MAIN LABOUR FORCE SURVEY RESULTS - THIRD QUARTER OF 2026

The unemployment rate was 3.1%, 0.3 percentage points lower compared to the third quarter of 2025.

The employment rate for the population aged 15 - 64 was 70.8%, 0.6 percentage points lower compared to the same quarter of 2025.

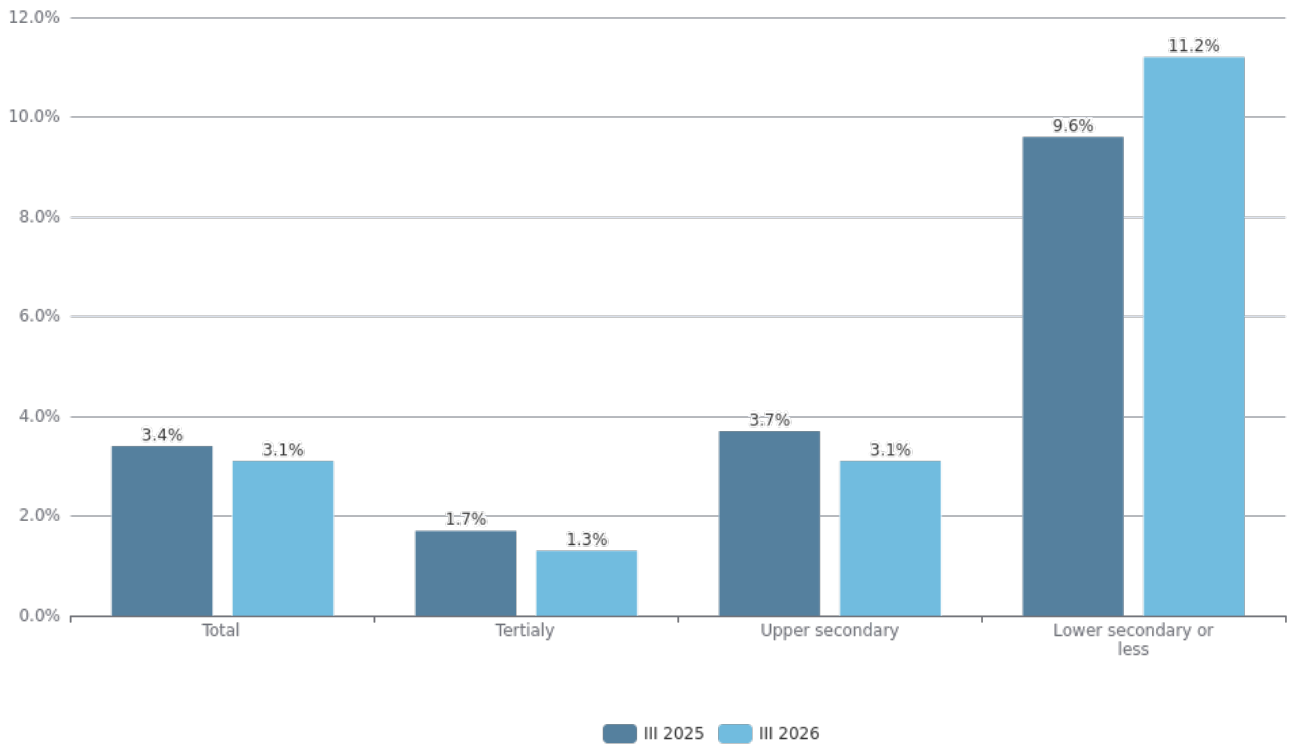
The activity rate of the population aged 15 - 64 was 73.1%, 0.8 percentage points lower compared to the third quarter of 2025.

Unemployment

In the third quarter of 2026, there were 95.1 thousand **unemployed persons**, of whom 57.0 thousand (59.9%) men and 38.2 thousand (40.1%) women. **The unemployment rate** was 3.1%, 3.6% for men and 2.7% for women, respectively.

Among all unemployed persons, 16.3% had attained tertiary education, 51.9% had completed upper secondary education and 31.8% had at most lower secondary education. The unemployment rate by level of educational attainment was as follows: 1.3% for persons with tertiary education, 3.1% for those with upper secondary education and 11.2% for those with lower education (lower secondary or less).

Figure 1. Unemployment rates by level of education in the third quarter of 2025 and 2026



Among all unemployed, 19.0 thousand persons, or 20.0%, were looking for job for the first time.

