



Working for a Living

Labor Force Participation of Utah's Women

"Woman has always had one opportunity—the opportunity to work; this one thing has never been denied her. Man has never considered that she was out of her sphere when she toiled in the fields and factories; he has never criticized her for leaving her home for any kind of drudgery. But when she began to enter the professional field and when she began to compete with men in the great work of the world, she was reminded that she was going out of her own sphere and was neglecting her home."

Annie Wells Cannon,
Member of the Utah
State Legislature, 1913

They're here. In 2007, 63 percent of Utah's women 16 years and older were working or actively seeking employment. Even though record numbers of women are now employed, they have played an important part in America's paid labor force since before the turn of the century.

In 1890, 18 percent of U.S. working-age women were part of the labor force. From that point, female participation rates have grown at a steady speed—except for the swell experienced in World War II as women filled the employment gaps left by soldiers.

The influx of women into the labor market has occurred gradually. Since the post WWII years, women's participation rates have increased about 8

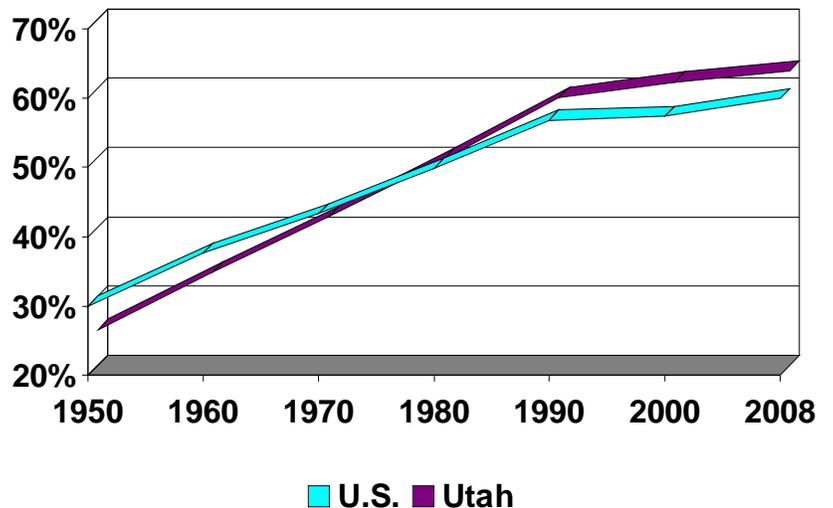
percentage points every decade. (A participation rate is the share of the working-age population working or looking for work.)

A Utah Participation History

The Census for 1950 indicated that 25 percent of Utah's working-age women had joined the labor force. This rate fell significantly below the national average of 30 percent for the year. Now, the Bureau of Labor Statistics tells us that more than 63 percent of Utah women work outside the home—more than double the 1950 rate.

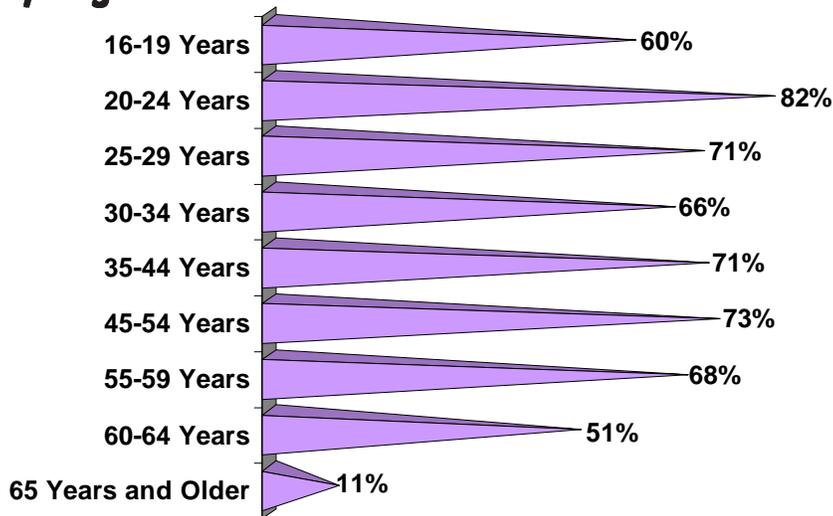
Utah played catchup in 1980, when its participation rate of 50 percent equaled the national average. Since that point, Utah has consistently shown **higher** participation rates than the U.S.

