

# HIGHLIGHTS

1920 - 1960



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**  
**James P. Mitchell, *Secretary***

**WOMEN'S BUREAU**  
**Mrs. Alice K. Leopold, *Director***

## H I G H L I G H T S

### The Past - 1920

8 $\frac{1}{4}$  million women workers

The average woman worker--single and 28 years old

Less than 1 out of every 4 women a worker

About 1 out of every 5 workers was a woman

Largest occupations for women (in order):

Factory workers; private-household workers;  
farm workers; stenographers, typists, and  
secretaries; teachers; saleswomen

(1)

Less than 1/3 million women enrolled in college

Degrees granted to women:

16,642 Bachelor's  
1,294 Master's  
93 Doctorates

A total of 18,029 degrees

### Today - 1960

22 $\frac{1}{2}$  million women workers

The average woman worker--married and 40 years old

More than 1 out of every 3 women a worker

About 1 out of every 3 workers is a woman

Largest occupations for women (in order):

Factory workers; stenographers, typists, and  
secretaries; private-household workers; sales-  
women; teachers; waitresses and cooks

This listing shows the increased importance of the stenographic group and saleswomen, as well as the sharp decline among farm workers. However, a variety of other occupations have been gaining in importance for women--nurses and other professional health personnel, office workers of many kinds, research workers, technicians, librarians, social workers, and specialists in food and home management

Almost 1 1/4 million women enrolled in college

Degrees granted to women (estimated):

132,000 Bachelor's  
23,600 Master's  
1,000 Doctorates

A total of 156,000 degrees--almost 9 times the number in 1920

The Future - 1970

30 million women workers

The average woman worker--married and 41 years old

Except for teen-age girls and women over 65, about 2 out of every 5 women will be a worker

About 1 out of every 3 workers will be a woman

Further expansion in the employment of women in occupations in which they have long been established, such as teachers, office workers, librarians, social workers, home economists, nurses, laboratory technicians, medical and other health workers

Greater opportunities for women with the required ability and educational qualifications as mathematicians, statisticians, scientists, engineers, technicians of various kinds, and higher level office workers with training in the use of electronic data processing and other business machines

Over 2 million women enrolled in colleges

Degrees granted to women:

234,000 Bachelor's

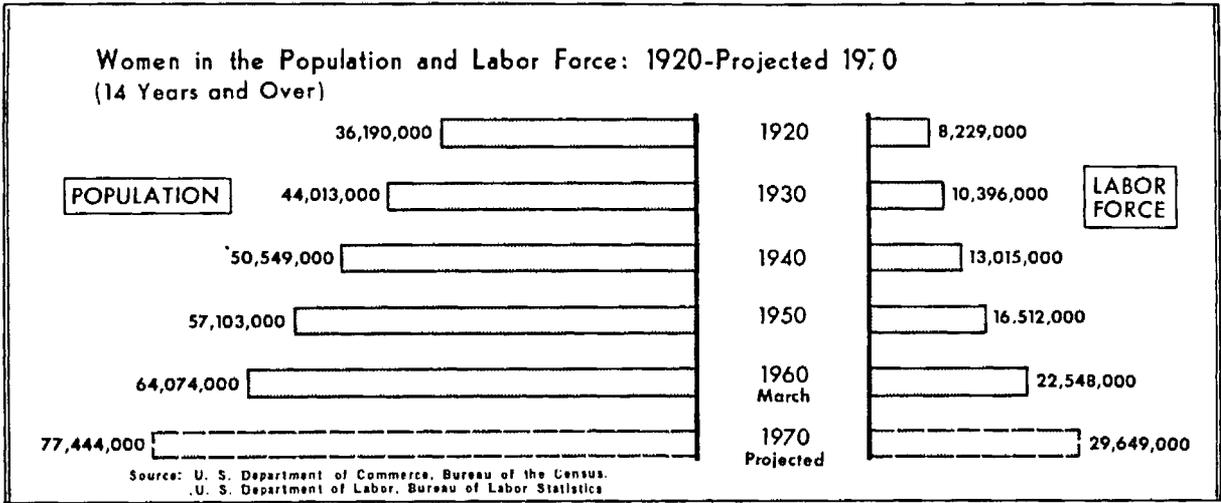
45,000 Master's

1,700 Doctorates

A total of 280,700 degrees--almost twice as many as in 1960

(2)

