

03

Work and Income

363-1500

SLFS 2015 in brief

The Swiss Labour Force Survey



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Since 1991, the Federal Statistical Office has conducted the SLFS on an annual basis at the behest of the Federal Council. This telephone survey of individuals provides representative data on the socio-economic structure of Switzerland's permanent resident population and on participation in the labour force. The SLFS is carried out on a representative sample based on around 125,000 annual interviews.

■ **A survey that meets international requirements**

Thanks to strict adherence to international definitions, the SLFS can be used to position Switzerland's unemployment and employment figures in the European and global context.

■ **Questions addressed**

The questions focus mainly on the situation on the labour market (present or past professional activity, unemployment, retirement, working conditions, occupation, household income and income from employment, job hunting, professional and geographical mobility), training/education (including continuing education), household composition and demographic characteristics (nationality, civil status, etc.).

■ Thematic modules

In addition to the basic questionnaire, the SLFS is supplemented each year by thematic modules. Topics covered include unpaid work, migration, social security, balancing work life and family life, young people's entry into the labour market, employment of persons with disabilities and the transition from working life to retirement.

■ Using data from the SLFS

The data collected through the SLFS are of great interest from the standpoint of social policy and labour market policies. The survey provides information on difficulties in finding employment, the professional reintegration of women, childcare, wage inequality, retirement behaviour and the integration of the foreign population. The SLFS is an essential survey for the Swiss statistical system. It is the main source for employment statistics and the work volume statistics used to calculate labour productivity, labour market accounts and labour force projections in the context of demographic scenarios.

■ When is the survey conducted?

Since 2010, the SLFS has been conducted continuously with the interviews distributed over the 52 weeks of the year (from 1991 to 2009, the SLFS was conducted during the 2nd quarter of each year). Persons participating in the survey are interviewed four times over a period of a year and a half.

■ **How have you been chosen?**

You have been randomly selected from the FSO's sample register. The FSO's sample register is primarily based on the official communal and cantonal population registers.

To facilitate initial contact, the sample is completed wherever possible by telephone numbers that telephone operators have to make available to the FSO in compliance with the Federal Statistics Act. This list also includes private landline numbers that are not found in the public telephone directory.

■ **Who conducts the interviews?**

The data are collected by call centres of the institute which is commissioned by the Federal Statistical Office to conduct the survey. Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) are conducted by professional survey takers who are monitored by supervisors. The interviews are conducted in German, French, Italian and English.

■ **How is the interview conducted?**

The Federal Statistical Office informs the randomly selected individuals in writing about the aims of the SLFS and how it is carried out. The institute commissioned by the FSO then contacts the households by telephone to conduct the interview straight away or to make an appointment to do so. Only persons aged 15 or older are eligible to be selected for the survey.

■ What is the data protection situation?

- Data protection is guaranteed by the Federal Statistics Act (RS 431.01), the Ordinance on the Conduct of Statistical Surveys (RS 431.012.1) and the Data Protection Act (RS 235.1).
- FSO employees and the institute commissioned to conduct the survey are strictly bound to observe professional secrecy and are subject to the relevant secrecy laws.
- Telephone numbers are treated as confidential. Commercial or administrative use of them is absolutely excluded.
- The data collected during the survey are processed anonymously, i.e. they are aggregated and extrapolated and finally expressed in a general form that does not make it possible to identify the persons who participated in the survey.

■ Why is your participation important?

Participation in this survey is voluntary but your cooperation is essential for a survey that is relevant and of good quality. To achieve this objective we need to have a representative sample of the resident population in Switzerland. Your answers are therefore important to us regardless of your age, nationality or your employment situation (employed, unemployed, retired, at home, in education or training or otherwise economically inactive).

This publication provides only an overview of the findings from the Swiss Labour Force Survey (SLFS).

