

Unemployment Higher Among Educated

Educated women, holding high school diplomas and higher, account for 88.7 percent of the total unemployed women in urban areas and 59.4 percent in rural parts. As reported by SYNA, a senior expert with the Management and Planning Organization, Ladan Norouzi, said the unemployment rate among women was 1.5 times higher than that of men in 2001, adding the figure was reported at 40 percent for the 15-24

age group. She stated that women's unemployment period is usually longer than men's. "Not being risk-takers, women tend to stay longer in their jobs compared to men." According to Norouzi, unemployment is basically the concern of educated women both in rural and urban areas. "Unemployment rate among women graduates is more than double the figure among the corresponding group of men," she stated. "Despite a substantial

rise in the number of women graduating from high schools and universities in recent years, their share of the total employed women has remained constant. This is because job demand among educated women has not grown in tandem with the employment opportunities made available to them." Norouzi says that a review of the facts and figures about women occupying top managerial positions indicates the obstacles they face in contributing to

socioeconomic affairs. "A document is being drafted on strategic solutions to cut unemployment. Once endorsed, it can help improve women's employment status," she stated. "The document is intended to transfer the costs pertaining to women employees from the employers to the government. These include the costs of nurseries or maternity leave. This is expected to encourage enterprises to recruit women personnel."

Center Signs 8 MoUs With State Bodies

Women Participation Center and governmental organizations have signed eight agreements this year to promote women's affairs, women.org.ir reported. Deputy head of the center in charge of planning, Reza Tofiqi, explained that the memoranda of understanding revolved around topics such as expanding cooperatives for graduate women and girls, training heads of women cooperatives on marketing and management strategies, marketing the products of cooperatives through seasonal and permanent exhibi-

tions and well as promoting job-generation schemes by rural women. "Promotion of cultural and artistic activities pertaining to women, providing libraries with specialized references on women, implementing special cultural and artistic programs and enriching women's leisure time have been considered in the schemes," he elaborated, adding there have also been agreements to promote women's access to sporting facilities across the nation. He put the funds allocated to the projects at 9.4 billion rials.

Celebrities

Susan Sontag

One of America's best-known and most admired writers, Susan Sontag was born in New York City in 1933, grew up in Tucson, Arizona, and attended high school in Los Angeles. She received her BA from the University of Chicago and did graduate work in philosophy, literature, and theology at Harvard University and Saint Anne's College, Oxford.



Her books, all published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, include four novels, *The Benefactor*, *Death Kit*, *The Volcano Lover*, and *In America*; a collection of short stories; several plays, including *Alice in Bed and Lady from the Sea*; and eight works of nonfiction, starting with *Against Interpretation* and including *On Photography*, *Illness as Metaphor*, *Where the Stress Falls*, and *Regarding the Pain of Others*.

Her stories and essays have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Art in America*, *Antaeus*, *Parnassus*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The Nation*, *Granta*, and many other magazines here and abroad. Her much anthologized story "The Way We Live Now" (1987) was chosen for inclusion in *The Best American Short Stories of the Eighties* and, more recently, in *The Best American Short Stories of the Century*.

Her books have been translated into thirty-two languages.

Sontag wrote and directed four feature-length films: *Duet for Cannibals* (1969) and *Brother Carl* (1971), both in Sweden; *Promised Lands* (1974), made in Israel during the war of October 1973; and *Unguided Tour* (1983), from her short story of the same name, made in Italy. Her play *Alice in Bed* has had many productions in the United States, Mexico, Germany, and Holland. A more recent play, *Lady from the Sea*, has been produced in Italy, France, Switzerland, and Korea.

Sontag also directed plays in the United States and Europe; her most recent theater work was a staging of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in the summer of 1993 in besieged Sarajevo, where she spent much of the time between early 1993 and 1996 and was made an honorary citizen of the city.

A human rights activist for more than two decades, Sontag served from 1987 to 1989 as president of the American Center of PEN, the international writers' organization dedicated to freedom of expression and the advancement of literature, from which platform she led a number of campaigns on behalf of persecuted and imprisoned writers.

Among Sontag's many honors are the 2003 Peace Prize of the German Book Trade, the 2003 Prince of Asturias Prize, the 2001 Jerusalem Prize, the National Book Award for In America (2000), and the National Book Critics Circle Award for *On Photography* (1978). In 1992, she received the Malaparte Prize in Italy, and in 1999, she was named a *Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French government (she had been named an Officer in the same order in 1984). Between 1990 and 1995, she was a MacArthur Fellow.

Sontag died at age 71 of leukemia in New York on Dec. 28, 2004, after 30 years of sporadic illness.

Saudis Demand Municipal Seats

Saudi women have called on the government to appoint women at the Saudi municipal councils, half of whose members will be elected, after Saudi women were banned from taking part in it, arabicnews.com reported.

Women rights activists wrote to the chairman of the general committee for municipal elections, Prince Mansour Bin Mutb,

demanding that women be admitted into the main municipal councils, according to an activist Hatoun al-Fasi.

China's Detective Agency Shut

China's first all-female detective agency has been closed following allegations it broke the law and overstepped the scope of its powers, an official at the center said.

The Women's Rights Protection Investigation Center was accused of "violating regulators procedures," an advisor at the center, surnamed Zhou, said.

