



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

Dear Friend:

We want to thank you for your cooperation in the ongoing nationwide study of family economics which we support through the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center. We appreciate your participation in the study and hope that we may continue to count on your help in this valuable research.

By supplying us with accurate data on the well-being of American households, you provide us with a basis for making better policy decisions and help us to correct some widespread but inaccurate notions about family economics.

We use data from the Census Bureau and from many other sources; however, the Michigan study is unique in that taking interviews each year with the same people helps us to understand the reasons for the year-to-year changes in family composition and income that are experienced by many households. In measuring changes over time, each additional year of information greatly increases the value of the data.

You have been very generous in contributing so much time to this research, and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare is most grateful for your cooperation in helping to make the Michigan study a success. We hope that you will continue to participate in this important study.

Sincerely,

*William A. Morrill*

William A. Morrill  
Assistant Secretary for  
Planning and Evaluation

*Wives*

The big event of our year was, of course, interviewing wives. These interviews have added enormously to our understanding of family economics and we are very grateful to you for making this one-time opportunity such a success. We wish that we could do it every year.

There hasn't been time yet to process all the new information, but we have analyzed some of it and will devote most of this report to giving you some comparisons between working wives and husbands based on their answers to the same series of questions about their jobs.

The answers to "How much education is required to get a job like yours?" were very similar for both husbands and wives. Twenty percent of both groups had jobs which required no particular level of education, 40 percent needed a high school education, and 6 percent needed to have completed some college. More husbands than wives, though, had jobs that required a college degree and twice as many husbands as wives needed post graduate degrees, but here we are talking about relatively few people. Besides the educational requirements for their jobs, 67 percent of husbands and 58 percent of wives needed additional special work experience or training.

However, husbands and wives were very far apart in their answers to the question, "On a job like yours, how long would it take the average new person to become fully trained and qualified?" Almost a third of working wives only took a month or less to become fully qualified for their jobs and more than three-quarters of them could learn all about their work in a year or less. On the other hand, more than half of the husbands needed up to five years or more to be fully trained and some of them were always learning.

Some employers are said not to like to hire married women, especially those with young children, expecting that they will have to keep running home because of a sick child or some other household disaster. We asked working husbands and wives, both those with and without young children, if they ever had to stay home from work because someone else in the family was sick. In the majority of families this never happens, but 11 percent of husbands and about 20 percent of the wives answered "yes" to the question. The husbands had mostly stayed home to care for their sick wives, and the wives to care for sick children. In almost all of these cases the total time lost from work during the year due to the illness of some other family member was a week or less, so this doesn't seem to be a major problem.

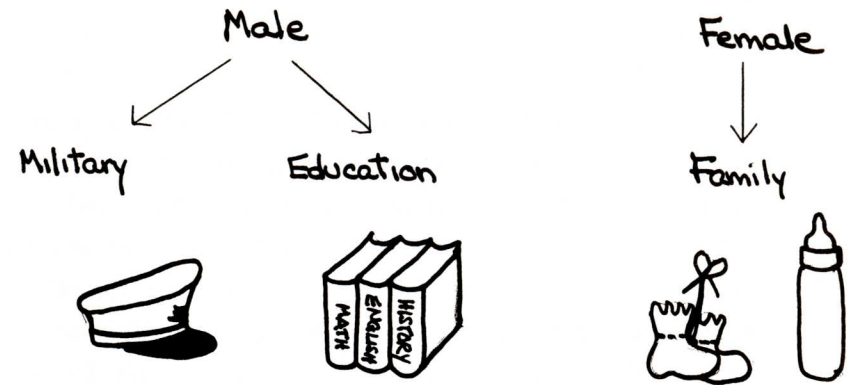
*Husbands Care for Sick Wives; Wives Care for Sick Children*



We also asked husbands and wives if they had ever stopped working for a year or more and then gone back to work later. We found that wives interrupted their working careers fairly often in order to raise their families, and we were surprised that about 30 percent of husbands answered

"yes" to the question. For husbands the interruptions were caused mostly by military service and some for education.

