

Labour Market Statistics for 16 to 24 year olds: Scotland and the United Kingdom

Statistics from the Office for National
Statistics Annual Population Survey,
October 2023 to September 2024,
first published 22 January 2025

This publication contains the latest estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for 16 to 24 year olds. Estimates are for Scotland and the United Kingdom and cover the period October 2023 to September 2024. Data are sourced from the Annual Population Survey (APS), first released on 11 December 2024 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

ONS have carried out analysis to assess the quality of APS estimates. The impact of falling sample sizes in addition to the APS estimates not being reweighted to use the latest population totals have led ONS, in agreement with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), to temporarily suspend the accreditation of all APS-based outputs. All ONS APS-based outputs will be re-designated as official statistics in development until further review.

Further details on this can be found in the exchange between ONS and OSR:
[Michael Keoghan to Siobhan Tuohy-Smith: Request to suspend APS accreditation – Office for Statistics Regulation](#)



Key Points

The latest ONS Annual Population Survey (APS) data are for October 2023 to September 2024. The latest estimates for 16 to 24 year olds in Scotland show the employment rate had decreased over the year, the unemployment rate had increased, and the economic inactivity rate had increased.

In Scotland in October 2023 to September 2024:

- the estimated employment rate for 16 to 24 year olds was 55.9 per cent
- the estimated unemployment rate for 16 to 24 year olds was 10.4 per cent
- the estimated economic inactivity rate for 16 to 24 year olds was 37.6 per cent

Compared with the previous year:

- the employment rate for 16 to 24 year olds decreased by 1.0 percentage point
- the unemployment rate for 16 to 24 year olds increased by 0.7 percentage points
- the inactivity rate for 16 to 24 year olds increased by 0.6 percentage points

Compared with the United Kingdom as a whole:

- the estimated employment rate for 16 to 24 year olds in Scotland was higher (55.9 per cent compared to 52.0 per cent)
- the estimated unemployment rate for 16 to 24 year olds in Scotland was lower (10.4 per cent compared to 11.4 per cent)
- the estimated inactivity rate for 16 to 24 year olds in Scotland was lower (37.6 per cent compared to 41.3 per cent)

Estimates by sex and local authority have been removed from this publication to allow for additional quality assessment of the data. This is due to increased uncertainty around the survey estimates. While estimates remain robust for headline measures at Scotland level, an increasing number of estimates for smaller groups of the population are based on a small sample size which should be used with caution. Further information on the quality of the APS can be found in the [introduction](#).

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Introduction

This publication contains the latest estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for 16 to 24 year olds. Estimates are for Scotland and the United Kingdom and cover the period October 2023 to September 2024. Data are sourced from the Annual Population Survey (APS); first released on 11 December 2024 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland

These statistics are official statistics. Official statistics are statistics that are produced by crown bodies, those acting on behalf of crown bodies, or those specified in statutory orders, as defined in the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#).

Scottish Government statistics are regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

More information about Scottish Government statistics is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

About the Annual Population Survey

The APS combines results from the ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) with the English, Welsh and Scottish LFS boosts. This provides a larger annual sample of households. Compared with the quarterly LFS, the annual data is statistically more robust. Estimates for smaller populations (including those aged 16 to 24 years) are more accurate as a result.

The population totals used for the latest APS estimates differ from the population totals used in the reweighted LFS estimates and use projected growth rates from Real Time Information data for UK, EU and non-EU populations based on 2021 patterns. The total population used for the APS therefore does not take into account any changes in migration, birth rates, death rates, and so on, since June 2021, so level estimates may be under- or over-estimating the true values and should be used with caution. Estimates of rates will, however, be robust.

How Response Rates Are Impacting the Annual Population Survey

ONS have carried out analysis to assess the quality of APS estimates. The impact of falling sample sizes in addition to the APS estimates not being reweighted to use the latest population totals have led ONS, in agreement with the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), to temporarily suspend the accreditation of all APS-based outputs. All ONS APS-based outputs will be re-designated as official statistics in development until further review.

