



INTERNATIONAL LABOR COMPARISONS

International Unemployment Rates & Employment Indexes

Technical Notes

Last Updated: October 2013

Data adjusted to U.S. concepts

Data in tables 1 and 3 are on a civilian labor force basis and are from household surveys unless otherwise noted. Although the U.S. lower age limit is 16 years, the age limit for other countries varies from 15 to 16 years. No adjustment is made for the treatment of layoffs. For some countries, no adjustment is made for the treatment of unpaid family workers, persons waiting to start a new job, and passive job seekers (for example, persons only reading newspaper ads as their method of job search). In the United States, job search must be "active," such as placing or answering advertisements, and simply reading ads is not enough to qualify as active search. These unadjusted differences have a negligible effect on the comparisons. For further information on comparability issues, see Constance Sorrentino, "International unemployment rates: how comparable are they?" *Monthly Labor Review*, June 2000, pp. 3-20, at www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2000/06/art1full.pdf.

Employment indexes are calculated using employment levels underlying the unemployment rates and therefore are also from household surveys. Household surveys provide greater comparability of labor market trends across countries than establishment surveys, although both types of surveys are used to measure employment. In the United States, the establishment survey provides a highly reliable gauge of monthly change in nonfarm payroll employment while the household survey provides a broader picture of employment including agriculture and the self-employed. For details on the differences between the two U.S. surveys, see www.bls.gov/web/ces_cps_trends.pdf. Note that trends shown in table 3 are for the number of persons in employment and not the number of jobs.

For further qualifications on data adjusted to U.S. concepts and historical annual figures, see "International Comparisons of Annual Labor Force Statistics, Adjusted to U.S. Concepts, 16 countries" at www.bls.gov/ilc/flscomparelf.htm.

Unemployment rates unadjusted by The Conference Board

Data in table 2 are not adjusted by The Conference Board to reflect U.S. concepts. They exclude conscripts but include career military living in private households. These data are prepared by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) according to the International Labor Office (ILO) definitions and are called harmonized unemployment rates. For details on methods and concepts, see "European Union labor force survey, methods and concepts, 2001," at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-BF-03-002/EN/KS-BF-03-002-EN.PDF. Data are reproduced with permission from EUROSTAT.

The European Union-27 (EU-27) refers to EU member countries as of January 1, 2007. The EU-27 rate is the population-weighted average for the following 27 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

The Euro area refers to EU member countries that adopted the euro as a common currency. The composition of the euro area changes over time. As the euro area expands, data for new member countries are linked into this moving coverage series. Thus, the euro area rate changes its geographical coverage according to the composition of the euro area during the period to which the data refer. For January 2011 onward, the euro area rate is the population-weighted average for the following 17 countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.