

# Economic Spotlight

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## MARRIED WITH CHILDREN

Alberta has by far the highest labour force participation rate among the provinces. In 2002, the proportion of Alberta's working age population active in the labour force was 73.0%. All of the other provinces had aggregate participation rates below 70%; Newfoundland's was below 60% at 58.6%.

Although Alberta also had the highest participation rate for women overall, it had one of the lowest participation rates among the provinces for women aged 25-39. For women aged 25-29, Alberta's participation rate was below that of all other provinces except for Newfoundland, Quebec and Saskatchewan. For women aged 30-34, Alberta's participation rate was below that in every province except Newfoundland and B.C., while for women aged 35-39, only Newfoundland had a lower participation rate. For women aged 40-44, Alberta's participation rate was again among the highest in Canada.

**Table 1: Female Participation Rates, 2002**

	15 +	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
Canada	60.7	74.9	80.6	80.0	81.5	82.4	81.2
Newfoundland and Labrador	53.4	62.9	76.0	74.1	77.6	75.8	72.6
Prince Edward Island	63.9	80.9	87.0	87.2	87.5	87.3	83.6
Nova Scotia	57.6	72.6	84.9	79.2	81.5	79.6	78.6
New Brunswick	58.3	77.1	83.9	79.2	81.3	79.5	77.2
Quebec	58.2	76.5	78.9	80.8	82.8	82.2	80.9
Ontario	61.9	74.2	82.3	80.9	81.4	83.0	82.3
Manitoba	62.8	77.8	80.2	81.9	84.5	85.4	84.6
Saskatchewan	60.3	71.0	77.0	82.5	83.5	85.0	86.2
<b>Alberta</b>	<b>66.3</b>	<b>79.0</b>	<b>79.1</b>	<b>79.1</b>	<b>79.5</b>	<b>84.9</b>	<b>85.5</b>
British Columbia	59.5	72.1	79.6	76.6	80.5	79.4	76.2

The data suggest that Alberta women with very young children are less likely to participate in the paid labour force than their counterparts across Canada, but have the sharpest rise in participation rates once their children reach school age.<sup>1</sup> Only 61% of Alberta women with children under 3 were active in the labour force in 2002, the lowest proportion among the provinces. The participation rate rose to 69.3% for women with children aged 3 to 5 and then jumped sharply to 83.8% for women with school-aged children. There was very little difference in the participation rates of Alberta women with children aged 6 to 15, and those under 55 without any children under the age of 16 at home.

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<sup>1</sup> Although data are not specifically available for women aged 25-44, most of the women with very young children would fall in this age group.

**Table 2: Participation Rates of Women in Families, 2002**

	Youngest child < 3	Youngest child 3 - 5	Youngest child 6 - 15	Under 55, no children < 16
Canada	67.0	74.3	82.5	82.1
Newfoundland and Labrador	69.2	68.6	75.5	72.2
Prince Edward Island	81.1	84.6	88.6	84.3
Nova Scotia	68.6	74.6	79.6	78.7
New Brunswick	73.6	78.0	80.5	77.6
Quebec	70.6	76.0	82.2	80.2
Ontario	67.3	75.1	83.7	82.8
Manitoba	66.0	75.1	86.1	85.8
Saskatchewan	64.4	75.8	84.5	85.3
Alberta	61.0	69.3	83.8	86.3
British Columbia	63.5	72.2	78.4	82.1

Why are Alberta women with young children less likely to participate in the paid labour force than their counterparts in the other provinces? The data show that this is largely a matter of choice. In Alberta, only 5.8% of women aged 25-44 out of the labour force in 2002 wanted to work, the lowest percentage among the provinces. At the other extreme was Newfoundland, where a third of the women who did not participate in the labour force wanted work, but were discouraged about the prospects of finding a job (12.2%), were waiting for a recall (5.1%), had family/personal responsibilities (7.7%) or had other reasons. Generally speaking, provinces with higher unemployment rates tended to have higher proportions of women who wanted work, but who were not in the labour force. The data also suggest that it was more feasible economically for women in Alberta to stay home with young children than elsewhere in Canada. They were the most likely to have a husband with a job, and Alberta men in the 25-54 age group had the highest weekly wages among all the provinces.

**Table 3: Selected Labour Force Statistics 2002**

	% Women 25-44 Not Participating Who Wanted Work	Women 25-44 Unemployment Rate	% of Women with Children < 3 and Husband Employed	Average Weekly Wage Men 25-54 (\$)
Canada	9.4	6.7	81.2	844.94
Newfoundland	33.2	14.2	61.7	745.74
Prince Edward Island	16.0	10.1	73.0	647.93
Nova Scotia	14.0	7.3	72.9	727.05
New Brunswick	14.0	7.5	79.8	707.26
Quebec	9.1	7.4	80.4	767.68
Ontario	8.4	6.5	82.4	893.43
Manitoba	9.1	4.1	80.8	759.69
Saskatchewan	8.1	4.3	77.8	795.67
Alberta	5.8	4.2	85.4	937.78
British Columbia	10.0	7.8	81.0	866.04

Not surprisingly, Alberta women with young children were less likely to participate in the paid labour force if their husband was employed (60.3%) than if their husband was out of work (63.5%), or if there was no husband present (67.1%). This pattern, however, stands in sharp contrast to the rest of Canada. In all the other provinces, the women with young children who are most likely to participate in the labour force are those with employed husbands. This may in part reflect the fact that women with employed husbands are more likely to live in areas with lower unemployment rates and better jobs prospects. It may also reflect differences in the design of provincial social programs.

**Table 4: Participation Rates of Women with Children Under 3, 2002**

	All	Employed husband	Non-employed husband	No husband present
Canada	67.0	69.8	55.4	54.6
Newfoundland and Labrador	69.2	79.7	52.9	46.2
Prince Edward Island	81.1	85.2	80.0	75.0
Nova Scotia	68.6	73.1	64.3	51.5
New Brunswick	73.6	76.8	71.4	50.0
Quebec	70.6	74.6	58.1	49.1
Ontario	67.3	69.7	55.2	56.4
Manitoba	66.0	68.9	56.5	52.4
Saskatchewan	64.4	70.1	45.5	43.9
Alberta	61.0	60.3	63.5	67.1
British Columbia	63.5	66.9	43.5	56.5