

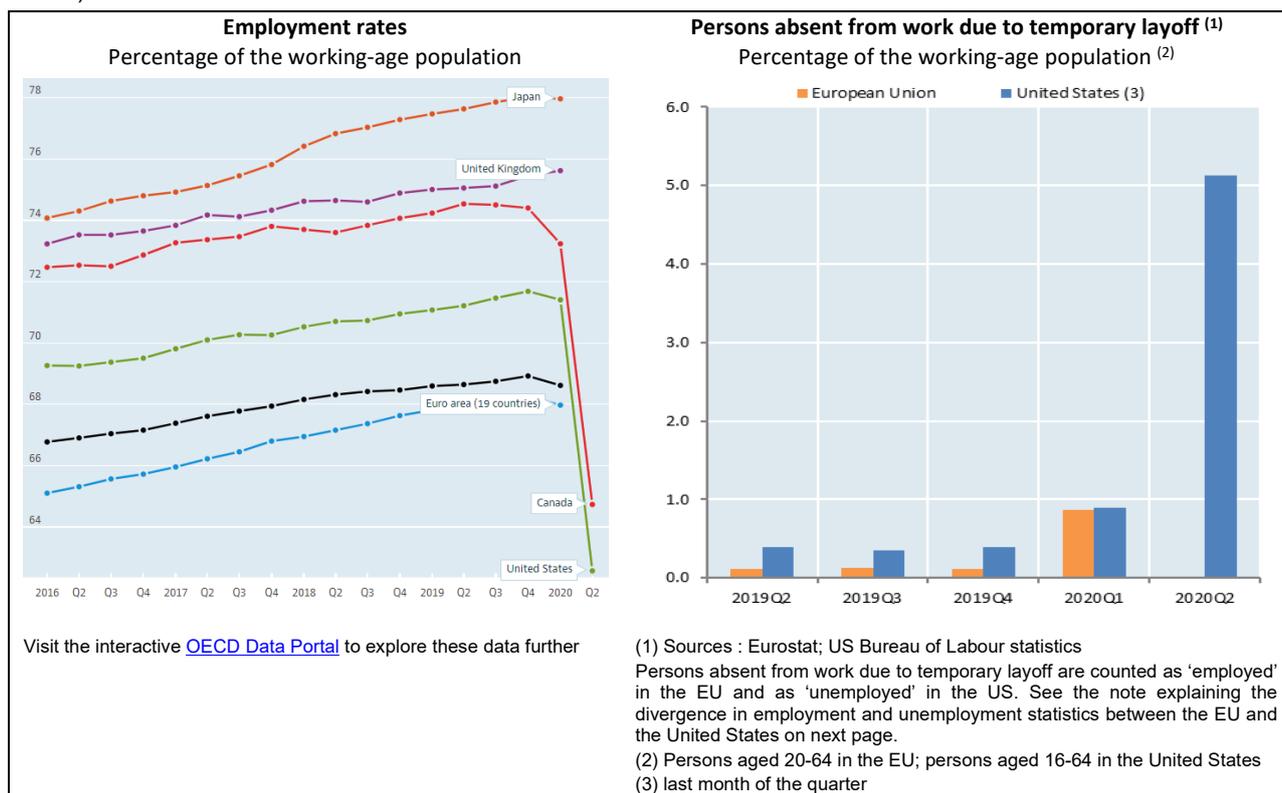
OECD area employment dipped in first quarter of 2020 but early evidence for second quarter points to a plunge

The **OECD area**¹ employment rate – the share of the working-age population with jobs – fell to 68.6% in the first quarter of 2020, from 68.9% in the previous quarter, the first decrease since early 2013. While **OECD** employment rates for **women** and **men** decreased at the same pace (to 61.3% and 76.1% respectively), the **youth** (people age 15 to 24) employment rate (down to 41.9%, from 42.3%) was particularly affected.

