Sex-Age Patterns of Labour Force Participation by Urban and Rural Populations

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Introduction

AS A PART of its programme of work in the field of human resources statistics and, in particular, labour force projections, the International Labour Office has undertaken several analytical studies on recent trends and changes in the structure of the world's labour force, primarily to assess the various factors affecting labour force participation rates and the changes that are likely to take place in the future.[2]

This study is concerned with sex-age labour force participation in urban and rural areas respectively and the effect on the sex-age patterns of labour force participation in the total area. The data shown relate to 40 countries, of which three are in Africa, two in Northern America, 13 in Latin America, ten in Asia, four in Eastern Europe and eight in Northern, Western and Southern Europe. Where possible, the countries and regions have been grouped according to level of economic development. The measure used to determine this level is the proportion of the economically active male population engaged in agricultural, industrial and service activities respectively. More specifically, countries with less than 45 per cent. of the male labour force in agriculture have been classified as more developed; conversely, countries with more than 45 per cent. of their labour force in agriculture have been classified as less developed.[3]

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[1] International Labour Office.

[2] See, in particular, United Nations, Inter-Regional Seminar on Long-Term Economic Projections for the World Economy: Sectoral Aspects, Elsinore, Denmark, August 1966: *World and regional estimates and projections of labour force*, by James N. YPSILANTIS (I.L.O.) (doc. ISLEP/A/VII.4 and ISLEP/A/VII.4/Add.1 and Add.III); and Samuel BAUM: "The world's labour force and its industrial distribution, 1950 and 1960", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 95, Nos. 1-2, Jan.-Feb. 1967, pp. 96-112.

[3] For more details of the classification system see *World and regional estimates and projections of labour force*, op. cit., figure I and table E (pp. 14-15). The table shows the relationship of various socio-economic indices of development to the one used here, while the

In most cases the country data have been collected from population censuses taken during the period 1950-66, but for six countries, all Asian, they have been obtained from regular or occasional labour force surveys. Since the age groups included in the tabulation of economic activities were not the same in all cases, estimates have sometimes had to be made to fit the data into the standard age groups used in this article.

The data are presented for six age groups: 15-19, 20-24, 25-44, 45-54, 55-64 and 65 years and over. Since the minimum age for inclusion in the labour force varies widely from country to country, the activity rate for persons under 15 years of age was omitted from the analysis. As indicated in a previous I.L.O. study on activity rates, " these groups represent... the minimum age detail required to throw light on the variations in levels of activity of youth, aged persons and population of working age and, to a certain extent, of female population of child-bearing age ".[1]

One of the limitations as regards the comparability of the data presented in this study is the lack of an international standard definition of " urban " and " rural " areas. With a few exceptions [2], therefore, the respective national definitions have been used.[3] It is hoped, nevertheless, that the relatively high number of countries selected will permit a delineation of patterns that are not too biased by definitional differences.

Further problems are posed by differences in the concept of economic activity [4] and in the methods of collecting data on the economically

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figure depicts the levels of economic development as measured by the structure of the male labour force. The 40 countries were plotted on a similar graph to determine level of economic development and proximity to regional models.

[1] *World and regional estimates and projections of labour force*, op. cit., p. 5.

[2] In its data on the economically active population by age, *Colombia* provided no details on " urban " and " rural " areas; the municipal centres have therefore been considered as " urban ", and the rest of the territory as " rural ". *Greece* and *Spain* provided data for three types of areas—" urban ", " semi-urban ", and " rural "; the " semi-urban " areas have been excluded from the study. *Liberia* provided no definition of " urban " and " rural " areas, so inhabitants in localities with 10,000 or more inhabitants have been treated as " urban " and the rest of the population has been classed as " rural ".

[3] The criteria used by the 40 countries surveyed to identify the urban and rural populations were of three types: (i) qualitative (urban = the population in administrative centres, capitals, etc.), (ii) quantitative (urban = population in localities above a certain size), and (iii) a combination of these. The first type was used in a number of Latin American countries (for example Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Peru) and in Ceylon, the Philippines, Morocco and, to a certain extent, the four Eastern European countries. The second type was used in the other European countries, Northern America, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Indonesia, South Korea, Syria, Turkey and Ghana. In this group the size of population used to identify urban areas varied widely from country to country: 250 in Denmark, Finland and Sweden, 1,000 in Canada, 2,500 in the United States, and 10,000 in Portugal, Spain, Ghana and Turkey. The third type was used by Panama, Cuba, India and Iran.

[4] Two types of criteria are generally used for identifying members of the economically active population: (i) the " gainful worker " approach, and (ii) the " labour force " approach. The first considers as economically active any person who usually, or for a large part of his time, works at an occupation by which he earns money (or a money equivalent) or in which he assists in the production of marketable goods. The second approach considers as a member of the labour force, regardless of his usual activities, any person employed or seeking employment in a specified brief period, usually one week.

active population.[1] These problems have been amply treated in publications of the International Labour Office and the United Nations [2] and will not be dealt with in any detail here. However, since differences in the concept of economic activity considerably limit comparability between countries and even within a country, it seems appropriate briefly to mention national practices in this field.

The " labour force " approach was used by about 43 per cent. of the countries observed, the proportion reaching 44 per cent. among the less developed countries and about 39 per cent. among the more developed. Looking at the regions, we find that the percentages of countries using this approach were as follows: Northern America, 100; Africa; 66.7; Latin America, 61.5; Asia, 40; Eastern Europe, 0; the rest of Europe, 13. As can be seen, differences in the concept of economic activity used tend more especially to affect regional comparisons.

National differences as to reference period, scope and coverage are also important factors limiting data comparability. They frequently influence the size of certain categories in the labour force, particularly unpaid family workers, part-time workers, seasonal workers and the military forces.

Male labour force participation patterns

For inter-country and intra-country comparisons the characteristics of the male labour force generally provide a more reliable basis than those of the female labour force, mainly because statistics of economically active males are less affected by differences in concepts, definitions, enumeration procedures and coverage than those of females. The crude activity rate [3] of the male population depends primarily on the latter's age structure. This explains why the differences are not analysed in this study except when standardising procedures are used. However, when male age-specific activity rates [4] are analysed, attention must be

[1] Within a given country the definition used to identify the economically active segment of the population in urban and rural areas respectively is the same. However, the choice of concepts, data collecting method, reference period, etc., will influence the relationship between the urban and rural patterns.

[2] See I.L.O.: *The international standardisation of labour statistics*, Studies and Reports, New Series, No. 53 (Geneva, 1959); and United Nations: *Handbook of population census methods*. Vol. II: *Economic characteristics of the population* (doc. ST/STAT/SER.F/5 Rev.1) (New York, 1958).

[3] The terms " activity rate " and " work rate ", as used here, are equivalent to " labour force participation rate ".

[4] Defined as the percentage of economically active persons among the population of a given age group. For example the age-specific activity rate (R) for the 15-19 group is calculated by the formula—

$$R\ (15\text{-}19) = \frac{LF\ (15\text{-}19)}{P\ (15\text{-}19)} \times 100$$

where LF = the number of economically active persons in the specified age group and P is the total number of persons in that age group.

given to the interpretation of the differences in the work rates[1] of young and old persons respectively. Indeed, for these categories of persons, where the " working " or " non-working " status is not always clearly identifiable, the different concepts or methods used by the various countries may bias inter- and intra-country comparisons. Of course, the impact of the differences is more or less pronounced according to the level of development of country. Moreover, since the criteria used by the various countries in defining the urban and rural areas differ, inter- and intra-country comparisons of the age-specific activity rates are accordingly affected, particularly among the younger and older age groups.

