

Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns of First-Time Mothers: 1961–2000

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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 2002.¹ A child's birth, particularly the first child's, often requires changes in a family's schedule, including their work schedule. 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 2000.

The analysis primarily uses retrospective fertility, employment, and maternity leave data from the 2001 panel of the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), conducted in 2001.² Previously published results based on similarly collected information from the 1984, 1985, and 1996 SIPP panels are also included.³

The report analyzes trends in women's work experience prior to their first birth and the factors associated with employment during pregnancy. Changes are

SIPP FERTILITY, EMPLOYMENT, AND MATERNITY LEAVE DATA

The 2001 panel of the nationally representative Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) included a fertility topical module in the second wave of interviews conducted June–September 2001. 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, and 1996 SIPP panels to provide an extended series of employment and maternity leave data between 1961 and 2000.

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

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¹ Barbara Downs, *Fertility of American Women: June 2002*, Current Population Reports, P20-548, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2003.

² The data in this report were collected from June through September 2001, in the second wave (interview) of the 2001 Survey of Income and Program Participation (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.

³ For more information on the previously published report, see Martin O'Connell, "Maternity Leave Arrangements: 1961–85," in *Work and Family Patterns of American Women*, Current Population Reports, P23-165, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1990.

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length of time they are absent from the labor force.

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

CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS AT FIRST BIRTH

Many of the social, economic, and legislative changes that have occurred in American society since 1961 are related to families, child bearing, and work.⁴ At the same time, the demographic picture of new mothers has also changed. This section analyzes some of these events and details how the characteristics of first-time mothers have changed over time.

Age and Educational Attainment of First-Time Mothers

Two factors that likely shape women's employment histories prior to having their first child are their age at the time of the first birth and their educational attainment level. Young women giving birth in their late teens and early twenties are just beginning to develop job skills and often have not completed their education. 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

⁴ Bureau of National Affairs, "Work and Family: A Changing Dynamic," *BNA Special Report*: Washington DC, 1986.

experience. 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 has changed over time. Data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) show that the mean (average) age of first-time mothers increased from 21.4 years in 1970 to 24.9 years in 2000.⁵ The percentage of first births that were to women aged 30 and over tripled between 1960 and 2000, from 7 percent to 22 percent. At the same time, the percentage of first births that were to women under 20 years of age dropped from 37 percent to 25 percent. Educational attainment of first-time mothers has also increased since 1970, partly because older women are more likely to have completed their education than younger first-time mothers. In 2000, 27 percent of first-time mothers had completed 16 or more years of school, compared with 10 percent in 1970.⁶

Another factor is that 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 increased from 8 percent in 1960, to 12 percent in 1970, and further increased to 23 percent by 1990. By 2000, the proportion with a bachelor's degree or more

⁵ Matthews, T. J. and B. E. Hamilton, "Mean Age of Mother, 1970–2000," *National Vital Statistics Reports*; Vol. 51, No. 1, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2002.

⁶ National Center for Health Statistics, 2000 Natality Data Set, *Vital Statistics of the United States*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Washington, DC.

education had reached 30 percent.⁷ Age and educational attainment of first-time mothers are examined in ensuing sections of this report.

Factors Related to Employment and Maternity Leave

In addition to changes in the age and education of new mothers over the previous four decades, changes also occurred in the work environment in terms of maternity leave and employment issues. In the 1970s, the common expectation that women would leave work upon becoming pregnant began to change.⁸ Another change during the 1970s was the decision in many families to have a second income. To maintain economic well-being and for other reasons, more mothers began to enter and stay in the workforce, resulting in an increase in homes where both spouses worked.⁹

Many 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, as well as child care costs. 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 is an issue for many women in deciding

⁷ Current Population Survey. *Educational Attainment Historical Tables: Table A-1*, U.S. Census Bureau: Washington, DC, 2005. 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 higher.

⁸ Andrew Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1992.

⁹ Frank Levy, *The New Dollars and Dreams, American Incomes and Economic Change*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1998.

Table 1.
Employment History of Women Before First Birth: 1961–1965 to 1996–2000

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 ¹		Worked during pregnancy		Worked full-time during pregnancy ²		Worked part-time during pregnancy ²	
		Percent	Margin of error ³	Percent	Margin of error ³	Percent	Margin of error ³	Percent	Margin of error ³
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	8,306	73.4	1.4	62.0	1.5	55.3	1.5	6.7	0.8
1986–1990	8,568	75.5	1.3	67.2	1.4	58.3	1.5	8.9	0.9
1991–1995	8,542	73.5	1.6	65.3	1.8	56.7	1.8	8.6	1.0
1996–2000	8,558	74.0	1.6	67.2	1.7	56.6	1.8	10.6	1.1

¹ At any time before first birth.

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

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P23-165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Tables C and B-2, P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), and Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

whether and when to return to work.¹⁰ 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 became popular employee 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.¹¹ 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. These types of laws and rights are not universal across the states. 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 no solid evidence that such laws have increased the amount of leave women take by any considerable amount, possibly because the legislation addresses unpaid leave only. Many families identify financial pressures as the reason why a mother returned to work before her allotted period of unpaid leave was over.¹²

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY BEFORE THE FIRST BIRTH

This section describes overall trends in women's employment

history from 1961–1965 to 1996–2000 and the characteristics of women who worked during their first pregnancy.

Overall Trends: 1961–1965 to 1996–2000

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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ Other mothers may have worked at one time and quit working before they got pregnant. Table 1 shows that for mothers who had their first child between 1996 and 2000, 74 percent had worked for at

¹⁰ Daphne Spain and Suzanne Bianchi, *Balancing Act: Motherhood, Marriage, and Employment Among American Women*, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1996.

¹¹ Harriet B. Presser, "Can We Make Time for Children? The Economy, Work Schedules, and Child Care," *Demography*, Vol. 26 (1989): 523–543. Current Population Survey, *Fertility of American Women—Historical Tables*, U.S. Census Bureau: Washington, DC, 2003, Table H3.

¹² Wen-Jui Hen and Jane Waldfogel, "Parental Leave: The Impact of Recent Legislation on Parent's Leave Taking," *Demography*, Vol. 40, No 2 (2003): 191-200. Jacob Klerman and Arleen Leibowitz, "Job Continuity Among New Mothers," *Demography*, Vol. 36, No 2 (1999): 145-155.

¹³ For the remainder of this report, the term "pregnancy" is used to refer to the pregnancy preceding the first birth.

¹⁴ Working for 6 consecutive months is a standard labor force indicator that measures the likelihood of a serious commitment to the labor force.

