

*The embattled gates to equal rights
Indeed opened up for modern women,
But I sometimes think to myself:
That is not what I meant by freedom;
It is only 'social progress.'*

Helen Deutsch
Confrontations with Myself
1973

*It is worst than folly
Not to recognize the truth,
For in it lies
The tinder for tomorrow.*

Pearl S. Buck
1942

Section VI: Economic Trends

Since 1950 per capita income (adjusted for inflation) has more than doubled. There are two sides of this economic boom for America's women. One group of women is benefiting from the prosperity. But the economy is bypassing the second group completely.

The Good News: A fascinating aspect of the good economic times is what is happening among the mothers of children under 6 years of age; they are leaving their full or part time employment to stay home with their pre-school children. In the past when the numbers of working women declined it was in periods of economic recession – early 1970s and early 1980s. The currently dip in the trend of women with young children working either full or part time is the first such downturn during economic prosperity. Apparently, these women are choosing to stay home with their children even though there are jobs available if they want to continue working. Economic prosperity is allowing them to do what they want to do – stay home and raise their children themselves.

The Bad News: During this time of unprecedented economic prosperity, however, there is a group missing out on the positive benefits. The disintegration of America's social structure is preventing large segments of the population from enjoying the booming economy because family breakdown and poverty are siamese twins. Take a moment to look at the poverty that is associated with single mother families. Among the 50 million unmarried American women, 1 in 3 female-headed households with children live in poverty as compared with the 1 in 10 without children who live in poverty – and that number is double the number in poverty among married couples. Among those who live alone, 1 in 5 live in poverty.

The Economic and Social Costs: While family breakdown is primarily a tragedy for those closest to the breakup, it is also a tragedy whose tentacles stretch out to affect the entire nation. The combined annual federal and state spending to support single parent families is around \$150 BILLION. Even so, that large sum of money is but the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the total cost of family disintegration and the resulting social chaos. Because the breakdown of the family is a root cause of crime and violence, physical and drug abuse, poverty and welfare dependence, as well as emotional problems such as depression and suicide, experts estimate that these social ramifications cost the American government (and, ultimately, taxpayers) tens of billions of dollars annually.

Table 10. –Employment Status of Women, by Marital Status and Presence and Age of Children: 1960 – 1999

	Total			With any children								
	Single	Married	Other	Total			Children 6 to 17 only			Children under 6		
				Single	Married	Other	Single	Married	Other	Single	Married	Other
In Labor Force (millions)												
1960 ¹	5.4	12.3	4.9	—	6.6	1.5	—	4.1	1.0	—	2.5	0.4
1965 ¹	5.9	14.7	5.3	—	8.0	1.7	—	4.8	1.2	—	3.1	0.6
1970	7.0	18.4	5.9	—	10.2	1.9	—	6.3	1.3	—	3.9	0.6
1975	8.6	21.4	7.0	0.3	11.5	2.8	0.1	7.0	1.8	0.2	4.5	1.0
1980	11.2	24.9	8.8	0.6	13.7	3.6	0.2	8.4	2.6	0.3	5.2	1.0
1985	12.9	27.7	10.3	1.1	14.9	4.0	0.4	8.5	2.9	0.7	6.4	1.1
1990	14.0	31.0	11.2	1.5	16.5	4.2	0.6	9.3	3.0	0.9	7.2	1.2
1995	15.0	33.6	12.0	2.1	18.0	4.6	0.8	10.2	3.3	1.3	7.8	1.3
1999 ²	17.5	34.3	13.0	3.1	17.9	4.6	1.2	10.6	3.3	1.8	7.2	1.3
Labor Force Participation Rate ³												
1960 ¹	44.1	30.5	40.0	—	27.6	56.0	—	39.0	65.9	—	18.6	40.5
1965 ¹	40.5	34.7	38.9	—	32.2	58.1	—	42.7	64.5	—	23.3	48.1
1970	53.0	40.8	39.1	—	39.7	60.7	—	49.2	66.9	—	30.3	52.2
1975	57.0	44.4	40.8	42.2	44.9	62.1	61.1	52.2	67.9	37.0	36.7	54.0
1980	61.5	50.1	44.0	52.0	54.1	69.4	67.6	61.7	74.6	44.1	45.1	60.3
1985	65.2	54.2	45.6	51.6	60.8	71.9	64.1	67.8	77.8	46.5	53.4	60.3
1990	66.4	58.2	46.8	55.2	66.3	74.2	69.7	73.6	79.7	48.7	58.9	63.6
1995	65.5	61.1	47.3	57.5	70.2	75.3	67.0	76.2	79.5	53.0	63.5	66.3
1999 ²	68.1	61.6	49.4	73.4	70.1	80.4	82.6	77.1	81.7	68.1	61.8	77.0
Employment (millions)												
1960 ¹	5.1	11.6	4.6	—	6.2	1.3	—	3.9	0.9	—	2.3	0.4
1965 ¹	5.5	14.0	5.0	—	7.5	1.6	—	4.7	1.1	—	2.8	0.5
1970	6.5	17.5	5.6	—	9.6	1.8	—	6.0	1.2	—	3.6	0.6
1975	7.5	19.5	6.4	0.2	10.4	2.4	0.1	6.5	1.6	0.2	3.9	0.8
1980	10.1	23.6	8.2	0.4	12.8	3.3	0.2	8.1	2.4	0.2	4.8	0.9
1985	11.6	26.1	9.4	0.9	13.9	3.5	0.3	8.1	2.6	0.5	5.9	0.9
1990	12.9	29.9	10.5	1.2	15.8	3.8	0.5	8.9	2.7	0.7	6.9	1.1
1995	13.7	32.3	11.3	1.8	17.2	4.2	0.7	9.8	3.1	1.1	7.3	1.2
1999 ²	16.2	33.4	12.3	2.7	17.3	4.3	1.1	10.4	3.1	1.6	7.0	1.1
Unemployment rate ⁴												
1960 ¹	6.0	5.4	6.2	—	6.0	8.4	—	4.9	6.8	—	7.8	12.5
1965 ¹	7.1	5.1	5.4	—	6.2	8.5	—	3.8	6.6	—	9.8	12.4
1970	7.1	4.8	4.8	—	6.0	7.2	—	4.8	5.9	—	7.9	9.8
1975	12.6	8.5	8.9	23.9	9.8	12.5	20.2	7.1	9.9	26.1	13.9	17.3
1980	10.3	5.3	6.4	23.2	5.9	9.2	15.6	4.4	7.9	29.2	8.3	12.8
1985	10.2	5.7	8.5	23.8	6.6	12.1	15.4	5.5	10.6	28.5	8.0	16.1
1990	8.2	3.5	5.7	18.4	4.2	8.4	14.5	3.8	7.7	20.8	4.8	10.2
1995	8.7	3.9	5.8	16.6	4.3	8.1	11.8	3.6	7.1	19.5	5.3	10.8
1999 ²	7.4	2.8	5.0	11.7	2.9	6.2	8.9	2.4	4.5	13.6	3.7	10.7

