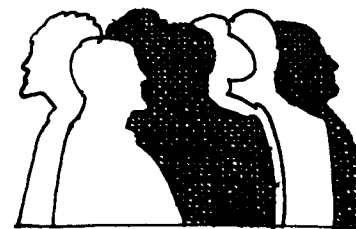


Special Labor Force Reports—Summaries



More than half of all children have working mothers

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More children than ever before have mothers who are in the labor force. In March 1981, 31.8 million youngsters below age 18—54 percent of the Nation's total—had mothers who were either employed or looking for work. (See table 1.) Since 1970, the number of children with working mothers has grown by 6.2 million despite a 6.6-million decline in the children's population.¹

By March 1981, a record 8.2 million children below age 6—45 percent of all preschoolers—had working mothers. A year earlier, these figures were 7.7 million or 43 percent. Two major factors accounted for this growth. First, the long-term increase in labor force activity among mothers below age 35 accelerated over the year. Their participation rate advanced by more than 2 percentage points, to reach 49 percent. Second, as the number of births among these women increased,² the population below age 6 grew by nearly 400,000. At the same time, the population of school-age children (6-to-17-year-olds) dropped substantially over the year, and the number of these children with working mothers also declined. Thus, preschoolers accounted for all of the year's net increase in the number of children with working mothers.

More young mothers working

Reflected in these patterns are the changing work and marital profiles of women born during the post-World War II baby boom. For instance, between March 1980 and March 1981, the number of working mothers increased by 600,000 to reach 18.4 million, and those with children below age 6 were responsible for 60 percent of the gain. Within this group, women between the ages of 25 and 34 registered the greatest increases. These women have generally been showing a propensity to delay marriage, postpone childbearing, and ultimate-

ly to have fewer children than women of comparable ages in the past. As a result, many of those who eventually become mothers have spent more years in the labor force than many of their predecessors, and they often choose to remain in the work force or return to it soon after childbearing. In contrast, the early marriage and prolific childbearing patterns of a generation ago resulted in the almost automatic and prolonged withdrawal of young mothers from the labor force.³

Because of these trends, the traditional concept of a family with the father as the only earner has changed dramatically. For example, both parents were earners in about 60 percent of all married-couple families with children under 18 years in 1981. (See table 2.) On average, these dual-earner families were smaller than comparable single-earner families. Fewer than 6 of 10 had more than one child, compared with nearly 7 of 10 of the one-earner families. Among families maintained by women, the presence of earners was affected by the number of children. For instance, of families with children, 65 percent of those without earners had more than one child compared with less than half of those with earners.

Other sociological changes of the 1970's also contributed to the growing number of children with working mothers. Two of these were the increase in the divorce rate and the growing occurrence of unwed mothers. In 1981, 11.6 million youngsters—1 of every 5—were living with their mother or their father only. This was almost 60 percent more than in 1970, when 1 of every 9 youngsters lived with only one parent. Most lived with their mothers; however, small increases have been posted in the number of children living only with their father. Black children were far more likely than white children to be living with one parent (50 percent of black children, compared with 15 percent of white children).

Despite the recent surge into the labor force of mothers with younger children, older children remain more likely than younger ones to have working mothers. For example, of all children between the ages of 14 through 17 who lived in two-parent families in March 1981, 60 percent had mothers in the labor force, compared with 56 percent of the 6-to-13-year-olds and 45 percent of

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Table 1. Number of children under 18, by age, type of family, and labor force status of mother, March 1980 and March 1981

[Numbers in thousands]

Type of family and labor force status of mother	Children under 18			Children 6 to 17			Children under 6		
	March 1980		March 1981	March 1980		March 1981	March 1980		March 1981
	Original	Revised		Original	Revised		Original	Revised	
Total children ¹	58,107	59,714	59,148	40,688	41,788	40,842	17,418	17,927	18,306
Mother in labor force	30,663	31,529	31,785	23,196	23,826	23,569	7,467	7,703	8,216
Mother not in labor force	26,493	27,208	26,269	16,722	17,168	16,398	9,771	10,040	9,871
Married-couple families	46,829	48,155	47,542	32,150	33,032	32,111	14,679	15,123	15,431
Mother in labor force	24,218	24,912	25,178	18,032	18,525	18,307	6,186	6,386	6,871
Mother not in labor force	22,611	23,244	22,364	14,118	14,507	13,804	8,493	8,737	8,560
Families maintained by women ²	10,327	10,582	10,513	7,768	7,961	7,857	2,559	2,620	2,656
Mother in labor force	6,445	6,617	6,607	5,164	5,300	5,262	1,281	1,317	1,345
Mother not in labor force	3,882	3,964	3,906	2,604	2,661	2,595	1,278	1,303	1,311
Families maintained by men ²	951	978	1,094	771	794	875	180	184	219

¹ Children are defined as "own" children of the family. Included are never-married daughters, sons, stepchildren and adopted children. Excluded are other related children such as grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and unrelated children.

