

1901

United States

As the 20th century began, the U.S. population was 76 million. Americans were young, white, and more male than female. Relatively few women were in the workforce, and unemployment was low.

The median age in the country was 22.9 years, 23.3 for men and 22.4 for women. The percentage of Americans who were white was 87.9, and the ratio of men to women was 104.4 men for every 100 women. The average size of U.S. families was 4.9 people. (See chart 1.)

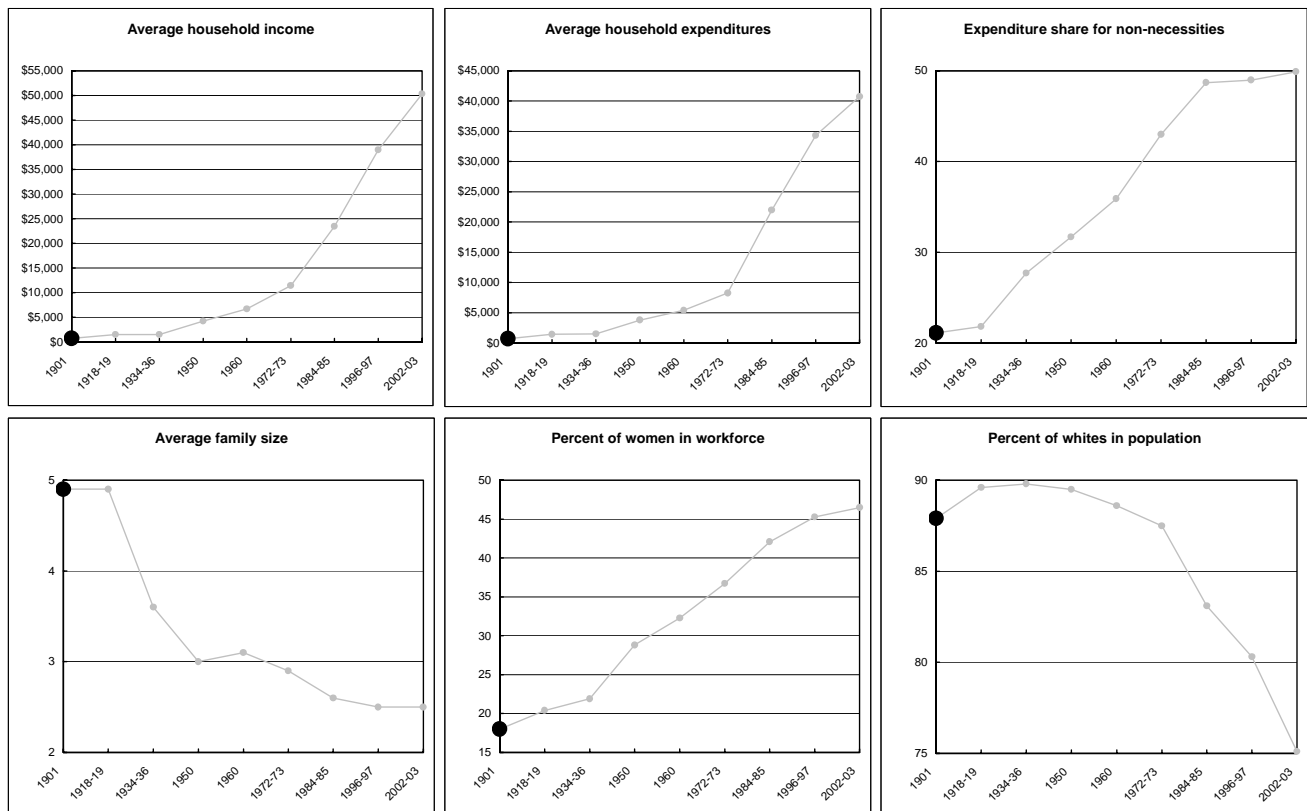
Labor force participation was 80.0 percent for men and 20.6 percent for women, while the workforce consisted of 82.0 percent men and 18.0 women. The country's unemployment rate in 1901 was 4.0 percent.

