

Statistical bulletin

Workless households for regions across the UK: 2017

Annual information at a local level about households and the adults and children living in them, by their economic activity status.



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1 . Main points

- In 2017, the areas with the highest percentage of workless households were generally located outside the south of England.
- Not all locations outside the south of England had high percentages of workless households; 8 of the 50 areas with the lowest percentages in 2017 were in Scotland, Wales, the Midlands and the north of England.
- Hartlepool was the only area in the top five areas with the highest percentage of workless households in both 2016 and 2017.
- Windsor and Maidenhead, Redbridge and Bracknell Forest were in the top five areas with the lowest percentage of workless households in both 2016 and 2017.

2 . Things you need to know about this release

This bulletin provides statistics on the economic status of households and the people living in them in the UK at a regional and local level. The statistics are taken from the Annual Population Survey (APS), cover the period January to December 2017 and only include households where at least one person is aged 16 to 64 years.

Due to the larger sample size at local level within the APS, compared with the Labour Force Survey (LFS), these statistics provide the most timely and highest-quality estimates of the economic status of households for local areas and other sub-regional geographical breakdowns within Great Britain.

At a regional level, the larger sample size of the APS, compared with the LFS, allows a comparison of reasons why people within workless households are not in employment.

Apart from these exceptions, the most up-to-date analysis of the economic status of households at a national and regional level is available in the bulletin, [Working and workless households in the UK: January to March 2018](#). These statistics come from the LFS, cover the period January to March 2018, include data for earlier years and are consistent with the headline national figure.

Main definitions

This bulletin uses a number of main definitions.

Households

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

Student households

Households where all adults are aged 16 to 24 years and in full-time education. The definition excludes households where all members are in education but some members are aged 25 years and over. People in full-time education can also be in [employment](#).

Working households

Households, as defined previously, and where all members aged 16 years and over are [employed](#).

Workless households

Households, as defined previously, and where no-one aged 16 years and 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 they may be unable to work through sickness or disability.

Mixed households

Households, as defined previously, which contain both working and workless members, aged 16 years and over.

Data source

The source for the statistics in this bulletin is the APS household dataset. These data are available for January to December periods and they do not contain information on earnings. All members of the household are weighted equally in the household datasets.

This bulletin focuses on county and unitary authority level analysis alongside consistent aggregations within the APS for regions in England and countries within the UK. This bulletin also includes analysis and data about reasons for non-employment in workless households at a regional level.

How these data should be interpreted

The APS household datasets can be used for analysis of family or household characteristics at the country, regional or local level. This bulletin particularly focuses on the economic status of households and household members in counties and unitary authority areas. For example:

- the number of households with all, some or no people in employment
- the number of adults in each of these household types
- the number of children in each of these household types

Analysis of LFS household datasets was released in [Working and workless households in the UK: January to March 2018](#), which uses household data from the LFS covering the period January to March 2018.

The LFS data should be used for the most up-to-date analysis of the economic status of households for:

- the UK as a whole
- England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- the regions of England (except for analysis of reasons for non-employment in workless households)

The main uses and users of the data and reasons for production

Users of the data in this bulletin include government departments, devolved administrations, local authorities, independent research organisations and members of the media and general public. These data are used to understand how the economic status of households at a local level compares with that in other local areas within the UK and to examine patterns in the data over time.

3 . Workless households

In 2017, the areas with the highest percentage of workless households (those which include at least one person aged 16 to 64 years and where no-one aged 16 years or over is in work) tended to be located outside the south of England (London, South East, South West, East of England). The 19 areas with the lowest percentage of workless households were all in the south of England and the 17 areas with the highest percentage of workless households were all outside the south of England.

As the Annual Population Survey (APS) is a sample survey, all estimates from it and, hence, all specific rankings and their year-on-year changes are subject to sampling variability. However, most of the areas with the highest and lowest percentages of workless households in 2017 had similar rankings in previous years. In particular, for all years from 2006 to 2017, when comparing the percentages of workless households, Glasgow City and Liverpool were among the top 10 counties and unitary authorities and West Berkshire was the only area among the bottom 10. Rankings for 2006 to 2017 are included in Table E of the datasets.

