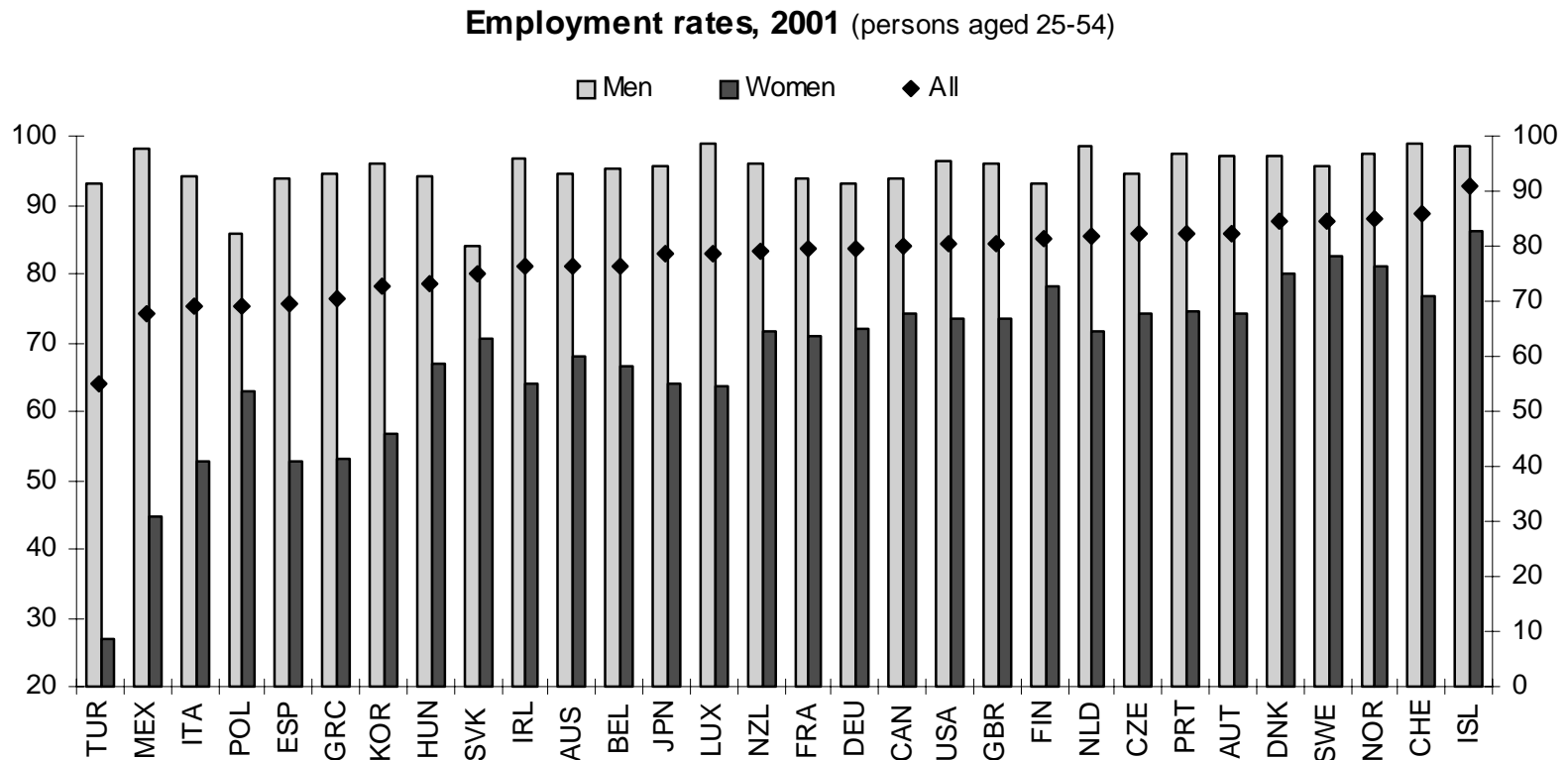


Raising women's employment rates would help to face the demographic challenge

- In the general demographic context, if participation pattern remains unchanged, population ageing will strongly affect the availability of labour resources, economic growth and sustainability of social protection systems.
- Since prime age women (25-54), together with older workers (55-64), constitute one of the largest demographic groups of non-employed persons who could be mobilised, raising participation among women is key.

