

# American women are largest economy

As you read this, if you are a woman in America, that emotion you feel is power.

The economic "war between the sexes" is over and you have won. You may declare victory and, what's more, you have now heard it from a man.

Somehow, the victory may not feel quite as good as it could because you are so busy. You are starved for time, and multitasking has become a way of life.

You are looking for ways to simplify your life. Perhaps the service industries will figure that out and respond, but first let's examine your rise to power.

**Tommy Williams**



Financial Fundamentals

Ten years ago, we talked about baby boomers with big spending habits entering their peak spending years. We marveled at the Greatest Generation and the \$7 trillion to \$10 trillion they saved. Then we speculated about what would happen to their money when the baby boomers inherited it.

In 1996, Alan Greenspan gave his "irrational exuberance" speech (he was right — and the market has only doubled since then). Globalization. The Internet. The world is flat. Red and blue states. Sunset provisions in the tax law. Oil prices, war, and the "terrorism premium." Event risk. These are very important variables, but they are not the big picture. So what is?

What is the world's largest economy? American women. Women directly purchase 83 percent of all products and services, 51 percent of consumer electronics, 66 percent of all cars (and influence 80 percent of their sales), and 66 percent of all personal computers.

Half of all stock market investors are women, and 56 percent of a family's day-to-day finances are controlled by women. You control a stunning 89 percent of all bank accounts, start businesses twice as often as men, and own nearly half of all privately held U.S. firms.

Seventy-five percent of the students completing the recent entrepreneurial skills training course for new and prospective business owners in the Ark-La-Tex were women.

Nearly half of all Americans with assets exceeding \$600,000 are women. One of the many reasons for this is an astonishing fact — the average age of widowhood in America is 56. On average, a woman inherits money twice — once from her parents and once from her husband. Consequently, some women have no choice but to manage the family's finances for about 20 years. Eighty percent to 90 percent will be solely responsible for their own or their family's finances at some point in their lives.

And there's more. Women are seizing educational opportunities. More than half of all business, accounting and master's degrees are earned by women, as are almost half of all medical, law and doctorate degrees. Experts predict in 10 years, women will hold 50 percent of the Top 20 jobs in Fortune 500 companies.

With power comes responsibility. You still are mother, daughter, sister, caregiver, friend, volunteer, business owner, employee, etc. Your loved ones are depending on you now (or you know they will be).

You have skillfully developed networks of trusted advisers to get you here. Now you must build similar bonds with wealth management advisers to protect the future of your loved ones and yourself. Congratulations. We are counting on you.

Tommy Williams is a certified financial planner and member of the Ark-La-Tex Chapter Financial Planning Association, whose members contribute to this column weekly. If you have questions or topics you would like to see addressed in this space, send inquiries to Financial Fundamentals c/o The Times, Money/Business, P.O. Box 30222, Shreveport LA 71130-0222 or e-mail [shreveportmoney@gannett.com](mailto:shreveportmoney@gannett.com).

## The Times - January 17, 2007