

University of Michigan Law School  
**University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository**

---

Bibliography of Research Using UMLS Alumni  
Survey Data

University of Michigan Law School Alumni Survey  
Project

---

2019

# Women and Men Graduates of the University of Michigan Law School: Career Patterns and Adjustments for Children

David L. Chambers

*University of Michigan Law School*, [dcham@umich.edu](mailto:dcham@umich.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni\\_survey\\_scholarship](https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey_scholarship)

 Part of the [Labor and Employment Law Commons](#), [Law and Gender Commons](#), and the [Legal Profession Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Chambers, David L., "Women and Men Graduates of the University of Michigan Law School: Career Patterns and Adjustments for Children" (2019). *Bibliography of Research Using UMLS Alumni Survey Data*. 44.  
[https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni\\_survey\\_scholarship/44](https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey_scholarship/44)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Michigan Law School Alumni Survey Project at University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bibliography of Research Using UMLS Alumni Survey Data by an authorized administrator of University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [mLaw.repository@umich.edu](mailto:mLaw.repository@umich.edu).

# **Women and Men Graduates of the University of Michigan Law School: Career Patterns and Adjustments for Children**

David L. Chambers

## **NOTE added 2019**

In 1967, the University of Michigan Law School began an annual survey of selected classes of its alumni. The survey was administered by mail for forty consecutive years until 2006, when it was suspended upon the retirements of the survey's long-time co-directors, David L. Chambers and Terry K. Adams. In 2014, the survey was revived by Professor J. J. Prescott and was continued annually thereafter online.

The following memorandum is one of a group of memoranda Chambers wrote in 2009 and 2010 – after the survey project was suspended but before its revival – on a range of topics that the initial forty years of data permit exploring. Some of the memoranda evolved into publications. The memo here did not. Thus, the accuracy of the tables and other statistical figures in this memo have not been double-checked as they would have been if formally published. To verify the claims here and for access to additional data from years after the Project was revived, qualified researchers may apply for access to the full Project dataset. For guidance, go to [https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni\\_survey/alumni\\_survey\\_dataset.html](https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey/alumni_survey_dataset.html).

For important background information on the Project, the reader is encouraged to read [The University of Michigan Law School Alumni Survey Project: Description, Scope and Limits](#), a seven-page memo available on this website.

[https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni\\_survey\\_scholarship/](https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey_scholarship/)

Many of the other memoranda from this period, also available online, provide further comparisons of the experiences of the women and men graduates in the context of discussing various topics. [https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni\\_survey\\_scholarship/](https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey_scholarship/)

David L. Chambers

September 9, 2009

Women and Men Graduates of the University of Michigan Law School  
Patterns of Careers and Adjustments for Children  
David L. Chambers

The University of Michigan Law School was among the earliest law schools in the United States to admit women as students. The first woman, Sarah Killgore Wertman, graduated in 1871. Small numbers of other women followed her over the rest of the nineteenth century<sup>1</sup> and the first half of the twentieth, but never constituted more than two percent of any decade's students. Then, quite suddenly, in the late 1960s, women began applying to Michigan (and other American law schools) in substantial numbers and, amazingly, forty years later, at the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century roughly half of all law students in the United States were women.

Among all scholarly writing on the legal profession over the past forty years, the experiences of women entering the profession has attracted more attention than any other. In a recent fine review of the literature on women in the profession, Fiona Kay and Elizabeth Gorman cite over 180 articles, book chapters, and monographs in which women as law students, practicing lawyers, or judges is the central subject. [Kay and Gorman, 2008] The articles address a broad range of topics: sex discrimination in hiring and promotion, differing treatment of women by judges or other attorneys, the persistent differences in the earnings of women and men, the different choices women make with regard to jobs, women lawyers' efforts to balance the demands of work and family, and the possibility that women approach legal issues and client relationships in different ways than men do.

Back in 1966 when the Michigan Alumni Survey began, the founders had no clue that gender issues would become important to scholars of the profession. The questionnaires for the 15 year graduates of the classes of the 1950s and early 1960s (when fewer than two percent of the students were women) did not even ask respondents for their sex, and the early reports of these surveys, which drew on both the questionnaire responses and law school records, never mentioned women at all. It was not until 1973, with the initiation of the survey of graduates five years out, that gender was included. Appallingly, the first survey of a five-year class (the class of 1968, surveyed in 1973, asked women, *but not men*, how many children they had. It also asked whether they worked part time; how, if married their husband felt about their career; and how they had managed to combine work with family responsibilities, giving as choices on this last question a range of possibilities to check: "with ease," "with some difficulty," "with great difficulty," and "forced by family responsibilities to stop work."

---

<sup>1</sup> "Although by 1899-1900, there were 818 students enrolled in the Law School, the number of women enrolled to that time had never exceeded five in any one year." Brown, at 253.

Despite the failings of the early surveys, the Michigan dataset, by surveying at many points after graduation, has now gathers uniquely rich information for all classes that permits comparisons of the experiences of women and men. Questions about children that were not asked in the early years children were repeated when the classes were resurveyed later. Questions about childcare, part-time work and periods out of the labor force were also added. A sign of the richness of the Michigan data is that five of the articles in Kay and Gorman's bibliography are analyses of the Michigan dataset to compare the experiences of women and men lawyers.<sup>2</sup> A sixth article comparing the Michigan women and men, longer and more detailed than the other five, has been published since Kay and Gorman.<sup>3</sup>

In this paper that follows, we will not attempt a comparison of women and men across the whole range of experiences, attitudes and situations that our data record. Rather, after a brief re-introduction to the growth in the numbers of women law students and a comparisons of the backgrounds of women and men students across time, we will concentrate on two subjects only: first, the differences between women and men in their overall career patterns and, second (and related to the first), the differences between women and men in the adjustments they make in their careers after having children.

---

<sup>2</sup> Chambers (1989), Dau-Schmidt and Mukhopadhaya (1989); Wood, Corcoran, Courant (1993); Noonan and Corcoran (2004) and Noonan, Corcoran, and Courant (2005),

<sup>3</sup> Dau-Schmidt, Galanter, Mukhopadhaya, and Hull (2009).

## Growth in Numbers of Women at the Law School

We begin with a graph showing the growth in the numbers of women over the period from 1952 to 2009. [Reprint graph from Law Quad Notes.<sup>4</sup>

Table 1  
Percentage of women and men in classes,  
by Decade of Graduation,  
Classes of 1952 - 2008

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
	n=1925	n=3049	n=3648	n=3715	n=3817	n=xxx
Women	2%	2%	15%	32%	40%	44%
Men	98%	98%	85%	68%	60%	56%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

File: sb01; classes of 2002 forward, Zearfoss

Our data begin with the class of 1952, in which there were 14 women graduates in a class of 292.<sup>5</sup> Fourteen appears to have been a record number for any single class up to that point,<sup>6</sup> a record not exceeded until the graduating class of 1971, twenty classes later. In fact, toward the beginning of the 1960s, the numbers of women graduates declined almost to zero. In the combined graduating classes of 1960 and 1961, there was only one woman among the nearly 500 graduates.<sup>7</sup> By a few years later, in the class of 1966, 2.3 percent of the class were women.<sup>8</sup> From that point forward, through the 1970s, the percentage of women in the graduating classes doubled every few years. By the class of 1980, 28 percent of the graduates were women. By 2000, women exceeded 40 percent. Since 2000, including the classes in the law school now, 44 percent of the graduates and students have been women. In the class that began in the fall of 2009, 45 percent are women.

