

## Chapter 1

# Families are changing

*Families have changed over the past thirty years. This chapter provides an overview of the changes in family formation, household structure, work-life balance, and child well-being. Fertility rates have been persistently low in many OECD countries leading to smaller families. With marriage rates down and divorce rates up, there are an increasing number of children growing up in sole-parent or reconstituted families. Sole-parent families are of particular concern due to the high incidence of poverty among such households.*

*Poverty risks are highest in jobless families and lowest amongst dual-earner families. Important gains in female educational attainment and investment in more family-friendly policies have contributed to a rise in female and maternal employment, but long-standing differences in gender outcomes in the labour market still persist. The increased labour market participation of mothers has had only a limited effect on the relative child poverty rate as households without children have made even larger income gains.*

*Child well-being indicators have moved in different directions: average family incomes have risen but child poverty rates are also up. More youngsters are now in employment or education than before, while evidence on health outcomes is mixed.*

*Overall, are families doing better? Some undoubtedly are, but many others face serious constraints when trying to reconcile work and family aspirations.*

## Introduction

Families are changing in many ways across the OECD and its enhanced-engagement partners. Most countries have seen a decline in the fertility rate over the past three decades. Today almost no OECD country has a total fertility rate above the population replacement rate of two children per women. As a result the average household size has also declined over this period. At the same time, there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of women entering the labour force. The evidence on trends in child well-being is mixed, and important challenges remain. There are still large gender gaps in employment and earnings and one in eight children, on average across the OECD, still lives in relative poverty.

Family formation patterns are also changing. Increasingly, both men *and* women want to first establish themselves in the labour market before founding a family. Hence, the age of mothers at first childbirth has risen and with it the probability of having fewer children than previous generations. Many women remain childless. Birth rates have fallen and life expectancy has increased, so there are fewer children and more grandparents than before. Figure 1.1, Panel A and Panel B illustrates how birth rates and average household sizes have fallen in most OECD countries since the 1980s.<sup>1</sup>

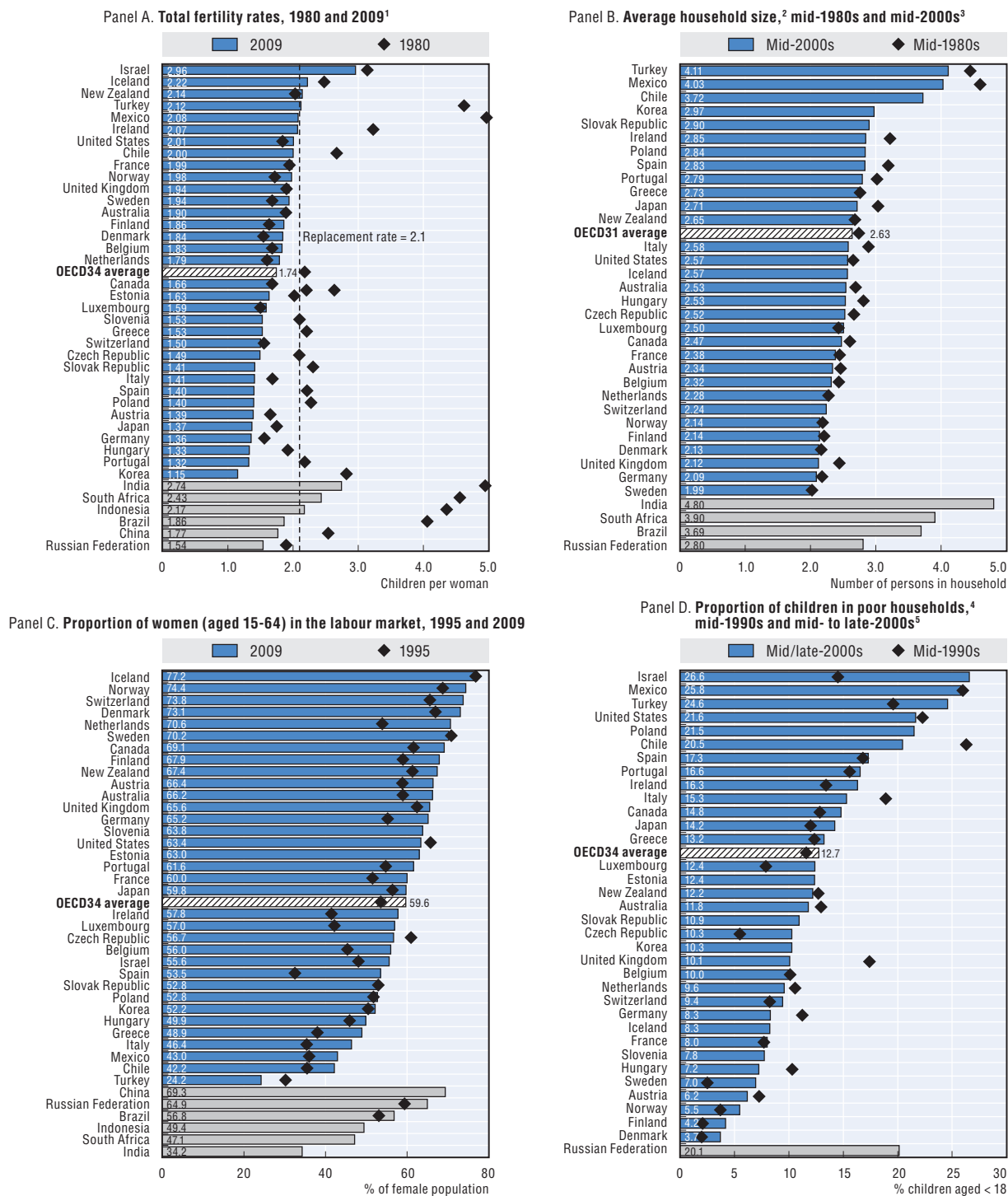
Female educational attainment and female employment participation (Figure 1.1, Panel C) have both risen over the last 30 years. Women have a better chance of fulfilling their labour market aspirations and much needed additional labour supply has been mobilised. And while increased maternal employment has contributed to material wealth among families with children, comparable societal groups without children have also seen similar gains. Poverty rates among households with children, based on a relative poverty concept related to half of equivalised median household income, have increased slightly across the OECD over the past 10 years (Figure 1.1, Panel D).

Issues in family policy, underlying policy objectives and evidence on good practices will be discussed in subsequent chapters. This chapter outlines some of the key indicators that illustrate modern family life and how these affect the well-being of children and parents across the OECD countries and its enhanced engagement partners.<sup>2</sup> The second section provides an overview of the change in family formation over the past thirty years, while the following section illustrates changes in household structure and changes in parent-parent and parent-child relationships. The next section focuses on employment outcomes for parents and what effect this may have on family poverty risks. Before summarising the overall family outcomes, the final section considers child well-being against three key dimensions of material, education and health outcomes.

## Trends in fertility and family formation

In many OECD countries, policy makers are increasingly concerned about adults being able to have as many children as they desire. Fertility behaviour can be constrained for different reasons: the perceived inability to match work and care commitments because of

Figure 1.1. Families are changing



Note: Panel B: Data missing for Estonia, Israel and Slovenia.

1. Data refers to 2007 for Canada; 2008 for Brazil, Chile, China, India and Indonesia.

2. The size of households is determined by members who live in the same dwelling and include dependent children of all ages.

3. Data refers to 2003 for Brazil; 2007 for India and South Africa.

4. Poverty thresholds are set at 50% of the equivalised median household income of the entire population.

5. Data refers to 2008 for Germany, Israel, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United States; 2007 for Canada, Denmark and Hungary; 2006 for Chile, Estonia, Japan and Slovenia; 2005 for France, Ireland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom; 2004 for Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Turkey.

Source: OECD (2010b), OECD Employment Outlook; Provisional data from OECD (2010e), Income Distribution Questionnaires; United Nations Statistical Division, 2010; UNECE, 2010; and national statistical offices, 2010.

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inflexible labour markets and/or the lack of public supports, the financial costs of raising children, and the difficulty for prospective parents in finding affordable housing to establish a family of their own. This section illustrates the main drivers of trends in family formation and how they vary between OECD countries. The restrictions to family formation and related public policy issues are discussed in Chapter 3.

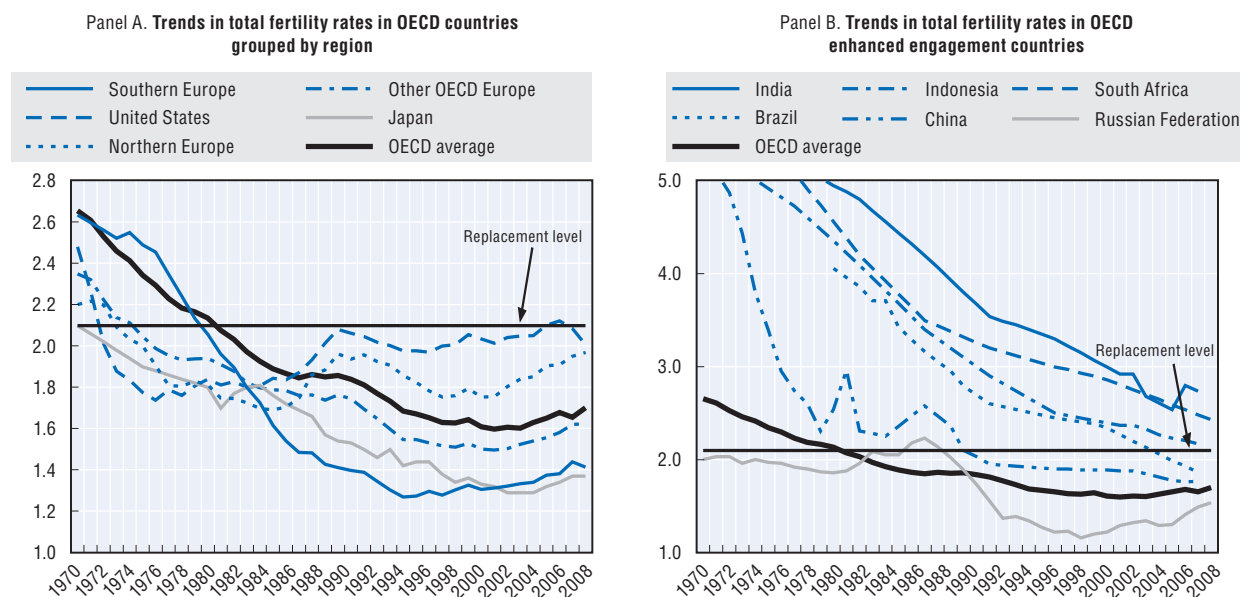
### **Fertility patterns**

Demographic trends involve low and/or declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy in most OECD countries (OECD, 2010a, CO1.2). The resultant ageing populations have led to a decline in the number of women of childbearing ages, and curtailed growth of the potential labour force. In some countries this has already resulted in a sharp decline of the working-age population, as seen in the Russian Federation (OECD, 2011a). The growing number of retirees will lead to higher public (and private) spending on pensions and long-term care supports for the retired population (OECD, 2010b and 2011b). Informal support networks will come under increasing pressure as the declining number of children will lead to a reduction of future informal carers for the elderly population.

Total fertility rates (TFR) among the OECD countries have declined dramatically over the past few decades, falling from an average of 2.7 children per woman in 1970 to just over 1.7 in 2009 (Figure 1.2, Panel A). The average TFR across the OECD bottomed out at 1.6 children per woman in 2002 and has since edged up. Overall, the average TFR across the OECD has been below replacement level since 1982.<sup>3</sup> In 2009, the TFR was around the replacement rate in Ireland, Mexico, Turkey and New Zealand, and it was above replacement level in Iceland (2.2) and Israel (3.0). Historically, the fertility rates were extremely high in all enhanced engagement countries, except for the Russian Federation, with TFRs greater than 5.0 children per woman in the early 1970s. Since then there has been a steady decrease in Brazil, India, Indonesia and South Africa, with the TFR dropping below 3 children per women in all four countries in recent years. In China, where fertility rates were also high, around 4.8 in the early 1970s, there was a large decrease in the late 1970s, and, following the introduction of the one-child policy, the TFR fell to 2.3 in 1979. Since then there has been a continuous drop for the past few decades and the TFR in China currently stands below the replacement level at around 1.8 children per woman (Figure 1.2, Panel B).


The pace of decline in TFR varied widely between countries. In northern European countries, the decline started early but has oscillated around 1.85 children per women since the mid-1970s. By contrast, among southern European countries the decline has been slower, starting in the mid-1970s, but reached an extremely low level of 1.3 in 1994 before slowly starting to edge up. Fertility rates in Japan and Korea (OECD, 2007a) were in decline until 2005. In contrast fertility rates in the United States bottomed in the mid-1970s, and have oscillated around two children per women for the past 20 years. In the Russian Federation, the fertility rates were more stable than in OECD countries in the 1970s, followed by a rise in the 1980s peaking at 2.2 children per woman in 1986. This growth was followed by a sharp decline throughout the 1990s, reaching a low of 1.2 in 1999.

Following the long period of decline, fertility rates began to rise from 2002. Since 2002 the TFR has increased by 0.2 children per woman in Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Poland and Spain; and by 0.3 children per women in the Czech Republic, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom up to 2008 (OECD, 2010a,

Figure 1.2. **Fertility rates have dropped but are beginning to rebound, 1970 to 2009**

Note: Northern Europe includes Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Southern Europe includes Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. Other OECD Europe includes all other OECD European countries.

Source: Eurostat (2010), Eurostat New Cronos Database, and national statistics offices; UN Population Division, 2010, for China.

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SF2.1). Thus, there appears to have been a rebound in fertility in Nordic countries with fertility rates relatively close to the replacement level, and also in some of the so-called “lowest-low” fertility rate countries in southern Europe and the Czech Republic where fertility rates had bottomed around 1.2 children per women. However, TFRs have fallen since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008 in Portugal, Spain and the United States.

The overall decrease in fertility rates over the past three decades has contributed to the decline in the average household size over the same period (Figure 1.1, Panel B). However, despite persistently low fertility rates the average household size in Korea and the Slovak Republic remains well above the OECD average. This is because of the relatively high proportion of multigenerational households in these two low-fertility countries (OECD, 2010a, SF1.1).

### **Postponement of family formation**

Postponement of childbearing is a major reason for the decline in fertility rates. Greater access to contraceptives has given more adults control over the timing and occurrence of births. And as more men and women first want to establish themselves in the labour and housing markets, many adults have chosen to postpone having children. Across the OECD the average age at which women have their first child increased from 24 in 1970 to 28 in 2008 (OECD, 2010a, SF2.3). The average age of first childbirth of women is high, at just below 30 years of age in Germany, Italy, Spain and Switzerland and is highest in the United Kingdom (despite teenage motherhood being more prevalent in the United Kingdom than in most OECD countries, OECD, 2010a, SF2.4).