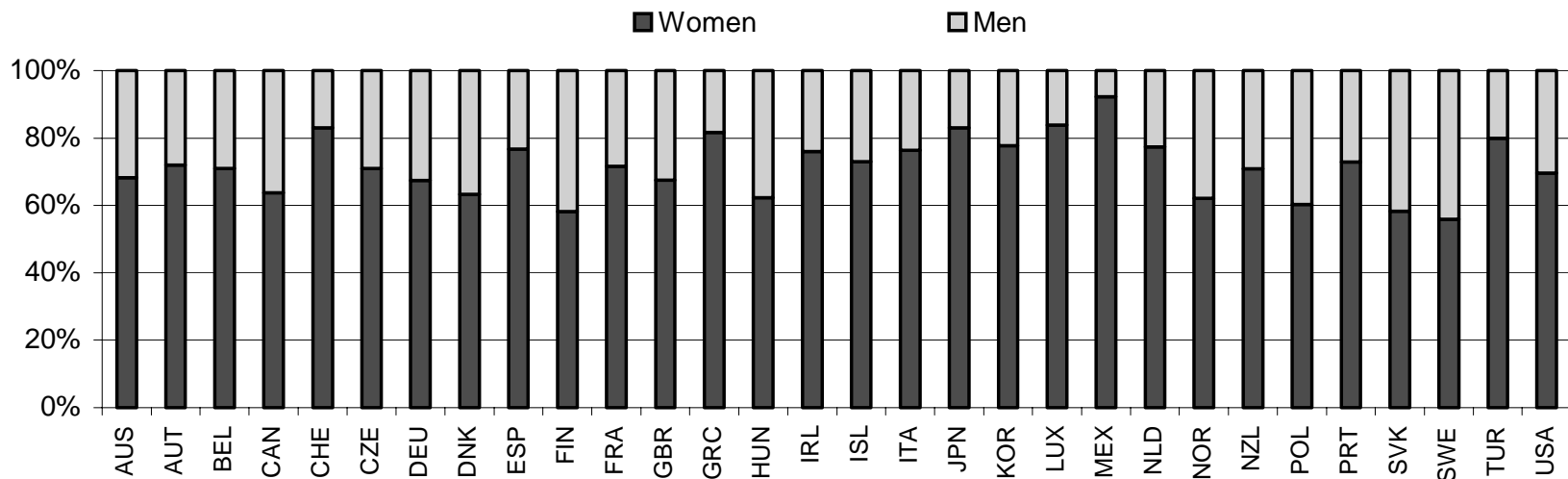
Women are under-represented in employment

Employment rates of prime age women (25-54) vary considerably across OECD countries, but in all countries, they are significantly below men's employment rates.



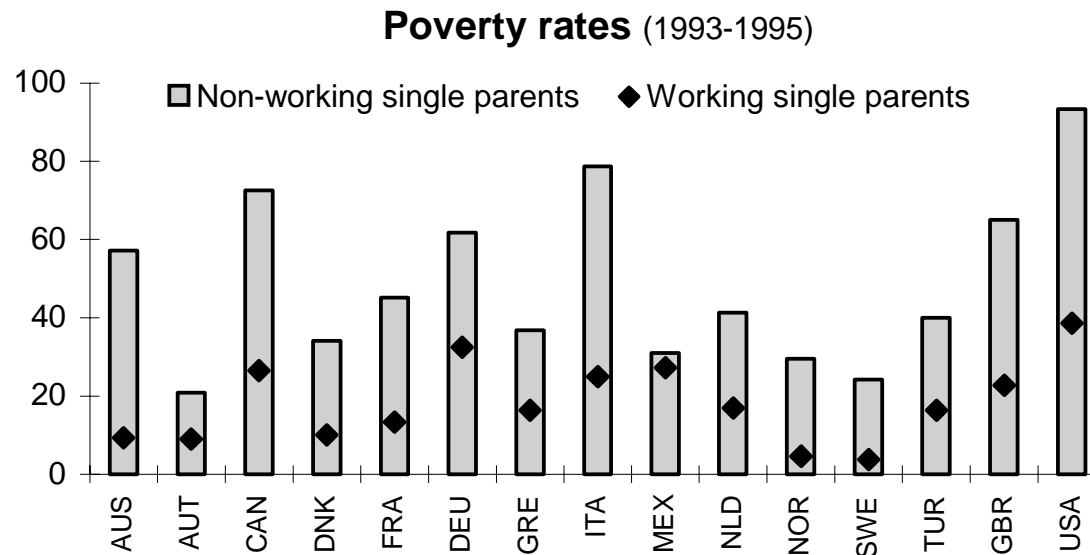
In virtually all OECD countries women represent more than 60% of the total number of non-employed persons aged 25-54, and this proportion is often close to 70% or even above.