The number of persons (aged 20-64) who were absent from work due to temporary lay-off in the **European Union**, where they are counted as employed, increased sharply to 2.3 million in the first quarter of 2020 (from 0.3 million in the fourth quarter of 2019). While in the **United States**, where they are counted as unemployed, they increased to 1.8 million in March 2020 (from 0.8 million in December 2019).

More recent data for the second quarter of 2020 show a much stronger fall in the employment rate in the **United States**, by almost 9.0 percentage points, to 62.6%, with the number of persons employed (129 million) at its lowest level since the fourth quarter of 1998. Similarly, in **Canada**, the employment rate fell to 64.7% in the second quarter (from 73.2% in the first quarter). The **US youth** employment rate was particularly affected (down by more than 12.0 percentage points, to 38.6%), compared to workers **aged 25-54** (down to 71.5% from 80.1%) and **55-64** (down to 57.0% from 63.5%). During the second quarter, the number of persons in temporary lay-off in the **United States** reached 18.1 million in April, before decreasing to 10.6 million in June.

In OECD countries with monthly labour force surveys, over April and May, the employment rate fell by a (cumulative) 10.3 percentage points in **Colombia** (to 50.6%) and by 4.7 percentage points in **Australia** (to 69.8%). The decrease was lower in **Japan** (down by 1.0 percentage points, to 76.9%) and **Korea** (down by 0.4 percentage points, to 65.4%).



The measures put in place by national governments to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) may have impacted on the ability to field surveys, and so, in turn, on the quality of statistics typically produced. In addition, because of differences in national practices used to determine whether individuals are unemployed when under confinement, international comparability has also been affected. See the **note on the divergence in employment and unemployment statistics during the Covid-19 crisis** on next page.

¹ Now including Colombia. Colombia became the 37th member country of the OECD on 28 April 2020

Note: Employment and unemployment statistics during the COVID-19 crisis

The broad comparability of unemployment data across OECD countries is achieved through the adherence of national statistics to International Guidelines from the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) – the so-called ILO guidelines.

Departures from these guidelines may however exist across countries depending on national circumstances (e.g. statistical environment, national regulations and practices). Typically, these departures have only a limited impact on broad comparability of employment and unemployment statistics. However, the unprecedented impact of Covid-19¹ is amplifying divergences and affects the cross-country comparability of unemployment statistics in this news release.

This concerns in particular the treatment of persons on temporary layoff or employees furloughed by their employers. These are *persons not at work during the survey reference week due to economic reasons and business conditions* (i.e. lack of work, shortage of demand for goods and services, business closures or business moves).

According to ILO guidelines, ‘**employed**’ persons include those who, in their present job, were ‘not at work’ for a short duration but maintained a job attachment during their absence (ILO, 2013 and 2020). Job attachment is determined on the basis of the continued receipt of remuneration, and/or the total duration of the absence. In practice, formal or continued job attachment is established when :

- *the expected total duration of the absence is up to three months (which can be more than three months, if the return to employment in the same economic unit is guaranteed and, in the case of the pandemic, once the restrictions in place - where applicable - are lifted)*
- OR**
- *workers continue to receive remuneration from their employer, including partial pay, even if they also receive support from other sources, including government schemes.*

In turn persons are classified as ‘**not employed**’ if:

- *The expected total duration of absence is greater than three months or there is no or unknown expected return to the same economic unit*
- AND**
- *People in this condition do not receive any part of their remuneration from their employer.*

Not-employed persons are classified as ‘**unemployed**’ if they fulfil the criteria of active “job search”² and “availability” specified for the measurement of unemployment.

However, departures from these guidelines in national practices do exist. In particular, in North America persons on temporary layoff are considered to be “only weakly or not at all attached to their job and are to be counted as unemployed” (Sorrentino, 2000). In the United States, people on temporary layoff are classified as ‘unemployed’ if they expect to be recalled to their job within six months. If they have not been given a date to return to work by their employer and if they have no expectation to return to work within six months, they need to fulfil the “job search” criteria to be classified as ‘unemployed’. For the latest US figures “people who were effectively laid off due to

¹ Broad comparability is ensured during normal business conditions, while divergences are potentially exacerbated during economic and financial crisis, such as the Great Recession or the current Covid-19 crisis.

