

# G20



International  
Labour  
Office

# Short-term employment and labour market outlook and key challenges in G20 countries

A statistical update for the G20 Meeting of Labour and Employment Ministers

Paris, 26–27 September 2011

Prepared by the ILO and the OECD

## Introduction

1. The objective of this note is two-fold: (i) to review the most recent employment and labour market trends in a period of highly differentiated recovery from the global downturn; and (ii) to highlight key structural issues in G20 labour markets and the policy challenges to address them<sup>1</sup>. The note shows that all G20 countries are facing substantial labour market challenges to promote productive employment and decent work opportunities for all. Some of these have arisen during the crisis and early phases of the recovery; others reflect longer-term structural issues that require further policy attention.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Recent labour market developments and short-term outlook

#### *Employment growth perspectives are weakening as recovery slows*

2. The latest available indicators suggest that growth in world output is slowing. In the major advanced G20 economies the recovery appears to have come close to a halt, with falling household and business confidence affecting both investment and job creation. According to the latest *Interim Assessment* released by the OECD on 8 September 2011, economic growth in the major advanced G20 economies excluding Japan will remain at an annualized rate of less than 1 per cent in the second half of 2011. In emerging G20 countries, growth remains strong albeit moving at a more moderate pace.
3. With economic activity slowing in several major economies and regions, earlier improvements in the labour market are now fading, hiring intentions are softening and there are greater risks that high unemployment and under-employment could become entrenched. This makes for a highly uncertain outlook as to the timing and strength of a future recovery in employment. Continued weak growth in employment in many G20 countries, in turn, will make it impossible in the near term to close the jobs gap accumulated during the crisis, which amounts to more than 20 million jobs.

<sup>1</sup> All data are drawn from published national sources and are not altered in any way by the ILO or the OECD. Data compiled by the ILO are publicly available in the ILO short term labour market indicators database (<http://laborsta.ilo.org>) and in other ILO databases ([www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)). Data compiled by the OECD are publicly available in the OECD databases ([www.oecd.org/employment/keystatistics](http://www.oecd.org/employment/keystatistics)). ILO encourages countries to adopt the recommendations of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians.

<sup>2</sup> The cut-off date for the statistical information presented in this document is 15 September 2011. Quarterly or monthly data, when available, are used to characterize recent labour market trends. Annual data are used to highlight key structural labour market characteristics.

4. The lingering employment crisis is exacerbating structural challenges in the form of high and mostly increasing youth unemployment and a rising incidence of long-term unemployment. The jobs crisis is also bearing negatively on consumer demand and on household behaviour, putting additional pressures on the overall weak recovery.

#### *Labour market situations differ across G20 countries*

5. Overall, employment has increased at an average rate of 1 per cent since 2010 in G20 countries, approximately the same rate as the growth in the economically active population. Labour force participation has declined slightly on average (by 1 per cent). However, this overall performance hides large differences across the G20 countries. Five of 17 G20 countries for which quarterly data are available have seen employment grow at 2 per cent or more over the past year, while six countries show employment growth of less than 0.6 per cent. The growth of employment has been slow, at less than 1 per cent, in China and in India.
6. Over the past year, the unemployment rate has declined in the vast majority of the G20 countries, but often only moderately, leaving the number of job-seekers close to the peak recorded at the depth of the Great Recession (table 1). Brazil, Germany and Turkey have seen the fastest decline in unemployment.
7. The evolution of employment largely depends on the depth of the recession and strength of the ongoing recovery (figure 1). When output growth is weak, net job creation also tends to be weak, with few exceptions (see Germany). Yet when growth is strong, the growth in employment can be strong or weak, as illustrated by the contrasting positions of Turkey and Indonesia relative to Argentina and the Republic of Korea. Growth in output is necessary for growth in employment, but it is not sufficient. The composition of output matters a great deal.
8. Figure 2 shows that the intensity of the recession – as measured by the change in peak-to-trough real GDP levels during this period – was severe in many G20 countries with sharp declines in output.<sup>3</sup> The economic recovery, which started in mid-to late 2009 in most countries, was rather modest in many advanced economies and has come to a halt in most of them the second quarter of 2011. It has been more vigorous in the emerging G20 economies, with the excep-

<sup>3</sup> China, India and Indonesia, not shown in the figure, avoided drops in output but nevertheless experienced a major slowdown in GDP growth.

**Table 1. Recent labour market changes** (Year-on-year change)

|                        | Latest values <sup>1</sup> | Unemployment rate |                 | Labour force participation rate |                 | Total employment |          | Total unemployment |          | Economically active population |          |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|
|                        |                            | Latest            | %-points change | Latest                          | %-points change | Latest (000's)   | % change | Latest (000's)     | % change | Latest (000's)                 | % change |
| Argentina <sup>2</sup> | 2011 Q2                    | 7.3               | -0.5            | 46.6                            | 0.6             | 10,823           | 2.6      | 858                | -4.5     | 11,682                         | 2.1      |
| Australia              | August 2011                | 5.3               | 0.2             | 65.6                            | 0.1             | 11,433           | 1.2      | 637                | 5.6      | 12,069                         | 1.5      |
| Brazil <sup>2</sup>    | July 2011                  | 6.0               | -1.0            | 57.1                            | -0.1            | 22,476           | 2.1      | 1,444              | -12.1    | 23,920                         | 1.1      |
| Canada                 | August 2011                | 7.3               | -0.8            | 66.7                            | -0.5            | 17,339           | 1.3      | 1,368              | -9.2     | 18,707                         | 0.5      |
| France                 | July 2011/2011 Q1          | 9.9               | 0.1             | 56.4                            | -0.4            | 25,571           | 0.1      | 2,869              | 1.1      | 28,263                         | -0.2     |
| Germany                | July 2011/2011 Q1          | 6.1               | -0.9            | 59.6                            | 0.2             | 39,084           | 1.9      | 2,559              | -12.4    | 41,885                         | 0.5      |
| Indonesia <sup>1</sup> | 2011 Q1/2010 Q3            | 6.8               | -0.6            | 67.7                            | 0.5             | 108,208          | 3.2      | 8,120              | -5.5     | 116,528                        | 2.4      |
| Italy                  | July 2011/2011 Q1          | 8.0               | -0.3            | 48.4                            | -0.2            | 22,874           | 0.5      | 2,009              | -3.5     | 25,029                         | -0.0     |
| Japan <sup>3</sup>     | July 2011                  | 4.7               | -0.4            | 59.3                            | -0.3            | 59,590           | -0.3     | 2,940              | -7.5     | 6,253                          | -0.6     |
| Korea, Rep. of         | July 2011                  | 3.3               | -0.4            | 61.1                            | -0.1            | 24,294           | 1.4      | 820                | -11.0    | 25,113                         | 0.9      |
| Mexico <sup>1</sup>    | July 2011/2011 Q2          | 5.3               | -0.1            | 58.5                            | -0.7            | 46,333           | 3.8      | 2,564              | 3.2      | 48,897                         | 3.8      |
| Russian Federation     | July 2011/2011 Q2          | 6.9               | -0.5            | 68.2                            | 0.3             | 70,499           | 1.0      | 5,039              | -12.0    | 75,583                         | 0.0      |
| South Africa           | 2011 Q2                    | 25.7              | 0.5             | 54.5                            | -0.2            | 13,125           | 0.5      | 4,538              | 3.1      | 17,663                         | 1.2      |
| Spain                  | July 2011/2011 Q2          | 21.2              | 0.9             | 59.5                            | 0.0             | 18,303           | -0.9     | 4,907              | 4.3      | 23,137                         | 0.1      |
| Turkey                 | May 2011/2011 Q2           | 9.3               | -1.4            | 50.0                            | 1.2             | 24,445           | 6.0      | 2,443              | -9.4     | 26,728                         | 4.5      |
| United Kingdom         | May 2011/2011 Q1           | 7.8               | 0.1             | 62.3                            | 0.3             | 29,057           | 1.4      | 2,473              | 2.3      | 31,478                         | 1.1      |
| United States          | August 2011                | 9.1               | -0.5            | 64.0                            | -0.7            | 139,627          | 0.3      | 13,967             | -5.9     | 153,594                        | -0.3     |
| China <sup>4</sup>     | 2009                       | 4.3               | -0.1            | 73.7                            | -0.0            | 779,950          | 0.7      | 9,210              | 4.0      | 798,120                        | 0.7      |
| India <sup>5</sup>     | 2009–10                    | 3.6               | -0.9            | 38.4                            | -2.4            | 434,200          | 0.4      | 16,100             | -4.2     | 450,400                        | 0.2      |
| Saudi Arabia           | 2009                       | 5.4               | 0.2             | 50.2                            | 0.3             | 8,148            | 1.6      | 463                | 5.8      | 8,611                          | 1.8      |

<sup>1</sup> For France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom, employment rates and unemployment rates refer to the harmonized unemployment data (Eurostat estimation based on labour force survey and registered unemployment figures) from the Short-term Indicators published by Eurostat and available on a monthly basis, while the other indicators are based on the European Union Labour Force Survey (EULFS) and available only on a quarterly basis. For Indonesia, only the labour force participation rate refers to the third quarter of 2010. For Mexico, the unemployment rate (*Tasa de desocupación, serie unificada*) is based on the monthly results of the ENOE (*Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo*), while the other indicators are based on the quarterly results of the ENOE. For the Russian Federation, the (seasonally adjusted) data are available on a quarterly basis except for the unemployment rate.

