

I

Employment of Women¹

INCREASES IN NUMBER OF WOMEN WORKERS, 1870 TO 1947

(See Table 1)

The first full census of women workers in this country was taken in 1870. At that time less than 2 million women were in gainful employment. In every decade the census showed their numbers continuing to rise, and in 1947 the labor force contained about 16½ million women. (This was more than a fourth above the entire number of all workers, men and women, in 1870.)

TABLE 1.—Women workers, 1870–1947

Year	Women workers		
	Number	Percent of all workers	Percent of all women of working age
Aged 10 years and over:			
1870.....	1,917,448	14.8	13.3
1880.....	2,647,137	15.2	14.7
1890.....	4,005,532	17.2	17.4
1900.....	5,319,397	18.3	18.8
Aged 14 years and over:			
1900.....	5,114,461	18.1	20.4
1910.....	7,783,826	20.9	25.2
1920.....	8,429,707	20.4	23.3
1930.....	10,679,048	22.0	24.3
1930 ¹	10,396,000	21.9	23.6
1940 ¹	13,015,000	24.4	25.7
1940 ²	13,840,000	25.4	27.4
1945.....	19,570,000	35.1	36.8
1947.....	16,323,000	27.6	29.8

¹ Labor force for 1930 estimated and for 1940 adjusted, to make them comparable.

² Civilian labor force for 1940 adjusted to make figures comparable with those for later years.

Source: Based on census data. Figures 1870 through 1940 shown in Women's Bureau Bull. 218, Women's Occupations Through Seven Decades.

¹ Notes on figures used: Figures used here are based chiefly on census data, in a few cases including unpublished material. Figures adjusted for comparability of different periods are used where necessary and available. Figures used refer to women 14 years of age and over (in Table 1 in early census years, 10 years of age and over). For the most part data used are for spring of the year (except in Table 1, where decennial census dates are used, and in Table 8, which uses October, date of Census of Manufactures). Figures on factory employment are largely from Bureau of Labor Statistics reports. For a more detailed discussion of occupations, see Women's Bureau Bull. 218, Women's Occupations Through Seven Decades, Part II.

The proportion women constituted of all workers increased from decade to decade. In 1870 women were less than 15 percent of this country's workers, in 1947 women were more than 27 percent of all the workers.

Increasing proportions of all the women of working age have entered the labor force. In 1870 less than 14 percent of them were gainful workers; in 1947 almost 30 percent of the women of working age were members of the labor force.

CHIEF OCCUPATION GROUPS OF WOMEN WORKERS

(See Tables 2 and 3)

Numerical increases and declines, 1940, 1947.—In most occupation groups the number of women increased from 1940 to 1947. The greatest increases were of more than 1½ million among clerical and kindred workers, and of nearly 1¼ million among operatives and kindred workers. The number of sales workers and of service workers (except domestic) increased by something less than ½ million. A relatively small occupation group in which the number of women employees increased by a very large proportion (73 percent) is that of proprietors, managers, and officials (except farm). Numerically small increases also occurred among farm workers and in the craftsmen and foremen group.

The number of women decreased from 1940 to 1947 in three occupation groups. The greatest decline approached ½ million, and was among the domestic service workers. The professional and semi-professional group also showed a small decline, having 30,000 fewer women in 1947 than in 1940, and the small group of laborers declined.

TABLE 2.—Changes in numbers of women in each occupation group, 1940, 1947

Occupation group	Number of women employed in—		Change, 1940, 1947	
	1940 ¹	1947	Number	Percent
All employed women.....	11,920,000	15,800,000	+3,880,000	+32.6
Clerical and kindred workers.....	2,530,000	4,130,000	+1,600,000	+63.2
Operatives and kindred workers.....	2,100,000	3,420,000	+1,320,000	+62.2
Domestic service workers.....	2,100,000	1,690,000	-410,000	-19.5
Professional and semiprofessional workers.....	1,570,000	1,540,000	-30,000	-1.9
Service workers (except domestic).....	1,360,000	1,770,000	+420,000	+31.1
Sales workers.....	830,000	1,320,000	+490,000	+59.0
Farmers and farm workers.....	690,000	910,000	+220,000	+31.9
Proprietors, managers, officials (except farm).....	450,000	780,000	+330,000	+73.3
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers.....	110,000	160,000	+50,000	+45.5
Laborers (except farm).....	100,000	80,000	-20,000	-20.0

¹ Employed women whose occupations were not reported were apportioned according to the distribution of those whose occupations were reported. These were only a small proportion of all the women.

SOURCE: Based on census data. See U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Monthly Labor Review, August 1947, p. 140.

