

Statistical bulletin

# Working and workless households in the UK: April to June 2016

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 . Main points for April to June 2016

Of the 20.7 million households (where at least one member is aged 16 to 64) in the UK, 11.8 million of those households (57.0%) were classed as working. This is up 186,000, or 1.1 percentage points, over the past year.

5.8 million households (28.1%) were classed as mixed (had at least 1 working and 1 workless adult), down 79,000 or 0.3 percentage points over the year.

There were 3.1 million households (14.9%) classed as workless, down 189,000 or 0.9 percentage points over the last year.

The broad picture since 1996 is one of an overall increase in the share of working households and a declining share of workless households. There has also been an overall decline in the share of children aged 0 to 15 years old living in workless households since 1996.

Growth in the share of working households in the UK has been partly driven by increased proportions of lone parents working. The share of lone parents who were in employment has risen from 43.8% in 1996 to 66.5% in 2016.

## 2 . Summary of latest estimates by type of household, April to June 2016

**Table 1: Summary of latest estimates by type of household, April to June 2016, thousands, UK, not seasonally adjusted**

	Working households	Mixed households	Workless households
Number of households <sup>1</sup>	11,779 (57.0%)	5,796 (28.1%)	3,087 (14.9%)
Number of people <sup>2</sup>	21,916 (53.4%)	14,879 (36.3%)	4,214 (10.3%)
Number of children <sup>3</sup>	7,042 (57.4%)	3,876 (31.6%)	1,353 (11.0%)

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Number of households where at least one person is aged 16 to 64
2. Number of people aged between 16 and 64
3. Number of dependent children aged 15 or under

## 3 . Introduction to working and workless households

This bulletin provides statistics on the economic status of households in the UK and the people living in them. These statistics are from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), covering the period April to June 2016 unless otherwise stated, and only include households where at least one person is aged 16 to 64 years old.

All estimates are not seasonally adjusted and all comparisons are made on annual basis, as in comparing April to June 2016 with April to June 2015.

Due to the greater sample size at local level in the Annual Population Survey (APS), the highest quality statistics for the economic status of households at a local level within England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are available, up to January to December 2014 in the bulletin, [Workless households for regions across the UK 2014](#). Estimates for January to December 2015 will be published on 27 September 2016.

See Background notes for the differences between the LFS and APS.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the LFS are subject to a certain level of uncertainty. Please see Background notes for an explanation of sampling variability.

## 4 . Main definitions

This statistical bulletin uses a number of main definitions:

### Households

For the purposes of this bulletin, estimates only include those households where at least 1 person is aged 16 to 64.

### Student households

Households where all adults are aged 16 to 24 and in full-time education. The definition excludes households where all members are in education but some members are aged 25 years or more.

### Working households

Households where all members aged 16 or over are employed.

### Workless households

Households where no-one aged 16 or over is in employment. These members may be unemployed or economically inactive. Economically inactive members may be unavailable to work because of family commitments, retirement or study, or unable to work through sickness or disability.

### Mixed households

Households that contain both working and workless members.

### Other household types

This refers to households that contain 2 or more family units, or 2 or more people belonging to separate family units.

## Lone parent households

This refers to households that contain at least 1 dependent child under the age of 19. There may be other non-dependent children present, as in those aged over 18.

## Employment

A measure of the number of people in work.

## Unemployment

A measure of 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.

## Economically inactive

People are not in employment but do not meet the internationally accepted definition of unemployment 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.

# 5 . Data source

The source for the statistics in this bulletin is the Labour Force Survey (LFS) household datasets. These are available historically for the April to June quarters from 1996 and October to December quarters from 2004. They do not contain information on earnings. All members of the household are weighted equally in the household datasets.

Further information on quality of the data within the Labour Force Survey is available at the [QMI for the LFS](#).

# 6 . How these data should be interpreted

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) household datasets should be used for analysis of family or household characteristics. This statistical bulletin particularly focuses on the economic status of household members. For example:

- number of people in employment in the household
- number of people unemployed in the household
- number of people economically inactive in the household

All estimates in this release are not seasonally adjusted and all comparisons should be carried out on an annual basis, as in, comparing April to June periods with April to June periods or October to December periods with October to December periods. Comparisons made in this release are made between the latest available period, April to June 2016, and April to June 2015.

