

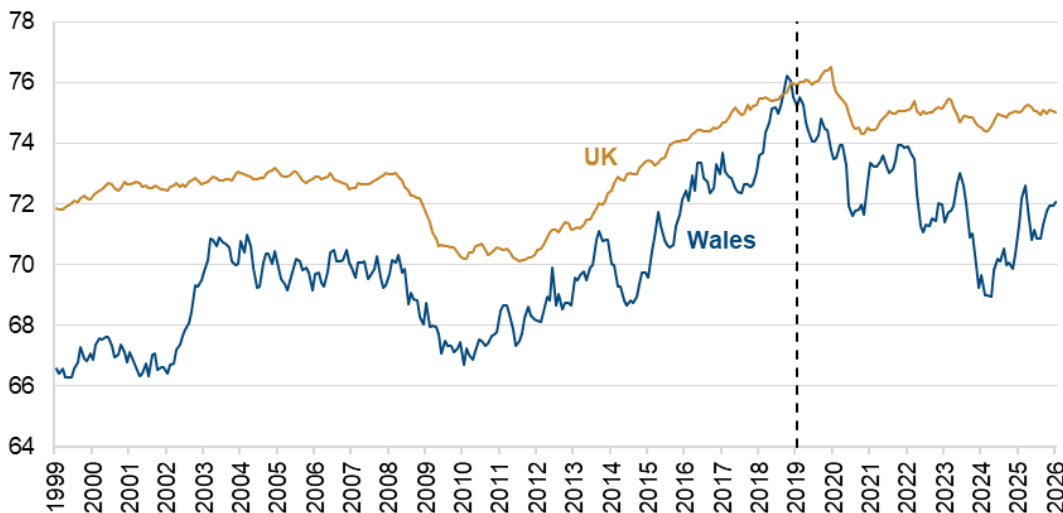
21 May 2026  
SB 17/2026

## Labour market overview, May 2026

### Main points

- Early estimates from HMRC show that in April 2026 the number of paid employees in Wales decreased by 5,100 (0.4%) over the month to 1.30 million.
- The claimant count now (April 2026) stands at 65,300, an increase of 1.7% compared to the same month in the previous year. This is a rate of 4.2%, up 0.1 percentage points over the same period.
- Latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for Wales for the 3 months to March 2026 show an increase in employment and economic inactivity and a decrease in unemployment over the year.
- However, there were no statistically significant changes for the LFS headline labour market indicators as shown in Table 1. This suggests that the changes for these indicators are unlikely to reflect a real change in the data.

**Figure 1: employment rate (percentage of population age 16 to 64), 3 months to March 1999 to the 3 months to March 2026**



Description of Figure 1: a line chart showing the employment rate in Wales and the UK from 1999 onwards. During this time period, the employment rate in Wales has generally remained lower than the UK. Both the rates in Wales and the UK have increased overall since 1999.

Note: data for the period January to March 2019 onwards are not comparable with previous periods due to a discontinuity in the time series following a reweighting of the data.

Source: LFS, ONS

### About this bulletin

This monthly bulletin is a compendium publication that brings together data sources and indicators to provide an overview of the Welsh labour market.

We've made some changes to the content of this bulletin, please see the [Changes to this publication section](#) for further information.

Supporting material:  
[Welsh Economy in Numbers](#)

### In this bulletin

<a href="#">Employment &amp; Jobs</a>	6
<a href="#">Unemployment</a>	18
<a href="#">Economic Inactivity</a>	24

## Contents

Main points .....	1
Changes to this publication .....	3
Quality of the LFS .....	3
1. Employment and jobs .....	6
Main points .....	6
Employment (LFS and APS, ONS) .....	6
Real Time Pay Information (HMRC) .....	8
Workforce Jobs (ONS) .....	10
2. Unemployment .....	11
Main points .....	11
Unemployment (LFS and APS, ONS) .....	11
Claimant count (DWP) .....	13
3. Economic inactivity .....	14
Main points .....	14
Economic inactivity (LFS and APS, ONS) .....	14
4. Quality information .....	16
4.1 Relevance .....	16
4.2 Accuracy .....	17
4.3 Timeliness and punctuality .....	20
4.4 Accessibility and clarity .....	21
4.5 Comparability and coherence .....	22
Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS) .....	22
Employment and Workforce Jobs .....	22
ILO Unemployment and Claimant Count .....	22
Redundancies .....	22
4.6 Technical notes .....	23
4.7 Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics .....	23
4.8 Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG) .....	25
4.9 Further details .....	26
Links .....	26
Next update .....	26
We want your feedback .....	27
Open Government Licence .....	27

## Changes to this publication

We recently consulted on the content of this publication. There was broad support for reducing the level of detail included in this bulletin whilst still reporting on the main points for relevant data sources. We have started implementing these changes, through making alterations to the bulletin and reducing the level of content from this release onwards. The changes being made include:

- Removing sections covering:
  - The number of hours worked
  - Online job adverts
  - Universal credit
- Reducing the level of detail on:
  - Annual Population Survey (APS) labour market statistics
  - Public sector employment
  - Workforce jobs
  - HMRC Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) data on the number of employees in Wales by industry, local authority and age group
- Publishing a separate quality information report to reduce the size of the quality section included within this report.

We continue to signpost to data available on the removed and reduced sections within the Accessibility and Clarity section (Section 4.4) of the bulletin. For further information please see the [response to the consultation on proposed changes to Welsh Government statistics outputs](#).

## Quality of the LFS

The latest updates from the ONS on the [quality of the Labour Force Survey](#) and the [planned improvements for economic statistics](#), both published in April 2026, include information on the actions ONS have been and continue to take to improve the quality of the LFS and labour market statistics. For further information on the interventions ONS have made to improve the quality of LFS and Annual Population Survey (APS) labour market estimates and our advice on using these statistics for Wales, please see the latest [Chief Statistician's update: measuring the labour market in Wales](#).

Estimates from January to March 2025 fully reflect improvements to LFS data collection introduced from January 2024, though volatility remains, especially for mid-2023, 2024, and smaller breakdowns, so ONS advise caution when interpreting short-term changes and a focus on longer-term trends is recommended. While the LFS represents the primary labour market data source, LFS based statistics will remain as 'official statistics in development', and we recommend that users consider LFS estimates alongside other labour market data sources such as those presented in this report (annual population survey (APS), workforce jobs, claimant count, HMRC PAYE RTI data).

The APS has seen a fall in sample sizes over recent years. Given this and the fact that the survey has not been reweighted to latest population estimates, [the Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\) has agreed that the accredited official statistics status should be temporarily suspended](#) and that the estimates should be re-designated as official statistics (OSR).

It is still appropriate to use these statistics, however users should note the increased uncertainty around estimates derived from the APS. At a national level, estimates continue to provide a reasonable indication of trends for Wales, particularly if used as part of a basket of indicators with alternative sources such as HMRC real time information on paid employees, data on workforce jobs, and the claimant count. Estimates for smaller geographies or population sub-groups, however, are less reliable.

