Opting In and Out: Conditional and Unconditional Trends in Women's Transitions, and the Emergence of High-Paid Labor Force Reentry

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Abstract: Media reports of an "opt-out revolution"—in which large numbers of high-paid women were reportedly leaving the labor force to care for their children—precipitated a number of research papers that all confirmed what we already know: women in the U.S. are participating in the labor force at higher rates, and with higher relative wages, than ever before in history. This article takes a different approach, with particular attention to *transitions* both into and out of employment, conditional on observed worker characteristics. I find that, while a decreasing share of women recently left employment, a growing share of women recently left high-paid employment, simply because so many more women earn high pay. I also find that simultaneous rapid growth in the share of high-paid women re-entering the labor force completely offsets this trend. This approach clarifies why increasingly strong labor force attachment is consistent with a growing population of non-employed, formerly high-paid women, and highlights the previously unrecognized corresponding emergence of labor markets for high-paid female re-entrants.

JEL codes: J16, J22

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Media reports of an "opt-out revolution" (Belkin 2003)—in which large numbers of high-paid women were reportedly leaving the labor force to care for their children—precipitated a number of research papers that all confirmed what we already know: women in the U.S. are participating in the labor force at higher rates than ever before in history (Boushey 2005, 2008, Goldin 2006, Blau and Kahn 2007, Antecol 2012). However, the "opt-out" story is really about transitions, conditional on demographic and labor force characteristics including motherhood, husband's income, and high pre-exit income or earnings potential (Belkin 2003, Shang and Weinberg 2009, Herr and Wolfram 2009, Antecol 2012, Hersch 2013). This paper contributes to the literature by explicitly examining changes over time in the proportion of women making transitions into and out of the labor force, estimating both unconditional and conditional trends. The motivating question is whether rising levels of labor force participation might coincide with a growing number of transitions by well-paid women—both out of and back into the labor force—simply because a larger share of employed women are paid well. In this case, growing labor force participation is not inconsistent with the opt out story, as long as a growing group of well-paid women opting back into the labor force offsets the group opting out.

The approach taken here is to use time-consistent measures available in annual March CPS data to examine changes over time in the rate at which women transition into or out of employment in a 15 month period spanning the preceding calendar year through the March survey date. Information on age, motherhood, husband's income, and weekly earnings allows us to examine changes over time in the size and composition of the group of women with employment exit or entry.

I find that, although the proportion of women leaving employment in a given year is decreasing over time, pre-exit earnings levels within this group of leavers have risen over time, reflecting the rise in earnings among all employed women. Because the upward trend in the proportion of women with high earnings is stronger than the downward trend in employment exit rates, a growing share of women recently left high paid jobs. A similar pattern can be seen among recent entrants (or reentrants)—fewer women are making transitions in either direction, but those who do are more likely to be paid well while employed. Therefore, while it is literally true that a growing share of women recently left high paid employment, it is also true that a growing share of women are both well-paid and recent entrants to employment. The observed trends can be seen

within the entire population of women of childbearing age, but are much stronger conditional on certain observable characteristics including motherhood and high levels of husband's income.

Data, Definitions and Illustration

For more than three decades, the annual March CPS has consistently asked a representative sample of U.S. workers about the number of weeks worked in the preceding calendar year, and about current labor force participation. From this information, workers can be divided into four mutually exclusive categories. At the two extremes, workers with "persistent employment" are defined as those who reported working 50-52 weeks of the preceding year and also reported current employment as of the March survey date.[1] Workers with "no employment" are defined as those who reported working zero weeks of the preceding year and no current employment. All of the remaining workers were employed part of the time and therefore made transitions into or out of employment within the past 15 months, although we cannot tell how many transitions. What we do know is that within this group that made transitions, all of the currently employed workers must have made at least one transition into employment ("recent entry"), while those who are not currently employed must have made at least one transition out of employment ("recent exit").[2]

Figure 1 shows the population aged 23-52 divided into the four groups described above, with trends estimated separately for women (above) and men (below). The lowest curve (indicated by the marker "ALL") describes the proportion of the population falling into the "persistent employment" category each year.[3] The next curve (indicated by the marker "NOW") describes the proportion of the population currently employed, which is the sum of the "persistent employment" category and the group of workers with recent employment entry. The top curve (indicated by the marker "SOME") describes the proportion of workers not in the "no employment" category. The gap between "SOME" and "NOW" describes the proportion of workers with recent exit from employment. While each of the categories is computed in a consistent way over time, the magnitudes of the recent exit group and the recent entry group are

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[1] Of course, it is possible that some of this group had a quick exit and reentry between January and March that would not be observed in the CPS data. For the purpose of describing trends over time, what matters is that the prevalence of this type of phenomenon does not change dramatically or discontinuously over time.

[2] An additional category was investigated to represent those employed between 39 and 49 weeks last year and currently employed in the education sector, because a nine-month academic year can represent persistent employment in this sector. The prevalence of women in this small category (about 2 percent) shows no time trend.

