



## Economy And Labour Market

### Scotland's Devolved Employment Services: Fair Start Scotland

### Statistical Summary for April 2018 to June 2024

#### Main Points

This report presents statistics for Scotland's Devolved Employment Services: Fair Start Scotland. Fair Start Scotland closed to new referrals on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, however participants can continue to achieve job outcomes. Statistics with updates to the employment outcomes are presented to the most recent quarter of April to June 2024.

- There have been 104,208 referrals on Fair Start Scotland (FSS) since April 2018 up to March 2024.
- There have been 70,513 starts to FSS since April 2018, including 6,999 re-joins which was possible from April 2021. As FSS closed to new referrals on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, there are no new additional starts reported in this publication.
- Overall, there have been 26,038 job starts since FSS launched. For job starts where enough time has passed in pre-employment support and for outcomes to be achieved, 38% have entered employment, 28% have sustained employment for 3 months, 23% have sustained employment for 6 months and 18% have sustained employment for 12 months.
- Of the 10,806 job starts (those where enough time has passed in pre-employment support and for outcomes to be achieved), 79% went on to reach at least 12 months employment.
- Of the 70,513 starts to FSS since April 2018, 15,345 (22%, including 1,440 re-joins) were parents. Where enough time has passed in pre-employment support and for outcomes to be achieved there have been 4,979 job starts who are parents, since FSS launched.
- For the first time, this publication presents breakdowns by trans status. A total of 36 people responded 'yes' to the question on trans status.

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## About this publication

This report presents statistics for Scotland's Devolved Employment Services: Fair Start Scotland. FSS is an employability support service, launched in April 2018, which aims to help unemployed people into sustainable employment. FSS closed to new referrals on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Official statistics with updates to the employment outcomes are presented to the most recent quarter of April to June 2024. Following the end of referrals to FSS, Scottish Government funded employability provision is now commissioned through Local Employability Partnerships, under the No One Left Behind approach ([Scotland's Devolved Employment Services statistics - opens in a new window](#)).

Further detailed statistics are published in accompanying tables alongside the report. Please refer to the supplementary Background and Methodology Report for more details on FSS data.

### Official Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics ([Access the Code of Practice – opens in a new window](#)) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. The statistics presented for FSS are Official Statistics.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards by emailing: [employabilitydata@gov.scot](mailto:employabilitydata@gov.scot). Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing: [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk).

### Data Developments in this Edition

For the first time, this publication presents the following data:

- Breakdowns by trans status

# Fair Start Scotland (Official Statistics)

## Introduction

FSS was Scotland's devolved employability support service which aimed to help those further from the labour market move into and sustain fair work. FSS launched on 3 April 2018 with funding to support a minimum of 38,000 people into work over an initial three year period ([Fair Start Scotland Statement - opens in a new window](#)). The service was later extended to March 2024. Further details on the nature of Fair Start Scotland can be found in table 1 of the supplementary Background and Methodology Report.

This report refers to the following groups throughout:

- **People** – unique individuals counted only once. If a participant has joined the service more than once, they will only be counted once under the people metric.
- **Starts** – number of starts on the service. As people could re-join from April 2021, the number of starts may not equal the number of unique people. For example, if a participant joined the service on two separate occasions, this would be counted twice under starts but only once under people.
- **Re-joins** – refers to starts that are not first time starts. It should also be noted people could re-join more than once. The sum of the people metric and re-joins equals the number of starts on the service.

FSS closed to new referrals on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. A small number of participants started the service in April 2024 and are included in the January – March 2024 quarter.

Most of the statistics in this report will cover up until FSS closed to new referrals (April 2018 to March 2024). Updates to outcome data includes the most recent quarter (April – June 2024). Please note, for the job outcomes data items, it is more appropriate to only consider those participants where enough time has passed that we have complete data. This varies depending on the metric but is noted within the relevant sections of the report. Updates to outcome data will continue into future publications.