Female Civilian Labor Force Participation Rates



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Utah 2008 Female Participation Rates by Age



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

average. People may think that a smaller share of Utah women work than the national average, but it's just not so. In 2008, Utah's rate measured more than 62 percent compared to a 59-percent rate for the United States.

Behind this higher-than-average rate lies Utah's unusual demographics. Younger women are more likely to work outside the home and Utah has a lot of young women.

Men Losing Ground

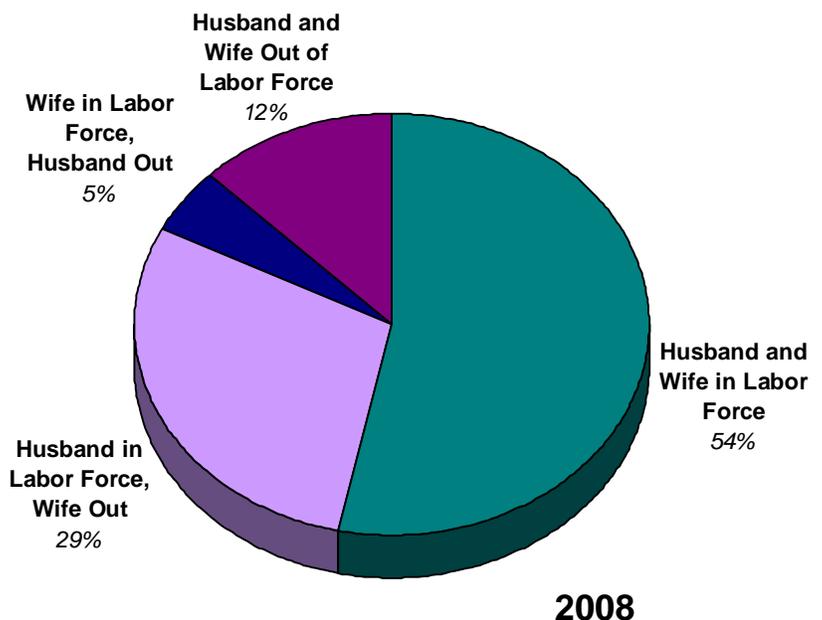
While Utah women's rate of labor force participation had climbed steadily upwards, Utah men have actually decreased their participation. In 1950, almost 83 percent of Utah men were in the labor force compared to 77 percent in 2000. This drop in the male

workforce participation has resulted largely from the trend toward early retirement.

It's an Age Thing

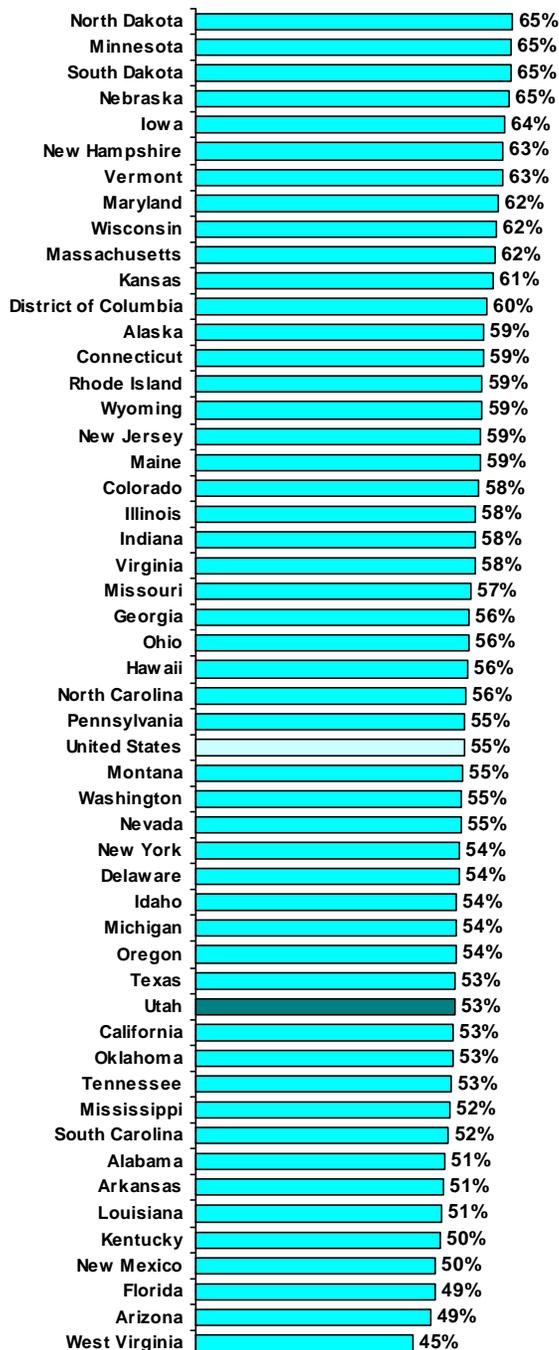
Age has a definite bearing on a Utah woman's likelihood of working. In 2008, Utah women between the ages of 20 and 24 were most likely to work—82 percent worked outside the home. Females between the ages of 45-54 are next most likely to work. During the adult years, Utah women are least likely to work between the ages of 60 and 64. This may reflect a trend toward earlier retirement for this group also. However,

