

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Most OECD countries publish unemployment rates that are based on the numbers of persons who are registered as unemployed at government labour offices. Because they are available soon after the end of the month or quarter to which they refer, the numbers of registered unemployed are treated as the “headline” unemployment figures by many countries. However, the rules for registering at labour offices vary from country to country, so that unemployment statistics based on this source are not comparable between countries. The unemployment rates shown here use ILO Guidelines that provide common definitions of unemployment and of the labour force.

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 and 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.

Long-term trends

In most OECD countries, unemployment rates rose in the early part of the 1990s but have been falling since then. Falls have been particularly marked in Australia, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand and Spain.

There is no obvious pattern in the differences in unemployment rates for men and women. Unemployment rates for women are usually higher than for men, but in several countries unemployment rates for women have been lower in recent years – Canada, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States. Part of the reason may be that in these countries women are more likely than men to withdraw from the labour force when unemployed.

As regards total unemployment rates in 2005-2007, countries can be divided into three groups: a low unemployment group with rates below 4.5% (Iceland, Korea, Norway, Mexico, New Zealand, Netherlands, Switzerland, Japan, Denmark and Luxembourg); a middle group with unemployment rates between 4.5% and 9%; and a high unemployment group with average rates of 9% and above (Greece, Germany, Turkey, Poland and the Slovak Republic).

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 employment, which are defined as persons who have worked for one hour or more in the last week.

When unemployment is high, some persons become discouraged and stop looking for work. They are then excluded from the labour force so 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, but the operational definitions used in national labour force surveys vary slightly in a few countries. Unemployment levels are also likely to be affected by changes in the survey design and/or the survey conduct, but unemployment rates are likely to be fairly consistent over time.

Source

- OECD (2008), *Main Economic Indicators*, OECD, Paris.
- For Non-Member Countries: National Sources.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2007), *Society at a Glance: OECD Social Indicators – 2006 Edition*, OECD, Paris.

Statistical publications

- OECD (2004), *Quarterly Labour Force Statistics*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2008), *OECD Employment Outlook*, OECD, Paris.

Online databases

- *Employment Statistics*.

Websites

- OECD Labour Statistics Database, www.oecd.org/statistics/labour.
- OECD Employment Policy, www.oecd.org/els/employment.
- OECD Employment Data, www.oecd.org/els/employment/data.

Unemployment rates: total

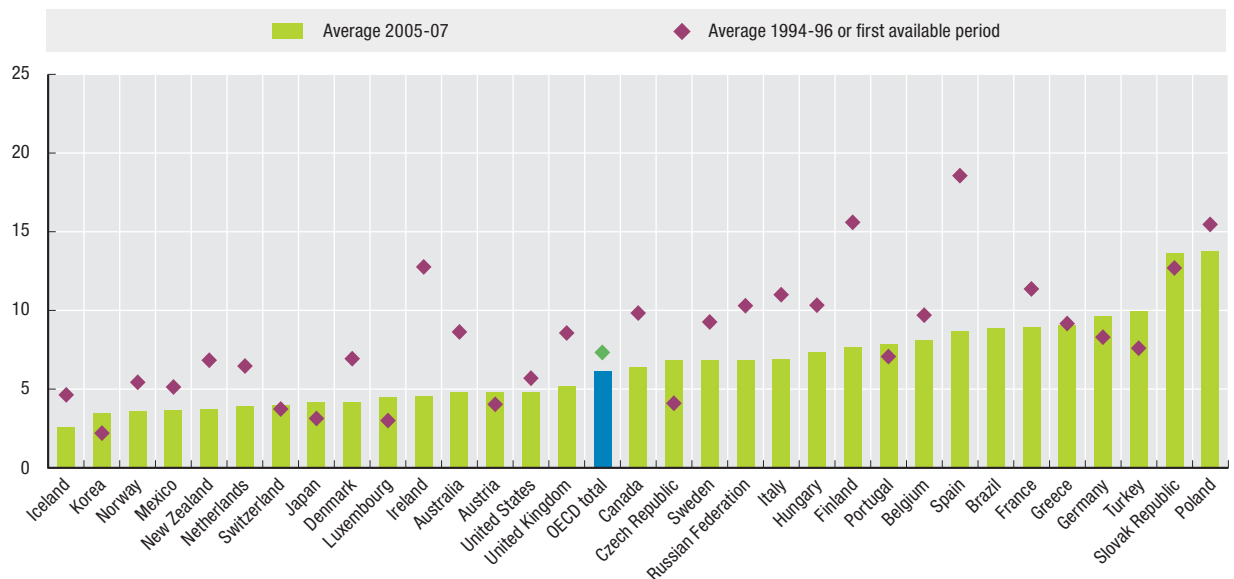
As a percentage of civilian labour force


