

MAIN LABOUR FORCE SURVEY RESULTS, FIRST QUARTER OF 2021

Since the beginning of 2021 the Labour Force Survey in all EU Member States, incl. in Bulgaria, is carried out in compliance with the Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households, based on data at individual level collected from samples and subsequent Commission implementing regulations in the field of labour force statistics. These regulations implied changes in the methodology of the Labour Force Survey, primarily related to the definitions of employment and unemployment, and in consequence, the data for the first quarter of 2021 are not fully comparable to that for previous quarters¹.

Main labour market indicators in the first quarter of 2021

- **The activity rate for population aged 15 - 64** was 71.4%.
- **The employment rate for population aged 15 - 64** was 66.9%.
- **The unemployment rate** was 6.3%.
- There were 60.0 thousand **discouraged persons aged 15 - 64**, representing 4.8% of the economically inactive population in the same age group.

Employment

In the first quarter of 2021 there were 3 028.7 thousand **employed persons**, 1 626.4 thousand men and 1 402.3 thousand women. The employment rate was 51.4% (57.7% for men and 45.6% for women).

In the first quarter of 2021, 1 887.9 thousand persons (62.3% of all employed persons) worked in the service sector, 962.1 thousand persons (31.8%) worked in the industry sector and 178.7 thousand persons (5.9%) worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Employers were 3.5% (105.4 thousand) out of all employed persons, **self-employed without employees** were 6.4% (193.6 thousand), **employees** were 89.6% (2 714.9 thousand) and **unpaid family workers** were 0.5% (14.8 thousand). There were 2 070.2 thousand persons (76.3% of all employees) working in the private sector and 644.7 thousand (23.7%) working in the public sector.

For specific age groups the employment during the first quarter of 2021 was as follows:

There were 2 940.2 thousand **employed persons aged 15 - 64 years**. The employment rate for the same age group was 66.9% (71.0% for men and 62.7% for women).

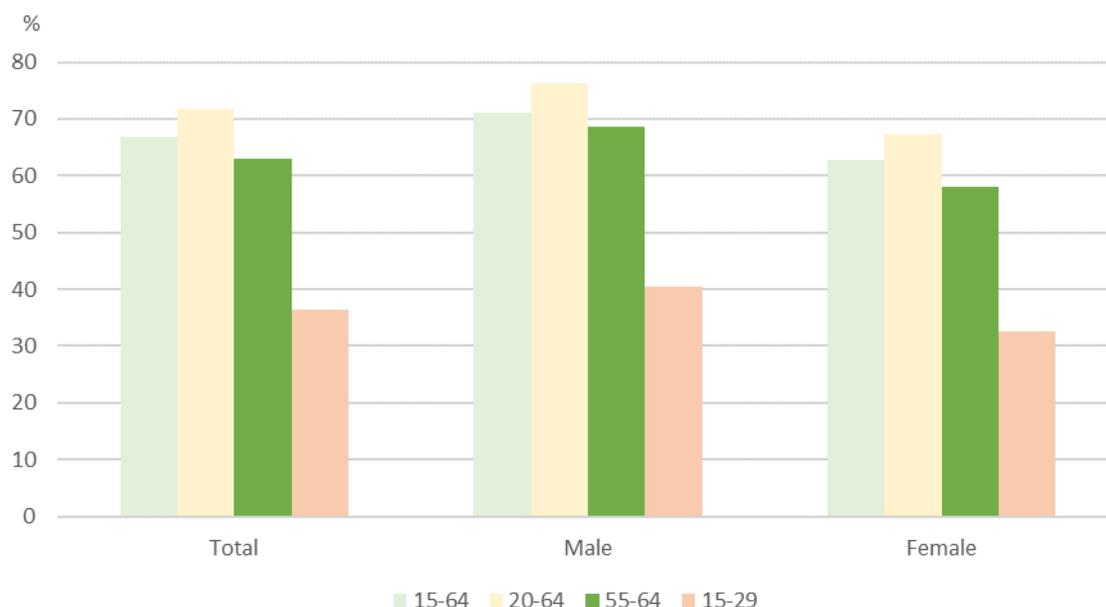
The employment rate for the age group 15 - 29 years was 36.5% (40.4% for men and 32.5% for women).

The employment rate for the age group 20 - 64 years was 71.7%, 76.2% for men and 67.2% for women.

¹ Main changes are described in the Methodological notes.

