

**Gender segregation in the labour market:
roots, implications and policy responses in France**

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Introduction

Occupational segregation is a long-standing and recurrent issue in France – both in terms of the concentration of women in few sectors (horizontal/sectoral segregation) and their concentration in few occupations with little access to decision-making positions (occupational/vertical segregation). The Women's Rights Service and Ministry of Equality or Parity have long been those most involved in addressing the issue of the gender balance of jobs. The main, recurrent approach has focussed on gender balance of training and the choices of courses and careers made by girls and young women being both the explanation and main lever of action against occupational segregation: girls continue to choose literary - not scientific – studies, and then go on to very limited occupations, mainly in services, not industry. **Thus it is often repeated that 60% of women's employment is concentrated in 6 occupations.** This long-standing issue is ongoing with permanent programmes and campaigns regarding gender balance in training, but without big results.

Sometimes, the issue leaves the purely academic area, when certain sectors come up against difficulties in recruiting staff. This is **the case of the building industry**, which has run a major campaign with a view to attracting women, but with mixed results.

The pay gap is also talked about a lot in France (without however leading to a real reduction) - a pay conference in November 2007 put the issue on the table again with threats to companies that do not negotiate equal pay. But this topic is presented above all in terms of structural phenomena explaining such inequality and, firstly, both vertical and horizontal segregation.

It can thus be considered that this issue is present in France, and is already long-standing, as if all possible solutions have been exhausted. Moreover, France's intermediate situation, compared with our neighbours, is explained by the fact that certain occupations are now open to women, in particular medicine and law. So, there is a tendency to consider that the matter is closed...

1. Trends in occupational and sectoral segregation

Table 1 IP INDEX

| Country | Occupational | | | | |
|---------|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 1992 | 1997 | 2001 | 2005 | 2007 |
| FR | 0,2695 | 0,2740 | 0,2657 | 0,2613 | 0,2669 |

Source : LFS

| Country | Sectoral | | | | |
|---------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 1992 | 1997 | 2001 | 2005 | 2007 |
| FR | 0,1824 | 0,1732 | 0,1742 | 0,1717 | 0,1834 |

Source : LFS

According to European data, France is in an intermediate situation, with little change: over a period of almost 10 years, the index of occupational segregation is still 0,26 with a slight drop since the end of the 1990s. The index of sectoral segregation is significantly lower, but is tending to increase slightly.

Table 2: Comparison of the 3 different indexes

| Country | Year | ID-index | IP-index | WE-index |
|---------|------|----------|----------|----------|
| FR | 1997 | 0,5544 | 0,2740 | 0,6138 |
| FR | 2001 | 0,5367 | 0,2657 | 0,5908 |
| FR | 2007 | 0,5359 | 0,2669 | 0,5695 |

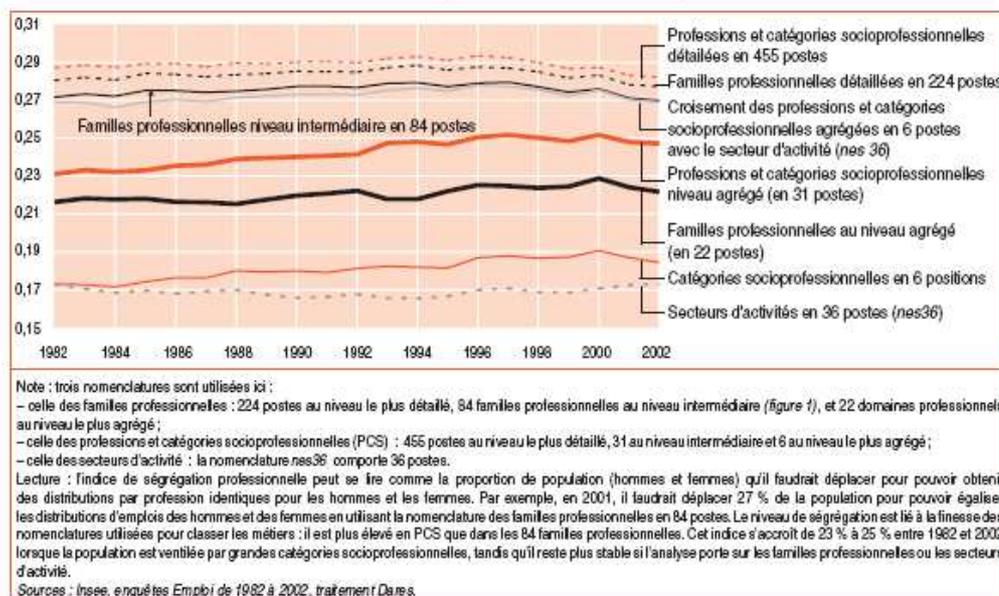
Source : LFS

Generally in European and French documents, the IP-index is used. It takes into account the unequal distribution of women by occupation and sector, as well as the distribution of jobs between men and women. Both of the other indexes are significantly higher. The ID-index does not take into account the structure of employment and assumes that 54% of women should change jobs in order for there to be a perfectly equal distribution of occupations between men and women. The WE-index only compares the share of women by occupation, in line with their share in employment. The latter was even higher (57%) in 2007. But, overall, both of these indicators are tending to decrease – even more rapidly than the IP-index.

Available French data:

On the basis of data provided by Meron et alii (2006), there is little difference between the French occupational and sectoral segregation indexes and the European data. The occupational segregation index by occupational families is about 27% (26.5% according to Eurostat); the sectoral segregation index is 17% (French source) and 17.6% (Eurostat). If we use more detailed data, the index increases: it is nearly 29% when using the nomenclature with 455 positions.

Figure 3 - Évolution de 1982 à 2002 des indices de ségrégation professionnelle entre hommes et femmes selon les nomenclatures utilisées (indices de Maclachlan)



Data concerning diplomas

Women continue to do better educationally - in 2006, amongst young people between 25 and 34 years old, more than 68% of young women had the baccalaureate or a higher-level diploma (less than 60% of young men did so). This gap exists for all age groups; except for those over 55, where the trend is marginally the opposite. The gap is 6 points for higher education diplomas for those under 34.

Table 3: Highest level diploma obtained by age and gender, 2006 (%)

| | 25-34 years | | 35-44 years | | 45-54 years | | 55-64 years | |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men |
| No diploma or CEP (primary education certificate) | 11,0 | 12,4 | 19,0 | 19,8 | 29,7 | 27,1 | 42,7 | 36,1 |
| Only BEPC (junior secondary education certificate) | 5,0 | 6,3 | 8,7 | 6,6 | 11,4 | 8,1 | 9,5 | 7,2 |
| CAP and BEP (vocational training certificates) or equivalent | 15,8 | 21,4 | 26,5 | 35,0 | 23,2 | 34,2 | 21,0 | 28,3 |
| Baccalaureate or vocational brevet | 21,6 | 22,8 | 17,1 | 12,4 | 15,2 | 11,8 | 11,6 | 11,4 |
| Baccalaureate + 2 years | 21,5 | 17,2 | 14,5 | 11,9 | 10,9 | 7,5 | 7,9 | 5,9 |
| Higher education diploma | 25,0 | 19,9 | 14,3 | 14,3 | 9,6 | 11,2 | 7,3 | 11,1 |
| Total | 100,0 |
| % of those with baccalaureate or higher-level diploma | 68,2 | 59,9 | 45,8 | 38,6 | 35,6 | 30,5 | 26,8 | 28,4 |

Note: Results are annual averages.

Field: Metropolitan France, individuals from 25 to 64 years old.

Source: Insee, enquêtes Emploi du 1er au 4ème trimestre 2006.

But, **the specialisation of diplomas** persists within universities by discipline: young women remain mainly in languages (75%) and literature (73%) and history, philosophy and sociology (68%), but only constitute 27% of those studying fundamental science and 38.7% of those in University Institutes of Technology (Instituts universitaires de technologie, IUTs - baccalaureate + 2 years' higher education).

