-earner couples thought it was better for men to earn the money and for women to care for the home and children. By 2008, only 37% of men in dual-earner couples felt this way, perhaps in part reflecting the fact that family income has become increasingly dependent on women’s earnings” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 11).

✔ **Fact 4** “The percentage of employees who agree (strongly or somewhat) that ‘a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work’ has increased significantly over the past three decades from 58% in 1977 to 73% in 2008” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 12).



### Who is taking care of the children and household chores now that more women are working?

✔ **Fact 1** “The amount of time fathers spend with their children under 13 on workdays has increased from two hours to three hours—an increase of one hour. At the same time, the amount of time mothers spend with their children under 13 on workdays has remained constant at an average of 3.8 hours” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 14).

✔ **Fact 2** “In 2008, men who say their wives or partners take the most responsibility for child care are no longer the majority (48% in 2008 compared with 58% in 1992). The nearly half of employed men (49%) who now say they take most or an equal share of child care responsibilities is up from 41% in 1992” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 16).

✔ **Fact 3** “The percentage of women who say they do most of the cooking has dropped from 75% in 1992 to 70% in 2008, while the percentage of women who say their husbands do most or an equal share of cooking increased from 15% in 1992 to 25% in 2008” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 17).

✔ **Fact 4** “In 1977, the proportions of men and women reporting some or a lot of work-life conflict were similar. Men’s work-life conflict, however, has increased significantly from 34% in 1977 to 45% in 2008, while women’s work-life conflict has increased less dramatically and not significantly: from 34% in 1977 to 39% in 2008” (Galinsky, Aumann, & Bond, 2008, p. 18).

The Network has additional resources related to this topic.

1. Visit our database of academic literature with citations and annotations of literature related to the issue of Women in the Workforce. You can connect to this database at:

[http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-0&local\\_base=BCL\\_WF](http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-0&local_base=BCL_WF)



## References

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Bond, J. T., Thompson, C., Galinsky, E., & Prottas, D. (2002). *Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

"The NSCW surveys representative samples of the nation's workforce once every five years (1992, 1997, 2002). Sample sizes average 3,500, including both wage and salaried employees and self-employed workers" (Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2002, p. v). Several of the questions in the National Study of the Changing Workforce were taken from or based upon questions in the Quality of Employment Survey (QES) conducted three times by the Department of Labor from 1969 to 1977. Although the NSCW is more comprehensive than the QES in addressing issues related to both work and personal life and has a stronger business perspective, having comparable data from over a 25 year period has provided a unique opportunity to look at trends over time. The 2002 NCSW uses 25 years of trend data to examine five topics in depth: women in the workforce; dual earner couples, the role of technology in employees' lives on and off the job, work-life supports on the job, and working for oneself versus someone else" (Highlights of the National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2002).

To read the Executive Summary or the press release, or to purchase the full report as a PDF, please visit <http://www.familiesandwork.org/announce/2002NSCW.html>

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Boushey, H. (2005). *Are women opting out? Debunking the myth*. Retrieved from the Center for Economic and Policy Research web site: [http://www.cepr.net/publications/opt\\_out\\_2005\\_11.pdf](http://www.cepr.net/publications/opt_out_2005_11.pdf)

"This analysis uses data from the CEPR Outgoing Rotation Group (ORG) Extracts for years from 1984 to 2004. The analysis examines the effects of children on the labor force participation rates of prime-age women, aged 25 to 45, regardless of their biological relationship to the child, including un-adopted stepchildren and foster children, along with biological children. Thus, the paper will refer to "mothers" as "women with children at home. . . . The focus will be on LFPRs that 'control' for factors, such as race and ethnicity, age, education, and the business cycle" (p. 3).

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Connelly, R., & Kimmel, J. (2003). Marital status and full-time/part-time work status in child care choices. *Applied Economics*, 35, 761-777.

"The data used in this analysis comes from overlapping 1992 and 1993 panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). These data provide a nationally representative data set for the second half of 1994 with sufficient information on child care expenditures and mode as well as extensive employment information. The study limits its sample to those women with at least one child under the age of six. These samples include 4241 married women and 1523 single women, both with at least one child under the age of six" (p. 763).

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European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. (2005). *Fifteen years of working conditions in the EU: Charting the trends*. Retrieved from <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2006/85/en/1/ef0685en.pdf>

"The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) is carried out every five years by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, a tripartite European Agency based in Dublin. The questionnaire is developed by the European Foundation team in close cooperation with an expert questionnaire development group. This group comprises representatives of the European social partners, other EU bodies (EU Commission, Eurostat, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work), international organisations (OECD, ILO), national statistical institutes, as well as leading European experts in the field. The sample of the EWCS is representative of persons in employment (according to the Eurostat definition this comprises both employees and the self-employed) in the countries covered for the respective periods. In each country, the EWCS sample followed a multi-stage, stratified and clustered design with a random walk procedure for the selection of the respondents at the last stage. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in the respondent's own household" (p. 8).



Galinsky, E., Aumann, K., & Bond, J. (2008). *Times are changing: Gender and generation at work and at home*. Retrieved from the Families and Work Institute web site: [http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times\\_Are\\_Changing.pdf](http://familiesandwork.org/site/research/reports/Times_Are_Changing.pdf)

"Various data sources were used for this report. Primary sources were the Families and Work Institute 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW) surveys, as well as the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey (QES) conducted by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor. The NSCW builds directly upon the 1977 QES, which was discontinued after the 1977 round of data collection. Both the NSCW and QES are based on random samples of the U.S. workforce.

The present report is based on 2,769 wage and salaried employees from the 2008 total sample. Total samples include wage and salaried employees who work for someone else, independent self-employed workers who do not employ anyone else, and small business owners who do employ others. NSCW total samples for each year average about 3,500 employed people. All NSCW samples are adjusted to reflect (i.e., weighted to) recent U.S. Bureau of the Census statistics on the total U.S. population to adjust for any sampling bias that might have occurred. The response rates for all NSCW surveys are above 50%, applying the conservative method of calculation recommended by the American Association for Public Opinion Research. In 2008, the response rate was 54.6%. The estimated maximum sampling error for the total wage and salaried sample is approximately  $\pm 1\%$ " (p. 23).

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Pew Research Center. (2007). *From 1997 to 2007 fewer mothers prefer full-time work*. Retrieved from <http://pewresearch.org/assets/social/pdf/WomenWorking.pdf>

"The Pew survey was conducted by telephone from February 16 through March 14, 2007 among a randomly selected, nationally-representative sample of 2,020 adults. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points. Many of the analyses presented in this report are based on responses among selected subgroups. Results based on working mothers (259 respondents to the survey) have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 8 percentage points. Results based on at-home mothers (153 respondents) have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 11 percentage points. Whenever possible, these findings have been compared with a nationally-representative survey of 1,101 women conducted in 1997 by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The subgroup of women in the 1997 survey who are working mothers (317 respondents) and at-home mothers (140 respondents) have a margin of sampling error of plus or minus six and nine percentage points, respectively" (p. 2).

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