Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Regional labour market: April 2016

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

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1. Main points

For the 3 months ending February 2016, the highest employment rate in the UK was in the East of England (78.0%) and the lowest was in Northern Ireland (68.9%). The employment rate estimates showed few large movements for the regions and countries of the UK.

For the 3 months ending February 2016, the highest unemployment rate in the UK was in the North East (8.0%) and the lowest was in the East of England (3.5%). The unemployment rate estimates are generally showing small changes for most of the regions of the UK.

For March 2016, the highest Claimant Count rate in the UK was in Northern Ireland (4.3%) and the lowest was in the South East and South West (1.2%). Compared with February 2016, the majority of regions saw no change in the Claimant Count rate. The exception was in the North East, which saw an increase of 0.1 percentage points.

For the 3 months ending February 2016, the highest inactivity rate in the UK was in Northern Ireland (26.3%) and the lowest was in the South East (18.9%). The largest change in the inactivity rate, compared with the same period last year, was in Wales, which decreased by 1.5 percentage points.

The largest increase in workforce jobs in the UK, for December 2015, was in the South West, at 30,000. The largest decrease was in the North West, at 15,000.

The highest proportion of workforce jobs, for December 2015, in the service sector was in London, at 91.8%, which has increased by 0.1 percentage points since September 2015. The East Midlands had the highest proportion of jobs in the production sector, at 13.2%.

The highest average actual weekly hours worked, for the 12 months ending December 2015, was in Northern Ireland, at 33.3 hours and lowest in the South West and North East, both at 31.1 hours. For full-time workers, it was highest in Northern Ireland and the East Midlands, both at 38.0 hours and for part-time workers it was highest in Northern Ireland, at 17.0 hours.

2. In this bulletin

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

Data for Northern Ireland, although included in this bulletin, are available separately, in full, in the Northern Ireland Labour Market Report on the NISRA economic and labour market statistics website.

Updated this month

Labour Force Survey estimates for the period December 2015 to February 2016

Claimant Count for March 2016

Annual Population Survey estimates for the period January 2015 to December 2015

Also in this release

Public and private sector employment for December 2015

Workforce jobs estimates for December 2015

3. Summary of latest regional labour market statistics

Table A shows the latest estimates for employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for December 2015 to February 2016 and a comparison with the previous quarter (September to November 2015). Comparing non-overlapping periods (December 2015 to February 2016 with September to November 2015) provides a more robust short-term comparison. Table B shows the latest Claimant Count rate for March 2016, and shows how these figures compare with the previous month (February 2016) and the previous year (March 2015).

Table A: Summary of latest headline estimates, seasonally adjusted, December 2015 to February 2016

UK regions

	Employment rate[1] (%) aged 16 to 64	Change on Sep to Nov 2015	Unemployment rate[2] (%) aged 16 and over	Change on Sep to Nov 2015	Inactivity rate[3] (%) aged 16 to 64	Change on Sep to Nov 2015
North East	70.3	0.4	8.0	0.0	23.6	-0.5
North West	73.2	0.2	5.0	0.0	22.9	-0.2
Yorkshire and The Humber	72.0	0.6	6.3	0.1	23.1	-0.8
East Midlands	74.6	0.2	4.5	0.2	21.8	-0.3
West Midlands	71.3	-0.1	5.5	-0.2	24.4	0.3
East	78.0	0.3	3.5	-0.3	19.1	-0.1
London	72.9	0.1	6.3	0.1	22.1	-0.2
South East	77.9	0.0	3.8	0.2	18.9	-0.1
South West	77.2	-0.5	3.8	0.0	19.7	0.5
England	74.5	0.1	5.0	0.0	21.5	-0.1
Wales	72.0	1.5	5.0	-0.5	24.0	-1.2
Scotland	73.9	-1.0	6.2	0.7	21.1	0.5
Great Britain	74.3	0.1	5.1	0.0	21.6	-0.1
Northern Ireland	68.9	0.1	6.3	0.4	26.3	-0.5
UK	74.1	0.1	5.1	0.1	21.7	-0.1

Table source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Calculation of headline employment rate: Number of employed people aged from 16 to 64 divided by the population aged from 16 to 64. Population is the sum of employed plus unemployed plus inactive.

2. Calculation of headline unemployment rate: Number of unemployed people aged 16 and over divided by the sum of employed people aged 16 and over plus unemployed people aged 16 and over.

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

Table B: Summary of latest Claimant Count estimates, seasonally adjusted, March 2016 (experimental statistics)

UK regions

	Level (thousands) aged 18 and over	Change on February 2016	Change on March 2015	Rate (%) aged 18 and over	Change on February 2016	Change on March 2015
North East	48.3	0.8	0.4	4.0	0.1	0.0
North West	103.7	1.2	1.3	2.8	0.0	0.0
Yorkshire and The Humber	70.9	0.2	-15.1	2.7	0.0	-0.6
East Midlands	42.9	0.3	-7.0	1.9	0.0	-0.3
West Midlands	75.2	1.1	-8.1	2.6	0.0	-0.3
East	43.7	0.6	-5.2	1.4	0.0	-0.2
London	104.7	-0.7	-12.4	1.8	0.0	-0.2
South East	55.2	1.1	-5.5	1.2	0.0	-0.1
South West	36.1	1.0	-1.8	1.2	0.0	-0.1
England	580.7	5.7	-53.3	2.0	0.0	-0.2
Wales	41.4	0.6	-3.8	2.8	0.0	-0.3
Scotland	71.4	0.2	-7.7	2.5	0.0	-0.3
Great Britain	693.5	6.5	-64.9	2.1	0.0	-0.2
Northern Ireland	38.6	0.2	-6.6	4.3	0.0	-0.7
UK	732.1	6.7	-71.5	2.1	0.0	-0.2

Table source: Department for Work and Pensions

Notes:

1. Calculation of headline Claimant Count rate: Number of people aged 18 and over claiming Jobseeker's Allowance plus out-of-work Universal Credit claimants.

4. Understanding and working with labour market statistics

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

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

Labour supply consists of people who are employed, as well as those people defined as unemployed or economically inactive, who are considered to be potential labour supply. Our framework distinguishes between these 3 categories of worker, and also between the different working arrangements of those in employment such as employees, the self-employed and those on government schemes.

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

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

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

Labour market statuses

Everybody aged 16 or over is either employed, unemployed or economically inactive. The employment estimates include all people in work including those working part-time. People not working are classed as unemployed if they have been looking for work within the last 4 weeks and are able to start work within the next 2 weeks. A common misconception is that the unemployment statistics are a count of people on benefits; this is not the case as they include unemployed people not claiming benefits.

Jobless people who have not been looking for work within the last 4 weeks or who are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks are classed as economically inactive. Examples of economically inactive people include people not looking for work because they are students, looking after the family or home, because of illness or disability, or because they have retired.

A glossary is also available to explain the main labour market terms.

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

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household survey using international definitions of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity and compiles a wide range of related topics such as occupation, training, hours of work and personal characteristics of household members aged 16 years and over. Estimates are produced every month for a rolling 3 monthly period for example: January to March data in a release will be followed by data for February to April in the next release.

The Annual Population Survey (APS), which began in 2004, is compiled from interviews for the LFS, along with additional regional samples. The APS comprises the main variables from the LFS, with a much larger sample size. Consequently the APS supports more detailed breakdowns than can be reliably produced from the LFS. Estimates are produced every quarter for a rolling annual period for example, January to December data will be followed by data for April to March when they are next updated.

