PATTERNS OF WOMEN’S WORK
As this graph suggests, single women worked at a fairly steady rate (about half), while the increase in overall participation rates was driven almost entirely the entry of married women into the labor force.
This contemporary poster both documents and celebrates the wartime contributions of women—and captures the dramatic increases of the war years. The increase in female employment, from 11 million in 1940 to 20 million in 1945, was not entirely made up of "new" workers. Many would have been working under natural employment conditions (a recovery from the Depression). Probably about 3.5 million women (75 percent of them married) entered the workforce because of the war. Women also moved in and out of the labor force: by 1941, about 3.5 million had moved from home to work, almost 2 million had, by 1944, moved the other way.

After demobilization, the war had the effect of adding about 1 million female workers who might otherwise have stayed at home. As in World War I, shifts in employment were as important as statistical growth. Black women especially made gains, particularly in northern cities like Detroit. While black women still did not consistently achieve the highest paying factory jobs, many did move permanently out of the domestic sphere.