

Women outside the labour force in 2006

One woman in ten aged 25-54 in the EU27 is inactive due to family responsibilities

Large variations between Member States

The inactivity rate¹ of women aged between 25 and 54 years was 23.6% in 2006 in the **EU27**, compared with 8.1% for men. This period is the main working age, and also the age when families are founded and children are raised. The main single reason for prime-aged women to be outside the labour force is therefore family responsibilities². Among prime-aged women in the **EU27** in 2006, 10.2% stated they were inactive due to family responsibilities, almost half of all inactive women of this age.

These data come from a report³ issued by **Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities**, focusing on people outside the labour force.

Between 2% of prime-aged women in the United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark and 46% in Malta inactive due to family responsibilities

In the **EU27** in 2006, the lowest inactivity rates for women aged 25-54 were found in **Slovenia** (13.0%), **Sweden** (13.7%), **Estonia** (14.3%), **Denmark** and **Finland** (14.6%), while **Malta** (58.9%), **Italy** (35.7%), **Greece** (30.9%) and **Ireland** (29.5%) had the highest.

Among prime-aged women, the percentage inactive due to family responsibilities varied greatly between Member States: the **United Kingdom** (1.9%) had the lowest percentage, followed by **Sweden** (2.1%) and **Denmark** (2.3%). At the other end of the scale, **Malta** (45.9%), followed by **Ireland** (23.1%) and **Luxembourg** (21.7%) had the highest rates.

Around 60% of young women outside the labour force

Education and retirement explain the higher inactivity rates observed at either end of the age scale. For women aged 15-24, the inactivity rate was 59.4% in the **EU27**, compared with 52.5% for men. Female inactivity rates within this age group ranged from 30.7% in **Denmark**, 31.6% in the **Netherlands** and 39.2% in **Finland** to 76.9% in **Lithuania**, 76.6% in **Hungary** and 75.0% in **Luxembourg**.

For women aged 55-64, the rate was 62.9% in the **EU27** in 2006, compared with 43.8% for men. The lowest rates were recorded in **Sweden** (30.4%), **Estonia** (39.5%) and **Finland** (42.8%) and the highest in **Malta** (88.4%), **Poland** (79.7%) and **Slovakia** (79.1%).

Inactivity rates of women, in %, 2006

	15-64 years old	15-24 years old	25-54 years old		55-64 years old
			Total	due to family responsibilities	
EU27	37.1	59.4	23.6	10.2	62.9
Belgium	40.5	68.1	23.0	10.1	75.4
Bulgaria	39.8	73.6	20.6	7.7	66.1
Czech Republic	37.7	70.8	18.7	12.4	66.0
Denmark	23.0	30.7	14.6	2.3	43.3
Germany	30.5	52.2	18.6	9.9	52.7
Estonia	30.7	69.4	14.3	8.5	39.5
Ireland	38.7	52.2	29.5	23.1	59.2
Greece	45.0	71.3	30.9	18.8	72.0
Spain	40.0	55.9	28.8	18.2	69.6
France	35.9	65.4	19.8	4.9	63.0
Italy	49.2	73.1	35.7	15.2	77.5
Cyprus	36.2	61.7	22.6	18.3	62.2
Latvia	33.4	66.4	17.1	8.8	48.4
Lithuania	35.4	76.9	16.2	7.1	52.4
Luxembourg	41.8	75.0	26.3	21.7	71.5
Hungary	44.5	76.6	27.1	11.6	71.8
Malta	61.7	50.9	58.9	45.9	88.4
Netherlands	29.7	31.6	20.4	8.3	60.7
Austria	33.0	44.9	19.1	12.8	73.1
Poland	43.2	69.3	24.6	12.0	79.7
Portugal	31.6	61.3	17.3	8.7	54.9
Romania	43.4	74.1	27.4	11.7	65.2
Slovenia	33.2	63.6	13.0	3.9	78.6
Slovakia	39.1	69.1	18.8	11.4	79.1
Finland	25.0	39.2	14.6	6.2	42.8
Sweden	23.7	48.1	13.7	2.1	30.4
United Kingdom	30.8	41.6	22.1	1.9	49.9
Croatia	43.1	68.4	24.8	11.0	73.1
Turkey	73.9	76.3	71.5	62.6	83.2
Iceland	16.6	19.7	15.2	3.2	18.8
Norway	25.2	42.1	16.7	2.7	37.8
Switzerland	25.3	32.9	18.8	13.7	41.4

1. Inactive persons are persons who are neither employed nor unemployed. **Inactivity rate** is the share of the inactive population as a % of the total population (living in private households) in the same age group.
2. **Family responsibilities** may include marriage, pregnancy, childcare, serious illness of another member of the family, long vacation. Own illness is not included.
3. Eurostat, Statistics in focus, 122/2007 "**People outside the labour force: the downward trend continues**". Available free of charge in PDF format on the Eurostat website.

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