

# Gender gaps in the reconciliation between work and family life

## Statistics in focus

### POPULATION AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

4/2005

#### Population and living conditions

Author  
**Christel ALIAGA**

## Contents

Employment rates and amount of time worked with or without children ..... 2

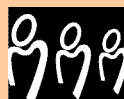
Employment rates by number of children ..... 2

Employment rates by age of the youngest child ..... 3

Amount of time worked by number of children ..... 3

Employment rates by level of education and number of children ..... 4

Organisation of work by couples ..... 5



Manuscript completed on: 22.03.2005  
ISSN 1024-4352  
Catalogue number: KS-NK-05-004-EN-N  
© European Communities, 2005

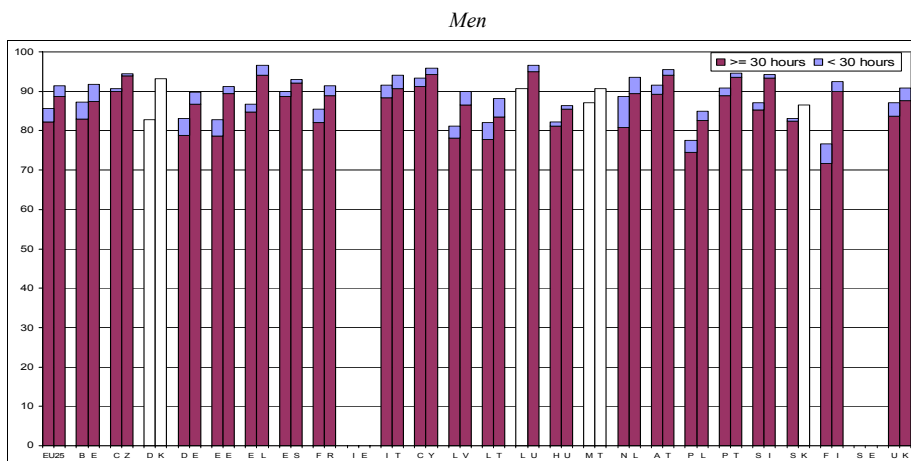
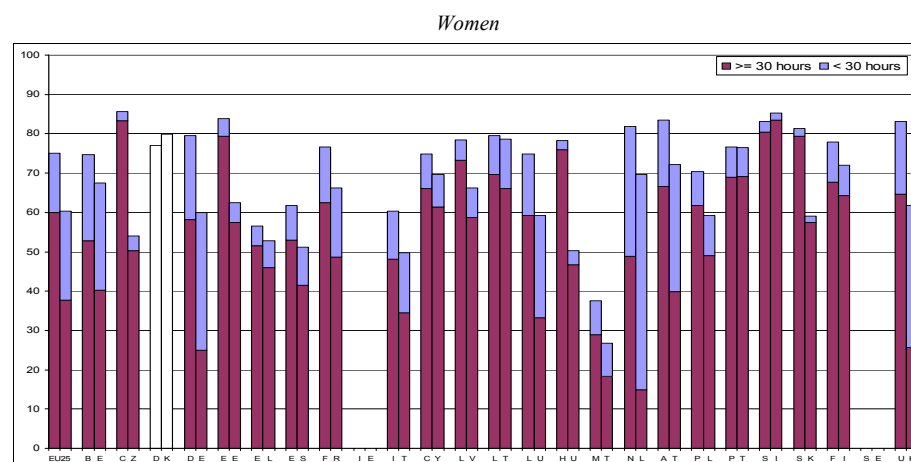
Within the European Union, participation in employment and the amount of time worked by women aged between 20 and 49 are closely linked to the number and age of their children<sup>1</sup>, which is less the case for men.

In EU-25, the employment rate for women aged 20-49 is 60% when they have children under 12, compared with 75% when they do not (Chart 1). For men with children under 12, however, the employment rate is 91%, five points above the rate for men without children.

