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Visual Essay

Comparative civilian labor force statistics, 10 countries: a visual essay

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Excerpt from the visual essay:

For many years, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has regularly prepared international comparisons of labor force statistics that are used to assess relative economic performance across countries. This essay presents 10 charts of key labor market indicators, using data from the semiannual publication *Comparative Civilian Labor Force Statistics, Ten Countries*, available on the Internet at www.bls.gov/fls/. Charts cover the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, and six European countries—France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom—the same countries covered in the full publication. The data have been adjusted to U.S. concepts insofar as possible and are based mainly on labor force surveys.

Data are presented on three main components of the labor market: unemployment, employment, and labor force. Unemployment rates are the key measure of labor market performance in academic analyses and the media, and are presented first. Labor force and employment data show characteristics of labor markets in different ways and are presented next. Trends in employment distribution across economic sectors provide a snapshot of broad employment patterns over time and are presented last.

Among the 10 countries, the United States had a relatively low unemployment rate overall, no gender gap in unemployment, and relatively low teenage joblessness, compared with most of the European countries. U.S. labor force participation and employment-population ratios for both men and women were comparatively high. U.S. women's share of the labor force has consistently ranked among the highest. Trends in the distribution of employment across sectors are similar for all countries, with agriculture and manufacturing declining, and the services sector increasing, in share of total employment over time.

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