In order to provide an indication of the homogeneity of each age group as regards participation rates, standard deviations have been calculated.[2]

Urban male patterns

Table I shows the average age-specific rates for the 40 countries observed.

The high dispersion that characterises the activity rate of young and old persons is to be expected. Economic, social and cultural differences among countries affect primarily the young and the old; in the case of the middle age span their impact is negligible, as is shown by the low

TABLE I. AVERAGE URBAN MALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES)[1] IN 40 SELECTED COUNTRIES, WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS, BY LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Age group (years)	All 40 countries		13 more developed countries		27 less developed countries	
	Average activity rate	Standard deviation	Average activity rate	Standard deviation	Average activity rate	Standard deviation
15-19	52.3	*12.1*	48.3	*12.7*	54.3	*9.5*
20-24	83.8	*8.1*	82.3	*7.3*	84.5	*8.5*
25-44	95.8	*2.5*	96.0	*2.5*	95.6	*2.4*
45-54	94.1	*3.0*	94.1	*2.8*	94.1	*3.0*
55-64	82.6	*7.1*	82.9	*5.3*	82.4	*7.9*
65 and over	46.7	*15.8*	36.3	*11.7*	51.6	*15.1*

[1] Unweighted averages of individual country rates.

[1] See footnote 3 on preceding page.

[2] As used in this study, the standard deviation is an index of the dispersion of individual rates of activity around the average rate. It has been calculated for each specified age group in a group of countries or areas. For further details on the use of this measure for estimating or evaluating activity rates and their patterns see James N. YPSILANTIS: *The labor force of Czechoslovakia*, International Population Statistics Reports, Series P-90, No. 13 (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1960), pp. 22-23.

standard deviation. Of course, this phenomenon is not due solely to economic, social and cultural factors; as stated earlier, it could also be the result of differences in the definition of urban and rural areas respectively and of differences in the definitions and methods used to identify the economically active population.

Table I also compares the average urban male age-specific activity rates of two groups of countries, the more developed and the less developed. In the age groups 25-44, 45-54 and 55-64 the rates are slightly higher in the more developed countries. In contrast, the rate for the age group 65 and over is about 42 per cent. higher in the less developed countries. For the age groups 20-24 and 15-19 in the less developed countries the rates were also higher, but the differences were statistically not significant. Excluding the age group 65 years and over, therefore, the patterns of age-specific activity rates of the more and less developed countries do not differ greatly.

However, although the level of economic development does not appear to be a significant factor in urban male activity patterns when all the countries under observation are taken together, there is some evidence that it is an important variable for certain regions (see, for example, tables II and IV).

TABLE II. AVERAGE URBAN MALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES) IN SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BY LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT

Age group (years)	Average activity rates	
	More developed countries [1]	Less developed countries [2]
15-19	50.9	64.7
20-24	78.0	87.6
25-44	96.3	96.7
45-54	96.0	93.6
55-64	85.4	79.1
65 and over	31.0	40.3

[1] Unweighted average rates of Denmark, Finland, France, Norway and Sweden. [2] Unweighted average rates of Greece, Portugal and Spain.

Regional averages of urban male age-specific activity rates are presented in table III. For three of the six regions the number of countries observed were few. The standard deviation at regional level was therefore not calculated.

The urban areas of the Latin American countries are characterised by relatively high participation rates in the age groups below 25 and over 44 years. The lowest participation rates are found in the Northern American and African countries. In Africa the regional average rates presented are probably affected by the small number of countries

TABLE III. AVERAGE URBAN MALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES) [1] BY REGION

Region	Number of countries observed	Age group (years)					
		15-19	20-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Africa	3	44.1	81.2	92.1	89.5	80.7	50.0
Northern America . .	2	41.3	85.4	95.5	93.5	83.6	28.1
Latin America	13	56.3	87.5	95.8	94.8	87.6	60.6
Asia	10	48.7	81.1	95.8	93.8	77.3	43.6
Western, Southern and Northern Europe .	8	56.1	81.6	96.6	95.1	83.1	34.2
Eastern Europe . . .	4	52.9	83.9	96.7	94.6	79.2	40.9

[1] Unweighted averages of individual country rates.

observed (three) and by the exclusion of the unemployed from the economically active population in one of these (Liberia), which resulted in the generally low age-specific work rates for that country and therefore for the region.

Major differences in the age-specific activity rates are particularly noticeable for the age groups 15-19 and 65 years and over. In both these groups the lowest work rates are found in the Northern American countries (about 41 and 28 per cent. respectively) and the highest in the Latin American countries (about 56 and 61 per cent. respectively).

The work rate in the Asian countries for the age group 15-19 appears to be particularly low. This also applies to most of the ten countries individually and may be explained by a lack of opportunities for gainful employment. The same factor is probably also responsible for the relatively low work rates observed for the age groups 55-64 and 65 years and over in these countries.

The regional work rate for urban males aged 55-64 in Eastern European countries is also low, mainly because of the emphasis on earlier retirement in those countries, particularly as compared with other European countries. On the other hand, the work rate of urban males aged 20-24 in Europe other than Eastern Europe is particularly low if compared with that observed in the Northern American countries; however, this may be mainly due to the exclusion from the economically active population of persons in compulsory military service in France, Greece and Sweden and those seeking work for the first time in Norway and Sweden (although the latter group of persons was also excluded in Canada).

Table IV presents the urban male age-specific activity rates for Northern America and Europe other than Eastern Europe, where only five out of the eight countries examined have been considered as developed.

The data indicate that the regional differences between Northern America and Europe other than Eastern Europe follow the pattern of differences associated with various levels of economic development. This influence is particularly noticeable in the lowest and highest age groups: in the age group 15-19 almost 35 per cent. of the actual difference observed between the work rates of Northern America and Europe appears to be due to differences in the level of development, and the difference reaches about 52 per cent. in the age group 65 years and over.

Finally, almost 37 per cent. of the actual difference in the work rate observed between Northern America and Europe other than Eastern Europe appears to be attributable to regional differences in the level of economic development.

TABLE IV. INFLUENCE OF LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON URBAN MALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES) [1] IN NORTHERN AMERICA AND EUROPE OTHER THAN EASTERN EUROPE

Age group (years)	Average male activity rate			Actual difference between Northern America and Europe	Differences due to—	
	Northern America	Europe other than Eastern Europe			Level of economic development	Other factors [2]
		All countries	More developed countries only			
15-19 . .	41.3	56.1	50.9	+14.8	+5.2	+9.6
20-24 . .	85.4	81.6	78.0	− 3.8	+3.6	−7.4
25-44 . .	95.5	96.6	96.3	+ 1.1	+0.3	+0.8
45-54 . .	93.5	95.1	96.0	+ 1.6	−0.9	+2.5
55-64 . .	83.6	83.1	85.4	− 0.5	−2.3	+1.8
65 and over	28.1	34.2	31.0	+ 6.1	+3.2	+2.9

[1] Unweighted averages of individual country rates. [2] Including different levels of economic development within the group of more developed countries.

Rural male patterns

Average age-specific activity rates in rural areas, together with the corresponding standard deviations, have been computed for the 40 countries and are given in table V.

