

DOMESTIC WORKERS IN PRIVATE HOMES

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NEARLY 5 percent of all gainfully occupied persons in the United States are customarily engaged in domestic service in private homes. It is generally recognized that domestic workers require the protection of old-age insurance fully as much as do other groups of workers. Typically their earnings are low. The exception of this large field of employment from the insurance provisions of the Social Security Act was occasioned not by lack of social justification but by regard for additional administrative problems which would have arisen if an attempt had been made to include domestic service in private homes at the start of the program.

Certain occupational characteristics, while not confined to domestic service in private homes, characterize it to an extent to require special consideration. There are probably as many employers of domestic labor as there are workers in private homes. These employers are scattered over wide areas of the country, often at some distance from a city or town, and most of them have had little experience in keeping records or making reports. A considerable proportion of domestic workers, moreover, live in the homes of their employers, and most receive part of their remuneration in kind. Under these circumstances it is obvious that special attention must be given to methods of obtaining wage reports and collecting contributions.

Women constituted more than 90 percent of the gainful workers recorded in the 1930 census who are estimated to have been in private domestic service. Addition of a large group of workers composed almost wholly of women would, of course, increase the proportion of women in total old-age insurance coverage. Such a change would be of decided actuarial significance for several reasons, among them the greater life expectancy of women as a group, and the fact that their earnings are typically lower than those of men and that their employment in industrial and commercial occupations is often intermittent or for only a part of their adult life. Under the present benefit for-

mula, persons whose total wages from covered employment are relatively low receive proportionately higher benefits than do those whose total taxable wages are larger by reason of higher annual earnings or longer periods of covered employment. Extension of old-age insurance coverage to women who have only brief periods of gainful work and who thereafter withdraw from the labor market would therefore tend to increase benefit costs.

Undoubtedly some workers usually in private domestic service will have been engaged intermittently in employment now covered by the system to an extent to qualify them for at least the minimum monthly benefit at age 65. In such cases, the accumulation of further wage credits through the opportunity to count wages received in domestic service in private homes would lower, rather than raise, the relative cost to the system of the monthly benefits. The net increase in coverage or costs which may be anticipated from the inclusion of domestic service in private homes would therefore not necessarily represent the addition of the entire group working as private domestic servants.

Characteristics of Domestic Workers in Private Homes

Despite the number of workers concerned and the importance of the social and economic problems evident in such employment, only fragmentary data are available on domestic service in private homes. This analysis endeavors to bring together existing information and to relate it to questions involved in the extension of old-age insurance to this type of employment.

Number of Workers

While the number of domestic workers in private homes at the present time is unknown, a sufficiently precise estimate may be drawn from data of the 1930 census. In the census, gainful¹

¹ "The term, 'gainful workers,' in census usage, includes all persons who usually follow a gainful occupation, although they may not have been employed when the census was taken. It does not include women doing housework in their own homes, without wages, and having no other employment, nor children working at home merely on general household work, on chores, or at odd times on other work." *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population, Vol. V, p. 20.*

* Bureau of Research and Statistics. Because of absence from the country on leave, Miss Needleman was unable to review editorial revisions in this article.

workers were classified by occupation and industry. Cooks, laundresses, and other domestic workers who reported that their ordinary employment was in hotels, restaurants, boarding houses, or other establishments, rather than in private homes, were classified according to the industry reported. The remaining workers reporting domestic occupations were placed in the category "domestic and personal service (not elsewhere classified)." By segregating from that category the occupations which characterize

Table 1.—Distribution by race and sex of all gainful workers, all domestic servants in private homes, and general houseworkers, 1930; and applicants for employee account numbers prior to 1938¹

Race and sex	All gainful workers ¹	All domestic servants in private homes ²	General houseworkers ³	Applicants for employee account numbers ⁴
Total.....	40,580,522	2,217,762	1,195,429	3,505,258
Male.....	30,108,026	208,028	79,883	2,536,522
Female.....	10,472,496	2,009,734	1,115,546	908,736
White, total ⁵	40,549,001	(⁶)	691,200	3,217,529
Male.....	31,062,046	(⁶)	37,811	2,301,944
Female.....	8,586,955	(⁶)	653,389	915,585
Negro, total.....	5,310,654	(⁶)	483,583	204,893
Male.....	3,516,274	(⁶)	36,158	215,998
Female.....	1,794,380	(⁶)	447,425	48,895
Other races, total ⁴	720,867	(⁶)	20,646	22,836
Male.....	628,806	(⁶)	5,914	18,580
Female.....	92,061	(⁶)	14,732	4,256
Percentage distribution by race and sex				
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Male.....	77.5	9.4	6.7	72.4
Female.....	22.5	90.6	93.3	27.6
White, total ⁵	87.1	(⁶)	57.8	91.8
Male.....	68.7	(⁶)	3.2	65.7
Female.....	18.4	(⁶)	54.6	26.1
Negro, total.....	11.4	(⁶)	40.5	7.6
Male.....	7.5	(⁶)	3.0	6.2
Female.....	3.9	(⁶)	37.5	1.4
Other races, total ⁴	1.5	(⁶)	1.7	.6
Male.....	1.3	(⁶)	.5	.5
Female.....	.2	(⁶)	1.2	.1

