

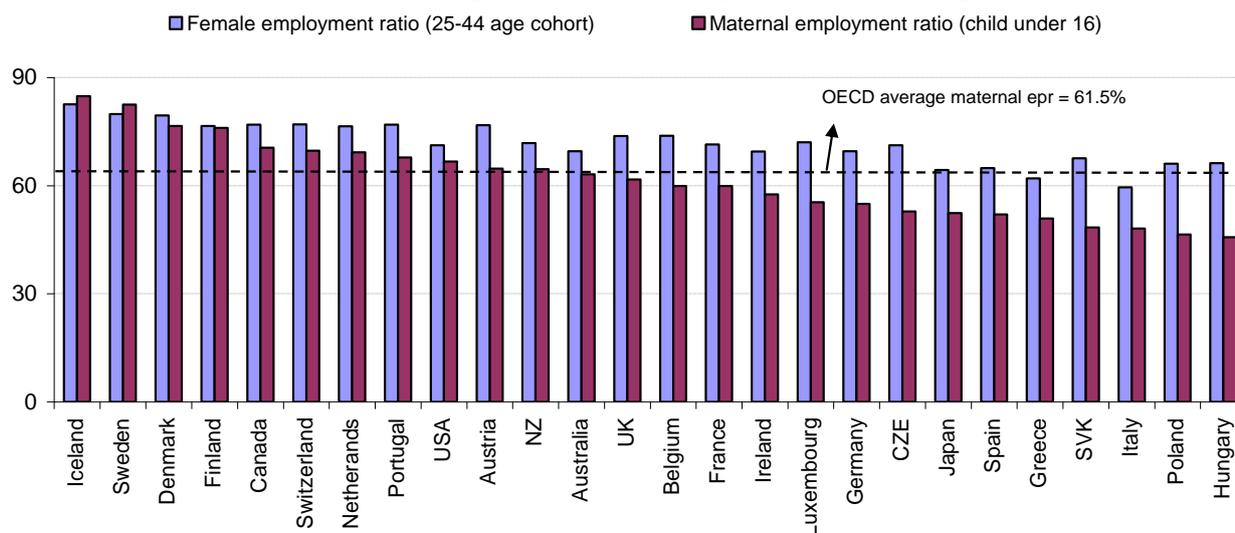
LMF2: Maternal employment rates

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 under 16. There is as yet no comprehensive regular annual data collection of maternal (or parental) employment across OECD countries at present which means as a consequence data has been taken from various national sources and the European Labour Force Survey. Data presented are for 2005 or the most recent year available (please refer to section on *comparability and data issues* for details on country years of reference and sources).

Chart LMF2.1 presents data for mothers in employment as a percentage of the population of mothers with at least one child aged under 16 living at home. This is compared with the female employment ratio for women aged between 25 and 44, this being the age cohort typically most effected by rearing young children, mothers' participation rates in the labour force are lower in all countries except Iceland and Sweden. At the other end of the spectrum the gap between females aged 25 to 44 in employment and maternal employment of female employment ratios are lowest in Poland and Hungary.

Chart LMF2.1: Maternal employment rates compared to female employment rates

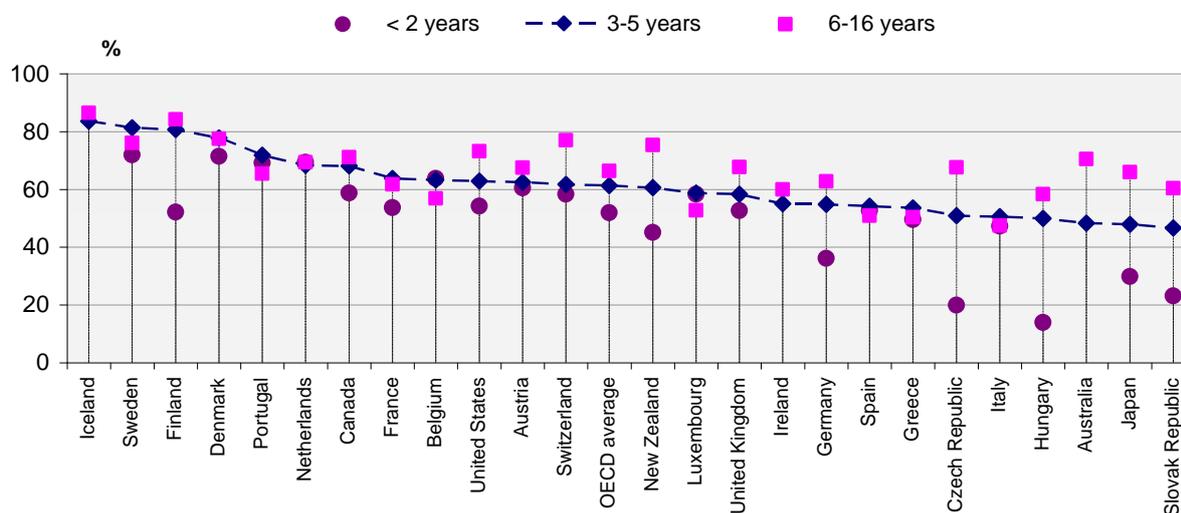


Source OECD Labour Force Statistics and OECD Family database

Chart LMF2.2 presents maternal employment rates by age of 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, Finland, Germany, Hungary and the Slovak Republic) have markedly low employment rates for mothers with very young children (less than three years of age). This is associated with the extent to which extended parental leave is available as presented in indicator LMF4 (Chart LMF4.2).