Table 2.
Work History of Women During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth by Selected Characteristics: 1996–2000

Characteristic	Number of women with a first birth (thousands)	Percent who worked during pregnancy	Among women who worked while pregnant, percent who stopped working—	
			Less than 3 months before child's birth	Less than 1 month before child's birth ¹
Total	8,558	67.2	84.8	56.6
Age at first birth				
Under 18 years	790	32.5	72.4	44.0
18 and 19 years	1,119	48.3	76.5	47.8
20 and 21 years	1,177	56.8	79.5	49.5
22 to 24 years	1,199	74.5	82.2	50.4
25 to 29 years	2,125	77.9	87.4	59.4
30 years and over	2,147	80.7	90.0	64.4
Race and Hispanic origin				
White	6,865	70.1	86.6	58.6
Non-Hispanic	5,463	75.7	86.6	58.8
Black	1,103	55.2	70.8	38.3
Asian and Pacific Islander	498	55.6	81.9	59.6
Hispanic (any race)	1,530	48.0	84.7	57.6
Timing of first birth²				
Before first marriage	3,388	55.5	78.3	48.6
Within first marriage	4,654	74.1	87.7	59.7
After first marriage	516	81.4	89.8	66.9
Educational attainment				
Less than high school	1,318	35.8	76.5	46.4
High school graduate	2,337	59.8	80.9	51.5
Some college	2,631	75.4	85.3	55.0
Bachelor's degree or higher	2,272	83.5	89.1	64.5

¹ Includes women who responded that they never stopped working during their pregnancy.

² 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, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

least a 6-month period in their lives. This percentage had increased since the early 1960s, when it was 60 percent of new mothers.¹⁵ Most of the increase seen in the percentage of women who had ever worked occurred by the 1976–1980 first-birth cohort. Age is related to whether women have worked before having their first child. For women 30 years and

older, approximately 9 out of 10 women who had a first birth in 1996–2000 had worked for at least 6 consecutive months, compared with about half of women under 22 years of age.¹⁶

A similar increase over time occurred in the percentage of new mothers who worked at all during their pregnancy. Forty-four percent of women who had their first birth between 1961 and 1965 worked while pregnant. By the 1986–1990 first-birth cohort, 67 percent of new mothers worked while pregnant and the proportion

has remained at about the same levels since.¹⁷

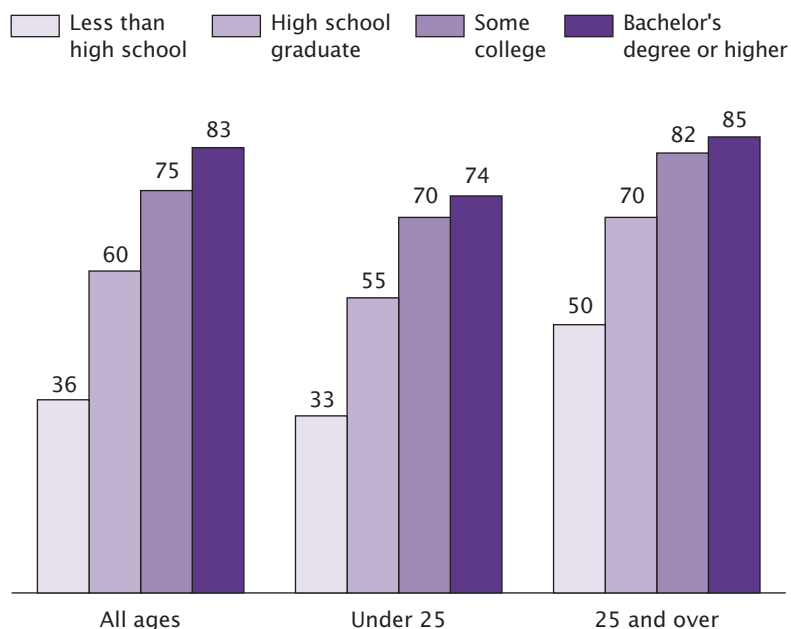
Fifty-seven percent of first-time mothers in 1996–2000 worked at full-time jobs during their pregnancy (35 hours or more per week, Table 1). The proportion of first-time mothers working full-time during pregnancy in 1961–1965 was 40 percent. The percentage increased by the late 1970s and has stayed above 50 percent since. Working part-time during pregnancy also increased, from 5 percent of

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Separate analysis, not shown in tables.

¹⁷ Overall labor force participation rates for women, regardless of pregnancy status, increased 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>.

Figure 1.
**Percent of Women Who Worked During Pregnancy
 Preceding First Birth by Age at First Birth and
 Educational Attainment: 1996–2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

first-time mothers in 1961–1965 to 11 percent in 1996–2000 (the highest percentage among the cohorts). 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 correlate with the type of maternity benefits received.

Women Who Worked During Pregnancy

Table 2 summarizes the trends in women's work experience during pregnancy in the late 1990s. First-time mothers under age 22 had lower rates of employment during pregnancy than older first-time mothers. There were also large employment differences between women at the ends of the age spectrum. Thirty-three percent of new mothers under the age of 18

worked while pregnant compared with 81 percent of mothers 30 and older.

Seventy-six percent of non-Hispanic White women worked during their first pregnancy, the highest percentage among the groups shown. About 55 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander mothers and Black mothers worked during pregnancy. About half of Hispanic women worked during pregnancy.¹⁸

¹⁸ Categories are not exclusive. Hispanics may be any race. Based on the 2001 SIPP Panel, Wave 2 maternity leave data, 8 percent of the Black population and 5 percent of the Asian or Pacific Islander population were Hispanic. The percentage of Hispanic women working during pregnancy is not statistically different from the percentage of Asian or Pacific Islander women and Black women who worked during pregnancy. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population are not shown in this report because of their small sample size in the survey.

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 1996–2000, those with a bachelor's degree or higher were more likely to have worked during pregnancy (84 percent) than women with less education (36 to 75 percent of women in other educational categories).

Figure 1 shows how the combination of educational attainment and age at first birth are related to the likelihood of working during pregnancy. These data show that older first-time mothers, almost regardless of educational attainment, were more likely to have worked during pregnancy. At every level of educational attainment except a bachelor's degree or higher, women 25 or older at the time of their first birth had higher rates of working during pregnancy than younger first-time mothers. There was no statistical difference between the age groups for women with bachelor's degrees. Women who became mothers later in life were more likely to have worked at some time prior to their first birth. This finding may reflect a decision to postpone pregnancy in order to pursue job experiences or because of reliance on that job's income, regardless of their level of education.