*Job Interruptions*



Conflicts for wives between job and home show up clearly in their answers to "Were there limits on where and what hours you could work when you started this job?" Thirty-six percent of wives (compared to 13 percent of husbands) had been limited, mostly by finding a job that fitted the hours they could work and still be home when they needed to be. More than half of the wives who are not working now but are thinking about it also said that the timing of work hours would be their biggest problem.

In spite of these difficulties, 46 percent of all wives work (though not all of them have full-time jobs) and more than half of the wives between the ages of 25 and 54 have jobs. The vast majority of these women plan to keep on working and more than half of them say that they would continue to work even if they didn't need the money.

As we have seen, most working wives need about the same amount of education to qualify for their jobs as their

husbands do, but they do not earn the same amount of money. The average hourly wage for all working husbands is \$6.13, compared to \$4.13 for wives who work more than half-time. For wives who work half-time or less the average hourly pay is \$3.69.

Husbands under 25 years old earn on the average \$4.51 an hour. From then on their average earnings climb neatly along with their ages until they reach their highest average hourly earnings of \$7.09 an hour between the ages of 45 and 54. Wives under 25 with full-time or more than half-time jobs earn an average of \$3.42 an hour. Between 25 and 34 their hourly earnings rise to \$4.38 an hour and stay there. That is as high as average hourly earnings go for wives who work full-time or more than half-time. Wives who work half-time or less also reach their highest average earnings (\$4.13 an hour) between ages 25 and 34. For part-time workers older than that, average hourly earnings are actually less than \$4.13.

The unequal earnings between husbands and wives may be partly due to sex discrimination, but not entirely. It probably took wives much less time than their husbands to be fully qualified for their jobs because, on the whole, they do very different kinds of work.

Forty percent of wives are secretaries, typists, clerical and sales workers. Another 12 percent operate various kinds of machines. Eighteen percent are service workers including, for example, beauticians, dressmakers, and waitresses. Nineteen percent hold professional jobs. About half of these are school teachers and the rest are divided among medical workers (other than physicians), nurses, professors, social scientists, librarians, technicians, and accountants. In the United States population there are certainly some wives who are physicians, lawyers, architects,

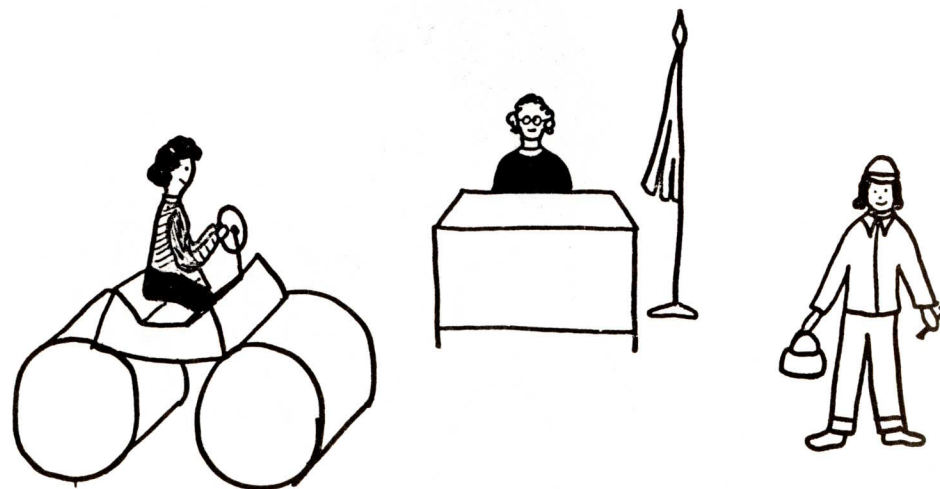
chemists, scientists and engineers, but there are not enough of them to turn up in a national sample.

These professional women and many other working wives undoubtedly do get regular salary increases, but in figuring averages they are overshadowed by the majority of wives who seem to be in dead-end jobs.

About the same number of husbands and wives hold professional jobs, but the husbands' jobs are more diversified. Fewer of them teach school and more are physicians, lawyers, scientists, engineers, and so on. Many more husbands than wives are executives, managers, foremen, craftsmen, and own their own businesses.

