

**EMPLOYMENT of WOMEN
in an EMERGENCY PERIOD**

**WOMEN'S BUREAU
Bulletin Number 241**



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Maurice J. Tobin, Secretary**

**WOMEN'S BUREAU
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Letter of Transmittal

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,
WOMEN'S BUREAU,
Washington, June 2, 1952.

SIR: I have the honor of transmitting a report on the employment of women in an emergency period, prepared for the use of officials and agencies responsible for manpower utilization, and of employers, for women workers, and other interested individuals.

This bulletin brings together facts relevant to the place of women in today's economy and factors bearing on the effective utilization of womanpower during emergency periods, for this purpose drawing on the experience of World Wars I and II.

Respectfully submitted.

FRIEDA S. MILLER, *Director.*

HON. MAURICE J. TOBIN,
Secretary of Labor.

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EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN AN EMERGENCY PERIOD

I. Women's Place in the Economy Today

Women today are an integral and significant part of the labor force of the country. During the past half century the increase in the number of women who work has been tremendous; since 1900, the number has more than tripled. The 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ million women workers in April 1952 formed 30 percent of all workers.

The long-term trend toward increased participation of women in the labor force was accelerated by two world wars. Immediately following the close of World War II, there was a marked withdrawal of women from the labor force. Nevertheless, their rate of participation in April 1947 remained higher than it had been in 1940, prior to the war. Since 1947, this rate has risen again. If the present emergency is prolonged and the full impact of defense production makes itself felt, the rate will undoubtedly continue to be accelerated because women today constitute the largest labor reserve in the Nation.

In April 1952, one-third of all women of working age were in the labor force:¹

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Total.....	57, 566, 000	100. 0
In the labor force.....	18, 798, 000	32. 7
Not in the labor force.....	38, 768, 000	67. 3

Employable women in the 38 $\frac{3}{4}$ million not now in the labor force constitute the Nation's largest single labor reserve.

An effective manpower program must concern itself not only with drawing new workers into the labor force but also with the most effective utilization of women already employed. Thus, it is necessary to have information both on women in the labor force and on those who form the womanpower potential.

Women Workers

Certain facts about today's women workers are important in planning a manpower program:

First, according to a census report for 1951, there are more married than single women workers. Almost half of all women in the labor

¹ All statistics are from reports for April 1952, U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, unless otherwise noted. Persons under 14 years of age and those in institutions are usually excluded in considering that portion of the population from which the labor force is drawn. Under present social conditions, 16 years of age might yield a more realistic picture. However, in order to conform to current statistical practice, all figures on labor force and on manpower potential include persons 14 years of age and over.

force are married and less than one-third are single. The others are widowed, separated or divorced. An almost complete reversal in proportion of women workers who are married and those who are single has taken place within the last 11 years.

	Percent	
	1940	1951
All women workers.....	100	100
Single.....	48	29
Married, with husband present.....	30	49
Other.....	21	22

Second, many of the women who work are mothers with children under 18 years of age. Over one-fourth of the women in the civilian labor force in 1950, or more than 4½ million women workers, had children under 18 and over 1½ million of these working mothers had children younger than school age.

Third, the woman worker today is older, on the average, than ever before. Older women came into the labor force in great numbers during World War II as did women of all ages but, unlike the younger women, did not leave after the war was over. Women 45 years of age and over formed 32 percent of the 18¾ million women in the labor force in April 1952.

Occupationally, women congregate chiefly in a few major types of activity. Clerical and kindred workers predominate; over one-fourth of the employed women (29 percent) are in clerical occupations. Next in importance are the semiskilled factory workers or operatives; one-fifth (19 percent) of women workers are in this group. Next in number of women employed are three broad groups, each with approximately one-tenth of the working women: Professional and technical workers, service workers,² and private household workers. No other occupational group employs as much as 10 percent of the women who work.

