

Scotland's Labour Market Trends

April 2024

This publication contains:

- experimental monthly estimates of the number of payrolled employees and their median earnings and cover the period March 2024. Data are sourced from the HMRC's Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system where people are recorded through the Real Time Information (RTI) system
- experimental Claimant Count estimates which cover the period March 2024
- the ONS Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity. Estimates cover the period to December 2023 to February 2024

The statistics included in this release are official statistics in development. Official statistics in development may be new or existing statistics, and will be tested with users, in line with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Key Points

- early seasonally adjusted estimates for March 2024 from HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information indicate that there were 2.45 million payrolled employees in Scotland, an increase of 0.5 per cent (12,000) compared with March 2023. This compares with the UK where the number of payrolled employees had increased by 0.7 per cent over the same period.
- early seasonally adjusted estimates for March 2024 from HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information indicate that median monthly pay for payrolled employees in Scotland was £2,389, an increase of 6.3 per cent compared with March 2023. This is higher than the growth in median monthly pay for the UK over the same period (5.6 per cent). Changes over time are based on median monthly pay estimates rounded to the nearest pound.
- In March 2024, the claimant count was 105,800, an increase of 200 (0.2 per cent) over the month but a decrease of 5,200 (-4.6 per cent) over the year. The claimant count unemployment rate in March 2024 was 3.5 per cent, compared with 4.0 per cent for the UK as a whole.

Due to increased volatility of the ONS Labour Force Survey estimates resulting from smaller achieved sample sizes, estimates of quarterly change should be treated with additional caution and ONS recommend using them as part of our suite of labour market indicators alongside Pay As You Earn Real Time Information estimates and claimant count data.

Estimates sourced from the ONS Labour Force Survey are presented for December 2023 to February 2024, compared with the quarter before (September to November 2023). Please note percentage point changes are based on unrounded data.

- the estimates for December 2023 to February 2024 indicate that over the quarter the unemployment rate decreased, while the employment rate increased and the inactivity rate decreased.
- the unemployment rate (16 and over) in Scotland was 4.0 per cent, down 0.4 percentage points over the quarter. Scotland's unemployment rate was below the UK rate of 4.2 per cent.
- the employment rate (the proportion of people aged 16 to 64 in work) in Scotland was 74.2 per cent, up 0.5 percentage points over the quarter. Scotland's employment rate was below the UK rate of 74.5 per cent.
- the economic inactivity rate (the proportion of people aged 16 to 64 years who were not working and not seeking or available to work) in Scotland was 22.6 per cent, down 0.2 percentage points over the quarter. Scotland's economic inactivity rate was above the UK rate of 22.2 per cent.

Contents

Key Points	2
About this publication	4
An Official Statistics in Development Publication for Scotland	4
Source of data	4
Comparison over time.....	4
ONS Labour Force Survey	5
Other sources	6
1. HMRC payrolled employees (experimental)	7
2. HMRC earnings (experimental)	10
3. Claimant Count	12
4. Summary of labour market statistics	13
Infographic summary of ONS Labour Force Survey Statistics	14
5. Employment estimates	15
6. Unemployment estimates	16
7. Economic Inactivity estimates	17
8. Labour market estimates for women and men	18
9. Glossary	20
10. Data and Methodology	22
Labour Force Survey	22
Labour Market Transformation	23
HMRC RTI	23
Claimant Count	23
Where can labour market data for Scotland be accessed.....	24
Scottish Government Labour Market Statistics	24
11. Tell us what you think	25
Feedback survey	25
Enquiries	25
Join our mailing list	25
Future publications	25
Crown Copyright	25
Next update	25

About this publication

This publication contains the Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for Scotland and the UK by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The publication also includes the experimental HMRC Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real-Time Information (RTI) and ONS Claimant Count statistics.

An Official Statistics in Development Publication for Scotland

These statistics are official statistics in development. Official statistics in development may be new or existing statistics, and will be tested with users, in line with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

ONS have published a [article](#) which mentions the reintroduction of the Labour Force Survey estimates and the impact of the reweighting on the key indicators for the UK.

