

Labor force status of families: a visual essay

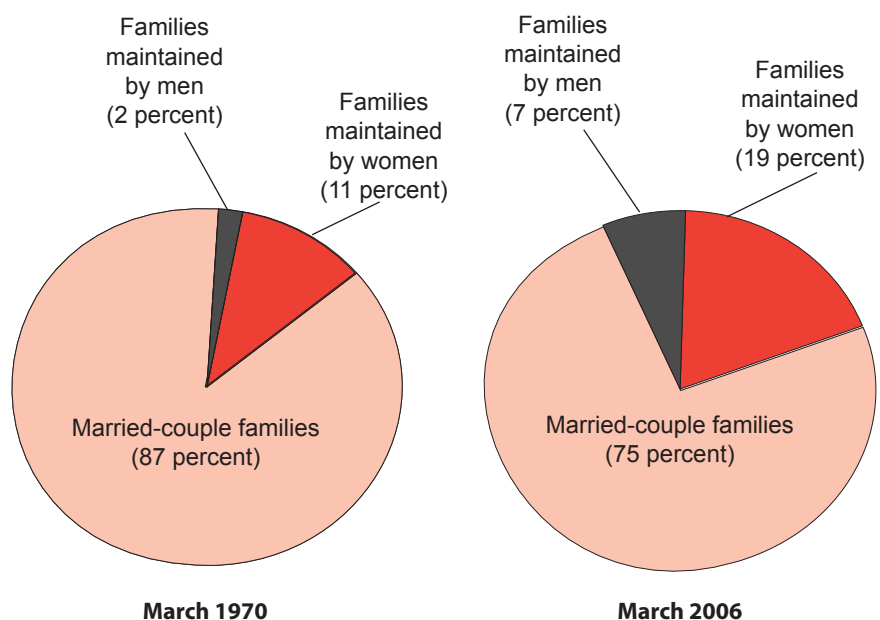
Stella Potter Cromartie

This visual essay presents highlights of data on employment and unemployment within families. Over time, work patterns within families have changed dramatically, particularly as women—notably married women and mothers—have entered the labor force. Labor force patterns vary by family type and by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

The estimates in this visual essay are based on data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), a national sample survey of about 60,000 households conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the U.S. Census Bureau. For more information about the employment characteristics of families, see www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.nr0.htm.

- The number of families maintained by women has grown substantially as a proportion of all families over time. In March 2006, almost 2 in 10 families were maintained by women. That was nearly twice the proportion in March 1970.
- The share of families maintained by men grew from 2 to 7 percent over the same period.
- A family is a group of two or more persons residing together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption; children need not be members of the group.
- Families are classified either as married-couple families or as families maintained by men or by women without spouses.
- Data on children refer to the family's own children and include sons, daughters, stepchildren, and adopted children. Not included are nieces, nephews, grandchildren, other children related to the family, and all unrelated children living in the household.

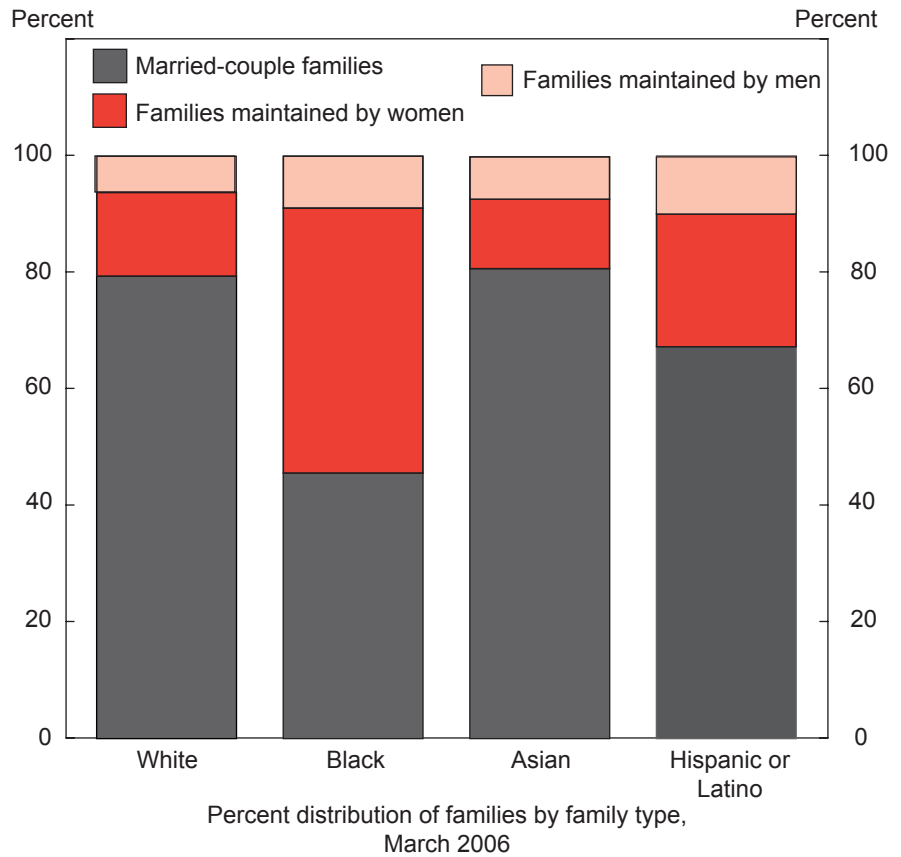
1. The proportion of all families maintained by men or by women with no spouse present has grown substantially



