

Employment - annual statistics

Statistics Explained

Data from April 2025

Planned article update: 17 April 2026

Highlights

The EU employment rate was 75.8% in 2024. Among the EU countries, it ranged from 83.5% in the Netherlands to 67.1% in Italy. In 2024, the EU employment rate for men stood at 80.8%, while it was at 70.8% for women, resulting in a gender employment gap of 10.0 percentage points. Between 2015 and 2024, the employment rate for people with a low level of education increased by 7.8 percentage points. This article presents the most recent EU annual statistics on [employment](#) based on the [EU Labour force survey \(EU-LFS\)](#). It shows employment rates by sex, age and education attainment level. The article also presents information on the over-qualification rate among employed people with tertiary education.

Employment in 2024 compared with the EU target

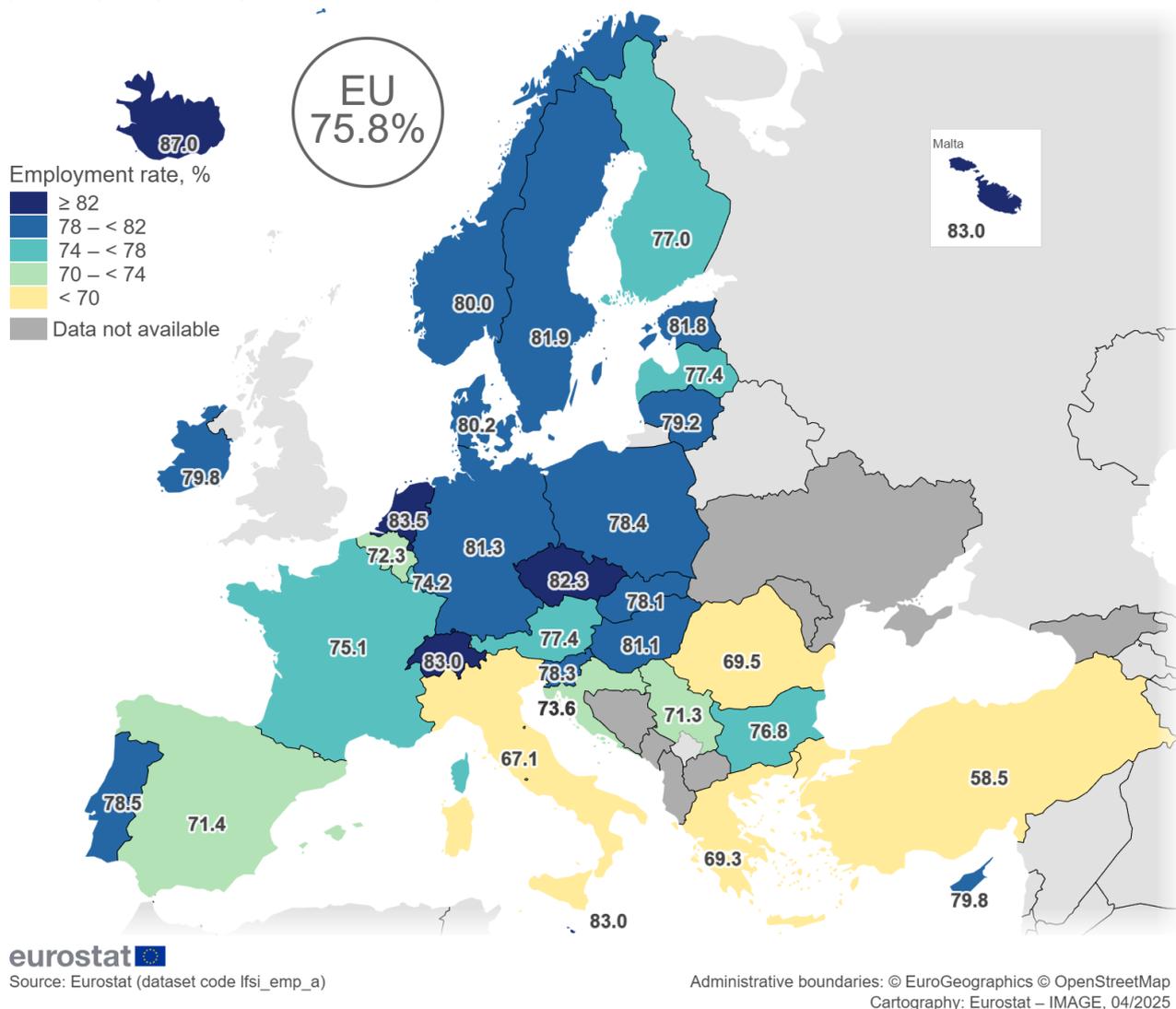
In 2017, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council jointly introduced the [European Pillar of Social Rights action plan](#), aimed at promoting fair and efficient labour markets and welfare systems across the EU. To achieve this goal, the EU has set 3 targets for 2030, one of which is to attain a 78% [employment rate](#) for those aged 20-64 by 2030.

