WOMEN WORKERS

SOME BASIC STATISTICS

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INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet was originally assembled as a background paper for a conference for working women held in Boston in May 1970. It has been rewritten and expanded for publication, but its original purpose remains the same: to present the basic statistical information available about women who work.

The information has been organized around a series of questions that are relevant to the tasks facing the women's movement; both the present situation and long-term trends are surveyed for each question. In each section the data are presented in as simple and clear a form as possible; in this way, the reader can find the answer to some specific question, and new questions can arise naturally out of the basic data. The statistical information presented concerns women; the condition of women workers is related to the general situation of workers in the United States, and the pamphlet should be used with this in mind (for a good general survey, see Victoria Bonnell and Michael Reich's "Workers and the American Economy: Data on the Labor Force", published by the New England Free Press, 1969). The five sections are briefly described in the following paragraphs, along with some obvious questions raised by the data presented.

SECTION I surveys the basic facts about women in the labor force: how many women work, whether they work part-time or full-time, part-year or the year round, and which women work (age, marital status, working mothers and women heads of families). On the one hand, women are a large and increasing portion of the labor force; on the other, most working women work part-time or part of the year. What does this mean in terms of the consciousness of women, both 'in the home' (part-time or full-time, part-year or year round) and as workers? Should women be reached through their communities or on the job? The median age of women workers has been rising, and most women who work are married, living with their husbands, and contributing substantially to family income. Mothers with children under 18 years of age are entering the labor force in increasing numbers, and a large proportion of these mothers have young children below school age. What potential do the evident contradictions between this reality and the highly developed ideology of full-time homemaker/mother in the United States have for the expansion of a radical women's movement? Finally, many women are 'heads of families', as defined by U.S. government survey techniques, and many more than these earn half or more of their family's income; what meaning do these widespread phenomena, which challenge the economic and ideological bases of the nuclear family unit, have for the development of the women's movement?

SECTION II examines the kinds of jobs women hold and SECTION III provides some basic data on what working women get paid. Taken together these two sections raise the general questions of the social tracking of women into low-paid jobs. The data on particular job categories and on long-term trends show that the position of women in the different types of work varies greatly and is changing, and suggest that such factors must be taken into account in any political work done with working women.

SECTION IV documents the additional oppression of nonwhite women workers. From every point of view, nonwhite women are more oppressed than white women: a larger proportion work, they are less apt to hold full-time jobs the year round, proportionately more nonwhite mothers with children under 18 work, a larger proportion of their children are below school age, and they hold jobs that pay significantly less than jobs held by white women or by nonwhite or white men. The meaning of these fairly well-known facts for the women's movement and for the movement as a whole is already a lively debate.

SECTION V covers some of the basic data available about the participation of women in labor unions. An even smaller proportion of working women than of working men are members of labor unions; on the other hand, the proportion of union members who are women is increasing slightly. Should women form caucuses in their unions? Should they organize their own unions?

It is important to understand what it means to use data collected by the U.S. government. Bonnell and Reich give a good explanation of the many problems involved in using U.S. government statistics in their pamphlet, "Workers and the American Economy". They remind us that the U.S. government collects and publishes data for its own purposes, and that therefore much of the information we might want is often not available. In addition, the categories used in collecting and presenting the data are often deceptive (for example, the distinction between blue and white collar work is less and less clear as white collar jobs become increasingly mechanized and in many respects resemble assembly line work).

Finally, the categories used in the government data are not only deceptive, but frequently they are both misleading and offensive. For example, the category 'nonwhite' includes Blacks (about 92% of nonwhites), Orientals, and American Indians, while Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans are classified as 'whites'; from the point of view of the present situation in the United States, statistics using these categories inevitably obscure the real facts to some extent. In addition, to define one group (e.g. 'nonwhites') in terms of its not being another group (e.g. 'whites') is inherently insulting; other examples of unpleasant terminology in this pamphlet are 'head of family', statistics broken down 'by Color', and possibly 'women' (=wo-men as opposed to 'men'). It was felt to be impossible at this point, and using government data, to deal with these problems of inadequate categories and offensive terminology. Hopefully this pamphlet will help people to do what is necessary to get the information they need, and to do the things that have to be done.

Note: Statistics are difficult if not impossible to read through and understand; the following remarks may help.

In this pamphlet the data is frequently presented from two important and different points of view: on the one hand women can be considered with respect to men or to all persons (men and women) for a particular question; on the other hand, a subgroup of women (e.g., women who work, mothers, nonwhite women) can be considered with respect to all women, or to another subgroup of women. For example, the numbers of women in the population who work can be examined by looking at women workers as a percent of all workers (men and women), and also by looking at women workers as a percent of all women in the population. In one case the ques-

tion is: What proportion of workers are women? In the other: What proportion of women work?

A very important concept is the 'percent distribution', in which a group is broken down with respect to some characteristic into proportional parts of 100 percent, so that one can understand its internal composition. For example, of all women who work, what proportions are married, single, widowed, etc. (Chart C); or, of all women who work, what proportions work full-time or part-time, year-round or part-year (Table 3); or, of mothers who work, what proportions have children of various ages (Chart G).

LIST OF TABLES AND CHARTS

I. WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE

1. HOW MANY WOMEN WORK?

a. Numbers

More women are working today in the United States than ever before. In 1969, women made up 38% of the labor force; this means that nearly two out of five workers is a woman. It is also important to examine what proportion of the female population in the United States works: by 1969, more than two out of five women were in the labor force (in contrast, more than four out of five men were in the labor force). The tendency for more women to participate in the labor force is not a fluctuation or a fad, but a permanent trend. Table 1 summarizes the data:

Table 1: Women in the Labor Force, Selected Years, 1890-1968
(women 16 years of age and over)

Year	Number	As % of all workers	As % of woman population
1890	3,704,000	17.0	18.2
1900	4,999,000	18.1	20.0
1920	8,229,000	20.4	22.7
1930	10,396,000	21.9	23.6
1940	13,783,000	25.4	28.9
1950	17,882,000	29.1	33.0
1960	22,985,000	33.3	37.4
1968	29,204,000	37.1	41.6
1969	30,512,000	37.8	42.7

If only women in the principal working age group (18 to 64 years of age) are considered, the rising proportion of women in the labor force reveals itself even more clearly: by 1968, nearly one out of two workers were women in this age group (table 2).

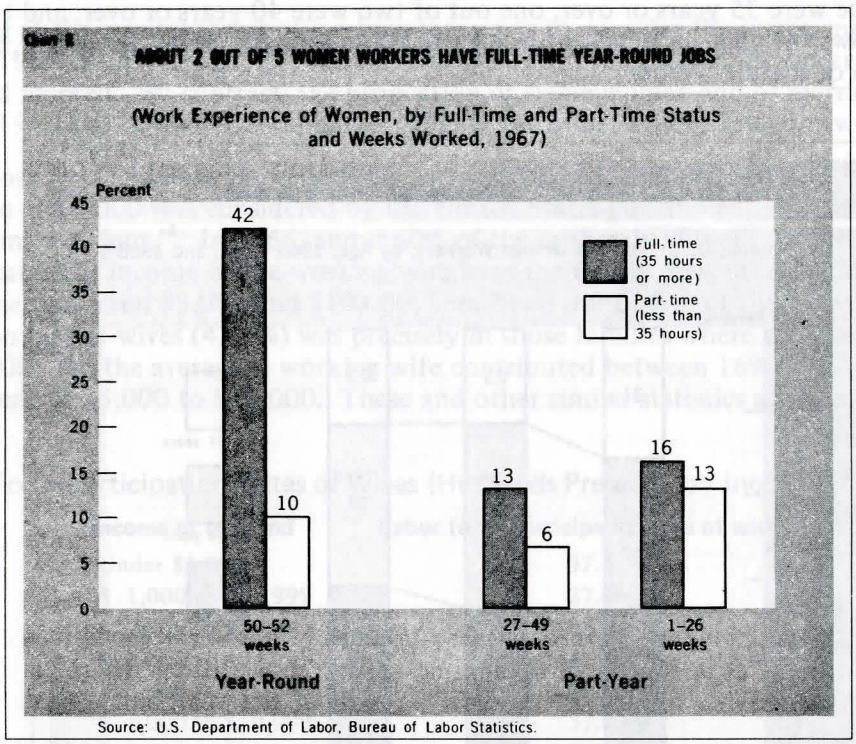
Table 2: Labor Force Participation Rates of Women 18 to 64 Years of Age, Selected Years, 1947-68[1]