[3] Statistics are computed over two-year intervals to reduce noise.

not directly comparable due to the asymmetry of their construction. Note that the "recent entry or reentry" group tends to be larger than the recent exit group because it includes all individuals who took only a short break at any time during the past year, while the recent exit group includes only those not currently employed.

The time trends for women indicate that an increasing proportion of women participated in employment by all three measures described, and that the proportion of women making transitions either out of or into employment decreased over time. The corresponding time trends for men are much more cyclic, with no clear patterns of increase or decrease over time. Both men and women show a sharp drop in employment associated with the onset of the most recent recession, with larger impact for men than for women. We will return to discussion of the trends among women after introducing two more definitions.

For each woman in the sample who worked at least one week in the preceding year (either part-time or full-time), an indicator of high weekly earnings is set to 1 if her average weekly earnings (annual income divided by the number of weeks worked) are at least as high as an age- and year-specific threshold. The threshold for "high earnings" among women of a given age in a given year is set to the median of weekly earnings among men the same age in the same year who are employed full-time and full year (at least 35 hours per week for 50-52 weeks). An alternate threshold, the median of weekly earnings among college-educated men, is used to construct the corresponding measure referred to as "very high earnings." Even higher thresholds at the 75th and 90th centiles among college-educated men are also used in some of the analysis.

The solid line in Figure 2 depicts the proportion of employed women in the "high earnings" group each year. The upward slope of this curve indicates a positive net trend in the share of employed women in high paid jobs. Combined with the Figure 1 trend in the share of women employed, there is no question that the overall share of women both employed and paid well is increasing over time. The lowest dashed line shows the corresponding trend when the population is restricted to women in the "recent exit" group. Although this group is less likely to have high earnings than the typical employed woman, the increase over time in the share with high pre-exit earnings mirrors the rise among all employed women, with somewhat lower slope. Women who recently left employment are about twice as likely to be leaving a high-paid job compared to similar women three decades ago, while the typical employed woman is about three times as likely to be in a high-paid job. The remaining longer-dash line illustrates that, among women of the

"recent entry" group, the proportion reporting high weekly earnings increased rapidly over time, with slope quite similar to that for all employed woman.

An indicator for husband's high earnings is based on the husband's annual income last year. In this case the threshold for high husband earnings is the median over the husbands of all married women age 35-45 whose husbands worked full-time full-year in the corresponding year. The fraction of women with high husband's earnings under this definition of the threshold was about 18 percent throughout the three-decade interval. The remaining 82 percent of women in the 23-52 age range had either lower husband's income or were not married.

Unconditional and Conditional Trends

The first four rows of Table 1 present a numerical representation of the Figure 1 data (for women), averaged over each of the eight-year pre-recession time intervals, plus the four-year interval 2009-2012. In the earliest time interval, 1977-1984, 28 percent reported no employment over the 15 month window, while 41 percent reported persistent employment, and the remaining 31 percent made at least one transition. In the pre-recession 2001-2008 interval, 20 percent reported no employment over the 15 month window, while 59 percent reported persistent employment, and only 21 percent made a transition.[4] In the most recent 2009-2012 interval, women were somewhat less likely to be employed than in the pre-recession period, and that is true by any of the measures. The final column reports the long-term trend as described by the difference between the statistic reported for 1977-1984 and that for the most recent 2009-2012 interval.[5] Of the four categories, only the fourth--persistent employment--contains a larger share of women today than it did 30 years ago.

Row 5 of Table1 describes the first set of conditional means: the proportion of women who are both in the "recent exit" group and the "high earnings" group. The size of this high-paid recent exit group grew from 0.74 percent of women to 1.28 percent of women over the three decade interval, although the size of the entire recent exit group fell from 11 percent to 8 percent. Notably, about half of the growth in high-paid-recent-exit corresponds with the timing of Belkin's opt-out story (2003). Row 8 of Table 1 shows that growth in the size of the high-paid recent entry-or-

[4] The downward trend in the prevalence of transitions is consistent with the decline in labor market "churning" previously noted by several economists (Davis, Faberman and Haltiwanger 2012, Hyatt and Spletzer 2013, Molloy, Smith and Wozniak 2013).

[5] All four of the corresponding time trend regressions have t-statistics with magnitude greater than or equal to 45.

reentry group is more than large enough to offset growth in the high-paid recent-exit group. In fact, growth in the share of women in the high-paid-entry group is twice as large: 1.0 percent more women are in the high-paid recent-entry-or-reentry group, more than double the 0.5 percent growth in the share of women in the high-paid recent-exit group. The corresponding pair of time-trend regressions show statistically significant positive trends in the sizes of both high-paid transition groups, with t-statistics greater than 20. The coefficient representing the time-trend in high-paid recent entry-or-reentry (.0038 per decade) is almost exactly double the coefficient representing the time-trend in high-paid recent exit (.0019 per decade).[6] Although the overall share of women making transitions in either direction has fallen over time, a small but growing share of women made transitions out of high paid jobs, while a somewhat larger and faster growing share of women made transitions from outside the labor force into high paid jobs.

Recall, though, that the magnitudes of these two trends are not directly comparable. Further investigation based on longer panels of data will be required to determine the precise extent to which these two trends offset each other. Analysis included later in this paper suggests that the net effects are approximately neutral, with high-paid reentrants about evenly replacing high-paid leavers over the course of a year.