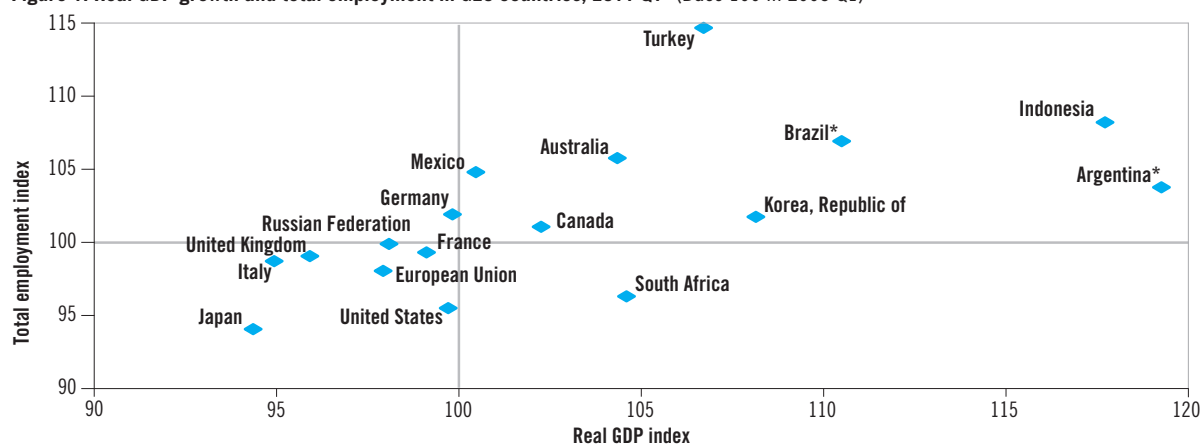
<sup>2</sup> Selected urban areas.

<sup>3</sup> The results for Japan exclude three prefectures (Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima) struck by the Great East Japan Earthquake, where the survey operation is suspended since March 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Unemployment data refer to registered unemployment in urban areas only.

<sup>5</sup> Estimated persons/person-days (in million) based on the current weekly activity status for the entire population. Growth rates correspond to the annual average change between 2004–05 and 2009–10.

Source: ILO Short-Term Indicators Database, OECD Main Economic Indicators Database and national labour force surveys. Cut-off date: 15 September 2011.

**Figure 1. Real GDP growth and total employment in G20 countries, 2011 Q1<sup>1</sup>** (Base 100 in 2008 Q1)


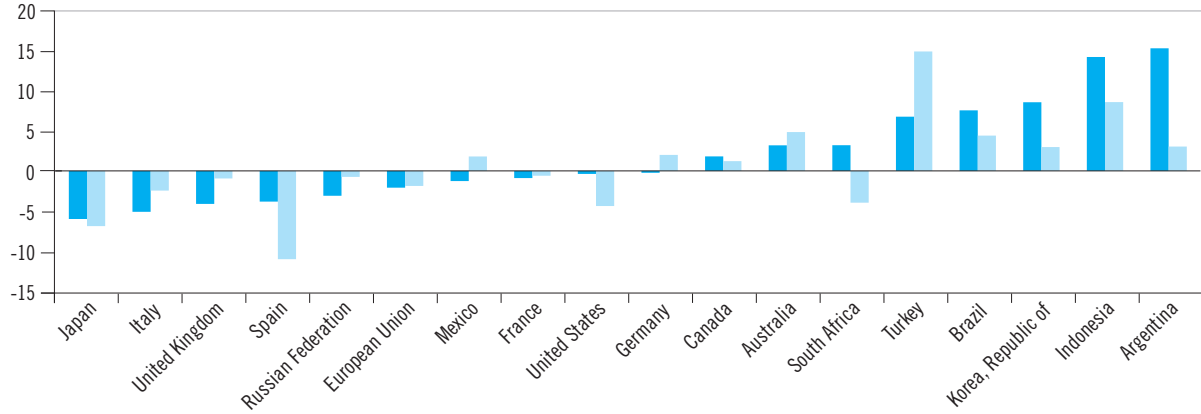
\* Selected urban areas for the employment rates.

<sup>1</sup> 2010 Q3 for Indonesia (base 100 in 2007 Q3).

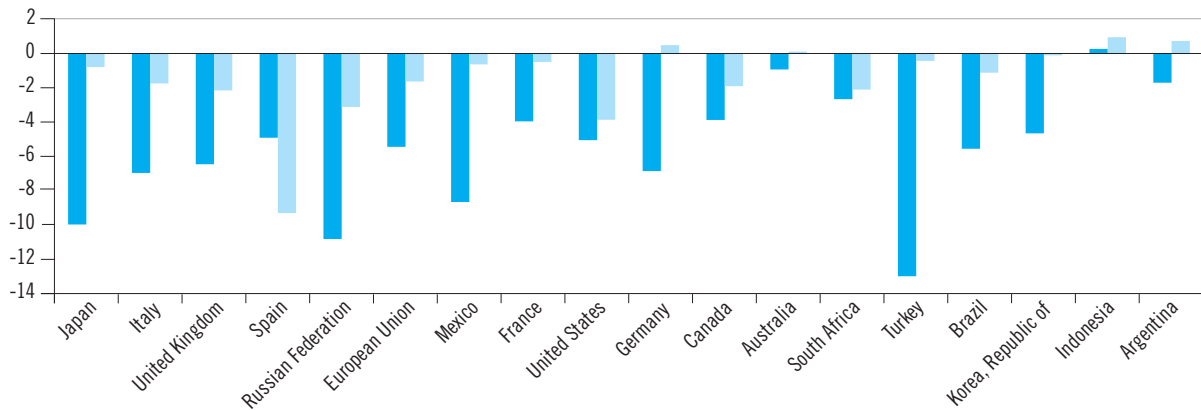
Source: ILO Short-Term Indicators Database, OECD Main Economic Indicators Database and national labour force surveys.

**Figure 2. Real GDP and employment adjustment during the crisis and the early recovery**  
(percentage change between the real GDP peak and trough<sup>1</sup> and the real GDP trough to the latest available quarter<sup>2</sup>)

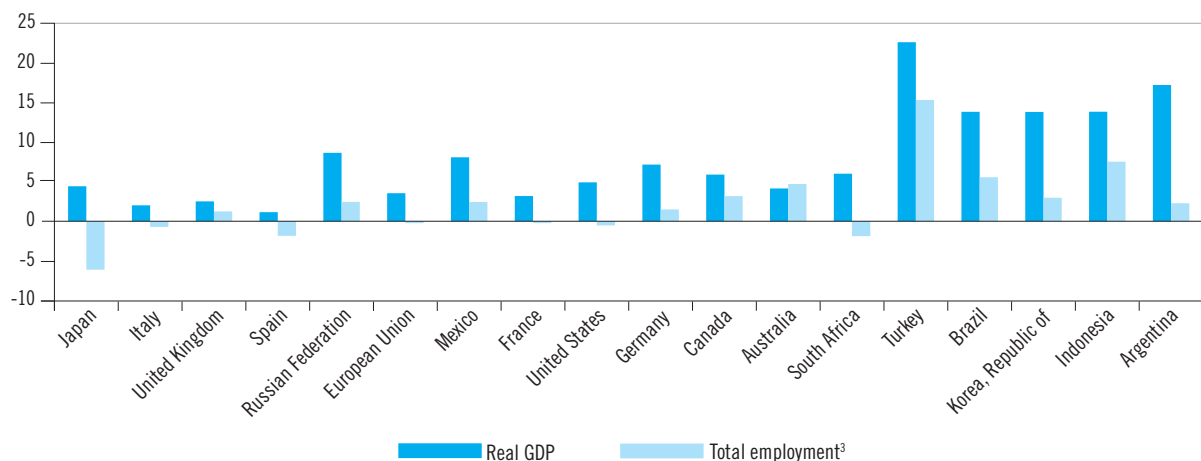
**A. All period (from GDP peak to latest available quarter)**



**B. 2008–09 recession (from GDP peak at GDP trough)**



**C. Early recovery (from GDP trough to latest available quarter)**



<sup>1</sup> Peak (trough) dates are defined as the start (end) of the longest spell of consecutive negative quarterly real GDP growth rate since 2006 Q1. For comparison purposes the dates for Indonesia correspond to the period when the real GDP growth rate slows down.