Women who had their first child before their first marriage rather than during or after their first marriage were less likely to have worked during pregnancy (56 percent compared with 74 percent and 81 percent respectively). This difference by marital status in terms of employment during pregnancy has been constant since 1966–1970.¹⁹

¹⁹ Kristin Smith, Barbara Downs, and Martin O'Connell. *Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P70-79, Washington, DC, 2001. *Op. cit.*, O'Connell, 1990, pp. 14–15.

Table 3.
Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth by When They Stopped Working: 1961–1965 to 1996–2000

(6,306 represents 6,306,000)

Characteristic	1961–1965	1966–1970	1971–1975	1976–1980	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000
Number of women with a first birth	6,306	6,956	6,920	7,192	8,306	8,568	8,542	8,558
Number of women who worked during pregnancy.	2,797	3,435	3,700	4,414	5,147	5,758	5,581	5,749
Percent distribution of women by number of months before first birth they stopped working¹								
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Less than 1 month ²	22.7	25.9	27.1	40.9	52.7	54.8	54.5	56.6
1 month	11.9	13.2	16.0	18.0	21.0	20.9	19.5	20.1
2 months	17.1	18.3	20.9	14.7	10.7	9.1	9.2	8.1
3 to 5 months	35.4	28.4	22.9	18.6	10.2	10.0	10.0	7.9
6 or more months	12.9	13.9	13.1	7.7	5.4	5.2	6.9	7.3

¹ Among women who worked during pregnancy.

² Includes women who responded that they never stopped working during their pregnancy.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P23-165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Tables B and B-6, P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), and Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

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.²⁰ 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, 85 percent worked into their last trimester (less than 3 months before their child's birth, Table 2). Older mothers were more likely than younger mothers to work closer to the end of their pregnancies. Ninety percent of mothers 30 and older worked into the last 3 months of their pregnancy, compared with 72 percent of mothers under 18 years of age.

Sixty-four percent of the oldest mothers worked into their last month of pregnancy, while 44 percent of the youngest mothers did.

In the early 1960s, women who worked longer into their pregnancy were those more in need of financial assistance, especially high school dropouts who are more likely to have low-paying jobs.²¹ During the 1980s, a greater proportion of college-educated women began to work into the last trimester of their pregnancy than women with less than a high school education.²² By 1996–2000, 89 percent of college graduates who worked during their pregnancy were employed into their last trimester, compared with 77 percent of women who had not graduated from high school. Table 2 also shows that a higher proportion of college graduates worked into the last month of pregnancy (65 percent) than did women with less than a high school education (46 percent). These more highly

educated women might have been viewing their jobs from a long-term perspective, such as subsequent job opportunities after the birth of their child. It also may be the case that jobs that require more education are more conducive to accommodating pregnant women. Women working at these jobs may be more likely to sit during the day, have easy access to rest facilities, not engage in manual labor, and not be exposed to hazardous materials or conditions. Also, their schedules may be more flexible, allowing for ease of scheduling medical appointments, late arrivals, and early departures.

Black women were less likely than other women to work late into their pregnancy. For the most recent period of births (1996–2000), 71 percent of Black mothers-to-be worked during their last trimester of pregnancy and 38 percent worked into their last month. The other groups shown all had percentages that were similar to each other.

Table 3 shows how late into pregnancy first-time mothers have worked since 1961. For the

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, Downs, 2003, Tables C and E. These factors were found to persist in being related to lower employment levels in a multivariate analysis controlling for many socioeconomic factors.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, O'Connell, 1990, pp. 16–17.
²² *Op. cit.*, Smith, Downs, and O'Connell, 2001, pp. 7–9.

Table 4.
Women Who Worked Full-time During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth by When They Stopped Working: 1961–1965 to 1996–2000

(6,306 represents 6,306,000)

Characteristic	1961–1965	1966–1970	1971–1975	1976–1980	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000
Number of women with a first birth...	6,306	6,956	6,920	7,192	8,306	8,568	8,542	8,558
Number of women who worked during pregnancy.....	2,797	3,435	3,700	4,414	5,147	5,758	5,581	5,749
Worked full-time (number) ¹	2,503	3,074	3,289	3,823	4,591	4,992	4,844	4,846
Worked full-time (percent) ²	89.5	89.5	88.9	86.6	89.2	86.7	86.8	84.3
Percent working full-time among women who stopped working at each time interval:								
Less than 1 month ³	88.2	91.8	89.9	89.1	92.0	91.0	90.3	87.4
1 month.....	91.9	91.6	91.5	90.8	90.6	87.5	87.3	85.3
2 months.....	86.2	90.0	93.7	84.5	88.4	82.1	84.8	84.4
3 to 5 months.....	91.8	88.5	86.9	79.8	75.7	73.4	81.1	74.0
6 or more months.....	87.5	85.1	80.0	83.2	83.1	72.0	67.8	68.3

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

² Among women who worked during pregnancy.

³ Includes women who responded that they never stopped working during their pregnancy.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P23-165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Tables B and B-6, P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), and Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

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) and 23 percent worked into the last month. A key transition occurred between 1971–1975 and 1981–1985; the percentage of women who left work in their first trimester declined from 13 percent to 5 percent, while the proportion working into the last month before their child's birth increased from 27 percent to 53 percent.²³ Since 1981–1985, both percentages have remained relatively unchanged.

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. It was around the same proportion for the 1981–1985 first-birth cohort. By the 1996–2000 first-birth cohort, the percentage of working women who worked full-time during pregnancy declined to 84 percent.²⁴ In the early 1960s, the proportion of working women with full-time jobs during their pregnancy was approximately 9 in 10, regardless of when they stopped working. By 1996–2000, 68 percent of women who worked only in their first trimester had full-time jobs, compared with 87 percent of women who were still working in the last month before their child's birth.

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. Then it discusses leave arrangements women used 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, unpaid, 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 and some combine several types. Others may return to work before they wish, due to a lack of leave options or because of financial concerns. Maternity leave in the United States is a common occurrence, yet hardly uniform.

²³ In 1996–2000, of the 57 percent of women who stopped working up to 1 month before their child's birth, almost one-half (27 percent) reported that they had never stopped working before giving birth.

²⁴ Bureau of Labor Statistics data show that the percentage of employed workers working part-time increased over the 1970s and 1980s and then began to decrease in the late 1990s.

Table 5 shows the changes over the past 20 years in the type of leave arrangements used by women who worked during their pregnancy. From the 1981–1985 first-birth cohort to the 1996–2000 first-birth cohort, the percentage of mothers who quit their jobs before or soon after their first birth dropped from 36 percent to 26 percent. During the cohorts between 1981–1985 and 1996–2000, there is a sawtooth pattern of quit-job responses. It is mirrored by the reverse pattern in unpaid leave responses (unpaid maternity, sick, vacation, or other unpaid leave). This pattern may be due to the difficulty in recalling exactly when or if they took unpaid leave as opposed to quitting a job. When these two types of leave are combined, the percentages are fairly stable over this period: about 70 percent of all cohorts took unpaid leave or quit their job.

