

Labour Force Survey performance and quality monitoring report: October to December 2025

Response rates, sample size and quality assessment of the Office for National Statistics quarterly Labour Force Survey

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Notice

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From Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2025, we have improved the structure and content in this release to better meet accessibility standards and user needs. Supporting methodological information can be found in our [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\) user guide](#) and our [LFS quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#).

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1 . Main points

The achieved sample size, excluding imputed cases, for the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS) was 65,590 individuals in 29,907 households during Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025. This represents an increase of 2% in household interviews and an increase of 2.5% in achieved person interviews, compared with Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2025.

The dataset size, including imputed households, for the UK LFS was 77,927 individuals in 34,851 households during Quarter 4 2025. This represents an increase of 2.9% in individual cases and an increase of 2.5% in household cases, compared with Quarter 3 2025.

In Quarter 4 2025, main response rates were as follows:

- the total response rate for Great Britain excluding imputed cases (Table 2) was 23.9%; this is up 0.5 percentage points on the previous quarter
- the response rate for Great Britain excluding imputed cases (Figure 3) was 32.4% in Wave 1 and 18.7% in Wave 5; this compares with 32.2% and 17.2%, respectively, in the previous quarter
- the total response rate for Great Britain including imputed cases (Table 3) was 28.0%; this is up 0.7 percentage points on the previous quarter
- the total response rate for the UK excluding imputed cases (Table 4) was 24.2%; this is up 0.6 percentage points on the previous quarter
- the total response rate for the UK including imputed cases (Table 5) was 28.2%; this is up 0.8 percentage points on the previous quarter
- non-contacts made up 14.5% of unproductive cases (Figure 4); this is unchanged compared with the previous quarter
- other unproductive cases included circumstantial refusals (5.3%, up 0.3 percentage points from the previous quarter), outright refusals (58.8%, up 3.6 percentage points on the previous quarter) and other refusals comprised the remainder
- the English region with the highest accumulated response rate across the five waves (Table 6) was the Rest of Yorkshire and Humberside (35.2%); the lowest was West Midlands Metropolitan Council (19.7%)
- the overall proxy response rate (Table 7) was 36.5%; the highest proxy response rates were in the 16 to 17 years age group (93.9%), in males (40.5%) and in the combined total proxy response rate of all ethnic groups other than the White ethnic group (42.8%)
- the average income response rate (Table 8) was 83.0%
- the data on attrition rates (Table 9) show (in percentage change terms) that those who drop out of the survey are overrepresented in the 20 to 29 years age group, self employed, in households with six people or more, and in the Inner London region

Respondent characteristics proportions for age, tenure and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) remained stable in Quarter 4 2025. More information can be found in [Section 5: Respondent characteristics](#).

There have been a few methodological and operational changes that may have affected response rate changes in Quarter 4 2025. More information about fieldwork and methodological changes in previous quarters can be found in [Section 6: Quarterly changes and updates](#).

More information about the LFS and technical definitions can be found in our [LFS quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#) and our [LFS user guidance](#).

2 . Summary of quality

We introduced several collection measures in Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2023 and the Labour Force Survey (LFS) sample was increased from January 2024. Together, these two actions have incrementally led to increases in the achieved sample and, subsequently, the quality of the data.

The five-wave structure of the LFS means that some changes can take up to 15 months to fully feed through into survey estimates. Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2025 was the first period of data that reflected the full impact of the January 2024 sample increase. More information can be found in our [Labour Market transformation – update on progress and plans: July 2025 article](#) and our [LFS quality update: May 2025 article](#).

A coding practice was introduced during and after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that involved coding cases that were unproductive in two consecutive waves as headquarter (HQ) refusals, preventing them from being attempted again in the following wave. This measure was put in place in an attempt to better manage interviewer workloads while resources were stretched. This practice was discontinued in December 2025. For more information see [Section 6: Quarterly changes and updates](#).

We reweighted the LFS estimates from Quarter 1 2019 onwards, alongside the changes to the sample and data collection. The reweighted LFS estimates incorporate information on the size and composition of the UK population, based on our 2022 mid-year estimates. For England, Wales and Northern Ireland, they are projected forward using scaling factors from our 2021-based national population projections published in January 2024. For Scotland, they are projected forward using scaling factors from 2020-based national population projections published in January 2023. More information can be found in our [Impact of reweighting on Labour Force Survey key indicators: December 2024 article](#).

We are starting to see a reduction in the volatility we have observed in recent periods. However, we would advise users to continue to apply caution when interpreting short-term changes observed in the estimates from the data. We suggest users read our commentary on our LFS-based statistics, which will consider ongoing quality challenges.

3 . Achieved sample

Table 1: Achieved sample by type of household, for October to December 2025
Great Britain and UK

	GB		UK	
	Includes imputed	Excludes imputed	Includes imputed	Excludes imputed
Private households	32,704	27,857	34,851	29,907
Individuals in private households	73,179	61,060	77,927	65,590
NHS Households	0	0	0	0
Individuals in NHS households	0	0	0	0
Total households	32,704	27,857	34,851	29,907
Total individuals	73,179	61,060	77,927	65,590