Year	% of all workers
1947	34.8
1950	37.2
1954	38.6
1958	41.8
1962	43.5
1966	46.5
1968	48.2

b. Part-time and part-year work[2]

Not all women work full-time (35 hours or more a week) or the year round (50 to 52 weeks). About three out of five women who worked in 1967 held part-time or part-year jobs (by contrast, 70% of men with work experience in 1967 were full-time year-round workers). Chart A summarizes the experience of women in 1967 with respect to part-time and part-year work:

Chart A



There has been a trend for more women to work full-time the year round. Table 3 suggests that the proportion of working women who work part-time is remaining roughly stable (about 10% the year round, and about 20% part-year), but that a greater percentage of women are tending now to work full-time the year round.

Table 3: Work Experience of Women, 1950, 1960, 1967 (percent distribution)

Work experience	1950	1960	1967
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*
Year-round (50-52 weeks)			
Full-time	36.8	36.9	42.1
Part-time	8.2	10.0	9.9
Part-year:			
27-49 weeks			
Full-time	17.9	14.6	13.0
Part-time	5.1	6.6	6.2
1-26 weeks			
Full-time	18.7	16.0	15.4
Part-time	13.2	15.8	13.3

2. WHO ARE THE WOMEN WHO WORK?

a. Age

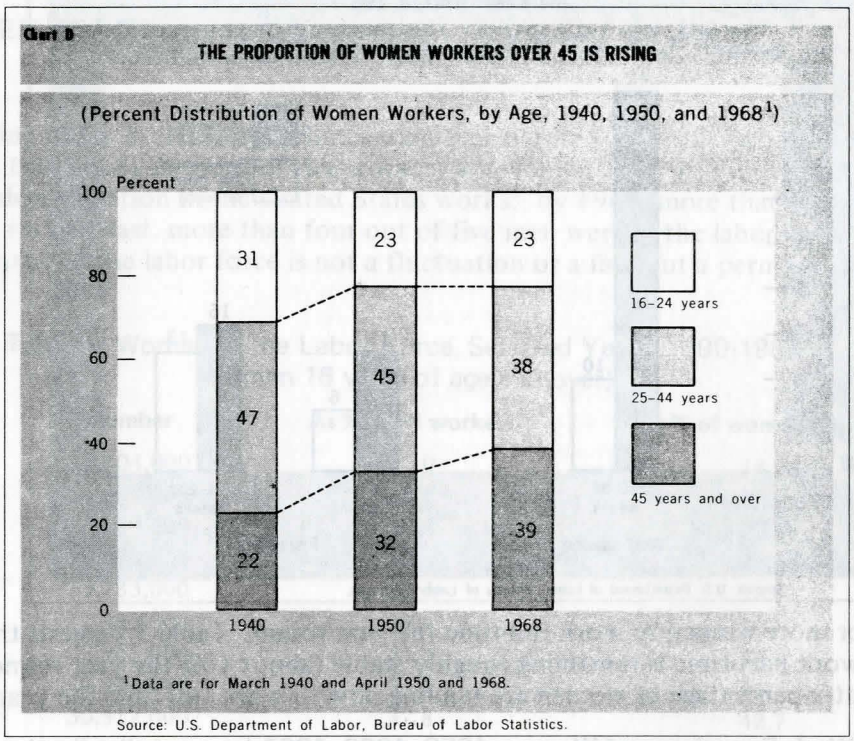
The median age (half above/half below) of women workers has been rising (table 4). Between 1960 and 1968, large numbers of women from the generation of war and postwar babies entered the labor force; their numbers counterbalanced the two- and three-fold increase in the number of women over 45 entering the labor force, and thus in table 4 the median age remains about the same for these years.

Table 4: Median Age of Women Workers, Selected Years, 1900-1968

Year	Median age
1900	26
1940	32
1945	34
1950	37
1960	41
1968	40

In 1940, about two out of five women workers were 35 years of age or over; in 1968 almost three out of five women in the labor force were 35 years or over, one out of two were 40 years or over, and two out of five were 45 or over. Chart B shows the changes in labor force participation of women by age group, and illustrates the increasing particupation of mature women.

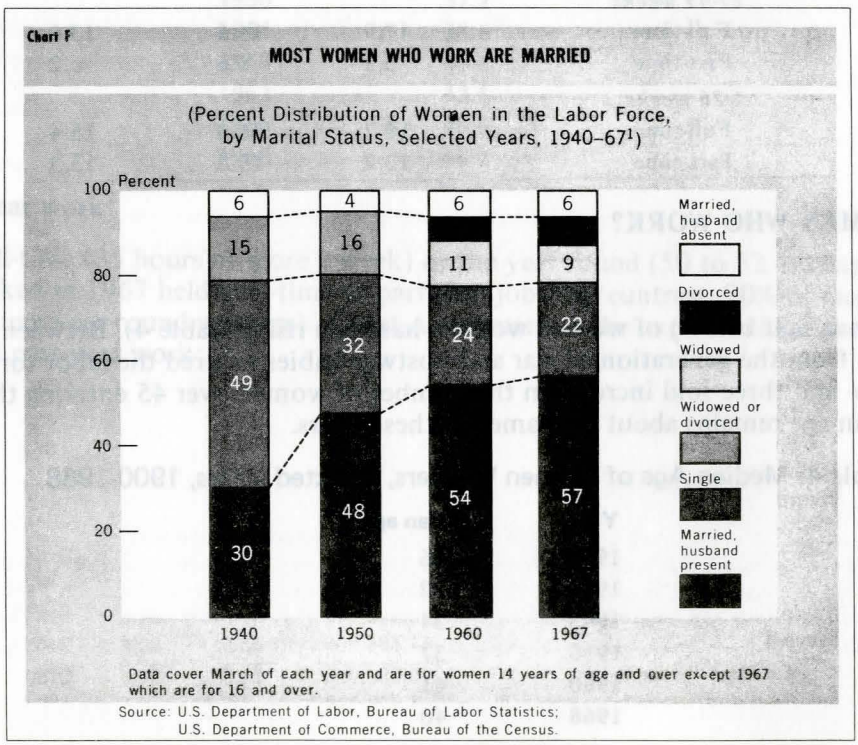
Chart B



b. Marital status

Most women who work are married. Almost three out of five women workers are married and living with their husbands; one out of five is single; of the remaining one out of five women workers, three-quarters (or about 15% of all women workers) are widowed or divorced, and one-quarter (or about 5% of all women workers) are married and not living with their husbands. The percentage of women workers who are married and living with their husbands has increased substantially (chart C).

