

## Catch up: America's cooling jobs market; Toyota cuts EV target



The **American** economy added 142,000 jobs in August, less than what analysts were expecting. The unemployment rate dropped to 4.2%, from 4.3% the previous month, suggesting that companies are cutting job vacancies rather than firing workers. As the labour market cools, the figures will add pressure to the **Federal Reserve**, the central bank, to cut [interest rates](#) at its next meeting in September.

**Toyota** became the latest carmaker to scale back its electric-vehicle plans as it battles slowing consumer demand and stiff competition from [Chinese rivals](#). The Japanese company cut its production target for 2030 by one third. Earlier this week Volvo, a Swedish brand, dropped ambitions to sell only EVs by 2030; America's Ford and General Motors have both recently revised their production targets.

A UN-backed mission to **Sudan** concluded that both sides in its [deadly civil war](#) may have committed [war crimes](#) or crimes against humanity. The human rights investigators said that both the

Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces had used torture against civilians. They recommended an arms embargo and a peacekeeping force to protect civilians.

A **Russian court** banned the sale of shares in Raiffeisen, the biggest Western bank in Russia. The freeze effectively blocks the Austrian bank's plans to spin off its Russian business. According to Reuters, Russian authorities want Raiffeisen to continue operating its [international payments](#), which Russian banks can no longer offer under Western sanctions.

**Seven & i Holdings**, the Japanese group that owns the 7-Eleven brand of convenience stores, rejected a takeover approach from **Alimentation Couche-Tard**, a Canadian rival. Seven & i said that while it would “sincerely” consider offers, the one on the table—\$38bn—was too low. If it had been accepted, the deal would have been the largest-ever [foreign acquisition](#) of a Japanese company. ACT owns the competing Circle K brand.

**Donald Trump** said that, if elected, he would appoint **Elon Musk** to lead a “government efficiency commission” to slash red tape and cut expenditure. In a speech to the Economic Club of New York, Mr Trump said the commission would recommend “drastic reforms”, although he was murky on specifics. Mr Musk and Mr Trump have [drawn closer](#) over the past year.

**China** said it would stop foreigners adopting children from the country, with the only exception being blood relatives. American families have adopted nearly 83,000 Chinese children—more than any other country—with hundreds of applications pending. China did not explain its decision, but [new births](#) in the country fell by 5.7% to 9m in 2023 and its birth rate was the lowest ever recorded.

**Figure of the day:** 50.7%, the share of electric and hybrid vehicles in new car sales in China. [Read the full story.](#)

# Ukraine's quest for air defences



On Friday the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, a 50-member coalition of the country's international supporters, meets again at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. Ukraine wants to speed up deliveries of air-defence systems. On Tuesday Russian Iskander ballistic missiles hit a military academy and a hospital in the central town of Poltava. It was the deadliest attack of the year so far, killing at least 51 people. The next day another strike killed seven people in Lviv to the west. [Volodymyr Zelensky](#), the president, noted that Western air-defence systems were no use "sitting in storage".

Meanwhile, Russia continues its slow, costly advance on [Pokrovsk](#), an important logistics hub. But there are signs that Ukraine's incursion into Russia's Kursk region is forcing the Russians to redeploy forces from the front line, including some earmarked for the Pokrovsk offensive. Ukrainian analysts expect Russian troops to reach Pokrovsk by mid-September, but claim they will struggle to capture it.

## A tough task for France's new prime minister

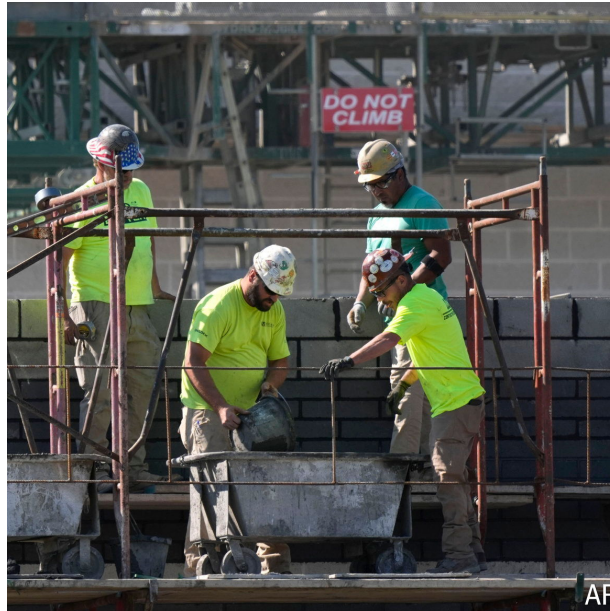


Michel Barnier (pictured) begins his [first day as France's prime minister](#) on Friday. The appointment on Thursday of the 73-year-old centre-right politician, formerly the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, was a surprise. It took President Emmanuel Macron two months, and endless talks, to find a figure who might survive in the country's new hung parliament, dominated by three minority blocs.

