

LMF12: Time spent travelling to and from work

Definitions and methodology

Labour force participation not only involves time spent at the workplace, but often also considerable time spent commuting. Time use surveys provide information on the average daily time travelling to and from work during a week day (see LMF11 for more detail on these surveys).

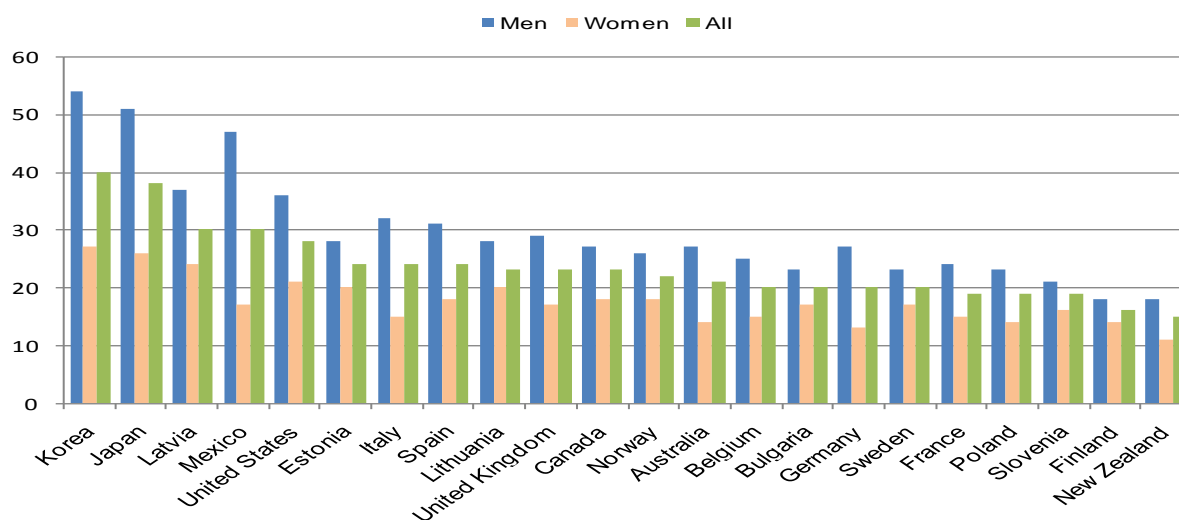
This indicator presents information on the average daily time in minutes men and women spend commuting from home to work. Ideally, time use surveys provide such information for workers only, but often available data include self-employed who work at home or working age survey-respondents who do not participate in the labour market. Obviously, estimates on average commuting times based on information for all respondents are lower than when such estimates are based on responses by workers only. Data on time spent commuting is provided for men and women, with and without children.

Key findings

In all countries, men spent on average more time than women travelling from home to work (Chart LMF12.1), although to some extent (see below) this is because women are less likely to be in paid work. The average time spent commuting is much higher for both men and women in Japan, Korea, Mexico and the United States than in other countries. The average commuting time is lowest in Finland and New Zealand at around 15 minutes per day; compared to 40 minutes in Korea.

Chart LMF12.1 Average time spent travelling to and from work

Time in minutes in a week day, all respondents



1) Countries are ranked by decreasing time spent by all respondents.

Year: 1999: France; 2000: Estonia, Finland, Hungary; 2001: Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom; 2002: Germany, Mexico; 2003: Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Spain; 2004: Korea; Poland; 2005: Canada; 2006: Australia, Belgium, Japan, New Zealand, Turkey, United States..

Source: For European countries, National Time Use Surveys as reported in the Harmonised European Time use Surveys dataset (HETUS); Australia: 2006 Time Use Survey (ABS); Canada: 2005 General Social Survey; Japan: 2006 Survey on Time-use and Leisure activities; Korea: 2004 Time-use Survey; Mexico: 2002 National Survey on Time-use (see LMF11 for details).

Other relevant indicators: Maternal employment (LMF2); Distribution of working hours among individuals in couple families (LMF8); and, Time used for work, care and daily household chores (LMF11).

Gender differences in commuting times are much smaller than suggested above when only considering paid workers among the survey-respondents (Table LMF12.1). In Belgium, France, Italy, Japan, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, male workers spent on average more than one hour commuting per weekday. In most countries men spent more time on commuting than women, but there are notable cross-country differences. On average Japanese men spent far more time commuting than women, while in Finland there is hardly any difference.

