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# **MOTHERS, FATHERS AND EMPLOYMENT**

**1985 - 1991**

**March 1993**

**European Commission Network on Childcare  
and other Measures to Reconcile Employment  
and Family Responsibilities**

This document has been prepared for use within the Commission. It does not necessarily represent the Commission's official position.

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The views expressed in this discussion paper are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Commission of the European Communities.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The report gives an overview of employment among mothers and fathers of children **under 10 years of age** at the beginning of the 1990s and developments in parental employment since 1985. It is based on special analyses of the Labour Force Survey undertaken by the Statistical Office of the European Communities for the European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities.

1. *Employment rates for mothers* increased rapidly between 1985 and 1991, from 41% to 50%. Over 80% of this increase was due to part-time employment. The fastest overall growth in employment was in **Netherlands, UK, Ireland and Germany**; the slowest growth was in **France, Italy, Greece and Denmark**.
2. In 1991, 58% of *mothers were economically active*. Levels of economic activity vary considerably between countries. Highest levels (75% and over) are in **Denmark and Portugal**. Lowest levels (under 50%) are in **Ireland (38%), Luxembourg (42%) and Spain (44%)**, Greece and **Netherlands (46%)**. In between come **Italy and UK (50-59%)** and **Germany, France and Belgium (60-69%)**. Some countries have substantial *regional variations* for employment and unemployment rates; the largest regional differences are in **Italy**.
3. **Netherlands, UK, Germany, Belgium and Denmark** have the highest *levels of part-time employment among mothers*; more than 20% of all mothers are in part-time jobs. **Portugal, France and Denmark** have the highest levels of full-time employment. In the Community overall, 39% of employed mothers have part-time jobs. More mothers are employed part-time than full-time in the **Netherlands and UK**; in the four **Southern countries**, less than 15% of employed mothers have part-time jobs.
4. *Mothers* are less likely to be employed than *childless women aged 20-39* (51% v 76%); mothers have a much lower full-time employment rate (31% v 66%), but a higher part-time employment rate (20% v 10%). Mothers have a higher unemployment rate than childless women aged 20-39 (13% v 8%).
5. *Mothers* are less likely to be employed than *fathers* (51% v 92%), much less likely to have a full-time job (31% v 91%) but much more likely to have a part-time job (20% v 2%). The unemployment rate for mothers is nearly three times as high as for fathers (13% v 5%). This difference in unemployment is greater than for women and men in general, and occurs in all Member States.
6. *Unemployment rates* are highest for *mothers* in **Spain, Ireland and Italy**; for *childless women aged 20-39* in **Spain, Italy and Greece**; and for *fathers* in **Ireland, UK and Spain**.
7. *Lone motherhood* is most common in the **Northern countries** of Europe. The **UK (14%)** probably has the highest proportion, followed closely by **Denmark**. Then come **Germany (9%)**, **France** and the **Netherlands (both 8%)**. Lowest levels are found in **Italy, Spain and Greece (3%)**.

8. *Lone mothers* have higher levels of economic activity than *mothers in two parent families* (60% v 54%). Lone mothers are more likely to be employed - except in **UK, Netherlands and Ireland**.
9. Economic activity is lower for *mothers with a child under 3* compared to *mothers with a youngest child aged 3-9* (58% v 50%). The biggest differences between mothers with younger and older children are found in **Germany and UK**.
10. Economic activity for *mothers* falls as the *number of young children* increases - 64% for mothers with one child, 56% for two children and 41% for three or more children. The drop is greater between two and three children than between one and two children. Fathers with three children are less likely to be employed than other fathers; in **UK and Ireland**, less than 85% of these fathers are employed.
11. *Working hours for employed mothers* average 30-39 a week. Just over a third (34%) work these hours. Just over a fifth (22%) work 40-49 hours a week and just under a fifth work 1-19 hours (19%) and 20-29 hours (18%). Very few work 50-59 hours (2%) or over 60 hours per week (2%). Longest hours are worked in **Southern European** countries and shortest hours in **Netherlands and the UK** where mothers employed part-time work particularly short hours.
12. *Working hours for employed fathers* average 40-49 per week; they work longer hours than mothers even if only full-time workers are compared. Nearly half of all employed fathers (44%) work these hours, with a further third (32%) working 30-39 hours. Very few fathers (2%) work under 30 hours a week, but a substantial minority (18%) work more than 50 hours. Fathers work longest hours in **UK and Ireland**.
13. Three-quarters of employed *mothers* and employed *fathers* are *permanent employees*. For mothers, the other quarter are mainly temporary employees, self-employed workers without employees and family workers. **Denmark** has the highest level of permanent employees among mothers and fathers; **Greece, Spain and Portugal** have the lowest levels. Fathers who are not permanent employees are more likely than mothers to be self-employed and less likely to be family workers or temporary employees. The proportion of fathers who are permanent employees is highest in **Luxembourg, Netherlands and Germany**, and lowest in the four **Southern European** countries and **Ireland**.
14. Employed *mothers* are heavily concentrated in three main *types of economic activity*: Other Services, Distributive Trades and Other Manufacturing account for two-thirds of all employed mothers. Only 5% of employed mothers work in agriculture, but the proportion is substantially higher in **Italy, Portugal and Greece**. The employment of *fathers* is spread more evenly across different groups of economic activities, and is less concentrated in the service sector.
15. Distribution between employee, self-employed and family worker status and between types of economic activity is very similar comparing employed mothers with all employed women, and comparing employed fathers with all employed men.

**Table 1: Parental Employment and Unemployment: 1985-1991**

	Proportion employed, 1991			Change in proportion employed, 1985-91	Unemployment rate, 1991 (for definition, see page 6)		
	Women with child aged 0-9	Men with child aged 0-9	Women aged 20-39, no child		Women with child aged 0-9	Men with child aged 0-9	Women aged 20-39, no child
<b>B</b>	60% [22%]	94% [ 1%]	81% [14%]	+9.0% [+8.6%]	12%	4%	8%
<b>DK</b>	75% [28%]	92% [ 2%]	77% [15%]	-0.8% [-5.6%]	14%	5%	10%
<b>D</b>	55% [24%]	94% [ 1%]	84% [10%]	+10.7% [+9.2%]*	9%	3%	4%
<b>EL</b>	41% [ 3%]	96% [ 1%]	57% [ 3%]	+4.1% [-2.4%]	11%	2%	12%
<b>E</b>	33% [ 4%]	91% [ 7%]	65% [ 4%]	No information	25%	7%	18%
<b>F</b>	59% [16%]	92% [ 1%]	76% [10%]	+4.3% [+2.8%]	13%	5%	11%
<b>IR</b>	30% [ 9%]	81% [ 2%]	77% [ 3%]	+11.2% [+3.6%]	21%	15%	10%
<b>I</b>	42% [ 5%]	95% [ 2%]	57% [ 5%]	+3.8% [+1.1%]	15%	3%	14%
<b>L</b>	40% [13%]	97% [ - ]	85% [ 4%]	+6.2% [+4.3%]	4%	1%	2%
<b>N</b>	40% [35%]	92% [ 8%]	79% [29%]	+16.7% [+15.7%]	13%	4%	8%
<b>P</b>	69% [ 6%]	96% [ 1%]	79% [ 3%]	No information	7%	1%	6%
<b>UK</b>	51% [35%]	88% [ 1%]	87% [ 8%]	+13.2% [+6.5%]	11%	8%	5%
<b>E12</b>	51% [20%]	92% [ 2%]	76% [ 9%]	+8.7% [+7.3%]**	13%	5%	8%

\* = excluding new German lander. \*\* = excluding Spain, Portugal and new German lander. Figures in brackets = part-time employment.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background to the current report

The European Community has a long-standing commitment to promoting equal treatment for women and men in the labour market. Progress towards this objective requires, among other conditions, the reconciliation of employment with family responsibilities, which include caring for children. To assist with its work on reconciliation, the European Commission established in 1986, as part of the Community's Second Equal Opportunity Action Programme, the Childcare Network (now renamed the Network on Childcare and other measures to Reconcile Work and Family Responsibilities for Women and Men)

Under the Community's Third Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which began in 1991, the Commission has continued to support the Network. The Programme defines a number of general tasks for the Network, including "to monitor developments". As well as developments in services and policies to promote reconciliation between employment and caring for children, the Network has monitored developments in parental employment since 1985. The results of this monitoring work can be found in general reports prepared by the Network - *Childcare and Equality of Opportunity* (1988) and *Childcare in the European Communities 1985-90* (1990) - and in a report devoted specifically to the subject of parental employment - *Mothers, Fathers and Employment* (1990).

At the same time, further information on the employment position of women in the European Community has appeared in a number of reports published by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment and the European Commission Network on the Situation of Women in the Labour Market. These reports are listed at the back of this report in the 'References' section, and complement the Network's reports on parental employment.

The current report - *Mothers, Fathers and Employment 1985-91* - is a revised and updated version of *Mothers, Fathers and Employment*, giving an overview of parental employment at the beginning of the 1990s and developments in parental employment since 1985. The focus of the report is parental employment, but this term needs qualification. **The report is limited to mothers and fathers of children under 10 years of age.** The *Council of Ministers' Recommendation on Childcare*, adopted in March 1992, notes that "responsibilities arising from the care and upbringing of children continue up to and throughout the period of children's schooling" (our emphasis). The Network agrees with this view, but has prioritised the needs of parents with younger children. To this extent, therefore, the report does not give a comprehensive review of parental employment in the European Community.

## The Labour Force Survey

The Network's monitoring of parental employment is made possible by the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS is undertaken annually in each Member State of the Community, using a sample of households (640,000 in 1990). The main objective is to provide comparable statistics on employment and unemployment across the Community:

"Perfect comparability among 12 countries is difficult to achieve, even by means of a single direct survey...the degree of comparability of the labour force survey results

is considerably higher than that of any other existing set of statistics on employment or unemployment available for member states" (*Eurostat 1988: 10*).

The published results from the LFS do not distinguish parents or indeed other workers with other caring responsibilities. In producing this report and earlier work on parental employment, the Network has depended on special analyses of the LFS undertaken by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat). As before, the Network is very grateful for the efficient and helpful service offered by Eurostat and in particular for the assistance of Mr. Arthur O'Malley. (For a fuller description of the Labour Force Survey, see *Eurostat 1992a, 1992b*).

One point about the special analyses should be emphasised. The information presented on mothers covers women who are either the head of household or married or cohabiting with men classified as the head of household. This means that some mothers are not included, for example mothers and their children living in the home of the mother's parents (a three generation household, where the grandparents are head of household); the exclusion of such women from the analyses will be more significant in some countries than others, depending on the frequency of such households structures.

