

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

**RECONSTRUCTING THE FEMALE  
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION  
RATES IN WESTERN EUROPE,  
18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES**

Barcelona (Spain), 4 - 6 November, 2010

**Convened by:**

**Carmen Sarasúa <sup>①</sup> and Jane Humphries <sup>②</sup>**

---

<sup>①</sup> Department of Economics and Economic History, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, ES  
<sup>②</sup> All Souls College, University of Oxford, UK

---



The European Science Foundation (ESF) is an association of 79 Member Organisations devoted to scientific research in 30 European countries. The Mission of ESF is to provide a common platform for its Member Organisations in order to advance European research and to explore new directions for research at the European level. Through its activities, the ESF serves the needs of the European research community in a global context.

The main objectives of ESF for the years 2006-2010 as defined by its current *Strategic Plan* are to promote Science Strategy and Science Synergy, paving the way for initiatives across disciplinary and geographic boundaries in the European Research Area (ERA).

The Exploratory Workshops scheme is one of the key instruments of the Science Strategy “pillar”. Each year, ESF supports approximately 50 Exploratory Workshops across all scientific domains. The focus of the scheme is on workshops aiming to explore an emerging and/or innovative field of research or research infrastructure, also of interdisciplinary character. Workshops are expected to open up new directions in research or new domains. It is expected that a workshop will conclude with plans for specific follow-up research activities and/or collaborative actions or other specific outputs either within the frame of ESF (e.g. prepare the ground to develop a [Forward Look](#), a [Research Networking Programme](#) or a [EUROCORES](#) proposal; publication of a Policy Briefing...) or for submission to the EU 7th Framework Programme or to other European or international funding organisations.

### ***European Science Foundation***

1 quai Lezay Marnésia  
BP 90015  
67080 Strasbourg Cedex  
France  
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 37 05 32

<http://www.esf.org>

### **ESF Exploratory Workshops:**

**Farzam Ranjbaran**  
Scientific Coordinator

**Valerie Allspach-Kiechel**  
Senior Administrator  
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 76 71 36

**Isabelle May**  
Senior Administrator  
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 76 71 46

Email: [ew-office@esf.org](mailto:ew-office@esf.org)  
<http://www.esf.org/workshops>

**Convenor:**

**Carmen Sarasúa**  
carmen.sarasua@uab.es

Department of Economics and Economic  
History  
Faculty of Economics  
Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona  
08193 Bellaterra (Barcelona)  
Spain

**Co-convenor:**

**Jane Humphries**  
jane.humphries@all-souls.ox.ac.uk

All Souls College  
Oxford OX1 4AL  
United Kingdom

---

**Main Objectives of the Workshop:**

This Preliminary Workshop aims at exploring the possibilities of developing a method of calculation of the female labor force participation (FLFP) rates by country and economic sector between 1700 and 1900. Our starting point is the long known and well documented inconsistencies between the figures from the population censuses and those from other sources, until now explored only in local or sector studies. The main objectives of the Workshop are (a) to identify the best sources and methodologies to recalculate FLFP rates, (b) to use the reconstructed rates to understand the different regional models of female participation, (c) to discuss the supply and demand factors that accounted for these rates, and (d) to describe the historical evolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries of these rates.

Contributions should aim to estimate female participation rates for populations using sources that include female occupations (although some degree of under registration might exist) for an entire city, village or town, or for groups of cities, villages or towns. The aim is to try to go beyond partial reconstructions based for instance on guild or firm records that provide information on women's activity in certain occupations only, and to build up to more complete coverage. We are also aiming at crossing participation data with (if available) individual data, such as age, civil status, educational level, number of children, husband's or father's occupation, type of local labor demand, etc. in order to begin to develop explanations of the variation in female participation rates.

The following notes reflect earlier discussions and should guide ongoing contributions.

**A. Defining/Measuring FP**

Female economic activity is defined and marked historically in a number of different ways, including the possession of an occupational title, being observed working, being observed earning, etc. Contributions might usefully use different definitions/

measures of activity and compare findings based on different definitions. Important approaches are :

1. Occupations
  - Assignment of an occupation as in some historical censuses, community listings/censuses, etc.
  - Practice of an occupation as in guild records, trade directories, insurance records, trade cards, memoirs, family histories, etc.
2. Work
  - Assignment of status of "active" as in some historical censuses, community listings/censuses, etc.
  - Practice of "active" status as in memoirs, family histories, etc.
3. Economic independence
  - Ability/inability to support self derived from court records, charity/poor law records, etc.
4. Earnings
  - Ability/inability to contribute to family incomes derived from household budgets, contemporary social commentators, government reports, etc.
  - Practice of earning as revealed in firm records, wage books, etc.
5. Contribution to family business, domestic manufacturing, family farm
  - Contribution inferred as in some historical censuses, government reports, etc.
  - Contribution inferred and imputed by historians or social commentators
  - Contribution documented in household accounts, memoirs, etc.
6. Self-provisioning/use-value production
  - Contribution inferred as in some historical censuses, government reports, etc.
  - Contribution inferred and imputed by historians or social commentators
  - Contribution documented in household accounts, memoirs, etc.

#### **B. "Hidden participation" and its measurement**

Comparisons of estimates of female participation rates using different definitions measures are useful as they shed light on the extent of underestimation in standard sources, e.g. national censuses. Contributions might usefully provide measures of "hidden participation" and so indicate the extent to which standard sources might be underestimating female activity rates. Possible approaches are suggested below.

1. Comparisons of FP using different definitions/measures as above [e.g. FP defined by occupation might be expected to underestimate FP defined by earnings given women's often multiple activities and generalised occupations (e.g. "assisting")]
2. Specific categories of women workers likely to be "hidden" [e.g. co-resident kin acting as household managers and servants; part-time activity; seasonal activity; assistance within household production]; estimation of numbers involved and value produced

3. Specific categories of women contributors likely to be “hidden” [e.g. unpaid home workers; women assisting male kin; use value producers]; estimation of numbers involved and value produced
4. Geographical variation in FP indicating uneven incidence of opportunities for women and demand constraints on FP

### **C. Married women’s participation rates**

Married women’s participation is particularly likely to be “hidden” and so difficult to capture and measure historically. Contributions might usefully focus on married women and the nature of their participation.

1. Differences between married and single women’s PR
2. Availability of work for married women and historical constraints on married women’s work [marriage bars; custom and “respectability”; large families; need for women workers to live-in, i.e. as in much domestic service; etc.]
3. Geographical variation in married women’s work indicating uneven incidence of opportunities for women and demand constraints on FP

### **D. Modelling participation**

In this workshop we will try to go beyond measures of female participation to explanations of geographical, temporal and life-cycle variation. Contributions might usefully consider the following topics.

1. Historicising the standard model of female participation rates [i.e. where participation is a positive function of husband’s wage and negative function of own potential wage]
2. Including important historical variables [culture and institutions, fertility, marital stability, availability of women’s work, child labour, legal regime, industrial relations variables, etc.]
3. Children as substitutes for or compliments of married women’s work [children work in the home to release mothers to work in the market place or vice versa; children and mothers both work in same poor households and both do not work in same prosperous households]

## **Workshop Agenda**

Participants are expected to present their work as a power point file. If written papers are available in advance of the workshop, they will be distributed to all the participants so to facilitate the discussion.

Each session will be chaired by a discussant who will summarize the main points of the papers presented. An open discussion will follow.

The last session will be followed by a general discussion on the possibilities for future networking and research.

## PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

### Thursday 4 November 2010

- Afternoon *Arrival*
- 20.00 *Dinner at Mercado de Santa Caterina (Avenida de Francesc Cambó, s/n, inside the old market of Santa Caterina, at walking distance from the hotel)*

### Friday 5 November 2010

- 09.10-09.20 **Welcome by Convenor**  
**Carmen Sarasúa** (Dpt. of Economics and Economic History, Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain)
- 09.20-09.40 **Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**  
**Savvas Savvides** (Standing Committee for Social Sciences (SCSS), European University, Nicosia, Cyprus)
- 09.40-13.00 Morning Session: Women's occupations in pre-census Europe** **Chair: Beatrice Craig**
- 09.40-10.10 **Presentation 1 "Participation rates and occupational descriptors: from local registrations to female labour force participation rates: Dutch towns in the 18<sup>th</sup> century"**  
**Ariadne Schmidt** (International Institute of Social History, Leiden University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
- 10.10-10.40 **Presentation 2 "Female activity rates in 18th century Castile. The dominance of the wool industry"**  
**Ricardo Hernández** (Dpt. Economic Analysis Fundamentals and History and Economical Institutions, University of Valladolid, Spain)
- 10.40-11.00 *Coffee / Tea Break*
- 11.00-11.30 **Presentation 3 "Accounting for women's participation rates in 18th century Spain"**  
**Carmen Sarasúa** (Dpt. of Economics and Economic History, Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain)
- 11.30-12.00 **Presentation 4 "Reconstructing Female Participation Rates in the Pre-Census Past: Great Britain"**  
**Jane Humphries** (All Souls College, Oxford University, United Kingdom)
- 12.00-13.00 **Discussion**
- 13.00-14.00 *Lunch*