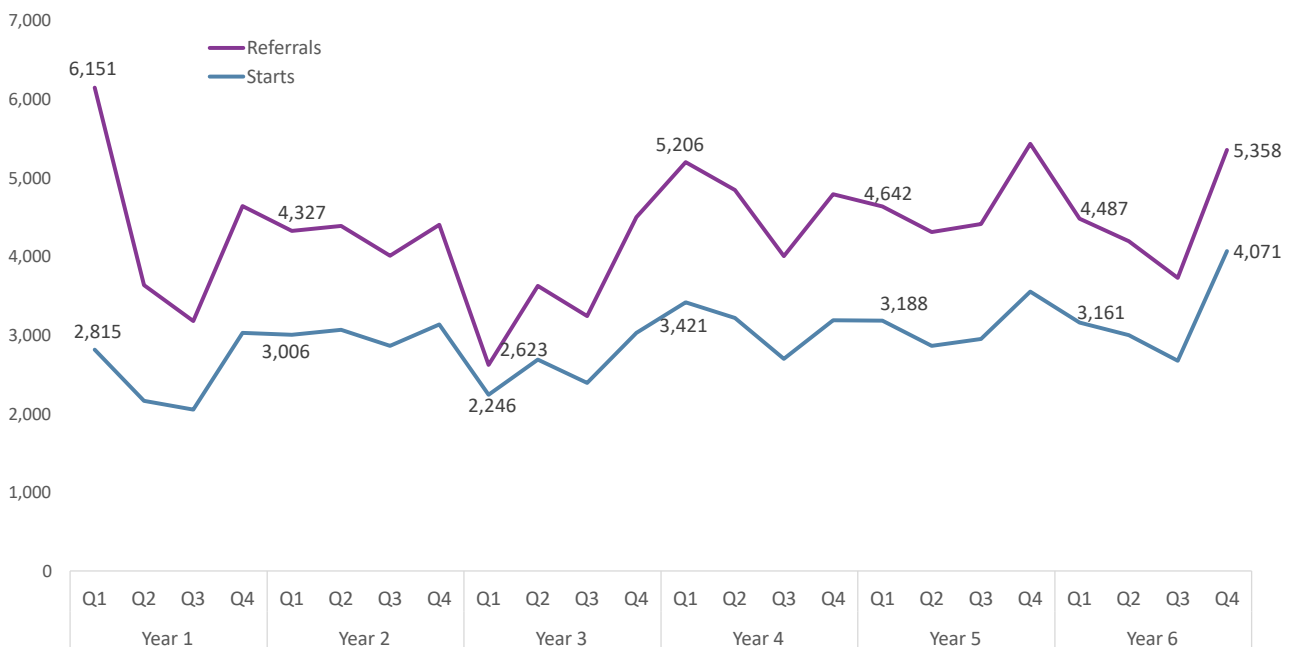
## How many FSS referrals and starts have there been?

There were 104,208 referrals to FSS between its launch in April 2018 and the end of March 2024. Of the total referrals to FSS, 70,513 started receiving employability support, including 6,999 re-joins to the service.

Over the years, number of referrals have fluctuated between 14,000 (year 3 – 2020/21) and 18,863 (year 4 – 2021/22) with 17,777 people being referred in the final year (year 6 – 2023/24). Number of starts have fluctuated between 10,063 (year 1 – 2018/19) and 12,910 (year 6 – 2023/24).

**Figure 1: Referrals and starts on Fair Start Scotland**

**Referrals and Starts on Fair Start Scotland, by Quarter, April 2018 to March 2024**



## Who are the people that have joined FSS?

Of 70,513 FSS starts, 63,514 people have started on the service, with the difference reflecting participants re-joining the service. The following breakdown of equality groups are based on the characteristics of those 63,514 people when they first joined FSS.

### Sex

Most people that joined FSS were male 62% (39,065) while 38% (23,946) were female. The proportion of females increased from 35% in year 1 (2018/19) to 40% in year 3 (2020/21) and 4 (2021/22), but decreased to 35% in year 6 (2023/24).

## **Trans Status**

This was a new variable included in the new data reporting template from April 2023. Data are only available for participants starting on or after the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. This question was voluntary.

A total of 36 people responded 'yes' to the question on trans status. Of these, 18 identified as a non-binary person, 8 as a trans man, 7 as a trans woman, with the remaining 3 people choosing the 'other' option.

## **Age**

The most common age group of people joining FSS was 35 to 49 years (29%; 18,501), followed by 25 to 34 year olds (25%; 15,761). The lowest proportion was the 16 to 24 years old age group (20%; 12,515).

The proportion of participants in the youngest and oldest age groups showed larger fluctuations than those in the 25 to 34 and 35 to 49 years age groups. Those in the youngest age group (16 to 24) represented 16% of all participants in year 1 (2018/19) compared to 25% in year 3 (2020/21). This decreased to 16% in year 4 (2021/22) and increased again, reaching 21% in year 6 (2023/24). In comparison, the oldest age group (aged 50 and above) represented 30% in year 1 (2018/19) compared to 20% in year 3 (2020/21). This increased to 27% in year 4 (2021/22) and decreased again to 21% in year 6 (2023/24).

## **Ethnicity**

Overall, 8% (5,275) of people joining FSS were from a minority ethnic background and 73% (46,590) were white, with ethnicity unknown for the remaining 18% (11,649) of participants.

