

### Definition and measurement

The definition of work is nearly as complex as each individual's motivation for undertaking it. The diversity of employment goals such as financial gain, self-fulfilment, social interaction, intellectual stimulation and career advancement gives rise to an equally diverse range of employment situations. In the past, full-time salaried workers were predominant in the labour force. Today, standardised definitions of employment must make clearer distinctions, because of the rising importance of part-time, flexible working hours, temporary contracts, self-employment and consultancies, not to mention informal employment, occasional work and volunteer work.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition of employment, as implemented in labour force surveys of OECD countries, considers a person as "employed" if he/she works for pay, profit or family gain (in cash or in kind), for at least one hour per week, or is temporarily absent from work because of illness, holidays or industrial disputes. The employment/population ratio presented here is the proportion of the population of working age (persons aged between 15 and 64) who are self-employed or in paid employment. Temporary workers – the special focus of this section – are employees in jobs of limited duration: they include fixed-term contracts, daily work, seasonal work, etc. The *OECD Labour Force Statistics 1983-2003* (published in 2004) provide a detailed description of how this definition is applied in member countries. Data on employment and temporary work are generally gathered through national labour force surveys, which do not capture informal employment. Efforts to estimate informal employment force have gained importance with the increased interest in policies to promote the transition to declared employment. OECD (2004) provides a detailed discussion of the policy issues and recent estimation methods.

The proportion of the working-age population in employment increased strongly over the second half of the 1990s in most OECD countries, primarily as a result of favourable economic conditions. The improvement in employment rates has, however, come to a halt since 2001. In the two years to 2003, employment rates continued to increase in Greece, Spain and Italy, while they decreased significantly in Turkey, Poland and the United States. On average, employment rates declined both in the OECD as a whole and in the 19 countries of the European Union. By 2003, the employment to population ratio was close to 65% on average, but significantly higher in Iceland, Switzerland and Norway (Table SS1.3).

In most OECD countries, female employment to population ratios have continued to increase since 2001, continuing the trend over the last two decades (Chart SS1.1). Despite this increase, however, the "gender gap" in employment rates remains substantial (close to 10 points, on average) in most OECD countries.

Employment among older workers (55-64 years) has also increased in almost all countries since 2001, due to delayed entry into retirement. Conversely, employment of younger workers (15-24) decreased in most countries over the same period, with France as the most notable exception. Youth employment-to-population ratios are much lower than the OECD average rate of 43% in Belgium, France, Greece,

Hungary, Italy, Korea, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Turkey.

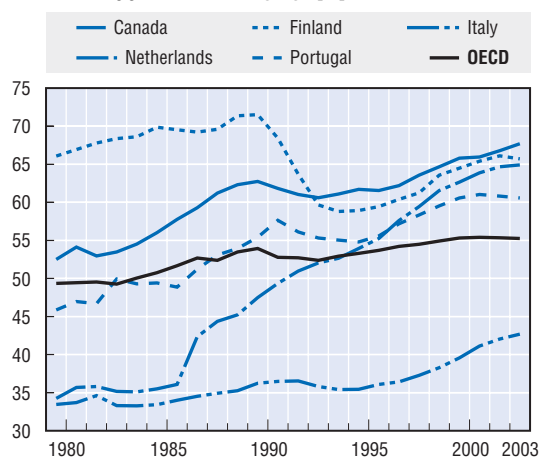
The incidence of temporary employment has risen significantly in many OECD countries, for both men and women, since the levels prevailing in the early 1990s. Women are more likely to be in temporary employment than men (Table SS1.3), except in the Eastern European countries and Mexico. Temporary work is well above average in Mexico, Poland, Spain and Portugal, and has increased sharply since the mid-1990s in the latter country (Chart SS1.2) as a result of labour market reforms and rapid economic growth. In other countries such as Japan, the shift towards temporary employment has been more gradual, resulting from changes in cultural factors, and social attitudes towards work. The easing of regulations on temporary employment in many OECD countries since the mid 1980s has contributed to greater incidence of temporary work, particularly in countries where employment protection laws concerning permanent contracts are strict (OECD, 2004).

**Status indicators:** Unemployment (SS2), Working mothers (SS4), Age at retirement (SS8).

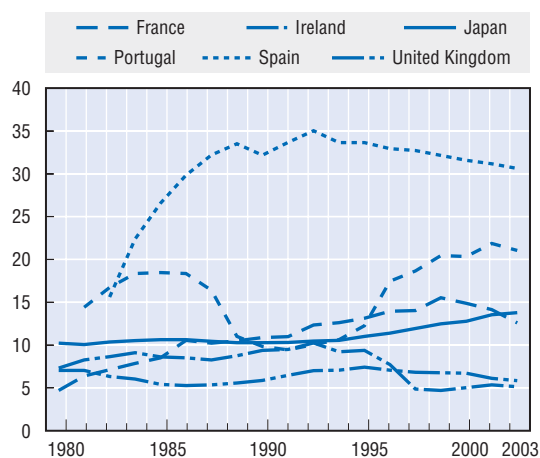
**Response indicators:** Out-of-work benefits (SS5).

**SS1.1. Strong increase in female employment rates**

Female employment as a percentage of female working age population


**SS1.2. Broad variation in shares of temporary employment**

As a percentage of dependent employment


**SS1.3. Employment indicators, 2003**

	Employment/population ratio (as a percentage of working age population)					Incidence of temporary employment (as a percentage of total dependent employment)			
	Total	Age group			Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
		15-24	25-54	55-64					
Australia	69.3	59.9	76.9	50.1	76.4	62.2	..	..	..
Austria	68.7	51.5	83.7	30.1	76.0	61.5	7.2	7.5	6.8
Belgium	59.3	27.1	76.1	28.1	67.1	51.4	8.6	6.4	11.3
Canada <sup>1</sup>	72.1	57.8	80.6	53.0	76.5	67.7	13.0	12.4	13.6
Czech Republic	64.9	31.4	81.7	42.3	73.4	56.3	9.9	9.2	10.7
Denmark	75.1	59.4	83.5	60.7	79.7	70.5	9.6	7.9	11.3
Finland	67.4	38.5	81.1	49.9	69.0	65.7	16.4	12.8	20.0
France	62.7	29.8	79.3	36.8	68.9	56.7	12.6	11.2	14.1
Germany	64.6	42.4	78.2	39.0	70.4	58.7	12.2	12.1	12.3
Greece	58.0	26.3	72.6	41.9	72.5	44.0	11.1	9.7	13.2
Hungary	57.0	26.7	73.7	29.0	63.4	50.9	7.5	8.3	6.7
Iceland <sup>2</sup>	82.8	59.4	90.0	87.2	85.7	79.8	9.6	9.5	9.7
Ireland	65.0	45.8	76.0	49.3	74.5	55.4	5.1	4.3	6.0
Italy	56.2	26.0	70.8	30.3	69.7	42.7	9.5	7.9	11.8
Japan	68.4	40.3	78.3	62.1	79.8	56.8	13.8	7.9	22.2
Korea	63.0	30.8	73.1	57.8	75.0	51.1	..	..	..
Luxembourg <sup>2</sup>	63.6	32.3	79.1	27.9	75.5	51.5	4.3	4.0	4.7
Mexico	59.6	44.7	68.1	53.8	82.0	39.4	20.6	25.8	10.6
Netherlands	72.7	65.4	82.1	43.5	80.2	64.9	14.6	12.8	16.7
New Zealand	72.5	56.6	79.8	64.4	79.3	65.8	..	..	..
Norway	75.9	55.3	83.0	68.8	78.8	72.9	9.4	7.7	11.3
Poland	51.4	19.6	67.6	28.6	56.7	46.2	19.4	20.8	17.8
Portugal	67.1	38.4	81.0	51.1	73.9	60.6	21.0	19.4	22.9
Slovak Republic	57.7	27.6	76.0	24.6	63.4	52.2	5.1	5.5	4.6
Spain	60.7	36.8	71.3	40.8	74.5	46.8	30.6	28.6	33.5
Sweden	74.3	45.0	83.5	69.0	75.6	72.8	14.7	12.3	17.0
Switzerland	77.8	63.2	84.8	65.6	84.9	70.6	12.3	12.0	12.6
Turkey	45.5	30.5	54.0	32.7	65.9	25.2	15.5	15.6	15.4
United Kingdom	72.9	59.8	80.9	55.5	79.3	66.4	5.8	5.1	6.6
United States <sup>1</sup>	71.2	53.9	78.8	59.9	76.9	65.7	4.0	3.9	4.2
<b>OECD</b>	<b>64.9</b>	<b>42.9</b>	<b>75.3</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>74.7</b>	<b>55.3</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>15.2</b>

1. Temporary employment data refer to 2002 for Canada, and 2001 for the United States.

2. Data for Iceland and Luxembourg refer to 2002.

Source: OECD (2004), Labour Force Statistics 1983-2003, OECD, Paris.

 StatLink: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/028433688415>

**Further reading:** ■ OECD (1999), *Implementing the OECD Jobs Strategy: Assessing Performance and Policy*, OECD, Paris. ■ OECD (2004), *Employment Outlook*, OECD, Paris (see also [www.oecd.org/els/employmentoutlook](http://www.oecd.org/els/employmentoutlook)). ■ OECD (2000), *Policies Towards Full Employment*, OECD, Paris.

### Definition and measurement

The rate of unemployment is the proportion of people out of work among the active population of working age. In addition to the level of the unemployment rate, the duration of unemployment spells and the incidence of long-term unemployment are important dimensions of the effects of unemployment on individual well-being, family life and social conditions.