Percent distribution of families by family type

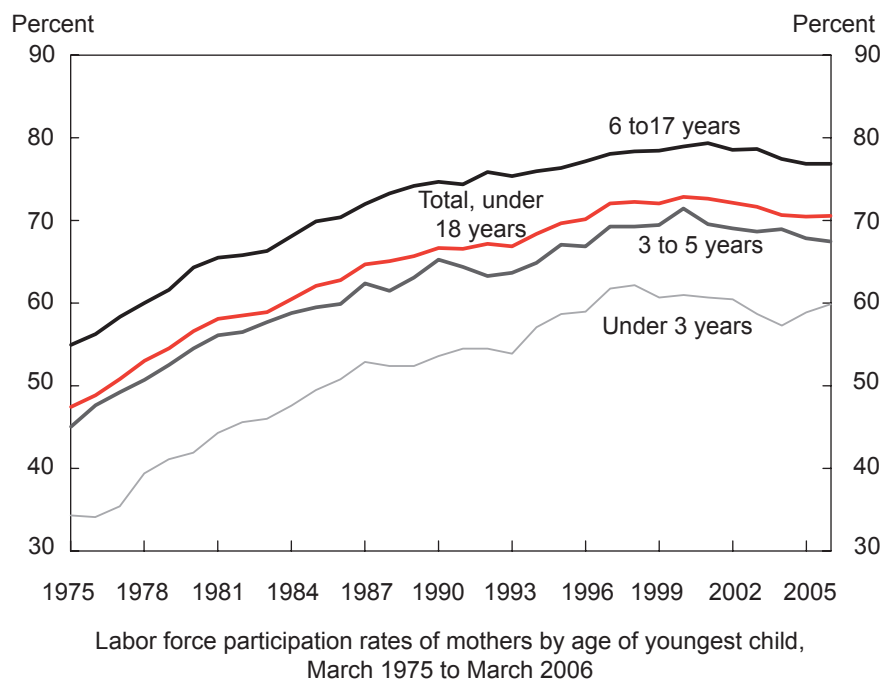
- The composition of black families is quite different from that of white, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino families. In March 2006, 46 percent of black families were maintained by women, compared with 14 and 12 percent, respectively, for their white and Asian counterparts. About 23 percent of Hispanic or Latino families were maintained by women.
- Black families are the least likely to be married-couple families. In March 2006, nearly half of black families were married couples, compared with about 80 percent of both white and Asian families, and nearly 70 percent of Hispanic or Latino families.
- Data are not shown for all race groups. Hispanics or Latinos may be of any race and, therefore, are classified by ethnicity as well as by race.