There were 587.4 thousand **employed persons aged 55 - 64 years**, representing 63.1% of population in the same age group (68.6% of men and 58.0% of women).

Figure 1. Employment rates by age groups and sex in the first quarter of 2021



Unemployment

In the first quarter of 2021 there were 204.0 thousand **unemployed persons**, of whom 114.0 thousand (55.9%) men and 90.0 thousand (44.1%) women. The unemployment rate was 6.3%, 6.6% and 6.0% for men and women respectively.

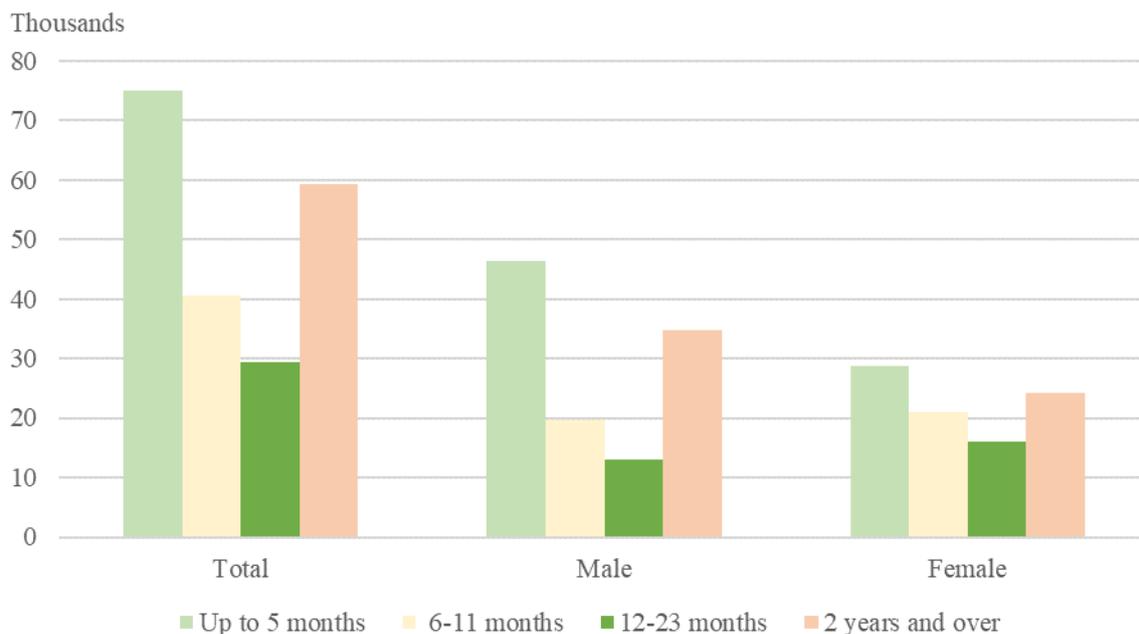
Among all unemployed persons, 11.5% had attained tertiary education, 50.2% had completed upper secondary education and 38.3% had at most lower secondary education. The unemployment rate by level of educational attainment was as follows: 2.3% for higher education, 5.7% for upper secondary and 20.4% for education lower than upper secondary.

In the first quarter of 2021 the number of persons unemployed for less than a year was 115.6 thousand, representing 56.6% of all unemployed persons, and that of long-term unemployed persons was 88.4 thousand (43.4%). **The long-term unemployment rate** was 2.7%, 2.8% for men and 2.7% for women.

Out of all unemployed persons 175.7 thousand (86.1%), had previous work that they left mainly due to dismissal, redundancy or forced closure of the business, completion of seasonal or other temporary work, and 28.3 thousand (13.9%), were looking for a first job.

In the first quarter of 2021, **the unemployment rate for the age group 15 - 29 years** was 11.0%. The unemployment rate for men (15 - 29 years) was 13.1% and 8.2% for women.

Figure 2. Duration of unemployment by sex in the first quarter of 2021



Economic inactivity

In the first quarter of 2021 there were 2 660.2 thousand **economically inactive persons (persons outside the labour force)**, of whom 1 080.3 thousand (40.6%) men and 1 579.9 thousand (59.4%) women. **Economically inactive persons in the age group 15 - 64 years** were 1 256.0 thousand, representing 28.6% of the population in the same age group.

Methodological background

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is ongoing sample survey providing quarterly and annual data on the economic activity of the population aged 15 and over. The survey covers non-institutional households.