Utah Labor Force Status of Married Couple Families



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

2008 Married Couple Families with Both Spouses in the Labor Force



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

it's probably a generational characteristic, too. Many of these women have had careers in the home, rather than outside the home.

While female teens show a 57-percent participation rate, 11 percent of women 65 years and older are still making money in the labor market. Compared to the U.S., a smaller-than-average percentage of Utah women participates in the labor force between the ages of 30 and 34—a time when many women leave the labor market for home and maternal duties.

Utah's Families at Work

Gone are the days of the traditional working father and stay-at-home mom as the prime family type. In 2008, most of Utah's married couple families (53 percent) included both a working husband and working wife. Keep in mind that 13 percent of married-couple families have neither wife nor husband in the workforce (many are retired). In addition, 5 percent of these families have a wife who works and a husband who does not.

In a ranking of states, Utah falls below average in the percentage of married couple families with both spouses in the labor force. Many of the other low-ranking counties are in the southern part of the country. In addition, several of these low-ranking states are retirement meccas which undoubtedly contributes to their lower-than-average figures since retirees have removed themselves from the labor force.

Dead Last

While Utah certainly reflects the trend toward more working mothers, it ranks dead last for the percentage of children in 2008 with both parents in the labor force. Nevertheless, notice that half of Utah's children still have both parents working outside the home.

Mom's Working, Too.

