



## Data Snapshot: Employment Characteristics of Fathers

The resources that parents can provide for children—both in time and money—are strongly linked to their children’s wellbeing, and the availability of those resources is strongly influenced by the employment characteristics of fathers (e.g., employment status, earnings).<sup>i,ii,iii</sup> Over the past several decades, employment patterns within families have changed markedly. Although most fathers today still report working full-time, it is much less common for men to be the sole breadwinner in the family.<sup>iv</sup> Women now account for nearly half of the U.S. labor force (46.8 percent)<sup>v</sup> and resident fathers are increasingly more involved in child rearing and other household responsibilities.<sup>vi</sup>

This data snapshot provides information from published resources (see Data Box, page 10) on a range of employment characteristics of resident fathers, including employment rates, employment status, earnings, family structure, and division of household labor. With the exception of data on why stay-at-home fathers are not in the labor force, the data sources considered here do not include data on the seven million men (ages 25-54) classified as “not in the labor force” in 2016.<sup>vii</sup>

### Highlights

- The large majority of fathers in the U.S. report that they are employed full-time.
  - In 2016, 93 percent of fathers with a child aged 0-17 reported being employed and, of these men, 96 percent reported they were employed full-time.
- In 2015, nearly half of married or cohabiting couples with children aged 0-17 report that both the mother and father were employed full-time.
  - Half of households with two full-time working parents reported that the father was the higher earner, one-quarter reported that the mother and father earned the same, and one-in-five reported that the mother was the higher earner.
- In 2012, 16 percent of stay-at-home parents were men.
  - The largest percentage of stay-at-home fathers (35 percent) reported they were not in the workforce due to illness or disability, however 21 percent reported they stayed home to care for their family.
  - This represents a significant change since 1989, when only five percent of stay-at-home fathers reported staying home to care for their family and 56 percent indicated they were not in the workforce due to illness or disability.
- In 2015, among the majority of households with two full-time working parents, the mother and father equally shared the responsibilities of household chores (59 percent), disciplining children (61 percent), and playing or doing activities with children (64 percent).

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## Employment rate, employment status, and earnings

Table 1 shows the employment rate (percentage of fathers who are employed), employment status (part- or full-time), and median weekly earnings for fathers whose youngest biological, adoptive, or step-child was aged 0-17 in 2016. The data are also presented separately for fathers of children aged 0-5 and fathers of children aged 6-17. Full-time employment is defined as usually working 35 hours or more per week at all jobs, while part-time is defined as usually working less than 35 hours per week at all jobs.

**Table 1. Employment characteristics of fathers with children aged 0-17, by age of youngest child, 2016**

	Employed Fathers			
	Fathers' employment rate	Full-time	Part-time	Median weekly earnings of full-time fathers
<b>Children aged 0-17</b>	93%	96%	4%	\$1,013
<b>Children aged 0-5</b>	94%	95%	5%	\$952
<b>Children aged 6-17</b>	92%	96%	4%	\$1,085

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017a; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017b

### Employment rate

- In 2016, 93 percent of fathers whose youngest child was aged 0-17 reported being **employed**.
  - Ninety-four percent of fathers whose youngest child was aged 0-5 and 92 percent of fathers whose youngest child was aged 6-17 reported being **employed**.

### Employment status

- Ninety-six percent of employed fathers whose youngest child was aged 0-17 reported working **full-time**. Only four percent reported working **part-time**.