HMRC and ONS have also published a [response to the OSR RTI review](#).

Scottish Government statistics are 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.

Source of data

The information included in this publication are from three separate sources covering the time periods shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Labour market data source reference periods

Labour Force Survey Estimates (ONS)	December 2023 to February 2024			
PAYE RTI (HMRC) - employee counts - median monthly pay			1 to 29 February	
Early PAYE RTI (HMRC) - employee counts - median monthly pay				1 to 31 March
Claimant Count (ONS)				14 March
	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar

Comparison over time

Comparisons with the latest data over the year have been included within the commentary of this publication. Estimates for employment, unemployment and inactivity rates are compared over the quarter and over the year.

ONS Labour Force Survey

An issue was detected in the weighting of the ONS Labour Force Survey for Northern Ireland for the November 2023 to January 2024 quarter only which affected the March 2024 release of the LFS estimates. This issue has now been resolved and the November 2023 to January 2024 figures have been revised accordingly.

Previous revisions

On 5 February 2024, ONS published a [blog](#) announcing the reintroduction of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates and an [article](#) outlining how they have been affected by reweighting. These reweighted estimates were included in the main ONS release on 13 February 2024.

The reweighted LFS estimates incorporate the latest estimates of the size and composition of the total UK population, improving the representativeness of the LFS estimates.

ONS have used the 2022 mid-year population estimates for England and Wales which incorporate the results of the 2021 Census of England and Wales. However, the 2022 mid-year population estimates for Scotland and Northern Ireland have been calculated using the 2011 Census results to produce an updated UK population projection specifically for the purpose of LFS reweighting. 2022 Census data from Scotland and Northern Ireland will be incorporated when they become available. This underlying data affects assumptions on gender and tenure weighting. The socio-economic non-response bias adjustment remains unchanged from the previous weighting approach. Please note that although the tenure distribution was unchanged for Scotland, it should be noted that it has changed for England and Wales and therefore the UK overall.

Given time constraints, ONS have only been able to reweight the LFS data from July to September 2022 onwards. Therefore, this reweighting exercise creates a discontinuity in the series between June to August 2022 and July to September 2022 where there will be a step change in the LFS estimates apart from the headline UK estimates. ONS have modelled the seasonally adjusted UK levels of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by sex and age-band back to June to August 2011, to ensure that headline rates and levels by sex and age-band (datasets [A02SA](#) and [A05SA](#)) can be assessed without a discontinuity. For this reason, the Scottish Government's Labour Market Trends publication will only compare LFS estimates for Scotland and the UK from July to September 2022 onwards.

The reweighting of the LFS estimates does not address the volatility seen in the recent estimates (since May-July 2023), therefore ONS have advised that users should be cautious when interpreting quarterly changes in the LFS estimates and that these should be viewed alongside the wider suite of labour market indicators

including the Claimant Count data and HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information (PAYE RTI) estimates.

The longer-term solution remains the replacement of the Labour Force Survey with the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS).

Other sources

This publication also contains HMRC PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) on median monthly earnings and payrolled employees. These are classed as Official Statistics in Development.

The ONS have also published experimental Claimant Count estimates which have also been included within this publication.

This release follows the ONS monthly releases of:

- [Labour market overview, UK Statistical bulletins](#)
- [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, UK](#)
- [CC01 Regional labour market: Claimant Count by unitary and local authority \(experimental\)](#)

1. HMRC payrolled employees (experimental)

This information is based on experimental monthly estimates of paid employees and their pay from HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) data.

The latest early payrolled employee estimates for March 2024 indicate that there were 2.45 million payrolled employees in Scotland. Compared with the same month the year before, the number of payrolled employees had risen by 0.5 per cent (12,000). This compares with a rise of 0.7 per cent for the UK over the same period.

