

Women's Employment and Welfare Regimes  
*Globalization, Export Orientation and Social Policy  
in Europe and North America*

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## **Summary/Résumé/Resumen**

### ***Summary***

Women's employment and the policies facilitating it, constraining it or ignoring it are central to contemporary social politics across the developed countries. Social policies and other political interventions, such as equal-opportunity legislation, are hardly the only influences on women's employment. We must also point to changes in labour markets and the demand for women's labour (as employers tend to see labour in gender-specific ways); women's rising education and aspirations, and their increased productivity and real wages; the decline of men's wages; the decline of fertility; increasing individualization and the rising instability of marriage. But social policy is also significant, if not so much for increasing women's employment, then for shaping the patterns of women's employment, especially the continuity of their participation over the life course, and the conditions under which they work—as well as for helping to constitute the stakes in gendered social politics. And in this respect, even as women's labour force participation has increased everywhere, there are significant cross-national differences in the policies and politics affecting women's employment.

Women's increasing presence and (uneven) advancement in paid employment is understood by many observers as integrally linked with the emergence and (uneven) successes of various gender equality projects. Indeed, for many, women's movement into the workforce is the key symbol of women's equality—what some call “woman-friendliness”—overall. Let me make three caveats to the folk understanding of gender equality and women's employment. First, women's increasing rates of employment have resulted from a complex of forces, many of which have little to do with equality (gender or otherwise). And because women's paid and unpaid work have significance for the economy and the reproduction of the population, the politics and policies around women's employment involve a wide range of political actors—from employers and trade unions to religious organizations and nationalists. Second, advocates of gender equality would point to the multidimensionality of any robust notion of equality; for example, advocates of women's movement into paid work argue that it must be complemented by men's taking up greater caregiving responsibilities. Third, advocates do not entirely agree about the meaning of equality, although we consistently find the themes of securing women's economic independence, empowering women and ending unequal burdens of work. Some feminists have rejected a notion of gender equality as resting on women's employment, arguing that this represents an unacceptable androcentrism and preferring what is often thought of as a strategy of “equality in difference”, by which women's “traditional” domestic and caregiving activities are valorized and serve as a basis for citizenship rights and political standing. But most feminists would agree that employment on the male model cannot serve for the greater part of women's employment if it is to lead to gender equality.

Three tasks are undertaken in this paper. First, there is a review of material on the character of women's employment and the social policies that affect it, including frameworks that attempt to categorize cross-national policy patterns in different types of policy regimes. Second, available options are examined for women when they cannot work for pay, particularly when they are

engaged in periods of intense caregiving. Third, research is considered that attempts to explain different national patterns of policy affecting women's employment. I conclude with some thoughts about the ways in which women's employment may lead to greater gender equality. Thematically, this paper is unified by attention to the links between social policy, patterns of women's employment and gender equality. Empirically, the focus is on developed countries.

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### **Résumé**

Dans les pays développés, l'emploi des femmes et les politiques qui le favorisent, le limitent ou l'ignorent sont aujourd'hui au cœur du débat politico-social. Les politiques sociales et d'autres interventions politiques, telles que les lois sur l'égalité des chances, ne sont pas les seuls facteurs à influencer sur l'emploi des femmes. Il ne faut pas négliger non plus les changements survenus sur les marchés du travail et la demande de travail féminin (les employeurs tendant à identifier les femmes à certains travaux), le niveau d'instruction et les aspirations de plus en plus élevées des femmes, l'augmentation de leur productivité et de leurs salaires réels, la diminution des salaires masculins, la baisse de la fécondité, la montée de l'individualisation et la fragilité accrue du mariage. La politique sociale a aussi son importance, peut-être moins pour développer l'emploi féminin que pour déterminer les modalités du travail des femmes, en particulier la continuité de leur présence sur le marché du travail durant leur vie, et leurs conditions de travail, et pour aider à cerner les enjeux d'une politique sociale dans laquelle les femmes ont leur place. A cet égard, bien que la part de la main-d'œuvre féminine ait partout augmenté, les mesures et facteurs politiques ayant une incidence sur l'emploi féminin varient sensiblement d'un pays à l'autre.

De nombreux observateurs considèrent que l'accès de plus en plus large des femmes et leur (inégalement) promotion à des emplois rémunérés sont intégralement liés à l'émergence et au succès (variable) de divers projets concernant l'égalité des sexes. De fait, l'avancée des femmes sur le marché du travail est, aux yeux de beaucoup, le symbole majeur de leur égalité dans tous les domaines, ou de ce que certains appellent la "gynophilie" de la société. La conception populaire de l'égalité des sexes et de l'emploi féminin suscite trois objections. Premièrement, la hausse des taux de l'emploi féminin résulte d'un ensemble de forces, dont beaucoup sont étrangères à l'égalité (entre les sexes ou dans l'absolu). Parce que le travail rémunéré et non rémunéré des femmes a de l'importance pour l'économie et la reproduction de la population, un large éventail d'acteurs sont associés au débat et aux décisions politiques touchant à l'emploi des femmes: non seulement les employeurs et les syndicats, mais aussi les nationalistes et les organisations religieuses. Deuxièmement, ceux et celles qui plaident pour l'accès des femmes au travail rémunéré font valoir que les hommes doivent compléter cette avancée en assumant une plus grande part des responsabilités ménagères et familiales. Troisièmement, les féministes ne sont pas entièrement d'accord sur le sens

de l'égalité, bien que les thèmes de l'indépendance économique des femmes, de leur émancipation et de la nécessité de répartir plus équitablement la charge de travail reviennent constamment. Certaines ont refusé de fonder l'égalité des sexes sur l'emploi des femmes, voyant là un androcentrisme inadmissible et préférant ce que l'on considère souvent comme la stratégie de "l'égalité dans la différence", qui valorise les activités ménagères et familiales "traditionnelles" des femmes et en font le fondement de leurs droits de citoyennes et de leur statut politique. Mais la plupart reconnaissent que, si l'on veut que l'emploi débouche sur l'égalité des sexes, le modèle masculin de l'emploi est, dans la majorité des cas, inapplicable aux femmes.

L'auteur s'est donné ici trois tâches: d'abord donner une vue d'ensemble des informations existantes sur la nature de l'emploi féminin et les politiques sociales qui s'y rapportent, notamment les grilles utilisées pour tenter de classer les politiques nationales par type de régime politique. Ensuite, étudier les possibilités qui s'offrent aux femmes lorsqu'elles ne peuvent pas prendre un travail rémunéré, en particulier dans les périodes où elles sont accaparées par leurs responsabilités familiales. Enfin, envisager une recherche qui tente de dégager les caractéristiques nationales des politiques touchant à l'emploi des femmes. Elle conclut par quelques réflexions sur la manière dont l'emploi féminin peut déboucher sur une plus grande égalité des sexes. L'unité thématique du document vient de l'attention portée aux liens entre la politique sociale, les caractéristiques de l'emploi féminin et l'égalité entre hommes et femmes. Empiriquement, l'accent a été mis sur les pays développés.

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### **Resumen**

La política social contemporánea en los países desarrollados se centra en el empleo de las mujeres y las políticas que lo facilitan, limitan o ignoran. Las políticas sociales y otras intervenciones políticas, tales como la legislación sobre igualdad de oportunidades, no son los únicos factores que influyen en el empleo de las mujeres. Debemos señalar igualmente los cambios producidos en los mercados de trabajo y la demanda de trabajo de las mujeres (ya que los empleadores tienden a concebir el trabajo de formas específicas según la distinción por género); la educación y aspiraciones cada vez mayores de las mujeres, y el incremento de su productividad y sus salarios reales; la disminución de la fertilidad, y el individualismo y la inestabilidad marital crecientes. Pero la política social también es importante, no tanto para fomentar el empleo de las mujeres, sino para determinar los modelos del empleo de las mismas, en particular su participación continua en el curso de la vida, y sus condiciones de trabajo—y para ayudar igualmente a establecer los intereses en las políticas sociales relativas a la distinción por género. A este respecto, a pesar haber aumentado la participación de las mujeres en la fuerza de trabajo en todo el mundo, las diferencias entre los países son considerables con respecto a las medidas políticas y la política en general relativa al empleo de las mujeres.

Muchos observadores consideran que la presencia cada vez mayor de las mujeres y los progresos realizados (desiguales) en materia de empleo remunerado están plenamente vinculados a la aparición y el éxito (desigual) de varios proyectos sobre la igualdad en la distinción por género. En efecto, muchos consideran que la incorporación de las mujeres a la fuerza de trabajo es el símbolo clave de su igualdad—que algunos denominan “orientación hacia las mujeres”—en todo el mundo. Permítanme formular tres advertencias con respecto a la interpretación tradicional de la igualdad en la distinción por género y del empleo de las mujeres. En primer lugar, la participación cada vez mayor de las mujeres en el empleo ha sido consecuencia de un conjunto de fuerzas, muchas de las cuales no están relacionadas con el concepto de igualdad (ya sea en la distinción por género o de otro tipo). Además, dado que el trabajo remunerado y no remunerado realizado por las mujeres es importante para la economía y la reproducción de la población, tanto la política en general como las medidas políticas concretas adoptadas para el empleo de las mujeres suponen la participación de muy diversos actores políticos—desde empleadores y sindicatos a organizaciones religiosas y nacionalistas. En segundo lugar, los defensores de la igualdad en la distinción por género señalarían las múltiples dimensiones de todo concepto sólido de igualdad; por ejemplo, los que defienden que las mujeres deben poder realizar un trabajo remunerado consideran que, como complemento, los hombres deberían asumir mayor responsabilidad en la prestación de cuidados. En tercer lugar, los defensores no llegan a un acuerdo sobre el significado de igualdad, aunque se habla constantemente de asegurar la independencia económica de las mujeres, de habilitar a las mismas y de poner fin a la desigualdad de cargas en materia de empleo. Algunas feministas han rechazado un concepto de igualdad en la distinción por género relativo exclusivamente a la igualdad de las mujeres en el empleo, al considerarlo un androcentrismo inaceptable, y prefieren lo que a menudo se considera una estrategia de “igualdad en la diferencia”, por la que las actividades domésticas y de cuidado “tradicionales” realizadas por las mujeres se valorizan y sirven como base para los derechos de ciudadanía y la posición política. Pero la mayoría de las feministas convienen en que empleo basado en el modelo de los hombres no puede utilizarse para la mayor parte del empleo de las mujeres si desea lograrse la igualdad en la distinción por género.

En estas páginas se emprenden tres tareas. En primer lugar, se examina el material relativo al carácter del empleo de las mujeres y las políticas sociales al respecto, incluidos los marcos que tratan de clasificar los modelos de política entre los países en diferentes tipos de regímenes políticos. En segundo lugar, se estudian las opciones de que disponen las mujeres que no pueden ejercer una actividad profesional remunerada, en periodos en que se dedican intensivamente a la prestación de cuidados. En tercer lugar, se considera la investigación encaminada a explicar los diferentes modelos nacionales de la política relativa al empleo de las mujeres. Se concluye con algunas reflexiones sobre las diferentes formas en que el empleo de las mujeres puede fomentar la igualdad en la distinción por género. Desde el punto de vista temático, el estudio está unificado por la atención prestada a los vínculos entre la política social, los modelos del empleo de las mujeres y la igualdad en la distinción por género. Empíricamente, se centra en los países desarrollados.



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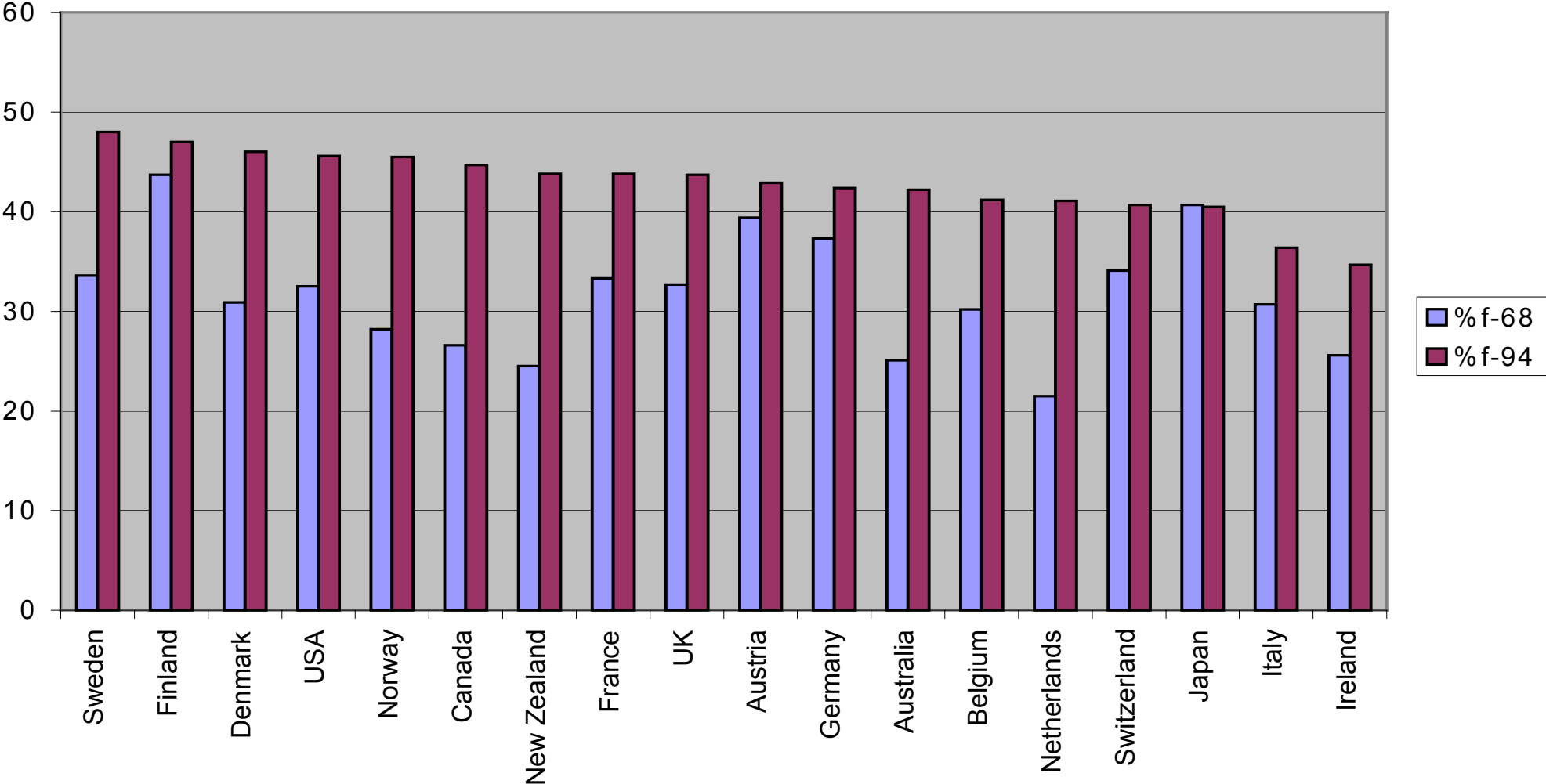
## **Gender Relations and Women's Employment: Opportunities for Employment**

What are the opportunities for women to participate in paid employment across developed countries? And how do they fare once they are in the labour force? Clearly, the opportunities are far greater today than before the Second World War, when marriage bars (employers' formal or informal rules to deny employment to married women) and outright discrimination were common and cultural, social and economic factors bolstered the male breadwinner, full-time female caregiver household. However, while opportunities are greater than before, nowhere has formal equality been translated into substantive equality in the labour force (or elsewhere), as "informal" barriers to women's employment and economic advancement—ranging from lack of good-quality care services to "glass ceilings"—have been only unevenly targeted for correction by governments, although some countries attempt to do more than others.