## The main uses of the data, main users and why it's produced

Users of the data in this statistical bulletin include government departments, devolved administrations, independent research organisations and members of the media and general public. These data are used to understand how the economic status of households in the UK, countries of the UK and regions within England are changing. Time series are available between April to June 1996 and April to June 2016.

A more detailed breakdown of data at the local level within the countries of the UK will be released on 27 September 2016. The other bulletin uses the Annual Population Survey (APS), which has a larger sample size than the Labour Force Survey. This allows labour market analysis to be carried out on families and households at local area levels and for small sub-groups of the population across the UK.

## 7. Households

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

Out of the 20.7 million households in the UK in April to June 2016, 11.8 million (57.0%) were classed as working, a further 5.8 million (28.1%) were classed as mixed, and 3.1 million (14.9%) were classed as workless. Within the 14.9% of workless households, 82.5% of those were economically inactive (no-one in the household participating in the labour market).

Excluding student households, which are more likely to be workless than the rest of the population, there were 20.4 million households. Of these, 11.7 million (57.4%) were classed as working households, 5.7 million (28.0%) as mixed and 3.0 million (14.6%) as workless households. Student households are more likely to be economically inactive households; as a result, the percentage of households that are economically inactive is lower, at 12.0%, when excluding students compared to 12.3% for all households.

**Table 2: Percentage of households by combined economic status, UK, not seasonally adjusted, 1996, 2015, 2016**

	All households			Excluding student households		
	April to June 1996 (%)	April to June 2015 (%)	April to June 2016 (%)	April to June 1996 (%)	April to June 2015 (%)	April to June 2016 (%)
Working households	51.7	55.9	57.0	51.9	56.3	57.4
Mixed households	27.4	28.3	28.1	27.5	28.3	28.0
Workless households	20.9	15.8	14.9	20.6	15.4	14.6

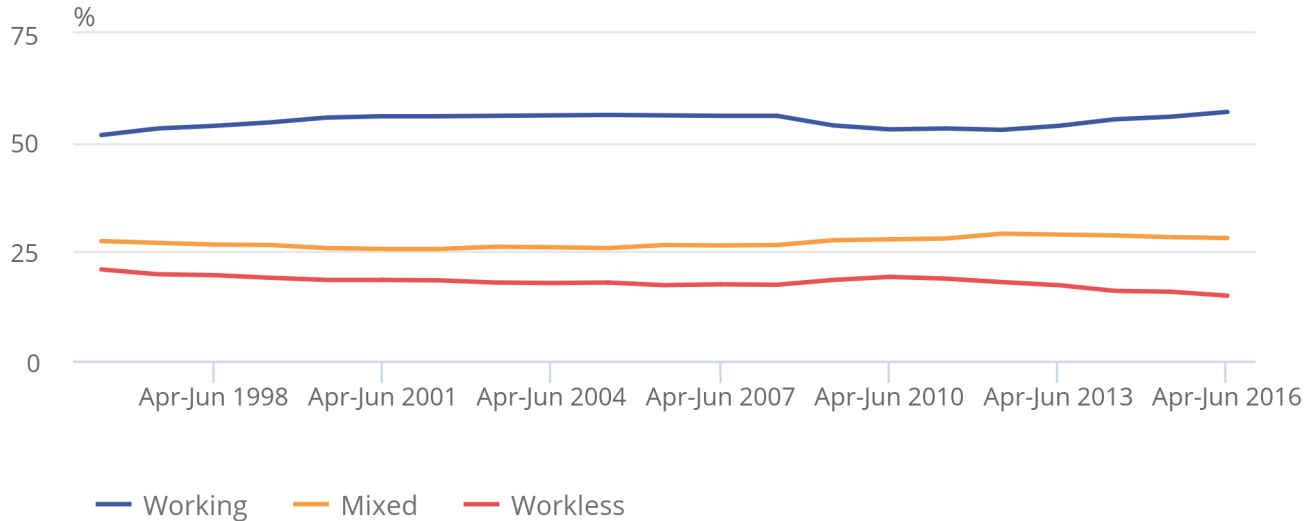
Source: Office for National Statistics

For the period April to June 2016, the number of working households increased by 186,000 or 1.1 percentage points compared to the same period a year ago, to stand at 11.8 million or 57.0% of all households. This is the highest level and percentage for an April to June period since records began in 1996.