The standardised ILO definition considers as unemployed those who did not work for at least one hour, either as an employee or self-employed, in the reference week of the survey; that are currently available for work; and that have taken specific steps to seek employment in the four weeks preceding the survey. Thus, for example, people who cannot work because of physical impairments, or are in full-time education, are generally not considered as unemployed. Unemployment data are mainly gathered through national labour force surveys.

Trends in unemployment are determined by both labour market demand factors, such as the rate of economic growth, and by factors affecting labour supply, such as demographic changes and social policy. The unemployment rate in many OECD countries has fallen substantially from post-war highs recorded in the early 1990s (Chart SS2.1), and in 2003, it was below 10% in all but a few countries (Poland, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Turkey). In Spain, Ireland and Finland, the unemployment rate has been particularly volatile, mirroring changes in economic activity in those countries. In Japan, it has declined slightly in 2003, following a decade of gradual but persistent increases.

The unemployment rate of women, on average, was in 2003 only marginally higher than that of men, following a considerable narrowing of the gender gap in unemployment rates recorded in many countries (Table SS2.3). The discrepancy between men and women, however, remains large in Greece, Spain and Italy, accounting for much of the gender gap in unemployment in the OECD average.

In a majority of OECD countries the youth unemployment rate (15-24 years) is more than double that of prime-aged persons (25-54), and in many European countries youth unemployment has increased substantially since 2001. In contrast, the unemployment rate of the older workers (55-64) is below that of prime-aged group in all countries except Austria, Finland, Germany, Japan and New Zealand, as moves into retirement leave a smaller proportion of active job seekers.

Cross-country differences in the incidence of long-term unemployment are considerably larger than those in unemployment rates (Table SS2.3). While the incidence of long-term unemployment is a good

indicator of structural labour market factors in each country, changes in its size are usually related to cycles of economic activity. For example, economic slowdowns caused abrupt increases in long-term unemployment in the early 1990s and more moderate rises since 2000 (Chart SS2.2), while long-term unemployment has tended to fall in periods of economic recovery. The incidence of long-term unemployment has increased steadily in Japan from the early 1990s.

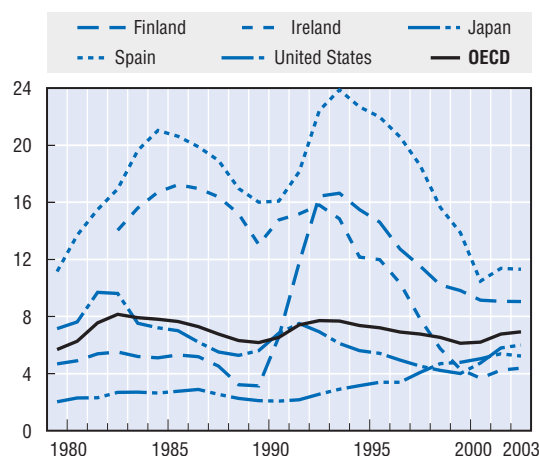
The distress experienced by people who are unemployed, both financial and social, depends on a range of factors, including its duration, the labour force status of other household members, and public policies. Once unemployed, the chances of getting back into work decrease with the length of time spent out of work: while short periods of unemployment are often necessary for career transition and job search activities, extended spells of unemployment are likely to be more detrimental to household income, family life and mental health, and may contribute to the social isolation of affected individuals. OECD (2004) reports evidence that active labour market policies such as skills improvement and training can reduce unemployment duration. Trained workers experience relatively short unemployment spells after dismissal, and training increases the probability of re-employment after job loss. These policies therefore help to address some of the social concerns associated with long-term unemployment.

**Status indicators:** Employment (SS1), Jobless households (SS3), Age at retirement (SS8), Youth inactivity (SS9), Social isolation (CO2).

**Response indicators:** Out-of-work benefits (SS5), Benefits of last resort (SS6), Public social spending (EQ5).

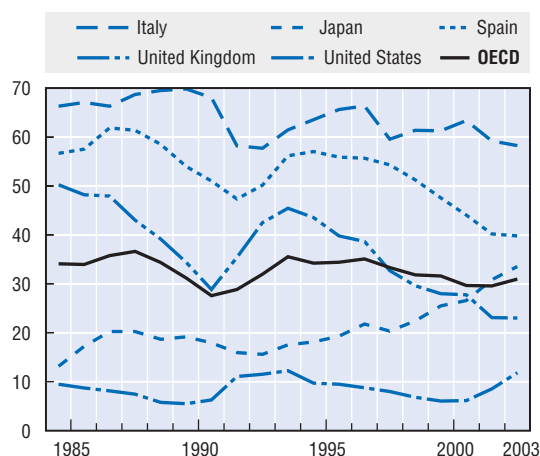
## SS2.1. Higher unemployment rates since 2000

Persons unemployed as a percentage of the labour force



## SS2.2. Large cross-country differences in levels and trends in long-term unemployment

Persons unemployed for 12 months or longer as a percentage of all unemployed



## SS2.3. Unemployment indicators, 2003

	Unemployment rate (as a percentage of labour force)					Incidence of long-term unemployment (as a percentage of total unemployment)		
	Total	Age group			Men	Women	6 months and over	12 months and over
		15-24	25-54	55-64				
Australia	5.7	11.6	4.5	3.9	5.6	5.8	39.7	22.5
Austria	4.2	6.5	3.8	5.0	4.3	4.1	41.0	24.5
Belgium	7.7	19.0	7.0	1.7	7.4	8.0	64.7	46.3
Canada	7.6	13.8	6.5	6.3	8.0	7.2	18.6	10.1
Czech Republic	7.8	17.6	7.0	4.4	6.1	9.9	69.9	49.9
Denmark	5.4	9.8	5.0	3.9	5.1	5.7	40.9	19.9
Finland	9.0	21.6	7.3	7.7	9.2	8.9	41.4	24.7
France	9.7	20.8	8.6	6.8	8.7	10.9	62.0	42.9
Germany	9.3	10.6	9.1	9.7	9.6	8.8	68.5	50.0
Greece	8.9	25.1	8.0	3.0	5.7	13.6	74.5	56.5
Hungary	5.9	13.4	5.3	2.8	6.1	5.6	65.4	42.2
Iceland <sup>1</sup>	3.3	7.2	2.7	1.4	3.6	2.9	24.8	11.1
Ireland	4.4	7.6	3.9	2.4	4.8	3.9	56.6	35.4
Italy	8.7	26.3	7.2	3.8	6.7	11.6	74.1	58.2
Japan	5.2	10.2	4.7	5.5	5.5	4.9	50.9	33.5
Korea	3.4	9.6	3.0	1.9	3.6	3.1	10.1	0.6
Luxembourg <sup>1</sup>	2.6	7.0	2.4	0.2	1.9	3.6	46.8	27.4
Mexico	2.5	5.3	1.9	1.0	2.5	2.6	4.9	1.0
Netherlands	4.2	7.8	3.6	3.0	4.1	4.3	49.2	29.2
New Zealand	4.7	10.2	3.5	3.6	4.4	5.0	27.4	13.3
Norway	4.4	11.7	3.8	1.4	4.8	3.9	20.6	6.4
Poland	19.6	43.0	17.3	11.2	19.0	20.4	70.2	49.7
Portugal	6.4	14.6	5.7	4.3	5.6	7.3	57.1	32.0
Slovak Republic	17.5	33.1	15.1	13.6	17.3	17.7	76.4	61.1
Spain	11.3	22.7	10.2	6.9	8.2	15.9	59.6	39.8
Sweden	5.8	13.8	4.9	4.8	6.3	5.2	35.4	17.8
Switzerland	4.1	8.6	3.6	2.5	3.8	4.5	48.8	27.0
Turkey	10.5	20.5	8.7	3.7	10.7	10.1	39.9	24.4
United Kingdom	4.8	11.5	3.8	3.3	5.5	4.1	37.3	23.0
United States	6.0	12.4	5.0	4.1	6.3	5.7	22.0	11.8
<b>OECD</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>31.0</b>

Note: Data refer to population aged 15 and over.

1. Data for Iceland and Luxembourg refer to 2002.

 Source: OECD (2004), *Labour Force Statistics 1983-2003*, OECD, Paris.

 StatLink: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/248745383306>
**Further reading:** ■ OECD (2004), *Employment Outlook*, OECD, Paris (see also [www.oecd.org/els/employmentoutlook](http://www.oecd.org/els/employmentoutlook)).

### Definition and measurement

Indicators on employment and unemployment are measures of what individuals do, or do not do, in relation to the labour market. But the well-being of a person depends on the sharing of the resources contributed by all members of the household. When no adult member of a household is in paid employment, all members are exposed to risks of poverty and destitution, and will have to rely on public benefits for their daily living. When a substantial proportion of the unemployed and the inactive are living in households with no other adults in employment, social distress is higher, and the living conditions of these households will mainly depend on welfare policies. Children growing up in jobless households lack the role model of a working adult – a factor often identified as affecting educational and future labour market achievements of children.

Indicators of jobless households can be defined in a variety of ways. They can refer either to individuals (i.e. the share of persons in jobless households) or to households (the share of households with these characteristics); and joblessness can be defined in different ways (using ILO conventions or other criteria). While indicators published in previous issues of *Society at a Glance* referred to households with at least one person of working age (15-64) where no member of the household was in paid employment, those shown here refer to all persons, including children, living in households with a working age head where no one works. “Work” is defined by the presence of earnings or self-employment income during the previous year. The data, available for around 25 OECD countries, are derived from household income surveys and micro datasets, and are also used in other sections to describe trends in income distribution and poverty.