The LFS is a sample survey and, as such, estimates obtained from it are subject to sampling variability. If we drew many samples, each would give a different result. Please note statistical significance and confidence intervals are only available for headline labour market indicators.

Table 1 shows the variability of the estimates, quarterly change and annual change using 95% confidence intervals. It is expected that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value. If none of the reported changes over the year or the quarter were statistically significant, then the recorded changes did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size.

More information about statistical significance and the accuracy of estimates is available in section 4.2 of [Quality Information](#).

**Table 1: estimates, confidence intervals and statistical significance for Labour Market Indicators in Wales, January to March 2026**

	Latest Data		Quarterly Change			Annual Change		
	Estimate	Confidence Interval	Change	Confidence interval	Significance	Change	Confidence interval	Significance
Employment Rate <sup>1</sup>	72.1%	+/-2.4ppts	0.3ppts	+/-3.1ppts	Not Statistically Significant	0.8ppts	+/-3.5ppts	Not Statistically Significant
Unemployment Rate <sup>2</sup>	3.6%	+/-1.1ppts	-0.9ppts	+/-1.6ppts	Not Statistically Significant	-1.5ppts	+/-1.8ppts	Not Statistically Significant
Economic Inactivity Rate <sup>1</sup>	25.1%	+/-2.3ppts	0.2ppts	+/-3.1ppts	Not Statistically Significant	0.4ppts	+/-3.3ppts	Not Statistically Significant

Source: WG analysis of Labour Force Survey, ONS

<sup>1</sup> Rates are the proportion of the total population aged 16-64.

<sup>2</sup> Rate is the proportion of the economically active population aged 16 and over.

Table 1 shows there were no statistically significant changes for headline labour market indicators in Wales for the three months to March 2026. This suggests that the quarterly and annual changes for the headline labour market indicators are unlikely to reflect a real change in the data.

Due to the lack of statistically significant estimates and volatile figures in the LFS, employment, unemployment and economic inactivity figures by sex have been removed from this bulletin.

Labour market estimates by sex, age, region, disability and ethnicity are available in the [Labour market statistics \(Annual Population Survey\)](#) release.

Given the challenges outlined above, ONS are introducing a new Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS) which they plan to become the main data source for information on the labour market in the UK and Wales in the future. ONS announced in the [latest update](#) they have now implemented all agreed major changes to the design of the TLFS across the core and plus surveys in order to strengthen data quality, and that they will continue the parallel running of the TLFS and LFS while TLFS development continues. A readiness assessment of the TLFS will be conducted with main users in July 2026 to inform final design decisions, with the earliest transition of headline labour market statistics most likely to be in 2027. In the meantime, ONS will continue to use the LFS as its lead measure of the labour market, **however for Wales we continue to recommend that consideration should be given to the trends exhibited by other sources.**

The LFS is the primary sources for estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity in the UK, whereas HMRC PAYE RTI data currently provides the most reliable measure of employees. For Wales, the APS provides a more robust estimate of the labour due to the larger sample size.

# 1. Employment and jobs

## Main points

- The employment rate in Wales was 72.1% (approximately 1.49 million) in January to March 2026. This is up 0.3 percentage points on the quarter and up 0.8 percentage points on the year. (LFS, ONS).
- According to the APS, the employment rate for people aged 16 to 64 in Wales was 72.5% in the year ending December 2025, down 0.3 percentage points on the previous year. The UK rate was 75.5%, up 0.2 percentage points over the year. (APS, ONS).
- Early estimates for April 2026 indicate that the number of paid employees in Wales has decreased by 5,100 (0.4%) over the month to 1.30 million. (Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, HMRC).
- There were 333,000 people employed in the public sector in Wales in December 2025, an increase of 2,000 (0.6%) from a year earlier. (Regional Public Sector Employment, ONS).
- The number of workforce jobs in Wales in December 2025 was 1.46 million, a decrease of 700 (0.0% to 1 decimal place) over the year. (Workforce Jobs, ONS).

## Employment (LFS and APS, ONS)

**Employment:** people aged 16 to 64 who did at least one hour of paid work in the reference week (whether as an employee or self-employed); those who had a paid job that they were temporarily away from; those on government-supported training and employee programmes and those doing unpaid family work.

**Annual Population Survey:** The APS comprises the main variables from the LFS and covers 12-monthly periods, resulting in a larger sample size than the LFS and producing more robust and reliable labour market estimates. APS data are published every quarter for a rolling annual period.

**Note:** During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic figures for employment include employees who have been furloughed.

## Labour Force Survey

The employment rate began to fall in early 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic but returned to pre-pandemic levels in early 2021. Following a period in 2021 when the employment rate was broadly stable it has been volatile since.

**Figure 1.1: employment rate, persons (percentage of those aged 16 to 64), 3 months to March 2016 to the 3 months to March 2026**



Description of figure 1.1: a line chart showing the fluctuating employment rates in both Wales and the UK over the last ten years, with the UK generally having a higher employment rate than Wales. The Welsh rate has seen an overall increase since the end of 2024 however the series has been volatile since 2020.

Note: data for the period January to March 2019 onwards are not comparable with previous periods due to a discontinuity in the time series following a reweighting of the data.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of LFS

There were 1.49 million people in employment in Wales in January to March 2026, up 21,800 (1.5%) from the same period a year earlier. This is a rate of 72.1% of those aged 16 to 64, which is up 0.3 percentage points on the previous quarter and up 0.8 percentage points on the previous year.

Over the year, the employment level in the UK increased by 416,400 (1.2%) to 34.4 million. This is a rate of 75.0% of those aged 16 to 64, which is 2.9 percentage points higher than the employment rate for Wales (based on unrounded figures). The trend in employment rates have differed between Wales and the UK in recent periods, however the changes for Wales are not statistically significant and should be considered alongside the longer-term trend.