<sup>4</sup> Chambers and Adams, *Who We Were and Who We Are: How Michigan Law Students Have Changed Since the 1950s: Findings from 40 Years of Alumni Surveys*, Law Quadrangle Notes, Vol. 51, no. 1.

<sup>5</sup> See file women21

<sup>6</sup> See Brown, Table VIII:5, pp.700-02.

<sup>7</sup> See file women21

<sup>8</sup> File sb01g

## Backgrounds of the Women and Men

In several important respects, Michigan's few women students of the fifties and sixties – overwhelmingly likely to be white, fresh out of college (the substantial majority under 23 years of age when they began law school), children of a professional or managerial father and a homemaker mother. See the first columns of Table 2. Over time, as Table 2 displays, as the student body became more racially diverse, less uniformly young, and from somewhat more varied economic backgrounds, the backgrounds of the women and men have become more varied at about the same pace.

Table 2  
Backgrounds of women and men students:  
The essential similarities  
Classes of 1952-2001

	Classes of 1952-1969		Classes of 1970-1979		Classes of 1980-1989		Classes of 1990-2001	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	n=66	n=3610	n=393	n=2390	n=794	n=1731	n=1150	n=1629
% white	96%	99%	88%	94%	89%	92%	82%	85%
% under 23 at start of law school	71%	63%	53%	62%	50%	52%	39%	36%
	n=25	n=899	n=345	n=1995	n=777	n=1682	n=1089	n=1593
% professional or managerial father	88%	81%	67%	61%	65%	66%	63%	66%
% homemaker mother	64%	68%	50%	59%	38%	41%	21%	26%

File: women01; printout women1

In two significant respects, however, women and men law students have remained different. In the 1950s and 1960s as well as in the decades since, women law students at Michigan have been consistently more likely than men to have majored in college in humanities or the social sciences and less likely than men to have majored in economics or business. See Table 3 below. In a similar pattern, throughout time, asked to recall their political attitudes when they began law school, women have been more likely than men to recall themselves as having been quite liberal and less likely to recall themselves as conservative in any degree. See Table 3 again. With regard to both academic majors and political views, the differences between women and men have shrunk somewhat over the decades.

Table 3  
 Backgrounds of women and men students:  
 A few differences  
 Classes of 1952-2001

	Classes of 1952-1969		Classes of 1970-1979		Classes of 1980-1989		Classes of 1990-2001	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	n=46	n=3253	n=392	n=2370	n=790	n=1730	n=1150	n=1629
Undergraduate major								
Humanities or social sciences	89%	56%	82%	63%	70%	56%	65%	54%
Economics/business	9%	30%	9%	25%	16%	30%	14%	20%
			n=321	n=1643	n=662	n=1346	n=857	n=1218
Political views at start of law school								
Very liberal (1 or 2 of 7)	--	--	54%	41%	45%	33%	38%	32%
Conservative (5, 6, or 7)	--	--	6%	20%	15%	30%	16%	32%

File: women1, gender01

## Differences in career patterns: plans and career paths

When we compare the career plans and histories of our men and women graduates over the first years of their careers, we find that, in the early classes in our surveys, women and men arrived at law school with very different aspirations, took very different first jobs and were distributed quite differently among work settings when surveyed later. In later decades of graduates, we find that, while women's and men's aspirations and first jobs become more and more similar over time, their career paths over the years thereafter diverge in striking ways..

We begin with women's and men's plans for their careers at the beginning and end of law school, a set of questions we started asking in 1981 of the fifteen-year graduates of 1966 and the five-year graduates of 1976. As table 4 displays, in the late 1960s and the 1970s, nearly half the women and men arrived at law school without a long-term plan, but among men and women who did have a plan, the women's plans differed substantially from men's, with men far more likely than women to plan on a career in a private firm and women far more likely than men to plan on a career in public service. In the decades that followed, women remained more likely than men to plan on public service, but as fewer of both women and men arrived at law school with no plans, the gap between women and men planning on private practice, narrowed substantially.

Table 4  
Career plans at *Beginning* of law school  
Classes of 1966 – 2001

	Classes of 1966-1979		Classes of 1980-1989		Classes of 1990-2001	
	women n=346	men n=2945	women n=791	men n=1723	women n=1104	men n=1576
Long-term career plans at start of law school						
no plan	42%	46%	28%	30%	22%	27%
large firm	5%	9%	11%	17%	20%	25%
smaller firm or firm of indeterminate size	15%	26%	21%	23%	10%	13%
public service*	32%	14%	30%	21%	37%	21%

\* public service = government, legal services for poor,  
public defenders, public interest organizations

File:Women01,01f  
printouts Women1



When we look at women's and men's long-term plans at the end of law school we find them similar in a few respects across all three time periods. As Table 5 reveals, at the end of law school, in all decades a solid majority of both women and men expected a long-term career in private practice. In fact, across all three periods, approximately equal proportions of women and men in each decade planned to work long-term in a large firm. The differences between women and men were with regard to working in smaller firms and in public service. In the classes of the 60s and the 70s, women were much less likely than men to end law school expecting to work in a small firm and considerably more likely than men to expect to work in public service. By later decades, those differences had lessened or disappeared.

Table 5  
Long-term career plans at *end* of law school  
Classes of 1966 – 2001

	Classes of 1966-1979		Classes of 1980-1989		Classes of 1990-2001	
	women n=346	men n=2945	women n=791	men n=1723	women n=1104	men n=1576
Long-term career plans at end of law school						
no plan	11%	8%	7%	8%	7%	9%
large firm	28%	26%	38%	41%	43%	44%
smaller firm or firm of indeterminate size	27%	43%	27%	27%	13%	16%
public service	26%	15%	18%	13%	23%	16%

\* public service = government, legal services for poor,  
public defenders, public interest organizations

File:Women01,01f  
printouts Women1  
(see very end)

Immediately after law school, taking all the years of graduates together, a substantial number of graduates have served as clerks for a judge, women slightly more likely than men to have done so. (women09) Table 6 reports on the first jobs women and men held after law school, not counting a judicial clerkship (if they had one). On first jobs, unlike the questions regarding aspirations, our information reaches back to the class of 1952. As Table 6 reveals, in the classes of 1952 through 1969, when there were few women graduating from Michigan and few graduating from law schools in general in the United States, a far smaller proportion of female than male graduates, after any clerkship, began their careers in private firms and a far larger proportion began in public service, primarily in government. In later decades, across the classes of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, women became nearly as likely as men to start out in a private firm and the gap between the rate of entry of women and men into public service closed substantially.

[Or use chart on private practice and public service from LQN article about first jobs<sup>9</sup>.]

