

Article

Labour disputes, UK: July 2022 update and future work

Progress to date on labour disputes statistics, analysis of UK labour disputes in June and July 2022, and our plans for future publication.

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Next release:
To be announced

Notice

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Please note these statistics are now published regularly as part of [Labour Disputes in the UK](#).

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1 . Main points

- In April 2020, collection and publication of labour disputes data were temporarily suspended to protect and prioritise our outputs in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- In June 2022, collection of the Labour Disputes Inquiry restarted.
- From November 2022 onwards, we plan to publish labour disputes as part of the monthly UK labour market release.
- In June 2022 and July 2022, there were 70,500 and 87,600 working days lost, respectively, as a result of labour disputes, which is higher than the 2019 monthly average of 19,500 days.
- Most working days lost in June and July 2022 were in the transport and storage industry.

2 . Update on labour disputes

Background

The effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on Office for National Statistics (ONS) capacity and capability at the start of the coronavirus pandemic meant that we had to review the existing labour market releases and suspend some labour market publications.

On 3 April 2020, we outlined our plans to temporarily suspend the data collection and publication of labour disputes statistics in a statement on [the impact of COVID-19 on labour market outputs](#).

By June 2022, there was a growing interest and need for these statistics from users, and so we restarted the collection of the Labour Disputes Inquiry. Disputes are picked up from reports in news and trade union websites. Where possible, the data are collected, via a questionnaire, directly from the employer involved in the dispute.

The Inquiry is voluntary and run as a census, and therefore the number of questionnaires dispatched in a monthly cycle is dependent on how many cases of industrial action there are in that month.

Apportionment and imputation

As the information is usually given by the organisation involved in the action, the data are usually considered to be accurate. However, it is not always possible to obtain complete information from the organisation. For example, an organisation may not be able to give accurate estimates on the full or part-time breakdown of employees involved in a dispute or a detailed geographical breakdown of where the disputes are taking place.

In instances where incomplete data are given, these can be imputed by calculating averages of the business's total employment, as defined on the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), and applying these averages to returned data.

Where organisations have failed to respond, the number of workers involved is taken directly from media reports and used as an imputation tool to calculate working days lost.

3 . Analysis of June and July 2022 estimates

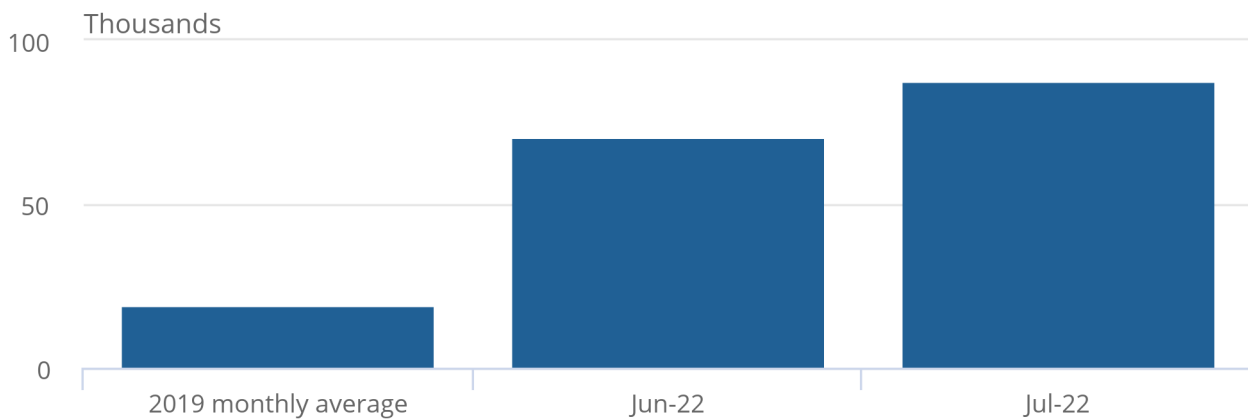
In June and July 2022, there were 70,500 and 87,600 working days lost, respectively, as a result of labour disputes. The June 2022 figure is an increase of 51,000 compared with the 2019 average, and the July 2022 figure is an increase of 68,100 compared with this average.