An even greater concentration of women workers is found in certain industries, according to the most recent (1951) estimates of the Bureau of the Census. The majority of women workers (80 percent) are found in four major industry groups: Manufacturing industries (25 percent), wholesale and retail trade (22 percent), personal services (17 percent), and professional and related services (16 percent). Other service industries³ account for 7 percent, and agriculture, public utilities, and government each account for about 4 percent of the women employed in 1951. Very few women are employed in either mining or construction industries.

This information on industry and occupation serves as a rough guide to the pattern of employment for women. It shows where

² Service workers include persons in service occupations other than private household workers, such as waitresses.

³ Other service industries include finance, insurance, and real estate; business and repair services; and entertainment and recreation services.

women are now employed and where additional women workers could be absorbed with the greatest facility. It also shows, in broad outline, where it will be necessary to make provision for the introduction of women if the labor shortage becomes so acute that women are needed in what, by tradition, have not been woman-employing occupations or industries.

Womanpower Potential

It is generally recognized that the 38¾ million women who are not workers represent the largest single source for expanding the labor force. This does not mean that all of these women are a potential source of additional labor. Many of them (over 3¾ million) are girls still in school. An even larger group (over 5¾ million) are 65 years of age and over. In 1950 a very large group (almost 11 million) had children younger than 6 years of age; a larger group, of course, had children younger than 12 years; and others had home responsibilities which create barriers to their employment. From the remainder, however, must come a large proportion of the additional workers needed to sustain the defense economy.

By far the greatest proportion of these women who are not in the labor force are homemakers. It is from these women, the housewives, that the bulk of the new women workers will have to be drawn—preferably from those housewives who do not have young children.

	<i>Women Not in the Labor Force,</i>	
	<i>April 1952</i>	
	<i>Total, 14 years</i>	<i>65 years and</i>
	<i>and over</i>	<i>over</i>
Total	38,768,000	5,876,000
Keeping house	33,500,000	5,002,000
In school	3,848,000	-----
Unable to work	868,000	628,000
Other	552,000	246,000

Any realistic planning for the effective recruitment and utilization of women workers must be based upon the realization that new women workers must be sought primarily among married women, at present housewives with no children under 6 years of age.

II. Wartime Experience—World Wars I and II

Since the turn of the century, there has been a steady growth in the extent to which women have participated in the labor force. This long-run trend was greatly accelerated by the two world wars.

World War I

No comprehensive information on the extent of women's employment in World War I exists. Nor is there any detailed list of the occupations in which they engaged. However, certain fragmentary information is available and a number of marked and definite trends have been observed. A Nation-wide survey by the Women's Bureau (Bulletin No. 12), based upon unpublished materials in Government files and supplemented by field investigations, disclosed a number of salient facts:

First. The popular belief that women in industry rendered real service to the Nation during the war is sustained by the figures showing the numbers of women employed both in war agent and implement industries and in war food and fabric industries, by the preponderance of evidence from employers holding important Government contracts, and by the official statement of the Assistant Secretary of War, acting as Director of Munitions.

Second. The labor shortage and excessive demands on industries essential to the production of implements and agents of warfare resulted during the war in: (a) A sharp increase in the number of woman workers in these industries during the war; (b) a marked decrease in the number of women in the traditional woman-employing industries, resulting in a relief of the long standing congestion of woman labor in these pursuits and in part contributing to a marked increase in the wage scales of the women remaining in these industries; (c) the employment of woman labor in other skilled crafts from which women had been practically debarred before the war.

Third. When the managers of private, Government, and Government-controlled plants were confronted with the necessity of employing women in skill-exacting positions there were practically no trained women available, because: (a) Public and private vocational institutions had given little encouragement to the training of women in mechanical occupations; (b) organized labor policies in fact—although not always in official regulations—discouraged apprentice work for women in skilled occupations.

Fourth. The training of women employed in skilled occupations during the war was provided principally by the employing firms.

