

Sources

Data for 10 countries for most indicators are based on the BLS report *International Comparisons of Annual Labor Force Statistics, Adjusted to U.S. Concepts, 10 Countries, 1970–2010*. The 10 countries are the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. To facilitate international comparisons, BLS adjusts data for these countries to U.S. concepts. For specific adjustments and breaks in series, see the [country notes](#) associated with the BLS report.

Data for the remaining countries and for some indicators in their entirety—labor force participation rates by age (chart 2.3), part-time employment rates (chart 2.7), and unemployment by education (chart 2.11) and by duration (chart 2.12)—are based on data from the International Labour Office (ILO) or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Country coverage for labor force levels and participation rates, employment-population ratios, and employment growth (charts 2.1–2.6) is supplemented with data from the ILO database [Key Indicators of the Labour Market](#) (KILM). The KILM harmonizes data using econometric models to account for differences in national data and scope of coverage, collection and tabulation methodologies, and other country-specific factors, such as military service requirements. Although some differences remain between the KILM and ILC series, they do not materially affect comparisons across countries.

Country coverage for part-time employment rates, employment by sector, and unemployment data (charts 2.7–2.12) is supplemented with data from the OECD database [OECD.Stat](#). The OECD generally uses labor force surveys and captures labor force statistics according to ILO guidelines, which facilitate cross-country comparisons, because these guidelines create a common conceptual framework for countries. However, except for total unemployment rates (chart 2.9), the OECD does not adjust data for differences that remain across countries in coverage and definitions that can affect international comparisons. See *Labor Force Statistics in OECD Countries: Sources, Coverage and Definitions*. For total unemployment rates, the OECD series used is the “harmonized unemployment rates” (HURs), which are adjusted to conform to the ILO guidelines in countries where deviations occur. For a full discussion of comparability issues, see the BLS article, “International unemployment rates: how comparable are they?” at www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2000/06/art1full.pdf.

Using multiple sources for an indicator to extend country coverage can introduce additional comparability issues, because each organization employs different methods for harmonizing data, if adjustments are made at all. Users should use caution when making international comparisons and are encouraged to review the methodological documents associated with each source.

In chart 2.6, the periods 2000–2007 and 2007–2010 are selected to compare a time of global recession (2007–2010) against a prerecessionary time (2000–

2007). The chart shows the average annual growth rate during each period. Although 2007 is included in both, it represents two different annual changes that do not overlap: 2006–2007 in the first period and 2007–2008 in the second period.

Definitions

Labor market data cover only civilians (i.e., members of the Armed Forces are not included). The **labor force participation rate** is the labor force as a percent of the working-age population. The **labor force** is the sum of all persons classified as employed and unemployed. The **working-age population** is either ages 15 and older or ages 16 and older, with the lower age limits varying by country. (See BLS and ILO documents from above sources.)

The **employed** are persons who, during the reference week, did work for at least 1 hour as paid employees; worked in their own business, profession, or on their own farm; or did work as unpaid workers in an enterprise operated by a family member (for at least 1 hour according to the ILO guidelines but for at least 15 hours according to U.S. concepts). Definitions of the employed vary by country. (See BLS, ILO, and OECD documents from above sources.) The **employment-population ratio** is employment as a percentage of the working-age population. **Part-time employment** refers to employed persons who usually work less than 30 hours per week in their main job; in some countries, “actual” rather than “usual” hours are used. The **part-time**

employment rate is the share of total employment that is part time and is also referred to as the incidence of part-time employment.

The **unemployed** are persons without work, who were actively seeking employment and currently available to start work. Definitions of the unemployed vary by country. (See BLS and OECD documents from above sources.) The **unemployment rate** is unemployment as a percentage of the labor force; it is the most widely used measure of an economy’s unused labor supply. For unemployment rates by education (chart 2.11), the levels of educational attainment accord with the 1997 International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED). **Less than high school** corresponds to “less than upper secondary education” and includes ISCED levels 0–2 and 3C. **High school or trade school** corresponds to “upper secondary and post-secondary education” and includes levels 3A, 3B, and 4. **College or university** corresponds to “tertiary non-university and university” and includes levels 5–6. ■