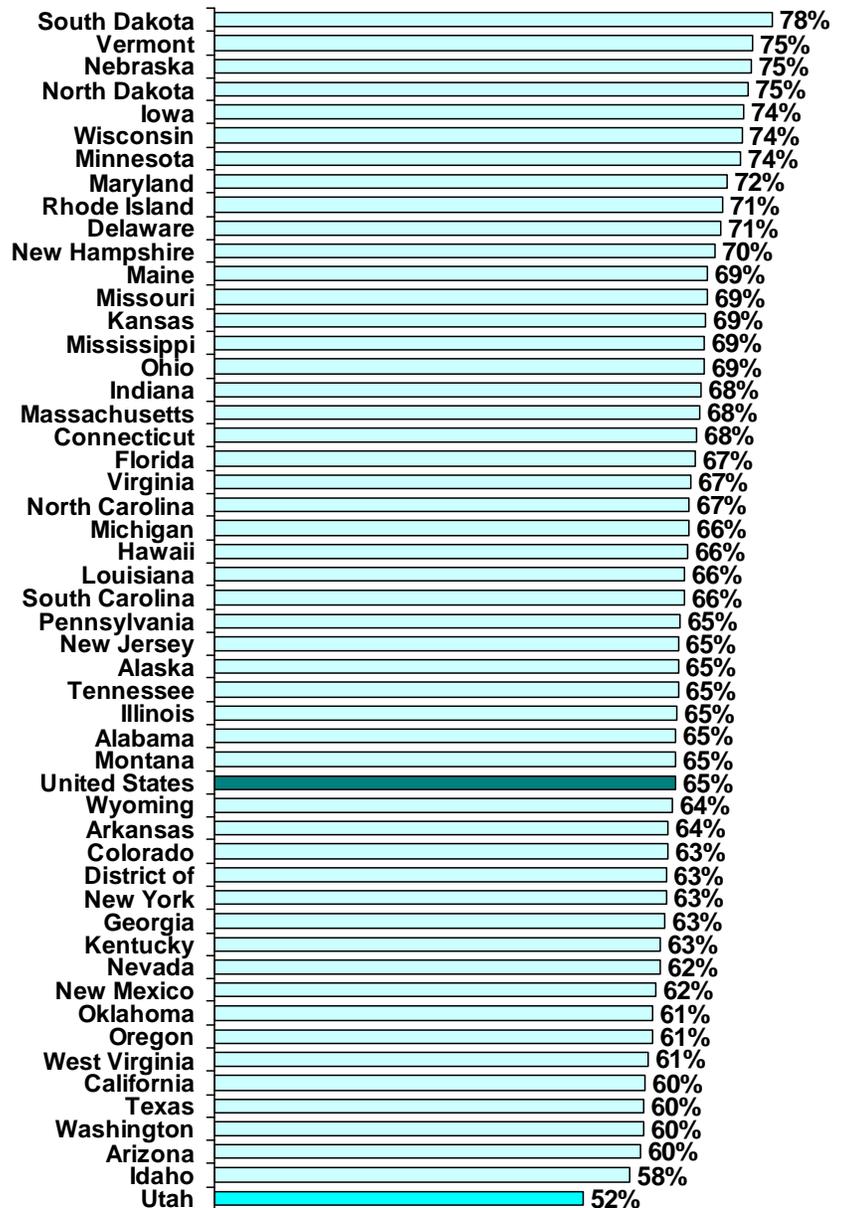
Most moms work. In Utah during 2008, 59 percent of mothers with only pre-school-age children worked outside the home. That figure measures noticeably lower than the U.S. average. However, Utah almost closes the gap with the U.S. in the participation rankings for mothers with children 6-17. Roughly three-fourths of both Utah and U.S. mothers of only school-age children work outside the home.

Not That Different

Probably every working mother wants to know how her labor force participation affects her children. Suzanne M. Bianchi, a well known demographer and researcher has surveyed the current research literature. Bianchi points out:

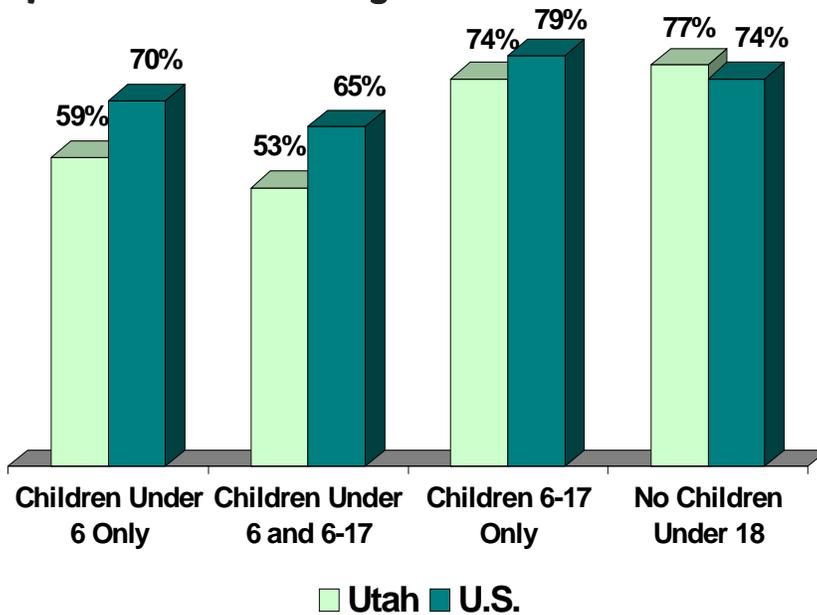
- *Despite the fact that more women are in the paid labor force than ever before, the time mothers spend with their children has changed very little over time.*
- *Although much effort has been devoted to searching for negative results from mom working outside the home, there has been relatively little negative consequence for children.*

2008 Children with Both Parents in the Labor Force



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Women in the Labor Force in 2008 by Presence and Age of Children



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

- On the other hand, the lack of two-parent families does cause problems for children—both behaviorally and monetarily.
- Research by Cathleen Zick and Keith Bryant indicates that mothers today report spending as much time with their children as did mothers during the Baby Boom.
- Per family, Zick and Bryant estimate mothers in the 1920s spent the same time in child care activities as those in the 1970s.

