

**EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN
IN THE EARLY POSTWAR PERIOD
With Background of Prewar and War Data**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,
WOMEN'S BUREAU,
Washington, October 8, 1946.

SIR: I have the honor to present a report showing the changes in women's employment that occurred in the first few months after the close of the war and outlining the chief employment problems that face women in the postwar period. Following a more comprehensive study of changes in women's employment during the war, this report was written by Mary Elizabeth Pidgeon, Chief of the Economic Studies Section of the Women's Bureau Research Division. It was prepared originally in response to a request from the International Labor Office, Section on Women's Work and the Protection of Young People. Current demands for the information contained are so heavy that it is thought useful to make the study available for general distribution.

Respectfully submitted.

FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Director.*

HON. L. B. SCHWELLENBACH,
Secretary of Labor.

CONTENTS

	Page
Letter of Transmittal.....	ii
Numbers of Women Employed—Prewar, War, and Postwar Periods.....	1
Prewar Employment.....	1
Wartime Increases in Employment.....	1
Postwar Employment.....	2
Occupational and Industrial Distribution of Women—Prewar, War, and Postwar Periods.....	3
Wartime Changes in Occupational Distribution.....	3
Wartime Changes in Industrial Distribution.....	4
Wartime Changes in Proportions Women Constituted of Those Employed in Various Industry Groups.....	5
Postwar Occupational and Industrial Distribution.....	5
Age of Women Workers—Prewar, War, and Postwar Periods.....	6
Aging of Female Population During War Period.....	6
Usual Age-Group Composition of Female Labor Force.....	6
Wartime Changes in Age-Group Composition of Female Labor Force.....	7
Proportions of All Women of Various Age Groups Who Are in the Labor Force.....	7
Postwar Age Distribution.....	8
Marital Status of Women Workers—Prewar, War, and Postwar Periods.....	10
Changes in Marital Status in the Population.....	10
Prewar Marital Status of Female Labor Force.....	10
Wartime Marital Status of Female Labor Force.....	10
Postwar Marital Status of Female Labor Force.....	10
Trends in Redistribution of Women War Workers.....	11
Proportions Women Constituted of Total Postwar Placements and of Prewar Labor Force.....	11
Distribution of Women in Postwar Placements Compared to Their Distribution in the Prewar and Wartime Labor Force.....	12
Difficulties in Redistribution of Women War Workers.....	13
Supplement—Dates for Which Information is Available.....	14

TABLES

1. Changes in employment of women—Prewar, war, and postwar periods.....	2
2. Percent distribution of women 14 years and over in the population, by labor force status—Prewar, war, and postwar periods.....	3
3. Occupational distribution of employed women, before and during the war.....	4
4. Industrial distribution of employed women before and during the war.....	4
5. Percent women in labor force were of women 14 years and over in the population, by age group.....	8
6. Age distribution of women 14 years and over in the population and in the civilian labor force in March of 1940, 1944, and 1945.....	9
7. Marital status of women workers, 1940 and 1944.....	11
8. Women in the nonagricultural labor force in 1940, and placements for selected months in 1944 and 1945.....	12

WOMEN WORKERS—WAR AND POSTWAR

Women in the Civilian Labor Force.

	<i>Millions of women</i>		<i>Millions of women</i>
War increase.....	6	Early postwar decline.....	4
March 1940 (old series).....	13	July 1945 (new series).....	20
War peak (old series).....	19	January 1946 (new series).....	16

War Changes in Industrial Distribution of Women.

Proportions in manufacturing increased greatly.
Proportions in service industries declined considerably.

Postwar Changes in Employment of Women.

Immediately after the war (June to September 1945)—
1 in 4 of the women in factories lost jobs.
Unemployment was small; many women left labor force.

Ages of Women in Population and Labor Force.

Of the increase in women workers during the war (1940-45)—
One-third were 45 years old or more.
Three-fifths were 35 years old or more.

The postwar population includes 2 million more women of 45 and older than in 1940. Those over 35 are likely to be more numerous in the postwar than the prewar period.

Marital Status of Women in Population and Labor Force.

Of the increase in women workers during the war (1940-44)—
Over 1 million were single, widowed, or divorced.
Nearly 3 million were married.

The postwar population includes 3¼ millions more married women than in 1940. They are likely to be more numerous in the postwar than the prewar period.

Types of Jobs Open to Women in Early Postwar Period.

Fewer are in manufacturing than in wartime.
Large proportion are in clerical, sales, service.

Many of the Jobs Available to Women—

Do not fully use their best wartime skills.
Pay lower rates than their wartime jobs.