Fifth. The success attending the emergency employment of women in occupations requiring a high degree of skill and the expansion of commercial trade, has resulted in the retention of women in most of these crafts and industries since the close of the war and bids fair to encourage a larger use of woman labor in the future.

World War II

Between the spring of 1940 and the spring of 1945 almost 6 million women entered the labor force. By the latter date there were 19½ million women workers; and 36 percent of all civilian workers were women. In April 1952, women constituted 30 percent of all workers, 6 points less than in 1945. Before World War II women composed only 25 percent of the labor force.

During World War II for the first time women entered the armed forces. Their number rose to 270,000 in April 1945, about 1½ percent of the total.

At the height of war production 37 percent of all women were in the labor force.⁴ In April 1952, 33 percent of the 57½ million women 14 years and over were in the labor force. This is still considerably more than the 28 percent of all women who were workers in 1940. In actual numbers, there were approximately 5 million more women working in 1952 than in 1940, only 1 million fewer than during the height of the war.

World War II not only increased the total number of women workers but changed the distribution of women in the work force both by occupation and by industry.

During the war the number of women increased tremendously in three occupational groups: Clerical workers, operatives or semiskilled factory workers, and farm workers. From March 1940 to April 1945, the number of women clerical workers rose from 2½ million to almost 5 million; the number of operatives and kindred workers rose from slightly more than 2 million to more than 4½ million women; and the number of farm workers increased from a little more than ½ million to almost 2 million workers. These were the most striking numerical increases; but increases were also found among proprietors, salespersons, craftsmen and foremen, and service workers other than domestics. Only two occupational groups showed a decline in numbers of women employed during the war. These groups were professional and technical workers, and private household workers.⁵

The change in the industrial concentration of women workers which took place during World War II is also relevant to present manpower planning. In October 1940 women composed only 24 percent of all production workers in manufacturing industries. This increased to 33 percent in October 1944. The greatest part of this increase took place in the durable goods industries which produce the basic products of a war economy. In the durable goods industries the proportion of all production workers who were women rose from 8 percent in 1940 to a dramatic and unprecedented 25 percent in 1944; that is, from less than one-tenth to one-fourth of all production workers.⁶

These wartime changes have certain clear implications concerning the emergency employment of women:

1. The number of women employed will increase in most occupational groups.
2. The number will increase most sharply in clerical occupations, semiskilled factory occupations and on the farm.

⁴ In July 1944, almost 40 percent of the woman population, or 20½ million women were in the civilian labor force. This figure, however, represents a seasonally high number.

⁵ "Recent Occupational Trends," *Monthly Labor Review*, August 1947, pp. 139-147.

⁶ U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Women in Factories," August 1947.

III. Factors To Be Considered in the Optimum Utilization of Women in an Emergency Period

The recruitment and integration of women into the labor force as well as the most efficient utilization of those women already at work is a two-sided problem. One aspect of the problem relates to their effective recruitment, placement, training, and utilization by industry in those occupations most necessary to the economy and into which they can most easily be absorbed. The other aspect deals with the provision by communities of those facilities and services which enable women, especially those with home responsibilities, to leave the home and go to work. Proper placement, training, and working conditions are necessary to insure effective functioning on the job; they are all nullified, however, if the lack of essential housing, child-care, or transportation facilities results in undue absenteeism, high turn-over and, perhaps, complete withdrawal from the labor force. This is especially true when it is necessary to recruit women who are not seeking work because of economic need but who must be appealed to on patriotic grounds. These women who are not seeking employment of their own volition will be under real pressure to leave employment if their dual role becomes too difficult.

Recruitment and Placement

At such time as active measures may be necessary to bring more women into the labor market, consideration of their home obligations is an important matter. Recruitment, accordingly, needs to be developed on the basis of considered policies and orderly procedures with efforts directed toward first bringing into the labor market those women without important family responsibilities, including young single women and older age groups. If the emergency becomes extreme and the labor shortage acute, doubtless there will be mothers of young children and young girls voluntarily entering the labor force, perhaps on a part-time basis. As these groups are drawn into the labor force provision must be made for adequate community facilities.

