

Economy of the united states before during and after world war ii

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Well... we're going through the WWII section of our US History class right now... and, well... our text book says that the American economy was coming out of the Depression at that time. Switching factories' equipment to make wartime things, such as uniforms, tanks, ships, planes, and ammunition, helped to boost the economy. Women worked in manufacturing while the men were gone, and minorities gained many rights, or at least brought their issues to the surface. People at home were encouraged to recycle rubber, nylon, iron, bone, animal fats, and donate unused things to be re-used in the war effort. They were also encouraged to ration their food and gas, and often grew " Liberty Gardens." Unfortunately, World War II also made the American Government used to relying on 'deficit spending' (government spending of borrowed money), causing economic problems that still linger today. That's all I have. Hope it helps! Everything listed above is definitely true to a point, I'm a history major who has to answer this question for an exam later this week so I thought I'd help add some more information for the people who are looking... WWII was an expensive war, it would cost \$304 billion just to finance it. For this reason the government pushed war bonds which encouraged common people to help support the war both with their money and with their hearts. From the get go the war was marketed to the common people, proven by the use of popular movie stars in the promotion of War fund-raising and compliance with government measures. After pearl harbor, the American people were ready to pour everything they had into the war effort. Women donated thousands of tons of aluminum cooking supplies to help build planes-- though it was later found that only virgin aluminum was good enough for aircraft and so their pots and pans were melted down and

sold back to them as pots and pans. In the first months of the war Washington was a mess, and mobilization was slow. This is because our government is not made to act swiftly, it was designed to take time and thought before any decision can be made. Scrap drives were unorganized and so were the efforts of the common people. Those who could not physically join the armed forces wanted to know what they could do to help but the government expected little more from them than the purchasing of war bonds and for them to practice conservation of goods. Other items which were recycled included bone and fats which were used in making explosives and other materials. One of the greatest failures of American government was the policies which did not encourage the full use of all of the American people. While "Rosie the Riveter" posters might make it seem that women were begged to help in factories, the truth is that Americans tried to keep the women home for as long as possible before labor shortages around 1943 made it necessary for factories to stop policies of discrimination. Coming out of the Depression, America had 9 million men that needed jobs. Each and every one was employed before women and minorities were given a chance to go to work. Even more difficult than the position of minorities was that of married women, especially those with the men of their families fighting overseas. America had been progressing socially as a nation under FDR, but his social reforms had taken a back seat to the war effort. Day care was almost non-existent, and where it was it was impossible to afford. Many stores also chose to keep the same hours they had during peace time and so women who worked late had a hard time getting the items they needed. Married women who had husbands in the workforce were also discriminated

against because a common attitude was that the man should be the sole bread-winner of a household and children would " be denied proper care" if their mother's worked. Many goods that people took for granted disappeared, and with more money than they had seen in years the American public had little to spend it on. Gasoline was rationed and in many cities " Sunday driving" was banned, those who violated the laws had their gas coupon books taken away. The decrease in driving worked both to save gasoline and to put many new business, which depended on " drive-in" customers, to fail. Most people were given a card that allowed them 2 gallons of gas per week, with unrestricted gas reserved for emergency vehicles, police officers, and a few unscrupulous congressmen. Meat was also rationed at 2lbs per person per week which was very difficult for some people to live with. Conservation and the war effort also found its way into popular fashion. During the war shoes could only be found in limited colors (i. e. 4 shades of brown, and black) and clothes were not allowed to be made with any more material than was absolutely necessary, pleats, ruffles and other embellishments were thrown out for the duration. (This is one of the reasons why short skirts and bare-backed dresses were all the rage). A black market of rationed goods and consumer goods (such as sheets) was strongly revived during this period, but was not so pervasive as to undermine the system. With money burning holes in their pockets, Americans turned to the entertainment industry, which with its glamorous actors and fantastical stories, helped to distract the public from their problems. Also, the government had its own idea about what Americans should do with their extra money, during the war the income tax was introduced to supplement GI spending and has been with

us ever since. One thing I would like to correct from what is stated above is the idea that minorities gained rights as a result of the economic boom and the war effort. What happened is that minorities began to actively fight for their rights after WWII. Women did not want to be thrown out of their positions after the men came home from the war, they liked the freedom of having their own income and enjoyed doing something other than cooking and cleaning. African-Americans also were feircly discriminated durring this time. It would not be until after the death of FDR that the new president Harry Truman would finally desegrigate the military. This nations' minorities were fighting overseas for freedom and equality when in fact they were not given these freedoms at home. After the war, blacks who had served in the military moved out of the south and sought a better life in the north where they could escape the racial caste system which existed there. Jews were also discriminated here as well as in many other countries. We were eager to condemn Hitler for murder and open persecution, but we did not want to take the Jews off of his hands alive. If you need more info, consult this book: O'Neil, W. L. (2002). A Democracy at War: America's Fight At Home and Abroad In World War II. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Most of my ideas come from that text, nothing is quoted directly. Hopefully this helps too!