² Some not-employed persons may be classified as “inactive/out of the labour force” because, due to the pandemic, they are either not able to actively look for a job even if they are available to work or are not available to work because of family responsibilities as schools and care services are closed.

pandemic-related closures were counted among the unemployed on temporary layoff” without further testing for their return to their previous job (BLS, 2020). In Canada, persons in temporary layoff are also classified as ‘unemployed’ if they have a date of return or an indication that they will be recalled by their employers.

Conversely, persons on temporary layoff are classified as employed (not at work) in Europe, as recommended by the ILO Guidelines (Eurostat, 2016). In practice, formal job attachment is tested on the basis of (i) an assurance of return to work within a period of three months or (ii) the receipt of half or more of their wage or salary from their employer. Somewhat stricter than ILO guidance, absences during COVID-19 crisis whose duration is unknown are treated as absences longer than three months. Those failing to satisfy these two criteria are classified as unemployed if they are “available to start work” (over the next two weeks) and have actively searched for a job in the last four weeks. All other persons on layoff are classified as inactive.

References

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Methodological Notes for OECD Quarterly Employment Situation News Release

All rates and levels quoted are seasonally adjusted (s.a.). Data for EU countries and for some non-EU countries are seasonally adjusted by the OECD.

OECD Database: [OECD Short-Term Labour Market Statistics](#)

Country Note: The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

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Table 1: OECD employment rates and levels (15-64)

Employment as a percentage of corresponding working age population and levels, seasonally adjusted

