

Women's Studies

Women in the Labor Force

Developments and Issues



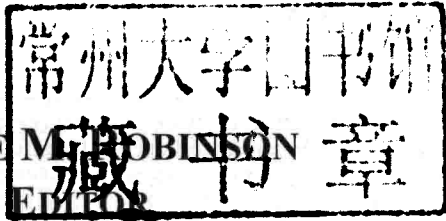
Sophie M. Robinson
Editor

NOVA

WOMEN'S STUDIES

WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE: DEVELOPMENTS AND ISSUES

SOPHIE M. ROBINSON
EDITOR



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**WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE:
DEVELOPMENTS AND ISSUES**

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PREFACE

Twenty-five years ago, America was recovering from the double-dip recession of the 1980s and women's roles in the labor force was beginning a multi-decade-long period of expansion. Today, as our nation's economy continues down the road to recovery from the Great Recession, women are poised to be the engine of future economic growth. Women comprise half of all U.S. workers and well over half of all American women are in the labor force. This book provides a comprehensive overview of women's economic progress over the last twenty-five years and highlights the additional challenges for the future. The role of women in the American economy is of indisputable importance and the future of the American economy depends on women's work, both inside and outside the home.

Chapter 1- On August 26, 2010, Americans celebrated the 90th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment, which granted women the right to vote and led to their increased participation in our political system. In 1984, Geraldine Ferraro shattered the political glass ceiling by becoming the first woman nominated to a national ticket and ushered in a new era of political leadership for women. Over the last quarter century, women have become a powerful political force, both as voters and as elected leaders. Did that political benchmark have implications for women's economic well-being? Data compiled by the Joint Economic Committee suggest that the answer is yes.

Chapter 2- The Great Recession has taken a huge toll on working families. The vast majority of jobs lost were lost by men, but a substantial number of jobs were lost by women during this recession. From December 2007 to April 2010, women lost 46 jobs for every 100 jobs lost by men.¹ By comparison, during the 2001 recession, women lost 17 jobs for every 100 lost by men and

women lost less than 2 jobs for every 100 jobs lost by men during the 1990s recession. Indeed, in recent months, women lost jobs while men gained jobs.² From October 2009 to March 2010, women lost 22,000 jobs while men gained 260,000.³ Women's increased vulnerability to the business cycle has important repercussions for families' economic This chapter provides an updated look at the employment situation of working mothers⁴ with children under 18 years old, and examines the impact of the recession on their participation in the labor market using unpublished data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.⁵

Chapter 3- Working women have received pink slips in growing numbers over the course of the current recession, which began in December 2007. For the first 3 months of the recession, when job losses were relatively light, women actually gained rather than lost jobs. This uptick in women's employment is similar to what has happened in previous recessions. However, in August 2008, this recession began to look quite different from past downturns. Women's job losses picked up pace to become a significant fraction of the total monthly job losses.

Chapter 4- The 20th century saw a dramatic increase in the number of women in the labor force. This increase in labor force participation represents a striking change in the allocation of women's time between work and home activities. The flexibility afforded by self-employment is often regarded as a way to better balance work and home activities. However, just as little is known about the nonmarket activities of women, little is known about the differences in time allocations between self-employed women and women employed in other organizations.

Chapter 5- A large body of literature has examined the effect of parental employment--primarily maternal employment--on the amount of time spent with children and in childcare activities, and it is well documented that employed parents spend less time with their children than nonemployed parents. But not all time is equal. Research on circadian rhythms suggests that children's ability to benefit from parents' enriching childcare activities, such as reading to and playing with their children, varies by time of day. Thus, we would expect parents to engage in these enriching activities at times of day when it is the most valuable to their children. If employment causes parents to shift their childcare activities away from times when it is the most valuable, then differences in the amount of time that employed and nonemployed parents spend in childcare underestimate the effect of employment on parents' quality-adjusted time with their children.

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Chapter 1

**WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY 2010: 25
YEARS OF PROGRESS
BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN**

Carolyn B. Maloney and Charles E. Schumer

INTRODUCTION

On August 26, 2010, Americans celebrated the 90th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th amendment, which granted women the right to vote and led to their increased participation in our political system. In 1984, Geraldine Ferraro shattered the political glass ceiling by becoming the first woman nominated to a national ticket and ushered in a new era of political leadership for women. Over the last quarter century, women have become a powerful political force, both as voters and as elected leaders. Did that political benchmark have implications for women's economic well-being? Data compiled by the Joint Economic Committee suggest that the answer is yes.