Part-time work – defined here as fewer than 30 hours normally worked per week – is much more common for women than men. In EU-25, part-time work accounts for 27% of total employment in the case of women, and 4% for men. It also occurs more often in the case of women with children (38% of total employment, compared with 20% for those without), which is not the case for men, for whom the rates are fairly similar.

**Chart 1: Employment rates and amount of time worked per week for women and men aged 20-49, depending on whether they have children under 12**

Left bar: without children under 12. Right bar: with children under 12.



Source: Eurostat, European Labour Force Survey, 2003

DK, IE, LU, MT, SK, SE: some data are not shown for reasons of availability or reliability.

<sup>1</sup> This publication considers children under 12. See Methodological Notes.

## Depending on gender and country, children have a different impact on employment

The employment rates for women aged 20-49 are lower for those with children under 12 in almost all the Member States, apart from Slovenia and Denmark (Chart 1). On the other hand, the employment rates for men without children are, depending on the country, lower or fairly close to the rates for men with children.

The employment rates for women with children are highest in Slovenia, Denmark, Lithuania and Portugal, followed by Austria, Finland, Cyprus and the Netherlands. The rates are lowest in Malta, Italy, Hungary, Spain, Greece and the Czech Republic.

The differences between the rates for women with and without children are particularly noticeable in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, Estonia and Germany.

Part-time work for mothers is particularly common in the Netherlands (79% of total employment), the United Kingdom (59%), Germany (59%), Austria (45%), Luxembourg (44%) and Belgium (40%). However, the figure is very low in Slovenia and Slovakia, and part-time work for mothers is generally not very common in most of the new Member States.

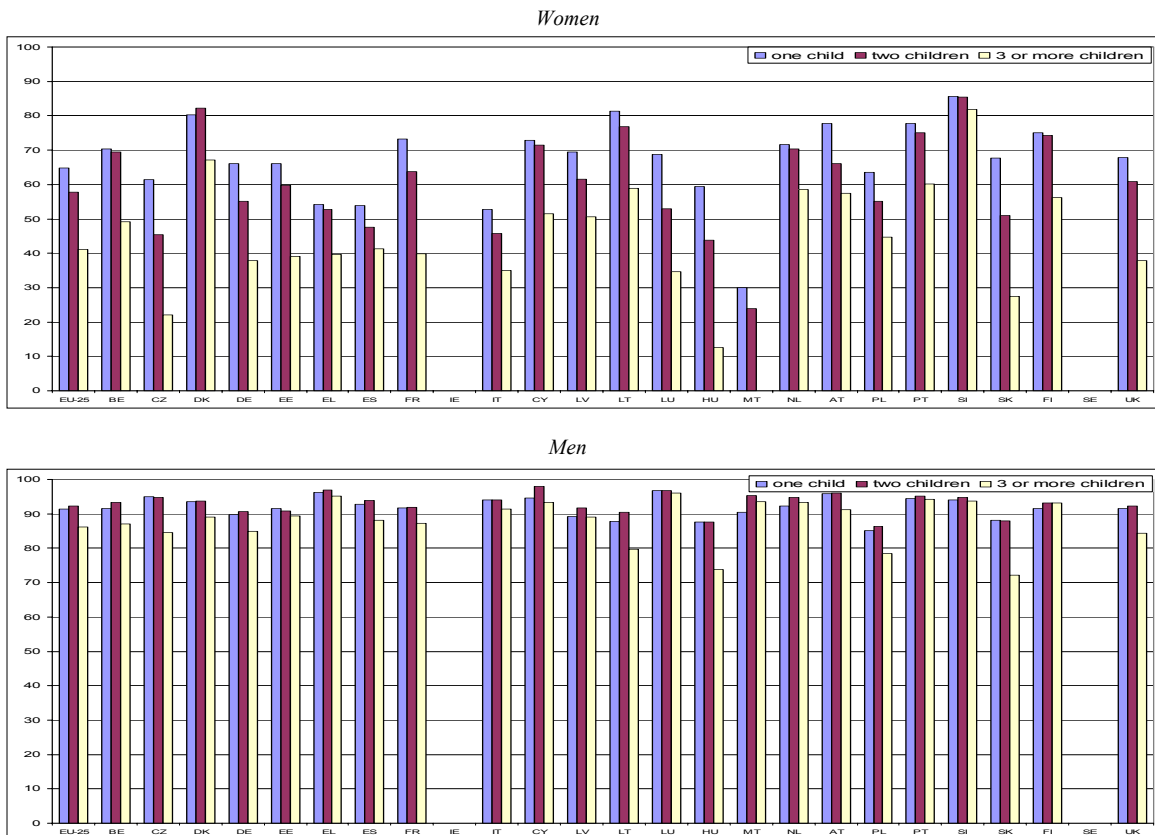
## Employment rates lower for women with three or more children