	Employment rates											Levels Thousands Q1 - 2020
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2008	2018	2019				2020	
					Q2	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	
OECD - Total	67.0	67.7	68.3	68.7	66.3	68.5	68.6	68.6	68.7	68.9	68.6	594,599
Major Seven	69.8	70.6	71.3	72.0	69.6	71.6	71.7	71.9	72.0	72.2	72.0	344,907
European Union	65.6	66.7	67.7	68.4	64.9	68.0	68.2	68.3	68.4	68.6	68.5	194,705
Euro area	65.4	66.3	67.3	68.0	65.8	67.6	67.8	67.9	67.9	68.3	68.0	148,124
Australia	72.4	73.0	73.8	74.3	73.3	74.0	74.1	74.2	74.4	74.4	74.6	12,404
Austria	71.6	72.2	73.0	73.5	71.0	73.2	73.5	73.5	73.5	73.7	73.3	4,270
Belgium ⁽¹⁾	62.3	63.1	64.5	65.3	62.3	65.1	64.7	65.6	65.6	65.2	65.3	4,774
Canada	72.6	73.4	73.8	74.4	73.6	74.1	74.2	74.5	74.5	74.4	73.2	17,953
Chile	63.3	63.9	64.1	64.1	57.2	64.1	63.9	64.2	64.4	63.9	63.3	8,401
Colombia	67.2	66.9	66.4	65.2	60.7	65.8	66.0	65.1	64.9	65.0	63.5	20,565
Czech Republic	72.0	73.6	74.8	75.1	66.7	75.2	75.3	75.1	75.1	75.1	75.1	5,143
Denmark ⁽¹⁾	72.7	73.2	74.1	75.0	76.6	74.3	74.7	74.9	75.2	75.3	75.3	2,792
Estonia	72.1	74.1	74.8	75.3	70.1	75.8	74.8	74.6	75.7	76.1	75.6	637
Finland	69.1	70.0	72.1	73.0	71.2	72.7	72.7	72.8	73.0	73.3	73.3	2,497
France	64.2	64.7	65.3	65.6	64.9	65.5	65.5	65.5	65.3	65.9	66.0	26,892
Germany ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	74.7	75.3	75.9	76.7	69.8	76.2	76.5	76.7	76.8	76.8	76.1 ^(b)	40,613
Greece	52.0	53.5	54.9	56.5	61.5	55.6	55.9	56.5	56.6	56.9	56.8	3,834
Hungary	66.5	68.2	69.3	70.1	56.3	69.5	70.3	70.0	70.0	70.2	70.1	4,418
Iceland	86.5	86.1	85.1	84.0	84.4	85.5	85.4	84.3	82.7	83.7		
Ireland ⁽¹⁾	66.4	67.7	68.7	69.6	70.3	68.9	69.5	69.3	69.4	69.9	70.0	2,267
Israel	68.6	69.0	69.0	68.9	60.0	68.9	69.3	69.0	68.7	68.6	68.6	3,762
Italy	57.3	58.0	58.5	59.1	58.8	58.6	58.8	59.0	59.1	59.2	59.1	22,661
Japan	74.4	75.3	76.9	77.7	70.9	77.3	77.5	77.6	77.9	78.0	78.0	58,320
Korea	66.1	66.6	66.6	66.8	64.1	66.6	66.6	66.7	66.9	67.1	66.7	24,492
Latvia	68.7	70.1	71.8	72.3	69.2	71.8	71.7	72.3	72.6	72.6	72.4	865
Lithuania	69.4	70.4	72.4	73.0	64.6	72.9	72.9	72.9	72.9	73.2	73.2	1,329
Luxembourg ⁽¹⁾	65.6	66.3	67.1	68.0	63.9	67.9	67.7	68.4	67.8	67.8	67.1	289
Mexico	61.0	61.1	61.5	62.2	61.2	61.5	62.0	62.2	62.3	62.3	62.5	52,622
Netherlands	74.8	75.9	77.2	78.2	75.0	77.8	78.0	78.1	78.2	78.3	78.6	8,789
New Zealand	75.6	76.9	77.5	77.4	75.0	76.9	77.4	77.5	77.5	77.3	77.7	2,484
Norway	74.3	74.0	74.8	75.3	78.1	75.2	75.1	75.0	75.6	75.5	75.6	2,635
Poland	64.5	66.1	67.4	68.2	59.0	67.6	67.7	68.1	68.4	68.7	68.8	16,183
Portugal	65.3	67.8	69.7	70.5	68.3	69.9	70.2	70.2	70.8	70.7	70.2	4,648
Slovak Republic	64.9	66.2	67.6	68.4	61.8	68.1	68.6	68.3	68.4	68.4	68.0	2,519
Slovenia	65.9	69.3	71.1	71.9	68.2	72.0	72.1	72.1	71.5	71.8	72.2	979
Spain	59.6	61.1	62.4	63.3	65.1	62.8	63.2	63.3	63.2	63.5	63.2	19,646
Sweden ⁽¹⁾	76.2	76.9	77.4	77.1	74.5	77.4	77.2	77.1	77.0	77.1	76.4	4,917
Switzerland	79.6	79.8	80.1	80.5	79.5	80.3	80.3	80.4	80.5	80.7	80.6	4,551
Turkey	50.7	51.6	52.0	50.3	45.2	51.3	50.7	50.1	50.0	50.3	49.2	26,793
United Kingdom	73.5	74.1	74.7	75.2	71.8	74.9	75.0	75.1	75.1	75.5	75.6	31,616
United States	69.4	70.1	70.7	71.4	71.3	70.9	71.1	71.2	71.5	71.7	71.4	146,852

b: Break in time series

(1) Breaks in the Labour Force Survey for Belgium in Q1 2017; for Denmark in Q1 2016 and Q1 2017; for Ireland in Q3 2017; for Luxembourg in Q1 2015 for Sweden in Q3 2018 and for Germany in Q1 2020. Some of these breaks also affect, to some extent, aggregates for the European Union, euro area and OECD-Total.

