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Women's Work

The economic mobility of women across a generation

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The report benefited from the insights and expertise of external reviewers Angela Fertig, an investigator at Medica Research Institute, and Liana Christin Landivar, a statistician and researcher in the Industry and Occupation Statistics Branch of the U.S. Census Bureau. These experts have found the report's approach and methodology to be sound; neither they nor their organizations necessarily endorse its conclusions.

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Overview

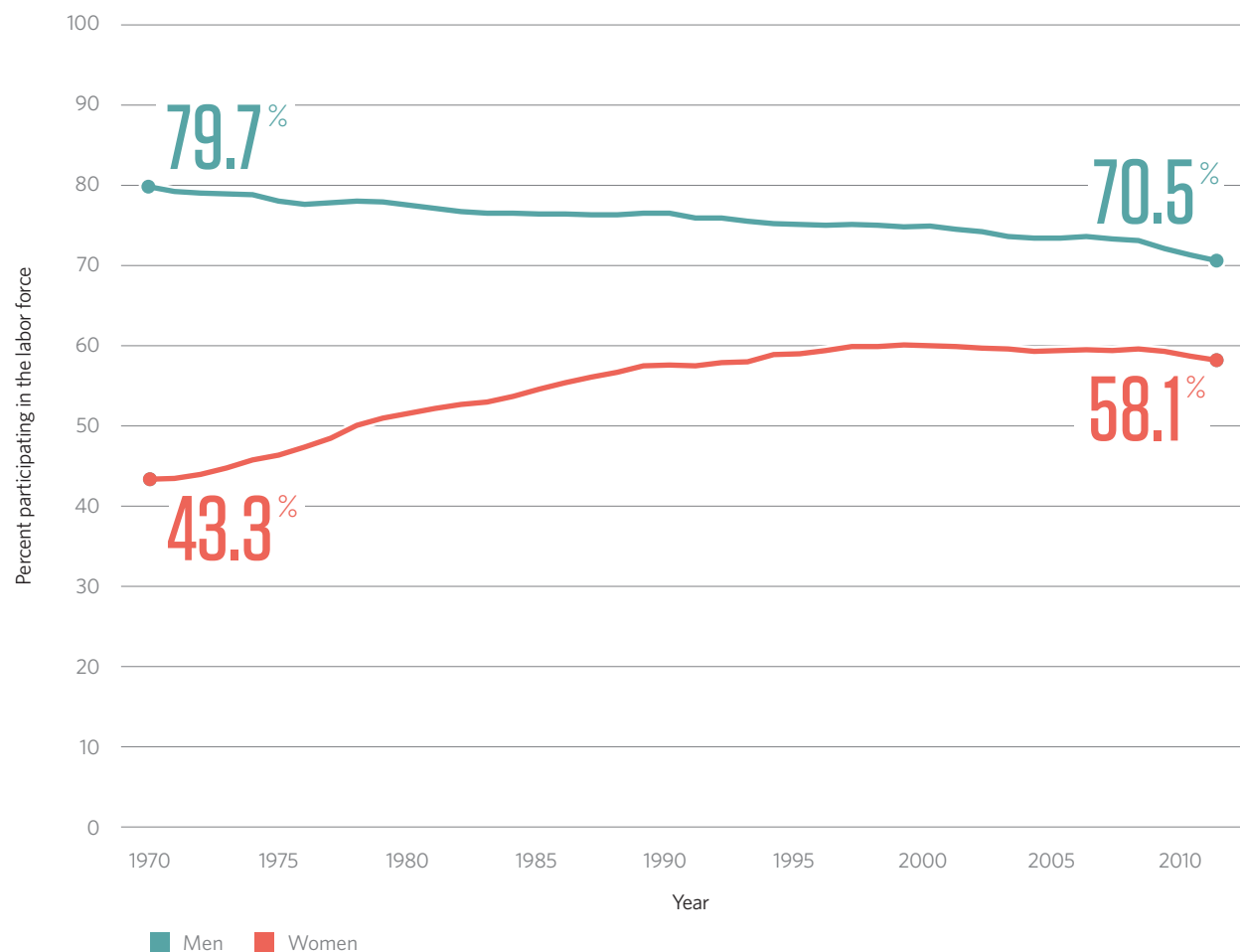
Men have long been the dominant participants in the paid labor force, but a significant number of women joined them during the past 40 years. In the early 1970s, 43 percent of all women were wage earners. Today, nearly 6 in 10 women are working for pay.¹ (See Figure 1.)

Much of this growth can be attributed to working mothers, who increased their numbers in the workforce by 50 percent over the past generation.² Previous research by The Pew Charitable Trusts shows that, as more women entered the labor force, movement up the economic ladder increasingly became a family enterprise.³

Figure 1

Women's Paid Work Increased During the Past 4 Decades

Percentage of men and women in the labor force, 1970-2011



Note: Women's and men's overall labor force participation is measured as a percentage of women and men in the civilian noninstitutional population age 16 and older. Men's labor force participation has declined over time in part because the population shown here includes men who have retired.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

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Measuring mobility

This report examines intergenerational economic mobility—the ability to move up and down the economic ladder over time and across generations—by comparing the household income, earnings, and wages of mothers and fathers with those of their daughters and sons in adulthood.

- “Income” is used here to represent the total money derived from taxable sources, including earnings, interest, dividends, and cash transfers for all members of a household.
- “Earnings” refers to annual compensation for work and includes wages and salary, bonuses, overtime, tips, and commissions.
- “Wages” means an individual’s hourly earnings.
- “Mothers” are women who had children and who were in their prime working years (around age 40) in the late 1960s and early 1970s.
- “Daughters” are the adult female children—around age 40 in the 2000s—of those mothers.
- Fathers and sons at similar ages to the mothers and daughters are used as points of comparison throughout the report.

