

MAY 2014

Mother's Day 2014: An Update on the Importance of Mothers for Family Economic Security

Mothers play an important role in the economic security of their families, a role that has grown over the past several decades. Nearly two-thirds of American families rely at least in part on a mother's income.¹ In married-couple families, 65 percent of mothers are employed, and on average, they contribute more than 40 percent of their family's income.² Working mothers often support a family on their own: more than one-quarter of mothers who work outside the home are single moms.³ Lower-income families are especially dependent on the money earned by mothers who work outside the home—in families in the lowest ten percent of the income distribution, mothers account for over half of family income.⁴ As we prepare to celebrate Mother's Day, this fact sheet highlights the critical role mothers play in the financial well-being of their families and underscores the need for policies that support and expand opportunities for women who are balancing motherhood with employment outside the home.

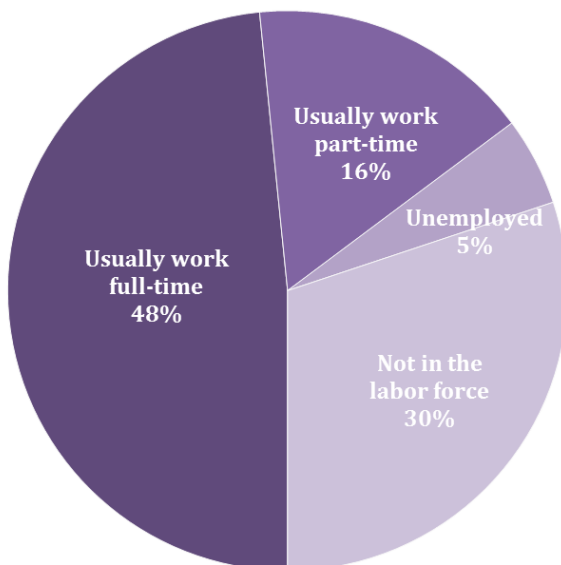
THE U.S. CONGRESS JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE DEMOCRATIC STAFF
Senator Amy Klobuchar, Vice Chair

Nearly two-thirds of families rely entirely or in part on a mother's income. Of the 36.4 million mothers with children under the age of 18, roughly half (48 percent) are employed full time, 16 percent are employed part time and five percent are unemployed (**Figure 1**).⁵ In all, more than 22.5 million families (66 percent of families) have a mother who is in the labor force,⁶ and 45 million children live with a mother who is in the labor force (**Table**).⁷

Many mothers are the only jobholder in their family. Most mothers who work outside the home live in dual-income families, where both spouses are employed outside the home.⁸ However, the steep job losses in male-dominated industries during the recession and the rising number of single-parent families mean that a significant number of mothers are the only jobholder in their family. There are 7.3 million mothers (35 percent of mothers employed outside the home) who are the sole earner in their family (**Figure 2**).⁹ Of those, 5.8 million (28 percent of mothers who work outside the home) are the heads of their households, and 1.5 million (7 percent of mothers employed outside the home) are married with a spouse who is either unemployed or out of the labor force. Nearly 17 million children live in a family where their mother is the only parent in the labor force.¹⁰ Furthermore, in more than one-third (37 percent) of married-couple families, the mother is the primary earner, out-earning her husband (**Table**).¹¹

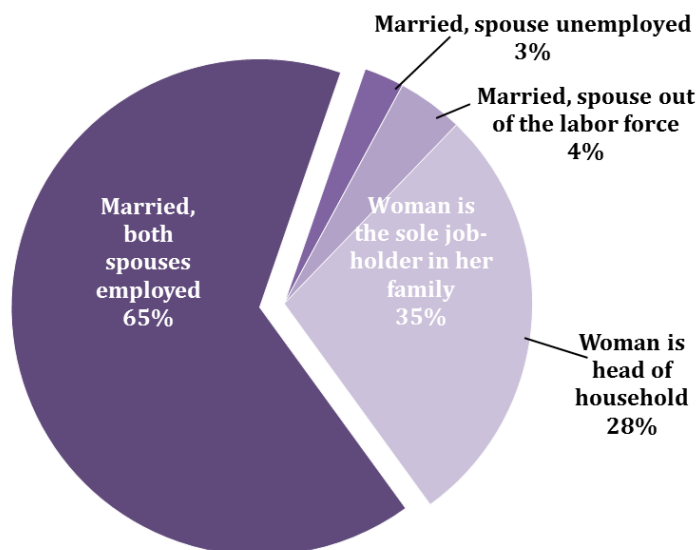
Families throughout the country depend on a mother's earnings. Overall, across the United States, mothers contribute a significant share of family income. On average, a mother in a two-parent family earns 44 percent of her family's income, though the rate varies among states. Mothers contribute the smallest share of family income in Utah and Wyoming (39 percent) and the highest share in Arkansas, Florida, Hawaii, Nevada, the District of Columbia and California (48 percent) (**Table**).¹² The percentage of mothers working outside the home who are their family's primary earner also varies across states. Nationally, 37 percent of mothers are the primary earner in their family, with the rate ranging from 29 percent in Wyoming to 44 percent in Hawaii and Nevada.¹³

