

## Unemployment rate in the OECD area drops further to 5.4% in December 2021

The monthly unemployment rate in the **OECD area** fell for the eighth consecutive month to 5.4% in December 2021, down from 5.5% in November, bringing it to just 0.1 percentage point above the pre-pandemic rate recorded in February 2020 (see Figure 1). The number of unemployed workers across the **OECD area** also continued to fall (by 0.7 million) reaching 36.1 million, still 0.5 million above the pre-pandemic level. In December (or the latest period available), the unemployment rate was **below the pre-pandemic level** in **Australia, Chile, France, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain and Turkey**<sup>1</sup> (see Figure 3).

The unemployment rate in the **OECD area** declined among both **women** (to 5.6%, from 5.7% in November) and **men** (to 5.2%, from 5.3%). It fell at a faster pace among **younger people** aged 15 to 24 (to 11.5%, from 11.8% in November), than **prime age and older workers** aged 25 and above (to 4.6%, from 4.7%).

In the **euro area**, the unemployment rate also declined for the eighth month in a row in December (to 7.0%, from 7.1% in November), falling by 0.3 percentage point or more in **Austria** (to 4.9%, from 5.2%), **Greece** (to 12.7%, from 13.3%), **Lithuania** (to 5.6%, from 6.0%), **Portugal** (to 5.9%, from 6.3%) and **Spain** (to 13.0%, from 13.4%), but increasing by 0.4 percentage point in **Finland** (to 7.2%, from 6.8%). During the same month, the unemployment rate among the **younger people** in the **euro area** fell by 0.5 percentage point (to 14.9%, from 15.4%).

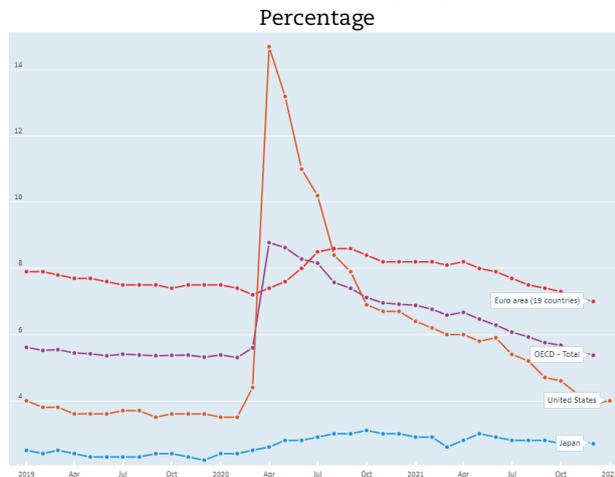
In December, the unemployment rate fell by 0.3 percentage point or more in **Australia** (to 4.2%, from 4.6% in November), **Colombia** (to 12.6%, from 13.0%), and the **United States** (to 3.9%, from 4.2%). It decreased by 0.1 percentage point in **Canada** (to 6.0%) and **Japan** (to 2.7%), but increased by 0.1 percentage point in **Mexico** (to 3.9%) and by 0.7 percentage point in **Korea** (to 3.8%). More recent data show that the unemployment rate rose by 0.5 percentage point in **Canada** (to 6.5%) in January 2022 and by 0.1 percentage point in the **United States** (to 4.0%) (see Figure 2).

It should be noted that the unemployment rate conceals the extent of the unmet labour demand as some non-employed people may be “out of the labour force”, and hence not captured by the unemployment rate, either because they are not actively looking for a job or are not available to work.

<sup>1</sup> European countries which experienced a methodological break between December 2020 and January 2021 in their unemployment series were excluded from this list (see [methodological changes in the EU Labour Force Survey](#)).