This report measures Americans’ movement on the economic ladder relative to their parents in two ways. The first is absolute mobility, which examines whether adults have higher income or earnings than their parents did at similar ages. The second measure is relative mobility, which looks at where adults rank on the income or earnings ladder compared with their parents. For example, one measure of relative economic mobility shows the percent of Americans raised in the bottom fifth (or quintile) of the income distribution who remain at the bottom as adults.

Measuring men’s mobility over the past generation has been a relatively straightforward task. A majority of fathers and their sons entered and remained in the workforce, providing researchers with comparable data on income, wages, and earnings. But determining the mobility of women—and with it the importance of their contributions to family economic security—is more complicated.

For example, comparing daughters’ earnings with those of their mothers could overestimate the daughters’ economic gains, because many more daughters work in the labor force than their mothers did a generation ago. Comparing daughters’ earnings with their fathers’ could underestimate the daughters’ gains because of gender differences, particularly in wages, work schedules, and employment sectors as well as other factors.

This report creates more accurate earnings comparisons between parent-child pairs by controlling for these demographic and labor market differences. First, hourly wage rates are compared across generations in order to understand changes in women’s pay, independent from the dramatic increases in women’s hours worked. Then daughters’ earnings are adjusted to match the work hours of their mothers to explore what daughters’ economic

standing would be if women's labor force participation had remained constant over a generation. Similarly aged fathers and sons are also included as points of comparison.

Key findings include:

- Median hourly wages increased for both women and men compared with the previous generation. At every rung of the economic ladder, women's median wages rose by 50 percent or more, but daughters continue to earn lower hourly wages than fathers did on the same rung.
- Daughters working full time contribute more than half of family incomes, strengthening financial security. The extent of this contribution, however, varies based on family structure. Daughters who are in a couple (either married or cohabiting) supply 45 percent. Single daughters supply 81 percent, with the remainder of their income coming from nonwage sources.
- Daughters' higher hours worked are associated with increased rates of upward family earnings mobility, especially in the bottom and middle of the earnings distribution.
- Despite women's significant generational gains, men's wages remain more important to increasing couples' family income, a key factor for upward mobility.

This study demonstrates that women's increased labor force participation and earnings have enabled some families to maintain their places on the economic ladder or, particularly among families at the bottom, to move up. But, as was the case for many women in the previous generation, men's earnings continue to matter most for families' income and, therefore, economic mobility.⁴

Women's shifting labor force participation, wages, and earnings

More women are in the labor force now than a generation ago, and they are working longer hours and earning more money than mothers did

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, slightly more than half of all mothers were in the labor force. These women worked, on average, 24 hours per week for a little more than \$10 per hour. Today, 85 percent of all daughters are employed, and they work 10 additional hours per week and earn \$9 more per hour. Not surprisingly, these increases in hours worked and wages translate into higher annual earnings: Women today earn nearly three times what mothers did.⁵ (See Figure 2.)

Increases in hours worked and wages translate into higher annual earnings: Women today earn nearly three times what mothers did.

When all fathers are compared with all adult sons, levels of employment and work hours are similarly high: Across both generations, more than 90 percent were in the labor force, working slightly more than 40 hours per week. Sons' hourly wages were typically \$5 more than fathers'.⁶

Figure 2

Daughters Work More Hours and Earn More Than Mothers Did

Labor force participation, hours worked, wages, and earnings, by generation



Note: This analysis shows the labor force participation, hours worked, wages, and earnings for employed mothers and daughters. Women had to report at least three years of wages to be included in this analysis. All wages and earnings are adjusted to 2009 dollars. Daughters' characteristics are measured from 2001 to 2009 and mothers' from 1968 to 1972. Hours worked are reported as averages; wages and earnings are reported as medians.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data

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Median hourly wages have increased relative to the last generation for both women and men

Daughters at every rung of the economic ladder increased their median wages by 50 percent or more over the previous generation, and women above the middle quintile are making considerably higher wages. When comparing all sons with all fathers, the typical son also earns higher wages than the typical father, but overall, daughters have experienced larger wage increases.

Despite daughters' wage gains, at every rung of the economic ladder they still earn a lower hourly wage than did fathers on the same rung more than 30 years ago. (See Table 1.) The gender wage gap is driven by a number of factors, including women's higher likelihood to take time out of the labor force when they have children, to work part time or not at all, and to dominate lower-wage sectors of the economy, among other reasons.⁷

Despite daughters' large wage gains, at every rung of the economic ladder they still earn a lower hourly wage than did fathers on the same rung more than 30 years ago.

Table 1

Women’s Median Hourly Wages Increased 50 Percent or More Over One Generation

Comparisons of all mothers with all daughters and all fathers with all sons, by wage quintile

Wage quintile	Median hourly wage		Percent increase	Median hourly wage		Percent increase
	All mothers	All daughters		All fathers	All sons	
Top	\$19.86	\$37.40	88%	\$38.45	\$62.67	63%
Fourth	\$13.26	\$25.65	94%	\$27.21	\$38.02	40%
Middle	\$10.58	\$18.45	74%	\$21.58	\$26.80	24%
Second	\$8.58	\$14.25	66%	\$16.62	\$19.53	18%
Bottom	\$6.10	\$9.30	52%	\$10.38	\$13.71	32%

Note: This analysis shows the distribution of wages for all mothers, daughters, fathers, and sons in each generation. Individuals had to report at least three years of wages to be included in this analysis. All wages are adjusted to 2009 dollars. Daughters’ and sons’ characteristics are measured from 2001 to 2009 and mothers’ and fathers’ from 1968 to 1972.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data

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The majority of daughters and sons experienced upward absolute wage mobility

In a related comparison of daughters with their own mothers, 85 percent of daughters have higher wages, regardless of the number of hours worked in either generation. When comparing daughters with their fathers, however, less than half have higher wages. By comparison, almost 70 percent of sons make more per hour than their fathers did.