### Annual Population Survey

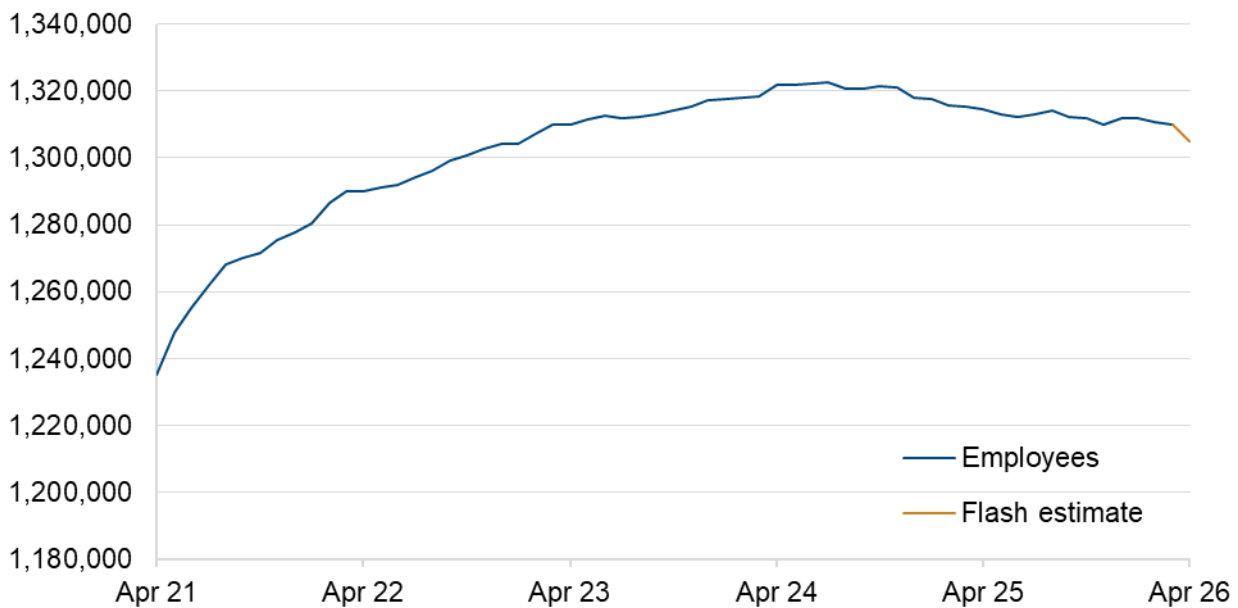
According to the APS, there were 1.47 million employed people aged 16 and over in Wales in the year ending December 2025. This is an employment rate of 72.5% of those aged 16 to 64, down 0.3 percentage points on the previous year. The UK rate was 75.5%, up 0.2 percentage points over the year. For further information on APS labour market estimates please see our [Labour market statistics \(Annual Population Survey\)](#) release.

## Real Time Pay Information (HMRC)

**HMRC's Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI):** These data come from HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) system. They cover the whole population rather than a sample of people or companies, and they will allow for more detailed estimates of the population. PAYE RTI covers employees payrolled by employers only. It does not cover self-employment income or income from other sources such as pensions, property rental and investments. Where individuals have multiple sources of income, only income from employers is included.

The ONS and HMRC publish [data for Wales on payrolled employees, mean pay, aggregate pay and single month estimates for median pay \(ONS\)](#).

**Figure 1.2: paid employees, Wales, April 2021 to April 2026**



Description of figure 1.2: a line chart showing the number of paid employees in Wales has decreased over the last year following a steady increase since 2021.

Source: Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, HMRC.

The number of paid employees in Wales has seen an overall increase since early 2021. Early estimates for April 2026 indicate that the number of paid employees in Wales has decreased by 5,100 (0.4%) over the month to 1.30 million.

At a UK level, early estimates for April 2026 showed a monthly decrease of 100,000 (0.3%).

HMRC also publish updates on the [number of employees in Wales by local authority, age and industry](#) on a rolling monthly basis. Latest published data shows:

In April 2026, the energy production and supply sector had the largest increase in the number of paid employees when compared to the previous year, increasing by 4.4%. The largest decrease over the same period was in the households and extraterritorial sector, decreasing by 3.8%.

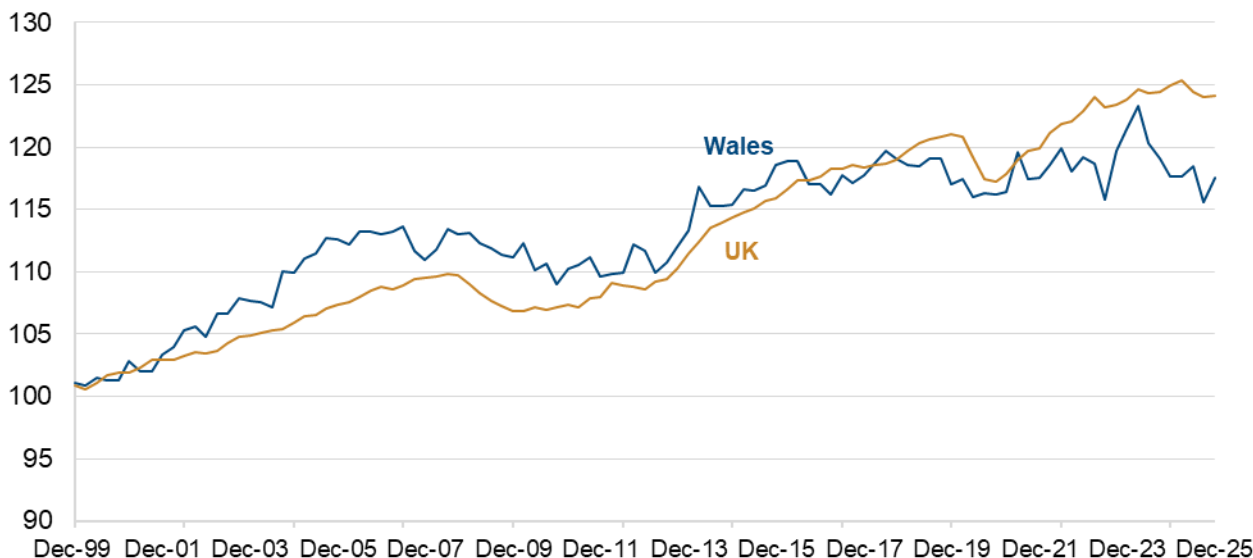
In March 2026, the age groups: under 18, 25 to 34 and 50 to 64 all experienced decreases in the number of paid employees (6.3%, 2.1% and 1.3% respectively) when compared to the previous year. The age groups: 18 to 24, 35 to 49, and over 65 all experienced increases (0.6%, 1.3% and 4.2% respectively) over the same period, with the 65 and over age group having the largest percentage increase.

In February 2026, 8 of the 22 Welsh local authority areas saw an increase in the number of paid employees when compared with the same month in the previous year. The largest increases were in Denbighshire (1.0%), Wrexham (0.7%) and Ceredigion (0.6%) and the largest decreases were in Torfaen (-1.1%) and Swansea (-1.0%).

## Workforce Jobs (ONS)

**Workforce Jobs:** The number of people with jobs is not the same as the number of jobs. This is because a person can have more than one job. The number of people with jobs is measured by the LFS. The number of jobs is measured by Workforce Jobs (WFJ) and is the sum of employee jobs from employer surveys, self-employment jobs from the LFS, those in HM Forces and government- supported trainees. The LFS and WFJ measures are reconciled each quarter and jobs vacancies are measured separately by the Vacancy Survey.

**Figure 1.3: workforce jobs (Index 1999=100), December 1999 to December 2025**



Description of figure 1.3: a line chart showing that the number of workforce jobs in both Wales and the UK have generally increased since 1999. The trend in workforce jobs for both Wales and the UK have remained generally comparable since 1999, despite the Wales series being more volatile.

The number of workforce jobs in Wales in December 2025 was 1.46 million, a decrease of 700 (0.0% to 1 decimal place) over the year. The number of workforce jobs in the UK decreased over the year by 266,200 (0.7%) to 36.6 million and has increased by 6.85 million (23.1%) since December 1999.