	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Australia	9.5	8.2	8.2	8.3	7.7	6.9	6.3	6.7	6.4	5.9	5.4	5.1	4.8	4.4
Austria	3.8	3.9	4.4	4.4	4.5	3.9	3.7	3.6	4.2	4.3	4.9	5.2	4.7	4.4
Belgium	9.8	9.7	9.6	9.2	9.3	8.5	6.9	6.6	7.5	8.2	8.4	8.5	8.3	7.5
Canada	10.4	9.5	9.6	9.1	8.3	7.6	6.8	7.2	7.7	7.6	7.2	6.8	6.3	6.0
Czech Republic	4.3	4.1	3.9	4.8	6.4	8.6	8.7	8.0	7.3	7.8	8.3	7.9	7.2	5.3
Denmark	7.7	6.8	6.3	5.2	4.9	5.1	4.3	4.5	4.6	5.4	5.5	4.8	3.9	3.8
Finland	16.8	15.1	14.9	12.7	11.4	10.3	9.6	9.1	9.1	9.1	8.9	8.4	7.7	6.9
France	11.6	11.0	11.5	11.4	11.0	10.4	9.0	8.3	8.6	9.0	9.3	9.3	9.2	8.3
Germany	8.2	8.0	8.7	9.4	9.0	8.3	7.5	7.6	8.4	9.3	9.8	10.6	9.8	8.4
Greece	8.8	9.0	9.7	9.6	11.1	12.0	11.3	10.7	10.3	9.7	10.5	9.9	8.9	8.3
Hungary	11.0	10.4	9.6	9.0	8.4	6.9	6.4	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.1	7.2	7.5	7.4
Iceland	5.3	4.9	3.7	3.9	2.7	2.0	2.3	2.3	3.3	3.4	3.1	2.6	2.9	2.3
Ireland	14.4	12.3	11.6	9.9	7.6	5.7	4.3	4.0	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.7
Italy	10.6	11.2	11.2	11.2	11.4	11.0	10.1	9.1	8.7	8.5	8.1	7.7	6.8	6.2
Japan	2.9	3.1	3.4	3.4	4.1	4.7	4.7	5.0	5.4	5.3	4.7	4.4	4.1	3.9
Korea	2.5	2.1	2.0	2.6	7.0	6.6	4.4	4.0	3.3	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.5	3.2
Luxembourg	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.4	2.3	1.9	2.6	3.8	4.9	4.6	4.6	4.2
Mexico	3.7	6.2	5.5	3.7	3.2	2.5	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.4	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.7
Netherlands	6.8	6.6	6.0	4.9	3.8	3.2	2.8	2.2	2.8	3.7	4.6	4.7	3.9	3.2
New Zealand	8.1	6.3	6.1	6.6	7.4	6.8	6.0	5.3	5.2	4.6	3.9	3.7	3.8	3.6
Norway	6.0	5.5	4.8	4.0	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.9	4.5	4.4	4.6	3.5	2.6
Poland	16.9	15.4	14.1	10.9	10.2	13.4	16.2	18.3	20.0	19.7	19.0	17.8	13.9	9.6
Portugal	6.8	7.2	7.2	6.7	5.0	4.5	4.0	4.0	5.1	6.4	6.8	7.7	7.8	8.1
Slovak Republic	13.7	13.1	11.3	11.9	12.7	16.3	18.8	19.3	18.7	17.6	18.2	16.3	13.4	11.1
Spain	19.5	18.4	17.8	16.7	15.0	12.5	11.1	10.4	11.1	11.1	10.6	9.2	8.5	8.3
Sweden	9.4	8.8	9.6	9.9	8.2	6.7	5.6	4.9	5.0	5.6	6.3	7.3	7.0	6.2
Switzerland	3.8	3.5	3.9	4.2	3.5	3.0	2.6	2.6	3.2	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.0	3.6
Turkey	8.6	7.6	6.6	6.8	6.9	7.7	6.5	8.4	10.3	10.5	10.3	10.2	9.9	9.8
United Kingdom	9.3	8.5	7.9	6.8	6.1	5.9	5.4	5.0	5.1	5.0	4.7	4.8	5.4	5.3
United States	6.1	5.6	5.4	4.9	4.5	4.2	4.0	4.7	5.8	6.0	5.5	5.1	4.6	4.6
EU27 total	..	..	..	..	..	..	8.7	8.5	8.9	9.0	9.0	8.9	8.2	7.1
OECD total	7.6	7.2	7.2	6.9	6.8	6.7	6.2	6.4	6.9	7.1	6.9	6.7	6.1	5.6
Brazil	9.2	9.6	8.7	8.3
Russian Federation	..	9.4	9.7	11.8	13.3	13.0	10.6	9.0	7.9	8.2	7.8	7.2	7.2	6.1