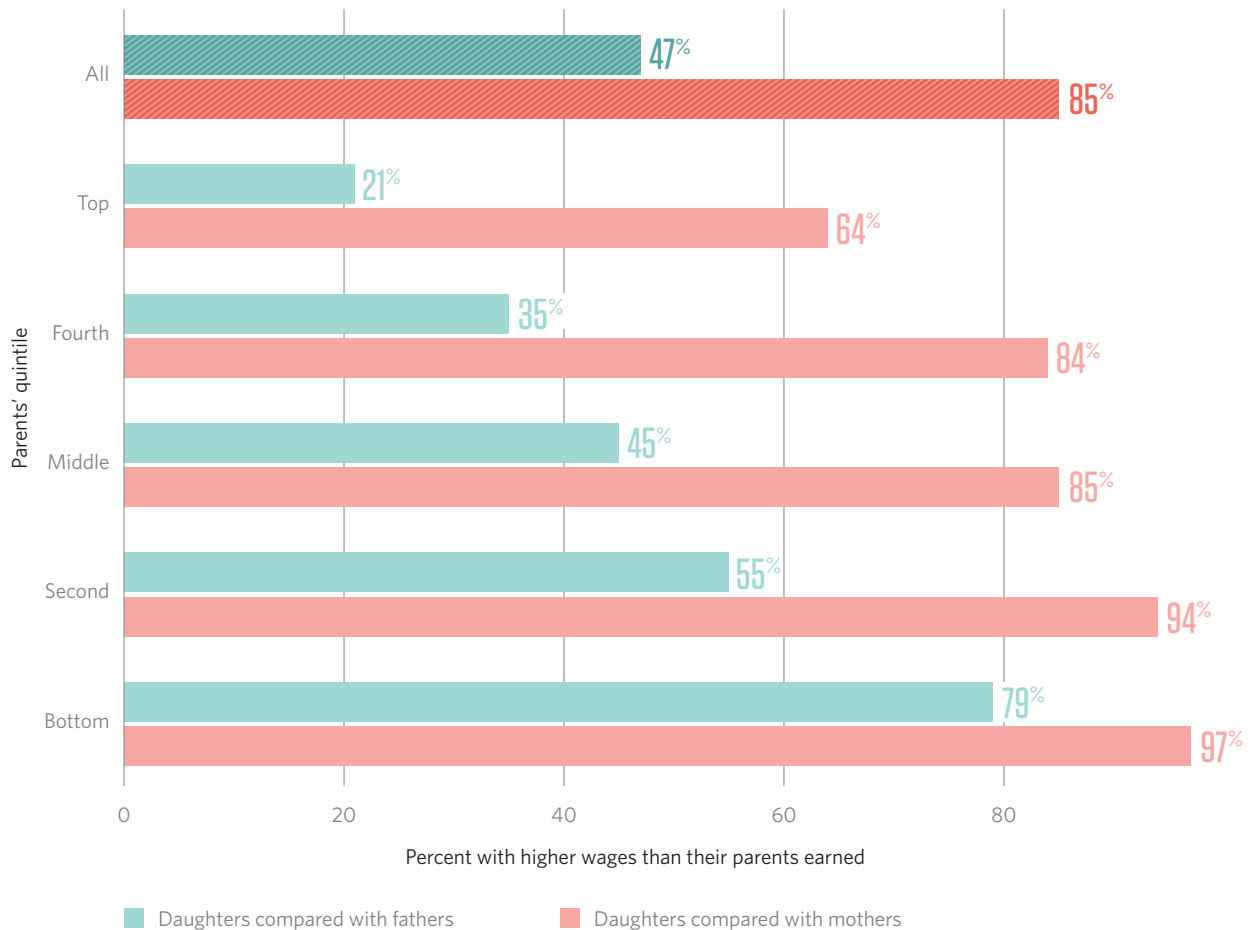
Even though daughters’ wage gains are not enough to put them on par with their fathers, the picture is brighter at the bottom of the ladder. Almost 8 in 10 daughters raised by the lowest-earning men make more money per hour than their fathers did. (See Figure 3.)

Almost 8 in 10 daughters raised by the lowest-earning men make more money per hour than their fathers did.

Figure 3

Most Daughters Make More Than Their Mothers Did but Less Than Their Fathers

Percent of daughters earning higher wages than their own parents did, by parents' quintile



Note: This analysis compares the wages of individual daughters with those of their own fathers and mothers and then aggregates data for all such pairs. Individuals had to report at least three years of wages to be included in this analysis. All wages are adjusted to 2009 dollars. Daughters' characteristics are measured from 2001 to 2009 and mothers' and fathers' characteristics from 1968 to 1972.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data

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Daughters working full time contribute more than half of family incomes, strengthening financial security

Today, four times more women work full time than did a generation ago, and their full-time employment is becoming increasingly necessary for families to stay afloat. On average, full-time employed daughters' earnings make up more than half of their families' annual incomes, compared with 40 percent contributed by their full-time working mothers. Some of the increase in women's contributions to family income is driven by a decline

in the number of coupled women relative to the previous generation: About one-third of daughters are single, compared with only about 10 percent of mothers. Single, full-time employed daughters' earnings constitute 81 percent of their families' incomes. It is important to keep in mind that total family income can include sources other than earnings, such as income from transfers and investments. So, even in a family headed by a single woman, her earnings from paid work may not constitute 100 percent of her total income. In contrast to single daughters, full-time employed daughters in coupled households contributed less than half of their families' incomes. (See Table 2.)

