

# Scotland's Labour Market Insights

**January 2026**

# Key Points

The Scottish Government's [Labour Market Trends](#) publication mainly reports on headline Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labour Force Survey estimates for Scotland.

This Scotland's Labour Market Insights report contains more detailed estimates describing those who are employed, unemployed or economically inactive as well as information from vacancy and business insights sources.

## People in work

- an estimated 11.3% of employees aged 18 and over earned less than the real living wage in 2025
- the 35 to 49 year old age group saw the largest growth in the number of payrolled employees over the year to December 2025 while the 65 and over age group saw the largest percentage growth in payrolled employees over the year to December 2025
- over the year to October 2025, payrolled employee growth varied by industry sector. The Finance and Insurance sector saw the largest growth in the number of payrolled employees over the year while the Energy Production and Supply industry sector saw the largest percentage growth in payrolled employees over the year
- real median earnings for payrolled employees, adjusted for inflation (using the [Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs \(CPIH\)](#)), grew by 0.6% over the year to December 2025

## People not in work

- the majority of unemployed people aged 16 and over have been unemployed for less than six months (an estimated 57.9% of unemployed people in October 2024 to September 2025)
- “long-term sick or disabled” was the main reason given by respondents to the survey for being economically inactive in Scotland. In October 2024 to September 2025, an estimated 33.8% of inactive people gave their reason for being inactive as “long-term sick or disabled”. This is lower than a year ago
- in October 2024 to September 2025, an estimated 18.1% of people aged 16 to 64 who were economically inactive reported that they wanted to work

## People moving into work

- the number of new online job adverts in Scotland in November 2025 was 45,570, 15% (6,010) higher than in November 2024
- ONS's Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) data shows that an estimated 22.8% of businesses reported difficulties in recruiting

employees in November 2025. The proportion of businesses reporting difficulties has generally been on a downward trend since March 2022, with the proportion being fairly constant since June 2025

## **Important information in relation to data sources**

The ONS Labour Force Survey is not a large and robust enough sample to produce reliable estimates for smaller groups of the Scottish population. There has also been increased volatility in Labour Force Survey estimates in recent years, further information is available in the ONS [Labour Force Survey: planned improvements and its reintroduction estimates methodology](#) article which provides information on the actions being taken to improve sample sizes. In January 2026, ONS published an [LFS data quality article](#) to provide an update on the quality of the UK level estimates based on the latest calendar quarter data.

The ONS Annual Population Survey (APS) combines results from the ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) with the local LFS boosts, providing a larger sample for smaller groups of the population.

ONS conducted analysis to assess the impact of falling sample sizes over recent years on the quality of APS estimates. ONS state that although the APS estimates are robust at National and headline regional level, there are concerns with the quality of estimates for smaller groups of the population, for example local authority level estimates. This assessment of the APS estimates alongside the fact that APS estimates have not been reweighted to new population estimates has led to the suspension of the accreditation of all APS-based outputs. 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 \(statisticsauthority.gov.uk\)](#)

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 included in this release using the current ONS [Measuring and reporting reliability of Labour Force Survey and Annual Population Survey estimates](#) guidance.

It is still appropriate to use the APS estimates included in this release. However, users are advised to note the increased uncertainty around these estimates in recent years.

We will continue to be transparent with our users around the quality of the APS estimates used within our releases by providing guidance on the use and limitations of the data. On 14 November 2024, the Chief Statistician published a [statement on the ONS Annual Population Survey](#) which noted our intention to publish our own quality assessment of the APS data.

On 2 April 2025, we published the first phase of our [Scottish Government's Quality Assessment of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey and Annual](#)

[Population Survey data for Scotland](#) which includes a detailed assessment of the APS estimates included in this release.

Based on the current data quality rules and data confidence ratings we considered as part of our quality assessment of the APS data, the estimates included in this release remain robust and are of high or moderate confidence unless otherwise stated.

High confidence indicates that the estimates can be used to draw accurate conclusions and there is substantial trust in the information presented, which is likely to provide a good reflection of reality.

Moderate confidence indicates that estimates are a suitable, but incomplete, measure of reality and conclusions can be drawn but limitations should be understood.

We will continue to assess the quality of APS estimates included within our publications and provide updates to our users.

## **Changes to Labour Market Statistics in Scotland**

On 29 October 2025, we published a paper outlining the Scottish Government's decision to discontinue funding for the local LFS boost for Scotland.

The [Change to Labour Market Statistics in Scotland: What you need to know](#) paper assesses the potential impact on labour market statistics for Scotland and sets out our plans to ensure access to high-quality labour market statistics for Scotland going forward.

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# People in work

## Employment rate (LFS)

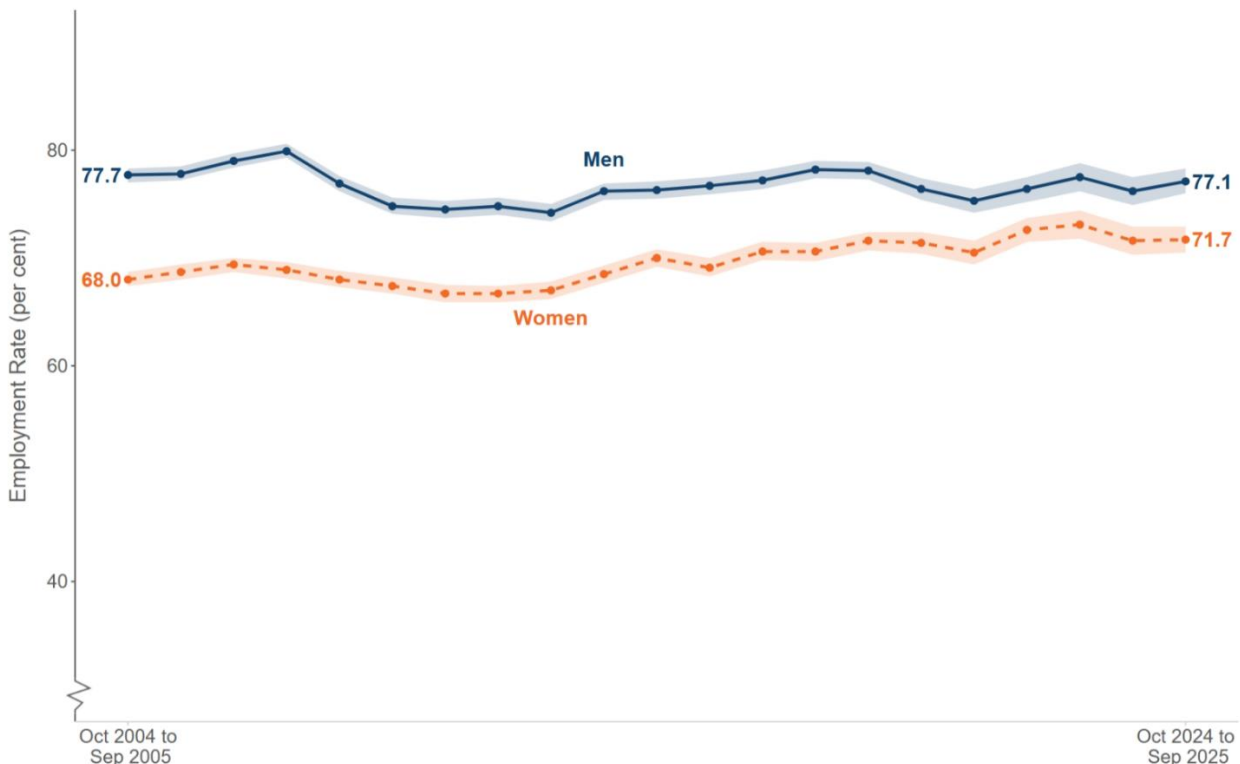
The employment rate (the proportion of people aged 16 to 64 in work) in Scotland based on the ONS Labour Force Survey was estimated at 74.7% in September to November 2025. Scotland's employment rate was below the UK rate of 75.1%.

## Employment rate by sex (APS)

The employment rate for men in Scotland has been consistently above the employment rate for women in Scotland. The gap had typically been narrowing over time, but has widened since October 2021 to September 2022.

**Figure 1: The estimated employment rate for women in Scotland has been slowly increasing over time, from 68.0% in October 2004 to September 2005 to 71.7% in October 2024 to September 2025**

Employment rate estimates for persons aged 16 to 64 by sex, Scotland, year ending September 2005 to year ending September 2025



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

Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

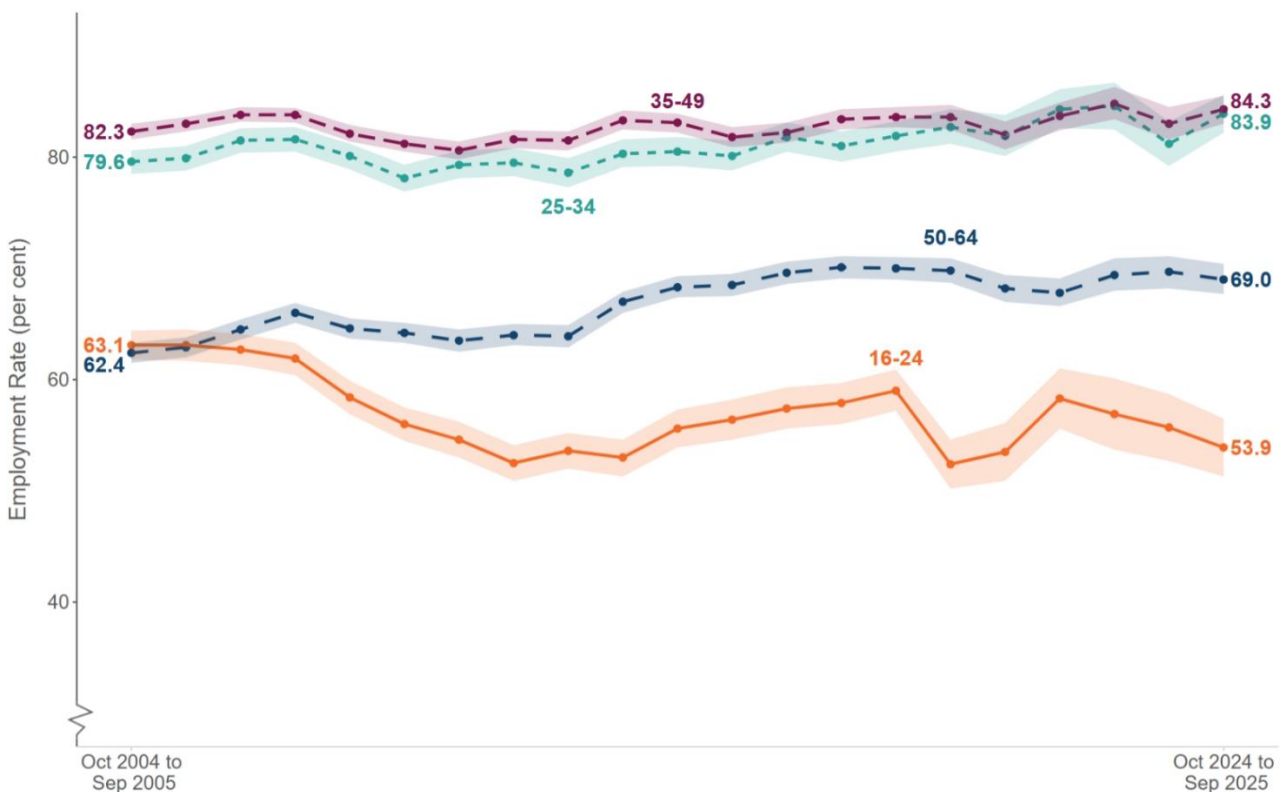
## Employment rate by age (APS)

Employment in Scotland varies by age group. As may be expected, younger and older age groups have lower employment rates.