Across the developed world, women form an increasing proportion of the labour force, and women's participation rates are up, although they are uneven across countries (see figures 1 and 2). Industrialization and urbanization have drawn women into the formal workforce and also into the informal workforce where informal economies are significant, notably in southern Europe. This trend is most noticeable among mothers with young children, the group most likely to drop out of employment in the immediate postwar period. However, analysts caution against focusing exclusively on participation rates, which do not reveal the intensity of men's and women's employment and their relative contribution to paid and unpaid work or the gender-differentiated patterns of participation over the life course (Daly, 2000; Blossfeld and Hakim, 1997).

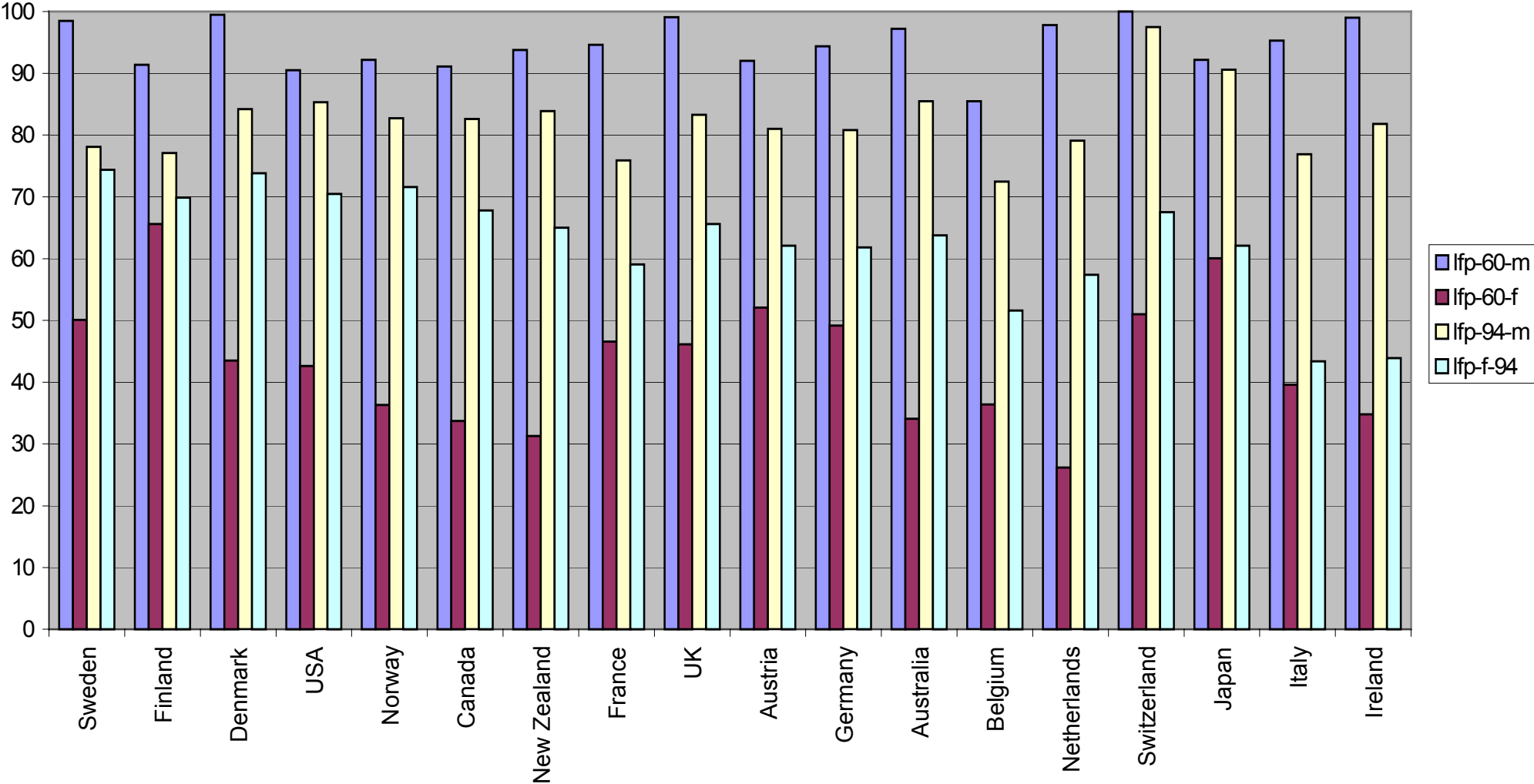
There are still significant aspects of older gender arrangements to be found in the new, for nowhere has the gender division of labour disappeared. In some countries women's employment rates are nearing men's, and more women than ever before are eschewing traditional roles to pursue careers once thought exclusively masculine. But there are still pressures for women to limit their economic activities—for example, by working part-time or "scaling back" in other ways—to accommodate care, and most women (and some men) face challenges in reconciling work and family life (Becker and Moen, 1999). Indeed, caregiving work remains predominantly women's work, and many women continue to subordinate employment to family responsibilities in various ways. It is true that the care of children and others dependent on care is partially shifting to institutions other than the family—a subject taken up in greater detail later in this paper; but it must be noted that in order to accommodate care, women still work part-time or drop out of the labour force altogether at far higher rates than do men. And even in the countries with the highest levels of formal participation—the Nordic countries—many mothers of young children who remain in the labour force are on parental leave; few men take such leave (Jenson, 1997). Note as well that even when caregiving work is paid, it tends to be "women's work" (and sometimes also the work of specific racial or ethnic groups as well (Glenn, 1992)) and is often underpaid relative to men's occupations involving similar levels of skill and education (England and Folbre, 1999; Waerness, 1984; Ungerson, 1997).

**Figure 1: Women as a proportion of the labour force, 1968 and 1994**



Source: O'Connor et al., 1999, table 3.1.

**Figure 2: Men's and women's labour force participation, 1960 and 1994**



Source: O'Connor et al., 1999, table 3.1.

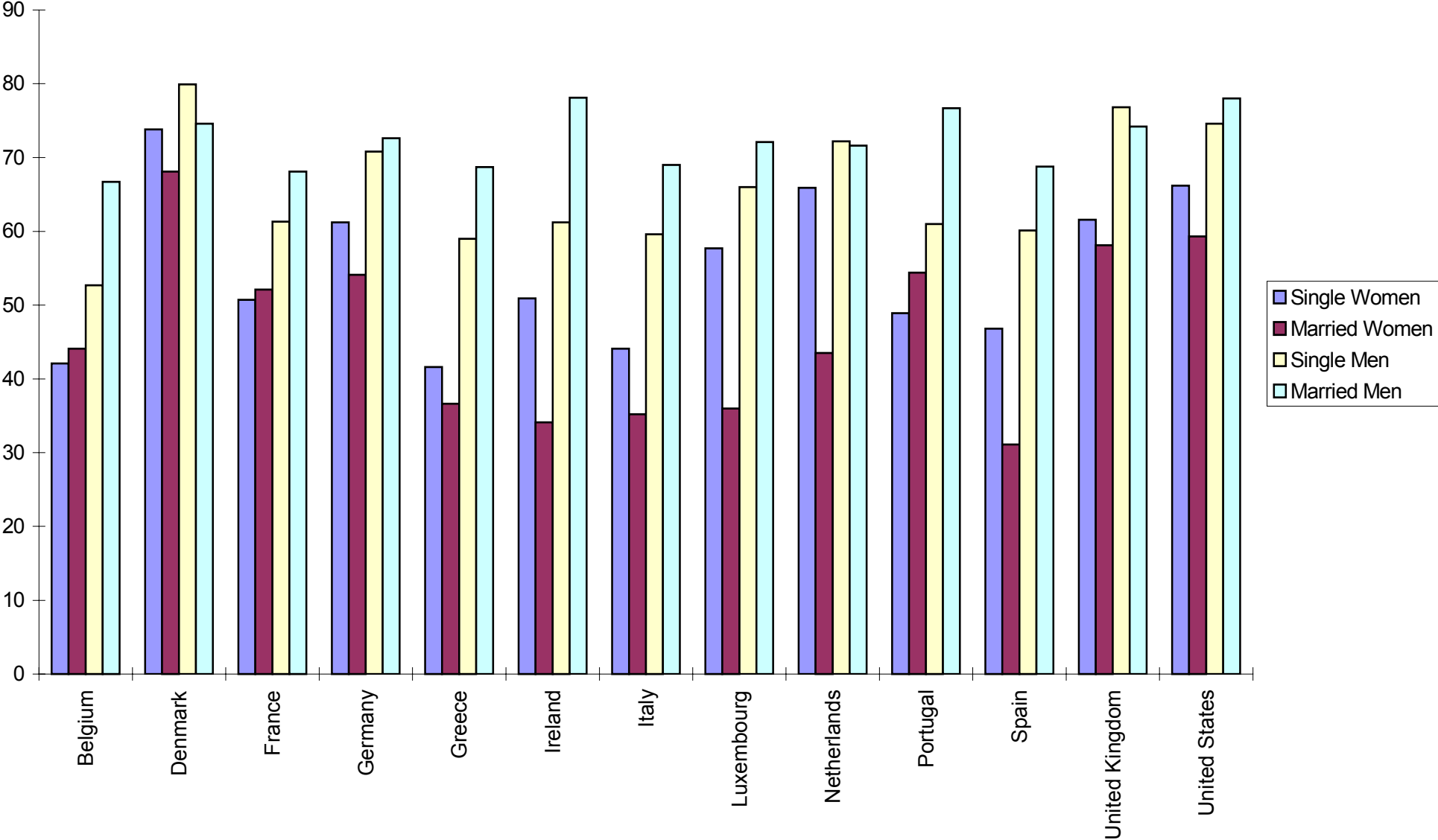
In short, the gender division of labour is not disappearing, but modernizing as women, particularly mothers, enter the labour force and stay in employment for greater portions of their lives.<sup>1</sup> Mutari and Figart (2001) argue that gender differentiation is increasingly based on time – with men working full-time and women part-time, so that their paid work is combined with domestic work. This has replaced the older gender distinction between men’s participation in paid work and women’s full-time domesticity and absence from paid work.

That women’s employment continues to be shaped by domestic and caregiving responsibilities, while men’s is not, is vividly reflected in data presented in figures 3, 4 and 5 below. Here, we see that marriage depresses women’s participation rates, while increasing men’s. Women take up part-time work at far higher rates than men do. Men and women allocate their time to paid and unpaid labour in very different ways, reflected in figure 5, which shows how men and women divide up household childcare (that is, this figure does not reflect the proportion of childcare provided outside the household by public or private childcare services). Women perform a far larger portion of childcare than do men, even in countries where public and market services are well developed. Across the developed countries, there is surely variation in the quality of the work itself, as well as in the exact mix of paid and unpaid work – but the basic pattern is the same: men “specialize” in paid work while doing little unpaid, mainly caregiving, labour, and women do the bulk of unpaid work, increasingly in combination with paid work. There is a large debate about whether in fact women work more hours overall than men; the evidence seems to indicate that certain groups of women are hard-pressed: employed mothers who work a “second shift” at home, in Hochschild’s memorable term (see, for example, Hochschild, 1989; Bittman and Wajcman, 1999). Although family and marital ties affect women’s participation in employment everywhere, these data also show that the patterns vary, rather dramatically, cross-nationally (Daly, 2000).

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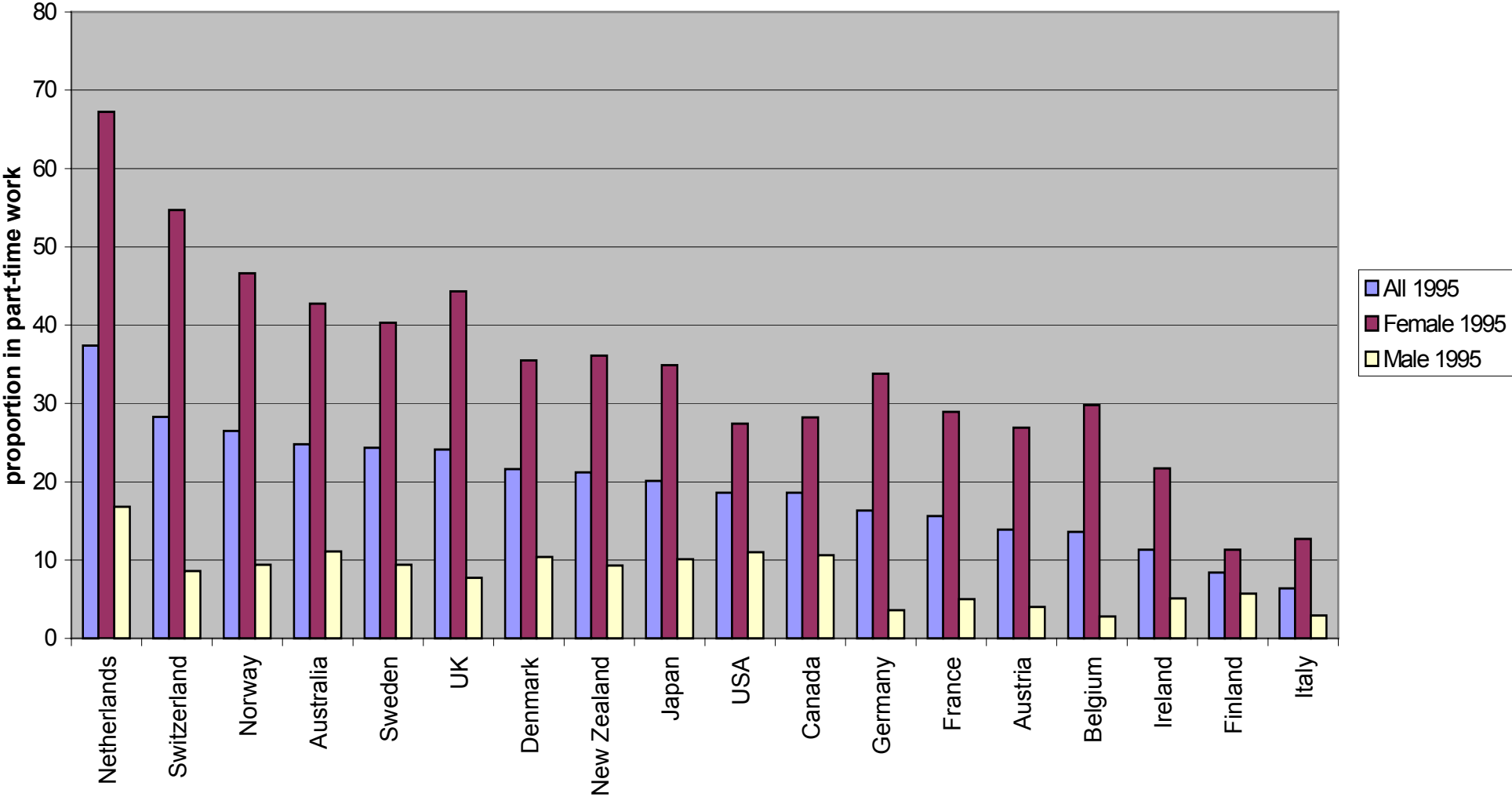
<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that there is some reversal of this process of increasing women’s labour force participation in the formerly socialist countries, where women are facing newly explicit forms of discrimination and higher rates of unemployment than are men, while supports for employed mothers are cut back. Whether this will remain the case as these countries complete their transitions is an open question – many women want to remain employed, but some political forces are pressing for a return to “traditional” gender roles, that is, women’s housewifery (Heinen, 1999).

