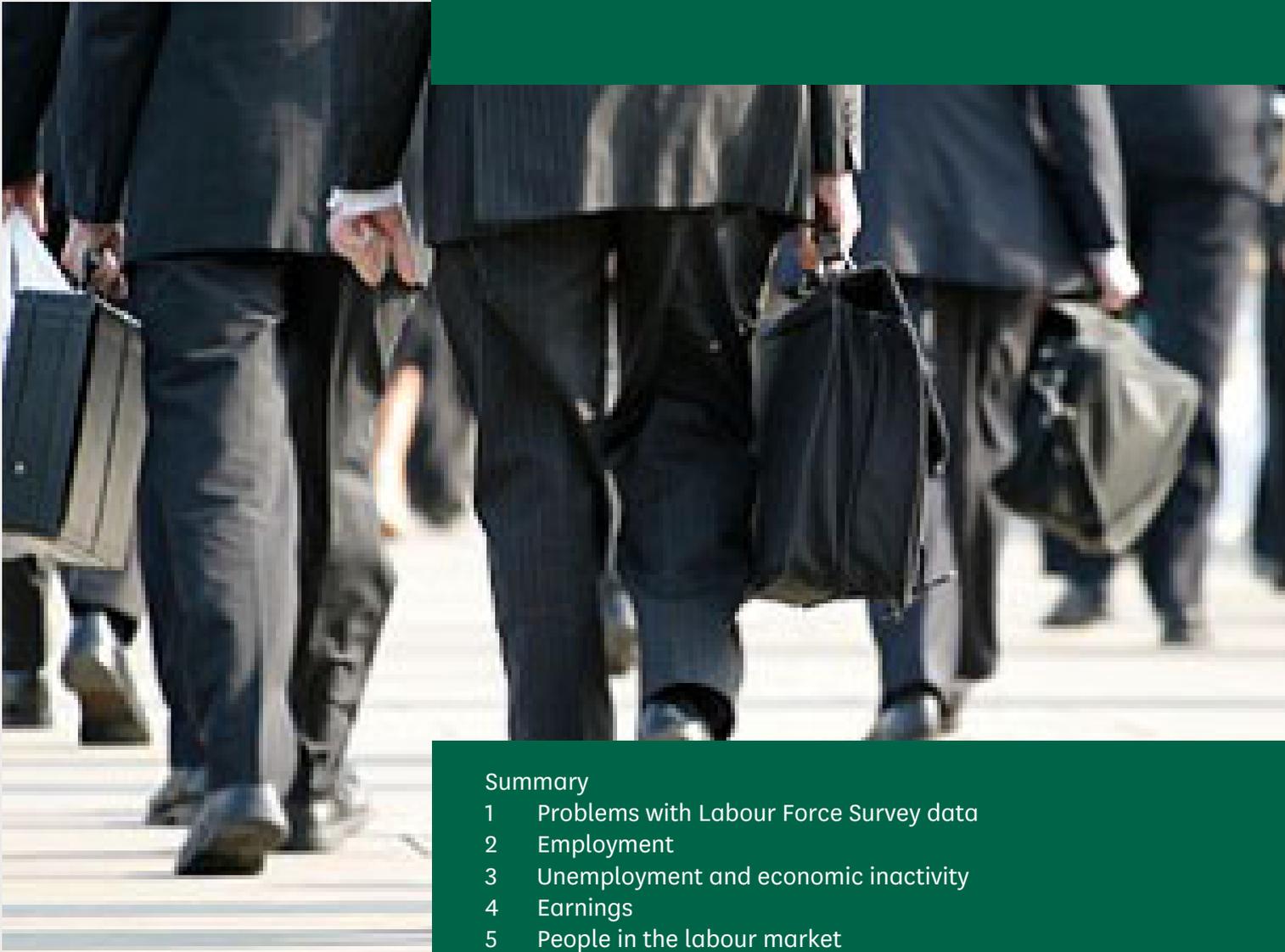


By Brigid Francis-Devine,  
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14 May 2024

# UK labour market statistics



## Summary

- 1 Problems with Labour Force Survey data
- 2 Employment
- 3 Unemployment and economic inactivity
- 4 Earnings
- 5 People in the labour market

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# Summary

This briefing summarises the latest labour market statistics for the UK.

In February 2024, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reintroduced [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\) data](#), which also includes a population reweighting. This is after only some [experimental headline data was published between October 2023 and January 2024](#) due to falling response rates.

The ONS have said that the reintroduced LFS estimates should be treated with additional caution, and that the quarterly change estimates are particularly volatile. Due to time constraints, the ONS has only reweighted LFS data from July to September 2022 onwards. This means there is a break in the data for the period before and after this quarter. The ONS has remodelled data back to June to August 2011 for the headline measures (employment, unemployment and economic inactivity), but not for other measures.

This briefing provides the statistics that have been published by the ONS, but these statistics should be treated with more caution than usual. There have also been some quite large revisions to the statistics published in the previous version of this briefing.

In the year to January to March 2024, employment levels fell and unemployment and economic inactivity levels increased. Real wages continued to grow in the three months to March 2024.

## Key figures

- In January to March 2024, the number of people aged 16+ in employment was **33.00 million**, and the employment rate for people aged 16-64 was **74.5%**. Employment levels have fallen by around 204,000 over the last year, and the employment rate has fallen.
- The UK unemployment rate was **4.3%**, and 1.49 million people aged 16+ were unemployed. Unemployment levels increased by around 103,000 over the last year, and the unemployment rate rose.
- **9.38** million people aged 16-64 were economically inactive, and the inactivity rate was **22.1%**. Inactivity levels increased by around 302,000 over the last year and the inactivity rate increased.
- The number of vacancies fell in the last quarter and over the year to 898,000 in February to April 2024, but remain above pre-pandemic levels.

- Average wages increased in real terms in the three months to March 2024, with an annual change of 2.1% including bonuses and 2.4% excluding bonuses. Nominal wages continued to rise, at a rate of 5.7% including bonuses and 6.0% excluding bonuses.

## UK labour market 2011-2024

### Employment rate

Aged 16-64, %



### Unemployment rate

Aged 16+, %



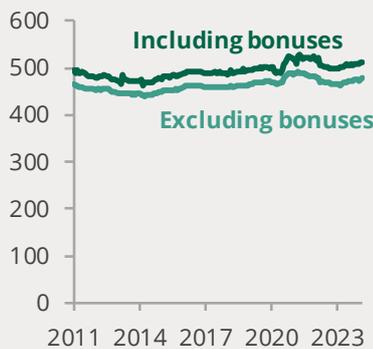
### Economic inactivity rate

Aged 16-64 olds, %



### Average weekly pay

Employees in GB, March 2024 prices, £



### Part-time and full-time workers

Thousands



### Employees and self-employed

Thousands



### Redundancies

Thousands



### Vacancies

Thousands



### Total hours worked

Millions



Note: dashed lines indicate a break in the series.

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey, Tables [A01](#), [FARN01](#), [RED01](#), [VACS01](#) and [HOUR01](#)

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# 1 Problems with Labour Force Survey data

## 1.1 Is there a problem with labour market statistics?

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces labour market statistics using the Labour Force Survey (LFS). In recent years, fewer people have been responding to the LFS, [which the ONS has identified as a challenge to data reliability](#).<sup>1</sup> Detailed LFS estimates were not published between October 2023 and January 2024 because of quality concerns.<sup>2</sup>

The Library Insight [Has labour market data become less reliable?](#) provides more information on falling response rates and LFS reliability.

Data for Northern Ireland is collected by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in the Northern Ireland [Labour Force Survey](#), which [NISRA says continues to have robust response rates](#).

## 1.2 Are labour market statistics back to normal now?

In February 2024, the ONS went back to publishing detailed labour market statistics from the LFS.