Comparing the two latest periods, Hartlepool had the highest percentage of workless households and was also the only area in the top five in both 2016 and 2017. Windsor and Maidenhead, Redbridge and Bracknell Forest were in the five areas with the lowest percentage of workless households in both 2016 and 2017.

To help remove some of the sampling variability seen in these estimates, the average of the ranks for each of the counties and unitary authorities was calculated for the five-year periods 2008 to 2012 and 2013 to 2017. These “average ranks” were then ranked to show which counties and unitary authorities consistently performed well or poorly. A rank of one indicates a high degree of worklessness.

Table 1 shows the 10 areas with the highest average rank of the percentage of workless households over the last five years (2013 to 2017) and the highest average rank of the percentage of workless households over the previous five years (2008 to 2012). Liverpool had the highest average rank in 2008 to 2012 and Hartlepool had the highest rank in 2013 to 2017. Along with Liverpool and Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Glasgow City, Blaenau Gwent, Wolverhampton and Nottingham were also in the top 10 for both periods.

Table 1: Average rank of counties and unitary authorities with highest percentage of workless household, UK

Rank	2008 to 2012	2013 to 2017
1	Liverpool	Hartlepool
2	Glasgow City	Glasgow City
3	Blaenau Gwent	Liverpool
4	Middlesbrough	Middlesbrough
5	Manchester	Wolverhampton
6	Wolverhampton	Blaenau Gwent
7	Neath Port Talbot	North Ayrshire
8	Merthyr Tydfil	West Dunbartonshire
9	Nottingham	Nottingham
10	Hartlepool	Dundee City

Table 2 shows the 10 areas with the lowest average rank of the percentage of workless households over the last five years (2013 to 2017) and the lowest average rank of the percentage of workless households over the previous five years (2008 to 2012). The area with the lowest average rank was different for each five-year period: Wokingham was the lowest for 2008 to 2012 and Windsor and Maidenhead was the lowest for 2013 to 2017. Along with these two areas, Bracknell Forest, Richmond upon Thames, Merton, South Gloucestershire, Surrey and West Berkshire were in the lowest 10 areas for both periods.

Table 2: Average rank of counties and unitary authorities with lowest percentage of workless household, UK

Rank	2008 to 2012	2013 to 2017
1	Wokingham	Windsor and Maidenhead
2	West Berkshire	West Berkshire
3	Windsor and Maidenhead	Bracknell Forest
4	Merton	Merton
5	Aberdeenshire	Buckinghamshire
6	Richmond upon Thames	Wokingham
7	Surrey	South Gloucestershire
8	Oxfordshire	Richmond upon Thames
9	Bracknell Forest	Cambridgeshire
10	South Gloucestershire	Surrey

The effect of excluding student households

The datasets accompanying this release include tables of data that exclude student households (where all adults are aged 16 to 24 years and in full-time education).

In these tables, most of the counties and unitary authority areas with the highest and lowest percentages of workless households in 2017 were the same as those when student households were included. In particular, four of the top five and all of the bottom five local authorities remained the same when student households were excluded. In most counties and unitary authority areas, the percentage of workless non-student households was slightly lower than the percentage of all households, reflecting the greater likelihood that student households were workless.

4 . Working and mixed households

In 2017, the counties and unitary authorities with high percentages of workless households were not necessarily those with low percentages of working households and vice versa. This was due to the uneven distribution of mixed households across Great Britain. For example, if an area has a high proportion of workless households, it could also have a relatively high percentage of working households if it had a lower-than-average proportion of mixed households.

A household can be mixed for a number of reasons. Some economic inactivity is a result of a personal decision, such as taking early retirement or some instances of opting to look after home or family on a full-time basis, while other inactivity results from circumstances, such as sickness or disability.

The two areas with the lowest percentage of workless households in 2017 were in the South East, whereas none of the 60 areas with the lowest percentage of working households were in the South East. In 2017, Hartlepool, Nottingham and Middlesbrough were the only areas that were in the bottom 10 for working households and top 10 for workless households.

Comparing 2012 with 2017, Birmingham, Brent, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, Newham, and Barking and Dagenham were the only areas whose percentage of working households was amongst the lowest 10 for both periods; whereas Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Aberdeenshire and Cambridgeshire were the only areas whose percentage was amongst the highest 10 for both periods.