2. Nearly half of black families are maintained by women

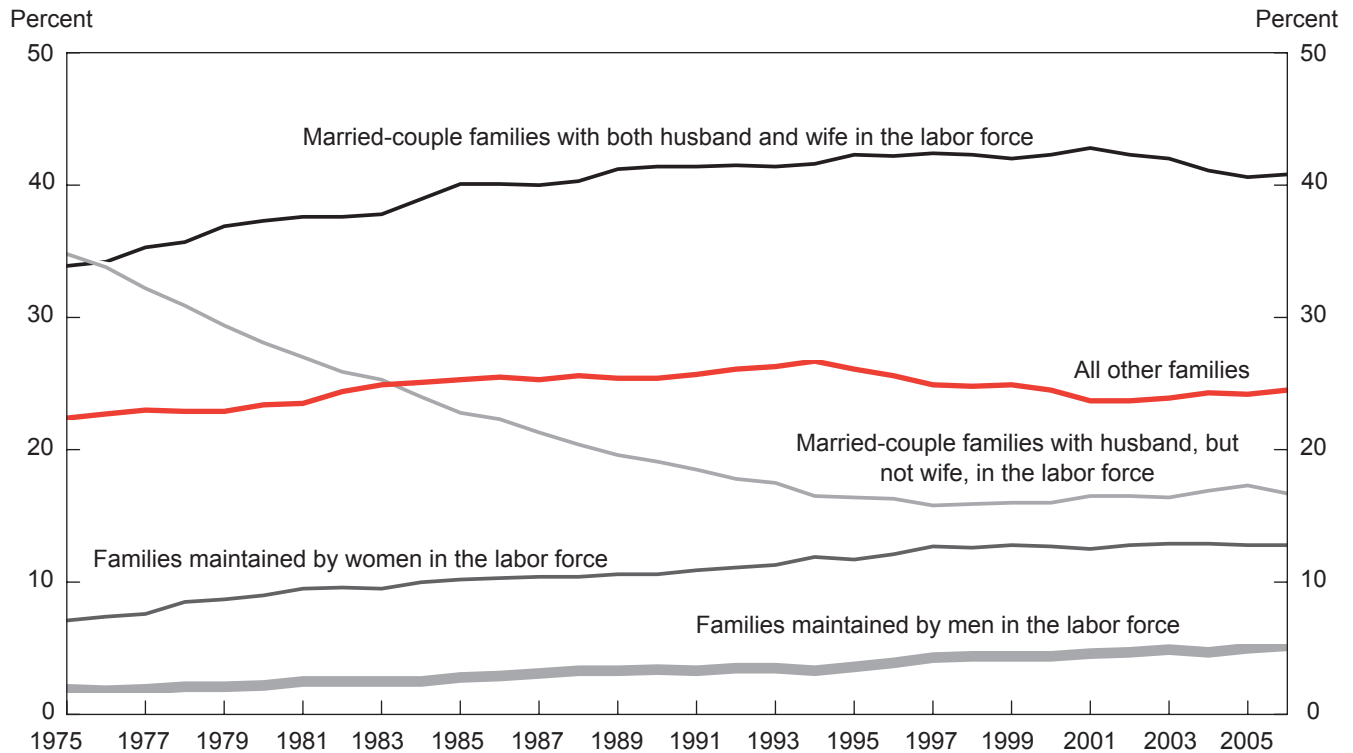


- In March 2006, about 7 out of 10 mothers of children under 18 years were labor force participants. Mothers with younger children were less likely to be in the labor force than were mothers of older children. For example, participation rates in March 2006 ranged from 60 percent for mothers whose youngest child was under 3 years to 77 percent for those whose youngest child was 6 to 17 years.
- Labor force participation rates for mothers have changed little in recent years, following several decades of growth.
- Among mothers with children under 3 years, the labor force participation rate edged down from 62 percent in March 1998 to 60 percent in March 2006.

3. After rising dramatically for decades, labor force participation rates for mothers have changed little in recent years



