

## 23. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

About 61% of all women in OECD countries were in the labour force, compared with 80% of all men in 2009. Broadening access to women to the labour market would require a mix of policies, including equal access to higher education and training; measures to reconcile family and work life; and tools to strengthen gender equality in the workplace.

Regional differences in male and female participation rates were above 20 percentage points in Turkey, Italy, Mexico, Korea and Poland. In Poland and Mexico these differences are due to particularly low female labour-force participation in predominantly rural regions. In Italy, Korea and Turkey the difference between male and female participation rates is often marked in predominantly urban regions, such as Istanbul in Turkey and Incheon in Korea, and in medium-sized urban areas in Italy (Figure 23.1). Regional differences in female participation rates suggest that the availability and use of services to reconcile family and work life (i.e. child care and day care facilities, parental leaves and tax/benefit policies to families) are also quite diverse within countries.

There is a smaller participation of women than men in the labour force in countries with low participation rates and high geographical disparities, such as Turkey, Poland and Italy (Figure 23.2). Regional disparities in participation rates, measured here by the Gini index, have generally decreased from 1999 to 2009 due to an increase of labour-force participation in less advantaged regions, such as in Greece, France, Portugal and the United Kingdom. The Gini index showed the greatest decline in Ireland, thanks to an increased labour force in the regions with low participation rates up to 2007, but also due to a steep reduction of the labour-force participation in Dublin in 2009-10. Regional inequalities in participation rates increased most in Iceland, Italy and New Zealand, where labour-force participation increased more in the regions with higher participation rates (Figure 23.2).

The female employment rate steadily increased in OECD countries up to 2007, when it reached 57.2% and then declined to 56.7% in 2009 as a result of the job losses following the economic recession. However, in around 25% of OECD regions, less than one out of two women was employed in 2009. Regional differences in female employment were the largest in Italy, Spain, the United States, France, Portugal, Mexico and the Slovak Republic (Figure 23.3).

Employment rates are generally higher for workers with tertiary qualifications and differences in employment rates between males and females are wider among less educated groups (OECD *Education at a Glance* 2010). The correlation between high educational achievement and female employment at regional level could be tested only using the regional educational attainment of the total labour force; in this case, 17 out of the 23 countries considered showed a positive linear association (Figure 23.4).

### Definition

Employed persons are all persons who during the reference week worked at least one hour for pay or profit, or were temporarily absent from such work. Family workers are included.

The female employment rate is calculated as the ratio between female employment and female working age population (aged 15- 64 years).

The participation rate is the ratio of the labour force to the working age population. The labour force is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed people.

### Source

OECD Regional Database: <http://dotstat/wbos/>.

See Annex B for data, source and country-related metadata.

### Reference years and territorial level

1999-2009; TL3.

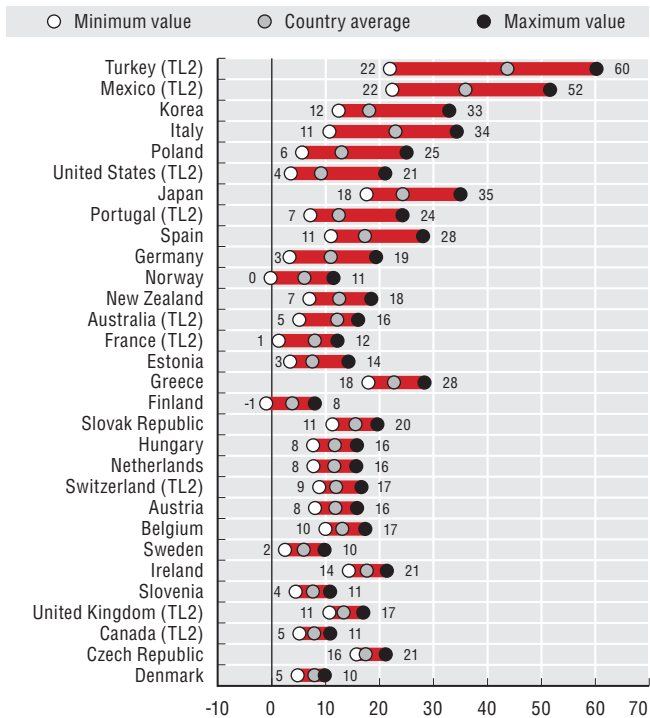
Australia, Canada, France, Mexico, Portugal, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States female participation rates only TL2.