You will find many other findings from the SLFS on our website: [**www.slfs.bfs.admin.ch**](http://www.slfs.bfs.admin.ch)

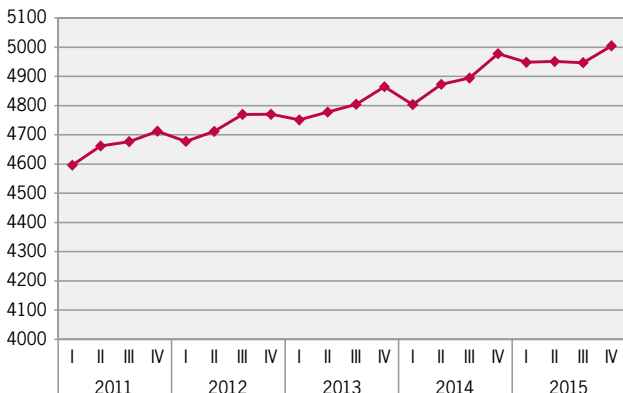
■ Employed population

In the 4th quarter 2015, there were 5,004 million persons in employment in Switzerland, i.e. 0.5% more than in the 4th quarter 2014. Among these, the number of men rose by 0.4% and the number of women by 0.7%. In terms of full-time equivalent jobs, growth reached 1.3% over the same period (men: +0.3%; women: +2.9%).

The European Union (EU28) and the euro zone (EZ19) saw their employed population increase in year-on-year comparison (+1.0% and 1.2% respectively).

Employed persons working in Switzerland

Domestic concept, in thousands, 2011–2015

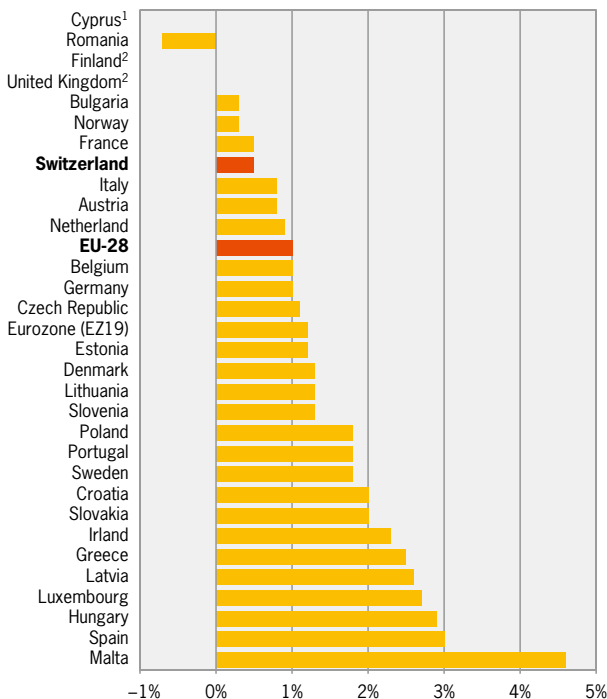


Source: ES

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Employed persons in international comparison

Domestic concept, change from 4th quarter 2014 – 4th quarter 2015



¹ Not available

² No change

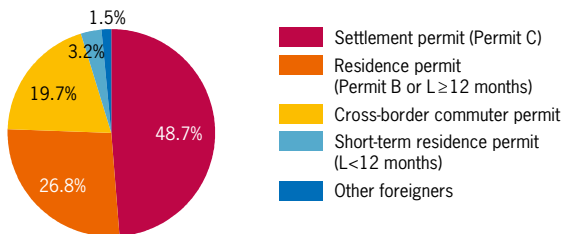
Source: ES – Eurostat

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■ Swiss and foreign labour force

Between the 4th quarter 2014 and the 4th quarter 2015, the number of foreign nationals in employment rose by 2.3% to 1.535 million, whereas the number of Swiss nationals in employment fell slightly (–0.2% to 3.470 million). Cross-border commuters had the largest workforce increase (Permit G: +3.8%), followed by residence permit holders (Permit B or L, in Switzerland for at least 12 months: +2.5%), and settlement permit holders (Permit C: +2.1%). In contrast, the number of employed persons holding a short-term residence permit fell (Permit L, in Switzerland for less than 12 months: –2.3%).

