

Statistical bulletin

Working and workless households in the UK: 2014

Statistics on the economic status of households in the UK and the people living in them. Taken from the Labour Force Survey, covering only households where at least one person is aged 16 to 64 years.



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1 . In April to June 2014

- The percentage of households where no adults work was 15.9%, down 1.4 percentage points from a year earlier and the largest fall since comparable records began
- The percentage of households where all adults work was 55.3%, up 1.5 percentage points from a year earlier
- Of the regions in England and countries of the UK, the North East had the highest percentage of workless households at 21.2%, while the South East had the lowest at 12.3%
- The percentage of households in which no adult has ever worked was 1.5%, the same as a year earlier
- There were around 1.5 million children living in workless households, down 132,000 from a year earlier

2 . Main definitions

- This document is concerned with **working, workless** and **mixed** households in the UK for the period April to June in each year
- For the purposes of this bulletin, estimates only include those households where **at least one person is aged 16 to 64**
- **Working households** are households where all members aged 16 or over are employed
- **Workless households** are households where no-one aged 16 or over is in employment. These members may be unemployed or inactive. Inactive members may be unavailable to work because of family commitments, retirement or study, or unable to work through sickness/disability
- **Mixed households** contain both working and workless members
- **Student households** are households where all adults are aged 16-24 and in fulltime education. Excludes households where all members are in education but some members are aged 25 years or more

3 . Summary

In April to June 2014 there were 3.3 million UK households with at least one member aged 16 to 64 where no-one was currently working. This represented 15.9% of households and was a fall of 1.4 percentage points, or 271,000 households on a year earlier, making it the fourth consecutive fall and the largest fall since comparable records began. In all, 1.5 million children lived in these households, as did 4.5 million people aged 16 to 64.

As well as a fall in workless households there was also a fall of 21,000 in mixed households – those with at least one person aged 16 to 64 where some adult members are in work and others are not. In April to June 2014 there were 5.9 million such households, representing 28.8% of all households. There was a rise of 333,000 in working households – those where all adult members are in work. The number of working households stood at 11.4 million, or 55.3% of the total.

In 1996, the earliest point at which a consistent series is available, the percentage of workless households stood at 20.9%. Ten years later in 2006, two years before the economic downturn hit the UK, it had fallen to 17.3%. During the recent economic downturn it rose to 19.2% in 2010. In 2014 it has fallen to 15.9%, which is the lowest since 1996.

Excluding student households, where all adults are aged 16 to 24 and in full time education, there were 3.2 million UK households with at least one member aged 16 to 64 where no-one was currently working. This represented 15.5% of households and was a fall of 1.4 percentage points, or 266,000 households on a year earlier, making it the fourth consecutive fall. In all, 1.5 million children lived in these households as did 4.3 million people aged 16 to 64.

Since 1996 there has been a fall in the percentage of lone parent households with dependent children that are workless from 51.9% in 1996 to 32.6% in 2014. The first part of this fall happened between 1996 and 2006 before remaining flat for a few years then falling again in the last three years. Between 2013 and 2014, this fell by 3.7 percentage points which is the largest fall since comparable records began.

Comparing lone parents and couple households with dependent children, the latter have a much lower chance of being a workless household. In 2014 around 4.3% of couple households with dependent children were workless, much lower than the 32.6% for lone parent households with dependent children.

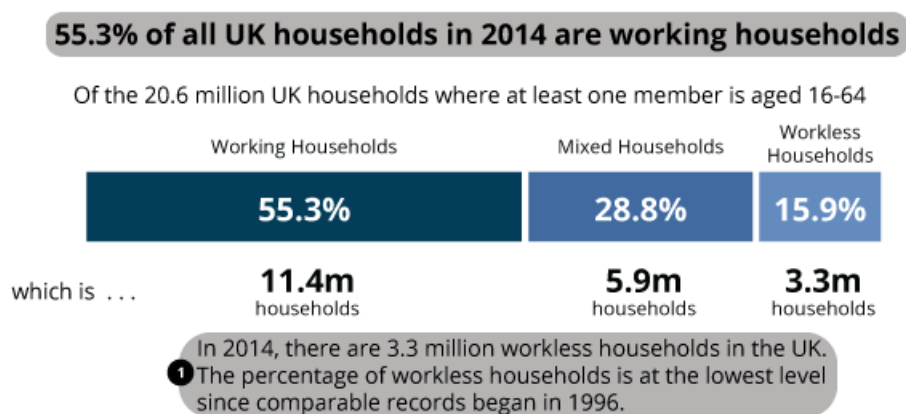
In 2014, there were 305,000 households in which no adult has ever worked, up 1,000 from a year earlier. In relation to all households in the UK containing at least one person aged 16 to 64 years, the percentage of households containing only people who have never worked was the same as a year earlier at 1.5%.

