

### **LMF1.3: Maternal employment by partnership status**

#### *Definitions and methodology*

Maternal employment rates concern mothers in paid work with dependent children and are annual averages calculated from various national employment or household surveys and from the European Labour Force Survey. Partnered fathers and mothers are married or cohabiting parents in couple families, while sole parents are adults not living with a partner, for whatever reason, with at least one dependent child (SF1.1). The European Labour Force Survey (ELFS) only identifies couple families and sole-parent families as such when these families do not share a household with other adults. For example, couples living with one or more other adults and sole parents living with at least two other adults in the household (e.g. the parents of a sole parent) are categorised as “other” families in the ELFS. Since available information for non-European countries is based on “nuclear families” or “census families”, the comparison of such data to the proportion of sole parents and partnered parents in all households as reported in the ELFS would be misleading (see SF1.1). To avoid the problem, households’ structure was reconstructed on the basis of the identification numbers of each person, which allowed to identify couples and sole parents living with other adults as couple families and sole- parents families respectively.

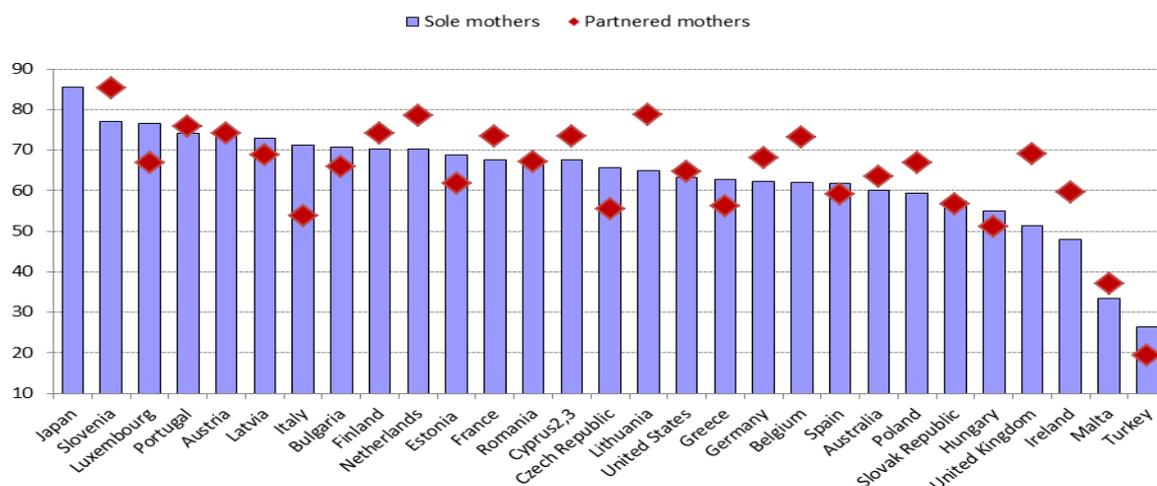
The data below concern partnered and sole parents aged 15 to 64, unless otherwise specified. In the ELFS dependent children are defined as children aged 0 to 14. For the US, data refers to household with at least one child under the age of 18; for New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland, data covers households with children aged 0 up to and including 16 years of age.

#### *Key findings*

Chart LMF1.3.A presents maternal employment rates by partnership status. The proportion of sole-parent mothers in paid employment is significantly higher than that of partnered mothers in Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Slovak Republic where differences are around 10 percentage points. In southern European countries, sole parents have to engage in paid work as public benefits for sole parents are low, often relying on informal networks for care support. By contrast, in most other OECD countries maternal employment rate is higher among partnered mothers, especially in Belgium, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovenia and United Kingdom. These are countries where income support for sole parents is substantial.

Other relevant indicators: SF1.1: Family size and composition; SF1.2: Children in families; LMF1.2: Maternal employment; LMF2.2 and LMF2.3 Usual working hours’ distribution among couple and sole parents; and CO2.1: Trends in the income position of different household types.