The remaining rows of Table 1 present estimates of the share of women who recently made transitions out of or into high paid employment using successively higher pay thresholds. In each of the three additional cases, both trends are an order of magnitude smaller but still positive, with stronger trend for high-paid entry relative to the trend for high-paid exit.[7]

Tables 2-4 present statistics corresponding to those of rows 1-4, 5 and 8 of Table 1 within groups broken down by age, husband's income, motherhood, and motherhood interacted with husband's income. In every case, the story is the same: a decreasing share of women is making transitions either out of or into the labor force. However, a growing share of women had high earnings last year *and* made a transition. For each group, growth in the number of high earning women entering or reentering the workforce more than offsets growth in the number of high earning women exiting the workforce. The relative trends are similar among women of different

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[6] Standard errors are near .0001 in both regressions. These coefficients are based on a linear probability model, marginal effects estimated from a probit regression are nearly identical.

[7] In each of these three additional cases, regression analysis confirms that the positive trends are statistically significant, with the coefficient describing the trend in high-paid entry about twice as large as the coefficient describing the trend in high-paid exit.

ages. Consistent with the opt-out story, both trends are stronger among women who are married to high-income husbands. The strongest positive trend in transitions from outside the labor force into high-earning jobs is seen among mothers married to high-income husbands.

Additional Evidence on the Emergence of High-Paid Rentry

The argument that there is an emerging labor market for high-paid reentrants would be even more convincing if one more piece of evidence were available. The measure of high earnings used so far is based on last year's earnings. To be thorough, I would like to check that the current pay of the high-earning re-entrant group remains high after reentry. While many of the currently employed reentrants who worked part of the preceding year probably have earnings data measured after labor force entry, some of the women might have worked for several weeks at the beginning of the year, taken a break, and then reentered. An ideal earnings measure would reflect earnings only after reentry. Beginning in 1990, the CPS March files include a measure of current weekly earnings (for a small subset of the sample included in the "earner study") as well as the measure of last year's earnings collected for the full sample in all years. The final table of the paper provides evidence on recent trends based on the current weekly earnings of recent female entrants (current full-time workers who worked no more than 26 weeks last year), and of persistent female workers (current full-time workers who worked at least 50 weeks last year), relative to the earnings of men the same age.

The statistics displayed in Table 5 are based on an earnings measure observed only during the current employment spell. Both groups of women—those who worked at least 50 weeks and those who worked no more than 26 weeks last year— were more likely to have high pay in recent years than in earlier years. In the earliest years available, 1990-1997, persistent workers were more than twice as likely as the entrants to have high pay, while in more recent years persistent workers were only 50 percent more likely to have high pay. The results are similar when a more stringent definition of very high pay is used. In the lower panel of the table, the younger portion of the sample is dropped to focus attention on the age group unlikely to be entering the workforce for the first time. Within this group, the initial differences between the persistent workers and the entrants is even starker, and the between-cohort change is even more dramatic. Among older reentrants, the share of women earning high pay doubled between cohorts (from 0.08 to 0.17),

compared to a much more modest between-cohort increase (from 0.26 to 0.32) among persistent workers. These findings confirm a rapid emergence of labor markets for high-paid entrants.

To provide additional understanding about the trends described in Table 5, Figure 3 combines statistics based on the Table 5 current earnings measure with the longer-term trends that can be computed using the original measure of high earnings. The two measures yield similar estimates among the full-time, full-year workers. Among the entrants who worked no more than half of last year, it is likely that "division error" accounts for the higher estimates when the earnings measure is based on last year's annual earnings divided by the number of weeks worked last year.[8] However both measures yield estimated time-trend slopes among entering workers that are steeper than the corresponding slope among persistent workers. This representation clarifies that, by either measure of earnings, the share of female labor force entrants or reentrants with high weekly salary was quite low in 1990 and then grew more quickly than the corresponding share among persistent female workers.

Additional Evidence on Net Trends Among High-Paid Women

While a complete picture of net trends will require additional data following individuals over a longer time interval, a simple thought experiment is revealing about net flows within the high-earnings-potential population. Table 6 describes comparisons, within fixed samples of women, between the share of weeks worked last year and the share of women who worked last week. If weeks worked are evenly distributed throughout the year, then differences in these proportions reflect net flows into or out of employment. The estimates are quite comparable in every case, suggesting that net flows are close to zero. It is likely that the earlier estimates showing higher levels and stronger trends in high-paid entry relative to high-paid exit are partially accounted for by reentry after very short spells away from employment. On net, it appears that high-paid reentry flows compensate fully for any high-paid exit, but do not seem to over-compensate.

The evidence presented in Table 6 also reveals that, contrary to opt-out notions, high-paid women are reliable employees. Overall, within groups containing both persistent and transitioning women workers, high-paid women tend to work more weeks per year than other women.

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[8] If a low number of weeks was recorded in error for some observations, then the estimated weekly earnings measure will be biased upwards. Note that the measure based on current earnings among those who worked 1-26 weeks last year is similar to that based on those who worked 0-26 weeks last year.