In the third quarter of 2026, there were 41.5 thousand **long-term unemployed people** (unemployed for one year or more), representing 43.6% of all unemployed. **The long-term unemployment rate** was 1.4%.

In the third quarter of 2026, **the youth unemployment rate (age group 15 - 29)** was 8.1% (10.0% for men and 5.6% for women). Compared to the same quarter of 2025 this rate was 0.6 percentage points lower.

Employment

In the third quarter of 2026, there were 2 927.8 thousand **employed persons**, of whom 1 543.6 thousand men and 1 384.2 thousand women. **The employment rate** for the population aged 15 years and over was 53.3%, 59.1% for men and 48.0% for women.

In the service sector worked 2 001.1 thousand persons (68.3% of all in employment), in the industry sector - 788.0 thousand (26.9%), and in the agriculture, forestry and fishing - 138.7 thousand (4.7%).

According to the status in employment, the distribution of employed persons was as follows:

- Employers - 5.7% (167.8 thousand);
- Self-employed persons without employees - 7.7% (224.6 thousand);
- Employees - 86.3% (2 526.8 thousand);
- Unpaid family workers 0.3% (8.7 thousand).

Of all employees, 1 900.2 thousand persons (75.2%) worked in the private sector, while 626.5 thousand (24.8%) worked in the public sector. Among all employees, 85.5 thousand persons (3.4%) had a temporary job (with limited duration).

In the third quarter of 2026, the employment in specific age groups was as follows:

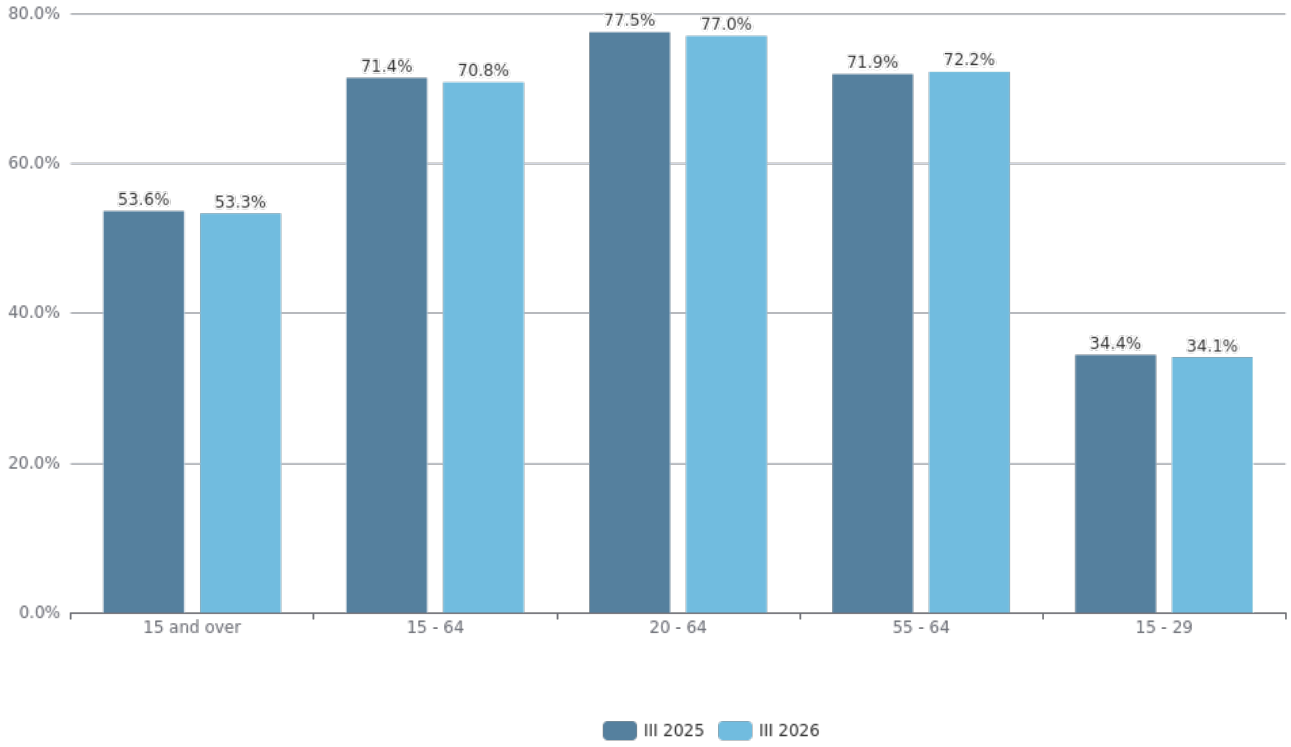
There were 2 788.1 thousand **employed persons aged 15 - 64** (1 471.1 thousand men and 1 316.9 thousand women). The employment rate for the same age group was 70.8% (73.7% for men and 67.8% for women).

