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Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009

ISBN 978-92-79-12859-2
DOI 10.2785/30167
Cat. No. KS-78-09-908-EN-N

Theme: Population and social conditions
Collection: Statistical books

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This publication has been produced by Eurostat unit F2 responsible for Labour Market Statistics. The opinions expressed are those of the individual authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the position of the European Commission.

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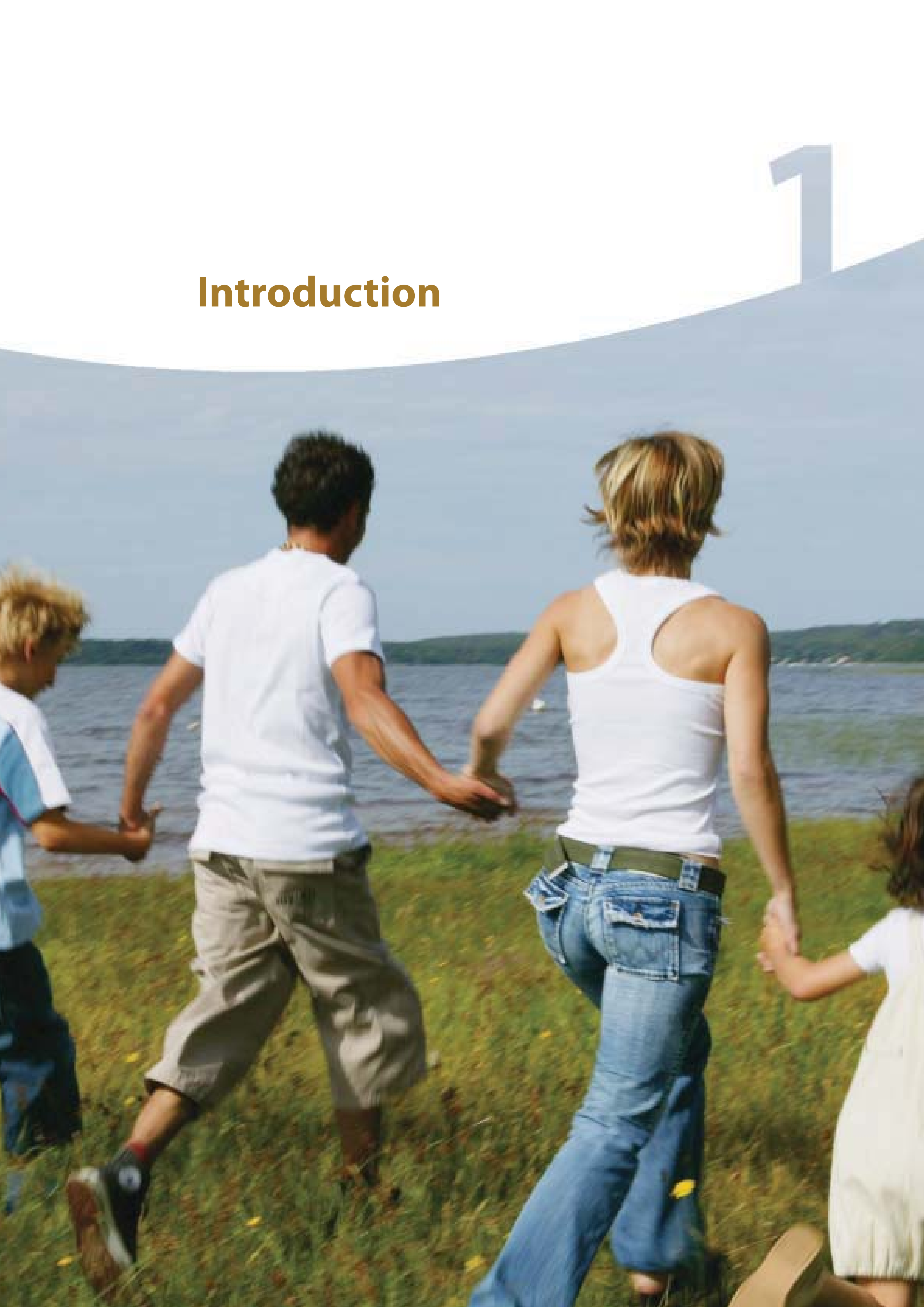

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Introduction

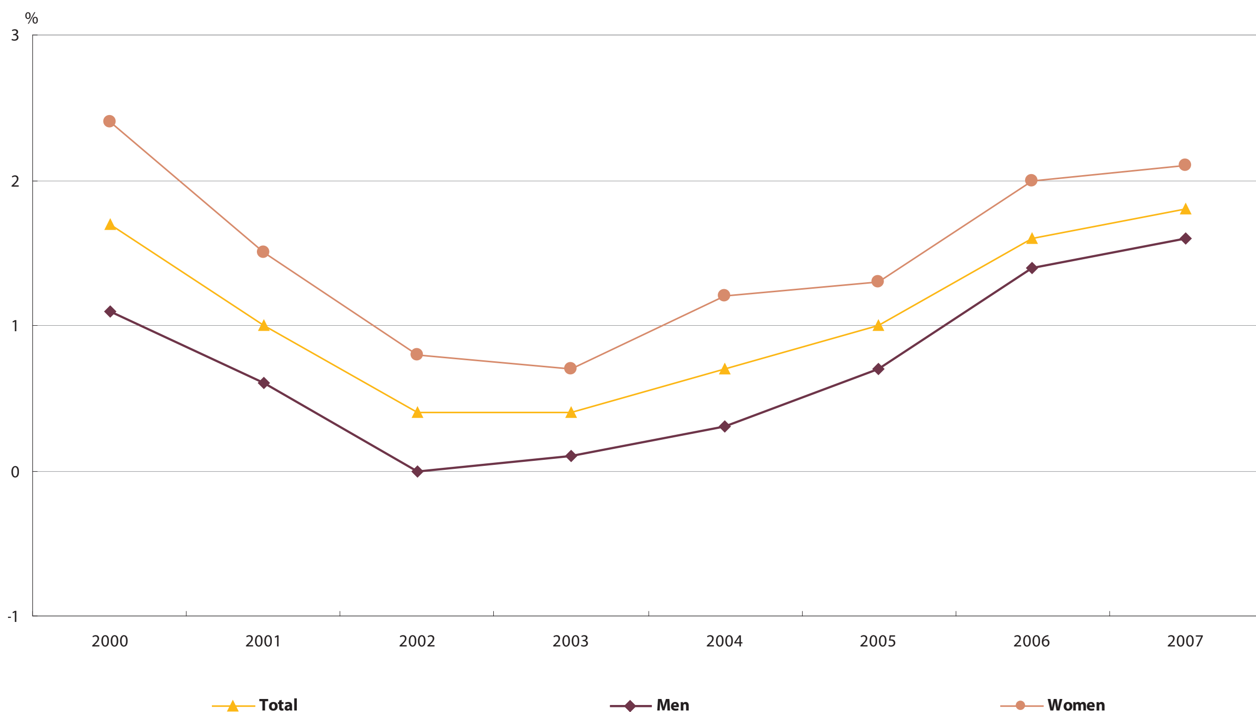
Main labour market indicators

1.1 Employment growth

The years from 2000 to 2007 saw a positive labour market development, with the number of persons employed increasing each year. However, changes in employment depend on the economic cycle: as for economic growth, growth in employment has not been constant over the entire period. Starting from +1.7% in 2000, the highest rate of the period under review, employment growth dwindled to a mere 0.4% in 2002 and 2003, before gradually increasing to reach 1.6% in 2006 and 1.8% in 2007.

The total number of persons employed in the EU is of course a summary measure: employment growth may vary considerably across different segments of the labour market. Considering employment growth among men and women, Figure 1.1 shows that while growth rates for both sexes followed similar paths, growth in female employment was consistently and considerably higher than growth in male employment.

Figure 1.1: EU-27 employment growth, 2000–2007



Note: The indicator "employment growth" gives the change in percentage from one year to another of the total number of employed persons on the economic territory. The indicator is based on the European System of Accounts. The Labour Force Survey breakdowns are applied to provide results by gender.

Source: Eurostat (National Accounts and Labour Force Survey)

The faster progress in female employment becomes even more visible when looking at cumulative growth over the entire period. Employment grew by an average of 7.0% between 2000 and 2007, but this includes a relative increase of 10.1% for women, against only 4.7% for men. In absolute terms, this means that between 2000 and 2007 employment in the EU increased by 14.7 million persons, of which 9.1 million were women and 5.6 million men. All in all, the EU economy provided 224.2 million persons with employment in 2007.

In assessing these developments, it should be noted that the European Union entered into recession in 2008, which is expected to adversely affect the labour market.

Table 1.1: Change in employment in the EU-27 between 2000 and 2007

EU-27 employment, absolute and percentage change

	Total employment (in thousands)		Change 2000-2007	
	2000	2007	Absolute terms (thousands)	Relative (% growth)
Total	209 472	224 198	14 726	7.0
Men	118 767	124 355	5 588	4.7
Women	90 705	99 843	9 138	10.1

Source: Eurostat (National Accounts and Labour Force Survey)

The development of employment in the EU outlined so far and condensed into a cumulative growth figure of +7.0% from 2000 to 2007 is the result of differing movements in the Member States. In four Member States, employment in 2007 was more than 20% higher than in 2000, with Luxembourg topping the league at + 26.3%, followed by Spain, Ireland and Cyprus. On the other hand, over the same period employment growth was very weak in Portugal, Germany and Hungary. As can be seen, the new Member States did not fare uniformly or consistently better than others in the creation of employment.

A closer look at growth rate patterns over time given in Table 1.2 reveals that a number of Member States did not follow the overall EU pattern. Most noteworthy perhaps was the decline in EU growth from 2000 to 2002, which was mainly attributable to Spain, Germany, France and a number of other old Member States. In contrast, many new Member States, and the three Baltic States in particular, saw significant improvements in employment growth over the same period. On the other hand, the acceleration observed in 2005 and 2006 was more broadly based on employment gains in most EU Member States — only Cyprus and Lithuania witnessed important declines in employment growth between 2005 and 2006. Employment growth across Member States broke step thereafter: from 2006 to 2007, the acceleration continued in some Member States such as Malta, Cyprus, Lithuania, Slovenia and Germany, while it stalled in others — most markedly in Estonia, where growth dropped from +5.4% in 2006 to +0.7% in 2007.

Table 1.2: Employment growth in EU Member States, 2000–2007

Annual percentage change in the number of persons employed

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Change 2000-2007
EU-27	1.7	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.7	1.0	1.6	1.8	7.0
EU-15	2.2	1.4	0.7	0.5	0.8	1.0	1.5	1.6	7.7
BE	2.0	1.4	-0.1	0.0	0.7	1.3	1.4	1.8	6.7
BG	4.9	-0.8	0.2	3.0	2.6	2.7	3.3	2.8	14.7
CZ	-0.2	0.5	0.6	-1.3	0.3	1.0	1.6	2.7	5.4
DK	0.5	0.9	0.0	-1.1	-0.6	1.0	2.0	2.7	5.0
DE	1.9	0.4	-0.6	-0.9	0.4	-0.1	0.6	1.7	1.6
EE	-1.5	0.9	1.3	1.4	0.0	2.0	5.4	0.7	12.2
IE	4.6	3.0	1.8	2.0	3.1	4.7	4.3	3.6	24.7
EL	0.5	0.1	2.3	1.0	2.3	1.0	2.1	1.3	10.5
ES	5.1	3.2	2.4	3.1	3.5	4.1	3.9	3.0	25.7
FR	2.7	1.8	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.6	1.0	1.7	5.9
IT	1.9	2.0	1.7	1.5	0.4	0.5	2.0	1.1	9.7
CY	1.7	2.2	2.1	3.8	3.8	3.6	1.8	3.2	22.2
LV	-2.9	2.2	2.3	1.0	1.1	1.5	4.8	3.5	17.6
LT	-4.0	-3.8	3.6	2.2	0.0	2.5	1.7	2.9	9.3
LU	5.5	5.6	3.2	1.8	2.2	2.9	3.7	4.5	26.3
HU	1.3	0.2	0.0	1.3	-0.7	0.0	0.6	-0.1	1.4
MT	8.4	1.8	0.6	1.0	-0.6	1.3	1.3	3.0	8.6
NL	2.2	2.1	0.5	-0.5	-0.9	0.5	1.8	2.5	6.1
AT	1.3	0.7	0.0	0.3	0.4	1.1	1.5	1.7	5.9
PL	:	:	:	:	-0.3	1.0	1.9	2.5	:
PT	2.1	1.8	0.6	-0.6	-0.1	-0.3	0.5	0.0	1.9
RO	:	:	:	0.0	-1.7	-1.5	0.7	:	:
SI	1.3	0.5	1.5	-0.4	0.3	-0.1	1.5	3.0	6.4
SK	-2.0	0.6	0.1	1.1	-0.2	1.4	2.3	2.1	7.5
FI	2.2	1.5	1.0	0.1	0.4	1.4	1.8	2.2	8.5
SE	2.5	2.1	0.0	-0.6	-0.7	0.3	1.7	2.2	5.0
UK	1.4	1.0	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.3	0.7	0.7	6.4
NO	0.6	0.4	0.4	-1.0	0.5	1.2	3.6	4.1	9.4

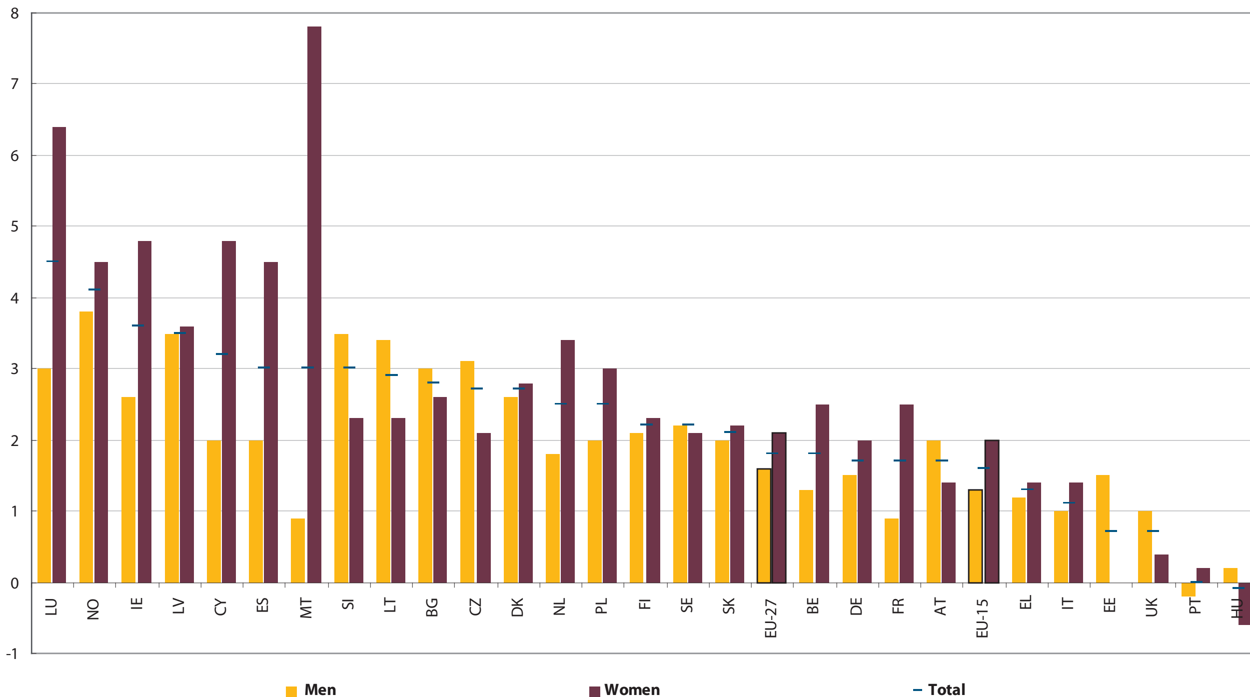
Notes: ':' missing value.

Source: Eurostat, National Accounts.

Many Member States exhibited healthy employment growth in 2007, led by Luxembourg with +4.5%, Ireland, Latvia, Cyprus, Malta and Spain, all with growth rates of 3% or above, followed by nine Member States with growth rates in excess of 2%. Combined with weaker figures elsewhere, notably in Portugal, where employment stagnated, and Hungary, where it declined marginally, this led to an overall growth rate of +1.8% in 2007.

Figure 1.2: Employment growth for the EU Member States, 2007

Annual percentage change in the number of persons employed



Source: Eurostat (National Accounts and Labour Force Survey)

As Figure 1.1 did for the EU-27, additional insight into employment growth in the Member States can be gained from looking at male and female employment separately. Figure 1.2 breaks down the national employment growth rates by gender for the year 2007. Female employment progressed strongly in Malta (+7.8%) and Luxembourg (+6.4%), but also in Ireland, Cyprus and Spain (all at +4.5% or above). The highest growth rates for male employment were markedly lower: around +3.5% in Latvia, Slovenia and Lithuania. At the lower end of the scale however, the worst result for female employment – a drop by 0.6% in Hungary – was also more extreme than the worst result for male employment – a drop by 0.2% in Portugal. Apart from Hungary, female employment growth was also very weak in Estonia, Portugal and the United Kingdom.

This leads to the observation that employment growth in EU Member States was not universally higher among women than men in 2007. Female employment did grow faster in a majority of Member States, and strikingly so in some, but the opposite was true in a few others. With the exception of Estonia however, where employment growth was entirely accounted for by men, imbalances in favour of men were less pronounced than those in favour of women.

1.2 Employment rates and EU targets

The creation of new jobs coupled with measures aiming to keep people in work — such as flexible working arrangements, better childcare facilities and reduced incentives for early retirement — have an impact on the employment rate, i.e. the proportion of persons employed as a percentage of the total population of the same age class.

According to the European Labour Force Survey, the average employment rate in the EU-27 amounted to 65.4% in 2007, up by 0.9 percentage points compared to 2006 and 4.6 percentage points compared to 2000. In other words, for every hundred EU citizens aged 15 to 64, sixty-five were in gainful employment, be it in a full-time job, a part-time occupation or a fixed-term employment contract. The remaining 35 were either unemployed or inactive. Despite the progression in the overall employment rate, the European Union considers that more efforts are needed to increase employment rates, so as to ensure sustainable economic growth and social cohesion.

The Lisbon targets

The Lisbon European Council launched an ambitious initiative in 2000 aimed at raising employment rates (see box below). In 2005 the Council recognised that insufficient progress had been achieved and decided to relaunch the strategy by focusing on economic growth and employment. A new set of employment guidelines for the period 2005–2008 was adopted and confirmed for the period 2008 - 2010 with a renewed focus on jobs, maintaining the overall goal of achieving full employment, quality and productivity at work as well as social and territorial cohesion. Three broad areas of action were defined:

- to attract and retain people in employment, increase the labour supply and modernise social protection systems;
- to improve the adaptability of workers and enterprises;
- to increase investment in human capital through better education and skills.

Lisbon targets

The Lisbon European Council of 2000 set a strategic goal, over the decade 2000–2010, for the EU "to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion". It specifically stated that the overall aim of employment and economic policies should be to raise the employment rate to as close to 70% as possible by 2010 and to increase the employment rate for women to more than 60% by the same year, not least in order to reinforce the sustainability of social protection systems. In that context, another explicitly stated target of EU policy is to specifically increase female participation in the labour market and to reduce gender gaps in employment, unemployment and pay.

In December 2007 the European Commission presented a progress report and a new Community Lisbon Programme (CLP) for 2008–2010, which were both endorsed by the Spring European Council in 2008. In parallel, the European Commission was asked to start reflecting on the future of the Lisbon Strategy after the year 2010.

The Commission's progress report on the renewed Lisbon Strategy[1] was quite positive about the progress in achieving the targets. Although Member States have implemented structural reforms, they were neither implemented at the same pace nor with the same amount of determination. The new CLP 2008-2010[2] is based on ten key objectives with corresponding actions. The majority of these objectives are directly or indirectly linked to labour market development (skills, strengthening of small and medium enterprises, immigration, competition, innovation).

The general growth in employment recorded at EU level has brought the overall employment rate (65.4% in 2007) closer to the Lisbon target, but it is still 4.6 percentage points short of what it should be in 2010.

Between 2000 and 2007 the female employment rate at EU-27 level increased by 4.6 percentage points, reaching 58.3% in 2007. With a further 1.7 percentage points to achieve, the 2010 target seems to be within reach.

(1) Communication from the Commission to the Spring European Council – Strategic report on the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs: launching the new cycle (2008-2010) – Keeping up the pace of change – COM (2007) 803 final

(2) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Proposal for a Community Lisbon Programme 2008-2010 – COM (2007) 804 final

Employment rates in the Member States

The above-mentioned average EU-27 employment rate hides substantial differences across individual Member States, ranging from a minimum of 54.6% in Malta to a maximum of 77.1% in Denmark.

As shown in Table 1.3, seven Member States have already achieved the 2010 Lisbon targets regarding both overall employment rates and female employment rates: Denmark, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Moreover, a further seven Member States have reached the target regarding female employment rates.

The overall employment rate has progressed in most countries, with the exception of Romania, where in 2007 it stood 4.2 percentage points lower than in 2000. A standstill, or even a marginal decrease, was observed in Malta, Portugal and the United Kingdom. The largest increases in employment rates were noted in Bulgaria and Latvia (around 11 percentage points) but also in Estonia and Spain (+9 percentage points). Nevertheless, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Poland and Romania are still between 10 and 15 percentage points below the Lisbon Strategy target for 2010.

Table 1.3: Employment rates and progress towards Lisbon targets, 2007

Employed persons aged 15–64, as a percentage of the total population of the same age

	Total			Women		
	2007 (%)	Change 2000-2007 (percentage points)	Gap below 2010 Lisbon target: 70% (percentage points)	2007 (%)	Change 2000-2007 (percentage points)	Gap below 2010 Lisbon target: 70% (percentage points)
EU-27	65.4	3.2	4.6	58.3	4.6	1.7
EU-15	67.0	3.6	3.0	59.7	5.6	0.3
BE	62.0	1.5	8.0	55.3	3.8	4.7
BG	61.7	11.3	8.3	57.6	11.3	2.4
CZ	66.1	1.1	3.9	57.3	0.4	2.7
DK	77.1	0.8	>	73.2	1.6	>
DE	69.4	3.8	0.6	64.0	5.9	>
EE	69.4	9.0	0.6	65.9	9.0	>
IE	69.1	3.9	0.9	60.6	6.7	>
EL	61.4	4.9	8.6	47.9	6.2	12.1
ES	65.6	9.3	4.4	54.7	13.4	5.3
FR	64.6	2.5	5.4	60.0	4.8	0.0
IT	58.7	5.0	11.3	46.6	7.0	13.4
CY	71.0	5.3	>	62.4	8.9	>
LV	68.3	10.8	1.7	64.4	10.6	>
LT	64.9	5.8	5.1	62.2	4.5	>
LU	64.2	1.5	5.8	56.1	6.0	3.9
HU	57.3	1.0	12.7	50.9	1.2	9.1
MT	54.6	0.4	15.4	35.7	2.6	24.3
NL	76.0	3.1	>	69.6	6.1	>
AT	71.4	2.9	>	64.4	4.8	>
PL	57.0	2.0	13.0	50.6	1.7	9.4
PT	67.8	-0.6	2.2	61.9	1.4	>
RO	58.8	-4.2	11.2	52.8	-4.7	7.2
SI	67.8	5.0	2.2	62.6	4.2	>
SK	60.7	3.9	9.3	53.0	1.5	7.0
FI	70.3	3.1	>	68.5	4.3	>
SE	74.2	1.2	>	71.8	0.9	>
UK	71.5	0.3	>	65.5	0.8	>
IS	85.1	:	>	80.8	:	>
NO	76.8	-0.7	>	74.0	0.4	>
CH	78.6	0.3	>	71.6	2.3	>

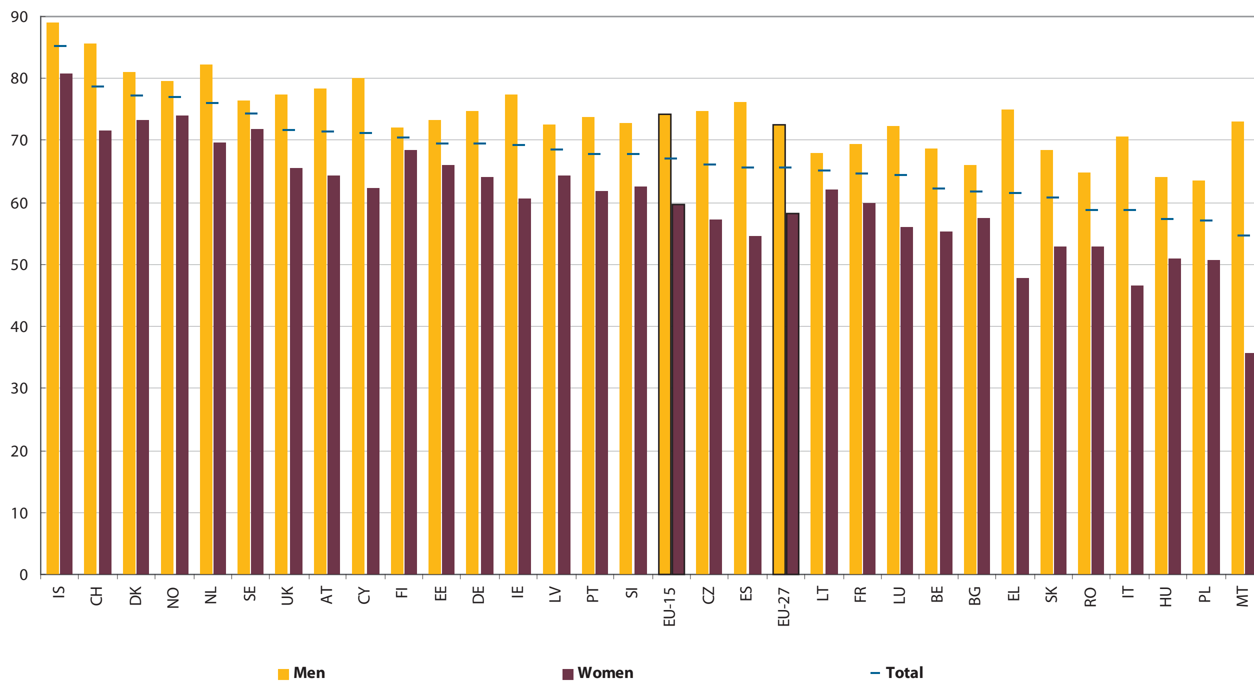
Notes: The column ”Gap below 2010 target” is for illustrative purposes only, since the 2010 target applies to the EU and not individual Member States. – The symbol ”>” indicates that the target has been exceeded by the Member State.

Source: Eurostat, LFS

Expectedly, the female employment rates remain below those of men in all Member States (see Figure 1.3); despite considerable progress, the disparity remained wide (between 10 and 15 percentage points) in Spain, Italy and Greece and especially in Malta (19 percentage points). Conversely, the gender difference was very narrow in Lithuania, Sweden and Finland.

Figure 1.3: Employment rates for the EU Member States, 2007

Employed persons aged 15–64 as a percentage of the total population of the same age



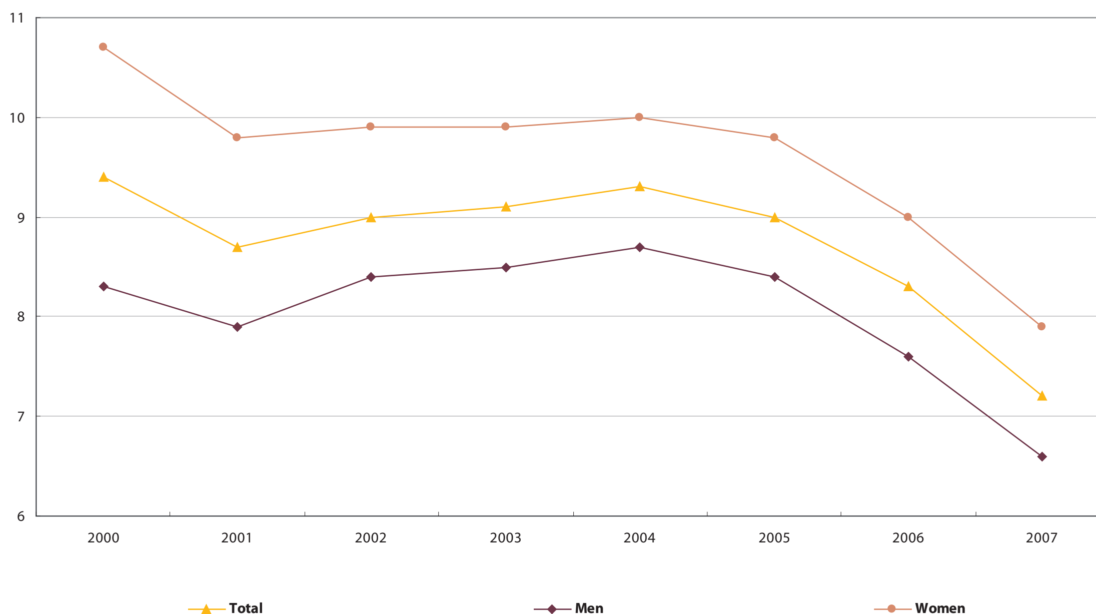
Source: Eurostat, LFS.

1.3 Unemployment rates

Economic growth and the robust labour market recovery have had an impact on the EU-27 unemployment rates: in 2007, these were at their lowest since the beginning of the decade. The overall unemployment rate stood at 7.2%, whereas it still amounted to 9.4% in 2000. As shown in Figure 1.4, after an initial drop between 2000 and 2001 and a moderate and very gradual increase between 2001 and 2004, a marked decline was registered from 2004 onwards, a trend that was intensified in 2006 and sustained into 2007. In that year the male unemployment rate stood at 6.6%, against 7.9% for women.

Figure 1.4: EU-27 unemployment rates, 2000–2007

Unemployed persons aged 15–64 as a percentage of the active population of the same age



Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Focusing on the situation in the individual Member States, unemployment rates were highest in Slovakia (11.2%) and Poland (9.7%), in spite of noticeable reductions over the past years (see Table 1.4). The three Baltic States and Bulgaria also registered a significant decrease in overall unemployment rates over the period 2000–2007, which have now dropped below the EU average.

Among the larger EU economies, unemployment was most notably reduced in Spain and Italy, whereas it declined only slightly in France and the United Kingdom. Conversely, the unemployment rate increased over the review period in Germany.

In 2007, Germany and France, which weigh heavily in the EU-27 average, registered unemployment rates of 8.7% and 8.0% respectively. At the other end of the scale, Denmark and the Netherlands were the only Member States to report rates below 4%.

