

Sources

Data for 10 countries for most indicators are based on the BLS report [International Comparisons of Annual Labor Force Statistics, Adjusted to U.S. Concepts, 10 Countries, 1970-2010](#). To facilitate international comparisons, foreign-country data are adjusted to U.S. concepts. Data for the remaining countries and some indicators in their entirety—labor force participation rates by age, part-time employment rates, unemployment rates by education and measures of underutilization—are based on data from the International Labour Office (ILO) or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Labor force participation rates, employment-population ratios, and employment growth are supplemented with data from the ILO database [Key Indicators of the Labour Market](#) (KILM). The KILM harmonizes data using econometric models to account for differences in national data and scope of coverage, collection and tabulation methodologies, and other country-specific factors, such as military service requirements. Although some differences remain between the KILM and ILC series, they do not materially affect comparisons across countries.

Part-time employment rates, employment by sector, unemployment rates, and measures of underutilization are supplemented with data from the OECD database [OECD.Stat](#). The OECD generally uses labor force surveys and captures labor force statistics according to [ILO guidelines](#), which facilitate cross-country comparisons, because these guidelines create a common conceptual framework for countries. However, except for total unemployment rates, the OECD does not adjust

data for differences that remain across countries in coverage and definitions that can affect international comparisons. See [Labor Force Statistics in OECD Countries: Sources, Coverage and Definitions](#). For total unemployment rates, the OECD series used is the “harmonized unemployment rates” (HURs), which are adjusted to conform to the ILO guidelines in countries where deviations occur. For a full discussion of comparability issues, see the BLS article, [“International unemployment rates: how comparable are they?”](#)

Using multiple sources for an indicator to extend country coverage can introduce additional comparability issues, since each organization employs different methods for harmonizing data, if adjustments are made at all. Users should use caution when making international comparisons using the actual values underlying these charts and are encouraged to review the methodological documents associated with each source.

In this section, Europe includes 21 countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Definitions

Labor market data are on a civilian basis (i.e., members of the Armed Forces are not included).

The **labor force participation rate** is the labor force as a percent of the working-age population; it is an overall indicator of the level of labor market activity.

The **labor force** is the sum of the employed plus the unemployed; it provides an indication of the size of the labor supply. The **working-age population** is

the population ages 15 or 16 and older. (Lower age limits vary by country. See source documents.)

The **employed** are persons who, during the reference week, did work for at least 1 hour as paid employees, worked in their own business, profession, or on their own farm, or as unpaid workers in an enterprise operated by a family member (at least 1 hour according to the ILO guidelines but at least 15 hours according to U.S. concepts). Definitions of the employed vary by country. See source documents. The **employment-population ratio** is employment as a percent of the working-age population. **Part-time employment** refers to employed persons who usually work less than 30 hours per week in their main job; in some countries, “actual” rather than “usual” hours are used. The **part-time employment rate** is the share of employment that is part time and is also referred to as the incidence of part-time employment.

The **unemployed** are persons without work, actively seeking employment and currently available to start work. Definitions of the unemployed vary by country; see source documents. The **unemployment rate** is unemployment as a percent of the labor force; it is the most widely used measure of an economy’s unused labor supply. Persons **marginally attached to the labor force** are those who did not look for work in the past 4 weeks, but who wish to work, are available to work and, in some countries, have looked for work sometime in the past 12 months. Discouraged workers are the subset of the marginally attached who are not currently searching for a job because they believe none are available. The **time-related underemployed** are either: (1) full-time workers working less than a full week (less than

35 hours in the United States) during the survey reference week for economic reasons or (2) part-time workers who want but cannot find full-time work. For unemployment rates by education, the levels of educational attainment accord with the International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED) in its current version, known as ISCED 1997. **Less than high school** corresponds to “less than upper secondary education” and includes ISCED levels 0-3C. **High school or trade school** corresponds to “upper secondary and post-secondary education” and includes levels 3-4. **College or university** corresponds to “tertiary non-university and university” and includes levels 5-6. ■