<sup>2</sup> Countries shown in ascending order of the real GDP growth from peak to the latest available quarter.

<sup>3</sup> Selected urban areas for Argentina and Brazil. The results for Japan exclude three prefectures (Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima) struck by the Great East Japan Earthquake, where the survey operation is suspended since March 2011. For the European Union, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, total employment refers to domestic employment.

Source: *OECD Main Economic Indicators Database* and national labour force surveys.

tions of the Russian Federation and South Africa. In particular, Brazil, the Republic of Korea and Indonesia all experienced a cumulated pick-up in GDP of around 14 per cent or more from the trough, while the increase in Argentina and Turkey was 17 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively.

9. The response of employment to the fluctuations in GDP has also varied significantly across the G20 countries. In some countries, notably South Africa, Spain and the United States, large declines in GDP were accompanied by severe contractions in employment. More importantly, employment continued to decline even in the subsequent recovery phase. By contrast, job losses were more contained for commensurable declines in GDP in most of the emerging economies as well as in some European countries (most notably Germany) and Australia, and the recovery was also rich in employment, especially in Australia, Brazil, Indonesia and Turkey.
10. Labour market performance relative to the pre-crisis situation is highly differentiated across the G20 countries. Taking into account also cross-country differences in demographic trends, figure 3 presents the changes in the employment to working-age population and the unemployment rates in the G20 countries in the three years to the first quarter of 2011. Over this period, five countries show an overall increase in the employment to working-age population rate and 13 an overall decline.
  - Some countries have seen strong growth in the employment rate and significant declines in the unemployment rate, particularly Brazil, Germany and Indonesia.
  - Others show little or no growth in the employment rate, and either an increase or a decline in the unemployment rate: Argentina, Australia and the Russian Federation illustrate this situation.
  - In other countries, the change in the employment rate has been negative since 2008 and the unemployment rate has increased by more than 50 per cent. Spain, United Kingdom and United States are in this situation.

#### *The crisis has accelerated structural employment shifts*

11. The main economic sectors that have suffered most since the global economic crisis also vary across the G20 countries. However, with few exceptions, employment in the construction sector has been especially hard hit (figure 4). Likewise, most advanced economies have seen large job losses in manufac-

turing with employment growth confined mainly to public services. By contrast, several emerging economies have experienced employment growth in manufacturing and market services. Longer-term trends are at work here, although the crisis accelerated them. This implies that labour market policies must address the adjustment implications for re-skilling and mobility of persons.

#### *Long-term unemployment has increased sharply in a number of countries, bringing with it the risk of hysteresis effects*

12. Long-term unemployment (defined as an unemployment spell of 12 months or more) has risen substantially in a number of G20 countries (figure 5). It began to rise sharply in 2010 in several countries, some quarters after unemployment peaked, as many workers who had lost their job during the recession were unable to get another one quickly in the subsequent recovery. The rise in long-term unemployment has been greatest in countries where the recession hit labour markets particularly hard.
13. By the first quarter of 2011, one-third or more of the unemployed had been jobless for more than one year in France (40.5 per cent), Germany (47.3 per cent), Italy (50 per cent), Japan (40.2 per cent), South Africa (68.3 per cent), and Spain (40.5 per cent). Among the G20 countries for which data are available, the incidence of long-term unemployment increased most sharply in Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom and, in particular, the United States where the share of long-term unemployment tripled to reach an historical high in early 2011.
14. The large increase in long-term unemployment is of particular concern because of the increased risk that many workers will become structurally unemployed. In previous recessions, this was the main channel through which a cyclical increase in unemployment in many advanced countries was transformed into persistently high unemployment rates that took many years to unwind. There are also serious social costs related to long-term unemployment, as it is associated with an increased risk of poverty, health problems and school failure for children of the affected individuals.

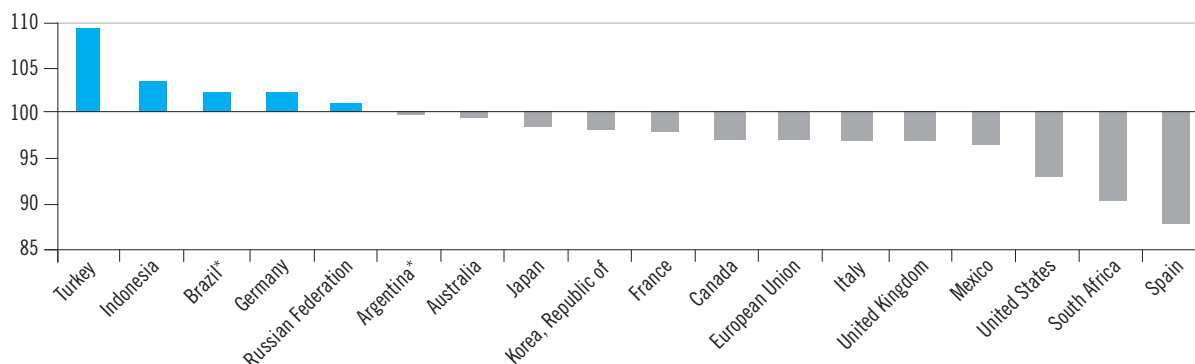
#### *Labour market slack goes beyond unemployment and also includes under-employment*

15. Under-employment varies more across countries than within countries over time. Figure 6 presents the share of workers wanting to work additional

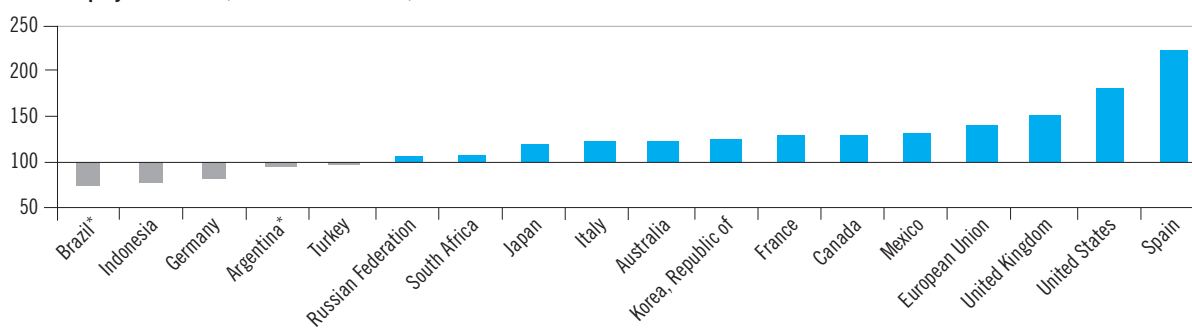


**Figure 3. Labour market outcomes over the past three years** (persons aged 15 years old and over, first quarter of 2011<sup>1</sup>)

**A. Employment rates** (index 100 = 2008 Q1)



**B. Unemployment rates** (index 100 = 2008 Q1)



\* Selected urban areas.

<sup>1</sup> 2010 Q3 for Indonesia (base 100 in 2007 Q3) and 2010 Q4 for Argentina (base 100 in 2007 Q4).

Source: OECD and ILO.

hours and who were available to do so. In selected urban areas of Argentina, as well as in Spain and Indonesia, 10 per cent or more of the total workforce was in involuntary part-time employment in 2010, a significant under-utilisation of available labour resources and with significant risk of poverty for those involved.

