

The Effect of a Woman-Friendly Occupation on Employment: U.S. Postmasters Before World War II *

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Abstract

This paper examines the effect of a woman-friendly occupation during the early 20th-century United States, a period when women's employment was highly constrained. It focuses on the postmaster occupation, an opportunity open to married women that offered relatively high pay and flexible hours. Using a novel dataset linking postmaster appointments to census records, I show that postmaster jobs attracted educated and qualified women into employment. However, regression discontinuity results indicate that many women exited the labor force after their appointments ended, with only a few successfully transitioned into other skilled occupations, which accounted for just one-third of the employment loss. State-level marriage bars and the Great Depression likely contributed to the limited long-term gains of this otherwise advantageous occupation.

JEL Codes: N32, J16, J24, J44

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1 Introduction

There is growing interest in how occupations with woman- and family-friendly features improve women’s labor market outcomes (Goldin and Katz, 2016; Mas and Pallais, 2017; Wiswall and Zafar, 2017; Wasserman, 2022). This paper examines this question from a historical perspective: Did woman-friendly occupations improve outcomes for women during a period when their employment opportunities were highly constrained? On the one hand, such jobs may have drawn women into the labor force and allowed them to gain valuable work experience. On the other hand, the long-term benefits of a woman-friendly occupation may have been limited, as women’s employment was often restricted by marriage bars and prevailing social norms.

This paper examines women’s employment as postmasters, managers of the local post offices, in the United States between 1920 and 1940. The postmaster occupation was notably open to married women, making it a rare woman-friendly occupation during this period when many jobs either refused to hire married women or fired women upon marriage (Goldin, 1988; Goldin, 2021). Postmasters were well paid, earning higher average wages than many other skilled workers, such as clerical workers and teachers. The position also offered considerable flexibility: post offices could be operated from a family-run business or even from the postmaster’s own home (Blevins, 2021), offering women convenient work arrangements. In many cases, women postmasters remained closely connected to the home and the community while working (Cortelyou, 1906), making them less susceptible to criticism for neglecting domestic responsibilities due to their employment.

To study postmasters, I compile a novel dataset of postmaster appointments between 1920 and 1940 using the archival source “Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-1971” (National Archives and Records Administration, 1977). This dataset provides detailed information on postmaster names, postmaster appointment dates, and post office locations. Using these records, I identify the gender and political affiliation of each postmaster, as well as their county and state of residence. I then link postmasters appointed during this period to the complete-count decennial census records, which allows me to observe their characteristics both before and after their appointments.

With the linked data, I first show that postmaster jobs attracted educated and qualified women into the labor force. On average, women postmasters had 11.7 years of schooling, plac-

ing them above the 70th percentile in the education distribution. However, only 32.5% of them had engaged in paid employment prior to their postmaster appointments, higher than the rate among women in the general population, but still relatively low given their qualifications. Additionally, women postmasters appear to be positively selected on business experience: among those who were married, 48.7% had self-employed husbands, suggesting that many may have gained managerial experience through unpaid labor by assisting in family-run businesses.

Next, I show that postmaster jobs offered limited long-term benefits to women's employment beyond the appointed term. Leveraging the fact that postmasters were presidential appointees and were rarely re-appointed after the party of the president changed (Kernell and McDonald, 1999; Blevins, 2021), I compare the 1940 labor market outcomes for women postmasters appointed just before and after the 1933 presidential transition in a regression discontinuity (RD) design. Women postmasters appointed just before the 1933 transition largely could not get reappointed for additional terms due to political misalignment with the new administration, whereas those appointed just after the transition were more likely to be reappointed and often remained in office beyond 1940.

The sharp and fuzzy RD estimates suggest that many women did not find new employment after their postmaster appointments ended. In particular, these women experienced at least a 24 percentage points (pp.) reduction in employment, along with reductions of 17 weeks worked per year and 11 hours worked per week. Nonetheless, some women did transition into other skilled occupations—such as clerical work and bookkeeping—suggesting that the skills acquired as postmasters were transferable. A simple decomposition shows that about one-third of the decline in employment was mitigated by such occupational substitution, while the remaining two-thirds reflected true labor force exits. These patterns align with a job search framework in which only women who found acceptable alternative jobs remained employed.

In contrast, men appointed under similar conditions experienced little to no decline in employment and labor supply after their postmaster terms ended. These gender differences are both large and statistically significant, suggesting that the decline in women's employment was not due to selection issues related to politics, but instead reflected gender-specific labor market barriers, such as discrimination against married women.

Additionally, I use a differences-in-differences (DID) design to compare women postmasters

and their 1920 women neighbors with similar pre-treatment characteristics. The DID results show that although women postmasters were positively selected, they did not have better employment outcomes relative to their women neighbors who had no postmaster work experience. Combined with the RD findings, these results suggest that although some women transitioned into other skilled occupations after their appointments ended, the average postmaster did not achieve higher long-term employment than her peers.

The limited long-term gains from the woman-friendly occupation may reflect broader labor market constraints of the historical period. One key constraint was state-level discrimination against married women's employment. In particular, 26 states introduced legislation aimed at restricting the employment of married women, driven by the belief that they did not need a second income and were displacing other workers (Gallup, 1939; Shallcross, 1940). I find that women living in states that introduced such legislation experienced significantly larger declines in employment and labor supply after their postmaster appointments ended, relative to women in states without such laws. These results suggest that institutional barriers at the state level played a critical role in limiting women's post-appointment employment opportunities.

A second factor is the severity of the Great Depression. Using county-level retail sales losses per capita from 1929 to 1933 as a proxy for the severity of the downturn (Fishback, Horrace, et al., 2005; Feigenbaum, 2015), I find that women in counties hit harder by the downturn were substantially less likely to be employed in 1940 and reduced their labor supply significantly. In contrast, women in less affected areas experienced no statistically significant declines. These results suggest that limited job opportunities during the Depression contributed to many women exiting the labor force, even though some women possessed the skills to transition into other white-collar jobs.

The findings of this paper align with a broader literature showing that women's employment gains in the early to mid-20th century United States were often short-lived. For example, Rose, 2018 finds that the increase in women's employment during World War II had only a limited effect on female labor force participation by 1950. However, if we were to study women-friendly occupations in a later period, such as the decades following World War II when restrictions on women's employment had eased, we might have observed more positive outcomes. Indeed, as Goldin and Katz, 2016 demonstrates, the most egalitarian occupation nowadays—the pharmacist profession—was transformed over the latter half of the 20th century into a family-friendly

career, offering greater flexibility and higher pay, which made it an attractive labor market option for women. In contrast, the postmaster occupation represents a missed opportunity: it could have served as a pathway for women to continue their labor force participation, but too few women were able to remain in the labor market afterwards.

This paper makes two main contributions to the literature. First, it leverages rich archival data to shed light on women’s historical work—much of which has remained invisible either because it was not classified as “gainful employment” or because many women participated in the labor force only temporarily (Goldin, 1990; Folbre, 1995; Burnette, 2021).¹ By uncovering a group of women who served as postmasters and played critical roles in the operation of U.S. post offices, this study contributes to the growing literature that documents women’s historical labor, including work in agriculture (Withrow, 2021), as telephone operators (Feigenbaum and Gross, 2024), and as family workers (Chiswick and Robinson, 2021). Second, this paper advances the discussion on woman-friendly occupations. While conventional wisdom holds that such roles support women’s employment, few studies offer empirical evidence (Goldin, 2014; Goldin and Katz, 2016; Mas and Pallais, 2020). This paper addresses this gap by leveraging a unique natural experiment to overcome the challenge of endogenous selection of women into these occupations, thereby providing stronger causal evidence on their impact on women’s employment.

2 Historical Background

Postmasters are federal government employees who manage local post offices, and each post office has one postmaster. The postmaster’s duties include selling stamps, processing money orders, managing receipts, and overseeing various administrative functions. In this paper, references to postmasters between 1920 and 1940 specifically concern those overseeing offices with relatively high mail volumes and working full-time in the position.² Approximately 12,000 postmasters met these criteria during this period. It is also important to note that very few postmasters were Black due to systemic barriers.³ As a result, the discussion and analyses in this paper

¹For example, the 1940 Census reports women were more likely to drop out of the labor force during the Depression, making it more difficult to study women who worked (United States Census Bureau, 1943).

²Additional information regarding the sample of postmasters used in this paper can be found in [Section 11.2](#).

³More than 100 Black postmasters were appointed during Reconstruction, a period when African Americans briefly gained voting rights and political influence in the 19th-century United States. However, significant structural barriers limited their access to the position. For example, postmasters were required to be bonded before taking office, and obtaining a bond typically required property ownership—a condition that many African Americans

focus exclusively on white individuals.

Two features of the postmaster position are particularly relevant for this paper. First, compared to other skilled occupations in the early twentieth-century United States, the postmaster role was very accessible to women, making it a desirable employment opportunity. Second, postmasters were presidential appointees typically aligned with the president's political party, which means they were rarely reappointed after a presidential transition.

2.1 Postmaster as a Woman-Friendly Occupation

The postmaster occupation had several woman-friendly characteristics that made it more accommodating to women than other skilled occupations of the time. First, the postmaster position was accessible to women and married women, which is a notable exception in a period when many skilled occupations enforced marriage bars. Opposition to married women's employment prevailed in the decades leading up to World War II, fueled by beliefs that working mothers were neglecting their domestic duties and taking jobs away from others (Aron, 1987; Wandersee, 1981). As a result, marriage bars were widely implemented across numerous skilled professions: Shallcross, 1940 documents that most insurance companies, banks, and public entities restricted the employment of married women, and Goldin, 1988 finds that marriage bars "affected 75% of all local school boards and more than 50% of all office workers" at its height.

The accessibility of the postmaster job, in contrast, is partly rooted in a historical pattern of the federal government appointing women during wartime when fewer men were available (Gallagher, 2017; Blevins, 2021). In addition, the civil service commission specified that wives of active military members or veterans should receive favorable consideration in the evaluation process, although appointment to the job was not guaranteed (United States Civil Service Commission, 1938). Another factor contributing to the accessibility of the postmaster occupation was the requirement of business experience (United States Civil Service Commission, 1922), which made the position particularly favorable to wives with self-employed husbands because of their role in the family business. Although the federal government did not provide the exact reason why it allowed women and married women to enter the postmaster job, it acknowledged the growing number of women in the occupation, which was first mentioned in the Annual Report could not meet due to disenfranchisement (National Postal Museum, 2025).

of the Postmaster General in 1924 (United States Post Office Department, 1924).

In addition, the postmaster position was notably well-paid for women. This is because postmasters' salaries were calculated as a percentage of post office sales, and the salaries did not adjust based on the gender of the postmaster.⁴ Although women were primarily appointed to smaller, rural post offices that generated lower revenue and thus offered lower pay,⁵ they were paid at least \$1,100 per year and sometimes even \$2,000 to \$3,000 per year (United States Civil Service Commission, 1938). By comparison, women in other skilled occupations generally earned less, with average salaries of approximately \$800 for clerical workers, \$900 for stenographers, and \$1,100 for teachers.⁶

The third woman-friendly feature of the postmaster job was its flexible work arrangements. Since most post offices were in rural areas, the postmaster had the autonomy to decide the location of the post office. Many postmasters chose to establish the office within a family-run general store or even inside their own homes (Blevins, 2021).⁷ This level of flexibility distinguished women postmasters from other working women, contributing to the perception of the postmaster role as a "clean and honorable" occupation that allowed women to remain closely connected to their homes and families while working (Cortelyou, 1906). It also blurred the boundary between home and work environments, making women postmasters less vulnerable to the common criticism that employed married women were neglecting their domestic responsibilities.

In the context of the early 20th-century labor market, the postmaster occupation occupied a unique position. While not widespread in absolute numbers, it illustrates how it could provide a well-compensated and easily accessible employment opportunity for women at a time when the broader labor market remained highly discriminatory.

⁴In particular, the formula for postmaster salary is "40% for sales under \$100, 33.3% for sales from \$100 to \$400, 30% for \$400 to \$2,400, 12.5% for sales over \$2,400" (Prechtel-Klusken, 2007). The lack of wage discrimination was proudly stated by the President of the National Federation of Postal Employees in 1919: "There is no discrimination against her in the matter of wages. We, as an organization, will resist any such discrimination, should it be made" (The National Federation of Postal Employees, 1919).

⁵Figure A1 shows that the share of women in the postmaster occupations in rural areas was much higher than the one in urban areas.

⁶Author's calculation based on the 1940 complete count census.

⁷Figure A2 in the Appendix provides a few examples of such flexible work arrangements.

2.2 Postmasters as Presidential Appointees

Postmasters were presidential appointees who worked for the federal government. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, postmasters played significant roles under the spoils system to help their party win elections, including inserting residents' mail with campaign materials and endearing "themselves to members of the House of Representatives through their regular, personal contact with a remote segment of the electorate" (Kernell and McDonald, 1999). In return, presidents gave out postmaster jobs to party loyalists after winning the election. As valuable political assets, postmasters became the largest group of political appointees (John, 1988). Postmasters alone accounted for 76.6% of presidential appointments between 1819 and 1917, and the number of political appointments among postmasters far exceeded the number of appointments from other departments in the federal government (Blevins, 2021). The politics involved in postmaster appointments was never a secret: the Postmaster General James Farley, who served under President Franklin Roosevelt, noted that his selection of postmasters had to be "loyal Democrats who at the same time will have the ability to serve in their positions to the credit of their party and their country" (Farley, 1938).

The political nature of the position meant that reappointments were extremely rare following a presidential transition involving a change in the party of the president. However, postmasters were not immediately removed from office after the transition, and they were allowed to complete the appointed term, which typically lasted four years. Given the relatively high pay of the position, most had a strong financial incentive to remain in office until the end of their term.

Despite being political appointees, candidates for postmasters had to demonstrate merit by passing civil service exams (Patch, 1948).⁸ The exam tested the candidate's ability to manage the post office, such as their arithmetic and writing skills. For example, the candidate was asked to make an itemized list of money order transactions over the past month, as well as to balance and close the statement based on fees charged in each money order (United States Civil Service Commission, 1916). Candidates applying for postmastership in larger post offices additionally had to demonstrate "business training, experience, and fitness" and "the ability in meeting and dealing satisfactorily with the public" (United States Civil Service Commission, 1922).⁹

⁸This rule still applies to postmaster selection today, as suggested by the USPS employment and placement handbook: <https://about.usps.com/handbooks/el312>

⁹Section 11.1 of the Appendix explains the eligibility requirements for postmaster candidates and the content of the civil service exams in more detail.

However, even after civil service reform, the postmaster position remained a political appointment for many decades.¹⁰ The president was free to select one of the top three scorers of the exam to be the postmaster. Naturally, the president would appoint someone from his own party rather than someone from the opposite party. A second exam was often held if the president failed to find a person from his own party (United States Government Printing Office, 1935). Since the president might not be familiar with the party affiliations of job seekers, the Postmaster General or local congressmen often would help pick the postmasters that belong to the president's political party (Fowler, 1945; Kernell and McDonald, 1999).

As a result, the selection of postmasters reflected a combination of political affiliation and other qualifications. A few women were selected based on their strong political ties, such as Mrs. Anne Parsal of Benton Harbor, Michigan, who secured the postmaster position because of her role in the 1932 campaign for the local Democratic party. When appointed in 1935, Parsal was photographed with a picture of Franklin Roosevelt on her desk, indicating her unwavering support for the Democratic president (The Herald-Palladium, 1935). Unlike Postmaster Anne Parsal, however, most women postmasters were not as closely connected to local politics. These women resided in rural areas and were far from the center of political attention. To establish political connections required for the job, women often cited the political affiliations of their family members, such as mentioning their husbands or fathers or brothers had voted for the party (Aron, 1987). In addition, women postmasters were often selected from self-employed families, such as being the wife of a husband who "operates a general merchandise store" (Herald and Review, 1938) or being the widow of "a former grocer in the village" (Marysville Journal-Tribune, 1926), which suggests women's business experience was crucial in securing the postmaster position.

2.3 Postmasters and Women's Employment

How would the flexible, well-paid, and accessible-to-married-women postmaster occupation change women's employment? I use a simple job search model to explain that the postmaster job likely would have increased women's labor force participation; however, some women might have exited the labor force if their appointments ended.

¹⁰12,000 postmasters from larger post offices remained as presidential appointees until 1970 (Patch, 1948). This is the sample of postmasters I used in the analysis. Postmasters from smaller post offices stopped being presidential appointees between 1909 and 1913 and were not included in the sample. See more explanation in Section 11.2 of the Appendix.

In this job search model, a woman who is not working receives a random wage offer of w in each period. She could either accept the offer and earn wage w , or reject the offer and be unemployed with a utility U . The reservation wage w^* is defined as the wage that makes the woman indifferent between accepting the offer and continuing to search for new employment:

$$V(w^*) = U$$

The woman will accept any job offers with a wage higher than the reservation wage w^* . Since the postmaster position offered wages that exceeded those in other common skilled occupations for women in the early 20th century, the availability of such a job could push many women's wage offers above their reservation wage w^* , increasing the likelihood of labor force participation.

Conversely, when the appointment ends, some women may return to non-employment if no alternative job offers meet or exceed their reservation wage. Non-wage factors, such as marriage bars and social norms against women working outside of the home, also affect women's utility function of not working. This, in turn, raises the reservation wage, making it less likely that women would accept lower-paying jobs after their postmaster appointments.