Postponement of first childbirth generally leads to a narrower age-interval in which women have their children (Chapter 3) and fewer children overall. Comparing 2008

with 1980, the proportion of births of a first child has increased in most European countries, while the share of births of a third or higher order has fallen over the same period, except in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway and Slovenia (OECD, 2010a, SF2.1). As a result, the proportion of large families has fallen, while the number of children growing up without siblings has risen.

### Childlessness

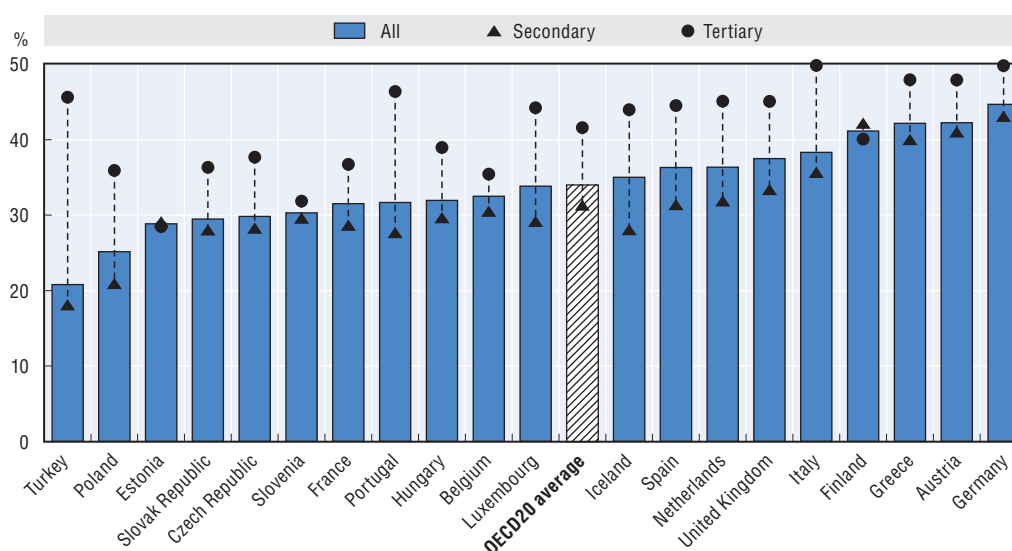
In addition to those women who cannot conceive or those women who have decided not to have any children, the upper limit to the childbearing years, set by the so-called biological clock, makes it difficult for women who postpone having children to give birth at later ages.

The proportion of women who remain childless has increased across the OECD (OECD, 2010a, SF2.5). A greater proportion of women born in the mid-1960s are childless compared with women born in the mid-1950s in most OECD countries, with the exceptions of Mexico, Norway, Portugal and the United States, where there was a decrease in childlessness of less than 2 percentage points. Definitive childlessness is highest in Spain and the United Kingdom, with over 20% of women born in 1965 without any children; it is lowest in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Mexico, Portugal, and Slovenia where less than 10% of women had no children.

Inevitably, the increase in the childlessness rate, along with the drop in the fertility rate, has led to an increase in the proportion of women living in households without children. At least 20% of women aged 25-49 live in households with no children in European OECD countries (Figure 1.3). This is partly due to deferment of childbearing and partly due to the increase in complete childlessness. The proportion of women living in

Figure 1.3. **Women with higher levels of education are more likely to live in households without children, selected OECD countries, 2008**

Proportion of 25-49 year old women living in childless households by level of education<sup>1</sup>



Note: Figures for OECD EU countries and Turkey. Data missing for Denmark, Ireland and Sweden.

1. Women with lower secondary and upper secondary education have been grouped together as category "Secondary".

Source: EU LFS, 2008.

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childless households is particularly high in Austria, Finland, Germany and Greece, where more than 40% of women aged 25-49 live in childless households. Conversely, it is low in Estonia, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Turkey where less than 30% of women live in childless households.

The household childlessness rate is strongly linked to the education level of women, as women with tertiary education are more likely to be in a childless household than women with secondary education in most OECD countries (Figure 1.3). This suggests that the increase in childlessness is more due to the consequences of women deferring childbirth or choosing not to have children, rather than being unable to conceive, as highly educated women choose employment over childbirth. The difference also suggests there is ongoing tension between employment and childbearing. The gap between women of differing educational level is largest in countries with low proportion of women living in childless households, such as Poland and Turkey. Another possible cause behind the increased childlessness among highly educated women is their reluctance to take on a partner who is less educated than themselves, especially in Japan and Korea (Chapter 3). This leads to lower marriage and partnership rates among highly educated women and can subsequently lead to lower fertility rates and childlessness.

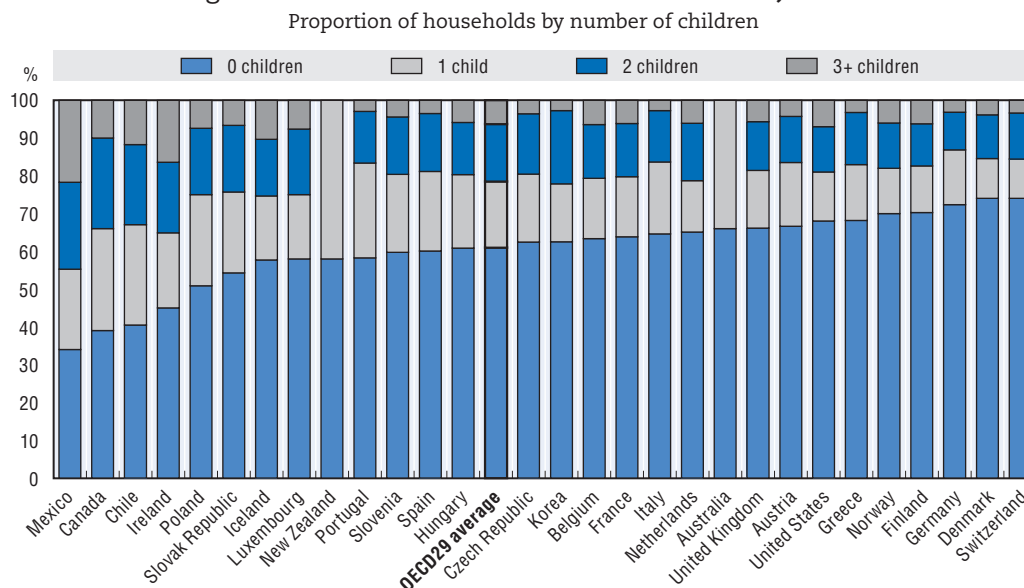
## Changes in household structure

### **Children in households**

Changing family structures, lower fertility rates and ageing populations have led to a growing share of households without children. Figure 1.4 shows that in all OECD countries, except Canada, Chile, Mexico and Ireland, over half of households do not include children. Even households with children predominantly contain only one or two children. The proportion of households with one child is about the same (around 40%) as the proportion of households with two children, except for Austria, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain, where the proportion of households with one child is around 50% of all households with children. The proportion of households with three or more children is below 20% of all households with children, on average, across the OECD, with the exceptions of Chile (20%), Norway (20%), Finland (21%), the United States (22%), Iceland (25%), Ireland (30%) and Mexico (33%).

### **Partnership patterns**

Both falling marriage rates and increasing divorce rates (OECD, 2010a, SF3.1) have contributed to the increase in sole-parent families as well as “reconstituted families”. On average across the OECD, marriage rates have fallen from 8.1 marriages per 1 000 people in 1970 to 5.0 in 2009. There is considerable variation across countries: marriage rates have remained high in Korea, Turkey and the United States but are low in Chile, Luxembourg and Italy. Over the same period the average divorce rate across OECD countries doubled to 2.4 divorces per 1 000 people. Again, the rates vary between countries, with high divorce rates in the United States, Czech Republic and Belgium and low divorce rates in Chile, Italy and Mexico. Thus, overall there are less people getting married, and those getting married are more likely to end up divorcing. The correlation between marriage and divorce rates is moderately strong ( $r = 0.59$ , see Figure 1.A1.1 in the annex), which suggests that high divorce rates reflect the high frequency of marriage in many countries.


Figure 1.4. **Most households have no children, 2008<sup>1</sup>**

Notes: For Australia and New Zealand, households with 1, 2 and 3+ children are grouped as households with 1+ children.

Data missing for Estonia, Israel, Japan, Turkey and Sweden.

1. 2001 for Denmark and Norway; 2002 for Ireland; 2003 for Australia; 2005 for the US; 2006 for Canada, Chile and New Zealand; 2007 for Switzerland.

Source: Australia: Family Characteristics, June 2003; Canada: 2006 Census; Chile: CASEN 2006; EU countries: EU LFS, 2008, NOSOSCO; Ireland: 2002 Census; Korea: KLIPS 2007; Mexico: ENIGH 2007; New Zealand: 2006 Census; Norway: Population and Housing Census 2001; Switzerland: SHP 2008; and US Census Bureau, 2005.

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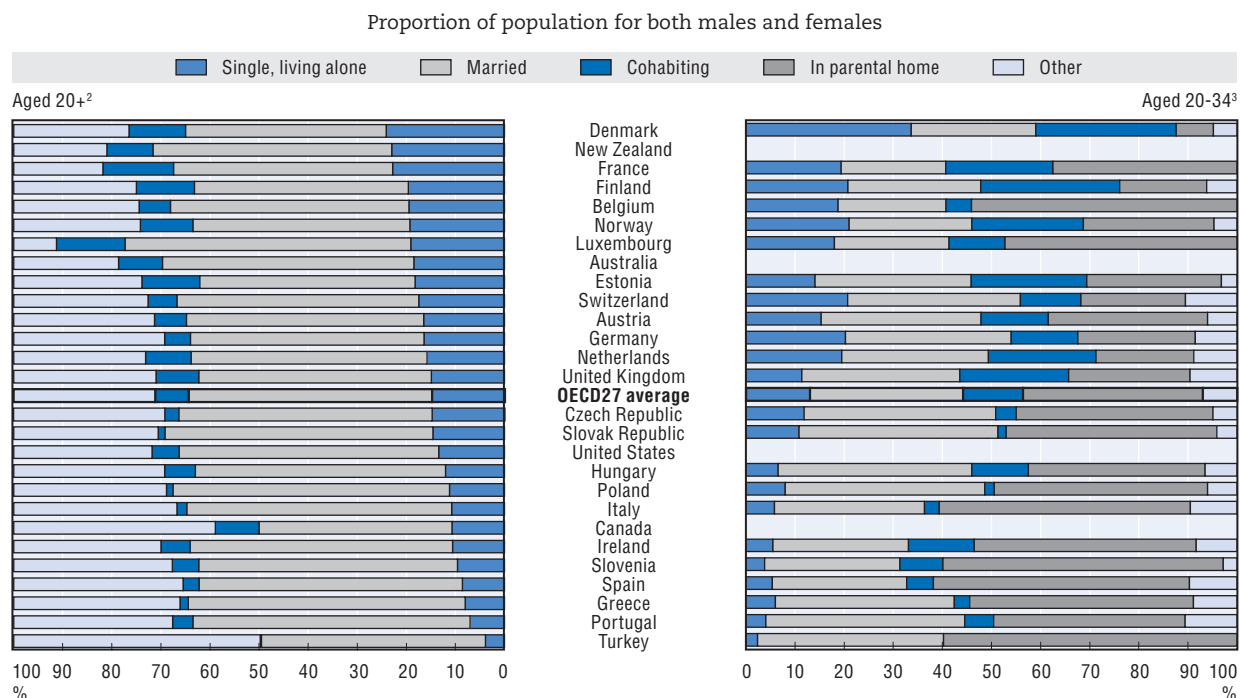
The decline in the marriage rate has been accompanied by an increase in the average age at which first marriages occur (OECD, 2010a, SF3.1). This tendency to defer the age of first marriage is most pronounced in Switzerland where the mean age at first marriage increased by more than seven years from 1980 to 2008. In Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, where cohabitation is becoming increasingly common, women are, on average, over 30 years of age when they marry for the first time.

The decline in marriage rates is related to the emergence of more non-traditional family forms, including relationships that involve partners keeping their own place of residency, “weekend-relationships”, “living apart together” and civil partnerships. Cohabitation is increasing, and because there are more people cohabiting before marriage, people are older when they marry. However, the data show that marriage is still the preferred option of partnership for most couples (Figure 1.5). Regardless of marital or “cohabitational” status, the majority of people opt to partner with someone with similar educational attainment (Box 1.1).

Overall, the partnership patterns are changing between generations. In almost all countries across the OECD the younger generation (aged 20-34) is more likely to be cohabiting than the previous generation at the same age. The younger generation is also less likely to live alone in most of the countries. While cohabitation rates are high in France, and the Nordic and Anglophone countries, they are very low in Greece, Italy, Poland and the Slovak Republic, and negligible in Turkey.



Figure 1.5. **Marriage remains the most common form of partnership among couples, 2000-07<sup>1</sup>**



Note: "Single/living alone" includes sole-parents without partners; "Married" and "Cohabiting" include couples without a third adult present; "Other" includes adults living in households with three or more adults including multi-generational households.

Data missing for Chile, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico and Sweden, and for Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States for those aged 20-34.

1. 2000 for Estonia, Finland, Switzerland and the United States; 2001 for Austria, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom; 2002 for Ireland, Poland, Romania, Slovenia; 2006 for Australia, New Zealand and Canada; 2007 for Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Luxembourg and Turkey.

2. For New Zealand aged from 15 onwards.

3. For Belgium, France, Luxembourg and Turkey aged 25 to 39.

Source: Australia: 2006 Census of Population; Canada: 2006 Census of Population; New Zealand: 2006 Census of Population; for European countries: 2000 Round of Censuses of Population and Housing, except for Belgium, France, Luxembourg and Turkey: EU LFS, 2007; and United States: 2000 Census of Population.

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### Children and parental partnership patterns

In 1970, the mean age of women in the OECD countries at first childbirth was 24.3, 0.3 years after the average age at first marriage. By the mid-2000s, however, the mean age at first marriage (29.7) had risen above the mean age at first childbirth (27.7). Many people now get married after having children or have children without getting married. This has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of children being born outside marriage: the OECD average tripled from 11% in 1980 to almost 33% in 2007 (Figure 1.6). The rate is particularly high among Nordic countries, with Norway, Sweden and Iceland having more births outside of marriage than within. By contrast, births outside marriage are rare in countries where the cohabitation rate is also low such as Greece, Japan and Korea. Unsurprisingly, there is a strong correlation between countries with high cohabitation rates and large proportion of births outside marriage ( $r = 0.69$ , see Figure 1.A1.2 in the annex).

### Box 1.1. Assortative mating

Men and women typically partner with people with similar educational attainment levels as themselves. Among European countries it is most common for both partners to be educated to upper secondary level (table below). In general, men are more likely to have a higher level of education than their partner in most European countries, with the exceptions of Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain.