This bulletin includes labour market estimates at a regional level from the LFS on total employment, unemployment and economic inactivity. More detailed regional estimates for employment by age, full-time and part-time working, economic activity and inactivity by age, and reasons for inactivity are provided using the APS. Any estimates for geographic areas below regional level are provided using the APS. In tables where APS estimates are provided for detailed geographic areas, regional and national estimates are also provided from APS for comparability.

Making comparisons with earlier data

The most robust estimates of short-term movements in estimates derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) are obtained by comparing the estimates for December 2015 to February 2016 with the estimates for September to November 2015, which were first published on 20 January 2016. This provides a more robust estimate than comparing with the estimates for November 2015 to January 2016. This is because the December and January data are included within both estimates, so observed differences are only between November 2015 and February 2016. The LFS is representative of the UK population over a 3 month period, not for single month periods.

Accuracy and reliability of survey estimates

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

Changes in the numbers reported in this statistical bulletin (and especially the rates) between 3 month periods are usually not greater than the margin of error. In practice, this means that small, short-term movements in reported rates (for example, within plus or minus 0.3 percentage points) should be treated as indicative, and considered alongside medium and long-term patterns in the series and corresponding movements in administrative sources, where available, to give a fuller picture.

Further information is available in Quality information, in the background notes section.

Seasonal adjustment

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

A glossary is also available to explain the main labour market terms.

Where to find explanatory information

We have produced a number of items to help aid understanding and highlight common misunderstandings of labour market statistics, all of which are available on our website:

- interpreting labour market statistics
- a detailed guide to labour market statistics
- a glossary of labour market terms

5. Employment

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

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

A comparison between estimates of employment and jobs article is available on our website.

A glossary is also available to explain the main labour market terms.

Regional employment

The employment rate for people aged from 16 to 64 for the UK was 74.1%, for the period December 2015 to February 2016. This is an increase of 0.1 percentage points from the previous period (September to November 2015).

The UK region with the highest employment rate was the East of England, at 78.0%, followed by the South East, at 77.9% and the South West, at 77.2%. The highest rate for the same period last year was in the South East, at 77.0%.

The region with the lowest employment rate was Northern Ireland, at 68.9%, followed by the North East, at 70.3% and West Midlands, at 71.3%. The lowest rate for the same period last year was also in Northern Ireland, at 68.6%.

The region with the largest increase in the employment rate on the previous period (September to November 2015), was Wales, with an increase of 1.5 percentage points. This is partially due to some particularly low estimates for Wales for September to November 2015; however, the latest estimate is a record high employment rate for Wales.

In addition to Wales, the employment rate for the North West is also at a record high. Meanwhile, the employment levels for the West Midlands and Wales are at record highs.

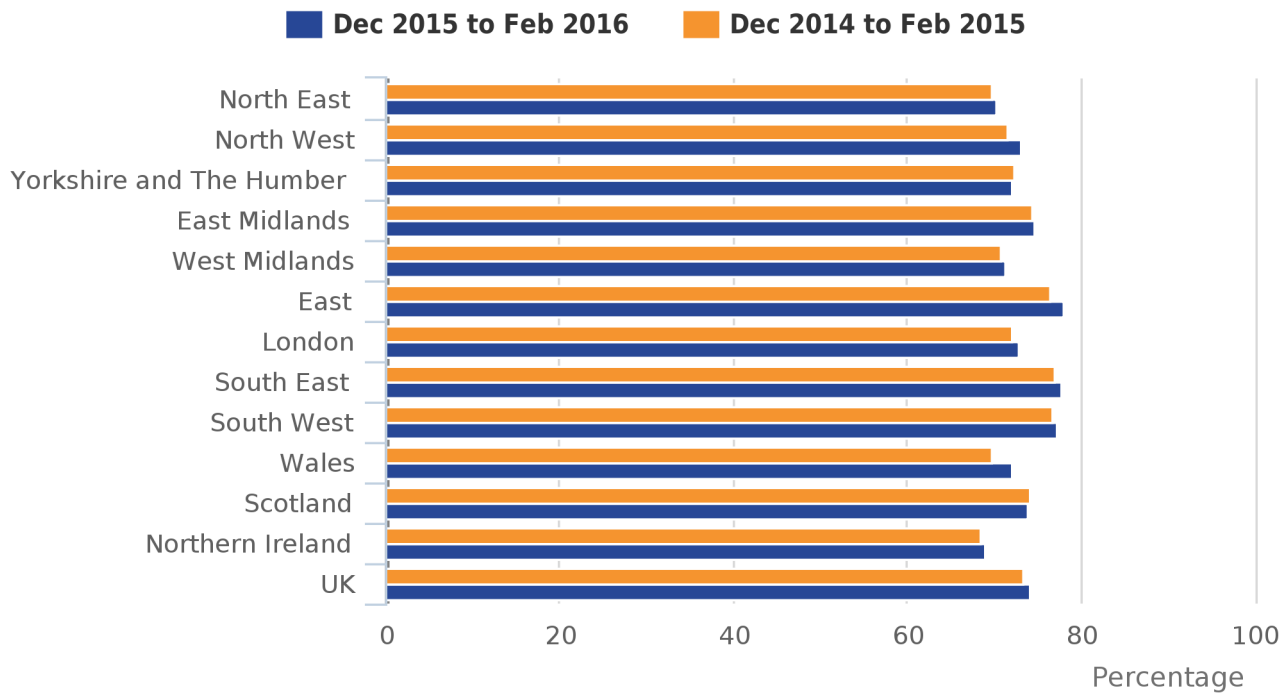
Wales was followed by Yorkshire and The Humber, with an increase of 0.6 percentage points, and the North East, with an increase of 0.4 percentage points.

Scotland had the largest decrease in the employment rate, with a decrease of 1.0 percentage point. This is partially due to an unusually high estimate for September to November 2015, compared with other recent estimates.

Scotland was followed by the South West, with a decrease of 0.5 percentage points, and the West Midlands, with a decrease of 0.1 percentage points. All other regions saw an increase in the employment rate on the previous period, except for the South East, which remained unchanged.

Figure 1: Employment rates by region and comparison year on year, seasonally adjusted, December 2014 to February 2015 and December 2015 to February 2016

UK regions



Source: Office for National Statistics

Over the year, the region with the largest increase in the employment rate was Wales, with an increase of 2.2 percentage points, followed by the North West, with an increase of 1.6 percentage points and the East of England, with an increase of 1.5 percentage points.

There were only 2 regions that saw a decrease in the employment rate: Yorkshire and The Humber, at 0.4 percentage points and Scotland, at 0.3 percentage points.

Where to find data about employment

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

These tables contain data produced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS). A note in the section “Understanding and working with labour market statistics” on the relationship between the LFS and APS entitled “What is the relationship between the APS and the LFS?” is included in this bulletin.

6. Workforce jobs (first published on 16 March 2016)

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

A comparison between estimates of employment and jobs article is published on our website.

A glossary is also available to explain the main labour market terms.

The service sector consists of the following industries:

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

The production sector consists of the following industries:

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

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

The Northern Ireland self-employed component of the workforce jobs is published by NISRA as part of the economic and labour market statistics.