Further details on this can be found in the exchange between ONS and OSR: [Michael Keoghan to Siobhan Tuohy-Smith: Request to suspend APS accreditation – Office for Statistics Regulation](#)

The Scottish Government's Labour Market Statistics for 16 to 24 year olds publication includes employment, unemployment and economic inactivity estimates for 16 to 24 year olds. These statistics are taken from the APS and therefore the estimates included will no longer be Accredited Official Statistics.

We continue to be transparent with our users around the quality of the APS estimates used within our releases and provide guidance on the use and limitations of the data. Please note, due to the falling sample sizes in recent years, the increased uncertainty around the estimates included in this release can be assessed using the confidence intervals provided. We have assessed the quality of the estimates for 16-24 year olds using the current ONS [Measuring and reporting reliability of Labour Force Survey and Annual Population Survey estimates](#) guidance and additional analysis of an estimate's coefficient of variation.

After considering the quality of the estimates for 16-24 year olds and breakdowns such as sex and full-time education status, we have decided to remove all breakdowns which would typically have been included within the outputs for this release to allow for additional quality assessment of the data to be carried out. Therefore, this publication only includes the headline 16-24 year old estimates.

We continue to assess the quality of APS estimates included within our publications and will provide updates to our users. On 14th November 2024, the Chief Statistician published a statement on the Annual Population survey, this can be found here: [Statistics Statement from the Chief Statistician on the Annual Population Survey - Statistics](#)

Labour Market Transformation

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) are transforming the Labour Force Survey (LFS) to enable a more adaptive and responsive survey to meet user needs and maintain the quality of labour market statistics. They are publishing articles on the transformation. In December 2024, ONS published an article on the [latest progress of the Labour Force Survey transformation](#).

ONS also welcome any feedback on this latest update and their plans. Please email them at labour.market.transformation@ons.gov.uk to tell them what you think.

Employment

In October 2023 to September 2024, an estimated 310,100 people aged 16 to 24 were in employment in Scotland. This is 4,500 less than the number of 16 to 24 year olds employed in October 2022 to September 2023.

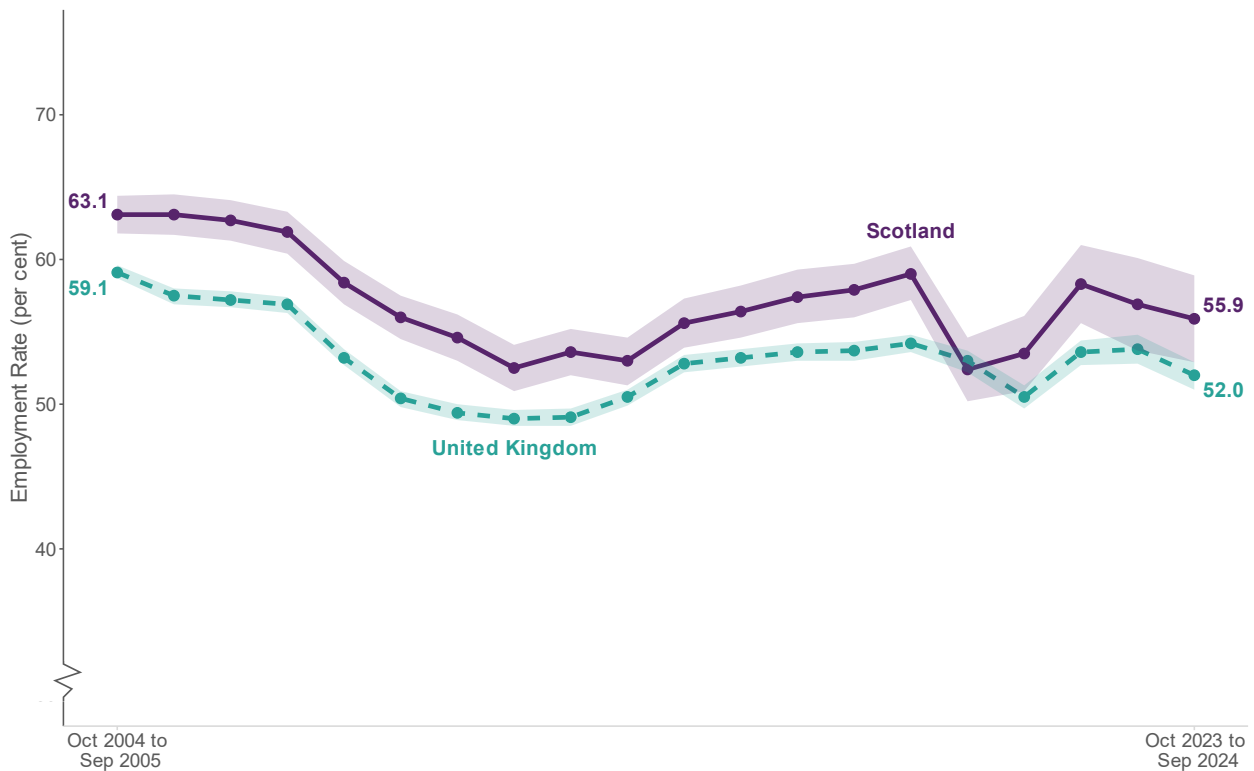
The estimated employment rate for 16 to 24 year olds was 55.9 per cent in October 2023 to September 2024. This was 1.0 percentage point (pp) lower than the year before (56.9 per cent) and 3.1 pp lower than in October 2018 to September 2019 (59.0 per cent). October 2018 to September 2019 is the last data point in the October to September series before the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the United Kingdom, the estimated employment rate for 16 to 24 year olds was 52.0 per cent. This was 1.9 pp lower than a year ago (53.8 per cent) and 2.2 pp lower than in October 2018 to September 2019 (54.2 per cent).