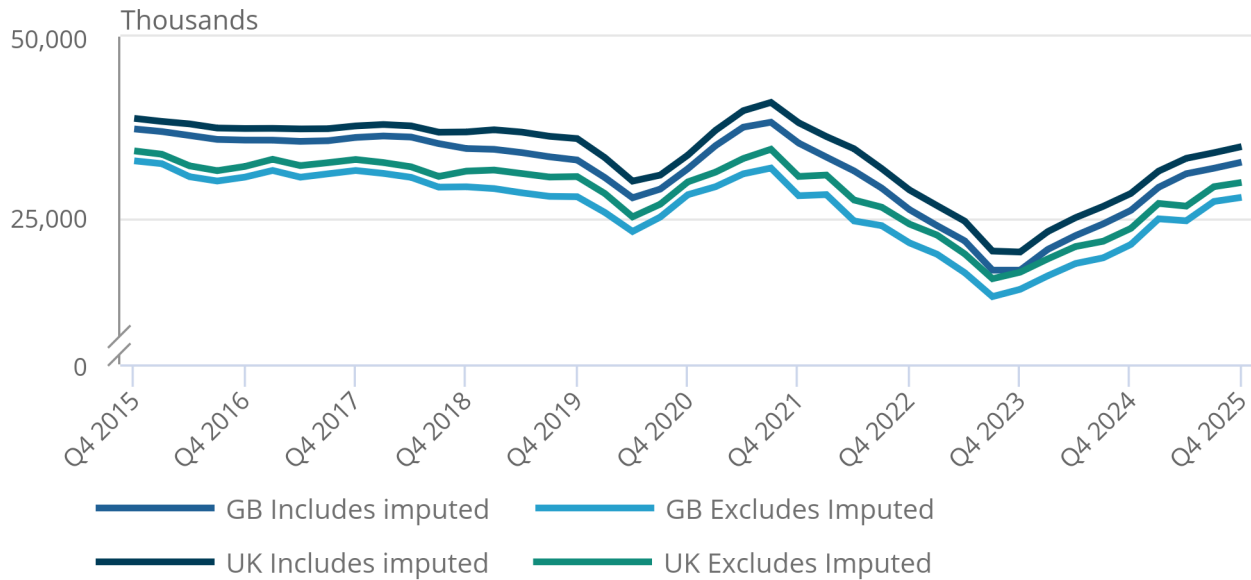
Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 1: The achieved number of household interviews including imputed continued to increase in October to December 2025

Achieved household interviews, Great Britain and UK, Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2015 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025

Figure 1: The achieved number of household interviews including imputed continued to increase in October to December 2025

Achieved household interviews, Great Britain and UK, Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2015 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

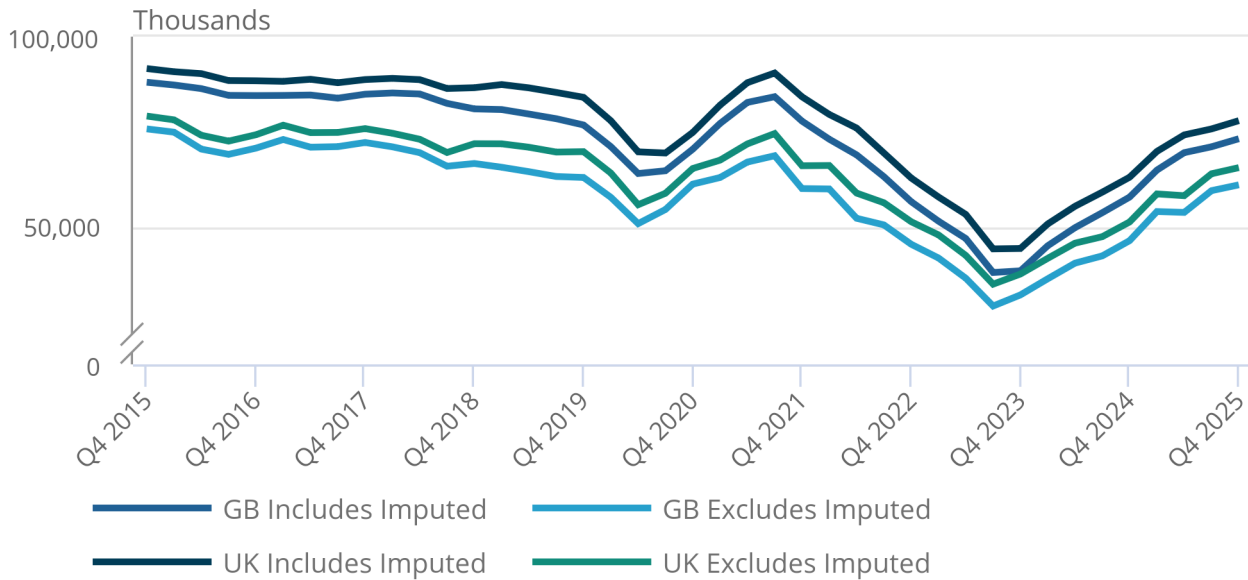
1. Q1 refers to January to March.
2. Q2 refers to April to June.
3. Q3 refers to July to September.
4. Q4 refers to October to December.

Figure 2: The achieved number of person interviews including imputed continued to increase in October to December 2025

Achieved number of person interviews, Great Britain and UK, Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2015 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025

Figure 2: The achieved number of person interviews including imputed continued to increase in October to December 2025

Achieved number of person interviews, Great Britain and UK, Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2015 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

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4. Q4 refers to October to December.

4 . Response rates

The total response rate is the aggregate response rate for the quarter across all waves, based on all eligible, in-scope households. For a full definition of response categories and the method used to calculate response rates, see [Section 7: Understanding response rates](#).

Table 2: Wave-specific response rates, excluding imputed households, for October to December 2025
Great Britain

	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4		Wave 5		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Eligible households found at selected units	24,327	100.0	23,181	100.0	23,084	100.0	23,065	100.0	23,189	100.0	116,846	100.0
Responding units												
Total	7,886	32.4	5,680	24.5	5,142	22.3	4,848	21.0	4,330	18.7	27,886	23.9
Full	7,524	30.9	5,259	22.7	4,741	20.5	4,537	19.7	4,005	17.3	26,066	22.3
Partial	362	1.5	421	1.8	401	1.7	311	1.3	325	1.4	1,820	1.6
Non-responding units												
Circumstantial refusal	2,310	9.5	1,531	6.6	1,065	4.6	830	3.6	557	2.4	6,293	5.4
Outright refusal	7,336	30.2	9,722	41.9	10,579	45.8	10,799	46.8	11,031	47.6	49,467	42.3
Refusal to HQ	263	1.1	2,304	9.9	3,595	15.6	4,347	18.8	5,377	23.2	15,886	13.6
Non-contact	6,532	26.9	3,617	15.6	2,203	9.5	1,625	7.0	1,215	5.2	15,192	13.0
Addresses not issued for interviewing												
Refusal to re-interview	n/a	n/a	327	1.4	500	2.2	616	2.7	679	2.9	2,122	1.8
Co-operation rate		44.3		29.5		25.2		23.3		20.3		28.0
Contact rate		72.1		74.1		74.3		73.4		70.7		72.9