Table 1.4: Unemployment rates, 2007 and change 2000–2007

Unemployed persons aged 15–64 as a percentage of the active population of the same age

	Percentage			Change 2000-2007 Percentage points		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
EU-27	7.2	6.6	7.9	-2.2	-1.7	-2.8
EU-15	7.1	6.4	7.8	-1.4	-0.9	-2.2
BE	7.5	6.7	8.5	0.9	1.4	0.2
BG	6.9	6.6	7.3	-9.5	-10.2	-8.6
CZ	5.4	4.3	6.8	-3.4	-3.1	-3.8
DK	3.8	3.5	4.2	-0.7	-0.5	-0.8
DE	8.7	8.7	8.8	0.7	1.0	0.5
EE	4.8	5.5	4.0	-8.6	-9.4	-7.7
IE	4.6	5.0	4.2	0.2	0.5	-0.1
EL	8.4	5.3	12.9	-3.1	-2.3	-4.4
ES	8.3	6.4	10.9	-5.6	-3.1	-9.5
FR	8.0	7.5	8.5	-2.3	-1.1	-3.7
IT	6.2	5.0	7.9	-4.8	-3.4	-7.0
CY	4.0	3.5	4.6	-1.1	0.2	-2.8
LV	6.1	6.6	5.7	-8.4	-8.7	-7.9
LT	4.4	4.4	4.4	-11.9	-14.1	-9.6
LU	4.1	3.6	4.7	1.7	1.8	1.5
HU	7.4	7.2	7.7	0.8	0.0	1.9
MT	6.5	6.0	7.6	0.1	-0.3	1.1
NL	3.2	2.8	3.7	0.5	0.6	0.2
AT	4.5	4.0	5.1	-0.2	-0.8	0.5
PL	9.7	9.1	10.4	-6.9	-5.7	-8.2
PT	8.5	7.0	10.1	4.5	3.8	5.1
RO	6.8	7.6	5.7	-0.9	-0.6	-1.4
SI	5.0	4.1	6.0	-2.1	-2.8	-1.2
SK	11.2	9.9	12.7	-7.9	-9.6	-5.9
FI	6.9	6.6	7.3	-4.3	-3.8	-4.7
SE	6.2	6.0	6.5	0.7	0.0	1.4
UK	5.4	5.7	5.0	-0.2	-0.5	0.1
IS	2.3	2.2	2.3	0.4	0.9	-0.2
NO	2.5	2.6	2.5	-1	-1	-0.8
CH	3.7	3	4.6	1	0.6	1.4

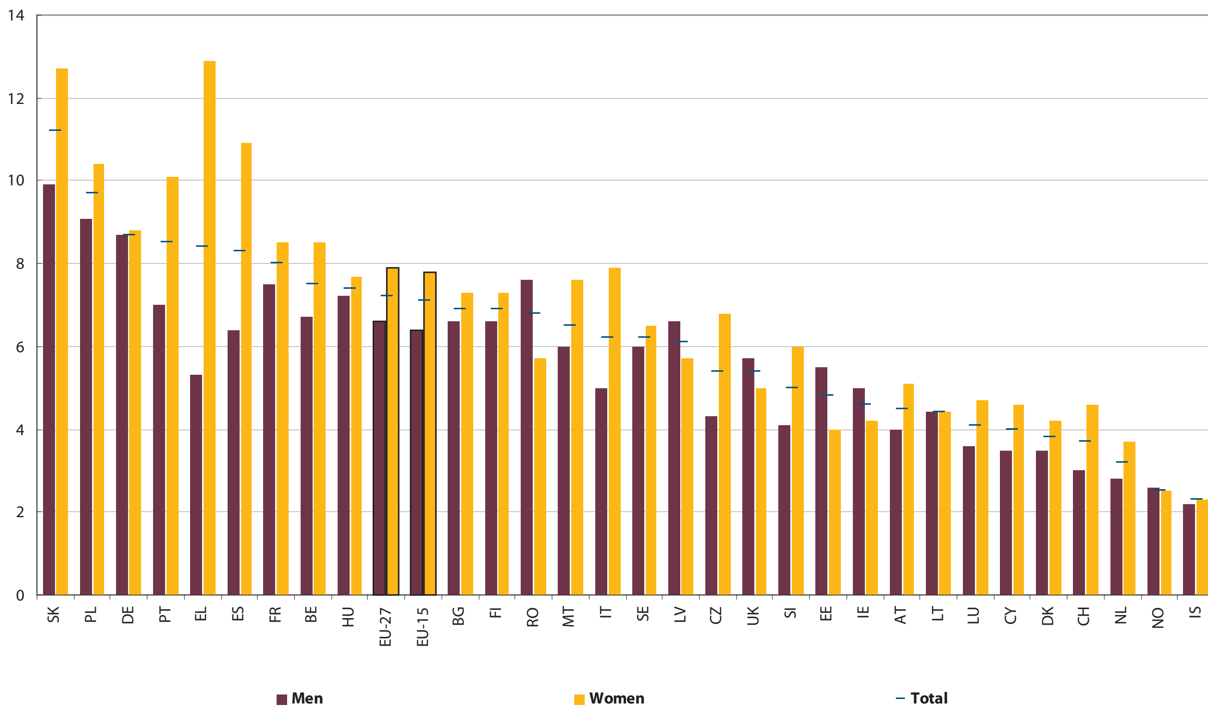
Note: Estonia: figure for women unreliable.

Source: Eurostat, LFS

Although gender disparities in unemployment continued to decrease in the EU-27, discrepancies continued to remain noticeable. The gender gap was noteworthy in Greece, Spain, and, to a lesser degree, in Portugal and Italy (see Figure 1.5). Whereas there was virtually no gender difference in Germany and Lithuania, the unemployment rate of women was lower than that of men in Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Figure 1.5: Unemployment rates for EU Member States, 2007

Unemployed persons aged 15–64 as a percentage of the active population of the same age



Note: Estonia: figure for women unreliable.

Source: Eurostat, LFS

2

The labour market for the 25 to 49-year olds

2.1. Preliminary remarks

The following section concentrates on labour market characteristics of the working population aged 25 to 49. Considering that the average age for a woman for having a first child is 28 in almost all EU Member States[1], reconciliation between work and private life is highly relevant for the population aged 25–49.

The lower age limit was chosen at that age 25 because most will have finished their education to focus on labour market participation. Hence, this section does not take account of young adults, many of whom are still likely to be in education, and persons over 50, who often have grown-up children or children that are old enough not to require supervision or continuous caring by a parent.

[1] Eurostat dataset (Population and social conditions indicators - Labour market - Employment and unemployment - LFS main indicators) http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=0,1136184,0_45572592&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

The presence of children, especially younger ones, can have a strong influence on the type of job sought, in particular among women. Flexible working time arrangements, part-time jobs or temporary work are examples of employment that persons with parental responsibilities may seek or be pushed into, often as a result of insufficient, inappropriate or unaffordable childcare provisions. Public policies regarding reconciliation between parenthood and labour market participation have sometimes developed in contradictory ways, combining measures encouraging parents to stay at home with those encouraging them to take up paid employment.

2.1.1. Employment rates

In 2006, 79.1% of Europeans aged 25 to 49 were in employment, which is 2 percentage points more than registered in 2000. The EU-27 employment rate for men stood at 86.8% and increased by a mere 0.3 percentage points over the same period. The overall increase was clearly driven by the 3.6 percentage point increase noted in the female employment rate, reaching 71.3% in 2006.

In 2006, at Member State level, the range between the lowest (79.6% – Bulgaria) and the highest (93.1% – Luxembourg) male employment rate was far narrower than that of women (from 41.0% in Malta to 83.6% in Slovenia).

Between 2000 and 2006, female employment rates increased in all but three Member States (Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia). Strong increases were registered in a number of Mediterranean countries (Spain, Greece and Italy) and in certain new Member States (notably in Cyprus, Latvia and Estonia). It is likely that these increases are influenced by various family-friendly policies implemented by individual Member States, allowing parents to better reconcile work and family responsibilities.

Despite this general positive trend, women and men continue to encounter difficulties in reconciling their professional and private lives. Unequal divisions of domestic and family responsibilities remain very marked, a topic further developed in Chapter 3.

Table 2.1: Employment rates, 2006 and change 2000-2006

Employed persons aged 25-49 as a percentage of same age total population

	Percentage			Change 2000-2006 Percentage points		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
EU-27	79.1	86.8	71.3	2.0	0.3	3.6
EU-15	79.7	87.8	71.5	2.2	-0.1	4.4
BE	80.2	86.9	73.5	-0.8	-3.0	1.7
BG	76.5	79.6	73.3	6.0	6.6	5.2
CZ	82.4	91.3	73.1	0.6	1.1	0.0
DK	86.4	90.6	82.1	1.3	1.4	1.2
DE	80.1	85.5	74.5	-0.1	-2.5	2.3
EE	84.7	89.2	80.5	7.3	8.6	6.2
IE	79.5	89.2	69.5	2.4	0.2	4.3
EL	76.7	90.6	62.7	4.5	1.2	7.6
ES	77.2	88.0	65.9	7.3	1.7	12.5
FR	81.7	88.4	75.1	2.7	0.4	4.8
IT	74.0	87.3	60.5	4.6	1.7	7.5
CY	84.0	92.4	76.0	4.9	-0.4	10.0
LV	81.4	84.0	78.8	7.4	8.0	6.7
LT	82.8	85.0	80.7	6.7	9.6	4.0
LU	82.6	93.1	72.1	2.5	-0.9	6.5
HU	75.4	83.3	67.5	1.4	2.6	0.1
MT	66.7	91.4	41.0	3.6	1.2	5.4
NL	84.5	91.1	77.9	0.9	-2.2	4.2
AT	84.3	90.7	77.9	1.2	0.0	2.4
PL	74.4	80.7	68.1	1.6	1.0	2.2
PT	82.4	88.3	76.7	-1.0	-2.4	0.3
RO	76.4	81.9	70.7	-3.5	-3.8	-3.5
SI	86.3	88.9	83.6	0.7	2.2	-0.8
SK	77.7	85.1	70.1	2.6	5.3	-0.1
FI	82.8	86.4	79.0	1.4	0.9	1.9
SE	84.8	88.1	81.4	2.6	4.0	1.1
UK	81.4	88.5	74.6	0.4	-0.1	1.0
IS	88.0	93.4	82.3	-3.3	-2.6	-4.3
NO	84.7	88.0	81.3	-1.4	-1.7	-1.0
CH	85.5	93.3	77.7	-0.2	-1.9	1.8

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

2.1.2. Unemployment rates

In 2006, the overall EU-27 unemployment rate (for persons aged 15-64) stood at 8.3%; when focusing on persons aged between 25 and 49, the rate was close to one per cent lower (7.4% – see Table 2.2). The latter rate decreased by 1 percentage point between 2000 and 2006, noticeably influenced by the positive labour market evolution for women: hence, the female unemployment rate was reduced by 1.7 percentage points (to reach 8.3%) whereas that of men decreased by 0.5 percentage points (to reach 6.6% in 2006).

Unemployment rates dropped particularly fast in Lithuania (-10.6 percentage points between 2000 and 2006), but also in Estonia, Latvia and Bulgaria. Conversely, they were on the rise in nine Member States during this period, especially in Portugal, Germany and Luxembourg.

In 2006, unemployment rates among women remained in the double-digit range in Poland (13.8%), Slovakia (13.5%), Greece (13.2%) and Spain (10.8%); female unemployment rates were the lowest in Ireland (3.5%), the United Kingdom (4.0%) and Denmark (4.1%).

Table 2.2: Unemployment rates, 2006 and change 2000-2006

Unemployed persons aged 25-49 as a percentage of same age active population

	Percentage			Change 2000-2006 Percentage points		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
EU-27	7.4	6.6	8.3	-1.0	-0.5	-1.7
EU-15	6.9	6.1	7.9	-0.6	0.0	-1.4
BE	7.4	6.7	8.2	1.5	2.0	0.7
BG	8.0	7.6	8.3	-6.7	-7.2	-6.3
CZ	6.3	4.6	8.4	-1.8	-1.4	-2.2
DK	3.2	2.4	4.1	-1.0	-1.1	-0.9
DE	9.3	9.4	9.1	2.4	2.8	1.9
EE	5.6	5.5 u	5.7 u	-7.1	-8.2	-5.9
IE	3.9	4.1	3.5	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2
EL	8.6	5.3	13.2	-1.7	-1.2	-2.7
ES	7.8	5.6	10.8	-4.9	-2.5	-8.6
FR	7.8	6.9	8.9	-1.8	-0.7	-3.0
IT	6.3	4.8	8.4	-3.1	-2.1	-4.8
CY	4.1	3.4	4.9	-0.6	0.3	-1.9
LV	6.1	6.9	5.3	-7.9	-7.9	-8.0
LT	4.8	4.9 u	4.8 u	-10.6	-12.4	-8.6
LU	4.3	3.0	6.0	2.3	1.6	3.0
HU	7.1	6.6	7.7	1.0	0.0	2.1
MT	5.2	4.4 u	7.0 u	0.1	-0.8	:
NL	3.8	3.4	4.3	1.5	1.6	1.4
AT	4.2	3.6	5.0	0.2	-0.3	0.9
PL	12.4	11.2	13.8	-2.4	-1.4	-3.5
PT	7.4	5.8	9.2	4.0	3.2	4.9
RO	6.7	7.6	5.6	-0.5	0.3	-1.6
SI	5.5	4.4	6.8	-0.1	-1.0	1.1
SK	11.9	10.5	13.5	-4.4	-5.4	-3.2
FI	6.1	5.5	6.8	-2.1	-1.6	-2.5
SE	5.5	5.3	5.8	0.5	0.4	0.7
UK	4.1	4.2	4.0	-0.4	-0.6	-0.2
IS	1.8	:	:	0.3	:	:
NO	3.1	3.2	2.9	0.5	0.5	0.6
CH	3.6	2.7	4.7	1.2	1.0	1.3

Notes: u: unreliable or uncertain data due to small sample size. ':' : missing data.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

2.1.3. Part-time work

There has been an increase in the proportion of part-time employment[2] between 2000 and 2006, both in the European Union as a whole (by almost 2 percentage points) and in the various Member States, for men and women alike. This trend can essentially be attributed to various factors, including:

- the structural effect of an increasing number of women in the labour market, of which a relatively high proportion opt for part-time employment;
- the various possibilities for a more flexible work organisation (further detailed in Chapter 6).

Whether or not part-time work facilitates the balance between work and private life depends first and foremost on working hours. Working only in the morning when children are at school certainly constitutes a viable option for many women. However, certain part-time jobs, especially for women, may be associated with atypical hours early in the morning or late at night (cleaning sector, retail trade) and are therefore an obstacle to reconciliation, unless these working patterns are specifically sought (in the case of 'shift parenting' for example).

The compatibility of part-time work with life outside work further depends on the institutional conditions, such as prevalent wages and salaries, social protection benefits and career prospects, and determines whether it is an attractive, or even viable alternative to standard full-time work. The choice workers make will have consequences on their pension rights or might lead to incomes being below the thresholds of some basic welfare benefits.

At EU level, 4.7% of employed men aged 25–49 were working part-time in 2006, while this share amounted to 3.9% in 2000 (+0.8 percentage points). The order of magnitude is completely different for women: 29.4% of all employed women had part-time occupations in 2006, against 27.6% in 2000 (+1.8 percentage points).

Unsurprisingly, the rate of part-time employment among women is considerably higher than the corresponding rate for men, revealing the predominantly female nature of part-time work in Europe. The differences in female participation across individual Member States may be ascribed to a multitude of factors, such as varying levels of education, existing family policies and, last but not least, culture.

The shares of part-time employment in total employment are generally higher in countries of northern Europe and lower in southern and new Member States. This structural difference may be attributed to the lower rates of female labour market participation in southern countries and, in the Eastern European Member States, the limited availability of part-time jobs due to labour market rigidity and lower wage levels, making part-time work less attractive[3].

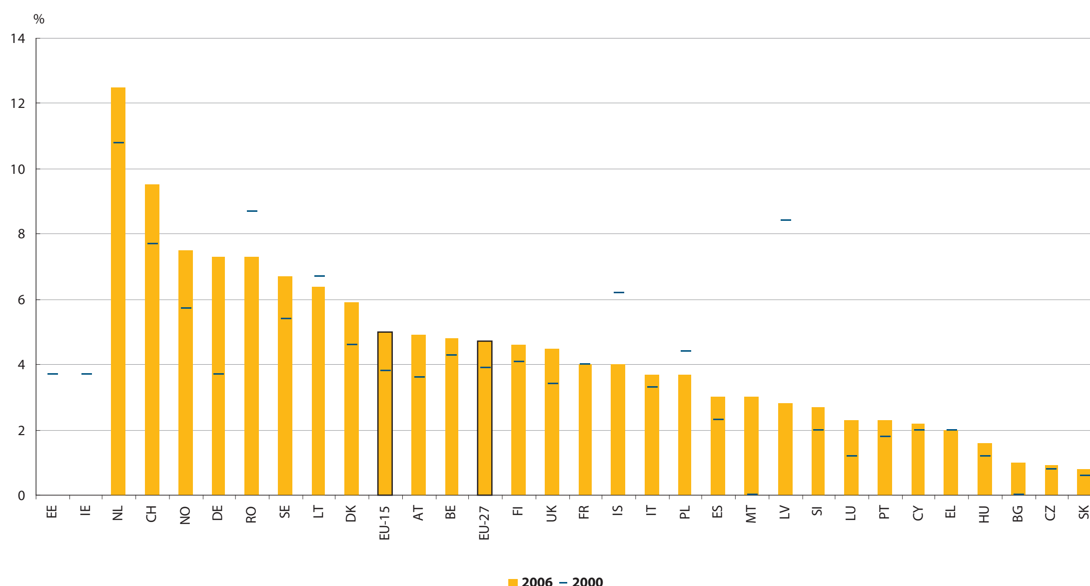
The share of part-time employment has increased in most Member States. The two graphs contained in Figure 2.1 may look similar in appearance but the scaling reveals the gender difference quite clearly: among men, the largest shares of part-timers were found in the Netherlands (12.5% of all employed men aged between 25 and 49), followed some way behind by Germany, Romania (both countries at 7.3%) and Sweden (6.7%). At the other end of the scale, the Czech Republic and Slovakia registered shares of under one per cent. Compared to 2000, the share of part-time employment was noticeably reduced in Romania, Poland and especially Latvia. Obviously, in these countries, the employment gains in recent years have primarily bolstered full-time jobs.

[2] Eurostat dataset (Population and social conditions indicators - Labour market Employment and unemployment - LFS main indicators) http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=0,1136184,0_45572592&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

[3] See Report from the Commission to the Council, the European parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on equality between women and men, 2005 – COM (2005) 44 final – Brussels 14.2.2005

Figure 2.1.a: Part-time employment of men, 2000 and 2006

Part-time employees aged 25-49 as a percentage of total employees in the same age group

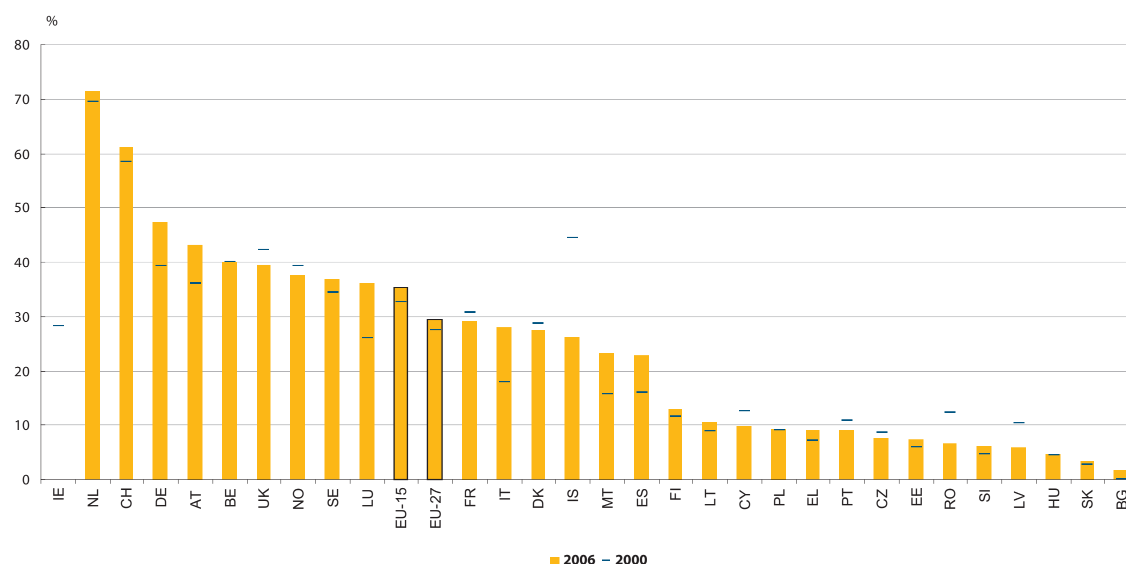


Notes:
EE, BE, SI, LU, HU and SK: unreliable or uncertain data for 2000 due to small sample size.
MT, SI and BG: unreliable or uncertain data for 2006 due to small sample size.
MT (2000) and EE (2006): data unavailable.
BG (2000) and IE (2006): unreliable or uncertain data not shown due to small sample size.
It should be noted that year-on-year evolution for Latvia and Iceland is more regular than suggested by the difference compared to 2000.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Figure 2.1.b: Part-time employment of women, 2000 and 2006

Part-time employees aged 25-49 as a percentage of total employees in the same age group



Notes:
BE (2000) and EE (2006): unreliable or uncertain data due to small sample size.
BG (2000) and IE (2006): unreliable or uncertain data not shown due to small sample size.
It should be noted that year-on-year evolution for Latvia and Iceland is more regular than suggested by the difference compared to 2000.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

The incidence of part-time work among women is of a different order of magnitude: the Netherlands was again at the top of the chart, with close to three quarters (71.5%) of all employed women between the ages of 25 and 49 in part-time occupations (see Chapter 6). Germany, Austria and Belgium followed some way behind, with shares ranging between 40% and 50%. Many new Member States registered low shares in female part-time employment, generally well under 10%. Part-time employment progressed particularly fast in Germany, Italy and Luxembourg (between 8 and 10 percentage points) whereas it dropped in Iceland.

Reasons for part-time occupation

Working part-time can either be a choice or a constraint: in many cases, part-time work will be voluntary and individuals will opt for it for a large variety of reasons. Working part-time can however also be linked to the fact that certain elements preclude working full-time. The main reasons evoked for working part-time within the EU-27 are shown in Figure 2.2, along with their respective importance.

In the EU, most women state that they are working part-time because they have difficulties balancing work and responsibilities in private life. The prevalence of part-time employment among women is closely linked to the unequal distribution of the caring responsibilities between men and women. Indeed, when considering 'looking after children' and 'other family or personal reasons' together, the share for men amounted to 13.9%, whereas for women it was 61.1%. The difference was particularly strong for the motivation 'looking after children' (mentioned by 8.0% of men and 42.1% of women).

Among men, education seems to be a major reason for taking up part-time employment: 16.0% of men appeared to combine part-time work with education, whereas this was the case for only 2.8% of women.

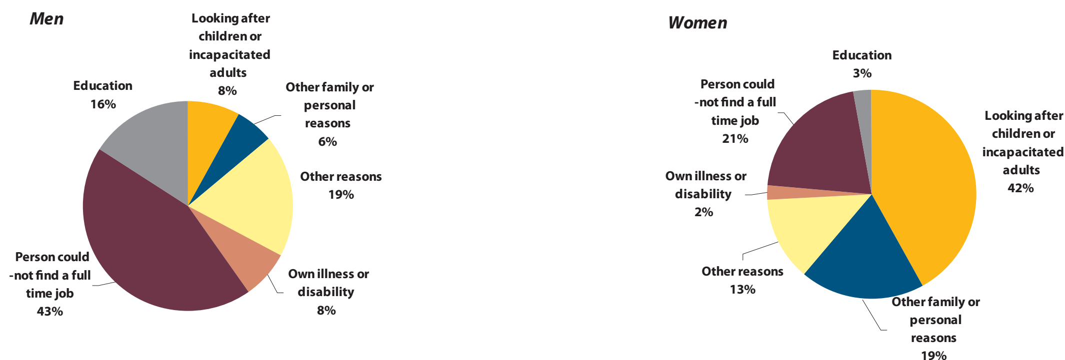
'Person could not find a full-time job' is an important category of 'involuntary part-time employment' but it should not be considered as the only one. It could indeed also apply to persons who answered 'looking after children' or 'other family or personal reasons', especially when no suitable care services are available.

Figure 2.2 shows that 43% of male part-time workers stated their situation was due to the fact that they could not find full-time employment. Considering their higher implication in caring responsibilities, a lower share can be expected among women, which is indeed confirmed, but it was nonetheless mentioned by one fifth of female respondents (20.8%).

Finally, a fairly large proportion mentioned 'other reasons' for having a part-time occupation (18.9% of men and 13.2% of women)[4] .

Figure 2.2: Main reasons behind part-time employment in the EU-27, 2006

Persons employed part-time aged 25-49



Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Turning away from the situation at EU-27 level, Table 2.3 details the reasons for part-time work in the individual Member States[5] .

The other column groups of Table 2.3 are sub-categories of the total. Although certain figures are uncertain due to small sample sizes, it can be stated that part-time employment combined with education is relatively widespread in Denmark. Also, a fairly large proportion of part-timers in Germany, France, Italy and Sweden, especially women, declared that they could not find full-time employment.

[4] Although the 2006 survey question did not ask further details on 'other reasons', the results of earlier surveys suggest that many who declared 'other reasons' are in fact persons who did not want a full-time job

[5] The last column group of Table 2.5 reflects the share of part-time workers as a share of all persons employed There is a discrepancy with the figures in Figure 2.3, which apply to 'employees' only.

It is not clear whether part-timers would prefer to work full-time if childcare services were more extensive or if full-time working hours were organised to be more family-friendly: 'looking after children' was a reason often cited by women in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, but this could either be due to insufficient child care facilities or to a deliberate choice of the mothers. Finally, 'other family reasons' were mentioned fairly often by women in Belgium and Germany. In the future, more details on these aspects may become available, as data is expected from a specific module called 'Reconciliation between work and private life', which is to be appended to the European Labour Force Survey of 2010.

Table 2.3: Main reason for part-time employment, 2006 (%)

Persons employed part-time as a share of total persons employed, age group 25-49

	Education			Own illness			Looking after children			Other family reasons			Could not find a full-time job			Other reasons			Total part-time employees		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
EU-27	0.6	(0.4)	0.7	0.4	(0.2)	0.5	4.8	(0.2)	10.3	2.2	(0.2)	4.7	3.2	(1.3)	5.0	2.0	(0.6)	3.5	**13.2**	**2.9**	**24.7**
BE	0.2	:	(0.3)	0.5	(0.2)	0.8	4.2	0.3	8.8	6.8	0.9	13.6	3.0	1.3	4.9	5.7	1.7	10.3	**20.5**	**4.5**	**38.6**
BG	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	0.5	(0.3)	(0.7)	:	:	:	**0.6**	**0.3**	**0.9**
CZ	0.2	(0.1)	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.6	1.0	:	2.2	0.3	:	0.6	0.6	(0.1)	1.2	0.4	(0.1)	0.7	**3.0**	**0.7**	**5.7**
DK	2.6	2.0	3.0	1.4	0.8	2.0	1.8	:	3.7	:	:	:	2.8	0.9	4.9	5.6	1.0	10.7	**14.2**	**4.8**	**24.2**
DE	1.3	(1.2)	1.4	0.4	(0.3)	0.5	5.4	(0.2)	11.3	8.3	(0.4)	17.3	5.1	(2.4)	7.9	2.3	(0.7)	4.0	**22.7**	**5.2**	**42.4**
EE	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	(1.8)	:	:	**4.4**	**1.8**	**6.9**
IE	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	**:**	**:**	**:**
EL	(0.1)	:	:	0.1	(0.1)	(0.2)	0.4	:	0.9	0.1	:	(0.2)	1.2	0.5	2.1	0.5	0.2	0.9	**2.3**	**0.8**	**4.3**
ES	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.1	0.0	2.5	0.7	(0.0)	1.7	1.9	0.4	3.8	1.4	0.3	2.7	**5.5**	**1.0**	**11.1**
FR	0.1	:	(0.2)	0.5	(0.3)	0.7	6.5	(0.3)	13.3	1.3	(0.2)	2.6	4.1	(1.5)	6.8	0.8	(0.3)	1.4	**13.3**	**2.6**	**24.8**
IT	0.4	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.3	4.2	0.1	10.1	0.8	0.1	1.8	4.5	1.5	8.0	1.7	0.5	3.1	**11.7**	**2.4**	**23.8**
CY	:	:	:	(0.1)	:	:	0.9	:	1.9	0.8	:	1.5	1.4	1.0	1.9	(0.2)	:	(0.3)	**3.6**	**1.5**	**5.7**
LV	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	1.0	(0.5)	(1.2)	0.5	:	(1.0)	**2.1**	**0.8**	**3.3**
LT	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	(0.7)	:	(1.3)	1.8	(1.1)	(2.2)	1.9	(1.0)	(2.7)	**5.0**	**2.6**	**7.2**
LU	:	:	:	(0.4)	:	:	6.2	:	13.9	4.7	:	10.1	1.6	:	3.2	3.2	(0.6)	6.3	**16.2**	**1.7**	**34.3**
HU	(0.1)	:	:	0.5	0.3	0.7	0.3	:	0.7	:	:	:	0.8	0.4	1.2	0.6	(0.2)	1.0	**2.4**	**1.2**	**3.8**
MT	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	3.2	:	9.5	(1.5)	:	:	(2.0)	:	:	**8.3**	**2.7**	**19.6**
NL	(1.6)	(1.3)	1.9	(1.4)	(0.8)	2.1	(20.8)	(2.9)	40.4	(2.1)	:	4.3	(2.2)	(1.5)	3.1	(7.0)	(3.5)	11.2	**35.1**	**10.1**	**63.0**
AT	1.4	1.1	1.6	0.4	:	(0.6)	10.6	:	22.6	3.2	0.6	6.1	2.4	0.9	4.1	4.6	1.4	8.1	**22.6**	**4.4**	**43.1**
PL	(0.0)	(0.0)	:	0.1	0.1	(0.2)	0.2	:	0.6	(0.1)	:	(0.1)	0.9	0.5	1.4	0.9	0.4	1.4	**2.3**	**1.0**	**3.8**
PT	:	:	:	0.1	:	:	0.2	:	0.4	0.3	:	0.7	0.8	0.2	1.6	0.3	0.1	0.4	**1.8**	**0.4**	**3.3**
RO	:	:	:	(0.0)	:	:	0.0	:	0.1	0.0	:	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.2	**0.4**	**0.2**	**0.7**
SI	(0.3)	(0.2)	(0.4)	(0.7)	(0.3)	(0.9)	(0.2)	:	(0.5)	:	:	:	(0.3)	:	(0.5)	(0.9)	(0.5)	(1.3)	**2.4**	**1.1**	**3.6**
SK	:	:	:	0.3	:	(0.4)	(0.2)	:	(0.3)	:	:	:	0.3	:	(0.5)	0.8	(0.2)	1.4	**1.6**	**0.6**	**2.8**
FI	1.0	0.7	1.3	0.2	:	(0.4)	1.2	:	2.5	0.6	0.4	0.9	2.4	1.1	3.6	0.4	0.3	0.5	**5.9**	**2.7**	**9.2**
SE	1.1	0.7	1.4	1.6	0.7	2.4	6.1	0.6	12.0	1.8	0.3	3.4	4.5	1.5	7.6	2.3	0.9	3.6	**17.4**	**4.6**	**30.5**
UK	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.6	12.3	0.6	24.9	1.6	0.2	3.1	1.7	1.0	2.2	2.4	0.6	4.2	**19.3**	**3.3**	**35.8**

Notes: ':' Data not available or extremely unreliable due to small sample size.
(): Indicates figure is uncertain due to small sample size.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

2.1.4. Fixed-term contracts

Employment under fixed-term contracts comprises work where, in contrast to permanent work, there is an end date. It often entails a different set of legal obligations on behalf of employers and certain aspects of employment protection legislation do not apply to fixed-term contracts. Indeed, employment protection regarding employee dismissal from permanent contracts may act as a disincentive for employers to hire permanent staff. This contributes to a relatively high incidence of fixed-term employment in certain Member States.

