

# 5 Facts About Working Mothers in California

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This Mother's Day, we celebrate mothers' contributions to their families and the important role they play in shaping California's economy. While mothers play a crucial role in their families and the workforce, they face multiple challenges rooted in gender norms—from work-life balance and wage gaps to limited participation in high-paying jobs. This infographic highlights the economic contributions of working mothers in California and the barriers they face to achieving financial security.

**Fact 1:** In 2023, **62% of California mothers** participated in the labor force, a **three-point increase** from 2019 (**59%**). However, mothers are **much less likely** to participate in the workforce **than fathers at 83%**—a **21-point gap** in 2023.

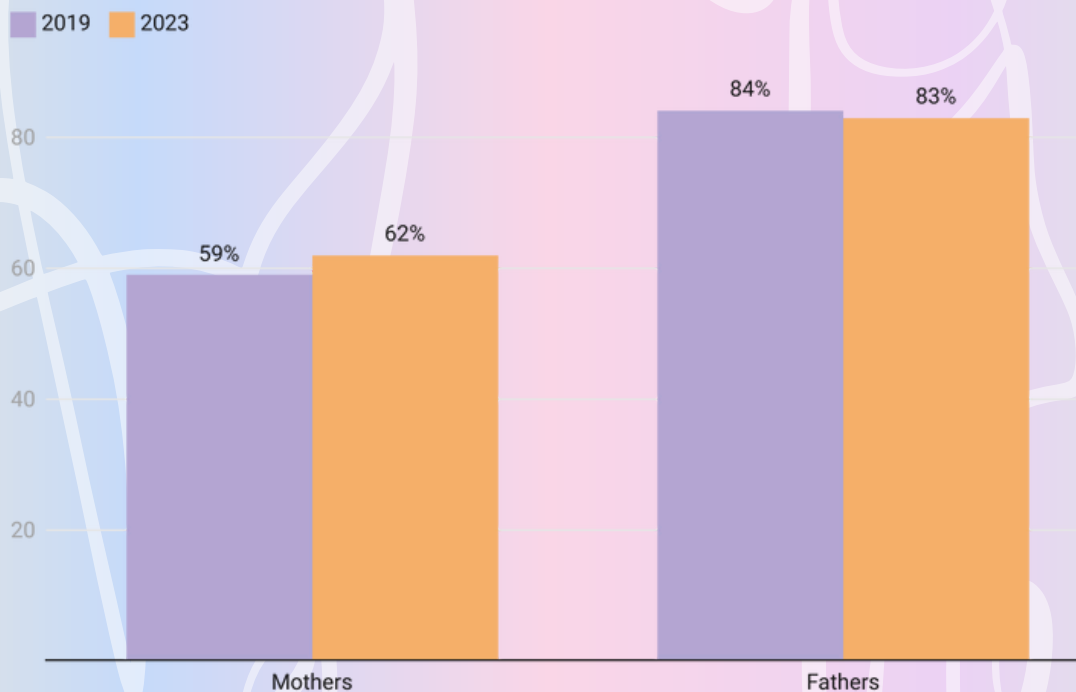


Figure 1: Mother and Father's Labor Force Participation Rate in California

## Fact 2: Mothers Are 3x More Likely to Work Part-Time than Fathers

In 2023, **26% of employed mothers** in California worked part-time, compared to just **9% of employed fathers**. While some mothers may choose part-time work to care for their families, others are constrained by a lack of support and flexibility.

Part-time jobs often lack essential benefits like paid family leave and health insurance, limiting economic mobility and reinforcing gendered labor expectations.

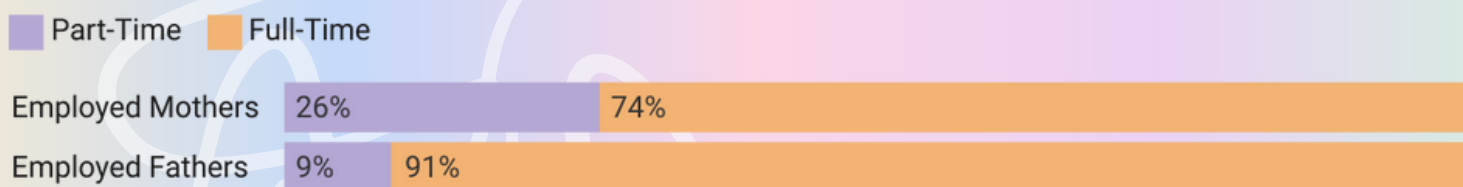


Figure 2: Employed Mothers and Fathers in California by Part-Time and Full-Time Work Status

