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Headwinds and Tailwinds: The Present and Future of Work for Women

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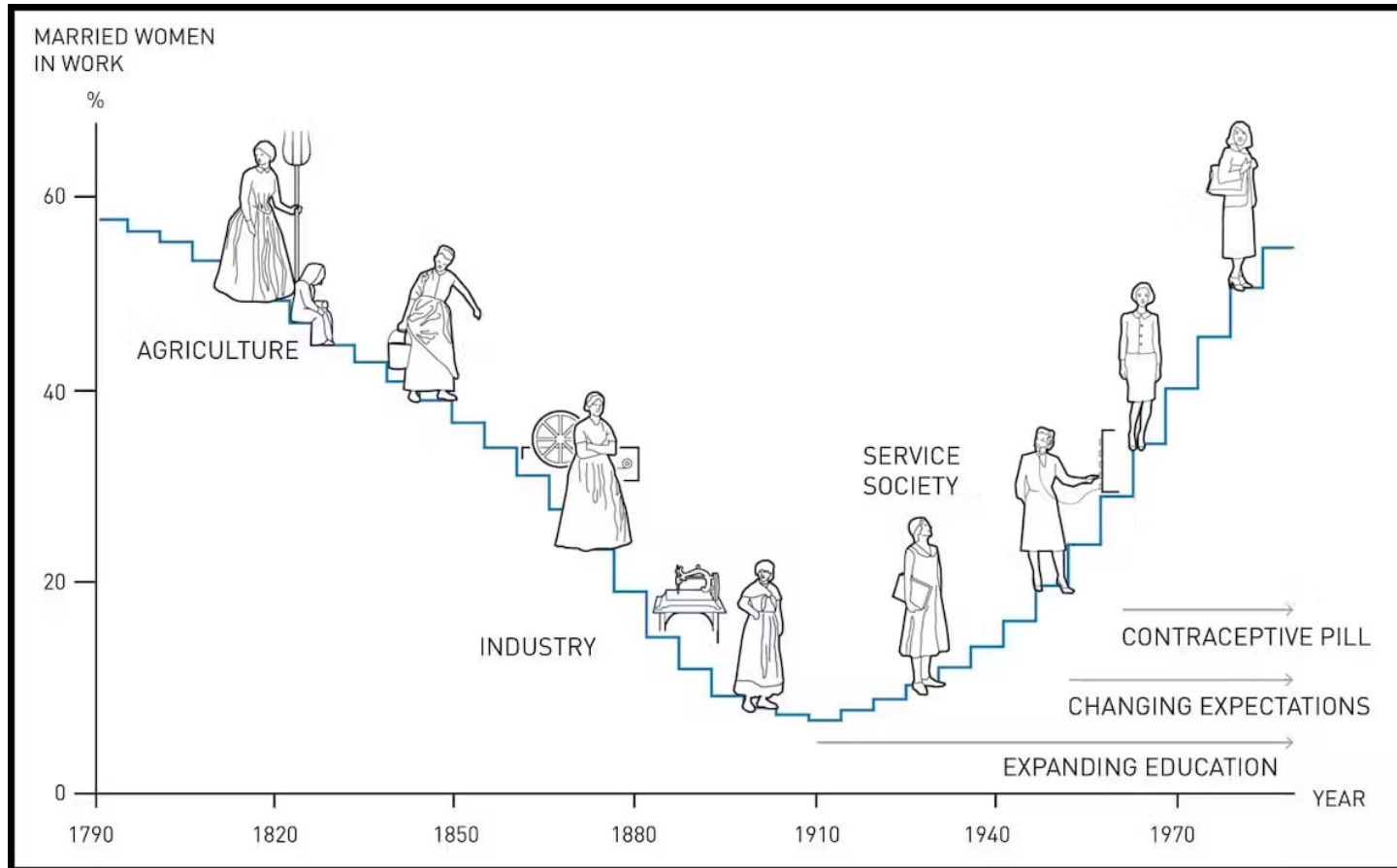
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THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF WORK FOR WOMEN

Molly Kinder

June 20, 2023
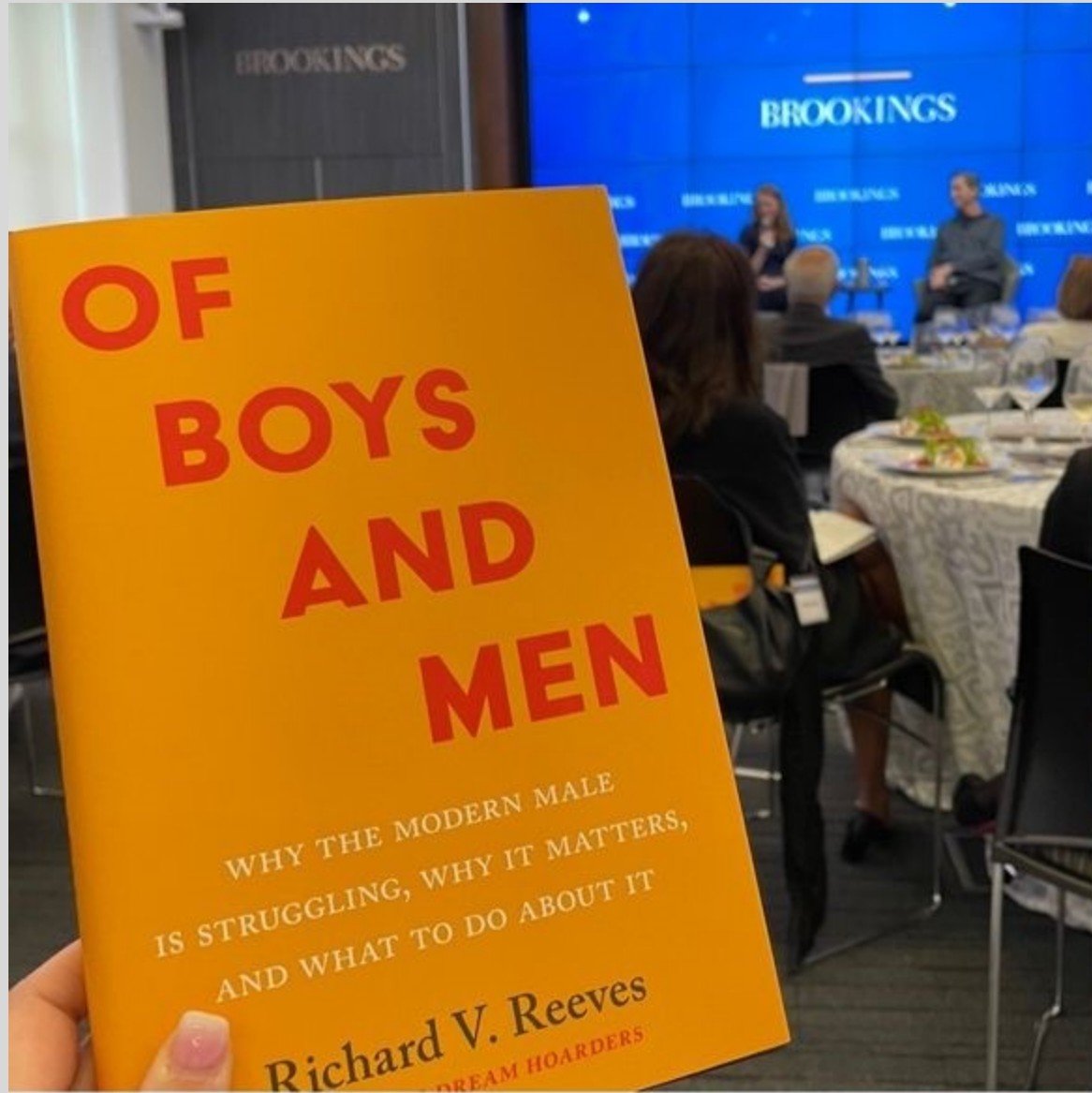
Source: © Johan Jarnestad/The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences

THE PAST OF WORK

Nobel Prize winner Claudia Goldin's research

THE PRESENT OF WORK

Three Tailwinds

FIGURE 1

Prime-age women's labor force participation rate January 1990 to June 2023, by age of youngest child
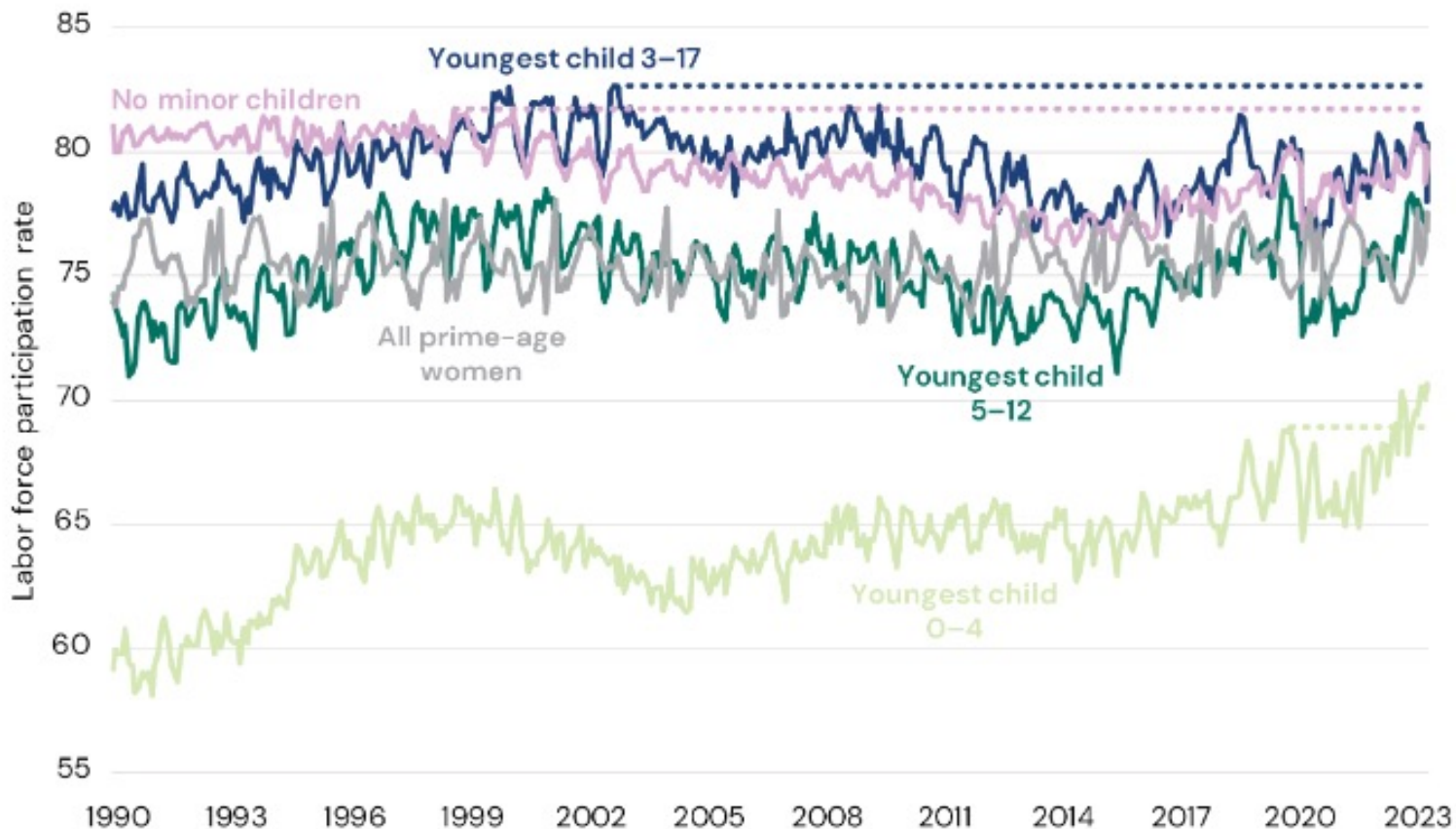
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics n.d.; authors' calculations.

Note: Participation rates are not seasonally adjusted. Participation rates for 1990–2022 are adjusted using the backcast for decennial Census revisions described in Bauer et al. (2023). Horizontal lines are drawn from the pre-pandemic peak participation to today.

Data source: Bureau of Labor Statistics
Figure: Brookings, "Prime Age Women Are Going Above and Beyond in the Labor Market" by Lauren Bauer and Sarah Yu Wang.."

TAILWIND #1: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

FIGURE 4

Share of Employed Persons Who Teleworked in the Last Week, January–June 2023

By Age

Prime-age women
Prime-age men
55+
Youth

All workers

Prime-Age Women

No minor children
Youngest child 0–4
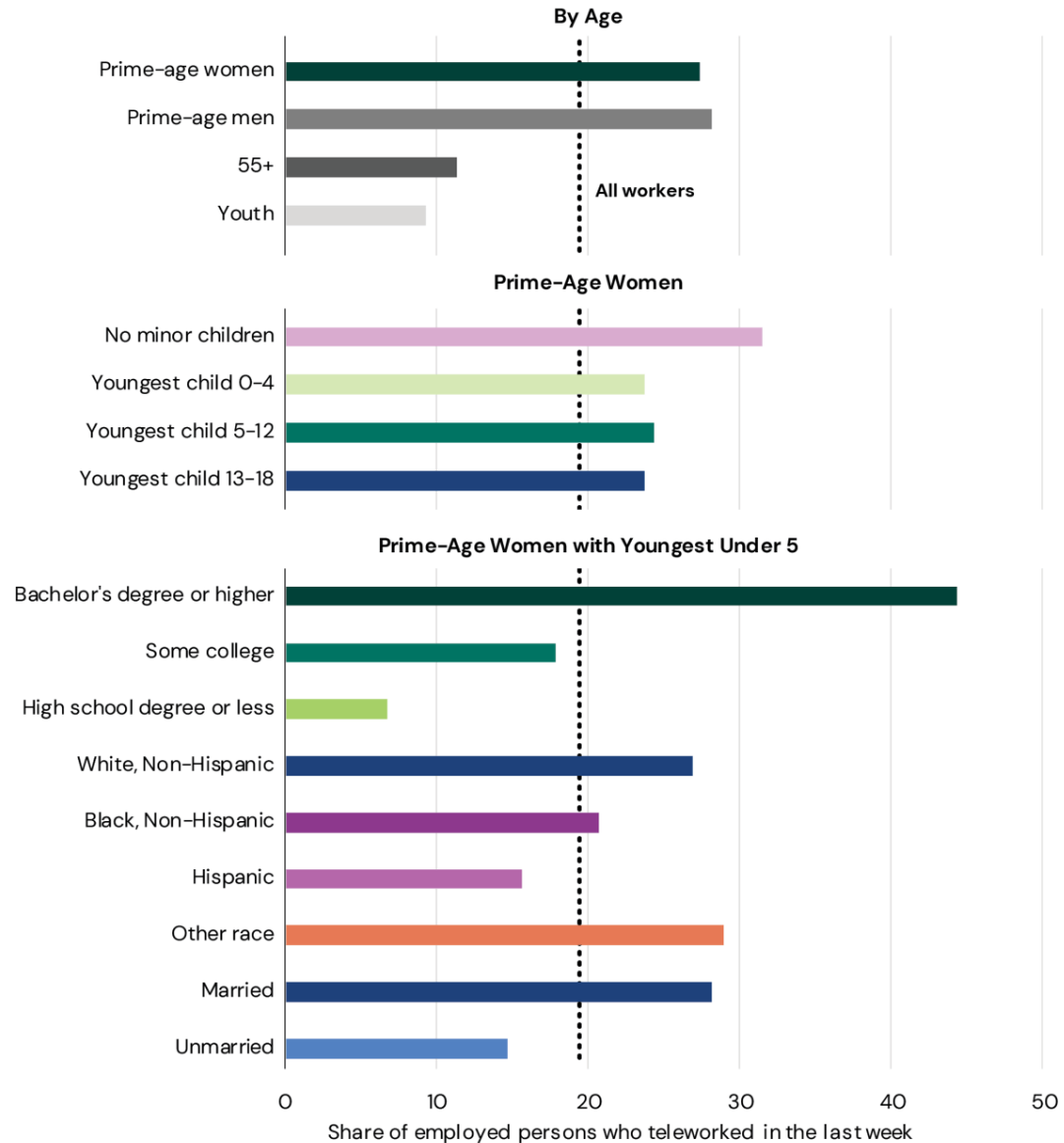Youngest child 5–12
Youngest child 13–18

