



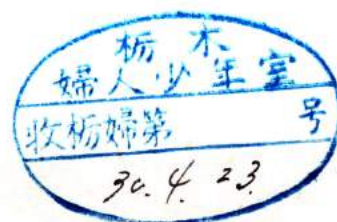
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STATUS OF JAPANESE WOMEN WORKERS

1955

Women's & Minors' Bureau
Ministry of Labor
Japan



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1. Women's Employment.

Since the end of the war, women's productive activities have been mounting with years. A study of labor force conducted by the Census Bureau of Prime Minister's Office reveals that the population of women-workers increased from 13.5 million of 1948 to 16,380,000 in 1954. The proportion of labor-force population in the population of productive ages also climbed up from 47.4% to 52.8%. (Table 1)

Table 1 - Women in Labor Force

	Number (in thousands)	Percentage of labor force population in women 14 years and over
Jan. - Sept. 1954, average	16,380	52.8%
Jan. - Sept. 1953, average	16,030.	52.6 %
1948 average	13,500	47.4 %

Source: Labor Force Survey; Census Bureau, Prime Minister's Office.

One of the reasons of this increase is naturally found in the increase of woman-population, but the major cause, we believe, lies in the fact that the various post-war social changes influenced women's view of their own economic position. Deprived of bread earners in the family, or pressed by the economic changes of post-war days, more and more women found it necessary to take up jobs in order to support their families or help ease their own household finance. Furthermore, with equal educational chance given to both sexes, and with the principle of emancipation of women being gradually accepted by the public, an increasingly larger number of women either want to attain economic independence by taking up jobs, or wish to make contributions to society through use of their own abilities. (Table 2)

Table 2 - Number of Women Job-Holders

	Number (in thousands)	Percentage of Women Job-Holders in Total Job-Holders
Jan. - Sept. 1954, average	16,140	41.0 %
Jan. - Sept. 1953, average	15,850	40.6 %
1948 average	13,410	38.8 %

Source: Labor Force Survey; Census Bureau, Prime Minister's Office.

The heightened productive activities of women in post-war years may be perceived in the increase in the number of women workers in paid employment. The labor-force survey of Prime Minister's Office, Census Bureau, shows that the number of women-employees which totaled 3,320,000 in 1947 rose to 4,330,000 in 1954. The percentage of women in the total number of employees went up from 26.6% of 1947 to 28.6% in 1954. (Table 3)

Table 3 - Number of Employees
(1947 - 1954) (in thousands)

Year	Women	Men	Percentage of women in total employees
Oct. 1947	3,320	9,160	26.6 %
Oct. 1948	3,490	9,700	26.4 "
Oct. 1949	3,140	9,520	24.8 "
Oct. 1950	3,420	9,620	26.2 "
Oct. 1951	3,890	10,120	28.2 "
Oct. 1952	3,910	10,050	28.0 "
Oct. 1953	4,090	10,880	27.3 "
Oct. 1954	4,330	10,830	28.6 "

Source: Labor Force Survey: Census Bureau, Prime Minister's Office..

In particular, the greatest increase of women-employees is seen in such industry branches as "wholesale and retail trades", "finance and insurance", and "service trades". In manufacturing industries, however, women-employees have begun to show a trend for gradual decrease in number since last year. This trend, it is believed, has started because textile industries which occupy an important position in Japan's export trade, have been cutting down the number of their employees, influenced by the recent recession of export trade and consequent rationalization of enterprises. Nevertheless, textile industries here are relying on women for 80% of their man power, and thus rank foremost as workshops for women. (Table 4)

Table 4 - Number of Women-Employees
in Industries. (Sept. 1954)

Industry	Number of Women-Employees (in thousands)	Comparison with corresponding month in previous year	Comparison with corresponding month in 1948
Total	4,100	plus 80	plus 780
Agriculture and Forestry	200	0	0
Fisheries	10	0	0
Mining	50	- 10	-
Construction	160	plus 10	plus 70
Manufacturing	1,480	- 30	plus 280
Wholesale and Retail, Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	830	plus 80	plus 510
Transportation, Communication and other Public Utilities	230	plus 40	-
Services	970	plus 10	plus 580
Government	180	- 10	-

Source: Labor-Force Survey; Census Bureau, Prime Minister's Office.

