

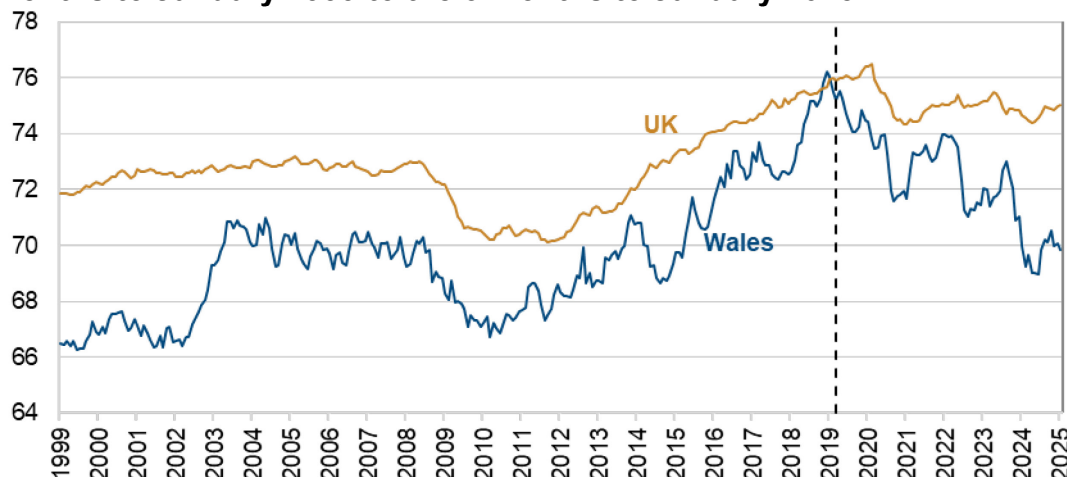
25 March 2025
SB 12/2025

Labour Market Overview, March 2025

Main points

- Early estimates from HMRC show that in February 2025 the number of paid employees in Wales increased by 700 (0.1%) over the month to 1.32 million.
- The claimant count now (February 2025) stands at 67,200, an increase of 8.8% compared to the same month in the previous year. This is a rate of 4.5%, up 0.4 percentage points over the same period.
- Latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for Wales for the 3 months to January 2025 show a decrease in both employment and economic inactivity and an increase in unemployment over the year.
- However, there were no statistically significant changes for the LFS headline labour market indicators as shown in Table 1. This suggests that the changes for these indicators are unlikely to reflect a real change in the data.

Figure 1: Employment rate (percentage of population age 16 to 64), 3 months to January 1999 to the 3 months to January 2025



Description of Figure 1: A line chart showing the employment rate in Wales and the UK from 1999 onwards. During this time period, the employment rate in Wales has generally remained lower than the UK. Both the rates in Wales and the UK have increased overall since 1999. Data for the period January to March 2019 onwards are not comparable with previous periods due to a discontinuity in the time series following a reweighting of the data.

Source: LFS, ONS

About this bulletin

This monthly bulletin is a compendium publication that brings together data sources and indicators to provide an overview of the Welsh labour market.

Supporting material:
[Welsh Economy in Numbers](#)

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Quality of the LFS

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published [reweighted LFS estimates for Wales](#) in December 2024 from the period January to March 2019, resulting in a step change in the data. Comparisons with periods prior to January to March 2019 are not strictly valid due to this discontinuity in the time series. The full impact of this reweighting is detailed in the article 'Impact of reweighting on Labour Force Survey key indicators in Wales – December 2024', available alongside the [December 2024 Labour Market Overview](#).

The ONS have highlighted that the challenges with maintaining response rates for the LFS continue to affect data quality despite the reweighting of the estimates. LFS-based labour market statistics will be labelled as 'official statistics in development' until further review and we continue to recommend caution when interpreting this data. Further information on the updates and current badging of the LFS are available in the latest [Chief Statistician's update on the labour market estimates for Wales](#).

The LFS represents the primary labour market data source, however we continue to recommend that consideration should be given to the trends exhibited by other sources. Due to this, headline labour market indicators from the Annual Population Survey (APS) have been added to this report in order to provide a more rounded picture of the labour market in Wales.

The Annual Population Survey (APS) has seen a fall in sample sizes over recent years, given this and the fact that the survey has not been reweighted to latest population estimates, [the Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\) has agreed that the accredited official statistics status should be temporarily suspended](#) and that the estimates should be re-designated as official statistics (OSR).

It is still appropriate to use these statistics, however users should note the increased uncertainty around estimates derived from the APS. At a national level, estimates continue to provide a reasonable indication of trends for Wales, particularly if used as part of a basket of indicators with alternative sources such as HMRC real time information on paid employees, data on workforce jobs, and the claimant count. Estimates for smaller geographies or population sub-groups, however, are less reliable.

The LFS is a sample survey and, as such, estimates obtained from it are subject to sampling variability. If we drew many samples, each would give a different result. Please note statistical significance and confidence intervals are only available for headline labour market indicators.

Table 1 shows the variability of the estimates, quarterly change and annual change using 95% confidence intervals. It is expected that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value. If none of the reported changes over the year or the quarter were statistically significant, then the recorded changes did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size.

More information about statistical significance and the accuracy of estimates is available in section 4.2 of [Quality Information](#).

Table 1: Estimates, confidence intervals and statistical significance for Labour Market Indicators in Wales, November 2024 to January 2025

	Latest Data		Quarterly Change			Annual Change		
	Estimate	Confidence Interval	Change	Confidence interval	Significance	Change	Confidence interval	Significance
Employment Rate ¹	69.9%	+/-2.9ppts	-0.7ppts	+/-3.8ppts	Not Statistically Significant	-0.1ppts	+/-4.3ppts	Not Statistically Significant
Unemployment Rate ²	5.4%	+/-1.6ppts	-0.1ppts	+/-2.2ppts	Not Statistically Significant	1.2ppts	+/-2.3ppts	Not Statistically Significant
Economic Inactivity Rate ¹	26.0%	+/-2.7ppts	0.8ppts	+/-3.6ppts	Not Statistically Significant	-1.0ppts	+/-4.0ppts	Not Statistically Significant

Source: WG analysis of Labour Force Survey, ONS

¹ Rates are the proportion of the total population aged 16-64.

² Rate is the proportion of the economically active population aged 16 and over.

Table 1 shows there were no statistically significant changes for headline labour market indicators in Wales for the three months to January 2025. This suggests that the quarterly and annual changes for these indicators are **unlikely to reflect a real change in the data**.

Due to the lack of statistically significant estimates and volatile figures in the LFS, employment, unemployment and economic inactivity figures by sex have been temporarily removed from this bulletin. We are continuing to monitor the performance and reliability of the LFS, and plan to reintroduce these estimates at a time when they provide a more accurate picture of the labour market in Wales.

Given the challenges outlined above, ONS are introducing a new Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) which they plan to become the main data source for information on the labour market in the UK and Wales in the future. ONS announced in their latest [TLFS and LFS progress update](#) the actions they are undertaking to improve the quality of existing Labour Force Survey (LFS) based statistics (including reweighting to more up to date population estimates) and an update on recent work and developments to the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS). ONS will keep users informed and plan to report back on progress in Spring 2025. In the meantime, ONS will continue to use the LFS as its lead measure of the labour market, **however for Wales we continue to recommend that consideration should be given to the trends exhibited by other sources**.

1. Employment and jobs

Main points

- The employment rate in Wales was 69.9% (approximately 1.43 million) in November 2024 to January 2025. This a decrease of 0.7 percentage points on the quarter and down 0.1 percentage points on the year. (LFS, ONS).
- Early estimates for February 2025 indicate that the number of paid employees in Wales has increased by 700 (0.1%) over the month to 1.32 million (Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, HMRC).
- In February 2025, 12 of the 22 Welsh local authority areas saw an increase in the number of paid employees when compared with the same month in the previous year. Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey were the local authorities with the largest increases, growing by 1.1% and 0.6% respectively.
- In the three months to January 2025, the average number of hours worked in the UK was 31.9 hours, a decrease of 0.7% (0.2 hours) from the previous quarter and down 0.1% (0.0 hours) from the same quarter in the previous year. (LFS, ONS).
- There were 331,000 people employed in the public sector in Wales in December 2024, up by 2,000 (0.7%) from a year earlier. (Regional Public Sector Employment, ONS).
- The number of workforce jobs in Wales in December 2024 was 1.46 million, a decrease of 46,800 (3.1%) over the year. (Workforce Jobs, ONS).
- The number of self-employment jobs in Wales in December 2024 was 171,100 (11.7% of workforce jobs), a decrease of 33,300 (16.3%) over the year. (Workforce Jobs, ONS).

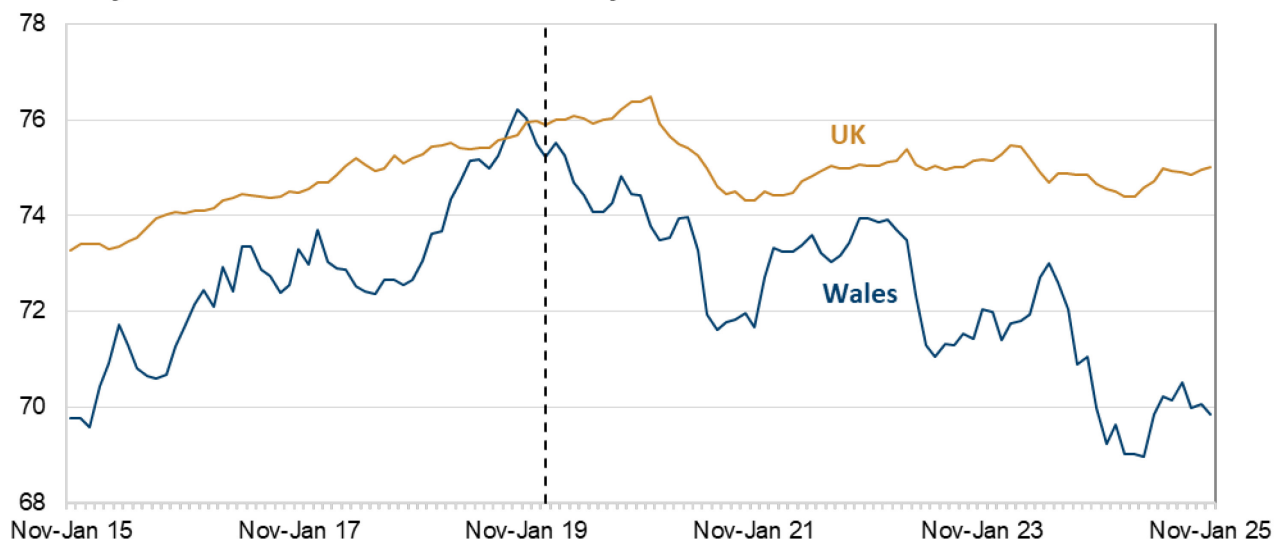
Labour Force Survey Employment (ONS)

LFS employment: people aged 16 to 64 who did at least one hour of paid work in the reference week (whether as an employee or self-employed); those who had a paid job that they were temporarily away from; those on government-supported training and employee programmes and those doing unpaid family work.

Note: During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic figures for employment include employees who have been furloughed.