(2) Germany: data for Q1 2020 is an estimation

Table 2: OECD employment rates (15-64) by gender

Employment as a percentage of corresponding working age population, seasonally adjusted

	Women						Men					
	2019	2019				2020	2019	2019				2020
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
OECD - Total	61.3	61.1	61.2	61.4	61.6	61.3	76.2	76.2	76.2	76.4	76.1	
Major Seven	66.8	66.5	66.7	66.9	67.2	66.9	77.2	77.0	77.1	77.2	77.3	77.1
European Union	63.1	62.8	62.9	62.9	63.4	63.1	73.7	73.6	73.7	73.8	73.8	73.8
Euro area	63.0	62.7	62.9	62.9	63.3	62.9	73.0	72.9	73.0	72.8	73.2	73.0
Australia	70.0	69.7	69.8	70.2	70.3	70.6	78.7	78.6	78.7	78.7	78.6	78.6
Austria	69.2	69.2	69.1	69.1	69.2	68.8	78.0	77.9	77.9	77.9	78.1	77.8
Belgium	61.7	61.1	62.1	62.0	61.7	61.3	68.9	68.4	69.1	69.3	68.7	69.3
Canada	71.5	71.3	71.6	71.6	71.6	70.0	77.3	77.2	77.4	77.4	77.1	76.4
Chile	55.0	54.5	55.4	55.4	54.6	54.2	73.2	73.1	72.9	73.4	73.4	72.4
Colombia	53.4	54.4	53.3	53.1	53.0	51.6	77.5	78.0	77.4	77.2	77.5	75.9
Czech Republic	68.1	68.3	67.8	68.1	68.0	68.0	82.0	82.0	82.0	81.8	81.9	81.9
Denmark	72.0	71.4	72.0	72.2	72.4	72.1	78.0	78.0	77.7	78.0	78.1	78.4
Estonia	72.0	71.2	71.3	72.1	73.3	73.1	78.7	78.4	78.0	79.3	78.9	78.2
Finland	71.8	71.4	71.5	72.0	72.3	72.2	74.1	74.0	74.0	74.0	74.2	74.3
France	62.5	62.3	62.4	62.2	62.9	62.7	68.8	68.8	68.8	68.5	69.1	69.4
Germany ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	72.8	72.5	72.7	73.0	73.0	72.1 ^(b)	80.5	80.4	80.6	80.4	80.6	80.0 ^(b)
Greece	47.3	46.5	47.2	47.5	47.9	48.0	65.9	65.5	66.0	66.0	66.2	65.7
Hungary	63.0	62.9	63.0	62.9	63.1	62.8	77.3	77.8	77.0	77.1	77.5	77.4
Iceland	81.8	83.7	81.6	80.5	81.6		86.1	87.0	86.9	84.8	85.6	
Ireland	64.2	64.3	63.9	64.0	64.5	64.4	75.0	74.6	74.8	74.9	75.4	75.6
Israel	66.4	66.9	66.4	66.1	66.3	66.5	71.4	71.8	71.6	71.4	71.0	70.8
Italy	50.1	50.0	50.1	50.2	50.2	50.0	68.0	67.7	67.9	68.0	68.3	68.2
Japan	71.0	70.5	70.9	71.1	71.5	71.5	84.3	84.2	84.2	84.4	84.4	84.3
Korea	57.8	57.4	57.7	57.9	58.1	57.6	75.7	75.7	75.5	75.7	75.9	75.6
Latvia	70.7	69.8	70.9	71.2	71.0	70.5	74.0	73.8	73.7	74.0	74.3	74.4
Lithuania	72.5	72.2	72.1	72.9	73.0	72.2	73.5	73.7	73.7	73.0	73.5	74.4
Luxembourg	63.7	63.3	64.0	63.5	63.6	62.9	72.1	71.9	72.7	71.8	71.9	71.1
Mexico	47.0	46.4	47.0	47.1	47.5	47.9	78.8	79.1	78.8	78.8	78.6	78.5
Netherlands	74.1	73.8	74.0	74.2	74.3	74.6	82.2	82.2	82.2	82.3	82.4	82.5
New Zealand	73.3	73.3	73.4	73.2	73.1	73.3	81.8	81.7	81.8	82.0	81.7	82.2
Norway	73.1	72.8	72.9	73.4	73.2	73.5	77.4	77.3	77.1	77.6	77.6	77.7
Poland	61.1	60.8	61.0	61.2	61.4	61.5	75.3	74.6	75.1	75.6	76.0	76.1
Portugal	67.6	67.1	67.6	67.6	67.9	67.4	73.6	73.5	73.0	74.2	73.7	73.2
Slovak Republic	62.4	62.4	62.2	62.4	62.4	62.1	74.4	74.6	74.2	74.3	74.4	73.9
Slovenia	68.7	68.1	68.6	68.5	69.3	69.4	74.9	75.8	75.3	74.2	74.0	74.7
Spain	57.9	57.6	57.9	57.8	58.3	58.0	68.7	68.7	68.7	68.6	68.8	68.5
Sweden	75.4	75.6	75.4	75.2	75.4	74.2	78.8	78.8	78.8	78.8	78.7	78.6
Switzerland	76.4	75.8	76.4	76.5	76.7	76.3	84.5	84.6	84.4	84.4	84.7	84.7
Turkey	32.2	32.5	32.2	32.1	31.9	30.5	68.3	69.0	67.9	67.7	68.5	67.9
United Kingdom	71.1	70.7	71.1	71.1	71.5	71.9	79.2	79.3	79.0	79.2	79.4	79.3
United States	66.3	66.0	66.1	66.5	66.8	66.6	76.5	76.3	76.5	76.6	76.7	76.4

