

LMF2.3: Patterns of employment and the distribution of working hours for single parents

Definitions and methodology

This indicator presents information on patterns of employment and the distribution of paid working hours for single parents with at least one child (aged 0-14). Data on working patterns are presented using four possible working arrangements:

- i. *Working full-time;*
- ii. *Working part-time;*
- iii. *Working – no information on working hours*, where an individual reports that they are employed but information on their working hours is missing;
- iv. *Not working.*

And on the distribution of working hours using four possible ‘usual weekly working hour bands’:

- i. *1-29 hours per week;*
- ii. *30-39 hours per week;*
- iii. *40-44 hours per week;*
- iv. *45 hours per week or more.*

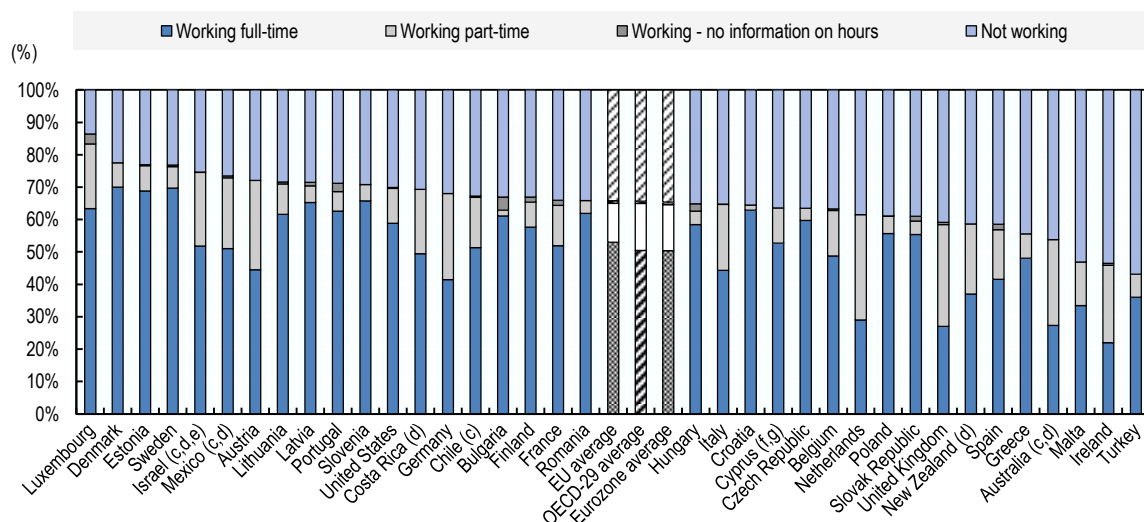
Definitions of ‘working’ and ‘employed’ follow [ILO guidelines](#), with all people who during a specified reference period were either in paid employment or were self-employed for at least one hour being classified as in ‘employment’. Data on working hours generally refer to *usual* weekly working hours (which include regular overtime) in the main job – unless individuals report that they do not have usual set hours in their main job, in which case the individual's actual hours worked in their main job during the survey reference week are used instead – and the distinction between part-time and full-time employment generally follows the OECD’s common 30-hour definition, with part-time employment defined as usual weekly working hours of less than 30 hours per week in the main job, and full-time employment as usual weekly working hours of 30 or more per week in the main job. (See the notes to the charts and tables and *data and comparability issues* for exceptions).

Key findings

Chart LMF2.3.A shows working arrangements for single parents (both male and female) with children aged 0 to 14. Apart from in Ireland and Turkey where more than half of single parents do not work, in most OECD countries most single parents are in paid employment. In most countries single parents are far more likely to work full-time than part-time, particularly in some of the Nordic (Denmark, Sweden) and many of the Eastern European OECD countries (such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, and Slovenia), where more than 90% of employed single parents work full-time hours. The main exceptions are Ireland, the United Kingdom, and particularly the Netherlands, where single parents more often work part-time.

Other relevant indicators: Children in families by employment status (LMF1.1); Maternal employment (LMF1.2); Maternal employment by partnership status (LMF1.3); Patterns of employment and the distribution of working hours for couples with children (LMF2.2).