Employed persons of foreign nationality by residence permit Domestic concept, in %, 4th quarter 2015



Source: ES

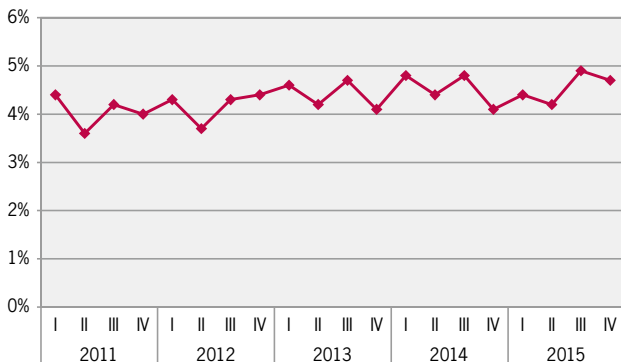
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■ Unemployment as defined by ILO

In the 4th quarter 2015, 229,000 persons were unemployed in Switzerland as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), i.e. 32,000 more than one year previously. These unemployed persons as defined by the ILO represented 4.7% of the economically active population, compared with 4.1% in the 4th quarter 2014. The unemployment rate based on ILO definition declined in both the European Union (EU-28: from 10.0% to 9.1%) and the euro zone (EZ19: from 11.5% to 10.6%).

Unemployment rate as defined by ILO

Permanent resident population concept, in %, 2011–2015

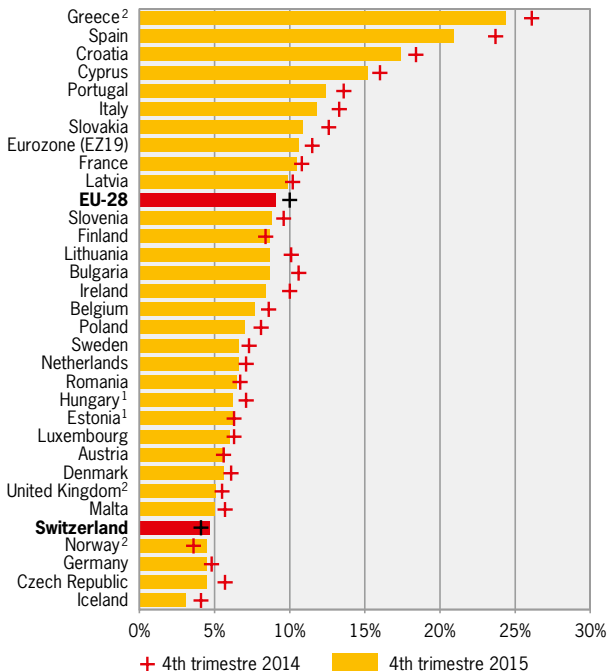


Source: SLFS

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Unemployment rate as defined by ILO in international comparison

Permanent resident population concept, in %,
at 4th quarters 2014 and 2015



¹ Average October/November 2015

² Values for October 2015

Source: SLFS, Eurostat (Situation on 02.02.2016)

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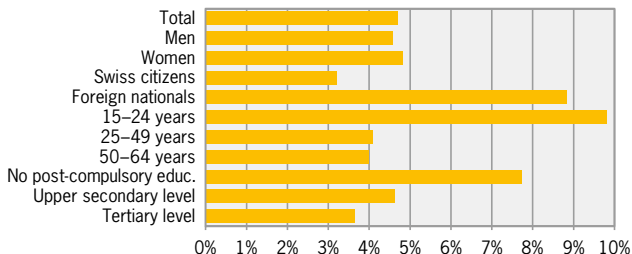
■ Unemployment as defined by the ILO by various characteristics

Between the 4th quarter 2014 and the 4th quarter 2015, the youth unemployment rate (15–24 year olds) as defined by the ILO rose from 6.2% to 9.8% in Switzerland. It fell very slightly among 25–49 year olds (from 4.2% to 4.1%) and increased among 50–64 year olds (from 3.2% to 4.0%). It rose among men (from 3.8% to 4.6%) and women (from 4.4% to 4.8%).

The increase in unemployment was felt more strongly by foreign nationals (+1.1 percentage points to 8.8%) than by Swiss nationals (+0.4 percentage points to 3.2%). It rose from 5.4% to 6.3% among EU-28/EFTA nationals and from 13.2% to 15.1% among non-EU citizens.