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY POSTWAR PERIOD

NUMBERS OF WOMEN EMPLOYED—PREWAR, WAR, AND POSTWAR PERIODS

In considering the employment of women after the war, it is well to present at the outset the prewar employment situation and the changes brought about by the war, as background to which the postwar conditions can be related. The Bureau of the Census *Monthly Reports on the Labor Force* form the basis for a knowledge of the changes in the numbers of women employed in late prewar years as well as during and since the war.¹

PREWAR EMPLOYMENT

In 1940 the civilian labor force included some 13 million women, who constituted practically a fourth of all persons in the labor force. Of all women in the population at that time, slightly over a fourth were in the labor force, and of these 13 percent were unemployed; practically three-fourths were not in the labor force. (See tables 1 and 2.)

WARTIME INCREASES IN EMPLOYMENT

From 1940 to the peak of women's war employment in July 1944, the number of women in the labor force had increased by more than 6 million, or by nearly half the 1940 number. This of course reflects the summer employment of women and schoolgirls in agriculture and other highly seasonal work as well as in war factories. However, more than nine-tenths of these additional women in the labor force were in nonagricultural employment.

By July of the next year, just before the close of the war, there had been a decline in the employment of women, though relatively little increase in unemployment. Some women had left the labor force, but there was not an extremely marked difference between July 1944 and July 1945. Women constituted more than a third of the total civilian labor force both in July 1944 and later (March 1945). In July 1945 they were 35 percent of the civilian workers.

¹ Figures used in this analysis are from Bureau of the Census, *Monthly Reports on the Labor Force*. (For March 1940, these do not differ very markedly from figures on employment of women in the decennial census taken that month, but use of the monthly series figures makes a more exact comparison possible.) Figures in these *Monthly Reports* were revised in July 1945 and a new series issued since that time. For July 1945 two sets of figures are available—old series, comparable with previous dates, and new series, comparable with subsequent dates. Since no single series of figures runs throughout the entire period, exact figures for comparing postwar with prewar months are not available.—Dates for which various types of information are available are listed in the Supplement, p. 14.

POSTWAR EMPLOYMENT

From March 1945 to the end of the year, during the closing months of the war as well as in the postwar period, the participation of women in nonagricultural employment was continually decreasing, as shown by the Census *Monthly Reports*. In January 1946 the number of women in the labor force had declined by nearly 4 million from that in the closing period of the war, July 1945. This is a number nearly one-fifth as great as the entire July 1945 female labor force. Although representing in part a decline from the seasonal peak in agriculture, over half of the reduction occurred in nonagricultural employment. Of the decline of more than 2 million women in nonagricultural pursuits, just over half came at the close of and immediately after the war, July to September 1945.

The increased unemployment among women was not nearly so great as the employment decline. In January 1946 something over half a million women were unemployed, only 60,000 more than in the previous July. This was a number very much less than the prewar unemployment of women, which amounted to about 1¼ million in March 1940.

After the war, many women left the labor force. However, the total number of women of working age in the population was larger in 1946 than in 1940. Although numbers of women outside the labor

Table 1.—Changes in Employment of Women—Prewar, War, and Postwar Periods

[Numbers shown in thousands]

	Women who were—				
	In civilian labor force	Employed		Unem- ployed	Not in labor force
		Total	Nonagri- cultural		
Old series					
March 1940.....	13, 010	11, 240	10, 730	1, 770	37, 120
July 1944.....	19, 110	18, 590	16, 440	520	33, 340
Change in number.....	+6, 100	+7, 350	+5, 710	-1, 250	-3, 780
Percent change.....	+46.9	+65.4	+53.2	-70.6	-10.2
July 1944.....	19, 110	18, 590	16, 440	520	33, 340
July 1945.....	18, 810	18, 280	16, 170	530	34, 190
Change in number.....	-300	-310	-270	+10	+850
Percent change.....	-1.6	-1.7	-1.6	+1.9	+2.5
New series					
July 1945.....	20, 080	19, 610	16, 900	470	32, 920
January 1946.....	16, 160	15, 630	14, 750	530	37, 320
Change in number.....	-3, 920	-3, 980	-2, 150	+60	+4, 400
Percent change.....	-19.5	-20.3	-12.7	+12.8	+13.4

Source: Bureau of the Census, Monthly Reports on the Labor Force. Changes computed in Women's Bureau. Figures were revised as of July 1945, hence those subsequent to that date cannot be compared with those of 1940 or those of any war year.

force have increased somewhat, larger proportions of the female population may remain a part of the labor force in the postwar period than before the war. In January 1946 over 30 percent of the adult women of the country could be accounted workers.