**Unemployment rates (seasonally adjusted)**

**Figure 1. Unemployment rates for selected OECD countries and country aggregates<sup>(1)</sup>**

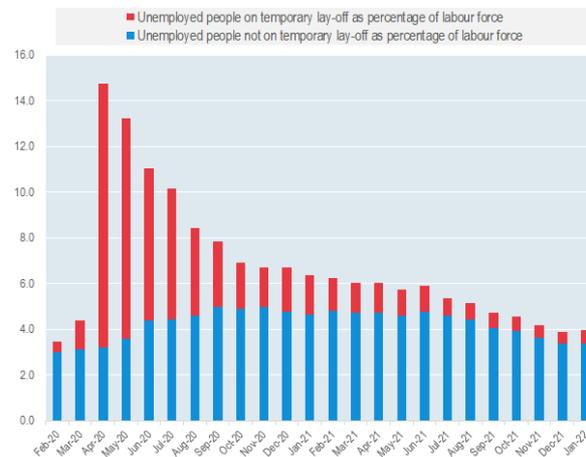


(1) Breaks between December 2020 and January 2021 for several EU Member States resulting from [changes in the EU Labour Force Survey](#). This break can affect, to some extent, aggregates for the euro area and OECD Total.

The fall in the OECD area unemployment rate when compared with the April 2020 peak should be interpreted with caution, as it largely reflects the return of temporary laid-off workers in the United States and Canada, where they are recorded as unemployed, unlike in most other countries, including European member states, where they are recorded as employed.

Visit the interactive [OECD Data Portal](#) to explore these data further.

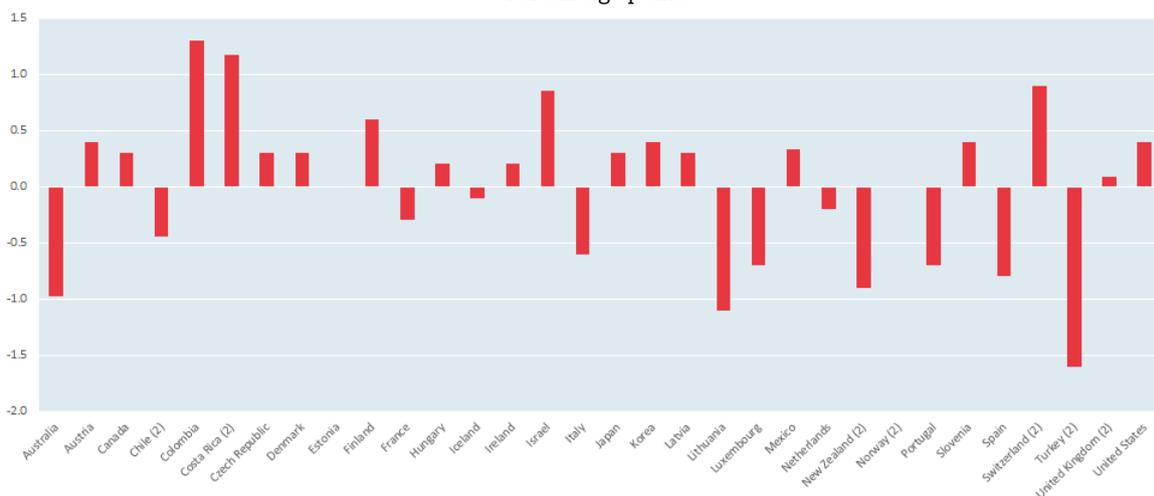
**Figure 2. Composition of the United States unemployment rate<sup>(2)</sup>**



(2) Source: OECD calculations based on US Current Population Survey.

For Canada and the United States, the statistical treatment of people on temporary layoff is different from other countries, where these people are typically recorded as employed. See the note on the divergence in employment and unemployment statistics during the Covid-19 crisis in the end of this news release.

**Figure 3. Changes in unemployment rate for selected OECD countries<sup>(1)</sup> between February 2020 and December 2021**  
Percentage points



(1) European countries which experienced a methodological break between December 2020 and January 2021 in their unemployment series were excluded from the chart.

(2) For Chile, Costa Rica, Norway and Turkey, change between February 2020 and November 2021; for the United Kingdom, change between February 2020 and October 2021; for New Zealand, change between fourth quarter 2019 and fourth quarter 2021; Switzerland, change between fourth quarter 2019 and third quarter 2021.

