

Moonlighting by women jumped to record highs

An important, but small, proportion of Americans work at two jobs or more; they do so principally for financial reasons such as meeting regular expenses or paying off debts and also to explore new careers while still holding on to their primary jobs

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According to a survey conducted in May 1985, multiple jobholders totaled 5.7 million, 5.4 percent of all employed workers. This was up from 4.9 percent in 1980 and was the highest level in more than 20 years. Data from the same survey confirm the continuance of two long-term trends: an increasing number of women among the moonlighters and a decline in the proportion of multiple jobholders with at least one job in agriculture.

These findings are from a special survey of work patterns of American workers.¹ Multiple jobholders, as identified in this survey, are those employed persons who, during the survey reference week, either (1) had jobs as wage or salary workers with two employers or more; (2) were self-employed and also held a wage and salary job; or (3) were unpaid family workers on their primary jobs but also held wage and salary jobs.² The primary job is the one at which the greatest number of hours were worked.

Demographic characteristics

The survey revealed that between 1980 and 1985, the number of women with two jobs or more rose by almost 40 percent to 2.2 million. Over the same period, the multiple jobholding or "moonlighting" rate for women (percent of employed with more than one job) jumped from 3.8 to

4.7 percent. In 1985, women made up nearly two-fifths of all moonlighters.

Moonlighting among women has actually been rising steadily since 1970, paralleling their continued increase in overall labor force participation. Over the decade and a half, the number of women holding at least two jobs has more than tripled and their moonlighting rate has risen from 2.2 to 4.7 percent. (See table 1.)

The moonlighting rate for men, which had undergone a long-term decline before stabilizing during the 1970's at around 6 percent, continued to hold steady at 5.9 percent in May 1985. While men are still more likely than women to be working at two jobs or more, the gender difference in the incidence of multiple jobholding has been sharply reduced over time. As recently as 1970, the moonlighting rate for men exceeded that for women by 5 percentage points; by 1975, the gap had shrunk to 3 percentage points; by 1980, it had declined to 2 points; and, as shown above, by 1985, it barely exceeded 1 point.

Significant differences still persist, however, in the types of jobs held by the men and women who moonlight. In 1985, about 40 percent of the women were working at multiple part-time jobs, while more than four-fifths of the male moonlighters usually worked full time at their primary jobs and part time on their secondary jobs.

Among men, the proportion holding more than one job increases progressively in each age group, reaching a peak of 7.1 percent in the 35 to 44 years interval and declining

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steadily thereafter. Among women the pattern was much different. The proportion holding multiple jobs was 5 percent in all age groups below 45 years and then dropped off progressively. (See table 2.)

While married men were more apt to moonlight than either single men or those who were widowed, divorced, or separated, married women were somewhat less likely to work at more than one job than were those without a spouse.

Whites continued to be much more likely than blacks to work at two jobs or more. In fact, the moonlighting rate for whites increased from 5.1 to 5.7 percent between 1980 and 1985, while the black rate was unchanged at 3.2 percent. The increase for whites was principally among women, whose moonlighting rate rose a full percentage point to 4.9 percent; the rate for white men edged up slightly to 6.2 percent. Hispanic women had a moonlighting rate of 2.8 percent, about the same as that for black women, while the rate for Hispanic men was below that of blacks and only half the rate of white men.

Reasons for working at more than one job

Economic factors predominate among the reasons for moonlighting. About 41 percent of persons working more than one job in May 1985 reported that they did so in order to meet regular expenses or pay off debts, and 13 percent cited a desire to save for the future. Another 17 percent indicated that their principal reason for moonlighting was to get experience or build up a business, while 29 percent reported various other reasons. Women were slightly more likely than men to indicate the desire to get experience in a different field of work. (See table 3.)

