

Men and women in the working world

When it comes to labor force participation, U.S. workers hold their own in the world. About 73 percent of men and 59 percent of women in the United States were in the labor force in 2007, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

The labor force participation rate is the share of a country's working-age civilian population that is employed or seeking work. This rate measures how involved men and women are in their labor market. The higher the rate, the more actively involved people are in their country's labor force.

Across most countries, men's labor force participation rates varied little—most countries had rates between 70 and 73 percent. But women's labor force participation

rates varied more than men's.

Women in several countries participated in the labor force at about the same high rate as U.S. women. The highest participation rates for women were in Canada and Sweden. The lowest rates for women were in Japan and Italy, which also had the largest gaps between male and female participation rates.

These data are from the BLS International Labor Comparisons program, formerly known as the Foreign Labor Statistics program. To learn more, visit www.bls.gov/fls; write to the program office at 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE., Suite 2150, Washington, DC 20212; call (202) 691-5654; or e-mail flshelp@bls.gov.

Labor force participation rates, by sex, selected countries, 2007