Prime-Age Women with Youngest Under 5

Bachelor's degree or higher
Some college
High school degree or less
White, Non-Hispanic
Black, Non-Hispanic
Hispanic
Other race
Married
Unmarried

Share of employed persons who teleworked in the last week

Source: Census Household Pulse Survey n.d.; authors' calculations.

Note: The rates of teleworking are averages for the designated populations for Pulse survey weeks 53–58, fielded between January 4 and June 19, 2023. A horizontal line is drawn across bars representing the share of employed people of all ages who teleworked in the last week.

THE HAMILTON PROJECT

BROOKINGS

REMOTE WORK

Large disparities by race, ethnicity and education

Women now represent a majority of the college-educated labor force in the U.S.

Number of people ages 25 and older in the U.S. labor force with at least a bachelor's degree, in millions

Women 31.3 M
28.7
28.0
Men 30.5 M

Q2 2018   Q2 2019   Q2 2020   Q2 2021   Q2 2022
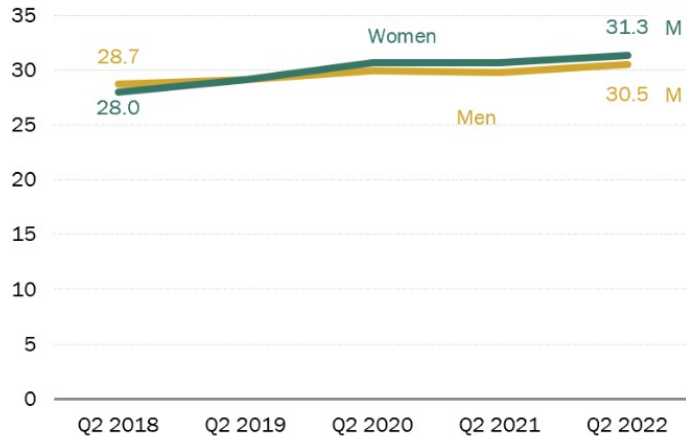
Note: Estimates refer to civilians ages 25 and older who are either employed or actively looking for work; they are not seasonally adjusted.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of April, May and June Current Population Survey monthly files (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

% of adults **ages 25 to 34** with a bachelor's degree

60%

46
40
Women
36
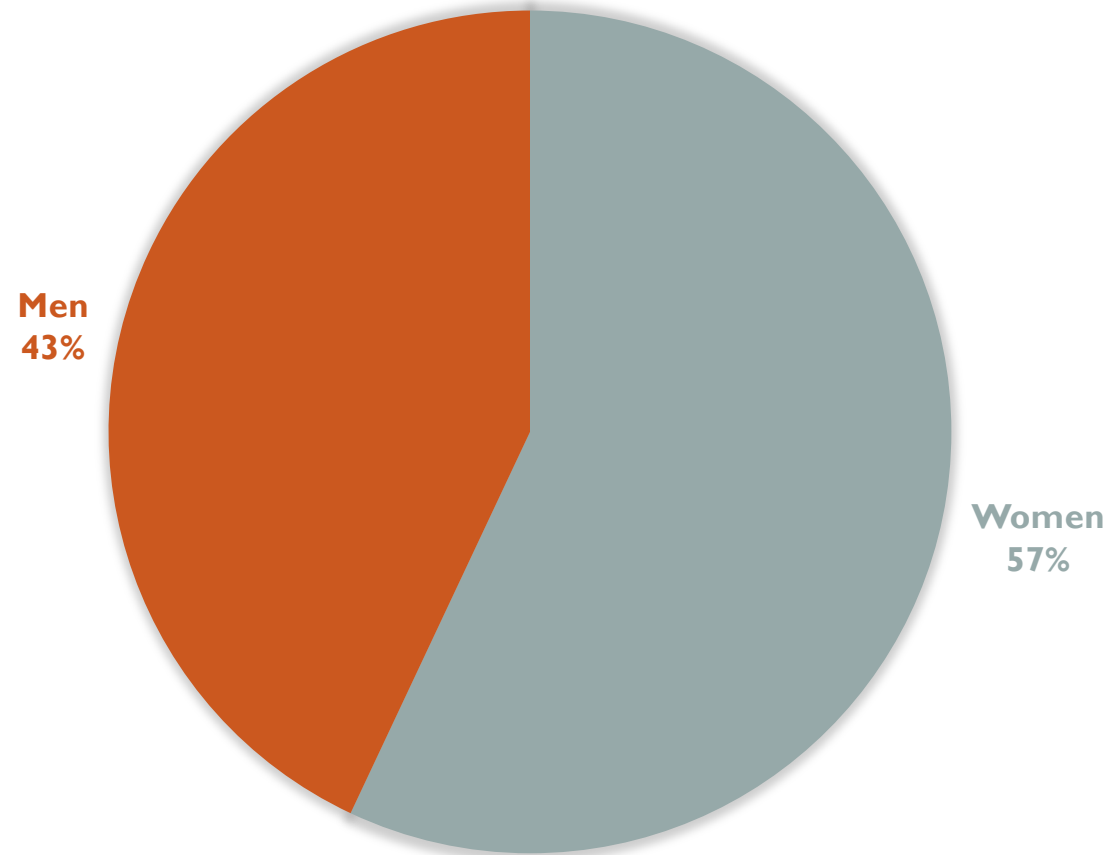Men
20   20
12

1970   1980   1990   2000   2010   2021
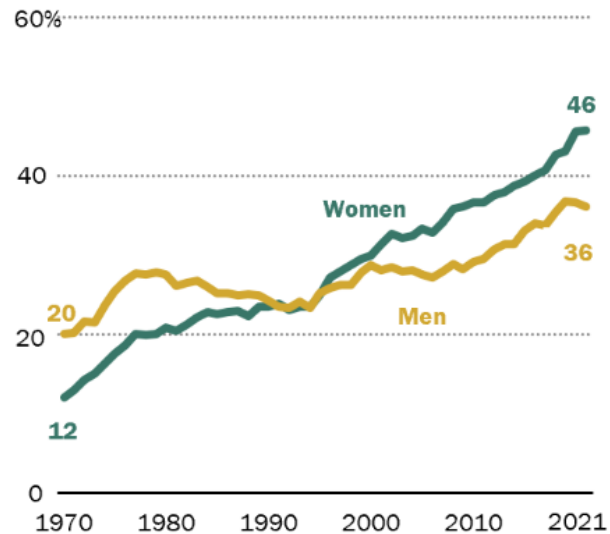
Graphs: Pew Research Center
Data: Current Population Survey