Distribution of women in occupation groups.—In 1947 nearly half the women workers were in the clerical and operative groups, over a fifth were in service groups, and a tenth were professional or semi-professional workers. All other groups were smaller.

The proportions of all women workers who were in clerical and operative groups increased from 39 percent in 1940 to 48 percent in 1947. The proportions in the combined service groups declined from 29 percent of the total in 1940 to 22 percent in 1947. In 1947 as compared to 1940, smaller proportions were in professional and craftsman groups, somewhat larger proportions in the groups of saleswomen and of proprietors and managers; farm workers were in the same proportion in both years.

Proportion of workers in each occupation group who were women.—Women constituted over 90 percent of the domestic service workers in 1947, nearly 60 percent of the clerical workers, about 40 percent of the professional, sales, and service (other than domestic) workers, and nearly 30 percent of the operatives. In other groups, smaller proportions of the workers were women.

During World War II the proportions of workers who were women increased in most occupation groups, in some of them quite markedly. After the war, the proportions of women declined in all occupation groups but in most groups still were larger than in the prewar period. The exceptions were the domestic service and the professional groups, and the small group of craftsmen, foremen, and laborers. All these had smaller proportions of women among their workers after the war than before, though in the professional and craftsman groups the wartime proportion had been larger than the prewar.

TABLE 3.—Occupational status of women workers before, during, and after World War II

Occupation group	Percent of all workers in each occupation group who were women			Percent distribution by occupation of employed women		
	1940	1945	1947	1940	1945	1947
All employed women.....	26	36	28	100	100	100
Clerical and kindred workers.....	53	70	59	21	25	26
Operatives and kindred workers.....	26	38	28	18	24	22
Domestic service workers.....	94	94	92	18	9	11
Professional and semiprofessional workers.....	45	46	40	13	8	10
Service workers (except domestic).....	40	48	44	11	10	11
Sales workers.....	28	54	40	7	8	8
Farmers and farm workers.....	8	22	12	6	10	6
Proprietors, managers, officials (except farm).....	12	17	14	4	4	5
Craftsmen, foremen laborers, (except farm).....	3	5	2	2	2	1

SOURCE: Based on census data.

IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL OCCUPATIONS

(See Tables 4 and 5)

Of course the 451 individual occupations reported in the census of 1940 could be considered in an almost endless variety of ways. Types of groupings or rearrangements of these occupations continually are being made for one use or another, or special kinds of occupations are selected for some particular purpose. The present discussion is

limited to pointing out those that employ the largest numbers of women, and those in which women constitute the largest proportions of all workers in the occupation in 1940, the latest date for which a detailed occupation list is available.

TABLE 4.—Occupations employing 100,000 or more women 14 years of age and over, 1940

Rank	Occupation	Women employed	
		Number	Percent of all persons in the occupation
1	Servants, private family ¹	1,420,469	91.3
2	Stenographers, typists, and secretaries.....	988,081	93.5
3	Teachers (not elsewhere classified).....	772,044	75.7
4	Clerical and kindred workers (not elsewhere classified).....	630,471	35.7
5	Salesmen and saleswomen (not elsewhere classified).....	515,539	40.8
6	Bookkeepers, accountants, and cashiers.....	446,205	52.1
7	Operatives, apparel and accessories.....	425,534	77.5
8	Housekeepers, private family.....	362,431	99.2
9	Waiters and waitresses, except private family.....	356,036	67.6
10	Trained nurses and student nurses.....	348,277	97.9
11	Farm laborers (unpaid family workers).....	223,279	19.2
12	Barbers, beauticians, and manicurists.....	206,592	49.7
13	"Clerks" in stores.....	201,281	42.5
14	Telephone operators.....	189,002	94.6
15	Launders and laundresses, private family.....	186,183	98.2
16	Servants, except private family ¹	174,724	55.3
17	Laundry operatives and laundresses, except private family.....	167,967	77.7
18	Operatives, cotton manufactures.....	167,155	47.0
19	Farmers (owners and tenants).....	151,087	8.0
20	Dressmakers and seamstresses (not in factory).....	133,627	93.3
21	Cooks, except private family.....	118,310	42.0
22	Operatives, knit goods.....	115,106	66.9
23	Boarding house and lodginghouse keepers.....	100,355	90.5

¹ Census classification terms necessarily are used here. The Women's Bureau has been working with the Census to develop classification terms to supplant "servants."

Source: Census of 1940, Population, Vol. III, The Labor Force, Part 1, United States Summary, table 53.

In each of 23 occupations reported in 1940, more than 100,000 women were employed. Taken together, these 23 occupations included three-fourths of all the employed women (exclusive of women workers in the labor force who were not employed at the time the census was taken).

