



Unemployment statistics

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Data up to July 2012. Most recent data: [Further Eurostat information, Main tables and Database](#).

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[Unemployment](#) levels and rates move in a cyclical way, largely related to the general [business cycle](#). However, other factors such as [labour market](#) policies and demographic developments may influence the short and long-term evolution as well.

This article gives an overview of statistical information for unemployment in the [European Union \(EU\)](#) since the year 2000, starting with the most recent developments.

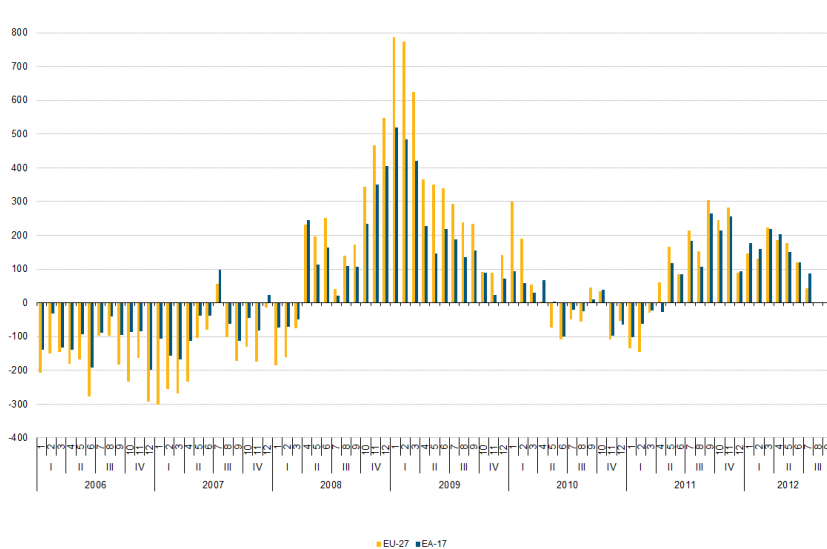


Figure 1: Change in the number of unemployed persons (compared to previous month, in thousands), seasonally adjusted, January 2006 - July 2012

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Main statistical findings

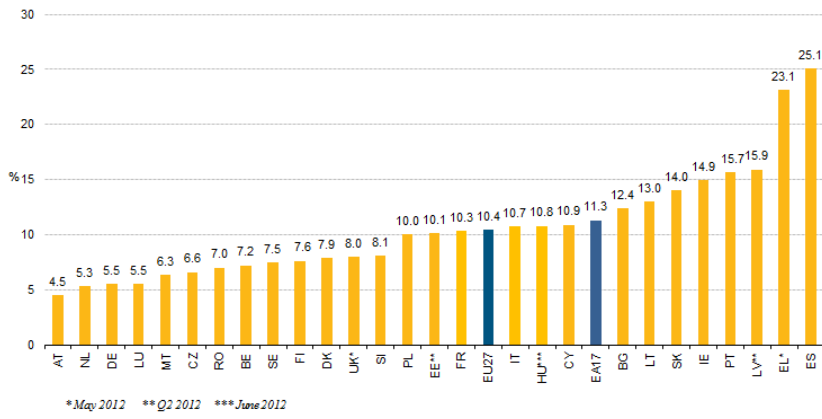


Figure 2: Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted, July 2012

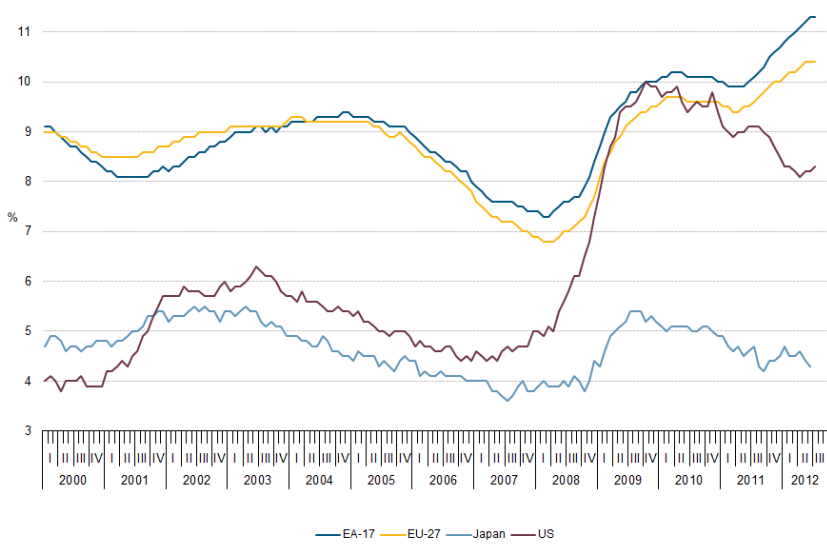


Figure 3: Unemployment rates EU-27, EA-17, US and Japan, seasonally adjusted, January 2000 - July 2012

