

L13.3

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

W. N. DOAK, SECRETARY

**WOMEN'S BUREAU**

MARY ANDERSON, Director

**BULLETIN OF THE WOMEN'S BUREAU, NO. 97**

**THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN  
IN THE SEWING TRADES  
OF CONNECTICUT**

**PRELIMINARY REPORT**



**UNITED STATES  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON : 1932**

**For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. - - - Price 5 cents**

[PUBLIC—No. 259—66TH CONGRESS]

[H. R. 13229]

An Act To establish in the Department of Labor a bureau to be known as the  
Women's Bureau

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there shall be established in the Department of Labor a bureau to be known as the Women's Bureau.*

SEC. 2. That the said bureau shall be in charge of a director, a woman, to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, who shall receive an annual compensation of \$5,000. It shall be the duty of said bureau to formulate standards and policies which shall promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment. The said bureau shall have authority to investigate and report to the said department upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of women in industry. The director of said bureau may from time to time publish the results of these investigations in such a manner and to such extent as the Secretary of Labor may prescribe.

SEC. 3. That there shall be in said bureau an assistant director, to be appointed by the Secretary of Labor, who shall receive an annual compensation of \$3,500 and shall perform such duties as shall be prescribed by the director and approved by the Secretary of Labor.

SEC. 4. That there is hereby authorized to be employed by said bureau a chief clerk and such special agents, assistants, clerks, and other employees at such rates of compensation and in such numbers as Congress may from time to time provide by appropriations.

SEC. 5. That the Secretary of Labor is hereby directed to furnish sufficient quarters, office furniture, and equipment, for the work of this bureau.

SEC. 6. That this act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Approved, June 5, 1920.

11

# THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN THE SEWING TRADES OF CONNECTICUT<sup>1</sup>

## PRELIMINARY REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

At the request of Governor Cross, a study of the economic status of women engaged in the manufacture of wearing apparel in the State of Connecticut was made in the fall of 1931 by the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor. Local organizations, manufacturers, and other individuals were most helpful in planning the field work for the survey and in making this study possible.

According to the United States Census of Manufactures in 1927, Connecticut is not one of the leading States in the manufacture of garments. In that year it was outranked by several States in numbers employed in making men's shirts and women's garments, and it ranked even lower in the manufacture of men's clothing. However, it surpassed all other States in the number of wage earners employed in felt-hat factories and ranked second in the making of corsets. Advance figures from the census of 1929 indicate that while in most branches of the wearing-apparel industry there was a decline in employment between 1927 and 1929, there was an increase in the number of wage earners making women's clothing.

### SCOPE

A total of 106 firms furnished the pay-roll data for hours and wages that form the basis of this report. Two-thirds of the factories visited were in cities on Long Island Sound, in Stamford, Norwalk, Bridgeport, Milford, New Haven, and New London, and almost three-fourths of the employees worked in these cities.

The 10,009 employees of the 106 establishments comprised between 60 and 65 per cent of the State's wage earners in the clothing industries—about 60 per cent if based on the 1929 figures of the United States Census of Manufactures and 64 per cent if based on the 1930 Census of Occupations. The representation of women is especially good, those employed in the factories surveyed constituting more than 80 per cent of the State's total as reported by the Census of Occupations.

The depression had hit all these plants, some harder than others, but the consensus of opinion in the garment factories seemed to be that in the very early fall of 1931 the plants had operated fairly well for a few weeks although the season had been very much shorter than usual. In rare cases had there been any overtime, and some persons

<sup>1</sup> In this preliminary report only some of the outstanding facts, relating mainly to hours of work, week's earnings, and ages of the women, have been covered. A more detailed analysis of these findings, as well as the other phases of the survey—such as year's earnings, the seasonal character of the industry, the prevalence of home work, the physical conditions of the factories, and personal information other than age—will be discussed in the final report.

stated that even their best weeks had been on an undertime basis, with numbers employed also far below normal. With these conditions in mind, an especial effort was made by the agents of the Women's Bureau to select as representative data as possible, and the pay-roll records taken were for the week recommended by the firm as having been normal or as nearly full time as any. The date of the week thus selected varied slightly from firm to firm, but the great majority were in September and a few in October.

