

OECD Harmonised Unemployment Rates

News Release

OECD unemployment rate rises to 6.8% in December 2008

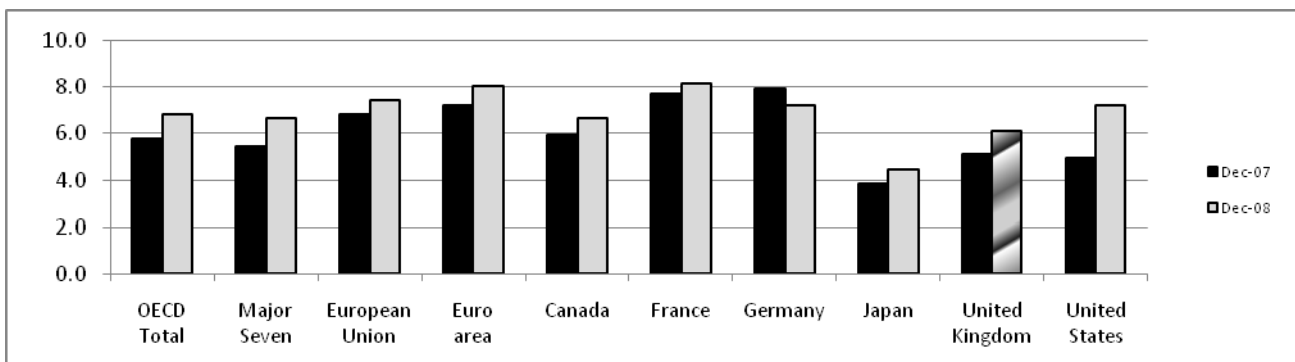
The unemployment rate for the **OECD area** was 6.8% in December 2008, 0.2 percentage point higher than the previous month and 1.1 percentage points higher than a year earlier.

In the **Euro area**, the unemployment rate was 8.0% in December 2008, 0.1 percentage point higher than the previous month and 0.8 percentage point higher than a year earlier. For the **United States** the unemployment rate for *January 2009* was 7.6%, 0.4 percentage point higher than the previous month and 2.6 percentage points higher than a year earlier. For **Japan**, the rate was 4.5% in December 2008, 0.5 percentage point higher than the previous month and 0.7 percentage point higher than in December 2007.

In December 2008, the unemployment rate for **France** was 8.1%, 0.1 percentage point higher than the previous month and 0.4 percentage point higher than a year earlier. For **Germany**, the rate was 7.2% in December 2008, 0.1 percentage point higher than the previous month but 0.7 percentage point lower than in December 2007. For **Canada**, the unemployment rate was 7.2% in *January 2009*, 0.6 percentage point higher the previous month and 1.3 percentage points higher than a year earlier. In *October 2008*, the rate in the **United Kingdom** was 6.1%, 0.2 percentage point higher than the previous month and 1.0 percentage point higher than in *October 2007*.

The unemployment rates for **other OECD countries and geographic groupings**, as well as historical data, can be downloaded from the OECD online data dissemination facility *OECD.Stat Extracts* at: <http://stats.oecd.org/wbos/Default.aspx?QueryName=251&QueryType=View&Lang=en>.

**Selected Unemployment Rates
December 2007 – December 2008 ⁽¹⁾**



Notes:

(1) United Kingdom: October-07— October-08.

NB: For methodological reasons, harmonised unemployment rates may differ from those published by national statistical institutes.

OECD Harmonised Unemployment Rates
OECD Unemployment Rates
Percentage of labour force

