

"The participation of immigrant women in the labour market.
The cases of France and Italy"

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Today about half of the 175 million migrants worldwide are women, and the share of women in the migrant stocks has increased by almost 3 percentage points from 35 million in 1960 to 94 million in 2005 (UN, 2005). Africa, Europe, Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean were the regions with large increases in the proportion of women in the migrant stock between 1960 and 2005. The gender composition of migration flows to the main destination countries in the North differ by region: flows from Africa, South Asia and the Middle East tend to be male-dominated; while flows from East Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Central Asia, Latin America and Caribbean tend to be female-dominated.

The feminisation of migration flows, coinciding with an increase in the share of women amongst first-generation migrants, including for work purposes, makes it all the more important to examine the conditions governing the entry of foreign women into the labour market. In the 1960s and early 1970s the women's movement, however, with its emphasis on the situation of women, caused some to question the near-invisibility of women as migrants, their presumed passivity in the migration process, and their assumed place in the home. Women have been viewed as "dependents", moving as wives, mothers or daughters of male migrants. Indeed, since "worker migration" has generally involved high proportions of men, women have traditionally been ignored. Research in the 1970s and the 1980s began to include women. The conceptualisation of a migrant as a person intent on maximizing economic gains has contributed to focus attention on the women who choose to become international migrants.

As much as it reflects a decision to enter in the labour market, the participation rate is a vital indicator and this study will propose to focus on.

Despite the progress recorded as regards women's access to employment in the majority of the European countries, which is attributable mainly to the increase in the female participation rate, there is ample evidence that migrant women are generally in a disadvantaged position in the labour market in relation to both male migrants and native women. However, there are also substantial differences between women from various countries/regions of origin and between EU Member States.

France and Italy are representative of two very different trends.

They have a different migration history, countries of departure, and exists different dynamics in the participation rates.

France has the longer immigration tradition in Europe and a colonialism history that influences the migration. Since the 1960 in France the female migration has been not only for family reasons, but also for labour demands in the industry and as housekeepers (see the Spanish and Portuguese female migration). In the opposite Italy has not a long immigration history, it becomes an immigration country in the 1970 and actually it's the biggest country of destination in the Southern Europe. In 1980 the immigrant women tend to claim a larger proportion of total immigrants, because of a tendency for immigration laws to evolve towards a greater emphasis on family reunification as incomes rise, the most part of the women come following their husband or father from the Maghreb and especially at the beginning it didn't represent a labour migration. Only in this last decades, an important number of women started to arrive not only for family reasons but also because of an

access to the employment opportunities with an increase in the participation rate, it's especially the case of women come from Eastern Europe.

The European Community Labour Force Survey highlights the progress made in France and in Italy between 1993 and 2003 in the participation rates of immigrant women.

In 2003, in France it apparent that immigrant women participate less in the labour market than their male counterparts (57% and 75,8%) and less also than female nationals (64%). In the opposite in Italy, as the countries of southern Europe (Spain, Greece and Portugal) and Luxembourg, the participation rates of immigrant women are always higher than those of female nationals (55% and 49%), and lower than immigrant male participation rate (89,8%) this last is also higher than male nationals (74,5%). But in the Italian case female immigrants made more progress compare to the French case in this decade, from 46% in 1993 to 55% in 2003 (OECD, 2005).

Research questions and Data availability

Census data are preferred to Labour force survey because significant number of records are needed to distinguish the situation of various sub-components of the migrant population. The Census data used are available in an individual format allowing specific tabulations and statistical analysis (regressions models). Indeed statistical offices don't published detailed labour statistics for such foreign-born population. Moreover the variables provided by this data collection represent the main determinants of the employment status although all are not available for both countries. For instance the reason for migration is only registered in the Italian census whilst a variable related to presence of young children in the household is only in the French database. Consequently the cross-national comparison could be achieved for some dimensions of the topic and an in-depth approach will be realized for other aspects in a specific national context.

Individual data available for foreign-born women

	Italy	France
Age	yes	yes
country of birth	yes	10 main countries (or group of countries)
activity status (employed/unemployed)	yes	yes
education	yes	yes
number of children within the household	no	yes
reason for migration	yes	no
sector of activity	yes	yes
length of stay in the receiving country	yes	country of residence at the previous census
professionnal status	yes	no
year of the census	2001	1975, 1982, 1990, 1999
sample of the total census records	100%	25%

First empirical findings

Activity rates have been calculated in the preliminary stage of this study. Further a more relevant indicator will be retained as the employment rate.