The LFS analyses of parental employment which Eurostat has undertaken for the Childcare Network cover 4 years - 1985, 1988, 1990 and 1991. This report mostly presents statistics for 1990; 1985 and 1988 statistics are reported in detail elsewhere (*EC Childcare Network 1988, 1990a, 1990b*). A full analysis of the 1991 LFS was not available when this current report was written, but Eurostat were able to provide some 1991 statistics. This is important for two reasons:

1. The 1991 LFS provides statistics, for the first time, on unified Germany.
2. The general picture for parental employment in 1991, and the main trends between 1985 and 1991 can be described. However, the statistics comparing change over time, between 1985 and 1991, do not include Spain and Portugal (which were not included in the LFS until 1986) and the new German lander. Statistics giving the situation in 1990 do include Spain and Portugal, and for 1991 include also the new German lander.

## **Definitions and Abbreviations**

Throughout this report, a number of terms and abbreviations are used (for a fuller description of definitions, see *Eurostat 1992a, 1992b*).

**Persons in employment:** persons who during the reference week for the survey did any work for pay or profit or who were not working but had jobs from which they were temporarily absent. Family workers are included but not persons on lay-off.

**Unemployed persons:** persons who during the reference week had no employment and were actively looking for paid employment and were immediately available to start work; or were looking to set up their own business or professional practice; or were waiting to be called back to a job from which they had been laid off; or had found a job to start after the



reference week.

**Economically active:** persons who are employed or unemployed.

**Economically inactive:** persons who are not classified as employed or unemployed.

**Percentage/proportion employed or unemployed:** mothers or fathers in employment or unemployed persons as a proportion of all mothers or fathers.

**Unemployment rate:** unemployed persons as a proportion of the labour force; the labour force consists of all employed and unemployed persons.

**Mothers:** women with at least one child aged 0-9 years.

**Fathers:** men with at least one child aged 0-9 years.

**Country:** B = Belgium; DK = Denmark; D = Germany; EL = Greece; E = Spain; F = France; IR = Ireland; I = Italy; L = Luxembourg; N = Netherlands; P = Portugal; UK = United Kingdom; E10 = European Community excluding Portugal, Spain, new German lander; E12 = European Community including Portugal, Spain, new German lander.

### **The general employment context: 1985-91**

This report covers developments in parental employment from 1985 to 1991. This period was mostly one of recovery in economic growth. Between 1985 and 1990, employment in the Community increased by over nine million. However the onset of recession began to have adverse effects towards the end of the period:

"The rate of job creation in the Community has slowed dramatically since the middle of 1990 as the rate of economic growth has fallen. In 1991, the numbers in employment remained stable, in contrast to the average growth of more than 1.5% which was achieved between 1986 and 1990...As employment has fallen so unemployment has increased, starting first in the UK and Ireland in 1990 and spreading to most other parts of the Community in 1991" (*European Commission, 1992: 9*).

Between 1985 and 1989, two-thirds of the additional jobs created in the Community were taken by women. This is part of a longer-term trend to women taking an increasing share of employment in the Community - up from 33% in 1970 to 39% in 1989. This growth in women's employment has not been evenly spread across all age groups:

"Two age-related trends in activity are affecting both sexes. Young people are tending to remain in education for more years than previous generations and older people are retiring earlier. (This has meant) that men's activity rates have either declined or remained constant...In contrast, the greatest increase in women's activity rates have occurred for women in the middle years...It is in this age-group, particularly between the ages of 25 and 49, that the growth in activity rates for women has been large enough to offset the conflicting trends for younger and older workers" (*EC Network*

*on the Situation on Women in the Labour Market, 1992: 1-2).*

Despite this growth, women's share of total employment remains lower than in other parts of Western Europe and the US where women currently account for around 45% of employment. Moreover, although women have lower levels of employment than men, they have higher levels of unemployment. In May 1992, the average unemployment rate in the European Community was 11% for women compared with 8% for men.

These figures represent 'visible' unemployment or unemployment as defined by the LFS. They do not give the full picture.

"Unemployment rose by less in the second half of 1991 than employment declined. The rate of inactivity - ie. the proportion of working age population who are not officially counted as part of the labour force - therefore increased during this period. In other words, significant numbers of people - half a million - disappeared from the work force when employment fell.

These people, a **high proportion of them women**, are likely to re-enter the labour market when employment growth resumes...The size of this **hidden part of the labour force** is a major reason why unemployment, as measured, has proved so difficult to reduce in the Community in recent years. Although recorded unemployment may be high in the Community, effective unemployment - as revealed by the high rate of inactivity compared with other developed parts of the world - is even higher" (*European Commission, 1992: 9*)(Network's emphasis).

## RESULTS

### Economic activity: trends for parents: 1985-91

#### Mothers

Between 1985 and 1991, in the E10 countries of the Community, there was a substantial increase in employment among women with young children (from 41.5% to 50.2%), a slight fall in the proportion unemployed (from 7.3% to 6.6%) and a rather larger fall in the unemployment rate (from 15% to 11.6%) and a fall in the proportion economically inactive (from 51% to 43%) [Figure 1A].

Although trends in Portugal and Spain cannot be compared over the same period, both countries showed strong upward employment trends in the period 1988-1991. Employment rates increased from 61.8% to 68.7% in **Portugal**, and from 27.7% to 32.9% in **Spain**.

The 9% increase in employment among mothers included a small rise in full-time employment rates (from 25.9% to 27.3%). But most of the increase was due to rising part-time employment (from 15.6% to 22.9%) [Figure 1A]. In other words, part-time employment accounted for over 80% of the total increase in employment rates among mothers.

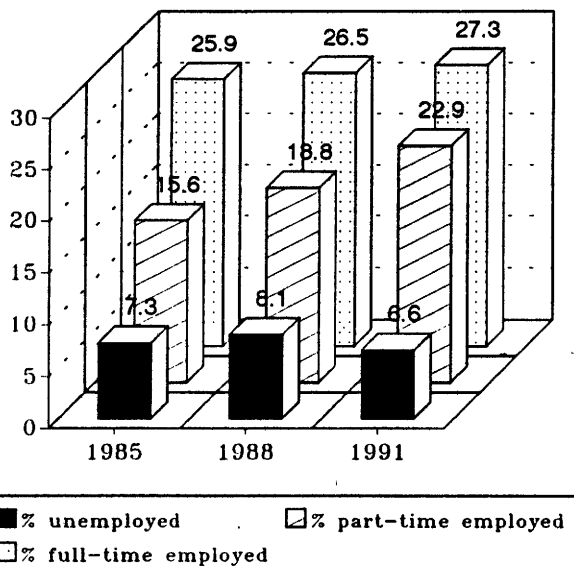
The largest increases in employment among mothers in the E10 countries occurred in the **Netherlands** (+16.7%), **UK** (+13.2%), **Ireland** (+11.2%) and **Germany** (+10.7%). Full-time employment contributed most of the increase in **Ireland**, while in the **UK** there was an equal contribution to increased employment from full-time and part-time working. But, in **Germany** and the **Netherlands**, total employment growth was mostly accounted for by increased part-time working, as was also the case for the moderate employment growth in **Belgium** (+9%) and **Luxembourg** (+6.2%). The smallest increases in employment between 1985 and 1991 in the E10 countries occurred in **France** (+4.2%), **Italy** (+3.8%) and **Greece** (+4%), whilst **Denmark** recorded a small drop in employment. These countries showed only a small increase in part-time employment or, in the cases of **Greece** and **Denmark**, an actual decrease. Indeed, in **Denmark**, a 5% increase in the full-time employment rate was offset by a 6% fall in part-time employment [Figures 1B, 1C; Table 1].

#### Fathers

For fathers, there was little change in the period. The great majority (90% in 1985 and 1991) continued to work full-time. Part-time employment increased slightly but remained at a very low level (under 2%). The proportion unemployed fell slightly (from 5.7% to 4.8%) as did the unemployment rate (from 5.8% to 5%) [Figure 1D].

**Figure 1A**  
**Employment and unemployment:**  
**mothers: 1985, 1988, 1991**

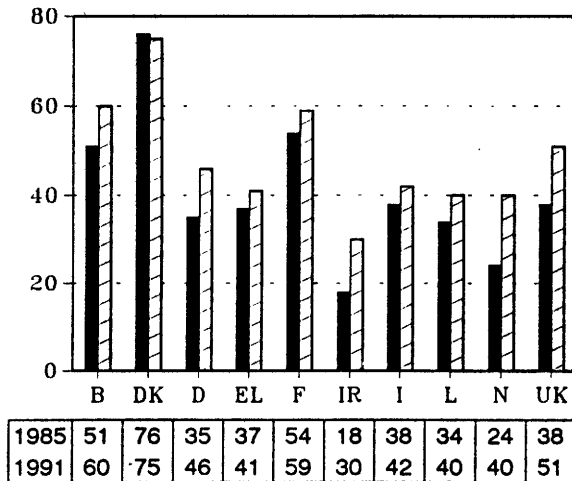
% employed and unemployed



Excluding Portugal, Spain,  
 new German lander

**Figure 1B**  
**Employment: mothers: 1985, 1991**

% employed

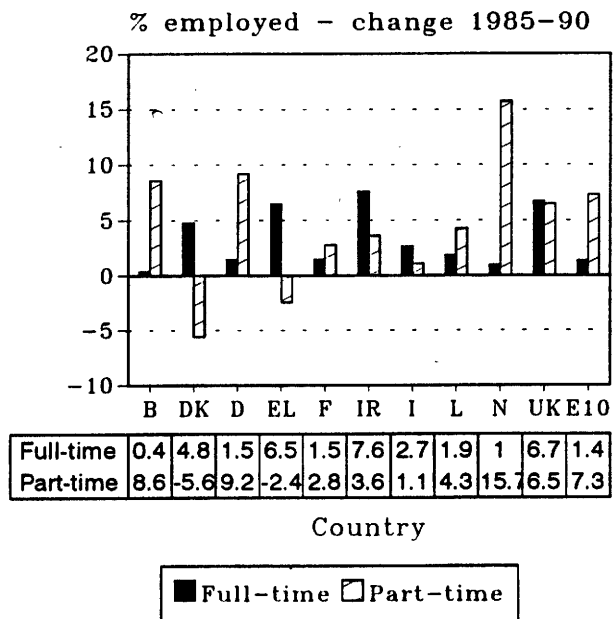


Country

■ 1985 □ 1991

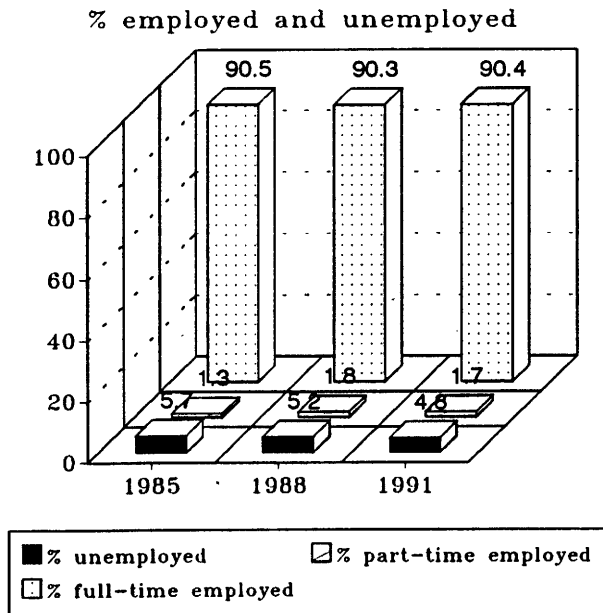
Excluding Portugal, Spain,  
 new German lander

