



OECD Labour Market and Social Policy Occasional Papers
No. 24

**Trends in Secretarial
Occupations in Selected
OECD Countries, 1980-95**

Hilary Steedman

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/650807020330>

LABOUR MARKET AND SOCIAL POLICY - OCCASIONAL PAPERS N°24

**TRENDS IN SECRETARIAL OCCUPATIONS IN SELECTED
OECD COUNTRIES, 1980-95**

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SUMMARY

In all OECD countries secretarial occupations constitute a substantial part of all women's employment, are heavily female-dominated and subject to rapid and far-reaching technical change. They are also transversal to all sectors and organisations. The report examines how the secretary's role is changing as the 'information society' develops and as organisations seek to organise work in a way that maximises its value-added. It also investigates the routes by which improvements in the occupation can be brought about.

The report is based on the results of national studies in 8 countries: Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. The report does not purport to be comparative but, instead, attempts to highlight some significant cross-national issues.

The labour market for secretaries

Secretarial work constitutes between 5 and to 15 per cent of all women's employment according to the definitions in the countries surveyed. Secretaries work in every sector of the economy but are highly concentrated in financial services and in the public sector, two sectors which have been fast-growing in many countries. The proportion working part-time is not very different from the proportions in the female workforce as a whole although secretaries are less likely to work for only a few hours a week. The overwhelming majority of secretaries are permanent employees.

Over the period under review (1980-1995), demand has been sufficiently high to absorb the growing numbers of women entering the labour market as secretaries and a number of those displaced from the lower level occupation of 'office employees'. There is little evidence of significant unemployment among secretaries compared with other groups.

Secretarial occupations remain heavily dominated by women. The over-representation of secretaries drawn from the youngest age group varies across countries and is declining everywhere. The earnings of secretaries tend to be above the average earnings for all female wage-earners. However, secretaries' earnings have not grown as fast as average male or female earnings over the past decade, reflecting in part the high level of supply.

Tasks and qualifications

Secretarial work is changing and evolving rapidly. This is occurring not just as a result of technological change but is also a result of the organisational change that has characterised the 1990s in many countries. In response to increased global pressures to remain competitive, organisations seek to acquire competitive advantage in two ways, both of which centrally involve the secretary. The first of these is the efficient exploitation of the possibilities of electronic information technology, the second is the 'presentation' of the organisation to the client or customer in such a way as to build a consistent image of professional expertise combined with personal service.

The secretary's expertise is traditionally as a communicator and handler of information; her main responsibility is to communicate and to make information work on behalf of those to whom secretarial services are provided. These tasks remain central to the secretary's work, yet expectations of the secretary are undoubtedly changing and, the evidence indicates, more demanding of higher level skills.

Every country has its own set of education and training qualifications. There is a trend towards more and higher qualification levels, although this is more pronounced in the European countries than in the United States. Increasingly, employers recruit secretarial staff from those with at least an upper secondary education. This creates a particularly acute problem for younger women having lower level qualifications. Whereas secretaries have frequent access to short updating courses it does not appear that they have access to employer-provided longer periods of training to upgrade educational qualifications.

Career mobility

Secretaries have problems in securing career mobility to higher level posts. Different grades of secretaries are usually recognised, the most common differentiation being between the secretary 'tout court' and the executive/personal assistant or senior secretary. The premium placed on high-level qualifications for the executive secretary makes progression from the post of secretary to executive secretary difficult for those who have not acquired these qualifications during the period of initial training. Also executive secretaries remain a small group within secretarial work (at the most they account for just over 10 per cent of all secretaries). While there is relatively little upward mobility for women secretaries, there appears to be considerable movement of secretaries between employers.

Prospects of mobility out of the secretarial occupation to higher positions on the internal mobility ladder within the firm are still less widespread. Secretarial work remains a support function and is not perceived as developing abilities such as creative thinking, strategic planning and decision-making. Also secretaries share with all women in the labour force major difficulties in combining family responsibilities and the management of a career.

While it is clear that secretaries have upgraded their skills, and improved the scope and quality of their work over the past 10 years, these real productivity gains have not been recognised by increased status and earnings. Examples of policies and initiatives that have made a contribution to tackling the key problems of the secretarial occupations, namely those of increasing skill, increasing responsibility and lack of recognition and reward include: job description and job evaluation; organising workers in secretarial jobs; skills upgrading, bridge-building to other occupations and other forms of career enhancement; career planning advice and guidance; family-friendly enterprise policies; and education and training.

The future

The future expansion of secretarial work is uncertain but there seems no doubt that the secretarial occupation will survive. The secretary has emerged in many countries with an enhanced role based upon more independent work and there are now widespread opportunities to consolidate a new dimension to this work, that of office IT consultant or office IT manager. The need for continuing learning will be as great if not greater than in the past and the effects of career gaps will probably be even more damaging to secretarial careers than at present. 'Soft' skills of communication and management of inter-personal relations are now recognised as an important dimension of the secretary's qualification and their demand is not likely to diminish in the future. This sets the scene and the priorities for future action.

RESUME

Dans tous les pays de l'OCDE, les emplois de secrétaire constituent une part importante de l'emploi féminin, les femmes y sont prépondérantes, et ils subissent une mutation technique rapide et profonde. Ces emplois sont par ailleurs communs à tous les secteurs et à toutes les organisations. Le rapport étudie comment évolue le rôle des secrétaires à mesure que se développe la "société de l'information" et que les organisations cherchent à organiser le travail de façon à en optimiser la valeur ajoutée. Il examine aussi les voies à suivre pour apporter des améliorations à la profession.

Le rapport s'appuie sur les résultats d'études nationales effectuées dans 8 pays : Danemark, Etats-Unis, Finlande, France, Italie, Pays-Bas, Royaume-Uni et Suisse. Le rapport n'est pas établi à des fins de comparaison mais tente au contraire de mettre en lumière les aspects importants qui sont communs à l'ensemble des pays.

Le marché du travail pour les secrétaires

Le travail de secrétariat représente entre 5 et 15 pour cent de l'emploi féminin total, suivant la définition appliquée dans chaque pays. Les secrétaires travaillent dans tous les secteurs de l'économie mais leur emploi est fortement concentré dans les services financiers et dans le secteur public, secteurs qui se sont tous deux développés rapidement dans de nombreux pays. La proportion de secrétaires travaillant à temps partiel n'est pas très différente de celle observée pour l'ensemble de la main-d'oeuvre féminine mais il est moins probable pour les secrétaires de travailler quelques heures par semaine seulement. En très grande majorité, les secrétaires sont des employés à statut permanent.

Dans la période étudiée (1980-1995), la demande a été suffisamment forte pour absorber les femmes de plus en plus nombreuses qui entraient sur le marché du travail en tant que secrétaires, et une partie de celles provenant de l'échelon inférieur des "employés de bureau". Il n'y a guère de signes d'un chômage important parmi les secrétaires, comparativement à d'autres groupes, mais il semble que la magnitude de l'offre ait contribué à bloquer la hausse des salaires des secrétaires.

Les femmes restent prédominantes dans les métiers de secrétariat. La surreprésentation de secrétaires provenant du groupe d'âge le plus jeune est variable suivant les pays et diminue partout. Les gains des secrétaires sont généralement supérieurs à ceux de l'ensemble des femmes salariées mais ils n'ont pas augmenté aussi vite que les gains moyens des travailleurs de chaque sexe dans la dernière décennie, en partie du fait du niveau élevé de l'offre.

Tâches et qualifications

Le travail de secrétariat change et se transforme rapidement. Ce n'est pas simplement un effet de l'évolution technologique mais c'est aussi le résultat de la mutation organisationnelle caractéristique des années 90 dans de nombreux pays. Pour faire face aux pressions mondiales croissantes, les entreprises soucieuses de rester compétitives cherchent à s'assurer un avantage concurrentiel de deux manières, et le travail de secrétariat occupe une place centrale dans chaque cas. La première consiste à exploiter avec efficacité les possibilités de la technologie informatique et la seconde à "présenter" l'entreprise au client de manière à projeter une image forte de professionnalisme doublé d'un service personnalisé.

Le savoir-faire d'un(e) secrétaire est traditionnellement celui d'un spécialiste de la communication et du maniement de l'information ; sa mission principale est de communiquer et de travailler sur l'information pour ceux qui bénéficient de ces services de secrétariat. Ces tâches restent

certaines au coeur du travail des secrétaires, pourtant on en attend assurément autre chose aujourd'hui et, comme les faits le montrent, on exige des compétences de plus haut niveau.

Dans chaque pays il existe un ensemble de qualifications en matière d'éducation et de formation. Nous pouvons constater une évolution, plus prononcée dans les pays européens qu'aux Etats-Unis, vers des qualifications plus nombreuses et de plus haut niveau. De plus en plus, les employeurs recrutent leur personnel de secrétariat parmi les personnes qui ont fait au minimum des études secondaires de deuxième cycle, ce qui pose un problème particulièrement grave aux jeunes femmes moins qualifiées. Alors que les secrétaires ont souvent accès à des cours de perfectionnement accéléré, il ne semble pas qu'elles puissent profiter de formations de plus longue durée organisées par l'employeur leur permettant d'élever leur niveau d'instruction.

Mobilité professionnelle

Les femmes secrétaires ont des difficultés à accéder à des postes plus élevés au travers de la mobilité professionnelle. En général, il existe pour les secrétaires différents échelons, la distinction la plus courante étant faite entre la simple secrétaire, l'assistante administrative ou personnelle et la secrétaire de direction. L'importance accordée aux qualifications de haut niveau dans le choix d'une secrétaire de direction rend difficile à la simple secrétaire de s'élever à ce poste si elle n'a pas acquis les qualifications nécessaires pendant sa formation initiale. Par ailleurs, les secrétaires de direction ne représentent qu'un petit groupe (à peine plus de 10 pour cent, au maximum, de l'ensemble des secrétaires). Alors que la mobilité vers le haut est relativement limitée pour les femmes secrétaires, on constate un mouvement considérable des secrétaires d'un employeur à l'autre.

Les possibilités de sortir du secrétariat et d'accéder à des positions plus élevées sur l'échelle de mobilité interne de l'entreprise sont encore moins nombreuses. Le travail de secrétariat reste une fonction de soutien et n'est pas perçu comme développant des capacités telles que la pensée créatrice, la planification stratégique et la prise de décision. Les secrétaires partagent par ailleurs avec toutes les femmes qui travaillent le fait d'avoir des grandes difficultés à assumer à la fois des responsabilités familiales et la gestion d'une carrière.

Si les secrétaires ont manifestement perfectionné leurs compétences et accru le champ et la qualité de leur travail au cours des dix dernières années, ces gains de productivité réelle n'ont pas été sanctionnés par un relèvement de leur statut ou de leur salaire. Il existe des exemples de mesures et d'initiatives qui ont contribué à s'attaquer aux problèmes majeurs de la profession, à savoir : l'accroissement des compétences et l'alourdissement des responsabilités sans que cela ne soit ni reconnu ni récompensé. On peut citer : la description de poste et l'évaluation des tâches ; l'organisation des travailleurs occupant des emplois de secrétaires ; l'élévation des qualifications, la création de passerelles vers d'autres professions et d'autres formes de valorisation de la carrière ; le conseil et l'orientation dans la planification de la carrière ; les politiques d'entreprise conçues pour tenir compte des responsabilités familiales ; et l'éducation et la formation.

Perspectives

La croissance des emplois de secrétariat à l'avenir apparaît incertaine mais il ne fait aucun doute que la profession de secrétaire ne disparaîtra pas. Dans nombre de pays le rôle de la secrétaire apparaît aujourd'hui plus élevé du fait d'une indépendance plus grande dans le travail, et il semble que des possibilités plus grandes s'offrent maintenant d'y intégrer une nouvelle dimension, celle de consultant ou de gestionnaire de la technologie de l'information de bureau. La formation continue sera tout aussi nécessaire que par le passé, si ce n'est plus, et, dans la carrière des secrétaires, les effets des périodes

d'inactivité seront probablement encore plus néfastes qu'ils ne le sont actuellement. Les compétences "humaines" de communication et de gestion des relations interpersonnelles qui sont, on le reconnaît maintenant, une dimension importante de la qualification des secrétaires, ne seront probablement pas moins recherchées à l'avenir. Ceci fixe les conditions et les priorités de l'action à entreprendre.

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SECTION 1 THE FOCUS OF THE STUDY

1.1 The decision to study secretarial occupations

Women working in secretarial occupations were chosen as a case study designed to contribute to the study of women's prospects on the labour market of the next decade in OECD countries. Experts from eight OECD countries - Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States - contributed reports on secretarial occupations and this synthesis report draws together their conclusions. The list of national experts is given at the end of the report.

The decision to study secretaries was taken for a number of reasons. First it was thought desirable to study an occupation which constituted a substantial part of all women's employment and which was heavily female dominated. In that way, the study would focus on an occupation on which, in all countries, a substantial proportion of the female workforce relied for their livelihood. A study of secretarial work would also mean studying an occupation which is heavily female-dominated and seeking to detect the extent to which traditional female dominance was being challenged by men. Furthermore, the secretarial occupation is one in which technical change has been as rapid and far-reaching (introduction of the personal desktop computer, proliferation of office software, increasingly sophisticated communication technology) as in any other occupation. Finally, secretaries work in every sector of the economy and a study of this occupation allows us to see the extent to which changes which have taken place have affected different sectors of the economy.