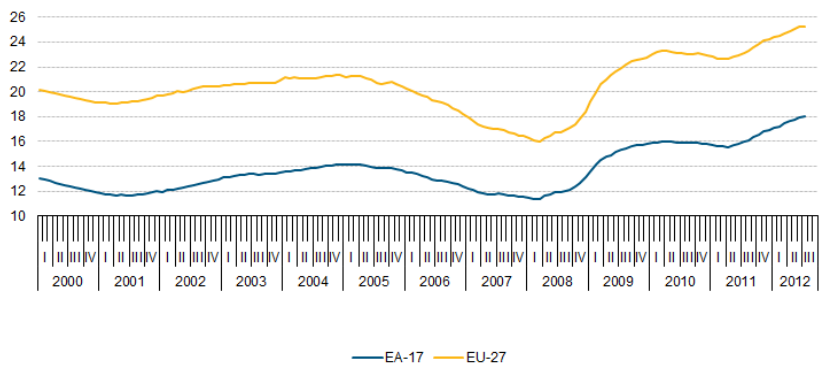


Figure 4: Unemployed persons, in millions, seasonally adjusted, EU-27 and EA-17, January 2000 - July 2012

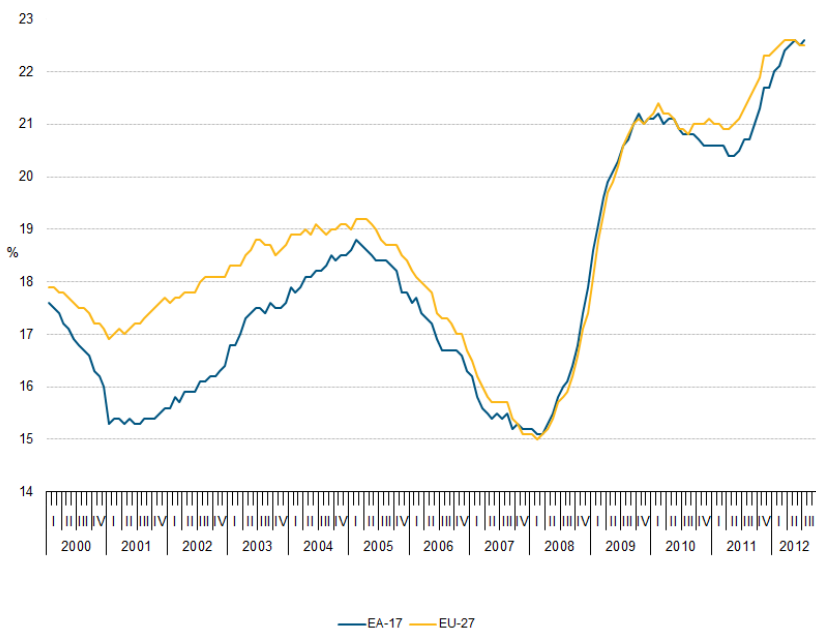


Figure 5: Youth unemployment rates, EU-27 and EA-17, seasonally adjusted, January 2000 - July 2012

