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ABSTRACT

The Special Labor Force Report shows a substantial rise in the labor force participation rates of married women and single and divorced persons. Also explored is the downward trend of married men (55 years old or over) as members of the labor force. This decline was due mainly to early retirements and to some extent to a rising incidence of reported disability. The report notes a rise in the labor force participation of multiple worker families but not of women heads of households. These findings were compiled from the annual nationwide survey of marital and family characteristics of workers in the population 16 years old and over. Appended to the report are statistical tables and charts. (BP)

SUMMARY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Bureau of Labor Statistics



SPECIAL LABOR FORCE REPORT

Marital and Family Characteristics of Workers, March 1974

Of the substantial 2.4 million rise in the labor force between March 1973 and March 1974, nearly half (47 percent) were single persons, 27 percent were divorced persons, and 23 percent were married women. Married men did not figure at all in the increase, as their labor force held steady over the year at 39.7 million. The number of married women in the work force rose by 550,000 to 20.4 million, or nearly three-fifths of all working women. Employment growth, or lack of it in some cases, corresponded with the changes in the labor force, and the jobless numbers and rates in all marital groups were not significantly changed over the year. (See table 1.)

Recent labor force increases among single persons are mostly due to the large number of post-World War II children who are now in the 20-to-29 age bracket where labor force participation rates are substantially higher than for teenagers. Since 1970, the labor force participation rate for single men has advanced from 61 to 67 percent; for single women, it has advanced from 53 to 57 percent. The increasing prominence of divorced persons in the labor force largely reflects their growth in the population. In 1973 and early 1974, the divorce rate hit the highest level ever recorded in the United States.

The labor force participation rate of married men continued its long-term decline, slipping to 84 percent in March 1974. This decline, as in the past, was concentrated among husbands 55 years old and over, due mainly to early retirement and to some extent to a rising incidence of reported disability. The rate for men 45 to 54 also is beginning to drift downward.

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Over the year, the labor force participation rate of married women continued to trend upward, reaching 43 percent. (See table 2.) Since 1970, the rate for wives with children under 3 has climbed 5 percentage points to 31 percent; rates for married women with older children or no children under 18 have increased more slowly.

In line with the rising labor force participation of married women, the number of multiple-worker families has also risen. In March 1974, there were about 22.5 million husband-wife families that had other family members (usually the wife) in addition to the husband in the labor force. This number represented 57 percent of all husband-wife families in which the head was in the labor force. (See table 3.)

The number of women who were family heads totaled 6.8 million in March 1974. Their labor force participation rate, at 54 percent, was higher than that of wives, but has remained little changed for many years.

These findings are from the annual survey of marital and family characteristics of workers in the population 16 years old and over. The survey was conducted in March 1974 for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of the Census. Additional information on this subject will be published in a forthcoming issue of the Monthly Labor Review.

Table 1. Employment status of persons 16 years old and over, by marital status, sex, and race, March 1973 and 1974

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(Numbers in thousands)

Marital status, sex, and race	March 1973						March 1974					
	Total population	Labor force				Total population	Labor force					
		Total 1/		Employed	Unemployed		Total 1/		Employed	Unemployed		
Number	Percent of population	Number	Percent of labor force		Number	Percent of population	Number	Percent of population		Number	Percent of labor force	
ALL PERSONS												
Total.....	146,200	88,303	60.4	82,820	4,504	3.1	148,898	90,691	60.9	84,877	4,756	5.2
Men.....	69,350	34,399	78.4	50,895	2,525	4.6	70,767	35,371	78.2	51,678	2,635	4.8
Married, wife present.....	46,939	39,782	84.8	37,822	1,110	2.8	47,324	39,718	83.9	37,681	1,125	2.8
Married, wife absent.....	1,733	1,370	79.1	1,254	87	6.4	1,753	1,405	80.1	1,292	84	6.1
Widowed.....	1,924	607	31.5	586	20	3.3	1,854	642	34.6	618	24	3.7
Divorced.....	1,963	1,538	78.4	1,425	103	6.7	2,335	1,869	80.0	1,737	121	6.5
Single.....	16,791	11,102	66.1	9,808	1,205	10.9	17,501	11,737	67.1	10,350	1,281	10.9
Women.....	76,850	33,904	44.1	31,925	1,979	5.8	78,131	35,320	45.2	33,199	2,121	6.0
Married, husband present.....	46,939	19,821	42.2	18,908	913	4.6	47,324	20,367	43.0	19,406	961	4.7
Married, husband absent.....	2,902	1,522	52.4	1,367	155	10.2	2,975	1,642	55.2	1,473	169	10.3
Widowed.....	9,854	2,484	25.2	2,394	90	3.6	9,814	2,434	24.8	2,319	115	4.7
Divorced.....	3,276	2,338	71.4	2,216	122	5.2	3,629	2,647	72.9	2,521	126	4.7
Single.....	13,879	7,739	55.8	7,040	699	9.0	14,387	8,230	57.2	7,480	750	9.0
NEGRO AND OTHER RACES												
Total.....	16,648	9,960	59.8	9,002	872	8.8	17,206	10,286	59.8	9,203	948	9.2
Men.....	7,582	5,533	73.0	5,024	423	7.6	7,849	5,774	73.6	5,100	539	9.3
Married, wife present.....	3,827	3,237	84.6	3,037	128	4.0	3,996	3,337	83.5	3,049	173	5.2
Married, wife absent.....	572	433	75.7	401	22	5.1	571	436	76.4	411	21	4.6
Widowed.....	353	131	37.1	123	8	6.1	327	120	36.7	117	3	2.5
Divorced.....	280	205	73.2	191	13	6.3	347	270	77.8	256	12	4.4
Single.....	2,550	1,527	59.9	1,272	252	16.5	2,608	1,611	61.8	1,267	330	20.5
Women.....	9,006	4,427	48.8	3,978	449	10.1	9,357	4,512	48.2	4,103	409	9.0
Married, husband present.....	3,877	2,093	54.0	1,952	141	6.7	4,027	2,100	52.1	1,953	147	6.9
Married, husband absent.....	1,122	546	48.7	477	69	12.6	1,139	617	54.2	547	70	11.4
Widowed.....	1,292	369	28.6	356	13	3.5	1,317	375	28.5	357	18	4.8
Divorced.....	516	366	70.9	337	29	7.9	549	394	71.8	377	17	4.3
Single.....	2,259	1,053	46.6	856	197	18.7	2,325	1,026	44.1	889	157	15.2