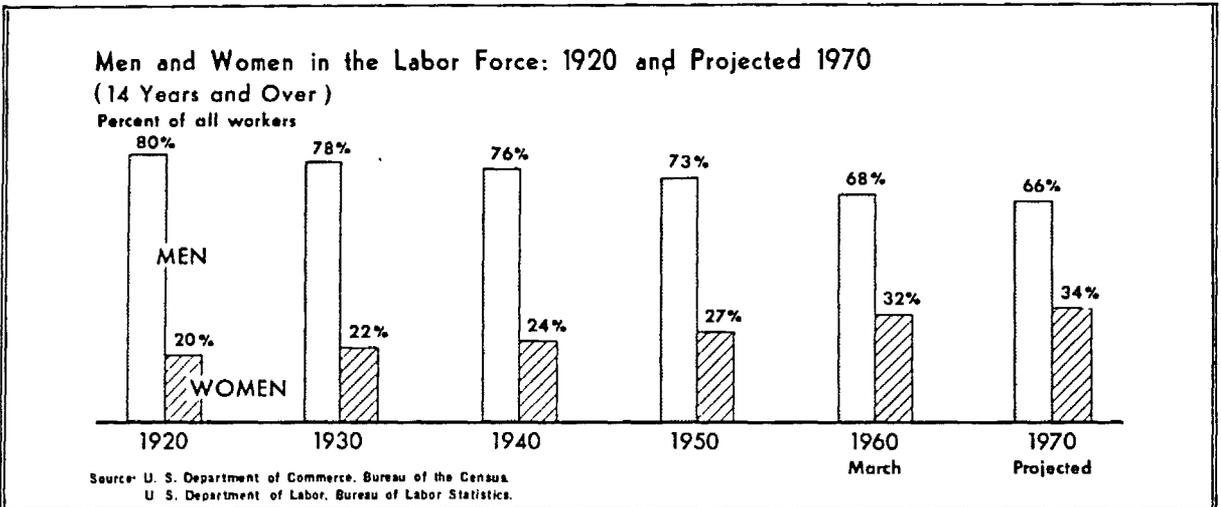
Chart 1



The number of women in the labor force has increased more rapidly than their number in the population. In 1920, 23 percent of the women were in the labor force; in 1940, 26 percent; and today, 35 percent.

Though population growth has been the basic factor in the tremendous rise in the number of women workers, other factors such as national emergencies and high levels of production and employment since World War II have contributed significantly to this development.

Chart 2.