If the diagnosis of the development of economic activity as the development of the 'information society' is correct, it ought to be possible to detect opportunities for growth and development of the secretary's role in the work organisation. This in turn leads to the investigation of whether women secretaries are able to actively shape and change their role in the organisation to take advantage of this trend.

The questions to be asked and which the country studies and synthesis study seek to answer are principally:

1. Over the last decade, how have women in secretarial occupations reacted to the impact of profound technological and organisational change?
2. Has women's comparative advantage in this occupation been weakened or strengthened as a result of these changes?
3. Over the last decade, have secretaries shared fully in the increased productivity made possible by new microelectronic technology? Are improvements in the working conditions, status, pay and career prospect of women secretaries evident?
4. What are the routes by which women can bring about or speed up such improvements; what is the contribution that the social partners can make to this process?

This synthesis report is structured as follows; Section 1 provides an introduction and definition of the secretarial role together with an overview of the labour market situation of the secretary in the countries included in the study. Section 2 examines family status, employment status and provides some evidence on earnings over time. Section 3 sets out information on educational levels and Section 4 looks at change in the work of the secretary since the mid 1980s. Section 5 examines changes in work organisation and implications for education, upgrading and the acquisition of new skills, Section 6 examines secretaries' career prospects and Section 7 analyses the role of employers, professional associations, employee organisations and government legislation and policy in improving the employment conditions, skills and prospects of secretaries. A concluding section looks at the future of secretarial work and provides a conclusion.

1.2 Stereotypes of the secretarial role and the new work organisation

A large literature exists (summarised in Truss, Goffee and Jones 1995) exploring the way in which sociologists consider that the secretarial role has evolved as a function of a wider set of patriarchal relationships within society. The term 'office wife' is used to draw attention to the way in which it is expected that the female role in the domestic context is reproduced in the office in the relationship between boss and secretary. Together with the fact that the secretarial role is essentially a support role, the assimilation of the domestic to the work role has undoubtedly led to perceptions by secretaries and by other employees, of the secretarial role as a low status position. That this is still to an extent the case is confirmed by the discussion in the report from France.

We should, however, be cautious in assuming that findings from research carried out even as recently as the 1980s are still valid for the 1990s and will continue to hold good into the next millennium. As is pointed out below (Section 5) secretarial work is changing and evolving rapidly. This is occurring not just as a result of technological change but is also as a result of the organisational change that has characterised the 1990s in many countries. Originating in the harsher economic environment, this organisational change has produced the concept of the 'lean organisation' in which every post in the organisation is scrutinised for its value-added to the organisation's balance sheet. In a number of OECD countries, this more rigorous evaluation of the contribution of employees at different levels has not been confined to the private sector alone but has also been applied in the public sector as a result of the introduction of the internal market principle in public services.

We should not, therefore, be too surprised to learn that in a survey carried out in 1996 of secretarial work in England, it was found that the ratio of secretaries to bosses overall had risen from an estimated 4:1 four years ago to 5:1 today (Reed Employment 1996). Furthermore, the research finds, 'secretaries are becoming administrators' and 'used to undertake core work and not support'. Such generalisations must, of course, conceal a wide range of practice within organisations, nevertheless, such changes fit well within the logic of the move towards the 'lean organisation' in which every employee's talents are exploited to their full advantage.

While the English survey may be no more than an indication of the direction of future change, it seems highly likely that the 'office wife' stereotype may be breaking down and that today's more highly qualified secretaries are being used more effectively and gaining greater job satisfaction than in the past. The most important question, however, is whether increased responsibility and increased contribution to the work of the organisation is being recognised by promotion and rewarded by higher salaries. This is the question addressed in Section 7.1 below.

1.3 The definition of a secretary

For the purposes of this study, secretaries are those employees who either have a job title containing the term 'secretary' or who describe themselves as secretaries. All but one (Switzerland) of the OECD countries contributing a country study to this investigation are able to identify a separate occupational category in national labour force statistics labelled 'secretary'. The occupational classifications used in the country reports and the occupational categories selected for study in each country are set out in Appendix Two of this report.

The understanding of the work and function of a secretary is remarkably stable across time and across the countries studied. There is general agreement that a secretary works for one individual or a group of individuals, usually senior management. The secretary takes on all routine and some non-routine tasks that belong to the manager's role, thus freeing him/her up to concentrate on core activities. From the national reports, a broad consensus view emerged of the range of tasks the secretary is expected to perform. The most important and commonly encountered tasks are as follows. The secretary deals with communications both written and spoken incoming to the office and is also responsible for most outgoing communication. He/she processes and prepares text and, increasingly, statistical data, undertakes a range of routine and some non-routine administrative tasks, acts as the 'gatekeeper' to the manager's office, deals with enquiries, and is responsible for time management - his/her own and that of the manager for whom he/she works. A number of countries, notably France, the United States and the United Kingdom also identify an occupational category of executive secretary and this category will be discussed below, especially in the context of career mobility (Section 6 below).

While secretaries are our main focus, because of the potential of the secretarial occupation for development and change, we are also interested in the wider group designated as 'office employees'. This group is less heavily female-dominated and, as a rule, less skilled and carries out more routine tasks than the secretary. Unlike the secretary, many of the tasks that constitute these occupations have either disappeared as a result of technical change (telex operator, data capture) or radically changed (copy typist). Over the period studied, we would therefore expect to see a decline in the numbers in these lower level occupations. Any conclusions we might draw about increasing employment opportunities for women based on the demand for secretarial employees, therefore needs to be viewed within the wider context of trends in office employment generally.

1.4 Trends in women's employment and in secretarial employment in selected OECD countries 1973-95

During the twenty-two year period 1973-1995 the proportion of the working age population which is economically active has grown or remained stable in all the OECD countries considered in this report (Appendix Table 1). Table 2 in the Appendix shows that without exception, male labour force participation has fallen over the period. It is, therefore, unsurprising to find that female labour force participation has increased over the same period (Appendix Table 3). The increase for women looks very large, this should however be interpreted in the light of Appendix Tables 4a,4b,4c and 4d. These show that in a majority of countries, the proportion of working women working full-time has fallen. In three countries, the United Kingdom, the United States and Norway the proportion has remained the same while in only one, Denmark, can we see a rise in the proportion of women working full-time. It is against this labour market background that secretarial employment and the future of secretarial employment should be viewed. Since, as is described below in this section, secretarial work is still almost exclusively carried out by women, the flow onto the labour market of additional women workers during the last twenty years must have had the effect of increasing the supply of secretaries and increasing the competition for

jobs. It does not appear that secretaries are required to work full-time more frequently than other women workers (Table 3) and we may conclude that there were no special constraints originating in working hours requirements that acted as a barrier to the increasing numbers of women coming into the workforce to prevent them from entering secretarial professions.

In addition to larger numbers of women entering the labour force, a number of reports (France, Netherlands, Denmark) indicate that many already working in low level clerical occupations have been displaced. It is believed that a significant number have been able to move into secretarial positions, thus providing another source of supply. On the demand side, it is harder to understand what might be happening since for most countries we do not have time-series data on numbers of secretaries employed. In Switzerland little change had been noted over a three year period, in the Netherlands a 10 per cent increase over the period 1981-1994 has been noted (the category includes typists). The Netherlands data provides full-time equivalents alongside numbers in secretarial employment. Since 1991, however, there has been a fall in the numbers of secretaries and typists. This fall is greater for full-time equivalents than for numbers of secretaries alone suggesting that more secretaries may be working shorter hours. In the United States, total numbers of secretaries have risen only slightly since 1983 and fell between 1988 and 1991. Since then numbers have increased to slightly above the 1983 level and the prediction is for further growth. In the United Kingdom, employers surveyed reported that the number of secretaries employed had either fallen or stayed the same over the past few years. In France, secretarial employment has grown considerably since 1980 without any of the downturns experienced in other countries. Related occupations (eg typist) have declined. Finland has seen considerable growth 1970-90, but some decline since that date, principally as a result of the economic recession of the early 90's.

On balance, it seems that demand over the past 15 years has been high, apart from downturns resulting from changes in the business cycle. Demand has probably been sufficiently high to absorb the growing numbers of women entering the labour market and a number of those displaced from lower level occupations. There is little evidence of significant unemployment among secretaries compared to other groups. It seems likely, however, in view of the evidence we have on the lack of growth in secretarial salaries in a number of countries that where strong unions are not in place, the high level of supply has kept down secretarial salaries and made it difficult for women to obtain the rewards of higher workplace productivity.

1.5 In which sectors of economic activity do secretaries work?

Secretaries work in every sector of the economy. The growing service sector, in particular the fast-growing financial services sector, has a high proportion of secretaries in relation to all employment. The public sector accounts for a significant proportion of all secretaries - in the Netherlands over 40 per cent, in Finland 30 per cent, in France 25 per cent and in the United Kingdom 22 per cent. In Denmark, of the members of HK in clerical occupations (HK: the Union of commercial and Clerical Employees), 43 per cent work in the public sector. In the United States a large fall has occurred in the percentage of all clerical employees employed in the public sector - from 25 per cent in 1984 to 16 per cent in 1994. In Finland since 1970, employment opportunities for secretaries have mainly grown in the public sector which has assumed increasing importance as an employer during the recent period of recession.

Where figures are available, and with the exception of the United States, we can see that secretarial employment has increased since 1970 in the public sector, remained roughly steady in the service sector and declined in manufacturing, presumably as part of the wider employment trends in these sectors.

1.6 The importance of secretarial work in women's employment

Secretarial work constitutes around 5 per cent of all women's employment in Finland and the Netherlands and 7 per cent in the United Kingdom (table 1). In Switzerland, those working in secretarial occupations as a percentage of the workforce are considerably higher for both men and women (7 and 18 per cent). Based on the Swiss definition of secretarial occupations, we can see that these occupations account for a much larger share of all employment in Switzerland than in the other countries considered here. This may well be explained by the greater importance of the service sector, particularly the financial services sector in the Swiss economy. In Denmark, the 195,000 women clerical and secretarial employees who are members of HK constitute 14 per cent of the total Danish female labour force. Grimshaw and Rubery (1997) analysed selected occupations in the EU from European Labour Force data to show the degree of concentration of female employment in selected occupations. They found 7 per cent of female employment concentrated in the secretarial and keyboarding occupations. The corresponding figure for men was 1.2 per cent.

Table 1

Male secretaries as a percentage of all economically active males and female secretaries as a percentage of all economically active females 1980 - 1995

	1980		1985		1990		1992		1995	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
England							0.4	7.1	0.4	6.3
France										8.3 (b)
Finland (a)	0.1	2.3	0.1	3	0.6	4.5	0.2	5		
Netherlands		7.4		6.9		6.4		5.8		5.4
Switzerland									7	18

Notes: a) Finland 1980, 1985, 1990, 1993 b) France, excludes civil service (fonction publique).

Source: Country reports.

1.7 Unemployment of secretaries

From the data available, there is no evidence that secretaries have been disproportionately affected by recent changes in the level of unemployment. Their unemployment rates do not deviate significantly from the average. There is some evidence, however, that women secretaries are more affected by unemployment than male secretaries.

1.8 Are secretarial occupations becoming more or less female-dominated?

All the countries studied show that secretarial occupations are still dominated by women. Table 2 shows the distribution of secretarial work between men and women in the latest years for which statistics are available.

Table 2

Percentages of men and women in secretarial occupations Finland 1993, France 1995, Netherlands 1994, Switzerland 1990, USA 1994, Denmark 1995, England 1996

	MALE	FEMALE
Finland	3	97
France	3	97
Netherlands	2	98
Switzerland	19	81
USA	1	99
Denmark	18	82
England	7	93

Notes: Switzerland - secretaries in public administration only;
USA - Federal secretaries only,
Denmark - members of HK only.

Source: Country reports.

With the exception of Switzerland and Denmark female domination of secretarial professions is very high. Nor does there appear to be any serious challenge to traditional female domination of the occupation from the entry of men. Grimshaw and Rubery (1997) found the female share of secretarial and keyboarding occupations to be 80 per cent in 1994 in the EU. (Because of the persistence of this female domination and because our focus is on female secretaries we will often refer to the secretary as “she”).

SECTION 2 SECRETARIES' FAMILY STATUS, EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND EARNINGS

2.1 Part-time and full-time employment of male and female secretaries

In all the countries considered, women are more likely to work part-time than men. Nevertheless, there are important differences between the countries in the percentage of the female work-force that works part-time. (Appendix, Tables 4b and 4d).

Table 3

Percentage of the female work-force and percentage of women secretaries working part-time a) between 50-99 per cent of standard working week and b) between 1 and 49 per cent of standard working week, Finland 1993, France 1995, Netherlands 1994, Switzerland 1995, England 1996, Denmark 1995

	% Female Workforce		%Secretaries	
	50 -99%	1 - 49%	50 - 99%	1 - 49%
Finland	11(a)	N/A	N/A	N/A
France	25(a)	N/A	66(a)	5
Netherlands	40	13	37	7
Switzerland	27	27	29	17
United States	26(a)	N/A	2 (a)(b)	N/A
England	46(a)	N/A	35(a)	N/A
Denmark	22(a)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Notes: (a) all part-time work; (b) Federal secretaries only; N/A = Not Available
Source: Country reports.