Chart LMF2.3.A. Employment status of single parents, 2014^a
 Distribution (%) of single parents with at least one child aged 0-14^b by employment status^c



a) Data for Denmark, Finland and Sweden to 2012, and for Chile, Germany and Turkey to 2013

b) For the United States, children aged between 0-17

c) For Australia, part-time employees are defined as those who usually work less than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and either did so during the reference week, or were not at work in the reference week, and full-time employees as those who usually work 35 hours or more a week (in all jobs) and those who, although usually working less than 35 hours a week, worked 35 hours or more during the reference week. For Chile, the distinction between part-time and full-time work is based on actual hours worked in the main job during the survey reference week, rather than usual weekly working hours. For Israel, part-time employment is defined as actual weekly working hours of less than 35 during the reference week, and full-time employment as actual weekly working hours of 35 or more during the reference week. For Mexico, part-time employment is defined as usual weekly working hours of less than 35 hours in the main job, and full-time employment as usual weekly working hours of 35 or more per week in the main job.

d) Data for Australia, Costa Rica, Israel, Mexico and New Zealand refer to single parent households with at least one child aged 0-14, rather than single parents themselves. For Costa Rica and Mexico, data cover households where at least one child (aged 0-14) shares a relationship with the reported 'head of household' only.

e) The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

f) 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";

g) 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: [for Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics; for Chile, CASEN](#); for Costa Rica, Israel, Mexico, and New Zealand, OECD questionnaire; [for European countries, EU-LFS](#); for Turkey, [Turkish Household Labour Force Survey](#); for the United States, [U.S. Current Population Survey](#)

Table LMF2.3.A shows the distribution of usual weekly working hours for employed single parents by weekly working hours bands. In most countries, very few employed single parents work very long hours (45+) – in almost all countries with available data, fewer than 15% of employed single parents work 45 hours or more per week. The main exceptions are Greece – where about 27% of employed single parents usually work 45 hours or more – and Chile and Turkey, where over 50% of employed single parents have weekly working hours at or above 45 hours per week¹. Shorter full-time hours (30-39) are the most common arrangement for employed single parents in Belgium, Denmark, Finland and France, while in most other OECD countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United States) a 40-44 hour week is the dominant working arrangement for employed single parents.

¹ There data for Chile refer to *actual* hours worked during the survey reference week, rather than usual weekly working hours

Table LMF2.3.A. Distribution of working hours for employed single parents, 2014^a
 Distribution (%) of usual weekly working hours^b by working hours bands for employed single parents with
 at least one child aged 0-14^c

	Proportion (%) with usual weekly working hours in the given weekly hours band:				No information on hours
	1 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 44	45+	
Australia	..	..	..	..	..
Austria	38.20	32.75	21.48	7.57	0.00
Belgium	22.15	53.28	13.94	9.85	0.78
Canada	..	..	..	..	..
Chile (d)	23.10	6.88	10.64	58.83	0.54
Czech Republic	5.98	19.54	65.60	8.88	0.00
Denmark	9.67	79.10	3.73	7.50	0.00
Estonia	10.14	5.19	75.34	8.89	0.45
Finland	11.45	58.00	22.67	5.56	2.33
France	18.89	54.14	13.18	11.39	2.39
Germany	39.13	30.80	22.57	7.50	0.00
Greece	13.63	8.18	51.48	26.71	0.00
Hungary	6.41	5.10	77.32	7.68	3.49
Iceland	..	..	..	..	..
Ireland	51.53	30.56	13.26	3.46	1.19
Israel	..	..	..	..	..
Italy	31.30	30.31	29.11	9.04	0.24
Japan	..	..	..	..	..
Korea	..	..	..	..	..
Latvia	7.21	2.34	83.14	5.79	1.52
Luxembourg	23.11	23.86	47.42	2.05	3.56
Mexico	..	..	..	..	..
Netherlands	52.89	34.98	10.16	1.98	0.00
New Zealand	..	..	..	..	..
Norway	..	..	..	..	..
Poland	8.84	6.59	72.01	12.53	0.04
Portugal	8.57	13.78	55.88	18.17	3.61
Slovak Republic	6.81	16.51	59.22	15.03	2.43
Slovenia	7.15	2.77	82.32	7.76	0.00
Spain	26.06	25.68	35.97	9.36	2.93
Sweden	8.64	32.25	52.41	6.11	0.59
Switzerland	..	..	..	..	..
Turkey	16.62	7.36	19.01	57.01	0.00
United Kingdom	53.14	25.07	11.41	9.12	1.25
United States (c)	15.38	18.16	54.61	11.46	0.40
OECD-25 average	20.64	24.93	40.16	13.17	1.11
Bulgaria	2.70	2.63	74.64	13.96	6.08
Croatia	2.44	0.00	82.52	15.03	0.00
Cyprus (e,f)	17.18	39.45	30.59	12.77	0.00
Lithuania	13.12	6.57	73.92	5.62	0.76
Malta	28.53	17.07	46.14	8.26	0.00
Romania	6.01	4.90	76.30	12.80	0.00
EU average	18.96	23.62	46.56	9.66	1.20
Eurozone average	22.48	25.59	41.46	9.30	1.17