Monitoring changes to ethnicity can be challenging due to data completeness where we saw higher rates of unknowns in earlier years. However, there was improvement over time in completion rates for this variable. The overall proportion of unknowns for year 6 (2023/24) was 11%. This compares to the higher proportions observed in earlier years (year 1: 17%, year 2: 31%, year 3: 29%).

## **Disability**

Disability is defined based on answers to two questions related to long-term health conditions (LTHC) and ability to carry out activities. Overall, 43% (27,402) of FSS

participants had a disability compared to 48% (30,663) who did not. This was unknown for the remaining 9% (5,449) of participants.

The proportion of disabled people varied across years with the highest proportion (55%) in year 1 (2018/19) and the lowest (32%) in year 3 (2020/21). The collection of equalities data in year 3 was impacted by the move away from face to face service delivery and policies such as shielding during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the proportion of disabled people accessing FSS subsequently increased from this low point, it continued to fluctuate. In year 4 (2021/22), the proportion increased to 47% but decreased to 39% in year 6 (2023/24).

### **Convictions**

People with a conviction may find it harder to enter employment. A total of 6,604 people (10%) joining FSS reported having a conviction. In year 4 (2021/22) this peaked at 13% but reached a low of 7% in year 6 (2023/24).

### **Benefit Claimants**

The majority of people (77%; 48,995) joining FSS were benefit claimants. This proportion was at its lowest in year 1 (2018/19) at 74% and peaked in year 4 (2021/22) at 87%, decreasing to 70% in year 6. It should be noted that the proportion of unknowns was high in the first few years of the programme but subsequently improved (21% in year 1 (2018/19) compared to 12% in year 6 (2023/24).

### **Length of Time Unemployed**

People who have been out of the labour market for a longer period of time may find it more difficult to find employment. Although there were fluctuations over the years, overall, most people (36%; 22,816) joining FSS had been unemployed for 24 months or more. A lower proportion were unemployed for less than 6 months (19%; 11,795), between 6 – 12 months (17%; 10,898) and 12 – 24 months (15%; 9,721). This information was unknown for the remaining participants (13%; 8,284).

### **Deprivation**

There were 22,305 people (35%) joining FSS who lived in one of the 15% most deprived areas. The highest proportion, 38%, was in year 1 (2018/19) and the lowest proportion, 33%, in year 3 (2020/21) and year 5 (2022/23).

