

Article

People temporarily away from paid work in the UK: August 2020

Which people are most likely to be temporarily away from paid work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

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Notice

11 August 2020

The effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on our capacity means we have reviewed the existing labour market releases and will be suspending some publications.

This will protect the delivery and quality of our remaining labour market outputs as well as ensuring we can respond to new demands as a direct result of the coronavirus. More details about the impact on labour market outputs can be found in our [statement](#).

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1 . Main points

- In the three months to June 2020, 7.3 million (22.3%) of those in employment were temporarily away from paid work.
- Part-time workers saw an increase of 23.4 percentage points on the year in those temporarily away from paid work, rising from 10.1% to 33.6% in April to June 2020, this compares with an increase of 12.9 percentage points to 18.5% for full-time workers.
- The youngest and oldest workers were most likely to be temporarily away from paid work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic – with the highest overall rates of temporarily away from paid work and largest increases on the year.
- In the three months to June 2020, more than 400,000 of those employees were receiving no pay whilst their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic, this compares with 1.2 million employees with full pay and 2.8 million employees with partial pay.

2 . Temporarily away from paid work

Overall analysis

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) collects information on those temporarily away from paid work that they expect to return to – that is any person who did no paid work in the reference week. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO) definitions these people would be defined as in employment. These persons could be away from paid work for a variety of reasons – for example; bank holidays, maternity or paternity leave, sick or injured, between jobs, or furloughed.

Of those temporarily away from paid work, we gather a range of data – including whether they are temporarily away from paid work short-term (less than three months) or long-term (three months or more) and whether those away long-term are earning more or less than half their usual salary.

LFS estimates presented in this article include interviews that took place during April to June 2020. Consequently, all interviews relate to the period following the implementation of COVID-19 social distancing measures (in March) which included the government closure of schools, introduction of lockdown, and announcement of measures aimed at protecting businesses and jobs, along with the start of easing of some of those measures.

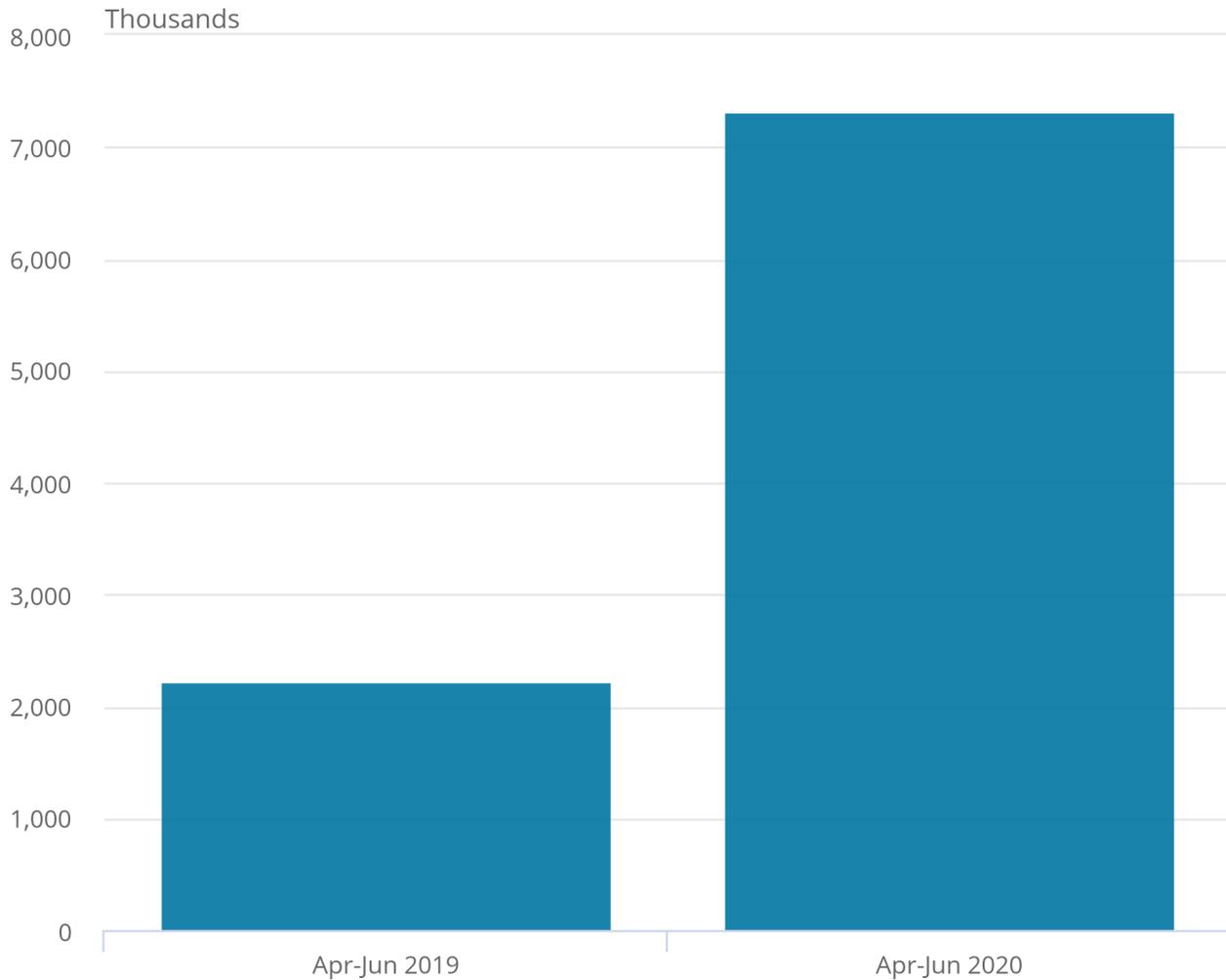
Although we can't say definitively that any observed increases are directly due to people furloughed, or otherwise away from work due to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, it is likely to be the main driving factor for the change on the year. This article compares the three months to June 2020 with the same period a year ago, thus eliminating any seasonal affects of people temporarily away from paid work (for example – school or bank holidays), and compares a post-lockdown period with the same period pre-lockdown.

Figure 1: The number of those in employment temporarily away from paid work has tripled to 7.3 million people in April to June 2020 compared with the previous year

Away from work levels for those in employment (aged 16 years and over), UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020

Figure 1: The number of those in employment temporarily away from paid work has tripled to 7.3 million people in April to June 2020 compared with the previous year

Away from work levels for those in employment (aged 16 years and over), UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