In December 2020, the lowest point following the start of the pandemic, there were 82,000 fewer payrolled employees in Scotland than prior to the pandemic (February 2020). However, the estimated number of payrolled employees has generally been increasing since December 2020 and has continued to be above the pre-coronavirus level (February 2020) since November 2021.

Estimates for March 2024 are provisional as they are based on around 85% of information being available. When comparing the number of payrolled employees in February 2024 with the same period the previous year, the number of payrolled employees in Scotland increased by 0.9 per cent (21,000).

Chart 1: Number of payrolled employees in Scotland declined between February and December 2020. However, it has continued to be above the pre-coronavirus level since November 2021

Payrolled Employees, Scotland, February 2019 to March 2024, seasonally adjusted

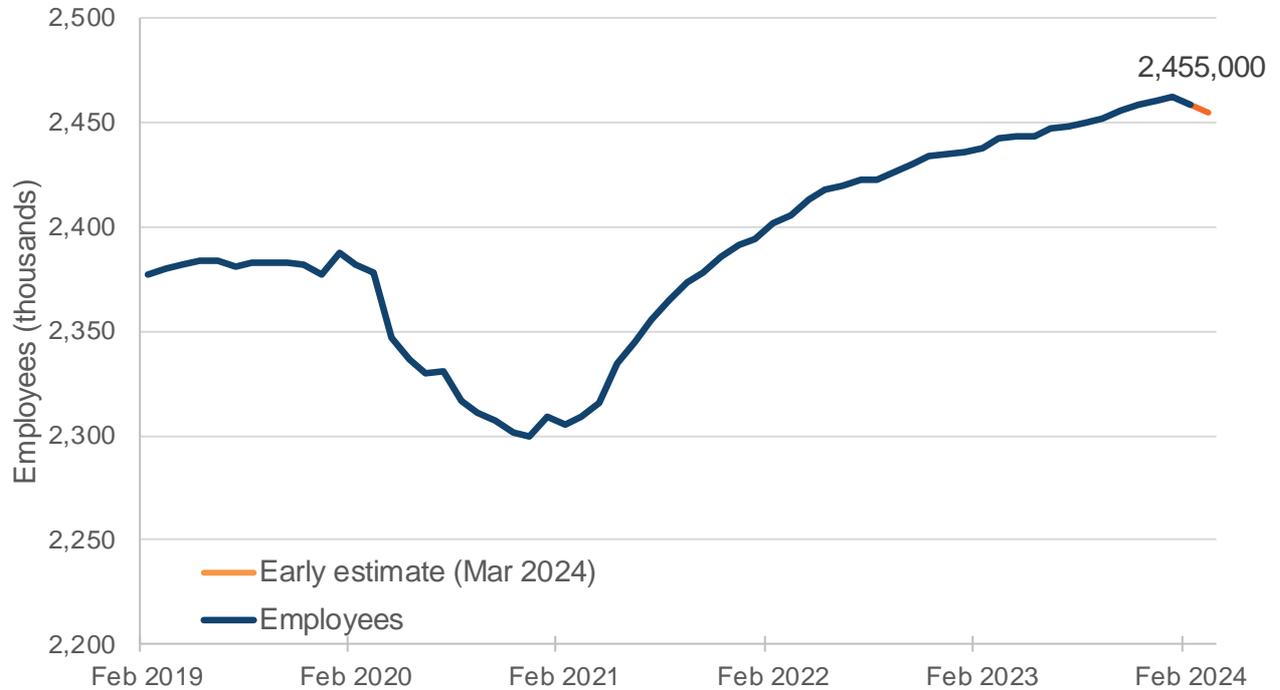
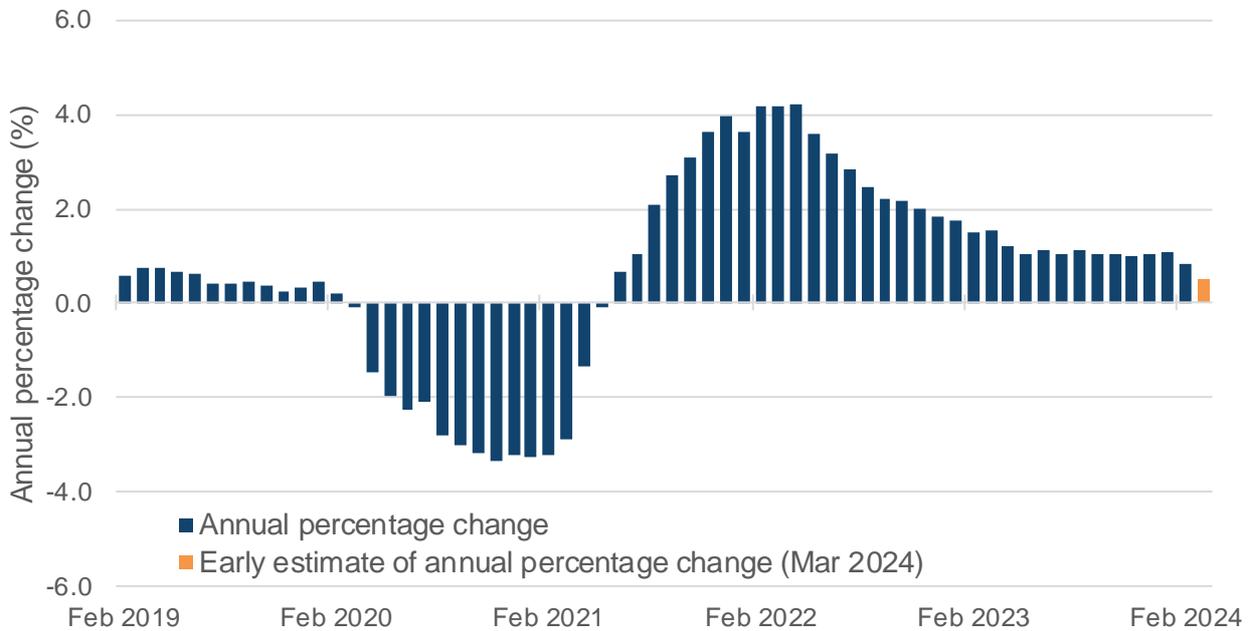