Discussion

Both the personal and societal long-term costs associated with the temporary withdrawal of valuable women workers from the labor force are far smaller if there are viable pathways enabling these women to return to occupations using their full productive potential. The evidence presented here points toward rapidly emerging labor markets for well-paid reentering women workers, against a backdrop of increased labor force persistence. As the share of employed women earning high pay has grown, so has the share of high-paid women among the diminishing groups of women making transitions in either direction during any particular year. The current magnitude of flow by entering or reentering women into high paid positions involves a small segment of the population, and appears to offset the better-publicized exit of some high paid women from the labor force. This new equilibrium provides opportunities not available to women of earlier generations, and facilitates more efficient utilization of scarce skilled labor.

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Table 1--Trends in Employment and Transitions over the Preceding 15 Months

	1977-1984	1985-1992	1993-2000	2001-2008	2009-2012	Change
WOMEN						
No Employment	27.90	21.28	19.07	20.22	22.99	-4.9
Recent Exit	11.26	9.51	7.90	7.23	7.55	-3.7
Recent Entry or Reentry	19.86	18.19	16.49	13.92	12.76	-7.1
Persistent Employment	40.98	51.02	56.54	58.63	56.70	+15.7
Additional Detail						
Recent Exit and High Pay	0.74	0.85	1.02	1.26	1.28	+0.5
Recent Exit and Low Pay	9.63	8.07	6.51	5.65	5.92	-3.7
Recent Exit, Pay Missing or 0	0.90	0.59	0.37	0.32	0.34	-0.6
Recent Entry and High Pay	1.60	2.26	2.78	2.83	2.55	+1.0
Recent Entry and Low Pay	15.39	13.35	11.22	8.68	7.76	-7.6
Recent Entry, Pay Missing or 0	2.87	2.58	2.50	2.40	2.46	-0.4
Recent Exit and Very High Pay	0.46	0.47	0.52	0.63	0.62	+0.16
Recent Entry and Very High Pay	0.99	1.14	1.41	1.42	1.30	+0.31
Recent Exit and VV High Pay	0.18	0.19	0.26	0.30	0.29	+0.11
Recent Entry and VV High Pay	0.34	0.40	0.53	0.58	0.54	+0.20
Recent Exit and VVV High Pay	0.10	0.09	0.13	0.15	0.13	+0.03
Recent Entry and VVV High Pay	0.15	0.17	0.22	0.26	0.22	+0.07
Number of Observations	268,547	275,913	251,959	379,322	177,387	

Sample: Women age 23-52 drawn from the CPS March Uniform Surveys.
Scale: Reported estimates represent the percentage of all women in each designated category.
Definitions: Average weekly income is computed for all women who reported positive weeks worked and positive income in the preceding year, and is missing for women who reported either no weeks or no income. High pay is defined as average weekly income higher than the median among men the same age and year who worked full time and full year (at least 35 hours per week and at least 50 weeks). Very high pay is defined as average weekly income higher than the median among college-educated men the same age and year who worked full time and full year. Very, very high pay (VV) and very, very, very high pay (VVV) raise the threshold to the 75^{th} and 90^{th} percentile among college-educated men the same age and year who worked full time and full year. Change describes the difference between the earliest and latest columns.

Table 2—Conditional Trends in Employment and Transitions over the Preceding 15 Months, By Age

	1977-1984	1985-1992	1993-2000	2001-2008	2009-2012	Change
Age 23-32						
No Employment	24.65	20.25	18.43	19.95	22.82	-1.8
Recent Exit	13.91	11.92	10.35	9.77	9.72	-4.2
Recent Entry or Reentry	22.03	20.10	19.21	16.70	15.48	-6.6
Persistent Employment	39.41	47.74	52.01	53.58	51.97	+12.6
Additional Detail						
Recent Exit and High Pay	1.23	1.37	1.54	1.92	1.84	+0.6
Recent Entry and High Pay	2.43	3.19	3.80	4.09	3.56	+1.2
Number of Observations	114,238	107,661	82,200	110,563	54,533	
Age 33-42						
No Employment	28.44	20.71	19.40	20.83	23.29	-5.2
Recent Exit	10.08	8.47	7.50	6.62	6.96	-3.1
Recent Entry or Reentry	20.00	18.06	15.81	13.60	12.39	-7.6
Persistent Employment	41.48	52.76	57.30	58.94	57.36	+15.9
Additional Detail						
Recent Exit and High Pay	0.45	0.59	0.88	1.04	1.09	+0.6
Recent Entry and High Pay	1.16	1.82	2.25	2.47	2.43	+1.3
Number of Observations	85,486	99,633	93,704	138,308	60,791	
Age 43-52						
No Employment	32.58	23.74	19.37	19.88	22.89	-9.7
Recent Exit	8.38	7.17	5.71	5.55	6.05	-2.3
Recent Entry or Reentry	16.1	15.36	14.36	11.74	10.57	-5.5
Persistent Employment	42.94	53.72	60.56	62.84	60.50	+17.56
Additional Detail						
Recent Exit and High Pay	0.30	0.40	0.62	0.87	0.93	+0.6
Recent Entry and High Pay	0.76	1.41	2.31	2.06	1.71	+1.0
Number of Observations	68,823	68,619	76,055	130,451	62,063	

Sample: Women age 23-52 drawn from the CPS March Uniform Surveys, by age group. Definitions: Average weekly income is computed for all women who reported positive weeks worked and positive income in the preceding year, and is missing for women who reported either no weeks or no income. High pay is defined as average weekly income higher than the median among men the same age and year who worked full time and full year (at least 35 hours per week and at least 50 weeks). Change describes the difference between the earliest and latest columns.