TAILWIND #2: COLLEGE ATTAINMENT

Women outnumber men on college campuses and among degree-holders

TAILWIND #3: WOMEN IN PREVIOUSLY MALE-DOMINATED PROFESSIONS

Medical School

Law school

STEM college degrees (but not masters and PhDs)

THE PRESENT OF WORK

Three Headwinds

Occupation	Median Wage (2022)	% Women
Cashiers	$13.58	72%
Fast Food Work	$13.43	64%
Home health & personal care aids	$14.51	87%
Maids & housekeeping cleaners	$14.40	88%
Childcare workers	$13.71	94%
Waiters & waitresses	$14.00	68%

Data source: BLS, OES, May 2022

Percent within each demographic earning < $15/hour
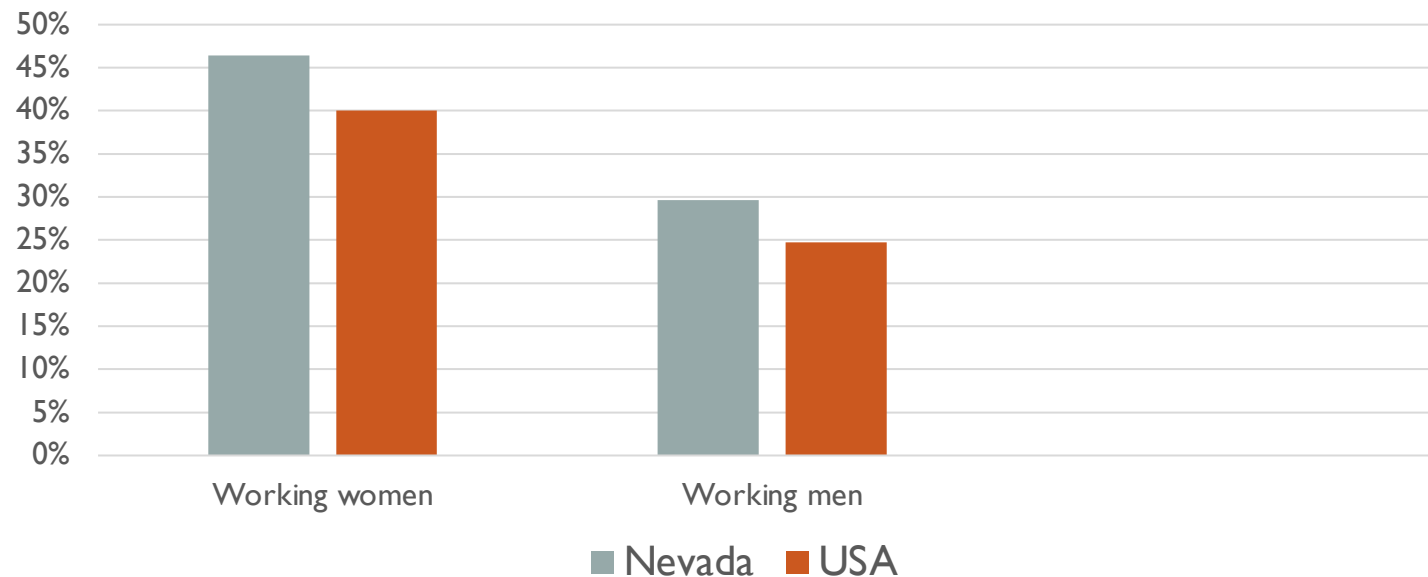
Data source: Oxfam, Census, ACS 2022

HEADWIND #1:
WOMEN IN
LOWEST
PAYING JOBS

~6 million care workers (2022)

Median hourly wage

Data: BLS, OEWS, May 2022

CARE WORKFORCE

Underpaid and undervalued

Median weekly earnings by sex and educational attainment

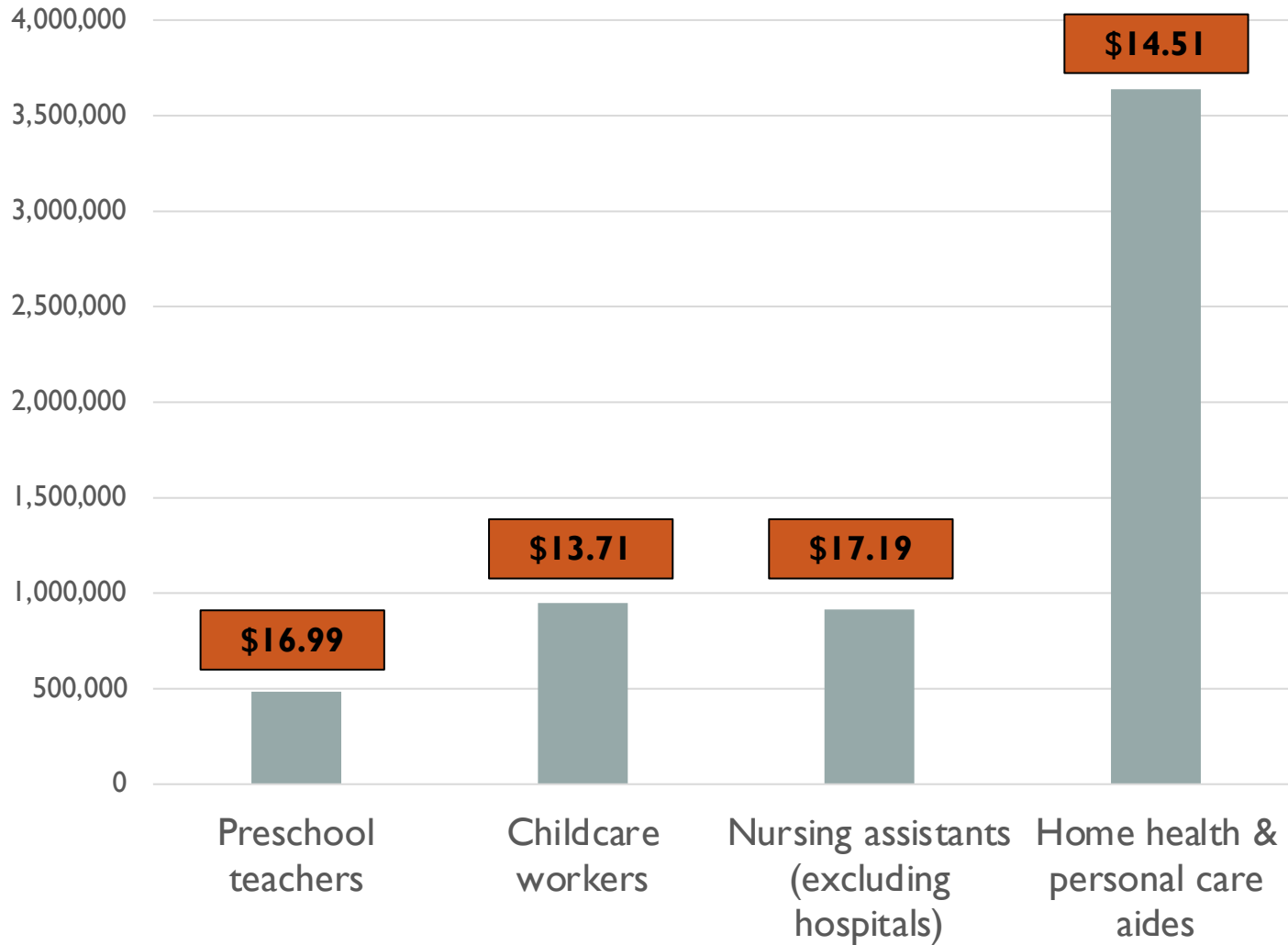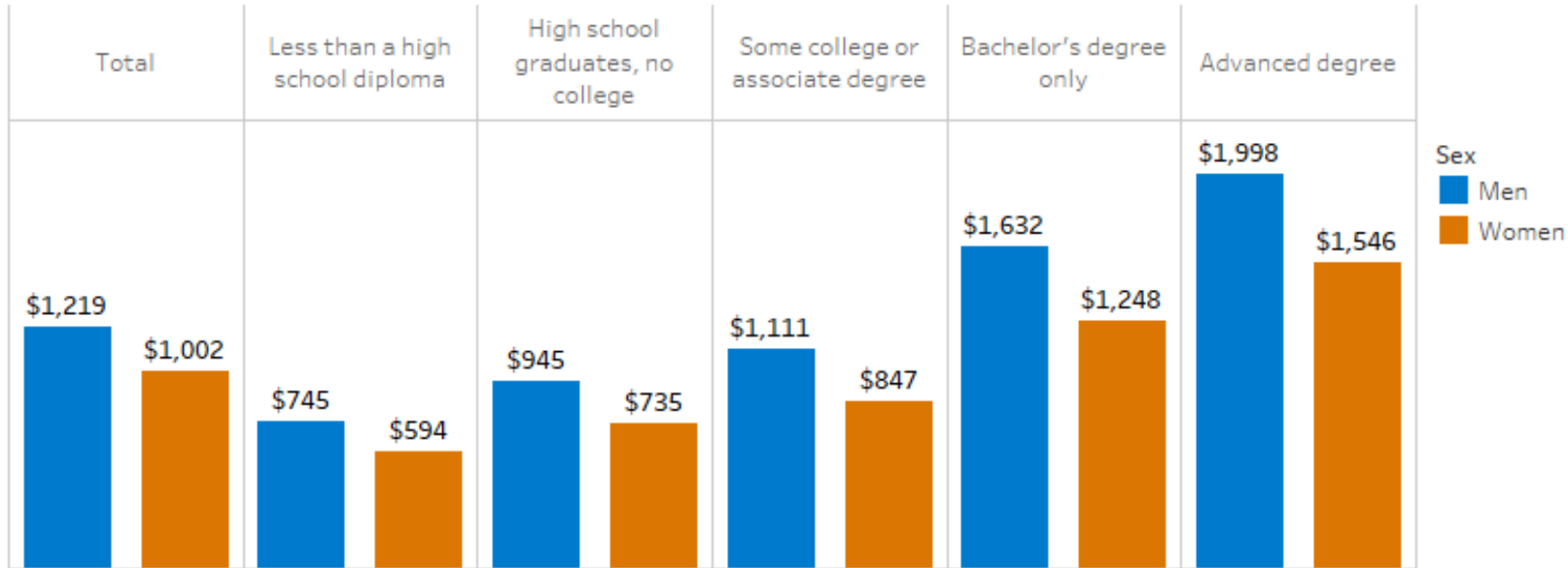|	Total	Less than a high school diploma	High school graduates, no college	Some college or associate degree	Bachelor's degree only	Advanced degree	Sex
Men	$1,219	$745	$945	$1,111	$1,632	$1,998	Men
Women	$1,002	$594	$735	$847	$1,248	$1,546	Women