Chart C



Another way of looking at the marital status of working women is to consider the increasing proportion of married women who work. In 1969, 39.6% of married women who lived with their husbands worked, while in 1940 only 14.7% of this group had worked. By contrast, the proportion of single women and of married women with husbands absent who worked in 1940 and in 1969 has remained roughly the same, at about one in two.[3]

Married women who work make an important, and not marginal, contribution to family income. For example, in 1966 dollars, an income of $7,000 was considered by the United States government to be a 'modest but adequate income for an urban family of four.'[4] In 1966, about 60% of the husbands of working wives had incomes of less than $7,000; in many cases the income of the working wife kept the family above the $7,000 line. In general, where the husband earned between $3,000 and $10,000, about two out of five of the wives worked; the highest labor force participation rate of wives (42.6%) was precisely in those families where the husband's income was between $5,000 and $7,000. On the average, a working wife contributed between 16% and 28% of the income of families with total income of $5,000 to $15,000. These and other similar statistics are summarized in tables 5 and 6.[5]

Table 5: Labor Force Participation Rates of Wives (Husbands Present), by Income of Husbands in 1966

Income of husband	Labor force participation rate of wives
Under $1,000	37.4
$ 1,000 to $ 1,999	27.0
$ 2,000 to $ 2,999	33.0
$ 3,000 to $ 4,999	41.4
$ 5,000 to $ 6,999	42.6
$ 7,000 to $ 9,999	37.9
$10,000 and over	28.8

Table 6: Median Percent of Family Income Accounted for by Wives' Earnings in 1966

Family income	Median percent
Under $2,000	6.0
$ 2,000 to $ 2,999	12.2
$ 3,000 to $ 4,999	14.4
$ 5,000 to $ 6,999	15.8
$ 7,000 to $ 9,999	23.0
$10,000 to $14,999	28.1
$15,000 and over	22.9

c. Working mothers and women heads of families

In 1967 there were 10.6 million mothers with children under 18 years of age in the labor force; in other words, 38.2% (nearly two out of five) of all mothers with children under 18 worked. For three out of five of these working mothers, their children were of school age, but substantial numbers of women with children under 6 also worked (table 7).

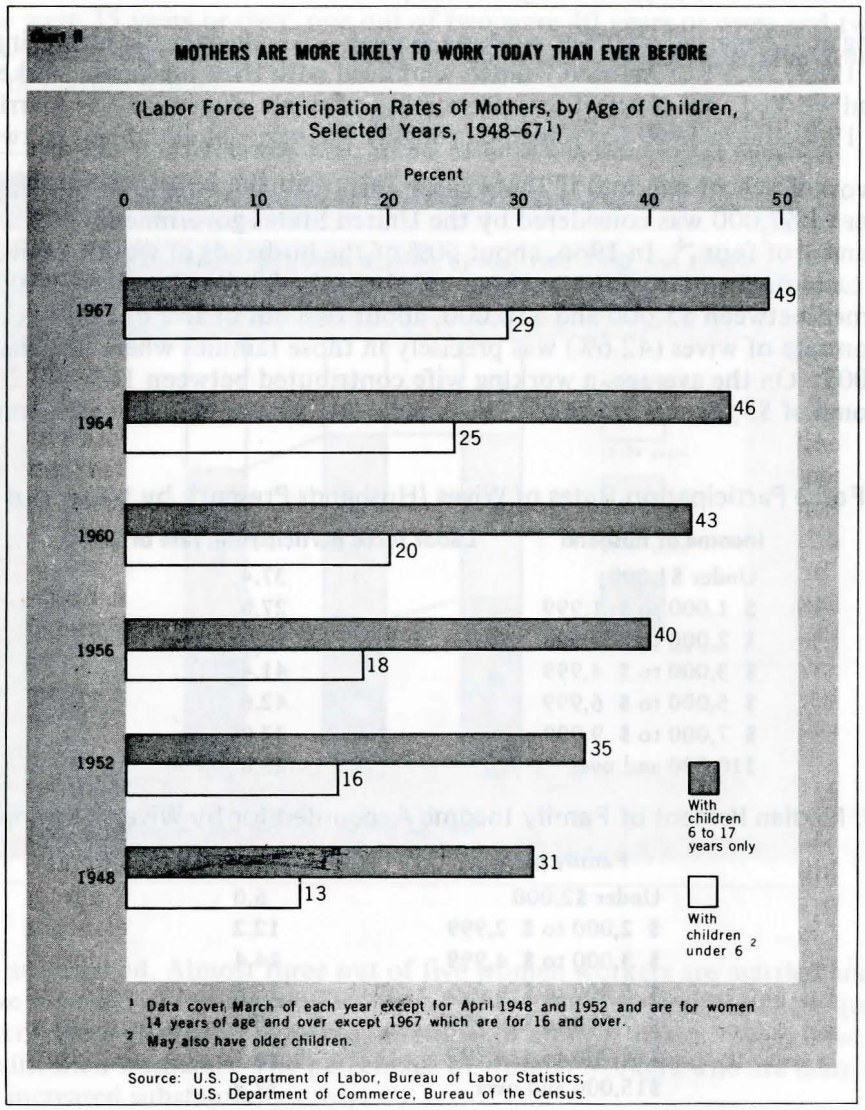
Table 7: Mothers in the Labor Force by Age of Children, 1967
(mothers 16 years of age and over)

Age of children	% in labor force	% distribution
All mothers with children under 18	*38.2*	*100.0*
Mothers with children 6 to 17 only	48.6	60.9
Mothers with children 3 to 5 (none under 3)	34.5	18.3
Mothers with children under 3	25.0	20.8

Mothers with children under 18 years of age have been entering the labor force at a rapid rate. In 1940, 8.6% of mothers with children under 18 worked; by 1967, 38.2% were in the labor force.[6] Chart D (next page) shows the trends since 1948.

The 'head of family' is defined in publications of the Bureau of the Census as follows: 'One person in each family was designated as the head. The head of a family is usually the person regarded as the head by members of the family. Women are not classified as heads if their husbands are resident members of the family at the time of the survey.' In 1967, over one out of ten families had a woman as the head (5.2 million families); almost half the women

Chart D



family heads were widows, and almost two-fifths were separated or divorced. More than half the women family heads were in the labor force in 1967 (in contrast to only 37% of wives living with their husbands); of the working women family heads, more than half were the sole breadwinners for their families.[7]

II. WHAT KINDS OF JOBS DO WOMEN HOLD?[8]

Women and men do not hold the same kinds of jobs. Chart E (next page) shows the differences very clearly, from two points of view: the numbers of women in a particular occupation group compared to the numbers of men in that same group, and the distribution of women workers in the different kinds of jobs (these two ways of examining the types of jobs held by women will be discussed in more detail below).

Women are a large proportion of the total number of workers in the service and white collar categories. For example, in 1968 women made up 65% of all workers in service jobs and 46% of those in white collar jobs, but they were only 17% of all workers in blue collar jobs and 15% of those in farm work.[9]

It is also important to consider the distribution of women workers in the various kinds of jobs. Most women who work hold white collar jobs (59%, or about three out of five women workers). About one out of six women workers (17%) are blue collar workers, over one out of five (22%) are service workers, and a small number (2%) are farm workers (comparable figures for men are: 40% white collar, 47% blue collar, 7% service, and 6% farm[10]).

These large-scale percentages are somewhat misleading, and it is more interesting to examine the particular jobs held by women in each of the major categories of work. Table 8 (next page) supplies the detailed data.

