

# Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns of First-Time Mothers: 1961–2003

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## INTRODUCTION

A little over half of all American women with a child under 1 year of age were in the labor force in 2004.<sup>1</sup> A child's birth often requires changes in a mother's work schedule.<sup>2</sup> This report examines trends in maternity leave and the employment patterns of women who gave birth to their first child between January 1961 and December 2003.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis primarily uses retrospective fertility, employment, and maternity leave data from the 2004 panel of the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) conducted in 2004.<sup>4</sup> Previously published results based on similarly collected

information from the 1984, 1985, 1996, and 2001 SIPP panels are also included.<sup>5</sup>

The report first analyzes trends in women's work experience prior to their first birth and the factors associated with employment during pregnancy. Changes are placed in the historical context of the enactment of family-related legislation during the last quarter of the twentieth century. The next section identifies the maternity leave arrangements used by women before and after their first birth and the shifts that have occurred in the mix of leave arrangements that are used. The final section examines how rapidly mothers return to work after their first birth and the factors related to the length of time they are absent from the labor force.

In addition to updating childbearing, employment, and maternity leave trends through the 1990s, the report provides details on changes many new mothers experience in the number of hours worked, pay level, and job skill level after the first birth. These changes are examined in relation to whether a woman returned to the same employer she had during pregnancy or changed employer after the birth of the child.

<sup>1</sup> Jane Lawler Dye, *Fertility of American Women: June 2004*, Current Population Reports, P20-555, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Mothers with infants consistently have both lower labor force participation rates and lower proportions working full-time than do mothers with older children. Jane Lawler Dye, *Fertility of American Women: June 2004*, Current Population Reports, P20-555, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from the actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup> The data in this report were collected from June through September 2004 in the second wave (interview) of the 2004 SIPP; from June through September 2001 in the second wave of the 2001 SIPP; from August through November 1996 in the second wave of the 1996 SIPP; from January through April 1986 in the fourth wave of the 1985 SIPP; and from January through March 1986 in the eighth wave of the 1984 SIPP. The population represented (population universe) is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the previously published reports, see Martin O'Connell, "Maternity Leave Arrangements: 1961–85," *Work and Family Patterns of American Women*, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 165, Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC, 1990; Kristin Smith, Barbara Downs, and Martin O'Connell, *Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*, Current Population Reports, P70-79, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2001; Julia Overturf Johnson and Barbara Downs, *Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–2000*, Current Population Reports, P70-103, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2005.

## Current Population Reports

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS AT FIRST BIRTH

Social and economic changes that have occurred among women since 1961 have been noted to be associated with changes in families, childbearing, and work.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the demographic picture of new mothers has also changed. This section analyzes some of these events and shows how the characteristics of first-time mothers have changed over time.

### Age and Educational Attainment of First-Time Mothers

Young women giving birth in their late teens and early twenties are just beginning to start families at ages when other women are completing high school and entering college. Women who have delayed childbearing until their late twenties and thirties are more likely to have completed their schooling and accumulated more years of work experience than their younger counterparts. Education and experience can influence income levels and job security, which may in turn influence their decisions about working during pregnancy and how soon to return to work after their first birth.

Age at first birth and the educational attainment of new mothers have changed over time. Data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) show that the mean (average) age at first birth increased from 21.4 years in 1970 to 24.9 years in 2000.<sup>7</sup> The

<sup>6</sup> "Work and Family: A Changing Dynamic," *BNA Special Report*, Bureau of National Affairs, Washington, DC, 1986.

<sup>7</sup> T.J. Matthews and B.E. Hamilton, "Mean Age of Mother, 1970-2000," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 51, No. 1, National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD, 2002.

## SIPP FERTILITY, EMPLOYMENT, AND MATERNITY LEAVE DATA

The 2004 panel of the nationally representative Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) included a fertility topical module in the second wave of interviews conducted in June–September 2004. Information was collected on the birth dates of the first and last children born to all women 15 to 64 years old at the time of the survey. Women whose first child was born between 1991 and the survey date were also asked a series of questions concerning their employment history before and after the birth, as well as their receipt of maternity-leave benefits. Data from this survey were used in combination with similar information collected in the 1984, 1985, 1996, and 2001 SIPP panels to provide an extended series of employment and maternity leave data between 1961 and 2003.

The most recent data shown in this report, for the time period 2001–2003, are from Wave 2 of the 2004 SIPP. In previous reports, data for prior decades were often generated retrospectively from the most recent survey. For this report, data presented from 1961–2000 were obtained from earlier maternity leave reports produced by the Census Bureau or were retabulated and the most recent time period was generated by the survey year closest to that period. Generally, data from 1961–1965 to 1981–1985 are from the Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P23-165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), except as noted in individual tables and figures; data from 1986–1990 to 1991–1995 are from P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*); and data from 1996–2000 are from P70-103 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–2000*). For this reason, some of the data for prior survey years shown in this report may not be identical to those published in previous reports for similar time periods.

percentage of first births that were to women aged 30 and over increased between 1970 and 2000, from 4 percent to 24 percent. At the same time, the percentage of first births that were to women under 20 years of age dropped from 36 percent to 23 percent. Although not available by birth order, educational attainment among all mothers has also increased since 1970. In 2000, 25 percent of mothers had completed 16 or more years of school, compared with 9 percent in 1970. Among mothers aged 30 to 34, the proportion completing 16 or more

years of school increased from 15 percent to 43 percent.<sup>8</sup>

During this time, an increasing proportion of women 25 to 34 years old continued their education beyond high school. The proportion who had completed 4 or more years of college approximately doubled from 12 percent in 1970

<sup>8</sup> Data for 1970 are from *Vital Statistics of the United States*, Vol. 1, National Center for Health Statistics, Rockville, MD, 1975. Data for 2000 are from J.A. Martin, et al., "Births: Final Data for 2000," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 50, No. 5, National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD, 2002.

to 23 percent by 1990. By 2006, the proportion with a bachelor's degree or more education had reached 33 percent.<sup>9</sup> The age and educational attainment of first-time mothers as related to their work history around the time of their child's birth are examined in ensuing sections of this report.

### Factors Related to Employment and Maternity Leave

In the 1970s, the common expectation that women would leave work upon becoming pregnant began to change.<sup>10</sup> Another change during the 1970s was an increase in the proportion of families with a second income. More mothers, to maintain economic well-being and for other reasons, began to enter and stay in the workforce, resulting in an increase in homes where both spouses worked.<sup>11</sup>

Legislative, judicial, and regulatory changes related to maternal employment were enacted in the 1970s and 1980s that affected employer practices during an employee's pregnancy and after giving birth and revised policies on child care support. For example, in 1976 the federal tax code was changed to permit working families with a dependent child to take a tax credit for child care costs. The affordability of child care services may be an issue for many women in deciding whether and

when to return to work.<sup>12</sup> In 1978, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act was passed, which prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of pregnancy or childbirth. This act covered hiring and firing policies as well as promotions and pay levels.

Flexible work schedules, employment-based child care benefits, and maternity leave emerged as issues during the 1980s at about the same time that birth rates among women 30 and older began to increase steadily in the United States.<sup>13</sup> A U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1987, *California Federal Savings and Loan Association v. Guerra*, upheld a California law requiring most employers to grant pregnant women 4 months of unpaid disability leave and the right to return to their same job. At the federal level, The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) mandates up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for childbearing or family care over a 12-month period for eligible employees. Studies so far have found little evidence that such laws have increased the amount of leave women take by any considerable amount.<sup>14</sup>

### EMPLOYMENT HISTORY BEFORE THE FIRST BIRTH

This section describes overall trends in women's employment

history from 1961–1965 to 2001–2003 and the characteristics of women who worked during their first pregnancy.

### Overall Trends: 1961–1965 to 2001–2003

In the Fertility History portion of the SIPP, all mothers are asked if they ever worked for pay for at least 6 consecutive months before their first birth and if they worked for pay at a job at any time during the pregnancy leading to their first birth.<sup>15</sup> The categories do not necessarily overlap, as new mothers may have worked for a few months during their pregnancy while never having worked for 6 months in a row.<sup>16</sup> Other mothers may have worked for 6 months but quit working before they got pregnant.

