

NOTHING HAS CHANGED: MOTHERS GIVE LOW PRIORITY TO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Destatis, 04 March 2010

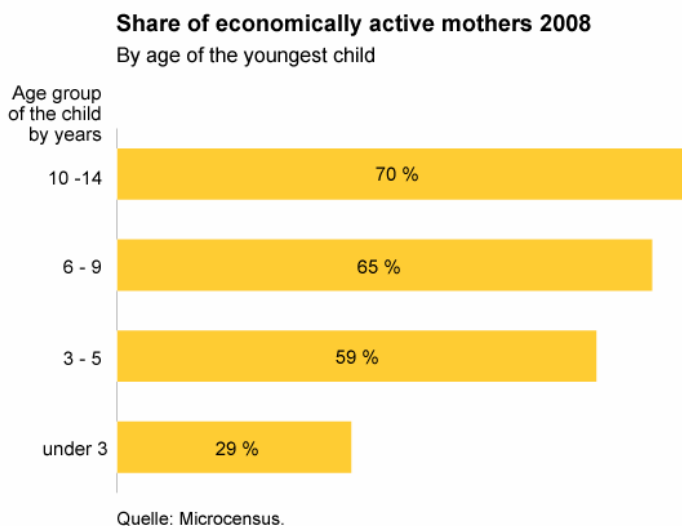
It is decisive for attaining gender equality that men's and women's share in professional and family life is well-balanced. These days the number of mothers pursuing an economic activity is still much lower than that of their male partners: in 2008, about six out of ten women in Germany with children below the age of 15 had a job. For men, starting a family seldom brings about any changes in their professional lives: only about every tenth father was not economically active.

Overall, there were 6.9 million mothers and 5.9 million fathers at working age in Germany in 2008 who had accepted the challenge to reconcile work and family life. They lived in a common household with at least one child of their own or a stepchild, foster child or adopted child below the age of 15.

The older the child, the greater the mother's economic activity

The extent to which mothers of minors give up or interrupt their economic activity depends among others on the age of the children. The older the child, the lower the need for care, and an increasing share of women takes up an economic activity again or works more hours.

In 2008 less than one third (29%) of the mothers whose smallest child was of crèche age (under



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three years) were in active employment. The same applied to six out of ten mothers (59%) with their youngest child at kindergarten age (3 to 5 years). When children reach primary school age (6 to 9 years), the share of working mothers goes up further (65%). Once children change to a secondary school (10 to 14 years), there is another small rise in the percentage share of mothers with a job (70%).

Fathers' participation in economic life is largely unrelated to the growing up of the children. In 2008 it was between 83% and 86% depending on the age of the youngest child.

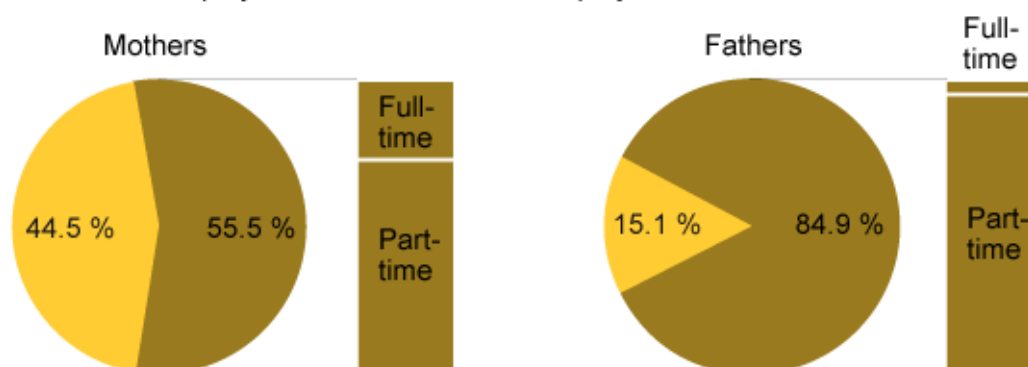
Nearly three fourths of all economically active mothers work part-time

A high rate of economic activity for both sexes alone does not mean that their integration into the labour market is well-balanced. The working time has to be considered, too. Part-time work on the one hand enables many women to distribute their time better between work and family. On the other, reduced working hours mean doing without part of the pay and old-age pension.

