

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

The unemployment rate is one measure of the extent of labour market slack, as well as being an important indicator of economic and social well-being. Breakdowns of unemployment by gender show how certain groups are faring compared to others and to the overall population.

### Definition

Unemployed persons are defined as those who report that they are without work, that they are available for work and that they have taken active steps to find work in the last four weeks. The ILO Guidelines specify what actions count as active steps to find work; these include answering vacancy notices, visiting factories, construction sites and other places of work, and placing advertisements in the press as well as registering with labour offices.

The unemployment rate is defined as the number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force, where the latter consists of the unemployed plus those in paid employment.

The unemployment rates shown here differ from rates derived from registered unemployed at labour offices that are often published in individual countries. Data on registered unemployment have limited international comparability, as the rules for registering at labour offices vary from country to country.

When unemployment is high, some persons become discouraged and stop looking for work; they are then excluded from the labour force. This implies that the unemployment rate may fall, or stop rising, even though there has been no underlying improvement in the labour market.

### Comparability

All OECD countries use the ILO Guidelines for measuring unemployment. The operational definitions used in national labour force surveys may, however, vary slightly across countries. Unemployment levels are also likely to be affected by changes in the survey design and the survey conduct. Despite these limits, the unemployment rates shown here are fairly consistent over time.

### Overview

When looking at total unemployment rates averaged over the three years ending in 2010, countries can be divided into three groups: a low unemployment group with rates below 5% (Austria, Korea, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland); a middle group with unemployment rates between 5% and 10%; and a high unemployment group with unemployment rates of 10% and above (Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Turkey).

In most OECD countries, unemployment rates grew over the last three years, with marked increases in Estonia, Ireland and Spain. This increase could be explained by the global recession of 2008-09.

From the breakdown of unemployment by gender, it can be observed that unemployment rates for men and women have increased in the past three years. The unemployment rate for men rose faster than for women in the beginning of the recent economic crisis. This could be explained by the fact that job losses in predominantly male sectors – namely construction, manufacturing mining and quarrying – have been particularly severe. Nevertheless, recent data shows that, the men to women unemployment ratio has slightly decreased in some countries within the last year.

### Sources

- OECD (2011), *Main Economic Indicators*, OECD Publishing.
- For non-member countries: National sources.

### Further information

#### Analytical publications

- OECD (2011), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing.

#### Statistical publications

- OECD (2011), *OECD Employment Outlook*, OECD Publishing.

#### Online databases

- *OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics*.

#### Websites

- OECD Employment Data, [www.oecd.org/els/employment/data](http://www.oecd.org/els/employment/data).
- OECD Employment Policies, [www.oecd.org/els/employment](http://www.oecd.org/els/employment).
- OECD Labour Statistics, [www.oecd.org/statistics/labour](http://www.oecd.org/statistics/labour).



# UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

## Unemployment rates: total

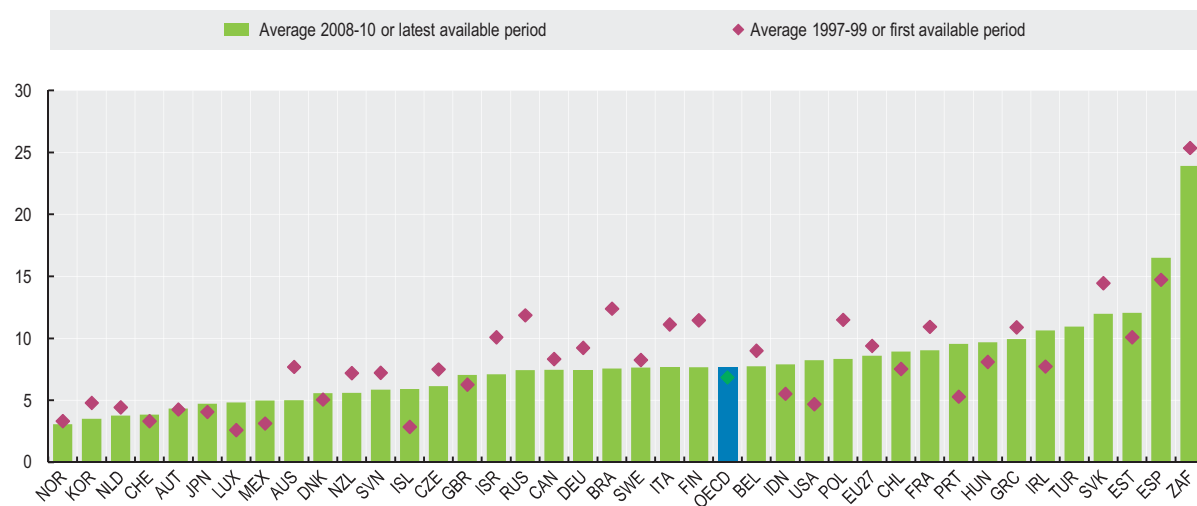
As a percentage of labour force

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia	8.5	7.7	6.9	6.3	6.8	6.4	5.9	5.4	5.0	4.8	4.4	4.2	5.6	5.2
Austria	4.4	4.5	3.9	3.6	3.6	4.2	4.3	4.9	5.2	4.7	4.4	3.8	4.8	4.4
Belgium	9.2	9.3	8.5	6.9	6.6	7.5	8.2	8.4	8.5	8.3	7.5	7.0	7.9	8.3
Canada	9.1	8.3	7.6	6.8	7.2	7.7	7.6	7.2	6.8	6.3	6.0	6.1	8.3	8.0
Chile	6.1	6.4	10.1	9.7	9.9	9.8	9.5	10.0	9.2	7.8	7.1	7.8	10.8	8.2
Czech Republic	4.8	6.4	8.6	8.7	8.0	7.3	7.8	8.3	7.9	7.2	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.3
Denmark	5.2	4.9	5.1	4.3	4.5	4.6	5.4	5.5	4.8	3.9	3.8	3.3	6.0	7.4
Estonia	9.7	9.2	11.4	13.6	12.6	10.2	10.0	9.7	7.8	5.9	4.6	5.6	13.8	16.8
Finland	12.7	11.4	10.3	9.6	9.1	9.1	9.1	8.9	8.3	7.7	6.9	6.4	8.2	8.4
France	11.4	11.0	10.4	9.0	8.3	8.6	9.0	9.2	9.3	9.2	8.4	7.8	9.5	9.8
Germany	9.7	9.4	8.6	8.0	7.9	8.7	9.8	10.5	11.2	10.2	8.8	7.6	7.7	7.1
Greece	9.6	11.1	12.0	11.2	10.7	10.3	9.7	10.5	9.9	8.9	8.3	7.7	9.5	12.6
Hungary	9.0	8.4	6.9	6.4	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.1	7.2	7.4	7.4	7.8	10.0	11.2
Iceland	3.9	2.7	2.0	2.3	2.3	3.3	3.4	3.1	2.6	2.9	2.3	3.0	7.2	7.5
Ireland	9.9	7.6	5.7	4.2	4.0	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.6	6.3	11.9	13.7
Israel	..	..	..	..	9.3	10.3	10.7	10.4	9.0	8.4	7.3	6.1	7.5	6.7
Italy	11.2	11.3	10.9	10.1	9.1	8.6	8.5	8.0	7.7	6.8	6.1	6.8	7.8	8.4
Japan	3.4	4.1	4.7	4.7	5.0	5.4	5.3	4.7	4.4	4.1	3.9	4.0	5.1	5.1
Korea	2.6	7.0	6.6	4.4	4.0	3.3	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.6	3.7
Luxembourg	2.7	2.7	2.4	2.3	1.9	2.6	3.8	4.9	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.9	5.1	4.5
Mexico	3.7	3.2	2.5	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.4	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.7	4.0	5.5	5.4
Netherlands	5.4	4.3	3.6	3.0	2.6	3.1	4.1	5.1	5.3	4.3	3.6	3.1	3.7	4.5
New Zealand	6.8	7.7	7.1	6.2	5.5	5.3	4.8	4.1	3.8	3.9	3.7	4.2	6.1	6.5
Norway	3.9	3.1	3.0	3.2	3.4	3.7	4.2	4.3	4.5	3.4	2.5	2.5	3.2	3.5
Poland	10.9	10.2	13.4	16.2	18.3	20.0	19.7	19.0	17.8	13.9	9.6	7.2	8.2	9.6
Portugal	6.7	5.6	5.0	4.5	4.6	5.7	7.1	7.5	8.6	8.6	8.9	8.5	10.6	12.0
Slovak Republic	11.8	12.6	16.3	18.8	19.3	18.7	17.6	18.2	16.2	13.4	11.1	9.5	12.0	14.4
Slovenia	6.9	7.4	7.4	6.7	6.2	6.3	6.7	6.3	6.5	6.0	4.9	4.4	5.9	7.3
Spain	16.7	15.0	12.5	11.1	10.4	11.1	11.1	10.6	9.2	8.5	8.3	11.4	18.0	20.1
Sweden	9.9	8.2	6.7	5.6	5.9	6.0	6.6	7.4	7.7	7.1	6.1	6.2	8.3	8.4
Switzerland	3.9	3.3	2.8	2.5	2.2	2.9	3.9	4.1	4.2	3.8	3.4	3.2	4.1	4.2
Turkey	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9.2	8.7	8.8	9.7	12.5	10.6
United Kingdom	6.8	6.1	5.9	5.4	5.0	5.1	5.0	4.7	4.8	5.4	5.3	5.7	7.6	7.8
United States	4.9	4.5	4.2	4.0	4.7	5.8	6.0	5.5	5.1	4.6	4.6	5.8	9.3	9.6
EU27 total	..	9.5	9.3	8.8	8.6	9.0	9.1	9.2	9.0	8.3	7.2	7.1	9.0	9.7
OECD total	6.9	6.8	6.8	6.3	6.6	7.1	7.3	7.1	6.8	6.2	5.8	6.1	8.4	8.6
Brazil	10.1	13.6	13.5	12.7	11.2	11.7	12.3	11.5	9.8	10.0	9.3	7.9	8.1	6.7
Indonesia	4.7	5.5	6.4	6.1	8.1	9.1	9.7	9.9	10.8	10.4	9.4	8.4	8.0	7.3
Russian Federation	10.8	11.9	12.9	10.5	9.0	8.0	8.6	8.2	7.6	7.2	6.1	6.4	8.4	7.5
South Africa	..	..	..	23.3	26.2	26.6	24.8	23.0	23.5	22.1	21.0	22.9	23.9	24.9