In 2024, the number of [employed people](#) in that age group in the EU totalled 197 566 000, accounting for 75.8% of all the age group. The employment rate has moved steadily closer to the EU target, increasing from 70.9% in 2017 to 75.8% in 2024. Across EU countries (see Map 1), 15 countries reported an employment rate exceeding 78%, while 9 countries fell within the range of 70% to 78%. The remaining 3 countries had employment rates below 70%.

Employment rates in 7 EU countries surpassed 81%: The Netherlands led with 83.5%, followed by Malta (83.0%), Czechia (82.3%), Sweden (81.9%), Estonia (81.8%), Germany (81.3%) and Hungary (81.1%). By contrast, Romania (69.5%), Greece (69.3%), and Italy (67.1%) had employment rates below 70%.

Employment rate, 2024

(% of people aged 20 to 64)



Map 1. Employment rate, 2024 Source: Eurostat (lfsi_emp_a)

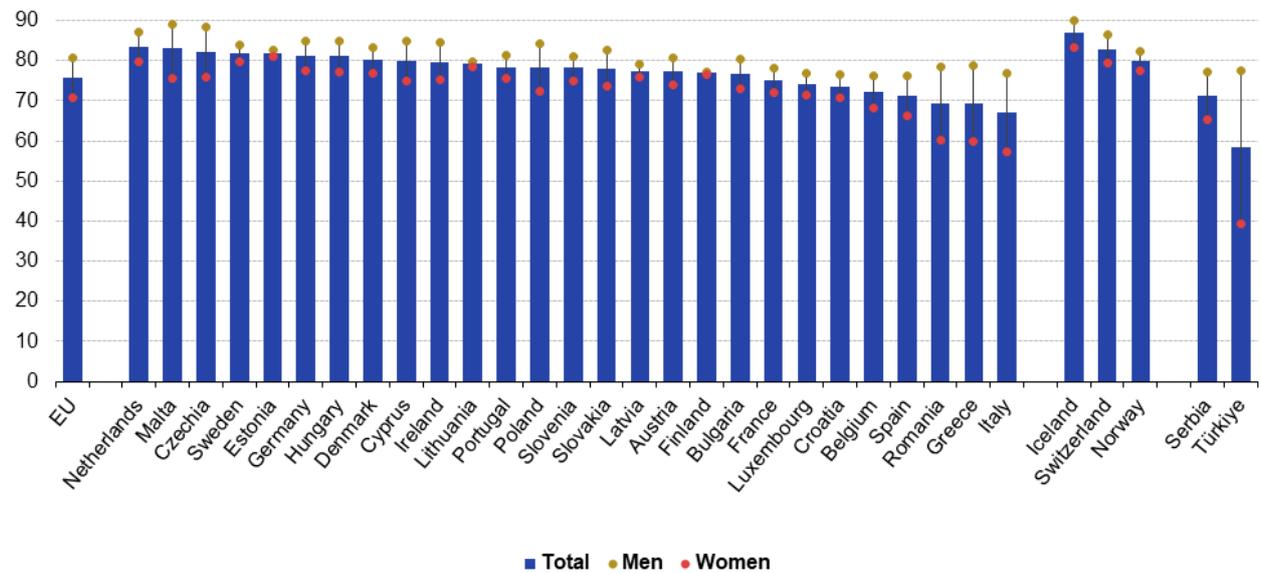
As part of its commitment to promoting inclusive employment, the [European Pillar of Social Rights action plan](#) has set the goal to reduce the gender employment gap. In 2024, there was a significant gap between employment rates for men and women aged 20-64 (see Figure 1). While the EU's male employment rate stood at 80.8%, the female employment rate was just 70.8%, resulting in a gender employment gap of 10.0 [percentage points \(pp\)](#) .