A more consistent pattern occurred for the use of paid leave (paid maternity, sick, vacation, or other paid leave), whose timing of use may be easier for respondents to recall than other types of leave arrangements. In the early 1980s, the use of paid-leave arrangements was reported by 37 percent of women who worked during pregnancy. By the 1986–1990 first-birth cohort, 43 percent of mothers said they used paid leave. In each cohort since that time, about the same percentage of mothers have reported receiving paid leave. Employers, perceiving women as integral to their work force, have become more likely to 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.²⁵

²⁵ Commission on Family and Medical Leave. *A Workable Balance: Report to Congress on Family and Medical Leave Policies*. U.S. Department of Labor: Washington, DC, 1996.

MATERNITY LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS

In the 1996 and 2001 SIPP 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 and 2001 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. Respondents in the last two panels were allowed to report as many arrangements as they used. Beginning in the 1996 panel, "disability leave" was included as a separate response. Women may have conceptually included it in either the paid or unpaid leave categories in the prior SIPP panels.

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. There was no statistically significant change in disability leave usage over the past two decades either; it was used by 7 percent of women in the 1996–2000 first-birth cohort.

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 1996 and 2000. Women were allowed to identify more than one arrangement. It was more common for women not to take any leave during pregnancy than it was not to take any leave after giving birth (26 percent compared with 1 percent). About 1 percent of women said they did not take any leave during pregnancy and did

not take any after giving birth. Both paid and unpaid leave (all types combined) were more likely to be used after the child's birth than during pregnancy. 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 once their child is born.

Fifty-five percent of women who worked during their pregnancy reported using paid or unpaid "maternity leave" specifically, either before or after giving birth. More women took unpaid maternity leave (39 percent) than paid (33 percent), and for both types, it was 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.

One in four women quit their job around the time of the birth of their child (26 percent).

Table 5.
Leave Arrangements Used by Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth: 1981–1985 to 1996–2000

Year of first birth	Number of women who worked during pregnancy (thousands)	Percent of women using type of leave arrangement ¹				
		Quit job	Paid leave ²	Unpaid leave ³	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	5,581	34.2	44.0	33.9	5.4	3.0
1996–2000	5,749	25.6	42.0	45.0	6.9	2.2

¹ 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.

² Paid leave includes all paid maternity, sick, and vacation leave, and other paid leave.

³ Unpaid leave includes all unpaid maternity, sick, and vacation leave, and other unpaid leave.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), Table F, and Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

Table 6.
Detailed Leave Arrangements Used by Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth: 1996–2000

Type of leave	Before or after birth ¹	Before birth	After birth
Percent who used a leave arrangement.....	99.2	73.7	98.5
Percent using leave arrangement²			
Quit job ³	25.6	21.5	19.4
Paid leave ⁴	42.0	25.3	34.1
Maternity leave	32.8	20.4	26.1
Sick leave	9.4	4.5	6.4
Vacation leave	8.8	3.4	6.6
Other paid leave	1.0	(B)	0.6
Unpaid leave ⁵	45.0	20.2	42.5
Maternity leave	38.8	15.5	36.8
Sick leave	3.2	1.7	2.0
Vacation leave	2.6	1.9	1.8
Other unpaid leave	3.1	1.3	2.4
Disability leave	6.9	4.2	4.7
Other leave	9.0	5.6	5.1
Self-employed	1.1	(B)	1.1
Employer went out of business	(B)	(B)	(B)
Other	7.7	5.0	3.9
Let go from job	2.2	1.6	1.3
Percent who did not take leave⁶.....	0.8	26.3	1.3

(B) Base less than 200,000 or numerator too small for comparison.

¹ Leave arrangements are only counted once if used before and after birth.

² Total of individual leave arrangements may exceed stated totals using a leave arrangement because of multiple arrangements.

³ Some women who identified having quit their job before birth also said that they quit their (same) job after birth (15.3 percent). An additional 4.1 percent actually quit their job (for the first time) after giving birth.

⁴ Paid leave includes all paid maternity, sick, and vacation leave, and other paid leave.

⁵ Unpaid leave includes all unpaid maternity, sick, and vacation leave, and other unpaid leave.

⁶ The first column is the percentage who took no leave before birth and no leave after birth.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

Subtracting the percentage that quit before the birth from the total percentage that quit indicates that 4 percent of women waited until after giving birth to quit their job,

compared with 22 percent who quit during pregnancy. Another leave-taking strategy that women use is to combine different types of leave. Figure 2 shows the

percentage of women that worked during pregnancy who used paid leave only, unpaid leave only, quit their job only, and used multiple types of leave. This is 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 8 percent used more than one type after birth, 30 percent of women used multiple leave arrangements in the combined periods of pregnancy and up to 12 weeks after giving birth.

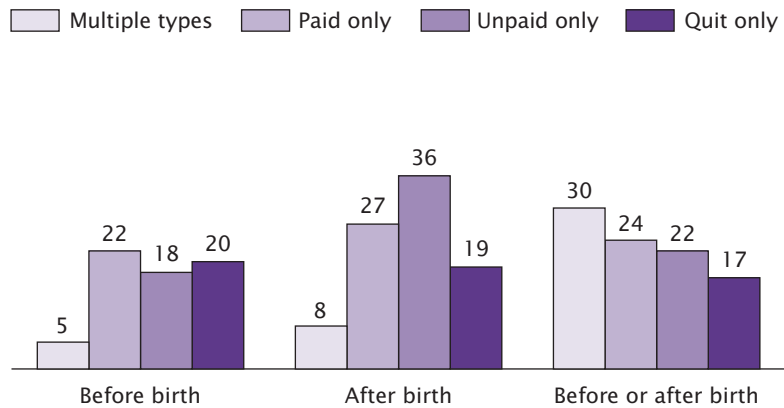
Using only paid leave was more common for women after giving birth than before (27 percent and 22 percent, respectively). The proportion of women who used only unpaid leave after the birth was twice as high as the proportion who used only unpaid leave before birth (36 percent and 18 percent, respectively). Many women who identified quitting a job as a leave arrangement they used after giving birth had actually quit working while they were pregnant, since they also identified it as an arrangement used before giving birth. Seventeen percent of women quit their job and used no other type of leave either before or after the birth.