Table 1 shows that for mothers who had their first child between 2001 and 2003, 74 percent had worked for at least a 6-month period in their lives. This percentage had increased since the early 1960s, when it was 60 percent of new mothers. Most of the increase since 1961–1965 occurred by the time of the 1986–1990 first-birth cohort, when the percentage reached 76 percent. Since then, no major changes have occurred. Age is related to whether women have worked before having their first child. For women 30 years and older, 9 out of 10 women who had a first birth in 2001–2003 had worked for at least 6 consecutive months, compared with 55 percent of women under 22 years of age.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Educational Attainment Historical Tables: Table A-1*, Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2007, <[www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/cps2006/tabA-1.xls](http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/cps2006/tabA-1.xls)>. Prior to 1992, educational attainment was measured by years of schooling completed. Four or more years of college is equivalent to a bachelor's degree or more education.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Levy, *The New Dollars and Dreams, American Incomes and Economic Change*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Daphne Spain and Suzanne Bianchi, *Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage, and Employment Among American Women*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Harriet B. Presser, "Can We Make Time for Children? The Economy, Work Schedules, and Child Care," *Demography*, Vol. 26, 1989, pp. 523–543. See Historical Fertility Tables, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2005, Table H3, <[www.census.gov/population/socdemo/fertility/tabH3.xls](http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/fertility/tabH3.xls)>.

<sup>14</sup> Wen-Jui Hen and Jane Waldfogel, "Parental Leave: The Impact of Recent Legislation on Parent's Leave Taking," *Demography*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 2003, pp. 191–200. Jacob Klerman and Arleen Leibowitz, "Job Continuity Among New Mothers," *Demography*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1999, pp. 145–155.

<sup>15</sup> For the remainder of this report, the term "pregnancy" is used to refer to the pregnancy preceding the first birth.

<sup>16</sup> Working for 6 consecutive months is a standard labor force indicator that measures the likelihood of a serious commitment to the labor force.

<sup>17</sup> Separate analysis, not shown in tables.

Table 1.  
**Employment History of Women Before First Birth: 1961–1965 to 2001–2003**

Year of first birth	Number of women with a first birth (thousands)	Women with a first birth who—							
		Ever worked for 6 or more months continuously <sup>1</sup>		Worked during pregnancy		Worked full-time during pregnancy <sup>2</sup>		Worked part-time during pregnancy <sup>2</sup>	
		Percent	Margin of error <sup>3</sup>	Percent	Margin of error <sup>3</sup>	Percent	Margin of error <sup>3</sup>	Percent	Margin of error <sup>3</sup>
1961–1965 . . . . .	6,306	60.0	2.0	44.4	2.0	39.7	2.0	4.7	0.9
1966–1970 . . . . .	6,956	66.4	1.8	49.4	1.9	44.2	1.9	5.2	0.9
1971–1975 . . . . .	6,920	68.9	1.8	53.5	1.9	47.6	2.0	5.9	0.9
1976–1980 . . . . .	7,192	73.1	1.7	61.4	1.9	53.1	1.9	8.3	1.1
1981–1985 . . . . .	8,129	75.2	1.4	64.5	1.5	54.0	1.5	10.5	0.8
1986–1990 . . . . .	8,568	75.5	1.3	67.2	1.4	58.3	1.5	8.9	0.9
1991–1995 . . . . .	8,599	73.8	1.6	66.8	1.8	54.5	1.8	12.2	1.0
1996–2000 . . . . .	8,558	74.0	1.6	67.2	1.7	56.6	1.8	10.6	1.1
2001–2003 . . . . .	4,905	74.0	2.0	67.0	2.1	57.1	2.2	9.9	1.3

<sup>1</sup> At any time before first birth.

<sup>2</sup> Full-time/part-time status refers to last job held before first child's birth.

<sup>3</sup> The margin of error, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, provides the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.

Source: 1961–1965 to 1981–1985: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Tables C, B-2, and B-3; 1986–1990 to 1991–1995: P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), Table A; 1996–2001: P70-103 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–2000*), Table 1; and 2001–2003: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

The percentage of new mothers who worked at all during their pregnancy increased by 23 percentage points since 1961–1965. Forty-four percent of women who had their first birth between 1961 and 1965 worked while pregnant. For the 2001–2003 first-birth cohort, 67 percent of new mothers worked while pregnant, not different from the proportions working while pregnant since 1986–1990.<sup>18</sup>

Fifty-seven percent of first-time mothers in 2001–2003 worked at full-time jobs during their pregnancy (35 hours or more per week, Table 1). The proportion of first-time mothers working full-time during pregnancy was 40 percent in 1961–1965, increased to over 50 percent by the late 1970s, and stayed above 50 percent through 2003. The proportion of first-time

<sup>18</sup> Overall labor force participation rates for women, regardless of pregnancy status, were as follows: 32 percent in 1960, 43 percent in 1970, 52 percent in 1980, 58 percent in 1990, and 60 percent in 2000. See the Bureau of Labor Statistics Web site at <[www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat2.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat2.pdf)>.

mothers working part-time during pregnancy in 1961–1965 was 5 percent. The percentage doubled to 11 percent in 1981–1985 and has remained between 9 percent and 12 percent since then. Subsequent sections of this report will show the extent to which weekly hours worked while pregnant and the amount of leave taken from the workforce around the time of a first birth are related to the type of maternity benefits received.

### Women Who Worked During Pregnancy

Table 2 summarizes differences in women's work experience during pregnancy in 2001–2003. Overall, 67 percent of mothers who had their first births in 2001–2003 worked during pregnancy. First-time mothers under age 22 had lower rates of employment during pregnancy than older first-time mothers. Among women at the ends of the age spectrum, 30 percent of new mothers under age 18 worked while pregnant, compared with 85 percent of mothers 30 and older.

Among the racial groups shown, non-Hispanic White women had the highest percentage (77 percent) that worked during their first pregnancy.<sup>19</sup> Fifty-eight percent of Asian women worked during pregnancy, followed by 56 percent of Black

<sup>19</sup> Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Therefore, two basic ways of defining a race group are possible. A group such as Asian may be defined as those who reported Asian and no other race (the race-alone or single-race concept) or as those who reported Asian regardless of whether they also reported another race (the race-alone-or-in-combination concept). The body of this report (text, figures, and tables) shows data for women who reported they were the single race White and not Hispanic, women who reported the single race Black, and women who reported the single race Asian. Use of the single-race populations does not imply that it is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. The Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches.

For further information, see the Census 2000 Brief, *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2000*, (C2KBR/01-1) <[www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs.html](http://www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs.html)>. Hispanics may be any race. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population are not shown in this report because of their small sample size in the SIPP. Based on the population of women who had a first birth between 2001–2003 surveyed in the 2004 SIPP, 3.2 percent of the single-race Black population and .54 percent of the single-race Asian population were also Hispanic.

Table 2.

### Work History of Women During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth by Selected Characteristics: 2001–2003

Characteristic	Number of women with a first birth (thousands)	Percent who worked during pregnancy	Among women who worked while pregnant, percent who were working—	
			Less than 3 months before child's birth	Less than 1 month before child's birth <sup>1</sup>
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>4,905</b>	<b>67.0</b>	<b>87.1</b>	<b>64.0</b>
<b>Age at First Birth</b>				
Less than 18 years .....	361	29.6	82.2	56.1
18 and 19 years .....	663	42.2	77.9	63.2
20 and 21 years .....	619	61.4	85.0	68.2
22 to 24 years .....	743	66.8	82.5	51.0
25 to 29 years .....	1,259	75.9	87.9	66.0
30 years and over .....	1,260	84.8	92.2	67.7
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>				
White alone .....	3,818	69.6	88.2	64.6
Non-Hispanic .....	2,924	76.7	88.4	65.5
Black alone .....	625	55.5	77.2	63.4
Asian alone .....	280	57.9	91.4	60.5
Hispanic (any race) .....	942	47.0	86.5	60.7
<b>Timing of First Birth<sup>2</sup></b>				
Before first marriage .....	1,896	53.3	82.8	59.6
Within first marriage .....	2,766	74.9	89.2	65.5
After first marriage .....	243	84.4	87.3	69.8
<b>Educational Attainment</b>				
Less than high school .....	692	29.9	81.6	57.5
High school graduate .....	1,194	59.1	82.4	61.3
Some college .....	1,534	75.1	86.8	63.5
Bachelor's degree or higher ..	1,485	82.2	91.1	67.1

<sup>1</sup> Includes women who responded that they never stopped working during their pregnancy.

<sup>2</sup> Refers to marital status at time of first birth. Before first marriage includes never-married women. After first marriage includes first births outside marriage or within second or subsequent marriages.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

women and 47 percent of Hispanic women.<sup>20</sup>

A mother's educational level is also associated with the probability that she worked during her first pregnancy. Table 2 shows that for new mothers in 2001–2003, those with a bachelor's degree or higher were more likely to have worked during pregnancy (82 percent) than women with less education (30

percent to 75 percent of women in other educational categories).