To increase the number of survey responses, the ONS reintroduced face-to-face interviews from October 2023 and boosted the sample in October 2023 and January 2024. This means the data is more reliable, but the ONS says that the improvements they've made to the Labour Force Survey will '[take time to materialise](#)'. The statistics will be badged as 'official statistics in development' and should still be treated with caution.<sup>3</sup>

The ONS also reweighted LFS data in February with the latest UK population. The ONS usually does this every two years to make sure the data is representative, but the pandemic meant it hasn't been done for a few years.

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<sup>1</sup> ONS, [Carry that weight: Reducing the effects of COVID-19 on the Labour Force Survey](#), 8 July 2021

<sup>2</sup> ONS, [Operational Note – Labour Market Statistics 24 October 2023](#), ONS, [Update on the Labour Force Survey](#), 4 December 2023 and ONS, [Statement on the Labour Force Survey](#), 12 January 2024

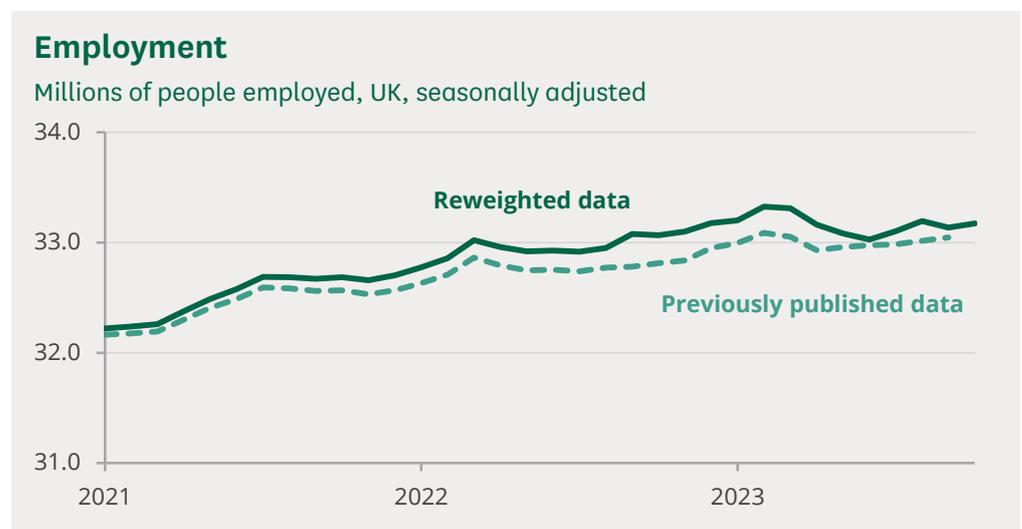
<sup>3</sup> ONS, [Impact of reweighting on Labour Force Survey key indicators: 2024](#), 5 February 2024

Due to time constraints, the ONS has only reweighted LFS data from July to September 2022 onwards. This means there is a break in the data for the period before and after this quarter. The ONS has remodelled data back to June to August 2011 for the headline measures (employment, unemployment and economic inactivity), but not for other measures.

## How does the reweighting affect the figures?

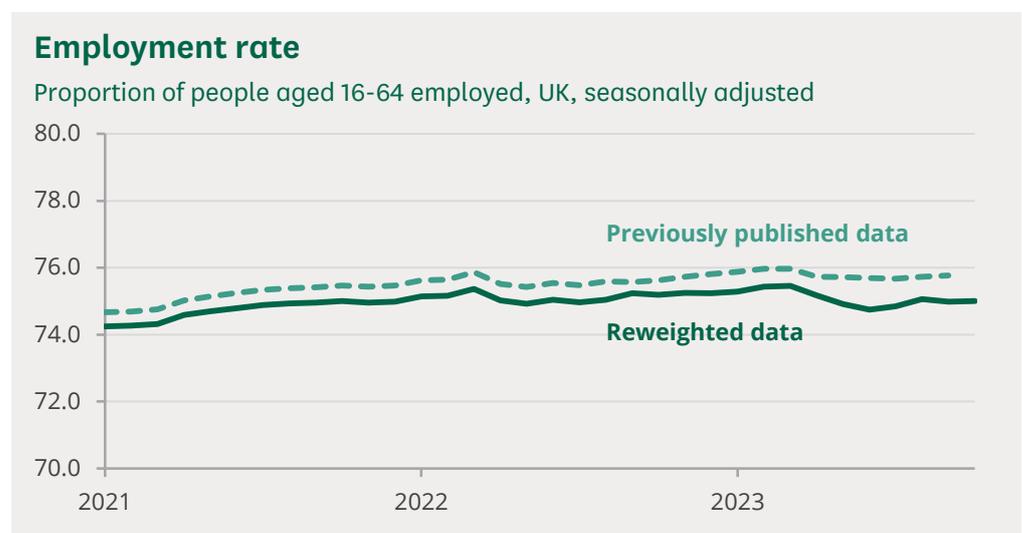
The charts below show the impact that the reintroduction of the LFS and the reweighting have had on the headline labour market measures. The dotted line shows the figures that had previously been published while the complete line shows the figures that were published by the ONS in February 2024.

The reweighting means that the estimates for the number of people who are employed have increased as shown in the chart below:



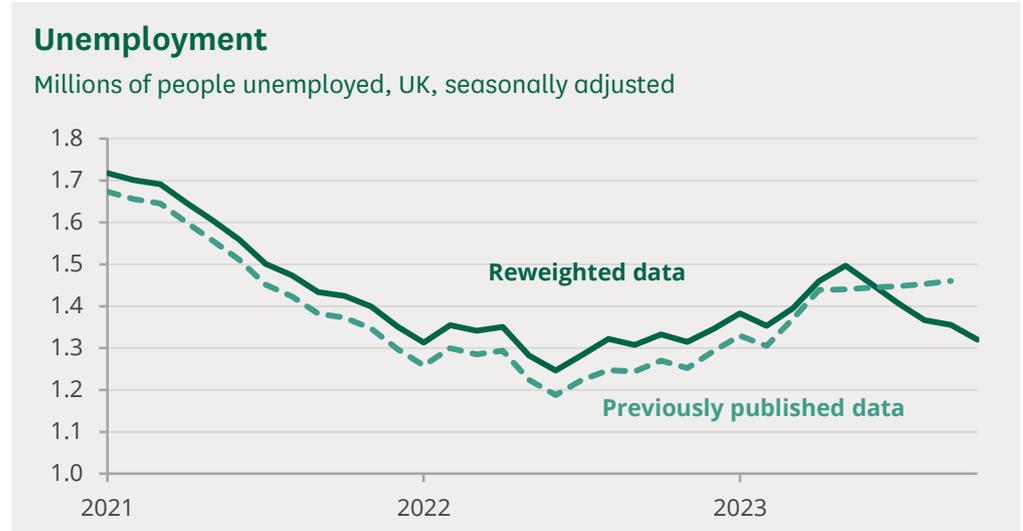
Source: ONS [X1Q](#) and ONS [A05 SA](#)

Conversely, the reweighting means that the estimates for the proportion of people aged 16-64 who are employed have fallen:



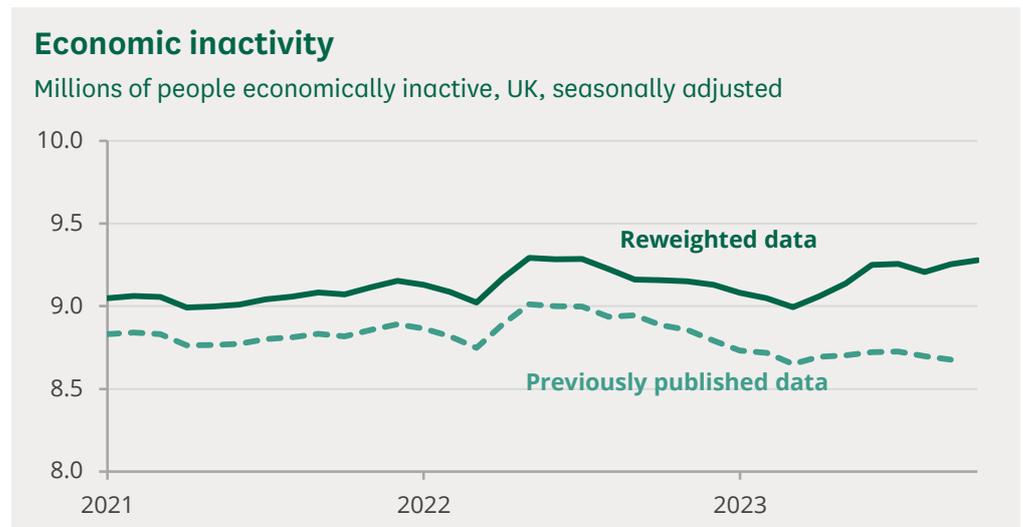
Source: ONS [X1Q](#) and ONS [A05 SA](#)

The estimates for the number of people who are unemployed have increased, apart for the recent figures when unemployment was modelled using the claimant count.



