

Living

POOR QUALITY ORIGINAL

Number of U.S. women who have lost support rising rapidly, report says

The New York Times

NEW YORK — The ranks of displaced homemakers appear to be growing rapidly, according to a report by the U.S. Displaced Homemakers Network.

The report says there are almost 11.5 million displaced homemakers in the United States — women who have lost their source of support, mainly through widowhood or divorce.

The number cited — 11,430,964 at the time the 1980 U.S. census was conducted

— reflects a marked increase over the 4.1 million identified as displaced homemakers in a smaller 1976 study conducted by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor.

"We have an urgent duty to make available resources necessary for these women to make the transition from homemaker to breadwinner," said Jill Miller, the network's executive director.

The study is believed to be the most comprehensive portrait yet drawn of women who work in the home.

Although the figures are seven years old, network officials say the findings are valid.

"We deliberately chose to use the census because it could provide us with more information than we could get anywhere else," Miller said. "We don't know yet whether the numbers have changed since then or whether legislation has helped, but we will be able to measure that through the next census."

Displaced homemakers are defined in

the study and elsewhere as women whose primary occupation has been in the home and who are left with few resources by divorce or separation, by the disability or long-term unemployment of their spouse, or by loss of eligibility for public assistance. They are unprepared for work outside the home.

"They are invisible," Miller said. "They are the ones who drove the car pools, ran the bake sale, organized the scout troop, and when their husbands die or divorce them, they get a raw deal."

Just how raw is demonstrated by the statistics in the report, which found that "nearly two-thirds of all displaced homemakers have inadequate incomes."

Some 4.5 million, or 40 per cent of all displaced homemakers over the age of 20, lived below the federal poverty level in 1980, and another 2.3 million were at the lower living standard.

In 1980 the U.S. federal poverty level for a family of four was \$7,412; by 1985 it had risen to \$10,989.

Editorials

Career education

Homemakers need help

The lesson is clear. Women should complete their education and be prepared to earn a living in the job market. They have become equal partners in the business of providing for themselves and their families.

That has not always been true. Early marriage and parenthood kept many women from educational opportunities. Now, because of divorce, widowhood or other circumstances, many women are being forced to make their own way in life and are ill-prepared to do it.

About 11.5 million women in the United States have been cut off from the main economic support of their spouses, and many of them are living in poverty as a result.

The new figure, released last week by the Displaced Homemakers Network, showed a nearly threefold increase in the number of women in those ranks in the past decade. About 4.1 million displaced homemakers were counted in 1976, according to Labor Department statistics.

Oregon counted 138,693 women in that group last year, according to the network. The figures are frightening.

The network is a Washington, D.C.-based organization made up of nearly 1,000 displaced homemaker programs nationwide.

It defines a displaced homemaker as a woman whose principal job has been homemaking and who has lost her main source of income because of divorce, separation, widowhood, disability or long-term unemployment of a spouse, or because of loss of eligibility for public assistance.

A related story adds weight to the report. Three Oregon couples were divorced in 1986 for every four couples who were married, according to the state Health Division's vital statistics report. That is sobering.

A letter in the Ann Landers column the

same day the network story appeared supported the idea that women should complete their education. The writer told of her husband leaving her for a younger woman after 23 years of marriage. She is forced to take care of herself and her children, and they live in constant poverty.

The growth in the number of displaced homemakers represents the dark side of the women's movement, according to Jill Miller, executive director of the network. She asked for more government attention to the plight of those women, including special access to federal job programs, an increase in the minimum wage and welfare reform.

A change in state divorce laws also is asked to assure proper alimony and child support for displaced homemakers.

Nearly 75 percent of the displaced homemakers are age 55 or older. The older the displaced homemaker is, the more likely she is to be unemployed. Of these women, 44 percent have only a high school education. The education level of the older displaced homemaker is also likely to be lower, the study said.

Displaced homemakers are often too young for Social Security and may never qualify for it because of divorce from the family wage-earner. They also generally are cut off from federal welfare assistance.

Of course, changes in government laws and programs will not change the heart of the problem. That is that society does not consider homemaking sufficiently important to reward homemakers financially. Whether women work outside the home or not, they usually carry most of the burden of nurturing their families, from preparing meals to cleaning the house.

Newlyweds may think that love conquers all, but that seldom is true. While love is great, an education can give much stability and peace of mind to a marriage.

U.S. displaced homemakers' plight studied

By Washington Post

WASHINGTON — A report warns of the worsening condition of the nation's 15.6 million displaced homemakers, women who stayed at home to raise families but lost the support of their husbands through divorce, desertion or death.

Unlike women who worked before getting married, those who never left the work force or those who bore children without a husband, the displaced homemakers are women who followed the American tradition of marrying and staying at home to raise a family.