Table 3—Conditional Trends in Employment and Transitions over the Preceding 15 Months, by Husband's Income

	1977-1984	1985-1992	1993-2000	2001-2008	2009-2012	Change
High Husband Income						
No Employment	38.31	27.25	23.07	25.42	25.61	-12.7
Recent Exit	11.16	9.27	7.40	6.44	6.08	-5.1
Recent Entry or Reentry	19.35	18.98	17.83	14.84	13.17	-6.2
Persistent Employment	31.18	44.5	51.69	53.31	55.15	+24.0
Additional Detail						
Recent Exit and High Pay	0.84	1.25	1.44	1.74	1.71	+0.9
Recent Entry and High Pay	1.58	2.60	3.55	3.61	3.39	+1.8
Number of Observations	47,052	48,530	45,665	69,079	31,527	
Lower Husband Income or No Husband						
No Employment	25.58	19.95	18.15	19.12	22.47	-3.1
Recent Exit	11.29	9.56	8.01	7.40	7.84	-3.5
Recent Entry or Reentry	19.97	18.02	16.18	13.72	12.68	-7.3
Persistent Employment	43.16	52.47	57.66	59.76	57.01	+13.9
Additional Detail						
Recent Exit and High Pay	0.72	0.77	0.92	1.15	1.19	+0.5
Recent Entry and High Pay	1.60	2.18	2.60	2.67	2.38	+0.8
Number of Observations	221,495	227,383	206,294	310,243	145,860	

Sample: Women age 23-52 drawn from the CPS March Uniform Surveys, by husband's income. Definitions: Husband income threshold is based on the year-specific median among all husbands, employed full-time full-year, of married women age 35-45. Average weekly income is computed for all women who reported positive weeks worked and positive income in the preceding year, and is missing for women who reported either no weeks or no income. High pay is defined as average weekly income higher than the median among men the same age and year who worked full time and full year (at least 35 hours per week and at least 50 weeks). Change describes the difference between the earliest and latest columns.

Table 4—Conditional Trends in Employment and Transitions over the Preceding 15 Months, by Motherhood and Husband's Income

	1977-1984	1985-1992	1993-2000	2001-2008	2009-2012	Change
Mothers						
No Employment	33.07	25.59	22.09	22.59	24.90	-8.2
Recent Exit	12.23	10.48	8.51	7.50	7.81	-4.4
Recent Entry or Reentry	20.22	19.00	17.43	14.60	13.05	-7.2
Persistent Employment	34.48	44.94	51.97	55.31	54.23	+19.8
Additional Detail						
Recent Exit and High Pay	0.66	0.76	0.93	1.09	1.17	+0.5
Recent Entry and High Pay	1.11	1.82	2.43	2.54	2.33	+1.2
Number of Observations	187,619	181,396	161,369	261,719	119,194	
Mothers with High Husband Income						
No Employment	41.00	30.06	25.46	28.36	27.95	-13.1
Recent Exit	11.40	9.80	7.72	6.47	6.04	-5.4
Recent Entry or Reentry	19.90	20.03	18.88	15.79	14.02	-5.9
Persistent Employment	27.69	40.11	47.93	49.38	51.99	+24.3
Additional Detail						
Recent Exit and High Pay	0.76	1.21	1.39	1.58	1.59	+0.8
Recent Entry and High Pay	1.29	2.32	3.37	3.57	3.40	+2.1
Number of Observations	39,408	38,628	35,471	58,361	26,672	
Mothers with High Husband Income and a College Degree						
No Employment	34.68	25.16	22.3	27.49	26.74	-7.9
Recent Exit	11	9.19	7.27	6.2	5.53	-5.5
Recent Entry or Reentry	23.47	22.07	21.16	16.62	14.84	-8.6
Persistent Employment	30.85	43.59	49.27	49.7	52.89	+22.04
Additional Detail						
Recent Exit and High Pay	1.34	1.91	2.15	2.12	1.83	+0.5
Recent Entry and High Pay	2.95	4.63	6.1	5.47	4.83	+1.9
Number of Observations	9,146	12,368	14,240	29,800	15,586	

Sample: Women age 23-52 with own children in the household, drawn from the CPS March Uniform Surveys.
Definitions: Same as Table 3.