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## Unemployment rates: total

As a percentage of labour force



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932505602>

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Unemployment rates: men

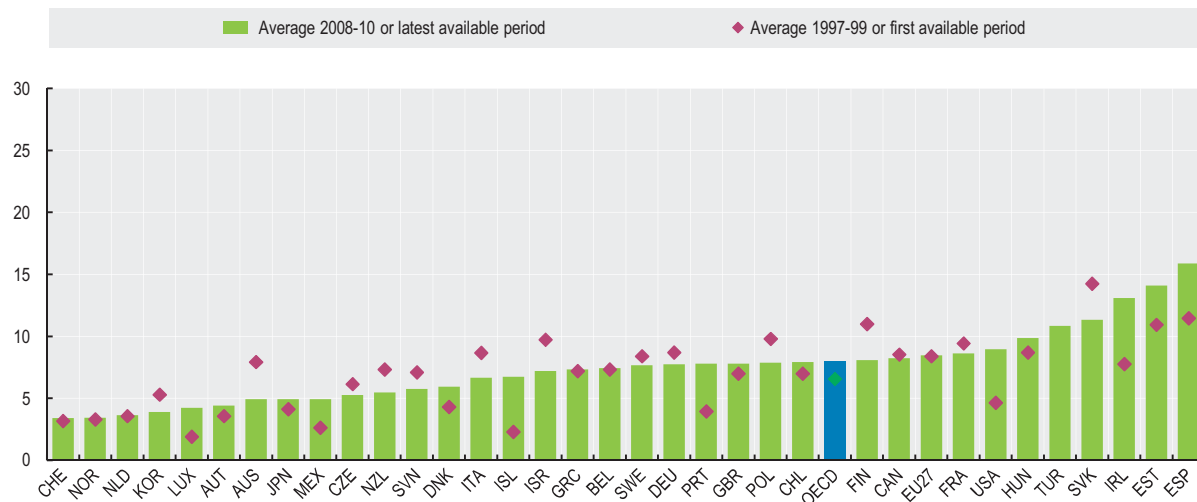
As a percentage of men in the labour force