Notes: Based on median weekly earnings of full-time, wage and salary workers, 25 years and older. Advanced degree includes people with master's, professional, and doctoral degrees.
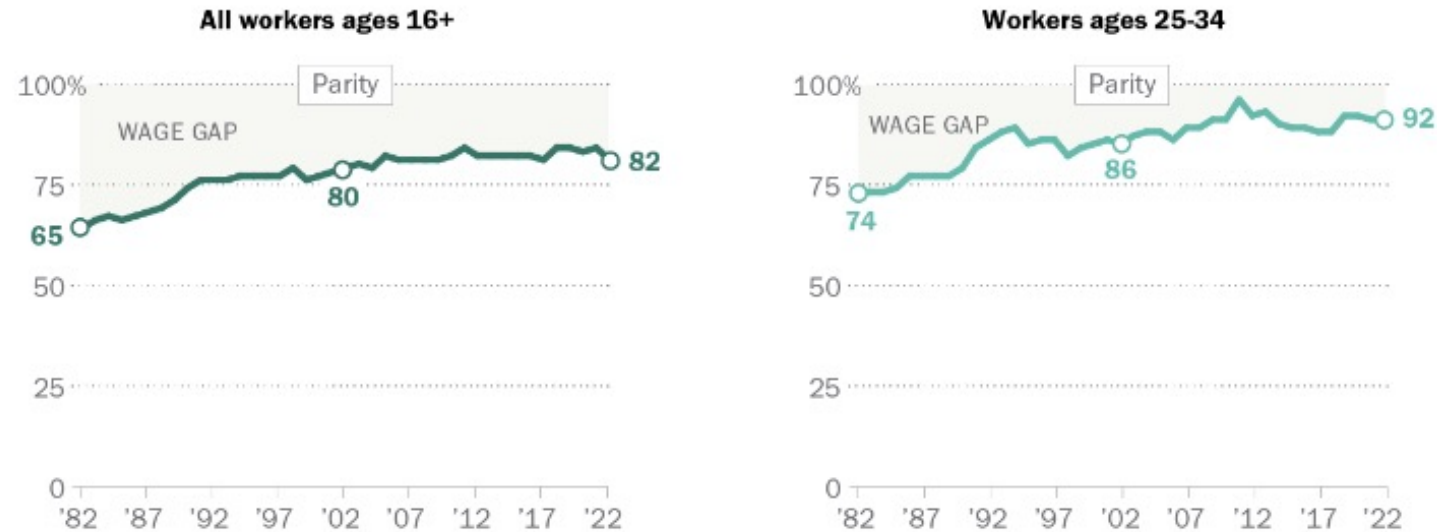Data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2022 annual averages.