Belgium, Finland and Ireland have the highest proportion of couples where both partners have completed tertiary education, at around 20% of all couples, while Portugal and Spain have a high proportion of couples, over 60%, where both partners have only completed lower secondary education. This reflects the overall difference in education levels among these countries, especially in Portugal where the proportion of 25-54 year-olds with at least an upper secondary education is among the lowest in the OECD (OECD, 2010a, CO3.1) The proportion of couples where one of the partners is still a student is relatively high in Finland and Hungary (over 5%).

Parental socio-economic background influences the child's educational, earnings and wage outcomes in all OECD countries (OECD, 2010c). Earnings mobility across parents and children (the extent to which children's earnings differ from their parents) is particularly low in France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, while it is high in the Nordic countries, Australia and Canada. In education, the effect of intergenerational transfer is particularly strong in Belgium, France and the United States where a parent's socio-economic status strongly influences the secondary school outcomes of their children. In contrast, the influence is again weak in Nordic countries, Canada and Korea.

#### Distribution of individuals by educational attainment of partners, selected OECD countries, 2008

	Men and women with high level of education	Men with higher education than women	Women with higher education than men	Men and women with medium education	Men and women with low education	One partner is a student
Austria	8.5	29.3	10.7	42.4	8.9	0.1
Belgium	18.7	20.8	19.2	16.4	24.1	0.8
Czech Republic	7.6	18.9	7.8	61.9	3.5	0.3
Finland	19.3	18.2	25.0	19.2	12.8	5.6
France	15.0	20.6	21.8	20.0	21.0	1.5
Germany	13.1	30.3	8.8	39.7	7.4	0.8
Greece	12.3	14.7	14.6	19.7	38.6	0.0
Hungary	12.0	14.7	13.4	37.7	13.6	8.7
Ireland	21.3	14.5	24.6	17.0	19.2	3.4
Italy	6.6	14.4	18.9	19.5	40.6	0.0
Luxembourg	15.4	26.8	15.1	20.9	20.8	0.9
Netherlands	17.7	29.2	17.9	18.1	15.4	1.7
Poland	13.3	12.9	14.5	50.5	8.3	0.5
Portugal	7.3	7.7	14.0	3.9	66.9	0.2
Slovak Republic	9.6	15.3	8.0	58.9	7.8	0.4
Spain	17.8	17.2	18.8	7.4	38.4	0.3
Turkey	5.6	19.6	6.6	6.1	62.0	0.1
United Kingdom <sup>1</sup>	16.5	20.8	18.0	26.8	17.8	–
<b>OECD18 average</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>1.5</b>

Note: Population includes all adults aged 15 or over, Low education = Lower secondary education; Medium education = Upper secondary education; High education = Tertiary education.

1. For the United Kingdom data for the group "One partner is a student" is not available. The proportions in the table are relative to the five groups for which data is available.

Source: EU LFS, 2008.


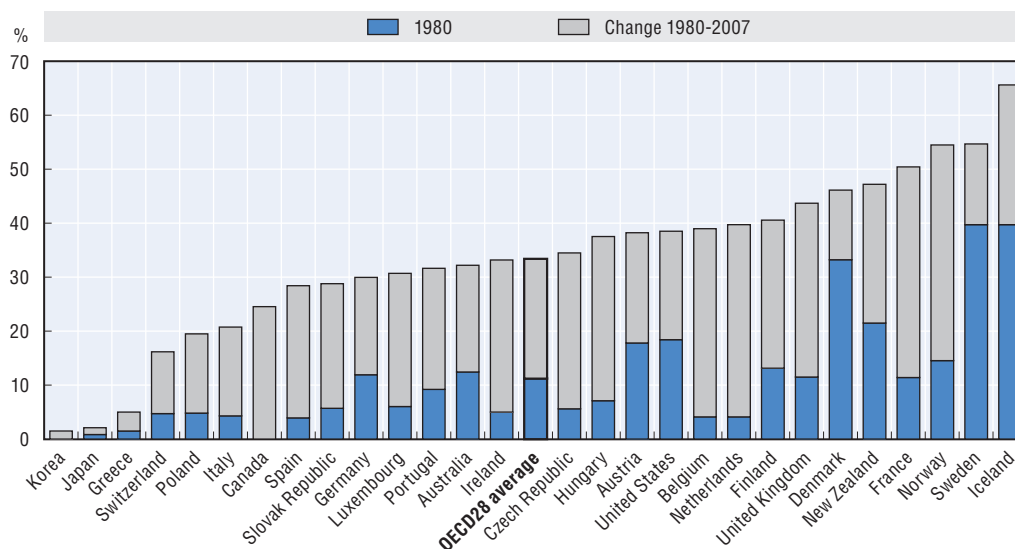
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Figure 1.6. **A sharp increase in the proportion of births outside marriage, 1980 and 2007<sup>1</sup>**



Note: Data missing for Chile, Estonia, Israel, Mexico, Turkey and Slovenia.

1. 2006 for Iceland, Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States; 2005 for Australia and Canada; 1999 for Mexico.

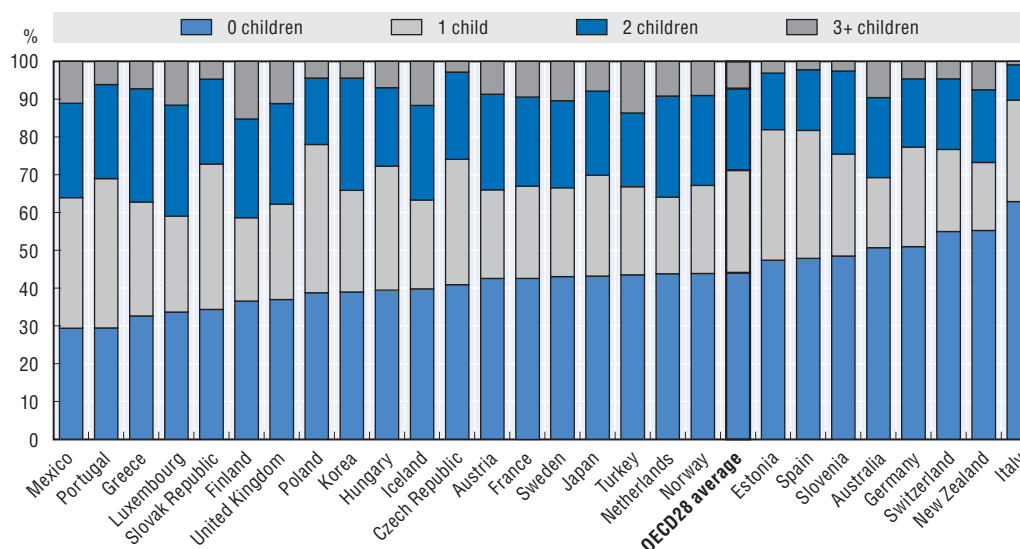
Source: Eurostat (2010), Eurostat New Cronos Database, and national statistical offices.

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Children today are also more likely to end up with divorced parents. Across the OECD, with the exceptions of Australia, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and Switzerland, most divorces involve children. Countries where a high proportion of divorces involve children include Greece, Luxembourg, Mexico, Portugal and the Slovak Republic, where this reaches 65% or more (Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7. **Proportion of divorces involving children, 2007<sup>1</sup>**

Number of children involved in divorces, as a proportion of all divorces



Note: Data missing for Belgium, Chile, Denmark, Israel, Ireland and the United States.

1. 2006: France, Korea, Italy; 2005: Greece, Spain; 2003: Portugal; United Kingdom, Turkey.

Source: UN Statistical Division, 2010.

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In all OECD countries the divorce rate decreases as more children are involved. In the Nordic countries, where there is strong financial support available for children following divorce or separation, and thus less financial constraint following divorce (OECD, 2010a, PF1.5), there is a high proportion of divorces involving two or more children. For example, more than a third of divorces in Finland and Iceland involve two or more children. The proportion of divorces involving two or more children is also high in the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Austria and Korea.

The increase in the proportion of divorces involving children has been accompanied by an increase in sole parenthood over the past few decades (Chapple, 2009). However, only 15% of all children live with one parent only, while nearly 84% of children live with two married or cohabiting parents, on average, across the OECD countries (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1. **Distribution of children<sup>1</sup> by household type, selected OECD countries, 2007**

	Percentage of children living with:				Total	% of children in multigenerational households
	0 parents	1 parent	2 cohabiting parents	2 married parents		
Australia	2.6	16.8	81.0		100	..
Austria	2.2	14.3	7.4	76.1	100	7.5
Belgium	2.5	16.2	13.7	67.7	100	2.2
Canada	0.0	22.1	11.0	66.9	100	..
Czech Republic	0.6	14.9	8.2	76.3	100	7.7
Denmark	1.5	17.9	15.1	65.6	100	0.4
Estonia	1.9	21.8	23.9	52.5	100	12.0
Finland	0.9	14.4	15.8	68.9	100	0.6
France	0.9	13.5	21.0	64.5	100	1.8
Germany	1.3	15.0	5.5	78.2	100	0.9
Greece	1.2	5.3	1.2	92.3	100	6.5
Hungary	0.8	15.4	9.9	73.9	100	11.6
Ireland	1.9	24.3	5.9	67.9	100	4.5
Italy	0.8	10.2	5.2	83.9	100	5.0
Japan	0.0	12.3	87.7		100	..
Luxembourg	0.3	10.2	6.9	82.6	100	2.8
Netherlands	0.3	11.1	13.1	75.5	100	0.3
New Zealand	0.0	23.7	76.3		100	..
Poland	0.8	11.0	9.2	79.0	100	22.0
Portugal	2.9	11.9	9.7	75.5	100	11.6
Slovak Republic	1.1	10.6	3.7	84.7	100	17.6
Slovenia	0.6	10.4	19.5	69.4	100	13.7
Spain	1.2	7.2	7.9	83.7	100	5.8
Sweden	1.3	17.6	30.5	50.6	100	0.3
Switzerland	0.1	15.2	84.7		100	..
United Kingdom	1.4	21.5	12.6	64.5	100	3.4
United States	3.5	25.8	2.9	67.8	100	..
<b>OECD27 average</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>72.5</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>6.6</b>

Notes: The category "2 cohabiting parents" includes unmarried parents and parents in reconstituted households. Data missing for Chile, Iceland, Israel, Korea, Mexico, Norway and Turkey.

1. Children are defined as household members aged under 18; < 15 for Canada and New Zealand.

Source: Iacovou and Skew (2010), *Household Structure in the EU*.

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### Box 1.2. Projecting changes in household structure to 2025-30

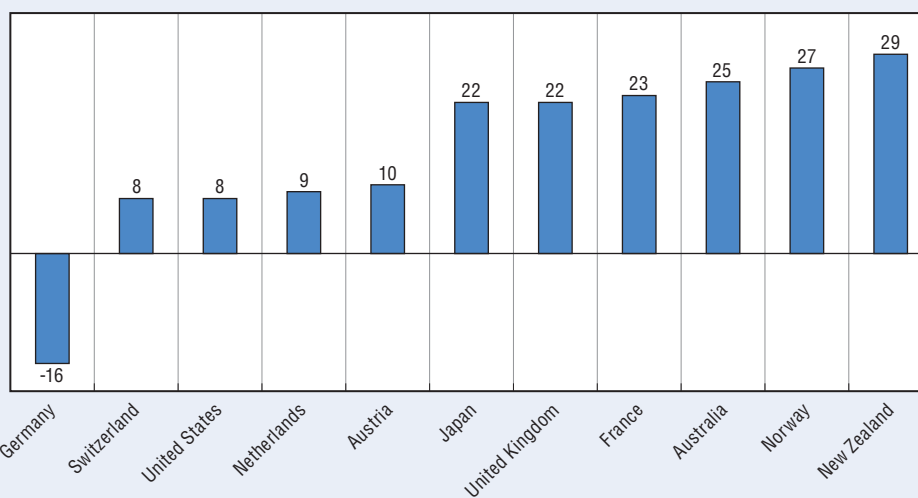
The way family and household structures are likely to evolve in the future is important for forward planning in policy areas including childcare, education, housing, and elderly care. About one-third of OECD countries have produced or commissioned relatively detailed projections to 2025-30 on various aspects of household and family structure, notably one-person households, sole-parent households, and households with or without children. The start dates, time horizons as well as the methods used vary from study to study, making precise comparisons between countries difficult. Nonetheless, the projections reveal strong similarities among many OECD countries with respect to underlying trends.

Much as a consequence of ageing populations, the number of *one-person households* is expected to grow in all the OECD countries for which projections are available. The largest increases are expected in Australia (between 43% and 73% depending on scenario), Korea (43%), New Zealand (71%), and UK (60%).

Data on *sole-parent households* are also available for most countries that have published projections. The consistency of the upward trend across these OECD countries is remarkable, with the bulk of projections to 2025-30 suggesting that numbers are likely to increase by between 22% and 29%. Austria, Netherlands, Switzerland and United States are the countries expecting the lowest increases in sole-parent families (8 to 10%). Germany stands out as the one exception with a projected decrease in sole-parent numbers of 16% by 2025 – the effect of a rise in divorce and separations being unlikely to substantially mitigate that of declining numbers of children.


#### Recent increases in the number of sole-parent households is expected to continue over the next couple of decades, except in Germany

Projected percentage increase in the number of sole-parent families in selected OECD countries, from early/mid-2000s to 2025-30<sup>1</sup>



1. The period over which changes are projected are as follows: Australia (2000 to 2026), Austria (2007 to 2030), France (2005 to 2030), Germany (2000 to 2025), Japan (2000 to 2030), the Netherlands (2009 to 2030), New Zealand (2006 to 2031), Norway (2002 to 2031), Switzerland (2005 to 2030), United Kingdom (2006 to 2031) and United States (2005 to 2030).

Source: OECD (2010d). OECD work is underway exploring likely future changes in household and family structures to 2030, and the challenges these and other long-term changes in economy and society may pose across a range of policy areas. Results will become available in the course of 2011 through [www.oecd.org/futures](http://www.oecd.org/futures).

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**Box 1.2. Projecting changes in household structure to 2025-30 (cont.)**

Sole-parent families are set to increase not only in absolute terms, but also as a proportion of all family households with children. Indeed, by 2025-30 their share is expected to rise in all the OECD countries for which projections are available (OECD, 2010b). However, the effect is likely to be felt more in some countries than in others. For example in Australia, Japan and New Zealand sole-parent families' share of all family households with children could reach well over 30% (up from 28%, 22% and 31% respectively in the mid-2000s). By contrast, in Austria, Germany and Switzerland shares are expected to range between 17% and 19%, showing little change since the mid-2000s.