Among the five largest of these occupations that of "servants, private family" stands at the top, employing almost 1½ million women. Nearly 1 million women were stenographers, typists, or secretaries, and almost ¾ million were in other clerical work. Over ¾ million were teachers and ½ million were saleswomen.

Among these occupations that employed 100,000 or more women, women constituted over nine-tenths of all the workers in eight occupations, about three-fourths in three more, and about half in five others, as Table 5 shows.

There also were a number of occupations in which considerably fewer than 100,000 women worked but in which women were practically half or over half of the employees. In two of these women were nine-tenths or more of the workers, in six others they were three-fourths but less than nine-tenths of the workers.

TABLE 5.—Selected occupations with women as large proportions of the workers

I. SELECTED OCCUPATIONS WITH 100,000 OR MORE WOMEN, 1940

<i>Women are more than nine-tenths of these workers:</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Housekeepers, private family.....	99
Dressmakers, seamstresses (not in factory).....	98
Launderers and laundresses, private family.....	98
Nurses, trained and student.....	98
Telephone operators.....	95
Stenographers, typists, secretaries.....	94
Servants, private family.....	91
Boarding and lodginghouse keepers.....	91
<i>Women are about three-fourths of these workers:</i>	
Operatives in laundries, and laundresses, except private family.....	78
Operatives in apparel and accessories factories.....	78
Teachers (not elsewhere classified).....	76
<i>Women are about two-thirds of these workers:</i>	
Waiters and waitresses, except private family.....	68
Operatives in knit goods factories.....	67
<i>Women are about half of these workers:</i>	
Servants, except private family.....	55
Bookkeepers, accountants, cashiers.....	52
Beauticians, manicurists, barbers.....	50
Operatives in cotton mills.....	47
<i>Women are about two-fifths of these workers:</i>	
"Clerks" in stores.....	43
Cooks, except private family.....	42
Salesmen and saleswomen (not elsewhere classified).....	41
Clerical and kindred workers (not elsewhere classified).....	36

II. SELECTED OCCUPATIONS WITH LESS THAN 100,000 WOMEN, 1940

Practical nurse (87,200).....	96
Librarian (82,500).....	90
Office machine operator (51,500).....	86
Demonstrator (7,400).....	83
Dancer, dancing teacher, chorus girl (9,000).....	81
Housekeeper, steward, hostess (except private family) (62,400).....	79
Library assistant, attendant (7,000).....	78
Religious worker (25,900).....	75
Social and welfare worker (44,800).....	64
Musician, music teacher (59,500).....	46

SOURCE: Census of 1940. Population, Vol. III, The Labor Force, Part 1, United States Summary, Table 58.

CHIEF INDUSTRY GROUPS OF WOMEN

(See Table 6)

Among the 10 chief industry groups, the one that employed the largest number of women was domestic and personal service, with nearly 3 million women (1940, the latest date for which data on chief industry groups are available). Each of two other groups employed over 2 million—manufacturing and trade (wholesale and retail together), and the professional group employed not far from 2 million. Each of these four groups employed about four to six times as many women as any other. The domestic and personal services, manufacturing and trade taken together accounted for almost two-thirds of all employed women.

Next in size were two industry groups each of which employed about $\frac{1}{2}$ million women—agriculture, and finance, insurance, and real estate. Two other groups employed over $\frac{1}{3}$ million—transportation, communication, and other public utilities, and government. All other

groups taken together employed only a very small proportion of the women workers.

Of course the workers in each of the various industry groups are engaged in a wide range of occupations, as for example those of salespersons, laborers of various types, clerical office forces, manufacturing operatives, and so forth. (For occupational data see Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5.)

TABLE 6.—*Women in each industry group, 1940*

Industry group	Number of women	Percent of all workers who were women	Percent distribution of women
All groups.....	11, 188, 178	25	100
Domestic and personal services.....	2, 875, 762	72	25
Manufacturing.....	2, 822, 252	22	21
Trade (wholesale and retail).....	2, 029, 540	27	18
Professional and related services.....	1, 845, 128	56	17
Agriculture.....	455, 373	6	4
Finance, insurance, real estate.....	474, 300	31	4
Transportation, communication, other public utilities.....	345, 086	11	3
Government.....	339, 418	19	3
Other services:			
Amusement, recreation.....	79, 279	20	1
Business, repair.....	76, 877	9	1
All other ¹	46, 897	2	(²)
Industry not reported.....	238, 266	35	2

¹ Includes construction, mining, forestry and fishing.

² Less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1 percent.