Except in the youngest and oldest age groups, the rural areas are characterised by a relatively lower dispersion of the individual country rates in each age group than the urban areas (see table I). Thus the standard deviation in percentage terms of the corresponding average rate tends to be lower in each age group of the rural areas. This is not surprising when one considers that the urban areas of the various countries investigated are probably more diversified economically than the rural areas.

TABLE V. AVERAGE RURAL MALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES)[1] IN 40 SELECTED COUNTRIES, WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS, BY LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Age group (years)	All 40 countries		13 more developed countries		27 less developed countries	
	Average activity rate	Standard deviation	Average activity rate	Standard deviation	Average activity rate	Standard deviation
15-19 . .	73.0	*16.4*	60.3	*16.2*	79.1	*12.5*
20-24 . .	92.5	*5.8*	90.1	*6.1*	93.6	*5.4*
25-44 . .	97.2	*2.3*	96.4	*3.1*	97.6	*1.6*
45-54 . .	96.4	*2.4*	95.3	*3.3*	96.9	*1.6*
55-64 . .	90.2	*5.9*	87.4	*6.4*	91.5	*5.2*
65 and over	62.2	*18.7*	49.2	*18.4*	68.5	*15.3*

[1] Unweighted averages of individual country rates.

Table V also shows rural male age-specific work rates according to level of economic development. For each age group the rural participation rates in the less developed countries are higher than those in the more developed. Again the differences are more pronounced in the lowest and highest age groups. As to the dispersion of individual country rates around the average, it will be seen that the participation rates in the less developed countries tend to cluster more closely around the average rate than do those in the more developed. The higher participation rates [1] and the lower standard deviations in each age group that characterise the less developed countries as compared with the more developed ones reflect the

TABLE VI. AVERAGE RURAL MALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES) [1] BY REGION

Region	Number of countries observed	Age group (years)					
		15-19	20-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Africa	3	60.8	85.4	95.3	95.3	90.5	68.8
Northern America . .	2	41.7	88.6	92.5	90.5	80.0	30.3
Latin America	13	80.2	95.3	97.4	96.9	93.5	74.9
Asia	10	70.9	92.0	97.3	96.2	87.3	56.7
Western, Southern and Northern Europe .	8	74.7	91.1	97.8	96.6	89.6	49.5
Eastern Europe . . .	4	76.8	94.2	98.6	98.1	92.5	71.4

[1] Unweighted averages of individual country rates.

[1] Tested with the technique of analysis variance, the difference in each age group between the work rates of the more and less developed countries appears to be significant in four out of the six age groups, i.e. 15-19, 20-24, 55-64 and 65 years and over.

influence of the level of economic development on the patterns of rural labour force participation. Furthermore, the higher dispersion of the national rates for each age group in the more developed countries appears to confirm that national differences are more pronounced in the more developed countries than in the less developed ones.

The regional data (see table VI) show similar differences between the regions to those already observed as regards urban areas, with, however, more pronounced variations. As in the case of urban areas, the calculation of the standard deviations at regional level was omitted because of the small number of countries in certain regions.

It is clear that here again differences within the regions in terms of economic development tend to influence the pattern of participation. Table VII shows that the actual differences between Northern America and Europe other than Eastern Europe appear to be influenced in all age groups by the difference in the level of regional development. As in the case of urban areas, the influence is particularly pronounced in the lowest and highest age groups.

TABLE VII. INFLUENCE OF LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ON RURAL MALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES)[1] IN NORTHERN AMERICA AND EUROPE OTHER THAN EASTERN EUROPE

Age group (years)	Average male activity rate			Actual difference between Northern America and Europe	Differences due to—	
	Northern America	Europe other than Eastern Europe			Level of development	Other factors[2]
		All countries	More developed countries only			
15-19 . .	41.7	74.2	67.4	+32.5	+ 6.8	+25.7
20-24 . .	88.6	91.1	87.7	+ 2.5	+ 3.4	− 0.9
25-44 . .	92.5	97.8	97.4	+ 5.3	+ 0.4	+ 4.9
45-54 . .	90.5	96.6	96.3	+ 6.1	+ 0.3	+ 5.8
55-64 . .	80.0	89.6	88.5	+ 9.6	+ 1.1	+ 8.5
65 and over	30.3	49.5	39.0	+19.2	+10.5	+ 8.7

[1] Unweighted averages of individual country rates. [2] Including different levels of economic development within the group of more developed countries.

Comparison of urban and rural patterns for males

In comparing the urban and rural patterns of labour force participation by males, one notes that, with few exceptions, the rural areas are characterised by higher participation rates in each age group. Moreover, the differences between urban and rural participation rates tend to be

higher in the youngest and oldest age groups than in the middle span (25-54 years).

Except in the age group 65 years and over, the urban-rural differences in participation rates in each age group appear to be lower in the more developed than in the less developed countries. In other words, socio-economic and cultural differences between urban and rural areas are in general less noticeable in the more developed countries than in the less developed ones. The urban-rural difference for the age group 65 and over is slightly higher in developed countries, but in a statistically insignificant degree.

The regions, with only one exception, as shown in table VIII, follow the same pattern of differences between the urban and rural areas as that observed for all the countries together and for the groups of less developed and more developed countries, although the differences are more or less pronounced from region to region. Excluding Africa and Northern America, the differences are particularly noticeable for the age group 65 years and over, ranging from about 24 per cent. in the Latin American countries to about 75 per cent. in the Eastern European countries. This is clearly illustrated in table VIII, where the differences are shown in percentage terms, taking the urban participation rates as the base.

For all the countries taken together the rural participation rate is only slightly higher (1.5 per cent.) than the corresponding urban rate in the age group 25-44, whereas the difference reaches respectively about 40 and

TABLE VIII. URBAN-RURAL DIFFERENCES IN MALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES BY LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BY REGION

(Urban rate = 100 per cent.)

Level of development and region	Age group (years)					
	15-19	20-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
All countries	**+39.6**	**+10.4**	**+1.5**	**+2.4**	**+ 9.2**	**+33.2**
More developed countries	+25.3	+ 9.5	+0.4	+1.3	+ 5.4	+35.5
Less developed countries	+45.7	+10.8	+2.1	+3.0	+11.0	+32.8
Regions:						
Africa	+37.9	+ 5.2	+3.5	+6.5	+12.1	+37.6
Northern America	+ 1.0	+ 3.7	−3.1	−3.2	− 4.3	+ 7.8
Latin America . .	+42.5	+ 8.9	+1.7	+2.2	+ 6.7	+23.6
Asia	+45.6	+13.4	+1.6	+2.6	+12.9	+30.0
Western, Southern and Northern Europe	+33.2	+11.6	+1.2	+1.6	+ 7.8	+44.7
Eastern Europe .	+45.2	+12.3	+2.0	+3.7	+16.8	+74.6

33 per cent. in the age groups 15-19 and 65 years and over. The marked differences in the extreme age groups may be explained by urban-rural differences in schooling and retirement possibilities.

The big difference in the Eastern European countries in this age group may be explained largely by the fact that the tendency to include old people in the workforce is more pronounced in rural than in urban areas—either because of shortages of manpower of prime working age (i.e. 15-64 years) or because of the methods used in the census to classify the male farm population.

Contrary to the general tendency, the Northern American pattern is characterised by very small urban-rural differences in the old and young age groups. Moreover, in the age groups 25-44, 45-54 and 55-64 the urban work rates are slightly higher than the rural ones. However, as regards urban-rural differences in individual countries apart from Canada and the United States, relatively higher urban work rates are found only in Mexico and Syria (age group 25-44) in Puerto Rico and Sweden (age group 45-54) and in Japan (age group 15-19).