Table 4: Distribution of students at university by gender, course and discipline, 2006-2007

| Disciplines | Feminisation rate |
|---|-------------------|
| Law and political science | 64,8 |
| Economics and management | 51,2 |
| Social and economic administration | 59,3 |
| Literature, and linguistics | 73 |
| Languages | 75,2 |
| History, philosophy, sociology | 67,8 |
| Multidisciplinary: literature, languages, history, philosophy | 72,2 |
| Fundamental and applied sciences | 27,3 |
| Life and earth sciences | 58 |
| STAPS (sport) | 31,7 |
| Multidisciplinary: sciences | 41 |
| Medicine-odontology | 59,9 |
| Pharmacy | 66,8 |
| IUT (University Institute of Technology) | 38,7 |
| Total | 56,7 |

Source: Ministère Education nationale

The *Grandes Ecoles* are beginning to become feminised, but this is mainly the case of business schools; there are still few women in engineering schools or ENA (Ecole nationale de

l'administration - high-level administration, whose profile is initially human sciences) – less than a third of the students are women.

Table 5: Proportion of women in the *Grandes Ecoles*, 2006-2007 (Metropolitan France + DOM)

| Type of school | Feminisation rate |
|--|-------------------|
| Engineering schools | 26.8% |
| Business schools | 48.1% |
| ENA (Ecole Nationale de l'Administration) 2006-2008 | 28.9% |

Source: Ministère Education nationale

Data on sectors

Recent developments regarding occupations are similar to those in most European countries, namely a rapid increase in services and a decline of many industrial sectors and agriculture; a major increase in the number of executive and technician jobs, along with a drop in unskilled manual jobs. **All of this has, above all, concerned women's employment.**

In 2006, **83.6% of French women worked in the service sector, compared with 62.4% of men, and conversely: only 11.2% of women's employment was in industry compared with 32.5% of men's. It should, however, be noted that these figures are slightly lower than the European ones:** 84% of women and 58% of men are in services; 14% and 38% in industry (CAS, 2007). The following table shows that it is the “Education, health and social services” sector, which employs most women (a third of them), then commerce, services to businesses and individuals, and finally administrations.

Table 6: The economically active in employment by sector, 2006 (thousands)

| | Women | Men | Total | Women as a percentage (%) | % of occupied women |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing | 259 | 670 | 929 | 27,9 | 2,2 |
| Agricultural industry | 231 | 380 | 611 | 37,8 | 2,0 |
| Manufacturing - consumer goods | 310 | 358 | 668 | 46,4 | 2,7 |
| Car industry | 53 | 250 | 303 | 17,5 | 0,5 |
| Manufacturing - capital goods | 163 | 676 | 839 | 19,4 | 1,4 |
| Manufacturing - intermediate goods | 328 | 1 019 | 1 347 | 24,4 | 2,8 |
| Energy | 54 | 217 | 271 | 19,9 | 0,5 |
| Construction | 157 | 1 475 | 1 632 | 9,6 | 1,3 |
| Commerce and repairs | 1 523 | 1 797 | 3 320 | 45,9 | 13,0 |
| Transport | 243 | 802 | 1 045 | 23,3 | 2,1 |
| Finance | 464 | 330 | 794 | 58,4 | 4,0 |
| Real estate | 192 | 165 | 357 | 53,8 | 1,6 |
| Services to businesses | 1 338 | 1 943 | 3 281 | 40,8 | 11,4 |
| Services to individuals | 1 343 | 850 | 2 193 | 61,2 | 11,5 |
| Education, health, social services | 3 637 | 1 191 | 4 828 | 75,3 | 31,1 |
| Administrations | 1 396 | 1 329 | 2 725 | 51,2 | 11,9 |
| Total | 11 707 | 13 467 | 25 174 | 46,5 | 100,0 |

Source: Insee, enquêtes emploi du 1er au 4ème trimestre 2006.

Note: Results are annual averages

Field: Metropolitan France, the occupied economically active, 15 years and above.

Data on occupations

Table 7: The occupied economically active, by gender and socio-occupational category, 2006

| | Share of women (%) | % of occupied women |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Farmers | 29 | 1,6 |
| Artisans | 23,7 | 1,5 |
| Shopkeepers and those in the same category | 37,1 | 2,3 |
| Heads of companies with 10 or more employees | 17,1 | 0,2 |
| Executives and higher-level intellectual occupations | 37,3 | 12,4 |
| <i>incl.: Freelance professionals</i> | 38,4 | 1,2 |
| <i>Civil service executives</i> | 42,3 | 1,3 |
| <i>Lecturers and scientific occupations</i> | 54,6 | 3,5 |
| <i>Occupations related to information, the arts and show business</i> | 42,8 | 0,8 |
| <i>Administrative and commercial executives in companies</i> | 41,3 | 3,9 |
| <i>Engineers and technicians in companies</i> | 17,8 | 1,6 |
| Intermediate occupations | 49,4 | 25,0 |
| <i>incl.: school teachers and those in the same category</i> | 67,7 | 5,0 |
| <i>in health and social work</i> | 79 | 7,8 |
| <i>Clergy, monks and nuns</i> | 14,3 | 0,0 |
| <i>in the civil service</i> | 57,8 | 2,3 |
| <i>in administrative and commercial positions in companies</i> | 53,2 | 8,1 |
| <i>Technicians</i> | 13,7 | 1,3 |
| <i>Foremen/women</i> | 11,0 | 0,5 |
| Office workers (or similar level) | 76,8 | 48,4 |
| <i>incl.: civil service</i> | 78,8 | 14,6 |
| <i>Police and military staff</i> | 11,1 | 0,5 |
| <i>Administrative staff in companies</i> | 83,9 | 12,7 |
| <i>Office workers in commerce</i> | 76,1 | 7,3 |
| <i>Direct services to individuals</i> | 86,5 | 13,3 |
| Manual workers | 17,6 | 8,7 |
| <i>incl.: Skilled industrial workers</i> | 15n,2 | 1,7 |
| <i>Skilled craft workers</i> | 8,5 | 1 |
| <i>Drivers</i> | 7,6 | 0,4 |
| <i>Skilled handling, warehouse and transport workers</i> | 11,0 | 0,4 |
| <i>Unskilled industrial workers</i> | 34,2 | 3,2 |
| <i>Unskilled craft workers</i> | 25,6 | 1,4 |
| <i>Agricultural workers</i> | 28,7 | 0,5 |
| Total | 46,5 | 100,0 |

Source: Enquête emploi

Field: Metropolitan France; the occupied economically active; 15 years and above.

On examining the major occupational categories, it can be seen that every other woman is an office worker or equivalent (in the civil service, companies, commerce and providing services to individuals). A quarter are in “intermediate occupations” (in health and companies).

In France, a new nomenclature of occupations was adopted in 1993. It lists “occupational families”, bringing together occupations that require similar kinds of skills, based on occupational “gestures” (see Meron et alii, 2006). 84 have been identified. Those “families” where there are the most

women include cleaning, teachers, childminders and secretaries. Some occupational families are almost entirely composed of women, such as childminders, secretaries, nursing assistants (between 90% and 99% are women). Table 7 is based on provisional data for 2007 and shows that the 10 occupational families with the most women have tended to become more feminised since 1982, except for cleaners, where there is a slight drop in the proportion of women (which is nevertheless 73%)¹. As for men, the main families are building workers, drivers, farmers, teachers and those in computers.

Overall, there are more office workers than manual workers and the occupations which are most feminised, have contributed most to the increase in employment – however, they are occupations which are not highly skilled. The decline of manual workers has also affected women, especially the less skilled: 40% of men are manual workers, but only a fifth are unskilled, whereas 10% of women are employed as manual workers, but half of them are unskilled.

There are certainly significantly more women executives now - in 1982, a quarter of executives were women; 20 years later, a third were women. They are to be found amongst research workers (their share has doubled in 20 years); amongst training staff and the legal profession (they now constitute the majority of barristers), but few are solicitors. Women executives are, however, more frequently employed as experts than to be found in management positions (and more often in administrative positions than technical ones; there are few in computer sciences and research in companies).