One implication of the job search model is that if more “nice” jobs (Goldin, 2006)—positions that are well-paid, flexible, and socially acceptable for women—exist, then more White and married women would have participated in the labor force. On the other hand, it also predicts that whether women remain in the labor force after serving as postmasters depends heavily on the availability of jobs that offer sufficiently high wages or desirable working conditions, which are typically found in skilled occupations. There may also be heterogeneous effects: women in worse economic conditions, such as those disproportionately affected by the Great Depression, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, or with unemployed husbands, are likely to have lower reservation wages. As a result, they are more inclined to continue seeking and accepting employment after their postmaster appointments end.¹¹

¹¹A limitation of the job search model is that it does not account for the possibility that some women may choose to remain employed after serving as postmasters because they have already overcome social and institutional barriers to work and have found personal fulfillment in employment. In such cases, women might be willing to accept job offers that pay less than their reservation wage.

3 Data and Census Linking

3.1 Presidential Transitions

A presidential transition occurs when the party of the president changes. There were three presidential transitions in the United States in the early twentieth century. The first occurred in 1913, when Democrat Woodrow Wilson succeeded Republican William Taft, ending the Republican hold on the presidency that had lasted since William McKinley’s election in 1896. The second transition took place in 1921, when Republican Warren Harding assumed office following Wilson’s two terms. This marked the beginning of over a decade of continued Republican leadership. The third transition occurred in 1933, when Franklin Roosevelt, a Democrat, was elected during the Great Depression. Because of Roosevelt’s popularity, the next presidential transition did not occur until the early 1950s.

3.2 Postmaster Appointments

I collect a novel dataset on postmaster appointments during the early twentieth century in the United States. This is part of a larger archival dataset, “Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832–1971”, which contains more than a century-long list of postmaster appointments for all post offices that ever existed (National Archives and Records Administration, 1977, Ancestry, 2021). The dataset provides rich information about postmaster appointments, including postmaster names, postmaster appointment dates, and post office locations. [Figure 1](#) shows a sample image of the archival dataset, which contains the postmaster appointment records for the Clermont post office in Lake County, Florida. The top of each appointment record indicates the name and location of the post offices. The table below displays postmaster names and appointment dates.

Based on post office locations, I infer the county and state of residence of postmasters. Because the Civil Service Commission required the candidates for postmasters to reside in the post office’s delivery zone (United States Civil Service Commission, 1916), the county and state of appointment serve as reliable proxies for their place of residence.

Based on postmaster names, I infer the gender of postmasters. The first two postmasters appointed in the Clermont post office were most likely to be women, as indicated by predominantly female names such as “Isabelle” and “Florence,” as well as the prefixes “Miss” and “Mrs.” before

their names. On the other hand, the last person appointed at the Clermont post office, Robert O. Seaver, was most likely to be a man. More rigorously, I used the method developed by Blevins and Mullen, 2015, which estimates the probability of a person being a woman using data on frequencies of baby names from the Social Security Administration. In addition, I also infer the women postmasters' marital status based on their prefixes. "Miss" would indicate a person had never been married at the time of the appointment and "Mrs." would indicate a person was married or had been married at the time of the appointment.¹²

The share of women postmasters is presented in Figure 2. The left column shows a steady increase in the number of women postmasters between 1910 and 1940, although the share of women in the postmaster occupation was still lower than that of other skilled occupations. The right column shows the share of ever-married women among those employed as postmasters, clerical workers, stenographers, and teachers between 1910 and 1940. During this period, approximately 80% of women postmasters had been married, significantly higher than the 10% to 30% observed among women in other occupations. This supports the claim from Section 2.1 that the postmaster occupation posed fewer barriers to entry for married women.

Based on postmaster appointment dates, I infer the party affiliation of postmasters. Given that postmasters were presidential appointees, postmasters and the presidents who appointed them often shared the same party affiliation. The first postmaster appointed at the Clermont post office, Miss Isabelle H. Boyd, was appointed in 1931 under a Republican presidency, which means she was most likely a Republican. On the other hand, the second postmaster, Mrs. Florence M. Bowman, was appointed in 1935 under a Democratic presidency, indicating that she was most likely a Democrat. In particular, I calculate the distance between initial appointment dates and presidential transition dates for each postmaster. This allows me to identify postmasters appointed just before and after a presidential transition.

Using the data on postmaster appointment dates, I plot the number of new postmasters coming into the office each year in Figure 3. The figure marks every presidential transition in the early twentieth century with a vertical dashed line and shows that the number of new postmasters coming into office increased drastically in the four years after each presidential transition but remained relatively stable in other years. This indicates postmasters appointed before a

¹²Marital status of individuals without a prefix cannot be inferred, so they are excluded from subgroup analyses based on marital status.

presidential transition were replaced soon after by people from the opposite political party,¹³ corroborating the historical account outlined in [Section 2.2](#).

To my knowledge, this is one of the only two papers that utilize this newly digitized dataset (the other being Aneja and Xu, [2022](#)). What differentiates my use of the data from theirs is that I focus on the gender of the postmaster rather than the race. There are more variations in the share of women appointed because very few postmasters were Black.

3.3 Postal Guide

In addition to postmaster appointment data, I also digitize one volume of the Postal Guide and combine it with the postmaster appointment data. The Postal Guide is an official government document that reports the size classification of each post office and the corresponding compensation for its postmaster (United States Government Printing Office, [1939](#)). A sample image of the 1939 Postal Guide is available in [Figure A4](#). Post offices were classified into several tiers: Class 1 served the most populated areas, while Class 3 served the least populated. Postmaster salaries were closely tied to these classifications—Class 1 postmasters typically earned over \$3,000 annually, whereas those in Class 3 earned under \$2,000.

3.4 Linked Census Data

To obtain pre-appointment and post-appointment characteristics of postmasters, I link those appointed between 1920 and 1940 separately to the complete-count 1920 and 1940 decennial census records (Ruggles et al., [2021](#)). Since the only available information for linking is postmaster names, postmaster appointment dates, and post office locations, I impose a conservative linking criterion requiring an exact and unique match of first name, last name, and county and state of residence.¹⁴ For women in particular, I drop matches where the prefixes (in the appointment

¹³Blevins, [2021](#) shows the same pattern for postmasters appointed during the late nineteenth century, as presented in [Figure A3](#) in the Appendix. Mastrorocco and Teso, [2023](#) establishes similar stylized facts for other federal employees employed outside of the Department of Post Office between 1817 and 1905.

¹⁴With exact matching, names must match perfectly, which ensures high precision but may miss true matches. I also try fuzzy matching, which allows for slight differences in names and yields more matches. The choice between exact and fuzzy matching involves a tradeoff between Type I errors (false positives) and Type II errors (false negatives). Given the lack of information in the postmaster data (e.g., there is no information on birth year to identify an individual further), I prioritize reducing Type I errors and therefore rely on exact matching in the main analysis presented in the paper. This reflects a judgment call that prioritizes precision, which is what I find more appropriate given the limitations of the data.

data) and marital status (in the census data) contradict each other.

To address the challenge of linking women who may have changed their names due to marriage, I begin by identifying those who likely experienced a change in marital status between their postmaster appointment and the census year. Because any name changes due to marriage needed to be reported, this means the person’s maiden name and marital name would both appear in the appointment data. In such cases, I drop the appointments with maiden names (and keep the appointments with married names) when linking forward to the 1940 census, and I drop the appointments with married names (and keep the appointments with maiden names) when linking backward to the 1920 census.

The linking rate for women is approximately 39%. The primary reason for failed matches is the lack of a unique match due to common names. Linking rates vary slightly across subgroups: married women are somewhat more likely to be linked than unmarried women, though the difference is modest—ranging from 2.7 to 3.6 pp. The urban-rural gap in linking rates is even smaller, at less than 1 pp.¹⁵ To address non-representativeness of the linked sample, I apply inverse probability weights following Bailey et al., 2020, which reweigh the observations to balance the observed characteristics of the linked sample with those of the full population of postmasters. The weights depend on variables such as post office classification, postmaster appointment year, frequency of names, and whether the name has a prefix. While I recognize that the inverse probability weights approach is not perfect, I demonstrate in [Section 11.4](#) that the linked sample of postmasters closely resembles the census sample of postmasters, which provides some reassurance about the validity of the linking procedure.

3.5 Census Tree Linked Sample

To obtain a panel of women postmasters and their women neighbors, I combine the linked census data with the Census Tree data. The Census Tree data links individuals between censuses by relying on user-contributed links from FamilySearch.org, a genealogy platform where users find their ancestors using historical records (Price et al., 2021; Buckles et al., 2023). This approach overcomes a major challenge in historical census data linkage—tracking women who often changed their names after marriage—and represents a substantial improvement in the

¹⁵Linking rates for demographic subgroups can be found in [Section 11.3](#).

ability to follow women longitudinally.

In the census tree linked sample, women postmasters were first linked to the 1920 census following the procedure outlined in Section 3.4. Then, I rely on the Census Tree data to link both women postmasters and their 1920 women neighbors forward to the 1940 census. Since individuals are linked twice, the census tree linked sample has a smaller number of postmasters.

4 Descriptive Statistics of Women Postmasters

To understand the selection of women postmasters, I compare their predetermined characteristics with those of the general female population aged between 18 and 65 in the 1920 and 1940 complete-count censuses (Ruggles et al., 2021).¹⁶ I also compare postmasters with their 1920 women neighbors. In particular, I follow the approach of Logan and Parman, 2017 to identify households likely to be neighbors: because census enumerators typically recorded households in the order they encountered them while moving along a street, the sequence of entries in the census reflects physical proximity. As a result, I consider households recorded on the same page of the microfilm as neighbors.¹⁷

4.1 Women Postmasters Were White, Native Born, and Rural

Women postmasters were selected from predominantly White, native-born, and rural populations. Based on results from Table 1, 99% of women postmasters were White, and 98% of them were native-born. This is not surprising because only citizens were eligible to become postmasters. While 57% of women in the general population lived in urban areas in 1920, only 11% of women postmasters did.¹⁸ This reflects both the concentration of post offices in rural areas and the tendency to appoint women to lower-paid rural post offices serving smaller populations. However, despite women postmasters' over-representation in rural areas, they were slightly less likely to be from farm households, which might speak to their high socioeconomic background.

¹⁶Information about years of education is only available in the 1940 census.

¹⁷A limitation of this method is that it does not capture households located across the street from one another, as they may not appear consecutively in the enumeration.

¹⁸Given the large number of observations of women in the general population, the differences between the means are statistically significant.

4.2 Women Postmasters Were Qualified but Not Employed Previously

Women postmasters were highly qualified relative to the general female population. On average, they had 11.7 years of schooling, substantially more than the 9-year average among all women. Despite their relatively high levels of education, most women postmasters were not engaged in paid labor prior to their appointment. In 1920, only 32.5% reported a gainful occupation.¹⁹ However, women postmasters were still more likely to be employed than women in the general population, among whom only 25.6% participated in paid labor, which suggests a positive selection on work experience among women postmasters.

In addition, women postmasters might be positively selected on business experience. 5.4% were self-employed in 1920, slightly higher than the 3.7% self-employed women in the general population. Conditional on marriage, 48.7% had a self-employed husband (Column 2 of [Table 1](#)), suggesting that many may have contributed through unpaid labor by assisting with their husbands' businesses.

These patterns of selection reflect the unique role of women postmasters within their communities. Although many were not formally employed prior to their appointments, their higher education levels and business experience likely equipped them with the skills necessary to manage post offices effectively.

4.3 Women Postmasters Were More Similar to Their Women Neighbors

Women postmasters were more similar to their women neighbors than women in the general population. Like women postmasters, their women neighbors were selected from predominantly white, native-born, and rural populations. Specifically, 96% of women neighbors were white, 91% of them were native-born, and 74% of them were from rural areas. In addition, the education gap between women postmasters and their women neighbors is smaller – the average years of education completed is 10.1 years for women neighbors. The similarity between the two groups could be partly due to neighborhood sorting.

¹⁹Based on instructions to census enumerators, occupations were defined as words “which most accurately indicate the particular kind of work done by which the person enumerated earns money or a money equivalent.” More details can be found here: <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/inst1920.shtml>.

5 Empirical Strategy

5.1 Regression Discontinuity

Taking advantage of the fact that postmasters were presidential appointees and were rarely re-appointed after the party of the president changed, I use an RD design to compare the 1940 outcomes for postmasters appointed just before and after the 1933 presidential transition, when Franklin Roosevelt (Democrat) replaced Herbert Hoover (Republican). Those appointed just before the presidential transition were unlikely to get reappointed due to their political affiliations, while those appointed just after could still be reappointed in the future because the Democratic party was in charge of the presidency for the next twenty years. Because all individuals in this comparison self-selected into postmaster positions, the RD design helps control for many unobserved factors related to this selection.

Formally, the RD treatment effect is the following:

$$E[Y_i(1) - Y_i(0)|X_i = X_0],$$

where the treatment is being a postmaster in 1940, Y_i is the economic outcome for individual i in 1940, X_0 is the day that the presidential transition took place (March 4, 1933), and X_i is the initial appointment date. The running variable is the distance between the initial appointment date and the day that the presidential transition took place. I also include individual control variables in the specification, such as age, age square, marital status, farm and urban status, years of education, and whether one migrated during the past 5 years.

I use both sharp RD and fuzzy RD designs. The sharp RD design assumes the presidential transition determines one's postmaster status perfectly: those appointed just before the transition are treated, and those appointed just after are not. The fuzzy RD design, by contrast, allows for some exceptions to this rule and accounts for cases where the transition does not perfectly determine postmaster status. The fuzzy RD is analogous to an Instrumental Variables (IV) approach, estimating a first-stage regression of reporting postmaster occupation in 1940 on the running variable. To implement these RD designs, I follow standard methods using the local polynomial RD estimates with the choices of robust bias-corrected confidence intervals and optimal bandwidth selection, as recommended in the literature (Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiu-

nik, 2014b; Calonico, Cattaneo, and Farrell, 2018; Calonico, Cattaneo, Farrell, and Titiunik, 2019; Calonico, Cattaneo, and Farrell, 2020).

5.1.1 Probability of Being A Postmaster Changes Discontinuously at the 1933 Transition

The top two subfigures of [Figure 4](#) show the probability of being a postmaster in 1940 changed discontinuously for those appointed just before and after the 1933 presidential transition. The non-parametric figure plots the linked census data by the standardized running variable in quantile-spaced bins (Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik, 2015), and each bin contains roughly 40 observations. No fitted lines are included, following the recommendation of Korting et al., 2023 to avoid misleading interpretations of discontinuities in the data.

The outcome variable here is a dummy variable equal to 1 if the person reported their occupation as postmaster in the 1940 census. For those appointed just before the 1933 presidential transition (bins on the left side of the vertical line), very few of them reported their occupation as postmaster in 1940, which indicates that they were not reappointed due to their political affiliations and stopped being postmasters by 1940. On the other hand, for those appointed just after the 1933 presidential transition (bins on the right side), most were still postmasters by 1940 since they could be reappointed for multiple terms. Specifically, Column 1 of [Table 3](#) shows the RD estimate on the difference in the probability of being a postmaster is 34 pp. for women and 53 pp. for men.

Note that the probability of being a postmaster in 1940 did not change perfectly from 0 to 1 at the presidential transition. This likely reflects that some women appointed just before the transition still reported their occupation as postmaster in 1940, while some appointed just after had already left the postmaster position or reported a different occupation in the census.

5.1.2 Predetermined Variables Do Not Change Discontinuously at the 1933 Transition

To support the validity of the RD design, I demonstrate that individuals appointed just before and after the 1933 presidential transition were similar across a range of predetermined characteristics, which mitigate concerns that postmasters on either side of the cutoff were selected based on systematically different criteria. For example, one potential concern is that Franklin Roosevelt, the incoming Democratic president, may have targeted appointments in counties that

previously supported Republican candidates. However, this appears not to be the case: [Table 2](#) shows a small and statistically insignificant RD estimate for the Republican vote share in 1928, and [Figure A5](#) reveals no discontinuity at the transition. These findings suggest that postmasters appointed after the transition were no more likely to come from Republican-leaning counties than those appointed before.

Likewise, there is little evidence that the severity of the Great Depression shaped appointment patterns around the transition. Specifically, the county-level decline in per capita retail sales between 1929 and 1933 (a measurement of the severity of the Great Depression in Fishback, Horrace, et al., [2005](#); Feigenbaum, [2015](#)) does not change discontinuously at the presidential transition date.

I also find no evidence of differential linkage rates to the census among those appointed just before and after the transition, reducing concerns that the outcome differences are driven by selection due to census linking issues. Moreover, women appointed just before and just after the transition appear similar in their individual characteristics. They had comparable socioeconomic backgrounds, as measured by the average occupational score rank of their fathers. They were also similar in terms of educational attainment, marital status, and employment. Together, these results provide strong support for the comparability of the treatment and control groups in the RD design.

5.1.3 Robustness Checks of Baseline RD

I implement several robustness checks to ensure the baseline RD results are robust to alternative specifications, including a bias-corrected RD estimate, an RD estimate using a different kernel function and a fixed bandwidth choice of 1,000 days, an RD estimate with county-level controls and age group fixed effects.

In addition, I run a placebo test by setting the presidential transition date to March 4th in a different year. I also use a donut RD design that excludes those appointed between the election and presidential transition dates ([Barreca et al., 2011](#)), since these individuals may have anticipated the incoming administration and had different incentives when accepting the position.

5.2 Differences-in-Differences

In addition to an RD design that compares women postmasters appointed in different time periods, I also implement a DID design that compares women who had been postmasters with their 1920 women neighbors who had never been postmasters. The DID design examines whether women postmasters had better labor market outcomes than their women neighbors with similar educational levels but without the postmaster work experience. By comparing women within the same neighborhoods, this approach controls for neighborhood characteristics and endogenous factors related to sorting.

