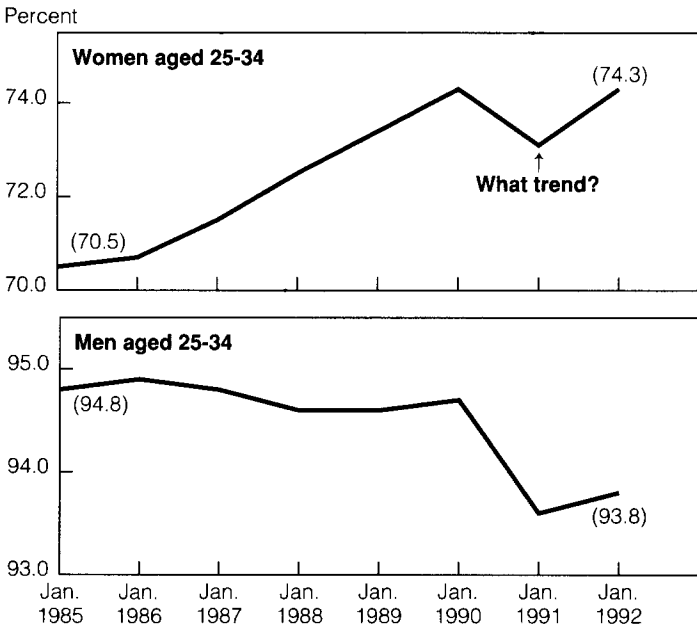


WORK: WHAT WOMEN DO...

Over the past four decades, women's participation in the labor force has risen steadily. More than half of all women aged 16 and older now participate in the labor force, and nearly three-fourths of younger women do. The growth of women's participation may be slowing, though, at least compared to the gains of the past two decades.

Civilian labor force participation rates



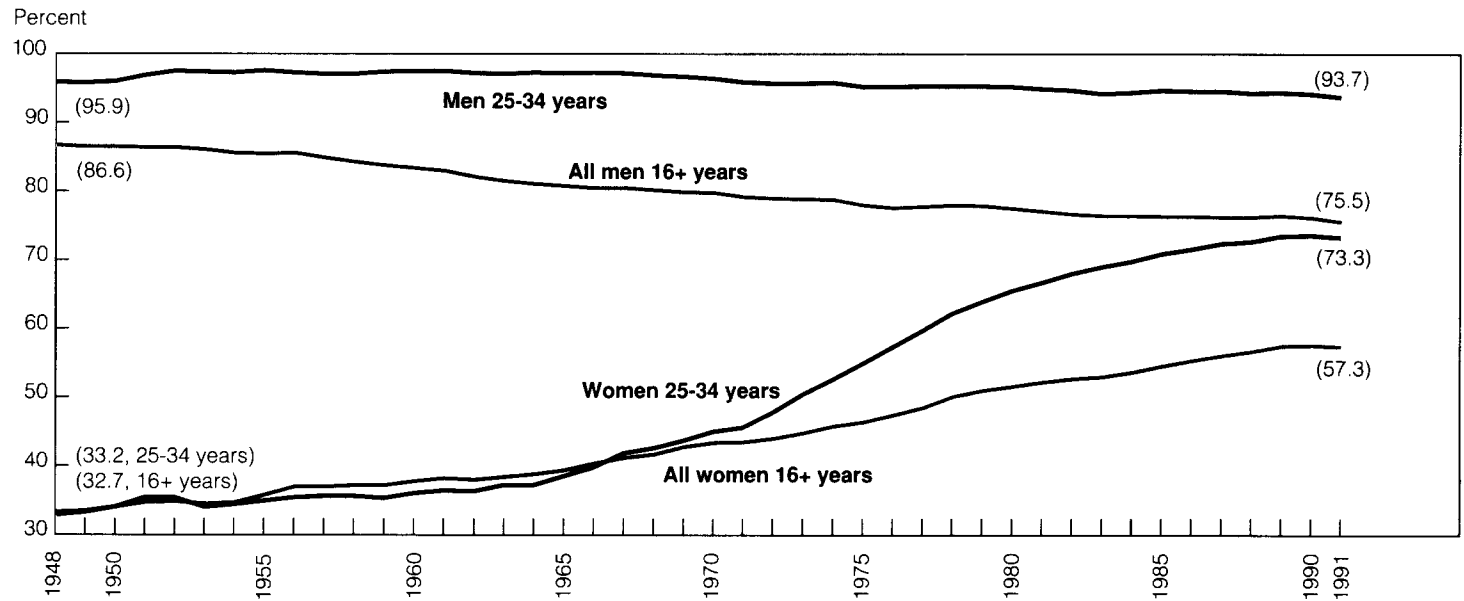
Last year, several major news organizations reported that women's participation in the labor force dropped during 1990 and speculated that women of child bearing age were returning home to family. The data presented here suggest that there was less to the story than met the eye, or that it was at least premature.