Table 5—Share of Full-Time Women Workers with High Current Weekly Earnings, Conditional on Recent Entry or Reentry, 1990-1997 vs 2005-2012

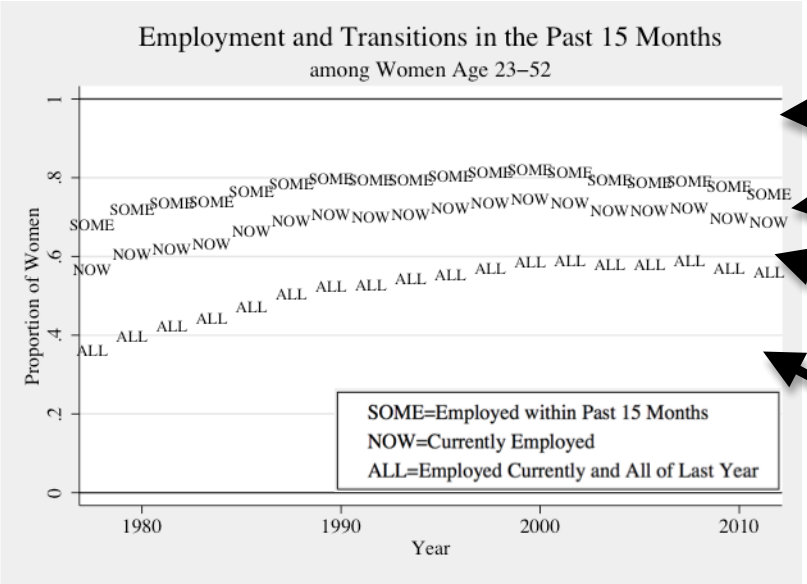
	1990-1997			2005-2012		
	Persistent workers	Entrants or reentrants	Ratio	Persistent workers	Entrants or reentrants	Ratio
Share of Full-Time Women Workers Earning More Than the Median among Men the Same Age	0.29	0.13	2.2	0.34	0.23	1.5
Share of Full-Time Women Workers Earning More Than the Median among College-Educated Men the Same Age	0.12	0.05	2.3	0.14	0.10	1.4
Sample size	25342	1725		25136	1433	
Conditional on Age 30+:						
Share of Full-Time Women Workers Earning More Than the Median among Men the Same Age	0.25	0.10	2.7	0.32	0.16	1.9
Share of Full-Time Women Workers Earning More Than the Median among College-Educated Men the Same Age	0.10	0.02	4.2	0.12	0.06	2.1
Sample size	19892	1166		20401	949	

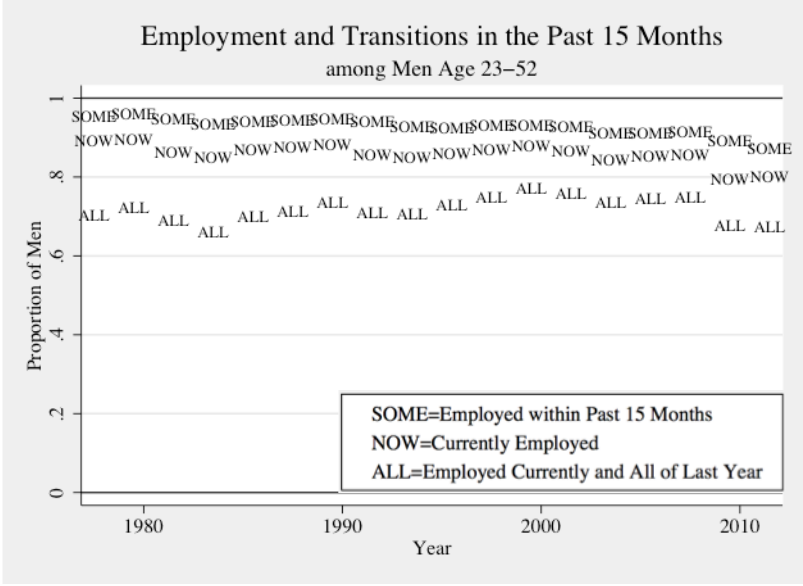
Sample: Women aged 23-52 currently employed at least 35 hours per week, with current weekly earnings observed in the March CPS. Persistent workers include those employed 50-52 weeks last year. Entrants or re-entrants include those employed no more than 26 weeks last year.

Table 6—Estimated Net Flows

	Average Share of Weeks Employed Last Year	Share of Women Employed Last Week	Ratio	Number of Observations
All Women with Some Employment				
1990-2002	0.87	0.90	1.04	86991
2003-2012	0.88	0.91	1.03	63868
All Women with Some Employment and High Pay				
1990-2002	0.93	0.94	1.01	19077
2003-2012	0.93	0.94	1.01	16952
All Women with Some Employment and Very High Pay				
1990-2002	0.92	0.93	1.01	7845
2003-2012	0.92	0.93	1.01	6870
Subset of Women with Very High Pay who made Employment Transitions				
1990-2002	0.61	0.65	1.06	1647
2003-2012	0.59	0.63	1.07	1262
Subset of Women with Very High Pay who made Employment Transitions other than Expected Academic Year Transitions				
1990-2002	0.57	0.57	0.99	1339
2003-2012	0.56	0.57	1.02	1061

Sample: Women aged 23-52 from the CPS earner study. Weekly earnings potential is based on the current weekly earnings measure for currently employed women with positive earnings reported, and is based on last year's estimated weekly earnings among the remaining women. Within each row, both estimates are computed within a fixed sample of women. High pay is defined as weekly earnings higher than the median among men the same age and year who worked full time and full year. Very high pay is defined as weekly income higher than the median among college-educated men the same age and year who worked full time and full year. Women who made transitions are either currently employed and worked less than 50 weeks last year, or are not currently employed and worked at least 1 week last year. The final set of estimates excludes women employed in the education sector who worked at least 36 weeks.