Table 2.—Percent Distribution of Women 14 Years and Over in the Population, by Labor Force Status—Prewar, War, and Postwar Periods

[Numbers of women shown in thousands]

Status	March 1940	March 1944	March 1945	July 1945	July 1945 ¹	January 1945 ¹
Women in population:						
Number.....	50,130	52,320	52,830	53,000	53,270	53,590
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Women in civilian labor force.....	26.0	32.3	34.0	35.5	37.7	30.2
Employed.....	22.4	31.5	33.3	34.5	36.8	29.2
Unemployed.....	3.5	.8	.6	1.0	.9	1.0
Not in labor force.....	74.0	67.7	66.0	64.5	61.8	69.6
Percent women were of all persons in civilian labor force.....	24.5	32.9	34.7	35.0	36.4	30.1

¹ New series.

² Civilian population only. Distribution in July 1945 (old series) differs but little from July 1944, when 36.4 percent of the women were in the labor force.

³ Total exceeds details, as women in the armed forces, constituting one-half of 1 percent or less, are not shown separately.

⁴ Includes women on public emergency projects.

Source: Bureau of the Census, Monthly Report on the Labor Force. Note that figures from the new series, begun in July 1945, cannot be compared with those of earlier months.

OCCUPATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN—PREWAR, WAR, AND POSTWAR PERIODS

The war period saw enormous changes in the occupational and industrial distribution of women workers.

WARTIME CHANGES IN OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

As would be expected, the group that expanded most markedly was that of craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and laborers (other than farm), whose numbers increased nearly 119 percent from March 1940 (the Census date) to March 1944. A close second was the clerical group, which increased nearly 85 percent in the same period. These two groups in 1944 employed considerably larger proportions of the total female labor force than in 1940.

The one big decline occurred in domestic service, which in 1944 had 20 percent fewer workers than in 1940, and which employed less than 10 percent of all women workers in 1944 as compared to almost double that proportion in 1940.

The number of women in the professions was somewhat greater in 1944 than in 1940, but owing to the much greater increases in the numbers of manufacturing and clerical employees, the proportion of all women workers who were in the professions was appreciably smaller in 1944 than in 1940. The accompanying table 3 shows the differences in the occupational distribution of women workers in 1940 and 1944.

Table 3.—Occupational Distribution of Employed Women, Before and During the War

Occupation group	Employed women in March 1944 (in thousands)	Percent change since 1940 ¹	Percent distribution in March—	
			1940	1944
All occupations.....	\$ 16,480	+48.0	\$ 100.0	\$ 100.0
Professional and semiprofessional.....	1,490	+1.2	13.2	9.0
Proprietors, managers, and officials.....	650	+53.3	3.8	3.9
Clerical and kindred.....	4,380	+84.5	21.8	26.6
Sales.....	1,240	+68.4	7.0	7.5
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and laborers except farm.....	4,920	+118.7	20.2	20.9
Domestic service.....	1,570	-20.4	17.7	9.5
Other services.....	1,650	+20.9	11.3	10.0
Farm workers.....	560	-18.0	4.2	3.4

¹ Takes no account of the women who in 1940 were unemployed or on emergency work and who were a part of the labor force. Their inclusion would have reduced the increase.

² Total exceeds details, since those in occupations not classifiable are not shown separately.

Source: Women's Bureau, Changes in Women's Employment During the War, Special Bull. 20, p. 9.

WARTIME CHANGES IN INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION

Among the various groups of industries, manufacturing showed the greatest expansion, an increase by 1944 of over 140 percent in employment of women. This was most marked in the direct war industries, whose additions of women to the labor force amounted to some 460 percent of the 1940 numbers. The one decline occurred in the domestic and other service group, which had dropped by nearly 10 percent. In the war period (1944 or 1945) as compared to 1940, manufacturing workers were a very much larger proportion of the total number of women in the labor force. The accompanying table 4 shows the differences in the industrial distribution of women workers in 1940, 1944, and 1945 (the later figures giving less detailed classification than the earlier).

Table 4.—Industrial Distribution of Employed Women Before and During the War

Industry group	Employed women in March 1944 (in thousands)	Percent change since 1940 ¹	Percent distribution in March—		
			1940	1944	1945
All industries.....	\$ 16,480	+48.0	\$ 100.0	\$ 100.0	100.0
Agriculture.....	680	+19.4	4.4	3.5	6.4
Manufacturing.....	5,690	+140.7	20.8	33.9	31.0
Group I (direct war industries).....	2,690	+482.7	4.3	15.3	14.9
Group II (essential consumer industries).....	2,160	+62.6	12.0	13.1	16.1
Group III (all other manufacturing).....	730	+42.6	4.6	4.4	16.1
Trade, wholesale and retail.....	3,130	+57.2	18.2	19.4	20.9
Transportation, communication, public utilities.....	680	+98.4	3.1	4.2	4.8
Finance, business, repair, professional.....	2,680	+12.6	21.3	16.2	41.8
Domestic, personal, recreation services.....	2,660	-9.9	26.5	16.1	16.1
Other (mining, construction, government, forestry, fishing).....	1,080	+180.0	3.5	6.6	-----

¹ Takes no account of the women who in 1940 were unemployed or on emergency work and who were a part of the labor force. Their inclusion would have reduced the increase.

