LMF2.6. Time spent travelling to and from work

Definitions and methodology

Participation in paid work not only involves time spent at the workplace, but often also considerable time spent commuting. Time use surveys provide information on the average daily time travelling to and from work during a weekday (see LMF2.5 for more detail on these surveys).

This indicator presents information on the average daily time (in minutes) men and women spend commuting from home to work or place of study. Ideally, time use surveys provide such information for workers only, but often available data include the self-employed who work at home or working-age survey-respondents who do not participate in the labour market, too. Obviously, estimates on average commuting times based on information for all respondents are lower than when such estimates are based on responses by workers only. Data on time spent commuting is provided for men and women.

The figure uses only data from 2021 onwards to improve comparability, as remote work affects commuting time. Teleworking is more widespread prevalent than before the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2022), as working patterns have increasingly shifted towards hybrid forms of work, with occasional remote work becoming more common (OECD, 2024).

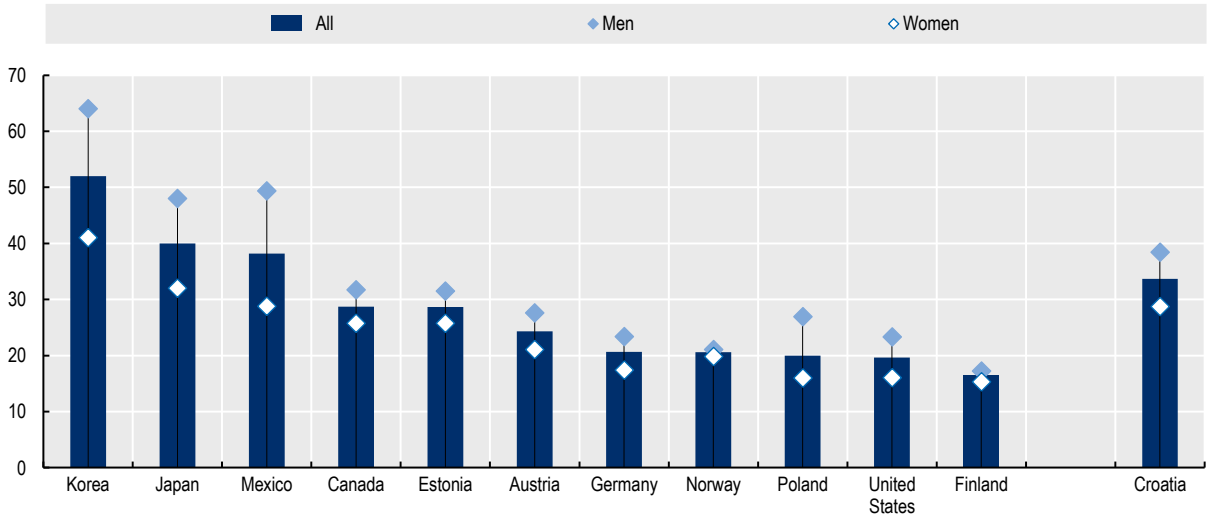
Key findings

The average amount of time individuals spend travelling to and from work differs considerably across OECD countries (Chart LMF2.6.A). In some countries, like Finland and the United States, individuals spend on less than 20 minutes per day commuting to work or study, while in others, like Japan and Mexico, this is around 40 minutes per day. In Korea, individuals spend, on average, around 50 minutes each day travelling to and from their place of work or study.

Across countries, on average, men spend more time travelling to and from work or study than women (Chart LMF2.6.A). In Korea and Mexico, for example, men spend on average around 20 minutes more per day on commuting than women. To some extent, however, these gender differences are due to the fact that women are less likely than men to be in paid work.

Chart LMF2.6.A Average time spent travelling to and from work, 2021-2024

Time spent travelling to and from work or study, in minutes per day, all 15-to-64-year-olds



Other relevant indicators: Maternal employment (LMF1.2); Distribution of working hours among individuals in couple families (LMF2.2); and, Time used for work, care and daily household chores (LMF2.5).

Note: Countries are ranked by time spent to and from work or study for all men and women. Data refer to 2024 for Korea, Mexico and the United States, to 2023 for Poland, to 2022-23 for Croatia, to 2022 for Canada, Germany and Norway, to 2021-22 for Austria, to 2021 for Japan, to 2020-21 for Finland, and to 2019-21 for Estonia. For further information, see the methodology guidelines for the OECD Time Use Database (https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/time-use-database.html).
Source: OECD Time Use Database and Statistics Korea ''Time Use Survey".

Comparability and data issues

Time use surveys provide the most reliable record of the daily time spent on commuting (LMF2.5 for more detail). Survey methods are in place to separately identify time used travelling from home to work from the time devoted to taking children to formal childcare facilities or school, or time spent on parallel activities, as, for example, shopping. Nevertheless, cross–country comparability is affected by the ability to spatially identify workers and other survey-respondents and the low (and varying) proportion of survey respondents who report commuting times in their diaries.

The reasons why commuting times differ include the distance between home and the workplace and the mode of transport and the quality of transport networks. The presence of children in households also seems to affect commuting times (as the birth of children is frequently associated with a change in place of residence or workplace. However, the available data do not allow to accurately determine the importance of these different factors.

Sources and further reading:

OECD Time Use Database, https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/time-use-database.html
OECD (forthcoming), Exploring Korea's Fertility, Work and Family Policy Trends
OECD (2022) OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2022, https://doi.org/10.1787/14108660-en
OECD (2024) OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2024, https://doi.org/10.1787/f42db3bf-en