b: Break in time series

(1) Break in the Labour Force Survey for Germany in Q1 2020. This break also affects, to some extent, aggregates for the European Union, euro area and OECD-Total.

(2) Germany: data for Q1 2020 is an estimation

Table 3: OECD employment rates by age

Employment as a percentage of corresponding working age population, seasonally adjusted

	Youth (15-24)				Prime-age workers (25-54)				Older workers (55-64)			
	2019	2019		2020	2019	2019		2020	2019	2019		2020
	Q1	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q1	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q1	Q3	Q4	Q1
OECD - Total	42.2	42.2	42.3	41.9	78.6	78.8	78.9	78.7	61.8	62.1	62.3	62.1
Major Seven	46.0	46.4	46.6	46.1	81.2	81.5	81.7	81.5	64.9	65.4	65.5	65.3
European Union	33.3	33.4	33.5	33.3	80.4	80.5	80.7	80.6	58.7	59.1	59.6	59.8
Euro area	33.8	33.8	33.9	33.6	79.6	79.7	79.8	79.7	59.5	60.0	60.6	60.4
Australia	60.1	60.1	60.0	60.1	81.3	81.6	81.7	81.8	64.1	64.7	64.6	64.4
Austria	52.6	50.8	51.6	51.0	84.8	85.7	85.5	85.2	55.0	54.3	54.5	54.3
Belgium	25.5	27.9	26.2	26.6	80.4	80.7	80.6	80.5	50.9	52.9	52.3	52.9
Canada	57.1	57.5	57.5	54.9	83.3	83.4	83.1	82.2	62.7	63.5	63.5	63.0
Chile	26.9	26.4	25.8	27.3	75.6	76.2	75.6	74.8	66.1	66.5	66.3	64.2
Colombia	41.9	40.0	40.5	38.6	76.9	76.3	76.1	74.7	62.0	60.6	61.6	60.1
Czech Republic	28.7	27.9	27.2	26.5	87.7	87.4	87.3	87.5	65.9	66.9	67.4	67.3
Denmark	55.0	54.7	55.7	54.8	82.5	82.6	82.9	83.0	70.0	71.8	71.7	71.2
Estonia	39.8	39.4	40.4	41.6	84.0	84.2	85.0	84.4	70.6	74.4	73.9	72.8
Finland	45.4	43.8	44.5	43.6	83.1	83.1	83.4	83.6	65.9	67.3	67.2	68.0
France	30.0	29.4	29.5	29.7	80.7	80.7	81.3	81.4	52.6	52.8	53.9	54.0
Germany ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	48.4	48.3	48.5	47.9 ^(b)	85.3	85.5	85.5	85.1 ^(b)	72.2	72.8	73.3	72.0 ^(b)
Greece	14.0	14.7	14.9	14.6	70.0	71.1	71.3	71.2	42.4	43.2	43.6	43.3