Source: ONS [X1Q](#) and ONS [A05 SA](#)

The estimates for the number of people who are economically inactive have also increased.



Source: ONS [X1Q](#) and ONS [A05 SA](#)

## 1.3 How was labour market data measured between October 2023 and January 2024?

Between October 2023 and January 2024, the ONS published headline data using PAYE and claimant count data to adjust LFS survey data from previous months.<sup>4</sup>

The ONS classed these as experimental statistics, which means they are still in the testing phase and not yet fully developed.<sup>5</sup> The ONS advised treating these estimates with more caution than usual.

On 5 February, the ONS published the Labour Force Survey data for the months it missed, reweighted by population. However, the ONS said that the reweighting does not address the volatility in labour market data and advised caution when interpreting the data. This briefing uses this reweighted data unless otherwise specified.

## 1.4 Does the ONS have a longer-term plan for labour market statistics?

The ONS has been working on a Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS), which will replace the Labour Force Survey.<sup>6</sup> On 5 February 2024, the ONS said the TLFS will become the primary source of labour market data from September 2024.<sup>7</sup> This plan has previously been delayed: in November 2023 the ONS said the TLFS would be the primary source in March 2024, and in January 2024 it said it would be in the first half of 2024.<sup>8</sup>

The ONS provided an update in April 2024 in which they confirmed that they were still planning to transition to the TLFS in September 2024, subject to [quality criteria](#) being met.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ONS, [X10: Adjusted employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity](#), 16 January 2024

<sup>5</sup> ONS, [Guide to experimental statistics](#) (accessed 24 October 2023)

<sup>6</sup> ONS, [Labour market transformation – update on progress and plans: November 2023](#), 14 November 2023

<sup>7</sup> ONS, [Impact of reweighting on Labour Force Survey key indicators: 2024](#), 5 February 2024

<sup>8</sup> ONS, [Statement on the Labour Force Survey](#), 12 January 2024

<sup>9</sup> ONS, [Labour market transformation – update on progress and plans: April 2024](#), 29 April 2024

## 2

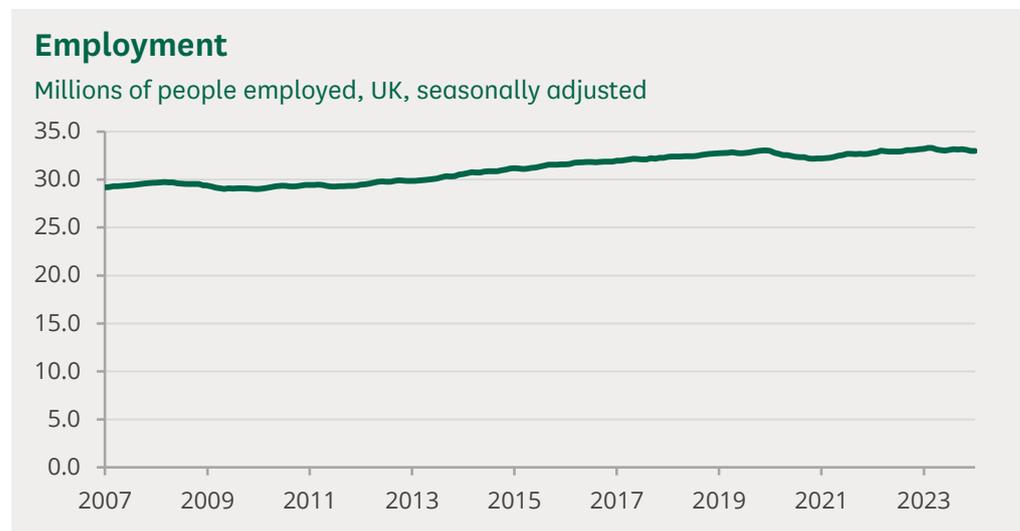
## Employment

Employment levels have decreased over the last year and the employment rate has fallen.

In January to March 2024, there were 33.00 million people aged 16+ in employment in the UK. The employment rate (the proportion of the population aged 16-64 in work) was 74.5%.

Employment January to March 2024	
<b>Rate (16-64)</b>	<b>74.5%</b>
Rate last year	75.3%
<b>Level (millions)</b>	<b>33.00</b>
Change on year	-204,000

Employment levels gradually rose from 2011 to the start of the coronavirus pandemic. They fell following the UK-wide coronavirus lockdown in March 2020 and continued to fall throughout 2020, before recovering during the first half of 2021 and returning to pre-pandemic levels towards the end of 2022. Employment has been falling in recent quarters.



Source: ONS, [A01: Summary of labour market statistics](#)

As discussed in section 1, Labour Force Survey (LFS) data is less reliable than usual at the moment, and the Bank of England pointed out in May that other data sources show that employment rates have been growing faster than the

Labour Force Survey suggests: LFS data shows employment growing by 0.6% since 2019, while the Workforce Jobs data shows growth of around 4%.<sup>10</sup>

## 1 The labour market has loosened, but remains tight

Low unemployment rates and high vacancies in 2022 and 2023 meant the labour market was tight: most of those who wanted to work were in work, meaning that recruitment was more difficult than usual.

This was driven by the growth in the number of economically inactive people since the beginning of the pandemic. Lower net migration from the EU also caused a fall in the number of people in the labour market.

Labour market tightness was a causal factor in the growth of nominal wages which caused some upward pressure on inflation. In August 2023, the [Bank of England's Monetary Policy Commission \(MPC\) identified a tight labour market and wage growth](#) as persistent inflationary pressures in the economy.<sup>11</sup>

However, demand for labour has slowed, which means the labour market has loosened: job vacancies fell from their peak in 2022, and unemployment has been increasing. The loosening labour market led to an easing of wage growth, though wage growth is still strong.

Despite this, the labour market remains tight by historical standards. Vacancy levels remain above their pre-pandemic levels, and with unemployment remaining at a historically low level, there continues to be pressure on employers to retain staff due to concerns over whether they will be able to rehire.<sup>12</sup>

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) said in its March 2024 Economic and fiscal outlook that it expects a further loosening of the labour market, with a moderate rise in unemployment and a small fall in the employment rate by the end of 2024.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.1 Type of employment

The increase in employment levels over the last ten years has been driven by full-time workers. The number of full-time workers continued to increase after the outbreak of the pandemic, while there was a sharp fall in part-time employment. There was also a fall in the number of people who were self-

<sup>10</sup> Bank of England, [Monetary Policy Report May 2024](#), 9 May 2024, p43

<sup>11</sup> Bank of England, [Monetary Policy Report - August 2023](#), 3 August 2023

<sup>12</sup> Bank of England, [Monetary Policy Report May 2024](#), 9 May 2024, p43

<sup>13</sup> OBR, [Economic and fiscal outlook - March 2024](#), 6 March 2024

employed, partly due to workers in the same job switching from describing themselves as self-employed to calling themselves employees.