Figure 1 shows how educational attainment and age at first birth are related to the likelihood of working during pregnancy. At every level of educational attainment, women 25 or older at the time of their first birth had higher rates of working during pregnancy than younger first-time mothers. Women who became mothers later in life were more likely to have worked at some time prior to their first birth, probably because they had more years of potential

working life before their first birth than mothers who had their first birth at younger ages. This finding may reflect a decision to postpone pregnancy in order to gain more work experience, regardless of their level of education.

Women who had their first child before their first marriage rather than within or after their first marriage were less likely to have worked during pregnancy (53 percent, 75 percent, and 84 percent, respectively). This difference by marital status in terms of employment during pregnancy has been

<sup>20</sup> The proportion of women who worked during pregnancy is not statistically different between Asian women, Black women, and Hispanic women.

consistently noted since 1966–1970.<sup>21</sup> Women who have their first child prior to marriage are generally younger, more likely to be a minority race or Hispanic, and to have lower levels of education. All of these factors are related to lower levels of employment during pregnancy.<sup>22</sup> Women who have their first birth during or after their first marriage are more likely to be older and already in the labor force at the time they become pregnant.

### Duration of Work During Pregnancy

Among all first-time mothers who worked while pregnant, 87 percent worked into their last trimester (less than 3 months before their child's birth, Table 2) while 64 percent worked into their last month of pregnancy. Older mothers were more likely than younger mothers to work closer to the end of their pregnancies. Eighty-nine percent of mothers 22 and older worked into the last 3 months of their pregnancy, compared with 82 percent of mothers less than 22 years of age.

In the early 1960s, high school dropouts worked longer into their pregnancy.<sup>23</sup> During the 1980s, a larger proportion of college-educated women began to work into the last trimester of their pregnancy than women with less than a high school education.<sup>24</sup>

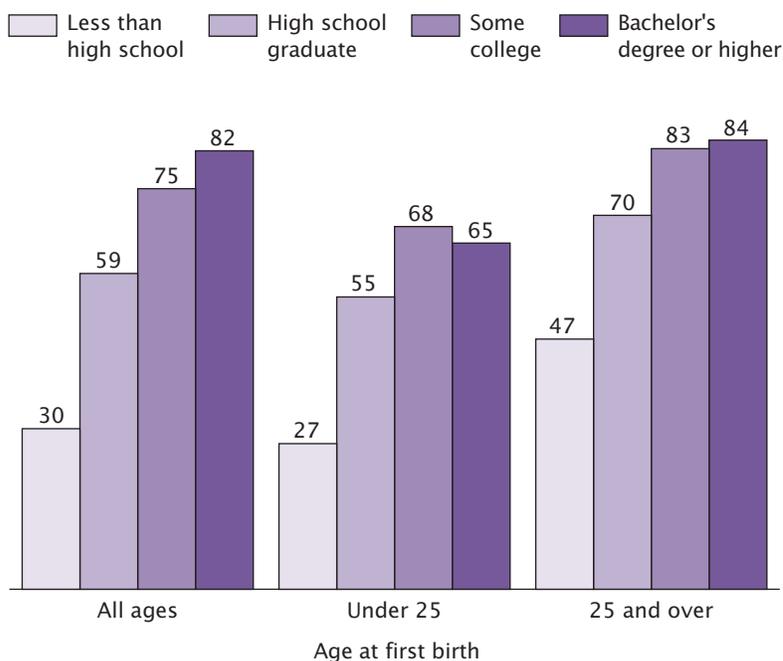
<sup>21</sup> Kristin Smith, Barbara Downs, and Martin O'Connell. "Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995," Current Population Reports, P70-79, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2001. O'Connell, op. cit., pp. 14–15.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, Downs, and O'Connell, *op cit.*, Tables C and E. These differences by marital status were also found to persist in being related to employment levels in a multivariate analysis controlling for many socioeconomic factors.

<sup>23</sup> O'Connell, op. cit., pp. 16–17.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, Downs, and O'Connell, op. cit., pp. 7–9.

Figure 1.  
**Percent of Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth by Age at First Birth and Educational Attainment: 2001–2003**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

By 2001–2003, 91 percent of college graduates who worked during their pregnancy were employed into their last trimester, compared with 82 percent of women who had not graduated from high school.

Black women were less likely than other women to work during their last trimester of pregnancy. Seventy-seven percent of Black mothers-to-be worked during their last trimester of pregnancy, not statistically significant different from Hispanics (87 percent) but statistically less than that of non-Hispanic Whites (88 percent) and Asians (91 percent).

Table 3 shows how late into pregnancy first-time mothers have worked since 1961. For the 1961–1965 first-birth cohort,

13 percent of those who worked during pregnancy reported they stopped working during their first trimester (6 or more months before the birth), while 35 percent worked one month or less before their child's birth. By 1986–1990, the percentage of women who left work in their first trimester had declined to 5 percent, while the proportion working 1 month or less before their child's birth more than doubled to 76 percent. During 1991–1995, 7 percent of women left work in their first trimester, compared with 4 percent by the 2001–2003 birth cohort. However, the proportion working 1 month or less before their child's birth increased from 73 percent in 1991–1995 to 80 percent in 2001–2003.

Table 3.  
**Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth by When They Stopped Working: 1961–1965 to 2001–2003**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	1961–1965	1966–1970	1971–1975	1976–1980	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2003
Number of women with a first birth . . . . .	6,306	6,956	6,920	7,192	8,129	8,568	8,599	8,558	4,905
Number of women who worked during pregnancy . . . . .	2,797	3,435	3,700	4,414	5,239	5,758	5,740	5,749	3,287
<b>Percent Distribution of Women by Number of Months Before First Birth They Stopped Working<sup>1</sup></b>									
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>100.0</b>								
1 month or less <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	34.6	39.1	43.1	58.9	64.7	75.7	72.9	76.6	79.7
2 months . . . . .	17.1	18.3	20.9	14.7	13.0	9.1	9.0	8.1	7.4
3 to 5 months . . . . .	35.4	28.4	22.9	18.6	13.5	10.0	11.0	7.9	8.6
6 or more months . . . . .	12.9	13.9	13.1	7.7	8.7	5.2	7.1	7.3	4.3

<sup>1</sup> Among women who worked during pregnancy.

<sup>2</sup> Includes women who responded that they never stopped working during their pregnancy.

Source: 1961–1965 to 1981–1985: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*) Tables B-3 and B-6; 1986–1990 to 1991–1995: P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), Table D; 1996–2000: P70-103 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–2000*), Table 3; and 2001–2003: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Table 4.  
**Women Who Worked Full-Time During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth by When They Stopped Working: 1961–1965 to 2001–2003**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	1961–1965	1966–1970	1971–1975	1976–1980	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2003
Number of women with a first birth . . . . .	6,306	6,956	6,920	7,192	8,129	8,568	8,599	8,558	4,905
Number of women who worked during pregnancy . . . . .	2,797	3,435	3,700	4,414	5,239	5,758	5,740	5,749	3,287
Worked full-time (number) <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	2,502	3,074	3,291	3,821	4,387	4,992	4,690	4,846	2,802
Worked full-time (percent) <sup>2</sup> . . . . .	89.5	89.5	88.9	86.6	83.7	86.7	81.7	84.3	85.2
<b>Percent Working Full-Time Among Women Who Stopped Working at Each Time Interval</b>									
1 month or less <sup>3</sup> . . . . .	89.5	91.7	90.5	89.7	87.1	90.0	86.1	86.8	87.5
2 months . . . . .	86.2	90.0	93.7	84.5	76.7	82.1	71.2	84.4	78.6
3 to 5 months . . . . .	91.8	88.5	86.9	79.8	76.6	73.4	66.2	74.0	77.8
6 or more months . . . . .	87.5	85.1	80.0	83.2	80.7	72.0	72.4	68.3	69.7

<sup>1</sup> Full-time employment status refers to last job held before birth of first child.

<sup>2</sup> Among women who worked during pregnancy.

<sup>3</sup> Includes women who responded that they never stopped working during their pregnancy.

Source: 1961–1965 to 1981–1985: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Tables B-3 and B-6; 1986–1990 to 1991–1995: P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), Table D; 1996–2000: P70-103 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–2000*), Table 4; and 2001–2003: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

The proportion of women who worked full-time during their pregnancy, according to when they stopped working, is highlighted in Table 4. In the 1960s, 90 percent of women who worked during pregnancy worked full-time. By the 2001–2003 first-birth cohort, the

percentage of working women who worked full-time during pregnancy declined to 85 percent.<sup>25</sup> By 2001–2003, 70 percent of women who worked only in their first

trimester had full-time jobs, compared with 88 percent of women who were still working 1 month or less before their child's birth.

