

California Women and Employment: An Overview

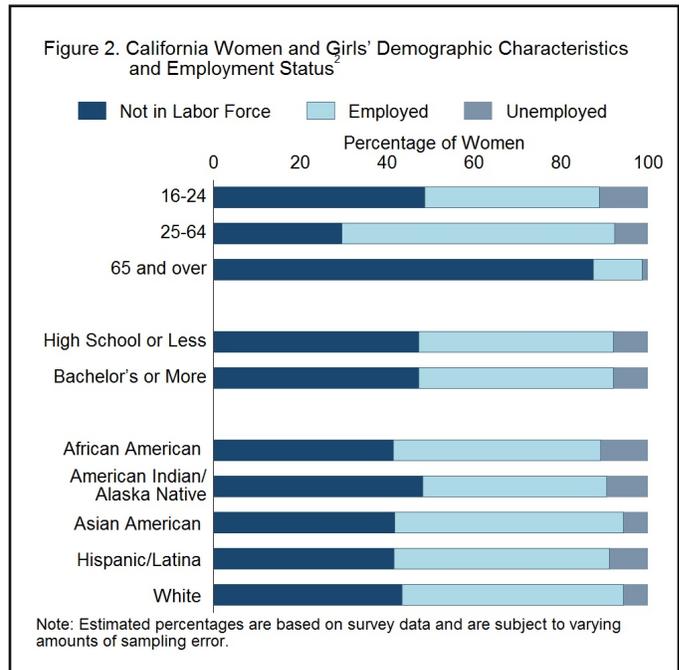
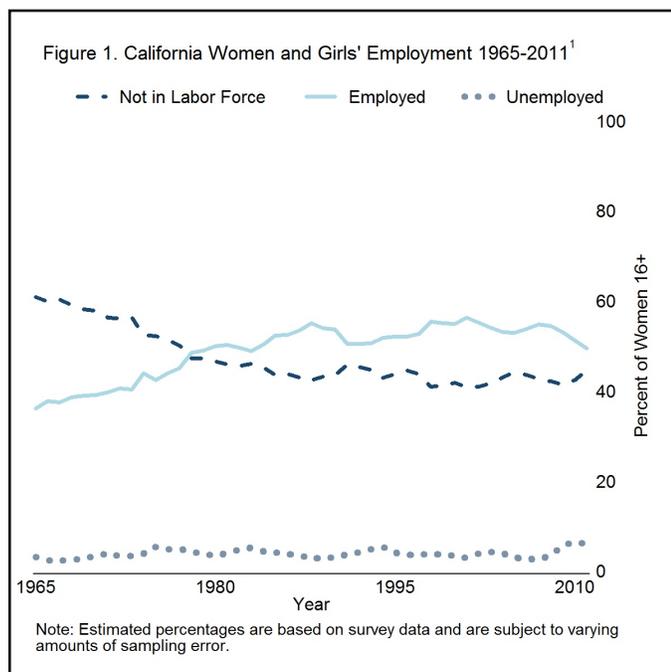
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California is home to nearly 15 million women and girls (hereafter, women) ages 16 and over. Fifty-two percent were employed and 7 percent were seeking employment during 2011. Despite comprising 46 percent of the labor force, this group earned 39 percent of total personal income in California during 2011. This Short Subject presents the employment rates of California women over time; their current employment rate according to age group, highest degree attained, and race/ethnic category; and their occupational category with median personal income.

CALIFORNIA WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT SINCE THE 1960S

Figure 1 presents information about the employment status of California women (ages 16 and over) between 1965 and 2011 based on Current Population Survey data. The percentage of California women not in the labor force (i.e., unemployed and not seeking employment) declined steadily between 1965 and 1990. Since 1990, that percentage has fluctuated on a year-to-year basis but remains around 45 percent. This



trend is complemented by the percentage of employed women in the state, which has increased over time to close to 50 percent of California women in 2011. Though the percentage of unemployed women in the state has been relatively stable (ranging from 2 to 5 percent), there was a notable increase in recent years (6 percent in 2011).

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

Figure 2 breaks out employment status by age, education, and race/ethnic category using data from the American Community Survey. Unsurprisingly, the greatest source of variation in employment status was age. Compared to women between the ages of 25 and 64, women between ages 16 and 24 were less likely to be in the labor force, as many in this age group are full-time students. However, those in the youngest age group also had the highest unemployment rate of all the age groups presented here. Women 65 and over were far less likely to be in the labor force, and, if they were in the labor force, less likely to be unemployed.

The employment status of California women also varied with their level of education. Women with a high school degree, its equivalent, or less were both less likely to be in the labor force and more likely to be unemployed than those with a college degree.

Figure 2 also presents California women's employment according to race/ethnic category. Approximately 60 percent of California women in each race/ethnic category were either employed or seeking employment in 2011. Unemployment rates were highest for African-American (11 percent), American Indian/Alaskan Native (9 percent), and Latina (9 percent) women.

OCCUPATION AND INCOME

Historically, women working outside of the home had limited career options and were often found in low-paying occupations. Table 1 reveals that California women continue to be concentrated in lower-paying occupations and scarce in higher-paying occupations when comparing the median income of an occupation to the median personal income of employed Californians (roughly \$35,000 in 2011). Approximately 60 percent of California women were in occupations that had a median income below \$35,000. Conversely, approximately 40 percent were in occupations with a median income above \$35,000.

REFERENCES

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau, 1965-2012 Current Population Survey Internet and Computer Use Supplement Public Use File, 2012.
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2012.

Table 1. California Women and Girls Represented Widely in the Labor Force²

Detailed Occupation Groups	Percentage of Employed Women	Median Personal Income Women	Above/Below Median CA Income (\$35,000)
Office and administrative support	20%	\$30,804	↓
Sales	12%	\$20,000	↓
Management	9%	\$60,000	↑
Education, training, and library	8%	\$35,600	↑
Personal care and service	7%	\$15,000	↓
Healthcare practitioner and technical	7%	\$65,000	↑
Business and financial operations	6%	\$51,000	↑
Food preparation and serving related	6%	\$13,200	↓
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	4%	\$14,600	↓
Healthcare support	4%	\$24,000	↓
Production	4%	\$20,000	↓
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	2%	\$38,800	↑
Community and social service occupation	2%	\$42,000	↑
Transportation and material moving	2%	\$20,000	↓
Computer and mathematical science	2%	\$72,000	↑
Legal	1%	\$65,000	↑
Life, physical, and social science	1%	\$59,190	↑
Protective service	1%	\$40,000	↑
Farming, fishing, and forestry	1%	\$12,800	↓
Architecture and engineering	1%	\$70,000	↑
Installation, maintenance, and repair	<1%	\$36,000	↑
Construction and extraction	<1%	\$30,000	↓
Armed Forces	<1%	\$33,000	↓

Note: Estimated percentages and median incomes are based on survey data and are subject to varying amounts of sampling error.

FURTHER READING

Women in the Labor Force: A Databook, BLS Reports, United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013.
<http://www.bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2012.pdf>

This short subject was requested by the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.
<http://www.women.ca.gov>

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