	2006	2007	2008	2008				2008					
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OECD - Total	6.3	5.8	6.1	5.7	5.9	6.2	6.6	6.1	6.3	6.3	6.4	6.6	6.8
Major Seven	5.8	5.4	5.9	5.5	5.7	6.0	6.4	5.9	6.0	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.6
European Union	8.2	7.1	7.0	6.8	6.9	7.0	7.3	6.9	7.0	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.4
Euro area	8.4	7.5	7.5	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.9	7.5	7.5	7.6	7.8	7.9	8.0
Australia	4.8	4.4	4.2	4.0	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.5
Austria	4.7	4.4	3.8	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.9
Belgium	8.2	7.5	7.1	7.1	7.0	7.2	7.1	7.2	7.2	7.3	7.1	7.0	7.1
Canada ⁽¹⁾	6.3	6.0	6.1	5.9	6.1	6.1	6.4	6.1	6.2	6.2	6.3	6.4	6.6
Czech Republic	7.2	5.3	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.7
Denmark	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.5	4.1	3.3	3.5	3.6	3.8	4.1	4.5
Finland	7.7	6.8	6.4	6.3	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.4	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5
France	9.2	8.3	7.8	7.6	7.7	7.7	8.0	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.9	8.0	8.1
Germany	9.9	8.4	7.3	7.6	7.4	7.2	7.1	7.3	7.2	7.2	7.1	7.1	7.2
Greece	8.9	8.3		7.8	7.5	7.5		7.5	7.5	7.5			
Hungary	7.5	7.4	7.9	7.7	7.7	7.9	8.2	7.8	7.9	7.9	8.0	8.2	8.5
Iceland	2.9	2.3	3.0	2.5	2.3	3.0	4.5						
Ireland	4.5	4.6	6.3	5.0	5.6	6.6	7.8	6.3	6.6	6.9	7.4	7.9	8.2
Italy	6.8	6.1		6.7	6.8	6.7		6.7	6.7	6.7			
Japan	4.1	3.9	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.7	4.0	4.5
Korea	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.3
Luxembourg	4.6	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.7	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.8
Mexico	3.6	3.7	4.0	3.7	3.8	3.9	4.5	3.9	3.9	4.0	3.9	4.7	4.7
Netherlands	3.9	3.2	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7
New Zealand	3.8	3.6		3.7	3.9	4.1							
Norway	3.5	2.6		2.4	2.5	2.4		2.4	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.9	
Poland	13.9	9.6	7.1	7.8	7.3	6.8	6.5	6.9	6.8	6.6	6.5	6.5	6.5
Portugal	7.8	8.1	7.8	7.7	7.7	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.9
Slovak Republic	13.3	11.2	9.7	10.2	10.0	9.2	9.2	9.4	9.2	9.1	9.1	9.2	9.4
Spain	8.5	8.3	11.3	9.3	10.6	11.8	13.7	11.3	11.7	12.3	13.1	13.7	14.4
Sweden	7.0	6.2	6.2	5.9	5.8	6.1	6.8	5.9	6.1	6.4	6.6	6.9	6.9
Switzerland	4.0	3.6		3.5	3.4	3.5							
Turkey	9.9	9.8		9.9	9.9	10.7							
United Kingdom	5.4	5.3		5.1	5.4	5.8		5.7	5.8	5.9	6.1		
United States ⁽²⁾	4.6	4.6	5.8	4.9	5.4	6.0	6.9	5.8	6.2	6.2	6.6	6.8	7.2

Notes:

(1) Canada: January 2009 is 7.2

(2) United States: January 2009 is 7.6

OECD Harmonised Unemployment Rates

OECD Unemployment Rates
Change of rates over the same period of the previous year