<sup>25</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics' data show that the percentage of employed workers working full-time decreased from the 1970s to the mid-1980s and then began to rise. See

*Women in the Labor Force: A Data Book*, Report 985, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005, Table 20, <[www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2005.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2005.pdf)>.

## MATERNITY LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS

This section first provides an overview of the changes in maternity leave arrangements since 1980, when comparable questions on types of leave arrangements were first asked on SIPP panels. The report highlights differences in leave arrangements women use before and after the birth of their first child. It concludes with a look at how the use of various categories of leave differs according to selected characteristics of women.

### Changes in Leave Arrangements Since the 1980s

Types of leave used by first-time mothers include paid leave, unpaid leave, and disability. Other circumstances that lead to time away from a job include quitting a job, being let go from a job, and having an employer go out of business. They are included as types of leave arrangements in this report. Some women use only one type of leave while others may combine several types.

Table 5 shows the changes over the past 20 years in the type of leave arrangements used by women who worked during their pregnancy. A drop in the proportion quitting their jobs was noted between the 1981–1985 first-birth cohort and the subsequent 1986–1990 first-birth cohort from 36 percent to 27 percent. No statistically significant change in the proportion quitting their job occurred in the following periods. Conversely, the percentage of mothers who took paid leave (including paid maternity, sick, vacation leave, and all other paid leave) increased from 37 percent in 1981–1985 to 43 percent in 1986–1990, remaining at that level

## MATERNITY LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS

In the 1996, 2001, and 2004 Survey of Income and Program Participation panels, two separate questions on leave arrangements were asked of every woman who worked during pregnancy. The first question concerned arrangements used between the time she stopped working and when the child was born, while the second question asked about the arrangements used between the child's birth and up to 12 weeks after the child was born. The 1984 and 1985 SIPP panels asked only one question about arrangements used at any time during pregnancy or up to 6 weeks after the child was born. If a woman said she had never stopped working during pregnancy, no other leave arrangements were tabulated.

In the 1996, 2001, and 2004 panels, questions about leave arrangements used after the child was born were asked of all women, including those who reported that they had never stopped working before the child's birth. This change from the earlier SIPP panels complicates any comparisons with leave arrangements used by women prior to 1980. Maternity leave arrangement data for the 1980s were obtained from the 1996 panel that asked these questions of women who had a first birth since 1980. Beginning in the 1996 panel, "disability leave" was included as a separate response. Women may have conceptually included it in either the paid or the unpaid leave categories in the prior SIPP panels.

until 2001–2003, when 49 percent received paid leave. Employers may offer paid maternity leave as a job benefit when they weigh the costs of finding and training a new employee against a short leave of absence.<sup>26</sup>

For all of the first-birth cohorts, less than 5 percent of women reported being let go from their job while pregnant or within 12 weeks after giving birth. Disability leave usage over the past two decades appears to have reached a high point in 1991–1995 at 11 percent. Unpaid maternity leave usage increased from 34 percent to 41 percent during the 1980s, and further increased to 45 percent by 1996–2000. An apparent

6 percentage-point decline in unpaid maternity leave usage occurred by 2001–2003, coincidental with the increase in the percentage of women receiving some type of paid maternity leave.

### Leave Arrangements Before and After the First Birth

Table 6 provides a detailed picture of leave arrangements—both before and after their child's birth—used by employed women who had their first birth between 2001 and 2003. Women were allowed to identify more than one type of leave arrangement. One in four women quit their job around the time of the birth of their child (25 percent). Seventeen percent of women quit their job before the birth of their child, compared with 8 percent who quit after the birth of their child.

<sup>26</sup> *A Workable Balance: Report to Congress on Family and Medical Leave Policies*, U.S. Department of Labor, Commission on Family and Medical Leave, Washington, DC, 1996.

Table 5.  
**Leave Arrangements Used by Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth: 1981–1985 to 2001–2003**

Year of first birth	Number of women who worked during pregnancy (thousands)	Percent of women using type of specified leave arrangement <sup>1</sup>				
		Quit job	Paid leave <sup>2</sup>	Unpaid leave <sup>3</sup>	Disability leave	Let go from job
1981–1985 .....	5,147	35.7	37.3	33.7	6.3	3.5
1986–1990 .....	5,758	26.5	43.3	41.0	7.5	2.3
1991–1995 .....	5,740	26.9	42.7	40.3	11.2	4.2
1996–2000 .....	5,749	25.6	42.0	45.0	6.9	2.2
2001–2003 .....	3,287	25.3	49.1	39.1	8.5	3.8

<sup>1</sup> The total in individual leave arrangements exceeds 100 percent because of multiple answers. Leave arrangements may have been used before, or up to, 12 weeks after the birth.

<sup>2</sup> Paid leave includes all paid maternity, sick, and vacation leave and other paid leave.

<sup>3</sup> Unpaid leave includes all unpaid maternity, sick, and vacation leave and other unpaid leave.

Source: 1981–1985 to 1991–1995: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961-1995*), Table F; 1996–2000: P70-103 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–2000*), Table 5; and 2001–2003: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Table 6.  
**Detailed Leave Arrangements Used by Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth: 2001–2003**

Type of leave	Before or after birth <sup>1</sup>	Before birth	After birth
<b>Number of women who worked during pregnancy (thousands) .....</b>	<b>3,287</b>	<b>3,287</b>	<b>3,287</b>
<b>Percent Using Leave Arrangement<sup>2</sup></b>			
Quit job .....	25.3	16.9	8.4
Paid leave <sup>3</sup> .....	49.1	22.0	43.4
Maternity leave .....	38.6	17.6	32.3
Sick leave .....	8.7	3.4	6.7
Vacation leave .....	9.1	2.3	7.4
Other paid leave .....	2.8	0.5	2.4
Unpaid leave <sup>4</sup> .....	39.1	15.5	34.2
Maternity leave .....	28.5	10.6	24.8
Sick leave .....	4.4	1.2	3.7
Vacation leave .....	3.4	1.8	2.5
Other unpaid leave .....	5.4	2.0	4.2
Disability leave .....	8.5	3.6	6.2
Other leave .....	8.5	4.2	5.6
Self-employed .....	1.1	0.5	1.0
Employer went out of business .....	0.4	0.4	0.1
Other .....	7.0	3.3	4.6
Let go from job .....	3.8	2.9	3.0

<sup>1</sup> Leave arrangements are only counted once if used before and after birth.

<sup>2</sup> Total in individual leave arrangements exceeds the percent who took leave because of multiple answers.

<sup>3</sup> Paid leave includes all paid maternity, sick, and vacation leave and other paid leave.

<sup>4</sup> Unpaid leave includes all unpaid maternity, sick, and vacation leave and other unpaid leave.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Both paid and unpaid leave (all types combined) were more likely to be used after the child's birth (43 percent and 34 percent, respectively) than during pregnancy (22 percent and 16 percent, respectively). These findings suggest that for women who plan to

return to work after having their child, many may work as long as possible into their pregnancy in order to have more leave available to use once their child is born.

Overall, 39 percent of women received paid maternity leave and 29 percent of women received

unpaid maternity leave. Both of these types of leave were more likely to be used after birth than before. Whether it was used during pregnancy or after giving birth, sick leave and vacation leave were more likely to be paid than unpaid.

Another leave-taking strategy that women use is to combine different types of leave. Figure 2 shows the percentage of women who worked during pregnancy who used paid leave only, used unpaid leave only, quit their job only, and used multiple types of leave. These data are shown separately for the time during pregnancy, up to 12 weeks after giving birth, and the combined periods. While 5 percent used more than one leave arrangement before birth and 12 percent used more than one type after birth, 32 percent of women used multiple leave arrangements in the combined periods of pregnancy and up to 12 weeks after giving birth (different arrangements before and after their child's birth).

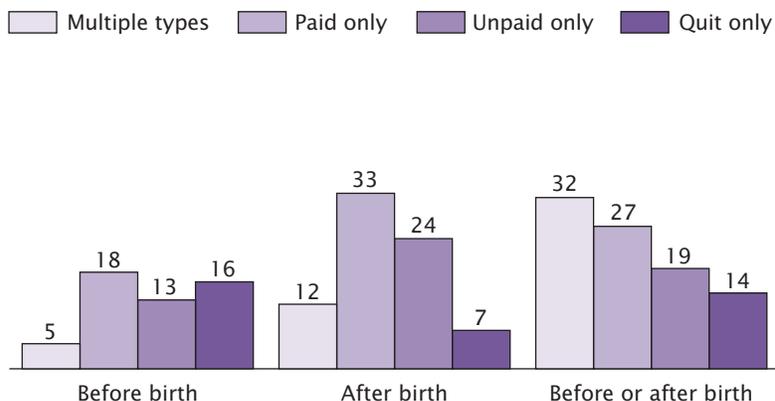
Using only paid leave was more common for women after giving birth than before (33 percent and 18 percent, respectively). The proportion of women who used only unpaid leave after the birth was almost twice as high as the proportion who used only unpaid leave before birth (24 percent and 13 percent, respectively). Among women who identified quitting their job as their only leave arrangement, 16 percent quit their job while they were pregnant while 7 percent quit their job after giving birth.