The DID specification is the following:

$$Y_{ihet} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 PM_i + \alpha_2 Post_t + \alpha_3 PM_i \times Post_t + \gamma_h + \gamma_e + X'_{ihet} \Theta + \epsilon_{ihet}$$

Y_{ihet} is the outcome variable for person i who had education level e and lived in neighborhood h in year t . t only takes on two values — 1920 and 1940. PM_i is a dummy variable that equals 1 if the person had been a postmaster. $Post_t$ is a dummy variable that equals 1 if the year is 1940. I include neighborhood fixed effects γ_h and education fixed effects γ_e , which allows me to compare individuals within the same neighborhood and with similar educational attainment. I also added individual-level control variables X_{ihet} , including age, age square, marital status, farm, and urban status. The data used here are the census tree linked sample of native-born White women aged between 18 and 65 who lived in neighborhoods with at least one postmaster.

6 RD Results

6.1 Decline in Women's Employment and Labor Supply

The primary outcome variable of interest is whether an individual was employed in 1940, defined as reporting a gainful occupation in the 1940 Census. As shown in the left column of [Figure 4](#), approximately 40% to 60% of women postmasters appointed just before the presidential transition were employed in 1940, three to four years after their appointment terms ended. This employment rate is considerably lower than that of women postmasters appointed just after the transition. Among the latter group, most of whom were still serving as postmasters in 1940, roughly 80% to 90% were employed that year. The sharp RD estimate in Column 2 of Panel A in

[Table 3](#) indicates a 24 pp. difference in the probability of employment between these two groups. Related, women also experienced a large decline in their labor supply. For women postmasters appointed just before the presidential transition, they worked approximately 20 to 30 weeks per year, while those appointed just after worked approximately 40 to 50 weeks per year. The sharp RD estimates in Columns 3 and 4 of Panel A in [Table 3](#) indicate a difference of 17 weeks per year and 11 hours per week in labor supply.

[Table 3](#) also shows fuzzy RD results, which focus on comparing the two groups of “compliers”: individuals appointed before the presidential transition and did not report postmaster as their 1940 occupation, and individuals appointed after and reported postmaster as their 1940 occupation. The fuzzy RD estimates are much larger, indicating that the gap in the probability of employment for these two groups was 64 pp., and the gap in labor supply was 44 weeks worked per year and 28 hours worked per week.

Both the sharp and fuzzy RD estimates suggest that women experienced a large decline in employment and labor supply after their postmaster appointments ended. Could this decline reflect a shift from formal labor market participation to other types of work, such as self-employment or unpaid family work? The results in Columns 5 and 6 of [Table 3](#) suggest otherwise. Women whose postmaster appointments had ended were not more likely to be self-employed or working as unpaid family workers in 1940.²⁰

Nevertheless, some women remained employed in 1940 by transitioning into other occupations. [Table 4](#) summarizes the most common jobs held in 1940 by women who were appointed before the 1933 presidential transition and reported a valid occupation other than postmaster. Notably, many of these women moved into skilled or white-collar jobs: among those still employed, Column 1 shows that 11.8% were clerical workers, 9.2% were managers of small businesses, 5.8% were bookkeepers, and 5.7% were teachers in 1940. This pattern implies that the skills acquired as postmasters (such as accounting and record-keeping) were highly transferable, enabling these women to successfully transition into a range of other white-collar professions. Moreover, Columns 2 and 3 suggest the types of jobs held did not vary much between urban

²⁰The 1940 census instructions (item 539) specify that unpaid family workers include those who work “in a shop or store from which the family obtained its support, or on other work that contributed to the family income (not including home housework or incidental chores).”: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/technical-documentation/questionnaires/1940/1940-instructions.html>. Alternatively, all family members in a household where the head is self-employed can be considered as family workers because many business owners rely on family members as laborers (Chiswick and Robinson, [2021](#)).

and rural areas, indicating that some women were able to access white-collar opportunities in rural areas. Similarly, differences in occupational distribution by marital status were modest (Columns 4 and 5), though far fewer married women were still employed in 1940.

To quantify how much of the decline in employment was mitigated by switching to other skilled occupations, I conduct a simple decomposition. First, I estimate the *mechanical effect* by setting all outcomes to zero for individuals who did not report postmaster as their occupation in 1940. This captures the total decline in employment assuming women did not find any replacement work. Next, I estimate the *substitution effect* by setting outcomes to zero for individuals who did not report either the postmaster occupation or another skilled occupation,²¹ thereby capturing the portion of the decline not offset by switching to other skilled occupations. As shown in [Table A1](#), the mechanical effect on employment is 34.2 pp. but the estimate decreases to 22.5 pp. if we account for substitution into other skilled occupations. This suggests that roughly one-third of the employment loss (about 11.7 pp.) was offset by transitions into other skilled occupations, while two-thirds reflect actual labor force exits. The labor supply results are similar, indicating a 32% loss in weeks worked per year and an 18% loss in hours worked per week were recovered through substitution.

The patterns of substitution and labor force exits are consistent with the predictions of job search model outlined in [Section 2.3](#). Women who remained employed likely received job offers that met their reservation wage — typically in skilled occupations that offered comparable pay or working conditions to the postmaster occupation. In contrast, women who exited the labor force after serving as postmasters likely did not receive job offers that met their reservation wage, perhaps due to limited availability of suitable jobs. Such constraints may have been shaped by broader factors like the marriage bars and the Great Depression, which will be examined further in [Section 8](#).

6.2 Gender Differences in Employment

As shown in [Section 5.1.1](#), the probability of being a postmaster changes discontinuously at the presidential transition date for both women and men. Like women, male postmasters appointed just before the presidential transition could not be reappointed. However, their sub-

²¹Skilled occupations are defined as those with occ1950 codes between 0 and 490, excluding 100 and 123 (i.e., farmers).

sequent labor market outcomes were markedly different. The right column of [Figure 4](#) shows that male postmasters who could not be reappointed as postmasters experienced a very small reduction in their 1940 employment and labor supply, suggesting that most were able to transition into other jobs after their appointments ended. Columns 2 to 4 of Panels B and C in [Table 3](#) further show that while the RD estimate for men is small and statistically insignificant, the gender differences in employment and labor supply are large and statistically significant. This indicates that women postmasters who were appointed under similar circumstances to their male counterparts faced substantially worse employment outcomes.

The comparison between women's and men's results has two implications. First, the decline in women's employment is unlikely to be driven by selection based on political affiliation (i.e., whether postmasters were appointed by Republicans), since the comparison between women and men holds political affiliation constant.²² Second, the reduction in women's employment might be explained by gender-specific factors in the labor market, such as types of discrimination that affected women but not men.

6.3 Robustness Checks

The baseline RD results are robust to a range of alternative specifications, as shown in [Table A2](#). These include (1) bias-corrected RD estimates, (2) estimates with an Epanechnikov kernel density, (3) estimates with a fixed bandwidth choice of 1,000 days, (4) specifications that control for county-level controls such as the share of high school/college graduates, the share of women, the share of Whites, the share of the working population by gender, and population density, and (5) estimates with age groups fixed effects where age groups are defined as below 30, between 30 and 40 ... between 60 and 70, and above 70 years old. Across all these specifications, the estimated effects remain consistent in sign and magnitude, reinforcing the baseline findings.

I also conduct two additional robustness checks. First, a placebo test using a pseudo-presidential transition date (March 4, 1926), which yields null effects across all outcome variables. Second, I implement a donut RD specification that excludes postmasters appointed between the 1932 election (November 8, 1932) and the actual presidential transition (March 4, 1933). This approach tests whether the baseline results are driven by potentially endogenous appointments during

²²This is similar to the "difference in discontinuity" estimates used to address selection bias as shown in Grembi et al., [2016](#), although the comparison here is a gender difference instead of a cross-sectional difference.

this period, when appointees may have anticipated the incoming administration. As shown in Panel G of [Table A2](#), the donut RD estimates for employment and labor supply are only slightly smaller than the main results in [Table 3](#), suggesting that the findings are not driven by individuals appointed immediately before the transition.

6.4 Heterogeneous Results

The RD results suggest that many women exited the labor force after their postmaster appointments ended. One possibility is that the effect is driven by women from more affluent backgrounds who did not need to work for financial reasons. To explore this, I examine heterogeneous effects among women by their socioeconomic backgrounds and by their husbands' employment status.

6.4.1 By Women's Socioeconomic Backgrounds

Women's socioeconomic backgrounds are imputed based on their names following the procedure from Olivetti and Paserman, [2015](#). Specifically, for each first name j held by daughters aged 0 to 15 in the 1900 census,²³ I compute the average occupational rank of their fathers, denoted F_j . Given that women postmasters were already positively selected on socioeconomic status, I classify a woman as coming from a high socioeconomic background if her associated F_j is above the 75th percentile of the distribution.

The RD results in [Table A3](#) suggest that women from higher socioeconomic backgrounds experienced a larger reduction in their employment and labor supply. The difference in the probability of employment between women appointed just before and after the presidential transition is 50 pp. in this case, much larger than the 22 pp. estimate for women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The estimates in labor supply are also larger, amounting to 28 fewer weeks worked per year and 21 fewer hours worked per week. Although the differences between the estimates for women from high versus low socioeconomic backgrounds are not statistically significant, the comparison indicates that the effects in [Table 3](#) may be partly explained by women who did not need to support themselves financially.

²³Since the average age of women postmasters is 34 in 1920, I focus on birth cohorts born between 1885 and 1900.

6.4.2 By Husband's Employment Status

In addition, I examine subgroups of married women based on their husbands' employment status because married women with employed husbands may have had less financial need to work. I plot the married women's employment outcomes across four categories in [Figure A7](#): (1) husbands with a gainful occupation ("working"); (2) husbands without a gainful occupation ("not working"), including those unemployed or out of the labor force; (3) husbands in skilled occupations, conditional on being employed; and (4) husbands in unskilled occupations, also conditional on being employed. I only present the RD results in figures, as the substantially smaller sample sizes across all four subgroups of women limit statistical power, making it difficult to estimate the RD effects precisely or robustly across different specifications using Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik, [2014a](#); Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik, [2014b](#).

The figure shows women appointed before the presidential transition were less likely to be employed in 1940 if their husbands were working, relative to the group whose husbands were not working, although the latter group is a much smaller sample. Similarly, these women were less likely to be employed if their husbands held skilled occupations rather than unskilled ones. Both comparisons suggest that economic necessity—stemming from little or no household income on the husband's side—may have driven some women to continue to be employed in 1940 after their postmaster appointments ended. In addition, the findings reflects an added worker effect, consistent with the literature (Bellou and Cardia, [2021](#)). In 1940, 31.5% of married women with employed husbands were gainfully employed themselves, compared to 37.7% of married women whose husbands were not working. These descriptive statistics suggest women's employment may have served as spousal insurance for the husband's unemployment.

7 DID Results

Using the census tree linked sample and a DID design, I examine whether women with postmaster work experienced had better 1940 employment outcomes than their 1920 women neighbors.²⁴ A key assumption of the DID design is that the outcomes of neighboring women are not affected by the postmaster appointments. As shown in the right column of [Figure 5](#), this

²⁴Employment is the only outcome available here since information related to labor supply is not available in years before 1940 and thus could not be examined in a DID design.

assumption is partly supported by the fact that these women neighbors did not become postmasters themselves in 1940, and their employment and labor supply trends appear smooth and unaffected by the timing of the postmaster appointment or the presidential transition. In particular, fewer than 20% of them were employed in 1940, and their average annual weeks worked was under 10 weeks.

The DID results with education and neighborhood fixed effects are presented in [Table 5](#). To ensure that the DID results are not sensitive to the appointment timing of women postmasters, the table shows the results by different samples of women postmasters appointed within 1400 days (approximately 4 years), 1600, 1800,..., 2400 days (approximately 6 to 7 years) of the 1933 presidential transition. For women appointed before the presidential transition (Panel A), the coefficients of the postmaster dummy variables are consistently positive and significant across all columns, which shows that women postmasters were positively selected and were more likely to be employed during the pre-treatment period than their 1920 women neighbors, consistent with the descriptive statistics shown in [Table 1](#). However, the DID estimates are negative but not statistically different from zero, suggesting that former women postmasters were not more likely to be employed in 1940 relative to their 1920 women neighbors. On the other hand, women appointed after the transition were 55 to 58 pp. more likely to be employed than their women neighbors (Panel B) because the postmaster appointments boosted women's labor force participation significantly.

Combined with the RD results, the DID results suggest that although some women were able to transition into other skilled occupations after their postmaster appointments ended, their average employment rate was no higher than that of other women with similar backgrounds.

8 Mechanisms

The RD results show that many women exited the labor force after their postmaster appointments, potentially due to broader labor market constraints, such as marriage bars and the economic hardship of the Great Depression. To explore these mechanisms further, I examine heterogeneity in the effects by (1) state-level restrictions on married women's employment and (2) the severity of the Great Depression.

8.1 State-Level Discrimination Against Married Women

Discrimination against married women, often referred to as "marriage bars," had a long history in the U.S. labor market and existed in different forms in various occupations and industries (Goldin, 1988). The discriminatory practice was in place because many people believed that women's sphere was the family and working women could not be efficient and caring home-makers (Harris, 1978; Rury, 1991).

Although marriage bars existed in the private sector before the 1930s, government-imposed restrictions were relatively rare until the onset of the Great Depression. In 1932, the federal government enacted Section 213 of the Economy Act, which asked "married persons" to resign if both the husband and the wife were working for the federal government. In practice, this policy disproportionately affected women, who were more likely to earn lower wages than their husbands and were thus the ones expected to leave their jobs (Cook, 1936). The legislation reflected and reinforced growing hostility toward women—especially married women—participating in the workforce during a time of widespread unemployment.

This federal precedent opened the door for states to adopt similar discriminatory measures. During the Depression, 26 states introduced legislation aimed at restricting the employment of married women (Shallcross, 1940; Scharf, 1980), which are shown in [Figure 6](#). These legislative efforts, although often unsuccessful, nevertheless signaled to employers that hiring married women was discouraged and dissuaded many women from seeking employment in the first place.²⁵ Women living in states with these types of marriage bars might find it more difficult to continue their employment.

To assess whether state-level discrimination affected the results, I estimate the RD effects separately for women living in states that did and did not introduce legislation restricting married women's employment in [Table 6](#). Among women living in states with newly introduced marriage bars (Panel A), they experienced large and statistically significant declines in employment (by 32 pp.) and labor supply (by 19 weeks worked per year and 13 hours worked per week). In contrast, the declines in employment outcomes for women living in states without such leg-

²⁵According to Shallcross, 1940, married women workers "may eventually find it impossible to get a job even though no laws have been passed specifically prohibiting her employment" if sentiment against women working continued to grow. A Gallup poll found the majority of the respondents supported state legislatures' desire to pass laws restricting married women's rights to work (Gallup, 1939), even though a government survey showed most married women were seeking employment due to economic necessity (Brown, 1929).

isolation (Panel B) were much smaller and not statistically significant. This comparison suggests that state-level discrimination against married women substantially limited their employment opportunities and may help explain why many women exited the labor force after their post-master appointments.

To further support this argument, I provide additional evidence in [Section 11.5](#) showing that married women were 21.5 pp. less likely to be employed in 1940 than unmarried women, with the coefficient being statistically significant at the 10% level. This indicates that unmarried women generally had an easier time finding new employment opportunities after their post-master appointment ended, possibly due to the absence of marriage bars.

8.2 The Severity of the Great Depression

In addition to state-level discrimination, the Great Depression might have made it more difficult for women to find new employment opportunities. I estimate the RD effects separately for women living in counties that experienced different levels of the economic downturn. Since county-level unemployment rates are largely unavailable for this period, I follow Fishback, Horrace, et al., [2005](#) and Feigenbaum, [2015](#) in using changes in retail sales per capita between 1929 and 1933 as a proxy for the severity of the downturn. Data on retail sales are obtained from Fishback and Kantor, [2018](#).

The median county-level retail sales loss per capita between 1929 and 1933 is \$185 (in 1967 dollar amount) or 0.46 log points. As shown in [Figure A8](#), retail sales losses varied across counties, though the South was generally less affected. Counties with higher shares of urban and manufacturing populations tended to face larger drops in retail sales. These patterns are consistent with the findings in Feigenbaum, [2015](#), which focuses on city-level outcomes.

As shown in Panel C of [Table 6](#), women living in areas that experienced a more severe economic downturn experienced a 40 pp. reduction in the probability of employment in 1940 and decreased their labor supply by 22.6 weeks per year. In contrast, the RD estimates for women in counties with less severe economic declines are small and statistically insignificant. This suggests that in areas more severely affected by the Depression, job opportunities that met women's reservation wages were more limited. As implied by the job search model in [Section 2.3](#), many women in these areas may have opted to exit the labor force.

9 Conclusion

This paper provides a historical perspective on the effect of woman-friendly occupations on women's employment. It examines the postmaster role between 1920 and 1940, a rare position open to married women that offered high pay and flexible hours. The analyses reveal a mixed picture: although the postmaster job attracted qualified women into employment, many exited the labor force after their appointments ended. While some women successfully transitioned into other skilled occupations, these transitions accounted for only one-third of the total employment loss.

These limited long-term gains reflect the broader institutional and economic constraints women faced during this period, such as state-level marriage bars and the economic hardships of the Great Depression. Had we examined women a woman-friendly occupation in a later period, such as the post-war decades when there were fewer restrictions on women's employment, we might have seen more favorable outcomes. It is worth noting that successful examples, such as the transformation of the pharmacy profession into a well-paid, family-friendly career (Goldin and Katz, 2016), do exist. Examining the types of features and policies that enhance women's labor market participation and narrow the gender wage gap in various contexts remains essential for advancing our understanding of gender equality in the labor market.