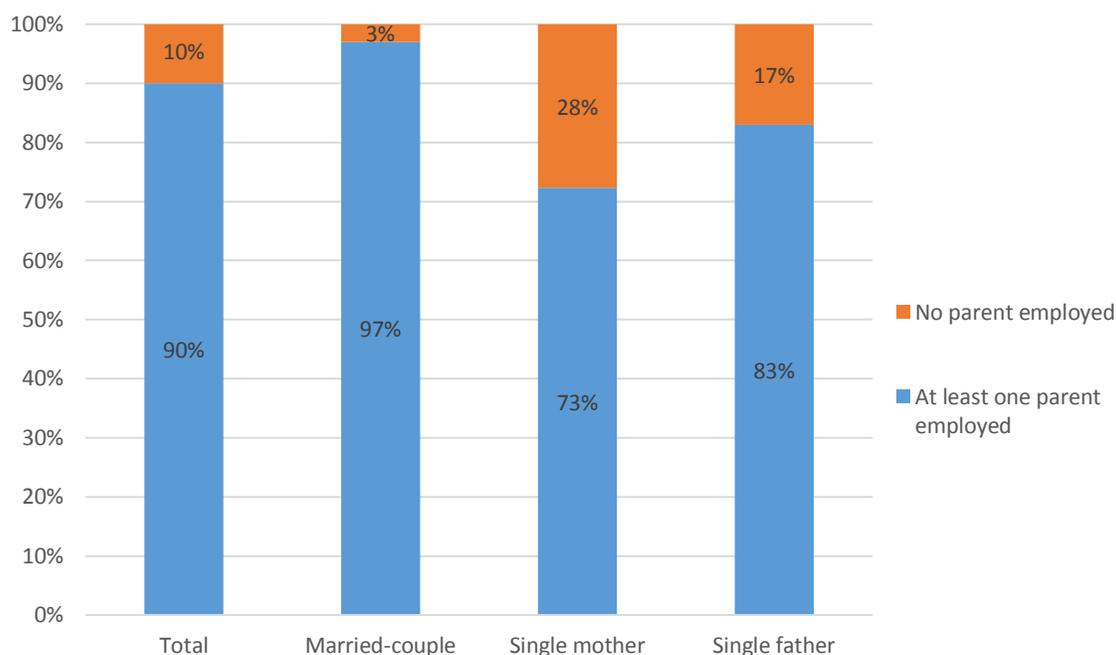
### Median weekly earnings

- In 2016, full-time employed fathers reported **median weekly earnings** of \$1,013.
  - Full-time employed fathers whose youngest child was aged 0-5 reported **weekly earnings** of \$952, and full-time employed fathers whose youngest child was aged 6-17 reported **weekly earnings** of \$1,085.

## Households with at least one parent employed

Figure 1 shows the family structure of households with a child aged 0-17 where at least one parent is employed. The data for married-couple households refer to opposite-sex married couples only; single-parent households may or may not include a same-sex spouse or an unmarried domestic partner (of either sex); and a parent may be biological, adoptive, or a step-parent.

**Figure 1. Percentage of households with a child aged 0-17 that have at least one parent employed, by family structure, 2016**



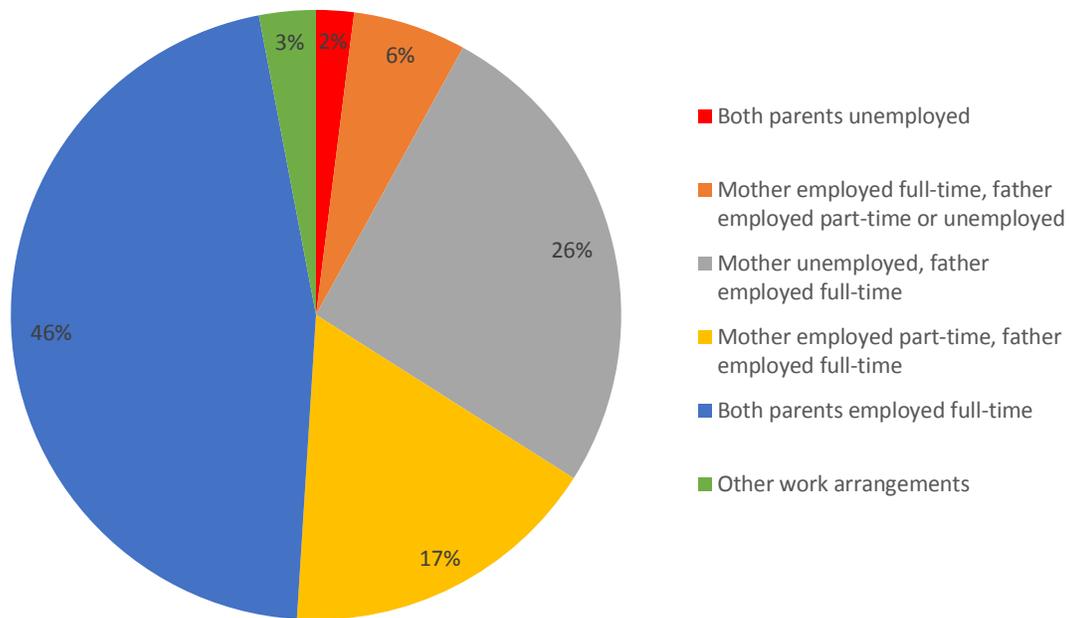
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017c. Notes: Due to rounding, some columns do not add to 100 percent.