**Figure 3: Labour force activity by sex and marital status in selected industrialized countries, 1990s**



Source: Women and Men in the European Union, and Statistical Abstract of the United States.

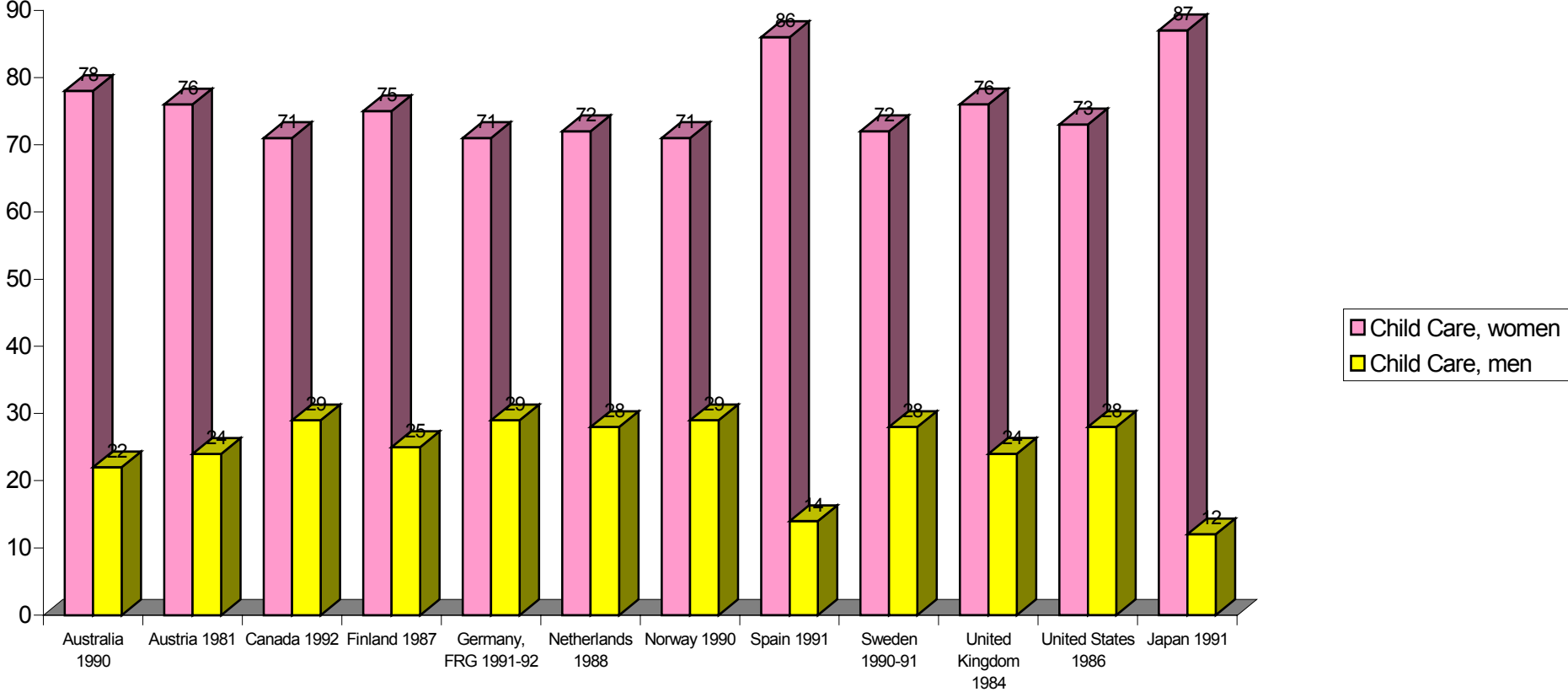
**Figure 4: Part-time employment in OECD countries**



Source: OECD Employment Outlook Historical Statistics, 1996, table e.



**Figure 5: Percentage distribution of household childcare by sex in selected industrialized countries**



Source: United Nations, *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*.

Once women are in the labour force, how do they fare? There is still a substantial earnings gap. Given women's far greater likelihood of working part-time, we can expect gender differences in annual earnings, even where part-time workers are protected against discrimination on the basis of their status. But this is not the only source of women's lower earnings, for there are still gaps among full-time workers, as reflected in the data presented in table 1.<sup>2</sup> Much of the gap reflects occupational sex segregation, and the wage penalty paid by "women's jobs" (England, 1992). We see that the ratio varies cross-nationally; Whitehouse (1992) determined that centralized bargaining systems were associated with lower pay gaps. Note also that ratios are highest among younger workers. This may reflect progress toward pay parity, but may also reflect the fact that the youngest cohorts have not yet entered the prime child rearing years, when many analysts point to women having to scale back on employment in ways that often result in lower pay.

**Table 1: Women's average annual income/earnings as a percentage of men's, by age groups for full-time, full-year workers in the mid- to late-1990s**

	Total 15+	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Austria	74.9	88.1	80.6	73.4	73.4	65.7	53.0
Canada	73.1	82.5	78.2	74.8	69.9	62.4	—
Denmark	82.8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Finland	77.6	79.5	81.7	74.5	74.7	75.4	—
Ireland	65.0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Italy	81.2	93.9	88.9	79.7	80.2	80.2	67.8
Netherlands	71.2	88.6	86.6	84.1	75.5	77.6	—
Norway <sup>a</sup>	71.2	85.1	71.6	73.4	67.7	79.2	—
Spain	77.9	77.9	85.9	82.1	73.8	63.9	34.4
Sweden	78.7	84.2	80.2	77.4	76.4	76.6	—
Switzerland <sup>b</sup>	76.4	95.1	87.2	80.9	69.6	72.3	—
United Kingdom <sup>c</sup>	73.8	—	—	—	—	—	—
United States <sup>b</sup>	68.0	87.2	81.1	69.6	63.5	53.5	54.8

<sup>a</sup> Youngest age group is 16-24. <sup>b</sup> Median annual income. <sup>c</sup> Average weekly earnings; figure refers to Great Britain. **Source:** UN/ECE database, based on national sources.

## Patterns of Women's Employment Across Developed Countries

In a recent, thorough analysis of women's employment patterns, Daly (2000) groups developed countries into four clusters, which I modify only slightly:<sup>3</sup>

- high activity: Canada, France, Portugal, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) and the United States (US);

<sup>2</sup> Social scientists disagree about the extent to which continuing earnings and occupational differences are based on discrimination or women's preferences and choices (see, for example, Blossfeld and Hakim, 1997; Duncan and Edwards, 1999), but this difference results in gendered income inequalities and is linked to gender inequalities in social security coverage.

<sup>3</sup> I disagree with Daly about the position of Canada: she puts it with Australia and the United Kingdom. In my previous work, Canada is grouped with the United States and I note that despite similarly "liberal" policy orientations, the two North American countries differ from Australia and the United Kingdom in that the latter two feature much higher levels of part-time employment among married and single mothers (O'Connor et al., 1999); indeed, Daly (2000) concedes this difference.

- medium-high activity: Australia and the United Kingdom;
- medium activity: Austria, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands; and
- low activity: Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain.

Among the countries characterized by the highest overall rates of women's labour force participation, there are still some significant differences in the quality and character of women's employment, and, as reported later in this paper, even more significant variation with respect to the policies that promote employment—there are different paths to women's employment. These countries feature relatively high ratios of women to men workers; employment ratios (women's rates compared to men's) are the highest (around 90 per cent) among the four Nordic countries while the United States, Canada and France have the next highest ratios, reflecting the higher employment rates among men (Daly, 2000).

In the Nordic countries, women and men have similar rates of participation, but—except in Finland—substantial numbers of women work in part-time jobs. However, these jobs tend to be “good jobs”, with relatively long hours and relatively good pay; indeed, overall earnings gaps are relatively low (Borchorst, 1994). Younger women are increasingly working full-time (Daly, 2000), but they continue to take advantage of maternity and parental leave provisions to a far greater extent than do men (Jenson, 1997). The fact that women workers are caregivers to a greater extent than are men means that they face barriers in occupations traditionally held by men, including positions of authority; occupational sex segregation is relatively high (Ruggie, 1988; Wright et al., 1995).

France stands out among continental European countries for its extent of women's employment, although somewhat lower than in the Nordic countries; but like these countries, part-time employment—an increasingly important source of women's employment—features relatively long hours and is relatively well protected. And women's employment tends to be continuous over the life course. With overall rates of women's labour force participation very similar to the Nordic countries, the United States and Canada have lower rates of part-time employment than said group, but with concomitantly lower rates of employment among mothers of young children—the group that takes most advantage of parental leave and provisions that allow fewer hours of work for the parents of young children in Scandinavia.<sup>4</sup> And, echoing the Nordic patterns, the pay gap is relatively high, but occupational sex segregation is relatively low, and in particular, North American women have had relatively good access to elite occupations (O'Connor et al., 1999). Portugal can be grouped with the other high activity countries in terms of participation rates and continuity of participation, making it an exception among Mediterranean countries, which are otherwise known for very low female participation. Like the North American countries, part-time employment is quite low.

The medium-high activity group is made up of Australia and the United Kingdom. Participation rates are relatively high, but the ratio between men's and women's employment is lower than in the Nordic countries because men in this group work at much higher rates than their

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<sup>4</sup> With parental leaves, women are not at their place of employment on account of taking care of young children, but are still counted as in the labour force.

Nordic counterparts. Moreover, part-time work makes up a substantial proportion of women's work—especially among married and single mothers, and features short hours and little protection; especially in the United Kingdom, women are more likely to drop out of employment for bearing and rearing children (Daly, 2000). Occupational sex segregation is higher than in North America, but wage gaps are lower, especially in Australia (Whitehouse, 1992; O'Connor et al., 1999). Thus, there is a stark divide between men's and women's—actually, fathers' and mothers'—patterns of involvement in paid and unpaid work (Mutari and Figart, 2001).

Among the continental European countries—with the significant exception of France, as noted above—there are medium rates of female labour force participation, and fairly low ratios of women's to men's employment (around 75 per cent). Part-time work and employment careers interrupted for bearing and rearing children are notable for women, so that, again, we see distinctive women's and men's patterns of work over the life course (Saraceno, 1997; Platenga, 1998; Mutari and Figart, 2001). The labour market is more regulated than in the United Kingdom or North America, and it has been harder to expand part-time work as a source of women's employment. Here there is a significant exception: the Netherlands, where economic liberalization has brought a tremendous expansion of part-time work that has drawn many women into the labour force over the last decade (Platenga, 1998). But all these countries feature relatively high wage gaps. Single mothers are more likely to work, and to work full-time, than are married mothers, as is the case in almost all the developed countries, but the contrasts are sharper among the continental European states (Kilkey and Bradshaw, 1999). Again, there is the notable exception of the Netherlands, where single mothers are enabled by a generous benefit system to stay out of the labour force when children are small, and to work only part-time when their children reach school age, mimicking the behaviour of married mothers, albeit with somewhat greater vulnerability to poverty (Knijn, 1994).

Finally, it is among the countries of southern Europe (except Portugal)—Greece, Italy and Spain—along with Ireland, that one finds the lowest levels of women's employment (Gonzalez et al., 2000). Participation rates and ratios are the lowest in the developed world. There is a sharp bifurcation in southern Europe in women's patterns of work: either women do not work for pay at all, or they tend to work full-time and continuously—with a low earnings gap for those in the workforce. Single mothers, although few in number, tend to be among those employed full-time (Bimbi, 1997). Ireland presents a somewhat different picture, as employed women tend to work part-time, and single mothers are actually less likely to work than are married mothers (Kilkey and Bradshaw, 1999). And even among women working full-time, there is a very high pay gap.

## **Social Policy and Women's Employment**

Modern citizenship is linked to women's and men's employment in a host of ways: citizens' claims to rights are both symbolically and programmatically based on paid work (Pateman, 1988; Lister, 1997; Orloff, 1993a). Initially, full citizenship—in the sense of both enjoying rights and having duties—was masculine. Women were distinctly second-class citizens, explicitly

when they were denied the right to vote, and implicitly when, even after gaining this right, women's access to paid work was limited by both law and custom. Men gained social rights—to pensions, unemployment insurance and the like—on the basis of their paid work, while women's access to benefits was usually mediated by their relationship to men. This set of arrangements has been challenged by women's movement into the realm of paid work. Women are gaining symbolic and material resources for citizenship, as well as access to benefits initially created with male workers in mind. Their increasing presence in the workforce has also spurred the development of new forms of income security, such as parental leaves, and the expansion of existing programmes for maternity coverage.

Because of the history of denying or limiting women's access to employment, the very right to work is a significant aspect of citizenship (Orloff, 1993a). Such access is in one way guaranteed by outlawing gender discrimination (a civil right). However, in the context of the gender division of caregiving labour, women (and men) with responsibility for caregiving also need services in order to enter employment, as well as some accommodation for maternity and time for caregiving (Knijn and Kremer, 1997). A right to work implies that women, like men, are free not to care—that is, to pursue their own career and interests (Land and Rose, 1985; Lewis, 1997a; Orloff, 1997). (Note that this applies to caregiving responsibilities not freely assumed; to the extent that childbearing is by choice, one cannot speak of a “right not to care” for one's children.) This means there must be public alternatives to kin-based caregiving, for all of us need to be cared for at various times in our lives—the right to be cared for refers to public guarantees that services will be provided whether or not we have friends and family willing and available to help (Knijn and Kremer, 1997; Fineman, 1995).

A pioneering attempt to understand welfare states' orientations toward women's employment was Jane Lewis's (1992) concept of the male breadwinner model, institutionalized in varying degrees in the social policy regimes of all Western countries. Lewis argues for considering policy regimes in terms of their different levels of commitment to a male breadwinner-female housewife household form, which in ideal-typical form would “find married women excluded from the labour market, firmly subordinated to their husbands for the purposes of social security entitlements and tax, and expected to undertake the work of caring (for children and other dependants) at home without public support” (Lewis, 1992:162). Lewis compares France, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, finding the United Kingdom and Ireland strongly committed to the breadwinner form, France only moderately so, and Sweden only weakly so, with support instead going to dual-earner households; Germany is also categorized as a strong breadwinner regime (Ostner and Lewis, 1995). Lewis's exercise highlighted the gendered assumptions of policy makers about family forms, and the ways that this contributed to the social organization of care.<sup>5</sup> It shows as well that there are gender differences within the regime groupings proposed by Esping-Andersen (1990). In the male breadwinner regime formulation, women's exclusion from paid work, their

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<sup>5</sup> Lewis (1997a) was less concerned with other outcomes, such as the level of poverty among single mothers. She has since noted that if one looks at more countries, differences in outcomes are clear, even if the logic of supporting male breadwinner-female housewife families is the same.

subordination in a male-headed family and their responsibility for care, undertaken in the private sphere are joined – as they are in male breadwinner ideology.<sup>6</sup>

A good deal of empirical work has focused on the extent to which services and welfare broadly speaking are publicly or privately provided, with the common assumption that women's employment depends on the availability of public services and that the provision of public services is in turn a reflection of a "dual earner" gender ideology – that is, an orientation that accepts that men and women should both be in the labour force. In an exemplary analysis of a large number of developed countries, Gornick et al. (1997) find that support for mothers' employment, measured in terms of policies that provide care for young children and allow women to maintain employment continuity (through paid leaves), is distinct from general support for families with children, and varies considerably across nations. The Nordic countries provide the best public support for mothers' employment, followed by France and Belgium. They suggest, but do not demonstrate, that these packages are related to mothers' employment rates. However, stressing the low levels of public services in North America, they avoid addressing the issue of how high women's employment rates in Canada and the United States are possible.