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia	8.7	8.0	7.1	6.5	7.0	6.5	5.9	5.3	4.9	4.7	4.0	4.0	5.7	5.1
Austria	3.6	3.8	3.3	3.0	3.2	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.9	4.3	3.9	3.6	5.0	4.6
Belgium	7.3	7.6	7.2	5.6	5.9	6.7	7.7	7.5	7.7	7.4	6.7	6.5	7.7	8.1
Canada	9.3	8.5	7.8	6.9	7.5	8.1	7.9	7.5	7.0	6.5	6.4	6.6	9.4	8.7
Chile	5.4	5.8	9.8	9.3	9.7	9.6	9.1	9.4	8.5	6.9	6.3	6.8	9.8	7.2
Czech Republic	4.0	5.0	7.3	7.3	6.7	6.0	6.2	7.1	6.5	5.8	4.2	3.5	5.9	6.4
Denmark	4.5	3.9	4.5	3.9	4.1	4.3	4.9	5.1	4.4	3.4	3.4	3.0	6.6	8.2
Estonia	10.4	9.9	12.5	14.6	13.0	10.8	10.3	10.4	8.6	6.1	5.3	6.0	17.0	19.4
Finland	12.4	10.9	9.7	8.7	8.7	9.1	9.3	8.8	8.1	7.4	6.6	6.2	8.9	9.1
France	10.0	9.4	8.9	7.5	7.0	7.7	8.1	8.4	8.4	8.5	7.8	7.3	9.3	9.4
Germany	9.0	8.9	8.2	7.7	7.8	8.9	10.1	10.8	11.5	10.2	8.7	7.5	8.1	7.6
Greece	6.3	7.3	8.0	7.4	7.2	6.8	6.2	6.6	6.2	5.7	5.2	5.1	6.9	10.0
Hungary	9.7	9.0	7.4	7.0	6.3	6.2	6.1	6.1	7.0	7.2	7.1	7.7	10.3	11.6
Iceland	3.3	2.2	1.4	1.8	2.1	3.6	3.6	3.2	2.6	2.7	2.3	3.3	8.6	8.3
Ireland	9.9	7.7	5.7	4.3	4.1	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.6	4.6	4.9	7.5	14.9	16.9
Israel	..	..	..	..	8.9	10.1	10.2	9.5	8.6	7.9	6.8	5.8	7.6	6.8
Italy	8.7	8.8	8.5	7.8	7.0	6.7	6.5	6.4	6.2	5.4	4.9	5.6	6.8	7.5
Japan	3.4	4.2	4.8	4.9	5.2	5.5	5.5	4.9	4.6	4.3	3.9	4.1	5.3	5.4
Korea	2.8	7.8	7.4	5.0	4.5	3.7	3.8	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.7	3.6	4.1	4.0
Luxembourg	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.6	2.0	3.0	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.4	4.1	4.6	3.9
Mexico	..	..	..	..	2.4	2.6	2.9	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.9	5.5	5.4
Netherlands	4.4	3.5	2.8	2.4	2.1	2.8	4.1	4.9	4.9	3.9	3.1	2.8	3.7	4.4
New Zealand	6.9	7.8	7.3	6.3	5.5	5.2	4.5	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.4	4.1	6.1	6.2
Norway	3.7	3.0	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.8	4.5	4.6	4.7	3.5	2.6	2.7	3.6	4.0
Poland	9.1	8.5	11.8	14.4	16.9	19.1	19.0	18.2	16.6	13.0	9.0	6.5	7.8	9.3
Portugal	6.0	4.8	4.7	3.8	3.9	5.1	6.7	7.2	8.1	8.0	8.0	7.9	10.7	11.8
Slovak Republic	11.1	12.2	16.3	18.9	19.8	18.6	17.4	17.4	15.4	12.2	9.9	8.4	11.4	14.2
Slovenia	6.8	7.3	7.2	6.5	5.7	5.9	6.4	5.9	6.1	4.9	4.0	4.0	5.9	7.5
Spain	13.1	11.2	9.0	7.9	7.5	8.1	8.2	8.0	7.1	6.3	6.4	10.1	17.7	19.8
Sweden	10.2	8.4	6.6	5.9	6.1	6.3	6.9	7.6	7.7	6.9	5.9	5.9	8.6	8.5
Switzerland	4.0	3.0	2.5	2.1	1.6	2.6	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.2	2.7	2.7	3.7	3.8
Turkey	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9.2	8.6	8.7	9.6	12.5	10.4
United Kingdom	7.7	6.8	6.5	5.9	5.5	5.7	5.5	5.1	5.2	5.8	5.6	6.2	8.6	8.6
United States	4.9	4.4	4.1	3.9	4.8	5.9	6.3	5.6	5.1	4.6	4.7	6.1	10.3	10.5
EU27 total	..	8.5	8.3	7.8	7.8	8.3	8.5	8.6	8.4	7.6	6.7	6.7	9.1	9.7
OECD total	6.5	6.6	6.5	6.1	6.5	7.1	7.3	7.1	6.7	6.2	5.7	6.2	8.9	9.0
Brazil	..	..	..	..	..	..	10.1	9.1	7.8	8.2	7.4	6.1	6.5	5.2
Indonesia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.7	..	..
Russian Federation	12.1	13.5	13.2	10.6	9.3	8.1	8.4	8.0	7.3	7.5	6.4	6.6	9.0	8.0
South Africa	..	..	..	20.4	23.3	22.6	21.7	19.9	19.7	17.8	18.2	20.0	22.1	22.8

StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932505621>

Unemployment rates: men

As a percentage of men in the labour force



StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932505640>



# UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

## Unemployment rates: women

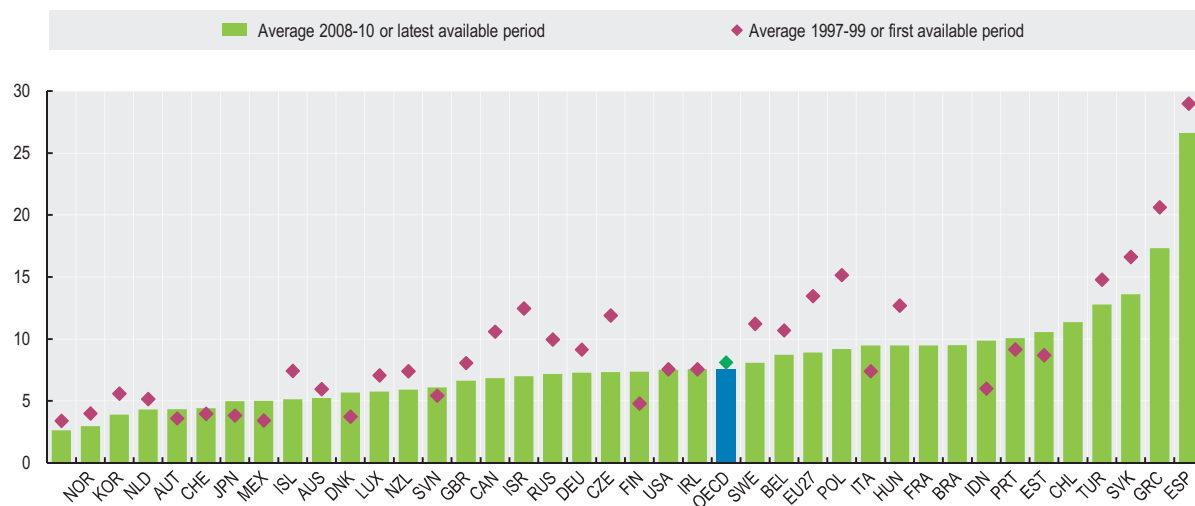
As a percentage of women in the labour force

