



Facts on Women Workers

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MARCH 31, 1948

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN FEBRUARY 1948

The number of women in the civilian labor force in February 1948 as shown by Census figures was more than three-fourths of a million above that of February 1947. This labor force increased from January to February 1948, whereas last year in the same period it declined slightly.

	Number of women	Change since January 1948	February 1948	
			Number	Percent women
Population (14 years and over)	54,889,000	+ 45,000	108,050,000	50.8
Civilian labor force	16,752,000	+ 384,000	59,778,000	28.0
Employed	16,002,000	+ 126,000	57,139,000	28.0
Unemployed	750,000	+ 259,000	2,639,000	28.4
Armed forces	16,000	None	1,226,000	1.3
Nonworkers	38,121,000	- 340,000	47,046,000	81.0

(U. S. Bureau of the Census)

MEDIAN AGE OF WORKING WOMEN

The median age of the labor force including the armed forces was 37.6 years in February 1948, or substantially higher than the prewar median age of 36.1 years in March 1940, according to the Census Bureau. For women, the median age increased from 31.9 years in March 1940, to 35.0 years in February 1948. A relatively large proportion of the additional women workers in the labor force during the war years was recruited from among women 35 years of age and over, a great many of whom have remained in the labor force during the postwar period. On the other hand, as a result of the high marriage and birth rates prevailing during the past few years, the labor force participation of younger women has shown a considerable decline.

NATIONAL WOMAN'S STATUS BILL

Hearings have been held on the National Woman's Status Bill (H.R. 2007) before a Subcommittee of the House Committee on the Judiciary, which proposes establishment of a Presidential Commission to survey the political and civil status of women under law and its administration in the United States. The bill carries recommendations for removal of discriminatory features of laws, regulations, and administrative practices in the Federal Government, and invites the States to take similar action regarding their own laws. The director of the Women's Bureau testified in support of it on March 12, 1948.

EQUAL PAY

Women's Equal Pay Bill, U. S. Congress

Hearings before the Subcommittee of the House Committee on Education and Labor were held on the Federal Equal Pay Bills (H.R. 4408; H.R. 4273) on three days, February 10, 11, and 13. The House bills were introduced in July 1947 by Congresswomen Helen Gahagan Douglas of California and Margaret Chase Smith of Maine. A companion bill (S. 1556) was also introduced in the Senate by Senators Pepper and Morse.

The general purpose of the 1947 bills and the enforcement procedure provided are essentially the same as in the original bill, S. 1178, introduced in June 1945 by Senators Pepper and Morse. However, the wage discrimination clause in the 1947 bill is different, particularly in that it establishes a second category of prohibited wage differentials against women based on sex, i.e., "work of comparable character, the performance of which requires comparable skills." It is thought that many women in the white-collar occupations, particularly in office work, would come under the "comparable skills" classification.

Both the Secretary of Labor and Miss Frieda S. Miller, the director of the Women's Bureau, appeared and presented testimony at the recent House Subcommittee hearings. Copies of both the Secretary's and Miss Miller's testimony may be obtained from the Women's Bureau.

Others who testified in favor of the bill included Congresswoman Douglas and representatives of the League of Women Voters, Business and Professional Women's Clubs, National Women's Trade Union League, Consumers League, and a number of CIO unions. The National Association of Manufacturers had several witnesses appear against the bills, each of whom was "in favor of the principle" but against the legislation.

United Nations, Resolution on Equal Pay adopted by Social Committee, ECOSOC

The principle that women should receive the same pay as men for equal work was adopted on March 5, 1948, by the Social Committee of the United Nations after protracted debate.

Adoption of the resolution on the subject was unanimous; according to the story in the New York Times, New Zealand, Britain, and Australia abstained from voting because they felt the implementation of the equal pay principle could not be divorced from a number of other economic and employment problems. Under the terms of the resolution the Council reaffirms the principle, and the member countries of the United Nations are called on to implement the principle "in every way, irrespective of nationality, race, language and religion."

In addition, the International Labor Organization, the Commission on the Status of Women, and several nongovernmental organizations, are asked to consider the matter and make suggestions to the Council. With the equal pay question disposed of, the Social Committee completed its work for this session.

JOBS SIMPLIFIED IN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Women workers in the automotive industry have declined markedly in numbers since the end of the war, and comprised only 9 percent of all workers in May 1947 as against the high peak of 26 percent during wartime. The employment of women led to new interest in adjusting machines and tools for the elimination of fatigue and for ease in operation, and this program of efficiency engineering has continued throughout the industry. These factories are better work places now for men because women were employed in them.

