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*What's
New . . .*

*. . . about
Women
Workers?
. . . a few facts*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
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What's New About Women Workers?

Dramatic changes have taken place in recent decades in the pattern of women's employment, the characteristics of women workers, and the role of women in the Nation's labor force. Today, it is accepted as customary that young women will work for some time after they have completed school. An increasingly large percentage of married women are returning to the work force after their children are grown or of school age. A generation ago, women workers were a young group; a majority of them were single. Today, there are more older women in the work force; a majority are married.

American women have always contributed their full share to the economic life of the Nation. In earlier times this contribution was made through a variety of skills and talents which women developed and used within the home. As the Nation's economy became more specialized, many of women's tasks were transferred to the factory, the store, the hospital. Modern conveniences and labor-saving devices now permit smooth functioning of the home in much less time than was formerly possible, releasing part of the homemaker's time for income-producing work outside the home. Vast numbers of new jobs were also created as the economy became more complex and varied.

The Women's Bureau receives hundreds of inquiries about women workers. In this leaflet, some of the questions most frequently asked are answered—briefly, and with a few comments.

For additional information about women in the labor force and about their employment opportunities in specific occupations, write for a free list of Women's Bureau publications. Address requests to Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington 25, D.C.

A Dozen Questions

Answered by the Women's Bureau

BRIEFLY:

WITH A FEW COMMENTS:

1. <i>How many women workers* are there in the United States?</i>	There are about 24 million women in the Nation's labor force.	In April 1962, about 24 million women were workers. This was 4½ million above the figure of 19½ million reached in April 1945 during World War II.
2. <i>Of all women, what percent work?</i>	More than one-third (36%) of all women of working age are in the labor force.	The percentage of women who work varies for different groups of women. For example, between the ages of 25 and 34, 80 percent of all single women, but only 29 percent of married women (living with their husbands) were in the labor force in March 1962.
3. <i>Of all workers, what percent are women?</i>	Women are one-third (34%) of the labor force.	In 1940, only 25 percent of all civilian workers were women. During World War II, in 1944 and 1945, 35 percent of all civilian workers were women. After the war, the percentage dropped to 28 in 1947 and then gradually rose again to 34 percent.
4. <i>What is the average age of women workers?</i>	The average (median) age of women workers is 41 years; almost two-fifths are 45 or older.	The tendency for women to continue working after marriage and to return to work in later years is reflected in the rising average age of women workers. In 1940, the average age of women workers was 32 years. Since then it has advanced about 9 years. Half of the women in the population 45 to 54 years of age were in the labor force in April 1962.
5. <i>Are many women workers married?</i>	Over half of all women workers are married women who are living with their husbands.	Of 24 million women workers in March 1962, 13½ million were married and living with their husbands; about 5 million were widowed, divorced, or had husbands absent from the home; and almost 5½ million were single.
6. <i>Are there many working mothers?</i>	Five and a half million women workers have children between the ages of 6 and 17 years only. More than 3 million women workers have young children under 6 years of age; many of these women also have children 6 to 17 years of age.	In a home with both parents present, the mother is much less likely to seek employment. In such families, 21 percent of the mothers of young children and 42 percent of those with older children only were working outside the home in March 1962. However, among women who were widowed, divorced, or had husbands who were absent from the home, 41 percent of those with young children and 65 percent of those with older children only were in the labor force.
7. <i>How many women are heads of families?</i>	The family head is a woman in 4.6 million families (1 family in 10). Half of the women family heads are in the labor force.	In families where the woman head was a year-round, full-time worker, the family's median money income for 1961 was \$4,699, compared with \$6,516 for families with a male head whose wife was not in the work force.

*Workers are persons 14 years of age and over who are in the labor force, which includes both the employed and those seeking work. Figures are taken from reports issued by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, or by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

BRIEFLY:

WITH A FEW COMMENTS:

8. How many women work at *part-time jobs*, or for only part of the year?

Of some 30 million women who worked at some time during 1961, about 14½ million either worked at part-time jobs or worked at full-time jobs for half of the year or less.

Thirty-two percent of all women who worked during 1961 were employed on a part-time basis (less than 35 hours a week), and 16 percent worked full time for 26 weeks or less.

9. What *occupational fields* employ the most women?

Of a total of over 22½ million employed women workers in April 1962, clerical jobs accounted for almost 7 million. Between 2¼ and 3¼ million women were employed in each of four other broad occupational groups—as service workers, such as waitresses, beauticians, and practical nurses; factory and other operatives; professional and technical workers; and private-household workers.

Of all persons (men and women) employed in the following occupational groups in April 1962, women constituted:

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Clerical, etc.....	69
Service workers (except private-household).....	54
Operatives, etc.....	28
Professional, technical, etc.....	37
Private household.....	98
Sales workers.....	39
Managers, officials, proprietors (except farm).....	15
Farm laborers and foremen.....	26
All others.....	3

10. What are the most important *specific occupations* for women?

These nine large specific occupations employed nearly half of the women workers in April 1962: Stenographers, typists, secretaries; operatives in nondurable-goods manufacturing; sales workers in retail trade; teachers (except college); waitresses, cooks, etc. (other than private-household); operatives in durable-goods manufacturing; medical and other professional health workers; farm laborers (unpaid family); proprietors in retail trade.

Specific occupations in which half or more of the workers are women include stenographers, typists, secretaries; teachers (except college); waitresses, cooks, etc. (not in private households); medical and other professional health workers; sales workers in retail trade; unpaid family farmworkers; operatives in nondurable-goods manufacturing.

11. How many working women belong to *labor unions*?

About 3.3 million women were union members in 1960—a gain of 30,000 since 1958. These women constituted nearly one-sixth of the Nation's union members and one-seventh of our women workers.

Roughly three-fifths of the women union members were in manufacturing industries, nearly a fourth in trade and service, and the remainder primarily in transportation and communications industries which have substantial numbers of white-collar workers.

12. How does *education* affect the kind of jobs women hold?

Women college graduates are employed primarily in professional or technical work; high school graduates, in clerical work; and those with an eighth-grade education or less, in factory, private-household, or service jobs.

That salaries increase with years of education is shown by figures for 1961: Median income (from all sources) of women was \$4,694 for those with 5 or more years of college, \$3,179 for women with 4 years of college, \$1,938 for those with 4 years of high school and no college, \$950 for those with 8 years of elementary school, and \$791 for those with less than 8 years of elementary school.