- a) Data for Denmark, Finland and Sweden to 2012, and for Chile, Germany and Turkey to 2013
b) In some countries (those for which information comes from the EU-LFS, plus the United States) it is possible for individuals to report that they do not have usual set hours in their main job. Where this is the case, the individual's actual hours worked in their main job during the survey reference week are used in place of their usual weekly working hours.
c) For the United States children aged 0-17
d) For Chile, working hours are based on actual hours worked in the main job in during the survey reference week, rather than usual weekly working hours.
e) See note f) to Chart LMF2.2.A
f) See note g) to Chart LMF2.2.A
Sources: [for Chile, CASEN](#); [for European countries, EU-LFS](#); [for Turkey, Turkish Household Labour Force Survey](#); [for the United States, U.S. Current Population Survey](#)

Comparability and data issues:

This indicator was constructed using information on single parents (both male and female) with at least one child aged 0-14. Data are not disaggregated by sex or by the age or number of children because in many countries the underlying samples are small, especially for single fathers. In general the data presented here concern single mothers, which account for at least 75% of single parents in many countries.

The data used in this indicator come from national labour force or national household surveys, or from information provided by national authorities. Labour force surveys are well-established sources of labour market data, but a few issues may prevent full comparability. For example, while for most countries the data on weekly working hours concern *usual* weekly working hours in the main job, for Chile and Israel the data refer to *actual* weekly working hours in the main job during the survey reference week. To the extent that actual hours differ from usual hours, this may affect comparisons of employment patterns and the distribution of weekly working hours between Chile and Israel and the remaining countries. Additionally, while for most countries the distinction between part-time and full-time employment is based on the OECD's common 30-hour definition – with part-time employment defined as usual weekly working hours of less than 30 hours per week in the main job, and full-time employment as usual weekly working hours of 30 or more per week in the main job – for a couple of countries (Australia, Israel and Mexico) alternative national definitions have been used. Specifically, for Australia part-time workers are defined as those who usually work less than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and either did so during the reference week, or were not at work in the reference week, for Israel part-time workers are those with *actual* weekly working hours of less than 35 during the reference week, and for Mexico they are those with usual weekly working hours of less than 35 hours in the main job. The use in particular of a higher part-time hours threshold by these countries is likely to increase the proportion of the employed classified as in 'part-time' work and decrease the proportion in 'full-time' work.

Labour force surveys are also not specifically designed to provide information on families or on employment by parenthood status or partnership status, and classifications of family relationships may not always match conventional conceptions. 'Single' people are generally defined as adults living without a spouse or cohabiting partner in the same household, regardless of their legal marital status (i.e. the definition reflects the "de facto" situation in terms of co-habitation arrangements). 'Children', meanwhile, are generally defined as any children (including both biological children and step or adoptive children) aged 0-14 (for the United States 0-17) that live in the same household and are reported as the child of the adult. Parents with children who do not live in the same household are generally not included, nor are parents with children aged 15 or older (for the United States, 18 or older) regardless of whether or not the child lives in the same household and/or is dependent on the parent. Data for Australia, Costa Rica, Israel, Mexico and New Zealand refer to single-parent *households* or one-parent *families* with at least one child aged 0-14 rather than to single parents themselves, and for Costa Rica and Mexico include only those households where at least one child aged 0-14 is reported as sharing a parent-child relationship with the household head.

As discussed in indicator [LMF1.2](#), cross-national comparisons of parental employment may also be affected by differences in the treatment of individuals on maternity, paternity or parental leave. It is

difficult to isolate the impact of differences in the treatment of persons on leave on parental employment rates, but it is possible that different treatments could influence cross-national variations in employment patterns among and working hours for parents with very young children.

Sources and further reading: OECD (2007), *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life, A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries*; OECD (2016), *Employment Outlook 2016*; OECD (2011), *Doing Better for Families* www.oecd.org/social/family/doingbetter; OECD (2012), *Closing the Gender Gap*