

OECD Harmonised Unemployment Rates

News Release

OECD unemployment rate stable at 8.8% in December 2009

The unemployment rate for the **OECD area** was 8.8% in December 2009, unchanged from the previous month but up by 1.8 percentage points from a year earlier.

Figures available for *January 2010* for the **United States and Canada** show a fall in unemployment rates in these countries. In the United States, the unemployment rate declined to 9.7% from a rate of 10.0% in December 2009 but it was still 2.0 percentage points higher than a year earlier. In Canada, the unemployment rate was 8.3% in *January*, 0.1 percentage point lower than in the previous month and 1.0 percentage point higher than a year earlier.

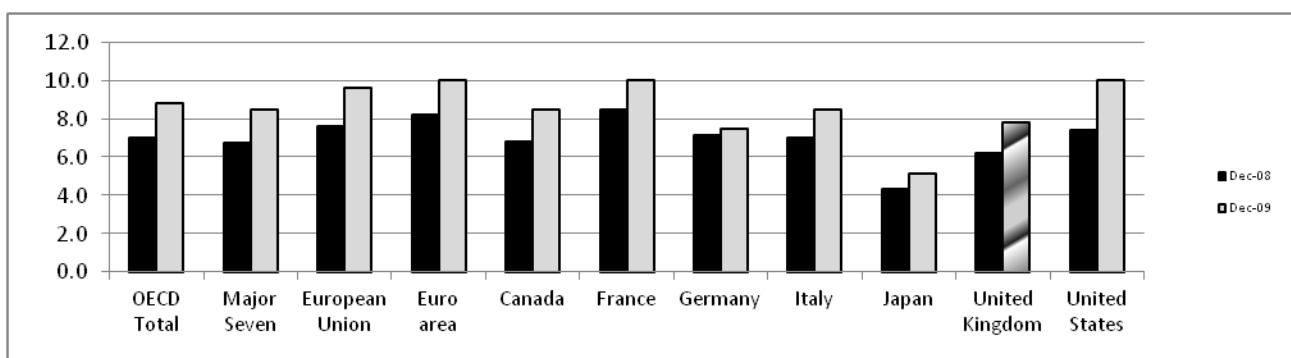
In the **Euro area**, the unemployment rate rose to 10.0% in December 2009, an increase of 0.1 percentage point from the previous month. The rate was 1.8 percentage points higher than in December 2008. In **Japan**, the unemployment rate declined to 5.1% in December 2009, a 0.1 percentage point fall from November, but a 0.8 percentage point increase since December 2008.

In December 2009, the unemployment rate for **France** was 10.0%, unchanged from the previous month and 1.5 percentage points higher than a year earlier. For **Germany**, the rate was also unchanged from the previous month at 7.5% but 0.4 percentage point higher than in December 2008. In **Italy**, the unemployment rate rose to 8.5%, 0.2 percentage points higher than in the previous month and 1.5 percentage points higher than a year earlier.

In *October 2009*, the unemployment rate in the **United Kingdom** was 7.8%, the same as in the previous month and 1.6 percentage points higher than in October 2008.

The latest unemployment rates for **other OECD countries and geographic groupings**, as well as historical data, can be downloaded from the OECD online data dissemination facility *OECD.Stat Extracts* at: <http://stats.oecd.org/wbos/Default.aspx?QueryName=251&QueryType=View&Lang=en>.

**Selected Unemployment Rates, s.a.
December 2008 – December 2009⁽¹⁾**



Notes:

(1) United Kingdom: October-08—October-09.



Paris, 8 February 2010

OECD Harmonised Unemployment Rates

NB: For methodological reasons, harmonised unemployment rates may differ from those published by national statistical institutes. All rates quoted are seasonally adjusted (s.a.).

OECD Harmonised Unemployment Rates
OECD Unemployment Rates, s.a.
Percentage of labour force