Age-standardised activity rates for males

In order to have a summary measure for comparing the general degrees of participation in urban and rural areas, the age-specific activity rates of both areas have been standardised.[1] This procedure has the advantage of eliminating the effects of differences in the age structure of the population and of highlighting the effect of economic, social and cultural factors.[2] In other words, the differences in age-standardised activity rates of the urban and rural areas within a country or region, and the differences between the individual countries or regions, are estimates [3] of the net effect of all factors affecting the relative size of the labour force, with the exception of age structure.

The results of such calculations carried out for the 40 countries under consideration, using the male world population in 1960 [4] as the standard, are summarised by region and level of development in table IX.

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[1] See A. J. JAFFE: *Handbook of statistical methods for demographers. Selected problems in the analysis of census data*, prepared under the supervision of Calvert L. DEDRICK (preliminary edition, second printing) (Washington, D.C., U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1951), Ch. III.

[2] However, it must be stressed that factors such as differences in concept, method, definitions and so on used by the various countries are also reflected in the age-standardised activity rates.

[3] These estimates are, however, subject to reservations as regards the interdependence and interaction of factors, e.g. the influence of population age structure or of its component factors (mortality, immigration, fertility) upon the age-specific activity rates, and of the latter upon the former.

[4] See *World and regional estimates and projections of labour force*, op. cit., p. 17, table F.

TABLE IX. AVERAGE MALE ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES) STANDARDISED FOR AGE STRUCTURE, IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, BY LEVEL OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND BY REGION

Level of development and region	Average activity rate standardised for age structure		Difference between rural and urban activity rates	
	Urban	Rural	Absolute	As percentage of urban rate
All countries	**52.2**	**56.5**	**+4.3**	**+ 8.2**
More developed countries	51.4	54.1	+2.7	+ 5.3
Less developed countries	52.6	57.6	+5.0	+ 9.5
Regions:				
Africa	49.9	54.5	+4.6	+ 9.2
Northern America	50.5	49.6	−0.9	− 1.8
Latin America	53.9	58.3	+4.4	+ 8.2
Asia	51.0	55.9	+4.9	+ 9.6
Western, Southern and Northern Europe	52.1	56.1	+4.0	+ 7.7
Eastern Europe	52.1	58.1	+6.0	+15.2

Taking all the countries together, the age-standardised rate of activity is 52.2 per cent. for the urban population and 56.5 per cent. for the rural population, the difference increasing in the less developed countries (52.6 as against 57.6 per cent.) and decreasing in the more developed ones (51.4 as against 54.1 per cent.). With a few exceptions, the rate of activity of the urban population in the less developed countries lies in between those of the urban and rural populations of the more developed countries.

By regions the differences in the rates of activity appear to be more pronounced in the rural areas. With one exception the standardised rate of activity is always lower in the urban areas.

Female labour force participation patterns

The statistics for economically active females are more influenced by differences in national statistical reporting and classification procedures than those for males. In the non-market sector of the economy the distinction between economic and non-economic activities is seldom very clear and the criteria applied to distinguish them are often quite arbitrary. This is particularly so in the rural areas, especially in the less developed countries, where a substantial proportion of women have a relatively weak attachment to the workforce. The diversity of national practice

regarding their inclusion in the economically active population poses certain problems of international comparability. The category of unpaid family workers, which is largely composed of female members of farm households, is the principal cause of the discrepancy. Differences in national practices with regard to classifying these unpaid family workers also affect comparisons between urban and rural patterns of labour force participation within the same country, since in urban areas the unpaid family worker category is merely a fraction of the labour force. The degree of female participation in economic activities is also influenced by other factors, such as training and level of education, opportunities for work outside the home, fertility, marital status and family responsibilities.

Urban female patterns

In urban areas female participation in economic activities is less influenced by differences in statistical methods than in rural areas. Therefore urban differences in the pattern and levels of activity rates may more nearly reflect social, economic and cultural differences. The latter factors are particularly important when comparing the pattern and levels of the female activity rates in most Moslem countries with those in non-Moslem countries in the same region or at similar levels of economic development.

The pattern of unweighted average urban activity rates for the 40 countries observed appears to have little practical value, since, as table X indicates, there is a high dispersion at all age levels, which implies a wide range of activity rates among these countries. The same was found to be true when these countries were grouped into more developed and less developed categories, particularly in the less developed group.

However, an analysis of the pattern and levels of the age-specific activity rates by country indicates five main patterns for urban areas. The

TABLE X. AVERAGE URBAN FEMALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES)[1] IN 40 SELECTED COUNTRIES, WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS

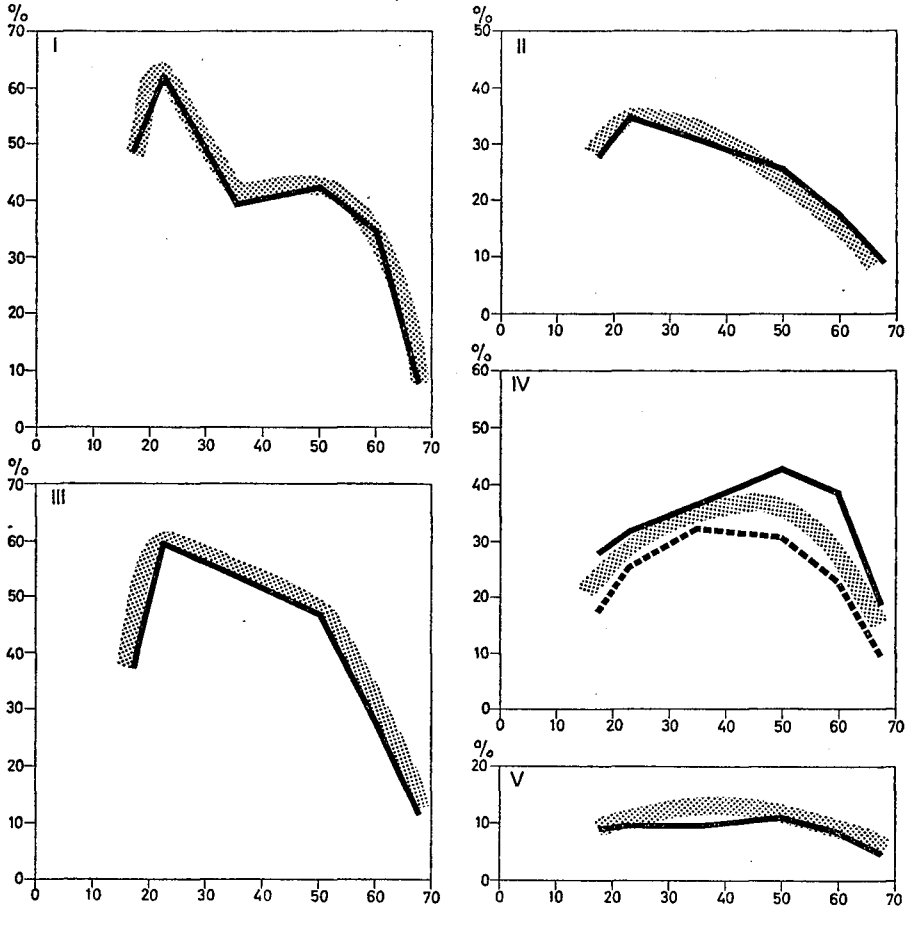
Age group (years)	Average activity rate	Standard deviation	Standard deviation as percentage of average activity rate
15-19	31.2	13.9	44.6
20-24	40.6	17.1	42.1
25-44	33.2	13.7	41.3
45-54	31.5	14.2	45.0
55-64	23.2	11.5	49.6
65 and over	9.9	5.8	58.6

[1] Unweighted averages of individual country rates.

first type of pattern is prevalent in the more developed countries of Europe other than Eastern Europe; the second one is typical of the Latin American countries and the third one of Eastern Europe, while the fourth and fifth are predominant in the non-Moslem and Moslem countries, respectively, of Asia and Africa. These five patterns are depicted in figure I, the rates being given in table XI.