The employment rate in Wales remained broadly stable towards the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 following a steady decrease since late 2018. The employment rate began to fall in early 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic but returned to pre-pandemic levels in early 2021. The employment rate remained broadly stable until the end of 2021 but has been volatile since then.

Figure 1.1: Employment rate, persons (percentage of those aged 16 to 64), 3 months to January 2015 to the 3 months to January 2025



Description of figure 1.1: A line chart showing the fluctuating employment rates in both Wales and the UK over the last ten years, with the UK generally having a higher employment rate than Wales. The Welsh rate has seen an overall decrease over the last five years despite some fluctuations in the data. Data for the period January to March 2019 onwards are not comparable with previous periods due to a discontinuity in the time series following a reweighting of the data.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of LFS

There were 1.43 million people in employment in Wales in November 2024 to January 2025, up 6,200 (0.4%) from the same period a year earlier. This is a rate of 69.9% of those aged 16 to 64, which is down 0.7 percentage points on the previous quarter and down 0.1 percentage points on the previous year.

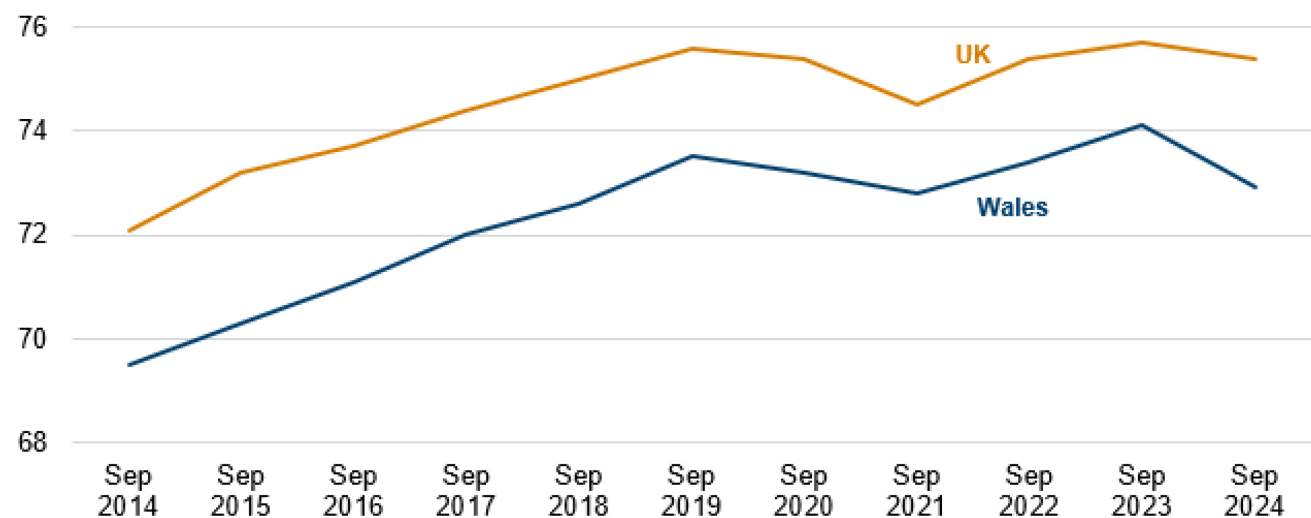
Over the year, the employment level in the UK increased by 608,400 (1.8%) to 33.9 million. This is a rate of 75.0% of those aged 16 to 64, which is 5.2 percentage points higher than the employment rate for Wales (based on unrounded figures). The trend in employment rates have differed

between Wales and the UK in recent periods, however the changes for Wales are not statistically significant and should be considered alongside the longer-term trend.

Annual Population Survey

Annual Population Survey: The APS, which began in 2004, is compiled from interviews for the Labour Force Survey (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.

Figure 1.2: APS employment rate, persons (percentage of those aged 16 to 64), year ending September 2014 to September 2024



Description of figure 1.2: A line chart showing the APS employment rates in both Wales and the UK over the last ten years, with the UK having a higher employment rate than Wales. The Welsh rate has seen an overall increase since the year ending September 2014 despite some fluctuations in the data.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of the APS.

According to the APS, there were 1.47 million people in employment in Wales in the year ending September 2024, down 15,500 (1.0%) from the same period a year earlier. This is a rate of 72.9% of those aged 16 to 64, which is down 1.2 percentage points on the previous year.

Over the year, the employment level in the UK increased by 79,900 (0.2%) to 32.9 million. This is a rate of 75.4% of those aged 16 to 64, which is 2.6 percentage points higher than the employment rate for Wales (based on unrounded figures).

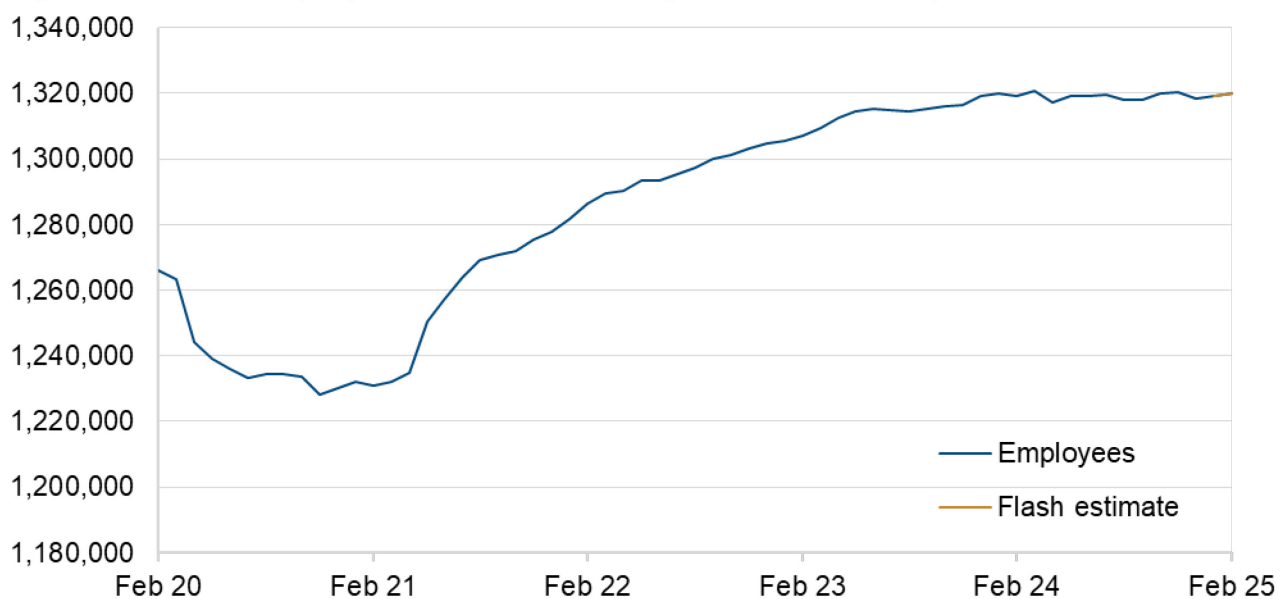
Experimental Real Time Pay Information (HMRC)

HMRC's Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI): These data come from HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) system. They cover the whole population rather than a sample of people or companies, and they will allow for more detailed estimates of the population. PAYE RTI covers employees payrolled by employers only. It does not cover self-employment income or income from other sources such as pensions, property rental and investments. Where individuals have multiple sources of income, only income from employers is included.

The release is classed as official statistics in development as the methodologies used to produce the statistics are still in their development phase. As a result, the series are subject to revisions.

The ONS and HMRC publish [data for Wales on payrolled employees, mean pay, aggregate pay and single month estimates for median pay \(ONS\)](#).

Figure 1.3: Paid employees, Wales, February 2020 to February 2025



Description of figure 1.3: A line chart showing the trend in the number of paid employees has been relatively stable over the last year following a steady increase since 2021.

Source: Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, HMRC.

The number of paid employees in Wales has seen an overall increase since early 2021. Early estimates for February 2025 indicate that the number of paid employees in Wales has increased by 700 (0.1%) over the month to 1.32 million.

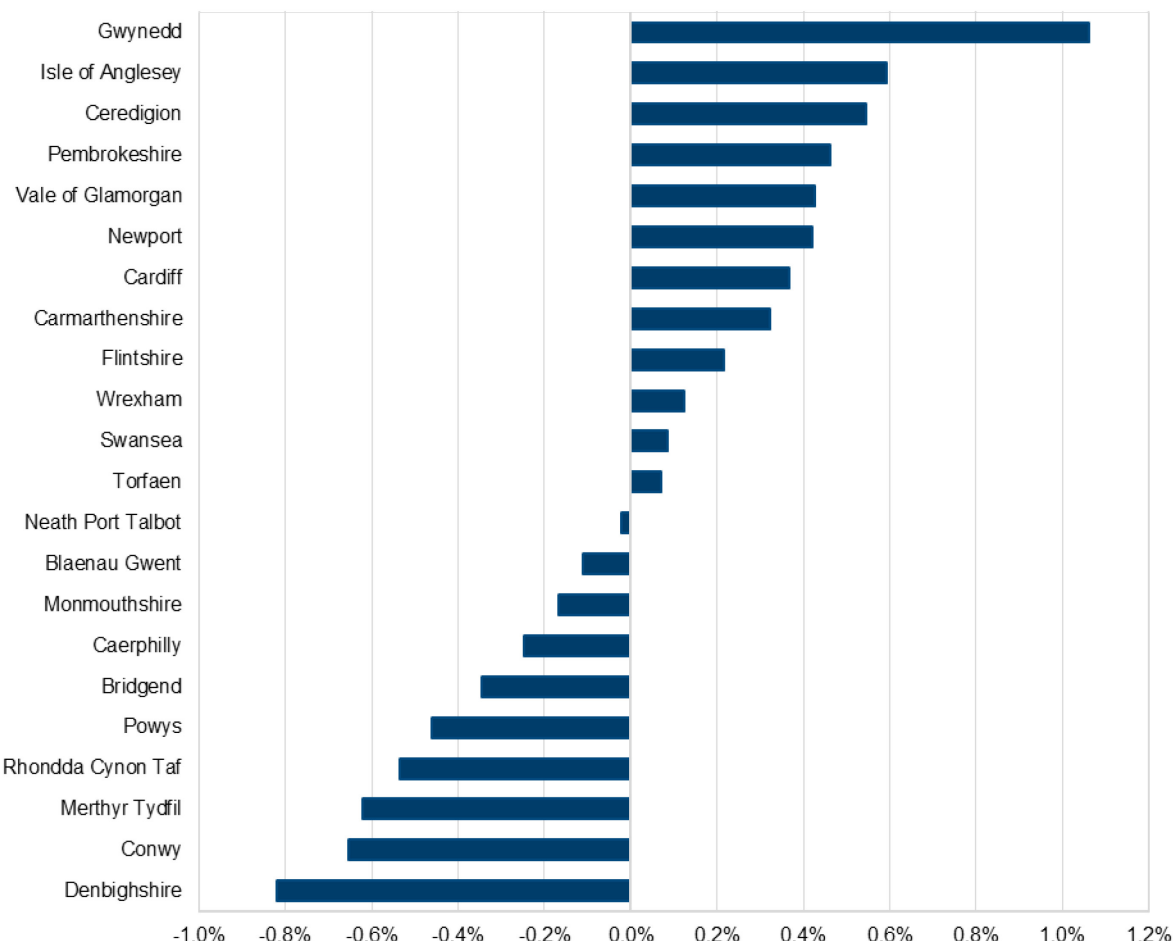
At a UK level, early estimates for February 2025 showed a monthly increase of 20,500 (0.1%).