Regional workforce jobs

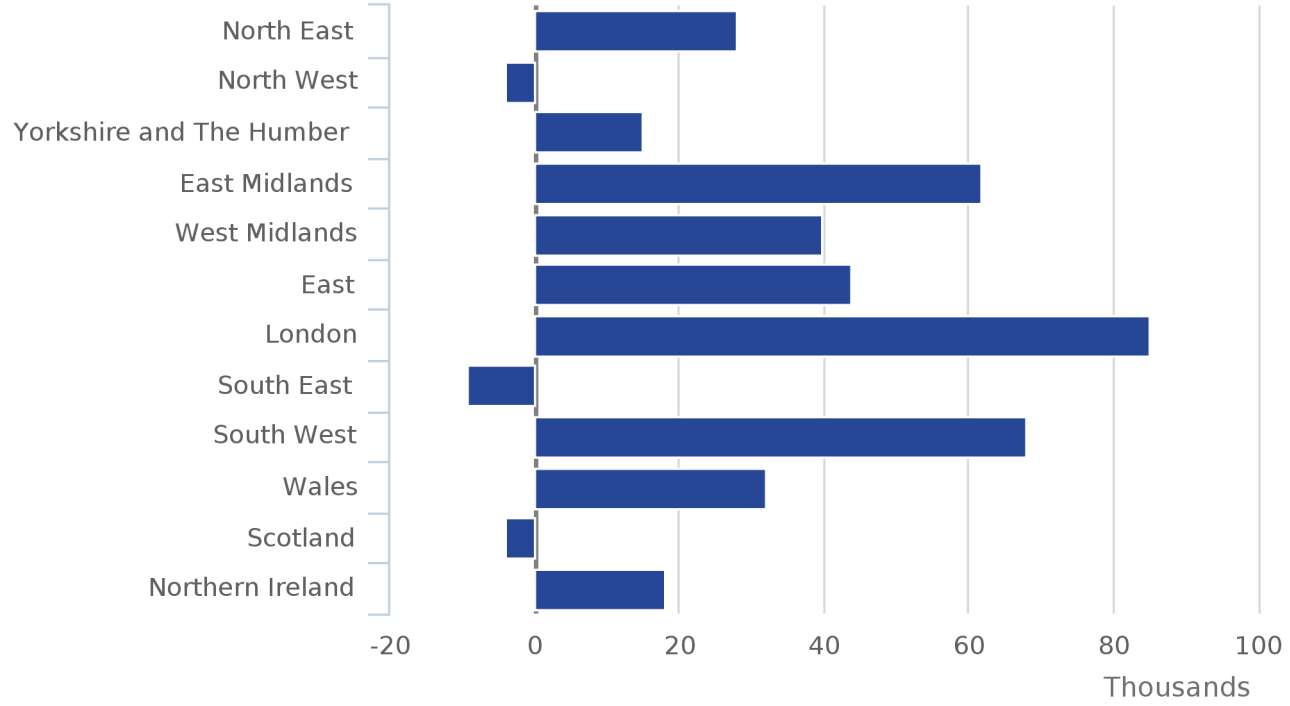
Workforce jobs increased in 7 of the 12 regions of the UK between September and December 2015. The largest increase of 30,000 was in the South West, followed by Wales, which increased by 28,000.

The largest decrease of 15,000 was in the North West, followed by Yorkshire and The Humber, which decreased by 11,000.

Compared with the same month last year (December 2014), the largest increase in workforce jobs was in London, with an increase of 85,000. This was also the largest overall change. The largest decrease was in the South East, at 9,000.

Figure 2: Change in workforce jobs, by region, seasonally adjusted, December 2014 and December 2015

UK regions



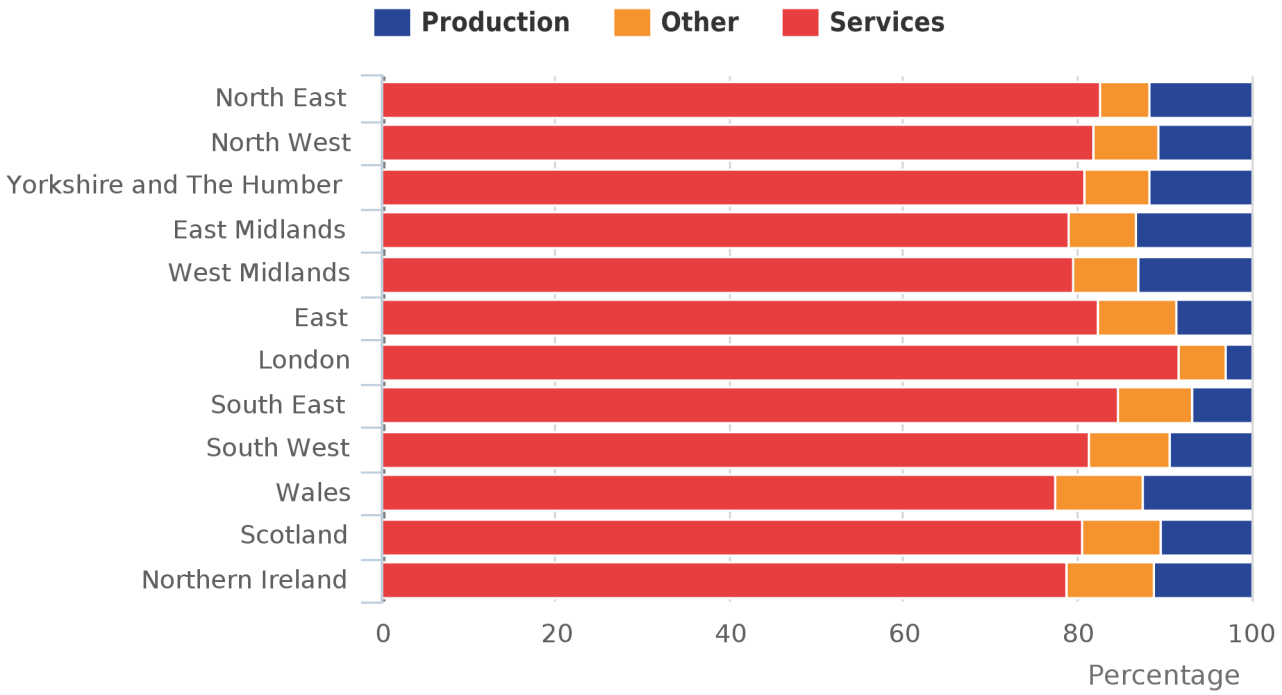
Source: Office for National Statistics

The East Midlands had the highest proportion of jobs in the production sector, at 13.2%, whilst London had the lowest proportion, at 2.9%. This is due to London having primarily service-based industries within its region, such as financial and administrative sectors.

For the service sector, London had the highest proportion, at 91.8%, whilst Wales had the lowest proportion, at 77.5%. The service sector currently accounts for 83.1% of the total workforce jobs in the UK.

Figure 3: Proportion of workforce jobs by broad industry group, by region, December 2015

UK regions



Source: Office for National Statistics

Where to find data about workforce jobs

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

While comparable estimates for workforce jobs by industry begin in 1978, there is information back to 1841, based on census data, not comparable with the latest estimates, available from 2011 Census Analysis, 170 years of industry on our website.

7. Actual hours worked

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

A glossary is also available to explain the main labour market terms.

Regional actual hours worked

For the period January 2015 to December 2015, the UK region with the highest average actual weekly hours worked, for all workers, was Northern Ireland, at 33.3 hours, followed by London, at 33.0 hours and the East Midlands, at 32.6 hours. The lowest were in the North East and the South West, both at 31.1 hours, followed by Scotland, at 31.2 hours.

The UK region with the largest increase in the average hours worked, compared with the same period last year (January 2014 to December 2014) was the East Midlands, with an increase of 0.4 hours, a percentage increase of 1.4%. This was followed by Wales and the West Midlands, both with an increase of 0.1 hours (both 0.4%). The largest decrease in the average hours worked was in the South East, with a decrease of 0.8 hours (2.4%), and Scotland, with a decrease of 0.7 hours (2.1%).

