

Around the World in Eight Charts

March 2008

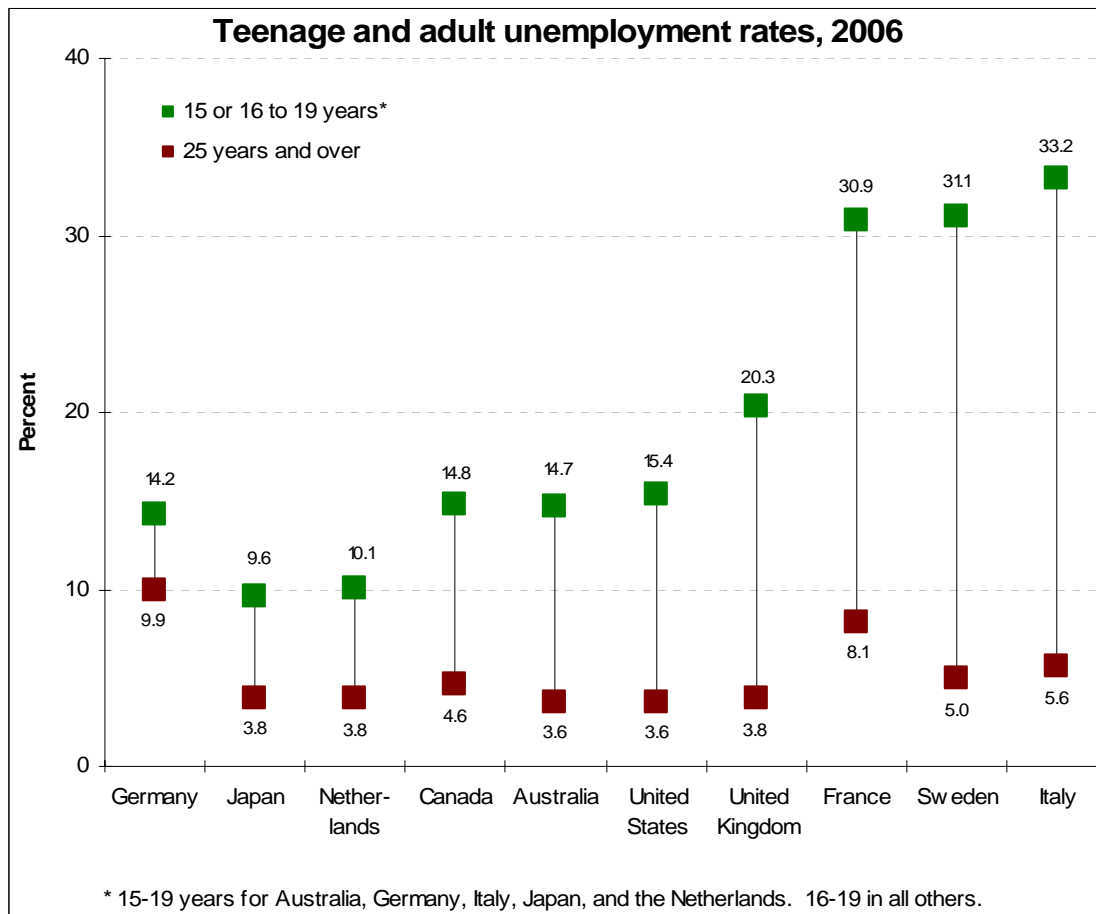
Jules Verne isn't the only one who can take you on a worldwide adventure. Travel the globe in eight charts with the Bureau of Labor Statistics! Although BLS is the premier source for U.S. labor statistics, the Bureau is also widely recognized for providing comparable international data. BLS provides information on employment, unemployment, productivity, compensation costs, and other labor-related measures for countries in the Americas, Europe, and Asia and the Pacific.



Let's begin our tour!