Notes: All data are from the March Current Population Survey. Married refers only to those whose husband is present. Other refers to widowed, divorced, or separated.

¹ For 1960 and 1965, civilian noninstitutional persons 14 and over, thereafter 16 years old and over.

² Data not strictly comparable with data for years prior to 1997.

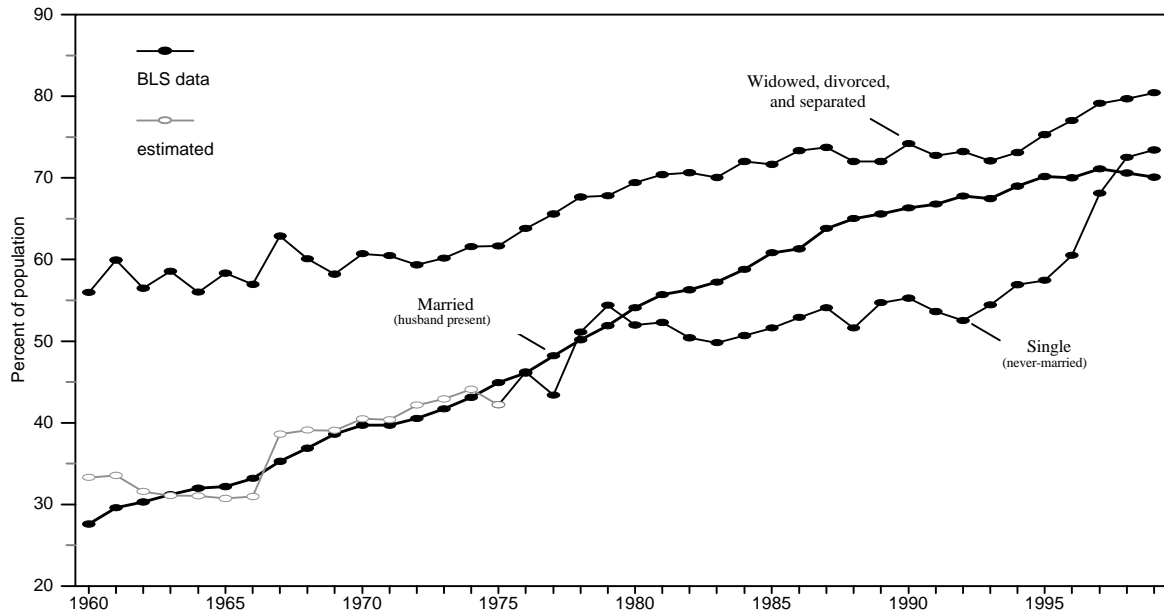
³ Percent of women in each specified group.

⁴ Percent of civilian labor force in each specified group.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Bulletin 2307*; and unpublished data.