Unemployment rate as defined by the ILO by various characteristics

Permanent resident population concept, in %, 4th quarter 2015



Source: SLFS

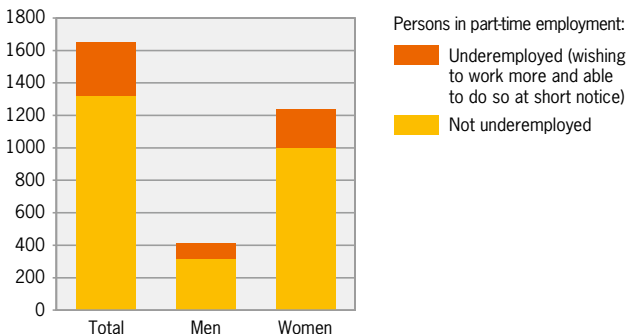
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■ Underemployed persons

In the 4th quarter 2015 the number of persons working part time was 1.653 million (–13,000 compared with the 4th quarter 2014). Among these, 332,000 were underemployed, i.e. they would have liked to work more and were available to do so in the near future. The underemployment rate was 6.8% in the 4th quarter 2015, a higher figure compared with the 4th quarter 2014 (6.5%).

Underemployed persons

Permanent resident population concept, in thousands, 4th quarter 2015



Source: SLFS

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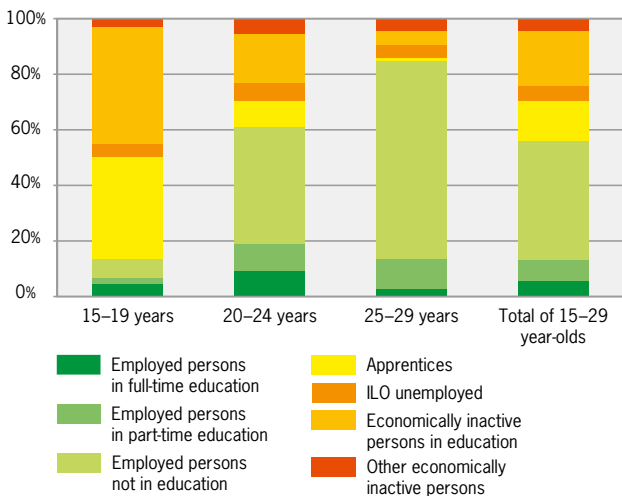
■ Situation of young people in the labour market

In 2015, 70.3% of 15–29 year olds were employed. If apprentices are excluded (from the numerator) the rate was 56.0%: 13.3% of young adults are enrolled in education alongside their employment and 42.7% of them are employed without attending any education.

Employed persons (excluding apprentices) aged 15 to 29 who are also in education mostly work part time (69.8%; proportion of employed persons working full-time: 30.2%). These proportions are the other way round for employed persons in this age group who are not in education and training: 80.3% work full-time and 19.7% work part time.

Population aged 15 to 29 by detailed status and age

Permanent resident population concept, in %, 2015



Source: SLFS

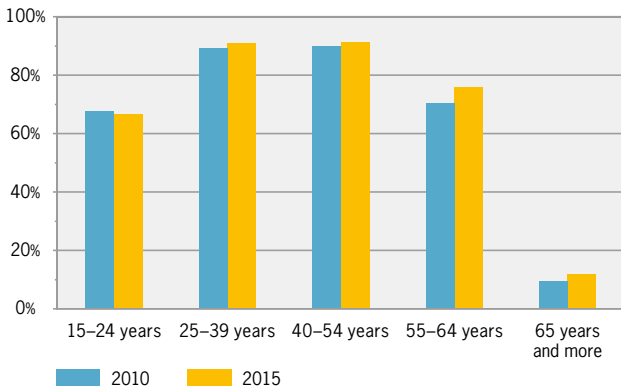
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■ Activity rate of 55 to 64 year olds

In 2015 the activity rate of persons aged 55–64 was 75.8%. Although it is considerably lower than that of the 25–54 year olds it has, nevertheless, increased by 5.3 percentage points when compared with 2010 (25–54 year olds: +1.4 point to 91.0%). The rise in the activity rate of women aged 55–64 was greater than the average increase (+8.5 percentage points to 69.1%; men: +2.0 points to 82.5%). It also increased among people who had reached legal retirement age: in comparison with 2010 the activity rate of 65–74 years olds rose by 3.4 percentage points to 18.1%.