Table 8: The 10 occupational families with most women in 2007 (provisional data) and developments since 1982

| | Feminisation rate 2007 (provisional data*) | Feminisation rate 2002 | Feminisation rate 1982 |
|--|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| Cleaners | 73,4 | 74,2 | 77,3 |
| School teachers | 64,7 | 63,9 | 61,5 |
| Childminders and home helps | 99 | 99 | 99 |
| Secretaries | 97,5 | 97 | 95,1 |
| Civil service administrative workers (grade C) | 75 | 72,2 | 69,4 |
| Sales staff | 76,4 | 68,8 | 71,2 |
| Administrative workers in companies | 77,6 | 76,1 | 74,4 |
| Nurses and midwives | 88 | 86,8 | 88,2 |
| Nursing assistants | 91,9 | 91,2 | 90,2 |
| Social service, cultural and sports professionals | 68 | 65 | 59,3 |

Source: enquête emploi, traitement DARES (Meron, 2005 and brought up to date by the author)

2. Analysis of the factors contributing to segregation and of its implications

2.a Overview of research

It is difficult to find a single explanation for persisting occupational and sectoral segregation. Indeed, there are many complex causes. In our view, reference must be made to educational and career choices of girls and young women themselves, but not only that. Studies point to the continued major role played by companies in maintaining occupational segregation. We have therefore added this item to the proposals made by the coordination.

¹ N.B. the 2007 data are based on an annual average, whereas previously it was an annual survey carried out in March. Comparisons are thus fragile

A. The role of education

In view of the data presented in part one on the courses girls do, it is clear that part of the explanation for occupational and sectoral segregation is to be found in “educational segregation”. The courses chosen by girls lead them to still go more into the service sectors and the occupations referred to above. Thus the paradox persists: they do better at school, but choose the least profitable occupations. Several studies have shown that these discrepancies can indeed be explained by their own choices – processes of self-selection; of “gender habits” (Bourdieu, Passeron, 1970); of anticipating “benefits, costs and risks” (Boudon, 1973); of “a choice of compromise” (Duru-Bellat, 1975). Girls’ “reasonable anticipation” and “cautious strategies” are also linked to “lack of attractive models - why would girls study hard doing science when there are very few women in related occupations?” (Duru-Bellat, 1993). Finally, it is possible to pinpoint the under-estimation girls have of their own performance and skills.² It is certain that these factors play a role, but in what way? One can wonder whether the reason why girls choose courses where they predominate is because of the occupational segregation they are sure to find when finishing their training... It is clear that the relationship between educational and career choices, on the one hand, and segregation, on the other, is complex.

Moreover, the involvement of parents can also play a role in the differing choices made by girls and boys (Gouyon, Guerin, 2006) - parents still tend to prefer scientific or technical courses for their sons, even if they increasingly encourage their daughters to continue their studies. The number of siblings also plays a role – the more there are, the less parents encourage their daughters to continue studying, but this is not the case regarding their sons. However, the higher the level of the parents’ education, the more homogeneous is their approach to their daughters’ and sons’ educational choices.

Qualitative studies of women engineers show that often women had been “pushed” towards scientific studies, especially if their parents are executives and their mother often a teacher. The absence of sons also (partly) explains this choice, as well as the success of older brothers, who are an example for their younger sisters (Ferrand, Imbert, Marry, 1999).

Studies made by economists show statistically that educational choices do not explain all the segregation. The work of Couppié et Epiphane (2006) shows how, when entering economically active life, segregation observed at school is transformed – or not – into segregation in the labour market. It involves using a method that analyses occupational segregation as being the result of a two-stage process, by isolating two components for each occupation, namely **one of educational origin, “inherited” from school, and the other post-education, i.e. “constructed” in the labour market**. Calculations based on various statistical sources point to still relatively significant segregation in France, with a rate between 25% and 28%, depending on the type of labour force studied. This means that overall a quarter of the economically active population needs to be redeployed, in order to achieve a balanced distribution of men and women in the various occupations. These authors estimate that **three fifths of this occupational segregation can be attributed to educational factors, the other two fifths being related to additional segregation that develops in the labour market**. Some examples are given: the strong predominance of men, which can be explained in some occupations by previous educational segregation, as is the case of many jobs in manufacturing (for example, 5% of skilled manual workers in the metal industry and mechanics are women and 10.9% of engineers are women); while in other occupations, it can be explained by **mechanisms of segregation occurring essentially in the labour market, as is the case for occupations associated with a male image and having little to do with initial educational choices**, as in jobs dealing with security (9.5% of those in the army and police are

² For a summary of all these approaches, see Bosse N, Guégnard C. (2007), « Les représentations des métiers par les jeunes : entre résistances et avancées », *Travail, genre et sociétés*, n°18, novembre.

women). However, the study also pinpointed women's over-representation that can be mainly related to their choice of courses in regulated service jobs in the medical and paramedical sectors (83% of nurses are women, for example), as well as in banks and insurance. Conversely, such over-representation can also be essentially the result of behaviour in the labour market, as observed amongst civil service office workers and those providing personal services to individuals (96% of home-helps are women).

When trying to use these observations to make recommendations that are useful for economic policies, these authors observed that **occupational segregation was far from being only mechanically derived from segregation operating in education. They therefore considered that the diversification of women's choices could not alone resolve the problem of occupational gender segregation.** It is thus necessary to question employers' recruitment policies and, more generally, the processes of distribution of individuals in the different occupations.

B. The role of recruiters

These authors have also analysed the degree of openness to men and women of classified job adverts. In spite of the ban on gender-based discrimination when recruiting staff – as stipulated in both the labour and penal codes – analysis of job adverts revealed that certain advertisers were clearly specifically addressing either men or women, by words such as “looking for a saleswoman”, for example. A study of vocabulary used in adverts in the national and regional press leads one to conclude that only 27% of job adverts were addressed clearly to both men and women, with executive positions appearing more open to both men and women, whilst 30% of adverts were explicitly addressed to only one or the other. The results of another survey of 4,000 recruiters concerning their possible preferences regarding the gender of candidates show that more than a quarter of recruiters replied openly that they were not indifferent to the gender of the candidates for available positions (in spite of inherent underestimation of such surveys). The survey shows that this preference was most often made by recruiters who had chosen a man and those who were in small companies. The proportion of recruiters, who were not indifferent to the gender of the candidates, was minimal regarding the recruitment of non-management executives (2% only), a little bigger regarding the recruitment of managers (12%) and biggest regarding production workers (48%).

The reasons given for preferring a particular gender when recruiting staff were the clients' or users' inclinations, when it concerned preferring a woman. Integration in existing teams was the reason given for choosing one gender or the other for executive positions, whereas the nature of the job was generally the reason given for such a choice regarding non-executive staff.

Recruiters, who want to render their company more humane, give priority to the “specific features of women”, given their interpersonal qualities. Recruiters, who have recruited a woman, often refer to their “personal qualities”, which are more subjective criteria than “know-how”, which is favoured by recruiters who have chosen a man.

This study concluded that the attribution of certain qualities, which are considered necessary for certain positions, was thus not “randomly distributed by gender”, thereby pointing to the permanent nature of gender stereotypes. It is, therefore, necessary to continue awareness-raising efforts amongst recruiters and company heads regarding the notion of equality and against prejudices, which still far too often associate “personal qualities” and “occupational skills”.

C. Individual choices regarding occupations and the role of gender stereotypes.

Clearly, educational and occupational choices play a role in developing individuals' career strategies, even if this factor is partly determined by the social and economic environment. Studies

of women, who have been to *Grandes Ecoles*, have shown, for example, that after great educational investment by these young women and their families, family and personal plans and the projection of their career influenced their career choices and some of them (not the majority) gave up prestigious occupations, in order to “espouse” a career that is more compatible with family life (teaching, in particular). However, few of them (and fewer than amongst those with few qualifications) gave up working, in order to devote themselves to their families.