*Youth are facing higher risks of joblessness and exclusion*

16. Youth have been hard hit by the global economic crisis in all G20 countries (figure 7). They were among the first to lose their jobs in the downturn, and for many new entrants job opportunities have been scarce. In all G20 countries, youth unemployment is twice or three times the adult unemployment rate and has increased further during the crisis. Finding a first job and keeping it is particularly difficult for youth who cumulate several disadvantages such as low skills, poor family background or living in backward areas. The persistence of youth unemployment has major consequences for the young, for their

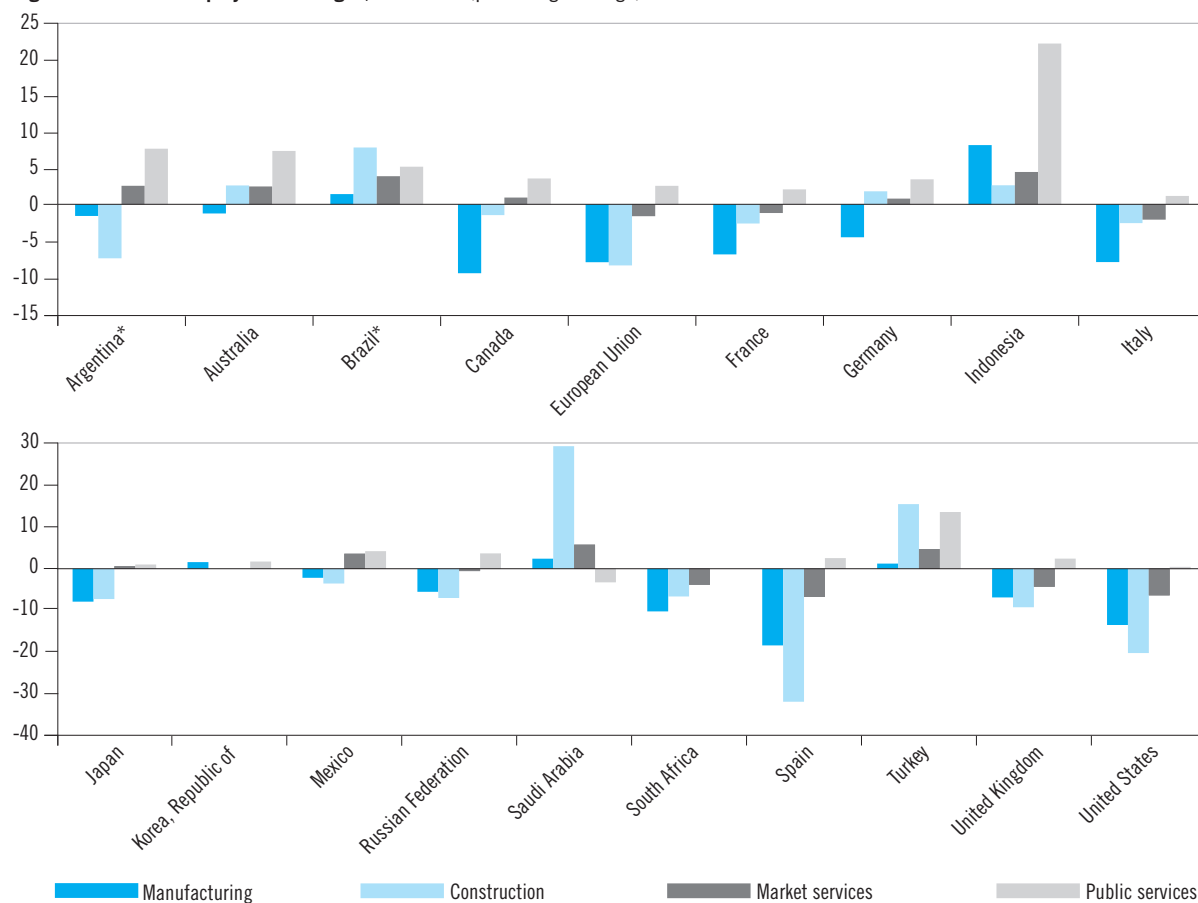
future employment prospects and for the potential growth of the economy.<sup>4</sup>

*Accommodating a growing working-age population and recovering jobs lost during the crisis requires strong employment growth*

17. Over the next few years, many G20 countries will be facing significant challenges to create enough jobs to accommodate their growing labour force and/or to absorb the persistent jobs gap resulting from the crisis. Total employment in all G20 countries was approximately 2 billion in 2009, equivalent to 63 per cent of total world employment. The employment to working-age population (15+ years) ratio was 64.6 per cent before the crisis, and the pre-crisis annual rate of growth of employment was 1 per cent (excluding India). Between 2008 and 2010, G20 countries generated 19 million

<sup>4</sup> For further details on youth labour market conditions and policy challenges, see the OECD and ILO background report *Giving youth a better start*, prepared for the G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Meeting in Paris, 26–27 September 2011.

**Figure 4. Sectoral employment changes, 2008-10<sup>1,2</sup> (percentage change)**



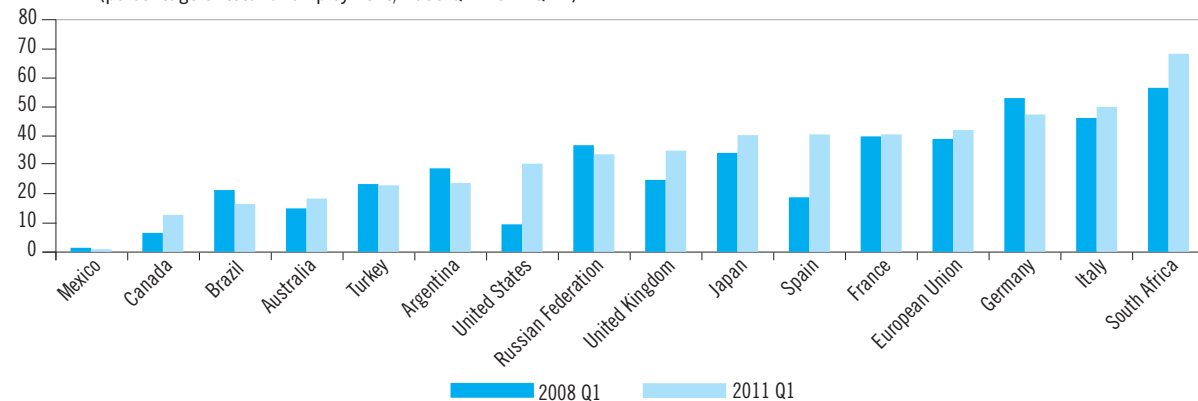
\* Argentina: Employment refers to formal employment. Korea: no data available for Construction and market services.

<sup>1</sup> 2008-09 for Saudi Arabia.

<sup>2</sup> Market services correspond to the following ISIC industries: Wholesale and retail trades; hotels and restaurants; Transport, storage and communications; Financial intermediation; and Real estate and business activities. Public services corresponds to the following ISIC industries: Public administration and defence, compulsory social security; Education; Health and social work; Other community, social and personal service activities; and Private households with employed persons.

Source: ILO Statistics, Short-Term Indicators Database and Annual National Accounts.

**Figure 5. Evolution of the incidence of long-term unemployment<sup>1</sup> in G20 countries (percentage of total unemployment, 2008 Q1–2011 Q1<sup>2,3</sup>)**



Countries shown in ascending order of the incidence of long-term unemployment in 2011 Q1.