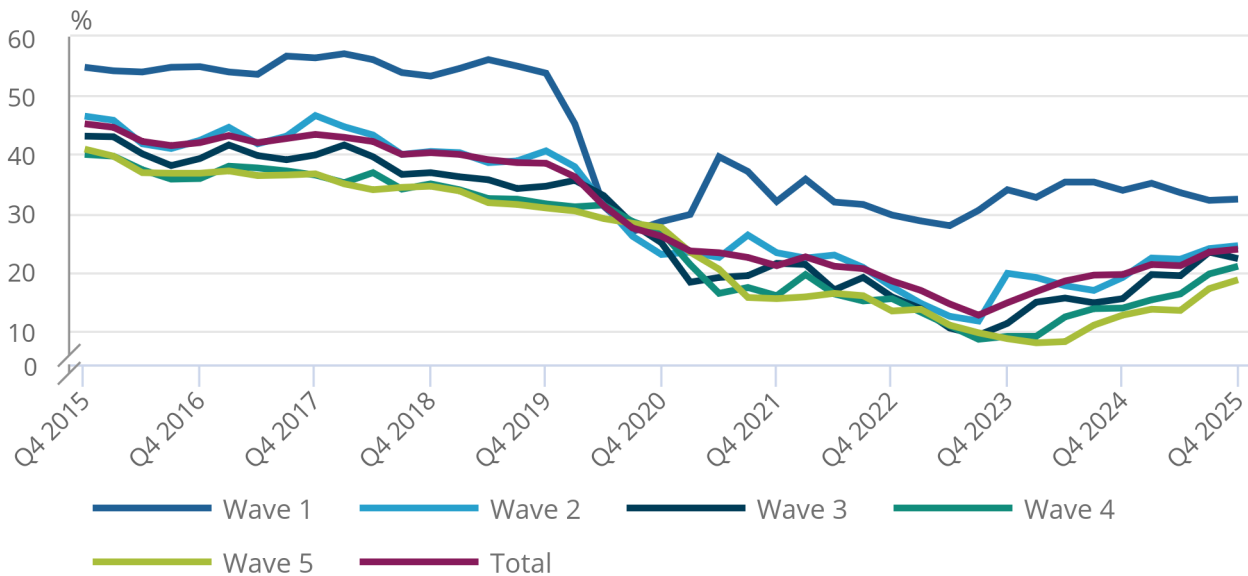
Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 3: The response rate for Wave 3 decreased slightly in October to December 2025, while all other waves showed a small increase

Wave-specific response rates, Great Britain, excluding imputed households, Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2015 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025

Figure 3: The response rate for Wave 3 decreased slightly in October to December 2025, while all other waves showed a small increase

Wave-specific response rates, Great Britain, excluding imputed households, Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2015 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Q1 refers to January to March.
2. Q2 refers to April to June.
3. Q3 refers to July to September.
4. Q4 refers to October to December.

Table 3: Wave-specific response rates, including imputed households, for October to December 2025
Great Britain

	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4		Wave 5		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Eligible households found at selected units	24,327	100.0	23,181	100.0	23,084	100.0	23,065	100.0	23,189	100.0	116,846	100.0
Responding units												
Total	7,886	32.4	7,548	32.6	6,312	27.3	5,924	25.7	5,071	21.9	32,741	28.0
Full	7,524	30.9	5,259	22.7	4,741	20.5	4,537	19.7	4,005	17.3	26,066	22.3
Partial	362	1.5	421	1.8	401	1.7	311	1.3	325	1.4	1,820	1.6
Imputed	-	-	1,868	8.1	1,170	5.1	1,076	4.7	741	3.2	4,855	4.2
Non-responding units												
Circumstantial refusal	2,310	9.5	859	3.7	586	2.5	428	1.9	284	1.2	4,467	3.8
Outright refusal	7,336	30.2	9,722	41.9	10,579	45.8	10,799	46.8	11,031	47.6	49,467	42.3
Refusal to HQ	263	1.1	2,304	9.9	3,595	15.6	4,347	18.8	5,377	23.2	15,886	13.6
Non-contact	6,532	26.9	2,421	10.4	1,512	6.5	951	4.1	747	3.2	12,163	10.4
Addresses not issued for interviewing												
Refusal to re-interview	n/a	n/a	327	1.4	500	2.2	616	2.7	679	2.9	2,122	1.8
Co-operation rate		44.3		36.9		30.0		27.6		23.3		31.9
Contact rate		72.1		79.3		77.4		76.4		72.8		75.6

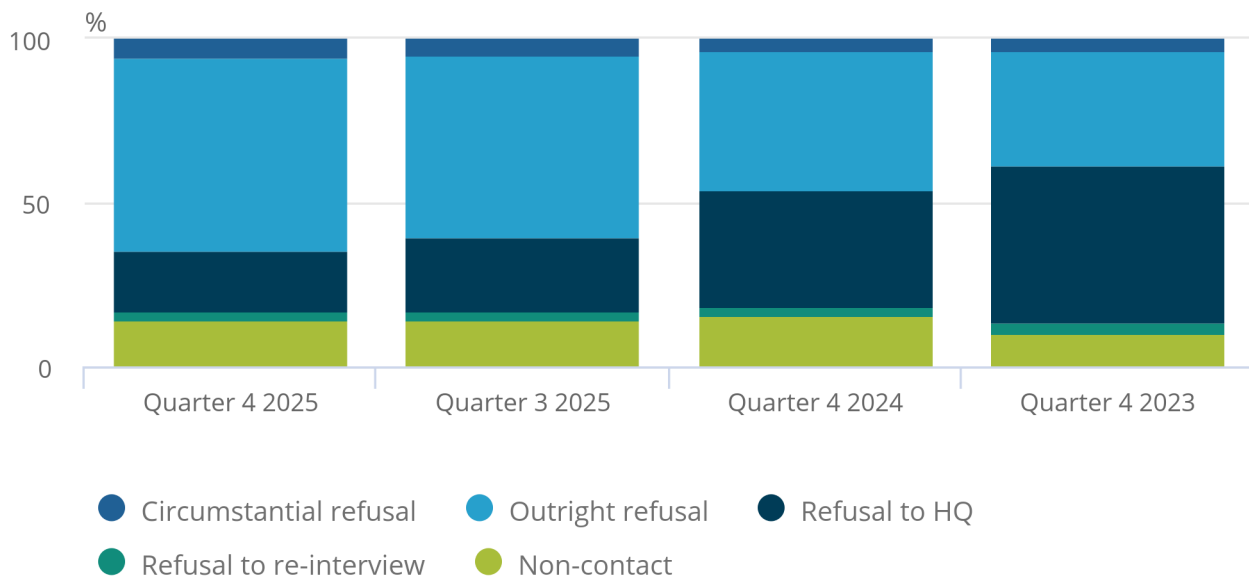
Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 4: Non-response mainly comprised outright refusals in October to December 2025, consistent with July to September 2025