Yearly household income averaged \$750. Several earners contributed to this income: 95.9 percent of households had earnings from husbands, 8.5 percent had earnings from wives, 22.2 percent had earnings from children, 23.3 percent had earnings from boarders or lodgers, and 14.4 percent of households

had other sources of income. Hourly wages are shown in table 1.

Annual expenditures for the average U.S. family averaged \$769. Of this amount, 42.5 percent (\$327) was allocated for food, 14.0 percent (\$108) for clothing, and 23.3 percent (\$179) for housing. That left \$155 for all other items. On average, household spending exceeded income by 2.5 percent. There were 7.2 million owner-occupied housing units in the country, but only 19.0 percent of U.S. families owned a home, while 81.0 percent were renters.

Chart 1. Economic and demographic indicators, United States, 1901



SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey, and U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*

Table 1. Hourly wages for selected industries, United States, 1901

Year	Manu- facturing	Mining	Con- struction	Transpor- tation	Communi- cations and public utilities	Trade	Finance, insurance, and real estate	Services	Govern- ment
1901	\$ 0.23	\$ 0.26	\$ 0.28	\$ 0.24	\$ 0.24	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.17	\$ 0.28

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey

Table 2. Retail prices of selected foods in U.S. cities, 1901

Year	Flour 5 lb.	Round steak lb.	Pork chops lb.	Bacon lb.	Butter lb.	Eggs dozen	Milk 1/2 gallon
1901	\$ 0.13	\$ 0.14	\$ 0.13	\$ 0.16	\$ 0.27	\$ 0.22	\$ 0.14

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey

Of these homeowners, 8.3 percent had encumbrances or liens on their home, while 10.6 percent did not.

Grocery store prices in 1901 averaged about 14 cents per pound for round steak or pork chops, 27 cents for a pound of butter, and 13 cents for 5 pounds of flour. (See table 2.)