TABLE 1.—Number of establishments visited and number of men and women they employed, by branch of industry

Branch of industry	Number of establishments	Number and sex of employees				
		Total	Men	Women		
				Total	Under 16 years	16 years and over
Total.....	1 106	10, 009	2, 234	7, 775	144	7, 631
Tailored garments.....	12	721	200	521	4	517
Children's apparel.....	12	820	43	777	29	748
Women's dresses.....	30	1, 760	232	1, 528	26	1, 502
Women's underwear.....	9	1, 083	103	980	24	956
Corsets.....	6	1, 415	269	1, 146	2	1, 144
Garters.....	5	259	38	221	5	216
Men's shirts.....	8	1, 252	89	1, 163	32	1, 131
Neckties and cravats.....	5	581	55	526	-----	526
Hats.....	6	1, 584	1, 137	447	-----	447
Men's furnishings.....	14	534	68	466	22	444

<sup>1</sup> Details exceed total, as 1 firm had both a hat and a necktie department.

The firms included in the report have been classified along rather broad lines according to the type of products manufactured. Numbers employed in men's suits and trousers and in women's coats were so small and scattering that for discussion these have been combined and called "tailored garments." Furthermore, to have a representative number, workers on children's dresses, play suits, and underwear form another group. Included in "women's dresses" are silk and wool dresses and silk blouses, and "women's underwear" covers one or two firms manufacturing cotton house dresses and aprons. In the last group, men's furnishings, are several smaller establishments making men's overalls, pyjamas, athletic underwear, bathrobes, collars, and handkerchiefs. With garters are grouped other types of elastic supporters and with corsets are classed other allied garments. The manufacture of hats covers both felt and straw products, but felt hats predominate.

From Table 1 it is apparent that with the exception of the hat factories these were chiefly woman-employing plants, more than three-fourths of the wage earners being women. In hat factories men were employed in large numbers in making the felts and shaping the hats, while women were engaged chiefly in trimming. Women predominated even in the tailoring establishments, where men are often in the majority, but their numbers bulked most heavily in dress, underwear, corset, and shirt factories. More than three-fifths of the women were in these four groups. Less than 10 per cent in each case were in establishments making garters, hats, neckties, men's furnishings, or tailored garments.

There was a great range in the size of plants; in some there were no more than 20 employees and in others there were several hundred. While the average size of the factories was about 95 employees for the group as a whole, this figure varied widely with the different branches of the industry. In the dress factories the average was just below 60 but in the corset factories it was well over 200 and in the hat factories it was over 250.

#### STANDARD HOURS

In normal busy times only 16 of these firms had a standard work-day as short as 8 hours. The customary full-time standard for over half the firms was 9 hours or more, two firms reporting a 10-hour day. The standard for the working week also was long. Over 60 firms, or about three-fifths, reported the normal week as more than 48 hours, and 10 had a standard of more than 50 hours.

During the week studied, almost two-fifths of the women whose hours worked were reported had been employed 48 hours or more.

That these standards for work hours in Connecticut were longer than those prevailing in the same industry elsewhere may be seen by reference to reports by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. In a bulletin Trade Agreements in 1927 this authority makes the statement that the 44-hour week is practically the rule in several trades, and clothing is noted specially.<sup>2</sup> In the 1931 Handbook of Labor Statistics the average full-time hours in 212 representative firms making men's clothing are shown to have been 44.3 in 1930.<sup>3</sup> These firms represented 12 large cities and two groups of smaller cities, one group in Pennsylvania and one in New Jersey. Furthermore, the 1929 report of the Statistics of Labor for Massachusetts shows that the 42-hour and 44-hour week prevailed in the men's clothing and ladies' garment factories in that State as a result of verbal or written agreements.<sup>4</sup> In tailoring establishments in western Massachusetts the standard was 48 hours.

#### HOURS WORKED

For more than one-third of the women for whom records of earnings were available in the survey, there was no record of the number of hours worked during the week for which the pay roll was copied. In many plants there was no record of hours for those paid on a piece-work basis, the only time record available being for those paid by the hour. Not only did the completeness of pay-roll records vary from plant to plant, but some branches of the industry had better office records than others. In corset, garter, hat, and necktie factories hours were reported more generally than in the other types of plants. For example, a correlation of hours and earnings could be made for less than one-fourth of the employees in the shirt factories, for less than two-fifths of those in men's furnishings, and for only about one-half of those in children's apparel and women's underwear.

However, records of time worked were available for nearly 5,000 women, almost half of whom worked 44 and less than 52 hours. At the two extremes below and above these points are found many hundred women who had worked unmistakably undertime periods

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Trade Agreements in 1927. Bul. 468, pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Handbook of Labor Statistics, 1931 edition. Bul. 541, p. 789.

<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts Department of Labor and Industries. Time Rates of Wages and Hours of Labor in Massachusetts, 1929, pp. 4, 20-21. (Pt. II of the annual report on the statistics of labor for the year ending Nov. 30, 1929.)

and a few hundred who had worked longer than normal. Over 1,000 women, but less than a fourth of the total, worked less than 40 hours during the week, many of them much less than 40 hours, and this group undoubtedly is representative of the undertime unusual for this season of the year and due in large part to the depression. Every branch of the industry had a group of undertime workers. It is surprising to find at the other extreme that 665 women worked as long as 52 hours or more, in some cases excessively long hours, and in a few cases work had continued even through seven days of the week. The dress factories were outstandingly responsible for such long hours.

