

Study shows surge of women into work-force

Afrikaans women are more career-minded than their English counterparts, a study of the changing women's market has found.

The research, commissioned by a South African advertising company, J Walter Thompson, has also found that the traditional stereotypical white South African housewife, heroine of advertisements and marketing campaigns, accounts for only 23 percent of women.

Figures from the research, released yesterday, show that three out of every 10 people in the work-force are female.

The surge of women entering the labour-force has been called "the single most outstanding phenomenon of the 20th century" and this study reinforces that description.

Since 1960 the number of women in the market place has grown by a remarkable 113 percent compared with 49 percent for men.

Nearly two in three working women today are married, comments Mrs Barbara Ross, research and planning director for JWT.

"Being married no longer means being bare foot in the kitchen and pregnant."

The study which concentrated on white women (a similar one on black women will be released next year) shows that only 55 percent of women live in traditional nuclear households with husband and children.

These women are hardly stereotypical housewives for four out of 10 of them are in the labour force. Of the balance, one in four plans to join the work-force in the near future.

The research, which is part of an international study called "Women: The Quiet Revolution", has divided women into four groups based on their attitudes. This departs from the historic manner in which women have been described according to their age, marital status and so on.

The four groups described as the "new demographic" are

The surge of women entering the labour force has been called "the single most outstanding phenomenon of the 20th century. SUE GRANT reports on results of a study into the changing women's market.



BARBARA ROSS:
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- The career woman — she believes she should be free to choose whether or not to pursue a career.
- The just-a-job woman — she is mainly working for financial reasons, and doesn't appear to hold very strong views.
- The plan-to-work woman — she is not working now but intends to do so, due to 63 percent of them having children under five.
- The stay-at-home woman — she tends to conform to the popular image of the traditional housewife and puts her family's needs and interests first.

One of the most interesting facts to emerge from the study is that more Afrikaans working women regard their job as a career than their English counterparts.

This can be explained, says Mrs Ross, by more Afrikaans career women being concentrated in the academic and teaching professions than their English counterparts. The latter go for careers in the more competitive private sector with better paid commercial achievement — the "boardroom" versus the "classroom".

Career women and the plan-to-work housewife disagree strongly that a

man's place is in the work-place while the women's is in the home. Only the stay-at-home housewife believes in maintaining the traditional female role.

When it comes to the media it is interesting that the just-a-job housewife is too busy to watch television, and is least likely to have anyone helping her on a full-time basis.

The career-minded woman is able to afford videos and enjoys them rather than television. It is the stay-at-home housewife who enjoys television. The younger plan-to-work housewives enjoy listening to the radio and it is the career woman who enjoys reading.

A high proportion of career women (77 percent) have current bank accounts while 66 percent of the stay-at-home women do not.

Credit cards and automatic teller machines are used more by career women than the other three groups of women but even they are not doing so in great numbers yet — only just over 30 percent of them use these facilities.

And very few women have overdrafts — only 13 percent of career women have asked their bank manager for one.

Mrs Ross, who commissioned the study, which was carried out by Market Research Africa, comments that when people ask why women want to work, it implies there is something remarkable or unnatural in their doing so.

"We all assume that men cannot be productive members of society unless they work, but society expects women to be wives and mothers.

"Women," she says "work for all the same reasons men do — for status, for money, for company, to achieve, because they believe there must be something beyond the kitchen sink."