**Figure 1C**  
 Change in employment:  
 mothers: 1985-91



Excluding Portugal, Spain,  
 new German lander

**Figure 1D**  
 Employment and unemployment:  
 fathers: 1985, 1988, 1991



Excluding Portugal, Spain,  
 new German lander

## **Economic activity: the situation for parents: 1991**

### **Mothers**

The figures quoted in this section include all 12 Member States and the new German lander. This comprehensive basis reveals just over half of all mothers employed in 1991 (50.7%, compared to 50.2% for the E10 countries). Three-fifths of employed mothers have full-time jobs and two-fifths have part-time jobs (30.8% v 19.9%). A further 7.3% are unemployed, producing an unemployment rate for mothers of 12.6% [Figure 2A, Table 1]. The total economic activity rate therefore is 58%.

The impact of children on women's employment status can be seen by comparing mothers with childless, younger women (aged 20-39). Childless women have a substantially higher employment rate (75.6% v 50.7%). They are more than twice as likely to have a full-time job (66.1% v 30.8%) and half as likely to work part-time (9.5% v 19.9%). Although the proportion unemployed is only slightly lower, the unemployment rate for childless women is substantially lower (8.3% v 12.6%) [Figure 2A, Table 1].

In only one country - **Denmark** - is the economic activity rate similar for mothers and childless women. Even in Denmark, however, employed mothers are nearly twice as likely as employed childless women to have a part-time job. Elsewhere the gap in economic activity rates varies from under 20% in **Portugal** (9%), **Italy** (16%), **France** and **Belgium** (18%), and **Greece** (17%), to over 30% in **UK** (33%), **Spain** (35%), **Netherlands** (40%), **Luxembourg** (45%) and **Ireland** (47%). The difference in **Germany** is 29%: but this overall figure consists of a large difference in former West Germany (37%) and little difference in the new German lander (in fact, mothers are slightly more likely to be economically active than women without children).

Where the gap in economic activity rates between mothers and childless women is relatively small, this is usually due to both groups of women having relatively high economic activity rates - for example in **Denmark** (85% for childless women v 87% for mothers), **Portugal** (84% v 75%), **Belgium** (87% v 69%) and **France** (85% v 67%). However, in the cases of **Italy** and **Greece**, the small difference in economic activity is because of the low levels of economic activity among childless women aged 20-39 - 66% and 65% respectively. In all other countries, the rate for this group is over 80%, with the exception of **Spain** where the rate is 79%.

Economic activity among mothers varies substantially between countries. The highest levels (75% and over) are in **Denmark** and **Portugal**, and the lowest levels (under 50%) are in **Ireland** (38%), **Luxembourg** (42%) and **Spain** (44%), **Greece** and **Netherlands** (46%). In between come **Italy** and **UK** (50-59%) and **Germany**, **France** and **Belgium** (60-69%) [Figure 2B].

Economic activity rates are made up of employed and unemployed persons. The proportion of mothers actually employed shows the same general pattern as for economic activity, with highest rates in **Denmark**, **Portugal** and **Belgium** and lowest rates in **Ireland**, **Spain**, **Luxembourg**, **Greece** and **Netherlands**.

In comparing employment rates between countries, another dimension needs to be taken into

account: the relative contribution of full-time and part-time employment. Two countries - **Netherlands** and **UK** - have by far the highest part-time employment rate in the E12 (35% in both cases). Moreover, the hours worked by part-time employed mothers in these two countries are low compared to part-time workers elsewhere in the Community (discussed further below). Three other countries - **Germany**, **Belgium** and **Denmark** - have part-time employment rates of over 20%. Part-time employment in **France** and **Luxembourg** is between 10-19%. The four southern Member States (**Italy**, **Greece**, **Portugal**, **Spain**) and **Ireland** have low levels of part-time employment, both overall (less than 10%) and in relation to full-time employment rates.

**Portugal** has the highest full-time employment rate for mothers (63%), followed by **Denmark** (47%) and **France** (42%). The lowest levels of full-time employment are found in the **Netherlands** (only 5%) and the **UK** (17%), the two countries with the highest part-time employment rates.

Throughout the European Community, part-time employment increased faster than full-time employment between 1985-91, but there are still more mothers employed full-time than part-time (61% v 39%). **Netherlands** and the **UK** are the only two countries where most employed mothers have part-time jobs. The former West Germany also had more mothers employed part-time than full-time, but full-time workers predominate in reunified **Germany** although part-time workers still make up a high proportion of all employed mothers. Otherwise, **Denmark** and **Belgium** have the highest proportions of employed mothers in part-time employment. In these three countries, part-time workers account for 35-45% of all employed mothers. Next come **Luxembourg** (33%), **Ireland** (30%) and **France** (28%). The proportion for the four Southern countries is under 15% [Figure 2B, Table 1].

The proportion of mothers unemployed varies considerably between countries. It is highest in **Denmark** (12%) and **Spain** (10%) and lowest in **Luxembourg** (2%) and **Greece** (5%). Elsewhere it ranges from 6-9% [Figure 2B]. The unemployment rate for mothers is however much higher in most countries, because so many mothers are economically inactive and unemployment rates are the number unemployed as a proportion of the economically active population. The highest rates are in **Spain** (25%), **Ireland** (21%) and **Italy** (15%), the lowest rates in **Luxembourg** (4%), **Portugal** (7%) and **Germany** (9%). Elsewhere unemployment is 10% or over [Figure 2D, Table 1].

The highest unemployment rates for childless women aged 20-39 are found in **Spain** (18%), **Italy** (14%) and **Greece** (12%); lowest unemployment rates are in **Luxembourg** (2%), **Germany** (4%) and the **United Kingdom** (5%). Although unemployment rates for mothers and childless women, in general, show similar national variations, there are a few striking exceptions. **Greece** is the only country where the unemployment rate for childless women is higher than for mothers; hence it appears among the top three countries for childless women, but not for mothers. By contrast, in both the **United Kingdom** and **Ireland**, childless women have much lower unemployment rates than mothers; so **Ireland** appears in the top three countries for unemployment rates for mothers, but not for childless women, while the **United Kingdom** appears in the bottom three countries for unemployment rates for childless women, but not for mothers [Table 1].

## **Fathers**

Fathers have uniformly high levels of economic activity and employment. For the Community overall, 97% were economically active in 1991, 92% in employment, and 5% unemployed [Figure 2A]. Economic activity is 95% or over in all Member States. The main variation is in unemployment. The proportion of fathers unemployed was highest in Ireland (14%), UK (8%) and Spain (7%). Elsewhere it was 5% or less. Because so few fathers are economically inactive, the proportion unemployed and the unemployment rate are very similar for this group of parents. [Figures 2C, 2D, Table 1].

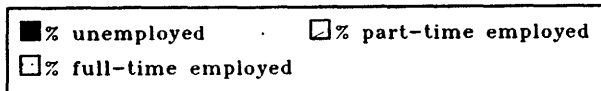
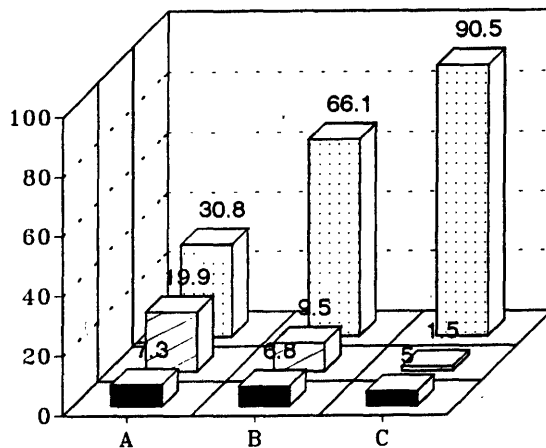
Only 1.5% of fathers have part-time jobs, compared to 90.5% in full-time work. Only the Netherlands, where 8% of fathers have part-time jobs, shows any significant variation [Figure 2C, Table 1].

Comparing mothers and fathers, mothers are less likely to be employed (50.7% v 92%), much less likely to have a full-time job (30.8% v 90.5%) but much more likely to have a part-time job (19.9% v 1.5%). The proportion unemployed is higher (7.3% v 5%), and the unemployment rate is nearly three times as high (12.7% v 5.2%). Not only is the unemployment differential worse than for women and men in general, but it is found in all Member States [Table 1].