- In 2016, 90 percent of households with a child reported that **at least one parent was employed**, 10 percent reported that **no parent in the household was employed**.
  - Ninety-seven percent of married-couple households, 83 percent of single-father households, and 73 percent of single-mother households reported that **at least one parent in the household was employed**.
- Twenty-eight percent of single-mother households and 17 percent of single-father households reported that **no parent in the household was employed**.

## Working arrangements of couples with children

Figure 2 shows the combined employment status of two-parent households (married or cohabiting opposite-sex couples) with biological, adoptive, or step-children in 2015.

Figure 2. Work arrangements of couples with children aged 0-17, 2015



Source: Pew Research Center, 2015.

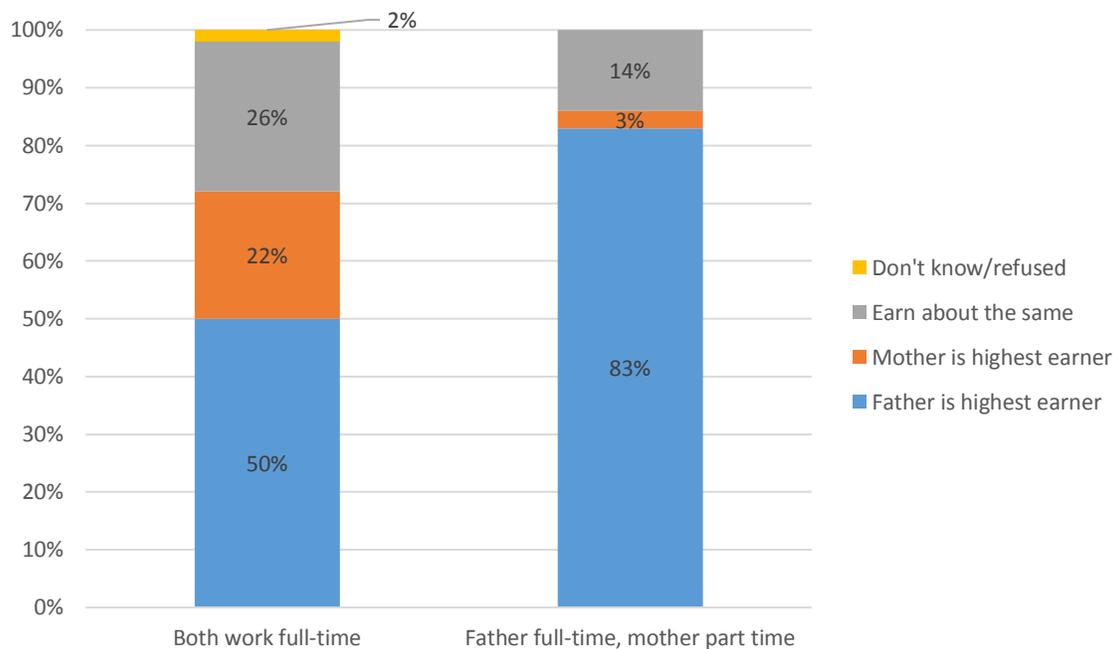
In 2015:

- Forty six percent of couples with a child aged 0-17 reported that both the **mother and father were employed full-time**.
- Seventeen percent reported that the father was employed full-time, and the mother was employed part time.
- Twenty-six percent reported that the father worked full-time, but the mother was unemployed (reflecting both voluntary and involuntary unemployment).
- Six percent reported that the mother was employed full-time, and the father was either employed part time or unemployed.
- Two percent reported that both the **mother and the father were unemployed**.

## Higher earner in two-parent households

Figure 3 shows which parent (with a child aged 0-17) was the higher earner in two-parent households where: 1) both the mother and father worked full-time and 2) the father worked full-time and the mother worked part-time. A parent can be biological, adoptive, or a step-parent.

