

Why are so many U.S. mothers becoming their family's primary economic support? ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Available online [paid or institutional access] ^[2]

Abstract

Although the growing prevalence of primary-earning mothers is well established, this article uses 1996 and 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation data to show U.S. mothers' rate of transition to primary-earner status increased by nearly 50% over the observed period. The rate of transition to primary earning predominantly increased among mothers with some college experience and mothers racialized as White, largely catching up to the rate among mothers identifying as Black. A decomposition analysis determined that relationship instability in marital and cohabiting relationships accounts for less than 20% of the increased transition rate, although somewhat more for Hispanic mothers. Roughly 75% of the growth in maternal primary-earning spells was attributed to situations in which the mother's earnings increased in isolation or, for mothers with a partner, often paired with a decrease in the partner's earnings. This latter circumstance was particularly the case for mothers identifying as Black or Asian. Findings show that most of the growth in mothers becoming primary earners from the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s occurred not because mothers experienced more household economic changes (frequency), but because household economic changes often increased mothers' relative financial contributions (impact). The impact component accounted for the entire increased transition rate across mothers' educational attainment and racial and ethnic identity.

Related link: More Canadian women are the breadwinners of the family, but the 'motherhood penalty' keeps many from getting ahead ^[3]

Families count 2024 ^[4]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/25/02/why-are-so-many-us-mothers-becoming-their-familys-primary> ^[2]

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/386023239_Why_Are_So_Many_US_Mothers_Becoming_Their_Family's_Primary_Economic_Support ^[3]

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