## Full time/part time

In January to March 2024, 24.85 million people were employed on a full-time basis while 8.15 million were employed on a part-time basis.

Full-time and part-time workers		
January to March 2024		
	Full-time	Part-time
<b>All workers</b>		
Level (millions)	<b>24.85</b>	<b>8.15</b>
Change on year	234,000	-437,000
<b>Men</b>		
Level (millions)	<b>14.70</b>	<b>2.30</b>
Change on year	-51,000	-166,000
<b>Women</b>		
Level (millions)	<b>10.15</b>	<b>5.84</b>
Change on year	285,000	-271,000

**Since the start of the pandemic, the number of people working full-time has increased, but there has been a fall in the number of people working part-time.**

## Employees and the self-employed

In January to March 2024, there were 28.64 million people working as employees, while a further 4.25 million were self-employed.

Employees and self-employed			
January to March 2024			
	Total	Full-Time	Part-time
<b>Employees</b>			
(millions)	<b>28.64</b>	<b>21.94</b>	<b>6.69</b>
Change on year	-31,000	270,000	-302,000
<b>Self employed</b>			
(millions)	<b>4.25</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>1.38</b>
Change on year	-114,000	8,000	-122,000

The increases in employment since 2011 have been mainly driven by people working as employees, although the number of people working in self-employment had also gradually increased.

The number of employees continued to increase after the start of the pandemic, driven by full-time employees. In January to March 2024, there were over a million more full-time employees compared to pre-pandemic levels. In contrast, the number of part-time employees has fallen.

The number of self-employed workers fell following the start of the pandemic and, remained around 700,000 below pre-pandemic levels in January to March 2024. The ONS have reported that this fall was partly due to people describing themselves as employees rather than self-employed after the furlough scheme was created.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2 Public/private

In the year to December 2023, there was an increase in the number of people working in the public sector, but there was a decrease in the private sector.

The ONS publishes two sets of figures for public and private sector employment: one which reflects the actual number of workers in the public and private sector and one which excludes the effects of major reclassifications, where bodies employing large numbers of people have moved between the public and private sectors. The ONS advises using the data excluding the effects of reclassification when looking at changes over time, so this data is provided in the table below. For reference, including the effects of reclassification, public sector employment was 5.93 million and private sector employment was 27.24 million in December 2023.<sup>15</sup>

Excluding the effects of reclassification, the public sector employed 5.79 million people in December 2023, while private sector employment was 27.38 million.

<b>Public and private sector employment</b>		
December 2023		
	Public sector	Private sector
<b>% in each sector</b>	<b>17.5%</b>	<b>82.5%</b>
% last year	17.1%	82.9%
<b>Level (millions)</b>	<b>5.79</b>	<b>27.38</b>
Change on year	140,000	-64,000

Note: Data excludes the effects of major reclassifications

Before the start of the pandemic, the percentage of all workers who worked in the private sector had been steadily increasing since 2010. The pandemic

<sup>14</sup> ONS, [Painting the full picture: what our statistics tell us about the labour market](#), 29 January 2021

<sup>15</sup> ONS, [EMP02: Public and private sector employment](#), 16 April 2024

reversed this pattern. Since 2020, there has been an increase in the number of workers in the public sector, while private sector employment has fallen.

## 2.3

## Vacancies

Vacancies reached a record high of 1.30 million in March to May 2022.

The number of vacancies fell on the quarter to 898,000 in February to April 2024. Vacancies have been falling every quarter since March to May 2022 but were still 102,000 higher than the pre-pandemic quarter of January to March 2020.<sup>16</sup> The number of vacancies was higher than the number of unemployed people in the middle of 2022, but there were 1.6 unemployed people for every vacancy in January to March 2024.

Vacancies	
February to April 2024	
<b>Level (thousands)</b>	<b>898</b>
Change on quarter	-26,000
Change on year	-188,000

One of the earliest indicators of the impact that the pandemic was having on the labour market was a record fall in the number of job vacancies in April to June 2020. The number of vacancies in that 3-month period was at a record low of 328,000. This was 468,000 less than in January to March 2020. The Library Insight [How has the pandemic affected industries and labour in the UK?](#) looks at the trends in vacancies across different industry sectors.

After that, the number of vacancies recovered and moved back to their pre-pandemic levels in spring 2021. Vacancy levels rose quickly throughout the rest of 2021, and reached their highest level in March to May 2022 since comparable records began in 2001, before falling in recent quarters. This is a sign of labour demand gradually decreasing.

<sup>16</sup> ONS, [Vacancies and jobs in the UK](#), 14 May 2024



Source: ONS, [VACS01: Vacancies and unemployment](#)

## 3 Unemployment and economic inactivity

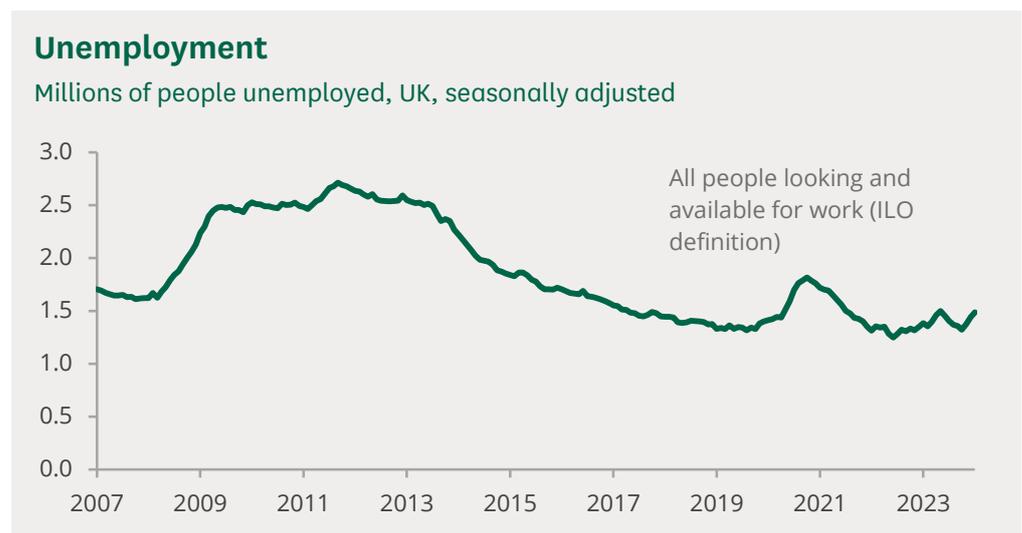
### 3.1 Unemployment

Unemployment has increased over the last year.

In January to March 2024, there were 1.49 million unemployed people in the UK. The unemployment rate (the percentage of the economically active population who are unemployed) was 4.3%.

Unemployment January to March 2024	
<b>Rate (16+)</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
Rate last year	4.0%
<b>Level (millions)</b>	<b>1.49</b>
Change on year	103,000

Prior to the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the unemployment rate was at a historically low level. The rate rose as a result of the pandemic to over 5% in late 2020, although this was much lower than the rates that were forecast at the beginning of the pandemic. In comparison, the rate exceeded 8% in late 2011 following the 2008 financial crisis.



Source: ONS, [A01: Summary of labour market statistics](#)

Looking across the **countries and regions of the UK** in January to March 2024, the unemployment rate was highest in the East Midlands (5.6%) and

lowest in Northern Ireland (2.1%). Note that smaller survey samples make regional estimates more volatile than estimates for the UK as a whole.<sup>17</sup>

## Unemployment forecasts

In March 2024, the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasted a rise in unemployment to peak at 4.5% in the final quarter of 2024.<sup>18</sup> The OBR has revised down its forecasts since November 2023, when it expected unemployment to peak at 4.6% in the second quarter of 2025.<sup>19</sup>

In its May 2024 Monetary Policy Report, the Bank of England also forecasted that unemployment would rise in 2024, up to 4.6% in Q2 2025, and 4.8% in Q2 2026.<sup>20</sup>

The Treasury's April 2024 survey of independent forecasts for the unemployment rate showed an average forecast of 4.3% for Quarter 4 2024 and 4.3% for Quarter 4 2025.<sup>21</sup>

## 3.2

## Redundancies

The number of redundancies has increased slightly over the last year to 90,000 in January to March 2024.