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**Next release: Thursday, 10 March 2022**

**Table 1: OECD Unemployment rates**  
Percentage of the labour force, seasonally adjusted

	2020	2021	2021				2020	2021					
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Feb	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
OECD - Total	7.2	6.2	6.7	6.5	5.9	5.5	5.3	6.1	5.9	5.8	5.7	5.5	5.4
G7	6.5	5.2	5.7	5.5	5.0	4.5	4.2	5.2	5.0	4.8	4.7	4.5	4.3
European Union	7.2	7.0	7.5	7.3	6.8	6.5	6.6	6.9	6.9	6.7	6.6	6.5	6.4
Euro area	7.9	7.7	8.2	8.0	7.5	7.1	7.4	7.7	7.5	7.4	7.3	7.1	7.0
Australia	6.5	5.1	6.0	5.1	4.6	4.7	5.1	4.6	4.5	4.6	5.2	4.6	4.2
Austria <sup>(1)</sup>	6.0	6.2	7.0	6.7	5.6	5.3	4.5	6.0	5.8	5.1	5.7	5.2	4.9
Belgium <sup>(2)</sup>	5.5	6.3	6.7	6.4	6.2	5.9	5.0	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.0	5.9	5.7
Canada <sup>(3)</sup>	9.6	7.5	8.4	7.9	7.2	6.3	5.7	7.4	7.1	7.0	6.8	6.1	6.0
Chile	10.8	8.9	10.4	9.2	8.2	7.8	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.1	7.9	7.8	..
Colombia	16.1	13.8	14.7	14.2	13.1	13.0	11.3	13.4	12.8	13.0	13.4	13.0	12.6
Costa Rica	19.6	16.4	18.8	18.0	15.3	13.7	12.5	16.4	15.3	15.0	14.4	13.7	..
Czech Republic <sup>(2)</sup>	2.6	2.8	3.3	3.1	2.7	2.2	1.8	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.1
Denmark <sup>(2)</sup>	5.7	5.2	5.9	5.1	4.9	5.1	4.8	4.7	4.8	5.1	5.0	5.1	5.1
Estonia	6.9	6.2	7.0	6.6	5.9	5.2	5.2	6.2	5.8	5.6	5.2	5.3	5.2
Finland	7.7	7.7	8.0	8.1	7.5	6.9	6.6	7.7	7.1	7.7	6.7	6.8	7.2
France	8.0	7.9	8.0	8.2	7.9	7.5	7.7	8.0	7.9	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.4
Germany <sup>(1)(2)</sup>	3.8	3.5	3.9	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.2
Greece <sup>(2)</sup>	16.4	14.8	16.4	16.0	13.7	13.2	16.0	14.3	13.7	13.2	13.5	13.3	12.7
Hungary	4.1	4.1	4.3	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.5	4.1	4.1	3.6	3.9	3.8	3.7
Iceland	6.4	6.0	6.9	6.3	5.2	4.9	5.0	5.5	5.2	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.9
Ireland <sup>(2)</sup>	5.9	6.3	7.4	6.9	5.5	5.2	4.9	5.8	5.4	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.1
Israel	4.3	5.0	5.1	5.3	5.0	4.5	3.4	4.9	4.9	5.0	4.8	4.4	4.3
Italy	9.3	9.5	10.1	9.8	9.1	9.1	9.6	9.1	9.2	9.1	9.3	9.1	9.0
Japan	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.7
Korea	3.9	3.7	4.4	3.7	3.0	3.4	3.4	3.3	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.1	3.8
Latvia <sup>(2)</sup>	8.1	7.6	7.7	7.8	7.4	7.3	7.2	7.7	7.4	7.0	7.0	7.3	7.5
Lithuania <sup>(2)</sup>	8.5	6.9	6.9	7.6	7.0	6.0	6.7	7.3	7.0	6.7	6.5	6.0	5.6
Luxembourg <sup>(2)</sup>	6.7	5.6	6.2	5.9	5.3	5.0	5.7	5.5	5.3	5.2	5.0	5.0	5.0
Mexico <sup>(4)</sup>	4.4	4.1	4.4	4.3	4.0	3.8	3.6	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.9
Netherlands	4.9	4.2	4.7	4.4	4.1	3.8	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.1	3.9	3.7	3.8
New Zealand	4.6	3.8	4.6	4.0	3.3	3.2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Norway	4.6	..	4.8	5.0	4.0	..	3.5	4.3	4.0	3.6	3.6	3.5	..
Poland <sup>(2)</sup>	3.2	3.4	3.8	3.6	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9
Portugal	7.1	6.6	6.8	6.9	6.4	6.2	6.6	6.6	6.3	6.4	6.4	6.3	5.9
Slovak Republic <sup>(2)</sup>	6.7	6.8	7.1	7.0	6.6	6.4	6.0	6.7	6.6	6.5	6.4	6.4	6.4
Slovenia <sup>(2)</sup>	5.0	4.8	5.2	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.6
Spain	15.5	14.8	15.6	15.4	14.7	13.4	13.8	15.1	14.7	14.3	13.9	13.4	13.0
Sweden <sup>(2)</sup>	8.3	8.8	9.2	9.2	8.6	8.3	7.6	8.3	8.8	8.8	8.5	8.3	8.0
Switzerland	4.8	..	5.4	5.3	5.0	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Turkey	13.1	..	13.0	12.2	11.7	..	12.8	11.8	11.8	11.5	11.2	11.2	..
United Kingdom	4.6	..	4.9	4.7	4.3	..	4.0	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.1	..	..
United States <sup>(5)</sup>	8.1	5.4	6.2	5.9	5.1	4.2	3.5	5.4	5.2	4.7	4.6	4.2	3.9

