



Facts on Women Workers

WOMEN'S BUREAU
U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF LABOR

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EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN MARCH 1948

Over 800,000 more women were in the civilian labor force both in February and in March 1948 than in the corresponding months of last year, according to Census reports. These women also were a slightly larger proportion of the labor force in 1948 than in 1947. Over the past 7 months the employment of women has continued higher than in the same month of the preceding year.

	March 1948			
	Number of women	Change since February 1948	Total persons	
			Number	Percent women
Population (14 years and over)	54,934,000	+ 45,000	108,124,000	50.8
Civilian labor force	16,760,000	+ 8,000	59,769,000	28.0
Employed	16,085,000	+ 83,000	57,329,000	28.1
Unemployed	675,000	- 75,000	2,440,000	27.7
Armed forces	17,000	+ 1,000	1,236,000	1.4
Nonworkers	38,157,000	+ 36,000	47,119,000	81.0

(U. S. Bureau of the Census)

MINIMUM WAGE ORDERS - Oregon

Oregon has revised two of its minimum-wage orders - public housekeeping (effective January 13, 1948) and mercantile (effective May 5, 1948) - increasing the minimum hourly rate for experienced women and minors in these industries from 40 to 65 cents. This represents an increase of 62½ percent over the minimum rate established for these workers in 1944.

The revised mercantile order reduces the learning period from 6 months to 400 hours and increases the minimum rate for learners from 35 to 50 cents an hour. The new public housekeeping order retains the provisions of the earlier order as to (1) the requirement of a permit before hiring persons as learners and (2) the 400-hour learning period. This order sets a minimum hourly rate of 40 cents for the first half of this learning period and 50 cents for the second half (rates had been 28 and 33 cents, respectively).

LABOR LEGISLATION

Night Work - New York made permanent the temporary relaxation enacted in 1946 and 1947 which permitted the employment of females over 21 years of age until midnight in factories operating on multiple shifts.

Minimum Wage - New York amended its minimum-wage law to require the Industrial Commissioner to file with the secretary of the Labor Department the wage board's report, together with regulations recommended by the board and modifications and amendments approved by the Commissioner. Action on report after hearing may be made within 30 instead of 10 days as formerly. Makes permissive instead of mandatory the provision that Commissioner re-submit matter to same or new wage board if report is rejected.

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

In Iowa, a January 1948 employment survey shows more than 27,000 women employed by 379 firms engaged in manufacturing, trade, utilities, and certain services - an increase in employment in these same firms over 1946 and 1947, but a decline from 1944 and 1945.

New factories opened since the War in 16 counties in southern Illinois are putting out products such as low- and medium-priced women's dresses, condensers, and radio parts, and in these plants women comprise the majority of employees.

In Detroit, the shortage of experienced workers is growing, according to an Employment Service report, and the automobile industry and machinery factories need assemblers, press operators, metal finishers, tool and die makers, pattern makers, form builders, machinists, and welders.

One Girl's Postwar Job

In a story headlined "Thirty Men and a Girl" the job of a girl in the propeller overhaul department of a commercial airline's big overhaul base at Kansas City is described in a recent issue of the Industrial Newsletter, as a "reminder that even in peacetime, plenty of smart, capable American girls will be able to make the grade in spots that were once considered to be 'men's work' only." She is the only woman in the department (with 30 men), measuring width, length, thickness, angle, shank diameter, face and edge alignment for rigid specifications. She has been "miking" 9 to 12 blades a day, for nearly three years, but has had additional experience at inspecting hub parts, overhauling prop governors, and installing other equipment. She is 25 years old and came to this company in 1943; she was formerly a telephone switchboard operator.

The Age Factor

In Brockton, Mass., 64 percent of the women claiming unemployment compensation benefits are at least 35 years old (1,600 women were unemployed and seeking work). On the other hand, in Philadelphia demand continues heavy for women 18 to 60 years of age, with three to twelve months recent experience or training, to operate power sewing machines at piecework rates averaging \$40 to \$60 weekly.

EARNINGS

Average week's earnings of men and women in selected industries, are available from sources which report data by sex, for November 1947:

For manufacturing industries -

The National Industrial Conference Board reports, from establishments representing 25 industries, show that for one week in November men's earnings averaged \$60.37, women's \$40.88; average hours worked were 41.2 and 39.0, respectively.