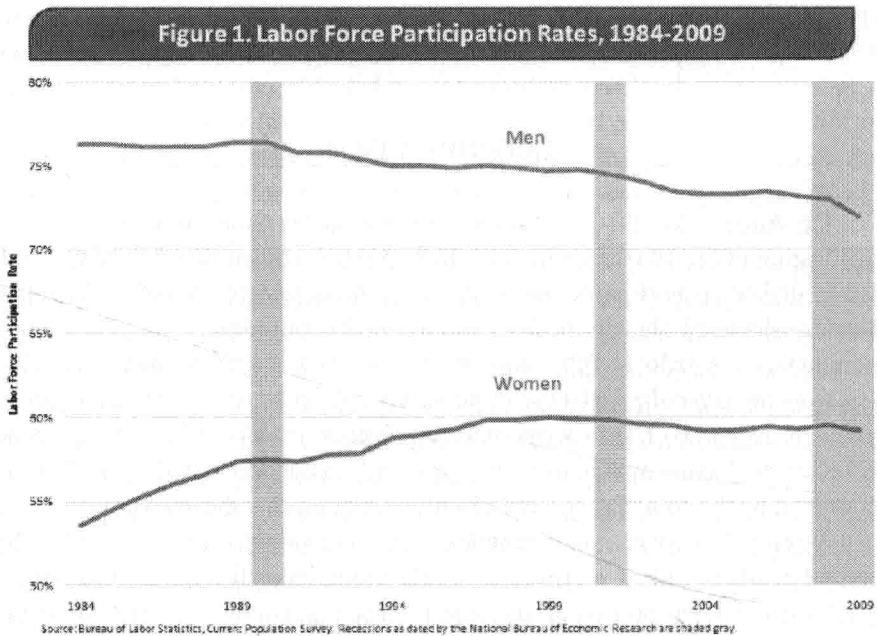
Twenty-five years ago, America was recovering from the double-dip recession of the 1980s, and women's role in the labor force was beginning a multi-decade-long period of expansion. Today, as our nation's economy continues down the road to recovery from the Great Recession, women are poised to be the engine of future economic growth. Women comprise half of all U.S. workers, and well over half of all American women are in the labor force. Women's educational attainment outstrips that of men, and women's

share of union membership is growing rapidly. Families are increasingly dependent on working wives' incomes in order to make ends meet.

Despite a quarter-century of progress, however, challenges remain. While the pay gap has narrowed over the last 25 years, the average full-time working woman earns only 80 cents for every dollar earned by the average full-time working man. Certain industries remain heavily gender-segregated. In addition, millions of women are struggling to juggle work outside the home with family care-giving responsibilities.

This chapter, which includes annual data from 1984 through 2009, provides a comprehensive overview of women's economic progress over the last twenty-five years and highlights the additional work left to be done. The role of women in the American economy is of indisputable importance. The future of the American economy depends on women's work, both inside and outside the home.

Women are a critically important part of the labor force.



- In the last 25 years, women's labor force participation has grown sharply. In 1984, 53.6 percent of women were in the labor market. By 2009, that number had grown to 59.2 percent. All of the growth in

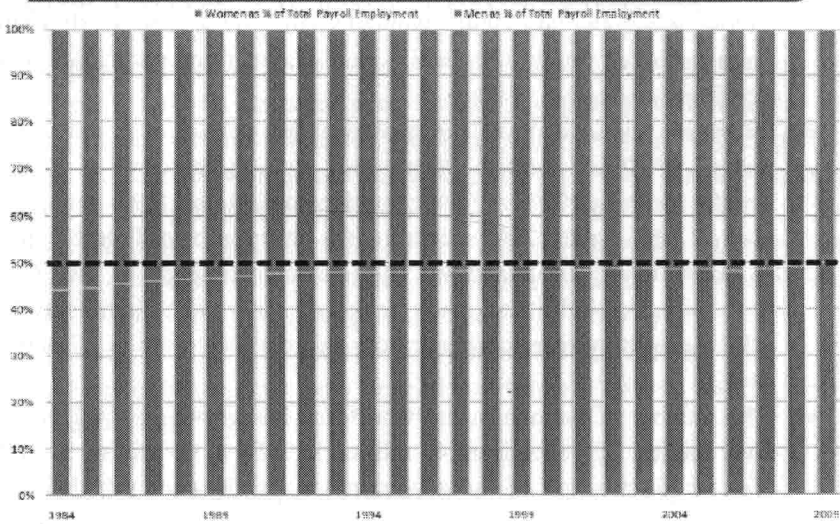
women's labor force participation occurred prior to 2000. In contrast, over that same period, men's labor force participation rates were falling. Since the late 1990s, women's labor force participation rates have remained roughly flat while men's labor force participation has continued to decline. (Figure 1)