Top Slice=Proportion reported no employment in past 15 months

Slice between "SOME" and "NOW" =Proportion with recent exit from employment

Slice between "NOW" and "ALL" =Proportion with recent entry to employment

Bottom Slice=Proportion reported at least 50 weeks employment last year *and* current employment ("persistent employment")

Figure 1—Trends in Employment and Transitions (employed at some time in the past 15 months, currently employed, and persistently employed over the past 15 months) as reported in CPS surveys March 1977-March 2012.

Sample: U.S. population age 23-52 drawn from the CPS March Uniform Surveys. Estimates are averaged over two years to reduce noise.

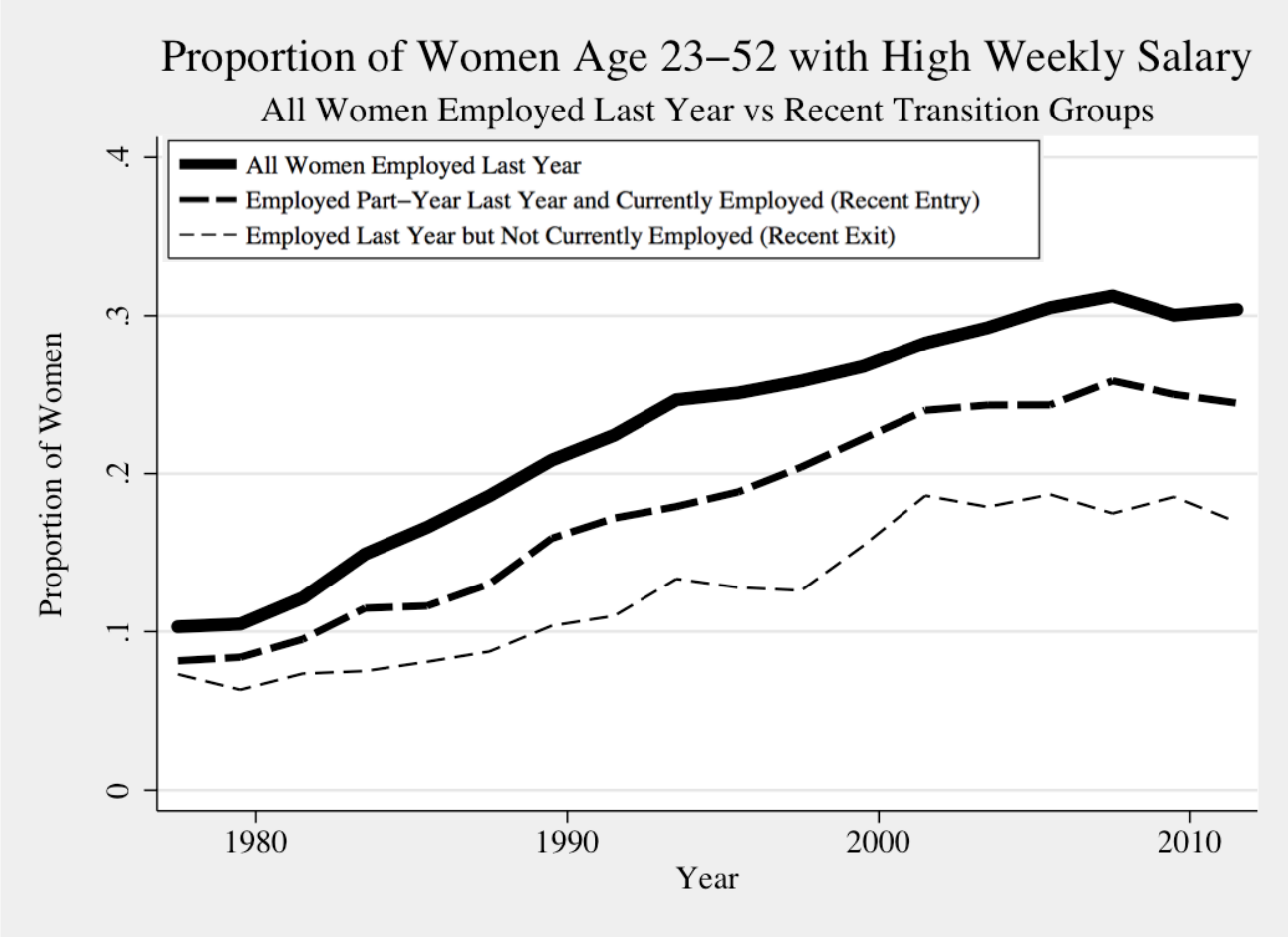


Figure 2—Proportion of Employed Women with High Weekly Earnings, by Recent Transition History
Sample: Women age 23-52 who worked at least 1 week last year and reported positive income, CPS March Uniform Surveys. Definitions: Average weekly income is computed for all women who reported positive weeks worked and positive income in the preceding year. High weekly salary is defined as average weekly income higher than the median among men the same age and year who worked full time and full year (at least 35 hours per week and at least 50 weeks). Estimates are averaged over two years to reduce noise.