In 2006, around 14.5 million workers aged 25-49 in the EU-27 worked under fixed-term employment contracts, accounting for 12.1% of the total number of employees. Over the period 2000-2006, the proportion slightly increased both in the European Union as a whole and in most Member States for both men and women. Poland registered a particularly strong increase in fixed-term employment, with close to 20 percentage points (Table 2.4).

The incidence of fixed-term employment varied considerably across countries, generally affecting women slightly more than men (except in some new Member States). The highest overall shares in 2006 were recorded in Spain (31.9%) and Poland (24.1%) which may be correlated with the high unemployment rate in these countries (12.4% in Poland and 7.8% in Spain). Indeed, persons who cannot find permanent employment will more readily accept a fixed-term job, hoping that it will sooner or later lead to a permanent contract. In the case of Spain, fixed-term contracts were introduced by the Spanish government in 1984 (Reform of the workers' status) in order to facilitate job creation, reduce unemployment and support the integration of young people. Strict regulations on permanent employment, reduced redundancy costs and wage differentiation may also have played a prominent role in the rise of this type of work.

Fixed-term jobs constituted 10% to 20% of all jobs in Greece, Portugal, Finland, Cyprus, Sweden, Slovenia, Italy, the Netherlands and France. Conversely, this share amounted to only around 1.5% in Ireland and Romania.

Compared to 2000, the proportion of persons with fixed-term working contracts in the individual countries did not change significantly, with the notable exception of Poland, where it increased by an impressive 20 percentage points, equally affecting men and women.

Table 2.4: Fixed-term working contracts, 2006 and change 2000-2006

Fixed-term employees aged 25-49 as a percentage of the total number of employees of the same age

				Change 2000-2006		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
EU-27	12.1	11.2	13.0	2.4	2.3	2.4
EU-15	12.3	11.1	13.5	1.3	1.2	1.2
BE	7.2	5.2	9.4	0.2	0.6	-0.5
BG	5.4	5.4	5.3	:	:	:
CZ	6.1	5.0	7.4	0.9	0.4	1.5
DK	7.2	5.3	9.2	0.3	1.0	-0.5
DE	9.3	8.9	9.8	1.3	1.4	1.3
EE	2.3 u	:	:	0.4	:	:
IE	1.6	1.4	1.8	-1.4	-0.8	-2.1
EL	10.2	8.6	12.2	-2.2	-2.7	-1.9
ES	31.9	29.9	34.4	2.6	1.7	3.5
FR	11.4	10.2	12.7	-1.3	-1.0	-1.7
IT	12.0	9.6	15.3	2.9	1.9	4.1
CY	14.3	7.9	20.8	3.7	0.9	6.1
LV	6.4	8.1	4.7	-0.1	-0.7	0.5
LT	3.9	6.0 u	1.9 u	0.2	0.9	-0.6
LU	4.6	4.2	5.1	2.1	2.5	1.4
HU	6.3	6.6	6.0	0.2	0.0	0.5
MT	2.9 u	:	:	0.4	:	:
NL	11.6	10.5	12.8	1.4	2.6	-0.3
AT	4.7	4.1	5.3	0.6	0.9	0.2
PL	24.1	25.3	22.7	19.7	19.9	19.5
PT	18.9	17.8	20.1	1.6	2.6	0.5
RO	1.7	1.9	1.4	-0.4	-0.3	-0.6
SI	13.1	11.2	15.1	3.6	2.4	4.9
SK	3.6	3.8	3.4	0.6	0.7	0.5
FI	14.6	9.8	19.7	0.1	-0.7	1.0
SE	13.9	11.7	16.1	1.1	1.4	0.9
UK	4.3	3.5	5.2	-1.1	-0.5	-1.7
IS	8.8	7.2	10.5	5.0	4.3	5.8
NO	9.1	5.6	12.8	1.5	0.7	2.3
CH	6.9	6.0	8.0	1.4	1.9	0.9

Notes: u : unreliable or uncertain data due to small sample size.
It should be noted that annual growth rates for Poland are fairly regular.
Change 2000-2006: percentage points.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

When asked about the reasons for working under a fixed-term contract, a significant number of respondents answered that they were unable to find a permanent job. At EU-27 level, this was the case for 61.9% of women and 60.2% of men (see Figure 2.3). Bearing in mind that data are uncertain due to the small sample size, 'education' was often mentioned to motivate fixed-term employment (in around 18% of cases). Indeed, tertiary education and fixed-term employment can often be combined. Whereas 8% of respondents answered that fixed-term employment preceded permanent employment (when a fixed-term contract acts as a probation period), 13% indicated that permanent employment was not wanted.

Figure 2.3: Main reasons behind temporary employment in the EU-27, 2006

Persons in fixed-term employment aged 25-49

Note: Data are uncertain due to low sample size for all the reasons cited.

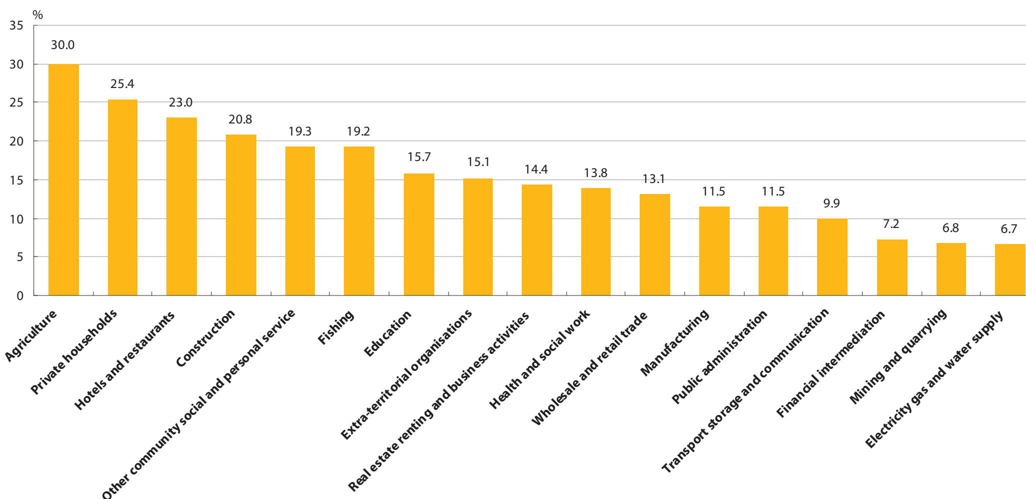
Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Figure 2.4 outlines that fixed-term employment is particularly widespread in sectors that experience seasonal activity fluctuations, such as agriculture, hotels and restaurants as well as construction. The fact that private households score high is certainly influenced by jobs in household maintenance or gardening.

Activities such as education, business services, trade and manufacturing generally display fixed-term job shares between 10% and 15%, allowing employers to cover workload needs during temporary absences of permanent staff (such as maternity/paternity leave) or periods of high activity.

Figure 2.4: Fixed-term employees by economic activity in the EU-27, 2006

Percentage of employees in fixed-term employment in age group 25-49



Source: Eurostat, LFS.

2.2. Employment status by type of household and impact of parenthood

The following section sheds light on the employment pattern of individuals taking into account the type of household in which they live, and notably how these individuals organise their working life when they have caring responsibilities.

Children affect employment opportunities and choices: the need to provide care for the child and the additional domestic responsibilities have a financial impact and raise the opportunity costs of working. While school entry (generally at age 5 or 6) presents a substantial sudden change in circumstances through the provision of what is effectively free (and compulsory) childcare, which may enhance employment opportunities for mothers, it also comes with additional parental demands associated with school life and the complexities of organising care around normal school hours. And this affects both genders.

The decision to work or keep working when having the responsibility for children is indeed a decision taken jointly with the partner, rather than individually. Many factors influence this decision process: financial needs of the household, opportunities for childcare, cultural aspects and personal preferences and, as the overall framework, the composition of the household concerned.

2.2.1. Household structure

The presence of children in a household has an impact on the employment pattern of the members in the household. Some persons work more to cover the increased expenses and others work less to have more time for caring. Here, the three main models should be recalled: the traditional breadwinner model – where the man is employed full-time, and the woman is in charge of caring for children and elderly; the modified breadwinner model – here the man is also working full-time and the woman is engaged in part-time paid work and is mainly responsible for the care work, assisted by partial provisions of care services or educational services; the egalitarian model – in this model both partners work full-time, but women are still responsible for the caring[(6)].

In the case of southern European countries, the persistence of the traditional breadwinner model may be explained by the limited possibilities women have to work part-time due to the relative rigidity in the labour market, the more limited work and family compatibility policies developed by the welfare states, as well as the family dependence and solidarity that characterise family relations in these countries.

The last decades have witnessed different forms of partnership, resulting in a variety of household types. This section takes a closer look at the employment pattern of individuals according to the type of household they are living in.

Individuals in three types of households will be considered in detail:

- Singles' households (with and without children)
- Couples' households (with and without children)
- Other types of households (with and without children)[(7)]

With respect to the definition of children, the LFS follows an approach which is mainly based on their age and economic activity. In the context of the household data, children are defined as persons who are either less than 15 years old, or who are aged 15–24, who live with their parents and are economically inactive. All other persons are considered as adults. The distinction between adults and children must be clear in order to make a relevant classification of the various types of households, depending on their composition.

Figure 2.5 offers an overview of persons aged 25–49 and the type of household they live in that were surveyed in the European Labour Force Survey. For several Member States, the household type 'couple with children' was the largest category, albeit at various degrees. Indeed, while persons living as couples with children comprised the absolute majority only in France, Cyprus and Luxembourg (with 50%) and accounted for high shares in the Czech Republic, Malta, the Netherlands and Finland (close to 50%), they accounted for well under 40% in Bulgaria, Germany, Lithuania, Austria and Slovakia, and represented only slightly more than one third of the population aged 25–49 in Latvia (35%).

(6) See also: Haas, B. (2005): The Work-care Balance: Is it possible to identify typologies for cross-national comparisons? – Current Sociology, Vol 53, No. 3, 487-508

(7) Consisting of multi-generation households.

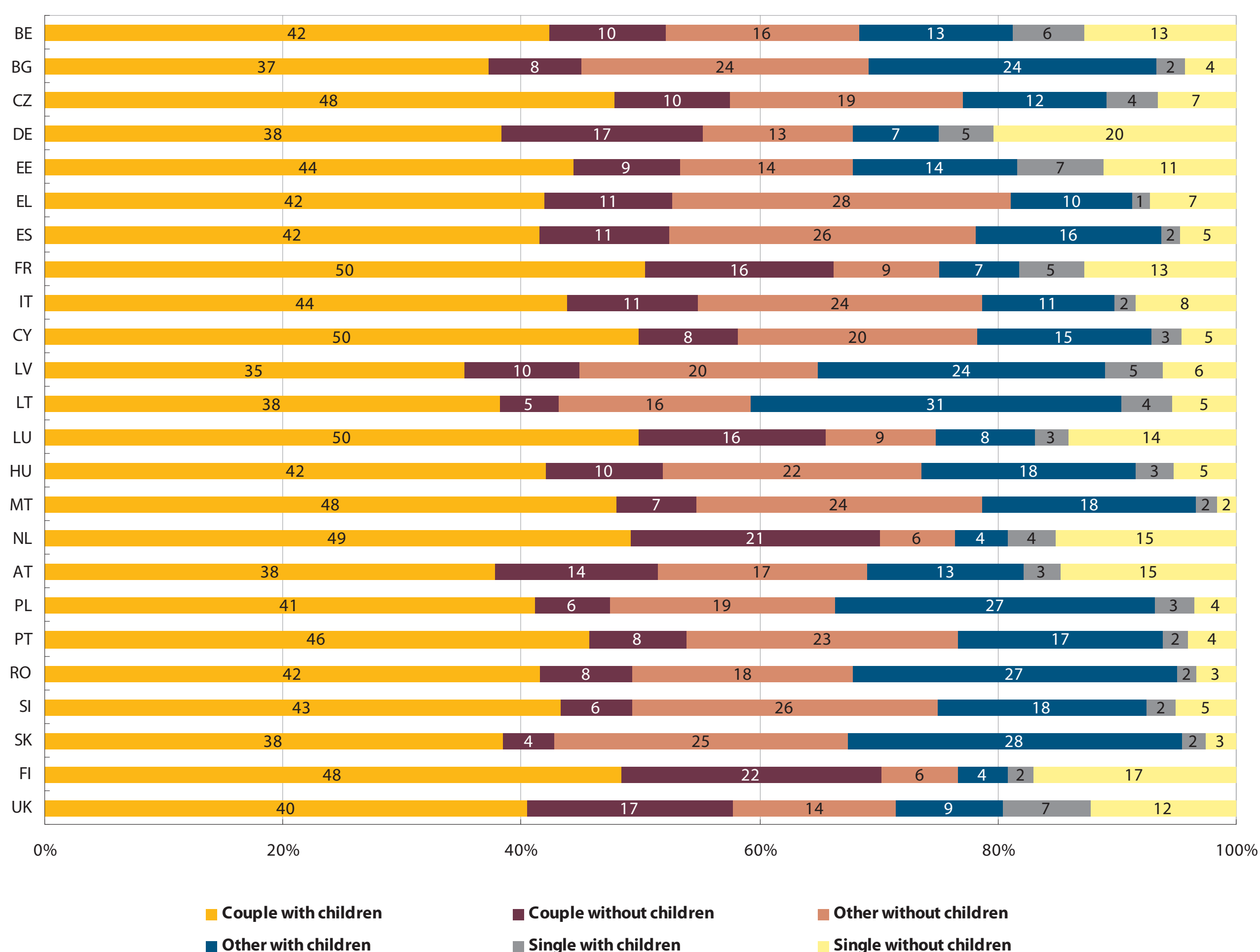
Persons living in 'couples without children' were relatively numerous in Finland and the Netherlands (22% and 21% respectively) but also in Germany, France, Luxembourg and the UK (between 16% and 17%). Conversely, persons within such households represented only around 5% in Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. Persons of the type 'other without children' constitute around one quarter of the total in Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia. These are also the countries where the share of one-person households (single without children) is generally very low, quite the opposite of Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Austria and Finland, where shares between 15% and 20% were registered.

Countries with comparatively few persons living as a 'couple with children' often displayed relatively high shares of persons living in 'other types of household with children', which include families extending over three generations. This was observed in many Eastern European Member States such as Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

In the EU-27, single-parents with children generally accounted for less than 5% of the surveyed persons, with the exception of Belgium (6%), France (5%), Estonia (7%) and the United Kingdom (7%), The lowest share was reported by Greece (1%).

Finally, single persons were most frequently observed in Germany (20%) and Finland (17%). Conversely, they accounted for very low shares in Romania, Slovakia and especially Malta.

Figure 2.5: Persons aged 25–49 by type of household they are living in, 2006



Notes: The analysis is based on a specific LFS database allowing household composition breakdowns. This database does not contain information on DK and SE. – IE: no data available .

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

2.2.2. Employment status according to the household type

Having considered the prevalence of household types in which persons aged 25-49 are living, it is now appropriate to investigate the employment status of these adults. Many factors can have an impact on the choice of a household's employment pattern, such as:

- Insufficient full-time wages

In countries where the average full-time wages are insufficient to cover a family's minimum cost of living, a dual full-time earner pattern will be encountered more often.

- Flexibility of working-time arrangements

Flexible working-time arrangements and in particular the possibility to work part-time help women and men to reconcile work and private life. Nevertheless, part-time work can remain uncommon in countries where employers are reluctant to provide such arrangements.

- Gender cultural context

In certain countries, especially those of Southern Europe, but also Germany and Austria, a more conservative family model persists.

- Unemployment

Family policy, societal ideals concerning the gender division of labour as well as economic incentives that encourage women and men to work full-time may often be undermined in practice by a lack of employment opportunities.

- Social and family policies

Provision of extensive, affordable child care facilities and generous support for parental leave would foster a dual full-time earner model by stimulating female labour market participation. Also, paid parental leave is likely to boost female participation, although extended parental leave may weaken labour market skills and damage future career paths and earnings, making it difficult or less interesting for mothers to return to the labour market.

Many of these factors are interrelated. Despite the fact that women often continue to take the bulk of the child care responsibilities, most of them enter the labour force for economic reasons, as an increasing number of families can only reach an acceptable standard of living when both parents generate an income. Consequently, the presence of children will have little effect on the employment rates.

Also, in countries with the most family-friendly labour policies, one could expect that the presence of children should have less of a negative effect on female labour market involvement and that the proportion of 'dual-earner families' would rise. But this works only if there is no mismatch between the family-friendly policy and the availability of appropriate caring facilities. When childcare provisions are insufficient; labour market participation will still depend on whether children are present or not.

The mainstream model for households with children features men working full-time and women working part-time, or, when part-time work opportunities are scarce, men full-time and women not at all. When reconciliation is persistently difficult, women either adjust their working pattern, postpone the family formation process or refrain from having children altogether.

The objective of the following analysis is to have a more detailed view on the working status of persons (working full time, working part-time or not working) given the type of household in which they live and taking into account the presence of children. The discussion is starting with the analysis of singles followed by the description of couples.

Employment pattern of singles

Turning to employment patterns for singles and single parents, Figure 2.6 outlines that single persons without children (lower bar of the respective countries) were predominantly employed full-time, but at varying degrees. Shares of over 80% were registered in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Hungary and Portugal. But in the Netherlands, which offers part-time employment in a wide range of economic sectors, this proportion amounted to only 62%. In Belgium, Bulgaria, Poland, Slovenia and Finland, more than 20% of singles without children were unemployed or inactive.

In all Member States single parents tend to work. Working full-time is fairly widespread in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland (with shares above 70%). In Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria and the United Kingdom more than 30% of single parents work part-time. More than 30% of single parents were unemployed in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom.

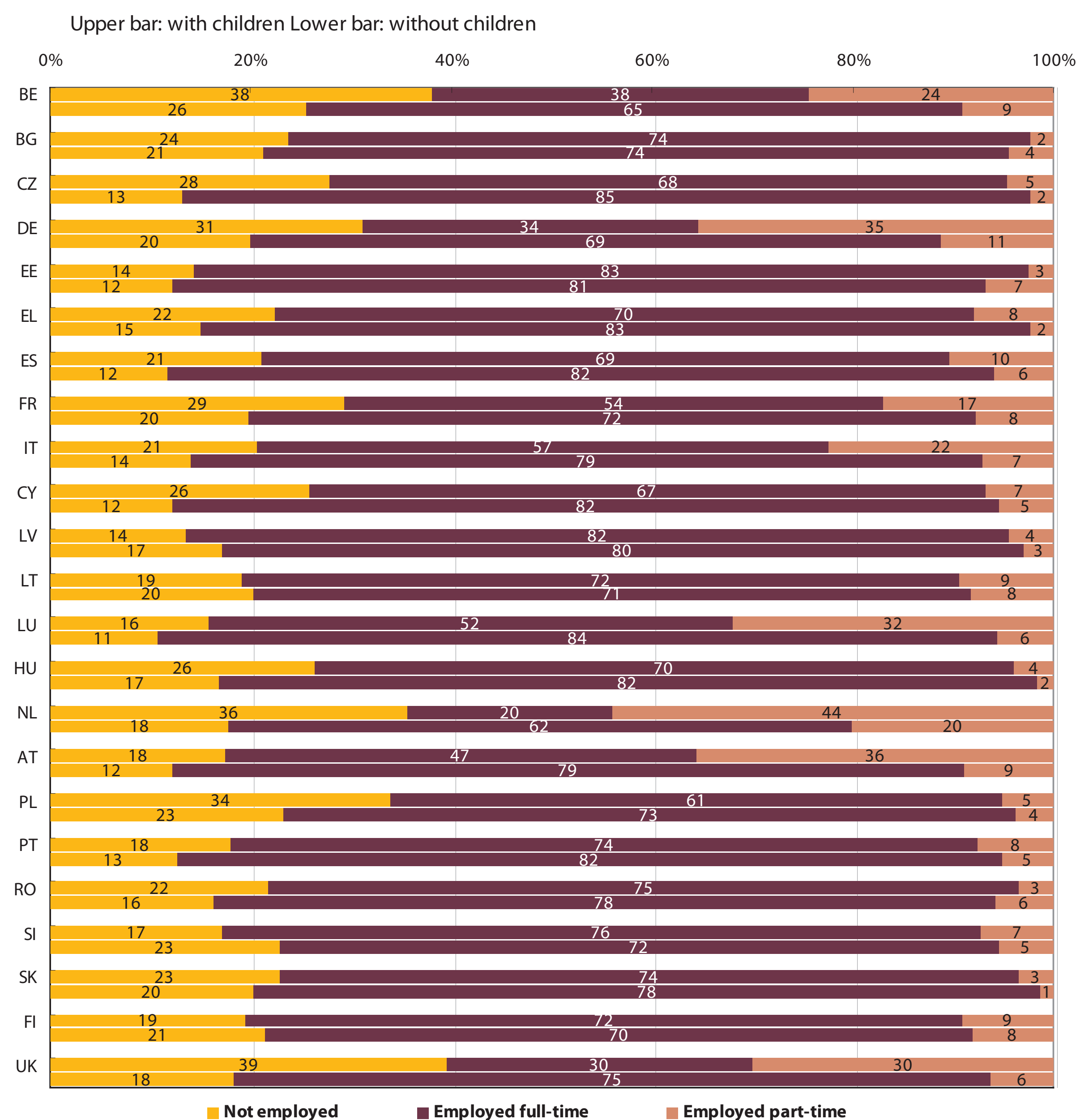
When compared with the respective country's upper bar (singles with children), it becomes evident that the proportion of singles employed full-time decreases significantly concurrently with childrearing, notably in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands (down by 45 and 42 percentage points respectively), but also in Germany, Luxembourg and Austria, where many seem to turn to part-time employment. Conversely, children have little or no effect on full-time employment in Bulgaria, Romania, the three Baltic States and Finland, confirming for Finland the efficiency of institutional childcare facilities. The institutional environment may also influence the shares of part-time occupations, which are low in childless households and remain relatively low in the presence of children.

In Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Finland, the share of singles in full-time employment actually increases in the presence of children, which is probably linked to increased financial needs, but is only possible with adequate childcare arrangements.

The proportion of singles who withdraw (or are pushed to withdraw) from a paid job when children enter the household is far from negligible in countries such as Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom. Taking up a job when children are born into the household is far less frequent, but remains noticeable in Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Finland.

Figure 2.6: Employment status of persons in singles' households, 2006

Age group 25-49, in relation to the presence of children in the household



Notes: Analysis based on a specific LFS database allowing household composition breakdowns. This database does not contain information on DK and SE. – IE: no data available – MT: unreliable data due to small sample size

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Employment pattern of couples

With respect to the employment status of persons living as couples more combinations arise. Figure 2.7 presents the most relevant patterns taking account of the presence of children in the household.

The most widespread working pattern for persons living in a couple *without* children is 'both working full-time'. With the exception of the Netherlands (39%), this share stood above 50% in all Member States. The highest shares (above 70%) were observed in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. The second most relevant pattern observed among couples without children was 'one person working full-time and the other person not working', with shares ranging from 12% in United Kingdom to 34% in Greece. The third type of employment pattern, with one partner working full-time and the other working part-time, was fairly common in Belgium, Germany and Austria, with shares of around 20%. However, this type of working pattern was most widespread in the Netherlands, with 45%. The fourth and last working pattern, in which both partners are unemployed, accounts for only a minor share to the overall distribution of couples without children.

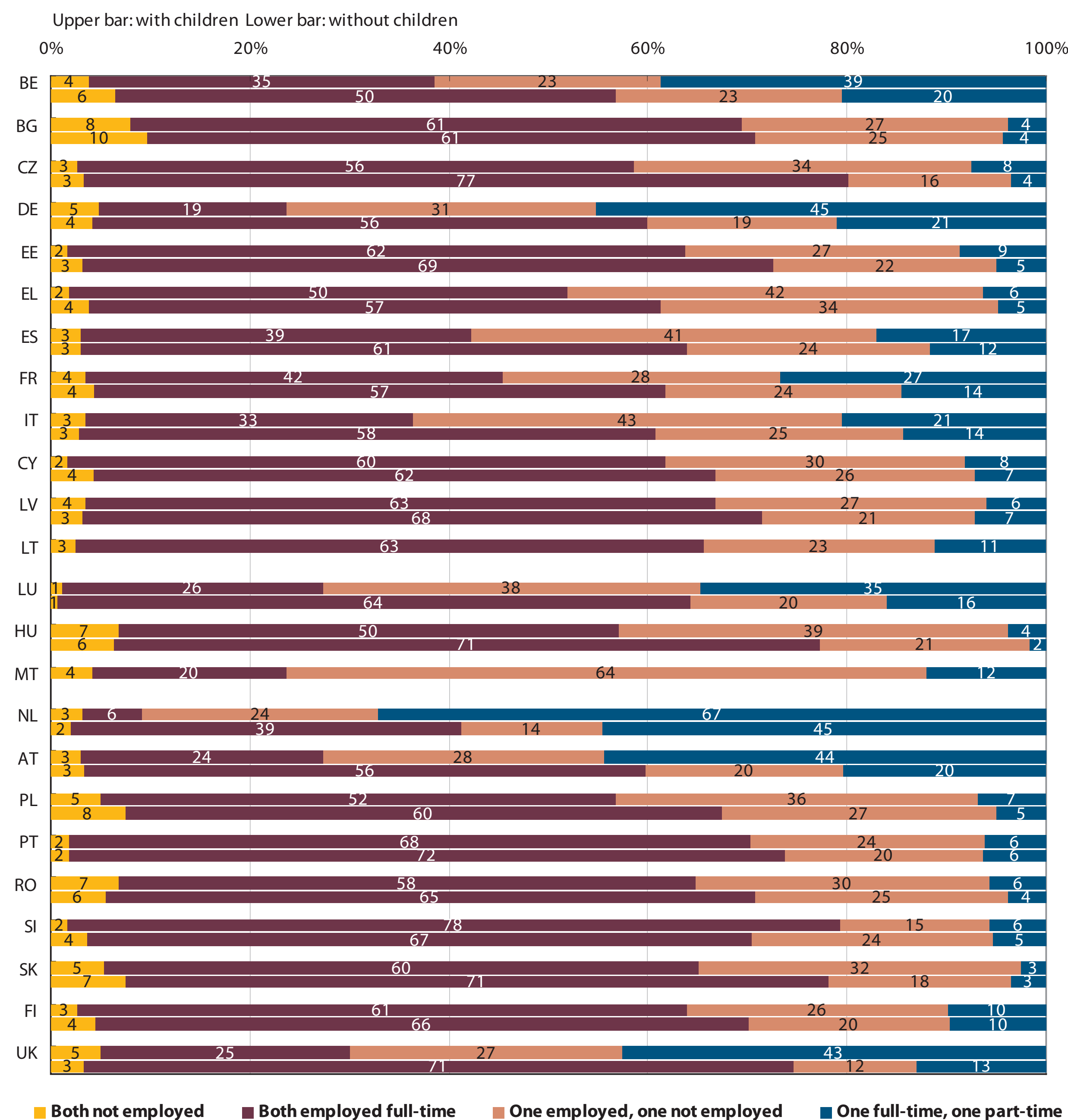
For persons living as couples *with* children, the employment patterns 'both working full-time' is also the most frequent. However, this share stood above 50% in only 14 Member States. It is recalled that in many Eastern European Member States, the dual full-time earner model was traditionally the norm, particularly in communist times, although it became less common in recent years, partly explained by the high cost of formal childcare[8]. Moreover, in some countries other employment patterns are prevalent: in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and the United Kingdom the pattern 'one working full-time and the other person working part-time' was the most widespread. In Spain, Italy and Luxembourg the situation where one person is employed (full-time or part-time) and the other person is not employed is the group with highest shares. Again the situation were both persons are not working are not widespread in the Member states.

Comparing couples with and without children reveals that, with the exception of Slovenia, in all Member States the presence of a child in the household leads to a decrease in the working pattern where both persons are working full-time. One reason to explain this drop may be found in the need to organise childcare responsibilities within the household.

[8] See also: The Cost of Childcare in EU countries – Transversal Analysis – European Parliament, Economic and Scientific Policy, document IP/A/EMPL/FWC/SC/2006-05/SC1 – Brussels, 2007

Figure 2.7: Employment status of persons living in households as couples, 2006

Age group 25-49, in relation to the presence of children in the household



Notes: Analysis based on a specific LFS database allowing household composition breakdowns. This database does not contain information on DK and SE. – IE: no data available. – LT and MT without children: unreliable data due to small sample size.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Drawing similar conclusions for 'other households' is not straightforward, as this category is quite heterogeneous. The most common employment model in these households often comprising three generations is 'at least one adult working and one adult not working'; the presence of children does not radically alter this pattern (data not shown). In countries with a wide availability of part-time employment, the presence of children in the household seems to cause a shift either towards more full-time employment or towards one adult giving up his or her job.

2.2.3. Impact of parenthood on employment rates

While the previous section analysed the household structure, the following paragraphs will consider the impact of parenthood on the individual employment rates in more detail, by focusing on the presence of children below 15 years of age.

Labour market participation patterns have for a long time remained unchanged by family structures. The 'male breadwinner' model was the dominant form, with men starting their professional careers in their early twenties, marrying a woman and starting a family around their mid-twenties. The impact of children on men's professional lives has long been small if not insignificant.

Over the past decades, major changes have occurred. The formerly predictable life course of men and women has changed radically, and family patterns have become more diverse, with people choosing to postpone marriage and/or parenting or refraining altogether from having children. Today, the career choices of men and women vary substantially according to the timing and nature of their decisions and expectations on family life. Education and apprenticeship also tend to last increasingly longer.

The participation of women in the labour market continues to rise but still depends on various factors. Women's participation in the workforce continues to be affected by their predominant role in the care of children. Therefore, the presence and number of children, as well as the age of the youngest child can have a marked influence on female employment rates.

Table 2.5 presents the employment rate of men and women in the various EU Member States, depending on their parental status. Expectedly, the presence of children appears to have a negative impact on the employment rate of women. According to the European Labour Force Survey, the deepest impact on women's employment rate was registered in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Malta (over 15 percentage points). Conversely, little or no impact was registered in Belgium and Lithuania. More surprisingly, the employment rate of women actually increased in the presence of children in Portugal and Slovenia.

However, the reverse was observed among men: in all Member States, the male employment rate rose in the presence of children, ranging from moderate differences registered in Bulgaria and Austria (4 and 5 percentage points respectively) to tangible discrepancies in Belgium, France, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Finland (more than 10 percentage points).

Childcare costs can be very high for parents, especially when they have more than one child. While women with a single child can succeed in combining motherhood and work with some organisational restructuring, this becomes increasingly difficult with two or more children, despite the fact that some countries provide extra social benefits for parents of three or more children. Therefore, in many cases, and especially for lower income groups, women with two or more children will prefer to shoulder childcare responsibilities, as childcare costs are no longer affordable[9]. Hence, employment rates are likely to decrease as the number of children increases. This picture is largely confirmed when looking at Table 2.6, at least for women.