¹ This tabulation includes only persons of known age under 65 years.
² Computed from *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population*, Vol. V, p. 274.
³ Computed from *Fifteenth Census*, op. cit., pp. 582-583 (chauffeurs, truck and tractor drivers; housekeepers and stewards; laundresses and laundresses; nurses (not trained); cooks; other servants; waiters).
⁴ Computed from *Fifteenth Census*, op. cit., pp. 136-137, 156-157, 176-177, 194-195 (servants other than cooks in domestic and personal service other than in hotels, restaurants, boarding houses, etc.).
⁵ Computed from a 10-percent sample of the applications for the account numbers issued and placed in the alphabetical file of actuarial cards by Dec. 31, 1937. This number includes the applications for 3,613,022 of the 36,688,338 account numbers issued through that date.
⁶ Mexicans are included in "other races" in the census data; they are included in "white" in the applicants for employee account numbers.
⁷ Data for domestic servants under 65 years of age are not available by race.

domestic service in private homes it may be estimated that nearly 2,327,000 of the workers enumerated in 1930 were in household employment. The census groups² included in this estimate are:

Occupational group	Number	Percent
Total.....	2,326,857	100.0
Cooks.....	273,594	11.8
Other servants (general houseworkers).....	1,240,086	53.3
Housekeepers and stewards.....	195,808	8.4
Laundresses and laundresses.....	357,525	15.4
Nurses, not trained ¹	153,443	6.6
Chauffeurs, truck and tractor drivers.....	94,270	4.0
Waiters.....	12,181	.5

¹ The census distinguishes between "nurses, not trained" and children's nurses, in its instructions to enumerators. Its category, "nurses, not trained," represents "practical" as distinct from "trained" nurses. Since practical nurses may be considered to perform household rather than professional services, they are included in this estimate of gainful workers in domestic service in private homes. Presumably the census tabulates children's nurses under general servants.

There are differences of opinion as to the groups to be included in private domestic service, and estimates of the total number of workers vary accordingly.³ Undoubtedly not all the workers included in these groups were in domestic service in private homes, and it is possible that a small—probably negligible—proportion of such workers are included in other groups listed by the census.

It is obvious also that at any given time some workers who report their usual occupation as domestic service will be unemployed or engaged in some other occupation. Estimates of the full-time equivalent of the number of persons actually employed in domestic service in private homes in the years 1929-37 have been made by the Department of Commerce⁴ as follows:

Year	Number of employees (full-time equivalent)	Percent of 1929
1929.....	2,257,000	100.0
1930.....	2,106,000	93.4
1931.....	1,858,000	83.7
1932.....	1,621,000	71.8
1933.....	1,540,000	68.2
1934.....	1,740,000	77.1
1935.....	1,824,000	80.8
1936.....	1,954,000	86.6
1937.....	2,075,000	91.9

Regardless of differences in these various estimates, the significant fact remains that there are

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 582.
² See Woytinsky, W. S., *Labor in the United States*; also Wendt, Laura, "Census Classifications and Social Security Categories," *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (April 1938), pp. 3-12.
³ U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, *Income in the United States, 1929-37*, p. 36 (table 14).

doubtless more than 2.2 million gainful workers with customary employment as domestic servants in private homes. It has been estimated recently that the total number of persons who will be engaged in domestic service in private homes at one time or another in 1939 is from 2.2 to 2.5 million.⁵

Race, Sex, and Age

Of the 2,326,857 persons here considered as domestic workers in private homes on the basis of the occupational classifications in the 1930 census, 53.9 percent were white; 44.5 percent were Negro; and 1.6 percent were of other races. Among all gainful workers, 87.2 percent were white; 11.3 percent Negro; and 1.5 percent of other races. These workers may be compared with applicants for the account numbers used by the Board in maintaining the old-age insurance records. When the applicants for employee account numbers in the 10-percent sample⁶ are distributed by

⁵ Winslow, Harry J., and Shaughnessy, William K. "Estimated Numbers of Persons in Employments Excluded From Old-Age Insurance," *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (February 1939), pp. 18-19.

⁶ Social Security Board. *Third Annual Report, 1938*, pp. 168, 169. See also footnote 5, table 1.

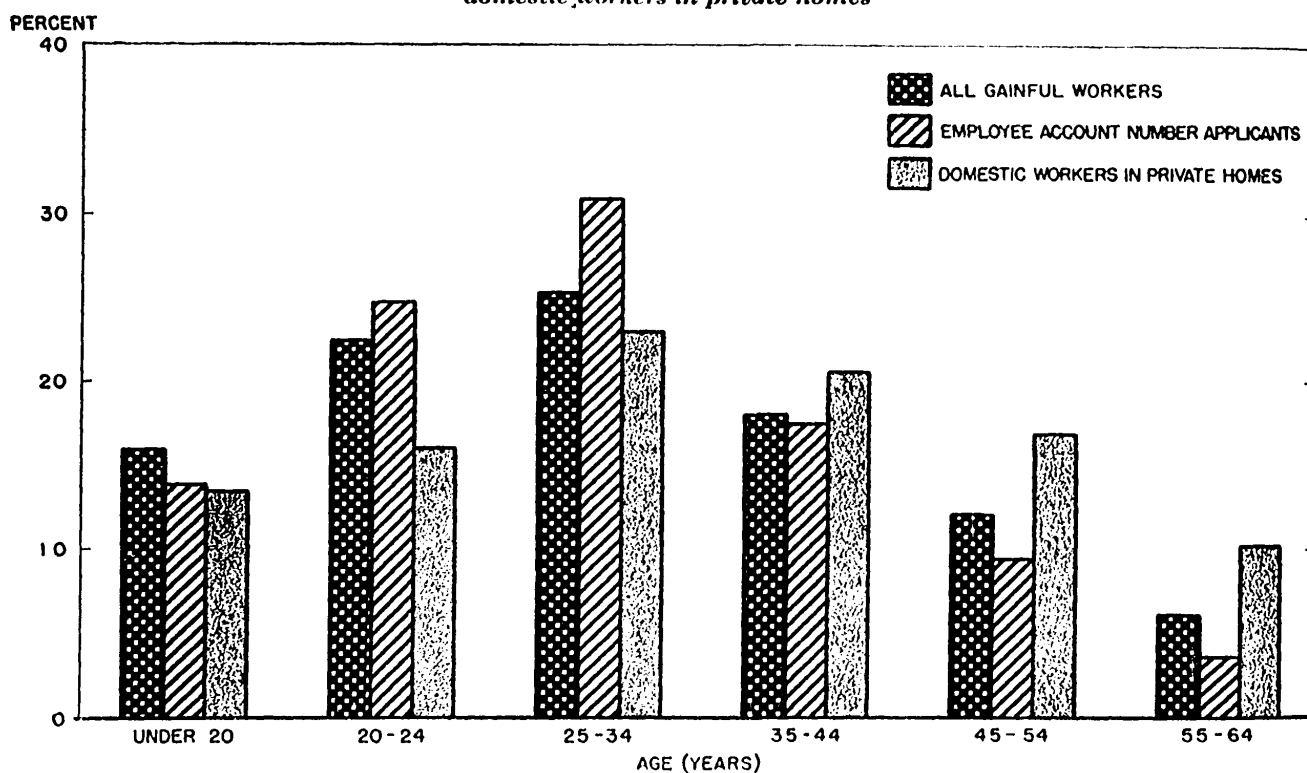
race it appears that 91.0 percent are white; 7.6 percent Negro; and 1.4 percent other races. The proportion of Negroes is markedly higher in the private domestic service category than in the total gainful worker group or in the sample.