Figure 1: The total number of working days lost because of labour disputes has increased since before the coronavirus pandemic

Total working days lost because of labour disputes, UK, average of January to December 2019, June and July 2022, not seasonally adjusted

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Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Disputes Inquiry

Notes:

1. The 2019 figure is an average of monthly figures between January and December 2019, as published in [LABD01](#).

As a result of difficulties in defining a stoppage, the number of working days lost is considered to be a better indicator of the impact of labour disputes than the number of recorded stoppages or the number of workers involved.

We have defined stoppages in this article based on the return of each organisation, whereby if disputes were raised by different unions or for different purposes, these would be considered different stoppages. If a dispute spans several months, this will be considered as a stoppage in all relevant months. For example, if a dispute involved strike days on 30 June and 3 July 2022, this would be considered as a stoppage in both June and July 2022 data. This will be reviewed over the next few months, prior to incorporating back into the monthly labour market publication. For more information on definitions, please see [Section 6](#).

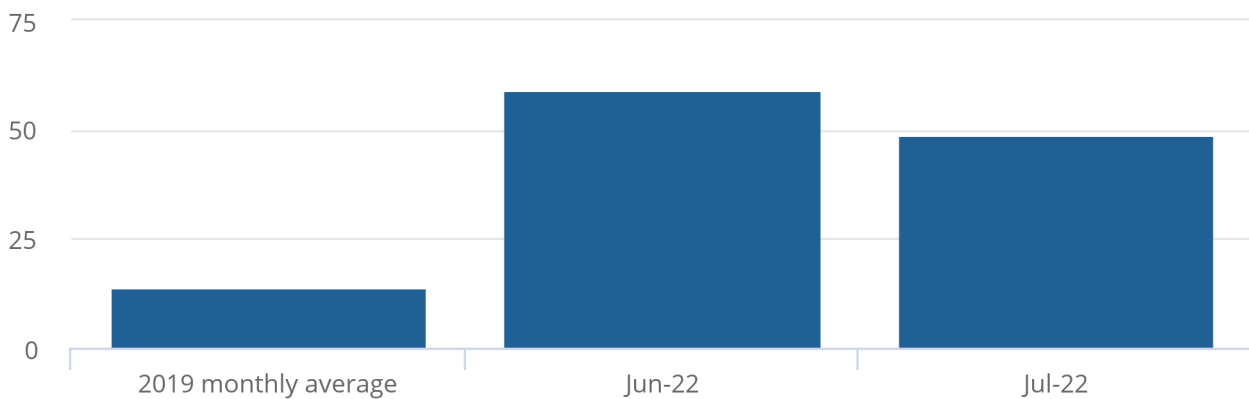
In June 2022, there were 19,100 workers involved across 59 stoppages in the UK. This increased in July 2022 to 45,100 workers, despite there being 10 fewer stoppages. The number of stoppages in June and July 2022 are both higher than the 2019 average. Most stoppages in June and July 2022 were because of disputes over pay.

Figure 2: The number of stoppages because of labour disputes in June and July 2022 is higher than the 2019 average for both months

Number of stoppages because of labour disputes, UK, average of January to December 2019, June and July 2022, not seasonally adjusted

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Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Disputes Inquiry

Notes:

1. The 2019 figure is an average of monthly figures between January and December 2019, as published in [LABD01](#).
2. Stoppages in June and July 2022 are defined by the organisation, and a dispute spanning several months will be considered a stoppage in each month. This may differ from the average in 2019 and will be reviewed over the next few months when back data are made available.

