

# COUNCIL on the ECONOMIC STATUS of WOMEN

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LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY of action on proposals endorsed by the Council during the past legislative session.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**PUBLIC HEARING:** Brainerd, Minnesota.  
The hearing will be conducted in the Social Service Center at the Courthouse, 7:00 PM on Tuesday, July 21, 1981.

Like other hearings held outside the Twin Cities area, the topics of the Brainerd hearing are open. Participants may present information and recommendations on any topic which is relevant to the economic status of women in the area.

All meetings and hearings of the Council are open to the public. If you would like to testify, or for more information, please call the Council office at 296-8590 (Twin Cities area) or 1-800-652-9744 (non-metro, toll-free line).

# WOMEN, WORK, & FAMILIES

A new national study reveals that women are in the work force to stay, not only to help support their families, but also to achieve personal satisfaction. The survey of attitudes about work and family also shows that there is concern about the pressures on families, but that citizens have faith in the family's strength and adaptability in a changing world.

Women say they would prefer to continue employment even if it was not economically necessary. However, many would choose part-time employment, reflecting the special pressures they feel in balancing the demands of work and family. Forty-one percent of all employed women would prefer part-time work, and an even higher proportion of managerial, professional, and executive women, 51 percent, would prefer part-time to full-time employment.

These are among the findings of a survey of American families conducted by Louis Harris and Associates and presented in the General Mills Family Report 1980-81, *Families at Work: Strengths and Strains*. Individuals from six different groups were interviewed: adult family members; teenagers; human resource executives; labor leaders; family traditionalists; and feminists.

An overwhelming majority of all groups recognize that women have difficulty achieving career goals because of family responsibilities, and that people who expect to get ahead in their careers or jobs have less time to spend with their families. They also feel that women should be given career opportunities equal to those of men; and they do not believe that women would prefer not to be employed in a less inflationary economy.

Some of the reasons men and women are employed are shown in the table below. Taken collectively, these findings suggest that women are no longer expected to stay at home and that the number of employed women will continue to increase.

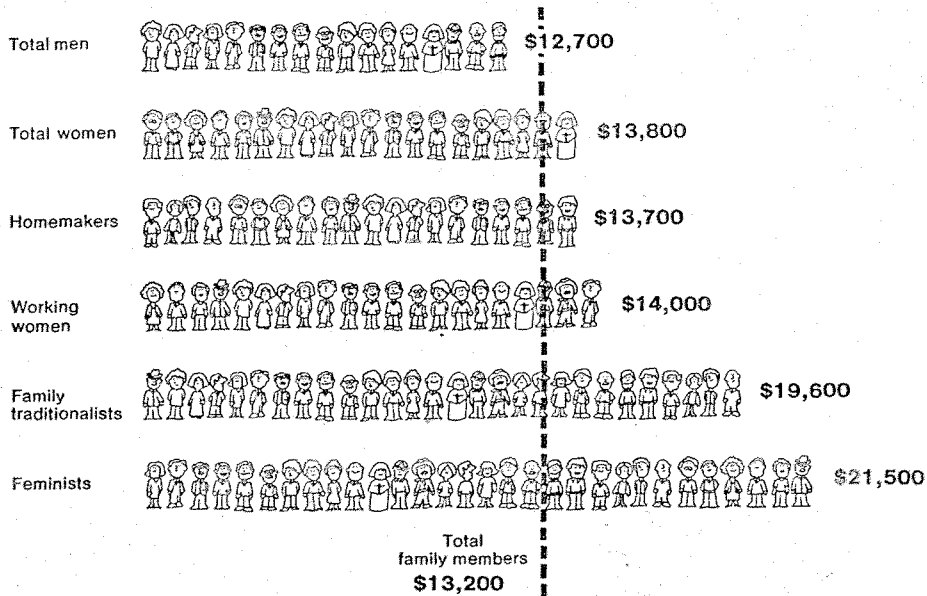
REASONS FOR WORKING		
Please tell me if each of the following is an important reason for your working, or not.		
Base	Working Men 582 %	Working Women 431 %
<b>Providing you with a sense of accomplishment and personal satisfaction</b>		
Important reason	90	87
Not important reason	9	13
<b>Helping make ends meet</b>		
Important reason	90	84
Not important reason	10	16
<b>Improving your family's standard of living</b>		
Important reason	88	81
Not important reason	12	18
<b>Providing a cushion or nest egg for your family</b>		
Important reason	89	72
Not important reason	10	27
<b>Earning money of your own to spend as you like</b>		
Important reason	68	64
Not important reason	30	36
<b>Paying for your children's or spouse's education</b>		
Important reason	73	51
Not important reason	23	44
<b>Providing for your own personal nest egg</b>		
Important reason	66	51
Not important reason	33	48