Across OECD 24 countries, a little less than 10% of all persons living in households with a head of working age belonged to households where no adult had a paid job. Chart SS3.1 shows that this proportion varied from less than 5% in Japan, Mexico, Portugal, Switzerland and the United States, to more than 15% in Poland and Germany. Relative to the levels prevailing in the mid-1990s, the share of persons in jobless households has declined in most countries, particularly in the Netherlands, New Zealand and Luxembourg. However, small increases have occurred in Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic and, more substantially, Hungary. Most of these countries experienced significant changes in their labour market over the last decade, associated with the transition to market systems.

Changes in joblessness are partly related to changes in the share of individuals with jobs, but the relation between the two variables is not strong. Chart SS3.2 shows trends in joblessness and in non-employment rates of individuals of working age (from labour force surveys) in selected OECD countries. Non-employment rates among persons of working age declined in several countries since the mid-1980s and more significantly in the second half of the 1990s. Such declines, however, have not consistently translated into declines in the proportion of individuals in jobless households. In the United Kingdom and Finland, household joblessness increased, while in Australia and France it remained stable, despite increases in

employment rates in all of these countries in the second half of the 1990s. The fact that higher employment did not consistently lead to lower joblessness reflects polarisation of work, and the growth in the proportion of two-earner households in most OECD countries.

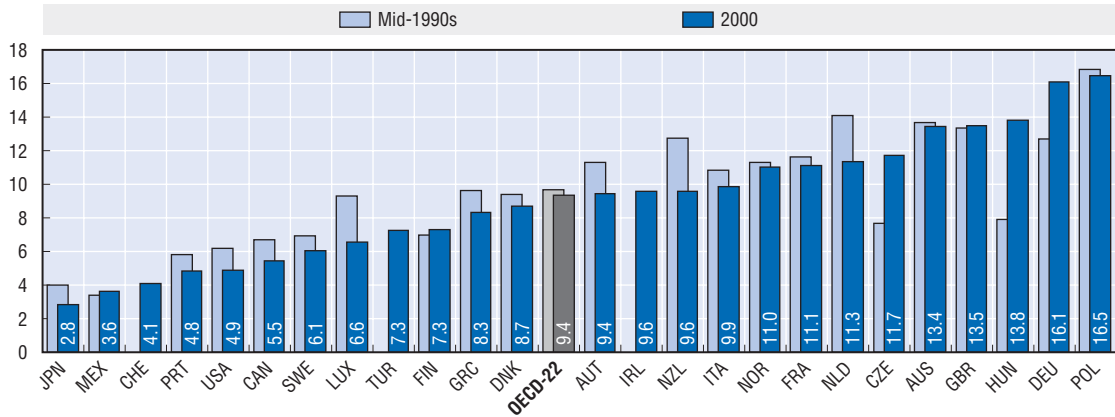
Joblessness interacts with other household characteristics. Joblessness is more likely in single parent households (32% on average) than in two-adult households (just 5%). In the United Kingdom, the proportion of jobless single parents is twice as high as in Austria and Portugal. Unsurprisingly, persons in jobless households constitute the majority of the poor, and depend on public benefits as the main source of income. The decline in jobless households should be good news in tackling poverty and exclusion. Nevertheless, because the proportion of lone-parent households is increasing, even moderate increases in employment rates in each country may not be sufficient to reduce the prevalence of lone-parent poverty.

**Status indicators:** Employment (SS1), Unemployment (SS2), Working mothers (SS4), Educational attainment (SS7), Relative poverty (EQ1), Social isolation (CO2).

**Response indicators:** Public social spending (EQ5), Out-of-work benefits (SS5).

SS3.1. Differences across countries in the proportion of individuals in jobless households

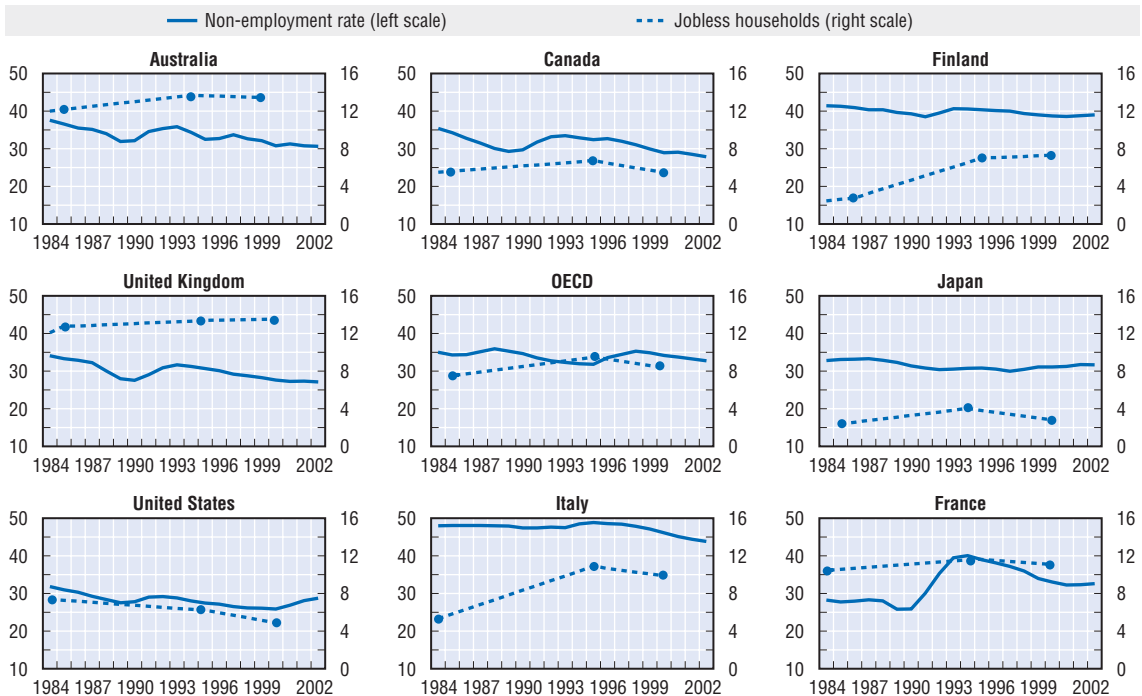
Persons living in households with a working-age head where no one works, as a percentage of the total population



Note: "2000" data refer to the year 2000 in all countries except 1999 for Australia, Austria and Greece; 2001 for Germany, Luxembourg, New Zealand and Switzerland; and 2002 for the Czech Republic, Mexico and Turkey. "Mid-1990s" data refer to year 1995 data in all countries except 1993 for Austria; 1994 for Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Mexico and Turkey; and 1996 for the Czech Republic and New Zealand.

SS3.2. No strong link between trends in non-employment and joblessness

Persons in jobless households with a working-age head and non-employment rates of individuals, percentages



Note: Non-employment rates refer to individuals of working age. Dots indicate survey years.

Source: Estimates based on Förster, M. and M. Mira d'Ercole (2005), "Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries in the Second Half of the 1990s", Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 22, OECD, Paris; OECD (2004), *Labour Force Statistics 1983-2003*, OECD, Paris.

StatLink: <http://Dx.doi.org/10.1787/225437262671>

**Further reading:** ■ Gregg, P., R. Scutella and J. Wadsworth (2004), "Reconciling Workless Measures at the Individual and Household Level: Theory and Evidence from the United States, Britain, Germany, Spain and Australia", LSE Centre for Economic Performance Discussion Paper, No. 635, London. ■ OECD (1998), *Employment Outlook*, OECD, Paris.

### Definition and measurement

Over the past few decades, large numbers of women with young children have entered the paid labour market. Public policies have often encouraged this development for a wide variety of reasons such as promoting individual autonomy and gender equality, reducing poverty – particularly for children – and mobilising additional labour market resources.

The indicator presented in this section is the employment rate among mothers aged 15 to 64 according to the age of their youngest child: tabulations distinguish between children aged less than 3, from 3 to 5, and from 6 to 14. Measurement problems exist given that age groups for young children may differ across national surveys (see footnotes to Charts SS4). Labour force surveys of OECD countries generally regard those on maternity and parental leave as employed persons. However, those who are using child-related leaves that last until a child is about 3 years of age, as in Austria, Finland, France, Germany, and Spain, are by convention not counted as employed in labour force surveys.

Younger women spend a longer time in education today on average than in the past. This trend has contributed to a slight fall in employment rates among women aged 15 to 24. However, employment rates for prime age and older women have increased over the last decade in almost all countries (OECD, 2002), so have employment rates for mothers with young children (below age 6). The only exceptions are Sweden, Finland and Japan, where rates have decreased (Chart SS4.1).

The age of youngest child has a significant impact on the employment status of women (Table SS4.2). Mothers devote a large amount of their time to caring activities when children are young. One way to do this without withdrawing completely from the labour market is to reduce their hours of work. Part-time work is more common for mothers with children below 6 than for mothers with older children: the only exceptions to this pattern are Denmark, Portugal and Eastern European countries (Chart SS4.3). Part-time work is the most common form of employment for mothers in the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Australia. In the remaining countries, although women with children are more likely to work part time than those without, full-time work remains

more usual. The incidence of part-time work is also highest among mothers with low and medium levels of educational attainment, while those with higher education are more likely to be working full-time.

