Unemployment

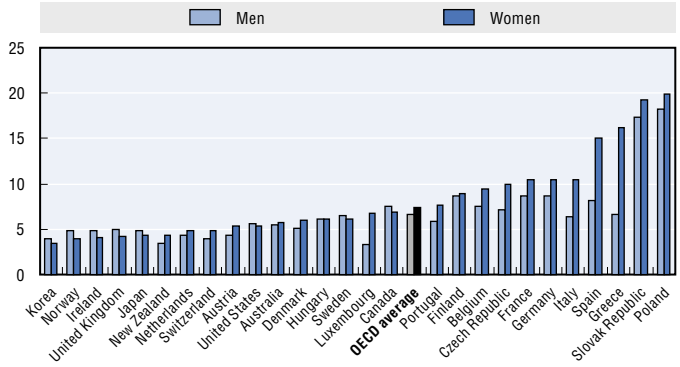
Did you know?

For statisticians, the "labour force" is everybody who is either working or is "unemployed". The "unemployed" are people who are actively looking for work but who have not found more than one hour of paid work in the last week. The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed as a percentage of the labour force. The female unemployment rate is the number of unemployed women as a percentage of the female labour force.

Poland has the highest with nearly 20% of the female labour force out of work in 2004; the Slovak Republic was second with just over 19%.

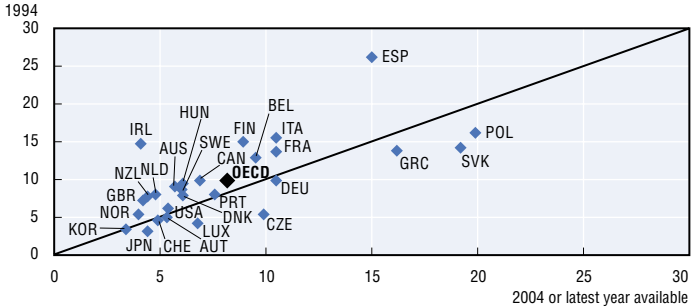
Compared to men, women have a higher risk of being unemployed in most OECD countries. Twenty-seven countries are shown in the chart and the female unemployment rate is higher than that for men in 20 of them. The gender gap in favour of men is particularly large in Greece, Spain, and Italy. On the other hand, women are somewhat less likely than men to be unemployed in Korea, Norway, Ireland, Japan and the United Kingdom.

Unemployment as a percentage of the male and female labour forces (2004)



Have unemployment rates been falling or rising for women over the past decade? The chart below compares female unemployment rates in 1994 and 2004. Countries that fall on the diagonal line have exactly the same female unemployment rates in both years. If they are below the diagonal, the 2004 rate is higher than the 1994 rate. Fifteen of the 27 countries lie above the diagonal meaning that in most countries female unemployment rates have fallen over the decade.

Female unemployment rates in 1994 and 2004



Source: Quarterly Labour Force Statistics and Annual Labour Force Statistics; OECD (2006), *OECD Factbook: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*, OECD, Paris.

Further reading:

OECD (2005), *OECD Employment Outlook*, OECD, Paris.
OECD (2006), *Economic Policy Reforms: Going for Growth* – 2006 Edition, OECD, Paris.
OECD (2006), *OECD Factbook 2006: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*, OECD, Paris.