Table 6  
First job (after any judicial clerkship),  
Women and men classes of 1952-2001

	Classes of 1952-1969		Classes of 1970-1979		Classes of 1980-1989		Classes of 1990-2001	
	women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men
	n=73	n=3761	n=430	n=2461	n=941	n=2044	n=1167	n=1651
Private firm	41%	61%	55%	69%	80%	86%	79%	83%
<i>10 or fewer attorneys</i>	--	--	16%	21%	8%	7%	6%	5%
<i>11 to 50 attorneys</i>	--	--	15%	27%	17%	20%	9%	11%
<i>51 to 200 attorneys</i>	--	--	19%	17%	40%	39%	30%	29%
<i>201 or more attys</i>	--	--	6%	4%	15%	20%	33%	38%
Business	15%	14%	9%	6%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Public Service	30%	16%	31%	19%	12%	8%	14%	10%
Other	14%	9%	5%	6%	4%	3%	5%	3%

File: women09

<sup>9</sup> Chambers, David L and Terry K. Adams, "Starting Out: Changing Patterns of First Jobs for Michigan Law School Graduates." Law Quad. Notes 52, no. 2 (2009): 23-8.

So far our story is largely one of convergence. What happens in the years after women's and men's first job? How has the arc of women's careers differed from that of men's? We have picked the classes surveyed fifteen years after graduation for close examination because we have conducted surveys at that point for 40 consecutive years and because we believed that much of the pattern of men's and women's careers was set by that point. We'll look first at where the graduates were working in their fifteenth year and then fill in the pattern of their careers as a whole up to that point.

Table 7 shows the positions held by women and men when surveyed in the fifteenth year after graduation. Here the story is less of convergence than of persistent difference. The line for those "Not Employed" leaps out immediately: in every decade, far more women than men were not employed at all fifteen years after law school. The proportion is as substantial in the 90s as it was in the 60s. As we will see in the next section, the huge majority of the women who are not employed are taking care of children. But this is not the only difference. We saw in the preceding table that by the 80s and 90s, approximately the same proportion of women and men began their careers in private firms. The table here shows that, by fifteen years out of law school, men in all decades of graduates are far more likely than women to be working in private firms. Women leave not only to care for children but also to work in settings in which they are not practicing law at all.

Table 7  
Job held fifteen years after graduation,  
women and men, classes of 1952-2001

	Classes of 1952-1969		Classes of 1970-1979		Classes of 1980-1989		Classes of 1990-1991	
	Women n=65	Men n=2869	Women n=657	Men n=165	Women n=213	Men n=1429	Women n=165	Men n=213
Work setting in fifteenth year								
Not employed	19%	0.6%	8%	0.3%	16%	2%	17%	1%
Private Firm	35%	66%	42%	67%	38%	56%	27%	49%
Corporate Counsel	11%	12%	11%	10%	13%	13%	14%	16%
Public service	9%	6%	15%	8%	11%	8%	11%	11%
Nonpractice setting	26%	16%	24%	15%	21%	20%	30%	23%
If in firm of 2 or more, status in Firm								
Partner			88%	96%	75%	90%	69%	85%
Associate, other			12%	4%	25%	10%	31%	15%

File: woman10a, 10a1

Another striking difference between women and men is also displayed in last lines of the table: although the great majority of both women and men who worked in firms had the status of partner, it was nonetheless the case that in all decades women were more than twice as likely as men to hold some status other than partner. We will see that this phenomenon too is strongly

associated with the subject we will take up later: the pattern of women working part-time or taking time out of the labor force to care for children.

Table 8 provides a snapshot of the first fifteen years of women's and men's work. As the first columns of the table reveal, the experiences of women in the early classes – those of the 1950s and 1960s – are markedly different from those of the men: Only half as many women as men had held a single job since law school; nearly twice as many women as men had held four or more jobs. Moreover, as the later rows of the table show, in these early decades, nearly twice as high a proportion of women as men had never worked in a private firm, while more than twice as many women as men had held a first or current job in public service.

Table 8  
Work history, first fifteen years after graduation,  
women and men in the Classes of 1952-1969

	Classes of 1952-1969		Classes of 1970-1979		Classes of 1980-1989		Classes of 1990-1991	
	Women n=65	Men n=2869	Women n=350	Men n=2023	Women n=701	Men n=1509	Women n=165	Men n=213
Number of Jobs since law school								
Only one	12%	28%	13%	12%	11%	17%	12%	11%
Two or three	49%	51%	53%	51%	49%	54%	51%	49%
Four or more	39%	21%	35%	37%	40%	29%	37%	40%
Ever worked in private firm?								
Yes	71%	84%	77%	86%	87%	90%	83%	92%
<i>Worked in firms 10+ yrs?</i>	30%	70%	37%	63%	42%	59%	32%	51%
No	29%	16%	23%	14%	13%	10%	17%	8%
Ever worked in public service?								
Yes	39% <sup>@</sup>	14% <sup>@</sup>	41%	23%	29%	18%	28%	22%
<i>Worked in pub serv 10+ yrs?</i>	--	--	14%	5%	12%	9%	14%	9%
No	61% <sup>@</sup>	86% <sup>@</sup>	59%	76%	71%	82%	72%	78%

<sup>@</sup> we do not have information on years in public service for the classes of 1952-1969. The figure here, which necessarily understates whether a grad ever worked in public service, is the sum of those for whom a job in public service was either their first or current job.

File: women10a, 10a2

After those early graduating classes, some patterns change rapidly, others stay the same. By the 1970s, the frequency with which men have only one job across their first fifteen years has fallen to the same level as the women. And across the 70s and 80s, the proportion of women who've ever worked in private practice comes close to approximating that of the men, but women's immersion in private practice is less deep than men's. Across all decades, the proportion of women who spend the substantial majority of their first fifteen years in private

practice (10 or more years) remains much lower than that of the men. Regarding public service, the story is nearly the reverse. The gap between the proportion of women and men who ever worked in public service narrowed over time, but, though the numbers for both women and men are small, in all decades more women than men have worked in public service ten or more years.

The short of our findings is this: since the 1980s women and men have been about equally likely to begin their careers in private practice, but women's attachment to private practice is much more transitory than men's. Table 9 capsulizes the experience of entry and leaving private practice at the 15 year point. Among those who started in private firms, women in all decades are substantially more likely than men to be practicing in some other setting by year 15. And conversely, among those who started in some other setting than a private firm, women are much less likely than men to be working in a private firm at year fifteen.

Table 9  
First jobs in relation to private law firm jobs  
15 years after graduation,  
Classes of 1952-1991

	Classes of 1952-1969		Classes of 1970-1979		Classes of 1980-1989		Classes of 1990-1991	
	Women n=65	Men n=2869	Women n=657	Women n=165	Women n=213	Men n=1429	Women n=165	Men n=213
Those with 1 <sup>st</sup> job in law firm, are they still in law firm at year 15?	39%	74%	51%	78%	43%	61%	32%	54%
Those with 1 <sup>st</sup> job NOT in law firm, have they shifted to law firm by year 15?	35%	58%	32%	42%	16%	25%	9%	21%

File: women10a3

Why do women leave firms more often than men and fail to move to firms as frequently as men? Many possible reasons can be suggested. To explore a few of them, we drew on the respondents to the fifteen-year survey of the classes of 1976 through 1991 who also responded to the five year survey, because their responses permit us to compare the situations and attitudes of the same women and men at two different points in time. The dataset includes 424 women and 1455 men in the classes of 1976 through 1991 who responded to surveys both at 5 and 15 years after graduation and who were working in a private firm at the five-year point. At that point, 69 percent of all women and 81 percent of all men were working in private firms. (women24a) By that point also, somewhat more women than men who'd started in private firms had left private practice altogether. Table 10 reports where the men and women who were working in firms at 5 years out were working ten years later. A substantial majority of women and men working in law firms were still working in law firms (not necessarily the same firm as at five years) but more women than men had shifted to work in other settings.