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Unemployment rates: total

As a percentage of civilian labour force



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UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

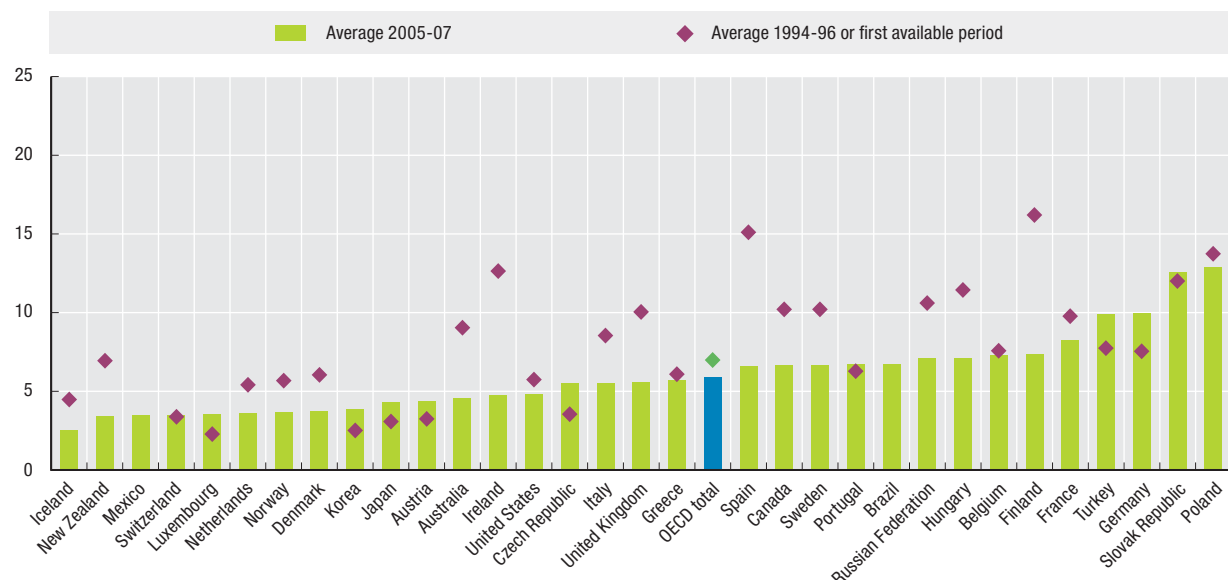

Unemployment rates: men

As a percentage of male civilian labour force

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Australia	9.9	8.7	8.5	8.6	8.1	7.2	6.5	7.1	6.6	5.9	5.3	4.9	4.7	4.1
Austria	3.0	3.1	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.3	3.1	3.1	4.0	4.0	4.4	4.9	4.3	3.9
Belgium	7.7	7.6	7.4	7.3	7.6	7.1	5.6	5.9	6.7	7.7	7.5	7.7	7.4	6.7
Canada	10.9	9.8	9.9	9.3	8.5	7.8	6.9	7.5	8.1	7.9	7.5	7.0	6.5	6.4
Czech Republic	3.7	3.5	3.4	4.0	5.0	7.2	7.3	6.7	6.0	6.2	7.1	6.5	5.8	4.2
Denmark	7.1	5.7	5.3	4.5	3.9	4.5	4.0	4.1	4.3	4.9	5.1	4.4	3.4	3.4
Finland	18.4	15.2	15.0	12.3	10.9	9.7	8.7	8.7	9.1	9.3	8.8	8.2	7.4	6.5
France	10.0	9.3	10.0	10.0	9.5	8.9	7.5	7.0	7.7	8.1	8.4	8.4	8.5	7.8
Germany	7.2	7.2	8.2	9.0	8.8	8.1	7.5	7.8	8.8	9.9	10.3	11.2	10.2	8.5
Greece	6.0	6.2	6.0	6.3	7.3	8.0	7.4	7.2	6.8	6.2	6.6	6.2	5.6	5.2
Hungary	12.3	11.8	10.2	9.7	9.0	7.4	7.0	6.3	6.1	6.1	6.1	7.0	7.2	7.1
Iceland	5.2	4.8	3.4	3.3	2.2	1.4	1.8	2.1	3.6	3.6	3.2	2.6	2.7	2.3
Ireland	14.2	12.2	11.5	9.9	7.7	5.7	4.3	4.1	4.8	5.0	4.9	4.6	4.6	5.0
Italy	8.3	8.6	8.7	8.7	8.8	8.5	7.9	7.1	6.7	6.5	6.4	6.2	5.4	4.9
Japan	2.8	3.1	3.3	3.4	4.2	4.8	4.9	5.2	5.5	5.5	4.9	4.6	4.3	3.9
Korea	2.8	2.3	2.4	2.8	7.8	7.4	5.0	4.5	3.7	3.8	3.9	4.0	3.8	3.7