In almost all the Member States, the employment rate for women declines as the number of children under 12 increases, whereas the equivalent employment rate for men changes very little (Chart 2). However, the employment rates for men with three or more children often seem to be somewhat below those for men with one or two children.

In EU-25, the employment rate for women aged 20-49 with one child under 12 is 65%, falling to 58% for women with two children and to 41% for those with

three or more children. The figures for women with three or more children are lower than those for women with one or two children in most of the Member States. The highest figures occur in Slovenia, Denmark, Portugal, Lithuania and the Netherlands, followed by Austria and Finland. The differences in the rates for women with one child and for those with three or more children are large in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, countries where the employment rates for women with three or more children are among the lowest in Europe.

Chart 2: Employment rates of women and men aged 20-49 by number of children under 12



Source: Eurostat, European Labour Force Survey, 2003  
IE, MT, SE: some data are not shown for reasons of availability or reliability.

## Women with young children: employment rates often lower, with differences depending on the country

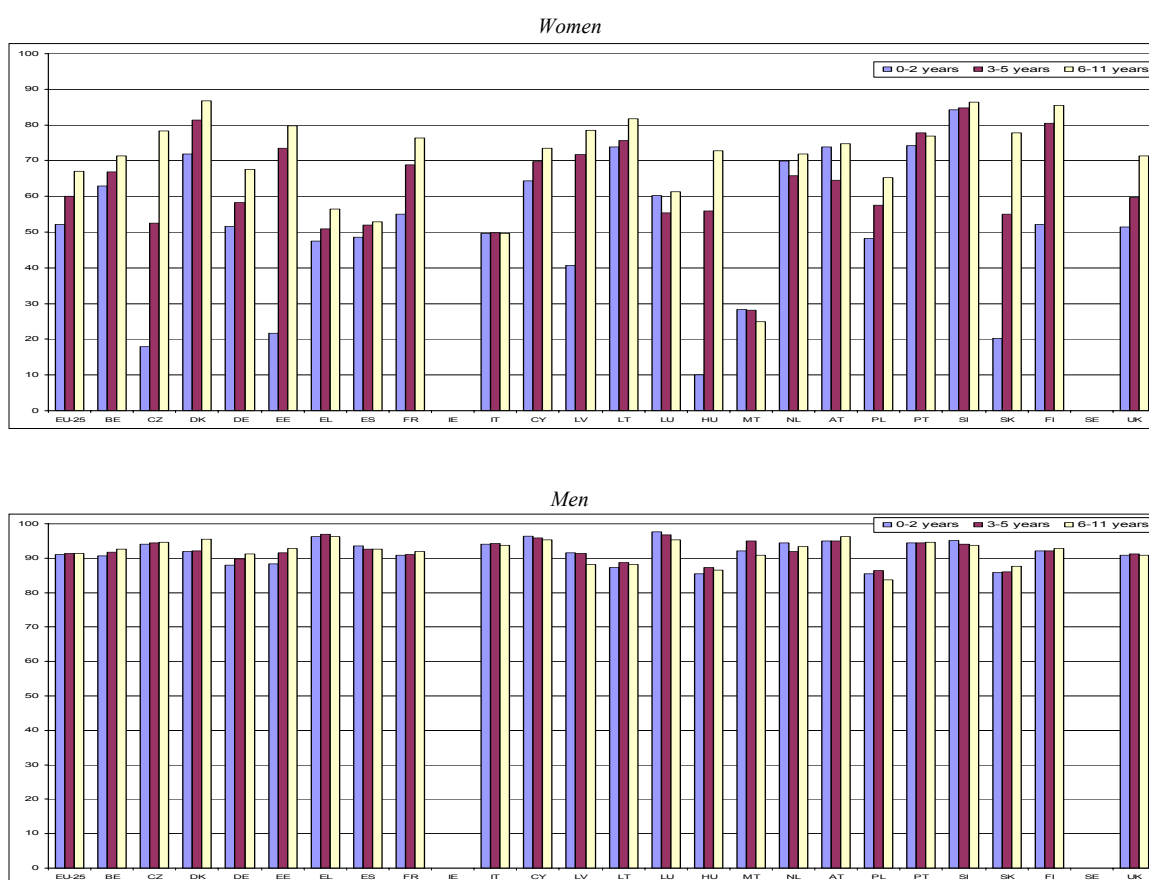
The employment rates for mothers are often lower when they have young children whereas the employment rates for men, by age of the youngest child, are extremely close (around 90% in EU-25).