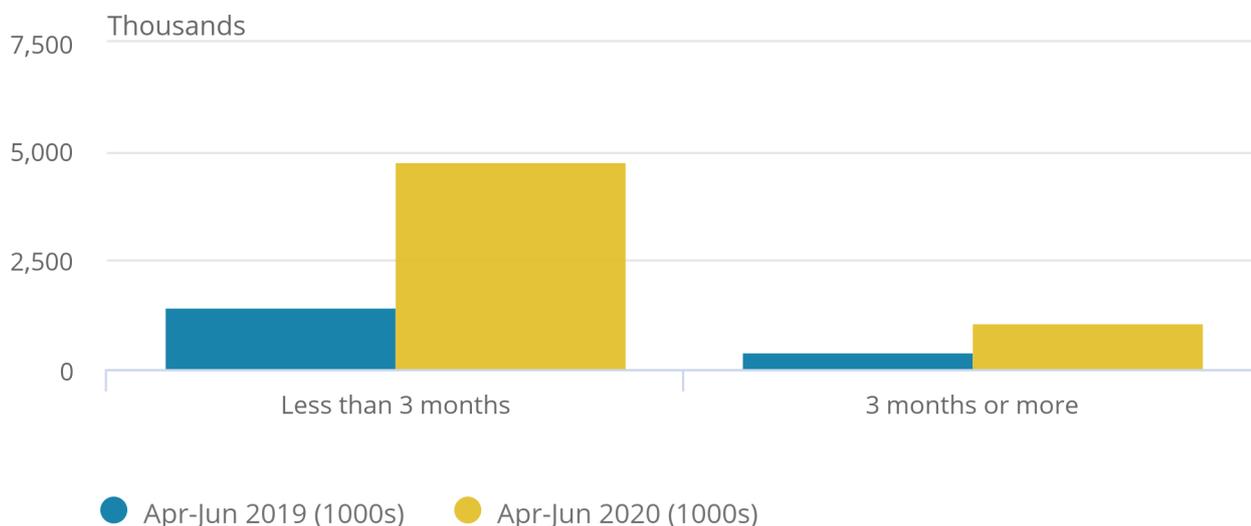
In the three months to June 2020, there were 7.3 million people temporarily away from paid work. This equates to 22.3% of people in employment, which is up 16.1 percentage points on the year from 6.2% (2.2 million people) in 2019.

Figure 2: Almost five million of those temporarily away from work had been away for less than three months in April to June 2020

Time respondent has been temporarily away from their job or business, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020

Figure 2: Almost five million of those temporarily away from work had been away for less than three months in April to June 2020

Time respondent has been temporarily away from their job or business, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. This question was asked to all in employment who were temporarily away from work in the reference period.

Of those people temporarily away from paid work in April to June 2020, almost five million (77.2%) had been away for less than three months during the lockdown period. This was more than a three-fold increase from only 1.4 million a year earlier. Those temporarily away for three months or more had almost increased three-fold on the year, increasing from 398,000 to 1.1 million.

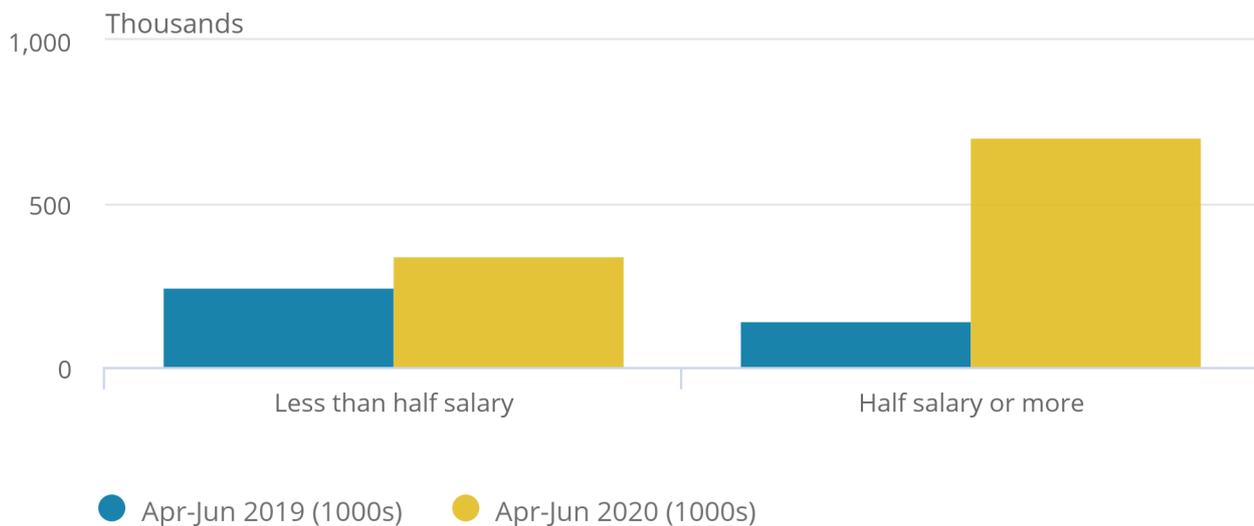
A more detailed look into the time people have been temporarily away from paid work can be found in [Single-month and weekly Labour Force Survey estimates: August 2020](#), where a shift from being temporarily away short-term to long-term can be observed in the latter weeks of June.

Figure 3: Over two-thirds of those away for three months or more were receiving more than half their usual salary in April to June 2020

Amount of wage being received by those temporarily away from their job or business for three months or more, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020

Figure 3: Over two-thirds of those away for three months or more were receiving more than half their usual salary in April to June 2020

Amount of wage being received by those temporarily away from their job or business for three months or more, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. This question was asked to all in employment who were temporarily away from work for 3 months or more in the reference period.

In the three months to June 2019, 143,000 (36.6%) of those temporarily away for three months or more were earning more than half their salary. However, in the three months to June 2020 these proportions were reversed, with more than 700,000 people (67.5%) away for three months or more earning more than half their salary.

A more detailed look into the amount of earnings being received by those temporarily away from paid work for three months or more can be found in [Single-month and weekly Labour Force Survey estimates: August 2020](#), where a large increase in the level and proportion of those earning more than half their pay can be observed in the latter weeks of June 2020.

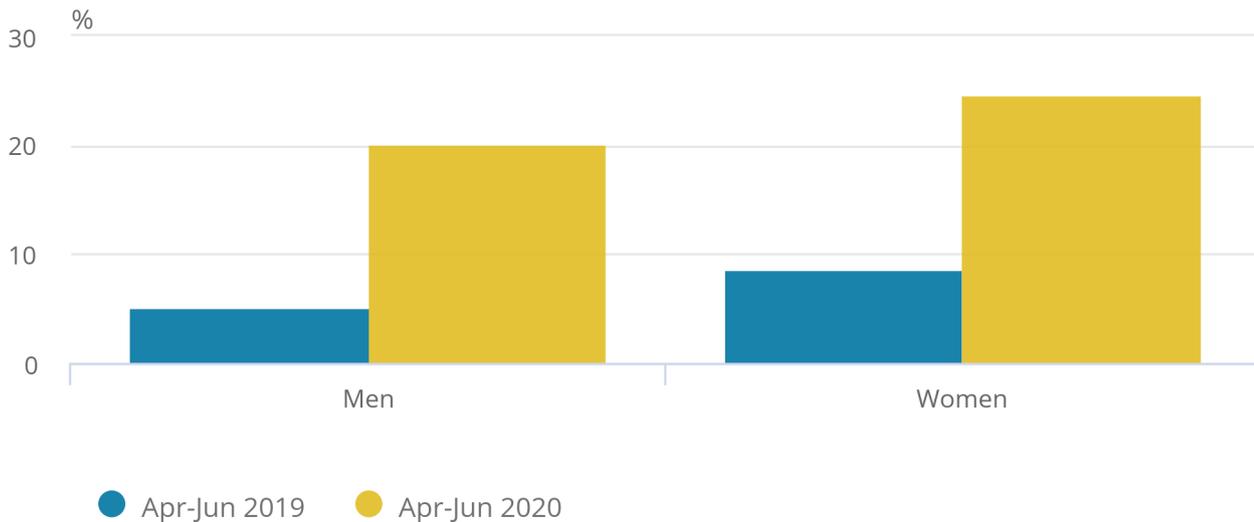
Temporarily away from paid work, by sex

Figure 4: Of those in employment, women were more likely to be temporarily away from their job than men

Away from work rates for those in employment (aged 16 years and over), by sex, UK, April to June 2019 to April to -June 2020

Figure 4: Of those in employment, women were more likely to be temporarily away from their job than men

Away from work rates for those in employment (aged 16 years and over), by sex, UK, April to June 2019 to April to -June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

In the three months to June 2020, both men and women were more likely to be temporarily away from paid work compared with the same period a year earlier. Women saw a slightly larger increase of 16.1 percentage points, rising from 8.6% to 24.7%. For men, the increase was 14.9 percentage points, rising from 5.2% to 20.1%.

