

Statistical bulletin

Regional labour market statistics in the UK: September 2018

Regional, local authority and Parliamentary constituency breakdowns of changes in UK employment, unemployment, economic inactivity and other employment-related statistics.



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1 . Main points

- For the three months ending July 2018, the highest employment rate in the UK was in the South West (79.2%) and the lowest was in Northern Ireland (69.3%).
- For the three months ending July 2018, the highest unemployment rate in the UK was in London (4.7%) and the lowest was in the South West (2.6%).
- For the three months ending July 2018, the highest economic inactivity rate in the UK was in Northern Ireland (27.7%) and the lowest was in the South West (18.6%).
- Between March and June 2018, the largest increase in workforce jobs in the UK was in Yorkshire and The Humber at 36,000, whilst the largest decrease was in the North East at 29,000.
- In June 2018, the region with the highest proportion of workforce jobs in the services sector was London at 91.5%, whilst the East Midlands had the highest proportion of jobs in the production sector at 14.0%.
- The highest average actual weekly hours worked, for the 12 months ending March 2018, was in London at 33.5 hours and the lowest was in the South West at 31.1 hours; for full-time and part-time workers, it was highest in Northern Ireland, at 38.3 hours and 17.4 hours respectively.

2 . Summary of latest regional labour market statistics

Table 1 shows the latest estimates for employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for May to July 2018 and a comparison with the previous quarter (February to April 2018). Comparing non-overlapping periods (May to July 2018 with February to April 2018) provides a more robust short-term comparison.

Table 1: Summary of latest headline estimates for regions of the UK, seasonally adjusted, May to July 2018

UK regions

	Employment rate ¹ (%) aged 16 to 64 years	Change on February to April 2018	Unemployment rate ² (%) aged 16 years and over	Change on February to April 2018	Inactivity rate ³ (%) aged 16 to 64 years	Change on February to April 2018
UK	75.5	-0.1	4.0	-0.2	21.2	0.3
Great Britain	75.7	-0.1	4.0	-0.2	21.1	0.3
England	75.8	-0.2	4.0	-0.2	20.9	0.3
North East	70.8	-2.3	4.4	-0.1	25.8	2.6
North West	74.3	0.8	4.5	0.4	22.0	-1.3
Yorkshire and The Humber	73.8	-0.3	4.4	-0.1	22.7	0.4
East Midlands	74.9	-0.8	4.1	0.1	21.9	0.8
West Midlands	74.8	0.8	4.6	-0.5	21.4	-0.4
East of England	78.4	-0.2	3.1	-0.5	19.0	0.6
London	74.7	-0.1	4.7	-0.5	21.6	0.5
South East	78.1	-0.8	3.7	0.3	18.8	0.6
South West	79.2	-0.2	2.6	-0.7	18.6	0.8
Wales	74.8	1.4	3.8	-0.6	22.2	-1.0
Scotland	75.1	-0.1	4.1	-0.2	21.7	0.3
Northern Ireland	69.3	-0.3	4.0	0.7	27.7	-0.2

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Calculation of headline employment rate: Number of employed people aged from 16 to 64 years divided by the population aged from 16 to 64 years. Population is the sum of employed plus unemployed plus inactive.
2. Calculation of headline unemployment rate: Number of unemployed people aged 16 years and over divided by the sum of employed people aged 16 years and over plus unemployed people aged 16 years and over.
3. Calculation of headline economic inactivity rate: Number of economically inactive people aged from 16 to 64 years divided by the population aged from 16 to 64 years. Population is the sum of employed plus unemployed plus inactive.

3 . Things you need to know about this release

This bulletin shows the latest main labour market statistics for the regions and countries of the UK, along with statistics for local authorities, travel-to-work areas and Parliamentary constituencies.

Data for Northern Ireland, although included in this bulletin, are available separately, in full, in the [Northern Ireland Labour Market Report](#) on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) website.

Updated this month

Labour Force Survey estimates for the period May to July 2018.

Workforce jobs estimates for June 2018.

Also in this release

Annual Population Survey estimates for the period April 2017 to March 2018.

Labour market statistics

Labour market statistics measure many different aspects of work and jobs and provide an insight into the economy. They are also very much about people, including their participation in the labour force, the types of work they do, the earnings and benefits they receive and their working patterns.

We have developed a framework for labour market statistics to describe the concepts within the labour market and their relationship to each other. The framework is based on labour supply and demand.

Labour supply consists of people who are employed, as well as those people defined as unemployed or economically inactive, who are considered to be potential labour supply. Our framework distinguishes between these three categories of worker and between the different working arrangements of those in employment such as employees, the self-employed and those on government schemes.

Labour demand is represented by employers, who have a need for work to be done and who offer compensation for this work to the employees who undertake it. Employers group this work to form jobs.

This approach has wide international acceptance, including by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Users of labour market statistics include central and local government, economists, financial analysts, journalists, businesses, trade unions, employer associations, students, teachers, industrial tribunals, academic researchers and lobby groups.

