

LMF2: Maternal employment rates

Definitions and methodology

Data on maternal employment rates are presented in this indicator both by age of youngest child and by the number of dependent children under 16. Employment rates refer here to annual average calculated from various national employment or household surveys and from the European Labour Force Survey. There is as yet no comprehensive regular annual data collection of maternal (or parental) employment across OECD countries at present, and time series are not available. Here, data are presented for 2007 or the most recent year available (see the comparability *and data issues* section for details on the definition of paid employment).

Key findings

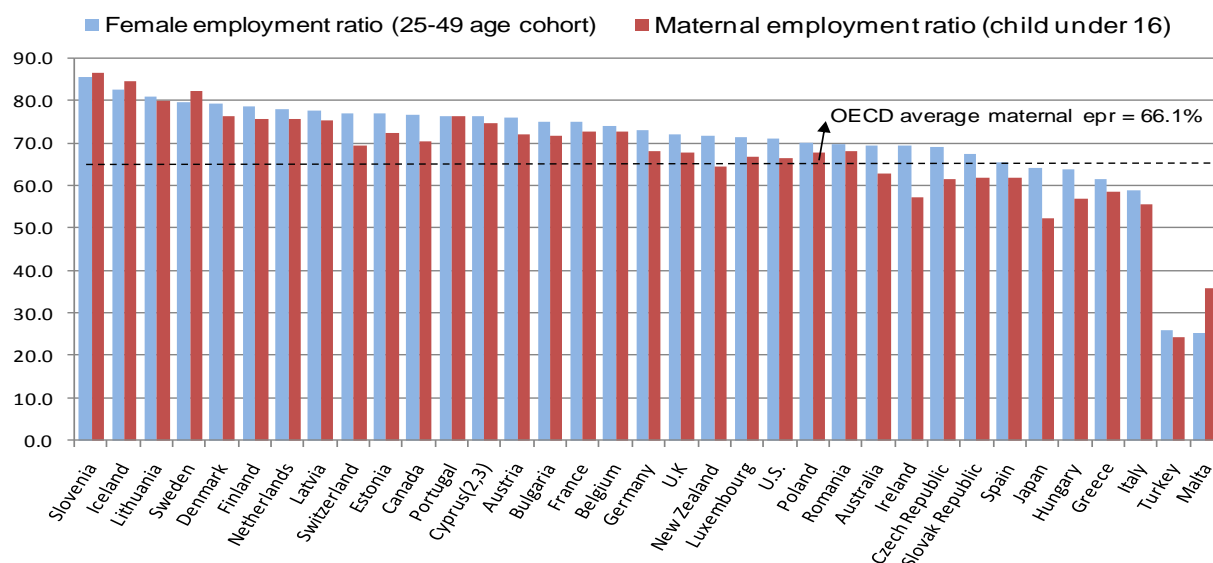
Chart LMF2.1 presents data for mothers in employment as a percentage of the population of mothers with at least one child aged under 16 living at home. These employment/population ratios are compared with the employment/population ratio for women aged between 25 and 49, this being the age cohort typically most concerned with rearing of young children. Compared to employment rates of women in this age group, maternal employment rates are lower in all countries except Iceland and Sweden. At over 10 percentage points, the employment gap between women aged 25 to 49 and mothers is highest in Ireland and Japan.

Chart LMF2.2 presents maternal employment rates by age of youngest child. In most countries, mothers are more likely to be in work when their child reaches the age of compulsory schooling (aged 6 in most countries). Some countries (the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Slovak Republic and Turkey) have markedly low employment rates for mothers with very young children (less than three years of age). In these countries, extended home-care or childcare leave is available and leave takers are not counted as in employment during this period (see below).

Chart LMF2.3 presents maternal employment rates by number of children. Labour market of mothers with three or more children is significantly lower than mothers with one or two dependent children in many countries (Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom).

Other relevant indicators: Employment patterns over the life-course (LMF4); Gender pay gaps for full and part-time workers (LMF5); Gender differences in employment outcomes (LMF6); Distribution of working hours among couple and sole parents families (LMF8 and LMF9) and Key characteristics of parental leave systems (PF7).

Chart LMF2.1: Maternal employment rates compared to female employment rates, 2007¹



Countries are ranked by decreasing female employment rates.