Table 10  
 Women and men in private law firms five years after graduation,  
 in relation to where they worked ten years later  
 (only those who responded to both a 5- and 15-year survey),  
 Classes of 1976-1991

	Women	Men
	n=424	n=1455
Remained in law firm	61%	76%
No longer at a law firm	39%	24%
	100%	100%

File: women24

An initial reason why women might leave private practice altogether at higher rates than men is that more women than men never planned to work in firms in the first place. And it is true that, of those working in firms at the 5-year point, somewhat fewer women than men finished law school with a long-term plan to work in a firm and that many more of the women who left private firms altogether had not planned on a career in a firm than was the case among those who stayed in a private firm until the fifteenth year. (women23a). Still, leaving private practice because it was never their plan is only a partial explanation for the greater exodus of women from firms. Of the women who left private practice altogether, 46 percent had a long-term plan for working in a private firm when they finished law school. (women 23a).

A second possible reason that more women than men leave or avoid private firms is that they are treated less well there or expect to be treated less well there. As a general matter, however, the women working at firms at the five year point were as satisfied as men with their relationships with superiors and co-workers at their place of work. (women24) On the other hand, 12 percent of the women who moved from one firm to another after the fifth year and 16 percent of those who left private practice altogether reported, at the five year point, experiencing

“a lot” of “discrimination or adverse treatment due to their gender” from “other lawyers working with [them] in [their] current place of work.” Virtually none of the men reported such adverse treatment.

A third possible reason is that more women than men find the nature of the working at firms uninteresting or distasteful. The women who left private practice altogether reported, when asked at the 5-year point, particularly low satisfaction with the social value of their work, with solving problems for particular clients and with the intellectual challenge of their work.

A final possible explanation for women’s comparatively higher exodus from private practice is more complex. It is suggested by the analysis of the Michigan data, by Kenneth Dau-Schmidt, Marc Galanter, et al (hereafter Dau-Schmidt). Dau-Schmidt suggests that lawyers with choices face an implicit choice between satisfaction and income, that is, that in general high work satisfaction comes at the price of taking lower-income work and that, in that trade-off women more frequently choose more satisfaction and men more frequently choose higher income.

Go to next page

Data from later surveys unavailable to Dau-Schmidt and his colleagues at the time they wrote provides further support for their thesis by comparing men and women who were in private practice (the highest paying setting) at five years and the careers choices they had made by the time of the fifteen year surveys ten years later. As we discuss elsewhere, women in general are approximately as satisfied with their careers overall as men are both at five years after law school and at fifteen. Part A of the next table, Table 11, shows, for the men and women who were working in private practice five years after graduation, what their overall career satisfaction level was at five years out of law school and what it was ten years later, in relation to whether they chose to stay in private firm practice or leave for some other setting. The overall point that the table reveals is that, for both men and women, the career satisfaction level of both women and men who remained in private firms barely changed (see lines 1 and 4) while the satisfaction of those who left private firms altogether improved hugely (see lines 2 and 5). The major difference between women and men is that a much higher proportion of women than men chose to leave private firms than men (see column A.)

Table 11A  
 Women and men who worked in private firms five years after graduation,  
 in relation to where they worked ten years later  
 (only those who responded to both a 5- and 15-year survey),  
 Classes of 1976-1991

Change in overall career satisfaction  
 (Satisfaction on 7-point scale, with 7 as highest satisfaction)

		A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
		n=	Overall satisfaction at 5 years	Overall satisfaction at 15 years	Change in satisfaction (C-B)	Percentage point change in % Q.S. <sup>10</sup>
	Women (n=465)					
1.	who remained in private practice	277	5.30	5.44	+0.14	+5
2.	who left private practice	188	4.83	5.85	<b>+1.02</b>	<b>+37</b>
3.	Total mean	465	5.11	5.61	+0.51	+18
	Men (n=1543)					
4.	who remained in private practice	1160	5.36	5.34	-0.02	0
5.	who left private practice	383	4.76	5.50	<b>+0.74</b>	<b>+30</b>
6.	Total mean	1543	5.21	5.38	+0.17	+7

File: sat06h

<sup>10</sup> Q.S.=quite satisfied (a 6 or 7 out of 7 on overall satisfaction)



Part B of Table 11 below displays the flip side of the Dau-Schmidt hypothesis. As the table reveals, on average the incomes of both women and men who remained in private practice greatly increased over the 10 years between surveys in comparison with the incomes of those who shifted to nonfirm settings (see income figures in bold in table below), but, because men more frequently than women chose to remain in private practice (column A), a higher proportion of men than women made these income gains. Thus, in sum, in career decisions after the fifth year, women more frequently than men made choices that greatly increased their job satisfaction while men more frequently than women made choices that greatly increased their incomes.

Table 11B  
 Women and men who worked in private firms five years after graduation,  
 in relation to where they worked ten years later  
 (only those who responded to both a 5- and 15-year survey),  
 Classes of 1976-1991

Change in CPI-adjusted income between year

	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
	n=	income reported at 4 years	income reported at 14 years	Change in income	Percentage change in income
Women (n=403)					
who remained in private practice	243	\$101499	\$221452	<b>+\$119953</b>	<b>+118%</b>
who left private practice	160	\$104402	\$156443	<b>+\$52040</b>	<b>+50%</b>
Total mean	403	\$102651	\$195642	<b>+\$95954</b>	<b>+93%</b>
Men (n=1306)					
who remained in private practice	970	\$109013	\$291281	<b>+\$182267</b>	<b>+167%</b>
who left private practice	336	\$111095	\$230188	<b>+\$119092</b>	<b>107%</b>
Total mean	1306	\$109550	\$275563	<b>+\$166014</b>	<b>152%</b>

file: sat06h1

A claim that women more frequently made choices to improve satisfaction and men more frequently made choices to maximize income rests on a premise that the women and men had genuine *choices* they could make. Those who left a private firm after five years almost certainly included some, perhaps many, who would have preferred to stay but were either let go or, more likely, left when they saw the handwriting on the wall. Still, even those who left under this pressure made choices about what to do next -- whether to seek a position at another firm or to leave private practice altogether, and that choice had implications for both satisfaction and income. Those who switched to a different firm typically experienced a greater rise in income but a much lesser rise in satisfaction than those who switched out of private practice altogether. (see sat06b) and, as we have seen, women made the switch somewhat more often than men.

## Private lives: marriage and children, shifting to part-time work and leaving the labor force

We shift now to the relationship between career patterns and women's and men's family lives. What effects do marriage or having children have on careers?

