

## LMF1.2: Maternal employment rates

### *Definitions and methodology*

Data on maternal employment rates are presented in this indicator both by age of youngest child and by the number of dependent children aged under 15. Employment rates refer to the annual average calculated from various national employment or household surveys and from the European Labour Force Survey. There is as yet no comprehensive regular annual data collection of maternal (or parental) employment across OECD countries. Data are presented for 2008 or the most recent year available (see the *comparability and data issues* section for details on the definition of paid employment).

### *Key findings*

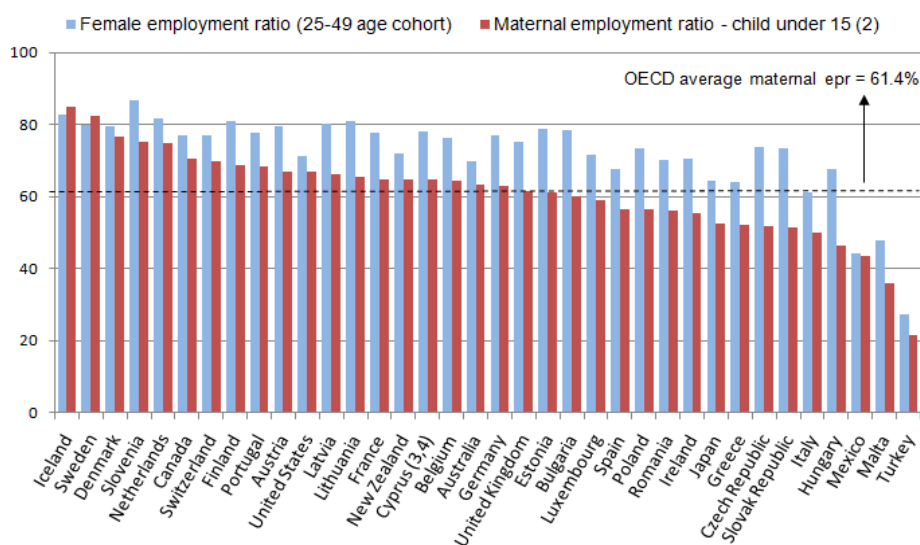
Chart LMF1.2.A presents data for mothers in employment as a percentage of the population of mothers with at least one child aged under 15 living at home. These employment/population ratios are compared with the employment/population ratio for women aged between 25 and 49, this being the age cohort typically most concerned with rearing of young children. Compared to employment rates of women in this age group, maternal employment rates are lower in all countries except Iceland and Sweden. At over 20 percentage points, the employment gap between women aged 25 to 49 and mothers is highest in the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Slovak Republic.

Chart LMF1.2.B presents maternal employment rates by age of the youngest child. In most countries, mothers are more likely to be in work when their child reaches the age of compulsory schooling (aged 6 in most countries). Some countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Slovak Republic and Turkey) have markedly low employment rates for mothers with very young children (less than three years of age). In these countries, extended home-care or childcare leave is available and leave takers are not counted as in employment during this period (see below).

Chart LMF1.2.C presents maternal employment rates by number of children. Labour market participation of mothers with three or more children is significantly lower than mothers with one or two dependent children in many countries.

Other relevant indicators: Employment patterns over the life-course (LMF1.4); Gender pay gaps for full and part-time workers (LMF1.5); Gender differences in employment outcomes (LMF1.6); Distribution of working hours among couple and sole parents families (LMF2.2 and LMF2.3) and Key characteristics of parental leave systems (PF2.1).

**Chart LMF1.2.A: Maternal employment rates compared to female employment rates, 2008<sup>1</sup>**

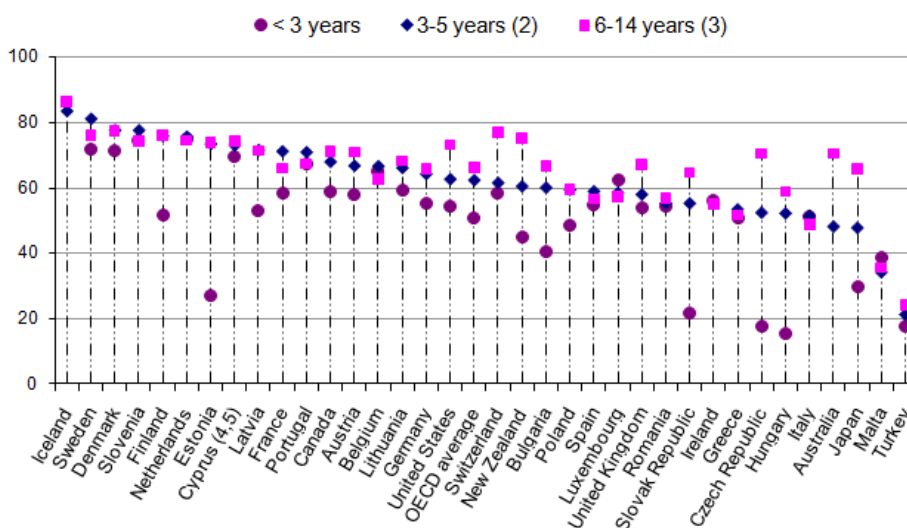


Countries are ranked by decreasing female employment rates.