- Women's share of payroll employment has grown over the last 25 years. In 1984, women comprised just 44 percent of payroll employment. In 2009, women comprised nearly half (49.8 percent) of payroll employment. The recent gender parity in payroll employment is most likely explained by the disparate impact of the Great Recession on industries, such as construction and manufacturing, which employ greater concentrations of men than women. (Figures 2 and 3)
- The number of women in the workforce has grown by 44.2 percent over the last 25 years, from 46 million in 1984 to 66 million in 2009. Yet the distribution of those working women's work schedules has remained remarkably constant: about one-quarter work part-time, while the remaining three-quarters work full-time. (Figure 4)

Figure 2. Non-Farm Payroll Employment, 1984-2009

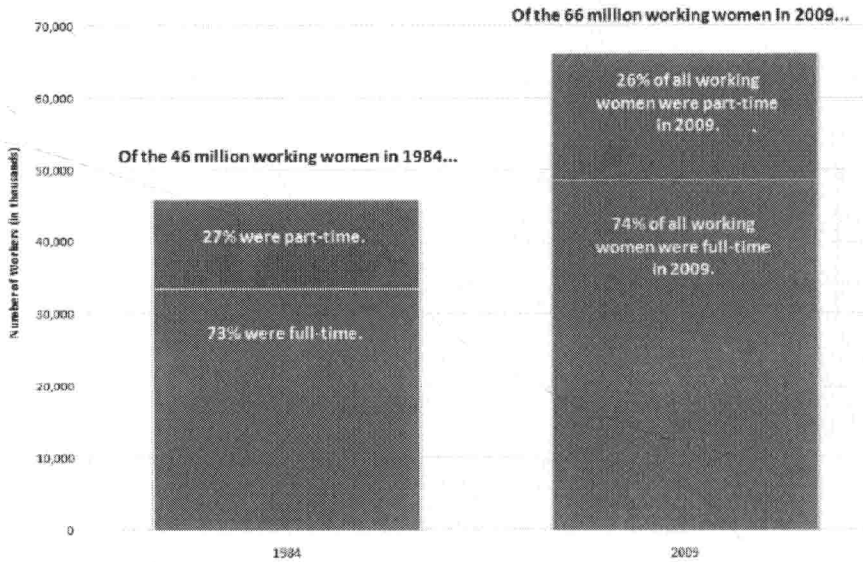


Figure 3. Share of Payroll Employment by Gender, 1984-2009



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics. Payroll employment refers to non-farm payrolls.

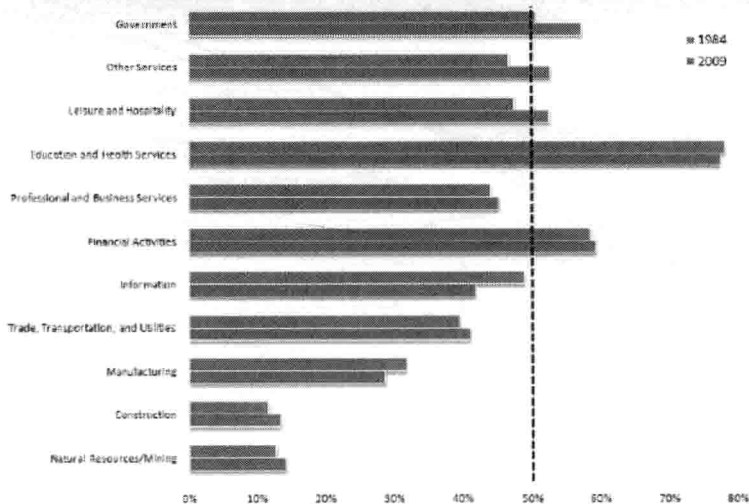
Figure 4. Women at Work, 1984 and 2009



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

- Progress toward gender parity by industry has been varied over the last 25 years. In 1984, women made up 50 percent or more of the workforce in three industries: government, education and health services, and financial activities. By 2009, women made up 50 percent or more of the workforce in 5 industries: government, leisure and hospitality, education and health services, financial activities, and other services. In some industries, little progress has been made. For instance, women comprised just over 13 percent of those employed in construction in 2009, compared to 12 percent in 1984. And in some industries, women have lost ground. While women comprised 49 percent of those employed in the information industry in 1984, they made up just 42 percent of the industry in 2009. Similarly, in 1984 women comprised 32 percent of the manufacturing industry. In 2009, women were just 29 percent of the manufacturing workforce. (Figure 5)
- Women's educational attainment has edged out men's in the last twenty-five years. In 2009, 87 percent of women had at least four years of high school or more education, as compared to 86 percent of men. In contrast, in 1984, 74 percent of men and 73 percent of women had at least four years of high school or more education. (Figure 6)