6 EU countries have bigger gender employment gaps than the EU average. These countries are, in increasing size of gender employment gap, Poland, Czechia, Malta, Romania, Greece and Italy. The widest gender employment gaps were observed in Greece (18.8 pp) and Italy (19.3 pp) where less than 60% of the female population was employed, compared with more than 75% of the male population.

However, the gender employment gap was relatively narrow in Baltic countries (Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia) with gaps of around 3 pp or less, while in Finland the gap was almost negligible (0.7 pp).

Employment rate by sex and country, 2024

(% of people aged 20 to 64)



Source: Eurostat (dataset code lfsi_emp_a)

eurostat

Figure 1: Employment rate by sex and country, 2024 Source: Eurostat (lfsi_emp_a)

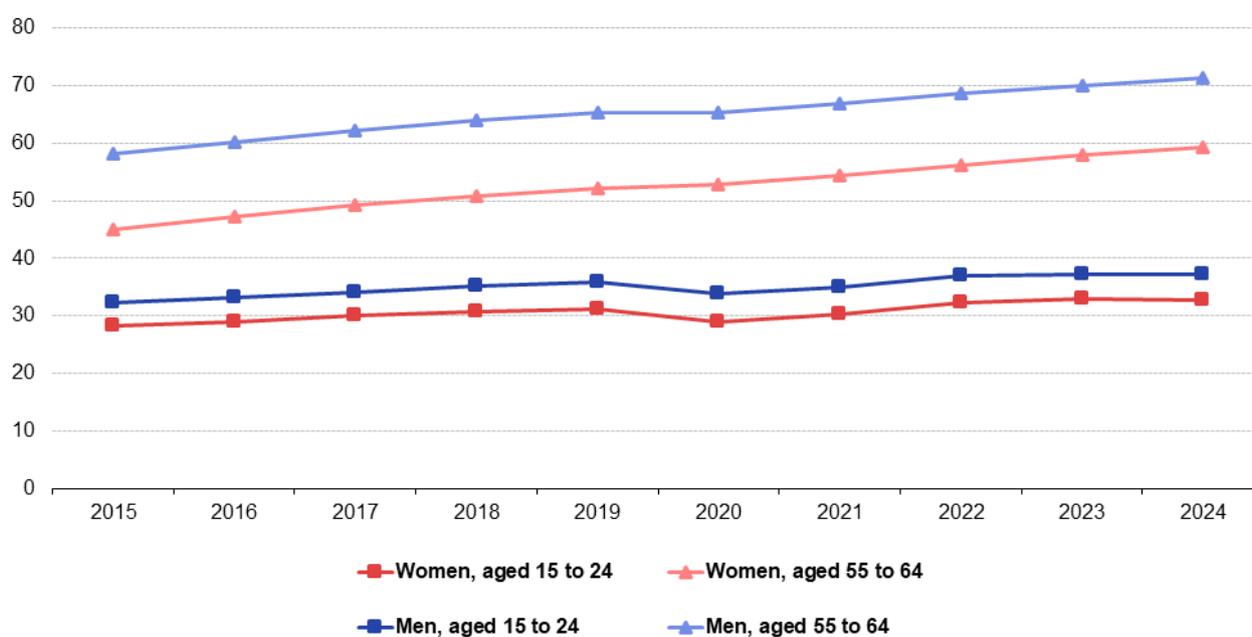
Employment of men and women by age groups

Figure 2 illustrates the trend in the employment rate for men and women among the youngest and oldest age groups in the sense of labour market participation working age. 2024 data indicate that in the EU, the employment rate was higher among young men aged 15-24 (37.1%) than among their female counterparts (32.7%). For those aged 55-64 years, the employment rate was 71.4% for men and 59.4% for women. This illustrates how the gender employment gap widens with age: 4.4 pp for the 15-24 age group and 12.0 pp for those aged 55-64.

The employment rate for those aged 55-64 years has been on an upward trajectory and is less prone to fluctuations. Between 2015 and 2024, there was a significant increase of 14.3 pp in the employment rate for women aged 55-64 years, while men in the same age group saw an increase of 13.3 pp. For those aged 15-24 years, the employment rate increased by 4.7 pp for men and by 4.4 pp for women.