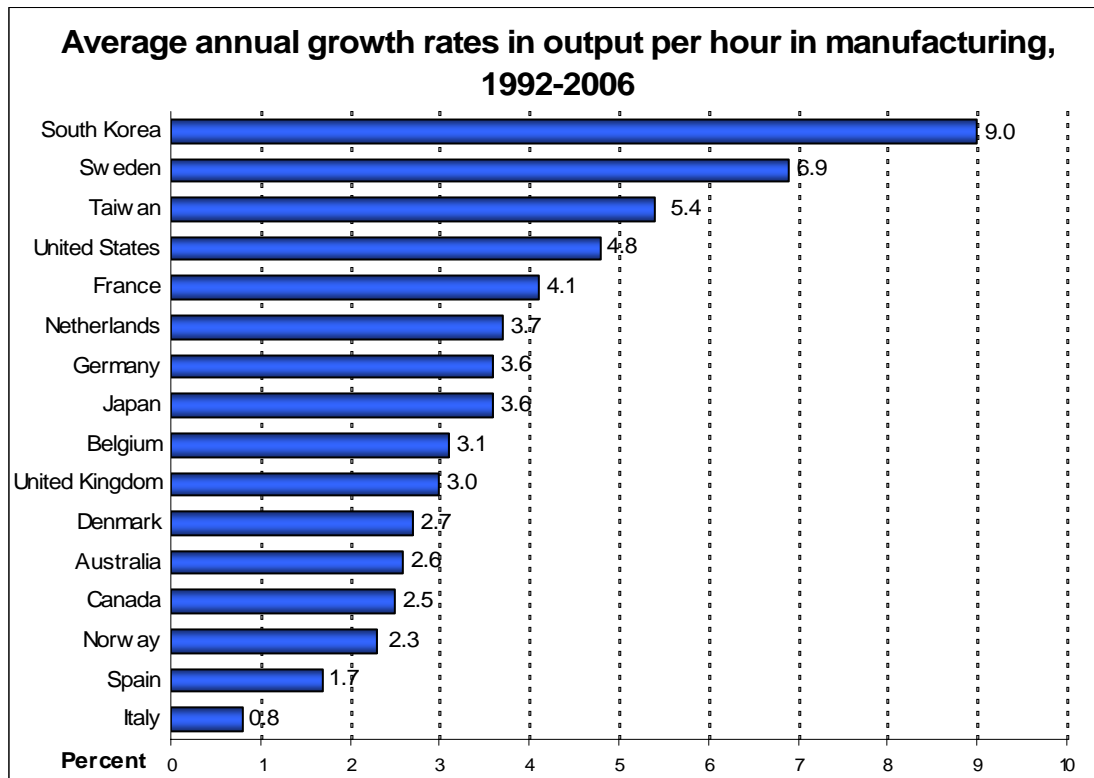
Teens Have Higher Unemployment Rates, but Less So in Germany

Worldwide, the unemployment rate for teenagers is generally higher than the unemployment rate for adults. In Germany, however, teens may have relatively better luck landing a job. German teenagers have among the lowest unemployment rates in Europe. This partly is due to an apprenticeship system that provides employment and training for young persons. Compared to other countries around the world, the gap between the adult and teenage unemployment rates in Germany is strikingly small.