The number of self-employment jobs in Wales in December 2025 was 151,600, a decrease of 19,800 (11.5%) over the year. However, it is important to note the volatility of this series. The estimate of the number of self-employment jobs in the UK in December 2025 was 4.04 million (11.0% of workforce jobs), down 241,600 (5.6%) over the year.

In December 2025, human health & social work activities accounted for 16.7% of workforce jobs in Wales, the highest of any industry. This was followed by wholesale & retail trade with 12.8% of workforce jobs.

## 2. Unemployment

### Main points

- In January to March 2026, the unemployment rate in Wales was 3.6% (approximately 56,300 people). This is down 0.9 percentage points on the quarter and down 1.5 percentage points on the year. (LFS, ONS).
- According to the APS, the unemployment rate for people aged 16 and over in Wales was 4.5% in the year ending December 2025, an increase of 1.2 percentage points compared with the previous year. The UK rate was 4.4%, an increase of 0.6 percentage points over the year. (APS, ONS).
- The claimant count in Wales was 65,300 in April 2026, an increase of 1.7% compared to the same month in the previous year. This is a rate of 4.2%, up 0.1 percentage points over the same period (based on unrounded figures). (Jobcentre Plus Administration System, Department for Work and Pensions)

### Unemployment (LFS and APS, ONS)

**Unemployment:** The number of unemployed people in the UK is measured through the LFS following the internationally agreed definition recommended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) – an agency of the United Nations. Unemployed people are without a job, have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks; or are out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks.

The headline unemployment rate is calculated by dividing the unemployment level for those aged 16 and over by the total number of economically active people aged 16 and over.

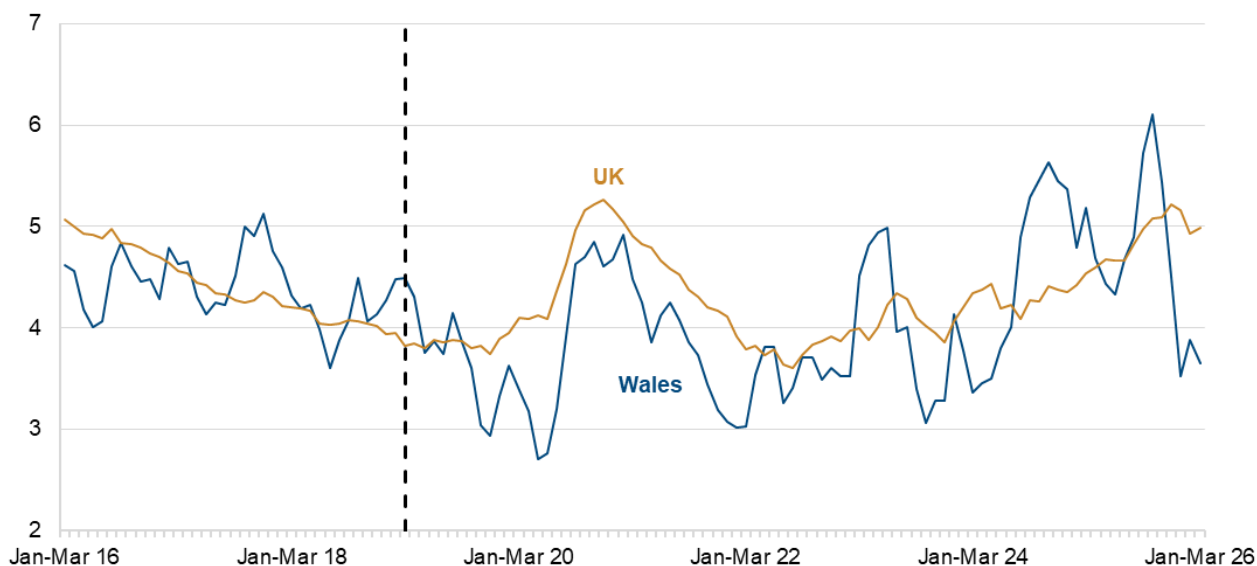
**Annual Population Survey:** The APS comprises the main variables from the LFS and covers 12-monthly periods, resulting in a larger sample size than the LFS and producing more robust and reliable labour market estimates. APS data are published every quarter for a rolling annual period.

### Labour Force Survey

Historically the Welsh unemployment rate has generally tracked the UK rate and had been gradually falling since the early 2010s, before rising sharply as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. In August to October 2019, the Welsh unemployment rate fell below the UK rate and remained below until March to May 2022. Since then, the Wales rate has fluctuated around the UK rate, despite volatility in the data.

Please note in recent years the data presented for the number of those unemployed and the unemployment rate have shown particularly high volatility as the number of unemployed people, as well as the sample sizes, have dropped. Due to this volatility, short-term changes should be considered alongside longer-term trends where possible.

**Figure 2.1: ILO unemployment rate (percentage of economically active population), 3 months to March 2016 to the 3 months to March 2026**



Description of Figure 2.1: a line chart showing that the unemployment rate in both Wales and the UK have shown similar movements, however the unemployment rate in Wales has fluctuated more than the UK rate.

Note: data for the period January to March 2019 onwards are not comparable with previous periods due to a discontinuity in the time series following a reweighting of the data.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Labour Force Survey

During January to March 2026 there were 56,300 unemployed people in Wales, this is a rate of 3.6% of the economically active population, down 0.9 percentage points compared to the previous quarter and down 1.5 percentage points compared to a year earlier. Short term changes in the unemployment rate should be considered alongside longer-term trends where possible due to the volatility of the series.

There were 1.81 million unemployed people in the UK in January to March 2026, this is a rate of 5.0%, an increase of 0.5 percentage points compared to the previous year.

### Annual Population Survey

According to the APS, there were 69,000 unemployed people aged 16 and over in Wales in the year ending December 2025. This is an unemployment rate of 4.5% of the economically active population, an increase of 1.2 percentage points compared with the previous year. The UK rate was 4.4%, an increase of 0.6 percentage points over the year. For further information on APS labour market estimates please see our [Labour market statistics \(Annual Population Survey\)](#) release.