As stated before, an effort was made to select for pay-roll study what had been a busy week in the early fall, a season that year after year shows peak employment. By this uniform policy of selecting for each firm a week showing good production, conditions as nearly normal as possible are described here.

### EARNINGS

Owing largely to the method of payment, piecework prevailing and hourly rates being common, there appears in Table 2 a consistent rise in earnings as the number of hours worked during the week increases. This is true not only for the total group but in each industry group where a comparison is possible. For example, the median for those employed in women's dress factories increases steadily from \$4.70 for women working less than 36 hours to \$16.70 for those working more than 55, most of the employees being paid by the hour. For the largest groups of women in the three classes that together cover 40 and less than 52 hours, the medians of the week's earnings ranged from \$13.60 to \$14.10—not high, to say the least, for although half the women in each group were earning more than the specified median, the other half were earning less. And these three hour groups may in all fairness be regarded as representative of the best conditions prevailing in the wearing-apparel industries in Connecticut in the fall season of 1931.

TABLE 2.—Median of week's earnings, by hours worked and branch of industry

Branch of industry	Median of week's earnings of 7,631 women										
	Total	Total reported	Hours worked							Hours not reported	
			Less than 36	36 and less than 40	40 and less than 44	44 and less than 48	48 and less than 52	52 to 55	Over 55		
Total:											
Women.....	7,631	4,812	830	316	697	1,120	1,184	450	215	2,819	
Median.....	\$12.35	\$12.95	\$8.45	\$11.45	\$13.60	\$13.80	\$14.10	\$15.00	\$16.35	\$11.30	
Tailored garments:											
Women.....	517	329	32	11	19	47	93	109	18	188	
Median.....	\$13.20	\$13.30	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$8.20	\$15.40	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$13.05	
Children's apparel:											
Women.....	748	395	44	12	30	93	160	39	17	353	
Median.....	\$11.15	\$10.05	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$9.70	\$12.30	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$12.55	
Women's dresses:											
Women.....	1,502	1,098	140	42	91	192	308	157	168	404	
Median.....	\$14.50	\$14.15	\$4.70	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$13.55	\$15.15	\$15.75	\$16.40	\$16.90	\$15.50	

<sup>1</sup> Medians not shown for less than 50 cases.

TABLE 2.—Median of week's earnings, by hours worked and branch of industry—Continued

Branch of industry	Median of week's earnings of 7,631 women									Hours not reported	
	Total	Hours worked									
		Total reported	Less than 36	36 and less than 40	40 and less than 44	44 and less than 48	48 and less than 52	52 to 55	Over 55		
Women's underwear:											
Women	956	498	86	26	22	65	289	8	2	458	
Median	\$9.75	\$10.85	\$4.75	(1)	(1)	\$10.30	\$12.50	(1)	(1)	\$8.65	
Corsets:											
Women	1,144	1,046	151	100	370	243	181	1		98	
Median	\$13.90	\$14.10	\$9.60	\$11.85	\$14.55	\$15.70	\$15.85	(1)		\$11.65	
Garters:											
Women	216	203	29	18	25	119	8	4		13	
Median	\$13.65	\$13.55	(1)	(1)	(1)	\$14.40	(1)	(1)		(1)	
Men's shirts:											
Women	1,131	257	37	24	40	116	21	14	5	874	
Median	\$9.65	\$9.50	(1)	(1)	(1)	\$10.75	(1)	(1)	(1)	\$9.75	
Neckties and cravats:											
Women	526	443	109	27	49	159	61	38		83	
Median	\$16.15	\$15.60	\$12.85	(1)	(1)	\$14.10	\$20.20	(1)		\$18.70	
Hats:											
Women	447	369	177	53	31	78	19	7	4	78	
Median	\$14.75	\$13.85	\$11.60	\$14.50	(1)	\$20.35	(1)	(1)	(1)	\$16.85	
Men's furnishings:											
Women	444	174	25	3	20	8	44	73	1	270	
Median	\$10.05	\$7.35	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	\$11.10	(1)	\$11.15	

<sup>1</sup> Medians not shown for less than 50 cases.

