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PRESENT TRENDS IN HOME SEWING[1]

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The practices of home makers in regard to home sewing are obviously in process of change, although there are no data available which show conclusively the tendencies which may be developing. The subject is of such economic importance that it is forcing itself upon the attention of many different groups. Not only those industrial organizations which deal directly with the production and sale of fabrics and clothing but also those firms which handle notions, patterns, domestic sewing machines, and other commodities connected with home sewing have a direct interest in the matter. In some instances attempts are being made to stimulate either home sewing or the purchase of ready-made garments, but often these are promoted with little knowledge of the forces which are favoring or inhibiting them.

It is unfortunate that data are not available showing the consumption of textile yardage by home makers. A recent study (*8*)[2] made by the bureau of business research, Harvard University, gives indicative but not conclusive figures. The report gives the record of sales from 10 department stores for the period from 1911 to 1925, inclusive. The total sales of ready-to-wear merchandise in these stores correspond closely with the total sales of yard goods until 1920. During the years 1921 to 1925, inclusive, there was an upward trend in the sales of ready-to-wear garments, whereas the sales of piece goods showed a marked downward inclination. Sales of cotton piece goods increased rapidly from 1911 to 1920. From

[1] Acknowledgment is hereby made to the State clothing specialists and other extension leaders; members of the General Federation of Women's Clubs; college, university, and high-school teachers; and individuals who helped to gather the data in this survey. So many of these persons assisted that lack of space makes it impossible to publish their names.

[2] Reference is made by italic numbers to "Literature cited," p. 15.

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The results of the bureau survey, which was made by the questionnaire method, are given in Tables 2 to 9. Blanks were sent to high-school, college, and university teachers, to presidents of women's clubs, and to extension leaders for distribution. The data are compared, whenever possible, with the results obtained by Tucker, since this study was made in cooperation with her and as a continuation of her survey. With the exception of Table 5, which is arranged according to the number of persons in the family, all the tables are arranged according to the size of the community in which the family lived and according to the income which the family received. The size of the community was not stated in 138 reports, and 505 failed to give the income.

GARMENTS MADE AT HOME

In Tables 2, 3, and 4 are shown the percentage of women who stated that they made the garments named for women and for children. In Tables 2 and 3, the percentages are based on the total number of reports summarized from each community and each income group. The percentages in Table 4 are calculated on the basis of the number of families having children 14 years of age and younger. The figures given under "Women not answering this question" in these three tables include those who may not sew, and those who did not answer the question as directed or who may have left it blank through carelessness.

TABLE 2.—*Proportion of women making certain garments for women and for girls over 14 years of age, classified by size of community and by income groups*