FIGURE I. URBAN FEMALE ACTIVITY RATES

(Vertical scales represent activity rates; horizontal scales represent age groups)



The first pattern (type I) was obtained by averaging the activity rates in Denmark, France, Norway and Sweden for each age group. The pattern is characterised by two peaks, the higher one occurring in the age group 20-24 and the lower one in the age group 45-54. The latter appears to reflect a tendency for married women to enter the workforce at the end of the child-bearing period and when home responsibilities decrease because children reach school age. A similar pattern can be observed in Canada, the United States, South Korea, Japan and the Philippines. However, in the United States the peaks are reversed, i.e. the higher activity rate is in the age group 45-54; moreover, the activity rates for the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 are considerably lower, while those for all age groups over 45 are higher. The difference in the rates of activity of the younger age groups reflects

TABLE XI. URBAN FEMALE ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES), BY AGE GROUP, FOR SELECTED GROUPS OF COUNTRIES ACCORDING TO TYPE OF PATTERN

Type [1] and country	Age group (years)					
	15-19	20-24	25-44	45-54	55-65	65 and over
Type I:						
More developed countries in Europe other than Eastern Europe [2]	48.8	61.6	39.4	42.2	34.2	8.4
Japan	50.3	66.4	44.1	45.3	34.2	15.2
Canada	38.5	54.2	33.3	37.2	25.6	7.3
United States	30.8	48.3	41.6	50.3	38.3	11.3
Type II:						
Latin American countries	27.9	34.9	30.5	25.2	17.7	9.4
Less developed countries in Europe other than Eastern Europe [3]	36.2	41.5	25.9	19.4	14.0	5.9
Ceylon	19.1	26.0	18.6	15.6	12.4	2.9
Type III:						
Eastern European countries	37.3	59.3	53.3	46.7	27.1	11.3
Finland	45.5	66.8	60.5	59.1	44.0	8.9
Type IV:						
(a) India and Indonesia	17.4	25.0	32.1	30.6	22.3	10.0
(b) Burma, Ghana and Liberia	27.9	31.9	36.7	42.7	38.5	19.5
Type V:						
Moslem countries [4]	9.0	9.7	9.7	10.7	8.2	4.6

[1] See figure I opposite. [2] Denmark, France, Norway and Sweden. [3] Greece, Portugal and Spain. [4] Iran, Morocco, Syria and Turkey.

higher school participation levels in the United States, while the higher activity rate for females over 45 years of age appears to be due to earlier marriages, earlier completion of child-bearing, and more opportunities for employment, particularly part-time work, in that country.

The second pattern (type II) is prevalent in the Latin American countries and also occurs in Ceylon and in some Southern European countries. It is characterised by a pronounced peak of activity in the age group 20-24, with rates decreasing gradually thereafter. There is a remarkable similarity in the age participation patterns observed in this group of countries. However, the less developed Southern European countries (Greece, Portugal and Spain) show a slightly deviant pattern in that the level of activity after the age group 20-24 drops more sharply, as in type I.

The third pattern (type III) is found primarily in the Eastern European countries. This curve is characterised by increasing participation rates until the age group 20-24 (60 per cent.), thereafter a moderate decrease until the age group 45-54 (47 per cent.) and then a sharp drop to about 11 per cent. for females aged 65 and over. The Bulgarian pattern differs slightly in that the peak activity level occurs after the age of 25 years. The absence of a drastic decrease in the work rate between the age groups 20-24 and 25-44, as observed in type I, may be explained by the fact that in the Eastern European countries married women with children have greater access to child-care institutions that operate during working hours, thereby enabling the mothers to work. On the other hand, the sharper decline of the work rate after the age of 54 may be explained by the earlier retirement possibilities in these countries.

The fourth pattern (type IV), found in the non-Moslem countries of Africa and Asia, shows a curve characterised by increasing activity rates from the age of 15 up to the age group 45-54 and thereafter dropping sharply to relatively low levels. This pattern is prevalent in such countries as Burma, Ghana and Liberia. A similar pattern is found in India and Indonesia. However, in the latter countries the peak level is attained somewhat earlier.

The fifth pattern (type V) is typical of Moslem countries. The curve is characterised by generally low work rates for all age groups, with no clearly discernible peak.

Participation rates for the various age groups in the less developed countries vary more widely than in the more developed ones. Female activity rates in less developed countries seem to be more influenced by social and cultural factors and by the methods used in classifying economically active females than by the level of economic development of the country. For instance in the more developed countries the relationship of worker to employer is a formal, impersonal relationship whereas in the less developed ones the female usually " works " in a family-owned and family-operated undertaking.

Rural female patterns

The range of age-specific activity rates for females in rural areas is much greater than that observed in urban areas: in the latter the standard deviation ranges from 6 to 17 percentage points (see table X) whereas in rural areas it ranges from 16 to 26 percentage points (see table XII).

TABLE XII. AVERAGE RURAL FEMALE AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES) [1] IN 40 SELECTED COUNTRIES, WITH STANDARD DEVIATIONS

Age group (years)	Average activity rate	Standard deviation	Standard deviation as percentage of average activity rate
15-19	33.9	22.2	65.5
20-24	36.3	23.7	65.3
25-44	33.6	25.2	75.0
45-54	34.4	25.6	74.4
55-64	29.0	22.2	76.6
65 and over	16.5	15.8	95.8

[1] Unweighted averages of individual country rates.

A great part of this variation is due to differences in national practice with regard to the classification of females living in farm households. In the Turkish and Bulgarian censuses, for example, almost all such women were classified in the category " unpaid family workers ", whereas relatively few women in the farm households were so classified in the censuses of the Latin American countries and in Moslem countries.

Such problems of under- and over-reporting are typical of the statistics relating to rural areas in the less developed countries. Although similar problems do sometimes exist in the more developed countries, the over-all effect on the national rates is not very great, since the rural sector is relatively small. The differences found between the age-specific work rates in Japan and Finland, on the one hand, and Norway and Sweden, on the other, are undoubtedly influenced by the different ways of classifying the group of " unpaid family workers ". In the agricultural sector, according to the censuses of Japan and Finland, 148 and 82 females respectively were classified as " unpaid family workers " per 100 males classified as " employer and worker on own account ". In Norway and Sweden these ratios were 0.8 and 8.3 per cent. respectively.

Countries with high numbers of female unpaid family workers per 100 male employers or own-account workers were undoubtedly more liberal in the statistical criterion used for including such females in the labour force. In the case of the more developed countries with low

ratios, such as Canada, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the United States, the ratios are also a function of the relatively minor role of the agricultural sector.