The amounts of the medians vary with the different branches of the trade. In tailored garments and women's dresses—each, and especially the latter, with outstandingly long hours—the highest medians fall in the groups working 52 hours or more, but the highest medians in these groups are much less than the \$20.35 for employees in hat factories working 44 and less than 48 hours or the \$20.20 for necktie employees working 48 and less than 52 hours. And, when the difference in time worked is taken into consideration, the median \$16.90 for over 55 hours in dresses is not enough in excess of the \$15.85 for the corset group with the highest hours (48 and less than 52) to compensate for the difference in hour standards.

These two lines of employment—dresses and corsets—afford an interesting example of differences in hour standards. In corsets the largest group of women worked 40 and under 44 hours and had median earnings of \$14.55. In dresses the largest number were in the group 8 hours longer than this, yet their median was only \$1.20 higher. Each of the longer-hour groups shows this striking difference.

The medians for the most representative groups, working 44 and less than 52 hours, were decidedly lower in other branches than in the two just discussed: Garters, \$14.40 for the 44–48 hour group; women's underwear, \$12.50 for the 48–52 hour group; children's apparel, \$12.30 for the 48–52 hour group; and men's shirts, \$10.75 for the 44–48 hour group.

Table 2 shows also the median of the earnings of all the women involved in the study, regardless of how long they worked during the

week. Of the total number, almost 8,000 women, half had earned less and half had earned more than \$12.35. Dividing the group into those for whom hours worked during the week were reported and those for whom they were not reported, the medians are respectively \$12.95 and \$11.30. At first glance, the lower median in hours not reported is surprising, as in six of the nine branches of industry with medians in both columns the figure for hours not reported is larger than that for hours reported. The total is, of course, overweighted by the largest groups—shirts and women's underwear—where the wages are low.

In two branches of the sewing trades listed—men's shirts and furnishings—the median for the total reporting hours worked was below \$10 and in children's apparel it barely exceeded \$10. The median for the necktie workers was highest (\$15.60) and there was only about \$1.50 difference between this and the medians next highest, that is, in women's dresses (\$14.15) and in corsets (\$14.10).

Table 3 correlates the hours worked and the median earnings by the occupations of the women instead of the products on which they were employed.

TABLE 3.—Median of week's earnings, by hours worked and occupation

Occupation	Median of week's earnings of 7,631 women										
	Total	Hours worked								Hours not reported	
		Total reported	Less than 36	36 and less than 40	40 and less than 44	44 and less than 48	48 and less than 52	52 to 55	Over 55		
Total:											
Women	7,631	4,812	830	316	697	1,120	1,184	450	215	2,819	
Median	\$12.35	\$12.95	\$8.45	\$11.45	\$13.60	\$13.80	\$14.10	\$15.00	\$16.35	\$11.30	
Power sewing-machine operator:											
Women	4,735	2,677	451	142	435	511	831	256	51	2,058	
Median	\$13.00	\$13.90	\$9.60	\$11.60	\$14.35	\$15.05	\$14.60	\$15.95	\$17.70	\$11.80	
Other power-machine operator:											
Women	63	61	3	6	11	29	5	5	2	2	
Median	\$13.55	\$13.45	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	
Hand sewer:											
Women	1,056	818	192	67	70	204	95	99	91	238	
Median	\$12.65	\$12.60	\$8.80	\$11.10	\$12.90	\$15.35	\$12.95	\$14.30	\$16.90	\$12.80	
Cleaner:											
Women	327	196	29	3	15	38	49	31	31	131	
Median	\$7.70	\$7.95	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$7.20	
Miscellaneous hand worker:											
Women	210	183	39	25	22	56	33	3	5	27	
Median	\$11.55	\$11.50	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$10.70	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	
Examiner:											
Women	320	239	34	19	56	35	67	20	8	81	
Median	\$11.30	\$12.50	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$12.45	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$12.45	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$7.15	
Presser:											
Women	440	214	28	18	28	53	49	16	22	226	
Median	\$11.65	\$13.30	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$14.10	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$10.15	
Packer:											
Women	176	147	14	11	15	70	24	13	-----	29	
Median	\$11.65	\$11.95	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$12.40	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	-----	( <sup>1</sup> )	
Other: <sup>2</sup>											
Women	57	54	5	1	6	19	13	6	4	3	
Median	\$17.50	\$17.65	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	
Occupation not reported:											
Women	247	223	35	24	39	105	18	1	1	24	
Median	\$9.45	\$9.70	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	\$10.85	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	( <sup>1</sup> )	

<sup>1</sup> Medians not shown for less than 50 cases.

<sup>2</sup> Includes forelady, instructor, stock clerk, sample maker, etc.