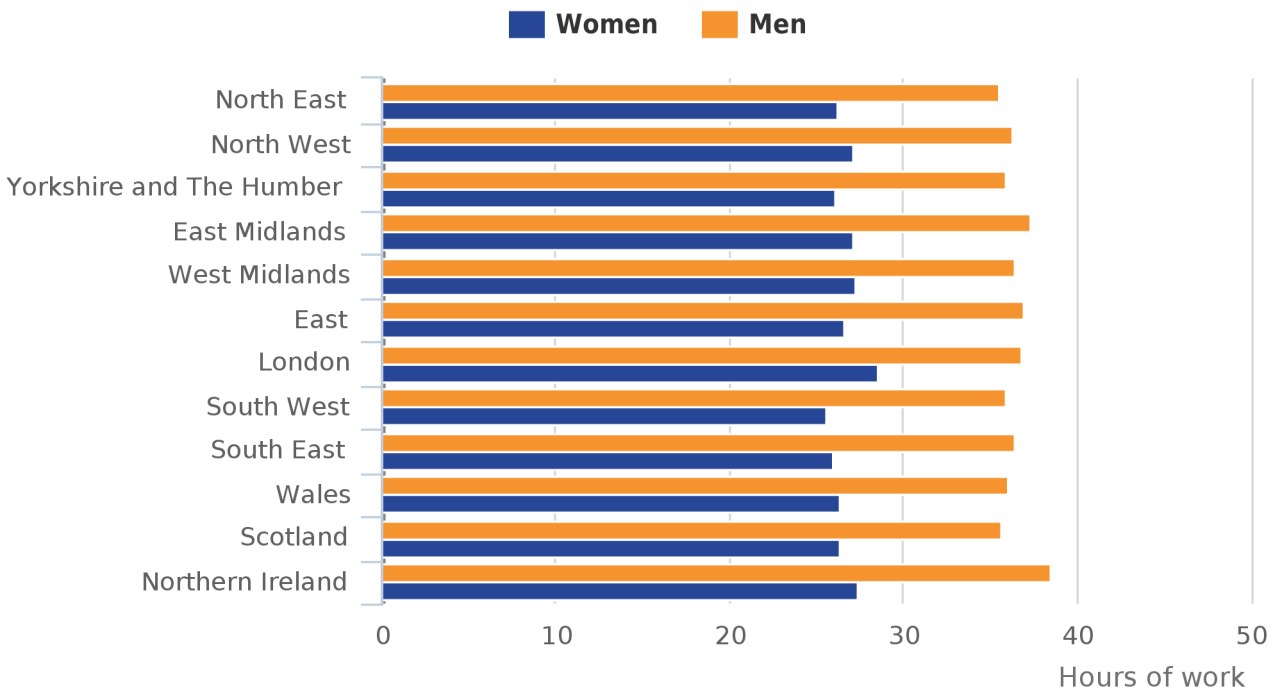
The regions with the highest average actual weekly hours worked in full-time jobs were Northern Ireland and the East Midlands, both at 38.0 hours; a decrease of 0.1 hours and a percentage increase of 0.2% for Northern Ireland and a decrease of 0.4 hours and a percentage increase of 0.6% for the East Midlands, compared with the same period last year. The lowest was Scotland, at 36.1 hours, which has decreased by 0.7 hours, a percentage decrease of 2.6%. For part-time jobs, the region with the highest average hours worked was Northern Ireland, at 17.0 hours, and the lowest was the South East, at 15.4 hours.

For men the region with the highest average hours worked was Northern Ireland, at 38.5 hours, and for women it was London, at 28.5 hours. The largest difference in average hours worked between men and women was in Northern Ireland, where men worked on average 11.1 more hours a week than women. The largest change compared with the same period last year (January 2014 to December 2014), was seen for women in the South East, where the average hours worked decreased by 3.2%; a decrease from 26.9 hours to 26.0 hours per week.

The region with the largest difference in total hours worked between men and women was the South East, where men worked a total of 32.0 million more hours than women. The region with the smallest difference was Northern Ireland, where men worked only 6.0 million more hours than women.

Figure 4: Average (mean) actual weekly hours of work, by region and by sex, January 2015 to December 2015

UK regions



Source: Office for National Statistics

Where to find data about hours worked

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

The national data is also available at the UK labour market statistical bulletin at Datasets Hour1 - Actual weekly hours worked (seasonally adjusted) and Hour2 – Usual weekly hours worked (seasonally adjusted). These estimates are based on data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

8. Unemployment

Unemployment measures people without a job who have been actively seeking work within the last 4 weeks and are available to start work within the next 2 weeks.

A glossary is also available to explain the main labour market terms.

Regional unemployment

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

The unemployment rate for people aged 16 and over for the UK was 5.1%, for the period December 2015 to February 2016. This is an increase of 0.1 percentage points from the previous period (September to November 2015).

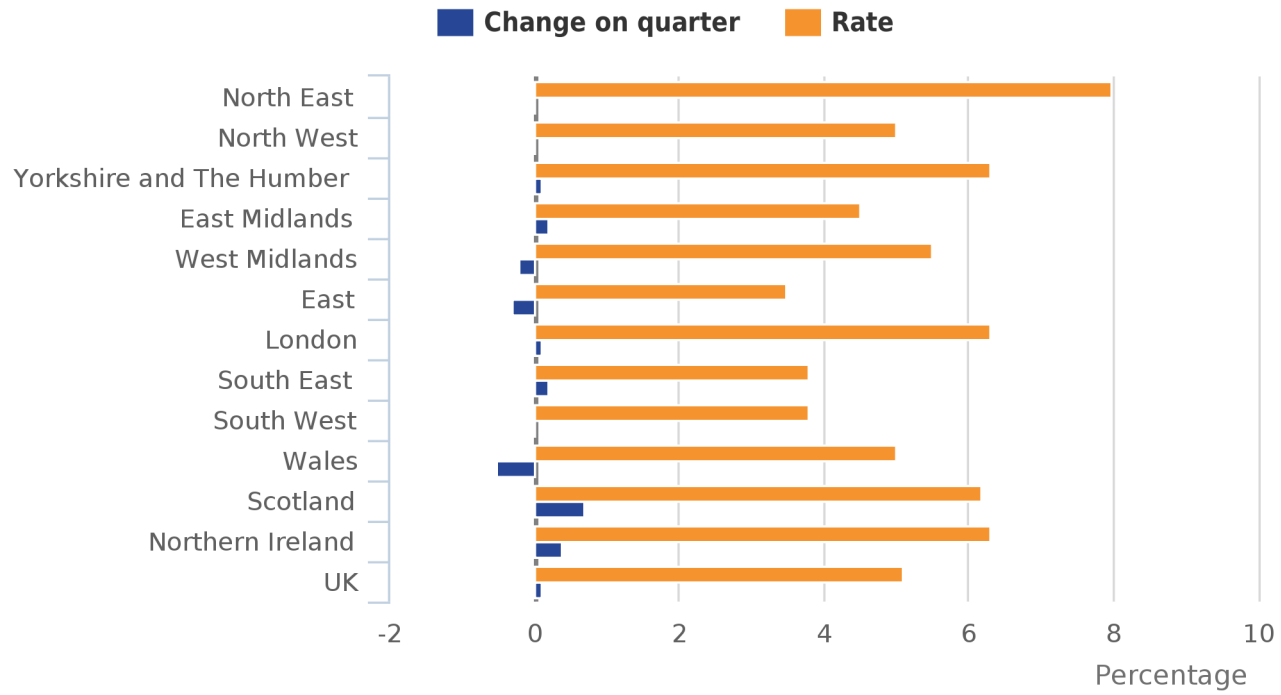
The UK region with the highest rate was the North East, at 8.0%. This was also the region with the highest rate for the same period last year, at 7.7%. The next highest rates were seen in London, Yorkshire and The Humber and Northern Ireland, all at 6.3% and Scotland, at 6.2%. The region with the lowest rate was the East of England, at 3.5%, followed by the South East and South West, both at 3.8%.