The local government said that the center was not in compliance with the law, so we are now in cooperation with the local government," Zhou told AFP.

People had also complained to the local government about the center's efforts to catch cheating husbands, a local newspaper said. There have also been claims that it "intruded on marriage privacy" and charged excessive rates.

The center was open for less than a year and in November won approval to setup a similar outfit in Shanghai.

Tehran Department Employing Firefighters



Some 2,000 women have registered for employment in the Fire Department.

Managing director of Tehran Municipality's Fire Department said that about 2,000 women had registered for employment in the department, adding they were being screened for the position, ILNA reported.

Ahmad Ziaei noted that in the first phase, 275 nominees would be selected who would join the firefighting squad after training by the yearend (March 21).

He referred to strong philanthropic inclinations, physical fitness, being athletic and familiarity with medical emergency

services as the main criteria for selecting the applicants, adding, "The applicants should hold a BS in nursing or an associate degree in anesthesia, or a high school diploma in natural sciences."

He remarked, "This is going to be the first female firefighting squad. In case their role is accepted within the department and the society, their number will increase fourfold by next year."

Ziaei explained that women recruits would be provided with a separate canteen, sports hall, sleeping quarters and rest facilities. "Women firefighters will have cars equipped with first aid equipment as well as fire extinguishers," he said.

Hundreds of Non-Iranians Studying At Al-Zahra Society

Hundreds of women from 40 countries are studying in Al-Zahra Society, a seminary exclusively training women on religious sciences.

Representative of the society to the Women Social and Cultural Council, Beheshti, told IRNA, "Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution, women revealed a fervent enthusiasm in religious studies. Given the large number of non-Iranians who revealed an interest in religious courses, the

society established an International Department for Non-Iranian Women in 1987."

Beheshti explained that non-Iranian women would go through a Farsi course for a six-month period, after which they would be trained on reciting the Holy Qur'an and basic Islamic instructions. Women applicants are admitted into any of the courses on interpretation and Qur'anic sciences, jurisprudence, Arab literature, Islam history and philosophy.

Algerian Protection System Poor

Algerian women are being let down by the state and are victims of a culture of legal and economic discrimination, AFP quoted rights group Amnesty International as saying.

Amnesty said it had presented a report to the United Nations outlining what it described as "the Algerian government's failure to protect women against rape, beatings and widespread legal and economic discrimination."

The organization said its report emphasized the "continuing lack of thorough investigations into allegations of rape and other forms of sexual violence against women," as well as the "virtual non-existence of state care for



Algerian women are victims of legal and economic discrimination.

women survivors of sexual violence."

Amnesty also criticized the Algerian family code, which it said contained discriminatory provisions which had made violence against women easier and had legitimized discrimi-

nation. It highlighted "the existence of discriminatory laws such as the legal duty to obey the husband and the husband's prerogative of unilateral divorce with no duty to pay maintenance or provide housing."

The document stated that with many men simply disappearing, their wives suffered as the law denied them access to the pension, savings or property of their former partners.

The people who seem to do well are the ones who are open-minded and open to working with others in a multi-practice approach. Such an approach may include one or more of the following: physical therapy, massage, chiropractic, osteopathy, aerobic exercise, biofeedback and other relaxation therapies, behavioral therapy, acupuncture and nutritional therapy.

Getting a correct diagnosis and information on the syndrome goes a long way to help sufferers manage fibromyalgia.



A Qashqaei tribal woman in Fars province (Photo by Oshin D. Zakarian)

Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain disorder characterized by generalized muscle pain. Sufferers count about a half dozen "tender points" where pain is intense. These points are in the neck, shoulders, and the lower back, hips and legs. And fibromyalgia can be accompanied by a host of other wide-ranging conditions, ranging from irritable bowel syndrome to depression. Although people have suffered with it for a long time, fibromyalgia only got its name in the last decade. But because of the far-ranging and seemingly disparate symptoms, many physicians misdiagnose the condition as osteoarthritis,

depression or anxiety. Fibromyalgia is especially common in older women. About 3 percent of women have fibromyalgia at age 40; 7 percent by age 70. About 80 percent of those with fibromyalgia suffer from extreme fatigue and sleep disturbance, while irritable bowel syndrome plagues as many as 70 percent of sufferers. Other common problems, in addition to depression, include anxiety, headaches and cognitive problems. The medical community has only recently started to get a handle on fibromyalgia. In

1980s, a few specialists began developing treatments for the non-fatal condition, and in 1990, the American College of Rheumatology gave the syndrome its name.

While researchers have not proven what causes fibromyalgia, there are a number of theories. The leading theory is that fibromyalgia is caused by a dysregulation or imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain like serotonin, which helps ease physical pain. Some scientists believe an unidentified infectious agent, such as a virus, may trigger fibromyalgia in certain people. Extreme stress, injury and trauma are

also believed to trigger the syndrome.

What works for one fibromyalgia sufferer may not work for another, however, medication and exercise are known widely for helping manage the condition.

Like many fibromyalgia sufferers, one patient takes low-level doses of the antidepressant Elavil which helps her relax and break the cycles of disturbed sleep that exacerbate her pain.

Exercise is also critical to combating the symptoms of this condition. A patient finds that water exercises are particularly helpful. She also believes that meditation has helped her limit the