### Use of Different Leave Arrangements

This section examines the types of leave arrangements used by women—either before or after their child's birth—by various social and demographic characteristics. Among first-time mothers in 2001–2003, younger women were more likely than women who had their first child at a later age to quit their jobs (Table 7). Forty-one percent of women who had their first birth as a teenager quit their jobs, compared with 20 percent of

Figure 2.  
**Percent of Women Using Selected Leave Arrangements and Multiple Arrangements Before or After Their First Birth: 2001–2003**

(Among women who worked during pregnancy)



Note: Multiple types of leave used "Before or after birth" include using more than one type before birth only, after birth only, and using a different type before birth than after birth. Paid leave includes all paid maternity, sick, and vacation leave and other paid leave. Unpaid leave includes all unpaid maternity, sick, and vacation leave and other unpaid leave.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel Wave 2.

women who had their first child at age 25 or older. The proportion of women using paid leave for their first birth generally increased with age, from 27 percent of women under age 22 at their first birth to 59 percent of those 25 and older. Older women, who have more years of labor force experience than younger women, may benefit from this experience by receiving more paid benefits.

Employment characteristics of last job held during pregnancy are also associated with the type of leave arrangements women use for the birth of their first child. Full-time workers were more likely to use paid-leave benefits than part-time workers (55 percent and 17 percent, respectively), while part-time workers were more likely to quit their jobs than were full-time workers (43 percent and 22 percent, respectively). Women who worked into the last month of pregnancy

were more likely to receive paid-leave benefits (54 percent) than those who left work 6 months or more prior to their first birth (23 percent). A small proportion of women who worked until their last month of pregnancy were let go from their job (2 percent).

Increasing levels of education go hand-in-hand with increases in the use of paid-leave benefits. Sixty percent of women with a bachelor's degree or more used paid leave, compared with 22 percent of women who had less than a high school education. The use of unpaid maternity leave did not differ statistically between women who had less than a high school education and those with a bachelor's degree or more. Almost twice as many women who had less than a high school education quit their jobs as did women who had a bachelor's degree or more (37 percent and 19 percent, respectively).

Table 7.

### Type of Leave Arrangements Used Before or After Birth by Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding Their First Birth by Selected Characteristics: 2001–2003

Characteristic	Number of women who worked during pregnancy (thousands)	Percent of women using specified leave arrangement				
		Quit job	Paid leave <sup>1</sup>	Unpaid leave <sup>2</sup>	Disability leave	Let go from job
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>3,287</b>	<b>25.3</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>3.8</b>
<b>Employment Status at Last Job</b>						
Full-time .....	2,802	22.2	54.7	37.8	9.0	3.5
Part-time .....	486	42.6	16.7	46.1	5.3	6.0
<b>Month Stopped Working Before Birth</b>						
1 month or less <sup>3</sup> .....	2,620	18.5	53.7	41.3	9.1	1.6
2 months .....	243	39.1	43.2	42.8	8.2	2.9
3 to 5 months .....	284	56.0	24.6	19.7	5.6	22.5
6 or more months .....	140	65.0	22.9	29.3	2.1	8.6
<b>Age at First Birth</b>						
Less than 18 years .....	107	49.5	9.3	51.4	5.6	4.7
18 and 19 years .....	280	37.9	26.4	46.1	2.5	5.7
20 and 21 years .....	380	29.5	33.2	41.8	6.8	3.7
22 to 24 years .....	496	31.7	40.7	38.9	7.9	5.6
25 to 29 years .....	955	19.0	56.0	38.4	7.1	4.4
30 years and over .....	1,069	20.8	62.3	35.6	12.4	2.0
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>						
White alone .....	2,658	25.4	48.9	39.2	8.2	4.4
Non-Hispanic .....	2,244	24.7	50.1	39.5	8.5	4.1
Black alone .....	347	23.6	49.6	40.6	5.5	2.6
Asian alone .....	162	21.0	56.8	35.8	17.9	—
Hispanic (any race) .....	443	27.5	42.4	38.1	7.0	5.9
<b>Timing of First Birth<sup>4</sup></b>						
Before first marriage .....	1,011	30.8	35.9	43.2	5.8	6.5
Within first marriage .....	2,071	23.3	54.5	37.7	10.2	2.2
After first marriage .....	205	18.0	59.0	32.7	4.4	6.8
<b>Educational Attainment</b>						
Less than high school .....	207	37.2	21.7	45.9	1.4	8.2
High school graduate .....	706	31.4	39.1	38.2	7.6	4.4
Some college .....	1,152	26.3	48.5	41.3	7.6	4.0
Bachelor's degree or more .....	1,221	18.8	60.0	36.4	10.9	2.6

— Represents zero or rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> Paid leave includes all paid maternity, sick, and vacation leave and other paid leave.

<sup>2</sup> Unpaid leave includes all unpaid maternity, sick, and vacation leave and other unpaid leave.

<sup>3</sup> Includes women who responded that they never stopped working during their pregnancy.

<sup>4</sup> Refers to marital status at time of first birth. Before first marriage includes never-married women. After first marriage includes first births outside or within second or subsequent marriages.

Note: The total in individual leave arrangements exceeds 100 percent because of multiple answers. Leave arrangements may have been used before or up to 12 weeks after the birth.

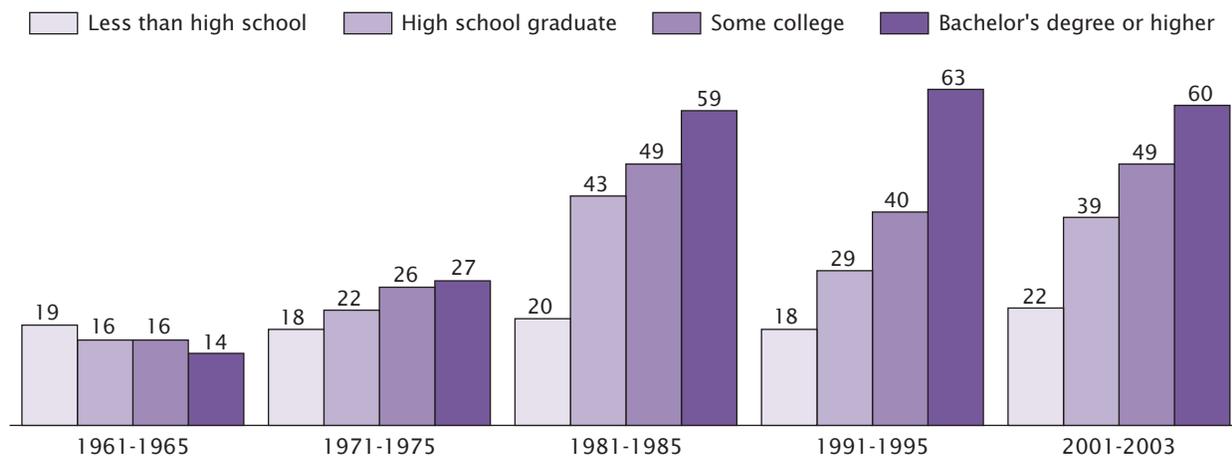
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

In the early 1960s, the use of paid maternity leave for a first birth did not differ statistically by educational level. The relationship between educational attainment and use of paid leave began to appear in the early 1970s and became pronounced by the early

1980s (Figure 3). The percentage of women with a bachelor's degree or more who received paid leave increased from 27 percent for the 1971–1975 first-birth cohort to 59 percent for those with a first birth between 1981–1985 and remained at 60 percent of new mothers

between 2001 and 2003. The use of paid leave by mothers with less than a high school degree was 22 percent in 2001–2003, not statistically different from the levels in prior first-birth cohorts shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3.  
**Percent of Women Who Received Paid Leave Before or After Their First Birth by Educational Attainment: Selected Years, 1961–1965 to 2001–2003**



Note: Paid leave includes all paid maternity, sick, and vacation leave and other paid leave used before the birth and up to 12 weeks after the birth.  
 Source: 1961–1965 to 1971–1975: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P23-165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Table B-9; 1981–1985 to 1991–1995: P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961-1995*), Figure 4; and 2001–2003: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

In summary, many changes have occurred in mothers' employment during and after pregnancy since the 1960s. Women are now working longer into their pregnancy. Paid benefits are more likely to be received by more educated women, those who work at full-time jobs, and those who work very close to their child's birth.