**Figure 2A**  
 Employment and unemployment:  
 mothers, fathers, childless women: 1991

% employed and unemployed

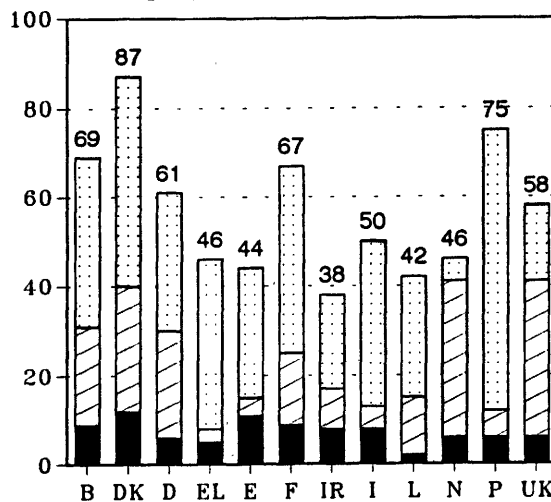


Women(A) and Men(C) with child aged 0-9  
 Women(B) aged 20-39, no child

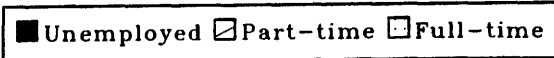
**Figure 2B**

Employment and unemployment:  
 mothers: 1991

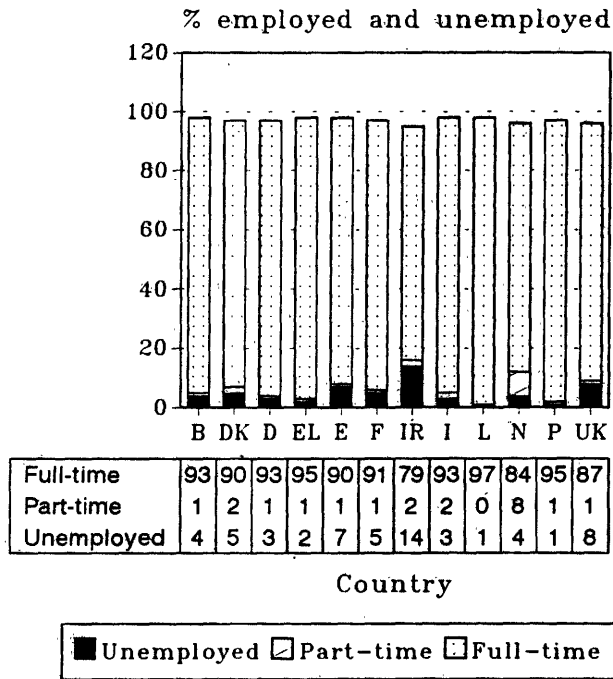
% employed and unemployed



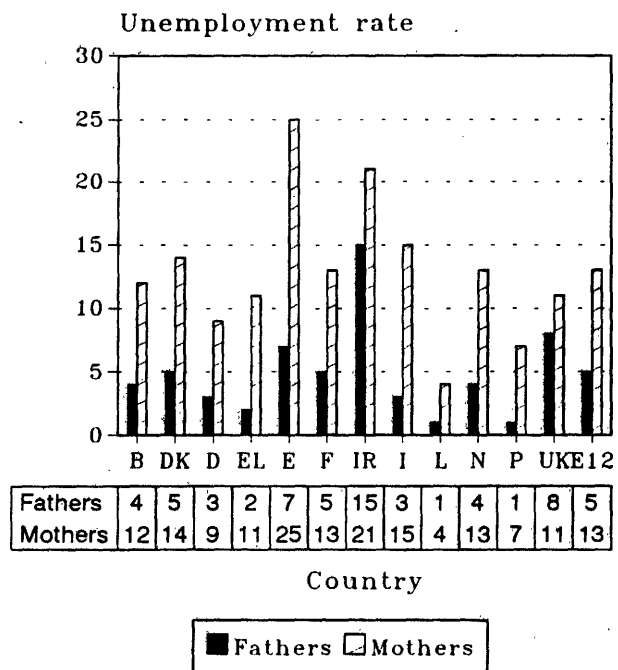
Country



**Figure 2C**  
**Employment and unemployment:**  
**fathers: 1991**



**Figure 2D**  
**Unemployment rate: mothers and**  
**fathers: 1991**



## **Economic activity: regional variations for parents: 1990**

### **Mothers**

Regional variations occur in economic activity for the eight Member States for which regional data is available (**Ireland, Denmark, Luxembourg and Portugal** are excluded) [Table 2]. Regional variations, for employment and unemployment, are particularly marked in **Italy**. Three times as many women are employed in **Emilia-Romagna** as in **Sicilia** (67% v 21%), while the unemployment rate for **Sicilia** is more than six times higher than for **Lombardia** (37% v 6%), and the highest recorded at regional level in the Community.

Elsewhere, there is a difference of 15% or more between the highest and lowest regional employment rates in **Germany** (excluding the new German lander) (**Saarland**=34%, **Bayern**=56%), **France** (**Nord-Pas-de-Calais**=47%, **Ile-de-France**=65%) and **Belgium** (**Antwerpen**=43%, **West- and Oost-Vlaanderen**=67%). In Netherlands, UK, Greece and Spain, however, the regional variations are considerably smaller [Figure 3A].

The unemployment rate is at least twice as great in the region with the highest level compared to the region with the lowest level in all countries except Netherlands. The differential is greatest in **Italy** (see above), **Belgium** (**West-Vlaanderen**=4%, **Hainault and Limburg**=23%), **Germany** (**Baden-Wurtemberg**=6%, **Bremen**=18%) and **Spain** (**Madrid**=12%, **Canarias**=33%) [Figures 3B].

### **Fathers**

Unemployment rates are uniformly lower for fathers than mothers in the regions included in Table 2, although the patterns of regional variation are generally similar. The largest differences between regions are found in **Italy** (**Lombardia**=0.5%, **Sicilia**=6%), **Belgium** (**West-Vlaanderen**=0.5%, **Hainault**=6%), **Germany** (**Baden-Wurtemberg** and **Bayern**=1%, **Bremen**=7%) and **UK** (**South-West and East Anglia**=3%, **Northern Ireland**=15%) [Figure 3C].

## **Economic activity: mothers in East and West Germany: 1991**

LFS data for 1991 show the differences between former West and East Germany for mothers' economic activity. In 1991, 94.6% of mothers in the new German lander were economically active (a higher proportion than in Denmark); the great majority (69.2%) were employed full-time and only 13.3% had part-time jobs. By contrast, half the mothers (49.5%) in the former West Germany were economically active; just 18.4% had full-time work, just over a quarter of the figure for the new German lander, and 27.5% had part-time jobs, twice the proportion for the East. Although the proportion of mothers unemployed was three times greater in the East (12.1% v 3.6%), the difference in unemployment rate was less (12.8% v 7.3%) because of the high level of economic activity in the East compared to the West [Figure 3D].

It should be emphasised that the data are for 1991, and that the situation in the new German lander may have changed substantially since that date.

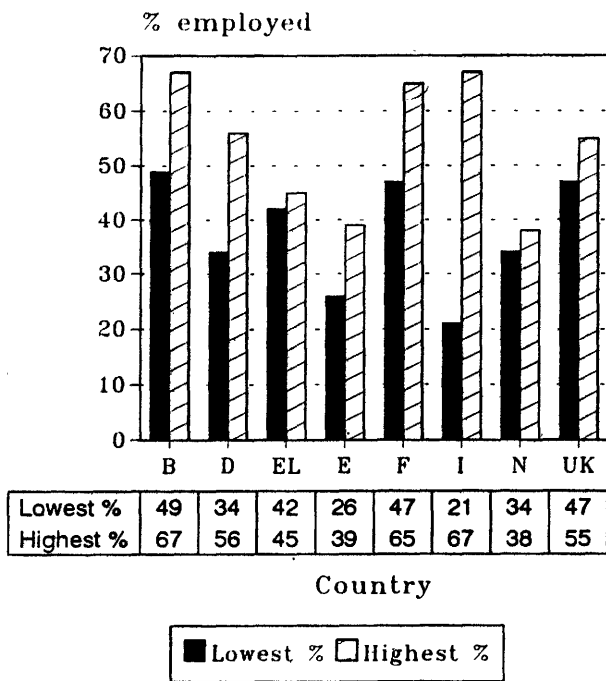
**Table 2: Maternal employment and parental unemployment  
by region: 1990**

	Region	Proportion of Mothers:		Unemployment Rate:	
		Employed	Unemployed	Mothers	Fathers
<b>B</b>	Antwerpen	49	7	13	1
	Bruxelles/Brussel	61	6	8	4
	Hainaut	51	15	23	6
	Liege	52	14	21	5
	Limburg	53	16	23	3
	Luxembourg	57	6	10	2
	Namur	57	12	17	4
	Oost-Vlaanderen	67	5	7	1
	West-Vlaanderen	67	3	4	0.5
	<b>All regions</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>D</b>	Saarland	34	7	17	2
	Berlin (West)	55	6	10	5
	Schleswig-Holstein	45	5	9	3
	Hamburg	48	10	17	4
	Neidersachsen	39	7	15	3
	Bremen	35	7	18	7
	Nordrhein-Westfalen	35	6	15	4
	Hessen	48	4	8	2
	Rheinland-Pfalz	46	4	8	3
	Baden-Wuerttemberg	48	3	6	1
	Bayern	56	4	7	1
	<b>All regions</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>E</b> <b>L</b>	Northern	43	7	13	2
	Central	45	7	13	2
	Attica	42	4	9	2
	Islands	43	2	5	1
	<b>All regions</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>E</b>	Noroeste	38	9	20	6
	Nordeste	34	11	25	4
	Madrid	34	5	12	4
	Centro	26	11	29	5
	Este	39	10	20	5
	Sud	24	11	31	12
	Canarias	28	14	33	13
	<b>All regions</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>

<b>F</b>	Ile de France	65	7	10	5
	Bassin Parisien	52	12	18	5
	Nord-Pas-de-Calais	47	10	18	8
	Est	57	8	12	3
	Ouest	61	9	13	4
	Sud-Ouest	57	10	15	3
	Centre-Est	59	8	12	4
	Mediterranee	50	11	18	8
	<b>All regions</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>I</b>	Sicilia	21	12	37	6
	Sardegna	36	9	20	3
	Nord-Ovest	57	5	8	1
	Lombardia	56	3	6	0.5
	Nord-Est	48	4	7	1
	Emilia-Romagna	67	5	7	1
	Centro	58	6	10	1
	Lazio	43	8	16	2
	Campania	29	9	23	5
	Abruzzi e Molisse	48	10	17	1
	Sud	33	9	21	4
	<b>All regions</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>N</b>	Noord-Nederland	34	9	20
Oost-Nederland		34	9	21	4
West-Nederland		38	7	16	5
Zuid-Nederland		38	6	15	4
<b>All regions</b>		<b>37</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>U K</b>	Scotland	48	9	16	7
	Northern Ireland	47	6	12	15
	North	47	11	17	8
	Yorkshire/Humberside	51	6	11	8
	East Midlands	53	8	13	5
	East Anglia	55	5	8	3
	South-East	51	5	9	5
	South-West	55	5	9	3
	West Midlands	51	6	10	7
	North-West	50	7	12	8
	Wales	49	8	13	8
	<b>All regions</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>

