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**France**

# **Pensions: women on the front line, women in struggle!**

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Since the mobilizations against the proposed pension reform [1] took off on 19 January, women's groups, collectives and associations have been actively participating in the days of action, in explaining the implications of the reform, in taking many forms of action. The reform has particular implications for women. The proposals of the joint trade-union committee to step up the mobilization as from 7 March with the possibility that 8 March will be start of all-out strikes in different sectors puts the call for the feminist women's strike which is widely supported by women's organizations, trade unions and political parties in the centre of the projected mobilization. [2] [IVP]

## An unfair reform for women

The current system for calculating pensions is already unfavourable to women: while the wage gap between women and men is around 22% on average, the pension gap is over 40%! This phenomenon of widening income inequalities is largely linked to the incomplete, interrupted and time-consuming careers that many women have. They account for 80% of part-time jobs and much of parental leave taken to raise children.

The government itself acknowledges in a report that the reform will force women to work an extra seven months compared to an average of five for men because of the increase in the minimum statutory retirement age from 62 to 64.

About 20% of women are already obliged to work until 67 to avoid the discount [3], compared to about 10% of men. Increasing the number of years of contributions required for a full pension will mechanically increase the number of people obliged to work until 67, including a majority of women and all employees who are particularly affected by casualization and precarious jobs: immigrant workers, racialized people, LGBTIs...

The government plans to make additional proposals on family rights in 2024... the worst is to be feared!

As for hardship, its recognition is already lamentable in view of the consequences on health and life expectancy of the working conditions and working hours of a large number of employees, but it is even more poorly evaluated and taken into account for the most feminized jobs.

## Women mobilized against pension reform

Already in previous battles, the injustice aggravated by the changes in the calculation methods had been important arguments to convince against government reforms. The previous reform of 2019 (not implemented) was particularly violent from this point of view. Feminist associations, trade unions, ATTAC and in particular its Gender Commission have constantly denounced these consequences. The Rosies' performance made a lot of noise. [4]

Today, we are once again obliged to raise our voices on this subject. In the demonstrations, signs are flourishing denouncing the inequalities in pensions and the aggravation that the reform will bring if it passes. Specific leaflets, assemblies of the first concerned as feminist and/or LGBTI collectives, often in connection with the [Feminist](#)

[Coordination](#)... women and gender minorities are specifically organized to mobilize in several cities. Women, including young people, are particularly present in the demonstrations.

On 15 February, at the initiative of *Politis*, a broadly-based public meeting will bring together many feminist activists from the trade union, political and associative left to denounce the reform project. With 8 March approaching, the link between the international day of struggle for women's rights and the mobilization against pension reform is becoming obvious.

## Building the general strike and the feminist strike

The work plan announced by the entire joint union group raises the prospect of blocking the country from 7 March and renewing the strike on the 8th. These dates are rather far in the future - it will be necessary to keep up the pressure to get through the holiday period and maintain the mobilization.

But it is also an opportunity to build the strike in the sectors most concerned. Among them, the cleaning sector, personal services, care homes, health... there are not enough strikers in these workplaces. Those on the front line of the COVID pandemic, those forgotten by the Segur wage negotiations, those who earn very low wages, have split shifts, are shared between several employers, are little or not organized by the unions to defend themselves.

We need to convince people that, despite the difficulty of “abandoning the users” to go on strike, the issue is essential! Not only for our pensions but also to put a stop to the government’s devastating policy, so that public services regain their essential place, so that socially useful jobs are recognized and revalued.

These are essential societal choices that concern the whole population and have consequences first and foremost on women, both as employees and as users. All these questions are at the heart of the women's strike of 8 March, supported by trade unions, associations and feminist political organizations. With its reform, the government is attacking the working classes, and women in particular. We are building the necessary fightback, with women on the front line of the struggle!

PS:

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[1] See *Le Monde* (in English), 12 February 2023 [“France's controversial pension reform, in detail”](#).

[2] For the national unitary appeal for 8 March see [Grève féministe](#).

[3] The “décote” applied when retiring without the required number of years’ contributions and before the age of 67.

[4] In 2019 the Gender Commission of Attac created a street theatre group dressed in blue overalls with red bandannas like the famous “Rosie the Riveter” poster. Since then their songs and routines have been a feature of protest demonstrations. See [here \(in French\)](#).