The region with the largest decrease in the unemployment rate on the previous period (September to November 2015), was Wales, at 0.5 percentage points, followed by the East of England, at 0.3 percentage points, and the West Midlands, at 0.2 percentage points.

The largest increase in the unemployment rate on the previous period (September to November 2015) was seen in Scotland, at 0.7 percentage points, followed by Northern Ireland, at 0.4 percentage points. The North West, North East and South West all remained unchanged.

Figure 5: Unemployment rates by region, seasonally adjusted, December 2015 to February 2016

UK regions



Source: Office for National Statistics

Most regions are showing decreases in the unemployment rate compared with a year ago, with the exception of Northern Ireland, which increased by 0.3 percentage points, the North East, which increased by 0.2 percentage points, Yorkshire and The Humber and Scotland, which increased by 0.1 percentage points and London remaining unchanged. The largest decrease was in the East of England, at 1.5 percentage points, followed by Wales, at 1.2 percentage points.

We are currently unable to produce the interactive chart relating to unemployment rate by government region, due to compatibility issues. We aim to develop an improved version of this in the near future.

Where to find data about unemployment

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

These tables contain data produced from the LFS and APS. A note in the section “Understanding and working with Labour Market Statistics” on the relationship between the LFS and APS entitled “What is the relationship between the APS and the LFS?” is included in this bulletin.

9. Claimant Count (experimental statistics)

Special note: Changes to the Claimant Count

In editions of this statistical bulletin prior to June 2015, the headline measure of the Claimant Count included claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) only. Since the June 2015 edition, the headline measure of the Claimant Count includes some claimants of Universal Credit as well as JSA claimants. These Universal Credit estimates are still being developed by the Department for Work and Pensions. We have therefore decided that the Claimant Count estimates including Universal Credit (which have been published as an alternative measure since July 2014) will continue to be designated as experimental statistics even though they are now the headline measure.

The coverage of the Universal Credit estimates does not precisely match the Claimant Count definition, because it includes some claimants who are not required to seek work.

What is the Claimant Count?

The Claimant Count measures the number of people claiming benefit principally for the reason of being unemployed:

- from May 2013, the Claimant Count includes all out of work Universal Credit claimants as well as all JSA claimants
- between October 1996 and April 2013, the Claimant Count is a count of the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- between February 1971 (when comparable estimates start) and September 1996, it is an estimate of the number of people who would have claimed unemployment-related benefits if Jobseeker's Allowance had existed at that time

Ideally only those Universal Credit claimants who are out of work and required to seek work should be included in the Claimant Count, but it is not currently possible to produce estimates on this basis. The Claimant Count therefore currently includes some out of work claimants of Universal Credit who are not required to look for work; for example, due to illness or disability.

The Claimant Count includes people who claim unemployment-related benefits but who do not receive payment. For example, some claimants will have had their benefits stopped for a limited period of time by Jobcentre Plus. Some people claim JSA in order to receive National Insurance Credits.

See "Notes for Claimant Count" [1,2,3,4,5] at the end of this section and background notes for further details.

Regional Claimant Count

The seasonally adjusted Claimant Count rate for the UK was 2.1% in March 2016; remaining unchanged from February 2016, with the level up 6,700.

The UK region with the highest rate was Northern Ireland, at 4.3%; which is unchanged from the previous month. The next highest rates were in the North East, at 4.0%, the North West and Wales, both at 2.8% and Yorkshire and The Humber, at 2.7%. Northern Ireland was also the region with the highest rate for the same period last year, at 5.0%.

The regions with the lowest rate were the South East and South West, both at 1.2%, followed by the East of England, at 1.4% and London, at 1.8%.

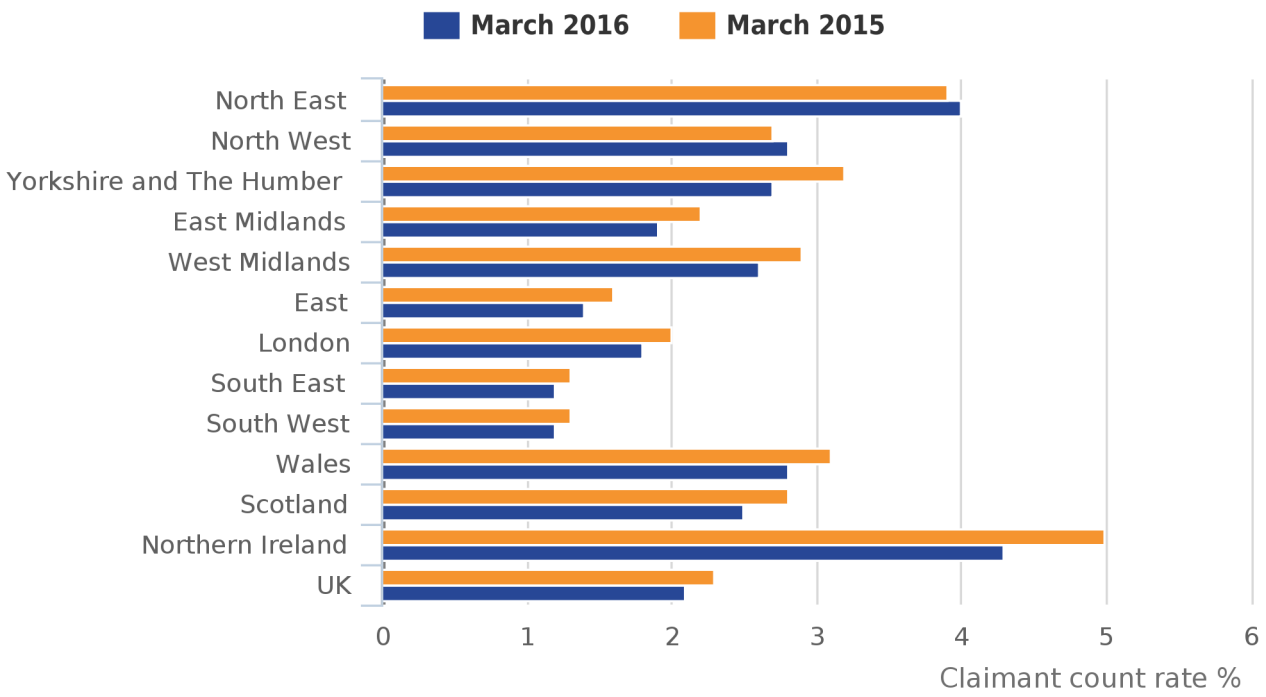
The largest change in the Claimant Count level compared to the previous month (February 2016) was seen in the North West, with an increase of 1,200, followed by the West Midlands and the South East, which both increased by 1,100. The Claimant Count is showing small increases for almost all of the regions and countries of the UK. The exception is London, which had a small decrease of 700.

Over the last 12 months the average change in the Claimant Count rates decreased in most regions of the UK, with the North East and the North West remaining unchanged. Northern Ireland had the largest change, with an average decrease of 0.06 percentage points per month. The monthly changes for February to March 2016 are now showing mostly increases, in contrast to the average change over 12 months, where there have been mostly decreases.