	Youth unemployment rate				Youth unemployment ratio		
	2009	2010	2011	2011Q4*	2009	2010	2011
EU-27	20.1	21.1	21.4	22.1	8.7	9.0	9.1
Euro area	20.2	20.9	20.8	21.4	8.7	8.7	8.7
Belgium	21.9	22.4	18.7	17.5	7.1	7.3	6.0
Bulgaria	16.2	23.2	26.6	26.2	4.8	6.7	7.3
Czech Republic	16.6	18.3	18.0	18.3	5.3	5.7	5.4
Denmark	11.8	14.0	14.2	14.3	8.4	9.4	9.6
Germany	11.2	9.9	8.6	8.3	5.8	5.1	4.5
Estonia	27.5	32.9	22.3	25.1	11.0	12.6	9.1
Ireland	24.4	27.8	29.4	30.5	11.5	11.8	11.7
Greece	25.7	32.8	44.4	49.3	8.0	10.0	13.0
Spain	37.8	41.6	46.4	48.9	17.1	17.8	19.0
France	23.9	23.6	22.9	22.7	9.2	9.0	8.5
Italy	25.4	27.8	29.1	30.5	7.4	7.9	8.0
Cyprus	13.8	16.7	22.4	26.8	5.7	6.8	8.5
Latvia	33.6	34.5	29.1	27.4	14.0	13.9	11.2
Lithuania	29.2	35.1	32.9	34.3	8.9	10.4	9.6
Luxembourg	16.5	15.8	15.6	16.0	5.5	3.5	4.2
Hungary	26.5	26.6	26.1	26.7	6.5	6.6	6.4
Malta	14.4	13.1	13.7	14.0	7.4	6.7	7.1
Netherlands	7.7	8.7	7.6	8.5	4.8	6.0	5.3
Austria	10.0	8.8	8.3	8.7	6.0	5.2	5.0
Poland	20.6	23.7	25.8	26.9	7.0	8.2	8.7
Portugal	24.8 (e)	27.7 (e)	30.1	34.1	7.9	8.2	11.7
Romania	20.8	22.1	23.7	24.8	6.4	6.9	7.4
Slovenia	13.6	14.7	15.7	16.4	5.6	5.9	5.9
Slovakia	27.3	33.6	33.2	33.8	8.6	10.4	10.0
Finland	21.5	21.4	20.1	19.9	10.9	10.6	10.1
Sweden	25.0	25.2	22.9	22.8	12.8	13.0	12.0
United Kingdom	19.1	19.6	21.1	22.0	11.4	11.6	12.4

* The quarterly youth unemployment rate is seasonally adjusted.

e: estimate

Source: Eurostat (une_rt_q, lfsi_act_a)

Table 1: Youth unemployment figures, 2008-2011Q4 (%)

Source: Eurostat ([une_rt_q](#)) and ([lfsi_act_a](#))

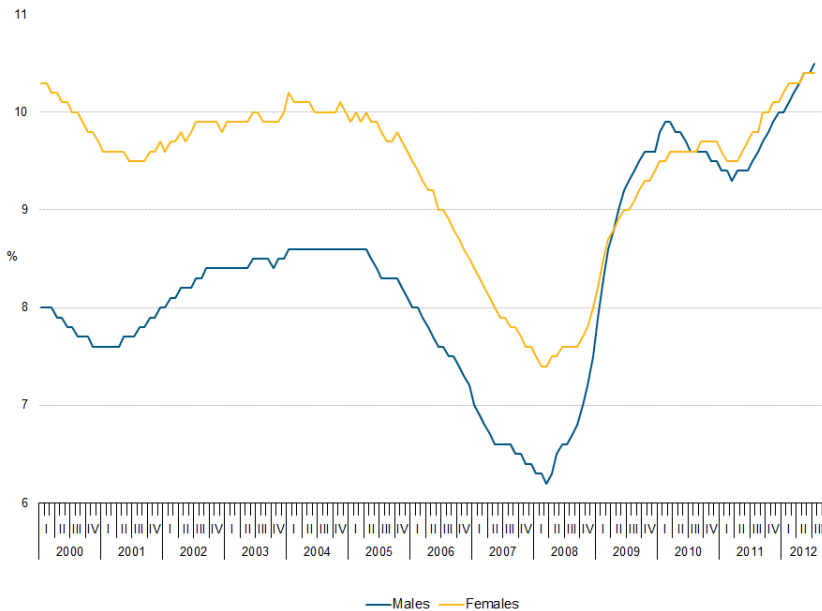


Figure 7: Unemployment rates by gender, EU, seasonally adjusted, January 2000 - July 2012