10 Figures and Tables

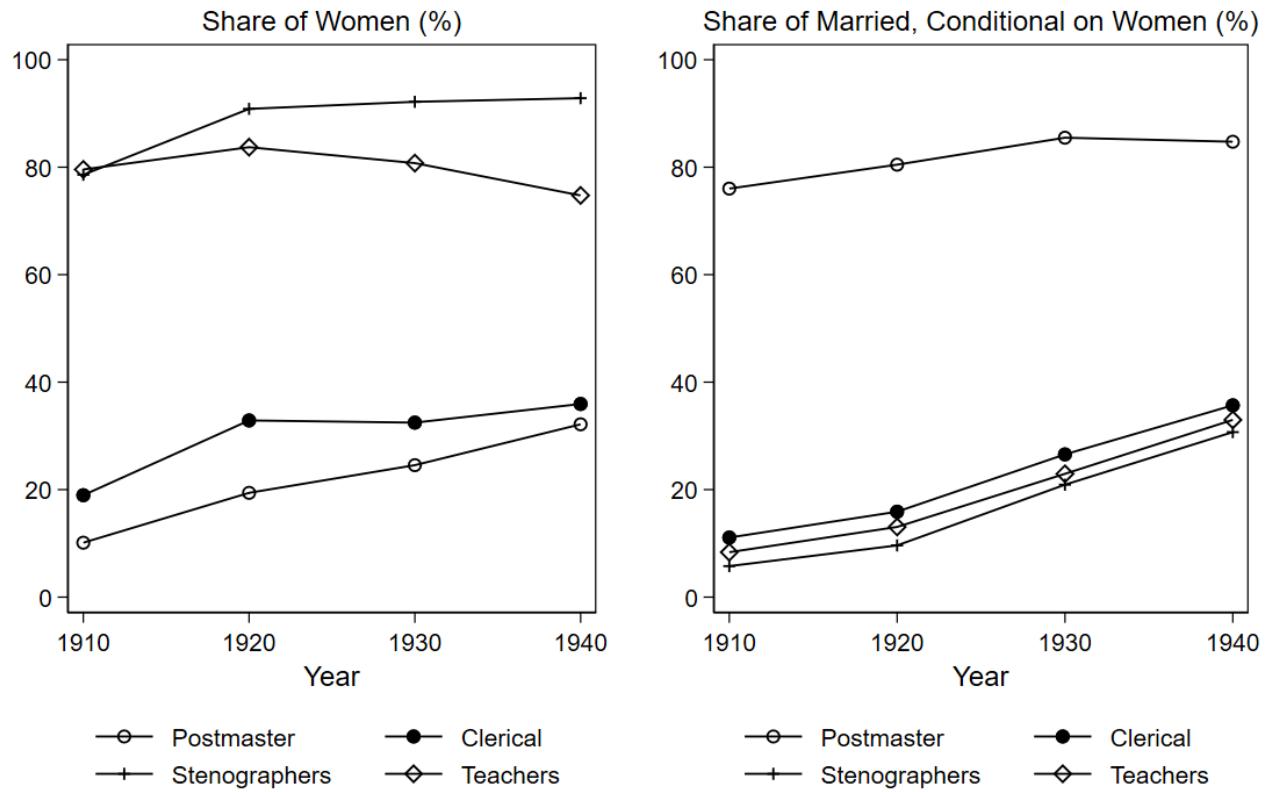
Figure 1: Sample Image from “Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-1971”

A-10749

POSTMASTER	NOMINATED	CONFIRMED	RECESS OR ACTING	COMMISSION SIGNED AND MAILED	ASSUMED CHARGE	CAUSE AND DATE OF VACANCY	REMARKS
Miss Isabelle N. Boyd	Feb. 27, 1931	out am			Rem	Res.	
Mrs. Florence M. Bowman		July 5-35 as per Pres.			July 20-35		
Mrs. Florence M. Bowman	July 10-35	July 28-35	July 26-35 Capt. Pres.	Aug. 10-35	Aug. 13, 1935	Corn. Ex.	
Mrs. Florence M. Bowman	July 12, 1939	July 18, 1939	July 26, 1939	Sept. 6, 1939	Sept. 16, 1939	Res.	
Robert O. Seaver			Vact. P.M.		June 1, 1946		
Robert O. Seaver	Apr. 7, 1947	July 11, 1947	May 31, 1946 Capt. Pres.	July 14, 1947	July 14, 1947	Sept. 30, 1947	

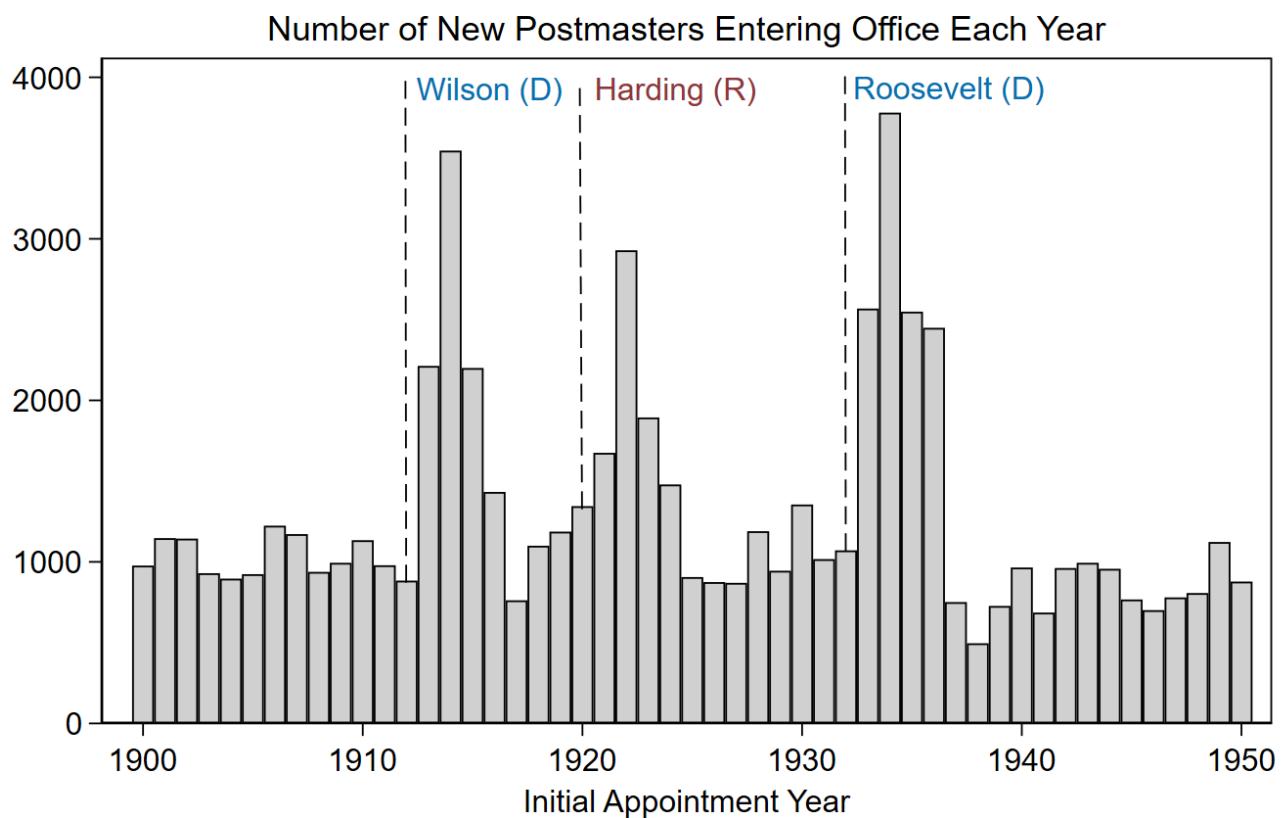
Source: Ancestry, 2021; National Archives and Records Administration, 1977. The sample image shows the dataset contains rich information about postmaster appointments, including post office locations, postmaster names and postmaster appointment dates.

Figure 2: Share of Women and Married Women Across Occupations



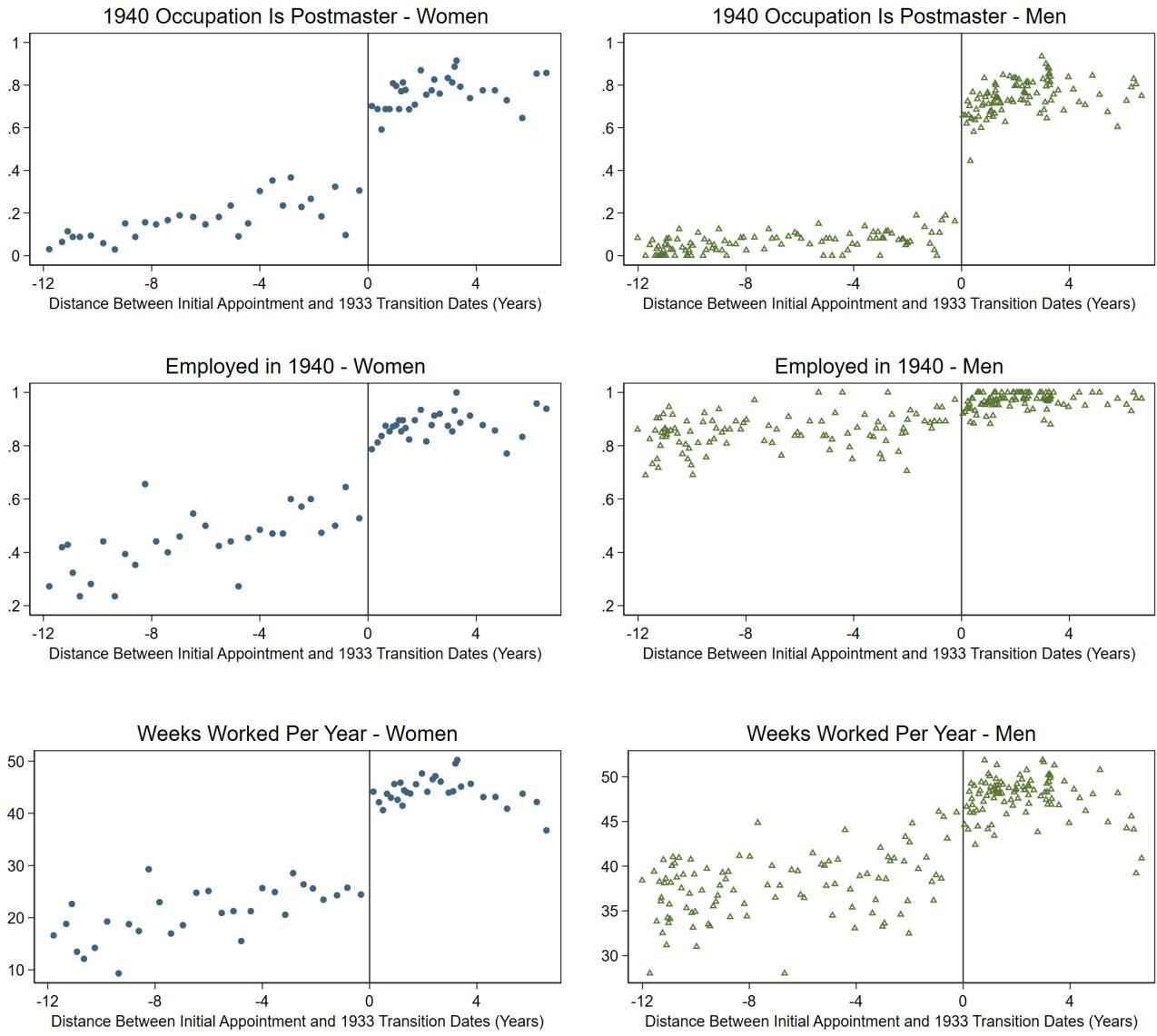
The left column displays the share of women employed as postmasters, clerical workers, stenographers, and teachers between 1910 and 1940. The right column displays the share of ever-married women among women employed in these occupations between 1910 and 1940. Data on postmasters are from the Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832–1971. Data on other occupations are from the 1% IPUMS census samples.

Figure 3: Number of New Postmasters Entering Office Each Year



The figure shows the number of new postmasters entering office each year. Each vertical dashed line indicates the election year that led to a presidential transition when the party of the president changed from Republican to Democrat or from Democrat to Republican. Changes in the presidency within the same party are not labeled. The author's calculation is based on the dataset "Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-1971".

Figure 4: RD Results on 1940 Outcomes Between Postmasters Appointed Just Before and Just After the 1933 Presidential Transition - By Gender



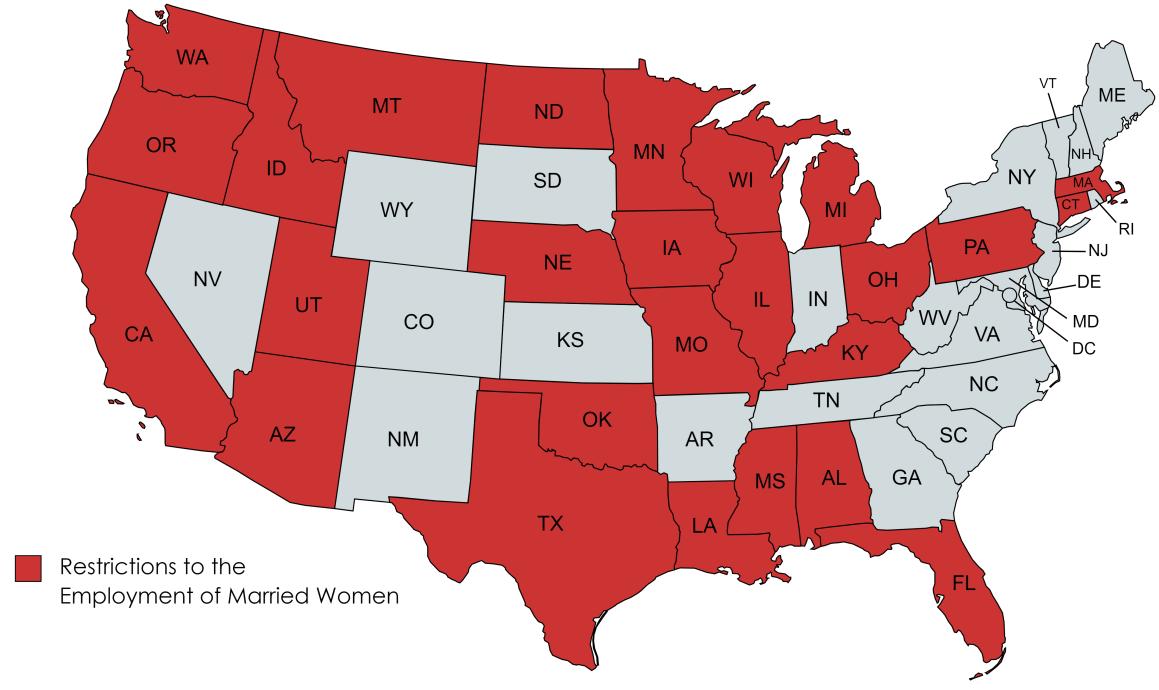
The figure shows RD Results between postmasters appointed just before and after the 1933 presidential transition for women (left column) and men (right column). The outcome variables are whether one reported postmaster being their occupation in 1940, whether they were employed in 1940, and the number of weeks worked per year in 1939. The sample is linked data between postmaster appointments and the 1940 complete-count census. The running variable is the standardized distance between the initial appointment and the 1933 presidential transition dates. Data are plotted in quantile-spaced bins, and each bin contains roughly 40 observations. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights. The results in table form are shown in [Table 3](#). Results for additional outcomes are shown in [Figure A6](#).

Figure 5: 1940 Outcomes Between Women Postmasters and Their Women Neighbors



The figures are binned scatter plots of 1940 outcomes between women postmasters (left column) and their women neighbors (right column). The outcome variables are whether one reported postmaster being their occupation in 1940, whether they were employed in 1940, and the number of weeks worked per year in 1939. The sample is census tree linked data, which has a smaller number of observations and is different than the sample used in [Figure 4](#). $N(\text{Women PM})=736$ and $N(\text{Women Neighbors})=5,468$. The running variable is the standardized distance between the initial appointment and the 1933 presidential transition dates. Data are plotted in quantile-spaced bins, and each bin contains roughly 40 observations. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights.

Figure 6: States that Introduced Legislation Against Married Women Working During the 1930s



Created with mapchart.net

Author's reproduction of Shallcross, 1940. The figure shows the states that introduced legislation against married women working during the Great Depression.

Table 1: Predetermined Characteristics of Women Postmasters and the General Population

	(1) Women PM	(2) Married Women PM	(3) Women Neighbors	(4) All Women
Variables Based on the 1920 Census				
Age	33.6 (9.0)	35.1 (8.6)	37.7 (13.2)	36.2 (12.7)
White	99.1 (9.3)	98.7 (11.1)	96.4 (18.5)	89.9 (30.1)
Native Born	98.2 (13.2)	98.2 (13.3)	91.2 (28.4)	82.4 (38.0)
Urban	11.0 (31.3)	10.6 (30.8)	25.9 (43.8)	56.8 (49.5)
Farm	22.1 (41.5)	22.3 (41.7)	18.1 (38.5)	24.6 (43.0)
Married	70.3 (45.7)	-	67.8 (46.7)	68.5 (46.5)
Employed	32.5 (46.8)	15.2 (35.9)	22.0 (41.4)	25.6 (43.7)
Self-Employed	5.4 (22.6)	2.1 (14.3)	2.9 (16.7)	3.7 (18.8)
Employed (H)	- -	97.3 (16.2)	-	-
Self-Employed (H)	- -	47.3 (50.0)	-	-
N	1921	1106	159051	30129809
Conditional on Head/Spouse				
Homeowner	66.4 (47.3)	66.9 (47.1)	57.9 (49.4)	44.2 (49.7)
# Children	1.7 (1.6)	1.8 (1.6)	1.8 (1.8)	2.1 (2.0)
N	1312	1106	109865	20965460
Variables Based on the 1940 Census				
Years of Education	11.7 (2.6)	11.6 (2.7)	10.1 (3.4)	9.0 (3.5)
Age at Appointment	38.1 (9.9)	37.1 (9.5)	-	-
N	2311	1242	138562	40803176

The table compares the predetermined characteristics of women postmasters appointed between 1921 and 1939 with the general female population. All samples are further restricted to be between ages 18-65. The outcome variables are years of education, age at appointment, age in 1920, whether one was White and native born (*100), urban and farm status in 1920 (*100), whether one was currently married in 1920 (*100), whether one's husband was gainfully employed in 1920 (*100), whether one's husband was self-employed in 1920 (*100), and whether one was a homeowner in 1920 (*100) and the number of children in the household in 1920 (conditional on head/spouse). The availability of variables varies by different samples and censuses. Postmaster data are weighted by inverse probability weights.