Table 2.5: Employment rates of individuals with and without children (under 15), 2006

Age group 25-49

	Without children		With children		Difference	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
EU-27	78.3	82.4	67.0	90.0	-11.3	7.7
EA-15	77.3	82.8	66.3	91.6	-10.9	8.8
BE	75.8	81.4	72.4	91.4	-3.5	10.0
BG	77.3	77.1	71.4	81.2	-5.9	4.1
CZ	84.8	87.8	68.3	93.7	-16.5	5.9
DE	82.3	81.6	68.5	90.6	-13.8	8.9
EE	85.6	83.5	78.7	93.2	-7.0	9.7
EL	67.3	86.2	59.4	95.1	-7.9	8.9
ES	75.0	84.1	60.6	91.3	-14.4	7.2
FR	79.9	81.1	72.0	91.3	-7.9	10.3
IT	68.2	82.6	55.8	91.7	-12.4	9.1
CY	82.3	87.2	73.2	95.2	-9.1	8.0
LV	81.8	78.9	77.4	87.4	-4.5	8.5
LT	83.0	78.0	80.1	88.1	-2.9	10.0
LU	82.8	90.1	65.4	94.8	-17.4	4.7
HU	79.2	80.5	62.2	85.4	-17.1	4.9
MT	65.6	87.6	31.4	93.2	-34.2	5.6
NL	85.1	87.7	73.8	94.2	-11.3	6.5
AT	83.6	88.5	73.9	93.1	-9.7	4.5
PL	74.1	72.6	66.2	84.6	-7.8	12.1
PT	76.2	82.5	76.9	91.9	0.7	9.4
RO	73.6	78.7	69.6	83.5	-4.0	4.8
SI	79.0	83.1	85.6	93.2	6.6	10.1
SK	79.3	79.0	66.7	88.6	-12.5	9.6
FI	81.8	80.4	76.8	92.5	-5.0	12.1
UK	85.6	85.5	68.4	90.9	-17.1	5.4

Notes: it should be noted that the analysis is based on a specific LFS database allowing household composition breakdowns. This database does not contain information on DK and SE. – IE: no data available – Difference: expressed in percentage points.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

[9] The Cost of Childcare in EU countries – Transversal Analysis – European Parliament, Economic and Scientific Policy, document IP/A/EMPL/FWC/SC/2006-05/SC1 – Brussels, 2007

With the incremental financial burden of child-rearing, the employment rate of men should rise in proportion to the number of children. Table 2.6 reveals that the shift in employment rates between men with one child and men with two children were in fact negligible, oscillating between one or two percentage points (except for Bulgaria where that rate fell by 1 percentage point). With three or more children, male employment rates remained stable at a relatively high level in most Member States, but a drop was registered in a number of new Member States, including the Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Portugal and the United Kingdom (around 7 percentage points) and, most strikingly, in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia (with more than 10 percentage points). In the latter country, large families are often found in rural areas. Even if a large number of children does not influence the usual child allowances, it may influence the eligibility to other social benefits. For low-income families, these benefits may then comprise a sizeable share of the family income.

On the other hand, employment rates remain very stable in Cyprus, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Finland.

Expectedly, the situation is quite different for women: in most countries, female employment rates decreased with the number of children, with a gradual drop for the first two children and a more outspoken drop from the third child onwards. The decrease was very tangible in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. In Slovenia, the female employment rate remained surprisingly stable, with this country accounted for the highest employment rates for women with three or more children: 85%.

Table 2.6: Employment rates by number of children, 2006 (%)

Age group 25-49

	Men			Women		
	Number of children			Number of children		
	1	2	3+	1	2	3+
EU-27	89.4	91.8	86.7	71.2	67.3	53.0
EA-15	90.8	93.2	89.6	70.3	65.9	53.9
BE	91.2	93.7	87.1	75.9	76.3	58.0
BG	83.1	81.8	58.5	75.2	70.8	36.6
CZ	92.9	95.6	88.4	69.4	70.9	51.3
DE	90.2	92.4	85.9	73.9	67.7	49.6
EE	93.1	94.3	90.4	83.4	76.2	64.0
EL	93.2	96.7	94.9	61.4	59.2	52.9
ES	90.2	92.6	90.9	64.7	58.1	50.3
FR	90.5	92.5	90.2	77.5	73.9	56.7
IT	90.5	93.2	90.9	60.1	53.5	41.8
CY	92.9	96.0	96.9	76.6	76.2	63.3
LV	87.3	89.4	82.6	80.3	77.2	65.1
LT	85.7	90.3	88.0	81.5	81.6	72.0
LU	93.2	95.7	95.7	74.0	65.2	51.1
HU	85.7	88.9	75.9	66.5	66.4	39.1
MT	93.6	94.7	89.8	39.1	27.8	21.7
NL	93.7	95.5	92.1	75.3	76.5	65.1
AT	93.4	94.0	89.3	80.1	72.3	57.9
PL	83.3	86.6	83.3	69.6	66.9	57.0
PT	91.5	93.6	86.8	78.0	77.5	65.8
RO	84.4	84.9	75.3	73.9	69.1	53.4
SI	91.2	94.9	94.1	84.3	87.2	84.7
SK	89.6	91.7	79.0	70.1	69.6	52.2
FI	92.0	93.1	92.2	78.7	80.9	66.5
UK	91.5	92.7	85.4	75.5	71.0	47.9

Notes: it should be noted that the analysis is based on a specific LFS database allowing household composition breakdowns. This database does not contain information on DK and SE. – IE: no data available.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Obviously, the age of children in the household (especially of the youngest child) is a crucial factor in the decision to work or not. Different scenarios exist: women may prefer to remain at home when children are very young and return to work once they are old enough to go to school; others may turn to childcare facilities when children are very young and stop working once they are sent to school and spend more time on caring then. Decisions are influenced by factors such as the availability, quality and cost of childcare facilities, the "operating times" of the national school system, the number of children and possibilities of special working time arrangements granted by the employer.

Table 2.7 reveals that the age of the youngest child appears to have virtually no effect on the employment rate of fathers aged between 25 and 49. Indeed, fluctuations are small and no distinct pattern emerges. The picture is very different for mothers: at first glance, female employment rates seem to increase with the age of the youngest child. But there are noticeable differences: employment rates remained fairly constant in Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (with a high proportion of part-time employment), Portugal and Slovenia.

In the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and to a lesser degree in Bulgaria, the employment rates of women with children aged 0–2 were very low and increased sharply in relation to the age of children, with female employment rates exceeding 75% when the youngest child is 12 to 14 years old. Conversely, the employment rate of women in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal seems to be constant as the youngest child grows older.

Bearing in mind a broadly comparable gender cultural context, Greece, Spain and Italy not only offer similar (and comparatively low) female employment rates, but these countries also feature little difference in female employment rates in relation to the progressing age of children.

Malta appears to be a special case: aside from very low employment rates among women, their labour market participation decreased with the age of children: around 3 in 10 Maltese mothers (aged 25–49) with children between 12 and 14 were in employment. This contrasts sharply with, for instance, Czech, Estonian and Finnish mothers in the same situation, where 9 in 10 were employed.

Table 2.7: Employment rates by age of the youngest child, 2006 (%)

Age group 25-49

	Men			Women		
	Child aged 0 to 5	Child aged 6 to 11	Child aged 12 to 14	Child aged 0 to 5	Child aged 6 to 11	Child aged 12 to 14
EU-27	91.2	90.8	87.3	59.7	69.8	73.5
EA-15	92.5	92.6	89.0	61.3	68.6	71.0
BE	90.7	92.5	91.5	70.3	72.8	74.5
BG	79.6	82.1	81.6	53.6	74.0	79.4
CZ	93.2	94.9	93.5	35.1	81.5	89.4
DE	90.6	92.0	88.9	59.2	70.3	77.1
EE	92.2	93.5	94.2	58.9	86.1	89.5
EL	97.1	95.8	91.2	55.8	60.6	62.1
ES	92.8	92.7	87.0	58.0	61.9	63.3
FR	91.7	91.3	90.6	64.7	76.4	80.0
IT	93.7	93.2	86.6	54.2	57.1	56.6
CY	95.4	95.8	94.3	70.1	74.8	75.4
LV	88.8	89.3	84.8	61.7	82.5	86.5
LT	89.1	87.4	87.7	73.9	82.5	83.2
LU	95.6	96.0	91.8	64.3	66.6	65.9
HU	85.8	86.1	84.3	36.4	70.4	79.7
MT	93.2	93.3	94.4	33.8	27.2	33.0
NL	94.4	94.6	93.4	72.8	74.1	75.2
AT	92.0	94.3	93.3	62.7	77.7	84.0
PL	88.2	85.4	80.3	56.9	67.7	73.4
PT	94.2	91.4	88.8	76.6	77.3	76.9
RO	84.5	84.4	82.0	66.1	68.4	72.8
SI	94.2	95.7	90.6	83.6	88.7	85.4
SK	86.2	89.4	90.4	37.9	78.3	83.3
FI	92.5	93.0	91.8	62.7	85.9	89.5
UK	91.1	90.8	90.7	60.3	72.4	77.8

Notes: it should be noted that analysis is based on a specific LFS database allowing household composition breakdowns. This database does not contain information on DK and SE. – IE: no data available.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

When considering the overall employment rate of women in the individual Member States, one often forgets that there are significant variations within the same country. Several factors affect the employment rates of women, the most significant being education and family circumstances. In general, highly qualified women are far better integrated in the labour market than those with lower qualifications, and the former also tend to maintain more stable career paths during their working lives. Conversely, women with a low level of education usually face difficulties in entering the job market and/or finding a job after temporary interruptions. The education level plays an even greater role when women have children and other family responsibilities.

Table 2.8 outlines that even if female employment rates across the categories vary between Member States, they generally increase with the level of education. When the presence of children (and their number) is taken into account, the employment rate drops as the number of children rises (as already outlined in Table 2.6), but this drop is more pronounced among the less educated.

Table 2.8: Female employment rates by level of education and number of children, 2006 (%)

Age group 25-49

	Low				Medium				High			
	Number of children				Number of children				Number of children			
	0	1	2	3+	0	1	2	3+	0	1	2	3+
EU-27	61.3	55.8	49.1	35.2	79.9	73.2	69.1	56.9	87.8	83.7	82.9	75.2
EA-15	61.2	55.3	48.1	36.7	79.9	74.1	68.8	58.0	85.9	82.6	82.5	75.0
BE	53.3	59.5	49.3	30.5	76.9	75.7	75.1	57.5	88.5	88.5	89.6	81.1
BG	46.8	48.5	41.7	26.5	79.0	74.7	76.4	58.4	90.3	87.3	86.7	:
CZ	58.4	55.0	52.9	23.9	86.6	70.5	71.1	55.0	91.3	70.4	77.8	68.6
DE	66.5	55.3	49.2	31.0	82.4	75.0	68.4	54.9	90.8	85.3	81.8	69.1
EE	:	:	:	:	84.7	79.9	74.4	61.2	90.8	89.0	84.2	:
EL	50.6	48.4	44.2	45.7	67.3	60.1	56.6	48.8	82.3	81.3	80.7	77.1
ES	59.9	50.6	45.7	36.4	76.8	68.5	57.9	52.3	83.9	79.6	76.2	72.3
FR	66.5	65.0	57.7	40.9	83.9	80.5	74.1	58.8	85.2	83.8	84.2	74.4
IT	53.8	45.7	35.2	26.1	74.2	68.2	63.3	54.5	77.6	75.0	80.5	75.5
CY	77.2	61.8	63.6	47.5	80.0	76.7	73.1	60.1	86.9	84.1	86.5	82.8
LV	62.2	49.0	:	:	79.3	80.3	77.8	65.4	90.7	89.2	82.9	94.4
LT	:	:	:	:	78.7	77.2	79.2	70.6	93.0	92.6	90.1	86.6
LU	67.6	67.4	60.9	50.5	84.6	73.3	64.3	45.1	89.6	85.4	75.2	63.1
HU	50.2	50.3	41.6	20.2	81.1	68.7	67.9	43.8	93.6	72.7	81.7	71.4
MT	51.0	26.4	18.6	:	86.0	70.7	60.8	:	91.9	81.1	70.9	:
NL	66.4	61.5	58.6	43.1	87.6	77.3	78.6	68.9	91.9	87.3	88.1	81.6
AT	71.0	66.9	56.8	43.1	85.7	82.8	74.1	63.6	90.0	85.8	83.8	70.2
PL	37.9	45.0	45.1	35.8	69.1	66.4	63.9	58.1	90.0	84.7	85.9	86.7
PT	71.1	73.9	72.6	59.0	75.5	81.4	85.2	79.1	86.2	90.4	91.2	89.6
RO	55.9	53.1	49.9	42.4	73.7	74.9	72.0	61.5	90.6	92.3	93.4	:
SI	68.3	72.1	73.5	68.4	76.0	82.9	86.3	84.8	90.2	93.0	95.1	95.3
SK	39.5	42.5	40.0	16.9	81.4	70.6	70.1	59.3	92.7	82.2	78.8	64.9
FI	61.1	70.1	70.4	47.8	77.3	77.5	77.3	65.4	90.9	82.1	85.4	72.9
UK	70.5	63.8	57.6	30.8	86.4	76.3	71.7	49.9	93.0	86.8	82.1	72.2

Notes: it should be noted that the analysis is based on a specific LFS database allowing household composition breakdowns. This database does not contain information on DK and SE. – IE: no data available – ':' : no data available.

Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Table 2.8 presents a number of remarkable figures. There are not many countries where highly educated women tend not to work in the presence of one or two children, these countries include the Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (10 percentage points less than compared to women without children). On the other hand in Belgium, Greece, France, Italy, Cyprus, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia the employment rates increase in the presence of one or two children, Considering not only the cost of childcare but also the 'logistics' involved in raising children, it is not surprising that a sharper drop in employment rates is usually registered from the third child onwards.

The general picture for women with a medium education level is quite similar to that of highly educated women, but decreases in employment rates were more pronounced. In the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Malta and Spain the drop was significant in the presence of two children (between 15 and 25 percentage points). Employment rates of women with a medium level of education remained relatively stable in the presence of one or two children in Belgium, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania and Finland.

There was little difference between women with a low and medium level of education. Overall, the same pattern countries where the decrease in employment rate in the presence of one or two children is more than 15 percentage points. On the other hand, a considerable increase in employment rates was registered in Poland, Slovenia and Finland.

The various sections above have revealed that in today's economies, there is an increasing pressure for a more flexible use of labour. The traditional form of work based on full-time employment and long tenure has been gradually eroded and employment conditions have changed. With the expansion of the services sector and a gradual change in societal values, working time preferences have become more diverse and 'non-standard' work contracts have been introduced. Whereas fixed-term employment appears fairly gender-balanced, part-time positions are more often taken by women. Part-time employment is far more widespread in Northern Europe than in Southern Europe or the new Member States. Recent statistics also tend to indicate an increase in part-time employment, including among men. Whereas most women work part-time because of caring responsibilities, many men do so because they cannot find a full-time job.

The presence of children in the household certainly has an impact on the employment pattern of the members of the household, but there is no predominant pattern. Full-time employment is obviously widespread among singles without children, yet it remains quite common among singles with children, especially in the new Member States. Regarding couples with children, the working pattern involving both partners in a full-time job is also quite common, although in some countries the 'one-and-a-half earner' model is more widespread (such as in the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom.)

The employment rate of women expectedly drops with the number of children, especially among the less educated. Whereas the decrease is gradual for the first two children, it is quite sharp from the third child onwards. Conversely, the employment rate of men increases in the presence of children; in certain countries the difference can exceed 10 percentage points.

3

Division of time, participation in paid and unpaid family work

The reconciliation between professional obligations and family and social commitments also involves issues linked to the actual time spent at work and the time needed to carry out essential responsibilities outside the workplace, such as the time committed to household tasks or caring for family members. This chapter intends to describe how Europeans spend their time, both in gainful work and in unpaid work. The European Labour Force Survey provides a regular and valuable source of information on EU labour markets, however aside from certain ad hoc modules, they provide little information on how work is perceived by individuals, especially with regard to existing commitments outside the place of (gainful) work.

In this context, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) has launched a series of surveys on working conditions in Europe (European Working Conditions Survey – EWCS, see box below). Key results from these surveys aim at monitoring trends and changes in working conditions over time, which can be useful for policymakers. In the present chapter, EWCS data are used to draw a better picture of how working citizens perceive their work–private life balance. Because of the strict definition set for survey respondents, the EWCS sample survey only includes people in paid employment. However, unpaid work is not only performed by people in paid employment; in fact, a very sizeable share of unpaid work is carried out by people not engaged in gainful work (such as women at home). Therefore data on unpaid working hours should be interpreted with due care, as in the present analysis figures only express unpaid working hours carried out by persons in paid employment.

The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)

The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) is carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, an autonomous EU agency based in Dublin.

Between 19 September and 30 November 2005, the Foundation carried out its fourth European Working Conditions Survey. Almost 30 000 European workers were interviewed in 31 countries (the EU-25 Member States (before the latest enlargement) plus Bulgaria, Croatia, Norway, Romania, Turkey and Switzerland), answering more than 100 items on a wide range of issues regarding their employment situation and working conditions.

The statistical population includes all persons aged 15 or over whose usual place of residence is in the territory of the Member States of the European Union and acceding, candidate and EEA countries, and who were in employment during the reference period. Some countries apply a different lower age limit (16 years in Spain, the UK and Norway), while others have set an upper age limit (74 years in Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Finland, Sweden and Norway). A person is considered as being in employment if he or she did any work for pay or profit during the reference week for at least one hour. This is the same definition as in the LFS, and the same inclusion and exclusion rules apply.

For further information:
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, "Quality report of the 4th European working conditions survey", 2007
http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/doc/5639%5Cmrdoc%5Cpdf%5C5639userguide.pdf

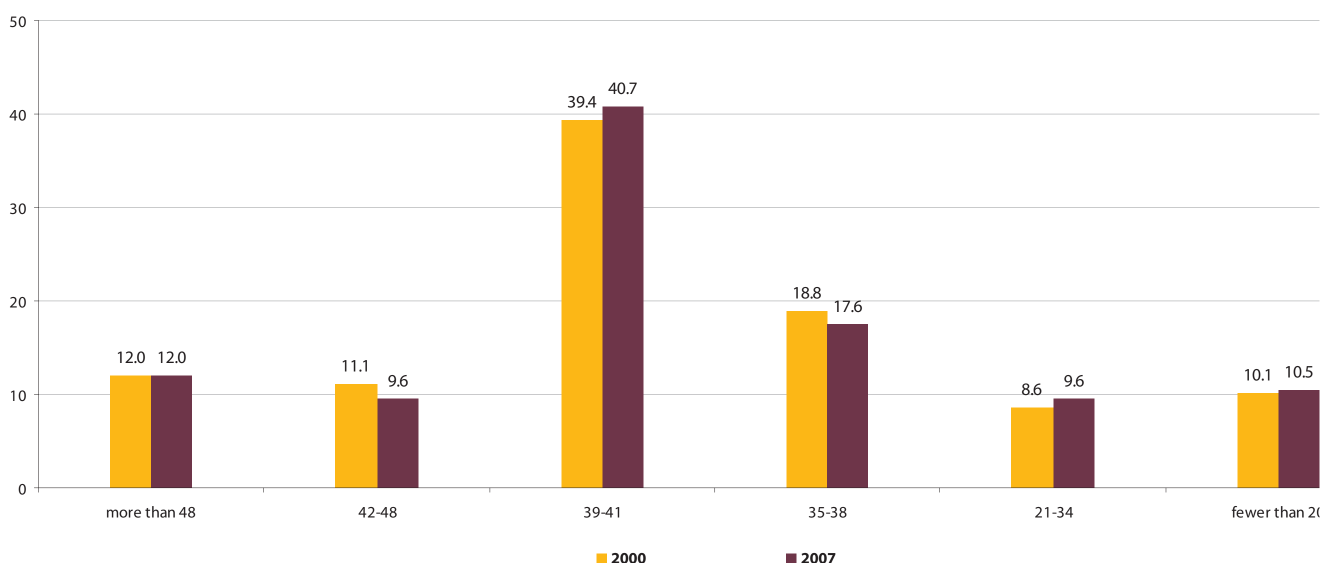
The household structure, and particularly the presence of children, is closely linked to time use. The allocation of time between work and domestic tasks varies considerably when children – young ones especially – are present in the household. The following sections outline the time use of individuals, with a specific focus on couples with children.

3.1 Evolution of weekly working hours

There has been a trend in the EU towards a slight reduction in the number of hours usually worked. Indeed, regardless of working full-time or part-time, the average employed EU citizen worked 38.1 hours in 2007, compared to 38.3 hours in 2000 (data not shown). However, a more interesting picture can be drawn when looking at the various working hour categories, as shown in Figure 3.1. The proportion of people working more than 41 hours a week has slightly decreased since 2000, while the proportion of people working shorter hours is increasing. In 2007, most employed persons (40.7%) worked between 39 and 41 hours per week. Whereas the share of persons working 48 hours or more has remained unchanged compared to 2000, the proportion of those working 42–48 hours and 35–38 hours a week has decreased. Conversely, the share of those working less than 34 hours a week has risen slightly.

Figure 3.1: Evolution of usual weekly working hours, 2000 and 2007, EU-27 (%)

Population aged 15-64, in employment



Source: Eurostat, LFS.

Working time is measured in labour force surveys as the time spent in the jobs that produce goods and services that are included in GDP. This makes sense from the labour market perspective and is in line with the standards set by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). For this publication however, it would be useful to broaden this definition and also consider the time indirectly related to paid work and time spent in performing unpaid work.

Indeed, from the point of view of reconciling work and private life, there is a case for taking into account:

- commuting time, i.e. time spent travelling to and from work. Although from the perspective of the employer this is not working time, for the employee it is definitely considered as time devoted to work. It should, therefore, be taken into account when discussing time dedicated to work.
- the time spent in unpaid work, which is clearly as important in societal and economic terms as paid work, even if it is not remunerated by the market. Obviously, from the perspective of the individual, unpaid work (time spent on household duties, and caring for children and adults) still represents work, so it can be considered as such, even if it is not placed in the same category as paid work.

Although an increasing number of women have careers, what is socially expected of them inside the home often remains much the same. Frequently referred to as women's "double shift", these demands tend to limit period of free time women have and to perpetuate gender stereotypes. Although men are increasingly involved in household tasks that were formerly (and in certain countries largely remain) the preserve of women, the amount and structure of time devoted by men to unpaid work is often quite different.

The archetypal household tasks attributed to men include car maintenance, home improvements and repairs. These tasks are often carried out on an irregular basis, which means that there is more control over "whether, how, and when" they need to be done. Some tasks traditionally attributed to women, such as clothes shopping and home decorating are similar to male tasks in that they do not have to be performed on a regular basis, which affords a high level of schedule control over them. However, other traditionally female tasks, such as laundry washing, cooking and grocery shopping are done on a routine schedule and allow only a low level of control over whether, how, and when they need to be done. These routine chores make up the bulk of unpaid working hours.

The following sections take a closer look at the distribution of paid and unpaid working hours in the individual Member States and the related impact of children. Time use survey data complete this analysis by offering further details on unpaid working hours.

3.2 Paid and unpaid working hours

General structure

The figure below presents results of the fourth European Working Conditions Survey (2005), giving a breakdown of the hours spent in paid and unpaid work in the EU-27, Norway and Switzerland. This composite indicator on working hours comprises the average number of weekly working hours, plus the average weekly working hours in jobs other than the main job, the time spent commuting as well as the total weekly unpaid working hours. It should be noted that the figures refer only to persons in employment.

The countries were ranked in decreasing order of total working time; at a glance it seems that the contrast between weekly working hours and total composite working hours is considerable.

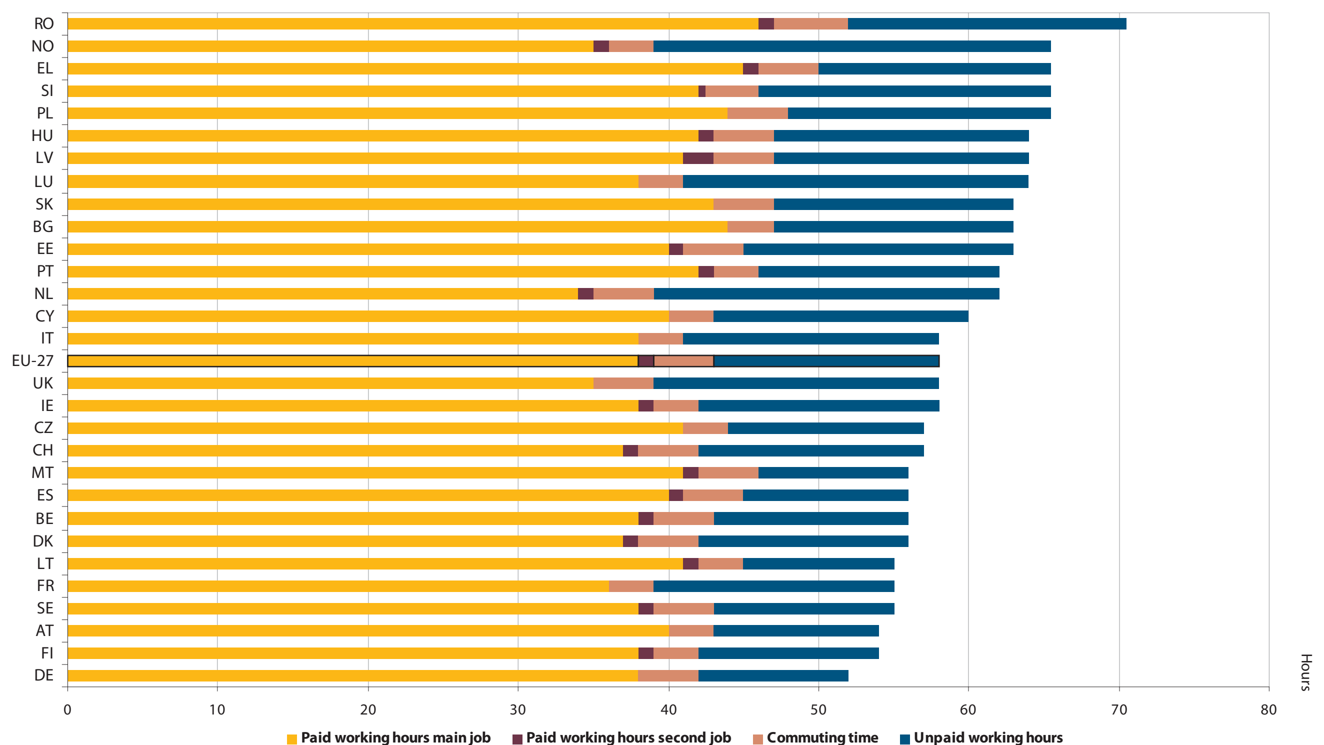
At EU-27 level, the total weekly time spent on paid and unpaid work amounted to 58 hours, 39 of which were paid working hours (an average 38 hours in the main job and an additional 1 hour in a second job), 4 were spent on commuting and the remaining 15 were unpaid. Differences between individual countries are substantial, ranging from a total of 70.5 hours in Romania to 52 hours in Germany.

The high values registered in Romania are influenced by two factors: the longest average paid working hours among all countries considered (46 hours per week) and the longest commuting time (5 hours). The time spent on unpaid work amounted to 18.5 hours, which is above the EU average (15 hours), but not exceptionally high.

Four countries follow with an identical composite number of hours: 65.5 hours were registered for Norway, Greece, Slovenia and Poland. Whereas the three latter roughly present a similar breakdown, Norway registered a fairly high amount of unpaid working hours.

It also appears that when the average number of paid working hours is comparatively low, the time spent on unpaid work tends to be higher. This is especially the case in the Netherlands, and – to a lesser extent – in the United Kingdom. It should also be highlighted that countries with a comparatively low average number of paid working hours generally offer a fairly high share of part-time jobs.

Figure 3.2: Weekly hours spent on paid and unpaid work, by country, 2005



Note: The composite working hours indicator is made up of the weekly working hours, plus the average weekly working hours in jobs other than the main job, commuting time and the total weekly unpaid working hours, declared by workers aged 15 or over.

Source: EWCS.

When looking at the gender breakdown for combined working hours by country, results indicate that there is a marked difference between women and men in terms of unpaid working hours. Figure 3.3, which shows groupings of countries with similar working time patterns[1], reveals that although on average, men work longer hours in paid employment overall, women actually work more hours than men when paid and unpaid working hours are combined.

Women in Bulgaria and Romania appear to be carrying the highest burden: the 78 hours of total work they face each week are essentially the result of the longest paid working hours and long unpaid working hours. Conversely, working women in Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg and Austria spend on average 19 hours less per week (59 hours) on paid and unpaid work. Of these 19 hours' difference, 10 can be ascribed to the lower average length of paid working time, notably due to higher recourse to part-time jobs in these countries.

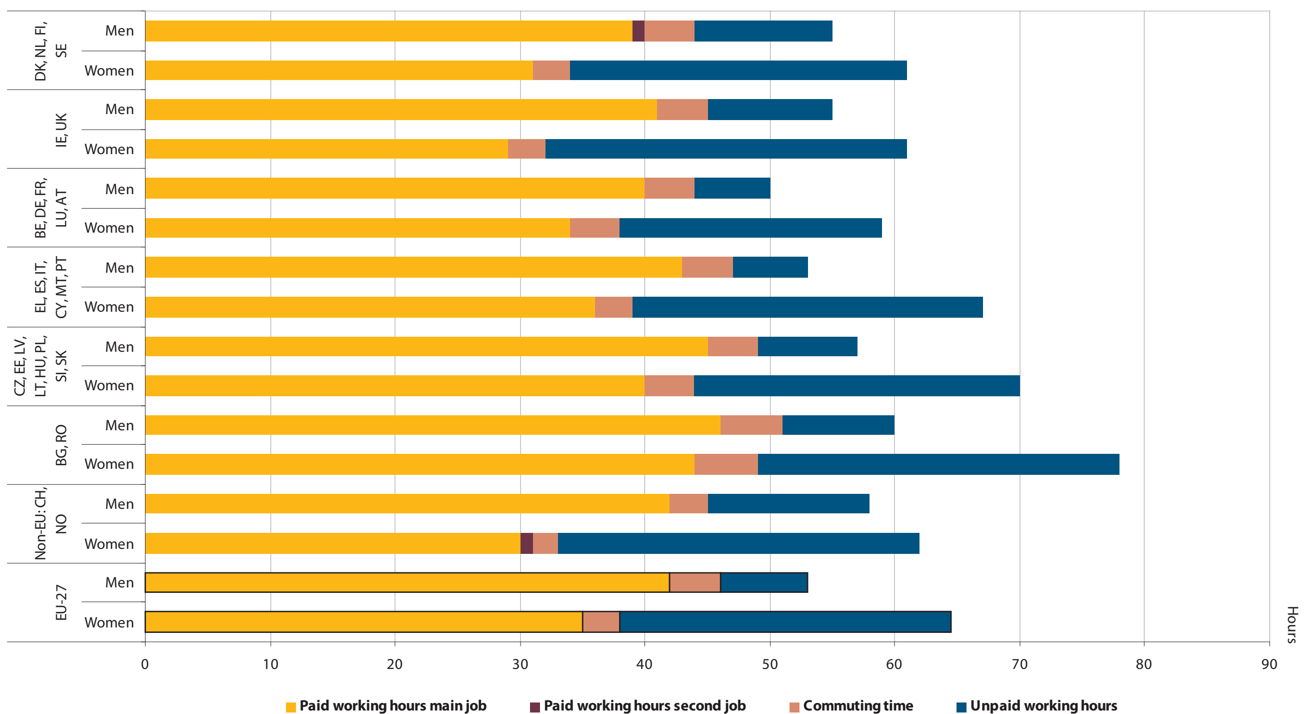
The same group of countries stand out when considering the lowest working time for men, with an average 50 hours a week: 40 in gainful work, 4 on commuting and 6 on unpaid working hours. Conversely, the highest number of working hours was registered for Swiss and Norwegian men, mostly due to their stronger involvement in unpaid work (13 hours a week).