Composition of non-response, Great Britain, including imputed households, Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2023 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025

Figure 4: Non-response mainly comprised outright refusals in October to December 2025, consistent with July to September 2025

Composition of non-response, Great Britain, including imputed households, Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2023 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Quarter 3 refers to July to September.
2. Quarter 4 refers to October to December.
3. HQ refusal levels should be considered within the context of the operational changes outlined in [Section 6: Data on consumer price inflation](#).
4. Q3 refers to July to September.
5. Q4 refers to October to December.

Table 4: Wave-specific response rates, excluding imputed households, for October to December 2025
UK

	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4		Wave 5		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Eligible households found at selected units	25,258	100.0	24,194	100.0	24,368	100.0	24,750	100.0	25,193	100.0	123,763	100.0
Responding units												
Total	8,346	33.0	6,151	25.4	5,547	22.8	5,225	21.1	4,667	18.5	29,936	24.2
Full	7,936	31.4	5,678	23.5	5,111	21.0	4,878	19.7	4,320	17.1	27,923	22.6
Partial	410	1.6	473	2.0	436	1.8	347	1.4	347	1.4	2,013	1.6
Non-responding units												
Circumstantial refusal	2,366	9.4	1,553	6.4	1,074	4.4	832	3.4	563	2.2	6,388	5.2
Outright refusal	7,563	29.9	9,732	40.2	10,581	43.4	10,805	43.7	11,032	43.8	49,713	40.2
Refusal to HQ	270	1.1	2,304	9.5	3,595	14.8	4,348	17.6	5,377	21.3	15,894	12.8
Non-contact	6,713	26.6	3,685	15.2	2,256	9.3	1,675	6.8	1,266	5.0	15,595	12.6
Addresses not issued for interviewing												
Refusal to re-interview	n/a	n/a	769	3.2	1,315	5.4	1,865	7.5	2,288	9.1	6,237	5.0
Co-operation rate		45.0		31.2		26.7		24.6		21.6		29.4
Contact rate		72.4		74.4		74.6		73.7		71.0		73.2

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Table 5: Wave-specific response rates, including imputed households, for October to December 2025
UK

	Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4		Wave 5		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Eligible households found at selected units	25,258	100.0	24,194	100.0	24,368	100.0	24,750	100.0	25,193	100.0	123,763	100.0
Responding units												
Total	8,346	33.0	8,064	33.3	6,738	27.7	6,317	25.5	5,423	21.5	34,888	28.2
Full	7,936	31.4	5,678	23.5	5,111	21.0	4,878	19.7	4,320	17.1	27,923	22.6
Partial	410	1.6	473	2.0	436	1.8	347	1.4	347	1.4	2,013	1.6
Imputed	-	-	1,913	7.9	1,191	4.9	1,092	4.4	756	3.0	4,952	4.0
Non-responding units												
Circumstantial refusal	2,366	9.4	870	3.6	592	2.4	429	1.7	287	1.1	4,544	3.7
Outright refusal	7,563	29.9	9,732	40.2	10,581	43.4	10,805	43.7	11,032	43.8	49,713	40.2
Refusal to HQ	270	1.1	2,304	9.5	3,595	14.8	4,348	17.6	5,377	21.3	15,894	12.8
Non-contact	6,713	26.6	2,455	10.1	1,547	6.3	986	4.0	786	3.1	12,487	10.1
Addresses not issued for interviewing												
Refusal to re-interview	n/a	n/a	769	3.2	1,315	5.4	1,865	7.5	2,288	9.1	6,237	5.0
Co-operation rate		45.0		38.5		31.3		28.8		24.5		33.2
Contact rate		72.4		79.7		77.7		76.7		73.1		75.9

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Table 6: Wave-specific response rates, including imputed households, for October to December 2025
By region

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Total
Region						
Tyne and Wear	36.4	35.0	29.0	32.7	22.5	31.2
Rest of North East	34.7	35.5	29.6	27.4	25.7	30.6
Greater Manchester	24.8	27.0	19.0	17.7	17.2	21.1
Merseyside	27.6	23.1	21.0	19.2	14.7	21.1
Rest of North West	35.9	33.8	26.0	24.8	20.1	28.2
South Yorkshire	28.2	29.0	28.9	30.1	27.8	28.8
West Yorkshire	36.3	36.7	31.7	30.0	26.9	32.3
Rest of Yorkshire and Humberside	39.6	42.5	31.7	31.7	29.9	35.2
East Midlands	33.5	36.2	32.2	28.3	24.1	30.9
West Midlands Metropolitan Council	23.3	24.6	19.1	17.2	14.3	19.7
Rest of West Midlands	31.6	36.1	31.3	27.5	24.3	30.2
East of England	34.8	34.7	28.9	24.9	21.0	28.9
Inner London	23.7	25.6	21.4	20.6	17.7	21.8
Outer London	24.5	27.5	23.4	19.5	18.1	22.6
South East	33.3	33.0	29.9	27.5	23.2	29.4
South West	41.9	39.9	32.3	32.6	25.6	34.6
England	32.4	33.0	27.8	25.7	21.9	28.2
Wales	34.4	29.3	24.7	21.6	18.8	25.8
Strathclyde	31.7	31.8	22.1	25.9	20.1	26.4
Rest of Scotland	31.2	29.5	26.6	27.7	23.7	27.8
Scotland	31.4	30.4	24.7	27.0	22.1	27.2
Northern Ireland	49.4	50.9	33.2	23.3	17.6	31.0

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Each wave reported here is an independent sample. For example, the Wave 2 response in Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025 is based on outcomes for the Oct to Dec 2025 collection period from the households initially sampled in Wave 1 in the previous quarter, Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2025.