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
EU-27	8.7	8.5	8.9	9.0	9.1	9.0	8.2	7.2	7.1	9.0	9.7	9.7
Euro area	8.5	8.1	8.4	8.8	9.0	9.1	8.5	7.6	7.6	9.6	10.1	10.2
Belgium	6.9	6.6	7.5	8.2	8.4	8.5	8.3	7.5	7.0	7.9	8.3	7.2
Bulgaria	16.4	19.5	18.2	13.7	12.1	10.1	9.0	6.9	5.6	6.8	10.2	11.2
Czech Republic	8.7	8.0	7.3	7.8	8.3	7.9	7.2	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.3	6.7
Denmark	4.3	4.5	4.6	5.4	5.5	4.8	3.9	3.8	3.3	6.0	7.4	7.6
Germany	7.5	7.6	8.4	9.3	9.8	11.2	10.3	8.7	7.5	7.8	7.1	5.9
Estonia	13.6	12.6	10.3	10.0	9.7	7.9	5.9	4.7	5.5	13.8	16.9	12.5
Ireland	4.2	3.9	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.6	6.3	11.9	13.7	14.4
Greece	11.2	10.7	10.3	9.7	10.5	9.9	8.9	8.3	7.7	9.5	12.6	17.7
Spain	11.1	10.3	11.1	11.1	10.6	9.2	8.5	8.3	11.3	18.0	20.1	21.7
France	9.0	8.3	8.6	9.0	9.3	9.3	9.2	8.4	7.8	9.5	9.7	9.7
Italy	10.1	9.1	8.6	8.4	8.0	7.7	6.8	6.1	6.7	7.8	8.4	8.4
Cyprus	4.9	3.8	3.6	4.1	4.7	5.3	4.6	4.0	3.6	5.3	6.5	7.8
Latvia	13.7	12.9	12.2	10.5	10.4	8.9	6.8	6.0	7.5	17.1	18.7	15.4
Lithuania	16.4	16.5	13.5	12.5	11.4	8.3	5.6	4.3	5.8	13.7	17.8	15.4
Luxembourg	2.2	1.9	2.6	3.8	5.0	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.9	5.1	4.5	4.8
Hungary	6.4	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.1	7.2	7.5	7.4	7.8	10.0	11.2	10.9
Malta	6.7	7.6	7.5	7.6	7.4	7.2	7.1	6.4	5.9	7.0	6.8	6.5
Netherlands	3.1	2.5	3.1	4.2	5.1	5.3	4.4	3.6	3.1	3.7	4.5	4.4
Austria	3.6	3.6	4.2	4.3	4.9	5.2	4.8	4.4	3.8	4.8	4.4	4.2
Poland	16.1	18.3	20.0	19.7	19.0	17.8	13.9	9.6	7.1	8.2	9.6	9.7
Portugal	4.0	4.1	5.1	6.4	6.7	7.7	7.8	8.1	7.7	9.6	11.0	12.9
Romania	7.3	6.8	8.6	7.0	8.1	7.2	7.3	6.4	5.8	6.9	7.3	7.4
Slovenia	6.7	6.2	6.3	6.7	6.3	6.5	6.0	4.9	4.4	5.9	7.3	8.2
Slovakia	18.8	19.3	18.7	17.6	18.2	16.3	13.4	11.1	9.5	12.0	14.4	13.5
Finland	9.8	9.1	9.1	9.0	8.8	8.4	7.7	6.9	6.4	8.2	8.4	7.8
Sweden (1)	5.6	5.8	6.0	6.6	7.4	7.7	7.1	6.1	6.2	8.3	8.4	7.5
United Kingdom	5.4	5.0	5.1	5.0	4.7	4.8	5.4	5.3	5.6	7.6	7.8	8.0
Croatia	.	.	14.8	14.2	13.7	12.7	11.2	9.6	8.4	9.1	11.8	13.2
Turkey	.	.	.	.	.	9.2	8.7	8.8	9.7	12.5	10.7	.
Norway	3.2	3.4	3.7	4.2	4.3	4.5	3.4	2.5	2.5	3.1	3.5	3.3
Japan	4.7	5.0	5.4	5.3	4.7	4.4	4.1	3.9	4.0	5.1	5.1	4.6
United States	4.0	4.8	5.8	6.0	5.5	5.1	4.6	4.6	5.8	9.3	9.6	8.8

(1) Break in series, 2001.
Source: Eurostat (une_rt_a)

Table 2: Unemployment rate 2000-2011 (%)

Source: Eurostat ([une_rt_a](#))

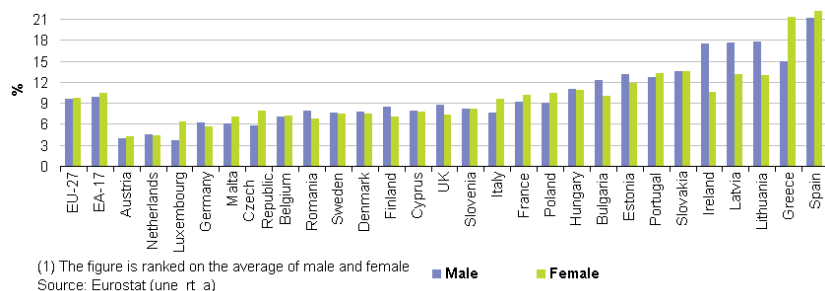


Figure 8: Unemployment rates, 2011 (%)