Female total activity rate (%) at ages 15-64

Country of birth*	Country of residence	
	France	Italy
All migrants	55	57
<i>EU origin</i>		
Spain	61	54
Italy	55	nap
France	nap	54
<i>Third country origin</i>		
Algeria	50	44
Marocco	46	39
Tunisian	50	33
Subsaharian Africa	62	63
Albania	nav	45
Croatia	nav	56
Former Yugoslavia	nav	51
Romania	nav	63
Philippine	nav	84
Turkey	39	-
National citizen	62,2	47,1
* except for autochthonous defined as national citizens		
nav : not available ; nap : not applicable		
Sources : French (1999) and Italian (2001) Census, own calculations from the authors, except the value on nationals found on Internet for the correspondent year of the census (LFS, source Eurostat)		

First results show in each receiving country that the female activity rate is merely dependent of the country of birth. In Italy the total activity rate among women migrants from Tunisia is more than two times below the rate for people originated from Philippines. Similar contrast is found with Turkish in France who experience the lowest participation rate compared to the rate for Sub-Saharan migrants.

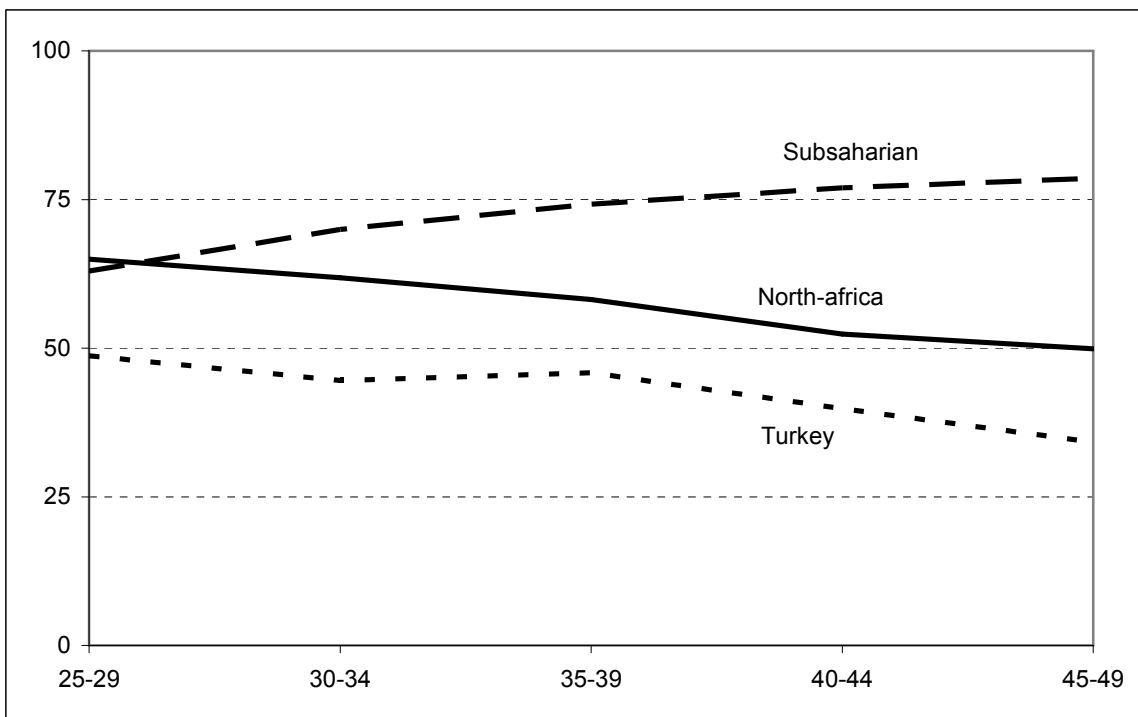
Italy and France share certain common origin countries allowing a comparison of the labour position of a given migratory flow in both countries particularly for migrants from north-Africa. Except the case of Tunisia female, it appears that the cross-national contrasts are smaller than the internal discrepancies within each country. By controlling with other variables will probably not eliminate such discrepancies.

Additionally to the distinction by country of birth the age profile of activity presents a significant interest since it illustrates how women combine family and work involvements. The age profile is also determined by the length of stay elapsed in the receiving country positively associated to a higher activity rate. Cohort effects could also have an impact on the time series.