The Claimant Count levels for men have increased across most regions of the UK, except for London, which decreased by 300. Notably, the largest change in the Claimant Count level for men is in the North West and the South East, which both increased by 800. The levels for women are showing mostly small increases, with the exception of the East of England, Scotland and London, which decreased by 100, 200 and 400, respectively. The East Midlands was the only region where the Claimant Count level remained unchanged.

Figure 6: Claimant Count rate by region and comparison year on year, seasonally adjusted, March 2015 and March 2016

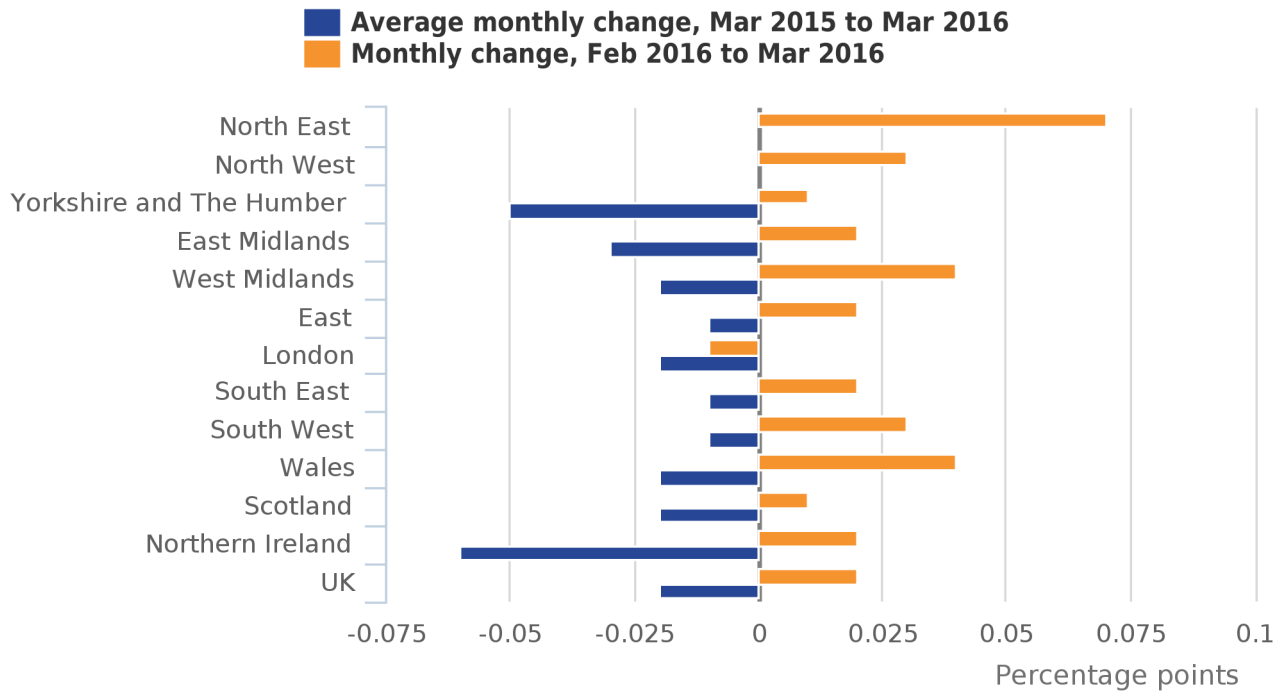
UK regions



Source: Department for Work and Pensions

Figure 7: Comparison of Claimant Count rate, annual average change and monthly change, March 2016

UK regions



Source: Department for Work and Pensions

Notes for Claimant Count

1.The Claimant Count now includes people claiming Universal Credit. The background notes to this statistical bulletin have further details.

1. The Claimant Count includes people who claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) but who do not receive payment. For example, some claimants will have had their benefits stopped for a limited period of time by Jobcentre Plus; this is known as "sanctioning". Some people claim JSA in order to receive National Insurance Credits.

2. An article explaining how unemployment and the Claimant Count series are defined and measured and the difference between the 2 series is available, along with an article to help users interpret labour market statistics and highlight some common misunderstandings.

3. Universal Credit has not yet been introduced in Northern Ireland and so the "Claimant Count" for Northern Ireland will only be the number of people claiming JSA.

4. Estimates of Claimant Count by region are available on a comparable basis back to April 1974. The figures from April 1974 to September 1996 are estimates of the number of people who would have claimed unemployment-related benefits if JSA had existed. The national records start in 1971, and some data back to 1881 (which do not have National Statistics status) are available from the "Historic Data" worksheet within Dataset CLA01 – Claimant Count (experimental statistics) in the UK Labour Market bulletin.

Where to find data about Claimant Count

Claimant Count estimates are available for each region at Datasets HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions (Tab 7) and at Datasets CC01 – Claimant Count by unitary and local authority and CC02 – Claimant Count by parliamentary constituency for further estimate breakdowns by geographies.

Datasets showing estimates of Jobseeker's Allowance are still available at HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions (Tabs 7(1), 8 and 8(2)), and in Datasets JSA01 – Jobseeker's Allowance for local and unitary authorities in the UK, JSA02 – Jobseeker's Allowance for Westminster parliamentary constituencies in the UK, JSA02.1 – Jobseeker's Allowance for Scottish parliamentary constituencies and JSA03 – Jobseeker's Allowance for Local Enterprise Partnerships in England, for further estimate breakdowns by sub-regional geographic areas. However these estimates are not designated as National Statistics. The back data for JSA, at a regional level, is available from Nomis. Workplace-based denominators used for the Claimant Count are also available at Dataset (S03) – Claimant Count denominators.

10. Economic inactivity

Economically inactive people are not in employment but do not meet the internationally accepted definition of unemployment. This is because they have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or they are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks.

A glossary is also available to explain the main labour market terms.

Regional economic inactivity

The inactivity rate for people aged from 16 to 64 for the UK was 21.7%, for the period December 2015 to February 2016. This is a decrease of 0.1 percentage points from the previous period (September to November 2015). The UK region with the highest rate was Northern Ireland, at 26.3%, followed by the West Midlands, at 24.4%. The region with the lowest rate was the South East, at 18.9%, followed by the East of England, at 19.1%, and the South West, at 19.7%.