Figure 5. Women's Share of Total Employment, by Industry, 1984 and 2009

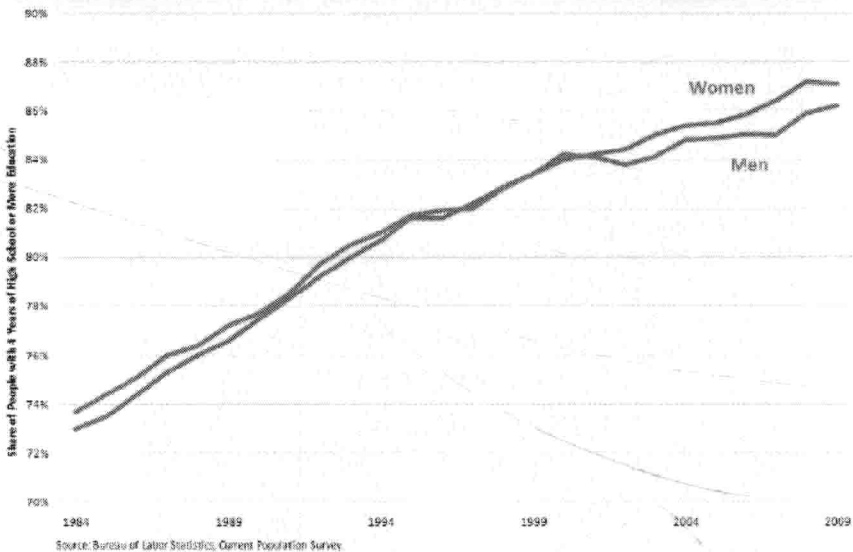


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics.

- While total union membership has declined over the last twenty-five years, women's union membership has been on the rise. In 1984, women made up just over one-third (34 percent) of all union members. In 2008, women comprised 45 percent of all union members. The growing importance of women in the labor movement is likely due to the expansion of female-concentrated sectors such as health care, education, and the service sector combined with the contraction of male-concentrated sectors such as manufacturing. (Figure 7)
- While the pay gap between men's and women's wages has decreased sharply over the last 25 years, it remains remarkably high. In 1984, the average full-time weekly wage for women was just 68 percent of men's full-time weekly wage. In 2009, the average full-time weekly wage for women was 80 percent of men's full-time weekly wage. (Figure 8)

Families depend on women's earnings.

Figure 6. Educational Attainment, 1984-2009



- Wives' earnings play an increasingly important role in families' incomes. In 1983, wives' incomes comprised just 29 percent of total family income. By 2008, wives' incomes comprised 36 percent of total family income. (Figure 9)

Figure 7. Union Affiliation, 1983-2008

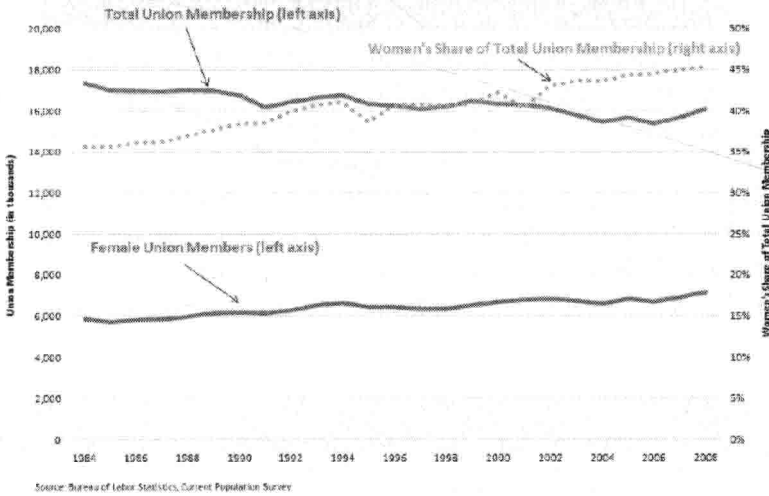
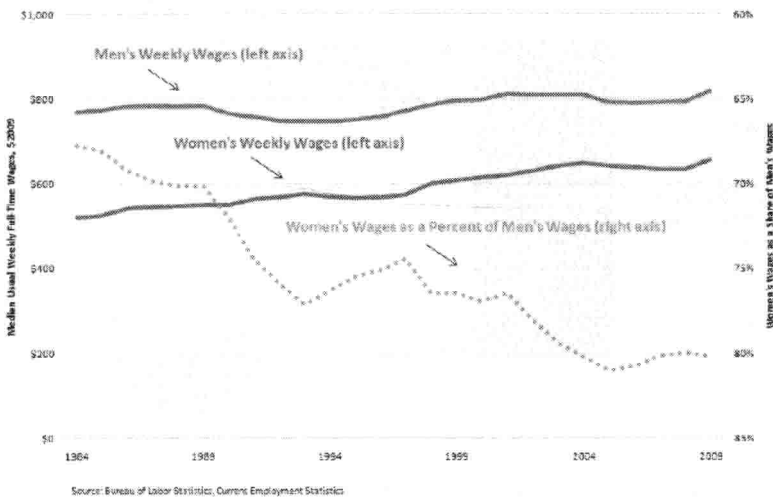