Redundancies	
January to March 2024	
<b>Level</b>	<b>90,000</b>
Change on year	7,100

Redundancies rose sharply during the coronavirus pandemic, and then fell equally sharply as coronavirus restrictions lifted. They fell to around 50,000 in March to May 2022, which was the lowest level since records began in 1995, with businesses finding it difficult to recruit in a tight labour market. They have increased since then and are currently around the same as pre-pandemic levels.

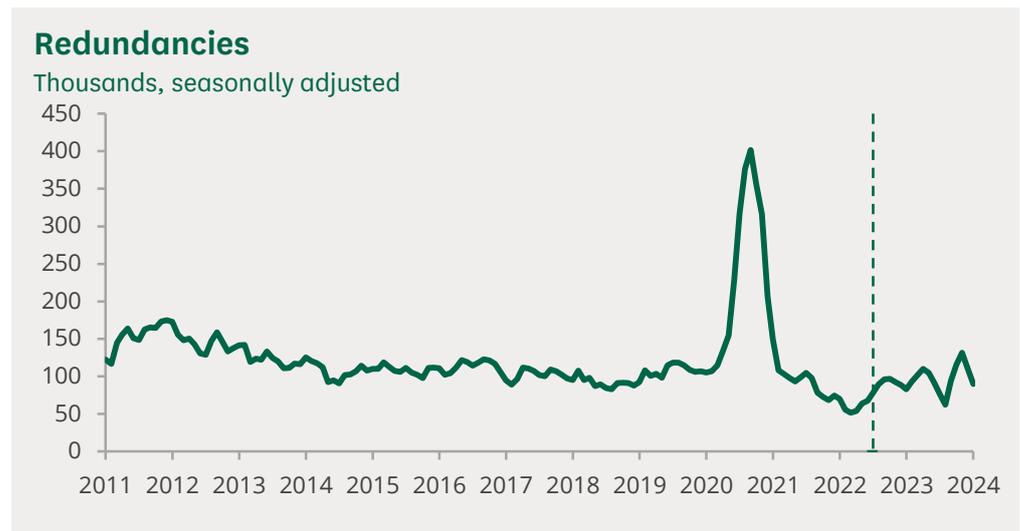
<sup>17</sup> ONS, [Labour market in the regions of the UK](#), 14 May 2024

<sup>18</sup> OBR, [Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2024](#), 6 March 2024

<sup>19</sup> OBR, [Economic and fiscal outlook](#) – 22 November 2023

<sup>20</sup> Bank of England, [Monetary Policy Report – May 2024](#), 9 May 2024

<sup>21</sup> HM Treasury, [Forecasts for the UK economy](#), 17 April 2024



Note: The dashed line indicates a break in the series.

Source: ONS, [RED01 SA: Redundancies levels and rates \(seasonally adjusted\)](#).

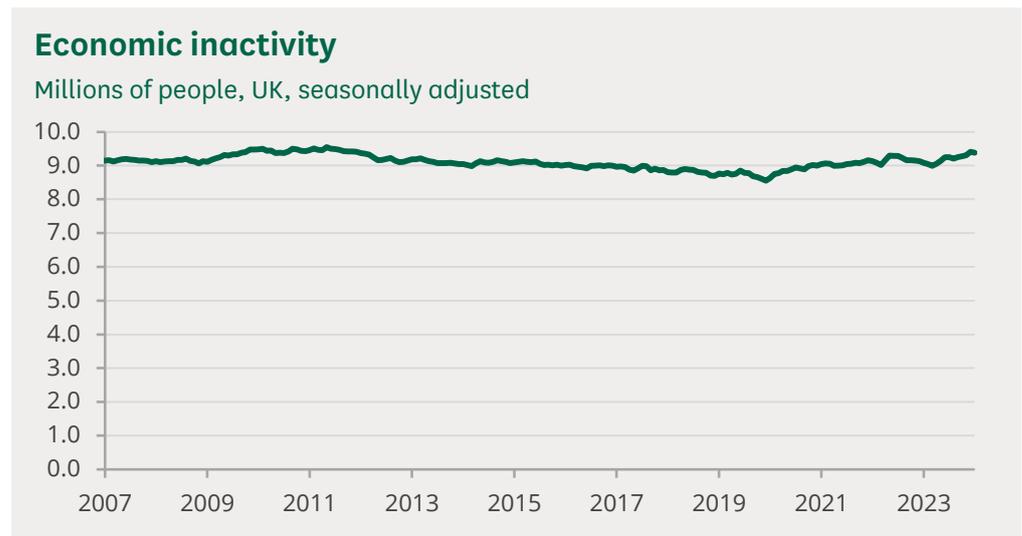
## 3.3 Economic Inactivity

In January to March 2024, there were 9.38 million people aged 16-64 in the UK who were economically inactive (not in work and not actively looking for work). The inactivity rate (the proportion of the population aged 16-64 who are economically inactive) was 22.1%.

Economic inactivity	
January to March 2024	
<b>Rate (16-64)</b>	<b>22.1%</b>
Rate last year	21.5%
<b>Level (millions)</b>	<b>9.38</b>
Change on year	302,000

As employment levels rose after 2011, the number of economically inactive people fell, but economic inactivity rose as a result of the pandemic. The number of economically inactive people in January to March 2024 was 754,000 above pre-pandemic levels in January to March 2020. As a result of high inactivity, the UK was the only G7 country where the employment rate has not reached its pre-pandemic level in Q3 2023.<sup>22</sup>

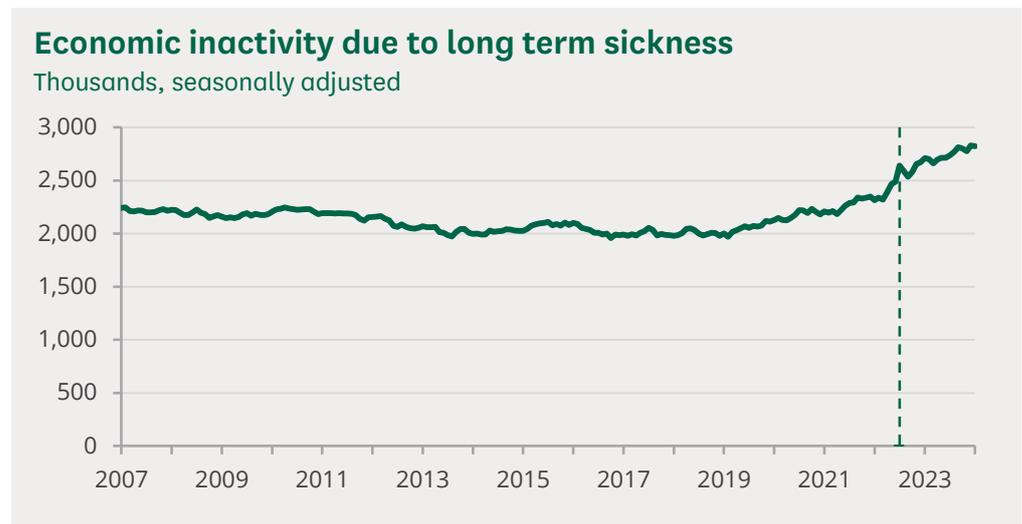
<sup>22</sup> Resolution Foundation, [A U-shaped legacy. Taking stock of trends in economic inactivity in 2024](#), 23 March 2024



Source: ONS, [A01: Summary of labour market statistics](#)

## Reasons for inactivity

Long term sickness and being a student were the leading reasons for economic inactivity in January to March 2024, with 30% of economically inactive people saying their inactivity was because of a long-term illness and 27% saying it was because they were a student. The number of economically inactive people with a long-term illness was close to its highest recorded level since comparable records began in 1993 in January to March 2024, as shown in the chart below.<sup>23</sup> Inactivity due to long term sickness has been rising since the summer of 2019. This is in contrast to the 2000s and 2010, when inactivity for this reason consistently fell.<sup>24</sup>



Note: Dashed line indicates a break in the series.