Turning from the country groupings to the situation in the individual Member States (data not shown due to space constraints), it appears that Latvian women frequently have a second job, as on average 1.03 hours per week were registered, far above the EU average of 0.30 hours. The other Baltic States also score comparatively high Estonia: 0.56 hours and Lithuania 0.50 hours).

Other national particularities include French men, with the shortest average weekly paid working hours in the main job, at 37.4 hours (EU average: 41.7 hours); Dutch men, with the longest average weekly commuting time (4.3 hours, against an EU average of 3.5 hours) and Dutch women, who excel in the number of unpaid working hours. With 36.6 hours per week, the latter spent 10 hours per week more than the average employed women in the EU (25.5 hours).

[1] Based on an adapted Esping-Andersen typology – Esping-Andersen, G., The three worlds of welfare capitalism, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1990.

Figure 3.3: Composite indicator of working time, by country group and gender, 2005 (hours)



Note: The composite working hours indicator is made up of the weekly working hours, plus the average weekly working hours in jobs other than the main job, commuting time and the total weekly unpaid working hours, declared by male and female workers aged 15 or over.

Source: EWCS.

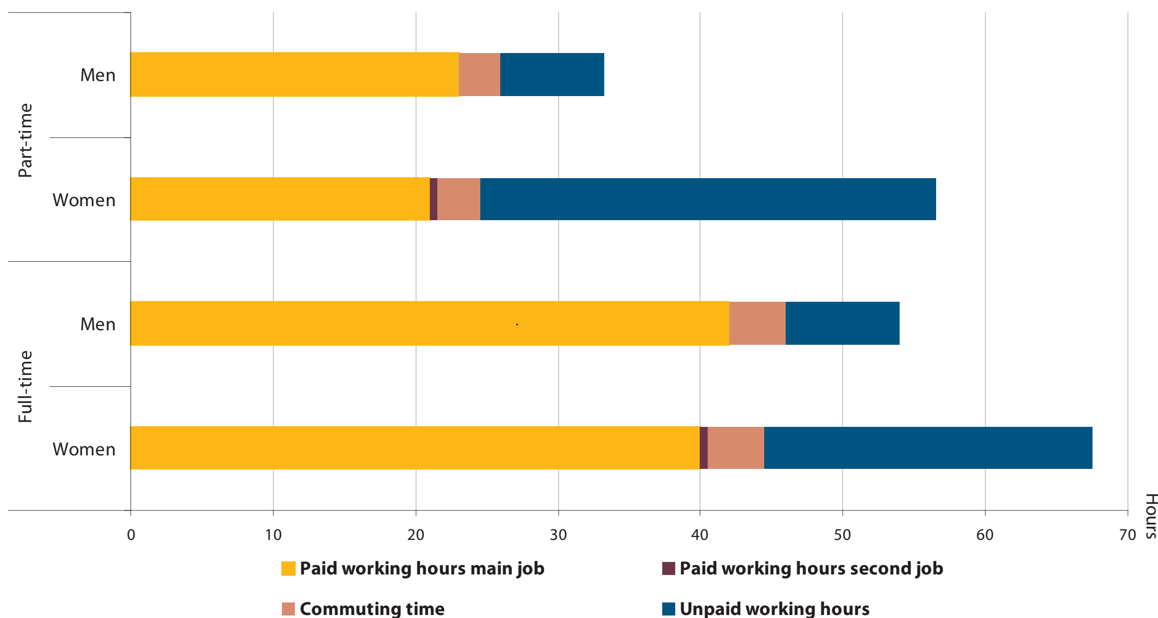
Looking at composite working hours according to full- and part-time employment reveals a number of interesting aspects. For women working part-time, the average time spent on unpaid work exceeds by far that spent on paid work, with an average 21 hours per week spent in paid work, against 32 hours in unpaid work. As such, this is not surprising. More interesting is the fact that men working part-time seem to trade in far less paid for unpaid working time (the paid–unpaid working time ratio is 33%).

It should also be noted that when considering paid and unpaid work in combination, as measured by the European Working Conditions Survey, female part-time workers work slightly longer per week than men in full-time employment (56 hours against 54). Women working full-time also have the longest working week, at more than 65 hours.

Although part-time work is often considered as a family-friendly measure that can help workers to balance working life with responsibilities outside work, the European Working Conditions Survey suggests that the number of unpaid working hours is actually higher when women work part-time. Figure 3.4 shows that women appear to spread their household tasks over a longer period when working part-time. In other words, all other things being equal in terms of daily household chores, women working full-time concentrate their unpaid work into fewer hours. A substantial part of the unpaid working hours by women working part-time will however consist in time spent on caring for children. Certain domestic tasks may be outsourced. Obviously, women working full-time are more likely to seek help for domestic chores than those working part-time, which may partly explain the discrepancy.

What is more striking is the marginal difference in the length of unpaid working hours between full-time and part-time working men. While male full-time workers spend an average 8 hours a week on unpaid work, this figure was even lower for men working part-time: 7.2 hours.

Figure 3.4: Composite indicator on working hours, by full-time/ part-time hours and gender, EU-27, 2005



Note: The composite working hours indicator is made up of the figures for weekly working hours, plus the average weekly working hours in jobs other than the main job, commuting time and the total weekly unpaid working hours, declared by male and female workers aged 15 or more broken down by full-time and part-time work, 2005.

Source: EWCS.

It thus appears that despite the increasing participation of women in the labour force, the traditional division of domestic responsibilities between men and women persists. Domestic responsibilities, such as caring for children, housework or cooking are essentially assumed by women. Women's work and private life hence appears "balanced" in the sense that they devote comparable amounts of their time to both paid and unpaid work.

As shown in Table 3.1, which constitutes a subgroup of the composite indicator, the number of unpaid working hours is particularly high among women aged between 25 and 39 (31.8 weekly hours) and between 40 and 54 (26.9 hours), who are primarily concerned by family responsibilities. This figure was noticeably lower outside these two age categories, as a large share of young women (aged 24 or below) will still be in education or living in the parental home, whereas women aged 55 and over often live in households where children have left the house and domestic and caring tasks are less time-consuming.

In terms of age class, a similar pattern emerges for men, but in a wholly different order of magnitude, as male shares are lower by a factor of between 3 and 4. Indeed, it appears that men's work largely tends to be confined to their paid job, regardless of their age.

A different approach is used in Time Use Surveys (TUS), which are conducted by national statistical agencies and research institutes in their respective countries. In a TUS, a representative sample of individuals keeps a diary of daily activities during one weekday and one weekend day of each week over one year. As this approach is substantially different, it will not be detailed here [2].

Table 3.1: Unpaid weekly working hours, by gender and age , 2005

Age of respondent	Men	Women
24 years or younger	3.2	10.4
25-39 years	9.2	31.8
40-54 years	8.6	26.9
55 years or older	5.2	17.9

Note: Total weekly unpaid working hours (caring for children and adults and hours spent on housework), declared by male and female respondents aged 15 or over.

Source: EWCS.

[2] For more information, please refer to Statistics in Focus No. 4/2006 "How is time of women distributed in Europe" – http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1073,46587259&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_product_code=KS-NK-06-004

More information on national time use surveys can be obtained through the following links:

How women and men spend their time
http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-NK-03-012/EN/KS-NK-03-012-EN.PDF

How is the time of women and men distributed in Europe?
http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/portal/page?_pageid=1073,46587259&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_product_code=KS-NK-06-004

How Europeans spend their time – Everyday life of women and men
http://epp.eurostat.cec.eu.int/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-58-04-998/EN/KS-58-04-998-EN.PDF

The life of women and men in Europe – A statistical portrait - NEW EDITION
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1073,46587259&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_product_code=KS-80-07-135

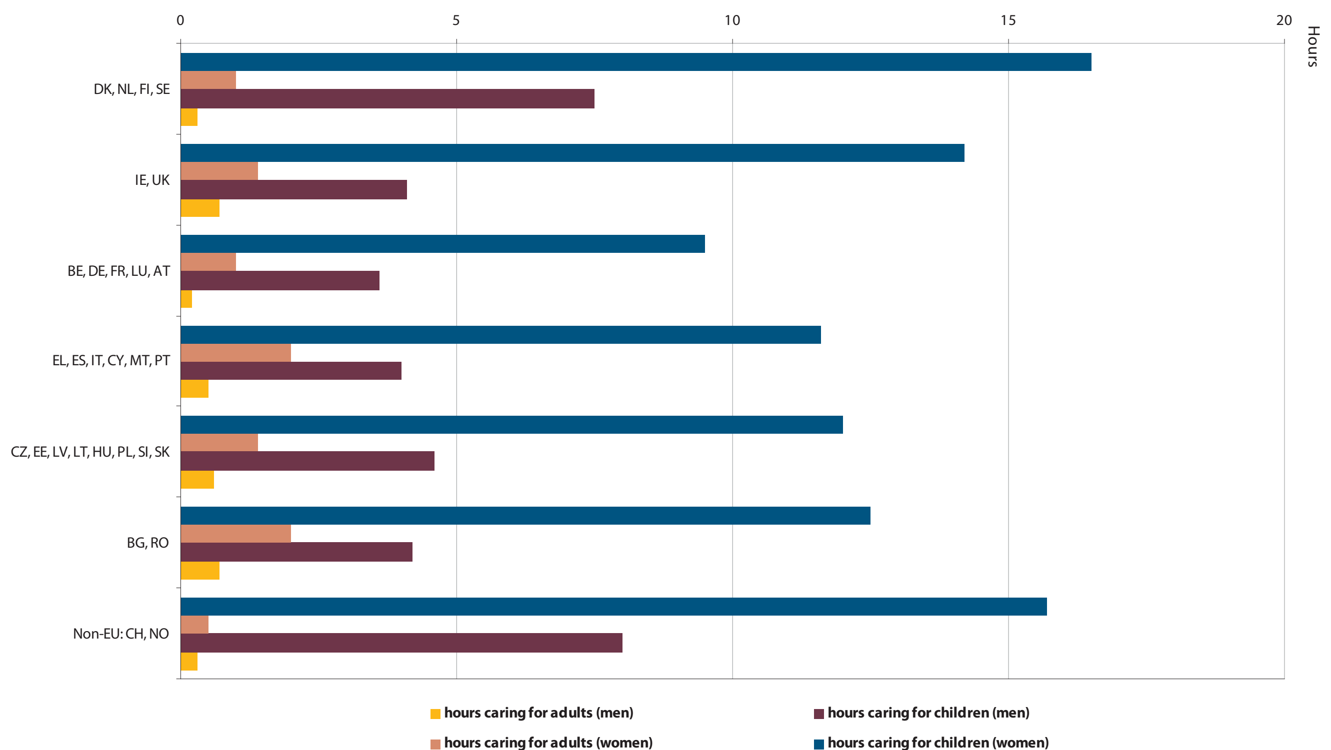
Focus on caring

Caring for children and other dependents is very often the primary motivation in the decision to stop working for family reasons. It should be recalled that the analysis carried out in this subsection is limited to employed persons. Persons that are not in gainful employment and assume caring responsibilities are hence excluded, which can have a strong impact on the results.

It appears that a substantial share of unpaid working hours is spent on caring (both for adults and children). As for domestic work in general, there are significant differences in the gender distribution of the number of hours spent on caring: in the Netherlands, Nordic countries and Switzerland, the amount of time spent on caring is better shared between men and women than in Southern European and candidate countries; Eastern European countries fall somewhere in between.

Childcare is by and large assumed by women in all countries considered. Again based on country groupings with similar working patterns, it appears that women in the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Switzerland spend the most time caring for their children (around 16 hours per week), which is double the amount of time spent by men on childcare (notably due to the duration of the paid parental leave schemes). However, men in these countries still excel when compared to other country groups, where men spend on average only 4 to 5 hours on childcare. In Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg and Austria, men spent on average 3.6 hours caring for their children, while women spent 9.5 hours per week, but were still at the bottom of the ranking. The largest gender gap was noted in Ireland and the United Kingdom, where the time spent by women on childcare exceeded that of men by a factor of 3.5. In concrete terms, this translates into a difference of 10 hours per week between women (14.2 hours) and men (4.1 hours).

Figure 3.5: Hours spent caring for children and adults per week, by country group and gender



Note: Total weekly unpaid working hours declared by male and female workers aged 15 or more broken down by time spent caring for children and adults, 2005 .

Source: EWCS.

Although overall far fewer hours are spent caring for adults than children, the amount of time devoted to caring for adults in southern European countries is considerably higher than in most other countries. For instance, Bulgarian and Romanian women spent twice as much time caring for adults (2 hours per week) than women in most western European and Nordic countries (1 hour). Albeit lower in absolute terms, a similar pattern can be observed for men: whereas men in Western Europe and Scandinavia spend 0.2 to 0.3 hours per week caring for adults, most southern and central European Member States registered between 0.5 and 0.7 hours a week. This is explained by the social and cultural situation in terms of caring for dependant adults in those countries who are mainly cared at home by their relatives and for whom care services are limited.

Indeed, while it is hard enough raising children with one or both parents pursuing a career, a growing number of families are also caring for ageing parents. Key elements to this development are the fact that people are living longer in retirement, people are marrying and having children later in life, and the fastest-growing segment of the population comprises people well over retirement age.

The so-called "sandwich generation" families – middle-aged persons wedged between two dependent generations – are coping with the challenge of multi-generational care and are facing obligations for which public authorities sometimes provide insufficient or inadequate solutions.

An increasing number of families are being confronted with the question of how to manage and afford the long-term care needs of senior citizens. Long-term care often involves not only medical care or nursing home care (which account for just a fraction of long-term care needs), but also the vast array of support services that many ageing citizens need to maintain their independence at home. These services include everything from help with shopping and cleaning to help with taking medication or getting to the doctor's appointment. Families are often shouldering a large share of these responsibilities on their own.

3.3 Satisfaction with the work–private life balance

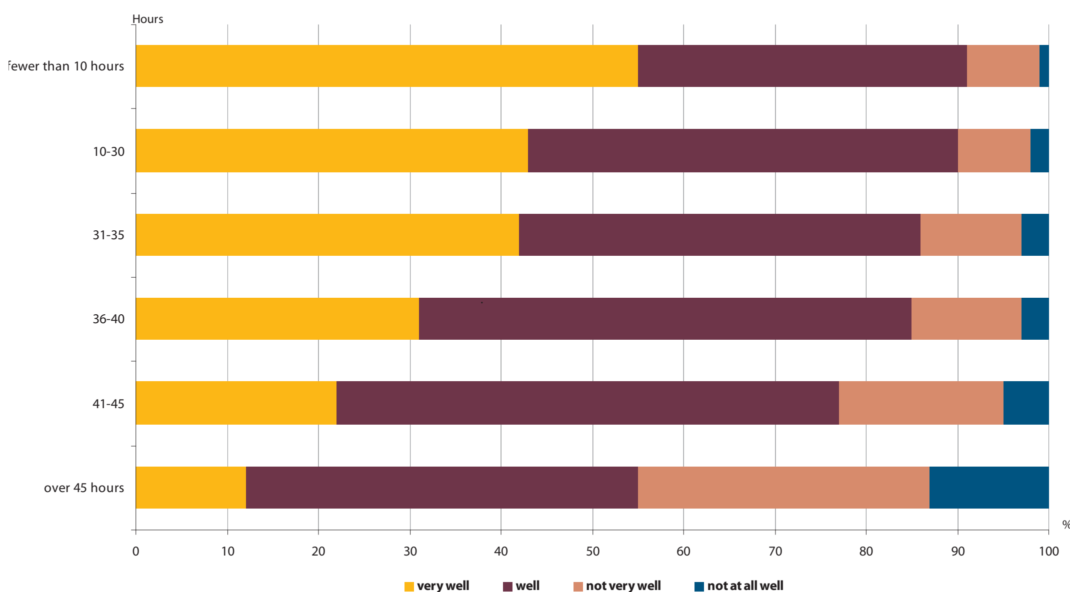
Respondents of the European Working Conditions Survey, which only takes account of persons in employment, were asked if their job 'fits in with their family or social commitments outside work' according to a four-point scale ('very well', 'well', 'not so well', 'not at all well'). Four out of five European workers said they were satisfied with their situation and how their working arrangements fitted in with their non-work commitments [3]. However, as questions on satisfaction with work–private life balance tend to routinely elicit high levels of positive responses, the survey also included additional questions to provide further details on aspects linked to the work–private life balance.

(3) See also the recent Eurobarometer survey on 'Family life and the needs of an ageing population' (Flash Eurobarometer 247, October 2008), which partly treats this topic.

One of the principal factors influencing the balance between work and private life is the volume of paid hours worked. The more hours a person works, the greater the difficulty in reconciling work and family and social commitments outside work. This is clearly reflected in Figure 3.6, where as much as 85% of persons working between 36 and 40 hours per week (considered as a full-time job) rated their work–private life balance as 'very well' or 'well'. This share stood at 77% for those working 41 to 45 hours a week, whereas it dropped to 55% for those working 45 hours or more.

Figure 3.6: Perception of the work–private life balance, by length of working week, EU 27, 2005 (%)

Employed persons aged 15 or above



Source: EWCS.

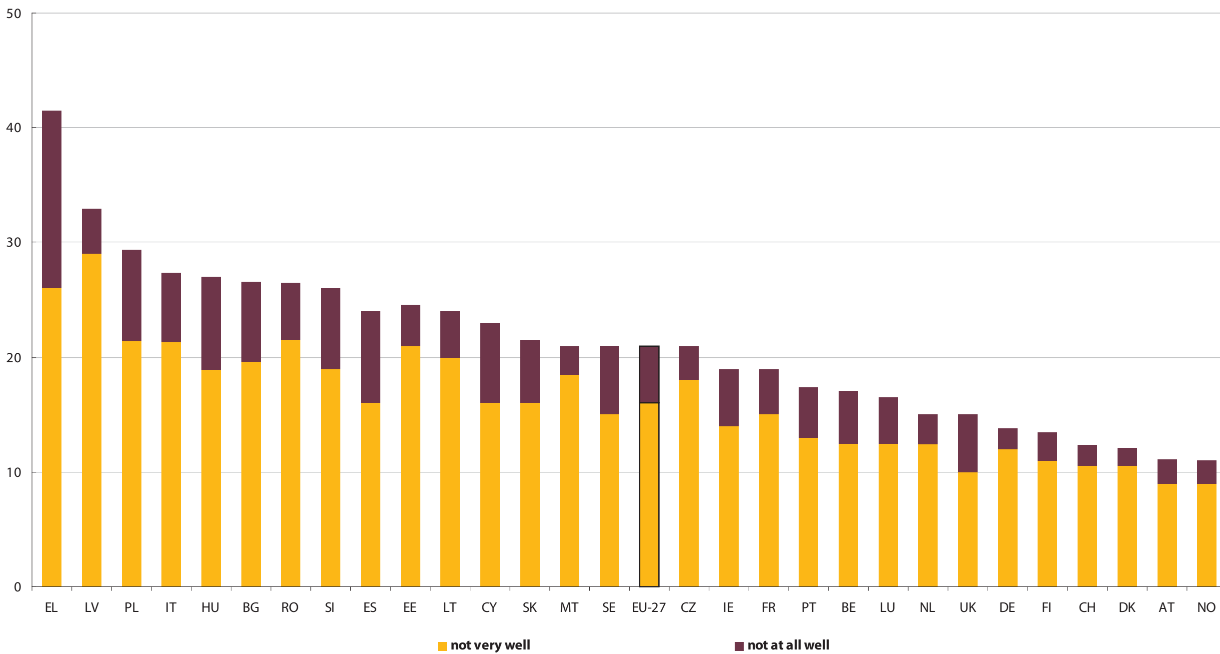
Similarly, the share of persons who rated their work–private life balance as 'not very well' or 'not at all well' increased with the number of hours worked in a week. This pattern was amplified considerably when the working week exceeds 45 hours: 32% of workers rated their work–private life balance as 'not very well' (against 18% for those working 41 to 45 hours a week); and 13% rated it as 'not at all well' (against 5% for those working 41 to 45 hours a week).

There were considerable variations across countries for respondents who considered their work–private life balance as 'not very well' or 'not at all well', from a low 11% dissatisfaction rate in Norway and Austria to over 40% in Greece, double the EU-27 average (21%).

At country level, there seems to be a correlation between the number of hours worked (in the main job) and the level of dissatisfaction with the work–private life balance. Countries with long average working hours tend to register relatively high dissatisfaction rates, but there are exceptions: Latvia for instance, with a similar volume of working hours in the main job as Slovenia or the Czech Republic, reported far higher shares of persons who were unhappy with their current situation (Latvia reported 33%, against 26% in Slovenia and 21% in the Czech Republic). In the EU-27 as a whole, where the average working week amounted to 39 hours, 21% of respondents were unsatisfied with their work–private life balance. Conversely, the remaining 79% were satisfied with their current situation.

Figure 3.7: Perception of the work–private life balance, by country, 2005 (%)

Employed persons aged 15 or above



Source: EWCS.

Given the assumption that working women remain disproportionately involved in unpaid domestic and caring activities – an assumption supported by evidence from the survey – a key focus in the work–private life balance debate remains the specific pressures on working women. Based on results from the EWCS, it is interesting to note that men report more dissatisfaction with their work–private life balance than women. The main factors contributing to this unexpected outcome are, however, the volume of weekly working hours and the different ways in which working hours are organised between men and women[4]. As a rule, part-time workers are twice as likely as full-time workers to have a positive perception of their work–private life balance. The high incidence of part-time work among women and the low incidence of part-time work among men are therefore key factors in explaining the levels of satisfaction with work–life balance among working men and women. However, even among both sexes working full-time, a somewhat higher proportion of men (24% for men against 20% for women – data not shown) have a negative perception of their work–private life balance.

[4] See Report on the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, Chapter 9 — http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/docs/ewco/4EWCS/ef0698/chapter9.pdf

4

Family responsibilities and care services

4.1 Childcare services

Early childhood education and care differ substantially across countries. First, opinions diverge as to the optimal age at which children's socialisation should begin. Secondly, countries also differ in the way childcare responsibilities are shared between the domestic, public and private spheres.

As far as outside childcare options are concerned, countries have generally implemented a dual system:

- Collective childcare systems (crèches, kindergartens, nursery-schools, play-schools): these are public or private reception facilities with skilled staff providing care for young children during the day;
- Subsidised professional child minders who receive children at their home (family day-care).

Moreover, most countries distinguish between two periods of pre-primary care and education, an earlier period that is more related to care (from birth until the child's third birthday) and a later one with a larger educational component (from three years of age until the age at which compulsory education starts).

The Barcelona European Council of March 2002 put forward the improvement of childcare provisions as an important instrument within the set of active policies aimed at full employment[1]. The Council acknowledged the need to improve public and private childcare provision in order to increase female participation rates. Moreover, accessible and high-quality childcare is considered of prime importance to enhance social inclusion of all vulnerable groups. Two specific targets were adopted:

By 2010, Member States should provide care facilities to cover, first, at least 90 per cent of children aged between three and the age at which compulsory schooling begins and, second, at least 33 per cent of children below three years of age. These objectives have appealed to governments to substantially improve their childcare systems.

This chapter provides an overview of a comprehensive set of relevant childcare characteristics as well as a comparison of all EU-27 Member States and EFTA countries when available. However, issues relating to regional heterogeneity remain given that the data available are not sufficiently disaggregated. Indeed, in most countries, local communities play an important role in the provision of childcare, which often leads to a high degree of diversity within countries.

[1] For details see http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/71025.pdf

4.1.1 Provision and organisation of childcare services

This section first provides an overview of the structure and typology of childcare services and facilities in individual countries, followed by a presentation of quantitative information on the use of such childcare services.

According to the OECD[2] , three main categories of formal care or education structures can be distinguished based on age and educational content (Table 4.1). The first category comprises a wide range of arrangements targeted at children of the youngest age group (mostly from birth up to the child's third birthday) such as day-care centres, playgroups, and nurseries, all of which put the emphasis on care (as opposed to education) and allow parents to work. These structures can be largely managed by private stakeholders but publicly and privately financed (the Czech Republic, Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, the UK and Switzerland) or largely publicly funded and managed (all remaining countries). A second group includes all non-school education-oriented settings, mostly for preschoolers, that is children between three years of age and the age at which they enter compulsory schooling. Finally, the third category corresponds to schools, which are institutionalised care structures as such.

The typology table (Table 4.1) shows that Hungary, the Netherlands and the UK are the countries with the lowest age to start statutory education: compulsory enrolment starts at five years of age in the form of a pre-primary curriculum.

In most European countries the age of compulsory schooling coincides with entry into primary education (usually six years of age). The same is true for the Nordic countries and Poland but at the age of seven. In Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands, primary school starts at the age of four, while compulsory schooling begins at six in Ireland and at five years of age in the UK and the Netherlands.

[2] OECD family database, available online at www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database

Table 4.1: Typology of childcare and early education services

	Centre based care		Family day care		Pre-school		Compulsory school	
Public [1]								
Private [2]								
Age	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
BE	*Kinderdagverblijf* , (centre-based crèches) and FDC. Crèches (centre-based) and gardiennes encadrées (FDC)			Kleuterschool, part-time or full-time, with out-of-school-hours care; Ecole maternelle, part-time or full-time, with out-of-school-hours care			Compulsory schooling	
CZ	*Crèche* (centre-based care), FT			Materska skola (state kindergarten)			Compulsory schooling	
DK	*Dagpleje* (FDC) and *Vuggestuer* (creche) full-time (>32 hrs)			*Bornehaver* (kindergarten) full-time (>32hrs)				Compulsory schooling
	Adlersintegrer (age-integrated facility) full-time (>32 hrs)						Borne-haver (>32hrs)	
DE	*Krippen* (centre-based creche)			Kindergarten (pre-school)			Compulsory schooling	
IE	Regulated FDC and nurseries (centre-based)				Early Start and Infant school (pre-school), with primary school		Compulsory schooling	
				Pre-school playgroups				
EL	*Vrefonipiakoi stathmoi* (crèche for children <2.5 and nursery school for >2.5)						Compulsory schooling	
				Nipiagogeia (kindergarten)				
ES	Educacion pre-scolar (Center based)			Educacion infantile (Pre-school), with primary school			Compulsory schooling	
FR	*Crèche* (centre-based care) and *Assistant maternelles* (FDC), FT			*Ecole maternelle* (pre-school)			Compulsory schooling	
IT	*Asili nidi* (creches) part-time (20hrs) and full-time (<50hrs)			*Scuola dell'infanzia* (pre-school)			Compulsory schooling	
LU	*Crèche* (centre-based care) and *Tagesmutter* (FDC)			*Enseignement pre-scolaire* (pre-school)			Compulsory schooling	
HU	*Bolcsode* (creches), full-time (40hrs)			Ovoda (kindergarten)		Compulsory schooling		
NL	Gastouderopvang (FDC), Kinderopvang (child care centres) and Playgroups				Group 1, with primary school	Compulsory schooling (group 2 onwards)		
AT	*Tagesmutter (FDC) and Krippen (centre-based). Part-time (25hrs)*			Kindergarten, (part-time, 25hrs). Out of school care provision under development.			Compulsory schooling	
PL	Nurseries			Pre-school/Nursery schools				Compulsory schooling
PT	Creche familiare (FDC) and centre-based creches			Jardims de infancia (pre-school)			Compulsory schooling	
SK	*Nursery schools*			*Kindergarten*			Compulsory schooling	
FI	Perhepaivahoito (FDC) and Paivakoti (municipal early development centres), full-time (>50hrs)						*Esiopetus* pre-school	Compulsory schooling
SE	*Forskola* (pre-school) full-time, 30 hours, some *Familiedaghem* (FDC) particularly in rural areas.						*Forskoleklass* (preschool, PT)	Compulsory schooling
UK	Nurseries, child minders and playgroups			Playgroups and nurseries, PT	Reception class, with primary school	Compulsory schooling		
IS	Day-care centres and 'day mothers' (FDC)			Pre-school			Compulsory schooling	
NO	Barnehage, including rural familiebarnhager, full-time (40hrs)						Compulsory schooling	
CH	Créche. Krippen, varies across cantons (centre-based)			Pre-school, mandatory in some cantons.			Compulsory schooling	

Notes: Situation as of 18.01.2007
(1) Provision is largely publicly funded and managed (more than 50% of enrolments are in publicly operated facilities).
(2) Provision is largely managed by private stakeholders (both for-profit and not-for-profit providers) and is publicly and privately financed.

Source: OECD.

Following the analysis of the organisation of formal childcare facilities, this section will focus on their use. There are only very few sources that actually quantify the use of childcare facilities across Europe in a comparable way. The most appropriate source appears to be the Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), which provide not only a source of information on the use of formal childcare services, but also on other types of arrangements. The box below details the overall aim of the EU-SILC and describes the survey's variables that are of interest here.

EU-SILC data

EU-SILC (Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions) is an instrument aiming at collecting timely and comparable cross sectional and longitudinal multidimensional micro data on income poverty and social exclusion. This instrument is anchored in the European Statistical System (ESS).

EU-SILC was launched in 2004 in 13 Member States. It reached its full scale extension with the 25 Member States, Norway and Iceland in 2005. Later it will be completed with data stemming from Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria and Switzerland.

The instrument aims to provide two types of data:

- Cross-sectional data pertaining to a given time or a certain time period with variables on income, poverty, social exclusion and other living conditions, and
- Longitudinal data pertaining to individual-level changes over time, generally observed periodically over a four-year period.

The reference population of EU-SILC is all private households and their current members residing in the territory of the Member State at the time of data collection.

In the framework of this publication, the survey's childcare services variables distinguishing formal care and other types of arrangements are of particular interest, the reference period being a typical (usual) week from January to June of the year of the survey.

FORMAL CARE covers the following services:

Education at pre-school
Pre-school or equivalent (e.g. kindergarten, nursery school, etc.). The educational classification used is ISCED Level 0. Special pre-schools or equivalents for children who have special needs (handicapped, etc.) are included as far as they are considered as pre-school (level 0).
Education at compulsory school
"Compulsory" school shall be understood as a mean to separate school from pre-school, but all the school hours have to be included.
Child care at centre-based services
This variable concerns only the children who are at pre-school or at school in the childcare reference period. Centre-based services outside (pre-) school hours should report the hours of care only before and after school. The services can be or not at the school place.
Child care at day-care centre
Includes all kinds of care organised/controlled by a structure (public, private). The place of the care can be a centre or the carer's home (e.g. organised family care). The care can be full time or part time, even for few hours. Special day-care of children with special needs are included.

OTHER TYPES OF ARRANGEMENTS include:

Child care by a professional childminder at child's home or at childminder's home covers direct arrangements between the carer and the parents, who are often employers and pay the carer directly. "Professional" childminder denotes a person for whom looking after a child represents a job or paid activity, including baby sitters and au pairs. The care can be provided either at the child's home or at the childminder's home.

Child care by grand-parents, others household members (aside from parents), other relatives, friends or neighbours refers to unpaid care (informal arrangements on an unpaid basis such as exchange of services). The care can be provided at the child's home or at the home of the relative, friend or neighbour.

For more information please see:
http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/dsis/eusilc/library

As explained hereafter, various indicators are used to evaluate the childcare system. They can each be broken down by age group: 0–2 years of age and 3 years of age until entry into the compulsory schooling system.

First, there is what is commonly denoted as the "coverage rate": it measures the proportion of children of a given age group receiving some form of formal childcare. Coverage rates can be computed on the demand-side by looking at the use of formal arrangements.

A second indicator is "daily coverage": this refers to the spread of opening hours of formal childcare arrangements. If a system is intended to adapt to parents' working hours, childcare centres and other care provisions are expected to offer continuous service covering the entire working day, or in other words, without interruptions at noon and continuing beyond usual working hours in order to allow parents enough time to commute.