4 . Households

Households by combined economic activity status of members (Tables A and A2)

In April to June 2014 there were 20.6 million households in the UK. Of these households, 11.4 million (55.3%) were classed as working, a further 5.9 million (28.8%) were classed as mixed, and finally 3.3 million (15.9%) were classed as workless.

Figure 1: Percentage of households that are working, mixed and workless, April to June 2014, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

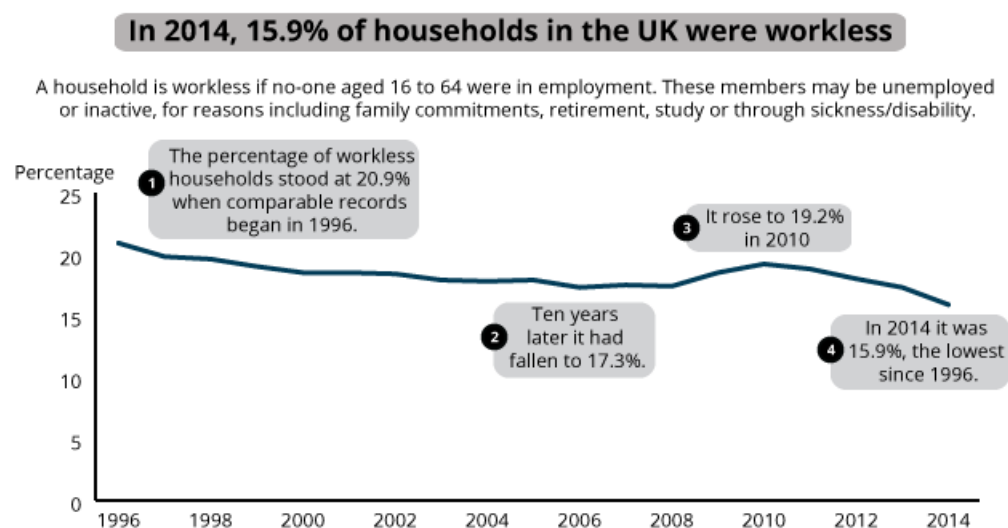
Workless households include student households; however student households contain members who are not traditionally expected to be in employment. The numbers shown for households, people (by age) and children in households by combined economic activity status of household members are also shown excluding student households (Tables A2, F2 and K2).

Excluding student households, there were 20.4 million households in the UK. Of these households, 11.3 million (55.6%) were classed as working, 5.9 million (28.8%) were classed as mixed and 3.2 million (15.5%) were classed as workless.

Focusing on the workless households, the majority were households where all members were inactive and these accounted for 12.4% of all households in the UK. A further 2.1% of households were where every person was unemployed and 1.4% of households had a mixture of unemployed and inactive people. Student households are included within inactive households, as a result once student households are excluded, the inactive rate within workless households falls to 12.0% while the rates for other types of workless households remain the same.

Looking at changes over time, in 1996, the earliest point at which a consistent series is available, the percentage of workless households stood at 20.9%. Ten years later in 2006, two years before the economic downturn hit the UK, it had fallen to 17.3%. During the recent economic downturn it rose to a high of 19.2% in 2010. In 2014 it has fallen to 15.9%, the lowest since 1996. Excluding student households this trend remains the same; the workless rate fell from 20.6% in 1996 to 17.1% in 2006 and rose to 18.8% in 2010 before it began falling again, where it is now at 15.5%.

Figure 2: Percentage of households that are workless, 1996 to 2014, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Concentrating on the change between 2013 and 2014, the number of households containing at least one person aged 16-64 increased by 41,000. The number of workless households fell by 271,000; the number of mixed households fell by 21,000 while the number of working households rose by 333,000.