Non-employment composition by sex, 2001 (persons aged 25-54)



Higher employment rates might further equity and social inclusion goals

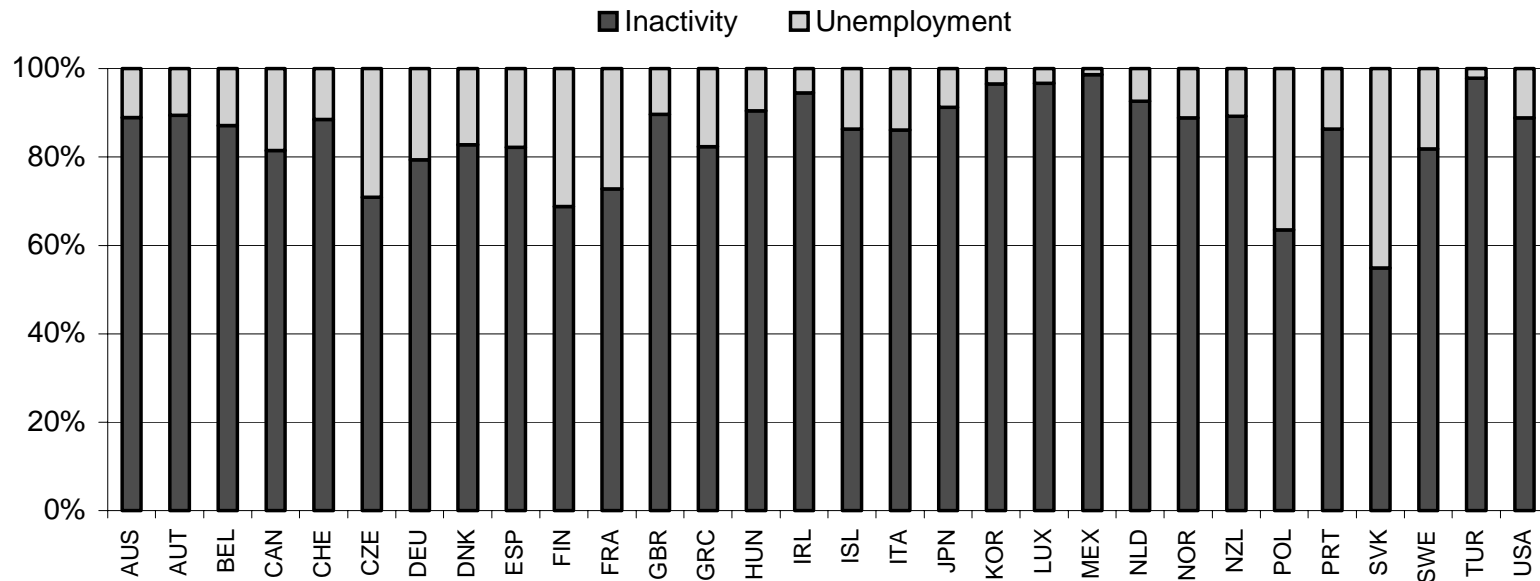
- A significant proportion of non-active women state that they would like to have a job (more than 17% of non-active women aged 25-54 in 2001, on average over 19 European countries).
- Non-employment among lone mothers leads very often to poverty and child poverty.



Behind women's non-employment: non-activity more than unemployment

Most non-employed women are inactive. In many OECD countries, 80% or more of non-employed women are not looking for a job. Usual policies aimed at fighting unemployment are not enough to increase significantly women's employment rate.