From the countries studied here, the proportion of secretaries working part-time is not very different from the proportions in the female workforce as a whole (Table 3). However, in the Netherlands and Switzerland, for which we have more detailed figures, it appears that secretaries are less likely to work for only a few hours a week than the female work-force as a whole. In France and the Netherlands, some part-time work is involuntary, and women part-time workers would actually like to work longer hours. Grimshaw and Rubery (1997) analysed European Labour Force data to show the percentage of all females

working part-time in the occupations of secretary and keyboarding clerks in the EU. They found just over a quarter of all female employment in these occupations to be part-time compared to an average of just under one third for the 'top ten' female occupations overall.

Among the Western European countries, the Netherlands has the highest part-time rate among both female and male workers (OECD 1994). More than half the female workforce has a part-time job. This percentage has been increasing since the late 1970s. Two reasons can be given for this growth (Tijdens *et al.* 1994). Firstly, housewives increasingly re-enter the labour market. The vast majority prefers a part-time job because they want to have time for their household and care responsibilities. Secondly, growing numbers of women do not quit the labour market when they have children. Quitting was the dominant pattern in the 1950s and 1960s. Since the 1970s, this pattern has started to change and from the 1980s onwards, the strategy of Dutch women has been to request for substantial reductions in working hours following the birth of a first child. They prefer to remain in the workforce because re-entrance often means downgrading, and because women increasingly face high opportunity costs as well as low returns on their high investments in human capital. Due to insufficient child-care facilities, absence of extended families, and a highly cultivated motherhood ideology, these women prefer to work part-time rather than full-time.

Tijdens K, Baaijens C, (1996) *Secretaries in the Netherlands*

2.2 Age and family circumstances of secretaries

Table 4 shows the percentage of male and female secretaries in each age group and Table 5 shows family circumstances.

Table 4

Male and Female secretaries, percentage in each group Finland 1993, France 1995, Denmark 1995, England 1996, Netherlands 1994 and Switzerland 1995

Age	Below 25		25 - 39		40 - 50		50+	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Finland (a)	24(a)	20(a)	29(a)	33(a)	31	33	16	14
France (b)	N/A	8	N/A	35(b)	N/A	29(b)	N/A	27(b)
Denmark (c)	6	5	25	30	29	29	40	36
England (d)	39	12	38	38	15(d)	39(d)	8(d)	11(d)
Netherlands (e)	N/A	15	N/A	67(e)	N/A	(e)	N/A	18(e)
Switzerland (f)	16	14	41	41	30(f)	36(f)	14(f)	10(f)

Notes: (a) Finland - 'Below 30', '31 - 40', (c) Denmark, all HK/Kommunal membership, (d) England, '40 - 54', '55+' (b) France - 'Below 25', '25 - 34', '35 - 44', '45+'; all secretaries; (e) Netherlands - 'Below 24', '25 - 44', '45+' (f) Switzerland - 'Below 24', '25 - 39', '40 - 54', '55+'
N/A = Not Available

Source: Country reports

For France and the Netherlands, we are able to compare the percentages of female secretaries in the different age groups with percentages of all active women in the same age groups and it is interesting to see that, while the younger end of the age range is slightly over-represented among secretaries, the differences are small. It would therefore be wrong to see employers as recruiting from the youngest age-groups in preference to the older and more experienced women. Indeed, in the Netherlands and in Switzerland, the proportion of secretaries drawn from the very youngest age group is declining and the proportion recruited from the older age groups has increased slightly. In a number of countries, notably France, Denmark and Finland, the ageing of the profession is beginning to cause concern. It has been noted that the occupation of secretary is no longer as attractive to young women as was previously the case.

One important reason for the smaller proportion recruited from the youngest age- group is, of course, the increasing trend to longer initial full-time education. A second reason is that, in a number of countries, more recent birth cohorts have been smaller than those of the 1940' s and 1950's.

Table 4 also shows differences in countries between the proportions employed in the youngest age group. In France and Denmark, the proportion of all female secretaries aged under 24/25 is less than 10 per cent, in Switzerland and the Netherlands the proportion is nearly twice as high. We shall see, in the section on the qualifications of secretaries, that this difference has its origins in the structure of qualification routes for secretaries in the different countries.

The family circumstances of male and female secretaries are set out in Table 5.

Table 5
Family circumstances of male and female secretaries, percentage in each status category, Finland, France, England, Netherlands and Switzerland

Percentage				
Status	Married (a)		Children	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Finland	61	56	N/A	N/A
France	N/A	70	N/A	65
England	38	74	7	93
Netherlands	N/A	76	N/A	23
Switzerland (b)	62.5	59	24.4	14

Notes: (a) includes living with a partner (b) married or living with a partner and having children under 15 years
Source: Country Reports

The proportions of all secretaries having children under 16 vary considerably from country to country. The social climate and expectations of women's role in society may play a part in determining to what extent women work and also care for children. For example, in Switzerland and the Netherlands, where the tradition of women working outside the home is less well-established, we see rather smaller proportions of women secretaries with children working. The reverse is true in France and England where it is more accepted that women with children should and can work. However, we should remember that family responsibilities do not just end with children but that many women are primary carers or have care responsibilities for adult relatives. This will especially be the case for older women.

2.3 Employment status

The overwhelming majority of secretaries are permanent employees and over half appear to stay in secretarial work or in secretarial work with the same employer for at least five years. Even in England and the Netherlands, where agencies supplying temporary secretarial staff are widespread, employers tend to use temporary employment as a way of filling very short term gaps and as a way of assessing the suitability of an individual for permanent employment. This was true of the Netherlands also. In England and the Netherlands, as in the other countries studied, the vast majority of secretaries have permanent positions. A general view was that the employer valued the secretary as a source of stability and knowledge of the organisation and that this aspect of the secretary's role encouraged the employer to provide permanent employment status for secretaries.

2.4 The earnings of secretaries

Three separate sources of information are available for this report on the earnings of secretaries in OECD member countries. Each source of information covers a different range of OECD countries, the range covered being dictated for each study by the availability and comparability of earnings data. The three sources are listed below and the country coverage is set out in Table 6. However, it should be noted that even this coverage is not complete as data is not always available for all measures for all countries.

- Source 1 *Grimshaw D. and Rubery J. The concentration of women's employment and relative pay: A statistical framework for comparative analysis OECD 1997 (forthcoming)*
- Source 2 *OECD Trends in Public Sector Pay 1995 Edition OECD 1996*
- Source 3 Country studies of trends in secretarial occupations prepared for this study (*see References for list*)

Table 6

OECD member countries included in the Sources of Wage Data used in this study

Source 1	Source 2	Source 3
Australia	Australia	
	Austria	
Canada	Canada	
	Denmark	Denmark
	Finland	Finland
France	France	France
West Germany	Germany	
	Iceland	
	Ireland	
	Italy	Italy
	Luxembourg	
Norway		
	Netherlands	Netherlands
	Portugal	
	Spain	
	Sweden	
	Switzerland	Switzerland
United Kingdom	United Kingdom	United Kingdom
United States	United States	United States

The United Kingdom , the United States and France are the only countries included in the country studies (Source 3) and in the other two studies of earnings (Sources 1 and 2). All of the countries contributing to this report are covered by Source 2 (public sector pay).

The findings relating to the earnings of secretaries will be reported separately for each source and a final paragraph will seek to draw out some common trends.

2.4.1 *The concentration of female employment and relative pay*

Grimshaw and Rubery (op.cit.) (Source 1) examine the consequences for female earnings of the concentration of female employment into relatively few occupations. They find that for all the countries studied, over 60 per cent of women's employment can be accounted for by less than ten occupational groups. During the period covered by the study - approximately 10-15 years - there is no sign that the degree of concentration has lessened although in some countries the composition of the group of most concentrated occupations has changed slightly. In every country and for all periods considered (spanning the period 1980-1995 but varying by country, France 1992 only) the secretarial category is contained within the group of occupations where the concentration of female employment is greatest (Grimshaw, Table 13).

Grimshaw and Rubery point out the difficulties of comparing levels of earnings across countries for a given occupation (problems of occupational definition, differences in qualifications and certification requirements, labour market institution differences). These make it impractical to attempt to draw conclusions from a comparison of levels of earnings across countries. However, several important conclusions relating to secretarial earnings over time can be drawn from their data. These relate to a) the dispersion of earnings within secretarial occupations b) secretaries' earnings relative to pay in the 'top ten' female occupations, relative to all female earnings and relative to male earnings in all sectors c) changes in the level of secretaries' earnings relative to changes in all female earnings, changes in all male earnings and changes in female earnings in the top ten occupations d) changes in the level of secretaries' earnings in the both the private and public sectors relative to the earnings of all women employed in the public sector. The data refer to gross hourly earnings.

a) The dispersion of earnings within secretarial occupations

Grimshaw and Rubery present data on pay dispersion at the two digit level for five countries Norway, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and West Germany (Grimshaw, Table 12). Of these the first four show clerical occupations (including secretarial) having a more compressed wage scale and a maximum ceiling which is substantially lower than the average for all women. Only Germany shows the opposite trend. On pay dispersion therefore, the evidence on balance confirms the view put forward from case study material in our country studies that opportunities for career advancement and higher earnings within secretarial work are more limited when compared to those available to women generally.

b) Secretaries' earnings relative to pay in the 'top ten' female occupations, relative to all female earnings and relative to male earnings

In the 1990s, in all countries considered, female secretaries earned less than the average for all men in all sectors. The differences range from slightly more than 80 per cent of the male average in Norway to 70 per cent in the United States. In all seven countries included in the study secretaries fared better than the average for the 'top ten' occupations. However, only in the United Kingdom, West Germany and Norway were secretaries paid more than the overall female average relative to the male average (Grimshaw, Table 14).

c) Changes in the level of secretaries' earnings relative to changes in all female earnings, changes in all male earnings and changes in female earnings in the top ten occupations

The picture on changes between the 1980's and the 1990's in female secretarial relative pay is somewhat mixed but overall the evidence points to a deterioration over this period in the earnings of secretaries relative to other groups (Grimshaw, Table 14). The position of secretaries' earnings relative to all male earnings is worse in the 1990s in Norway, Australia and the United Kingdom , improved in Canada and the United States and - by less than a percentage point - in West Germany (no data for France). The earnings of secretaries rose less relative to those of all men than did female earnings in all occupations in the six countries, Norway, Australia, United Kingdom , West Germany, Canada and the United States for which data was available.

d) Changes in the level of secretaries' earnings in the both the private and public sectors relative to the earnings of all women employed in the public sector.

From the study by Grimshaw and Rubery, when making a comparison of women's average occupational earnings (across both the private and public sectors) with the average occupational earnings of women in the public sector, we can consider secretaries' earnings for four countries only, Norway, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States and at the two digit level only (Grimshaw, Table 10). In the 1990's, Norway was the only country of the four where women employed as secretaries earned on average more than women employed in all occupations in the public sector, and this advantage was greater for part-time secretaries. In Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States average earnings for all secretaries were below those of women employed in all occupations in the public sector. In the United Kingdom and the United States the earnings of female part-time secretaries relative to all part-time women employees in the public sector are far lower than the relative earnings of full-time secretaries.

2.4.2 Comparisons within the public sector

The information on public sector pay (Source 2) enables us to chart changes in the earnings of secretaries in public sector employment over a (roughly) ten year period from the mid '80's to the mid '90's. Table 7 compares secretarial pay for the mid-point of service with that of a nursing auxiliary for a range of OECD countries.

Table 7**Change in public sector real earnings, secretaries and nursing auxiliaries in selected OECD countries 1985-1993**

	Earnings 1985/1993 (1985=100)		Difference in change in earnings levels 1993
	Secretaries	Nursing Auxiliary	Nurs.Auxiliary/ Secretary
Austria	110	133	+23
Canada	94	117	+23
Denmark	100	101	+1
Finland	105	114	+9
France	103	N/A	N/A
Germany	111	113	+2
Ireland	115	117	+2
Netherlands	106	103	-3
Spain	129	103	-26
Sweden	93 ^(a)	N/A	N/A
United Kingdom	126	117	-9
United States	95	95	0

Notes: (a) For Sweden after 1 year of service

Source: OECD (1996), Table 9

Out of a total of 10 OECD countries in Table 7 for which data is available, six show the size of the increase in real earnings for secretaries to be less than that for nursing auxiliaries (who would normally be considered a less well-qualified group in most countries), one, the United States, shows no difference while three show a greater increase for secretaries. It should be remembered that this data refers only to public sector employment in which, as we note in para. 1.5 above, at the most around one third of secretaries are employed. Nevertheless, it confirms the picture set out in Grimshaw and Rubery that increases in secretaries' earnings have frequently been below those of other groups even when compared to other female-dominated occupations.