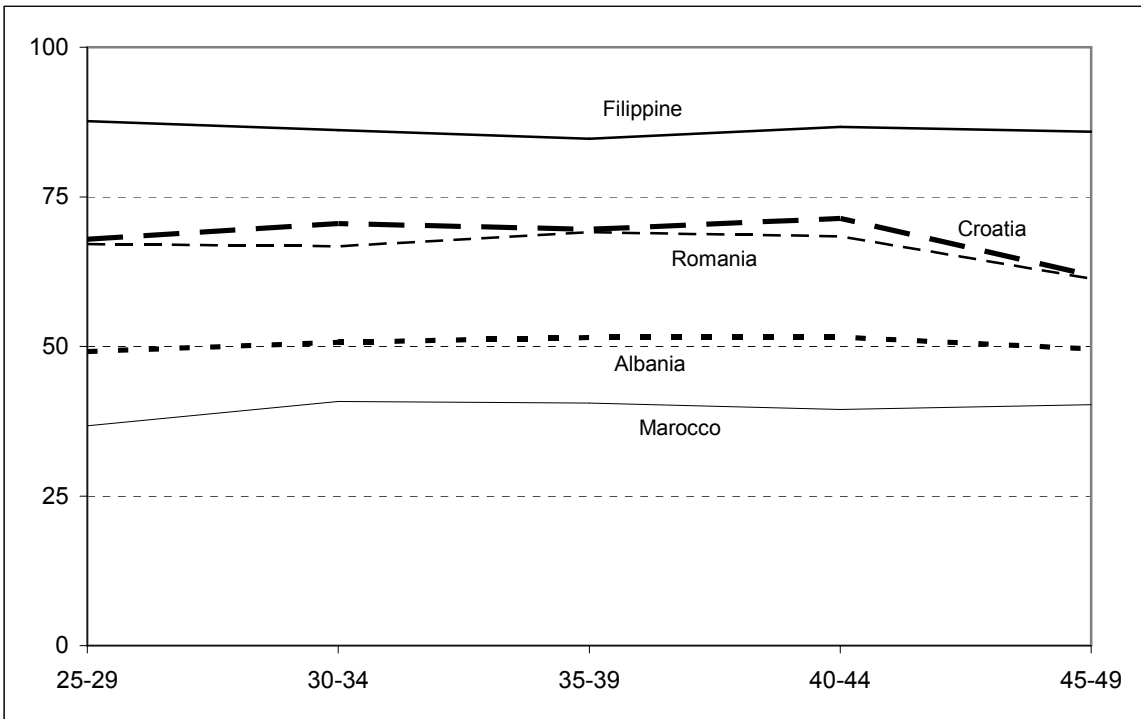
Our first results show a diversity of age profile. Migrants in Italy are characterised by constant activity rates at different points in life course whatever the origin country considered. Other empirical findings are observed in France where activity rate is timely dependent. Sub-Saharan women tend to be more active with the passing years. Surprisingly North-African and Turkish experience a decreasing activity rate even though they are settled in France since a longer period which is expected to give a benefit for inclusion in the labour market. One can argue that gender roles shaping the social acceptance on female participation contribute to these differences.

In a further stage of this study it is planned to analyse the specific effects of migration processes (the length of stay as well as the reason for migration) and socio-demographic characteristics (number of children and educational attainment). A special focus will also be done on the segmentation of the labour market among migrants from different origins (agricultural, industry, services) as a possible explanatory variables.