One of the best means of planning to meet anticipated manpower needs is by the provision of guidance and counseling for new entrants into the labor force, whether they are young girls just finishing high school or older women seeking to enter industry for the first time.

Supplying information on occupations which are in short supply, and which are therefore desirable to enter, and on the training necessary to fill those occupations is one of the most important services that can be rendered potential women workers. Recruitment into the labor force is just the start. Proper placement and preparation for the job are essential if there is to be effective utilization of the new recruits.

The country's ability to draw large numbers of women into the labor force and keep them there will depend in large part on determining and utilizing to the full the capabilities of the individual worker. Individual women have demonstrated their ability to perform successfully almost any type of work which has been traditionally reserved for men. The proper placement of both men and women depends on discovering the personal capacities of each person and matching these capacities to the requirements of a given job.

Training

Examples of women's training needs during World War II are helpful in providing guidance for present emergency planning. The shortage of trained nurses, for example, was partially alleviated by the establishment of a cadet nurses' program for the armed services. College women were encouraged to specialize in engineering, science, and medical laboratory work. Large numbers of women were trained in Engineering, Science, and Management War Training Courses to meet the demands for women in essential high-level jobs.

Many women who were to enter industrial plants for the first time received preemployment training in the fundamentals of production—safety, tools, machines, and many other factors which men take for granted. As more men were drawn into the armed forces, it became necessary to provide women with training in the semiskilled and skilled jobs. During the period 1940–45, approximately 1½ million women were trained in war production courses given under the Vocational Training for War Production Workers Program. In addition, many women were trained in the industrial plants by employers themselves. Women were able to fill jobs as inspectors, welders, machine operators, and supervisors when they were provided with the necessary training.

Many of the problems of the supervisors of women and of men working with women were smoothly ironed out by providing these men with sufficient instruction to enable them to understand women workers' contributions to essential production. It was found, as a result of the World War II experience, that women can equal men in job performance, provided the jobs are within their physical abilities and that they are given the proper training.

The points to be emphasized in planning a training program to meet the needs arising from the increased utilization of women may be summarized as follows:

- 1. Immediate steps should be taken toward the training of more women for essential jobs, at present in short supply, which women traditionally occupy and which require a considerable learning time (e. g. as nurses, teachers, stenographers, laboratory technicians).**

2. Training of women for occupations which women ordinarily do not perform but into which they will be drawn as manpower shortages develop should be planned for at once.
3. Orientation training should be provided for women without previous work experience.
4. The men workers should be oriented to working with women before women are brought into plants in large numbers.
5. Men who are to instruct or supervise women workers should be given special training.
6. Training for upgrading should be provided for women workers to enable them to advance and to perform more skilled jobs.
7. Supervisory training should be provided for women capable of assuming supervisory positions in order that their skills and abilities be fully utilized.

Working Conditions

An important factor affecting the utilization of women workers is the existence of working conditions standards relating to their employment. The standards are of two general kinds:

- Labor laws requiring the observance of certain specific standards.
- Voluntary (nonlegislative) standards maintained through the processes of collective bargaining or by employers on their own initiative.

A major piece of Federal legislation affecting labor standards outside the area of labor-management regulation, is the Fair Labor Standards Act originally passed in 1938. Under the amendments of 1949 the basic minimum wage for covered workers is 75 cents an hour with time and one-half the worker's regular rate after 40 hours a week. This law applies to men and women without distinction.

The most comprehensive legislation establishing a standard for women's employment is embodied in the large number of State laws, over 300 in number, now in effect. This development began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when Massachusetts passed in 1879 the first enforceable law limiting hours of work for women. The nature and extent of major types of legislation now in effect for women cover the following:

- Daily and/or weekly hours of work (43 States and the District of Columbia).
- Day of rest (22 States and the District of Columbia).
- Meal periods (27 States and the District of Columbia).
- Rest periods (8 States).
- Night work (23 States and the District of Columbia).
- Seating (46 States and the District of Columbia).
- Occupational limitations (29 States).
- Weight-lifting (10 States).
- Industrial homework (20 States).
- Employment prohibited before and after childbirth (6 States).
- Equal pay (13 States).
- Minimum wage (26 States and the District of Columbia).