2.4.3 *Trends in secretarial earnings from the country reports*

Only an approximate view of trends can be given here on the basis of the country reports (Source 3), as earnings data is not available for some countries and only available from limited sources in others. In Finland, a country with high female labour force participation, the earnings of secretaries relative to all average earnings have fallen since 1970; in 1993 the wage level of secretaries was 90 per cent of the average while in 1970, it was above the average (121 per cent). In the Netherlands, between 1984 and 1989, secretaries' salaries remained at the same level relative to the average for their skill group. In Denmark, where trade unions are particularly strong in the clerical and commercial sector, the earnings of secretaries in the private sector have increased faster than average male earnings in the same sector. Although, in Denmark, average female earnings tend to be lower than average male earnings for a given occupation, the wage differential between men and women has recently narrowed considerably. In England, over the period 1992-1996 the earnings of female secretaries have grown more slowly than all female non-manual earnings. Data from Switzerland and France do not permit a view of salaries over time.

For the countries for which data is available (Switzerland, Finland, Denmark) male secretaries earned a substantially higher wage on average than female secretaries. Nevertheless, in Finland, women secretaries earn above the average wage for all employed women and male secretaries earn slightly below the average wage for all employed men. In Denmark since 1990, in the private sector, secretaries' wages are higher than the average for all men and the average for all women in the sector.

In Switzerland, women secretaries in the youngest age group (15-24 years) earn more than their male counterparts but after that age male secretaries earn more with the gap widening more rapidly after 40 years of age. Except for men in the 15-24 age bracket, both male and female secretaries consistently earn above the average for all wage earners.

While almost all the country reports show a range of pay levels for secretaries associated with age and or status in the organisation, it is not possible to say whether this dispersion is less for the occupation of secretary than for other occupations.

This review of some recent evidence on changes in secretaries' earnings over the last decade points to a fall in the value of secretaries' earnings relative to those of other groups which is all the more surprising in the light of the higher skills requirement in secretarial work over the last decade described in Section 4 below. Part of the explanation probably lies in the exceptionally favourable supply situation since the mid 1980s described in para 1.4 above which includes the rapid upgrading of the educational levels of the female labour force entering the labour market in this period. In Sections 6 and 7 below some of the difficulties created by the nature of secretarial occupations which frequently prevent secretarial earnings from reflecting increased productivity are identified.

SECTION 3 EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF SECRETARIES

3.1 An overview of years of initial education and training of secretaries

Every country has its own set of initial education and training qualifications which cannot easily be equated with any other. For the purposes of comparison here, the number of years of full-time education after the age of 15/16 (end of compulsory schooling) has been used as a first indicator of initial education and training levels.

Table 8

Secretaries by years of education and training after age 15/16 (end compulsory schooling) Finland 1993, France 1995, England 1996, Netherlands 1994, Switzerland 1995, USA 1995

Years of Initial Education and Training after 15/16				
Countries	None %	1-2 %	3-4 %	5+ %
Finland (a)	21	15	51	13
France	22	37	38	3
England	52	34	14	N/A
Netherlands (b)	11	N/A	61	20
Switzerland (a)	6	N/A	82	12
United States (c)	N/A	50 (d)	50 (e)	

Notes: (a) Female secretaries only; (b) Figures do not add to 100 because of missing values (below 5000); (c) Federal secretaries only; (d) High School Diploma only; (e) Some college attendance or higher qualification
N/A = Not applicable

Source: Country reports.

Table 8 shows that only a minority of all secretaries now have no more than basic schooling. In all but the USA and the United Kingdom a substantial majority are well-qualified, having received at least 3 or more years of education and training after the end of compulsory schooling. In Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland, between ten and twenty per cent have studied at tertiary (higher education) level, usually on a vocational track. The level of qualification expected in the United Kingdom is considerably lower than in the rest of Europe. It appears that the qualifications profile of United Kingdom secretaries more closely resembles that of the United States with only about half having more than the school leaving minimum standard.

The educational reforms in Finland at the beginning of the 1990s have raised the training of secretaries from upper secondary level to higher level education which can also be expected to improve the position of secretaries in the labour market. Underlying the structural reform of vocational training are, for example, changes in the social environment of the workplace, such as the accelerated and unpredictable nature of changes, internationalisation, changes in work organisations, demands of efficiency and economy, and the continued unemployment problems. The reform was also a response to the changes in the work and in the required professional skills: an increased demand of professional skills and multi-vocational aptitudes, breakdown of the labour market, increased number of fixed-term work contracts, concepts of flexibility, productivity and economy, client and service orientation, quality goals, use of computer systems and other technical equipment, responsibility for the environment, oneself and others. The reform also aimed at substituting skill descriptions for job descriptions and replacing vocational groups by multi-vocational skills. Other objectives were raising the educational level, adopting a consecutive model of studies, extending the scope of studies and increasing the freedom of choice.

Kolehmainen-Lindèn S (1997) *Case Study of Secretaries in Finland*

3.2 Trends in levels of qualifications attained

Where we have data showing change over time in the qualifications held by secretaries, (Switzerland, Finland, Netherlands, United States) we can see a trend towards more and higher qualification levels. This is more pronounced in the European countries than in the United States. In general, higher level vocational qualifications are becoming more widely-held while advanced general education courses have been followed only by a minority of secretaries. In many countries, it is expected that the trend towards advanced vocational/professional courses at university/tertiary education level for secretarial employment will continue and strengthen.

SECTION 4 CHANGE IN THE WORK OF THE SECRETARY SINCE THE MID 1980S

4.1 The scope of technological and organisational change

The secretarial role has felt the full impact of all the important changes that have affected the economic environment and the way organisations operate since the mid 1980s. While the literature tends to concentrate on the radically different technology that the secretary has been required to master, other changes may actually have been of longer lasting importance. At the origin of these innovations are the increased global pressures to remain competitive. This produces pressures to acquire competitive advantage in two ways, both of which centrally involve the secretary. The first of these is the efficient exploitation of the possibilities of electronic information technology, the second is the 'presentation' of the organisation to the client or customer in such a way as to build a consistent image of professional expertise combined with personal service.

Electronic information technology does far more than put a word processor on the secretary's desk. It provides the secretary with the challenge of the exploitation and analysis of much increased levels of information. In all but the largest organisations where a distinct documentalist job may be defined, the secretary is at the cutting edge of the retrieval, storage and analysis of information, its transmission by the increased variety of information routes and its prioritisation and selection for the attention of others in the organisation. The increased importance of 'image' and 'presentation' put a premium on the 'soft' interpersonal skills of communication and initiative. In the age of telecommunications, the secretary is more likely to be the client or customer's first point of contact with the organisation.

4.2 The early phases of the technological revolution in the office

Evidence from the countries in the study helps us to understand the different stages in this revolution in the work of the secretary. As studies from Australia and Canada and reference to work from Denmark make clear, the first phase of the introduction of electronic word processing had seriously damaging effects on the careers and self-esteem of highly-skilled shorthand typists and experienced clerical workers. These women, especially the shorthand typist, had acquired high levels of quite specialised skills and were used to a type of work organisation that made the most effective use of these skills. With the introduction of the word processor, as a number of countries note, a lower premium was placed on typing speed and a higher one on general presentation using the layout and formatting facilities of the word processing programmes available. For the shorthand typists, it was not even sufficient to simply replace an out of date skill with a new skill. Word processing software packages were too various and too rapidly upgraded for the new skill of mastering a particular package to remain current for very long. In fact, the new skill required was the skill of learning fast and learning 'while doing' - not even 'by doing'. This transformation of the technical basis of secretarial work which took place in the late 1970's and first half of the 1980's constituted a severe shock and challenge to many millions of women secretarial and clerical workers whose working lives had consisted of applying high levels of the same skill to a predictable range of tasks.

4.3 The effect on office workers of the early phase of technological change

It is generally held that the first phase of the application of new technology to office work led to a worsening of working conditions for many clerical workers. This phase saw the one-off transfer of information from millions of documents to disk, and the inputting of data using an electronic keyboard capable of measuring productivity far more precisely than in the past. Little was known and understood about the ergonomics of electronic keyboarding work and women undertaking these tasks were frequently placed under more pressure to work productively, their work was deskilled and they suffered from the lack of understanding of the importance of posture, position and the correct positioning of equipment.

4.4 The implications for office work of the current phase of technological and organisational change

However, the evidence from the country reports indicates that, in the latest phase of the IT revolution, simple routine keyboarding jobs are fast disappearing. This trend results from two new developments in information technology. First, optical character readers now provide an automated solution to the problem of data transfer from paper to disk. Second, the development of local area networks and the technical understanding of how to adapt software to the potential of networks mean that many organisations, for example, banks, are moving towards the goal of 'once only data entry', that is, a piece of information, a payment made, for example, needs to be recorded in a number of documents in order for accounts to be kept. Previously, a separate entry was made for each account, now, a single keyboard or optical character reading entry flows through linked spreadsheets to reappear as a multiple entry in the appropriate documents. The evidence from our country surveys indicates that these latest technical developments have had devastating effect on clerical employment. Employment in the categories of copy typist/data entry clerk, and others affected by electronic automation, for example switchboard operator, is declining rapidly. By contrast, the available evidence points to an increase in the numbers employed as secretaries and a particularly rapid increase in the higher levels of secretarial employment (executive secretary).

4.5 The implications of the current technological change for secretarial work

The secretary's expertise is as a communicator and handler of information; she is frequently the voice of her boss and her main responsibility is to communicate and to make information work on behalf of those to whom she provides her services. She communicates with clients and customers and receives, selects, records, processes and analyses information. These tasks have always been present in the secretary's work and because of these wide responsibilities, her work has always been varied and difficult to define. Therefore, if we point out that the secretary in the 1990s is required to be flexible and adaptable, to communicate and process information, we should also make clear that these tasks and qualities have always been characteristics expected of the secretary. Yet expectations of the secretary are undoubtedly different and, the evidence indicates, more demanding of higher level skills.

What appears to have happened over the last 7-10 years is that changes in the business climate and technology-driven change have affected every aspect of the secretary's work. The central tasks remain what they always were, communication and information handling, but transformed by the forces outlined above.

Interviews with former secretaries alluded to the fact that changes in the tasks have occurred between 1980 and the present. It was explained that the daily agenda of secretaries used to be organised by others, their supervisors and superiors. However, throughout the past fifteen years, the job has become much more independent. Specifically, secretaries spend less time doing mundane tasks for their supervisors and spend more time on office and/or organisational tasks. Skills that make an excellent assistant/secretary include time management, technical expertise, ability to do several tasks at once and work as part of a team. These skills are ones that employers seek for every position, which is why administrative work is an ideal stepping stone along any number of different career paths. Employers want secretaries with excellent computer skills, good communication skills (both oral and written), networking ability, interpersonal skills, and an ability to learn. Higher-level secretaries supervise personnel and manage offices as well as operate a variety of sophisticated software programs.

Shoun S. (1996) *The Secretarial Occupation in the United States*

Communication has most obviously become more rapid and more diversified and as a consequence a greater variety of topics will need to be dealt with at greater speed. The secretary of the 1950s checked the post which arrived twice a day. The secretary of the 1990s checks the post, the electronic mail, the fax machine and the voicemail, all of which, with the spread of special delivery services, are continuously incoming.

4.6 The impact of wider organisational change on the secretary's role

Personal communication with customers or clients and with other colleagues has also always been an important part of the secretary's role. Today, as companies and parts of the public sector compete on service and sell on image and presentation, the secretary's ability to project a positive image of the company at all times, to deal sensitively with customers or clients is at the forefront of the job requirement. She does this in spoken and face to face contact but also by acquiring the IT skills required to present the company's written communications (letters, reports, invoices etc.) as clearly and as professionally as possible.

Dans un contexte général de croissance des activités de service et d'intensification de la concurrence, les entreprises misent sur la personnalisation des échanges. En s'ouvrant davantage sur leur environnement, elles cultivent leur image de marque qui doit attester d'une véritable souplesse vis-à-vis de clients ou de partenaires de plus en plus exigeants quant à la spécificité de leurs intérêts. Les secrétaires, à qui il est demandé de s'impliquer davantage dans les relations avec le public sont un des pivots de cette évolution. La fonction de représentation, qui fait partie de leur métier, devient ainsi beaucoup plus active.

Fournier C., Liaroutzos O. (1996) *Le Secrétariat en France aujourd'hui*

Furthermore, as the benefits of team working become more appreciated, interpersonal skills of working with others and acting with sensitivity as a channel of communication with more senior staff become more important.

Information has increased in quantity and requires recording/response more rapidly. The evidence from our studies indicates that in varying degrees the secretary is expected to record and analyse information, taking on tasks which would have been carried out in the past by other clerical employees.

A number of country reports mention an increase in the number of secretaries working for a group of managers rather than for a single manager. This development is seen as the accompaniment to the process of 'delaying' which has been widely implemented by companies (and in some countries eg Denmark in the public sector also) in the 1990s to cut costs. Providing secretarial services to a number of managers makes greater demands on the secretary's time-management and people-management skills.

Another trend noted in a number of the country reports, in particular by France and Finland is the trend towards specialization of secretaries in a particular professional area, most commonly but not always in the private sector. Law, medicine and finance are examples of areas where secretaries are expected to acquire extensive specialised knowledge, usually through experience and learning 'on-the-job'.