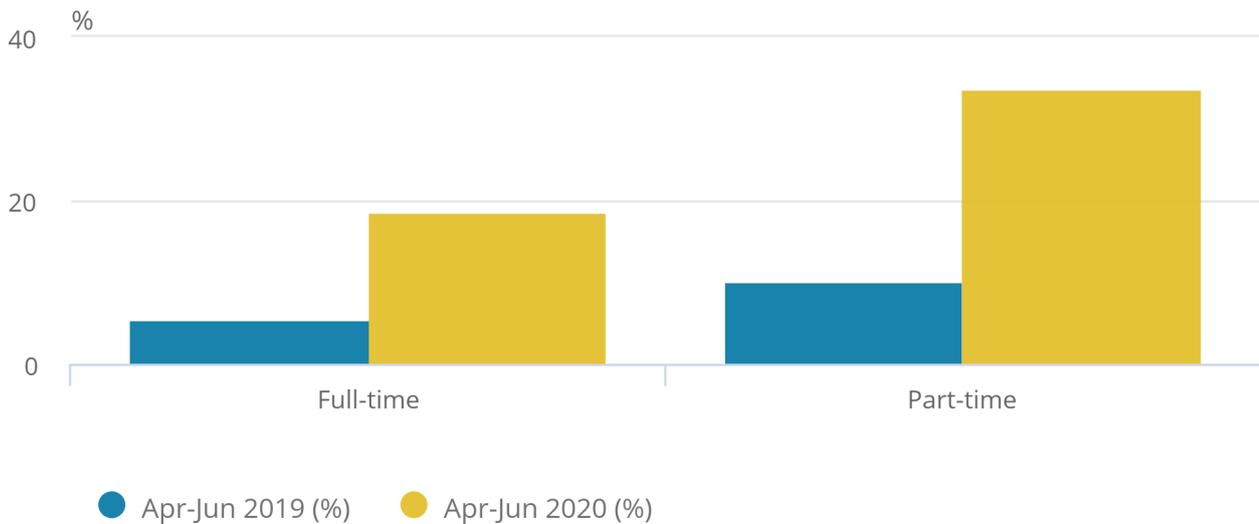
Temporarily away from paid work, by working status

Figure 5: More than a third of part-time workers were temporarily away from paid work in April to June 2020

Away from work rates for those in employment (aged 16 years and over), by status, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020

Figure 5: More than a third of part-time workers were temporarily away from paid work in April to June 2020

Away from work rates for those in employment (aged 16 years and over), by status, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

In the three months to June 2020, both people in full-time and part-time work were more likely to be temporarily away from paid work compared with the same period a year earlier. Part-time workers saw a larger increase of 23.4 percentage points, rising from 10.1% to 33.6%. For full-time workers, the increase was 12.9 percentage points, rising from 5.6% to 18.5%.

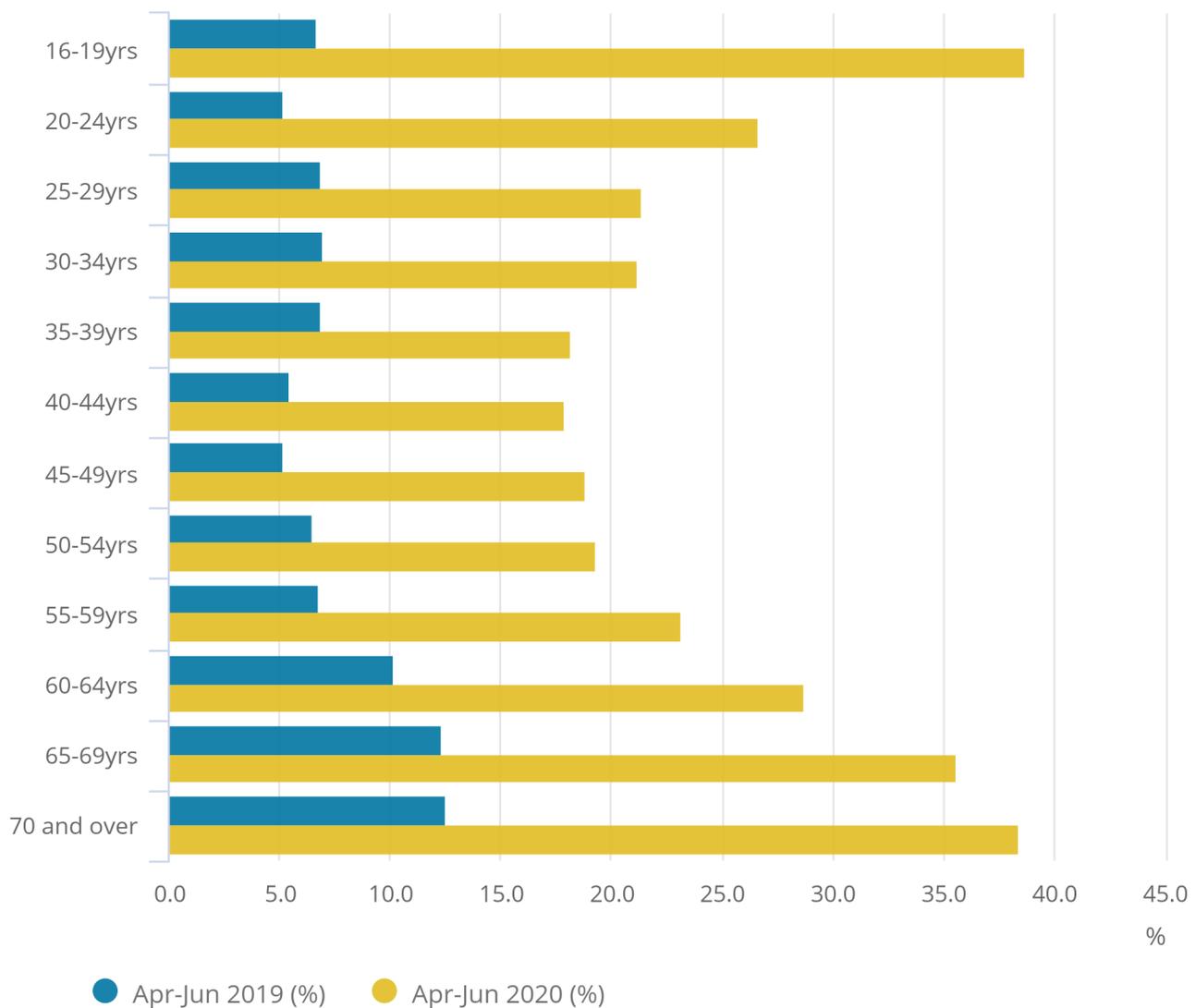
Temporarily away from paid work, by age

Figure 6: The youngest and oldest workers were most likely to be temporarily away from paid work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Away from work rates for those in employment, by age, UK, April to -June 2019 to April to June 2020