As a starting point, Table 12 displays the marital and parental status of women and men at five and fifteen years after graduation. Their patterns of the sexes are similar but not identical. At both five and fifteen years out most women and men were married but men were somewhat more likely to be married than women. Similarly, regarding children, at five years out only a minority of women and men were parents and at fifteen the great majority of those who were not parents before had become parents, but at both five and fifteen years out, men were more likely to be parents than women. As Table 3 reveals, at fifteen years out of law school 29 percent of the women graduates had no children. Since nearly all the women in our sample were 39 years old or older by that point, it seems likely that few who had not yet had children would ever do so.

Table 12  
Marital and parenting status, by sex,  
five and fifteen year graduates in classes surveyed 1985-2006

		Classes of 1980-2001, 5 years after graduation		Classes of 1970-1991, 15 years after graduation	
		Women	Men	Women	Men
		n=1894	n=3288	n=1184	n=3768
1	Percent currently married	58%*	63%*	76%*	85%*
2	Percent currently cohabiting	7%	7%	4%	3%
3	Percent with children	28%*	33%*	71%*	81%*
4	Of those with children, mean number of children	1.47*	1.61*	2.13*	2.25*
5	Of those ever married, percent ever divorced	12%*	7%*	24%*	18%*
6	Of those ever divorced, percent who'd remarried	41%	41%	56%**	64%**

\*p<.01    \*\*p<.05

file: fam01d

What effects did becoming married exert on work force participation?

For those who married for the first time after law school, it is perhaps no surprise that the fact of marrying alone, apart from having children, caused neither women nor men to alter their work force participation. We thought it conceivable that some graduates, particularly women who, upon marriage, became secondary earners might shift to lesser paying but more interesting jobs or shift to part-time work, but find no evidence that of either.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Fam03.

On the other hand, some changes in work can be observed for women but not for men among those who married between the fifth and fifteenth year. To isolate the effects of marrying on work force participation, we looked at childless women fifteen years after graduation, comparing those who had married since the fifth year with those who'd remained single. We included only those who had been working full-time at the five-year point. What we found somewhat surprised us: a third of the women who married between the fifth and fifteenth year after graduation had shifted to working part-time or not working at all in the labor force, even though they had no children.<sup>12</sup> Of the men in the same position (that is, working fulltime at five years, got married between the fifth and fifteenth year, no children), only 4 percent were no longer working full-time.<sup>13</sup>

What effects did having children exert on labor force participation of women and men?

The answer in a nutshell is that the effects were enormous for a large proportion of women but for almost no men. In large numbers, women shifted to part-time work or dropped out of the labor force altogether for significant blocks of time.

For the final 20 years of our surveys, beginning with the five-year class of 1982 and the fifteen year class of 1972, we asked the following question:

*Since law school, have you ever worked part time only or not worked outside the home at all for some period (not counting the time studying for the bar)? (Please check as many as apply.)*

\_\_\_ *No, I've always worked full time*

\_\_\_ *Yes, I worked part time for a total of \_\_\_ months, of which \_\_\_ months were in order to care for children.*

\_\_\_ *Yes, I stopped working altogether for a total of \_\_\_ months, of which \_\_\_ months were in order to care for children.*

In all the comparisons between women and men that our data permit, none is more stark than the difference between men and women in the career adjustments they make to care for children: about 60 percent of women leave the labor force or work part-time for three or more months in order to care for children; the numbers of fathers who do so is negligible (though it increased slightly between decades).<sup>14</sup> See Table 13. (In the table and elsewhere we referred to “stopping work” and “not working.” These terms are quite suspect, even sexist, for they could be

---

<sup>12</sup> The number of cases in the table is small because only women who responded to both the 5 and 15 year survey could be included and because by the fifteenth year the great majority of married women had children.

<sup>13</sup> Fam03a (third table)

<sup>14</sup> Of 943 fathers five years out of law school, only twelve took 3 or more months of Child Time and only 19 more took even one or two months. (Women17) Among the 2731 fathers 15 years out, only 45 report ever taking 3 or more months of Child Time and an additional 33 report one or two months.

read as implying that taking care of children is not work. In the context of our survey, we do not believe the terms offended or caused confusion to our respondents, because the questions about stopping work were in the context of a survey that was overwhelmingly about “working” in paid jobs in the labor force.)

Table 13

Percentage of women and men with children who have, in total, spent 3 or more months working part-time or stopping work altogether in order to care for children. classes of 1972-2001, five and fifteen years after graduation

	Classes of 1972-1981		Classes of 1982-1991		Classes of 1992-2001	
	N=	3+ mos of part-time or non-work	N=	3+ mos of child care	N=	3+ mos of child care
Graduates 5 years out of law school						
women with children	--	--	227	63.0%	237	58.2%
men with children	--	--	555	1.3%	383	3.7%
Graduates 15 years out of law school						
women with children	290	58.0%	477	65.4%	--	--
men with children	1605	1.6%	1102	3.9%	--	--

All comparisons of women and men, P<.01

women17m

Let’s look briefly at periods outside the labor force of women who said they’d “stopped worked altogether in order to care for children.” See Table 14. To be conservative, we counted as having “stopped work altogether” only women who said they had done so for three or more months. We do not report shorter periods because many women who reported taking a month or two only probably took paid parental (then almost always called “maternity”) leave and remained with the same employer all along.

Table 14

Months spent **out of labor force to care for children** by women 15 years out of law school who reported doing so for 3 or more months

	n=	percent
3 - 6 months	92	28%
7 - 12 months	73	22%
13 - 24 months	33	10%
25 - 48 months	33	10%
49 - 96 months	70	21%
More than 96 months	33	10%
	334	100%

About a quarter of the women, as the table displays, stopped working for only 3 to 6 months. Some of these were probably women who'd had more than one child since law school, took a few months of paid maternity leave after the birth of each child, and were treated by the employer as full-time employed throughout. Many women report have taken much longer than three or six months and we treat all these women as having left their places of prior employment. As the table above displays, forty-one percent of those who've stopped paid employment for three months or more have done so for more than 24 months (and 32 percent of the group as a whole were still out of the labor force at the time we surveyed them). We will examine later the impacts on the later income and status at work of those who later returned to work.

Let's look briefly also at patterns of *part-time* work by the women who reported working part-time at some point "in order to care for children." The patterns of part-time work are similar to the patterns of periods of "not working altogether." That is, while a few of those who've worked part time have done so for 6 months or less, most who have worked part-time have done it for two or more years and a third of the group as a whole were still doing it at the point of the fifteen-year survey. See Table 16

Table 16  
 Women 15 years out of law school who've  
 worked part-time 3 or more months to care for children,  
 Months spent in **part-time work**

	n=	percent
3 - 6 months	40	13%
7 - 12 months	41	13%
13 - 24 months	44	14%
25 - 48 months	72	23%
49 - 96 months	83	26%
More than 96 months	30	12%
	310	100%
Among those who've worked part-time, % who were working part-time at point of 15-year survey	310	32%

How many hours do the part-time working mothers work? Table 17 reveals the ranges and means of hours worked in an “average week” for those mothers who were working part-time at the time of the 15-year survey. The considerable majority worked more than 20 hours a week.