L'implication des secrétaires dans la vie de l'entreprise tend à changer de nature. Elles ne sont plus là simplement pour améliorer les fonctionnements, accélérer la circulation de l'information, faciliter les contacts. Aujourd'hui, cette dynamique de l'échange s'associe plus étroitement aux phases de production. La fonction principale de communication reste transversale mais elle est exercée dans le cadre d'activités débouchant davantage sur des résultats concrets (analyse- diagnostic de demandes, personnalisation de propositions tarifaires, comptabilité analytique du service...). A certains niveaux de responsabilité, on peut même parler de partage d'expertise avec d'autres professionnels de l'entreprise, cadres ou techniciens. Bien entendu, les secrétaires généralistes restent et resteront très majoritaires mais il est intéressant de mieux cerner le phénomène de spécialisation dans le secrétariat qui représente une caractéristique significative de l'évolution du métier.

Fournier C., Liaroutzos O. (1996) *Le Secrétariat en France aujourd'hui*

SECTION 5 CHANGES IN WORK ORGANISATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION, UPGRADING AND THE ACQUISITION OF NEW SKILLS

5.1 The changing educational requirements for secretarial work

The educational levels of women employed in secretarial occupations have risen over the last 10-15 years. We should bear in mind the overall rise in women's educational levels which has taken place in almost all OECD countries over this period. Nevertheless, a trend is apparent for employers to recruit secretarial staff from those with at least an upper secondary education. The lower level general education and vocational education qualifications are no longer considered an adequate basis for secretarial employment. Some evidence suggests that there is an element of screening involved in such a change. As larger proportions of the age group attain recognised qualifications, employers assume that a certain amount of 'inflation' has taken place and that, in order to recruit staff with the requisite basic skills (accurate spelling, grammar and appreciation of stylistic differences), they will need to shift recruitment to a higher qualification level.

5.2 Reasons for increasing demand for secretaries educated to a higher level

A tendency for employers to use the education system to pre-select a group having certain general abilities is not the whole explanation for the trend towards recruitment at higher levels. The evidence also points to a real increase in the general skills required of the secretary which result directly from the changes in role and duties outlined in Section 4 above. These skills are predominantly those recognised as being acquired through higher level general or academic education. In continental Europe, European integration and the internationalisation of trade has made proficiency in at least one foreign language essential for secretaries at almost all levels in all but the smallest companies. The ability to learn new skills, to work without supervision and to react flexibly to a changing business environment are also requirements whose importance has increased in recent years. In order to ensure that new secretaries have these qualities, employers appear to be increasingly ready to recruit at higher educational levels than previously.

From the 1 August 1996 the basic training of the commerce and clerical profession has been reformed and extended from 3 to 4 years. The theoretical part of the education has been increased by 35% and case and theme work are now central elements of the course. Given that the number of untrained secretarial workers is decreasing (many of whom have a medium- cycle education within a different field) it is evident that the secretarial workers in Denmark are a highly qualified group. The reorganisation of the basic education should be seen as an attempt to meet the demands of the technological development on the labour market which requires new and higher qualifications. The PC, in particular, has removed many of the routine jobs from the profession. The aim is to upgrade the clerical employees to a professional position from which they can compete with academics for administrative positions.

Sprog & Service (1996) *A Study of Clerical and Secretarial Occupations in Denmark*.

5.3 The problem of young secretaries with low level qualifications

The converse of this trend is that the employment and mobility prospects of women with only the lower level general education/vocational education/apprenticeship qualification are worsening. This is a particularly acute problem for younger women having lower level qualifications. Older women with substantial professional experience do not appear to be as badly affected by this trend.

5.4 Updating in the early phase of technological change

Evidence based on surveys carried out in the 1980s documented the lack of understanding initially shown by employers of the need for high quality training for secretaries and clerical employees confronted for the first time with the switch from typing to word processing.

However, evidence now indicates that the effects of the shock of that sudden transition are now in the past. Almost all office employees now routinely work with personal computers and the skill of adapting to an upgrade of existing software, learning a new software package or a new operating system is one of a range of new skills which secretaries have acquired in the course of the last ten years. This process has been helped by more user friendly software (eg drop-down help menus) and an increasing concentration and convergence within the software industry leading to a smaller range of products. This is not to imply that updating courses are not required by secretaries. Learning to use, for example, a sophisticated DTP (desk top publishing) package can most efficiently be achieved by attending a specialised course.

5.5 Access to opportunities for updating of skills and upgrading of educational level

There is mixed evidence from the surveys relating to secretaries' access to short updating courses. In particular, in England and France there was dissatisfaction with the opportunities offered to secretaries by employers for improving secretarial skills. In countries where there was a reasonable level of satisfaction with opportunities for updating we can see that between one third and two-thirds of those surveyed had received some additional formal training in a recent period. However, it does not appear that secretaries normally have access to employer- provided longer periods of training and development such as day-release during working hours to upgrade educational qualifications.

On the whole our findings seem to show that, despite the expansion in secretarial roles and responsibilities, and the expectation that this trend is likely to continue, very little thought has been given to the training implications.

This lack of training opportunities is partly linked to the persistence of narrow and stereotypical views about the work secretaries do and the type of training regarded as relevant to this group. Thus courses offered for managers in, for example, time management and inter-personal skills are often not seen as relevant to secretaries, while in many cases they obviously should.

Giles L., La Valle I. and Perryman S. (1996) *A New Deal for Secretaries?*

Secretaries are not, of course, exempt from the strong tendency noted in numerous studies for participation in employer-provided training and level of qualification to show a strong positive correlation. This tendency is particularly serious for the group qualified to only the most basic educational level. This group, which, as we have seen, is already disadvantaged on the labour market, is also less likely than those better qualified to be offered access to continuing or updating training.

Where data is available, it appears that women secretaries receive less additional training than their male counterparts, although they are more likely than men to undertake secretarial courses in order to change occupation or to facilitate a return to the labour force after a break for family reasons. There are also indications that women secretaries are unable to undertake as much training as they would like as a result of domestic responsibilities, but hard evidence on this point is not available.

En effet, la participation des femmes à la formation continue professionnelle est bien plus faible que celle des hommes. Le manque de participation aux cours de perfectionnement professionnels tient notamment au fait que les femmes se disent surchargées, en raison notamment d'une charge ménagère importante, et qu'elles peuvent rarement se perfectionner pendant les heures de travail. On constate d'ailleurs que la participation à la formation continue dépend fortement du niveau de formation de base et du taux d'occupation; d'où le fort désavantage des femmes avec un simple CFC et qui préfèrent souvent travailler à temps partiel. Ce dernier choix se transforme à mainte reprise en obstacle à toute ascension professionnelle. Les femmes travaillant à horaire réduit exercent notamment des tâches de traitement de texte peu qualifiantes. Pour ce qui est des participants aux cours de perfectionnement, on constate malheureusement que les femmes les suivent pour le plaisir, alors que les hommes ont tendance à se perfectionner pour se tenir au courant et pour gravir les échelons hiérarchiques. Même dans l'administration publique, qui offre la possibilité de se perfectionner pendant les heures de travail, on constate que le taux de participation aux cours spécifiques pour les secrétaires est très faible (5%).

Curti M. (1996) *Analyse des professions à prédominance féminine. Etude de cas : les métiers de bureau en Suisse*

SECTION 6 SECRETARIES' CAREER PROSPECTS

6.1 The causes of difficulties of career development

The problems that women working as secretaries have in securing career mobility to higher level posts have two principal causes. The first is common to all women in the labour force; the widespread need to combine family responsibilities and the management of a career. Mainly on account of family responsibilities, a proportion of women work less than full-time hours and their working lives are subject to discontinuities which result from the need to care for young children and for older relatives and discontinuities brought about by geographical relocation as a result of a partner or husband's change of job. In an increasingly competitive labour market, such discontinuities constitute a serious handicap, a handicap increased for women in secretarial occupations by the rapid development of technology which means that a career break equals a loss of skill.

The second of these causes is the nature of secretarial work itself. The secretarial role is a varied and demanding one, it requires specialised technical skill and a whole range of personal qualities. However, for all that, it remains a support function. Essentially, this means that the secretary relieves the person or persons for whom she works of all routine tasks and distractions. The qualities that her boss prizes are those of efficient work organisation and carrying out of prescribed procedures. These are, by definition, the tasks that do not constitute the essential expertise of her boss. What she rarely if ever gets the opportunity to do is to think creatively about the business in which she works, to contribute to strategic planning and to make decisions which affect the direction of the business. Yet, these are the skills which would be required if the secretary is to progress to the higher levels of management, to replace the boss. Thus, the service function which the secretary fulfills keeps her in a ghetto of routine and relatively undemanding activity even where the demands on her appear wide-ranging and to confer responsibility.

6.2 The prospects of promotion within secretarial work

Secretarial work has been characterised as a 'female ghetto', a space almost solely occupied by women and one from which they find it difficult to escape. Two questions are pertinent here. First, to what extent is it common for secretaries to move 'sideways' to non-secretarial jobs and, perhaps more importantly, to what extent are secretaries able to move upwards to positions of higher status, responsibility and rewards.

In a number of countries, principally those having a strongly-organised workforce, different grades of secretaries are recognised, the most common differentiation is between the secretary *tout court* and the executive or senior secretary. In countries with a less-regulated labour market, the same job differentiation exists in practice with considerable salary differentials between the secretary and the 'secretary/personal assistant' as this post is often known in the Anglo-Saxon countries.

The executive secretary is better paid and enjoys more autonomy and independence in her work. While it is increasingly common for the secretary to work for a number of bosses, the executive secretary usually works for only one boss, most commonly a highly-placed manager or chief executive.

6.3 Obstacles to progression within secretarial occupations

It is argued in a number of the country reports that progression from secretary to executive secretary could be said to represent a career ladder of sorts for women in secretarial work. However, it is also clear that employers increasingly seek to appoint executive secretaries from applicants who not only have secretarial experience at a lower level but who also have high level academic and/or vocational qualifications. Two factors make this requirement a significant barrier to mobility. First, we should recall that, while short updating courses, principally aimed at the acquisition of IT skills are quite widely available to secretaries, opportunities for longer periods of education to upgrade to a higher educational level are not normally available (apart from independent part-time study). Substantial numbers of secretaries in post at present have only low level qualifications. Therefore, the premium placed on high level qualifications for the executive secretary (either upper secondary, sub-degree or degree level certificates) makes progression from the post of secretary to executive secretary difficult for those who have not acquired these qualifications during their period of initial training at school or college.

Inevitably, where figures are available, they show that the number of executive secretary posts is much smaller than the number of secretary posts available. At best, even where women at the level of secretary have the requisite qualifications, promotion from secretary to executive secretary will only be possible for about one secretary in every seven. All the available evidence points to there being only severely limited opportunity for progression within the occupation of secretary for the vast majority of secretaries.

Mobility into the occupation is primarily by school-leavers, but also by re-entrant women. Yet, there is no one-to-one relationship between secretarial training and entry into the secretarial occupation. It can be assumed that between half to three-quarters of the students at secretarial courses become secretaries, and that about a quarter of the secretaries have not followed a secretarial course. Both the mobility intention and mobility itself between employers is very high among secretaries. The most frequently mentioned reasons for this type of mobility are job improvement and job dissatisfaction. Many secretaries have complained about a lack of career prospects within their occupation. The findings show severe tension between secretaries' career expectations and their career opportunities. About two in three secretaries do not expect to get another job with their current employer. On the other hand, about half of the secretaries indicated they had made a career step within the company. These secretaries expect to make a further step more often. Quite a few secretaries look for a career step into management. Of the female managers, about one-third was a secretary at some point in their working life. Yet, mobility from the secretarial occupation into managerial occupations seems to be exceptional.

Tijdens K., Baaijens C. (1996) *Secretaries in the Netherlands*

6.4 The internal mobility ladder

The view is also put forward that the internal mobility ladder within the firm or organisation ought also to offer a prospect of mobility out of the secretarial position. The company which was confident of retaining the employee by offering internal mobility opportunities might be more willing to make a serious investment in the education and training of a secretary for another post within the organisation. This willingness to invest on the part of firms would in turn overcome the problem mentioned above of the poor promotion prospects of women who have low level qualifications. There is, however, little evidence that such opportunities are widespread in the private sector. However, the Finnish report draws attention to somewhat better career prospects for female secretaries in the public sector in Finland although over all sectors, very few secretaries thought they had good job opportunities. As in

other countries , for example Switzerland, male secretaries in Finland appear to enjoy better career prospects regardless of sector.

6.5 Mobility between employers and out of secretarial work

While - or perhaps because - there is relatively little upward mobility for women secretaries, there appears to be considerable movement of secretaries between employers and also movement into and out of secretarial occupations. Some surveys, for example England, suggest that women secretaries move between employers to improve their prospects, pay and conditions as a way of compensating for the lack of a formal career ladder. In France in 1995 nearly half of all secretaries had been with their current employer for less than five years. In recent years, movement into secretarial occupations appears to have come principally from women previously employed in routine clerical and typing occupations which have been particularly affected by the increased automation of text and data processing.

