

MAIN LABOUR FORCE SURVEY RESULTS, FOURTH QUARTER OF 2023

The unemployment rate was 4.2%, by 0.5 percentage points higher compared to the fourth quarter of 2022.¹

The employment rate of the population aged 15 - 64 decreased by 1.2 percentage points in comparison with the same quarter of 2022 and stood at 70.5%.

The activity rate of the population aged 15 - 64 was 73.7%, by 0.8 percentage points lower compared to the fourth quarter of 2022.

There were 38.8 thousand discouraged persons aged 15 - 64, representing 3.7% of the economically inactive population in the same age group.

Unemployment

In the fourth quarter of 2023, there were 128.6 thousand unemployed persons, of whom 68.9 thousand (53.6%) men and 59.7 thousand (46.4%) women. In comparison with the fourth quarter of 2022, the number of unemployed persons increased by 13.0 thousand (11.2%). The unemployment rate was 4.2% (compared to 3.7% in the fourth quarter of 2022), the same for men and women.

Among all unemployed persons, 14.2% had attained tertiary education, 52.6% had completed upper secondary education and 33.3% had at most lower secondary education. The unemployment rate by level of educational attainment was as follows: 1.8% for tertiary education, 4.0% for upper secondary education and 13.0% for lower education (lower secondary or less).

Figure 1. Unemployment rates by level of education in the fourth quarter of 2022 and 2023



¹ Comparisons are made with revised data for the fourth quarter of 2022 (see Methodological notes).

In the fourth quarter of 2023, there were 66.4 thousand **long-term unemployed people** (unemployed for one year or more), representing 51.7% of all unemployed. **The long-term unemployment rate** was 2.2%, the same for men and women.

Among all unemployed, 19.3 thousand persons (15.0%) were looking for their first job.

In the fourth quarter of 2023, **the youth unemployment rate (age group 15 - 29)** was 7.9% (7.4% for men and 8.5% for women). In comparison with the same quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate (age group 15 - 29) went up by 0.4 percentage points, which was entirely due to an increase for women.

Employment

In the fourth quarter of 2023, there were 2 920.6 thousand **employed persons**, of whom 1 556.5 thousand men and 1 364.1 thousand women. Compared to the fourth quarter of 2022, the number of employed persons decreased by 2.0%, by 1.6% for men and by 2.5% for women. The employment rate for the population aged 15 years and over was 53.1%, 59.6% for men and 47.2% for women.

In the fourth quarter of 2023, in the service sector, worked 1 906.0 thousand persons (65.3% of all in employment), in the industry sector - 854.6 thousand (29.3%), and in the agriculture, forestry and fishing - 159.9 thousand (5.5%).

According to the status in employment, the distribution of employed persons was as follows: 4.3% (125.3 thousand) employers, 7.0% (205.3 thousand) self-employed persons without employees, 88.2% (2 576.5 thousand) employees and 0.5% (13.5 thousand) unpaid family workers. Of all employees, 1 993.7 thousand persons (77.4%) worked in the private sector, while 582.8 thousand (22.6%) worked in the public sector. Among all employees, 69.2 thousand persons (2.7%) had a temporary job (with limited duration).

In the fourth quarter of 2023, the employment in specific age groups was as follows:

There were 2 808.4 thousand **employed persons aged 15 - 64** (1 490.6 thousand men and 1 317.8 thousand women). The employment rate for the same age group was 70.5% (74.0% for men and 66.9% for women).

The employment rate for the age group 15 - 29 was 36.5% (41.0% for men and 31.8% for women).

The employment rate for the age group 20 - 64 was 76.1%, 80.1% and 72.1% for men and women, respectively. In comparison with the fourth quarter of 2022, the employment rate for the age group 20 - 64 was lower by 0.9 percentage points.

There were 618.6 thousand **employed persons aged 55 - 64**, representing 69.1% of the population in the same age group (73.8% of men and 64.8% of women). In comparison with the fourth quarter of 2022, the employment rate for the age group 55 - 64 registered a decrease of 0.3 percentage points.

Figure 2. Employment rates by age groups in the fourth quarter of 2022 and 2023



Economic inactivity

In the fourth quarter of 2023, there were 2 455.5 thousand **economically inactive persons (persons not in the labour force) aged 15 years and over**, of whom 988.3 thousand (40.2%) men and 1 467.2 thousand (59.8%) women.

The economically inactive persons aged 15 - 64 were 1 049.0 thousand (455.3 thousand men and 593.6 thousand women), representing 26.3% of the population in the same age group (22.6% of men and 30.1% of women). Among all persons not in the labour force aged 15 - 64, 41.0% were inactive due to participation in education or training.



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.

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; and
- 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; and
- 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 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 fourth quarter of 2023, preliminary data of the population as of 30 September 2023 were used. The population living in institutional households was excluded. In order to ensure comparability, the LFS estimates for the fourth quarter of 2022 have been recalculated with population data, based on the 2021 Census.

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 fourth quarter of 2023 are as follows:

- total number of employed persons - 1.4%;
- total number of unemployed persons - 6.6%;
- unemployment rate - 6.3%.