**Chart LMF1.3.A: Sole mothers and partnered mothers aged 15 to 64 in paid employment, 2011<sup>1</sup>**

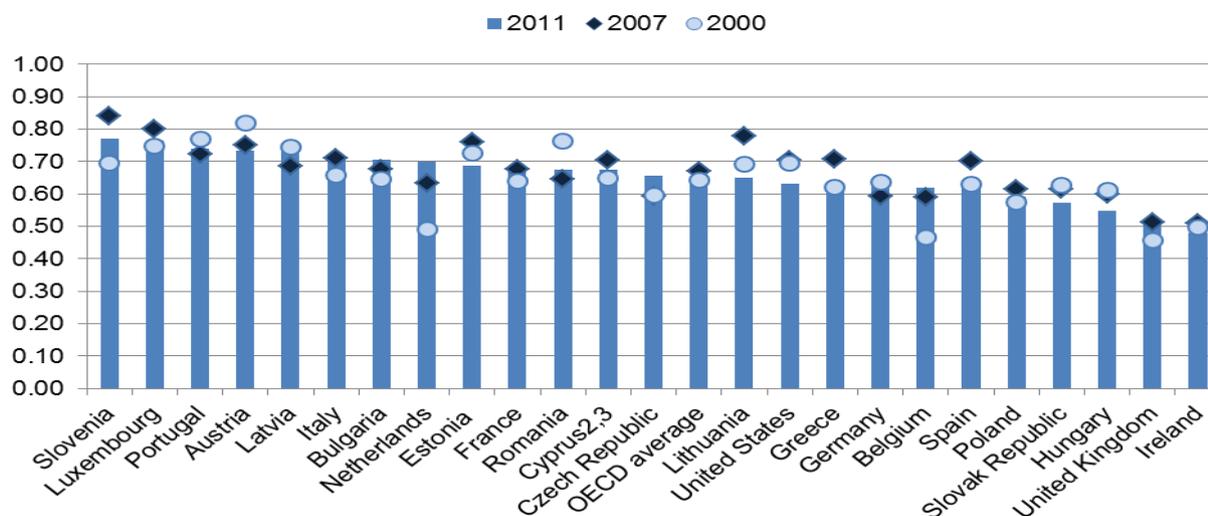


1) 2008 for Finland, Japan, Malta and Turkey; 2006 for Australia. 2) Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to "Cyprus" relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes 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.

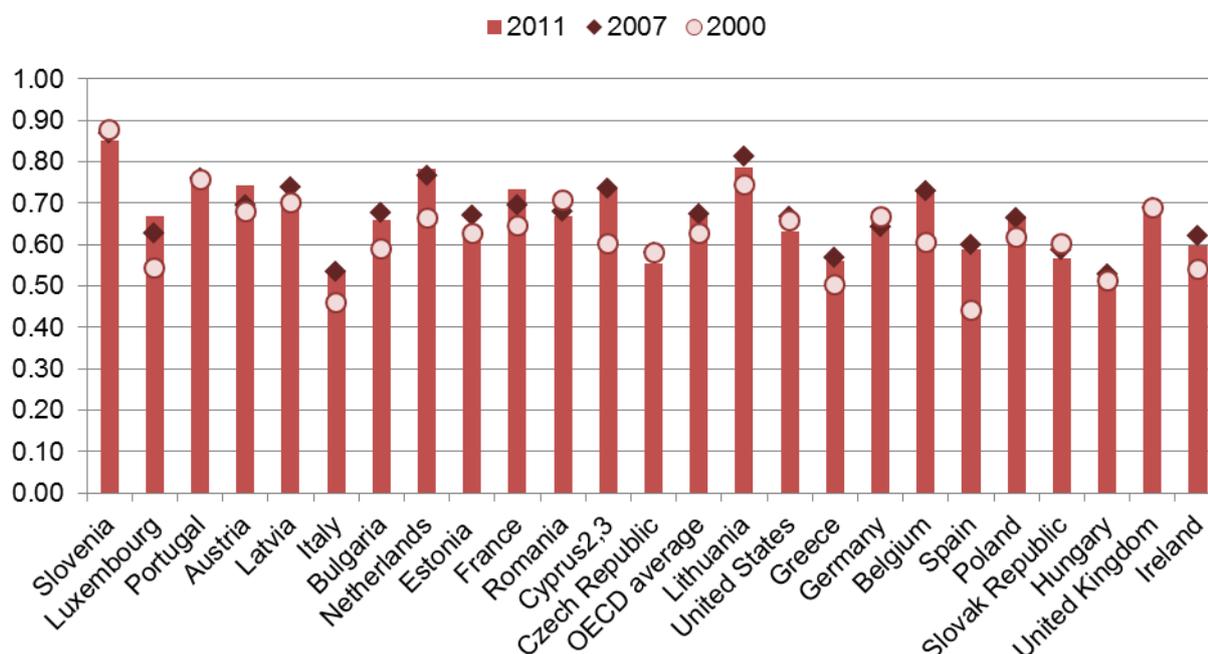
Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics; United States Current Population Survey; all other EU-countries and Turkey, ELFS.

Charts 1.3.B.I and 1.3.B.II show respectively the percentage of sole mothers and partnered mothers in employment in 2000, 2007 and 2011. While in 2000 employment rate was higher among sole mothers in most of the countries, the gap between the two groups shrank between 2000 and 2007 and eventually reversed in 2011 following the economic crisis, as many women in couple households either entered the labour market or worked longer hours to offset their partners' earning losses. The change was also driven by significant increases in the number of partnered mothers in employment in the years before the crisis, especially in the countries that had the lowest rates of partnered mothers in paid employment in 2000 (Luxembourg, Italy, Greece, Spain).