Chart E

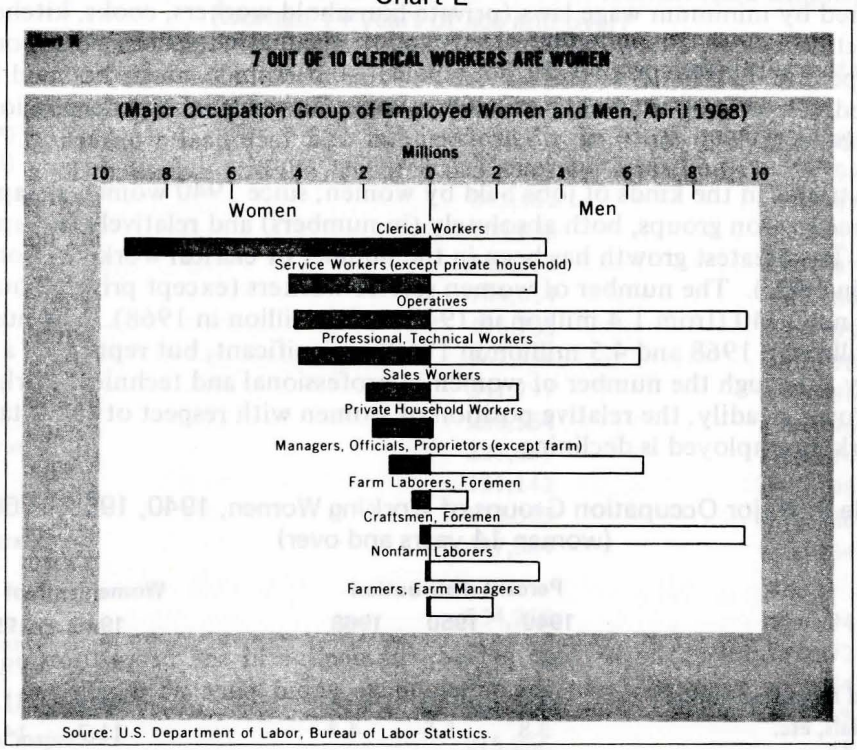


Table 8: Major Occupation Groups of Working Women, 1969
(women 16 years of age and over)

Occupation	Women employees (,000)	% distribution	Women as % of total employed
Total	*29,084*	*100.0*	*37.3*
White collar workers	*17,270*	*59.3*	
Professional, technical and kindred workers	4,018	13.8	37.3
Managers, officials, and proprietors	1,260	4.3	15.8
Clerical and kindred workers	9,975	34.3	74.5
Sales workers	2,017	6.9	43.0
Blue collar workers	*4,974*	*17.1*	
Craftsmen, foremen	339	1.2	3.3
Operatives and kindred workers	4,489	15.4	31.2
Nonfarm laborers	146	.5	4.0
Service workers	*6,271*	*21.6*	
Private household workers	1,592	5.5	97.6
Other service workers	4,679	16.1	59.3
Farm workers	*568*	*2.0*	
Farmers, farm managers	79	.3	4.3
Farm laborers, foremen	489	1.7	33.8

Table 8 shows that among the different white collar occupations, women are concentrated in the low-paid clerical category; one out of every three women who work is a clerical worker, and three out of four clerical workers are women. Although many women work as professional and technical workers, they tend to hold relatively low-paying, low-status jobs (for example, teachers); moreover, the percentage of women employed in this category is falling steadily (see table 9 below).

The percentage of women working in blue collar occupations is relatively small (17.1% in 1969), and is fluctuating but on the whole declining in relative importance (see table 9 below). However, virtually all of these women work as operatives and kindred workers, that is, as the lower-level 'unskilled' factory workers who constitute more than one-half of blue-collar workers.[11] This means that three out of ten operatives are women, and this proportion is slowly growing (table 9).

Women constitute well over half the workers in the service occupations. These are usually low-paying non-unionized jobs, generally not covered by minimum wage laws (private household workers, cooks, kitchen workers, waitresses, hospital attendents, practical nurses, charwomen, etc.). Essentially all private household workers (e.g. maids) are women; the number of private household workers has remained substantially constant, and thus their relative importance has decreased. On the other hand, the number of jobs in other service occupations has increased, and most of these jobs have been taken by women.

Table 9 summarizes the trends in the kinds of jobs held by women; since 1940 women's employment has expanded in nearly all the major occupation groups, both absolutely (in numbers) and relatively (as a proportion of total number of employees). The greatest growth has been in the number of clerical workers (from 2.5 million women in 1940, to 9.3 million in 1968). The number of women service workers (except private household workers) has also more than tripled since 1940 (from 1.4 million in 1940 to 4.3 million in 1968). The numbers of women working as operatives (4.1 million in 1968 and 4.5 million in 1969) is significant, but represents a growth of only about 28% since 1950. Finally, although the number of women in professional and technical work is also large (4.0 million in 1968) and has grown steadily, the relative position of women with respect ot the total number of professional and technical workers employed is declining.

Table 9: Major Occupation Groups of Working Women, 1940, 1950, 1968
(women 14 years and over)

Occupation	Percent distribution			Women as % of total employed		
	1940	1950	1968	1940	1950	1968
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*25.9*	*29.3*	*36.6*
Professional and technical workers	13.2	10.8	14.4	45.4	41.8	38.6
Managers, officials, etc.	3.8	5.5	4.3	11.7	14.8	15.7
Clerical workers, etc.	21.2	26.4	33.3	52.6	59.3	72.6
Sales workers	7.0	8.8	6.8	27.9	39.0	39.7
Craftsmen, foremen	.9	1.1	1.1	2.1	2.4	3.3
Operatives	18.4	18.7	14.8	25.7	26.9	29.9
Nonfarm laborers	.8	.4	.4	3.2	2.2	3.5
Private household	17.6	10.3	7.2	93.8	92.1	97.6
Other service workers	11.3	12.6	15.6	40.1	45.4	57.0
Farmers, farm managers	5.8	1.5	.3	8.0	5.5	4.1
Farm laborers, foremen		3.9	1.7		27.4	28.0

Table 10 (next page) gives examples of specific occupations in which 100,000 or more women were employed in 1960, together with the percentages representing the proportion of the total number of persons employed in the specific occupation who are women. The table shows that women are concentrated in a relatively small number of occupations. About one-third of all women working in 1960 were in seven occupations: secretaries, saleswomen in retail trade, general private household workers, teachers in elementary schools, bookkeepers, waitresses, and professional nurses. About two-thirds of the 21.2 million women working in 1960 were in 36 individual occupations (those listed in table 10).

Table 10: Detailed Occupations in which 100,000 or more Women were Employed, 1960
(women 14 years of age and over)

Occupation	Number of women workers	Women as % of total employed
White collar workers		
Teachers (elementary school)	860,413	86
Nurses (professional)	567,884	98
Teachers (secondary school)	243,452	47
Musicians and music teachers	109,638	57
Secretaries	1,423,352	97
Bookkeepers	764,054	84
Typists	496,735	95
Cashiers	367,954	78
Telephone operators	341,797	96
Stenographers	258,554	96
Office machine operators	227,849	74
Receptionists	131,142	98
File clerks	112,323	86
Saleswomen (retail trade)	1,397,364	54
Blue collar workers		
Sewers and stitchers	534,258	94
Laundry and dry cleaning operatives	277,396	72
Assemblers	270,769	44
Operatives (apparel, accessories)	270,619	75
Checkers, examiners, inspectors	215,066	45
Operatives (electrical machinery, equipment, supplies)	138,001	48
Operatives (yarn, thread, fabric mills)	103,399	44
Service workers		
Private household workers	1,162,683	96
Waitresses	714,827	87
Cooks (except private household)	361,772	64
Babysitters	319,735	98
Attendents (hospitals, etc.)	288,268	74
Hairdressers and cosmetologists	267,050	89
Packers and wrappers	262,935	60
Practical nurses	197,115	96
Kitchen workers (except private household)	179,796	59
Chambermaids, maids (except private household)	162,433	98
Housekeepers (private household)	143,290	99
Charwomen and cleaners	122,728	68
Housekeepers and stewardesses (except private household)	117,693	81
Dressmakers and seamstresses (except factory)	115,252	97
Counter and fountain workers	112,547	71

III. WHAT DO WOMEN WORKERS GET PAID?

Women earn considerably less than men. This can be seen immediately by examining the median wage or salary incomes of women and men. In 1968, the median wage or salary income of a woman working full-time and the year round was $4,457. The comparable income of a man in 1968 was $7,664. In other words, in 1968 a woman working full-time and year-round tended to be paid about 58% of what a man who worked full-time and year-round was paid. Table 11 (next page) shows that this 'earnings gap' has been steadily increasing.