A study of the distribution of women-employees among various industries has revealed that of all industry groups, the one that employed the largest number of women was "manufacturing" with 1,510,000 women which represented 37.1% of the whole women-employees. Then "service trades" employed 950,000 of them (23.4%), and "wholesale, retail, finance, insurance, and real estate business" employed 770,000 (18.9%). This means that all in all, approximately 80% of women-employees are working in these three industries. (Table 5)

Table 5 - Number of Employees, by Industry
and sex. (1953 average)
(in thousands)

Industry	Women	Men	Percentage of women in the total employees	Percent distribution	
				Women	Men
Total	4,080	10,720	27.0 %	100 %	100 %
Ariculture & Forestry	100	390	32.8	4.6	3.6
Fisheries	20*	220	4.4	0.5	2.1
Mining	60*	530	10.2	1.5	4.9
Construction	170	980	14.8	4.2	9.2
Manufacturing	1,510	3,360	31.1	37.1	31.4
Wholesale & Retail, Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	770	1,520	33.5	18.9	14.2
Transportation, Com- munication and other Public Utilities	210	1,600	11.1	5.2	14.9
Services	950	1,170	44.4	23.4	10.9
Government	190	950	16.7	4.6	8.8

Note: Figures marked with (*) are subject to large sampling error.
Source: Labor Force Survey; Census Bureau, Prime Minister's Office.

Table 6 - Number of Women-Employees (in Regular Employment)
and their Distribution in Manufacturing Industries.

(1953 Average)

Industry	Number of Women-Employees	Percent distribution
All Manufacturing Industries	888,513	100 %
Food Manufacturing	48,957	5.5
Tobacco	11,850	1.3
Textiles	438,206	49.4
Clothing and Accessories	34,953	3.9
Lumber and Wood Products	13,774	1.6
Furniture and Fixtures	3,302	0.4
Paper and Allied Products	18,966	2.1
Printing, Publishing and Allied Industries	22,321	2.5
Chemical Industries	60,584	6.8
Petroleum and	2,600	0.3
Rubber Products	29,538	3.3
Leather and Leather Products	2,079	0.2
Glass, Stone and Clay	32,237	3.6
Primary Metal Industry	20,802	2.3
Metal Products	15,295	1.7
Machinery	26,475	3.0
Electrical Machine, Equipment and Supplies	50,435	5.7
Transportation Equipment	22,292	2.5
Medical and Scientific Instruments, Photographic and Optical Goods, Time Piece	14,159	1.6
Other Manufacturing Industries	19,950	2.3

Notes: Figures for number of women-employees are estimates.

Source: Monthly Labor Survey; Labor Ministry.

Thus, women-employees have been steadily growing in their number each year, and now they represent approximately 30% of the entire employees population. However, women-employees in Japan, when considered collectively in terms of a labor force, still show certain characteristics not found in men, which interfere with the attempts to raise their position as workers. One of them is that they are generally younger than their male counterpart. (Table 7) A survey of Labor Ministry reveals that the average age of women-employees is 23.8 years as against men's 32.5 years. The proportion of youngsters under 18 years of age is 13 in every $\frac{1,000}{100}$ women, and only 4 in every $\frac{1,000}{100}$ men.

Table 7 - Percent Distribution of Employees,
by Sex and Age Group.

(Dec. 1953)

Age group	Sex	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total		3,030,368	8,484,806	100 %	100 %
Under 15 years		967	16,673	0.03	0.20
15 - 18 years		303,391	346,590	12.99	4.08
Over 18 years		2,636,010	8,121,543	86.98	95.72

Source: A survey by Labor Ministry, Labor Standard Bureau, covering only workers under its jurisdiction.

Majority of women-employees, not only do they belong to younger age groups, but are characterized by the fact that they do not stay long in service. It has been noted in a Labor Ministry's survey in all industries that women-employees stay in job only for 3.2 years on the average, or less than one half of the average service years of men which is 6.6 years. Evidently, explanation is that many women take up jobs after graduation from schools, only to stay for

a few years - until they are married and make homes, and they are replaced by younger generation. Recently, however, either driven by economic needs, or inspired by the movement for woman emancipation, an increasingly larger number of women-employees tend to stay in job even after marriage, but as revealed by the 1953 survey of Labor Ministry's Women's and Minors' Bureau, only 8.2% of the women-employees in all industries had husbands. This low percentage is accounted for by the fact that, for one thing, marriage places an added burden of household management on them, and makes it difficult for them to go out to work. They are burdened further with pregnancy, child-birth and child raising, which fact acts strongly to keep housewives from workshops. Thus, 35% of the women-workers who gave birth to children have left their jobs at the time of childbirth.