Figure 6: The youngest and oldest workers were most likely to be temporarily away from paid work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Away from work rates for those in employment, by age, UK, April to -June 2019 to April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

All age groups saw a large increase on away from work rates for the three months to June 2020 compared with a year earlier. The largest increases were observed for the younger and older workers; with 16-to 19-year-olds seeing an increase of 32.0 percentage points on the year and 70 years and older seeing an increase of 25.9 percentage points on the year. These two age groups also had the highest rates of away from work in the latest period; with 38.7% and 38.4% of people in employment temporarily away from paid work in those categories respectively.

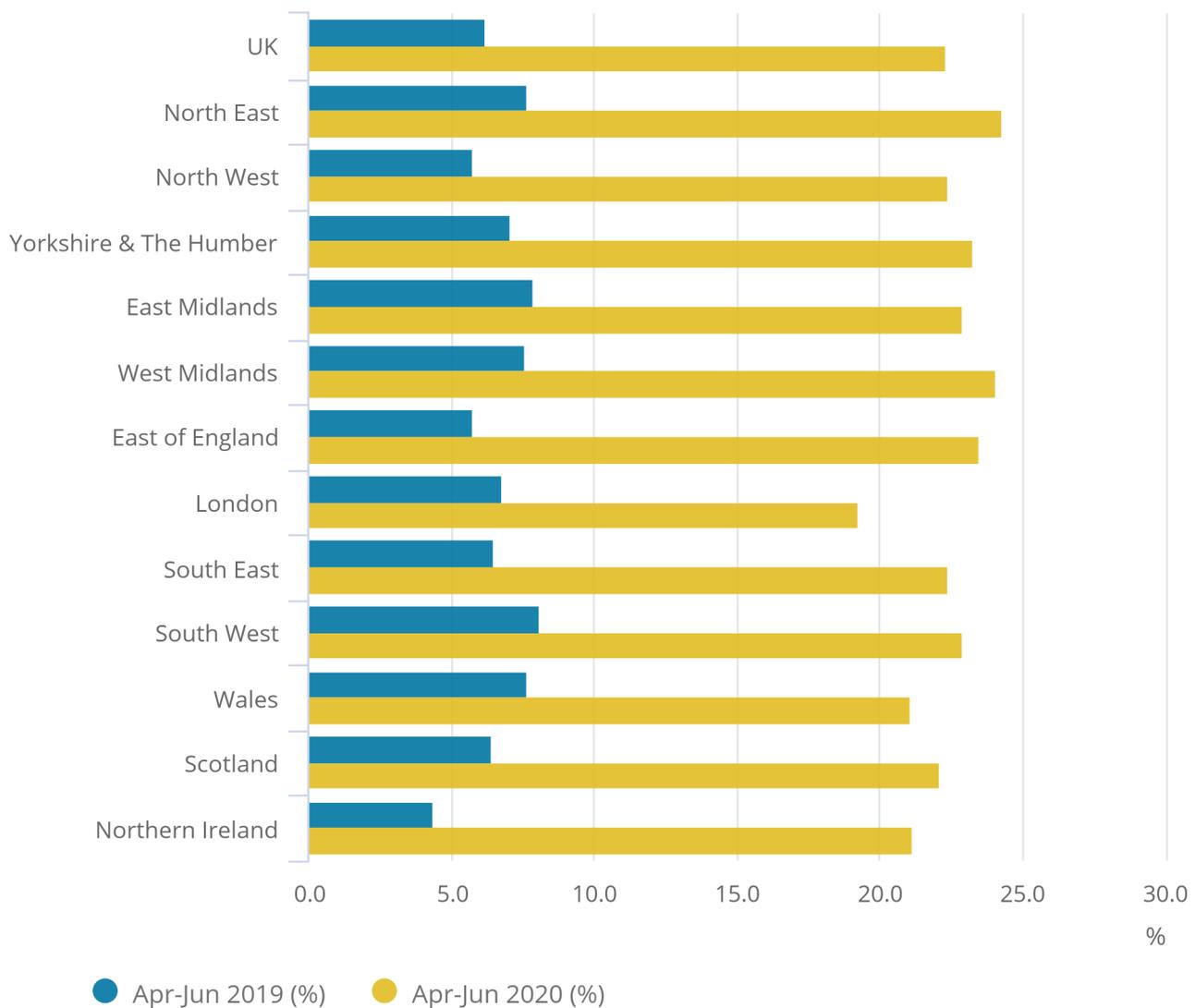
Temporarily away from paid work, by region

Figure 7: Of those in employment, people in London were the least likely to be temporarily away from work in April to June 2020

Away from work rates for those in employment, by region, UK, April to June 2019 to April to -June 2020

Figure 7: Of those in employment, people in London were the least likely to be temporarily away from work in April to June 2020

Away from work rates for those in employment, by region, UK, April to June 2019 to April to -June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

The East of England saw the largest increase in the rate of those temporarily away from paid work in the three months to June 2020, rising 17.8 percentage points from 5.8% in 2019 to 23.5%. The highest overall rate was in the North East at 24.3% in April to June 2020. For the same period, the lowest value across the UK regions was in London at 19.3%, a 12.4 percentage point increase on the year, which was also the lowest increase across the regions.