### WORKING AFTER THE FIRST BIRTH

This section looks at how rapidly women begin working after the birth of their first child. Overall trends since the 1960s will be examined. Also, recent data from the 2004 SIPP panel are analyzed to determine the characteristics of women who start working most rapidly and whether changing

employer after birth is related to changes in job characteristics.

### Trends Since the 1960s

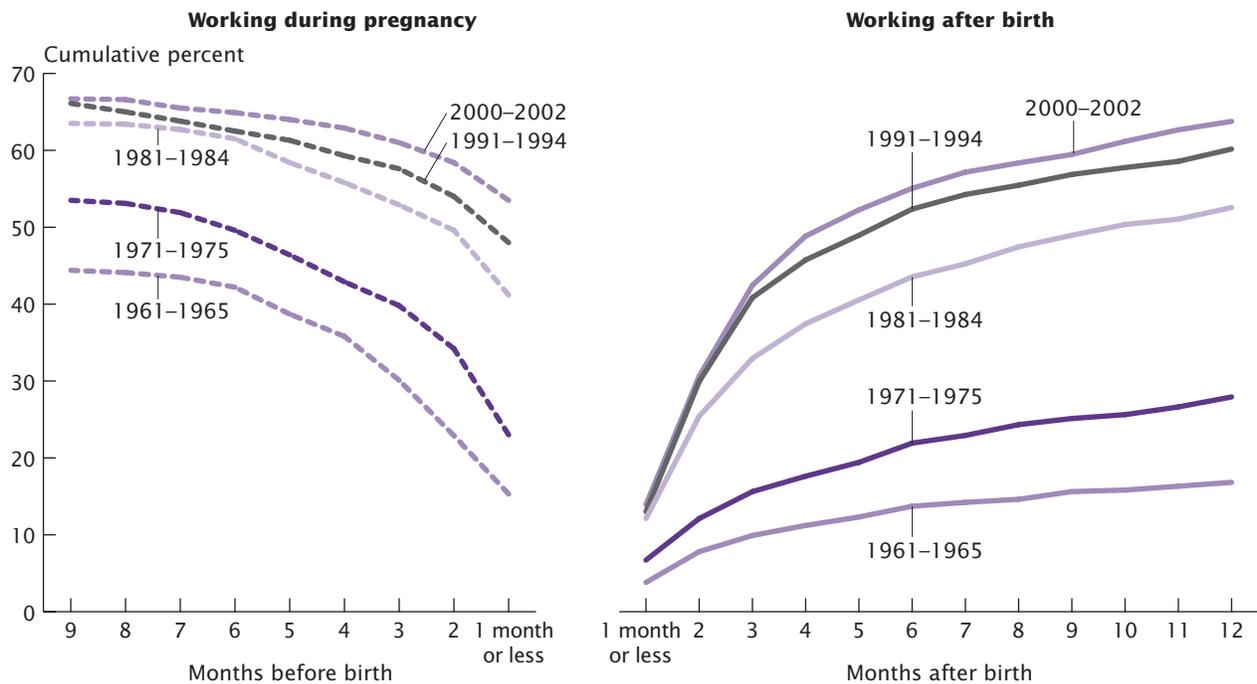
Figure 4 shows the monthly employment paths of women during their first pregnancy and for the first 12 months after their child's birth. Clearly, women in the most recent first-birth cohort of 2000–2002 worked longer into their pregnancy and started working after childbirth sooner than their counterparts in the early 1960s. As shown in Figure 4, most of the increases in the percentage of women working later into their pregnancy and working after their first birth came about by the early 1980s.

This trend is also evident in Table 8, which shows the monthly

cumulative percentage of women working after the birth of their first child. In the early 1960s, 14 percent of all mothers with newborns were working by the sixth month, increasing to 17 percent by the twelfth month. These percentages more than doubled by 1976–1980, with further increases occurring by 1986–1990. By 2000–2002, 55 percent of mothers were working by the sixth month after their child's birth and 64 percent by the twelfth month, not statistically different from the proportions recorded for 1986–1990.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The time period of analysis for working after a first birth is restricted to those who gave birth by 2002 because some who gave birth in 2003 did not have one full year of employment data by the time of the interview in 2004.

Figure 4.  
**Percent of Women Working During Pregnancy and Percent Working After Their First Birth by Month Before or After Birth: Selected Years, 1961–1965 to 2000–2002**



Source: 1961–1965 to 1981–1984: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Table B-5; 1991–1994: P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), Figure 7; and 2000–2002: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Not all women begin working at the same interval after their child's birth. Table 8 shows the relationship between work experience during pregnancy and the rate at which women work in the first year after giving birth for the periods 1961–1965 to 2000–2002. Among women who worked during their pregnancy, 17 percent of women in the 1961–1965 first-birth cohort returned to work 3 months after their child's birth. Twenty years later, this percentage increased to 46 percent for the 1981–1984 first-birth cohort and to 58 percent for the 2000–2002 first-birth cohort. Women who did not work during their first pregnancy have considerably lower percentages working at this 3-month interval: 5 percent (1961–1965),

10 percent (1981–1984), and 12 percent (2000–2002) for these three first-birth cohorts.<sup>28</sup> This suggests that a prior employer-employee relation is likely to be an important determinant in employment after a woman's first birth.

### Characteristics of Mothers

To examine the characteristics of women by when they returned to work, data are shown in Table 9 in two ways: for all mothers and for mothers who worked during pregnancy. This latter group, women who worked during pregnancy, is used to control for the negative effect of job-search costs on the

likelihood of securing work for those not being employed during pregnancy. Characteristics are shown by time intervals of when mothers started working after the child's birth—less than 3 months, 3 to 5 months, or 6 to 11 months after the child's birth. To complete the distribution, proportions are also shown for women who were not working within the first year after their child's birth.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> There is no statistical difference among women who did not work during their first pregnancy between the 1981–1984 and 2000–2002 birth cohorts.

<sup>29</sup> The June 2002 Current Population Survey found that 59.8 percent of women who had their first birth in the year prior to the survey were in the labor force at the time of the interview. (See Jane Lawler Dye, *Fertility of American Women: June 2004*, Current Population Reports, P20-555, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2005, Table 4.) The SIPP for the period 2000–2002 shows that 62.6 percent of women who had a birth in this period had ever worked within 12 months of their child's birth (Table 9).

Table 8.

**Women Working at Monthly Intervals After First Birth by Year of First Birth: 1961–1965 to 2000–2002**

Characteristic	1961–1965	1966–1970	1971–1975	1976–1980	1981–1984	1986–1990	1991–1994	1996–1999	2000–2002
<b>Women With a First Birth</b>									
Number of women (thousands) . . .	6,306	6,956	6,920	7,192	6,671	8,568	6,995	6,918	5,077
Percent . . . . .	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cumulative percent working after:									
3 months . . . . .	9.9	12.7	15.6	22.4	32.9	41.6	40.8	44.7	42.4
6 months . . . . .	13.7	18.3	21.9	32.2	43.5	52.9	52.3	57.2	55.0
12 months . . . . .	16.8	23.9	27.9	38.8	52.5	60.8	60.1	64.6	63.7
<b>Women Who Worked During Pregnancy</b>									
Number of women (thousands) . . .	2,797	3,435	3,700	4,414	4,237	5,758	4,621	4,592	3,386
Percent . . . . .	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cumulative percent working after:									
3 months . . . . .	16.5	19.6	24.1	32.6	46.0	57.3	57.3	59.7	57.7
6 months . . . . .	21.4	26.7	32.1	45.4	59.3	70.6	70.4	74.8	72.4
12 months . . . . .	25.8	32.7	38.8	52.6	69.7	78.6	77.7	81.5	79.4
<b>Women Who Did Not Work During Pregnancy</b>									
Number of women (thousands) . . .	3,509	3,522	3,221	2,778	2,434	2,810	2,374	2,327	1,691
Percent . . . . .	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cumulative percent working after:									
3 months . . . . .	4.6	6.0	5.9	6.3	9.9	9.4	8.7	15.1	11.8
6 months . . . . .	7.5	10.2	10.1	11.1	16.2	16.6	17.3	22.5	20.1
12 months . . . . .	9.6	15.3	15.3	16.8	22.5	24.3	25.8	31.2	32.2

Note: 2000–2002 estimates are used for the most recent birth cohort to allow for at least 1 year of post-birth employment data. No data are available for either the 1985 or 1995 birth cohort for the full calendar year to derive the work after birth proportion.