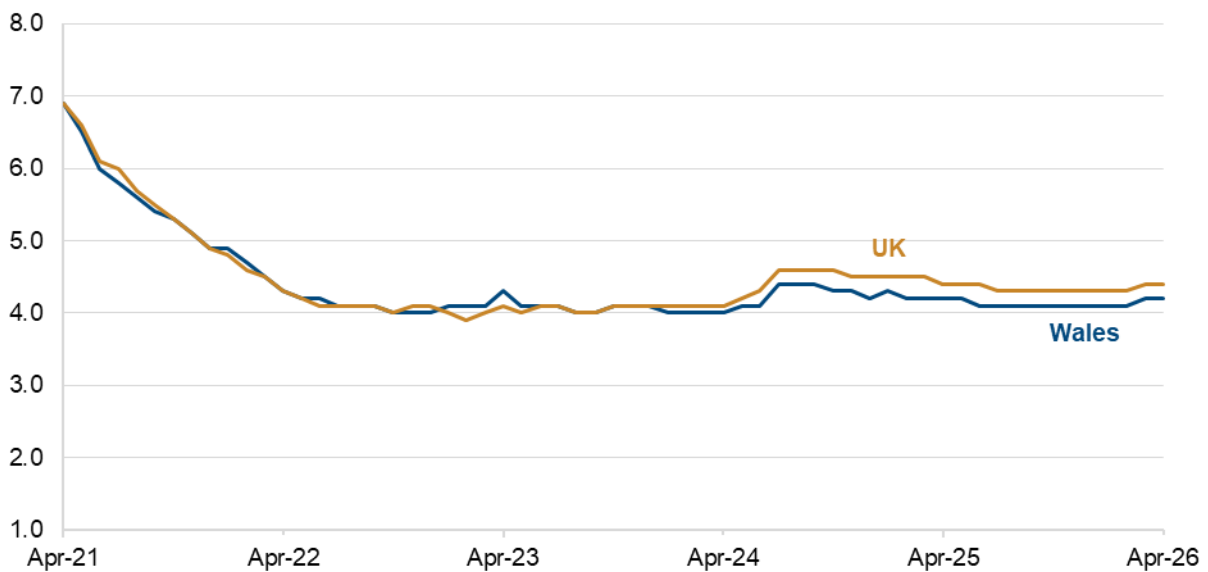
## Claimant count (DWP)

**Claimant Count:** The number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits. Between 1996 and 2013, the Claimant Count was measured using claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance. In 2013 a new benefit, Universal Credit, which will replace a number of means-tested benefits, including the means-tested element of Jobseeker's Allowance, began to be rolled out. From the introduction of Universal Credit, those claimants who were receiving the benefit for unemployment reasons have been included in the Claimant Count.

The claimant count rate is the number of claimants resident in an area as a percentage of the sum of claimants and workforce jobs in the country or region.

Official statistics in development are official statistics that are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed, these will potentially have a wider degree of uncertainty.

**Figure 2.2: claimant count rates (percentage of civilian workforce), April 2021 to April 2026**



Description of Figure 2.2: a line chart showing the claimant count rate for Wales and the UK over the past 5 years. The claimant count rate decreased in 2021 and 2022 for both Wales and the UK, followed by a slight increase in 2024 after a period of stability. Since then, the rates in both Wales and the UK have been relatively stable, with Wales showing an overall decrease over this time period.

Source: Jobcentre Plus Administration System, Department for Work and Pensions

In April 2026 the claimant count was 65,300 in Wales, up 1,100 (1.7%) compared to the previous month and up 1,100 (1.7%) over the year. This is a claimant count rate of 4.2%, up 0.1 percentage points compared to the previous month and up 0.1 percentage points compared to the previous year (based on unrounded figures). The claimant count rate in the UK was 4.4% in April 2026.

### 3. Economic inactivity

#### Main points

- In January to March 2026, the economic inactivity rate in Wales was 25.1% (approximately 490,400 people). This is up 0.2 percentage points on the quarter and up 0.4 percentage points on the year. (LFS, ONS).
- According to the APS, the economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64 in Wales was 24.0% in the year ending December 2025, down 0.7 percentage points over the year. The UK rate was 20.9%, down 0.7 percentage points over the year. (APS, ONS).

#### Economic inactivity (LFS and APS, ONS)

**Economic Inactivity:** Economically inactive people are those without a job who have not actively sought work in the last four weeks, and/or are not available to start work in the next two weeks.

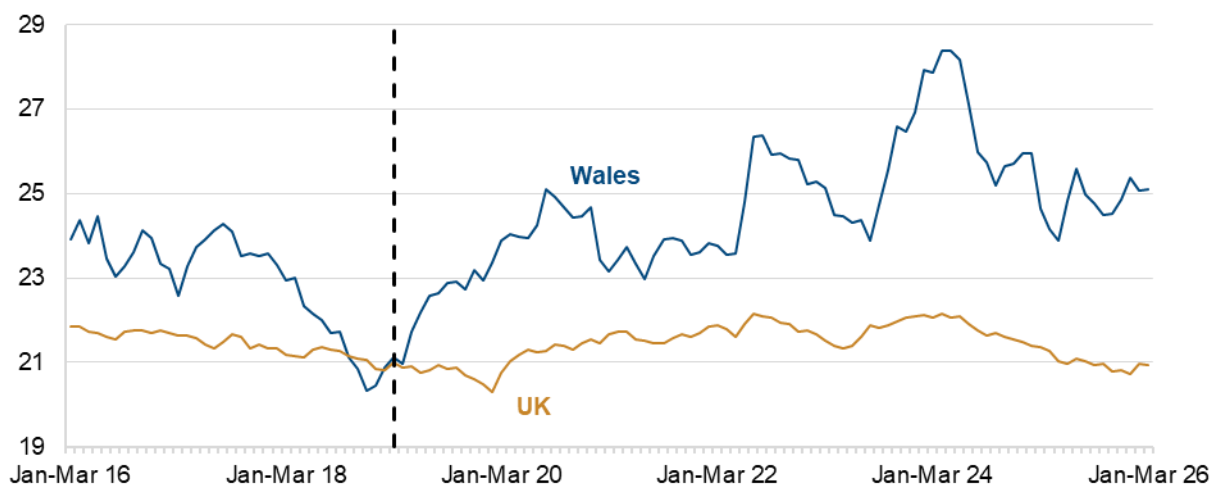
The headline inactivity rate is calculated by dividing the inactivity level for those aged from 16 to 64 divided by the population for that age group.

**Annual Population Survey:** The APS comprises the main variables from the LFS and covers 12-monthly periods, resulting in a larger sample size than the LFS and producing more robust and reliable labour market estimates. APS data are published every quarter for a rolling annual period.

#### Labour Force Survey

Inactivity rates in Wales have been persistently higher than the UK for decades but fell steeply to below the UK rate at the end of 2018. The rate in Wales generally rose until mid-2020 and then decreased as it corresponded with opposite movements in the employment rate (figure 1.1). Since 2022, the economic inactivity rate in Wales has become increasingly volatile, with large changes in the series being seen over recent years.

**Figure 3.1: economic inactivity rate, persons (percentage of those aged 16 to 64), 3 months to March 2016 to the 3 months to March 2026**



Description of Figure 3.1: a line chart showing over the past ten years inactivity rates in Wales have been more volatile than in the UK, with the rate in Wales remaining higher than the UK since December to February 2019.

Note: data for the period January to March 2019 onwards are not comparable with previous periods due to a discontinuity in the time series following a reweighting of the data.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of LFS

There were 490,400 people in Wales who were economically inactive in January to March 2026, down 11,500 (2.4%) from the same period a year earlier. This is a rate of 25.1% of those aged 16 to 64, up 0.2 percentage points over the quarter and up 0.4 percentage points compared to the same period a year earlier. The number of economically inactive people in the UK decreased by 126,400 (1.4%) over the year to 9.10 million. This is a rate of 20.9% of those aged 16 to 64, down 0.4 percentage points on the previous year.

