



Work-Life Balance

Background

Finding a suitable balance between work and daily living is a challenge that all workers face. Families are particularly affected. Some couples would like to have (more) children, but do not see how they could afford to stop working. Other parents are happy with the number of children in their family, but would like to work more. This is a challenge to governments because if parents cannot achieve their desired work/life balance, not only is their welfare lowered but so is development in the country. If parents have to choose between earning money and looking after their children, the result is that there will be too few babies and too little employment.

People spend one-tenth to one-fifth of their time on unpaid work. The distribution of tasks within the family is still influenced by gender roles: men are more likely to spend more hours in paid work, while women spend longer hours in unpaid domestic work. While on average men in OECD countries spend 131 minutes per day doing unpaid work, women spend 279 minutes per day cooking, cleaning or caring. This average difference, approximately 2.5 hours per day, conceals many disparities among countries. For instance Turkish and Mexican women spend between 4.3 and 5 hours more than men working on domestic chores, while the difference is only a little over one hour in the Nordic countries.

Employees Working Long Hours

An important aspect of work-life balance is the amount of time a person spends at work. Evidence suggests that long work hours may impair personal health, jeopardize safety and increase stress. The share of employees working more than 50 hours per week is not very large in OECD countries. Turkey is by far the country with the highest proportion of people working very long hours, with more than 46%, followed by Mexico with nearly 29% and Israel with nearly a fifth of employees. Overall, men spend more hours in paid work and the percentage of **male employees working very long hours across OECD countries is 12%, compared with less than 5% for women.**

Time devoted to Leisure and Personal Care

Furthermore, the more people work, the less time they have to spend on other activities, such as personal care or leisure. The amount and quality of leisure time is important for people's overall well-being, and can bring additional physical and mental health benefits. **The average person in the OECD works 1 776 hours a year and devotes 62% of the day, or close to 15 hours, to personal care** (eating, sleeping, etc.) **and leisure** (socializing with friends and family, hobbies, games, computer and television use, etc.). Fewer hours in paid work for women do not necessarily result in greater leisure time, as time devoted to leisure is roughly the same for men and women across the 20 OECD countries studied.

Top Ranking

Work-Life Balance

Indicators

Time devoted to leisure and personal care

Employees working very long hours

Find Out More

Mar 19, 2014

[Society at a Glance 2014: OECD Social Indicators](#)

[→ more ...](#)

Nov 28, 2013

[How's Life? at a Glance](#)

[→ more ...](#)

Sep 10, 2012

[Society at a Glance: How do People in the Asia/Pacific Region Spend their Time?](#)

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Work-Life Balance in Detail by Country

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aut **Austria** [expand](#) ▾

bel **Belgium** [expand](#) ▾

bra **Brazil** [expand](#) ▾

can **Canada** [expand](#) ▾

chl **Chile** [expand](#) ▾

cze **Czech Republic** [expand](#) ▾

dnk **Denmark** [expand](#) ▾

est **Estonia** [expand](#) ▾

fin **Finland** [expand](#) ▾

fra **France** [expand](#) ▾

deu **Germany** [expand](#) ▾

grc **Greece** [expand](#) ▾

Key Findings

Finding a suitable balance between work and life is a challenge for all workers, especially working parents. Some couples would like to have (more) children, but do not see how they could afford to stop working. Other parents are happy with the number of children in their family, but would like to work more. This is a challenge to governments because if parents cannot achieve their desired work/life balance, not only is their welfare lowered but so is development in the country.

People spend one-tenth to one-fifth of their time on unpaid work. The distribution of tasks within the family is still influenced by gender roles: men are more likely to spend more hours in paid work, while women spend longer on unpaid domestic work. Men in Hungary, spend 127 minutes per day cooking, cleaning or caring, less than the OECD average of 131 minutes and less than half as long as Hungarian women, who spend 268 minutes per day on average on domestic work.

Another important aspect of work-life balance is the amount of time a person spends at work. Evidence suggests that long work hours may impair personal health, jeopardize safety and increase stress. **People in Hungary work 1 980 hours a year**, more than the OECD average of 1 776 hours. The share of employees working more than 50 hours per week is not very large across OECD countries. In Hungary, some **3%** of employees work very long hours, less than the OECD average of 9%. Overall, men spend more hours in paid work: in Hungary **5% of men work very long hours, compared with 1% for women.**

Better Policies for Better Lives

More support to families can boost fertility in Hungary

At 1.33 children per woman, the total fertility rate in Hungary is the 3rd lowest across the OECD (the average is 1.74). The decline in fertility started in the 1980s, and accelerated in the early 1990s. Since 2000, fertility rates stabilised in Hungary, while about half of the other OECD countries experienced an increase. Low fertility goes hand in hand with low employment among women. In 2010, the female employment rate was just below 50% (10 percentage points below the OECD average), and at 46% in 2007, the maternal employment rate was the lowest of the European OECD countries.

Low fertility and female employment rates are largely explained by insufficient support for parents to reconcile work and care commitments. Hungary is among the top OECD spenders on families with 3.3% of GDP allocated to family benefits in 2007. However, only 1/3 of these resources are spent on helping with childcare costs, while this share is above 43% in countries with higher fertility rates.

The prolonged duration of parental leave and the limited provision of childcare supports establish barriers to employment for many mothers. Parental leave can last up to 3 years (compared with 1.5 years on average across the OECD) and be combined with a cash-for-care payment; a parent of three or more children can even stay at home and receive this benefit until the youngest child is eight years old. Moreover, less than 9% of children under age 3 are enrolled in formal childcare services.

Hungary has recently introduced a tax relief for households with large number of children, which might have a positive influence on birth rates. However, the evidence from other countries is that a wider provision of formal childcare services is a more effective tool for helping parents with work and family commitments and thus raise birth rates.

More Resources

[How's Life? at a Glance](#)

Indicators

Employees working very long hours

3.10%



Rank:

7 / 36

Trend

-6.8%

average annual increase
since 2004

Gender Inequality

3.12 men women



Rank:

16 / 32

Time devoted to leisure and personal care

~14.90 hours



Rank:

11 / 36

irl	Ireland	expand ▾
isr	Israel	expand ▾
ita	Italy	expand ▾
jpn	Japan	expand ▾
kor	Korea	expand ▾
lux	Luxembourg	expand ▾
mex	Mexico	expand ▾
nld	Netherlands	expand ▾
nzl	New Zealand	expand ▾
nor	Norway	expand ▾
pol	Poland	expand ▾
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rus	Russian Federation	expand ▾
svk	Slovak Republic	expand ▾
svn	Slovenia	expand ▾
esp	Spain	expand ▾
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