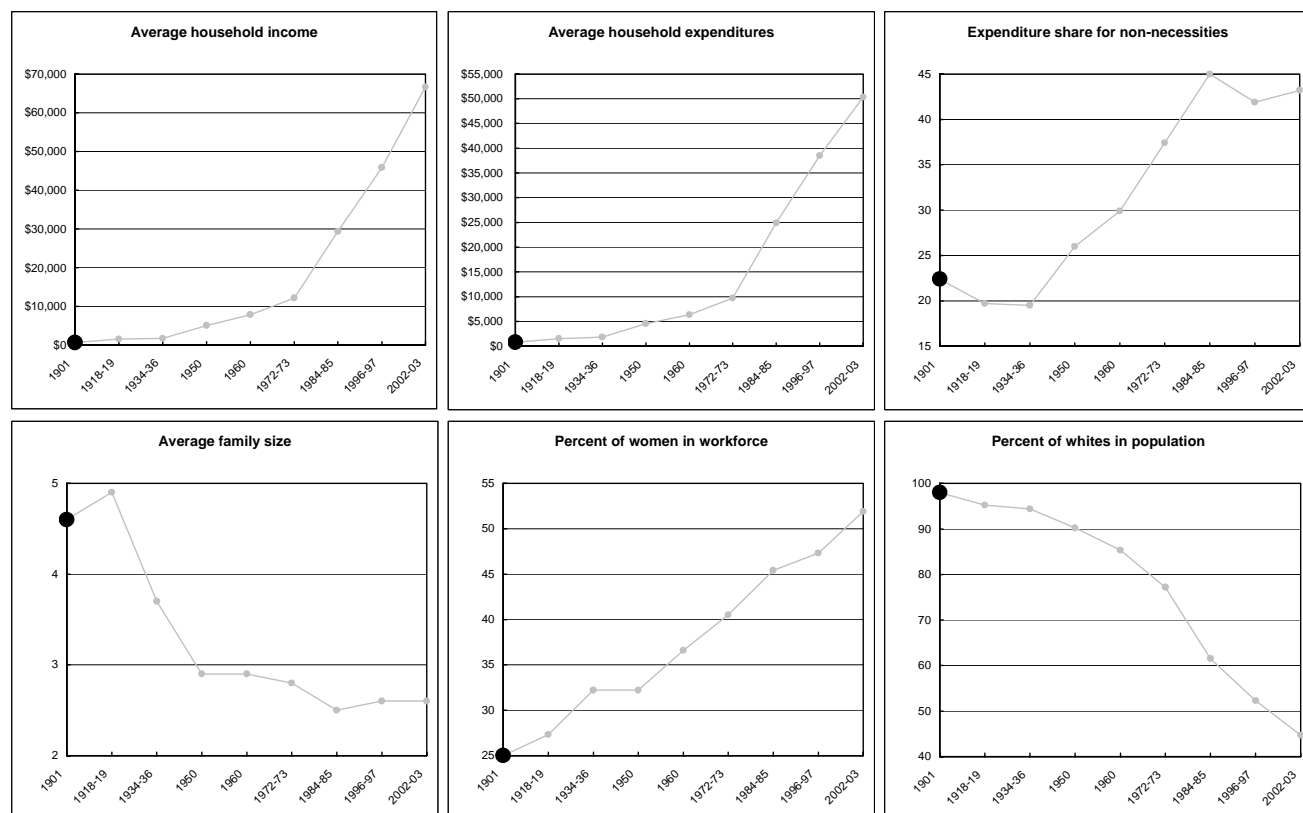
New York City

At the beginning of the 20th century, 7.3 million people or 9.6 percent of the U.S. population resided in New York State. Of these people, 3.4 million or 46.6 percent, lived in New York City.

In demographic terms, 49.6 percent

of the city's population was male; 98.0 percent was white; 30.6 percent was younger than 15; 2.9 percent was 65 or older; and 36.9 percent was foreign born, although 52.0 percent of family heads were foreign born. (See table 3.) There were over 735,000 households, among them 29,400 (4.0 percent) that

Chart 2. Economic and demographic indicators, New York City, 1901



SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey, and U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*

Table 3. Distribution by nativity of the heads of worker families surveyed in the New York area, 1901

Nativity	Percent
American born	48.0
Foreign born	52.0
Canada	18.0
England	8.0
Germany	33.8
Ireland	30.7
Italy	4.4
Russia	4.6
Scotland	2.7
Sweden	2.6

SOURCE: U.S. Commissioner of Labor, *Eighteenth Annual Report 1903*

consisted of 1 person and 133,000 (18.2 percent) that included 7 or more people. Average family size in the city was 4.6. (See chart 2.)

Of the 1.5 million people who worked in New York City, 75.0 percent were men, and 25.0 percent were women. The occupational distribution was as follows: 37.6 percent worked in manufacturing or mechanical pursuits, 32.0 per-

cent in trade or transportation, 24.0 percent in domestic services, 5.7 percent in the professions, and less than 1 percent in agriculture.

Household income in the State averaged \$675.⁵ Average household expenditures were \$814, with 43.7 percent (\$356) allocated for food, 13.0 percent (\$106) for clothing, and 23.5 percent (\$191) for housing. On average, spending for these necessities absorbed 80.2 percent of all household expenditures, and total household spending exceeded income by 20.6 percent.

Boston

In 1901, 3.7 percent of Americans (2.8 million people) lived in Massachusetts.