Comparatively young ages of women-workers and their average short service years are hampering them from becoming skilled workers, and constitute the major factors working to keep them ever on the level of mere semi-professional or unskilled workers. Nevertheless, due to realization by women of their own standing, coupled with increasingly deeper understanding of the general public in the move for woman-emancipation, there has been recently a gradual increase in the number of women who rose to hold supervising or controlling position in industries. According to 1952 survey of Women's and Minors' Bureau, which covered workshops employing 50 or more women, 10.4 in every 100 men were holding responsible posts, while the proportion was only 0.6 in every 100 with women. The labor force survey of the same year shows that, of 17,527 women-job-holders, only 0.06% were in supervisory positions, and 3% were engaged in professional or technical works, the proportions being for lower than those of men. Even so, this is a marked progress over pre-war situation, but still there remain some old-time labor practices in workshops, which are making it difficult for women to attain high positions. Besides, despite the equal educational chances,

women have narrower range of subjects in colleges to major in than men. There being few women staying in jobs long enough to acquire high degree of technical skill, they have comparatively little chance of becoming skilled workers.

2. Wages Paid to Women.

Since the war's end, wages paid to women have been climbing up considerably. Labor Ministry's monthly labor survey shows that women's wages advanced markedly during the period from 1947 to 1950, influenced, no doubt, by the fact that the Labor Standard Law was enforced in 1947 to give legal effect to the principle of equal pays to men and women, and further that, with the rapid development of labor union movement, a wage system with emphasis on living wages was adopted.

Table 8 - Trend of Cash Earnings of Male and Female Workers since the end of the War. (1947 - 1953)

	Average monthly Cash Earnings		Difference in Earnings of Men and Women. Percentage of Women's earnings in Men's.
	Women	Men	
1947	¥ 972	¥ 2,241	43.4 %
1948	2,640	6,133	43.0
1949	4,488	9,980	45.0
1950	5,184	11,143	46.5
1951	6,496	14,051	46.2
1952	7,533	16,782	44.9
1953	8,617	19,560	44.1

- Note: 1. Figures for respective earnings of female and male workers in June, July and August being unavailable, the average of earnings in the remaining 9 months is given above.
2. Due to a change in the method of monthly survey, no direct comparison is possible between the three years preceeding 1950 and the years following.

Source: Monthly Labor Survey; Labor Ministry.

However, average women's wages are generally on a level much lower than those of men. The wages paid to women in 1950 averaged ¥8,617 or 44.1% of those paid to men which stood at ¥19,560 on the average. Women's wages, like those of men, vary considerably with industries.

The highest wages are paid to women in such industries as finance, insurance, transportation, communication and public utilities, where they receive ¥10,000 average. Manufacturing industries generally pay low wages which fall below the industries-wide average, although in a few manufacturings wages 4.5% higher than the average are paid. For instance, tobacco manufacturers are paying ¥12,230, and in primary metal industry, and transportation machine and implement manufacturing industries, wages exceeding ¥10,000 are paid. On the other hand, wages paid by manufacturers of furniture and fixtures, and industries for wooden products, clothings and accessories barely exceed ¥5,000 mark, representing 70% of the average pays in manufacturing industries.

Table 9 - Total Cash Earnings By Industry
and Sex (1953)

Industry	female	male
All Industries	¥ 8,617	¥ 19,500
Mining	8,290	18,145
Manufacturing	7,572	19,148
Wholesale and Retail	9,939	21,744
Finance and Insurance	13,073	28,620
Transportation, Communication and other Public Utilities	11,573	19,264
Construction	6,208	12,794

Source: Monthly Labor Survey; Labor Ministry.

Table 10 - Monthly Cash Earnings of Women-Workers
in Manufacturing Industries
(Jan. 1953-Dec. 1953 Average)

Industry	
Food Manufacturing	¥ 7,010
Tobacco "	12,230
Textile Goods	6,893
Clothing and Accessories	5,371
Wood and Wooden Products	5,335
Furniture and Fixtures	5,292
Paper and Allied Products	8,861
Printing, Publishing and Allied Industries	9,867
Chemical Industries	8,899
Rubber Products	7,818
Glass, Stone and Clay Products	7,091
Primary Metal Products	10,939
Machinery	8,218
Electric Equipment and Supplies	8,678
Transportation Equipment and Tools	10,540
Other Manufacturing Industries	6,284

Source: Monthly Labor Survey; Labor Ministry.

2. Average wages paid to women in 1953 were 44% of those of men, but in a certain period after the war, namely during 1948-1949, women's wages were climbing up at a greater rate than those paid to men, and it appeared the gap between the wages paid to men and women was dwindling.

However, from 1950 on, when the above percentage rose to 46.5%, such gap has again started to widen slowly by degrees, mainly due to the fact that the post-war wage-system based largely on living wages began to be switched over to a new wage-system with emphasis on position.