² Total exceeds details, since those in industries not classifiable are not shown separately.

Source: For March 1940 and March 1944, and percent change, Women's Bureau, Special Bull. 20, op. cit., p. 15; for March 1945, Bureau of the Census, Series P-9 No. 8, Feb. 13, 1946.

WARTIME CHANGES IN PROPORTIONS WOMEN CONSTITUTED OF THOSE EMPLOYED IN VARIOUS INDUSTRY GROUPS

The figures reported by the Census for March 1945 enable us to compare with 1940 the proportions women constituted of all workers in certain of the chief industrial groups. Among all employed persons, the proportion of women had increased from 25 percent to 35 percent, and every major industrial group shared to some extent in this increase. Greatly increased proportions were found in government employment, in trade, and in direct war industries.

In March 1945 women were 45 percent of the workers in trade and nearly 40 percent of those in government; they were about 33 percent of the manufacturing employees, but at that time they constituted larger proportions in other manufacturing than in the direct war industries. The proportions were as follows:²

Industry group	Percent women constituted of total workers in March--	
	1940	1945
All industries.....	24.7	34.6
Agriculture.....	5.8	15.4
Manufacturing.....	22.0	32.7
Metal, rubber, chemicals.....	11.5	27.5
Other.....	24.7	39.7
Trade.....	26.9	45.1
Government.....	19.4	35.4
All other.....	35.2	39.4

POSTWAR OCCUPATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION

No complete figures exist as yet on the occupational or industrial distribution of women workers in any period since the war. It may be considered fairly certain that among women workers somewhat smaller proportions in the postwar than during the war period are in manufacturing. Contributing to this conclusion are the following:

1. Reports on heavy lay-offs in direct war manufacturing immediately following the end of the war which were considerably heavier for women than for men.—By September 1945 it was reported that 1 out of every 4 women employed in factories in June had been dropped, and all major manufacturing groups had smaller proportions of women in September than in June (except for a very slight increase in the proportion of women in food industries). By December, more than 1 million women had lost factory jobs, more than half of them immediately after the war.
2. The trend in placements of women—to be discussed later in this report.
3. Notes from many localities indicating types of employment needing workers which emphasize heavy demands for service and for clerical employees—also to be discussed more fully later.

² Source: Bureau of the Census data as follows: For March 1940, 16th Census of the United States, 1940, Population, Vol. III, Part I, United States Summary, Table 74; for March 1945, Series P-8 No. 8, Feb. 13 1946.

While the facts just noted indicate a smaller proportion of women in manufacturing since the war than at the war peak, nevertheless, judging from reports of women war workers in various areas on their postwar work intentions and from announced plans for expansion in many industries, somewhat larger proportions of all women workers are likely to be in manufacturing than in 1940.

The experience after the last war was that representative war manufacturing plants, though employing fewer women after the war than at the war peak, nevertheless employed both larger numbers and larger proportions of women than in the prewar period.

AGE OF WOMEN WORKERS—PREWAR, WAR, AND POSTWAR PERIODS

Figures to show the changes that occurred from the prewar to the late war period in the proportion of women in our population (14 years of age and older) who were in the labor force—and the proportions of each age group who were in the labor force—are available for March 1940 (the date of the last Census), March 1944, and March 1945, as indicated in table 5.

AGING OF FEMALE POPULATION DURING WAR PERIOD

During the war the entire female population 14 years of age and over increased from 50½ million in March 1940 to more than 52¼ million in March 1945, the latest date at which figures for some age groups in the population are available. Of the whole increase, nearly three-fourths occurred in the age group of women 45 years of age or over, and in 1945 the population contained over 1½ million more of these older women than before the war (in 1940). At the same time there was a decline of half a million in the number of girls in the "14 but under 20" group.³

Somewhat more detailed age figures available for March 1944 indicate that age 35 is the significant point above which the feminine population has increased most markedly. In 1944 this country had 700,000 more women in the age group "35 but under 45" than in 1940; it had 2 million more women of 35 and over than in 1940, and these constituted 54.5 percent of the female population (14 and over) as compared to only 52.3 percent in 1940. There were much slighter increases among those aged 20 to 34 (only about 160,000), and the number of girls of 14 to 19 had declined by about 393,000.

The median age for all women 14 and over in 1940 was 36.3 years (i. e., one-half were younger, one-half older); in 1944 it was 37.4 years.

