

## EU-LFS: Availability of Variables Over Time

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## **EU-LFS: Availability of Variables Over Time**

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## **GESIS Papers**

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The European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) is the largest household sample survey in Europe, with currently more than one million people interviewed in each quarter. It is the most important source of data on the EU labour market and the labour market participation of people living in the EU.

EU-LFS microdata are available from 1983 onwards (Eurostat 2024) and are documented in detail in our Microdata Information System MISSY (<https://www.gesis.org/en/missy>). While some countries such as Germany, France and Italy participated in the EU-LFS from the beginning, most countries entered later, e.g., Portugal in 1986 and Sweden in 1995. A full coverage of EU28 countries (plus three EFTA countries) is given since 2002, with the only exception of Malta providing data from 2009 onwards. The United Kingdom is part of the LFS up to and including 2019 and dropped out in 2020 due to Brexit.

The EU-LFS is conducted at least annually, in a similar way and with similar characteristics. Therefore, it is not only suitable for cross-sectional analyses, but also for repeated cross-sectional analyses, i.e., for comparisons over time and even for comparisons across so-called synthetic cohorts.<sup>1</sup>

To ensure comparability across countries and years, the EU-LFS is output harmonised. This means that the surveys are implemented nationally with some degree of flexibility, but according to common guidelines and rules laid down by EU legislation. The national statistical institutes are responsible for data collection and processing. After the national data have been transmitted to Eurostat, they are integrated and made available to researchers as integrated microdata files.

These integrated microdata files, the so-called scientific use files, are equally structured for all countries and years. This means that all datasets contain the same variables with the same names and the same values and are therefore (at least formally) fully comparable.

Not all variables are actually available in the data for all countries and years, however. The fact that the variables are technically available in the datasets does not necessarily mean that they are filled with valid values, since not every variable is surveyed in every country and in every year. Because the respective variables are part of the dataset (of the respective country and year) nonetheless, they can be completely empty, which means that there are no valid values at all. These variables only have missing values (e.g. blanks) in the raw data and are recoded to -3 using the Setups provided by GESIS (<https://www.gesis.org/en/missy/materials/EU-LFS/setups>).

The fact that variables are structurally present in the EU-LFS datasets, but do not always contain valid values, can be misleading. The selection of countries and time periods for comparative analyses depends primarily on the research interest and research question, but the availability of data and variables determines which analyses is actually possible. It is therefore not only necessary to identify which variables are present in the EU-LFS data, but also for which countries and for which years they contain valid values.

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<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, the EU-LFS has a rotational design, meaning that there are overlaps between the samples. However, the rotational design is not yet available in the Scientific Use Files of the LFS and is not intended to measure change at the individual level. Instead, the LFS can be used to measure change at the aggregate level.

As this is not directly apparent and time-consuming to ascertain, we provide an overview in this report.<sup>2</sup> We inform about the availability of variables in the EU-LFS datasets across countries and years concentrating on the 2022 release of the data, where the “Integrated European Social Statistics (IESS)” regulation was first implemented and the structure of the data changed. In addition, we focus on the yearly data of the EU-LFS, as they contain the full range of variables (quarterly and yearly variables, biennial variables, ad-hoc variables, and variables on the household level) and are used the most for comparisons over time and/or across synthetic cohorts.

All variables are included in all yearly datasets. Exceptions are the NACE revision 1 variables (NACE1\_1D, NACE1\_1D2J, NACE1\_1DPR) that are part of the datasets up to 2008 only, and the ISCO-88 variables (ISCO88\_3D, ISCO88\_1D, ISCO88\_3DPR,) that are part of the datasets up to 2010 only. Another exception are the derived household variables (HHPERS to HHCHILDR), which are only available from 2006 onwards.

The ad-hoc variables represent a special case. They are year-specific and therefore not considered in this report.

What follows is a synopsis of 144 variables and their availability across countries and years in the EU-LFS yearly data.<sup>3</sup> The order of the variables corresponds to their appearance in the data. Empty cells in the tables mean that no data for the whole country is available in the respective year. This is the case, for example, for Austria until 1994, for Bulgaria until 1999 and for Croatia until 2001. Cells shaded in light grey and filled with an X mean that data for the respective country and year are available, but that there are no valid values for the variable of interest. This is the case, for example, for the variable TEMP in Bulgaria in 2000, in Germany in 1983 and in Spain in 1986. Finally, cells shaded in dark grey mean that data and valid values are available for the variable of interest. The countries and years for which a comparison is possible are defined based on these cells.

In addition, we offer another document with the same information, but following another logic of presentation: The Excel document [LFS1983-2021\\_Variable\\_Availability.xlsx](#) is structured by country and shows the variables available in each country by year. A variable that has valid cases in the respective country and year is marked green with the abbreviation ‘av’ (available). A variable that is included in the dataset of the respective country and year, but has no valid cases, is marked with a red cell and the abbreviation ‘na’ (not available). Variables that are not included in the dataset of the respective country and year are marked with a hyphen in a white cell. The global synopsis (first sheet in the Excel file) shows if a variable is at all available in a certain year. If this is the case, it might only be available in some countries, but not in others.