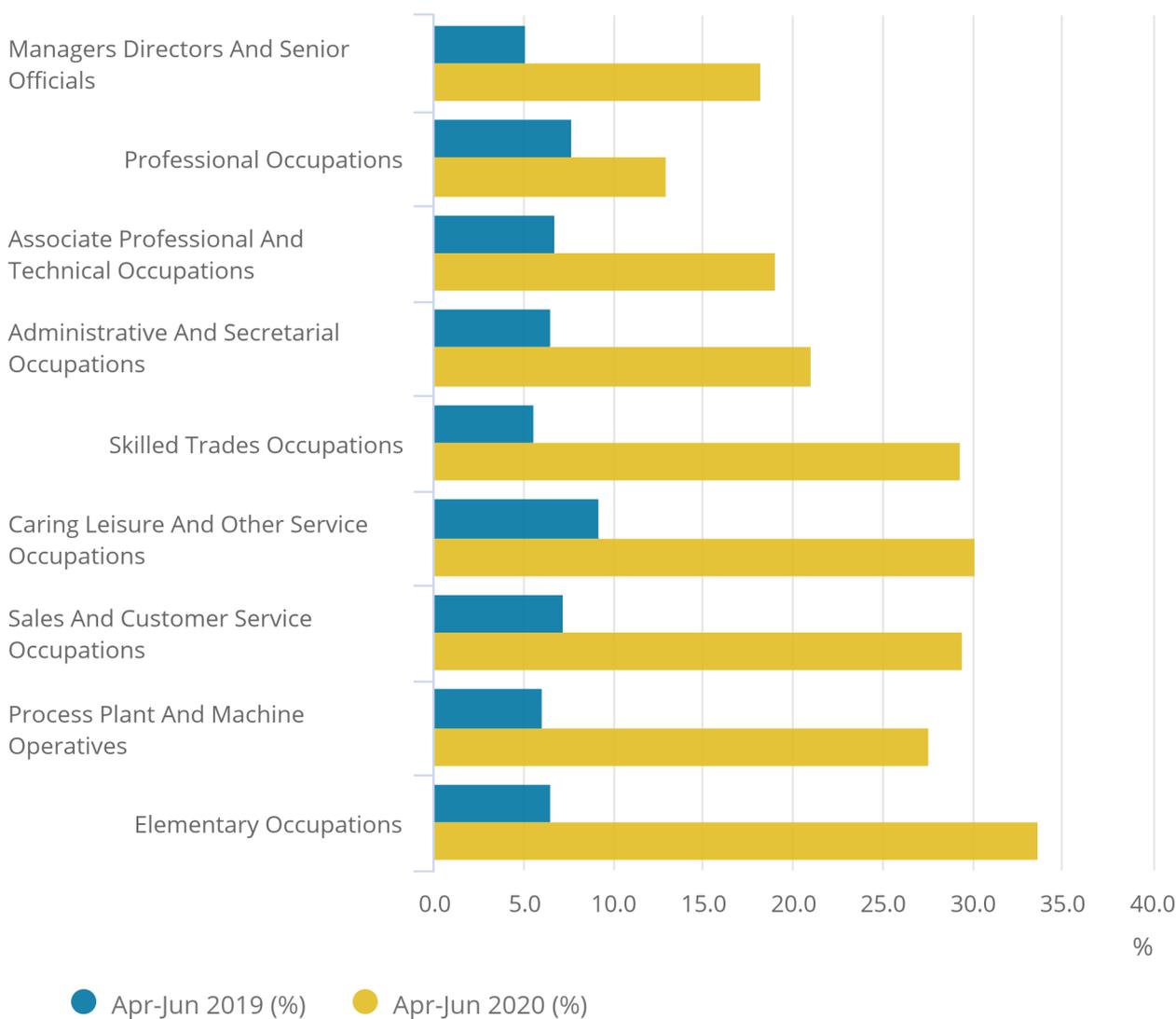
Temporarily away from paid work, by occupation

Figure 8: Of those in employment, those in manual or elementary occupations were most likely to be temporarily away from work

Away from work rates for those in employment, by occupation, UK, April to -June 2019 to April to June 2020

Figure 8: Of those in employment, those in manual or elementary occupations were most likely to be temporarily away from work

Away from work rates for those in employment, by occupation, UK, April to -June 2019 to April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

For April to June 2020, people in elementary occupations saw the largest increase on the year in people temporarily away from their job. The rate increased by 27.2 percentage points, rising from 6.5% to 33.7%, which is also the highest value overall for this period. People in professional occupations saw the smallest annual rise of 5.3 percentage points, increasing from 7.7% to 13.0% which was also the lowest value overall in the three months to June 2020.

For estimates of people temporarily away from paid work by industry please see the accompanying data tables.

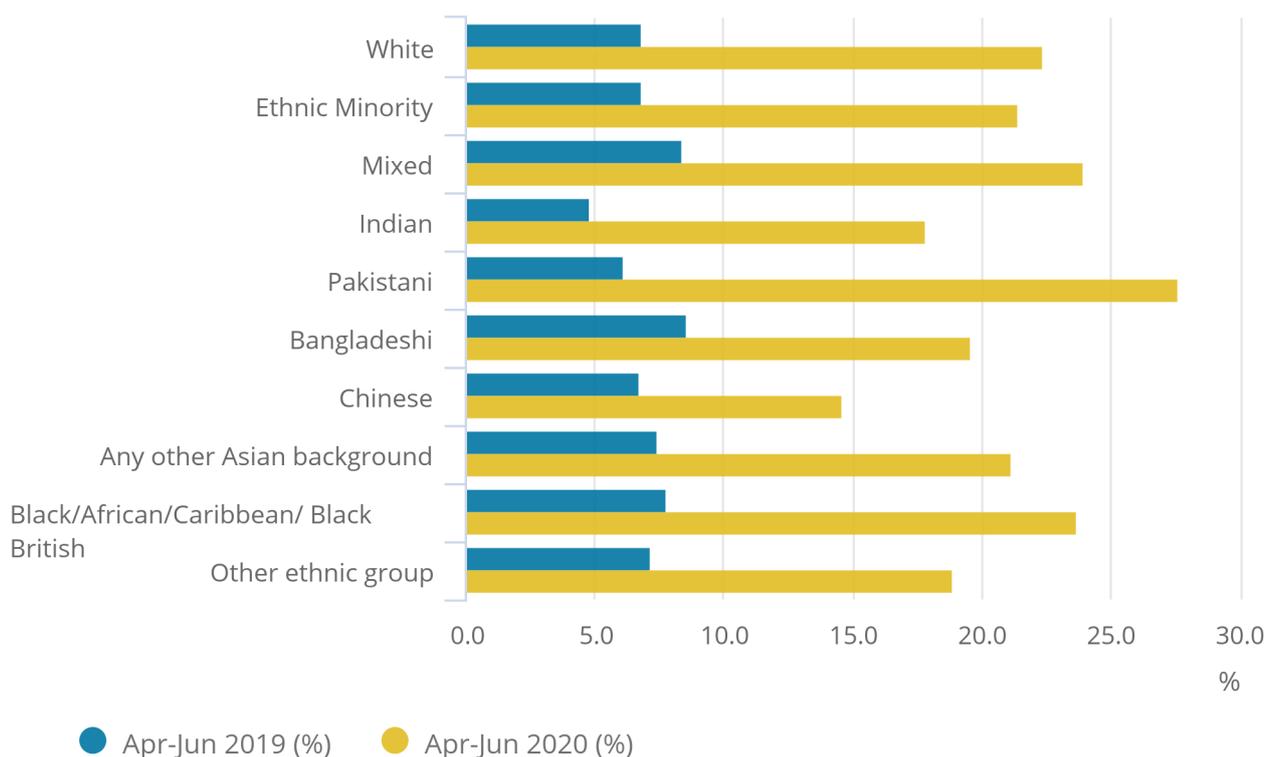
Temporarily away from paid work, by ethnicity

Figure 9: Pakistani, Black and Mixed people were most likely to be temporarily away from paid work in April to June 2020

Away from work rates for those in employment, by ethnicity, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020

Figure 9: Pakistani, Black and Mixed people were most likely to be temporarily away from paid work in April to June 2020

Away from work rates for those in employment, by ethnicity, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

When breaking down the rates of whether someone in employment is temporarily away from their job down by ethnicities, Pakistani people saw the highest rise of 21.5 percentage points, from 6.1% in April to June 2019 to 27.6% for the same period in 2020, which was the highest overall rate in the three months to June 2020. The Chinese ethnic group saw the smallest annual increase of 7.9 percentage points, from 6.7% in April to June 2019 to 14.6% in April to June 2020, which was also the lowest value across all ethnic groups in the three months to June.

For estimates of people temporarily away from paid work by country of birth or nationality please see the accompanying data tables.