Quarterly RTI Updates

Employees by local authority

In March 2025, estimates of the number of paid employees by local authority area were published by HMRC. The latest data refers to February 2025 and the next update to this data will be in June 2025.

Figure 1.4: Percentage change of paid employees by local authority, Wales, February 2024 to February 2025



Description of figure 1.4: A horizontal bar chart showing the year on year percentage change of paid employees for each local authority. Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey had the largest increases over the year.

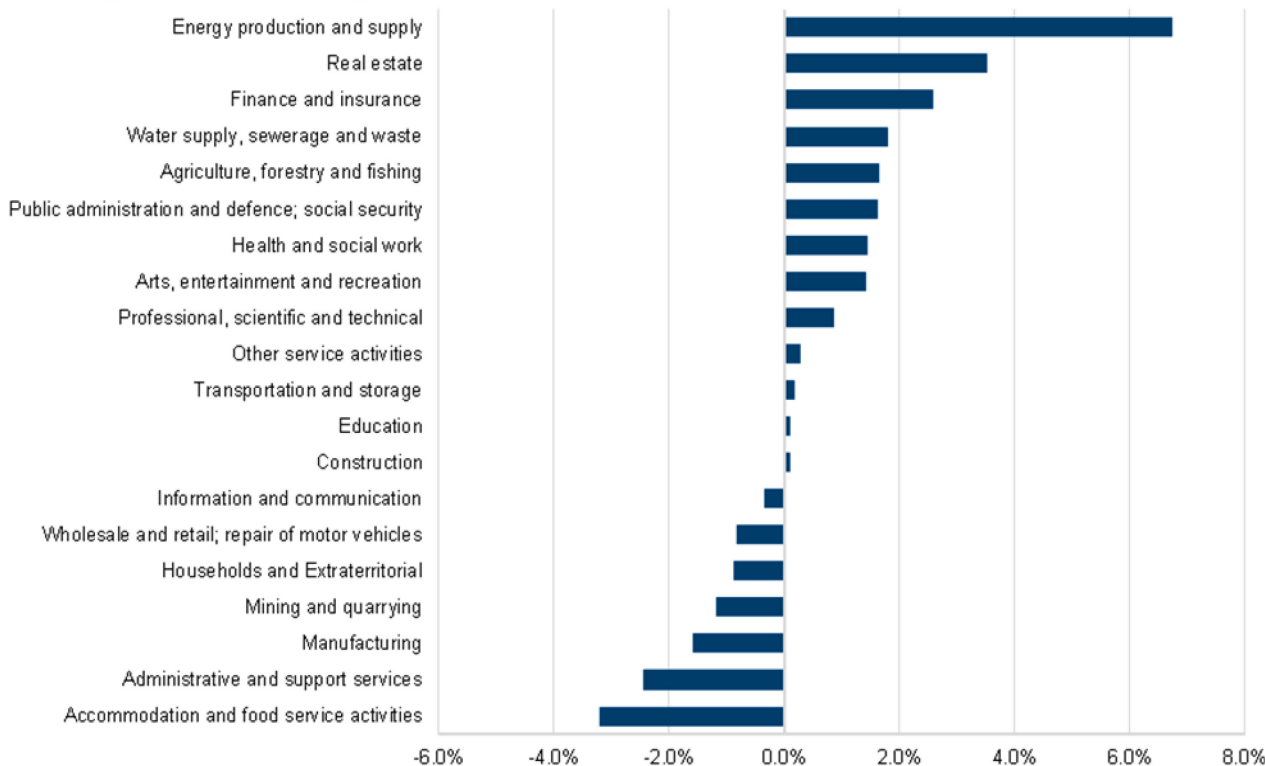
Source: Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, HM Revenue and Customs

In February 2025, 12 of the 22 Welsh local authority areas saw an increase in the number of paid employees when compared with the same month in the previous year. Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey were the local authorities with the largest increases, growing by 1.1% and 0.6% respectively.

Employees by industry sector

In February 2025, HMRC published data for the number of paid employees by industry sector for the UK countries and English regions. The latest data refers to January 2025 and the next update to this data will be in May 2025.

Figure 1.5: Percentage change of paid employees by industry sector, Wales, January 2024 to January 2025



Description of figure 1.5: A horizontal bar chart showing the year on year percentage change of paid employees for each industry sector in Wales. The Energy production and supply sector had the largest increase, and the Accommodation and food service activities sector had the largest decrease.

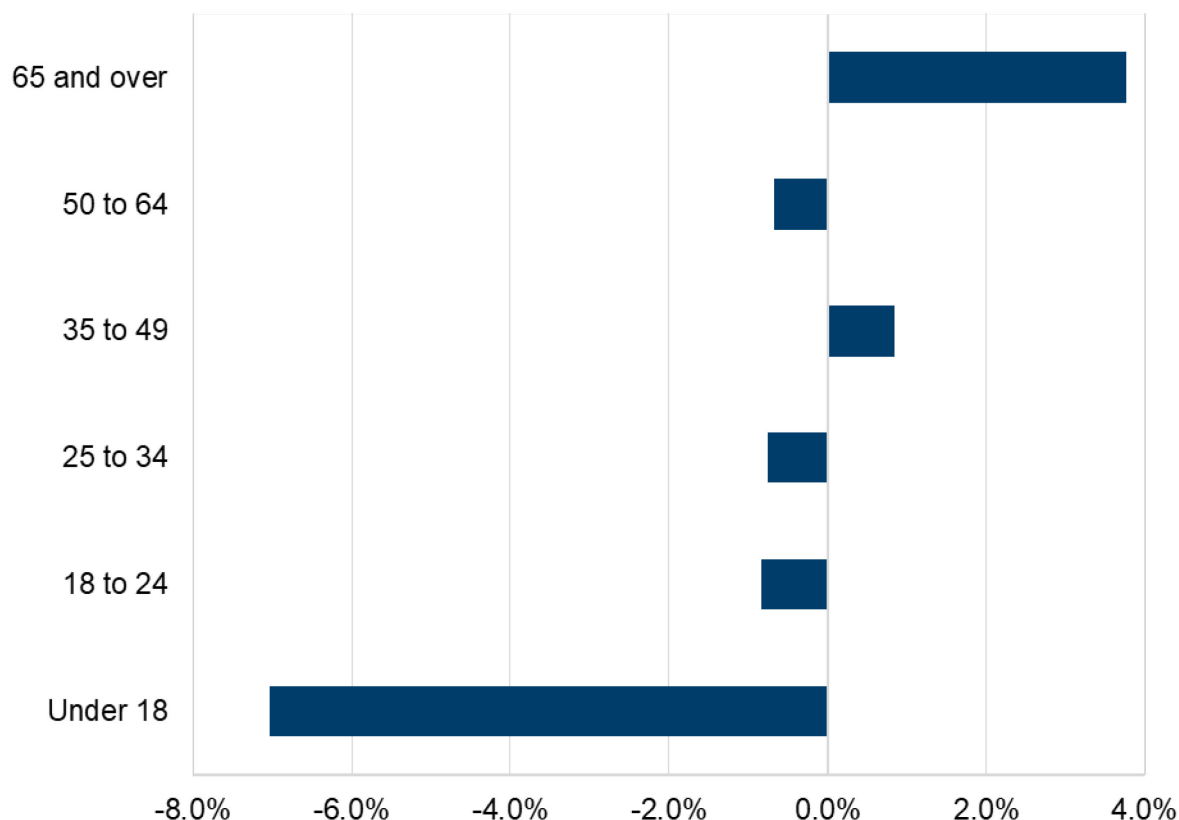
Source: Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, HM Revenue and Customs

In January 2025, the Energy production and supply sector had the largest increase (up 6.7%) in the number of paid employees when compared to the previous year. The largest decrease over the same period was in the Accommodation and food service activities sector (down 3.2%).

Employees by age

In January 2025, HMRC published data by age group for the UK countries and English regions. The latest data refers to December 2024 and the next update for these statistics will be in April 2025.

Figure 1.6: Percentage change of paid employees by age group, Wales, December 2023 to December 2024



Description of figure 1.6: A horizontal bar chart showing the year on year percentage change of paid employees for each age group in Wales. The 65 and over age group had the largest increase, and the under 18 age group had the largest decrease.

Source: Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, HM Revenue and Customs

In December 2024, the age groups: under 18, 18 to 24, 25 to 34 and 50 to 64 all experienced decreases in the number of paid employees (7.0%, 0.8%, 0.8% and 0.7% respectively) when compared to the previous year. The age groups: 35 to 49, and over 65 both experienced increases (0.8% and 3.8% respectively) over the same period, with the 65 and over age group having the largest percentage increase.

Hours worked (ONS)

Hours worked: LFS statistics for usual hours worked measure how many hours people usually work per week. They are not affected by absences and so can provide a good measure of normal working patterns.

Latest data for the UK are sourced from the LFS. Due to the sample size, data for Wales are derived from the APS and are therefore not as timely.

Figure 1.7: Average hours worked, UK, 3 months to January 2015 to the 3 months to January 2025



Description of figure 1.7: A line chart showing the average hours worked in the UK. Generally the hours worked remained relatively stable until a large drop in April to June 2020 (to a record low). The average hours worked have since recovered to levels prior to the drop and have remained relatively stable since November to January 2024.

Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

In the three months to January 2025, the average number of hours worked in the UK was 31.9 hours, a decrease of 0.7% (0.2 hours) from the previous quarter and down 0.1% (0.0 hours) from the same quarter in the previous year.

Total actual weekly hours worked was at 1.08 billion over the same period, a decrease of 3.1 million hours (0.3%) compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 18.7 million hours (1.8%) compared to the previous year.