Relying on data available in 1991, the news organizations reported a 1.2 percentage point drop between January 1990 and January 1991 in the labor force participation of women aged 25-34. But they didn't report that the labor force participation rate for men aged 25-34 also dropped, by 1.1 percentage points (see figure at left), raising the possibility that the same factor or factors affecting men were also affecting women.

A single point is a flimsy indicator of a trend and should always be interpreted cautiously and put into context. Moreover, month-to-month and year-to-year fluctuations often get more attention than they deserve. The weight of the 40-year trend below should make anyone cautious about overinterpreting a single point. Attitudinal data on the next page offer a different perspective.

Note: Data are seasonally adjusted.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings* for months shown.

Civilian force participation rates

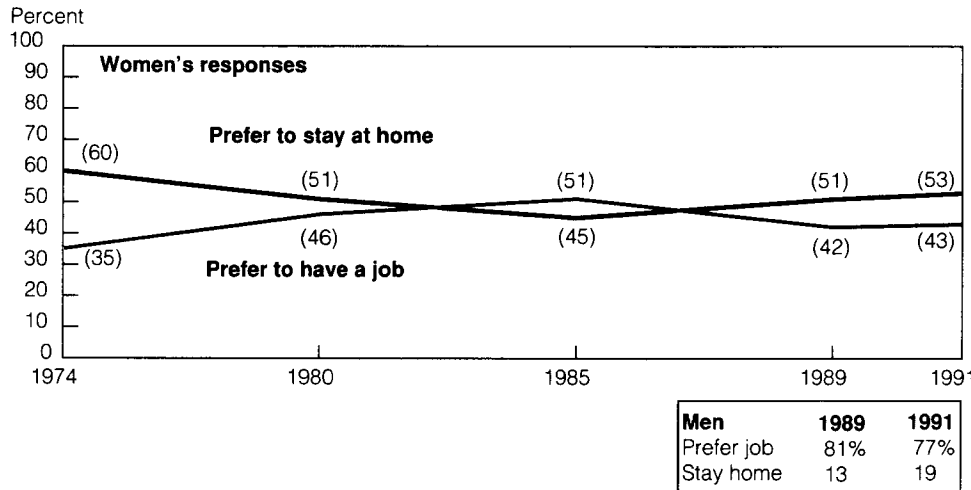


Note: Data are annual averages.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics *Handbook of Labor Statistics and Employment and Earnings*.

AND SAY THEY WANT TO DO

Since 1974 the Roper Organization has asked women whether they would prefer to stay home or work if they had the choice. The numbers have gone back and forth, but in 1991, a majority of women said they would prefer to stay home. Nearly six in ten women who preferred "staying home" say it is likely in the next two years.