Mr Barnier now faces a task as tough as those Brexit negotiations. He needs to form a government and put together a budget by October. Yet France's public finances are worsening; savings will be necessary. The budget deficit is expected to reach 5.6% of GDP in 2024, well above the EU's limit of 3%. Meanwhile the left-wing alliance in parliament will make Mr Barnier's job as difficult as it can. It won more seats at the general election in July than any other bloc, and is enraged that the post has gone to the centre-right. Street demonstrations are planned for Saturday.



# America's employment worries



Investors always closely watch America's monthly jobs report. But new numbers on Friday garnered more attention than usual. Worries have been mounting about the health of the economy. Last month, unanticipated weakness in the jobs report for July contributed to a big sell-off in stocks. The figures for August were more mixed, with grist for both optimists and pessimists.

The economy added 142,000 jobs in August, fewer than expected, and downward revisions to previous months' data added to the impression of weakness. At the same time, the unemployment rate ticked down to 4.2% from 4.3%, and overall hours worked increased—developments that are inconsistent with a looming recession. The Federal Reserve will launch a [rate-cutting](#) cycle later this month, and the question is whether it opts for a quarter-point or a half-point reduction. After the mixed jobs report, investors are themselves mixed, split on whether the Fed will start with a small or big cut.

# Should Google be broken up?



In recent years America's antitrust regulators have waged war on big tech. The saga continues on Friday, when Judge Amit Mehta is expected to hold a hearing on what to do with [Google](#), the owner of the world's dominant internet search engine. Last month he ruled that it had illegally maintained its monopoly, in particular by paying billions of dollars to Apple and other companies to be the default search provider on their devices.

But don't expect a clear steer on what will happen to Google. Even America's Department of Justice, which brought this case against Google, is not sure what to do. Possible remedies range from the draconian, such as splitting up Google, to the probably inconsequential, such as telling it to stop making such payments. Whatever the remedy, Google is sure to appeal. Once things are finally settled in a few years, the decision may no longer matter in an ever-faster moving industry.

## A Mormon scandal on television



Mormonism is America's homegrown religion. Yet less than 2% of the country's population belong to it. This is in part because it has fostered controversial practices. (In the 19th century the church taught that polygamy was central to salvation.) In recent years discussion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has spread on social media. Some Mormon housewives have gone viral on TikTok, a video-sharing platform, with clips of domestic work and daily scriptures.

In 2022 some were the centre of a scandal. A TikToker revealed that one popular group of Mormon housewives were “swinging” (exchanging husbands). On Friday Hulu will release a docuseries about the affair—“The Secret Lives of Mormon Wives”. It tells the story of the scandal and its aftermath. The women challenge traditional gender roles prevalent in Mormon culture by disregarding many of the church's rules. No doubt viewers will be gripped.

## Daily quiz



*The Economist*

We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to [QuizEspresso@economist.com](mailto:QuizEspresso@economist.com). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Friday:** The Sandhill, Wattled and Whooping are all varieties of which type of bird?

**Thursday:** The University of Georgia football team and the US Marine Corps both use which animal as a mascot?



# The winners of last week's crossword



Thank you to everyone who took part in our weekly crossword, published in the weekend edition of Espresso. The winners, chosen at random, were:

**Rosalie Schmitt-Degenhardt**, Mistelbach, Germany

**Dibyendu Roy Choudhury**, Kolkata, India

**Pawel Karolczak**, Cleveland, Tennessee, America

They all gave the correct answers of [deportation](#), [donate](#), [runway](#), [nickel](#). Check back tomorrow for this week's crossword.

**50.7%**

*The share of electric and hybrid vehicles in new car sales in China.  
Read the full story.*

**In a mad world, only the mad are sane.**

*Akira Kurosawa*