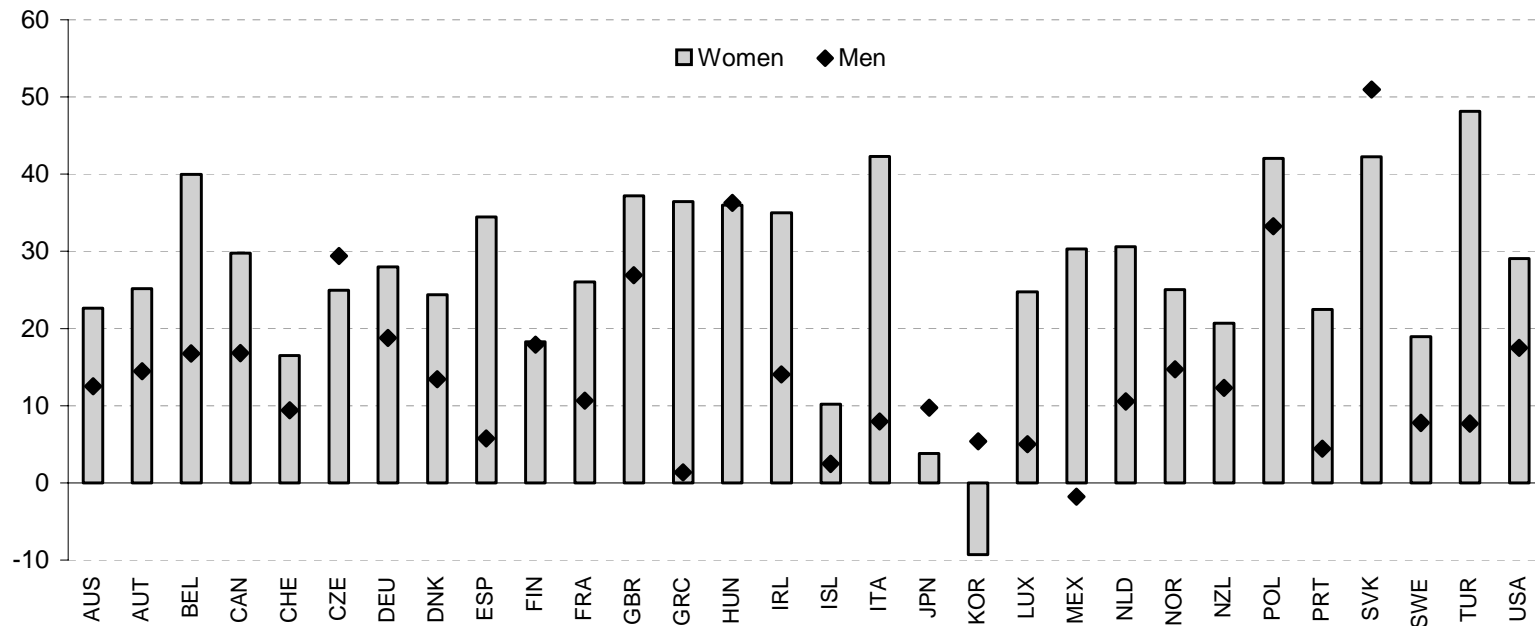
Women's non-employment composition, 2001 (persons aged 25-54)