Employment rate by age group and sex, EU, 2015-2024

(% of people in each category)



Source: Eurostat (dataset code lfsi_emp_a)

eurostat

Figure 2: Employment rate by age group and sex, EU, 2015-2024 Source: Eurostat (lfsi_emp_a)

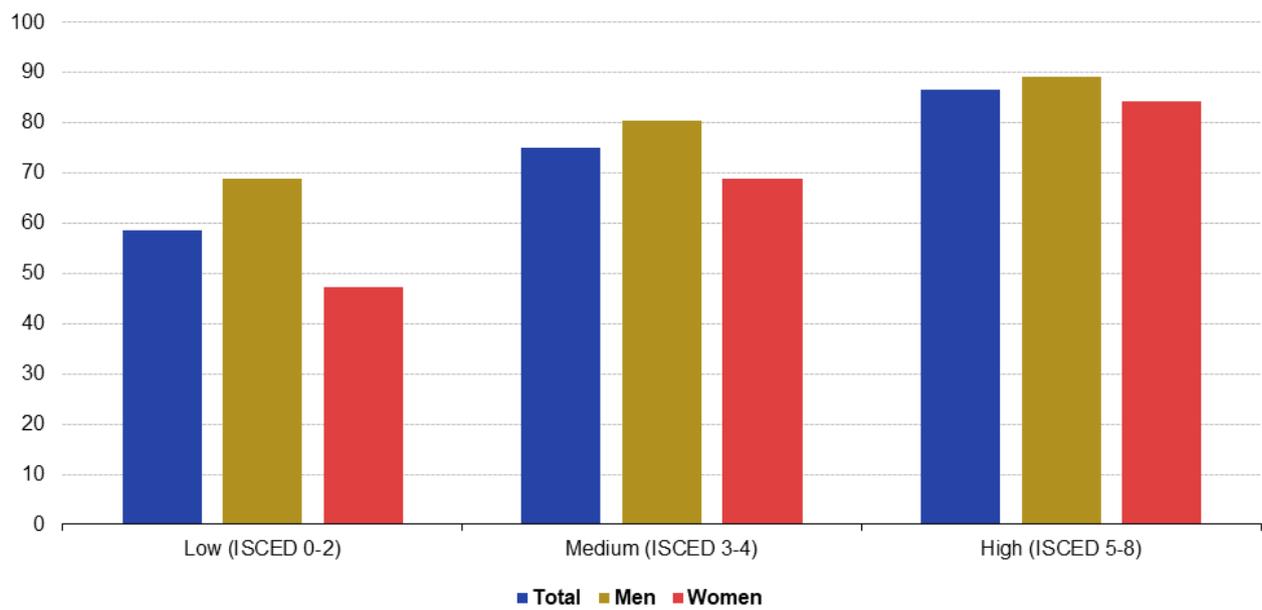
Employment by level of education

The level of educational attainment has a significant impact on the employment rate (see Figure 3). In 2024, in the EU, the employment rate for people aged 20-64 years who had attained a high level of education was 86.5%, much higher than the rate for those who had only completed a low level of education, which was 58.7%. High level of education refers to tertiary education, spanning short-cycle tertiary, bachelor's, master's or doctoral levels (or equivalents; ISCED levels 5-8), while a low level refers to (at most) primary or lower secondary education (ISCED levels 0-2). The EU employment rate for people who had completed their education at a medium level, meaning upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED levels 3-4), was between the two other rates in 2024, at 74.9%.

Another aspect to consider is the gender employment gap by educational level. The employment gap between men and women widens as the level of educational attainment decreases. In 2024, among people with a high level of education, the gender employment gap was 4.9 pp. By contrast, it was 11.5 pp for those with a medium level, and 21.5 pp for those with a low level of educational attainment.

Employment rate by educational attainment level and sex, EU, 2024

(% of people aged 20 to 64)



Source: Eurostat (dataset code lfsi_educ_a)

eurostat

Figure 3: Employment rate by educational attainment level and sex, EU, 2024 Source: Eurostat (lfsi_educ_a)