Finally, a third element denotes the "affordability" of childcare. It measures public commitment to offer affordable childcare and how the cost of childcare is shared between public funds and parent or employer contributions.

In terms of coverage rate, Table 4.2 shows the proportion of children using childcare services. A difference is made between formal care and other types of arrangements. It should be noted that these are not mutually exclusive, as children can both be in formal care and use other types of arrangements.

It appears that at EU-25 level, 26% of all children in the age group 0-2 received at least one hour of formal care in 2006 (see details in the box above). This share logically increases with age, up to 84% from the age of 3 to mandatory school age (typically kindergarten or pre-school), and logically close to 100% for children between mandatory school age and the age of 12[3] .

However, significant discrepancies were registered at country level: in the youngest age category, the share of children in formal care was comparatively high in the Scandinavian countries, especially in Denmark (73%), but also in the Netherlands (45%) and Belgium (40%). Conversely, less than 5% of infants were in formal care in the Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania and Austria[4] .

However, this situation changes for the '3 to mandatory school age' category, with shares of 90% or more registered in eight countries. As for the youngest age category, formal care remains very limited in Poland (28% of all children in this age class).

Other types of arrangement in childcare are slightly more common or could be used in combination with formal care. In 2006, 29% of all children in the EU-25 aged 0 to 2 received informal care (from grandparents, relatives, neighbours or a professional childminder) for at least one hour per week. However, significant variations were registered at country level: low values were registered in the Scandinavian countries, where formal care for the very young is generally well developed; in contrast comparatively high values were generally noted in southern and eastern European countries, where formal care is less widespread, but where multi-generation households are more common. The use of informal childcare services in the Netherlands (56%) was comparatively high, where part-time employment is very common (especially among women) and many parents appear to have recourse to informal arrangements for at least part of the day.

[3] Data for this age category not shown.

[4] Although certain figures are either provisional or uncertain.

Table 4.2: Use of formal childcare services and other types of childcare arrangements, 2006

Percentage of the population of each age group

	Formal care		Other types of arrangement	
Age	0-2	3- mand	0-2	3- mand
EU-25	26 (p)	84 (p)	29 (p)	26 (p)
EU-15	29 (p)	90 (p)	28 (p)	24 (p)
BE	40 (p)	98 (p)	30 (p)	32 (p)
CZ	2 (u)	67	20	22
DK	73	96	1 (u)	: (u)
DE	18 (p)	93 (p)	7 (p)	3 (p)
EE	18 (u)	85	32	25
IE	18 (p)	93 (p)	36 (p)	34 (p)
EL	10 (p)	61 (p)	54 (p)	40 (p)
ES	39	91	26	16
FR	31 (p)	94 (p)	29 (p)	27 (p)
IT	26	90	35	36
CY	25 (u)	87	57	44
LV	16 (p)	60 (p)	14 (p)	13 (p)
LT	4 (p)	56 (p)	21 (p)	13 (p)
LU	31	58	41	42 (u)
HU	8 (u)	79	48	51
MT	8 (u)	57	16 (u)	13 (u)
NL	45	89	56	52
AT	4 (u)	71	36	37
PL	2 (p)	28 (p)	36 (p)	36 (p)
PT	33 (p)	75 (p)	46 (p)	31 (p)
SI	29	81	60	60
SK	5 (p)	73 (p)	23 (p)	26 (p)
FI	26	77	5 (u)	5 (u)
SE	44	92	4 (u)	4 (u)
UK	33 (p)	89 (p)	39 (p)	38 (p)
IS	34	97	22	2 (u)
NO	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)

Notes: (p) provisional value, (u) unreliable/uncertain data, : (u) extremely unreliable data. — Age groups: 0–2: from birth until the child's third birthday; 3-mand: from three years of age until the age at which mandatory education starts.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2006 data.

The complementary nature of informal childcare becomes obvious when looking at the other age categories. Proportions shown are indeed influenced by (pre-) school systems in the respective countries and by working hours of parents. When a formal care solution does not cover the necessary time to allow for the parents' employment, informal types of arrangements will be sought to cover the remaining time gap. For children in the age group 'mandatory school age to 12 years old', proportions obviously reach 100% (data for this age class are not shown).

Very low proportions were noted in Sweden and Finland, suggesting that formal childcare services are well adapted to the constraints of working life. Higher proportions were again noted in southern and eastern European countries, especially in Slovenia.

4.1.2 Use of formal childcare services

Focusing on formal childcare services only, EU-SILC data make it possible to distinguish between children receiving formal care on a part-time basis (between one and 29 hours) and those attending formal care facilities for 30 hours or more each week.

For infants aged between 0 and 2 years old, Tables 4.3a and 4.3b reveal that few countries registered a clear preference for part-time care. Considering the fairly large availability of more flexible working time arrangements, these countries include the Netherlands, Ireland and the UK. Many other countries registered high shares of 0–2-year-olds in formal care for more than 30 hours a week, including Denmark, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland and Iceland.

Table 4.3a: Use of formal childcare services, 2006

Percentage of the population of each age group

	0-2		3- mand	
Hours	1-29	30+	1-29	30+
EU-25	14 (p)	12 (p)	44 (p)	40 (p)
EU-15	16 (p)	13 (p)	49 (p)	41 (p)
BE	17 (p)	23 (p)	36 (p)	62 (p)
CZ	1 (u)	1 (u)	28	39
DK	7 (u)	66	16	80
DE	11 (p)	7 (p)	66 (p)	27 (p)
EE	6 (u)	12 (u)	7 (u)	78
IE	13 (p)	5 (p)	80 (p)	13 (p)
EL	2 (p)	8 (p)	41 (p)	20 (p)
ES	20	19	47	44
FR	14 (p)	17 (p)	52 (p)	42 (p)
IT	10	16	24	66
CY	7 (u)	18 (u)	50	37
LV	2 (p)	14 (p)	4 (p)	56 (p)
LT	0 (p)	4 (p)	9 (p)	47 (p)
LU	14	17	42	16 (u)
HU	2 (u)	6 (u)	21	58
MT	5 (u)	3 (u)	32	25 (u)
NL	41	4 (u)	82	7
AT	3 (u)	1 (u)	55	16
PL	0 (p)	2 (p)	7 (p)	21 (p)
PT	1 (p)	32 (p)	9 (p)	66 (p)
SI	3 (u)	26	15	66
SK	1 (p)	4 (p)	10 (p)	63 (p)
FI	5 (u)	21	21	56
SE	17	27	34	58
UK	28 (p)	5 (p)	65 (p)	24 (p)
IS	3 (u)	31	13 (u)	84
NO	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)

Notes: (p) provisional value, (u) unreliable/uncertain data, : (u) extremely unreliable data. — Age groups: 0–2: from birth until the child's third birthday; 3-mand: from three years of age until the age at which mandatory education starts.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2006 data.

As for infants aged 0–2 years old, the use of part-time care for children aged between three and compulsory school age (preschoolers) is particularly widespread in the Netherlands, the UK and Ireland. To these countries should be added Germany and Austria, where part-time work is also relatively common. In France, Cyprus, Malta and Greece, preschoolers are more often in part-time care, but the share of full-time users is also worthy of mention (unlike in the previous countries). As a result, the average number of formal care hours used by preschoolers is slightly higher in these countries than in the Netherlands, the UK and Ireland. Conversely, in Denmark, Iceland, Portugal, the Baltic States, Slovenia and Slovakia, parents more often tend to put their children in full-time care. In Hungary, the Czech Republic, Italy, Finland, Belgium, Sweden and Norway, formal care is most often used on a full-time basis, but the share of children in part-time care is also significant. Spain registered a balanced share of preschoolers in full-time and part-time care, whereas the UK and particularly Malta, registered high shares of preschoolers in part-time care.

The average number of weekly hours in formal care in 2006 is shown in Table 4.3b. Among the youngest group, the EU average of 25 hours of weekly care is by far exceeded in Latvia and Lithuania (around 40 hours), but also in Poland (38 hours) and Portugal (38 hours), whereas the average length of formal care was lowest in the Netherlands (16 hours) and the United Kingdom (14 hours). These countries were also identified in the case of preschoolers. As can be expected, the time gap among the school-going children is far less wide: the longest average duration of weekly care is noted in Portugal and Sweden (35 and 35 hours respectively) while in Germany and Finland this was around 10 hours less.

Table 4.3b: Average number of weekly hours of formal childcare, by age group, 2006

Age	0-2	3- mand	mand- 12
EU-25	25.0 (p)	27.3 (p)	29.5 (p)
EU-15	24.7 (p)	26.6 (p)	29.5 (p)
BE	30.3 (p)	30.4 (p)	31.3 (p)
CZ	:	29.4	28.4
DK	34.1	33.5	32.6
DE	22.0 (p)	22.9 (p)	25.4 (p)
EE	34.0	38.4	27.6
IE	20.1 (p)	22.1 (p)	27.9 (p)
EL	33.8 (p)	25.8 (p)	27.8 (p)
ES	27.0	29.2	30.0
FR	28.4 (p)	27.9 (p)	30.6 (p)
IT	30.9	32.3	33.1
CY	32.9	29.8	29.3
LV	40.2 (p)	39.7 (p)	33.4 (p)
LT	39.9 (p)	38.9 (p)	26.6 (p)
LU	29.9	21.7	28.4
HU	31.3 (u)	33.4	33.7
MT	:	25.2	30.5
NL	15.8	18.6	26.3
AT	:	23.1	27.5
PL	37.7 (p)	33.8 (p)	28.0 (p)
PT	37.8 (p)	36.8 (p)	35.3 (p)
SI	36.1	33.8	30.4
SK	:	35.2 (p)	30.7 (p)
FI	34.8	33.5	25.5
SE	29.0	30.7	35.2
UK	14.4 (p)	18.4 (p)	29.0 (p)
IS	36.6	36.4	31.5
NO	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)

Notes: At least one hour of formal care per week — (p) provisional value, (u) unreliable/uncertain data, : (u) extremely unreliable data. — Age groups: 0–2: from birth until the child's third birthday; 3-mand: from three years of age until the age at which mandatory education starts; mand-12: from the age at which mandatory education starts until the child's 13th birthday.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2006 data.

Opening hours of childcare facilities for infants and preschoolers

In practice, attendance of formal childcare facilities may be reduced due to limited opening hours, forcing parents to work shorter hours or to find other types of care solutions to complement formal care.

Opening hours of formal care facilities for infants

In most countries, formal childcare facilities for infants (0–2 years old) have long opening hours.

The French school system (nursery and primary schools) is known for its long hours. A typical school day in France begins at 8:30 until 16:30, with extra-curricular activities planned for the period between 16:30 and 18:00. There is no school on Wednesdays, but extra-curricular activities are as a rule also available.

In Belgium, subsidised care is provided for children aged 0–2 in the Flemish Community for at least 220 days a year, 11 hours a day between 6:30 and 18:30. In the French Community, most day-care arrangements are open 10 hours a day, also for 220 days a year (Meulders and O'Dorchai 2005, 2008). This is more or less compatible with a full-time working day, assuming that commuting time is not too high. However, parents working atypical hours (evenings, weekends, etc.) cannot turn to such care facilities.

As in Belgium, formal care facilities in Sweden are open for approximately 10–12 hours a day (Löfström 2005, Nyberg 2008).

Most crèches in Ireland open set hours from 7:30 or 8:00 to 18:00 or 18:30. However, as in Belgium, there are no childcare facilities operating during evenings, at night or weekends and the usual arrangements are unavailable during holidays (Barry, Tiernan and Conlon 2005, Barry and Sherlock 2008). Similarly, Hungarian childcare institutions are open between 7:00 and 17:30, but public childcare does not offer non-standard opening hours (Nagy 2005, Fazekas and Ozsvald 2008).

Nursery schools in Italy are open from 7:30 to 18:00 and children can attend in July if both parents work (Villa 2005). In Latvia, the majority of public childcare establishments operate five days a week, 12 hours per day, usually from 7:00 to 19:00. Kindergartens are generally closed for a summer break in July or August (Trapenciere 2005).

In Lithuania, more than 80% of children attend nurseries and kindergartens that are open all day long (Kanopiene 2005).

In Denmark there has been a decline in day-care centre opening hours, generally combined with a reduction in working hours. A typical Danish day-care centre used to have fairly long opening hours, but more recently, it appeared that only 7% of all day-care institutions close at 17:30 or later (Emerek 2005).

Norwegian institutions run by municipalities often have opening hours ranging from 7:00 or 7:30 to 17:00 (Ellingsæter 2005).

Most nurseries in the UK are open Monday to Friday between 8:00 and 18:00 (Fagan, Donnelly and Rubery 2005). In the Czech Republic, most facilities provide full day-care and operate from 6:00 or 6:30 to between 16:00 and 17:30.

Besides these countries where opening hours of childcare facilities are relatively long, at least on normal working days, two countries form a middle group with less accommodating opening times. In Slovenia, formal care centres are usually open for six to nine hours a day (Kanjuo-Mrčela 2005, 2008). In Luxembourg, most childcare structures are open eight hours a day (Plasman and Sissoko 2005).

In Cyprus, opening hours of childcare facilities are not fully compatible with full-time work hours in the private sector. Most day-care centres are open until 15:00 at the latest. It is very common for kindergartens and most community centres to close at 13:00 (Panayiotou 2005). A similar example is Greece, where public crèches and nurseries are open from 7:00 to 16:00 in the winter and from 6:45 to 16:00 in the summer, five days a week. Nurseries are closed one month in August, and two weeks at Christmas and Easter, while summer school holidays last three months (Karamessini 2005).

In a number of countries, parents rely on childcare facilities that are open for less than eight hours a day, meaning that one of them must work part-time, or they must find other solutions to cover the time between the closing time of the childcare facility and the time they get back from work.

For example, in Portugal, public childcare was until recently provided typically either in the morning or afternoon, during five hours, or alternatively in two shifts. Private childcare facilities offer some considerable advantages: they usually do not close during holidays and offer longer opening hours. In Germany, a high proportion of childcare facilities, especially kindergartens, operate part-time, sometimes only in the morning, sometimes with a closing time between noon and 14:00. In the western part of Germany, only a minority of childcare facilities offer full-time opening hours. Very few kindergartens are open on Saturdays, but almost half of them are open during school holidays.

Opening hours of formal care for preschoolers and primary school children

The figures on opening hours of facilities for pre-school children illustrate a more time-restricted scheme than for infants in most countries. Belgian nursery schools open for just seven hours a day. Spanish school are open from 9:00 to 12:00 and 15:00 to 17:00, five days a week, 10 months per year. Some schools offer extra-curricular activities after school hours, most of them on a private basis (Molto 2005).

In Ireland, primary school pupils generally attend school between 9:00 and 13:00 for the first two years and from 9:00 to 14:00 for the following six years. In the UK, much of the pre-school expansion concerned part-time places for 3–4 year olds in state primary schools. These places are free of charge, but childcare is typically only provided mornings or afternoons during term-time. Some schools are able to offer full-time places, but the hours are usually shorter than those provided by day nurseries. Full-time, year round pre-school childcare services are expensive and in limited supply (Fagan, Donnelly and Rubery 2005).

There are however a few exceptions to the limited opening hours of formal care facilities. In 76 out of the 290 Swedish municipalities some pre-schools are open outside ordinary working hours (7:00–18:30) (Löfström 2005, Nyberg 2008). In Italy, kindergartens operate from 9:00 until 16:00. If both parents are working, service may be prolonged. This extra service is free, but it is available only to working parents. At primary school, classes often end in mid-afternoon (Villa 2005). In Portugal, pre-schools start 5 days earlier than primary schools, finish two weeks later, and have no holidays at Christmas and Easter. Only a few public schools are able to provide formal care outside school hours (Ferreira 2005).

Affordability of childcare

Affordability refers to the price of childcare services. This price usually varies with the form of ownership for users of childcare institutions. Private childcare institutions are generally more expensive than public ones. The relatively high price of private arrangements as compared to public ones limits their accessibility, even for better-off parents.

In most countries, the cost of municipal childcare facilities is partly subsidised by state transfers (granted to the providers of services) whereas the remainder is financed by municipal budgets and parent fees. This is an important issue because when the price of public care is high, it may not make economic sense for low-income mothers to be employed. High income parents also face the cost issue but for them, it may be slightly different, determined rather in terms of flexibility and opening hours of nurseries.

Countries can apply different mechanisms to subsidise the market cost of childcare:

- First, they may subsidise childcare itself so that charges fall below market prices for all parents.
- Second, they may reduce or refund charges for childcare according to income, family type, age, or number of children in childcare
- Third, the extra costs of childcare in some countries are mitigated by higher cash benefits for a child of pre-school age as compared with a school-age child (Denmark, Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium) (Bradshaw and Finch 2002).
- Finally, countries may offset the market costs of childcare through income tax reductions.

In Sweden, childcare is financed by municipal taxes, state contributions, and to a much smaller extent by parent fees and special grants from the state (Löfström 2005, Nyberg 2008). As childcare is considered a public responsibility in Denmark as well, the major part of the cost of childcare is publicly funded, and parents pay at most 33% of the total cost (as of July 2005) (Emerek 2005). In Finland, client fees cover about 15% of the total day-care costs that are fixed according to a family's size and income level (Lehto 2005, Sutela 2008). In France, parent fees cover 28% of a place in a collective crèche and 29% of a place in a family crèche. However, the general trend is towards individualised forms of childcare (Silvera 2005, 2008). In Spain, more precisely in Madrid, one third of each childcare place is paid by the municipality, one third by the regional government and the remainder by parents (with parental fees fixed according to parents' income) (Molto 2005). The situation varies for the other Spanish regions. In Bulgaria, all-day childcare institutions are subsidised by the state to the amount of the wages of their staff. However, half-day and seasonal childcare institutions are financed entirely by municipal funds and parent fees (Beleva 2005). In Ireland, public subsidisation is very low (Barry, Tiernan and Conlon 2005, Barry and Sherlock 2008). In Italy public childcare for infants is only partly subsidised, therefore parents are required to pay fees; these are determined at the municipal level and are usually set according to total household income (and number of children). Childcare for children over three years of age is completely subsidised, and parents are only required to pay for some expenses (meals) (Villa 2005).

It should be noted that there are many country-specific and regional differences in the way the childcare system is funded and the final costs that are borne by parents. Cross-country comparisons as regards the cost of childcare to parents will be presented below. The idea is to shed light on the comparative expensiveness of childcare for parents across Europe.

The group of Nordic countries is not homogeneous. Whereas childcare is very affordable in Sweden, it weighs more heavily on parents' budget in Denmark and Norway. In Sweden, no one should pay more than 3% of their income for one child, 2% for a second child, 1% for a third and no fee at all for the fourth, fifth child, and so forth. Moreover, there is a ceiling on the size of the fee. Free universal pre-school was made available from 2003 to all four- and five-year-olds, irrespective of their parents' income, but out-of-school hours care is charged (Löfström 2005, Nyberg 2008).

In Denmark, parent fees are earnings-related and childcare is free for parents on low incomes. As in Austria, the income limit up to which fee reductions are applied is higher for parents with more than one child. Nevertheless, only single parents, parents still studying and parents on unemployment or other cash benefits normally have an income lower than the income limit applied for reduced payment for day-care.

In Bulgaria, parents pay monthly fees that vary with the number of children. The fee for a first child is roughly EUR 10 on average and EUR 5 for a second child (Beleva 2005).
For regular, full-day-care of a child at a public nursery in the Czech Republic the total monthly cost is usually EUR 80, and the cost in a "public" kindergarten is around EUR 40 (Krížková, Maríková & Dudová 2005, Křížková 2008).

Besides Denmark and Norway, a number of other European countries may be considered middle range cost countries. In Luxembourg, the average monthly cost for a child that is regularly cared for in a paid childcare structure is EUR 185 (Plasman and Sissoko 2005).

For children aged 0–2, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, parents paid on average EUR 12 for a full day's care in subsidised collective childcare in 2006. Parental fees are income-related and tax deductible until the child reaches 12 years of age. In the French Community, parents pay on average EUR 13.1 per day and per child. The cost of out-of-school-hours care is never income-related but some minimal and maximal amounts are set by law, at least for formal care arrangements.

In France, the level of household participation for a place in a crèche is determined by the CAF (Caisse d'Allocations Familiales) and is income-related. Typically, the hourly fee for a full–time place will amount to 0.06% of the average monthly net income of a household (0.05% with 2 children, 0.04% with 3 children). With a net household income of EUR 2 500 for instance, the fee would be EUR 225 a month for a typical full-time place (150 hours per month). There are incentives for those on low pay to use crèches, but there is a great shortage of places (especially in rural and outlying urban areas).
In Slovenia, in recent years, the average parental contribution has been around 25–30% of the cost, with variations according to the level of income per family member, family property and the number of children (Kanjuo-Mrčela 2005, 2008).

In Greece, a progressive income-related scale is generally applied. The monthly fees in public and private crèches and nurseries range between EUR 250 and EUR 420 (Karamessini 2005).

In Spain, education for children aged 4–5 is free, while childcare / education for children aged 0–3 is subsidised for low-income families only (Molto 2005).

In Portugal, public services are free of charge but limited in supply. Registered childminders are the most common form of child-care used by low-wage employees. They offer longer and more flexible hours, and the price is often less than half that at a private crèche (Ferreira 2005).

In Italy, public nursery schools are organised at the municipal level. Low fees (around EUR 100 per month) apply only to poor households, average fees (EUR 200–300) to low income households, and high fees (EUR 400–600) to households with a total income above the average (Villa 2005).

In some countries childcare costs, even when subsidised, absorb a large part of parents' budgets, which can act as a disincentive to turn to formal childcare. Such countries include for example the Netherlands, Cyprus and Ireland, but foremost the UK. In the Netherlands, parents pay an income-related fee that can rise to 66% of the bill for higher income groups, absorbing as much as 40 to 70% of the income of a secondary earner (based on a part-time job for 3 days a week and three days of childcare) (Plantenga 2005). In Cyprus, the typical cost of a place in private day-care is around EUR 205 per month and per child. In a state or community centre fees are in the range of EUR 105–120, with the minimum wage at about EUR 600, and public care unavailable in many instances. Cyprus is a case in point where it does not make much sense for low-income mothers to be in paid work. Other arrangements such as nannies or licensed childminders are even more costly (Panayiotou 2005).

The high cost of childcare has also been found to have created a definite barrier to accessing paid employment, education and training in Ireland (Barry, Tiernan and Conlon 2005, Barry and Sherlock 2008).

The situation is even more difficult in the UK. Parents are the main contributors to the costs of early childcare (public), paying between 75–93% of the cost, with the government paying most of the rest plus a small contribution from employers. The average cost of a full-time nursery place in England for a child under two is EUR 720 per month (roughly equivalent to the average weekly wage of a women employed part-time)[5] (Fagan, Donnelly and Rubery 2005). Of note is that in Ireland and the UK, public childcare facilities play a negligible role compared with private care solutions.

[5] Note that the UK government has increased subsidies for some low-income employed parents via the new childcare tax credit (CCTC)). The CCTC means that those in low-paid employment can offset a proportion or all childcare costs up to a ceiling against tax payable on income. This tax/benefit in respect of childcare costs in the UK is the only subsidy that exists; it is limited to formal childcare services and has a fixed upper limit regardless of the number of children using childcare.

4.1.3 Quality of childcare and early education services

Several studies have dealt with the issue of evaluating the quality of childcare provision (Fiene 2002, Kamerman 2001). A range of indicators have been agreed upon to assess the different aspects of childcare quality. These roughly consist of health safeguards, educational content of care and security as well as children's safety. In this chapter the focus is on child/staff ratios and childcare workers' qualifications.

Child/staff ratios

Most countries have set requirements specifying a maximum number of children that can be placed under the responsibility of one adult, especially in pre-primary education. This is not the case in Belgium, France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden, where such limits are not established at a central level. In other countries, this upper threshold varies between seven in Finland and up to 30 in Ireland and Greece. Most countries impose a ratio of 25 children per carer/teacher (Eurydice 2005).

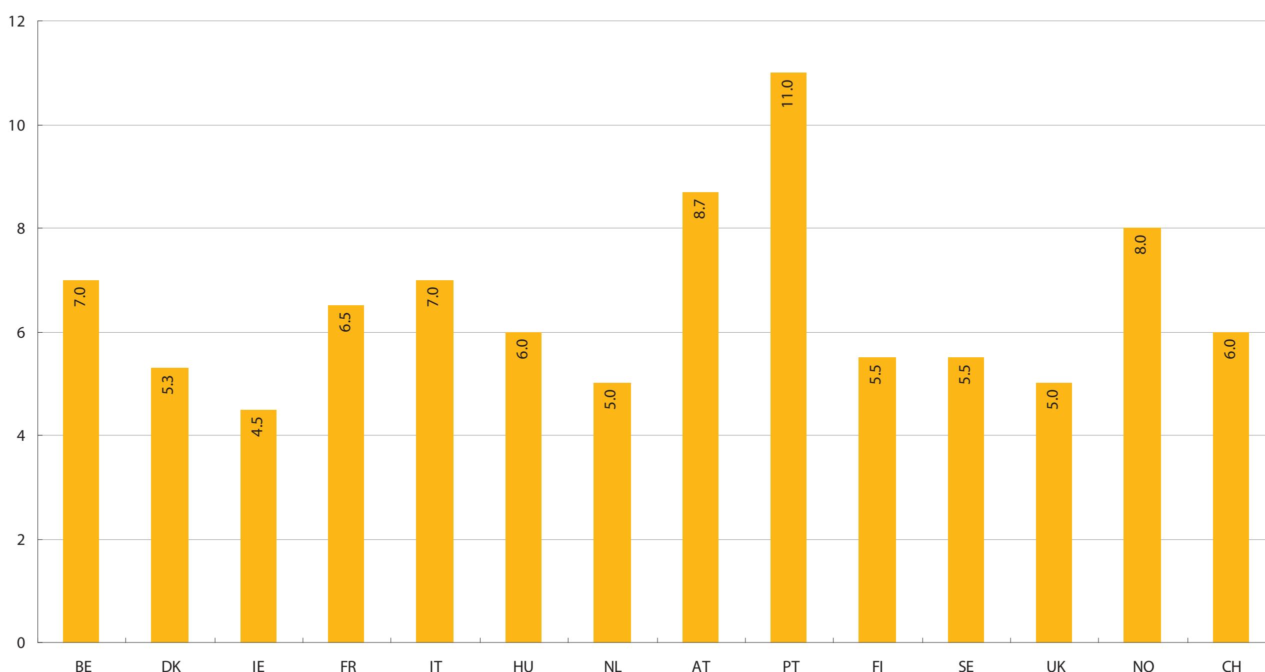
As far as the ideal ratio between staff and children is concerned, it is generally agreed to amount to around three or four infants per carer in centres (crèches or family day-care centres) and two staff members per group (Fiene 2002). For preschoolers, this ratio increases to eight children per carer/teacher but still remains much lower than the maximum legal limit set by most European countries.

Figures 4.1 (comprising 14 countries) and 4.2 (comprising 18 countries) show that for infants aged 0–3, the child/staff ratios across Europe are much lower than for preschoolers[6] . For infants, this ratio ranges between 4.5 and 11 children per childminder (in most countries it stands between 5 and 7); while for preschoolers the spread is much wider, covering from as few as 7 to as many as 18.6 children per carer/teacher (on average about 14-15 children per contact staff). This difference in density is reflected in the price of pre-primary care. Indeed, as mentioned above, childcare for 0–3-year-olds is much more costly than for children aged between three and the age at which compulsory school starts.

Considering 0–3-year-olds, child/staff ratios in formal day-care are very high in Norway, Austria and especially Portugal. In contrast, the lowest ratios are observed in Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands. As far as preschoolers are concerned, the UK presents one of the highest ratios, in the same range as France, Switzerland, and again Austria and Portugal.

[6] Data is taken from the on-line OECD Family database on family outcomes and family policies.

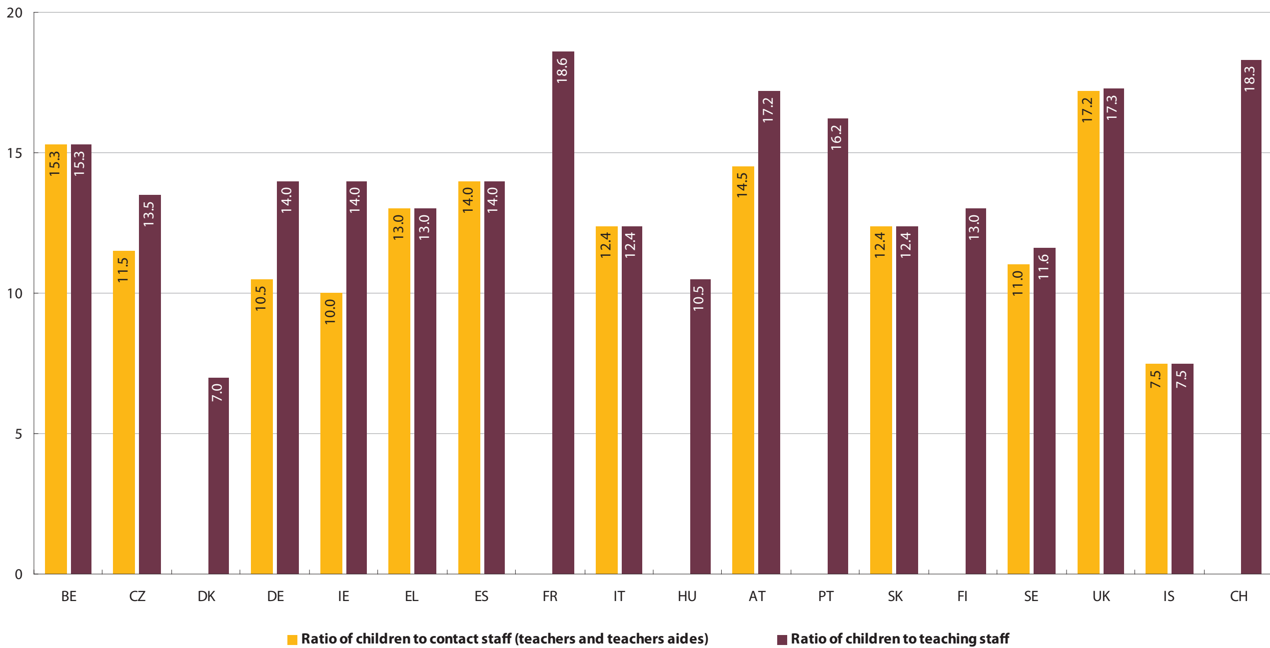
Figure 4.1: Child-to-staff ratios in formal day-care services, average for 0–3-year-olds



Note: This graph shows the average child-to-carer/educator ratio for children not yet 4 years of age who attend licensed day-care facilities, situation as of 18.01.2007.

Source: OECD.

Figure 4.2: Child-to-staff ratios in pre-schools



Note: For children attending pre-school, certified teacher-to-child ratios are calculated by dividing the number of full-time equivalent children enrolled in pre-school programmes by the number of full-time equivalent teachers at that level. Where information is available, the ratio of contact staff (teachers and classroom and teacher assistants) is also shown, situation as of 18.01.2007.

Source: OECD.

Qualifications of certified childcare workers/pre-school teachers and main place of work

In Denmark, Hungary, the Netherlands and Portugal, all facilities are operated by staff with tertiary educational skills. In all other countries, with the exception of Germany and Austria, the move from childcare for infants to preschoolers – generally at three years of age – corresponds to a change in formal arrangements, mostly shifting responsibility to the education system. For some of these countries, such education-based care is the only form provided for preschoolers (e.g. France, Belgium, Italy) from the age of three onwards (see typology Table 4.5). In Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands, educational enrolment starts at the age of four (idem).