The employment rate for 16 to 24 year olds has been consistently lower than the employment rate for any other age group since October 2006 to September 2007. This is due to higher numbers of people aged 16 to 24 being in education and therefore economically inactive.

### Figure 2: The estimated employment rate for those aged 16 to 24 in Scotland has been lower than any other age group since October 2006 to September 2007

Employment rate estimates for persons aged 16 to 64 by age group, Scotland, year ending September 2005 to year ending September 2025



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

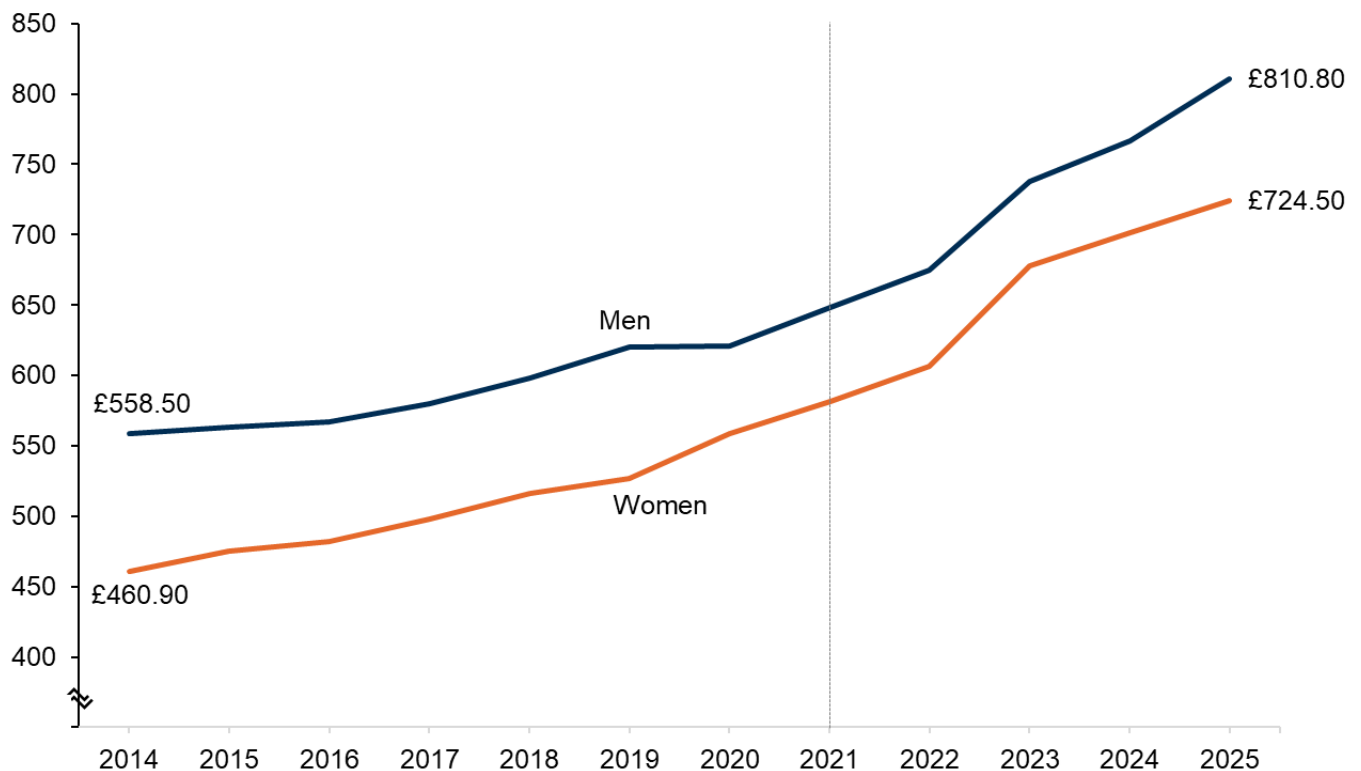
Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

## Earnings (ASHE)

Gross median weekly earnings for full-time men in Scotland have consistently been above the earnings for women in Scotland. In nominal terms, median gross full-time weekly earnings for women increased by 3.3% over the year to £724.50, compared with an increase of 5.8% for men to £810.80. In real terms, median gross full-time weekly earnings for women decreased by 0.8% over the year, compared with an increase of 1.5% for men.

### Figure 3: In nominal terms, median full-time weekly earnings have been gradually increasing over time for both men and women in Scotland

Gross median weekly earnings in nominal terms for full-time men and women, April 2014 to April 2025



Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), ONS

Notes:

1. Estimates for 2025 data are provisional.
2. Employees are on adult rates (i.e. excluding those on youth, training and apprentice rates), pay is unaffected by absence unless furloughed
3. Full-time is defined as employees working more than 30 paid hours per week (or 25 or more for the teaching professions).
4. Discontinuity in 2021 is due to change in occupational coding from SOC 2010 to SOC 2020.
5. Due to methodological changes, data for 2023 onwards might not be directly comparable to data for 2022 and earlier years.
6. Data for 2020 and 2021 are subject to more uncertainty and should be treated with caution because of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on the data and collection.

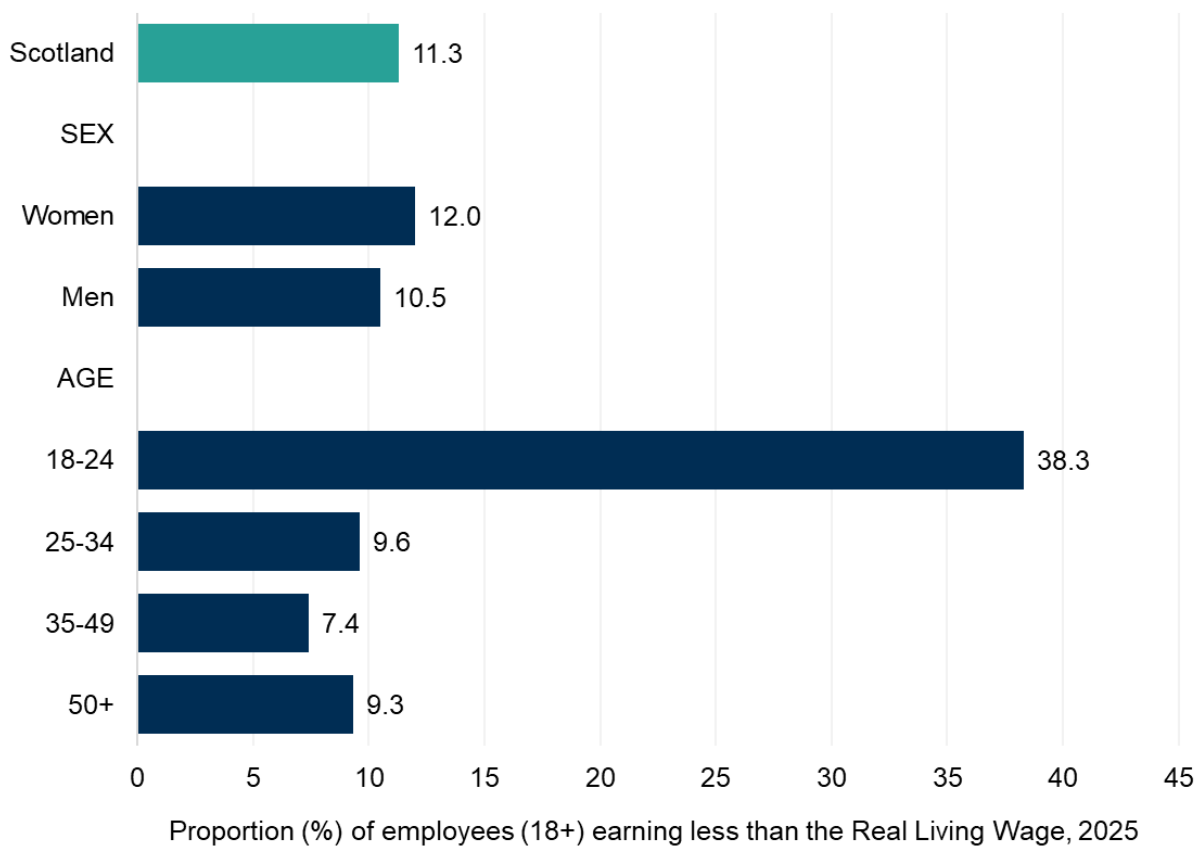
## Real Living Wage (ASHE)

The following analysis is based on the real living wage rate of £12.60. Please see the [Living Wage Foundation](#) for more information on how this is calculated.

An estimated 11.3% of employees aged 18 and over earned less than the real living wage in 2025.

**Figure 4: In 2025, the proportion of employees earning less than the Real Living Wage was higher for women (12.0%) compared with men (10.5%) and for young people aged 18-24 years (38.3%) compared with other age groups**

Proportion of employees (18+) earning less than the Real Living Wage by sex and age group, Scotland, 2025



Source: Scottish Government Analysis of Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), ONS

Notes:

1. Estimates for 2025 data are provisional.
  2. Employees are on adult rates (i.e. excluding those on youth, training and apprentice rates) and pay is unaffected by absence
  3. Statistical robustness - all estimates are considered precise except the estimates for 25 to 34 year olds and 35 to 49 year olds which are considered of reasonable quality
- For further information, and the latest official estimates of earnings, the gender pay gap and Real Living Wage for employees in Scotland from the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), please visit: [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2025 - gov.scot](#)

## **Payrolled Employees (HMRC PAYE RTI)**

This information is based on monthly estimates of paid employees and their pay from HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) data.

Early seasonally adjusted estimates for December 2025 indicate that there were 2.45 million payrolled employees in Scotland, a decrease of 0.4% (-9,000) compared with December 2024.

## **Payrolled employees by age (HMRC PAYE RTI)**

HMRC data published in December 2025 shows that annual change in payrolled employees varies by age.