Table 2

Full-Time Employed Women's Earnings Now Make Up More Than Half of Family Incomes

Earnings and family characteristics of mothers and daughters, by employment status

	All		Full time (35 hours+ per week)		Part time (<35 hours per week)		Not employed	
	Mothers	Daughters	Mothers	Daughters	Mothers	Daughters	Mothers	Daughters
Overall percent as a share of study sample			11%	46%	41%	40%	48%	15%
Average weekly work hours	23.8	34.3	39.0	41.9	19.5	25.6	--	--
Median hourly wage	\$10.36	\$19.34	\$12.39	\$20.38	\$9.75	\$17.11	--	--
Percentage who are coupled	89%	69%	79%	64%	86%	74%	95%	67%
Percentage who are not coupled	11%	32%	21%	36%	14%	26%	5%	33%
Median family income	\$58,641	\$80,872	\$63,787	\$85,154	\$59,250	\$88,535	\$57,191	\$53,036
Average % earnings contributed to family income	25%	48%	40%	58%	21%	37%	--	--
Among those coupled	22%	36%	35%	45%	19%	27%	--	--
Among those not coupled	41%	75%	60%	81%	33%	65%	--	--
Percentage with family income in bottom quintile	20%	22%	12%	16%	22%	20%	21%	44%
Percentage with family income in top quintile	19%	19%	21%	19%	16%	21%	21%	13%

Note: This analysis shows earnings and family characteristics by employment status of mothers and their own daughters and then aggregates data for each group. Individuals had to report at least three years of income to be included in this analysis. All wages, earnings, and income are adjusted to 2009 dollars. Daughters' characteristics are measured from 2001 to 2009 and mothers' from 1968 to 1972.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data

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Women who work part time contribute a smaller portion of their families' incomes than do women who work full time, but the two groups' family incomes are similar. In both generations, part-time workers were also more likely to be coupled. This suggests that when women's partners earn a higher wage, they have more flexibility to work part time while maintaining a level of economic security. Additionally, these data underscore that when families have a choice about one partner working less, it is usually women who step back from the labor force.

A notable shift between the mothers' and daughters' generations lies in the economic security of the families in which women do not work. The annual family income of mothers who were not employed was similar to that of their employed peers, and nearly all of the unemployed mothers (95 percent) were coupled. In contrast, one-third of unemployed daughters were also not coupled. They were also among the least financially secure and overwhelmingly occupied the bottom rung of the income ladder.

There is tremendous 'stickiness' at the ends of the wage ladder for women and men

As past Pew research has shown, there is pronounced "stickiness" at the ends of the economic ladder. Those raised in the top or bottom quintiles are highly likely to remain there as adults.⁸ This is also the case with respect to hourly wages. One-third of daughters raised by mothers earning the lowest wages remained at the bottom of the wage distribution, and almost two-thirds never made it to the middle.

The same is true of those raised at the top, revealing that, despite considerable variation between mothers and daughters in employment rates and hours worked, high- and low-wage-earning mothers are likely to have high- and low-wage-earning daughters, respectively. Sons born to the highest-wage-earning fathers had an even greater advantage: Nearly half of sons raised at the top remained there, and 7 in 10 never slipped to the middle or lower. (See Figure 4.)

Women's work hours and family earnings

Daughters' higher work hours have increased rates of upward earnings mobility for families, especially at the bottom and middle

Although fathers' and sons' work hours have remained relatively constant, mothers a generation ago worked only about 40 percent of the hours that their daughters work today.⁹ How much has this increase in women's work hours over a generation contributed to higher family earnings and therefore earnings mobility? To explore the question, this analysis adjusts daughters' work hours to match those of their mothers, uncovering what would have happened to family earnings if women's wages increased as they have over a generation but women's overall labor force participation and number of hours worked remained constant over time.¹⁰

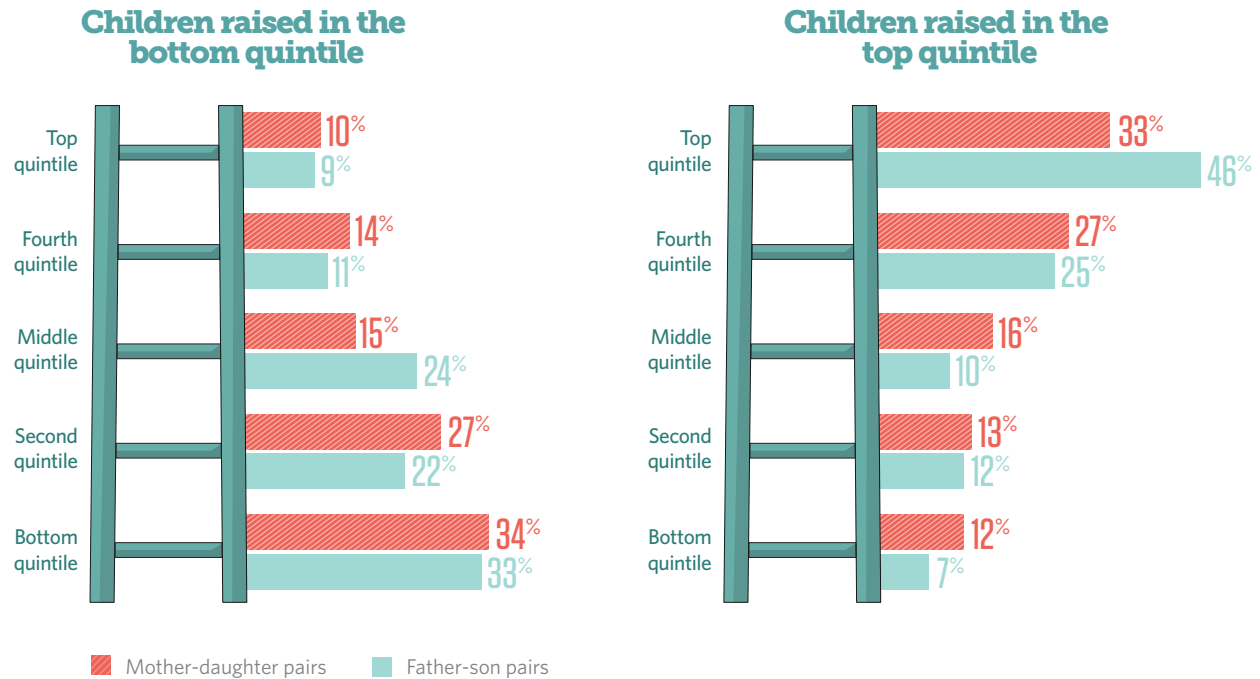
For example, for a daughter earning \$40,000 per year working 40 hours a week:

- If her mother did not work then her work hours, and thus her earnings, are adjusted to zero.
- If her mother worked half as many hours per week as she does, then her hours are cut to 20 and her earnings are adjusted to \$20,000 per year.
- If she and her mother worked the same number of hours, then her hours and earnings are unchanged.