4. Work patterns in families have changed remarkably over time

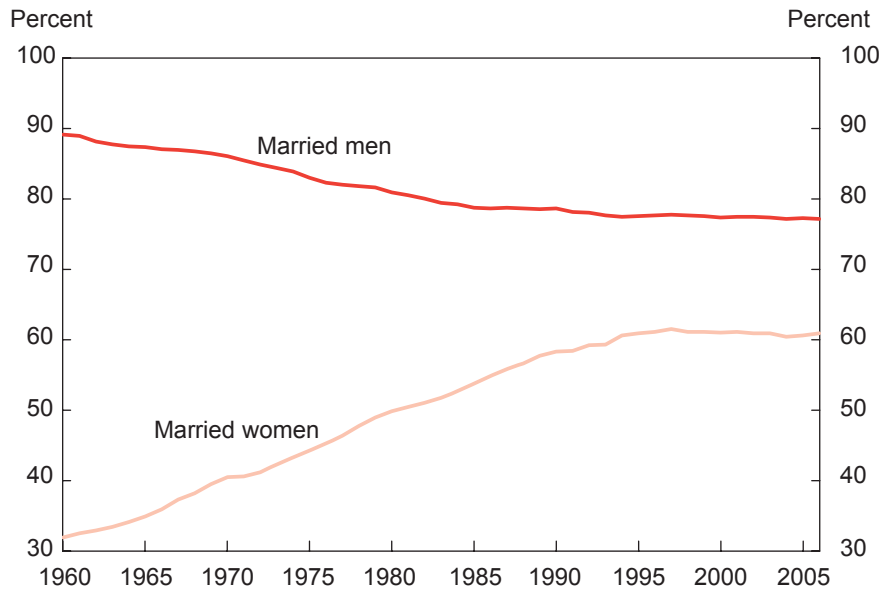


Percent distribution of families by family type and labor force status of family members, March 1975–2006

- Family work patterns reflect both changes in family structure and changes in women’s labor force participation.
- The share of all families that had a husband and wife in the labor force increased from 34 percent in March 1975 to 42 percent by the mid-1990s. Since then, the proportion has changed little (41 percent in March 2006), reflecting the leveling-off of wives’ labor force participation growth.
- The proportion of all families that were married-couple families in which only the husband was a labor force participant fell from 35 percent in March 1975 to 17 percent in March 2006.
- The share of all families that were maintained by women in the labor force grew from 7 percent in March 1975 to about 13 percent by March 1997; their proportion has remained essentially the same since then. The share of all families that were maintained by men in the labor force went from 2 percent to 5 percent between March 1975 and March 2006.

- The labor force participation rate of married women rose by about 30 percentage points from 1960 to the mid-1990s. Since then, however, there has been little further change.
- The rate for married men, which had trended downward, also has been essentially flat over the past several years.

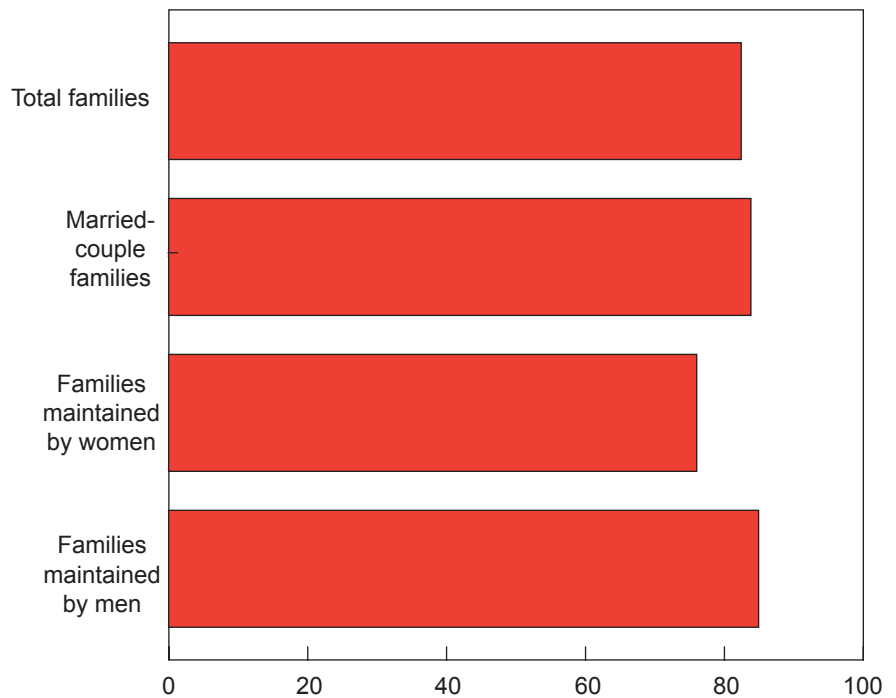
5. Following decades of growth, the labor force participation rate of married women has changed little since the mid-1990s



Labor force participation rates of married men and women, annual averages, 1960–2006

- Overall, about 4 in 5 families had an employed member in 2006. Families maintained by women were somewhat less likely than other families to have an employed member.
- In about 62 percent of married-couple families with employed members, both spouses were employed. In 24 percent of married-couple families with employed members, only the husband was employed.
- The householder was the only worker in about 57 percent of families maintained by women that have at least one employed member, compared with about 46 percent of such families maintained by men. A householder is the person (or one of the persons) in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented.