..: not available

Notes:

(1) Provisional data for Austria, for Germany from February 2021.

(2) Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden: from January 2021, data are compliant with the new Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) Framework Regulation, while prior to this date, data refer to the former definition.

(3) Canada: Unemployment rate for January 2022 was 6.5%.

(4) Mexico: April, May and June 2020 monthly figures are based on the INEGI Encuesta Telefónica de Ocupación y Empleo (ETOE) phone survey. These data are not strictly comparable with the results for earlier months. Data from July 2020 are based on the new Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo (ENOE) survey, combining telephone and face-to-face interviews.

(5) United States: Unemployment rate for January 2022 was 4.0%.

**Table 2: Unemployment rates by sex**  
Percentage of the labour force of each group, seasonally adjusted

	Women							Men						
	2020	2021	2021		2021			2020	2021	2021		2021		
			Q3	Q4	Oct	Nov	Dec			Q3	Q4	Oct	Nov	Dec
OECD - Total	7.4	6.4	6.1	5.8	5.9	5.7	5.6	6.9	6.0	5.8	5.3	5.5	5.3	5.2
G7	6.6	5.1	4.9	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.3	6.4	5.3	5.1	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.4
European Union	7.5	7.4	7.2	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.6	7.0	6.7	6.5	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.1
Euro area	8.3	8.1	7.9	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.3	7.7	7.4	7.2	6.8	7.0	6.8	6.7
Australia	6.4	5.0	4.7	4.8	5.4	4.7	4.2	6.6	5.2	4.5	4.6	5.0	4.6	4.1
Austria <sup>(1)</sup>	5.9	6.1	5.5	5.3	6.0	5.2	4.7	6.1	6.3	5.8	5.3	5.5	5.2	5.1
Belgium <sup>(2)</sup>	5.4	6.1	5.7	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.7	6.5	6.7	6.3	6.6	6.2	6.0
Canada	9.5	7.2	6.8	6.0	6.4	5.6	5.9	9.6	7.7	7.6	6.6	7.1	6.6	6.0
Chile	11.0	9.2	8.6	8.0	8.0	8.0	..	10.6	8.6	7.9	7.6	7.7	7.6	..
Colombia	20.7	18.2	17.4	17.1	17.9	17.0	16.4	12.9	10.6	9.9	10.1	10.1	10.2	9.9
Costa Rica	25.7	22.0	19.9	17.4	17.8	17.4	..	15.6	12.7	12.2	11.3	12.2	11.3	..
Czech Republic <sup>(2)</sup>	3.0	3.4	3.2	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.2	1.9	2.1	1.8	1.9
Denmark <sup>(2)</sup>	6.0	5.4	4.9	5.2	5.2	5.4	5.1	5.4	5.1	4.8	4.9	4.9	4.8	5.0
Estonia	6.7	5.5	5.1	4.6	4.8	4.6	4.5	7.1	6.8	6.7	5.8	5.6	6.0	5.7
Finland	7.4	7.1	7.1	6.6	6.1	6.7	6.9	8.1	8.2	7.9	7.2	7.3	6.9	7.5
France	8.0	7.8	7.9	7.4	7.5	7.4	7.4	8.1	8.0	7.9	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.5
Germany <sup>(1)(2)</sup>	3.4	3.2	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	4.2	3.8	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Greece <sup>(2)</sup>	19.9	19.0	17.9	17.3	17.6	17.7	16.6	13.7	11.5	10.4	9.8	10.3	9.7	9.5