Chart 2: Annual Growth in the number of payrolled employees in Scotland has fallen over the last couple of months despite being fairly stable for most of the previous year

Annual Percentage Change in Payrolled Employees, Scotland, February 2019 to March 2024



2. HMRC earnings (experimental)

This information is based on experimental monthly estimates of paid employees and their pay from HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) data.

Changes over time are based on median monthly pay estimates which are rounded to the nearest pound.

The latest early estimates for March 2024 indicate that median monthly pay for payrolled employees in Scotland was £2,389, an increase of 6.3 per cent compared to the same period the previous year. This is higher than the annual growth in median monthly pay for the UK over the same period (5.6 per cent).

Chart 3: Median pay for payrolled employees decreased sharply in April 2020 but has generally been increasing since July 2020

Median Monthly Pay, Scotland and UK, February 2019 to March 2024, seasonally adjusted

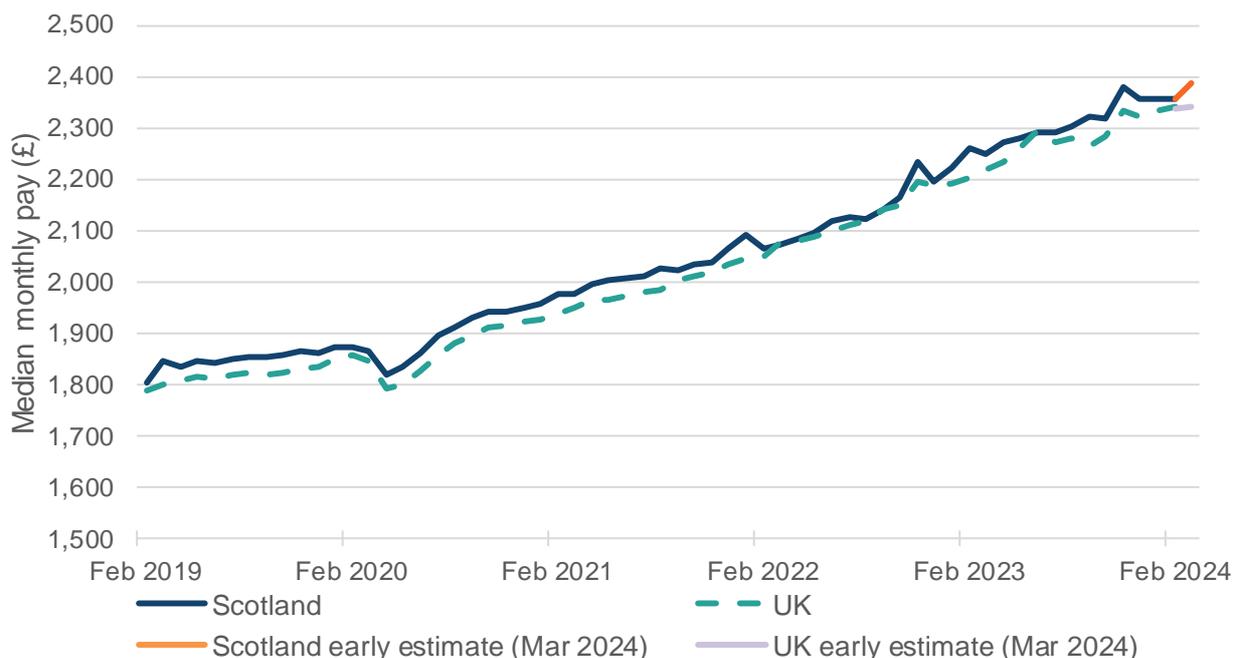
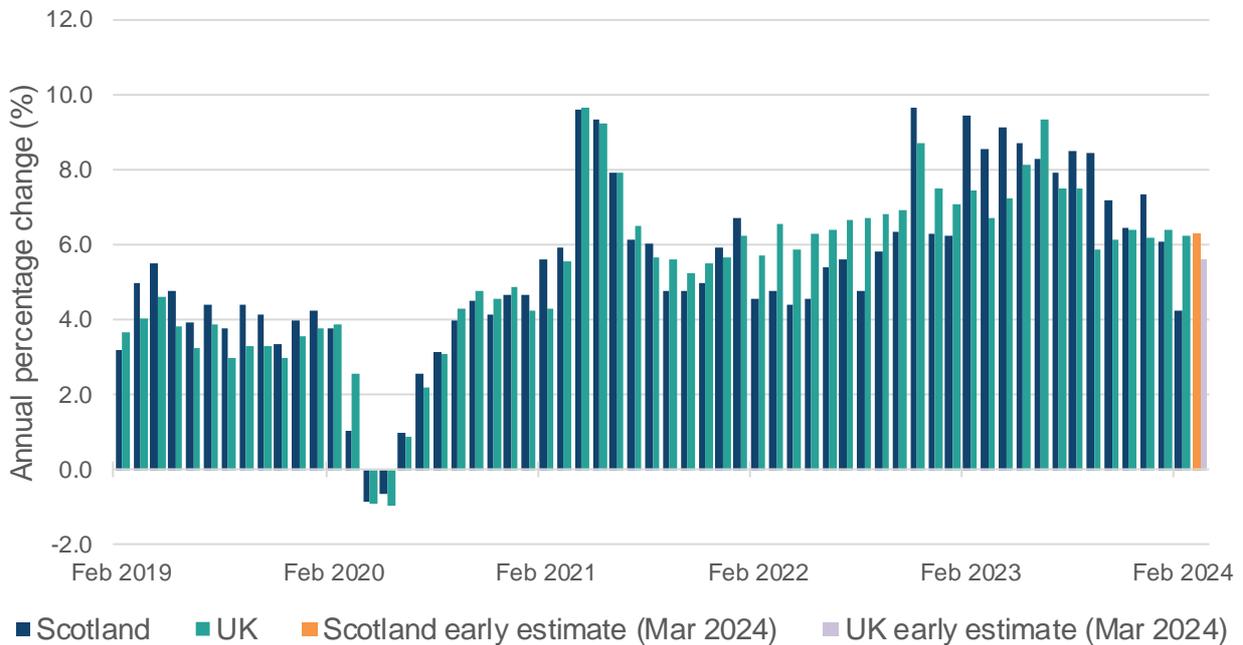