In EU-25, the employment rate of women aged 20-49 whose youngest child is aged 6-11 is 67%, falling to 60% when the youngest child is aged 3-5 and 52% in the case of women with children aged 0-2. This result varies depending on the Member State. There is no difference in the employment rate, or the difference is much less noticeable, in Italy, Malta, Luxembourg,

Austria, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain (Chart 3).

The employment rates for women with children aged 0-2 are highest in Slovenia, Portugal, Lithuania, Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands (70% or more). The difference between the rates for women whose youngest child is aged 6-11 and for those whose youngest child is aged 0-2 is biggest in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Estonia, countries with the lowest employment rates for women with very young children.

Chart 3: Employment rates of women and men aged 20-49 by age of the youngest child



Source: Eurostat, European Labour Force Survey, 2003  
IE, SE: data not shown for reasons of availability.

## Part-time work for women increases overall with the number of children

The percentage of women in part-time work increases overall with the number of children, which is not the case for men. In EU-25, the figures for part-time work range from 33% for women with one child under 12 to 44% for those with two children and 51% for those with three or more children. These figures are around 3-4% in the case of men.

However, these figures conceal differences among the Member States (Table 1). Part-time work for women seems to be particularly common from the first child in the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria and Luxembourg, and more common from the second child in France.

Table 1: Part-time work of women aged 20-49 by number of children under 12 (% of total employment)

	EU-25	BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK
Women without children	20	29	3	:	27	5	9	14	18	:	20	12	7	13	21	3 (23)	40	20	12	10	3	2	13	:	22	
Women with one child	33	37	6	:	54	8	11	19	21	:	28	11	9	16	38	5 (32)	73	43	15	9	(2)	(2)	10	:	53	
Women with two children	44	43	10	:	66	(7)	16	20	32	:	35	11	(17)	(16)	50	11	:	84	50	20	10	:	(4)	10	:	66
Women with three or more children	51	46	10	:	67	:	:	18	45	:	42 (22)	:	:	(65)	(31)	:	86	39	22	:	:	:	(17)	:	69	
Total for women	27	34	4	18	37	6	10	16	22	27	25	12	8	14	31	4	27	56	30	14	10	3	3	12	18	37
Total for men	4	5	1	7	5	4	3	1	3	5	4	2	4	5	(1)	1	:	7	2	3	2	(2)	1	5	6	4

Source: Eurostat, European Labour Force Survey, 2003

: not available or extremely unreliable () reliability uncertain

## With or without children, employment rates are higher for women with qualifications

Women's level of education is a very important factor in their employment situation. Women who are better qualified (defined as having a level of education ISCED 5 and 6) more often have a job than those who are less well qualified (defined as having a level of education below the second cycle of secondary education, i.e. not more than ISCED level 2). In EU-25, half of the women aged 20-49 who are less well qualified have a job, compared with 84% of better qualified women. It should be pointed out that this difference of 30 percentage points in the case of women is only 10 points (83% compared with 93%) in the case of men. The greater presence of better qualified women in employment is

also the case in the Member States when a « comparable » number of children is considered (Table 2). This means that the existence of children and their number and age are not the only factors involved, and the level of education (and probably the type of employment and the corresponding level of remuneration) also plays a part in whether women with children leave or stay at work. The « reductions » in the employment rates as the number of children increases are always lower among better qualified women in comparison with those who are less well qualified. These results are found in most of the Member States.