USUAL AGE-GROUP COMPOSITION OF FEMALE LABOR FORCE

Normally, a larger proportion of the women aged 20 to 24 than of those in any other group are in the labor force. Of these ages are many young women out of school and either unmarried or continuing work after marriage. Taking each successive 10-year age group of

³ Since this Report was prepared, data for 1946 have become available on age distributions in the population (though not on labor force status). They show in general a continuation of wartime age-population trends. The 1946 population had 53¼ million women, an increase from 1940 of nearly 3 million. More than 2 million of these additional women were 45 or older. Women 35 and older constituted 55 percent of the 1946 woman population 14 and over, as compared to 52.4 percent in 1940. There also was a further decrease in number of girls 14 and under 20. See Bureau of the Census release, Population, Series P-9 No. 10, Oct. 14, 1946.

those 25 and older, the proportion of women at work normally shows a diminution from the preceding younger group. Generally speaking, the greatest load of household management and the bearing, care, and rearing of children falls on women of 25 to 34 (to a lessening extent, on women beyond these years). In this group the proportion of women who are employed usually has been smaller than among women 20 to 24, though still larger than in any other age group. As ages advance to 35 and beyond, smaller and smaller proportions of the female population ordinarily become gainful workers, but as will be more fully stated, it was these somewhat older women who made up the largest proportion of the wartime increase in the female labor force (almost 60 percent).

WARTIME CHANGES IN AGE-GROUP COMPOSITION OF FEMALE LABOR FORCE

The numbers of girls and women (14 and over) in the labor force had increased during the war in every age group. The most marked proportional increases were in the numbers of those who were 35 or more, and of those who were under 20. Of the 5 million additional girl and woman workers in March 1945 above the March 1940 number, 3 million were 35 or over, and of these latter more than 40 percent were 35 to 44; about 1½ million were 20 to 34; and somewhat under a million were in the 6-year group of those less than 20 years of age.

PROPORTIONS OF ALL WOMEN OF VARIOUS AGE GROUPS WHO ARE IN THE LABOR FORCE

The big changes in the proportion of the female population who were at work came in the younger group, 14 to 19, and in the group 35 to 44. The least change occurred among those 25 to 34, who, as has been noted, carry much of the responsibility for family care, and who already were in the labor force in large proportions.

In the war period as in normal times, larger proportions of the female population were at work among those 20 to 24 than of any other age group, even though increases in the proportions who went to work in that period were greater in some other age groups. By 1945, 54 percent of the women 20 to 24 were in the labor force. Smallest proportions are at work in the female population of 45 and over, but during the war the proportion of this group that came into the labor force advanced from 16 percent to nearly 24 percent of the female population of these ages.

One of the greatest changes, and perhaps the one most significant for the future, came among the women 35 to 44; by 1945, 38 percent of them were in the labor force as compared to only 27 percent in 1940. These are the women who have been developing new skills during the war, and who will be most likely to wish to continue at work, since to a considerable extent they are beyond the ages carrying the heaviest load of household care. There were 1½ million more of them in the 1945 than in the 1940 labor force.

Enormous increases also took place among the girls 14 to 19. By 1945 a third of them were at work, compared to only a fifth in 1940. Since these girls may be expected to continue in school more generally in normal times than in the war period, the problem of their job placement will differ greatly in character from that of women 35 to

44 and even older who expect to remain in the labor force. The summary that follows shows the proportions of each age group of the female population who were in the civilian labor force in prewar and war years.

Table 5.—Percent Women in Labor Force Were of Women 14 Years and Over in the Population, by Age Group

Date (March in each year)	All ages 14 and over	14-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45 and over
1940.....	25.4	19.8	45.1	32.9	26.9	16.1
1944.....	32.3	31.7	53.3	35.7	36.8	21.3
1945.....	34.0	33.1	53.5	37.6	38.1	23.8

Source: Table 6 and unpublished data.

POSTWAR AGE DISTRIBUTION

It still is too early to give a conclusive report on the age distribution of the women in the postwar labor force. However, there are strong indications that women in the older groups will make up a notably larger proportion of the postwar than of the prewar labor force. Factors indicating this already have been mentioned. One of these is the aging of the adult female population. Another is the fact that in the war period very much larger proportions than formerly of women 35 to 45 were in the labor force and developing new skills. Many of these undoubtedly plan to continue work. In Women's Bureau studies in war-congested areas 81 percent of all women workers 45 and over indicated their intention to continue in the labor force, as compared to only 70-75 percent of those in the age groups 20 to 44 years. At the same time, the group 65 and over is likely to retire, and there was some decline in the numbers of women of these ages after VE-day.