Hungary	4.2	4.2	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.1	3.8	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6
Iceland	6.3	6.5	5.0	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.4	6.6	5.7	5.5	5.3	5.4	5.3	5.3
Ireland <sup>(2)</sup>	5.9	6.2	5.4	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.8	6.3	5.5	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.2
Israel	4.1	4.9	4.8	4.4	4.7	4.3	4.2	4.5	5.0	5.1	4.6	4.9	4.6	4.4
Italy	10.3	10.6	10.3	10.0	10.3	10.0	9.6	8.6	8.7	8.2	8.5	8.5	8.4	8.5
Japan	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.4	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.8	3.0	2.9
Korea	4.0	3.8	3.0	3.6	3.2	3.2	4.3	3.9	3.6	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.0	3.4
Latvia <sup>(2)</sup>	7.1	6.5	5.9	6.2	5.9	6.3	6.3	9.1	8.6	8.8	8.4	8.2	8.4	8.7
Lithuania <sup>(2)</sup>	7.7	6.4	6.3	5.1	5.6	5.1	4.7	9.3	7.3	7.7	6.9	7.4	6.8	6.5
Luxembourg <sup>(2)</sup>	6.8	6.2	5.9	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	6.5	5.1	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.6
Mexico <sup>(3)</sup>	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.0	3.8	4.0	4.3	4.6	4.1	4.0	3.7	3.9	3.6	3.6
Netherlands	5.1	4.5	4.4	4.1	4.3	3.9	4.0	4.6	4.0	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.6
New Zealand	5.0	3.9	3.4	3.3	..	..	..	4.3	3.7	3.3	3.1	..	..	..
Norway	4.4	..	3.6	..	3.5	3.2	..	4.8	..	4.3	..	3.7	3.6	..
Poland <sup>(2)</sup>	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.1	3.4	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Portugal	7.4	6.9	6.9	6.3	6.7	6.4	5.9	6.8	6.3	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.1	5.9
Slovak Republic <sup>(2)</sup>	7.1	7.0	6.7	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.3	6.4	6.6	6.5	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.5
Slovenia <sup>(2)</sup>	5.7	5.1	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.5	4.8	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.0
Spain	17.4	16.7	16.5	15.1	15.6	15.1	14.7	13.9	13.1	13.1	11.9	12.3	11.8	11.5
Sweden <sup>(2)</sup>	8.3	9.1	8.9	8.8	9.2	8.5	8.8	8.3	8.5	8.4	7.7	7.8	8.0	7.4
Switzerland	5.0	..	5.0	..	..	..	..	4.7	..	4.9	..	..	..	..
Turkey	14.8	..	14.4	..	13.9	14.5	..	12.4	..	10.4	..	9.9	9.6	..
United Kingdom	4.3	..	4.1	..	3.9	..	..	4.8	..	4.4	..	4.2	..	..
United States	8.4	5.2	4.9	4.2	4.6	4.2	3.9	7.8	5.5	5.3	4.2	4.5	4.2	3.9

..: not available

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(3) Mexico: April, May and June 2020 monthly figures are based on the INEGI ETOE phone survey. These data are not strictly comparable with the results for earlier months. Data from July 2020 are based on the New ENOE survey, combining telephone and face-to-face interviews.