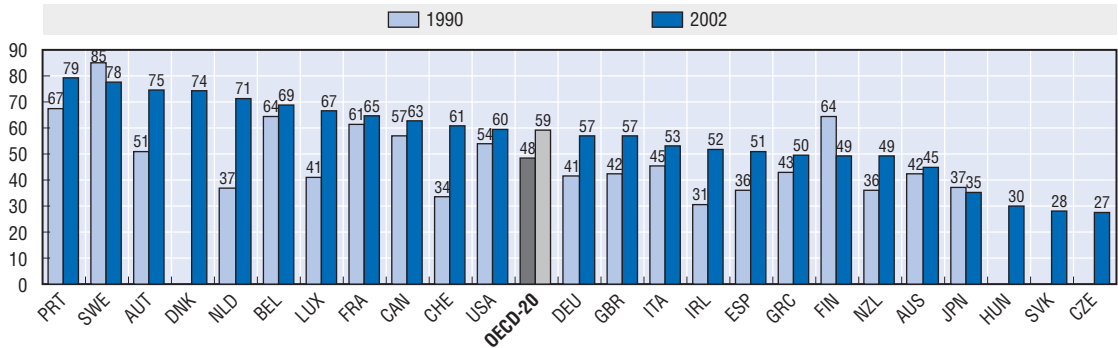
A range of policies can encourage higher employment rates among women with children, and their importance vary across countries. A strong focus on gender equity in public policy and generous public child-related leave arrangements and childcare services underlie high maternal employment rates in the Nordic countries, whereas in the Netherlands “family-work reconciliation” is mainly achieved by encouraging part-time employment. In-work benefits for families with children and the widespread use of private care arrangements support high employment rates among women with children in the United States.

**Status indicators:** Employment (SS1), Jobless households (SS3), Educational attainment (SS7), Relative poverty (EQ1), Child poverty (EQ3).

**Response indicators:** Public social spending (EQ5), Total social spending (EQ7).

SS4.1. More mothers with youngest child aged under 6 in work

Employment rates for mothers with youngest child aged under 6,<sup>1</sup> 1990<sup>2</sup> and 2002<sup>3</sup>



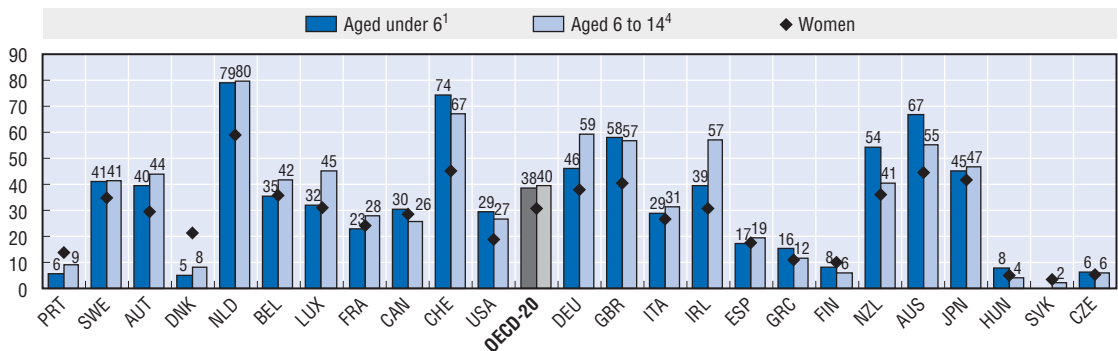
SS4.2. Maternal employment rates increase with age of youngest child

Mothers' employment rates by age of youngest child, in 2002,<sup>3</sup> percentages

	Age of youngest child			Age of youngest child			
	Under 3	3 to 5	6 to 14 <sup>4</sup>	Under 3	3 to 5	6 to 14 <sup>4</sup>	
Austria	80.1	70.3	69.8	Italy	54.4	51.7	49.4
Belgium	70.4	67.4	68.6	Luxembourg	70.6	63.1	58.2
Canada	58.7	68.1	76.3	Netherlands	74.2	68.2	70.1
Czech Republic	16.8	36.5	69.2	New Zealand	43.2	58.2	74.7
Denmark	71.4	77.5	79.1	Portugal	75.3	81.9	76.3
Finland	32.2	74.7	85.3	Spain	51.7	50.3	47.7
France	66.2	63.2	67.5	Sweden	72.9	82.5	77.4
Germany	56.0	58.1	64.3	Switzerland	58.2	64.5	77.8
Greece	47.9	50.9	53.5	United Kingdom	57.2	56.9	67.0
Ireland	51.1	52.3	51.1	United States	56.6	60.0	69.4
OECD-20					57.5	61.8	67.0

SS4.3. Higher shares in part-time employment for mothers

Share in part-time<sup>5</sup> employment for mothers with youngest child aged under 6,<sup>1</sup> other mothers and all women, 2002,<sup>3</sup> percentages



Note: In both above charts, countries are ranked in decreasing order of employment rate for mothers with youngest child aged under 6 in 2002.

1. Under 5 years old in Australia; under 7 in Sweden.

2. 1989 in Australia and the United States; 1991 in Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Japan and New Zealand.

3. 2001 in Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand and United States; 2000 in Australia.

4. 6 to 13 in the United States; 6 to 16 in Canada, Finland, Sweden; 6 to 17 in New Zealand.

5. Less than 30 hours per week, except in Australia, Japan Sweden and the United States (less than 35 hours per week).

Source: European Union Labour Force Survey; United States: Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey, [www.bls.gov/cps](http://www.bls.gov/cps); OECD (2002, 2003, 2004), *Babies and Bosses: Reconciling Work and Family Life*, Vols. 1, 2 and 3, OECD, Paris (see also [www.oecd.org/els/social/familyfriendly](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/familyfriendly)).

StatLink: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/044487431424>

Further reading: ■ OECD (2002, 2004), *Employment Outlook*, OECD, Paris (see also [www.oecd.org/els/employmentoutlook](http://www.oecd.org/els/employmentoutlook)).



### Definition and measurement

Out-of-work benefits compare the income of a household when its head is out of work to that it previously enjoyed when its head was employed. The household income considered is “net” of the benefits received and taxes paid when in and out of work. Out-of-work replacement rates are important determinants of the financial incentives for individuals to take-up paid employment, as well as of aggregate outcomes for employment and poverty for society as a whole.

The estimates of out-of-work replacement rates presented here are based on tax-benefit models for individual countries, applied to persons in a variety of “typical” settings. In computing these replacement rates, the individual is assumed to be 40 years old and to have been working for 22 years; replacement rates are computed for persons living alone and in a couple family with two children aged 4 and 6, under the assumptions that the spouse neither works nor receives unemployment benefits, and not considering childcare benefits and costs. Out-of-work replacement rates vary according to the length of time spent receiving benefit: many people qualify for unemployment insurance when they first become unemployed but rely on social assistance (“welfare”) benefits (normally dependent on having very few assets) after having exhausted their insurance benefits. By averaging these replacement rates across different family types and durations of unemployment an overall indicator is calculated: this synthetic measure is a simple average of net replacement rates, with each month of benefit receipt over a five-year period weighted equally, across four household types and two levels of previous earnings: 100% and 66.7% of the earnings of an “average production worker” (APW). Estimates are computed separately for individuals entitled and not entitled to social assistance. The OECD publication entitled *Benefits and Wages* (published in 2004) provides further details on methodology and assumptions.

Setting the “right” level of benefits for persons without work raises many dilemmas for governments. On the one hand, too low a level can leave those in receipt of unemployment insurance and assistance in real distress, and make it difficult for job-seekers to spend the time necessary for finding work that is both suitable and lasting. On the other, very generous benefits may give individuals little financial incentive to seek work. One way of assessing unemployment benefits available to able-bodied persons of working age is to compare their household income when relying on these benefits with that available when working, after taking into account the effects of taxes and other benefits (e.g. family and housing benefits where these exist).

On average, across OECD countries, the synthetic measure of out-of-work replacement rates was 40% in 2002 when only unemployment insurance is considered, and slightly above 60% when social assistance is also available (Chart SS5.1). Social assistance, while more important for long spells of unemployment, can also enhance family incomes during the initial period of unemployment in some countries, although this is less common (people’s assets are often above relevant limits during that period). In several countries, the concurrent receipt of

unemployment and social assistance benefits is explicitly ruled out.

Over a five-year period, out-of-work replacement rates, excluding social assistance, are highest in Belgium (69%), closely followed by some Nordic and Continental European countries, and lowest in Anglo-Saxon and Southern European countries as well as Japan.

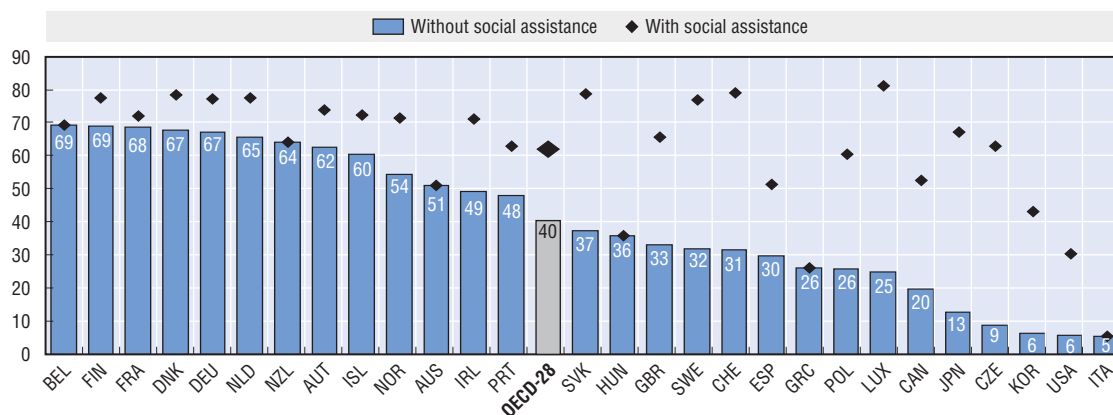
Out-of-work replacement rates vary according to family structure and length of unemployment (Table SS5.2). On average, net replacement rates for lone-parent and two-adult families with children (at around 70% in the initial phase of unemployment, and 60% for long-term unemployed) are generally higher than for families without children. Net replacement rates in the first month of unemployment generally exceed those after 5 years of unemployment by around one third.