Power sewing-machine operators rank first in point of numbers, constituting more than three-fifths of all the workers. Hand sewers rank next, with over a thousand women. Hand sewing includes an occasional baster but is chiefly the finishing operations, such as tailoring, embroidery, and sewing on buttons. Trimming in hat factories and slip stitching in necktie establishments are distinctive and important hand-sewing jobs. Pressers or ironers also are numerically important. In most cases they used hand irons, but occasionally on heavy garments and wool dresses they were operating power presses. The few colored women found during the survey were practically all employed in the pressing departments.

The term cleaners, as used in the garment trades, refers to the workers who clip the threads, trim uneven edges, and give the final touches after sewing is finished, preparatory to pressing and packing. Floor girls sort and match stock—they are called stock chasers in one or two plants—and make themselves generally useful in keeping the work moving. So frequently did the work of cleaners and floor girls overlap that they have been put in the same category here. The term packers covers the usual types of jobs found in the packing departments, such as pin and fold, stamp, wrap and box. The group other machine operators covers a small number of women usually running power pinking machines or small presses for eyeleting or cutting or shaping operations. The minor jobs classified as other hand work comprise turning collars and belts, ripping, stringing buckles, hand pinking, marking, cutting lace—what might well be called odd jobs.

In the last occupational group, numerically unimportant and called "other," are supervisors, foreladies, instructors, sample makers, fitters, and stock clerks.

The line of demarcation is not always clearly defined among the more unskilled jobs; inspectors, examiners, or sorters may perform some of the work done by cleaners, and cleaners may assist in minor packing operations, but in the classification for this table an effort was made to follow the grouping in practice in each plant and in case of very general workers to allocate them according to their major type of work.

Regarding 40 and less than 52 hours as the most normal and representative, the highest median here is found to be the \$15.35 for hand sewers, followed by \$15.05 for power-machine sewers, and \$14.10 for pressers, all working 44 and under 48 hours. The high ranking of these hand sewers probably is influenced by the rates paid trimmers in hat factories and slip stitchers in necktie factories as well as those employed on dresses.

It is evident from the table that the largest groups of women with long hours were sewers, either power-machine operators or hand sewers. Proportionately, the final operations of hand sewing, cleaning, and pressing show extensive overtime, many women working as much as 60 or 65 hours. Two women had worked more than 70 hours in the week recorded. And such overtime was practiced in spite of the fact that the maximum hours allowed by law are 10 daily and 55 weekly. Connecticut has a considerably lower standard than those of Massachusetts, where a 9-hour day and a 48-hour week have been established by law, and New York, which has an 8-hour day and a 48 or 49½ hour week. That higher medians do not always accompany the longer hours is shown by comparing the 44-and-under-48-hour group

with the one next higher in power-machine sewing and hand sewing. In the latter the difference in the medians in favor of those working the shorter hours is as much as \$2.40. The median of the pressers also shows a decline. Unpublished figures give a median of \$12.85 for those working 48 and under 52 hours, considerably lower than the \$14.10 for those working 44 and under 48 hours.

## AGES OF WOMEN

Almost 4,800 women reported their ages on the personal information cards distributed in the factory at the time of the inspection.<sup>5</sup> On the whole they were a very young group, more than one-half being not yet 25 and more than one-third being less than 20. Practically 1 in 5 were not yet 18, and as many as 155 (3.2 per cent) were less than 16. The women under 18 considerably outnumbered those who were 40 or more.

TABLE 4.—Age distribution, by occupation

Occupation	4,793 women who reported age							
	Total reporting		Under 16 years	16 and under 18 years	18 and under 20 years	20 and under 25 years	25 and under 40 years	40 years and over
	Number	Per cent						
Total.....	4,793	-----	155	793	708	945	1,324	868
Total reported.....	4,774	100.0	3.2	16.6	14.7	19.7	27.6	18.2
Power sewing-machine operator.....	2,929	100.0	2.0	16.2	15.8	21.6	28.6	15.7
Other power-machine operator.....	51	100.0	-----	7.8	25.5	25.5	15.7	25.5
Hand sewer.....	702	100.0	3.0	11.3	9.3	18.7	30.6	27.2
Cleaner.....	165	100.0	17.6	35.8	9.1	9.7	11.5	16.4
Miscellaneous hand worker.....	190	100.0	4.7	22.1	19.5	15.8	14.2	23.7
Examiner.....	259	100.0	7.7	21.6	12.0	14.3	19.3	25.1
Presser.....	276	100.0	1.8	13.0	13.0	14.9	40.2	17.0
Packer.....	136	100.0	8.1	27.9	25.7	16.2	14.0	8.1
Other <sup>1</sup> .....	66	100.0	-----	4.5	12.1	25.8	45.5	12.1
Occupation not reported.....	19	( <sup>2</sup> )	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

<sup>1</sup> Includes forelady, instructor, stock clerk, sample maker, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Per cent not computed; base less than 50.