**Table 3: Unemployment rates by age group**  
Percentage of the labour force of each group, seasonally adjusted

	Youth (15-24)							Prime-age and Older Workers (25+)						
	2020	2021	2021		2021			2020	2021	2021		2021		
			Q3	Q4	Oct	Nov	Dec			Q3	Q4	Oct	Nov	Dec
OECD - Total	15.2	12.9	12.2	11.7	11.8	11.8	11.5	6.2	5.3	5.1	4.7	4.9	4.7	4.6
G7	13.8	10.6	10.2	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.4	5.6	4.5	4.4	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.7
European Union	17.2	16.7	16.0	15.2	15.5	15.3	14.9	6.3	6.1	6.0	5.7	5.8	5.6	5.6
Euro area	17.7	17.0	16.2	15.3	15.6	15.4	14.9	7.0	6.8	6.7	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.2
Australia	14.3	11.3	10.6	11.1	13.1	10.9	9.4	5.0	4.0	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.4	3.2
Austria <sup>(1)</sup>	11.7	11.0	10.1	9.6	10.4	10.0	8.3	5.3	5.6	5.1	4.8	5.1	4.6	4.6
Belgium <sup>(2)(3)</sup>	15.3	18.4	18.3	16.4	16.4	16.4	16.4	4.8	5.3	5.2	4.9	5.0	4.9	4.9
Canada	20.0	13.6	11.6	10.7	10.5	10.5	11.1	7.9	6.5	6.5	5.6	6.2	5.4	5.1
Chile	24.7	20.0	17.5	16.8	16.9	16.8	..	9.6	7.9	7.4	7.0	7.1	7.0	..
Colombia	27.5	24.7	24.3	22.9	24.1	22.8	21.8	13.9	11.6	10.9	11.1	11.3	11.1	10.9
Costa Rica	42.4	39.4	37.8	36.1	36.1	36.1	..	15.8	12.5	11.6	10.1	10.9	10.1	..
Czech Republic <sup>(3)</sup>	7.9	8.2	7.4	7.1	7.3	6.5	7.6	2.3	2.5	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.0	1.9
Denmark <sup>(3)</sup>	11.6	11.2	10.3	11.2	11.6	11.1	10.8	4.7	4.3	4.0	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.1
Estonia	18.3	16.9	16.2	17.4	16.1	18.2	17.8	6.0	5.3	5.1	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.2
Finland	20.8	17.1	14.2	15.0	15.3	16.0	13.8	6.0	6.5	6.7	5.9	5.6	5.7	6.4
France	21.4	19.5	19.9	18.0	18.5	17.8	17.6	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2
Germany <sup>(1)(3)</sup>	7.1	6.9	6.5	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.1	3.5	3.2	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9
Greece <sup>(3)</sup>	35.4	36.0	30.9	33.3	32.5	37.0	30.5	15.5	13.8	12.9	12.2	12.5	12.1	11.9