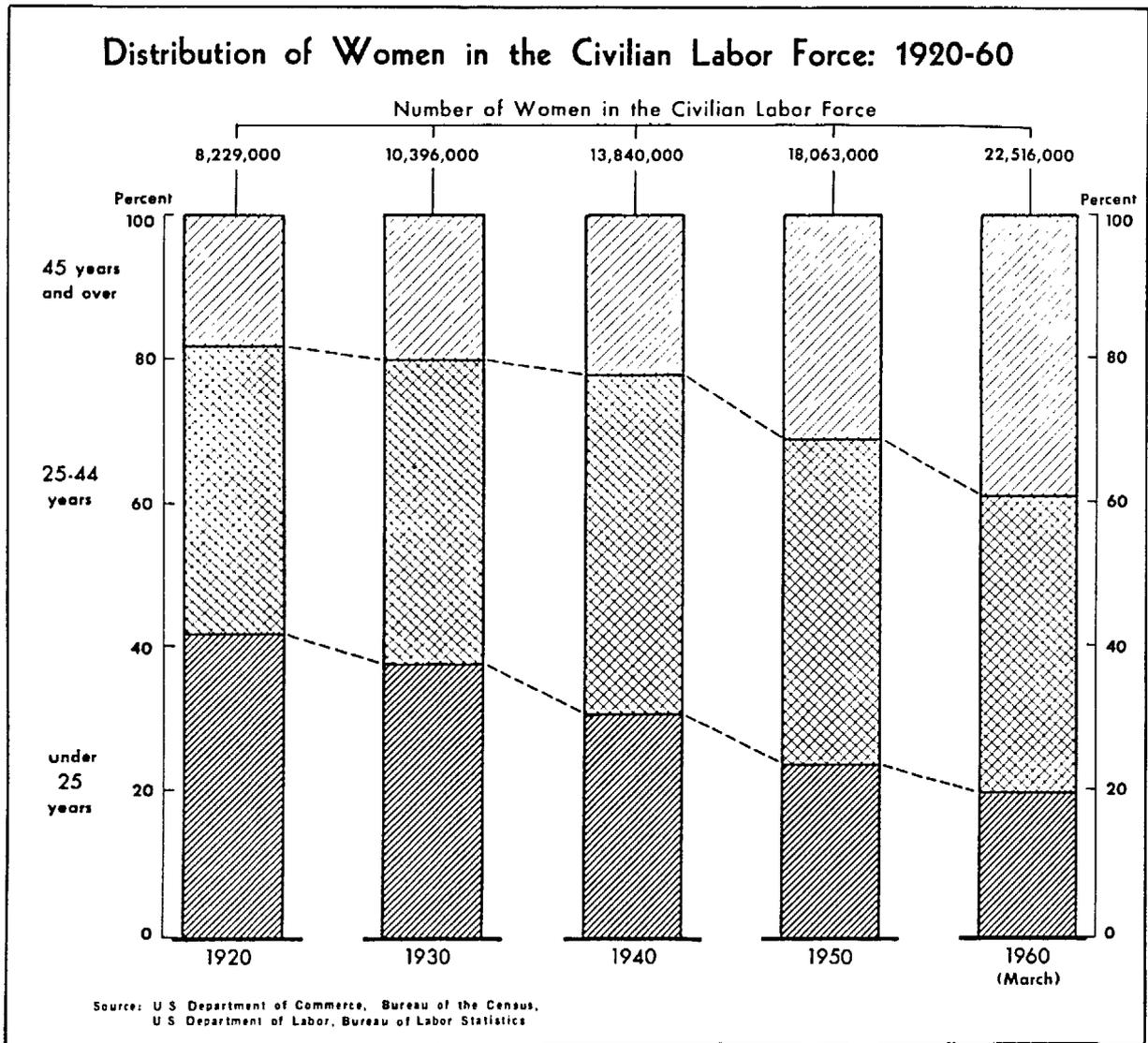


The proportion of women workers in the labor force has increased markedly since 1920.

In 1920, the approximately 8 1/4 million women workers represented 1 out of every 5 workers; in 1940, the 13 million women workers represented about 1 in 4 workers; today they represent almost 1 in 3. It is expected that they will represent 1 in 3 by 1970.

Early retirement from the labor force of older men and the trend toward higher educational attainment of the younger men are factors which have contributed to the changing proportions of men and women in the labor force.

Chart 3.

