

Table 4-1 • Women in the labor force, 1975–2004^{1,2}

Although, as shown in Figure 4-1, the number of women in the labor force has continued to increase over the years, women’s labor force participation rate—the percentage of women age 16 and over who are working or looking for work—seems to have declined a bit each year after 1999; in 2004, it was nearly a percentage point lower than it had been in 1999, the high water mark so far.³

Year	Women’s labor force participation rate	Women as a percentage of total labor force	Year	Women’s labor force participation rate	Women as a percentage of total labor force
1975	46.3	40.0	1990	57.5	45.2
1976	47.3	40.5	1991	57.4	45.3
1977	48.4	41.0	1992	57.8	45.4
1978	50.0	41.7	1993	57.9	45.5
1979	50.9	42.1	1994	58.8	46.0
1980	51.5	42.5	1995	58.9	46.1
1981	52.1	43.0	1996	59.3	46.2
1982	52.6	43.3	1997	59.8	46.2
1983	52.9	43.5	1998	59.8	46.3
1984	53.6	43.8	1999	60.0	46.5
1985	54.5	44.2	2000	59.9	46.5
1986	55.3	44.5	2001	59.8	46.5
1987	56.0	44.8	2002	59.6	46.5
1988	56.6	45.0	2003	59.5	46.6
1989	57.4	45.2	2004	59.2	46.4

¹Civilians age 16 and over.

²Observant readers comparing this table with its predecessor in the ninth edition of *The American Woman* may notice that the 2000 labor force participation rate shown therein differs slightly (by plus 0.7 percent) from that shown here. The revised rate was the result of a post-decennial census recalibration by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

³The Bureau of Labor Statistics cautions that the data for 2000 and 2003 are not strictly comparable with data for prior years.

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Annual Averages for 2003, Table 2, and Annual Averages for 2004, Table 2.

Table prepared by the Women’s Research and Education Institute (WREI), 2005.