Equally marked is the variation in the proportion of women workers, who constitute only 22.0 percent of all gainful workers, and 27.4 percent of applicants for account numbers, but 90.7 percent of domestic servants in private homes. Negro women, only 3.8 percent of all gainful workers and only 1.4 percent of the applicants for account numbers, constitute 41.0 percent of the domestic servants in private homes.

Title II of the Social Security Act excepts from coverage employment performed after age 65. Of the estimated total 2,327,000 domestic workers, 2,218,000 were in the ages under 65. Distribution by sex and race of gainful workers, of domestic workers in private homes, and of applicants for account numbers is shown in table 1 on the basis of the persons of known age of less than 65.

The age distribution of all domestic servants in private homes rather closely parallels that of all

Chart I.—Age distributions of women among gainful workers, applicants for employee account numbers, and domestic workers in private homes



gainful workers, except for a slightly higher concentration of domestic servants in the group under 20. When compared with applicants for account numbers, however, the domestic service group is somewhat lower in the ages 20-24 and 25-34, with correspondingly higher proportions in the younger and older age groups:

Age group (years)	All domestic servants in private homes	Applicants for employee account numbers	All gainful workers
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20.....	12.8	9.8	10.1
20-24.....	15.9	18.7	15.3
25-34.....	23.8	20.5	25.4
35-44.....	21.0	20.7	22.5
45-54.....	16.6	14.2	16.8
55-64.....	9.9	7.1	9.9

The fact that women represented 91 percent of all private domestic servants, whereas they were only 23 percent of all gainful workers and 28 percent of all applicants for account numbers, may explain the variations in age distributions found when these three groups are compared.

The relatively high concentration of older women among the domestic service group is illustrated by chart I, which compares the age distributions of women in private domestic service, in all types of gainful work, and in the group of applicants for account numbers.

It would appear that private domestic service is predominantly an occupation for very young or relatively older white women and for Negro women of all ages. Since women virtually preempt this field of gainful work, subsequent discussion will be limited almost exclusively to an analysis of women workers.

The occupational groups which make up the private domestic workers are not cross-classified according to race and age in the census though data on each of these characteristics are given separately. Detailed data are available, however, for the group of 1,240,086 servants (other than cooks) who are not attached to hotels, restaurants, boarding houses, and other industrial or commercial establishments. This group, largely composed of "maids-of-all-work," is referred to in table 1 and subsequently as general houseworkers. This group represents by far the largest single group of all domestic employees in private homes—53 percent of the total—and is the only large group for which an analysis of the interrelation-

ships of race, sex, and age can be made. The general houseworkers include a somewhat higher proportion of white persons and a smaller proportion of males than are characteristic of the larger group of 2,327,000 domestic servants in private homes, as shown in the following tabulation of census data:

Race and sex	All private domestic servants (percent)	General houseworkers (percent)
Total.....	100.0	100.0
Male.....	9.3	6.9
Female.....	90.7	93.1
White.....	53.9	58.3
Male.....	5.3	3.3
Female.....	48.6	55.2

Some idea of the extent to which white and Negro women of various age groups tend to engage in general housework can be derived from a comparison of the distributions of those reporting general housework as their gainful occupation and the total gainful workers of the same race. (See chart II and table 2.)

The most striking point revealed by the chart is the high concentration of white women houseworkers in the age group under 20; 24.2 percent were in this age class, as contrasted with 15.8 percent of all white women gainful workers, 15.9 percent of all Negro women gainful workers, and 14.4 of Negro women in general housework.