Economic activity rate by age

Permanent resident population concept, in %, 2010 and 2015

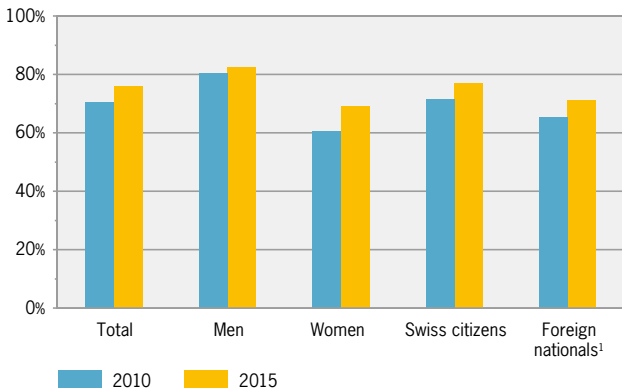


Source: SLFS

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Economic activity rate of persons aged 55 to 64 by sex and nationality

Permanent resident population concept, in %, 2010 and 2015



¹ Permanent residents (permanent residence permit holders, annual residence permit holders and short stay permit holders living in Switzerland for 12 months or longer)

Source: SLFS

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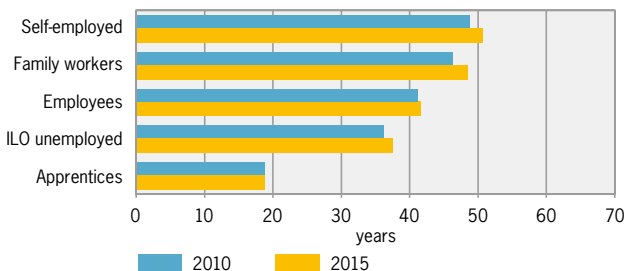
■ Average age of economically active persons

In 2015 the average age of the economically active population in Switzerland was 41.6 years. This is an increase of 0.7 years compared with 2010. The foreign economically active population is considerably younger than that of Swiss nationals (2015: 39.3 years compared with 42.4 years). Economically active women are a little younger (41.1 years) than their male counterparts (42.0 years).

The average age of the economically active population varies greatly by economic activity: it is around 40 years in construction and in accommodation and food service activities (39.3 and 39.5 years respectively), whereas in agriculture and forestry it is 47.4 years.

Average age of economically active population by labour market status

Permanent resident population concept, 2010 and 2015



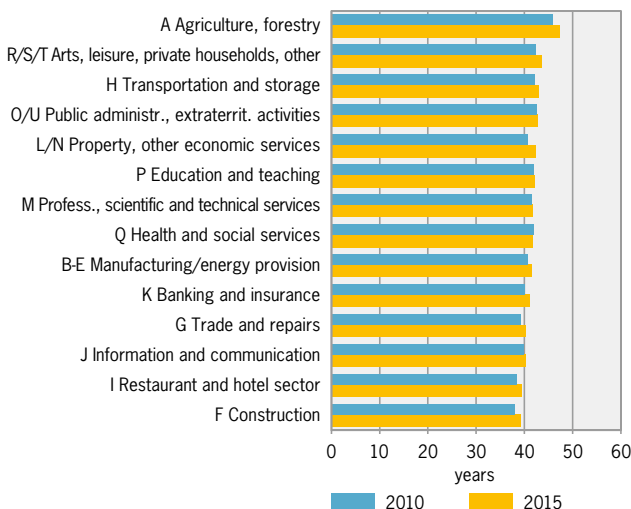
Source: SLFS

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On average self-employed person are 9 years older than employees (50.7 compared with 41.6 years).

Average age of economically active population by economic activity

Permanent resident population concept, 2010 and 2015



Source: SLFS

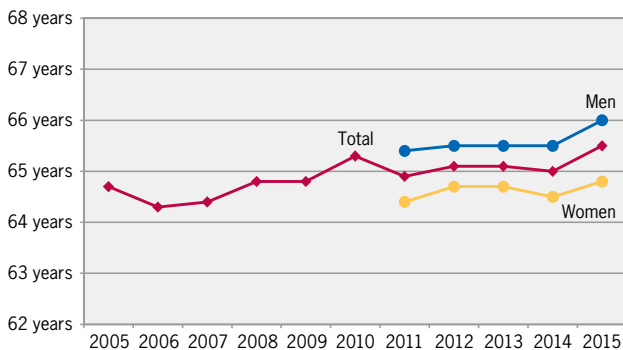
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■ Average age on leaving the labour market remains close to 65

In 2015, among persons aged 58 to 75, the average age on leaving the labour force was estimated to be 65.5. The age for leaving the labour market was 64.7 in 2005. In 2015 it was 66.0 years for men and 64.8 for women.