Marital status had a clear effect on the reasons reported for moonlighting. Single men and women were more likely than other groups to moonlight in order to accumulate savings for the future. Current financial considerations

played a much more important role in the decision to moonlight for widowed, divorced, and separated workers. More than two-thirds of the women and almost half of the men in that category cited either the need to meet regular expenses or to pay off debts as their reason for working at more than one job.

There was also a sharp divergence in the distribution of the reasons for multiple jobholding reported by blacks and whites. Blacks of both sexes were much more likely than whites to say they moonlighted in order to help with regular expenses and paying off debts and much less likely to say they did so to get experience or to build up a business.

Class of worker, industry, and occupation

The proportion of multiple jobholders engaged in farming in either their primary or secondary job—a prominent activity among dual jobholders in the past—declined to fewer than one-tenth in May 1985. In most cases, these workers had primary jobs as wage and salary workers in nonagricultural industries but did some farming on their own. (See table 4.) While the proportion of such workers had been edging down as shown in the following tabulation, the drop between 1980 and 1985 was particularly sharp, undoubtedly reflecting the myriad problems encountered by the farm sector in recent years:

	Total multiple jobholders (thousands)	With at least one job in agriculture	
		Total (thousands)	Proportion
1970	4,048	943	23.3
1975	3,918	890	22.7
1977	4,558	922	20.2
1979	4,724	871	18.4
1980	4,759	835	17.5
1985	5,730	532	9.3

Table 1. Employed persons 16 years and over holding two jobs or more and multiple jobholding rates by selected characteristics, May 1970 to May 1985

(Numbers in thousands)

Year	Total employed	Multiple jobholders				Multiple jobholding rate ¹				
		Total	Men	Women		Total	Men	Women	White	Black ²
				Number	Percent of all multiple jobholders					
1970	78,358	4,048	3,412	636	15.7	5.2	7.0	2.2	5.3	4.4
1971	78,708	4,035	3,270	765	19.0	5.1	6.7	2.6	5.3	3.8
1972	81,224	3,770	3,035	735	19.5	4.6	6.0	2.4	4.8	3.7
1973	83,758	4,262	3,393	869	20.3	5.1	6.6	2.7	5.1	4.7
1974	85,786	3,889	3,022	867	22.3	4.5	5.8	2.6	4.6	3.8
1975	84,146	3,918	2,962	956	24.4	4.7	5.8	2.9	4.8	3.7
1976	87,278	3,948	3,037	911	23.1	4.5	5.8	2.6	4.7	2.8
1977	90,482	4,558	3,317	1,241	27.2	5.0	6.2	3.4	5.3	2.6
1978	93,904	4,493	3,212	1,281	28.5	4.8	5.8	3.3	5.0	3.1
1979	96,327	4,724	3,317	1,407	29.8	4.9	5.9	3.5	5.1	3.0
1980	96,809	4,759	3,210	1,549	32.5	4.9	5.8	3.8	5.1	3.2
1985	106,878	5,730	3,537	2,192	38.3	5.4	5.9	4.7	5.7	3.2

¹ Multiple jobholders as a percent of all employed persons.

² Beginning in 1977, data refer to black workers only; data for prior years refer to the black-and-other-population group.

NOTE: Data for 1970-1980 have not been adjusted to reflect 1980 census population controls.

Table 2. Employed persons with two jobs or more by age, marital status, race, and Hispanic origin, May 1985

[Numbers in thousands]