**Status indicators:** Unemployment (SS2), Relative poverty (EQ1).

**Response indicators:** Benefits of last resort (SS6).

## SS5.1. Large variations across countries in net out-of-work replacement rates

Average of net replacement rates over 60 months of unemployment, in 2002, for four family types and two earnings levels, without and with social assistance, in percentages



## SS5.2. Net out-of-work replacement rates are generally higher for lone parent families and two-adult families with children

Net replacement rates for two phases of unemployment and six family types, in 2002, at 100% of APW level, in percentages

	Initial phase of unemployment <sup>1</sup>						Long-term unemployment <sup>2</sup>					
	No children			Two children			No children			Two children		
	Single person	One-earner married couple	Two-earner married couple	Lone parent	One-earner married couple	Two-earner married couple	Single person	One-earner married couple	Two-earner married couple	Lone parent	One-earner married couple	Two-earner married couple
Australia	32	29	44	54	66	54	32	29	44	54	66	54
Austria	55	57	76	71	73	81	51	62	47	68	78	68
Belgium	66	58	78	66	61	80	55	58	72	66	61	75
Canada	64	66	78	75	76	85	22	37	45	55	59	58
Czech Republic	50	50	72	54	54	74	31	52	44	59	71	51
Denmark	59	66	76	75	76	78	50	75	54	72	78	60
Finland	64	70	77	83	82	81	51	67	51	66	85	64
France	71	67	82	76	76	82	41	54	44	63	70	52
Germany	61	54	85	83	78	96	61	64	71	76	68	77
Greece	46	46	62	50	50	62	0	0	41	3	3	41
Hungary	44	44	66	55	54	71	24	24	42	31	30	49
Iceland	49	43	69	65	57	76	49	66	70	65	74	76
Ireland	29	45	60	54	55	67	51	66	45	59	73	54
Italy	52	56	71	60	60	76	0	0	45	0	0	53
Japan	63	61	79	74	61	81	34	48	42	74	71	52
Korea	54	54	72	54	53	73	17	28	41	39	49	40
Luxembourg	85	84	89	89	89	93	50	67	42	61	78	47
Netherlands	71	74	83	78	78	83	58	69	48	64	72	52
New Zealand	37	54	45	62	67	51	37	54	45	62	67	51
Norway	66	67	80	81	73	83	42	50	44	65	64	47
Poland	44	46	61	50	51	64	30	46	42	55	73	52
Portugal	78	76	88	76	77	87	24	46	49	50	61	64
Slovak Republic	62	65	78	69	72	82	42	71	43	68	91	60
Spain	70	71	83	76	75	87	27	32	45	38	41	44
Sweden	81	81	89	90	83	90	51	67	41	55	78	48
Switzerland	72	71	82	82	82	88	51	63	43	65	71	46
United Kingdom	45	45	52	46	46	61	45	56	42	64	73	60
United States	56	57	74	54	53	76	7	12	43	35	41	49
<b>OECD</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>55</b>

1. Initial phase of unemployment but following any waiting period. No social assistance "top-ups" are assumed to be available in either the in-work or out-of-work situation. Any income taxes payable on unemployment benefits are determined in relation to annualised benefit values (i.e. monthly values multiplied by 12) even if the maximum benefit duration is shorter than 12 months. For married couples, the percentage of earnings of an Average Production Worker (APW) relates to one spouse only; the second spouse is assumed to be "inactive" with no earnings in a one-earner couple and to have full-time earnings equal to 67% of APW in a two-earner couple.
2. After tax and including unemployment benefits, social assistance, family and housing benefits in the 60th month of benefit receipt. For married couples, the percentage of APW relates to one spouse only; the second spouse is assumed to be "inactive" with no earnings in a one-earner couple and to have full-time earnings equal to 67% of APW in a two-earner couple.

Source: OECD (2004), *Benefits and Wages – OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris (see also [www.oecd.org/els/social/workincentives](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/workincentives)).

StatLink: <http://Dx.doi.org/10.1787/720688707001>

**Further reading:** ■ Pearson, M. and S. Scarpetta (2000), "What do We Know about Policies to Make Work Pay?", *Economic Studies*, No. 31, OECD, Paris.

### Definition and measurement

Net benefit levels, as computed from tax-benefits models of OECD countries, can be expressed relative to alternative thresholds. When compared to earnings that each individual could get if employed, they provide a measure of the financial incentives to take up work for a person temporarily out of work. When compared to the income cut-off points that are commonly used to identify “poor” households, they inform about the capacity of benefit systems to assure an adequate standard of living.

The indicators shown below compare the “net” benefit income theoretically available to individuals with different characteristics, to three cut-off levels (40, 50 and 60% of median household income) conventionally used to measure income-poverty. Information is presented for a married couple with two children aged 6 and 4 that fully relies on social assistance, with and without housing benefits. Information is also presented, limited to countries with statutory minimum wages, on the disposable income of a household with, respectively, one and two persons employed at a minimum wage level. The OECD publication entitled *Benefits and Wages* (published in 2004) provides further details on methodology and assumptions.

In the majority of OECD countries, benefits of last resort (social assistance and “welfare”) are generally set below the thresholds conventionally used in comparative research on income-poverty (Chart SS6.1). In all countries, couples with two children relying on these benefits would have disposable income levels below 60% of the median.

Chart SS6.1 allows three groups of countries to be distinguished. In Poland, the Czech Republic, Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, Belgium, Austria and Norway, couple families with two children relying on benefits of “last resort” would enjoy a disposable income within the 40 to 60% range, whether or not housing benefits are available. In the Netherlands, Finland, Ireland, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland Sweden and France, “last resort” social assistance benefits assure a level of household income that is within the 40 to 60% range only when housing benefits are available. In the remaining countries, “last resort” social assistance benefits leave beneficiaries at income level that expose them to risks of poverty. This is especially the case in Spain, the United States and Hungary, where social assistance benefits (including the value of Food Stamps in the United States) are very low relative to incomes of the population at large, and in Greece and Italy, where no universal minimum income schemes for working-age individuals exist.

These indicators of benefit adequacy reflect assumptions that households rely on social assistance benefits for the entire year, and that no

other income streams (from other social protection benefits, e.g. unemployment or disability, or from work) is available. Persons with no other means to support themselves (shown in Chart SS6.1) represent a group that is highly relevant for social policy. However, in practice, the majority of households have access to some other forms of income, and the tax and benefit system as a whole plays a much greater role in reducing poverty risks than suggested by Chart SS6.1.

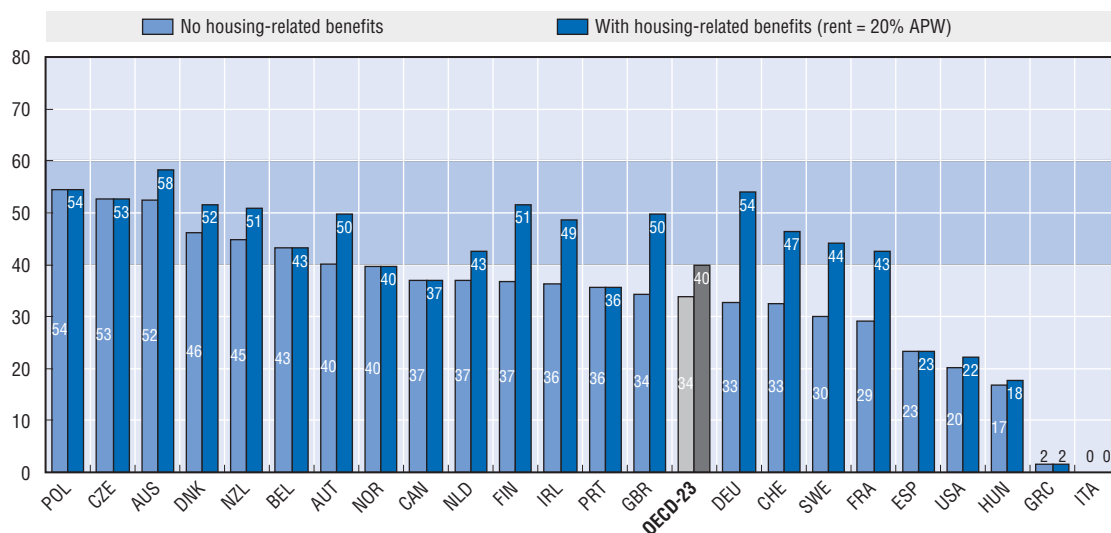
Employment income from one person may not suffice to lift families out of poverty. With the exception of Australia, the net income of the two-parent family with two children remains below the 60% cut-off if only one parent holds a full-time job paying the minimum-wage (Chart SS6.2). In about half of the countries, even two full-time jobs at the minimum-wage level are not enough to lift family incomes above the 60% median poverty line. These results underscore the role of other measures – such as the provision of affordable childcare that promote employment for both parents – to minimise the poverty risks of workers with low earnings potential.