These formulations work relatively well for European countries. Few fail to see the distinctiveness of the Nordic countries, with official gender-equality policies supporting dual-earner families and women's employment, coupled with extensive public care services (Huber and Stephens, 2001). The rest of the European countries feature official policies that may give lip-service to gender equality but in various ways fail to support the goal of increasing women's employment levels and quality, most significantly in leaving care to be provided privately. There is little development of public services for the care of children, but general support to families with children is relatively high – much of it concentrated on supporting the households of male breadwinners or educating young children. However, France stands out among the non-Nordic countries as having made a commitment to women's employment and public services, though not in as fully an egalitarian manner as the Nordic group.<sup>7</sup> Yet what to make of countries – mainly those outside Europe, but including Switzerland – that provide little in the way of public services to facilitate women's employment or support for breadwinner (or other) families?

Here, Esping-Andersen's (1990, 1999) tripartite regime typology, especially in its revised form, may be helpful. In the more recent work, in response to feminist critiques and research, Esping-Andersen has undertaken a thorough revision of his notion of regimes – previously defined

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<sup>6</sup> Following Lewis, Sainsbury (1994 and 1996) proposes examining states in terms of their similarity to one of two gendered ideal-types: the breadwinner model (similar to Lewis's conception) and an "individual model", also called a "dual earner model", where both men and women are earners and carers, benefits are targeted to individuals, and much caring work is paid and provided publicly. The models are defined in terms of linked elements: family ideology (which implies particular visions of the gender division of labour and economic dependency); the bases of entitlement, especially whether these are individual or derived; women's access to employment; and public versus private provision of care. Again, familial, or gender, ideology is connected to the social organization of care. She sees a pattern of Sweden – standing in for the Nordic countries – combining commitment to a gender-egalitarian ideology, women's employment and extensive public services opposed to other European countries, such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. In this pattern, gender ideologies uphold a traditional division of labour, women's benefits are based on their husbands' employment, women's employment is not promoted and the state provides few care services.

<sup>7</sup> Analysts point out other significant differences among this group, for example in the extent to which caregiving represents a basis for women's citizenship claims, apart from whatever benefits they might gain as the wives of breadwinners – a dimension important for relative poverty levels (see, for example, Knijn, 1994).

almost exclusively by state-market relations—to incorporate the role of families in welfare provisioning. He reconsiders and then reconfirms his well-known tripartite typology of social-democratic, conservative-corporatist and liberal regimes. Although it does not change his basic typology—he has no way to theorize these differences—Esping-Andersen does acknowledge service-provisioning differences within regime types identified by feminist scholars—France and Belgium differ from other conservative continental European countries, while among the liberal group, the United States differs from the United Kingdom. And he does allow that the southern European grouping (as compared to the larger conservative group) is notable principally for its degree of “familialism” (leaving service provision to families). His revised regime analysis highlights new material on household economies, showing that family provisioning remains significant and that non-familial childcare provision—by states or markets—is critical for women’s employment. Differences in service provisioning across regimes do affect women’s employment and fertility, important for their contribution to welfare-state sustainability and economic productivity. Esping-Andersen borrows Saraceno’s (and Lister’s (1997)) concept of “defamilialization” to denote provision of services outside the family, by either state or market (thus missing the other, feminist sense of the term as decreasing women’s economic dependency that Lister, Saraceno and many others stress). Thus, “liberal” regimes promote women’s employment by means other than public services. Defamilialization makes possible relatively high female employment levels and generates employment by increasing demands for services. However, high levels of familialism have contributed (paradoxically, since the dominant ideologies of these countries are pro-natalist as well as gender-traditionalist) to a low-employment and low-fertility equilibrium.

In a project coming out of the same social-democratic political and theoretical tradition, Korpi (2000) groups countries in terms of “gender policy models”, identifying dual-earner, general family support, and market-oriented models. The models are defined in terms of the level of public care services provided, and the level of family support through transfers. Extensive public services for caring promote women’s employment, while their absence constrains it. Extensive transfers to families, if provided in the absence of public services, are seen as bolstering the male breadwinner household, and are therefore associated with low levels of women’s employment. He argues that the dual-earner model is associated with the gender-egalitarian politics of the social democratic parties that have dominated the Nordic countries, and the general family model is associated with confessional parties, which attempt to shore up “traditional” family relations in the face of capitalist market pressures. Secular conservative parties, which put market forces above gender or family considerations, are associated with market-oriented policies. High levels of services along with some transfers support a dual-earner model, while generous transfers combined with lack of services—which he refers to as a general family support package—are tied to the traditional breadwinner model. But, like Esping-Andersen, Korpi identifies a group that leaves services and income to market forces; here, low transfers and low levels of public services are linked to intermediate levels of women’s employment—higher than in the general family support group, but lower than the dual-earner group.

- “Dual earner” (Lewis’s weak male breadwinner/dual-earner regime; Esping-Andersen’s social-democratic regime): Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden;

features extensive public services plus generous transfers to families; extensive defamilialization.

- “General family support” (Lewis’ strong male breadwinner model; Esping-Andersen’s conservative regime): Austria, Belgium, France (here his identification departs from Lewis’), Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain; features moderate to generous transfers, some tax breaks for housewives, but lacks public services; little defamilialization.
- “Market-oriented” (Esping-Andersen’s liberal regime): Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States; features few state services and only residual transfers; Esping-Andersen notes defamilialization through markets in Canada and the United States.

Korpi goes on to investigate how countries grouped in terms of their gender policy models rank in terms of gender differences in the proportion of men and women outside the labour force; differences between married men and women; differences between men and mothers with at least one preschool child; differences in the proportion with marginal job attachment; and negative attitudes toward women’s employment among older and younger cohorts. Korpi’s descriptive statistics, reproduced in table 2, are quite useful in revealing the gendered patterns of labour force participation that characterize the advanced industrial countries.

Korpi’s country rankings confirm the general trends he predicted, but with some signal exceptions. While the dual-earner support group stands apart as that with the lowest gender differences, it is harder to make the case that the market-oriented countries as a group are distinct from general family support countries, particularly in the key indicator of how the employment level of mothers of young children differs from that of men their age. Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom are more comparable to the general family support group than to the North American countries, while Belgium and France stand out among the general family support group for their relatively low gaps. This would seem to suggest the need for a further dimension to capture the character of gendered work patterns promoted through social policy.



**Table 2: Gender policy models and gender differences in labour force participation or having marginal job attachment, and negative attitudes toward women's employment by age in 18 countries**

Country	Gender policy model	Gender differences (%) with respect to outside of labour force				Negative attitudes toward women's employment (%) <sup>e</sup>		
		Women-men <sup>a</sup>	Rank	Women-men <sup>b</sup> (married)	Mothers-men <sup>c</sup>	Marginal job attachment <sup>d</sup>	Women aged 25–54 years	Women aged 55–76 years
Ireland	General family support	55	(1)	57	60	2	36	58
Italy	General family support	46	(2)	47	43	1	34	48
Netherlands	General family support	43	(3)	42	58	8	27	46
Belgium	General family support	36	(4)	34	28	4	—	—
Germany	General family support	32	(7)	36	53	4	38	56
Austria	General family support	(30)	(8)	34	42	3	34	54
France	General family support	26	(10)	29	33	3	—	—
Japan	Market oriented	36	(5)	—	—	3	39	47
Australia	Market oriented	34	(6)	34	47	4	34	49
Switzerland	Market oriented	(30)	(9)	—	—	—	—	—
United Kingdom	Market oriented	25	(11)	24	47	11	27	40
New Zealand	Market oriented	24	(12)	—	55	—	32	47
United States	Market oriented	23	(13)	25	34	2	28	43
Canada	Market oriented	23	(14)	19	28	2	21	35
Norway	Dual-earner support	17	(15)	15	16	10	24	49
Denmark	Dual-earner support	9	(16)	7	8	2	—	—
Finland	Dual-earner support	7	(17)	9	13	1	—	—
Sweden	Dual-earner support	6	(18)	5	7	3	18	30

<sup>a</sup> Differences women-men, 25–54 years of age, average 1983 and 1990. <sup>b</sup> People about 25–49 years of age, circa 1990. <sup>c</sup> People about 25–39 years of age, mothers with at least one preschool child, circa 1990. <sup>d</sup> People working fewer than 20 hours per week, as percentage of population 15–64 years of age, average 1985 and 1994. <sup>e</sup> Average percentage of people choosing negative alternatives in response to nine attitude questions, 1994. **Source:** Korpi, 2000, pp. 158–159.

Korpi's country rankings confirm the general trends he predicted, but with some signal exceptions. While the dual-earner support group stands apart as that with the lowest gender differences, it is harder to make the case that the market-oriented countries as a group are distinct from general family support countries, particularly in the key indicator of how the employment level of mothers of young children differs from that of men their age. Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom are more comparable to the general family support group than to the North American countries, while Belgium and France stand out among the general family support group for their relatively low gaps. This would seem to suggest the need for a further dimension to capture the character of gendered work patterns promoted through social policy.

In previous work (O'Connor et al., 1999), I have argued that several dimensions of variation need to be examined separately: gender stratification, including both gender differentiation and gender inequality; the institutional division of labour among states, markets, families and other organizations in the provision of care and income; and the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household (similar to the feminist sense of defamilialization, discussed above). We contend that gender stratification reflects gender ideologies about women's and men's work and social arrangements with respect to the gender division of labour.

In our comparative study of four liberal welfare regimes—the Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States—we found important differences in gender ideologies and gender divisions of labour, reflected in differing patterns relative to women's access to paid work and the organization of caring labour, and in the ways policy supports women's capacity to form and maintain autonomous households. Social policies in Canada and the United States are premised on women's paid employment, and the traditional gender division of labour has been undermined to a greater extent than in Australia and the United Kingdom, where more traditional gender relations, reflected in a more pronounced division of labour and in greater institutional support for male breadwinners, have influenced policy developments. The latter two countries have developed something like a liberal (or perhaps more accurately, "lib-lab" (liberal-labour)) version of general family support—transfers are targeted, but they do support families in ways similar to the more generous and extensive European systems, reflecting the strength and capacity of organized labour and labour parties in a context of (secular) conservative dominance.<sup>8</sup> In Canada and the United States, the liberal model has incorporated women's paid work, especially via employment equity policies and the tax-encouraged market provision of services; indeed, while public childcare provision is limited, women's opportunities to compete for privileged positions in the job market have also been greater in North America than elsewhere. Welfare reforms are aimed at moving single mothers into paid employment. In contrast, in Australia and the United Kingdom, women's responsibility for caregiving, even if increasingly in combination with part-time work, is the premise of social policy, and is afforded some protections—particularly in relatively generous sole-parent provision, which may be of long duration. But "private" provision of

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<sup>8</sup> Castles (1994) has argued that Australia's cross-nationally unusual welfare state reflects the input of labour, and that protectionist policy and centralized wage setting were "social protection by other means", the functional equivalent of European welfare states. Later, he noted the gender content of these arrangements, calling them a "wage earners' welfare state".

care here is more likely to mean family than market, as in North America, and women are more likely to be part-time workers or housewives than in North America. Welfare reforms encourage women to depend economically at least partially on former partners, and will not force single mothers into full-time paid employment as in the US version.

To summarize, we can say that where women's employment is promoted, care has shifted to some extent to institutions other than the family. But there are different paths to this end. In the Nordic countries and France, this means care through public services; in Canada and the United States, care is largely provided by market institutions, supported with tax credits and some direct state subsidies (Gornick et al., 1997; O'Connor et al., 1999, Gustafsson, 1994; Mahon, 1997). But, reflecting a policy approach which is at best indifferent to—and certainly unsupportive of—women's employment, there is less non-familial care for children in the countries of continental and southern Europe, and Ireland (Saraceno, 1997).<sup>9</sup> While almost all European countries provide care for children from the age of three to six in the course of fulfilling an educational mission, care for under-threes, essential for mothers' employment, is much less developed outside of the Nordic countries and France. Care for school-aged children is de facto provided by elementary schools, but there is less provision for after-school hours, and school days in certain countries, for example Germany, are irregular. Again, the Nordic countries provide services most comprehensively.

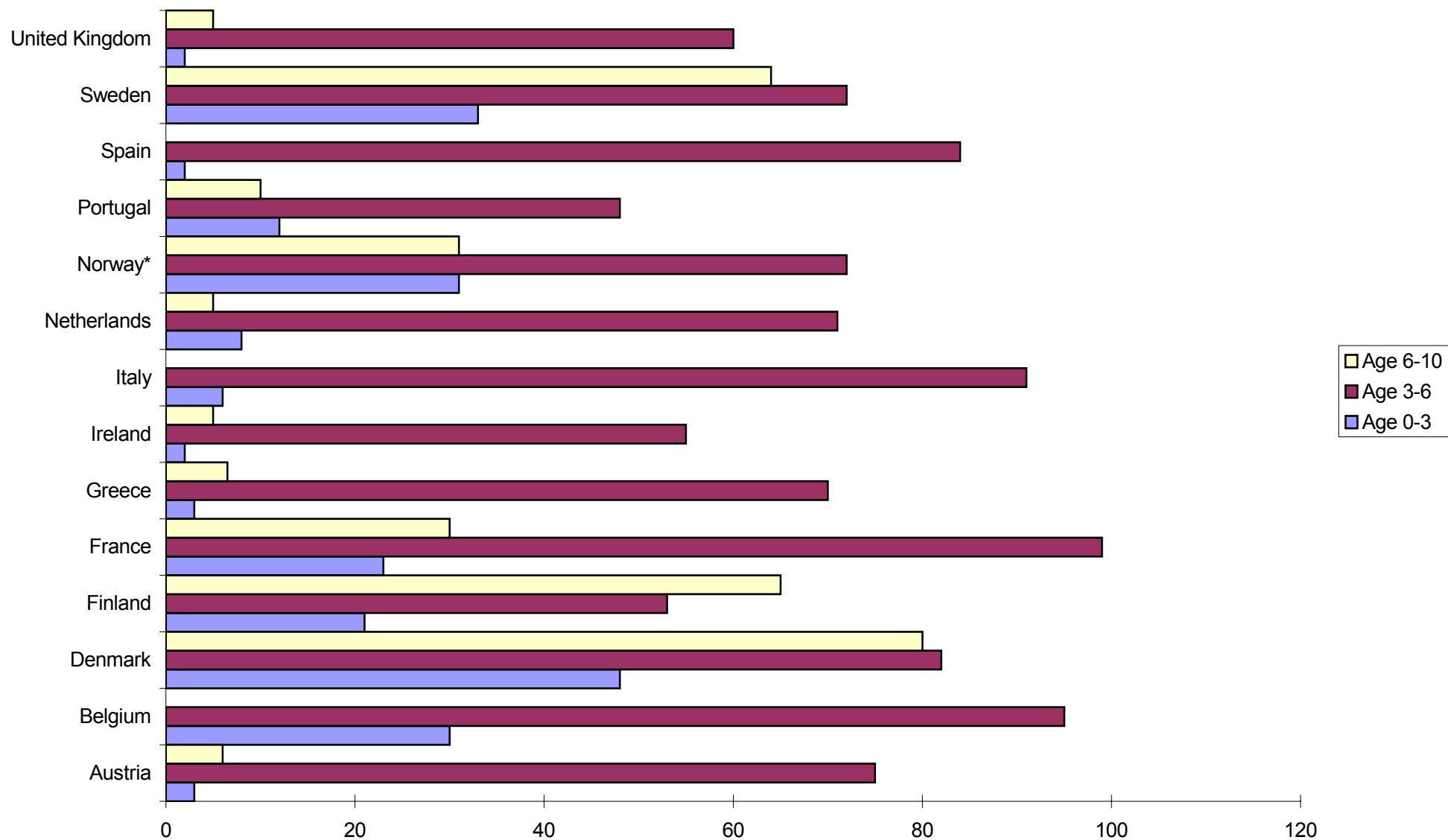
The Netherlands presents an emergent challenge to this view—under the rubric of a “combination model”, women's employment is definitely being promoted, as is men's care; however, care services have not yet been extensively developed. Instead of a greater development of public services to allow high levels of employment, the Dutch seem to be saying they will cut back on employment to allow care. It is unclear whether or not this will prove compatible with gender equality, for women are still scaling back more than are men, but one should note that Dutch men have the highest levels of part-time work in Europe, and regulations about work time are being reformed to allow flexibility from the point of view of workers. Platenga (2001) describes it thus:

The point of departure of the combination model is a balanced combination of paid and unpaid care work, whereas the unpaid care work is equally shared between men and women. The core concept here is that justice is done to both paid and unpaid work. Depending on the life-cycle phase, both men and women should be able to choose a personal mix of paid labour in large part-time (short full-time) jobs, part-time household production of care and part-time outsourcing of care. With some adjustments and with many concrete measures still to be developed, the combination model has been adopted by the Dutch government as the main guideline for policies in the field of labour and care ... flexible, non-full-time working hours [that is, individualized, non-standard working hours] for both men and women are deemed indispensable to reach gender equality.