Source: Eurostat ([une_rt_a](#))

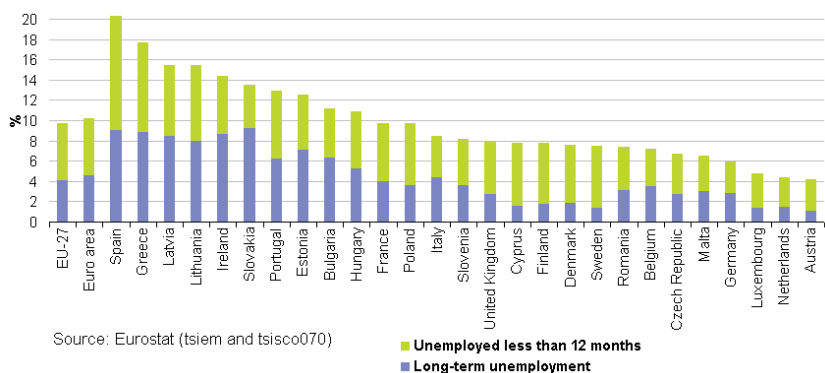


Figure 9: Unemployment rates by duration, 2011 (%)

	Male		Female		< 25 years		25-74 years	
	2006	2011	2006	2011	2011	2011	2011	2011
EU-27	7.6	9.6	9.0	9.8	21.4		8.3	
Euro area	7.6	9.9	9.7	10.5	20.6		9.0	
Belgium	7.4	7.1	9.3	7.2	18.7		6.0	
Bulgaria	8.7	12.3	9.3	10.0	26.6		10.0	
Czech Republic	5.8	5.8	8.9	7.9	18.0		5.9	
Denmark	3.3	7.7	4.5	7.5	14.2		6.3	
Germany	10.3	6.2	10.2	5.6	8.6		5.6	
Estonia	6.2	13.1	5.6	11.8	22.3		11.3	
Ireland	4.6	17.5	4.2	10.6	29.4		12.8	
Greece	5.6	15.0	13.6	21.3	44.4		15.8	
Spain	6.3	21.2	11.6	22.2	46.4		19.4	
France	8.5	9.2	10.1	10.2	22.9		8.2	
Italy	5.4	7.6	8.8	9.6	29.1		6.9	
Cyprus	3.9	7.9	5.4	7.7	22.4		6.4	
Latvia	7.4	17.6	6.2	13.1	29.1		13.8	
Lithuania	5.8	17.8	5.4	13.0	32.9		13.8	
Luxembourg	3.5	3.7	5.9	6.3	15.6		4.1	
Hungary	7.2	11.0	7.8	10.9	26.1		9.8	
Malta	6.1	6.1	8.6	7.1	13.7		5.0	
Netherlands	3.9	4.5	5.0	4.4	7.6		3.8	
Austria	4.3	4.0	5.2	4.3	8.3		3.5	
Poland	13.0	9.0	14.9	10.5	25.6		8.0	
Portugal	7.9	12.7	9.3	13.2	30.1		11.4	
Romania	8.2	7.9	6.1	6.8	23.7		5.8	
Slovenia	4.9	8.2	7.2	8.2	15.7		7.5	
Slovakia	12.3	13.5	14.7	13.6	33.2		11.7	
Finland	7.4	8.4	8.1	7.1	20.1		6.1	
Sweden	6.9	7.6	7.2	7.5	22.9		5.2	
United Kingdom	5.8	8.7	4.9	7.3	21.1		5.8	
Iceland	2.7	7.8	3.1	6.2	14.6		5.5	
Norway	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.1	8.6		2.4	
Croatia	9.9	13.7	12.8	12.6	35.6		11.0	
Turkey	8.6	8.3	9.1	10.1	16.8		7.2	
United States	4.6	9.4	4.6	8.5	17.3		7.6	
Japan	4.3	4.8	3.9	4.2	8.2		4.2	

Source: Eurostat (une_rt_a)

Table 3: Unemployment rates by age and gender, 2011 (%)