They use them for the analysis, evaluation, monitoring and planning of the labour market and economy. Labour market statistics are also used for social analysis and help inform a wide range of government policies towards population groups of concern (women, young people, older people and jobless households).

About labour market statuses

Everybody aged 16 years or over is either employed, unemployed or economically inactive. The employment estimates include all people in work including those working part-time. People not working are classed as unemployed if they have been looking for work within the last four weeks and are able to start work within the next two weeks. A common misconception is that the unemployment statistics are a count of people on benefits; this is not the case, as they include unemployed people not claiming benefits.

Jobless people who have not been looking for work within the last four weeks or who are unable to start work within the next two weeks are classed as economically inactive. Examples of economically inactive people include people not looking for work because they are students, looking after the family or home, because of illness or disability, or because they have retired.

What is the relationship between the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS)?

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household survey using international definitions of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity and compiles a wide range of related topics such as occupation, training, hours of work and personal characteristics of household members aged 16 years and over. Estimates are produced every month for a rolling three-monthly period; for example, February to April data in a release will be followed by data for March to May in the next release.

The Annual Population Survey (APS), which began in 2004, is compiled from interviews for the LFS, along with additional regional samples. The APS comprises the main variables from the LFS, with a much larger sample size. Consequently, the APS supports more detailed breakdowns than can be reliably produced from the LFS. Estimates are produced every quarter for a rolling annual period; for example, January to December data will be followed by data for April to March when they are next updated. This bulletin includes labour market estimates at a regional level from the LFS on total employment, unemployment and economic inactivity. More detailed regional estimates for employment by age, full-time and part-time working, economic activity and economic inactivity by age, and reasons for economic inactivity are provided using the APS. Any estimates for geographic areas below regional level are provided using the APS. In tables where APS estimates are provided for detailed geographic areas, regional and national estimates are also provided from APS for comparability.

Making comparisons with earlier data

The most robust estimates of short-term movements in estimates derived from the Labour Force Survey are obtained by comparing the estimates for May to July 2018 with the estimates for February to April 2018, which were first published on 12 June 2018. This provides a more robust estimate than comparing with the estimates for April to June 2018. This is because the May and June data are included within both estimates, so observed differences are only between April and July 2018. The LFS is representative of the UK population over a three-month period, not for single month periods.

Seasonal adjustment

All estimates discussed in this statistical bulletin are seasonally adjusted except where otherwise stated. Like many economic indicators, the labour market is affected by factors that tend to occur at around the same time every year; for example, school leavers entering the labour market in July and whether Easter falls in March or April. In order to compare movements other than annual changes in labour market statistics, the data are seasonally adjusted to remove the effects of seasonal factors and the arrangement of the calendar.

Where to find explanatory information

A [Guide to labour market statistics](#), which includes a [Glossary](#), is available.

4 . Employment

Things you need to know about employment

Employment measures the number of people in work; it differs from the number of jobs because some people have more than one job.

Employment consists of employees, self-employed people, unpaid family workers and people on government-supported training and employment programmes. Unpaid family workers are people who work in a family business who do not receive a formal wage or salary but benefit from the profits of that business. The government-supported training and employment programmes series does not include all people on these programmes; it only includes people engaging in any form of work, work experience or work-related training who are not included in the employees or self-employed series. People on these programmes not engaging in any form of work, work experience or work-related training are not included in the employment estimates; they are classified as unemployed or economically inactive.

A [comparison between estimates of employment and jobs](#) is available.

Regional employment

The employment rate for people aged from 16 to 64 years for the UK was 75.5% for the period May to July 2018. This is down 0.1 percentage point compared with the previous period (February to April 2018).

The UK region with the highest employment rate was the South West at 79.2%. The next highest employment rate was seen in the East of England, at 78.4%, followed by the South East at 78.1%. The highest rate for the same period last year was in the South East at 79.6%.

The region with the lowest employment rate was Northern Ireland at 69.3%, followed by the North East at 70.8%. The lowest rate for the same period last year was also in Northern Ireland at 68.2%.

The employment rate estimates for those aged 16 to 64 years for May to July 2018, compared with February to April 2018, showed very few large movements for the regions and countries of the UK. The largest increase was for Wales at 1.4 percentage points, followed by the West Midlands and North West, both at 0.8 percentage points. The employment rate estimate for Wales has risen rapidly since the end of 2017, having been relatively flat over the previous couple of years. The current employment rate, at 74.8% and the employment level, are both record highs for the country.