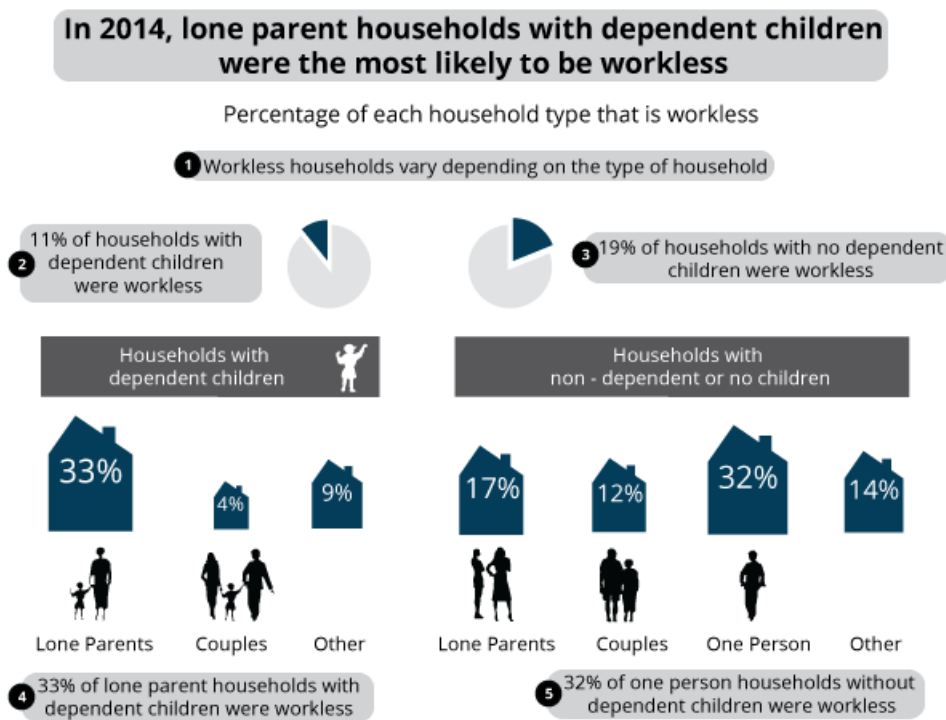
Excluding student households, between 2013 and 2014 the number of households containing at least one person aged 16-64 increased by 52,000. The number of workless households fell by 266,000; the number of mixed households fell by 7,000 while the number of working households rose by 326,000.

Households with and without dependent children by type of household and combined economic activity status of household members (Table B)

Workless households vary depending on the type of household; for example for those with dependent children, 11.0% were workless, and of those without dependent children, 19.0% were workless.

Looking firstly at households with dependent children, 32.6% of lone parent households were workless compared with just 4.3% of couple households. For the other household types with dependent children, 9.3% were workless, although other household types only comprise a small number of households.

Figure 3: Percentage of each household type that is workless, April to June 2014, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

For households without dependent children, those containing just one person were most likely to be workless in 2014, at 31.7%. The lowest percentage was for couples, at 12.1%.

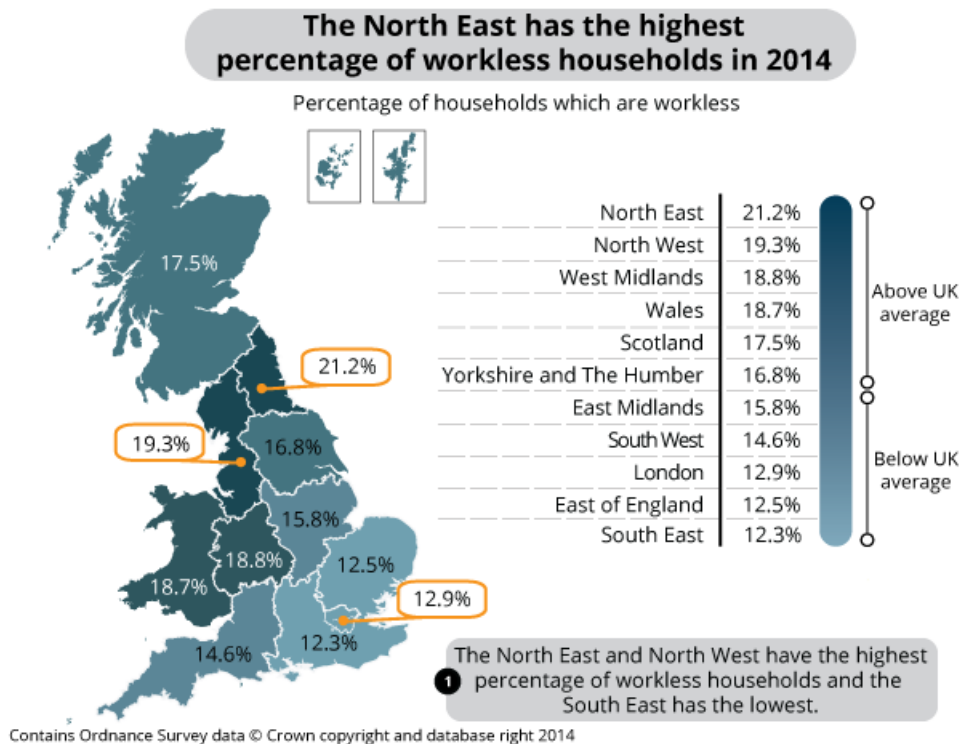
Note that the total number of people in each of these categories varies. The different population sizes will impact on the number of people living in workless households in each category.