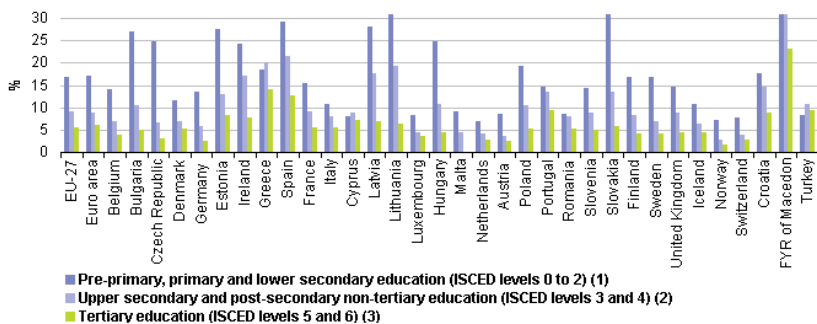
Source: Eurostat ([une_rt_a](#))

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Male	8.2	8.5	8.6	8.4	7.6	6.6	6.7	9.1	9.7	9.6
Female	9.8	9.9	10.1	9.8	9.0	7.9	7.6	9.0	9.6	9.8
Less than 25 years	17.9	18.6	19.0	18.8	17.5	15.7	15.8	20.1	21.1	21.4
Between 25 and 74 years	7.7	7.8	7.9	7.7	7.1	6.1	6.0	7.6	8.3	8.3
Long-term unemployment rate	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.1	3.7	3.1	2.6	3.0	3.9	4.1
Male	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.5	2.9	2.4	2.9	3.9	4.2
Female	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.1	3.4	2.8	3.1	3.8	4.1
Very long-term unemployment rate	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.2	1.8	1.5	1.5	1.8	2.2

Source: Eurostat (une_rt_a, une_ltu_a)

Table 4: Unemployment rates, EU-27, 2002-2011 (%)

Source: Eurostat ([une_rt_a](#)) and - ([une_ltu_a](#))



- (1) Luxembourg and Croatia, unreliable data;
(2) Malta, unreliable data;
(3) Malta, not available; Croatia, unreliable data.

Figure 10: Unemployment rates (among persons aged 25-64 years) by level of educational attainment, 2011 (%)

Recent developments in unemployment at a European and Member State level

Eurostat estimates that 25.254 million men and women in the EU-27, of whom 18.002 million were in the euro area (EA-17), were unemployed in July 2012. Compared with June 2012, the number of persons unemployed increased by 43 000 in the EU-27 and by 88 000 in the euro area. Compared with July 2011, unemployment rose by 2 104 000 in the EU-27 and by 2 051 000 in the euro area.

The euro area seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 11.3 % in July 2012, stable compared with June; it was 10.1 % in July 2011. The EU-27 unemployment rate was 10.4 % in July 2012, also stable compared with June; it was 9.6 % in July 2011.

Among the Member States, the lowest unemployment rates were recorded in Austria (4.5 %), the Netherlands (5.3 %), Germany and Luxembourg (both 5.5 %), and the highest rates in Spain (25.1 %) and Greece (23.1 % in May 2012).

Compared with a year ago, the unemployment rate fell in ten Member States, increased in sixteen, and remained stable in Slovenia. The largest falls were observed in Estonia (13.2 % to 10.1 % between the second quarters of 2011 and 2012), Lithuania (15.2 % to 13.0 %) and Latvia (17.0 % to 15.9 % between the second quarters of 2011 and 2012). The highest increases were registered in Greece (16.8 % to 23.1 % between May 2011 and May 2012), Spain (21.7 % to 25.1 %) and Cyprus (7.7 % to 10.9 %).

Between July 2011 and July 2012, the unemployment rate for males increased from 9.8 % to 11.3 % in the euro area and from 9.5 % to 10.5 % in the EU-27. The female unemployment rate increased from 10.4 % to 11.4 % in the euro area and from 9.8 % to 10.4 % in the EU-27.

In July 2012, 5.468 million young people (under 25) were unemployed in the EU-27, of whom 3.388 million were in the euro area. Compared with July 2011, youth unemployment increased by 182 000 in the EU-27 and by 204 000 in the euro area. In July 2012, the youth unemployment rate was 22.5 % in the EU-27 and 22.6 % in the euro area. In July 2011 it was 21.3 % and 20.7 % respectively. In July the lowest rates were observed in Germany (8.0 %), Austria (8.9 %) and the Netherlands (9.2 %), and the highest in Greece (53.8 % in May 2012) and Spain (52.9 %).