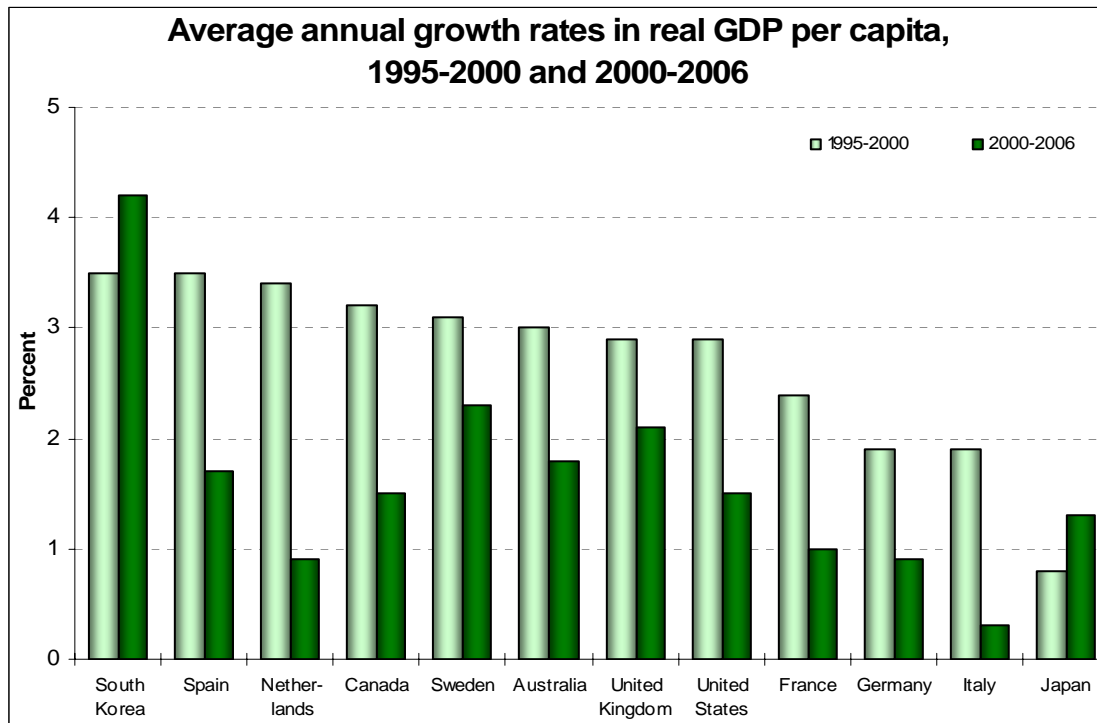
Worldwide Differences in Labor Productivity Growth

Among other things, Italy is known for its labor-intensive production of high-fashion clothing and accessories. While a fashion-conscious traveler might want to purchase an Italian designer handbag, an economist might wonder how many handbags are being produced per hour. Such detailed productivity data are not available, but broader measures are. Trends in output per hour, or labor productivity, in manufacturing differ considerably across countries. Average annual growth in manufacturing labor productivity between 1992 and 2006 ranged from 0.8 percent in Italy to 9 percent in South Korea. As a major industrialized country, Italy's relatively low productivity trend contrasts sharply with productivity growth rates in other economies.