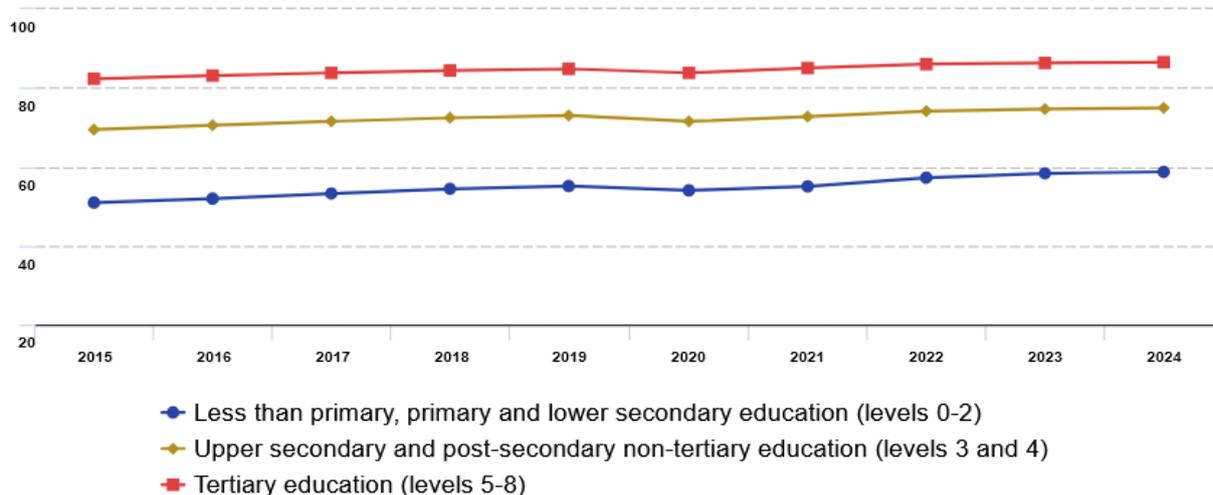
Figure 4 illustrates the trend in employment rates for people aged 20-64 years by educational attainment level, from 2015 to 2024. The changes over the 10 years are visible. The employment rate for people with a low level of education increased by 7.8 pp, the biggest change recorded over this period. The rate for employed people with a medium level of education increased by 5.5 pp. Conversely, the employment rate for people with a high level of education grew by 4.2 pp.

Figure 4



Employment rate by educational attainment level and country, 2015-2024

(% of people aged 20 to 64)



Source: Eurostat - ([lfsi_educ_a](#))

eurostat

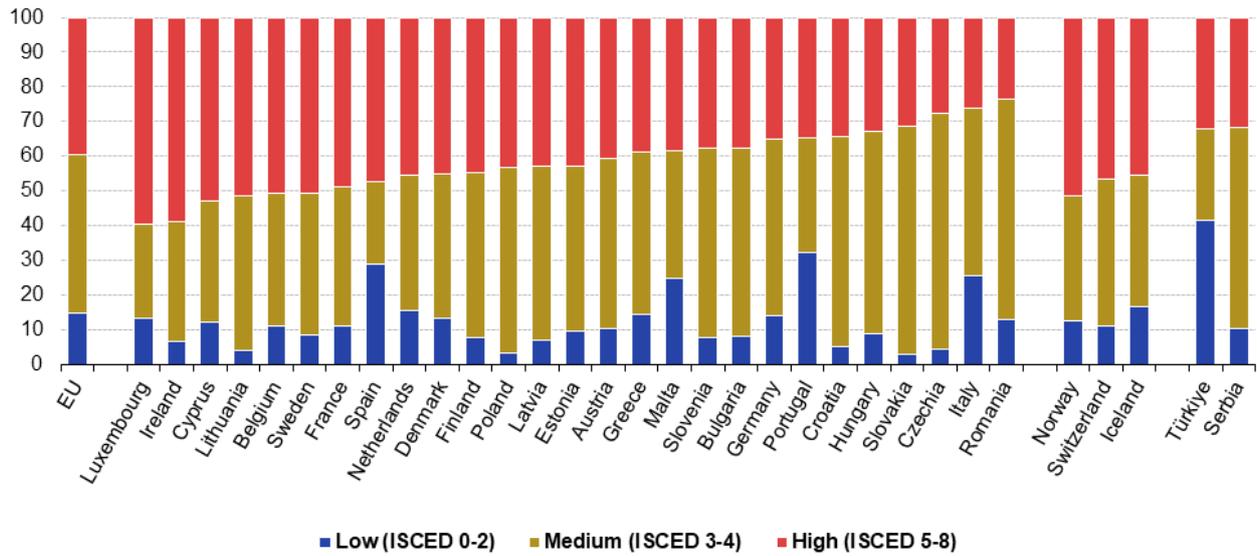
Figure 4: Employment rate by educational attainment level and country, 2015-2024 Source: Eurostat ([lfsi_educ_a](#))

Finally, Figure 5 presents information at country level on the proportion of employed people by education attainment level among all employed people aged 20-64. The highest proportions of employed people with high level of education in the EU were in Luxembourg (59.5%), Ireland (58.9%), Cyprus (53.1%), Lithuania (51.3%), Belgium (50.9%) and Sweden (50.8%). The lowest were found in Romania (23.5%), Italy (26.2%) and Czechia (27.7%).