The employment rate for the age group 15 - 29 was 34.1% (37.9% for men and 30.2% for women).

The employment rate for the age group 20 - 64 was 77.0% (80.2% for men and 73.7% for women). In comparison with the third quarter of 2025, the employment rate (20 - 64 years of age) decreased by 0.5 percentage points.

There were 652.0 thousand **employed persons aged 55 - 64**, representing 72.2% of the population in the same age group (75.8% of men and 68.7% of women). In comparison with the third quarter of 2025, the employment rate for the age group 55 - 64 increased by 0.3 percentage points.

Figure 2. Employment rates by age groups in the third quarter of 2025 and 2026



Economic inactivity

In the third quarter of 2026, there were 2 475.1 thousand **economically inactive persons (persons not in the labour force)** aged 15 years and over, of whom 1 010.8 thousand (40.8%) men and 1 464.3 thousand (59.2%) women.

The economically inactive persons aged 15 - 64 were 1 058.9 thousand (469.1 thousand men and 589.8 thousand women), representing 26.9% of the population in the same age group (23.5% of men and 30.3% of women). Among all persons not in the labour force aged 15 - 64, 42.4% were inactive due to participation in education or training. There were 16.9 thousand **discouraged persons aged 15 - 64**, representing 1.6% of the economically inactive population in the same age group.

Methodological notes

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a continuous sample survey providing quarterly and annual data on the economic activity of the population aged 15 and over. The survey covers non-institutional households. The households participating in the survey were randomly selected and were interviewed through a face-to-face interview.

Reference period - the characteristics of each interviewee refer to his/her status during a defined calendar week (from Monday to Sunday). With each quarter the sample is evenly spread over the all 13 calendar weeks.

The economically active population (labour force) comprises all employed and unemployed persons.

Employed are persons aged 15 to 89 who, during the reference period:

- did some work for at least one hour for salary or other form of payment;

- did not work but had a job or business, from which they were temporarily absent due to holiday, illness, maternity leave, etc.

Unemployed are persons aged 15 to 74 who:

- did not work at all during the reference period;

- were actively looking for work during the preceding four weeks, including the reference one, or have found a new job that is expected to start within 3 months following the reference period;

- were available to start working within two weeks following the reference period.

Long-term unemployed are persons who have been unemployed for one year or longer.

The economically inactive population (persons not in the labour force) includes persons aged 15 and over who were neither employed nor unemployed during the reference period, incl. all persons aged 90 and over.

Discouraged persons are persons not in the labour force, aged 15 to 74, who want to work but do not actively look for a job as they believe there are no suitable jobs available.

Activity rate - the ratio between the economically active population (labour force) and the total population (in the respective group).

Employment rate - the ratio between the employed population and the total population (in the respective group).

Unemployment rate - the ratio between the unemployed persons and the economically active population.

Long-term unemployment rate - the ratio between the long-term unemployed persons and the economically active population.

For weighting of the results of the Labour Force Survey for the third quarter of 2026, preliminary data on the population as of 30 June 2026 were used. The population living in institutional households was excluded.

Like all sample surveys, data from the Labour Force Survey have sampling errors (stochastic errors). The relative standard errors for the main LFS indicators for the third quarter of 2026 are as follows:

- total number of employed persons - 1.4%;
- total number of unemployed persons - 6.9%;
- unemployment rate - 6.7%.

Some of the totals are not equal to the sum of their components due to the rounding of the numbers.

More detailed information from the Labour Force Survey for the third quarter of 2026 can be found on the website of NSI - www.nsi.bg/en, section Labour Market, Labour Force Survey and in the Information System INFOSTAT.

