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*Listening, learning,  
and living together:  
it's the science of life.*

## Trends in Maternity Leave for First-Time Mothers<sup>1</sup>

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The birth of a child, especially the first child, brings dramatic changes to any family. Among the many new challenges couples address is whether or not mom will work outside the home. As mothers struggle with the decision of whether or not to go to work after their child is born, they might find the most recent information from the U.S. Census enlightening.

In a 2005 report on maternity leave and employment patterns of first-time mothers, Census Bureau analysts traced the history of working mothers over the past 40 years. Among their findings: about 57% of new mothers worked full-time during their pregnancy in the late 1990s to 2000, up from 40 percent in the early 1960s. In addition, the number of women who returned to work within a year of giving birth more than doubled from the late 1980s to the end of the 1990s, to 65% (Overturf Johnson & Downs, 2005).

The census report concluded that a number of factors have contributed to women's work experience since the 1960s, including increased levels of education and waiting

1. This document is FAR5048, one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. First published February 2009. In the interest of time or clarity, the broadcast version of this script may have been modified. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
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until later to have their first child. With these changes, women are staying at work longer during their pregnancy, are returning more rapidly after the birth of their first child, and are choosing to blend work and childrearing more than women did in the 1960s (Overturf Johnson & Downs, 2005).

Of course, today, more couples are also asking whether or not dad will work outside the home when mom is the primary wage-earner, but that's for another page in the Family Album.

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## Reference

Overturf Johnson, J. O., & Downs, B. (2005). Maternity leave and employment patterns of first-time mothers: 1961-2000. U.S. Census Current Population Report P70-103. Retrieved April 13, 2006, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p70-103.pdf>.