The change over the year and since October 2018 to September 2019 for 16 to 24 year olds in the United Kingdom represent statistically significant changes.

Chart 1: The employment rate for people aged 16 to 24 in Scotland has exceeded the United Kingdom rate in all years with the exception of October 2019 to September 2020

Employment rate estimates for people aged 16 to 24, Scotland and the United Kingdom, October 2004 to September 2005 through to October 2023 to September 2024



Source: Annual Population Survey, October to September datasets, ONS

Shaded areas represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Unemployment

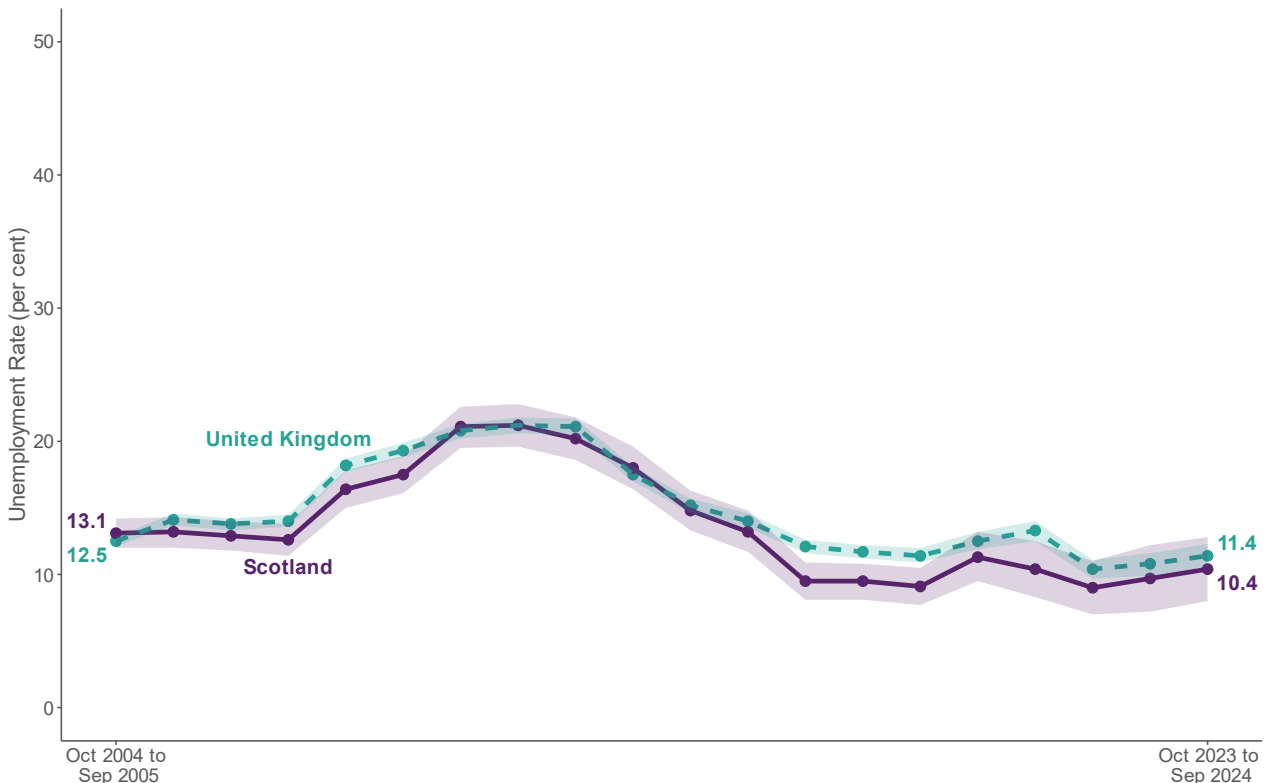
In October 2023 to September 2024, an estimated 36,100 people aged 16 to 24 were unemployed in Scotland. This is 2,300 more than the number of unemployed 16 to 24 year olds in October 2022 to September 2023.