Luxembourg	2.6	2.0	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.6	2.0	3.0	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.4
Mexico	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2.4	2.6	2.9	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.5
Netherlands	6.0	5.5	4.7	3.7	3.0	2.3	2.2	1.8	2.5	3.5	4.4	4.4	3.5	2.8
New Zealand	8.5	6.2	6.1	6.6	7.5	7.0	6.1	5.3	5.0	4.3	3.5	3.4	3.5	3.3
Norway	6.6	5.7	4.7	3.9	3.1	3.3	3.6	3.7	4.1	4.9	4.9	4.8	3.6	2.6
Poland	15.1	13.8	12.3	9.1	8.5	11.8	14.4	16.9	19.2	19.0	18.2	16.6	13.0	9.0
Portugal	6.0	6.4	6.4	6.0	4.0	3.9	3.2	3.2	4.2	5.5	6.0	6.8	6.6	6.7
Slovak Republic	13.3	12.5	10.2	11.1	12.2	16.3	18.9	19.8	18.7	17.5	17.4	15.5	12.3	9.9
Spain	16.2	14.8	14.3	13.1	11.2	9.0	7.9	7.5	8.1	8.2	8.0	7.1	6.3	6.4
Sweden	10.8	9.7	10.1	10.2	8.4	6.6	5.9	5.2	5.3	6.0	6.5	7.3	6.8	5.9
Switzerland	3.4	3.0	3.7	4.2	3.1	2.6	2.2	2.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.4	3.0
Turkey	8.8	7.8	6.6	6.5	6.9	7.7	6.6	8.7	10.7	10.7	10.5	10.2	9.7	9.7
United Kingdom	11.0	9.9	9.2	7.7	6.8	6.5	5.9	5.5	5.7	5.5	5.1	5.2	5.8	5.6
United States	6.2	5.6	5.4	4.9	4.4	4.1	3.9	4.8	5.9	6.3	5.6	5.1	4.6	4.7
EU27 total	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.8	7.7	8.3	8.4	8.5	8.3	7.6	6.6
OECD total	7.3	6.8	6.8	6.4	6.4	6.2	5.8	6.1	6.7	6.9	6.7	6.4	5.9	5.4
Brazil	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7.0	7.3	6.6	6.2
Russian Federation	..	9.7	10.0	12.1	13.5	13.2	10.8	9.3	8.1	8.5	8.0	7.3	7.5	6.4

 StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/543002577158>
Unemployment rates: men

As a percentage of male civilian labour force


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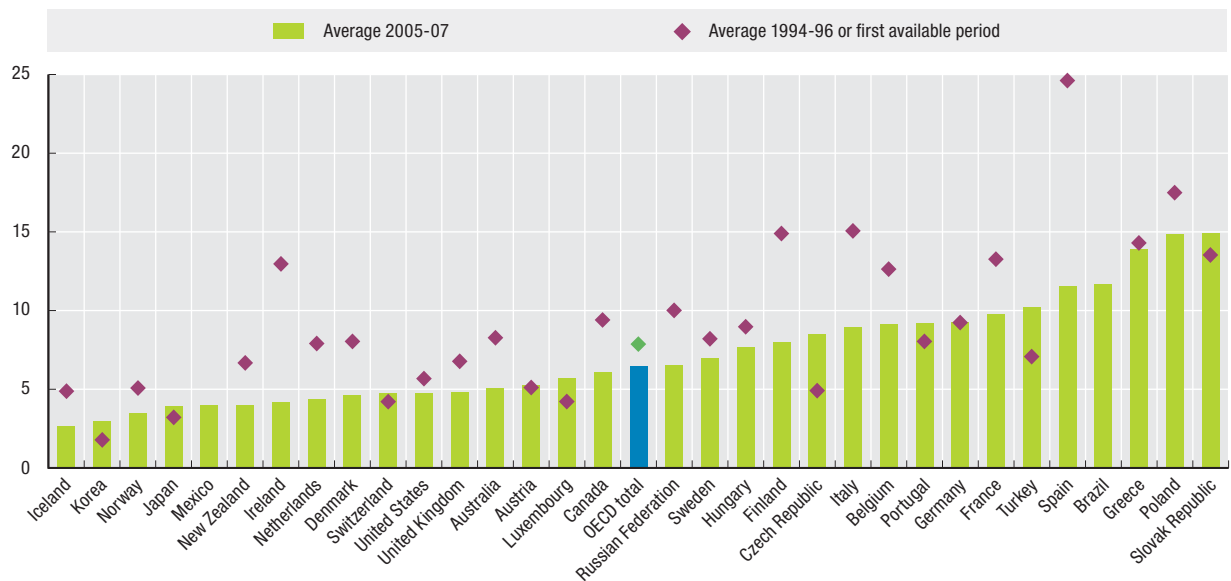

Unemployment rates: women

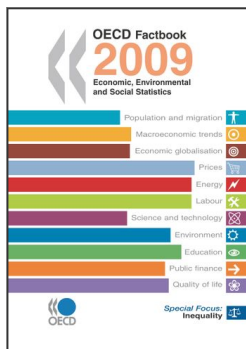
As a percentage of female civilian labour force