SOURCE: Census of 1940, Population, Vol. III, The Labor Force, Part 1, United States Summary, Table 74.

IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL INDUSTRIES

(See Table 7)

Among 23 individual industries each of which employed over 100,000 women in 1940, in only 3 did the proportion of women approach two-

TABLE 7.—*Individual industries employing 100,000 or more women, 1940*

Industry	Women employed	
	Number	Percent of all workers in the industry
Domestic service.....	2, 059, 936	89
Educational services.....	1, 020, 891	85
Medical and other health services.....	593, 244	58
Apparel and accessories manufacturing.....	488, 807	67
Eating and drinking places.....	478, 640	43
General merchandise stores.....	422, 213	59
Miscellaneous personal services.....	313, 056	46
Hotels and lodging places.....	285, 900	52
Food stores, except dairy products.....	266, 217	20
Laundering, cleaning, and dyeing services.....	216, 870	49
Stores, apparel and accessories, except shoes.....	208, 582	50
State and local government (n. e. c.) ¹	199, 625	24
Telephone (wire and radio).....	189, 919	60
Insurance.....	186, 137	38
Cotton manufactures.....	183, 571	38
Wholesale trade.....	181, 847	15
Banking and other finance.....	145, 996	31
Charitable, religious, and other membership organizations.....	135, 241	35
Printing, publishing and allied industries.....	129, 094	21
Knit goods.....	127, 263	69
Real estate.....	122, 167	26
Footwear industries, except rubber.....	107, 436	43
Electrical machinery and equipment.....	101, 201	27

¹ Not elsewhere classified.

SOURCE: Census of 1940, Population, Vol. III, The Labor Force, Part 1, United States Summary, Table 74.

thirds of the work force: in domestic service nearly 90 percent of the workers were women, and in educational services and in the manufacture of apparel and clothing accessories about two-thirds of the workers were women. In 8 other individual industries from about half to 60 percent of the workers were women.

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN FACTORY PRODUCTION ¹

(See Table 8)

Figures later than those of the 1940 census have been compiled periodically for one major industry group, manufacturing, and for various industries that compose this group. These have been adjusted to the latest regular decennial Census of Manufactures, 1939, so that comparable prewar and postwar figures are available for manufacturing industries (which employ over a fifth of all women workers and form a group exceeded in size only by domestic and personal service). (See Table 6.)

Before the war factory production work employed over 2¼ million women. During the war this number increased, and after the war it declined. However, in 1946 the number of women in such work exceeded that in 1939 by almost 1 million, or more than 40 percent, and the total was more than 3¼ million. Both in 1939 and in 1946 women were slightly over a fourth of all factory production workers.

In each of the 18 manufacturing groups listed except tobacco (Table 8), the number of women in the work force was appreciably greater in 1946 than in 1939. Apparel led the way with 193,000 additional women in 1946. Of the 10 manufacturing groups with the greatest increases in numbers of women from 1939 to 1946 (each had added some 40,000 or more women workers), 6 may be classed as durable goods. The 10 were as follows:

	Increased number of women		Increased number of women
Apparel	193,000	Stone, clay, glass.....	44,000
Electrical machinery.....	126,100	Printing, publishing.....	40,700
Machinery (except electrical).....	81,300	Textile mill products.....	39,700
Iron and steel.....	72,200	Nonferrous metals.....	39,700
Chemicals	64,500	Automobiles	39,400

The increased number of women in manufacturing production work in 1946 as compared to 1939 was divided very nearly half and half between the durable and the nondurable industries, each of which added roughly ½ million women. The nondurable goods group includes many industries that traditionally have been large employers of women. Before the war nondurable goods employed 85 percent of all women factory production workers. The striking development that occurred during the war was the entry of women into durable goods industries to a much greater extent than formerly. Women in durable goods, who were only 15 percent of all women factory workers in 1939, were more than 25 percent of such workers in 1946.

The five particular manufacturing-industry groups that employ the largest numbers of women are those making apparel and textile mill products, processing food, and producing electrical machinery and leather goods. This was true in 1946 as it was before the war, and

¹ Excludes factory office forces.

these industries employed over 400,000 more women production workers in 1946 than in 1939. Next in size of 1946 woman labor force were iron and steel, chemicals, machinery (except electrical), printing and publishing, and paper.