It is very difficult to find firm evidence across OECD countries on which to base a view of secretaries' chances of promotion out of secretarial occupations and to a higher level job. Truss (1994) in her study of a sample of secretaries in France, England and Germany finds that secretaries themselves were 'not very optimistic' about such possibilities. However, Truss found that their expectations of mobility were actually higher than the reality as reported by the sample of firms for which they worked, 'only five organisations out of a total of 16 were able to think of just a small number of cases over the previous year'. The 1996 survey of English secretaries published by Reed Employment found that only 7 per cent of the secretarial workforce in the firms in their sample had been promoted to non-secretarial jobs over the last four years.

6.6 Conclusions on mobility and career prospects

In all the evidence presented from the individual country reports, there is little indication to show that there has been any change in the rather small amount of mobility to higher level posts from secretarial positions. While a number of countries stress the post of executive secretary as a career goal to which those secretaries with higher level qualifications can aspire, executive secretaries remain a small group within secretarial work (at the most just over 10 per cent of all secretaries) and there are no signs that this proportion has increased over the last 10 years. Indeed, some reports suggest that the proportion may be decreasing somewhat. Some countries take the view that female secretaries' prospects of upward mobility are deteriorating. None are unreservedly optimistic. Perhaps the most important point to note is that, while in Section 6 above, it is made clear that secretaries have upgraded their skills, and improved the scope and quality of their work over the last 10 years, these real productivity gains have not been recognised by increased status and earnings. In the following section we discuss examples of policies and initiatives that have made a contribution to tackling the key problems of the secretarial occupation, namely those of increasing skill, increasing responsibility and lack of recognition and reward.

SECTION 7 THE ROLE OF EMPLOYERS, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, EMPLOYEE ORGANISATIONS AND GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AND POLICY IN IMPROVING THE EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS, SKILLS AND PROSPECTS OF SECRETARIES

7.1 Lack of recognition of increased value-added achieved by employees - a widespread problem

It would be misleading to claim that secretaries are in any way unique in experiencing a lack of recognition of increases in their productivity in terms of increases in earnings and/or a rise in occupational status. The last decade has witnessed a continuation and, some would claim, an intensification of the demand shift on the part of employers from low-skilled to high-skilled labour with the result that there has been an over-supply on the labour market of individuals with low and middle level secretarial skills. Although we know very little about the process itself, it appears from the available evidence, that a proportion of such women have succeeded in acquiring the upgraded skills which have made it possible for them to switch from routine clerical to secretarial work. This movement, together with an overall upward trend in female labour force participation has kept the supply of secretarial skills high and provided little incentive for employers to increase status and/or earnings in order to hold key secretarial staff. While this situation also faces other occupational groups, there are a number of ways in which the secretarial position makes it especially difficult for women in this occupation to achieve the right level of recognition and reward for their work. The importance of developing various dimensions of professionalism in secretarial work as a way of obtaining higher salaries was stressed. One dimension of professionalism was seen as the upgrading of initial qualifications based on two or more years of study at the tertiary level and it was noted in the report from Finland that higher level secretarial qualifications in Finland are rewarded by higher salaries. Another dimension of professionalism is the development and strengthening of professional associations (see 7.3.3 below).

7.2 Secretarial work - a marginalised occupation with contingency status

The following reasons have been put forward to explain the particular difficulties facing women in secretarial work in achieving recognition of their contribution in the workplace

- a) Secretaries frequently work on a one to one basis with their employer and/or have little contact with other secretaries. This makes it difficult to organize to defend the employment interests of secretaries and also makes job comparisons difficult.
- b) Secretaries' status is traditionally 'contingent' upon the status of her employer/boss. This creates difficulties if, for example, a secretary tries to claim a grading superior to that of her boss. The continuing centrality of the support function in secretarial work creates a problem for the grading of secretarial work independently of the grade of a secretary's employer/boss.
- c) In some countries, a minority of secretaries are women with family responsibilities, in others, eg France, Denmark, a majority have children. These women are likely to find it extremely

difficult if not impossible to participate actively in employee organisations or even in professional organisations. Such activities are only likely to be possible if paid working time is allowed for such activities by employers. This practice is the exception rather than the rule in OECD countries

- d) The secretary's role is diffuse and varied. The levels of skill deployed are much less visible than in other service sector and manufacturing jobs. This makes job evaluation more difficult (combined with a) and b) above.

7.3 Main agencies and types of action which have contributed to improvements in the employment, conditions and earnings of secretaries

7.3.1 *Achievements as a result of government legislation and the case of the public sector*

Countries in which legislation has been passed and implemented nationally to improve the conditions of working life and promote further education and training can report considerable benefits for women employees. Finland offers a particular example of a country where over two thirds of all women work - mostly full-time - and where the need to combine work and family responsibilities has been largely met by the introduction of family policy measures (nursery and pre-school provision, family leave, employment protection etc.). While in all countries included here provision is made for pregnant employees to benefit from a period of paid maternity leave, the duration of leave varies from country to country. If the period of maternity leave is too short and child care facilities unavailable or too costly, women employees will be discouraged from returning to work after the birth of a child and suffer damaging career gaps.

Publicly-subsidised care facilities both for children and for care- dependent adults are particularly important for women clerical and secretarial workers whose earnings are not usually sufficient to cover the cost of unsubsidised care. It should also be noted that because female secretaries are not concentrated among a small number of employers who are dependent on their services, they are far less likely to be provided with employer- subsidised child care than other female workers - for example nurses. In many but not all of the countries surveyed here subsidised child care is universally available for working parents.

Parental leave can make an important contribution to easing the burden on young working parents and to helping to spread more equally the damage caused to careers by a career break. Parental leave is available in all the OECD countries surveyed here (OECD 1995). However, there is very great variability in the conditions of leave. In the United States no benefit is payable and leave is granted at the employer's discretion. Eligibility rules vary - the United Kingdom is the only country which restricts parental leave to women. Most schemes require 6-12 months continuous employment with the same employer. Greater job insecurity and more self- employment could lead to a number of workers becoming ineligible. This might affect women in particular. On the other hand, eligibility rules can be interpreted as an incentive to women to develop an attachment to the labour market before the birth of a first child.

The rapid expansion of women's employment stands in symbiotic relation to the development of the Finnish welfare state, which offered women new places to work, and women's work was needed in the public sector. As women's employment is seen as their self-evident right in Finland, the development of public family policy started from the idea that services must be organised because women are in the labour market. Whereas in other Nordic countries emphasis is placed on enabling mothers to combine wage labour and family, for instance, through part-time work, the Finnish practice has been to develop family policy. Today Finland has a comprehensive system of maternal (105 days), paternal (6-18 days) and parental leave (158 days to be used either by the mother or by the father). During this leave the parent receives an allowance which is on average 66% of her/his income.

Kolehmainen-Lindèn S. (1997) *Case Study of Secretaries in Finland*

Where a government is committed to improving working conditions and career prospects for women, we can expect to see these principles promoted within the public sector. A number of reports describe actions taken on behalf of women secretaries and clerical workers employed in the public sector either by central government or local government agencies. Although we do not have a full picture, it appears that a substantial number of all secretaries - between one quarter and one third - work in the public sector. It is recognised that the setting up and maintenance of active and effective employee organisations is facilitated by the ethos and organisation of public sector employment. However, in Section 8 below, in which possible developments in the demand for secretarial skills in the next decade are set out, it is pointed out that the pressures to reduce or keep the tax burden constant are likely to lead to greater constraints on the public sector in the future. The franchising of public sector activities to privately-run companies is widespread in the Anglo-Saxon countries and may well spread to other OECD countries as pressures to cut costs and improve efficiency increase.

While recognising that much has been done in the public sector in the past to provide skills upgrading, bridge-building to other occupations and other forms of career enhancement for female secretaries, it would be wrong to suggest that there is a likelihood of more women being able to benefit from action of this sort in the future. It seems likely that public sector employment will diminish in importance in the future and that the number of female secretaries working in the private sector will increase.

While programmes and initiatives of the upgrading or bridge-building type may offer a model and many useful lessons for other employers, it is not easy to believe that, in the current climate of down-sizing and cost-containment, it will be easy to persuade private sector employers to implement such programmes although some initiatives can be observed. Strong employee organisation and professional associations may be needed to introduce new working practices etc. into the private sector.

Depuis juin 1995, l'Union de Banque Suisse de Winterthur a mis en place un concept permettant aux femmes de reprendre leur activité professionnelle. Pour ce faire, la banque et les collaboratrices s'engagent par contrat à salaire horaire à assurer une activité minimale de 5% du temps de travail annuel. L'entreprise vise à maîtriser des surcharges sporadiques de travail tout en ne perdant pas définitivement une main-d'oeuvre qualifiée. Les collaborateurs/collaboratrices qui profitent de cette possibilité peuvent contrecarrer l'inévitable déperdition de leurs capacités pendant une interruption du parcours professionnel en travaillant encore sporadiquement pour l'entreprise et en suivant les cours de formation continue organisés par la banque.

Curti M. (1996) *Analyse des professions à prédominance féminine. Etude de cas : les métiers de bureau en Suisse*

7.3.2 What employee organisations can do.

The level of unionization of secretaries appears to be generally rather low with a few exceptions, notably Denmark and the Netherlands. Public sector tertiary employees of all types are likely to be union members while those in the private sector in clerical and secretarial positions are less likely to be members of a union. Even where there is a high level of unionization in both sectors, the example of Denmark shows that it is more difficult to make gains for clerical workers in the private sector. The isolation of the secretary in the company, her highly dispersed responsibilities and her identification with the work of a manager or group of managers rather than with a group of fellow employees make it particularly difficult for secretaries to organize in the work place.

In countries with strong and effective trade unions which are recognised as partners in the workplace, unions can have an important role to play in helping to win recognition for the skills and increased levels of productivity achieved by secretaries. Unions can also negotiate with employers to put in place agreements on flexible working hours which can be of benefit to employees with care responsibilities. Unions can also press for vocational training access to be included in collective agreements. Where unions represent large bodies of office employees they can also make an input into the planning and development of initial education and training for office employees in general and secretaries in particular. Agreements on flexible working hours have been introduced for Federal employees in the United States. In Denmark, the HK union is investigating the development of home-working in order to evaluate the likely effects upon union members. In Finland, where there is a high degree of unionization, employees are organized by industry and sector. Because secretaries are working in every sector of economic activity, they are not represented by one occupationally-based union. This is a disadvantage of the wide spread of the secretarial occupation throughout the economy and illustrates the particular challenge to employee organisations presented by the secretarial occupation. At present, only a minority of OECD countries have strong and forward-looking union movements.

HK already has representatives in trade committees and the union thus has a significant influence on the contents and the quality of the basic education. Via sector-specific continuing vocational training courses and representation in the Vocational Training Committee for the commerce and clerical area (who are in charge of the HE-courses) HK seeks to secure an upgrading of their members. The sector-specific courses may furthermore make the individual secretarial sector more visible. They may also help conceptualise the individual qualifications and thereby be a stepping stone on the way towards a higher recognition of these qualifications in the form of higher wages. In the future HK want to be the guarantor of a highly qualified group of members.

HK therefore sees it as one of their most important roles in the future to encourage their members to participate regularly in vocational training; the local branches already offer the members individual advice on continuing vocational training. This initiative is based on the belief that participation in vocational training courses may induce in the member the confidence needed if the member is to strive for promotion.

Sprog & Service (1996) *A Study of Clerical and Secretarial Occupations in Denmark*.

An obstacle to the career development of secretaries particularly identified in Denmark and Switzerland is the apparent lack of ambition and lack of a coherent career plan of many young women having a basic secretarial qualification. In Switzerland, a professional association has issued a booklet with advice on career planning. Other measures are being supported by the Office Federal de l'Industrie, des Arts et Metiers du Travail (OFIAMT). In Denmark, the trade union HK provides continuing vocational training courses for members of the union in both the public and the private sector. Courses for employees in the private sector often take place in the evening or at week ends as these employees are less likely to be released during working time. However, the Danish report also identifies the lower take up of continuing education and training by women in secretarial occupations compared to men. The Danish report sees the building in to collective agreements of the right to vocational training as a way of overcoming this inequality in take-up of continuing education opportunities

7.3.3 What professional associations can do. The development of employer awareness of the secretarial role and of job and skills evaluation techniques

A number of sources of evidence in England suggest that English employers have little understanding of the secretarial qualifications on offer. The report for England stresses the need for employers to develop 'more clarity about skills requirements'. This would serve to provide clearer information for secretaries on the skills needed to progress within the organisation. At present, it is claimed, suitability for promotion is based largely on a person's experience.

The Federal government in the United States has supported the development of an automated system called Career Counselor based on 67 clerical/technical occupations and which allows the user to view the tasks and competencies critical for job performance in each of the occupations. The United States report states that there is considerable mobility out of clerical occupations in both the public and the private sector.

In France, it is expected that the current difficult business climate will induce more companies to draw up more detailed job evaluations for secretaries. This will be particularly useful as a guide for the

provision of upgrading courses when secretaries with low level qualifications need upgrading to meet new challenges.

