Unemployment rates EU-27, EA-19, US and Japan, seasonally adjusted, January 2000 - March 2020(%) Source: Eurostat (une_rt_m)

This article presents the very latest unemployment figures for the European Union (EU), the euro area and individual Member States. Additional information about long-term trends can be found in the article Unemployment statistics and beyond.
Unemployment in the EU and the euro area

Eurostat estimates that 14.141 million men and women in the EU-27, of whom 12.156 million in the euro area (EA-19), were unemployed in March 2020. Compared with February 2020, the number of persons unemployed increased by 241 000 in the EU and by 197 000 in the euro area.

![Graph showing change in number of unemployed persons](image)

**Figure 1: Change in the number of unemployed persons (compared to previous month, in thousands), seasonally adjusted, January 2011 - March 2020**

In March 2020, the month when COVID-19 containment measures began to be widely introduced by Member States, the euro area seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 7.4 %, up from 7.3 % in February 2020. The EU unemployment rate was 6.6 % in March 2020, up from 6.5 % in February 2020.

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1 In line with Eurostat’s guidelines for disseminating data when the EU is enlarged, aggregate data series in this article refer to the official composition of the EU in the most recent month for which data are available; from February 2020 onwards this is the EU with 27 Member States, EU-27.

2 In line with Eurostat’s guidelines for disseminating data when the euro area is enlarged, aggregate data series in this article refer to the official composition of the euro area in the most recent month for which data are available; from the reference month of January 2015 onwards this will be the euro area with 19 Member States, EA-19.
Youth unemployment

In March 2020, 2.763 million young persons (under 25) were unemployed in the EU, of whom 2.275 million were in the euro area. In March 2020, the youth unemployment rate was 15.2 % in the EU and 15.8 % in the euro area, up from 14.8 % and 15.4 % respectively in the previous month. Compared with February 2020, youth unemployment increased by 59 000 in the EU and by 52 000 in the euro area.
In March 2020, the unemployment rate for women was 7.0% in the EU, up from 6.7% in February 2020. The unemployment rate for men was 6.3% in March 2020, compared with 6.2% in February 2020. While in the euro area the unemployment rate remained stable for men in March 2020 compared with February 2020 (at 7.0%), it increased from 7.6% to 7.8% between February and March 2020 for women.

Data sources

These estimates are based on the globally used International Labour Organisation standard definition of unemployment, which counts as unemployed people without a job who have been actively seeking work in the last four weeks and are available to start work within the next two weeks. The COVID-19 confinement measures introduced in March 2020 have triggered a sharp increase in the number of claims for unemployment benefits across the EU. At the same time, a significant part of those who had registered in unemployment agencies were no longer actively looking for a job, e.g. limited by the confinement measures or no longer available for work, for instance, if they had to take care of their children during the lockdown. This leads to discrepancies in the number of registered unemployed and those measured as unemployed according to the ILO definition. To capture in full the unprecedented labour market situation triggered by the COVID-19 outbreak, the data on unemployment will be complemented by additional indicators, e.g. on employment, underemployment and potential additional labour force participants, when the LFS quarterly data for 2020 are published.

An unemployed person is defined by Eurostat, according to the guidelines of the International Labour Organization, as someone aged 15 to 74 without work during the reference week who is available to start work within the next two weeks and who has actively sought employment at some time during the last four weeks. The unemployment rate is the number of people unemployed as a percentage of the labour force.

In addition to the unemployment measures covered here, Eurostat also publishes statistics for persons who fulfil...
only partially the definition of unemployment. These persons are not included in the official ILO unemployment concept and have a varying degree of attachment to the labour market. The indicators on **underemployment and potential additional labour force participants** supplement the unemployment rate to provide a more complete picture of the labour market.

There is currently no specific legal basis for producing and disseminating monthly unemployment data. However, these monthly data are estimates based on results of the [European Union Labour force survey (EU LFS)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs), which is a continuous **household** survey carried out in all Member States in accordance with European legislation and on the basis of harmonised definitions. These results are interpolated/extrapolated to monthly data using national survey data and/or national monthly series on registered unemployment. The quarterly LFS results are always used as a benchmark to ensure international comparability. As for most Member States the results from the LFS for a full quarter are available 90 days after the end of the reference period, the most recent figures are usually provisional. For many countries monthly unemployment data are calculated by Eurostat, while several countries actually supply those figures directly from the LFS.

The following LFS data are used in the calculations of the monthly unemployment rates published in this article:

- For Czechia, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Finland and Sweden: monthly LFS data up to and including March 2020.
- For Greece: monthly data up to and including January 2020.
- For Portugal: monthly data (3 month moving average) up to and including January, February and March 2020.
- For Denmark: monthly data (3 month moving average) up to and including February, March and April 2020.
- For Estonia and Hungary: monthly data (3 month moving average) up to and including January, February and March 2020.
- For Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, France, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia: quarterly data up and including Q4 2019.
- For Spain: quarterly data up and including Q1 2020.
- For the United Kingdom: monthly data (3 month moving average) up to and including December 2019 as well as January and February 2020.
- For Germany: due to the introduction of the new German system of integrated household surveys, including the LFS, the monthly unemployment rate for March 2020 is an estimation based on the figures recorded in previous periods, taking into account current developments.
- For Italy: Unemployment decrease is linked to move to inactivity of a number of people no longer able to actively look for a job.