A description of some of the changes made in manual operations in the factories, in simplifying jobs, and in reducing muscular efforts is given in an article in "Automobile Facts" for March 1948, published by the Automobile Manufacturers Association. The following is a condensation of the article:

Women by the tens of thousands took jobs in automotive plants to help make guns, tanks, and airplanes. Because of them, the motor industry made major new discoveries on how to make jobs easier for workers - and is putting the new methods to work today on a vast scale. As the program took hold, output rose and material spoilage fell.

The biggest advance, stemming directly from the motor industry's use of women war workers, is being made in the machine tool industry: huge power-driven machines that turn out metal parts for cars and trucks have been changed in design and a whole series of new machines built.

Mechanical conveyors for assembly and sub-assembly work save lifting and carrying. Tools are hung on pulleys, with balancing weights, so they need not be picked up and laid down again. Because of women's strength limitations, "methods engineers" during wartime had to re-study each job and machine, and make changes. Jobs were simplified and muscular effort reduced, so that large numbers of new workers could take over as men left for military service.

Safety features that were adequate for experienced workers proved inadequate for the new wartime help. Plant engineers saw that the operator often had to stand in an unnatural position for some time, or tug and reach to operate control levers, or walk constantly from one end of the machine to the other.

Machine control levers and buttons, one automotive company said, should be grouped to save steps for the operator. Workers should be able to sit or stand naturally at the machines. Built-in safety features were specified, to guard even a careless worker. Muscular effort should be cut to a minimum.

Methods engineers are reviewing every job in automotive plants, to see if some new safety or labor-lightening feature can be added:

Must a worker add oil or coolants to his machine? Instead of carrying them in a bucket to the machine, why not pipe them in from storage tanks?

Must material be taken out of machines for measuring, then put back in for more machining? Why not have a gage that can be shoved into position, to measure the material without removing it from machine?

Can a conveyor line bring material to a machine, and take it away afterward, to save workers' steps? Can automatic devices put material into the machine, clamp it fast, and remove it after the machining is done?

EARNINGS OF OFFICE CLERICAL WORKERS IN ATLANTA

The first report on earnings of office clerical workers in various cities is now available. The Bureau of Labor Statistics is undertaking a comprehensive study of salaries of "white-collar" workers in 10 leading cities, and the one for Atlanta is ready in summary form; earnings for men and women are shown separately.

Straight-time weekly earnings of women general stenographers averaged \$39.42 in December 1947 in 186 Atlanta establishments. Among women clerical workers the highest weekly earnings were for hand bookkeepers who averaged \$44.41, and the lowest were for Class B file clerks who averaged \$30.03 per week. Of the 23 office occupations studied in which women were employed, their earnings in 14 averaged between \$35.00 and \$40.00 per week, while in only 5 occupations did they average less than \$35.00.

Average weekly earnings for men clerical workers ranged from \$28.27 for office boys to \$57.79 for hand bookkeepers. Weekly earnings for men were generally at a higher level than for women in the same occupation. These differences, however, are not necessarily the result of differences in rates paid to men and women for identical occupations in the same establishment. The averages are influenced by variations in wage levels between establishments as well as by differences in length of service of various employees. Men, in 8 of the 14 occupations in which they were employed, averaged more than \$40.00 per week.

The Bureau's study of white-collar workers, in addition to providing data on salaries, also included information on non-wage provisions of employment. Thus, formal provisions for paid vacations were reported for office workers by 181 of the 186 establishments studied. Nearly two-thirds of the firms with vacation plans granted 2 weeks of paid vacation after 1 year of employment. After 2 years of employment, clerical workers were receiving a 2-week paid vacation in approximately 75 percent of the establishments.

All but 4 of the establishments studied granted their office workers from 3 to 12 paid holidays a year. Seven out of 10 firms provided for 5 to 6 paid holidays.

Formal provisions for paid sick leave were in effect in 48 establishments; 31 of the plans provided for from 5 to 10 days of paid sick leave after 1 year of employment.

Atlanta office clerical workers were working a 5-day week in a large majority of the establishments. A 40-hour work week was common, but there was a wide variation in the scheduled work week in effect among the 186 firms studied.

(For further information about this Atlanta survey, write to the Atlanta Regional Office, U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 114 Marietta St., Atlanta 3, Ga.)

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which met at Lake Success January 5-19, recommended that its next session be held in Lebanon in April of 1949. The Government of Lebanon had extended an invitation to it and had offered to contribute \$30,000 to meet the additional expenses that would be incurred in holding a meeting away from Lake Success. The Economic and Social Council approved this recommendation at its February session.