Question: **Now, if you were free to do either, would you prefer to have a job outside the home, or would prefer to stay home and take care of a house and family?**



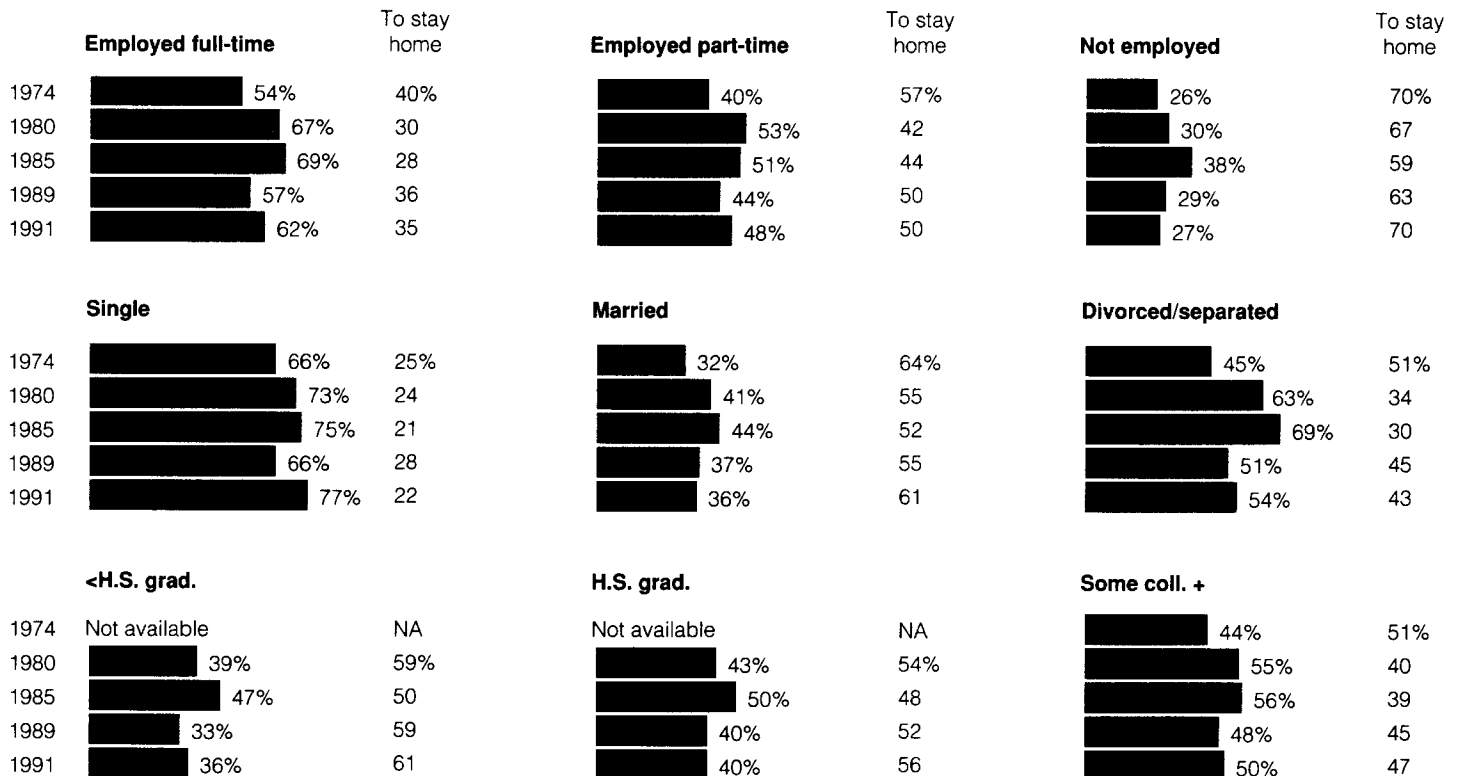
Question: **Regardless of what you may be doing now, how likely are you to be staying home to take care of house and family a year or two from now...?**

Based on respondents who would prefer to stay home and take care of house and family (Women 53%, Men 19%)

Very/somewhat likely that will be staying home to take care of house and family a year or two from now



■ Prefer to have a job



Source: Surveys by the Roper Organization (Roper Reports 91-8), latest that of August 10-17, 1991.