Women in the 1950s

WWII employment for women

Women’s Auxiliary Corps laboratory technician conducts an experiment, Fort Jackson State Hospital, 1944

Aircraft engine technician and senior supervisor, Naval Air Base, 1942
Post-WWII employment

A secretary and her boss, an industrial designer, New York City, 1950

Social pressures

- Early marriage
- Childbearing
- Stay-at-home motherhood
- Nuclear family

Kennedy wedding, Jacqueline throwing the bouquet, 1953
The Baby Boom

Births

Year

Media portrayals of gender

A photo of the Cleaver family from *Leave it to Beaver*, a popular TV show in the 1950s-60s
Suburbia, home of the “happy housewife”

- G.I. Bill
- Mass-produced, affordable homes
- Great Migration and “white flight”

Levittown track homes of the 1950s

Household products marketed to women

A 1950s ad for an electric iron

A 1950s ad for a cleaning product
Central Historical Question

Is the image of the happy 1950s housewife accurate?