Hungary	12.4	13.4	13.8	12.7	13.3	12.3	12.4	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1
Iceland	11.9	12.3	8.8	8.9	8.5	8.9	9.4	5.5	5.0	4.7	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.1
Ireland <sup>(3)</sup>	15.9	14.4	11.4	10.6	10.5	10.7	10.6	4.6	5.1	4.6	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.3
Israel <sup>(4)</sup>	7.9	7.7	8.7	7.5	8.6	7.8	6.2	3.7	4.5	4.7	4.1	4.5	4.0	3.8
Italy	29.5	29.6	27.9	27.3	27.6	27.5	26.8	8.1	..	8.0	..	..	..	..
Japan	4.5	4.6	4.2	4.8	4.1	5.2	5.2	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.5
Korea	10.5	8.5	6.9	7.7	8.1	7.6	7.4	3.6	3.4	2.8	3.1	2.9	2.9	3.6
Latvia <sup>(3)</sup>	14.8	15.3	14.6	15.0	14.9	15.0	15.0	7.7	7.1	6.9	6.8	6.5	6.8	7.0
Lithuania <sup>(3)</sup>	19.5	14.5	15.0	11.9	13.2	11.8	10.7	7.7	6.3	6.4	5.6	6.0	5.5	5.3
Luxembourg <sup>(3)</sup>	22.7	16.9	16.5	15.7	15.4	15.5	16.2	5.4	4.6	4.4	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1
Mexico <sup>(5)</sup>	8.1	8.1	7.2	7.7	8.0	7.6	7.5	3.7	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.2
Netherlands	10.6	9.4	8.9	8.0	8.5	7.8	7.8	3.7	3.2	3.1	2.9	3.0	2.8	2.9
New Zealand	12.4	10.5	9.9	8.8	..	..	..	3.3	2.7	2.2	2.2	..	..	..
Norway	11.5	..	10.5	..	9.8	9.5	..	3.6	..	3.0	..	2.7	2.6	..
Poland <sup>(3)</sup>	10.9	12.4	10.3	11.5	10.8	11.7	11.9	2.6	2.8	2.6	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.3
Portugal	22.9	23.2	23.0	21.8	22.1	22.3	21.1	6.0	5.5	5.3	5.1	5.3	5.2	4.9
Slovak Republic <sup>(3)</sup>	19.3	20.8	19.2	19.7	19.1	19.6	20.5	5.9	6.0	5.9	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.7
Slovenia <sup>(2)(3)</sup>	14.4	13.8	12.7	12.9	12.9	12.9	12.9	4.4	4.1	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.9	3.7
Spain	38.3	35.0	31.9	31.1	31.4	31.2	30.6	14.0	13.4	13.5	12.2	12.6	12.1	11.8
Sweden <sup>(3)</sup>	23.8	24.8	24.5	24.2	24.5	24.4	23.7	6.4	6.8	6.6	6.3	6.5	6.2	6.1
Switzerland	8.6	..	8.6	..	..	..	..	4.3	..	4.5	..	..	..	..
Turkey	24.9	..	22.0	..	20.6	22.3	..	11.1	..	9.8	..	9.5	9.2	..
United Kingdom	13.7	..	11.7	..	11.1	..	..	3.3	..	3.3	..	3.1	..	..
United States	15.1	9.7	9.4	8.4	8.5	8.4	8.2	7.1	4.7	4.5	3.6	4.0	3.6	3.3