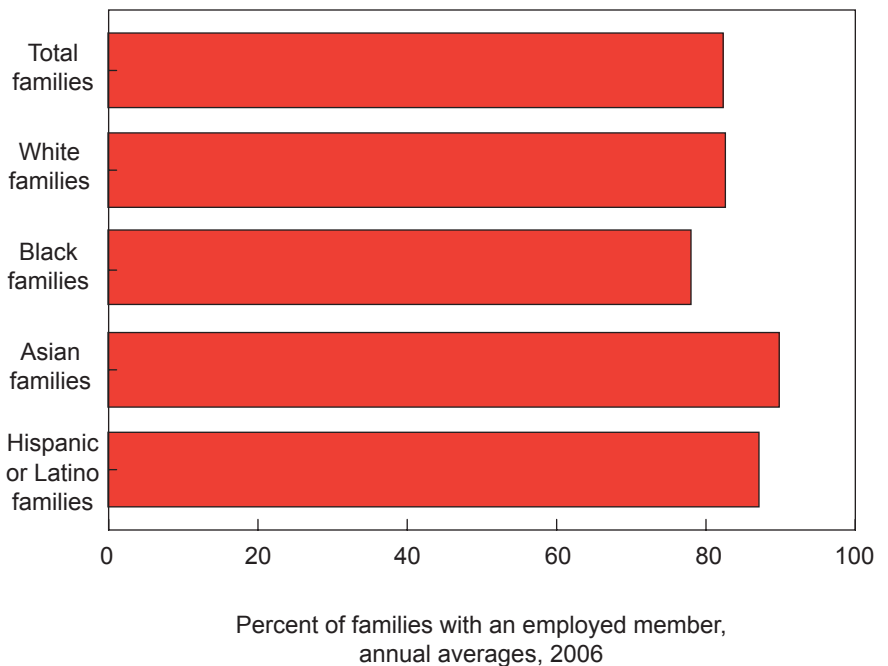
6. Most families have an employed member



Percent of families with an employed member, annual averages, 2006

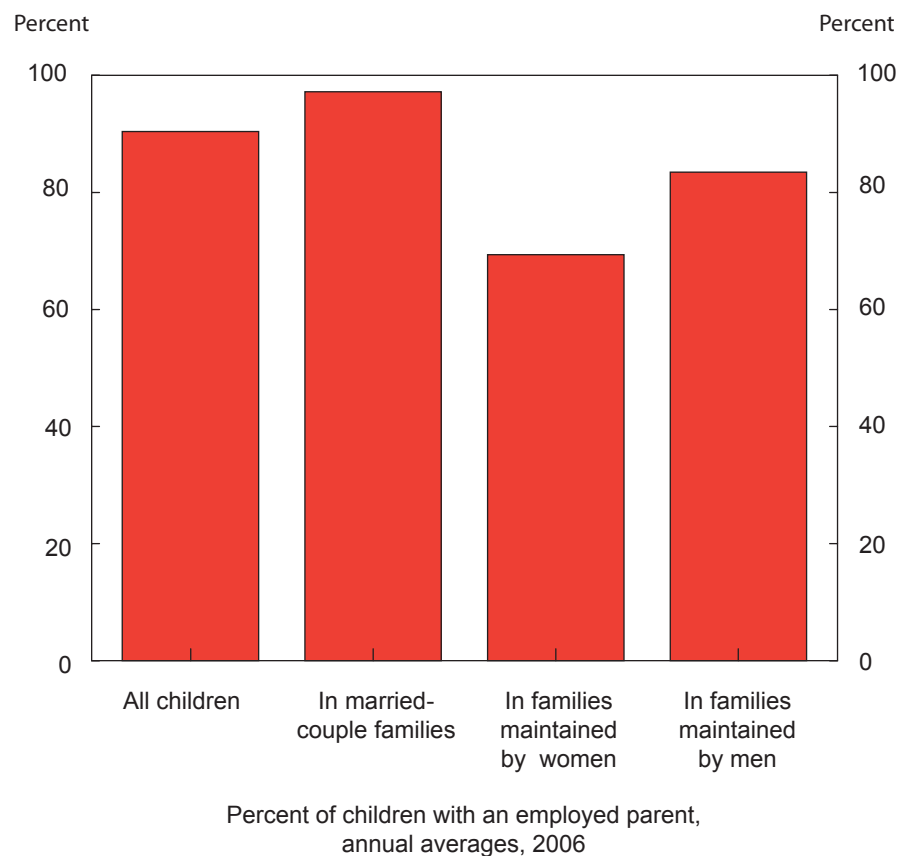
- Asian families were most likely to have at least one employed member (90 percent), followed by Hispanic or Latino families (87 percent), white families (83 percent), and black families (78 percent).
- Part of the reason for the difference by race and ethnicity is that a smaller percentage of Asian (13 percent) or white (15 percent) families are maintained by women than are Hispanic or Latino (24 percent) or black (45 percent) families. Families maintained by women are less likely to have an employed member than are other families.