Table 2: Employment rates of women aged 20-49 by level of education and number of children under 12

No of children	Level of education	EU-25	BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK
None	ISCED ≤2	57	58	69	:	65	67	49	48	68	:	45	60	59	(60)	67	58	30	:	74	54	73	72	49	69	:	56
	ISCED 3-4	78	77	87	:	80	82	53	67	79	:	73	74	77	76	76	81	:	:	84	68	84	84	85	72	:	85
	ISCED 5-6	88	89	94	:	89	88	83	83	82	:	88	89	90	91	88	94	(91)	:	94	91	91	95	96	89	:	92
	All	75	75	86	77	80	84	57	62	77	:	60	75	78	80	75	78	37	82	83	70	77	83	81	78	:	83
1 or 2	ISCED ≤2	43	47	37	:	41	51	42	37	54	:	34	53	45	63	62	35	19	:	58	37	72	71	36	60	:	35
	ISCED 3-4	64	70	56	:	65	63	49	56	71	:	61	72	67	76	61	55	(54)	:	76	57	85	84	62	71	:	66
	ISCED 5-6	80	87	68	:	76	69	79	75	81	:	80	86	80	91	69	72	(74)	:	86	87	92	97	78	82	:	80
	All	62	70	56	81	62	64	54	52	69	:	50	72	67	80	62	54	28	71	73	61	77	86	62	75	:	65
3 or more	ISCED ≤2	22	20	:	:	21	:	(27)	25	28	:	17	(35)	:	:	:	:	:	:	41	33	53	:	:	:	:	10
	ISCED 3-4	43	46	27	:	45	(33)	35	43	39	:	49	48	(56)	(63)	(31)	16	:	:	60	45	:	(80)	33	53	:	41
	ISCED 5-6	63	77	32	:	56	:	76	70	59	:	73	(78)	:	:	:	(27)	:	:	82	(75)	:	(90)	:	65	:	62
	All	41	49	22	67	38	(39)	40	41	40	:	35	52	(51)	(59)	(35)	13	:	59	57	45	60	(82)	27	56	:	38
Total	ISCED ≤2	49	52	55	:	53	55	46	43	60	45	39	56	50	59	62	46	23	:	66	46	72	72	43	64	61	43
	ISCED 3-4	71	72	72	:	74	72	51	61	74	67	66	71	73	76	67	69	56	:	80	62	85	84	74	71	77	73
	ISCED 5-6	84	87	82	:	84	81	81	79	80	82	84	87	86	90	78	83	82	:	90	89	91	96	88	85	86	86
	All	69	71	71	78	72	75	55	56	72	66	55	72	73	79	67	66	31	76	79	65	77	84	72	75	78	73

Source: Eurostat, European Labour Force Survey, 2003

: not available or extremely unreliable () reliability uncertain

## Organisation of work by couples varies with or without children and depending on the country

The amount of time worked and how the work is shared in households are important factors affecting individual decisions on working hours, since these decisions are generally taken in the overall context of the household.

For the Member States for which the Labour Force Survey provides data, among couples aged 20-49 where at least one partner has a job, the most common model is for both partners to work, either full-time or part-time, with an average of 66% for the Member States for which data are available (Table 3).

Among couples aged 20-49 where at least one partner has a job, the most common models are:

- partners both having a full-time job (45% on average): this model is particularly common in the new Member States (especially Slovenia, Slovakia and the

Czech Republic -apart from Malta) and in Portugal, Finland and France, where it accounts for more than half of couples;

- only the man has a job (29% on average): this model is more common in Malta (67%), Italy (45%), Greece (44%) and Spain (43%);

- the man works full-time and the woman part-time (19% on average): this model is most common in the Netherlands (44% of couples) and is also common in the United Kingdom (30%), Germany (28%), Austria (27%), Belgium (24%) and Luxembourg (21%). It is much less common in most of the new Member States.

