

This PDF is a selection from an out-of-print volume from the National Bureau of Economic Research

Volume Title: The Labor Force in War and Transition: Four Countries

Volume Author/Editor: Clarence D. Long

Volume Publisher: UMI

Volume ISBN: 0-87014-351-4

Volume URL: <http://www.nber.org/books/long52-1>

Publication Date: 1952

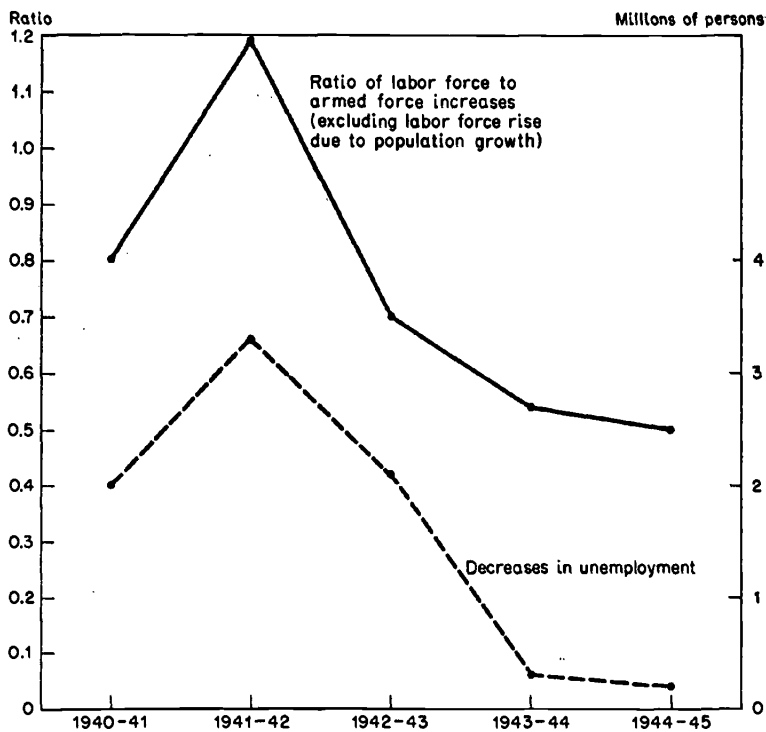
Chapter Title: THE WAR PEAK: UNITED STATES, GREAT BRITAIN, CANADA, GERMANY

Chapter Author: Clarence D. Long

Chapter URL: <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c3133>

Chapter pages in book: (p. 32 - 37)

Chart 6
**Ratio of Labor Force to Armed Force Increases
 and Annual Decreases in Unemployment
 United States, April 1940-1945**



Source: Table 2.

4 THE WAR PEAK: UNITED STATES, GREAT BRITAIN, CANADA, GERMANY

In World War I the United States, Great Britain, and Germany did not add appreciably to their labor forces, the illusion of an over-all increase having arisen from transfers out of domestic service and other paid employment to factories and shipyards.²⁵ In all three countries the civilian labor force was depleted by the full number drafted, and labor needed in war work had to be pulled from the small pool of prewar unemployed or from industries turning out goods of less urgency.

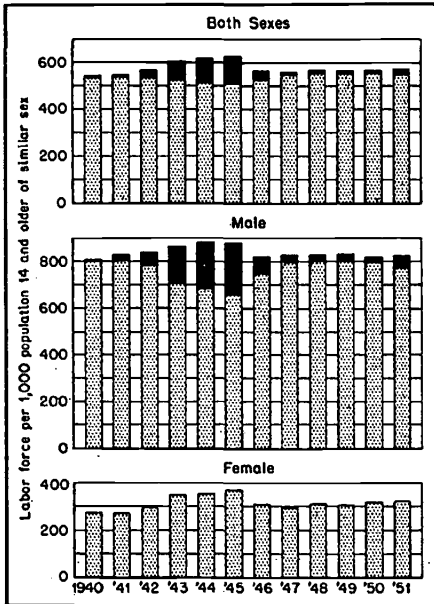
During World War II, on the contrary, the labor forces unquestionably increased (Chart 7), though the number varied widely among the countries. Nonexistent in Germany unless one counts foreigners, and

²⁵ *Occasional Paper 14*, pp. 39 ff.