Women were from one-fifth to over three-fourths of the factory workers in the following 10 manufacturing groups in 1946:

	Percent women were of all workers		Percent women were of all workers
Apparel	77	Food	27
Tobacco	63	Paper	25
Textile mill products.....	47	Printing and publishing.....	24
Leather	46	Rubber	24
Electrical machinery.....	39	Chemicals	21

TABLE 8.—Employment of women production workers in chief manufacturing industries, prewar and postwar

Industry	October 1939		October 1946		Increase October 1939 to October 1946	
	Number of women (in thousands)	Percent women were of all workers	Number of women (in thousands)	Percent women were of all workers	Number (in thousands)	Percent
All manufacturing.....	2,268	26	3,262	27	994	44
Nondurable goods.....	1,928	40	2,433	41	505	26
Apparel.....	626.0	74	819.0	77	193.0	31
Textile mill products.....	527.7	43	567.4	47	39.7	8
Food.....	263.8	28	291.3	27	27.5	10
Leather.....	139.6	40	161.5	46	21.9	16
Paper.....	69.4	24	85.1	25	25.7	37
Tobacco.....	64.9	67	55.6	63	9.3	14
Printing and publishing.....	59.8	18	100.0	24	40.7	69
Chemicals.....	46.0	15	110.5	21	64.5	140
Rubber.....	33.0	25	38.4	24	23.4	71
Durable goods.....	340	9	829	13	489	144
Electrical machinery.....	100.3	34	226.4	39	126.1	126
Iron and steel.....	68.3	6	141.0	9	72.2	105
Furniture.....	36.9	10	63.3	15	39.7	114
Stone, clay, glass.....	35.3	11	79.3	19	44.0	125
Nonferrous metals and products.....	34.9	14	74.6	18	39.7	114
Automobiles.....	29.5	7	68.9	9	39.4	134
Machinery (except electrical).....	28.4	5	109.7	10	81.3	286
Lumber.....	4.1	1	35.0	6	31.9	778
Transportation equipment (except auto).....	1.8	1	29.7	7	27.9	1,550

¹ Total exceeds details, as details not shown for smaller individual industries.

² In this industry, a decline.

Source: U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Women in Factories, October 1939-May 1947.

AGES OF WOMEN WORKERS

(See Tables 9 and 10)

The 1947 labor force, compared to that of 1940, included 1¾ million more women 35 to 54 years old than in 1940, over 1/3 million more girls under 20, and about 1/3 million fewer women 20 to 34 years old. Women aged 35 to 54 were almost three-fourths of all the additional women workers in 1947.

Both in 1940 and in 1947 over one-tenth of the women workers were under 20, and by 1947 a slightly larger proportion than this were 55 or older. Women 20 to 34 years old were nearly half the female labor

force in 1940 but were only 39 percent of it in 1947. On the other hand, the proportion who were 35 to 54 years old increased from 32 percent in 1940 to 38 percent in 1947.

TABLE 9.—Changes in numbers of women workers in each age group, 1940, 1947

Age group	Number of women workers		Change, 1940, 1947	
	1940	1947	Number	Percent
All ages.....	13,840,000	16,320,000	+2,480,000	+17.9
14-19.....	1,460,000	1,820,000	+360,000	+24.7
20-24.....	2,820,000	2,690,000	-130,000	-4.6
25-34.....	3,840,000	3,640,000	-200,000	-5.2
35-44.....	2,660,000	3,580,000	+920,000	+34.6
45-54.....	1,830,000	2,690,000	+860,000	+47.0
55-64.....	920,000	1,460,000	+540,000	+58.7
65 and over.....	310,000	440,000	+130,000	+41.9

¹ Estimated for adjusted figures on basis of distribution of unadjusted census figures for 1940.

SOURCE: Based on census data. See Current Population Reports, P-50, No. 2, and Supplement to Monthly Report on the Labor Force, No. 59-S, June 3, 1947.

During the war the proportion of all women who were workers increased quite considerably in every age group up to 64 years, and there even was a small increase in the proportion of women who went to work among those aged 64 years or more. The greatest increases in proportions of women workers were among those under 20 and those 45 to 54; women 45 to 54 were less likely than those 20 to 34 years old to be workers already or to have household and family cares requiring their full attention and consequently were in a position to enter the labor force to a larger extent than were the 20- to 34-year olds.

By 1947 the proportions of the women in every age group who were at work had declined from the war peak, but they still remained well above the proportions at work before the war, except in the age groups 20 to 34. Many of the women of 20 to 34 had delayed marriage or had remained at work until husbands returned from the services, and in the postwar period they desired to give their full time to household and family affairs rather than to paid employment. Women of all ages except those 20 to 34 were participating in the labor force to a greater extent in 1947 than in 1940; the greatest increase in labor force participation was among those 35 to 54, and among girls under 20.