In a significant number of countries fathers spend on average slightly more time commuting than men without children. By contrast, in almost all countries mothers with dependent children spend less time travelling commuting than childless women. This seems to suggest that working mothers have found workplaces closer to home than women without children.

Table LMF12.1: Time spent commuting, by gender and the presence of children in the household

Time spent in minutes in a week day, commuting respondents¹

	Men				Women			ratio men /women	
	No child	with children under age school ²	with school aged children	All	No child	with children under age school ²	with school aged children	All	All
Belgium	68	71	68	69	59	62	56	60	1.15
Bulgaria	63	68	68	64	57	56	60	57	1.12
Estonia	58	59	58	58	55	52	54	54	1.07
Finland	48	44	46	47	47	45	44	46	1.02
France	62	65	64	62	57	50	53	56	1.11
Germany	67	62	65	66	51	48	47	51	1.29
Italy	64	63	62	64	58	54	51	57	1.12
Japan	82	77	83	82	60	58	51	68	1.60
Latvia	71	70	68	71	65	50	59	62	1.15
Lithuania	63	59	63	62	58	48	55	56	1.11
Norway	55	62	60	57	51	47	46	50	1.14
Poland	61	62	62	61	59	54	54	58	1.05
Slovenia	51	51	51	51	50	46	49	49	1.04
Spain	65	66	65	65	63	59	56	63	1.03
Sweden	49	48	46	49	48	44	45	47	1.04
United Kingdom	64	66	70	64	52	43	47	51	1.25
United States	:	:	:	79	:	:	:	61	1.30
Canada				63					:
Australia				43.4					:

1) The average time is estimated here only for the respondents who travel to or from work, excluding those who work at home or do not work.

2) Children under age school are defined as children not yet 7 years of age. School aged children include those between 7 and 17 years of age. Children may be related to the respondent (such as their own children, grand children, nieces or nephews, or brothers or sisters) or not related (such as foster children or children of roommates or boarders), except in Canada where it refers only to the children of the respondent.

Year and Sources: see notes to Chart LMF12.1.

Comparability and data issues

Time use surveys provide the most reliable record of the daily time spent on commuting (LMF11 for more detail). Survey methods are in place to separately identify time used travelling from home to work from the time devoted to taking children to formal childcare facilities or school, or time spent on parallel activities, as, for example, shopping (Eurostat, 2008).

Nevertheless, cross-country comparability is affected by the ability to spatially identify workers and other survey-respondents and the low (and varying) proportion of survey respondents who report commuting times in their diaries (Table LMF12.2).

The reasons why commuting times differ include the distance between home and the workplace and the mode of transport and the quality of transport networks. The presence of children in households also seems to affect commuting times (as the birth of children is frequently associated with a change in place of residence or workplace (Mulder and Cooke, 2009). However, the available data do not allow to accurately determine the importance of these different factors.

Table LMF12.2: Proportion of survey respondents reporting commuting times by gender and presence of children in the household

	Men			Women		
	No child	With children under school age	All	No child	With children under school age	All
Belgium	34%	47%	36%	25%	30%	26%
Bulgaria	35%	46%	36%	32%	23%	30%
Estonia	46%	55%	48%	38%	32%	37%
Finland	35%	52%	38%	31%	27%	31%
France	36%	53%	39%	27%	27%	27%
Germany	38%	54%	40%	27%	20%	26%
Italy	46%	74%	51%	26%	31%	26%
Japan	43%	82%	62%	24%	27%	39%
Latvia	50%	62%	52%	38%	38%	38%
Lithuania	41%	61%	44%	34%	36%	35%
Norway	44%	54%	46%	37%	34%	37%
Poland	35%	48%	38%	25%	21%	24%
Slovenia	40%	52%	42%	32%	33%	32%
Spain	45%	60%	48%	28%	29%	28%
Sweden	45%	51%	46%	37%	31%	36%
United Kingdom	43%	59%	46%	34%	27%	33%

Source: see Chart LMF12.1

Sources and further reading: Eurostat (2008), *Harmonised time use surveys – guidelines 2008*, Luxembourg; Flood M., and C. Barbatto (2005), "Off to Work. Commuting in Australia", *Discussion paper 78*, The Australia Institute; Turcotte M. (2006), *The time it takes to get to work and back*, Statistics Canada; Mulder C. and Th. Cooke (2009), Family Ties and residential location Special Issue of *Population, Space and Place*, 15/04.