

Most U.S. mothers of infants work - Census Bureau [US] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

More than half of U.S. women with an infant work, compared with less than one-third two decades earlier, because of such factors as a need for money, a desire for independence and the spread of child care, the government said Tuesday.

Using its most recent data, the U.S. Census Bureau said that in 1998 there were 3.7 million women between the ages of 15 and 44 with a child aged 1 or less and that 59 percent of them worked, up from 31 percent in 1976.

The bureau said 36 percent of the 1998 mothers were full-time employees, 17 percent were part-timers and 6 percent were unemployed but looking for a job.

"More and more women are returning to the labor force because they have facilities to take care of their children at the home or at the workplace," said Amara Bachu, report co-author and demographer for the Census Bureau.

Besides, mothers may need the pay, want to be independent or be attracted by the growing number of good-paying jobs, Bachu said. The bureau also found that marital status was a "strong determinant" of whether new mothers returned to work.

The total number of women of child-bearing age, defined as being between the ages of 15 and 44, was over 60 million in 1998, the bureau said. The group numbered over 41 million in 1976.

The Census Bureau started recording data on working mothers in 1976. The minimum age for the category was lowered to 15 from 18 in 1990, Bachu said.

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