

Women in the workplace

Week 2: Women bring home the bacon

Compiled by
Bill Pinkovitz, Professor,
UW-Extension.

QUESTIONS? Contact
Bill Pinkovitz at
bill.pinkovitz@ces.uwex.edu.

Economic Snapshot
is a weekly feature
provided by the

UW
Extension

20 percent more wives are breadwinners now than in 1967

Increasingly, women in the United States are becoming the breadwinners in married-couple families. The U.S. Census reports that 60.5 percent of the married women in the U.S. are employed. According to the recently released Shriver Report, "The New Breadwinners," 38.1 percent of working wives earned as much or more than their husbands in 2008. This compares to only 18.7 percent in 1967.

In 2008, wives with at least one child under eighteen years old were the primary breadwinners in almost one-third (31.4 percent) of the married-couple families in which the wife worked. In 1967, wives were the primary breadwinners in only one in nine of those

households. Somewhat surprisingly, this trend does not vary significantly with the age of the children. Wives were the primary breadwinners in 31 percent of married-couple families with children under the age of 6 with working mothers.

Married women age 45 to 60 and those with a college degree are most likely to be family breadwinners. Wives between ages 18 and 30 are least likely to be the breadwinners in their families.

This chart provides selected data from the Shriver Report. Similar data and other data by age, income, ethnicity, and education are available at <http://www.awomansnation.com/economy.php>

Percentage of working wives earning as much or more than their husbands

	1967	2008
All working wives	18.7	39.1
With children under 18 years	11.5	31.4
With children under 6 years	9.3	31.0
< 30 years old	14.8	30.3
30 to 44 years old	11.9	32.7
45 to 60 years old	24.1	40.0
With < high school	20.3	35.3
With high school degree	14.5	36.6
With college degree	30.8	41.1

Source: Table 1, The New Breadwinners, Shriver Report, 2008