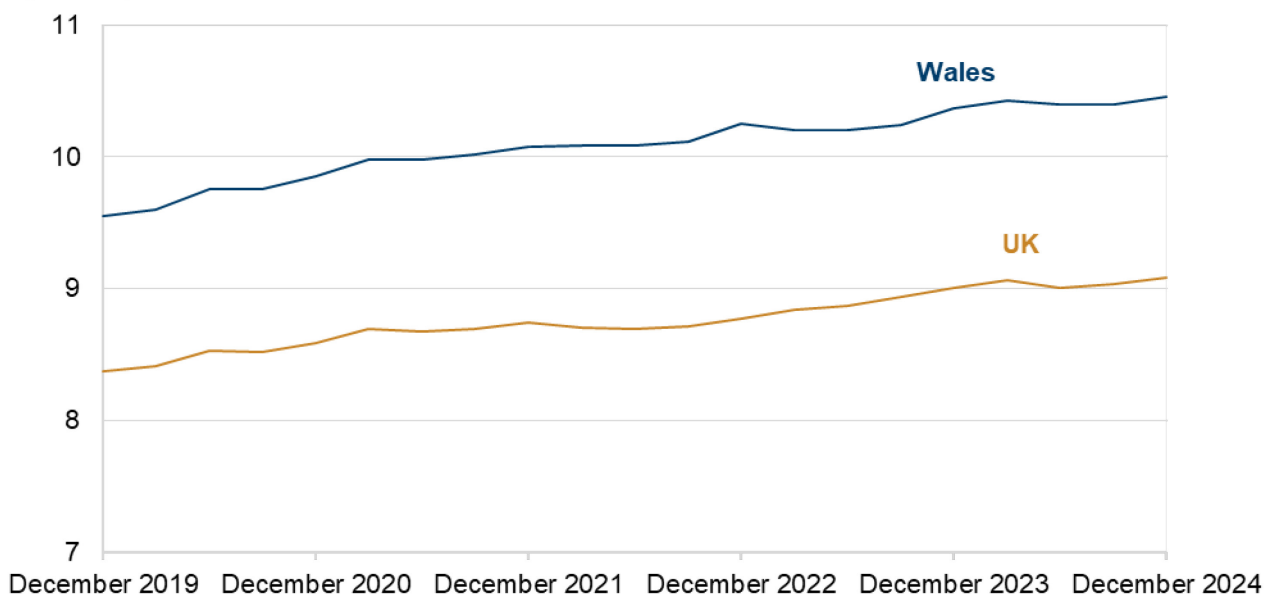
The APS estimates that during the year to September 2024, the average number of hours worked in Wales was 30.9 hours per week, a 0.9% decrease from the previous year. Males in Wales worked an average of 34.6 hours per week and females worked an average of 26.9 hours per week.

The number of hours worked may be affected by labour disputes. [ONS publish labour disputes statistics](#), however the latest data for Wales has been suppressed for confidentiality.

Public Sector Employment (ONS)

Public Sector: The public sector comprises central government, local government and public corporations as defined for the UK National Accounts. The national accounts are compiled based on an internationally comparable accounting framework and describe the activities in a national economy. Data sourced from an ONS data collection on Public Sector Employment.

Figure 1.8: Public sector employment (percentage of population, not seasonally adjusted), December 2019 to December 2024



Description of figure 1.8: A line chart that shows both Wales and the UK have had an increasing rate of public sector employment over the last five years. Wales has a higher percentage of the population employed in the public sector than the UK.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Regional Public Sector Employment, ONS

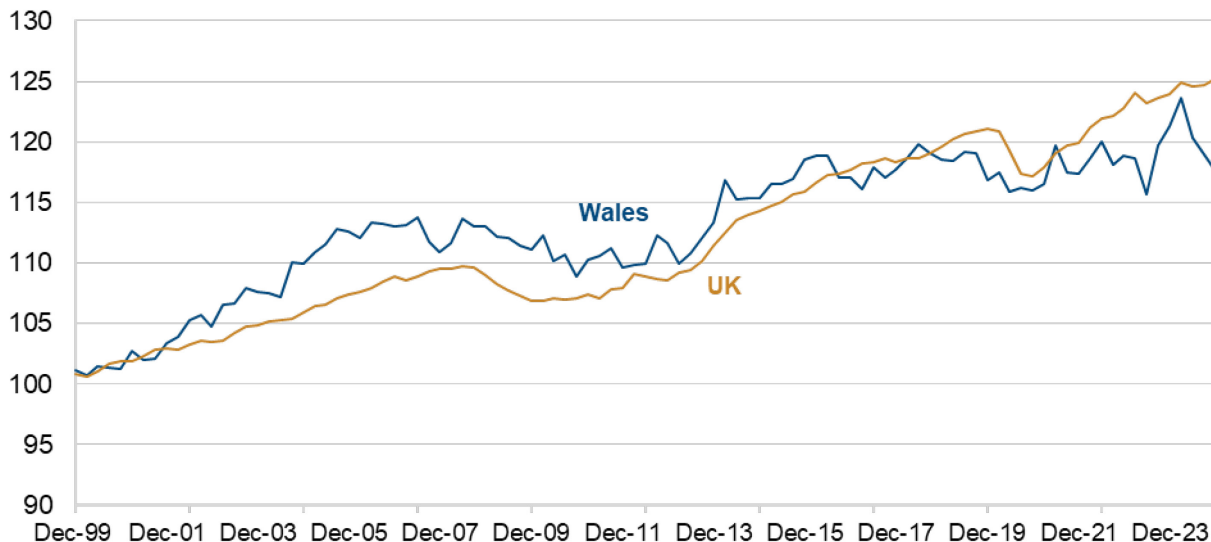
According to Public Sector Employment data, there were 331,000 people employed in the public sector in Wales in December 2024, an increase of 2,000 (0.7%) from a year earlier. This is 10.5% of the population, an increase of 0.1 percentage points over the year.

Public sector employment in the UK increased over the same period by 0.9% to 6.11 million. This is 9.1% of the population, an increase of 0.1 percentage points over the year.

Workforce Jobs (ONS)

Workforce Jobs: The number of people with jobs is not the same as the number of jobs. This is because a person can have more than one job. The number of people with jobs is measured by the LFS. The number of jobs is measured by Workforce Jobs (WFJ) and is the sum of employee jobs from employer surveys, self-employment jobs from the LFS, those in HM Forces and government- supported trainees. The LFS and WFJ measures are reconciled each quarter and jobs vacancies are measured separately by the Vacancy Survey.

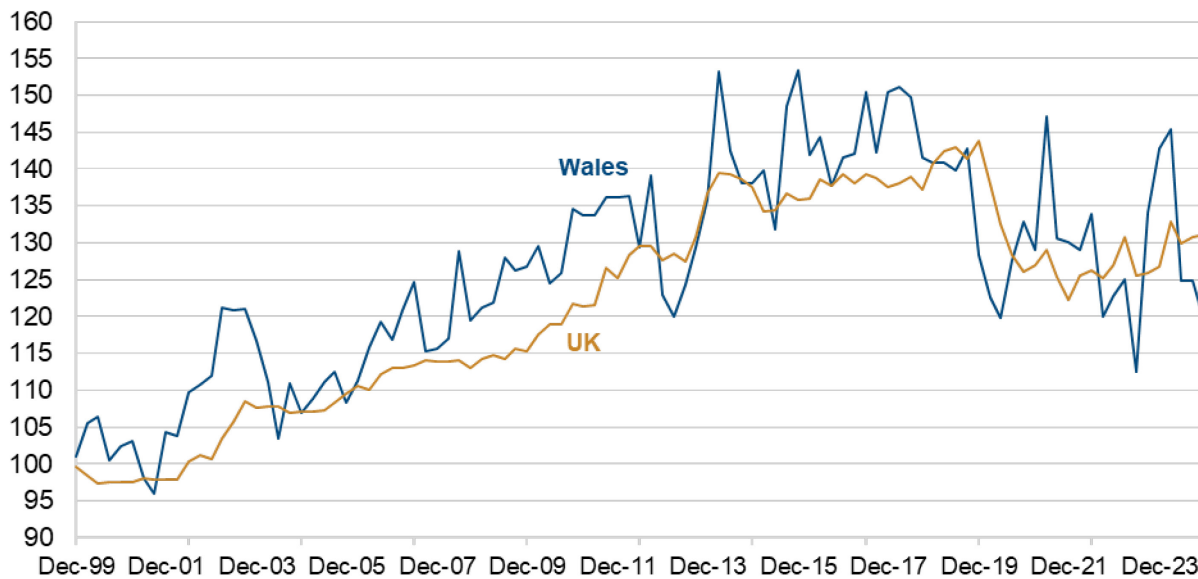
Figure 1.9: Workforce jobs (Index 1999=100), December 1999 to December 2024



Description of figure 1.9: A line chart showing that the number of workforce jobs in both Wales and the UK have generally increased since 1999. The trend in workforce jobs for both Wales and the UK have remained generally comparable since 1999, despite the Wales series being more volatile.

The number of workforce jobs in Wales in December 2024 was 1.46 million, a decrease of 46,800 (3.1%) over the year. Since December 1999, the number of workforce jobs in Wales has increased by 203,400 (16.2%). The number of workforce jobs in the UK increased over the year by 402,700 (1.1%) to 36.9 million and has increased by 7.19 million (24.2%) since December 1999.

Figure 1.10: Self-employment jobs (Index 1999=100), December 1999 to December 2024

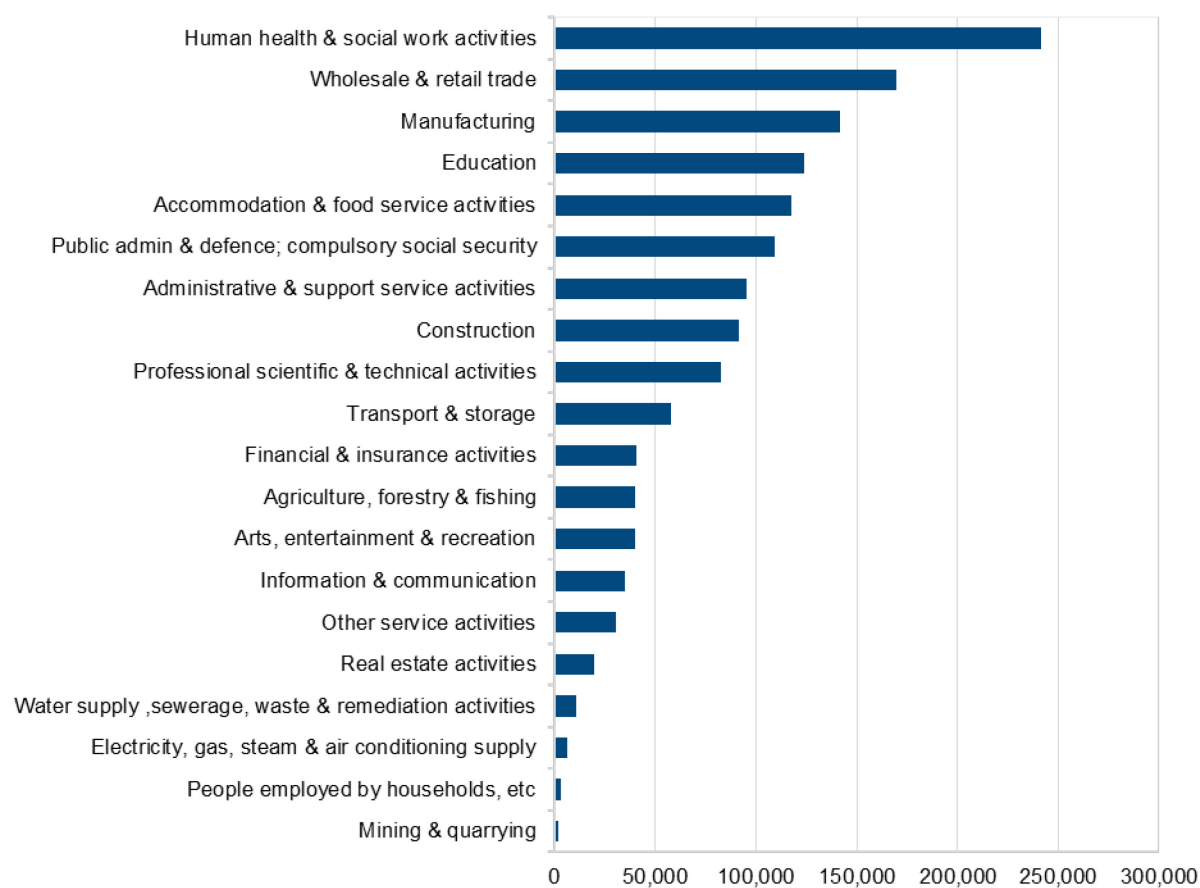


Description of figure 1.10: A line chart showing that the number of self-employment jobs in both the UK and Wales have generally increased since 1999 and have followed similar trends.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Workforce Jobs, ONS

The number of self-employment jobs in Wales in December 2024 was 171,100, a decrease of 33,300 (16.3%) over the year. Since December 1999, self-employment jobs in Wales increased by 26,600 (18.4%), accounting for 11.7% of workforce jobs (compared to 11.5% in December 1999). However, it is important to note the volatility of this series. The estimate of the number of self-employment jobs in the UK in December 2024 was 4.27 million (11.6% of workforce jobs), up 141,100 (3.4%) over the year.