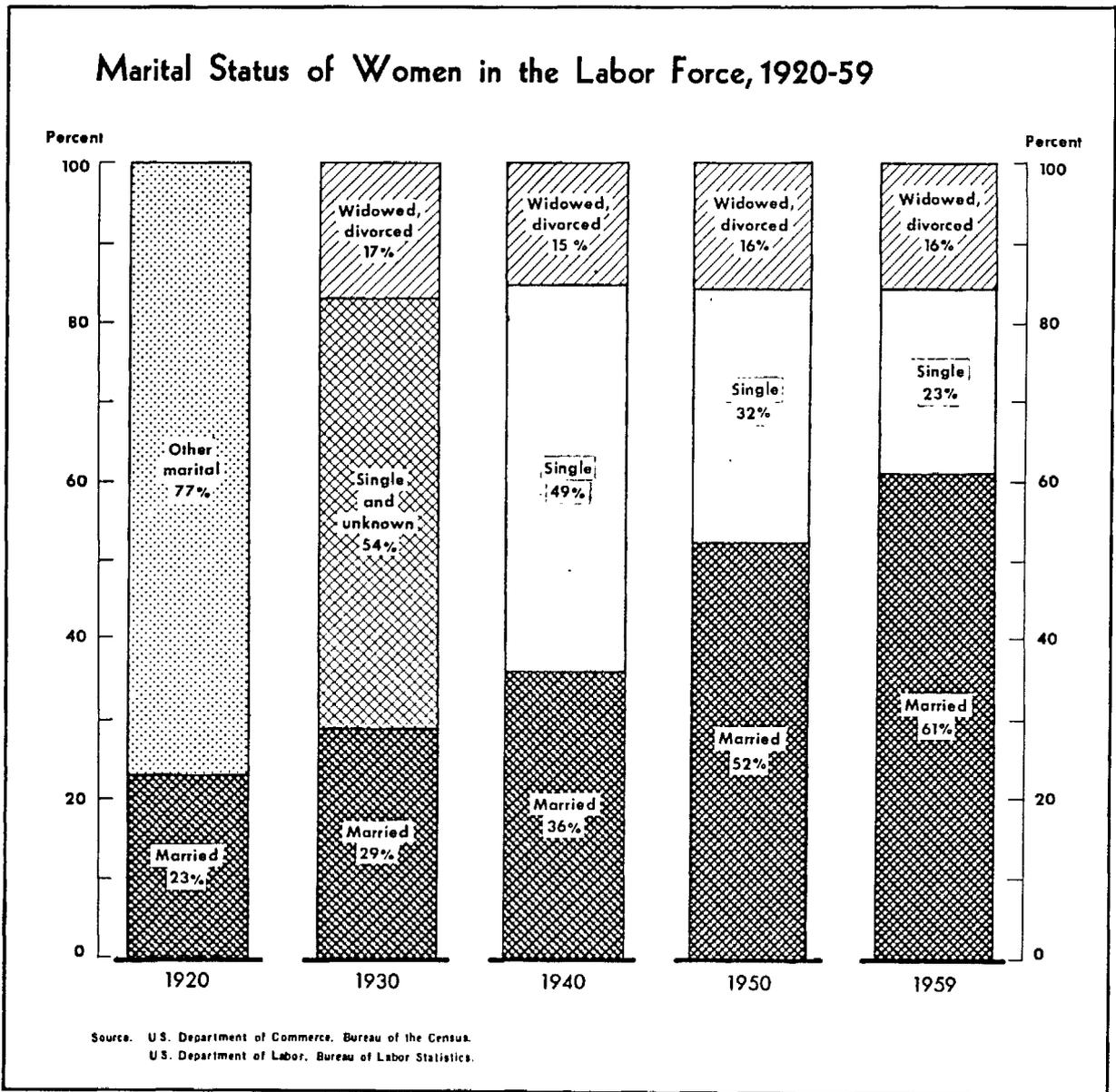


Important shifts in the age distribution of women workers have taken place since 1920, partly because of the changing age composition of the population and partly because of the higher labor force participation rates of older women.

The proportion of women over 45 years of age in the labor force has more than doubled since 1920. The proportion of young women under 25 in the labor force has declined to less than half during this period.

The proportion of women in the labor force from 25 to 44 years of age has remained relatively stable. As a result, the median age of women workers has risen from 28 to slightly over 40 in 1960.

