

Statistical bulletin

# Employees in the UK: provisional results 2020

Number of employees in the UK, full-time and part-time, by sector, industry, country and English region, from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES).



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# 1 . Other pages in this release

Commentary on topics covered in the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) is split between three separate headline bulletins. Other commentary from the latest BRES data can be found on the following pages:

- [Employees in the UK by region: 2020](#)
- [Employees in the UK by industry: 2020](#)

## 2 . Main points

- The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic influenced the increases and decreases in employee estimates between September 2019 and September 2020; increases were shown in industries responding to the pandemic, whereas decreases were shown by the industries where restrictions impacted on them.
- The estimated number of employees in the UK decreased by 570,900 (1.9%) between 2019 and 2020, from 30.9 million to 30.3 million; the decrease was mainly driven by private sector employees, which fell by 685,400 (2.7%) whereas public sector employees increased by 114,600 (2.1%).
- Between 2019 and 2020, the estimated number of full-time employees decreased by 341,600 (1.6%) and the estimated number of part-time employees decreased by 229,300 employees (2.3%).
- Between 2019 and 2020, the largest increase in employees by industry was in health (up 75,700, or 1.9%); the largest decrease by industry was in accommodation and food services (down 182,300, or 7.7%)
- Of the 12 regions in the UK, 11 saw a decrease in employees between 2019 and 2020. The North East saw the largest percentage decrease in employees (down 30,300, or 2.8%), followed by the North West (down 91,500, or 2.7%); only the East of England (up 5,000, or 0.2%) saw an increase in the number of employees.

## 3 . Business Register and Employment Survey data

### [Broad Industry Group \(SIC\) - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 1](#)

Dataset | Released on 9 November 2021

Annual employee and employment estimates for Great Britain and UK split by Broad Industry Group (SIC2007). Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits

### [Industry \(2, 3 and 5-digit SIC\) - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 2](#)

Dataset | Released on 9 November 2021

Annual employee and employment estimates for Great Britain and UK split by 2, 3 and 5-digit Standard Industrial Classification (SIC2007). Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

### [Region - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 3](#)

Dataset | Released on 9 November 2021

Annual employee and employment estimates for Great Britain and UK split by region. Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

### [Region by Broad Industry Group \(SIC\) - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 4](#)

Dataset | Released on 9 November 2021

Annual employee and employment estimates for the UK split by region and Broad Industry Group (SIC2007). Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

### [Local Authority county - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 5](#)

Dataset | Released on 9 November 2021

Annual employee and employment estimates for the UK split by local authority county. Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

### [Local Authority district - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 6](#)

Dataset | Released on 9 November 2021

Annual employee and employment estimates for the UK split by local authority district. Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

## 4 . Glossary

### Employee

An employee is defined as anyone aged 16 years or over who is paid directly from the payroll, in return for carrying out a full-time or part-time job or being on a training scheme.

### Employment

Employment includes employees plus the number of working owners who receive drawings or a share of the profits.

### Full-time and part-time

Full-time is defined as working more than 30 hours per week and part-time is defined as working 30 hours or less per week.

## 5 . Measuring the data

## Coronavirus

View [more information on how labour market data sources are affected by the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#) published on 6 May 2020.

View a [comparison of our labour market data sources and the main differences](#), published on 11 December 2020.

## Impact on production of Business Register and Employment Survey estimates

The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) reference date of 11 September 2020 meant that coronavirus (COVID-19) had a tangible effect on producing estimates, as borne out when calculating the [coefficients of variation](#), which indicate lower levels of precision than in previous years. The response rate for the 2020 BRES was 72.6%, which was lower than the 2019 BRES response rate of 83.6%. Survey contributor-level comments provided to us over the telephone or electronically suggested the estimates were affected by COVID-19 planning and response.

## Sources

BRES is a sample survey. For the 2020 survey period, approximately 85,000 businesses were sampled for Great Britain, of which 72.6% responded. Northern Ireland data were collected independently by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. All estimates for 2020 are provisional. Data from the 2019 survey have been subject to small revisions since the [provisional estimates](#) were published on 6 November 2020. "Total employees" rather than "Total employment" is used when discussing the main points. Employees is the more robust of the two measures and is recommended for use in analysis. Further information about BRES can be found in the [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) report.

BRES is the primary source for employee estimates at a detailed regional and industrial level. More timely, less detailed, employment estimates are available in workforce jobs (WFJ). Workforce jobs benchmarks the private sector employee component to the BRES private sector employee estimates on an annual basis. The WFJ series, which is compiled mainly from surveys of businesses, is the preferred source of statistics when comparing changes in employment over time.

The BRES industry data are recommended in preference to industry data from household surveys such as the Annual Population Survey and Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS, which collects information mainly from residents of private households, is the preferred source of statistics on employment at the whole economy level.

The public sector employee job figures from BRES aggregated to regional or national level will not match those produced from the [Public sector employment release](#), which is the recommended source for public sector employment figures.

## Legal status

BRES includes breakdowns by public and private sector according to the legal status for national accounts classification purposes.

## Standard Industrial Classification

Figures are classified to the [Standard Industrial Classification 2007: SIC 2007](#). In this bulletin, the term "industry" refers to a "section" as defined in SIC 2007.

## Sampling variability

Because of the survey's large sample size, BRES is able to produce good-quality estimates for detailed breakdowns by industry and geography. The [coefficients of variation](#), a measure of quality, accompanies the BRES datasets on our website. The quality of the estimates may deteriorate for smaller geographies and this should be taken into account when making inferences about the figures.

## 6 . Related links

### [Labour market overview](#)

Bulletin | Released 12 October 2021

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

### [NOMIS](#)

A service provided by the ONS, to give free access to the most detailed and up-to-date UK labour market statistics from official sources.

### [Vacancies and jobs](#)

Bulletin | Released 12 October 2021

Estimates of the number of vacancies and jobs for the UK.

### [Regional labour market](#)

Bulletin | Released 12 October 2021

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

### [Public sector employment](#)

Bulletin | Released 14 September 2021

Estimates of people employed in the public and private sectors in the UK.