Almost 9 out of 10 (89.1%) counties and local authorities saw an increase in the percentage of working households between 2012 and 2017. Bedford had the highest percentage of working households in 2017, whereas Aberdeen City had the highest percentage in 2012. Of the areas that showed a decrease between 2012 and 2017, the majority (15 out of 22) saw decreases of less than 3.0 percentage points.

5 . Children in workless households

The datasets accompanying this release include the percentages of adults and children in each of the three types of households (working, mixed and workless). The counties and unitary authority areas with higher percentages of adults in workless households are mainly those with higher percentages of workless households but this is not necessarily true for children in workless households.

As the data are from a sample survey, all estimates and, hence, all year-on-year changes are subject to sampling variability. This is especially true for subsets of the data such as children in workless households.

In nearly nine out of ten (88.1%) counties and unitary authorities in Great Britain, the percentage of children in workless households was lower in 2017 than it was in 2012. In 21 of these areas, the 2017 figure was more than 10.0 percentage points lower, including in 10 London unitary authorities. No area had an increase above 6.0 percentage points.

At a regional level, the South East, South West and East of England had the lowest percentages of children in workless households in 2017, with all percentages below 10%. In contrast, Northern Ireland and the North East had the highest percentage of children in workless households at 16.4% and 15.3% respectively.

Between 2012 and 2017, only one region did not see a decrease in the percentage of children in workless households: Northern Ireland, which increased from 15.8% to 16.4%. London had the largest decrease of 8.0 percentage points from 18.3% to 10.4%.

Table 3: Percentage of children in workless households, UK, 2012 and 2017

Area name		2012 2017	
UK	K02000001	15.1	10.9
England	E92000001	15.0	10.5
North East	E12000001	20.3	15.3
North West	E12000002	18.2	12.6
Yorkshire and the Humber	E12000003	17.0	13.7
East Midlands	E12000004	12.9	12.2
West Midlands	E12000005	16.9	12.8
East	E12000006	11.9	8.0
London	E12000007	18.3	10.4
South East	E12000008	10.6	6.6
South West	E12000009	11.2	7.1
Wales	W92000004	17.8	12.7
Scotland	S92000003	14.0	11.7
Northern Ireland	N92000002	15.8	16.4

6 . Reasons for worklessness in workless households

The larger sample size of the Annual Population Survey (APS), when compared with the Labour Force Survey (LFS), allows for a national and regional analysis of the reasons why adults aged 16 to 64 years in workless households were not in employment. This analysis covers people aged 16 to 64 years where the household, as before, includes at least one person aged 16 to 64 years and has no-one aged 16 years and over in work.

In 2017, as with every period covered in this release since 2006, the most common reason for worklessness in such households in the UK and in all regions and countries of the UK, was sickness or disability. Wales had the highest percentage at 42.3%, more than 10 percentage points higher than the South West, which was the lowest at 27.6%.

London had the lowest percentage of people aged 16 to 64 years who were in workless households due to early retirement, at 8.3%, over two percentage points lower than the next lowest region, while the South East and the East of England had the highest percentage at 24.6% and 22.7% respectively.

7 . Quality and methodology

The [Annual Population Survey Quality and Methodology Information](#) report 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

Concepts and definitions

Estimates within this statistical bulletin only cover households that contain at least one person aged 16 to 64 years.

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 years, where all individuals aged 16 years and over are in employment.

A mixed household is a household that contains at least one person aged 16 to 64 years, where at least one person aged 16 years 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 years, where no-one aged 16 years or over is in employment.

Children refer to all children under 16 years old.

Sampling variability

The Annual Population Survey (APS) is a sample survey and is, therefore, subject to a margin of uncertainty, as different samples give different results. Analysis in this bulletin focuses on counties and unitary authority areas with some areas of low population combined to provide larger sample sizes (see Section 4 for details). Datasets also include data for smaller areas, for example, districts within counties.

The datasets include measures of sampling variability (in hidden columns in each spreadsheet) and also include shading that indicates estimates that are not considered reliable for practical purposes. These data can be summed to provide more robust estimates for combined areas.

Household datasets

The figures in this bulletin come from APS household datasets. These 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.

Details of the [policy governing the release of new data](#) are available..