**Status indicators:** Unemployment (SS2), Relative poverty (EQ1).

**Response indicators:** Out-of-work benefits (SS5), Public social spending (EQ5).

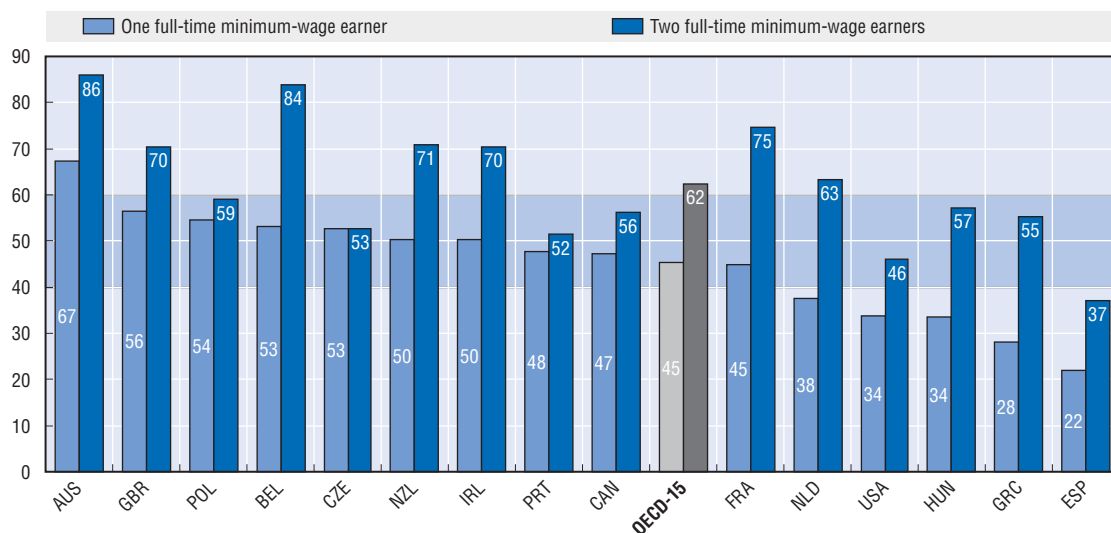
### SS6.1. Benefits of last resort are generally set below the poverty thresholds

Net incomes of social assistance recipients in per cent of median equivalent household income, married couple with two children, in 2001



### SS6.2. For minimum-wage earners, employment of both parents is essential to avoid poverty

Net incomes at statutory minimum wages, married couple with two children, 2001, in % of median household incomes



Note: Horizontal lines show different poverty thresholds, defined as 40, 50 and 60% of median household income. Countries are ranked in decreasing order of net income of social assistance recipients with no housing benefits in Chart SS6.1, in decreasing order of net income at statutory minimum wages for couples with one full-time minimum wage earner in Chart SS6.2.

Source: OECD (2004), *Benefits and Wages – OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris (see also [www.oecd.org/els/social/workincentives](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/workincentives)).

StatLink: <http://Dx.doi.org/10.1787/654213227483>

**Further reading:** ■ Carone, G., H. Immervoll, D. Paturot and A. Salomäki (2004), “Indicators of Unemployment and Low Wage Traps”, *Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 18, OECD, Paris. ■ OECD (2003), *Taxing Wages: 2002-2003*, OECD, Paris.

### Definition and measurement

A well-educated and trained population is important for the social and economic well-being of both countries and individuals. Policies to stimulate lifelong learning have gained importance with the rising skill requirements of continued technological progress and the changing nature of labour markets. The level of educational attainment in the population is the most commonly used proxy for the stock of human capital within a country.

The educational attainment data shown here are based on the percentage of the population aged 25-64 years who have completed a specified level of education. The recently refined International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) defines different levels of educational attainment in great detail (see *Education at a Glance*, OECD, 2004). The indicators shown here distinguish among three broad groupings: primary and lower secondary education; upper secondary, which includes post-secondary non-tertiary education; and tertiary education (university education and advanced vocation-specific programmes). For countries whose educational systems do not consist of distinct lower and upper secondary education levels, the first three years of secondary education are considered as lower secondary education. Data are derived from labour force surveys of member countries.

In all but a few OECD countries, more than 50% of the population aged 25 to 64 achieves at least upper secondary education level. Among the highest achieving countries, the proportion of the population below the upper secondary education level is less than 15%. There are noticeable differences in tertiary education level achievements, varying from around 40% in Japan, the United States and Canada to less than 10% in Turkey, Portugal and Mexico. In these latter countries, attainment is significantly lower at all levels, with more than 70% of the adult population having less than secondary education, and less than one in six reaching upper secondary level (Chart SS7.1). On average, 65% of the working age population has at least an upper secondary education.

Measures of the distribution of the population by attainment level can be summarised in terms of mean years of schooling (shown as a “diamond” in Chart SS7.1). When averaged across OECD countries, mean years of schooling is just under twelve years, and is below ten years only in four countries.

Throughout the OECD, attainment levels have increased in the space of a generation. On average, the proportion of 25 to 34 year-olds that have attained at least an upper secondary education (close to 75%) is significantly higher than in the 55 to 64 year-old cohort (50%).

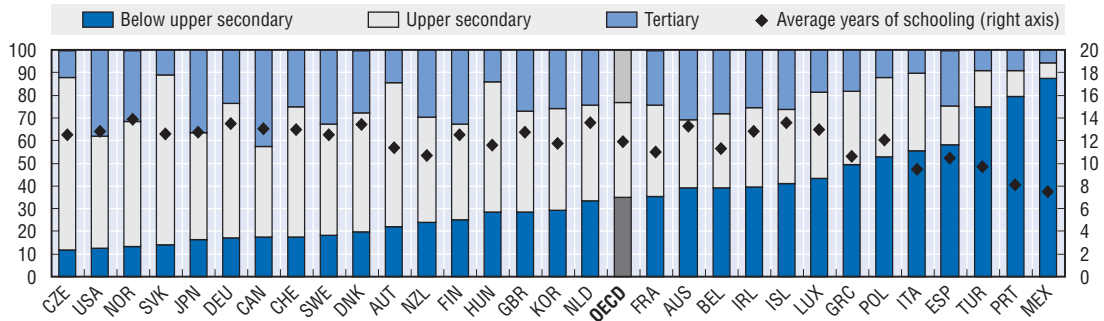
Gender differences in educational attainment have been reduced sharply, although in 2002 the proportion of men reaching tertiary education remained well above the proportion of women in Switzerland, Germany, Korea and Japan.

An individual’s investment in education is expected to be rewarded with increased returns in the labour market. Chart SS7.2 shows that attainment of an upper secondary education has a substantial impact on employment levels. The impact of tertiary level studies (relative to an upper secondary education) is less evident: in some countries – Poland, Greece, Turkey and the Slovak Republic – employment rates are much higher for persons with tertiary education, but the impact is not as large elsewhere. However, in all countries for which data are available, tertiary education leads to significantly higher earnings relative to persons with upper secondary education (a 50% wage premium on average), while the earnings of those with less than upper secondary education are around 20% less than those of people who have attained that level.

**Status indicators:** Employment (SS1), Unemployment (SS2), Youth inactivity (SS9), Relative poverty (EQ1), Income inequality (EQ2).

SS7.1. Variation in educational attainment across countries, 2002

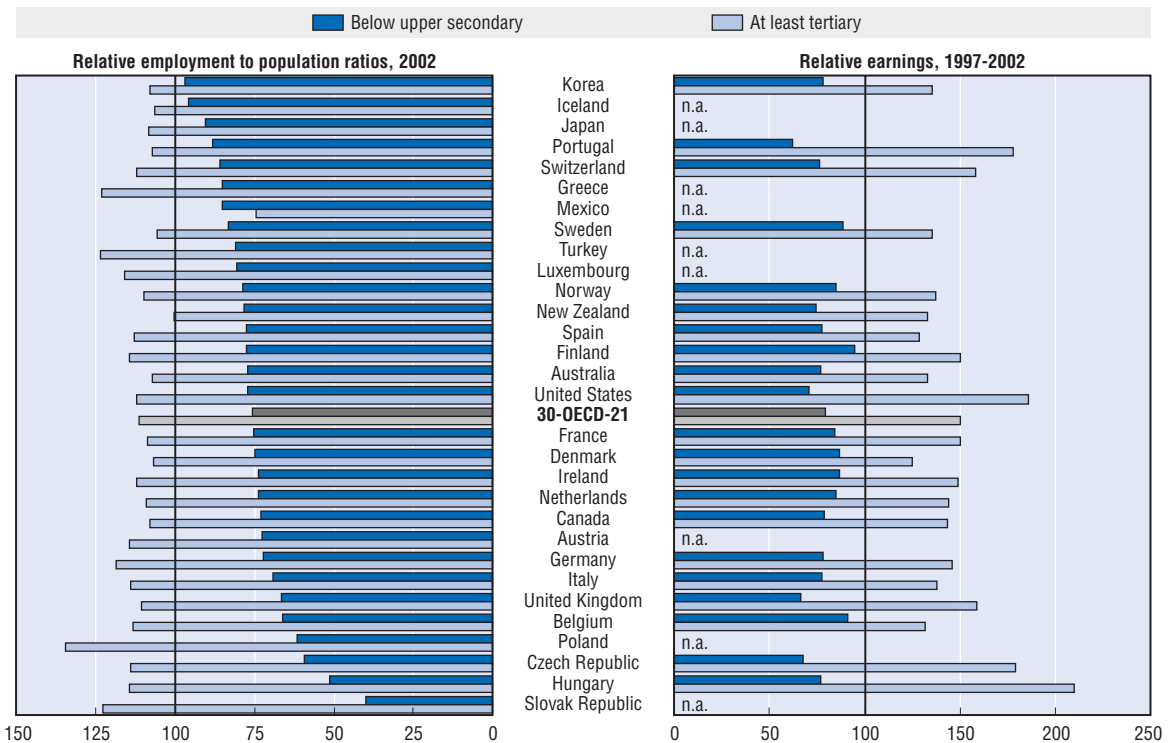
Distribution of the population aged 25 to 64 by level of educational attainment (percentages) and average years of schooling



Note: Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of the population who have completed at least upper secondary education. Upper secondary includes post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 6) programmes. It also includes ISCED 3C short programmes for Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovak Republic and the United States, and certain programmes in the United Kingdom. In all other countries, they are excluded. See OECD (2004), *Education at a Glance – OECD Indicators*, Annex 3, for a description of ISCED-97 levels and ISCED-97 country mappings.