Comparing different levels of education, in 15 EU countries the highest proportion of employed people was in the group with medium education level. In 12 EU countries, the highest proportion was among those with high level of education.

Employed people by educational attainment level, 2024

(% of employed people aged 20 to 64)



Source: Eurostat (dataset code lfsi_educ_a)

eurostat

Figure 5: Employed people by educational attainment level, 2024 Source: Eurostat (lfsi_educ_a)

Over-qualification rate

The over-qualification rate is calculated for employed people with a high (= tertiary) level of educational attainment (ISCED levels 5–8). It indicates the proportion of people in that group who are employed in occupations that do not require a tertiary level of education (equivalent to ISCO major groups 4–9). The calculation is based on the correspondence between occupations and level of education as proposed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the [International Standard Classification of Occupations; Structure, group definitions and correspondence tables](#).

The over-qualification rate in the EU was 21.4% in 2024, with 20.6% for men and 22.2% for women (see Figure 6, referring to the 20-64 age group).

Among the EU countries, the over-qualification rate ranged from around one-third in Cyprus (28.2%), Greece (33.0%), and Spain (35.0%), to less than 15% in Hungary, the Netherlands, Sweden, Czechia and Croatia, reaching its lowest value in Luxembourg with 4.7%.

Over-qualification rate by sex, 2024

(% of tertiary-educated workers aged 20 to 64 employed in jobs not requiring tertiary education)

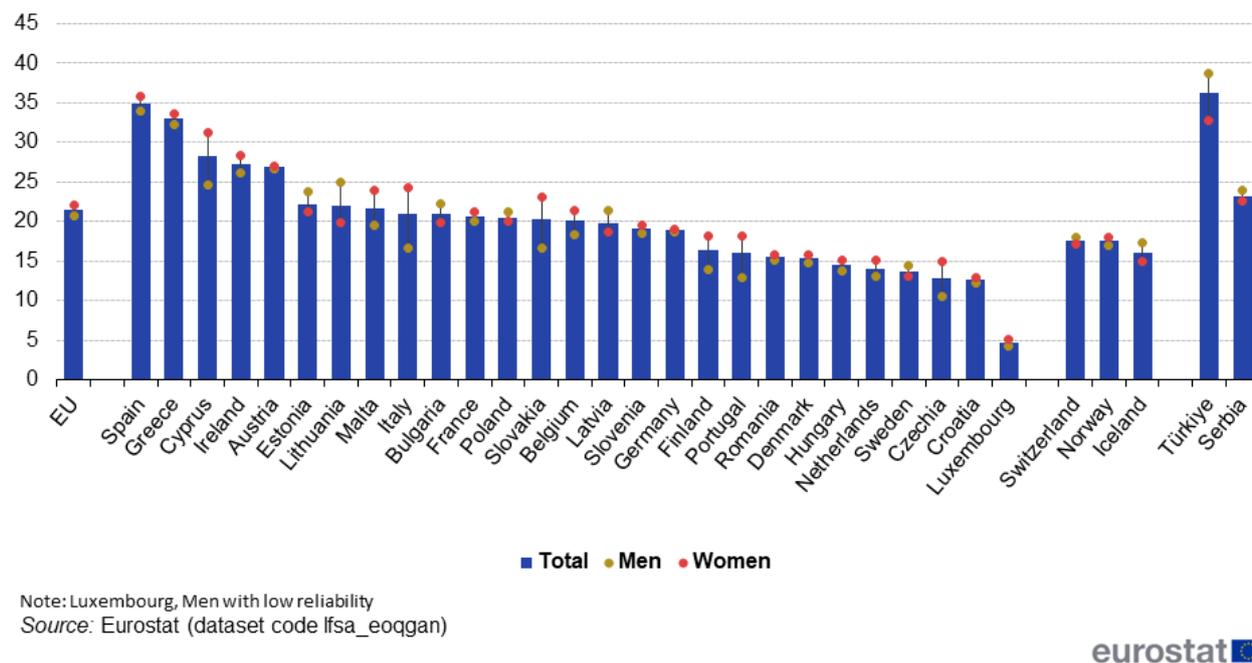


Figure 6: Over-qualification rate by sex, 2024 Source: Eurostat (lfsa_eoqgan)

In 21 EU countries, the over-qualification rate was higher for women than men. Among these countries, the largest differences were in Italy, Cyprus and Slovakia, with female over-qualification rates being respectively 7.7 pp, 6.6 pp and 6.4 pp higher than those for men.