The estimated unemployment rate for 16 to 24 year olds was 10.4 per cent in October 2023 to September 2024. This was 0.7 percentage points (pp) higher than a year ago (9.7 per cent) and 1.3 pp higher than in October 2018 to September 2019 (9.1 per cent). October 2018 to September 2019 is the last data point in the October to September series before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the United Kingdom, the estimated unemployment rate for 16 to 24 year olds was 11.4 per cent. This was 0.7 pp higher than the year before (10.8 per cent) and the same as in October 2018 to September 2019.

Chart 3: The unemployment rate for people aged 16 to 24 in Scotland had been broadly similar to the United Kingdom rate until October 2015 to September 2016 when Scotland started seeing a consistently lower unemployment rate but in the last few years both rates have returned to being broadly similar

Unemployment rate estimates for people aged 16 to 24, Scotland and the United Kingdom, October 2004 to September 2005 through to October 2023 to September 2024



Source: Annual Population Survey, October to September datasets, ONS

Shaded areas represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Economic Inactivity

In October 2023 to September 2024, there were an estimated 208,600 economically inactive 16 to 24 year olds in Scotland. This is 4,100 higher than the number of inactive 16 to 24 year olds in October 2022 to September 2023.

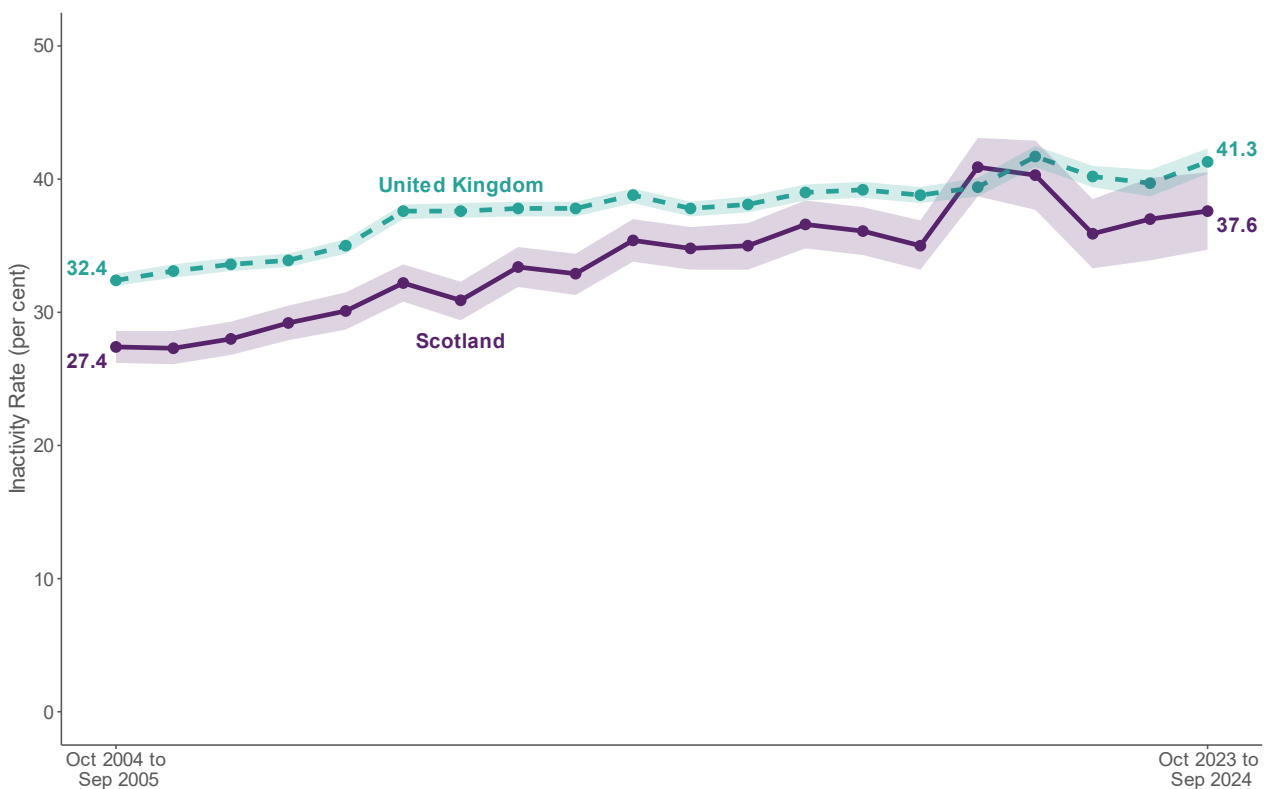
The estimated inactivity rate was 37.6 per cent in October 2023 to September 2024. This was 0.6 percentage points (pp) higher than a year ago (37.0 per cent) and 2.5 pp higher than in October 2018 to September 2019 (35.0 per cent). October 2018 to September 2019 is the last data point in the October to September series before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the United Kingdom, the estimated inactivity rate for 16 to 24 year olds was 41.3 per cent. This was 1.6 pp higher than a year ago (39.7 per cent) and 2.5 pp higher than in October 2018 to September 2019 (38.8 per cent).

The change over the year and since October 2018 to September 2019 for 16 to 24 year olds in the United Kingdom represent statistically significant changes.