Table 7: Proxy response, for October to December 2025
Great Britain

		All responses	Proxy	%
Age	Total (16+)	59,754	21,840	36.5
	16-17	1,732	1,626	93.9
	18-19	1465	1270	86.7
	20+	56,557	18,944	33.5
Sex	Total	59,754	21,840	36.5
	Male	28,598	11,572	40.5
	Female	31,156	10,268	33.0
Ethnicity	Total	59,754	21,840	36.5
	White	51,566	18,335	35.6
	All Ethnicities Other than White	8,163	3,492	42.8
	Refused	25	13	52.0
Economic activity (INECAC05)	Total	59,754	21,840	36.5
	Employees	31,456	12,067	38.4
	Self-Employed	5,139	1,984	38.6
	Government schemes	63	24	38.1
	Unpaid family workers	143	30	21.0
	ILO Unemployed	1628	715	43.9
	Inactive	21,325	7,020	32.9

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Table 8: Income response rates by National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC), October to December 2025
Great Britain

	Wave 1 in Quarter 4 2025	Wave 5 in Quarter 4 2025	Total
NS-SEC	%	%	%
Higher managerial and professional	82.5	90.0	85.2
Lower managerial and professional	83.2	88.8	85.3
Intermediate occupations	80.0	87.6	82.9
Small employers and own account workers	75.0	75.0	75.0
Lower supervisory and technical	75.9	89.2	80.2
Semi-routine occupations	73.5	87.1	78.2
Routine occupations	73.4	86.2	77.8
Total	79.9	88.4	83.0

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. The percentages in Table 8 are based on all eligible in-scope respondents at Wave 1 and all eligible in-scope respondents at Wave 5.
2. The total response rate is the aggregate response rate for income for the quarter (Wave 1 and Wave 5), based on all eligible, in-scope respondents.

Table 9: Summary of attrition by characteristics for October to December 2025
Great Britain

		Wave 1 in Quarter 4 2024	Wave 5 in Quarter 4 2025		
		Responds	Responds	Responds all waves	Non- responder
Age	<16	19.9	17.4	15.1	22.3
	16-19	4.7	3.8	3.4	5.5
	20-29	9.1	6.8	6.2	11.3
	30-39	14.0	12.0	10.0	15.9
	40-49	13.9	13.1	12.4	14.6
	50-59	14.5	15.6	15.7	13.5
	60-69	15.4	19.8	23.2	11.3
	70+	8.5	11.5	14.0	5.6
Sex	Male	48.7	48.5	48.4	48.9
	Female	51.3	51.5	51.6	51.1
Econ Activity (INECAC05)	Employees	43.8	42.2	40.2	45.3
	Self Emp	7.4	6.9	6.5	7.8
	GovTraining Scheme	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	UPFW(Unpaid Family Workers)	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	ILO Unemp	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.8
	Inactive	27.0	31.7	36.4	22.6
Number of people in household (TOTNUM)	1	11.0	12.8	14.7	9.3
	2	31.5	35.8	40.0	27.4
	3	20.0	19.3	17.4	20.6
	4	25.4	22.8	20.5	27.9
	5	7.9	6.3	5.0	9.4
	6 or more	4.2	3.0	2.4	5.4
Region (GOVTOR)	Tyne and Wear	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.6
	Rest of North East	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.0
	Greater Manchester	4.1	4.0	3.6	4.2
	Merseyside	1.8	1.6	1.5	2.0
	Rest of North West	5.3	5.1	4.7	5.4
	South Yorkshire	3.0	3.2	2.9	2.8
	West Yorkshire	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.4
	Rest of Yorkshire and Humberside	3.3	4.2	4.0	2.4
	East Midlands	7.8	8.1	8.9	7.4

West Midlands Metropolitan Council	4.1	3.0	3.2	5.0
Rest of West Midlands	4.2	4.6	5.1	3.9
East of England	9.0	9.3	9.9	8.8
Inner London	3.2	2.3	2.2	4.1
Outer London	5.8	5.7	5.0	5.9
South East	14.8	15.5	16.7	14.1
South West	9.9	10.5	10.8	9.5
Wales	4.2	4.2	3.7	4.2
Strathclyde	4.1	3.2	2.9	4.9
Rest of Scotland	5.5	5.5	5.2	5.5

Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. The column Wave 1 in Quarter 4 2024 Responds, shows the percentage of responders in each characteristics category at Wave 1.
2. The column, Wave 5 in Quarter 4 2025 Responds, shows the percentage of responders in each characteristics category at Wave 5.
3. A substantial decline in the values between Waves 1 and 5 denotes a higher rate of attrition than where values are consistent between Waves 1 and 5 or higher at Wave 5.