Data source: Current Population Survey
Figure: Department of Labor

HEADWIND #2: GENDER PAY GAP PERSISTS

Data and Figure source: Pew Research Center

GENDER PAY GAP DIFFERS BY AGE
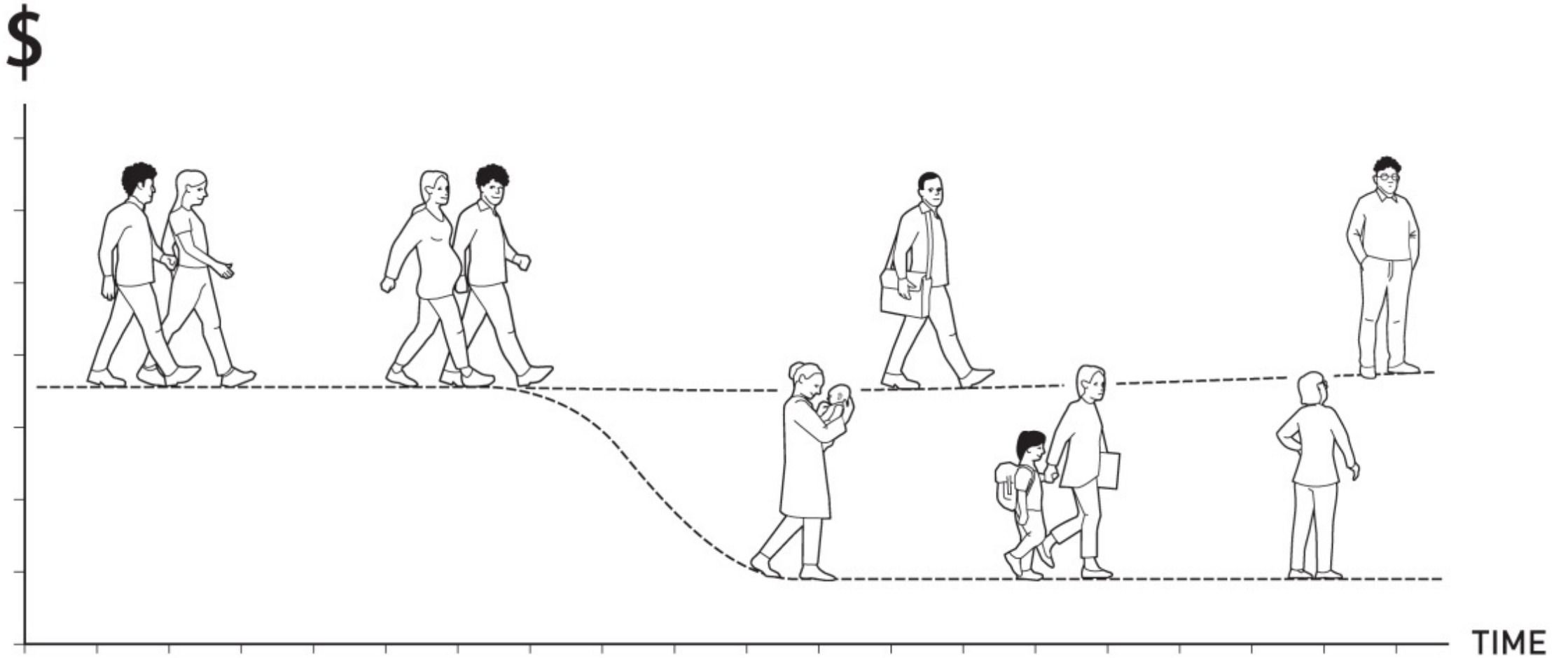
©Johan Jarnestad/The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences

About two-thirds of U.S. working mothers feel a great deal of pressure to focus on responsibilities at home

*Among **employed U.S. parents**, % who say they feel a great deal of pressure to ...*

	Fathers	Mothers	Diff
Focus on their responsibilities at home	45	67	-22
Support their family financially	62	57	5
Be successful in their job or career	38	41	-3

Note: Parents are those with children younger than 18 in the household.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 10-16, 2022.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure and data: Pew Research Center

CLASH OF RESPONSIBILITIES:

Work vs Care

The New York Times

OPINION

The Economy That Allows You to Get Your Job Done Is Broken

President Biden understands that caregiving is infrastructure, and that all families need it.

April 13, 2021

Illustration by Arsh Raziuddin / The New York Times

By Molly Kinder and Martha Ross

Ms. Kinder is a fellow, and Ms. Ross is a senior fellow, at the Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution where they focus on the labor market and employment. Both have juggled children at home during the pandemic.

HEADWIND #3: LACK OF INVESTMENT IN CARE INFRASTRUCTURE

MEDIAN ANNUAL PRICE OF CHILD CARE FOR ONE CHILD

Infant center-based
$7,461 ($8,310) $10,194 ($11,354) $13,420 ($14,947) $15,417 ($17,171)

Toddler center-based
$6,760 ($7,529) $8,846 ($9,852) $11,160 ($12,452) $12,121 ($13,500)

Preschool center-based
$6,239 ($6,949) $8,400 ($9,356) $10,078 ($11,224) $11,050 ($12,307)

School-age center-based
$5,268 ($5,890) $6,732 ($7,498) $8,373 ($9,325) $9,199 ($10,245)

Infant home-based
$5,824 ($6,486) $7,800 ($8,667) $8,978 ($10,000) $9,892 ($11,018)

Toddler home-based
$5,713 ($6,363) $7,362 ($8,199) $8,436 ($9,396) $9,100 ($10,135)

Preschool home-based
$5,541 ($6,171) $7,020 ($7,818) $8,048 ($8,963) $9,019 ($10,045)

School-age home-based
$4,810 ($5,357) $6,360 ($7,084) $7,097 ($7,904) $7,867 ($8,761)

County population size
- ■ 1-99,999
- ● 100,000 - 499,999
- ◆ 500,000 - 999,999
- ● 1,000,000+

In 60% of states, center-based childcare is more expensive than in state tuition

Avg family: 13% of family income to pay for childcare for 1 child (affordable = < 7%)

Source: National Database of Childcare Prices 2018 (U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau) and American Community Survey 2014-2018 (U.S. Census Bureau)
Note: Childcare prices are presented in 2018 and 2022 real dollars. Estimates for 2022 are in parentheses.

Figure: DOL; Data: ACS and DOL

Read more about the
Build Back Better Framework:

The most transformative investment in children and caregiving in generations:

Offers universal and free preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, the largest expansion of universal and free education since states and communities across the country established public high school 100 years ago. ⊕

Makes the largest investment in child care in the nation's history, saving most American families more than half of their spending on child care. ⊕

Delivers affordable, high-quality care for older Americans and people with disabilities in their homes, while supporting the workers who provide this care. ⊕

Administration Priorities

Long-term care: $400 billion ✗

Childcare: $225 billion ✗

Paid Family Leave: $225 billion ✗

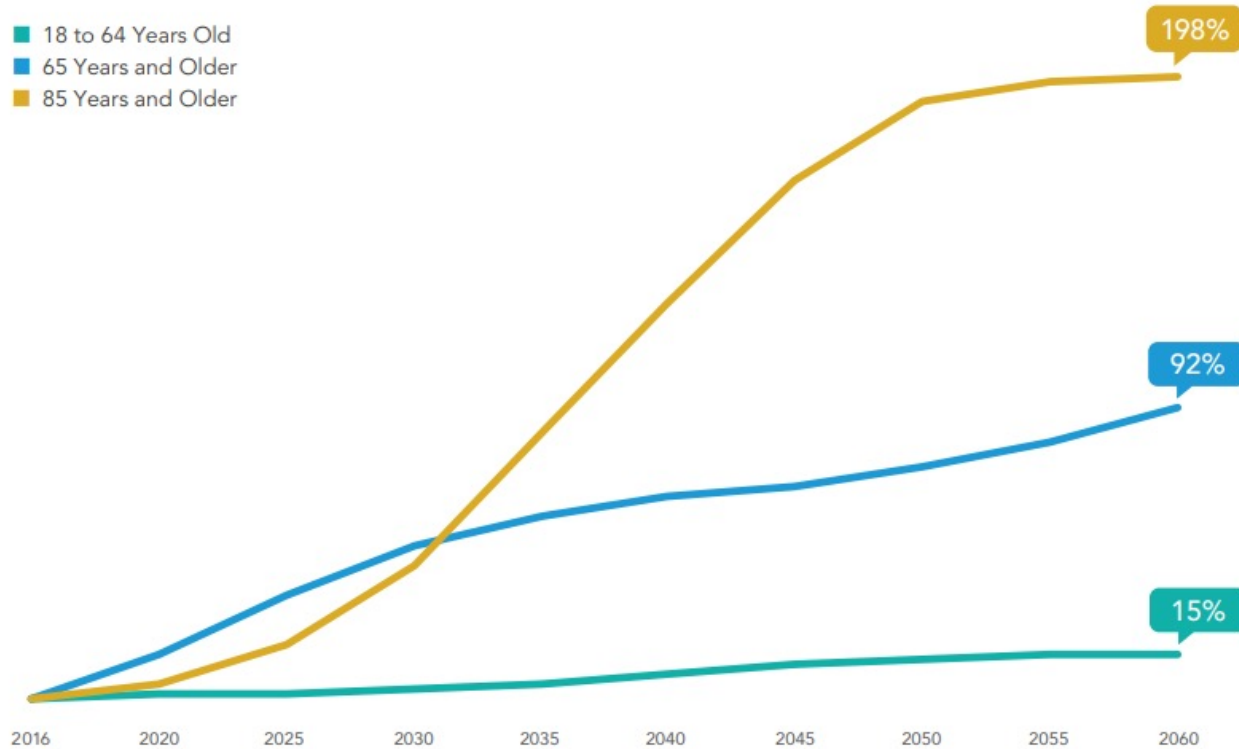**PreK for 3 & 4 yrs:** $200 billion ✗

THE FUTURE OF WORK

Changes on the Horizon

Ratio of adults 18-64 years to >85 years:
- Today: 31:1
- By 2060: 12: 1

PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH BY AGE GROUP, 2016 TO 2060