Characteristics of Women by the Leave They Use

Among new mothers in 1996–2000, younger women were more likely than women who had their first child at a later age to quit their jobs (Table 7). About twice as many women who had their first birth before age 22 quit their jobs (41 percent) as women who had their first child at age 25 or older (19 percent). The proportion of women using paid leave for their first birth generally increased with age, from 12 percent of women who were 18 or 19 years of age at their first birth to 58 percent of those 30 and older. The longer labor force experience of older women may bring better benefits.

Figure 2.
Percent of Women Using Selected Leave Arrangements and Multiple Arrangements Before or After Their First Birth: 1996–2000

(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, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

Employment characteristics 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 (48 percent and 12 percent, respectively), while part-time workers were more likely to quit their jobs (45 percent) than were full-time workers (22 percent). Women who worked into the last month of pregnancy were more likely to receive paid leave benefits (51 percent) than those who left work more than 1 month prior to their first birth (30 percent). A small proportion of women who worked until their last month of pregnancy were let go from their job (1 percent).

Educational attainment at the time of the interview is likely related to a mother's type of job, her wages, and, in turn, the leave benefits she is offered. Increasing levels of education go hand-in-hand with increases in the use of paid leave

benefits. Fifty-nine percent of women with at least a bachelor's degree used paid leave before or after giving birth, compared with 18 percent of women who had less than a high school education. In contrast, 57 percent of women with less than a high school education took unpaid leave compared with 39 percent of women with more education (Table 7).

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 at least a bachelor's degree who received paid leave increased from 27 percent of the 1971–1975 first-birth cohort to 47 percent of those with a first birth between 1981–1985. It further increased to 59 percent of new mothers between 1996 and 2000. The use of paid

Table 7.

Type of Leave Arrangements Used Before or After Birth by Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding Their First Birth by Selected Characteristics: 1996–2000

Characteristic	Number of women who worked during pregnancy (thousands)	Percent of women using specified leave arrangement				
		Quit job	Paid leave ¹	Unpaid leave ²	Disability leave	Let go from job
Total	5,749	25.6	42.0	45.0	6.9	2.2
Employment status at last job						
Full-time	4,846	22.1	47.6	44.7	7.6	2.5
Part-time	903	44.7	12.2	46.8	(B)	(B)
Month stopped working before birth						
Less than 1 month ³	3,252	14.0	51.2	46.5	6.7	1.2
1 month	1,153	22.3	44.0	48.4	9.3	(B)
2 months	468	41.9	23.5	53.0	1.7	(B)
3 to 5 months	457	60.2	18.8	31.9	12.0	(B)
6 or more months	419	69.7	11.0	(B)	2.4	(B)
Age at first birth						
Less than 18 years	257	48.2	(B)	52.9	(B)	(B)
18 and 19 years	540	42.4	11.5	53.0	(B)	(B)
20 and 21 years	669	36.2	30.6	46.0	(B)	(B)
22 to 24 years	893	27.2	32.0	46.7	6.8	(B)
25 to 29 years	1,656	22.3	50.9	41.8	7.2	(B)
30 years and over	1,734	15.5	58.1	43.2	10.4	(B)
Race and Hispanic origin						
White	4,815	24.6	42.9	45.5	7.0	2.4
Non-Hispanic	4,135	23.7	44.7	44.4	7.2	2.2
Black	609	35.0	29.9	44.5	5.3	(B)
Asian and Pacific Islander	277	19.5	55.6	36.5	9.0	-
Hispanic (any race)	734	30.4	32.3	50.3	(B)	(B)
Timing of first birth⁴						
Before first marriage	1,879	35.1	23.3	51.0	5.6	2.9
Within first marriage	3,449	21.1	51.3	42.2	7.5	1.8
After first marriage	420	20.7	49.8	41.4	(B)	(B)
Educational attainment						
Less than high school	472	35.2	17.8	56.4	(B)	(B)
High school graduate	1,397	35.9	31.2	46.7	5.2	3.4
Some college, no degree	1,983	23.3	39.4	47.2	8.3	2.5
Bachelor's degree or more	1,897	18.1	58.7	38.6	7.9	(B)

- Represents or rounds to zero.

(B) Base less than 200,000 or numerator too small for comparison.

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.

¹ Paid leave includes all paid maternity, sick, and vacation leave, and other paid leave.

² Unpaid leave includes all unpaid maternity, sick, and vacation leave, and other unpaid leave.

³ Includes women who responded that they never stopped working during their pregnancy.

⁴ 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.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

leave by mothers without a high school degree was 18 percent in 1996–2000, about what it was for all cohorts.

In summary, over the time period shown in Figure 3, many changes in U.S. society occurred. The number of family households and the

average number of children per family have decreased.²⁶ Legislation is now in effect that is designed to provide more job

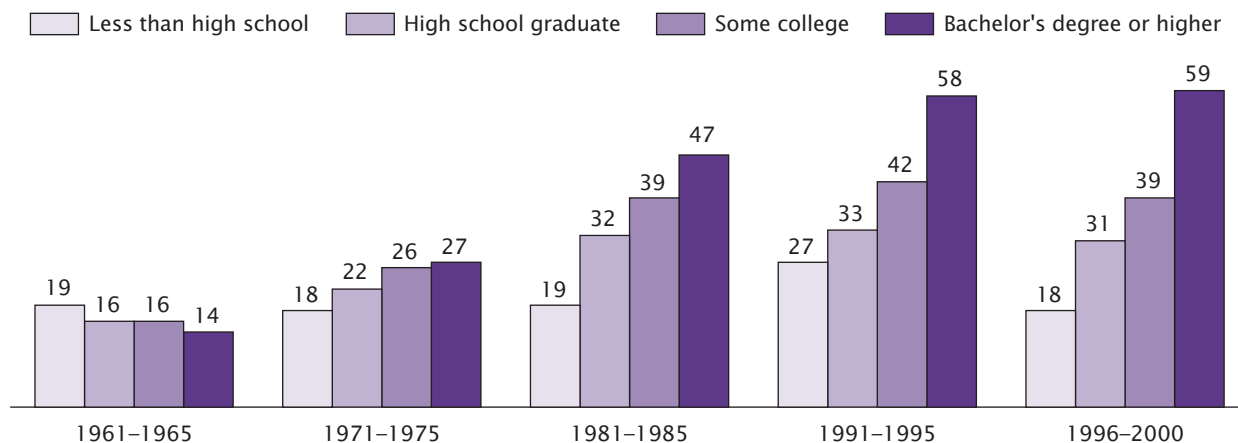
²⁶ Jason Fields and Lynn M. Casper, *America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2000*, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P20-537, Washington, DC, 2001.

security for mothers. The profile of first-time mothers has altered as well; the average age at first birth has risen as has educational attainment and labor force participation.²⁷ The average woman is now

²⁷ *Op cit.*, *Vital Statistics of the United States*, Volume I – Natality, 1999.