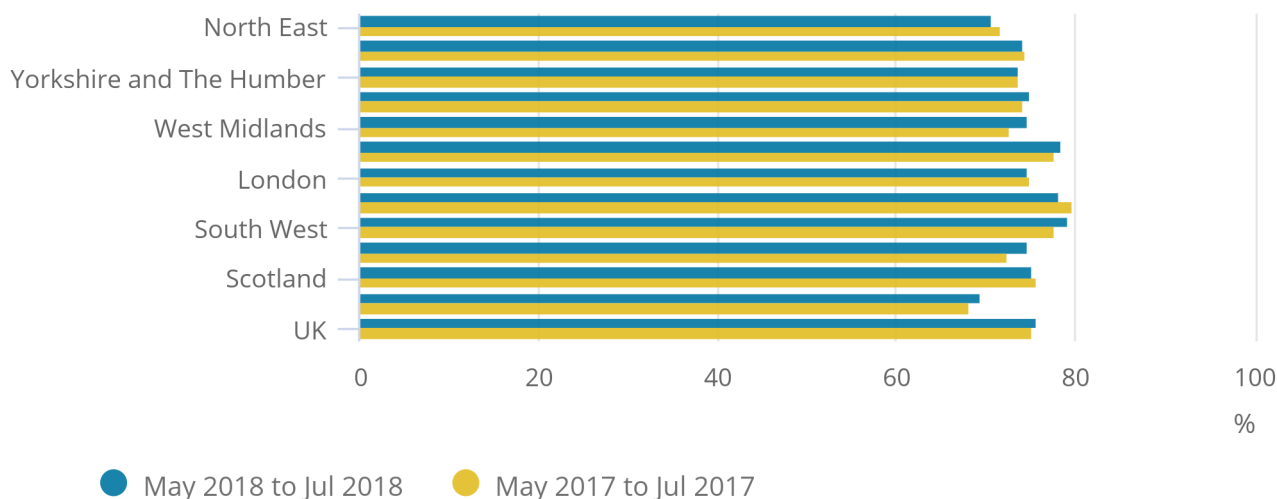
The largest decrease in the employment rate estimates, compared with the previous period, was for the North East at 2.3 percentage points, followed by the East Midlands and South East, both at 0.8 percentage points.

Figure 1: Employment rates by region and comparison year-on-year, seasonally adjusted, May to July 2017 and May to July 2018

UK regions

Figure 1: Employment rates by region and comparison year-on-year, seasonally adjusted, May to July 2017 and May to July 2018

UK regions



Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

Over the year, the region with the largest increase in the employment rate was Wales at 2.4 percentage points, followed by the West Midlands with an increase of 2.1 percentage points (Figure 1).

The South East had the largest decrease in the employment rate over the year, of 1.5 percentage points, followed by the North East, at 0.9 percentage points and Scotland at 0.8 percentage points.

Where to find data about employment

Employment estimates are available for each region in [Dataset HI00 – Headline LFS indicators for all UK regions](#) and [HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions \(Tabs 1 and 2\)](#), and [Datasets LI01 to LI05 – Local indicators for subregional areas of Great Britain](#), for this and further estimate breakdowns by age or geographies.

These tables contain data produced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS). A note in the “Things you need to know about this release” section on the relationship between the LFS and APS entitled “What is the relationship between the APS and the LFS?” is included in this bulletin.

5 . Workforce jobs

Things you need to know about workforce jobs

Workforce jobs measures the number of filled jobs in the economy. The estimates are mainly sourced from employer surveys such as the Short-Term Employment Surveys (STES) and the Quarterly Public-Sector Employment Survey (QPSES). Workforce jobs is a different concept from employment, which is sourced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), as employment is an estimate of people and some people have more than one job.

A [comparison between estimates of employment and jobs](#) article is available.

The services sector consists of the following industries:

- wholesale and retail trade
- repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles, transport and storage
- accommodation and food service activities
- information and communication
- financial and insurance activities
- real estate activities
- professional, scientific and technical activities
- administrative and support service activities
- public administration and defence
- compulsory social security
- education
- human health and social work activities
- arts, entertainment and recreation
- other service activities
- people employed by households

The production sector consists of the following industries:

- mining and quarrying
- manufacturing
- electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply
- water supply, sewerage, waste and remediation activities

The “other” sector consists of agriculture, forestry and fishing, and construction industries.

The Northern Ireland self-employed component of the workforce jobs is published by the [Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency](#) (NISRA) as part of the [Economic and Labour Market Statistics](#).

Regional workforce jobs

For June 2018, there were 35.20 million workforce jobs in the UK, 83,000 more than for March 2018.

Workforce jobs increased in 9 of the 12 regions of the UK between March and June 2018. The largest increase of 36,000 was in Yorkshire and The Humber, followed by the North West at 30,000.

The largest decrease was in the North East at 29,000, followed by the East Midlands, which decreased by 18,000.