² Includes only divorced, separated, widowed, or never-married persons.
NOTE: Due to rounding, sums of individual items may not equal totals.

the children under 6. Among children living with their mother only, the proportion whose mothers worked was two-thirds for those between the ages of 6 and 17 and one-half for those below age 6. (See table 3.)

Socioeconomic characteristics

Proportionately more black (59 percent) than white children (53 percent) had working mothers in 1981.

This difference has been narrowing in recent years as white mothers have joined the work force at a faster pace than black mothers. Nevertheless, at every age level, black children in 2-parent families were still more likely than white children to have a working mother. In one-parent families, however, the situation was reversed; a larger share of white than black children had a working mother. Hispanic children were less apt than either white or black children to have working mothers.

Regardless of race, ethnic origin, or family type, children with a working mother were in families with considerably higher incomes, on average, than were children whose mother was out of the labor force. The median income in 1980 for all two-parent families with children was \$26,500 when the mother worked and \$21,300 when she did not.

Generally, white children live in families with higher incomes than black children. Family income for white, two-parent families with children averaged \$26,900 when the mother was in the labor force and \$21,700, when she was not. Comparable median incomes for black families were \$23,000 when the mother worked and \$14,900 when she did not. (See table 4.)

For some mothers, work is a necessity. It provides economic benefits that may constitute a major share of their offspring's support. In March 1981, one-fourth of all children—14.8 million in all—were living in families in which their father was absent (10.5 million), unemployed (2.4 million), or out of the labor force (1.9 million). More than half of all black children and nearly one-fifth of all white children lived in one of these circumstances. Between March 1980 and 1981, the total number of children in these situations remained steady as the increase in the number with unemployed fathers was offset by a decline in the numbers whose fathers were absent or out of the labor force. In each of these

Table 2. Families by presence and number of children under 18, number and relationship of earners in 1980, and family type, March 1981

[Numbers in thousands]

Number and relationship of earners by family type	No children under 18	With children under 18 ¹				
		Total	1	2	3	4 or more
Total families	29,140	31,562	12,984	11,688	4,635	2,275
No earners	6,406	1,957	121	147	674	294
One earner	8,033	11,369	4,383	4,338	1,807	842
Two earners or more	14,701	18,234	7,925	6,657	2,514	1,139
Married-couple families	24,381	24,935	9,739	9,526	3,843	1,828
No earners	5,492	411	121	147	62	82
One earner	6,375	7,525	2,376	3,058	1,406	685
Husband	4,581	7,039	2,172	2,875	1,341	650
Wife	1,341	366	154	144	46	22
Other	453	119	50	38	19	12
Two earners or more	12,514	16,998	7,242	6,322	2,374	1,062
Husband and wife	10,637	14,919	6,317	5,717	2,068	817
Husband and other(s) not wife	1,511	1,868	804	546	289	229
Husband nonearner	365	211	119	59	18	14
Families maintained by women ²	3,482	5,935	2,839	1,949	728	419
No earners	728	1,488	519	518	246	204
One earner	1,246	3,366	1,740	1,132	353	141
Two earners or more	1,508	1,081	580	299	129	173
Families maintained by men ²	1,278	692	407	193	64	28
No earners	186	58	37	9	5	8
One earner	412	478	267	148	48	16
Two earners or more	679	155	103	36	11	4

¹ Children are defined as "own" children of the family. Included are never-married daughters, sons, stepchildren, and adopted children. Excluded are other related children such as grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and unrelated children.

² Includes only divorced, separated, widowed, or never-married persons.

NOTE: Due to rounding, sums of individual items may not equal totals.

Table 3. Children under 18 by age, type of family, and employment status of parents, March 1981

[Numbers in thousands]

Item	Children under 18			
	Total	14 to 17	6 to 13	Under 6
Total children ¹	59,148	14,607	26,235	18,306
Mother in labor force	31,785	8,698	14,871	8,216
Employed	29,269	8,193	13,688	7,388
Unemployed	2,516	505	1,183	828
Mother not in labor force	26,269	5,498	10,900	9,871
Married-couple families	47,542	11,329	20,782	15,431
Mother in labor force	25,178	6,763	11,544	6,871
Employed	23,516	6,426	10,800	6,290
Unemployed	1,662	337	744	581
Mother not in labor force	22,364	4,566	9,238	8,560
Father in labor force	44,763	10,490	19,605	14,669
Mother in labor force	24,042	6,372	11,060	6,610
Employed	22,462	6,060	10,349	6,053
Unemployed	1,580	312	711	557
Mother not in labor force	20,721	4,119	8,544	8,058
Father employed	42,376	10,003	18,632	13,741
Mother in labor force	22,744	6,086	10,485	6,173
Employed	21,383	5,813	9,865	5,704
Unemployed	1,361	273	620	468
Mother not in labor force	19,632	3,917	8,147	7,569
Father unemployed	2,387	487	973	927
Mother in labor force	1,298	285	575	438
Employed	1,079	246	484	348
Unemployed	219	39	91	89
Mother not in labor force	1,089	202	397	490
Father not in labor force	1,918	736	804	379
Mother in labor force	730	325	282	122
Employed	667	304	256	107
Unemployed	63	22	26	15
Mother not in labor force	1,188	410	521	256
Father in armed forces	861	103	373	384
Mother in labor force	407	66	201	139
Employed	388	62	195	131
Unemployed	19	4	7	8
Mother not in labor force	454	37	172	245
Other families:				
Maintained by women ²	10,513	2,867	4,990	2,656
Mother in labor force	6,607	1,935	3,327	1,345
Employed	5,753	1,768	2,888	1,098
Unemployed	854	167	439	247
Mother not in labor force	3,906	932	1,663	1,311
Maintained by men ²	1,094	411	464	219