- Labor force participation rates have increased steadily in the post-Baby-Boom era. Of particular note are the sharp increases by unmarried women with children under 6 in the period from 1990 to 1999 as states implemented measures to curtail their welfare programs. The rate for single mothers rose nearly 20 percentage points and for other unmarried women (widows, divorced, and separated) the increase was over 13 percentage points.

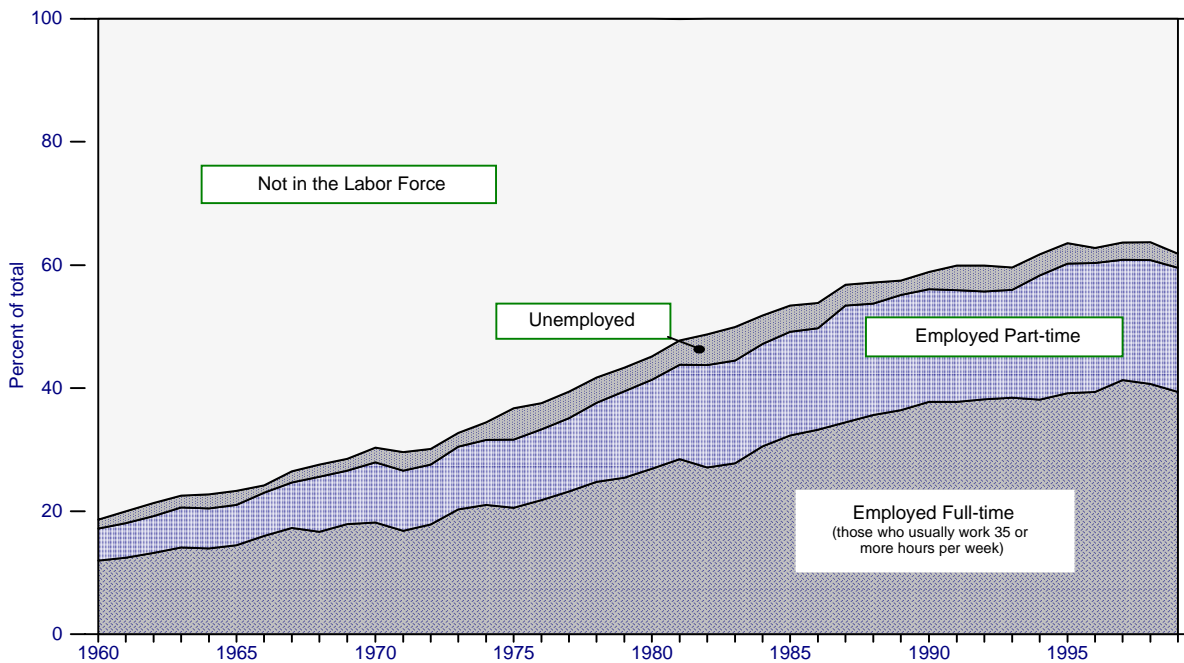
Figure 10.1. –Labor Force Participation of Women with Children under 18



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics Derived from the Current Population Survey, 1948-87*, Bulletin 2307, August 1988 and unpublished CPS data.

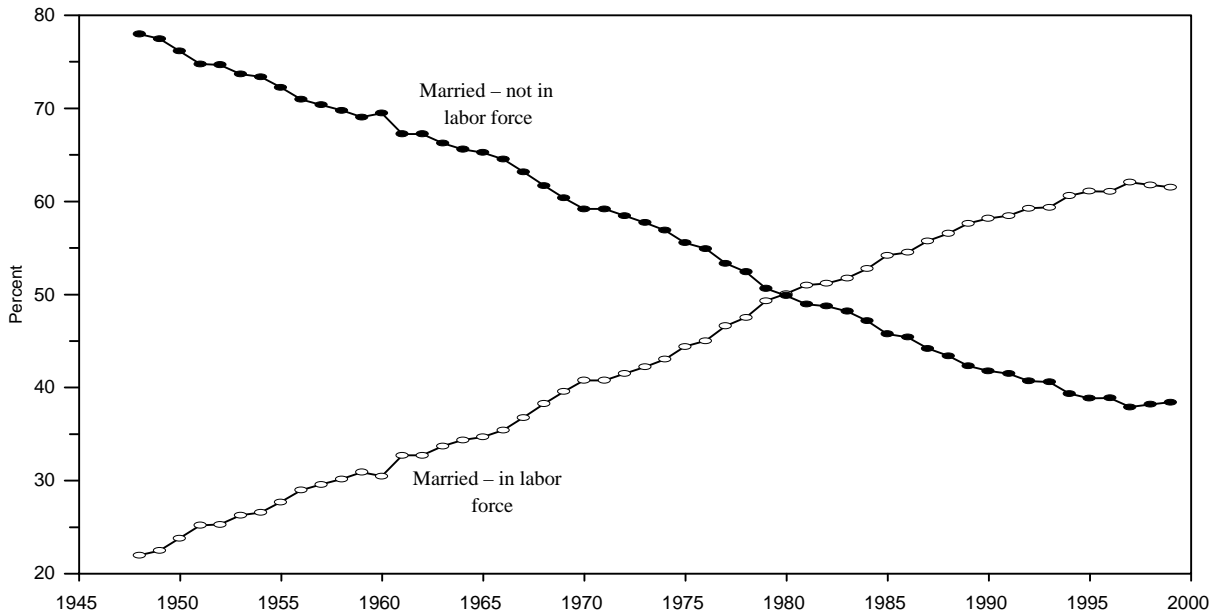
- After seeing little change from the late 1970s to the early 1990s, the labor force participation rate for single mothers turned up sharply and moved higher than the married rate which shows some signs of a possible reversal of trend after moving upward steadily during the entire post-World War II period.