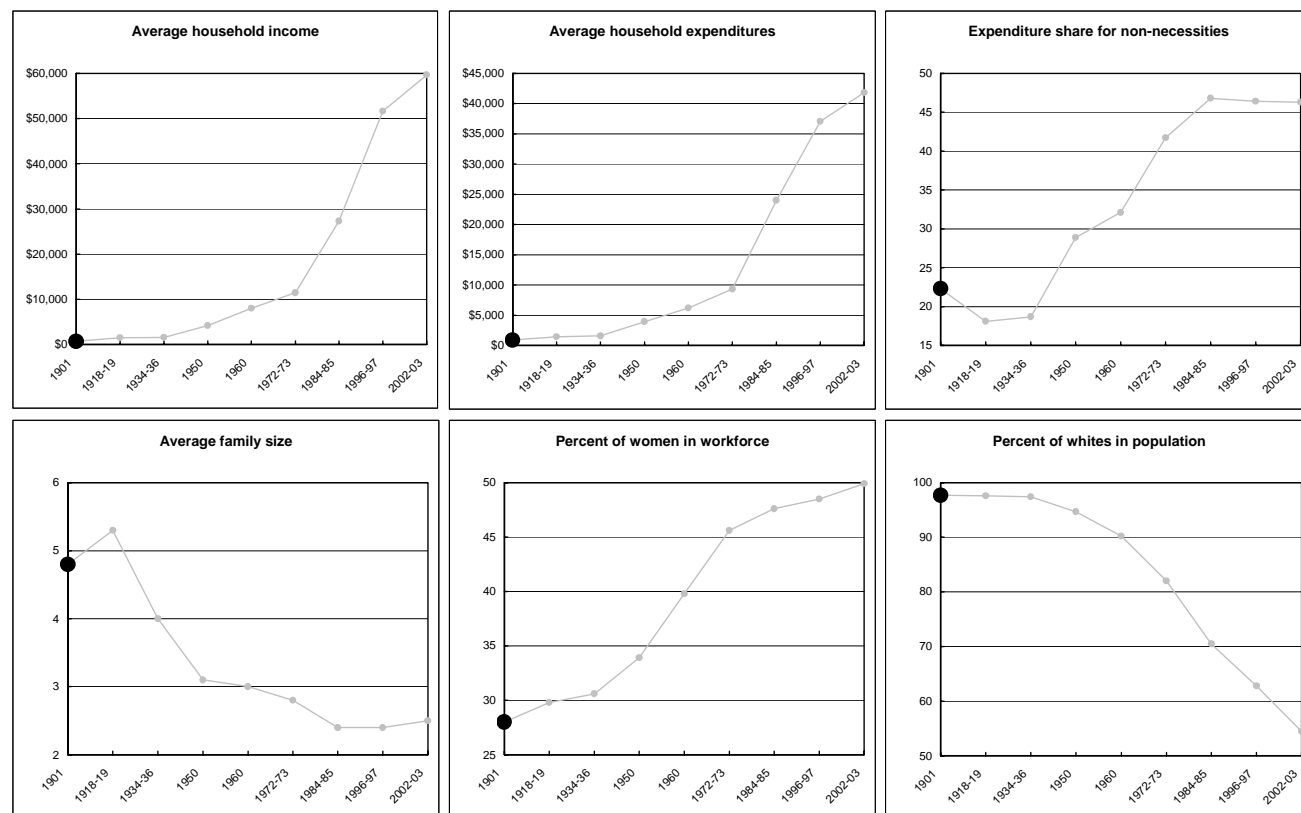
⁵ Household income and expenditure data for 1901 are available only for New York State, not for New York City.

Of those, 560,000 or 20.0 percent lived in Boston. More than half the residents of the Commonwealth were foreign born, with the countries of origin of many indicated in table 4.

Demographically, 49.0 percent of the city's population was male, 97.7 percent was white, 26.5 percent was younger than 15, 3.6 percent was 65 or older, and 35.1 percent was foreign born. There were over 117,000 individual households in the city, 5,000 (4.4 percent) made up of 1 person and 22,000 (19.5 percent) comprising 7 or more people. Average family size in Boston was 4.8. (See chart 3.)

Of the quarter-million workers in Boston, 72.0 percent were men, and 28.0 percent were women. Occupationally, 34.0 percent of workers were employed in trade and transportation, 32.6 percent in manufacturing or mechanical pursuits, 26.7 percent in domestic services, 6.2 percent in the professions,

Chart 3. Economic and demographic indicators, Boston, 1901



SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey, and U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*

Table 4. Distribution by nativity of the heads in worker families surveyed in Massachusetts, 1901

Nativity	Percent
American born	43.2
Foreign born	56.8
Canada	25.4
England	11.0
Germany	3.6
Ireland	46.7
Italy	0.4
Russia	2.3
Scotland	3.6
Sweden	4.9

SOURCE: U.S. Commissioner of Labor, *Eighteenth Annual Report 1903*

and less than 1 percent in agriculture.

Household income in Massachusetts averaged \$685.⁶ Average household expenditures were \$880, with 41.7 percent (\$367) allocated for food, 14.4

percent (\$127) for clothing, and 29.9 percent (\$263) for housing. (See chart 4 and table 5.) In the aggregate, spending for necessities made up 86.0 percent of all household expenditures, and total household spending exceeded income by 28.5 percent.

