

considerably larger numbers, particularly between 1916 and 1921, but with a slight retrogression between 1921 and 1926.

Census.	Numbers engaged.	Proportion, Females to Males. Per Cent.
1896	53,070	23·8
1901	65,671	25·2
1906	75,244	24·5
1911	90,253	25·8
1916	100,209	28·9
1921	126,405	31·1
1926	122,772	28·0

At the 1926 census there were some 140,000 unmarried women between the ages of 16 and 55 (assumed as covering the extreme working period) and of these 83,000 (60 per cent.) were breadwinners. A further 15,000 were widows, divorcees, and legally separated wives.

The absorption of women has proceeded at a somewhat greater rate than that of men, with a period of accentuation due to circumstances arising out of the war. Had the proportion of women workers to men been the same in 1926 as in 1896 there would have been over 18,000 fewer women in industry.

The infiltration of female labour has not proceeded uniformly in the divergent fields of industry.

Industry Group.	Numbers engaged, 1926.	Percentage Increase since 1896.
Primary production	3,526	13
Industrial	20,616	54
Transport and communication	2,283	603
Commerce and finance	19,493	411
Public administration and professional	23,948	239
Domestic	36,416	59
Total including other groups	122,772	131
Dependants (all ages)	528,273	90

Between 1906 and 1911 development of dairying caused considerable accretion to the ranks of female farm-workers. Maintained by war causes and the post-war dairying boom up to 1921, they showed a sudden drop in 1926, for which the slump, introduction of milking-machines, &c., emergence of farms from more primitive and less prosperous stages, &c., are given as notable among many contributory causes.

In the industrial group, which covers factories, &c., women workers have been stationary in numbers since 1911. Figures examined in more detail suggest that in spite of the establishment or development of industries employing women, the extension of labour-saving machinery, large-scale production, &c., has been sufficient to keep numbers from increasing.

Transport and communication is a small group—for females—and is largely dominated by employees of the Post and Telegraph Department.

The most considerable expansion has taken place in the commercial, Governmental, and professional groups. Mechanical appliances again come into importance: there were, for instance, 18 women typists in 1896, and 6,486 in 1926. Lower wage-scales, increasing keenness of competition, &c., are operative.

The comparatively low ratio of growth of the domestic group, of which the domestic servant is the principal element, is usually ascribed to the less attractive conditions of remuneration, living, &c., and the diminished social status.

The accompanying data shows the general position fairly clearly:—

Industry Group.	Proportion per Cent. of Females to Males.		
	1926.	1911.	1896.
Primary production	2·5	5·8	3·0
Industrial	16·2	21·5	25·9
Transport and communication	4·0	3·4	2·0
Commerce and finance	30·3	23·5	12·6
Public administration and professional	69·8	68·9	63·8
Domestic	450·5	373·8	390·0
Total (including other groups)	28·0	25·8	23·8

Apart from the various economic causes directly affecting the entry of women into industry, such as the desire for financial independence, careers, inability of parents to maintain, &c., the gradual rise of the marriage age has its effect. The mean age of brides is now twelve months greater than in 1896, with the result that some thousands annually remain at work a year longer than they otherwise would.