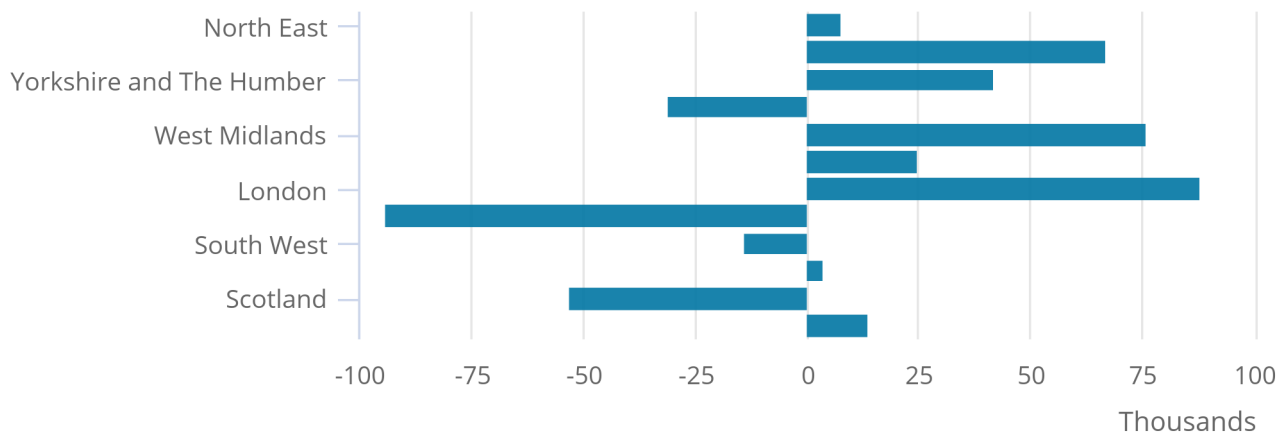
Compared with the same month last year (June 2017), the largest increase in workforce jobs was in London, at 88,000. The largest decrease was in the South East at 94,000 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Change in workforce jobs, by region, seasonally adjusted, June 2017 and June 2018

UK regions

Figure 2: Change in workforce jobs, by region, seasonally adjusted, June 2017 and June 2018

UK regions



Source: Office for National Statistics

The East Midlands had the highest proportion of jobs in the production sector at 14.0%, while London had the lowest proportion at 3.1%. This is due to London having primarily service-based industries within its region, such as financial and administrative sectors.

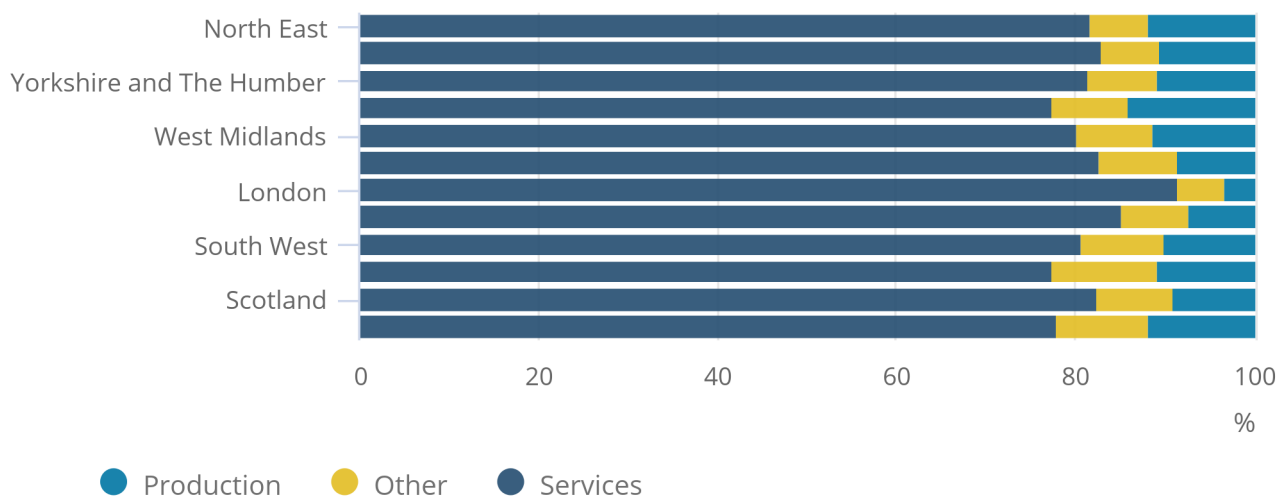
For the services sector, London had the highest proportion at 91.5%, whilst Wales had the lowest proportion at 77.4% (Figure 3). The services sector currently accounts for 83.3% of the total workforce jobs in the UK.

Figure 3: Proportion of workforce jobs by broad industry group, by region, June 2018

UK regions

Figure 3: Proportion of workforce jobs by broad industry group, by region, June 2018

UK regions



Source: Office for National Statistics

Where to find data about workforce jobs

Workforce jobs estimates are available for each region in [Datasets HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions](#) (Tabs 4 and 5).

While comparable estimates for workforce jobs by industry begin in 1978, there is information back to 1841, based on census data (not comparable with the latest estimates), available from [2011 Census Analysis](#).