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<sup>9</sup> Provision for eldercare has not been as extensively researched as childcare, but is clearly central in resolving the care “crisis” (Knijn and Kremer, 1997).

**Figure 6: Provisions of publicly funded childcare services\* in selected industrialized countries**  
 (percentage of children attending/places available in publicly funded services for children)



\* Defined as publicly funded to at least 75 per cent. Norway's youngest age group is 1-2 years.

Source: European Commission, **Reconciliation Between Work and Family Life in Europe**, 1998.

In a summary consideration of the various clusters proposed by Esping-Andersen, Korpi and Lewis—as modified by the insights supplied by O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver—we look at the extent to which regimes promote familialism versus women's employment (the relative extent of defamilialization), and also the ways in which gender differentiation and gender ideologies are reflected in regime arrangements. While there are significant similarities with respect to gender policies among the countries within each regime, there are also likenesses between countries from different regimes in terms of outcomes, even if the institutional modalities for achieving these outcomes are distinctive. However, there also appear to be significant gendered differences within regimes, which Korpi and Esping-Andersen deal with cursorily at best—they are noticed, but not fully theorized. Feminists' notion of gender differentiation or gender ideology, as reflected in assumptions about the male breadwinner model, are needed to make sense of how policies affect women's employment.

The social-democratic regimes are notable for their extensive service provision; this has been critical in supporting women's, especially mothers', employment. But within the social-democratic cluster, Norway differs from Denmark and Sweden in terms of "models of motherhood", according to Leira (1992); this is reflected in less extensive service provision and somewhat lower participation rates by Norwegian mothers with very young children. In other words, gender ideologies—and the gender division of labour—differ even among the social-democratic regimes.

But there is more than one path to high women's employment and their economic independence; the social-democratic countries are joined by others. France stands out among continental European countries—also grouped as the conservative/general family support cluster—for featuring extensive publicly supported childcare services, leaves and so on, and mothers' employment rates are higher than in other continental European countries, where service provision is conspicuous in its absence. Canada and the United States, liberal regimes, also display relatively high rates of mothers' employment and women's economic independence, but without extensive public services. How is this possible? Low wages make childcare affordable for many families, who are also aided by tax subsidies; however, the situation of low-paid childcare workers exemplifies the pitfalls of this system: care for the poor is still often out of financial reach, or may be of poor quality. Targeted public services enable others to work. Liberalism favours private provision; but "private" can mean market or family. North American countries have supported market provision in various ways, which has facilitated women's employment. Esping-Andersen (1999) shows that the cost of childcare as a proportion of the average income for a working-class, dual-earner family is about the same in the United States as in Denmark, and is less than in France; this data is reproduced in table 3. Finally, Portugal, alone among the service-scarce southern European countries, features relatively high levels of women's employment, most full-time; according to Daly (2000) this reflects the fact that women simply must work, but others have suggested the role of women's determination to preserve their careers. Note that while outcomes—relatively high levels of women's employment—are similar, the policies by which they are achieved differ, especially between liberal North American countries and social-democratic Nordic ones.

**Table 3: The net, post-transfer/tax cost of childcare for a family with average income (two children under age three, mid-1990s)**

Country	Net cost as a percentage of average family income <sup>a</sup>
Denmark	10.9
Sweden	15.7
France <sup>b</sup>	9.4
Germany	19.4
Netherlands	23.2
Italy	39.3
United Kingdom	28.1
United States	10.6

<sup>a</sup> Average production worker income, plus 66 per cent (wife's assumed income). <sup>b</sup> French data are adjusted for a FF2,000 per month additional subsidy for daycare. Note also that the French figures reflect the situation prior to the introduction of an income test. **Source:** Esping-Andersen, 1999, table 4.4.

The conservative, general family support countries are notable for the familialism of their welfare regimes, which has meant that caregiving burdens are borne by families—especially women, creating difficulties in reconciling employment and care and lower participation rates than elsewhere. (This has been linked to the very low fertility regime prevalent in many of these countries as well.) Yet French patterns of women's employment differ from those in Austria, Belgium (perhaps), Germany and the Netherlands; again, a somewhat different gender division of labour can be recognized—what Lewis (1992) has called a “modified male breadwinner regime”, in contrast to the “strong male breadwinner” model institutionalized in, for example, Germany. However, judging from historical analyses of the origins of France's family policy (for example, Pedersen, 1993; Jenson, 1986), discussed below, the sources of this set of provisions is distinctive from that prevailing in Scandinavia. It was not social-democratic forces that led to the initiation (in the pre-Second World War period) of the set of policies that French mothers use today to reconcile work and care, but pro-natalists and state and church elites who wanted to support reproduction, compromising with employers who wanted to employ women workers. Recent trends in the Netherlands may lead to a novel approach to women's employment; perhaps the Dutch will pioneer a part-time worker model for both men and women.

In the countries of southern Europe, except Portugal, there is little market or state provision for young children or the elderly, and most mothers drop out of formal employment, but a minority work full-time, as part-time jobs are few and service sector employment is scarce (Saraceno, 1994; Esping-Andersen, 1999). Esping-Andersen groups these countries with other continental European states as conservative regimes, although others have argued that these patterns of employment, along with a familialist orientation in social policy, justify a separate regime grouping (see, for example, Gonzalez et al., 2000). Ireland seems to fit here as well, although with somewhat different policies for single mothers, and more part-time work for all women.

But familialism is not limited to continental Europe. Liberal Britain and Australia (and maybe to a more limited degree, social-democratic Norway) also display some features of familialism in

their systems. However, these countries are not so constrained by strong labour regulation and social security costs, and have therefore seen somewhat higher participation rates for women, and less severe consequences for fertility than in the most familialist systems; in addition, stronger systems of support for women's autonomous households and lower levels of backing for male breadwinners are reflected in higher proportions of single-mother households than in the conservative regimes.

## **Social Provision and Gender (In)Equality**

Analysts of state systems of social provision have always been concerned about the extent to which poverty is alleviated and citizens' living standards—such as being able to maintain a household—are upheld, especially when citizens are without employment, but also in situations of special need, such as with the presence of young children. But, as noted above, the situation for women is complicated by their uneven incorporation into paid work, as a basis for gaining entitlements to such provisions as unemployment and pensions, in addition to parental leave in some countries, and continuing economic dependency (Hobson, 1990 and 1994). This section questions whether countries have welfare services and state transfers that provide a decent standard of living for women when they are out of the labour force, during periods of full-time care, especially when they are not supported by a male head of household as in the case of female heads of households, and also in retirement. A decent standard of living should provide all adults—including unpartnered women—with the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household, and should at least imply living above the poverty line.

## **Gender in the Development of the Welfare State**

If employment is the principal means by which people are to support households, what happens when they are unable to find employment or to hold jobs because of disability or retirement? Can they maintain an independent household and uphold a decent standard of living? These have been the classic questions of the welfare state. Programmes of social insurance, social assistance, universal citizenship entitlement and public services—that have come to define a “welfare state”—developed in the first half of the century in Europe, North America and the Antipodes (and then in Latin America) as a complex set of political responses to industrialization, urbanization, demographic changes, democratization and bureaucratization (Orloff, 1993b; Flora and Alber, 1981). The political mobilization of working classes and, in some places, women's movements, was critical in transforming systems of social provision from deterrent poor relief and discretionary charity to programmes based on social rights of citizenship. But as noted above, women and men were not equivalent with respect to the social rights developed over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, nor did they participate in equivalent ways politically in demanding state social protection.

Western systems of social provision were built on a gender division of labour in which women were mothers, wives, caregivers and domestic workers—even if they also worked for pay—while

men supported families economically, almost always through paid labour.<sup>10</sup> Social policies complemented the family wage system, in which men's relatively superior wages and tax advantages were justified partly in terms of their financial responsibility for dependent wives and children, and in which women were excluded from the paid labour force or from favoured positions within it. In the absence of the universal motherhood endowments for full-time caregivers or generous family allowances coupled with equal pay for men and women called for by the most visionary reformers (for example, Eleanor Rathbone), the gender division of labour in a capitalist wage economy created women's economic dependence on men and their disproportionate vulnerability to poverty when outside marriage (Pedersen, 1989; 1993). Social provision for women was almost always a back-up to the family wage system—a kind of insurance against family failures analogous to the protection from market failures that men received from social insurance. But this provision was almost always ungenerous and limited to women who had been deprived of breadwinners, rather than contributing to the economic independence of all women on the basis of caregiving work.

Gender difference and inequality were institutionalized in the systems of all countries, more deeply in some than in others. There were different expectations about paid work versus caregiving, and rules and benefits for men (wage workers) and for women (family members, caregivers and only secondarily, if at all, workers). At the systemic level, gender relations were reflected in a gendered dualism in all systems of social provision: some programmes dealt with risks of income interruption associated with the labour market, such as unemployment and retirement, while others targeted the risks of economically dependent family members associated with family dissolution, such as widowhood. The family-related programmes were used almost exclusively by women and were usually inferior to programmes targeting paid workers, mainly men. In addition, programmes were characterized by what we would now call sex discrimination; for example, women, even when paid workers, did not have the same pension rights as men.

These gendered systems of social provision have been challenged by changing social arrangements, with women increasingly participating in paid labour and families and marriage no longer offering stable economic support for those remaining outside or on the margins of the paid labour force. Existing social provision for workers, developed with men's patterns of work and care in mind, is often inadequate for women workers, particularly when they have caregiving responsibilities that limit their capacities to be employed. Today's developed countries are committed to the standard of equal treatment of men and women within social security systems (Brocas et al., 1990). Discrimination based on sex is outlawed. This means that when men and women are equally situated, they must be treated the same with respect to entitlement to social provision. Yet, as has been detailed in the previous section, men and women are very often not equally situated, especially in that women are far more likely to engage in caregiving that variously limits their participation in paid work. Some scholars argue that many women choose to make sacrifices in employment in order to attend to their families, and view this as a positive (for example, Blossfeld

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<sup>10</sup> This description of the gender division of labour is sufficiently general that it could fit today's conditions. But in the period of the origins of modern social provision, overall levels of women's participation in paid employment were far lower than today, and this was especially notable for married women and mothers.



and Hakim, 1997; Becker, 1981). Others would argue that such "choices" are at least in part the result of adaptive preferences in the context of opportunities still strongly structured by gender. But however part-time or interrupted employment are evaluated, such arrangements do mean that men and women are not in the same situation with respect to current economic status, including vulnerability to poverty, and to capacities to claim employment-based benefits in the present or in the future—pension entitlements are especially affected by interrupted work careers and periods of low income. To date, equal treatment for the equally situated has precluded equal treatment for the differently situated.

## **Provision for Workers Who Are Caregivers**

Workers with caregiving responsibilities—usually but not always women—benefit from general protections afforded workers. Esping-Andersen referred to this as "decommodification", understood as the degree to which individuals' typical life situations are freed from dependence on the labour market. But they will also sometimes need other protections, such as shorter workdays or full-time leaves: what Knijn and Kremer (1997) call "time to care". They also need some way to earn adequate old-age pension protection, even though they are less likely to participate in paid work over the life course in ways similar to men, for whose employment patterns pension systems were designed. Existing social provision for those suffering from family failures is also challenged by new social realities. First, marriage is less stable and non-marital births are increasingly acceptable, so that more women find themselves without the economic security provided (at least ideally) by relationships with breadwinners. Second, changing norms for women's employment have made the presumption of many programmes for single mothers—that they should be engaged in full-time caregiving, as were married women—increasingly untenable. Most systems of support for single mothers have been incorporating employment requirements or incentives; yet when provision for the demands of caregiving (for example, maternity or caring for young, disabled or sick children) is inadequate, or unemployment coverage is out of reach, single mothers often call on sole-parent provision. Provision for widows, much of which initially developed on the presumption that women would gain entitlement on the basis of husbands' work records, is also faced with the challenges created by divorce and changing work patterns. How can equitable pension provision be crafted for people who have organized their lives according to different patterns of paid and unpaid work? Is it fair, for example, that those who have spent their lives caring for others—but making no individual contributions to social insurance systems—receive lower pensions than those who earned wages and made contributions to pension systems?

Parental leave and maternity programmes play an important role in allowing women to take up employment on more equitable terms by guaranteeing income security when they must attend to caregiving. But periods out of the workforce are also significant for their impact on retirement coverage; given that most retirement systems require lifelong contributions for workers to receive full pensions, intermittent participation undercuts retirement security. This problem has recently been addressed in some countries with the development of caregiving credits—time out of the workforce for caring for children (and sometimes others) is counted as insured time, or caregiving periods are excluded from average salary for pension benefit calculation.