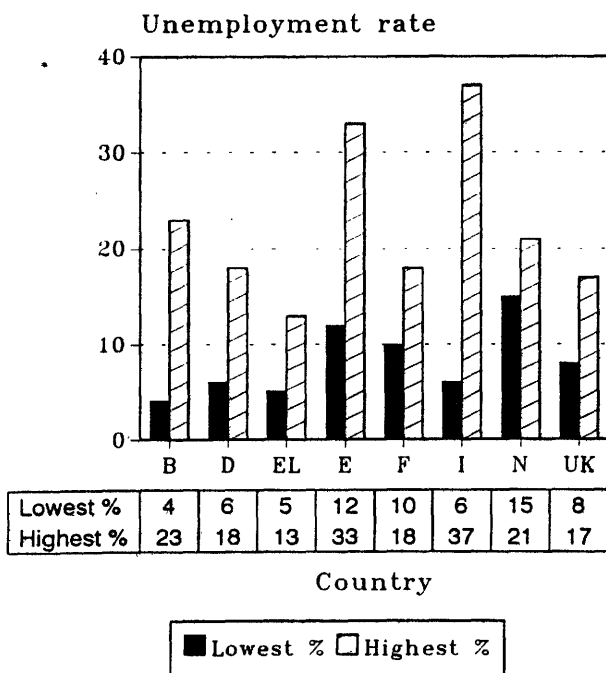
### Figure 3A

Highest and lowest regional employment: mothers: 1990

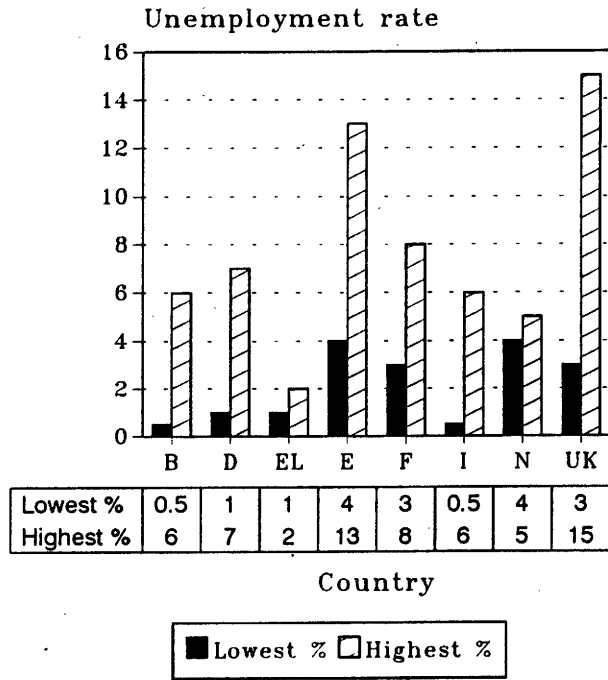


### Figure 3B

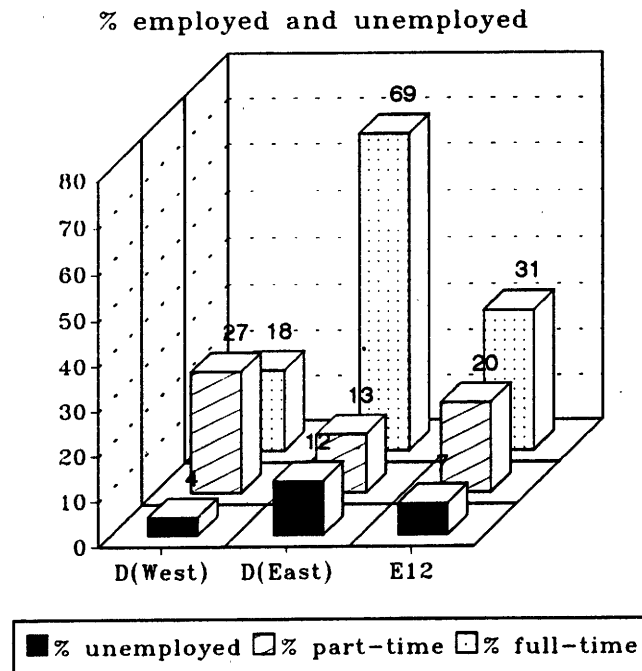
Highest and lowest regional unemployment: mothers: 1990



**Figure 3C**  
Highest and lowest regional unemployment: fathers: 1990



**Figure 3D**  
Employment and unemployment: mothers: Germany: 1991



## **Economic activity: lone mothers: 1990**

The proportion of lone parent families is increasing in all countries (*Roll, 1992*), but the proportion still varies considerably between Member States. In her report on lone parents in the European Community, Roll estimates the proportion of families with a child under 18 headed by a lone parent. The **UK** is top of the league table (17%, rising to 19% in 1990), followed by **Denmark** (15%), **France** and **Germany** (11-13%). Next comes a cluster of countries - **Belgium, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal** - with 9-11%. Lowest levels of lone parent families are found in **Greece, Spain and Italy** (5-6%) (*Roll, 1992*).

The analysis of the 1990 LFS undertaken for the Childcare Network provides estimates of the proportion of lone mothers among households with children under 10. Although Roll concludes that the LFS "is the best potential source of information about the number and labour force activities of lone parent families", she warns that "the LFS currently has some disadvantages as a source of information" and that "modifications would be needed to achieve true comparability". Overall, however, "it seems likely that the Danish (LFS) figure is the only one which is way out of line"; for this reason **Denmark** has been excluded from this section<sup>1</sup>.

This data for households with younger children shows a similar profile to Roll's estimate for families - though the levels in Roll's estimate are higher, partly because they cover a wider age range of children. In general, levels of lone motherhood in households with children under 10 are highest in the Northern countries of Europe. The **UK** (14.3%) has the highest proportion (probably followed close behind by **Denmark**). Then come **Germany** (9.1%), **France** (8.3%) and the **Netherlands** (8.1%). The lowest levels are recorded in **Italy** (3.4%), **Spain** (3%) and **Greece** (2.7%) [Figure 4A].

In the European Community as a whole, lone mothers have higher levels of economic activity than mothers in two parent families (referred to below as 'couple mothers') - 60.2% v 53.8%. This total figure consists of higher proportions of lone mothers in full-time employment (31.2% v 28.3%) and who are unemployed (12.2% and 7%), and a lower proportion in part-time employment (16.8% v 18.5%). The unemployment rate for lone mothers is particularly high - 20.3% compared to 13.3% for couple mothers [Figure 4B].

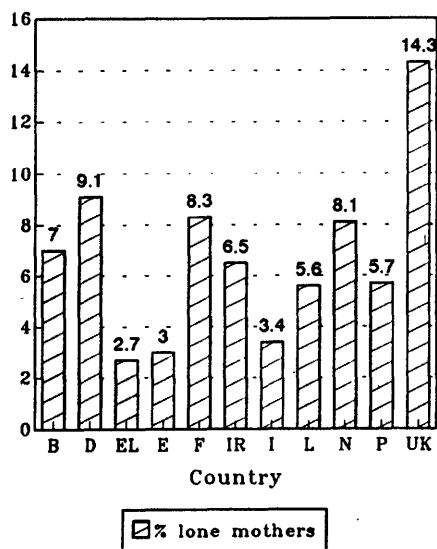
In Member States, lone mothers are more likely to be employed, with three exceptions - **Ireland, Netherlands** and the **UK**. The difference is particularly striking for the **UK**, where only 33% of lone mothers were employed in 1990 compared to 54% of couple mothers. In contrast, lone mothers have employment rates that are more than 20% higher than those for couple mothers in **Italy, Luxembourg, Greece and Spain** [Figure 4C].

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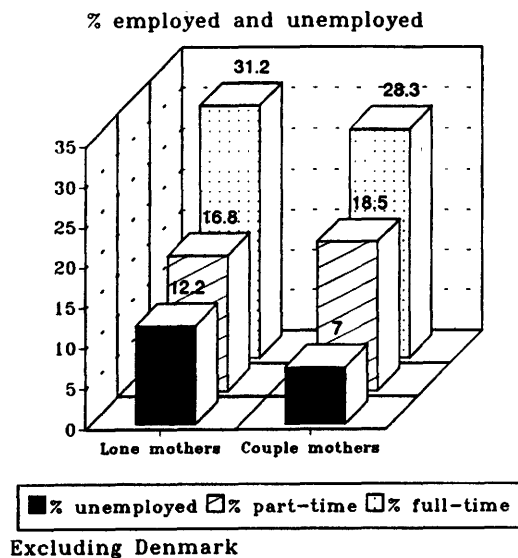
<sup>1</sup>The 1990 LFS data show 35% of households with a child under 10 in Denmark headed by a lone mother. Roll concludes that the LFS figure for lone parents is about double the actual number in Denmark (the rest are accounted for by cohabiting couples).



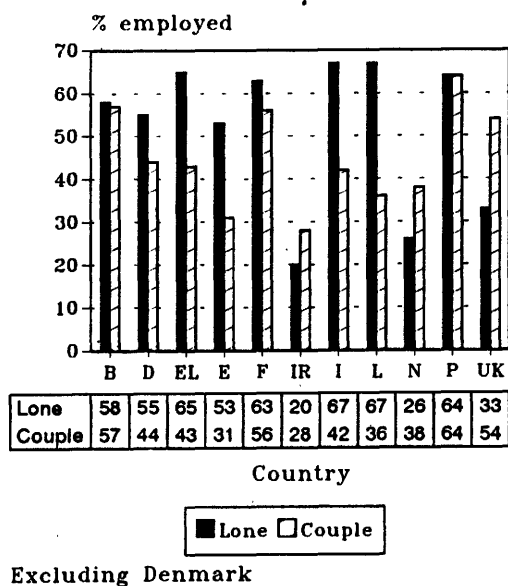
**Figure 4A**  
Proportion of mothers who are lone mothers: 1990



**Figure 4B**  
Employment+unemployment: lone couple mothers: 1990



**Figure 4C**  
Employment: lone and couple mothers: 1990



## **Economic activity: age of youngest child: 1990**

### **Mothers**

Economic activity in the European Community is lower among women with a youngest child under 3 (49.5% v 58.2% for mothers with a youngest child aged 3-9). There is little difference in unemployment, but mothers with older children are more likely to be employed part-time and full-time [Figure 5A].

In all Member States, employment rates are rather higher for mothers with older children - except in **Ireland** where women with a youngest child aged over 3 are less likely to be employed. Elsewhere, however, the differences in employment are not great (5% or less), with the exception of **Denmark** (8%), **France** (9%), **Germany** (15%) and, above all, **UK** (22%) [Figure 5B]. This reflects a tendency in both **Germany** and the **UK** for women to leave the labour market when they have children, but to resume employment once their children are older (*EC Network on the Situation of Women in the Labour Market, 1992*).