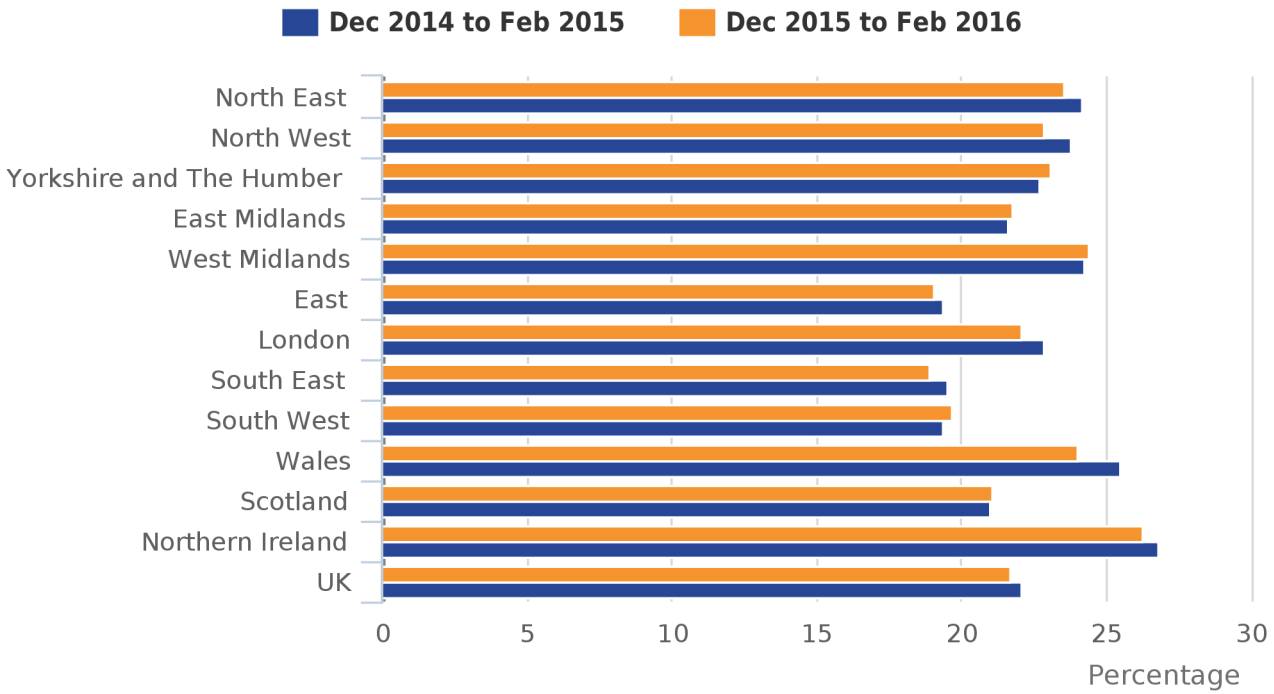
The regions with the largest increase in the inactivity rate on the previous period (September to November 2015), were the South West and Scotland, both with an increase of 0.5 percentage points, followed by the West Midlands, at 0.3 percentage points. Wales had the largest decrease in the rate, with a decrease of 1.2 percentage points, followed by Yorkshire and The Humber, at 0.8 percentage points.

Over the year, the region with the largest increase in the inactivity rate was the Yorkshire and The Humber, with an increase of 0.4 percentage points, followed by the South West, with an increase of 0.3 percentage points. The largest decreases in the rate were in Wales, at 1.5 percentage points, followed by the North West, at 0.9 percentage points.

Northern Ireland also had the highest inactivity rate, at 26.8%, in the same period in 2015, decreasing by 0.5 percentage points over the last year. The current rate is now 4.6 percentage points higher than the UK rate.

Figure 8: Economic inactivity by region and comparison year on year, seasonally adjusted, December 2014 to February 2015 and December 2015 to February 2016

UK regions



Source: Office for National Statistics

Where to find data about economic inactivity

Inactivity estimates are available for each region at Dataset HI00 – Headline LFS indicators for all UK regions and HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions (Tabs 10 and 11), and Datasets LI01 to LI05 – Local indicators for sub-regional areas of Great Britain, for further estimate breakdowns by age, reason or geographies.

These tables contain data produced from the LFS and APS. A note in the section “Understanding and working with labour market statistics” on the relationship between the LFS and APS entitled “What is the relationship between the APS and the LFS?” is included in this bulletin.

11. Local labour market indicators

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

Indicators from the Annual Population Survey

For the period January to December 2015, the local authorities with the highest employment rate in Great Britain were Rushmoor, at 89.2%, the Shetland Islands, at 87.3%, Watford, at 87.1%, and the Orkney Islands, at 86.8%. Liverpool is the local authority with the lowest rate, at 60.4%, followed by Torridge at 61.1% and Birmingham, at 61.5%. For the same period last year, the highest rates were in the Orkney Islands, at 89.3%, and East Northamptonshire, at 86.4%.

For the period January to December 2015, the local authority with the highest unemployment rate in Great Britain was Middlesbrough, at 11.1%, followed by Wolverhampton, at 9.9%, and Barking and Dagenham, at 9.8%. The local authorities with the lowest rate were Stratford-on-Avon, at 1.9%, followed by Eden in Cumbria, at 2.0%, and Derbyshire Dales and Harrogate, both at 2.1%. These were followed by 3 local authorities, all at 2.2%, 1 local authority, at 2.3%, and a further 45 local authorities, all under 3.0%. For the same period last year, there were only 16 local authorities with a rate of less than 3.0%.

Indicators using Claimant Count data (experimental statistics)

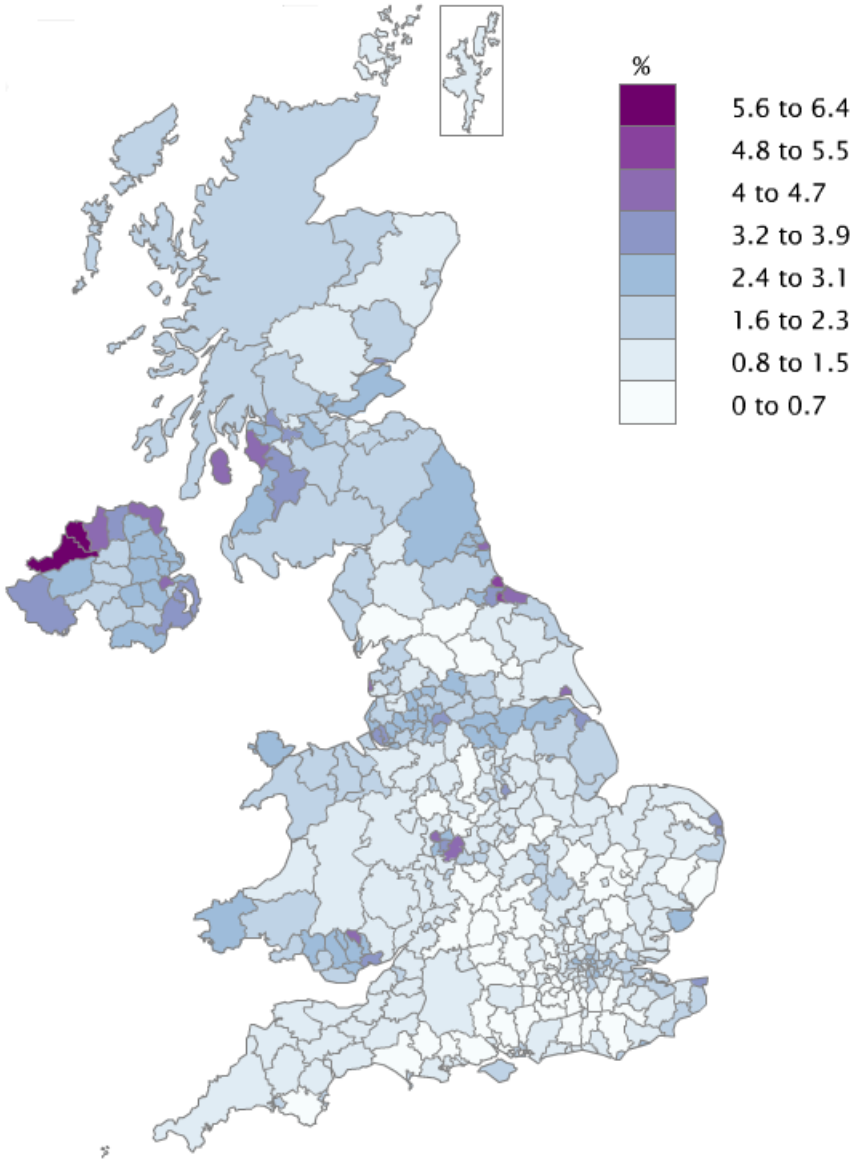
In March 2016, excluding the Isles of Scilly, the UK local authority with the lowest proportion of the population, aged from 16 to 64 years, claiming JSA or out-of-work Universal Credit was Hart in Hampshire, at 0.4%, followed by 13 local authorities, all at 0.5%, and 23 other local authorities, all at 0.6%. There were a further 62 local authorities with a proportion of less than 1.0%.