Studies on gendered images that *lycée* students have of occupations show the extent to which stereotypes persist. A recent survey (Bosse, Guégnard, 2007) shows the permanent and also developing nature of these images: for 58% of the young people (more than 1,000), who were questioned, “there are no occupations reserved for women”. But when examining the answers in more detail, girls are more convinced of this than boys. Moreover, only 53% of the girls and 45% of the boys contest the idea that some occupations are reserved for men. In other words, girls reproduce gender stereotypes less than boys. Moreover, all seem to think that it is easier for women to access so-called men's jobs (for example, company head), rather than vice versa (i.e. men accessing occupations where women predominate). In general, the usual foundations of such stereotypes are to be found above all amongst boys: so-called women's jobs require natural, interpersonal skills, whereas “men's” occupations require physical strength and technical skills - as if jobs in health and education do not use technical skills, but only “natural and innate ones”!

D. The role of working conditions and schedules in sectors where women predominate

There is a link between the concentration of jobs occupied by women and the type of contracts and schedules proposed in sectors and occupations, where part-time work, staggered and atypical hours, as well as fixed-term contracts, are over-represented. It is, however, difficult to make a causal link. It can be surmised that there were no union structures in such feminised jobs at the beginning – and also that few were covered by collective agreements, thus making it possible to introduce atypical schedules – this is the case of home-helps, cleaning and shop work, where imposed flexibility predominates with staggered working hours (early in the morning and late at night, on weekends, with breaks that last longer than two hours, and so forth). Management methods and even clients' needs (cleaning and families) have priority over the interests of the employees concerned. The widespread use of part-time work in these sectors could not occur in sectors where men predominate, in particular in industry. Part-time work has become widespread in these sectors, in the name of so-called “reconciling” women's different kinds of time – but, in fact, it is often a matter of atypical and staggered schedules that are incompatible with family life... Thus, in industry, part-time work represents only 6% of all jobs, whereas almost 22% of service sector jobs are part-time. However, part-time work is most widespread in those sectors with the most women, namely personal services to individuals, services for businesses (cleaning), education, health and administration.

Table 9: Share of part-time work, by sector

| Sectors | Proportion of employees in part-time work | Proportion of women in part-time work |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Agriculture | 14,1 | 31,3 |
| Industry | 6,3 | 17,5 |
| Construction | 5,5 | 37 |
| Services, including: | 21,7 | 33 |
| Commerce | 18,6 | 32 |
| Transport | 7,8 | 22,2 |
| Finance | 13,4 | 21,5 |
| Real estate | 19,7 | 27,9 |
| Services to businesses | 14,7 | 27,1 |
| Services to individuals | 41,9 | 54,2 |
| Education, health, social services | 26,2 | 30,9 |
| Administration | 19,6 | 32,8 |
| Total | 17,9 | 31,4 |

Source: Insee Enquête emploi 2005

For other jobs, notably in the civil service and education, women's choice can be based on more flexible working conditions and hours (possibility of transferring to part-time and then back to full-time employment; possible arrangements regarding schedules; free time during school holidays, and so forth).

E. The macro-economic relationship between segregation and employment rates

As the report of the Strategic Analysis Council (2007) suggests, correlation can be made between occupational segregation and women's employment rates. At the time when this rate increased most in France (from about 53% at the end of the 1990s to 58.5% in 2005), there was a slight increase in sectoral segregation – in the service sectors, notably personal help for individuals, women's jobs increased most, thus explaining the slight increase in sectoral segregation.

2.b Case study analysis

The case studies chosen concern two very different occupations – the first is the explosion of the number of **women doctors**, and the effects of this partial feminisation. The second concerns the other end of the chain, namely jobs that are in the process of being professionalised, but are still undervalued and still highly feminised, namely **personal services to individuals**, i.e. “care” jobs, which are still called home-helps.

A. Women doctors³

In France, in the 1990s, only 30% of doctors were women (whereas 70% were in Russia and 50% in Finland (Lapeyre, Le Feuvre, 2005)). Although there were already women doctors in the 19th century, we had to wait until the 1980s and '90s to see an explosion of this phenomenon, related to girls going into higher education, and also to medical demography (growing needs given the ageing

³ This part is largely inspired by the work of Lapeyre, Le Feuvre, 2005

of the population). Women now account for 40% of doctors, and they are forecast to top 50% by 2020. Indeed, young generations of doctors are highly feminised (they represent 54% of the under 40s and, above all, make up the majority of those studying medicine (65% in the first year).

Three phenomena explain this feminisation (Divay, 2005):

- Pressure coming from the increasing numbers with a scientific baccalaureate;
- Existing feminisation of the health sector;
- Imposition of a norm of women's continued economic activity, especially for those with most qualifications.

Panorama of the profession

Feminisation of doctors does not mean substitution of men, but corresponds to an overall expansion of the number of doctors. Women do not enter all medical sectors: they remain over-represented in some so-called “interpersonal” specialities: dermatology (61%); gynaecology (88%) and paediatric services (56%). It is not so easy for them to enter specialities that involve technical equipment – in cardiology, they do not represent more than 15%, not to mention surgeons – a very symbolic specialisation, where less than 5% are women. All of this reflects a certain degree of reproduction of presumed feminine skills (related to children, interpersonal skills and so forth), and their so-called “technical incompetence”. It also reflects individual strategies – refusal to go into fields with long hours – as well as men's resistance to opening up their traditional fields to women: “The example of surgeons – a prestigious and relatively well-paid speciality – leads one to think that women are still victims of male exclusion strategies (...), but it also reflects “choices” made by women themselves, notably in relation to managing the work-family interface.” (Lapeyre, Le Feuvre, 2005).

Another differentiation related to working in medicine is to be seen **in modes and places**: women doctors are over-represented amongst employed doctors - they represent 47% of employed doctors and only 28% of freelance doctors. Not all of the former have shorter hours and less responsibility, as some of them are either part of the “university-hospital elite” or, at the other end of the spectrum, work in mother and child clinics (PMI) or are occupational health officers. Moreover – and unlike our neighbours – freelance women doctors are less often in a group practice than men, and more often in big cities (30% of them are in the Paris region).

Working hours tend to increase and are on average 51 per week, in spite of feminisation and the development of part-time work. This can, above all, be explained in terms of income – maintaining the standard of living (especially of GPs) involves working more, as remuneration of consultations has not been increased. On average, women doctors work 6 hours less than men per week, but women doctors' working hours are much longer than those of women in other jobs: they work about 50 hours per week and the 25% of women doctors working part-time have hours that approach the “norm” of women in employment. It should be noted that the gap between men and women doctors is tending to decline and should disappear by 2025.

On average, men doctors earn **twice as much gross pay** as women! This gap can be mainly explained by the difference in the distribution of specialities and sectors. Such under-payment is also to be found within each speciality – women see fewer patients each day, because they spend more time with each of them. The gap in the number of patients seen by men and women is estimated to be 30%. This trend is in the process of changing – women doctors over 55 years old earn on average 14% less than the youngest ones...

“Gender dynamics” - ongoing changes

Traditionally, men doctors have wives who do not work and thus enable their husbands to be totally involved in their work, which requires “**permanent availability**”. These “inactive” women can sometimes even help their husband (with secretarial work, accounts and so forth...) and pay someone to do the housework. With the general increase in women's economic activity and of

women doctors, in particular, this traditional pattern is tending to disappear – more and more men doctors' wives have higher education and their own job, whereas the first women doctors were often single or increasingly married to men with an occupation requiring higher education, even as doctors. Therefore, “permanent availability” of doctors is changing and this can be explained “less by the gradual increase in the number of women doctors (...) than by the gradual transformation of the relationship of men doctors' wives to employment” (Lapeyre, Le Feuvre, 2005). Men doctors had to adapt their behaviour, given the fact that their wives are less available and are involved in their own careers. Even if men are far from totally sharing domestic chores, and conversely women do not access the same careers as men, the traditional model of “male breadwinner” has changed: men doctors cannot be totally disconnected from their family life. In other words, thanks to the feminisation of jobs requiring higher education, a real change has appeared in doctors' relationship to time – both men and women no longer can accept being totally available for their work, even if, of course, we are far from achieving equal sharing of tasks. According to Lapeyre and Le Feuvre, women doctors do not have specific features, but there is rather gradual convergence in the way all doctors work. In Divay's view, although this model of “permanent availability” is on the decline, it does not occur in the same way for men and women doctors – according to the surveys, women seek “time for others” (the family), whereas men seek “time for themselves”, i.e. “reconciling” family life and work remains the prerogative of women, according to the answers given by medical students and young doctors in interviews...