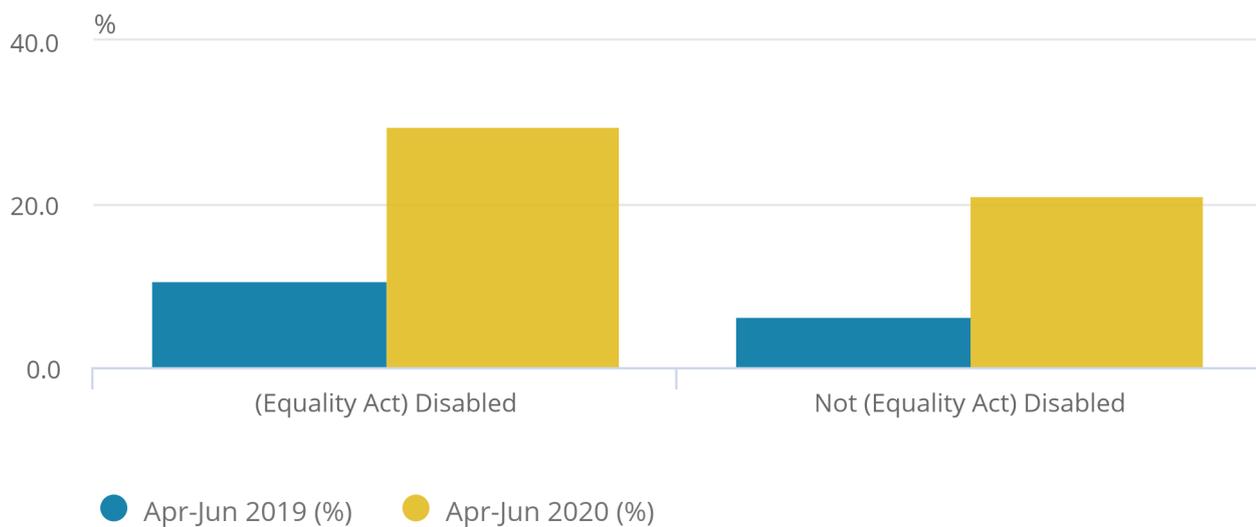
Temporarily away from paid work, by disability status

Figure 10: Those defined as disabled under the Equality Act were more likely to temporarily be away from work in April to June 2020

Away from work rates for those in employment, by Equality Act disability status, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020

Figure 10: Those defined as disabled under the Equality Act were more likely to temporarily be away from work in April to June 2020

Away from work rates for those in employment, by Equality Act disability status, UK, April to June 2019 to April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

Those defined as disabled under the Equality Act are more likely to be temporarily away from paid work than those defined as not disabled. In the three months to June 2020, 29.5% of disabled workers were temporarily away from paid work, an increase of 18.9 percentage points on the year. In the same period, 21.1% of those not disabled were temporarily away from paid work, a smaller increase of 14.9 percentage points on the year.

3 . Those still being paid while their job is on hold or affected by the coronavirus

Overall analysis

In April 2020, a number of questions were added to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) questionnaire to gather additional information on the situation in the labour market during the coronavirus pandemic. One of these asks whether an employee is still being paid while their job is on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic; therefore, everyone answering this question will be defined as in employment and temporarily away from paid work. Those self-employed who were temporarily away from work because of the coronavirus pandemic were asked whether they had applied for the coronavirus Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

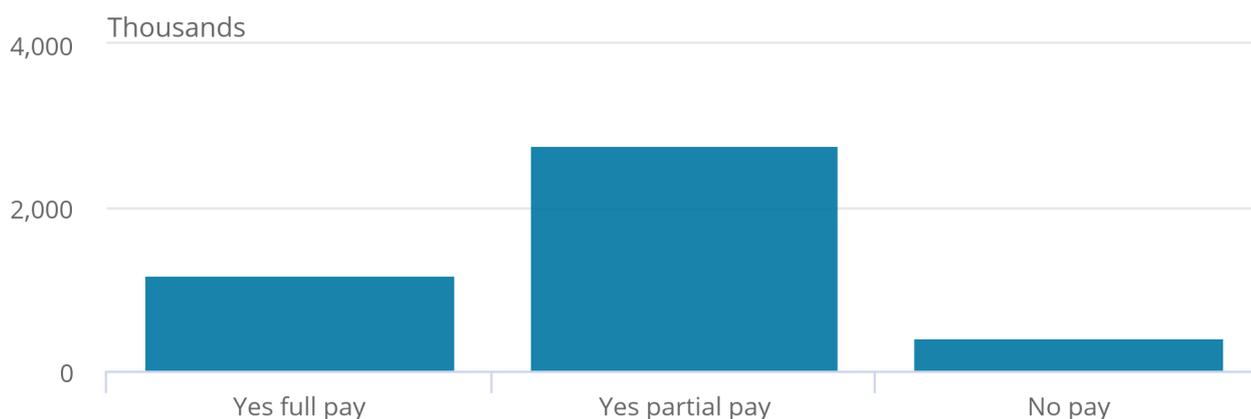
Figures 11 and 12 look in more detail at employees and self-employed people who were temporarily away from paid work due to the coronavirus pandemic, and who did no hours of paid work during the reference week.

Figure 11: More than 400,000 employees received no pay whilst their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic

Total number of persons receiving full, partial or no pay while their job is on hold or affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, UK, April to June 2020

Figure 11: More than 400,000 employees received no pay whilst their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic

Total number of persons receiving full, partial or no pay while their job is on hold or affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, UK, April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. This question was asked to employees who were temporarily away from work, did no hours of paid work in the reference week and who identified their reason for being away to be due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

In the three months to June 2020, approximately 417,000 employees were receiving no pay whilst their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic. There were 1.2 million people receiving full pay, whilst 2.8 million people were receiving partial pay.