Such differences in national practices undoubtedly influence the patterns of age-specific activity, which seriously limits the possibility of arriving at any conclusive statement about the different levels of the age-specific work rates and more particularly the shape of the curves (patterns) prevailing in the rural areas of the various countries.

In order to control this variable, the countries have been divided into two groups, the first comprising countries where the numbers of female unpaid family workers in the agricultural labour force are relatively low, the second comprising countries where they are relatively high. Table XIII shows the figures for the two groups.

TABLE XIII. NUMBER OF FEMALE UNPAID FAMILY WORKERS PER 100 MALE EMPLOYERS OR OWN-ACCOUNT WORKERS IN AGRICULTURE

Group I: less than 20		Group II: more than 20	
Northern America:		*Northern America:*	
Canada	13.6	(none)	
United States	5.2		
Latin America:		*Latin America:*	
Peru	10.5	(none)	
Panama	2.8		
Colombia	2.0		
Ecuador	1.9		
El Salvador	0.8		
Costa Rica	0.7		
Guatemala	0.6		
Cuba	0.5		
Mexico	0.3		
Nicaragua	0.2		
Venezuela	0.2		
Europe:		*Europe:*	
Spain	11.6	Rumania	121.2
Denmark	11.0	Poland	116.0
Sweden	8.3	Greece	91.8
Portugal	3.6	Hungary	76.0
Norway	0.8	France	83.2
		Finland	82.2
Africa:		*Africa:*	
Morocco	10.0	Liberia	86.4
		Ghana	23.9
Asia:		*Asia:*	
Syria	11.4	India	222.4
Iran	4.6	Turkey	175.2
		Japan	147.7
		South Korea	55.1

The age-specific activity patterns and levels for group I are depicted in figure II. Three major patterns are discernible: the first is that of Canada and the United States and resembles urban pattern type I, but with lower levels of activity; the second is that of Northern Europe and is characterised by high activity levels in the younger age groups, a constant decline to the age of 25, stability to the age of 54 and decline thereafter; the third, found mainly in the Latin American countries, Portugal and the Moslem countries, is characterised by very low levels of

FIGURE II. RURAL FEMALE ACTIVITY RATES

GROUP I: *(see table XIII)* LOW PROPORTION OF FEMALE UNPAID FAMILY WORKERS IN AGRICULTURE

(Vertical scales represent activity rates; horizontal scales represent age groups)

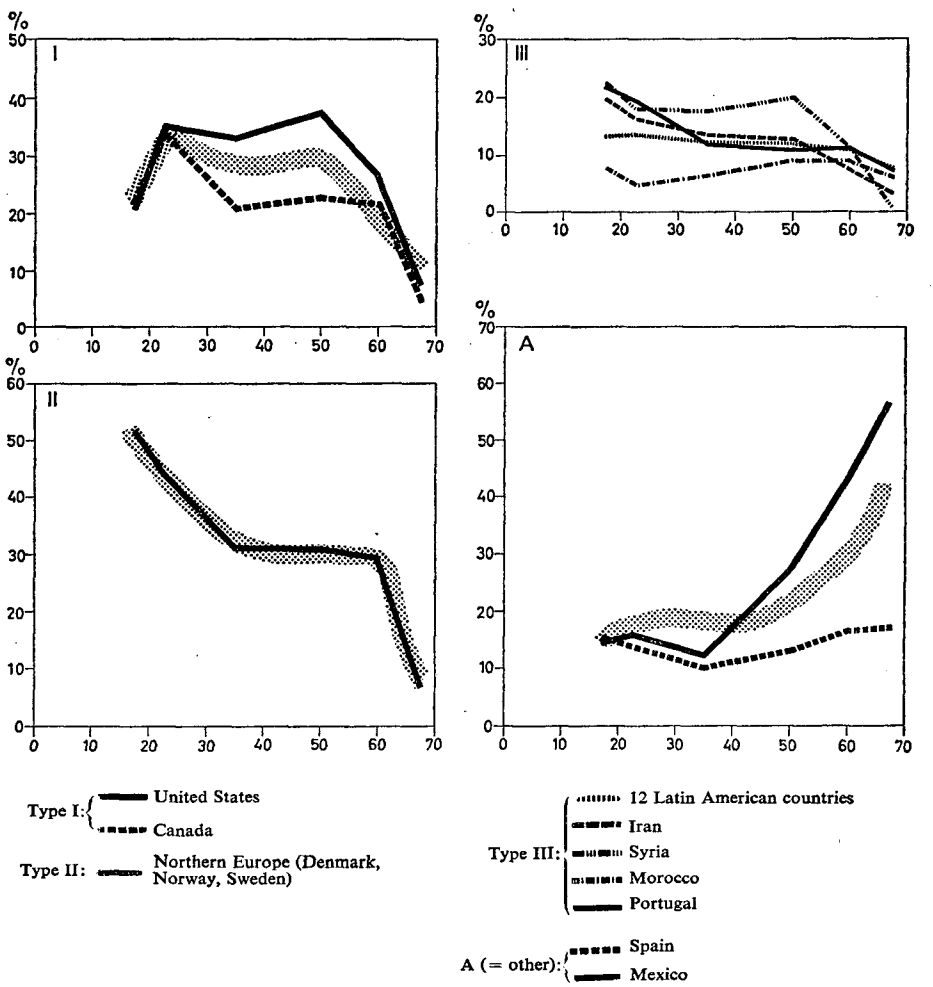
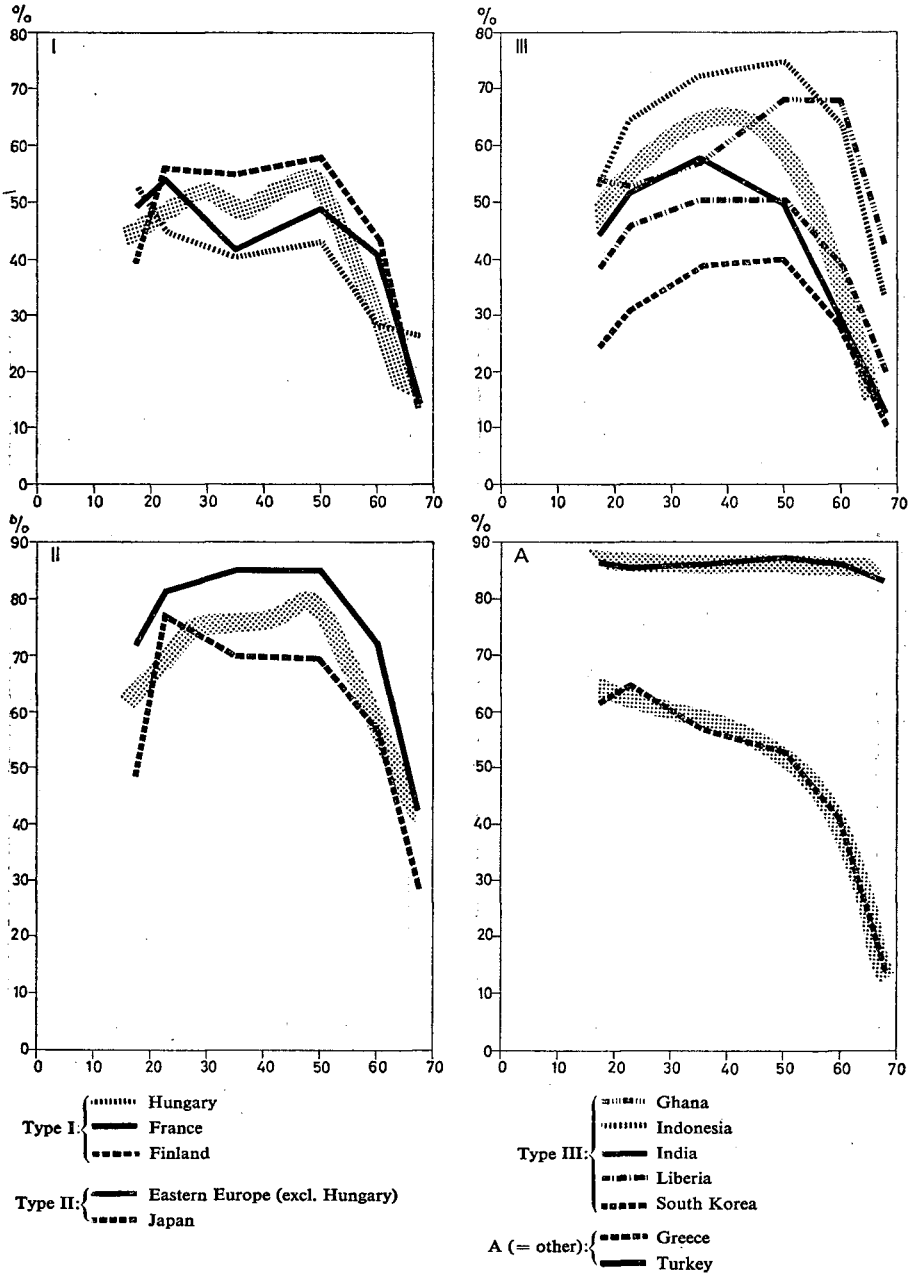