Wives may tend to congregate in secretarial, clerical, and service jobs because in this kind of work it is easier to arrange part-time or flexible work hours that fit in with home responsibilities. Let us hope that employers will soon come to realize that working wives are here to stay and make work hour arrangements available to them in a wider variety of jobs. Being restricted to certain kinds of work is also discrimination.

*Working Wives Are Here to Stay*



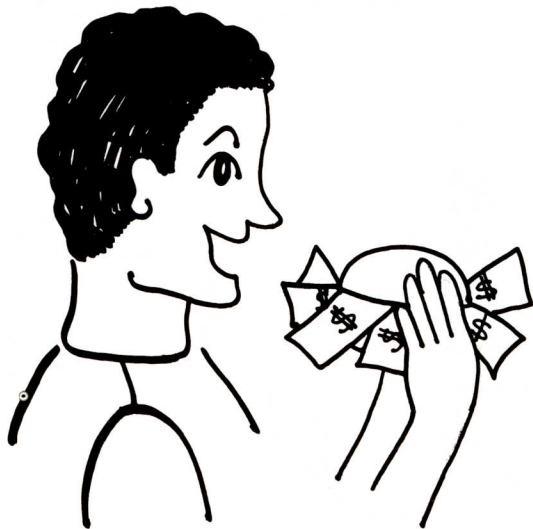
### *Housekeeping Notes*

We keep talking about wives with jobs as "working" wives as though the wives who stay home don't do anything. Actually, depending on the size of her family, the wife with no outside job does an average of 8 to 16 hours more housework a week than the wife with a job. For instance, non-working wives in a family of 7 spend an average of 41 hours a week on housework compared to 25 hours for working wives. Of course in all these households, some of the other six people may lend a hand. Husbands with or without working wives report working around the house an average of about 5 hours a week.

### *A Few Statistics*

Food prices went up a little last year, but the dramatic increases of the last few years seem to have leveled off. However, eating still makes a large hole in everyone's budget.

### *Eating Is Still Expensive*



We list below the average yearly food costs for families of from one to eight people.

### *1976 AVERAGE ANNUAL FOOD EXPENDITURES*

<u>Number in Family</u>	<u>Average Dollars Spent On Food Per Year</u>
1	\$ 936
2	1,685
3	2,182
4	2,656
5	3,106
6	3,699
7	4,029
8	4,230

We don't have enough families of more than eight people in the study to continue the list, but to give you an idea--the average yearly food bill for a family of twelve is around \$6,740.

No matter what your grandmother says, two cannot live as cheaply as one. However, it does cost two or more people considerably less to eat together than to buy and cook their food separately.

### *1977 Questionnaire*

As you know, there will be no separate questionnaire for wives this year although we will include a few more questions than usual about them in the regular questionnaire. We are reviving some questions from a few years ago about household utility bills, and we hate to think how they may have increased since we last asked you about them. Otherwise, the interview will cover about the same ground as usual.

## *The Future*

This year the study is ten years old. We have the money for 1977 interviewing, but a great deal of thought is being given to what happens after that.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare sent an "After Ten Years, What?" kind of letter to some of the people who depend on this study as a basis for their research to get their ideas about its future. HEW has sent us the answers they received. Those of us who work on the study have found these letters heartwarming and we thought that you might too. (It's nice to be reminded that you are taking part in something of national importance.) Here are a few typical quotes from researchers at various institutions:

"There simply is no other source of information of comparable quality and duration available."  
(Brookings Institution)

"I think that this survey is becoming a national resource and would strongly recommend that every consideration be taken to extending the panel ... ." (University of North Carolina)

"These data are a clear-cut public good and provide ... benefits to a wide variety of users." (U. S. Department of Labor)

"If the study is not continued, ten or twenty years from now researchers will look back and wonder how anyone could have been so short-sighted as to discontinue (it)." (The Urban Institute)

"I believe that it would be extraordinarily wasteful to terminate the study after ten years. Social scientists badly need longitudinal data on economic behavior and economic success ... . The key point is to have data over a long period." (Harvard University)

We don't know yet what will be decided in Washington, but everyone involved realizes that the future of the study, if it has one, depends in the end on your continuing kindness, patience, and, we hope, interest. We will let you

know what happens.

In the meantime, we look forward to talking to you again in a few months.

Happy 1977 and, as usual, very many thanks for your help.