Characteristic	Total			Men			Women		
	Total employed	Multiple jobholders		Total employed	Multiple jobholders		Total employed	Multiple jobholders	
		Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Age									
Total, 16 years and over	106,878	5,730	5.4	60,015	3,537	5.9	46,864	2,192	4.7
16 to 19	6,289	289	4.6	3,370	134	4.0	2,919	156	5.3
20 to 24	13,857	777	5.6	7,345	436	5.9	6,512	340	5.2
25 to 34	31,246	1,771	5.7	17,641	1,090	6.2	13,605	682	5.0
35 to 44	24,446	1,522	6.2	13,698	967	7.1	10,478	556	5.2
45 to 54	16,682	847	5.1	9,526	558	5.9	7,156	290	4.1
55 to 64	11,545	433	3.8	6,739	294	4.4	4,806	139	2.9
65 and over	2,813	90	3.2	1,696	59	3.5	1,117	31	2.7
Marital status									
Single	26,167	1,448	5.5	14,768	767	5.2	11,399	681	6.0
Married, spouse present	65,443	3,448	5.3	39,444	2,447	6.2	25,999	1,001	3.8
Widowed, divorced, or separated	15,268	834	5.5	5,803	323	5.6	9,465	510	5.4
Race and Hispanic origin									
White	93,555	5,286	5.7	53,222	3,291	6.2	40,333	1,995	4.9
Black	10,416	338	3.2	5,240	187	3.6	5,176	151	2.9
Hispanic origin	6,489	194	3.0	3,984	125	3.1	2,505	69	2.8

NOTE: Detail for race and Hispanic-origin groups will not add to totals because data for the "other races" group are not presented and Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

Table 3. Multiple jobholders by sex, marital status, race and the reason for working at more than one job, May 1985

Characteristic	Total (thousands)	Percent distribution by reason					
		Total	To meet regular household expenses	To pay off debts	To save for the future	To get experience or build up a business	Other reason
Total, 16 years and over	5,730	100.0	31.6	9.3	13.0	17.0	29.2
Men, 16 years and over	3,537	100.0	30.3	9.0	12.9	18.1	29.7
Single	767	100.0	20.7	10.4	21.5	19.5	27.9
Married, spouse present	2,447	100.0	33.4	7.6	11.0	18.0	30.1
Widowed, divorced, or separated	323	100.0	29.2	17.0	7.2	15.4	31.1
White	3,291	100.0	29.4	9.1	12.8	18.4	30.3
Black	187	100.0	45.6	10.6	12.8	11.1	20.0
Women, 16 years and over	2,192	100.0	33.7	9.7	13.1	15.3	28.2
Single	681	100.0	28.5	8.7	22.1	14.1	26.6
Married, spouse present	1,001	100.0	27.2	7.8	10.6	20.1	34.2
Widowed, divorced, or separated	510	100.0	53.5	14.8	6.0	7.0	18.8
White	1,995	100.0	33.3	8.9	12.9	15.7	29.2
Black	151	100.0	40.1	19.7	16.3	5.4	18.4

Table 4. Multiple jobholders by industry and class of worker of primary and second job, May 1985

[Numbers in thousands]

Primary job	Total employed	Multiple jobholders		Second job in agriculture			Second job in nonagricultural industries		
		Number	As a percent of total employed	Total	Wage and salary job	Self-employed	Total	Wage and salary job	Self-employed
Total, 16 years and over	106,878	5,730	5.4	382	81	300	5,348	3,866	1,482
Agriculture	3,524	186	5.3	36	13	22	150	137	13
Wage and salary workers	1,731	103	6.0	32	10	21	71	58	13
Self-employed workers	1,582	74	4.7	3	3	(1)	71	71	(1)
Unpaid family workers	211	8	4.0	-	-	(2)	8	8	(2)
Nonagricultural industries	103,354	5,544	5.4	346	67	279	5,198	3,728	1,469
Wage and salary workers	95,379	5,266	5.5	342	64	278	4,924	3,459	1,469
Self-employed workers	7,694	269	3.5	3	3	(1)	266	266	(1)
Unpaid family workers	280	9	3.2	-	-	(2)	9	9	(2)

¹ Self-employed persons with a secondary business or farm, but no wage and salary job, are not counted as multiple jobholders.

² Persons whose primary job was as an unpaid family worker are counted as multiple jobholders only if they also had a wage and salary job.

Among the other multiple jobholders—that is, the vast majority who did not engage in any agricultural work—about one-third were self-employed in at least one job, usually the second job. The rest worked as wage and salary employees in both jobs.

