

Unemployment rates in nine countries, civilian labor force basis,
approximating U.S. concepts, seasonally adjusted, 1990-2004

Period	United States	Canada	Aus- tralia	Japan (1)	France (2)	Germany	Italy	Sweden	United Kingdom
1990	5.6	7.7	6.7	2.1	9.1	5.0	7.0	1.8	6.8
1991	6.8	9.8	9.3	2.1	9.5	(3)5.6	(3)6.9	3.1	8.4
1992	7.5	10.6	10.5	2.2	(3)9.9	6.7	7.3	5.6	(3)9.7
1993	6.9	10.8	10.6	2.5	11.3	8.0	(3)10.2	9.4	10.4
1994	(3)6.1	9.5	9.4	2.9	11.8	8.5	11.2	9.6	9.6
1995	5.6	8.6	8.2	3.2	11.3	8.2	11.8	9.1	8.7
1996	5.4	8.8	8.2	3.4	11.9	9.0	11.7	9.9	8.1
1997	(3)4.9	8.4	8.3	3.4	11.8	9.9	11.9	10.1	7.0
1998	(3)4.5	7.7	7.7	4.1	11.3	9.3	12.0	8.4	6.3
1999	(3)4.2	7.0	6.9	4.7	10.6	(3)8.5	11.5	7.1	6.0
2000	(3)4.0	6.1	6.3	4.8	9.1	7.8	10.7	5.8	5.5
2001	4.7	6.4	(3)6.8	5.1	8.4	7.9	9.6	5.0	5.1
2002	5.8	7.0	6.4	5.4	8.7	8.6	9.1	5.1	5.2
I	5.7	7.1	6.7	5.4	8.5	8.3	9.2	5.1	5.1
II	5.8	6.9	6.4	5.4	8.6	8.5	9.2	5.0	5.2
III	5.7	7.0	6.3	5.5	8.7	8.7	9.1	5.1	5.2
IV	5.9	6.9	6.2	5.4	8.9	8.9	9.0	5.3	5.1
2003	(3)6.0	6.9	6.1	5.3	9.3	9.3	8.8	5.8	5.0
I	5.8	6.7	6.2	5.4	9.0	9.2	9.0	5.2	5.1
II	6.1	6.9	6.2	5.4	9.2	9.4	8.8	5.5R	5.0
III	6.1	7.2	6.1	5.2	9.4	9.4	8.7	5.8	5.0
IV	5.9	6.8	5.8	5.1	9.4	9.3	8.6	6.3	4.9
2004									
I	(3)5.6	6.7	5.7	5.0	9.4	9.7	8.6	6.6	4.8
II	5.6	6.6	5.6	4.7	9.4	9.9		6.8	
Feb	5.6	6.6	5.9	5.1	9.4	9.7		6.6	4.8
Mar	5.7	6.8	5.6	4.8	9.4	9.8		6.7	4.8
Apr	5.6	6.7	5.6	4.8	9.3	9.9		6.8	4.8
May	5.6	6.5	5.5	4.6	9.4	9.9		6.8R	4.9

Jun	5.6	6.6	5.6	4.7	9.4	9.9	6.8R
Jul	5.5	6.5	5.7	5.0	9.4	9.9	6.8

R = Revised.

Note: 2003 annual rates are preliminary for Japan.

- (1) Germany (unified) for 1991 onward. Prior to 1991, data relate to the former West Germany.
- (2) Quarterly rates are for the first month of the quarter.
- (3) Break in series. See notes on the back of this page.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 3, 2004.

Note on quarterly and monthly data: Quarterly and monthly figures for France and Germany are calculated by applying annual adjustment factors to current published data and therefore should be viewed as less precise indicators of unemployment under U.S. concepts than the annual figures

For further qualifications and historical data, see "Comparative Civilian Labor Force Statistics, 10 Countries, 1959-2003," June 23, 2004.

Note on adjustments: The foreign country data are adjusted as closely as possible to U.S. concepts, with the exception of age limits and the treatment of layoffs, for which no adjustments are made. In addition, for some countries, no adjustment is made for deviations from U.S. concepts in the treatment of unpaid family workers, persons waiting to start a new job, and passive job seekers (for example, persons only reading newspaper ads as their method of job search). In the United States, job search must be "active," such as placing or answering advertisements, and simply reading ads is not enough to qualify as active search. Except for the inclusion of passive job seekers in Canada (for which an adjustment is made), these "unadjusted" differences are believed to have a negligible effect on the comparisons. For further information on comparability issues, see Constance Sorrentino, "International unemployment rates: how comparable are they?" Monthly Labor Review, June 2000, pp. 3-20.

Breaks in Series: There are breaks in the data series for the United States, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

The United States: Beginning in 1994, data are not strictly comparable with data for prior years because of the introduction of a major redesign of the labor force survey questionnaire and collection methodology. The redesign effect has been estimated to increase the overall unemployment rate by about 0.1 percentage point. Other breaks noted relate to changes in population controls that had virtually no effect on unemployment rates.

Australia: The 2001 break reflects the introduction of a new questionnaire and a minor change in the definition of unemployed persons. The impact of the change was an increase in the adjusted unemployment rate by 0.1 percentage point beginning with April 2001. BLS incorporates the April 2001 revisions for that month onward.

France: The 1992 break reflects the replacement of unemployment statistics tabulated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with those tabulated by the European Union Statistical Office (EUROSTAT). Since 1992, the EUROSTAT definitions are closer to U.S. definitions than they were in prior years. In 1992, the unemployment rate decreased by 0.1 percentage point.

Germany: The 1991 break reflects the introduction of comparative labor force measures for Germany (unified). The impact of including the former East Germany was to increase the 1991 unemployment rate from 4.3 to 5.6 percent. The 1999 break reflects the incorporation of an improved method of data calculation and a change in coverage to persons living in private households only. In 1999, the unemployment rate decreased from 8.6 to 8.5 percent.

Italy: In 1991, the method of weighting sample data was revised. The impact was an increase in the adjusted unemployment rate by approximately 0.3 percentage point, from 6.6 to 6.9 percent in 1991. In October 1992, Italy revised survey methodology and changed the definition of unemployment to include only those who were actively looking for a job within the 30 days preceding the reference period and who were available for work. Prior to the revision, BLS adjusted Italy's

published unemployment rate downward by using a proxy to exclude from the unemployed persons who had not actively sought work in the past 30 days; however, this resulted in an overadjustment downward. In addition, the lower age limit of the labor force was changed from 14 to 15 years. The impact of these changes was an increase in the adjusted unemployment rate by 1 percentage point. BLS incorporates the October 1992 revisions for 1993 onward.

United Kingdom: The 1992 break reflects changes in design, method, sampling frame, and definitions, when the labor force survey became continuous.

Acknowledgment: Data used to calculate these unemployment rates come mainly from national statistical sources but also from the OECD and EUROSTAT.