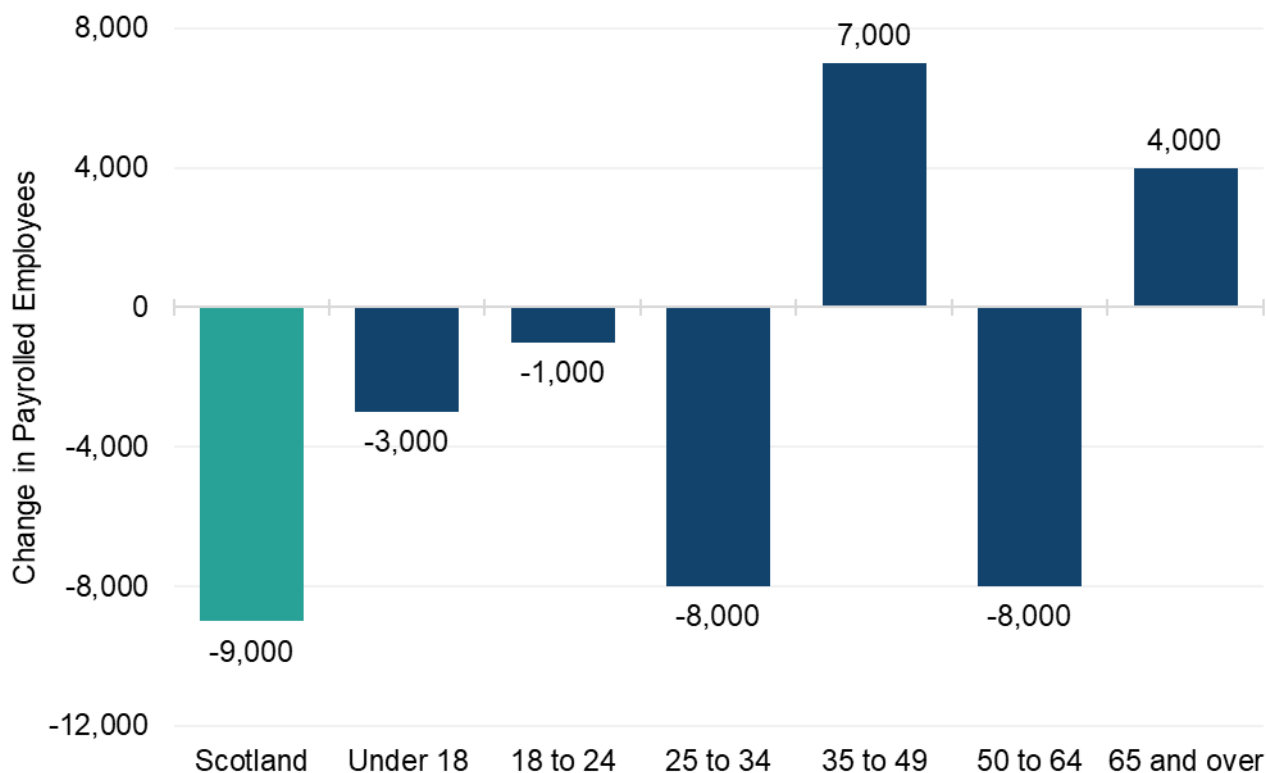
Of the estimated 2.45 million payrolled employees in Scotland in December 2025, 32.5% were aged 35 to 49 and 28.5% were aged 50 to 64.

The 35 to 49 age group saw the largest increase in the estimated number of payrolled employees over the year to December 2025 (up 7,000). The 25 to 34 and 50 to 64 age groups saw the largest decreases over this period (each down 8,000).

The 65 and over age group saw the largest percentage increase over the year (up 4.6%). The under 18 age group saw the largest percentage decrease over the year (down 6.3%).

### Figure 5: The 35 to 49 age group saw the largest increase in payrolled employees since December 2024

Annual Change in Payrolled employees by age estimates, Scotland, December 2024 to December 2025



Source: PAYE RTI, all age groups, seasonally adjusted, HMRC

Data for Figure 5 can be obtained from [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted](#) data released on 20 January 2026.

Changes over the year are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Note: Early estimates for December 2025 are provided to give an indication of the likely level of payrolled employees in the latest period. The figures are based on around 85% of information being available. They are considered of lower quality and may be subject to revision in next month's release when between 98% to 99% of data will be available.

## **Payrolled employees by industry (HMRC PAYE RTI)**

HMRC data published in October 2025 shows that annual change in payrolled employees varies by industry sector.

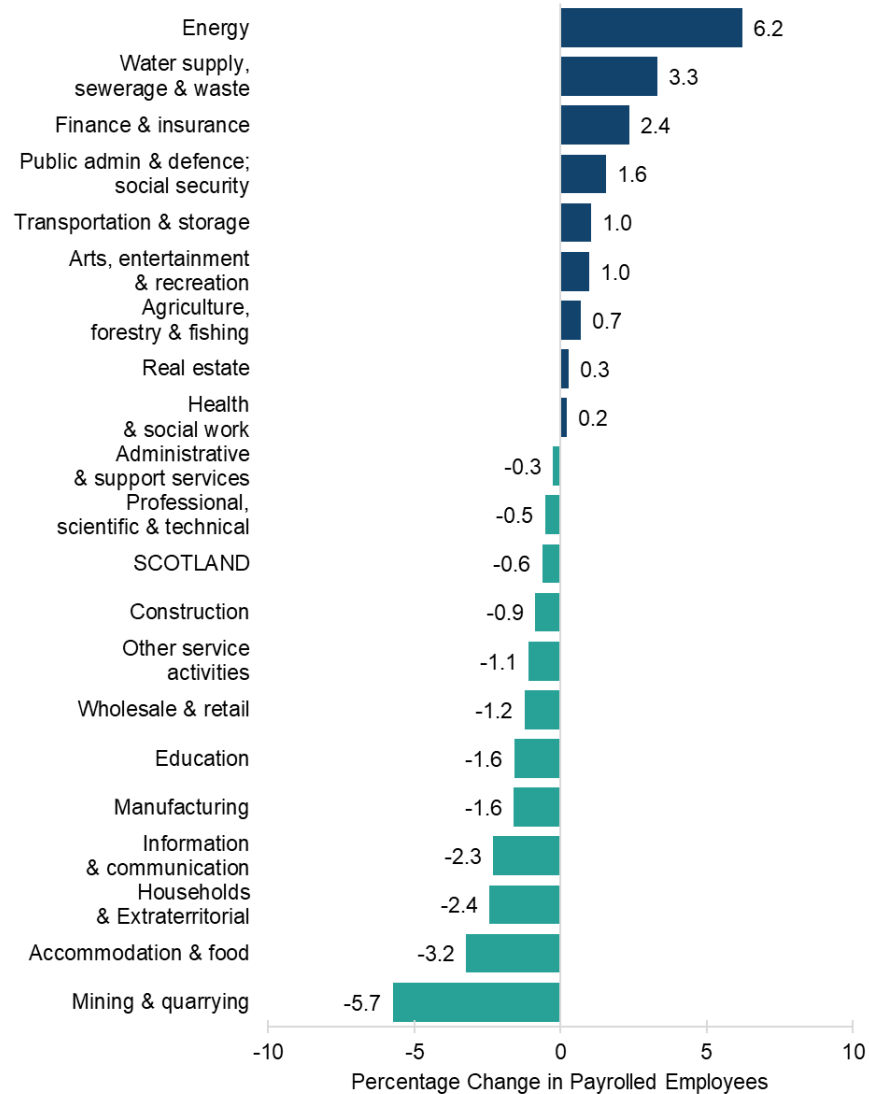
Of the estimated 2.45 million payrolled employees in Scotland in October 2025, the highest numbers were employed in the Health and Social Work (15.3%), Wholesale and Retail (13.4%), and Education (13.2%) industry sectors. The lowest numbers of payrolled employees were employed in the Households and Extraterritorial organisations (0.3%), Water Supply, Sewerage and Waste (0.7%), Mining and Quarrying (0.7%), and Energy Production and Supply (0.8%) industries.

The Finance and Insurance sector saw the largest growth in the number of payrolled employees over the year (up 2,000). The Accommodation and Food Services sector saw the largest decrease in the number of payrolled employees (down 6,000).

The Energy Production and Supply industry sector has shown the largest percentage growth in payrolled employees over the year to October 2025. Eleven industry sectors showed a decrease over the year to October 2025.

**Figure 6: The Energy sector has seen the largest percentage increase in payrolled employees since October 2024**

Annual Percentage Change in Payrolled employees by industry sector estimates, Scotland, October 2024 to October 2025



Source: PAYE RTI, all industries, seasonally adjusted, HMRC

Data for Figure 6 can be obtained from [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted](#) data released on 13 November 2025.

Industry sectors are based on the ONS [UK Standard Industrial Classification \(SIC\) codes](#).

Notes: Based on early October 2025 estimates published in November 2025. October 2025 estimates are based on around 85% of information available at the time of publication and may be subject to more significant revisions. Payrolled employees by industry sector data is updated quarterly. The next estimates, comparing early estimates for January 2026 with January 2025, will be published in February 2026.

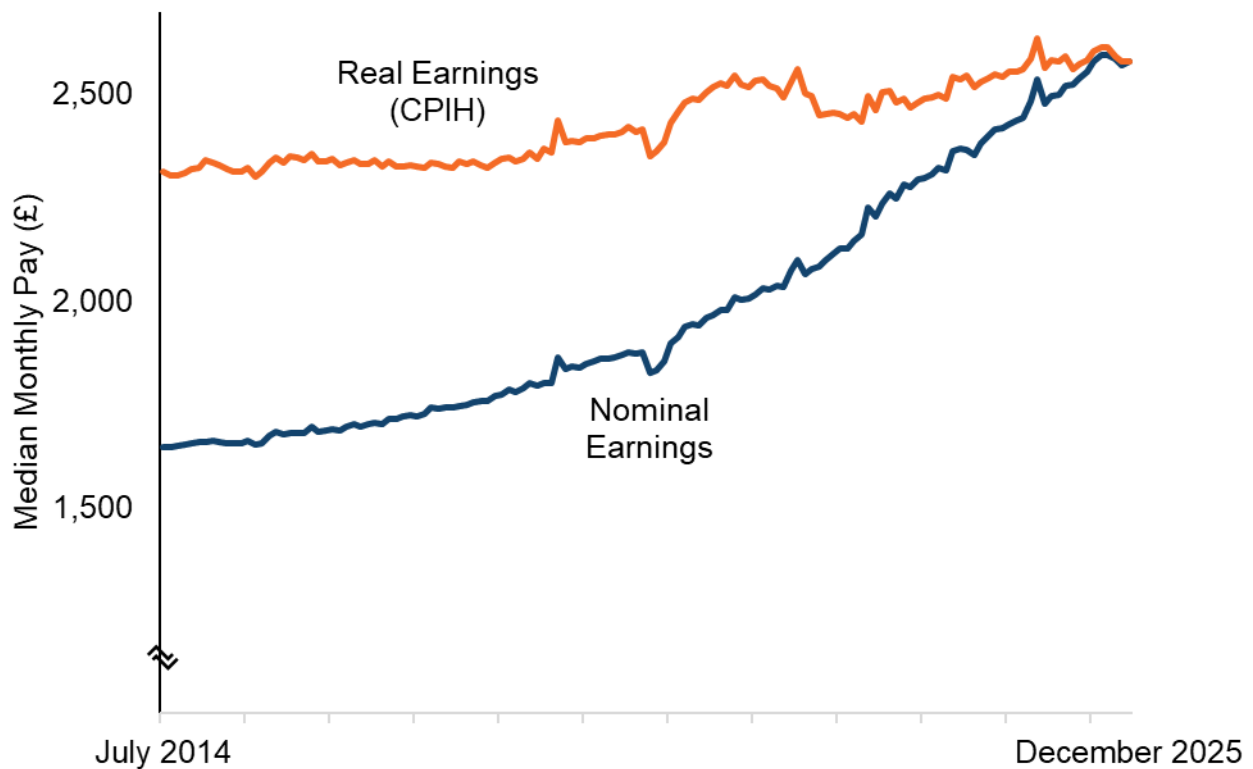
## Median earnings for payrolled employees (HMRC PAYE RTI)

Early estimates for December 2025 indicate that median monthly pay for payrolled employees in Scotland was £2,580, an increase of 4.2% in nominal terms compared to the same period the previous year.