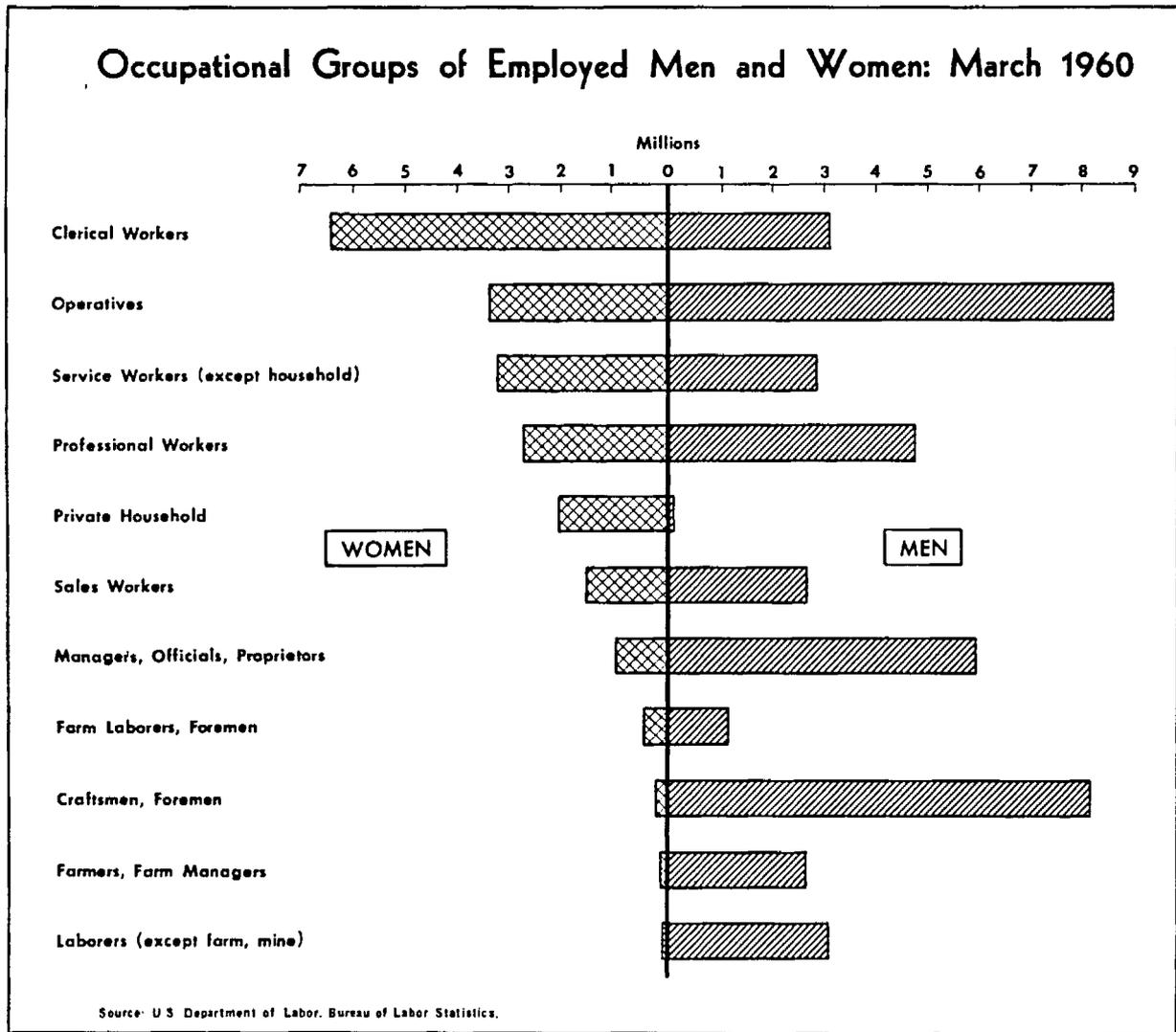
Chart 4



The trend toward early marriage, the increasing tendency of women to seek paid employment, and changes in women's occupations account for the striking increase in the proportion of married women among women workers.

The rise has been especially rapid since 1940, and has been accompanied by a simultaneous decline in the proportion of single women workers.

Chart 5.