6 . Actual hours worked (first published 17 July 2018)

Things you need to know about actual hours worked

Actual hours worked measures the number of hours worked in the economy. Changes in actual hours worked reflect changes in the number of people in employment and the average hours worked by those people.

Regional actual hours worked

For the period April 2017 to March 2018, the UK region with the highest average actual weekly hours worked (for all workers) was London at 33.5 hours, followed by Northern Ireland at 33.2 hours. The South West had the lowest number of hours worked at 31.1 hours.

The UK region with the only increase in the average hours worked, compared with the same period last year (April 2016 to March 2017) was Yorkshire and The Humber, with an increase of 0.1 hours, a percentage increase of 0.4%. The largest decreases in the average hours worked were in the West Midlands and the South West, both with a decrease of 0.6 hours (each with a percentage decrease of 1.8%).

The region with the highest average actual weekly hours worked in full-time jobs was Northern Ireland, at 38.3 hours. This represents a decrease of 0.2 hours and a percentage decrease of 0.4%, compared with the same period last year. The region with the lowest average actual weekly hours worked in full-time jobs was Scotland, at 36.3 hours. For part-time jobs, the region with the highest average hours worked was Northern Ireland at 17.4 hours and the regions with the lowest were the East Midlands and the South East, both at 15.8 hours.

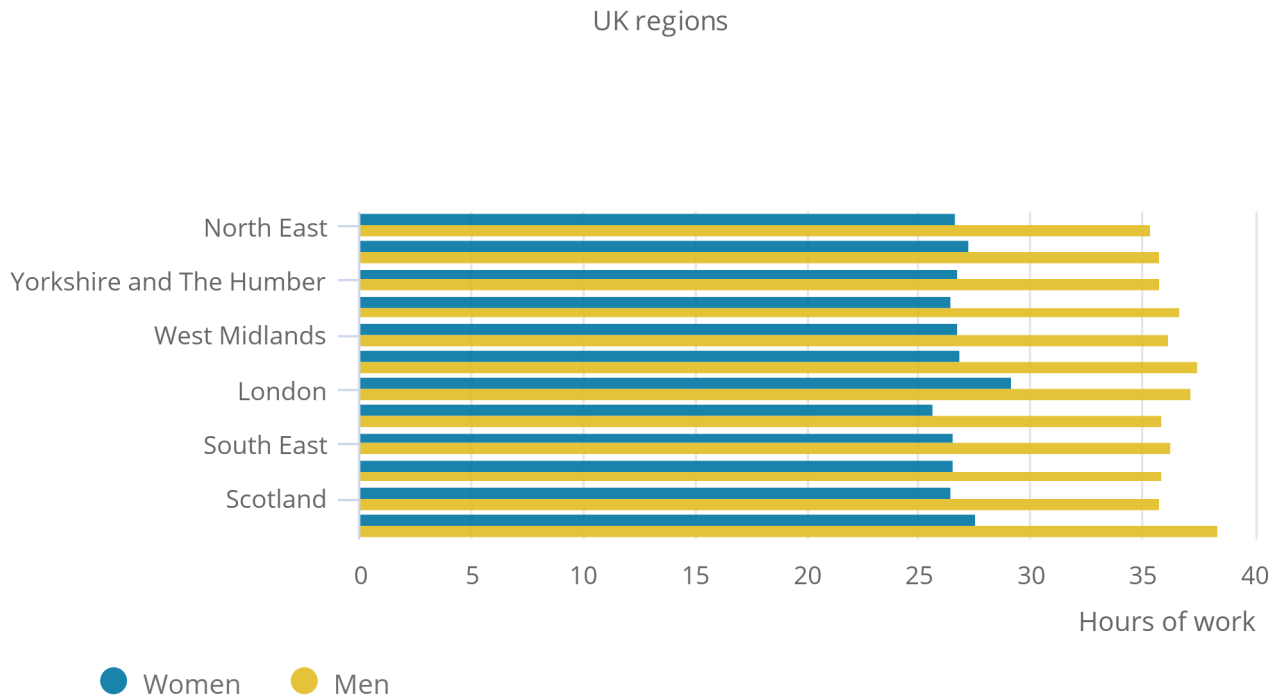
For men, the region with the highest average hours worked was Northern Ireland, at 38.4 hours and for women it was London, at 29.2 hours. The largest difference in average hours worked between men and women was in Northern Ireland, where men worked on average 10.8 more hours per week than women. The largest change compared with the same period last year (April 2016 to March 2017) was seen for women in the South West, where the average hours worked decreased by 2.7% to 25.7 hours. For men, the largest changes were in the West Midlands and London where, for both regions, the average hours worked decreased by 2.1% to 36.2 and 37.2 hours per week respectively (Figure 4).

The region with the largest difference in total hours worked between men and women was London, where men worked a total of 32.0 million more hours than women. The region with the smallest difference was Northern Ireland, where men worked only 5.0 million more hours than women.