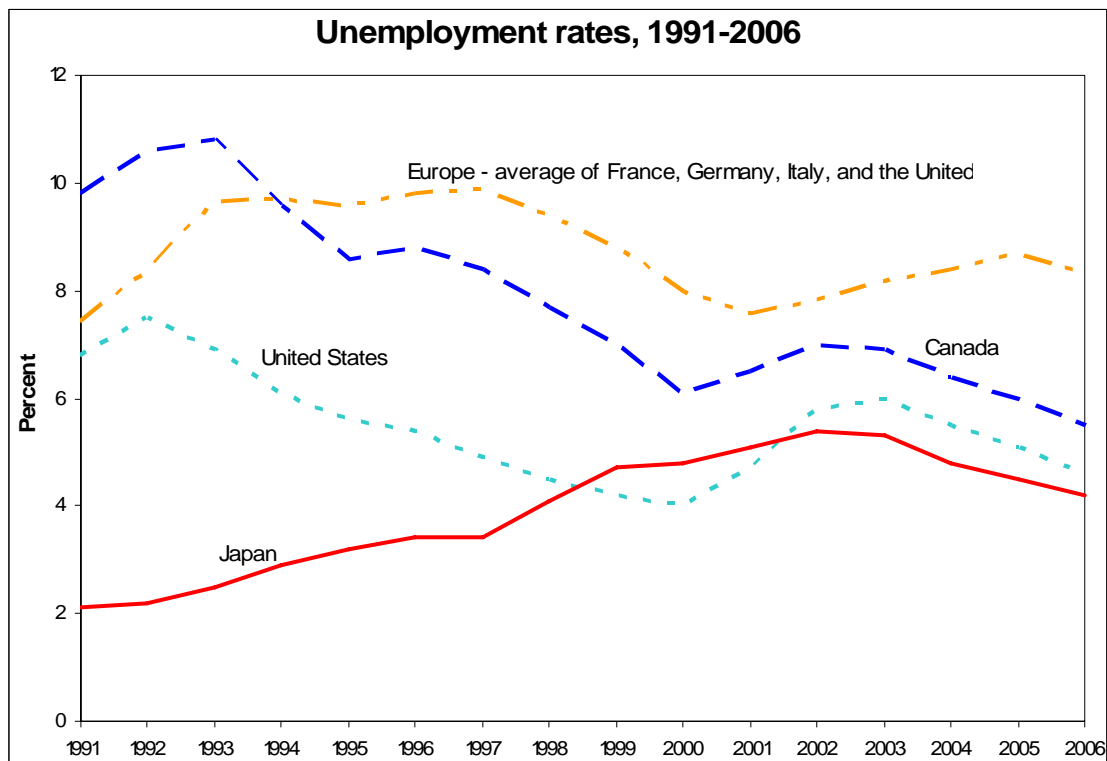
Rapid Growth in South Korea

In South Korea you can find the hottest in cell phones, flat screen televisions, and other electronic gadgets. Korea's rate of economic growth, as measured by growth in the country's gross domestic product (GDP) relative to its population, has also been hot in recent years. Between 2000 and 2006, real GDP per person in Korea grew approximately 4.2 percent per year, up from 3.5 percent during the 1995-2000 period. On the flip side, many other countries have experienced slower rates of economic growth in recent years compared to the 1995-2000 period.