### Annual Population Survey

According to the APS, there were 465,100 economically inactive people aged 16 to 64 in Wales in the year ending December 2025. This is an economic inactivity rate of 20.9% of those aged 16 to 64, down 0.7 percentage points over the year. The UK rate was 20.9%, down 0.7 percentage points over the year. For further information on APS labour market estimates please see our [Labour market statistics \(Annual Population Survey\)](#) release.

## 4. Quality information

### 4.1 Relevance

This monthly bulletin is a compendium publication that brings together the latest key statistics relating to the Welsh economy and labour market, mainly in the context of the UK economy and labour market. The headline LFS estimates in the bulletin are published by ONS in their Labour Market Statistical Bulletin which includes headline figures for Wales as a whole.

This bulletin provides a more detailed breakdown of the Wales data than the ONS bulletin and presents those estimates alongside other headline estimates for the economy and labour market for Wales. These statistics are used by the Welsh Government to monitor the headline statistics for the Welsh economy as well as providing comparisons to the UK economy. The bulletin complements the [Welsh Economy in Numbers dashboard](#), which provides a broad picture of the Welsh economy.

The LFS remains the main source for headline labour market indicators at a Wales level. The larger sample of the APS allows for estimates at a local authority level and for sub-groups of the population.

Information from the APS that was included in previous versions of this bulletin, can be accessed via the quarterly [Labour market statistics \(APS\)](#) publication. This includes data for Welsh economic regions, long-term unemployment rates, youth unemployment and the reasons for economic inactivity for males and females.

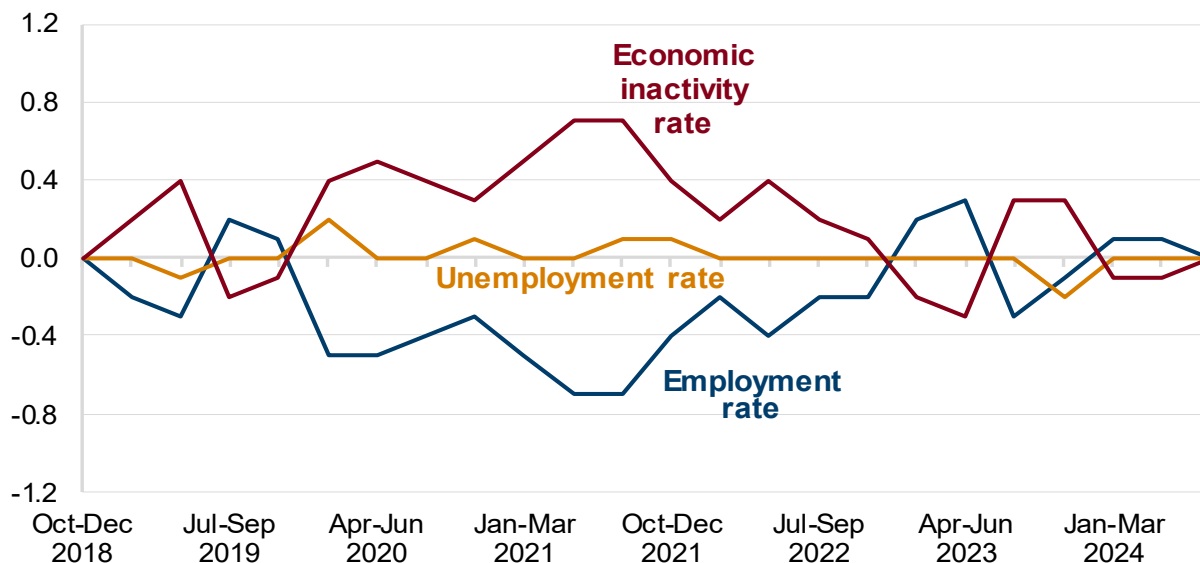
This bulletin is used by other public sector organisations, businesses, academia and private individuals as a means of identifying the key trends in the headline economic and labour market statistics for Wales.

Welsh Government published a more detailed analysis of [protected characteristics in the labour market in Wales](#) on 16 December 2021. We welcome your feedback on this publication and priorities for future analyses; please see contact details at the end of this release. Data is also currently available on [StatsWales](#) and [Nomis](#).

[LFS estimates published on 17 December 2024](#) were reweighted for periods from January to March 2019 for UK countries and regions, resulting in a step change in the data. Comparisons with periods prior to January to March 2019 are not strictly valid due to this discontinuity in the time series. The reweighted estimates incorporated latest ONS estimates of the size and composition of the UK population. UK estimates were reweighted back to June to August 2011.

On 3 December 2024, the [ONS published an article exploring the Impact of reweighting on LFS key indicators: December 2024](#). On 19 December 2024, we published [an article exploring the full impact of this reweighting on key indicators in Wales](#).

**Figure 4.1: revisions to the employment rate, unemployment rate and economic inactivity rate, Wales, 3 months to December 2018 to the 3 months to September 2024**



Description of figure 4.1: a line chart that shows how the reweighting January to March 2019 affected the Welsh employment rate, unemployment rate and economic inactivity rate.

Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

The ONS published revised LFS estimates for Wales in March 2025 from the period January to March 2019 due to a seasonal adjustment review. The impact of the revisions on the estimates is small, accounting for changes of 0.1 percentage points or less across most periods.

## 4.2 Accuracy

Some of the data in this bulletin is based on sample surveys meaning it is subject to sampling variability. The LFS is a sample survey and, as such, estimates obtained from it are subject to sampling variability. If we drew many samples, each would give a different result.

Table 1 shows the latest estimates and quarterly and annual changes for Wales alongside their respective 95% confidence intervals. We would expect that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value. Due to the LFS five wave structure, this means it can be used to assess changes over six quarters or more. The confidence intervals have been calculated using data that are not seasonally adjusted, with the relevant sampling errors produced then applied to the seasonally adjusted data.

If the 'quarterly or annual change' of an estimate is larger than the 'confidence interval around the change', the change is statistically significant. If none of the reported changes over the year or the quarter were statistically significant, then the recorded changes did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size.

ONS have stated that there is an increasing challenge to maintain response rates for the Labour Force Survey which has resulted in a reduction in the robustness and reliability of the data for Wales.

ONS [published an update](#) in April 2026 on their program of work to improve the quality of estimates from the Labour Force Survey. This looked at LFS data which included the main interventions made to address quality concerns. Whilst these interventions have resulted in improvements in response levels and rates, levels for certain waves still remain low by historical standards and coherence with other labour market data sources remains a challenge. Headline estimates from the LFS for Wales remain volatile and provide an uncertain view of the labour market when viewed in isolation.

[ONS published an update on their plans for improving Economic Statistics](#) in April 2026 as part of their response to the [Devereux Review of the Office for National Statistics](#). The update details the developments that ONS have made across a range of economic and labour market data sources in order to restore trust and improve the quality of these statistics, and the impact of these changes. These include improving achieved sample sizes in the LFS; continued assessment of the design changes made to the TLFS; and expanding electronic data collection of the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE).

Estimates from January to March 2025 include the full effect of the improvements in LFS data collection and sampling methods introduced by ONS from January 2024 onwards. ONS advise that caution should be taken when drawing conclusions from short-term changes and to focus on long term movements in the data. Some volatility remains particularly for estimates for mid-2023 and throughout 2024, and for granular breakdowns, where sample sizes are smaller.