Figure 10.2. –Employment Status of Married Women with Children Under 6 Years of Age



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics Derived from the Current Population Survey, 1948-87*, Bulletin 2307, August 1988 and unpublished CPS data.

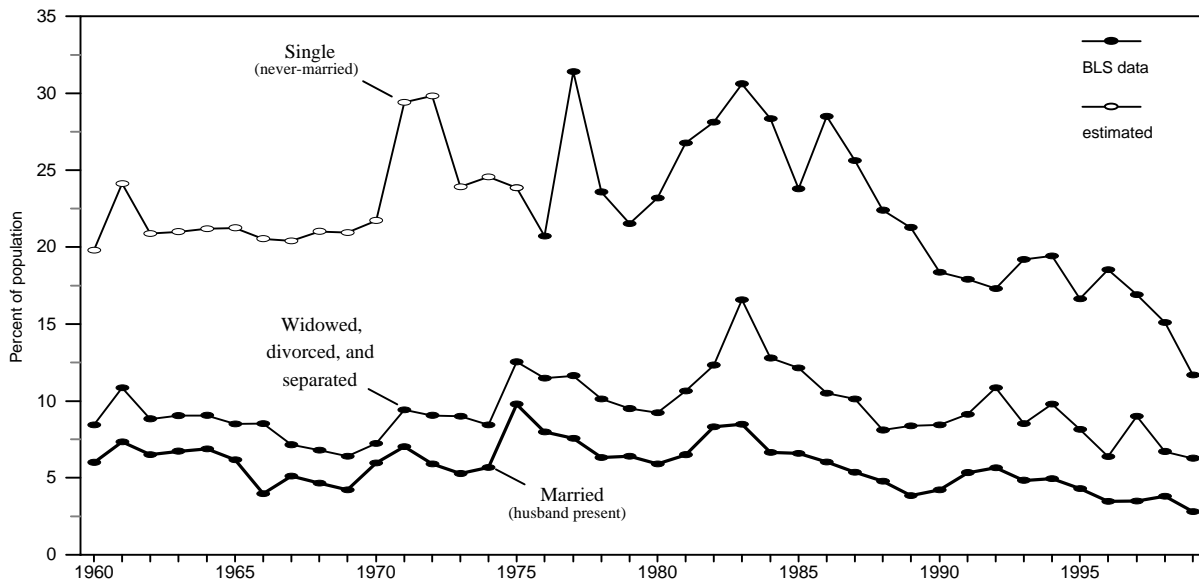
Figure 10.3. –Married Women by Labor Force Participation, 1948 – 1999



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics Derived from the Current Population Survey, 1948-87*, Bulletin 2307, August 1988 and unpublished CPS data.

- Both the number and percentage of married women (husband present) in the labor force have followed an upward trend in the post-World War II period. In 1948, 22 percent of married women were in the labor force. In 1980 the percentage of married women in the labor force equaled those who were not. In both 1998 and 1999, despite a booming economy that pushed unemployment rates of women to record lows, the percentage of married women in the labor force went down, the first time it has ever declined two years in a row.

Figure 10.4. –Unemployment Rates of Women with Children, by Marital Status



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics Derived from the Current Population Survey, 1948-87*, Bulletin 2307, August 1988 and unpublished CPS data.