Behind women's non-employment: educational attainment

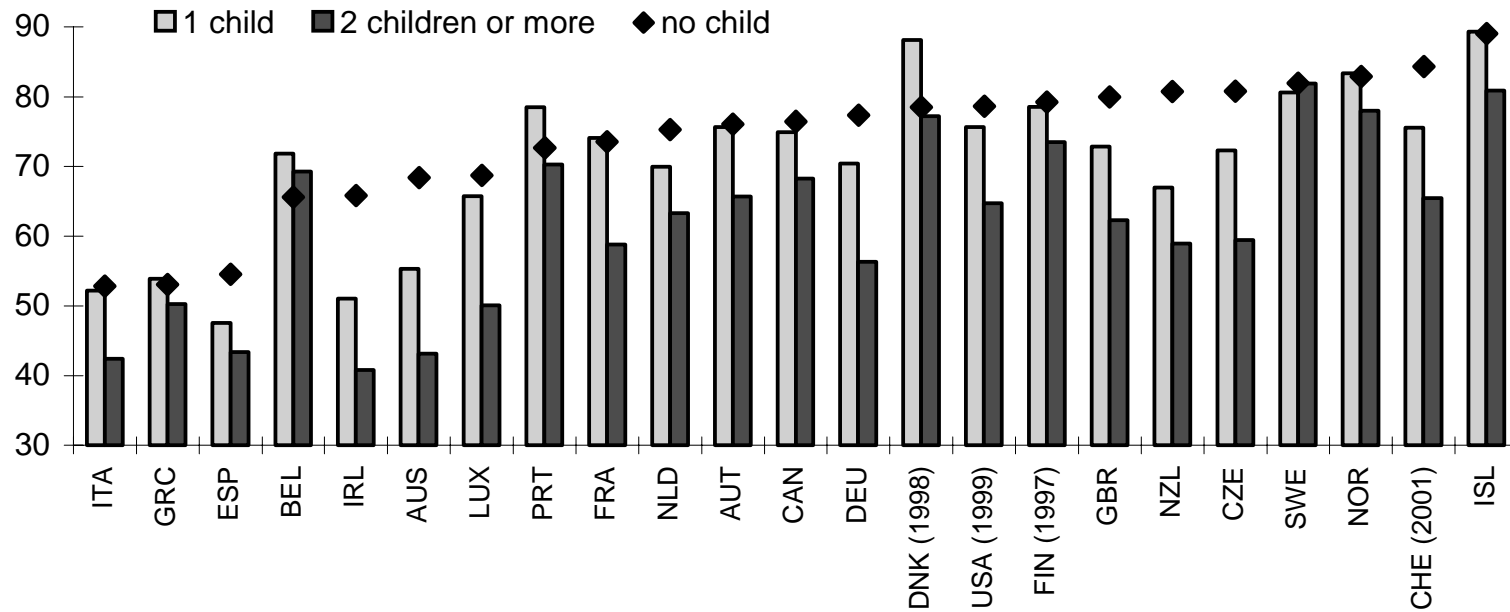
Low educational attainment increases the probability of being non-employed, for women as well as for men. But there are more inequalities related to education and training in the female labour market.

Differences in employment rate between high and low skilled, 2001
(persons aged 25-54)



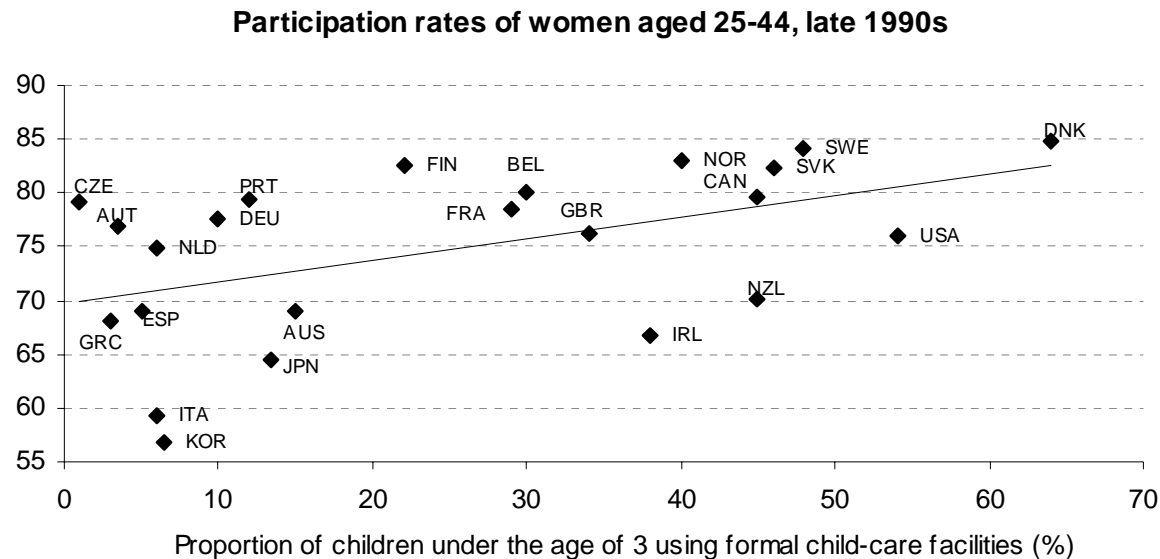
- In virtually all OECD countries, employment rates are lower for women with children than for women without children.