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<sup>2</sup> We would like to thank our colleague Florian Thirolf for extracting the basic information from our Microdata Information System MISSY (<https://www.gesis.org/en/missy>).

<sup>3</sup> The variables REFYEAR, YEAR, QUARTER, HHNUM, QHNUM and COUNTRY are excluded from the synopsis, as these variables always have valid cases (in all countries and years). The weighting factors COEFFY, COEFFMOD, COEFFHH, COEFFHHAVG and COEFF2Y are also excluded, as their availability depends on the variables to which they refer.

## References

Eurostat (2024). EU Labour Force Survey Database. User Guide. Version: February 2024.  
[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1978984/6037342/EULFS\\_Data-base\\_UserGuide\\_2021.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/1978984/6037342/EULFS_Data-base_UserGuide_2021.pdf). Accessed: 12. June 2024.

*List of country abbreviations used in the EU-LFS and accordingly in the following tables*

Country code	Country name
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CH	Switzerland
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czechia
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IS	Iceland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom

List of variables displayed in the following tables  
(click on the variable name to go directly to the corresponding table)

Variable name	Variable label
REFWEEK	Reference week
REFMONTH	Reference month
INTWEEK	Interview week
HHTYPE	Living in a private household or an institution
HHSEQNUM	Sequence number in the household
INTWAVE	Sequence number of survey wave
INTQUEST	Questionnaire used
MODE	Interviewing mode used
PROXY	Nature of participation in the survey
REDION_2D	Region of residence (NUTS - 2 digits)
DEGURBA	Degree of urbanisation
SEX	Sex
AGE	Age in completed years
AGE_GRP	Age group
CITIZENSHIP	Country of main citizenship
COUNTRYB	Country of birth
COBFATH	Country of birth of the father
COBMOTH	Country of birth of the mother
MIGREAS	Main reason for migrating
YEARESID	Duration of stay in the country of residence in completed years
AGERESID	Age at which person last established their usual residence in the country
COUNTRPR	Country of previous residence
HHLINK	Relationship to the reference person in the household
HHSPOU	Sequence number of partner
HHFATH	Sequence number of father
HHMOTH	Sequence number of mother
WKSTAT	Working in the reference week
ABSREAS	Main reason for absence from work during the entire reference week
JATTACH	Job attachment
EMPSTAT	Being in employment
NUMJOB	Number of jobs
SEEKWORK	Searching for employment during the 4 weeks ending in the reference week
WANTWORK	Willingness to work even if not searching for employment
SEEKREAS	Main reason for not searching for employment
WANTREAS	Main reason for not wanting to work
ACTMETNE	Having used an active search method to find a job (for not employed people)
WISHMORE	Wish to work more than the current number of usual hours
AVAILBLE	Availability to start working immediately or to work more
AVAIREAS	Main reason for not being available to start working immediately or to work more
ILOSTAT	ILO employment status



Variable name	Variable label
COUNTRYW	Country of place of work for main job
REGION_2DW	Region of place of work for main job (NUTS - 2 digits)
HOMEWORK	Working at home for the main job
STAPRO	Status in employment in main job
NACE2_1D	Economic activity of the local unit for main job (1 digit) - NACE rev. 2
ISCO08_3D	Occupation in main job (3 digits) - ISCO-08
ISCO08_1D	Occupation in main job (1 digit) - ISCO-08
ESEG_2D	European socio-economic group (2 digits)
ESEG_1D	European socio-economic group (1 digit)
FTPT	Full- or part-time main job (self-defined)
TEMP	Permanency of main job
TEMPDUR	Total duration of temporary main job
TEMPREAS	Main reason for having a temporary main job
TEMPAGCY	Contract with a temporary employment agency for the main job
FTPTREAS	Main reason for part-time work in the main job
MAINCLNT	Number and importance of clients in the 12 months ending with the reference week
VARITIME	Decision on the start and end of working time
SUPVISOR	Supervisory responsibilities in main job
SIZEFIRM	Size of the local unit for main job
LOOKOJ	Looking for another job
HWWISH	Number of hours that the person would like to work in total in a week
SEEKDUR	Duration of search for employment
NEEDCARE	Main reason why care for children or incapacitated relatives limits labour market participation
STAPRO2J	Status in employment in second job
NACE2_1D2J	Economic activity of the local unit for second job (1 digit) - NACE rev. 2
MAINSTAT	Main activity status (self-defined)
HATLEVEL	Educational attainment level (highest level of education successfully completed)
HATLEV1D	Level of education
HATFIELD	Field of the highest level of education successfully completed
HATYEAR	Year when the highest level of education was successfully completed
HATWORK	Work experience at a workplace as part of HATLEVEL
YSTARTWK	Year in which person started working for current employer or as self-employed in current main job
MSTARTWK	Month in which person started working for current employer or as self-employed in current main job
STARTIME	Time since person started to work
WAYJFOUN	Public employment service helped to find the current main job
FINDMETH	Most effective method used to find the current main job (for persons in employment)
EXISTPR	Existence of previous employment experience
YEARPR	Year in which person left the last job or business