Annex

Table 1

Main labour market indicators, third quarter of 2025 and 2026

	Third quarter 2025	Third quarter 2026	Growth (Third quarter 2026 minus Third quarter 2025)
Total			
Activity rate (15 - 64) - %	73.9	73.1	-0.8
Employed persons - total - in thousands	2956.0	2927.8	-28.2
Employed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	2825.6	2788.1	-37.5
Employed persons aged 15 - 24 - in thousands	103.5	107.3	3.8
Employed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	303.0	305.8	2.8
Employed persons aged 20 - 64 - in thousands	2815.1	2777.5	-37.6
Employed persons aged 55 - 64 - in thousands	650.0	652.0	2.0
Employment rate - %	53.6	53.3	-0.3
Employment rate (15 - 64) - %	71.4	70.8	-0.6
Employment rate (15 - 24) - %	17.0	17.2	0.2
Employment rate (15 - 29) - %	34.4	34.1	-0.3
Employment rate (20 - 64) - %	77.5	77.0	-0.5
Employment rate (55 - 64) - %	71.9	72.2	0.3
Unemployed persons - total - in thousands	104.5	95.1	-9.4
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	101.3	92.0	-9.3
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	29.0	27.1	-1.9
Unemployment rate - %	3.4	3.1	-0.3
Unemployment rate (15 - 64) - %	3.5	3.2	-0.3
Unemployment rate (15 - 29) - %	8.7	8.1	-0.6
Long-term unemployment rate - %	1.4	1.4	0.0
Discouraged persons - total - in thousands	17.1	17.7	0.6
Discouraged persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	16.6	16.9	0.3
Male			
Activity rate (15 - 64) - %	77.4	76.5	-0.9
Employed persons - total - in thousands	1563.0	1543.6	-19.4
Employed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	1494.5	1471.1	-23.4
Employed persons aged 15 - 24 - in thousands	62.9	66.3	3.4

	Third quarter 2025	Third quarter 2026	Growth (Third quarter 2026 minus Third quarter 2025)
Employed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	173.0	174.5	1.5
Employed persons aged 20 - 64 - in thousands	1487.7	1463.9	-23.8
Employed persons aged 55 - 64 - in thousands	333.8	333.0	-0.8
Employment rate - %	59.7	59.1	-0.6
Employment rate (15 - 64) - %	74.6	73.7	-0.9
Employment rate (15 - 24) - %	20.0	20.7	0.7
Employment rate (15 - 29) - %	38.2	37.9	-0.3
Employment rate (20 - 64) - %	81.0	80.2	-0.8
Employment rate (55 - 64) - %	76.1	75.8	-0.3
Unemployed persons - total - in thousands	59.5	57.0	-2.5
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	57.6	54.9	-2.7
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	15.8	19.3	3.5
Unemployment rate - %	3.7	3.6	-0.1
Unemployment rate (15 - 64) - %	3.7	3.6	-0.1
Unemployment rate (15 - 29) - %	8.4	10.0	1.6
Long-term unemployment rate - %	1.7	1.5	-0.2
Discouraged persons - total - in thousands	9.6	10.8	1.2
Discouraged persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	9.1	10.5	1.4
Female			
Activity rate (15 - 64) - %	70.3	69.7	-0.6
Employed persons - total - in thousands	1392.9	1384.2	-8.7
Employed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	1331.1	1316.9	-14.2
Employed persons aged 15 - 24 - in thousands	40.6	41.0	0.4
Employed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	130.0	131.3	1.3
Employed persons aged 20 - 64 - in thousands	1327.4	1313.6	-13.8
Employed persons aged 55 - 64 - in thousands	316.2	318.9	2.7
Employment rate - %	48.1	48.0	-0.1
Employment rate (15 - 64) - %	68.1	67.8	-0.3
Employment rate (15 - 24) - %	13.7	13.6	-0.1
Employment rate (15 - 29) - %	30.4	30.2	-0.2
Employment rate (20 - 64) - %	73.9	73.7	-0.2
Employment rate (55 - 64) - %	67.9	68.7	0.8

	Third quarter 2025	Third quarter 2026	Growth (Third quarter 2026 minus Third quarter 2025)
Unemployed persons - total - in thousands	45.0	38.2	-6.8
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	43.7	37.1	-6.6
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	13.1	7.8	-5.3
Unemployment rate - %	3.1	2.7	-0.4
Unemployment rate (15 - 64) - %	3.2	2.7	-0.5
Unemployment rate (15 - 29) - %	9.2	5.6	-3.6
Long-term unemployment rate - %	1.1	1.2	0.1
Discouraged persons - total - in thousands	7.5	6.9	-0.6
Discouraged persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	7.5	6.4	-1.1