There are very few couples (2%) who both have a part-time job or where the woman works full-time and the man part-time.

**Table 3: Organisation of work of couples aged 20-49 where at least one partner has a job (% of couples)**

	EU-25	BE	CZ	DK	DE	EE	EL	ES	FR	IE	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK	
Man and woman both full-time	45	43	64	:	37	62	47	44	52	:	38	62	58	60	40	56	22	27	47	49	67	77	66	63	:	44	
Only man working	29	25	29	:	26	25	44	43	25	:	45	27	25	16	35	33	67	21	22	29	21	13	24	21	:	21	
Man full-time/woman part-time	19	24	3	:	28	4	5	9	16	:	13	8	5	10	21	2	8	44	27	8	7	2	2	7	:	30	
Man and woman both part-time or Woman full-time/man part-time	2	3	0	:	2	2	2	1	2	:	2	(1)	3	4	:	1	:	4	1	2	1	(1)	(1)	2	:	2	
Only woman working	5	5	4	:	7	7	2	3	5	:	2	2	9	10	4	8	:	4	3	12	4	7	7	7	:	3	
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Eurostat, European Labour Force Survey, 2003

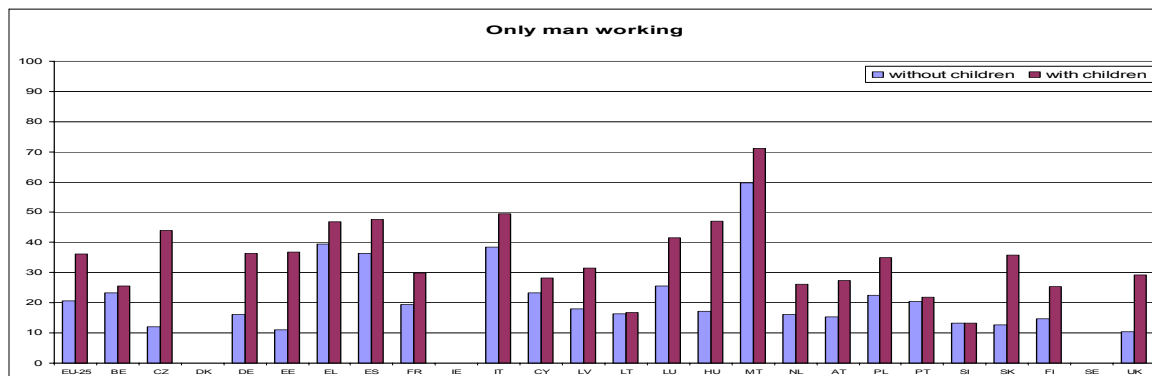
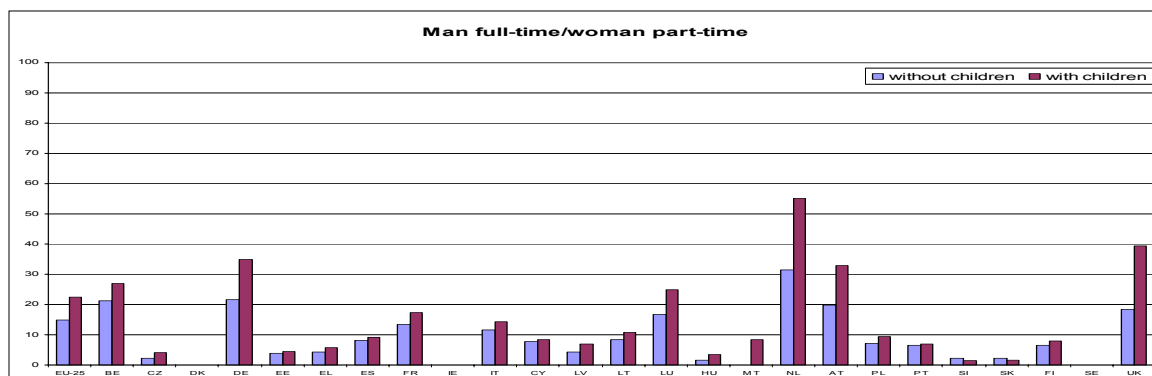
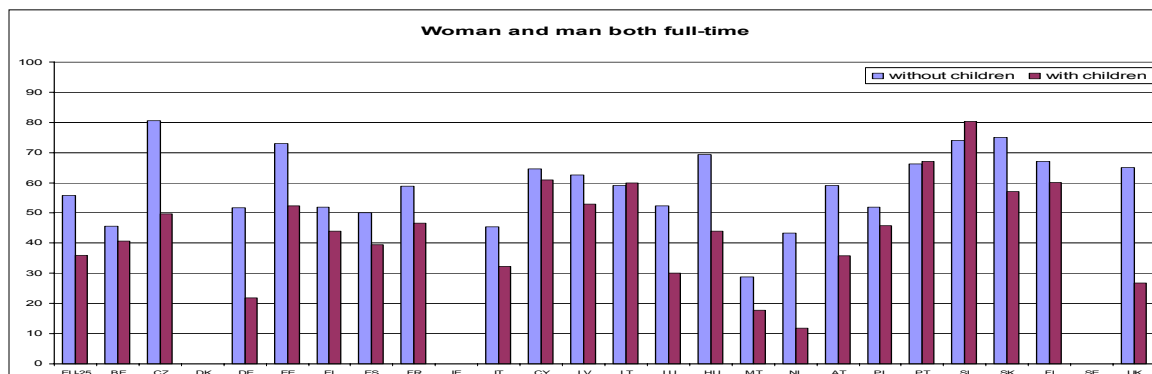
: not available or extremely unreliable ( ) reliability uncertain