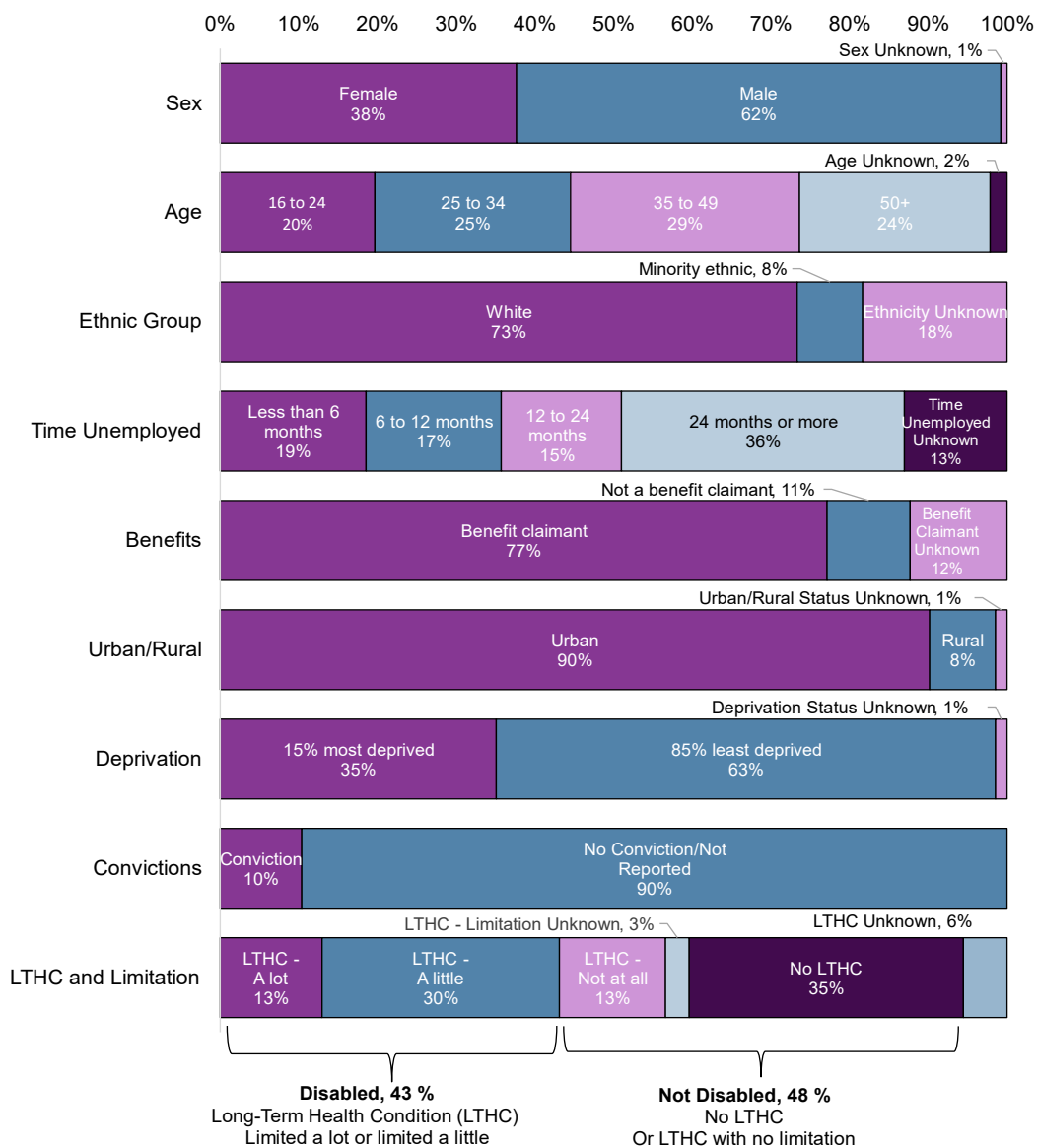
## Urban/Rural

People living in rural areas may be more limited for job opportunities compared to those living in urban areas. There were 5,305 people (8%) joining FSS who live in a rural area, while 57,276 people (90%) lived in an urban area. This remained consistent across years with the highest proportion (91%) in years 1 (2018/19) and 4 (2021/22) and the lowest proportion (88%) in year 3 (2020/21).

See supplementary Background and Methodology Report for more detail on impact of the COVID -19 pandemic and the precise definition of characteristics reported here.