Certain changes in the methodology of the Labour Force Survey take place in the first quarter of 2021 in line with the implementation of Regulation (EU) 2019/1700 of European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households, based on data at individual level collected from samples, and consequent implementing regulations of the European Commission in the field of Labour Force statistics. These changes concern mainly employment and unemployment definitions, in particular:

- Persons on leave for looking after a child of one to two years of age who are receiving fixed compensation for the duration of the leave, are considered employed (they used to be considered economically inactive persons up to the end of 2020);

- Persons on an unpaid parental leave for looking after a child of two to eight years of age are considered employed only if the one time duration of using that leave is at most three months, i. e. they do not use all the leave they are entitled to (six months for each parent). These persons used to be considered employed up to 2020;

- Persons who are absent from work due to different reason than holidays, illness, accident or maternity and parental leave are considered employed only if the duration of their absence is up to 3 months (even they are being partially compensated);

- Persons who produce agricultural products for self-consumption are excluded from the employed person's category even if they satisfy their household's main consumption needs by that production. Employed are considered only persons growing agricultural produce, intended mainly for sale or barter;

- Persons on a seasonal job are defined as employed out of the active work season if they regularly continue to do tasks and activities connected with their work or business, not including execution of legal or administrative tasks;

- Persons receiving social benefits who are obliged to do free community services are not considered employed. They used to be considered employed if they worked during the reference week up to the end of 2020.

Reference period - the characteristics of each interviewee refer to their status during a defined calendar week.

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 an enterprise, a business from which they were temporarily absent due to illness, annual leave, maternity leave, parental leave, etc.

Unemployed are persons aged 15 to 74 who:

- did not work at all during the reference period;

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- were actively looking for work during the preceding four weeks, including the reference one, or have found a new job, or established a business 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 at least one year or longer.

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.

Discouraged persons are persons not in the labour force, aged 15 to 74, who want to work but they do not actively look for a job as they do not believe will find suitable job.

Activity rate - ratio between the economically active population and the total population of the same age group.

Employment rate - ratio between the employed population and the total population of the same age group.

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

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

For weighting of the results of the survey for Q1 2021, data on population as of 31 December 2020 (excluding population living in institutional households) were used.

Like all sample surveys, data from the Labour Force Survey have sample errors (stochastic errors). The relative standard errors for the main LFS indicators for the first quarter of 2021 are as follows:

- total number of employed persons - 1.4%;
- total number of unemployed persons - 5.1%;
- unemployment rate - 4.9%.

Some of the totals (including rows and columns) are not equal to the sum of its components due to the rounding of the numbers.

More detailed data from the Labour Force Survey for the first quarter of 2021 can be found on the NSI website - www.nsi.bg, section 'Labour Market', Labour Force Survey.

Annex

Table 1

Main labour market indicators in the first quarter of 2021

	Total	Male	Female
Activity rate (15 - 64) - %	71.4	76.0	66.8
Employed persons - total - in thousands	3028.7	1626.4	1402.3
Employed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	2940.2	1577.7	1362.5
Employed persons aged 15 - 24 - in thousands	105.5	66.3	39.2
Employed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	357.6	202.8	154.9
Employed persons aged 20 - 64 - in thousands	2931.1	1572.5	1358.6
Employed persons aged 55 - 64 - in thousands	587.4	307.5	279.9
Employment rate - %	51.4	57.7	45.6
Employment rate (15 - 64) - %	66.9	71.0	62.7
Employment rate (15 - 24) - %	17.1	20.9	13.1
Employment rate (15 - 29) - %	36.5	40.4	32.5
Employment rate (20 - 64) - %	71.7	76.2	67.2
Employment rate (55 - 64) - %	63.1	68.6	58.0
Unemployed persons - total - in thousands	204.0	114.0	90.0
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	201.6	112.3	89.2
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 24 - in thousands	21.3	13.4	7.9
Unemployed persons aged 15 - 29 - in thousands	44.3	30.5	13.8
Unemployment rate - %	6.3	6.6	6.0
Unemployment rate (15 - 64) - %	6.4	6.6	6.1
Unemployment rate (15 - 24) - %	16.8	16.9	16.7
Unemployment rate (15 - 29) - %	11.0	13.1	8.2
Long-term unemployment rate - %	2.7	2.8	2.7
Discouraged persons aged 15 and over - in thousands	62.2	35.2	27.0
Discouraged persons aged 15 - 64 - in thousands	60.0	33.9	26.2