In the light of past and current fertility rates and increases in life expectancy, it comes as no surprise that almost all the OECD countries for which projections exist are expected to show significant increases to 2025-2030 in the numbers of couples without children. These increases range between 37% and 72% for Australia, Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United States. Germany is projected to see the slowest increase (14%) while Japan could in fact experience a decrease in the number of childless couples.

By contrast, most of these countries expect to see declines in the number of couples with children to 2025-30. The largest decreases are projected for Germany, Japan and Austria (between 15% and 27%), the lowest for Korea and the Netherlands. In contrast, the United States and Australia could see increases in the numbers of couples with children.

Children of divorced parents are more likely to live with just one parent than in reconstituted families. On average across the OECD, almost 10% of children live in reconstituted households, while nearly 15% live in sole-parent households (OECD, 2010a, SF1.3). The proportion of reconstituted families is above-average in Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, the Nordic countries, the United Kingdom and the United States. Reconstituted families are rare in Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey where less than 5% of children live in such households.

Around 1 in 15 children on average across the OECD live in a household with their grandparent (Table 1.1), a consequence of an ageing population. In many countries, sole parents live with their parents to pool resources and gain better access to childcare (see Chapter 5). Multigenerational households are most common in Poland and the Slovak Republic, where more than 15% of children live in multi-generational households, while they are extremely rare in the Nordic countries.

**Work life and family life*****Changing patterns of female labour market participation***

Increasing female participation in higher education (Box 1.3) has contributed to changing female aspirations regarding labour market participation in many OECD countries, with the biggest change in behaviour amongst married mothers (see below). The timing of the resultant increase in female employment has varied across countries. For example, the rise in female employment began in the early 1960s in Australia, New Zealand, the Nordic countries, and the United States (OECD, 1999), whereas the main gains in Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain were recorded over the past two decades (Figure 1.8).

In the early 1980s, Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Mexico, Spain and Turkey had the lowest female labour market participation among the OECD with less than 40% of the female working population in employment (Figure 1.8). Amongst these countries there has been a large increase in female employment in Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain with employment rates exceeding 50% in 2009. There were also modest increases in Greece, Italy and Mexico with employment rates reaching above 40%. However, in Turkey female employment dropped below 25% in 2009.

The Nordic countries historically had the highest female employment rates among the OECD countries and are still among the highest despite drops in the 1990s in Finland, Norway and Sweden. Iceland is the only OECD country with nearly 80% of the female working-age population in employment in 2009.

In the past decade the female employment rate has remained fairly stable across most of the OECD countries, with the exceptions of a noticeable decrease in the United States and a large decrease in Turkey. But the rate dropped in almost every OECD country from 2008 to 2009, reflecting the poor economic situation worldwide (OECD, 2010b). In contrast to most of the OECD countries, there was a slight increase in the female employment rate in the Russian Federation over the last decade, increasing from 56% in 1999 to 65% in 2009.

**Box 1.3. Participation in education by gender: women are now more likely to have a university degree, but they study humanities rather than sciences**

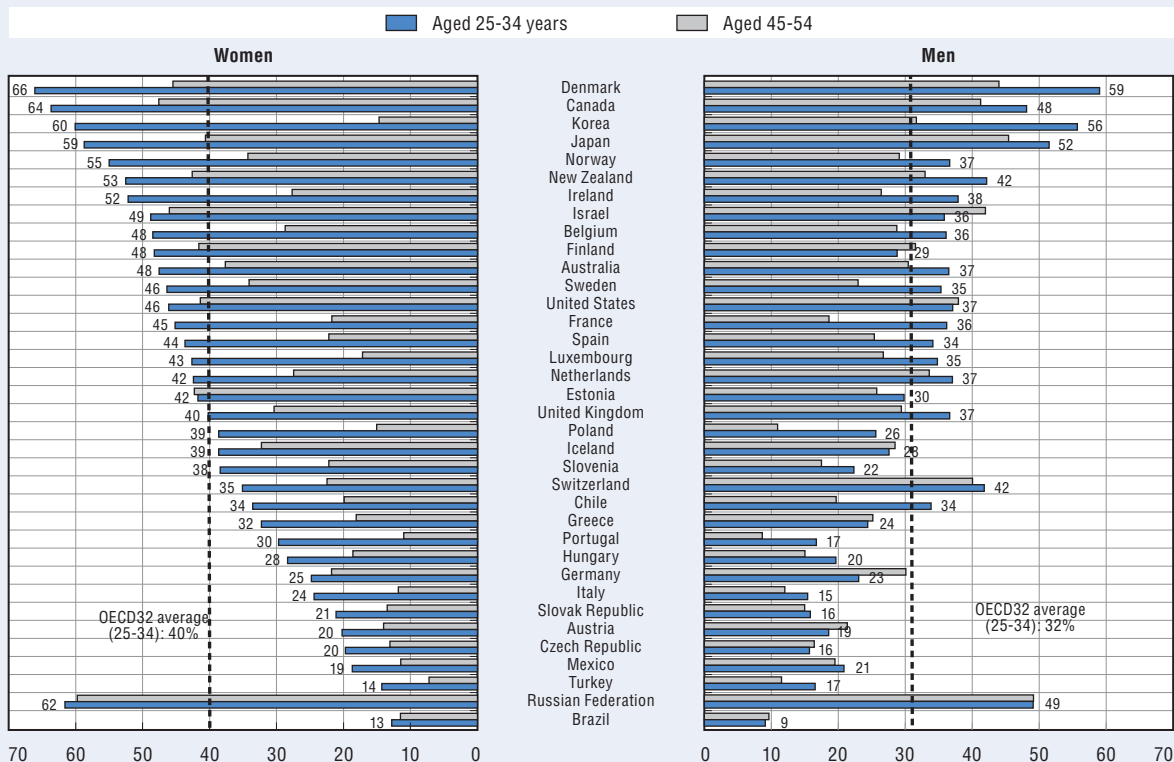
The increase in female educational attainment levels has preceded changes in women's labour market behaviour. The figure below shows that the proportion of younger women with completed tertiary education is higher than for older women in all countries, and the gains have been particularly large in Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland and Spain (more than 20 percentage points) and most pronounced in Korea (over 40 percentage points). In fact, in the majority of OECD countries, and in the Brazil and the Russian Federation, young women have higher levels of educational attainment than their male counterparts: on average across the OECD 40% of women in the age group 25-34 have completed tertiary education compared with 32% of the young men. As with women, young adult men aged 25-34 are more likely to have completed tertiary education compared with their peers in the age cohort 45-54. In some countries gains have been limited (e.g. Austria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Israel, Mexico, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic and the United States), or the proportion of men with tertiary educational attainment decreased, as in Brazil and Estonia.

Women may have overtaken young men in terms of average educational attainment levels, but men and women still engage in different fields of study. While a large proportion of females graduate with degrees in humanities (OECD, 2010a, CO3.2), there is relatively low female participation in science and engineering (Panel B). This gender gap in engineering, manufacturing and construction degrees is particularly large in Ireland, Japan, Switzerland and the Netherlands where less than 20% of graduates are female. In Greece, which has the highest proportion of female participation in engineering degrees, less than 50% of engineering graduates are female. Because older female workers have relatively low average education levels, and younger women in general study arts rather than sciences, differences in labour market outcomes (employment and earnings) for men and women persist (see below).

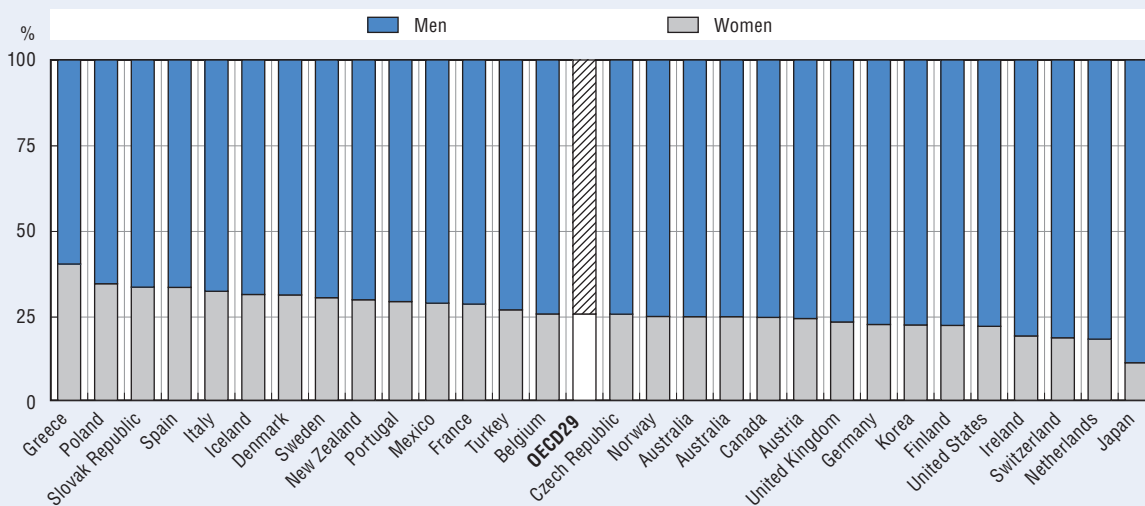
**Box 1.3. Participation in education by gender: women are now more likely to have a university degree, but they study humanities rather than sciences (cont.)**

**Women are more likely than men to have completed tertiary education, 2008**

**Panel A. Proportion of population with at least tertiary education, by gender and age group, 2008<sup>1</sup>**



**Panel B. Proportion of university graduates receiving engineering, manufacturing and construction by gender, 2008**



Note: Panel B: data missing for Chile, Estonia, Israel, Luxembourg and Slovenia.

1. 2002 for the Russian Federation.

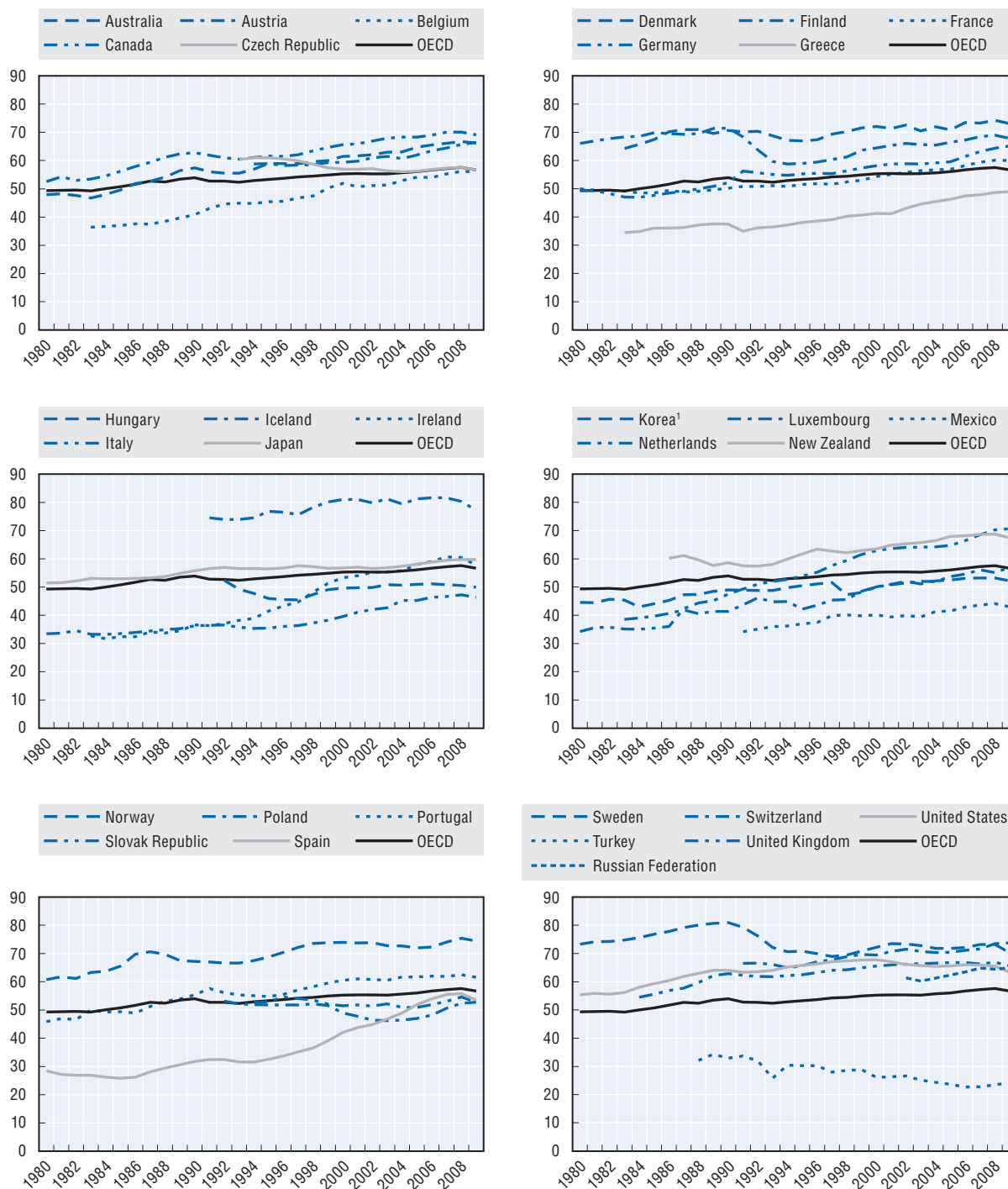
Source: OECD (2010i), *Education at a Glance*, for Panel A; OECD (2010a), *OECD Family Database*, CO3.2 for Panel B.

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Figure 1.8. **Women are increasingly participating in paid work, 1980 to 2009**

As a percentage of the working population (15-64)



Note: Data missing for Chile, Estonia, Israel and Slovenia.

1. For Korea data refers to ages 15-59 prior to 1989.

Source: OECD Database on Labour Force Statistics, 2010.

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### **Gender differences in paid and unpaid work remain**

Despite the improvement in female participation in the labour market, gender inequalities persist. While over 70% of prime-aged women (25-54 year-olds) are employed on average across the OECD, the figure is over 85% for men, resulting in a gender employment gap of around 15 percentage points (Table 1.2). There are large cross-country differences in the employment rate gender gap. The gap is below 5 percentage points in Estonia, the Nordic countries and Slovenia. By contrast, the gender employment gap for prime-age workers is over 30 percentage points in Chile and Mexico, and very high in Turkey at over 50 percentage points.

There are also gender gaps in the intensity of employment participation. In all OECD countries, a much larger share of female employment is part-time when compared with male employment, with the OECD average for women at 21.7% compared with only 4.4% for men. The largest gaps in the share of part-time/full-time employment among men and women are in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom where over 35% of female employees work part-time. The gap is smallest in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Portugal, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia where less than 10% of female employment is part-time. In contrast to the OECD countries the gender gap is low in the Russian Federation where the average for women is almost on par with the average for men (2.4% at 4.0%), and is lower than the average for men in most OECD countries.