	Average number in family	Reports summarized	Women not answering this question	Percentage of women making—														
				House dresses	Summer wash dresses	Silk dresses	Wool dresses	Skirts	Blouses	Aprons	Coats	Hats	Slips	Petticoats	Chemises	Bloomers	Nightgowns	Kimonos
Summary of all reports	No. 4.0	No. 1,981	Per cent 8.9	Per cent 80.0	Per cent 82.1	Per cent 60.9	Per cent 59.2	Per cent 44.1	Per cent 41.2	Per cent 80.4	Per cent 24.4	Per cent 31.9	Per cent 76.6	Per cent 58.6	Per cent 46.6	Per cent 61.9	Per cent 79.9	Per cent 50.9
Size of community:																		
Rural	4.6	668	6.1	88.1	86.6	60.5	63.8	48.4	46.6	88.8	27.6	34.4	80.6	66.5	42.2	73.6	87.2	51.1
Under 5,000	3.7	427	7.5	84.9	85.2	62.5	62.7	47.5	42.8	86.1	26.7	32.1	81.4	61.5	53.8	64.6	84.2	56.2
5,000 to 10,000	3.8	197	8.6	76.6	80.1	65.4	54.8	36.5	36.5	77.1	22.3	31.9	79.1	50.2	45.6	53.2	77.6	47.7
Over 10,000	3.5	551	9.4	72.8	78.4	61.2	53.9	40.7	36.9	71.1	21.2	29.1	71.1	53.2	49.1	50.1	72.8	50.7
Not given	4.3	138	24.6	58.6	67.3	48.2	52.1	36.2	32.6	62.3	17.4	29.7	59.4	43.4	36.9	55.0	62.3	38.4
Income:																		
Under $1,000	3.7	151	8.6	86.7	85.4	53.0	63.6	48.3	41.0	85.4	28.5	35.1	76.1	62.2	40.4	70.8	88.7	44.4
$1,000 to $1,999	3.6	473	6.5	83.1	84.8	65.8	63.9	48.1	44.1	85.7	27.2	35.9	78.9	63.7	49.0	67.9	84.4	53.8
$2,000 to $2,999	3.7	387	5.7	83.9	86.4	69.1	65.8	49.3	48.2	83.6	29.7	35.9	80.8	64.2	58.8	64.5	85.7	61.7
$3,000 to $3,999	4.0	195	7.2	81.9	83.5	64.5	58.9	36.4	42.5	78.8	19.5	27.1	78.8	52.2	43.0	55.8	77.8	50.2
$4,000 to $4,999	4.1	111	11.7	73.8	77.4	63.9	54.0	36.9	41.4	71.1	30.6	29.7	79.2	49.5	39.6	54.0	73.8	48.6
$5,000 or over	4.4	159	8.3	72.4	73.7	57.8	50.8	34.9	29.8	77.5	12.7	24.1	73.7	54.0	43.2	48.9	70.5	45.1
Not given	4.3	505	13.9	75.6	78.8	51.5	52.5	42.8	36.2	75.4	20.8	29.1	71.3	54.5	41.2	60.0	74.3	44.7

From the summary in Table 2 it is seen that 80 per cent or more of the women made house dresses, summer wash dresses, aprons, and nightgowns. In general more of the women living in the smaller communities than of those in the larger places made these garments. The exceptions were the number of women making kimonos, chemises, and silk dresses. The percentage that made silk dresses varies only slightly in any community. Many more in all community groups

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made house dresses and summer wash dresses than made silk dresses and wool dresses. As many made silk dresses as made wool dresses, except in the rural communities and in the case of those who did not report the size of the community.

In the classification by income groups the largest percentages of women making most of the garments are in the $2,000 to $2,999 group, the only exception being those of the women making house dresses, nightgowns, bloomers, coats, and aprons. The highest percentage making the first three of these garments is in the "Under $1,000" group. Apparently size of family is not an influencing factor in this grouping. However, Table 5 shows that as the size of family increases a larger percentage of women made more kinds of garments. Therefore, if the size of family were a constant factor in Table 2, the percentages in the higher income groups might tend to be even lower. The data in Table 2 show that in general a larger percentage of those in the lowest income group than those in the highest income group made the garments.

The percentage of women making a certain number of the garments named are given in Table 3, which is based on the 1,981 reports used for Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 3.—*Proportion of women, classified by size of community and by income groups, making garments for women, for girls over 14 years of age, and for children*