The tendency of white women in the age groups over 20 and under 35 to engage in occupations other than general housework is indicated when general houseworkers are expressed as a percentage of gainful workers of the same age. In the group under 20, white women in general housework were 11.7 percent of the total white women of that age who reported themselves as gainful workers. Negro workers in general housework of the same age group were 22.6 percent of the total Negro women gainful workers under 20. For higher ages Negro and white women show marked variations in their concentration in general housework. White women in this occupation are successively smaller percentages of total white women gainful workers of the same age until age 35; Negro women in general housework are increasingly larger percentages of total Negro women of the same age in all gainful occupations until age 35. The following tabulation illustrates this contrast:

Age group	General houseworkers as percent of all gainful workers of same age, sex, and color	
	White women	Negro women
Total.....	7.8	24.8
Under 20.....	11.7	22.6
20-24.....	6.5	27.9
25-34.....	5.0	28.4
35-44.....	6.5	24.5
45-54.....	8.5	20.9
55-64.....	11.0	17.8
65 and over.....	13.5	10.7
Unknown.....	8.0	31.5

It is significant, from the standpoint of old-age insurance coverage, that white women of the ages 20-44 in general housework represent only 6.1

percent of all white women gainful workers of these ages. For Negro women in general housework the situation is very different. In the age group 20-44, they represent 27.0 percent of all Negro women gainful workers.

The years 25-44 are doubtless the most fruitful working span in providing for old-age security. White women of this age group concentrate in occupations other than general housework in private homes. They would, therefore, presumably have an opportunity to earn wages from employment covered by the old-age insurance program under the present provisions of the Social Security Act before they reach age 65, unless, of course, they withdraw permanently from gainful work.

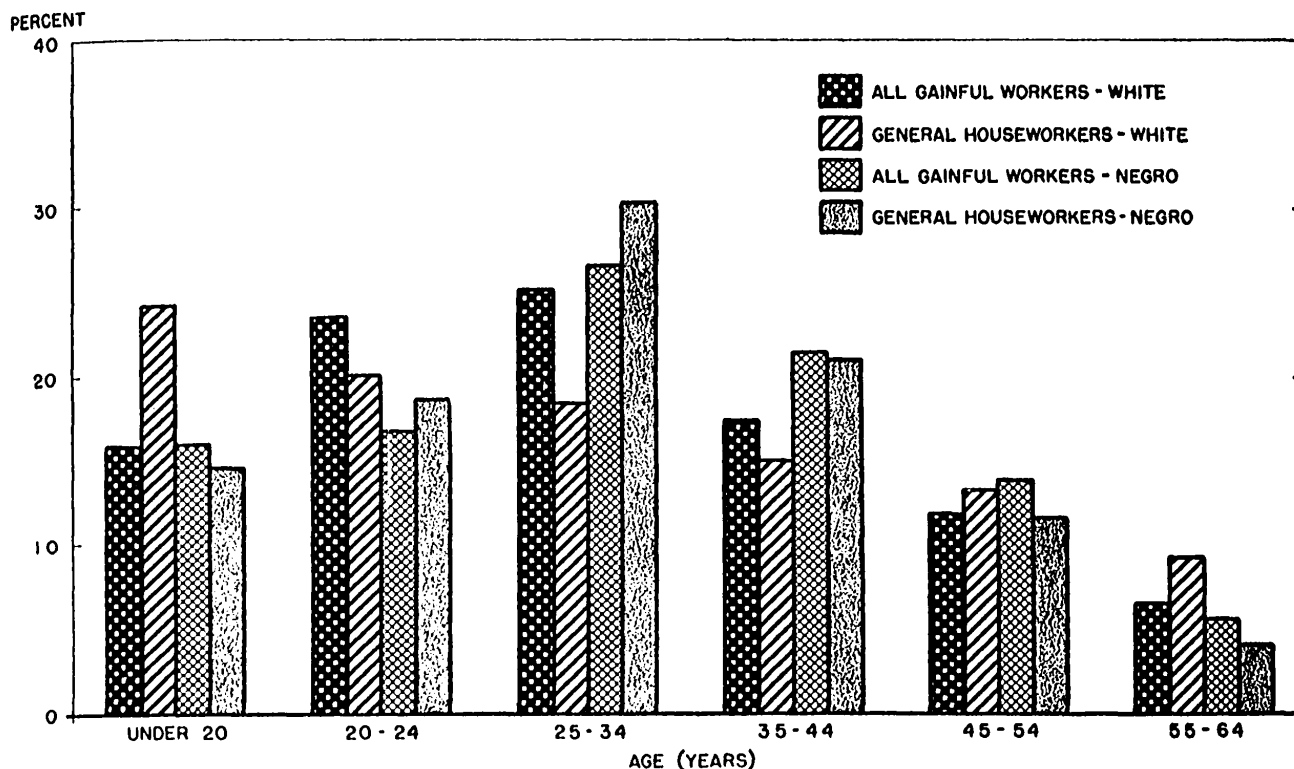
Table 2.—Percentage distribution¹ by age groups of all gainful workers, all domestic servants in private homes, and general houseworkers, 1930; and applicants for employee account numbers prior to 1938²