Labour disputes by region

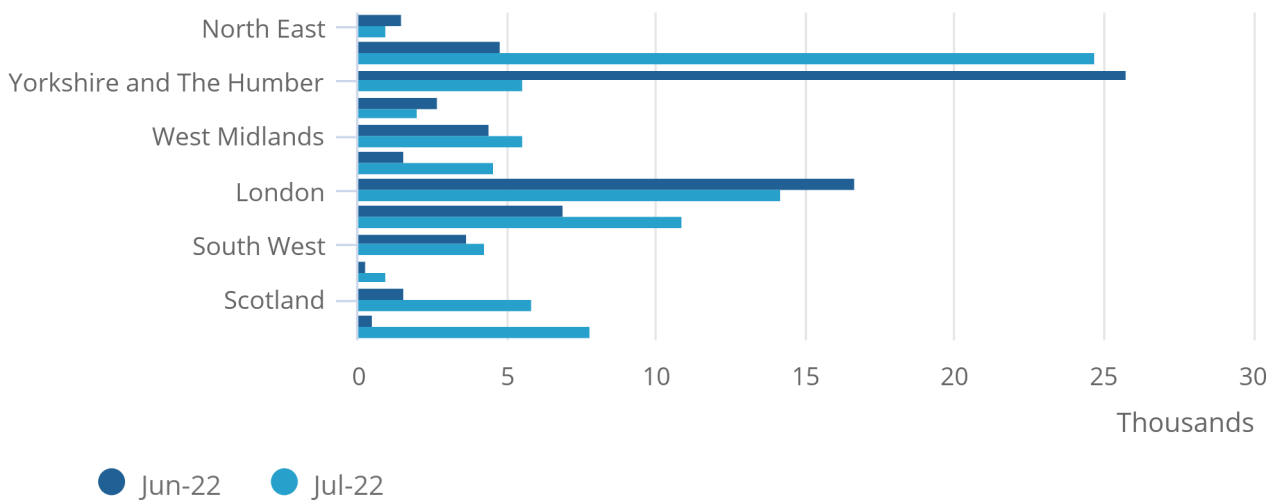
In June and July 2022, labour disputes took place in all regions of the United Kingdom. In June 2022, there were 25,800 working days lost in Yorkshire and The Humber and 16,700 lost in London, making them the highest regions for working days lost. In July 2022, London was still the second highest with 14,200 working days lost, and the North West was the highest with 24,700 working days lost.

Figure 3: The total number of working days lost because of labour disputes varies between regions

Total working days lost because of labour disputes, by region, June and July 2022, not seasonally adjusted

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Total working days lost because of labour disputes, by region, June and July 2022, not seasonally adjusted



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Disputes Inquiry

The number of stoppages also varies between regions, with London seeing the most stoppages in June and July 2022 with 38 and 30 stoppages, respectively. London also has the highest number of workers involved, with 6,300 workers involved in June 2022 and 10,900 in July 2022.