Table 2: Validity of RD - Predetermined Characteristics for Women Postmasters Appointed Just Before and After the 1933 Presidential Transition

	(1) Number of Obs	(2) RD Estimate	(3) Standard Errors
Variables from Sample of Women PM			
Republican Vote 1928 %	5728	1.930	(3.07)
Sales Loss PC 1929-1933	5728	-1.495	(16.03)
Father's OCCScore Rank	5728	0.012	(0.01)
Linked to 1940	5728	-0.026	(0.10)
Linked to 1920	5728	0.083	(0.07)
Variables from Sample of Linked Women PM (1940)			
Years of Education	2443	0.861	(0.71)
Age at Appointment	2443	-1.854	(2.37)
Variables from Sample of Linked Women PM (1920)			
White	1929	0.053	(0.06)
Native Born	1929	0.005	(0.05)
Urban	1929	0.026	(0.08)
Farm	1929	-0.182	(0.16)
Married	1929	-0.256	(0.13)
Employed	1929	0.090	(0.10)
<i>Conditional on Household Head/Spouse</i>			
Homeowner	1316	-0.020	(0.16)
# Children	1316	0.386	(0.45)

The table displays the RD estimates on pre-determined characteristics for women postmasters appointed between 1921 and 1939. The running variable is the distance between the initial appointment date and the presidential transition date (March 4, 1933). The outcome variables are county-level Republican vote share in 1928, county-level sales loss per capita between 1929 and 1933, father's OCCScore rank, the probability of the postmaster being linked to the 1940/1920 census, years of education, age at the appointment, whether one was White/native born/married/gainfully employed in 1920, farm and urban status in 1920, whether one was a homeowner in 1920 (conditional on head/spouse), and the number of children in the household in 1920 (conditional on head/spouse). Standard errors are clustered by the running variable (Lee and Card, 2008), and linked data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights (Bailey et al., 2020). The availability of variables varies by different samples and censuses. * for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$

Table 3: RD Estimates by Gender - 1940 Outcomes of Postmasters Appointed Just Before and After the 1933 Presidential Transition

	(1) Postmaster Occ	(2) Employed	(3) Weeks Worked	(4) Hours Worked	(5) Self- Employed	(6) Family Worker
<i>Panel A: RD Estimates on Women Postmasters</i>						
Sharp RD	0.342*** (0.10)	0.239* (0.11)	16.865*** (3.94)	11.111* (4.93)	-0.035 (0.05)	-0.027 (0.02)
Fuzzy RD		0.637*** (0.19)	43.945*** (9.44)	27.891** (9.14)	-0.091 (0.13)	-0.050 (0.05)
N Women	2443	2443	2443	2443	2443	2443
N Effective	818	836	1242	944	846	1300
Bandwidth	742.5	760.7	1172.9	872.7	779.3	1193.0
<i>Panel B: RD Estimates on Male Postmasters</i>						
Sharp RD	0.533*** (0.06)	-0.017 (0.03)	-1.032 (3.05)	1.618 (2.67)	-0.338*** (0.09)	-0.008 (0.01)
Fuzzy RD		-0.070 (0.07)	-0.944 (5.38)	5.138 (7.24)	-0.660*** (0.17)	-0.016 (0.02)
N Men	8085	8085	8085	8085	8085	8085
N Effective	2472	2577	1999	3310	2134	2933
Bandwidth	673.9	707.3	472.7	885.5	518.7	792.5
<i>Panel C: Gender Differences in Sharp RD Estimates</i>						
Sharp RD Difference	0.19 (0.12)	-0.256** (0.11)	-17.897** (4.98)	-9.493 (5.61)	-0.302** (0.11)	0.019 (0.02)
N Total	10528	10528	10528	10528	10528	10528

The table reports sharp and fuzzy RD estimates between postmasters appointed just before and after the 1933 presidential transition for women (Panel A) and men (Panel B). The gender differences in RD are reported in Panel C. The outcome variables are whether one reported postmaster being their occupation in 1940, whether they were employed in 1940, the number of weeks worked per year in 1939, the number of hours worked per week, whether the postmaster was a family worker in 1940, and whether the postmaster was self-employed in 1940. Control variables include age, age squared, whether one was native-born/married/migrated during the last five years, and farm/urban status. It additionally reports clustered standard errors by the running variable, the number of effective observations, and the optimal bandwidth. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights. * for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$.

Table 4: Top 1940 Occupations for Women Postmasters Appointed Before the 1933 Presidential Transition

	(1) All Women	(2) Married Women	(3) Unmarried Women	(4) Rural Women	(5) Urban Women
Clerical Workers (occ1950=390)	11.8 (32.3)	9.1 (28.9)	13.5 (34.2)	11.4 (31.8)	14.3 (35.3)
Managers, Officials, and Proprietors (occ1950=290)	9.2 (28.9)	10.4 (30.6)	8.5 (27.9)	9.5 (29.4)	7.2 (26.0)
Bookkeepers (occ1950=310)	5.8 (23.5)	5.0 (21.9)	6.3 (24.4)	5.9 (23.5)	5.6 (23.2)
Teachers (occ1950=93)	5.7 (23.3)	5.7 (23.3)	5.7 (23.3)	5.2 (22.3)	9.0 (28.9)
Salesmen (occ1950=490)	4.5 (20.6)	4.1 (20.0)	4.6 (21.1)	4.1 (19.9)	6.6 (25.0)
Officials, Public Admin (occ1950=250)	2.8 (16.5)	1.4 (11.6)	3.7 (18.8)	3.0 (17.0)	1.8 (13.3)
Farmers (Owner) (occ1950=100)	2.5 (15.6)	0.6 (7.8)	3.7 (18.8)	2.5 (15.5)	2.8 (16.7)
Stenographers (occ1950=350)	1.5 (12.1)	1.4 (11.9)	1.5 (12.2)	1.7 (12.9)	0.0 (0.0)
Boarding House Keepers (occ1950=752)	1.4 (11.6)	0.6 (8.0)	1.8 (13.3)	1.0 (10.2)	3.4 (18.3)
Telephone Operators (occ1950=370)	1.3 (11.4)	1.9 (13.7)	1.0 (9.7)	1.5 (12.2)	0.0 (0.0)
Insurance Agents (occ1950=450)	1.3 (11.2)	1.0 (10.0)	1.4 (12.0)	1.5 (12.1)	0.0 (0.0)
N	444	175	269	387	57

The table summarizes the top 1940 occupations for women postmasters appointed before the 1933 presidential transition, conditional on those who reported a valid occupation other than the postmaster. Columns show the share of women engaged in a specific occupation in the respective sample. The occupational code for the variable occ1950 is shown for each occupation. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights (Bailey et al., 2020).

Table 5: DID Estimates on Employment Between Women Postmasters and Women Neighbors

Bandwidth	Outcome: Employed					
	1400	1600	1800	2000	2200	2400
<i>Panel A: Women PM Appointed Before the 1933 Transition v.s. Neighbors</i>						
$PM_i \times Post_t$	-0.054 (0.08)	-0.059 (0.07)	-0.106 (0.07)	-0.102 (0.06)	-0.090 (0.06)	-0.067 (0.06)
PM_i	0.149** (0.05)	0.157** (0.05)	0.189*** (0.05)	0.192*** (0.04)	0.190*** (0.04)	0.171*** (0.04)
$Post_t$	0.022 (0.04)	0.031 (0.04)	0.052 (0.04)	0.062 (0.03)	0.060 (0.03)	0.046 (0.03)
<i>N</i>	851	945	1072	1228	1296	1380
Neighborhood FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Education FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Panel B: Women PM Appointed After the 1933 Transition v.s. Neighbors</i>						
$PM_i \times Post_t$	0.584*** (0.04)	0.572*** (0.04)	0.562*** (0.04)	0.556*** (0.04)	0.550*** (0.04)	0.552*** (0.04)
PM_i	0.024 (0.02)	0.032 (0.02)	0.021 (0.02)	0.029 (0.02)	0.031 (0.02)	0.033 (0.02)
$Post_t$	0.053* (0.02)	0.052* (0.02)	0.057** (0.02)	0.057** (0.02)	0.064** (0.02)	0.069*** (0.02)
<i>N</i>	2212	2328	2394	2477	2531	2635
Neighborhood FE	X	X	X	X	X	X
Education FE	X	X	X	X	X	X

The table reports DID estimates on the employment outcome between women who had been postmasters and their women neighbors (who had never been postmasters). Neighborhood and Education fixed effects are included. Panel A shows the results for women postmasters appointed before the 1933 presidential transitions, and Panel B shows the results for women postmasters appointed after the 1933 presidential transitions. Different columns indicate different samples of women postmasters who were appointed within 1400/1600/1800/2000/2200/2400 days of the 1933 presidential transition. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights. * for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$

Table 6: RD Estimates For Women By State-Level Discrimination Against Married Women and the Severity of the Great Depression

	(1) Postmaster Occ	(2) Employed	(3) Weeks Worked	(4) Hours Worked	(5) Self- Employed	(6) Family Worker
<i>Panel A: States w. Legislation against Married Women Working</i>						
RD Estimate	0.432*** (0.10)	0.318** (0.12)	18.797*** (4.83)	12.672* (6.12)	-0.001 (0.03)	-0.027 (0.02)
N	1633	1633	1633	1633	1633	1633
<i>Panel B: States w/o Legislation against Married Women Working</i>						
RD Estimate	0.341* (0.14)	0.030 (0.17)	9.914 (8.52)	4.786 (10.29)	-0.141 (0.11)	-0.013 (0.05)
N	810	810	810	810	810	810
<i>Panel C: Counties w. Above Median Retail Sales Loss Per Capita</i>						
RD Estimate	0.398*** (0.10)	0.406** (0.13)	22.638*** (5.63)	14.679* (7.12)	0.069* (0.03)	-0.048 (0.04)
N	1469	1469	1469	1469	1469	1469
<i>Panel D: Counties w. Below Median Retail Sales Loss Per Capita</i>						
RD Estimate	0.337 (0.21)	-0.253 (0.19)	-2.807 (8.84)	-0.204 (11.28)	-0.369* (0.18)	0.005 (0.01)
N	974	974	974	974	974	974

The table reports RD Results between women postmasters appointed just before and after the 1933 presidential transition by state-level discrimination against married women (Panel A and B) and the severity of the Great Depression (Panel C and D). Data on states that introduced legislation against married women working are from Shallcross, 1940. The severity of the Great Depression is measured by retail sales loss per capita between 1929 and 1933 (Fishback, Horrace, et al., 2005). The outcome variables are whether one reported postmaster being their occupation in 1940, whether they were employed in 1940, the number of weeks worked per year in 1939, the number of hours worked per week, whether the postmaster was self-employed in 1940, and whether the postmaster was a family worker in 1940. Standard errors are clustered by the running variable. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights. * for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$

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11 Appendix: Additional Context, Figures, and Tables

This appendix is intended to complement the main paper by providing additional context, data, and robustness checks that support its key findings. It includes further details on data construction, additional empirical results, and alternative specifications that reinforce the paper's conclusions. The appendix is not designed to be read on its own; rather, it should be read alongside the main text, which provides the necessary framework and interpretation for the material presented here. A short table of contents is provided below:

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11.1 Eligibility of Postmaster Candidates and Civil Service Exams

The Civil Service Commission established several minimum requirements for postmaster candidates. For example, the candidate must be a US citizen, and a naturalized citizen is acceptable. Male candidates must be 21 years old and above, and female candidates must be 18 and above. The candidate must also reside in the delivery area of the post office he or she would be in charge of (United States Civil Service Commission, [1916](#)).

Meeting the minimum requirement only made the candidate eligible for the civil service exam, while only the top candidates from the exam would be considered for the position. Candidates for postmasters were tested on a few subjects. The most important subject was arithmetic which includes addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. For example, one exam question asked the candidates to make an itemized list of transacted money orders over the past month, as well as to balance and close the statement based on fees charged in each money order. Arithmetic skills were necessary because postmasters must keep track of sales and receipts to report post office revenue correctly. Additional subjects included penmanship and letter writing which would help communication between post offices, efficient mail delivery, and many other post office businesses (United States Civil Service Commission, [1916](#)).

Postmasters in larger post offices were subject to even higher standards. Specifically, postmasters in charge of Class 3 post offices and above must demonstrate “business training, experience, and fitness” and “the ability in meeting and dealing satisfactorily with the public” (United States Civil Service Commission, [1922](#)). The demonstration often included a personal history of past business managing experience that needed to be verified by the civil service commission. The highest paying post offices specifically required more than 5 to 7 years of experience in similar types of employment (United States Civil Service Commission, [1922](#)).

[Figure A9](#) shows the requirement for postmasters in charge of Class 3 post offices and an example question that asks the candidates to calculate the fees associated with money orders received in a specific post office.

11.2 Sample of Postmasters and Post Offices in the Analysis

Post offices were classified into Class 1 through 4 based on post office revenue and postmaster salary. Class 1 post offices are the largest, often in metropolitan areas, and were subject to the highest demand for mail and parcels. Class 4 post offices are the smallest, serving local towns with a few hundred residents. Due to differences in mail volumes and post office revenue, postmasters of Class 1 post offices have the highest salary, ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year during the early 20th Century, while postmasters of Class 4 have the lowest salary and over 70 percent of them received below \$100 per year ([Hoogenboom, 1959](#)). The classification was adjusted every two years based on post office revenue, but most adjustments were minor changes since mail volumes (determined by population in a locality) were relatively stable over the years.

I only include postmasters who were presidential appointees in the analysis. This group of postmasters is often referred to as Class 1, 2, and 3 postmasters. I do not include postmasters from Class 4, who stopped being presidential appointees between 1909 and 1913 when President Theodore Roosevelt and President William Taft took the initiative to classify Class 4 post offices under the merit system.²⁶ Additionally, given the low level of compensation for Class 4 postmasters, it is unlikely that being a postmaster was their full-time job. Gaining or losing a part-time postmaster job at a Class 4 post office might have little impact on the person's overall labor market outcomes. This also implies that Class 4 postmasters had higher turnover rates than others and more frequent turnovers outside presidential transition periods, which makes linking Class 4 postmasters to the complete count censuses much more complex since postmasters might have moved away from the county/state of appointment.

²⁶Classifying Class 4 post offices under merit system was a political decision since Class 4 postmasters had the lowest stake among all presidential appointees and both executive orders went into effect as Roosevelt and Taft were leaving office.

11.3 Linking Rates by Matching Criteria and Demographic Subgroups

Here, I summarize three main takeaways from the census linking procedure: (1) the primary reason not to match an individual is the lack of unique matches; (2) linking rates for married women are slightly higher than those for single women, but the difference is modest; and (3) the gap in linking rates between urban and rural women is less than 1 percentage points. To address the non-representativeness of the linked sample, I use inverse probability weights to reweigh the observations by observed characteristics (Bailey et al., 2020).

First, I demonstrate that the primary reason for failed matches is common names. In Table A4, I calculate the share of postmasters who have at least 1 match in the census, and the share of postmasters who have a unique match in the census. As shown in Columns 1 and 2, between 48.1% and 84.6% of postmasters had at least one match in the census, but requiring a unique, non-duplicated match significantly lowers the linking rates to between 16.3% and 39.0%. Columns 3 and 4 show that men have lower linking rates than women, likely due to men having more common names than women. For example, postmasters with names like “John Smith” are harder to match than those with more distinctive names. As a result, the linked sample might not be fully representative of the broader postmaster population. To address this issue, I apply inverse probability weights following Bailey et al., 2020, which reweigh the observations to balance the observed characteristics (such as the frequency of the name) of the linked sample with those of the full population of postmasters.

Table A4 also shows that restricting the matches to be in the same county improved linking rates. Note that the share of postmasters that could be uniquely matched to the census is 22% without any restrictions on county (row 1, column 2), but the share increases to 33.9% if the county of appointment in the postmaster data and the county of residence in the census data are required to be the same (row 2, column 2).

In addition, linking rates are higher with fuzzy matching, which allows for minor variations in names, compared to exact matching, which requires names to match perfectly. The choice between exact and fuzzy matching involves a tradeoff between Type I errors (false positives) and Type II errors (false negatives). Given the lack of information in the postmaster data (e.g., there is no information on birth year to identify an individual further), I prioritize reducing Type I errors and therefore rely on exact matching in the main analysis presented in the paper. This

reflects a judgment call that prioritizes precision, which is what I find more appropriate given the limitations of the data.