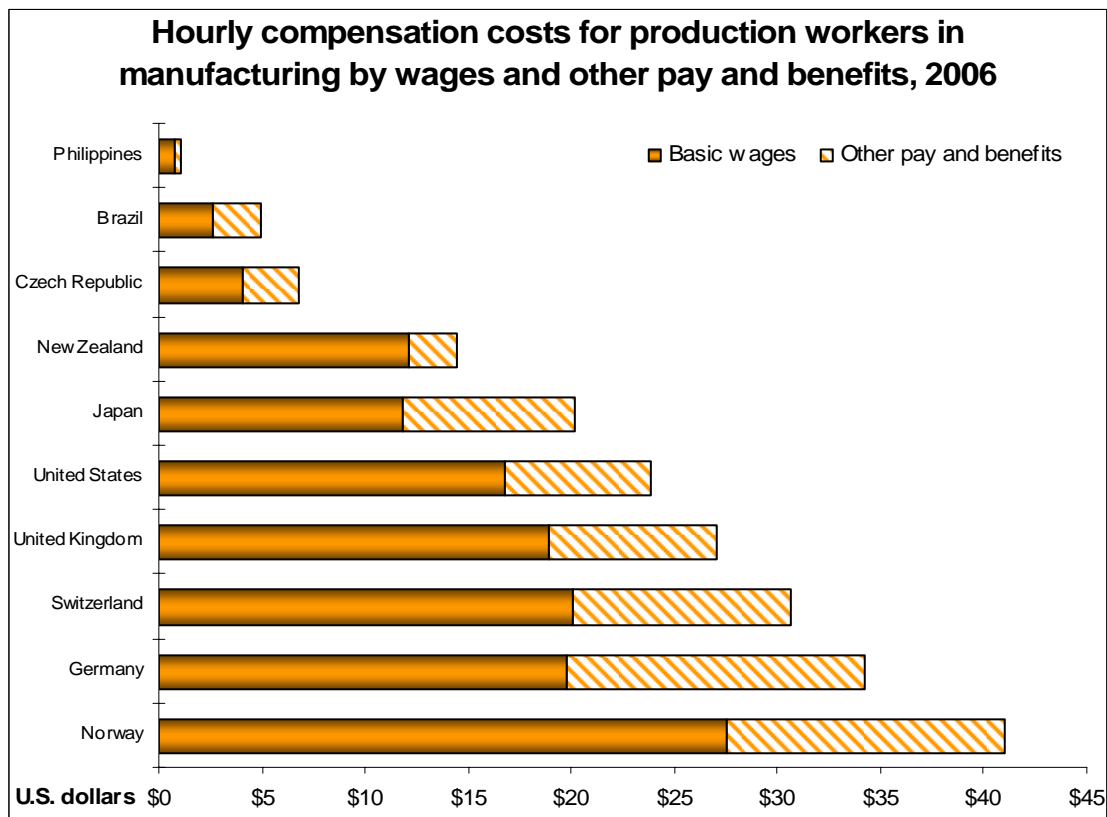
Low Unemployment in Japan

Unemployment rates vary substantially across countries and over time. Historically, Japan has had relatively low unemployment rates, as shown in the chart below. Japan has been able to maintain low unemployment rates in part because of the large numbers of women who are temporary or casual workers. When economic downturns occur there, these temporary and casual workers are often the first to be let go. Women in Japan are less likely than men to look for another job after losing a position. They are therefore not counted among the unemployed, and their flexibility enables regular full-time workers to keep their positions.



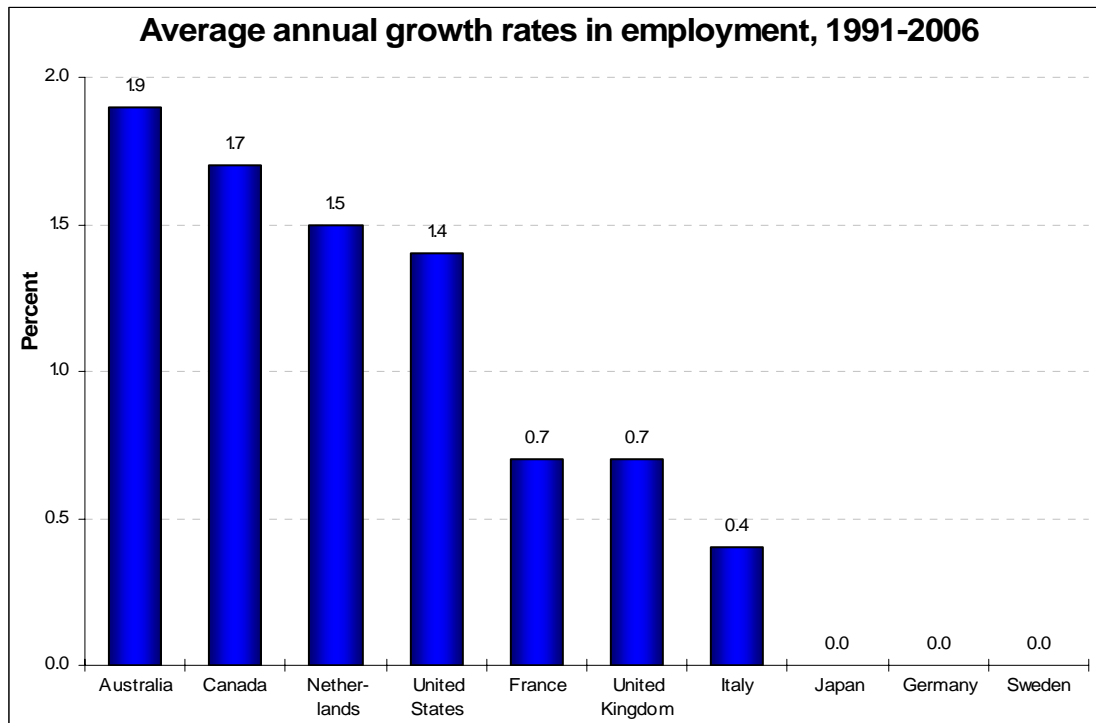
Manufacturing Competitiveness

Wages, bonuses, benefits — these are terms that are familiar to workers and employers alike. Hourly compensation costs, including basic wages and other pay and benefits, are one measure of international competitiveness. In 2006, Norwegian factory owners had among the highest compensation costs in the world: the average total of \$41.05 per hour included \$27.54 in wages and \$13.51 for other pay and benefits. At the other extreme, average manufacturing compensation costs in the Philippines were among the lowest that same year, at \$1.07 per hour. These costs included \$0.80 in wages and \$0.27 in other pay and benefits.