	2007	2008	2009	2009				2009					
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OECD - Total	5.8	6.1	8.3	7.6	8.3	8.6	8.8	8.6	8.6	8.7	8.8	8.8	8.8
Major Seven	5.5	5.9	8.0	7.3	8.0	8.3	8.5	8.2	8.3	8.4	8.5	8.4	8.4
European Union	7.1	7.0	8.9	8.3	8.8	9.2	9.5	9.1	9.2	9.3	9.4	9.5	9.6
Euro area	7.5	7.6	9.4	8.8	9.3	9.6	9.9	9.5	9.6	9.8	9.9	9.9	10.0
Australia	4.4	4.2	5.6	5.3	5.7	5.8	5.7	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.8	5.6	5.5
Austria	4.4	3.9	5.0	4.4	4.8	5.3	5.5	5.1	5.2	5.5	5.6	5.5	5.4
Belgium	7.5	7.0	7.9	7.7	7.7	8.0	8.1	7.9	8.0	8.0	8.1	8.1	8.2
Canada ⁽¹⁾	6.0	6.1	8.3	7.8	8.4	8.5	8.4	8.6	8.7	8.3	8.4	8.4	8.4
Czech Republic	5.3	4.4	6.8	5.6	6.4	7.3	7.8	7.0	7.3	7.5	7.7	7.8	8.0
Denmark	3.8	3.4	6.0	4.8	5.9	6.2	7.2	6.1	6.0	6.5	6.9	7.2	7.4
Finland	6.9	6.4	8.3	7.4	8.2	8.6	8.8	8.5	8.6	8.7	8.8	8.9	8.8
France	8.3	7.9	9.4	8.9	9.3	9.6	10.0	9.5	9.6	9.7	9.9	10.0	10.0
Germany	8.4	7.3	7.5	7.3	7.6	7.6	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.6	7.5	7.5	7.5
Greece	8.3	7.7		8.8	9.2	9.7		9.7	9.7	9.7			
Hungary	7.4	7.8	10.1	9.3	9.7	10.5	10.8	10.2	10.5	10.7	10.8	10.8	10.7
Iceland	2.3	3.0	7.2	7.2	6.9	7.2	7.8						
Ireland	4.6	6.0	11.8	10.2	11.9	12.2	13.0	12.0	12.1	12.5	12.6	13.0	13.3
Italy	6.2	6.8	7.8	7.4	7.5	7.8	8.3	7.7	7.7	8.0	8.2	8.3	8.5
Japan	3.9	4.0	5.1	4.5	5.2	5.5	5.1	5.7	5.5	5.3	5.1	5.2	5.1
Korea	3.2	3.2	3.6	3.5	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.5
Luxembourg	4.2	4.9	5.8	5.4	5.7	5.9	6.1	5.9	5.9	5.9	6.0	6.1	6.2
Mexico	3.7	4.0	5.5	4.8	5.7	5.8	5.6	5.7	5.9	6.0	5.7	5.6	5.4
Netherlands	3.2	2.8	3.5	2.9	3.3	3.6	3.9	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.9	4.0
New Zealand	3.7	4.2		5.0	6.0	6.5							
Norway	2.5	2.5		3.0	3.1	3.1		3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2		
Poland	9.6	7.1	8.2	7.7	8.0	8.4	8.8	8.3	8.4	8.5	8.7	8.8	8.9
Portugal	8.1	7.8	9.6	8.8	9.5	9.9	10.3	9.8	9.9	10.0	10.2	10.3	10.4
Slovak Republic	11.2	9.5	11.8	10.2	11.2	12.6	13.5	12.1	12.6	13.0	13.3	13.5	13.6
Spain	8.3	11.4	18.1	16.5	17.9	18.7	19.4	18.4	18.7	19.0	19.2	19.4	19.5
Sweden	6.2	6.3	8.3	7.5	8.2	8.6	8.9	8.5	8.6	8.7	8.8	8.9	8.9
Switzerland	3.6	3.5		4.0	4.4	4.6							
Turkey	8.9	9.8		12.5	13.2	13.1		13.1	13.1	13.1			
United Kingdom	5.3	5.6		7.0	7.7	7.8		7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8		
United States ⁽²⁾	4.6	5.8	9.3	8.2	9.3	9.7	10.0	9.4	9.7	9.8	10.1	10.0	10.0

Notes:

(1) Canada: January 2010 is 8.3

(2) United States: January 2010 is 9.7

OECD Harmonised Unemployment Rates

OECD Unemployment Rates, s.a.
Change of rates over the same period of the previous year