	Average number in family	Reports summarized	Percentage of women making garments for women and for girls over 14				Percentage of women making children's garments				
			Women not answering	1 to 5 kinds	6 to 10 kinds	11 to 15 kinds	Women not answering	Families with no children under 15	1 to 4 kinds	5 to 8 kinds	9 to 12 kinds
Summary of all reports	4.0	*Number* 1,981	*Per cent* 8.9	*Per cent* 13.5	*Per cent* 36.6	*Per cent* 40.9	*Per cent* 53.0	*Per cent* 49.1	*Per cent* 13.9	*Per cent* 20.7	*Per cent* 12.2
Size of community:											
Rural	4.6	668	6.1	9.1	39.2	45.1	40.1	37.6	15.3	27.1	17.0
Under 5,000	3.7	427	7.5	11.9	34.2	46.3	54.5	53.4	13.1	19.4	12.9
5,000 to 10,000	3.8	197	8.6	18.3	36.0	37.0	51.7	45.7	17.2	20.3	10.6
Over 10,000	3.5	551	9.4	18.6	35.8	35.8	63.7	60.3	12.9	15.9	7.2
Not given	4.3	138	24.6	11.6	34.8	29.0	68.8	52.2	8.7	13.0	9.4
Income:											
Under $1,000	3.7	151	8.6	11.9	41.0	38.4	48.3	43.7	14.6	24.5	12.6
$1,000 to $1,999	3.6	473	6.5	10.6	35.9	46.8	50.6	48.8	12.9	20.9	15.4
$2,000 to $2,999	3.7	387	5.7	10.6	31.2	52.4	50.8	51.2	12.6	21.9	14.4
$3,000 to $3,999	4.0	195	7.2	17.9	38.9	35.8	51.2	47.7	14.8	25.1	8.7
$4,000 to $4,999	4.1	111	11.7	18.0	31.5	38.7	56.7	49.6	16.2	22.5	4.5
$5,000 or over	4.4	159	8.3	24.1	38.1	30.5	57.2	52.8	18.4	15.9	9.5
Not given	4.3	505	13.9	12.9	40.0	33.3	57.0	48.7	13.5	18.0	11.5

The largest percentage of women making garments for women and girls made 11 to 15 kinds, and over one-third made 6 to 10 kinds. In other words over 75 per cent of the women were making 6 or more kinds of garments. The largest percentage making children's garments made 5 to 8 kinds, while the percentages making 1 to 4 kinds and those making 9 to 12 kinds are practically equal. Approximately half of the families had no children under 15 years of age, which probably accounts for the small percentages of women making chil-

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dren's garments. However, many of the women made garments for children when there were no children in the family.

As the size of the community increases the percentage of women making from 1 to 5 kinds of garments for women and for girls over 14 years of age increases. The largest percentages of women making the most different kinds of garments for women and girls were in the rural districts and the small towns. The size of the community seems to have little or no effect on the percentage making from 6 to 10 kinds of garments but causes the greatest variation in the groups making 1 to 5 kinds.

In the classification by income the percentage of women making 1 to 5 kinds of garments for women and for girls over 14 years old increases with the income. Approximately half of the women in the $1,000 to $1,999 and the $2,000 to $2,999 groups made 11 to 15 kinds. Throughout all the income groups there was least variation in the percentages making 6 to 10 kinds.

In all groups the percentage of women making children's clothes decreases as the size of the community increases. Classified by income groups the number answering in most cases is too small to afford any definite comparisons.

In Table 4 is given the percentage of women having children under 15 years of age and younger who made the children's garments named in the questionnaire.

TABLE 4.—*Proportion of women making garments for children under 15 years of age, classified by size of community and by income groups, and based on the number of families having children under 15 years of age*