SS7.2. Attainment of upper secondary level has a substantial impact on labour market outcomes

Labour market outcomes relative to persons with upper secondary education<sup>1</sup> aged 25 to 64



Note: Countries are ranked in decreasing order of relative employment to population ratios for persons who have attained below upper secondary. 1. Relative to the upper secondary education level, which includes post-secondary non-tertiary education (index = 100). n.a. = Not available.

Source: OECD (2004), *Education at a Glance – OECD Indicators*, OECD, Paris (see also [www.oecd.org/edu/eag2004](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2004)).

StatLink: <http://Dx.doi.org/10.1787/100816263133>

Further reading: ■ OECD (2004), *Learning for Tomorrow's World: First Results from PISA 2003*, OECD, Paris.

### Definition and measurement

Retirement is generally associated with cessation of work from a “main” job and receipt of an old-age pension. However, retirement ages are difficult to measure directly, as the meaning of retirement differs across countries and between pension regimes. For this reason, international comparisons of retirement ages have to rely on indirect measures. These indirect measures are most often based on comparisons of movements out of the labour force, as measured by labour force surveys of member countries. Persons above a specified age are regarded as “retired” if they are not in the labour force at the time of the survey. “Net” movements into retirement are proxied by the changes over time in the proportion of the population above a given age that is neither at work nor classified as unemployed.

Different methods applied to labour force survey data can yield different estimates of retirement ages. The indicator presented in previous issues of *Society at a Glance* broadly corresponds to a concept of “expected” retirement ages. The one presented in this section is that used in the ongoing OECD reviews of older workers (e.g. various country reports in the series *Ageing and Employment Policies*) and measures the average “effective” age of retirement. This is defined as the sum of the ages at which individuals withdraw from the labour force, weighted by the proportion of all withdrawals occurring at that age. Data are based on changes in the labour force participation rates of five-year age cohorts, observed at five-year intervals.

In many OECD countries the “official” (or “standard”) age of entitlement to public pensions is 65 for both men and women; while in some countries, receipt of a public pension imposes conditions on continued paid employment, in other countries it does not. Higher and lower official ages exist in some countries (Iceland, Denmark and Norway, in the former case; Greece, France, Japan, Korea, the Slovak Republic and Turkey in the latter). Individuals’ decisions to move into retirement, however, depend on much more than official ages. Relevant factors include the cyclical conditions of the labour market, demographic factors, the organisation of work, changes in the structure of the economy, cultural considerations, health status, spousal decisions and the nature of domestic obligations.

“Effective” retirement ages are in most OECD countries well below “official” retirement ages. On average, across the 30 OECD countries, the effective age of retirement is 61.4 years for women and 63.3 years for men (Chart SS8.1). Effective retirement ages are highest in Iceland and Mexico, where men work on average until age 70 or more, and lowest in Eastern Europe and Belgium, where both men and women tend to withdraw from the labour force and move into retirement when in their late 50s.

While the effective retirement age is below the official age in most countries, there are some exceptions. In Japan and Korea, the effective age of retirement exceeds the official age by more than five years for both women and men. Japanese men work

nearly 10 years more than the official age, as withdrawal from their “main” job is associated with employment in lower-paying activities to complement old-age pensions. Similarly, in Turkey and Greece both women and men work between 2½ and 4 years more than the official age.

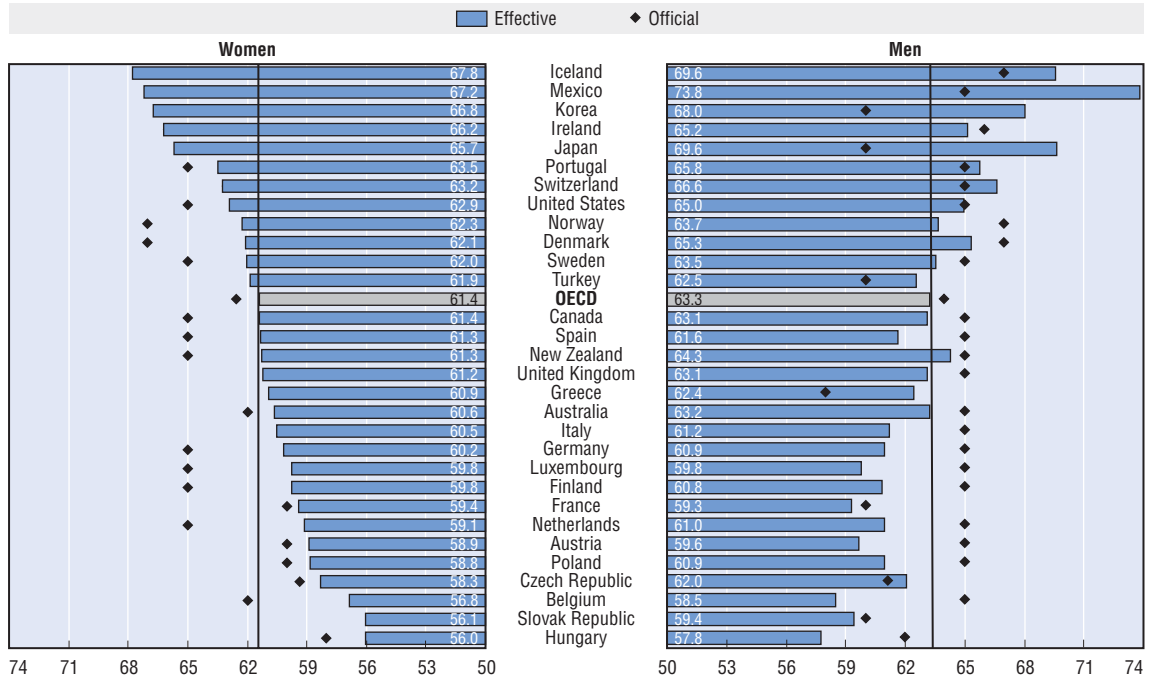
Effective retirement ages have fallen significantly over the last 25 years in most OECD countries, with the exception of Japan (Chart SS8.2) and Korea. The decline has continued over the second half of the 1990s in some countries (e.g. Poland and France), but there are several exceptions. Since the late 1990s, effective retirement ages have increased by more than one year in Australia, the United Kingdom and Finland (limited to men) and by two or more years in Italy. Both better labour market conditions and reforms in pension systems are likely to have contributed to this outcome. As a result of recent trends in effective retirement ages, the gap in retirement ages between women and men narrowed in Italy and in most OECD countries, while it increased in the United States.

**Status indicators:** Employment (SS1), Income of older people (EQ4), Health-adjusted life expectancy (HE2).

**Response indicators:** Old-age pension replacement rate (EQ8), Pension promise (EQ9).

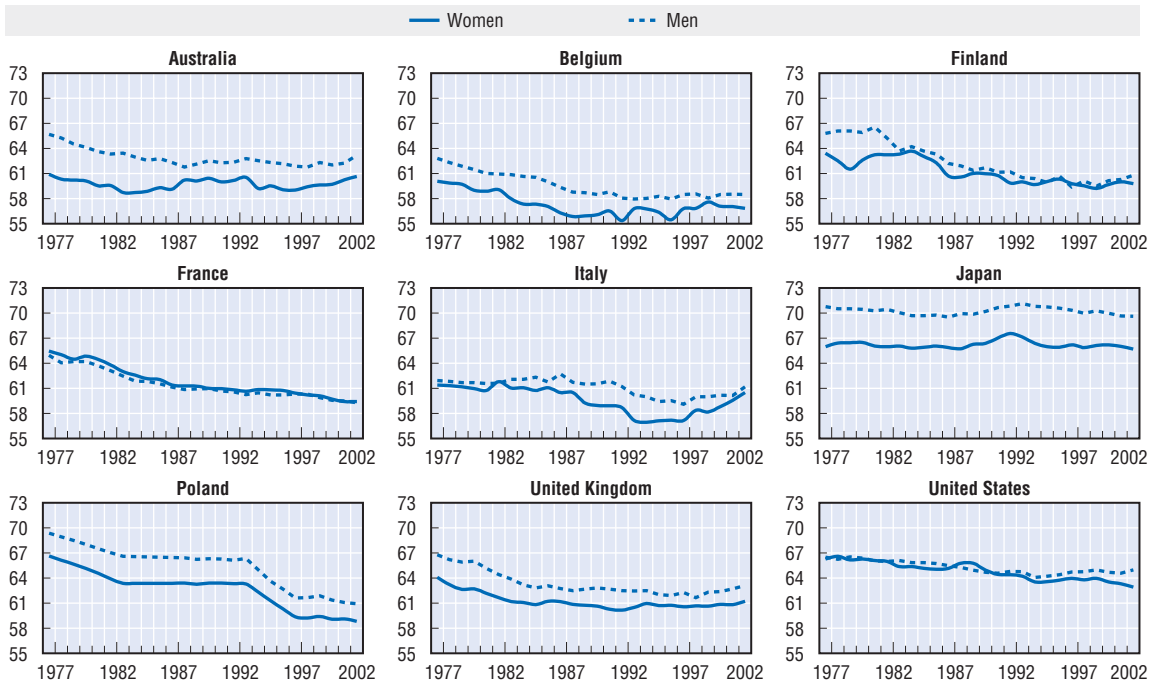
SS8.1. Effective retirement ages are generally lower than “official” ages

Average effective age of retirement versus official age, 1997-2002



SS8.2. The decline in effective retirement age has stabilised in several countries

Evolution of average effective age by gender, 1977-2002



Note: The average effective age of retirement is derived from observed changes in participation rates over a five-year period for successive cohorts of workers (by five-year age groups) aged 40 and over.