Figure 4

Children’s Wages Are Likely to Reflect Those of Their Parents

Percent of children who end up on each rung of the wage ladder, by parents’ quintile



Note: The analysis compares the wages of individual daughters and sons with those of their own mothers and fathers, respectively, and then aggregates the data for all such pairs. Individuals had to report at least three years of wages to be included in this analysis. All wages are adjusted to 2009 dollars. Daughters’ and sons’ characteristics are measured from 2001 to 2009 and mothers’ and fathers’ characteristics from 1968 to 1972.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data

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If a typical daughter today, regardless of whether she is coupled, worked the same hours as her mother, she would make just over \$2,500 a year and would, on average, have reduced her contribution to her family’s earnings from 48 to 17 percent. This is the result of roughly half of the mothers in the previous generation not participating in the labor force but having daughters among high-wage and sole earners today.¹¹

It is also informative to use this adjustment to compare couples today with couples in the previous generation.¹² If daughters (or daughters-in-law) worked the same hours as their mothers (or mothers-in-law), today’s families would experience a decrease in earnings and in earnings mobility across the board.¹³

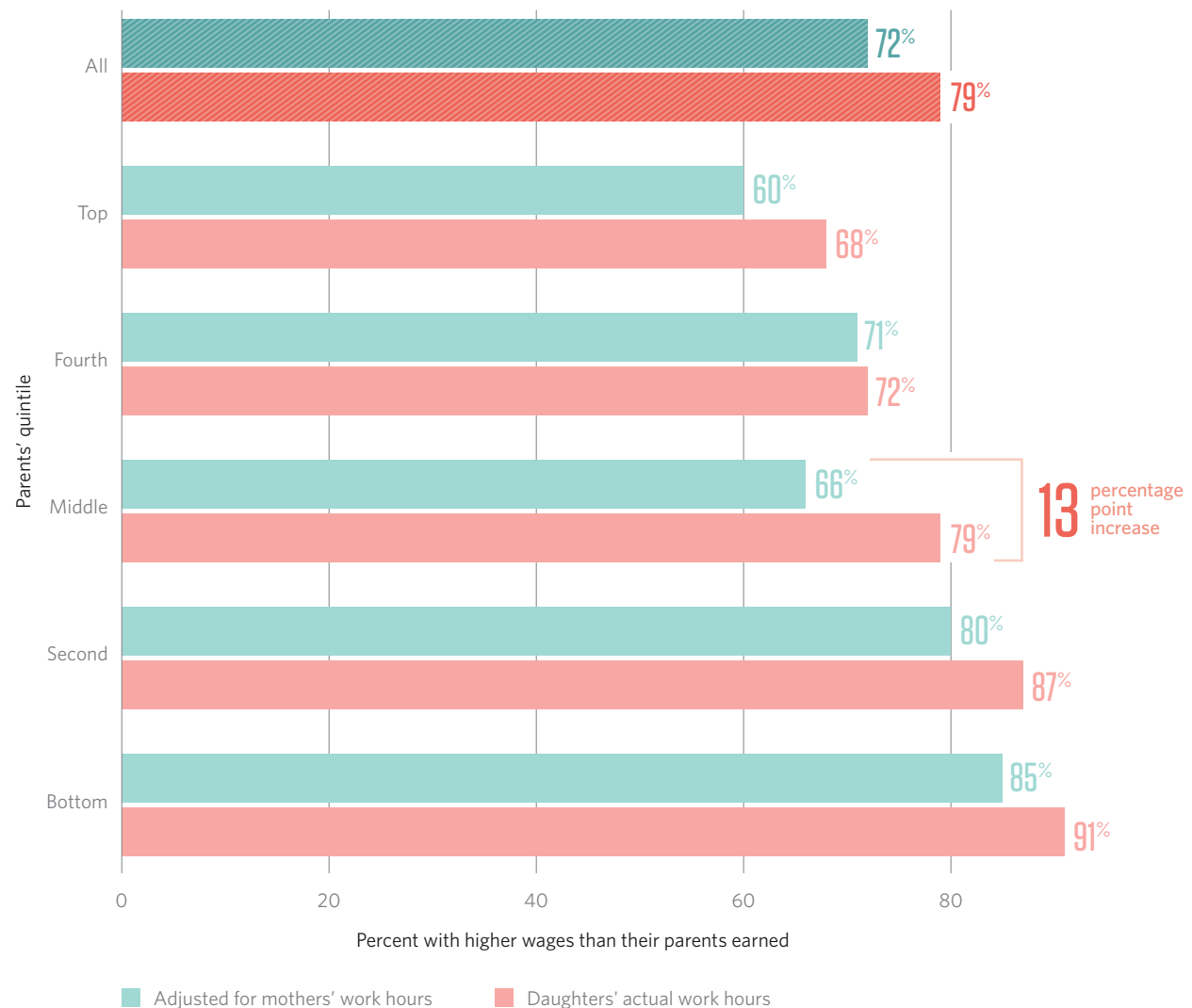
There are significant differences, however, in the importance of women’s increased hours for their families’ earnings, based on a couple’s position on the ladder. Overall, among coupled daughters, 79 percent of their households earned more than did their parents’ households. But if daughters had not increased their labor force participation (and had worked the same hours as their mothers), 72 percent of coupled households today would have earned more.¹⁴ In other words, women’s greater hours in the workforce created an increase of 7 percentage points in the proportion of families with more earnings than their parents.