	Number of families with children	Women not answering this question	Percentage of women making garments—												
			Rompers	Cotton dresses	Wool dresses	Cotton suits	Wool suits	Shirts	Coats	Hats	Night garments	Drawers or bloomers	Petticoats	Slips
		Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Summary of all reports	1,008	19.3	36.1	59.8	48.3	30.5	21.5	30.2	42.0	25.6	68.0	60.5	54.2	53.0
Size of community:														
Rural	417	13.9	37.6	63.3	54.9	33.8	27.1	38.8	45.6	27.6	74.8	66.2	57.6	58.0
Under 5,000	199	17.1	35.7	64.8	50.8	31.2	19.1	30.2	46.2	27.1	71.4	63.3	57.3	56.3
5,000 to 10,000	107	21.5	35.5	53.3	39.3	32.7	15.9	27.1	38.3	26.2	59.8	54.2	49.5	46.7
Over 10,000	219	22.8	35.6	58.0	42.5	25.6	18.7	19.6	38.4	23.3	63.9	55.7	53.0	50.7
Not given	66	45.5	30.3	39.4	33.3	19.7	12.1	15.2	24.2	15.2	40.9	42.4	34.8	28.8
Income:														
Under $1,000	85	17.6	35.3	56.5	50.6	30.6	20.0	36.5	41.2	21.2	72.9	61.2	50.6	47.1
$1,000 to $1,999	242	14.5	43.4	65.7	57.0	36.8	24.8	36.8	51.2	29.8	73.5	66.1	61.6	55.4
$2,000 to $2,999	189	12.7	43.9	64.0	48.7	40.2	29.6	34.4	44.4	32.8	81.5	66.7	59.3	59.3
$3,000 to $3,999	102	14.7	42.2	63.7	46.1	34.3	20.6	23.5	52.9	23.5	66.7	59.8	54.9	51.0
$4,000 to $4,999	56	28.6	14.3	46.4	28.6	17.9	14.3	19.6	25.0	12.5	60.7	46.4	42.9	46.4
$5,000 or over	75	20.0	36.0	65.3	44.0	18.7	12.0	17.3	29.3	20.0	58.7	61.3	60.0	57.3
Not given	259	29.0	26.3	52.1	45.6	22.0	17.8	27.4	34.7	23.2	56.0	53.7	45.2	49.0

From the summary it will be noted that a larger percentage of women made night garments than made any other garment. It is also shown that 42 per cent made coats and 25 per cent made hats for their children. In this group a much higher percentage (19.3) of the women than in Table 2 (8.9) failed to answer the question.

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TABLE 8.—*Sewing machines owned and attachments used by women, classified by size of community and by income groups*

	Reports	Women not answering this question	Women owning—		
			Foot, hand, and motor-power sewing machines	Foot-power sewing machines	Motor-power sewing machines
Summary of all reports	*Number* 1,981	*Per cent* 1.8	*Per cent* 89.9	*Per cent* 75.3	*Per cent* 13.0
Size of community:					
Rural	668	1.3	92.7	87.2	1.0
Under 5,000	427	1.4	92.2	77.5	14.5
5,000 to 10,000	197	3.5	88.2	62.4	25.4
Over 10,000	551	1.1	85.6	65.3	21.4
Not given	138	5.8	87.6	68.1	15.2
Income:					
Under $1,000	151	2.6	92.0	87.4	2.0
$1,000 to $1,999	473	1.5	85.2	75.1	6.8
$2,000 to $2,999	387	1.5	86.9	73.3	13.2
$3,000 to $3,999	195	1.0	92.7	70.1	22.0
$4,000 to $4,999	111	1.8	92.7	66.6	27.9
Over $5,000	159	0.0	95.3	66.7	29.8
Not given	505	3.0	93.1	80.4	10.1

	Women not answering this question	Women using—					
		No attachments	All attachments	Ruffler	Tucker	Braider	Hemmer
Summary of all reports	*Per cent* 39.8	*Per cent* 12.8	*Per cent* 5.4	*Per cent* 28.5	*Per cent* 21.3	*Per cent* 6.8	*Per cent* 32.6
Size of community:							
Rural	39.6	10.4	5.1	31.9	19.4	7.6	34.3
Under 5,000	34.9	13.8	6.8	30.0	26.9	7.5	34.2
5,000 to 10,000	39.0	15.2	6.1	25.4	17.7	6.1	34.0
Over 10,000	37.6	15.0	4.3	28.1	23.9	6.3	33.1
Not given	64.4	8.7	5.8	13.8	7.2	2.9	14.5
Income:							
Under $1,000	36.4	9.9	2.6	34.4	17.9	6.6	39.1
$1,000 to $1,999	35.9	13.9	4.6	32.7	22.2	8.9	34.2
$2,000 to $2,999	31.0	13.9	6.2	33.5	29.9	9.3	37.9
$3,000 to $3,999	32.3	16.9	1.5	34.3	29.7	6.1	40.4
$4,000 to $4,999	26.1	16.2	11.7	28.8	26.1	5.4	34.2
Over $5,000	41.9	16.5	2.5	29.2	17.8	8.3	32.4
Not given	56.6	8.3	7.3	16.6	11.7	3.0	21.8

Beginning with the group having an income of $1,000 to $1,999, the percentage owning sewing machines increases with the size of the income. The percentage using motor power increases steadily with the increase of the income, and the percentage of those using foot-power machines decreases with the increase in income.