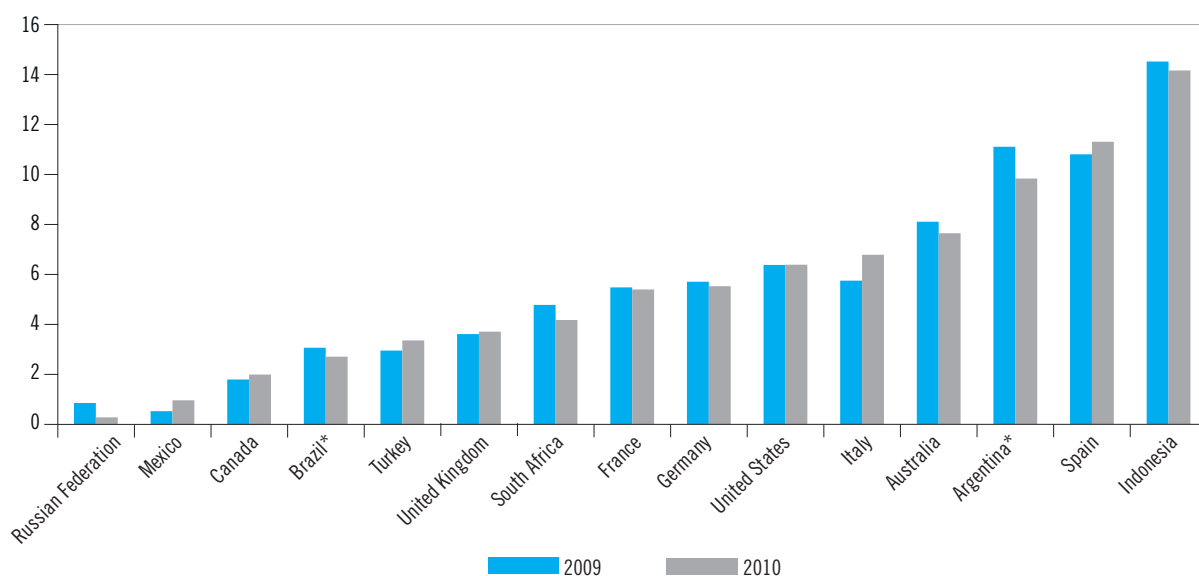
<sup>1</sup> Persons unemployed for one year or more.

<sup>2</sup> 2007 Q4–2010 Q4 for Argentina and Mexico.

<sup>3</sup> Selected urban areas for Argentina and Brazil.

Source: OECD estimates based on various national surveys.

**Figure 6. Time-related under-employment<sup>1</sup> (percentage of total employment, 2009–10<sup>2</sup>)**



Countries shown in ascending order of time-related under-employment in 2010.

\* Selected urban areas.

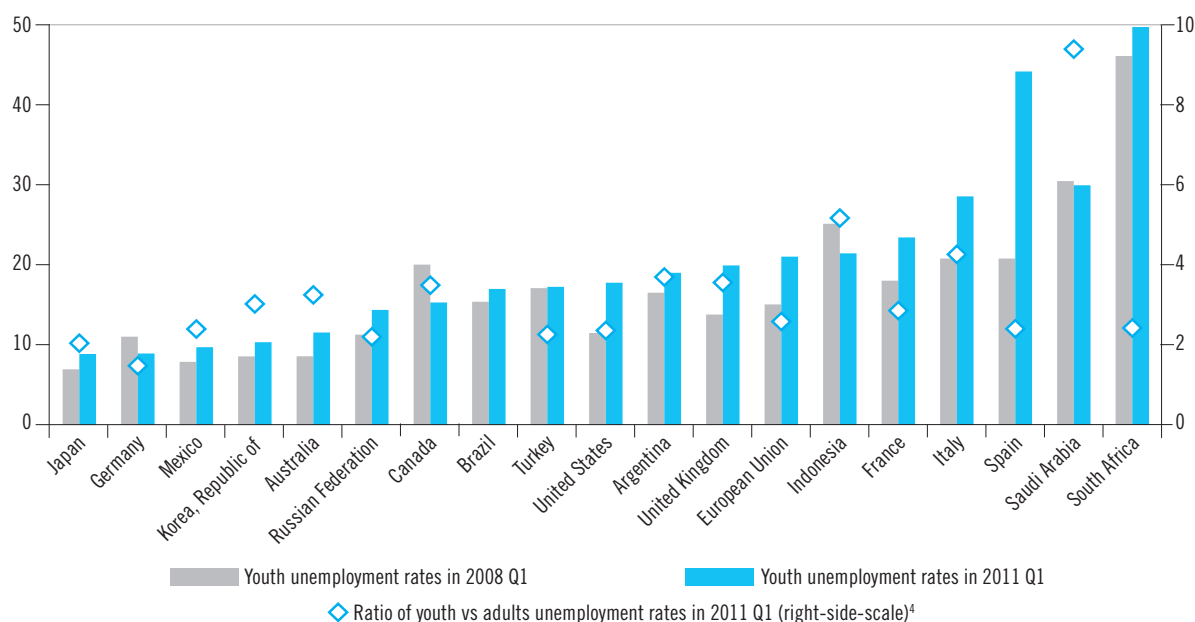
<sup>1</sup> Persons in time-related underemployment are those who during the short reference period, were willing to work additional hours, were available to do so, and had worked fewer hours than a selected number of hours. For France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, time-related under-employment corresponds to the proportion of involuntary part-time employment as a percentage of total employment.

<sup>2</sup> 2008–09 for Mexico; 2009 refers to the average of the last three quarters of 2009 for Turkey.

Cut-off date: 2 September 2011.

Source: ILO Statistics, *ILO Short-Term Indicators Database*.

**Figure 7. Youth<sup>1</sup> unemployment during the crisis (percentage of the labour force, 2008 Q1–2011 Q1<sup>2,3</sup>)**



Countries shown in ascending order of the youth unemployment rates in 2011 Q1.

<sup>1</sup> Persons aged 15–24 (16–24 for Spain and the United States).

<sup>2</sup> 2007 Q4–2010 Q4 for Argentina; and 2007 Q3–2010 Q3 for Indonesia; 2007–09 for Saudi Arabia.

<sup>3</sup> Selected urban areas for Argentina and Brazil.

<sup>4</sup> "Adults" refers to persons aged 25 and over in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico and the United States; and persons aged 25–74 in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Data not available for the Russian Federation.

Source: OECD estimates based on various national surveys.



fewer jobs than what would have been required to hold the employment ratio constant at its pre-crisis level (see figure 8).<sup>5</sup>

18. Annual employment growth of at least 1.3 per cent is necessary in order to return to the pre-crisis employment rate by 2015. This would generate some 21 million additional jobs per year, recover the jobs lost since 2008 and absorb the increase in the working age population.
19. Is such a rate of growth feasible? The answer is yes. Several G20 countries have recorded employment growth rates of 1.3 per cent or more in the recent past (see table 1). Raising the rate of growth of employment in China and India alone, from the low rates of today, would, given the weight of these countries, push the G20 aggregate rate upwards. Faster employment generation is an objective in all countries, including in those countries that have sustained rapid growth in employment since 2008.
20. However, employment growth of less than 1 per cent cannot be excluded given the slowdown of the world economy and the anaemic growth foreseen in several G20 countries. Should employment grow at a rate of 0.8 per cent until end 2012, now a distinct possibility, then the shortfall in employment would increase by some 20 million to a total of 40 million in G20 countries.

## 2. Key structural challenges in G20 labour markets

*Two key challenges are the better utilization of labour resources and better quality jobs*

21. Even before the economic crisis, G20 countries were grappling with a number of underlying structural challenges in the labour market. For most of them, better integrating youth, women and migrants into the labour market were key issues. In the context of rapid technological change and globalization, another priority has been to improve labour market prospects for the low-skilled, especially in the more advanced economies. For many countries, reversing a long-term trend decline in the effective age of exit from the labour market by older workers has also been a key policy aim in order to cope with the fiscal challenge posed by rapid population ageing.

<sup>5</sup> These G20 average statistics exclude India for lack of data.

22. While the objective of creating a more inclusive labour market for these groups implies raising the demand for labour and removing obstacles to labour market participation, job quality is an important issue for most G20 countries. This has ranged from concerns about rising wage inequality, low or negative real wage growth for some groups of workers, to increases in temporary work and persistence of high levels of informal employment.
23. These long-term labour market challenges still need to be tackled. In some instances the crisis has exacerbated existing problems. For example, the fall in employment during the crisis has affected some workforce groups more than others. Youth, low-skilled, temporary and migrant workers were most affected. The crisis, as noted above, has also increased the risk of high long-term unemployment becoming entrenched in some countries.