The average age on leaving the labour market (persons leaving aged between 58–75 years)

Permanent resident population concept, 2005–2015



Note: The distinction between men and women has been available since 2011

Source: SLFS

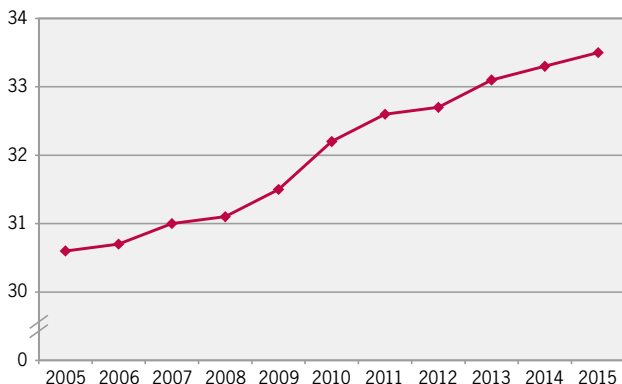
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■ Increase in the number of older persons per 100 economically active persons

Between 2014 and 2015, the number of persons aged 65 or more per 100 economically active persons aged 20 to 64 rose from 33.3 to 33.5. Over the past 10 years, demographic ageing has led to a rapid increase in this ratio in spite of the growing participation in the labour force: in 2005 there were only 30.6 persons aged 65 or older per 100 economically active persons aged 20 to 64.

Number of persons aged 65 and older per 100 economically active persons aged 20 to 64

Permanent resident population concept, 2005–2015



Source: SLFS

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■ **Employed persons**

The term “employed persons” refers to all persons aged 15 and over who, during the reference week:

- worked at least one hour for payment
- or who, although temporarily absent from their work (due to illness, holidays, maternity leave, military service, etc.) had a job either in an employed or self-employed capacity
- or who worked in the family business without payment.

■ **Unemployed persons based on ILO definition**

(ILO=International Labour Office)

The term “unemployed persons” based on ILO definition refers to people aged 15–74 who:

- were not employed during the reference week,
- were actively looking for work during the previous four weeks, and
- were available for work.

■ **Economically active persons**

The economically active population (economically active persons) is comprised of employed persons and unemployed persons based on ILO definition. It constitutes the “labour supply”.

■ **Underemployed persons**

The term “underemployed persons” refers to employed persons who:

- work less than 90% of the normal full-time workweek in businesses,
- wish to work more,
- are able to do so within the next three months at a higher work-time percentage.

■ **Full-time/part-time**

The term “full-time” refers to employed persons with a work-time percentage of 90% or more.

■ **Average age on leaving the labour force**

This indicator is calculated on the basis of a weighted average of the age on leaving the labour force. All persons changing from economically active to economically inactive between 2 SLFS interviews (interviews separated by one year) are considered as having left the labour force. Only persons leaving the labour force between the ages of 58 and 75 are taken into account.

■ **Permanent resident population**

The term “permanent resident population” refers to all persons who reside in Switzerland for at least one year (Swiss citizens whose main residence is in Switzerland and foreign citizens residing in Switzerland for at least 12 months).

■ Domestic concept

Productive activity according to the domestic concept refers to activity carried out within the Swiss economic territory, both by residents or non-residents. Therefore, cross-border commuters and holders of a short-term resident permit who exercise gainful employment in Switzerland are two groups that are not part of the permanent resident population but which are included in the domestic concept.

■ Definitions of rates

Activity rate =	$\frac{\text{economically active persons}}{\text{reference population}} \times 100$
Unemployment rate according to ILO definition =	$\frac{\text{number of unemployed persons based on ILO definition}}{\text{economically active persons}} \times 100$
Underemployment rate =	$\frac{\text{number of under-employed persons}}{\text{economically active persons}} \times 100$

■ **Hotline for persons interviewed as part of the SLFS**

If you wish to notify us of a change of address, make an appointment for the interview or if you have questions regarding the conduct of the survey, please call us free of charge Monday to Friday from 10.00–11.30 and from 14.00–16.00 at **0800 00 25 26**.

■ **Any more questions?**

For additional information on the publications and results of the SLFS, please visit our website: www.slfs.bfs.admin.ch



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