Women are also more likely than men to have a temporary rather than a permanent employment contract (Table 1.2), particularly in Finland, Japan and Korea. In contrast, women in Estonia, Hungary, Mexico and the Russian Federation, where a large proportion work in the public sector, are more likely to have a permanent contract than their male counterparts. In particular the proportion of employed men with temporary contracts is very high in Mexico, Poland and Spain with over 20% of male employment being temporary.

The gender gap is also very large for managerial and supervisory jobs. Although the number of reported jobs with management and supervisory responsibility varies from country to country, women in Japan and Korea have the most difficulty getting through to the top with less than 10% of management jobs occupied by women. Women have the best career prospects in Canada, France, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic and the United States, with over 35% of management jobs occupied by women.

Overall, despite the improvement of the labour market situation for women, significant differences in gender employment outcomes remain across the OECD. To some extent this reflects past education and labour market outcomes (older women have lower average levels of education and are unlikely to have strong labour force attachment), but is also related to women's self-selection to employment in sectors with family-friendly workplace practices (often in the public sector) or working under less favourable employment conditions (e.g. temporary contracts). Together these factors contribute to persistent gender wage gaps. The wage gap has reduced over time but in most OECD countries the median female wage was still less than 90% of the median male wage in 2008 (see Figure 1.A1.3, Panel A in the annex). Two notable exceptions are Hungary and Italy where the median female wage is almost the same as the median male wage, which for Hungary is related to the recent increase in wages in the public sector where a large proportion of women are employed. To some extent, the low wage gap in Hungary and Italy is also due to selection of highly qualified women in the labour market (both Hungary and Italy have low female employment rates, see above). In Belgium, Greece, New Zealand and Norway, the wage gap is also small with the female median wage

Table 1.2. Selected labour market statistics for 25-54 year-olds, by gender, 2007-09

	Employment rates, 2009 <sup>1</sup>		Share of part-time employment in total employment, 2009 <sup>2</sup>		Share of temporary employment in dependent employment, <sup>3</sup> 2009 <sup>4</sup>		Proportion of managers who are female, 2007 <sup>5</sup>
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	
Australia	72.1	86.3	33.9	6.4	6.6	4.3	..
Austria	79.5	88.5	33.0	4.2	5.1	4.0	26.8
Belgium	73.8	85.7	30.4	5.0	7.9	4.6	34.0
Canada	77.2	83.5	19.7	5.6	9.7	8.6	37.8
Chile	52.8	86.3	13.9	4.0	..	..	..
Czech Republic	74.1	90.5	4.2	0.8	6.4	4.3	28.9
Denmark	82.9	87.2	15.0	5.7	8.0	5.0	27.7
Estonia	75.5	77.4	8.6	3.7	1.3	2.8	..
Finland	80.4	84.4	9.6	4.6	16.6	8.1	27.4
France	76.6	87.6	21.1	4.0	11.6	7.9	37.9
Germany	75.4	86.1	38.9	5.6	9.9	8.8	27.9
Greece	62.2	88.4	14.0	3.9	13.2	9.9	27.9
Hungary	66.9	78.9	3.9	1.7	7.0	8.5	35.1
Iceland	80.6	86.9	18.2	5.0	8.2	6.0	31.1
Ireland	67.1	78.0	34.8	7.7	7.1	5.2	30.7
Israel	68.3	79.6	20.4	5.1	..	..	..
Italy	59.1	84.7	30.2	4.5	13.3	8.7	33.5
Japan	67.6	91.3	30.5	5.0	19.7	4.3	9.6
Korea	59.8	86.3	11.0	4.0	22.9	13.6	7.8
Luxembourg	71.4	90.8	31.0	3.4	5.9	4.0	21.3
Mexico	51.1	90.2	26.7	5.0	10.3	22.2	..
Netherlands	79.6	90.7	55.5	6.0	15.0	11.1	27.6
New Zealand	74.2	87.5	30.4	5.3	..	..	23.0
Norway	83.5	88.3	22.2	5.4	10.6	4.2	31.7
Poland	71.6	83.7	11.1	3.1	22.3	22.6	36.1
Portugal	74.9	84.5	8.9	2.2	21.2	18.6	31.8
Slovak Republic	71.2	84.2	3.4	1.6	3.2	3.6	38.2
Slovenia	83.2	86.4	5.4	3.1	12.6	10.1	..
Spain	63.8	77.3	20.0	3.3	25.9	22.8	32.9
Sweden	81.9	86.9	14.1	5.1	13.2	8.9	31.6
Switzerland	80.6	92.9	47.4	5.4	7.0	6.2	21.2
Turkey	27.6	77.9	22.4	4.5	10.0	9.3	..
United Kingdom	74.4	85.4	35.1	5.5	4.9	3.8	34.4
United States	70.2	81.5	13.6	4.1	3.4	3.5	36.7
<b>OECD34 average</b>	<b>70.9</b>	<b>85.5</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>29.3</b>
Russian Federation	81.2	86.4	4.0	2.4	11.5	16.6	..

1. Data refers to 2008 for Israel.

2. Data refers to 2004 for Mexico; 2007 for Chile and Israel.

3. Dependent employment = Total employment – Self-employment.

4. Data refers to 2004 for Mexico; 2005 for the United States.

5. Data refers to 2000 for Canada, Iceland, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Slovak Republic and Switzerland.

Source: OECD Database on Labour Force Statistics, 2010.

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more than 90% of the male median wage. At the other end of the spectrum, the wage gap is large in Japan and Korea with the median female wage less than 70% of the median male wage.

The gender wage gap is greater for top earners in most OECD countries reflecting the low proportion of women in managerial positions. The top quintile female wage is less than 90% of the top quintile male wage for all OECD countries studied, except Belgium, Greece, Italy, Poland and Spain. As with the median wage, the largest gap is in Japan and Korea where the top quintile female wage is around 60% of the top quintile male wage.

These gender employment and wage gaps can also be related to the period of family formation. Employment rates for men and women tend to be similar during their twenties, but patterns diverge when adults become parents. Paternal employment behaviour is not that different from men in general (although in some countries, *e.g.* Australia and the United Kingdom, men often increase working hours after becoming fathers (OECD, 2010a, LMF2.1 and LMF2.2)), but in many countries female employment participation drops when young children are present in households.

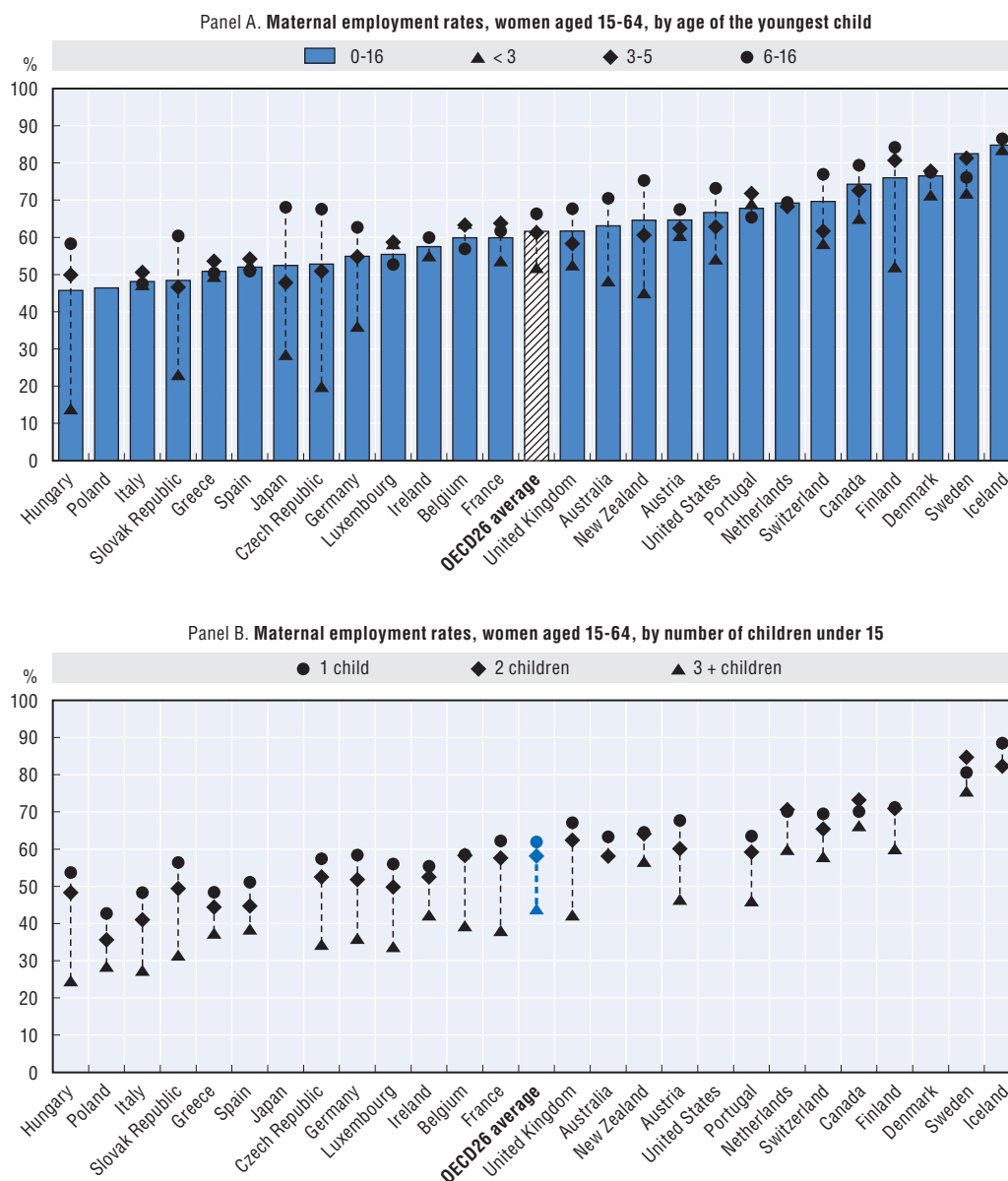
Employers are aware that mothers have to make work and family choices. In fact, many employers expect women, regardless of their level of educational attainment to withdraw (at least temporarily) from the labour force upon marriage and/or childbirth, and are therefore, more likely to consider women less committed to their career than men. As a result, employers are less likely to invest in female workers and their career prospects. To some extent this is a vicious circle: as female workers have limited incentives to pursue a career if they perceive the likelihood of moving upwards to be more limited than for men, they are more likely to leave the labour force, thus reinforcing the stereotype. These features apply to most OECD labour markets to some degree, but are particularly pronounced in Asian OECD countries, where the choice between a career and motherhood is a stark one. In Asian OECD countries, many women either have children or remain in work: the constraints to labour force participation of women who do have children leads to a considerable waste of human resources and can negatively affect child poverty (see below), whereas the fact that many women choose not to have children will have significant implications for the face of future societies.

### **Parents in work**

The growth in the proportion of women in the labour force is strongly related to the growing numbers of mothers re-entering the labour force or remaining in employment. On average across OECD countries in 2007, more than six out of ten mothers with dependent children (aged 0-16) were in paid employment (Figure 1.9, Panel A). There is, however, considerable cross-national variation. At below 50%, employment rates for mothers with dependent children (0-16) were lowest in Hungary, Italy, Poland and the Slovak Republic. In contrast, more than two out of three mothers were in paid employment in Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States, with maternal employment rates highest in Nordic countries at around 75% or more.

Virtually all employed mothers take a short break from paid work just before birth and during the first few months after a child's birth. After this period, differences in national parental leave and childcare support arrangements contribute to different labour force behaviour of mothers (Chapter 4). Figure 1.9, Panel A shows that in many countries maternal employment rates rebound when children are three to five years of age, and maternal employment rates often increase further when children enter primary school around the age of six. But the data also mask considerable cross-national differences in the dynamics of employment relationships. For example, in Australia and New Zealand mothers often reduce hours of work per week to care for young children and increase hours when children go to primary school at age five, in contrast to the Netherlands and Switzerland where part-time employment is a more permanent feature for mothers with children throughout childhood (OECD, 2007b). The change in the prevalence and nature of employment among mothers as their children grow older is discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4.

Figure 1.9. **Most mothers are in paid work, especially when children go to school, 2007<sup>1</sup>**



Note: In both panels countries ordered in ascending order of maternal employment rate with youngest child aged 0-16. Panel A: For Australia, Iceland and Ireland children aged < 2 and 3-5 are grouped together as children aged under 6. Panel B: For Australia and Iceland the “two children” group represents “2 + children”.

Data missing for Chile, Estonia, Israel, Korea, Mexico, Norway, Slovenia and Turkey.

1. 1999 for Denmark; 2001 for Belgium, Canada and Japan; 2002 for Finland, Iceland and Italy; 2003 for Sweden; 2005 for Australia; 2006 for Switzerland.

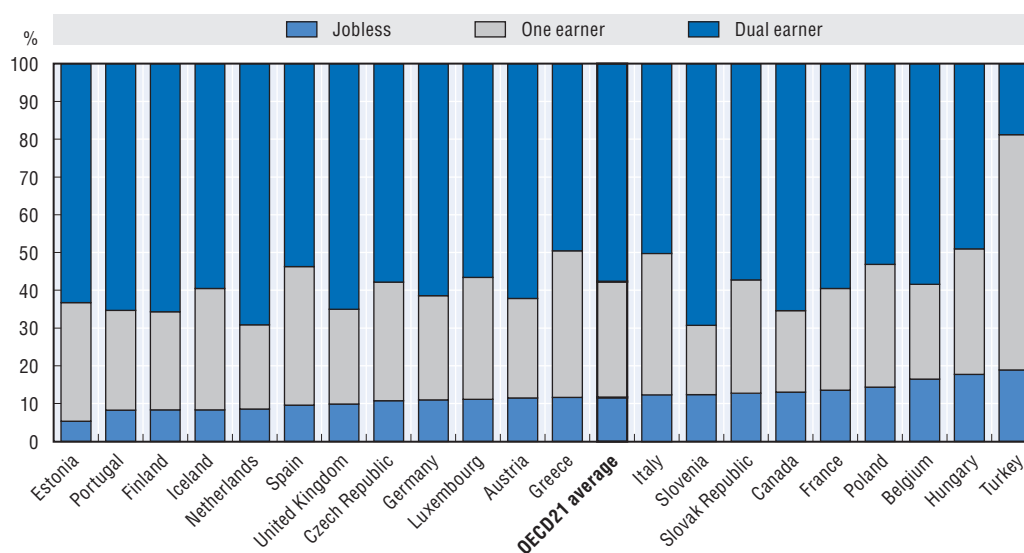
Source: Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005); Statistics Canada (2001 data); Statistics Denmark (1999 data); Statistics Finland (2002 data); Statistics Iceland (2002 data for women age 25-54); Japanese authorities (2001 data); Swiss LFS (2006 2nd quarter data); UK Office of National Statistics (2005 data); and the US Current Population Survey (2005 data). All other EU countries, European Labour Force Survey (2005 data, except for Italy which concerns 2003).