Source: ONS, [INAC01 SA: Economic inactivity by reason](#)

<sup>23</sup> ONS, [INAC01 SA: Economic inactivity by reason \(seasonally adjusted\)](#), 14 May 2024

<sup>24</sup> Resolution Foundation, [A U-shaped legacy. Taking stock of trends in economic inactivity in 2024](#), 23 March 2024

The Library Insight [How is health affecting economic inactivity?](#) provides more analysis on health as a reason for economic inactivity.

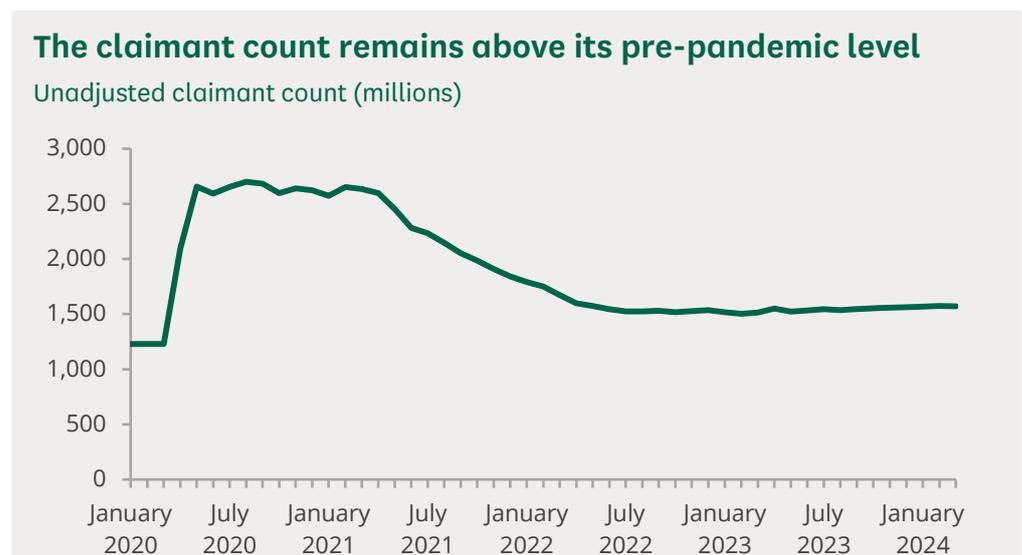
There have been large increases in inactivity since the start of the pandemic for people aged 16-24 and aged 50-64. The Library Insight [Why are young people leaving the labour market?](#) discusses why young people may not be entering the workforce after leaving education. The Library Insight [Why have older workers left the labour market?](#) provides more analysis on early retirement as a reason for inactivity.

The Resolution Foundation report [Left behind, Exploring the prevalence of youth worklessness due to ill health in different parts of the UK](#) provides data on ill-health as a reason for inactivity among young people by area. It found that young people with low levels of skills were particularly likely to be inactive due to ill health: around 80% of young people who had qualifications at GCSE-level or below.

## 3.4 People claiming unemployment benefits

In April 2024, 1.58 million people claimed unemployment related benefits, slightly more than in March, and 29,000 more than April 2023.<sup>25</sup>

The claimant count was 349,000 higher in March 2024 than it was in March 2020, when the first coronavirus lockdown began. However, as shown in the chart below, most of this increase occurred between March and May 2020. The number of claimants fell from the end of 2020 to mid-2022 and has been gradually increasing over the last year.



Source: ONS, [Claimant count](#)

<sup>25</sup> ONS, [CLA01: Claimant Count](#), 14 May 2024

The claimant count is useful for tracking changes in the labour market, although many of those who have started to claim may not be unemployed.

Constituency level claimant count figures are published in the Library briefing [People claiming unemployment benefits by constituency](#).

## 4 Earnings

There was high year-on-year growth in average pay in cash terms in the three months to March 2024. There was real-terms growth for earnings both including and excluding bonuses, at 2.1% including bonuses and 2.4% excluding bonuses.<sup>26</sup> CPI inflation averaged 3.5% in the same period.

### Annual growth in average weekly pay

Three months to February 2024

	Cash	Real
Including bonuses	5.7%	2.1%
Excluding bonuses	6.0%	2.4%

As discussed in Box 1, a tight labour market led to nominal wage growth reaching a record high, although the loosening of the labour market has led to growth falling in recent months. The Bank of England expects pay growth to slow further this year as the labour market continues to loosen.

In March 2024, the Office for Budget Responsibility forecasted nominal pay growth to be 3.4% in Q4 2024, 1.8% in Q4 2025, and 2.2% in Q4 2026.<sup>27</sup> The Bank of England expects pay growth excluding bonuses in the private sector to fall to below 5% by the second quarter of 2024.<sup>28</sup>

High inflation since 2021 has meant despite growth in nominal wages, real wages were falling until recently. The Library briefing [Rising cost of living in the UK](#) provides more detail.

<sup>26</sup> ONS, [XQ9: Real average weekly earnings using consumer price inflation \(seasonally adjusted\)](#), 14 May 2024

<sup>27</sup> OBR, [Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2024](#), Detailed forecast tables: economy, Table 1.6, 6 March 2024

<sup>28</sup> Bank of England, [Monetary Policy Report – February 2024](#), 1 February 2024



Source: ONS, [EARNQ1: Average weekly earnings](#)

The Resolution Foundation's [Labour market outlook Q2 2023](#) discusses the real terms fall in public sector pay during the rising cost of living.

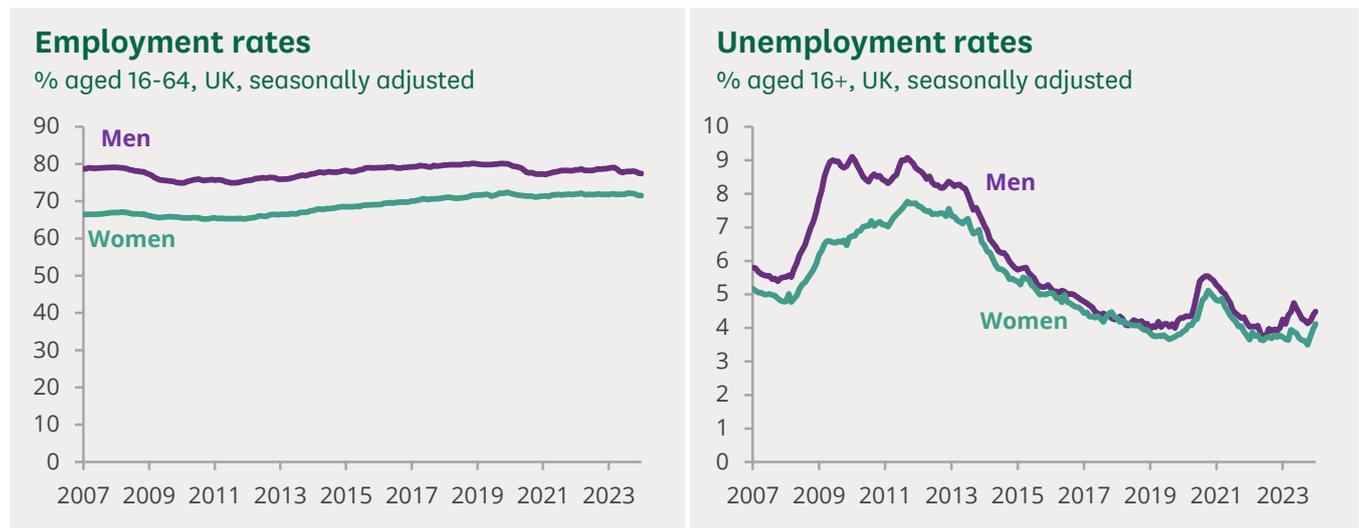
## 5 People in the labour market

### 5.1 Women and men

In January to March 2024, 15.99 million women and 17.01 million men were in employment. The female employment rate was 71.6% and the male employment rate was 77.4%.

