



Facts on Women Workers

WOMEN'S BUREAU
U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF LABOR

JANUARY 31, 1949

EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN IN DECEMBER 1948

The number of women in the labor force declined by about 140,000 between November and December 1948, according to reports of the U. S. Bureau of the Census. The decrease was substantially less than normally occurs at this time of year, apparently because a larger proportion of women farm workers than usual remained in the labor force late in the year. The agricultural employment of women, 1,204,000, was well above that of December 1947.

	December 1948			
	Number of women	Change since November 1948	Total persons	
			Number	Percent women
Population (14 years and over)	55,412,000	+ 51,000	109,036,000	50.8
Civilian labor force	17,802,000	- 140,000	61,375,000	29.0
Employed	17,272,000	- 70,000	59,434,000	29.1
Unemployed	530,000	- 70,000	1,941,000	27.3
Armed forces	14,000	No change	1,453,000	1.0
Nonworkers	37,596,000	+ 191,000	46,208,000	81.4

(U. S. Bureau of the Census)

EQUAL PAY BILLS IN CONGRESS

In the initial weeks of the 81st Congress equal pay bills were introduced in the House of Representatives by Mrs. Douglas of California, and Mrs. Woodhouse of Connecticut.

EARNINGS IN THE MANUFACTURE OF MEN'S AND BOYS' SUITS AND COATS

Hourly earnings of women performing machine sewing operations in the manufacture of men's and boys' coats ranged, among 10 production centers, from an average of \$1.19 in St. Louis to \$1.61 in Newark in August-September 1948, according to a study by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Women's earnings in the non-sewing jobs studied were usually lower than for either machine or hand sewing. In 4 cities, with over three-fourths of the industry's employment in the areas surveyed, the averages for the women sewing operators were: New York \$1.56, Philadelphia \$1.38, Chicago \$1.41, and Rochester \$1.40. On machine-sewing of trousers, women operators averaged \$1.51 an hour in New York, \$1.44 in Philadelphia, \$1.43 in Chicago, \$1.32 in Rochester, and the lowest in St. Louis — \$1.14.

Over half the estimated 24,000 sewing-machine operators in the 10 industry centers were women, although men outnumbered women sewing-machine operators almost 3 to 1 in New York City. In this area, accounting for over half the men in the job in the 10 cities, men sewing-machine operators averaged \$2.02 an hour on coats and \$1.79 on trousers.

EARNINGS IN WOMEN'S DRESS MANUFACTURE

Earnings in the dress manufacturing industry for 11 large cities studied in August 1948 have recently been reported by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Women workers comprise five-sixths of the labor force in this industry, about half of which is concentrated in New York City.

Women sewing-machine operators employed on the single-hand (tailor) system of dress manufacture averaged \$1.70 or more an hour in 7 of 11 large cities studied. In this numerically largest job group, women workers averaged less than \$1 an hour in Atlanta and Dallas, and their earnings exceeded \$2 an hour in Paterson and New York City.

Hand sewers, the second largest job group, averaged \$1 or more an hour in 8 of the 11 cities; city averages for the group ranged from 76 cents in Atlanta to \$1.47 in New York. City averages for women inspectors ranged from 81 cents (Dallas) to \$1.22 an hour in New York, and for thread trimmers from 67 cents in Boston to 94 cents in New York.

Men workers are employed principally as cutters, pressers, and sewing-machine operators (single-hand system). City averages for men pressers, usually paid piece rates and among the highest paid shop workers in the industry, ranged from \$2.22 an hour in St. Louis to \$3.50 an hour in Boston. For men machine-cutters, generally paid on a time basis, city averages ranged from \$1.26 in Dallas to \$2.43 in New York.

Variations in occupational earnings among the cities studied are believed to reflect a combination of factors including differences in type and price of garments made, method of wage payment, unionization, and geographic location.

HOURS OF WORK AND WORKERS' HEALTH

Additional evidence that workers have higher sickness rates under long than under short work hours is contained in the recently reported findings of a study by the U. S. Public Health Service and the Milbank Memorial Fund. The group consists of nearly 2,000 men and women workers in Baltimore, the majority of them employed in war plants. The period covered in the study of hours worked and illnesses was about 2½ years, beginning in January 1941. Weekly hours groups compared were: Long, 50 or more (average 59); medium, 44-49 (average 47); short 24-43 (average 39). In all cases the illness rate was higher for the long-hour than for the short- or the medium-hour group. Long-hour workers in war plants had more illnesses than those in nonwar plants.