TABLE 10.—Age groupings of women workers before, during, and after World War II

Age group	Percent of all women in each age group who were workers			Percent distribution of women workers, by age		
	1940	1945	1947	1940	1945	1947
All ages.....	27	37	30	100	100	100
14-19.....	20	40	28	11	14	11
20-24.....	48	56	44	20	17	17
25-34.....	35	41	31	28	23	22
35-44.....	29	41	36	19	20	22
45-54.....	24	37	33	13	15	16
55-64.....	18	27	23	7	8	9
65 and over.....	7	9	8	2	3	3

SOURCE: Based on census data. Current Population Reports P-50, No. 2, and unpublished census data.

MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN WORKERS

(See Tables 11 and 12)

Extent to which women in various marital groups are in labor force.—In 1947 over half the single women in this country were in the labor force, as were more than a third of the widowed and divorced women, and over a fifth of the married women.

Distribution of women by marital status in population and in labor force.—Single women constituted 22 percent of the woman population in 1947 but were 38 percent of the women in the labor force. Married women were 65 percent of the adult female population and 46 percent of the women in the labor force. Widows and divorced women were 13 percent of the woman population, 16 percent of the female labor force.

TABLE 11.—Distribution of women in population and in labor force, by marital status, 1940 and 1947

Marital status	Number of women		Percent change	Percent distribution	
	1940	1947	1940-47	1940	1947
POPULATION					
Total.....	50,140,000	54,278,000	+8	100	100
Single.....	13,733,000	11,864,000	-14	27	22
Married.....	29,973,000	35,112,000	+17	60	65
Widowed and divorced.....	6,434,000	7,302,000	+13	13	13
LABOR FORCE					
Total.....	13,840,000	16,323,000	+18	100	100
Single.....	6,710,000	6,181,000	-8	49	38
Married.....	5,040,000	7,545,000	+50	36	46
Widowed and divorced.....	2,090,000	2,597,000	+24	15	16

SOURCE: Based on census data.

Wartime and postwar employment of women, by marital status (see Tables 11 and 12).—During the war there was great pressure for additional numbers of women to enter the labor force. To respond to this need, very many more married than single women were available. This and other factors contributed to the entry of many more married than single women into the wartime labor force. Married women are much more numerous than single women in the population. (In 1940 the number of married women was more than double that of single women. See Table 11.) Then, during the war the number of married women in the population increased markedly, while the number of single women declined. Furthermore, single women already had been employed in large proportions before the war. (Nearly half of them were workers in 1940. See Table 11.) Many married women were beyond the ages when family care absorbed most of their time and energy, others were the more recently married wives of husbands in the service, and there was in general a desire to be of service in the country's emergency.

During the war the proportion of the single women who were in the labor force increased from 49 percent in 1940 to 55 percent, and the proportion of the married women who were workers increased to an even greater extent—from a prewar 17 percent to a wartime 23 percent. (See Table 12.)

TABLE 12.—Marital status of women workers before, during, and after World War II

Marital status	Percent of all women of each marital status who were workers			Percent distribution of women workers, by marital status		
	1940	1944	1947	1940	1944	1947
All groups.....	28	32	30	100	100	100
Single.....	49	55	52	49	43	38
Married.....	17	23	22	36	44	46
Widowed and divorced.....	33	32	36	15	13	16

SOURCE: Based on census data.

After the war smaller proportions of both single and married women and larger proportions of the widowed and divorced women were in the labor force than during the war. The last mentioned group, of course, would include those widowed during the war.

Among each of the marital groups of women, participation in the labor force was greater after than before the war. The increase in the number of married women was 17 percent in the population, but it was much greater in the labor force—50 percent. The number of single women declined 14 percent in the population but only 8 percent in the labor force.

WORKING WIVES AND FAMILY FINANCES

The growing importance of married women workers continues a long-time trend in our industrial economy, in which money income has increasingly determined the family's standard of living. In addition there are available for the production of goods and services more married women and fewer single women in the population than in the prewar period. In fact, there are nearly three times as many married as single women in the adult population. (See Table 11.)

The proportion of wives who work is materially higher when their husbands are in low-income groups, as is strikingly illustrated by the following 1940 census data on work status of wives in large cities, according to husband's wage or salary income.

Labor force status of married women with husband present, by wage or salary income of husband, 1940

[Limited to married women whose husbands had no other source of income, in cities of 100,000 or more population]

<i>Wage or salary income of husband</i>	<i>Percent of married women (husband present) in labor force</i>
All income groups.....	16.7
None and not reported.....	24.3
\$1-\$199.....	27.6
\$200-\$399.....	24.2
\$400-\$599.....	22.7
\$600-\$999.....	21.7
\$1,000-\$1,499.....	18.8
\$1,500-\$1,999.....	14.0
\$2,000-\$2,999.....	9.2
\$3,000 and over.....	5.6

SOURCE: Census of 1940, Population, The Labor Force (Sample Statistics), Employment and Family Characteristics of Women, Table 23.

