Unemployment here is a short stay

On average 37.0% of Dutch unemployed people are working one quarter later, against 23.1% in the EU. Only Denmark does better.

Summary

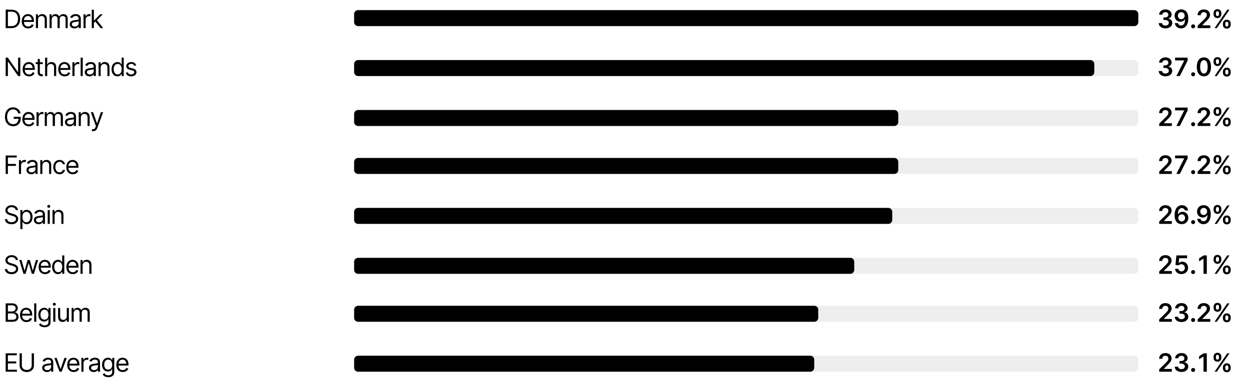
Unemployment in the Netherlands is mostly a pass-through. Over the four quarters to the first quarter of 2026, an average of 37.0% of unemployed people were in work one quarter later, more than one in three. The EU average stands at 23.1%, and only Denmark sits higher at 39.2%. At the peak of the tight market the Dutch outflow was higher still: 41.5% over the same quarters in 2022 and 2023. The other side is small but growing: the share of workers becoming unemployed rose within a year from 1.0% to 1.4% per quarter.

Beside the question of how many unemployed people there are sits a second question that matters more for recruitment: how fast they flow back into work. Eurostat measures every quarter who changed status. This paper reads those flows for the Netherlands and sets them against the rest of Europe.

More than one in three is out within a quarter

Of the Dutch people unemployed in one quarter, an average of 37.0% are working in the next. That average runs over the four quarters to the first quarter of 2026. The EU average over the same period is 23.1%.

37.0% of Dutch unemployed people are working one quarter later



Average quarterly transition from unemployment to employment, four quarters to the first quarter of 2026. Eurostat, lfsi_long_q, not seasonally adjusted, retrieved 1 September 2026.

Only Denmark sits higher, at 39.2%. Belgium, the closest neighbour in wealth and geography, stays at 23.2%: a Belgian unemployed person has a more than one third smaller chance of finding work in a quarter than a Dutch one.

The outflow cools along with the market

At the peak of the tight market the Dutch pace was higher. Over the four quarters to the first quarter of 2023, an average of 41.5% of the unemployed found work within a quarter. The most recent single quarter, the first of 2026, stands at 33.6%, the lowest of the four measured.

At the same time the inflow into unemployment grows, from a low base. Of the employed, 1.0% became unemployed in the second quarter of 2025; by the first quarter of 2026 it was 1.4%. Small numbers, but the direction matches the vacancy series: the market turns more slowly.

Why this figure matters for recruitment

An unemployed person in the Netherlands is rarely available for long. At an outflow of 37% per quarter, a candidate available this month has a good chance of working somewhere else in three months. Whoever designs a three-month selection process for candidates coming from unemployment is selecting mostly from those still left after three months.

It also explains why the recruitment conversation in the Netherlands is structurally about people who already work. The unemployed reserve is small and flows through fast; the supply sits with the employed, as this library showed earlier in the quarterly figures on employer changes.

What this figure does not say

- These are survey figures under the international definition of unemployment. Whoever did not search actively or was not available counts as inactive, not unemployed. The transitions therefore do not reconcile with Dutch benefit registers.
- The Dutch unemployed base is small, so quarterly figures move around. This paper averages four quarters throughout and uses non-seasonally adjusted series.
- Employment is not the only exit. Part of the unemployed flow into inactivity; that flow is not in this paper.

What this means

- **The quotable number.** An average of 37.0% of Dutch unemployed people are working one quarter later, against 23.1% in the EU. Only Denmark does better.
- **Speed is the norm here.** An available candidate is a temporary state. A process that takes months loses candidates to the market itself.
- **The reserve is a flow, not a stock.** Recruiting from unemployment means recruiting from a group that refreshes itself by more than a third every quarter.
- **The cooling is visible, not dramatic.** The outflow fell from 41.5% to 37.0% and the inflow into unemployment crept from 1.0% to 1.4% per quarter. The same direction as the vacancy figures, at a lower tempo.

Method and sources

All figures come from Eurostat, dataset lfsi_long_q, quarterly labour market transitions, not seasonally adjusted, persons aged 15 to 74. The outflow is the transition from unemployment to employment as a percentage of the unemployed in the preceding quarter; the inflow is the transition from employment to unemployment as a percentage of the employed. Averages run over the four quarters to the first quarter of 2026 and, for the peak comparison, over the four quarters to the first quarter of 2023. Retrieved on 1 September 2026, licensed CC BY 4.0.

The figures follow the survey definitions of the European labour force survey and are not comparable with Dutch benefit statistics from UWV or the register flows of CBS. Countries with a small unemployed base, the Netherlands included, have volatile quarterly figures; averaging four quarters dampens that without removing it.

Europe, Mobility, All markets

Sources

- Eurostat (lfsi_long_q), arbeidsmarkttransities, CC BY 4.0