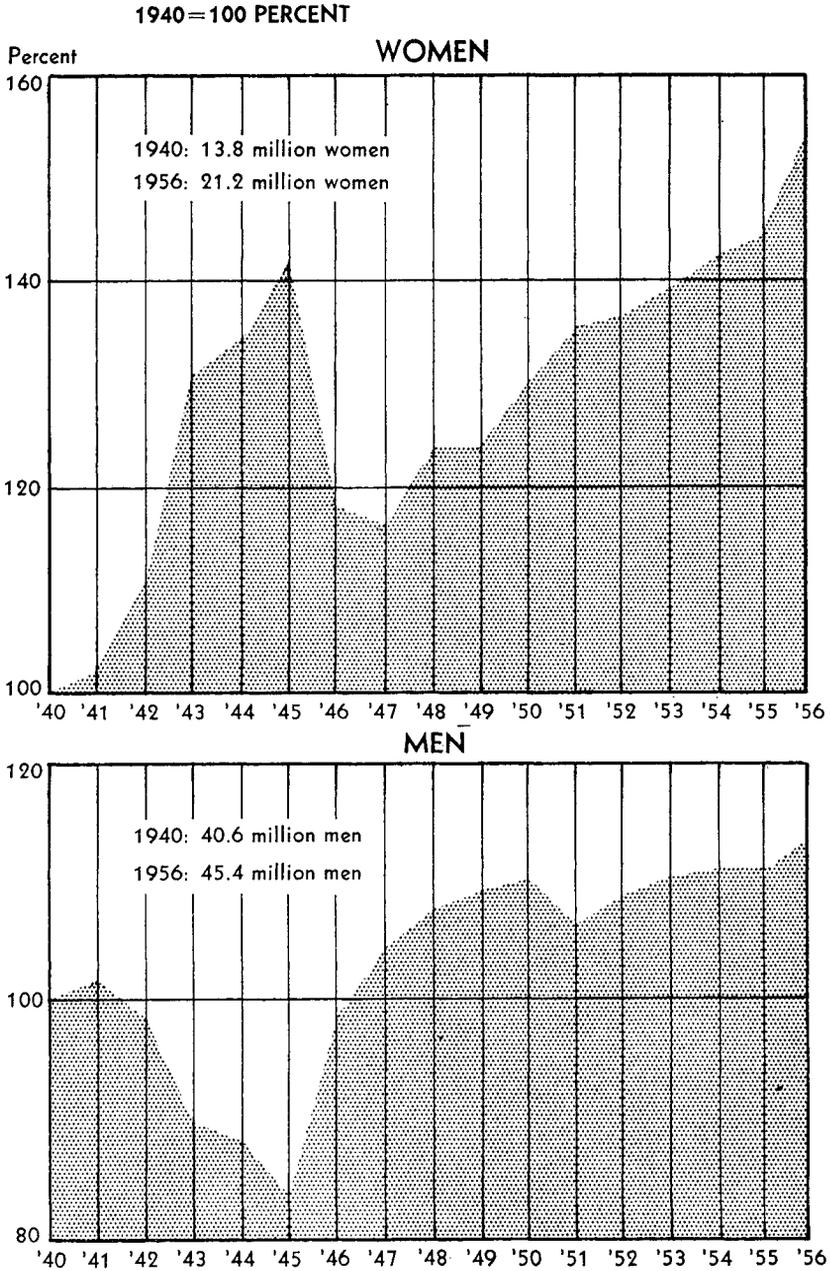


PERCENT CHANGE IN NUMBER OF WOMEN AND MEN WORKERS, 1940-1956



Source: Bureau of the Census.

Figure 1

1956 HANDBOOK ON WOMEN WORKERS

WOMEN IN TODAY'S ECONOMY

Women in the labor force are making a greater contribution to the national economy today than at any previous period except, perhaps, during World War II. (See summary on p. 2.) The upward trend in number of women workers—from 5 million in 1900 to more than 21 million in 1956—has been more rapid than the growth in population or the expansion of the labor force. There are more women workers today than ever before.

Women's total contribution to the economy, moreover, far exceeds their contribution to the labor force. Most adult women who are not wage earners are homemakers, and family life depends on the services of homemakers. This has always been true; but never before have so many women been both homemakers and wage earners. (See p. 3.)

Among employed women the range of jobs held is wider than in any earlier period. (See p. 10.) At least a few women were reported in all the 446 occupations listed by the decennial census of 1950. Many of the gains made during two world wars, such as the general acceptance of women in executive and administrative positions, have been maintained and consolidated.

Earnings of women workers (see ch. 2) have advanced as standards of living have risen, although in general the increase in earnings has been less rapid for women than for men.

In education, women make a somewhat better showing than men. (See ch. 3.) Among adults 25 and over, the average woman has completed nearly a year more of school than the average man. However, the percentage who have completed 4 years or more of college is higher among men than among women. Educational and training opportunities for almost any profession or occupation are now open to women in universities, coeducational colleges, and technical schools.