Generally, part-time work is much more common among women than among men. In 2008 almost three fourths (73%) of the working mothers aged 15 to 64 years were employed on a part-time basis. The age of the children did not have much influence on the share of part-time work of all economically active mothers. Even with their youngest child aged between 10 and 14 years, more than two thirds (70%) of the working mothers are part-timers. In contrast to mothers, the extent to which fathers participate in economic activity while their youngest child is below the age of 15 does not change much. Depending on the age of the youngest child in the household, the fathers' rate of part-time employment was between 4% and 6%.

Economic activity of mothers and fathers 2008

■ In active employment ■ Not in active employment



With the youngest child under 15 years.

Source: Microcensus.

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Mothers in eastern Germany in the lead

Twenty years after German unification, the economic activity of mothers with children under 15 years in the former territory of the Federal Republic (excluding Berlin) still differs from that of mothers in the new Länder (including Berlin). In eastern Germany, 58% of mothers pursue an economic activity, only 3% more than in the western part (55%), but a much higher number of working mothers in the eastern part opt for full-time employment. Every other working woman whose youngest child was under 15 years in the new Länder had a full-time job. Overall, the percentage of full-timers (53%) was more than twice that of mothers in the western part (22%).

It may be doubted that mothers in the eastern part of the Republic get more help from their partners. Although the share of fathers working full time (between 90% and 93%) was a few percentage points lower than in the western part (95% to 96%), this will mainly be due to the more difficult labour market situation in the new Länder.

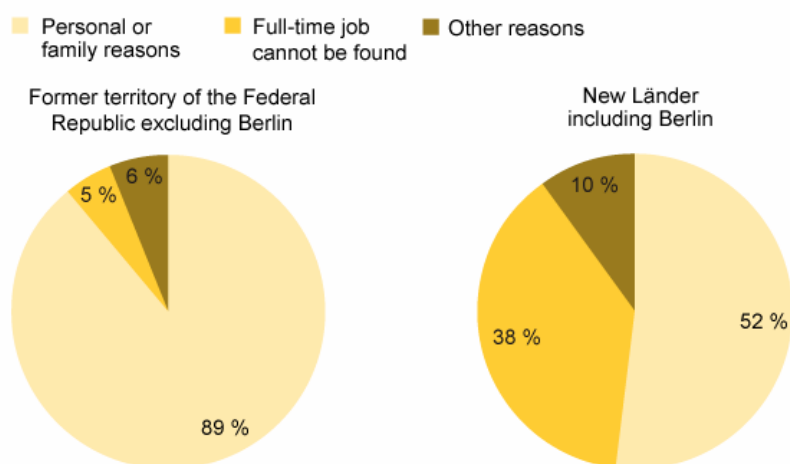
The more rapid reintegration of women into the labour market is rather owing to a well-developed childcare infrastructure for the youngest in the eastern part of Germany. It enables women to return to working life earlier and with more hours. In 2008, mothers with children of all age groups in eastern Germany were more often economically active (again). Be it with children of crèche age (eastern part: 33%; western part 27%), kindergarten age (eastern part: 63%; western part: 57%) or primary school age (eastern part: 71%; western part: 64%), the difference to mothers in western Germany was nearly the same at 6 or 7 percentage points. If the youngest child was 10 to under 14 years old, the employment rates were 70% for mothers in both eastern and western Germany.

Different reasons for working part-time in eastern and western Germany

The reasons why mothers opt for a part-time job provides further insights into the different employment patterns in the eastern and western parts. The percentage of mothers working part-time who state that they do so because of personal or family responsibilities is much smaller in the new Länder (52%) than in the former territory of the Federal Republic (89%). For almost four out of ten mothers (38%) in eastern Germany the reason for working reduced hours was a shortage of full-time jobs. This means that part-time work more often is a necessary evil for mothers in the eastern part, while women in western Germany mostly withdraw from economic life for the benefit of their families. The reasons surely are the higher economic pressure felt by women in the eastern part. For mothers in western Germany, in contrast, the traditional distribution of roles more often is the reason for reducing the working hours.

As the reconciliation of work and family life is a great challenge especially for women it remains to be seen what effects recent family, social and labour market policy measures will have (for instance introduction of parental allowance or additional childcare facilities for children under three years). In addition to government support measures, a central part will be played in this process by family-friendly working time models being offered and by personal attitudes.

Reason for mothers working part-time in 2008



With the youngest child under 15 years.

Source: Microcensus.

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Further detailed information

on the participation of mothers and fathers in economic life – also compared over time since 1996 – may be obtained free of charge via the table "Erwerbstätigenquoten" (employment rates, code: 12211-0606) in the GENESIS-Online data base.