**Chart LMF1.3.B.I Sole mothers aged 15 to 64 in paid employment, 2000<sup>1</sup>, 2007, 2011**



**LMF1.3.B.II Partnered mothers aged 15 to 64 in paid employment, 2000<sup>1</sup>, 2007, 2011**



1 2001 for Bulgaria and Latvia; 2002 for Germany and Lithuania, 2003 for Poland and the United States  
 Source: EULFS 2011

Table LMF1.3.A shows that employment rates of sole mothers are significantly lower than employment rates among sole fathers. The largest ‘gender’ gaps (with differences above 20 percentage points between sole fathers and sole mothers) can be found in Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Hungary, Luxembourg and Turkey. The percentage of sole fathers in employment is lower than the percentage of sole mothers in employment in a few countries, notably Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland and Portugal. However, given the small number of sole fathers in the population, employment rate for this category of people is extremely volatile. Thus, the magnitude of the “gender” gaps vary considerably based on the specific sample (see *Comparability and data issues*).

Considering all sole parents, Table LMF1.3.A shows that at above 75%, sole-parent employment rates are highest in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Japan, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Sweden, and lowest, at below 60% in Hungary, Ireland, Malta, New Zealand, Turkey and the UK. Table LMF1.3.A also shows that employment rates for sole parents age 25 to 49 are only around 1.5 percentage point higher than for all sole parents of working age; differences are somewhat larger in the Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Lithuania, UK and US.

*Comparability and data issues*

This indicator was constructed using information from the European Labour Force survey, national Labour Force Surveys or information provided by national authorities. Labour Force Surveys are not specifically designed to provide information on family or partnership status, and relative small sample sizes (e.g. on the total number of sole mothers and sole fathers in employment) can affect the reliability of the results and subsequent comparisons.

Other factors that need to be taken into account when comparing figures across countries are differences in years of reference and age groups for the children covered in the samples.

**Table LMF1.3.A: Sole-parents in paid employment by year, sex and age, 2011<sup>1</sup>**

	Employment rates by sex		Employment rates by age	
	Sole parents aged 15-64		Sole parents	
	Mothers	Fathers	15-64	25-49
Australia	60.0	72.0	62.0	-
Austria	77.7	84.9	78.2	78.8
Belgium	67.3	91.0	78.8	80.3
Bulgaria	70.7	65.4	70.0	74.2
Canada	:	:	67.6	:
Cyprus <sup>2,3</sup>	67.5	45.0	66.3	69.6
Czech Republic	65.7	89.1	67.8	69.0
Denmark	:	:	82.0	:
Estonia	68.8	100.0	71.4	72.5
Finland	70.2	65.9	69.7	72.4
France	65.5	86.0	68.8	69.9
Germany	62.5	81.9	64.9	66.0
Greece	62.6	74.8	64.5	65.5
Hungary	54.9	77.4	57.3	58.3
Iceland	81.0	:	:	:
Ireland	47.9	52.7	48.3	49.9
Italy	71.2	75.7	71.6	72.1
Japan <sup>4</sup>	85.4	90	85.9	87.8
Latvia	72.9	79.9	73.5	75.9
Lithuania	65.0	79.73	66.1	71.1
Luxembourg	76.6	100.0	77.5	77.9
Malta	33.3	45.2	35.1	33.9
Netherlands	70.1	95.8	74.2	75.0
New Zealand	:	:	54.4	:
Norway	:	:	69.0	:
Poland	59.3	72.4	60.3	61.5
Portugal	74.1	69.2	73.6	75.9
Romania	67.5	68.5	67.7	69.5
Slovak Republic	57.7	73.2	59.3	60.2
Slovenia	77.1	92.9	79.1	79.7
Spain	61.7	74.6	63.6	65.9
Sweden	:	:	81.1	:
Switzerland	:	:	67.0	:
Turkey	26.3	73.9	28.7	30.0
United Kingdom	52.1	59.7	52.7	57.9
United States	63.2	76.7	66.4	69.2
<b>OECD average</b>	<b>64.2</b>	<b>77.9</b>	<b>66.5</b>	<b>67.2</b>
<b>EU- average</b>	<b>65.4</b>	<b>76.0</b>	<b>67.6</b>	<b>68.1</b>

1) Data are for 2011, except year 2005 for Canada, Denmark, Switzerland and Sweden; 2006 for Australia and New Zealand; 2007 for Japan; 2008 for Finland, Iceland, Malta, Norway and Turkey; 2) and 3) see notes 1 and 2 to chart LMF1.3.A; 4) age range is from 30 to 49 years old for the last column.

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics; Statistics Canada (2006 Census of Population); Japan: 2007 Comprehensive Survey of Living Conditions of the People on Health and Welfare; Mexican authorities (National Survey on Occupation and Employment 2008); New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 2006; Swiss authorities (Swiss Labour Force Survey 2005); Swedish authorities (Level-of-living Conditions Survey 2005); US Current Population Survey 2011; and, all other EU-countries, 2011 ELFS.

Further reading: EU Labour Force Survey database, User Guide, <a href="http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/employment/info/data/eu_lfs/index.htm">http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/employment/info/data/eu_lfs/index.htm</a> ; and, OECD (2011) Doing Better for Families. <a href="http://www.oecd.org/social/family/doingbetter">www.oecd.org/social/family/doingbetter</a>
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