Age group (years)	All gainful workers			All domestic servants in private homes			General houseworkers			Applicants for employee account numbers		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
All races												
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20.....	10.1	8.4	15.9	12.8	7.9	13.3	10.0	14.1	20.3	9.8	8.2	13.8
20-24.....	15.3	13.3	22.4	15.9	14.4	16.0	10.2	13.9	19.6	18.7	16.5	24.8
25-34.....	25.4	25.4	25.3	23.8	31.0	23.0	23.4	25.4	23.2	20.5	20.0	30.9
35-44.....	22.5	23.8	18.1	21.0	24.4	20.6	17.6	21.1	17.4	20.7	21.9	17.5
45-54.....	10.8	18.2	12.1	16.6	14.5	16.9	12.7	15.9	12.5	14.2	16.0	9.4
55-64.....	9.9	10.9	6.2	9.9	7.2	10.2	7.2	9.6	7.0	7.1	8.4	3.6
White³												
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0				100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20.....	9.4	7.7	15.8				23.6	13.2	24.2	9.9	8.3	14.0
20-24.....	15.3	13.1	23.6				19.7	11.6	20.1	18.9	16.4	26.2
25-34.....	25.3	25.3	25.1				18.6	22.0	18.4	20.3	28.7	30.7
35-44.....	22.7	24.2	17.3				15.2	21.5	14.9	20.4	21.7	17.2
45-54.....	17.0	18.4	11.8				13.5	18.3	13.2	14.3	16.3	9.3
55-64.....	10.3	11.3	6.4				9.4	12.5	9.2	7.2	8.6	3.6
Negro												
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0				100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20.....	14.6	14.0	15.9				14.4	14.8	14.4	7.9	7.7	8.8
20-24.....	15.4	14.7	16.7				18.4	14.6	18.7	17.4	17.2	18.2
25-34.....	25.7	25.2	26.6				30.1	27.3	30.3	32.7	32.0	35.5
35-44.....	21.4	21.3	21.5				21.1	21.4	21.1	23.8	23.9	23.8
45-54.....	15.6	16.6	13.8				11.8	14.4	11.6	12.6	13.2	10.0
55-64.....	7.3	8.2	5.5				4.2	7.5	3.9	5.6	6.0	3.7
Other³												
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0				100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 20.....	11.2	9.7	21.8				23.1	15.3	20.3	12.1	9.6	22.8
20-24.....	17.4	17.1	19.6				21.7	24.7	20.5	17.5	15.7	25.3
25-34.....	29.7	30.4	24.0				25.3	29.3	23.7	33.6	30.1	23.2
35-44.....	21.5	21.9	18.4				16.4	16.8	16.2	21.0	21.6	18.4
45-54.....	13.9	14.4	10.8				9.7	9.8	9.6	11.0	11.7	8.0
55-64.....	6.3	6.5	4.5				3.8	4.1	3.7	4.8	5.3	2.3

¹ Percentages computed from basic data cited in table 1, footnotes 2-5.
² This tabulation includes only persons of known age under 65 years.

³ Mexicans are included in "other" in the census data; they are included in "white" in the applicants for employee account numbers.

Chart II.—Age distributions of white and Negro women among all gainful workers and general houseworkers, 1930



Among Negro women aged 25-44, on the other hand, general housework is an important gainful occupation. Their opportunities for obtaining old-age insurance coverage by shifting to other work are relatively fewer. Extension of the old-age insurance program to domestic service in private homes would, therefore, provide protection for a large proportion of the Negro women in the group of workers dependent upon their wages for subsistence.

Marital Status

Several significant differences between white and Negro women are revealed by an analysis of census data on marital status.⁷ Of the total number of white women 15 years of age and over in the population, nearly two-thirds were reported as married, but among gainfully occupied women 15 and over, only about one-fourth were married. Negro married women represented nearly 59 percent of the total number of Negro women 15 and over in the 1930 population, while married women

⁷ The census classifies women by marital status as single and unknown, married, and widowed and divorced.

represented about 45 percent of the gainfully occupied Negro women. This comparison indicates a marked tendency for Negro women to remain in the labor market after marriage.

The contrast is even more marked if the comparison is limited to a single age group, 20-24 years. Married women in this age group constituted 50 percent of all white women of this age and 60 percent of all Negro women of the age group. In spite of these proportions of married women in the general population 20-24 years of age, married women represented less than 17 percent of the gainfully occupied white women aged 20-24, whereas they were 41 percent of the gainfully occupied Negro women. Among women of this age group who reported general housework as their gainful occupation in 1930, it is evident that the married white woman is an exception; in the age group 20-24 only 8 percent of the white general houseworkers were married, in contrast to nearly 40 percent of the Negro women. (See table 3.)

Chart III and table 3 illustrate some of the wide differences in marital status between Negro and white women of four age groups among all women

gainful workers and among those engaged in general housework in private homes. The percentage married did not exceed 25 percent for any age group among white general houseworkers. For white women this occupation appears to attract single women and the widowed and divorced. For Negroes the reverse is true; from age 25 on the percentage of single women is small. It is also evident from the chart that Negro women in general housework show approximately the same distribution by marital status as all Negro gainful

workers. For white women, the proportions married among all gainful workers are noticeably higher than among general houseworkers.

This contrast between Negro and white women may be shown in still another way. Computations based on census data for all Negro married women in the 1930 population indicate that 33 percent were gainfully occupied and 8 percent were in general housework; but of all married white women, only about 10 percent were gainfully occupied and less than 1 percent were in general housework.

In the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 the widowed and divorced form relatively small proportions of the women in the total population, among those classified as gainful workers, and among those reporting general housework as their occupation. At age 45 and over, white widowed and divorced women represent 41.6 percent of the gainfully occupied white women of that age group, and widowed or divorced Negro women constitute 54.2 percent of the gainfully occupied Negro women of the same age group.

Percentage comparisons of the marital status for the age group 45 and over reveal that among all gainfully occupied women and among general houseworkers, high proportions are widowed and divorced as compared with the total population.

Single women, including those of unknown marital status, are a relatively small proportion of Negro women age 45 and over; among white women of the same age group single women are 31.0 percent of those gainfully occupied and 34.0 percent of those in general housework.