Reading: In EU-25, among the couples where at least one partner has a job, the most common model is for both partners to work full-time or part-time, with an average figure of 66% for the Member States for which data are available (45%+19%+2%).

Some models change to some extent when there are children. The percentage of couples where both work full-time is lower when there are children under 12 in most countries, apart from Slovenia, Portugal and Lithuania (Chart 4). On the other hand, there is a larger percentage of couples where the man works full-time and the woman part-time and/or couples where only the man has a job. The former type is particularly common for couples with children in the Netherlands, the United

Kingdom and Germany, and also in Austria, while the second type is particularly common in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. These differences may to some extent reflect differences in job opportunities or the possibility of organising work time from one country to another, differences in social customs or even access to child-care services (availability, cost in relation to income).

Chart 4: The three main models of organisation of work of couples aged 20-49 where at least one partner has a job, with or without children under 12 (% of couples in each group)



Source: Eurostat, European Labour Force Survey, 2003

DK, IE, MT, SE: some data are not shown for reasons of availability or reliability.

Reading: In EU-25, for 56% of couples without children where at least one partner has a job, both the man and the woman work full-time, whereas the figure is 36% for couples with children under 12.

## ➤ ESSENTIAL INFORMATION – METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

### Abbreviations

: not available or extremely unreliable      0 insignificant      () reliability uncertain

### Data sources, classification and definitions

The data are taken from the European Labour Force Survey conducted in 2003 (annual average except for Germany and Cyprus – second quarter; limited sample for Denmark and Finland). This survey comprises sociodemographic data for households for all the Member States except Ireland and Sweden; in the case of Denmark, only some data are available. Date of data retrieval: 08/02/2005.

The data used in the analysis refer to « reference persons » (i.e. the person in each household selected in the survey to be the point of reference for identifying relations between the various members of the household) and their partner (except for Ireland and Sweden). In fact, the survey identifies in a comparable manner within the EU only the children of the reference person and/or his/her partner. The analysis is limited to the reference persons and partners aged 20-49, in order to exclude households less affected by the matter of reconciling work and family life. Members of the household other than the children under 12 of the reference person or his/her partner are not considered for the purpose of analysis. In the part on couples' organisation of work, only couples both of whom are aged 20-49 are considered. In the rest of the article, reference persons and partners aged 20-49 are considered individually.