Figure 4: Average (mean) actual weekly hours of work, by region and by sex, April 2017 to March 2018

UK regions

Figure 4: Average (mean) actual weekly hours of work, by region and by sex, April 2017 to March 2018



Source: Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics

Where to find data about hours worked

Hours worked estimates are available for each region in [Datasets HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions](#) (Tab 6). These estimates are based on data from the Annual Population Survey (APS).

The national data are also available in the UK labour market statistical bulletin in Datasets [HOUR01 SA: Actual weekly hours worked \(seasonally adjusted\)](#) and [HOUR02 SA: Usual weekly hours worked \(seasonally adjusted\)](#). These estimates are based on data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

7 . Unemployment

Things you need to know about unemployment

Unemployment measures people without a job who have been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and are available to start work within the next two weeks.

Regional unemployment

Regional estimates for the unemployment rate are quite volatile, which needs to be allowed for when considering the pattern of change over time.

The unemployment rate for people aged 16 years and over for the UK was 4.0%, for the period May to July 2018, down 0.2 percentage points compared with the previous period (February to April 2018) (Figure 5).

The highest unemployment rate in the UK for May to July 2018 was for London at 4.7%. The next highest rate was seen in the West Midlands at 4.6%. The region with the lowest unemployment rate was in the South West, at 2.6%, followed by the East of England at 3.1%.

The unemployment rate estimates for May to July 2018, compared with February to April 2018, are generally showing small changes. The largest increase in the unemployment rate on the previous period (February to April 2018) was seen in Northern Ireland, at 0.7 percentage points, followed by the North West, at 0.4 percentage points.

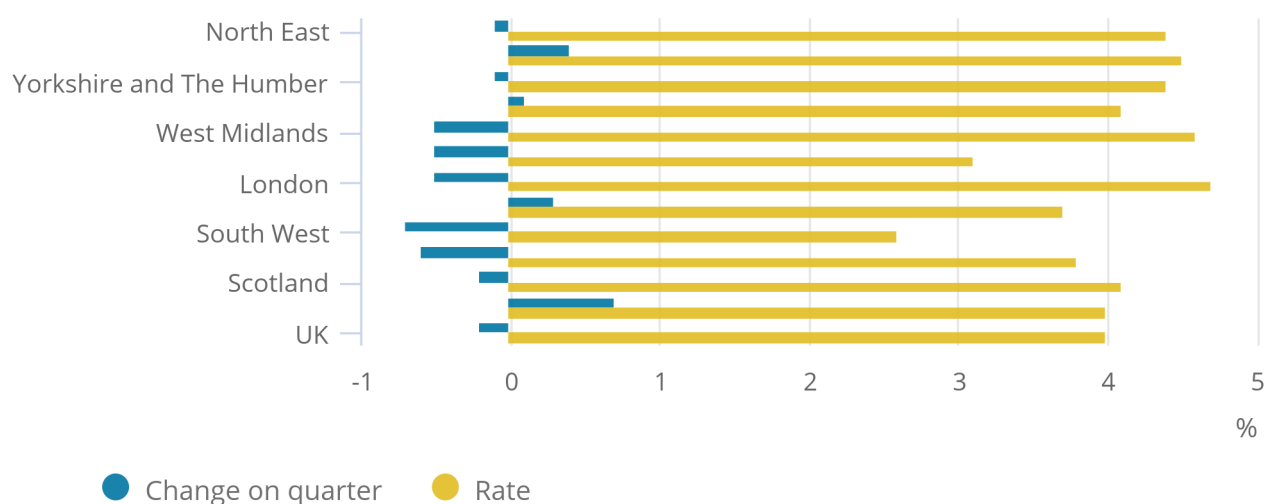
The largest decrease in the unemployment rate estimates was for the South West at 0.7 percentage points, followed by Wales, at 0.6 percentage points and London, the East of England and the West Midlands, all at 0.5 percentage points. The unemployment rates for the East of England, London, the South West and Wales are all at record lows.

Figure 5: Unemployment rates by region, seasonally adjusted, May to July 2018

UK regions

Figure 5: Unemployment rates by region, seasonally adjusted, May to July 2018

UK regions



Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

The regions with the largest increase in the unemployment rate over the year were the South East and the North West, both with an increase of 0.5 percentage points, followed by Scotland at 0.3 percentage points and the East Midlands, at 0.1 percentage points. All other regions of the UK are showing decreases in the unemployment rate compared with a year ago; the largest decrease was in the North East at 1.5 percentage points, followed by Northern Ireland at 1.3 percentage points.

Where to find data about unemployment

Unemployment estimates are available for each region in [Dataset HI00 – Headline LFS indicators for all UK regions](#) and [HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions](#) (Tab 2(2)), and Datasets [LI01 to LI05 – Local indicators for subregional areas of Great Britain](#), for further estimate breakdowns by age or geographies.