Trends in the labor force over past decades show an increase in the proportion women workers 45 and over constitute of the entire female labor force. Based solely on such trends, regardless of any possible effects of the war, the women 45 and over are expected to constitute 24.2 percent of the labor force in 1950⁴ as compared to 21.7 percent in 1940; this is less than the war proportion of 25.3 percent in March 1945. (See table 6.) Some lessening may be accounted for by retirement of those 65 and over. Put in numbers, this would mean some 1,120,000 more women of 45 and over in the labor force in 1950 than in 1940. A similar addition of 1,355,000 would occur among the 35-44 group between 1940 and 1950. Altogether, on the basis of normal trends regardless of the war, there would be some 2½ million more women of 35 and over in the 1950 than in the 1940 labor force.

It is all too probable that women above 45 or even 35 may often, as formerly, experience difficulty in obtaining jobs. In an investigation of more than 1,000 job openings for women in Connecticut, early in 1946, the Women's Bureau found that the maximum hiring age for nearly 60 percent of the clerical jobs was 35 years or less, for approxi-

⁴ Source: Bureau of the Census, Population, Special Report, Series P-44, No. 12, July 12, 1944.

mately 55 percent of the factory jobs, 40 years or under. If this is fairly typical, openings in service occupations would be the chief ones available for many women beyond these ages. This situation also may be intensified by the increase in the numbers of women of 35 and older who are in competition for jobs.

Older women who belong to occupational groups not covered by unemployment compensation may be without means of support if they cannot obtain paid work. When under 65, they are considered too old for jobs but not old enough to be eligible for old-age insurance benefits, even if they have been previously engaged in work included under such insurance. Moreover, public assistance or relief given older unemployed persons able and willing to work is small.

There is a very pronounced tendency to consider older women seeking work unemployable, whereas some adjustment in conditions of work and types of jobs best suited to their performance may assure the double advantage of saving valuable skills and at the same time enabling them to make a living.

Table 6.—Age Distribution of Women 14 Years and Over in the Population and in the Civilian Labor Force in March of 1940, 1944, and 1945

	Total	14-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55 and over
Numbers of women in population (in thousands)							
1940.....	50,549	7,341	5,895	10,818	9,168	7,550	9,777
1944.....	52,320	6,948	5,975	10,899	9,882	8,041	10,575
1945.....	52,830	6,830	5,960	21,040		19,000	
Change 1940-45:							
Number.....	+2,281	-511	+65	+1,054		+1,673	
Percent.....	+4.5	-7.0	+1.1	+5.3		+9.7	
Numbers of women in labor force (in thousands)							
1940.....	12,845	1,377	2,659	3,561	2,465	1,666	1,117
1944.....	16,885	2,205	3,182	3,887	3,637	2,478	1,496
1945.....	17,040	2,260	3,190	4,160	3,800	4,530	
Change 1940-45:							
Number.....	+5,095	+833	+531	+599	+1,335	+1,747	
Percent.....	+39.7	+64.1	+20.0	+16.8	+54.2	+62.8	
Percent distribution of increase.....	100.0	17.3	10.4	11.8	26.2	34.3	
Percent distribution							
Population:							
1940.....	100.0	14.5	11.7	21.4	18.1	14.9	19.3
1944.....	100.0	13.3	11.4	20.8	18.9	15.4	20.2
1945.....	100.0	12.9	11.3	39.8		36.0	
Civilian labor force:							
1940.....	100.0	10.7	20.7	27.7	19.2	13.0	8.7
1944.....	100.0	13.1	18.8	23.0	21.5	14.7	8.9
1945.....	100.0	12.6	17.8	23.2	21.2	25.3	

Source: Bureau of the Census data as follows: 16th Census of the United States, 1940, Population, Vol. IV, Part I, United States Summary, Table XIV; Monthly Report on Labor Force, March 1944, and supplementary unpublished material; The Labor Force Bulletin, July 1945, Table 3; Series P-S No. 6, Oct. 29, 1945. Since this Report was prepared, data have become available on ages of women in the population in 1946. See footnote 3, p. 6 for reference.

MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN WORKERS—PREWAR, WAR, AND POSTWAR PERIODS

An understanding of the changes in employment of women according to their marital status requires some initial consideration of the changes in marital status in the population.

Married women always greatly exceed single women in the population, but normally very much larger proportions of the single than of the married are in gainful work.

CHANGES IN MARITAL STATUS IN THE POPULATION

The war period was a time of great acceleration in the marriage rate. In 1944 the female population included nearly 2½ million more married women but 830,000 fewer single women than in 1940. Single women made up nearly 28 percent of the female population in 1940, but only about 25 percent in 1944.⁵

PREWAR MARITAL STATUS OF FEMALE LABOR FORCE

In 1940, as at previous Census dates,⁶ many more single than married women were working, though married women far exceeded single women in the population. In all, 45 percent of the single but only 15 percent of the married women were in the labor force, as is shown in the accompanying table 6. Of all women workers nearly half were single, and the single, together with the widowed and divorced women, constituted almost two-thirds of the prewar female labor force.