Labour disputes by industry

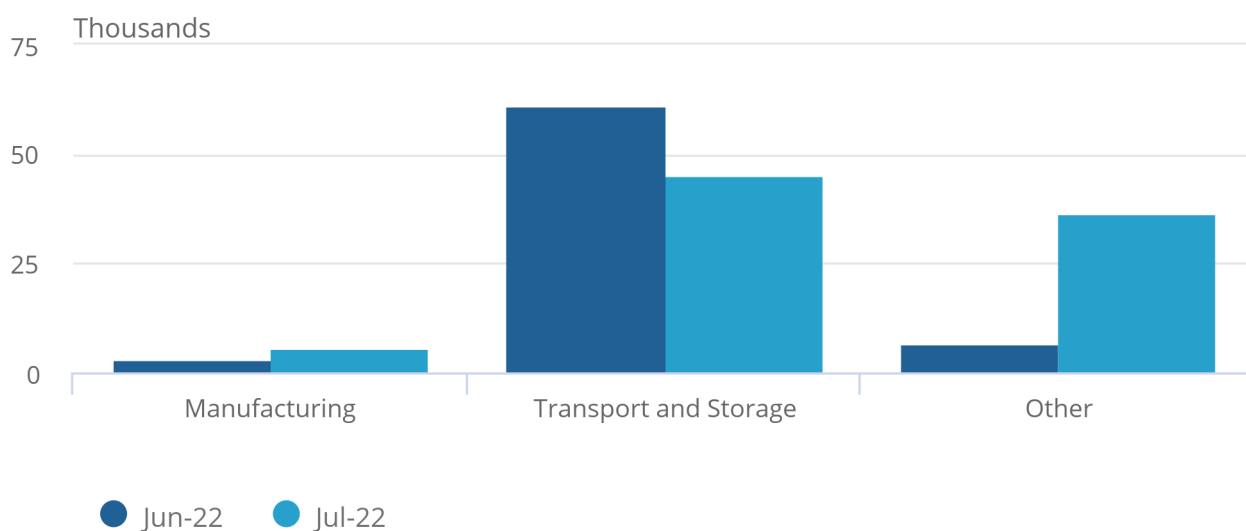
In June and July 2022, most of the labour disputes took place in the transport and storage industry. In June 2022, 60,900 (86.4%) working days lost and 38 (64.4%) stoppages were in transport and storage. In July 2022, over 45,000 (51.6%) working days lost were in transport and storage, with 31 (63.3%) stoppages taking place in this industry.

Figure 4: Most working days lost because of labour disputes in June and July 2022 were in the transport and storage industry

Total working days lost because of labour disputes, by industry, UK, June and July 2022, not seasonally adjusted

Figure 4: Most working days lost because of labour disputes in June and July 2022 were in the transport and storage industry

Total working days lost because of labour disputes, by industry, UK, June and July 2022, not seasonally adjusted



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Disputes Inquiry

Notes:

1. As a result of sample sizes, industries have been combined for the purposes of these analyses.

4 . Future developments

From November 2022 onwards, we plan to re-introduce labour disputes as part of the monthly [UK labour market release](#). We hope to publish labour disputes statistics approximately six weeks after the end of the reference period. For example, we will collect data for September 2022 throughout October 2022 and publish these estimates alongside the [UK labour market release](#) in November 2022. We also plan to publish August 2022 estimates alongside the November 2022 release.

In the future, we plan to make backdated labour disputes statistics available, covering the period from January to May 2022.

As we re-instate these statistics, we will continue to review the relevance, methodology and accessibility of our statistics. As a result of this review, we may revise data and make changes to the format of our output datasets. We welcome feedback from users on the content and presentation of these statistics. Please email labour.market@ons.gov.uk to provide feedback.

5 . Labour disputes, UK data

[Labour disputes in the UK, by region and industry](#)
Dataset | Released 29 September 2022
Estimates of labour disputes for June and July 2022.

6 . Data sources and quality

The [Labour Disputes Inquiry Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) report contains important information on:

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

A full list of definitions for technical terms used in this release can be found in our [Labour disputes in the UK: 2018 article](#).

7 . Related links

[Labour disputes in the UK: 2018](#)

Article | Released 17 May 2019

Analysis of UK labour disputes in 2018, including working days lost, stoppages and workers involved.

[LABD01: Labour Disputes](#)

Dataset | Released 17 March 2020

Monthly estimates of labour disputes back to 1931.

[LABD02: Labour disputes by sector](#)

Dataset | Released 17 March 2020

Labour disputes by sector.

[LABD03: Stoppages of work](#)

Dataset | Released 17 March 2020

Stoppages of work.

[Labour market overview, UK: September 2022](#)

Article | Released 13 September 2022

Estimates of employment, unemployment, economic inactivity and other employment-related statistics for the UK.

8 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 29 September 2022, ONS website, article, [Labour disputes, UK: July 2022 update and future work](#)