Headline estimates from the LFS for Wales remain volatile and provide an uncertain view of the labour market when viewed in isolation. Given this, we continue to recommend that consideration should be given to the trends exhibited by other sources, headline labour market indicators from the APS have been added to this report in order to provide a more rounded picture of the labour market in Wales.

For further information on the interventions ONS have made to improve the quality of LFS and APS labour market estimates and our advice on using these statistics for Wales, please see our latest [Chief Statistician's update: measuring the labour market in Wales](#). The Annual Population Survey (APS) has seen a fall in sample sizes over recent years, given this and the fact that the survey has not been reweighted to latest population estimates, [the Office for Statistics Regulation \(OSR\) has agreed that the accredited official statistics status should be temporarily suspended](#) and that the estimates should be re-designated as official statistics (OSR).

It is still appropriate to use these statistics, however users should note the increased uncertainty around estimates derived from the APS. At a national level, estimates continue to provide a reasonable indication of trends for Wales, particularly if used as part of a basket of indicators with

alternative sources such as HMRC real time information on paid employees, data on workforce jobs, and the claimant count. Estimates for smaller geographies or population sub-groups, however, are less reliable.

The [Welsh Government revisions policy](#) is available from the Statistics and Research website. Where the data is not from the Welsh Government, the revisions policy of the individual Government department is followed. The majority of the data in this release is from the ONS and their [revisions policy \(ONS\)](#) applies.

The LFS and WFJ measures are reconciled each quarter in an [article published](#) on ONS' website. Jobs vacancies are measured separately by the Vacancy Survey.

From June 2015 the Claimant Count statistics were designated as experimental (now official statistics in development) due to the impact of Universal Credit, which is designed so a broader span of claimants are required to look for work than under Jobseeker's Allowance.

This meant that once Universal Credit was fully rolled out, the Claimant Count was higher than it would otherwise have been under Jobseeker's Allowance. The impact increased as the roll-out of Universal Credit progressed and the seasonally-adjusted claimant count series become more volatile. The full [ONS statement](#) is available via their website.

## 4.3 Timeliness and punctuality

This bulletin follows the ONS publication schedule of labour market data, available on the [National Statistics Release Calendar](#). Table 5.1 lists the date of last update and next update for each data source.

**Table 4.1: summary of data sources**

Data	Source	Last updated	Next updated
Claimant count	Jobcentre Plus Administrative System, DWP	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
Economic inactivity rate	Annual Population Survey, ONS	21-Apr-2026	21-Jul-2026
Economic inactivity rate	Labour Force Survey, ONS	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
Employment rate	Annual Population Survey, ONS	21-Apr-2026	21-Jul-2026
Employment rate	Labour Force Survey, ONS	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
Hours Worked	Labour Force Survey, ONS	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
Real Time Pay Information (RTI)	Real Time Pay As You Earn Information, HMRC	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
RTI – Employees by local authority	Real Time Pay As You Earn Information, HMRC	19-Mar-2026	18-Jun-2026
RTI – Employees by country/region & industry sector	Real Time Pay As You Earn Information, HMRC	19-May-2026	18-Aug-2026
RTI – Employees by country/region & age	Real Time Pay As You Earn Information, HMRC	21-Apr-2026	21-Jul-2026
ILO unemployment rate	Annual Population Survey, ONS	21-Apr-2026	21-Jul-2026
ILO unemployment rate	Labour Force Survey, ONS	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
Online job adverts	Textkernel New Online Job Advert Estimates, ONS	23-Apr-2026	TBA
Potential redundancies	HR1 Potential Redundancies, ONS	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
Public sector employment	Regional Public Sector Employment, ONS	19-Mar-2026	18-Jun-2026
Redundancies	Labour Force Survey, ONS	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
Self-employment jobs	Workforce jobs, ONS	19-Mar-2026	18-Jun-2026
Universal Credit	Universal Credit, DWP	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
Vacancies	Vacancy Survey, ONS	19-May-2026	18-Jun-2026
Workforce jobs	Workforce jobs, ONS	19-Mar-2026	18-Jun-2026

Description of table 4.1: a table showing the different data sources used in the Labour Market Overview release, when these data sources were last updated and when they will be next updated.

## 4.4 Accessibility and clarity

Much of the data behind the charts shown in this bulletin can be found on StatsWales. This bulletin covers key statistics for Wales as a whole, but additional breakdowns for age, gender, disability and ethnicity are also available on StatsWales and the ONS website. Links to StatsWales, Welsh Government statistical headlines (where applicable) and ONS analysis for information presented in this bulletin as well as other economic and labour market data are provided below.

- [Annual Population Survey: summary of economic activity on StatsWales](#)
- [Annual Population Survey: summary of economic activity by disabled status on StatsWales](#)
- [Annual Population Survey: summary of economic activity by ethnicity on StatsWales](#)
- [Claimant count data by UK country, English region and month \(seasonally adjusted\)](#)
- [Claimant count data by Welsh local area and month \(not seasonally adjusted\)](#)
- [Disability and ethnicity pay differences published by Welsh Government](#)
- [Employment earning at least the real living wage on StatsWales](#)
- [Gender pay gap on StatsWales](#)
- [Gross weekly and hourly pay on StatsWales](#)
- [Hours worked data published by ONS](#)
- [Labour Force Survey: labour market indicators by age, UK country and English region on StatsWales](#)
- [Online job adverts published by ONS](#)
- [Pay As You Earn \(PAYE\) Real Time Information \(RTI\) published by ONS](#) (data for Wales by local authority, age and industry are available in tables 19, 32 and 36)
- [Potential Redundancies published by ONS](#)
- [Public Sector Employment published by ONS](#)
- [Redundancies published by ONS](#)
- [Self-employment jobs published on NOMIS](#)
- [Universal Credit statistics published by the Department for Work and Pension \(DWP\) with data for Wales on Stat-Xplore](#)
- [Vacancies published by ONS](#)
- [Workforce jobs published by ONS](#)

## 4.5 Comparability and coherence

Comparable measures for other UK countries for the data published in this bulletin are published on StatsWales and on the ONS website, which can be accessed using the data links in Table 4.3.

### **Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Annual Population Survey (APS)**

Estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity are available from both the LFS and the APS. Estimates from the LFS are based on a rolling quarter and are updated monthly. The sample sizes are too low in the LFS to produce reliable estimates for geographies below Wales level. Estimates from the APS are based on a rolling twelve months, updated each quarter. The APS uses a bigger sample than the LFS so is used to produce estimates for geographies in Wales. At Wales level, the APS is a slightly more robust measure than the LFS but it is less timely and slower to adapt to changes in the labour market.

[Labour market statistics for Wales using APS estimates are published quarterly on the Welsh Government website.](#)

### **Employment and Workforce Jobs**

Employment figures differ between the LFS estimates and Workforce Jobs. Primarily this is because people with more than one job are counted once in the LFS but more than once in Workforce Jobs. The LFS does not cover people living in most types of communal establishments and Workforce Jobs excludes unpaid family workers.