	2006	2007	2008	2008				2008					
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OECD - Total	-0.5	-0.5	0.3	-0.2	0.2	0.5	0.9	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.9	1.1
Major Seven	-0.4	-0.4	0.5	-0.1	0.4	0.6	1.0	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.0	1.2
European Union	-0.7	-1.1	-0.1	-0.6	-0.3	-0.1	0.4	-0.2	-0.1	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.6
Euro area	-0.6	-0.9	0.1	-0.4	-0.1	0.1	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.6	0.8
Australia	-0.3	-0.4	-0.1	-0.5	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	-0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3
Austria	-0.4	-0.3	-0.6	-0.4	-0.9	-0.9	-0.2	-1.1	-1.0	-0.5	-0.4	-0.2	0.0
Belgium	-0.2	-0.8	-0.4	-0.7	-0.7	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1	0.1	-0.1	-0.1	0.0
Canada ⁽¹⁾	-0.5	-0.3	0.1	-0.2	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.7
Czech Republic	-0.8	-1.8	-0.9	-1.4	-1.1	-0.9	-0.3	-0.9	-0.9	-0.8	-0.6	-0.3	0.0
Denmark	-0.9	-0.2	-0.3	-0.8	-0.6	-0.5	0.8	-0.6	-0.6	-0.2	0.3	0.8	1.4
Finland	-0.6	-0.9	-0.4	-0.7	-0.6	-0.4	-0.1	-0.4	-0.4	-0.3	-0.2	-0.1	0.0
France	-0.1	-0.9	-0.5	-1.1	-0.7	-0.5	0.2	-0.6	-0.5	-0.3	-0.1	0.2	0.4
Germany	-0.7	-1.5	-1.1	-1.2	-1.1	-1.1	-0.9	-1.1	-1.1	-1.0	-1.0	-0.9	-0.7
Greece	-1.0	-0.6		-0.8	-0.9	-0.7		-0.7	-0.7	-0.7			
Hungary	0.3	-0.1	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.7
Iceland	0.3	-0.6	0.7	0.4	-0.1	0.6	2.3						
Ireland	0.1	0.2	1.6	0.3	1.0	2.0	3.1	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.7	3.2	3.5
Italy	-0.9	-0.7		0.7	0.9	0.5		0.5	0.5	0.5			
Japan	-0.3	-0.3	0.1	-0.1	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.0	-0.3	0.2	0.7
Korea	-0.3	-0.2	-0.1	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2
Luxembourg	0.0	-0.5	0.2	-0.2	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7
Mexico	0.0	0.1	0.3	-0.1	0.1	0.3	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.2	1.0	1.0
Netherlands	-0.8	-0.7	-0.4	-0.7	-0.4	-0.4	-0.1	-0.5	-0.5	-0.3	-0.1	-0.1	-0.1
New Zealand	0.1	-0.2		0.0	0.4	0.6							
Norway	-1.1	-0.9		-0.3	-0.1	-0.1		-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.2	0.4	
Poland	-3.9	-4.2	-2.5	-3.1	-2.5	-2.5	-2.0	-2.5	-2.5	-2.4	-2.3	-2.0	-1.7
Portugal	0.1	0.3	-0.4	-0.6	-0.5	-0.3	0.0	-0.4	-0.3	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.2
Slovak Republic	-2.9	-2.2	-1.5	-1.3	-1.3	-2.1	-1.3	-2.0	-2.2	-2.1	-1.8	-1.3	-0.9
Spain	-0.7	-0.2	3.1	1.1	2.5	3.4	5.2	3.1	3.3	3.9	4.7	5.1	5.7
Sweden	-0.3	-0.8	0.0	-0.6	-0.4	0.1	0.9	-0.1	0.1	0.4	0.7	1.0	1.0
Switzerland	-0.4	-0.4		-0.3	-0.2	-0.1							
Turkey	-0.3	0.0		-0.1	0.0	0.8							
United Kingdom	0.6	-0.1		0.1	0.2	0.4		0.4	0.5	0.7	1.0		
United States ⁽²⁾	-0.5	0.0	1.2	0.2	0.4	0.7		1.1	1.5	1.5	1.8	2.1	2.3

Notes:

- (1) Canada: January 2009 the change is 1.3
 (2) United States: January 2009 the change is 2.6

OECD Harmonised Unemployment Rates

Methodological Notes

The OECD harmonised unemployment rates, compiled for 30 OECD member countries, are based on definitions of the 13th Conference of Labour Statisticians (generally referred to as the ILO guidelines). Under these definitions, the unemployed are persons of working age who, in the reference period, are without work, are available for work and have taken specific steps to find work.

The uniform application of the definitions results in estimates that are more internationally comparable than those based on national definitions. For example, national unemployment data in some countries only include persons registered at government labour offices. Under the ILO definition, persons without work who are seeking employment through other means can also be classified as unemployed and registrants can be excluded if they worked or were not available for work. The unemployment rates shown here are calculated as the number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force (i.e., the unemployed plus those in employment) and are seasonally adjusted.

The unemployment rates for the European Union (EU) member countries and Norway are produced by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat). The OECD is responsible for collecting data and calculating unemployment rates for the remaining OECD member countries.

In September 2000, Eurostat adopted a new unemployment definition through a Commission Regulation. Details about the new definition and its implementation are available on the [Eurostat Internet site](#). This link also gives details about country specific estimations and provisional data.

Monthly figures include OECD Secretariat estimates for countries which only compile quarterly rates.

Geographical groupings

In this news release:

- The *Euro area* covers, for all periods, the 16 participating member countries, see note 1 of Eurostat's monthly news release at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=0,1136184,0_45572592&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL for details;
- The *European Union* covers the EU 27 member countries, see note 1 as above for details;
- The *OECD total* covers 29 OECD member countries for which unemployment rates have been estimated. These comprise the 19 of the 27 European Union countries which are also members of the OECD plus Canada, the United States, Australia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

Contacts:

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