These tables contain data produced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS). A note in the “Things you need to know about this release” section on the relationship between the LFS and APS entitled “What is the relationship between the APS and the LFS?” is included in this bulletin.

8 . Economic inactivity

Things you need to know about economic inactivity

Economically inactive people are not in employment but do not meet the internationally accepted definition of unemployment. This is because they have not been seeking work within the last four weeks and/or they are unable to start work within the next two weeks.

Regional economic inactivity

The economic inactivity rate for people aged from 16 to 64 years for the UK was 21.2%, for the period May to July 2018, an increase of 0.3 percentage points compared with the previous period (February to April 2018).

The UK region with the highest rate was Northern Ireland at 27.7%, followed by the North East at 25.8%. Northern Ireland also had the highest economic inactivity rate, at 27.8%, in the same period last year. The current rate is now 6.5 percentage points higher than the UK rate.

The region with the lowest rate was the South West at 18.6%, followed by the South East, at 18.8%, and the East of England, at 19.0% (Figure 6).

The region with the largest increase in the economic inactivity rate on the previous period (February to April 2018) was the North East at 2.6 percentage points, followed by the East Midlands and the South West, both at 0.8 percentage points. The region with the largest decrease in the economic inactivity rate was the North West, at 1.3 percentage points, followed by Wales at 1.0 percentage point.

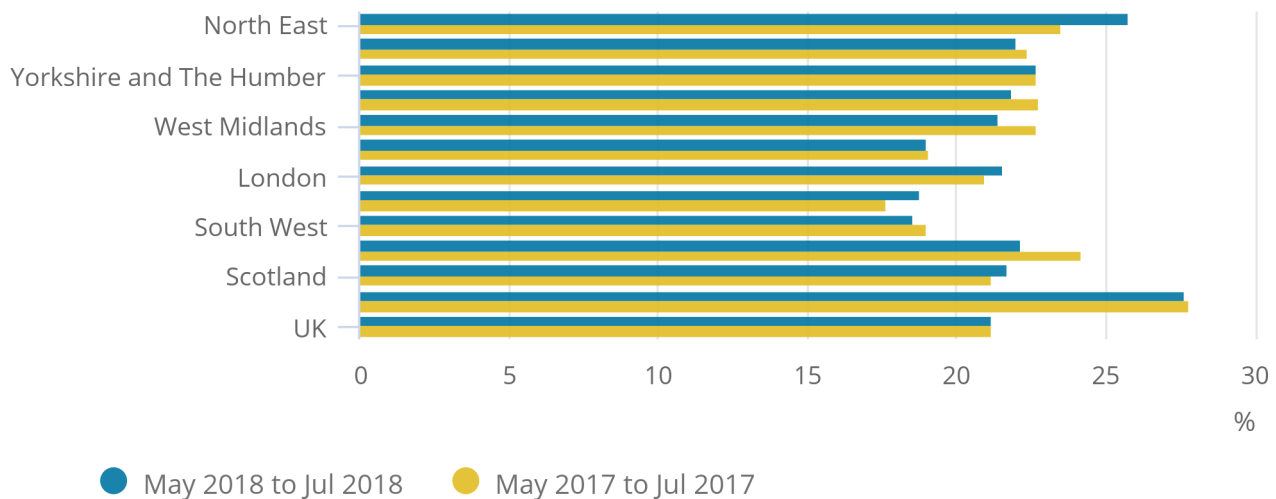
Over the year, the region with the largest increase in the economic inactivity rate was the North East at 2.3 percentage points, followed by the South East, at 1.0 percentage point. The region with the largest decrease in the inactivity rate was Wales, at 2.0 percentage points, followed by the West Midlands, at 1.3 percentage points.

Figure 6: Economic inactivity rate by region and comparison year-on-year, seasonally adjusted, May to July 2017 and May to July 2018

UK regions

Figure 6: Economic inactivity rate by region and comparison year-on-year, seasonally adjusted, May to July 2017 and May to July 2018

UK regions



Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

Where to find data about economic inactivity

Economic inactivity estimates are available for each region in [Dataset HI00 – Headline LFS indicators for all UK regions](#) and [HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions](#) (Tabs 10 and 11), and [Datasets LI01 to LI05 – Local indicators for subregional areas of Great Britain](#), for further estimate breakdowns by age, reason or geographies.

These tables contain data produced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS). A note in the “Things you need to know about this release” section on the relationship between the LFS and APS entitled “What is the relationship between the APS and the LFS?” is included in this bulletin.

9 . Local labour market indicators

Things you need to know about labour market indicators

Local labour market indicators cover employment, unemployment, economic inactivity and jobs density, for subregional geographic areas such as local and unitary authorities, counties and regions in the UK for the most recent 12-month period available of the Annual Population Survey (APS). The jobs density of an area is the number of jobs per head, of resident population, aged 16 to 64 years.