Table 17  
 Women currently working part-time in order to care for children,  
 Part-time hours worked in an “average week,”  
 Fifteen year classes, 1972-1991

	n=162
Under 10 hours	11%
11-20 hours	27%
21-30 hours	41%
31-35 hours	22%
total	100%
Mean hours	23.2 hrs

File: women17e

When we combine into one table all the women who have either worked part-time or taken periods out of work, we find, as Table 18 displays, that many women have done both and that for the 179 women who report doing both, the average total length is 70.7 months or nearly six years. A lot of mothers have spent a lot of time not working outside the home at all or working part-time only.

Table 18  
 Mean periods of part-time work or time out of the labor force  
 By women who’ve taken 3 or more months part-time work or not in the labor force

	3 or more months <b>part-time</b> , but never stopped work	<b>Stopped work</b> for 3 or more months, but has never worked part-time	Has both worked <b>part-time</b> and <b>stopped work</b> for period totaling 3 or more months
	n=147	n=154	n=179
Average months of part-time work by time of survey	52.2 mos.	--	40.9 mos.
Average months not working outside home by time of survey	--	44.3 mos.	29.8 mos.
Total	52.2 mos	44.3 mos	70.7 mos

File: women17, 17b, printouts Gender20, 21

## The Impacts on Women’s Careers of Taking Time Out or Working Part-Time to Care for Children

We looked at three ways in which women’s working part-time or taking time out of work to care for children may have affected their careers: their earned income; the positions they held at their place of employment; and their satisfaction with career. Again we will focus on the graduates fifteen years after law school.

First, do women who, in order to care for children, have ceased employment altogether and/or worked part-time, earn less when they return to full-time work than they would have if they had remained full-time workers all along? We cannot, of course, answer this counterfactual question directly, but we can compare the incomes of women who’ve taken varying periods of less than full-time work to care for children with the incomes women who have not. In table 19 below, we report on the earnings of women working full-time now, some of whom have worked part-time or taken time out in the past to care for children. Unfortunately, in making comparisons, we must, of course, omit from the table a substantial number of mother who, at the time of the survey, were still out of the labor force or still working part-time even though many of them will return at some point to full-time work.) See Table 19. In the table, the term “Child Time” is a shorthand for time spent caring for children and not working in the labor force or working part-time only.

Table 19  
Inflation-adjusted earnings of *full-time* working women,  
in relation to employment status and past periods of part-time work or nonwork,  
Fifteen-year Classes of 1972-1991

		n=	Mean Individual earnings in 14 <sup>th</sup> year
1	Single women without children	142	\$162433
2	Women with spouse/partners but no children	139	\$177260
	Women with children:		
3	Who have taken no more than 2 months of Child Time <sup>15</sup>	240	\$197052
4	Who have taken 3 to 6 months of Child Time	55	\$193579
5	Who have taken 7 to 24 months of Child Time	65	\$177573
6	Who have taken more than 24 months of Child Time	37	\$112933

The first noteworthy aspect of the table, before we consider the women who’ve taken long periods of Child Time, is that women who have no children (see lines 1 and 2) earn somewhat *less* on average than the women who do have children but have returned to full-time

---

<sup>15</sup> “Child Time” is a shorthand for time spent caring for children when either not working in the labor force at all or working part-time only.

work have taken 6 months or less of Child Time to care for them (lines 3 and 4). More on this below.

When we turn to our principal focus – the effects of taking substantial periods of Child Time – it appears that among those who’ve left employment or worked part-time for more than six months but no more than two years (line 5 in the table), seem to do as well financially when they return to full-time work as those who’ve taken no Child Time at all. On the other hand, women who’ve taken two or more years of Child Time (line 6) reported earning much less than other women when they return to full-time work. We cannot tell how long in the past the periods of part-time or non-work were and thus cannot say whether those who took the Child Time long ago and have been back at full-time work for, say, ten or twelve years, are more likely to make up for their periods away from full-time work than those whose periods of Child Time are quite recent.

The earnings of the group of women who taken more than 24 months of Child Time remain significantly lower than the women who’ve taken less time off even after taking their graduation years and work settings into account. See Appendix Table A, regression on current income. At the same time, the same regression reveals that, after controls for work settings, the women without children do not earn significantly less than the mothers who’ve taken off short periods of time. It turns out that women without children are simply more likely than women with children to work in lower paying settings.

The impact on the standard of living of the women who’ve taken long periods of Child Time and then returned to full-time work cannot be fully measured by the impact on their own earned incomes alone. For that purpose, total household income is a better measure. Total household income is also necessary for understanding the financial well-being of the women who, at the time of our survey, were working part-time or not working in the labor force at all. Table 20 shows the total household incomes of the women in our survey in relation to their partner status, work situation, and periods of Child Time. What we see is that full-time working women who’ve taken large blocks of Child Time in the past (those in line 8) as well as the women currently working part-time or not working at all (lines 9 and 10) are, except in a small proportion of cases, continuing to live at a comfortable standard in large part because they are attached to a high-earning partner (or in a very few cases have high investment income). As measured by total household income, the least well-off women, not surprisingly, are the single women raising children on their own (line 3).



Table 20  
Household income<sup>16</sup> of women, in relation to employment status  
And periods of part-time work or nonwork,  
Fifteen-year Classes of 1972-1991

		n=	Mean inflation- adjusted household income in 4 <sup>th</sup> year	% house- hold income <\$75000	% house- hold income >\$500000
	<b>Full-Time Workers</b>				
1	Single women without children	142	\$177115	11%	3%
2	Women with spouse/partners but no children	139	\$315069	2%	10%
	Mothers	279			
3	No partner	51	\$130833	14%	0%
4	With spouse or partner	389	\$355072	2%	19%
	Mothers				
5	Who have taken no more than 2 months of Child Time	240	\$345344	3%	19%
6	Who have taken 3 to 6 months of Child Time	55	\$307509	2%	15%
7	Who have taken 7 to 24 months of Child Time	65	\$338091	3%	19%
8	Who have taken more than 24 months of Child Time	37	\$222074	8%	3%
	<b>Part-Time Workers</b>				
9	Mothers currently working part-time	46	\$283513	10%	11%
	<b>Not Working Outside the Home</b>				
10	Mothers not currently working outside the home	40	\$345209	4%	18%

file: women17i; printout Gender25

<sup>16</sup> Household income represents the sum of earned income, spouse/partner income and investment and any other income. A few women had household incomes well over a million dollars. To reduce the effects on the mean of the very high household incomes, we treated all households with more than \$1,250,000 as having a household income of \$1,250,000.

A second possible effect of taking time out of the labor force and then returning to work or of working part-time is lesser advancement or lower status at work.

Consider the women in private practice first. As an initial point, more women who've taken substantial amounts of Child Time work now as solo practitioners in comparison to those women who have taken less or no child time. 25 percent of women in private practice who've taken 7 or more months of Child Time are sole practitioners, in comparison to 8 percent of women with children who've taken less or no child time and 14 percent of women who have no children. (Women17h3). Whether these women prefer solo practice because it gives them flexibility or feel relegated to solo practice because others do not want to partner with them, we cannot say.