Table 11. –Median Income, by Work and Marital Status and Sex: 1947 – 1998

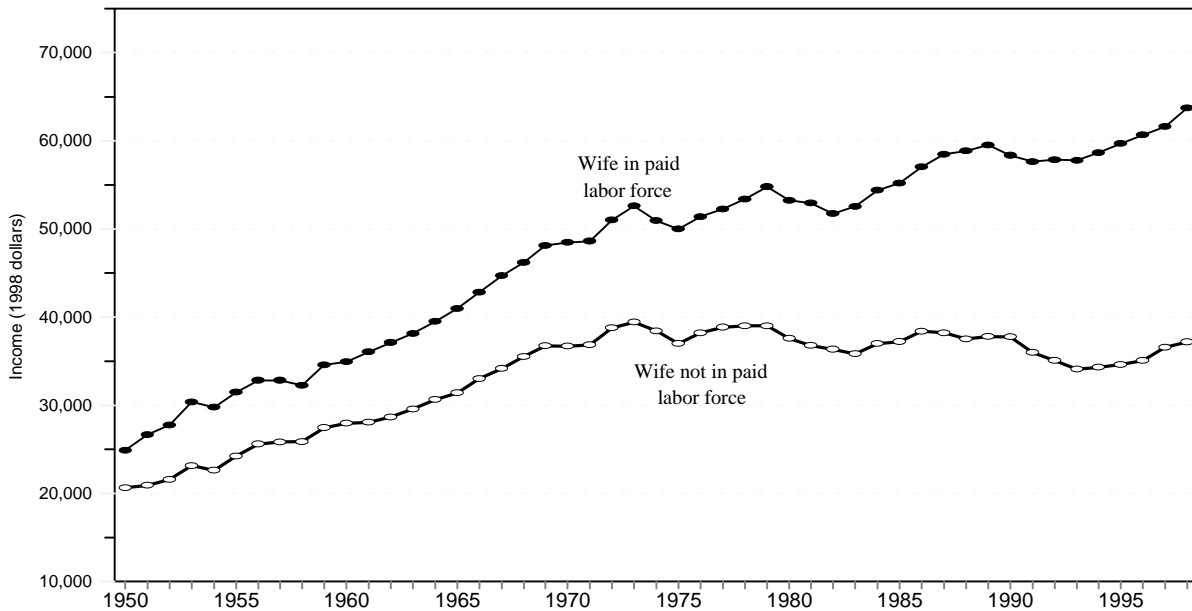
Year	Married Couple Families						Unrelated Individuals		Year-round, Full-time Workers	
	Total	Wife Not in Paid Labor Force		Householder spouse not present		Male	Female	Males per Females	Ratio of Median Earnings	
		Wife in Paid Labor Force	Wife Not in Paid Labor Force	Male	Female					
In thousands of 1998 dollars										
1947	\$20.9	—	—	\$19.8	\$14.6	\$10.4	\$6.8	—	—	
1950	21.4	24.9	20.6	19.4	12.0	10.3	6.1	—	—	
1955	25.8	31.5	24.2	23.5	13.8	11.2	7.1	—	—	
1960	29.7	34.9	27.9	24.6	15.0	13.6	7.8	3.11	60.5	
1965	34.6	41.0	31.4	29.3	16.8	14.8	9.0	2.86	59.8	
1970	41.5	48.5	36.7	35.6	20.1	18.5	10.1	2.33	59.2	
1975	43.1	50.0	37.0	37.7	19.9	19.5	11.9	2.10	59.7	
1980 ¹	45.8	53.2	37.6	34.7	20.6	22.0	13.5	1.82	60.5	
1985	47.1	55.2	37.2	34.3	20.7	23.1	15.3	1.64	65.0	
1990	49.8	58.3	37.7	36.2	21.1	22.9	15.9	1.55	71.1	
1995	50.3	59.7	34.6	32.5	21.1	22.2	15.9	1.48	73.8	
1996	51.6	60.7	35.1	32.8	20.7	22.8	15.8	1.48	74.3	
1997	52.4	61.6	36.6	33.5	21.4	23.2	16.4	1.46	73.8	
1998	54.2	63.8	37.2	35.7	22.2	25.1	17.0	1.47	74.1	

¹ People 15 years old and over beginning with March 1980, and people 14 years old and over as of March of the following year for previous years.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, “Money Income in the United States: 1999,” P60-209, September 2000.