The report for the Netherlands describes two initiatives to try to set out detailed job descriptions for secretaries graded by level of responsibility. One of these initiatives was promoted by a trade union, the other by a group of professional associations. In both cases, the aim was to set out more clearly the range and different levels of skill of the secretarial occupation as a starting point for wage bargaining or demands for greater professional recognition.

In France, professional associations of secretaries have long existed but largely as a forum for meeting and discussion. Recently, however, a national association has been set up with the aim of developing better understanding of secretarial work and associated skills and to encourage and foresee development of the occupation. It now seems likely that, for the first time, secretaries will be represented by their National Professional Association in France on the Committee of the Ministry of Education which advises on the curriculum of secretarial qualifications offered in schools.

In England, it was felt that increasing use by employers of an annual appraisal procedure for all employees could lead to better definition and recognition of secretaries' skills. An interesting example is given of innovative organisational structures which encourage secretaries to learn higher level skills by being promoted to a 'professional growth level' of eg senior secretary. Similar measures were described in the United States Report.

7.3.4 What women can do. Improvements in the educational level of secretaries and improving opportunities for the upgrading of skills.

The previous paragraphs on the activities of professional associations and of employee organisations show what can be achieved by association and collective action. Acting on an individual level, women are more restricted in what they can do to improve their working conditions and career prospects.

The main area in which individual action is possible is education, training and updating.

Many of the trends and variables investigated in this study occur in all or almost all the countries surveyed e.g. female occupational concentration, the balance between part-time and full-time working, changes in the nature and range of secretarial tasks. Yet despite these indicators of convergence there are still striking differences in the qualification levels and types of qualifications held by secretaries in different OECD countries. Basically, three models can be identified as characterising the training and education received by the majority of the workforce in post in the 1990s. First, short compulsory general education plus specialised secretarial skills training (United Kingdom, United States) second, 'long' professional education and training (compulsory education plus 2, 3 or 4 years) including general education (Netherlands, France, Finland, Denmark) and, third, compulsory education plus apprenticeship (Germany, Switzerland).

Given what we know about changes in the secretary's role and responsibilities during the last ten years and the direction of future developments, most commentators consider that the 'Anglo-Saxon' model of low-level education plus specialized skill training no longer fits young women to take full advantage of the opportunities now on offer in secretarial occupations. In France, where the upgrading of secretarial qualifications is most advanced, young people with low level qualifications which were formerly acceptable on the labour market, are already effectively excluded from secretarial jobs. The trend may be

more difficult to detect in Anglo-Saxon countries with less transparent qualification structures, nevertheless, there too, clear signs are reported of employers seeking graduate level candidates when recruiting new secretaries.

Efforts to promote greater transparency concerning the skills/qualifications needed for future secretarial employment and for promotion and mobility have already been mentioned. These need to be a primary focus of efforts to improve the status and remuneration of secretaries.

Better guidance and careers advice is also needed in those countries where the production of qualifications remains predominantly at a low level in order to avoid young people investing in a level of education and training which will no longer be appropriate for secretarial work in the decades to come. Three additional reasons can be adduced for encouraging young women to attain higher level professional qualifications before entering secretarial work. First, as most of the reports assert, career progression within the secretarial field is likely to be facilitated by higher level qualifications. Second, women holding higher level qualifications are more likely to receive additional training while in employment. Third, the uncertainty that is currently reported concerning the future role of the secretary and, indeed, the whole future of the occupation as we know it argues for a qualification which allows its holder to switch to other occupations after a brief period of retraining. It is well-accepted that such retraining is greatly facilitated by a level of education equivalent to at least university entrance level.

As far as actions that can be taken by individual women to improve their skills, the main avenue appears to be that of taking advantage of the free provision of higher level professional education and training that is widely on offer in OECD countries in order to enter secretarial work at a higher level. The upgrading of initial qualification levels should also lead to higher returns on subsequent investment in the upgrading of skills, either by individuals or by employers.

The French report raises the question of whether a further higher level secretarial qualification would be justified. The possibility that such a qualification would be used by employers mainly as a screening device rather than add real value to performance is one danger, the other is its effect on already existing qualifications in a highly competitive labour market. It has already been noted that in some Anglo-Saxon countries, notably the United Kingdom, graduate secretaries are increasingly common. In the United Kingdom it can be argued that this trend arises from the artificially low costs of university level education in the United Kingdom rather than from a specific need for graduates as opposed to women with a sound upper secondary professional education.

7.3.5 How the introduction and implementation of publicly-funded measures to upgrade the skills of the workforce can be adapted to benefit women secretaries

The familiar arguments of Becker concerning the respective interests of employers and employees in investment in training do not need to be repeated here. Building on Becker's theory, there are, however, well-rehearsed arguments for the social returns that could be expected to arise from government incentives to the work force to invest in their own skills upgrading. While this is currently the case for those out of employment, the extension of the availability of education and training to all adults free at point of use is a powerful way of providing incentives to individuals to invest in their own skills. There is evidence from the surveys that women secretaries do greatly benefit from such provision where it is available.

Benefits are particularly great where government encourages and part-subsidises companies to release their employees during working hours to attend updating courses. This is the case in Denmark for

employees classified as unskilled or low-skilled. If access to updating is not provided during working hours, the constraints of family responsibilities apply equally to the take-up of publicly provided courses free at point of use. Difficulties of travel, work overload and child care problems often all combine to prevent women taking advantage of such opportunities. More imaginative ways of creating access to such training opportunities need to be experimented with. Multimedia CD Rom, courses provided on public broadcasting networks, and other forms of IT assisted distance learning processes could all be of particular benefit to women who have difficulties attending conventional courses of study.

SECTION 8 THE FUTURE OF SECRETARIAL OCCUPATIONS, FUTURE TRENDS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The future of secretarial occupations

The future of secretarial occupations will be determined by a mix of technological, organisational and political developments.

8.1.1 Technology

Women working in secretarial occupations will need to be prepared for further technical change to affect their working lives. However, it seems accepted that the period of most revolutionary change, the initial electronic revolution has now passed. The secretary has emerged in many countries with an enhanced role based upon more independent work (letter writing, research and information co-ordination) and fewer routine tasks. There are now widespread opportunities for the secretary to consolidate a new dimension to her work, that of office IT consultant or office IT manager.

As discussed earlier, secretaries in our sample organisations are normally expected to be familiar with a range of computer applications. However, our findings also suggest that they are increasingly expected to become 'experts' in some computer graphics applications. These include desktop publishing, word-processing packages, spreadsheets and databases...Secretaries' increased IT expertise means that in some cases they are expected to contribute to the organisation's IT policy. [Their] considerable experience of a number of computer applications means that in many organisations they are assuming an important role as IT trainers and internal 'IT help desks', assisting managers, professionals and other secretarial staff.

Giles L., La Valle I. and Perryman S. (1996) *A new deal for Secretaries?*

Over the next decade, advances in speech recognition and microelectronic technology can be expected to routinely permit the production of text directly from speech without the need to key in individual characters using a keyboard. This change will not signal the end of the keyboard, since editing and formatting will still be important tasks best undertaken using the keyboard. In view of the fact that secretaries now spend only small amounts of time copying text onto disc using a keyboard as opposed to using the keyboard for independent tasks, it is not expected that the development of speech recognition technology will have a major impact on the secretarial role.

Two further technological developments are now beginning to affect secretarial work. The first of these is the development of multi-media forms of communication. Secretaries can expect to be required to master the technology to produce a communication on CD ROM integrating video clips, interviews and paper-based information. The second of these is the development of the Internet. In small and medium-sized firms in particular, secretaries will be expected to master the skills of creating and updating a home page as well as using the Internet as an additional tool for research and information retrieval. Increased

Internet use will increase the already high demand for secretaries to acquire good foreign-language skills - principally English.

The need for continuing learning will be as great if not greater than in the past and the effects of career gaps/periods out of the workforce will probably be even more damaging to secretarial careers than at present. Communications will continue to become more flexible and information sources will continue to multiply. Secretaries will be expected to master the new communication and information sources and to be pro-active in devising innovative and cost-effective ways of using them.

8.1.2 Work organisation

It also seems highly likely that in OECD countries the business climate will become even more competitive with continuing pressure on businesses to cut costs by restructuring.

Because of the public's increasing reluctance to fund higher government spending, public sector employment in many OECD countries is likely to be subjected to similar processes. The evidence presented in the country reports does not, on the whole, show very much growth in secretarial employment over the last five or six years. It cannot be assumed that secretarial employment will expand or even remain at its present level.

Another trend that seems set to stay and likely to intensify in the future is the new-found power of the consumer of products and services, both public and private. In Section 4 above, this power was identified as producing a greater demand for the 'soft' skills of communication and management of interpersonal relations. These skills are now recognised as an important dimension of the secretary's qualification and are not likely to diminish in the future.

8.2 Possible future scenarios

The report on England sketches two possible future scenarios for secretarial employment. One view is that in the future most traditional secretarial functions will disappear or be taken over by other groups of staff. The prediction is that 'in the future, the secretarial occupation will be reduced to a small number of people at the two extremes of the occupational structure'. Opposing this view are those who argue that 'there will always be the need for staff to provide secretarial and clerical support' but that higher skill levels will be required in all areas of secretarial work. The result will be higher entry requirements.

The expert group is firmly of the view that the second scenario described above is most likely to prevail. Earlier in this report it was pointed out that the secretary carries out routine and non-routine tasks that would otherwise devolve upon a manager or other employee. By so doing, the secretary ensures that their time is spent on more productive tasks. New technology will extend the range of tasks that can be delegated to a secretary, in future, she will take a more pro-active role in identifying these tasks and working out ways in which she could extend her range of action. In this way, an efficient use of labour is developed which is cost-effective for the organisation. As long as the secretary is able to substitute for part of the manager's work at lower cost, we can conclude that the secretary will have an important role to play in any organisation of the future. However, she may need to demonstrate her value to the organisation more visibly than before by being innovative and pro-active in grasping the opportunities and cost savings offered by new technology, by being highly flexible in the range of tasks that she performs and by being educated to a higher level than in the past. It is likely (and desirable) that her job title will change to reflect the fact that she is likely to provide services for a number of managers. The report on England suggests the job title 'team administrator', the Danish, 'case officer' the United States

report gives a wide range of new job titles e.g. executive secretary, administrative assistant, co-ordinator etc.

The report from Italy foresees opportunities for women to become highly-skilled users of new technology through training courses provided from public funds and to operate as co-operatives providing services to businesses. This raises the difficult question of how important it is for a secretary to be office-based. Many single administrative functions can now be carried out in a variety of locations, including the home, if the technology and the data links can be provided. For example, telephone banking employees who provide a seven-day a week 24 hour service can work from home. Administrators can arrange to work part of their time at home because their work can be planned in advance. The secretary may be different. She is, among other things, both team anchor and crisis manager, the one who holds the team together when the boss is away or when emergencies arise.

It is not easy to envisage services provided distant from a business's premises by a group which services a number of companies being able to provide these 'anchor' and 'emergency' services that the secretary currently provides. However, there may be scope for the development of certain specialised services (text production, research, DTP) to be provided centrally by groups of secretaries in response to the needs of small and medium-sized businesses.

8.3 Conclusions

In the introduction to this study, we set out four questions which the study would explore and seek to respond to. Inevitably, there is much that we still do not fully understand about the factors shaping the development of the secretarial role and about the way technology might affect it in the future. Not enough is known about the extent, nature and quality of employer-provided updating and retraining offered to secretaries. Information on mobility and flexible working is also scarce. In particular, more research is needed on the new career routes opening up for secretaries in IT management and Desk Top Publishing and the prior qualifications and experience required. One of the aims of this report is, therefore, to highlight the main challenges to the future of the occupation and to raise new questions and areas of research for the future of women's occupations and careers.

In this brief concluding section, the questions asked at the beginning of the study are again set out, followed by the responses that the study has been able to bring to these issues.

1. Over the last decade, how have women in secretarial occupations reacted to the impact of profound technological and organisational change?
2. Has women's comparative advantage in this occupation been weakened or strengthened as a result of these changes?
3. Over the last decade, have secretaries shared fully in the increased productivity made possible by new microelectronic technology? Are improvements in the working conditions, status, pay and career prospect of women secretaries evident?
4. What are the routes by which women can bring about or speed up such improvements; what is the contribution that the social partners can make to this process?