- In the early twentieth century, mothers spent much of their time involved in unpaid family work and housework. In addition, larger families meant older children could mind younger children.

- Because families today are smaller, mothers actually spend more care time per child than mothers in previous generations.

- Although mothers who work outside the home do spend slightly less time with their children than nonworking mothers, the amount of time is not significant.

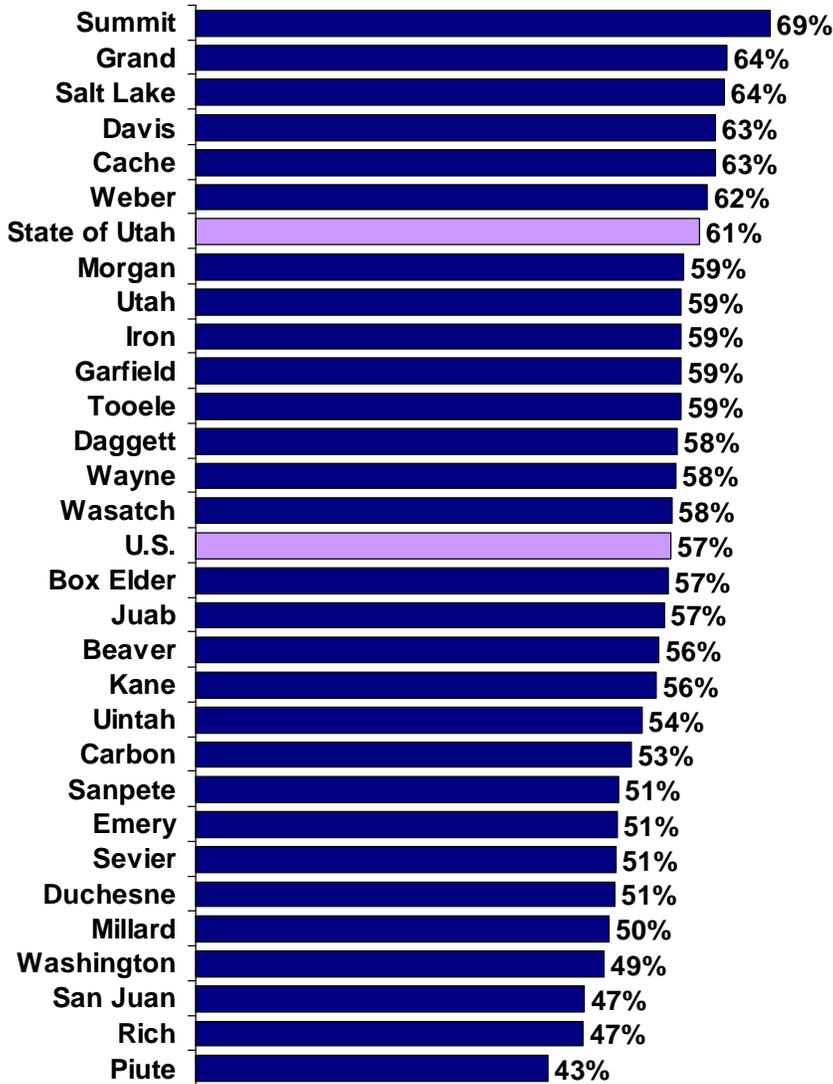
- Research suggests that working mothers protect time with their children by reallocating their priorities. They may do less housework or volunteer work and at the same time give up leisure time and sleep.

- Evidence suggests that mothers, on average, have not reduced their time with children, while fathers (at least married fathers) have significantly increased the time they spend with their children.

The Country Mouse and the City Mouse

In general, more densely populated areas have higher labor force participation rates. Utah's most metropolitan counties all rank near the top of the

Utah 2000 Female Participation Rates by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

participation rankings. However, two less-populated counties—Summit and Grand show the highest participation rates—69 and 64 percent respectively. Coincidentally, these two economies are heavily invested in the tourism trade.