In July 2012, the unemployment rate was 8.3 % in the USA. In June 2012, the unemployment rate was 4.3 % in Japan.

Unemployment trends

In early 2000, just less than 20 million persons were unemployed in the EU-27, slightly below 9 % of the total labour force. This figure fell to around 19 million (or 8.5 %) in early 2001 before rising back to around 21 million persons by the middle of 2002, where it remained through until the middle of 2005. From mid-2005 there was a period of several years of steadily declining unemployment within the EU-27. By the first quarter of 2008, EU-27 unemployment hit a low of 16 million persons (equivalent to a rate of 6.7 %)

before rising sharply in the wake of the [economic crisis](#). In 2010 and 2011, the average unemployment rate in the EU-27 was 9.7 %, the highest annual rates recorded since the start of the series in 2000.

The unemployment rate in the [euro area](#) (EA-17) followed roughly the same trend as in the EU-27. However, between 2000 and the middle of 2004 the unemployment rate in the euro area was below that recorded in the EU-27. This pattern was subsequently reversed as unemployment declined more rapidly in the Member States [which do not yet have the euro](#) between 2005 and 2008. During the economic crisis, unemployment increased at a considerably pace, as in the EU-27. While in the EU-27 the growth in unemployment slowed down in 2011, the average unemployment rate for the EA-17 hit 10.2 %, the highest rate since 1999.

In 2000, the unemployment rate in the United States was around 4 %, considerably lower than in the EU. It remained much lower until early 2008, when unemployment started to increase rapidly. By mid-2009, the unemployment rate in the United States had reached the same level as in the EU, and the annual average rate in 2009 was higher in the US than in the EU-27. In 2010 and 2011, annual average unemployment rates in the US, while still comparatively high, dropped again below EU-27 levels. Unemployment rates in Japan were much lower than in the EU, and this was the case without exception throughout the last ten years for which data are available.

Youth unemployment trends

[Youth unemployment rates](#) are generally much higher than unemployment rates for all ages. High youth unemployment rates do reflect the difficulties faced by young people in finding jobs. However, this does not necessarily mean that the group of unemployed persons aged between 15 and 24 is large because many young people are studying full-time and are therefore neither working nor looking for a job (so they are not part of the labour force which is used as the denominator for calculating the unemployment rate). For this reason, youth unemployment ratios are calculated as well, according to a somewhat different concept: the unemployment ratio calculates the share of unemployed for the whole population. Table 1 shows that youth unemployment ratios in the EU are much lower than youth unemployment rates; they have however also risen since 2008 due to the effects of the recent crisis on the labour market.

The youth unemployment rate in the EU-27 was around twice as high as the rate for the total population throughout the last decade. The EU-27 youth unemployment rate was systematically higher than in the euro area between 2000 and early 2008; since this date, these two rates were very close (see also Figure 5), until mid 2010, when the EU-27 youth unemployment rate started to increase more strongly than that of the EA-17. While youth unemployment thus increased in both areas during the crisis, the increase has been more relevant for the EU-27, despite the lower overall unemployment rate in that area.

Male and female unemployment trends

Historically, women have been more affected by unemployment than men. In 2000, the unemployment rate for women in the EU-27 was around 10 %, while the rate for men was around 8 %. By the end of 2002, this [gender gap](#) had narrowed to around 1.3 percentage points and between 2002 and early 2007 this gap remained more or less constant. In recent years, most markedly since the first quarter of 2008, male and female unemployment rates in the EU-27 have converged and by the second quarter of 2009 the male unemployment rate was higher. The annual average unemployment rates for 2009 and 2010 were consequently slightly higher for men (9.1 % and 9.7% respectively) than for women (9.0 % and 9.6 %); in 2011 however, unemployment for males slightly declined in the EU-27, while that of women continued to increase such that the rate for males was again lower at 9.6 % than that for females (9.8 %).

A detailed look at 2011

The overall unemployment rate in the EU-27 reached 9.7 % in 2011, thus staying stable at a high level in comparison with 2010. The impact of the economic crisis on unemployment in the years from 2008 to 2010 has completely wiped out the reduction experienced in the unemployment rate between 2004 and 2008. In the United States, where the unemployment rate grew from 9.3 % to 9.6 % between 2009 and 2010, it dropped again in 2011 to 8.9 %. Between 2008 and 2009, the unemployment rate had increased by a staggering 3.5 percentage points.