The proportion of workless households has been gradually falling since comparable records began, from 20.9% in 1996 to 14.9% in 2016, with the exception of the period between 2008 and 2010, when it rose due to the economic downturn. Over the past year this has decreased 0.9 percentage points.

**Figure 1: Percentage of households by combined economic status, 1996 to 2016, UK**

Figure 1: Percentage of households by combined economic status, 1996 to 2016, UK



**Source: Household labour force datasets, Office for National Statistics**

The number of households in which no adult has ever worked was at its highest level for an April to June period in 2011 at 368,000. Since then it has decreased to 292,000 – the lowest level since April to June 2006. In relation to all households in the UK containing at least 1 person aged 16 to 64 years, the percentage of households containing only people who have never worked was 1.4%, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points over the year.

In April to June 2016, the percentage of all households with dependent children, that were workless, was 9.4% (747,000), down 1.3 percentage points on the same period a year ago. This is the lowest proportion since comparable records began in 1996.

## 8 . People

**Table 3: Percentage of people aged 16 to 64 living in households by combined economic status, UK, not seasonally adjusted, 1996, 2015, 2016**

	All households			Excluding student households		
	April to June 1996 (%)	April to June 2015 (%)	April to June 2016 (%)	April to June 1996 (%)	April to June 2015 (%)	April to June 2016 (%)
Working households	50.3	52.3	53.4	50.7	52.9	54.1
Mixed households	34.6	36.6	36.3	34.6	36.5	36.1
Workless households	15.1	11.1	10.3	14.7	10.6	9.8

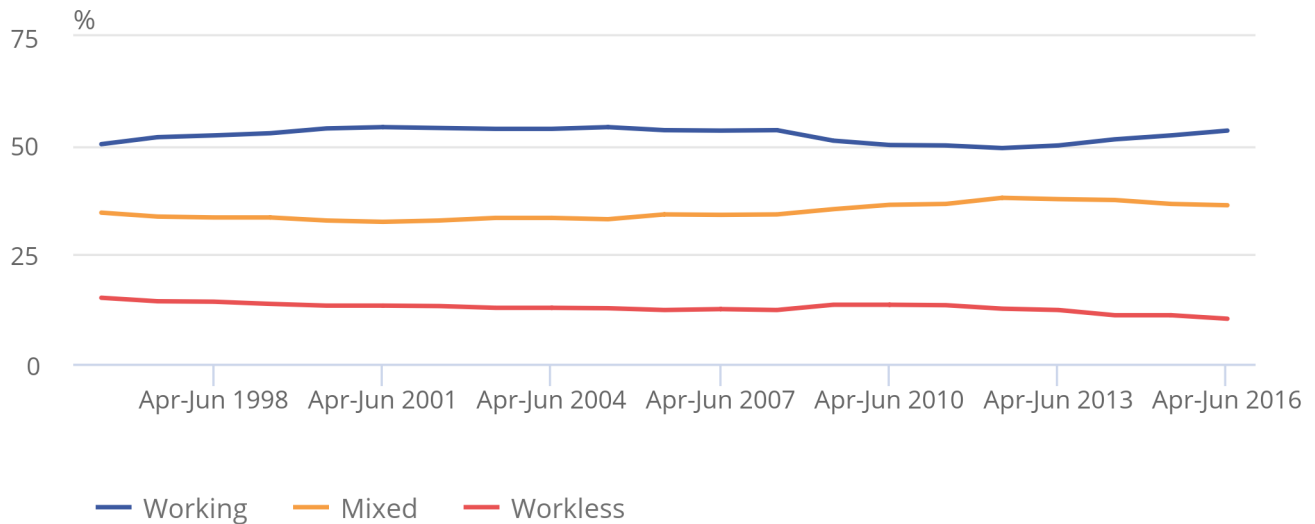
Source: Office for National Statistics

For the period April to June 2016, 21.9 million people aged 16 to 64 (53.4%) were living in working households in the UK, up 1.1 percentage points over the year. A further 14.9 million people (36.3%) were living in mixed households, down 0.3 percentage points, and 4.2 million people (10.3%) were living in workless households, down 0.8 percentage points.