Since 1996 there has been a fall in the percentage of lone parent households with dependent children that are workless from 51.9% in 1996 to 32.6% in 2014. The first part of this fall happened between 1996 and 2006 before remaining flat for a few years then falling again in the last three years. Between 2013 and 2014 this fell by 3.7 percentage points, which was the largest fall since comparable records began.

Households by region and combined economic activity status of members (Table C)

For the UK as a whole in 2014, around 15.9% of households were workless, but this varies greatly across the regions in England and countries of the UK. There were six areas of the UK that were above the UK average with the remaining five below. The North East had the highest percentage of workless households at 21.2%, while the South East had the lowest at 12.3%.

Figure 4: Percentage of workless households by region, April to June 2014, UK



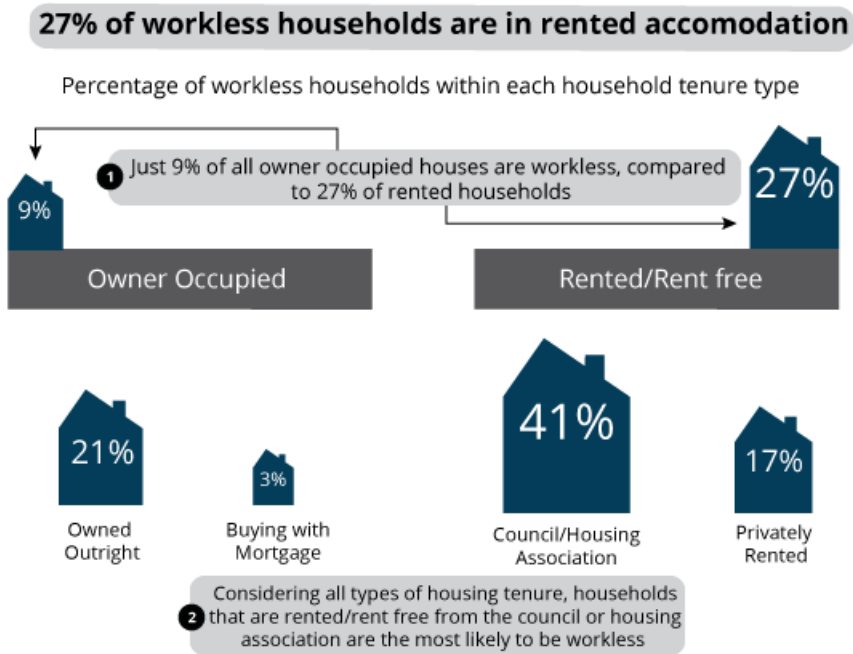
Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Households by housing tenure by combined economic activity status of household members (Table D)

The percentage of households that are workless varies depending on the financial arrangement under which the house is occupied. The two most common types of arrangement are tenancy, in which rent is paid to a landlord, and owner occupancy. In 2014, 9.0% of owner-occupied households were workless and 27.0% of those renting were workless.

For those households renting from a social landlord, over two fifths (40.9%) were workless, compared with 16.6% of those privately renting. For owner-occupied households, 20.6% of households owned outright were workless compared to 2.8% of households bought with a mortgage.