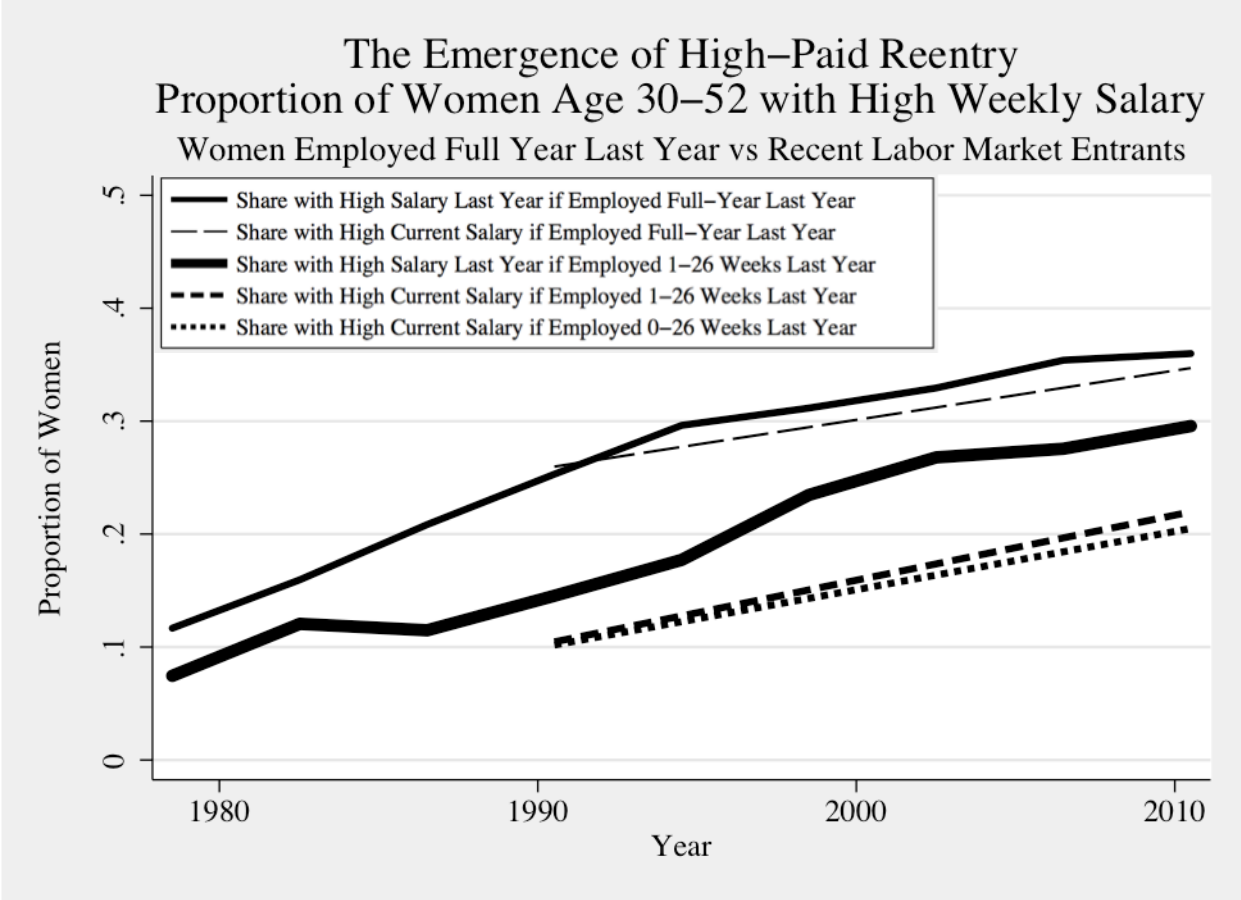


Figure 3—Proportion of Age 30-52 Currently Employed Women with High Weekly Earnings, Persistent Workers vs. Recent Entrants, and Current Weekly Earnings vs. Average Weekly Earnings Last Calendar Year

Samples: Women age 30-52 currently employed full-time who worked at least 50 or no more than 26 weeks last year, drawn from the CPS March Uniform Surveys. Current weekly earnings measures are further restricted to the earner study subsample. Previous year's earnings measures are further restricted to those who also worked at least 1 week and usually worked full-time in the preceding year.

Notes: High weekly salary is defined as average weekly income higher than the median among men the same age and year who worked full time and full year. Salary is measured two different ways. The first corresponds to the measure used in Figure 2, with estimates averaged over four years to reduce noise. The second is based on current weekly earnings reported in the smaller earner study subsample, as in Table 5, with estimates based on a linear probability model regression over the interval 1990-2012.