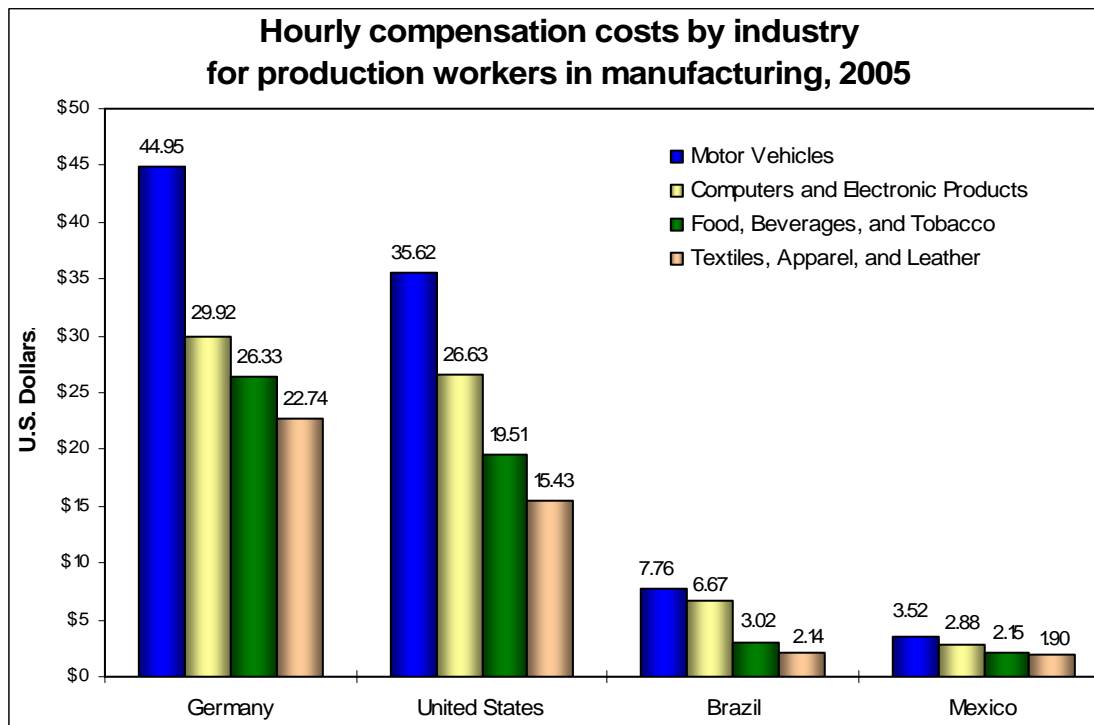
Employment Growth "Down Under"

No round-the-world adventure would be complete without a stop "Down Under." Since the early 1990s, employment in Australia has grown about 1.9 percent per year, the highest employment growth among many developed countries during this period. (NOTE: Due to rounding, the average annual growth rate in employment was 0.0 percent for Japan, Germany, and Sweden between 1991 and 2006, even though there were slight changes in employment levels in these countries over the period.)