The workers whose primary jobs were in industries such as entertainment and recreation services; professional services, especially educational services; and public administration were the most likely to engage in moonlighting. In terms of specific occupations, the men most likely to moonlight were those employed as teachers, both at and below the college level, or as health technologists and technicians. Between 16 and 19 percent of them held a second job. A high proportion of dual jobholders (13.9 percent) was also found among male protective service workers, a group which includes police, who frequently moonlight as guards and security personnel. There were no occupations for women with such high rates of multiple jobholding. The highest rates for women were among officials and administrators in public administration, with a moonlighting rate of 7.5 percent, and health diagnosing occupations; teachers at all levels; and engineering and science technicians, all with rates around 7 percent.

Hours of work and earnings

Multiple jobholders usually worked an average of about 14 hours per week on their secondary jobs. Almost two-thirds worked less than 16 hours, while about 15 percent reported 25 hours or more of moonlighting work. Although blacks are much less likely than whites to hold more than one job, about 20 percent of black moonlighters reported usually working more than 25 hours per week at their second job, compared with about 15 percent of whites.

Combining all jobs, moonlighters worked an average of 51 hours per week in May 1985. The average for men, at 55 hours per week, exceeded by 10 hours that usually worked by women with two jobs or more.

The median usual weekly earnings from all jobs of multiple jobholders (who were wage and salary workers on their primary job)⁴ was \$343 in May 1985. For women who moonlighted, total weekly earnings from all jobs (\$241) were equal to little more than half of the earnings of multiple-jobholding men (\$450). The total weekly earnings for black multiple jobholders were \$305, slightly below the

\$344 average for whites.

Looking only at the second jobs, the earnings reported by multiple jobholders yielded a median of \$70 in May 1985. Just over three-fifths of the moonlighters reported earnings of below \$100 per week for their second job; one-fourth reported between \$100 and \$200; and about 13 percent reported earnings of over \$200 per week. As was generally the case with regard to the principal job, men earned considerably more on the second job—\$85 per week—than did women—\$57 per week. Three quarters of the women reported weekly earnings of less than \$100 on their second job, compared with a little more than half of the men.

Consistent with their greater hours worked, blacks reported earning more on their second jobs than did white moonlighters; the medians for the two groups were, respectively, \$81 and \$69 per week. Because black workers tend to earn much less in their primary jobs than do white workers, the earnings from secondary jobs help to narrow the income gap between whites and blacks who engage in multiple jobholding. □

—FOOTNOTES—

¹ The data were obtained through special questions asked in conjunction with the May 1985 Current Population Survey (CPS), the monthly survey of about 59,500 households which provides the basic labor force and unemployment data for the Nation. Data on multiple jobholders used to be collected each May in a supplement to the CPS until the supplement was ended after 1980. For the most recently published report on multiple jobholders, see Daniel E. Taylor and Edward S. Sekscenski, "Workers on long schedules, single and multiple jobholders," *Monthly Labor Review*, May 1982, pp. 47–53.

² Also included as multiple jobholders are a small number of persons who had two jobs because they changed jobs during the survey week. Persons employed only in private households (such as housekeepers, laundresses, gardeners, babysitters, and so forth) who worked for two employers or more during the survey week, are not counted as multiple jobholders because working for several employers is considered an inherent characteristic of private household work rather than an indication of multiple jobholding. Also excluded are self-employed persons with additional farms or businesses and persons with secondary jobs as unpaid family workers.

³ Included among the wage and salary workers are the incorporated self-employed (individuals who worked for corporations which they owned). The number of dual jobholders in this category is very small (58,000, or 1 percent of all moonlighters) and their inclusion among the wage and salary workers should have a minimal impact on the analysis of the data.

⁴ Data on wage and salary earnings only were collected for the primary job. Data on earnings from all sources were collected for the second job.