Hungary	28.8	28.7	28.1	28.9	84.9	84.2	84.3	83.5	56.3	56.7	57.6	58.5
Iceland	74.0	68.5	68.8		89.0	87.4	88.7		81.5	82.3	79.6	
Ireland	41.1	41.1	42.0	42.3	80.3	79.8	80.4	80.5	61.4	61.5	62.9	62.6
Israel					80.3	80.0	80.2	79.6	68.1	67.8	67.9	68.8
Italy	18.2	18.6	18.6	18.2	70.1	70.6	70.7	70.5	53.9	54.4	54.5	54.8
Japan	47.1	47.6	47.9	47.4	85.7	86.1	86.2	86.1	76.1	76.5	76.8	77.0
Korea	26.5	26.3	26.9	25.6	76.3	76.4	76.5	76.1	66.7	67.0	67.0	67.1
Latvia	32.8	32.2	33.2	31.4	82.2	83.6	83.2	82.2	66.1	68.5	68.1	69.4
Lithuania	33.6	33.6	31.9	32.6	85.2	84.8	85.4	85.5	68.3	67.2	68.8	68.6
Luxembourg	30.5	28.4	26.2	24.9	83.7	84.3	84.5	83.3	42.8	42.9	44.0	43.8
Mexico	41.4	41.7	41.3	41.6	72.2	72.5	72.7	72.8	55.8	56.1	56.5	56.3
Netherlands	65.1	65.1	65.5	65.9	85.1	85.4	85.1	85.3	69.3	69.7	70.4	71.2
New Zealand	56.1	57.0	55.8	57.7	85.0	84.7	84.7	84.3	76.7	76.4	76.7	78.0
Norway	49.3	50.9	50.8	50.4	83.5	83.9	83.4	83.6	72.0	73.2	73.4	73.3
Poland	31.1	32.3	32.4	31.6	82.5	82.9	83.2	83.4	49.1	49.8	49.9	50.3
Portugal	28.8	28.0	27.7	27.5	84.9	85.3	85.4	85.2	59.5	61.1	60.8	60.0
Slovak Republic	25.7	24.6	24.5	24.3	82.5	82.1	81.8	81.5	55.9	56.8	58.1	57.0
Slovenia	34.4	32.6	32.5	32.6	88.5	88.1	88.9	88.8	48.3	48.8	48.3	48.8
Spain	21.9	22.4	22.6	22.3	75.6	75.6	76.0	75.4	53.3	53.5	54.6	55.3
Sweden	44.4	44.2	43.4	43.0	86.4	86.2	86.4	86.0	78.5	77.3	77.3	77.0
Switzerland	61.3	60.3	61.3	61.0	87.2	87.7	87.7	87.6	72.3	73.2	73.5	73.5
Turkey	34.3	32.1	33.2	31.8	60.1	59.7	59.8	58.9	34.3	33.7	33.3	32.4
United Kingdom	50.7	49.7	50.4	50.9	84.6	85.0	85.1	85.4	65.9	66.3	66.6	66.4
United States	50.6	51.4	51.6	51.1	79.8	79.9	80.3	80.1	63.5	64.0	63.7	63.5

b: Break in time series

(1) Break in the Labour Force Survey for Germany in Q1 2020. This break also affects, to some extent, aggregates for the European Union, euro area and OECD-Total.

(2) Germany: data for Q1 2020 is an estimation