The survey included several questions about homemaking as a full-time job. When asked whether homemaking as a full-time job has more advantages or more disadvantages than other jobs, 46 percent of all family members said "more disadvantages" while 41 percent said "more advantages." Almost two-thirds of women who are currently homemakers, however, said this job has more advantages than others.

Both feminists and family traditionalists placed a higher dollar value on the work of homemakers than did the general public:

**STUDYING A YEAR: ANNUAL WAGES FOR HOMEMAKING**

There has been talk recently about the dollar value of a homemaker's job. Specifically, it could cost a family a certain amount of money to have someone do the housework and care for the children, a job that homemakers ordinarily do without pay. If you had to place a dollar value on the job of a homemaker, what do you feel fair wages for a year's work would be?



The rigid division of roles into breadwinning for one parent and caring for home and children for the other is rejected by family traditionalists, feminists, labor leaders, employed men, and employed women. All groups believe that raising children should be the responsibility of both parents; that financial decisions should be shared jointly; and that decisions about housework and family activities should be shared.

Over 50 percent of children now under 18 years of age have two employed parents. About half of all family members surveyed feel that this trend has had negative effects on families. The reason most often cited is that children need stronger guidance, supervision, and discipline than can be given when both parents are employed.

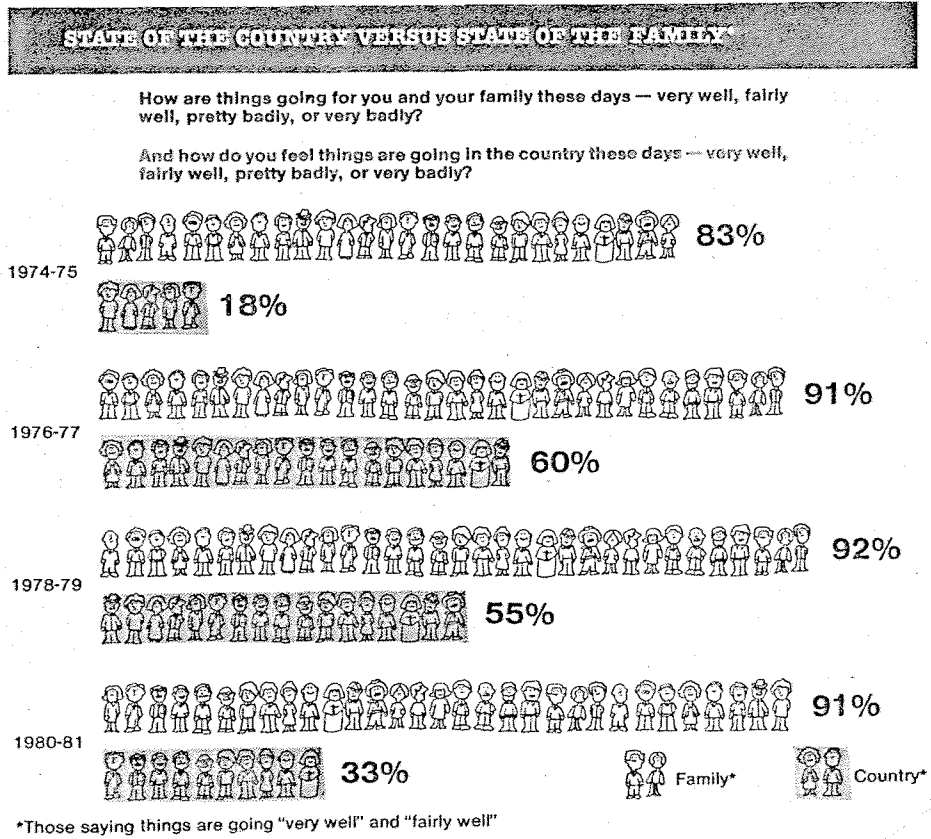
Most feminists and a majority of employed women, however, feel that both parents being employed has positive effects or no effects at all on families. Positive effects cited are personal fulfillment of women, added financial security for the family, improved family communications, and greater independence for children. All groups agree that "when both parents work, children have to become more self-reliant and independent."

