LMF2.3. Patterns of employment and the distribution of working hours for single parents

Definitions and methodology

This indicator presents information on patterns of employment and the distribution of paid working hours for single parents with at least one child (aged 0-14). Data on working patterns are presented using four possible working arrangements:

i. *Working full-time;*
ii. *Working part-time;*
iii. *Working – no information on working hours*, where an individual reports that they are employed but information on their working hours is missing*;*
iv. *Not working.*

And on the distribution of working hours using four possible 'usual weekly working hour bands':

i. *1-29 hours per week;*
ii. *30-39 hours per week;*
iii. *40-44 hours per week;*
iv. *45 hours per week or more.*

Definitions of 'working' and 'employed' follow ILO guidelines, under which individuals are classified as 'employed' if they worked for pay or profit for at least one hour during a specified reference period (including employees and self-employed workers). Differences in the recorded employment status of parents on maternity, paternity and parental leave are discussed in indicator LMF1.2. Data on working hours generally refer to usual weekly working hours (which include regular overtime) in the main job – unless individuals report that they do not have usual set hours in their main job, in which case the individual's actual hours worked in their main job during the survey reference week are used instead – and the distinction between part-time and full-time employment generally follows the OECD's common 30-hour definition, with part-time employment defined as usual weekly working hours of less than 30 hours per week in the main job, and full-time employment as usual weekly working hours of 30 or more per week in the main job. (See the notes to the charts and tables and data and comparability issues for exceptions).

Key findings

Chart LMF2.3.A shows working arrangements for single parents (fathers and mothers) with children aged 0 to 14. In all OECD countries - with the exception of Türkiye - most single parents are in paid employment, though in Belgium, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Spain and the United Kingdom, more than 30% of single parents are without paid work. In most countries single parents are far more likely to work full-time than part-time, particularly in Denmark, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden, where more than 70% of employed single parents work full-time hours. The main exception is Switzerland, where single parents more often work part-time, while in the United Kingdom, part-time work is about as common as full-time work among single parents.

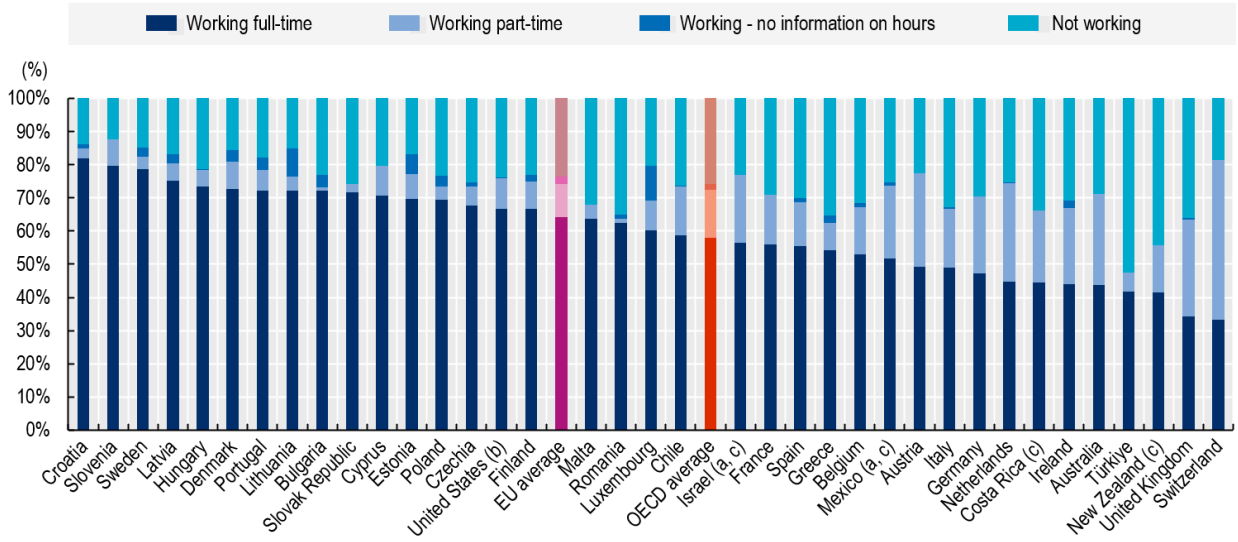
Other relevant indicators: Children in families by employment status (LMF1.1); Maternal employment (LMF1.2); Maternal employment by partnership status (LMF1.3); Patterns of employment and the distribution of working hours for couples with children (LMF2.2).