The greater sickness rates showed up among long-hour workers regardless of age, and were found for both sexes but were even more marked for women than for men. Of all disabling cases, 44 percent suffered from minor respiratory diseases, which caused 27 percent of all days lost due to disease or accident. It is pointed out that such illnesses are a total loss even to an insured employee, since most of the cases are of too short duration to permit any compensation. Minor respiratory ailments accounted for 21 percent of all days lost in the short-hour group, 28 percent in the medium-hour, and 37 percent in the long-hour group.

MARITAL STATUS OF WOMEN WORKERS

In April 1948, 65 percent of all women in the civilian population were married and 21 percent were single, according to recent U. S. Bureau of the Census estimates. Twenty-three percent of the married women in the population in 1948 were in the labor force, as compared with 17 percent in 1940.

Married women have constituted a growing proportion of the labor force over the years. Of 17 million women in the labor force in April 1948, 48.3 percent were married, 34.6 percent were single, 17 percent widowed or divorced. In 1940 the proportion of married and single women workers was practically reversed: 36.4 percent were married, 48.5 percent were single, 15 percent widowed or divorced.

Women 14 Years Old and Over in the Labor Force

	Number (in thousands)		Percent of woman population		Percent distribution	
	April 1948	March 1940	April 1948	March 1940	April 1948	March 1940
Total	<u>17,155</u>	<u>13,840</u>	<u>31.0</u>	<u>27.4</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Single	5,943	6,710	51.1	48.1	34.6	48.5
Married	8,281	5,040	23.1	16.7	48.3	36.4
Widowed or divorced	2,931	2,090	36.8	32.0	17.1	15.1

ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, FALL 1948

For the third successive year the Nation's college and university enrollments have climbed to a new peak, according to recent reports of the U. S. Office of Education. Veterans, who formed about half the Nation's college student body in 1947, dropped to 42 percent of the total enrollment in 1948. While women increased their total enrollment over the previous year by about 17,000, men still outnumbered women almost 3 to 1. Enrollment figures are given below:

	<u>Fall 1948</u>	<u>Fall 1947</u>
Total students	<u>2,408,000</u>	<u>2,338,000</u>
Men	1,712,000	1,659,000
Women	696,000	679,000
First time in any college	<u>569,000</u>	<u>593,000</u>
Men	370,000	400,000
Women	199,000	193,000
Veterans	<u>1,021,000</u>	<u>1,122,000</u>
Men	1,001,000	1,098,000
Women	20,000	24,000

WOMEN IN UNIONS

CIO Resolution On Women Workers

The CIO National Convention held in November 1948, Portland, Oregon, adopted the following resolution on women workers:

The CIO has always opposed discrimination against women, whether on or off the job.

There are now 17 million working women most of whom must earn a living or supplement the inadequate incomes of their husbands.

Women have fully proved their ability to contribute to community welfare through their productive efforts and their participation in unions.

The CIO has advocated, through collective bargaining and legislation, provisions to take account of women's special needs as workers and mothers but at the same time has supported equal pay for equal work in order to protect the wages of women and men alike.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT

1. We renew our efforts to obtain equal pay for equal work through our bargaining power and through State and Federal laws, and

2. We continue to oppose the so-called Equal Rights Amendment which would outlaw essential labor legislation, and support instead the Women's Status Bill which would maintain such legislation and at the same time help to end discrimination against women, and

3. We continue to support measures that permit women to earn a living without unduly jeopardizing the welfare of their families or their own health, including community projects such as school lunch and child care programs, expansion of opportunities for part-time employment, and amendment of the Federal income tax law to permit sums spent by working mothers for child care to be deducted as a business expense, and

4. We urge our affiliates and the national CIO to make special efforts to encourage and assist women to participate fully as trade unionists and citizens.

Great Britain - Part-Time Work

In England the National Conference of Labor Women, meeting in September 1948 at Weston super Mare, adopted a resolution "pledging support for the production drive, with the proviso that part-time work should be provided for women."

**HAVE
YOU
READ**

**Women's Occupations Through Seven Decades, Bull. No. 218
Women's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor**