



Humanities and Social Sciences Latvia



1(18)/98

- General Editor:* Viktors Ivbulis (*University of Latvia*)
- Editorial Council:* Roger Bartlett (*University of London*)
Uldis Bērziņš (*Latvian Writers Union*)
Visvaldis Klīve (*University of Latvia*)
Maija Kūle (*Latvian Academy of Sciences*)
André Dietrich Loeber
(*Kiel University, Germany*)
Erwin Oberländer (*Johannes
Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz, Germany*)
Knuts Skujenieks (*Latvian Writers Union*)
Jānis Stradiņš (*Latvian Academy of Sciences*)
George (Juris) Viksniņš
(*Georgetown University, USA*)
Pēteris Zvidriņš (*University of Latvia*)
- Editorial Consultants:* Juris Kalniņš, Raita Karnīte, Janīna Kursīte,
Einārs Semanis, Aivars Stranga,
Kārlis Streips, Valters Šulcs,
Andrejs Veisbergs, Aivars Tabūns,
Ingrīda Zemzare
- Editor of the Issue:* Pārsla Eglīte

Correspondence and Contributions:

Manuscripts are accepted in English and Latvian

Viktors Ivbulis, General Editor
Humanities and Social Sciences. Latvia
4a Visvalža iela
Rīga LV-1011, LATVIA

Subscriptions: available from the publisher, University of Latvia
Journal *Humanities and Social Sciences. Latvia* Foundation

University of Latvia

Humanities and Social Sciences. Latvia

**Gender Equality –
a Precondition
of Democracy
1(18)**

University of Latvia

CONTENTS

Pārsla Eglīte	LATVIAN WOMEN AND MEN IN DIALOGUE 4
Ilze Ostrovska	THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF DEMOCRATIZATION - A CON CEALED INTEREST GROUP 26
Brigita Zepa, Liene Čaplinska, Inese Ozoliņa	LATVIAN WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET: ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS 34
Ieva Marga Markausa	THE DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC WORK IN LATVIAN FAMILIES 50
Inna Broņislava Zariņa	HOW DO THE RESIDENTS OF RĪGA FEEL? THEIR OWN VIEWS 66
Aija Tūna	GENDER EQUALITY IN LATVIAN SCHOOLS: IS THIS IMPORTANT? . 73
	A NEW JOURNAL FOR LATVIAN LINGUISTS 83
	ARE THEY IN THEIR OWN HOMES? 86
	THE THIRD BOOK ON GENDER ISSUES IN LATVIA 92
	CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS 1998 93

Brigita Zepa, Liene Čaplinska, Inese Ozoliņa

LATVIAN WOMEN IN THE LABOR MARKET: ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

In present-day society, work usually occurs outside the home, so we can speak of two types of work — unpaid domestic work and salaried professional work. The historical reality has been that women are responsible for domestic work. Until the mid-17th century, this allowed women to have a stable situation in the family. The work done in providing for the family was visible to all members of the family, and everyone felt that it was a necessary (albeit, perhaps, a second-class) supplement to the work which was done by husbands and fathers.

In developed societies in our time, work (and here we basically mean employment outside the home) has become a dominant source of power, welfare and prestige. An individual who is not involved in the labor market becomes a person without status, and he/she is denied access to various social resources such as influence, money, privileges, etc. As a result of this, the individual becomes dependent on other people who do have the respective resources. This is why women, even if they spend a lot of time doing domestic work, want to obtain professional jobs, too.

A situation has emerged in which inequality exists between women and men in the labor sector of free market economies. The American sociologist Gerhard Lenski (Lenski, 1970) has explained the inequality through the following factors:

- 1) Childbirth is necessarily the function of women;
- 2) The traditional system of raising families has put full responsibility for work in the home on the shoulders of women;
- 3) There is a persistent view that women cannot make achievements which are comparable to those of men, so people who control access to

the better paid professions often reject female applicants without even reviewing their qualifications;

4) Women themselves are often happier in participating in the “marriage market” than in the economic or political spheres of life.

The French sociologist M. Gilbert (Gilbert, 1984) has written that the economic inequality of women is dependent on psychological factors. With the help of the mass media, various female roles have been idealized — the role of the loving mother, for example, or of the homemaker or the object of worship by men. As a result, women have less of a desire for permanent professional activity, and they are satisfied with lower-paid or monotonous jobs which do not require extensive qualifications.

If we look at the situation in Latvia, we must note first of all that in the early years of independence in this country, much attention was devoted to various ethnic matters, while right now the focus is on the citizenship issue. Comparatively little is said about opportunities available to women — the so-called “women’s question” which is the focus of a great deal of attention in the countries of the First World. Problems have occurred, and some are expanding quite rapidly. We feel that the mass media in Latvia hide the issue more than reveal it, thus promoting the reproduction of “classical” stereotypes:

- Women who are more active and better situated, those who have, by dint of their own effort, established successful careers, are the ones who most often represent views at conferences and in radio and television interviews, thus creating the impression that there is no inequality in career opportunities between men and women. Those women who have lost in the competition with men do not speak up about this fact, so we can say that society is not fully informed about this issue.

- The mass media produce and reproduce various images of successful women, but there is virtually no discussion about the many and varied less successful routes which a woman’s life can take, especially at this time, during a period of transition.

- Stereotypes about the roles of women and men in the professional

sphere and, especially, in family life are quite conservative in Latvia (time budget research shows this especially clearly). In many cases this limits career opportunities for women, when compared to men, and this is a loss for all of society.

- Finally, conservative stereotypes are preserved in families and in schools, thus “programming” boys and girls for their place in society.

The purpose of this article is to study:

- 1) The attitude of women toward professional work and their motivation for work in Latvia (as compared to the attitudes of men);
- 2) The work behavior of men and women and specific aspects of this behavior in both genders.

For this purpose, the authors are referring a survey that was conducted by the Baltic Data House in August 1997.¹

The attitude of women toward work

In Latvia, work is a fundamental part of life for men and women both. Employment of women is perceived as a normal phenomenon in society, and this is largely because of the country's historical experience. During the Soviet era, there was loudly proclaimed equality between women and men, and this created grounds for a high level of employment among women. As a result of this, society holds views which say that women have two different roles — their professional role and their family role.

In the survey conducted in August 1997, 86% of employed men and 80% of employed women said that work is the most important area of human activity. Although this view is slightly less popular among women than men, female respondents were less likely than male respondents to say that work is “a way of earning money and nothing more” (see Figure 1). Similarly, women (46%) are much more ready than men (27%) to work at a salaried job even if they don't really need money. This suggests that women are encouraged to work outside the home not only by material, but also by social factors — a wider communications network, opportunities for professional self-affirma-

¹ The survey was based on a multi-level random cohort with approximately 100 survey points; the number of respondents (N=1,060) sets the margin of error at plus or minus 3%.

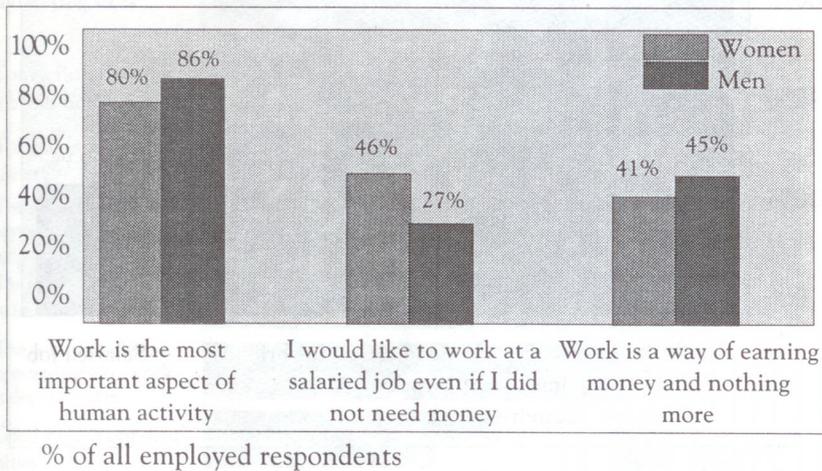
tion, and the need to feel useful in society [Švarckopfa, Koroļeva, Zariņa]. Research data indicate that men link work to the earning of money more often, and if there was no need to earn, only one-fourth of men would continue to work.

Figure 1

The attitude of men and women toward work

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements, thinking about work in general?

[The figure shows the sum of the responses “fully agree” and “agree more than disagree”]



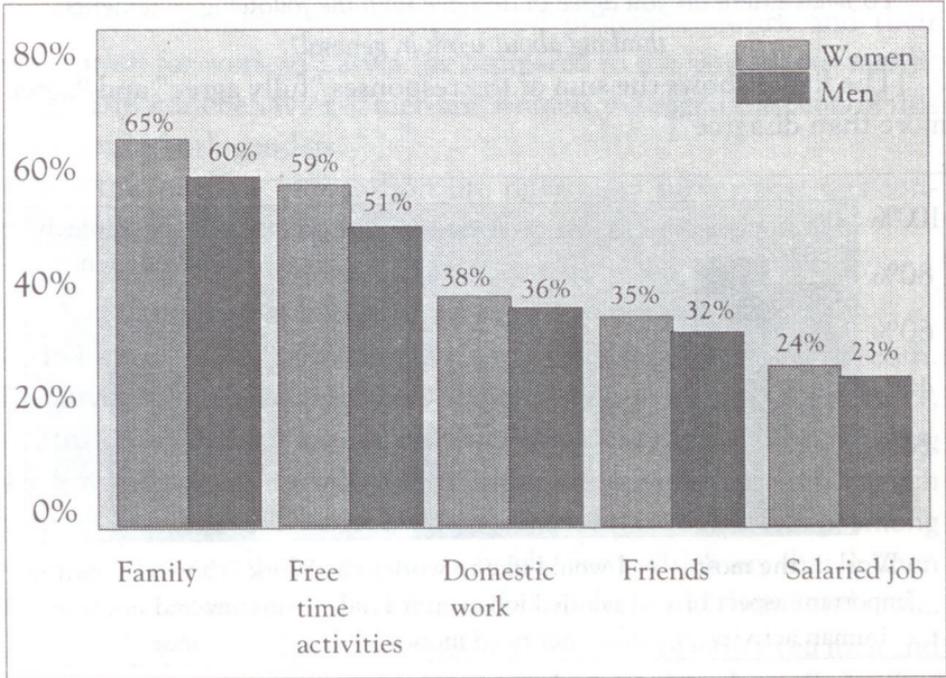
Interestingly, when survey respondents were asked about which activities they would like to spend more time on and which less, both women and men said that they would like to devote more time to their families and free time (65% of working women and 60% of working men would like to spend more time with their families, while 59% and 51% respectively would be happy to have more time for leisure activities). It is noteworthy that this trend — that more women than men want to devote time to something — also exists in other activities — domestic work, time with friends and salaried jobs (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Desired changes in time consumption among women and men

I would like to spend more time on...

[The figure shows the sum of the responses "much more time" and "a little more time"]



% of all employed respondents

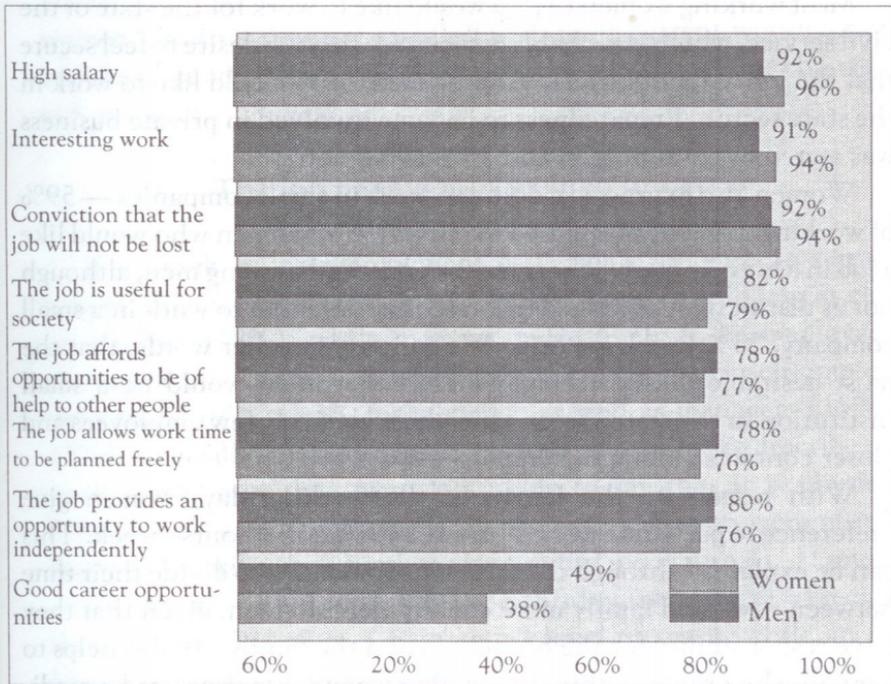
Men and women have similar views concerning the importance of various aspects of work. For both genders (91% - 96%) a high level of income is very important. The same is true with respect to the content of work, as well as job security (here — a conviction that the individual will not lose his or her job). Both men and women also attach importance to the ability to work independently, the ability to help others, the extent to which their work is useful in society, and their ability to plan their work time freely (76% - 82%) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Assessments by men and women concerning various aspects of work

Thinking about work in general, how important, in your view, is each of the following characteristics of work?

[The figure shows the sum of the responses "very important" and "more important than unimportant"]



% of all employed respondents

There are significant differences between the views of men and women only with respect to the issue of career development. 49% of employed men feel that good career opportunities are important, but only 38% of women — a considerably smaller percentage — hold that view. We see that for women, job security, earnings and the content of work are important, but they are less oriented toward establishing a career.

This viewpoint is also illustrated quite well in responses to a question in which respondents were asked whether they would rather be self-employed or work for someone else. 46% of employed women would like to be self-employed (53% of men), while 45% of women (39% of men) would like to work for someone else. Women, in other words, are more prepared to take a subordinate role in work than are men.

Most working women (57%) would like to work for the state or the civil service, which is probably associated with the desire to feel secure that the job will not be lost. Among men, 50% would like to work in the state sector. Preparedness to become involved in private business was stated by 39% of men and 35% of women.

Women also expressed a desire to work in small companies — 59% of working women, as opposed to only 27% of women who would like a job in a big company. The same trend prevails among men, although not as distinctly — 47% of respondents would like to work in a small company, 33% in a large one. We can say, in other words, that the most desirable place of employment for women would be a small institution in the state sector which has relatively few employees and closer contacts among the employees.

With respect to the length of the working day, women give preference to part-time work — between 20 and 39 hours a week. This can be explained through the fact that women try to divide their time between work and family more equally than do men, given that they have responsibility for the household and the family. It also helps to explain why only one-third of female respondents expressed a readiness to spend a full day at work. Among working men, 61% want to work at a full-time job and to devote most of their time only to work; only 17% of men would choose part-time work. Another 21% of male respondents said that they would just as soon not work at a salaried job at all, setting their own working schedule. This means that they would like to be self-employed.

At the same time, however, 59% of men and 58% of women say that they would like to work longer hours and earn more money. This

is a contradictory situation in that women on the one hand wish to work at part-time jobs, but at the same time they wish to increase working time and their earnings. This obviously indicates that there is a gulf between what women want (shorter hours so that they can spend more time with their families) and what they must do in reality (a less than satisfactory material situation in Latvia forces both women and men to think about earning opportunities by increasing working hours). Of working respondents, 34% of men and 37% of women said that they are satisfied with their current working hours and their income. This group in society is not looking for changes in either aspect.

The job behavior of women in Latvia

Work conditions and working hours

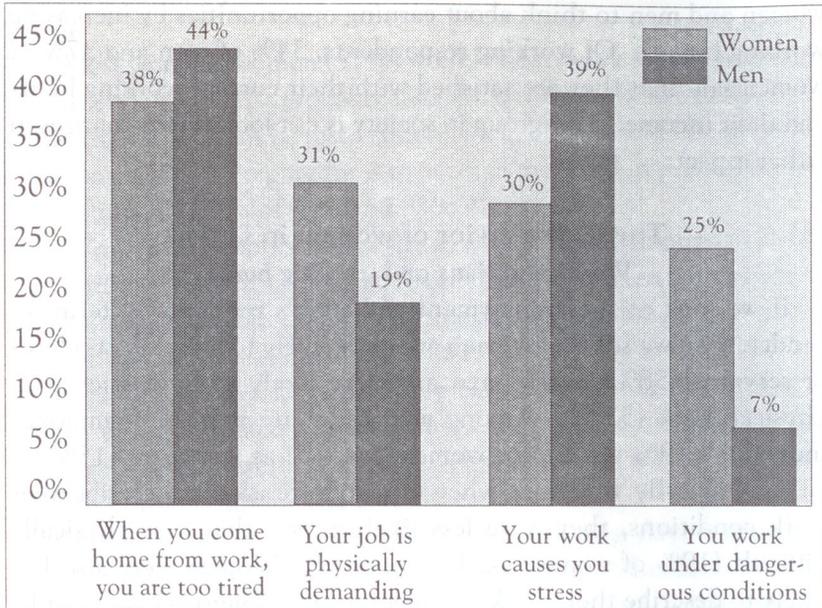
If we look at the employment of Latvia's residents in terms of gender, then we see that women are more likely to hold jobs as clerks or servants (58%), while men are more likely to be employed in physical work (53%). Among men there are more self-employed individuals (9% vs. 3% for women), as well as managers (15% vs. 11%). Logically, therefore, when women were asked to describe their work conditions, they were less likely to say that it is physically difficult (19% of women vs. 32% of men). Women were also less likely to describe their work as dangerous (see Figure 4). It must be noted, however, that more than one-third of women (39%) feel that their work is linked to a heightened level of stress, while an even higher percentage (44%) say that they are too tired when they come home from work. The same was said by 30% and 38% of men respectively. Women, compared to men, are more likely to feel weariness and stress at work, and this is a significant sign of inequality between the genders.

Figure 4

Description of the primary job of the respondents

To what extent does each of the following statements apply to your job —
always, frequently, sometimes, seldom or never?

[The figure shows the sum of the responses “always” and “frequently”]



% of those employed at a salaried job

Women are more likely to work as clerks or servants, so their jobs more frequently can be described by the sentence “Usually I work at a single location outside my home, e.g., an office or a factory”. This statement was used to describe the job by 82% of women, but only 61% of men. Among men, 28% work at various locations. This is true only of 7% of women.

With respect to the start and end of the working day, the hours of women are more often specified by their employers, and they have fewer opportunities to change the hours (this view was expressed by 68% of

women and 57% of men). Full freedom to decide when to start work and when to stop is enjoyed by 12% of men and 5% of women.

We see, therefore, that the work of women is more regulated. It is linked to a single place of employment, and working hours are regulated more often for women than for men. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why women are more likely to feel tired or stressful.

Job security

The research results show that women are more likely than men to feel a lack of security in their jobs, because more than half of working women (53%), but only about one-third of men (36%) are very worried about the possibility of losing their jobs. Summing up the responses "very worried" and "worried to a certain extent" with respect to the possibility of losing one's job, we come up with 68% of working men and 76% of working women.

It turns out, moreover, that women are not only more insecure about their jobs, they are also less convinced that they will be able to find new work if they lose their existing job (Figure 5). This is not difficult to explain psychologically, because it is precisely the fact that women do not see an opportunity to find different work which exacerbates their worries about holding on to their present jobs. In this instance, it is important to emphasize that this situation is faced much more often by women than men.

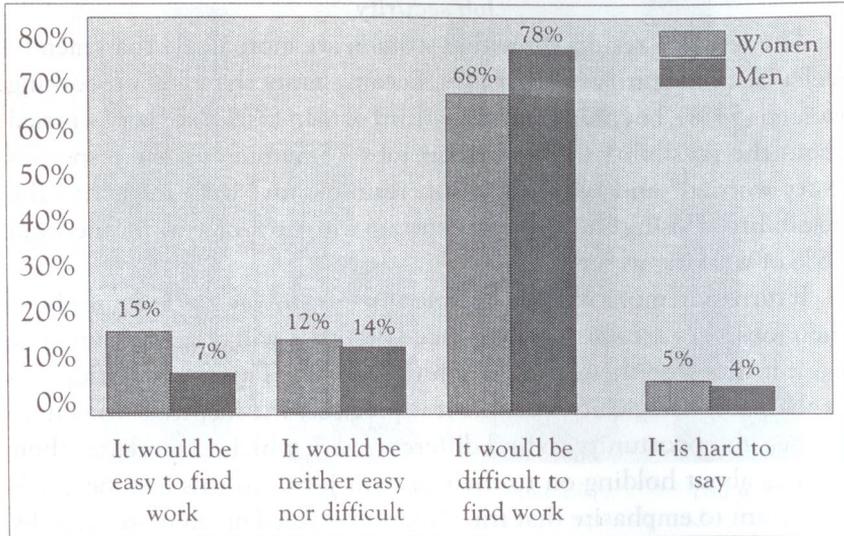
We can also add that women, on average, have a higher level of education in Latvia than do men. Among survey respondents, 30% of women, but only 14% of men had a completed higher education, while 3% of women and 15% of men had no more than a primary education (approximately an equal number of respondents had a completed secondary or vocational education). Even though women with a higher education feel slightly more secure about their job (women with a secondary or vocational education feel secure in 25% of instances, while those with a higher education feel safe in 35% of cases), men have a much higher level of confidence in the security of their jobs (43% of men with a secondary or vocational education and 65% of men with a

higher education). We can conclude that the higher level of education among women does not protect women from fear of losing their jobs.

Figure 5

The attitude toward opportunities to find work

If you were actively searching for a satisfactory job, do you feel that it would be very easy, rather easy, neither easy nor difficult, rather difficult or very difficult?



% of those employed at a salaried job

Attitudes toward the job

Comparing the views of men and women with respect to their primary job (Figure 6), we find that both women and men have similar views about the human aspects of their work — usefulness to society (84% and 86%) and the ability to help others (71%).

With respect to the content of work, however, we find differences between men and women. Men mentioned the ability to work independently more often, and men were more likely than women to say that their work is interesting.

We find even greater differences in looking at the social aspects of

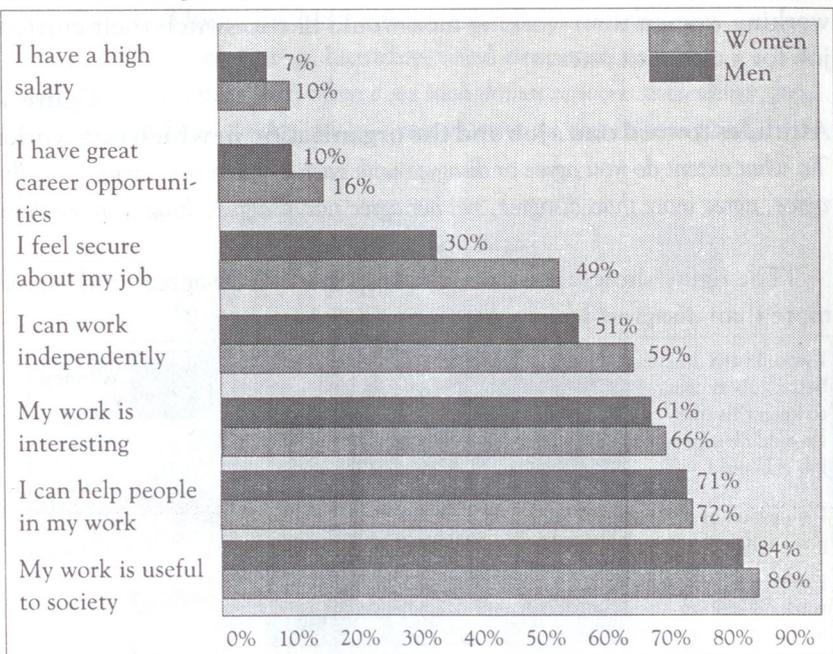
work. Male respondents mentioned career opportunities more often than women, and they were more likely to emphasize the aspect of a high salary. The greatest differences between the genders, however, exist in the area of job security — half of men, but less than one-third of women feel safe about hanging on to their jobs.

Figure 6

Evaluation of primary work

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your primary job — fully agree, agree more than disagree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree more than agree, fully disagree?

[The figure shows the sum of the responses “fully agree” and “agree more than disagree”]



% of those employed at a salaried job

Attitudes toward one's job and the organization in which one works
Interestingly, 43% of surveyed women and 39% of surveyed men say

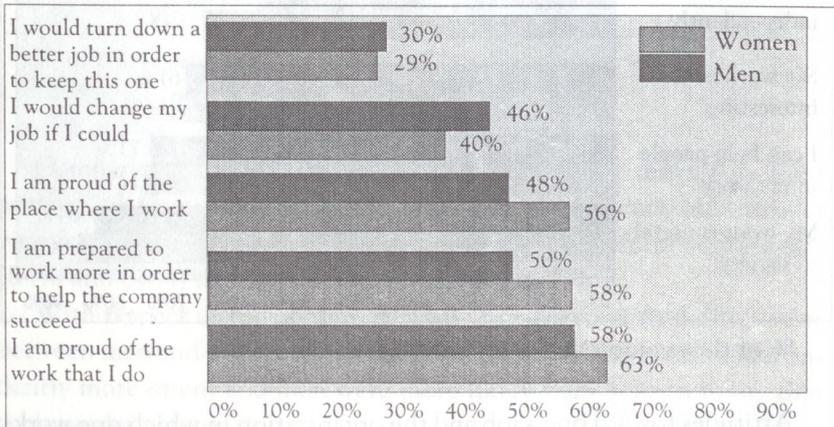
that it is important to them to do their work as well as possible, even if that hampers private life from time to time. This signifies the extent to which work is important in the lives of women.

If we take into consideration responses to the previous questions (i.e., that women are more likely to be tired or stressed out at work), then we see that it is no accident that female respondents were less likely than male respondents to be proud of the company or organization in which they work or the job which they are performing (see Figure 7). Men are more likely to be proud of their work and of the firm or organization in which they work, and this helps to explain why men are prepared to work more than they are working now in order to help the firm or organization to succeed. Given these data, we can see that more working women than working men would like to switch their current job for a different one.

Figure 7

Attitudes toward one's job and the organization in which one works
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of these statements — fully agree, agree more than disagree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree more than agree, fully disagree?

[The figure shows the sum of the responses “fully agree” and “agree more than disagree”]



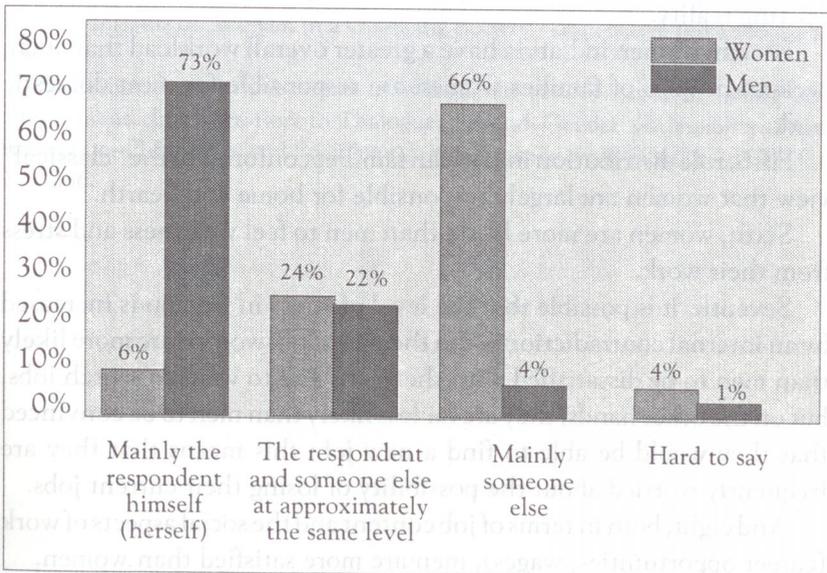
% of those employed at a salaried job

It is not difficult to understand why men are more prepared than women to work overtime hours, because research data show that women undertake most responsibilities for the home and the family. Such work as cleaning the house, preparing food, doing the laundry, etc., is the role of women in 90% of families, which means that women have less time for their own needs and for overtime in professional work (Figure 8). This once again affirms the traditional role distribution between women and men, and it means that it is still extensively true that women in Latvia are in essence forced to work at two full-time jobs — one outside the home, the second in the home.

Figure 8

**The main performer of domestic work —
cleaning, laundry, food preparation**

Who in your family most often does such domestic work as cleaning, food preparation, laundry, etc. — you or someone else in your family?



% of those employed at a salaried job

CONCLUSIONS

In summarizing these data, we can conclude that professional work is a sphere which is an important part of life for women and for men. It must be emphasized, however, that this helps to create significant inequality between the two genders.

First of all, women put stock not only in the material factors which encourage people to work outside the home, but also various social factors — a wider communications network, opportunities for professional self-affirmation, and the need to feel useful in society. Men more often than women feel that their job is a way to earn money.

Second, women are less oriented than men toward career development. They are more interested in such aspects of work as job security, wages and the content of work.

Third, there is a contradictory situation in which women want part-time jobs, but at the same time they want to increase their working hours and earn more money. This means that there is a conflict between desired job behavior and the behavior which becomes obligatory due to existing reality.

Fourth, women in Latvia have a greater overall workload than men, because in 90% of families women are responsible for most domestic work.

Fifth, role distribution in Latvian families conforms to the "classical" view that women are largely responsible for home and hearth.

Sixth, women are more likely than men to feel weariness and stress from their work.

Seventh, it is possible that the level of stress in women is increased by an internal contradiction — on the one hand, women are more likely than men to be dissatisfied with their jobs and to want to switch jobs, but on the other hands, they are far less likely than men to be convinced that they would be able to find a new job; this means that they are frequently worried about the possibility of losing their current jobs.

And eight, both in terms of job content and the social aspects of work (career opportunities, wages), men are more satisfied than women.

We have looked at only a few aspects of work, but they show very

clearly that work is an area of life in which there is considerable inequality between the genders. Given that most women and men feel that work is the most important aspect of human activity, the sphere represents many obstacles on the road to a democratic society — a society which can ensure true social gender equality. It also means that more research is needed on these issues, and greater attention to them should be encouraged in society.

REFERENCES

1. Gilbert, M. (1984). Rabota I semja v industrialnih obshchestvah. In: Struktura semji: sociologicheskiye I npravstvennije aspekti. Moskva, Pp. 45-47 (in Russian).
2. Koroļova, I. Young women's attitude towards work: options, opportunities and reality. In: Women of Latvia - 75. Research. Statistics. Reminiscences. Rīga: Zvaigzne, 1994, Pp. 20-39.
3. Lenski, G. (1970). Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification. New York: McGraw-Hill.
4. Švarckopfa, A. A women at work and in everyday life. In: Fragments of Reality: Insights on Women in a Changing Society. Trapenciere (ed.) 1992, Pp. 59-63.
5. Zariņa, I. - B. The views of women on gender issues in family and employment. In: Invitation to Dialogue: beyond Gender (In)equality. Riga: Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Latvian Academy of Sciences, 1997, Pp. 277-286.

ISSN 1022-4483 = HUMANITIES *and* SOCIAL SCIENCES. LATVIA



Humanities and Social Sciences Latvia

© University of Latvia