Working mothers.—The Bureau of the Census reported in 1946 on the work status of wives with and without children. The report included wives in "normal" families (those with husband and wife present) and women heads of families. It did not include working mothers living in a family group whose head was someone other than such a mother or her husband (as for example a married daughter living with her parents or her husband's parents).

The report shows that when their children are small, women tend to stay out of the labor force. Much smaller proportions of those with small children than of those with no young children go to work. Higher proportions of women heads of families worked than of wives in normal families, but among women heads also there was a tendency for those with small children to stay out of the labor force. The following summary shows the proportions of women with and without young children who were in the labor force in 1946.

Family status	Proportion of wives at work in families with—		
	No children under 18	Children aged 6-7 only	Children under 6 years old
Wives in "normal" families (husband and wife present).....	24	23	9
Women heads of families.....	44	50	35

These working wives (living with husbands) and women family heads who had children under 6 years old constituted only 8 percent of the total woman labor force in 1946. They numbered 1¼ million.

WOMEN AS HEADS OF FAMILIES

In sharp contrast to the popularly envisioned picture of the "average" family, consisting of father, mother, and children, stands the fact that in 1946 over 6½ million families had a woman head.

The number of families with a woman head has been increasing. They constituted 12.7 percent of all families in the country in 1930, and 15.3 percent in 1940. It is not surprising that during the war they increased sharply. In the postwar period there was a decline in the extent to which women headed the family, but in 1946 women were 17.4 percent of all family heads, which was above the 1940 proportion just shown. Evidence on prewar years shows that among the underprivileged and among those living in industrial localities, the percent of women family heads is appreciably higher than the national average. In 1946, of the total number of women family heads, over 4 million (more than 60 percent) headed families of two or more persons.

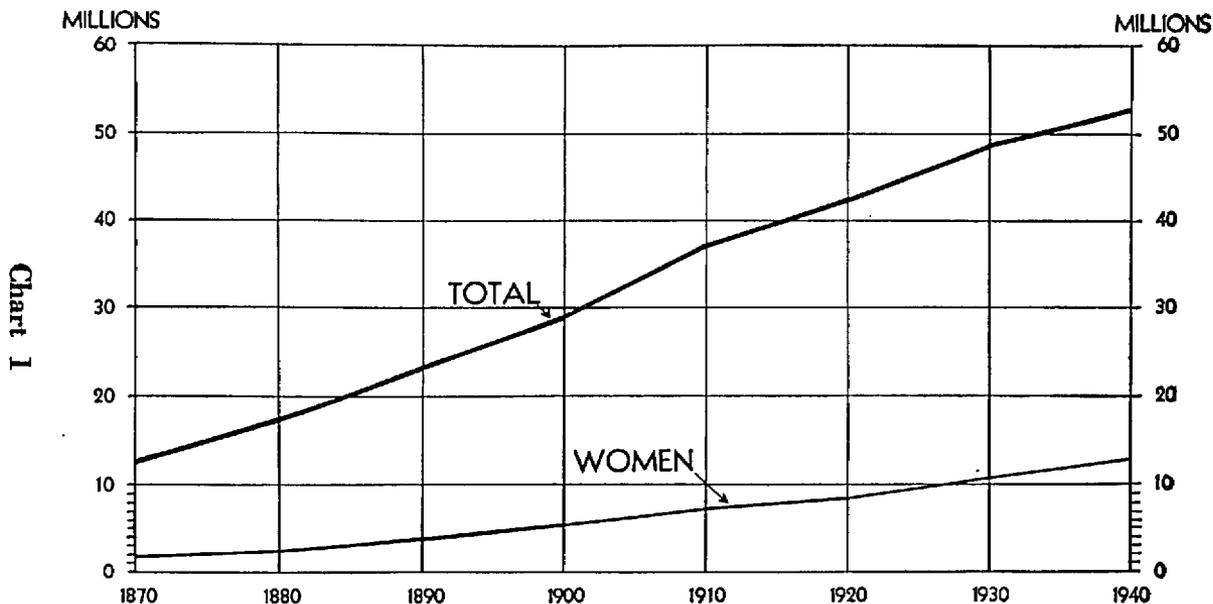
Among women family heads, in 1940 as well as in 1946, about 70 percent were widowed and divorced women (the great majority of these were widows). Both in 1940 and in 1946, practically half the women family heads were 55 years old or more; in 1946, there was a considerable increase over 1940 in the proportion of them who were under 35 years of age, chiefly at the expense of the decreased group who were 35 to 54 years old.