**Figure 3. Higher earner in two working parent households, 2015**



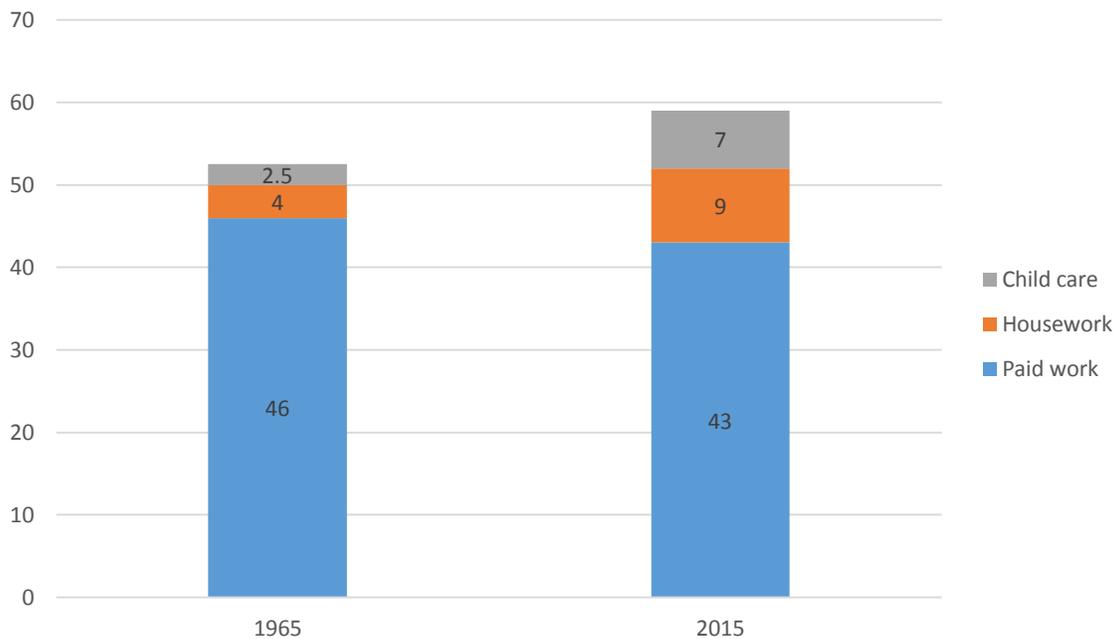
Source: Pew Research Center, 2015

- For households in which both the mother and father worked full-time:
  - **Fathers were the higher earners** in half of the households.
  - The **mother and father earned about the same** in 26 percent of households.
  - The **mother was the higher earner** in 22 percent of households.
- For households where fathers worked full-time and mothers worked part-time:
  - **Fathers were the higher earners** in 83 percent of the households.
  - The **mother and father earned about the same** in 14 percent of households.
  - The **mother was the higher earner** in three percent of households.

## Time spent by fathers on child care, housework, and paid work

Figure 4 shows the average number of hours per week that fathers with children aged 0-17 spent on child care, housework, and paid work in 1965 and 2015. Child care is defined as time spent caring for and helping household children under 18 as their main activity.

**Figure 4. Hours per week spent on child care, housework, and paid work for fathers with children aged 0-17, 1965 and 2015**