The youngest group were the cleaners (a most unskilled job), more than half of whom were under 18. Among the examiners or inspectors nearly three-tenths were not yet 18. Most of the girls engaged in packing operations also were young, three-fifths being under 20 years. It is surprising to find these young girls in the more skilled jobs also; yet 100 (14.2 per cent) of the hand sewers and 533 (18.2 per cent) of the sewing-machine operators were under 18, as many as 58 of the latter being less than 16.

However, a large proportion of the sewing-machine operators (44 per cent) were at least 25, as were more than half (58 per cent) of the hand-sewing group, another skilled operation. Naturally, the majority of those in supervisory positions were in these older groups.

Irrespective of the number of hours worked during the week, wages increased consistently as the ages of the women increased up to 40 years.

<sup>5</sup> Other data obtained in this way will appear in the complete report.

Age	Number of women with age and earnings reported	Median of the week's earnings	Age	Number of women with age and earnings reported	Median of the week's earnings
Under 16 years.....	112	\$6. 15	20 and under 25 years.....	830	\$14. 55
16 and under 18 years.....	663	9. 40	25 and under 40 years.....	1, 145	14. 75
18 and under 20 years.....	613	12. 35	40 years and over.....	758	13. 65

Although, as a whole, women 25 and under 40 years of age had somewhat the highest median, in some of the industry subdivisions the median for women not yet 25 was higher than that of the older women, and in garters the highest median was for the oldest group, followed closely by the figure for the group 20 and under 25. In men's shirts the peak median (\$11.75) was that of women of 18 and under 20 years, though that for 25 and under 40 was only 5 cents less; in three other branches of the industry, namely, children's apparel, women's underwear, and neckties, the peaks were reached by the group 20 and under 25 years of age. However, women who were employed on the products paying the higher wage scale did not reach the peak until the 25-and-under-40-year group, the only exception being those in neckties, whose medians for 20 and under 25 years and 25 and under 40 years were alike.

*Minors under 16.*—It is customary for the Women's Bureau to confine its surveys to women at least 16 years of age, and in the first establishments visited in Connecticut this policy of omitting data on minors was followed. Later, however, when considerable local interest was evinced in the problems of this youngest group of employees, records were taken for them wherever available. As a consequence of this change in method, the number under 16 years in the tables reporting age probably gives an incomplete picture of the employment of minors in the plants visited.

Altogether 155 girls reported their ages as under 16 years. More than nine-tenths of these were in factories making women's dresses and underwear, children's apparel, and men's shirts and furnishings. In hat and necktie factories none under 16 years of age were reported. Approximately one-third of these girls were in New Haven establishments, one-fourth were in Bridgeport or Milford, and one-fifth were in Stamford, the rest being scattered in various other localities.

Records of the State board of education showed that more work certificates were issued to children 14 and 15 years of age in the New Haven area than in any other district in the State. In 1931, 354 such permits were issued for factory work in New Haven, exclusive of messenger and clerical jobs in manufacturing establishments. In spite of the increasing number of adults out of work in 1931, the number of certificates issued was almost as large as in 1930. It was officially stated that New Haven had the heaviest certification of girls in the State, due to their employment in the local shirt factories. Official inspection records emphasized this statement, for almost one-fifth of the several hundred employees in some of the leading shirt factories in New Haven had been found in recent inspections to be not yet 16 years of age.

## MIGRATION OF INDUSTRY

Everywhere there was considerable interest expressed in the movement of factories from other districts into Connecticut. Quoting from a pamphlet issued by the Connecticut Chamber of Commerce in 1929 on the migration of industry:<sup>6</sup> "The most frequently occurring reason for plant location in this region was advantageous labor conditions. Available factory building was second in rank and was the most important factor affecting relocation to this area. Practically 86 per cent of the movement to this region was from the Middle Atlantic States. The principal trend was from New York State to Connecticut." However, this relocation of factories had about ceased during the depression of 1931, according to officials of the New Haven Chamber of Commerce, who said migration was practically at a standstill.

In this connection it was stated by one manager that the labor cost in the Connecticut city in which he was operating was 20 per cent below the cost in New York City. Even allowing for the expense of shipping and of premises and overhead, the advantage still was 10 or 12 per cent.

