

Millennials accept working mothers and traditional gender roles more than GenXers

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US adults and adolescents are now significantly more accepting of mothers who work fulltime, but a growing minority from younger generations believe that wives should mind the household and husbands should make decisions for the family, according to new research out today in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly*.

"Students are more accepting of mothers working, but a growing minority believes that men should be the rulers of the household or more believe that women should work, but still have less power at home," wrote researchers Donnelly et al. "This trend is particularly surprising given the legitimization of [same-sex marriage](#) over this time period, which challenges traditional gender-based views of marriage."

Looking at two nationally representative surveys of approximately 600,000 12th grade [students](#) and [adults](#) from 1976 to 2013, the researchers reported the following findings:

- In the 2010s, 22% of 12th graders believed that a preschool-age child would suffer if his or her mother worked, down from 34% in the late 1990s and 59% in the 1970s. Among adults, 35% thought preschool children would suffer from a [working mother](#), down from 42% in 1998 and 68% in 1977.
- In 2012, 72% of adults believed that working mothers could have good relationships with their children, up from 68% in 1998 and 49% in 1977.
- In the 2010s, 32% of 12th graders agreed that it is best for men

to work and women to take care of the family, up from 27% from 1995 to 1996.

- In the 2010s, 17% of students agreed that the husband should make the important decisions in the family, up from 14% from 1995 to 1996.
- In the 2010s, 68% of students reported that their mother worked the majority or all of the time while they grew up, compared to 33% in the 1970s and 61% in the late 1990s.
- Support for stay-at-home dads doubled from the 1970s to 2010s, yet the increase slowed significantly after the 1990s, suggesting that the current generation of men do not expect to become stay-at-home dads any more than the men of the previous generation.
- In the late 1990s, U.S. adults became less accepting of working mothers, but their support increased significantly in the 2000s and 2010s, with support of [working mothers](#) now a majority opinion.

With the overall increasing acceptance of working women, the researchers suggest that these findings signal a need for public support for [mothers](#) who work.

"The majority of U.S. adults and high school students now accept the idea that [women](#) will work even when they have young children," commented Donnelly et al. "This suggests a continued, urgent need for programs to help working families."

More information: "Attitudes Toward Women's Work and Family Roles in the United States, 1976-2013" *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 2015.

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