Real median monthly pay for payrolled employees in Scotland, adjusted for inflation (using the [Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs \(CPIH\)](#)), grew by 0.6% over the year to December 2025.

**Figure 7: Nominal pay for payrolled employees has increased steadily over time. Real pay for payrolled employees is above the pre-pandemic level.**

Median Real and Nominal Monthly Pay for payrolled employees, seasonally adjusted, Scotland, July 2014 to December 2025



Source: PAYE RTI, all industries, seasonally adjusted, HMRC and CPIH, ONS

# People not in work

## Unemployment rate (LFS)

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Unemployment measures those who are available for and actively seeking employment.

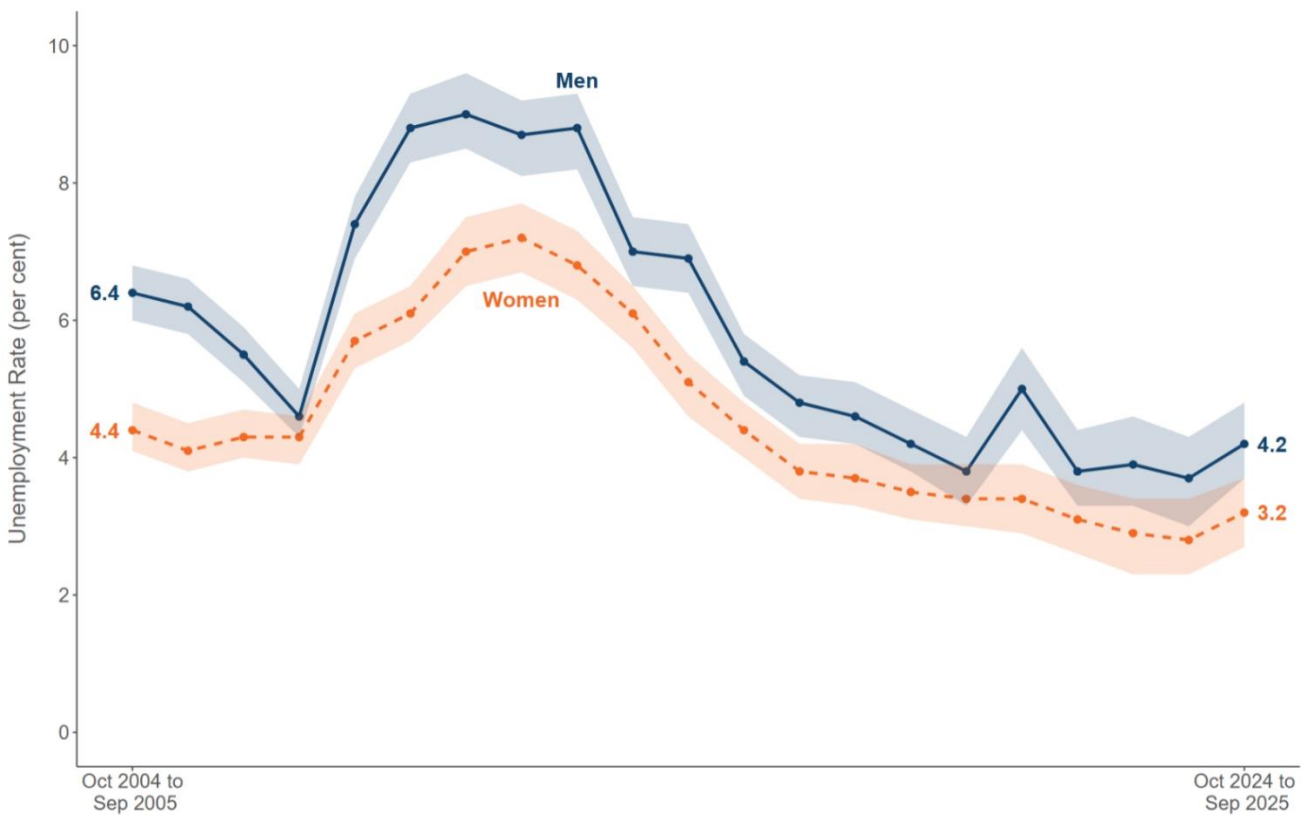
The unemployment rate for people aged 16 years and over in Scotland based on the ONS Labour Force Survey was estimated at 3.7% in September to November 2025. Scotland's unemployment rate was below the UK rate of 5.1% for this period.

## Unemployment rate by sex (APS)

The unemployment rate for men in Scotland has been consistently higher than the unemployment rate for women. In October 2024 to September 2025, the estimated unemployment rate for men in Scotland was 4.2% and for women was 3.2%.

**Figure 8: Unemployment rate estimates are higher for men than for women in Scotland across the time series. The latest estimates for men and women are both close to historic lows in the October to September series**

Unemployment rate estimates for persons aged 16 and over by sex, Scotland, year ending September 2005 to year ending September 2025



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

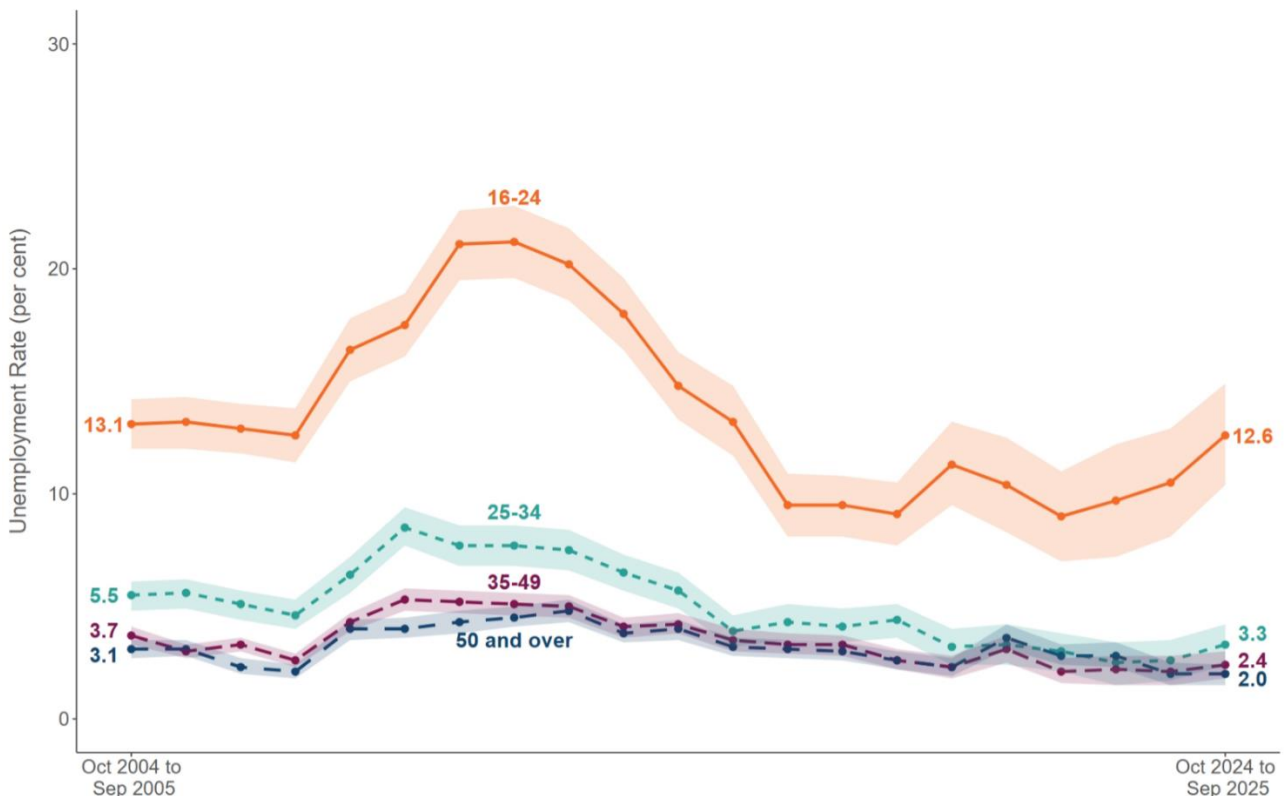
Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

## Unemployment rate by age (APS)

Across the series, the unemployment rate for those aged 16 to 24 has been consistently higher than the unemployment rate for any other age group. The rate has increased over recent years for this age group.