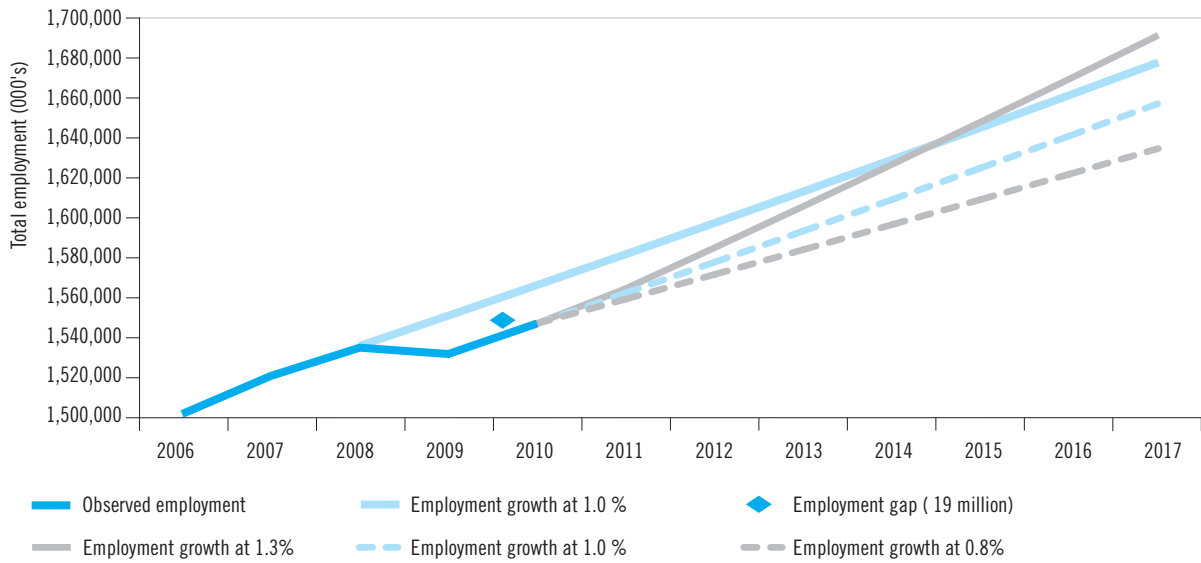
*There is much scope to improve the utilization of labour resources*

24. Labour market outcomes vary markedly across socio-demographic groups and the extent to which some groups are under-represented in the labour market contributes significantly to explain international differences in the overall rate of labour force participation. On the one hand, the participation rate of prime-age men varies little across G20 countries despite very diverse labour market contexts (figure 9). In all but South Africa, around 90 per cent or more of prime-age men were either employed or unemployed in 2009. On the other hand, the labour market participation of women, youth, and older workers is much lower but with some marked differences across G20 countries:
  - Participation rates of prime-age women are lower than those of prime-age men in all G20 countries.
  - Participation rates of youth (aged 15/16 to 24) are very low in most G20 countries. To a large extent, this is due to the fact that many young people – especially teenagers – are still in education and relatively few combine work and study. However, in many G20 countries, a sizeable share of youth is neither in employment nor in education or training (the so-called NEET group).
  - Older workers are significantly under-represented in the labour market compared with their prime-age counterparts.

*Further improvements in job quality are required*

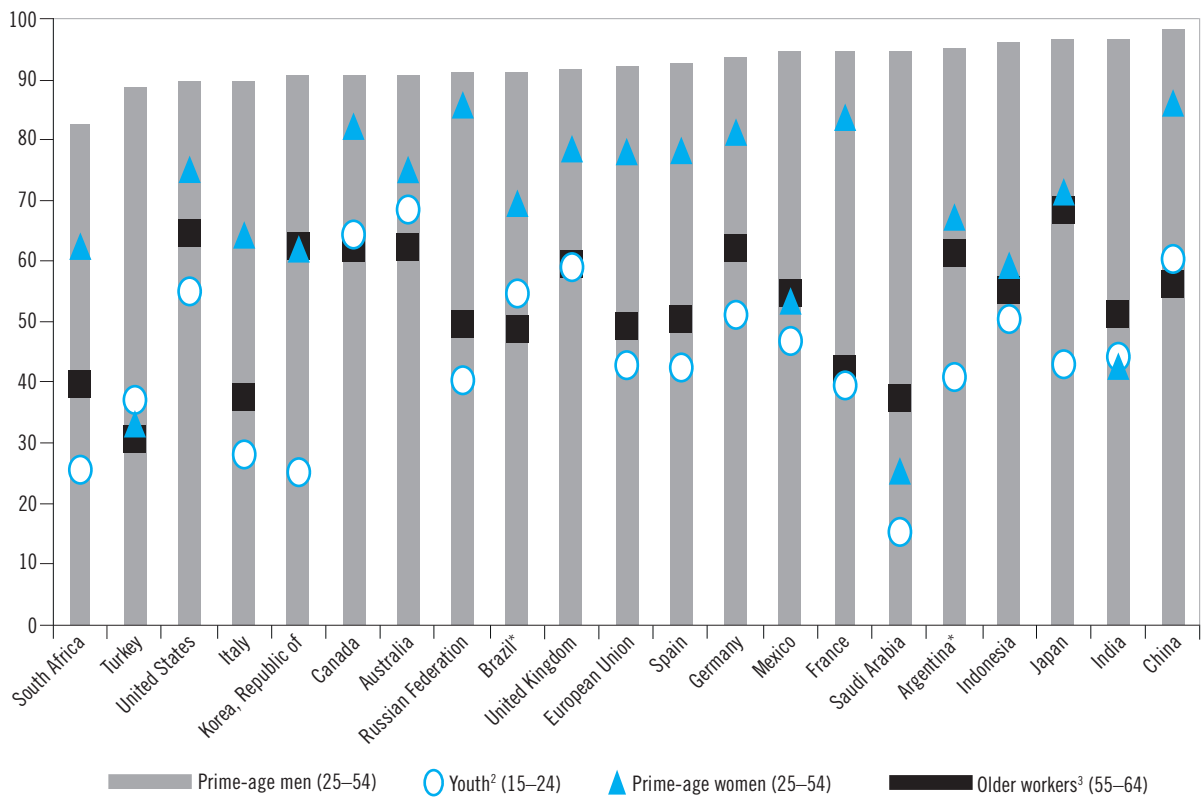
25. Improving job quality remains a major challenge for all G20 countries. One major concern is grow-

**Figure 8. Growth of employment under different scenarios, G20 countries**



Note: G20 countries excluding India.  
Source: ILO Statistics and estimates.

**Figure 9. Labour force participation rates by socio-demographic characteristics, G20 countries**  
(percentage of the population of the indicated group in 2010<sup>1</sup>)



Countries are ordered by ascending order of the prime-age male labour force participation rates.

\* Selected urban areas.

<sup>1</sup> 2009 for China, India, Indonesia, the Russian Federation and Saudi Arabia.

<sup>2</sup> 16-24 for Spain and the United States.

<sup>3</sup> 55 and over for Indonesia.

Source: Calculations based on OECD Labour Force Statistics Database and ILO: Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

ing duality in the labour market between those workers who are in productive and decent jobs and those who are not. While concepts such as job quality and decent work encompass a range of characteristics, some of the more important ones can be captured by indicators of job characteristics in terms of earnings, contract type (permanent/temporary, regular/casual) and sector (formal/informal), as well as coverage by social protection schemes.

26. Labour market segmentation is an issue in all G20 economies. In spite of the strong economic performance in many emerging countries, both before and after the global crisis, the share of informal employment remains sizeable in several countries (figure 10, panel A). Informal employment is largely the consequence of weak growth in formal employment. Raising the rate of growth of formal employment significantly above that of total employment should be high on the policy agenda of emerging countries.
27. In many of the advanced G20 economies, a significant and often growing share of the workforce is employed on temporary contracts. In ten countries, the incidence of temporary employment lies between 10 and 25 per cent (figure 10, panel B), with a high share of women and youth. In France and especially in Spain prior to the crisis, almost 55 per cent (of dependent employment) of youth (aged 15–24) were employed on a fixed-term contract or were working for a temporary work agency. Even after the major job losses among youth temporary workers, the proportion was still higher than 50 per cent in 2010. In a number of countries, changes in employment protection legislation enabled employers to hire workers in temporary jobs to meet changing production needs. Not surprisingly, temporary employees were often the first to lose their jobs during the crisis, but in some cases they have also been the first to be hired in the recovery. A high incidence of temporary and casual employment is also observed in many emerging economies.

#### *Trends in real wages vary*

28. Trends in average real wages since 2008 in selected countries show wide variations (figure 11). Nine of the ten countries have seen at least one year of negative growth since 2008. Wage growth of 1 per cent or more in 2010 was recorded in Australia, Canada, Japan and the Republic of Korea. In France, Germany and the United States, wage growth has been weak; it has been negative

in Spain and the United Kingdom. Care is needed to avoid a cycle of wage deflation related to weak growth from further weakening aggregate demand and future growth.