The unemployment rate rose in 12 Member States between 2010 and 2011, dropped in 13 and remained stable in two, France and Italy. The highest decreases in the annual average unemployment rates between 2010 and 2011 were experienced in the Baltic countries, with Estonia in the lead (- 4.4 ppt) followed by Latvia (-3.3 ppt) and Lithuania (-2.4 ppt). The unemployment rate also fell in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden. The highest increases were reported in Greece (+5.1 ppt), Portugal (+1.9 ppt), Spain (+1.6 ppt) , Cyprus (+1.3 ppt) and Bulgaria (+1.0 ppt). Increases below one percentage point were reported in Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and the UK. For the fourth year in a row, Spain remained the country with the highest overall unemployment rate in 2011, at 21.7 %. The dispersion of unemployment across the EU-27 continued to increase during 2011.

Long-term unemployment is one of the main concerns of policymakers. Apart from its financial and social effects on personal life, long-term unemployment negatively affects social cohesion and, ultimately, may hinder economic growth. In total, 4.1 % of the labour force in the EU-27 in 2011 had been unemployed for more than one year; more than half of these, 2.2 % of the labour force, had been

unemployed for more than two years.

For the first time since the calculation of EU-27 unemployment statistics started (in 2000), the unemployment rate for women was lower than that for men in 2009, and remained so in 2010. In 2011, this effect had reversed again, showing female unemployment rates at 9.8 % against 9.6 % for males. In the euro area, the gap was even higher, with female unemployment at 10.5 % and male unemployment at 9.9 %. Male unemployment rates were higher than the corresponding rates for women during 2011 in 12 out of 27 Member States. The gap between male and female unemployment rates varied from -6.3 percentage points in Greece to +6.9 percentage points in Ireland.

The youth unemployment rate in the EU-27 was more than double the overall unemployment rate in 2011. At 21.4 %, more than one out of every five young persons in the labour force was not employed, but looking and available for a job. In the euro area, the youth unemployment rate was marginally lower at 20.8 %. The unemployment rate among young persons was higher than the rate among those aged between 25 and 74 in all of the Member States. In Spain (46.4 %), Greece (44.4 %), Slovakia (33.2 %), Lithuania (32.9 %), and Portugal (30.1 %) youth unemployment rates were particularly high. The Netherlands (7.6 %), Austria (8.3 %), and Germany (8.6 %) were the only Member States with a youth unemployment rate below 10 %.

Educational qualifications are still the best insurance against unemployment, which clearly increases the lower the level of education attained. This characteristic was noted in all Member States except for Greece and Cyprus in 2011, as the average unemployment rate in the EU-27 for those having attained at most a lower secondary education was 16.7 %, much higher than the rate of unemployment for those that had obtained a tertiary education qualification (5.6 %).

Definition, data sources and availability

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 explained here, Eurostat publishes statistics of 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.

The main source used by Eurostat for unemployment figures is the [European Union Labour force survey \(EU LFS\)](#). This [household](#) survey is carried out in all EU-27 Member States in accordance with European legislation; it provides figures at least each quarter.

There is currently no legal basis for producing and disseminating monthly unemployment data. For many countries, Eurostat calculates monthly data by using additional monthly figures from unemployment registers. The quarterly LFS results are always used as a benchmark to ensure international comparability. Few countries actually supply monthly unemployment figures directly from the LFS.

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 in as unadjusted, [seasonally adjusted](#) and [trend](#) series. There are monthly estimates for all EU-27 Member States except for Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania. Data for the EU-27 aggregate start in 2000 and for the euro area (EA-16) in 1995; the starting point for individual Member States varies.

Quarterly and annual unemployment figures from the LFS are also published, with more detailed breakdowns (for example, a wider range of age groups, by nationality, or by educational attainment); there are also figures available on long-term unemployment.

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 dependents.

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 by 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.

Further Eurostat information

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 July 2012](#) (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)

Methodology / Metadata

- [Labour force survey \(LFS\) - Definitions](#)
- [Labour Force Survey in the EU, Candidate and EFTA countries - Main characteristics of the 2007 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](#)

See also

- [Impact of the economic crisis on unemployment](#)
- [Job vacancy statistics](#)
- [Labour market introduced](#)
- [Underemployment and potential additional labour force statistics](#)