### **Fathers**

There is little difference in employment (92.4% v 92.9%) or unemployment (4.8% v 4%) between fathers with a child under 3 and fathers with a youngest child aged 3-9.

## **Economic activity: number of children under 10: 1990**

### **Mothers**

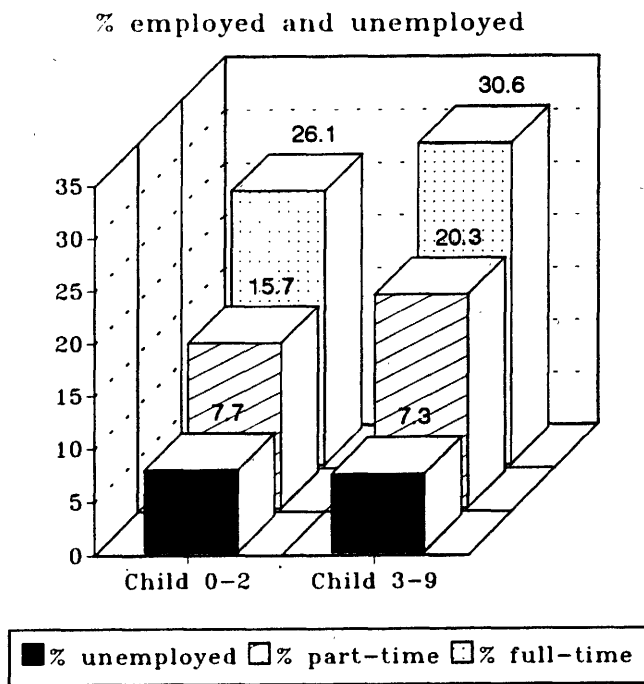
In the European Community, economic activity falls as the number of young children increases - from 63.5% for mothers with one child, to 56.1% for two children and 41.1% for three or more children. The drop is greater between two and three children than between one and two children. The main reason for this fall in economic activity, is the decrease in full-time employment (from 37.2% for mothers with one child to 18.7% for mothers with three or more children) [Figure 5C].

In most Member States, the fall in employment rates is similar comparing mothers with one and two children and two and three or more children. However in **Denmark** and **Portugal**, but especially in **France** and **Belgium**, the decrease in employment is much greater between two and three or more children; in **Belgium**, for example, the employment rate is only 4% lower for mothers with two children compared to mothers with one child, but is 22% lower for mothers with three or more children compared to mothers with two children. By contrast, **Luxembourg** has a big drop from one to two children and little change between two and three children, while the **UK** shows increased employment from one to two children, followed by a substantial fall between two and three [Figure 5D].

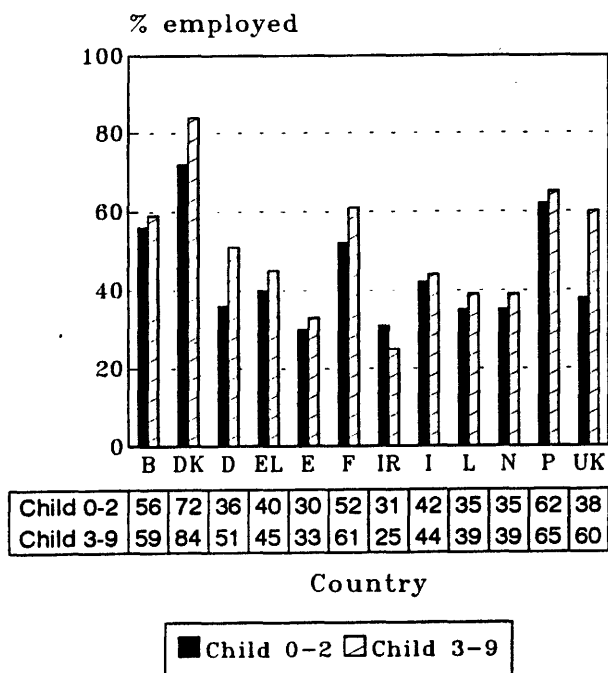
### **Fathers**

In the European Community, the employment rate is slightly higher for fathers with 2 children compared to fathers with one child (94.5% v 93.4%), but then drops back for fathers with three or more children (89.2%). This drop between two and three or more children is largest in the **UK** (-7.8%), **Portugal** (-7%) and **Belgium** (-6.7%). The employment rate among fathers with three or more children drops below 85% in both **UK** (84.6%) and **Ireland** (79.6%). These lower employment rates reflect both increased unemployment and increased economic inactivity among fathers with three or more children.

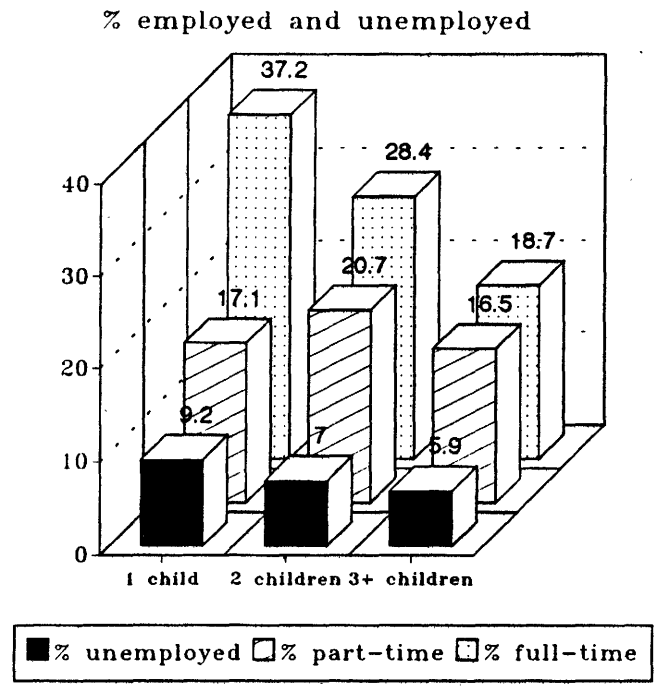
**Figure 5A**  
 Employment and unemployment:  
 mothers: by age of youngest child: 1990



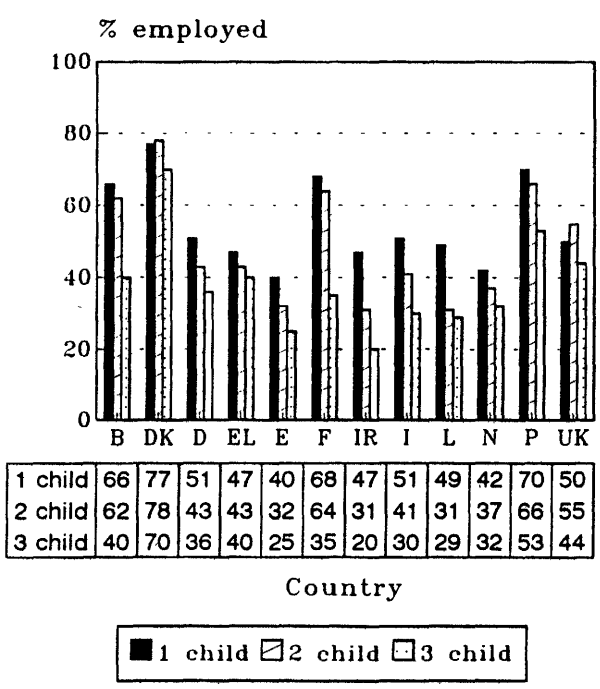
**Figure 5B**  
 Employment: mothers: by age  
 of youngest child: 1990



**Figure 5C**  
 Employment and unemployment:  
 mothers: by number of children: 1990



**Figure 5D**  
 Employment: mothers: by number of  
 children: 1990



## Hours normally worked by employed parents: 1990

### Mothers

The average hours worked by employed mothers in the European Community is 30-39 hours a week. Just over a third (34%) work these hours. Just over a fifth (22%) work 40-49 hours a week and just under a fifth work under 20 hours (19%) and 20-29 hours (18%). Very few work 50-59 hours (2%) and 60 hours or more per week (2%) [Figure 6A]. Employed mothers work longest hours in the four Southern European countries and Luxembourg, where 40% or more work 40 hours a week or more. Shortest hours are worked in Netherlands, UK and Germany, where more than a quarter of employed mothers work less than 20 hours a week [Figure 6B].

In most Member States, employed mothers are much more likely to work long hours (over 40 hours a week) than short hours (under 20 hours a week): for example, in Spain only 7% of employed mothers work less than 20 hours compared to 64% who work over 40 hours. However, in Belgium the proportions are almost equal, while in Denmark few mothers work either long or short hours. In three countries - Germany, Netherlands, UK - more employed mothers work short hours than long hours. The difference is greatest in the Netherlands where 65% of employed mothers work under 20 hours while only 7% work 40 hours or more a week [Figure 6B].

These differences are partly due to national differences in the hours of mothers in full-time jobs. In Netherlands, Luxembourg, Greece, Portugal and Spain, the average hours per week worked by this group are 40-49 compared to 30-39 hours elsewhere in the Community.

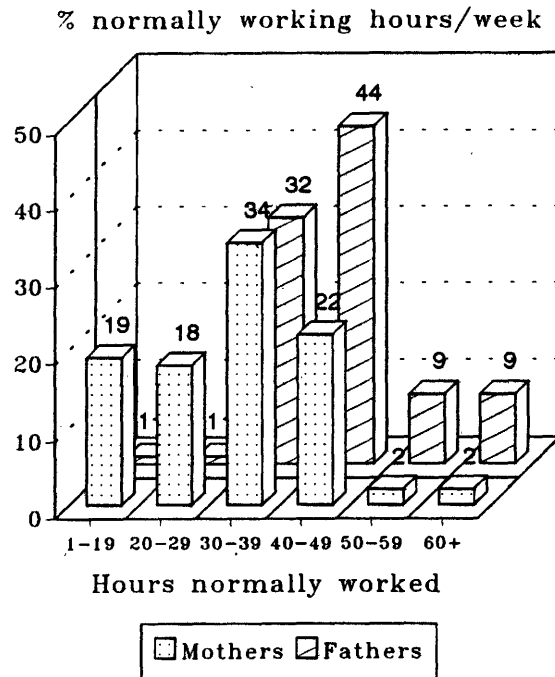
The differences in hours worked are also partly explained by national differences in the extent of part-time working, already discussed. However, even among the four countries where part-time work is most common, the hours normally worked by part-time employed mothers varies considerably. Most part-time employed mothers in the Netherlands and UK work less than 20 hours a week (64% and 60%). In Germany the proportion is just under half (45%). In Denmark very few part-time workers have such short hours (12%); most are employed 20-29 (52%) or 30 hours or more (36%) a week [Figure 6C].

