

Participation in the labour market in the EU27 in 2009

Nearly one woman in five aged 25-54 outside the labour market

Half of them for family reasons

Over the last decade, the inactivity rate¹ for women aged between 15 and 64 years in the **EU27** has fallen steadily, from 39.9% in 2000 to 35.7% in 2009, meaning that 5.0 million more women have entered the labour market. In contrast, the inactivity rate for men aged 15 to 64 has decreased only slightly, from 22.8% in 2000 to 22.2% in 2009.

In spite of the economic crisis, the labour market participation of women in the **EU27** continued to increase between 2008 and 2009, as the inactivity rate of women aged 15-64 further declined from 36.1% to 35.7%. For the participation of men however a limited impact can be observed, as the rate for men aged 15 to 64 increased, even if slightly, for the first time since 2002, from 22.0% in 2008 to 22.2% in 2009. Most affected seemed to be young men aged 15 to 24, who saw their inactivity rate rise from 52.1% in 2008 to 53.0% in 2009.

These data come from a report² issued by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**, focusing on people outside the labour market.

Between 1% of prime working aged women in Denmark and 40% in Malta outside the labour market due to family responsibilities

In the **EU27** in 2009, the inactivity rate of women aged between 25 and 54 years was 22.1%, compared with 8.2% for men. Among the Member States, the lowest inactivity rates for women aged 25-54 were found in **Slovenia** (12.1%), **Sweden** (12.9%) and **Denmark** (13.0%), while **Malta** (51.1%), **Italy** (35.5%), **Romania** (29.4%) and **Greece** (29.0%) had the highest.

The period between the ages of 25 and 54 is the main working age, and also the age when families are started and children are raised. The main single reason for prime working aged women to be outside the labour market is therefore family responsibilities³. Among prime working aged women in the **EU27** in 2009, 10.1% stated they were outside the labour market due to family responsibilities, almost half of all women of this age outside the labour market. The percentage mentioning family responsibilities varied greatly between Member States: **Denmark** (1.4%) had the lowest rate, followed by **Sweden** (1.8%) and **Slovenia** (3.6%). At the other end of the scale, **Malta** (40.4%) had by far the highest rate, followed by **Greece** (16.2%) and **Luxembourg** (15.6%).

Around 60% of both younger and older women outside the labour market

Education and retirement explain the higher inactivity rates observed for the younger and older population. For women aged 15-24, the inactivity rate was 59.3% in the **EU27**, compared with 53.0% for men. Female inactivity rates within this age group were lowest in the **Netherlands** (28.1%) and **Denmark** (29.3%), and highest in **Hungary** (78.5%) and **Italy** (76.1%). National differences in the behaviour of students having or seeking a job largely explain those differences.

For women aged 55-64, the inactivity rate was 60.1% in the **EU27** in 2009, compared with 41.5% for men. The lowest female inactivity rates were recorded in **Sweden** (30.1%) and **Estonia** (33.9%), and the highest in **Malta** (87.9%) and **Poland** (76.8%).

Inactivity rates of women, in %

	15-64 years old			15-24 years old, 2009	25-54 years old, 2009		55-64 years old, 2009
	2000	2005	2009		Total	Family responsibilities	
EU27	39.9	37.6	35.7	59.3	22.1	10.1	60.1
Belgium	43.6	40.5	39.1	70.1	20.8	8.8	70.7
Bulgaria	44.4	42.7	37.5	75.2	19.4	9.4	58.1
Czech Republic	36.4	37.6	38.5	73.9	20.1	14.0	62.8
Denmark	24.4	24.1	22.7	29.3	13.0	1.4	47.0
Germany	36.7	32.0	28.6	50.6	17.6	9.2	47.3
Estonia	34.7	33.1	29.4	65.3	16.1	10.4	33.9
Ireland	43.7	39.2	37.6	54.6	28.3	:	57.2
Greece	49.5	45.5	43.5	72.6	29.0	16.2	70.7
Spain	48.0	41.7	35.2	58.3	23.3	13.5	64.0
France	37.6	35.2	33.7	61.3	16.7	:	61.2
Italy	53.7	49.6	48.9	76.1	35.5	15.0	73.9
Cyprus	42.3	37.5	33.8	59.8	20.3	15.2	57.4
Latvia	37.9	34.9	29.0	63.7	13.9	6.5	40.3
Lithuania	32.7	35.1	32.2	73.3	13.7	5.5	47.1
Luxembourg	48.4	43.0	39.3	69.3	24.8	15.6	69.5
Hungary	47.3	44.9	44.7	78.5	26.4	12.6	71.2
Malta	64.8	63.1	59.2	52.3	51.1	40.4	87.9
Netherlands	34.0	30.0	25.9	28.1	17.2	5.8	54.3
Austria	38.0	34.4	30.4	43.0	17.2	10.6	67.6
Poland	40.1	41.9	42.2	70.6	22.5	12.9	76.8
Portugal	36.1	32.1	31.0	62.5	16.6	7.9	54.1
Romania	38.1	44.7	44.6	74.2	29.4	12.2	65.3
Slovenia	37.1	33.9	32.1	64.2	12.1	3.6	74.4
Slovakia	36.8	38.5	39.4	74.6	19.3	12.7	71.0
Finland	28.1	27.2	26.5	48.8	14.3	5.9	41.3
Sweden	25.2	23.7	23.6	49.0	12.9	1.8	30.1
United Kingdom	31.8	31.2	30.5	42.4	21.3	12.4	50.1
Iceland	:	17.4	18.7	24.5	16.1	2.7	22.3
Norway	23.9	25.1	23.6	41.2	14.8	2.1	36.0
Switzerland	28.4	25.7	22.7	31.3	15.9	10.9	38.8
Croatia	:	43.3	43.0	72.8	23.2	10.5	70.4
Former yugoslav rep. of Macedonia	:	50.8*	50.0	73.8	36.1	27.5	71.0
Turkey	:	74.9*	72.2	75.1	69.0	60.7	83.7

* 2006 data

: Data not available

1. Persons outside the labour market are persons who are neither employed nor unemployed. **Inactivity rate** is the percentage of the population outside the labour market in the total population (living in private households) in the same age group.
2. Eurostat, Statistics in focus, 57/2010 "**Fewer people outside the labour force in 2009. Increased female participation in the labour market**". Available free of charge in PDF format on the Eurostat website.
3. **Family responsibilities** may include looking after children or incapacitated adults, pregnancy or other family responsibility. Own illness is not included.

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