In 6 EU countries, the situation was the reverse with higher over-qualification rates for men than for women. Among these countries, the greatest differences were in Lithuania (5.2 pp) and Latvia (2.6 pp).

Source data for tables and graphs

- [2024 Employment: Data and figures](#)

Data sources

Methods and definitions

Source. The European Union Labour force survey (EU-LFS) is the largest European household sample survey providing quarterly and annual results on labour participation among people aged 15 years and over, and on people outside the labour force. It covers residents in private households. Conscripts in military or community service are not included in the results. The EU-LFS is based on the same target populations and uses the same definitions in all countries, which means that the results are comparable between countries. The EU-LFS is an important source of information about the situation and trends in national and EU labour markets. Each quarter around 1.2 million interviews are conducted throughout the participating countries to obtain statistical information for some 100 variables. Due to the diversity of information and the large sample size, the EU-LFS is also an important source for other European statistics like education statistics or regional statistics.

Reference period. Yearly results are obtained by calculating the average of the four quarters in the year.

Coverage. The results from the survey currently cover all [European Union](#) countries, the [EFTA](#) countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland), as well as the [candidate countries](#) (Serbia and Türkiye). For Cyprus, the survey covers

only the areas of Cyprus controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

European aggregates. EU refers to all 27 EU Member States. If data are unavailable for a country, EU aggregates are calculated using the data for the most recent period available for the country in question. Such cases are indicated.

Country notes

The Netherlands collects EU-LFS data using a rolling reference week instead of a fixed reference week, i.e. interviewees are asked about the situation in the week before the interview rather than a pre-selected week.

Definitions and main concepts

Employment rate is defined as the ratio of employed people to the working-age population. Employment rates allow changes in the labour market to be interpreted in wider context by factoring in changes in the population. Employment rates are sensitive to the economic cycle, but in the longer term they are significantly impacted by higher education and income support policies and by policies that facilitate employment among women and different socio-economic groups.

Employment level measures the total number of people estimated to be in employment.

The concepts and definitions used in the EU-LFS follow the guidelines set up in resolutions by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians hosted every five years by the ILO.

Employment covers people living in private households, who performed an hour or more's work during the reference week performed, for pay, profit or family gain, or who were not at work but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent, for example because of illness, holidays, an industrial dispute or education and training.

Employment can be measured in terms of number of people employed or jobs, in **full-time equivalents** or in hours worked. All the estimates in this article use number of persons; the information on employment rates is also based on estimates for the number of persons. Employment statistics are frequently reported as employment rates to discount the changing size of countries' populations over time and to facilitate comparisons between countries of different sizes. These rates are typically published for the working age population, which is generally considered to be those aged between 15 and 64 years. The 15 to 64 years age range is also a standard used by other international statistical organisations (although the age range of 20 to 64 years is given increasing prominence by some policymakers as a rising share of the EU population continue their studies into tertiary education).

The LFS employment concept differs from domestic employment in national accounts. The latter sets no limit on age or type of household, and also includes the non-resident population contributing to GDP and conscripts in military or community service.

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education successfully completed. Educational levels are defined and classified according to the [International Standard Classification of Education, 2011 version \(ISCED 2011\)](#) .

Detailed technical and methodological information is available in a number of articles on the [EU labour force survey](#) .

Time series

Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 came into force on 1 January 2021 and caused a break in the LFS time series for several EU countries. To monitor changes in employment and unemployment despite this break, EU countries assessed the impact of the break in their country and computed impact factors or break-corrected data for a set of indicators. Break-corrected data are published for the LFS main indicators.

More information on the EU-LFS can be found via [EU Labour Force Survey](#) , which includes eight articles on the technical and methodological aspects of the survey. The article on [methodology from 2021 onwards](#) describes the methodology currently in use. Detailed information on coding lists, explanatory notes and classifications used over time can be found in the article on [documentation](#) .

Publication of results

Eurostat provides two sets of indicators linked to the annual employment rate, which serve different purposes and which in some cases differ from each other.

1) The **EU-LFS main indicators** , contain seasonally adjusted series. They include the labour market headline indicators used, for example in the [Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure Scoreboard](#) or the [European Statistical Monitor](#) and are consequently used for monitoring policy. They have only a few breakdowns and normally refer to the age group 20-64 years.