**14.00-18.30 Afternoon Session: The impact of Industrialization in women's employment. Chair: Nigel Goose**

- 14.00-14.30 **Presentation 1 "Female economic activity in Biscay (Basque Country) through the Police Census of 1825"**  
**Pilar Pérez-Fuentes** (Dpt. of Contemporary History, Universidad del País Vasco, Spain)
- 14.30-15.00 **Presentation 2 "Female labour force participation during early industrialisation in Sweden. Discourses and statistical representation in the Swedish population census"**  
**Inger Jonsson** (Dpt. of Economic History, Uppsala University, Sweden)
- 15.30-15.50 *Coffee / tea break*
- 15.50-16.20 **Presentation 3 "Female activity and the family economy in Finland"**  
**Beatrice Moring** (Cambridge Group for the History of Population, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom)
- 16.20-16.50 **Presentation 4 "Female employment and fertility: evidence from contrasting industrial towns in England"**  
**Paul Atkinson** (School of History, University of Leeds, United Kingdom)
- 16.50-18.30 **Discussion**
- 20.30 *Dinner*

**Saturday 6 November 2010**

**09.15-12.30 Morning Session: "At the bottom of the activity curve?" Chair: Carmen Sarasúa**

- 09.15-09.45 **Presentation 1 "Continuity and Change of Women's Work in Turin during the 18th century"**  
**Beatrice Zucca** (Ecole Des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociale, Paris, France)
- 09.45-10.15 **Presentation 2 "Revisiting female activity and households' labor strategies in 19th century Catalonia"**  
**Cristina Borderías** (Dpt. of Contemporary History, Universidad de Barcelona, Spain)
- 10.15-10.45 *Coffee / Tea Break*
- 10.45-11.15 **Presentation 3 "A comparison of female activity rates in rural and industrial towns, 19th century coastal Spain"**  
**Luisa Muñoz** (Dpt. of Contemporary History, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)
- 11.15-11.45 **Presentation 4 "Female labour force participation and the coming of industrialization: a comparative study of two northern French regions"**  
**Beatrice Craig** (Dpt. of History, University of Ottawa, Canada)
- 11.45-12.30 **Discussion**
- 12.30-13.15 *Lunch*

**13.15-16.00 Afternoon Session: Women's employment in the national population censuses. Chair: Jane Humphries**

- 13.15-13.45 **Presentation 1 "Participation rates and occupational descriptors: from national registrations to female labour force participation rates: the Netherlands in the 19th century**  
**Elise van Nederveen** (International Institute of Social History, Leiden University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)
- 13.45-14.15 **Presentation 2 "Local labour markets and the representation of women's work in the Victorian census"**  
**Nigel Goose** (Dpt. of Humanities, University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom)
- 14.15-15.30 **Discussion**
- 15.30-16.00 **Follow-up activities/networking/collaboration**
- 16.00 *End of Workshop and departure*

European Science Foundation

## **Objectives of the ESF Standing Committee for Social Sciences (SCSS)**

The mission of the **ESF Standing Committee for Social Sciences (SCSS)** is as follows:

- to promote high quality social science research at the European level;
- to bring 'added value' to nationally funded research through European collaboration between ESF Member Organisations;
- to help support innovative research ideas and approaches emanating from the scientific community, and
- to play an institutional role in strengthening European social science research infrastructure.