### **ILO Unemployment and Claimant Count**

There are two different measures of unemployment used in official UK statistics, the headline International Labour Organisation (ILO) measure recorded by the LFS and the claimant count measure. Each is subject to advantages and disadvantages.

The headline ILO measure is a count of those who are out of work and want a job, or have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks; plus those who are out of work, have found a job and are waiting to start in the next two weeks. It is the broader measure of unemployment. However, it is sourced from a survey so the results are subject to sampling error. Wales data is subject to higher variability than UK level data because of the smaller sample size.

The claimant count is a count of all those claiming unemployment related benefits (currently Jobseekers Allowance plus some claimants of Universal Credit). As such it excludes those who are unemployed who are not eligible to claim, and those who do not wish to claim. However, it is a count of all claimants and is not subject to any sampling variability. It can therefore be disaggregated to very high levels of detail, and in particular, changes measured over the short term are more robust than for the headline unemployment measure.

### **Redundancies**

[ONS publish estimates on the number of redundancies](#) and [potential redundancies \(ONS\)](#) for UK countries and English regions. The redundancy figures for Wales are based on a small sample size

and are therefore volatile, in recent periods estimates have been suppressed on disclosure grounds. Due to the volatility and availability of the data at the Wales level, we have removed these figures from this publication. Data and further information on these topics can be accessed via the ONS published tables.

## 4.6 Technical notes

Some of the data in this bulletin are presented as index numbers. Index numbers take the data for each time period and divide them by the figure for the reference period, and multiply the result by 100. A figure of above 100 for a given time period then indicates that the figure is higher than that for the reference period, whilst a figure of below 100 indicates that it is lower than that for the reference period. Data on workforce jobs and self-employment jobs are presented as indices referenced to 1999 = 100.

Data series shown are seasonally adjusted unless stated otherwise. Seasonal adjustment is the process of removing variations associated with the time of year from a time-series and enables comparisons of labour market statistics to be made since the previous quarter or previous month. Labour market data for Wales is seasonally adjusted but for geographies within Wales only non-seasonally adjusted data is available.

## 4.7 Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in the Welsh Government's [Statement of Compliance](#).

These [official statistics](#) and [official statistics in development](#) demonstrate the standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and public value in the following ways.

### Trustworthiness

The data for this release have been calculated from a variety of data sources, including the LFS, APS, RTI PAYE, Public Sector Employment (PSE), Workforce Jobs, Claimant Count, Universal Credit Statistics and Online Job Adverts. These datasets are produced and conducted by the ONS, HMRC and DWP, and are tabulated by Welsh Government statisticians with a focus on ensuring that the statistics, data and explanatory material is presented impartially and objectively.

All personal data underlying these statistics are processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

This release is published in an orderly, pre-announced manner on the Welsh Government website at 9:30am on the day of publication. All statistical releases referenced in this report are available to download for free.

All outputs adhere to the Code of Practice by pre-announcing the date of publication through the [upcoming calendar](#) web pages. Access to the data during processing is restricted to those involved in the production of the statistics, quality assurance and for operational purposes. Pre-release access is restricted to eligible recipients in line with the [Code of Practice \(UK Statistics Authority\)](#).

The published figures are compiled by professional analysts using the latest available data and applying methods using their professional judgement and analytical skillset.

## Quality

The data in this release all originate from the sources listed below:

- Labour Force Survey (LFS) (ONS)
- Annual Population Survey (APS) (ONS)
- Real Time Information (RTI) Pay As Your Earn (PAYE) data (HMRC, ONS)
- Public Sector Employment (PSE) (ONS)
- Workforce Jobs (ONS)
- Claimant Count (ONS)

ONS have stated that there is an increasing challenge to maintain response rates for the LFS which has resulted in a reduction in the robustness and reliability of the data for Wales. Due to this, LFS-based labour market statistics will be labelled as 'official statistics in development' until further review. The LFS represents the primary labour market data source, however we continue to recommend that consideration should be given to the trends exhibited by other sources.

APS labour market estimates were previously classed as accredited official statistics. The APS has seen a fall in sample sizes over recent years, given this and the fact that the survey has not been reweighted to latest population estimates, the OSR has agreed that this accreditation should be temporarily suspended and that the estimates should be re-designated as official statistics (OSR).

It is still appropriate to use these APS statistics, however users should note the increased uncertainty around estimates derived from the APS. At a national level, estimates continue to provide a reasonable indication of trends for Wales, particularly if used as part of a basket of indicators with alternative sources such as HMRC real time information on paid employees, data on workforce jobs, and the claimant count. Estimates for smaller geographies or population sub-groups, however, are less reliable.

All stages in the collection, validation and production of these statistics are led by professional statisticians and are produced free from any political interference. All statistics are quality-assured prior to publication.

Statistics published by Welsh Government adhere to the Statistical Quality Management Strategy which supplements the Quality pillar of the Code of Practice for Statistics and the European Statistical System principles of quality for statistical outputs. In particular, we aim to provide advice on the quality of the various statistics presented to enable users to understand how they can best be used.

## **Value**

The official statistics in this release show the trends in the Welsh labour market across a variety of metrics alongside comparisons with the UK. These statistics have been published at the earliest opportunity to assist users in understanding the latest trends in the labour market. This bulletin will be updated on a monthly basis throughout the year including the latest available statistics at the time of publication.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to ministers
- to inform education and employability policy decision making process in Wales

This release is accompanied by StatsWales tables, a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

The commentary and notes in the release have been developed to try to make the information as accessible as possible to the widest range of users.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) or via the OSR website.

## **4.8 Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)**

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The

indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016. This release includes data related to the following national indicator:

- (21) percentage of people in employment

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

This release includes contextual indicators, namely the basket of indicators presented in the Well-being report in the previous link.

As a national indicator under the Act they must be referred to in the analyses of local well-being produced by public services boards when they are analysing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their areas.

The Act states national milestones must be set that "...the Welsh Ministers consider would assist in measuring whether progress is being made towards the achievement of the well-being goals." In doing so Welsh Ministers must specify how we know that a national milestone has been achieved and the time by which it is to be achieved.

National milestones are not performance targets for any individual organisation, but are collective measures of success for Wales.

In this release indicator (21) percentage of people in employment corresponds to the milestone "Eradicate the gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK by 2050, with a focus on fair work and raising labour market participation of under-represented groups". Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

## **4.9 Further details**

### **Links**

This document is available on our website: <https://gov.wales/labour-market-overview>

The National Survey for Wales [methodology and quality reports](#) can be found on the Welsh Government website.

More information on the data sources can also be found in the Quality and Methodology Information reports published by ONS on [Labour Market](#), [Claimant Count](#), [Public Sector Employment](#) and [Workforce Jobs](#) data.

### **Next update**

18 June 2026 (Headline)

23 June 2026 (Labour Market Overview bulletin)

## **We want your feedback**

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [labourmarket.stats@gov.wales](mailto:labourmarket.stats@gov.wales).

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