For the women in private practice who are not solo practitioners but who work in firms with two or more members, Table 21 shows their status at the time of the 15 year survey. In a manner similar to our findings regarding income, we find that, fifteen years after graduation, single women without children who are in firms are the group of women least likely to be partners. (We need to do more work to understand the characteristics of women fifteen years out who reported themselves as single and without children.) Among women with children in private practice, only women who have taken more than 24 months of Child Time are substantially less likely than others to be partners. (The proportion of women who are partners among those who've taken 7-24 months of Child Time is also smaller than those who've taken less time or no time, but their numbers are small and the difference is not statistically significant.)

Table 21  
 Status in private firms of two or more lawyers  
 (including both part-time and full-time workers),  
 Fifteen-year Classes of 1972-1991

	n=	partner	assoc., other	median size of firm
Single women, no partner/kids	46	70%	30%	75
Partnered women, no children	56	88%	12%	75
Women with children				
Who've taken 0-6 mos of Child Time	133	90%	10%	100
Who've taken 7-24 mos of Child Time	24	79%	21%	50
Who've taken more than 24 mos of Child Time	63	51%	49%	50

File: women17h3, 17h8, printout gender34

For those practicing law in settings other than private firms – that is, those in settings such as government, corporate counsel’s offices, legal services – the relationship between having children and status at work is mixed. As table 22 shows, however, those women who’ve taken more than 24 months of Child Time are significantly less likely to be in a supervisory status than those who’ve taken no Child Time or who don’t have children.

Table 22  
 Status in Other Practice Settings (Govt. attorneys, corporate counsel, etc),  
 including both part-time and full-time workers  
 Fifteen-year Classes of 1972-1991

	n=	super- visor	staff
Women without children	111	47%	53%
Women with children			
Who’ve taken 0-6 mos of Child Time	95	48%	52%
Who’ve taken 7-24 mos of Child Time	26	62%	38%
Who’ve taken more than 24 mos of Child Time	50	34%	66%

File: women17h3, printout gender34

Finally, how much of a price do women men who've taken periods of Child Time pay in terms of career satisfaction?

As we have reported elsewhere,<sup>17</sup> women in general, both at five and fifteen years out of law school, are fully as satisfied with their careers overall as the men. Table 23 reveals that among full-time workers, women with children, no matter how much Child Time they've taken in the past (lines 3 through 6), are somewhat *more* satisfied overall with their careers than women without children (lines 1 and 2). Among women working full-time or part-time at the time of the survey, even those who'd previously taken two or more years of Child Time (line 6) and who, as we've just seen, earned considerably less on average than other women and were less likely to be partners or supervisors at their place of work, were nearly as satisfied as other women with children who've taken less Child Time (and fully as satisfied as women without children).

Table 23  
Women's career satisfaction, in relation to employment status  
and periods of part-time work or nonwork,  
15-year Classes of 1972-1991

		n=	mean overall career satis	% quite satis overall*
	<b>Full-Time Working Women</b>			
1	Single women without children	145	5.39	50%
2	Women with partners but no children	138	5.58	62%
	Mothers working full-time			
3	Who have taken no more than 2 mos of Child Time	265	5.69	63%
4	Who have taken 3 to 6 months of Child Time	58	5.83	72%
5	Who have taken 7 to 24 months of Child Time	72	5.79	63%
6	Who have taken more than 24 mos of Child Time	41	5.63	58%
	<b>Part-Time Working Women</b>			
	Mothers currently working part-time			
7	Who have taken up to 24 months of Child Time	38	5.39	61%
8	Who have taken more than 24 mos of Child Time	138	5.62	62%

\*indicating a 6 or 7 out of 7 on the scale of overall satisfaction. file: women17h6

<sup>17</sup> Satisfaction in the Practice of Law: Findings from a Long-Term Study of Attorneys' Careers, U. of Mich. Public Law Research Paper No. 330. (2013), David L. Chambers

As groups, the difference in career satisfaction between all women with children and all women without children is statistically significant. It may thus be that, on the whole, for the Michigan women, having children affirmatively contributed to overall career satisfaction.

It is interesting to compare full-time women who've taken varying periods of Child Time with other full-time working women who haven't on two other dimensions of satisfaction likely to be affected by their decisions to work in the labor force only part-time or not at all. One is their satisfaction with the balance of their work and their family or private life. The other is their satisfaction with their current income from their place of work. Unsurprisingly, as table 24 shows in the middle column, women currently working part-time are comparatively well satisfied with the balance. They've arranged their lives to give less time to work in order to give more time to family. But even the full-time working mothers (lines 3 through 6) are, on average, more satisfied overall with the balance of work and private life than women without children.

Table 24  
Women's career satisfaction, in relation to employment status  
and periods of part-time work or nonwork,  
15-year Classes of 1972-1991

		n=	mean satis balance wk + fam or private life	mean satis with income
	<b>Full-Time Working Women</b>			
1	Single women without children	145	4.21	4.92
2	Women with partners but no children	138	4.63	5.31
	<b>Mothers working full-time</b>			
3	Who have taken no more than 2 mos of Child Time	265	4.73	5.36
4	Who have taken 3 to 6 months of Child Time	58	4.48	5.22
5	Who have taken 7 to 24 months of Child Time	72	4.89	5.17
6	Who have taken more than 24 mos of Child Time	41	4.81	4.73
	<b>Part-Time Working Women</b>			
	<b>Mothers currently working part-time</b>			
7	Who have taken up to 24 months of Child Time	38	5.13	4.50
8	Who have taken more than 24 mos of Child Time	138	5.67	4.97

\*indicating a 6 or 7 out of 7 on the scale of overall satisfaction. file: women17h6

As to satisfaction with income (the last column in the table), the women with children currently working part-time and the women with children working part-time who have taken large blocks of Child Time in the past are, in general, less satisfied with their income than other women. In one sense this is quite unsurprising since in general these women earn much less than other women. We nonetheless had thought it possible, given their generally high household incomes, that these women would be as satisfied with their earned incomes as others, thinking of it as the best they could expect to earn given the choices they have made, but that was not the case. They seem, understandably, to be measuring their satisfaction with income in comparison to other full-time working lawyers in general.

### Working Full-Time But Working Somewhat Fewer Hours Than Others

There is a further way that women with children altered their working lives apart from taking time out of the labor force or working part-time. Among men and women who reported themselves to be currently working “full-time,” women with children reported averaging somewhat fewer hours of work per week than women without children and than men with and without children. See Table 25. The difference that, though small, is statistically significant. As the table reveals, in comparison to men with and without children and to women without children, somewhat more of the women with children averaged no more than 40 hours per week and somewhat fewer averaged 56 or more hours per week.

Despite averaging somewhat fewer work hours, the average work week of the full-time working mothers—48.5 hours--was nonetheless quite long. A work week of 48.5 hours equals five nine hour days during the week plus 3.5 hours more on Saturday. Assuming a half-hour travel time to work, these women are, on average, the average full-time working mother was away from her children about ten hours each weekday. The fathers, who averaged 51.2 hours per week were, if we assume similar commutes, away about ten and a half hours each workday

Table 25  
Average hours worked per week by  
respondents reporting they work “full-time,”  
Fifteen year classes of 1970-1991

	Women				Men			
	n=	mean wk hours per week	% who worked 36-40 hours	% who worked 56 or more hrs	n=	Mean wk hours per week	% who worked 36-40 hours	% who worked 55 or more hrs
No children	286	50.4 hrs	18%	21%	626	50.2 hrs	16%	19%
Has children	436	48.5 hrs	24%	14%	2889	51.2 hrs	10%	21%

File: women25



We will consider briefly whether working full-time but working shorter hours has negative effects on the satisfaction of women with children.