Table 12 (next page) shows the earnings gaps in each one of the major occupation groups. The gaps are especially large for two groups in which increasing numbers of women work – sales workers and service workers.

Table 11: Wage or Salary Income of Full-time Year-round Workers, by Sex, 1955-1968

Year	Median income		Women's median income as percent of men's
	Women	Men	
1955	$2,719	$4,252	63.9
1956	2,827	4,466	63.3
1957	3,008	4,713	63.8
1958	3,102	4,927	63.0
1959	3,193	5,209	61.3
1960	3,293	5,417	60.8
1961	3,351	5,644	59.4
1962	3,446	5,794	59.5
1963	3,561	5,978	59.6
1964	3,690	6,195	59.6
1965	3,823	6,375	60.0
1966	3,973	6,848	58.0
1967	4,150	7,182	57.8
1968	4,457	7,664	58.2

Table 12: Median Wage or Salary Income of Full-time Year-round Workers, by Sex and Selected Major Occupation Group, 1968

Major occupation group	Median income		Women's median income as percent of men's
	Women	Men	
Total	*$4,457*	*$7,664*	*58.2*
Professional, technical and kindred workers	6,691	10,151	65.9
Managers, officials and proprietors	5,635	10,340	54.5
Clerical and kindred workers	4,789	7,351	65.1
Sales workers	3,461	8,549	40.5
Craftsmen, foremen	4,625	7,978	58.0
Operatives and kindred workers	3,991	6,738	59.2
Service workers (except private household)	3,332	6,058	55.0

Table 13 shows the trends in the earnings gap in the major occupation groups. Except for women professional and technical workers (whose position is worsening in other ways; see table 9), the earnings gap stayed about the same or increased in every occupation group. The greatest deterioration occurred in the incomes of clerical workers and operatives, two groups whose median income as a percentage of men's had been relatively high.

Table 13: Women's Median Wage or Salary Income as Percent of Men's, by Selected Major Occupation Group, 1956-1966 (year-round full-time workers 14 years of age and over)

Major occupation group	1956	1958	1960	1962	1964	1966
Professional, technical and kindred workers	62.4	63.7	64.0	66.1	64.3	65.1
Managers, officials and proprietors	59.1	58.6	57.6	57.8	55.5	54.0
Clerical and kindred workers	71.7	70.0	68.3	68.6	66.2	66.5
Sales workers	41.8	43.8	42.2	43.6	40.4	41.0
Operatives and kindred workers	62.1	61.5	59.7	59.4	57.8	55.9
Service workers (except private household)	55.4	53.2	59.1	51.8	53.7	55.4

Finally, it should be remembered that these are wage or salary incomes for women working full-time and the year round, and only about 42% of working women work full-time and the year round (table 3). Table 14 shows the median money earnings of women in 1967 according to work experience: although a woman working full-time the year round received $4,150, the woman who worked part-time received median money earnings of only $747, and only $1,404 if she worked part-time the year round.[12]

Table 14: Median Money Earnings of Women Workers in 1967, by Work Experience (women 14 years and over)

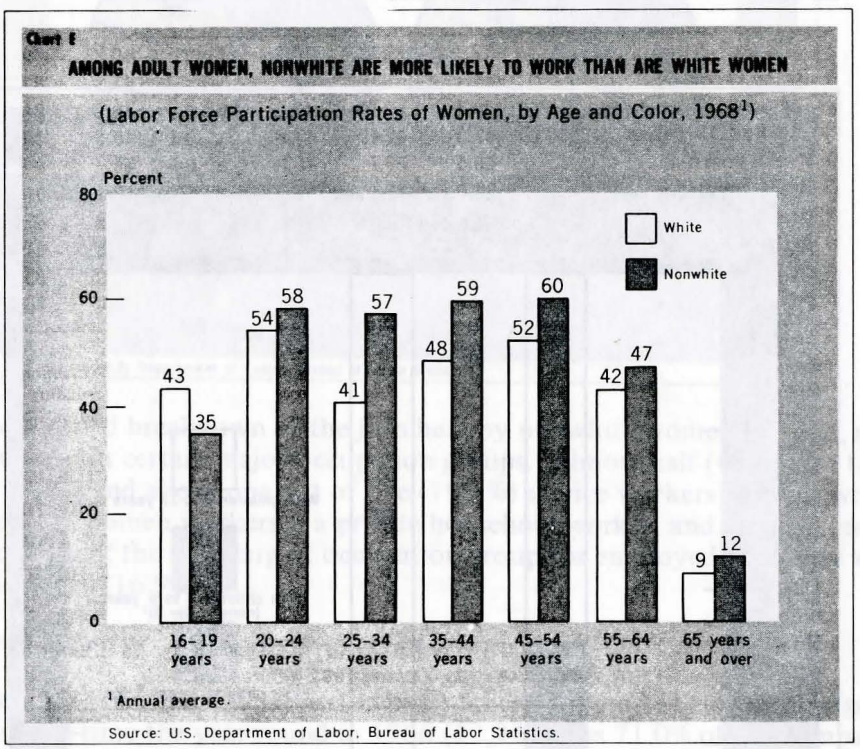
Work experience	Women with full-time jobs	Women with part-time jobs
Total	*$3,296*	*$ 747*
50 to 52 weeks	4,150	1,404
40 to 49 weeks	3,140	1,186
27 to 39 weeks	2,162	950
14 to 26 weeks	1,348	583
13 weeks or less	470	326

IV. NONWHITE WOMEN WORKERS[13]

1. NUMBERS AND AGE

In 1968, 3.8 million nonwhite women were in the labor force; they made up about 13% of all women workers, and about 43% of all nonwhite workers. In virtually all age groups a significantly larger proportion of nonwhite women were in the labor force than of white women (chart F). Nonwhite women workers are somewhat younger than white women workers; in 1968 the median age of nonwhite women workers was about 38 years.[14]

Chart F



There has been a steady increase in the participation of nonwhite women in the labor force. In the principal working age group (18 to 64 years of age), the rate has risen from 50.7% in 1954 to 56.1% in 1968, as compared with the rise from 38.6% to 48.2% for all women in this age group between 1954 and 1968.[15]

2. PART-TIME AND PART-YEAR WORK[16]

A somewhat smaller percentage of nonwhite women than of white women work at full-time jobs the year round: in 1967, 42.4% of working white women but only 40.2% of working nonwhite women held full-time year-round jobs. Similarly, more nonwhite women who find full-time jobs hold them for only part of the year: in 1967, 31.5% of nonwhite women, but only 27.9% of white women, worked at full-time jobs on part-year schedules. About the same proportion of nonwhite and white women workers held part-time jobs (in 1967, 28.3% of nonwhite and 29.6% of white women workers).

3. NONWHITE WORKING MOTHERS AND HEADS OF FAMILIES

Nonwhite working mothers with children under 18 years of age totalled 1.1 million or 12% of all working mothers in 1967. Proportionately more nonwhite mothers work than white mothers (table 15); in addition, a larger proportion of nonwhite mothers who work have children below school age (chart G).

