
COUNCIL on the ECONOMIC STATUS of WOMEN

400 SW, State Office Building, St. Paul 55155

(612) 296-8590

NEWSLETTER #51

JUNE 1981

IN THIS ISSUE

WOMEN, WORK AND FAMILIES, a summary of a recent national study conducted by Louis Harris and Associates and presented in the General Mills Family Report 1980-81, *Families at Work: Strengths and Strains*.

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY of action on proposals endorsed by the Council during the past legislative session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PUBLIC HEARING: Brainerd, Minnesota.
The hearing will be conducted in the Social Service Center at the Courthouse, 7:00 PM on Tuesday, July 21, 1981.

Like other hearings held outside the Twin Cities area, the topics of the Brainerd hearing are open. Participants may present information and recommendations on any topic which is relevant to the economic status of women in the area.

All meetings and hearings of the Council are open to the public. If you would like to testify, or for more information, please call the Council office at 296-8590 (Twin Cities area) or 1-800-652-9744 (non-metro, toll-free line).

WOMEN, WORK, & FAMILIES

A new national study reveals that women are in the work force to stay, not only to help support their families, but also to achieve personal satisfaction. The survey of attitudes about work and family also shows that there is concern about the pressures on families, but that citizens have faith in the family's strength and adaptability in a changing world.

Women say they would prefer to continue employment even if it was not economically necessary. However, many would choose part-time employment, reflecting the special pressures they feel in balancing the demands of work and family. Forty-one percent of all employed women would prefer part-time work, and an even higher proportion of managerial, professional, and executive women, 51 percent, would prefer part-time to full-time employment.

These are among the findings of a survey of American families conducted by Louis Harris and Associates and presented in the General Mills Family Report 1980-81, *Families at Work: Strengths and Strains*. Individuals from six different groups were interviewed: adult family members; teenagers; human resource executives; labor leaders; family traditionalists; and feminists.

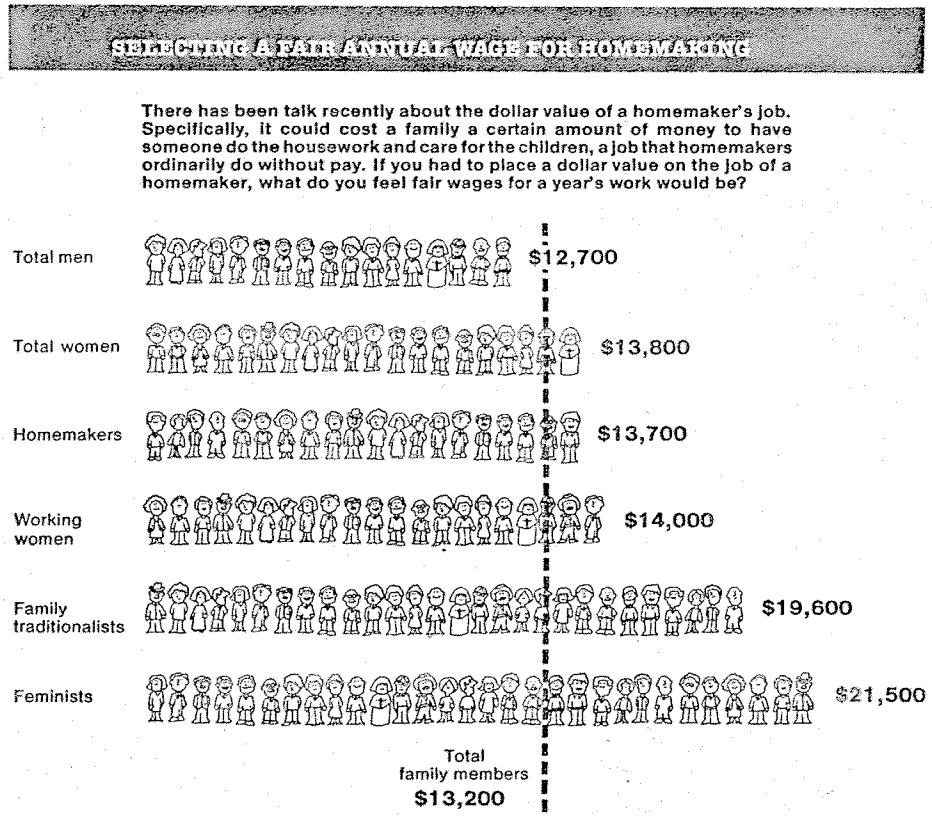
An overwhelming majority of all groups recognize that women have difficulty achieving career goals because of family responsibilities, and that people who expect to get ahead in their careers or jobs have less time to spend with their families. They also feel that women should be given career opportunities equal to those of men; and they do not believe that women would prefer not to be employed in a less inflationary economy.

Some of the reasons men and women are employed are shown in the table below. Taken collectively, these findings suggest that women are no longer expected to stay at home and that the number of employed women will continue to increase.

REASONS FOR WORKING		
Please tell me if each of the following is an important reason for your working, or not.		
Base	Working Men 582 %	Working Women 431 %
Providing you with a sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction		
Important reason	90	87
Not important reason	9	13
Helping make ends meet		
Important reason	90	84
Not important reason	10	16
Improving your family's standard of living		
Important reason	88	81
Not important reason	12	18
Providing a cushion or nest egg for your family		
Important reason	89	72
Not important reason	10	27
Earning money of your own to spend as you like		
Important reason	68	64
Not important reason	30	36
Paying for your children's or spouse's education		
Important reason	73	51
Not important reason	23	44
Providing for your own personal nest egg		
Important reason	66	51
Not important reason	33	48

The survey included several questions about homemaking as a full-time job. When asked whether homemaking as a full-time job has more advantages or more disadvantages than other jobs, 46 percent of all family members said "more disadvantages" while 41 percent said "more advantages." Almost two-thirds of women who are currently homemakers, however, said this job has more advantages than others.

Both feminists and family traditionalists placed a higher dollar value on the work of homemakers than did the general public:



The rigid division of roles into breadwinning for one parent and caring for home and children for the other is rejected by family traditionalists, feminists, labor leaders, employed men, and employed women. All groups believe that raising children should be the responsibility of both parents; that financial decisions should be shared jointly; and that decisions about housework and family activities should be shared.

Over 50 percent of children now under 18 years of age have two employed parents. About half of all family members surveyed feel that this trend has had negative effects on families. The reason most often cited is that children need stronger guidance, supervision, and discipline than can be given when both parents are employed.

Most feminists and a majority of employed women, however, feel that both parents being employed has positive effects or no effects at all on families. Positive effects cited are personal fulfillment of women, added financial security for the family, improved family communications, and greater independence for children. All groups agree that "when both parents work, children have to become more self-reliant and independent."