Figure 3.

Percent of Women Who Received Paid Leave Before or After Their First Birth by Educational Attainment: Selected Years 1961–1965 to 1996–2000



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 birth. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P23-165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Table B-9, P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), and Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

working longer into her pregnancy. These factors are related to the choices new mothers make concerning their employment and leave during pregnancy.

WORKING AFTER THE FIRST BIRTH

This section looks at how rapidly women began working after the birth of their first child. Overall trends since the 1960s on when women returned to work will be examined. Also, new data from the 2001 SIPP panel are analyzed to determine the characteristics of women who return to work most rapidly and whether changing employers after birth is related to changes in job characteristics.

Trends Since the 1960s

As shown in Figure 4, most of the increases in the percentage of women working later into their pregnancy and returning to work quickly after their first birth came about by the early 1980s. This trend is also found in Table 8, which shows the cumulative

monthly percentage of women working after the birth of their first child. In the early 1960s, 14 percent of all mothers with newborns returned to work by the 6th month, increasing to 17 percent by the 12th month. These percentages more than doubled by 1976–1980, with another large increase occurring by 1981–1985. In 1996–1999, 57 percent of mothers returned to work by the 6th month after their child’s birth, and 65 percent by the 12th month.²⁸

When New Mothers Return to Work

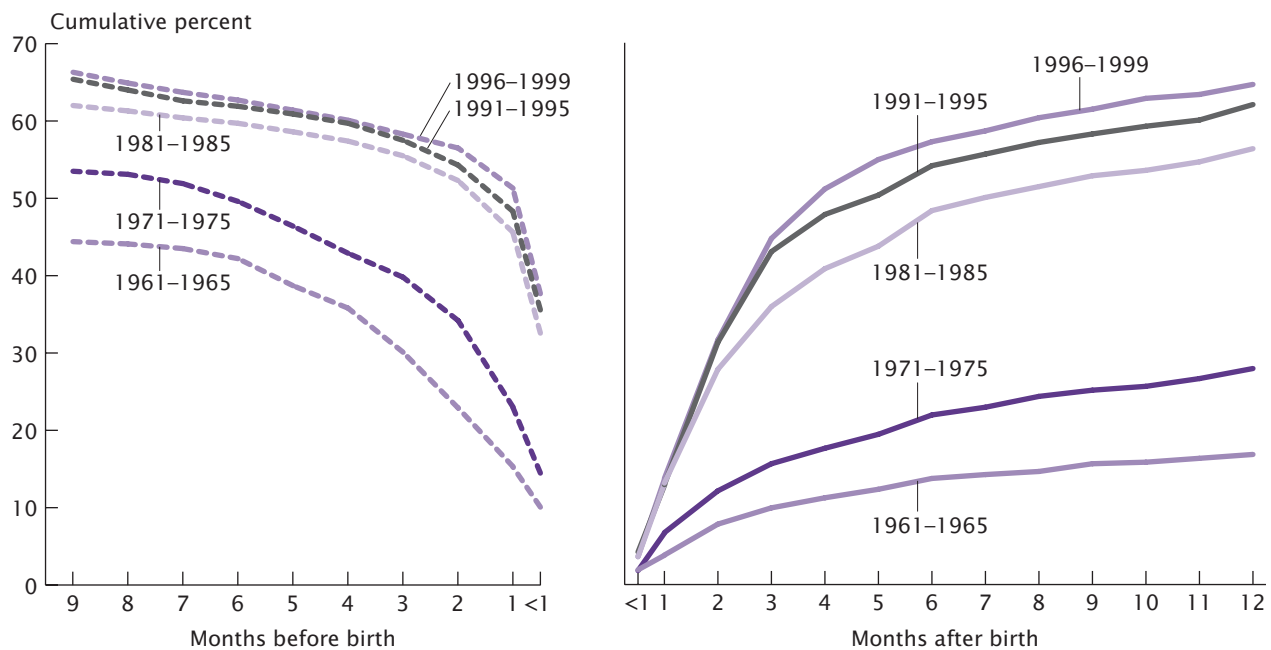
While women who had their first birth between 1996 and 1999 and returned to work within the first year after giving birth were more likely to return earlier rather than later in the child’s infancy, only 4 percent returned within the first month. Fifty-one percent were working by 4 months after giving

birth. In the next 8 months another 14 percent of new mothers returned to work.

Table 8 also shows the relationship between work experience during pregnancy and the rate at which women returned to work in the first year after giving birth. Women who had their first child between 1996 and 1999 were more likely to be working by 12 months after the birth if they had worked during their pregnancy than if they had not (82 percent and 31 percent, respectively). Sixty percent of women who worked during their pregnancy were working by the third month after birth, compared with 15 percent of women who had not worked during their pregnancy. Among women who worked during pregnancy and returned to work in the first year, 73 percent had returned by the third month. In contrast, this was the case for 48 percent of women who had not worked during pregnancy and worked in the first year after birth. These findings indicate that among those who worked after having

²⁸ Analyses of working after birth is restricted to those who gave birth by 1999 because some who gave birth in 2000 did not have one full year of employment data by the time of the interview.

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 1996–1999



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P23-165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Table B-9, P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), and Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

their child, those who worked during pregnancy were back at work sooner than those who had not worked during pregnancy.

To examine the relationships between occupational and other 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. 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. For comparison, characteristics of women who were not working within the first year after their child's birth are also profiled.

Older first-time mothers were more likely to return to work in the first

few months after giving birth than younger first-time mothers. A smaller percentage of women aged 21 or younger at the time of their first birth than mothers who were 22 to 29 years were working within 3 months of giving birth. In terms of education, women with college experience were more likely to work in the first 3 months after having their child than women with no more than a high school education (37 percent compared with 29 percent). Women who were not high school graduates were the least likely to be working within 3 months of giving birth (17 percent) and the most likely to not work in the year after their first child's birth (55 percent). A greater percentage of non-Hispanic White women than Hispanic women were working within 3 months after childbirth

(36 percent compared with 20 percent) and a smaller percentage did not work in the first year (30 percent and 56 percent, respectively).

The variations in the timing of returning to work diminish or disappear when only women who worked during pregnancy are considered. For example, among all mothers, 19 percent of mothers under the age of 18 were working within 3 months, compared with 33 percent of mothers 30 and older. Among women who worked during pregnancy, the percentages for these two age groups were not statistically different. Also 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 at least a bachelor's degree. Hispanic mothers

Table 8.