Variable name	Variable label
MONTHPR	Month in which person left the last job or business
LEAVTIME	Time since person last worked
LEAVCLAS	Time since person last worked (classes)
DURUNE	Duration of unemployment
LEAVREAS	Main reason for leaving last job or business
STAPROPR	Status in employment in last job or business
NACE2_1DPR	Economic activity of the local unit for previous job (1 digit) - NACE rev. 2
ISCO08_3DPR	Occupation in the last job (3 digits) - ISCO-08
ISCO08_1DPR	Occupation in the last job (1 digit) - ISCO-08
CONTRHRS	Contractual working hours in main job
HWUSUAL	Number of hours per week usually worked in main job
ABSHOLID	Days of absence from main job due to holidays and leave
ABSILLINJ	Days of absence from main job due to own illness, injury or temporary disability
ABSOTHER	Days of absence from main job due to other reasons
EXTRAHRS	Overtime or extra hours worked in main job
HWACTUAL	Number of hours actually worked in main job
HWUSU2J	Number of hours per week usually worked in second job
HWACTU2J	Number of hours actually worked in second job
SHIFTWK	Shift work in main job
EVENWK	Evening work in main job
NIGHTWK	Night work in main job
SATWK	Saturday work in main job
SUNWK	Sunday work in main job
EDUCFED4	Participation in formal education and training (student or apprentice) in the last 4 weeks
EDUCLEV4	Level of the most recent formal education or training activity in the last 4 weeks
EDUCNFE4	Participation in non-formal education and training in the last 4 weeks
EDUC4WEEKS	Education or training received during previous 4 weeks
EDUCFED12	Participation in formal education and training (student or apprentice) in the last 12 months
EDUCLEV12	Level of the most recent formal education or training activity in the last 12 months
EDUCNFE12	Participation in non-formal education and training in the last 12 months
EDUC12MONTHS	Education or training received during previous 12 months
GENHEALTH	Self-perceived general health
GALI	Limitation in activities because of health problems
INCDECIL	Monthly (take home) pay from main job (deciles) (2009-2020)
REGISTER	Registration at a public employment service (PES)
NACE1_1D	Economic activity of the local unit for main job (1 digit) - NACE rev. 1/1.1 (1992-2007)
NACE1_1D2J	Economic activity of the local unit for second job (1 digit) - NACE rev. 1/1.1 (1992-2007)

Variable name	Variable label
NACE1_1DPR	Economic activity of the local unit for previous job (1 digit) - NACE rev. 1/1.1 (1992-2007)
ISCO88_3D	Occupation in main job (3 digits) - ISCO-88-COM
ISCO88_1D	Occupation in main job (1 digit) - ISCO-88-COM
ISCO88_3DPR	Occupation in the last job (3 digits) - ISCO-88-COM
ISCO88_1DPR	Occupation in the last job (1 digit) - ISCO-88-COM
HHPERS	Person is child or adult
HHNBCH0TO2	Number of children between 0 and 2 years in the household
HHNBCH3TO5	Number of children between 3 and 5 years in the household
HHNBCH6TO8	Number of children between 6 and 8 years in the household
HHNBCH9TO11	Number of children between 9 and 11 years in the household
HHNBCH12TO14	Number of children between 12 and 14 years in the household
HHNBCH15TO17	Number of children between 15 and 17 years in the household
HHNBCH0TO14	Number of children aged less than 15 years in the household
HHNBCHILD	Total number of children in the household
HHAGEYG14	Age of the youngest child less than 15 years in the household
HHAGEYG	Age of the youngest child in the household
HHNBADULT	Total number of adults in the household
HHNBOLD	Number of persons aged 65 years or more in the household
HHNBPERS	Total number of persons in the household
HHNBALLEMPL	Total number of employed persons aged 15 years and more in the household
HHNBADEMPL	Number of employed adults in the household
HHNBADUNEMP	Number of unemployed adults in the household
HHNBADOUTLF	Number of adults outside the labour force in the household
HHWKSTAT	Working status of adults living in the same household
HHJOBLESS	Jobless household
HHCOMP	Household composition
HHPARTNR	Partner in the household
HHPARENT	Parent(s) in the household
HHCHILDR	Child(ren) of the person in the household

























































































































































Availability of variable HATFIELD, per country and year (2022 release)

no data     
  data, but no valid cases (only -3)     
  data and valid cases

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021			
AT													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X										
BE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
BG																		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
CH														X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
CY																	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
CZ															X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
DE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
DK	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
EE															X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
EL	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
ES				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
FI													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
FR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
HR																			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
HU														X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
IE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
IS													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
IT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
LT																X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
LU	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
LV																X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
MT																												X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
NL	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
NO													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
PL															X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
PT				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
RO															X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
SE													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
SI														X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
SK																X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
UK	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							









































































































































