29. Several emerging countries are experiencing an acceleration of consumer price inflation, including in food staples, that is eroding the purchasing power of earnings with severe consequences for low-income households at or near the poverty threshold.

#### *Growing earnings inequality is a concern...*

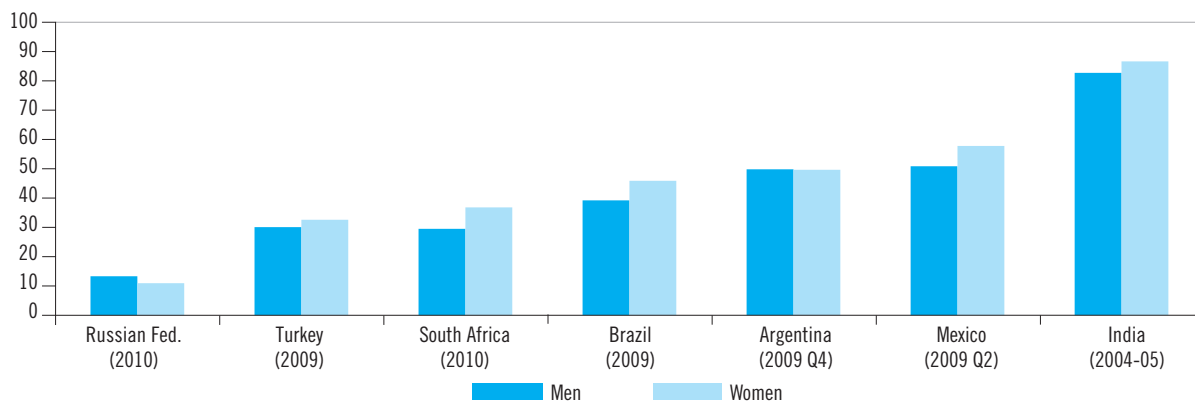
30. Improving the primary distribution of income is recognized as a priority in many countries. In many G20 countries, earnings inequality has increased over the past 20 years (figure 12) and in some countries for which data are available this has occurred over an even longer period of time, e.g. the United States. With very few exceptions (France and Japan), earnings of the 10 per cent best-paid workers have risen relative to those of the 10 per cent least-paid workers. In most countries, wage disparities grew more in the upper half of the distribution than in the bottom half. The reasons for growing earnings inequality range from skill-biased technological changes giving a premium to better skilled workers, to greater competition in product markets and declining strength of trade unions and collective bargaining but also globalisation of the financial sector with its very specific remuneration practices.

#### *...as is rising (or high) income inequality*

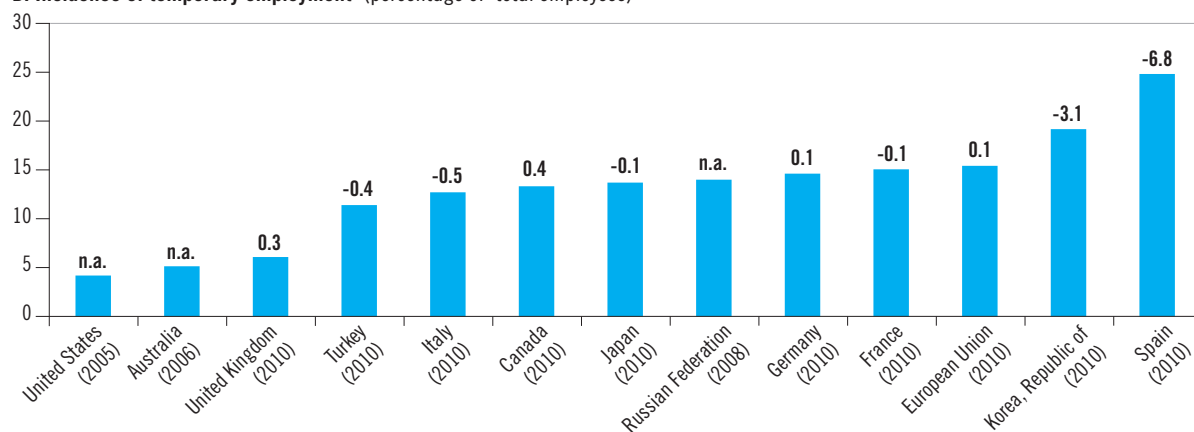
31. Growing earnings inequality in most G20 countries has often translated into growing household income inequalities (figure 13). Such inequalities are generally lower and increased by less than inequalities of market incomes, due to the redistributive effect of taxes and benefits. However, over the past decades, tax-benefit policies in many countries have been unable to *fully* offset growing market-income disparities.
32. Beyond a certain threshold, levels of income inequality generate negative effects that may undermine social cohesion and economic performance. Growing attention is being given to the adverse implications for growth of high and rising inequality. Policies to reverse such trends include fiscal and tax policies, where needed, to expand basic social protection and more effective redistribution ends, policies and regulatory measures to generate more and better jobs and policies for decent work.

**Figure 10. Atypical work in G20 economies**

**A. Persons in informal employment<sup>1</sup> by sex (percentage of non-agricultural employment)**



**B. Incidence of temporary employment<sup>2</sup> (percentage of total employees)**



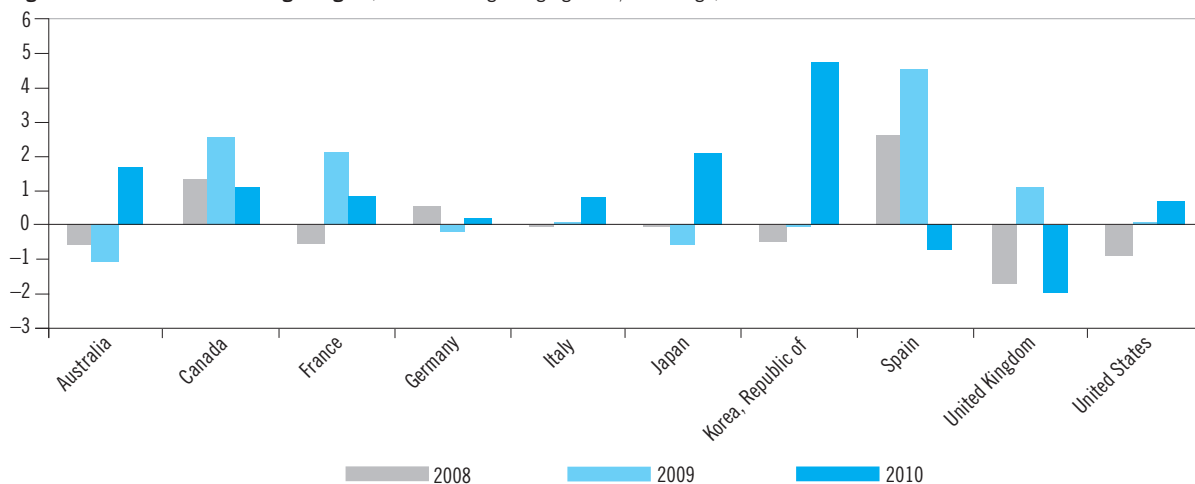
Countries shown in ascending order of the proportion of women in informal employment in Panel A and of the incidence of temporary employment in Panel B.  
n.a.: not available

<sup>1</sup> Data for the Russian Federation correspond only to persons employed in the informal sector.

<sup>2</sup> Values above each bar represent the percentage change of the incidence of temporary employment between 2007 and 2010.

Source: ILO Statistics, ILO Short-Term Indicators Database and OECD Labour Force Statistics Database.