Perspective

As the country entered the 20th century, the average family included nearly five people and had an income of \$750. Only 8.5 percent of U.S. households reported earnings from wives, while 22 percent had earnings from children, 23

⁶ Household and income expenditure data for 1901 are available only for Massachusetts, not for Boston.

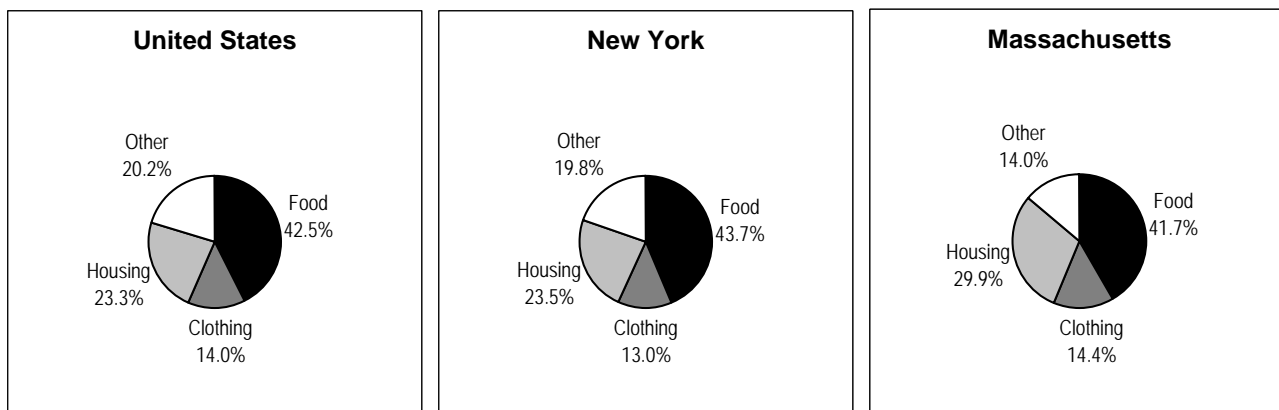
percent had earnings from boarders, and more than 14 percent had other sources of income.

The economy was expanding following a recession that had ended in 1900, and there was virtually full employment in the country. In both New York and Massachusetts, the impact of immigration was apparent, as more than half the residents were foreign born.

In both New York and Massachusetts, family expenditures exceeded household income, by 20.6 percent in New York and by 28.5 percent in Massachusetts. Additionally, household spending in both States exceeded the national average by 14 percent.

In terms of spending for necessities—food, housing, and clothing—Massachusetts households led, devot-

Chart 4. Expenditure shares, United States, New York, and Massachusetts, 1901



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey

Table 5. Expenditures and expenditure shares, United States, New York, and Massachusetts, 1901

Item	United States		New York		Massachusetts	
	Expenditures	Shares	Expenditures	Shares	Expenditures	Shares
Food	\$ 327	42.5	\$ 356	43.7	\$ 367	41.7
Alcoholic beverages	12	1.6	24	2.9	6	.7
Housing	179	23.3	191	23.5	263	29.9
Apparel and services	108	14.0	106	13.0	127	14.4
Healthcare and insurance	40	5.2	49	6.1	24	2.6
Entertainment	12	1.6	14	1.7	11	1.2
Reading and education	8	1.1	9	1.1	11	1.3
Tobacco	11	1.4	11	1.4	10	1.1
Miscellaneous	62	8.1	45	5.5	48	5.5
Religion and charity	10	1.3	9	1.1	13	1.5
Average income per family	750		675		685	
Expenditures, all items	769		814		880	

NOTE: Expenditure shares do not add to 100 due to rounding.
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey

ing 86 percent of their total expenditures to these items. Households all across the country and those in New York allotted less, about 80 percent of their total expenditures.

Boston's population was older, compared with New York City's, and this dynamic may have contributed to differences in spending. Consumers in New York State spent more than did

their counterparts in Massachusetts for entertainment, although the residents of the Commonwealth allocated more for healthcare and for reading and education. ■