**Figure 9: The unemployment rate estimate for those aged 16 to 24 in Scotland has been consistently higher than any other age group**

Unemployment rate estimates for persons aged 16 and over by age group, Scotland, year ending September 2005 to year ending September 2025



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

Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

Based on the current data quality rules and data confidence ratings we considered as part of our [Quality Assessment of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey and Annual Population Survey data for Scotland](#):

- the unemployment by age estimates for October 2024 to September 2025 remain robust
- we have moderate confidence in the October 2024 to September 2025 unemployment estimates for those aged 16-24, indicating that these estimates are suitable but incomplete measures of reality and conclusions can be drawn but limitations should be understood

- we have limited confidence in the October 2024 to September 2025 unemployment estimates for those aged 25-34, 35-49 and 50 and over, indicating that these estimates provide a restricted view on reality. These estimates should be considered alongside other more reliable indicators and limitations must be understood before drawing conclusions or making decisions

### **Unemployment rate by length of time unemployed (APS)**

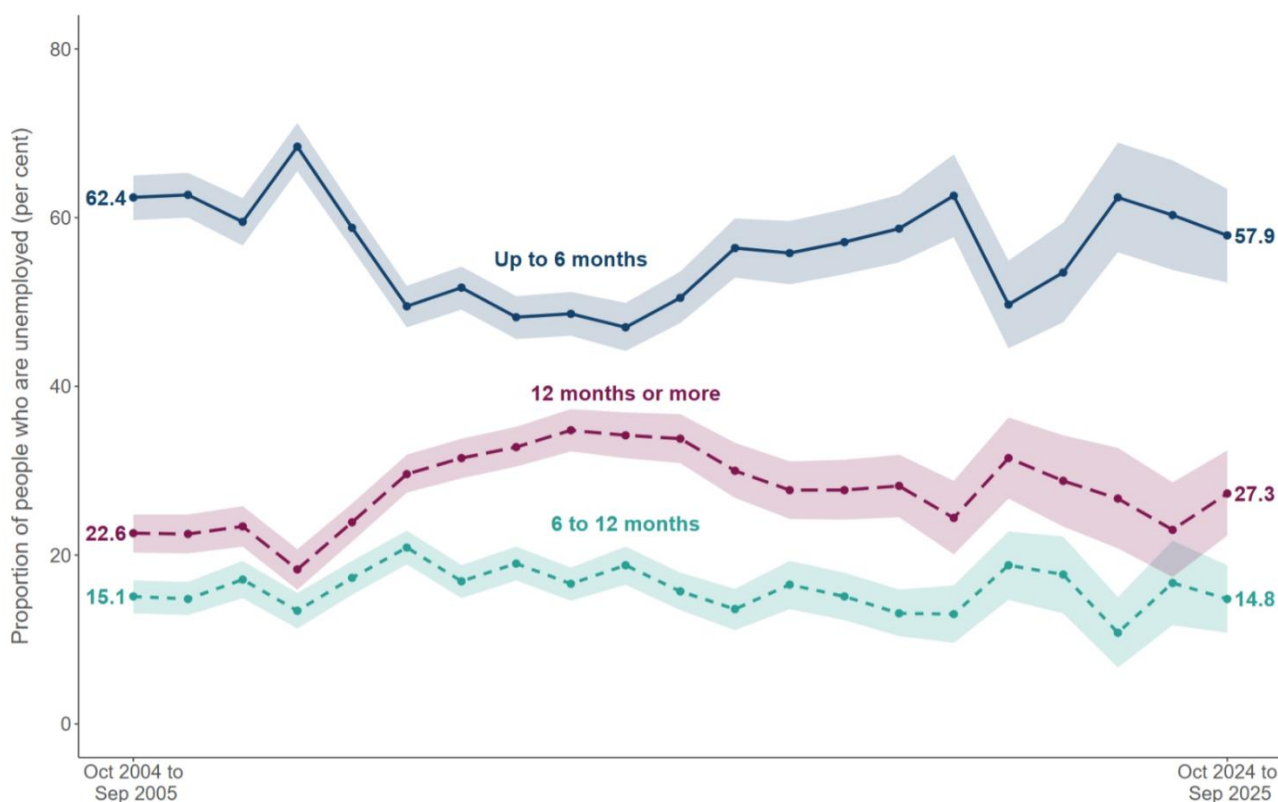
In October 2024 to September 2025, an estimated 104,700 people aged 16 and over were unemployed in Scotland.

Of those who were unemployed in October 2024 to September 2025 and their duration of unemployment was known, the majority were unemployed for less than six months (an estimated 57.9% of unemployed people). This proportion decreased during the pandemic to 49.7% in October 2020 to September 2021, indicating that at that time there were more people unemployed for longer durations.

**Being unemployed for 12 months or more is often considered long-term unemployed.** In October 2024 to September 2025, 27.3% of unemployed people were estimated to be long-term unemployed.

## Figure 10: The majority of unemployed people aged 16 and over have been unemployed for less than six months

Duration of unemployment estimates for those aged 16 and over, Scotland, year ending September 2005 to year ending September 2025



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

Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

Based on the current data quality rules and data confidence ratings we considered as part of our [Quality Assessment of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey and Annual Population Survey data for Scotland](#):

- the duration of unemployment estimates for October 2024 to September 2025 remain robust
- we have limited confidence in the October 2024 to September 2025 estimate for those unemployed for 6-12 months, indicating that this estimate provides a restricted view on reality. This should be considered alongside other more reliable indicators and limitations must be understood before drawing conclusions or making decisions

## Economic Inactivity rate (LFS)

Economic inactivity measures those who are neither in work, available for work or actively seeking work.

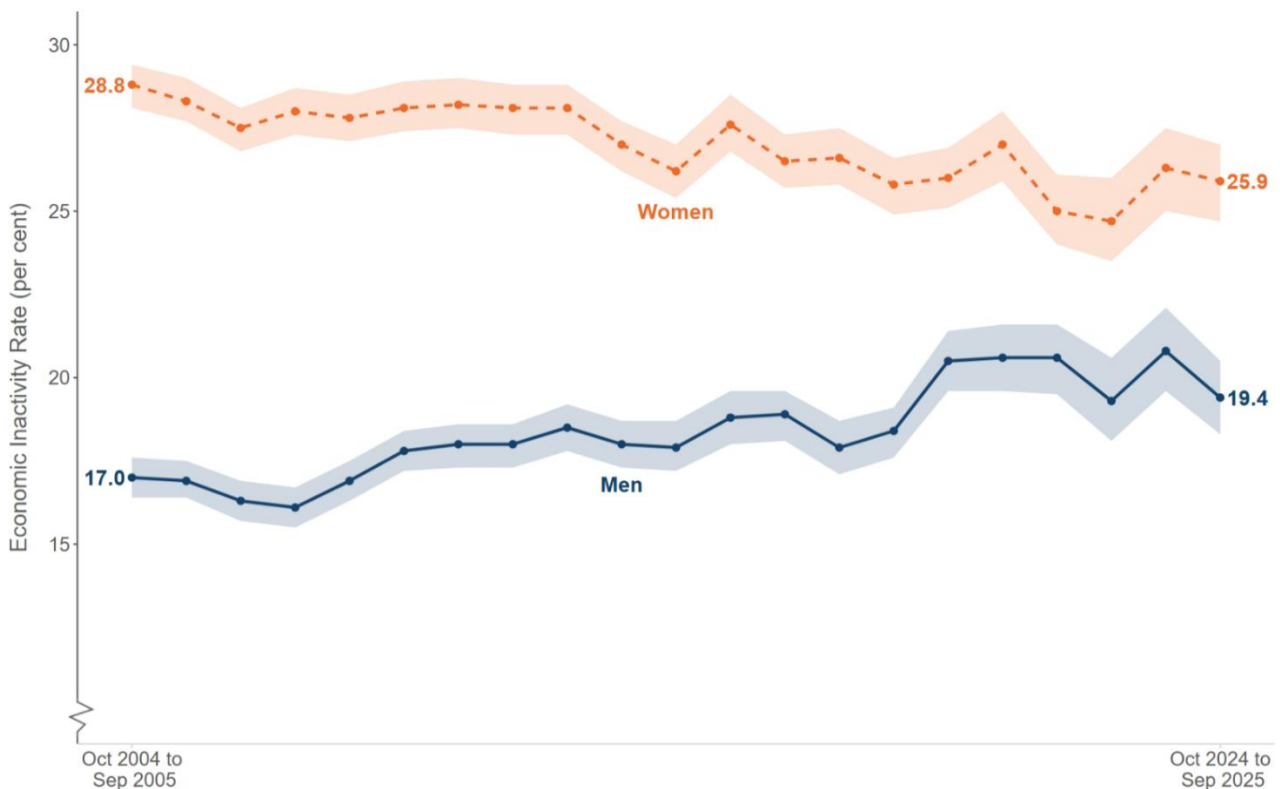
The economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64 years in Scotland based on the ONS Labour Force Survey was estimated at 22.3% in September to November 2025. Scotland's economic inactivity rate was above the UK rate of 20.8%.

## Economic Inactivity rate by sex (APS)

The inactivity rate for women in Scotland has been consistently above the inactivity rate for men in Scotland. The gap was narrowing over time, but has widened since October 2021 to September 2022.

**Figure 11: The estimated economic inactivity rate for women in October 2024 to September 2025 was 25.9%, higher than the inactivity rate for men in Scotland at 19.4%**

Economic inactivity rate estimates for persons aged 16 to 64 by sex, Scotland, year ending September 2005 to year ending September 2025



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

Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

## Economic Inactivity rate by age (APS)

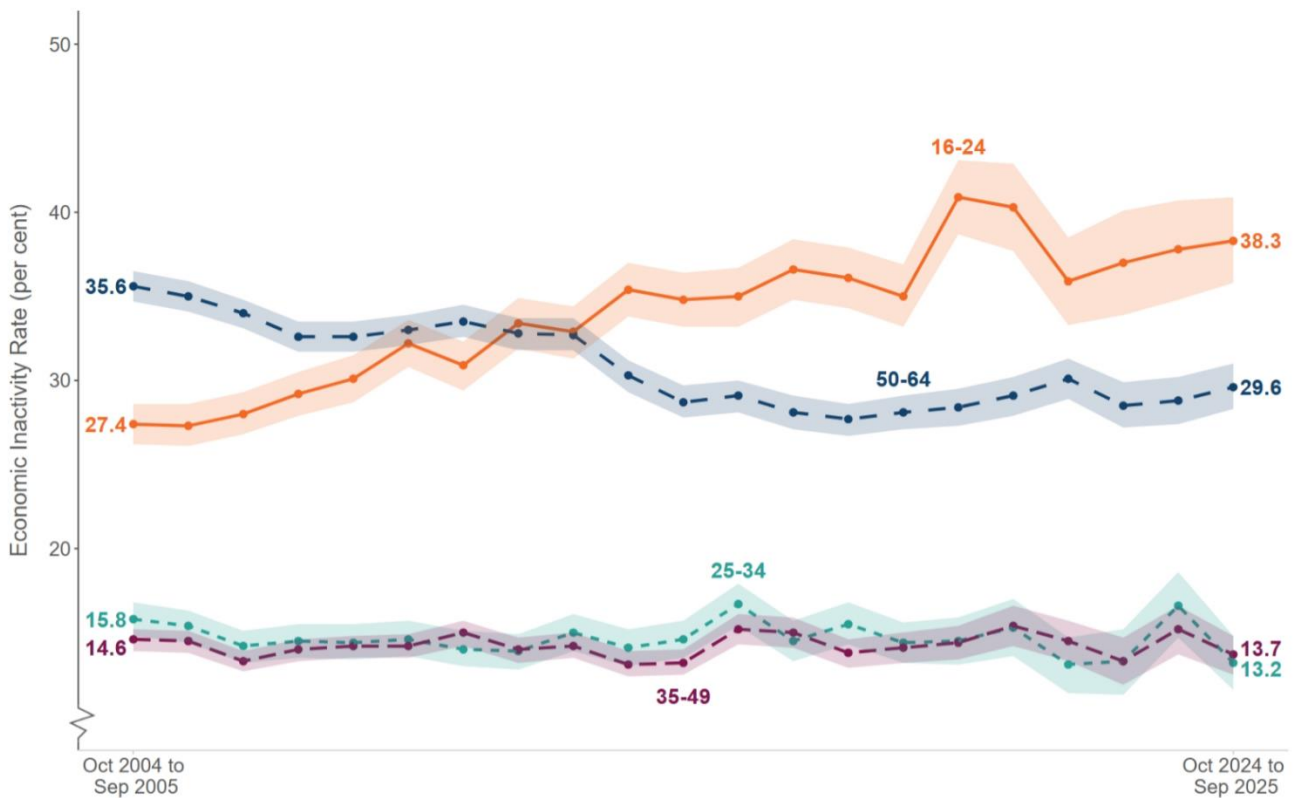
Economic inactivity in Scotland varies by age group. As may be expected, the younger and older age groups have higher inactivity rates.