Table 15

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF MOTHERS (HUSBAND PRESENT), BY COLOR AND BY AGE OF CHILDREN, MARCH 1967

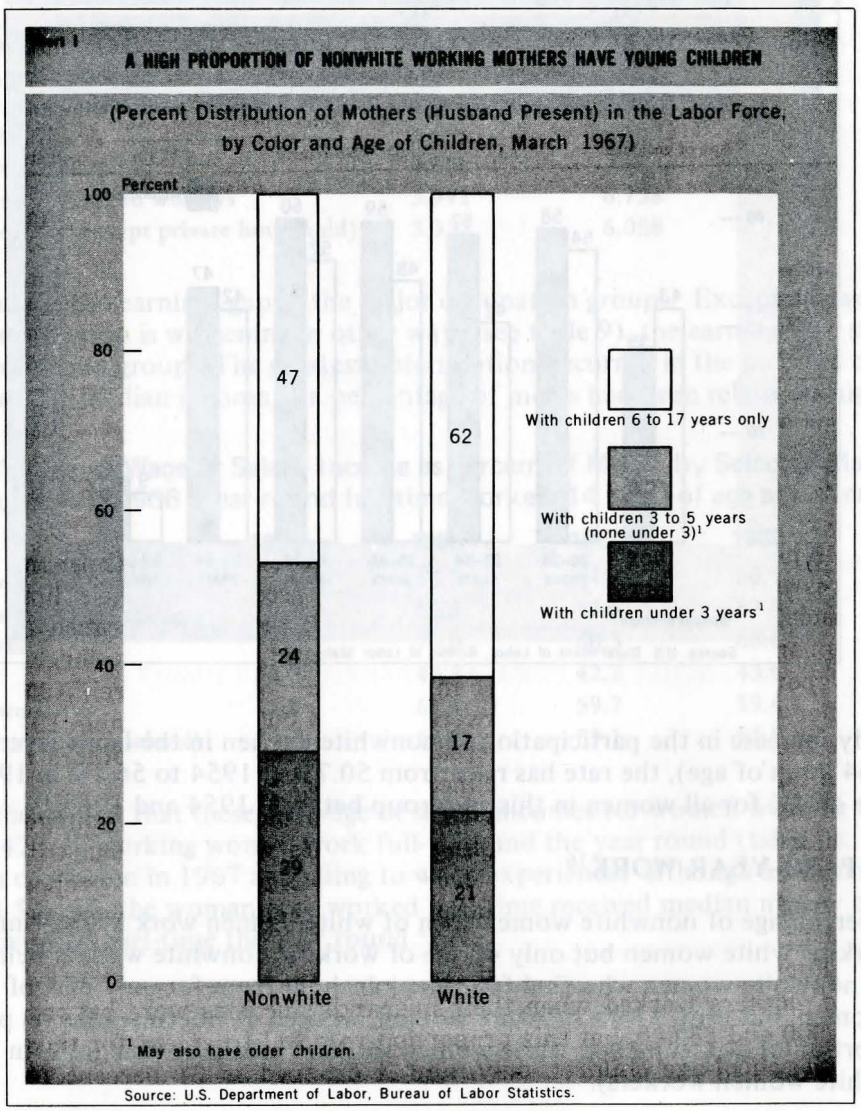
(Mothers 16 years of age and over)

Age of children	Mothers in the labor force		Nonwhite as percent of all working mothers
	Nonwhite	White	
	NUMBER		
Total	1,053,000	7,697,000	12.0
	PERCENT		
Children 6 to 17 years only	55.2	44.2	9.3
Children under 6 years[1]	42.1	24.8	16.1
None under 3 years	51.8	29.6	16.2
Some under 3 years	36.5	21.7	16.3

[1] Also may have older children.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Special Labor Force Report No. 94.

Chart G



In 1967 there were 1.1 million women family heads who were nonwhite; they made up 22% of all women family heads. In other words more than one in every five women family heads is nonwhite.[17]

4. WHAT KINDS OF JOBS DO NONWHITE WOMEN HOLD?

Nonwhite women work at quite different kinds of jobs than do white women (chart H). In 1968, about one in two nonwhite women were in service work, and one in three in white collar work; in contrast, less than one in five white women were in service work, but almost two in three in white collar work. Approximately the same proportions of both nonwhite and white women were in blue collar and farm work.

Chart H

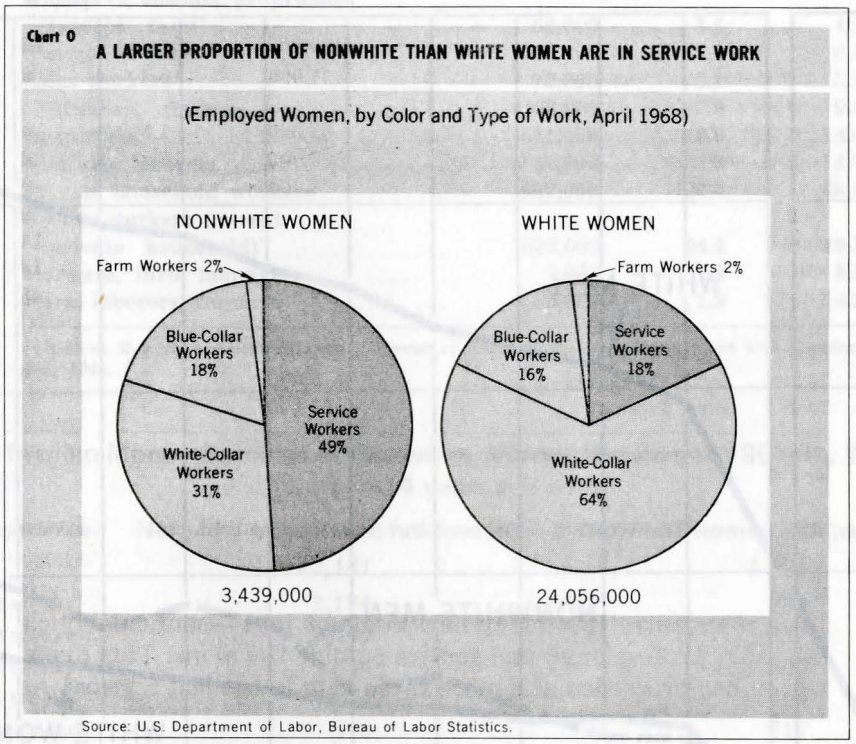


Table 16 provides a more detailed breakdown of the jobs held by nonwhite women in 1968, and shows that nonwhite women are concentrated in certain major occupation groups. Almost half (48.6%) of the women private household workers (e.g. maids) and about one out of five (19.3%) service workers who are women are nonwhite. One in four (24.4%) nonwhite women workers is a private household worker, and another one in four (24.2%) works in some other service occupation; the next largest occupation group for employed nonwhite women is clerical work (17.4%), followed by operatives (16.9%).

5. WHAT DO NONWHITE WOMEN WORKERS GET PAID?

Nonwhite working women are paid significantly less than all other workers. The median wage or salary income of a nonwhite woman working full-time the year round in 1966 ($2,949) was 71.0% of the comparable median income of white women ($4,152), 65.1% of the comparable median income of nonwhite men ($4,528), and 41.0% of the comparable median income of white men ($7,164).[18]

The gap between what nonwhite and white workers are paid has narrowed slightly, and more for women than for men. In 1956 the median wage or salary income of nonwhite women working full-time the year round was 55.3% of the comparable income of white women; in 1966 it had risen to 71.0%. In contrast, nonwhite men received 61.8% of what white men were paid in wages or salary in 1956, but the rate had risen only to 63.2% in 1966.[19] However, the slight narrowing of the earnings gap between nonwhite and white women workers is of small significance next to the large and increasing gap between what women and men are paid (table 11, above; chart I, next page).

Once again it should be remembered that the income just discussed are for persons working full-time and year-round. Nonwhite women tend somewhat more than white women to work part-year and part-time. Table 17 shows the median money earnings of nonwhite women workers in 1967 according to work experience; comparison of these figures with the same statistics for all women (table 14, above) reveals very clearly the extreme exploitation of nonwhite women.