Half of parents say their employment has had an effect on their decisions about how to rear a child, showing a strong interrelationship between child rearing and work or career. One-fifth say their employment has had an effect on decisions about when to bear a child, and 7 percent say employment has affected decisions on whether to have any children.

Survey responses do not lead to a "one-solution blueprint" on how to care for children in two-earner families. However, 85 percent of family members and a high percentage of other groups agreed that support from employers would be helpful in balancing the sometimes conflicting responsibilities of employment and children. When asked which employee benefits would be helpful, the most frequent responses were: part-time work with full benefits, paid personal leave for responsibilities related to family and children, and paid disability and personal leave for more than six weeks for pregnancy and maternity.

Despite the sense that families are under pressure, an overwhelming 91 percent of those surveyed said things in their own families were going "very well" or "fairly well." Responses show that in every year since 1974, the public has felt more confidence in the state of the family than in the state of the nation as a whole.

The report concludes that the next decade will be a time of experimentation for both employers and families, with new kinds of employment patterns and new roles and responsibilities for children. "Through it all," say the writers, "the American family and system will show their traditional strength -- adaptability to a changing world."



Single copies of the report are available free of charge from General Mills, Box 6, Department 760, Minneapolis, MN 55460.

# LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

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The following proposals endorsed by the Council passed in the recent legislative session:

**Council Refunding:** Removes the sunset date to continue the existence of the Council. Appropriates \$191,000. Chapter 356

**Battered Women:** Provides continued funding for shelters and related services. Appropriates \$3,728,800. Chapter 360

**Marriage License Fee:** Increases the marriage license fee by \$15 (and the marriage dissolution fee) to help fund battered women's and displaced homemaker programs. Chapter 360

**Probable Cause Arrest:** Removes the restriction that an arrest take place in the offender's residence. Chapter 273

**Displaced Homemaker:** Provides continued funding for programs and related services. Appropriates \$786,000. Chapter 360

**Sexual Assault:** Provides continued funding for statewide coordination and administration and for grants to local communities. Appropriates \$822,000. Chapter 360

**Part-Time Students:** Continues funding of financial aid for financially needy students enrolled part-time in post-secondary institutions. Appropriates \$600,000. Chapter 359

**University of Minnesota Women's Athletics:** Continues funding for women's intercollegiate athletics in order to provide equal opportunity to female students. Chapter 359

**Family Planning:** Continues funding for family planning projects. Appropriates \$2,000,000. Chapter 360

**Volunteer Services:** Continues funding for the Governor's Office of Volunteer Services. Appropriates \$270,000. Chapter 356

**Child Care Sliding Fee:** Continues the program which provides a sliding scale subsidy for child care services to low-income parents. Appropriates \$1,636,200. Chapters 355,360

**Pension Notification:** Requires notification to the spouse of a Minnesota public employee of the employee's annuity options and of the option chosen. Chapter 68

**Programming for Women Offenders:** Requires counties to provide programming for women offenders comparable to that provided for male offenders. Appropriates a minimum of \$122,000 for two model programs. Chapter 360

**Withholding Support:** Allows for a more speedy court procedure for withholding wages of a non-paying spouse or parent and expands the definition of income from which support may be withheld. Chapter 360

**Job-Sharing:** Continues the job-sharing pilot program. Appropriates \$31,300. Chapter 356

**State Employees Training:** Continues a requirement that state agencies allocate training funds to clerical employees proportional to their numbers in each agency, but not to exceed 50 percent of training funds. Chapter 356

**Human Rights Enforcement Process:** Allows for damages for mental anguish or suffering. Increases the ceiling on punitive damages to \$6,000. (Chapter 364) Clarifies the meaning of reprisal. Permits the filing of a charge directly in district court. Grants the commissioner the authority to prioritize the caseload. (Chapter 330)

**Human Rights Contract Compliance:** Allows the department to revoke a state contract if the contractor does not have an approved affirmative action plan. Chapter 326

**Driver's License Name:** Allows a married applicant to use a family name prior to marriage or a middle name on a driver's license. Chapter 363

**Discriminatory Language:** Eliminates statutory language referring to members of one sex only in a number of statutes and substitutes inclusive language. Chapters 25,31,58

Note: Appropriations are for the biennium.