**Table 4: Retirement provisions, credited periods for caregiving, and maternity benefits**

Country	Retirement age	Credited periods	Maternity benefits	Conditions for full pension
<b>Australia</b> Dual system, with means-tested social security pensions and mandatory occupational earnings-based pensions.	Social Security Pension: Men 65; Women 61.5, to be raised to 65. Occupational Pension: 55, if permanently retired.	None	Received as sickness benefits.	Social Security Pension: 10 years continuous residence, plus age requirement (means-tested). Occupational Pension: lump sum paid at declaration of retirement.
<b>Austria</b> Pay-as-you-go insurance system for employees.	Men: 65 Women: 60, with progressive increase to 65 by 2028.	For child-raising years (maximum of 4 years per child), a supplement to the pension is due in the amount of 1.83% per year of a set amount of S 6,586 (ECU 474). Periods in which maternity benefits are received (periods of maternity leave). Periods of child-raising (maximum of 4 years per child).	If there is no continued payment of wages and salaries: 8 weeks before and after confinement at average net income of last 3 months.	40 years of contribution.
<b>Belgium</b> Pay as you go insurance system for employees, based primarily on contributions.	Women: was 61, will be 65 by 2009. Men: 65.	Period of maternity leave normally credited toward pension.	Maternity leave: 7 weeks pre-natal, 6 of which are optional and may be taken after the mandatory postnatal leave or after the newborn is released from a long hospital stay; 8 weeks mandatory postnatal leave. Compensated at 82% of wages for the first 30 days, and at reduced levels for additional time.	Women: 41 years of contribution, will be 45 years by 2009. Men: 45 years of contribution.
<b>Canada</b> Dual universal pension, plus social insurance.	65	Years spent caring for a child under age 7, in which there were low or no earnings, may be excluded from base pension average.	Received as unemployment benefits.	Age, residence and contribution requirements.
<b>Denmark</b> Dual system: 1. Universal national pension. 2. Supplementary social insurance pension for employees.	67	For the supplementary pension, salaried workers who take up a non-salaried activity may remain in the scheme, on a voluntary basis, if they have made 3 years of contributions.	Calculated on earnings, as for sickness benefits.	Full national pension benefits after 40 years of residence between the ages of 15 and 67.
<b>Finland</b> Dual system of insurance (employment pension) and a universal coverage system (national pension) guaranteeing a minimum pension.	65	If maternity leave is less than one year, that year is usually credited to insured person.	Allowance paid to mother for 105 consecutive calendar days except Sundays, 30–50 of which before expected date of confinement.	National pension: 40 years of residence in Finland between the ages of 16 and 65 for a full pension. Employment pension: 40 years of employment/self-employment.
<b>France</b> Insurance system with contribution-based benefits. Compulsory supplementary pension schemes (insurance system) for all employed under the general pension scheme, or social insurance system for farmers.	60	Mothers get credit for two years of insurance per child. Credits for parental leaves up to three years. Periods when maternity leave benefits are drawn. Parents raising three or more children get a pension bonus.	Daily allowance only for employees interrupting their work for 16 weeks (six before confinement and 10 after). Amount equals net salary, with ceiling.	Has worked 160 quarters, or is 65 years of age, or belongs to a special group (disability, etc.).
<b>Germany</b> Compulsory insurance for employees based on contributions.	65	For parents born after 1921, 12 months are counted as insured months after birth of child if a parent stayed home. For children born after 1992, parent staying home gets credit of up to 36 months.	Maternity allowance (only in case salary stops): six weeks prior to and eight weeks after confinement. Maternity leave at average wage, with ceiling.	Reaching a certain age and qualifying period.

Country	Retirement age	Credited periods	Maternity benefits	Conditions for full pension
<b>Greece</b> Compulsory insurance system for employees, based on contributions.	Women: was 60 until 1993, now 65 for workers insured since 1993. Men: 65. Earlier retirement for mothers with adequate work history who have a minor or disabled child.	Option to repay missing parental leave periods up to three months per child after the birth.	Maternity allowance (taxable) paid for 56 days before and 56 days after the birth.	Pre-1993: 35 contribution years or 10,500 working days for pension at 80% of pensionable income. Post-1993: 35 contribution years for pension at 60% of pensionable income.
<b>Ireland</b> Contribution-based social insurance system for employees and self-employed people.	65 for retirement pension, 66 for old age pension.	Period when maternity benefits are drawn. Periods of up to 20 years spent by an insured person caring for children under 12 years, or providing care to incapacitated people of any age, can be disregarded for the purpose of calculating entitlement to Old Age Contributory Pension.	14 weeks: at least four must be taken before and four after confinement. Benefits at 70% of average weekly earnings, within a fixed range.	Has an annual average of 48 weekly contributions, is insured before age 55, and has at least 156 contribution weeks paid.
<b>Italy</b> Insurance system based on contributions for salaried workers, with separate systems for farmers, artisans and merchants.	Men: will be 65. Women: will be 60.	Total consideration for periods of maternity.	Maternity allowance of two months before and three months after birth (six optional supplementary months); 80% of wages for initial leave, 30% for supplementary leave.	40 years of insurance and contribution.
<b>Japan</b> Two-tier social insurance system: 1. Flat rate national pension programme for all residents. 2. Earnings-related employees' pension insurance.	National Pension: 65. Employees' Pension: 60, or 55 for certain categories of workers.	No credits.	42 days before and 56 days after confinement, at 60% of average daily basic wage.	25 years of contribution, age requirements.
<b>Luxembourg</b> Compulsory insurance for those engaging in any professional activity. Voluntary insurance option.	65	Periods for the rearing of children, periods during which a dependent was cared for.	Eight weeks before presumed date of confinement and eight weeks after effective date of confinement, at 100% of salary.	40 years of contribution.
<b>Netherlands</b> System of universal coverage, financed with contributions on earned incomes. Compulsory supplementary pension schemes for employees based on agreements between social partners.	65	No credits. For every year in which there was no insurance, an amount of 2% of the full pension is deducted.	Confinement allowance: 16 weeks (only in the case of salary stoppage). 100% of daily wage, with ceiling.	50 years of insurance.
<b>Portugal</b> Insurance system. Benefits depend on contributions. The law provides for supplementary conventional schemes as an option.	65	Maternity leave periods, periods spent caring for children.	98 days at 100% of average daily wage.	40 years of contribution.
<b>Spain</b> Compulsory insurance system for all employees based on contributions.	65	The first year of parental leave for a child under age three is considered a period of effective contributions.	Maternity allowance for a maximum of 16 weeks at 100% daily salary, less contributions.	35 years of contribution.
<b>Sweden</b> Compulsory and universal coverage consisting of two parts: 1. National flat-rate basic pension based on residence in Sweden and financed out of general revenue and out of contributions. 2. National income-related supplementary pension scheme is a pay-as-you-go benefit-defined system financed by employers' contributions, based on the wage bill.	65	To complete the number of years required for a full supplementary pension, years during which a parent has taken care of a child under the age of three could be taken into consideration.	Parental cash benefit is payable during 450 days. The days may be taken out 60 days before expected confinement by the mother and by either of the parents until the child is eight years old. Temporary parental benefit may be taken out for a maximum of 60 days per year until the child is 12 years old. (In certain cases the benefit could be extended.) Cash benefit is 80% of the income carrying sickness benefits rights.	At least 40 years residence, or at least 30 years of employment for national system. 30 years employment for supplementary pension.

Country	Retirement age	Credited periods	Maternity benefits	Conditions for full pension
<b>United Kingdom</b> Contributory State Retirement Pension scheme (for people who have reached state retirement age) made up of a flat-rate Basic Pension, an earnings-related pension (SERPS) and an earnings-related Graduated Retirement Benefit. A non-contributory state pension is payable to certain persons aged 80 years and over (see table XII.2). Voluntary supplementary pension schemes may be used to replace benefits provided by SERPS.	Men: 65. Women: 60, with gradual increase to 65 by 2020.	Number of years required for full pension reduced by number of years (after 1978) spent at home caring for children or sick or disabled person (Home Responsibilities Protection).	Statutory Mandatory Pay and Maternity Allowance (and leave) are payable for up to 18 weeks, at 90% of average earnings for the first 6 weeks. Flat rate for remaining 12 weeks.	Contributions paid or credited for 90% of years in "working life" [i.e. from age 16 to age 65 men/60 women]. Generally this means that for full amount of pension, contributions must be paid or credited for 44 years (men) and 39 years (women).
<b>United States</b> Social insurance system based on earnings.	65, increasing to 67 by 2027.	None.	No mandatory cash benefits.	40 quarters of coverage.

Sources: **Mutual Information System on Social Protection in the Member States of the European Union (MISSOC)**, Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (Unit V/E/2), [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/soc-prot/missoc98/](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/missoc98/). **Social Security Pensions: Development and Reform**, C. Gillion et al. (eds.), ILO, Geneva, 2000, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/socsec/publ/exec.htm>. **Social Security Programs Throughout the World**, United States Social Security Administration, 1999, <http://www.ssa.gov/statistics/ssptw99.html>.

Maternity leave and benefits to replace lost income are well-established parts of the systems of social provision in almost all countries. However, coverage is often limited by the exclusion of certain categories of workers, or by stiff eligibility requirements (Moghadam, 1993). And, especially where women workers are not well-organized, there are problems of gender discrimination relating to women's need to utilize maternity leave provisions—an example of the overall discrimination against caregivers found in the labour market. The European Union (EU) mandates a leave of at least 14 weeks; Canada's unemployment insurance system provides a similar leave; and Australia offers leave through the mechanism of arbitrated labour agreements, which reach many but not all women (O'Connor et al., 1999). The United States offers no paid maternity leave; some women can take time off under parental and care leave provisions, but others, unable to do without pay, cannot.

Parental leave, more recently developed, is also a way to allow mainly women workers to maintain their connection to employment while attending to caregiving. The EU mandates an individual leave of at least three months for all workers, men and women, but it need not be paid. The United States has an unpaid care leave of three months, open to men and women, but restricted to the workers of large employers. Canada and Australia also have short leaves, some paid, available to men and women. Unpaid leaves are unlikely to be of much help those with low earnings levels. Yet parental leave is a right used mostly by women, as very few men avail themselves of their right to it; this has certain negative implications for employment careers, if not always for social insurance protection. Several countries—Austria, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden—have attempted to encourage men to take parental leave by lengthening the total family leave when men take part. In spite of this effort, only a small minority of men take parental leave (for example, on Sweden, see Haas, 1992).

Leave provisions are varied, and their effects are not always easy to discern (for good descriptions, see OECD, 1995; Gornick et al., 1997; Gauthier, 1996). Eligibility conditions restrict the coverage of leave in most countries to those with six to 12 months previous continuous service with the same employer; this may serve as a further incentive for women to work (OECD, 1995). In countries where leave provisions are generous but other employment supports are not well developed (Germany and Italy, for example), leave may reinforce the traditional division of labour and women's non-employment. In states with better-developed employment supports, such as the Nordic countries and France, taking leave to give birth and care for very young children is important for most women, but the fact that mostly women take leave may affect their employment opportunities – employers may prefer men for certain sorts of jobs. Such employer preferences may help to reinforce men's reluctance to become involved in care activities. Taking leave may be preferable to dropping out of the workforce entirely, but often confirms the mother as a family's secondary earner.

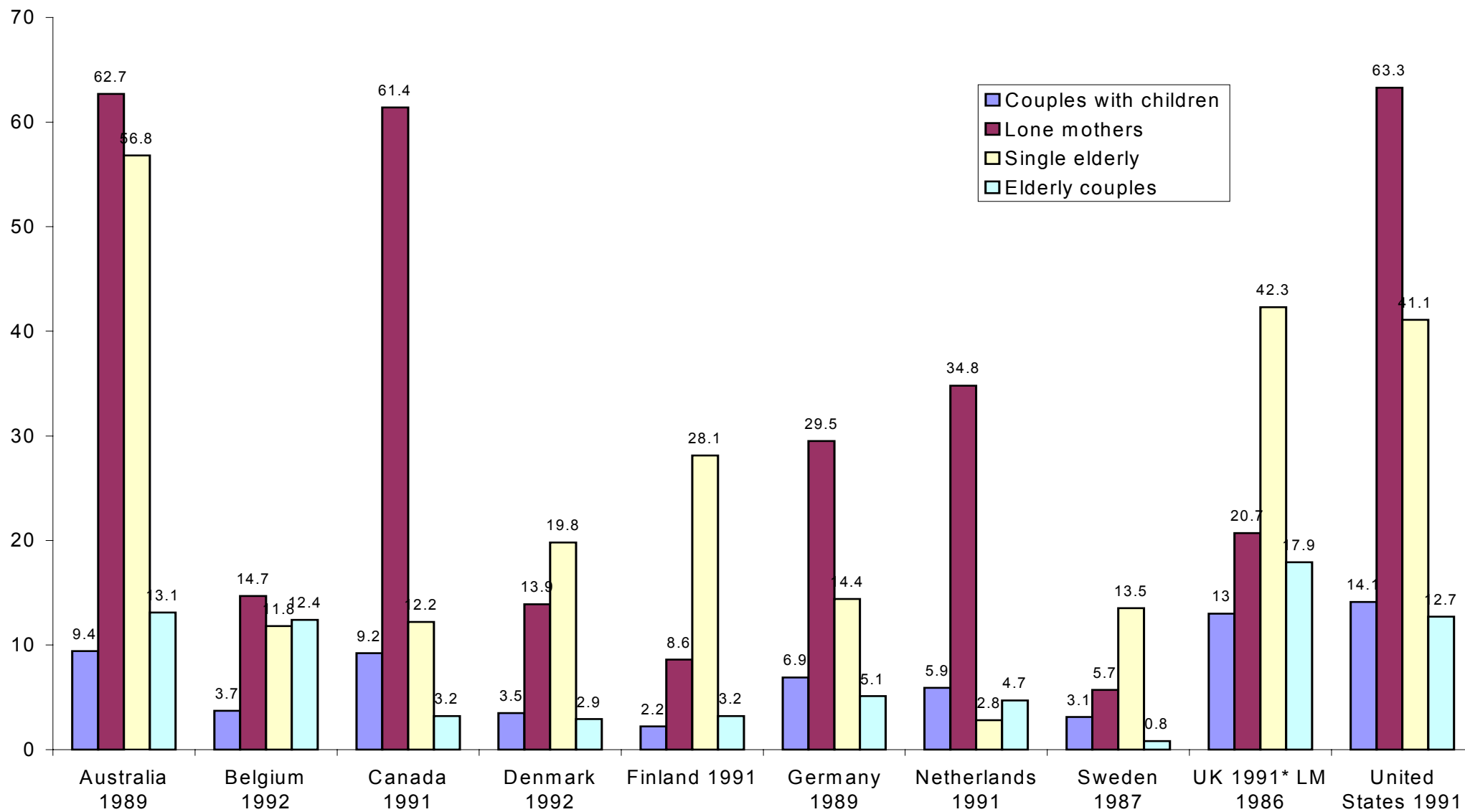
## Poverty and Economic Vulnerability

Ameliorating poverty and preventing it through insuring against socially recognized risks of income interruption are the most fundamental aspects of state social provision. This section assesses gender differences in poverty rates, which give some indication of how well states provide for the different (gendered) risks of income interruption.

Figure 7 presents data on how particularly vulnerable households in a number of countries fare in terms of having an income below half the median income, which is the common measure of poverty. All families with children face extra costs associated with raising them, and must also cope with caregiving responsibilities that cut into parents' employment capacity. And elderly people are usually out of the labour force, and dependent on pensions for their support. But within these groups, unpartnered women face the added problem of lack of access to a second income. Note that because poverty is measured at the household level, married women's, especially mothers', vulnerability to poverty is not easily examined. Thus, a focus on poverty rates alone can be misleading; when marriage rates are high, one sees relatively low poverty rates for women and low gender poverty gaps, but the extent of women's vulnerability to poverty is occluded (Goldberg and Kremen, 1990).

Single-mother families (which make up more than 90 per cent of all sole-parent families) are usually relatively worse off economically than are two- (or more) adult households, and may suffer time deprivation as well (see, for example, Kamerman, 1986; Goldberg and Kremen, 1990; Mitchell, 1993; Smeeding et al., 1988; Lewis, 1997b). When employed, these mothers, like all women, are on average paid less than men; in addition, they must cope with only one wage in economies where families increasingly depend on two, and they must shoulder caregiving burdens alone. Of course, two-parent families face the extra costs and burdens of childrearing with the advantage of being able to distribute them between two adults. However, this may result in disadvantage to principal caregivers – usually mothers – in terms of lifetime earnings

**Figure 7: Households with disposable income below half median income in selected industrialized countries**



\* Data for lone mothers in the United Kingdom from 1986.