	2007	2008	2009	2009				2009					
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OECD - Total	-0.5	0.4	2.2	1.9	2.5	2.4	2.1	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.1	1.8
Major Seven	-0.4	0.4	2.1	1.8	2.4	2.3	2.0	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.0	1.7
European Union	-1.0	-0.1	1.9	1.5	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.0	2.0
Euro area	-0.9	0.1	1.9	1.6	1.9	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.8
Australia	-0.4	-0.1	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.5	1.1	1.5	1.7	1.4	1.4	1.1	0.9
Austria	-0.3	-0.6	1.1	0.4	1.1	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.2
Belgium	-0.8	-0.5	0.9	0.7	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.1	1.2	1.1
Canada ⁽¹⁾	-0.3	0.1	2.1	1.9	2.4	2.4	1.9	2.5	2.6	2.1	2.2	1.9	1.6
Czech Republic	-1.8	-0.9	2.4	1.1	2.1	3.0	3.3	2.7	3.0	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.3
Denmark	-0.2	-0.4	2.7	1.6	2.8	2.9	3.3	2.9	2.7	3.1	3.3	3.4	3.3
Finland	-0.8	-0.5	1.8	1.1	2.0	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	1.9
France	-0.9	-0.5	1.6	1.2	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.5
Germany	-1.5	-1.1	0.2	-0.3	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4
Greece	-0.6	-0.6		1.0	1.7	2.2		2.2	2.2	2.2			
Hungary	-0.1	0.5	2.2	1.7	1.9	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.7	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.2
Iceland	-0.6	0.7	4.3	4.9	4.5	4.2	3.2						
Ireland	0.2	1.4	5.8	5.5	6.7	5.8	5.2	6.0	5.7	5.7	5.4	5.2	5.0
Italy	-0.6	0.6	1.0	0.8	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.1	0.8	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.5
Japan	-0.3	0.1	1.1	0.6	1.2	1.5	1.1	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2	0.8
Korea	-0.2	-0.1	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2
Luxembourg	-0.4	0.7	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9
Mexico	0.1	0.3	1.5	1.1	1.9	1.9	1.1	1.9	2.0	2.0	1.8	0.8	0.6
Netherlands	-0.7	-0.4	0.7	0.1	0.5	0.9	1.2	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.2	1.2
New Zealand	-0.2	0.5		1.2	2.0	2.2							
Norway	-0.9	0.0		0.7	0.6	0.7		0.7	0.7	0.7	0.4		
Poland	-4.2	-2.5	1.1	0.1	0.8	1.5	2.0	1.3	1.5	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.9
Portugal	0.3	-0.3	1.9	1.1	1.8	2.1	2.4	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.3
Slovak Republic	-2.2	-1.6	2.3	0.0	1.2	3.6	4.4	2.9	3.7	4.2	4.5	4.5	4.3
Spain	-0.3	3.1	6.7	7.3	7.4	6.8	5.4	7.0	6.9	6.6	6.0	5.4	4.7
Sweden	-0.9	0.1	2.0	1.5	2.1	2.3	2.1	2.3	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1	1.9
Switzerland	-0.4	-0.1		0.5	0.9	1.0							
Turkey		0.9		3.5	4.2	3.2		3.2	3.2	3.2			
United Kingdom	-0.1	0.4		1.9	2.4	2.0		2.1	2.0	1.8	1.6		
United States ⁽²⁾	0.0	1.2	3.5	3.2	4.0	3.6	3.1	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.1	2.6

Notes:

(1) Canada: January 2010 the change is 1.0

(2) United States: January 2010 the change is 2.0

OECD Harmonised Unemployment Rates

Methodological Notes

The OECD harmonised unemployment rates, compiled for 30 OECD member countries, are based on definitions of the 13th Conference of Labour Statisticians (generally referred to as the ILO guidelines). Under these definitions, the unemployed are persons of working age who, in the reference period, are without work, are available for work and have taken specific steps to find work.

The uniform application of the definitions results in estimates that are more internationally comparable than those based on national definitions. For example, national unemployment data in some countries only include persons registered at government labour offices. Under the ILO definition, persons without work who are seeking employment through other means can also be classified as unemployed and registrants can be excluded if they worked or were not available for work. The unemployment rates shown here are calculated as the number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force (i.e., the unemployed plus those in employment) and are seasonally adjusted.

The unemployment rates for the European Union (EU) member countries, Norway and Turkey are produced by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat). The OECD is responsible for collecting data and calculating unemployment rates for the remaining OECD member countries.

In September 2000, Eurostat adopted a new unemployment definition through a Commission Regulation. Details about the new definition and its implementation are available on the [Eurostat Internet site](#). This link also gives details about country specific estimations and provisional data.

All figures are seasonally adjusted and monthly figures include OECD Secretariat estimates for countries which only compile quarterly rates.

Geographical groupings

In this news release:

- The *Euro area* covers, for all periods, the 16 participating member countries, see note 1 of Eurostat's monthly news release at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/product?code=3-01102009-AP> for details;
- The *European Union* covers the EU 27 member countries, see note 1 as above for details;
- The *OECD total* covers 29 OECD member countries for which unemployment rates have been estimated. These comprise the 19 of the 27 European Union countries which are also members of the OECD plus Canada, the United States, Australia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

Contacts:

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Next release: Monday, 8 March 2010