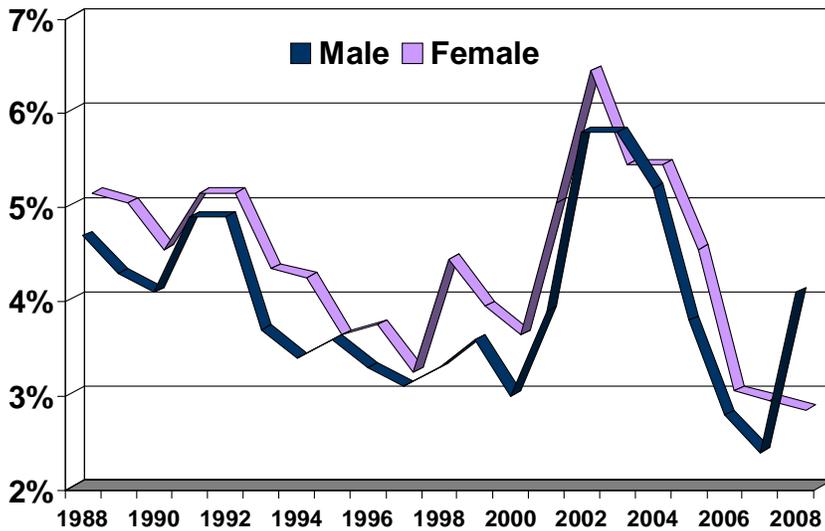
Counties where the population is less dense and older tend to have the lowest participation rates. Piute County is one of the smallest counties in the state and also has the oldest population. It shows the lowest female participation rate in 2000 in Utah—only 43 percent.

A Dubious Honor

While more and more women are a part of the labor force, they are more likely than men to be unemployed. Typically, female unemployment rates have exceeded male unemployment rates. For example, in 2007, Utah women's unemployment rate measured 2.9 percent compared to the male figure of 2.4 percent. The fact that women tend to move in and out of the labor market more than their male counterparts accounts for much of this pattern.

Since 1988, Utah female unemployment rates have surpassed male jobless rates—except during economic downturns. The recessionary year of 2008 proved no different—male jobless rate proved higher (4.1 percent) than that of women (2.8 percent).

Utah Unemployment Rates by Gender



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Utah women are much more likely to work part-time than their U.S. counterparts. Roughly 38 percent of Utah's female labor force works part-time compared to 25 percent of the U.S. female labor force. Larger families may make working longer hours more difficult in Utah. Of course, Utah's males are also more likely to work part-time (15 percent compared to 11 percent nationally). Why? Utah has a high participation rate among its teenage population—both male and female. These young people are more likely to engage in part-time work.

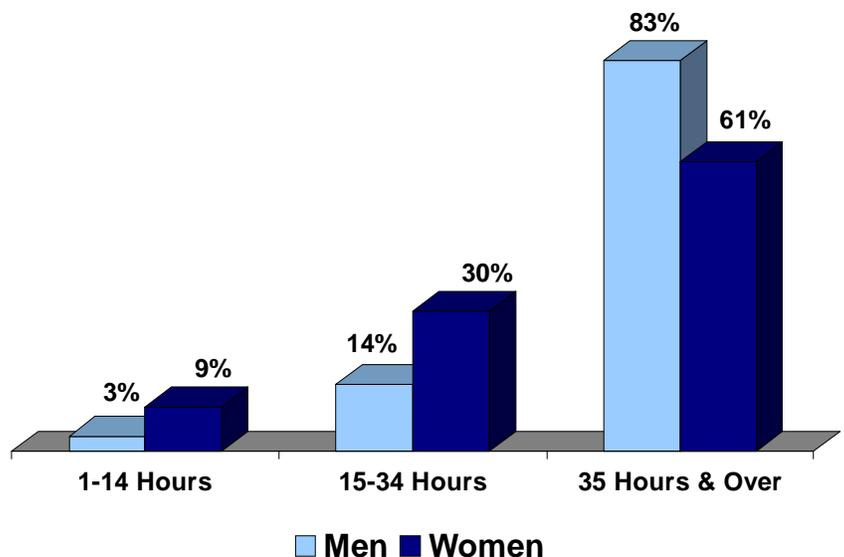
Nevertheless, women are working longer hours than ever before. The average Utah woman worked 33 hours

In recessions, industries which typically employ higher percentages of men—like manufacturing—are hardest hit. Therefore, male jobless rates typically rise above those of women.