## Fact 3: Most Working Mothers Are in Undervalued Care Sectors

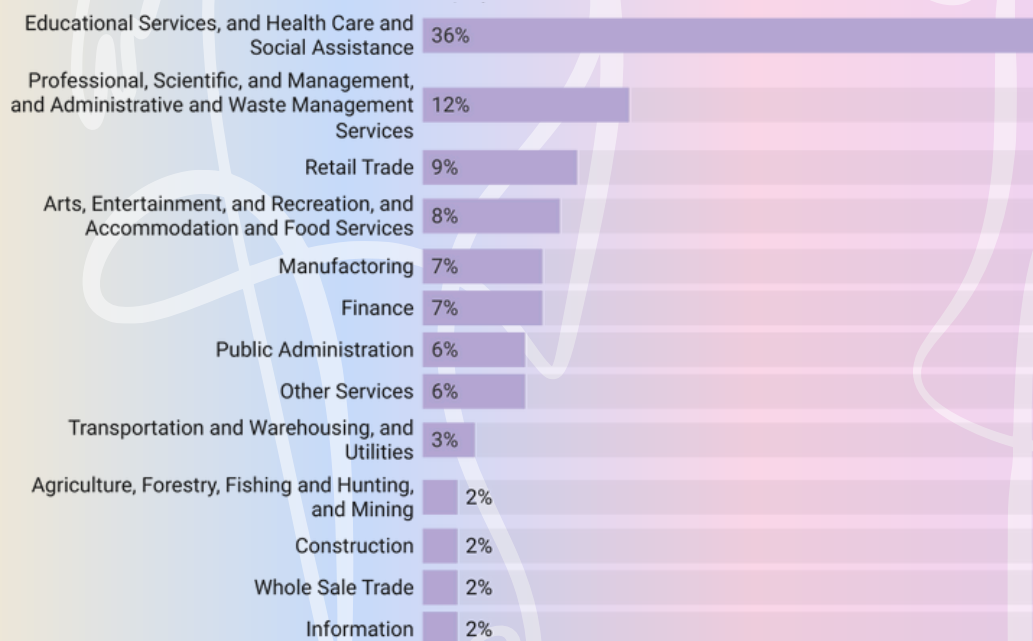


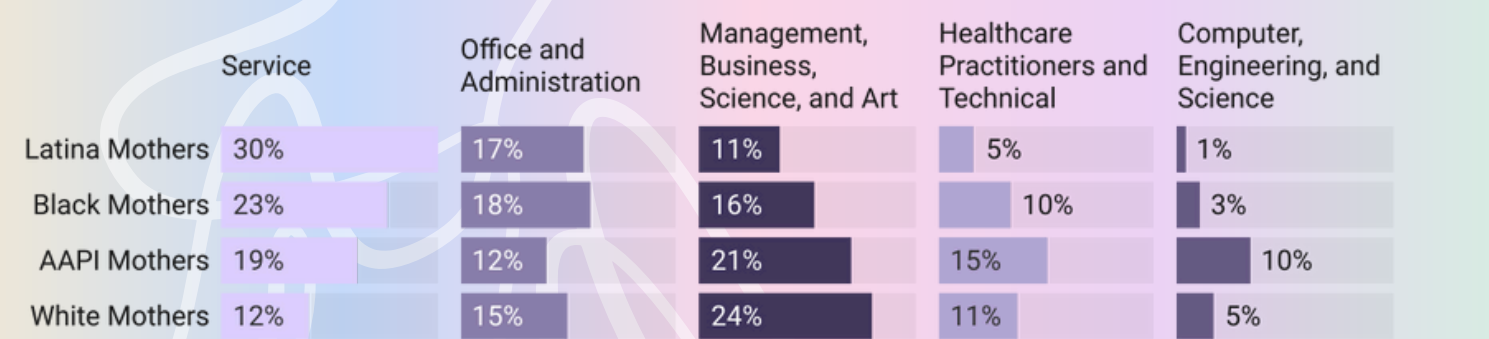
Figure 3: Employed Mothers in California by Industry

In 2023, almost **1.4 million mothers** in California were employed in **education, health care, and social assistance**. These industries provide essential services but are historically underpaid. Mothers remain underrepresented in higher-paying fields like tech.

## Fact 4: Service Jobs Dominate for Mothers—With Stark Racial Gaps

Nearly **1 in 4** California mothers work as personal care aides, food service workers, janitors, or housekeepers—essential jobs to the economy but with limited earnings.

These challenges are not evenly distributed. **About 30% of Latina mothers** work in service roles—more than **twice the rate of white mothers (12%)**.



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Figure 4: Employed Mothers in California by Selected Occupation Groups

## Fact 5: Working Mothers Earn Less Than Fathers Across All Racial and Ethnic Groups

In 2023, the **median income** for all working mothers was **\$56,000—\$17,000** less than that of working fathers (**\$73,000**).

On average, working mothers earn **77 cents** for every dollar working fathers earn.

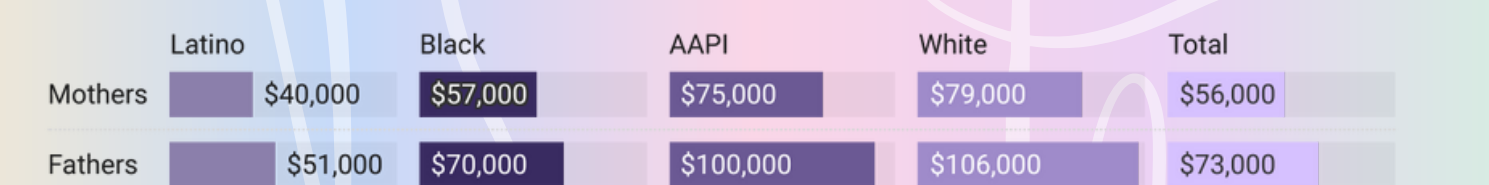



Figure 5: Median Income for Full-Time Working Mothers and Fathers by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex



Working mothers play a vital role in their families and in California's economy. Yet, they face multiple barriers to achieving economic well-being—barriers that are especially steep for Black and Latina mothers, who are overrepresented in low-wage occupations and underrepresented in high-paying fields.

Supporting mothers in the workforce isn't just about fairness—it's about inclusive policy that reflects the realities of today's economy and unlocks every worker's full potential.

With targeted investments in affordable care, flexible work options, and workplace protections, we can help mothers thrive at work and at home—and ensure a future where every California family has the opportunity to succeed.

Data Source: All findings in this brief are based on an analysis of the 2019 and 2023 5-Year American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata, accessed through IPUMS USA. Mothers and fathers are defined as adults ages 18 and older with their own children living in the same household in California. All employment and income data reflect this population.