

Women, Statistics, and Mobilization

Nursing, like other professions which depend primarily on the service of women, must recognize statistical trends in planning for education and the use of woman power.

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MOST of our careful observers and analysts of international relations predict that we are facing a prolonged period of international tension rather than an out-and-out declared war. This implies that we must be ready at any moment to mobilize for total war should some sudden adverse change occur in the international picture. Nations survive by the same natural law as biological species, that is, "a struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest." Universal military training for men can be justified on the basis of this need for a constant state of preparedness.

Women, of course, will be needed to play their part in specific jobs during this period. Their training and the utilization of their services cannot be planned on the same basis as for men because of their basic responsibilities of bearing and rearing children and maintaining a home. At the present time there are some trends in relation to women's responsibilities toward marriage and family life which need to be considered seriously in the long-range mobilization program if future needs are to be met.

A recent release from the Census Bureau gave some very interesting information on the population trends:

Two out of every three persons in the civilian population 14 years old and over in March 1950 were reported as married. Sixty years

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ago when the Census Bureau first published statistics on marital status, only 53 per cent of the population 14 years old and over were married as compared with 60 per cent in 1940 and 67 per cent in 1950. . . . The most striking decrease in the single population took place in the younger age groups especially among those 20 to 24 years old. In this age range, the proportion of single females declined from 47 per cent in 1940 to 32 per cent in 1950. . . . Although the [total] female population 14 years old and over increased about six million since 1940, the number of single females was actually lower in March 1950 than it had been ten years earlier. Throughout the age range of the female population, the figures showed a decline between 1940 and 1950 in the proportion that was single. This decline was most noteworthy for the younger ages (1).

Table 1 gives the data in percentages as taken from the Census Bureau's statistics. This table also indicates a decrease in the total number of women in the 14- to 19-year age group in 1950 as compared to 1940. This decrease is due to the low birth rates during the depression years. The proportion of single women in this age group has also decreased during this ten-year period—in 1940 over three-fourths of the 17- to 19-year-

old girls were single, in 1950 only two-thirds of them were single. This would point to a trend toward earlier marriages in the past ten years which will need to be watched in the years to come.¹

Rough estimates for the number of young women needed in the uniformed services of the military within the next year is 72,000 over and above their present strength. The nurse recruitment program wants at least 50,000 recent high school graduates to enter schools of nursing this year. In addition to these two demands, an indefinite number of women are needed to be trained by higher education in our colleges and universities for other essential civilian and military occupations.

The majority of women secure their education and specialized training before marriage. The military services prefer single women, with no dependents under eighteen years of age, because of their mobility. It is true that a graduate nurse or other well-trained woman, even if she is married, is a potential resource of skilled woman power in case of a national emergency; her mobility is limited, however, due to her family responsibilities. The trend toward earlier marriages, if it continues, eventually may interfere with the number of women receiving specialized training or higher education. Recruitment of unskilled woman power at the present time from the group of young women who would be going into schools for higher education and nursing schools could jeopardize the supply of skilled women for many years to come.

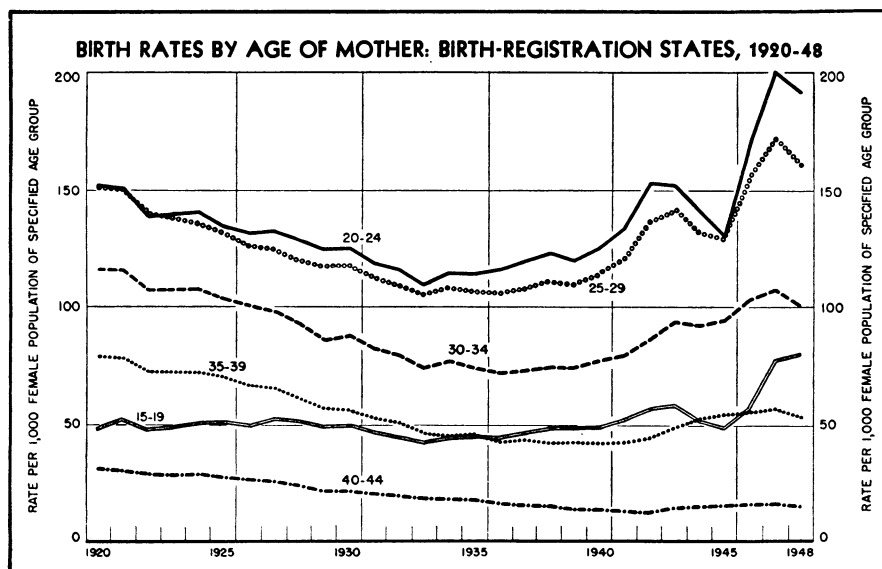
Planning for the use of the married women's services in a mobilization program should not be done without considering the birth rates. The National Office of Vital Statistics of the

¹Actual data from marriage certificates to substantiate this trend are not available because the registration area for marriage statistical data is not nation wide. Complete data for 1949 were available in only 17 states (2).