For those raised in middle-income families, the bump in women’s work hours was even more beneficial, raising the percent of households earning more than their parents by 13 points. (See Figure 5.) For a typical middle-income family, this translates into almost \$9,000 more in earnings per year.

Figure 5

Daughters’ Higher Work Hours Increased Family Earnings, Especially at the Middle

Percent of couples earning more than their parents if daughters worked their mothers’ hours, compared with daughters’ actual hours, by parents’ quintile



Note: This analysis is restricted to coupled parents and coupled children. Couples had to report at least three years of earnings to be included in this analysis. The impact on family earnings of the increase in women’s hours worked over a generation was considered both in actual terms and by adjusting daughters’ work hours, but not wages, to match those of their mothers. All earnings are adjusted to 2009 dollars. Daughters’ and sons’ characteristics are measured from 2001 to 2009 and mothers’ and fathers’ from 1968 to 1972.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data

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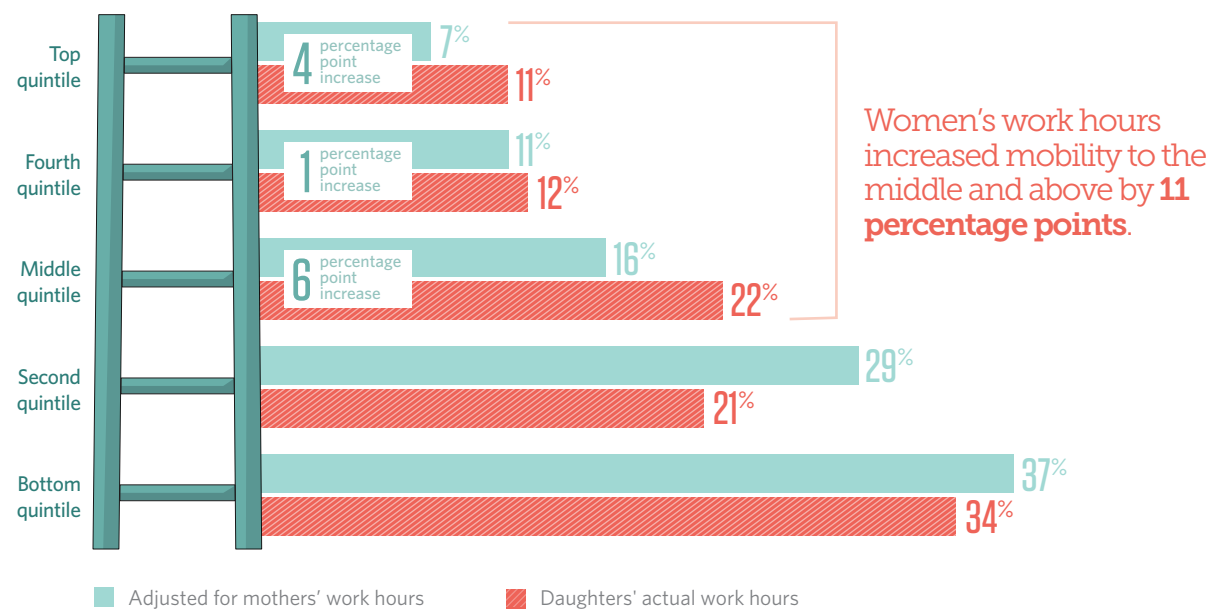
Changes in women’s work hours also have implications for where couples end up on the earnings ladder. More than 4 in 10 couples who were raised at the top remain at the top, and more than 60 percent of such couples never even slipped to the middle. Adjusting women’s work hours to those of their mothers does not affect this stickiness at the top.

In contrast, women’s increased work hours do affect stickiness at the bottom: Those raised by the lowest-earning couples are likely to remain stuck. Thirty-four percent remain at the bottom as adults, and another 21 percent only move up one rung. That means 55 percent never reach the middle. Without women’s increased labor force participation, however, 66 percent of those raised by the lowest-earning couples would remain stuck below the middle (37 percent at the bottom and 29 percent on the second rung). In fact, the proportion of couples who started at the bottom and made it to the middle or higher was 11 percentage points greater because women increased their work hours relative to the previous generation.¹⁵ (See Figure 6.)

Some of the change in family earnings among couples over the past 30 or more years may also be attributable to increasing rates of college-educated, high-earning individuals pairing off, while less-educated, lower-earning individuals are also doing so. Such pairings have been found to magnify differences in the family earnings distribution, widening the gap between families at the bottom and the top.¹⁶

Figure 6
Women’s Higher Work Hours Increased Mobility Among Couples Raised at the Bottom

Percent of couples who end up on each rung of the earnings ladder if daughters worked their mothers’ hours, compared with daughters’ actual hours



Note: This analysis is restricted to coupled parents and coupled children. Couples had to report at least three years of earnings to be included in this analysis. All earnings are adjusted to 2009 dollars. Daughters’ and sons’ characteristics are measured from 2001 to 2009 and mothers’ and fathers’ from 1968 to 1972.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data.

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Despite significant generational gains by women, men's wages remain the more important contributing factor to higher family income among couples

Women's increased educational attainment, labor force participation, and wage premiums certainly have contributed to families' ability to out-earn the previous generation. Among the daughters' generation, when both spouses have college degrees and higher wage rates and work more hours per week, family incomes are significantly higher.