Feminisation of medicine: depreciation of the occupation or (relative) desertion by men?

This is a recurrent issue: each time a skilled job becomes feminised, depreciation is referred to. However, here it is the opposite – men are tending to desert medical studies, because the occupation is (relatively) depreciated both symbolically and financially. A survey of students (Hardy-Dubernet, 2005) shows that those with a scientific baccalaureate tend to desert medicine and prefer to go to preparatory classes for the Grandes Ecoles and University Institutes of Technology (which still are relatively closed to girls). According to individual interviews, families play a major role in boys' choices – above all, when parents are doctors, they advise their sons not to choose this path (less profitable and valued). Thus, gradually, men have left their places to women, for whom medicine is a women's occupation – relationship with health, interpersonal skills and emotional factors are all to be found in the choice of specialisation; moreover, work organisation is changing – women are not necessarily going to do what their predecessors did, namely give up family life, but adapt their schedules and rhythm to their family (part-time work and being part of a group practice, etc.). Thus Hardy-Dubernet concluded that “men desert medicine and leave it to women, but do they desert it “in order” to leave it to women? Are we in the presence of a kind of “class” arrangement, which makes it possible to position men and women, who are both economically active and in higher positions, in differentiated - and therefore more compatible and less competitive - labour markets?”.

B. Personal services to individuals (care)

Since the 1990s, France banks on new “deposits” of jobs in the area of home-helps – primarily in order to fight against unemployment, the aim is to create 500,000 such jobs. It is also a matter of meeting huge needs regarding home-help (for older and dependent people, as well as children), given ageing and the increasing number of women who work. Finally, there is also the clear interest regarding taxation, namely limiting the use of undeclared work, by introducing tax and financial help for employers (via service job cheques), in order to facilitate declaring such workers.

But “the highly gendered, insecure, inegalitarian and depreciated nature is what appears at the heart of the issue of services provided in the home” (Angeloff, 2005).

These jobs have a two-fold origin – both domestic and social: cleaners, chambermaids, domestic workers, home-helps... the terms have changed, but social reality has changed very little – 99% of them are women and tend to be middle-aged (over 40) and, although nothing is said about this

because French legislation prohibits it, most of them have foreign origins.

Their role involves helping individuals regarding certain essential aspects of daily life (washing, preparing meals, cleaning, shopping, administrative procedures and so forth). This kind of job is most often part-time (the needs and resources of dependent people do not add up to full-time work) and are often at the beginning and end of the day, and even on the weekend.

The great majority of these jobs are filled by women and, until recently, were hardly professionalised. The Personalised Independence Allowance (*Allocation personnalisée d'autonomie*, APA), which is managed by the *Département* councils, imposed skills for looking after dependent people. However, generally, the sector is still marked by poor employment, training and working conditions – atypical hours, fixed-term contracts, low levels of education and vocational training. As the recent Economic and Social Committee report (2007) indicates: “the whole of the sector should call upon both school leavers and men – of whom there are few or none in occupations that until now have been considered to be essentially women's jobs and very often part-time with limited prospects of mobility and career advancement. But there is very little training available for jobs in the area of personal services to individuals – and it is far from sufficient in view of the needs of the sector. This is the case both of courses within the education system and those in vocational training. There are also very few professionalisation contracts, apprenticeships and work-based courses in general”.

Still depreciated working conditions

In spite of various programmes giving priority to these jobs, working time and both financial and symbolic promotion of them is still impossible. On average, these jobs involve 70 hours per month and only 5% of them are full-time (more than 165 hours per month)! Home-helps have several “clients”, insecure hours and pay, and also daily distances between each person's home. None of these employees have ever protested, as if this situation is internalised and goes without saying – the notion of “total availability” seems obvious and no law guarantees minimum working hours for them.

Moreover, their low level of qualifications explains why these jobs are more often than not paid at the minimum level (hourly SMIC) – and not even paid on a monthly basis, as provided for in the legislation. Length of service is only recognised by the same employer. For example, if Ms. X worked for 20 years with Ms. Y, when Ms. Y dies, Ms. X's length of service begins again at 0! “How can jobs that involve sensitive activity related to the intimacy and dignity of individuals be socially valued (...), when pay remains so low?”

Besides pay, required skills pose a problem – is it a matter of simply reproducing tasks that women carry out at home, “without” any particular skills. Or should not other required skills be recognised, such as interpersonal skills concerning the family and the person they are looking after? In spite of the desire to professionalise these workers and develop training, there is a tendency to underestimate the interpersonal skills required that are sometimes considerable when the person concerned is very ill or psychologically fragile. The technical nature of the work is also sometimes denied – some home-helps give medicine, as well as certain treatment, even though it is not prescribed.

But a search for professionalisation

An association⁴ proposed working on skills – identifying all the work carried out by such employees, who think they “do not know how to do anything”. The list was long:

⁴ Brigitte Croff Conseil

Skills acquired on the job:

- Autonomy at work: they often work alone and have to adapt to the needs of each person they work for (foreign, deaf, sick people and so forth).
- Ability to work with a project: it is a matter of adapting to the needs of each person, without replacing them or the people close to them.
- Perseverance: managing crisis situations and finding solutions.
- Ability to adapt to situations: know how to pass from one family and culture to another in the same day.
- Ability to listen and make oneself heard: besides the material tasks, there is much heavy-going work involved in providing moral support and advice, as well as enabling them to confide.
- Ability to physically deal with dependant people: help with washing and moving, as well as stimulating them.
- Ability to work in a team: even if the employee is isolated, s/he must take into account the people close to the person, the person him/herself and also respect family practices.
- Self-confidence: ability to reassure others and make decisions quickly.
- Ability to work under pressure: put up with the complaints and idiosyncrasies of the individuals they work for – and sometimes several different people during the same day.

Activities acquired by employees outside work:

- Renovating a flat
- Sewing and embroidery
- Cooking and dietary notions
- Beauty treatment
- Paperwork
- Educational activities with small children
- Leisure activities (reading, walks and so forth)

Another study listed these skills differently with a view to developing training:

**Skills assessed in the Certificate of Occupational Skills (Certificat de compétences professionnelles, CCP)
Helping an individual carry out functions related to everyday life (G. Doniol-Shaw, 2005)**

*** Making contact with the person concerned and organising intervention**

When it is an initial meeting, exchange information in order to establish the bases of a positive relationship and also to determine the framework of the job.

Each time on arrival at the person's home, dialogue, observe and analyse the data of the moment (the state of the person and the liaison book, in order to adapt intervention, agree on the way to organise things, possibly explain impossibilities or refusal.

***Accompanying and helping individuals carry out functions related to everyday life**

Helping the person to eat: preparing, organising and creating the atmosphere of meals and snacks.

Advising the person and adapting menus.

Helping the person regarding their personal hygiene: helping them wash in a sink or shower, helping the nurse when it is a matter of washing in bed.

Helping with getting dressed and undressed.

Helping the person move from one place to another – with or without specialist equipment, depending on the type of invalidity.

Helping the bedridden: making the bed and manipulating a hospital-type bed.

Helping with paper work.

Accompanying the person in their social and leisure activities.

***Contributing to maintaining the person's physical and intellectual independence**

Involving the person and asking for their physical and intellectual participation.

Maintaining contact and communicating with the person during the various activities.

***Dealing with emergency situations**

Picking up a person who has fallen, anticipating incidents and accidents, giving first aid, taking emergency measures and alerting.