Working Nine to Five

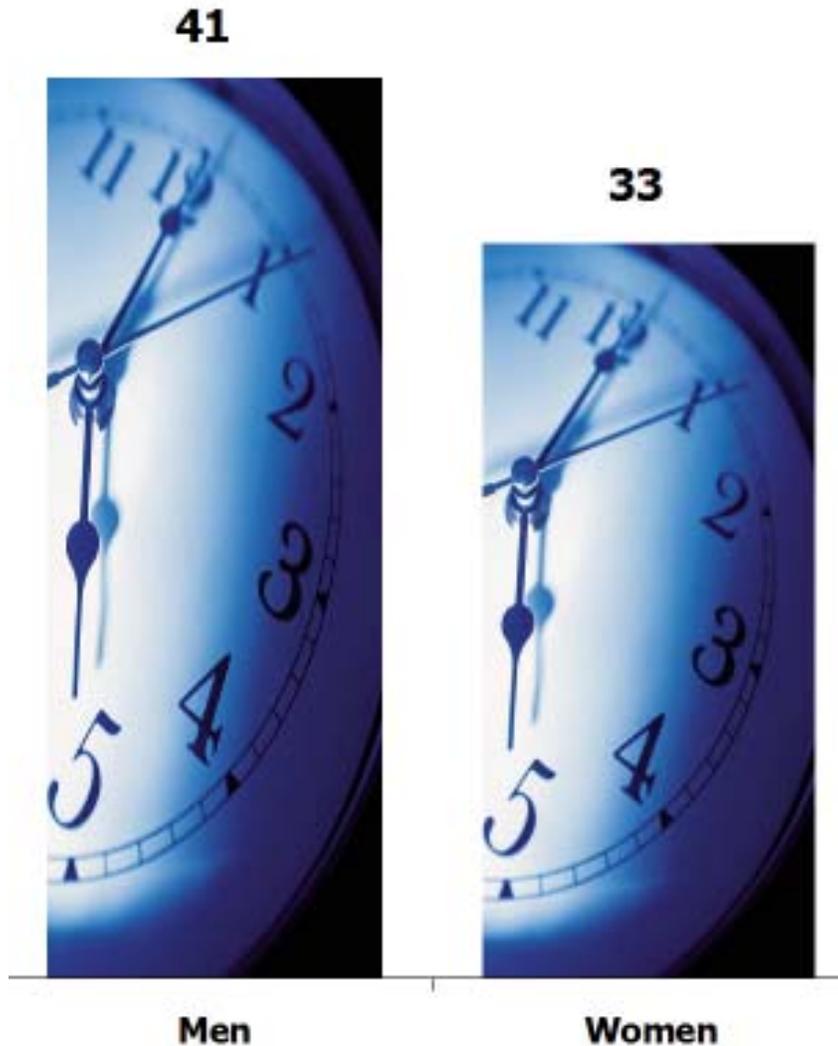
Even though the gap between male and female participation in the labor force may be narrowing, the work patterns of women and men still differ significantly. For one thing, women are much more likely to work part-time than men. In 2002, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 38 percent of Utah's women employees worked part-time—only 15 percent of men registered in that same category. In fact, Utah women account for over two-thirds of those working less than full-time.

Utah Average Weekly Hours at Work 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Utah Average Weekly Hours at Work 2008



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

per week in 2008—not all that far behind men with an average of 41 hours per week.

Why are More and More Women Working?

- *Because of their marital status, workforce participation has become an economic necessity.*
- *Many work to provide families with a higher standard of living.*
- *Smaller families and delayed child birth make it easier for women to combine home and work responsibilities.*
- *Women are obtaining more education providing access to more interesting and better paying jobs.*
- *The opportunity cost of foregoing employment for better educated women is higher.*
- *Women find paid employment offers them opportunities to use and develop skills and talents not necessarily needed in the home.*
- *Changes in social morés or norms make employment more acceptable for women.*
- *Economic expansion has provided employment.*

The times they are a-changing. Labor force participation for Utah women has now become the norm rather than the exception.