Source: OECD, **Family, Market and Community**, table 2.4.

capacity, pension credits and the like; when they remain with a partner, they are usually better buffered against poverty. In a number of countries where the state offers benefits to sole parents to care for their children full-time, these conditions have led women to opt out of employment, principally when caregiving burdens are highest—before children enter school, or when children are sick or disabled; their caring work is then supported, but they usually face relatively high poverty rates and “welfare traps” (O'Connor et al., 1999). Indeed, employed single mothers are better off economically than their non-employed counterparts (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Rainwater, 1993). But even in the Nordic countries, where state benefits are linked to the support of employment, single mothers are not as well off in terms of time and economic resources as are two-parent families (Siim, 1997; Hobson and Takahashi, 1997). And employment is not always possible, even when services are provided.

Single (widowed, never-married or divorced) elderly women also are more likely to be in poverty than are elderly men or couples, reflecting primarily their lower pension benefits and lesser access to occupational pensions and savings—direct results of these older cohorts' patterns of labour force participation (Smeeding, 1997; Myles, 1989). Older women are also far less likely to have access to occupational pensions where these are available; in the English-speaking countries, these pensions are the principal means by which retired workers maintain an income above the poverty line (Myles, 1989; Quadagno, 1988; Ginn and Arber, 1994).

The liberal regimes are notable for their residual systems of social provision. Given women's disproportionate economic vulnerability due to caregiving responsibilities, this means that when women find themselves outside employment or marriage, they are left exposed to poverty. All of the liberal regimes feature very high levels of poverty among woman-maintained households (that is, single elderly women or single mothers with children). But there are some interesting differences within this group on this score: Britain has done better at protecting single mothers, while Canada's recent initiatives in old-age protection have brought poverty levels among older women down dramatically (to European levels). Meanwhile, Germany, with more extensive social protection in other respects, also leaves single mothers exposed to high poverty levels; this has become the case in the Netherlands as well (poverty levels for this group were significantly lower in the mid-1980s than in the 1990s, before reforms vis-à-vis single mothers). And even in the Scandinavian countries, where poverty levels generally are far lower than in the English-speaking countries, older women are more likely to be poor than other groups.

Analysts link cross-national variations in poverty rates to a key characteristic of social protection schemes—the relative generosity of benefit levels and levels of overall social spending. Particularly among elderly women, raising benefits has been a successful strategy in fighting poverty (for example, in Canada). State anti-poverty spending is not the only factor in ameliorating poverty, especially among working-age women. In comparisons of women's poverty across several industrialized countries, Goldberg and Kremen (1990) and Caspar et al. (1994) found several factors in addition to the level of public benefits—the extent of women's labour force participation and the degree of gender equality in the labour market—that affect the level of women's poverty. In Sweden, as in other social-democratic regimes, good labour market

conditions coupled with generous supplementary benefits minimize single women's poverty. Yet the "feminization of poverty" (Pearce, 1978) can emerge only when women are in a position to form autonomous households; in Japan and Italy (Bimbi, 1997), despite very unequal labour market conditions and low benefits, feminization of poverty has not emerged as an area of concern, as few mothers are in a position to form households separate from husbands or natal families. Thus, there is a prior question to be asked: do women (or men) have the right to form an autonomous household?

## **Social Rights and Personal Autonomy**

Much cross-national analysis of welfare states has focused on their effectiveness in fighting poverty or assuring economic security. However, the question of whether or not citizens and residents are assured of the capacity to form and maintain autonomous households has tended to be taken for granted—likely because men as workers have been the implicit subject of most comparative analyses, and their capacity to support a household has generally been assured by their own paid work, backed up by systems of social provision for periods when they are out of employment. The dependence of men on women's caregiving is also occluded, but even when deprived of such caregiving, men are not typically rendered unable to sustain an independent household. But when women are deprived of access to men's wages, their capacity to support a household is more likely to be tenuous, as their wages are usually less than men's; they may instead depend on state benefits, or a combination of wages and transfers.

The capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household identifies rights relative to family and household formation (Orloff, 1993a). Having the capacity to form a household without depending on the economic support of a spouse, family members or others, increases a person's options and enhances leverage within families or partnerships; it is about the right to have a family (Saraceno, 1994), as well as the capacity to exit from relationships. Do people have real choices about their personal relationships by virtue of having some politically guaranteed modes of personal support? Do people have real choices about employment and their participation in caregiving? Thus, familialism—relying on family members or a spouse for income or services, or subsidiarity—might be construed as the obverse of capacities for independence; this has led some scholars (for example, Lister (1997)) to use the term "defamilialization" to signify personal independence vis-à-vis household formation.<sup>11</sup> Speaking of a capacity to form an autonomous household does not indicate a preference for separation or a denial of interdependencies. Rather, it indicates a belief that equality and freedom of choice—including the choice to partner—require an absence of coercion, including the kind imposed for years on women to marry because of their own dismal economic prospects (O'Connor et al., 1999). Thus, this capacity is relevant for all women, married or not, but the conditions facing single parents are a good measure of the extent to which it exists (Hobson, 1990 and 1994).

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<sup>11</sup> Esping-Andersen (1999) uses the term to refer to dependence on families for services, as discussed above.



In capitalist wage economies, there are at least three possible sources for women or men to gain the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household: paid work, and necessary services to allow people with caregiving responsibilities to enter paid employment; various types of allowances for caregivers, such as cash benefits from the state for full-time care activities; or “citizens’ wages”, benefits provided to all citizens and residents and not conditional on employment, care or other requirements. Parental leave might be seen as a time-limited caregivers’ allowance, usually conditional on prior employment. After retirement, most people’s mode of support is linked to their prior employment and contributions to pension systems, or to the prior employment of spouses.

Only some states during some historical periods have given male or female citizens any kind of political guarantee—a social right—to household support. None has yet initiated an unconditional citizen’s wage, but conditional social rights have developed in a number of places. The elderly, including older women, have increasingly had access to a “retirement wage” (Myles, 1989), which has allowed them to maintain independent households after ceasing employment—that is, not to have to move in with adult children as was the norm in earlier decades (Orloff, 1993b). Formerly married women shared in this capacity through the development of survivors’ benefits, available in all contributory pension systems. And most states have also developed some sort of universal pension or minimum pension that offers this capacity to those who were not married and did not contribute sufficiently to gain entitlement to an employment-related pension. Yet, few of the benefits under these systems are adequate for women to sustain above-poverty households without access to help from kin or a spouse (Doring et al., 1994). But benefits for those of working age are more variable.

Prior to the initiation of programmes that have come to define a “welfare state”, states gave little or no support to single mothers, which meant that almost none could escape familial dependency, or, for those without families, institutionalization or destitution, given the abysmally low wages available to the vast majority of women workers. Early systems of social provision could be viewed as political guarantees of the male breadwinner’s capacity to support a household in the event of income interruption due to unemployment, disability, illness or retirement; these programmes have been expanded and institutionalized over the course of the century. In the contemporary period of greater international capital mobility and concomitant demands for welfare state restructuring, these systems are being subjected to some tightening of eligibility requirements. However, most male workers in the industrialized world retain good social protection that allows them to maintain their households, albeit usually not on their own wages alone. Women’s position is more precarious. Yet most states in the industrialized world do offer some sort of a guarantee of support to single mothers, insuring the risk of marital break-up or failure to form, even if at a minimal level.

In some countries, sole-parent support is linked to care: Australia, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom give benefits to single mothers who do not work for pay at least until their children reach school age (Ostner, 1997; Platenga, 1998; Knijn, 1994; Conroy, 1997; O’Connor et al., 1999). This provision is aimed at the needs of mothers who find them-

selves without a male breadwinner; the economic dependence of married women and the need for mothers to care full-time for their children in these systems is not challenged. And these mothers face substantially greater chances of living in poverty or at a low income than do married mothers or men (see figure 7). Still, benefits for single parents offer a bottom-line capacity for household independence (critical in cases of domestic violence), which does enhance women's bargaining position in marriage. Yet, even in countries that strongly support the male breadwinner and female (full-time) caregiver, there are signs of the gender division of labour modernizing: there is encouragement for single mothers' employment, usually part-time, after children reach school age, and for absent fathers' contribution to covering the needs of their children (O'Connor et al., 1999; Knijn, 1994). Household independence will be less publicly supported—single mothers will partially depend on employment and on absent fathers. Yet in none of these countries has there been an unambiguous commitment to women's independence or to women's employment opportunities. While the language of "choice" between care and employment is sometimes deployed, options for employment, especially through the development of care services, are in fact constrained.

The Nordic countries and France support women's household independence by assisting single mothers to be employed—as they do all mothers—with generous leave policies and public services (Hobson and Takahashi, 1997; Siim, 1997; Gornick et al., 1997). They offer as well some special supplements for single mothers. In these countries, women and men gain personal independence through employment, but in the context of a rather extensive public system of social supports that has been updated to apply to women's special needs with regard to caregiving.<sup>12</sup> This is not a system of guaranteeing choice between care and employment, either—employment is the basis of the system (Lewis and Astrom, 1992; Hobson and Takahashi, 1997). There are fairly well-supported opportunities to take time to care—parental leave with generous benefits, for example—but these are conditional on previous employment.

Canada and the United States have withdrawn the political guarantee—that is, entitlement—to social assistance that once existed for single non-employed parents (O'Connor et al., 1999; Orloff, 2001). Yet, because of rising real wages among women and policies directed at opening workplace opportunities to women, many women do earn enough to support themselves and their children, gaining the capacity to support a household as most US and Canadian men do, through the market. Needed services are supplied by the market—meaning that there is a fair amount of unevenness in the quality and cost of services. Thus, in North America, it is the market that undergirds personal autonomy for married and single men and women alike—there are no political guarantees of services, employment or income. Some recent initiatives at bolstering the income of low-wage workers in North America through tax credits have made even low-wage employment a relatively more attractive option for single mothers. The Achilles heel of this system is the inadequate provision for periods in which women need to attend to

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<sup>12</sup> There were some parallels between these cases and the policies pursued by the socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe; single and other mothers were given special support to facilitate the combination of employment and caregiving (although without the Scandinavians' commitment to enhance men's participation in caregiving). But restructuring of social policies in the wake of the transition from socialism has ended such support, and single mothers find themselves with only means-tested and inadequate public assistance, while married mothers find themselves more dependent on husbands (Heinen, 1999; Haney, 1997).

care—there is some evidence that sole-parents' benefits have been used as a substitute for parental leave by unmarried women without access to employment-based protections, but this will be more difficult after welfare reform. Canada has done more than the United States, however, in directing benefits also to non-employed households, including those of elderly women, and has thereby reduced the poverty rates of these groups, and prevented the deep poverty among children that is such a troubling aspect of US society (Myles and Pierson, 1997).

Even today, the countries of southern Europe still do not offer benefits to single mothers; support must come from families or work (Bimbi, 1997; Saraceno, 1994). But since there is little support for mothers' employment generally and employment opportunities for women have not been aggressively pursued by the state, few mothers would find it possible to support themselves on their wages alone—and indeed, there are few single-mother families in these countries, and in those that do exist, mothers' labour force participation is considerably higher than that of married mothers. Most find no alternative to marriage or staying with their natal families. Women's economic dependence on husbands and other family members is the norm, even though it is often coupled with secondary wage-earning. (Portugal remains an exception here, for women are employed at relatively high levels.)

In all the countries that support women's employment (by whatever means), women's economic independence (a lack of familialism, if you will) is a by-product. And this is related to high proportions of single-parent families and non-marital births, characteristic of both the social-democratic regimes and the North American countries. But women's economic independence can also be supported through state benefits, as in Australia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, where there are also relatively high proportions of single-mother families. Again, a significant outcome—autonomy (or defamilialization)—may be supported by different policy means. It is only where both employment-supporting policies and individual rights to social assistance are lacking—in southern Europe—that we see relatively low rates of divorce and non-marital births.

## **Political Factors in Creating Women's Employment Policies**

The ways in which states affect women's employment and their vulnerability to poverty vary systematically by regime type; much of this variation can be understood by calling on the well-developed explanatory apparatus of comparative welfare regime studies. Here, systems of interest representation (of workers and employers), state structures and capacities, and political party configurations are critical (Esping-Andersen, 1990; 1999). A number of analysts have noted that state structures with multiple "veto points"—the North American countries, but also Switzerland, stand out here—make it difficult to develop co-ordinated and generous welfare policies; the centralized state structure of especially the Nordic countries has, conversely, encouraged a well-developed welfare state (Hecló, 1974; Immergut, 1992; Huber and Stephens, 2001; Orloff, 1993b). Centralized and encompassing systems of social partnership have been associated with the strong social-democratic parties that have been the primary champions of generous welfare states, as in the Nordic countries—and political initiatives find easier going in these unified states. (Of course, political initiatives need not be in the direction of increasing

generosity and coverage; serious retrenchment in the United Kingdom and New Zealand was possible for conservative parties because of unusually centralized states (Pierson, 1994; Rhodes, 2000; Schwartz, 2000).) Decentralized industrial relations structures, as in the liberal regimes, have undercut labour's influence on politics, which has allowed the development of more market-friendly and less egalitarian welfare systems. Unionization is quite high in continental Europe, and social partnership is a well-developed institution, but the political context differs from that prevailing in the Nordic countries. Status concerns and a strong role for the church are but two of the more significant influences in producing a more conservative welfare regime, despite the relative strength of unions. Indeed, unions have been significant in maintaining a highly regulated labour market with extensive protections directed at workers—rather than at citizens, as in the Nordic models. This has meant that those outside or at the margin of the labour market—including the majority of women—depend on core workers, mainly male breadwinners, for their economic support and social security, a trend reinforced by the familialist tendencies of these regimes.

Korpi (2000) emphasizes the significance of the configuration of political parties for gender policy models, arguing that stances on women's employment reflect parties' positions on a left-right dimension and a confessional-secular dimension. In general, left-wing and secular parties have been more open to women's employment than have right-wing and confessional parties, although here one must signal the role of feminist organizing in getting parties to accept this position—it was not an automatic evolution from their initial egalitarian or equal-opportunity positions. Left-wing parties have been committed to class equalization through state action—social provision most notably, and have more recently become advocates of policies to support dual-earner households. Right-wing parties have favoured limiting state intervention in markets to advance equality, including gender equality—but some liberal parties have come to support equal opportunities for women, particularly if this can be accomplished through incentives or regulation rather than public services. Confessional parties, positioning themselves “between” capitalism and socialism, have favoured state intervention to protect workers and to support traditional families. Confessional parties reflect the doctrine especially of the Catholic Church, with the valorization of gender difference, an ideal of full-time mothering rather than wage work for women, and family “solidarity” and unity—implying women's economic dependence, but not (explicitly) gendered inequality of resources (on social Catholicism and Christian Democracy, and their country-specific expression, see Jackson, 1993; Knijn, 1994; Bussemaker and van Kersbergen, 1994; Cousins, 1995; Schmidt, 1993; Ostner, 1993 and 1997; Saraceno, 1994).

Korpi (2000) shows that dominance of left-wing, confessional, or secular-conservative or centrist parties is associated with different gender policy models; his findings are reproduced in table 5 below. Yet we have already noted that there are significant gender differences within these policy model groupings. Korpi attempts to explain these differences with reference to exceptional situations of partisan stalemate, minority party tendencies in the countries in question, or by reference to public opinion—but never to factors such as the character and ideologies of women's movements, or their opponents, or the character of gendered political interests and identities among political actors. Thus, he explains the Swiss exception with reference to the

near-permanent coalition governments of the postwar era, in which confessional parties, while strong, were unable to put their imprint on policy. The higher-than-expected labour force participation rates of women in France are explained with reference to the relative weakness of confessional parties, while Norway's slightly higher-than-average—for the Nordic group—gaps are attributed to the relative strength of religious parties (albeit still in a context of general social-democratic strength). Negative popular attitudes toward women's work are invoked to explain the higher-than-expected levels of gender differences in labour force participation in Australia, Japan and New Zealand, which Korpi has classified as market-oriented models.<sup>13</sup> This is not entirely satisfactory, however. Nor can we leave gendered interests, agendas and groupings out of the cases that line up with predictions based on partisan characteristics.