**1** 2007 for Sweden; 2006 for Mexico and Switzerland; 2005 for Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States; 2002 for Iceland; 2001 for Canada; 1999 for Denmark. **2** Children under 16 for Australia, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. **3** Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to « Cyprus » relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue". **4** Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Sources: European Labour Force Surveys (2007-08) for EU countries; Australia: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005); Canada: Statistics Canada (2001); Denmark: Statistics Denmark (1999); Iceland: Statistics Iceland (2002 for women age 25-54); Japan: Japanese national census (2005); Mexico: Encuesta Nacional de la Dinamica Demografica 2006; Switzerland: Swiss LFS (2006); United States: US Current population survey (2005).

**Chart LMF1.2.B: Maternal employment rates by age of youngest child, 2008<sup>1</sup>**

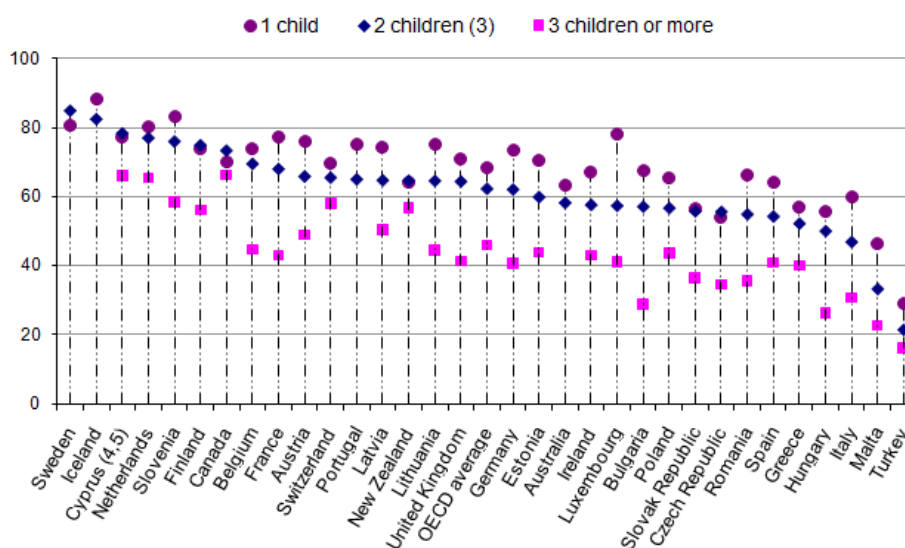


Countries are ranked in descending order of maternal employment rates with the youngest child aged between 3 and 5.

**1** see note 1 for Chart LMF1.2.A. **2** Data for Australia and Iceland refer to mothers with a youngest child aged less than 5. **3** Data for Australia, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States refer to mothers with a youngest child aged between 6 and 14. **4 and 5**, see notes 3 and 4 for Chart LMF1.2.A.

Sources: see Chart LMF1.2.A

**Chart LMF1.2.C: Maternal employment rates by number of children under 15<sup>1</sup>, 2008<sup>2</sup>**



Countries are ranked in descending order of maternal employment rates for mothers with two children.

1 see note 2 for Chart LMF1.2.A. 2 see note 1 for Chart LMF1.2.A. 3 Data for Australia and Iceland refer to 2 or more children. 4 and 5, see notes 3 and 4 for Chart LMF1.2.A

Sources: see Chart LMF1.2.A

### Comparability and data issues

In line with ILO definition of employment, the "employed" comprise all persons above a specific age who during a specified brief period, either one week or one day, were in the following categories:

- (a) "Paid employment": (i) "at work": persons who during the reference period performed "some work" for wage or salary, in cash or in kind; (ii) "with a job but not at work": persons who, having already worked in their present job, were temporarily not at work during the reference period and had a formal attachment to their job.
- (b) "Self-employment": (i) "at work": persons who during the reference period performed some work for profit or family gain, in cash or in kind; (ii) "with an enterprise but not at work": persons with an enterprise, which may be a business enterprise, a farm or a service undertaking, who were temporarily not at work during the reference period for any specific reason."