Other relevant indicators: LMF4: Age employment profiles; LMF5: Gender pay gaps for full and part-time workers; LMF6: Gender differences in employment outcomes; LMF8: Family-friendly workplace practices and PF7: Key characteristics of parental leave systems.

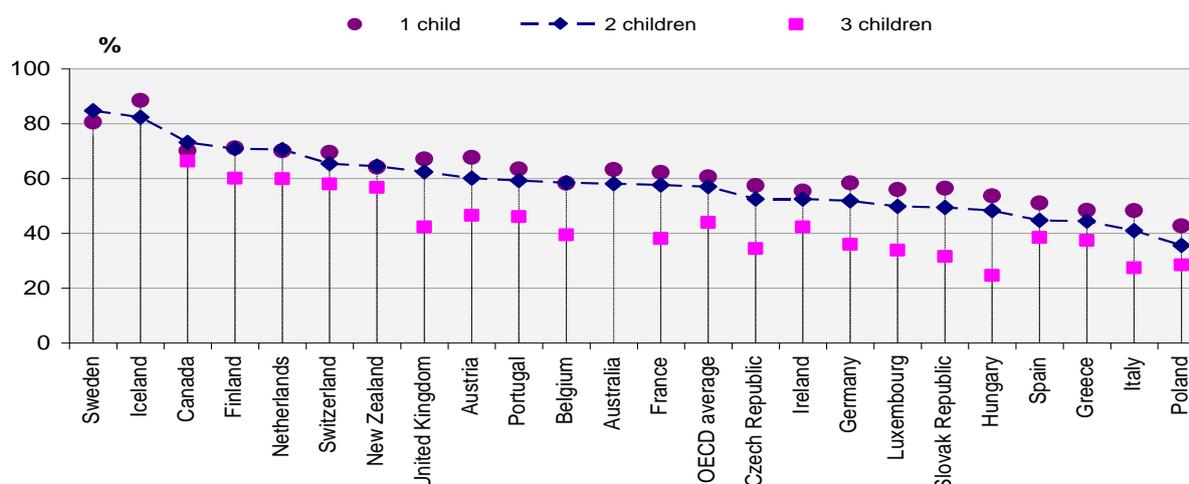
Chart LMF2.2: Maternal employment rates by age of youngest child, 2005



Data for Australia, Iceland and Ireland refer to mothers with a youngest child aged less than 5. Countries are ranked in descending order of maternal employment rates with the youngest child aged between 3 and 5. Source: OECD Family database

Chart LMF2.3 presents maternal employment rates by the number of children. Participation can be seen to drop significantly in many countries (the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Japan, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom) for mothers with three children at rather than one or two dependent children.

Chart LMF2.3: Maternal employment rates by number of children under 16, 2005



Countries are ranked in descending order of maternal employment rates for mothers with two children. Data for Australia, Iceland and Sweden refer to 2 or more children. Source: OECD Family Database

Comparability and data issues

Both female employment ratios and maternal employment ratios disregard whether employment is on a full- or part-time basis and this leads to an over-estimation of the presence of women in the labour force.

Comparisons of maternal employment rates with very young children are difficult to make as many Mothers often withdraw from work during the first 30 to 36 months of their children's lives -- via paid leave schemes or career breaks or both -- and then return to paid work. In principle, all women on maternity leave are counted as employed. EU-guidelines stipulate counting parents as employed when they are on parental leave for less than 3 months or with continual receipt of a significant portion of previous earnings (at least 50%). However, national treatment of parental leave varies widely. For example, many parents on parental leave in Austria (up to 2 years) are counted as employed, while leave is technically unpaid (there is an income support benefit for all parents with a child not yet 30 months old, (see indicator PF7). 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 not included in the employment statistics.

Maternal participation in the workforce is typically lower for mothers with very young children. This can be related to different factors including long parental leave periods and differences in workforce participation between older and younger generations of women.

As data on maternal employment are not collected on a regular basis by the OECD, data sources and years of reference vary across countries. These differences need to be taken into account whilst making comparisons. Data for Australia are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005); Canadian data is sourced from Statistics Canada (2001); data for Denmark come from Statistics Denmark (1999); data for Finland come from Statistics Finland (2002); data for Iceland comes from Statistics Iceland (2002 for women age 25-54); data from Japan has been provided by the Japanese national census (2005), Swiss data are from the Swiss LFS (2006); data for the UK are from the UK office of National Statistics (2005) and for the US they come from the US Current population survey (2005); all other EU-countries come from the European Labour Force Survey and are for 2005, except for Italy which concerns 2003.

Sources and further reading: *OECD Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life* (Volume 5) forthcoming 2007; *Employment Outlook* (2006) OECD, the annual edition of *OECD Labour Force Statistics, 1985-2005*; **OECD.Stat** (the OECD's central data warehouse which contains both raw data and derived statistics), *OECD on-line Labour Force Statistics database*.