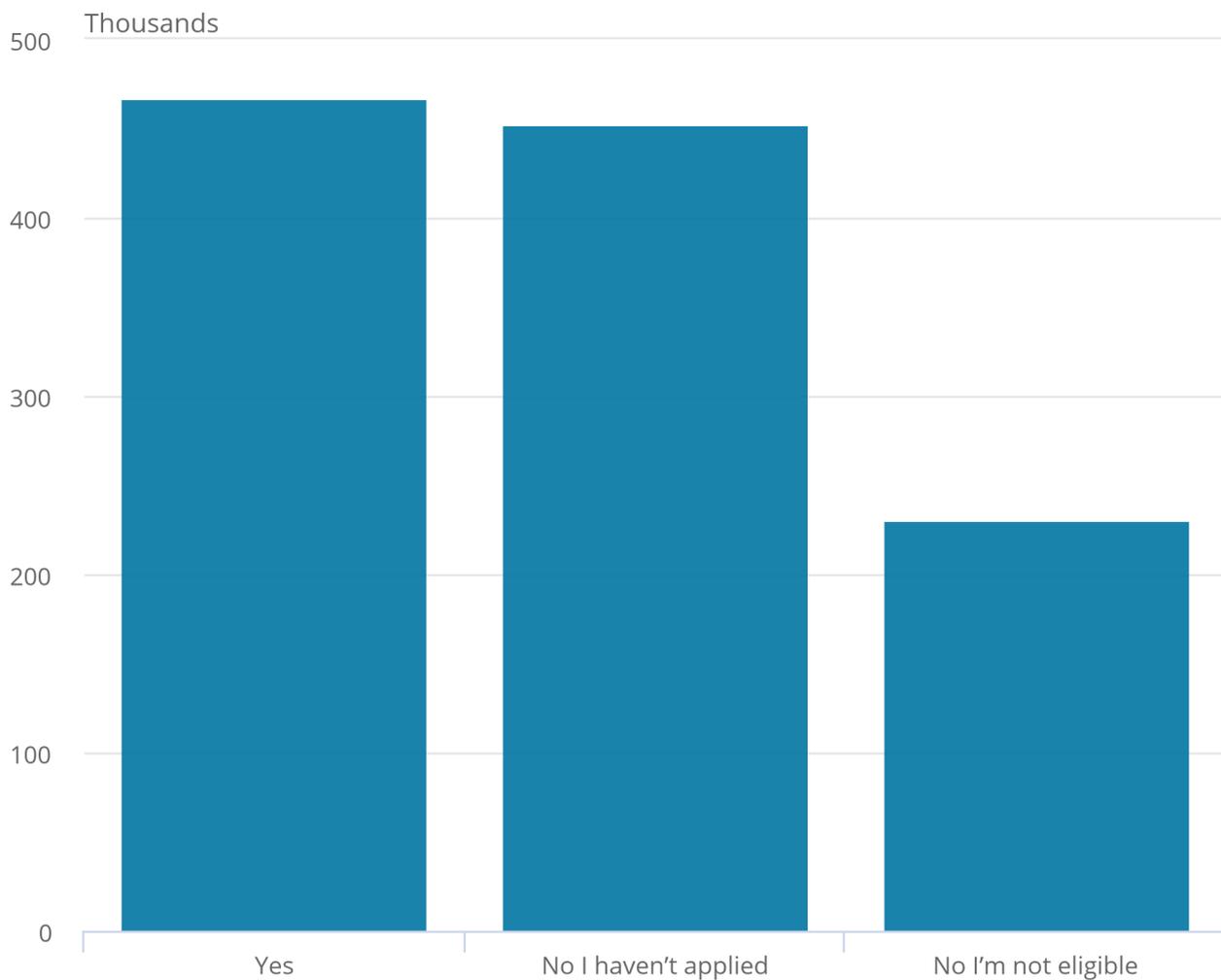
A more detailed look into how the payments to employees temporarily away from paid work developed through the lockdown period can be found in [Single-month and weekly Labour Force Survey estimates: August 2020](#).

Figure 12: Almost half a million self-employed workers applied for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) while their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic

Total number of persons who had applied for the coronavirus (COVID-19) Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) while their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, UK, April to June 2020

Figure 12: Almost half a million self-employed workers applied for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) while their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic

Total number of persons who had applied for the coronavirus (COVID-19) Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) while their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, UK, April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. This question was asked to self-employed who were temporarily away from work, did no hours of paid work in the reference week, and who identified their reason for being away to be due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
2. This question was added to the LFS questionnaire in April 2020, before the scheme opened for application on 13 May 2020, therefore some respondents may have answered the question in foresight.

In the three months to June 2020, approximately 467,000 self-employed people had applied for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) whilst their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Approximately 453,000 people had not applied and 230,000 people identified themselves as being ineligible.

A more detailed look into how the Self-employment Income Support Scheme developed through the lockdown period can be found in [Single-month and weekly Labour Force Survey estimates: August 2020](#).

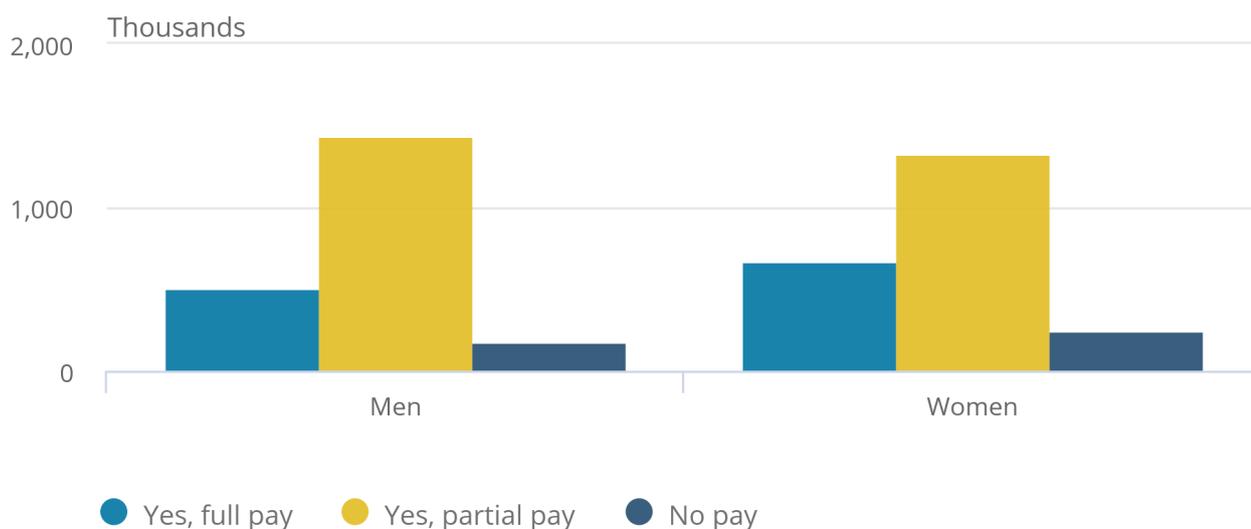
Still being paid, by sex

Figure 13: Quarter of a million women received no pay whilst their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic

Number of persons receiving full, partial or no pay while their job is on hold or affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, by sex, UK, April to June 2020

Figure 13: Quarter of a million women received no pay whilst their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic

Number of persons receiving full, partial or no pay while their job is on hold or affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, by sex, UK, April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. This question was asked to employees who were temporarily away from work, did no hours of paid work in the reference week and who identified their reason for being away to be due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

In the three months to June 2020 the majority (63.3%) of those temporarily away from paid work while their job is on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic were receiving partial pay. Women were more likely to receive full pay than men (30.1% compared with 23.8%) but were also more likely to receive no pay (10.9% compared with 8.2%).