Next, I show that married women (indicated by the prefix “Mrs.”) are slightly more likely to be linked than single women (indicated by the prefix “Miss”), but the difference is relatively modest. Table A5 below shows 42.3% of women postmasters with the prefix “Miss” and 45% of women postmasters with the prefix “Mrs.” could be linked to the 1940 census. The size of the difference remains similar when I change the matching criteria from exact to fuzzy. In addition, when I further require that women’s prefixes align with their marital status—dropping matches where “Mrs.” is paired with a single marital status or “Miss” with a non-single status—the linking rates improve slightly, as the restriction makes it easier to identify unique matches.

In addition, I show that urban and rural postmasters have similar linking rates in Table A6. Although the postmaster appointment data does not directly provide information on the rural or urban status of postmasters, I can use classifications of the post office from the postal guide as proxies (United States Government Printing Office, 1939). Class 1 and Class 2 post offices are in densely populated areas (considered “urban”), and Class 3 post offices are in less populated areas (considered “rural”). I show that the differences in linking rates between urban and rural women are less than 1 pp. (columns 2 and 4), and the differences in linking rates between urban and rural men are around 1-3.4 pp. (columns 1 and 3).

11.4 Comparison Between Linked and Census Samples of Postmasters

I compare the linked sample and the census sample of postmasters here. The census sample of postmasters is identified by the occupation code (occ1950=270) and taken from the 1940 census. To further restrict this sample to include only presidential postmasters who worked full-time positions,²⁷ I limit it to individuals earning at least \$1,100 per year, which is the income threshold used by the Postal Guide to distinguish presidential from non-presidential postmasters (United States Government Printing Office, 1939). The linked sample of postmasters used in the comparison is those appointed after the 1933 presidential transition, who were likely still

²⁷As mentioned in the paper, the group studied in the paper are presidential postmasters who worked full-time positions, also often referred to as Class 1, 2, and 3 postmasters. They were in charge of relatively large post offices (despite many of them being in rural areas) and were paid at least \$1,100 a year. This group is different than non-presidential postmasters, often referred to as Class 4 postmasters, most of whom received less than \$100 per year and were unlikely to have held the position as a full-time occupation (Hoogenboom, 1959).

serving as postmasters at the time of the 1940 Census. I include two linked samples constructed using different matching criteria: one based on exact matches and the other on fuzzy matches.

Table A7 shows the observed characteristics of the linked sample and census sample of postmasters by gender. Based on Columns 1, 3, and 5, both groups of women had similar educational attainment (around 12.0–12.1 years) and were close in age (46.1–46.4 years). Nearly all women in both groups were White and native-born, consistent with the broader demographic patterns described in the paper. However, linked women postmasters were somewhat less likely to reside in urban areas (12.7–13.2%) compared to their census counterparts (15.8%), and were 2-3 pp. more likely to be married. Since married and rural women might be less likely to be employed after their postmaster appointments (due to marriage bars and availability of jobs), this overrepresentation may introduce a small upward bias in the RD estimates. However, it is unlikely to explain the substantial differences in employment outcomes we have observed in the paper.

In addition, all individuals in the census sample of postmasters were, by construction, recorded as employed, since the sample was identified based on the postmaster occupation code. In contrast, individuals in the linked sample of postmasters were less likely to report being employed in 1940. The employment gap between the two groups was relatively small for men (approximately 3–4 pp.), but more pronounced for women (about 13 pp.). This pattern may reflect the tendency of women to underreport employment in the census, even when they were working, possibly due to social stigma. The direction of any resulting bias in the RD estimate is unclear, as it depends on the degree of underreporting among women appointed just before versus just after the presidential transition. If both groups of women underreported employment to a similar extent, then the RD estimate would not be substantially biased.

11.5 Employment for Married and Unmarried Women

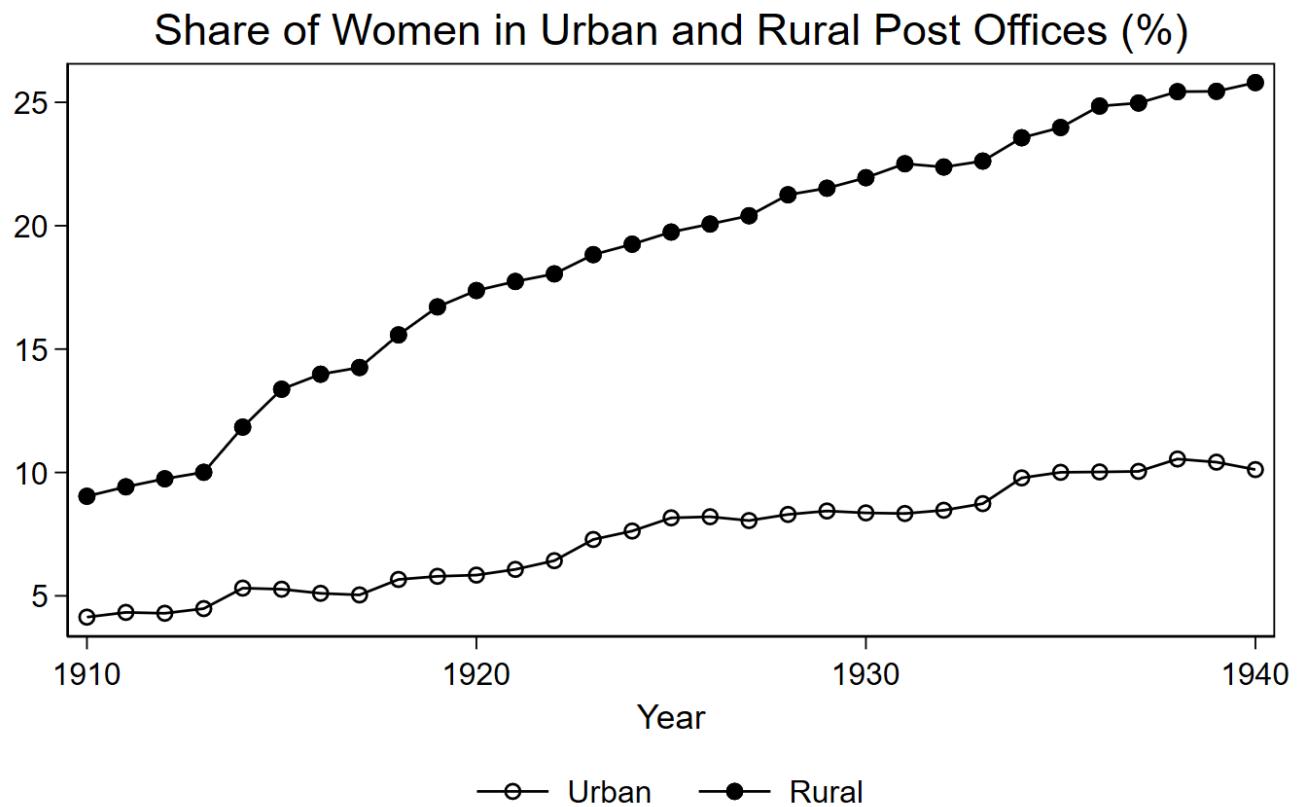
I provide evidence showing that, for those appointed before the presidential transition, married women were less likely to be employed in 1940 than unmarried women. In particular, I examine the 1940 outcomes of married and unmarried women postmasters with the following specification:

$$Y_{ica} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Married_i + \gamma_c + \gamma_a + X'_{ica} \Theta + \epsilon_{ica}$$

Y_{ica} is the 1940 outcome for postmaster i in county c initially appointed in year a . $Married_i$ is a dummy variable that equals one if the woman postmaster was married in 1940 and equals zero if the woman postmaster was never married or divorced/separated/widowed. County fixed effects γ_c and initial appointment year fixed effects γ_a , are included to compare women postmasters who were appointed in similar circumstances. I also added individual-level control variables X_{ica} , including age, age square, farm and urban status, years of schooling, and migration status.

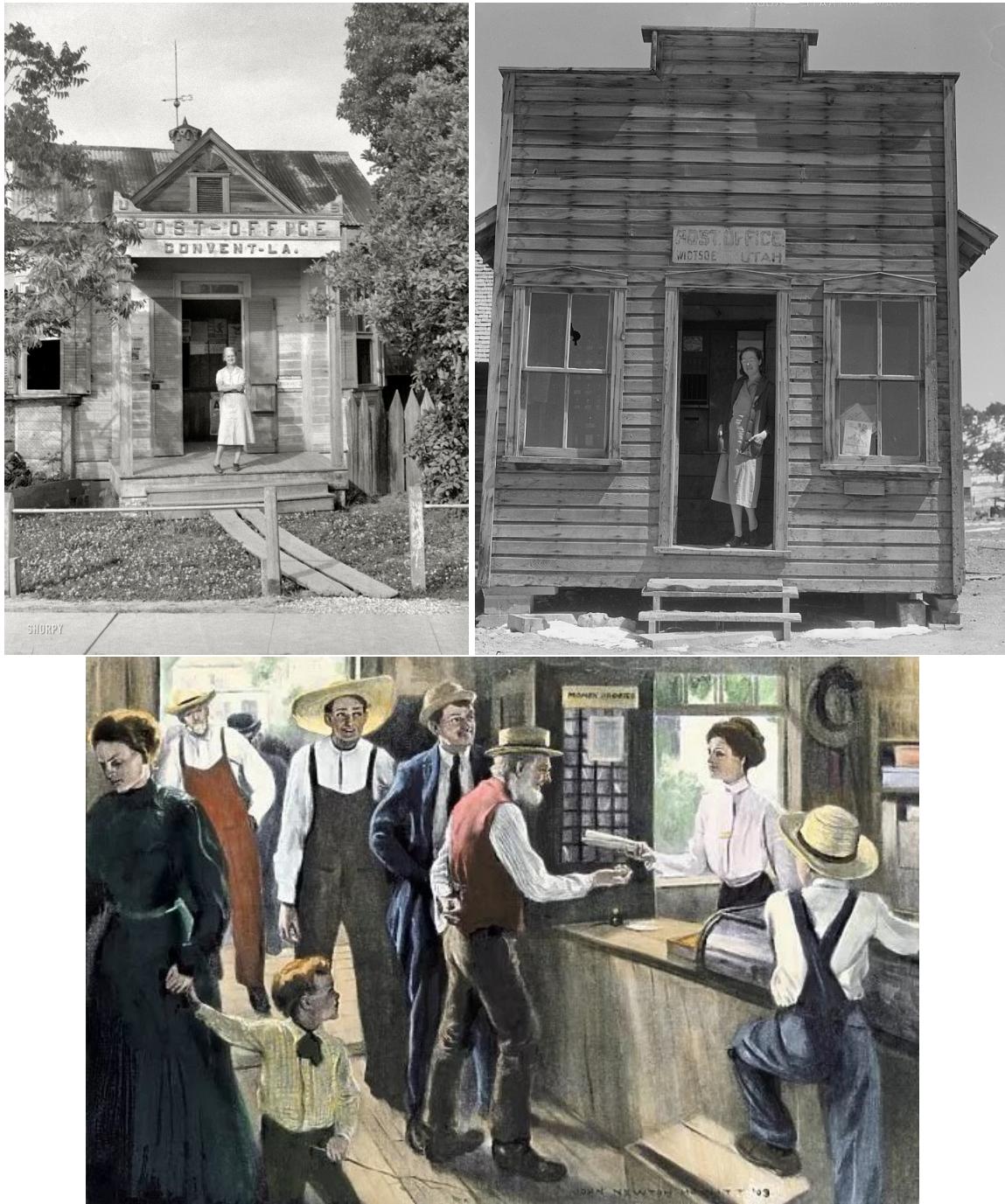
Table A8 presents the results separately for women postmasters appointed before the 1933 presidential transition (Panel A) and women postmasters appointed after (Panel B). Among those appointed before the presidential transition, married women were 21.5 pp. less likely to be employed in 1940 than unmarried women, although the coefficient is only statistically significant at the 10% level. This indicates that unmarried women generally had an easier time finding new employment opportunities after their postmaster appointment ended, possibly due to the absence of marriage bars. The estimates on labor supply cannot be distinguished from a null effect, highlighting the overall difficulty both married and unmarried women faced in securing new employment. Among those appointed after the presidential transition, the differences in the 1940 outcomes between married and unmarried are smaller and not statistically significant from zero, which is reasonable given that both groups were most likely still employed as postmasters in 1940.

Figure A1: Share of Women Postmasters in Urban and Rural Post Offices



The figure shows the share of women postmasters in urban and rural post offices between 1910 and 1940. Urban post offices were defined as Class 1 and Class 2 post offices, and rural post offices were defined as Class 3 post offices (based on the definition in the Postal Guide). The shares are calculated based on the dataset "Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-1971".

Figure A2: Work Arrangements of Women Postmasters



Top left: Photo of a woman postmaster in Covert, Louisiana, taken by John Vachon for the Farm Security Administration. Top right: Photo of a woman postmaster in a Utah post office published by the National Postal Museum. Bottom: the reproduction of a 1905 illustration, "Meeting the new postmistress, early 1900s" (original source unknown).

Figure A3: Number of Postmasters Removed during the Late-Nineteenth Century

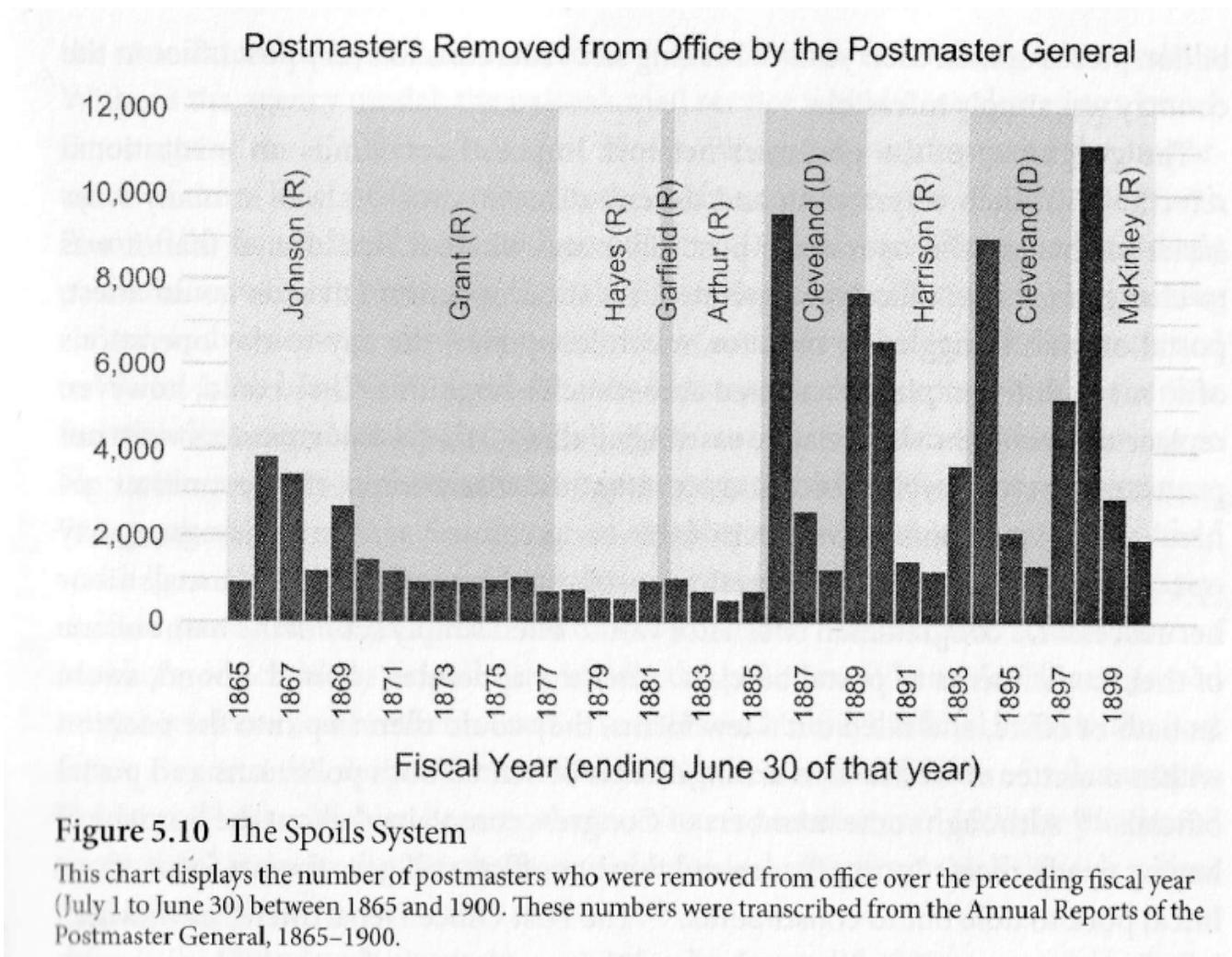


Figure 5.10 The Spoils System

This chart displays the number of postmasters who were removed from office over the preceding fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) between 1865 and 1900. These numbers were transcribed from the Annual Reports of the Postmaster General, 1865–1900.