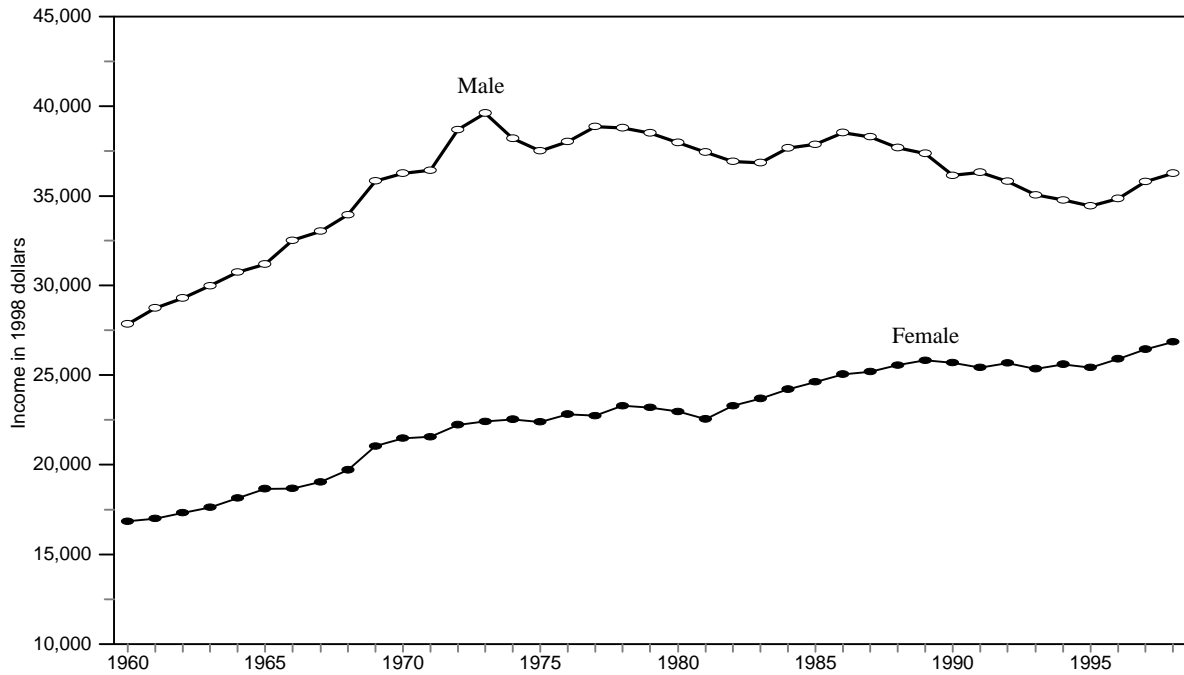
- Until the mid-1970s married couples with the wife in the paid labor force had a median income that ranged from 25 to 30 percent higher than those where the wife was not in the paid labor force. Since then the gap has widened steadily and now stands at better than 70 percent.

Figure 11.1. –Median Income of Married Couples, by Wife’s Work Status: 1947 – 1998



Source: See Table 11.

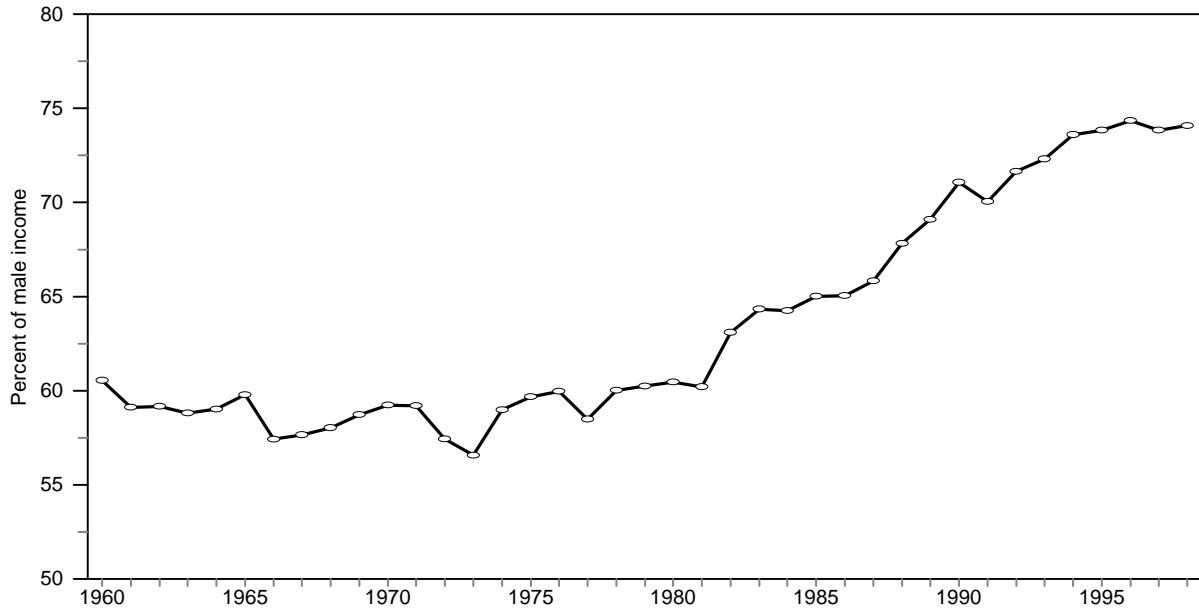
Figure 11.2. –Median Money Earnings of Year-Round, Full-Time Workers, by Sex



Source: See Table 11.

- The gap between median earnings of women and men who work year-round, full-time has narrowed substantially since 1973 when male earnings peaked and began trending downward. The upward trend of women’s earnings was interrupted in the early 1980s by recession and again during the entire first half of the 1990s but resumed an upward trend in the late 1990s. The ratio now stands at 74 percent, up from a low of 57 percent in 1973.

Figure 11.3. –Ratio of Female to Male Median Earnings for Year-Round, Full-Time Workers



Source: See Table 11.