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Employment rates tend to be lower for mothers with a greater number of dependent children (Figure 1.9 Panel B). In 2007, on average almost 60% of mothers with one child were in paid employment, while this was about 55% for mothers with two children. In Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Spain, less than half of mothers with two or more children were in paid employment in 2007. Maternal employment rates tail off even further in the presence of a third child, to below 30% in Hungary, Italy and Poland.

Looking across the OECD, the increase in female and maternal employment has led to an increase in the share of couple families where both adults are in paid employment. In most countries the male breadwinner household has now been replaced by dual-earner couples: on average nearly 60% of couples are now dual-earner families (Figure 1.10).

Figure 1.10. **Most couples are dual-earner families, selected OECD countries, 2008**



Note: Figures for OECD EU countries, Canada and Turkey. Data missing for Denmark, Ireland and Sweden.

Source: EU LFS, 2008.

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### Joblessness and poverty among households

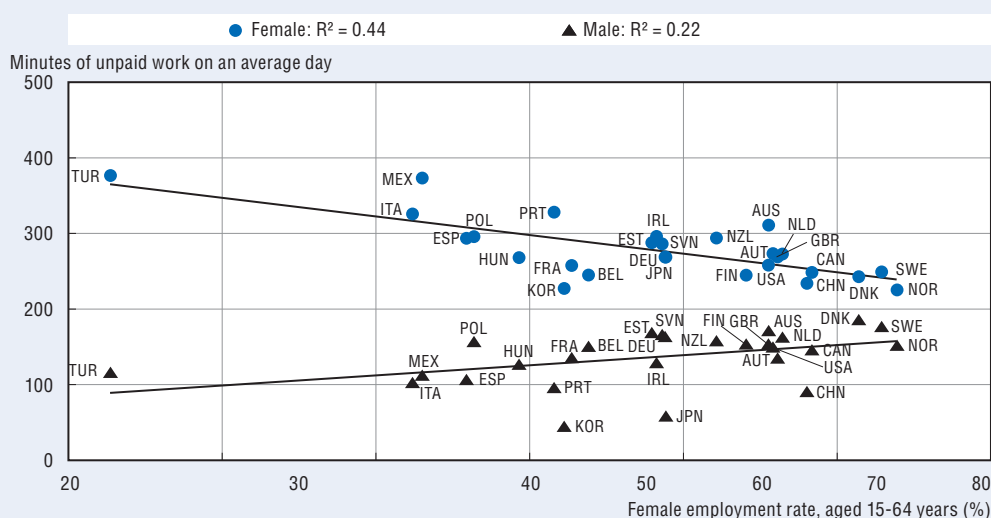
The economic vulnerability of families is linked to parents' incapacity to reconcile employment and parenthood. The most disadvantaged families with children are those where no adults are in paid employment. Joblessness is generally much higher for sole-parent families than for couples with children, and the growth in the incidence of sole-parent families has been a significant contributor to trends in family joblessness (the various policies geared towards improving the labour force participation of sole-parent families are discussed in Chapter 6). Thus, children in couple households are less likely to be living with jobless parents than children in sole-parent households (OECD, 2010a, LMF1.1). In all countries studied, more than 80% of children living in couple households have at least one parent in full-time employment with the proportion particularly high in Japan and the United States. The share of children living in couple households where both parents are employed is also high, particularly in Slovenia, Portugal and the United States, where more than 60% of children live in couple households with both parents

### Box 1.4. Unpaid work and time spent on parenting by fathers and mothers

The burden of unpaid work can often contribute to gender inequality. Care activities constitute one of the main forms of unpaid work and there are large differences in the time contributed to care work by women and men. Even in families without children, women contribute a substantial part of their time to care work. At the extreme end, women aged 25-44 devote nearly 8% of their time to care work in Mexico, while men of the same age spend only 3% of their time (OECD, 2010a, LMF2.5). This gender gap increases with the number of children in the family. In families with two or more children, women in Germany, Finland, Mexico and the United Kingdom spend over 20% of their time on care, compared with less than 10% of men's time spent on care. In contrast, women in Canada, France and the United States spend less than 13% of their time on care activities. Although the proportion of time spent on care varies between countries the proportion of women whose primary activity is care work is fairly constant across the OECD at 2-4% of the female working population.

In countries with high rates of female employment more men spend time on unpaid work (see Figure below). However, in all OECD countries women spend more time on unpaid work in an average day than men regardless of the level of female employment in the country, due in part to women working shorter hours and taking up more parental leave. In Norway, where the female employment rate is more than 75% men spend more than two hours on unpaid work on an average day, while women spend less than 4 hours per day on unpaid work. In Mexico, where the female employment rate is one of the lowest among the OECD countries at just 43%, women spend a disproportionately large amount of time in unpaid work: more than six hours on average per day. This suggests that many women in Mexico carry out unpaid work on top of some paid work. The amount of time spent on unpaid work is lowest in Korea for both men and women, with women spending around 3.5 hours and men spending less than one hour each day on unpaid work.

#### Men's unpaid work increases with national levels of women's employment, while women's unpaid work decreases, selected OECD countries, 2007



Note: Data missing for Austria, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic and Turkey.

Source: Miranda (2011), "Cooking, Cleaning and Volunteering: Unpaid Work around the World".

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392875>

**Box 1.4. Unpaid work and time spent on parenting  
by fathers and mothers (cont.)**

In general, women spend at least twice as much time on care work (for children and adults) as a primary activity than men. The largest differences are recorded for Japan and Turkey where women spent on average 4 and 6 times more time on care work than men, respectively (OECD, 2010a, LMF2.5).

Gender inequality also persists in child-related leave policies (OECD, 2007b). Mothers are entitled to paid leave with employment protection in all OECD countries except the United States. Legal entitlements to paternity leave exist in around half of OECD countries with payment rates at 100% of salary, but duration is considerably shorter. For example, in Austria, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain, paternity leave amounts to three days or less (Chapter 4 and OECD, 2010a, PF2.1 and PF 2.2).

working full-time. Given that joblessness greatly increases the chances of a household being poor, couple households can act as a protection for children against poverty as such households are less likely to be jobless.

A significant minority of families in work are poor (as measured with respect to half the median disposable household income). Sole-parent families with a working adult generally have higher poverty rates than two-parent households where only one parent is employed, with the exceptions of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Portugal (Whiteford and Adema, 2007). But joblessness is still the major poverty risk especially among sole-parent families. In almost all countries, poverty rates among non-employed lone parents are at least twice as high as among those with paid work (Table 1.3), while poverty rates among couples with children where neither parent is employed are, on average, three times higher than where one parent is employed, and more than ten times higher than where both parents are employed.

It is a particular worry that in most OECD countries, poverty risks have shifted over the past 20 years towards families with children (Förster and Mira d'Ercole, 2005). In many countries, families with children are disproportionately likely to be poor; only in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Norway and Sweden do children face lower risks of poverty than the national average. Israel and Mexico have the highest rate of child poverty in the OECD with more than a quarter of children living in poor households. The poverty rate is also high in Chile, Poland, Turkey and the United States at over 20% (Table 1.3).

**Public benefits for families**

With the current economic crisis, and the shift in poverty risks towards households with children, it is important for countries to provide support for families, especially for those with elevated poverty risks such as sole-parent and jobless households. Most governments provide support to families in the form of cash benefits (Figure 1.11): cash benefits make up more than 40% of public spending on families in all OECD countries except France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United States. In Korea, where public social benefits are low overall, cash benefits are extremely low making up less than 5% of all public spending on families. On the contrary, tax breaks for families are low in most OECD countries. Tax breaks only constitute a significant proportion of public family spending in Canada, Germany, Japan, Poland and the United States where they account for over 30% of spending on families.



**Table 1.3. Children in sole-parent families face an elevated poverty risk, mid- to late-2000s<sup>1</sup>**

Poverty rates for children and for families by employment status, percentages

	Children (0-17)	Sole parent		Two parents		
		Not working	Working	No worker	One worker	Two workers
Australia	11.8	67.8	6.1	50.8	7.9	1.0
Austria	6.2	51.3	10.5	36.3	4.5	2.9
Belgium	10.0	43.2	10.1	36.1	10.6	2.5
Canada	14.8	90.5	29.6	79.4	28.7	4.1
Chile	20.5	87.2	37.6	32.8	27.2	5.8
Czech Republic	10.3	71.4	10.3	43.2	9.5	0.7
Denmark	3.7	33.9	5.1	29.2	7.8	0.6
Estonia	12.4	94.5	29.2	75.4	16.3	3.1
Finland	4.2	46.3	5.6	23.4	8.9	1.1
France	8.0	35.8	14.6	18.1	8.7	3.0
Germany	8.3	46.2	11.6	23.2	3.7	0.6
Greece	13.2	83.6	17.6	39.2	22.1	4.0
Hungary	7.2	30.8	21.3	9.6	6.5	3.1
Iceland	8.3	22.9	17.1	51.0	28.8	4.1
Ireland	16.3	74.9	24.0	55.4	15.7	1.9
Israel	26.6	81.1	29.6	86.4	37.5	3.6
Italy	15.3	87.6	22.8	79.3	22.5	2.7
Japan	14.2	52.5	54.6	37.8	11.0	9.5
Korea	10.3	23.1	19.7	37.5	9.5	5.3
Luxembourg	12.4	69.0	38.3	27.4	15.8	5.3
Mexico	25.8	48.2	31.6	68.7	34.7	11.2
Netherlands	9.6	56.8	23.2	63.1	14.6	1.8
Norway	5.5	42.5	5.9	45.4	7.3	0.2
New Zealand	12.2	75.7	14.0	68.6	9.3	1.0
Poland	21.5	74.9	25.6	51.2	28.4	5.7
Portugal	16.6	90.2	26.2	53.2	34.3	4.8
Spain	17.3	78.0	32.2	70.6	23.2	5.1
Slovak Republic	10.9	65.9	23.9	66.0	18.2	1.8
Slovenia	7.8	72.8	19.6	76.6	22.0	2.1
Sweden	7.0	54.5	11.0	46.0	18.5	1.4
Switzerland	9.4	21.6		7.6		
Turkey	24.6	43.6	31.9	28.1	18.9	20.2
United Kingdom	10.1	39.1	6.7	35.8	9.0	1.0
United States	21.6	91.5	35.8	84.1	30.6	6.6
<b>OECD34 average</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>49.4</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>3.9</b>
Russian Federation	20.1	56.0	24.5	57.2	29.8	15.0

Note: The child poverty rate is defined as the share of children living in households with equivalised incomes less than 50% of the median for the entire population.

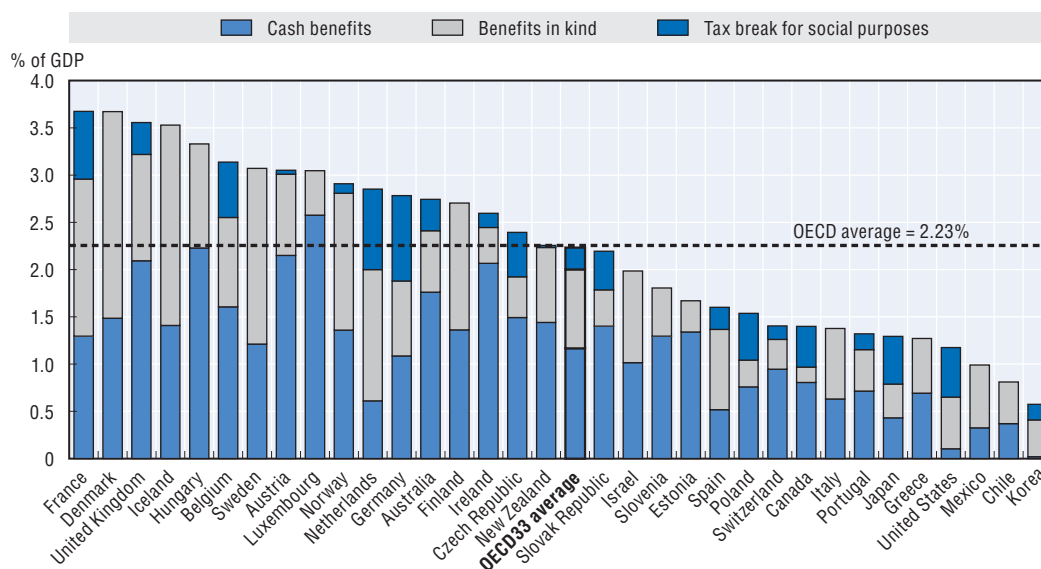
1. Data refers to 2008 for Germany, Israel, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United States; 2007 for Canada, Denmark and Hungary; 2006 for Chile, Estonia, Japan and Slovenia; 2005 for France, Ireland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom; 2004 for Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Turkey.

Source: Provisional data from OECD (2010e), *Income Distribution Questionnaires*.

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Overall, the average OECD public spending on families is around 2¼% of GDP. The highest spending, more than 3% of GDP, is in Austria, Belgium, Iceland, Luxembourg, Denmark, France, Hungary, Sweden and the United Kingdom while it is lowest in Chile, Korea and Mexico where the government spends less than 1% of GDP on families.

Figure 1.11. **Public spending on family benefits in cash,<sup>1</sup> services<sup>2</sup> and tax measures, in percentage of GDP, 2007**



Note: Public support accounted here only concerns public support that is exclusively for families (e.g. child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and childcare support). Spending in other social policy areas such as health and housing support also assists families, but not exclusively, and is not included here. Data on tax breaks towards families is not available for Chile, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Israel and Slovenia. Coverage of spending on family services (including childcare) may be limited as such services are often provided, and/or co-financed, by local governments. This can make it difficult to get an accurate view of public support for families across, especially but not exclusively, in federal countries.

Data missing for Turkey. Data on tax breaks towards families are not available for Chile, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Israel and Slovenia.

1. Cash benefits include family allowance, maternity and paternity leave and other cash benefits.

2. Services include day-care/home-care help service and other benefits in kind.

Source: OECD (2010f), *Social Expenditure Database*; and Adema, Fron and Ladaique (2011).

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## Child well-being

Child well-being is a multidimensional concept. However, for the purposes of this report we focus on three commonly-agreed dimensions only: material well-being, education and health (OECD, 2009a),<sup>4</sup> and also discuss subjective well-being among children. This selection of indicators also aims to cover outcomes for children at different stages of childhood: with material well-being representing the whole of childhood, health indicators covering the early years, and educational outcomes reflecting experiences in the later years.