### Fathers

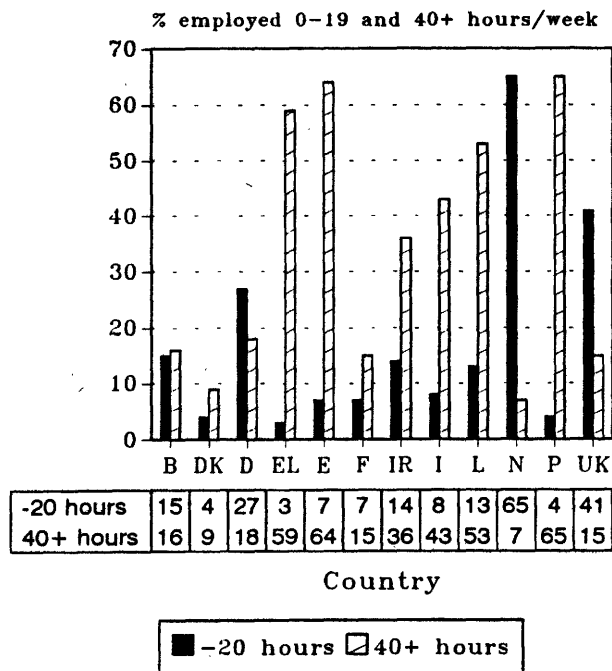
Employed fathers work longer hours than employed mothers. The average hours worked by employed fathers are 40-49 per week. Nearly half of all employed fathers (44%) work these hours, with a further third (32%) working 30-39 hours. Unlike mothers, very few fathers (2%) work under 30 hours a week, and a substantial minority (18%) work more than 50 hours. Even comparing only full-time workers, fathers work longer than mothers - an average of 4-49 hours a week compared to 30-39 hours [Figure 6A].

In five countries, around a half or more of employed fathers work under 40 hours a week - Germany, France, Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark. In most countries, 15% or less of fathers work 50 hours a week or more, but there are three exceptions where over 20% of employed fathers have these long hours - Greece, Ireland and the Netherlands. The UK provides a particularly striking contrast between the hours of employed mothers and fathers. Most mothers work part-time and many work less than 40 hours a week; few fathers work part-time, and over a third work 50 hours a week or more [Figure 6D].

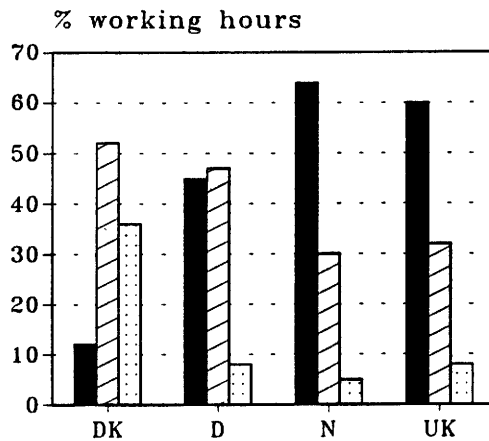
**Figure 6A**  
Hours normally worked: mothers  
and fathers: 1990



**Figure 6B**  
Mothers: short and long  
working hours: 1990

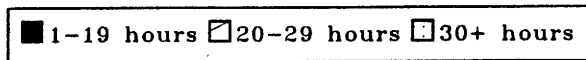


**Figure 6C**  
Part-time employed mothers:  
hours normally worked: 1990

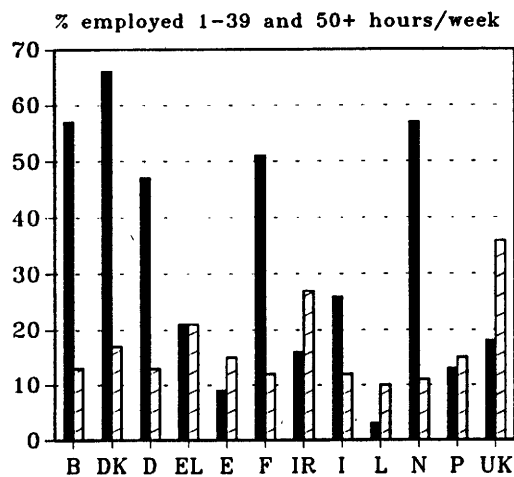


1-19 hours	12	45	64	60
20-29 hours	52	47	30	32
30+ hours	36	8	5	8

Country

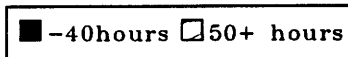


**Figure 6D**  
Fathers: short and long working  
hours: 1990



-40hours	57	66	47	21	9	51	16	26	3	57	13	18
50+ hours	13	17	13	21	15	12	27	12	10	11	15	36

Country



## Parental employment: professional status: 1990

### Mothers

Three-quarters of employed mothers in the European Community are permanent employees (*Group E* in **Figure 7A**). Of the remainder, 8.7% are employees with temporary jobs (*Group A* in **Figures 7A-7C**), 8% are self-employed with no employees (*Group C*) and 4.9% are family workers (*Group B*). This leaves a small number (1.9%) who are self-employed with employees (*Group D*) [**Figure 7A**].

At a national level, **Denmark** has a high level of permanent employees (86%), while **Greece** (58%), **Spain** (57%) and **Portugal** (63%) have relatively low levels. Both **Spain** and **Portugal** have relatively high levels of temporary employees, **Greece** and **Spain** have relatively high levels of family workers and all three countries have high levels of self-employed workers without employees, along with Italy. Apart from these four countries, the proportion of permanent employees ranges from 71% (**Netherlands**) to 81% (**France**) [**Figure 7B**].

### Fathers

At a European Community level, the proportion of employed fathers who are permanent employees is the same as for employed mothers (75%). However the distribution of fathers between different types of professional status differs from the distribution for mothers. Fathers are more likely to be self-employed without employees (13.7% v 8%) or self-employed with employees (5.7% v 1.9%), but less likely to be an employee with a temporary job (4.5% v 8.7%) or a family worker (0.3% v 4.9%) [**Figure 7A**].

The proportion of fathers who are permanent employees is highest in **Luxembourg**, **Netherlands** (both 88%) and **Germany** (84%). It is lowest in the four **Southern European** countries and **Ireland**, where less than 70% of employed fathers are permanent employees. Though the number of fathers who are employees in temporary jobs is high in **Spain**, the main reason for the low level of permanent employees in these countries is the number of fathers who are self-employed: this group (with or without employees) accounts for 23% of fathers in **Portugal** and **Spain**, 27% in **Italy**, 30% in **Ireland** and 39% in **Greece** [**Figure 7C**].

Comparison of these figures for parents with those for all persons in employment in the published report of the 1990 LFS (*Eurostat, 1992a: Table 25*) shows that the proportions who are employees, self-employed and family workers are very similar for mothers and all women and for fathers and all men.

## Parental Employment: type of economic activity: 1990

### Mothers

The LFS divides employed parents between 11 main groups of economic activity: Agriculture (*Group 1* in **Figure 7D**); Energy and Water (*Group 2*); Mineral Extraction (*Group 3*); Metal Manufacture (*Group 4*); Other Manufacturing (*Group 5*); Building (*Group 6*); Distributive Trades (*Group 7*); Transport and Communications (*Group 8*); Finance and Insurance (*Group 9*); Public Administration (*Group 10*); and Other Services (*Group 11*).

Employed mothers are heavily concentrated in three of these groups - Other Services (37%),



Distributive Trades (20%) and Other Manufacturing (10%). These three groups of activity account for two-thirds of all employed mothers. Finance and Insurance (8%) and Public Administration (8%) bring this up to more than four out of five mothers [Figure 7D]. In five countries, the three main economic activities account for over 70% of all employed mothers - Belgium, Luxembourg (both 71%), UK (73%), Spain (75%) and the Netherlands (76%).

High proportions of mothers work in Other Services in Netherlands (56%) and Denmark (50%); in Distributive Trades in Spain (27%) and UK (25%); and in Other Manufacturing in Portugal (22%), Greece (15%) and Italy (14%).

Only 5% of employed mothers throughout the Community work in Agriculture, but the proportion is substantially higher in Italy (10%), Portugal (14%) and Greece (16%).

### Fathers

The employment of fathers is spread more evenly across different groups of economic activities, and is less concentrated in the service sector. Five groups account for just under two-thirds of all employed fathers: Distributive Trades (16%), Metal Manufacture and Building (both 13%), Other Services (12%) and Other Manufacturing (10%).

Fathers are much less likely than mothers to work in Other Services, but more likely to work in Metal Manufacturing, Building and Transport. Employed mothers and fathers are employed in similar proportions in Agriculture, Other Manufacturing, Distributive Trades, Finance and Insurance and Public Administration.

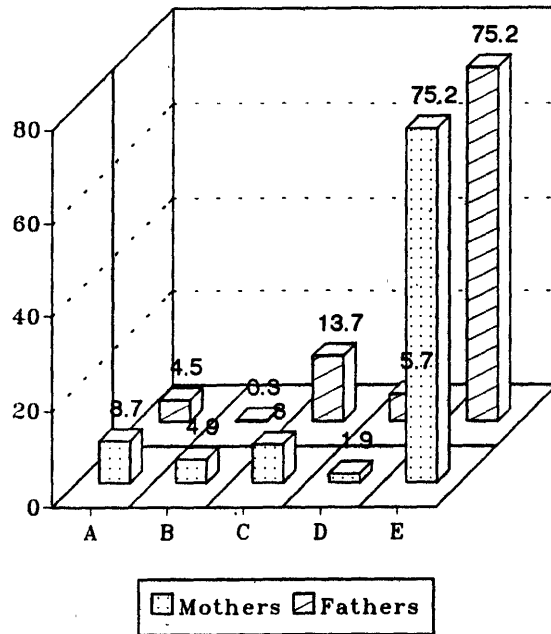
Nationally, Germany has a high proportion of employed fathers in Metal Manufacturing and Other Manufacturing, reflecting its strong manufacturing base - 32% compared to 22% for the Community and under 20% in Italy, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Greece and Portugal. Agriculture accounts for 15% of employed fathers in Ireland, 10% in Greece and 8% in both Portugal and Spain compared to a Community average of 5% [Figure 7D].