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia	8.2	7.4	6.7	6.1	6.4	6.2	6.0	5.5	5.2	4.9	4.8	4.6	5.4	5.4
Austria	5.4	5.4	4.7	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.7	5.4	5.5	5.3	5.0	4.1	4.6	4.2
Belgium	11.9	11.6	10.2	8.5	7.5	8.7	8.8	9.5	9.5	9.3	8.4	7.6	8.1	8.5
Canada	8.9	8.0	7.3	6.7	6.9	7.1	7.2	6.9	6.5	6.1	5.6	5.7	7.0	7.2
Chile	7.7	7.6	10.8	10.3	10.1	10.1	10.3	11.2	10.6	9.5	8.6	9.5	12.5	9.7
Czech Republic	5.9	8.0	10.3	10.3	9.7	9.0	9.9	9.9	9.8	8.9	6.8	5.6	7.7	8.5
Denmark	6.2	6.0	5.7	4.8	5.0	5.0	6.1	6.0	5.3	4.5	4.2	3.7	5.4	6.6
Estonia	8.9	8.4	10.2	12.7	12.2	9.7	9.8	8.9	7.0	5.6	3.9	5.3	10.6	14.3
Finland	13.0	11.9	10.8	10.5	9.7	9.1	8.9	9.0	8.5	8.1	7.2	6.7	7.6	7.7
France	13.2	12.8	12.1	10.8	9.9	9.8	10.0	10.2	10.3	10.1	9.0	8.4	9.8	10.2
Germany	10.6	10.2	9.1	8.3	8.0	8.5	9.4	10.2	10.9	10.0	8.9	7.7	7.3	6.5
Greece	14.8	17.0	18.1	17.1	16.1	15.7	15.0	16.2	15.3	13.6	12.8	11.4	13.2	16.2
Hungary	8.1	7.8	6.3	5.6	5.0	5.5	5.6	6.1	7.4	7.8	7.7	8.0	9.7	10.7
Iceland	4.5	3.2	2.6	2.9	2.5	2.9	3.1	2.9	2.6	3.1	2.3	2.6	5.7	6.7
Ireland	9.9	7.3	5.5	4.1	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.8	8.0	9.7
Israel	..	..	..	..	9.9	10.6	11.3	11.4	9.5	9.0	7.9	6.5	7.5	6.5
Italy	15.3	15.4	14.8	13.6	12.2	11.5	11.4	10.5	10.0	8.8	7.9	8.6	9.3	9.7
Japan	3.4	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.7	5.1	4.9	4.4	4.2	3.9	3.7	3.8	4.8	4.6
Korea	2.3	5.7	5.3	3.6	3.3	2.7	3.3	3.4	3.4	2.9	2.6	2.6	3.0	3.3
Luxembourg	3.9	4.0	3.3	2.9	2.4	3.4	4.9	6.8	6.0	6.0	5.2	5.8	5.9	5.3
Mexico	..	..	..	..	3.5	3.7	4.3	5.1	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.1	5.5	5.3
Netherlands	6.8	5.5	4.5	3.9	3.3	3.5	4.3	5.3	5.8	5.0	4.1	3.4	3.8	4.5
New Zealand	6.9	7.6	6.7	6.0	5.4	5.5	5.1	4.6	4.1	4.2	4.0	4.2	6.2	6.9
Norway	4.1	3.2	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.9	3.9	4.3	3.4	2.5	2.3	2.6	3.0
Poland	13.0	12.2	15.2	18.2	19.9	20.9	20.5	20.0	19.2	15.0	10.4	8.0	8.7	10.0
Portugal	7.6	6.6	5.4	5.3	5.4	6.4	7.7	8.0	9.1	9.3	10.0	9.2	10.5	12.3
Slovak Republic	12.8	13.2	16.4	18.6	18.7	18.7	17.8	19.2	17.2	14.7	12.7	10.9	12.8	14.6
Slovenia	7.1	7.5	7.6	7.0	6.8	6.8	7.1	6.8	7.1	7.2	5.9	4.8	5.8	7.1
Spain	22.6	21.2	18.1	16.1	14.8	15.7	15.3	14.3	12.2	11.6	10.9	13.1	18.4	20.5
Sweden	9.5	8.0	6.8	5.3	5.6	5.6	6.2	7.1	7.6	7.2	6.4	6.5	8.0	8.3
Switzerland	3.9	3.7	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.2	4.2	4.6	4.8	4.5	4.2	3.8	4.5	4.7
Turkey	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9.3	9.1	9.1	10.1	12.6	11.4
United Kingdom	5.8	5.3	5.2	4.8	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.3	5.0	5.0	5.1	6.4	6.8
United States	5.0	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.7	5.6	5.7	5.4	5.1	4.6	4.5	5.4	8.1	8.6
EU27 total	..	10.9	10.5	10.0	9.6	9.9	9.9	10.0	9.8	9.0	7.9	7.6	9.0	9.6
OECD total	7.7	7.6	7.4	7.0	7.0	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.3	6.7	6.2	6.3	8.0	8.4
Brazil	..	..	..	..	..	..	15.2	14.4	12.4	12.2	11.6	10.0	9.9	8.5
Indonesia	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9.5	..	..
Russian Federation	11.5	13.0	12.9	10.4	8.6	7.6	8.0	7.5	7.0	6.8	5.8	6.1	7.9	7.0
South Africa	..	..	..	26.5	29.4	31.1	28.4	26.6	27.8	27.0	24.3	26.3	26.1	27.5

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932505659>

## Unemployment rates: women

As a percentage of women in the labour force



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