**Figure 2: Most people that started on Fair Start Scotland were male, white and lived in an urban area**

**Equality Characteristics of People Starting on Fair Start Scotland, April 2018 to March 2024**





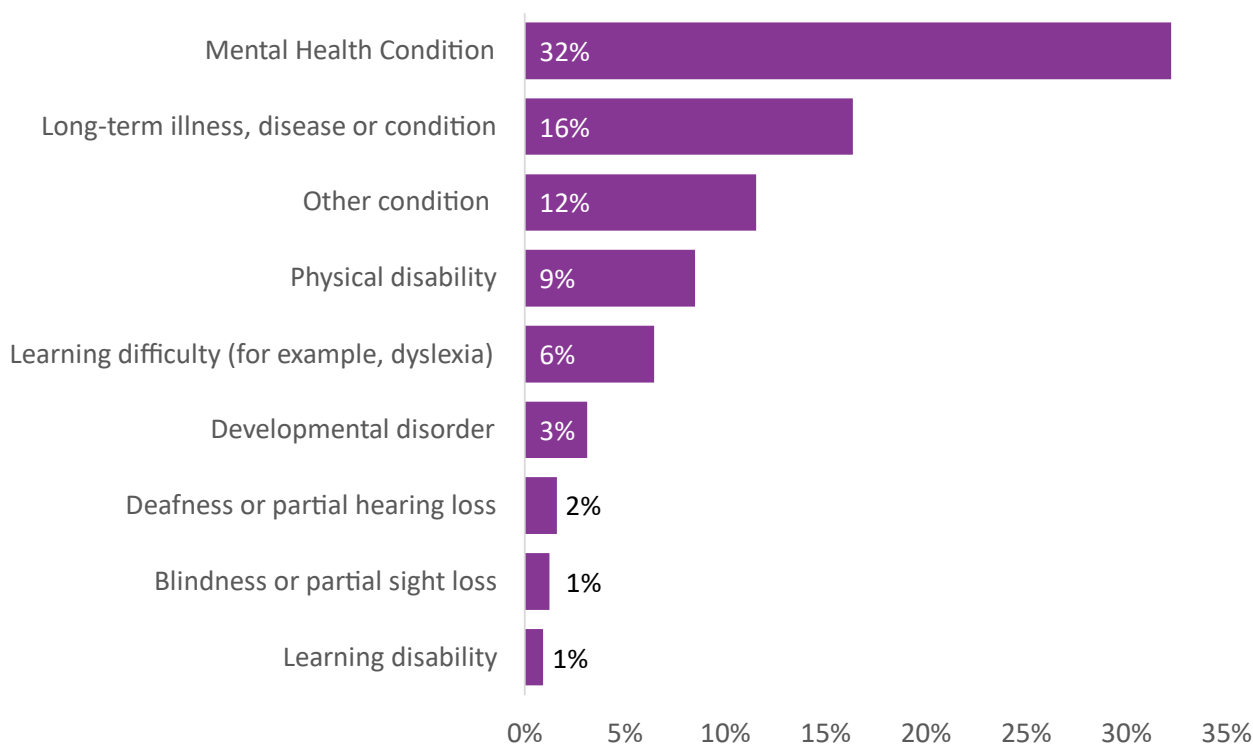
## Long-Term Health Condition

Overall, 60% (37,860) of people joining FSS reported a LTHC, 35% (22,122) reported no LTHC, with this unknown for 6% (3,532) of people.

Many LTHC can impact upon a person's ability to gain and maintain employment without additional support and participants can report more than one LTHC. The most commonly reported LTHC by participants joining FSS was a mental health condition (32%; 20,475), followed by a long-term illness, disease or condition (16%; 10,388).

### Figure 3: Mental health condition was the most reported long-term health condition for people starting on Fair Start Scotland

#### LTHC Reported by People Starting on Fair Start Scotland, April 2018 to March 2024



## Parents

Annual data on parents was first published in May 2021. Quarterly parental data for year 5 was published from August 2022 whilst quarterly parental data covering year 5 onwards was published for the first time in February 2024.

Cumulative totals should be interpreted with caution and comparison of data between years is not advised due to the way the collection has developed over time. Please see supplementary Background and Methodology Report for more details.

Of people joining FSS for the first time, 13,905 were parents, while there have been 15,345 total parent starts on the service since its launch in April 2018, including re-joins.

Parents and families from certain groups are at higher risk of being affected by child poverty (see supplementary Background and Methodology Report). Of the 2,620 parents accessing support in year 6:

- 38% had a child aged under 12 months (28% overall),
- 34% were lone parents (42% overall),
- 25% were from a minority ethnic background (13% overall),
- 35% were disabled (37% overall),
- 21% were parents with three or more children (18% overall), and,
- 2% were mothers aged under 25 (3% overall).

## How many FSS early leavers have there been?

Someone is defined as having left FSS early (an 'early leaver') if they leave FSS before the end of the pre-employment support period and without having sustained employment for at least 3 months. The pre-employment support period usually lasted for up to 12 months but could last up to 18 months in some cases, though this only applied to a small number of people.

There have been 33,801 early leavers from the 70,513 FSS starts (including 6,999 re-joins). As time passes, there is a more complete picture of the proportion of starts that stay on FSS or leave early.