### Material well-being: household income

A number of OECD countries, and the European Union more recently, have set income poverty targets in past years (European Union, 2010). However, even though the equivalised household income for families with children has increased in absolute terms over the past 20 years (Figure 1.12), these increases have not translated to lower relative child poverty (Figure 1.1, Panel D). Indeed, rates of income poverty among children have increased slightly during this period (see Chapter 5 for more detail).

Figure 1.12. **Average incomes in households with children are rising steadily in absolute terms across the OECD, 1985 to 2005**

Income levels relative to OECD average income in 2005  
(OECD average income in 2005 = 100)



Notes: Equivalised median household income for households with children aged 0-17 has been anchored to the unweighted OECD average for 2005 data (given a score of 100).

Data missing for Chile, Estonia, Slovenia, Israel, the Netherlands, Spain and Turkey.

Source: Provisional data from OECD (2010e), *Income Distribution Questionnaires*.

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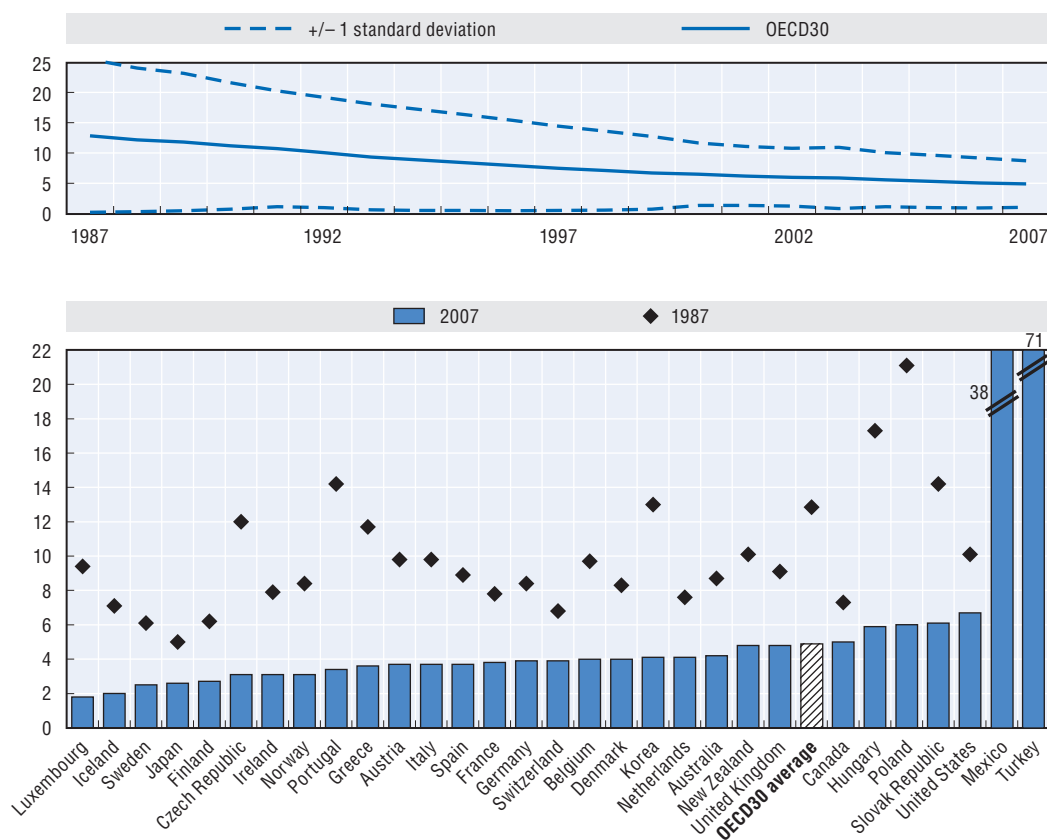
Across the OECD, the income for families with children has increased by an average of 25% between 1985 and 2005, with the increase particularly strong since 1995. Around one-third of countries have seen unabated increases; the remaining countries have witnessed some income fluctuation (with most of the drops being around the mid-90s), but there is an overall increase for all countries.

**Health outcomes: infant mortality and low birth weight**

Two important measures of child health outcomes are infant mortality rates and low birth weights. In 2007, infant mortality was low or extremely low in most OECD countries (Figure 1.13), and there have been improvements in all OECD countries on this front in the past 20 years. Japan, along with most northern European countries, had the lowest rate of infant deaths in 2005 (two to three per 1 000). Mexico and Turkey are outliers and had substantially higher infant mortality rates than other OECD countries at rates of 16 and 21 per 1 000 births, respectively.

**Figure 1.13. In the past 20 years the numbers of infant deaths have fallen: there has been clear convergence on this front, 1987 to 2007**

Number of deaths of children under one year of age that occurred in a given year per 1 000 live births



Notes: OECD average and standard deviation are unweighted. Some variation in infant mortality rates is related to differences in registration practices of premature babies. For example, in Canada, Nordic countries and the United States, very premature babies (with relatively low odds of survival) are registered as live births, which can increase mortality rates compared with other countries that do not. For more detail, see OECD Health Data 2009. Data missing for Chile, Estonia, Israel and Slovenia. The values above the columns for Mexico and Turkey refer to the figure for 1987. See the Statlink.

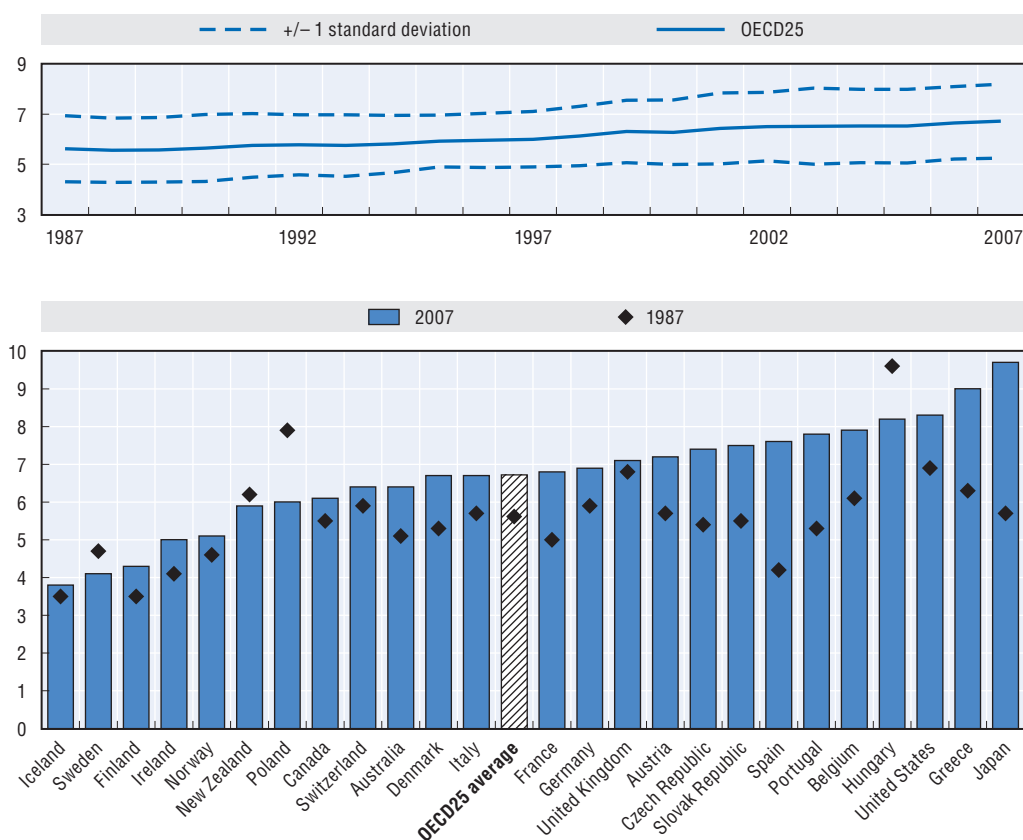
Source: OECD (2009d), Health at a Glance.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392685>

Contrary to the trends observed in the infant mortality rates, low birth weights have increased across the OECD countries in the past 20 years. Low birth weight is linked to children's future development trajectories and has also been linked to earning and learning capacity in later life (for example see Black, 2007). Part of the increase is due to improvements in medical care leading to higher number of births for children who would otherwise not survive to birth, as well as changes to birth recording practises. Nordic countries have particularly low proportions of children born underweight and the rates in these countries have only increased slightly since 1987 (Figure 1.14). At the other end of the scale, Japan and Greece have high rates of low-birth weight children, rates which have increased more substantially than elsewhere since 1987.

**Figure 1.14. Low birth weights are increasing steadily across the OECD, only Hungary and Poland have seen notable falls, 1987 to 2007**

Number of live births weighing less than 2500 grams as a percentage of total number of live births



Notes: OECD average and standard deviation are unweighted based on 25 OECD countries. Data is missing for Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands and Turkey. Breaks in series: Australia (1991, no significant change), Denmark (1997, 0.9 percentage points decrease) and France (1998, 0.5 percentage points increase). For Germany, until 1989 data refers to the Federal Republic of Germany, from 1990 onwards data refers to Germany after reunification. For further information, see *OECD Health Data 2009*.

Data missing for Chile, Estonia, Israel, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Turkey.

Source: OECD (2009d), *Health at a Glance*.

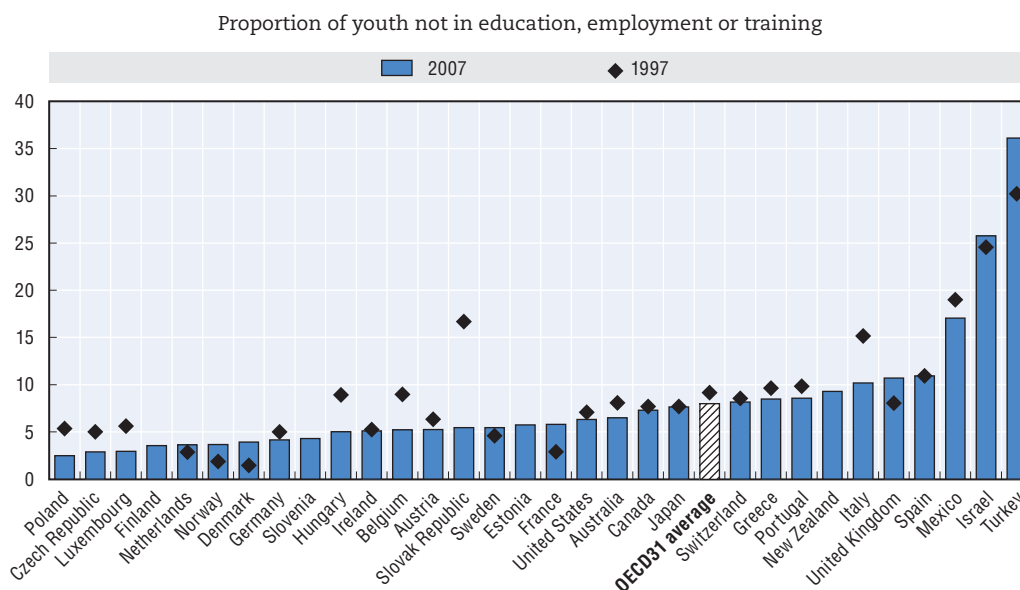
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### Educational outcomes: literacy scores, children not in education and employment

A good education is critical to a child's personal and social development. Compulsory education of children in the majority of OECD countries takes place between the ages 5 to 15, the most important stages of which – at least for later labour market participation – is around the period of examination and exit from compulsory school. All OECD countries provide comprehensive education systems. But how successful are these systems at getting children into work or further education and providing children with the necessary life skills?

The NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) indicator records the proportion of older children who fail to find employment, training or further educational opportunities after compulsory schooling, and compares NEET rates reported in 1997 and 2007. In the last decade, the rates of children aged 15-19 not finding work, training or further education have been below 10%, on average, across the OECD. The data shows that the rate had fallen slightly in the period leading up to the financial crisis. In 2007, only five OECD countries had more than 10% of children not in education, training or employment between the ages of 15 and 19 (the United Kingdom, Spain, Israel, Mexico and Turkey).

Figure 1.15. **In the past decade the likelihood of children being out of education and employment in the years following compulsory school has fallen, 1997<sup>1</sup> and 2007<sup>2</sup>**



Note: Data missing for Chile, Iceland, Korea.

1. Austria and Israel data is for 2002, United Kingdom for 2000, Ireland for 1999 and Norway and Italy for 1998. Japanese data is for ages 15-24.

2. Mexico data is for 2004. Data for Iceland is missing. OECD average is an unweighted average based on data for 1997 and 2007 only

Source: OECD (2010i), *Education at a Glance*.

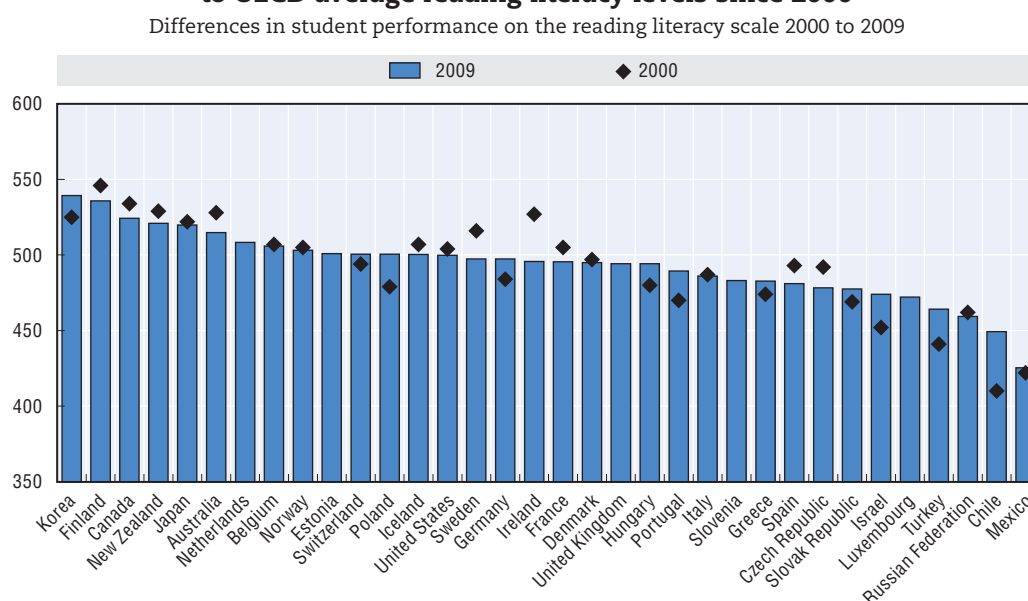
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392723>

Countries that had above-average NEET rates in 1997 have seen the largest drops from 1997 to 2007. Countries where rates are increasing include the Nordic countries and France, from very low levels in 1997, and in Turkey and Israel from rates already well above

the OECD average. In 2007, there remained considerable variation in NEET rates across the OECD, with the Turkish rate 12 times higher than the Polish rate, although the difference between higher income countries has decreased to between 3% and 10%.

The trends in educational achievement across OECD countries can be compared using information on reading literacy from the first three waves of PISA (Figure 1.16). The data show the change in the countries performance on the reading literacy scale relative to the OECD average for each survey in terms of average performance scores. Chile, Hungary, Israel, Korea, Poland, Portugal and Turkey have seen the largest improvements between 2000 and 2009; it is interesting to note that these countries are spread out across the range of country scores. Ireland and Sweden observed the biggest falls in reading literacy.

Figure 1.16. **A minority of countries have reported real gains relative to OECD average reading literacy levels since 2000**



Note: For Turkey, Slovak Republic and the Netherlands scores differences are between 2003 and 2009 only. Data for Austria is missing as the 2009 scores were not comparable.

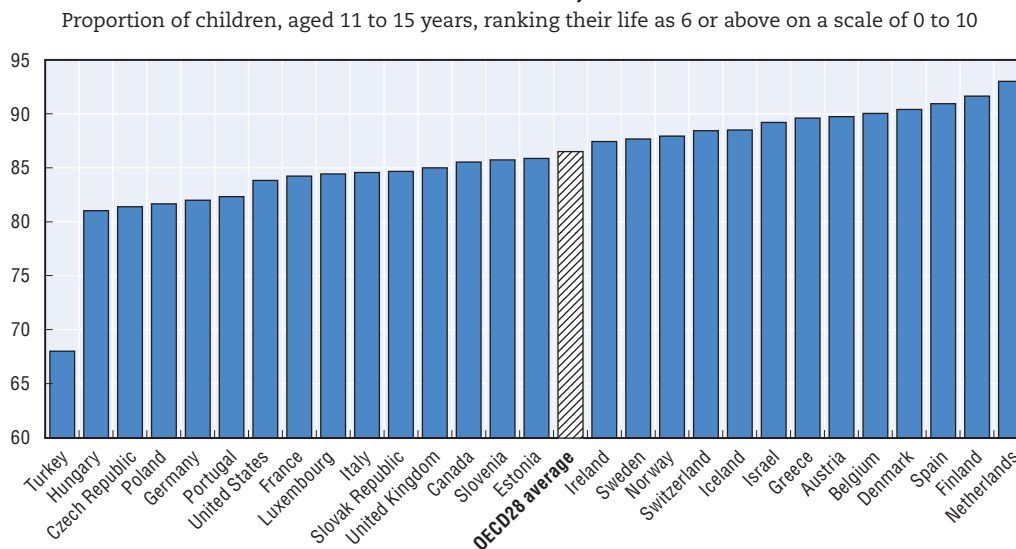
Source: OECD (2010h), PISA 2009 Assessment Framework.

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### Subjective well-being: children's self-reported life satisfaction

Subjective well-being among children in OECD countries can be measured based on the proportion of children who report scores of 6 and over on a scale used to represent their personal satisfaction with their life. The scale – presented in a written questionnaire in classrooms – asks children aged 11 to 15 years to place themselves on a rung of a ladder based on present subjective perception of life, where the top rung (10) represents the best possible life, and the bottom rung (0) represents the worst possible life. In 2005-06, with the exception of Turkey, at least four out of five children stated that their life is in the top half of the scale (Figure 1.17). Life satisfaction (a score of 6 or more) was particularly high in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and Spain, where over 90% of children were satisfied with their life. However, around 15% of OECD children said that their life is at most half as good as it could be (Currie *et al.*, 2008).

Figure 1.17. **The majority of OECD children report higher than median levels of life satisfaction, 2005-06**



Note: Data missing for Australia, Chile, Japan, Korea, Mexico and New Zealand.

Source: Currie et al. (2008), *HBSC International Report from the 2005/2006 Survey*.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392761>

## Summary

Family life has changed over the past few decades in most OECD countries. Total fertility rates have fallen and, despite a recent rebound in many countries, fertility rates remain below the replacement level in most OECD countries. There has been increased deferment of childbearing among women which in extreme cases has led to increased childlessness. The childlessness rate seems strongly linked to the education level of women: women with higher education levels are most likely to remain childless.

Lower fertility rates and increased childlessness has led to a decline in the average household size and a large proportion of households without children. Falling marriage and increasing divorce rates also mean that less people are getting married, and those that do are more likely to get divorced. Consequently more children are born out of marriage and experience family dissolution. The increase in births outside marriage is also partly due to the increase in non-traditional forms of partnership, namely cohabitation. Cohabitation is becoming increasingly popular among the younger generation as they cohabit before potential marriage and as an alternative to marriage. Overall, changing partnership patterns mean that more children now live in sole-parent and reconstituted families.

Increasing educational attainment levels among women have gone hand-in-hand with improved labour market outcomes for women. However, despite sharp increases in female employment over the past few decades, gender gaps persist. Many women still find it more difficult to gain employment than men, and once they are in the labour market, face further difficulties in gaining equity with their male counterparts. On average, there is a 15 percentage point gap in the employment rates of men and women among prime-aged (25-54) adults. And among the working population, women are more likely to have part-time work and temporary contracts and less likely to reach managerial positions.



Over a generation of children, indicators of three important dimensions of child well-being have evolved in different directions. Average incomes have risen, but at the same time child poverty rates have also increased as households without children have made more financial gains than households with children. More youngsters are now in employment or education than before. Health outcomes for children show evidence of improvement, decline and stability/stagnation in equal measures. Thus, whilst improvements are being made in some areas, it is clear that more could be done to improve child well-being.

## Notes

1. In this chapter, 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.
2. Families have changed more than available data can show, as certain features of family life were not widespread enough to be reflected in data systems until recently. For example, statistics on non-marital forms of partnerships, such as cohabitation, which are now being developed in many countries, were simply not available in the 1980s. The development of formal childcare systems started in the 1960s in Nordic countries, and comparable data for other OECD countries are only available from the mid-1990s onwards. Similarly, data on women in employment by the age of their youngest child are still not available for some OECD countries. In the absence of historical information, some indicators presented in this chapter are based on cross-national comparisons for a recent year only.
3. The fertility “replacement level” is defined as the cohort fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman, which would ensure the replacement of the previous generation, and therefore population stability, assuming no net migration and no change in mortality rates.
4. OECD (2009a) included three other dimensions: risk behaviours, quality of school life and housing and environment. These three dimensions have not been included here as indicators of the first two dimensions have recently been reviewed for changes over time and by gender (OECD, 2009d, 2009e), and housing and environment data are not available in long-term trends for sufficient countries.

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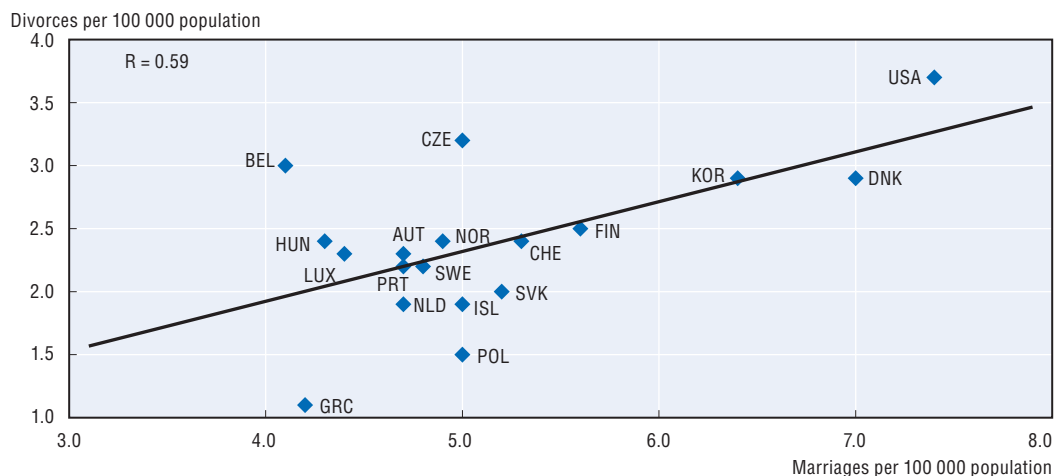
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ANNEX 1.A1

*Background Information to Chapter 1*

**Figure 1.A1.1. Countries with high marriage rates also have high divorce rates, 2007**

Relationship between crude marriage and divorce rates



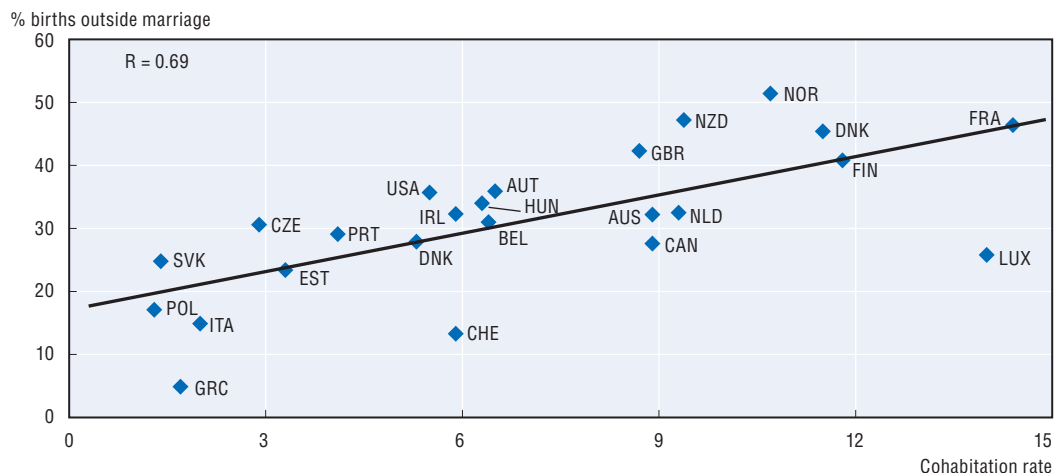
Note: Data refer to 2004 for Mexico; 2005 for Turkey and the EU (except for Denmark and Ireland); 2006 for Denmark, Iceland, Ireland and the United States.

Source: OECD (2010a), OECD Family Database.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392780>

**Figure 1.A1.2. Countries with high cohabitation rates have a high proportion of births outside marriage, 2000-07**

Relationship between cohabitation and births outside marriage

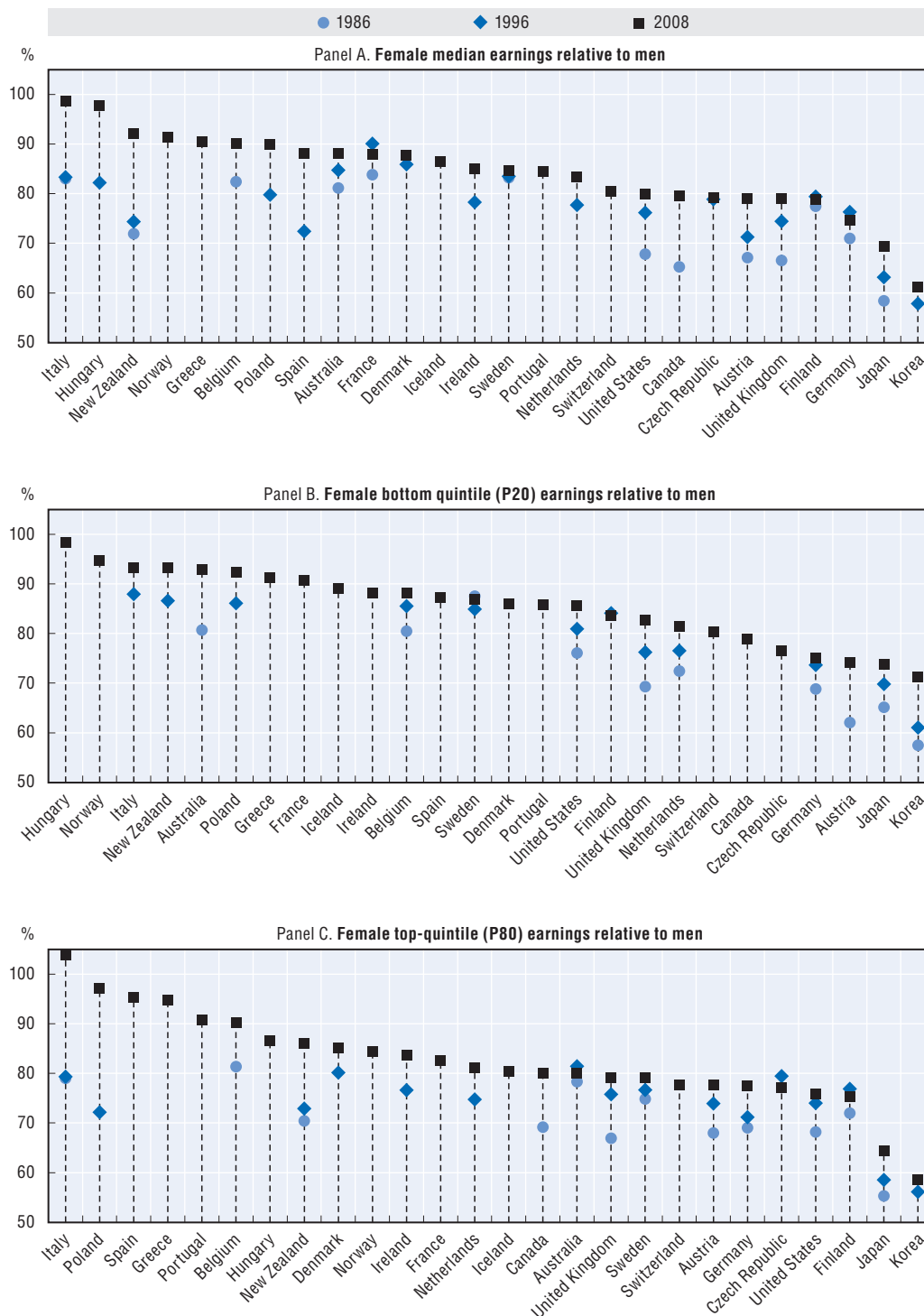


Note: Data refers to 2000: Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Switzerland and the United States; 2001: Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom; 2002: Ireland, Poland, Romania, Slovenia; 2006 for Australia, New Zealand and Canada; 2007 for Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Luxembourg, Malta, and Turkey.

Source: OECD (2010a), OECD Family Database.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392799>

Figure 1.A1.3. Trends in the gender gap in earnings, 1980, 1996 and 2008



Note: Estimates of earnings used in the calculation refer to gross earnings of full time wage and salary workers. However, this definition may slightly vary from one country to another.

Source: OECD (2010g), OECD Employment Database.

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932392818>