

## LMF2.6: Time spent travelling to and from work

### *Definitions and methodology*

Participation in paid work 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 LMF2.5 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 or place of study. Ideally, time use surveys provide such information for workers only, but often available data include the self-employed who work at home or working-age survey-respondents who do not participate in the labour market, too. 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*

The average amount of time individuals spend travelling to and from work differs considerably across OECD countries (Chart LMF2.6.A). In some countries, like Finland, Spain, Sweden and the United States, individuals spend on average only around 20 minutes per day commuting to work or study, while in others, like Japan and Turkey, this is as high as 40 minutes per day. In Korea, individuals spend, on average, just less than one hour each day travelling to and from their place of work or study.

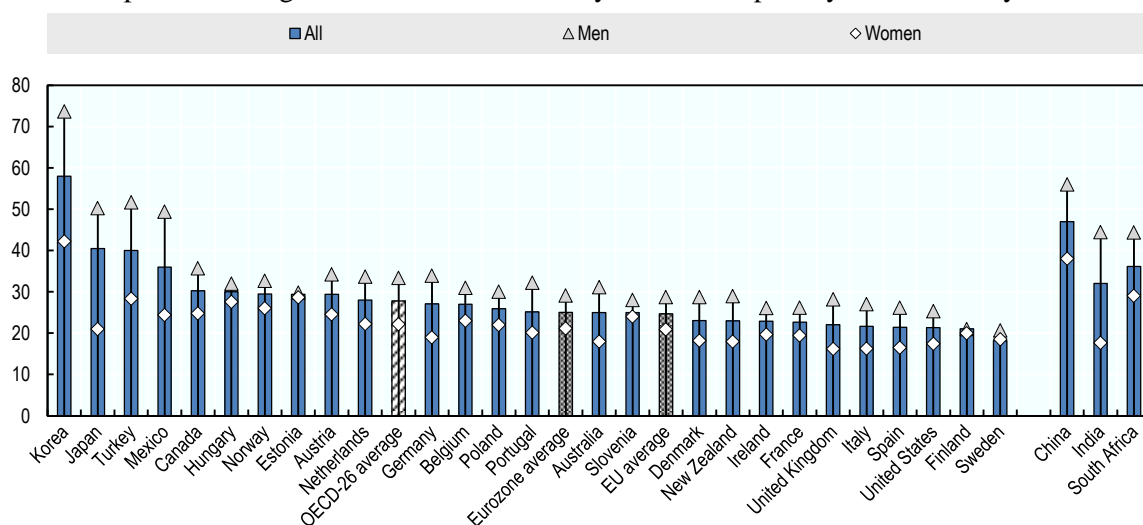
Across countries, on average, men spend more time travelling to and from work or study than women (Chart LMF2.6.A). In Mexico, for example, men spend on average 25 minutes more per day on commuting than women, while in Japan and Korea men dedicate around half an hour more of their day to travelling to and from work or study. To some extent, however, these gender differences are due to the fact that women are less likely than men to be in paid work (see below).

Gender differences in commuting times are much smaller than suggested above when only those respondents who spend at least some of their day commuting are taken into account (Table LMF2.6.A). In most countries men still spend slightly more time on commuting than women, but gender gaps are generally only small – Korea still sees a gender gap of about 17 minutes, but in Italy and Spain the gap is only three minutes per day, and in Finland there is hardly any difference.

Fathers often spend on average slightly more time travelling to and from work than men without children (Table LMF2.6.A). This is especially the case in Canada and the United States, where commuting men with a child under school age spend on average 7-8 minutes per day more travelling to and from work than commuting men without children. By contrast, mothers with dependent children usually spend less time commuting than childless women. In the United States and Korea, for instance, commuting mothers with a child under school age spend around 12-13 minutes per day less travelling to and from work than commuting women without children, while in Italy the gap is as large as 18 minutes. This seems to suggest that working mothers more often find workplaces closer to home than women without children.