¹ Children are defined as "own" children of the family. Included are never-married daughters, sons, stepchildren, and adopted children. Excluded are other related children such as grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and unrelated children.

² Includes only divorced, separated, widowed, or never-married persons.

NOTE: Due to rounding, sums of individual items may not equal totals.

cases, family income in 1980 was substantially greater when the mother was in the labor force.

— FOOTNOTES —

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the data in this report are from information collected in the March supplement to the Current Population Survey conducted and tabulated for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of the Census. The data have been inflated using population weights based on results from the 1980 census of population. The March 1980 data also have been revised to bring them in line with the new population weights and to make them comparable with the March 1981 data. Previously published 1980 data reflected population weights projected forward from the 1970 Census. The effect of the revision on the 1980 data is shown in table 1, which presents the original as well as the revised estimates for 1980.

As the table shows, the number of children with working mothers in March 1980 was revised upward by 866,000. Despite this, and sim-

Table 4. Children under 18 by age, type of family, labor force status of mother, race and Hispanic origin, March 1981, and median family income, 1980

[Numbers in thousands]

Item	Two-parent families			One-parent families maintained by women ¹		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
Total children ²	42,129	3,960	3,688	6,583	3,698	1,074
Mother in labor force	21,865	2,520	1,571	4,375	2,090	423
Mother not in labor force	20,264	1,441	2,117	2,208	1,608	651
Children 14 to 17 years	10,024	987	744	1,867	947	230
Mother in labor force	5,916	649	350	1,356	549	110
Mother not in labor force	4,108	338	393	511	398	121
Children 6 to 13 years	18,416	1,754	1,572	3,157	1,708	512
Mother in labor force	10,057	1,147	714	2,200	1,040	217
Mother not in labor force	8,359	606	858	957	668	295
Children under 6 years	13,688	1,220	1,372	1,558	1,043	331
Mother in labor force	5,892	723	507	818	501	96
Mother not in labor force	7,794	496	865	740	541	236
Median family income, 1980						
Total children	\$24,200	\$20,200	\$17,100	\$8,800	\$6,300	\$6,300
Mother in labor force	26,900	23,000	21,400	11,900	8,900	8,900
Mother not in labor force	21,700	14,900	14,000	5,000	4,400	5,400
Children 14 to 17 years	29,000	21,400	19,700	12,500	7,600	8,200
Mother in labor force	31,100	24,500	24,400	14,900	10,600	11,400
Mother not in labor force	25,400	13,600	15,600	6,800	5,400	6,400
Children 6 to 13 years	24,800	21,100	18,000	9,000	6,600	6,400
Mother in labor force	27,200	23,700	22,400	11,700	8,900	8,400
Mother not in labor force	22,400	16,100	14,200	5,100	4,600	5,600
Children under 6 years	21,000	18,400	15,000	5,300	4,600	5,300
Mother in labor force	22,800	20,300	18,500	8,200	7,300	8,000
Mother not in labor force	19,500	14,100	13,200	4,200	3,600	4,600

¹ Includes only divorced, separated, widowed, or never-married persons.

² Children are defined as "own" children of the family. Included are never-married daughters, sons, stepchildren, and adopted children. Excluded are other related children such as grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and unrelated children.

NOTE: Due to rounding, sums of individual items may not equal totals.

About 4.6 million families with children were in poverty during 1980. About 7 percent of married couples with children were poor as were 44 percent of the families maintained by women. For both family types, the incidence of poverty increased as family size grew. □

ilarly significant changes in other data for 1980, the various relationships and percentages based on the new estimates are nearly the same as those based on the previously published estimates.

³ Final Natality Statistics, National Center for Health Statistics, Division of Vital Statistics, Natality Statistics.

⁴ See Howard Hayghe, "Families and the rise of working wives—an overview," *Monthly Labor Review*, May 1976, pp. 12-19; Janet L. Norwood and Elizabeth Waldman, "Women in the Labor Force: Some New Data Series," U.S. Department of Labor, Report 575; and George Masnich and Mary Jo Bane, "The Nation's Families 1960-1990," (Massachusetts, Joint Center for Urban Studies of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, 1980), pp. 52-85.