FIGURE III. RURAL FEMALE ACTIVITY RATES

GROUP II *(see table XIII)*: HIGH PROPORTION OF FEMALE UNPAID FAMILY WORKERS IN AGRICULTURE

(Vertical scales represent activity rates; horizontal scales represent age groups)



activity at all ages and generally a gradual decrease with increasing age; a variant of this type shows stability of activity rates between the ages of 25 and 54 or so. Two countries in this group do not correspond to any of these patterns, namely Mexico and Spain. Their uniqueness is probably a function of enumeration practices. It would appear that with increased economic development and the improvement of educational and retirement practices, countries with the second and third patterns will move closer to those with the first.

In group II also, three types of patterns are discernible (see figure III). In the first the activity rates for the age group 25-44 are lower than those for the age groups 20-24 and 45-54 and therefore resemble to a certain extent the first pattern in group I. The second pattern is found in Japan and the Eastern European countries. Again the levels of activity are very high for all age groups, and, with the exception of the high rate in Japan for the age group 20-24, the pattern resembles a bell curve, i.e. the rates for the very young and the old are lower while those for the middle span (25-54) are higher. The third pattern is represented by the non-Moslem countries of Asia and Africa. It is similar to the second but is skewed towards the higher age groups, i.e. the rates of activity increase at successive age levels generally to the age of 50 or so and decline thereafter. This pattern resembles pattern type IV for urban females.

India deviates slightly in that the peak level is attained at an earlier age. Two countries in group II, namely Greece and Turkey, do not appear to fit any of these patterns, because of their particular statistical reporting procedures.

Undoubtedly participation by rural women in the labour force is much influenced by the criteria followed in enumerating the female members of farm households. The following points lead to this conclusion. First, a greater variety of levels and patterns of the female age-specific work rates have been found in the rural areas than in the urban areas. Secondly, the relationship between the various countries observed can hardly be explained by factors such as the level of economic development, or by other economic, social and cultural factors alone. For example in the two Moslem countries, Turkey and Morocco, that are economically, socially and culturally more or less similar, almost identical age-specific work rates have been found in urban areas whereas there are marked differences in the rural patterns of these two countries. Thirdly, in both groups of countries the different patterns and levels of the age-specific work rates appear to be associated with the level of economic development of the countries concerned. In other words, countries at a similar level of economic development show similar patterns of participation rates and the levels of these rates vary according to the proportion of women classified as " unpaid family workers " in agriculture.

Hence, differences in national statistical reporting systems appear to be of primary importance in explaining the differences between the levels

and to a certain extent the patterns found in the rural areas of the various countries. This is especially true in the less developed countries, which by definition are predominantly agricultural.

Comparison of urban and rural patterns for females

When both the patterns and the levels of female age-specific work rates are compared as between the urban and rural areas of a given country or a group of countries we find similar problems to those discussed above: again differences in levels and patterns between the urban and rural areas appear to be influenced primarily by the statistical treatment of unpaid family workers.

TABLE XIV. FEMALE ACTIVITY RATES (PERCENTAGES) BY AGE GROUP IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS OF TURKEY (1960 CENSUS)

Age group (years)	Female activity rate in—	
	Urban areas	Rural areas
15-19	10.7	86.2
20-24	10.3	85.4
25-44	10.0	85.8
45-54	9.4	87.2
55-64	6.5	86.0
65 and over	3.1	82.9

Table XIV shows how the work rates for all age groups in the rural areas of Turkey are highly inflated; apparently almost all females living in farm households have been classified as economically active. On the other hand, the low urban rates may be partly due to cultural factors, reflecting the traditional Moslem attitude regarding women working outside the home.[1]

In the Eastern European countries, particularly Bulgaria and Rumania, similar high activity rates are reported for females in rural areas. Such high levels are undoubtedly a function of the classification procedures, which include all women of working age in farm areas among the economically active.

In the urban areas of the more developed countries, such as Denmark, France, Norway, Sweden, Japan and Canada, strikingly similar patterns of age-specific work rates were found and differences in the levels of work rates were not great. On the other hand, in the rural areas such differences were much more pronounced.

It would seem that differences in economic and social conditions are only part of the explanation for the differences between the urban and rural areas in these countries; more important are the differences in

[1] The statistics on economically active females show that in the large Moslem cities the crude activity rate is generally lower than in other urban areas of the country.

classifying females living in farm households. This is confirmed by the fact that, as a general rule, higher urban age-specific rates were found only in countries with low proportions of female unpaid family workers.

As a result, the possibility is limited of comparing both the levels of the age-specific work rates and the patterns or curves of these rates in the urban and rural areas, respectively, within a country and between countries. However, despite this obstacle, by arranging the countries in two groups (see tables XV and XVI respectively), it is possible to give some general indications concerning the relationship between female age-specific activity rates in the urban and rural areas respectively.