Excluding student households, which are more likely to be workless than the rest of the population, there were 21.8 million people (54.1%) living in working households, 14.6 million people (36.1%) living in households classed as mixed and 4.0 million people (9.8%) living in workless households.

**Figure 2: Percentage of people living in households by combined economic status, 1996 to 2016, UK**

Figure 2: Percentage of people living in households by combined economic status, 1996 to 2016, UK



**Source: Household labour force datasets, Office for National Statistics**

The number of people who live in households where all members had never worked decreased by 2,000 over the last year to 460,000, the lowest level since April to June 2006. Excluding student households, the number of people living in households where all members had never worked decreased by 10,000 to 318,000, the lowest level since April to June 2003.

In April to June 2016, of those people aged 16 to 64 living in households with dependent children, 6.6% were living in workless households, the lowest percentage since comparable records began. This compares to 13.1% of people aged 16 to 64 living in households without dependent children who were in workless households.

Of those people aged 16 to 64 living in households with dependent children, the percentage who were in working households increased by 1.4 percentage points over the past year to 49.2%. This compares with an increase of 0.9 percentage points to 56.6% of people in households without dependent children, who were living in working households.

The percentage of people aged 65 and over living in working households increased by 2.6 percentage points over the year to stand at 11.8 %, the highest percentage since comparable records began in 1996. There was a corresponding decrease of 2.1 percentage points in the proportion of people in this age group living in workless households.



## 9 . Children

**Table 4: Percentage of children living in households by combined economic activity status of household members, UK, not seasonally adjusted, 1996, 2015, 2016**

	All households			Excluding student households		
	April to June 1996 (%)	April to June 2015 (%)	April to June 2016 (%)	April to June 1996 (%)	April to June 2015 (%)	April to June 2016 (%)
Working households	49.3	55.4	57.4	49.3	55.4	57.4
Mixed households	30.9	32.8	31.6	31.0	32.9	31.6
Workless households	19.8	11.8	11.0	19.7	11.7	10.9