Figure 5: Percentage of workless households by housing tenure, April to June 2014, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Households where all members have never worked (Table E)

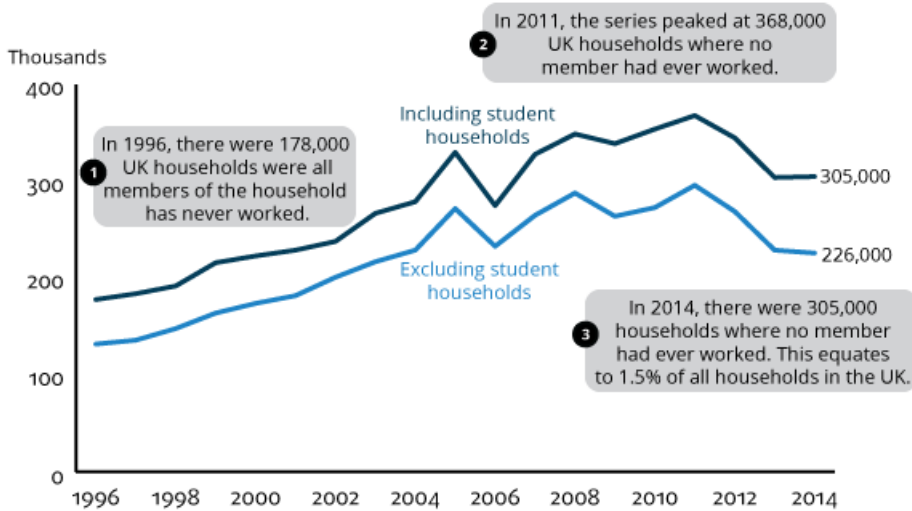
In 2014, there were 305,000 households in which no adult has ever worked, up 1,000 from a year earlier. In relation to all households in the UK containing at least one person aged 16 to 64 years, the percentage of households containing only people who have never worked was 1.5%, the same as a year earlier.

Excluding student households, where all adults are aged 16 to 24 and in full-time education, there were 226,000 households containing only people that have never worked, down 2,000 from a year earlier. This represents 1.1% of all non-student households in the UK, the same as a year earlier.

Figure 6: Households where all members have never worked, 1996 to 2014, UK

In 2014, there were 305,000 households in the UK where all members of the household have never worked

Number of UK households where all members of the household have never worked



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

5 . People

People in households by combined economic activity status of household members (Table F and F2)

In 2014 there were around 4.5 million people aged 16 to 64 living in workless households, representing 11.1% of all people aged 16 to 64 in the UK. The number fell by 475,000 between 2013 and 2014 while the percentage was down 1.2 percentage points.

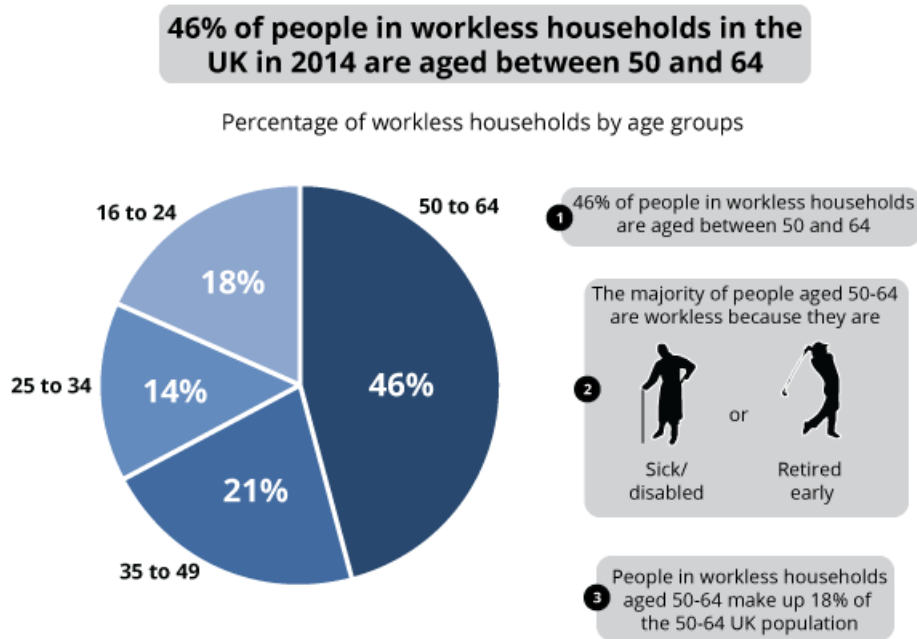
Of the 4.5 million people in workless households, 2.1 million (45.9%) were aged between 50 and 64. A further 968,000 (21.5%) were aged 35 to 49, 648,000 (14.4%) were aged 25 to 34 and 822,000 (18.2%) were aged 16 to 24.

The total number of people in each of these age categories varies, for example there are 7.3 million people aged 16 to 24 and 12.9 million aged 35 to 49. The different population sizes will impact on the number of people living in workless households in each age group.