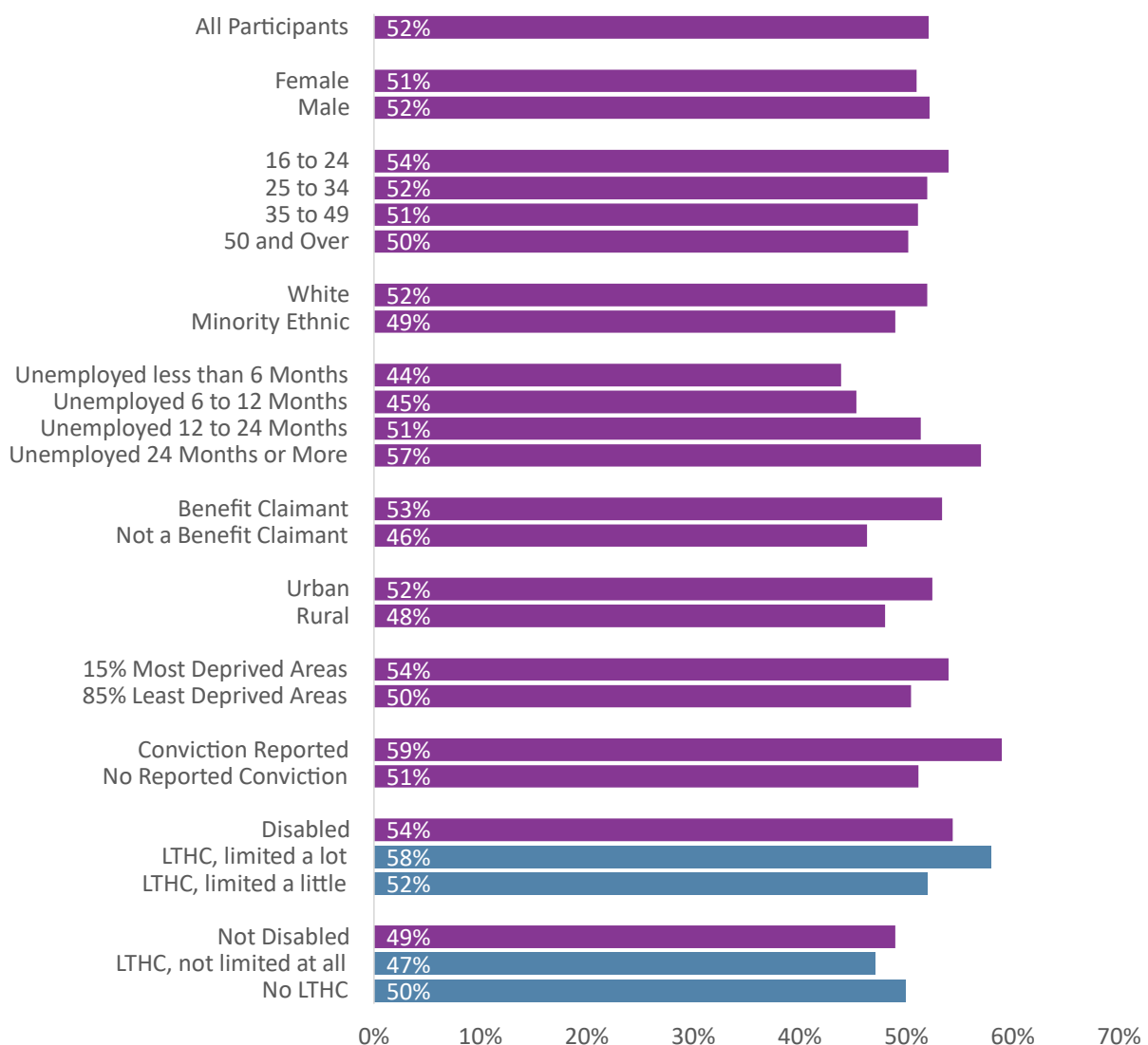
Where we have a complete picture, based on participants with a start date one year ago or longer, 31,377 (52%) of starts have left early. This rate is based on a cohort of 60,764 starting between the period April 2018 and June 2023 (including 5,076 re-joins).

The percentage of early leavers was higher for those reporting a disability, particularly for those who have a LTHC that limits daily activities a lot (58%) compared with those with a LTHC that did not limit daily activities at all (47%). Younger participants (16 to 24) were also more likely to leave early (54%) compared to older participants (50%, 50 years and over). There is little difference between male and female participants.

Participants with a conviction were more likely to leave early (59%) than those not reporting a conviction (51%). Those participants who lived in one of the 15% most deprived areas were more likely to leave early (54%) compared to those who lived in one of the 85% least deprived areas (50%). Participants unemployed for 24 months or more also have higher rates of leaving early (57%) compared to those unemployed less than 6 months (44%), 6 – 12 months (45%) and 12 – 24 months (51%).

**Figure 4: FSS starts reporting a conviction, living in one of the 15% most deprived areas or are unemployed 24 months or more are most likely to leave FSS early**

**Proportion of Fair Start Scotland starts leaving early, April 2018 to June 2023**



**How many FSS starts entered and sustained employment?**

Overall, there have been 26,038 (37%) job starts in total from the 70,513 FSS starts, including the 6,999 re-joins to the service, since the launch of FSS. Of these job starts, so

far 18,472 (71%) have sustained employment for at least 3 months (13 weeks), 14,501 (56%) at least 6 months (26 weeks), and 10,225 (39%) at least 12 months (52 weeks).

When considering job outcomes, to properly assess how participants have progressed, it is more appropriate to calculate this for cohorts of participants where enough time has passed in pre-employment support and for outcomes to be achieved.

For example, pre-employment support lasts 12 months so for a participant to complete this support and also sustain employment for 12 months, a total of at least 24 months is required from their start date. Calculating 12 month job outcomes for participants where this time has not passed will under estimate outcomes for this measure. The following table summarises time periods and denominators for each outcome type.

**Table 1: Outcome type by respective service start time period and number of participants covered in each outcome**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Time Required to Pass</b>	<b>Time period of starting on service</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Re-joins</b>
<b>Job Starts</b>	12 month support	April 2018 to June 2023	60,764	5,076
<b>3 month job outcome</b>	12 month support + 3 months	April 2018 to March 2023	57,603	4,497
<b>6 month job outcome</b>	12 month support + 6 months	April 2018 to December 2022	54,046	3,899
<b>12 month job outcome</b>	12 month support + 12 months	April 2018 to June 2022	48,228	3,071

For those starts where enough time has passed in pre-employment support and for outcomes to be achieved, job outcomes show 38% (22,875 of 60,764) have entered employment, 28% have sustained employment for 3 months (16,007 out of 57,603), 23%

have sustained employment for 6 months (12,278 out of 54,046) and 18% have sustained employment for 12 months (8,487 out of 48,228).