Figure 1.11: Workforce jobs by Industry sector, Wales, December 2024



Description of figure 1.11: A horizontal bar chart showing the number of workforce jobs in each industry sector in Wales. Human health and social work activities was the industry with the largest number of jobs.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Workforce Jobs, ONS

In December 2024, Human health & social work activities accounted for 16.3% of workforce jobs in Wales, the highest of any industry. This was followed by Wholesale & retail trade with 11.4% of workforce jobs.

2. Unemployment

Main points

- In November 2024 to January 2025, the unemployment rate in Wales was 5.4% (approximately 81,200 people). This is down 0.1 percentage points on the quarter and up 1.2 percentage points on the year.
- The claimant count now (February 2025) stands at 67,200, an increase of 8.8% compared to the same month in the previous year. This is a rate of 4.5%, up 0.4 percentage points over the same period (based on unrounded figures). (Jobcentre Plus Administration System, Department for Work and Pensions)
- Since the start of 2022 the number of people on Universal Credit in Wales has increased, leading to a new high of 379,200 in February 2025. (Department for Work and Pensions)
- In February 2025, online job adverts in Wales increased by 8.7% compared with the previous month and increased by 7.5% compared to the previous year. (Textkernel new online job estimates, ONS)

Labour Force Survey Unemployment (ONS)

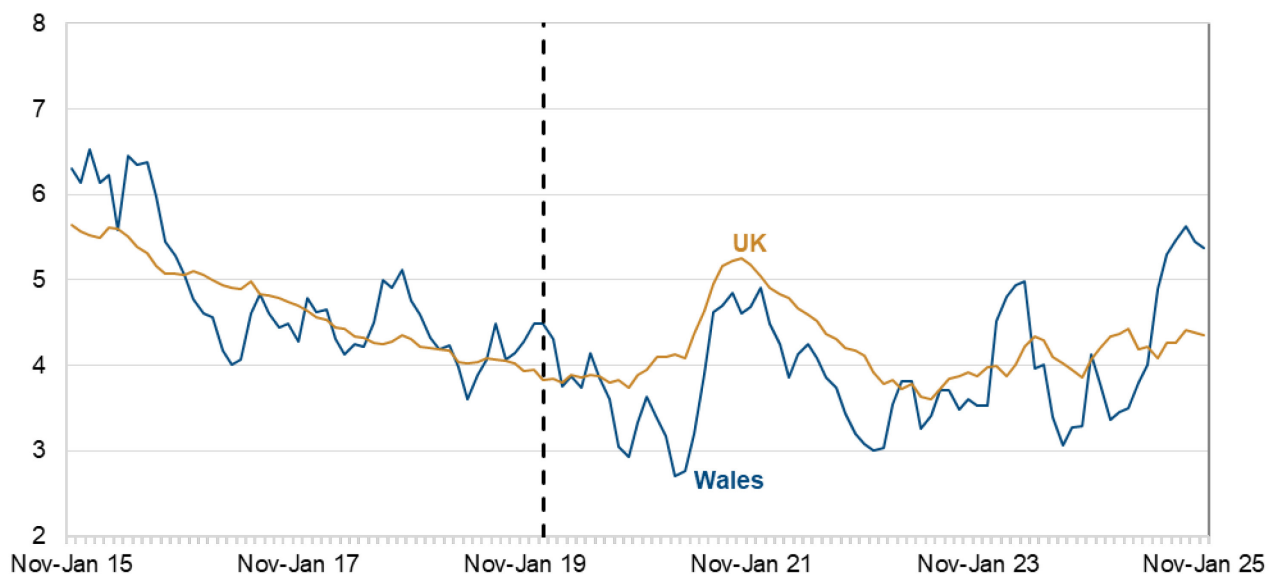
LFS Unemployment: The number of unemployed people in the UK is measured through the LFS following the internationally agreed definition recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) – an agency of the United Nations. Unemployed people are without a job, have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks; or are out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks.

The headline unemployment rate is calculated by dividing the unemployment level for those aged 16 and over by the total number of economically active people aged 16 and over.

Historically, the Welsh unemployment rate has generally tracked the UK rate and had been gradually falling since the early 2010s, before rising sharply as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. In August to October 2019, the Welsh unemployment rate fell below the UK rate and remained below until March to May 2022. Since then, the Wales rate has fluctuated around the UK rate, despite some volatility in the data.

Please note in recent years the data presented for the number of those unemployed and the unemployment rate have shown particularly high volatility as the number of unemployed people, as well as the sample sizes, have dropped. Due to this volatility, short-term changes should be considered alongside longer-term trends where possible.

Figure 2.1: ILO Unemployment rate (percentage of economically active population), 3 months to January 2015 to the 3 months to January 2025



Description of Figure 2.1: A line chart showing that the unemployment rate in both Wales and the UK have shown similar movements, however the unemployment rate in Wales has fluctuated more than the UK rate. Data for the period January to March 2019 onwards are not comparable with previous periods due to a discontinuity in the time series following a reweighting of the data.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Labour Force Survey

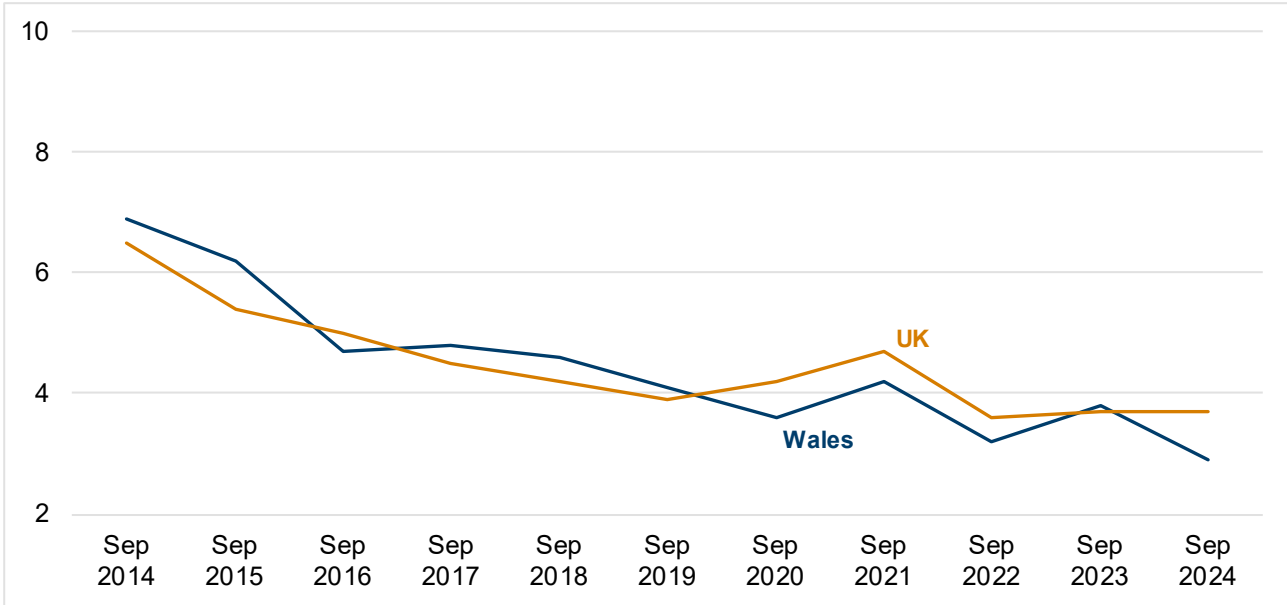
During November 2024 to January 2025 there were 81,200 unemployed people in Wales, this is a rate of 5.4% of the economically active population, down 0.1 percentage points compared to the previous quarter and up 1.2 percentage points compared to a year earlier. Unemployment rate changes should be considered alongside longer-term trends where possible due to the volatility of the series.

There were 1.55 million unemployed people in the UK in November 2024 to January 2025, up 131,700 (9.3%) from the previous year. This is a rate of 4.4%, an increase of 0.3 percentage points compared to the previous year.

Annual Population Survey

Annual Population Survey: The 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.

Figure 2.2: APS unemployment rate, persons (percentage of economically active population), year ending September 2014 to September 2024



Description of figure 2.2: A line chart showing the APS unemployment rate in both Wales and the UK over the last ten years. The Welsh unemployment rate has seen an overall decrease since the year ending September 2014 despite some fluctuations in the data.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of the APS.

There were 43,300 unemployed people in Wales in the year ending September 2024, down 15,100 from the same period a year earlier. This is a rate of 2.9% of the economically active population, which is down 0.9 percentage points on the previous year.

Over the year, the unemployment level in the UK decreased by 3,700 to 1.26 million. This is a rate of 3.7% of the economically active population, which is 0.8 percentage points higher than the rate for Wales.