Looking at the percentage of people within each age group who are living in workless households, around 17.7% of all 50 to 64 year olds are in households where no-one works. The smallest percentage of people living in workless households was in the 25-34 and 35 to 49 age categories, both at 7.5%.

When student households are excluded, the number of people aged 16 to 24 falls from 7.3 million to 6.9 million. Of these, 2.2 million (32.8%) live in working households; 4.0 million (58.6%) live in mixed households and 590,000 (8.6%) live workless households. The proportion of 16 to 64 years olds living in workless households that are aged 16 to 24 is 13.8% when student households are excluded.

Figure 7: People in workless households by age group, April to June 2014, UK



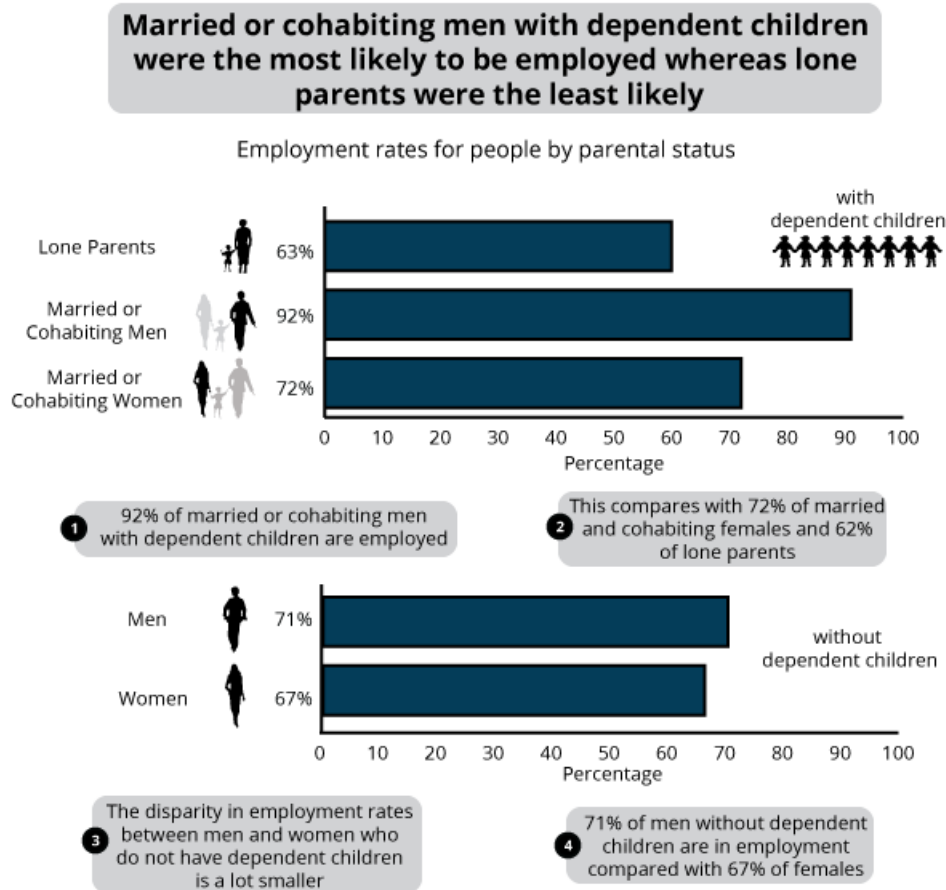
Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Employment rates by parental status (Table P)

In 2014, 79.1% of people with dependent children were employed compared with 69.5% of people without. One reason for this could be that the majority of people without dependent children are older and therefore more likely to be retired or otherwise removed from the labour market.

For those with dependent children, 63.4% of lone parents were employed whereas the employment rate for married/cohabiting men was 91.7% and for women, 71.9%. The disparity in employment rates between men and women without dependent children was much smaller, at 71.3% for men versus 67.5% for women. This indicates that where couples had dependent children, men were more likely to be in employment than women.