This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Chart LMF2.3.A Employment status of single parents, 2024 or latest available year

Distribution (%) of single parents with at least one child aged 0-14b by employment status[c]



Note: Data for Australia, Costa Rica, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand and Switzerland refer to 2025; for Luxembourg and Türkiye to 2023.
a. For Israel, part-time employment is defined as actual weekly working hours of less than 35 during the reference week, and full-time employment as actual weekly working hours of 35 or more during the reference week. For Mexico, part-time employment is defined as usual weekly working hours of less than 35 hours in the main job, and full-time employment as usual weekly working hours of 35 or more per week in the main job.
b. For the United States children aged 0-17.
c. For Costa Rica, Israel, Mexico, and New Zealand data refer to the employment status of the two parents in 'two parent households' or 'couple families' with at least one child aged 0-14, rather than to couples themselves. For Costa Rica and Mexico, data cover households where at least one child (aged 0-14) shares a relationship with the reported 'head of household' only.
Source: For Chile, CASEN; for Australia, Costa Rica, Israel, Mexico, New Zealand and Switzerland, OECD questionnaire; for European countries, European Union Labour Force Survey; for Türkiye, Turkish Household Labour Force Survey; for the United States, U.S. Current Population Survey

Table LMF2.3.A shows the distribution of usual weekly working hours for employed single parents by weekly working hours bands. In most countries, few employed single parents work very long hours (45+) – in almost all countries with available data, fewer than 15% of employed single parents work 45 hours or more per week. The main exceptions are Chile, Greece and Türkiye, where about 23%, 20% and 59% of employed single parents, respectively, usually work 45 hours or more per week. Shorter full-time hours (30-39) are the most common arrangement for employed single parents in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany and Ireland, while in most other OECD countries a 40-44 hour week is the dominant working arrangement for employed single parents.

Note by Türkiye:
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. Türkiye recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Türkiye shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”.

Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union:
The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Türkiye. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Table LMF2.3.A. Distribution of working hours for employed single parents, 2024[a]

Distribution (%) of usual weekly working hours by working hours bands for employed single parents with at least one child aged 0-14

	Proportion (%) with usual weekly working hours in the given weekly hours band:				
	1 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 44	45+	No information on hours
Australia	..	..	..	..	..
Austria	36.4	38.4	19.4	5.8	0.0
Belgium	20.8	53.7	15.8	8.0	1.6
Canada	..	..	..	..	..
Chile (c)	20.0	9.4	47.7	22.5	0.4
Colombia	..	..	..	..	..
Costa Rica	..	..	..	..	..
Czechia	7.9	18.9	61.9	9.6	1.7
Denmark	9.9	66.2	12.1	7.7	4.1
Estonia	9.2	9.2	70.4	4.2	7.1
Finland	11.0	61.0	18.6	6.9	2.4
France	21.3	52.4	17.4	9.0	0.0
Germany	32.9	43.1	20.0	4.0	0.0
Greece	12.9	8.5	55.4	19.8	3.5
Hungary	6.3	3.3	87.4	2.8	0.2
Iceland	..	..	..	..	..
Ireland	32.9	39.8	16.1	7.9	3.3
Israel	..	..	..	..	..
Italy	26.6	27.8	37.2	7.8	0.7
Japan	..	..	..	..	..
Korea	..	..	..	..	..
Latvia	6.5	3.8	84.0	2.6	3.2
Lithuania	5.0	5.0	77.3	2.7	10.0
Luxembourg	11.2	21.2	49.0	5.3	13.3
Mexico	..	..	..	..	..
Netherlands	39.8	38.9	15.5	5.5	0.4
New Zealand	..	..	..	..	..
Norway	..	..	..	..	..
Poland	5.3	6.4	79.1	5.1	4.1
Portugal	7.5	21.1	54.9	11.9	4.6
Slovak Republic	3.5	35.9	58.5	2.2	0.0
Slovenia	9.0	3.4	82.7	4.8	0.0
Spain	18.7	27.9	45.5	6.1	1.8
Sweden	4.4	22.9	55.2	14.3	3.2
Switzerland	..	..	..	..	..
Türkiye	11.8	9.6	19.9	58.7	0.0
United Kingdom	..	..	..	..	..
United States (b)	12.2	15.2	61.5	10.8	0.3
OECD average	15.3	25.7	46.5	9.8	2.6
Bulgaria	1.4	1.1	92.2	0.5	4.9
Croatia	3.5	13.8	76.6	4.7	1.3
Cyprus	11.3	34.6	41.2	12.9	0.0
Malta	6.3	22.9	62.9	7.8	0.0
Romania	2.0	1.6	92.1	2.3	1.9
EU average	13.5	25.3	51.8	6.7	2.7