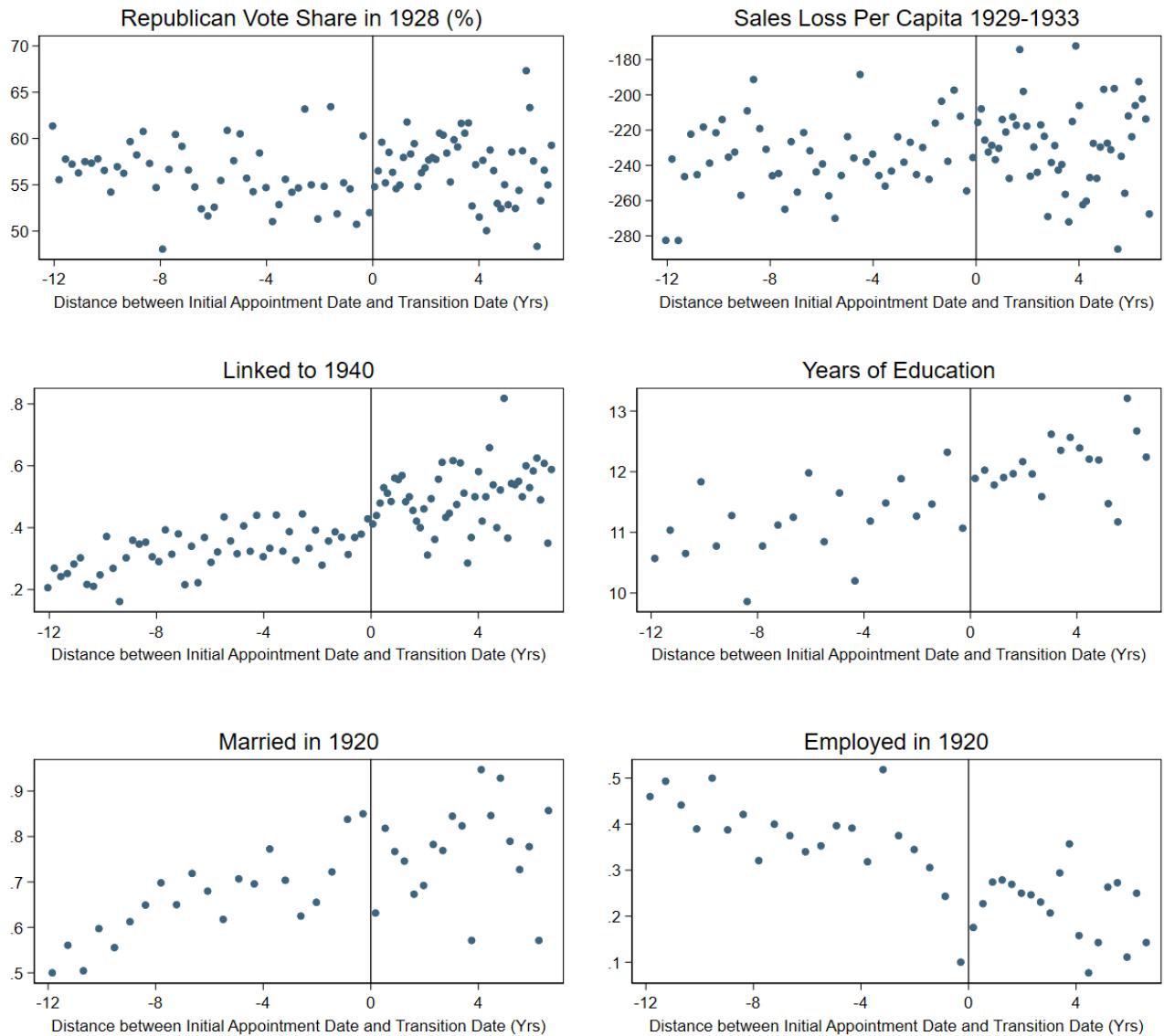
The figure shows the number of postmasters removed in each fiscal year during the late-nineteenth Century United States (Blevins, 2021).

Figure A4: Sample Image of US Official Postal Guide, 1939

Classified List of Post Offices, With Salaries						877		
CONNECTICUT—Continued			CONNECTICUT—Continued			DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA		
Office	Class	Salary	Office	Class	Salary	Office	Class	Salary
Glastonbury.... GV	2	\$2,700	South Norwalk.. G F	1	\$3,800	Washington.... G F	1	\$10,000
Glenville.....	3	2,000	Southport.....	2	2,500	FLORIDA		
Granby.....	3	1,600	South Willington.....	3	1,700	Alachua.....	3	1,900
Greens Farms.....	2	2,400	Springdale..... F	2	2,500	Altamonte Springs.....	3	1,200
Greenwich.... G F	1	5,000	Stafford Springs.... F	2	2,500	Altha.....	3	1,400
Guilford..... F	2	2,400	Stamford.... G F	1	4,500	Apalachicola.... G F	2	2,400
Haddam.....	3	1,600	Stepney Depot.....	3	1,800	Apopka.....	2	2,400
Hartford.... G F	1	7,000	Sterling.....	3	1,600	Arcadia.... G F	2	2,600
Hazardville.....	3	1,700	Stonington.... F	2	2,500	Archer.....	3	1,400
Higganum.....	3	1,800	Stony Creek.....	3	1,600	Atlantic Beach.....	3	1,800
Ivoryton.....	2	2,500	Suffield..... V	3	2,200	Auburndale.....	2	2,400
Jewett City.... F	2	2,500	Taftville.....	3	2,100	Avon Park.....	2	2,500
Kensington.... V	2	2,500	Terryville.....	2	2,500	Babson Park.....	3	1,700
Kent.....	3	2,300	Thomaston.... G F	2	2,700	Bagdad.....	3	1,200
Killingly.....	3	1,500	Thompson.....	3	1,500	Baker.....	3	1,300
Lakeville.....	2	2,500	Thompsonville.... G F	2	2,900	Bartow.... G F	2	2,800
Litchfield.....	2	2,700	Torrington.... G F	1	3,600	Bay Harbor.....	3	1,700
Madison.....	2	2,500	Uncasville.....	3	1,900	Bay Pines.....	3	1,800
Manchester.... G F	1	3,500	Unionville.... V	2	2,500	Belleair.....	3	1,100
Mansfield Depot....	3	1,400	Versailles.....	3	1,600	Belle Glade.....	3	2,300
Meriden.... G F	1	3,900	Voluntown.....	3	1,300	Blountstown.....	3	2,100
Middlebury.....	2	1,900	Wallingford.... G F	1	3,500	Bocagrande.....	3	1,900
Middlefield.....	3	2,300	Warehouse Point.....	3	1,700	Boca Raton.....	3	1,900
Middletown.... G F	1	2,700	Washington.....	3	2,100	Bonifay.... V	3	2,200
Milford.... G F	1	3,300	Washington Depot.....	3	2,100	Bowling Green.....	3	1,600
Milldale.....	3	2,200	Waterbury.... G F	1	4,500	Boynton.....	3	1,900
Montville.....	3	2,100	Waterford.....	3	2,000	Bradenton.... G F	1	3,300
Moodus.....	3	2,300	Watertown.... F	2	2,700	Branford.....	3	1,600
Moosup.....	3	2,200	Wauregan.....	3	1,300	Brewster.....	3	1,400
Mystic.... G F	2	2,700	Westbrook.....	3	2,300	Bronson.....	3	1,100
Naugatuck.... G F	1	3,500	West Cheshire.....	3	2,100	Brooksville.... F	2	2,400
New Britain.... G F	1	4,200	West Cornwall.....	3	1,500	Bunnell.....	3	1,900
New Canaan.... F	1	3,200	Westport.... G F	1	3,400	Bushnell.....	3	1,900
New Hartford.....	3	2,000	West Willington.....	3	1,400	Callahan.....	3	1,500
New Haven.... G F	1	7,000	Willimantic.... G F	1	3,300	Canal Point.....	3	1,700
Newington.....	3	2,200	Wilton.....	3	2,300	Carrabelle.....	3	1,600
New London.... G F	1	3,800	Windsor..... F	2	2,700	Cedar Keys.....	3	1,400
New Milford.... G F	2	2,900	Windsor Locks.... F	2	2,400	Center Hill.....	3	1,500
New Preston.....	3	1,700	Winsted.... G F	1	3,200	Century.....	3	1,700
Newtown.....	3	2,300	Woodbury.....	3	2,100	Chattahoochee.....	3	2,300
Niantic.....	2	2,400	Woodmont.....	3	1,900	Chiefland.....	3	1,400
Noank.....	3	1,600	Yalesville.....	3	1,400	Chipley.... V	2	2,400
Norfolk.....	2	2,400	Yantic.....	3	1,500	Citra.....	3	1,100
Noroton.....	3	2,200	DELAWARE			Clearwater.... G F	1	3,400
Noroton Heights.....	3	2,200	Bellevue.....	3	1,100	Clermont.....	2	2,400
North Grosvenor Dale.....	3	1,900	Bridgeville.....	3	2,300	Clewiston.....	2	2,400
North Haven.....	3	2,100	Camden.....	3	1,600	Cocoa.....	2	2,600
North Stonington.....	3	1,200	Cheswold.....	3	1,200	Coronado Beach.....	3	1,400
Norwalk.... G F	1	3,600	Claymont.... V	2	2,400	Cottondale.....	3	1,500
Norwich.... G F	1	3,700						

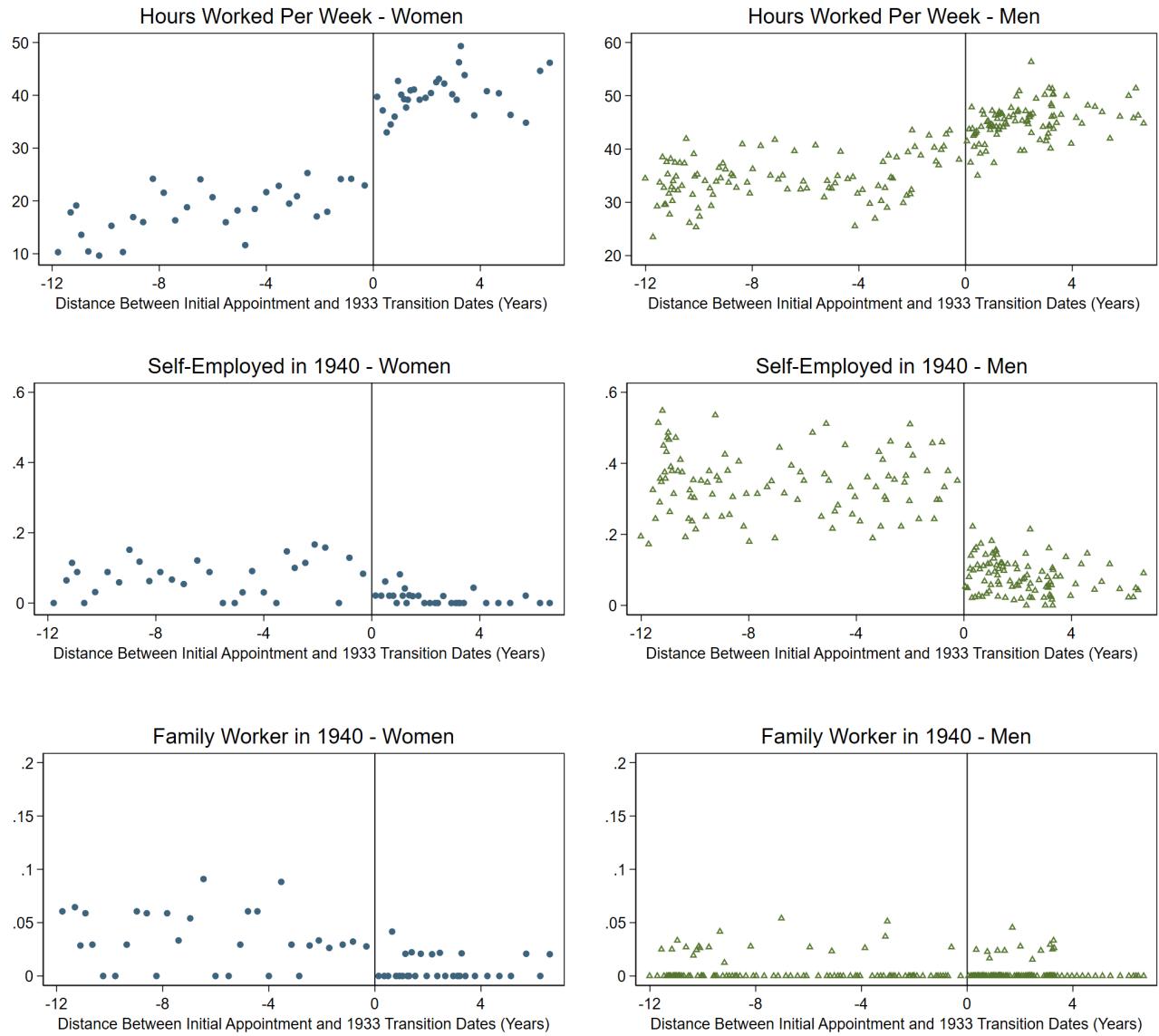
The figure shows the postmaster salary and level of classification for post offices in Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, and Florida in 1939 (United States Government Printing Office, 1939). For example, the Clermont post office in Florida was a Class 2 post office, which suggested that it was one of the larger post offices in urban areas. The postmaster's salary was \$2,400.

Figure A5: Validity of RD – Pre-Determined Characteristics for Women Postmasters Appointed Just Before and Just After the 1933 Presidential Transition



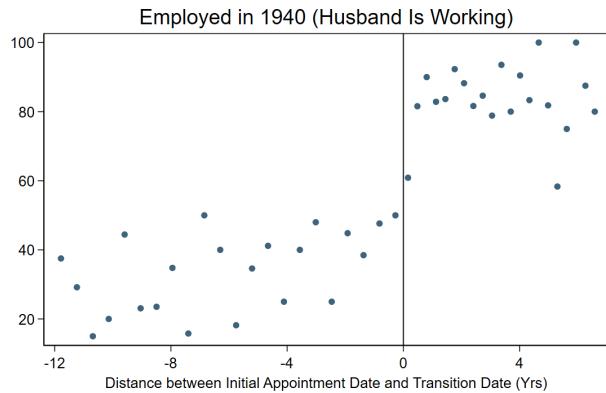
The figures plot pre-determined characteristics for women postmasters. The running variable is the standardized distance between the initial appointment and the 1933 presidential transition dates. The outcome variables are county-level Republican vote share in 1928, county-level sales loss per capita between 1929 and 1933, whether the postmaster is linked to the 1940 census, the postmaster's years of education, and whether the postmaster was married/gainfully employed in 1920. The first three variables are from the full sample of women postmasters, and the last three variables are from the linked sample of women postmasters. Data are plotted in quantile-spaced bins, and each bin contains roughly 40 observations. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights. The availability of variables varies by different samples and censuses (see more details in [Table 2](#)).

Figure A6: Additional RD Results on 1940 Outcomes Between Postmasters Appointed Just Before and Just After the 1933 Presidential Transition - By Gender

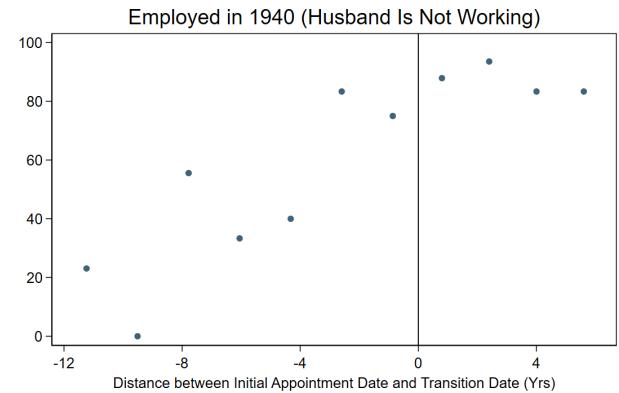


The figure shows RD Results between postmasters appointed just before and after the 1933 presidential transition for women (left column) and men (right column). The outcome variables are the number of hours worked per week, whether the postmaster was self-employed in 1940, and whether the postmaster was a family worker in 1940. The sample is linked data between postmaster appointments and the 1940 complete-count census. The running variable is the standardized distance between the initial appointment and the 1933 presidential transition dates. Data are plotted in quantile-spaced bins, and each bin contains roughly 40 observations. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights.