7. Asian families are most likely to have an employed member



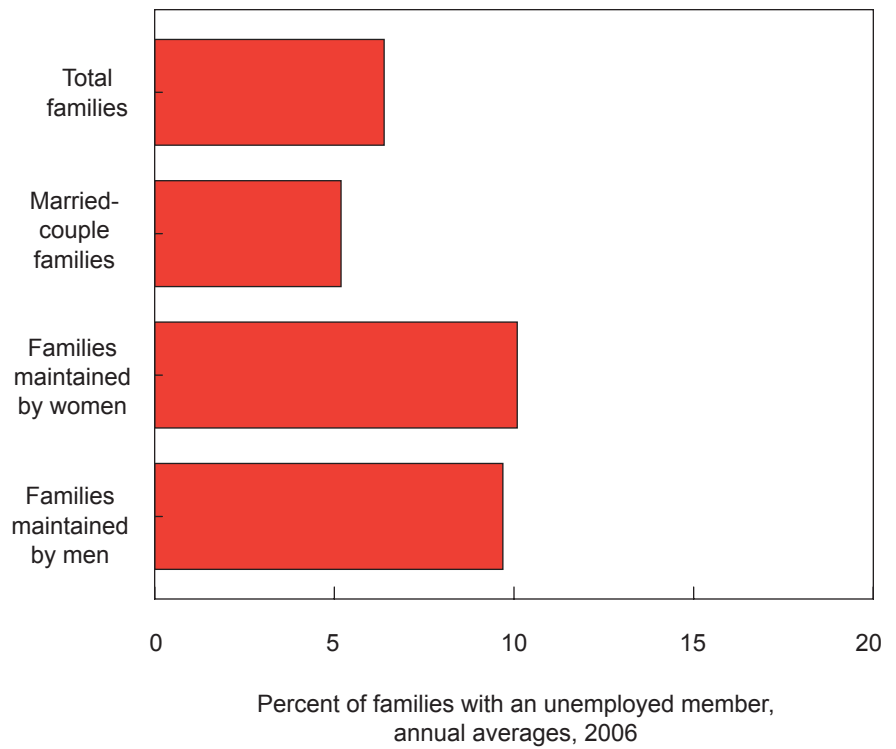
- Children in married-couple families are more likely to live with at least one employed parent (97 percent) than are children in families maintained by women (69 percent) or in families maintained by men (84 percent).
- More than 90 percent of both white children and Asian children lived with an employed parent, compared with about 88 percent of Hispanic or Latino children and 78 percent of black children.