Table 12. –Poverty Rates by Age and Sex and Families with Children: 1960 – 1999

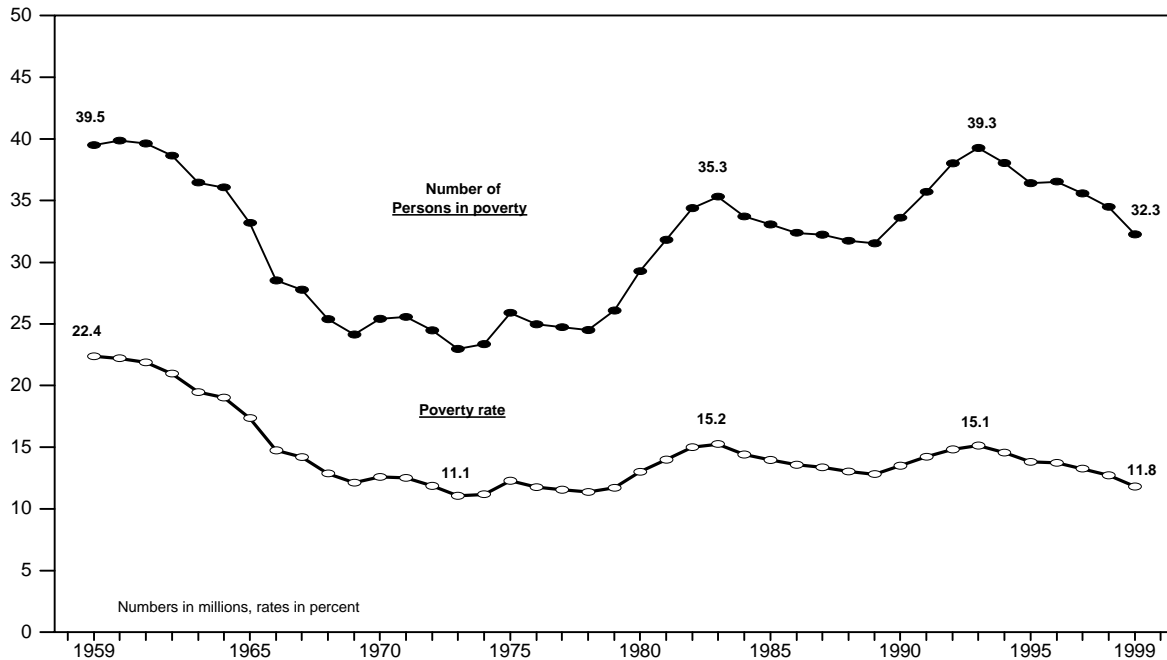
	All persons	Under 18	18-64	65 & over	All persons in families	Unrelated individuals	Married Couples with children	Female-headed household children	Male-headed household children	Female	Male
1960	22.2	26.9	–	–	20.7	45.2	–	56.3	–	–	–
1965	17.3	21.0	17.0	35.2	15.8	39.8	–	52.2	–	–	–
1970	12.6	15.1	9.0	24.6	10.9	32.9	–	43.8	–	14.0	11.1
1975	12.3	17.1	9.2	15.3	10.9	25.1	7.2	44.0	11.7	13.8	10.7
1980	13.0	18.3	10.1	15.7	11.5	22.9	7.7	42.9	18.0	14.7	11.2
1985	14.0	20.7	11.3	12.6	12.6	21.5	8.9	45.4	17.1	15.6	12.3
1990	13.5	20.6	10.7	12.2	12.0	20.7	7.8	44.5	18.8	15.2	11.7
1992	14.8	22.3	11.9	12.9	13.3	21.9	8.6	46.2	22.5	16.6	12.9
1994	14.5	21.8	11.9	11.7	13.1	21.5	8.3	44.0	22.6	16.3	12.8
1995	13.8	20.8	11.4	10.5	12.3	20.9	7.5	41.5	19.7	15.4	12.2
1996	13.7	20.5	11.4	10.8	12.2	20.8	7.5	41.9	20.0	15.4	12.0
1997	13.3	19.9	10.9	10.5	11.6	20.8	7.1	41.0	18.7	14.9	11.6
1998	12.7	18.9	10.5	10.5	11.2	19.9	6.9	38.7	16.6	14.3	11.1
1999	11.8	16.9	10.0	9.7	10.2	19.1	6.3	35.7	16.2	13.2	10.3

Note: Children refers to all related children.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, “Poverty in the United States, 1999,” P60-210, September 2000.