5 . Respondent characteristics

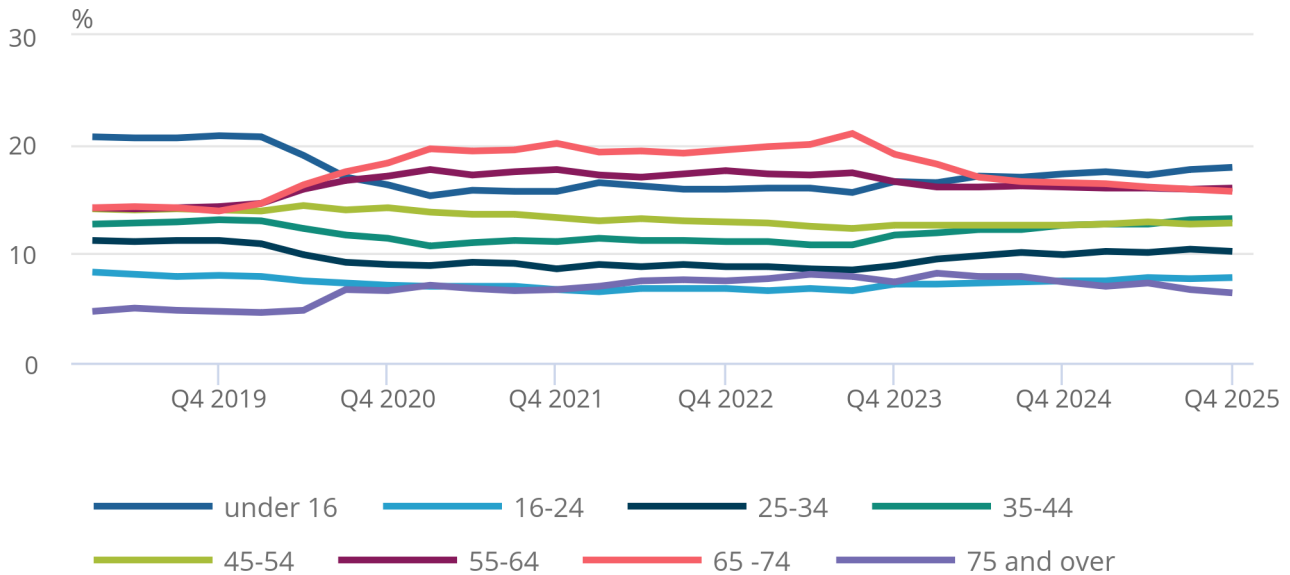
We monitor the distribution of the sample across a range of demographic characteristics on a quarterly basis to help identify potential biases in the data. We have seen changes to the make-up of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) sample since the onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in March 2020. The following charts show the trends observed across all waves of the LFS in age, tenure and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile since Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019.

Figure 5: The Labour Force Survey responding sample comprises more people aged over 55 years and fewer people aged under 24 years, when compared with pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels

Labour Force Survey (LFS) respondent breakdown by age band, all waves, UK, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025

Figure 5: The Labour Force Survey responding sample comprises more people aged over 55 years and fewer people aged under 24 years, when compared with pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels

Labour Force Survey (LFS) respondent breakdown by age band, all waves, UK, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

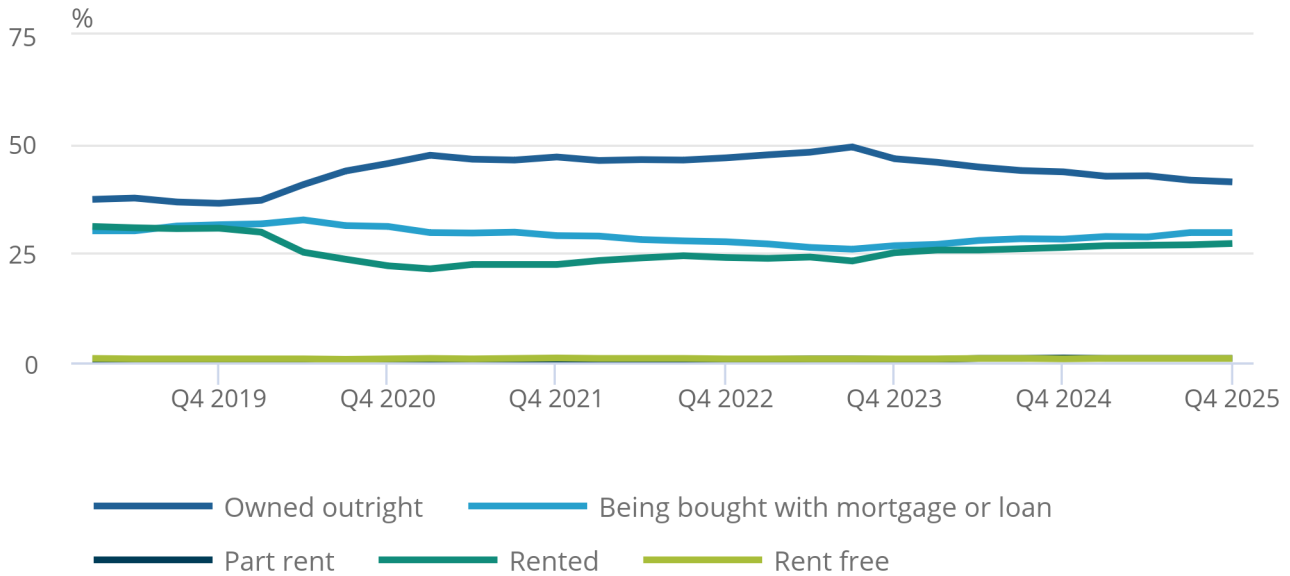
1. If a household is found at Wave 1 to contain only adults aged 75 years and over who are economically inactive, then no further waves of interviews are conducted. More information can be found in [LFS User Guide volume 1: background and methodology](#).
2. Q1 refers to January to March.
3. Q2 refers to April to June.
4. Q3 refers to July to September.
5. Q4 refers to October to December.