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Australia	9.0	7.9	7.9	8.1	7.5	6.8	6.2	6.5	6.2	6.0	5.6	5.2	5.0	4.9
Austria	5.0	5.0	5.3	5.4	5.4	4.7	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.7	5.4	5.5	5.3	5.0
Belgium	12.7	12.7	12.5	11.9	11.6	10.2	8.5	7.6	8.6	8.9	9.5	9.5	9.4	8.5
Canada	9.8	9.1	9.3	8.9	8.0	7.3	6.7	6.9	7.1	7.2	6.9	6.5	6.1	5.6
Czech Republic	5.2	4.8	4.7	5.9	8.0	10.3	10.3	9.7	9.1	9.9	9.9	9.8	8.9	6.8
Denmark	8.5	8.1	7.5	6.2	6.0	5.7	4.8	5.0	5.0	6.1	6.0	5.3	4.5	4.1
Finland	14.9	15.0	14.8	13.0	11.9	10.8	10.6	9.7	9.1	8.9	9.0	8.6	8.1	7.2
France	13.5	13.0	13.3	13.2	12.8	12.1	10.8	9.9	9.8	10.0	10.3	10.2	10.1	8.9
Germany	9.5	9.0	9.2	9.8	9.3	8.5	7.6	7.4	7.9	8.7	9.1	10.0	9.4	8.3
Greece	13.7	13.8	15.4	14.8	17.0	18.2	17.1	16.1	15.7	15.0	16.2	15.3	13.6	12.8
Hungary	9.4	8.7	8.8	8.1	7.8	6.3	5.6	5.0	5.4	5.6	6.1	7.4	7.8	7.7
Iceland	5.6	4.9	4.1	4.5	3.2	2.6	2.9	2.5	2.9	3.1	2.9	2.6	3.1	2.3
Ireland	14.6	12.5	11.8	9.9	7.3	5.6	4.1	3.8	4.1	4.3	4.1	4.0	4.2	4.2
Italy	14.6	15.4	15.2	15.3	15.4	14.8	13.6	12.2	11.5	11.4	10.6	10.0	8.8	7.9
Japan	3.0	3.2	3.4	3.4	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.7	5.1	4.9	4.4	4.2	3.9	3.7
Korea	2.0	1.7	1.6	2.3	5.7	5.3	3.6	3.3	2.7	3.3	3.4	3.4	2.9	2.6
Luxembourg	4.1	4.3	4.2	3.9	4.0	3.3	3.0	2.4	3.5	4.9	6.8	6.0	6.0	5.1
Mexico	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3.6	3.7	4.3	5.1	4.0	3.9	4.1
Netherlands	7.9	8.1	7.7	6.6	5.0	4.4	3.6	2.9	3.1	3.9	4.9	5.0	4.4	3.7
New Zealand	7.6	6.3	6.1	6.6	7.4	6.5	5.8	5.3	5.3	5.0	4.4	4.0	4.1	3.9
Norway	5.3	5.1	4.8	4.2	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.5	3.6	4.0	4.0	4.4	3.4	2.5
Poland	19.0	17.3	16.2	13.0	12.2	15.2	18.2	19.9	20.9	20.5	20.0	19.2	14.9	10.4
Portugal	7.8	8.1	8.2	7.6	6.2	5.2	5.0	5.0	6.1	7.3	7.7	8.7	9.1	9.7
Slovak Republic	14.1	13.8	12.7	12.8	13.2	16.4	18.6	18.7	18.7	17.8	19.2	17.3	14.7	12.7
Spain	25.4	24.7	23.8	22.6	21.1	18.1	16.1	14.8	15.7	15.3	14.3	12.2	11.5	10.9
Sweden	7.8	7.8	9.0	9.5	8.0	6.8	5.3	4.5	4.6	5.2	6.1	7.3	7.1	6.4
Switzerland	4.4	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.5	4.6	4.9	5.1	4.7	4.4
Turkey	8.0	7.3	5.9	7.7	6.8	7.6	6.3	7.5	9.4	10.1	9.7	10.1	10.3	10.2
United Kingdom	7.3	6.7	6.3	5.8	5.3	5.1	4.8	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.3	5.0	5.0
United States	6.0	5.6	5.4	5.0	4.6	4.3	4.1	4.7	5.6	5.7	5.4	5.1	4.6	4.5
EU27 total	..	..	..	..	..	..	9.8	9.4	9.7	9.7	9.8	9.6	8.9	7.8
OECD total	8.1	7.8	7.7	7.5	7.4	7.2	6.7	6.8	7.2	7.3	7.2	7.0	6.5	5.9
Brazil	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11.9	12.5	11.3	11.1
Russian Federation	..	9.2	9.3	11.5	13.0	12.9	10.4	8.6	7.6	8.0	7.5	7.0	6.8	5.8

 StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/543010081278>
Unemployment rates: women

As a percentage of female civilian labour force


 StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/536662250514>



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