Table 1. Female Population 14 Years of Age and Over, According to Marital Status, in Civilian Population, March 1950, and in Total Population, April 1940

Age in Years	Total Number		Number Single		Percentage Single		Percentage Married		Percentage Widowed or Divorced	
	1940	1950	1940	1950	1940	1950	1940	1950	1940	1950
14-17.....	4,817,523	4,174,000	4,645,340	3,910,000	96.4	93.7	3.5	6.0	—	.4
18-19.....	2,523,461	2,176,000	1,962,777	1,476,000	77.8	67.8	21.7	31.7	.5	.5
Total 14-19..	7,340,984	6,350,000	6,608,117	5,387,000	90.0	84.8	9.8	14.8	.2	.4
20-24.....	5,895,443	5,863,000	2,781,001	1,854,000	47.2	31.6	51.3	66.1	1.5	2.2
25-34.....	10,818,052	12,078,000	2,049,790	1,321,000	18.9	10.9	77.1	85.4	4.0	3.7
35-44.....	9,168,426	10,663,000	950,876	897,000	10.4	8.4	81.0	83.6	8.6	8.0
45-54.....	7,550,052	8,795,000	654,312	686,000	8.7	7.8	76.0	77.2	15.3	15.0
55-64.....	5,163,025	6,819,000	462,407	494,000	9.0	7.2	63.0	65.0	28.0	27.7
65 and over..	4,613,194	6,067,000	429,363	488,000	9.3	8.0	34.3	36.0	56.3	56.0
Total 14 years of age and over....	50,549,176	56,635,000	13,935,866	11,126,000	27.6	19.6	59.5	66.1	12.9	14.3

From U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, no. 33, February 12, 1951, page 10.



From National Office of Vital Statistics, Public Health Service, Federal Security Agency. Contained in *Special Reports, National Summaries*, vol. 33, no. 10, May 11, 1950, page 131.

U. S. Public Health Service collects data from birth registration certificates and computes birth rates based on the estimated female population for each age group. These rates are given in terms of number of births per 1,000 estimated female population of the specific group—or the age specific birth rate. In the 15- to 19-year age group the rate has been rising steadily from 48.8 in 1945 to 79.7 in 1948. A marked rise has occurred in the 20- to 24-year age group; the rate increased from 125.0 in 1940 to 192.8 in 1948.

The curve graph indicates that the birth rates in the younger age groups show a more marked increase after World War II than was evident after World War I(3). It is apparent from these statistics that the younger age groups are assuming more responsibility toward bearing children than they have in the past 30 years.

Printed data on birth statistics do not go beyond the year 1948. Current news releases from the Federal Security Agency predict that the 1951 birth rates will equal if not exceed the 1947 peak. The age specific rates for 1951 will not be available for some time; it is reasonable to expect, however, that there will be no decline in the birth rates for the younger age groups when the final reports are made available.

Statistical data in relation to the use of women's services in the labor field have been collected by the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor. The trends in respect to the past ten years are shown by Table 2. There is a decrease in the percentage of younger women employed which is most marked in the 20- to 24-year age group, and an increase in the percentage of women workers who are

over 35. The median age of the employed woman today is 37 years.

In 1900 about half of the employed women were under 25 years of age; now the proportion is about one in every four. In 1900 about one-sixth of the employed women were 45 years of age or over; now it is about one-third(4). The number of women workers 35 years of age and older increased markedly during the war years, and has continued to increase in post-war years. About half of the women in the labor force were in the 20- to 34-year age group in 1940; the proportion dropped to less than two-fifths by 1949(5). These trends indicate that the labor market is leaning more on the older women, leaving the younger women for their family responsibilities.

It is apparent that at the present time there are fewer single women, that there is a trend toward younger marriages, that the younger-age groups have higher birth rates than they have had for some time, and that these trends are reflected in the age distribution of the employed women. These trends need to be re-evaluated from time to time. Another Pearl Harbor might change the picture; but it is important that these

Table 2. Percentages of All Women Workers According to Age Distribution for 1940 and for April 1951

Age in Years	1940	April 1951
14-19.....	10.6%	9.3%
20-24.....	20.4	13.8
25-34.....	27.7	22.5
35-44.....	19.2	22.6
45-54.....	13.2	18.2
55-64.....	6.7	10.5
65 and over....	2.2	3.1
Total.....	100.0%	100.0%

From Women's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor.

facts be recognized now. Since the emergency may happen within the next year or the next ten years, it is important that these trends be appreciated, so that an adequate supply of skilled women will be constantly maintained to meet that emergency. Some general suggestions can be made:

1. Long-term training of women for nursing, teaching, and so forth, must be maintained and increased. The age span for this training should be expanded to include women who have had their families and are now free to study for a career. Part-time training programs for women should be carried on wherever possible, while they are rearing their families, so that they can be trained in a skill by the time their children are grown.

2. More emphasis should be placed on training the older women for semi-skilled occupations such as practical nursing so that they will be available for service in the event of a national emergency within the next ten years. At the present time a woman of 40 who is trained for a special occupation may be more readily available for service in that skill for ten or more years to come, whereas a girl of 20 may be available only a year or two before marriage and then not be available again until she is 40 or over.

Many more specific recommendations could be made, but they would be, as these suggestions are, just one person's opinion. These statistical trends in relation to women's biological responsibilities should be recognized and taken into consideration in all plans for training and utilizing women's services. Occupations dependent primarily on women which require a long period of education or specialized training such as teaching, nursing, dietetics, occupational and physical therapy, may very well experience even more critical shortages of personnel in a few years if the training programs do not take these trends into account today.

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