Figure 1. Labor Force Status of Mothers with Children Under 18, 2013 Annual Averages



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

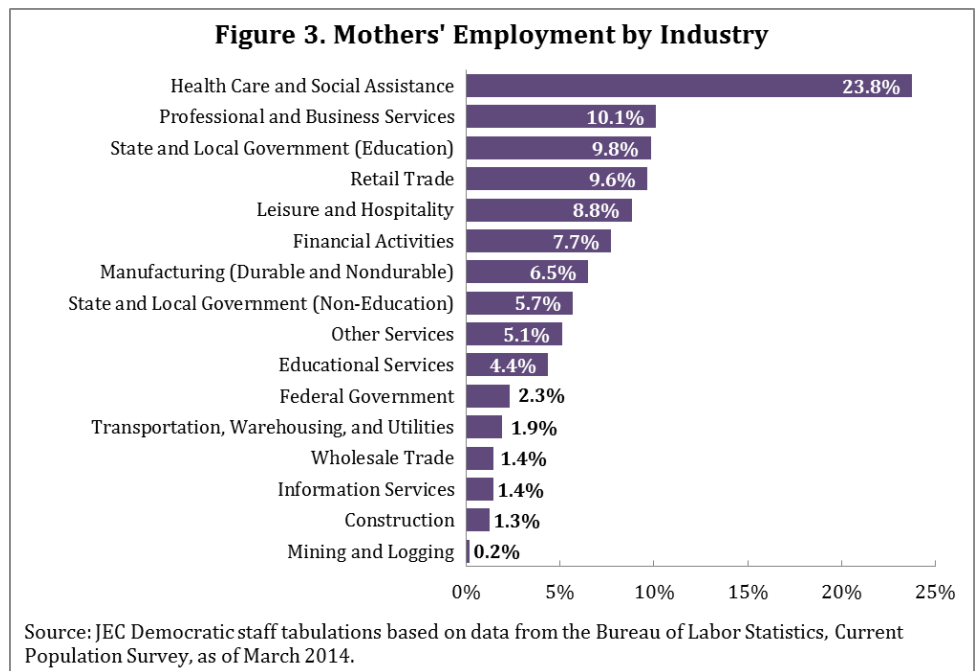
Figure 2. Mothers with Children Under 18 Employed Outside the Home, 2013 Annual Averages



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Mothers employed outside the home are concentrated in particular industries.

Nearly 24 percent of mothers employed outside the home work in health care and social assistance, and an additional 38 percent work in professional and business services, retail trade, state and local education, and leisure and hospitality (Figure 3).¹⁴ In those sectors, which account for nearly two-thirds of jobs held by women with children, women have gained more than one million jobs over the past year. Overall, women's job gains accounted for nearly 60 percent of all jobs added in those five sectors last year.¹⁵



Mothers face higher unemployment rates than fathers. The overall unemployment rate among mothers with children younger than 18 is 7.3 percent, compared with an unemployment rate of 4.9 percent among fathers.¹⁶ Mothers' unemployment rates are higher among minority groups: 13.0 percent of African American mothers and 9.8 percent of Hispanic mothers are unemployed. The unemployment rate is also higher for single mothers (10.2 percent).¹⁷ Among mothers with young children (under 6 years old), the unemployment rate is 8.9 percent.¹⁸

Congress can do more to support mothers and their families. Policymakers can improve the economic security of American families by taking steps to help women boost their wages and earning potential. Many mothers take time out of the workforce to care for their children or other family members. Encouraging employers to adopt flexible work schedules could have a significant impact on the financial well-being of women balancing work outside the home with caregiving responsibilities. Increasing the minimum wage, which has declined in value by one-third since reaching a peak in 1968,¹⁹ would also improve the economic security of children who live with a mother earning the minimum wage. More than half of workers (55 percent, or 15.5 million) who would benefit from raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour are women.²⁰ Additionally, policymakers should act to solidify social safety net programs that keep millions of Americans out of poverty and continue to support programs that help families move into the middle class.

For data sources, please see the expanded version of this report on Vice Chair Klobuchar's website: www.jec.senate.gov/public.