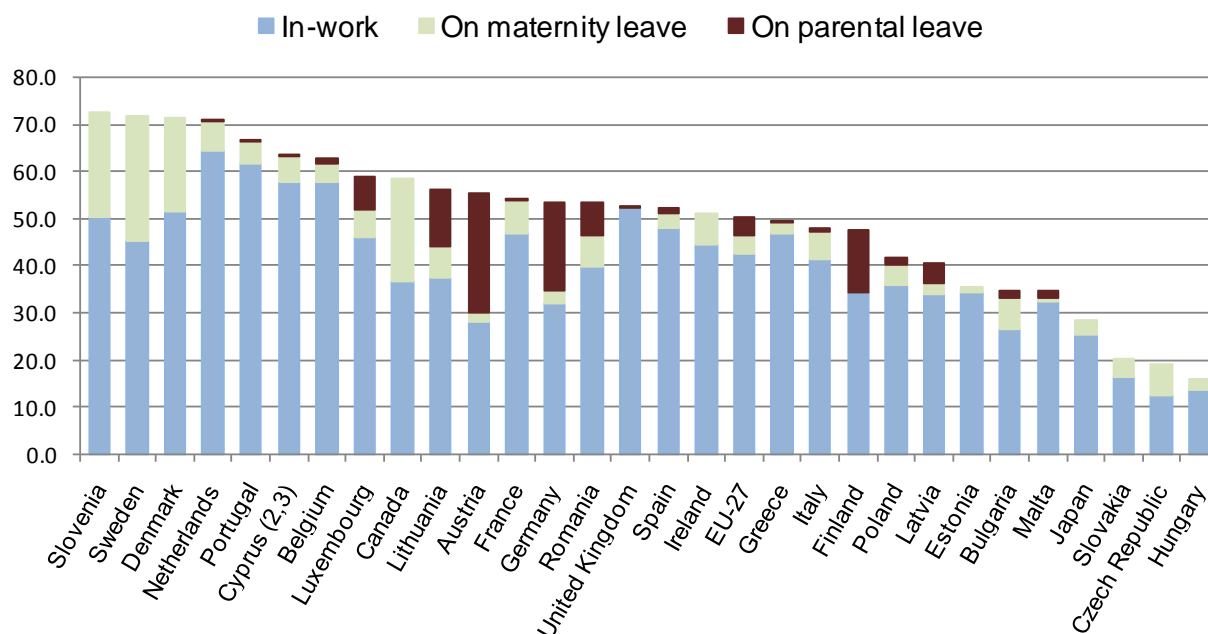
For operational purposes, the notion of "some work" is interpreted as work for at least one hour. Unpaid family workers at work are considered as in self-employment irrespective of the number of hours worked during the reference period. Apprentices who received pay in cash or in kind are considered in paid employment and classified as "at work" or "not at work" on the same basis as other persons in paid employment.

Maternal participation in the workforce is typically lower for mothers with very young children. This can be related to different factors including differences in childcare institutions, but also to differences in how women in parental leave are counted.

In principle, all women on maternity or on statutory paid parental leave (legal or contractual) are counted as employed. EU-guidelines stipulate counting parents on parental leave as employees absent for other reasons: they should be counted as employed if the period of absence is less than 3 months or if they continue to receive a significant portion of previous earnings (at least 50%). However, national treatment

of long or unpaid parental leave varies widely. For example, many parents on parental leave in Austria (up to 2 years) are counted as inactive, while leave is technically unpaid (there is an income support benefit for all parents with a child not yet 30 months old (see indicator PF2.1). By contrast, many of the parents in Finland on home-care leave (which is often taken when the child is 1 to 3 years of age) are often included in the employment statistics.

**Chart LMF1.2.D: Employment and maternity rates for mothers with children under 3 years, 2006<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> 2003 for Sweden; 2002: Ireland; 2001: Canada and Japan; 1999: Denmark. **2 and 3**, see notes 3 and 4 for Chart LMF1.2.A  
 Source: European Labour Force Surveys 2006 and Babies and Bosses, Reconciling Work and Family Life: A synthesis of findings for Canada, Denmark, Ireland, and Japan.

Sources and further reading: *OECD on-line Labour Force Statistics database*; European Labour Force Survey database, User Guide, [http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/employment/info/data/eu\\_lfs/index.htm](http://circa.europa.eu/irc/dsis/employment/info/data/eu_lfs/index.htm); OECD (2007), *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life, A Synthesis of Findings for OECD Countries*; and OECD (2010), *Employment Outlook*.