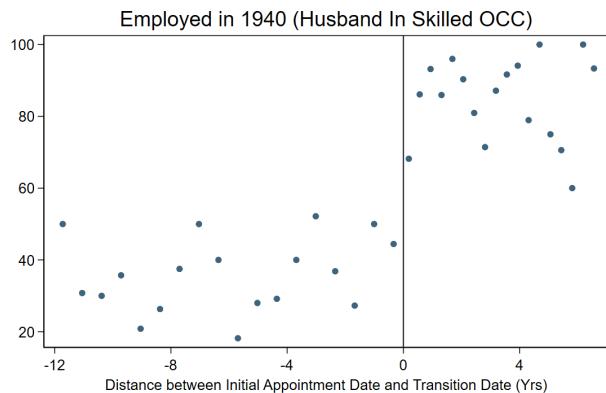
Figure A7: RD Figures for Married Women By Husband's Employment Status



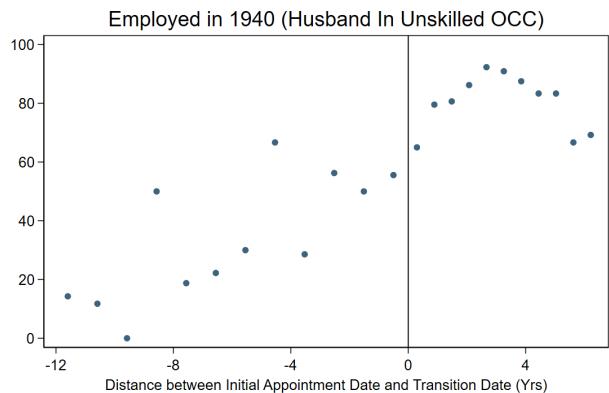
(a) Married Women, Husband Working



(b) Married Women, Husband Not Working



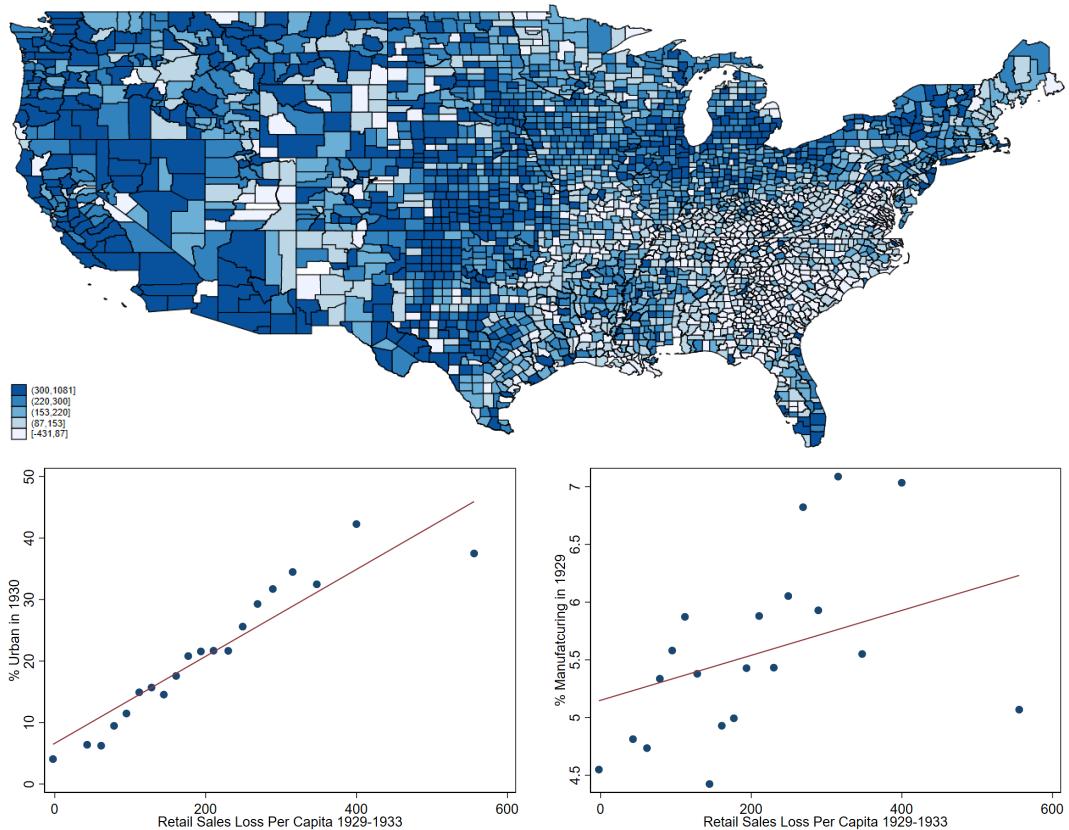
(c) Married Women, Husband Skilled Occ



(d) Married Women, Husband Unskilled Occ

The RD figure shows married women's employment outcomes across four categories: (1) husbands with a gainful occupation ("working"); (2) husbands without a gainful occupation ("not working"), including those unemployed or out of the labor force; (3) husbands in skilled occupations, conditional on being employed; and (4) husbands in unskilled occupations, also conditional on being employed. The running variable is the standardized distance between the initial appointment and the 1933 presidential transition dates. Data is reweighted by inverse probability weights (Bailey et al., 2020).

Figure A8: Severity of the Great Depression - Measured by Retail Sales Loss Per Capita between 1929 and 1933



The figure at the top shows variations in county-level retail sales loss per capita between 1929 and 1933. The median is \$185 (in 1967 \$). The two figures at the bottom show the correlation between (1) % urban population and retail sales loss per capita and (2) % manufacturing population and retail sales loss per capita.

Figure A9: Civil Service Exams Requirements for Postmasters

Subjects.	Weights.
1. Accounts and arithmetic (this test includes a simple statement of a postmaster's monthly money-order account in a prepared form, furnished the candidate in the examination, and a few problems comprising addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentage, and their business applications).....	3
2. Penmanship (a test of ability to write legibly, rated on the specimen shown in the subject of letter writing).....	1
3. Letter writing (this subject is intended to test the candidate's ability to express himself intelligently in a business letter on a practical subject).....	1
4. Business training, experience and fitness (under this subject, full and careful consideration is given to the candidate's business training and experience. The rating is based upon the candidate's sworn statements of his personal history, as verified after inquiry by the commission. It must be clearly shown that the candidate has demonstrated ability in meeting and dealing satisfactorily with the public).....	5
Total.....	10

2. The money-order transactions at Avon, Mass., post office for the month of May, 1914, were as follows:

Money-order fund on hand May 1, \$18. May 1, transferred from postal account to money-order account, \$27. May 2, paid money order, \$39.06. May 3, issued money order for \$49.50. May 5, issued money order, \$80.91. May 6, paid money order, \$7.29. May 7, issued money order, \$18.27. May 8, paid money order, \$27.81. May 9, issued money order, \$63. May 10, paid money order, \$19.80. May 12, paid money order, 81 cents. May 13, issued money order, \$4.77. May 14, paid money order, \$9.27. May 15, issued money order, \$29.07. May 16, paid money order, \$9.72. May 17, issued money order, \$9.72. May 19, issued money order, \$57.24. May 20, paid money order, 99 cents. May 21, issued money order, 72 cents. May 22, paid money order, \$45. May 23, issued money order, \$36. May 24, paid money order, \$2.97. May 26, paid money order, \$7.29. May 27, issued money order, \$72. May 28, paid money order, \$9.72. May 29, issued money order, \$4.59. May 30, postmaster deposited in the United States depository to the credit of the Post Office Department \$90, and received a certificate of deposit. May 31, issued money order, \$46.89. May 31, postmaster credited himself for errors as per auditor's circular, \$1.62.

Make an itemized statement of the postmaster's money-order account in the form provided, and balance and close the statement.

Schedule of fees over and above the amount of the order which the postmaster must collect from the public for the Government on issue of money orders.

For orders from \$0.01 to \$2.50.....	3 cents.	For orders from \$30.01 to \$40.00.....	15 cents.
For orders from \$2.51 to \$5.00.....	5 cents.	For orders from \$40.01 to \$50.00.....	18 cents.
For orders from \$5.01 to \$10.00.....	8 cents.	For orders from \$50.01 to \$60.00.....	20 cents.
For orders from \$10.01 to \$20.00.....	10 cents.	For orders from \$60.01 to \$75.00.....	25 cents.
For orders from \$20.01 to \$30.00.....	12 cents.	For orders from \$75.01 to \$100.00.....	30 cents.

The figure shows the requirement for postmasters in charge of Class 3 post offices and an example question that asks the candidates to calculate the fees associated with money orders received in a specific post office (United States Civil Service Commission, 1916).

Table A1: RD Estimates for Women - Mechanical and Substitution Effects

	(1) Employed	(2) Weeks Worked	(3) Hours Worked
RD - Mechanical	0.342*** (0.10)	19.304*** (4.18)	11.924* (5.57)
RD - Substitution	0.225* (0.10)	13.160** (4.55)	9.734 (5.25)
N	2443	2443	2443

The RD mechanical effect is estimated by setting all outcomes to 0 if the individual did not report postmaster as her occupation in 1940. The RD substitution effect is estimated by setting all outcomes to 0 if the individual did not report the postmaster occupation or other white-collar occupations as her occupation in 1940.

Table A2: Robustness Checks on RD Estimates (Women Only) - 1940 Outcomes of Postmasters Appointed Just Before and After the 1933 Presidential Transition

	(1) Postmaster Occ	(2) Employed	(3) Weeks Worked	(4) Hours Worked	(5) Self- Employed	(6) Family Worker
<i>A. Bias-Corrected Estimates</i>						
RD Estimate	0.312** (0.10)	0.225* (0.11)	17.142*** (3.94)	10.690* (4.93)	-0.032 (0.05)	-0.031 (0.02)
<i>B. Epanechnikov Kernel Density</i>						
RD Estimate	0.409*** (0.08)	0.231* (0.10)	16.272*** (4.14)	10.978* (4.86)	-0.041 (0.05)	-0.030 (0.02)
<i>C. Bandwidth = 1000 Days</i>						
RD Estimate	0.404*** (0.08)	0.249** (0.08)	16.090*** (4.32)	11.298* (4.64)	-0.022 (0.05)	-0.021 (0.02)
<i>D. County-level Controls</i>						
RD Estimate	0.326** (0.10)	0.244* (0.11)	16.706*** (4.03)	11.099* (4.95)	-0.033 (0.05)	-0.025 (0.02)
<i>E. Age Group Fixed Effects</i>						
RD Estimate	0.329** (0.10)	0.240* (0.11)	16.679*** (4.19)	11.052* (4.90)	-0.040 (0.05)	-0.025 (0.02)
<i>F. Placebo Test</i>						
RD Estimate	-0.113 (0.11)	-0.003 (0.15)	2.034 (7.60)	1.175 (6.94)	0.081 (0.07)	-0.035 (0.04)
N	2443	2443	2443	2443	2443	2443
<i>G. Donut RD dropping obs appointed after the 1932 election</i>						
RD Estimate	0.514*** (0.15)	0.207* (0.10)	14.743** (4.99)	11.065* (5.38)	-0.188 (0.10)	-0.036 (0.04)
N	2371	2371	2371	2371	2371	2371

The table reports robustness checks on RD estimates from [Table 3](#). Panel A to Panel G report RD results with (A) bias-corrected RD estimates; (B) an Epanechnikov kernel density function; (C) bandwidth = 1000 days; (D) county-level control variables; (E) age group fixed effects; (F) a placebo test where the placebo presidential transition date is March 4th, 1926; (G) a donut RD design where observations within the distance between the election date in 1932 and the transition date in 1933 are dropped. Standard errors are clustered by the running variable. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights. * for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$

Table A3: RD Estimates By Socioeconomic Backgrounds (Women Only) - 1940 Outcomes of Postmasters Appointed Just Before and After the 1933 Presidential Transition

	(1) Postmaster Occ	(2) Employed	(3) Weeks Worked	(4) Hours Worked	(5) Self- Employed	(6) Family Worker
<i>Panel A: Women from High Socioeconomic Backgrounds</i>						
RD Estimate	0.213 (0.23)	0.501** (0.19)	28.224** (9.30)	21.318** (8.13)	0.087* (0.04)	-0.084 (0.05)
N	951	951	951	951	951	951
<i>Panel B: Women from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds</i>						
RD Estimate	0.408** (0.14)	0.217 (0.15)	14.785 (7.67)	10.438 (9.24)	-0.118 (0.08)	0.019 (0.01)
N	1386	1386	1386	1386	1386	1386

The table reports RD Results between women postmasters appointed just before and after the 1933 presidential transition by their socioeconomic backgrounds. Women's socioeconomic backgrounds are imputed based on their first names following the procedures shown in Olivetti and Paserman, 2015. High socioeconomic backgrounds are defined as having fathers whose occupational ranks were above the 75th percentile in 1900. The outcome variables are whether one reported postmaster being their occupation in 1940, whether they were employed in 1940, the number of weeks worked per year in 1939, the number of hours worked per week, whether the postmaster was self-employed in 1940, and whether the postmaster was a family worker in 1940. Standard errors are clustered by the running variable. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights. * for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$

Table A4: Linking Rates for Postmasters By Different Criteria

	(1) % >= 1 Match	(2) % Uniq Match	(3) % Uniq Match (Men)	(4) % Uniq Match (Women)
State, First Name & Last Name (Exact)	68.5	22.0	21.3	24.9
State, County, First & Last Name (Exact)	48.1	33.9	32.6	39.1
State, First Name & Last Name (Fuzzy)	84.6	16.3	15.9	17.8
State, County, First & Last Name (Fuzzy)	60.9	39.0	37.1	46.8

The table shows the linking rates between the postmaster data and the 1940 census based on different criteria: (a) exact match on state, first and last names (b) exact match on state, county, first and last names (c) exact match on state, fuzzy match on first and last names (d) exact match on state and county, fuzzy match on first and last names. The first two columns show the share of postmasters (1) with at least one match, but the match might not be unique (2) with a unique match. And the last two columns show the share of male and female postmasters with a unique match.

Table A5: Linking Rates for Women Postmasters By Different Prefixes

	(1) % Unique Match "Miss"	(2) % Unique Match "Mrs"	(3) % Unique Match No Prefix
State, County, First Name & Last Name (Exact) No restrictions on marital status	42.3	45.0	32.2
State, County, First Name & Last Name (Exact) Restrictions on marital status	42.7	46.3	31.2
State, County, First Name & Last Name (Fuzzy) No restrictions on marital status	51.5	53.4	38.8
State, County, First Name & Last Name (Fuzzy) Restrictions on marital status	53.7	56.0	38.8

The table shows the linking rates between women postmasters and the 1940 census based on different criteria: (a) exact match on state, county, first and last names without restrictions on marital status (b) exact match on state, county, first and last names with restrictions on marital status (c) exact match on state and county, fuzzy match on first and last names, without restrictions on marital status (d) exact match on state and county, fuzzy match on first and last names, with restrictions on marital status. Restrictions on marital status mean I drop the observations where a postmaster with the prefix "Miss" is matched with a married woman in the census and where a postmaster with the prefix "Mrs" is matched with a single woman in the census. The columns show the share of postmasters with unique matches in the group where (1) the prefix is "Miss" (2) the prefix is "Mrs", and (3) there is no prefix.

Table A6: Linking Rates by Urban/Rural Status

	(1) % Uniq Match Urban Men	(2) % Uniq Match Urban Women	(3) % Uniq Match Rural Men	(4) % Uniq Match Rural Women
State, County, First & Last Name (Exact)	32.0	39.8	33.0	39.0
State, County, First & Last Name (Fuzzy)	35.0	46.8	38.4	46.8

The table shows the linking rates for postmasters by their urban and rural status. Urban and rural status of the postmaster is proxied by the classification of the post office, where Class 1 and 2 are considered urban post offices and Class 3 is considered rural post offices. The table also shows linking rates by different criteria: (a) exact match on state and county, exact match on first and last names; (b) exact match on state and county, fuzzy match on first and last names.

Table A7: Descriptive Statistics Between the Linked Sample and the Census Sample of Postmasters

	(1) Linked Exact Women	(2) Linked Exact Men	(3) Linked Fuzzy Women	(4) Linked Fuzzy Men	(5) Census Women	(6) Census Men
Education	12.1 (2.5)	11.2 (3.0)	12.0 (2.6)	11.3 (3.0)	12.1 (2.6)	11.3 (2.8)
Age	46.1 (10.8)	48.0 (12.0)	46.2 (11.0)	48.3 (12.0)	46.4 (10.7)	49.0 (11.1)
White	99.6 (6.3)	99.4 (7.6)	99.3 (8.6)	99.4 (7.5)	99.5 (6.7)	99.8 (4.2)
Nativeborn	98.6 (11.9)	97.7 (15.0)	98.1 (13.7)	97.6 (15.2)	97.9 (14.3)	97.1 (16.8)
Urban	12.7 (33.3)	25.9 (43.8)	13.2 (33.8)	25.4 (43.5)	15.8 (36.5)	32.5 (46.8)
Farm	10.9 (31.2)	10.3 (30.4)	11.5 (31.9)	10.5 (30.7)	9.8 (29.8)	7.7 (26.7)
Married	54.0 (49.9)	86.1 (34.6)	54.7 (49.8)	86.8 (33.9)	51.3 (50.0)	89.3 (30.9)
Gainfully Employed	87.5 (33.1)	96.9 (17.3)	86.4 (34.3)	96.6 (18.0)	100.0 (0.0)	100.0 (0.0)
Self-Employed	1.4 (11.9)	7.9 (26.9)	1.5 (12.0)	7.5 (26.3)	0.6 (7.7)	0.6 (7.8)
Wage	1515.8 (798.0)	1870.6 (1005.8)	1512.1 (818.6)	1882.4 (989.5)	1724.2 (607.0)	2152.1 (767.5)
N	1441	4386	1759	4912	4215	14365
<i>Restricting the Sample to Household Head/Spouse</i>						
Own Home	77.3 (41.9)	74.6 (43.5)	76.2 (42.6)	75.7 (42.9)	75.4 (43.1)	77.5 (41.8)
# Children	1.1 (1.3)	1.4 (1.5)	1.1 (1.3)	1.4 (1.5)	1.0 (1.3)	1.4 (1.5)
N	1149	3909	1391	4414	3306	13281

The table shows descriptive statistics between the linked sample of postmasters appointed after the 1933 presidential transition and the census sample of postmasters. The mean education/age/wage/number of children and the average share of white/native-born/urban/farm/married-employed/self-employed/homeowner population are reported. The linked sample of postmasters is reweighted by inverse probability weights (Bailey et al., 2020).

Table A8: Comparison Between Married and Unmarried Women Postmasters

	(1) Employed	(2) Weeks Worked	(3) Hours Worked	(4) Self- Employed	(5) Family Worker
<i>Panel A: Women Postmasters Appointed Before Presidential Transition</i>					
<i>Married</i> _i	-0.215 (0.12)	-6.548 (5.84)	-5.782 (6.39)	-0.020 (0.06)	0.045 (0.05)
N	1002	1002	1002	1002	1002
<i>Panel B: Women Postmasters Appointed After Presidential Transition</i>					
<i>Married</i> _i	-0.084 (0.05)	-3.841 (2.83)	-5.020 (3.76)	-0.032 (0.02)	0.006 (0.01)
N	1441	1441	1441	1441	1441

The table reports the coefficient of Married_i , which is a dummy variable that equals one if the woman postmaster was married in 1940. The outcome variables are whether one was employed in 1940, weeks and hours worked in 1940, and whether one was self-employed or a family worker in 1940. County fixed effects and initial appointment year fixed effects are included. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. Data are re-weighted by inverse probability weights (Bailey et al., 2020). * for $p < 0.05$, ** for $p < 0.01$, *** for $p < 0.001$