Responses From the Expert Studies

1. The secretarial occupation has been one of the occupations most strongly affected by the development of information technology. As a consequence, change and growth in the secretarial role has been profound during the last ten years. The **services** the **secretary** provides are **increasingly valuable** as a result of the enhancement of her skills and the opportunities for innovation offered by new technology.
2. The growth of the service sector and competitive pressures on employers in all sectors to compete on 'customer service' has led to a greater demand for what are called '**soft skills**' or '**people skills**'. Secretaries have therefore been required to respond to demands from employers for higher levels of 'people skills' in response to these wider competitive pressures within all sectors, including the public sector. Women are widely perceived as having a capacity to develop such skills and there is strong evidence to show that these are highly valued by employers. The job title of 'secretary' is widely perceived to indicate a relatively unskilled and low status position which is inappropriate in the light of these changes. New job titles, for example '**team administrator**' and '**team facilitator**' are emerging. If widely adopted, these could do much to improve the secretary's self-image and her image in the eyes of others.
3. The fundamental change in the secretary's role and contribution to the organisation have not been well-documented or recognised by employers. Much good secretarial practice is 'invisible' except when left undone or badly done. As a consequence, **recognition** that a secretary is doing her job well is often more **difficult to achieve** than in other occupations and we conclude that this is one of the causes of the failure of secretaries' earnings to keep pace with those of other comparable groups.
4. Action is needed to ensure that employers understand the range of tasks and services that the secretary performs and the nature of her contribution to the organisation. Clear **descriptions of the skills required** at different levels of secretarial work can then form the basis for salary negotiations promotion and career and skill development. There are examples of some large employers initiating such action, and appraisal systems may also offer the opportunity for better job descriptions to be established. However, **employee organisations**, perhaps working in conjunction with **professional associations**, are the most likely to be able to bring about such change. Ways need to be found of encouraging their development and growth.
5. **Clear career routes** for secretaries and national agreement on a transparent and coherent set of **high-level (tertiary level) qualifications** for secretarial work could assist in the process of improving understanding of the secretary's contribution and role. There is evidence that where such qualifications exist and are taken by a substantial proportion of young women, holders take on a wider range of tasks and greater responsibility than in countries where low-level qualifications are the norm. The continuing development of the content of secretarial work to incorporate greater autonomy, responsibility and specialized skills should also be a policy objective capable of raising the status and increasing the bargaining power of secretaries in the workplace.
6. While low-level secretarial qualifications will continue to be offered, **careers guidance** should make clear to young women that such qualifications are unlikely to be sufficient for a secretarial career in the way they have been in the past. **Career planning** services are also important to show those in post the range of career possibilities available. Older women secretaries who are often valued by employers for their experience and skills acquired on-the-job should be given the opportunity to have their skills certificated through the **Accreditation of Prior Learning**. Such action would contribute to increasing recognition of secretaries' skills.

7. The future expansion of secretarial work is uncertain. Women secretaries do not appear to face increased competition from men but the occupation has not grown in recent years and supply has probably exceeded demand. Greater pressure on companies and the public sector to cut costs could lead to some routine secretarial functions being reallocated to other administrative employees. There seems no doubt that the secretarial occupation will survive. However, the secretary will increasingly take on tasks formerly carried out by junior managers and the **skills required** will be significantly **higher than in the past**.
8. Career development and mobility in secretarial work is still difficult because of the nature of secretarial work. It is important that women preparing to work in secretarial occupations should acquire a high level of education and training and the opportunity for **frequent technical updating** once in employment. This is essential to enable them to develop their skills to keep up with the continuing pace of technological change and to retrain in a relatively short time if the need arises.
9. Because secretarial work is so heavily affected by technological change, periods out of the work force constitute a **serious loss of skill** for the women concerned. Not only do they lose their facility with current technology but they also lose out on the opportunity to become familiar with technological change. This puts them at a disadvantage when seeking to return to the labour market. As women frequently have caring responsibilities, spells out of the labour force can often only be prevented by access to care facilities, or the sharing of responsibility with a partner or relative. Secretaries' **pay levels are insufficient** to allow them to pay the **full-cost of child care** and they are less likely than women in other female-dominated professions to have access to employer-provided care.
10. Solutions to these issues have to involve the concerted action of those in the workplace and also those responsible for the wider social framework. A first step can be an initiative to raise public awareness of the importance of the family as a caring institution, not just for children but for the chronically sick and the elderly and of the need for **family-friendly policies** that offer a wide range of **opportunities for women and men**.
11. Access to **affordable and relevant education and training** resources is essential to enable women to acquire new skills and to update their secretarial skills in line with new technology and new organisational requirements. The opportunities offered by new communication technologies e.g. the Internet, interactive CD ROM allow flexible and cost-effective provision of training and updating in the home and workplace. A debate needs to be initiated about how best to provide the necessary infrastructure and investment.
12. Women's opportunities in later life are still being limited by a **poverty of aspiration** in their early years. Women's organisations, schools, colleges and universities are the vehicles that should be used to mount a campaign to persuade women to make the maximum investment possible in education and training provided for young people and to reflect upon the development of work and jobs and their likely career demands at an early age.

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**APPENDIX ONE: CHANGE IN LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION IN OECD COUNTRIES
1973-1995**

Table 1: Active Population as a Proportion of Total Population of Working Age

	1973	1979	1983	1993	1994	1995b
Australia	69.8	69.2	69.3a	73.7	74.2	75.4
Canada	66.7	73.4	75.3	75.1	75.2	74.8
Denmark	75.9(a)	79.8	80.9	82.6	79.1	78.7
Finland	71.7(a)	75.5	77.4	73.9	73.5	73.9
France	67.8	68.4	66.4	66.7	67.3	67.3
Germany	69.4	68.3	67.5a	71.7	71.5	71.0
Italy	58.7	60.2	60.1	58.9	59.3	59.6
Netherlands	57.6	56.5(a)	59.0(a)	67.5	68.4	68.8
Norway	68.7	75.6	76.5	76.5	76.9	77.8
Switzerland	77.7	73.8	74.5	83.4	82.6	81.9
United Kingdom	73.0	74.3	72.4	74.7	74.2	73.8
United States	68.4	72.1	73.2	76.8(a)	77.9	77.8

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, July 1996.

a) discontinuity in series after this date.

b) estimates.

Table 2: Active Males as a Proportion of all Males of Working Age

	1973	1979	1983	1993	1994	1995(b)
Australia	91.1	87.6	85.9(a)	85.0	84.9	85.6
Canada	86.1	89.4	88.5	82.4	82.6	81.8
Denmark	89.6(a)	89.6	87.6	86.9	84.2	-
Finland	80.8(a)	82.2	82.0	77.6	77.1	77.5
France	85.2	82.6	78.4	74.5	75.0	74.8
Germany	89.6	84.9	82.6a	81.2	80.8	80.3
Italy	85.1	82.6	80.7	74.8	75.7	75.5
Netherlands	85.6	79.0(a)	77.3(a)	78.7	79.1	79.1
Norway	86.5	89.2	87.2	82.0	82.3	83.0
Switzerland	100.0	94.6	93.5	99.0	97.5	97.6
United Kingdom	93.0	90.5	87.5	84.0	83.0	82.1
United States	86.2	85.7	84.7	84.7(a)	85.3	85.0

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, July 1996.

a) discontinuity in series after this date.

b) estimates.

Table 3: Active Females as a Proportion of all Females of Working Age

	1973	1979	1983	1993	1994	1995(b)
Australia	47.7	50.3	52.1a	62.3	63.2	65.0
Canada	47.2	57.4	62.2	67.7	67.8	67.6
Denmark	61.9a	69.9	74.2	78.3	73.8	-
Finland	63.6(a)	68.9	72.7	70.0	69.9	70.2
France	50.1	54.2	54.3	59.0	59.5	60.0
Germany	50.3	52.2	52.5(a)	61.8	61.8	61.3
Italy	33.7	38.7	40.3	43.3	43.2	43.6
Netherlands	29.2	33.4(a)	40.3a	56.0	57.4	58.9
Norway	50.6	61.7	65.5	70.8	71.3	72.4
Switzerland	54.1	53.0	55.2	67.6	67.5	67.0
United Kingdom	53.2	58.0	57.2	65.3	65.4	65.4
United States	51.1	58.9	61.9	69.0(a)	70.5	70.7

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, July 1996.

a) discontinuity in series after this date.

b) estimates.

Table 4a: Proportion of Active Males in Full-Time Employment

	1973	1979	1983	1993	1994	1995
Australia	95.0	90.2	84.6	79.4	80.2	81.1
Canada	90.6	87.4	80.4	78.7	79.7	80.7
Denmark	-	90.8	83.4	78.9	80.1	80.6
Finland	-	90.8	90.2	75.5	75.5	78.0
France	96.7	93.6	91.4	86.5	85.2	85.2
Germany	97.4	96.0	91.1	90.2	89.8	89.6
Italy	92.4	92.3	91.5	90.1	88.4	88.1
Netherlands	-	90.0	83.2(a)	79.6	78.0	77.8
Norway	90.5	88.0	85.7(a)	84.3	85.1	86.0
Switzerland	-	-	-	87.3	88.5	87.8
United Kingdom	94.9	92.7	83.8	80.4	81.2	82.1
United States	87.7	86.5	80.6	82.8(a)	83.1	84.1

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, July 1996; OECD Quarterly Labour Statistics, various issues.

a) discontinuity in series after this date.

Table 4b: Proportion of Active Males in Part-Time Employment

	1973	1979	1983	1993	1994	1995
Australia	3.7	5.0	5.6	9.1	9.8	10.1
Canada	4.5	6.1	7.7	9.7	9.6	9.6
Denmark	-	5.0	5.9	9.8	8.9	9.4
Finland	-	3.0	4.2	5.0	5.0	4.7
France	1.7	2.3	2.3	3.7	4.1	4.5
Germany	1.8	1.5	1.6	2.7	3.0	3.3
Italy	3.5	2.9	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.6
Netherlands	-	5.2	6.2(a)	14.4	15.0	15.7
Norway	8.5	10.4	11.1(a)	9.1	8.9	8.9
Switzerland	-	-	-	8.2	8.3	8.3
United Kingdom	2.2	1.8	2.9	5.7	6.2	6.9
United States	8.3	8.6	9.8	10.2(a)	10.8	10.4

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, July 1996; OECD Quarterly Labour Statistics, various issues.

a) discontinuity in series after this date.

Table 4c: Proportion of Active Females in Full-Time Employment

	1973	1979	1983	1993	1994	1995
Australia	69.9	59.8	57.3	51.9	52.0	52.5
Canada	75.2	68.2	63.6	63.7	64.4	65.2
Denmark	-	49.2	48.5	54.0	56.7	56.9
Finland	-	84.5	83.0	75.0	74.0	73.9
France	83.1	75.9	71.0	63.5	61.6	60.2
Germany	74.7	69.3	63.8	62.8	60.3	59.7
Italy	76.2	77.7	76.7	76.0	73.7	72.5
Netherlands	-	52.2	42.7(a)	32.9	31.2	30.1
Norway	50.9	47.2	43.4(a)	49.7	51.0	50.9
Switzerland	-	-	-	43.6	42.7	43.1
United Kingdom	60.4	59.0	53.0	53.1	52.9	53.3
United States	68.8	68.3	65.3	69.7(a)	68.0	68.5

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, July 1996; OECD Quarterly Labour Statistics, various issues.

a) discontinuity in series after this date.

Table 4d: Proportion of Active Females in Part-Time Employment

	1973	1979	1983	1993	1994	1995
Australia	27.4	32.5	32.8	38.0	38.6	39.2
Canada	18.1	23.1	24.8	25.7	25.8	25.6
Denmark	-	42.5	39.2	32.3	29.7	31.3
Finland	-	10.0	11.9	9.4	9.3	9.4
France	12.3	15.6	17.8	22.6	23.7	24.4
Germany	24.1	26.4	27.4	29.5	29.8	30.5
Italy	12.4	9.2	8.0	9.4	10.4	10.6
Netherlands	-	41.1	43.3(a)	58.0	60.5	61.7
Norway	46.7	50.5	52.8(a)	45.1	44.3	44.5
Switzerland	-	-	-	51.4	52.8	52.1
United Kingdom	38.7	37.7	39.0	41.5	42.2	42.4
United States	25.2	24.9	25.5	23.8(a)	26.0	25.9

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, July 1996; OECD Quarterly Labour Statistics, various issues.
a discontinuity in series after this date.

**APPENDIX TWO: NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS AND
OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES USED IN THE COUNTRY STUDIES(1)**

COUNTRY	OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM OR OFFICIAL SOURCE USED	OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES USED
Denmark		The report is based upon records of the members of the Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees (HK). The majority of clerical employees are enrolled in HK. The report concentrates on HK members from two of the five sectors HK Kommunal (Municipal authorities) and HK Service(private sector). These cover 71,796 and 95,560 employees respectively.
Finland	Central Statistical Office of Finland Classification of occupations 1980, 1985 1989	1 Administrative, managerial and clerical work 13 Secretarial and typing work 130 Secretaries 131 Typists and stenographers
France	Enquête-Emploi (Labour Force Survey)	5411 Secretaries 4615 Executive secretaries 5412 Typists, shorthand typists 5415 Data input and computer operators 5417 Telephone operators 5424 Clerical workers (various) private sector
Netherlands	Statistics Netherlands Classification of Occupations	321 Secretaries, teletypists and typists (share of secretaries in 321 estimated)
Switzerland	Federal Census 1990 Enquête suisse sur la population active (ESPA)	332.01 Employés de commerce et professions de bureau 680 Employés de commerce 681 Employés de bureau 682 Autres personnels de bureau

United Kingdom	Labour Force Survey Standard Occupational Classification 1990	45 Secretaries, personal assistants, typists and word processor operators 49 Clerical workers
United States		The report is based on data for Federal secretaries ie secretaries employed by the United States government numbering 102,231 out of a total secretarial employment for the United States of 3,397,000 in 1994

Note: (1) The report for Italy did not contain an analysis of national statistics

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