

Women at work in home help : tensions on the labour market in the French coastal zone

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Introduction

- *Seasonality of work in home help: a concern among professionals*
- **Seasonality**: *fluctuations of a phenomenon according to an annual rhythm, linked to natural phenomena but mostly to social constructions*

Methodology



- *ANR Profam, Between profession and family, the "frameworks of work" of assistance to the elderly, <https://profam.hypotheses.org/>*
- *20 interviews with various actors of the sector (home help workers, nurses, social workers, managers, officials, ...)*
- *Ethnographic survey with home help workers, meeting with beneficiaries and their families*

The territory

- *Located in the North-West of France*
- *Economy based on tourism and food industry*
- **Ageing index (number of people of 65 and older per 100 people under 20): AI = 1,4 vs 0,8 for Metropolitan France (2016). Up to 3 in the municipalities closed to the sea**
- *Cause: aging of the local population + arrival of retirees*
- *Attractive territory for elderly people*
 - *Gentrification of the coastal zone*

The job market

- *At a national level, home help sector considered as «jobs under stress» (Pôle Emploi)*
- **Locally, the situation is made worse by two factors :**
 - 1° *young families leave the costal zone (price of the real estate, school closure).*
However, home help workers always work closed to their home.
 - 2° **Food industry and hôtel/restaurant sector** *need workforce with the same profile to that of home help workers.*

A scissor effect

- *Increase of the demand for labour*
- *Workforce less available*
→ **scissor effect**
- *Tensions in the labour market throughout the year*
- *It sets the context in which the question of the seasonal fluctuations arises*

The seasonality

More needs :

- *From the spring, arrival of residents of secondary residences (average age = 65; 39% of them > 70 years old)*
- *Family visits to local elderly people lead to reevaluation of their needs*

Less workforce available :

- *High demand in tourism sector*
- *Home help workers must take care of their children in holidays (especially single-parent families)*

→ the scissor effect is reinforced

Consequences

1° Working conditions

- *Car jam (market days, festivities) and parking difficulties (risk of fines)*
- *Increased number of beneficiaries: part-time contracts become full-time jobs*
- *Psychological risks (burn out, high turn over)*

Consequences

2° Relations between profit and non-profit organisations

- *Context of concurrence between profit and non-profit services since 2006.*
- *Public, associative and private actors manage the shortage by coordinating their actions to focus on the most problematic situations.*
- *Profit sector attached to the «social» part of the work, but the economic logic lead to increase social inequalities between local working class people and wealthy people in secondary residences.*

Conclusion

- *Seasonality contributes to increase the tensions on the labour market*
- *Limit: phenomenon very visible on this specific territory, but could expand to other places*
- *Home help services could play a negative or a positive role in the tourism development*
- *«Women at work» as professionals (productive), mothers (reproductive) and carers for relatives.*

Thank you for your attention