



Mother's Day 2016

10 Economic Facts about Mothers that Might Surprise You

Mothers in the United States earned roughly \$1 trillion for their families in 2014.¹

Overwhelmingly, mothers work outside the home. Today, 70 percent of mothers with children under the age of 18 are in the labor force, up from 47 percent in 1975.²

Today, 64 percent of children under the age of 18 – nearly 45 million children – live in a household with a mother who is in the labor force.³

Households with a mother who works outside the home typically rely on her wages for nearly 40 percent of their earnings.⁴

Earnings from a mother's work are especially important for families near the bottom of the income spectrum. In the poorest families, mothers bring home 89 percent of their family's earnings.⁵

Roughly 5.1 million working mothers earn less than \$12 per hour.⁶ That includes more than 2.4 million single moms.⁷ A single mother of two children who works full-time at the federal minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour) is left more than \$4,500 below the poverty line.⁸

Some 1.6 million women are the primary providers for their grandchildren.⁹ Grandmothers take on this role for many reasons, including the death, illness or incarceration of a parent.

Data suggest that women effectively are penalized for becoming mothers and caring for their families. The typical working woman can lose as much as half a million dollars over a 40-year career as a result of the gender wage gap.¹⁰

Among working parents, women are often hit with a “mommy penalty”, while men are rewarded with a “daddy bonus.” On average, mothers earn 3 percent less than women without children, while fathers earn 15 percent more than childless men.¹¹

Yet, the United States lags behind in adopting policies that can help mothers balance the demands of both work and family.¹² The United States is the only advanced country that does not guarantee paid leave for new mothers. Mothers in many other advanced countries also have access to paid sick leave, flexible work policies and affordable, quality child care.

Sources

- ¹ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (using CPS Table Creator).
- ² Bureau of Labor Statistics, “[Employment Characteristics of Families](#)” (Table 5); and JEC Democratic Staff 114th Congress, “[How Working Mothers Contribute to the Economic Security of American Families](#)” (May 2015).
- ³ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-year estimates (Table B23008).
- ⁴ JEC Democratic Staff 114th Congress, “[Gender Pay Inequality: Consequences for Women, Families and the Economy](#)” (April 2016).
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Economic Policy Institute, “[Raising the Minimum Wage to \\$12 by 2020 Would Lift Wages for 35 Million Workers](#)” (Table 2A) (May 7, 2015).
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ David Cooper, Katherine Gallagher Robbins and Julie Vogtman, “[A \\$12 Minimum Wage Would Give More Than One in Four Working Moms a Raise](#)” *Working Economic Blog*, Economic Policy Institute (May 8, 2015).
- ⁹ JEC Democratic staff calculations based on data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey 1-year estimates (Table S1002).
- ¹⁰ JEC Democratic Staff 114th Congress, “[Gender Pay Inequality: Consequences for Women, Families and the Economy](#)” (April 2016).
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Ibid.