Source: OECD estimates derived from the European and national labour force surveys.

StatLink: <http://Dx.doi.org/10.1787/720153600464>

**Further reading:** ■ OECD (2004), *Ageing and Employment Policies*, various country reports, OECD, Paris. ■ Scherer, P. (2001), “Age of Withdrawal from the Labour Market in OECD Countries”, *Labour Market and Social Policy Occasional Papers*, No. 49, OECD, Paris.



### Definition and measurement

If young people are neither at school nor at work there are good reasons to be concerned about their current well-being and future prospects. Low educational attainment and its growing importance for labour market outcomes make it difficult for those leaving the schooling system without having gained adequate qualifications to move into jobs that offer good career prospects. In turn, this is likely to permanently reduce future income and increase risks of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion throughout life. In its worst form, disengagement of young people from mainstream society raises concerns about drug use, crime and suicide.

The indicator presents the proportion of youths, separately for those aged 15 to 19 and 20 to 24, who are not in education, training or employment in a given year, as a percentage of the total population of the same age. Youths in education include those attending part-time as well as full-time, but excludes those in non-formal education and educational activities of very short duration. Data are gathered through labour force surveys of member countries and generally refer to the four weeks preceding the survey (*Education at a Glance*, OECD, 2004).

On average, across the countries for which information is available, around 8% of all teenagers (15 to 19 years old) and 17% of young adults were neither in school nor at work in 2002. Differences across countries are large: in Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Norway and France, less than 4% of those aged 15 to 19 were neither in school nor at work, while the same proportion exceeded 10% in Italy, Finland, Slovak Republic, Mexico and Turkey.

The probability of being neither employed nor in school or training courses is much higher for women than for men, and increases with age (Chart SS9.2). In a majority of countries, this proportion has diminished since the mid-1980s, especially for women (Chart SS9.1). Despite this fall, however, or more of women aged 20 to 24 are neither in school nor in employment in Turkey, Mexico and the Slovak Republic.

Cross-country differences in the proportion of youths that are neither at school nor at work partly reflect differences in school attendance. In 2002, the proportion of 20-24 year-olds in education exceeded 50% in Finland, Denmark, Poland and France, but was 25% or less in Turkey, Mexico, and Slovak Republic. The fact that young people currently spend more time in education than they did a decade ago has contributed to the observed decline in the share of youths neither at school nor at work.

Following exit from the school system, several features of the labour markets and training systems

affect the ease of the transition from school to work. OECD reviews of youths' transition from school to work have identified Nordic and English-speaking countries as the countries where this process is smoother, and Continental and Southern European countries as those where the transition is more difficult (OECD, 1999). Beyond waste of human capital and risks of marginalisation in the labour market, delays in settling into jobs will lead many youths to live longer with their parents and to defer the formation of independent families, further compounding fertility declines.

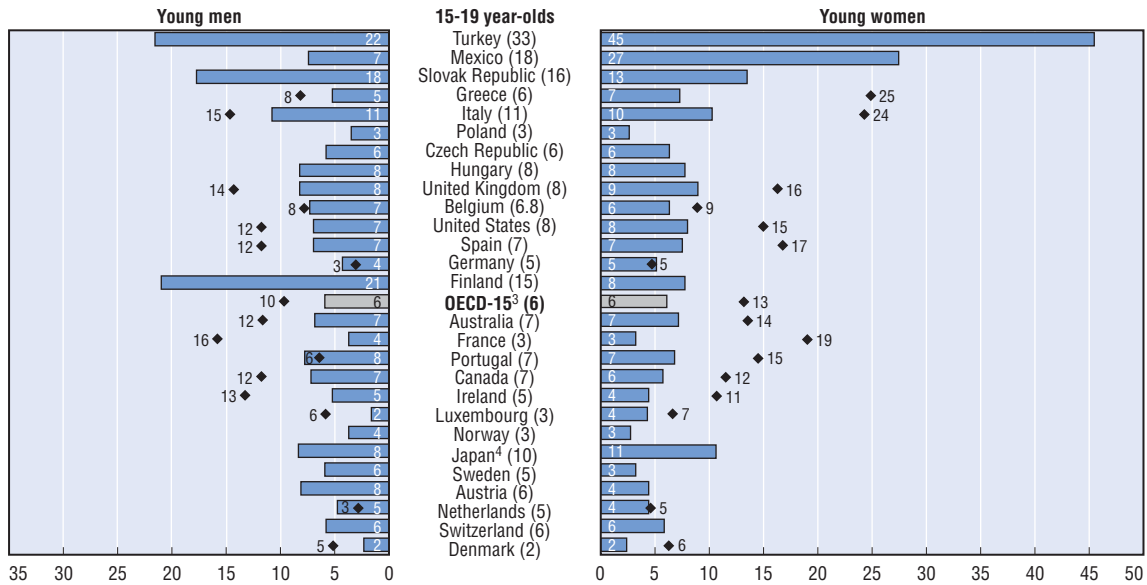
The policy response to the prevalence of young people not being in school or work has varied across countries. Measures have typically included steps to increase the extent to which the labour market is "youth friendly", greater diversification of educational pathways, active labour market programmes and special interventions targeted to youths exposed to special risks (such as homelessness, drug abuse, crime offence).

**Status indicators:** Unemployment (SS2), Out-of-work benefits (SS5), Drug use and related deaths (CO5), Suicide (CO6).

**Response indicators:** Educational attainment (SS7)

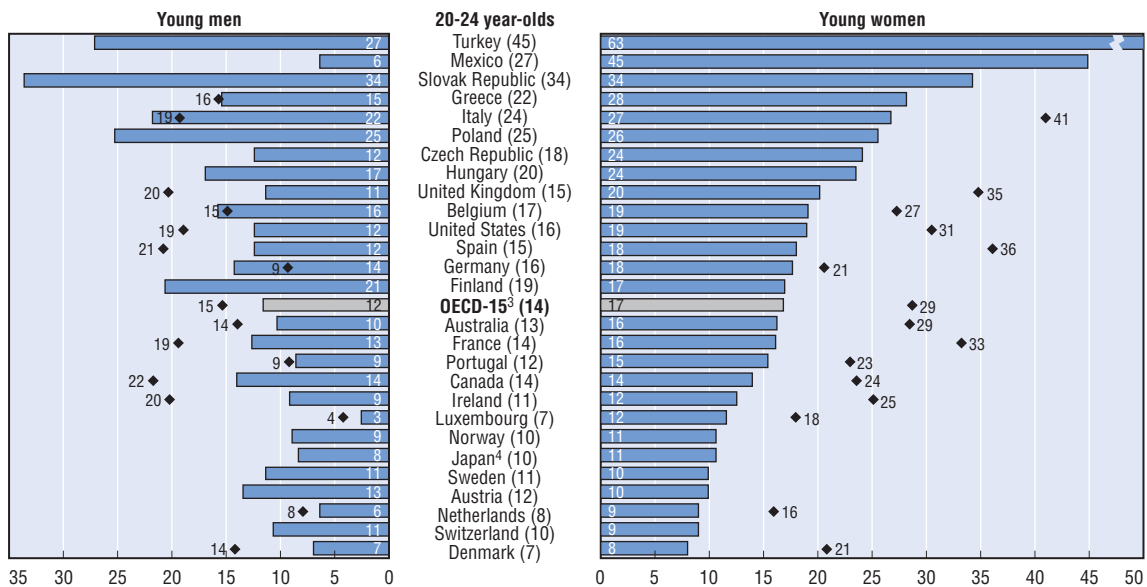
SS9.1. Fewer teenagers not in education nor in employment in the last 20 years

Proportion of 15-19 year-olds not in school nor in employment, by gender, 2002<sup>1</sup> (bar) and mid-1980s<sup>2</sup> (diamond marker)



SS9.2. More women than men not in education nor in employment among young adults

Proportion of 20-24 year-olds not in school nor in employment, by gender, 2002<sup>1</sup> (blue bar) and mid-1980s<sup>2</sup> (diamond marker)



Note: In both above charts, countries are ranked by decreasing order of 20-24 female rate in 2002. Values in brackets refer to the proportion of youths for both sexes, not in education, training nor in employment in 2002.

- 2001 in New Zealand and in the United States.
- 1984, except 1985 for Canada, 1989 for the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.
- OECD-15 refers to 15 countries where data are available for both years.
- 15-24 year-olds in Japan.

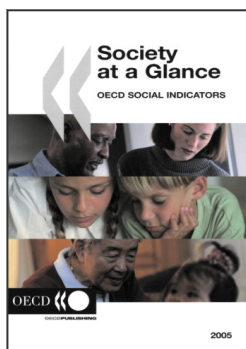
Source: OECD (2004), Education at a Glance – OECD Indicators, Tables C4.2, OECD, Paris (see also [www.oecd.org/edu/eag2004](http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2004)).

StatLink: <http://Dx.doi.org/10.1787/423003613632>

**Further reading:** ■ OECD (1999), *Preparing Youths for the 21st Century. The Transition from Education to the Labour Market*, OECD, Paris.  
 ■ OECD (2002), *Employment Outlook*, Chapter 2, OECD, Paris (see also [www.oecd.org/els/employmentoutlook](http://www.oecd.org/els/employmentoutlook)).

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