Women's employment rates, depending on the number of children, 2000 (persons aged 25-54)



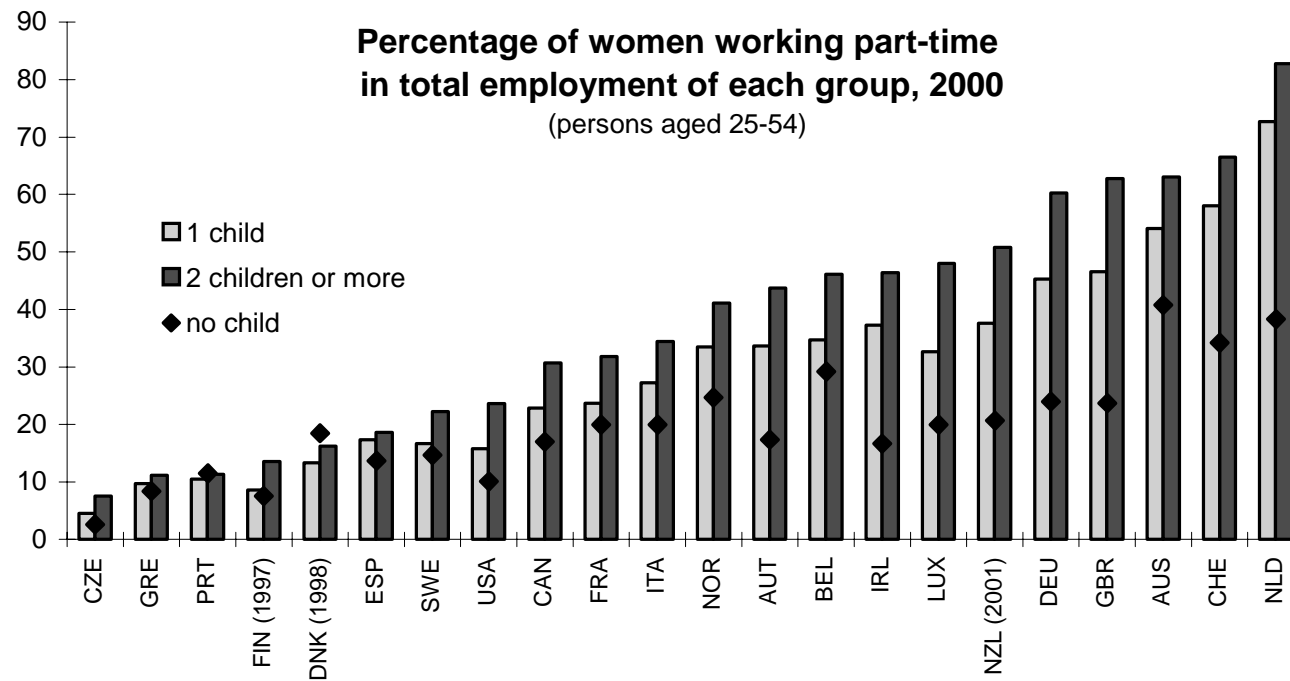
Offering low cost child-care services is important for mothers' return to work.

- There is a positive relationship between women's participation rates and the availability of formal child-care arrangements.
- A number of studies have also shown that child-care costs may be a barrier to employment, particularly at the lower end of the wage scale, among women with the lowest education levels.