**Table 5: Relative strength of different political tendencies in governments, 1946–1985, and gender policy institutions, 1985–1990, in 18 countries**

Country	Strength of political tendencies <sup>a</sup>			Gender policy institutions
	Confessional	Conservative-centrist	Left-wing	
Ireland	95	0	24	General family support
Italy	86	47	44	General family support
Netherlands	80	41	34	General family support
Belgium	69	38	46	General family support
Switzerland	66	73	55	Market oriented
Germany	55	57	37	General family support
Austria	48	6	75	General family support
France	22	77	28	General family support
Canada	0	100	0	Market oriented
United States	0	100	0	Market oriented
Japan	0	99	3	Market oriented
New Zealand	0	68	20	Market oriented
United Kingdom	0	67	42	Market oriented
Australia	0	60	24	Market oriented
Norway	14	22	73	Dual-earner support
Denmark	4	54	63	Dual-earner support
Finland	0	78	56	Dual-earner support
Sweden	0	28	80	Dual-earner support

<sup>a</sup> Average of percentage of government seats and percentage of time in governments, 1946–1985. **Source:** Korpi, 2000, table 3.

What is the role of feminist women's movements vis-à-vis gender policy models? No one would claim—especially since these groups have nowhere been in a position to dictate policy—that such groups can be considered in isolation. But some analysts view gender as one of the key analytic categories for understanding policy and politics, while others seem to understand gen-

<sup>13</sup> Esping-Andersen (1999) identifies Japan as a hybrid regime, with strong elements of familialism and gender traditionalism similar to conservative regimes, along with some similarities to liberal regimes.

der outcomes as more or less wholly dependent on the (largely class-based) partisan complexion of governments.

For most of the analysts in the social-democratic or power resources analytic tradition, the overall configuration of state-labour-capital is the key to the variable character of gender policy regimes. Thus, these analysts see advancement for women's political agenda, especially as reflected in developing policies supportive of mothers' employment, as dependent on leftist governments willing to use public power to provide services, compel the end of employment discrimination and the like. While acknowledging that women's movements have brought gender issues to the fore in public discussions and have helped to change popular attitudes, Korpi (2000) seemingly downplays the independent political significance of women's movements, arguing that they have tended to work through existing parties in attempting to shape gender policy – with the greatest success registered by women working with social-democratic parties in the Nordic countries. In this view, he echoes Ruggie's (1984) classic study of Swedish and British policy, which argues that parties and the state are more significant for women's employment outcomes than specific feminist mobilization. Ruggie contends that the overall relationship between state and society – determined by the character of governing coalitions – affects women workers' progress; “for the successful achievement of their employment pursuits, women must be incorporated into labor, and labor must be incorporated into the governing coalition” (1984:346).

Sweden may indeed be the best case for making the social-democratic argument, as both organized labour and the social-democratic party have been more ambitious with respect to promoting gender equality via women's employment and state services than almost any other such organizations. And Swedish feminists have tended to support social-democratic initiatives around women's employment as the best path toward women's equality. But note that Ruggie (1984) sees women's presence in labour and governing coalitions as significant, a view also put forward by other feminist analysts of Swedish gender politics. Swedish women's mobilizing has tended to be a variety of institutional feminism – that is, mobilization within existing organizations, and thus distinct from the autonomous feminist groups seen in Germany or the United States, but no less effective or feminist for that (Hobson and Lindholm, 1997; Edwards, 1991; Siim, 1994; Bergqvist, 1999). Indeed, far from being a straightforward development, where parties – including the Swedish social democrats – have come to embrace some of the goals of women's equality, including support for women's employment, it has typically been because women's groups within or outside of the party organization have pressed such claims. Ruggie subsequently qualified her view, arguing that even given general agreement on a dual-earner model, men and women might have different gendered interests – expressed by women's caucuses and other bodies – on questions of hours of work (the six-hour day was championed by Swedish women trade unionists, while men preferred more vacation time), affirmative action, access to jobs with authority, and the like (Ruggie, 1988). Here, too, other feminist scholars are in agreement. But this understanding has been difficult to come by given the predominant discourse of Swedish equality politics, which has construed gender equality as subsumed in class equality (Jenson and Mahon, 1993). Yet in the 1990s, Swedish women's organizing did break from the social-democratic mould, and a number of cross-party women's initiatives, including some on employment issues, were formed (Hobson, 1998).

Clearly, one must attend to specifically gendered interests and ideologies at work in shaping policies around employment, and to political organizations mobilized around gender explicitly or implicitly. The particular gender ideologies and differential mobilization of women's movements and their opponents are critical, of course, but so also are the gendered interests, ideologies and mobilization of employers and labour organizations in favour of particular forms of women's employment—or women's non-employment. The particular organizational form of egalitarian women's political activities has varied widely, shaped by the nationally or regionally specific political-institutional contexts in which all political actors work, and the historically specific political opportunity structures in place at particular moments of organizing (Hellman, 1987). But we should expect to find some impact of these activities when we examine women's employment policies over the last century.

Pedersen's (1993) study of the origins of family policy in interwar Britain and France is exemplary in showing the ways in which gender structured the politics around these policies. She argues that the balance of power among workers, employers and the state was the most significant factor determining policies vis-à-vis dependent children and women's labour force participation. But she also stresses that trade unionists, employers and others had gender and familial as well as occupational or class interests. In addition, they were influenced by the discursive connotations of various policies. Among other things, male workers wanted women to be treated as wives, male employers wanted them to be (cheap, subordinate) workers, women themselves often wanted recognition as mothers or as (equally paid and equal) workers. British and French trade unionists—mainly men—defended a “family wage”, and preferred that their wives be kept out of the labour market. Employers in both countries appreciated cheap female labour, and saw some merit in using family allowances to restrain men's wages. British unions had the capacity to keep most married women out of paid work and to block such use of family allowances, while French employers had the capacity to block measures keeping married women out of the labour market and also acceded to state-mandated allowances that promoted wage restraint while funnelling funds to families with children, an important natalist goal. Given strong capital and a strong state in France, strong labour and a slightly less-powerful state in Britain, “the French state ceded authority over women workers to those who wanted to exploit them, the British state to those who wanted to exclude them [from the labour force]” (Pedersen, 1993:106).

Pedersen also attends to the role of political actors based outside the labour market and production—feminists and other women's groups, social scientists and intellectuals, political leaders, church officials and pro-natalists—in constructing the discourse of family issues and policy. In France, family allowances, carried into policy debates by conservative and religious forces, were associated with pro-natalism and national reconstruction and thus were attractive to employers looking to justify their (economically motivated) commitment to such programmes. In Britain, feminists, the initial promoters of motherhood endowment (which would give non-earning mothers an independent income), then family allowances, associated such programmes with women's emancipation; moreover, they argued that ending family wages

would undercut gender discrimination in pay. These gendered connotations stimulated unionists' opposition; they accepted family allowances only once they were scaled down. These discursive differences showed variance in the strength of feminist and women's groups; the lack of input from French feminists reflected their weakness, while British women's superior organization enabled them to open up questions of family dependence, although they were not strong enough to enact their preferred policies. French women could work, and were supported as mothers, but, voteless and legally subjugated to their husbands, were hardly emancipated. Still, there have been unintended effects of these patterns. France's "parental welfare state", though initiated under patriarchal auspices, is relatively indifferent to gender relations within families. French employers wanted to use married women's labour, and public policy focused on supporting children rather than supporting a male breadwinner wage. France emerged from the Second World War with less institutionalized support for this particular prop of male dominance than did the United Kingdom, where strong male-dominated unions succeeded in making it central to social provision. Since patriarchal family laws were overturned in the 1960s and 1970s, the French system has offered more generous support for two-earner families and children's welfare than the British, where children depend on the wages of their fathers in a stratified society in which women cannot always depend on access to male wages.

Pedersen's analysis—like that of scholars of the Swedish case—calls attention to what is arguably the distinctive contribution of feminist groups to policy discussions: their concern with eliminating women's economic dependence, unequal citizenship and unequal burden of labour. While feminist movements do not always agree about how or even if women's employment should be promoted, they have consistently sought to empower women, and to reduce gender inequality. (Men are not necessarily targeted as the "opposition" in these struggles—how political alliances and enmities take shape is more variable, and nationally specific.) Indeed, women's movements in different times and places have pursued two main strategies for economic independence and citizenship entitlement, guided by distinctive visions of gender equality. Gaining access to employment is the predominant strategy today—particularly in the English-speaking countries, France and Scandinavia—while "maternalist" strategies to attain state economic support for full-time mothering were more common in the past and retain some viability in some European countries, notably Ireland, Italy and Germany (Ostner and Lewis, 1995; Bock and Thane, 1991).

Even among those women's movements that have viewed employment as the principal path to equality, different strategies with respect to women's employment have prevailed, influenced by the political context and available allies. The approach of Scandinavian women has reflected the availability of allies in the labour movement and social democratic party, as well as a tradition linking concerns about fertility to married women's right to work (Hobson, 1998). Nordic women have pursued a strategy of supporting the position of women workers who are also principal caregivers; this has meant especially good service provision, reduced workdays for parents, and maternity and parental-leave coverage.<sup>14</sup> Here, one might see some similarities to the French case, discussed above. However, where initial support for French women's employment and care came

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<sup>14</sup> This was also the premise of socialist countries' policies before 1989, but changes in the social policy frameworks of the transition economies have in general meant less public support to employed mothers (Heinen, 1999; Haney, 1997).



from above, these Nordic initiatives featured important support from below, as well. Of course, today, French feminists work to advance women's situation in employment and with respect to care facilities. But some have argued that the instrumental orientation to French women's work on the part of political elites has undercut support for women's employment as a part of an agenda for women's independence (Jenson and Sineau, 1995).

In contrast to their Nordic and French counterparts, feminists in the United States have tended to work to make traditional breadwinner positions in the workforce available to women. This is related to the fact that the US political context has been quite encouraging to liberal feminist civil rights claims—such as for equal opportunities, in terms of available allies and established political discourse, but less open to claims for social rights—such as paid parental leave or public childcare services. Thus, these feminists have supported political interventions that encourage private provision of services such as tax credits for childcare, equal-opportunity regulation of employment, and affirmative action (Fraser, 1994; O'Connor et al., 1999). Moreover, again unlike the European cases, work through party organizations has not been feminists' favoured mode of organizing. The characteristics of the US political system—especially its highly decentralized decision-making structure, its highly decentralized organization of political parties, and the diversity of its policy preferences—frustrate social movement efforts to change policy; the successes achieved by the women's movement have come largely through “sophisticated interest group” behaviour (O'Connor et al., 1999). Parallel to this many of the most significant equality achievements by the US women's movement—such as anti-discrimination and equal opportunities decisions—were achieved through the courts.

It is important to note—given how common it is for social scientists to assume that women's movements have pursued only women's entrance into waged work—that some women reformers have pursued benefits for all mothers—a “mothers' allowance”, which also would have given them freedom from dependence on male breadwinners (Pedersen, 1993; Lake, 1992). Feminists, especially in continental Europe, have been influenced by notions of gender difference and the valorization of mothering (Ostner and Lewis, 1995). But also in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the male breadwinner-(full-time) female caregiver model was championed by strong trade union movements, led by men, who were able in the early part of the century to establish provision supporting men's position as breadwinners; in these countries, women reformers championed women's position as caregivers, and secured relatively generous allowances to single mothers to allow them to stay home (Cass, 1994; Castles, 1994; Lewis, 1992; Pedersen, 1993). Feminists challenged the economic dependence of women in these arrangements, but usually accepted the notion that mothers should remain outside the labour force.

Today, supporters of full-time mothering and women's lifelong non-employment are few. But many contemporary feminist reformers do want to see employment shaped to fit women's—or men's—care work, rather than the other way around, and further, want to see care work accepted as a valid form of social participation entitling people to political standing and full citizenship rights (Sevenhuijsen, 1998). A range of policy proposals flows from these concerns, from caregivers' allowances and reduced workdays for caregivers to citizen's basic income grants, benefits

provided to all citizens and residents and not conditional on employment, care or other requirements. Some feminists have joined campaigns for a citizen's basic income, arguing that such a benefit would have emancipatory effects for women who perform the bulk of caregiving, offering them a genuine choice about whether or not to participate in employment (McKay and VanEvery, 2000). (Whether such a benefit would give them a genuine choice about whether or not to care is another matter (Lewis, 1997a)). Given concerns about the amount of employment available in some societies, such proposals might someday garner serious consideration.

## **Supporting Women's Employment and Gender Equality**

Women's employment is on the rise, but only unevenly supported by welfare states. In the industrialized countries, equal treatment initiatives have removed the majority of the most explicit biases from social security systems in the treatment of women workers. But welfare regimes are far from unbiased in dealing with problems of how men and women can combine caregiving and paid work. Participation in and of itself is not sufficient to advance women's interests; the quality of jobs in terms of pay, hours, conditions, locations, and how compatible jobs are with caregiving are critical. Many are concerned about whether women's equality projects can flourish under the new conditions of globalization, given pressures by many employers and allied political forces for maximum "flexibility" from workers and the decline of traditionally well-paid, secure and unionized jobs in the manufacturing sector (O'Connor et al., 1999; Jenson et al., 1988). But surely "flexibility" can be imagined from the perspective of employees, men and women, who would like greater control over when and how long they work, and also want social protection. Thus, the mustering of political will is necessary to ensure that this reconciliation is not at the expense of the quality of care or of women's employment opportunities. In other contexts, persistently high unemployment rates may cause some policy makers to assume that encouraging women's entry to the labour force would be counterproductive. Yet it is arguable that the effects of women's employment in generating demand for services, and hence service employment, would actually help to reduce unemployment (Esping-Andersen, 1999).

Depending on each country's starting point, different strategies may be pursued to enhance women's employment, while reducing poverty and economic vulnerability and ensuring that caregiving activities are supported. Where women's employment and employment opportunities are well-established, as in North America, it is caregiving that needs attention: supporting parental leaves more generously and assisting more extensively in the provision of services. In addition, there is a need for supporting low-wage workers financially so that they can in fact provide necessities, including high-quality care, for their families. If all are expected to be (paid) workers, it must be understood that workers have caregiving obligations that should be supported. In Scandinavia and France, where workers who are caregivers have excellent support, but employers discriminate on the basis of caregiving responsibilities, it is women's opportunities in employment—rather than simply their participation in the labour force—that must be targeted, while assuring that services and leaves are not cut back. Here, where men are "just" workers, despite the rhetoric encouraging them to take up care, but women are carer-providers, it is women's roles as workers that must be emphasized while continuing to make clear that men

should be carers as well. In the many European systems where women's care work in the family is supported but their paid work is not, the systems of service provision and leave protection that allow women's employment must be built up even as employment opportunities are opened up. In all systems, these initiatives must target men as well as women.

The ultimate solution to the problems of reconciliation of employment and care and women's economic dependence in all systems may be a "universal caregiver" model: to induce "men to become more like what most women are now—that is, people who do primary care work"; this would dismantle "the gendered opposition between breadwinning and caregiving," and "integrate activities that are currently separated from one another, eliminate their gender coding" (Fraser, 1994:611). This would necessitate changing workplaces to accommodate caregiving, and would call on income security systems to ensure that people can take time to care and have access to care services. Encouraging men's caregiving is essential, as is encouraging women's integration into paid employment while allowing their continued caregiving.

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