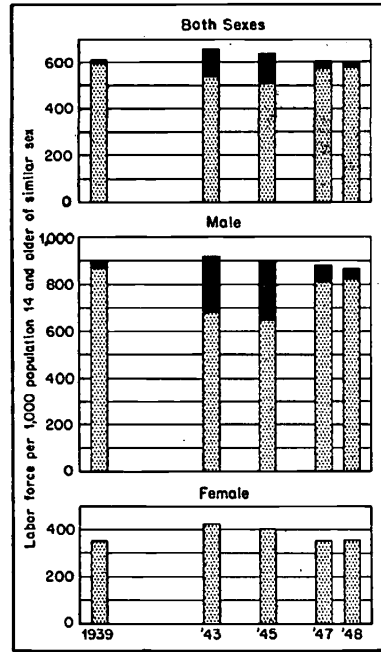
Chart 7
 Labor Force per 1,000 Population 14 and Older, World War II

■ Armed forces

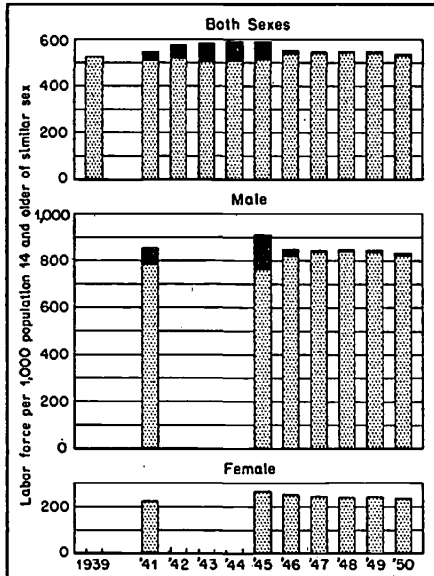
A United States, April 1940-1951



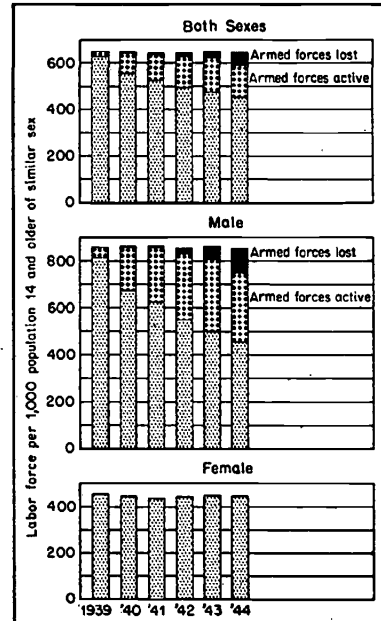
B Great Britain, June 1939-1948



C Canada, August 1939, June 1941-1950



D Germany, May 1939-1944
 (labor force including armed forces but excluding foreigners)



Source: See text notes 5 and 6.

substantial in Canada, in Britain it was impressive though smaller than usually imagined, and in the United States largest of all.

In April 1940 the American armed forces were hardly worth numbering. Five Aprils later, as the *Wehrmacht* was breaking up, they had taken on a dozen million which, added to the gains of the civilian sector, had brought employment up altogether by 19.4 million (Table 2 A, line 1). Much was due to the absorption of many millions unemployed in 1940, but 11.5 million represented extra workers who had come in during the five intervening years. Leaving out further the part due to population growth, 8.5 million was the excess over the labor force that would have prevailed if the population 14 and older had contributed the same proportion of workers as in April 1940 — 54.1 percent.²⁶ This nation was in the enviable position of staffing one of the largest military establishments in history and at the same time placing a sixth more persons in civilian jobs than in 1940. Over half of the labor force additions were females, one for every three who would have been in gainful work on the basis of prewar participation rates (Table 5).