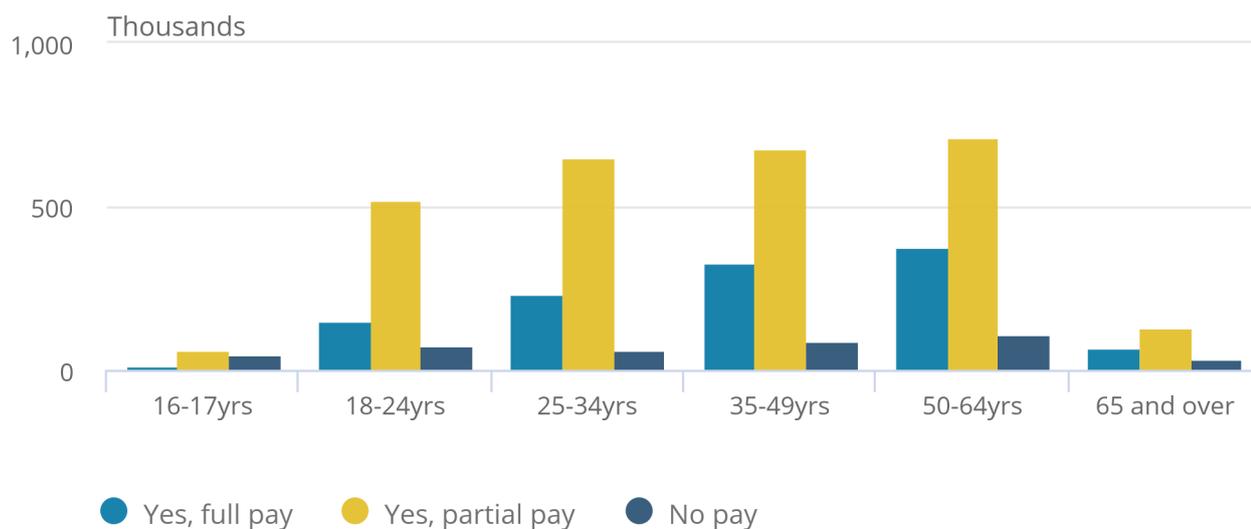
Still being paid, by age

Figure 14: Almost 40% of 16- to 17-year-olds were receiving no pay in the three months to June 2020

Number of persons receiving full, partial or no pay while their job is on hold or affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, by age, UK, April to June 2020

Figure 14: Almost 40% of 16- to 17-year-olds were receiving no pay in the three months to June 2020

Number of persons receiving full, partial or no pay while their job is on hold or affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, by age, UK, April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. This question was asked to employees who were temporarily away from work, did no hours of paid work in the reference week and who identified their reason for being away to be due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

As a proportion of those temporarily away from paid work while their job was on hold or affected by the coronavirus pandemic, the youngest and oldest age groups were most likely to receive no pay (38.9% and 15.0% respectively). More than two-thirds of people aged 18 to 24 years and 25 to 34 years received partial pay, and almost one-third of those aged 35 to 49 years and 50 to 64 years received full pay.

4 . Those waiting to take up a new job

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) collects information on those not in employment that are waiting to take up a job. This question identifies people who, although not looking for work, were waiting to take up a job already obtained. These people are classed as unemployed on the ILO definition if available to start work within two weeks. This variable also covers people up to five years above retirement age.

Figure 15: Approximately the same number of people were waiting to take up a job in April to June 2020 as the same period a year earlier

Number of persons waiting to take up a new job, UK, April to June 2020 (1000s)

Figure 15: Approximately the same number of people were waiting to take up a job in April to June 2020 as the same period a year earlier

Number of persons waiting to take up a new job, UK, April to June 2020 (1000s)



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

In the three months to June 2020 there were approximately 149,000 persons waiting to take up a new job. This is an increase of approximately 10,000 persons (7.0%) since the same period a year ago.

5 . Away from work data

[People temporarily away from paid work in the UK](#)

Dataset | Released 11th August 2020

Analysis of which people are most likely to be temporarily away from paid work during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

6 . Glossary

Employment

Employment measures the number of people in paid work or who had a job that they were temporarily away from (for example, because they were on holiday or off sick). This differs from the number of jobs because some people have more than one job. The employment rate is the proportion of people aged between 16 and 64 years who are in employment. A more detailed explanation is available in our [guide to labour market statistics](#).

Temporarily away from work

People temporarily away from paid work are still defined as in employment. This question is asked of all those in employment who did no paid work in the reference week. People could be temporarily away from work for a variety of reasons -- these include bank holidays, vacation, off sick, maternity or paternity leave, or furloughed.

Time away from job

Of those temporarily away from work, and still in employment, we measure if this time away is short-term (less than three months) or long-term (three months or more). This measure only applies to respondents who were away from their job or business in the reference week -- that is, those who answered yes to being temporarily away from work.

Waiting to take up a new job

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) collects information on those not in employment that are waiting to take up a job. This question identifies people who, although not looking for work, were waiting to take up a job already obtained. These people are classed as unemployed on the ILO definition if available to start work within two weeks. This variable also covers people up to five years above retirement age.

7 . Data sources and quality

Coronavirus

In response to the developing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we are working to ensure that we continue to publish economic statistics. For more information, please see [COVID-19 and the production of statistics](#).

We have reviewed all publications and data published as part of the labour market release in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This has led to the [postponement of some publications and datasets](#) to ensure that we can continue to publish our main labour market data. This will protect the delivery and quality of our remaining outputs as well as ensuring we can respond to new demands as a direct result of the coronavirus.

For more information on how labour market data sources, among others, will be affected by the coronavirus pandemic, see the [statement](#) published on 27 March 2020. A further [article](#) published on 6 May 2020, detailed some of the challenges that we have faced in producing estimates at this time. A [blog](#) published by Jonathan Athow, Deputy National Statistician for Economic Statistics, published on 16 July 2020, explains why nearly half a million employees are not being paid.

Our latest data and analysis on the impact of the coronavirus on the UK economy and population is now available on our dedicated COVID-19 webpage. This will be the hub for all special coronavirus-related publications, drawing on all available data.

After EU withdrawal

As the UK leaves the EU, it is important that our statistics continue to be of high quality and are internationally comparable. During the transition period, those UK statistics that align with EU practice and rules will continue to do so in the same way as before 31 January 2020.

After the transition period, we will continue to produce our labour market statistics in line with the UK Statistics Authority's [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and in accordance with International Labour Organization (ILO) definitions and agreed international statistical guidance.

The employment, unemployment and economic inactivity estimates rely on data collected from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), a survey run by field interviewers with people across the UK every month.

The [LFS performance and quality monitoring reports](#) provide data on response rates and other quality related issues for the LFS, including breakdowns of response by LFS wave, region and question-specific response issues. The average weekly earnings and vacancies estimates rely on data collected from surveys of employers.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [Labour Force Survey Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\) report](#).

Strengths and limitations

Accuracy of the statistics: estimating and reporting uncertainty

The figures in this bulletin come from surveys, which gather information from a sample rather than from the whole population. The sample is designed to be as accurate as possible given practical limitations such as time and cost constraints. Results from sample surveys are always estimates, not precise figures. This can have an impact on how changes in the estimates should be interpreted, especially for short-term comparisons.

As the number of people available in the sample gets smaller, the variability of the estimates that we can make from that sample size gets larger. Estimates for small groups (for example, away from work estimated for people aged between 16 and 19 years), which are based on small subsets of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) sample, are less reliable and tend to be more volatile than for larger aggregated groups (for example, the total number of those away from work).

Further information is available in [A guide to labour market statistics](#).

Where to find data about uncertainty and reliability

The estimates presented in this article contain [uncertainty](#). There are many sources of uncertainty, please see above link for more information.

8 . Related links

[Labour market overview: August 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 11 August 2020

Estimates of employment, unemployment, economic inactivity and other employment-related statistics for the UK.

[Employment in the UK: August 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 11 August 2020

Estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for the UK.

[Single-month and weekly Labour Force Survey estimates: August 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 11 August 2020

Comparison of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) headline three-month average rates for employment, unemployment and economic inactivity with their equivalent single-month estimates. Includes weekly Labour Force Survey estimates.