Chart 4: Annual Growth in the median monthly pay for payrolled employees in Scotland is higher than the average growth prior to the pandemic

Annual Percentage Change in Median Monthly Pay, Scotland and UK, February 2019 to March 2024



Source: PAYE RTI, all industries, seasonally adjusted, HMRC

Notes: Early estimates for March 2024 are provided to give an indication of the likely level of employees as well as median pay in the latest period. The figures for March 2024 are based on around 85% of information being available. They are considered of lower quality and may be subject to revision in next month's release when between 98% to 99% of data will be available.

3. Claimant Count

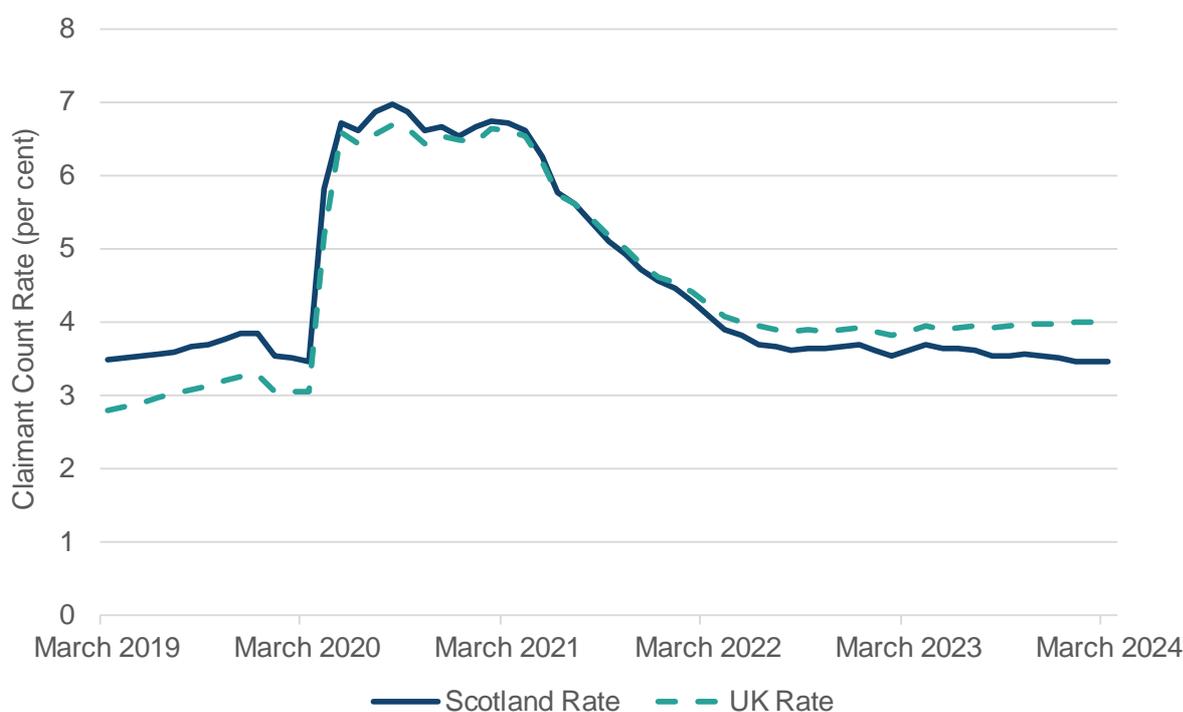
This information is based on experimental monthly estimates of the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits.