Source: 1961–1965 to 1981–1984: Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No.165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Table B-5; 1986–1990 to 1991–1994: P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), Table I; 1996–1999: P70-103 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–2000*), Table 8; and 2000–2002: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Some women may be motivated to maintain ties to the labor force because of career goals or because their jobs offer attractive leave benefits and do not penalize them for choosing to become mothers. They may also feel they have too much invested in their careers in terms of education, training, and wages to leave the labor force.<sup>30</sup> Previous research has shown that in the 1960s and 1970s, those who were most economically in need of and dependent on their own earnings (teenagers, Black

women, and women with premarital first births) returned to work the most rapidly.<sup>31</sup>

Table 9 shows that for 2000–2002, older first-time mothers were more likely to work in the first few months after giving birth than younger first-time mothers. Twenty-eight percent of mothers 30 or older were working within 3 months, compared with 15 percent of mothers less than 18 years old. Most of these women were old enough to have completed high school or college and were potentially old enough to have had some work experience prior to the child's birth.

In terms of education, women with a high school degree, some college, or a bachelor's degree or more were more likely to work in the first 3 months after their child's birth (30 percent or more) than women with less than a high school degree (14 percent). Women with less than a high school degree were most likely not to work at all in the year after their first child's birth (62 percent). A larger percentage of non-Hispanic White women than Hispanic women were working within 3 months after childbirth (34 percent compared with 25 percent) and a smaller percentage did not work in the first year (33 percent and 52 percent, respectively).

<sup>30</sup> Sonalde Desai and Linda Waite, "Women's Employment During Pregnancy and After the First Birth: Occupational Characteristics and Work Commitment," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 56, 1991, pp. 551–556.

<sup>31</sup> O'Connell, op. cit., pp. 23–25.

Table 9.  
**Women Working at Stated Time Intervals After First Birth by Selected Characteristics: 2000–2002**

Characteristic	All women with a first birth					Women with a first birth who worked during pregnancy				
	Total (thousands)	Started working after first birth				Total (thousands)	Started working after first birth			
		Less than 3 months <sup>1</sup>	3 to 5 months	6 to 11 months	Did not work during first year <sup>2</sup>		Less than 3 months <sup>1</sup>	3 to 5 months	6 to 11 months	Did not work during first year <sup>2</sup>
<b>Number</b> .....	<b>5,077</b>	<b>1,553</b>	<b>1,096</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>1,899</b>	<b>3,386</b>	<b>1,404</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>732</b>
<b>PERCENT DISTRIBUTION</b>										
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>100</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>21.6</b>
<b>Employment Status During Pregnancy</b>										
Not employed .....	1,691	8.9	8.5	13.7	69.0	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
Full-time .....	2,928	42.1	29.1	8.3	20.5	2,928	42.1	29.1	8.3	20.5
Part-time .....	458	37.1	22.3	11.8	29.0	458	37.1	22.3	11.8	29.0
<b>Age at First Birth</b>										
Less than 18 years .....	405	15.3	12.1	9.1	63.5	118	37.3	11.0	16.1	35.6
18 and 19 years .....	723	24.6	15.1	18.4	41.8	326	49.4	21.5	15.0	14.4
20 and 21 years .....	699	36.9	19.0	13.3	30.6	441	53.1	22.4	10.0	14.3
22 to 24 years .....	747	31.6	18.5	8.3	41.6	493	43.2	25.8	7.3	23.5
25 to 29 years .....	1,275	37.3	22.7	7.2	32.7	978	43.8	28.7	6.9	20.8
30 years and over .....	1,227	28.0	30.6	9.0	32.4	1,029	31.5	35.4	7.8	25.4
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>										
White alone .....	3,908	32.2	21.0	9.7	37.2	2,684	42.6	27.9	8.3	21.2
Non-Hispanic .....	3,036	34.1	23.1	10.0	32.8	2,283	41.8	28.5	8.3	21.4
Black alone .....	679	26.1	25.0	16.5	32.4	384	38.5	33.1	9.9	18.2
Asian alone .....	260	21.2	24.2	5.4	49.2	167	29.9	27.5	8.4	34.1
Hispanic (any race) .....	941	25.3	13.8	9.0	51.9	442	46.6	23.3	9.5	20.6
<b>Timing of First Birth<sup>3</sup></b>										
Before first marriage .....	2,016	28.7	17.4	14.7	39.2	1,084	46.2	23.5	11.6	18.7
Within first marriage .....	2,821	31.0	24.8	7.4	36.8	2,115	39.0	30.9	7.4	22.7
After first marriage .....	240	41.7	19.2	8.8	30.0	186	41.9	24.2	7.5	25.8
<b>Educational Attainment</b>										
Less than high school .....	677	13.6	13.7	10.9	61.7	208	37.5	25.0	11.1	26.4
High school graduate .....	1,255	33.0	15.9	11.5	39.7	717	47.6	20.4	11.3	20.8
Some college .....	1,665	34.9	19.2	10.6	35.3	1,207	45.5	23.2	8.0	23.4
Bachelor's degree or higher ...	1,481	31.5	32.7	9.0	26.7	1,254	34.8	38.0	7.7	19.6
<b>Month Stopped Working Before Birth</b>										
1 month or less <sup>1</sup> .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	2,717	44.9	30.2	6.8	18.1
2 months .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	250	39.2	18.8	9.6	32.4
3 to 5 months .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	281	22.4	21.7	14.6	41.3
6 or more months .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	137	16.8	17.5	33.6	32.1
<b>Type of Leave Arrangement Used<sup>4</sup></b>										
Quit job .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	845	23.1	14.1	14.3	48.5
Paid leave .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	1,717	42.2	33.4	8.0	16.3
Unpaid leave .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	1,312	46.6	33.9	8.5	10.8
Disability leave .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	239	33.1	43.5	5.0	18.8
Let go from job .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	108	21.3	23.1	10.2	45.4
Other leave .....	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	( <sup>5</sup> )	294	36.1	26.2	7.5	30.3

(X) Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup> Includes women who responded that they never stopped working during their pregnancy or after their birth.

<sup>2</sup> Includes women who were working after one year and those who never returned to work.

<sup>3</sup> Refers to marital status at time of first birth. Before first marriage includes never-married women. After first marriage includes first births outside or within second or subsequent marriages.

<sup>4</sup> Leave arrangement may have been used before or after the birth. The total in individual leave arrangements exceed 100 percent because of multiple answers.

<sup>5</sup> Only applicable for women who worked during pregnancy.

Note: 2000–2002 estimates are used for the most recent birth cohort to allow for at least one year of post-birth employment data.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2

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The variations in the timing of returning to work previously noted diminish or disappear when only women who worked during pregnancy are considered. For example, among all mothers, 14 percent of mothers with less than a high school education were working within 3 months of their child's birth, compared with 32 percent of mothers with a bachelor's degree or more. Among mothers who worked during pregnancy, there was no statistically significant difference in the percentage returning within 3 months between those without a high school education and those with a bachelor's degree or more (38 percent and 35 percent, respectively).

About 25 percent of Hispanic mothers, regardless of their work status during pregnancy, were working less than 3 months after their child's birth, compared with 34 percent of non-Hispanic White mothers. However, among those mothers who worked during their pregnancy, the reverse relationship was noted—47 percent of Hispanics and 42 percent of non-Hispanic Whites were working within 3 months of giving birth.<sup>32</sup>

For women who worked during pregnancy, when they returned to work after their child's birth was related to when they left work during their pregnancy. Women who worked later into their pregnancy were more likely to return to work sooner than those who left work earlier in their pregnancy. For example, 45 percent of women who

stopped working 1 month or less prior to their child's birth were back at work within 3 months of their birth. In comparison, 17 percent of women who left 6 or more months before their child's birth went back to work within 3 months.

The type of leave arrangement women used was also related to when or if they returned to work in the first year after having their child. Women who said they quit a job around the time of their first birth were less likely to return to work in the first year of their child's birth—49 percent compared with 16 percent of women who used paid-leave arrangements. In contrast, women who used paid leave at any time during their pregnancy or after their child's birth were more likely to return to work less than 3 months after their child's birth (42 percent) than were women who quit their jobs around the time of their first child's birth (23 percent). Women who quit their job during pregnancy or after their child's birth would likely have to expend job-search time to find new employment before they could go back to work.

### **Job Characteristics Before and After Birth**

For the 2000–2002 cohort of first births, 83 percent of the women who worked during their pregnancy and who returned to work within 12 months of their child's birth returned to their pre-birth employer (Table 10). Seventy-eight percent of those who returned to their pre-birth employer experienced no change in the number of hours they worked per week, about the same as in 1991–1994. About 1 of 5 women worked fewer

hours after having their first child for the 1991–1994 and 2000–2002 birth cohorts. For both of these first-birth cohorts, about 9 of 10 women returning to their pre-birth employer earned around the same pay and 98 percent were at the same or higher job skill level as before their birth.