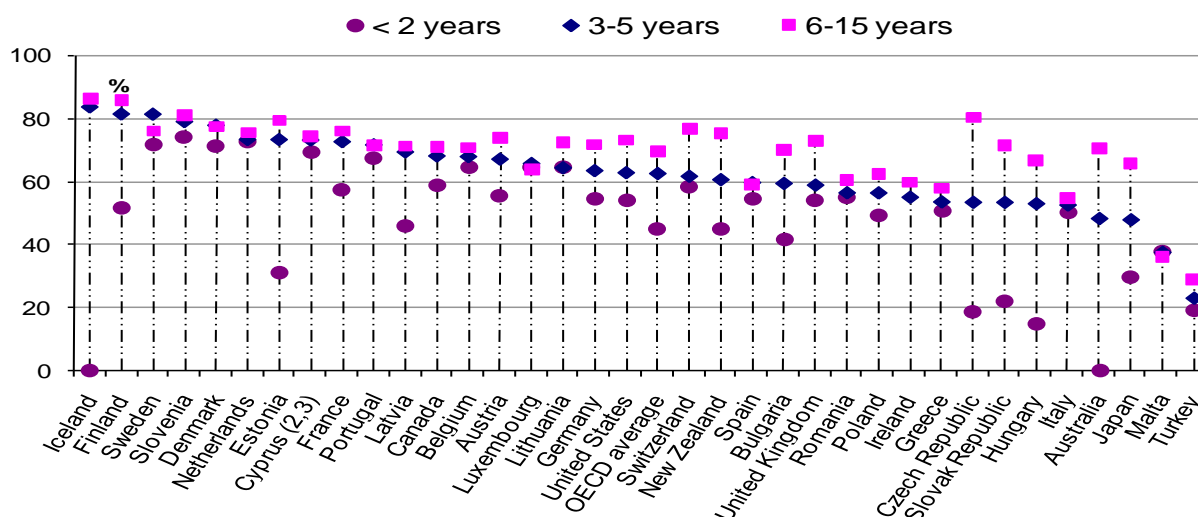
1) Year 2006 for Switzerland; 2005 for Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the US; 2002: Iceland; 2001: Canada; 1999: Denmark.

2) Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to « Cyprus » relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue".

3) Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Sources: European Labour Force Surveys (2007) for EU countries; Australia: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005); Canada: Statistics Canada (2001); Denmark: Statistics Denmark (1999); Iceland: Statistics Iceland (2002 for women age 25-54); Japan: Japanese national census (2005); Switzerland: Swiss LFS (2006); United States: US Current population survey (2005).

Chart LMF2.2: Maternal employment rates by age of youngest child, 2007¹



Countries are ranked in descending order of maternal employment rates with the youngest child aged between 3 and 5.

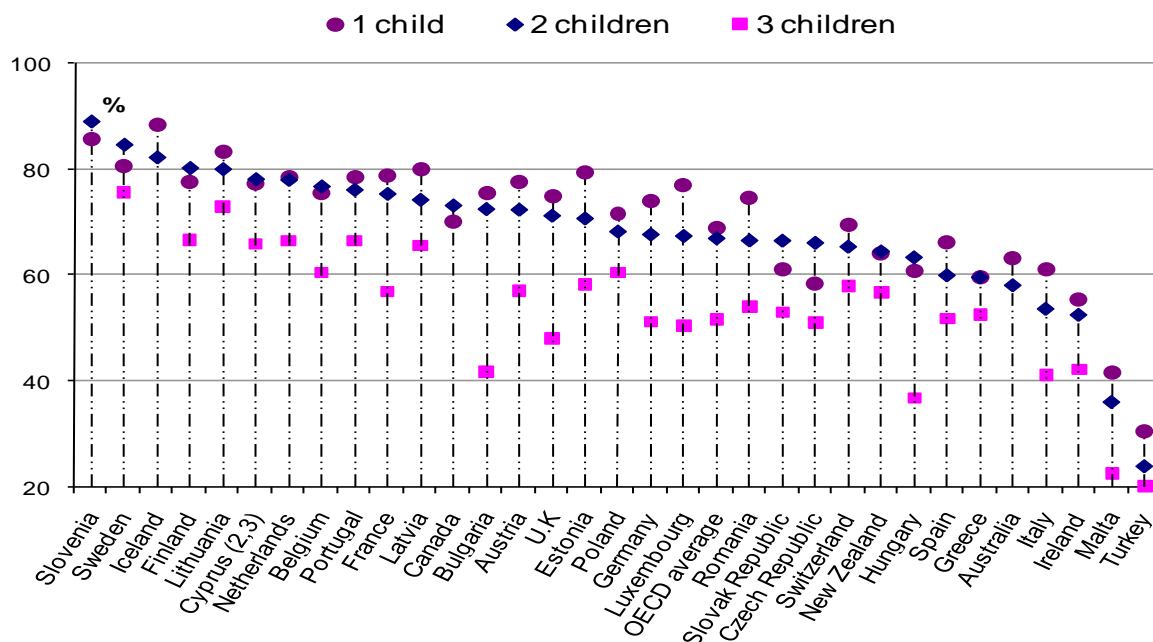
Data for Australia, Iceland and Ireland refer to mothers with a youngest child aged less than 5.

1) Year 2006 for Switzerland; 2005 for Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the US; 2002: Iceland; 2001: Canada; 1999: Denmark.

2) and 3) see corresponding notes to Chart LMF2.1

Sources: see Chart LMF2.1

Chart LMF2.3: Maternal employment rates by number of children under 16, 2007¹



Countries are ranked in descending order of maternal employment rates for mothers with two children.
 Data for Australia, Iceland and Sweden refer to 2 or more children.

1) Year 2006 for Switzerland; 2005 for Australia, New Zealand and the US; 2002: Iceland; 2001: Canada; 1999: Denmark.