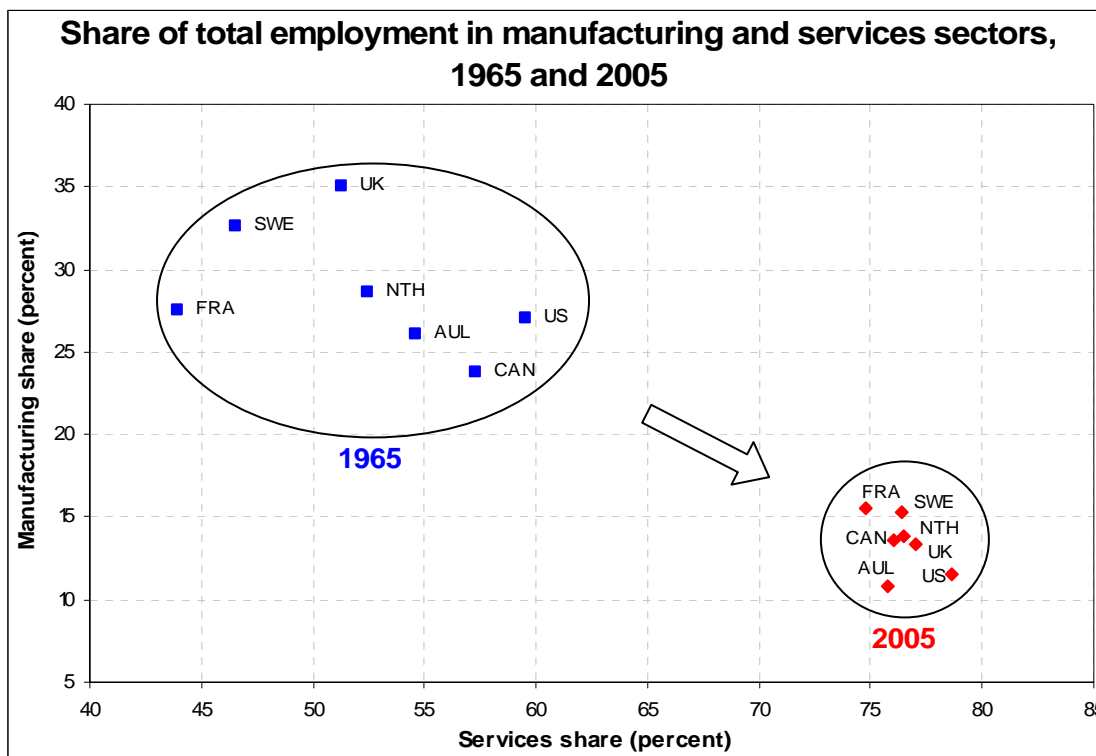
From Cars to Clothes: Patterns in Compensation Costs

Average worker compensation costs in manufacturing differ greatly across countries. Within each country, however, compensation differences between manufacturing industries follow a similar pattern. In 2005, compensation costs in the motor vehicles industry were among the highest in manufacturing, while costs in textiles, apparel, and leather were among the lowest. Industry differentials are notably large in Brazil, with compensation costs in motor vehicles more than 3.5 times as much as costs in textiles, apparel, and leather.



Shifting Shares of Manufacturing and Service Sector Employment

Over time, more workers are employed in the services sector, and relatively fewer in manufacturing. In the United States, the share of employment in services increased from about 60 percent in 1965 to 79 percent in 2005. In contrast, the share of U.S. employment in manufacturing decreased from 27 percent to about 12 percent. This employment shift from manufacturing to services seen in the United States is also seen in countries around the world. This is true to such an extent that employment shares in services and manufacturing appear to be converging to similar levels among industrialized countries. (Note: Employment shares shown do not represent the total economy, because employment in agriculture, mining, and construction is excluded; therefore, the shares for each country do not sum to 100 percent. In chart: AUL = Australia; CAN = Canada; FRA = France; NTH = Netherlands; SWE = Sweden; UK = United Kingdom; US = United States.)



Continue the Adventure

The eight charts in this Spotlight on Statistics showcase just a small sample of the comparative international labor statistics that BLS has to offer. In addition to employment, unemployment, productivity, and compensation measures, BLS has consumer price indexes, labor force participation rates, and other indicators for up to 36 economies around the world. Another country that has been studied is China, for which limited statistics are available from BLS.

To continue your adventure in international labor statistics, please see the following:

- BLS Foreign Labor Statistics program homepage (www.bls.gov/fls/)
- Data Available from the BLS Foreign Labor Statistics program (www.bls.gov/fls/availability.htm)
- A Chartbook of International Labor Comparisons by the U.S. Department of Labor (www.dol.gov/asp/media/reports/chartbook/2008-01/chartbook.pdf)
- "Comparative civilian labor force statistics, 10 countries: a visual essay" from the December 2007 Monthly Labor Review (www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2007/12/art4exc.htm)

General Information

For more information, please call (202) 691-5200.

Media Contact

The news media can contact the BLS Press Assistant at (202) 691-5902.

Note: Data in text and charts are the latest available at the time of publication.