- 18 to 64 Years Old
- 65 Years and Older
- 85 Years and Older

198%

92%

15%

| 2016 | 2020 | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 | 2040 | 2045 | 2050 | 2055 | 2060 |

Graph: PHI
Data: Census

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE:
AN AGING TIME BOMB

OCCUPATION	NUMBER OF NEW JOBS (PROJECTED), 2022-32	2022 MEDIAN PAY
Home health and personal care aides	804,600	$30,180 per year
Software developers	410,400	$127,260 per year
Cooks, restaurant	277,600	$34,110 per year
Stockers and order fillers	178,600	$34,220 per year
Registered nurses	177,400	$81,220 per year
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	158,800	$36,110 per year
General and operations managers	147,300	$98,100 per year
Medical and health services managers	144,700	$104,830 per year
Light truck drivers	133,800	$40,410 per year
Financial managers	126,600	$139,790 per year
Nurse practitioners	118,600	$121,610 per year
Market research analysts and marketing specialists	116,600	$68,230 per year
Medical assistants	105,900	$38,270 per year

Figure and data: BLS 2023

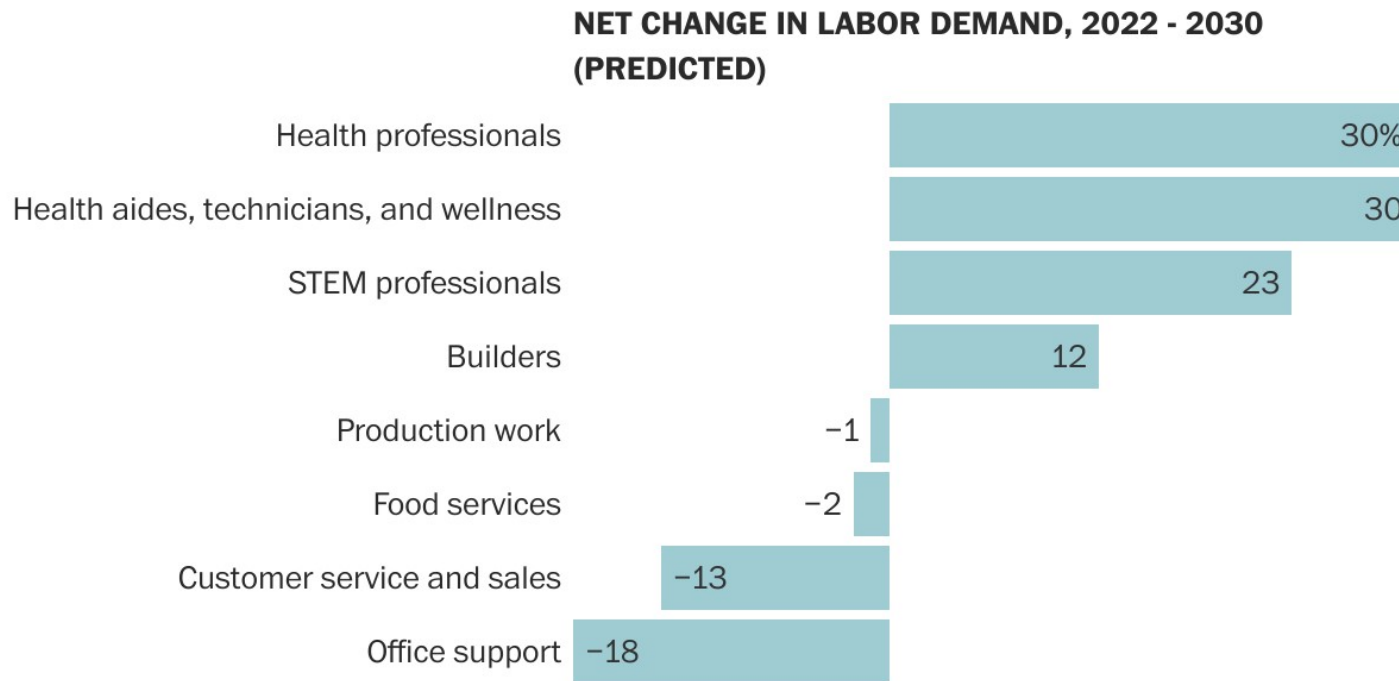# MOST NEW (PROJECTED) JOBS THROUGH 2032

TECHNOLOGY & AUTOMATION

Health care, STEM fields and construction are expected to boom. Workers in customer and food services, office support and production roles could suffer.
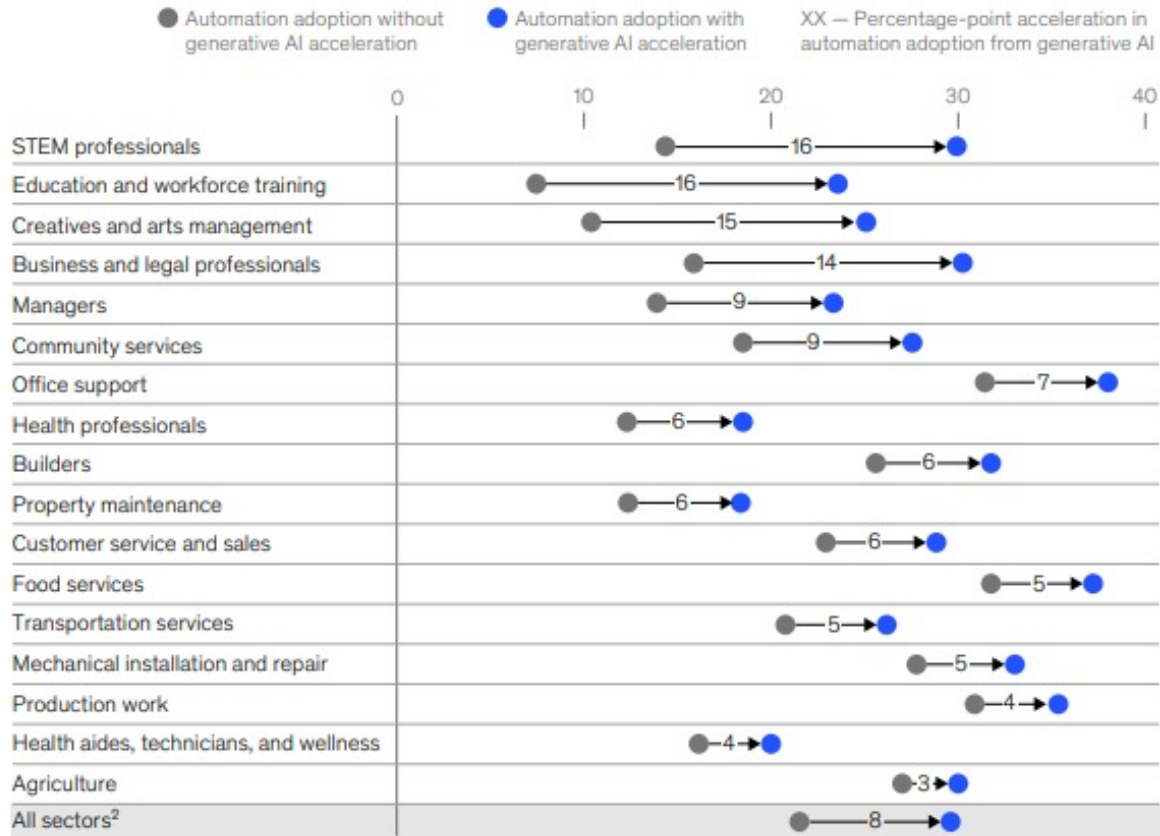
NET CHANGE IN LABOR DEMAND, 2022 - 2030 (PREDICTED)