Employment for men and women January to March 2024			
	Total	Women	Men
<b>Rate (16-64)</b>	<b>74.5%</b>	<b>71.6%</b>	<b>77.4%</b>
Rate last year	75.3%	71.8%	78.9%
<b>Level (millions)</b>	<b>33.00</b>	<b>15.99</b>	<b>17.01</b>
Change on year	-204,000	13,000	-217,000

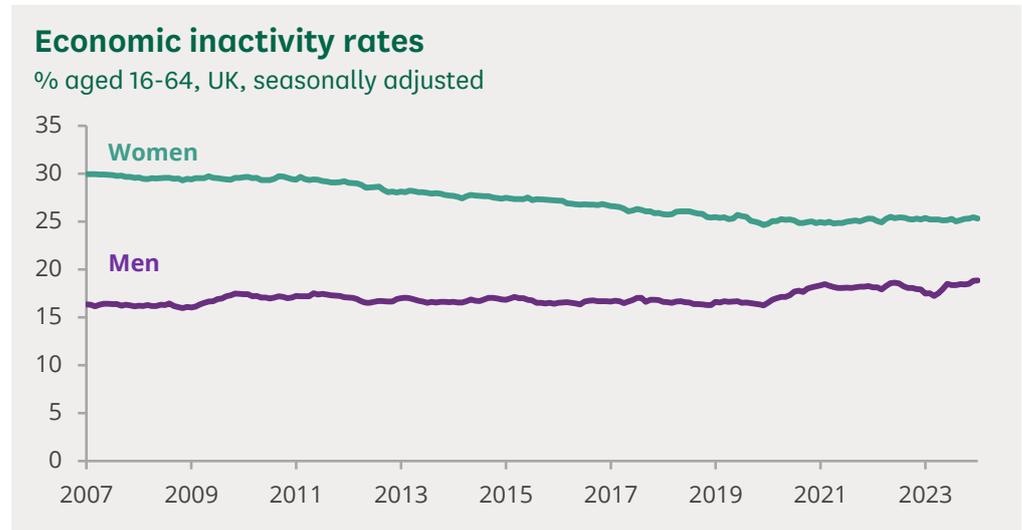
As shown in the charts below, both unemployment rates and employment rates are higher for men than for women. The gap for unemployment, however, is now very small.



Source: ONS, [A05 SA: Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by age group \(seasonally adjusted\)](#)

Economic inactivity rates are higher for women: in January to March 2024, the percentage of women aged 16-64 who were not in work and not looking for work was 25.3%, compared to 18.8% for men.

The gap between the rates for men and women has been narrowing steadily due to a fall in the number of women who are economically inactive. As there has been a flow from inactivity to employment for women, this has meant that the employment gap between men and women has also been closing steadily in recent years.



Source: ONS, [A05 SA: Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by age group \(seasonally adjusted\)](#)

Increases in the employment rate for women over recent years are partly due to changes to the State Pension age.<sup>29</sup>

## 5.2 Young people

In January to March 2024, 540,000 young people aged 16-24 were unemployed, a rate of 13.0%. By historical standards, unemployment levels for young people remain low.<sup>30</sup>

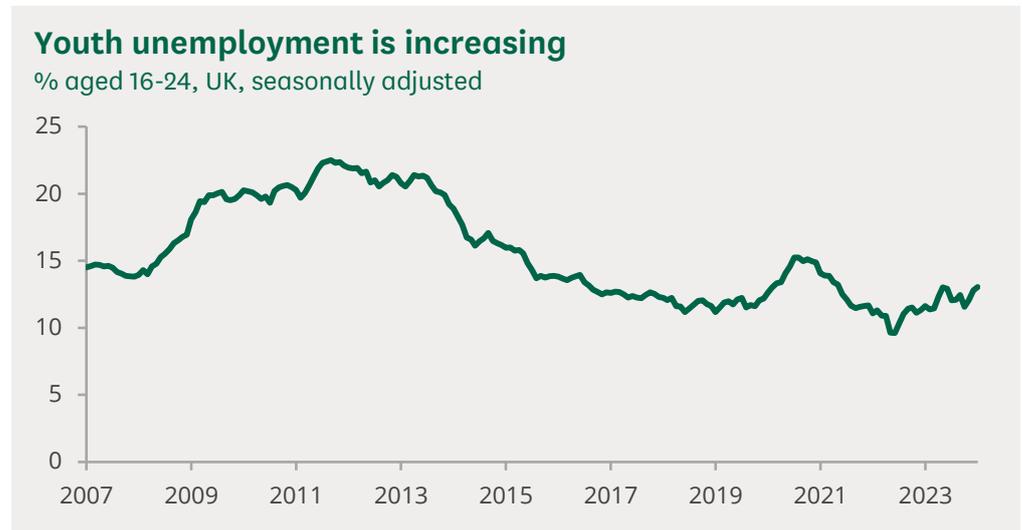
<b>Youth unemployment</b>	
January to March 2024	
<b>Rate (16+)</b>	<b>13.0%</b>
Rate last year	11.6%
<b>Level</b>	<b>540,000</b>
Change on year	33,000

<sup>29</sup> Library briefing [Increases in the State Pension age for women born in the 1950s](#) provides more information.

<sup>30</sup> ONS, [A06 SA: Educational status and labour market status for people aged from 16 to 24](#), 14 May 2024

In the months following the start of the pandemic there was a large fall in employment levels for young people aged 16-24, and this was followed by a rise in unemployment.

Unemployment levels for young people started to fall after that to below pre-pandemic levels before rising again. In 2023 and 2024 it has generally been a similar to pre-pandemic levels.



Source: ONS [Table A06 SA](#): Educational status and labour market status for people aged from 16 to 24

Library briefing [Youth unemployment statistics](#) provides more detail on this subject.

## 5.3 Ethnic groups

The unemployment rate for minority ethnic groups (7.9%) in January to March 2024 was more than double the rate for White ethnic groups (3.6%).<sup>31</sup>

In January to March 2024 rates were highest for people from Pakistani (10.8%) and Black (8.6%) ethnic groups and lowest for White ethnic groups (3.6%). The UK unemployment rate was 4.3% in the same period.

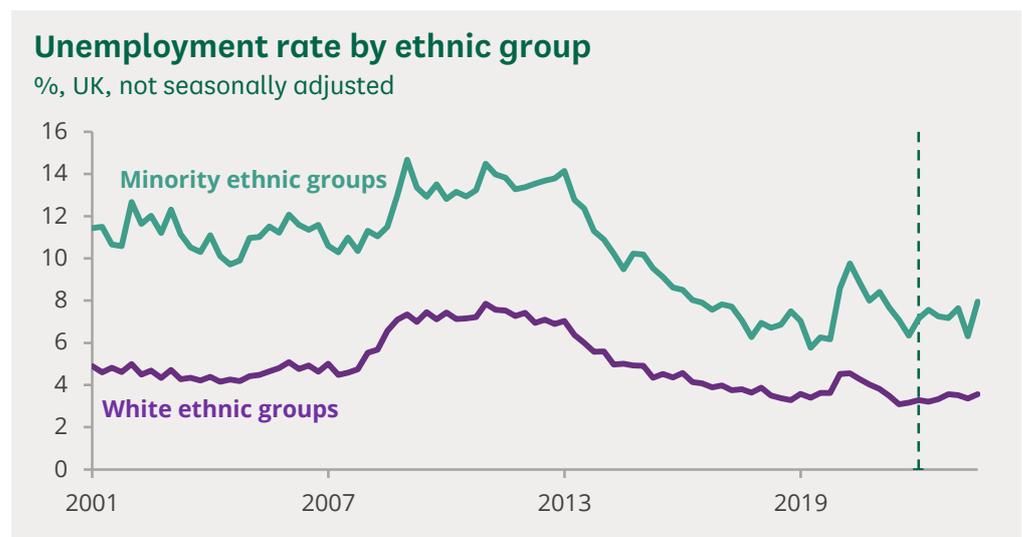
<sup>31</sup> ONS, UK labour market, [Table A09](#), 14 May 2024

Unemployment by ethnic group	
January to March 2024	
	Rate
White	3.6%
Indian	5.5%
Bangladeshi	5.6%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	7.7%
Other	8.4%
Black	8.6%
Chinese	9.4%
Pakistani	10.8%

Unemployment rates vary substantially between ethnic groups, although small survey sample sizes mean that the unemployment rates can be unreliable for these groups. The chart below groups all minority ethnic groups together to improve reliability.