Figure 6: The composition of the LFS responding sample from tenure perspective, since July to September 2023 has been trending back toward proportions similar to those seen prior to the COVID19 pandemic

Labour Force Survey (LFS) respondent breakdown by tenure type, all waves, UK, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025

Figure 6: The composition of the LFS responding sample from tenure perspective, since July to September 2023 has been trending back toward proportions similar to those seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic

Labour Force Survey (LFS) respondent breakdown by tenure type, all waves, UK, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

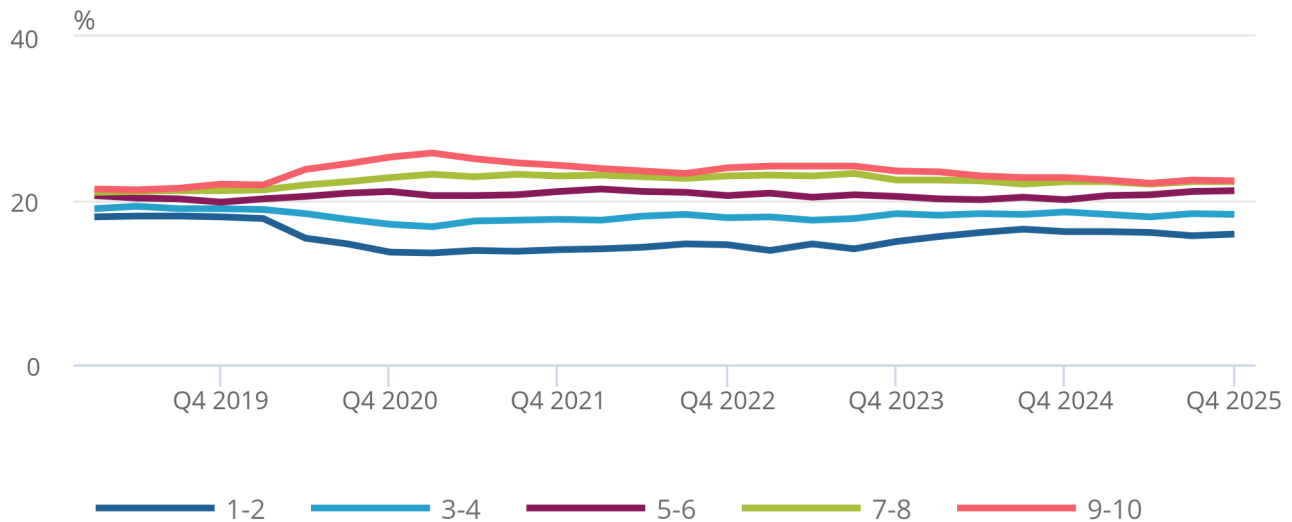
1. Q1 refers to January to March.
2. Q2 refers to April to June.
3. Q3 refers to July to September.
4. Q4 refers to October to December.

Figure 7: The difference in proportions of respondents in the most and least deprived areas of Great Britain has stayed relatively stable since early 2024, but still different from preCOVID19 levels

Labour Force Survey (LFS) respondent breakdown by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile, all waves, Great Britain, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025

Figure 7: The difference in proportions of respondents in the most and least deprived areas of Great Britain has stayed relatively stable since early 2024, but still different from pre-COVID-19 levels

Labour Force Survey (LFS) respondent breakdown by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile, all waves, Great Britain, Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2019 to Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. IMD decile monitoring is currently monitored for Great Britain LFS cases only.
2. Q1 refers to January to March.
3. Q2 refers to April to June.
4. Q3 refers to July to September.
5. Q4 refers to October to December.

6 . Quarterly changes and updates

This section details changes that may have had an impact on response rates and data included in the charts and tables in [Section 5: Respondent characteristics](#). Details of historical operational changes can be found in Volume 1: Background and methodology of our [Labour Force Survey user guidance](#).

Quarter 4 2025 questionnaire changes

In Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2025, two LFS questionnaire variables (TPBN13 and DISBEN) were updated to include new Scottish welfare benefits within the existing response categories. Please refer to Volume 2: LFS questionnaire and Volume 3: Details of LFS variables within the [LFS user guidance](#) for further information.

Methodological changes

In response to fluctuation in response rates since the onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we made several adjustments to the size of the LFS Wave 1 sample in recent years. These adjustments included:

- doubling the Wave 1 sample in May 2020
- reducing the Wave 1 sample to 160% of pre-pandemic levels in April 2021
- reducing the Wave 1 sample to 150% of pre-pandemic levels in October 2021
- increasing the Wave 1 sample to 155% of pre-pandemic levels in April 2022
- reducing the Wave 1 sample to pre-pandemic levels in July 2023
- increasing the Wave 1 sample to 155% of pre-pandemic levels (25,800 addresses in total per quarter) in January 2024

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) are responsible for the LFS data collection in Northern Ireland. NISRA reduced the Wave 1 issued sample in Northern Ireland by 20% (from 1,287 to 1,040 addresses per quarter) in August 2024.

Fieldwork and operational changes

Since the start of the pandemic, a coding practice was put in place. This coding practice involved coding cases that were unproductive in two consecutive waves as headquarter (HQ) refusals so that these would not be attempted again in the following wave. These cases were less likely to result in an interview compared with those that had achieved a productive outcome in previous waves, and this helped mitigate increasing workloads for interviewers while capacity was stretched.

This measure was paused in October 2023 when LFS recovery measures were introduced. This resulted in an observed decrease in refusal rates in Waves 2 to 5. To improve our fieldwork operations, this practice was reintroduced in July 2024 after the Wave 1 sample increase led to an increase in unproductive cases in follow-up waves.

With the implementation of the [Survey Improvement and Enhancement Plan](#), interviewer capacity in the field has been significantly increasing. As such, more cases could be worked in 2025 than in 2024, which has reduced the need for this coding practice. Consequently, the practice was discontinued in December 2025, and only Survey Enquiry Line (SEL) should now record HQ refusals.

This change in coding practice is reflected in non-response data, including the composition of non-response, meaning that the increase in outright refusals in the last two calendar quarters is largely offset by a decrease in the refusals to HQ (see Figure 4).

7 . Understanding response rates

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is managed by the Social Surveys directorate of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in Great Britain, and by the Central Survey Unit of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in Northern Ireland. Response rates for the UK are calculated by combining the achieved samples for Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

More information and technical definitions can be found in our [LFS quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#) and Volume 1: Background and methodology of our [Labour Force Survey user guidance](#).