The fact is that although the principle of equal pays to both sexes is in force, there exists a considerable gap between wages paid to men and women, as the result, presumably, of the difference in the nature of men and women considered as labor force. As stated elsewhere, women workers in Japan are generally unstable. They do not stay long on job. Most of them are young and unmarried, and work only for a short period of time as unskilled laborers and quit, to be replaced by others. Such is the general tendency with them, and in consequence, majority of them are found working in low wages.

3. Labor Union Activities of Women.

As a marvellous progress was made in the labor union movement of post-war Japan, women's power also greatly extended, and in June, 1953, women-members of labor unions were estimated at 1,360,000, representing 33.5% of women workers. This is, indeed, a remarkable progress, when it is recollected that, even at the pre-war peak of 1936, women-members counted only 24,685 with percentage of organization at 1.4.

Table 11 - Labor Union Membership by Sex and
Estimated Organization Percentage
(1948 - 1953)

Year	male membership	female membership	Estimated organization Percentage with women
1948	5,026,937	1,507,017	45.7 %
1949	5,126,333	1,519,782	51.0
1950	4,466,917	1,304,332	37.9
1951	4,333,215	1,352,620	37.4
1952	4,397,546	1,322,014	32.6
1953	4,484,713	1,357,965	33.5

Source: Basic Survey on Labor Unions; Labor Ministry.

Since 1950, membership both of men and women was declining, as the result of the economic stabilization policy carried out then, but in the years 1952 and 1953, the labor union movement began to regain its footing, and increases were seen both in the number of members and percentage of organization. Women-members are found in the greatest number in industries for textile goods, clothing and accessories, where 70% of the union members are women. They are followed by industries for rubber manufactures, motion picture and other amusements, theater and other allied industries, education, finance, insurance, wholesale and retail, in their order. In these industries more than 30% of union members are women.

Since the end of the war, there has been ebb and flow in women's labor union movement, but nevertheless, women are winning increasingly larger power in labor unions. Their power is indicated by the number of officers chosen from among them, and, according to Labor Ministry's survey, in 1953 officers were chosen from among them at the rate of 13 in every 1,000 women members, while with men such rate was 53 in every 1,000. This means that women's power is still weaker by far than men's, yet the fact indicates a considerable growth of women's power in a comparatively short period of time since the end of the war.

Table 12 - Percentage of Union Officers
in Total Membership, by Sex

Year	Percentage of Union officers in total membership	Percentage of women officers in total-female membership	Percentage of men officers in total male membership
1952	6.0 %	1.3 %	7.3 %
1953	4.4	1.2	5.2

Note: Officers comprises President, Vice-President, Secretary General, Auditor and members of executive organs.

Source: Basic Survey on Labor Unions; Labor Ministry.

It has to be admitted that, because labor unions in Japan grew suddenly after the war, and because women's position has long been kept low, there still remain in workshops certain stubborn prejudices against women, as well as practices unfavorable to them. Situation being such, apart from the question of inadequacy of women's power, there are many problems yet to be solved about women in workshops. With a view, therefore, to solving these problems about women-workers through their own concerted efforts, some of Japan's labor unions set up special organs such as women's division or youths' and womens' division, designed to function in these matters.

Table 13 - Unions having Women's Divisions or Youth's and Women's Divisions; Their Membership.
(As of end of June 1954)

	Total		Unions with Women's Divisions		Unions with Youth's and Women's Divisions	
	No. of Unions	Women's Division Members	No. of Unions	Div. Members	No. of Unions	Div. Members
1948			8,306	781,262		
1950	4,830	454,756	3,183	368,647	1,647	86,109

Source: Basic Survey on Labor Unions; Labor Ministry.

A survey of labor unions in 1950 has revealed that unions' women's divisions, or sometimes planning divisions for women, had an aggregate membership of 450,000, representing 35% of the total of the women members of unions. Their activities in the union were chiefly directed toward projects for education, enlightenment, organizing efforts and investigations, with a lively union activities in view. The women's division also makes efforts to give solution to women's problems, functioning as an organ for remedying their grievances.

The problems women's divisions are now tackling concern: equal treatment of men and women respecting wages, promotion of class and position; labor conditions in respect to transposition, work hours, midnight work, etc.; protection of motherhood, and also stimulation of union activities.

Thus, women in the unions are year by year making progress through their organized efforts, but their way is by no means an easy one, and it is the common opinion of members of all women's divisions that they will have to make considerable efforts before they acquire, inside the union, an equal influence with men.