Generally speaking, in the countries of Europe other than Eastern Europe and America (Northern and Latin) the age-specific work rates are higher in the urban than in the rural areas (see table XV). In the Northern

TABLE XV. FEMALE ACTIVITY RATES IN RURAL AREAS AS A PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE ACTIVITY RATES IN URBAN AREAS, BY AGE GROUP, IN SELECTED COUNTRIES OF EUROPE, NORTHERN AND LATIN AMERICA

Countries	Age groups (years)					
	15-19	20-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Europe:						
Denmark	106.7	72.2	52.7	51.3	63.7	153.7
Finland	85.9	83.1	90.6	97.8	99.8	148.3
France	143.3	90.4	101.0	108.0	108.2	125.2
Greece	183.8	146.2	211.6	290.1	416.5	620.8
Norway	85.9	62.5	47.3	44.6	54.8	70.2
Portugal	46.2	40.8	39.4	48.2	61.8	93.9
Spain	53.5	41.8	48.1	72.0	112.5	234.7
Sweden	91.1	75.8	58.9	53.1	55.4	66.7
Northern America:						
Canada	55.8	61.4	62.8	60.5	82.8	64.4
United States	66.9	72.3	78.4	74.3	68.4	68.1
Latin America:						
Chile	52.6	41.6	42.2	53.3	67.8	91.9
Colombia	40.5	40.0	51.5	72.5	92.1	121.5
Costa Rica	41.9	29.5	24.1	24.8	26.9	36.1
Cuba	63.9	48.0	46.4	56.2	73.7	109.6
Ecuador	46.6	36.0	41.7	55.1	71.9	100.8
El Salvador	37.6	25.8	24.3	27.8	31.5	41.4
Guatemala	24.1	17.2	19.4	25.3	28.0	35.7
Mexico	77.3	69.0	57.4	133.5	257.7	654.7
Nicaragua	26.9	29.1	35.2	43.0	52.0	81.4
Panama	44.3	25.7	21.3	24.3	31.6	46.5
Peru	77.0	55.9	59.6	77.8	97.4	136.7
Puerto Rico	55.6	55.3	50.0	42.5	45.7	55.1
Venezuela	55.6	50.9	53.5	61.5	74.1	124.3

and Western European and Northern American countries this is due mainly to the relatively minor role of the agricultural sector in the economy, whereas in Latin America and in Southern Europe it is due mainly to the practice of excluding unpaid family workers from the statistics. France and Greece are exceptions: in these two countries the rural rates for each age group are higher than the urban ones, with the exception of age group 20-24 in France. It is evident that this deviation is influenced by conceptual differences in reporting the female members of farm households, since these countries also fell into group II (countries with high proportions of female unpaid family workers).[1]

There is some evidence of this bias also in the patterns of older age groups in Finland and Spain (see table XV). In general the differences in the work rates between the urban and rural areas seem to be less pronounced in the more developed countries. On the other hand, the Asian, African and Eastern European countries are characterised, as a general rule, by higher age-specific participation rates in rural areas (see table XVI). Among the Asian countries there seems to be a typical pattern of differences, even though the variations in age-specific work rates as between the urban and rural areas may have been partially distorted by reporting procedures. Unfortunately the scarcity of detailed data on the ages of economically active females in the great majority of the Asian countries precludes an analysis of differences in age-specific work rates by size of locality, although some rough indications may be obtained from the crude activity rates. In India, for example, according to the records of the sixth and seventh national surveys, the crude activity rates were higher in " rural areas " than in towns with a population below 15,000 and higher in the latter than in the large cities (32.3, 20.4, 7.2 per cent. respectively). A similar pattern was found in the African region.

Among the Eastern European countries the relationship between the urban and rural levels appears to be influenced by both the method used in classifying the female members of farm households and the way work is organised in agriculture (co-operatives).

Conclusions

Despite the problems posed by the imperfect comparability of the data on the economically active population, it has been possible to identify certain patterns in the activity rates, by sex and age group, for urban and rural areas, according to the level of economic development of the countries under consideration and, to a certain extent, according to their geographical, social and cultural characteristics.

The percentage of the male labour force engaged in agricultural, industrial and service activities respectively, which was used to measure

[1] See p. 542, table XIII.

TABLE XVI. FEMALE ACTIVITY RATES IN RURAL AREAS AS A PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE ACTIVITY RATES IN URBAN AREAS, BY AGE GROUP, IN SELECTED COUNTRIES OF ASIA, AFRICA AND EASTERN EUROPE

Countries	Age group (years)					
	15-19	20-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over
Asia:						
Burma	173.5	156.4	132.4	121.1	133.8	128.6
Ceylon	199.5	161.5	214.0	210.9	173.4	251.7
India	326.7	246.6	205.7	183.6	141.5	108.7
Indonesia	249.1	218.2	197.5	216.6	266.8	404.8
Iran	209.5	143.8	126.7	117.1	83.3	69.4
Japan	96.2	114.5	158.3	153.9	167.0	187.5
South Korea	84.9	96.9	237.9	204.1	241.6	257.1
Philippines	110.5	84.6	99.6	109.9	151.4	123.0
Syria	504.4	229.1	265.2	257.1	215.7	13.5
Turkey	805.6	829.1	858.0	927.7	1 323.0	2 674.2
Africa:						
Ghana	106.3	100.0	94.0	96.7	101.1	119.5
Liberia	694.5	391.3	295.9	243.9	227.6	252.4
Morocco	67.3	51.6	52.6	60.7	76.3	54.9
Eastern Europe:						
Bulgaria	318.5	162.8	163.9	186.2	266.1	333.7
Hungary	98.3	63.6	65.1	79.3	100.4	202.3
Poland	201.4	115.9	148.5	176.8	151.3	443.9
Rumania	192.4	166.6	197.8	219.7	293.3	396.2

the general level of economic development of a country, appears to be an important variable in assessing patterns of labour force participation, especially in the less developed countries and regions and in rural areas generally. On the other hand, the male labour force is less influenced than the female labour force by national differences in statistical reporting practices, which can and often do obscure and bias the patterns and, more particularly, the levels of activity rates.

In the more developed countries and regions and in urban areas generally, the variation in patterns of sex-age activity rates is less pronounced than in the less developed countries and regions and in rural areas generally. Therefore the data for rural areas and for less developed regions, particularly in the case of females, require greater scrutiny and have to be evaluated on the basis of the likely bias introduced by the reporting procedures.

It is recognised that the greater variability in female activity patterns as compared to the male activity patterns is not only a function of differing statistical reporting procedures. In almost every society the main role of

adult males is economic activity, whereas the female role is often more closely tied to the non-economic but equally functional and demanding role of wife and mother. The participation of women in the economic life of the society is highly dependent on a number of complex factors, primarily social and cultural but also economic. These factors vary considerably from one country to another, as well as between the urban and rural areas of a given country.

There are, however, important differences in statistical reporting practices, which do influence the female activity levels and patterns—more so in the less developed countries and in rural areas generally, less so in the more developed countries and in urban areas generally. Many differences between the age-specific activity rates of urban and rural areas, particularly for females, cannot be solely explained by any one factor but are the result of the interplay of several factors. Studies with a view to standardising the effect of each of these factors, where feasible, are highly desirable. Other aspects that merit investigation and were not covered in this study are the differences in status composition (employer, employee, etc.) of the labour force, and demographic characteristics such as fertility levels, size of family, marital status, and age of children.

For example the differences in levels and patterns of female age-specific activity rates in the Moslem and in the Latin American countries appear to be largely influenced by cultural and social factors. In the Moslem countries the tendency to discourage women from engaging in economic activity seems to be stronger in the urban areas, where it often takes place outside the home. In Latin America, on the other hand, the negative attitude towards women engaging in economic activity seems to be stronger in the rural areas. It may well be that women do in fact participate in rural areas to the same degree as in urban areas, or an even greater degree, but their participation is less visible, since it occurs in the non-wage sector and in family-owned and family-operated undertakings.

In the case of Asia and Africa and of certain groups of countries with cultural affinities the countries analysed in this study cannot be considered truly representative, owing to the relatively small number covered. However, the patterns for Northern America, Latin America, Northern and Eastern Europe and, to a certain extent, Western and Southern Europe are more firmly based.

In general, these patterns do illustrate the influence of the level of economic development, statistical reporting practices and various cultural and social factors. They may also serve as a guide for selecting model patterns for estimating or projecting economically active populations.