Table 3.—Percentage distribution by marital status of white and Negro women of different age groups in the total population, in all gainful work, and in general housework in private homes, 1930

Marital status	Women 15 years of age and over					
	Total population ¹		All gainful workers ¹		General houseworkers ¹	
	White	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro
	Total					
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single and unknown....	26.9	23.4	59.3	28.1	66.5	33.1
Married.....	61.3	58.5	25.6	44.8	14.9	42.7
Widowed and divorced..	11.8	18.1	15.1	27.1	18.6	24.2
	15-19 years					
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single and unknown....	88.2	78.0	95.0	82.0	97.4	84.9
Married.....	11.5	20.5	4.6	15.2	2.2	12.8
Widowed and divorced..	.3	1.5	.4	2.8	.4	2.3
	20-24 years					
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single and unknown....	48.2	33.2	81.1	48.4	89.1	50.9
Married.....	50.3	60.4	16.7	41.3	8.1	39.9
Widowed and divorced..	1.5	6.4	2.2	10.3	2.8	9.2
	25-44 years					
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single and unknown....	14.7	10.3	48.2	16.0	57.6	20.6
Married.....	80.1	74.1	37.3	58.2	24.7	54.2
Widowed and divorced..	5.2	15.6	14.5	26.9	17.7	25.2
	45 years and over					
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single and unknown....	9.4	4.6	31.0	7.1	34.0	11.5
Married.....	62.0	53.5	27.4	39.7	18.8	34.8
Widowed and divorced..	28.6	41.9	41.6	54.2	47.2	53.7

¹ Computed from *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population*, Vol. V, p. 274.

² Computed from *Fifteenth Census*, op. cit., pp. 139-7, 156-7, 176-7, 191-200, 209, 307, 314, 320, 357, 363, 368, 373, 378.

Occupational Characteristics

For information concerning wages and general working conditions of domestic servants in private homes reliance must be placed largely on fragmentary data based for the most part on sample studies. Undoubtedly the data of some of the studies picture the conditions among selected groups rather than among all domestic workers. It is possible, for example, that only the more socially minded and intelligent household employers take the trouble to furnish adequate information and that such employers give their workers better wages and working conditions than are typical of the entire community. It may also be

true that workers who fill out questionnaires are above the average in skill and education, and enjoy better working conditions than the average household worker.

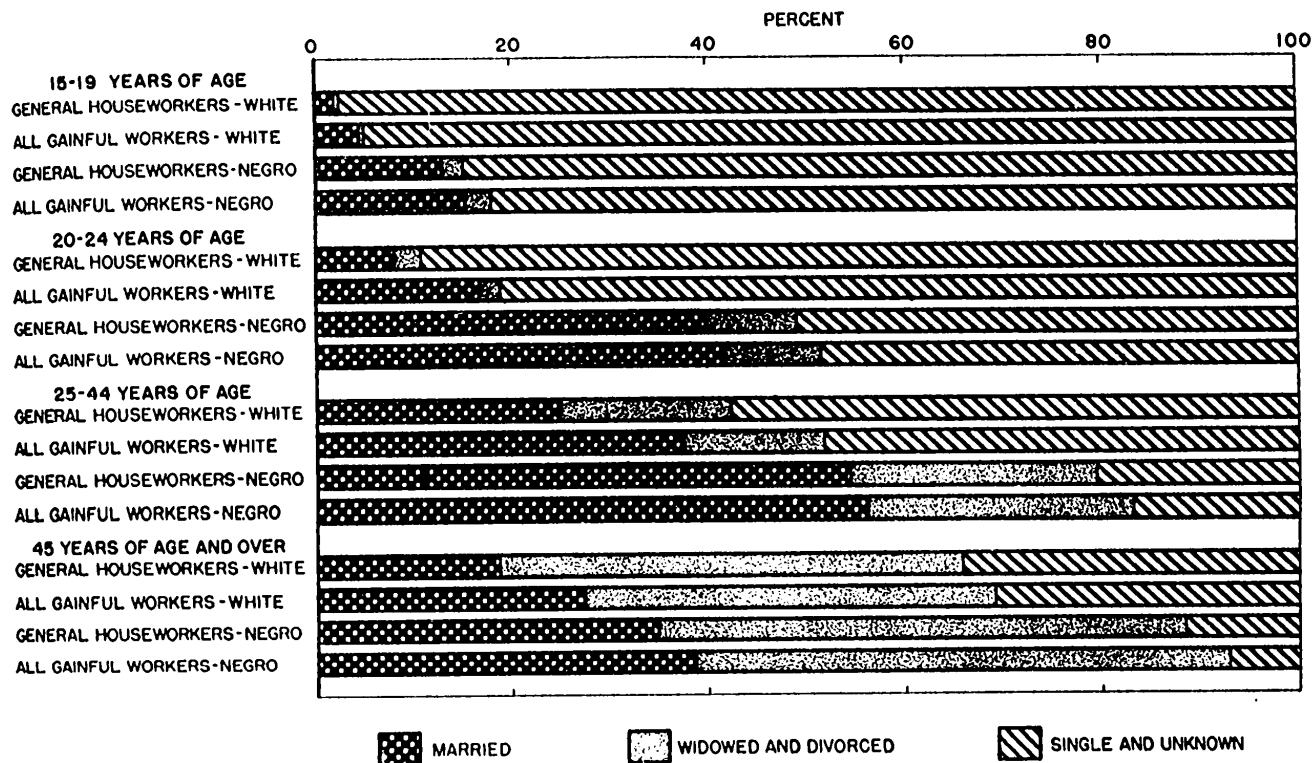
Earnings

In domestic service there are four wage bases: monthly, weekly, daily, and hourly. The most frequent and most variable in rate is the weekly

board in addition to these wages. Of the 180 non-resident full-time employees whose wage rates were reported, 85 percent were earning less than \$11.50.

In order to obtain further data on domestic workers, an analysis was made of 3,848 registration cards providing a random sample of the active and inactive files for domestic workers registered with the State employment offices in

Chart III.—Distribution by marital status of white and Negro women gainful workers and general houseworkers, by age groups, 1930



wage, with the daily wage next in sequence, followed by the monthly rate. Hourly rates vary among the different cities and within the larger cities in different sections of the community. They are, as a rule, uniform within given areas.