WARTIME MARITAL STATUS OF FEMALE LABOR FORCE

At the outset of the war a large proportion of the available single women already were at work. During the war, as has been stated, the number and proportion of single women in the population declined. Thus, the needed labor supply of women had to come to a considerable extent from among the married group.

The war pressures for added labor supply brought into the labor force greatly increased numbers of single women, nearly 1 million, but the increase of married women in the labor force was nearly 3 million. As a result, for the first time in this country's history the number of married women somewhat exceeded the number of single women in the labor force.

Of the single women in the population in 1944, more than 20 percent were wartime entrants to the labor force; of the married women, nearly 10 percent. However, well over half the single women in the population, but less than a fourth of all married women, were in the labor force.

POSTWAR MARITAL STATUS OF FEMALE LABOR FORCE

No over-all figures after 1944 are available as yet for an analysis of postwar marital status. However, from July 1945 to January 1946 approximately 4 million women left employment, over and

⁵ Women's Bureau, Special Bull. 20, op. cit., p. 22.

⁶ As reported back to 1890. Since this Report was prepared, data have become available for 1946 on marital status of women in the population (though not in the labor force). See footnote 3, p. 6 for reference. These data show a continuation to 1946 of the trends observed in 1944—namely, further increase in number of married women, further decrease in number of single women in the population.

above the number reported as unemployed. Undoubtedly a large number of these were married, a much smaller number single.

Furthermore, studies made in various regions during the war indicate the intention of many married women to leave the labor force. The Women's Bureau made studies of the economic responsibilities and postwar work intentions of women in 10 war-congested areas. Of the married women in these samples, 4 in 10 planned to leave the labor force, but of other status groups only 1 in 10 planned to leave. Or stating it a little differently, about nine-tenths of the single women (and also of the widowed and divorced), but only about three-fifths of the married women planned to continue in the labor force.

Table 7.—Marital Status of Women Workers, 1940 and 1944

Marital status	Women in the labor force					
	Number (In thousands)		Percent distribution		Percent of woman population	
	1940	1944	1940	1944	1940	1944
Total.....	12,850	16,880	100.0	100.0	25.4	32.3
Single.....	6,350	7,230	49.4	42.8	45.6	55.1
Married.....	4,560	7,470	35.5	44.3	15.2	23.0
Widowed and divorced.....	1,940	2,180	15.1	12.9	29.8	32.4

Source: Bureau of the Census, 16th Census of the United States, 1940, Population, Vol. III, Part I, United States Summary, Table 6; and Women's Bureau, Special Bull. 20, op. cit., pp. 23, 29, and also p. 22 for population figures on which percents in last two columns are based.

TRENDS IN REDISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN WAR WORKERS

As has been stated, the female labor force declined by nearly 4 million after the war, though the major part of this decline did not appear as an addition to the rolls of the unemployed. There are no over-all figures to show the types of industries or occupations in which displaced women war workers have found employment. The nearest approximation to such information is in an analysis of all placements made by the U. S. Employment Service, which may be taken as some indication of the situation, though it includes only those placed by this agency, and many workers find jobs through direct contact with employers; moreover, placement includes service to all those who apply to the Employment Service, and reports therefore are not limited in coverage to those specifically displaced from war jobs.

PROPORTIONS WOMEN CONSTITUTED OF TOTAL POSTWAR PLACEMENTS AND OF PREWAR LABOR FORCE

It is of interest to compare the proportions women constituted of the 1940 labor force and of late war and postwar placements by the U. S. Employment Service. As table 8 shows, women constituted much larger proportions of the nonagricultural placements in March 1944 than of those employed in March 1940. In March 1945 women's proportions among placements had declined somewhat from the previous war year but still were well above the proportion they were of the 1940 employed. In the latter part of 1945, the proportions of women among those placed had declined, but they still constituted

much the same part of the total as in 1940 employment and were slightly above 1940 proportions in employment in manufacturing and in government, and to a somewhat greater extent, in service industries.

Table 8.—Women in the Nonagricultural Labor Force in 1940, and Placements for Selected Months in 1944 and 1945

	Proportions women constituted of all workers in—			
	Total, non agricultural	Manufacturing	Trade and service	Government
Labor force: ¹				
1940 (Mar.)	28.1	22.0	42.8	19.5
Placements:				
1944 (Mar.)	26.0	36.6	54.9	43.2
1945 (Mar.)	32.1	33.7	45.3	40.0
(July)	29.0	28.8	45.0	41.7
(Aug.)	29.8	29.2	46.4	40.7
(Sept.)	30.1	27.1	48.6	35.0
(Oct.)	28.8	24.0	48.2	32.5
(Nov.)	29.0	24.1	47.7	28.0
(Dec.)	28.4	22.6	47.4	20.2

¹ Excludes new women workers seeking work and those on public emergency work.