Before the pandemic, the gap between unemployment for White ethnic groups and minority ethnic groups was gradually narrowing, but the pandemic reversed this trend. Unemployment rates for minority ethnic groups increased from 6.3% in the pre-pandemic quarter January to March 2020, to a high of 9.8% in October to December 2020. In comparison, the unemployment rate for people from a White ethnic group increased from 3.6% to a high of 4.6%.

The gap narrowed after the pandemic as the unemployment rate for minority ethnic groups returned to pre-pandemic levels in April to June 2022. It has stayed at a similar level in recent quarters. Note that fluctuations between quarters are likely to be due to survey error.



Note: dashed line indicates a break in the series.

Source: ONS, UK labour market, [Table A09](#), 14 May 2024

Library briefing [Unemployment by ethnic background](#) provides more detail on this subject.

## 5.4

### Nationality

In January to March 2024, the employment rate for all non-UK nationals was 74.7%, compared to a rate of 74.4% for UK nationals. Nationals of EU countries had an employment rate of 80.7%, compared to 70.0% for non-EU nationals.<sup>32</sup>

<b>Employment by nationality</b>				
January to March 2024				
	UK	Non-UK	EU	Non-EU
<b>Rate (16-64)</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>74.7%</b>	<b>80.7%</b>	<b>70.0%</b>
Rate last year	75.3%	75.3%	82.1%	69.2%
<b>Level (millions)</b>	<b>28.53</b>	<b>4.45</b>	<b>2.09</b>	<b>2.35</b>
Change on year	-432,000	200,000	-78,000	279,000

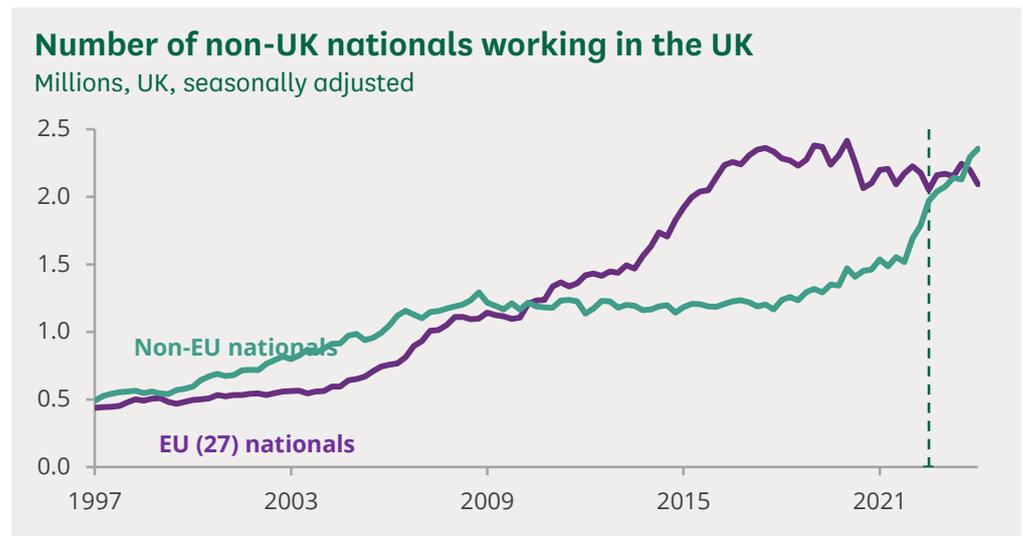
In January to March 2024, there were 4.45 million people working in the UK who were not UK nationals, 13.5% of all people in employment. This included:

- 2.09 million people who were nationals of the 27 EU countries (6.3%)
- 2.35 million people who were nationals of countries outside the EU (7.1%)

The chart below shows that there were big increases in the number of EU nationals in work up to the end of 2017, but numbers have since been falling in response to Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic. The number of non-EU nationals in work has been steadily increasing in recent years.

Compared to the pre-pandemic quarter of January to March 2020, there was a fall in employment of around half a million for UK nationals. There was also a fall for EU nationals of around 300,000, but an increase for non-EU nationals of around 900,000, meaning the increase in employment for non-UK nationals was around 600,000.

<sup>32</sup> ONS, [EMP06: Employment by country of birth and nationality](#), 14 May 2024



Note: dashed line indicates break in the series

Source: ONS, [EMP06: Employment by country of birth and nationality](#), 14 May 2024

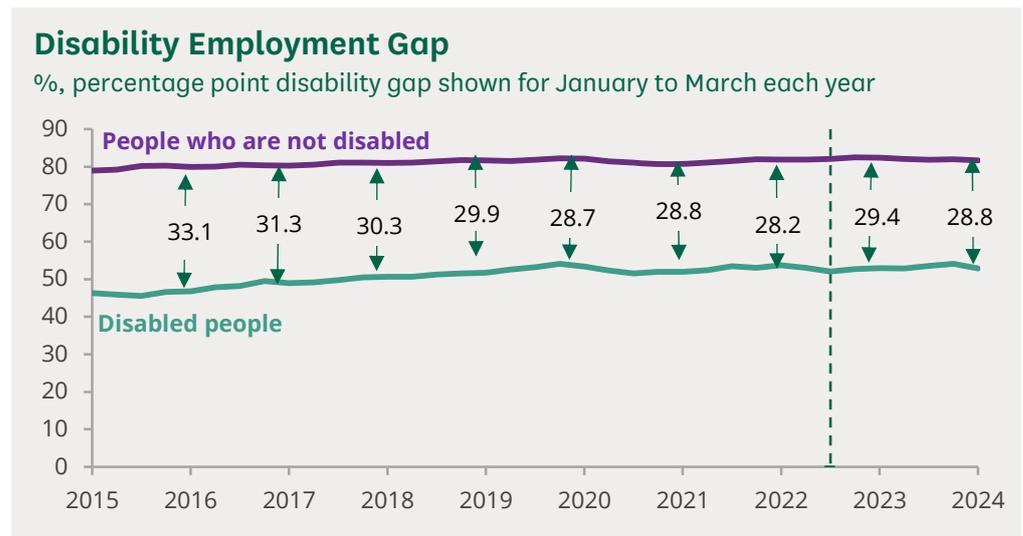
## 5.5

### Disability

In January to March 2024, the employment rate for disabled people was 52.9% and the rate for people who are not disabled was 81.7%, meaning that the disability employment gap (the difference in the employment rate of disabled people and people who are not disabled) was 28.8 percentage points.

Between January to March 2014 and January to March 2024, the disability employment gap reduced by around 5 percentage points. This has been because the employment rate for disabled people has been rising faster than the employment rate for people who are not disabled.

The gap increased slightly during the coronavirus pandemic.



Note: dashed line indicates a break in the series

Source: ONS, [Table A08: Labour market status of disabled people](#), 14 May 2024

Library briefing [Disabled people in employment](#) provides more detail on this subject.

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