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

More detailed data from the Labour Force Survey for the fourth quarter of 2023 can be found on the NSI website - www.nsi.bg/en, section 'Labour Market', Labour Force Survey.



Annex

Table 1

Main labour market indicators, fourth quarter of 2022 and 2023

	Fourth quarter 2022	Fourth quarter 2023	Change (fourth quarter 2023 minus fourth quarter 2022)
Total			
Activity rate (15 - 64) - %	74.5	73.7	-0.8
Employed persons - total - in thousands	2980.5	2920.6	-59.9
Employed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	2876.4	2808.4	-68.0
Employed persons aged 15 - 24 - in thousands	119.0	98.8	-20.2
Employed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	331.8	311.7	-20.1
Employed persons aged 20 - 64 - in thousands	2864.0	2798.7	-65.3
Employed persons aged 55 - 64 - in thousands	625.7	618.6	-7.1
Employment rate - %	54.0	53.1	-0.9
Employment rate (15 - 64) - %	71.7	70.5	-1.2
Employment rate (15 - 24) - %	21.1	16.9	-4.2
Employment rate (15 - 29) - %	39.2	36.5	-2.7
Employment rate (20 - 64) - %	77.0	76.1	-0.9
Employment rate (55 - 64) - %	69.4	69.1	-0.3
Unemployed persons - total - in thousands	115.6	128.6	13.0
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	112.9	126.9	14.0
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	26.8	26.6	-0.2
Unemployment rate - %	3.7	4.2	0.5
Unemployment rate (15 - 64) - %	3.8	4.3	0.5
Unemployment rate (15 - 29) - %	7.5	7.9	0.4
Long-term unemployment rate - %	2.0	2.2	0.2
Discouraged persons - total - in thousands	48.0	40.5	-7.5
Discouraged persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	46.4	38.8	-7.6

Table 1

Main labour market indicators, fourth quarter of 2022 and 2023

(Continued)

	Fourth quarter 2022	Fourth quarter 2023	Change (fourth quarter 2023 minus fourth quarter 2022)
Male			
Activity rate (15 - 64) - %	78.1	77.4	-0.7
Employed persons - total - in thousands	1581.8	1556.5	-25.3
Employed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	1522.2	1490.6	-31.6
Employed persons aged 15 - 24 - in thousands	67.3	59.8	-7.5
Employed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	183.0	179.5	-3.5
Employed persons aged 20 - 64 - in thousands	1515.8	1485.8	-30.0
Employed persons aged 55 - 64 - in thousands	323.3	318.0	-5.3
Employment rate - %	60.3	59.6	-0.7
Employment rate (15 - 64) - %	75.1	74.0	-1.1
Employment rate (15 - 24) - %	23.3	19.9	-3.4
Employment rate (15 - 29) - %	42.1	41.0	-1.1
Employment rate (20 - 64) - %	80.9	80.1	-0.8
Employment rate (55 - 64) - %	74.7	73.8	-0.9
Unemployed persons - total - in thousands	63.7	68.9	5.2
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	61.7	67.9	6.2
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	15.7	14.3	-1.4
Unemployment rate - %	3.9	4.2	0.3
Unemployment rate (15 - 64) - %	3.9	4.4	0.5
Unemployment rate (15 - 29) - %	7.9	7.4	-0.5
Long-term unemployment rate - %	2.1	2.2	0.1
Discouraged persons - total - in thousands	24.1	23.0	-1.1
Discouraged persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	22.9	21.7	-1.2



Table 1

Main labour market indicators, fourth quarter of 2022 and 2023

(Continued and end)

	Fourth quarter 2022	Fourth quarter 2023	Change (fourth quarter 2023 minus fourth quarter 2022)
Female			
Activity rate (15 - 64) - %	70.8	69.9	-0.9
Employed persons - total - in thousands	1398.7	1364.1	-34.6
Employed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	1354.1	1317.8	-36.3
Employed persons aged 15 - 24 - in thousands	51.7	39.0	-12.7
Employed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	148.8	132.2	-16.6
Employed persons aged 20 - 64 - in thousands	1348.2	1312.8	-35.4
Employed persons aged 55 - 64 - in thousands	302.4	300.6	-1.8
Employment rate - %	48.2	47.2	-1.0
Employment rate (15 - 64) - %	68.2	66.9	-1.3
Employment rate (15 - 24) - %	18.8	13.8	-5.0
Employment rate (15 - 29) - %	36.1	31.8	-4.3
Employment rate (20 - 64) - %	73.2	72.1	-1.1
Employment rate (55 - 64) - %	64.6	64.8	0.2
Unemployed persons - total - in thousands	51.9	59.7	7.8
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	51.2	59.0	7.8
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	11.0	12.3	1.3
Unemployment rate - %	3.6	4.2	0.6
Unemployment rate (15 - 64) - %	3.6	4.3	0.7
Unemployment rate (15 - 29) - %	6.9	8.5	1.6
Long-term unemployment rate - %	1.9	2.2	0.3
Discouraged persons - total - in thousands	23.9	17.5	-6.4
Discouraged persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	23.5	17.0	-6.5