Category	Net Change
Health professionals	30%
Health aides, technicians, and wellness	30
STEM professionals	23
Builders	12
Production work	−1
Food services	−2
Customer service and sales	−13
Office support	−18

Source: "Generative AI and the future of work in America," McKinsey Global Institute (2023).

Figure and data: McKinsey Global Institute, 2023

THE TRADITIONAL TECHNOLOGY PATH

With generative AI added to the picture, 30 percent of hours worked today could be automated by 2030.

Midpoint automation adoption[1] by 2030 as a share of time spent on work activities, US, %

Figure and data: McKinsey Global Institute, 2023
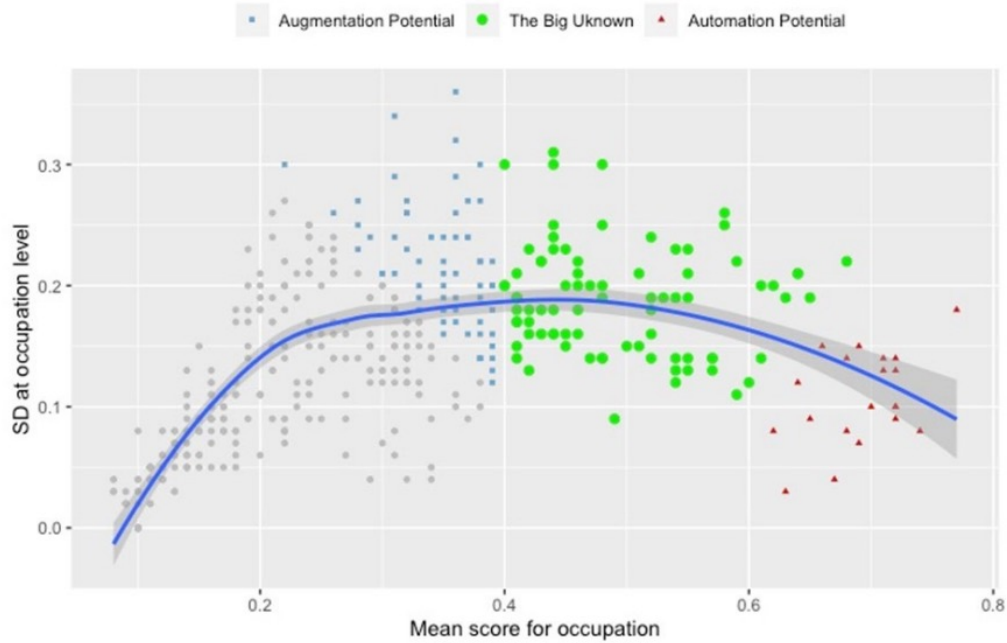
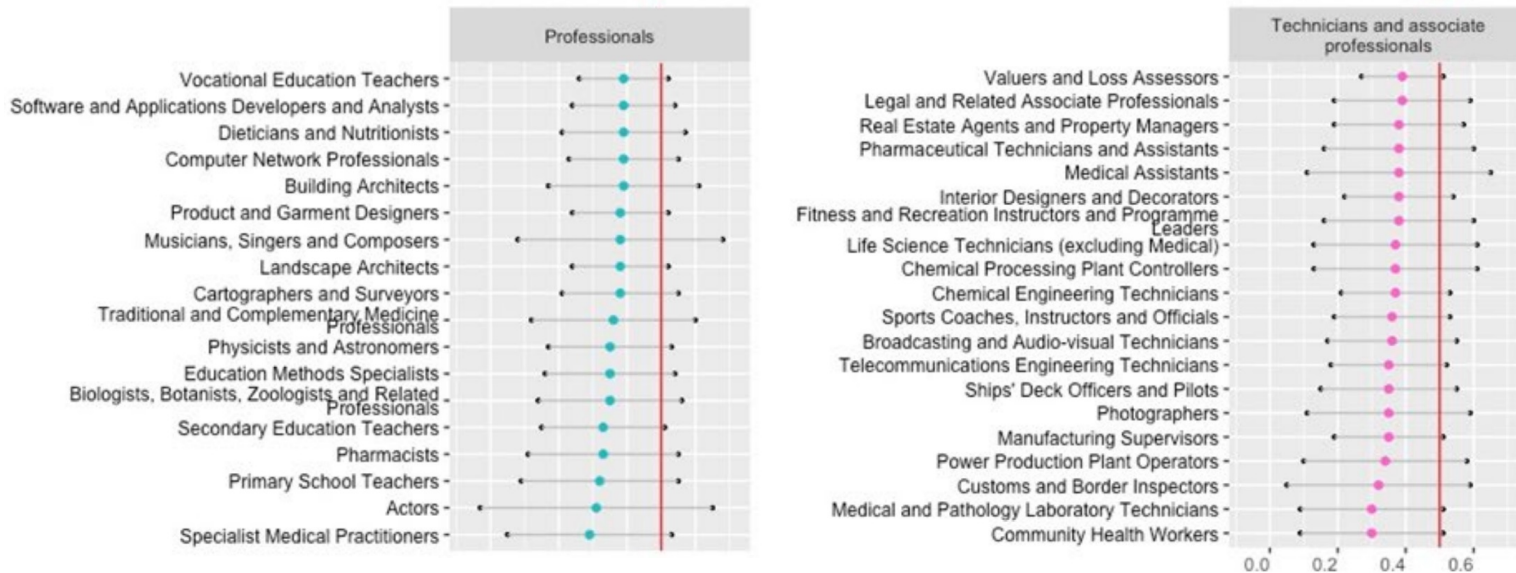GENERATIVE AI ACCELERATES DISRUPTION

Figure and data: ILO, 2023

MANY UNKOWNS

Augment or automate?

OCTOBER 30, 2023

Executive Order on the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence

BRIEFING ROOM ▸ PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

(c) The responsible development and use of AI require a commitment to supporting American workers. As AI creates new jobs and industries, all workers need a seat at the table, including through collective bargaining, to ensure that they benefit from these opportunities. My Administration will seek to adapt job training and education to support a diverse workforce and help provide access to opportunities that AI creates. In the workplace itself, AI should not be deployed in ways that undermine rights, worsen job quality, encourage undue worker surveillance, lessen market competition, introduce new health and safety risks, or cause harmful labor-force disruptions. The critical next steps in AI development should be built on the views of workers, labor unions, educators, and employers to support responsible uses of AI that improve workers' lives, positively augment human work, and help all people safely enjoy the gains and opportunities from technological innovation.

A FUTURE STILL TO BE DETERMINED

Whether generative AI augments or automates, helps or harms, is a future that we need to shape