Chart I

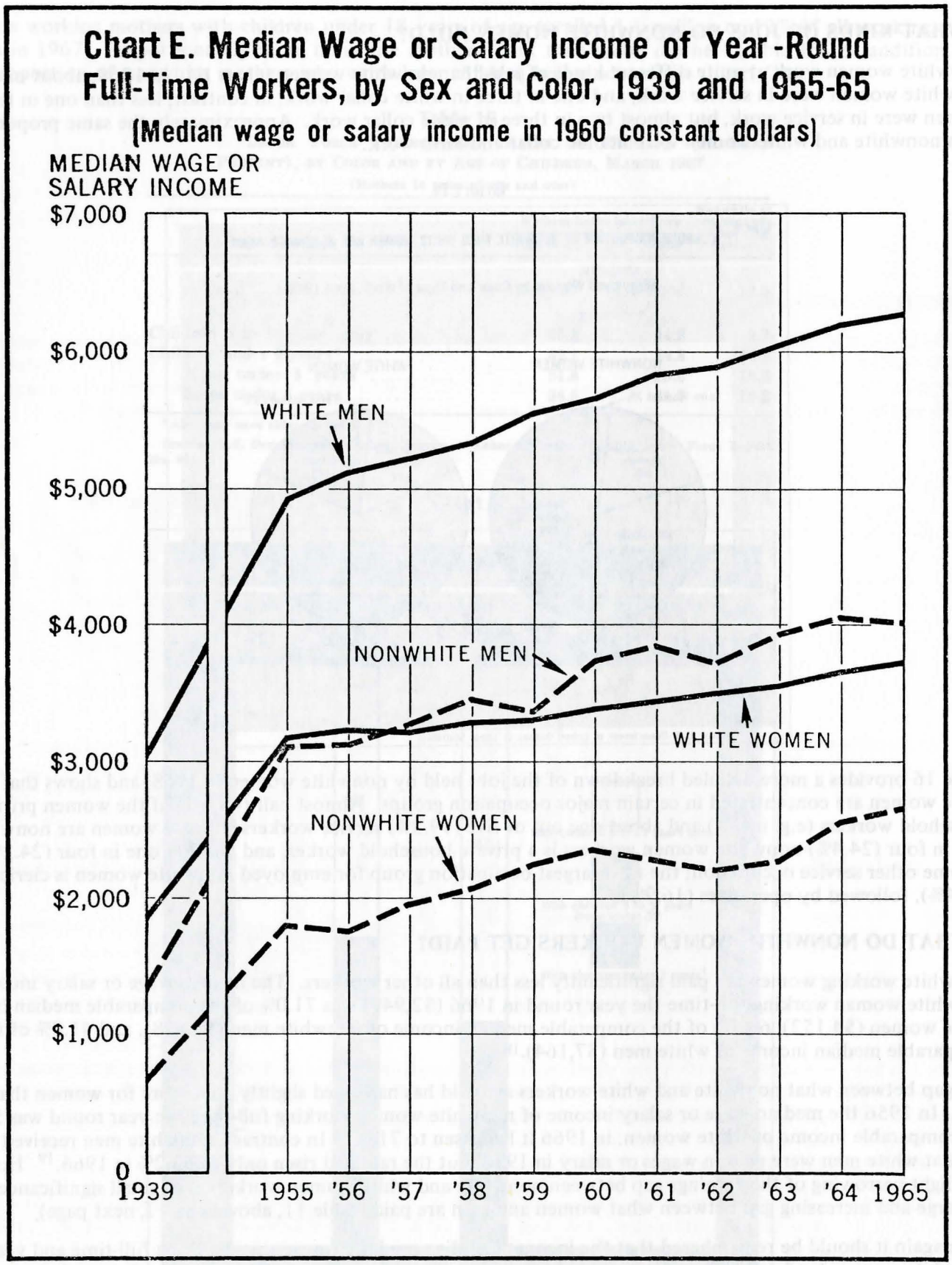


Chart E. Median Wage or Salary Income of Year-Round Full-Time Workers, by Sex and Color, 1939 and 1955-65
(Median wage or salary income in 1960 constant dollars)
MEDIAN WAGE OR SALARY INCOME
$7,000
$6,000
$5,000
$4,000
$3,000
$2,000
$1,000
0
WHITE MEN
NONWHITE MEN
WHITE WOMEN
NONWHITE WOMEN
1939
1955
'56
'57
'58
'59
'60
'61
'62
'63
'64
1965

Table 16

MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUPS OF EMPLOYED NONWHITE WOMEN, APRIL 1968

(Women 16 years of age and over)

Major occupation group	Number	Percent distribution	As percent of total employed women
Total	3,439,000	100.0	12.5
Professional, technical workers	351,000	10.2	8.7
Managers, officials, proprietors (except farm)	52,000	1.5	4.3
Clerical workers	598,000	17.4	6.4
Sales workers	72,000	2.1	3.8
Craftsmen, foremen	28,000	.8	9.0
Operatives	581,000	16.9	14.0
Nonfarm laborers	17,000	.5	14.7
Private household workers	839,000	24.4	48.6
Service workers (except private household)	832,000	24.2	19.3
Farmers, farm managers	7,000	.2	8.5
Farm laborers, foremen	65,000	1.9	14.2

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: Employment and Earnings, May 1968.

Table 17: Median Money Earnings of Nonwhite Women Workers in 1967, by Work Experience (women 14 years and over)

Work experience	Nonwhite women with full-time jobs	Nonwhite women with part-time jobs
Total	*$2,341*	*$ 575*
50 to 52 weeks	3,194	930
40 to 49 weeks	2,349	837
27 to 39 weeks	1,534	600
14 to 26 weeks	1,234	464
13 weeks or less	398	317

V. WOMEN IN LABOR UNIONS

Early nineteenth century unions in the United States were organized as sexually segregated locals. After the Civil War this separation gradually broke down, and today there are no separate unions for women (a few unions have no women members: those for bricklayers, fire fighters, locomotive engineers, and plasterers).

The total number of union members (women and men) has remained about constant since the mid-fifties; because the labor force is increasing, this means that the proportion of workers who are unionized is falling. Thus 33.2% of employees in non-agriculatural establishments were members of unions in 1955, 31.4% in 1960, and only 28.0% in 1966: Blue collar unionists comprise about 85% of all union members; white collar workers make up the other 15%; service workers remain largely unorganized.[20]

Women and men do not participate in labor unions to the same extent. In 1966 only about one in seven women in the female labor force were union members, as compared to the more than one in four men in the male labor force who belonged to unions.[21] More than four out of five union members are men; however, the proportion of women union members is increasing slightly (table 18).

Table 18: Women as Members of National and International Unions, 1958-1966

Year	Number	Percent of all members
1958	3,274,000	18.2
1960	3,304,000	18.3
1962	3,272,000	18.6
1964	3,413,000	19.0
1966	3,689,000	19.3

Women in blue collar jobs probably make up the majority of women union members.

About 18% of all women union members in 1966 were in two unions in the apparel industry (International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America). Other unions with a sizable number of women members are the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Retail Clerks International Association, and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders International Union. Relatively large numbers of women are members of several big industrial and transportation unions, although women represent only a small portion of their total membership; this group of unions includes automobile and machinery manufacturing. Table 19 summarizes the information on membership of women in unions in 1966.

Table 19

WOMEN MEMBERS OF LABOR UNIONS,[1] 1966

Union	Approximate number of women
American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations:	
International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union	364,131
Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America	286,500
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers	262,500
Retail Clerks International Association	250,157
Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders' International Union	202,488
Communications Workers of America	176,614
International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America	168,324
International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers	112,000
Building Service Employees' International Union	97,580
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers	83,616
Textile Workers Union of America	72,800
United Federation of Postal Clerks	57,258
Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, Freight Handlers, Express and Station Employes	54,000
American Federation of Government Employees	50,000
Office and Professional Employees International Union	49,000
Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America	45,898
International Brotherhood of Bookbinders	37,056
United Packinghouse, Food and Allied Workers	28,350
United Shoe Workers of America	27,030
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union	(2)
American Federation of Teachers	(2)
United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers of America	(2)
United Steelworkers of America	(2)
Unaffiliated:	
Alliance of Independent Telephone Unions	56,250
United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America	41,750
International Union of District 50, United Mine Workers of America	27,840
International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers of America	(2)

[1] Unions reporting 25,000 or more women members.