### **ESF Social Sciences Unit**

*(Contacts for general and Exploratory Workshops-related matters):*

**Balázs Kiss**  
Head of Unit

**Rifka Weehuizen**  
Science Officer

**Rhona Heywood**  
Senior Administrator

**Céline Quedrue**  
Administrator

Tel: +33 (0)3.88.76.71.42

Email: [cquedrue@esf.org](mailto:cquedrue@esf.org)

<http://www.esf.org/social>



## Provisional List of Participants

### Convenor:

1. **Carmen SARASÚA**  
Department of Economics and Economic  
History  
Faculty of Economics  
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
Edifici B – Campus de Bellaterra  
08193 Bellaterra (Barcelona)  
Spain  
carmen.sarasua@uab.es

### Co-Convenor:

2. **Jane HUMPHRIES**  
All Souls College  
Oxford University  
Oxford OX1 4AL  
United Kingdom  
jane.humphries@all-souls.ox.ac.uk

### ESF Representative:

3. **Savvas SAVVIDES**  
Department of Accounting, Economics  
and Finance  
School of Business Administration  
European University Cyprus  
6 Diogenes Str  
P.O. Box 22006 Engomi  
1516 Nicosia  
Cyprus  
s.savvides@euc.ac.cy

### Participants:

4. **Paul ATKINSON**  
School of History  
University of Leeds  
22 Grange Avenue  
Ilkley LS29 8NU  
United Kingdom  
atkinson22@talktalk.net
5. **Cristina BORDERÍAS**  
Department of Contemporary History  
Faculty of Geography and History  
Universidad de Barcelona  
Montalegre 6-8  
08001 Barcelona  
Spain  
cborderiasm@ub.edu

6. **Beatrice CRAIG**  
Department of History  
University of Ottawa  
155 Seraphin Marion  
Ottawa On. K1N  
Canada  
bcraig@uottawa.ca
7. **Nigel GOOSE**  
Department of Humanities  
University of Hertfordshire  
College Lane  
Hatfield AL10 9AB  
United Kingdom  
n.goose@herts.ac.uk
8. **Ricardo HERNÁNDEZ**  
Dpt. Fundamentos del Análisis Económico  
e Historia e Instituciones Económicas  
Universidad de Valladolid  
Avda. Valle Esgueva, 6  
47011 Valladolid  
Spain  
rhgarcia@eco.uva.es
9. **Inger JONSSON**  
Department of Economic History  
Uppsala University  
Box 513  
751 20 Uppsala  
Sweden  
inger.jonsson@ekhist.uu.se
10. **Beatrice MORING**  
Cambridge Group for the History of  
Population  
University of Cambridge  
8 Dodford lane  
Cambridge CB3 0QE  
United Kingdom  
bke.moring@ntlworld.com
11. **Luisa MUÑOZ**  
Department of Contemporary History  
Faculty of Geography and History  
University of Santiago de Compostela  
Plaza Universidad, 1  
15782 Santiago de Compostela  
Spain  
luisamaria.munoz@usc.es

12. **Pilar PÉREZ-FUENTES**  
Department of Contemporary History  
Faculty of History  
Universidad del País Vasco  
Barrio Sarriena s/n  
48940 Bilbao  
Spain  
pilar.perezfuentes@ehu.es
13. **Ariadne SCHMIDT**  
Department of Research  
International Institute of Social History  
Leiden University  
Cruquiusweg 31  
1019 AT Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
enm@iisg.nl
14. **Elise VAN NEDERVEEN**  
Department of Research  
International Institute of Social History  
Leiden University  
Cruquiusweg 31  
1019 AT Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
enm@iisg.nl
15. **Beatrice ZUCCA**  
LaDéHis, Laboratoire de Démographie et  
Histoire Sociale  
EHESS - Ecole Des Hautes Etudes en  
Science Sociale  
54 Bd Raspail  
75006 Paris  
France  
beatrice.zucca@gmail.com

IM/30.09.2010

---

**ESF Exploratory Workshops**

European Science Foundation ▪ 1 quai Lezay Marnésia ▪ BP90015 ▪ FR-67080 Strasbourg Cedex  
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 76 71 46 or 36 ▪ Fax: +33 (0)3 88 37 05 32 ▪ Email: ew-office@esf.org ▪ <http://www.esf.org/workshops>

ESF Exploratory Workshop on:

# *Reconstructing The Female Labor Force Participation Rate in Western Europe, 18th and 19th Centuries*

convened by Carmen Sarasúa (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, ES) and  
by Jane Humphries (Oxford University, UK)