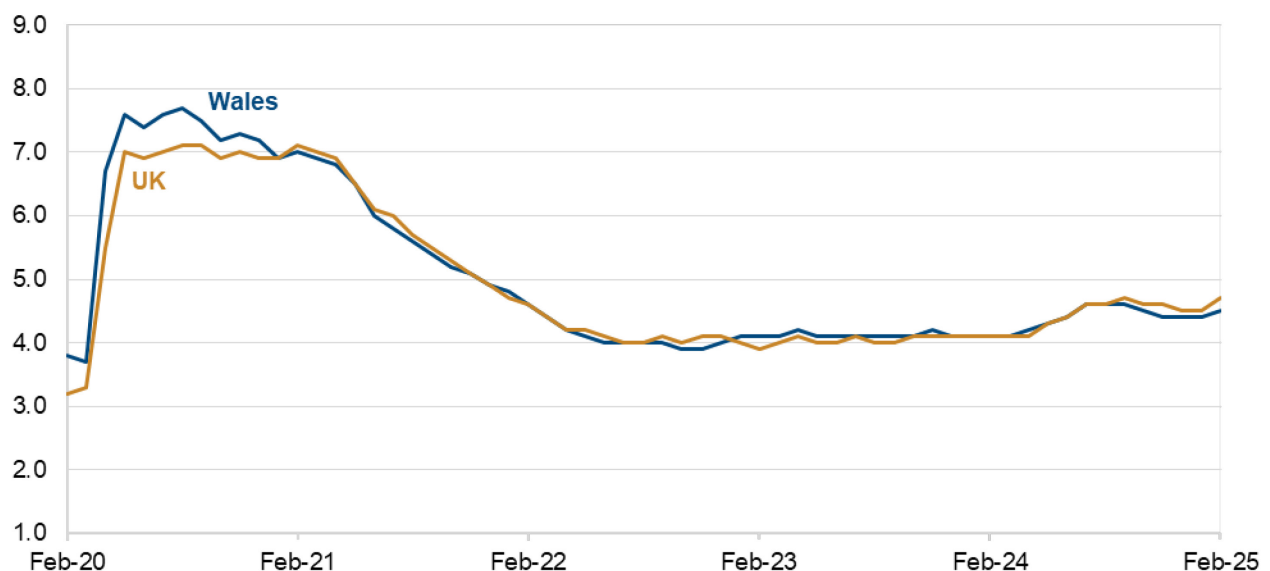
Claimant count (DWP)

Claimant Count: The number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits. Between 1996 and 2013, the Claimant Count was measured using claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance. In 2013 a new benefit, Universal Credit, which will replace a number of means-tested benefits, including the means-tested element of Jobseeker's Allowance, began to be rolled out. From the introduction of Universal Credit, those claimants who were receiving the benefit for unemployment reasons have been included in the Claimant Count.

The experimental claimant count rate is the number of claimants resident in an area as a percentage of the sum of claimants and workforce jobs in the country or region.

Official statistics in development are official statistics that are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed, these will potentially have a wider degree of uncertainty.

Figure 2.3: Experimental claimant count rates (percentage of civilian workforce), February 2020 to February 2025



Description of Figure 2.3: A line chart showing the claimant count rate for Wales and the UK over the past 5 years. There was a large increase in the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits in both Wales and the UK in March 2020. The claimant count rate has generally decreased since for both Wales and the UK, however has started to slightly increase since April 2024.

Source: Jobcentre Plus Administration System, Department for Work and Pensions

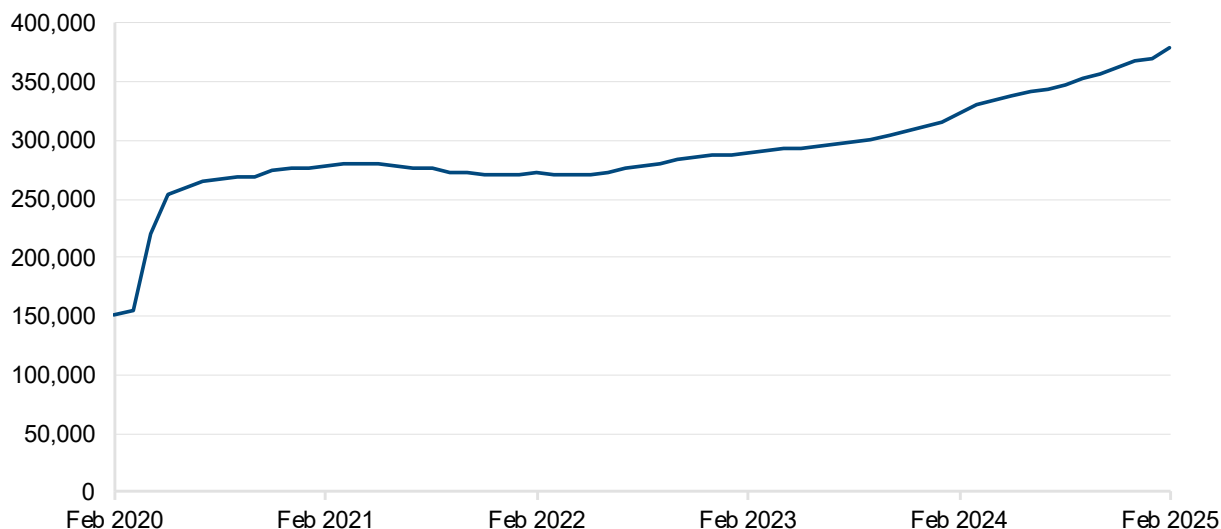
Experimental claimant count data showed a large increase at the start of the pandemic and has seen an overall decrease since the peak in August 2020, despite a slight increase over recent months.

In February 2025 the claimant count was 67,200 in Wales, up 5,500 (8.8%) over the year and up 900 (1.3%) compared to the previous month. This is a claimant count rate of 4.5%, up 0.4 percentage points compared to the previous year and up 0.1 percentage points from the previous month (based on unrounded figures). The claimant count rate in the UK now (February 2025) stands at 4.7%.

Universal Credit (DWP)

Universal Credit: Universal Credit is a new benefit, which began to be rolled out in 2013, which will replace a number of means-tested benefits, including the means-tested element of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Those Universal Credit claimants who are required to be seeking work are included in the Claimant Count estimates along with all claimants of JSA.

Figure 2.4: People on Universal Credit, Wales, February 2020 to February 2025



Description of Figure 2.4: A line chart showing the number of people on universal credit in Wales. It shows a steady increase until the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, then a steep rise from March 2020 until May 2020. The chart shows an increase in numbers over the last year.

Source: Universal Credit, DWP

Since the start of 2022 the number of people on Universal Credit in Wales has seen an overall increase, with larger increases being seen over the last six months. In February 2025, the number of people on Universal Credit in Wales reached a new high of 379,200, an increase of 2.8% compared to the previous month.

Of the 379,200 people claiming Universal Credit in Wales, 189,900 (50.1%) were categorised as having no work requirements, 64,600 (17.0%) were categorised as searching for work, and 58,200 (15.4%) were categorised as working – no requirements.

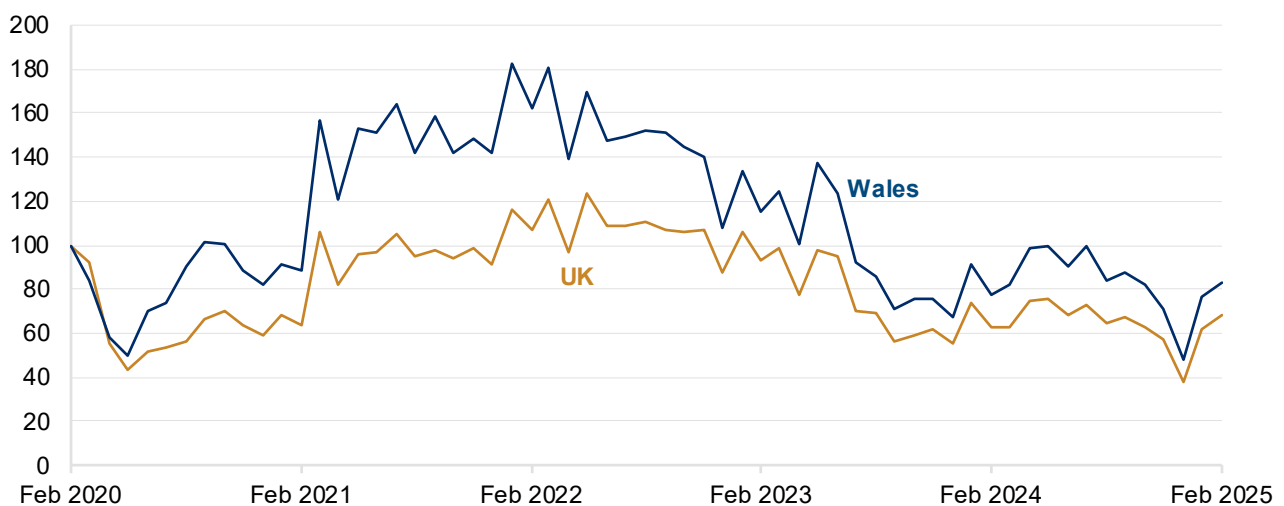
Online Job Adverts (ONS)

Online Job Adverts: These indices are created based upon job advert estimates provided by Textkernel. This data includes information on job advert entries from approximately 90,000 job boards and recruitment pages each month since January 2018, broken down by job category and UK country and English region.

Please note that this series is categorised as official statistics in development. Official statistics in development are official statistics that are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed, these will potentially have a wider degree of uncertainty.

The [Textkernel monthly online job adverts](#) series has replaced the discontinued [Adzuna weekly online job advert](#) series from January 2025. Estimates from the new Textkernel series are provided below.

Figure 2.5: Online job adverts (Index February 2020 = 100), February 2020 to February 2025



Description of Figure 2.5: A line chart showing that online job adverts in Wales and the UK increased in mid 2020 and 2021 following a drop at the start of the pandemic, however the number of online job adverts has generally decreased over the most recent two years.

Source: Weekly Online Job Advert Estimates, ONS

In February 2025, online job adverts in Wales increased by 8.7% compared with the previous month and increased by 7.5% compared to the previous year.

[ONS also publish UK level job vacancy estimates from the Vacancy Survey.](#) Job vacancies in the UK have followed a similar trend to online job adverts over the previous four years.

3. Economic inactivity

Main points

- In November 2024 to January 2025, the economic inactivity rate in Wales was 26.0% (approximately 503,500 people). This is up 0.8 percentage points on the quarter and down 1.0 percentage points on the year.

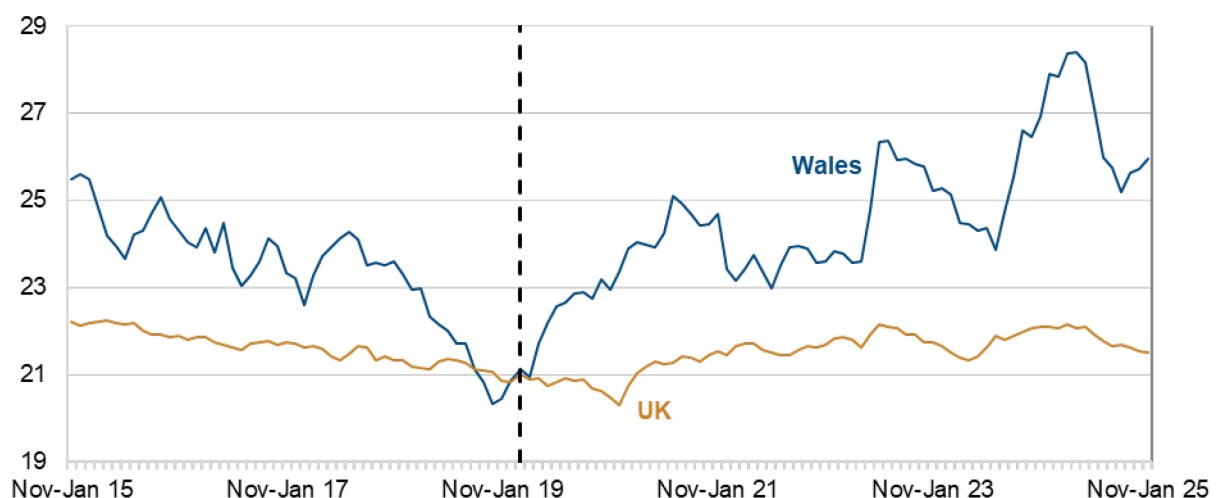
Labour Force Survey Economic Inactivity (ONS)

Economic Inactivity: Economically inactive people are those without a job who have not actively sought work in the last four weeks, and/or are not available to start work in the next two weeks.