### Figure notes

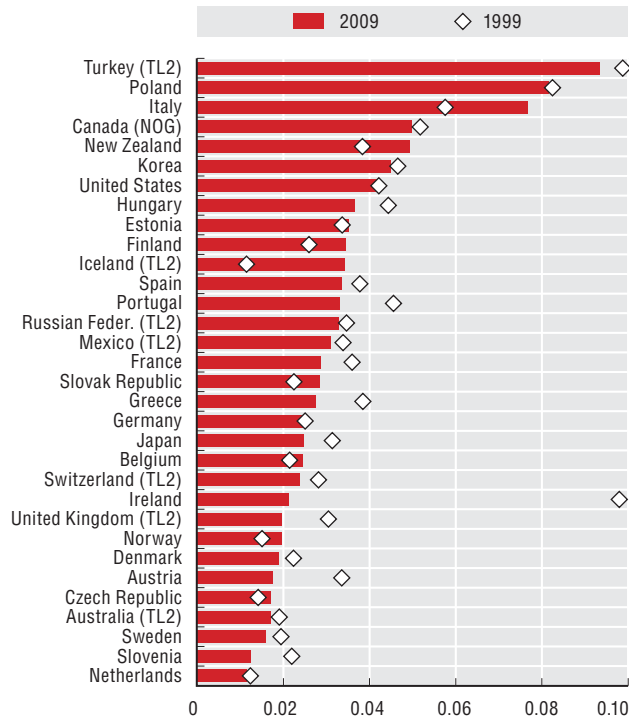
23.3: No regional data in Turkey.

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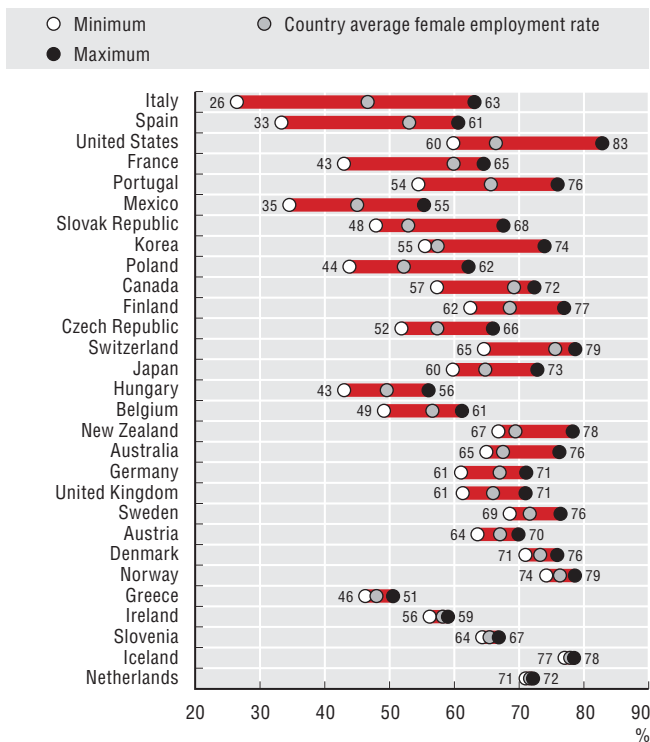
**23.1. Differences between female and male participation rates, TL3 regional minimum and maximum values, 2009**



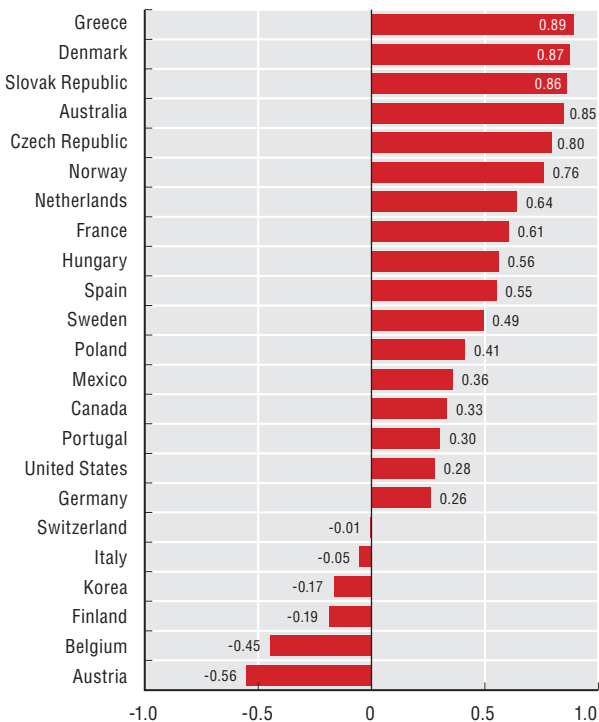
**23.2. Gini index of TL3 regional participation rates, 1999 and 2009**



**23.3. Countries ranked by size of difference in TL2 regional female employment rate, 2009**



**23.4. Pearson correlation between female employment rate and higher educational attainment, 2008**



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