Table 4.4: Qualifications of certified childcare workers and main place of work

	Main type of staff	Initial training requirements	Age range	Main field of work	Continuous training	Child-to-staff ratio
BE	*Kinderverzogsster/ Puéricultrice*	3-year post-16 vocational secondary	0 - 3	*Kinderdagverblij f*/Crèches (or assistant in *école maternelle*)	Child care - limited to some services	7.0
CZ	*Detska sestra*	4-year secondary nursing school	0 - 3	Creche	Voluntary - offered by regional centres	
DK	Paedagog	3- to 5-year vocational or tertiary education (depending on prior experience)	0 - 5	Educational, social care, special needs institutions (including day care)	Funding decentralised to municipalities	3.3 (0-2 years) 7.2 (3-5 years)
DE	*Kinderpflegerinnen*	2-year secondary vocational training	0 - 6	*Kindergarten*		
IE	Child carer / child minder	Wide variation	0 - 6	Child care centres		3.0 (>1) 6.0 (2-3 years)
FR	*Puéricultrices* *Educateurs de jeunes enfants*	Nurse/mid-wife + 1-year specialisation 27-month post-Bac in training centre	0 - 3 0 - 6	*Crèches/* assistant in *école maternelle*		5.0 (0-2 years) 8.0 (2-3 years)
IT	Educatrice	Secondary vocational diploma	0 - 3	Asili nido	Municipality of director/inspector decides	7
HU	*Gondozó* (child care worker)	3- year post-secondary voc. training or specialist certificate	0 - 3	*Bölcsöde* (for children < 3)		6.0
NL	Leidster kinder-centra	2- year post-18 training	0 - 4	Kinderopvang	Funding decentralised to municipalities	4 (1 year) 5 (2 years) 6 (3 years)
AT	*Erzieherinnen* *Kindergartenpädagoginnen*	5-year vocational secondary	0 - 5	*Krippen* and *Hort* Kindergarten	Funding by provinces; 3-5 days per year	8.7
PT	Educadora de infância	4-year university or polytechnic	0 - 6	Creches ATL	Offered by regional teacher centres and universities to all teachers	11
FI	*Sosionomi (social pedagogues)* *Lähihoitaja* (practical nurses)	3-year secondary vocational	0 - 6	P äiväkoti (children's day care centre) *Avoin päiväkoti*	Municipalities have to provide 3-10 days annual training	4.0 (0-3 years) 7.0 (3+ years)
SE	Barnskötare	2- year post 16 secondary	0 - 7	Open Förskola Fritidshem	Funding decentralised to municipalities	5.5
UK	Trained nursery teacher Nursery nurse	2-year post 16 secondary	3 - 11 0 - 5	Nursery (or assistant in above)	Limited for day-care workers	3 (>2 years) 4 (2-3 years) 8 (3-5 years)
NO	Assistents	2-year post - 16 apprenticeship	0 - 7	Barnehager / SFO		8 (>3 years)
CH	Childcare worker	Varies per canton		Creches, nurseries		4-5 (0-2) 7-8 (2-3)

Note: Situation as of 18.01.2007.

Source: OECD.

Table 4.5: Qualifications of certified pre-school teachers and main place of work

	Main type of staff	Initial training requirements	Age range	Main field of work	Continuous training	Ratio of child to teacher (% male teachers)
BE	Kleuteronderwijzer(es)/ Institutrice de maternelle	3-year pedagogical - tertiary	2.5 - 6	Kleuterschool/Ecole maternelle	Funding decentralised to schools	15.6 (1.6%)
CZ	Učitel mateřske školy	4-year secondary pedagogical or 3-year tertiary	3 - 6	Mateřská škola		13.4 (0.3%)
DK	Paedagog	3- to 5-year vocational or tertiary education (depending on prior experience)	0 - 10	Educational, social care, special needs institutions (including day care)	Funding decentralised to municipalities	6.9 (16% - 2001 data)
DE	*Erzieherinnen*	3-year secondary vocational training + 1-year internship	0 - 6	*Kindergarten*		13.9 (1.7%)
IE	Teacher	3-year tertiary degree	4 - 12	Schools		14 (7.7%)
FR	Instituteurs Puéricultrices	Bac + 2-years	2 - 6	Ecole maternelle		18.8 (19%)
IT	Insegnante di scuola materna	4-year tertiary degree	3 - 6	Scuola materna	Municipality or director/inspector decides	12.5 (0.4%)
HU	Pedagogue	3 - year tertiary degree	0 - 7	Ovoda (kindergarten for children 3-7)		10.5 (0.2%)
NL	Leraar basisonderwijs	3-year voc.higher education	4 - 12	Bassischool	Funding decentralised to municipalities	
AT	*Erzieherinnen Kindergartenpädagoginnen*	5-year vocational secondary	0 - 5	*Krippen* and *Hort* Kindergarten	Provisional funding: 3-5 days per year	17.4 (0.8%)
PT	Educadora de infância	4-year university or polytechnic	0 - 6	Jardim de infância	Offered by regional teacher centres and universities to all teachers	16.5 (1.8%)
FI	*Lastentarhanopettaja* (kindergarten teachers)	3-4-5-year university or 3- to 5-year polytechnic	0 - 7	*6-vuotiaiden esiopetus* (pre-school class as well as kindergarten)	Funding decentralised to municipalities	12.7 (3.1%)
SE	Förskollärare Fritidspedagog	3-year university 3-year university	0 - 7	Förskoleclass Förskola	Funding decentralised to municipalities	11.2
UK	Qualified teacher	4-year university	4-8 (0-8)	Nursery classes	Regular access for teachers	17.6 (3.1%)
NO	Pedagogiske ledere	3-year vocational higher education	0 - 7	Bernhager SFO		
CH	Kindergarten teacher	Three year upper secondary and tertiary degree	3 - 6	Kindergarten/centre de vie enfantine/infant schools		18.2 (1.9%)

Note: Situation as of 18.01.2007.

Source: OECD.

4.1.4 Demand for childcare services according to household composition

The supply of affordable and accessible childcare services grants parents more freedom to organise their working lives and maintain a satisfactory work-private life balance. The type of household a child is living in notably influences if and for how long childcare services are needed. It hence appears appropriate to take a closer look at childcare demand according to household composition.

One can reasonably state that childcare facilities are particularly important for, and more often used by, single parents, as single mothers and fathers cannot rely on their partner to share the child raising responsibilities.

Table 4.6 based on EU-SILC 2006 data presents the average number of hours of formal care according to the number of adults in the household, distinguishing between one adult and two or more (typically couples, but also multigenerational households).

Uncertain data due to small sample sizes make it impossible to draw conclusions for 0–2-year-olds at national level. For children aged between 3 and the age at which compulsory school starts, sample sizes are generally larger and yield some interesting facts.

Contrary to what could be expected, EU-25 figures reveal that single parents do not use formal childcare facilities much more than couples (or households with two or more adults), regardless of the child's age. The time children spend in formal care is only marginally higher among single-parent households: the differences compared to children living in households with two or more adults amount to less than one hour for the three age categories.

At country level, the only noticeable differences among the preschoolers are observed in Spain and the Netherlands, where the weekly length of formal care is a couple of hours longer among children living with single parents. Conversely, in Estonia and Italy, children remain slightly longer in formal care (around one hour per week) when living in households comprising two or more adults.

In the age group comprising children having entered compulsory schooling but below 12 years of age, the same decrease in hours of formal care can be observed when there is more than one adult in the household, except for Estonia, Ireland and Finland, where the number of hours of formal care increased.

Table 4.6: Formal childcare by type of household, average number of hours of childcare, 2006

	Singles		Two or more adults	
Age	0-2	3- mand	0-2	3- mand
EU-25	25.2 (p)	27.8 (p)	24.8 (p)	27.3 (p)
EU-15	25.1 (p)	27.2 (p)	24.6 (p)	26.6 (p)
BE	: (u)	28.6 (p)	28.1 (p)	28.5 (p)
CZ	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	29.4
DK	: (u)	34.1 (u)	33.2	33.4
DE	: (u)	28.0 (p)	24.7 (p)	23.2 (p)
EE	: (u)	36.9 (u)	37.4 (u)	37.9
IE	: (u)	23.2 (p)	22.2 (p)	22.5 (p)
EL	: (u)	: (u)	31.5 (p) (u)	30.5 (p)
ES	: (u)	31.6 (u)	23.6	26.8
FR	: (u)	28.9 (p)	26.4 (p)	27.5 (p)
IT	28.5 (u)	32.5 (u)	30.4	33.7
CY	: (u)	: (u)	31.9	31.4
LV	: (u)	: (u)	39.7 (p)	40.2 (p)
LT	: (u)	: (u)	38.0 (p) (u)	39.9 (p)
LU	: (u)	: (u)	22.1	16.8
HU	: (u)	35.3 (u)	30.4 (u)	31.2
MT	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	24.4
NL	: (u)	24.0	15.6	17.8
AT	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	23.6
PL	: (u)	: (u)	37.5 (p) (u)	34.4 (p)
PT	: (u)	: (u)	38.9 (p)	28.5 (p)
SI	: (u)	: (u)	37.3	35.6
SK	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	34.4 (p)
FI	: (u)	32.4	33.2	32.5
SE	: (u)	32.3 (u)	30.1	30.1
UK	20.1 (p) (u)	20.8 (p)	15.9 (p)	18.5 (p)
IS	: (u)	38.5 (u)	34.5	33.8
NO	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)

Notes: (p) provisional value, (u) unreliable/uncertain data, : (u) extremely unreliable data. — Age groups: 0–2: from birth until the child's third birthday; 3-mand: from three years of age until the age at which mandatory education starts.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2006 data

4.1.5 Childcare arrangements other than formal care

The trade-off between formal and other types of childcare arrangements depends on a range of factors relating to supply and demand, including employment preferences, existing formal/informal care services in the country, income, the cost of formal childcare, trust, flexibility, convenience and also perceptions about the child's development. The need for childcare services is of course also linked to the starting age of compulsory school, which is in most EU countries at about six years of age.

Results of the EU-SILC 2006 survey provide interesting insights regarding the use of care arrangements other than formal care, which are to be understood here as childcare provided by a professional childminder at the child's home or at the childminder's home. These are direct arrangements between the carer and the parents, where parents are often employers who pay the carer directly. "Professional" childminders are persons for whom looking after the child represents a job or paid activity, including baby sitters and au pairs. The care can be provided either at the child's home or at the childminder's home. Such arrangements also include childcare by grand-parents, others household members (aside from parents), relatives, friends or neighbours. Here, care should be unpaid care (informal arrangements on an unpaid basis such as exchange of services). The care can be at the child's home or at the relative, friend or neighbour's home.

Table 4.7a, indicates that other types of care tend to be used in combination with formal care. At EU-25 level, a far higher share of children use informal childcare arrangements for one to 29 hours a week than for 30 hours or more; this was the case in all three age categories. For infants aged 0–2, 29% of all children are cared for in informal arrangements, two thirds of which between one and 29 hours per week. The proportion of preschoolers reaches 26%, with only 5% being in informal care for 30 hours or more. Full-time use of informal care decreases remarkably once children enter compulsory schooling. 18% of children between mandatory school age and 12 years of age are placed in informal childcare between one and 29 hours a week, usually to make up for the lack of formal care after school hours.

Member States where informal arrangements are less frequently used can easily be spotted in Table 4.7a, including Scandinavian countries and Germany, which feature very low shares (5% or under) across all age categories. This suggests either very comprehensive formal childcare arrangements or a low usage due to favourable parental leave modalities, or a combination of the two. Conversely, high shares of informal care use were registered in the Netherlands, Hungary, the United Kingdom and Luxembourg. In these countries however, informal care is mainly needed between 1 and 29 hours per week, as shares drop drastically for the category '30 hours or more'.

Table 4.7a: Types of childcare arrangements other than formal care, 2006

Percentage of the population of each age group

	0 to 2		3- mand		mand- 12	
Hours	1-29 hours	30+ hours	1-29 hours	30+ hours	1-29 hours	30+ hours
EU-25	19 (p)	10 (p)	21 (p)	5 (p)	18 (p)	1 (p)
EU-15	19 (p)	9 (p)	20 (p)	4 (p)	18 (p)	1 (p)
BE	22 (p)	8 (p)	31 (p)	1 (p)	22 (p)	0 (p)
CZ	18	2 (u) (u)	21	1 (u)	16	1 (u)
DK	1 (u)	0 (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)
DE	5 (p)	2 (p)	2 (p)	1 (p)	3 (p)	0 (p)
EE	22	10 (u)	23	2 (u)	13	2 (u)
IE	22 (p)	14 (p)	31 (p)	3 (p)	16 (p)	1 (p)
EL	25 (p)	29 (p)	22 (p)	18 (p)	17 (p)	5 (p)
ES	17	9	12	4 (u)	8	1 (u)
FR	15 (p)	14 (p)	24 (p)	3 (p)	17 (p)	0 (p)
IT	22	13	31	5	26	2
CY	17 (u)	40	34	10 (u)	22	2 (u)
LV	5 (p)	9 (p)	4 (p)	9 (p)	4 (p)	1 (p)
LT	7 (p)	14 (p)	3 (p)	10 (p)	8 (p)	1 (p)
LU	30	11	36 (u)	6 (u)	31	2 (u)
HU	42	6 (u)	45	6 (u)	36	5
MT	11 (u)	5 (u)	9 (u)	4 (u)	11	1 (u)
NL	53	3 (u)	50	2 (u)	36	1 (u)
AT	31	5 (u)	35	2 (u)	23	0 (u)
PL	18 (p)	18 (p)	20 (p)	16 (p)	19 (p)	4 (p)
PT	9 (p)	37 (p)	20 (p)	11 (p)	17 (p)	1 (p)
SI	37	23	46	14	40	3
SK	15 (p)	8 (p)	20 (p)	6 (p)	21 (p)	1 (p)
FI	3 (u)	2 (u)	4 (u)	1 (u)	4	0 (u)
SE	2 (u)	2 (u)	3 (u)	1 (u)	2 (u)	:
UK	31 (p)	8 (p)	33 (p)	5 (p)	30 (p)	2 (p)
IS	3 (u)	19	1 (u)	1 (u)	2 (u)	0 (u)
NO	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)

Notes: (p) provisional value, (u) unreliable/uncertain data, : (u) extremely unreliable data. — Age groups: 0–2: from birth until the child's third birthday; 3-mand: from three years of age until the age at which mandatory education starts; mand-12: from the age at which mandatory education starts until the child's 13th birthday.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2006 data.

In nearly all countries, care arrangements other than formal care are used for less than 30 hours a week. There are a few exceptions to this general picture. In Cyprus, 40% of 0–2-year-olds are placed in informal care for 30 hours or more). Similarly, in Portugal, 37% of 0–2-year-olds use 30 hours or more of informal care (against only 9% for 1 to 29 hours. Then follows Greece where 29% of 0–2-year-olds are placed in informal care for more than 30 hours. Finally, in Iceland, 19% of infants in this age group are in full-time informal care for more than 30 hours a week. These exceptions aside, other care types are always used on a part-time basis. Nevertheless, the average number of hours of informal care used can be very high in certain countries (see Table 4.7b) and can deviate substantially from the EU average. Keeping in mind the average duration of 22 hours per week at EU-25 level, 0–2-year-olds are placed in informal care for an average 39 hours per week in Portugal, followed by 37 hours in Latvia and 33 hours in Lithuania. This should be compared with a mere 11 hours in the Czech Republic, and 13 hours in Austria and the Netherlands. In the other two age groups, informal care is always used on a part-time basis, with the exception of preschoolers in Latvia and Lithuania, where the average time spent in informal care slightly exceeds that of 0–2-year-olds.

Table 4.7b: Average number of weekly hours of childcare arrangements other than formal, by age group, 2006

Age	0-2		3- mand		mand- 12	
EU-25	22.0	(p)	17.0	(p)	11.7	(p)
EU-15	21.9	(p)	15.7	(p)	10.8	(p)
BE	19.1	(p)	10.7	(p)	8.2	(p)
CZ	10.7		11.6		11.0	
DK	:	(u)	:	(u)	:	(u)
DE	19.0	(p)	20.8	(p)	10.6	(p)
EE	20.9		14.1		13.4	
IE	23.4	(p)	14.9	(p)	11.7	(p)
EL	30.1	(p)	28.0	(p)	18.0	(p)
ES	22.7		19.5		14.2	
FR	26.9	(p)	14.5	(p)	10.9	(p)
IT	23.1		15.2		12.7	
CY	34.9		20.4		15.1	
LV	36.6	(p)	37.9	(p)	24.0	(p)
LT	33.4	(p)	36.9	(p)	18.3	(p)
LU	21.1		15.2		10.6	
HU	14.1		13.8		13.4	
MT	19.0	(u)	20.0	(u)	10.2	
NL	12.9		10.5		6.4	
AT	13.2		10.2		8.4	
PL	27.3	(p)	26.6	(p)	17.2	(p)
PT	39.0	(p)	24.5	(p)	16.4	(p)
SI	22.9		16.6		11.0	
SK	22.0	(p)	18.8	(p)	13.2	(p)
FI	23.0	(u)	14.0		12.2	
SE	27.4	(u)	25.3	(u)	12.8	(u)
UK	17.3	(p)	15.1	(p)	10.0	(p)
IS	33.6		:	(u)	:	(u)
NO	:	(u)	:	(u)	:	(u)

Notes: At least one hour of care per week. – (p) provisional value, (u) unreliable/uncertain data, : (u) extremely unreliable data. — Age groups: 0–2: from birth until the child's third birthday; 3-mand: from three years of age until the age at which mandatory education starts; mand-12: from the age at which mandatory education starts until the child's 13th birthday.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2006 data.

Care provided by professional childminders and/or the grand parents

A particular type of informal care is care provided by professional childminders. Given that this is generally one of the most expensive forms of care, the share of children cared for in this way tends to be small in most countries. Nevertheless, at EU-25 level provisional data show that in this age group, 25.2% of infants are cared for by professional childminders for at least one hour per week (see Table 4.8).

Among the countries with high formal childcare coverage rates, only Iceland registered a relatively widespread use of professional childminders (34.7%), exceeding the EU average. Aside from this country, professional childminders account for substantial shares of total formal care for 0–2-year-olds in France (31%), Poland (33%), Cyprus (37.3%) and Portugal (42.6%). It is interesting to note that only children of the youngest age group are cared for by professional childminders to a considerable degree. However, for preschoolers and school-going children under 12 years of age, this type of care never exceeds 19% of all formal care arrangements available for these age groups, except for Poland (29%) and Sweden (26%) in the '3 to mandatory school age' category, although these values should be considered uncertain.

The role of grand-parents in childcare should not be underestimated, not only for the very young, but also for preschoolers and school-going children. At EU-25 level, close to 19% of 0–2-year-olds are cared for by grand-parents, this share gradually decreasing with age (see Table 4.8).

Among the countries for which data are available, high proportions throughout the age groups can be noted for Latvia and Lithuania as well as Portugal, Cyprus and Greece. To a somewhat lesser extent, relatively high values are also noted for Poland, Spain, Slovakia and Malta. In all of these countries, formal childcare is not as developed as, for instance, in western European Member States but also, and this aspect should not be underestimated, multigenerational households are quite common.

Table 4.8: Average number of weekly hours of childcare by professional childminders and by grand-parents, by age group of the children, 2006

Age	Professional child-minder			Grand-parents		
	0-2	3- mand	mand- 12	0-2	3- mand	mand- 12
EU-25	25.2 (p)	15.9 (p)	9.8 (p)	18.7 (p)	15.9 (p)	11.3 (p)
EU-15	24.8 (p)	15.4 (p)	9.6 (p)	18.2 (p)	14.3 (p)	10.3 (p)
BE	22.2 (p) (u)	7.4 (p) (u)	6.2 (p) (u)	17.6 (p)	11.2 (p)	8.5 (p)
CZ	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	10.4	11.6	11.0
DK	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)
DE	18.3 (p) (u)	: (u)	10.8 (p) (u)	: (u)	: (u)	10.2 (p) (u)
EE	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	18.8	14.3	13.4
IE	24.7 (p)	16.7 (p)	11.1 (p)	18.2 (p)	13.3 (p)	11.6 (p)
EL	27.6 (p) (u)	: (u)	: (u)	28.2 (p)	27.3 (p)	17.7 (p)
ES	23.3 (u)	17.2 (u)	13.9	22.0	18.5	13.6
FR	31.0 (p)	14.9 (p)	9.7 (p)	18.4 (p)	12.3 (p)	10.5 (p)
IT	17.0	11.2	8.2	21.8	14.5	12.5
CY	37.3 (u)	: (u)	: (u)	32.5	20.0	14.9
LV	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	35.2 (p) (u)	38.0 (p) (u)	25.3 (p) (u)
LT	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	31.5 (p) (u)	36.6 (p)	18.0 (p)
LU	23.0	17.9 (u)	11.9	14.8	9.0 (u)	7.9
HU	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	13.8	13.9	13.5
MT	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	19.4 (u)	19.7 (u)	10.1
NL	13.1	10.2	6.6	10.7	8.5	5.3
AT	21.0 (u)	13.5 (u)	9.0 (u)	9.7	8.9	7.9
PL	33.0 (p)	28.7 (p) (u)	18.5 (p) (u)	25.1 (p)	26.1 (p)	17.0 (p)
PT	42.6 (p) (u)	: (u)	15.9 (p) (u)	35.7 (p)	23.4 (p)	16.2 (p)
SI	24.8 (u)	: (u)	9.1 (u)	21.8	16.1	10.9
SK	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	21.7 (p)	18.8 (p)	13.2 (p)
FI	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	16.5 (u)	11.5	12.2
SE	: (u)	25.6 (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)
UK	22.9 (p)	17.6 (p) (u)	10.1 (p)	13.9 (p)	12.9 (p)	9.1 (p)
IS	34.7	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)
NO	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)	: (u)

Notes: At least one hour of care per week. – (p) provisional value, (u) unreliable/uncertain data, : (u) extremely unreliable data. — Age groups: 0–2: from birth until the child's third birthday; 3-mand: from three years of age until the age at which mandatory education starts; mand-12: from the age at which mandatory education starts until the child's 13th birthday.

Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2006 data.

4.1.6 Labour Force Survey data: a different definition of formal care

Data stemming from the ad hoc module of the 2005 European Labour Force Survey also generate interesting results as regards childcare issues. However, the definitions of formal/informal care are somewhat different compared to the concept used in EU-SILC (see box below for more information). Nevertheless, selected aspects are presented below, complementing the information taken from EU-SILC.

The Labour Force Survey's 2005 *ad hoc* module

The 2005 ad hoc module on 'Reconciliation between work and family life' is specified by Commission Regulation (EC) No 29/2004 of 8 January 2004. Participating countries included the EU-25 Member States, the three EFTA countries as well as Bulgaria and Romania (the latter two countries having joined the EU on 1 January 2007).

The aims of the module are the following:

- Find out to what extent persons participate in the labour force at the level they would wish, and whether the reasons for an insufficient participation are connected with a lack of suitable care services for children and/or dependent persons:
  - Identification of care responsibilities (children and dependents).
  - Analysis of the consequences on labour participation taking into account the choice/constraint dimension.
  - In case of constraint, identification of those linked to the lack or unsuitability of care services.
- Analysis of the degree of flexibility offered at work in terms of reconciliation with family life.
- Estimate to what extent leave or absence is taken (as specified in Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3.6.1996, OJ L145).

For more information see: 'Reconciliation between work and family life: final report to the 2005 LFS ad hoc module', available at: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-RA-07-011/EN/KS-RA-07-011-EN.PDF

NewCronos tables are available at:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,45323734&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=welcomeref&open=/labour/employ&language=en&product=EU_MASTER_labour_market&root=EU_MASTER_labour_market&scrollto=0

The main differences compared to EU-SILC include:
Definition of formal care: In the LFS ad hoc module, formal care includes the care given by professional childminders (at the child's home or at the childminder's home), whereas this is considered as being part of 'other types of arrangements' (i.e. other than formal arrangements) in EU-SILC.
Household composition: In the LFS ad hoc module, households with children are broken down into three categories: 'Singles', 'Couples' and 'Other types' (see also Chapter 1, giving further details on household structure in LFS), whereas EU-SILC only distinguished between 'Single' and 'Two or more adults'. The latter category would then include multigenerational households.
Age of children: childcare issues relate to children aged under 15 years, whereas in EU-SILC these relate to children up to the age of 12.

The variation in the extent to which formal care is used according to the number of adults living in the household may be expected to be related to what these adults do professionally. When considering couples, one might expect that when only one person is employed, childcare responsibilities will be ensured by the respective partner living in the household, whatever the age of the children. Households where both parents work will probably make use of paid childcare facilities and/or rely on their relatives. This will also be the case for employed single parents who face more difficulties in reconciling work with childcare responsibilities.

This is indeed more or less what is revealed by Table 4.9. At this stage, it might be useful to recall that the 2005 ad hoc module variable used in this section refers to four main categories:

- *Childcare services:* crèches, day-care centres, organised family care (e.g. family crèches, home-based care by childminders affiliated to a child-minding service), after-school care centres, paid carers.
- *Childcare by partner:* Partner living in the household.
- *Childcare by relatives:* including grandparents, father/mother living outside the household, neighbours, friends, etc.
- *No childcare used:* if children up to 14 always take care of themselves/each other or if a parent works at home/cares for the child at the work place or if no childcare is used at all.

When couples are compared across the three different employment scenarios (both employed full-time, one full-time and one part-time and one employed and the other not), childcare services are mostly used when both partners are employed full-time. This group is closely followed by that of couples in which one partner works full-time and the other part-time. Finally, childcare services are much less used when one of the partners is not employed, in which case the partner becomes the main person responsible for caring for the children, as shown in the table. There are just two minor exceptions to this general pattern. In Estonia and Latvia, childcare services are more often used by couples in which one partner works full-time and the other part-time than by those in which both are full-time employed.

Discrepancies between countries appear when considering the relative share in which all four types of childcare considered are used. When both partners in a couple are employed full-time, as much as 60% of all childcare arrangements used are provided by childcare services in Hungary, compared to only 4% in Malta. When one partner is employed full-time and the other part-time, the share of childcare services used out of all childcare arrangements ranges from 5% in Malta to 51% in Hungary. Finally, when one partner is employed and the other not, this share ranges from 2% in the Czech Republic and the Netherlands to 27% in Latvia. As mentioned earlier, in this case most childcare responsibilities are provided by the non-working partner (between 50% in Latvia and 96% in the Czech Republic).

Table 4.9: Childcare services and couples, 2005

Main childcare services used among couples in age group 25-49 and for a given employment pattern (%)

	Both employed full-time				One employed and one not employed				One part-time and one full-time			
	Childcare services	No childcare used	Partner	Relatives	Childcare services	No childcare used	Partner	Relatives	Childcare services	No childcare used	Partner	Relatives
BE	42	18	11	29	15	8	72	6	36	24	15	25
BG	24	40	11	25	8	10	76	6	20	36	29	15
CZ	24	22	28	27	2	1	96	1	23	14	40	24
DE	25	27	35	12	4	5	88	3	17	21	47	15
EE	37	45	7	12	10	23	65	2	42	36	14	8
EL	37	18	8	37	5	2	90	2	24	16	24	36
ES	32	27	17	24	6	13	78	3	24	30	26	21
FR	42	27	10	21	7	8	80	5	35	29	15	20
IT	23	10	32	36	3	2	89	6	23	10	41	26
CY	24	20	14	43	: u	: u	: u	: u	13	22	43	22
LV	40	42	5	14	27	22	50	1	43	32	9	16
LT	25	47	16	11	: u	: u	: u	: u	18	47	24	11
LU	43	31	8	19	: u	: u	: u	: u	24	38	15	23
HU	60	16	3	22	11	2	83	3	51	10	9	30
MT	4	41	29	26	: u	: u	: u	:	5	37	26	32
NL	31	24	31	14	2	6	91	1	17	20	51	12
AT	19	14	45	22	6	4	83	8	16	11	49	24
PT	45	23	6	26	13	24	57	6	21	42	19	18
RO	15	36	25	24	3	27	59	11	10	30	47	13
SI	41	20	16	23	12	7	78	3	34	18	17	31
SK	44	29	8	19	9	7	81	3	29	42	8	21
UK	30	30	17	23	3	15	79	3	18	31	32	19

Note: DK, IE, PL, FI and SE are missing.

Source: Eurostat, LFS and ad hoc Module.

4.2 Care for persons other than children

Europe's population is ageing. The post-war baby boom led to a bulge in the population pyramid that has gradually been working its way through the age groups: those born in the late 1940s are reaching retirement age. The boom lasted well into the 1960s and this generation will reach retirement age over the next 25 years.

However, there are other, longer-term structural factors which are also influencing the age distribution of the population. Europeans are living longer and the overall European birth rate has fallen well below the level needed to sustain a stable population. Although immigration may compensate to a limited extent for these effects, current levels are too low to make any significant contribution. As a result the balance between the generations is changing and the numbers of middle-aged and elderly people are growing in relation to the young.

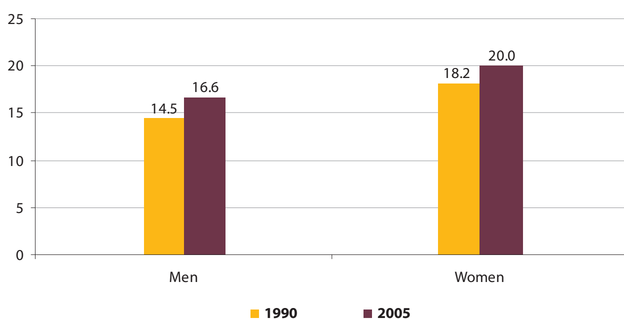
This section aims to give an insight on the care supplied in private households for the growing proportion of elderly persons, but also to disabled and other dependent persons. It excludes aspects linked to care provided by professional caretakers and care supplied in professional care-taking institutions, such as retirement homes or homes for the physically and mentally disabled.

4.2.1 Demographic developments

Higher life expectancy

According to the latest estimates (2005), in the EU women at age 65 can expect to live on average another 20 years or slightly more, while men can expect to live another 17 years (Figure 4.3). Between 1990 and 2005, life expectancy at age 65 across the EU rose marginally faster for men than for women, by around 26 months, against 21 months for their female counterparts, thus closing the gap only slightly.

Figure 4.3: Life expectancy at the age of 65, by gender, 1990 and 2005 (years)



Source: Eurostat (Demography).

Although trends towards longer life expectancy are positive, fertility rates are also persistently low in the EU. Fertility rates are now below replacement level (2.1 children per couple) in nearly all EU countries. As a result, the natural population growth is stagnating or outright decreasing.