[2] Data not reported, but number of women believed to be significant.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: "Directory of National and International Labor Unions in the United States, 1967." Bull. 1596. 1968.

NOTES

1. According to the *1969 Handbook on Women Workers*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Bulletin 294, p. 22, data is not available for computing labor force participation rates of women 18 to 64 years of age prior to 1947. The *1969 Handbook* is the single best source for information on women in the United States; anything not specifically footnoted in this pamphlet can be found in it.

2. The important questions of absenteeism, labor turnover, and part-time and part-year work cannot be examined here. All agree that they cannot be separated from the problems of the lack of adequate daycare and other socialized forms of family maintenance. Government publications include: *Facts About Women's Absenteeism and Labor Turnover*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, August 1969; *Women's Part-Time and Part-Year Employment Patterns in the United States*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, January 1966 (based on the *1965 Handbook on Women Workers*); *1969 Handbook*, pp. 43-47, 55-67. Two excellent radical critiques are: I. Winkler, *Women Workers: The Forgotten Third of the Working Class*, an International Socialists publication (co-published by the New England Free Press), and M.P. Goldberg, "The Economic Exploitation of Women", *The Review of Radical Political Economics*, vol. II, 1 (Spring 1970), pp. 35-47.

3. For more detailed statistics on the trends through 1967, see the *1969 Handbook*, pp. 26-27; the data for 1969 is given in *Background Facts on Women Workers in the United States*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1970, table 4.

4. *Working Wives—Their Contribution to Family Income*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, November 1968, p. 1.

5. For more detailed presentation and analysis of these complicated and important statistics, see the pamphlet cited in note 4 above, or the *1969 Handbook*, pp. 32-36. According to *Women Workers Today*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, June 1970, p. 4, 46% (cf. 42.6% in 1966) of the wives of husbands earning between $5,000 and $7,000 now work, and it is likely that many of the percentages in tables 5 and 6 have now increased.

6. For these figures, and more details, see *1969 Handbook*, pp. 40-41 and table 17. Some more recent data on working mothers can be found in *Background Facts on Women Workers in the United States* (cited above in note 3) and in *Women Workers Today* (cited in note 5).

7. *1969 Handbook*, pp. 29-32. More recent data is briefly surveyed in *Background Facts on Women Workers in the United States* (cited above in note 3), p. 2; as might be expected, more women than ever are heads of families although I have not found easily accessible data on long-term trends.

8. For a fine discussion of the relationship of the various types of social tracking (e.g. education) to the kinds of jobs held by women, see Winkler, *Women Workers* (cited above in note 2), pp. 5-9.

9. Percentages calculated from *1969 Handbook*, p. 88, table 37; for more complete figures, including the trends since 1958, see V. Bonnell and M. Reich, *Workers and the American Economy: Data on the Labor Force*, New England Free Press, 1969, table 20.

10. *1969 Handbook*, p. 88, table 37.

11. For the occupational structure of the blue collar labor force, see Bonnell and Reich, *Workers and the American Economy* (cited above in note 9), p. 6 and table 9.

12. A frequently cited figure is the "earnings gap" between all working women and all working men. For example, in 1966 the median wage or salary income of all working women was $2,149 and that of all men was $5,693; thus in 1966 the median wage or salary income of all women could be said to be 37.7% of that of all men (calculated from the *1969 Handbook*, p. 132, table 58; for comparable statistics by major occupation group, see *Background Facts on Women Workers in the United States*, cited above in note 3, table 16). The problem with this type of comparison is that by using the category of *all* working women or men it obscures the difference in the proportions of women and of men who work part-time or part-year; in addition, it treats part-time and part-year workers as if a "natural" salary period is a year. In order to understand the question of the earnings gaps between all women and all men, one should probably break the statistics down into more subtle categories (for example, separating full-time year-round workers from other workers).

13. In general it was difficult to find easily accessible data on long-term trends for this section on nonwhite women workers. As for all women workers, one can guess that the general trend for nonwhite women workers is for more to work, with on the whole greater exploitation than ever before. However, for each particular characteristic it would be necessary to do a detailed study in order to determine whether the gap between nonwhite and white women is decreasing or increasing.

14. *1969 Handbook*, p. 21.

15. For more detailed statistics on this trend, see the *1969 Handbook*, pp. 21-23 and table 6; data is not available before 1954.

16. *1969 Handbook*, pp. 62-63 and table 28.

17. *1969 Handbook*, p. 29.

18. *1969 Handbook*, pp. 136-137, table 67, and calculations.

19. For more detailed statistics on these trends, see the *1969 Handbook*, p. 137, table 67.

20. Bonnell and Reich, *Workers and the American Economy* (cited above in note 9), pp. 21-22 and table 33.

21. *1969 Handbook*, p. 82.

SOURCES FOR TABLES AND CHARTS

1. *1969 Handbook on Women Workers*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Bulletin 294, p. 10, table 1, and *Background Facts on Women Workers in the United States*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1970, table 1.
2. *1969 Handbook*, p. 22, table 6.
3. *1969 Handbook*, p. 57, table 23.
4. *1969 Handbook*, p. 16.
5. *1969 Handbook*, p. 33, table 12.
6. *1969 Handbook*, p. 35, table 14.
7. *1969 Handbook*, p. 39, table 16.
8. *Background Facts on Women Workers in the United States*, table 9.
9. *1969 Handbook*, p. 92, table 40.
10. *1969 Handbook*, p. 96, table 41.
11. *Fact Sheet on the Earnings Gap*, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, February 1970, p. 1.
12. *Fact Sheet on the Earnings Gap*, p. 2 (and for total, p. 1); *Background Facts on Women Workers in the United States*, table 16 (for Craftsmen, foremen, etc.)
13. *1969 Handbook*, p. 135, table 59.
14. *Income in 1967 of Persons in the United States*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 60, table 11.
15. *1969 Handbook*, p. 43, table 18.
16. *1969 Handbook*, p. 106, table 45.
17. Same as table 14.
18. *Directory of National and International Labor Unions in the United States, 1967*, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 1596, p. 60.
19. *1969 Handbook*, p. 83, table 36.

Note: Most of the tables have been reorganized in order to shorten and simplify the data, and thus make it easier to understand.

A. *1969 Handbook*, p. 56, chart K
B. *1969 Handbook*, p. 20, chart D.
C. *1969 Handbook*, p. 24, chart F.
D. *1969 Handbook*, p. 41, chart H.
E. *1969 Handbook*, p. 93, chart N.
F. *1969 Handbook*, p. 21, chart E.
G. *1969 Handbook*, p. 44, chart I.
H. *1969 Handbook*, p. 105, chart O.
I. *Negro Women in the Population and in the Labor Force*, U.S. Department of Labor, December 1967, chart F

Postscript, April 1980

The trend toward greater labor-force participation by women remained very strongly marked in the 1970s. At the end of the decade, 51% of all women over 16 were in the labor force, up from 43% in 1969. The new figure included 48% of all married women with husband present, and it also included about 45% of all mothers with children under 6 years old. It is rapidly becoming the norm in the U.S. for wives (with or without children) to work for wages.

The major change here has been among white women. Their labor-force participation rate is now only around 3 percentage points lower than that of black women. (If only married women with husband present are considered, the difference is over 11 points.)

The trend toward a greater number of female-headed households has also continued. At the end of the decade one in 7 families was headed by a woman, compared with one out of 10 a decade earlier.

One thing did not change at all during the 1970s: the concentration of women in lower-paying jobs. The "earnings gap" between men and women remained about the same, with women earning about 60% of what men earn on the average.

New England Free Press