The question on attachments was not answered by 26 per cent or more of all income groups. The highest percentages reporting that they used none are found in the three highest income groups. The highest percentage reporting use of all attachments is in the $4,000 to $4,999 group. However, this group has the least number of women answering, and the result may not, therefore, be conclusive. The highest percentage in any group reporting the use of an attachment is the 40.4 per cent in the $3,000 to $3,999 group using the hemmer.

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From these figures, it seems that a large part of the labor-and-time-saving equipment of the sewing machines is unproductive and that training and encouragement in the use of attachments would greatly increase efficiency in home sewing. Ninety-five per cent of the 9,560 families surveyed by Ward (*11*), 97.2 per cent of those reported by Tucker (*1*), and 98 per cent of the rural families and 92 per cent of the city families surveyed by Hastie and Gorton (*9*) had sewing machines in their homes.

REASONS FOR PURCHASING GARMENTS READY-MADE

The reasons given for buying clothes ready-made are summarized in Table 9. Only the women who answered the question are included in these percentages. In most reports more than one reason was checked.

TABLE 9.—*Reasons for purchasing garments ready-made given by women, classified by size of community and by income groups*

	Women answering this question	Better style and design in ready-made garments	Ready-made garments save time and energy	Unable to make clothes at home
	Number	*Per cent*	*Per cent*	*Per cent*
Summary of all answers	1,478	69.4	72	25.9
Size of community:				
Rural	453	66.1	67.2	29.8
Under 5,000	334	74.4	65.4	28.5
5,000 to 10,000	163	72.3	72.3	23.3
Over 10,000	453	69.6	82.2	22.8
Not given	75	61.6	69.7	16.1
Income:				
Under $1,000	89	62.7	59.4	33.6
$1,000 to $1,999	342	68.3	66.6	26.9
$2,000 to $2,999	315	69.1	74.5	25.7
$3,000 to $3,999	165	73.9	81.2	20.6
$4,000 to $4,999	99	77.7	74.7	25.3
$5,000 or over	141	71.6	80.1	19.9
Not given	327	66.7	69.5	28.5

According to the summary figures, a large percentage of the women bought garments ready made to save time and energy and to get better style and design. The factor having the least influence was "Unable to make clothes at home." Other reasons volunteered are: Difficult to fit self, poor health, not skilled with silk and wool, get full effect with ready-mades, better tailoring, difficult to get yard goods and trimmings, and unable to get a good dressmaker.

In the classification by communities it is shown that a large percentage bought ready-made garments for better style and design and to save time and energy. The variation is greater on the latter reason, and the percentage giving this answer increases with the size of the community. A few more women in the rural communities than in the cities reported that they were unable to make their clothing.

As the income increases a larger percentage buy because of better style and design and also because ready-made garments save time and energy. More women in the low-income groups than in the high-income groups buy because they were unable to make garments.

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PRESENT TRENDS IN HOME SEWING[1]

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By RUTH O'BRIEN, *Textile Chemist in Charge, and* MAUDE CAMPBELL, *Assistant Specialist in Clothing, Textiles and Clothing Division, Bureau of Home Economics*

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MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATION NO. 4
WASHINGTON, D. C. SEPTEMBER, 1927

PRESENT TRENDS IN HOME SEWING[1]

By RUTH O'BRIEN, *Textile Chemist in Charge, and* MAUDE CAMPBELL, *Assistant Specialist in Clothing, Textiles and Clothing Division, Bureau of Home Economics*

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