Chart 5: The gap between the economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 24 in Scotland and the United Kingdom has typically been narrowing over time with the rate for Scotland lower than the rate for the United Kingdom in all years except October 2019 to September 2020

Economic inactivity rate estimates for persons aged 16 to 24, Scotland and the United Kingdom, October 2004 to September 2005 through to October 2023 to September 2024



Source: Annual Population Survey, October to September datasets, ONS

Shaded areas represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Glossary

Rates: Rates represent the proportion of the population or subgroup with a certain characteristic. They allow changes in the labour market to be interpreted in a wider context by accounting for changes in the population or the number of people who are economically active. Rates can be calculated for different age groups.

Within this publication, the reference population for employment and economic inactivity rates is the overall 16 to 24 year old population. For unemployment, the reference population is the active population aged 16 to 24.

Economically active: The population who are either in employment or unemployed.

Economically inactive: People not in employment and who do not meet the criteria for unemployment. This group includes:

- those who want a job but who have not been seeking work in the last four weeks
- those who want a job and are seeking work but not available to start
- those who do not want a job

For example, students not working or seeking work and those in retirement.

Employment: There are two main ways of looking at employment: the number of people with jobs or the number of jobs. These two concepts represent different things as one person can have more than one job. The number of people in employment is measured via the Labour Force Survey and consist of those aged 16 and over. Employment measures the number of people who did at least one hour of paid work or had a job they were temporarily away from. People who do unpaid work in a family business and people on Government-supported training and employment programs are also included. This is in accordance with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition.