Source: Bureau of the Census, 16th Census of the United States, 1940, Population, Vol. III, Part I, United States Summary, Table 74; and U. S. Employment Service, The Labor Market, February 1946, pp. 53, 54.

DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN POSTWAR PLACEMENTS COMPARED TO THEIR DISTRIBUTION IN THE PREWAR AND WARTIME LABOR FORCE

The most marked change in industrial distribution of women workers during the war was in the great increase in their proportions in manufacturing employment and the almost corresponding decline in their proportions in the various service industries. In the non-agricultural placements of women made in the last 3 months of 1945 through the U. S. Employment Service, the distribution among the various industries was much the same as in the labor force of the war period—much larger proportions were in manufacturing, smaller proportions in the services, than in 1940 employment. These proportions are shown in the summary following.

Industry	Percent distribution of women in—		
	Employment		Placements— Oct.-Dec., 1945
	1940	1944	
All nonagricultural employment	100	100	100
Manufacturing	22	35	39
Household service	19	34	24
Other services	27		11
Trade	19	20	17
Government	3	11	5
Other	10		4

Of the women in the manufacturing labor force in 1940, about 43 percent were employed in textiles and apparel. Many plants in these industries had retained and even increased their labor force

during the war, making much the same products as in peacetime; the chief change was that the markets were supplied with war needs instead of the normal ones. In the last 3 months of 1945 these industries accounted for 28 percent of all placements of women in manufacturing through the U. S. Employment Service.

DIFFICULTIES IN REDISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN WAR WORKERS

There are certain distinct difficulties that face women in particular in the redistribution of the labor force in the postwar period. Chief among these difficulties, bearing with special force on women, is the frequent lack of openings for many workers at the levels of skill developed during the war. Some women were not in the labor force before the war. Others have developed higher skills during the war period than before. Because they are new entrants to the labor force or to occupations of certain skills, many of these women do not have prior seniority in the jobs they hold when lay-offs occur. Few of them are entitled to the job preferences afforded veterans. When jobs of the skill levels women have developed in war work are no longer available, the tendency is to refer them back to their earlier types of jobs, which many of them no longer desire. In a sample study made in three cities⁷ by the U. S. Employment Service, it was found that 40 to 61 percent of the openings for women were in clerical, sales, or service jobs, but only 15 to 18 percent of the women claimants had last worked in these fields. Reports from the field indicate that women do not desire to return, not only to service occupations, but in some instances to manufacturing occupations in which they were formerly engaged. For example, some localities report shortages of women workers in garment and hosiery factories owing to women's lack of desire to return to such jobs.

The jobs available for women tend to pay lower basic rates than did their wartime work. Meanwhile elimination of overtime hours and overtime pay have cut amounts in pay envelopes, making women all the more hesitant to accept new jobs where basic rates are lower than they have been receiving. This tends also to keep women longer unemployed and to throw more women for longer periods on unemployment compensation. At the same time, the restrictions on receipt of unemployment compensation bear with particular hardship on women.

Furthermore, the increased number of older women in the labor force, and the tendency for hiring specifications in some types of clerical and manufacturing work to be placed at relatively low age ranges—facts that already have been discussed—indicate that when the labor market eases a greater number of women than before the war may experience difficulties in obtaining jobs owing to their ages.

⁷ Atlanta, Ga., Columbus, Ohio, and Trenton, N. J.

SUPPLEMENT

Dates for Which Information is Available

Figures are available for analysis of the female labor force, war and prewar, and totals (only) for postwar, as follows:

Labor Force—Monthly figures, March 1940 to July 1945; and July 1945 (revised) to date. As to the revised figures, see footnote 1 of the text. Of these available figures, the following have been used:

1940, and war peak, July 1944;

July 1944 and July 1945 (shows similarity to peak, with slight decline);

July 1945 (new figures) and January 1946 (also intervening months).

Occupational Distribution—March 1940 and March 1944 (Women's Bureau, Special Bull. 20).

Industrial Distribution—Same as occupational, with addition of figures with less fine breakdown for March 1945.

Age—Labor Force—March 1940, 1944, 1945.

Age—Population—March 1940, 1944; figures also for March 1945, but not enabling analysis for the important 35-44 group. Since preparation of this Report, figures for 1946 have become available.

Marital Status—Labor Force and Population—1940 and 1944 (Women's Bureau, Special Bull. 20). Since preparation of this Report, figures for 1946, relating to population only, have become available.