A survey⁸ made in 1934 in three cities in Connecticut—Hartford, Waterbury, and Litchfield—covering 1,270 household workers, shows that 63 percent of the 867 full-time resident employees whose wage rates were reported were earning less than \$11.50 per week, but they received room and

⁸ Connecticut Department of Labor, *Household Employment in Hartford, Waterbury, and Litchfield, Connecticut, 1936*, p. 30.

four cities—Cincinnati and Lakewood, Ohio; Wilmington, Delaware; and the District of Columbia.⁹ The wage data on these cards are believed to be complete and reliable. While these data do not afford a basis for drawing general conclusions for the entire country, they may be considered representative of the communities where they were gathered.

Data on wages at placement or in the last employment were obtained for 1,734 workers registered in 1936, 1937, and 1938. Weekly rates were

⁹ Unpublished data, Social Security Board, Bureau of Research and Statistics.

obtained for 979 registrants, daily rates for 450, monthly rates for 160, and hourly rates for 136. Wage rates of couples working in the same household were omitted. Rates are given for cash wages only and do not include meals, lodging, or other remuneration in kind.

For Lakewood, data were obtained only for the weekly wage rates of persons placed in domestic employment. In this city and in each of the other three, and in each year, the most frequent weekly cash wage was from \$5 to \$7. In each of the three areas for which more detailed data are available—Cincinnati, Wilmington, and the District of Columbia—a larger proportion of Negro than of white workers received from \$7 to \$9, but larger proportions of white workers received \$11 and over.

In Cincinnati, Wilmington, and the District daily rates varied from 50 cents to \$3.50; the largest number of workers—164 out of the total 450—received between \$2 and \$2.50 a day. In each of these cities 90 percent of the workers reported to have been working on an hourly basis received from 25 to 30 cents an hour. Of the 160 registrants for whom monthly wage rates were reported in the three cities, 23 were receiving between \$10 and \$25 a month, and 52 were receiving from \$25 to \$35. The rates for 77 persons ranged from \$35 to \$75, and 8 received \$75 and over.

In the records covered by this field study it was found that there was little difference, as a rule, in the wage rates of those who live in the homes of their employers and those who live out, and, in a few instances, wages were lower for those living out. In Hartford and Waterbury the full-time weekly cash wages of nonresident servants were lower than for those "living in." The Connecticut study points out that the difference may partly be due "to the fact that the hours of work for those who live in are in most cases longer than the working hours for those who live out. The type of work done by the latter is often less skilled than that done by the former. Moreover, the girl who lives in her employer's home has to have many qualifications for fitting into the household which employers do not expect of employees who live out."¹⁰

The estimated proportion of workers receiving meals or meals and lodging in domestic service

¹⁰ Connecticut Department of Labor, op. cit., p. 27.

differs widely in the different occupations and in the given States. Data on the proportion of domestic workers receiving perquisites are based on information available to State employment services through placement of domestic workers. Computations derived from figures for 39 States, as reported by State offices of the United States Employment Service, showed that 4 percent of cooks received cash wages only; among untrained nurses the proportion was 7 percent and among housekeepers 9 percent. The group classified as "all other domestic servants" and the group of laundresses (not in laundries) showed a much larger proportion of workers receiving cash wages only—55 and 69 percent, respectively.¹¹

The best available estimates of average per capita annual earnings of full-time workers in domestic service are those given in *National Income in the United States, 1929-1937*.¹² The estimates include both cash wages and wages in kind. The money equivalent of wages in kind in this employment, representing chiefly board and lodging, was calculated on the basis of the cost of living index of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Even with inclusion of these allowances for wages in kind, the figures for the domestic service group as a whole are lower than corresponding estimates for any other group of wage earners except those engaged in agriculture.

From the standpoint of social insurance, administrative problems associated with remuneration in kind would be largely those of determining the status, value, and method of reporting such items. The question of the status of such items in relation to taxable wages has already been met both under the Social Security Act and under State unemployment compensation laws, which have definitions specifically including under "wages" the cash value of all remuneration paid in any medium other than cash. The chief difficulties, which lie in evaluating and reporting such items, already exist under present coverage and would not be introduced, though they might be intensified, by the inclusion of domestic workers. Some problems which might arise in inclusion of domestic workers under present provisions of the Social Security Act might be met by use of alternative methods of collecting contributions.

¹¹ Computed from United States Employment Service schedules on Estimate of Prevailing Wages in Domestic Service.

¹² U. S. Department of Commerce, op. cit., p. 38 (table 10).

Hours of Work

Domestic workers may be grouped into three categories: full-time workers employed by one employer; day workers, working the entire week but for several employers; day workers, working only part of the week for one or more employers. While part-time work is not limited to the field of domestic service, its prevalence in other occupations is less pronounced, and it is a definite factor to be considered in adjudging the difficulties of wage reporting for domestic workers.

It is difficult to determine what constitutes "full time" in domestic service. The wide range in the number of daily and weekly hours worked by domestic employees would make it difficult to use as a measure the number of hours worked. When some employees, for example, work 17 hours a day, or 80 to 90 hours a week, can those working 8 hours a day or 45 hours a week be considered full-time workers?

Data on hours of work are not available for part-time workers, but even if it is assumed that less than 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week definitely represent part-time work, the range in hours worked is greater than that for any other group of wage earners. A survey¹³ was made in Philadelphia in 1928 covering some 2,800 workers; of the 1,796 workers for whom data on hours were obtained, 1,791 reported working days ranging from a few hours to 16; 1 reported 17 hours, and 4 reported 24. Eighty-four percent of the workers in the group reported a day of 8 or more hours but less than 14; 59 percent reported 11 or more hours but less than 15.