Since October 2011 to September 2012, the inactivity rate for 16 to 24 year olds has been consistently higher than the inactivity rate for any other age group. This is due to higher numbers of people aged 16 to 24 being in education.

The estimated inactivity rate for those aged 50 to 64 had gradually decreased until October 2014 to September 2015 but has remained relatively constant since then.

**Figure 12: The estimated economic inactivity rate for those aged 16 to 24 in Scotland has been higher than any other age group since October 2011 to September 2012**

Economic inactivity rate estimates for persons aged 16 to 64 by age group, Scotland, year ending September 2005 to year ending September 2025



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

Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

## **Economic Inactivity rate by reasons for inactivity (APS)**

In October 2024 to September 2025, an estimated 790,000 people aged 16 to 64 were economically inactive in Scotland.

“Long-term sick or disabled” was the main reason given for being inactive in Scotland. In October 2024 to September 2025, an estimated 33.8% of inactive people aged 16 to 64 gave their reason for being inactive as “long-term sick or disabled”. This is lower than a year ago; an estimated 34.1% of inactive people reported being inactive due to long-term sickness or disability in October 2023 to September 2024.

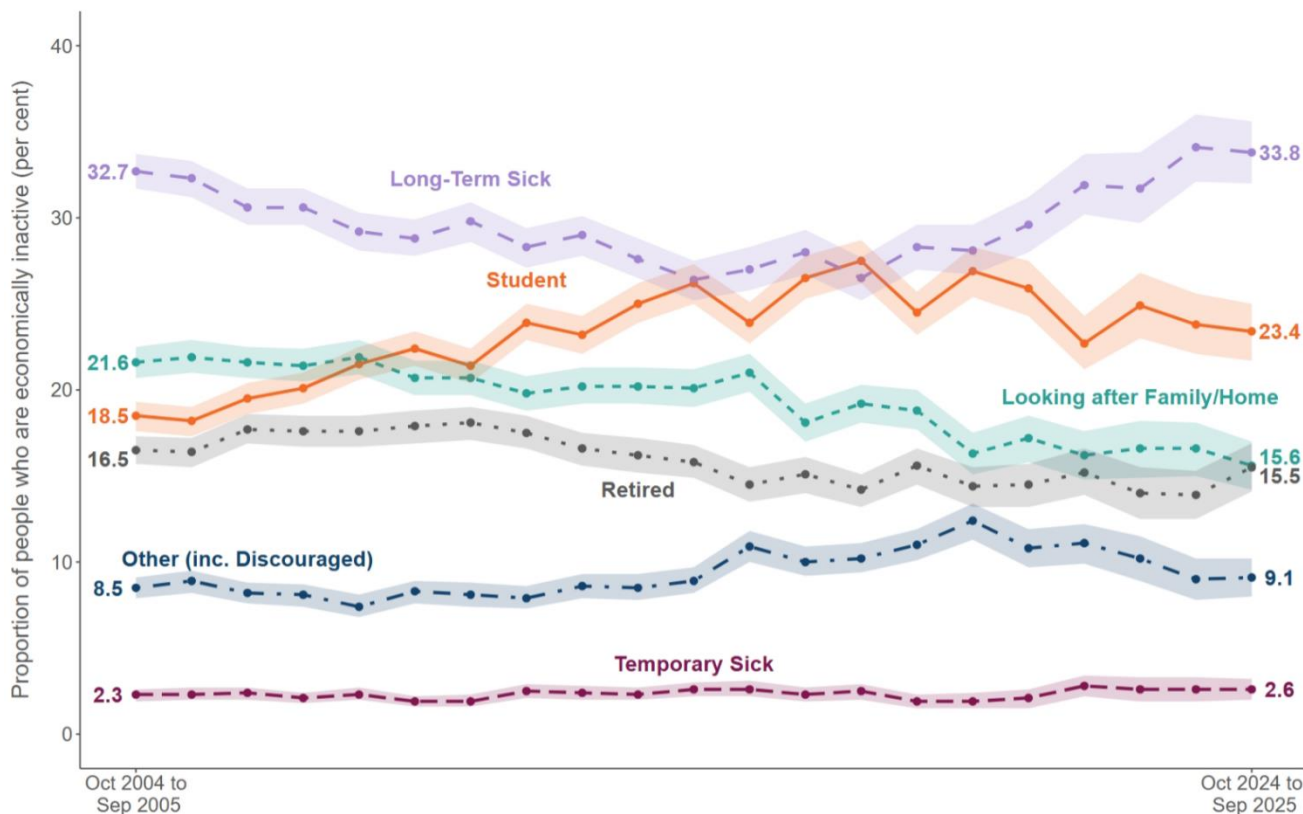
The proportions of inactive people who were long-term sick or disabled had been gradually decreasing over time. However, these proportions have generally been increasing in recent years.

Being a student is the second most common reason for being inactive (an estimated 23.4% of inactive people in October 2024 to September 2025). The proportion of inactive people who were students had been gradually increasing over time but has been slowly decreasing in recent years.

“Looking after family/home” is the third most common reason reported for inactivity and has typically been decreasing over time (an estimated 15.6% of inactive people in October 2024 to September 2025).

**Figure 13: The estimated proportion of people aged 16 to 64 who are inactive and gave their reason for being inactive as long-term sick or disabled was lower than a year ago**

Economic Inactivity estimates for persons aged 16 to 64 by reason for inactivity, Scotland, year ending September 2005 to year ending September 2025



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

Notes:

1. 'Other' reason for being inactive includes those who are discouraged.
2. Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

Based on the current data quality rules and data confidence ratings we considered as part of our [Quality Assessment of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey and Annual Population Survey data for Scotland](#):

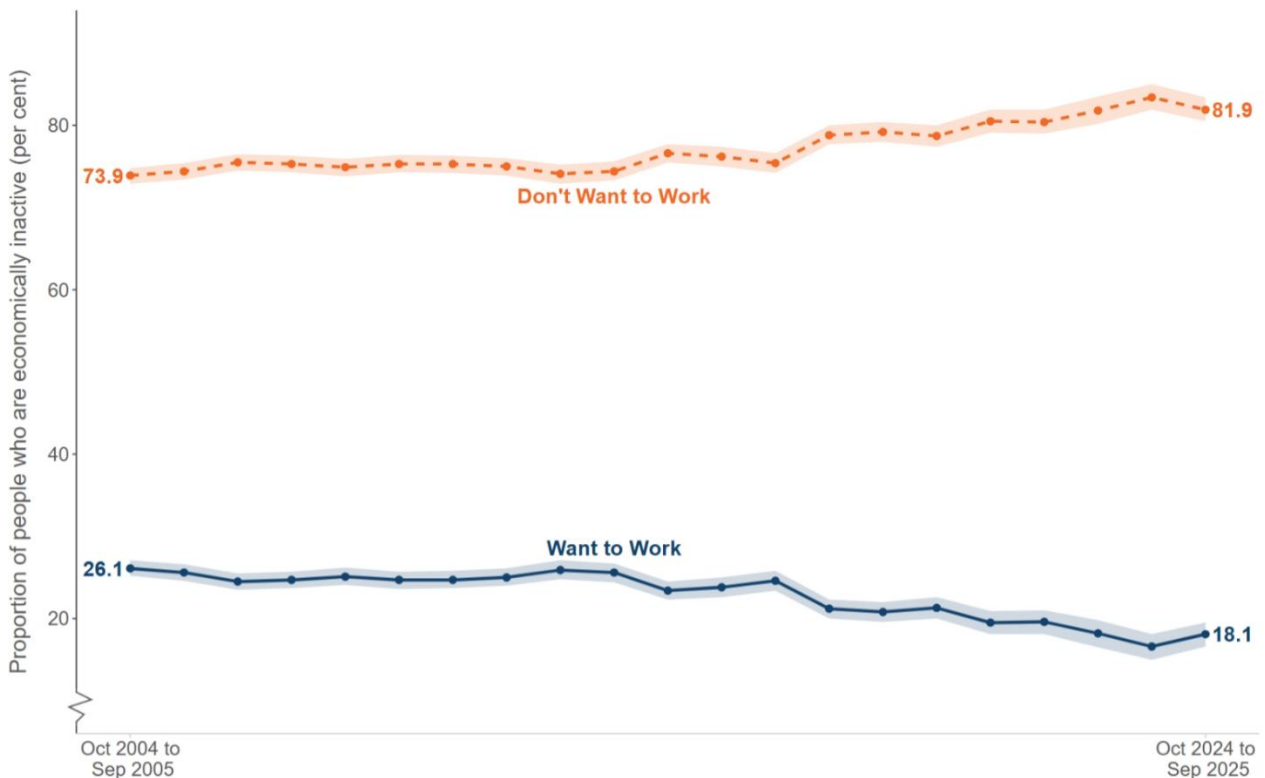
- the economic inactivity by reason estimates for October 2024 to September 2025 remain robust
- we have limited confidence in the October 2024 to September 2025 estimate for those who gave their reason for being inactive as 'Temporary sick' indicating that the estimate provides a restricted view on reality. It should be considered alongside other more reliable indicators and limitations must be understood before drawing conclusions or making decisions.

## Economically Inactive people who want to work (APS)

The proportion of inactive people aged 16 to 64 who want to work had been relatively constant over time but has decreased in recent years. In October 2024 to September 2025, an estimated 18.1% (142,600) of inactive people aged 16 to 64 reported that they wanted to work.

**Figure 14: The estimated proportion of inactive people aged 16 to 64 who want to work had been relatively constant over time. However the proportion has been generally decreasing in recent years**

Economic Inactivity estimates for persons aged 16 to 64 by whether they want to work, Scotland, year ending September 2005 to year ending September 2025



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

Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals around the estimates.