***Being in contact with those close to the individual, other people, services and professionals involved**

Writing reports in the liaison book, envisaging necessary contacts.

Taking stock with the person concerned, jointly assessing the service, preparing the future service.

Leaving the person.

Skills assessed in the CCP: Looking after children and babies in their homes

*** Organising the intervention**

Making contact with the parents or their representatives at an initial meeting, exchanging information in order to establish a relationship based on confidence and also to determine the framework of the job. Each time, establishing contact with the children, observing and recognising the characteristic signs of the needs of the child or baby, asking about specific instructions in order to adapt one's intervention and organise activities.

*** Ensuring the physical and moral safety of the children and dealing with emergency situations**

Preventing domestic accidents: ensuring the safety of the child under all circumstances (both inside and outside the home); in the case of an accident, taking emergency measures, giving first aid and alert; ensuring moral comfort for the children: dealing with their fears.

*** Carrying out various activities**

Preparing and giving a feeding bottle – Organising and giving a meal or snack.

Ensuring daily hygiene: washing a baby and helping a child to wash.

Changing and dressing a baby, helping a child to get dressed and undressed.

Putting children to bed and getting them up.

Occupying children : playing, reading and drawing ... Taking children out.

Ensuring homework times are respected.

*** Contributing to acquiring fundamental skills**

Using opportunities to consolidate acquiring fundamental skills, in particular related to potty training, sociability, safety (not touching electric sockets, etc.). Reacting to refusal, anger, aggressive behaviour, jealousy and disobedience, by helping children to deal with it.

*** Reporting and establishing necessary links**

Reporting to parents or other responsible adult, jointly assessing the service, preparing the future service; leaving the parents or adult and children.

Reporting to the employer; making the links with those close to the person concerned, other actors involved, writing information in the liaison book.

Overall, this work with home helps has made it possible to give them confidence, formalise “innate” and “invisible” skills and should, in the long-term, make it possible to promote these

occupations. **However, what has not changed yet, is that few men are attracted to these jobs, in spite of the needs that exist in this sector and men's unemployment.**

3. Policy issues

3.a Overview

The battle against occupational and sectoral segregation has long been part of French policy regarding equality.

- First of all, regarding education and guidance, there have been many campaigns since the 1980s to encourage girls to choose 'men's' occupations: “*techniciennes*” (i.e. using a mixed masculine / feminine form, rather than the usual way of writing the word in French, using the masculine form), “occupations are genderless”... An agreement that was drawn up with the Ministry of Education incorporates this objective.

- The 13 July 1983 law on occupational equality made it possible for employers and social partners to negotiate occupational contracts and plans in companies. The State takes on board 50% of investment costs (training and adapting premises, etc.). This measure still exists in that employers can initiate an action plan regarding occupational equality. From 1987 onwards, “gender balance contracts”⁵ were introduced. They aim at making it easier for women to access occupations where most of those working are men – the State covers 50% of training costs and 30% of the women's pay during training.

The results of the 13 July 1983 law regarding negotiating occupational equality are mediocre. The quantitative assessment made by the Women's Rights Service confirms this observation. Until 2001, occupational equality was not at the heart of bargaining, whether at intersectoral level (an agreement was signed in November 1989, but without any impact); at sector level (a few agreements have been signed during the renegotiation of collective agreements, but many protective measures persist, in spite of the fact that the European Court of Justice has denounced them); at company level, only **34 occupational equality plans** have been signed (including 22 equality contracts) and **1500 gender balance contracts**. These few results are even more surprising, as the State covers 50% of costs (including training). Finally reports of the comparative gender situation have been drawn up in only 43% of companies concerned.

- The 9 May 2001 law introduced the obligation for companies with at least one union section of a representative union to organise specific annual bargaining on occupational equality at company level. This bargaining should concern “*objectives regarding occupational equality and measures to achieve it*”. Bargaining can concern recruitment, training, promotion, organisation and/or working conditions. Occupational equality is also one of the topics imposed on sector-level bargaining, just like pay, training and grading. This obligation to negotiate equality is beginning to have an impact, because more than 100 company agreements have been signed. Amongst the topics dealt with is women's access to fields where men predominate (for example in the car industry).

- **The national intersectoral agreement signed in March 2004** devotes various points to these issues, notably educational guidance, recruitment, vocational training, promotion and mobility, as well as equal pay.

⁵ Contracts regarding the gender balance of jobs are individual measures, unlike equality plans, which concern a group of women and involve company-level bargaining.

- The first section concerns **developing mentalities** and challenging certain stereotypes, in order for it to be possible to achieve occupational equality. Amongst others, reference is made to aptitudes that are considered to be “innate” to women (dexterity, gentleness and so forth), and are used as a pretext to prevent them from accessing highly valued occupations and, conversely, in order not to recognise certain skills in jobs where women predominate.
- Regarding **educational guidance**, cooperation agreements are sought with the Ministry of Education, in order to facilitate the access of young women to scientific and technical occupations. Communication on the image and social representation of occupations will be made in those sectors that are not mixed.
- **Recruitment**: better gender balance will be sought at all levels when choosing candidates who have the same skills, experience and profiles. It will be possible to introduce some transitional measures regarding progress when real imbalance is observed.

- **The march 2006 law on equal pay** provides for, amongst others, “improving girls' and women's access to apprenticeships and to the supply of basic and continuing vocational training”.

- More recently, the conference **on occupational equality held in November 2007** dealt with this topic. Reference was made to structural factors causing unequal pay, including the concentration of women's jobs in few occupations and sectors and the glass ceiling (only 6% of the heads of big companies are women). Various measures supporting companies are envisaged in order to consolidate the place of women: pursuing the battle against stereotypes, supporting companies that take initiatives (e.g. in the building industry (see below)), and the idea of a quantitative objective regarding the representation of women in high-level management positions of companies. **But on all these points, the State has made no new, concrete undertakings.**

- Finally, some indirect measures aim at facilitating the access of women to employment, including in sectors where men predominate: developing childcare and the 35-hour week (which was partly challenged in 2001); law on vocational training aimed at promoting women (via the creation of the DIF – see below).

But the overall result of these measures is rather negative – it is as if public policies do not influence choices and occupational segregation, and that the latter depend on the social players (school, family and social partners). Moreover, no measure promoting men's access to jobs where women predominate is envisaged.

3.b Job evaluation

Officially, in France, there is still no real public concern about grading and job evaluation from the point of view of equality. However, **the national intersectoral agreement on gender balance and occupational equality**, which was signed on 1 March 2004, referred to the need for a “five-yearly review of grading and evaluation criteria used for defining different positions in order to identify and rectify those which are likely to lead to gender discrimination, and also in order to take into account all skills used” (article 13). As far as we know, this has not been monitored, even though job evaluation methods obviously exist in France and the system of grading jobs is essential for defining pay. Everything happens as if these methods were neutral and did not have any impact on

lack of gender balance and on pay gaps (occupations where women predominate being less attractive).

We have just begun a study⁶ on this theme. Given certain difficulties in entering companies, which still resist this kind of approach, we are at the moment comparing the following occupations: secretarial assistants / technical workers; nurses / manual staff supervisors; cleaners / technical workers; local authority administrative managers / local authority technical managers.

These jobs are generally at the same level in the internal grading system of the company or establishment and are either predominantly occupied by women or men (i.e. with approximately 70% representation of one or the other).

Our method is “modest” and constitutes an initial stage: we have made an assessment of the real definition of each job and compared the job descriptions and pay of these jobs. Then we carried out a survey of employees (individual and group interviews and monitoring what they do).