²⁶ These statistics were revised by the Census to be comparable to 1945. They manifest an upturn in the proportion of the population in the labor force during 1940 and 1941. In the data underlying *Occasional Paper 14* the increase was less (p. 50 and App. B), the discrepancy arising chiefly from the new technique which made the July 1945 labor force nearly 2 million bigger. For comparability, the earlier data were raised by the Census back to 1940, and the above difference distributed in such a way that the labor force was enlarged about a million more in April 1943 than in March 1940 ('Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment in the United States, 1940 to 1946', *Current Population Reports*, Series P-50, No. 2, Sept. 11, 1947, p. 9)

Table 5

Peak Excess of World War II Labor Force (including armed forces) over Prewar or Early War (millions of workers)

	U. S.	G. B.	Canada	Germany		
	April 1, 1945 ^a	June 1, 1943 ^b	June 1, 1945 ^c	A	B	C
A BOTH SEXES 14 AND OLDER						
Actual number						
Both sexes	66.3	25.2	5.3	41.5	39.9	46.1
Males	46.4	16.7	4.2	26.7	25.1	29.8
Females	19.9	8.5	1.1	14.8	14.8	16.3
Excess, incl. rise due to population growth						
Both sexes	11.5	2.3	0.7	1.0	-0.6	5.3
Males	5.5	0.7	0.4	0.8	-0.8	3.7
Females	6.0	1.6	0.3	0.2	0.2	1.6
Excess, excl. rise due to population growth						
Both sexes	8.5	1.8	0.4	-0.1	-1.7	4.2
Males	3.8	0.3	0.3	0.1	-1.6	3.0
Females	4.7	1.5	0.1	-0.2	-0.1	1.2

B MAJOR AGE-SEX EARNING GROUPS

Actual number			
Males 25-64	33.5	11.9	2.8
Others	32.8	13.3	2.5
Young persons 14-24	16.7	7.0	1.6
Elderly persons 65+	2.9	1.2	0.3
Women 25-64	13.2	5.1	0.6
Excess, incl. rise due to population growth			
Males 25-64	2.4	0.3	0.2
Others	9.1	2.0	0.5
Young persons 14-24	4.4	0.2	0.2
Elderly persons 65+	0.7	0.4	0.1
Women 25-64	4.0	1.4	0.2
Excess, excl. rise due to population growth			
Males 25-64	0.5	0.0	0.0
Others	7.8	1.8	0.4
Young persons 14-24	4.6	0.3	0.2
Elderly persons 65+	0.5	0.2	0.1
Women 25-64	2.7	1.3	0.1

* Excess over April 1940. The United States mobilized a slightly larger labor force inasmuch as 300,000 men were killed. Their inclusion would not alter the picture materially.

^b Excess over June 1939. For information on British parttime workers, military and civilian war losses, and foreign workers and war prisoners, see *Labor Force, Income, and Employment*, Appendix H.

^c Excess over June 1941. The Canadian labor force concept excludes student workers and farm women employed on family farms. Canada mobilized a slightly larger labor force than is reflected in these figures on active strength inasmuch as 40,000 were killed. Their inclusion would not alter the picture materially.

^d Excess over May 1939. These data do not reflect some concealed possible shifts in the German female labor force to the extent that 'agricultural helping wives' transferred to industry. The same shifts occurred in the United States but undoubtedly some farm wives, who would be excluded from the United States or Canadian peacetime labor force, were in the German labor force before the war and might, if their peacetime work was trivial, constitute a real addition to the labor force without being recognized in these statistics. However, no more than a few hundred thousand did, in fact, shift from agriculture; and indication that females may not have worked harder on their family farms is had in the fact that the exodus of German men from farms was just about made up by foreign labor.

The actual labor force data are based upon a threefold classification:

- A Labor force mobilized from native population, military losses not deducted; civilian losses by May 1943 negligible.
- B Labor force maintained in active strength from native population, military losses deducted; civilian losses by May 1943 negligible.
- C Labor force deducting military losses and counting foreigners and prisoners of war; civilian losses by May 1943 negligible.