Women Working at Monthly Intervals After First Birth by Year of First Birth: 1961–1965 to 1996–1999

Characteristic	1961–1965	1966–1970	1971–1975	1976–1980	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–1999
Women with a first birth								
Number of women (thousands) . . .	6,306	6,956	6,920	7,192	8,306	8,568	8,542	6,918
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cumulative percent working after:								
Less than 1 month ¹	1.9	1.3	1.8	2.5	3.6	3.4	4.2	3.6
1 month	3.8	4.6	6.7	7.2	13.1	13.5	12.9	13.6
2 months	7.8	9.0	12.1	16.8	27.8	31.8	31.3	31.6
3 months	9.9	12.7	15.6	22.4	35.9	41.6	43.0	44.7
4 months	11.2	15.2	17.6	27.1	40.8	46.9	47.8	51.1
5 months	12.3	16.5	19.4	29.5	43.7	49.9	50.3	54.9
6 months	13.7	18.3	21.9	32.2	48.3	52.9	54.1	57.2
12 months	16.8	23.9	27.9	38.8	56.3	60.8	62.0	64.6
24 months	22.5	29.8	37.0	48.0	63.0	66.6	70.2	(X)
60 months	33.5	41.1	50.0	64.3	69.9	72.7	78.6	(X)
Women who worked during pregnancy								
Number of women (thousands) . . .	2,797	3,435	3,700	4,414	5,147	5,758	5,582	4,592
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cumulative percent working after:								
Less than 1 month ¹	4.1	2.4	2.6	3.7	5.4	4.5	5.3	4.7
3 months	16.5	19.6	24.1	32.6	52.9	57.3	58.5	59.7
6 months	21.4	26.7	32.1	45.4	66.9	70.6	72.3	74.8
12 months	25.8	32.7	38.8	52.6	74.4	78.6	79.3	81.5
Women who did not work during pregnancy								
Number of women (thousands) . . .	3,509	3,522	3,221	2,778	3,160	2,810	2,960	2,327
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cumulative percent working after:								
Less than 1 month	0.2	0.2	1.0	0.5	0.6	1.1	2.3	1.3
3 months	4.6	6.0	5.9	6.3	8.3	9.4	13.7	15.1
6 months	7.5	10.2	10.1	11.1	17.9	16.6	19.6	22.5
12 months	9.6	15.3	15.3	16.8	26.9	24.3	29.5	31.2

(X) Not applicable, interval not completed by date of data collection.

Note: 1996–1999 estimates are used for the most recent birth cohort to allow for at least 1 year of post-birth employment data.

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P23-165 (*Work and Family Patterns of American Women*), Table B-5, P70-79 (*Maternity Leave and Employment Patterns: 1961–1995*), and Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

who worked during pregnancy were less likely than their non-Hispanic White counterparts to return to work in the first 3 months after birth (35 percent and 44 percent, respectively). The percentage-point difference between these two groups is smaller than that between all Hispanic women with a first birth and all non-Hispanic White women with a first birth (20 and 36 percent, respectively).

For women who worked during pregnancy, when they left work was related to when they returned to work. Greater proportions of women who worked late into their

pregnancy returned to work sooner after having their child than those who left work earlier in their pregnancy. For example, 50 percent of women who stopped working less than 1 month prior to their child's birth were back at work within 3 months of their birth. In comparison, 20 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 be working in the first year after that birth; 61 percent compared with around 85 percent of women who used one of the other leave arrangements. In contrast with women who used paid leave, women who quit their jobs around the time of their first child's birth were less likely to be working in the first 3 months after giving birth (20 percent compared to 47 percent). Those who quit were more likely than women who used paid leave to first start working between 6 and 11 months after giving birth

Table 9.
Women Working at Stated Time Intervals After First Birth by Selected Characteristics: 1996–1999

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 ¹	3 to 5 months	6 to 11 months	Did not work during first year ²		Less than 3 months ¹	3 to 5 months	6 to 11 months	Did not work during first year ²
Number (thousands)	6,918	2,183	1,617	582	2,536	4,592	1,944	1,362	383	903
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION										
Total	100.0	31.6	23.4	8.4	36.7	100.0	42.3	29.7	8.3	19.7
Employment status during pregnancy										
Not employed	2,327	10.3	11.0	8.6	70.2	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
Full-time	3,866	43.5	31.2	6.8	18.6	3,866	43.5	31.2	6.8	18.6
Part-time	725	36.3	21.7	16.7	25.4	725	36.3	21.7	16.7	25.4
Age at first birth										
Less than 18 years	649	19.4	14.6	12.5	53.5	204	34.8	28.9	(B)	25.0
18 and 19 years	923	24.2	17.6	12.0	46.3	438	40.0	26.0	15.1	18.9
20 and 21 years	978	28.6	19.8	10.7	40.8	560	42.7	25.9	11.3	20.2
22 to 24 years	983	39.5	21.1	7.9	31.5	720	48.5	23.6	9.0	18.9
25 to 29 years	1,744	35.6	26.4	5.6	32.5	1,325	44.8	31.2	4.8	19.2
30 years and over	1,639	33.3	30.4	6.7	29.6	1,345	38.4	34.2	7.5	19.9
Race and Hispanic origin										
White	5,535	32.8	23.8	8.2	35.2	3,860	42.6	29.8	7.9	19.6
Non-Hispanic	4,457	35.9	25.7	8.1	30.3	3,342	43.8	29.8	7.7	18.7
Black	923	29.8	19.4	10.1	40.7	494	43.1	27.7	11.5	17.6
Asian and Pacific Islander	391	19.7	25.8	(B)	47.6	206	37.4	33.5	(B)	21.4
Hispanic (any race)	1,185	19.8	15.8	8.8	55.6	554	34.5	29.8	9.6	26.2
Timing of first birth³										
Before first marriage	2,795	29.1	19.5	11.3	40.1	1,524	43.3	26.7	11.5	18.5
Within first marriage	3,696	31.9	25.7	6.3	36.0	2,708	40.7	31.2	6.5	21.6
After first marriage	428	44.4	28.0	(B)	19.6	358	50.6	30.7	(B)	(B)
Educational attainment										
Less than high school	1,043	16.8	15.6	12.4	55.2	352	34.4	29.0	14.8	21.9
High school graduate	1,930	28.5	20.8	9.5	41.2	1,147	41.0	27.7	11.3	20.0
Some college	2,186	39.3	24.6	7.5	28.6	1,627	47.6	28.7	6.4	17.3
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,761	34.1	29.2	6.0	30.7	1,467	39.4	32.4	6.6	21.6
Month stopped working before birth										
Less than 1 month ¹	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	2,612	49.8	30.0	6.9	13.4
1 month	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	940	41.5	28.7	7.1	22.7
2 months	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	356	30.3	33.4	14.6	21.6
3 to 5 months	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	342	22.5	33.0	12.0	32.5
6 or more months	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	345	20.3	22.3	13.0	44.3
Type of leave arrangement used⁴										
Quit job	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	1,177	20.1	23.4	17.7	38.9
Paid leave	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	1,946	47.2	35.1	4.7	12.9
Unpaid leave	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	2,049	44.0	31.8	7.6	16.6
Disability leave	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	294	38.1	39.5	(B)	16.0
Let go from job	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	108	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Other leave	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	406	43.1	33.5	(B)	17.2

(X) Not applicable. (B) Base less than 200,000, or numerator too small for comparison.