Not all family heads, be they men or women, are in the labor force. In 1946, among the more than 31 million families in which the head was in the labor force, almost 2.9 million had a woman head, many of whom undoubtedly were working not only for their own support but also toward the family's maintenance. In other words, 18 percent (not far from one-fifth) of the Nation's working women were heads of families, but labor force data do not indicate what proportions of these headed families of two or more persons.

SELECTED REFERENCES TO BASIC DATA ON EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

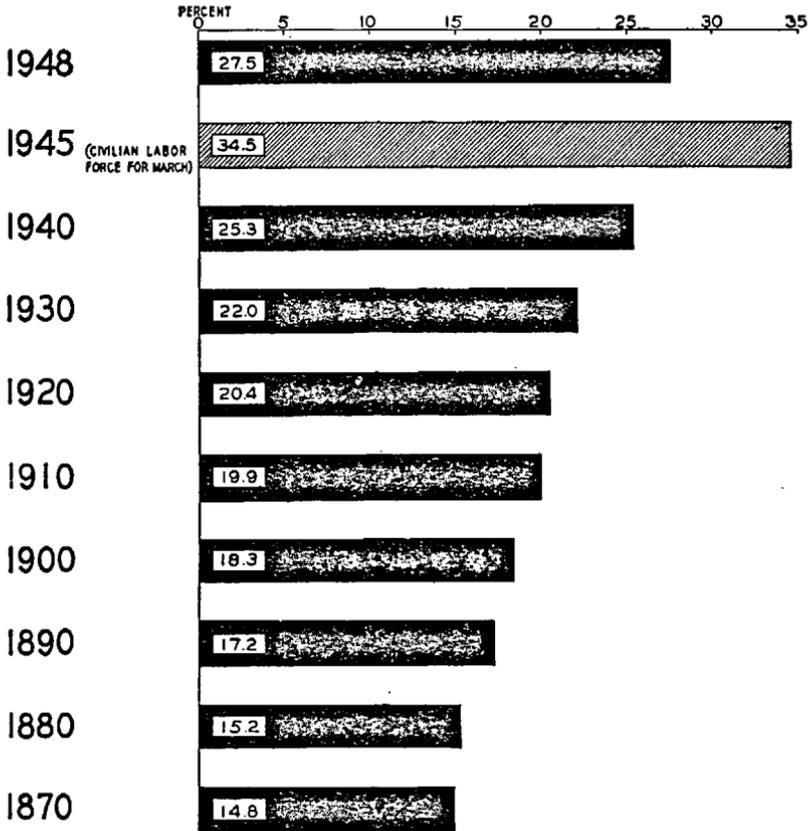
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 - a. 16th Census, 1940. Population. Vol. III, Labor Force. Part 1, United States Summary, Tables 58 and 74.
 - b. Current Population Reports. Labor Force Bulletin, Series P-50, No. 2. (Revised statistics 1940 to 1945.)
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 - a. Special Bull. No. 20. Changes in Women's Employment During the War. 1944.
 - b. Bull. No. 211. Employment of Women in the Early Postwar Period. 1946.
 - c. Bull. No. 218. Women's Occupations Through Seven Decades. 1948.
3. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS:
 - a. Monthly Labor Review, August 1947. Recent Occupational Trends.
 - b. Monthly Labor Review, December 1947. Labor Force Changes and Employment Outlook—Women Workers and Recent Economic Change.
 - c. Women in Factories, October 1939–May 1947. (Mimeograph.)

Number of Women Workers and of All Workers, 1870-1940



Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census. 16th Census: 1940. Population. Vol. III, Part I, Table 7; and Comparative Occupation Statistics for the United States, 1870 to 1940. By Alba M. Edwards. pp. 12, 91.

PROPORTION OF ALL WORKERS WHO ARE WOMEN 1870 - 1948



SOURCE: U. S. BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Chart 2

Occupations of Women Workers, 1940

Women who were employed (except on public emergency work) or who were experienced workers seeking work

CLERICAL, SALES, AND
KINDRED WORKERS



OPERATIVES AND
KINDRED WORKERS



DOMESTIC SERVICE
WORKERS



PROFESSIONAL AND
SEMIPROFESSIONAL
WORKERS



SERVICE WORKERS,
EXCEPT DOMESTIC
AND PROTECTIVE



OTHER OCCUPATIONS



Each symbol represents 250,000 women workers

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census. 16th Census, 1940. Population. Vol. III, Part I, Table 65.

Chart 3