Legal standards in these fields vary rather widely from State to State. As one would expect, the highly industrialized States have

much more extensive regulations and, generally speaking, a pattern of standards that has come to be regarded as socially desirable, while the less industrialized States have established fewer and less effective legal standards.

Working conditions standards maintained through collective bargaining or voluntarily by employers, irrespective of legal requirements, are even more extensive than standards required by law. For example, the scheduled workweek in most industrial establishments is 40 hours, and frequently, as in the apparel industry, less; this is the usual workweek in department stores in large cities. But in no State is the legal limit on hours for adult women in any industry as low as 40 hours.

These industrial practices are an outgrowth of the continued recognition that efficient production and full utilization of labor are increased by greater general awareness of the harmful effects on workers of fatigue, insanitary and unsafe surroundings, poor personnel practices, and the great variety of factors that influence morale and efficiency.

Legislative requirements in many areas of the country do not meet desirable standards. It is therefore essential, in any program for increasing the participation of women in defense production, that the interrelationship between tested standards and production be kept in the forefront of planning.

Unforeseen emergencies in defense production may on occasion arise in a particular plant or locality, necessitating a degree of adjustment in one or more of these standards for a limited period. There will be a wide variation in the urgency of production in different industries, branches of industries, or occupations, and variation of availability of women workers in different geographic areas. If longer hours or adjustments in other standards are to be permitted without resulting sacrifice of productive efficiency, such changes must be accompanied by sound supervision and satisfactory working conditions, and in accordance with procedures and standards set by law.

Community Facilities

Community factors related to the employment of women must be considered to a far greater degree than at any time in the history of the country, not only because defense production may call for the use of women in the labor force to an unprecedented extent, but also because of the long-term increase that has taken place in the number of women who work. Today, 3 out of every 10 women of working age are already in the labor force, and it is expected that expanded defense production will call forth additional workers from the 38¾ million women not now in the labor force but who form the Nation's largest labor reserve. At present, married women far outrank single women

in the labor force, and one-fourth of all women workers have children. Moreover, it is expected that the majority of new recruits to the labor force will be women with homemaking responsibilities. The exigencies of the times have made the employment of women, especially those with homemaking responsibilities, a question where the basic issue involves measures to facilitate the adjustment of the home and the community to the social and economic change in women's place in the American economy.

Both the defense production program and the maintenance of national health and well-being require that community plans be undertaken to provide adequate help for employed women with home responsibilities, and also for the needs of the younger woman worker and the older woman worker whose pattern of living may have been seriously altered by the needs of emergency production. In fact, the unprecedented use of women in the labor force and the assignment of increasing numbers of men to military service, whether at home or abroad, disrupts the community pattern in various ways and requires that special attention be given to maintaining the stability and welfare of community life. The situation becomes particularly critical where hundreds of women workers are recruited and brought into a community that is unaware of the problems relating to community facilities and services concomitant with such in-migration.

The lack of adequate provision for the care of children and other dependents creates conditions which have a direct bearing on turnover, absenteeism, and loss of productivity. Moreover, if adequate facilities were provided, local womanpower in many cases would be utilized, making it unnecessary to import workers, men or women, from other areas. This would tend to reduce pressure on existing facilities.

Community facilities problems vary in intensity according to the different types of communities involved and the varied needs of women workers. It is not possible, therefore, to pose a set of solutions that will fit all situations. With such a variety of communities calling for programs to be planned and shaped specifically to meet widely divergent situations, the solutions will have to follow local patterns of development.