We have thus initially identified some striking features of these comparisons:

- **In occupations where men predominate**, there is recognition of a **real occupation**, an occupational culture, a precise definition of the position and perfect correlation with the grade; there is strong legitimacy, social importance, including for intermediate positions that are even not highly skilled (e.g. technical workers). They refuse to do anything besides what is strictly defined in their job description; there is a feeling of being indispensable and irreplaceable; they make demands to change grade and be promoted...
- **In occupations where women predominate**, the content of the positions seems vague and requires “invisible” skills that are not recognised – even in skilled jobs. Content seems more personalised and jobs more individualised, thus making collective demands more difficult. Employees in these positions tend to personalise their work themselves and are far from having collective recognition (especially for secretarial and administrative work).
- **Historical recognition for technical occupations** still plays a central role: men's occupations and technical fields (in the civil and public services) are better defined and recognised union-wise, including when they are not central positions (e.g. in hospitals). This leads to differences in the kind of job, promotions and awarding of bonuses, etc. between positions traditionally occupied by men and those occupied by women. The example of local authorities is revealing: local authority “*attachés*” (civil service administrative managers A, amongst whom women still predominate) increasingly occupy the same positions as “engineers” (civil service technical managers A, where men still predominate), but the promotion system and bonuses are still different: engineers have an annual bonus of €10,000 (compared with €5,000 for the *attachés*)
- **Supervising** even 4 people is a skill that is over-valued for positions where men predominate, compared with other types of responsibility. Supervising – from the point of view of hierarchical authority - is overvalued compared with activities involving coordination and work organisation and in relation to responsibilities

⁶ S. Lemièrre, R. Silvera, *Evaluer les emplois pour réduire les inégalités salariales entre femmes et hommes*, étude pour l’IRES.

regarding patients... The fact of being responsible for people, including when they are independent (technical workers), is significantly more highly valued than responsibility for accounting data, which are sometimes very important.

- The **arduous nature** of work has varied significance, depending on the occupation – the influence of traditional trade union culture plays a negative role in relation to occupations where women predominate. The fact that nurses have staggered schedules and lift bodies when washing them - or that school cleaners have to move heavy furniture about - is totally invisible when jobs are defined and evaluated. Even the people concerned themselves have internalised this denial and invisibility.
- **Definition of qualifications** is complex and very variable depending on practices:
 - **Diplomas** (sometimes young women have high-level diplomas) are largely overtaken by the role played by experience for positions in which men predominate; conversely, in the case of the school, having passed the civil service entry exam or not, having a CAP or not, will define the boundaries between staff “without quality” and technical workers; even if financially there is not much difference, in the long-term everything depends on that, as far as mobility and careers are concerned...
 - **Technical nature** of work is still difficult to deal with: for jobs where interpersonal skills are important, there is a tendency to deny the technical component of practices and relegate them to the field of personal behaviour, claiming that they are purely informal or even “natural”.
 - The notion of **versatility** is totally different depending on whether jobs are recognised as being skilled or not. Being versatile for a cleaner signifies an absence of specialisation and recognition – it is a matter of being “good at doing everything”, whereas in industry versatility is highly valued...

Our initial conclusions thus partly confirm our original hypotheses that behind the construction of “men's” or “women's” occupations, a differing value is given to certain criteria, as well as an underestimation of the criteria required, when defining the jobs we studied where women predominate. Their upgrading does not automatically occur. It presupposes challenging established systems, which are often legitimised by all the players concerned – including by the women themselves...

3.c *Skill Shortages*

In terms of job shortages, we know there are needs in the following fields: building, plastics processing, hotels and catering, as well as food. In both of the first two sectors, recruitment is difficult for men, and even more so for women; the other two sectors are more attractive for women's employment. But working conditions affect existing employment tensions a lot (schedules and arduous nature of the work, etc.). Finally, an expanding sector, which has already been referred to, is that of personal services to individuals, which the government wants to develop and concerns primarily women, even if the risk of occupational down-grading is great for them. A gender mainstreaming approach could facilitate better balance between available jobs and skills of the unemployed. This presupposes pursuing policies encouraging gender balance of jobs (in both directions, including promoting men's access to jobs that are mainly occupied by women).

Let us take the example of the building industry, where there is a campaign to attract women. It is clear that labour shortages are at the heart of bringing women into this sector and a desire to play the gender balance card. On 4 March 2004, at the Conference of the French Building Federation

(Fédération française du bâtiment, FFB), Christian Baffy, FFB President, launched the challenge of increasing the number of women on building sites and in workshops from **10,000 to 30,000 by 2009**: "Tomorrow is conceived, chosen and built today. Each year, the sector must recruit about 100,000 people and we will need everyone's talents – both of men and women. Everything changes quickly in our companies – techniques, customer demands for comfort, relationships with young people and behaviour at work. All companies are concerned - some have already adapted to the new situation; many others still have to do so. Incorporating more women into our teams is already happening. This is an ongoing revolution! Many women want to join us."

According to the FFB, several reasons explain this desire:

- Firstly, **changing mentalities with growing gender balance** in all sectors. The complementary nature of men and women, response to clients, who are increasingly women, improved working conditions and image are all assets, emphasised by other occupations. Society is mixed, why should the building industry be an exception?
- **Great need for recruiting skilled staff** especially on building sites and in workshops. More and more women want to work in the building industry. Like men, they are able to acquire the necessary skills. All occupations are open to them. So why deprive ourselves of 50% of the population's talents?
- Finally, **changes in the exercise of occupations**. Technical progress on building sites and regarding the use of materials, greater mechanisation and adaptation of tools all make it easier for women to work in all building jobs. Why shouldn't women take advantage of these changes?

In all the *départements* of France, there are initiatives to inform, train and recruit women into building occupations. For example:

Information

- Meetings presenting building jobs in secondary schools and jobs centres (ANPE),
- Contact with women during employment/training forums and in the FFB offices (Haut Rhin, Oise, Mayenne, Var, Bourgogne...),
- Visits of workshops in the National Organisation for Adult Vocational Training (Association pour la formation professionnelle des adultes, AFPA) and the Apprentices Training Centre (Centre de formation des apprentis, CFA); visits of building sites, organised with companies; public displays,
- Video showing personal accounts (Drôme-Ardèche, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Franche-Comté, Mayenne...),
- Dissemination of leaflets and posters (Aveyron, Midi-Pyrénées, Pays de la Loire,...),
- Raising awareness of heads of companies by their counterparts in other companies (Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Deux-Sèvres, Midi-Pyrénées, Bretagne...),
- Seminars with accounts by women and heads of companies.

Training/Recruitment

- Identifying available jobs and positions with heads of companies (Corrèze, Normandie, Rhône, Aquitaine...),
- Dissemination of women's CVs (Indre et Loire, Rhône...),
- Platforms for discovering occupations via placements in companies,
- Pre-qualification action and training courses,
- Putting employers and women into contact with each other (Bourgogne, Bouches du Rhône, Limousin, Maine-et -Loire, Rhône...),
- Creation of moral sponsorship by women in order to support women during their training and help them integrate work (Aquitaine, Bourgogne, Haute-Vienne...).

3.d Training

Vocational training and life-long learning are still less used by women: 23.8% of them, compared with 25.9% of men, but we do not have information on the length and kind of training. In the public sector, more women access training (a third of them), but this figure remains very low for those providing personal services to individuals (6%).

Table 10. Rate of access to training, by type of employer (%)

| | Women | | Men | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| | Distribution | Rate of access to training | Distribution | Rate of access to training |
| Private Sector | 68,3 | 20,3 | 79,1 | 23,4 |
| Personal services to individuals | 8,6 | 6,6 | 0,6 | 9,8 |
| Under 10 employees | 11,1 | 10,8 | 11,2 | 8,1 |
| 10-49 employees | 10,7 | 17,6 | 14,4 | 12,8 |
| 50-99 employees | 4,4 | 23,7 | 5,8 | 19,4 |
| 100-199 employees | 4,3 | 21,5 | 6,1 | 22,3 |
| 200-499 employees | 4,9 | 21,5 | 6,1 | 24,0 |
| 500 employees or more | 24,3 | 29,7 | 35,0 | 33,5 |
| Public sector | 31,7 | 31,0 | 20,9 | 32,8 |
| Total | 100,0 | 23,8 | 100,0 | 25,9 |

Interpretation: in May 2003, 8.6% of employed women in the private sector worked in providing personal services to individuals; 6.6% of them went on training organised by their employer since January 2002.