The labor force influx exceeded by far that of the other three countries together even if foreigners are counted in the German work force (Tables 1, 5). In percentages of working age population, however, additions in Britain compare favorably to those in this country (Table 6). Britain also drew more females 25-64 into its labor force per 1,000

of those ages in the population, despite smaller reserves. In a larger sense Britain aroused its people most completely to action, for its peak wartime labor force was a larger proportion of native population than that of any of the other three countries.²⁷ Germany lost from its native labor force even if killed and missing are not deducted, and heavily if they are.²⁸ Only by including foreigners in the labor force can its additions be compared to those of the United States (Tables 5 and 6, A, col. C).

WARTIME ADDITIONS BY AGE AND SEX EARNING GROUPS

No information was available on the age of the German labor force during World War II. Detail on the other three countries (Tables 5, 6) elicits first that, aside from population growth, few additions were drawn from males 25-64. Men 65 and older represented also, except in Canada, a minor source, furnishing in the United States no more than did males 25-64. Most of the extra labor came from young persons 14-24 and women 25-64. The former was the source of over half of all United States accretions, the latter, of nearly 40 percent; hardly more than a tenth came from men of prime ages and the elderly together. Most fresh manpower was thus, in fact, woman- and childpower. In Canada one in every two entering the labor force during 1941-45 was a youth. Women supplied the same number as elderly men. In Great Britain young persons were among the least important additions, no doubt because most children 14 or older were already gainfully occupied in peacetime. Seven in every ten entrants were women 25-64.

²⁷ Moreover, 47 percent of its workers in civilian nonagricultural industries, classified by uses of products, were in war employments, compared with 38 percent in Canada and 34 percent in this country. 'The Impact of the War on Civilian Consumption in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada', *A Report to the Combined Production and Resources Board*, Morris A. Copeland, Chairman, September 1945, pp. 152-6.

²⁸ To show that Germany's failure to enlarge its labor force was due to other factors than military losses one set of figures is presented in which the war dead are not deducted. Incidentally, the failure to recruit native females puts figures quoted during the war in an unfavorable light. According to uncited German sources in *The Economist* (March 6, 1943, p. 300), 2.2 million women, including conscripts for compulsory labor service and 'helpers' in the *Wehrmacht*, were brought into employment from the labor reserve that existed in August 1939. "Thus, it is obvious that only married women are available [in Germany] in large numbers. Married women without children or with one child, have already been drawn into some kind of war work. . . ."

Table 6

Peak Excess of World War II Labor Force (including armed forces) per 1,000 Population of Similar Age and Sex

	United States April 1, 1945 ^a	Great Britain June 1, 1943 ^b	Canada June 1, 1945 ^c	Germany May 1, 1943 ^d		
				A	B	C
A BOTH SEXES 14 AND OLDER						
Actual proportion						
Both sexes	623	658	594	649	639	672
Males	879	916	909	861	853	874
Females	370	423	265	449	449	473
Excess over prewar proportion						
Both sexes	82	47	46	0	-10	21
Males	70	19	55	2	-6	14
Females	96	73	42	-4	-4	19
B MAJOR AGE-SEX EARNING GROUPS						
Actual proportion						
Men 25-64	958	974	970			
Others	459	509	411			
Young persons 14-24	639	872	646			
Elderly persons 65+	289	260	378			
Women 25-64	374	377	218			
Excess over prewar proportion						
Men 25-64	18	3	10			
Others	111	66	66			
Young persons 14-24	176	43	91			
Elderly persons 65+	43	50	111			
Women 25-64	91	102	42			

See Table 5, notes.

5 WEAKNESS OF GERMAN MANPOWER POLICY EXPLAINED

The failure of Germany to augment its labor force with citizens calls for careful scrutiny, especially in view of the Nazis' supposed dictatorial advantage and reputation for total warfare. We must be sure, first, that it was not because civilians were stricken by bombing or sent out to conquered territories.

Emigration can be disposed of fairly quickly. "According to a slogan coined by Chancellor Hitler and frequently repeated by National Socialist leaders, 'the conquests of the German sword must be consolidated by the plough'. The German victories throughout Europe did not, however, lead to any appreciable volume of German settlement apart from the resettlement of Germans abroad. . . . There are, of course, millions of Germans from the Reich in the territories conquered, annexed, or occupied by Germany, but the overwhelming majority of them are directly connected with the military operations" (p. 27). "The number of Germans working abroad in commercial undertakings should not be over-