Method of calculating response rates

The response rate is how many interviews were achieved as a proportion of those eligible for the survey. The formula used is:

Response rate (RR) equals full response (FR) plus partial response (PR), divided by FR plus PR plus outright refusal (OR) plus circumstantial refusal (CR) plus refusal to headquarters (RHQ) plus non-contact (NC) plus refusal to re-interview (RRI) (for only Waves 2 to 5).

The calculation of response rates should take the panel design into account, because the LFS is a panel survey. Households may refuse further participation at any of the five quarterly visits they are due to receive.

Households that refuse further participation are not revisited at the next quarter, but they remain part of the eligible sample. The response rate for households is the ratio of the number of households responding at the current wave to the sum of the number of eligible households found at the same wave at the sampled addresses, plus any households that have refused outright to participate at a previous wave. Outright refusals are distinct from circumstantial refusals and non-contacts, which are revisited at the next wave. Outright refusals may occur either when the interviewer calls or asks for permission to re-call in three months.

This simple model does not take account of situations like net addition or subtraction of eligible households at sampled addresses at waves after Wave 1, for example, by a net increase or decrease in occupation of household spaces. However, the definition of household spaces is fluid and does not provide a firm basis for response rate calculations. LFS response rates that take the panel design into account are based on the simple model.

Definitions of response outcome categories

Full response

A household in which each household member has answered all applicable questions.

Partial response

A household in which questions were not completed because someone refused to be interviewed, refused part way through the questionnaire, or refused to let someone else answer on his or her behalf. However, at least one question block must have been completed. If only part of the information has been collected for a one-person household, it is coded as a refusal or non-contact.

Outright refusal

A household that refuses to respond to the survey and the interviewer feels that there is no chance of an interview at the current wave or in any future wave.

Circumstantial refusal

A household where the respondent refuses to respond because of a temporary circumstance (for example, going on holiday or being too busy during the field period). A circumstantial refusal enables an interviewer to call back at the next wave.

Refusal to HQ

A household that contacts headquarters to refuse to participate in the survey in response to the advance letter.

Non-contact

When an address is occupied, but where it has not been possible to contact any member of the household in the field period.

Method of calculating income response rates

The income question is asked at Waves 1 and 5 only. The subset of respondents who are eligible for these questions includes individuals aged 16 to 69 years who are in employment in the reference week. The percentage response rates for the income questions are based on all eligible, in-scope respondents at Wave 1 and all eligible, in-scope respondents at Wave 5. The total response rate is the aggregate response rate for income for the quarter (Wave 1 and Wave 5), based on all eligible, in-scope respondents.

Proxy response

The LFS interviewers must complete fieldwork to a tight timetable and interview as many of the sampled households as possible. This leaves limited time for re-calls. LFS interviewers try to interview every adult (aged 16 years and over) in each sampled household. However, when a household member is unavailable for interview, interviewers accept information by proxy from another responsible adult in the household. The proxy respondents are normally people living with a partner on behalf of their partner, and parents on behalf of their adult offspring who live with them.

Attrition

Attrition is the term applied to respondents who begin the survey but then drop out. These respondents tend to have different characteristics to those who remain in all waves of the survey. This can result in attrition bias. For example, if respondents in a particular age group have a higher tendency to drop out (attrition rate) than respondents in other age groups, then they will be underrepresented in subsequent waves of the survey and in estimates.

Item non-response

Item non-response refers to the situation where a respondent fails to answer a specific question or item during the survey, even though they have completed other parts of the survey. This can occur for various reasons, such as the respondent not knowing the answer, choosing to skip a sensitive question, or misunderstanding the question. This type of non-response is distinct from unit non-response.

Unit non-response

Unit non-response refers to individuals in sampled households not participating in the survey. This can occur for a variety of reasons, such as the respondent refusing the survey, including circumstantial refusals and outright refusals, or being unable to reach or contact the selected respondent during the field period.

Imputed cases

If a respondent from one quarter is not available in the next consecutive quarter, then their responses from the earlier quarter may be carried forward (for one quarter only). This is referred to as "imputation". Response rates excluding imputed cases are the best measure of true response, as these are calculated based solely on actual responders as a proportion of eligible cases for the current quarter. Imputed cases are included in analytical datasets to provide a greater dataset size. We also report response rates including imputed cases in this methodology to show the extent of imputation for the current quarter. More information about imputation can be found in Section 12 of our [LFS User Guide Volume 1: Background and methodology \(PDF, 1.5MB\)](#).

8 . Timeliness and punctuality

Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the time lag between the actual and planned dates of publication.

To the Office for National Statistics Labour Market and Households Division

- The scheduled delivery date for file was 16 January 2026.
- The achieved delivery date for file was 16 January 2026.
- The time lag between achieved delivery date and the end of the reference period was 12 days.

Data file for other users

The scheduled availability date for regional public and government normal release user files was 16 January 2026.

9 . Related links

[Labour Force Survey user guidance](#) Methodology | Last revised 29 January 2026 Guidance about the background and methodology of the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

[Labour Force Survey performance and quality monitoring reports](#) Methodology | Updated quarterly Historical Labour Force Survey performance and quality monitoring reports from 2016 to present.

[Labour market overview, UK statistical bulletins](#) Bulletin | Release monthly Estimates of employment, unemployment, economic inactivity and other employment-related statistics for the UK.

[Labour Force Survey Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) QMI | Last revised 17 November 2025 Quality and methodology Information for the Labour Force Survey, detailing the strengths and limitations of the data, methods used, and data uses and users.

[Methodology for the calculation of sampling variability in the Labour Force Survey \(PDF, 175KB\)](#) The formulas used for the calculation of standard errors (SEs) on the quarterly LFS, and describes how the impact of the sample design and weighting are captured in these calculations.

[The National Online Manpower Information System \(NOMIS\)](#) Web page | Updated regularly Nomis is a service provided by the Office for National Statistics to give you free access to the most detailed and up-to-date UK labour market statistics from official sources.

[UK Data Archive, University of Essex](#) Web page | Updated regularly Home to the UK's largest collection of social, economic and population data for over 50 years.

10 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 17 February 2026, ONS website, methodology, [Labour Force Survey performance and quality monitoring report: October to December 2025](#)