Figure 8: Employment rates of people by parental status, April to June 2014, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

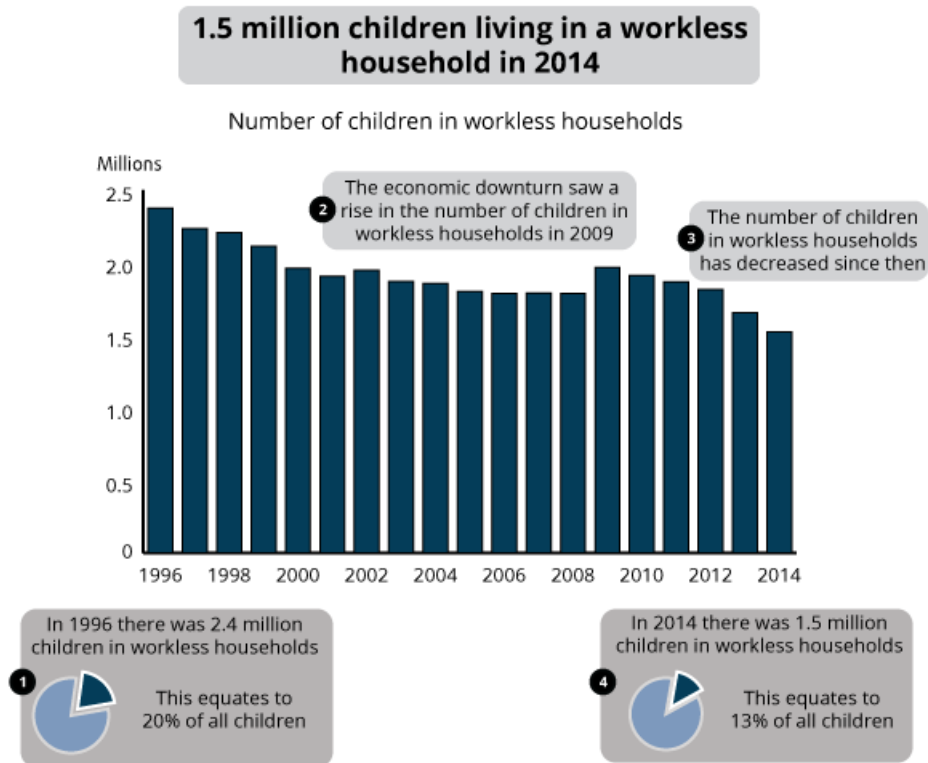
6 . Children

Children in households by combined economic activity status of household members. (Table K and K2)

In 2014 there were around 1.5 million children aged 0 to 15 living in workless households, representing 12.7% of all children aged 0 to 15 in the UK. The number fell by 132,000 between 2013 and 2014 while the percentage was down 1.2 percentage points.

There has been a general decline in the number and percentage of children in workless households since 1996, the earliest point at which a consistent series is available. In 1996 there were 2.4 million children in workless households, representing 19.8% of all children. This continued to fall until the onset of the recession, where the percentage of children in workless households increased from 15.3% in 2008 to 16.8% in 2009. However, this has since continued to fall.

Figure 9: Children in workless households, April to June 2014, UK



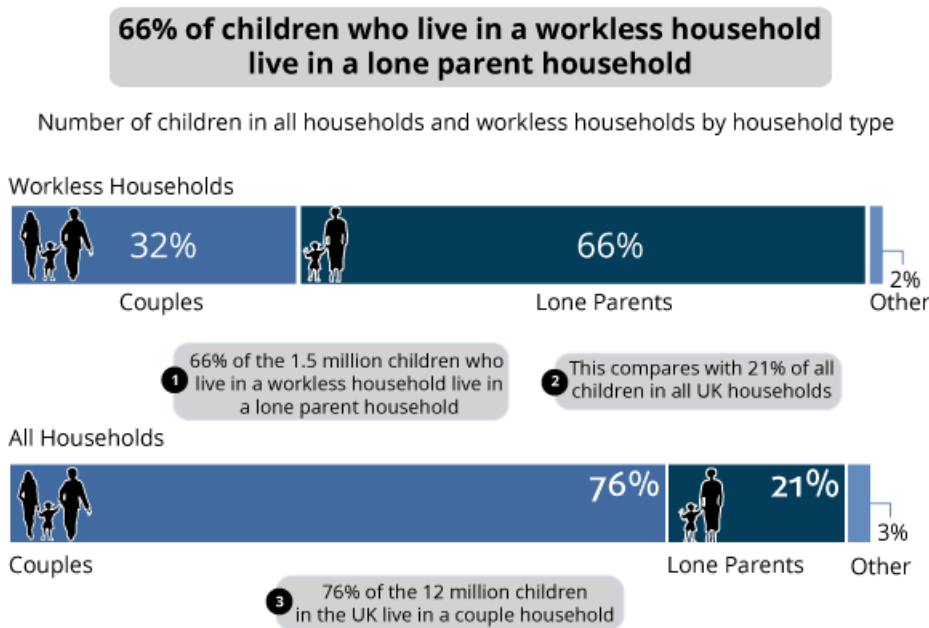
Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

Children by type of household by combined economic activity status of household members (Table L)

In 2014 there were 12 million children living in the UK. The majority, 9.2 million (76.3%) of these lived with a couple, 2.5 million (20.8%) lived with a lone parent and 348,000 (2.9%) were living in other household types.