The Connecticut survey,¹⁴ previously mentioned, shows that close to 60 percent of 1,151 household employees worked from 10 to 20 hours per day. The average weekly hours were 65 in Hartford, 59 in Waterbury, and 70 in Litchfield. In each town a few women reported working more than 90 hours a week and one woman reported 108 hours. More than 80 percent of the 1,151 persons worked from 50 to 90 hours a week, and 63 percent worked from 60 to 100 hours per week.

Residence

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the group of domestic workers, in comparison

¹³ U. S. Women's Bureau. *Household Employment in Philadelphia*, p. 30. 1932.

¹⁴ Connecticut Department of Labor, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

with other workers, is the close personal associations between domestic workers and their employers; a considerable proportion of this group live in the homes of their employers, work side by side with them, and are regarded as part of the family. Whether the coverage of domestic workers under old-age insurance would result in a change in relationship which would be unfavorable to the worker is difficult to judge. The increasing tendency of American urban dwellers to live in apartments or in small houses with no living accommodations for resident servants would seem to be making for change in any event. There are fewer children, and many of the activities of the household, such as baking, canning and preserving, and laundry work are performed to an increasing extent by commercial or industrial organizations. These tendencies, together with the use of electrical and other devices to lighten the human labor of housework, reduce the need for full-time service by domestic workers residing in their employers' homes.

Sample studies must be relied on for data on the residence of domestic workers. Of 2,773 domestic workers who reported living status in the Philadelphia survey of 1928, a little more than 50 percent were living on the premises where they worked. Of those "living in" for whom sex was reported, 89.4 percent were female and only 10.6 percent were male.¹⁵

Whether the Philadelphia study reflects the general situation is difficult to say. Compared with the total number of workers in domestic occupations, a sample of a few thousand is insignificant. The 1930 census lists 523,922 families in the United States having resident servants.¹⁶ It is generally held that there are more employers of domestic servants than domestic workers since day workers and part-time workers often are employed by more than one family. Since the number of domestic workers is estimated at upwards of 2 million, and since 524,000 families—not including families with lodgers—are recorded to have full-time resident servants, it would seem that at least one-fourth of the domestic workers "lived in" in 1930.

¹⁵ U. S. Women's Bureau, op. cit., p. 20.

¹⁶ *Fifteenth Census*, op. cit., Vol. VI, p. 26. "Families designated as 'having servants' include only those reporting servants living in the home and no lodgers. This combination was obtained as a byproduct of the tabulation by number of lodgers, but the mechanical restrictions were such that it was not possible to obtain data for families having both servants and lodgers."

Employer Characteristics

In analyzing the employer group in the field of domestic service one meets certain definite characteristics which differentiate the group from employers in other occupations.

Of families with servants, the one-servant household is a typical employing unit in the United States. Moreover, in view of the large proportion of part-time workers, some of whom have several employers at the same time, and of the relatively small proportion of employers having more than one servant, employers of domestic workers probably outnumber the workers themselves.

This problem of size of employing unit is of importance from the point of view both of administration and of cost. An analysis¹⁷ of wages and employment within the present coverage of the act was made by the Bureau of Old-Age Insurance from about 95 percent of the employers' returns for 1937 received by the Bureau of Internal Revenue as of August 20, 1938. This analysis showed that 25 percent of the 1.7 million employers reported only one employee wage item for the 6-month period July-December 1937. The total of these wage items constituted only 1.2 percent of the total number, and 1.1 percent of the total amount of such items reported by all employers.

Coverage of employers of domestic service obviously would greatly increase the number of employers concerned with the provisions of the system. Moreover, employers of domestic workers are a highly diverse and scattered group and the vast majority of them cannot be presumed to have had experience with keeping and reporting wage records.

Conclusion

The problems of covering domestic service within the provisions of old-age insurance are largely administrative. Relatively high administrative costs would result from the fact that employers of domestic workers are not a homogeneous or readily identifiable group and that they are scattered throughout the community and in rural areas. Inclusion of domestic workers would more than double the number of employers now

covered while probably it would increase present coverage of workers by only about 7 percent.

The problem of compliance is linked with that of administrative cost. Because of the large number of employers of domestic workers, non-compliance of any considerable proportion would result in a heavy administrative burden. Non-compliance would not necessarily be intentional but might arise because of the difficulty of diffusing information on the program to so large and scattered a group of employers and workers.

Since the benefit formula results in payment of relatively higher benefits to workers whose earnings are low because of low wage rates or brief periods of employment—conditions which are prevalent among domestic workers in private homes—coverage of that group would increase the total amount of benefit payments in a proportion higher than that of the increase in number of covered workers. However, even if domestic employment were not included, many workers in this field acquire rights to benefits through occasional covered employment. It should be noted, further, that many of the factors, such as low wages, which involve questions of administrative difficulties and costs, also illustrate the need of domestic workers for the protection of old-age insurance. Coverage of this group might be expected to lessen obligations which otherwise would be incurred for relief and for old-age assistance.

With the experience already gained in administering the program, the problem of extending coverage to excepted employments is simpler than it would have been earlier. The Social Security Board has expressed the opinion that it is sound social policy to extend old-age insurance to as many of the Nation's workers as possible and has recommended further that the exception of domestic service be eliminated with allowance of a reasonable time before the effective date. In its report to the President and the Congress on proposed changes in the act, the Board declared, "It is believed that the principal administrative difficulties with respect to domestic service will be overcome, just as they will be in the case of agricultural labor, when the individuals affected become generally informed as to the benefits and obligations incident to coverage."

¹⁷ *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 9, pp. 20-24.