First, income. For all groups of full-time workers within our sample -- both men and women, with and without children -- there is a strong positive correlation between work hours and earned income. The correlation is no higher among women with children than it is for others. The special significance of the correlation for women with children is simply that fewer of them worked long hours and more worked comparatively short hours. Table 26 shows, for women with children who were working full-time at the time of the survey and who have never been out of the labor force for more than 6 months in the past,<sup>18</sup> the relationship between average earnings (adjusted for inflation) and the number of hours worked. The differences are dramatic – more than 100 percent – between the women who work 40 hour weeks and those who put in 55 or more. Part of the difference in earnings is explained by the fact that a higher percentage of the 40 hour workers are employed in public service than is the case among the longer work-week women, but in a regression on earned income for the full-time working mothers that included controls for hours worked and setting of work, the women with children who worked 40 or fewer hours still earned substantially less than those who worked longer, earning on average about 37 percent less than other women with children.

Table 26  
Mean cpi-adjusted earnings of full-time working mothers  
who have never been out of the labor force for more than 6 months,  
by numbers of hours worked in average week during preceding year  
Classes of 1970-2001

	n=	cpi- adjusted earnings
Averaged 36-40 work hours/wk	93	\$133146
Averaged 41-45 work hours/wk	68	\$175918
Averaged 46-50 work hours/wk	104	\$199528
Averaged 51-55 work hours/wk	49	\$233884
Averaged 56+ work hours/wk	55	\$276234
total	369	\$194441

File: women25a

---

<sup>18</sup> We excluded full-time working women who'd taken more than 6 months out of the labor force in the past because including them runs the risk that what appears to be related to working short hours is actually an effect of having been long out of the labor force in the past.



Second, do the mothers who work shorter hours have lower status in the settings in which they work? The answer differs depending on whether they practice in a private firm or some other setting. See Table 28 A and B. (We do not have information on the status of those working in non-practice settings.) In private firms, as Table 27A reveals, the full-time working mothers who work 40 or fewer hours tend to be partners as frequently as those who work longer, although the firms in which they are partners tend to be smaller. In non-firm settings, as revealed in Table 27B, the fulltime-working mothers who work 40 or fewer hours less frequently hold supervisory positions than those who work longer hours.

Table 27  
 Status of full-time working mothers  
 who have never been out of the labor force for more than 6 months,  
 by numbers of hours worked in average week during preceding year  
 Classes of 1970-2001

A.  
 Private Law Firms

	n=	percent partner	median size of firm
Averaged 36-40 work hours/wk	20	90%	20
Averaged 41-45 work hours/wk	26	89%	30
Averaged 46-50 work hours/wk	52	89%	130
Averaged 51-55 work hours/wk	26	96%	150
Averaged 56+ work hours/wk	23	91%	50

File:women25b, women25a2

B.  
 Practitioners in Settings Other than Private Law Firms

	n=	percent supervisor
Averaged 36-40 work hours/wk	40	35%
Averaged 41-45 work hours/wk	30	57%
Averaged 46-50 work hours/wk	40	58%
Averaged 51-55 work hours/wk	12	50%
Averaged 56+ work hours/wk	15	73%

File:women25b

Finally, full-time working mothers' satisfaction with their careers has no consistent relationship with the number of hours they worked. Those who worked 40 or fewer hours per week were somewhat less satisfied than those who work 40 to 45 hours per week, but not significantly less satisfied than those who work longer hours. In a regression on satisfaction overall, with graduating class year, whether in private practice, and working 36-40 hours and working 41-45 hours as controls, those who worked 36 to 40 hours were not less satisfied overall than others, but those who worked 41 to 45 hours were significantly more satisfied than those who worked fewer hours or more hours. Perhaps the group who worked 41 to 45 hours had found a satisfying way to have a full career while allowing them more time with their children than most of the full-time working mothers. See Appendix Table C.

(Unsurprisingly, those who work 40 or fewer hours are more satisfied with the balance of work and family than those who work longer, but less satisfied with their income.)

Table 27

Mean overall career satisfaction of full-time working mothers who have never been out of the labor force for more than 6 months, by numbers of hours worked in average week during preceding year, Classes of 1970-2001

	n=	Mean overall career satisfaction	% who are quite satisfied
Averaged 36-40 work hours/wk	93	5.67	58%
Averaged 41-45 work hours/wk	71	6.06	80%
Averaged 46-50 work hours/wk	114	5.47	59%
Averaged 51-55 work hours/wk	50	5.62	64%
Averaged 56+ work hours/wk	55	5.93	65%
Total	383	5.71	64%

File:women25c

[Still to do: write a summary of observations about the apparent effects of working part-time, taking time out of the labor market, and working full-time but with shorter hours. Figure out how to talk about the relevance of high household incomes.]

APPENDIX TABLES

Appendix Table A  
 Regression on natural log of inflation-adjusted earned income  
 Of full-time working women, fifteen years after graduation  
 Classes of 1970-1991

	n=725	n=725
	Beta	Beta
Year of graduation	.053	.054
Single, no children	-.045	-.046
Spouse/partner, no children	.014	.014
Mother, taken 3 to 6 months of Child Time	-.023	--
Mother, taken 7 to 24 months of Child Time	.002	--
Mother, taken 25 or more mos of Child Time	-.093*	--
Total months worked part-time for children	--	-.075**
Total months out of labor force for children	--	-.033
Works in firm of 50+ attorneys	.497*	.497*
Works in business	.266*	.269*
Works in public service*	-.050	-.050
Total explained variance (adjusted)	28.8%	28.8%

\*P<.01 \*\*p<.05

file: women22

Appendix Table B

Regression on natural log of inflation-adjusted earned income  
 of full-time working women with children,  
 who have never taken more than 6 months out of the labor force  
 Classes of 1970-1991, fifteen years after graduation

	n=363
	Beta
Year of graduation	-.093
Worked 36-40 hours in average week	-.225*
Worked 41-45 hours in average week	-.045
In private practice	+.280*
Total explained variance (adjusted)	14.3%

\*P<.01

File: women25a (last page)

Appendix Table C  
 Regression on overall career satisfaction  
 Of full-time working women with children  
 who have never taken more than 6 months out of labor force,  
 Classes of 1970-1991 fifteen years after graduation

	n=378
	Beta
Year of graduation	.128**
Worked 36-40 hours in average week	.003
Worked 41-45 hours in average week	.139**
In private practice	-.117**
Total explained variance (adjusted)	3.6%

\*P<.05

File: women25c (last page)

	n=363
	Beta
Year of graduation	-.093
Worked 36-40 hours in average week	-.225
Worked 41-45 hours in average week	-.045
In private practice	+.280
Total explained variance (adjusted)	14.3%