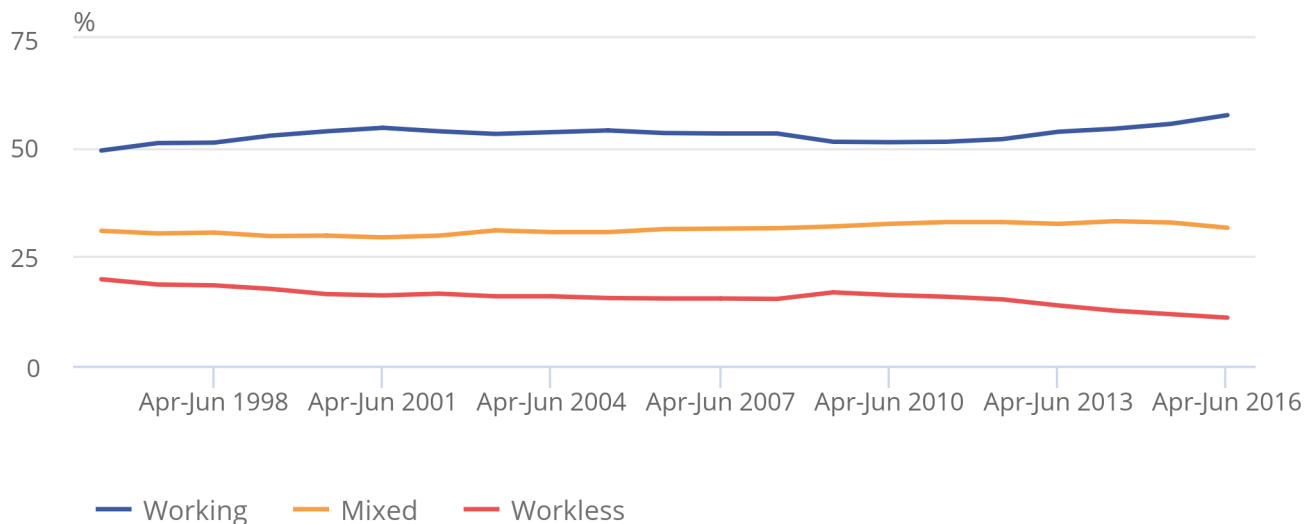
Source: Office for National Statistics

For the period April to June 2016, 7.0 million children (57.4%) were living in working households, a further 3.9 million children (31.6%) were living in mixed households, and 1.4 million children (11.0%) were living in workless households in the UK.

The percentage of children living in workless households decreased by 0.8 percentage points compared to the previous year to 11.0%, the lowest level since comparable records began. The percentage of children living in working households was also at a record high of 57.4%, an increase of 2.0 percentage points over the past year.

**Figure 3: Percentage of children living in households by combined economic status, 1996 to 2016, UK**

Figure 3: Percentage of children living in households by combined economic status, 1996 to 2016, UK



**Source: Household labour force datasets, Office for National Statistics**

Children in lone parent families were more likely to be living in workless households (37.2%) than couple households (4.3%) or other households (9.2%). However, this percentage has decreased 1.2 percentage points compared to a year ago to a record low and continues the general trend of decreases since records began in April to June 1996 when the percentage was 58.6%. The percentage of children in lone parent families living in working households increased by 2.3 percentage points over the last year to a record high of 51.1%.

The number of children living in households where all members had never worked, decreased by 18,000 to 193,000, or 1.6% of all children. This is the lowest level and percentage since April to June 1998.

Although lone parent and one person households have a higher proportion of workless households, these household types are more likely to be workless households as there is often only one person in the household that could be in work.

## 10 . Employment rates by parental status

In 2016, 81.1% of people aged 16 to 64 with dependent children were employed compared with 70.7% of people without dependent children. The employment rate for married or cohabiting men was 92.8% and for women, 73.9%. The disparity in employment rates between men and women without dependent children was much smaller, at 72.6% for men versus 68.5% for women.

In April to June 2016, there were 1.2 million lone parents in employment in the UK, or 4.1% of all people in employment, aged 16 to 64. This compares with 769,000 lone parents in employment, or 2.8% of all people in employment, aged 16 to 64, in April to June 1996. This equates to an increase in the lone parent employment rate of over 20 percentage points in the last 20 years, from 43.8% in 1996 to 66.5% in 2016.

## 11 . Quality and methodology

The [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\) Quality and Methodology Information document](#) contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
- users and uses of the data
- how the output was created
- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data

## 12. Background notes

### 1. Household datasets

The figures in this statistical bulletin come from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Each month we issue 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.

### 2. Sampling variability

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the source for each estimate within this statistical bulletin. The LFS is a sample survey; all estimates from it are subject to sampling variability. Sampling variability is dependent on several factors, including the size of the sample, the size of the estimate as a proportion of the population, and the effect of the design of the sample on the variable of interest. Therefore, 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 11.0 per cent, with a sampling variability of plus 0.7 per cent. This variability gives a confidence interval, which is such that there is 95% certainty that the percentage of children in workless households lies between 10.3% and 11.7%.

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

### 3. Seasonal adjustment

The data in this statistical bulletin cannot be seasonally adjusted because the Labour Force Survey (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.

#### 4. Concepts and definitions

- 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 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 economically inactive.
  - Children refers 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 2 or more family units, or 2 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 3 groups of parents: married or cohabiting women, married or cohabiting men and lone parents, each defined as people with dependent children who are resident in their household. Foster parents, women or men with non-dependent children and those whose children live in a separate household are not included.
5. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the [Statistics Authority website](#) or from the Media Relations Office email: [media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

These National Statistics are produced to high professional standards and released according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.

Get all the tables for this publication in the data section of this publication.