The headline inactivity rate is calculated by dividing the inactivity level for those aged from 16 to 64 divided by the population for that age group.

Inactivity rates in Wales have been persistently higher than the UK for decades but fell steeply to below the UK rate at the end of 2018. The rate in Wales generally rose until mid-2020 and then decreased as it corresponded with opposite movements in the employment rate (figures 1.1 and 1.2). The trend in the economic inactivity rate has seen an overall increase since mid-2021, despite a downward trend over 2022 and the first half of 2023. Since June to August 2023, the economic inactivity rate in Wales has increased overall, and remains more volatile than the UK.

Figure 3.1: Economic inactivity rate, persons (percentage of those aged 16 to 64), 3 months to January 2015 to the 3 months to January 2025



Description of Figure 3.1: A line chart showing over the past four years, inactivity rates have generally increased in both Wales and the UK. The rate in Wales has remained higher than the UK since December to February 2019. Data for the period January to March 2019 onwards are not comparable with previous periods due to a discontinuity in the time series following a reweighting of the data.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of LFS

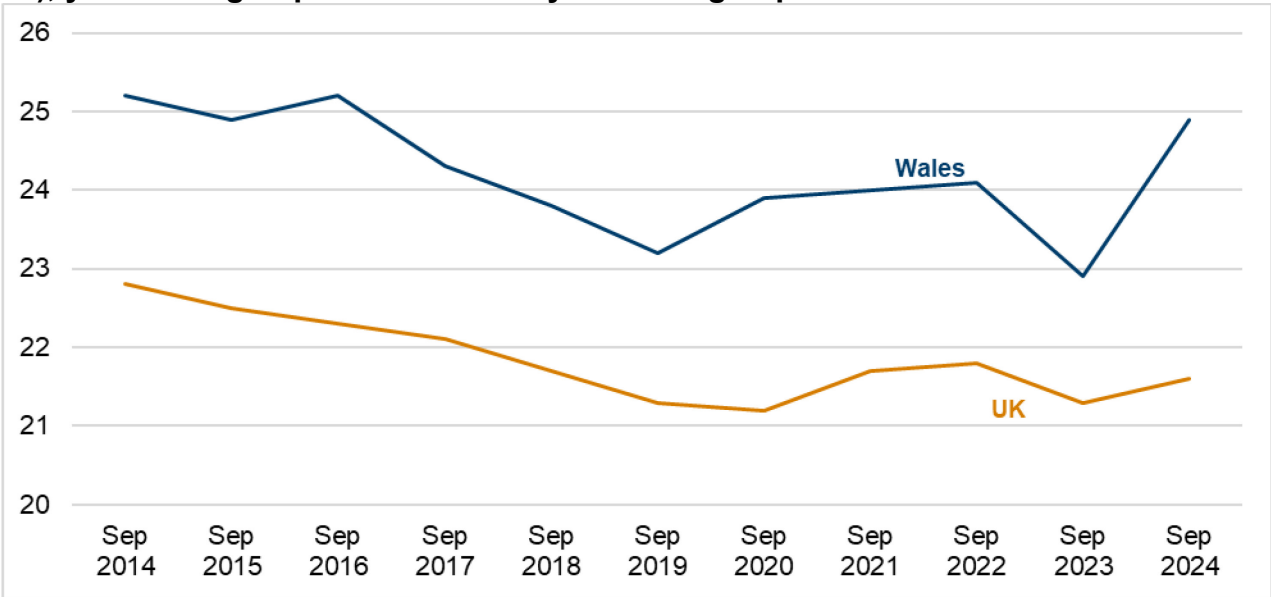
There were 503,500 people in Wales who were economically inactive in November 2024 to January 2025, down 14,300 (2.8%) from the same period a year earlier. This is a rate of 26.0% of those aged 16 to 64, up 0.8 percentage points over the quarter and down 1.0 percentage points

compared to the same period a year earlier. The number of economically inactive people in the UK decreased by 169,200 (1.8%) over the year to 9.27 million. This is a rate of 21.5% of those aged 16 to 64, down 0.6 percentage points on the previous year.

Annual Population Survey

Annual Population Survey: The 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.

Figure 3.2: APS economic inactivity rate, persons (percentage of those aged 16 to 64), year ending September 2014 to year ending September 2024



Description of figure 3.2: A line chart showing the APS economic inactivity rate in both Wales and the UK over the last ten years, with Wales having a higher economic inactivity rate than the UK. The Welsh rate has seen an overall decrease since the year ending September 2014 despite some fluctuations in the data.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of APS.

There were 480,600 people in Wales aged 16 to 64 who were economically inactive (including students) in the year ending September 2024, up 42,300 (9.7%) from the same period a year earlier. This is a rate of 24.9% of those aged 16 to 64, which is up 2.1 percentage points on the previous year (based on unrounded figures).

Over the year, the economic inactivity level in the UK increased by 154,200 (1.7%) to 9.04 million. This is a rate of 21.6% of those aged 16 to 64, which is 3.3 percentage points lower than the economic inactivity rate for Wales.

4. Quality information

4.1 Relevance

This monthly bulletin is a compendium publication that brings together the latest key statistics relating to the Welsh economy and labour market, mainly in the context of the UK economy and labour market. The headline LFS estimates in the bulletin are published by ONS in their Labour Market Statistical Bulletin which includes headline figures for Wales as a whole.

This bulletin provides a more detailed breakdown of the Wales data than the ONS bulletin and presents those estimates alongside other headline estimates for the economy and labour market for Wales. These statistics are used by the Welsh Government to monitor the headline statistics for the Welsh economy as well as providing comparisons to the UK economy. The bulletin complements the [Welsh Economy in Numbers dashboard](#), which provides a broad picture of the Welsh economy.

The LFS remains the main source for headline labour market indicators at a Wales level. The larger sample of the APS allows for estimates at a local authority level and for sub-groups of the population.

Information from the APS that was included in previous versions of this bulletin, can be accessed via the quarterly [Labour market statistics \(APS\)](#) publication. This includes data for Welsh economic regions, long-term unemployment rates, youth unemployment and the reasons for economic inactivity for males and females.

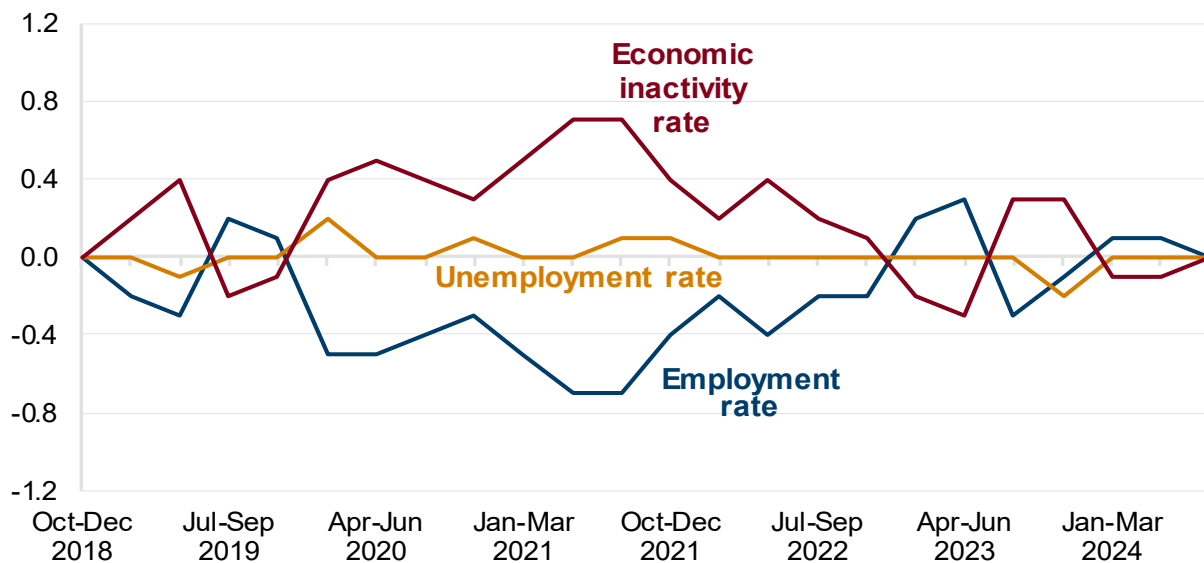
This bulletin is used by other public sector organisations, businesses, academia and private individuals as a means of identifying the key trends in the headline economic and labour market statistics for Wales. Our [2012 user consultation](#) provides more information on how our outputs are used.

Welsh Government published a more detailed analysis of [protected characteristics in the labour market in Wales](#) on 16 December 2021. We welcome your feedback on this publication and priorities for future analyses; please see contact details at the end of this release. Data is also currently available on [StatsWales](#) and [Nomis](#).

LFS estimates published on 17 December 2024 were reweighted for periods from January to March 2019 for UK countries and regions, and incorporated latest ONS estimates of the size and composition of the UK population. UK estimates were reweighted back to June to August 2011.

On 3 December 2024, the [ONS published an article exploring the Impact of reweighting on LFS key indicators: December 2024](#). On 19 December 2024, we published [an article exploring the full impact of this reweighting on key indicators in Wales](#).

Figure 4.1: Revisions to the employment rate, unemployment rate and economic inactivity rate, Wales, 3 months to December 2018 to the 3 months to September 2024



Description of Figure 4.1: A line chart that shows how the reweighting January to March 2019 affected the Welsh employment rate, unemployment rate and economic inactivity rate.

Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

The ONS published revised LFS estimates for Wales in March 2025 from the period January to March 2019 due to a seasonal adjustment review. The impact of the revisions on the estimates is small, accounting for changes of 0.1 percentage points or less across most periods.

4.2 Accuracy

Some of the data in this bulletin is based on sample surveys meaning it is subject to sampling variability. The LFS is a sample survey and, as such, estimates obtained from it are subject to sampling variability. If we drew many samples, each would give a different result.

Table 4.1 shows the sampling variability of the estimates, and quarterly and annual changes using 95% confidence intervals. We would expect that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value. Due to the LFS five wave structure, this means it can be used to assess changes over six quarters or more. The confidence intervals have been calculated using data that are not seasonally adjusted, with the relevant sampling errors produced then applied to the seasonally adjusted data.

If the 'quarterly or annual change' of an estimate is larger than the 'confidence interval around the change', the change is statistically significant. If none of the reported changes over the year or the quarter were statistically significant, then the recorded changes did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size.