However, when starts enter employment, there tends to be a high level of sustainment. Of those starts entering employment, 74% sustained employment for 3 months (16,007 of 21,589 job starts up to March 2023 – 12 months support plus 3 months job outcome). Of the starts sustaining employment for 3 months, 82% went on to continue sustainment to 6 months (12,278 of 14,890 job starts up to December 2022 – 12 months support plus 6 months job outcome). And of the starts sustaining employment for 6 months, 79% went on to reach at least 12 months employment (8,487 of 10,806 job starts up to June 2022 – 12 months support plus 12 months job outcome).

### **Sex**

There is no difference in job starts (38% females, 38% males), although female participants are more likely to stay in employment. For example, 29% of female starts sustain employment for 3 months compared with 27% of male starts, while 20% of female starts sustain employment for 12 months compared to 16% for male starts.

### **Age**

Younger participants are more likely to enter employment compared to the oldest participants, however, there is little difference in job sustainment at 12 months. The youngest age group (16 to 24) accounts for the lowest proportion of FSS starts but have the highest job starts (43%). For starts in the oldest age group (50 years and over), 33% enter employment. However, by 12 month job sustainment, all age groups have similar levels of sustainment (range: 17-18%).

### **Long-Term Health Condition and Disability**

The extent to which a LTHC limits daily activities is a more important factor in terms of entering and sustaining employment than simply having or not having a LTHC. For FSS starts with no LTHC, 41% entered employment. However, this is higher for those with a LTHC that does not limit daily activities at all (45%). In comparison, for starts with a LTHC that limits daily activities a lot, 26% enter employment. This general trend is also maintained for sustained outcomes, where 13% of starts with a LTHC that limits daily activities a lot sustain employment for 12 months compared to 21% for starts with a LTHC that does not limit daily activities at all. However, this difference narrows for longer sustainment periods compared to shorter periods. For example, 19% with a LTHC that

limits daily activities are in employment for 3 months compared to 33% for those with a LTHC but not limited at all.

### **Ethnicity**

FSS starts from minority ethnic backgrounds have higher job starts and outcome sustainment compared to white participants, with differences ranging between 2-4 percentage points. For example, 41% of starts from a minority ethnic background enter employment compared to 37% of starts who are white, while 19% of starts from a minority ethnic background sustain employment for 12 months compared to 17% of starts who are white.

### **Convictions**

Having a conviction is one of the biggest barriers to entering and sustaining employment for FSS participants. For job starts, 30% of starts reporting a conviction enter employment compared to 39% of starts not reporting a conviction. Only 10% of starts reporting a conviction maintain employment for 12 months compared to 19% for those starts not reporting a conviction.

### **Benefit Claimants**

While most FSS participants reported claiming a benefit (77%), 34% of these starts entered employment compared to 57% of starts not claiming a benefit. While the difference narrows at longer sustainment outcomes, this remains notable. For example, 15% of starts claiming a benefit sustain employment for 12 months compared to 32% for those not claiming a benefit.

### **Length of Time Unemployed**

Length of time unemployed is an important factor for entering and sustaining employment. Those out of employment for a longer period are less likely to enter and sustain employment. For example, 57% of FSS starts unemployed for less than 6 months entered employment compared to 23% for starts unemployed for 24 months or more. For starts unemployed less than 6 months, 27% sustained employment for 12 months compared to 11% for those starts unemployed for 24 months or more.

### **Deprivation**

FSS starts living in the 85% least deprived areas have higher job starts and outcome sustainment compared to those living in the 15% most deprived areas, with a range of 2-3

percentage point difference across all outcome measures. For example, 39% of those living in one of the 85% least deprived areas entered employment compared to 36% for those living in one of the 15% most deprived areas. For 12 month sustained employment, this was 18% and 16%, respectively.

### Urban/Rural

There is almost no difference in outcomes between those living in an urban or rural setting with 38% of those living in an urban setting entering employment compared with 37% of those living in a rural setting. At 12 months, 18% of those living in both an urban and rural setting were still in employment.

### How many parents start on FSS entered and sustained employment?

For the 15,345 FSS starts that were parents, job outcomes are only reported where enough time has passed in pre-employment support (12 months) and for outcomes to be achieved, as is the case for all participants. The following table summarises this for each outcome type.