1/ The male labor force includes members of the Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post.

Table 2. Labor force participation rates 1/ of married women, husband present, by presence and age of children, March 1960-1974

Year	All wives	No children under 18 years	With children under 18 years				
			Total	6 to 17 years only	Under 6 years		
					Total	3 to 5 years, none under 3 years	Under 3 years
1960.....	30.5	34.7	27.6	39.0	18.6	25.1	15.3
1961.....	32.7	37.3	29.6	41.7	20.0	25.5	17.0
1962.....	32.7	36.1	30.3	41.8	21.3	27.2	18.2
1963.....	33.7	37.4	31.2	41.5	22.5	28.5	19.4
1964.....	34.4	37.8	32.0	40.3	22.7	26.7	20.5
1965.....	34.7	38.3	32.2	42.7	23.3	29.2	20.0
1966.....	35.4	38.4	33.2	43.7	24.2	29.1	21.2
1967.....	36.8	38.9	35.3	45.0	26.5	31.7	23.3
1968.....	38.3	40.1	36.9	46.9	27.6	34.0	23.4
1969.....	39.6	41.0	38.6	48.6	28.5	34.7	24.2
1970.....	40.8	42.2	39.7	49.2	30.3	37.0	25.8
1971.....	40.8	42.1	39.7	49.4	29.6	36.1	25.7
1972.....	41.5	42.7	40.5	50.2	30.1	36.1	26.9
1973.....	42.2	42.8	41.7	50.1	32.7	38.3	29.4
1974.....	43.0	43.0	43.1	51.2	34.4	39.1	31.0

1/ Labor force as percent of population.

Table 3. Employment status of family head and other family members, by race, March 1972-1974

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Employment status and relationship to head	1972	1973	1974		
			All families	White	Negro and other races
HUSBAND-WIFE FAMILIES					
Total families (thousands)-----	45,752	46,314	46,810	42,894	3,916
Head in labor force: Number (thousands)-----	39,116	39,298	39,312	36,053	3,259
Percent-----	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wife or other member in labor force-----	54.6	55.7	57.2	56.6	63.7
Wife only-----	35.1	36.0	37.4	36.8	45.0
Wife and other member-----	9.9	9.8	9.9	9.8	10.9
Other member only-----	9.6	9.9	9.8	10.0	7.8
Neither wife nor other member in labor force-----	45.4	44.3	42.8	43.4	36.3
Head Employed ^{1/}					
Total: Number (thousands)-----	37,855	38,247	38,252	35,154	3,098
Percent-----	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wife or other member in labor force-----	54.5	55.7	57.2	56.5	64.3
Wife only-----	34.9	35.9	37.4	36.7	45.4
Wife and other member-----	9.9	9.9	9.9	9.8	11.1
Other member only-----	9.7	9.9	9.9	10.0	7.8
Neither wife nor other member in labor force-----	45.5	44.3	42.8	43.5	35.7
Head Unemployed					
Total: Number (thousands)-----	1,261	1,051	1,060	899	161
Percent-----	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wife or other member in labor force-----	56.5	55.6	56.7	57.7	50.9
Wife only-----	40.6	40.6	39.3	39.6	37.3
Wife and other member-----	7.5	7.8	8.4	8.9	5.6
Other member only-----	8.3	7.1	9.1	9.2	8.1
Neither wife nor other member in labor force-----	43.5	44.4	43.4	42.3	49.1
FAMILIES WITH FEMALE HEAD					
Total families (thousands)-----	6,184	6,600	6,798	4,847	1,951
Head in labor force: Number (thousands)-----	3,288	3,510	3,679	2,725	954
Percent-----	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Other member in labor force-----	38.5	35.8	35.2	37.8	27.9
No other member in labor force-----	61.5	64.2	64.8	62.2	72.1
Head Employed					
Total: Number (thousands)-----	3,062	3,274	3,443	2,576	867
Percent-----	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Other member in labor force-----	39.1	36.6	35.6	36.3	27.6
No other member in labor force-----	60.9	63.4	64.4	61.7	72.4
Head Unemployed					
Total: Number (thousands)-----	226	236	236	149	87
Percent-----	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Other member in labor force-----	31.0	24.8	29.5	29.1	30.2
No other member in labor force-----	69.0	75.2	70.5	70.9	69.8

^{1/} Includes members of the Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post.