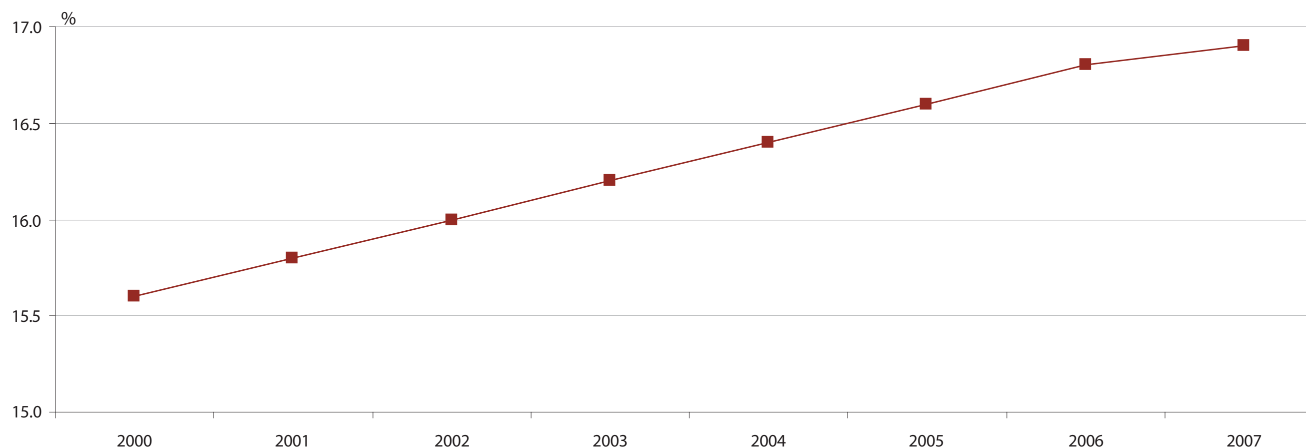
These two independent factors, living longer and a low fertility rate, inevitably result in an increasing old-age dependency ratio[1]. This trend is dampened to some extent by immigration. Net migration in the EU-27 has been positive between 2000 and 2005, averaging 1.6 million per year, and represents a significant factor in population growth.

In the EU-27, the share of the population aged 65 and over in the total population has increased from 15.6% to 16.9% between 2000 and 2007 (Figure 4.4). The ageing of the European Union's population can hence largely be ascribed to the low average number of children per woman (the fertility rate) and the increase in life expectancy. The latter will notably lead to an increase in the number of people aged 80 and over, many of them spending decades in retirement and reaching an age frequently characterised by infirmity and disability.

[1] The ratio between the total number of elderly persons of an age when they are generally economically inactive (aged 65 and over) and the number of persons of working age (from 15 to 64).

Figure 4.4: EU-27 population aged 65 and over, 2000-2007

as a proportion of the total population



Note: On the 1st of January of each year.

Source: Eurostat (Demography).

The average share of the population aged 65 and over registered in the EU in 2007 (16.9%) masks large disparities at Member State level, ranging from as low as 11.1% in Ireland to as high as 19.9% in Italy. The latter also registered the lowest share of young population (aged 0 to 15 — 14.1%) whereas at the other end of the scale, Ireland counted the most youngsters (20.3%).

Three Member States (Denmark, Ireland and Sweden) registered a slight decrease of the population aged 65 and over between 1990 and 2007. Conversely, this share increased in the remaining countries, reaching sometimes more than 5 percentage points (Estonian, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia). The highest increases were observed during the period 1990–2000.

The old-age dependency ratio (ratio between the population aged 65 and over and the population of working age aged 15 to 64) is increasing, indicating the ageing of the EU population as a whole. Eurostat projections show that this ratio will double between 2004 and 2050. By the middle of the century, there will be one person aged 65 or over for every two aged between 15 and 64. In the coming decades, an ever smaller working-age population will have to support an ever greater number of pensioners. One consequence will be the increasing demand for care services for the elderly.

Table 4.10: Population aged 65 and over as a share of the total population (%)

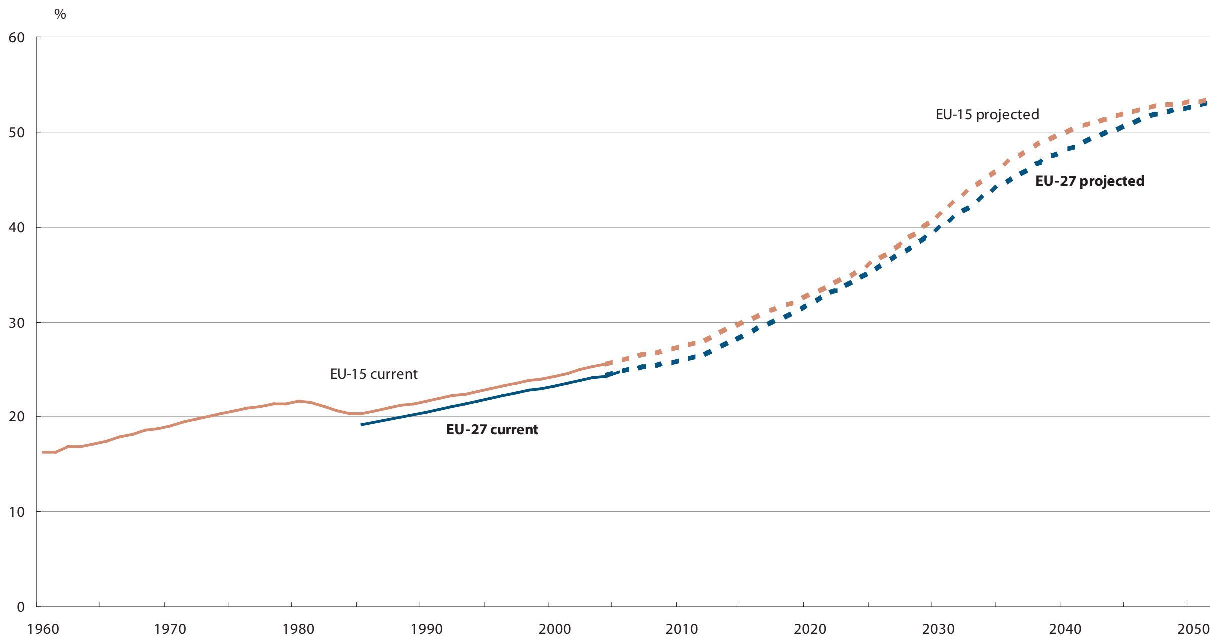
	1990	2000	2006	2007
EU-27	13.7	15.6	16.8	16.9
BE	14.8	16.8	17.2	17.1
BG	13.0	16.2	17.2	17.3
CZ	12.5	13.8	14.2	14.4
DK	15.6	14.8	15.2	15.3
DE	14.9	16.2	19.3	19.8
EE	11.6	15.0	16.7	17.1
IE	11.4	11.2	11.1	11.1
EL	13.7	16.5	18.5	18.6
ES	13.4	16.7	16.7	16.7
FR	:	15.8	16.2	16.2
IT	14.7	18.1	19.7	19.9
CY	10.8	11.2	12.0	12.3
LV	11.8	14.8	16.8	17.1
LT	10.8	13.7	15.3	15.6
LU	13.4	14.3	14.1	14.0
HU	13.2	15.0	15.8	15.9
MT	10.4	12.1	13.7	13.8
NL	12.8	13.6	14.3	14.5
AT	14.9	15.4	16.5	16.9
PL	10.0	12.1	13.3	13.4
PT	13.2	16.0	17.1	17.3
RO	10.3	13.4	14.8	14.9
SI	10.6	13.9	15.6	15.9
SK	10.3	11.4	11.7	11.9
FI	13.3	14.8	16.0	16.5
SE	17.8	17.3	17.3	17.4
UK	15.7	15.8	16.0	16.0

Notes: on 1 January of each year — ':' : data not available.

Source: Eurostat (Demography).

Figure 4.5: Old-age dependency ratio : EU-15 and EU-27 (%)

Ratio between the total number of elderly persons (aged 65 and over) and the number of persons of working age (aged 15 to 64)

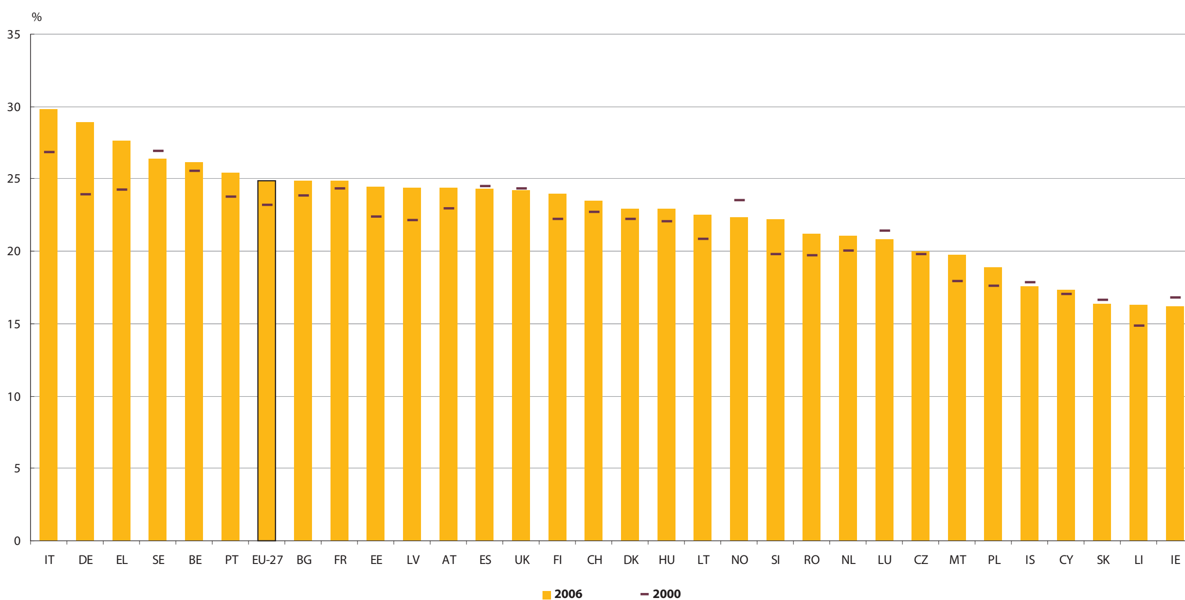


Source: Eurostat (Sustainable Development Indicators).

The old-age dependency ratio has grown at an average rate of about 0.3 percentage points per year since 1990 in both the EU-15 and the EU-27. However, this evolution should be examined over a long time frame, as changes are gradual and highly dependent on the past. In particular, the impact of the baby boom generation is significant: while it increased the working-age population and contributed to reduce the old-age dependency ratio until the turn of the century, the reverse effects will be observed thereafter.

Figure 4.6: Old-age-dependency ratio, by country, 2000 and 2006 (%)

Ratio between the total number of elderly persons (aged 65 and over) and the number of persons of working age (aged 15 to 64)



Source: Eurostat (Demography).

At Member State level, the old-age dependency ratio was highest in Italy and Germany, with values close to 30% and 29% respectively. The lowest levels were registered in Slovakia and Ireland, with values of around 16%, well below the EU-27 average of 25%. Compared to 2000, this ratio increased in most Member States, except for Sweden, Spain, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Ireland. The largest difference was recorded in Norway, where the ratio fell by 1.1 percentage points.

4.2.2 Family care for the elderly and the disabled

The increase in the number of elderly and disabled people has led to a growing need for specific care. This type of care is often supplied by families and relatives. The fact that care for the elderly and the disabled mainly takes place within the family may be due to limited access to formal care. On the other hand, family care is driven by a strong cultural component as regards responsibility for elderly family members. Finally, the household composition is another factor in determining to what extent informal care can be provided. Indeed, the presence of adult relatives or grown-up children in the household can facilitate home care for the elderly.

There is a hierarchy in relation to the importance of the different groups of caregivers. In a classic family pattern, it is primarily the spouse who is expected to give care. Behind him or her, the daughters and daughters-in-law take second position in that hierarchy. In reality however, daughters or daughters-in-law aged between 45 and 65 often play a fundamental role in terms of informal care, which can be explained by the age structure of the risk to be in need of help. It rises when people are 80 and older, an age when the elderly are frequently widowed. But this most important group of middle-aged women is shrinking, not only as an effect of demographic development but also because of the rising employment of women in this age category.

In debates on family care it is often argued that the general evolution towards a more individualistic lifestyle has caused a motivation loss for women to care for their elderly relatives in the household, and that family solidarity would gradually disappear. This is not supported by empirical data.

SHARE data (see box below) can provide useful information on the amount of personal care the elderly and disabled receive from within and outside the family.

SHARE data

The Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) is a multidisciplinary and cross-national panel database of micro data on health, socio-economic status and social and family networks.

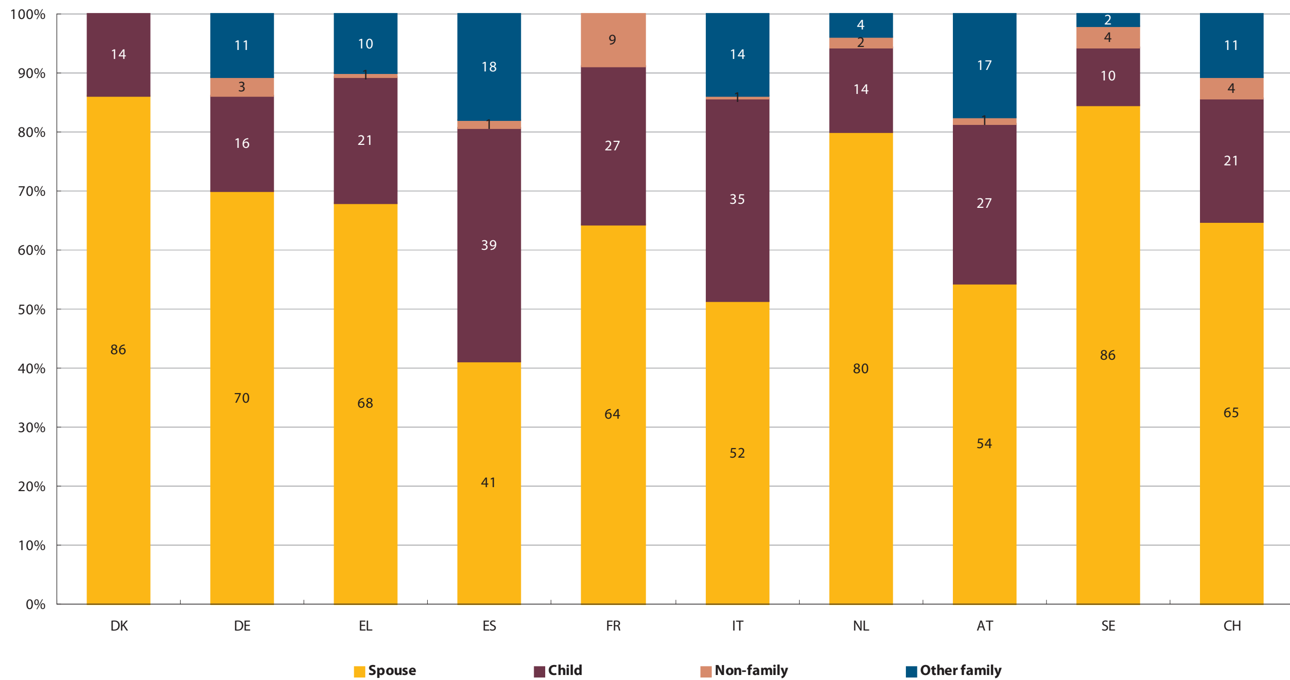
The main aim of SHARE is to create a pan-European interdisciplinary panel data set covering persons aged 50 years and older. The project brings together many disciplines, including demography, economics, epidemiology, psychology, sociology and statistics. Scientists from some 15 countries have worked on feasibility studies, experiments, and instrument development, culminating in a first survey in 2004, covering 11 countries. The multidisciplinary nature of the data provides new insights into the complex interactions between economic, health, psychological and social factors determining the quality of life of the elderly.

Eleven countries ranging from Scandinavia (Sweden, Denmark), Western and Central Europe (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Austria) to the Mediterranean (Spain, Italy, Greece) are currently participants. The survey will follow a common set-up across all countries with the goal of collecting data that are strictly comparable to allow cross-country research.

For more information: http://www.share-project.org

Figure 4.7 shows from whom elderly and disabled people receive personal care within the household. In general, personal care within the household is to a very large extent provided by spouses. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in Spain, children and other family members are more involved than spouses.

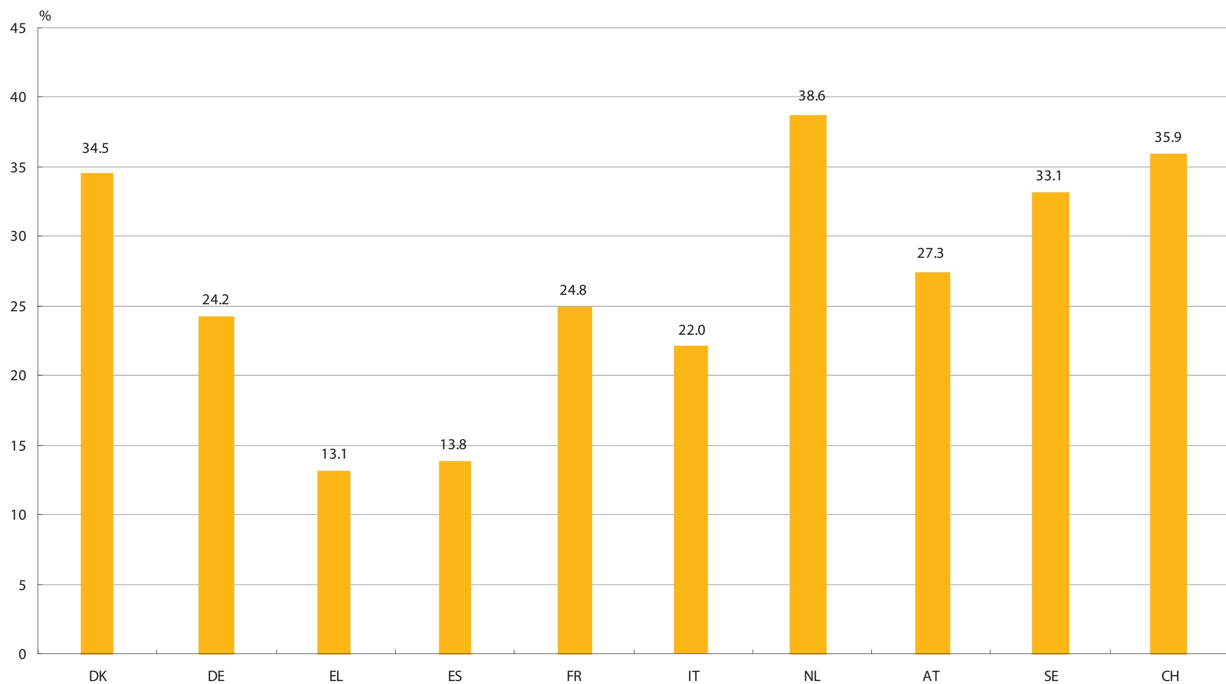
Figure 4.7: Persons providing personal care to elderly people with health problems or disability within the household, 2004 (%)



Source: SHARE.

It should also be considered that a much higher share of elderly people live in their own household in northern countries than in southern Europe. The next figure presents the share of respondents living alone receiving non-family help (including professional services and help from friends and neighbours). Unsurprisingly, these SHARE data show that the elderly living alone receive more 'non-family help' compared to those living with others. Indeed, one third of the respondents living alone received help with personal care or practical tasks during the past 12 months. These shares were significantly lower in Spain, Italy and Greece. Nevertheless, it seems that family support in southern countries, which is traditionally strong, is weakened when older people are living alone and that these countries may not have adequate infrastructure to facilitate living independently in old age. Living alone in countries where formal service levels are low appears to be a more risky living arrangement than in the northern countries, where institutional care and assistance facilities for the elderly are better developed.

Figure 4.8: Proportion of elderly with health problems or disability living alone and receiving non-family help, 2004



Source: SHARE.

Over the past 30 years the labour force participation rate of women has increased, especially among the 35 to 55 year olds, the core age group involved in care for the elderly and disabled. The possibility to combine care for elderly and disabled people in the family and a job varies with the degree of caring needs. The impact of care needs on labour force participation is hence a dynamic process, as the conditions for combining both duties are changing constantly.

Giving up working is often the result of a joint family decision. Considering the costs of formal care and loss of income resulting from leaving work, it is quite common for both partners in a couple to decide which option is the most favourable for the family. Even if the caregiver (most often the woman/wife) acknowledges the drawbacks of such a decision (no or less social security coverage, drop in family income, less social interaction) the "family logic" and responsibilities towards the elderly – most often parents – can be stronger.

It comes as no surprise that employed women resort to formal care services more often than women who are not employed. Working carers organise their everyday schedules, rationalise leisure time, housework and care, even though this can lead to conflicts with the care needs of the elderly.

The following figures consider persons regularly taking care of ill, disabled or elderly relatives/friends aged 15 or over in need of care, living inside or outside the household. For this, results of the 2005 LFS ad hoc Module on reconciliation between work and family life have been used (see also box in Section 4.1).

Caregivers are defined here as persons who look after or help friends/relatives in need of care on a regular basis (i.e. every day, every week, etc.). People may need care on account of illness, general old age, inability to look after oneself or disability. Caring tasks are defined as follows: personal care (e.g. dressing, washing); physical help (e.g. walking); helping with paperwork or financial matters; domestic help (e.g. housework, laundry); company, talking, visiting.

The survey results show that among respondents, the proportion of caregivers never exceeded 10% across Europe. The lowest share was recorded in Luxembourg with only 0.5% and the highest in Cyprus with 9.7%. The share registered in Luxembourg can be explained by a well-organised public care service for ill, disabled and elderly persons [2].

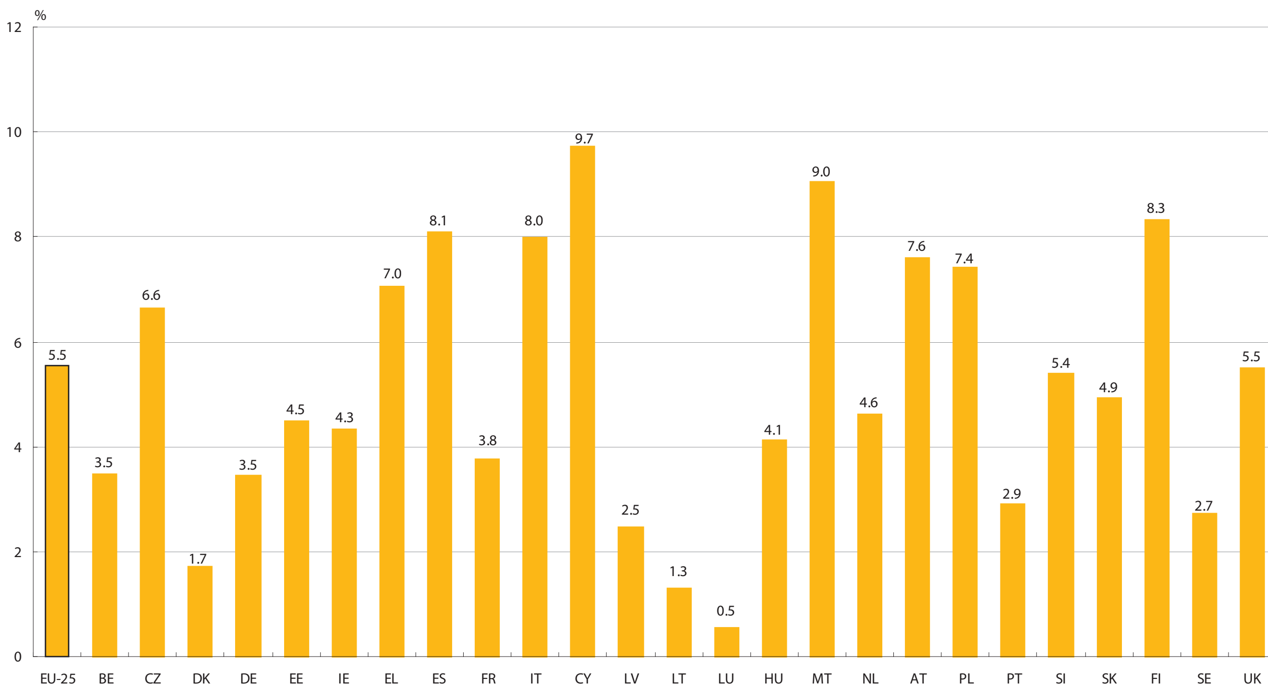
As a rule, women were more involved in caring than men in all Member States, particularly in Malta, Spain, Italy and Cyprus[3]. Denmark and Lithuania registered the lowest shares; where disabled and elderly persons are generally taken care of by publicly-funded care institutions.

[2] European Commission (2007), Reconciliation between work and family life: final report to the 2005 LFS ad hoc module, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 76p.

[3] A detailed analysis on the gender differences as regards caring responsibilities was set aside in order to avoid problems linked to small sample size.

Figure 4.9: Persons regularly taking care of ill, disabled or elderly relatives/friends aged 15 or more in need of care, 2005

Persons aged 25-49 as a proportion of all persons of the same age group



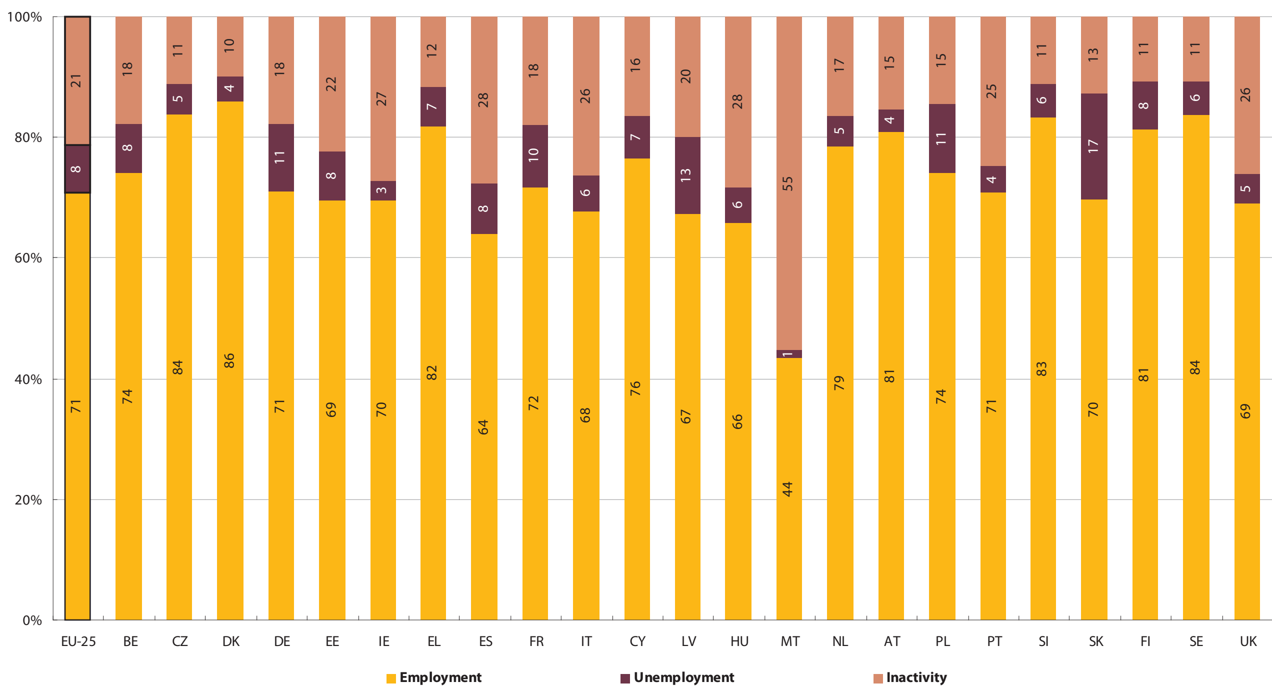
Note: no data available for Bulgaria and Romania.

Source: Eurostat (LFS ad hoc module 2005).

Figure 4.10 displays the proportions of people regularly taking care of ill, disabled and elderly people according to their situation in relation to work. It appears that a large share of carers are employed. But there are exceptions: in Malta, the majority of caregivers are unemployed. This outcome should not be attributed to caring responsibilities but rather to the employment rates (and to a lesser extent unemployment rates) which in Malta are the lowest compared to the other Member States [4].

[4] Refer to Chapter 1 for more details.

Figure 4.10: Persons regularly taking care of ill, disabled, elderly relatives/friends aged 15 or more in need of care by working status, 2005



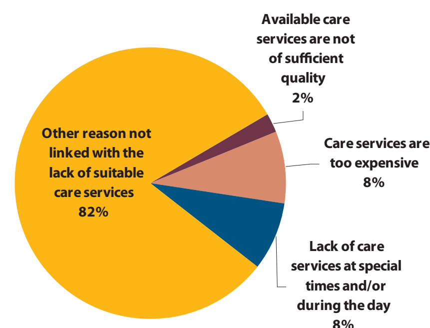
Notes: no data available for Bulgaria and Romania. — Lithuania and Luxembourg unreliable or uncertain data.

Source: Eurostat (LFS ad hoc module 2005).

When restricting the view to the main reasons mentioned by caregivers for not working, or not working more, it seems that the availability of care services is not the main cause. Indeed, only 18% of the carers reported that constraints such as insufficient quality, high costs and unavailability of care services persuaded them not to work or work more. Conversely, 82% mentioned 'Other reasons not linked with the lack of suitable care services' as main reason. These 'other reasons' include carers unable to find a job, but also those that give care to persons who have difficulties accepting carers other than family members or relatives.

Figure 4.11: Main reason for not working, or not working more, EU-25, 2005

Proportion of persons aged 25-49 taking care of ill, disabled, elderly relatives/friends aged 15 or more in need of care



Source: Eurostat (LFS ad hoc module 2005).

Finally, it would be interesting to analyse the share of carers wishing to change working life in order to better balance gainful work and care. The statistical results show that most caregivers (76% at EU level) seem to be satisfied with the organisation of their working life. Satisfaction rates did not drop below 65% in all countries considered.

27.5% of Danish carers, the highest share among the Member States, stated they wished to work less in order to have more time for caring. Other countries that scored high in this respect were Greece (19.7%), Cyprus (18.1%) and Italy (17.7%). The lowest shares (below 3%) were found in the Netherlands, a country with a large availability of part-time jobs, and France.

As such, these results appear consistent as almost one third of caregivers in France (32.1%) wish to work or to work more and therefore reduce the amount of time spent on caring. This share still exceeded that of the Netherlands by a large margin, where 20.7% of caregivers would like to find a job or to work more. Shares in Latvia and Estonia were similar to that of the Netherlands, with 19.6% and 17.0% respectively. Carers in Finland were the least prone to change, with only 2.1% expressing the desire to find employment or to work more.

Table 4.11: Persons taking care of ill, disabled or elderly relatives/friends aged 15 or more wishing to change their working life organisation, 2005

as a proportion of all caregivers aged 25-49

	No change wanted	Wish to work less to have more time for caring		Wish to work or to work more (and reduce caring time)	
EU-25	76.0	10.4		13.6	
BE	85.7	8.1		6.3	
CZ	83.8	11.2		5.0	
DK	69.6	27.5		2.9	u
DE	80.3	4.9		14.7	
EE	73.2	9.7		17.0	
IE	82.7	8.9		8.4	
EL	71.8	19.7		8.5	
ES	75.1	10.4		14.5	
FR	66.7	1.1		32.1	
IT	68.2	17.7		14.1	
CY	76.1	18.1		5.9	
LV	76.6	3.8	u	19.6	
LT	:	:	u	:	u
LU	:	:	u	:	u
HU	75.9	13.9		10.3	
MT	:	:	u	:	u
NL	76.6	2.7		20.7	
AT	87.1	6.9		6.0	
PL	85.4	6.2		8.4	
PT	83.3	8.5		8.1	
SI	74.8	15.2		10.1	
SK	78.7	5.8		15.5	
FI	81.2	16.7		2.1	
SE	84.6	7.6		7.8	
UK	78.7	11.2		10.2	

Notes: no data available for Bulgaria and Romania. — ':': no data available. — u: unreliable or uncertain data due to a small sample size.

Source: Eurostat (LFS).