Unemployment: The ILO definition of unemployment covers people who are 16 years and over:

- without a job, have been actively seeking work in the past four weeks and are available to start work in the next fortnight

or

- out of work, have accepted a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks

Employment rate: The proportion of people aged between 16 and 24 years who are in employment.

Unemployment rate: The proportion of economically active people aged 16 to 24 years who are unemployed.

Economic inactivity rate: The proportion of people aged between 16 and 24 years who are economically inactive.

Sex: Sex is self-reported by respondents participating in the ONS Annual Population Survey (APS). Analysis is based on “sex” rather than “gender”. No documentation is asked for by the interviewer or provided by the respondent.

Data and Methodology

Reliability of estimates

Estimates from the ONS Annual Population Survey for October 2004 to September 2005 through to October 2023 to September 2024 are presented. For the latest time period, the sample size is around 8,900 households in Scotland.

The ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS) are sample surveys. As such, these estimates are subject to an associated sampling error that decreases as the sample size increases. It is the nature of sampling variability that the smaller a group is the (proportionately) less precise an estimate is. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) have published a detailed guidance note on this. Shading is one method used by ONS to indicate where estimates should be used with caution.

Employees who were furloughed between April 2020 and the end of September 2021 were classed as employed, but temporarily away from work. This is consistent with labour market definitions [outlined by ONS](#).

Confidence Intervals

Confidence limits can be used to assess the range of values that the true value lies between. 95 per cent confidence intervals for rates are included in all tables and charts.

What does the 95 per cent confidence limit mean?

If, for example, we have an APS estimate and confidence limit of 63 per cent \pm 0.27, this means that 19 times out of 20 we would expect the true rate to lie between 62.73 per cent and 63.27 per cent. Only in exceptional circumstances (1 in 20 times) would we expect the true rate to be outside the confidence interval around the APS estimate. Thus the smaller the confidence limits, the more reliable the estimate is.

The confidence limits use a design factor of 1, which may not be likely in some cases but given the lack of further information an average design factor of 1 is assumed to be reasonable. Further information on estimating confidence intervals can be found in the [LFS user guidance](#).

In surveys with small samples where rates and proportions are calculated close to 0 per cent or 100 per cent confidence intervals can sometimes look unrealistic as a result of the techniques used.

Statistical Significance

Statistical significance is based on 95 per cent Confidence Intervals. Statistical significance means that the change was large enough that it is unlikely to have resulted only from the variable nature of the sample.

Quality Assurance

Annual Population Survey microdata is collected and produced by the ONS. Scottish Government statisticians receive early access to perform quality assurance checks.

When producing estimates for this publication, Scottish Government statisticians conduct in-depth quality assurance.

These checks include:

- analysis of the sample size obtained in the collection process
- production of estimates from the microdata using statistical software and relevant coding
- cross checking of coding between team members

Further checks relate to:

- coherence across all data tables
- crosschecking historical time series data with previously published results
- benchmarking the results against other relevant data sources for this age group

The estimates in Table 1 of the associated spreadsheet are verified with estimates published by ONS on [nomis](#).

How to access background or source data

In addition to the estimates in this publication, the full time-series of headline estimates on labour market statistics for 16 to 24 year olds are available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

ONS also release rolling quarterly Annual Population Survey datasets covering the periods January to December, April to March, and July to June. The data for these time periods have not been used or presented within this publication. The data for these time periods are available on [nomis](#).

Context

These statistics are produced by Scottish Government Labour Market Statisticians. The Labour Market Statistics team is located within the Labour Market and Employability Statistics Unit, part of the Office of the Chief Economic Adviser. Labour Market Statistics are used for policy monitoring, research, services planning and delivery.

The APS is used to measure a number of indicators in the Scottish Government [National Performance Framework](#) (NPF). The estimates help to measure progress towards high level outcomes, Education and Fair Work and Business. Where possible, information on the NPF split by age is published on the [Equality Evidence Finder](#).

A range of labour market statistics for Scotland, including disability and ethnicity, are available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

Tell us what you think

We are always interested to hear from our users about how our statistics are used, and how they can be improved.

Enquiries

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Next Release

Statistics from the Office for National Statistics Annual Population Survey, January to December 2024 will be released in the next iteration of this publication.