Compared with mothers who returned to their pre-birth employers, a larger proportion of women who changed employers for their first job after childbirth experienced change in at least one of their job characteristics. For the 2000–2002 first-birth cohort, 22 percent of women who changed employers maintained consistency in hours, pay, and skill level before and after the birth of their child, compared with 71 percent of women who had the same employer. Fifty-three percent of new mothers in 2000–2002 who changed employers worked the same number of hours after the child's birth, compared with 42 percent in the 1991–1994 cohort.

For women who had their first child between 2000 and 2002, those who switched employers were more likely to have a change in salary. Thirty-one percent of women who changed employers, compared with 91 percent of women who returned to the same employer, had jobs at the same pay level. Some women may have switched employers with better compensation in mind, as 35 percent of those who switched received higher pay, compared with 7 percent of women who stayed with the same employer. However, 34 percent took jobs with different employers at a lower pay level, compared with 2 percent who returned to the same employer.

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<sup>32</sup> The proportion of women who were working less than 3 months after their child's birth was statistically different for Hispanic women and non-Hispanic White women.

Table 10.

### Job Characteristics of Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth and Returned to Work Within 12 Months After Birth: 1991–1994 to 2000–2002

Characteristic	1991–1994	1995–1999	2000–2002
<b>Women who returned to work (thousands)<sup>1</sup></b> .....	<b>3,539</b>	<b>4,466</b>	<b>2,586</b>
<b>Returned to Pre-Birth Employer</b>			
Number of women (thousands) .....	2,750	3,388	2,146
Percent (among women returning to work) .....	77.7	75.9	83.0
<b>Percent Among Women Returning to Pre-Birth Employer</b>			
Number of hours worked after first birth .....	100.0	100.0	100.0
More than before first birth .....	2.8	2.7	1.9
Same as before first birth .....	77.2	77.6	78.4
Fewer than before first birth .....	20.0	19.7	19.8
Pay level after first birth .....	100.0	100.0	100.0
Higher than before first birth .....	7.5	7.9	7.0
Same as before first birth .....	88.3	89.0	91.1
Lower than before first birth .....	4.1	3.1	1.8
Skill level after first birth .....	100.0	100.0	100.0
Higher than before first birth .....	5.6	3.6	3.0
Same as before first birth .....	92.6	94.1	95.3
Lower than before first birth .....	1.8	2.3	1.7
Hours, pay, and skill level all the same as before .....	69.1	70.5	71.1
<b>Different Employer After First Birth</b>			
Number of women (thousands) .....	790	1,078	440
Percent (among women returning to work) .....	22.3	24.1	17.0
<b>Percent Among Women Returning to Different Employer</b>			
Number of hours worked after first birth .....	100.0	100.0	100.0
More than before first birth .....	22.7	19.6	13.6
Same as before first birth .....	41.6	47.7	53.4
Fewer than before first birth .....	35.8	32.7	33.2
Pay level after first birth .....	100.0	100.0	100.0
Higher than before first birth .....	38.0	34.0	35.2
Same as before first birth .....	34.7	41.4	30.9
Lower than before first birth .....	27.3	24.7	34.1
Skill level after first birth .....	100.0	100.0	100.0
Higher than before first birth .....	24.8	28.0	22.7
Same as before first birth .....	53.9	53.1	55.7
Lower than before first birth .....	21.2	18.9	21.6
Hours, pay, and skill level all the same as before .....	16.0	21.3	22.3

<sup>1</sup>Excludes self-employed women and women whose pre-birth employer went out of business.

Note: 2000–2002 estimates are used for the most recent birth cohort to allow for at least 1 year of post-birth employment data.

Source: 1991–1994: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), Table K; 1995–1999: Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 2001 Panel, Wave 2; and 2000–2002: SIPP, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

In the 2000–2002 first-birth cohort, 95 percent of women returning to their pre-birth employer worked at a job requiring the same level of skill as before the birth of their first child compared with 56 percent of women

who switched employers. Twenty-three percent of women who changed employers took jobs at a higher skill level compared with 3 percent of women who returned to the same employer. However, a larger proportion of those who

took jobs with a new employer took a job at a lower skill level than they held during pregnancy (22 percent) than did women who returned to the same employer (2 percent).

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## CONCLUSIONS

Since the 1960s, women have experienced gains in education beyond the high school years and have continued to delay childbearing to older ages. The work experience of women both before and during the pregnancy preceding the birth of their first child has also increased. Women are more likely to work both before and during their pregnancy than they were 30 to 40 years ago and are working later into their pregnancy. Sixty-four percent of women who worked during their pregnancy in 2001–2003 did so into the last month of their pregnancy. In addition, more women are working within a year of giving birth (64 percent in 2000–2002 compared with 39 percent in 1976–1980 and 17 percent in 1961–1965).

One in four women quit their jobs before or shortly after the birth of their child in 2001–2003. Paid leave benefits were received by 49 percent of pregnant workers in 2001–2003; 39 percent of pregnant workers received unpaid leave; and 9 percent took disability leave. Data in this report also show that 83 percent of mothers who returned to work within 12 months of their child's birth returned to their same employer. Women who returned to their same employer had a good chance of returning to a job with the same pay, skill level, and hours.

Overall, these findings indicate that women are staying longer at work, returning more rapidly after having their first child, and, in general, choosing to incorporate work life with childbearing and childrearing more than did women in the 1960s.

## SOURCE OF THE DATA

The population represented (the population universe) in the 1984, 1985, 1996, 2001, and 2004 panels of the SIPP is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. The SIPP is a longitudinal survey conducted at 4-month intervals. The employment history and maternity leave information were part of the Fertility History topical module collected in the SIPP panels referenced below. The data in this report were collected from June through September 2004 (2004 Panel), June through September 2001 (2001 Panel), August through November 1996 (1996 Panel), January through April 1986 (1985 Panel), and January through March 1986 (1984 Panel). The number of designated housing units in sample in Wave 1 was 62,700 (2004 Panel), 50,500 (2001 Panel), 49,200 (1996 Panel), 17,800 (1985 Panel), and 26,000 (1984 Panel). The number of eligible units and the number interviewed in Wave 1 were 51,400 and 43,700 for the 2004 Panel; 40,500 and 35,000 for the 2001 Panel; 40,100 and 36,700 for the 1996 Panel; 14,400 and 13,400 for the 1985 Panel; and 20,900 and 19,900 for the 1984 Panel. In Wave 2 of the 2004 Panel, 40,600 interviews were obtained from 44,100 eligible units. In Wave 2 of the 2001 Panel, 28,100 interviews were obtained from 30,500 eligible units. In Wave 2 of the 1996 Panel, 35,000 interviews were obtained from 37,500 eligible units. In Wave 4 of the 1985 Panel, 11,400 interviews were obtained from 13,500 eligible units. In Wave 8 of the 1984 Panel, 11,100 interviews were obtained from 13,500 eligible units.

The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized population in Census 2000).

## ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. This means the 90-percent confidence interval for the difference between the estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately the answers are coded and classified. To minimize these errors, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports. The SIPP weighting procedure uses ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age,

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race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on the source of the data and accuracy of the estimates, including standard errors and confidence intervals, go to <[www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A2\\_SIPP2001\\_w1tow9\\_20050214.pdf](http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A2_SIPP2001_w1tow9_20050214.pdf)> or contact Charles D. Sissel of the Census Bureau's Demographic Statistical Methods Division via e-mail at <[charles.d.sissel@census.gov](mailto:charles.d.sissel@census.gov)>.

Additional information on the SIPP, including questions on the topical modules, can be found at the following Web sites: <[www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/s&a96\\_040501.pdf](http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/s&a96_040501.pdf)>, <[www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/](http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/)> (main SIPP Web site),

<[www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/workpapr/wp230.pdf](http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/workpapr/wp230.pdf)> (SIPP Quality Profile), and <[www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/usrguide/sipp2001.pdf](http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/usrguide/sipp2001.pdf)> (SIPP User's Guide).

### **MORE INFORMATION**

The report is available on the Internet <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)> by clicking on the letter "F" in the "Subjects A to Z" section of the Web page and selecting "Fertility of American Women Data." Scroll down to the maternity leave data section. Other research on maternity leave can be found in the following report: Kristin Smith and Amara Bachu, *Women's Labor Force Attachment Patterns and Maternity Leave: A Review of the Literature*, Population Division Working Paper Series, No. 32, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1999. This report is on the Internet on the "Population: Working Papers" section under "Subjects A to Z."

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### **USER COMMENTS**

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