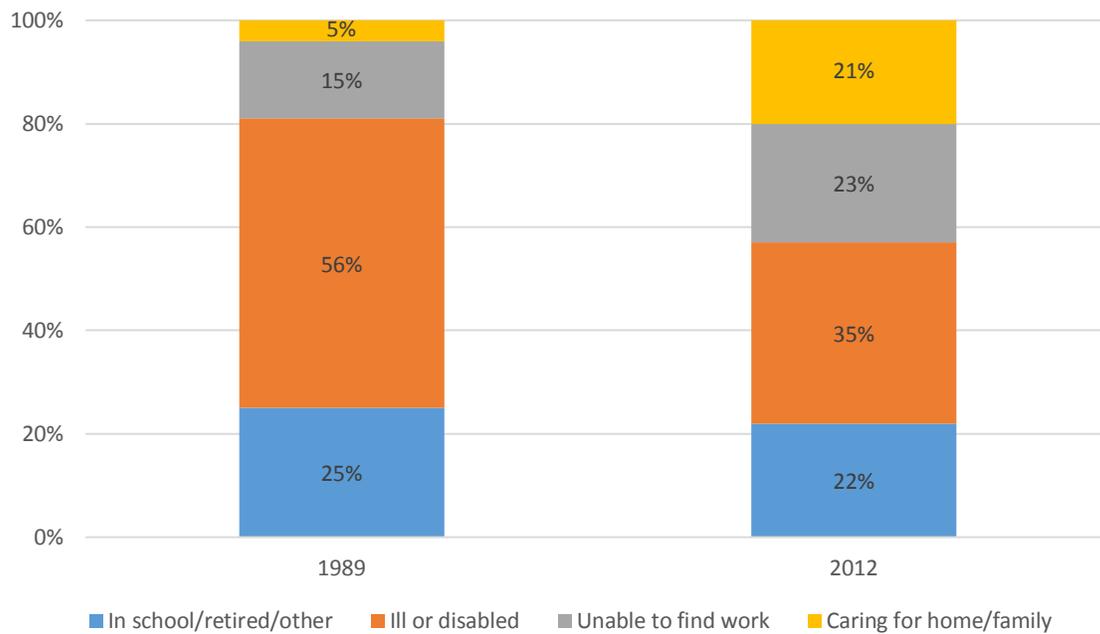
Source: Parker, K. & Livingston, G., 2017

- In 2015, fathers reported spending seven hours per week on **child care** and nine hours per week on **housework**.
  - In 1965, fathers reported spending just 2.5 hours per week on **child care** and four hours per week on **housework**.
- In 2015, fathers reported spending 43 hours per week on **paid work**.
  - In 1965, fathers reported spending 46 hours per week on **paid work**.

## Reasons stay-at-home fathers are not in workforce

Figure 5 shows responses from stay-at-home fathers to a question about why they were at home and not employed, in 1989 and in 2012. Stay-at-home fathers are defined as fathers who do not work outside the home, including fathers who are both unemployed and out of the labor force. In 1989, [10 percent](#) of all stay-at-home parents were fathers; this percentage grew to [16 percent](#) in 2012. Fathers who live apart from their children are not included.

**Figure 5. Percentage of stay-at-home fathers who are not working, by reason, 1989 and 2012**



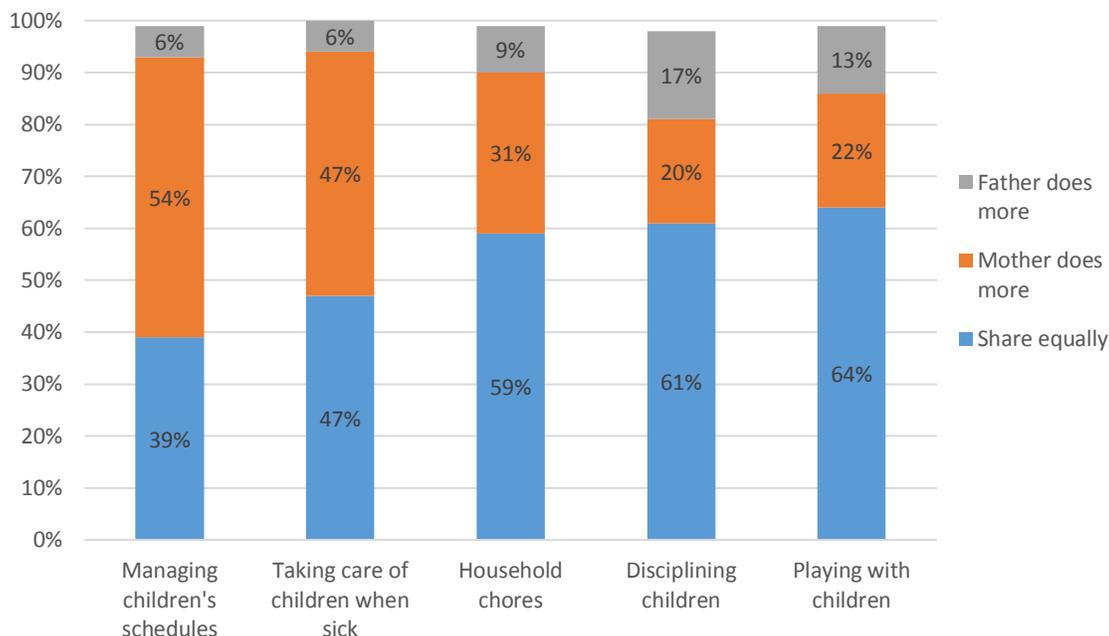
Source: Livingston, G., 2014. Notes: Due to rounding, some columns do not add to 100 percent.