..: not available

Notes:

(1) Provisional data for Austria, for Germany from February 2021.

(2) Belgium and Slovenia: For youth unemployment, quarterly data are shown.

(3) Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, the Slovak republic, Slovenia and Sweden: from January 2021, data are compliant with the new Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) Framework Regulation, while prior to this date, data refer to the former definition.

(4) Israel: Data shown in this table are not seasonally adjusted.

(5) Mexico: April, May and June 2020 monthly figures are based on the INEGI ETOE phone survey. These data are not strictly comparable with the results for earlier months. Data from July 2020 are based on the New ENOE survey, combining telephone and face-to-face interviews.

**Table 4: Unemployment levels**  
Thousands of persons, seasonally adjusted

	2020	2021	2021			2021			
			Q2	Q3	Q4	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OECD - Total	46,890	41,014	43,089	39,527	36,899	38,423	37,912	36,748	36,059
G7	24,647	19,844	21,142	19,145	17,300	18,441	17,981	17,270	16,650
European Union	15,218	14,920	15,530	14,567	13,853	14,295	14,125	13,822	13,612
Euro area	12,911	12,589	13,110	12,344	11,700	12,102	11,953	11,666	11,481
Australia	878	701	712	627	639	625	706	637	574
Austria <sup>(1)</sup>	271	283	303	260	244	237	264	241	228
Belgium <sup>(2)</sup>	282	325	328	326	305	324	315	304	296
Canada	1,897	1,520	1,593	1,470	1,298	1,439	1,396	1,262	1,236
Chile	938	806	817	749	722	744	727	722	..
Colombia	3,755	3,349	3,519	3,210	3,124	3,169	3,246	3,122	3,003
Costa Rica	468	401	434	378	333	368	351	333	..
Czech Republic <sup>(2)</sup>	137	150	163	143	121	139	130	117	115
Denmark <sup>(2)</sup>	171	160	156	149	156	157	155	158	156
Estonia	48	43	46	41	36	39	36	37	36
Finland	209	212	224	207	192	210	185	188	203
France	2,381	2,380	2,473	2,384	2,267	2,340	2,289	2,261	2,251
Germany <sup>(1)(2)</sup>	1,664	1,506	1,556	1,451	1,385	1,421	1,399	1,384	1,372
Greece <sup>(2)</sup>	761	679	739	644	617	619	629	629	593
Hungary	198	196	199	190	185	172	188	185	181
Iceland	13	13	13	11	10	11	10	10	10
Ireland <sup>(2)</sup>	139	157	174	141	134	135	135	135	132
Israel	177	206	218	208	192	211	205	189	182
Italy	2,296	2,359	2,429	2,267	2,270	2,262	2,320	2,259	2,230
Japan	1,911	1,931	2,000	1,900	1,867	1,890	1,820	1,920	1,860
Korea	1,108	1,037	1,051	858	956	849	900	890	1,079
Latvia <sup>(2)</sup>	79	71	73	69	69	66	66	69	71
Lithuania <sup>(2)</sup>	126	101	111	103	89	99	96	88	84
Luxembourg <sup>(2)</sup>	21	18	19	17	16	17	16	16	16
Mexico <sup>(3)</sup>	2,340	2,376	2,475	2,336	2,248	2,236	2,243	2,204	2,297
Netherlands	465	408	417	399	370	399	382	359	369
New Zealand	132	110	114	98	93	..	..	..	..
Norway	131	..	142	115	..	104	105	100	..
Poland <sup>(2)</sup>	537	577	622	531	511	517	515	515	504
Portugal	358	337	356	331	320	328	330	325	304
Slovak Republic <sup>(2)</sup>	182	185	191	183	177	179	177	176	177
Slovenia <sup>(2)</sup>	51	49	47	47	50	48	50	50	49
Spain	3,531	3,430	3,572	3,433	3,119	3,339	3,224	3,104	3,030
Sweden <sup>(2)</sup>	459	488	511	479	459	489	470	460	448
Switzerland	238	..	262	245	..	..	..	..	..
Turkey	4,040	..	3,940	3,855	..	3,809	3,738	3,777	..
United Kingdom	1,551	..	1,600	1,448	..	1,423	1,382	..	..
United States	12,948	8,623	9,491	8,225	6,832	7,666	7,375	6,802	6,319

..: not available

Notes:

(1) Provisional data for Austria, for Germany from February 2021.

(2) Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden: from January 2021, data are compliant with the new Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) Framework Regulation, while prior to this date, data refer to the former definition.

(3) Mexico: April, May and June 2020 monthly figures are based on the INEGI ETOE phone survey. These data are not strictly comparable with the results for earlier months. Data from July 2020 are based on the New ENOE survey, combining telephone and face-to-face interviews.

**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-19<sup>2</sup> 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”<sup>3</sup> and “availability” specified for the measurement of unemployment.

However, departures from these guidelines in national practices do exist. In Canada and the United States 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

<sup>2</sup> Broad comparability is ensured during normal business conditions, while divergences are potentially exacerbated during economic and financial crises, such as the Great Recession or the Covid-19 crisis.

<sup>3</sup> Some people not in employment 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.

to 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 Unemployment Rates News Release](#)

The OECD area unemployment rate is calculated as the total number of unemployed people in all OECD countries as a percentage of the total labour force (i.e. the unemployed plus those in employment); this is equivalent to an average of unemployment rates of all OECD countries weighted by the labour force of each country. Rates and levels are seasonally adjusted (s.a.).

For countries for which unemployment data for the most recent month or quarter are not available, the latest available data are used to compile data for the OECD area total.

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

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.

New methodology in the **EU Labour Force Survey** from 2021 with the entry into force of the Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS) Framework Regulation, resulted in [updated definitions of the labour status](#). These changes may affect comparisons for several EU countries between December 2020 and subsequent months. Information, by European country, on the status of the implementation of IESS regulation as well as on possible resulting breaks in time series can be found in a Eurostat Statistics Explained [article](#).

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 above on the divergence in employment and unemployment statistics during the COVID-19 crisis**.