2) and 3) see corresponding notes to Chart LMF2.1

Sources: see Chart LMF2.1

Comparability and data issues

In line with ILO definition of employment, the "employed" comprise all persons above a specific age who during a specified brief period, either one week or one day, were in the following categories:

(a) "Paid employment": (i) "at work": persons who during the reference period performed "some work" for wage or salary, in cash or in kind; (ii) "with a job but not at work": persons who, having already worked in their present job, were temporarily not at work during the reference period and had a formal attachment to their job.

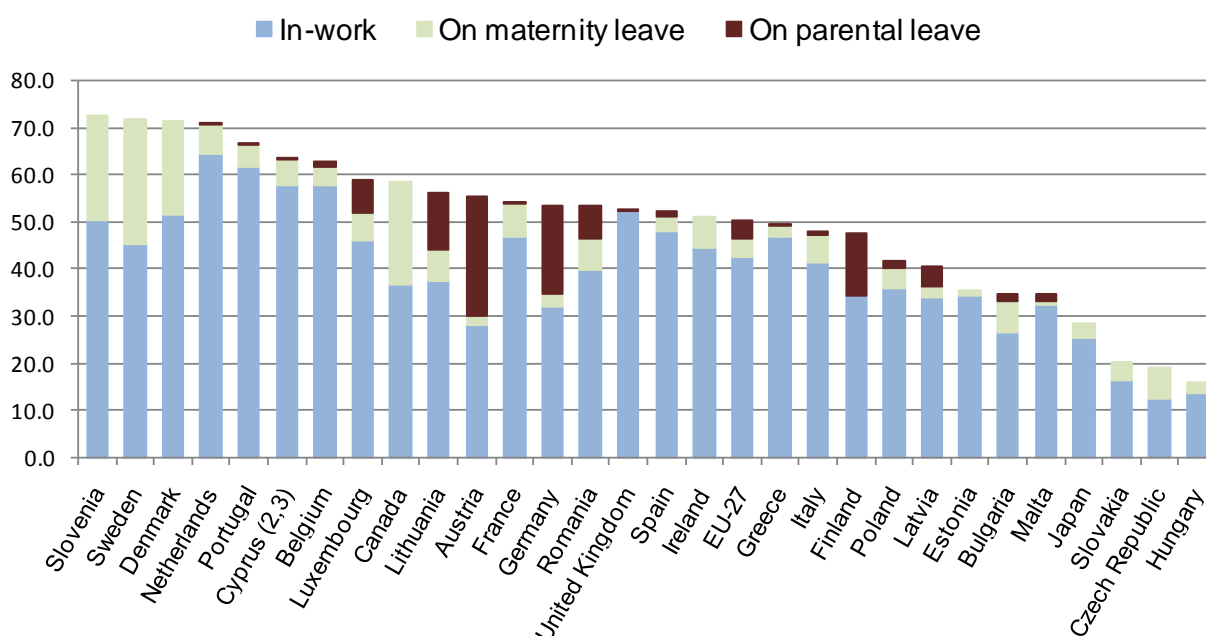
(b) "Self-employment": (i) "at work": persons who during the reference period performed some work for profit or family gain, in cash or in kind; (ii) "with an enterprise but not at work": persons with an enterprise, which may be a business enterprise, a farm or a service undertaking, who were temporarily not at work during the reference period for any specific reason."

For operational purposes, the notion "some work" is interpreted as work for at least one hour. Unpaid family workers at work should be considered as in self-employment irrespective of the number of hours worked during the reference period. Apprentices who received pay in cash or in kind should be considered in paid employment and classified as "at work" or "not at work" on the same basis as other persons in paid employment.

Maternal participation in the workforce is typically lower for mothers with very young children. This can be related to different factors including differences in childcare institutions, but also to differences in how women in parental leave are counted.

In principle, all women on maternity or on statutory paid parental leave (legal or contractual) are counted as employed. EU-guidelines stipulate counting parents on parental leave as employees absent for other reasons: they should be counted as employed if the period of absence is less than 3 months or if they continue to receive a significant portion of previous earnings (at least 50%). However, national treatment of long or unpaid parental leave varies widely. For example, many parents on parental leave in Austria (up to 2 years) are counted as inactive, while leave is technically unpaid (there is an income support benefit for all parents with a child not yet 30 months old (see indicator PF7)). By contrast, many of the parents in Finland on home-care leave (which is often taken when the child is 1 to 3 years of age) are often included in the employment statistics.

Chart LMF2.4: Employment and maternity rates for mothers with children under 3 years, 2006¹



1) 2003 for Sweden; 2002: Ireland; 2001: Canada and Japan; 1999: Denmark.

Source: *European Labour Force Surveys 2006 and Babies and Bosses, Reconciling Work and Family Life: A synthesis of findings for Canada, Denmark, Ireland, and Japan.*

Sources and further reading: *OECD on-line Labour Force Statistics database*; *European Labour Force Survey database, User Guide*, http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/employment/info/data/eu_lfs/index.htm; OECD (2007), *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life, A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries*; and OECD (2008), *Employment Outlook*.