The experiences of World War II indicate that community facilities problems closely related to the increasing employment of women are interdependent. For example, inadequate transportation, in many instances, aggravates the housing problem and causes under-utilization of recreation and child-care centers. Thus, an appraisal of a specific problem such as child care, housing, transportation, recreation, essential consumer services, or health services must take into consideration the general framework of over-all community needs.

Among the community facilities and services which must be given considerable attention are the following:

The care of dependents—preschool children; children of school age; other dependents.

Housing—for women with families and for women war workers recruited for isolated defense plants.

Transportation—to work; to shopping facilities; to the child-care center; and home after late-shift work.

Procurement and distribution of essential goods and services—shopping facilities available; eating facilities at work and near the home; increased family feeding facilities; laundry services or facilities.

General health and welfare—recreational facilities; medical and dental care; provisions for guidance and counseling on special problems arising from employment.

IV. The Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor

The major responsibility for matters relating to the recruitment, training, and utilization of women for meeting defense and essential civilian labor requirements was delegated to the Women's Bureau in section 6 of General Order No. 48 issued by the Secretary of Labor in September 1950. In addition to developing plans, programs, and policy at a national level, the Women's Bureau functions as liaison on matters relating to women workers with public and private organizations, conducts research studies and supplies informational materials. While the Women's Bureau has no large field establishment, it has a limited number of experienced field representatives who can be called upon for advice when special problems arise relating to women workers.

General Order No. 48 also established a Women's Advisory Committee on Defense Manpower to advise the Secretary of Labor concerning the most effective use of women in meeting defense manpower requirements. At the local level, if problems arise in a particular area relating to the recruitment, training, and utilization of women, it may be desirable in certain instances to establish a task force composed of persons with special interest and experience in problems relating to the employment of women. The assistance of the Women's Bureau can be secured in suggesting or nominating persons to serve on this task force. The Women's Bureau can also supply pertinent informational material on problems and solutions arising in other places.

SOME WOMEN'S BUREAU PUBLICATIONS

For general information—

- 1952 Handbook of Facts on Women Workers. Bull. 242.
- Women Workers and Their Dependents. Bull. 239.
- Women's Jobs: Advance and Growth. Bull. 232.
- The Women's Bureau, Its Purpose, Its Functions. Leaflet 1.
- Hiring Older Women. Leaflet 12.
- Why Do Women Work? Leaflet 11.
- Women's Chances for Advancement in Business and Industry. Leaflet 14.
- Women as Workers—a Statistical Guide. Processed.
- Various maps and charts.

On standards for women workers—

- Recommended Standards for Employment of Women. Leaflet 3.
- Working Women's Budgets in Thirteen States. Bull. 226, revised December 1951.
- State Minimum Wage Laws. Leaflet 4.
- Working Women and Unemployment Insurance. Leaflet 5.
- Summary of State Labor Laws for Women. Processed.
- Digests of State Labor Laws for Women. (Separates for individual States.)
- Equal Pay for Women. Leaflet 2.
- Equal Pay Indicators. Processed. D-43.
- Maternity Protection of Employed Women. Bull. 240.
- Lifting and Carrying Weights by Women in Industry. Special Bull. 2.
- Safety Clothing for Women in Industry. Special Bull. 3.
- Washing and Toilet Facilities for Women in Industry. Special Bull. 4.
- Women's Effective War Work Requires Good Posture. Special Bull. 10.
- Women's Wartime Hours of Work. Bull. 208.

On utilization of women workers—

- Part-Time Jobs for Women. Bull. 238.
- Job-Training for Women and Girls. Leaflet 7.
- Community Problems Relating to the Increased Employment of Women in Defense Areas. Processed. D-36.
- Part-Time Employment of Women in Wartime. Special Bull. 13.
- The Industrial Nurse and The Woman Worker. Bull. 228.
- Woman Workers in Two Wars. Reprint from Monthly Labor Review.
- When You Hire Women. Special Bull. 14.
- Series of Studies on employment of women in various defense industries. Bull. 192, Nos. 1-9.

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