WOMEN IN THE WORLD TODAY

Notes on Women's Employment in the United States and Nine European Countries

January 1963
WOMEN IN THE WORLD TODAY

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NOTES ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE UNITED STATES
AND NINE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

January 1963

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
W. Willard Wirtz, Secretary
WOMEN'S BUREAU
Esther Peterson, Director

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P R E F A C E

This report indicates the number and proportion of women workers in the total labor force, their progressive increase in labor force participation, and their major occupations in the United States and nine European countries.

Source material on the United States is from the 1960 Handbook on Women Workers, of the Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor. Source material on the nine European countries was taken from the Labour Gazette, 1961, of the Department of Labour of Canada, prepared by the Canadian Women's Bureau.
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NOTES ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AND NINE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The many social and economic changes of the last half century as well as two world wars have brought about expanded employment of women in the highly industrialized nations.

Women workers as a proportion of the total labor force

Today in the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany, one-third of the total labor force is made up of women; in Denmark women make up more than one-third. In Belgium, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Italy, women number about one-fourth of the total labor force.

Increase in labor force participation

In the past, in highly industrialized countries participation in the labor force by women tended to be the exception, influenced by attitudes, opinions, and even by a particular form of action such as the refusal to hire married women. Many women must work because of economic necessity, to support themselves and their families. However, in some cases, a woman's decision to work is a matter of choice. Her decision to seek employment to earn wages with which to purchase consumer goods and services usually has been weighed carefully against the advantages of leisure and other elements of non-participation in the labor force.

1/ Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden.
NOTES ON WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE UNITED STATES
AND NINE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

In Germany, Denmark, and France about 40 percent of all girls 14 years and over and women are employed. This high labor force participation rate for women is due to a number of factors. The large proportion of women in the population of Germany after the second world war, together with the critical labor shortage, brought about a 43 percent increase in the number of women workers during the period 1950-60.

In Denmark the number of married women wage earners is increasing steadily. From 1950 to 1955 the number of married women in the population increased 5.7 percent, but the number of married women wage earners increased 16.2 percent. During the same period, the number of women not in the labor force increased by only 3.6 percent. The entry of married women into the labor force is made easier by various benefits for working mothers, such as maternity leave and a system of creches, nurseries, and kindergartens subsidized by national and local authorities and run by local authorities, charitable organizations, and employers.

France also has a system of maternity benefits, as well as creches and nurseries available to working mothers. In France woman's role is growing in importance in the expanded health, welfare, and clerical fields.

In the United States, in addition to other socio-economic changes responsible for the increased numbers of women in the labor force, one factor has been rapid population growth. However, the female population 14 years of age and over did not quite triple (from 25 million women in 1900 to 64 million in 1960), while the female labor force more than quadrupled during the same period. In 1900 only 20 percent of all women and girls 14 years and over in the population were employed, and in 1940 about 28 percent. The number of all employed women and girls 14 years and over in the population reached a high of 37 percent during World War II, and then dropped sharply to 30 percent with the return of war veterans to civilian jobs, before starting to climb again. In 1960, 36 percent of all

2/ A day nursery for infants.
3/ Girls 14 and 15 constitute less than 1 percent of the total work force.
women and girls 14 years and over were employed; over one-half of the women workers were married.

In Belgium, Norway, and Italy about 25 percent of all girls 15 years and over and women are employed. In Belgium a high proportion are employed in manufacturing and services; about 36 percent are married.

In Norway the demand for women workers in all industries has exceeded the supply. The number of women employed in manufacturing, the professions, and service occupations (except domestic service) has increased. There has been a corresponding decrease in the number of women employed in agriculture and domestic service. At the same time, a striking rise in the proportion of married women in the population has brought about a rapid increase in the number of married women working for pay outside the home.

In Italy the largest number of women are employed in the service industries, while the proportion of women employed in manufacturing has fallen steadily since the war. A former law tended to reduce the number of employed women because it allowed employers to dismiss women when they married. Benefits required for working mothers, such as maternity leave, rest periods for nursing mothers, and creches, also have been a negative influence.

In the Netherlands only 14 percent of all the women workers are married. One cause of this low rate is legislation which restricts married women from working. In 1958 some laws were amended to allow married women to work in the national civil service and to teach in public primary schools.

Major occupations of women

The service industries, personal and professional, employ the largest number of women in the European countries except Great Britain and Germany (manufacturing) and Denmark (unpaid family workers). In Great Britain work in potteries and in textile mills is traditional for married women; women comprise 65 percent of all textile workers. The gradual but widespread

4/ See footnote 1 on page 1.
shift in employment from goods-producing to service-producing industries has extended job opportunities for women in the service industries.

In the United States 69 percent of all clerical workers are women; in Great Britain and France, about 52 percent. The clerical category includes secretaries, stenographers, typists, bookkeepers, telephone operators, cashiers, and related workers. The large and growing number of women in clerical work is directly related to the expanding activities of business and financial organizations and of government.

The demand for women workers has been accompanied by greater opportunities for their education and training. The changing nature of work, brought about by scientific and technological advances, requires the use of new sources of labor, helps to change traditional attitudes toward women working, and facilitates the entry of women into the labor force.

The following table compares women's employment in the United States and nine European countries.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total employed women</th>
<th>Women as percent of total workers</th>
<th>Women as percent of clerical workers</th>
<th>Married women as percent of all women workers</th>
<th>Percent of girls and women who work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27 1/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>721,800</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42 2/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>6,500,000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39 1/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>7,000,000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>40 1/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>8,197,000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>5,771,000</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>25 1/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>922,000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>328,000</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>23,750,000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1/ Over 15 years of age.
2/ Over 14 years of age.