Indicators from the Annual Population Survey (first published 17 July 2018)

For the period April 2017 to March 2018, the local authorities with the highest employment rates in Great Britain were Dartford at 91.3%, the Orkney Islands at 90.3% and Basingstoke and Deane at 88.9%. Nottingham is the local authority with the lowest rate at 58.6%, followed by the City of London at 60.8% and Hartlepool at 63.1%.

For the period April 2017 to March 2018, the local authorities with the highest unemployment rates in Great Britain were Hartlepool at 8.7%, followed by Great Yarmouth at 8.0% and Nottingham and Birmingham, both at 7.8%. The local authority with the lowest rate was Eden in Cumbria, at 1.8%, followed by South Lakeland and the Orkney Islands, both at 2.0%. These were followed by a further 78 local authorities all under 3.0%.

Jobs densities (first published 17 July 2018)

The jobs density of an area is the number of jobs per head, of resident population, aged 16 to 64 years. In 2016, the highest jobs density in Great Britain was the City of London at 118.14 and the lowest was Lewisham at 0.39. Westminster (4.41) and Camden (2.26), both in London, were the next highest jobs densities. The highest jobs density outside London was the Isles of Scilly at 2.06. After Lewisham, the lowest jobs densities were East Renfrewshire at 0.44, followed by East Dunbartonshire and Redbridge, both at 0.46 and Waltham Forest at 0.47.

Where to find data about local labour market indicators

Annual Population Survey (APS) estimates are available in [Datasets LI01 to LI05 – Local indicators for subregional areas of Great Britain](#) and Claimant Count estimates are available in Datasets [CC01 – Claimant Count by unitary and local authority](#) and [CC02 – Claimant Count by Parliamentary constituency](#), [CC02.1 – Claimant Count for constituencies of the Scottish Parliament](#), and [CC03 – Claimant Count for local enterprise partnerships](#) in this statistical bulletin.

These tables contain data produced from the Annual Population Survey (APS). A note in the “Things you need to know about this release” section on the relationship between the LFS and APS entitled “What is the relationship between the APS and the LFS?” is included in this bulletin.

10 . Upcoming changes and future publication dates

Future publication dates

Tuesday 16 October 2018
Tuesday 13 November 2018
Tuesday 11 December 2018
Tuesday 22 January 2019
Tuesday 19 February 2019
Tuesday 19 March 2019

11 . Links to related statistics

Further information on labour market statistics is available in the following publications:

- [UK labour market statistics](#)
- [Public sector employment](#)
- [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#)
- [Labour productivity](#)
- [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings \(ASHE\)](#)
- [Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\)](#)
- [regional and local area statistics are also available at NOMIS®](#)

We have also produced:

- [ad hoc data and analysis related to employment and employee types](#)
- [methodological articles related to employment and employee types](#)

Historic articles published in Economic and Labour Market Review and Labour Market Trends

Articles about labour market statistics were published in Labour Market Trends (up until 2006) and in Economic and Labour Market Review (from 2007 to 2011). Editions of [Labour Market Trends](#) are available from July 2001 until January 2006, when the publication was discontinued. Editions of [Economic and Labour Market Review](#) are available from the first edition, published in February 2007, up until the last edition, published in May 2011.

12 . Quality and methodology

Accuracy and reliability of survey estimates

Most of the figures in this statistical bulletin come from surveys of households or businesses. Surveys gather information from a sample rather than from the whole population. The sample is designed carefully to allow for this and to be as accurate as possible given practical limitations such as time and cost constraints, but results from sample surveys are always estimates, not precise figures. This means that they are subject to a margin of error, which can have an impact on how changes in the numbers should be interpreted, especially in the short-term.

Changes in the numbers reported in this statistical bulletin (and especially the rates) between three-month periods are usually not greater than the margin of error. In practice, this means that small, short-term movements in reported rates (for example, within plus or minus 0.3 percentage points) should be treated as indicative and considered alongside medium- and long-term patterns in the series and corresponding movements in administrative sources, where available, to give a fuller picture.

Quality information

One indication of the reliability of the main indicators in this bulletin can be obtained by monitoring the size of revisions. These summary measures are available in [Dataset S02 Regional labour market: Sampling variability and revisions summary](#) and show the size of revisions over the last five years.

The revised data may be subject to sampling or other sources of error. Our standard presentation is to show five years' worth of revisions (that is, 60 observations for a monthly series, 20 for a quarterly series).

Other quality information

The Quality and Methodology Information reports for labour market statistics contain important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
- uses and users of the data
- how the output was created
- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data

Quality and Methodology Information reports for various labour market topics are available:

[Labour Force Survey Quality and Methodology Information](#)

[Labour Force Survey performance and quality monitoring reports](#)

[Vacancy Survey Quality and Methodology Information](#)

[Workforce jobs Quality and Methodology Information](#)

[Average weekly earnings \(AWE\) Quality and Methodology Information](#)

[Labour disputes Quality and Methodology Information](#)

Further information about the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is available from the [Labour Force Survey – user guide](#).