# People moving into work

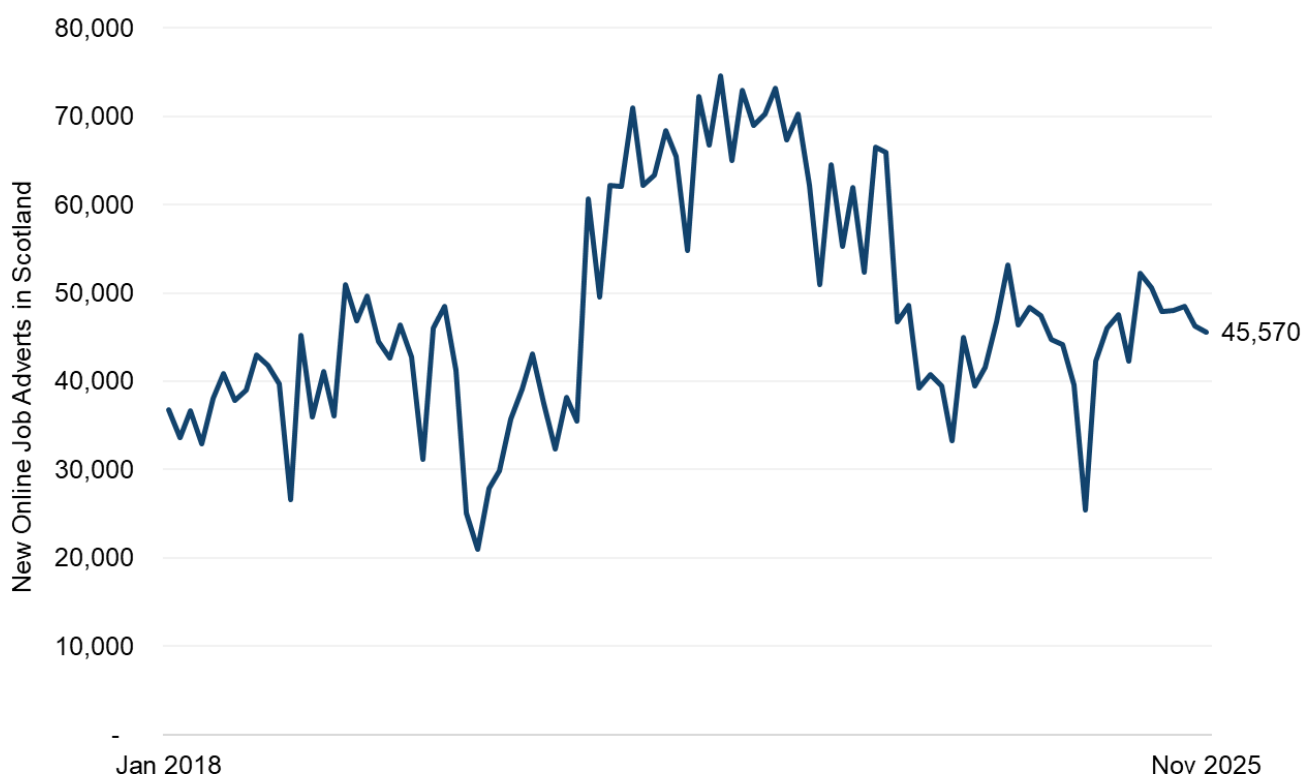
## New Online Job Adverts (Textkernel)

These figures are innovative estimates of new online job adverts provided by Textkernel. The number of job adverts over time is an indicator of the demand for labour.

The total number of new online job adverts in Scotland in November 2025 was 45,570, 15% (6,010) higher than in November 2024.

**Figure 15: New online job adverts in Scotland were at their lowest level in May 2020, with 20,995 new job adverts, and peaked in March 2022, with 74,575 new job adverts**

Estimated Number of New Online Job Adverts, Scotland, January 2018 to November 2025



Source: Textkernel online job adverts, non-seasonally adjusted, ONS

Data for Figure 15 can be obtained from [Textkernel new online job adverts](#) data released on 18 December 2025.

New adverts represent the number of adverts that appear for the first time across the month

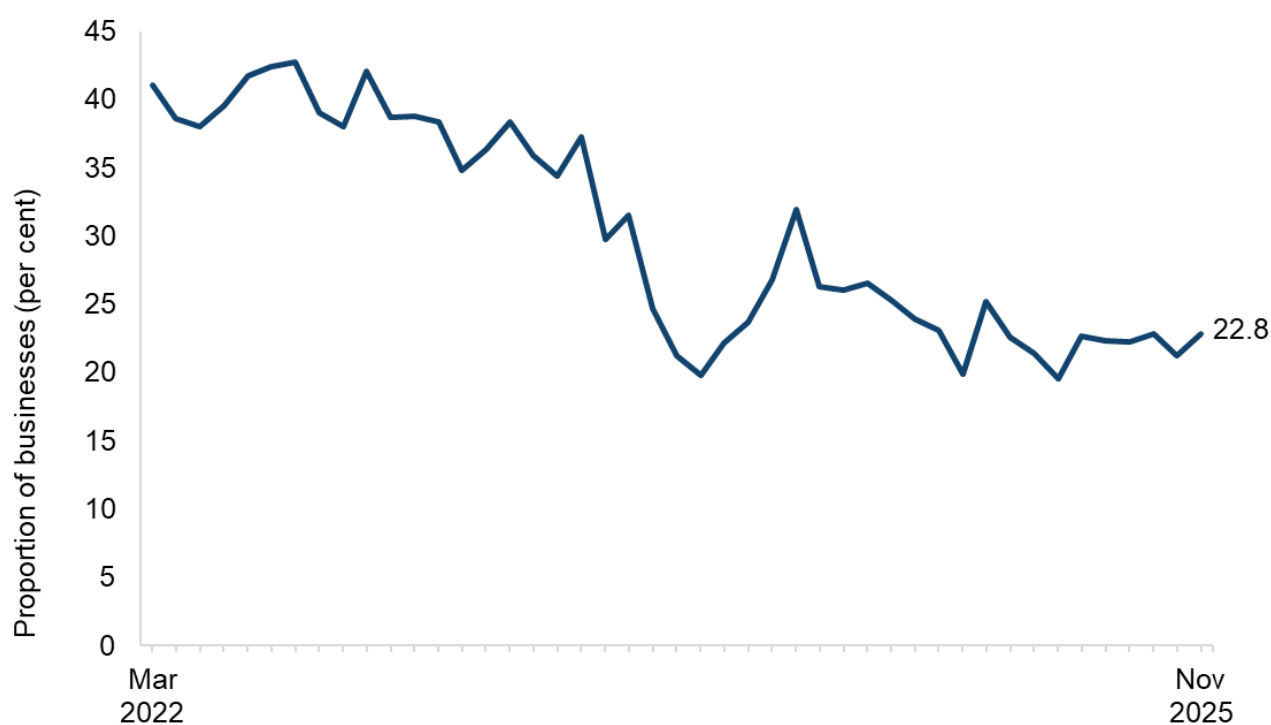
## Difficulties recruiting employees (BICS)

The ONS's Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS) is a voluntary fortnightly business survey, which captures businesses' responses on how their turnover, workforce, prices, trade and business resilience have been affected by current conditions.

In December 2025, businesses not permanently stopped trading were asked if they had experienced any difficulties recruiting employees in the previous calendar month (November 2025).

**Figure 16: An estimated 22.8% of businesses reported difficulties in recruiting employees in November 2025. The proportion of businesses reporting difficulties has generally been on a downward trend since March 2022, with the proportion being fairly constant since June 2025.**

Estimated share of businesses experiencing recruitment difficulties. All businesses not permanently stopped trading, with 10+ employees and a presence in Scotland. Applicable waves 55 - 146.



Source: BICS Weighted Scotland Estimates - Wave 146 Scottish Government

Data for Figure 16 can be obtained from [BICS weighted Scotland estimates: data to wave 147](#) data released on 15 January 2026.

In the latest period, the industry sectors with the highest proportion of businesses reporting recruitment difficulties were Transport & Storage (30.1%), Administration & Support Services (29.7%) and Construction (26.3%).

For further information, including breakdowns by industry sector and business size band, please see the [latest BICS weighted Scotland estimates](#) publication.

## **Employability Support Service – No One Left Behind**

No One Left Behind (NOLB) is a strategic approach to employability delivery in Scotland.

Official statistics in development for No One Left Behind show a total of 92,523 people started receiving support from April 2019 to June 2025. The number of people starting to receive support has increased each year from 2,652 in 2019/20 to 23,866 in 2024/25.

In the most recent quarter, quarter 1 of year 7, 5,541 people started to receive support through No One Left Behind. This was an 11% decrease on the previous quarter and a 4% decrease on the same quarter in the previous year.

For more information, and breakdowns by equality characteristics, please see the latest [Scotland's Devolved Employment Services](#) publication. The next Scotland's Devolved Employment Services release is scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

## Further Labour Market Information

We will continue to review the content of this publication for future releases, focussing on the main points of interest.

For further information relating to the labour market in Scotland, please find below a table which includes other Scottish Government labour market statistics publications.

**Table 1: Table of Scottish Government Labour Market Statistics publications**

Publication	Link to publication
Labour Market Trends	<a href="#">Labour Market Trends: January 2026 - gov.scot</a>
Labour Market Statistics for 16 to 24 year olds: Scotland and the United Kingdom <sup>1</sup>	<a href="#">Labour Market Statistics for 16 to 24 year olds: Scotland and the United Kingdom - January to December 2024 - gov.scot</a>
Quarterly Public Sector Employment in Scotland Statistics	<a href="#">Public Sector Employment in Scotland Statistics for 3rd Quarter 2025 - gov.scot</a>
Annual survey of hours and earnings	<a href="#">Annual survey of hours and earnings: 2025 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>