Note: 1996–1999 estimates are used for the most recent birth cohort to allow for at least 1 year of post-birth employment data.

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

² Includes women who were working after 1 year and those who never returned to work.

³ 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.

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

Table 10.

Job Characteristics of Women Who Worked During Pregnancy Preceding First Birth and Returned to Work Within 12 Months After Birth: 1991–1995 to 1996–1999

Characteristic	1991–1995	1996–1999
Women who returned to work (thousands)¹	4,205	3,626
Returned to pre-birth employer		
Number of women (thousands)	3,271	2,771
Percent (among women returning to work)	77.8	76.4
Percent among women returning to pre-birth employer		
Number of hours worked after first birth	100.0	100.0
More than before first birth	2.0	2.3
Same as before first birth	82.4	77.8
Fewer than before first birth	15.6	19.8
Pay level after first birth	100.0	100.0
Higher than before first birth	5.4	7.5
Same as before first birth	91.4	89.4
Lower than before first birth	3.1	3.1
Skill level after first birth	100.0	100.0
Higher than before first birth	4.4	3.6
Same as before first birth	93.5	93.7
Lower than before first birth	2.1	2.7
Hours, pay, and skill level all the same as before	75.1	70.6
Different employer after first birth		
Number of women (thousands)	944.0	858.0
Percent (among women returning to work)	22.2	23.6
Percent among women returning to different employer		
Number of hours worked after first birth	100.0	100.0
More than before first birth	14.1	21.2
Same as before first birth	57.5	46.4
Fewer than before first birth	28.4	32.5
Pay level after first birth	100.0	100.0
Higher than before first birth	36.1	33.6
Same as before first birth	35.7	42.1
Lower than before first birth	28.2	24.3
Skill level after first birth	100.0	100.0
Higher than before first birth	34.4	28.0
Same as before first birth	48.8	51.8
Lower than before first birth	16.7	20.2
Hours, pay, and skill level all the same as before	22.1	21.4

Note: 1996–1999 estimates are used for the most recent birth cohort to allow for at least 1 year of post-birth employment data.

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

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2.

(39 percent and 13 percent, respectively). Many women who quit their job would need time to find new employment if they wished to go back to work.

Some women may be motivated to maintain ties to the labor force because of career goals or because the jobs they are committed to 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.²⁹ Previous research has shown that in the 1960s and 1970s, those who were most economically in need of and dependent

²⁹ 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.

on their own earnings (teenagers, Black women, and women with pre-marital first births) returned to work the most rapidly.³⁰

Occupational Characteristics After Birth

Since the early 1980s, 74 percent or more of women who worked during their pregnancy returned to work by 12 months after their first child's

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, O'Connell, 1990, pp. 23–25.

birth (Table 8). For the 1996–1999 cohort, 76 percent of these women 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, a decline from 82 percent in 1991–1995. There was a corresponding increase in women working fewer hours after having their first child, from 16 percent in 1991–1995 to 20 percent in 1996–1999. For both first-birth cohorts, 97 percent of women returning to their pre-birth employer earned the same or higher pay and around the same proportion 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 their work characteristics. For the 1996–1999 first-birth cohort, 21 percent of women who changed employers, compared with 71 percent of women who had the same employer, maintained consistency in hours, pay, and skill level before and after the birth of their child. Around half of new mothers in 1996–1999 who changed employers worked the same number of hours after the child's birth, a decrease since the previous cohort.

For women who had their first child between 1996 and 1999, those who switched employers were more likely to have a change in salary. Forty-two percent of women who changed employers, compared with 89 percent of women who returned to the same employer, returned at the same pay level. Some women may have switched employers with compensation in mind, as 34 percent of those who switched received a higher pay, compared with 8 percent for women who stayed with the same employer.

In the 1996–1999 first-birth cohort, 94 percent of women returning to their pre-birth employer and 52 percent of women with a new employer worked at a job requiring the same level of skill as before the birth of their first child. Among women who switched employers, more took jobs at an advanced skill level than a diminished one (28 percent and 20 percent, respectively).

CONCLUSIONS

Since the 1960s, women have experienced gains in education beyond the high school years and have continued to delay childbearing to older ages. These factors have contributed to increases in the work experience of women both before and during the pregnancy preceding the birth of their first child. Women are more likely to work during their pregnancy than they were 30 to 40 years ago and are continuing to work later into their pregnancy. More than half of women who worked during their pregnancy in 1996–2000 did so into the last month of their pregnancy. In addition, more women are returning to work within a year of giving birth (65 percent in 1996–1999 compared with 39 percent in 1976–1980). One in four women quit their jobs before or shortly after the birth of their child in 1996–2000. Paid leave benefits were received by 42 percent of pregnant workers in 1996–2000, a similar proportion received unpaid leave, and 7 percent took disability leave.

Data in this report also show that 78 percent of mothers who returned to work within 12 months after 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. 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, and 2001 Panels of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. The SIPP is a longitudinal survey conducted at 4-month intervals. The data in this report were collected from 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 housing units in sample in Wave 1 was 50,500 (2001 Panel), 49,200 (1996 Panel), 17,800 (1985 Panel), and 26,000 (1984 Panel). The number of eligible units and number interviewed were 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 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. 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 to minimize these errors. The Survey of Income and Program Participation 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, 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> or contact Reid Rottach of the Census Bureau's Demographic Statistical Methods Division at <reid.a.rottach@census.gov>.

Additional information on the SIPP can be found at the following Web sites:

www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/s&a96_040501.pdf

www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/ (main SIPP Web site)

www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/workpapr/wp230.pdf (SIPP Quality Profile) and

www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/usrguide/sipp2001.pdf (SIPP User's Guide)

MORE INFORMATION

The report is available on the Internet <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

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of users of its data and reports. If you have any suggestions or comments, please write to:

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