- The reason most often cited by fathers for not being in the workforce is **illness or disability**. However, the percentage of stay-at-home fathers giving this as their main reason for being out of the workforce has dropped significantly - from 56 percent in 1989 to 35 percent in 2012.
- There has been a significant increase in the percentage of stay-at-home fathers reporting that they are doing so to **care for their family** – from five percent in 1989 to 21 percent in 2012.
  - Similarly, the percentage reporting they are **unable to find work** has increased from 15 percent in 1989 to 23 percent in 2012.
- The percentage of stay-at-home fathers reporting they are not in the workforce because they are **in school or retired** has stayed about the same – 25 percent in 1989 and 22 percent in 2012.

## Division of labor among parents working full-time

Figure 6 shows the division of labor among full-time working parents across household tasks, as reported by mothers and fathers. A parent can be biological, adoptive, or a step-parent.

**Figure 6. Division of labor in households with two full-time working parents, 2015**



Source: Pew Research Center, 2015. Notes: Due to rounding, some columns do not add to 100 percent.

- In more than half of the households surveyed, mothers and fathers indicated that they share the responsibilities equally for **household chores** (59 percent), **disciplining** children (61 percent) and **playing or doing activities with children** (64 percent).
  - Fifty-four percent indicated that mothers do more to **manage children's schedules and activities**, while 39 percent reported this was a task that was shared equally between mothers and fathers.
  - Forty-seven percent reported that mothers spend more time **taking care of children when they are sick**, while the same percentage indicated this is a task they share equally.
- In households where there is an imbalance in the division of household responsibilities, mothers did more than fathers across all five areas.
  - The gender gap was largest for **managing children's schedules**, with mothers nine times more likely to report managing their children's schedules than fathers (54 percent compared to 6 percent).

## Data Box

This NRFCC Data Snapshot draws from published reports that use nationally representative data from the *Current Population Survey (CPS)*. The CPS defines “employed full time” as working for pay or profit 35 hours or more per week across all jobs. Someone who is employed part time works less than 35 hours per week across all jobs. An unemployed person does not have a job, but is actively seeking and available to work. Someone who is neither employed nor unemployed is not in the labor force. These reports include:

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017a). *Table 5. Employment status of the population by sex, marital status, and presence and age of own children under 18, 2015-2016 annual averages*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.t05.htm>

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017b). *Highlights of women’s earnings in 2016*. Report 1069. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-earnings/2016/home.htm>

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017c). *Employment characteristics of families summary*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.nr0.htm>

Livingston, G. (2014). *Growing number of dads home with the kids*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/06/05/growing-number-of-dads-home-with-the-kids/>

Parker, K. & Livingston, G. (2017). *6 facts about American fathers*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/15/fathers-day-facts/>

Pew Research Center. (2015). *Raising kids and running a household: How working parents share the load*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/11/04/raising-kids-and-running-a-household-how-working-parents-share-the-load/>

<sup>i</sup> Ermisch, J., & Francesconi, M. (2001). *The effects of parents’ employment on children’s lives*. London: Policy Press at the University of Bristol.

<sup>ii</sup> Heinrich, C. J. (2014). Parents’ Employment and Children’s Wellbeing. *The Future of Children*, 24(1), 121–146.

<sup>iii</sup> Perry-Jenkins, M., & Gillman, S. (2000). Parental Job Experiences and Children’s Well-Being: The Case of Two-Parent and Single-Mother Working-Class Families. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 21(2), 123–147. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009473918629>

<sup>iv</sup> Pew Research Center. (2015). *Raising kids and running a household: How working parents share the load*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/11/04/raising-kids-and-running-a-household-how-working-parents-share-the-load/>

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2017). *Women in the labor force: A databook*. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-databook/2017/pdf/home.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Parker, K., & Livingston, G. (2017). *6 facts about American fathers*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/15/fathers-day-facts/>

<sup>vii</sup> Doar, R., Holzer, H. J., & Orrell, B (2017). *Getting Men Back to Work: Solutions from the Right and Left*. Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Getting-men-back-to-work.pdf>