However, focusing on the 1.5 million children who lived in workless households, the majority, 1.0 million (65.5%), lived with a lone parent. A further 487,000 (32.0%) lived with a couple and the remaining 38,000 (2.5%) lived in other household types.

Figure 10: Children in all households and in workless households by household type, April to June 2014, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

7. Background notes

1. Labour Force Survey re-weighting

ONS has revised estimates derived from the Labour Force Survey (including estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity) as a result of taking on board population estimates based on the 2011 Census and a review of the seasonal adjustment process. Estimates have been revised back to June to August 2001. The article '[Revisions to Labour Force Survey estimates due to re-weighting to the Census 2011 population](#)' published on 23 September 2014 provides indicative details of the back revisions to the headline estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity. ONS will update this article shortly.

Revisions to headline figures within the release tables of the bulletin are provided in [Revisions due to LFS re-weighting \(32 Kb Excel sheet\)](#).

2. Household datasets

The figures in this statistical bulletin come from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Each month ONS issues many estimates of the labour market using the LFS person datasets, designed to provide estimates of people. The estimates within this statistical bulletin differ as they combine responses of all people within households. This is to provide estimates involving all the labour market characteristics of the people within the household.

Household datasets are weighted differently to person datasets, in that each person in a household is given the same weight. This ensures that weighted estimates at the household level are consistent. When using the household datasets to give estimates of the total number of people the different weighting procedure will give marginally different estimates to those from the person datasets.

Estimates in this statistical bulletin go back to 1996, which is the first year a consistent time series, on a calendar quarter basis is available. ONS is currently investigating calendar quarter household datasets for the period 1992 to 1995, to allow for a longer consistent time series.

3. Sampling variability

The LFS is the source for each estimate within this statistical bulletin. As a sample survey, it is subject to a margin of uncertainty, as different samples give different results. For example, the estimate for the percentage of children in workless households is 12.7 per cent, with a sampling variability of ± 0.7 per cent. This variability gives a confidence interval, which is such that there is 95 per cent certainty that the percentage of children in workless households lies between 12.0 per cent and 13.4 per cent.

Sampling variability tables for other estimates in this statistical bulletin are available in the quality measures spreadsheet.

4. Seasonal adjustment

The data in this statistical bulletin cannot be seasonally adjusted because the LFS Household datasets are produced for Q2 and Q4 only. In order to carry out seasonal adjustment data would have to be available for each quarter.

5. Concepts and definitions

- Estimates within this statistical bulletin only cover households that contain at least one person aged 16 to 64
- A household is defined as a single person, or a group of people living at the same address who have the address as their only or main residence and either share one main meal a day or share living accommodation (or both)
- A working household is a household that contains at least one person aged 16 to 64, where all individuals aged 16 and over are in employment
- A mixed household is a household that contains at least one person aged 16 to 64, where at least one person aged 16 and over is in employment and at least one other is either unemployed or inactive
- A workless household is a household that contains at least one person aged 16 to 64, where no-one aged 16 or over is in employment
- Children refer to all children under 16
- Dependent children are children aged under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 who have never married and are in full-time education
- The other household types columns in tables B, G and L refer to households which contain two or more family units, or two or more people belonging to separate family units
- The household reference person is the householder who: a) owns the household accommodation, or b) is legally responsible for the rent of the accommodation, or c) has the household accommodation as part of their job, or d) has the household accommodation by virtue of some relationship to the owner who is not a member of the household. If there are joint householders the household reference person will be the one with the higher income. If the incomes are the same, then the eldest householder is taken
- Parental status refers to three groups of parents; married/cohabiting mothers, married/cohabiting fathers and lone parents, defined as people with dependent children who are resident in their household. Those whose children live in another household are not included
- Mother/father includes biological mothers/fathers, step-mothers/fathers and adoptive mothers/fathers with dependent children that live in the same household as them. Foster mothers/fathers, women /men with non-dependent children and those whose children live in a separate household are not included

6. Working and Workless Households: [Pre-release access list 2014](#)

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