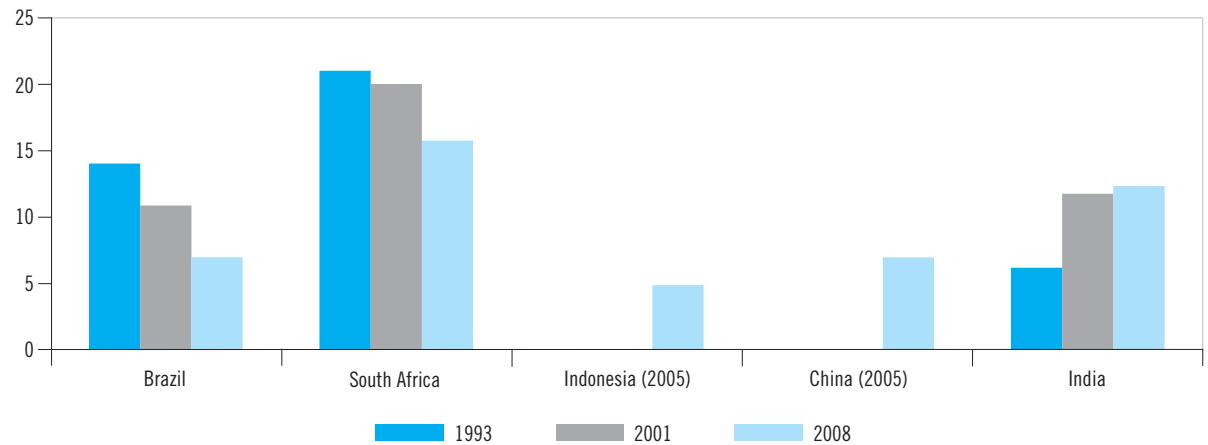
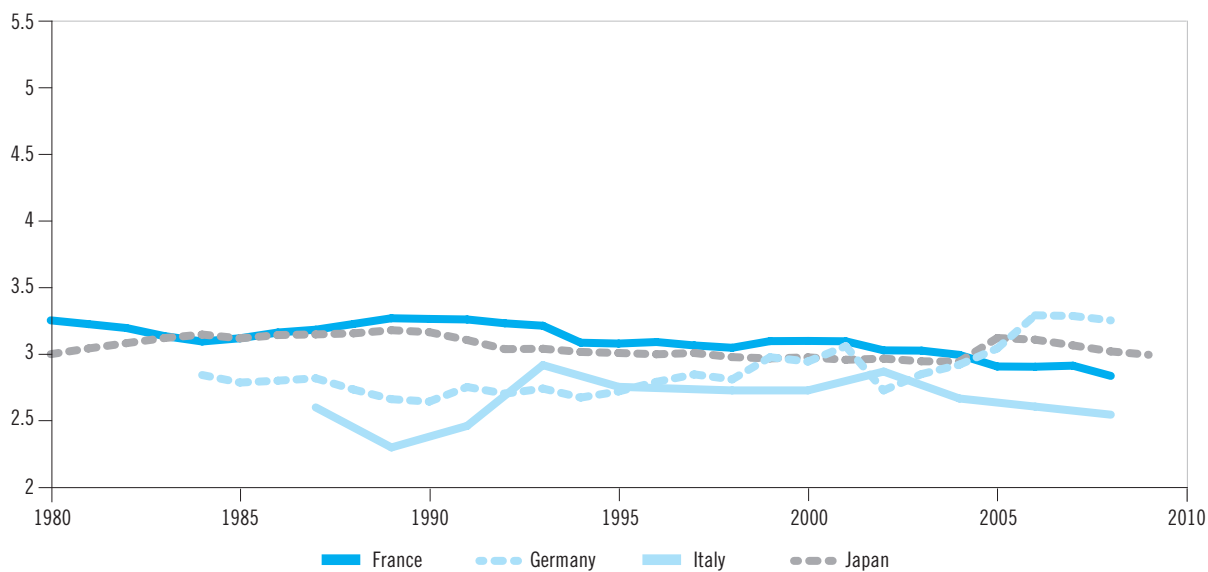
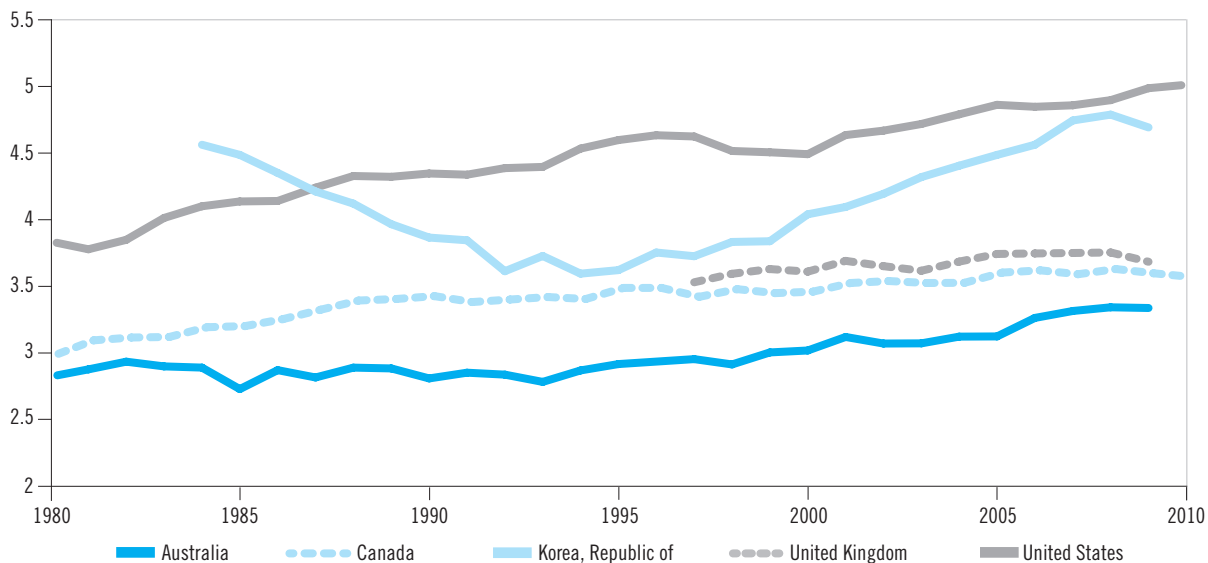
**Figure 11. Trends in real average wages (annual average wage growth, % change)<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Average wage converted to USD PPPs using 2010 USD PPPs for private consumption.

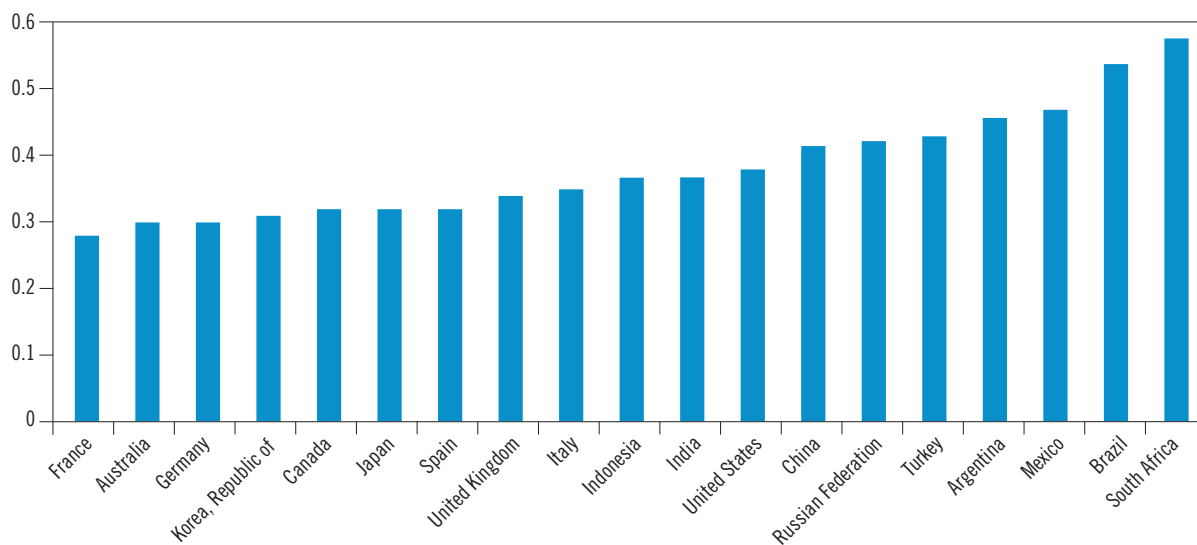
Source: OECD Labour Force Statistics Database.

Figure 12. Trends in earnings inequality, 1970-2010 (Ratio D9/D1)



Source: OECD Earnings Database, OECD-EU Database on Emerging Economies for Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa.

Figure 13. Income inequality in G20 countries (gini coefficient, most recent year)



Source: OECD Statistical Database 2011, World Bank, World Development Indicators (WDI) 2011.