Few of the firms supplying records for this survey were recent arrivals in Connecticut, and a tabulation has been made of three that had located in the State in 1931. These are concerns too small for the drawing of general conclusions, and they are not typical of the average plant visited during the survey, but they are described here as illustrating a tendency in so-called "runaway shops" to exploit the very young to the disadvantage of the mature woman wage earner dependent for a living on the same type of job. In these factories, only 2 of the 105 employees reporting age were as much as 20 years old; one-sixth were not yet 16 and the majority were 16 and under 18, altogether a very youthful group of wage earners, to say the least. More than three-fourths of the 102 for whom the hours worked were reported had worked at least 40 hours, half had worked as long as 50 hours. The majority were operating power-sewing machines, by no means a child's job. The median of the week's earnings fell between \$4 and \$5 for the total group for whom hours worked were reported, and for those who had worked more than 48 hours it fell between \$5 and \$6, shockingly low wages even when allowance is made for the youth and inexperience of the workers.

The manager of one of these firms was somewhat apologetic for his low wage scale and stated that, when business warranted, it was his purpose to work up to a \$10 to \$12 wage for girls.

## CONTRACT SHOPS

Half of the factories included in this survey were described as contract shops, that is, the materials were not owned by the manager of the plant in which they were being made into garments. Almost invariably the materials were cut by the owner in New York and sent to the Connecticut contractor for making up, the latter shipping back the finished articles and having no responsibility for their sale.

Most of the contract shops were operating on a hand-to-mouth scale. Frequently one of the partners spent his time hustling for

<sup>6</sup> Connecticut Chamber of Commerce. The Migration of Industry. An address by William J. Barrett delivered at thirtieth annual meeting at Hartford, May 23, 1929.

contracts among the New York firms while the other partner pushed production in the factory. One day they might be making up one style, and the next day a style quite different. Many dress factories were making daily shipments to meet the exacting demands of New York jobbers. The contracts, especially in dresses, were limited in number and invariably were rush orders. One week there might be so many orders that the entire plant worked overtime, and the next week there might be no orders and the shop would be practically closed.

The firms were evenly divided as to contract shops and regular factories. No contract shops were making corsets, neckties, or hats, but, in contrast to these, 26 of the 30 dress factories were contract shops, as were a majority of the tailoring and shirt establishments. There were about 1,000 more women employed in regular factories than in contract shops. Hours worked during the week were reported in more cases of regular factories than of contract shops, though in both types of plants the hours of a large proportion of the workers were not obtained. That the trend of wages was higher in regular factories than in contract shops is indicated by the following:

Type of plant	Number of firms	Worked less than 40 hours		Worked 40 hours or more		Hours not reported	
		Number of women	Median earnings	Number of women	Median earnings	Number of women	Median earnings
All firms.....	1 106	1, 146	\$9. 65	3, 666	\$14. 05	2, 819	\$11. 30
Regular factory.....	53	870	10. 85	2, 172	14. 65	1, 307	10. 80
Contract shop.....	1 53	276	6. 00	1, 494	12. 90	1, 512	11. 70

<sup>1</sup> 1 establishment did not report hours.

Only for the women whose hours worked were not reported were the median earnings in contract shops comparable with those in regular factories. Where the hours were less than 40, the median for regular factories was nearly \$5 higher than that for contract shops, and where the hours were as much as 40, the difference was \$1.75.

TABLE 5.—Median of week's earnings of women who worked 40 hours and longer in contract shops and in regular factories, by branch of industry

Branch of industry	Total			Contract shops			Regular factories		
	Number of establishments	Number of women	Median earnings	Number of establishments	Number of women	Median earnings	Number of establishments	Number of women	Median earnings
Total.....	1 105	3, 666	\$14. 05	2 52	1, 494	\$12. 90	3 53	2, 172	\$14. 65
Tailored garments.....	12	286	13. 75	8	194	12. 00	4	92	15. 70
Children's apparel.....	12	339	10. 85	5	237	10. 65	7	102	11. 10
Women's dresses.....	30	916	15. 60	26	835	15. 55	4	81	16. 15
Women's underwear.....	9	386	12. 00	2	25	( <sup>4</sup> )	7	361	12. 05
Corsets.....	6	795	15. 25	—	—	—	6	795	15. 25
Garters.....	2 4	156	14. 15	( <sup>2</sup> )	—	—	4	156	14. 15
Men's shirts.....	8	196	10. 20	6	194	10. 15	2	2	( <sup>4</sup> )
Neckties and cravats.....	5	307	16. 80	—	—	—	5	307	16. 80
Hats.....	6	139	19. 65	—	—	—	6	139	19. 65
Men's furnishings.....	14	146	8. 65	5	9	( <sup>4</sup> )	9	137	8. 80

<sup>1</sup> Details exceed total, as 1 firm had both a hat and a necktie department. For 1 contract shop making garters, hours were not reported.

<sup>2</sup> Excludes 1 firm, hours not reported.

<sup>3</sup> Details exceed total, as 1 firm had both a hat and a necktie department.

<sup>4</sup> Medians not shown for less than 50 cases.