**Table 2: Outcome type and respective service start time period and number of parents covered in each outcome**

Outcome	Time Required to Pass	Time period of starting on service	Parents Included	Parent Re-joins
<b>Job Starts</b>	12 month support	April 2018 to June 2023	13,052	1,084
<b>3 month job outcome</b>	12 month support + 3 months	April 2018 to March 2023	12,260	975
<b>6 month job outcome</b>	12 month support + 6 months	April 2018 to December 2022	11,255	854
<b>12 month job outcome</b>	12 month support + 12 months	April 2018 to June 2022	9,693	662

For those parent starts where enough time has passed in pre-employment support and for outcomes to be achieved, job outcomes show 38% (4,979 of 13,052) have entered employment, 29% have sustained employment for 3 months (3,539 of 12,260), 24% have sustained employment for 6 months (2,695 of 11,255) and 19% have sustained for 12

months (1,805 of 9,693). These proportions are comparable to those observed for all participants.

## **Priority Family Groups**

### **Disabled Parents**

The proportion of disabled parents entering employment is the same as disabled participants who are not parents (both 32%) but lower than both parents who are not disabled (42%) and participants who are not a parent nor disabled (43%), highlighting the challenge for participants who are disabled regardless of parental status.

Job sustainment was also consistently lower for disabled parents compared to parents who are not disabled. For example, 15% of disabled parents sustained employment for 12 months compared to 20% for parents who are not disabled. However, sustainment rates were the same as for those who are not parents but disabled, again, highlighting the challenges for disabled participants generally.

### **Lone Parents**

The proportion of lone parents entering employment is lower (33%) than for all parents (38%). This is consistent across employment outcome measures. For example, 16% of lone parents sustained employment for 12 months compared to 19% for all parents.

### **Mothers under 25**

The proportion of mothers under 25 entering employment is lower (35%) than for all parents (38%). This remains the case for sustained employment. For example, 12% of mothers under 25 sustained employment for 12 months compared to 19% for all parents. While job starts are higher for mothers under 25 than disabled and lone parents and 3 month job outcomes are similar, this group note a higher drop-off for longer sustainment periods compared to the other mentioned groups.

### **Parents with three or more children**

The proportion of parents with three or more children entering employment is closer (37%) to all parents (38%) than previously mentioned groups. This remains the case for sustained employment. For example, 18% of parents with three or more children sustained employment for 12 months compared to 19% for all parents.



### **Youngest child under 12 months**

The proportion of parents with a youngest child under 12 months entering employment is the same as parents with three or more children at 37%. Parents with a youngest child under 12 months have lower sustainment rates compared to all parents. For example, 15% of parents with a youngest child under 12 months sustained employment for 12 months compared to 19% for all parents.

### **Parents from a minority ethnic background**

The proportion of parents from a minority ethnic background entering employment is two percentage points higher (40%) than all parents (38%). This remains the case for 3 and 6 months sustained employment but drops to the same proportion at 12 months sustainment (19%).

The Scottish Government has identified a number of 'priority family groups' at risk of child poverty. Further information can be found here: [Tackling child poverty priority families overview \(opens in a new window\)](#). Please also see supplementary Background and Methodology Report for further details on definitions and data comparisons.

## Previous editions of this publication

Previous editions of this publication can be accessed via [Scotland's Devolved Employment Services Statistics \(opens in a new window\)](#).

This publication has previously reported on Work First Scotland (WFS), Work Able Scotland (WAS), and the Health & Work Support pilot in Dundee and Fife. These services have now closed. The final statistics for WFS and WAS were published 26 February 2020 ([Scotland's Devolved Employment Services: statistical summary - February 2020 \(opens in a new window\)](#)), and the final statistics for the Health & Work Support pilot were published 27 May 2020 ([Scotland's Devolved Employment Services: statistical summary - May 2020 \(opens in a new window\)](#)).

Other services operate within Scotland, including those run by Local Authorities and third sector providers, which are not included in this publication.

## Coherence

Links to other relevant documents and published collections:

- [Fair Start Scotland Years Four and Five Evaluation Report \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [Fair Start Scotland Year Three Evaluation Report \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [Fair Start Scotland Year Two Evaluation Report \(opens in a new window\)](#)
- [Fair Start Scotland Year One Evaluation Report \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [Fair Start Scotland: Year 4 Annual Report \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [Fair Start Scotland: Year 4 Annual Report Accompanying Statistics \(opens in new window\)](#)
- [A range of Labour Market Statistics for Scotland are published by the Scottish Government: Labour market statistics \(opens in new window\)](#)

# Glossary of Acronyms

**Table 3: Glossary of acronyms used in this publication**

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
FSS	Fair Start Scotland
LTHC	Long-term Health Condition
OSR	Office for Statistics Regulation
UK	United Kingdom
WAS	Work Able Scotland
WFS	Work First Scotland

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**Next Update:** February 2025