The proportion was highest in Derry City and Strabane, at 6.2%, followed by Hartlepool, at 4.9%, and Middlesbrough, at 4.8%. The next highest rates were in South Tyneside, at 4.7%, and Belfast, at 4.4%. There were a further 33 local authorities with a proportion of 3.0% or more in the UK.

The local authority map in Figure 9 reflects the Claimant Count for the total amount of people claiming JSA and Universal Credit only. Due to technical issues it is not currently possible to show the latest Northern Ireland districts on this map. In the meantime we will continue to show the Northern Ireland districts as they were prior to the April 2015 reorganisation. We are also unable to produce the interactive version of this map, due to compatibility issues. We aim to develop an improved version of this map in the near future.

Figure 9: Claimant Count map, March 2016

Claimant Count proportion of people aged 16 to 64 in local authorities in the UK



Job densities

The job density of an area is the number of jobs per head, of resident population, aged 16 to 64. In 2014, the highest jobs density in Great Britain was the City of London, at 84.36, and the lowest was East Renfrewshire, at 0.42. Westminster (4.32), Camden (2.26), both in London, were the next highest jobs densities. The highest jobs density outside London was the Isles of Scilly at 2.15. After East Renfrewshire, the lowest jobs densities were Lewisham, at 0.43, followed by East Dunbartonshire and Waltham Forest, both at 0.46, and Redbridge and Barking and Dagenham, both at 0.47.

Where to find data about local labour market indicators

APS estimates are available at Datasets LI01 to LI05 – Local indicators for sub-regional areas of Great Britain and Claimant Count estimates are available at Datasets CC01 – Claimant Count by unitary and local authority and CC02 – Claimant Count by parliamentary constituency in this statistical bulletin.

These tables contain data produced from the APS. A note in the section “Understanding and working with labour market statistics” on the relationship between the LFS and APS entitled “What is the relationship between the APS and the LFS?” is included in this bulletin.

12. Where to find more information about labour market statistics

Other datasets within the regional labour market release:

Guide to tables in regional labour market statistical bulletin

Summary of headline indicators (S01)

Sampling variability and revisions summary (S02)

Model based estimates of unemployment (M01)

Estimates of employment by age (experimental statistics) (X01)

Estimates of unemployment by age (experimental statistics) (X02)

Estimates of inactivity by age (experimental statistics) (X03)

Regional public and private sector employment (RPUB1)

Other regularly published labour market releases:

- UK labour market statistics
- Public sector employment
- Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- Labour productivity
- Annual survey of hours and earnings (ASHE)
- Business register and employment survey (BRES)
- regional and local area statistics are also available at NOMIS®

We have also produced:

- ad hoc data and analysis
- methodological articles

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

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

Quality information

One indication of the reliability of the main indicators in this bulletin can be obtained by monitoring the size of revisions. These summary measures are available in Dataset S02 regional labour market sampling variability spreadsheet and show the size of revisions over the last 5 years.

The revised data may be subject to sampling or other sources of error. Our standard presentation is to show 5 years worth of revisions (that is, 60 observations for a monthly series, 20 for a quarterly series). Further information on the quality of and methods for workforce jobs estimates can be found in the summary quality report .

Other quality information

Quality and methodology information papers for labour market statistics are available. Further information about the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is available from:

- the LFS user guide
- LFS performance and quality monitoring reports

13. Background notes

1. ### Changes in this month's bulletin

   There are no changes to this month's bulletin.

2. ### Next month's bulletin

   There will be revisions to estimates derived from the Labour Force Survey (including estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity) back to June to August 2012, resulting from taking on board the latest population estimates and a review of the seasonal adjustment process.

3. Incorporation of estimates of Universal Credit into the Claimant Count

Since the June 2015 release, the headline measure of the Claimant Count has been changed to include some claimants of Universal Credit (UC) as well as JSA claimants, resulting in upward revisions to the Claimant Count. Previously the headline measure did not include UC claimants.

The Claimant Count measures the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. Between October 1996 and April 2013, the only unemployment-related benefit in the UK was Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and the Claimant Count was therefore a count of the number of people claiming JSA.

The introduction of Universal Credit started on 29 April 2013 with the introduction of this new benefit in one Jobcentre Plus office. This has been extended to further Jobcentre Plus offices across Great Britain. GOV.UK has a list of Jobcentres where Universal Credit is available.

Universal Credit is replacing a number of means-tested benefits including the means-tested element of JSA. It will not replace contributory-based JSA.

Following a consultation in 2012, it was decided that, with the introduction of Universal Credit, the Claimant Count would include:

- people claiming contribution-based JSA (which is not affected by the introduction of Universal Credit)
- people claiming income-based JSA during the transition period while this benefit is being gradually phased out
- people claiming Universal Credit who are not working and who are subject to a full set of labour market jobseeker requirements, that is, required to be actively seeking work and available to start work

The experimental estimates of Universal Credit are still being developed by the Department for Work and Pensions and they currently include all out of work Universal Credit claimants including those who are not required to look for work (who should ideally be excluded from the Claimant Count).

The number of Jobcentre Plus offices introducing Universal Credit has increased substantially over the last few months. Consequently we have concluded that the experimental measure of the Claimant Count has now become the best estimate of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. We are therefore no longer publishing 2 measures of the Claimant Count. Instead we are publishing a single measure of the Claimant Count that includes the experimental estimates of Universal Credit claimants. These experimental Claimant Count estimates are available at Datasets HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions (Tab 7).

It is not currently possible to produce estimates of inflows and outflows for the new measure of the Claimant Count, however, estimates of JSA inflows and outflows continue to be available at Datasets HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions (Tab 7(1)).

Similarly, it is not currently possible to produce a regional age or duration breakdown for the new measure of the Claimant Count. Estimates of JSA by age and duration continue to be available and are now published at Datasets HI01 to HI12 – Headline indicators for individual UK regions (Tabs 8 and 8(2)).

A breakdown for local geographies for the new measure of the Claimant Count is now available at Datasets CC01 – Claimant Count by unitary and local authority and CC02 – Claimant Count by parliamentary constituency. However, estimates of JSA continue to be available and are published at Datasets LI01 to LI05 – Local indicators for sub-regional areas of Great Britain and Datasets JSA01 to JSA03 – Jobseeker's Allowance for sub-regional areas of the UK.

The JSA estimates published at Datasets JSA01 to JSA03 – Jobseeker's Allowance for sub-regional areas of the UK are no longer designated as National Statistics because they are no longer the best estimate of the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits, as explained in correspondence between the National Statistician and the UK Statistics Authority:

- letter from National Statistician to UK Statistics Authority, 9 June 2015
- reply from UK Statistics Authority to National Statistician, 10 June 2015

The article "Jobseeker's Allowance, Universal Credit and the Claimant Count: Changes to the measurement of the Claimant Count" provides further information.

4. Publication policy

A list of the job titles of those given pre-release access to the contents of this statistical bulletin is available on our website.

5. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from our Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

   The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

   Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

   - meet identified user needs
   - are well explained and readily accessible
   - are produced according to sound methods
   - are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest

   Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the code of practice shall continue to be observed.