"They are the women who packed the lunches, organized car pools, volunteered at church functions and ran the scout troops," said Jill Miller, executive director of the National Displaced Homemakers Network, which issued the report Thursday.

But then, as a result of the death of their husbands, or divorce or separation, they were left largely to fend for themselves, often without job skills, without health insurance, without pension or social security protection, and with little or no child support.

"They are penalized for having made the choice to be a traditional mother," said Miller.

"Our study paints a picture of displaced homemakers' lives that is unrelentingly grim," said Cheryl Brown Henderson, president of the homemakers group.

"More than one in three live below the federal poverty line, and another one in four have incomes of less than 150 percent of the poverty line," Henderson said. "Perhaps the best indication of their tenuous financial status is the fact that nearly one in five displaced homemakers are doubled-up in housing with other families or individuals." More than half are elderly.

Henderson said every one of "the 22 million other homemakers who are not in the labor force today run the risk of becoming displaced tomorrow."

The report found that two-fifths of these women work part-time or seasonally, often at poor wages without health insurance or other fringe benefits. Three-quarters of displaced homemakers are white, nearly 2.5 million black and 1 million Hispanic.

The report said the number of displaced homemakers had increased about 200,000 annually since 1980.



Carol Kleiman
Women at work

Homemakers seek job training, aid

For 12 years, little federal attention has been paid to displaced homemakers.

Displaced homemakers are women who have spent years caring for families and suddenly lose their primary source of income—usually because of divorce or death of a spouse. They need training and other professional assistance to re-enter the paid labor force.

While the federal government wasn't looking, the number of displaced homemakers increased. In 1990, there were 15.6 million displaced homemakers, 12 percent more than in 1980, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

In that same period, important federal displaced-homemaker bills were passed, but they were not funded.

While the number of federally funded programs serving displaced homemakers has increased to 1,200 from 300 in 1984, most of the programs are underfunded, with average budgets of \$50,000 to \$60,000 annually, and small staffs. As a result, local programs serve only 400,000 displaced homemakers a year.

The plight of these female-dedicated workers is a prime concern of the National Displaced Homemakers Network, a nonprofit group based in Washington.

Its 1993 budget from the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor to provide technical assistance to displaced homemakers was cut by the Bush administration to \$485,000 from \$650,000 in 1992.

The Displaced Homemakers Network was galvanized into action last year when President Bush announced his new job-training program for the year 2000—without mentioning needs of displaced homemakers. Almost immediately, the Displaced Homemakers Network and 27 other women's employment groups formed the Coalition on Women and Job Training.

"Though half of the states have legislation to use state revenues to fund displaced-homemakers programs, we see a need for federal legislation to establish a more aggressive plan to train and place women of all ages," said Jill Miller, executive director of the Displaced Homemakers Network.

At least 10 percent of new displaced homemakers, Miller points out, have previous work experience, unlike their predecessors of a decade ago. "But their skills are minimal, and they are just as likely to be poor or near poor when they become displaced homemakers," she said.

Displaced homemakers have specific needs, said Miller, whose background is in nontraditional job training and apprenticeships for women.

The Coalition on Women and Job Training has issued recommendations for the economic development of displaced homemakers in federally funded training programs.

Some of its suggestions:

- "Self-sufficiency" should be a part of performance standards used by job-training programs. It includes the quality of the job, economic needs of the trainee and possibility of career advancement—not just placement in any job available.

- Program content should include basic and advanced academic skills, skills in all aspects of the industry they are entering, a range of pre-vocational services and exposure to non-traditional jobs.

- Support services, especially fully subsidized dependent care and transportation, are essential for success and should be available to all displaced homemakers, not just welfare recipients.

- Measures to evaluate progress of displaced homemakers should be free of biases that create barriers.

The coalition also asks for money for unfunded programs, such as the 1990 Displaced Homemakers Self-Sufficiency Assistance Act (\$35 million) and the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations Act (\$1 million).

Harper College in Palatine has had a displaced-homemakers program for 12 years, according to Lucille Lopez-Wark of the school's Resources for Women Program.

The displaced-homemakers program, which receives \$57,825 annually from the State of Illinois, helped 101 women last year.

"The majority of women we serve are in the process of divorce and have no marketable skills," said Lopez-Wark, who has a master's degree in social work. "The recommendations [of the national women's job training agenda] are important. Federal legislation and a grass-roots commitment to women are needed."

Carol Kleiman appears in *Jobs on Sunday, Your Money on Wednesday and Business on Thursday*.

Rate of women losing primary income source on the rise

WASHINGTON (AP) — Single mothers and women who have lost their primary source of income — their husbands — are four times as likely to live in poverty as the population as a whole, according to a study.

“What we have discovered can only be characterized as grim,” said Gilda Nardone, president of Women Work!, an advocacy group that conducted the analysis, based on census data.