Other relevant indicators: Maternal employment (LMF1.2); Distribution of working hours among individuals in couple families (LMF2.2); and, Time used for work, care and daily household chores (LMF2.5).
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**Chart LMF2.6.A: Average time spent travelling to and from work, 1999-2014<sup>a</sup>**  
 Time spent travelling to and from work or study, in minutes per day, all 15-to-64-year-olds<sup>b</sup>



Countries are ranked by time spent to and from work or study for all men and women

a) Australia: 2006; Austria: 2008-09; Belgium: 2005; Canada: 2010; China: 2008; Denmark: 2001; Estonia: 2009-10; Finland: 2009-10; France: 2009; Germany: 2001-02; Hungary: 1999-2000; India: 1999; Italy: 2008-09; Ireland: 2005; Japan: 2011; Korea: 2009; Mexico: 2009; the Netherlands: 2005-06; New Zealand: 2009-10; Norway: 2010; Poland: 2003-04; Portugal: 1999; Slovenia: 2000-01; South Africa: 2010; Spain: 2009-10; Sweden: 2010; Turkey: 2006; the United Kingdom: 2005; and the United States: 2014.

b) Except for Australia (15+ year olds), China and Hungary (15-74 year olds) and Sweden (25-64 year olds).

Source: OECD gender data portal (<http://www.oecd.org/gender/>) and OECD secretariat estimates based on national time-use surveys.

**Table LMF2.6.A: Time spent travelling to and from work, by gender and the presence of children in the household, 2008 - 2010<sup>a</sup>**

Time travelling to and from work or study, in minutes on per day, 15-to-64-year-old commuting respondents<sup>b</sup>

	Men				Women				Ratio men/women
	All	No child	with children under school age	with school-aged children	All	No child	with children under school age	with school-aged children	
Austria	65	65	69	62	56	55	51	59	1.16
Canada	66	65	73	61	54	55	53	49	1.23
Finland	52	52	50	53	52	53	47	48	1.00
France	73	71	74	75	67	66	66	70	1.08
Italy	65	65	68	63	62	67	50	53	1.05
Korea	101	100	100	110	84	85	72	74	1.21
Norway	62	61	63	62	56	57	61	51	1.10
Spain	61	62	62	59	58	63	54	50	1.05
United States	48	47	54	47	42	46	34	39	1.15

a) 2008: Italy; 2008/2009: Austria; 2009: Finland, Korea; 2009/2010: France, Spain; 2010: Canada, Norway, United States.

b) Data are for 15-64 year old respondents who report travelling to and from work and/or study, excluding those working at home or not working.

Source: OECD secretariat estimates based on national time-use surveys.

*Comparability and data issues*

Time use surveys provide the most reliable record of the daily time spent on commuting (LMF2.5 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 LMF2.6.B).

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 LMF2.6.B: Proportion of survey respondents reporting time spent travelling to and from work, by gender and the presence of children in the household, 2008 - 2010<sup>a</sup>**  
 Proportion of survey respondents reporting time spent travelling to and from work, 15-to-64-year-olds<sup>b</sup>

	Men				Women			
	All	No child	with children under school age	with school-aged children	All	No child	with children under school age	with school-aged children
Austria	53%	50%	59%	56%	44%	44%	31%	52%
Canada	54%	51%	61%	60%	46%	48%	36%	48%
Finland	41%	38%	52%	45%	39%	39%	33%	46%
France	36%	33%	47%	38%	29%	28%	27%	32%
Italy	41%	38%	50%	50%	26%	27%	20%	28%
Korea	74%	73%	79%	76%	50%	54%	28%	41%
Norway	53%	53%	50%	54%	46%	48%	37%	49%
Spain	40%	36%	45%	46%	32%	31%	32%	35%
United States	51%	50%	57%	50%	42%	45%	32%	44%

a) 2008: Italy; 2008/2009: Austria; 2009: Finland, Korea; 2009/2010: France, Spain; 2010: Canada, Norway, United States.

b) Data are for 15-64 year old respondents.

Source: OECD secretariat estimates based on national time-use surveys.

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.