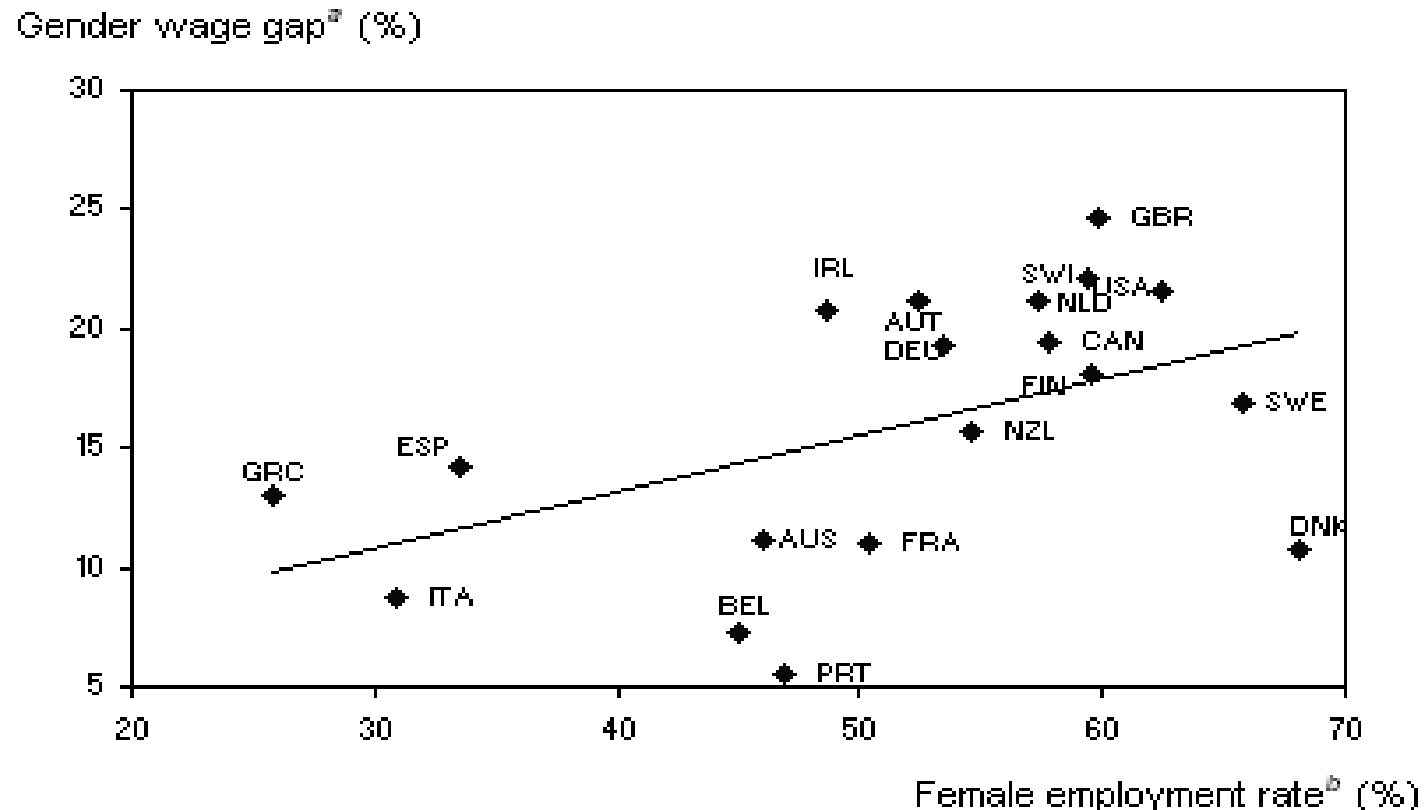
Part-time work: a bridge to female labour market participation

- In virtually all OECD countries, having children increases the probability of working part-time for working women. Long and atypical working hours are the factor most detrimental to family life in the opinion of households and part-time work can facilitate the reconciliation between work and family life.



The paradox of success?

- In the OECD countries where the female employment rate is higher, the wage gap also tends to be larger and occupational segregation more pronounced.



Maternity is one of the main reasons why some women do not participate in the labour market.

- On average over 19 European countries, more than 50% of non-active women aged 25-54 in 2001, stated that they were not searching for a job because of personal and family reasons (proportion close to 60% among women aged 25-44).
- Various studies have shown that having a low level of education and having held a precarious or unstable job seem to lower the chances of returning to work after having a child.

Maternity leave may increase women's attachment to the labour market, under certain conditions.

- ❑ Paid maternity leave with a job guarantee increases women's attachment to the labour market when not too long.
- ❑ Allowances that enable mothers to stop work for a considerable time without job protection may have a negative impact on the employment trajectory of recipients. Indeed, the possibility of taking relatively long parental leave, especially when it is combined with financial benefits, is particularly attractive to less skilled women or women in precarious job situations, *i.e.* precisely those women who subsequently find it most difficult to return to work.