

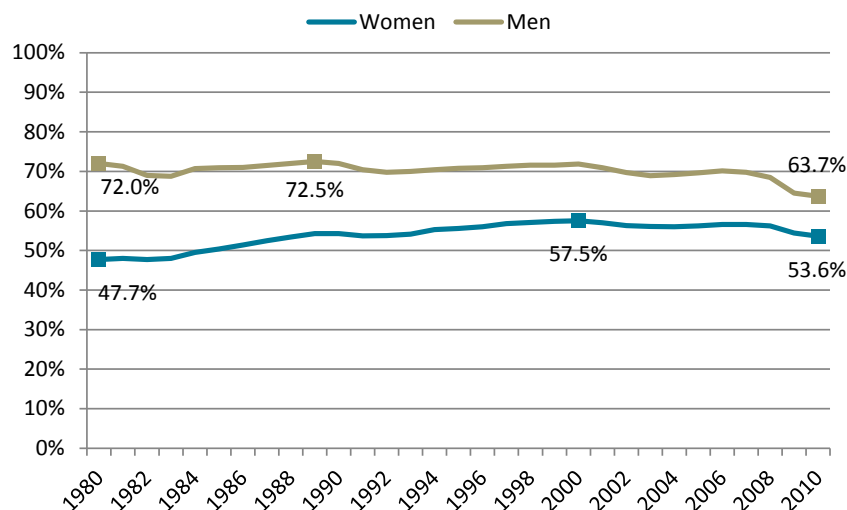
Women's Employment Rate, 2010

Larry Gibbs

Women's socioeconomic roles have changed dramatically in recent decades due to increases in educational attainment, full-time employment, and personal earnings relative to men's (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Women in the Labor Force: A Databook, 2011). These changes coincided with increases in the overall labor force participation rate among all Americans. Examining women's employment is important because the increase in overall labor force participation is driven substantially by women's movement into the labor force and subsequent employment (DiCecio et al., 2008). This profile explores employment rates in the U.S. (1980 to 2010) based on the Current Population Survey (2010). More specifically, we consider differences in women's employment rates across race/ethnicity, union status, and educational attainment using the American Community Survey (2010).

- Women's rate of employment in the U.S. has gradually increased from 47.7% in 1980 to 53.6% in 2010.
 - Peaking at 57.5% in 2000, women's employment rate has subsequently declined by 3.9% to 53.6% in 2010.
- Men's employment rate has steadily declined over the twenty-year period.
 - In 1989, men's employment peaked at 72.5%. During the 1990s to mid-2000s, employment rates remained relatively stable. Since 2008, there has been a sharp linear downward drop in the employment rate of men.

Figure 1. Employment Rate for Women and Men Aged 16 and Older, 1980-2010



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics and Current Population Survey, 2010.

Note: Female employment rate is calculated by the formula: number of women employed/population 16 years and older. The calculated rate for female employment using the ACS (2010) is 53.4%, which is similar to the CPS's employment rate of 53.6% for 2010.

This profile draws on research published in the following articles:

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011). "Women in the Labor Force: A Databook." www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2011.pdf
2. DiCecio, R., Engemann, K., Owyang, T., & Wheeler, C. H. (2008). Changing Trends in the Labor Force: A Survey. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review, 90(1), 47-62.

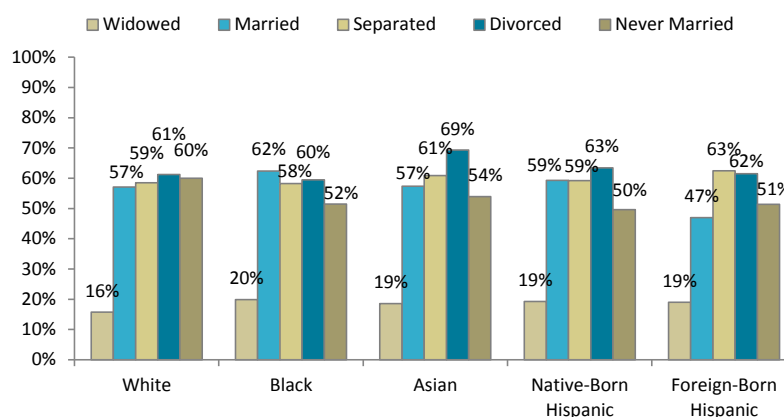
Employment Rate for Women by Race/Ethnicity

- A majority of women ages 16 and older are working (53%), and there is little race and ethnic variation in employment.
 - Asian women have the highest employment rate (55%) followed by Whites (54%), Blacks (53%), and Hispanics ((51%) (54% and 48% for native- and foreign-born Hispanics, respectively)).

Employment Rate for Women by Race/Ethnicity and Marital Status

- Across all race/ethnicities (except Blacks and foreign-born Hispanics), the highest rates of employment are found among divorced women.
 - Among divorced women, Asians have the highest employment rate (69%), and Blacks have the lowest (60%).
- The lowest employment rates are found among the widowed. About one-fifth of widowed Black, Asian, and Hispanic women are currently working. White widows have the lowest employment rate of all groups at only 16%.

Figure 2. Employment Rate for Women Aged 16 and Older by Race/Ethnicity and Marital Status, 2010

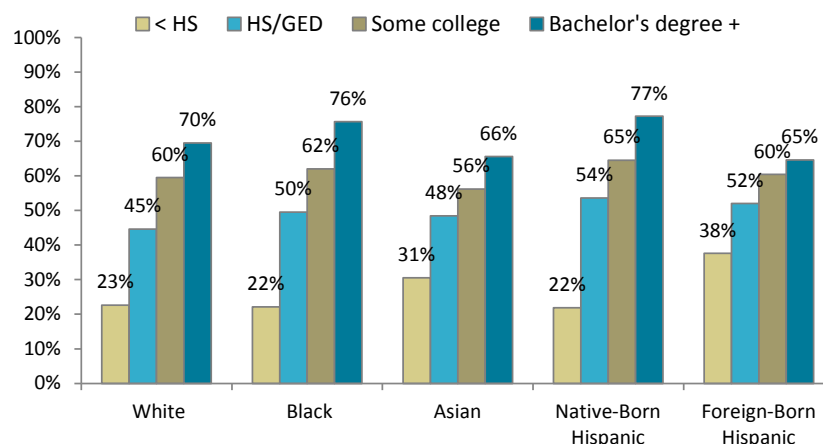


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2010

Employment Rate for Women by Race/Ethnicity and Educational Attainment

- Figure 3 illustrates a positive association between women's educational attainment and employment rate across all race and ethnic groups.
 - Women with a Bachelor's degree have the highest employment rates. Native-born Hispanic women lead this category with over three-fourths of college educated being employed. Women with less than a high school diploma are the least likely to be employed.
- Foreign-born Hispanic women—compared to all other women—have a higher employment rate among those receiving less than a high school education.
- Native-born Hispanic women have the highest rates of employment among women with a high school diploma and some college degree.

Figure 3. Employment Rate for Women Aged 16 and Older by Race/Ethnicity and Educational Attainment, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, 2010

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