The survey concepts and definitions follow the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation. Anyone who worked for an hour or more during the reference week or was temporarily absent from work is regarded as having a job. The employment rates are calculated in relation to the total population of the same gender and age. It must be remembered that the employment rates are calculated here for reference persons and partners, which may explain the differences with regard to the rates normally calculated for the whole population. In addition, there may be some differences because of those classified as being on maternity or parental leave, even though such people are generally counted as being in employment.

Full-time is defined here as working for at least 30 hours in a normal week (and part-time is defined as working for fewer than 30 hours). However, the survey variable relying on a self-assessment of full-time/part-time work has been used to estimate figures where the number of hours normally worked is missing.

The level of education is defined in accordance with the 1997 International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997), divided into three levels: below the second cycle of secondary education (up to ISCED level 2), second cycle of secondary education (ISCED levels 3-4) and higher education (ISCED levels 5-6). The analysis does not cover employment rates for men in accordance with their level of education and whether or not they have children, since employment rates for men are generally very high.

The variables for family circumstances taken into account for the study cover only children under 12 (existence, number and age), but other variables can also influence employment (work situation of partner, etc). In addition, it must be noted that the number of the children under 12 and the age of the youngest child are linked to some extent.

Country codes used in this publication: BE (Belgium), CZ (Czech Republic), DK (Denmark), DE (Germany), EE (Estonia), EL (Greece), ES (Spain), FR (France, excluding the overseas *départements*, i.e. Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane and Réunion), IE (Ireland), IT (Italy), CY (Cyprus), LV (Latvia), LT (Lithuania), LU (Luxembourg), HU (Hungary), MT (Malta), NL (Netherlands), AT (Austria), PL (Poland), PT (Portugal), SI (Slovenia), SK (Slovakia), FI (Finland), SE (Sweden), UK (United Kingdom), EU-25 (European Union).

## ***Further information:***

### ➤ **Databases**

[EUROSTAT Website/Population and social conditions/Labour market](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/Population_and_social_conditions/Labour_market)

---

### **Journalists can contact the media support service:**

Bech Building Office A4/017 • L-2920 Luxembourg • Tel. (352) 4301 33408 • Fax (352) 4301 35349 •

E-mail: [eurostat-mediasupport@cec.eu.int](mailto:eurostat-mediasupport@cec.eu.int)

---

### **European Statistical Data Support:**

Eurostat set up with the members of the 'European statistical system' a network of support centres, which will exist in nearly all Member States as well as in some EFTA countries.

Their mission is to provide help and guidance to Internet users of European statistical data.

The complete details concerning this support network can be found on our Internet site: [www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/)

---

A list of worldwide sales outlets is available at the:

#### **Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.**

2, rue Mercier – L-2985 Luxembourg

URL: <http://publications.eu.int>

E-mail: [info-info-opoce@cec.eu.int](mailto:info-info-opoce@cec.eu.int)

BELGIEN/BELGIQUE/BELGIË - DANMARK - DEUTSCHLAND - EESTI – ELLÁDA - ESPAÑA - FRANCE - IRELAND - ITALIA - KYPROS/KIBRIS – LUXEMBOURG - MAGYARORSZÁG – MALTA - NEDERLAND - ÖSTERREICH - POLSKA - PORTUGAL - SLOVENIJA - SLOVENSKO - SUOMI/FINLAND - SVERIGE - UNITED KINGDOM - BALGARIJA - HRVATSKA - ÍSLAND – NORGE - SCHWEIZ/SUISSE/SVIZZERA - AUSTRALIA - BRASIL - CANADA - EGYPT - MALAYSIA - MÉXICO - SOUTH KOREA - SRI LANKA - T'AI-WAN - UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

---

The author thanks Michael BERGMAN for his support.

ORIGINAL TEXT: French