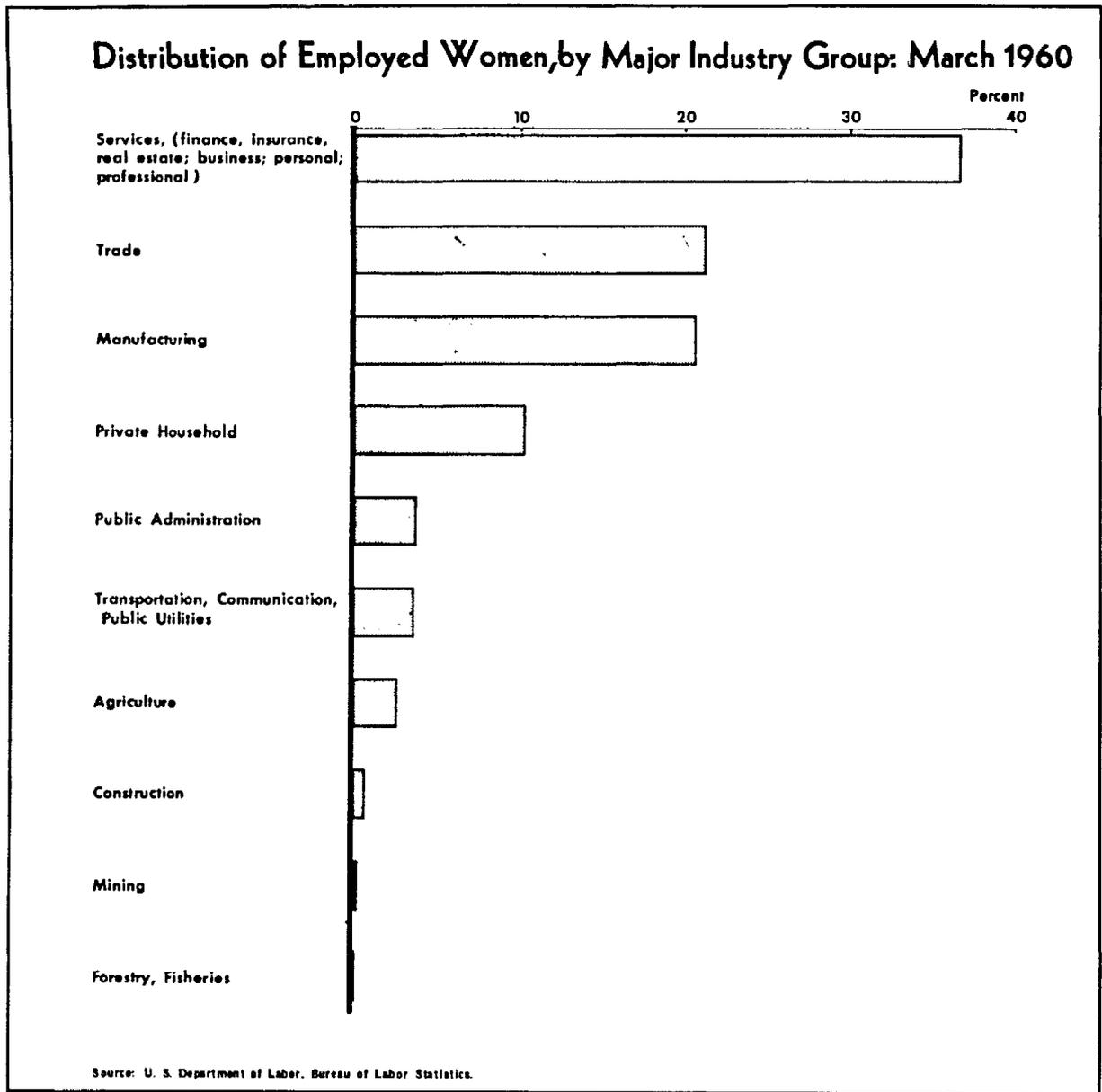


Women tend to work in different occupations from those in which men work. While they constitute more than two-thirds of the clerical workers, there are few women among the craftsmen, farm managers and workers, and the unskilled laborers.

Some of these differences are undoubtedly due to differences in the nature of the work, its requirements and its suitability or attractiveness to women, but others persist largely because of conventional attitudes toward women and work.

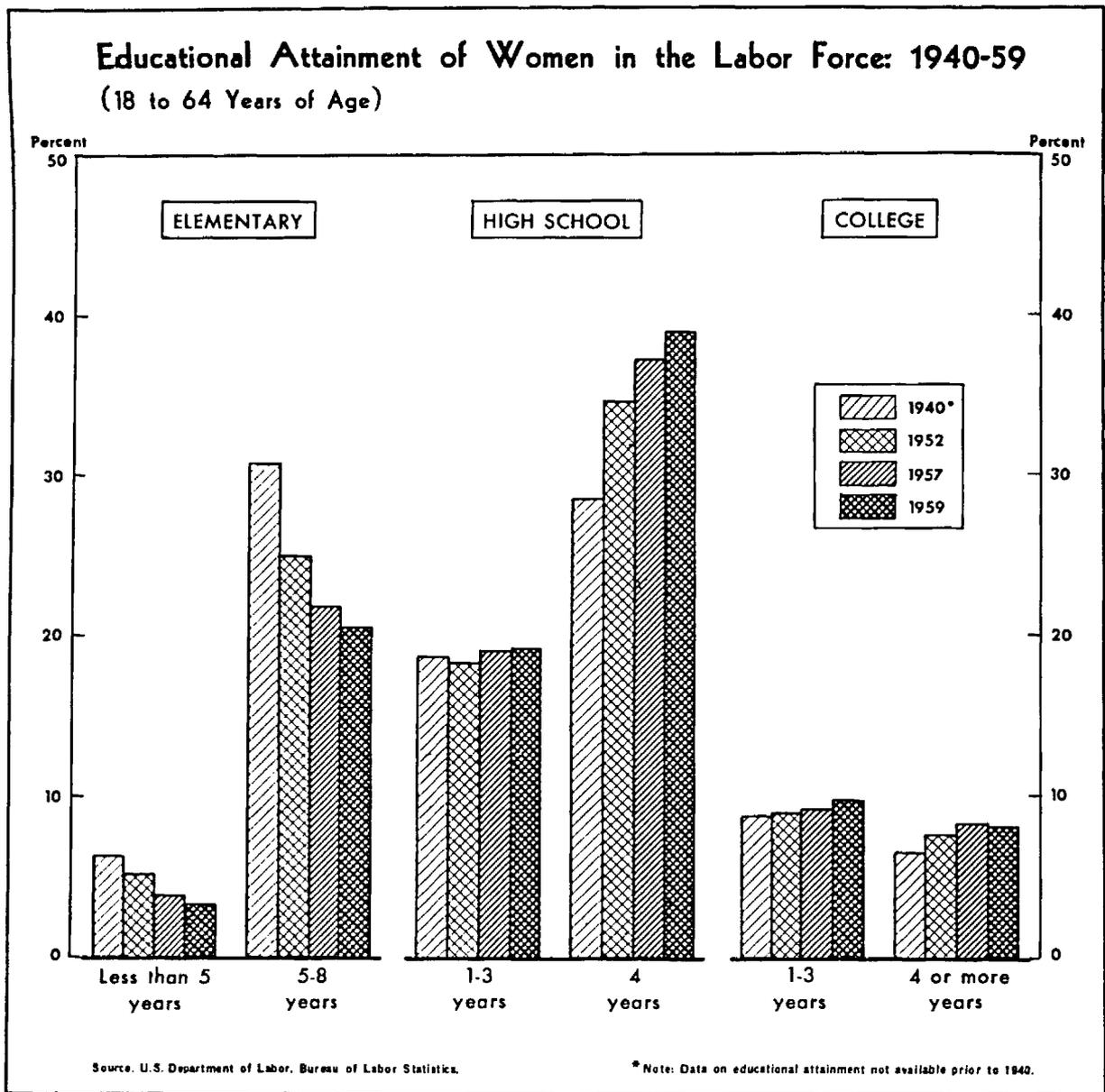
Women tend to remain concentrated in a few occupations. While they represent more than one-third of the professional workers, most of them are teachers or nurses. There are still relatively few women among the scientists, engineers, physicians, lawyers and other professional groups, though their numbers have been increasing in these occupations.