Children Dependent on Mothers' Earnings and Mothers' Share of Family Income

	Number of Children Under 18 Years Old Living with Their Parent(s)	Percent of Children with a Mother in the Labor Force	Percent of Children with Only a Mother in the Labor Force	Mothers' Share of Family Income in Married-Couple Families	Percent of Married-Couple Families in which the Mother is the Primary Earner
United States Total	70,152,775	64%	24%	44%	37%
Alabama	1,059,458	65%	28%	45%	38%
Alaska	177,876	62%	22%	44%	36%
Arizona	1,531,641	59%	24%	45%	39%
Arkansas	666,074	63%	25%	48%	43%
California	8,811,331	59%	22%	48%	41%
Colorado	1,176,281	63%	21%	42%	36%
Connecticut	764,160	70%	24%	43%	35%
Delaware	191,503	68%	28%	45%	37%
District of Columbia	101,051	72%	39%	48%	37%
Florida	3,795,358	66%	28%	48%	43%
Georgia	2,364,265	64%	28%	47%	41%
Hawaii	285,907	67%	21%	48%	44%
Idaho	410,264	61%	19%	42%	35%
Illinois	2,943,497	67%	24%	44%	35%
Indiana	1,511,563	66%	24%	43%	34%
Iowa	693,174	73%	21%	43%	34%
Kansas	689,263	66%	21%	43%	33%
Kentucky	942,987	64%	24%	44%	36%
Louisiana	1,046,269	67%	32%	42%	31%
Maine	251,996	66%	21%	43%	34%
Maryland	1,281,406	70%	25%	44%	35%
Massachusetts	1,352,489	71%	22%	42%	35%
Michigan	2,163,729	66%	24%	43%	35%
Minnesota	1,235,902	73%	19%	43%	33%
Mississippi	694,285	65%	33%	47%	37%
Missouri	1,325,990	67%	24%	44%	34%
Montana	205,930	66%	20%	45%	39%
Nebraska	442,956	71%	20%	44%	35%
Nevada	634,076	63%	26%	48%	44%
New Hampshire	263,652	68%	20%	41%	30%
New Jersey	1,960,687	67%	22%	43%	34%
New Mexico	488,544	62%	28%	45%	39%
New York	4,082,490	65%	25%	45%	39%
North Carolina	2,168,092	65%	26%	46%	40%
North Dakota	147,988	71%	18%	41%	31%
Ohio	2,520,666	67%	25%	43%	34%
Oklahoma	878,570	63%	23%	43%	36%
Oregon	819,094	62%	22%	43%	35%
Pennsylvania	2,613,007	66%	23%	42%	33%
Rhode Island	207,495	73%	28%	45%	38%
South Carolina	1,019,411	67%	30%	43%	35%
South Dakota	192,726	72%	22%	43%	35%
Tennessee	1,401,624	62%	25%	44%	37%
Texas	6,630,350	60%	24%	44%	35%
Utah	852,833	56%	14%	39%	30%
Vermont	117,991	72%	22%	43%	33%
Virginia	1,770,830	66%	22%	45%	36%
Washington	1,515,522	60%	20%	43%	36%
West Virginia	360,444	59%	23%	44%	38%
Wisconsin	1,260,474	70%	22%	43%	35%
Wyoming	129,604	63%	20%	39%	29%

Source: Democratic staff of the Joint Economic Committee calculations based on 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (Table B23008 for children with mothers who work outside the home) and 2011-2013 Current Population Survey data (for mothers' contributions to family income).

Sources:

¹ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Current Population Survey (CPS) Table 4: Number of families by presence and age of own children under 18 years old, type of family, employment status of parents, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, Annual Average 2013, provided by BLS. Of 32.4 million families with children younger than 18 years, 65.5 percent had a mother in the labor force in 2013.

² JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from BLS Table 4, and JEC Democratic staff tabulations based on data from the monthly CPS.

³ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from BLS Table 4.

⁴ JEC Democratic staff tabulations based on data from the 2013 CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement. In the typical two-earner family with children (with family income at the 50th percentile), wives' earnings make up 38.5 percent of family income. In two-parent families in the bottom 10 percent of the income distribution, mothers contribute 51.3 percent of income.

⁵ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from BLS Table 6: Employment status of persons by presence and age of own children, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and marital status, Annual Average 2013, provided by BLS.

⁶ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from BLS Table 4.

⁷ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on the U.S. Census Bureau 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates. Table B23008: Age of own children under 18 years in families and subfamilies by living arrangements by employment status of parents.

⁸ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from BLS Table 4.

⁹ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from BLS Table 4.

¹⁰ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on 2012 ACS Table B23008.

¹¹ JEC Democratic staff tabulations based on 2011-2013 monthly CPS data.

¹² JEC Democratic staff tabulations based on 2011-2013 monthly CPS data.

¹³ JEC Democratic staff tabulations based on 2011-2013 monthly CPS data.

¹⁴ JEC Democratic staff tabulations based on 2013 monthly CPS data.

¹⁵ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from BLS Current Employment Statistics. Changes calculated between March 2013 and March 2014 (the most recent data available on employment by gender for some of the industries).

¹⁶ BLS Table 6.

¹⁷ BLS (Accessed at <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/srgate>. Series code: LNU04000313), 2013 Annual Average).

¹⁸ BLS Table 6.

¹⁹ Council of Economic Advisers, *The Economic Case for Raising the Minimum Wage*, February 12, 2014, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/02/12/economic-case-raising-minimum-wage>.

²⁰ Ibid.