Table 4.1: 95% confidence intervals for LFS figures: Wales, 3 months to January 2025

Numbers in thousands

	Estimates			Quarterly changes			Annual changes		
	Lower limit	Estimate	Upper limit	Lower limit	Quarterly change	Upper limit	Lower limit	Annual change	Upper limit
Employment level	1,378	1,432	1,487	-77	-5	67	-72	6	84
Employment rate	67.0%	69.9%	72.7%	-4.4%	-0.7%	3.1%	-4.4%	-0.1%	4.2%
Unemployment level	57	81	105	-34	-2	31	-13	20	53
Unemployment rate	3.8%	5.4%	7.0%	-2.3%	-0.1%	2.1%	-1.0%	1.2%	3.5%
Economically active level	1,461	1,513	1,566	-76	-6	63	-49	26	101
Economic activity rate	71.4%	74.0%	76.7%	-4.3%	-0.8%	2.8%	-3.0%	1.0%	5.0%
Economically inactive level	437	503	570	-72	15	103	-113	-14	85

Description of Table 4.1: A table showing the 95% confidence interval for the Labour Force Survey figures with the lower limit, estimate, and upper limit for the current estimate, quarterly changes, and annual changes.

Source: LFS, ONS

The ONS indicate that there is an increasing challenge to maintain response rates for the LFS and that headline numbers and trends for employment are starting to vary from other labour market data sources. In addition to the [ONS blog](#) on this topic, please see the [Chief Statistician's update on understanding and managing the impact of these challenges for labour market data in Wales](#).

Due to the lack of statistically significant estimates and volatile figures in the LFS, employment, unemployment and economic inactivity figures by sex have been temporarily removed from this bulletin. We are continuing to monitor the performance and reliability of the LFS, and plan to reintroduce these estimates at a time when they provide a more accurate picture of the labour market in Wales.

The LFS represents the primary labour market data source, however we continue to recommend that consideration should be given to the trends exhibited by other sources. Due to this, headline labour market indicators from the APS have been added to this report in order to provide a more rounded picture of the labour market in Wales.

The Annual Population Survey (APS) has seen a fall in sample sizes over recent years, given this and the fact that the survey has not been reweighted to latest population estimates, [the Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\) has agreed that the accredited official statistics status should be temporarily suspended](#) and that the estimates should be re-designated as official statistics (OSR).

It is still appropriate to use these statistics, however users should note the increased uncertainty around estimates derived from the APS. At a national level, estimates continue to provide a reasonable indication of trends for Wales, particularly if used as part of a basket of indicators with alternative sources such as HMRC real time information on paid employees, data on workforce jobs, and the claimant count. Estimates for smaller geographies or population sub-groups, however, are less reliable.

The [Welsh Government revisions policy](#) is available from the Statistics and Research website. Where the data is not from the Welsh Government, the revisions policy of the individual Government department is followed. The majority of the data in this release is from the ONS and their [revisions policy \(ONS\)](#) applies.

The LFS and WFJ measures are reconciled each quarter in an [article published](#) on ONS' website. Jobs vacancies are measured separately by the Vacancy Survey.

From June 2015 the Claimant Count statistics were designated as experimental due to the impact of Universal Credit, which is designed so a broader span of claimants is required to look for work than under Jobseeker's Allowance.

This means that once Universal Credit was fully rolled out, the Claimant Count was higher than it would otherwise be under Jobseeker's Allowance. The impact has increased as roll-out of Universal Credit has progressed and the seasonally-adjusted claimant count series has become more volatile. The full [ONS statement](#) is available via their website.

4.3 Timeliness and punctuality

This bulletin follows the ONS publication schedule of labour market data, available on the [National Statistics Release Calendar](#). Table 4.2 lists the date of last update and next update for each data source.

Table 4.2: Summary of data sources

Data	Source	Last Updated	Next Updated
Claimant count	Jobcentre Plus Administrative System, DWP	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
Economic inactivity rate	Annual Population Survey, ONS	21-Jan-2025	15-Apr-2025
Economic inactivity rate	Labour Force Survey, ONS	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
Employment rate	Annual Population Survey, ONS	21-Jan-2025	15-Apr-2025
Employment rate	Labour Force Survey, ONS	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
Hours Worked	Labour Force Survey, ONS	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
Experimental Real Time Pay Information (RTI)	Real Time Pay As You Earn Information, HMRC	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
RTI – Employees by local authority	Real Time Pay As You Earn Information, HMRC	20-Mar-2024	10-Jun-2024
RTI – Employees by country/region & industry sector	Real Time Pay As You Earn Information, HMRC	18-Feb-2024	13-May-2025
RTI – Employees by country/region & age	Real Time Pay As You Earn Information, HMRC	21-Jan-2025	15-Apr-2025
ILO unemployment rate	Annual Population Survey, ONS	21-Jan-2025	15-Apr-2025
ILO unemployment rate	Labour Force Survey, ONS	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
Online job adverts	Textkernel New Online Job Advert Estimates, ONS	20-Mar-2025	TBA
Potential redundancies	HR1 Potential Redundancies, ONS	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
Public sector employment	Regional Public Sector Employment, ONS	20-Mar-2025	10-Jun-2025
Redundancies	Labour Force Survey, ONS	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
Self-employment jobs	Workforce jobs, ONS	20-Mar-2025	10-Jun-2025
Universal Credit	Universal Credit, DWP	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
Vacancies	Vacancy Survey, ONS	20-Mar-2025	15-Apr-2025
Workforce jobs	Workforce jobs, ONS	20-Mar-2025	10-Jun-2025

Description of Table 4.2: A table showing the different data sources used in the Labour Market Overview release, when these data sources were last updated and when they will be next updated.

4.4 Accessibility and clarity

Much of the data behind the charts shown in this bulletin can be found on StatsWales. This bulletin covers key statistics for Wales as a whole, but additional breakdowns for age, gender, disability and ethnicity are also available on StatsWales and the ONS website. Links to StatsWales, Welsh Government statistical headlines (where applicable) and ONS analysis for information presented in this bulletin as well as other economic and labour market data are provided below.

- [APS Economic Inactivity \(excluding students\) on StatsWales](#)
- [APS Employment rate on StatsWales](#)
- [APS Labour market statistics by Disability status on StatsWales](#)
- [APS Labour market statistics by Ethnicity on StatsWales](#)
- [APS Unemployment rate on StatsWales](#)
- [Claimant count on StatsWales](#)
- [Employment earning at least the real living wage on StatsWales](#)
- [Disability and ethnicity pay differences](#)
- [Gender pay gap on StatsWales](#)
- [Gross weekly pay on StatsWales](#)
- [Hours worked data published by ONS](#)
- [LFS Economic Inactivity on StatsWales](#)
- [LFS Employment rate on StatsWales](#)
- [LFS Unemployment rate on StatsWales](#)
- [Online job adverts published by ONS](#)
- [Out of work benefit claimants on StatsWales](#)
- [Pay As You Earn \(PAYE\) Real Time Information \(RTI\) published by ONS](#)
- [Potential Redundancies published by ONS](#)
- [Public Sector Employment published by ONS](#)
- [Redundancies published by ONS](#)
- [Self-employment jobs published on NOMIS](#)
- [Vacancies published by ONS](#)
- [Workforce jobs published by ONS](#)

4.5 Comparability and coherence

Comparable measures for other UK countries for the data published in this bulletin are published on StatsWales and on the ONS website, which can be accessed using the data links in Table 4.3.

Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS)

Estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity are available from both the LFS and the APS. Estimates from the LFS are based on a rolling quarter and are updated monthly. The sample sizes are too low in the LFS to produce reliable estimates for geographies below Wales level. Estimates from the APS are based on a rolling twelve months, updated each quarter. The APS uses a bigger sample than the LFS so is used to produce estimates for geographies in Wales. At Wales level, the APS is a slightly more robust measure than the LFS but it is less timely and slower to adapt to changes in the labour market.

[Labour market statistics for Wales using APS estimates are published quarterly on the Welsh Government website.](#)

Employment and Workforce Jobs

Employment figures differ between the LFS estimates and Workforce Jobs. Primarily this is because people with more than one job are counted once in the LFS but more than once in Workforce Jobs. The LFS does not cover people living in most types of communal establishments and Workforce Jobs excludes unpaid family workers.

ILO Unemployment and Claimant Count

There are two different measures of unemployment used in official UK statistics, the headline International Labour Organisation (ILO) measure recorded by the LFS and the claimant count measure. Each is subject to advantages and disadvantages.

The headline ILO measure is a count of those who are out of work and want a job, or have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks; plus those who are out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start in the next two weeks. It is the broader measure of unemployment. However, it is sourced from a survey so the results are subject to sampling error. Wales data is subject to higher variability than UK level data because of the smaller sample size.

The claimant count is a count of all those claiming unemployment related benefits (currently Jobseekers Allowance plus some claimants of Universal Credit). As such it excludes those who are unemployed who are not eligible to claim, and those who do not wish to claim. However, it is a count of all claimants and is not subject to any sampling variability. It can therefore be disaggregated to very high levels of detail, and in particular, changes measured over the short term are more robust than for the headline unemployment measure.

Redundancies

[ONS publish estimates on the number of redundancies](#) and [potential redundancies \(ONS\)](#) for UK countries and English regions. The redundancy figures for Wales are based on a small sample size

and are therefore volatile, in recent periods estimates have been suppressed on disclosure grounds. Due to the volatility and availability of the data at the Wales level, we have removed these figures from this publication. Data and further information on these topics can be accessed via the ONS published tables.

4.6 Technical notes

Some of the data in this bulletin are presented as index numbers. Index numbers take the data for each time period and divide them by the figure for the reference period, and multiply the result by 100. A figure of above 100 for a given time period then indicates that the figure is higher than that for the reference period, whilst a figure of below 100 indicates that it is lower than that for the reference period. Data on workforce jobs and self-employment jobs are presented as indices referenced to 1999 = 100.

Data series shown are seasonally adjusted unless stated otherwise. Seasonal adjustment is the process of removing variations associated with the time of year from a time-series and enables comparisons of labour market statistics to be made since the previous quarter or previous month. Labour market data for Wales is seasonally adjusted but for geographies within Wales only non-seasonally adjusted data is available.

4.7 Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in the Welsh Government's [Statement of Compliance](#).

These [official statistics](#) and [official statistics in development](#) demonstrate the standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and public value.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

4.8 Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals,

and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016. This release includes data related to the following national indicator:

- (21) percentage of people in employment

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

This release includes contextual indicators, namely the basket of indicators presented in the Well-being report in the previous link.

As a national indicator under the Act they must be referred to in the analyses of local well-being produced by public services boards when they are analysing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their areas.

The Act states national milestones must be set that “...the Welsh Ministers consider would assist in measuring whether progress is being made towards the achievement of the well-being goals.” In doing so Welsh Ministers must specify how we know that a national milestone has been achieved and the time by which it is to be achieved.

National milestones are not performance targets for any individual organisation, but are collective measures of success for Wales.

In this release indicator (21) percentage of people in employment corresponds to the milestone “Eradicate the gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK by 2050, with a focus on fair work and raising labour market participation of under-represented groups”. Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

4.9 Further details

Links

This document is available on our website: <https://gov.wales/labour-market-overview>

The National Survey for Wales [methodology and quality reports](#) can be found on the Welsh Government website.

More information on the data sources can also be found in the Quality and Methodology Information reports published by ONS on [Labour Market](#), [Claimant Count](#), [Public Sector Employment](#) and [Workforce Jobs](#) data.

Next update

15 April 2025 (Headline)

17 April 2025 (Labour Market Overview bulletin)

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to labourmarket.stats@gov.wales.

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