Field: economically active employees in May 2003 in Metropolitan France.

Source: Insee, enquête Formation et Qualification Professionnelle (2003).

It appears extremely important to develop women's access to continuing training, in order to enable them to access greater promotion and career developments. Gender mainstreaming policies would imply facilitating or even giving priority to women - not only in terms of helping towards the cost of childcare, as is usually proposed. Some company agreements advocate going further and giving priority to women's access to training (e.g. Schneider Electric); and ensuring that the place and length of training is adapted to their needs. Finally, on returning to work after maternity and parental leave, companies are introducing access to training.

Following a multi-sector agreement, which was signed by all the unions, a law on vocational training was adopted on 4 May 2004. It incorporates the principle of an **Individual Right to Training (DIF)**, which aims at enabling every employee to build up a credit of training time of 20 hours per annum that can be accumulated over six years and up to a limit of 120 hours. The initiative for using this acquired right to training belongs to the employee, but the implementation of DIF requires the employer's agreement as to the content of the chosen training. The multi-sector agreement indicates that one of the objectives is to introduce gender “parity” regarding access to training. **But it should be noted that some of the training time envisaged is outside working hours, thus making access more difficult for mothers.** At the beginning, DIF was not transferable from one sector to another, thus greatly limiting its accessibility in cases of employee mobility – and especially for women who have more transversal skills and occupations, such as assistants and administrative staff. The recent agreement on modernising the labour market should facilitate transferring this right. A survey on DIF was carried out in 2006. It shows that more than 45% of training carried out in the framework of DIF concerned manual and clerical workers, 33% concerned foremen and higher level technicians, 15% managerial staffs and 10% professional staffs (thus reversing the usual situation of managerial and professional staffs having much more training than others). Most of the requests for training were made in **big companies**. Industry (64%) and banks-finance-insurance (63%) received most requests. Another striking fact of the study is the balance observed between training during working hours and training outside working hours – 48%

of those using DIF in the companies that were interviewed do so mainly during working hours and 44% outside working hours. In all, 78% of DIF training in the banks-finance-insurance sector take place during working hours, whereas industry accepts them mainly outside working hours. The most popular courses requested concern languages (36%) and mainly take place at lunchtime or in the evening. Computer and word processing courses are also popular (35% of requests), followed by those which are directly linked to a specific occupation (15%). **But, it should be noted that, according to the Ministry of Employment, only 3.6% of employees used DIF in 2006 (i.e. 14% of companies). Amongst them, more than half were men...** This could still change, as it is a recent measure (in 2005, only 6% of companies used DIF). Moreover, the share of women can increase as, in general, more of them benefit from specific forms of training (such as for validating skills acquired on the job and for skills assessment) compared with all forms of training, which they request less, because of the structure of employment (more managerial and professional staffs than clerical workers go on courses).

Finally, another measure may have repercussions in this area, namely validating experience, thus making it possible to obtain recognition for informal skills and also validate some diplomas. However, in the social inclusion report (2005), we showed the limits of this measure: “This measure is *a priori* of interest, as it will enable those who are economically inactive, unemployed or without recognised qualifications to access jobs notably in the social services area (social workers, carers and those providing services to individuals, etc.) where there are shortages. It involves validating social, family and other kinds of experience and, thereby, obtaining part of a diploma. In order to do this, training in this area will be totally overhauled and these occupations will become “more professional”. This measure is, in itself, of great interest. Unfortunately, nothing is indicated regarding consequences in terms of gender. It is well known that many women work in services to individuals and their work is undervalued (carers, nursing assistants and childminders, etc.). VAE could improve their situation if it involves taking into account, for instance, family experience (bringing up children and care for the elderly). There should also be parallel reflection with a view to gender balance in these jobs (promoting these occupations and possibility of external mobility), in order to encourage more men to come into the area of social services”.

4. Summary and recommendations

Sectoral and occupational segregation remains a topical issue in France. Even if France is in an intermediate situation compared with its neighbours, it is still an essential problem – women occupy a limited number of jobs and sectors and this factor has a great influence on unequal pay and job insecurity. The service sectors, which are least covered by collective and union agreements, are those with the most women and offer poor working conditions (especially regarding schedules) and low pay.

This is not a new observation and many studies, policies and statements have denounced these facts. However, the inertia of the policies is striking, just as unequal pay and segregation seem unchangeable. In this report, we have attempted to explain why - there are many causes related to all the players concerned, and they combine individual choices and collective obstacles. The kinds of explanations pinpointed include: firstly, educational choices that are accused of being greatly influenced by gender stereotypes affecting young people and their families: girls and their families themselves perpetuate segregation by still choosing less (socially and financially) profitable courses. But on this point, we have insisted on the ambivalent nature of the link – educational choices can be seen to reflect existing occupational segregation, i.e. involving anticipation, given the difficulty for girls to enter fields where men predominate.

We have also insisted on the fact that educational segregation does not explain everything: choices made by recruiters and discrimination related to recruitment play a role that is often minimised.

Studies show that such barriers to recruitment still exist and also explain the persistence of “male strongholds”.

Certainly, progress has been made over the past 20 years – there are hardly any jobs that are reserved only for men. The number of women has increased greatly in executive positions and certain prestigious jobs (doctors and lawyers), thus reversing the trend. But even in these cases, women remain outside the highest circles of power, like in medicine, where they are not to be found amongst surgeons, or in big private sector companies, where they are not CEOs.

Conversely, men's entry into fields where women predominate seems even more difficult – there are no male-dominated jobs, which are occupied at the level of 99% by men, as is the case for childminders and home-helps, almost 99% of whom are women.

Feminisation of many occupations is ongoing, but must be interpreted cautiously. According to Le Feuvre (2007), three pitfalls must be avoided. According to certain people, feminisation would lead to devaluing the occupations concerned (lower pay and less recognition, etc.). This approach has been highly criticised, because it has never been possible to prove the link of causality – is it not rather a case of the field being devalued that women are “authorised” to enter it? Secondly, some authors consider that there would be a radical change when women enter these occupations, because they would work differently. This type of analysis is on the increase and is based on “naturalisation of women”, i.e. the “essentialist” approach, which can be criticised. Finally, others see no change – feminisation would not change gender relations – in fact, women, who arrive in male strongholds, have to copy men and adopt the virile model. This last version was the case for the women pioneers, but cannot be applied to general feminisation of certain occupations. Finally, in Le Feuvre's view, there is a fourth trend - feminisation of occupations challenges everyone's practices, including men's, not because of so-called feminine skills, but because of the social constraints they bring with them (notably in relation to time and availability) – and this could also shake up men's relationship to work (see the case of doctors).

In our view, it seems difficult to make recommendations – the system is so complex and there have been many attempted forms of action that have been in vain. We only wish to point to some important aspects:

- **Work on representations** of occupations should be continued, because gender stereotypes persist, especially amongst boys, and also amongst teachers.
- Segregation is not only a matter of educational policies: **action directed at companies** must be developed, in order to remove certain forms of persisting discrimination, especially regarding recruitment. There should be widespread dissemination of good practices in certain sectors (car and building industries). “Positive action” measures that are aimed at promoting the employment of women, who have the same skills, are still too rare in France (and are even criticised as not being “legitimate”). But, it appears that companies “naturally” tend to identically reproduce their mode of recruitment and organisation, which excludes women. Women should not, however, be seen as a “reserve army” and only called upon when there are job shortages in difficult sectors, such as the building industry. Upgrading these jobs is a necessary pre-condition to their achieving gender balance.
- **Trade unions** also have a role to play, in order to win members in “women's strongholds”, where labour law is not always properly implemented regarding schedules, dignity at work and pay. Union coverage of these sectors would in the long term contribute to men entering these jobs.

- **Developing non-discriminatory job evaluation systems** would also make it possible to upgrade certain jobs where women predominate and also attract men to these jobs.

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