In the case of couples, however, both the labor force participation and the earning status of men remain the primary drivers of movement up the income ladder. When considering the educational and labor force contributions of both men and women within couples today, men's higher wage rates were the most important factor predicting higher family incomes. In fact, men's wage rates were nearly twice as important as those of their female partners for boosting family income.¹⁷

Conclusion

In just one generation, women's participation in the labor force increased substantially. Compared with their mothers, women today work 10 hours more per week, earn \$9 more per hour, and bring in three times as much money annually. Had the shift in women's workforce participation not occurred, the share of middle-income families with higher earnings than their parents would be a full 13 percentage points lower than it is, underscoring women's ever-increasing and substantive role in family financial security and mobility.

By all estimates, women's wages will continue to grow in importance for their families, making greater wage parity all the more critical.

Despite these gains, women continue to earn less than men, and at every rung of the ladder, today's women earn less than men did at the same rung more than 30 years ago. As noted, this dynamic is driven in part because women are more likely to take time out of the labor force when they have children, work part time or not at all, and dominate lower-wage sectors of the economy. As a result of these and other factors, men's labor force participation and wages remain the most important elements for boosting couples' income.

So what does the future of family financial security and mobility look like? Women are now entering and graduating from college at higher rates than men, and today's youngest female workers are earning wages more on par with their male peers than ever before.¹⁸ Additionally, during the Great Recession, men experienced significantly more and longer unemployment than women did, marking a shift toward greater relevance of women's earnings for buoying their families' economic well-being.¹⁹ By all estimates, women's wages will continue to grow in importance for their families, and this fact makes greater wage parity all the more critical for financial security and mobility.

Appendix A: Data tables

Table A1

Intergenerational Work Patterns and Economic Characteristics

Labor force participation, hours worked, wages, and earnings, by generation

	All daughters	All sons	All mothers	All fathers
Employed	85%	94%	53%	98%
Weekly work hours of the employed (mean)	34.3	42.6	23.6	45.4
Annual earnings of the employed (median)	\$34,380	\$55,655	\$12,531	\$48,520
Hourly wage of the employed (median)	\$19.34	\$26.41	\$10.36	\$21.27
Family income (median)	\$80,872	\$89,916	\$58,690	\$62,614

Note: This analysis shows the labor force participation, hours worked, wages, and earnings for all paid workers as a group in each generation, including mothers, daughters, fathers, and sons. Individuals had to report at least three years of income to be included in this analysis. All wages, earnings, and income are adjusted to 2009 dollars. Daughters' and sons' characteristics are measured from 2001 to 2009 and mothers' and fathers' from 1968 to 1972.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data

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Table A2

What if Daughters and Sons Worked the Same Hours as Their Mothers and Fathers?

Hours worked, earnings, and family income of mothers compared with their own daughters, and fathers compared with their own sons

	Mothers compared with daughters	Fathers compared with sons
Hours older generation worked relative to younger generation, including those not in the labor force	39%	104%
Older generation earnings (median)	\$12,316	\$48,233
Younger generation earnings adjusted for older generation work hours (median)	\$2,584	\$61,911
Earnings employed older generation contributed to family income	25%	78%
Earnings employed younger generation contributed to family income	48%	68%
Earnings younger generation contributed to family income after adjusting for older generation work hours	17%	74%

Note: This analysis compares mothers to their own daughters and fathers to their own sons. Individuals had to report at least three years of income to be included in this analysis. All earnings are adjusted to 2009 dollars. Daughters' and sons' characteristics are measured from 2001 to 2009 and mothers' and fathers' from 1968 to 1972.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data.

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Table A3

Men's Wages Within Couples Today Are Most Associated With Higher Family Income

Ordinary least squares regression of coupled children's family income, 2001-09

	Significance (p-value)	Standardized beta coefficients
Adult child raised in the second income quintile rather than the bottom	0.011	0.056
Middle income quintile	0.000	0.097
Fourth income quintile	0.000	0.155
Top income quintile	0.000	0.194
Number of own children	0.120	0.029
White head of household	0.380	0.015
Adult child is daughter	0.715	0.006
Male partner has a four-year college degree	0.000	0.133
Female partner has a four-year college degree	0.004	0.075
Male partner's wage average	0.000	0.431
Female partner's wage average	0.010	0.230
Male partner's average work hours	0.000	0.252
Female partner's average work hours	0.000	0.176
Constant	0.000	
R-squared	0.631	

Note: This analysis is restricted to coupled parents and coupled children. Couples had to report at least three years of income to be included in this analysis. Family income is logged. All wages and income are adjusted to 2009 dollars.

Source: Pew analysis of Panel Study of Income Dynamics data.

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Appendix B: Methods

This report uses data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, or PSID, a longitudinal data set that has followed families from 1968 to the present. The benefit of these data is that they allow for the income, earnings, and wealth of real parent and child pairs to be compared at the same ages.

In this study, income, wealth, earnings, and wages are analyzed in both generations. “Income” is defined as the total money derived from taxable sources (such as earnings, interest, and dividends) and cash transfers (such as Social Security and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) of the head, spouse, and other family members. “Earnings” is defined as all labor income, such as wages and salary bonuses, overtime, tips, and commissions, and are a subset of family income based on compensation for work. “Wages” means the hourly breakdown of earnings based on the number of hours that individuals reported working for pay.

The generations studied in this report are women and men of prime working age, or those generally around the age of 40. In the parent generation, income and earnings are reported for the years 1967-71, and mothers’ average age was 37. In the children’s generation, income and earnings are reported for the years 2000-08, and daughters’ average age was 45.

In the parent generation, the analysis sample is restricted to families in which the head of household had a child younger than 18 in 1968 and had valid income and earnings measures for at least three years of data. Income and earnings were measured in the 1968-72 survey years, and subjects were asked about the previous year (1967-71).

In the child generation, the analysis sample is restricted to those who were heads of their households from 2001 to 2009 and had valid income and earnings measures reported for at least three of the previous years (2000-08). Overall, there were 1,457 mother-daughter pairs with valid income data.