Chart 6.



Women workers are highly concentrated in the rapidly growing service industries. These include finance and insurance services and many professional and business services, as well as personal services; many women work also in retail trade and in manufacturing.

Chart 7.



The educational attainment of women in the labor force has risen significantly

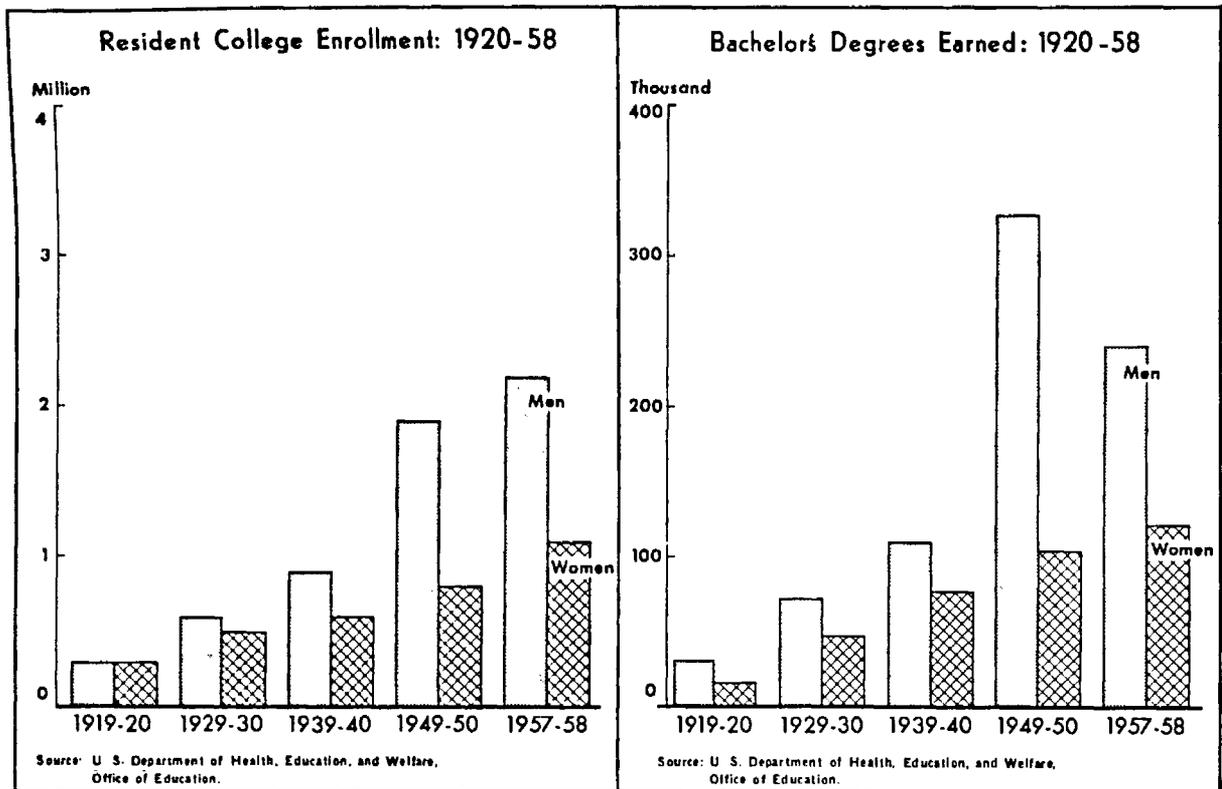
Today, almost three-fifths of the women workers have at least a high school education. About two-fifths had a high school education 20 years ago.