Comparing these figures for parents with those for all persons in employment in the published report of the 1990 LFS (*Eurostat, 1992a: Table 25*) shows similar distributions between different types of economic activity for mothers and all women and for fathers and all men. Thus 65% of all employed women work in Other Services, Distributive Trades and Other Manufacturing, compared to 67% of women with a child under 10; while Distributive Trades, Metal Manufacturing, Building, Other Services and Other Manufacturing account for 64% of all employed men and all employed men with a child under 10.

### Figure 7A

Professional status: employed  
mothers and fathers: 1990

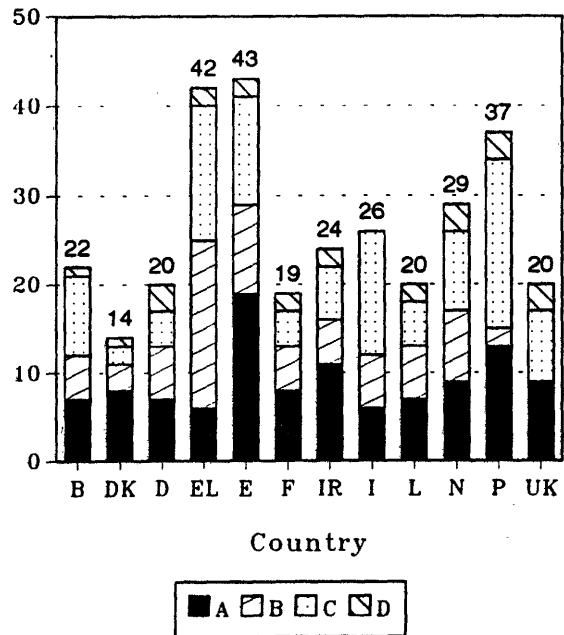
% of total employed



### Figure 7B

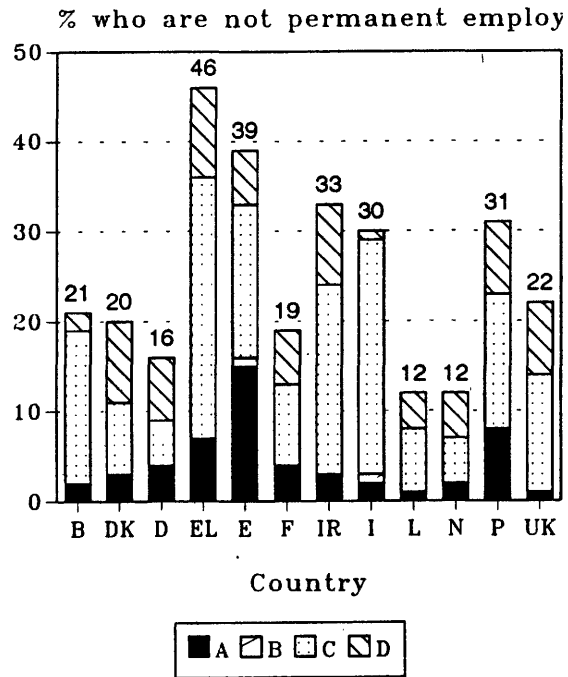
Employed mothers who are not  
permanent employees: 1990

% who are not permanent employ



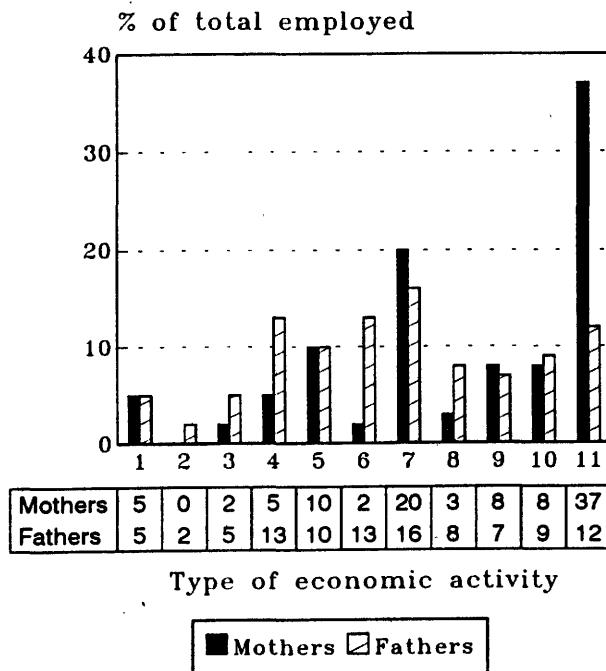
### Figure 7C

Employed fathers who are not permanent employees: 1990



### Figure 7D

Type of economic activity:  
employed mothers and fathers: 1990



## DISCUSSION

Having children continues to reduce women's participation in the labour market significantly -but to a decreasing extent. Throughout the European Community, an increasing number of mothers have been joining, or remaining in, the labour market. But even when in the labour market, having children affects the position of many women. Unemployment rates among mothers are higher than for childless women or for men; mothers may also form a large and disproportionate part of the 'hidden' labour force. Economically active mothers are more likely than childless women or fathers to have part-time jobs, and the proportion is growing. In current circumstances, part-time employment may have an adverse effect on the quality of jobs of many employed mothers, either when they have young children or later in their working lives.

The research of the EC Network on the Position of Women on the Labour Market shows a dual process underway in the European Community - increased integration of women into the labour market and increased inequalities in women's employment position:

"The steady trend has been that of women swelling the ranks of the economically active population in large numbers...However, (narrowing the gap between the economic activity of women and men) does not mean equality, for the pressures of unemployment and the employment crisis have reinforced the inequalities between men and women...and widened the differences amongst women. The segmentation of the female workforce into women with stable jobs, those who can hope to work only at the price of precariousness and those who, whatever their desires, will not find jobs is growing daily in each country" (*Maruani, 1992: 55*).

If increased economic activity among women involves growth in good quality jobs, 'precarious' poor quality jobs and unemployment, it is important to examine whether women with children and other major family responsibilities are disproportionately represented in the last two groups.

This report has dealt with economic activity among both mothers and fathers. Such comparison throws into sharp contrast the differing impact of children on the economic activity of men and women, and the different employment patterns of fathers and mothers. The impact of children on men's employment seems marginal, at least on the indicators covered in this report. Indeed, employment rates among men are at their highest level in the years when they have children at home. Nearly all employed fathers work in full-time jobs, and many work long hours.

The comparison raises important questions. What would genuine equality between men and women in the labour market look like? Would it consist of mothers adopting a similar employment profile to fathers, so that virtually all parents worked long hours in full-time jobs? Or would it involve significant changes in fathers' employment, with more working part-time and all working shorter hours? Would there be one gender-neutral model of employment for parents, male as well as female, or several gender-neutral models? How would employment during parenthood compare with employment before or after parenthood, or employment for members of the workforce who remained childless?

The trend towards more employment among mothers, combined with continuing high employment rates among fathers, raises another major issue when considered alongside other trends - more early retirement, more and longer education and relatively high unemployment among young people under 25. Employment rates peak for men and women aged 25-49. In this age range, 90% of men are employed, compared to 46% under 25 and 64% aged 50-64; while for women, employment rates are 59%, 38% and 31% respectively. The 1992 edition of *Employment in Europe* notes that:

"Between 1960 and 1990, the proportion (of the European Community's labour force) in the prime age group of 25-49 rose from 51% to 62%...(and) is projected to be higher in 2010" (*European Commission, 1992: 10,11*).

In short, working life is condensing and an increasing proportion of total employment is undertaken by men and women aged 25-49 - exactly the period in life when most men and women have children to care for (the average age at which women in the European Community have their first child is now 26 years).

This raises further questions. What are the costs and benefits of this way of organising paid and unpaid work? Is it possible, and is it desirable, to distribute the paid and unpaid workload (employment and caring), to give a more even distribution over the adult lives of individual men and women and to reduce unemployment? Can we organise time and work in a way that promotes gender equality, child and adult well-being and more effective use of human resources?

These questions posed above - about working life, its place in people's lives, the allocation of paid and caring work and the use of time for these and other activities - deserve and require far more attention. They are as relevant to the long-term social and economic well-being of the European Community as equally complex technical and environmental questions.

The issue of time is particularly pressing for lone mothers. Their numbers are increasing everywhere in Europe. With a few national exceptions, lone mothers are more likely than other mothers to be employed full-time or to be seeking work. Yet they have no partner with which to share (however unequally) the work and responsibility of caring for children, while their social networks are often inadequate to compensate. The report highlights the need to pay particular attention to the reconciliation of employment and caring for children for this group of women, in a way that not only promotes gender equality but also leaves lone mothers with some time for other activities, including time for themselves.

Lone parent households are at an increasing economic disadvantage in societies where there are growing numbers of dual-earner households with children. To take a very specific example, lone parents must pay for any necessary childcare services from one income, usually female; dual-earner households can draw on the resources of two incomes, one of which will be male and therefore, in most cases, significantly higher than a female income. This gives particular urgency to the principle of 'affordability' of services contained in the *Council of Ministers' Recommendation on Childcare*.

Developments in parental employment raise more general issues about household income and inequalities between households. Are these developments leading to increasing inequalities?

For example, both mothers and fathers with three or more children are less likely to be employed than parents with fewer children. Mothers are most likely to be unemployed in regions where fathers are also most likely to be unemployed. An increased number of mothers are in employment: but we do not know if this increase is uniform across different social, ethnic and demographic groups in different regions. It may be that already advantaged women (white, higher educated, with a partner in a well-paid, stable job) are benefitting most from any growth in good quality, stable employment for women with children, while less advantaged women are more likely to take precarious jobs, to be unemployed or to be economically inactive. In short, an overall growth in economic activity among women with children could actually contribute to reduced social cohesion and increased inequalities.

A large minority of employed mothers and fathers are not permanent employees, being self-employed, family workers or employees with temporary contracts. This has considerable implications when considering the reconciliation of employment and caring for children, and the 'respective responsibilities' (to use the words of the *Council of Ministers' Recommendation on Childcare*) of government and employers in this process: in other words, which measures should be universal rights and which should be occupational benefits? Even if all employers were to take major initiatives for their permanent workforce, many parents could not benefit because they are not part of that workforce.

Moreover, we do not know sufficient about the position of those mothers or fathers who are permanent employees to assess the likely impact of employer initiatives, given that such initiatives are most likely to be offered to higher skilled workers in areas of labour shortage, working for larger employers.

The LFS, on which this report is based, provides an invaluable source of quantitative data on employment and unemployment. It will continue to have an essential role to play in monitoring developments in parents' economic activity. However, to gain a fuller understanding of these developments and their implications, for example in areas such as quality of employment and various forms of inequality, additional material will be needed to build on the foundation provided by the Labour Force Survey.

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