Employment status was restricted to those individuals who reported having done any paid work in at least three of the five years of data studied in each generation. Full-time status, averaged over three years of employment, includes those who worked at least 35 hours a week, while part-time status includes all who averaged less than 35 hours a week over that period.

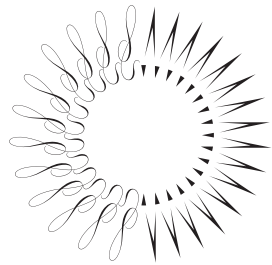
Analyses in which individual hourly wages were studied required data from both mothers and daughters and also from sons and fathers during the same years when income was measured. There were 861 father-son pairs with valid hourly wage data available. Because of mothers’ limited labor force participation, the sample was slightly smaller: 634 mother-daughter pairs with valid and comparable wage data were available.

Some analyses focus on couples in order to understand how the contributions of women mattered in households where joint labor force and/or earnings decisions may be made in consideration of both partners. Coupled status was determined by counting the number of years for which the household head had either a spouse or a cohabiting partner of a year or longer. If the head was coupled for more than half of the years for which income, wage, or earnings data were reported, the household was determined to be headed by a couple. Overall, in the most restrictive couple analysis, there were 624 coupled households in the child generation that had valid wage data, for which the wages of daughters could be adjusted for the wages of mothers, and that also had matching couple data in the parent generation. Because the PSID data only considers heads of households to be male and spouses to be female, there are no same-sex couples in the couple-level analyses.

All data were adjusted to 2009 dollars using the Consumer Price Index, specifically CPI-U-RS. Unlike past Pew reports, income data in this report were not adjusted for family size in order to better understand the separate earnings contributions of men and women within a family.

Endnotes

- 1 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*, Table 2, February 2013, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2012.pdf>.
- 2 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*, Table 7.
- 3 The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations*, July 9, 2012, <http://www.pewstates.org/research/reports/pursuing-the-american-dream-85899403228>.
- 4 Wealth, or the savings and assets that families hold, is also an important consideration when comparing intergenerational economic mobility. Consistent with past Pew research, this study finds that a majority of adult children exceed their parents' family income, but only half exceed their parents' wealth. (See also "Pursuing the American Dream.") In this analysis, the most important factor in wealth formation was whether adult children were coupled: 55 percent of coupled children had more wealth than did their parents, compared with just 31 percent of those who were not coupled. Wealth is not discussed further in this report, because it is held collectively within families and could not be analyzed separately for all men and women.
- 5 Throughout this report, medians are reported for income, earnings, and wages to minimize the influence of outliers. Means are reported for all other averages (i.e., age, hours worked).
- 6 For these and additional data, see Appendix A, Table A1.
- 7 See Michelle Budig and Paula England, "The Wage Penalty for Motherhood," *American Journal of Sociology* 66 (2001): 204–225; and Stephanie Boraas and William M. Rodgers III, "How Does Gender Play a Role in the Earnings Gap? An Update," *Monthly Labor Review* (2003): 9–15.
- 8 The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Pursuing the American Dream*.
- 9 This calculation includes those not in the labor force. For these and additional data, see Appendix A, Table A2.
- 10 For the analyses of coupled households only, earnings of daughters-in-law were also adjusted to match the work hours of their mothers-in-law. Thus, the family earnings of coupled parents are compared with the family earnings of both their coupled daughters and coupled sons a generation later. This analysis does not explore how the wage rates associated with, for example, part-time work may have changed differentially over a generation's time. It is likely that a generation ago, the type of work available and wages paid to women who worked part time were not commensurate with what is available to women today. The analysis assumes no changes to the wage rate itself in order to study changing work hours in the labor force among coupled women. This assumption should be kept in mind when considering these findings.
- 11 For these and additional data, see Appendix A, Table A2.
- 12 In all cases, couples refer to coupled sons or daughters, relative to their coupled parents. In the cases of coupled sons, the hours worked by daughters-in-law were adjusted to match the hours of their mothers-in-law.
- 13 This report uses data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, which count only married men (designated as "heads") and women (designated as "spouses") as couples; thus same-sex couples are not included in these analyses.
- 14 Again, this analysis assumes that no wage premiums have been paid to daughters, relative to their mothers, for the same hours worked. Consequently, the benefit realized by coupled households today for increases in daughters' hours worked may be understated if a wage premium has also boosted their earnings within families relative to the previous generation of women.
- 15 It is likely that changes in daughters' occupations, relative to their mothers', played a role in their upward mobility.
- 16 This is a phenomenon known as marital homogamy. One study finds that the growing association of spouses' earnings explains 25 to 30 percent of the variation overall in growing income inequality. See Christine Schwartz, "Earnings Inequality and the Changing Association Between Spouses' Earnings," *American Journal of Sociology*, 115, no. 5 (March 1, 2010): 1524–1557.
- 17 This statement is based on standardized beta coefficients produced for the OLS regression model, for which all predictors in the model were assessed. Men's wage rates had a standardized beta of 0.43 (the highest of all factors), nearly double the standardized beta for women's wage rates (0.23). For these and additional data, see Appendix A, Table A3.
- 18 Pew Research Center, *On Pay Gap, Millennial Women Near Parity—for Now*, Dec. 11, 2013, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/12/11/on-pay-gap-millennial-women-near-parity-for-now/>.
- 19 For a description of women's labor force participation during the Great Recession, see Department of Labor, "Women's Employment During the Recovery," May 3, 2011, http://www.dol.gov/_sec/media/reports/FemaleLaborForce/FemaleLaborForce.pdf; for historical context on women's earnings and the Great Recession, see Kristin Smith, "Wives as Breadwinners: Wives' Share of Family Earnings Hits Historic High During the Second Year of the Great Recession," Carsey Institute fact sheet, no. 20, fall 2010, <http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/IB-Smith-Breadwinners10.pdf>.



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