In Illinois, the State Labor Department reported men's earnings averaged \$61.95, women's \$41.31; average hours worked were 42.6 and 38.5, respectively.

In New York State, the State Labor Department reported men's earnings averaged \$62.22, \$40.46 for women; hours worked were not reported.

For nonmanufacturing industries -

In Illinois in retail apparel shops, men's earnings averaged \$54.17, women's \$40.14. In laundries, dry cleaning and dyeing, men were paid an average of \$46.93, women \$29.01.

In hotels, men's earnings averaged \$37.63, women's \$27.21.

In New York State in laundries, women's earnings averaged \$29.43; hours worked were 38.3. (Men's earnings not available.)

WOMEN IN UNIONS

California Union Membership in 1946

Of the 2,021 locals in California replying to a questionnaire sent out by the California Department of Industrial Relations, 1,922 unions reported the number of women members. Some 18 percent of the total membership in these locals were women. In wartime this proportion was slightly higher, 21 percent in 1944, 22 percent in 1945. According to the report the membership of women in labor unions parallels the extent of their employment in various industries: Women comprised three-fourths of the membership reported in the textile and apparel industry, 40 percent in hotels and eating and drinking places, and approximately one-third in food and tobacco manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade groups.

Railway and Steamship Clerks (AFL) Convention

At the 1947 Convention, 10 women were among the total 1,000 delegates. The following resolution was introduced but was rejected: "That in the event of a lay-off due to depression, reorganization, etc., any married woman whose husband is employed shall be released prior to any other person, married or single, who has dependents to support."

WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD

Japan

The U. S. Women's Bureau has received two very interesting documents: (1) the ordinances putting the Japanese Labor Standards law into effect (translated into English), and of greatest interest is the ordinance affecting women and minors; (2) a press release (for a Japanese press conference) on employment of girls leaving school this spring, issued by the manpower branch of the Labor Division of our military government's Economic and Scientific Section.

The Labor Standards law contains a 6 months' grace period for several of the provisions affecting women so that the law will not be completely in effect until May 1, 1948. The Women's and Minors' Bureau of the Japanese government, getting its activities under way for the enforcement of the law as it relates to women and minors, has already appointed field representatives; an advisory committee is being set up, and plans are under way for issuing informational material and preparing schedules for surveys to be made.

The press release sets forth the main types of employment open to beginners, explains what services and protections are provided for girls under the Employment Security law and the Labor Standards law, and is directed mainly at the textile industry. Under the Labor Standards law the employer is required to tell an applicant the conditions of employment in advance, so that she is thus enabled to choose a job which suits her best in terms of wages, working conditions, and nearness to her home. Textile mills are obliged to recruit as many girls as possible from the locality where the mill is located. Up until now the Japanese textile industry has made a practice of recruiting girls from distant prefectures where its reputation for low wages, poor working conditions, and involuntary labor were not well known. The new recruiting practices will be advantageous to industry as well as to its workers. The girls are also urged to find out about the different types of jobs available, free of charge, from the nearest public employment security office, many of which will give aptitude tests.

Germany

A pamphlet in German on the surplus of women, and their gainful employment, issued by the British Zonal Trade Union Secretariat, has been received in the U. S. Women's Bureau. A summary translation reveals the following information: Today there exists in Germany an excess of women and with it a high percentage of young women and war widows entirely dependent upon gainful employment. The trade unions on principle hold that all occupations should be open to women but that where women are not equally suited to certain types of work special laws should be enacted to protect them against harmful consequences, and at present there are laws prohibiting night work for women, work connected with noxious gases, etc., as well as arduous work. Female factory inspectors are needed in all branches of industry employing women, and the trade unions favor the establishment of special training courses for women inspectors, chosen from the rank and file. Contrary to general belief there is an unfulfilled demand for domestic employees. In September 1946 the Allied Control Council issued a supplement to its wage policy directive, which made permissive equality of wages for women, minors, and men, performing identical work with identical productivity. Today wage schedules are in effect under which women receive from 25 to 30 percent less in earnings than men; in a few cases equal pay for equal work prevails. Women are urged to join trade unions so that they can protect their own interests.