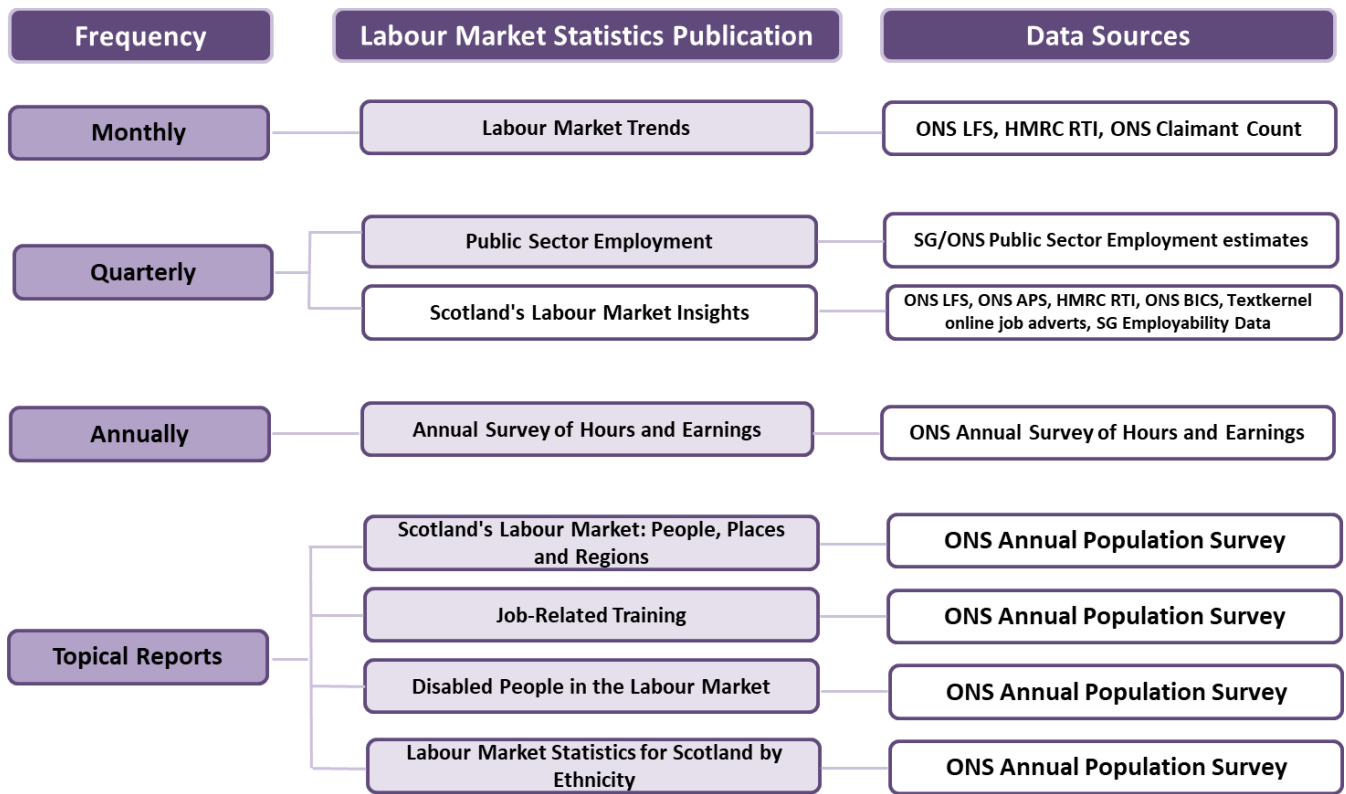
For more in depth economic analysis and insight on the Scottish economy as a whole, please see the latest Scottish Government [Economic briefs and bulletins](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Note that we have decided to postpone further iterations of the Labour Market Statistics for 16 to 24 year olds publication while we undertake our quality assessment of the APS. The headline 16 to 24 year old estimates will be included in our Labour Market Insights publication and will still be available from [nomis](#) and the [ONS Labour Market Statistics for regions of the UK publication](#).

## Figure 17: Scottish Government Labour Market Statistics publications

Infographic showing Scottish Government Labour Market Statistics publications, frequency of each release and sources of data



# Data and Methodology

Further to the [Labour Market Trends publication](#) that was released on 20 January 2026, this publication provides more detailed trends and analysis for topics of interest from a wider range of labour market data sources for Scotland.

**Figure 18: Measures and data sources presented in this publication**

Infographic showing measures and data sources included in this publication for people in work, people not in work and people moving into work.



Note that the majority of participants receiving employment support were unemployed or inactive before joining No One Left Behind, however a small proportion were employed when starting.

Earnings and employment statistics from HMRC's PAYE RTI are Accredited official statistics. All other statistics included in this release are Official Statistics or Official Statistics in Development. Information on the data sources is given in the [Data sources](#) section.

## Where can labour market data for Scotland be accessed

The data contained in this release can be obtained from the following sources:

**Table 2: Table of data sources and where the data can be accessed**

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Where data can be accessed</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
ONS Regional Labour Market publication	<a href="#">Labour market in the regions of the UK Statistical bulletins - Office for National Statistics</a>	Monthly
ONS Annual Population Survey	<a href="#">Regional labour market: headline indicators for Scotland - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)</a>	Quarterly
HMRC Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) – Payrolled employees and median pay	<a href="#">Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, UK Statistical bulletins - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)</a>	Monthly

Further labour market information for Scotland from the ONS Annual Population Survey is also published on [Nomis](#)

## Data sources

ONS have published a [Comparison of labour market data sources methodology](#) document which compares data sources and discusses some of the main differences.

### ONS Labour Force Survey

The Labour Force Survey is a survey of UK households collected and published by the Office for National Statistics. Information are obtained from a sample survey and are therefore subject to some error. LFS estimates are currently classed as official statistics in development until further review.

### ONS Annual Population Survey

The APS combines results from the ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) with the local LFS boosts. This provides a larger annual sample of households. Compared with the quarterly LFS, the annual data is more robust.

The population totals used for the latest APS estimates 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.

ONS Annual Population Survey (APS) estimates have not been reweighted to the new population estimates used for the LFS. Consequently, all APS estimates remain weighted to the previous population totals, which will be inconsistent with those used for ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) in the latest periods.

ONS conducted analysis to assess the impact of falling sample sizes over recent years on the quality of APS estimates. ONS state that although the APS estimates are robust at National and headline regional level, there are concerns with the quality of estimates for smaller groups of the population, for example local authority level estimates.

This assessment of the APS estimates alongside the fact that APS estimates have not been reweighted to new population estimates has led to the suspension of the accreditation of all APS-based outputs. 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 \(statisticsauthority.gov.uk\)](#)

Therefore, APS estimates are currently classed as official statistics in development until further review.

ONS's longer-term solution remains the replacement of the Labour Force Survey with the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS).

## Labour Market Transformation

ONS are transforming the LFS and are publishing [Labour market transformation articles](#) providing updates on their progress with the transformation of labour market statistics.

Scottish Government are stakeholders in the transformation of the labour force survey. To provide any feedback on labour market statistics for Scotland, please feedback to [LMStats@gov.scot](mailto:LMStats@gov.scot)

## ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is the official source of UK earnings estimates. Data are sourced from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, first released on 23 October 2025 by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The latest estimates are provisional and relate to the pay period that includes 30 April 2025.

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is the official source of UK earnings estimates. ASHE data is published annually and is based on a 1% sample of the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system. The ONS have released three statistical bulletins covering [Employee earnings in the UK](#), [Gender Pay Gap in the UK](#) and [Low and high pay in the UK](#).

From 2021, ONS have moved from Standard Occupation Classifications (SOC) 2010 to SOC 2020 for their occupation coding. This means earnings estimates for April 2021 based on SOC 2020 represent a break in the ASHE time series. Therefore, estimates pre- and post-2021 are not directly comparable.

ONS have implemented improvements to the methods used for processing data returns to help address differences between ASHE and other sources of earnings data. Due to these methodological changes, data for 2023 onwards might not be directly comparable to data for 2022 and earlier years. For further details on the methodological changes implemented by ONS, please see the [data sources and quality section of the ONS publication](#).

## HMRC RTI

This release covers people paid through the HMRC's Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system where their pay is reported through the Real Time Information (RTI) system.

Information presented in this release are monthly estimates of the number of payrolled employees and their median earnings. It includes UK and geographical regions (NUTS1) early estimates of payrolled employment and median pay for the most recent month.

Statistics in this release are based on people who are employed in at least one job paid through HMRC's PAYE system and the monthly estimates reflect the average for each day of the calendar month.

On 31 July 2025, earnings and employment statistics from HMRC's PAYE RTI were designated as Accredited official statistics. The Office for Statistics Regulation independently reviewed and accredited the statistics as complying with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). More information can be found in the [letter from OSR's Director General to HMRC and ONS](#).

The publication and background information can be accessed on the [ONS website](#).

### **Textkernel online job adverts**

Textkernel is the source of the [ONS online job adverts data](#). Textkernel online job advert data is collected using comprehensive web-scraping software which downloads job advert information from approximately 90,000 job boards and recruitment pages. The scraped data includes job titles, descriptions, posting dates and expiration dates. These describe location, salary, seniority, skill requirements, home/office working, and more.

Textkernel perform some proprietary data cleaning to identify duplicate job adverts, which ONS have removed in this release. Duplication can occur when the same job is posted on multiple job boards, or when multiple recruiters advertise the job at the same time. Textkernel remove some adverts when they are low quality, e.g. if they are missing information, and remove adverts for jobs not based in the UK. Textkernel-based statistics are official statistics in development.

Information on how new online job adverts are assigned to geographical locations can be obtained from the ONS [Measuring labour demand volumes across the UK using Textkernel data user guide](#)

### **Reliability of estimates**

Estimates from the ONS Annual Population Survey for October 2004 to September 2005 through to October 2024 to September 2025 are presented. For the latest time period, the sample size is around 10,300 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% confidence intervals for rates are included in all tables and charts.

### What does the 95% confidence limit mean?

If, for example, we have an APS estimate and confidence limit of  $63\% \pm 1$ , this means that 19 times out of 20 we would expect the true rate to lie between 62% and 64%. 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.

### Design factor

The Annual Population Survey is a household survey which provide estimates for individuals. The selection of households is based on a simple random sample of addresses but people within households often share characteristics, such as ethnicity. One method for accounting for this clustering of similar characteristics is to apply a design factor. Design factors attempt to adjust the variance of an estimate to account for loss of randomness in the sample. In some instances a cluster effect can be seen due to addresses being sampled but estimates being shown for individuals.

The design factor itself is a positive number. When it is greater than 1 it indicates there is more variance in an estimate than there would be if the sample was truly random. Similarly, when it is less than 1 it indicates there is less variance in an estimate, and when it equals 1 it indicates the variance is the same as if the sample was truly random.

Scottish Government analysts do not have access to the design factors used by ONS in their calculations. As such, the confidence limits in this report are based on CIs calculated using a design factor of 1. This is not realistic for some estimates, such as ethnicity. However, it is to be expected that in most instances the design factor would be greater than 1 and not have varied significantly over time. This in turn leads us to expect that the CIs we have calculated are smaller than if the correct design factor was applied. As such, our CI estimates will likely be underestimating the variability of the data. Further information on estimating confidence intervals can be found in the [LFS user guidance](#).

## Statistical Significance

Statistical significance is based on 95% 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 data is collected and produced by the ONS.

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:

- crosschecking historical time series data with previously published results
- benchmarking the results against other relevant data sources

# Glossary

**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 4 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 64 years who are in employment.

**Unemployment rate:** The proportion of economically active people aged 16 and over who are unemployed.

**Economic inactivity rate:** The number of economically inactive people expressed as a percentage of the relevant population.

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

**Median earnings:** The median measures the amount earned by the average employee, i.e. the level of earnings at which half the population are above and half the population are below.

**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.

For headline employment, economic activity and economic inactivity, the reference population is those aged 16 to 64. For unemployment, the reference population is the active population aged 16 and over. Thus, people aged 65 and over who continue to be economically active are included in the base while those who are economically inactive will not.

**Real Living Wage:** The real living wage rates have been independently calculated by the Resolution Foundation according to the cost of living based on household goods and services and are overseen by the Living Wage Commission. In April 2025, the period which the latest ASHE estimates relate to, the real living wage rate for employees in London was £13.85 and £12.60 for employees who did not work in London. Current and historical living wage rates are available on the [Living Wage Foundation website](#).

**Percentage point change:** Percentage points are used when comparing two percentages. The abbreviation is pp. For example, if a rate was 10% and it increased to 15%, then it increased by 5 percentage points.

# 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

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

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