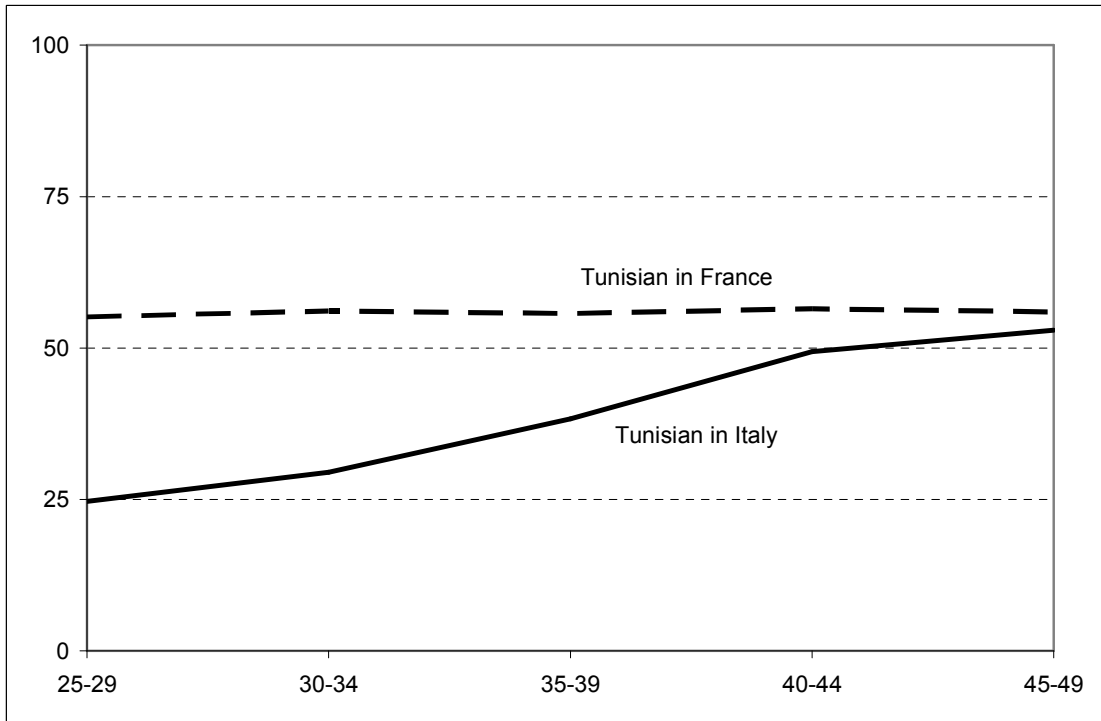
Female activity rate (%) by age for various country of birth - France



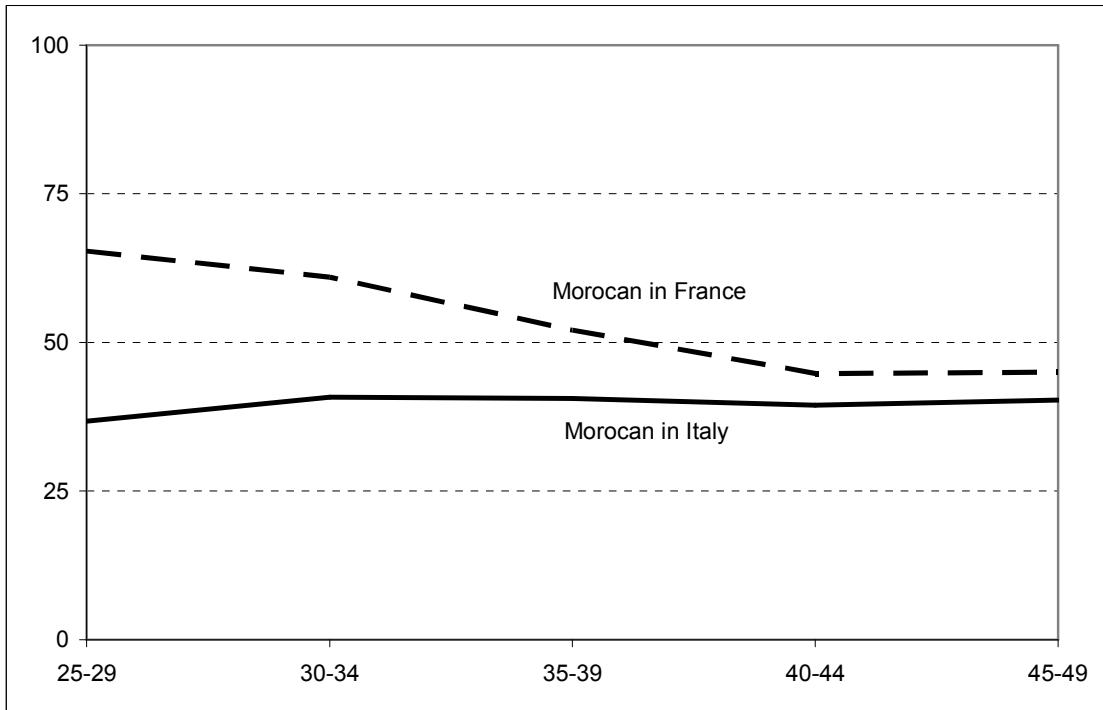
Female activity rate (%) by age for various country of birth - Italy



Female activity rate (%) by age for Tunisian – Comparison France/Italy



Female activity rate (%) by age for Moroccan – Comparison France/Italy



Female activity rate (%) by age for migrants from Sub-Saharan area – Comparison France/Italy