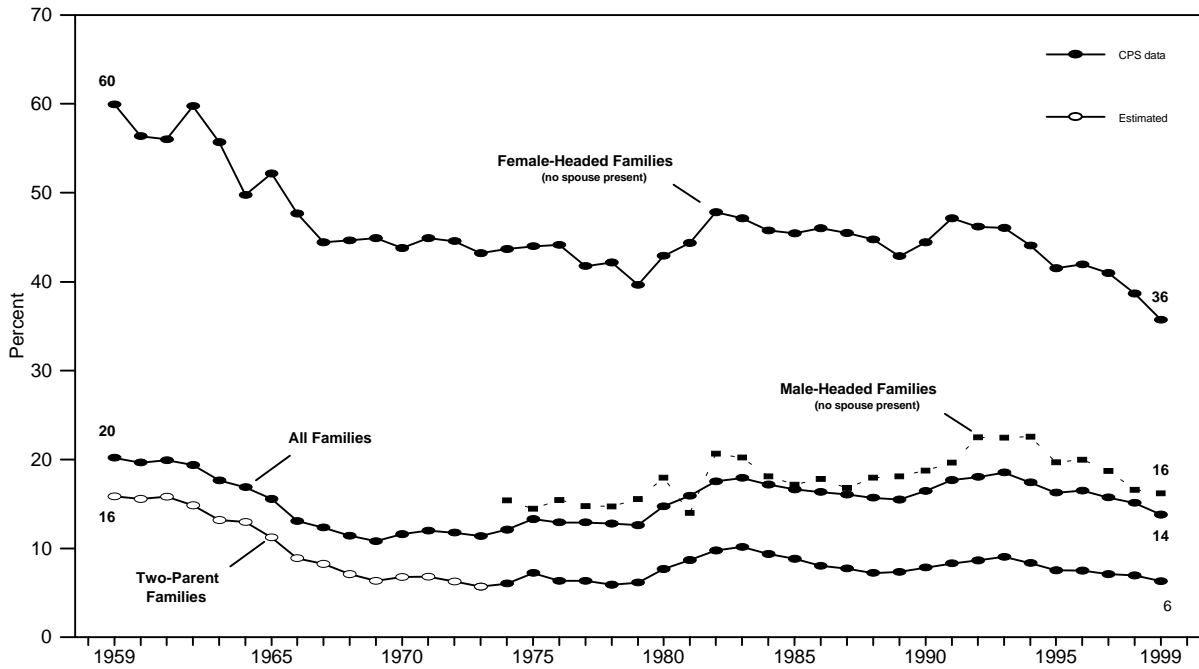
- The poverty rates for those 65 and over and for female-headed households with children reached record lows in 1999. From 1993 to 1999, the number of persons in poverty has declined by 7 million, an 18 percent decrease.

Figure 12.1. –Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate in the United States: 1959 – 1999



Source: See Table 12.

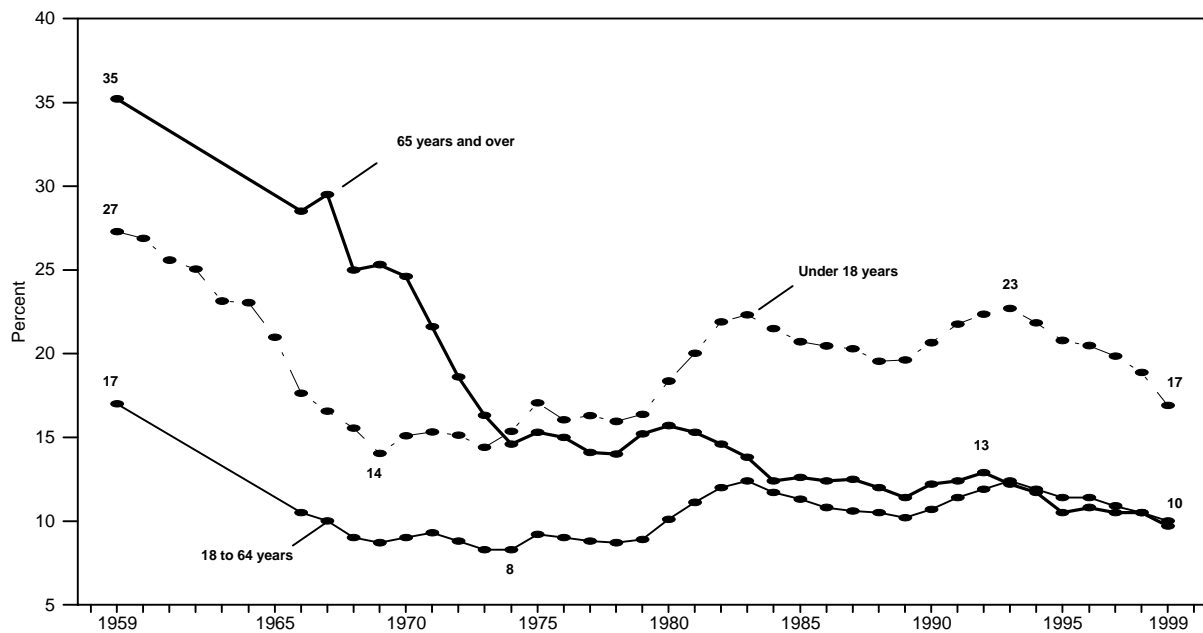
Figure 12.2. –Poverty Rates of Families with Related Children under 18



Source: See Table 12.

- The poverty rates for female-headed households with children have been 5 to 7 times those of married couples with children for the last 25 years.

Figure 12.3. –Poverty Rates in the United States by Age: 1959 – 1999



Source: See Table 12.