Monthly unemployment and employment series are calculated first at the level of four categories for each Member State (males and females 15-24 years, males and females 25-74 years). These series are then seasonally adjusted and all the national and European aggregates are calculated. Monthly unemployment figures are published by Eurostat as rates (as a percentage of the labour force) or levels (in thousands), by gender and for two age groups (persons aged 15-24, and those aged 25-74). The figures are available as unadjusted, seasonally adjusted and trend series. There are monthly estimates for all EU Member States. Data for the EU aggregate start in 2000 and for the euro area in April 1998; the starting point for individual Member States varies.

Member States may publish other rates such as register-based unemployment rates, or rates based on the national LFS or corresponding surveys. These rates may vary from those published by Eurostat due to a different definition or methodological choices.

**Source data for tables and graphs**
Context

The unemployment rate is an important indicator with both social and economic dimensions. Rising unemployment results in a loss of income for individuals, increased pressure with respect to government spending on social benefits and a reduction in tax revenue. From an economic perspective, unemployment may be viewed as unused labour capacity.

The International Labour Organization definition of the unemployment rate is the most widely used labour market indicator because of its international comparability and relatively timely availability. Besides the unemployment rate, indicators such as employment and job vacancies also give useful insights into labour market developments.

The time series on unemployment are used by the European Commission, other public institutions, and the media as an economic indicator; banks may use the data for business cycle analysis. Finally, the general public might also be interested in changes in unemployment.

The unemployment rate is considered to be a lagging indicator. When there is an economic downturn, it usually takes several months before the unemployment rate begins to rise. Once the economy starts to pick up again, employers usually remain cautious about hiring new staff and it may take several months before unemployment rates start to fall.

Male, youth and long-term unemployment appear to be more susceptible to cyclical economic changes than overall unemployment. Indeed, social policymakers often face the challenge of remedying these situations by designing ways to increase employment opportunities for various groups of society, those working in particular economic activities, or those living in specific regions.

Globalisation and technological progress have an ever-increasing effect on daily life, and the demand for different types of labour and skills is evolving at a rapid pace. While enterprises try to improve their productivity and become more competitive and innovative, they may well seek to pass on risk to the labour force through greater flexibility - both in relation to those already in employment, as well as those searching for a new job. Within the context of the European employment strategy (EES), there are a number of measures that are designed to help encourage people to remain in work or find a new job, including: the promotion of a life-cycle approach to work, encouraging lifelong learning, improving support to those seeking a job, as well as ensuring equal opportunities.

The integrated employment guidelines for 2008-2010 encouraged Member States, among others, to:

- work with renewed endeavour to build employment pathways for young people and reduce youth unemployment, in particular, through adapting education and training systems in order to raise quality, broaden supply, diversify access, ensure flexibility, respond to new occupational needs and skills requirements, and;
- take action to increase female participation and reduce gender gaps in employment, unemployment and pay, through better reconciliation of work and private life and the provision of accessible and affordable childcare facilities and care for other dependants.

The guidelines also set a number of additional benchmarks, whereby Member States were encouraged:

- to ensure that by 2010 every unemployed person is offered a job, apprenticeship, additional training or another employability measure (for young persons leaving school within four months, and for adults within no more than 12 months), and;
- to work towards 25% of the long-term unemployed participating in training, retraining, work practice, or other employability measures by 2010.

The current economic crisis has however reversed much of the progress achieved in Europe since 2000. The Europe 2020 strategy put forward by the European Commission sets out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century. As part of the flagship initiatives, 'An agenda for new skills and jobs' and 'Youth on the move', (youth) unemployment rates will be targeted via a range of policies, including proposals aimed at education and training institutions, or measures for the creation of a (work) environment conducive to higher activity rates and higher labour productivity. There are also initiatives aimed at improving the entry rate of young people into the labour market.
Other articles

- Unemployment statistics and beyond
- Job vacancy statistics
- Underemployment and potential additional labour force statistics
- Youth unemployment

Publications

- Impact of the crisis on unemployment so far less pronounced in the EU than in the US – Statistics in focus 20/2010
- Sharp increase in unemployment in the EU – Statistics in focus 53/2009
- Unemployment news release, 75/2020, 30 April 2020 (Latest release, PDF)

Main tables

- Employment and unemployment (Labour force survey) (t_employ) , see:
  - LFS main indicators (t_lfsi)
    - Unemployment - LFS adjusted series (t_une)
  - LFS series - detailed annual survey results (t_lfsa)
    - Unemployment rates of the population aged 25-64 by level of education (tps00066)

Database

- Employment and unemployment (Labour force survey) (employ) , see:
  - LFS main indicators (lfsi)
    - Unemployment - LFS adjusted series (une)
  - LFS series - detailed quarterly survey results (from 1998)
    - Total unemployment - LFS series (lfsq_unemp)
  - LFS series - Detailed annual survey results (lfsa)
    - Total unemployment - LFS series (lfsa_unemp)

Dedicated section

- Employment and unemployment (Labour force survey)
Methodology

- EU Labour Force Survey - main concepts and definitions
- Labour Force Survey in the EU, candidate and EFTA countries - Main characteristics of the 2011 national surveys (publication)
- Unemployment - LFS-adjusted series (ESMS metadata file — une_esms)

External links

- International Labour Organization - ILO Global Job Crisis Observatory
- OECD Statistics Portal - Labour

Notes