

Statistical bulletin

Understanding skill and qualification suitability in the labour market, UK: August 2024

Subnational differences in the population's suitability to the labour market, with potential gaps and shortages. These are official statistics in development.

Contact:
Skills and Human Development
team
Economic.Wellbeing@ons.gov.
uk
+44 1633 456265

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1 . Main points

- In 2022, according to the Annual Population Survey, 2.3 million (6.6%) of the working-age population in the UK had the skills to work in at least one other occupation outside of their current one.
- In 2021, according to the Census, just over half (52.5%) of employed adults in England and Wales had qualifications that matched the average for their occupation, while one in five (20.2%) employed adults were more qualified than average for their current occupation.
- In 2021, employed women were more likely than men to be more qualified than average for their current occupation (21.8% compared with 18.7%).
- Overall, women of working age were more likely to have the skills from their current or most recent occupation to work in at least one other occupation outside of their current jobs (7.4%, compared with 5.9% of men in 2022); this implies a greater underutilisation of women's skills and qualifications in the labour market.
- The two most critical skills for the labour market were "establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships" and "updating and using relevant knowledge", as these skills were required for the largest number of different occupations.
- Employed people were more likely to demonstrate these critical skills than unemployed people; the gap was largest in Yorkshire and the Humber, where in 2022, 71.1% of employed people and 41.8% of unemployed people were able to demonstrate "updating and using relevant knowledge".
- In 2021, employed people in the North East were most likely to be more qualified than average for their current occupations (22.3%), while those in the East of England and the South East were least likely (18.7% and 18.4%, respectively).

These are official statistics in development, and we advise caution when using the data. The methods are currently under development, and certain assumptions and the coverage of the data sources may affect the accuracy of these statistics. Read more in [Section 3. Data sources and quality](#).

2 . Data on understanding skill and qualification suitability in the labour market, UK

[Skills supply estimates: 2012 to 2023](#)

Dataset | Released 9 August 2024

These reference tables contain skills supply estimates for the UK between 2012 and 2023. These are official statistics in development.

[Qualifications mismatch estimates in England and Wales: 2021](#) Dataset | Released 9 August 2024

These reference tables contain estimates of qualification mismatch in England and Wales using Census 2021. These are official statistics in development.

3 . Data sources and quality

This bulletin presents statistics to help understand local and demographic differences in people's suitability for occupations across the economy, and potential gaps and shortages in the labour market.

These statistics evaluate whether people are suitable for an occupation based on their highest level of qualification, and the skills they demonstrate from their current or last occupation. It does not account for whether individuals will want to apply for those occupations, or if those opportunities exist. Future work will aim to compare labour market demands alongside people's occupational suitability.

In [Section 1. Main points](#), please note that:

- all references to skills estimates focus on the UK working-age population, with further breakdowns looking at employed, unemployed and economically inactive people, provided they are currently employed or have had a job in the past eight years
- all references to individuals demonstrating a skill refer to those who demonstrate that skill to an intermediate level or above
- all references to qualification mismatch metrics focus on the employed population in England and Wales
- for the qualification mismatch metrics, qualifications within each occupation are based on the mode level of highest qualification within each occupation (the level that appears most often) and do not account for the field or subject area of the qualification
- "less qualified than average" means that an individual's highest level of qualification was lower than the mode for that occupation; "matched" means that an individual's highest level of qualification was the same as the mode for that occupation; and "more qualified than average" means that an individual's highest level of qualification was higher than the mode for that occupation

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Measuring skill and qualification suitability in the UK labour market user guide](#).

Official statistics in development

These statistics are labelled as "official statistics in development". Until September 2023, these were called "experimental statistics". Read more about the change in the [guide to official statistics in development](#).

These statistics are based on information from the Annual Population Survey (APS), the Occupational Information Network (O*NET), and Census 2021 data. We are developing how we collect and produce the data to improve the quality of these statistics. Read more in our [Measuring skill and qualification suitability in the UK labour market user guide](#).

Once the developments are complete, we will review the statistics with the Statistics Head of Profession. We will decide whether the statistics are of sufficient quality and value to be published as official statistics, or whether further development is needed. Production may be stopped if they are not of sufficient quality or value. Users will be informed of the outcome and any changes.

We value your feedback on these statistics. Contact us at Economic.Wellbeing@ons.gov.uk.

4 . Related links

[Measuring skill and qualification suitability in the UK labour market: user guide](#)

User guide | Released 09 August 2024

Supporting information statistics on skill and qualification suitability to occupations in the UK labour market, covering its source, its collection, the methods used to produce it, relevant background information and any changes or quality issues that may affect the data.

5 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 9 August 2024, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Understanding skill and qualification suitability in the labour market, UK: August 2024](#)