An analysis of Table 5, showing the earnings of women who worked as much as 40 hours in the various branches of the sewing trades, makes it clear that in the three branches in which comparisons are possible the medians in the regular factories are higher than those in the contract shops. Tailoring paid very much better in the regular factories than in the shops, but in children's apparel and women's dresses the advantage was not great. While 3 of the 4 medians computed for contract shops were far below \$15, 5 of the 9 computed for regular factories were between \$15 and \$20. Here, as in earlier tables, medians were highest in hat and necktie factories and lowest in men's furnishings, shirts, children's apparel, and women's underwear.

Not only was the general trend of wages better in the regular factories than in the contract shops, but there was a better standard of hours in the regular factories. More than two-thirds of the women who worked 52 hours or longer were employed in making tailored garments and women's dresses, where shops predominated. Furthermore, of the 450 women who worked from 52 to 55 hours during the week, 287, or 63.8 per cent, were employed in contract shops; and of the 215 who worked more than 55 hours, practically three-fourths (74.4 per cent) were in such shops.

#### METHOD OF PAYMENT

In all branches of the industry but dresses and garters the majority of the employees, varying from 60 to 95 per cent, were paid on a piecework basis, and even in garters the timework and piecework systems were in vogue in practically a 50-50 ratio.

The average dress shop was a small affair, usually occupying an obscure loft in a business block. Over three-fifths of the women employed in these shops were paid on a time-rate basis, largely by the hour. In no other branch of the industry was there anything like so high a percentage of time workers. The contractors said it was almost necessary to pay on a time basis, as styles changed so often that it would take all one person's time to adjust rates. The managers themselves were too busy rushing the work through to be bothered with piece rates, and they felt that it would be a waste of time and money to attempt to keep such rates adjusted fairly. On the whole, they thought hourly rates satisfactory; the girls were satisfied and the quality of the work was better than where the piecework method of payment was used.

In greatest contrast to the prevalence of time rates in the dress shops was the piece-rate system in shirt factories, where the pay of 95 per cent of the women depended solely on their output. In the latter case the greater standardization of the product made it possible to establish a scale of prices for the various operations and qualities that could be maintained for months at a time. Furthermore, in the shirt factories, as in some other clothing plants, each operator performed only one operation; one girl did nothing but close the side seams, another set in sleeves, and so on until the garment was completed.

The division of labor just described, called "section work," was not the practice throughout the women's dress factories. In some of these it was customary for many of the most skilled operators to stitch the entire dress. Copying the pattern dress, these women made the complete garment, from the first closing seam to the finishing stitching. During the fall a 2-piece woolen dress, jacket and skirt, was a common

style in several of the shops, and an experienced operator was reported to have stitched up seven such garments a day. The rate for stitching was 40 to 45 cents a dress. Such garments were wholesaling at \$6.75 apiece and the retail price was frequently \$10.75. Exclusive of cutting, the labor cost of making this style garment was from 54 to 59 cents: 40 to 45 cents—depending on style—for stitching, 8 cents for finishing, and 6 cents for pressing.

In a shop making cheap dresses for children—a model that retailed at about a dollar—the rate for sewing was just over 11 cents and that for pressing was less than 2 cents.

#### NATIVITY OF DRESS-SHOP WORKERS

Since almost half of the more than 600 women in the dress shops who reported nativity were born in the old country, the great majority in Italy, tabulations have been made contrasting the jobs, the earnings, and the ages of the native American with the foreign-born women. The foreign born were for the most part carrying the double burden of home making and wage earning, for almost four-fifths were married or widowed. In contrast to these were the native American employees, only about one-fourth of whom were married or widowed. But this difference is what might be expected when their ages are taken into consideration; the Americans were a much younger group, almost half of them not yet 20, whereas over three-fourths of the foreign women were 25 or more and almost a fourth were as much as 40.

Only two foreign-born women were engaged in such unskilled jobs as cleaners and floor girls in the dress shops. For the most part they were operating power-sewing machines or were sewing by hand. Machine operating was the job of women mainly in the prime of life, 20 and under 40 years old. And above 40 years the proportion of hand sewers was greater than that of machine operators.

A different situation prevailed among the American hand sewers. About two-thirds of them were less than 20 years old, while only one-eighth of the foreign-born hand sewers were so young. On the whole, in both hand and machine jobs the foreign women were older than the American women.

Earnings differed decidedly with the two types of job. The median of the foreign-born machine operators for the week was \$17.25, and this was about \$4 higher than the median of the hand sewers. The much younger native women, whether machine or hand sewers, averaged less than the foreign women. For machine operating their median was more than a dollar below that of the foreign born, and in hand sewing the difference was \$3.