2) The **detailed results** , contain series that are not seasonally adjusted. They have a large number of breakdowns and can therefore be used for more detailed analysis.

Context

Employment statistics can be used for a number of different analyses, including macroeconomic studies (looking at labour as a production factor) and [productivity](#) or [competitiveness](#) studies. They can also be used to study a range of social and behavioural aspects related to an individual's employment situation, such as the social integration of different socio-economic groups, or employment as a source of [household](#) income.

Employment is both a structural indicator and a short-term indicator. As a structural indicator, it may shed light on the structure of labour markets and economic systems, as measured through the balance of labour supply and demand, or the quality of employment. As a short-term indicator, employment follows the [business cycle](#) ; but it has limits in this respect, as employment is often referred to as a [lagging indicator](#) .

[The European Pillar of Social Rights](#) was jointly signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017. Employment and social policies are the main fields of interest in the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is about delivering new and more effective rights for citizens. It has 3 main categories: 1. equal opportunities and access to the labour market 2. fair working conditions and 3. social protection and inclusion.

In particular, today's more flexible working arrangements provide new job opportunities especially for the young but can potentially give rise to precariousness and inequalities. Building a fairer Europe and strengthening its social dimension is a key priority for the Commission. The European Pillar of Social Rights is accompanied by a 'social scoreboard' which will monitor implementation of the Pillar by tracking trends and performances across EU countries in 12 areas. The social scoreboard will also feed into the European Semester of economic policy coordination.

At the Informal meeting of heads of state or government on 7-8 May 2021, EU leaders discussed implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights at EU and national level, in line with the EU strategic agenda 2019-2024. The action plan presented by the Commission in March 2021 provides guidance on the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, including in the fields of employment, skills and social protection. The action plan also sets three main targets to be achieved throughout the European Union by 2030:

- an employment rate of at least 78% in the EU
- at least 60% of adults attending training courses every year
- a reduction of at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of social exclusion or poverty.

For more information, see [commitment to implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights](#) .

All EU countries have now identified and submitted [national targets](#) (final or preliminary) that are consistent with the overall EU framework and the shared ambition towards reaching the EU headline target by 2030.

Explore further

Other articles

- [All articles on employment](#)
- [Unemployment statistics and beyond](#)
- [Job vacancy statistics](#)
- [Labour market statistics at regional level](#)

Database

- [Employment and unemployment \(Labour Force Survey\) \(employ\)](#) , see:

LFS main indicators (lfsi)

Employment and activity - LFS adjusted series (lfsi_emp)

Unemployment - LFS adjusted series (une)

Labour market transitions - LFS longitudinal data (lfsi_long)

LFS series - Detailed quarterly survey results (from 1998 onwards) (lfsq)

LFS series - Detailed annual survey results (lfsa)

LFS series - Specific topics (lfst)

LFS ad-hoc modules (lfsa)

Thematic section

- [Employment and unemployment \(Labour force survey\)](#)

Publications

- [Labour force survey in the EU, EFTA and candidate countries — Main characteristics of national surveys, 2020](#) , 2022 edition
- [Quality report of the European Union Labour Force Survey 2020](#) , 2022 edition
- [EU labour force survey — online publication](#)

Methodology

ESMS metadata files and EU-LFS methodology

- [Employment and unemployment \(Labour Force Survey\)](#) (ESMS metadata file — employ_esms)
- [LFS main indicators](#) (ESMS metadata file — lfsi_esms)
- [LFS series - detailed annual survey results](#) (ESMS metadata file — lfsa_esms)
- [LFS series - detailed quarterly survey results \(from 1998 onwards\)](#) (ESMS metadata file — lfsq_esms)
- [LFS regional series](#) (ESMS metadata file — reg_lmk)
- [LFS ad-hoc modules](#) (ESMS metadata file — lfsa_esms)

External links

- [European Commission — Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion — employment strategy](#)
- [OECD — Employment](#)

Selected datasets

- [Employment and unemployment \(Labour Force Survey\) \(t_employ\)](#) , see:

LFS main indicators (t_lfsi)

Population, activity and inactivity - LFS adjusted series (t_lfsi_act)

Employment - LFS adjusted series (t_lfsi_emp)

Unemployment - LFS adjusted series (t_une)

LFS series - Detailed annual survey results (t_lfsa)

LFS series - Specific topics (t_lfst)