Today, only 3 percent of the working women have less than 5 years of schooling; 20 years ago, 6 percent had less than this.

Today, a larger proportion of women workers have completed at least 4 years of college than 20 years ago, but the relative increase has been much smaller than that for high school graduates.

Chart 8.

Chart 9.

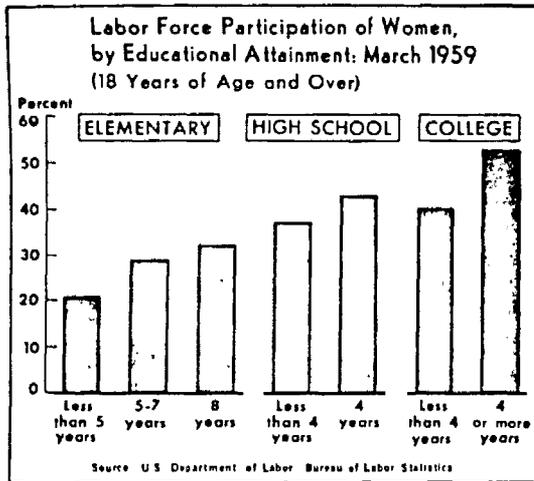


More and more women are attending and graduating from institutions of higher learning.

Since 1920, enrollments of women in colleges and universities have almost quadrupled. The number of baccalaureate degrees granted to women during the same period has multiplied more than 7 times.

The increases in enrollments for men, however, have been even greater during most of this period. The percent of women enrollees in the total, therefore, dropped from 50 percent in 1920 to 30 percent in 1950, when many veterans took advantage of the educational aid made available to them. Since then enrollments of women have again increased at a faster rate than those of men, and they now represent more than one-third of the total enrollments.

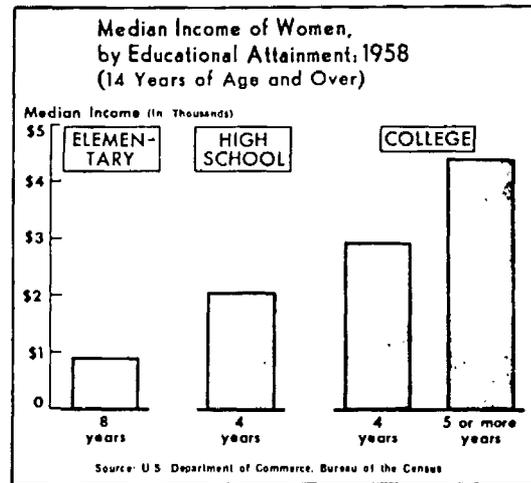
Chart 10.



Chances that a woman will seek paid employment tend to increase with the amount of education she has received.

In March 1959, more than one-half of the women in this country with a college degree were in the work force as compared with somewhat more than one-fourth of the women who left school prior to or on completing the 8th grade.

Chart 11.



Education is an important determinant of the average income of women.

One-half of the women who had completed a year or more of graduate study had incomes of at least \$4,381 in 1958. This was 1 1/2 times the median income of women 4-year college graduates; more than 2 times that of high school graduates; and almost 5 times that of elementary school graduates.

Chart 12.

SELECTED OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS	Percent Distribution		
	SOME COLLEGE EDUCATION	HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION	LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
Professional workers	73	22	5
Managers, officials, proprietors	19	40	40
Clerical workers	17	65	18
Sales workers	12	43	42
Service workers (except household)	6	29	63
Operatives	2	24	72
Private-household workers	3	14	80

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Education strongly affects a women's occupation.

Nearly 3 out of every 4 women in the professions have had some college education.

The vast majority of women in clerical, managerial and sales occupations have had at least a high school education.

Most of the women employed in service occupations or factory operations have had less than a high school education.