Figure 8. The Earnings Gap, 1984-2009



- Families need a working wife in order to see their incomes grow. Between 1983 and 2008, married couples with a working wife enjoyed average annual income growth of 1.12 percent per year. In contrast, married couples with a stay-at-home wife saw their average annual incomes decrease by 0.22 percent per year. (Figure 10)

Figure 9. Wives' Earnings as a Share of Total Family Income, 1983-2008

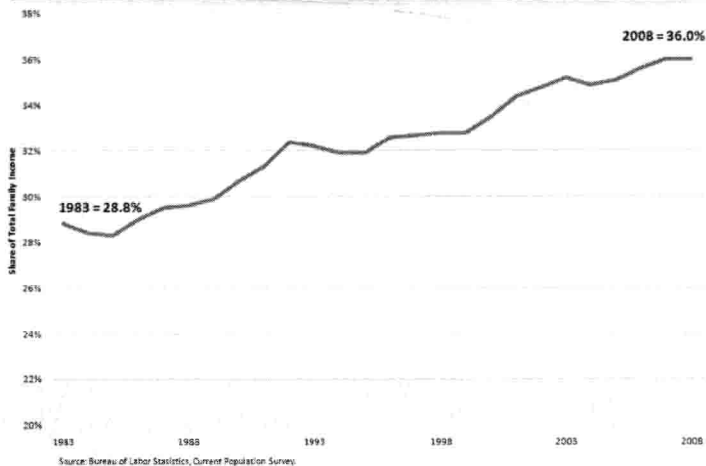
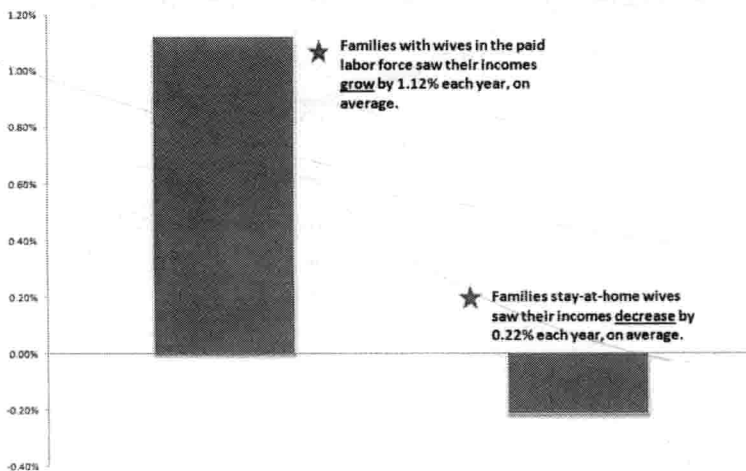


Figure 10. Average Annual Income Growth for Married Families, 1983-2008



Working women have significant care-giving responsibilities at home.

- Female heads of household for families with children ages 18 and under comprise an increasing share of all families with children. In 1983, 20 percent of all families with children (or 6.6 million families) were female-headed households. By 2009, 25 percent of all families with children (9.8 million families) were female-headed households. The increase in female-headed households was sharpest during the second half of the 1980s and in the early 2000s. (Figures 11 and 12)
- Mothers' labor force participation rose over the last 25 years. While mothers with young children are less likely to work than are mothers of older children, both groups' labor force participation rates have increased over time. In 1984, 52 percent of mothers with children under the age of 6 and 68 percent of mothers with children ages 6-17 were in the labor force. In 2008, 64 percent of mothers with children under the age of 6 and 78 percent of mothers with children ages 6-17 were in the labor force. (Figure 13)

Figure 11. Families with Dependent Children Age 18 or Less, 1983-2008