“Even though these women’s work-force participation rose significantly during the decade, their likelihood of living in poverty remained high.”

The report, released Thursday, focused on the plight of single mothers and what it calls “displaced homemakers” — women whose primary occupation had been homemaking but who did not find full-time, year-round employment after they became divorced, separated or widowed.

There were 17.8 million displaced homemakers in the United States in 1990, up 4 million since 1980, Nardone said.

The number of single mothers also rose, from 5.8 million in 1980 to 7.7 million a decade later, according to the report.

But while 11 percent of households in the United States lived in poverty in 1990, 42 percent of displaced homemakers who headed households and 44 percent of single

mothers were impoverished, the study found.

“For millions of single mothers and displaced homemakers, the American dream is proving elusive because jobs are not providing economic security,” said Nardone.

Displaced homemakers had a significantly higher rate of employment in 1990 than they did in 1980, the study found. Approximately half of all displaced homemakers were employed either part-time or part of the year in 1990, compared with only a third a decade earlier. But the poverty rate improved only slightly, from 39 percent in 1980 to 35 percent in 1990.

“Part of the reason is that displaced homemakers and single mothers are over-represented in service jobs, even compared to women in general,” Nardone said at a news conference. “As you know, service jobs offer low wages, few benefits, part-time work and little or no job security.”

The study also found that single mothers and displaced homemakers tended to have “unstable housing situations.” Three in four single mothers rented or shared their housing, and three in five single mothers with children under age 2 had moved within the prior year.

Jill Miller, executive director of the organization, said displaced homemakers are not a phenomenon that will disappear as some last generation of traditional homemakers dies.

Homemakers hit by horrors

Study says millions enduring hardship

News-Press wire services

WASHINGTON — The number of women who spent years as homemakers, then lost their husbands — and their primary source of income — rose by four million between 1980 and 1990, according to a report released Thursday.

And far more of these women either end up in low-level service jobs or live in poverty than the population as a whole, concluded the report, which was based on Census Bureau data.

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In 1980, reports said, Florida had 711,526 single mothers. By 1990 the number had climbed to 1,101,794.

"We have to begin by recognizing that displaced homemakers are not a generational phenomena," said Jill Miller, executive director of the

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'Women Work!'

Network helps women return to the workplace

• Organization founded in 1979 takes a new name more fitting to its role

BY CAROL KLEIMAN

Chicago Tribune

"Women Work!"

That energetic, affirming title is the new name of the National Displaced Homemakers Network, a nonprofit organization in Washington devoted to helping women get back into the work force and achieve economic equity.

And the full name of the group tells the rest of the story:

It's "Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment."

The network was founded in 1979. Over the years, it has been an advocate for displaced homemakers and other women entering or returning to the work force.

It has an annual budget of \$800,000 and provides training and technical assistance for more than

1,200 job training programs that serve 400,000 women each year.

The network has 5,000 individual members who pay \$15 each to join. It is also supported by group membership and grants from corporations, foundations and the government.

Women Work! reports that there are 17.8 million homemakers in the United States, an increase of 4 million since 1980. And 42 percent of those women who head households live in poverty.

"Our name change really is a response to what we see happening in our local programs for displaced homemakers," said Jill Miller, who has been executive director of the network since 1984. "We are finding women in all kinds of job transitions, women of all ages. In recent years, we've been serving as many women under age 35 as over. Our new name reflects the fact we now officially will be working with women from ages 20 to 75 years."

The organization continues to

lobby the federal government to fund the Displaced Homemakers Self-Sufficiency Act, which was passed in 1990. But the promised \$35 million was never allocated by Congress.

It also lobbies to make sure the Workforce Security Act, the new worker retraining program, includes women re-entering the work force in addition to workers receiving unemployment.

Miller, who previously worked for a consulting firm researching women in nontraditional jobs, said that "even though divorce still has the greatest financial impact on women, other dislocated women include those only able to find part-time employment but want full-time, women whose husbands are ill or long-term unemployed, and women who took time out when their kids were young and now want to re-enter the work force."

Women Work!, which has a staff of 10, does not fund individual programs, but it does act as a

FOR MORE

Women who want to know more about what training programs and other help might be available as they try to re-enter the work force should call Women Work! at 1-800-235-2732.

If you leave your name and address, you will be sent information about job-readiness and training programs in your community and a kit with information about child-support agencies, financial aid and your legal right to continue health insurance.

clearinghouse for women in transition through local displaced homemaker programs.

Although Women Work! reaches hundreds of thousands of women each year, Miller said it wants to help more. That's why it has instituted a toll-free number for information: (800) 235-2732.

Women will be the majority of new hires in the 1990s, and Women Work! is positioned to deal with that change.

"As job opportunities open up over the next few years, our hope is that women returning to the work force will benefit from them, and that their skills and abilities will be recognized as valuable in the new work force," Miller said.