8. Nine out of 10 children live with an employed parent



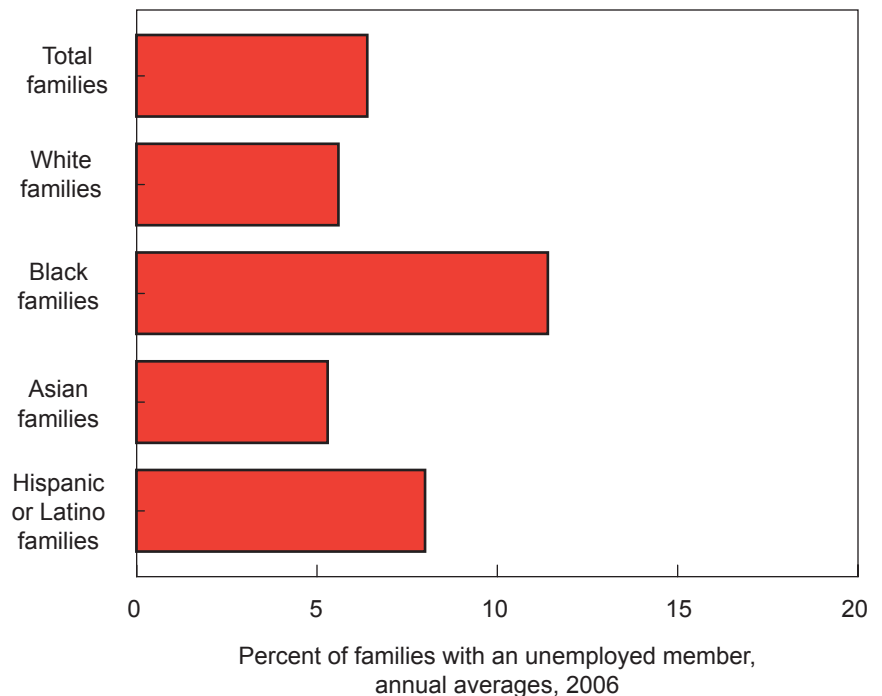
- In 2006, 4.9 million families had at least one member who was unemployed, down from 5.3 million in 2005.
- Typically, families maintained by women or by men are more likely than married-couple families to contain an unemployed member. About 10 percent of families maintained by women or by men had an unemployed member in 2006, compared with 5 percent of married-couple families.

9. Fewer than 1 in 10 families has an unemployed member



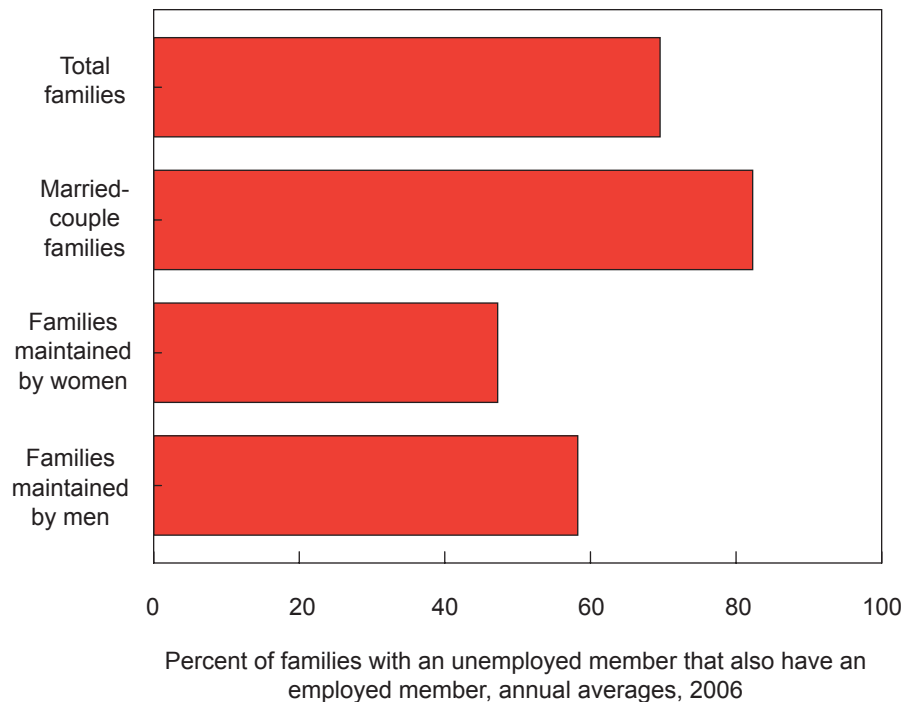
- The proportion of black families with an unemployed member (about 11 percent) continued to be about twice that for white families (6 percent) and Asian families (5 percent).
- Among Hispanic or Latino families, 8 percent had an unemployed member.

10. Black families are those most likely to have at least one unemployed member



- Of the 4.9 million families with an unemployed member in 2006, about 70 percent also had at least one worker.
- Families maintained by women or by men that have an unemployed member are less likely to have at least one member employed (47 percent and 58 percent, respectively) than are married-couple families with an unemployed member (82 percent).

11. Most families with an unemployed member also have someone who is employed



- Black families with an unemployed member were less likely than other families to also have at least one employed member (58 percent).
- Asian families with an unemployed member were considerably more likely to have one or more persons employed (80 percent) than were white (73 percent) or Hispanic or Latino (69 percent) families with an unemployed member.

12. The proportion of families with an unemployed member that also had at least one employed member was lowest for blacks