Note: Data for Luxembourg and Türkiye refer to 2023.
a. In some countries (those for which information comes from the EU-LFS, plus the United States) it is possible for individuals to report that they do not have usual set hours in their main job. Where this is the case, the individual's actual hours worked in their main job during the survey reference week are used in place of their usual weekly working hours.
b. For the United States children aged 0-17.
c. For Chile, working hours are based on actual hours worked in the main job in during the survey reference week, rather than usual weekly working hours.
Sources: For Chile, CASEN; for European countries, European Union Labour Force Survey; for Türkiye, Turkish Household Labour Force Survey; for the United States, U.S. Current Population Survey

Comparability and data issues

This indicator was constructed using information on single parents (both male and female) with at least one child aged 0-14. Data are not disaggregated by sex or by the age or number of children because in many countries the underlying samples are small, especially for single fathers. In general the data presented here concern single mothers, which account for at least 75% of single parents in many countries (see indicator SF1.1).

The data used in this indicator come from national labour force or national household surveys, or from information provided by national authorities. Labour force surveys are well-established sources of labour market data, but a few issues may prevent full comparability. For example, while for most countries the data on weekly working hours concern *usual* weekly working hours in the main job, for Chile and Israel the data refer to *actual* weekly working hours in the main job during the survey reference week. To the extent that actual hours differ from usual hours, this may affect comparisons of employment patterns and the distribution of weekly working hours between Chile and Israel and the remaining countries.

Additionally, while for most countries the distinction between part-time and full-time employment is based on the OECD's common 30-hour definition – with part-time employment defined as usual weekly working hours of less than 30 hours per week in the main job, and full-time employment as usual weekly working hours of 30 or more per week in the main job – for a couple of countries (Israel and Mexico) alternative national definitions have been used. Specifically, for Israel part-time workers are those with *actual* weekly working hours of less than 35 during the reference week, and for Mexico they are those with usual weekly working hours of less than 35 hours in the main job. The use in particular of a higher part-time hours threshold by these countries is likely to increase the proportion of the employed classified as in 'part-time' work and decrease the proportion in 'full-time' work.

Labour force surveys are also not specifically designed to provide information on families or on employment by parenthood status or partnership status. 'Single' people are generally defined as adults living without a spouse or cohabiting partner in the same household, regardless of their legal marital status (i.e. the definition reflects the "de facto" situation in terms of co-habitation arrangements). 'Children', meanwhile, are generally defined as any children (including both biological children and step or adoptive children) aged 0-14 (for the United States 0-17) that live in the same household and are reported as the child of the adult. Parents with children who do not live in the same household are generally not included, nor are parents with children aged 15 or older (for the United States, 18 or older) regardless of whether or not the child lives in the same household and/or is dependent on the parent. Data for Costa Rica, Israel, Mexico and New Zealand refer to single-parent *households* or one-parent *families* with at least one child aged 0-14 rather than to single parents themselves, and for Costa Rica and Mexico include only those households where at least one child aged 0-14 is reported as sharing a parent-child relationship with the household head.

As discussed in indicator LMF1.2, cross-national comparisons of parental employment may also be affected by differences in the treatment of individuals on maternity, paternity or parental leave. It is difficult to isolate the impact of differences in the treatment of persons on leave on parental employment rates, but it is possible that different treatments could influence cross-national variations in employment patterns among and working hours for parents with very young children.

Sources and further reading:

OECD (2025), *Gender Equality in a Changing World: Taking Stock and Moving Forward*, Gender Equality at Work, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/e808086f-en.

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OECD (2026), *Labour Force Statistics In OECD Countries: Sources, Coverage and Definitions*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/data/datasets/employability-data/LFSNOTES_SOURCES.pdf.

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2023), *Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (including amendments)*, adopted by the 21st International Conference of Labour Statisticians, https://www.ilo.org/resource/resolution-concerning-statistics-work-employment-and-labour.

Eurostat (2026), *EU Labour Force Survey: Explanatory Notes (to be applied from 2021Q1 onwards)*, version 14 January 2026, European Commission,https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1978984/6037342/EU-LFS%2BExplanatory%2Bnotes%2Bfrom%2BQ1%2B2021%2Bonwards.pdf