The OECD-area unemployment rate on a standardised basis was 7.9 per cent in April, down 0.1 percentage point from March; this compares with a 7.8 per cent rate a year earlier. In OECD-Europe the unemployment rate also fell 0.1 percentage point to 11.1 per cent. Among the non-European OECD countries for which monthly data are available the unemployment rate fell in two, was constant in one and rose in the other. In April, the unemployment rate fell to 6.4 per cent in the United States and to 10.1 per cent in Australia; it was constant in Japan at 2.8 per cent while it rose in Canada to 10.9 per cent. The quarterly rate of unemployment in New Zealand fell from 9.2 per cent in December 1993 to 9.1 per cent in March 1994. Between March and April, the unemployment rate rose in three of the eight European economies for which monthly data are available and fell in the other five. The unemployment rate rose to 9.8 per cent in Belgium, to 12.3 per cent in France and to 6.6 per cent in western Germany. The unemployment rate fell to 18.9 per cent in Finland, to 15.2 per cent in Ireland, to 9.6 per cent in the Netherlands, to 7.4 per cent in Sweden and to 9.6 per cent in the United Kingdom.

The unemployment rate fell in five of the seven OECD countries for which May data are available and was constant in the other two. The unemployment rate fell from 10.9 to 10.7 per cent in Canada, from 6.4 to 6.0 per cent in the United States, from 10.1 to 9.7 per cent in Australia, from 7.4 to 7.1 per cent in Sweden and from 9.6 to 9.5 per cent in the United Kingdom. The unemployment rate was constant between April and May in Belgium at 9.8 per cent and in Ireland at 15.2 per cent.

Standardised unemployment rates are based on national statistics but have been adjusted when necessary, and as far as the available data allow, to bring them as close as possible to ILO guidelines for international comparisons of labour force statistics. The standardised rates are, therefore, more comparable between countries than the unemployment rates published in national sources. For further details, see the Technical Note to the table.