The experimental Claimant Count includes Jobseeker’s Allowance Claimants and those claimants of Universal Credit who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed (those in the “searching for work” conditionality regime). Those claiming such benefits may be wholly unemployed and seeking work, or may be employed but with low income and/or low hours, that make them eligible for unemployment-related benefit support. As part of the response to the pandemic, the rules around who could claim Universal Credit had changed, meaning an increased proportion of those claiming may actually still be in some kind of work.

In March 2024, the claimant count was 105,800, an increase of 200 (0.2 per cent) over the month but a decrease of 5,200 (-4.6 per cent) over the year. The claimant count unemployment rate in March 2024 was 3.5 per cent, compared with 4.0 per cent for the UK as a whole.

Chart 5: Experimental claimant count rate for Scotland and the UK showed a large increase at the start of the pandemic, reaching a peak in August 2020 before starting to gradually decrease. The claimant count for Scotland and the UK has been fairly constant since mid-2022 although the gap has widened slightly in recent months

Claimant Count rate, seasonally adjusted, Scotland and UK, March 2019 to March 2024



Source: Claimant count, ONS

4. Summary of labour market statistics

Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity estimates are presented for December 2023 to February 2024, compared with the quarter before (September to November 2023) and compared with the year before (December 2022 to February 2023).

Information are obtained from a sample survey and are therefore subject to some error.

Comparisons with the latest data over the quarter have been included within the commentary of this publication but caution in their use is advised by ONS.

Table 1: Labour Market Statistics, Scotland and UK, December 2023 to February 2024

	Rate (%)	Percentage point			Level ('000)	Level ('000's)				
		CI	Change on quarter	CI		Change on year	CI	Change on quarter	CI	Change on year
Employment¹										
Scotland	74.2 (± 2.4)		0.5 (± 3.3)		-0.9 (± 3.2)	2,637 (± 81)		11 (± 108)		-48 (± 101)
UK	74.5 (± 0.6)		-0.5 (± 0.6)		-0.8 (± 0.8)	32,980 (± 272)		-156 (± 244)		-195 (± 353)
Unemployment²										
Scotland	4.0 (± 1.1)		-0.4 (± 1.6)		0.8 (± 1.4)	111 (± 29)		-11 (± 42)		20 (± 36)
UK	4.2 (± 0.3)		0.3 (± 0.4)		0.3 (± 0.4)	1,440 (± 116)		85 (± 128)		94 (± 154)
Inactivity³										
Scotland	22.6 (± 2.3)		-0.2 (± 3.1)		0.2 (± 2.9)	777 (± 101)		-7 (± 135)		7 (± 126)
UK	22.2 (± 0.6)		0.3 (± 0.6)		0.6 (± 0.8)	9,404 (± 248)		150 (± 228)		275 (± 320)

Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

Note 1: Levels all persons aged 16 and over; rates all persons aged 16 to 64; denominator all persons aged 16 to 64.

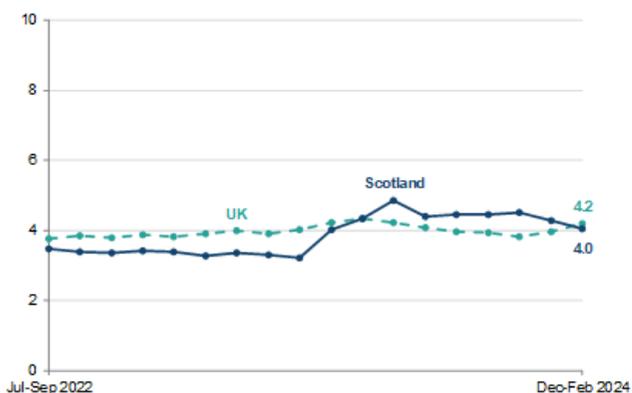
Note 2: Levels and rates all persons aged 16 and over; denominator all economically active persons aged 16 and over.

Note 3: Levels and rates all persons aged 16 to 64, denominator all persons aged 16 to 64.

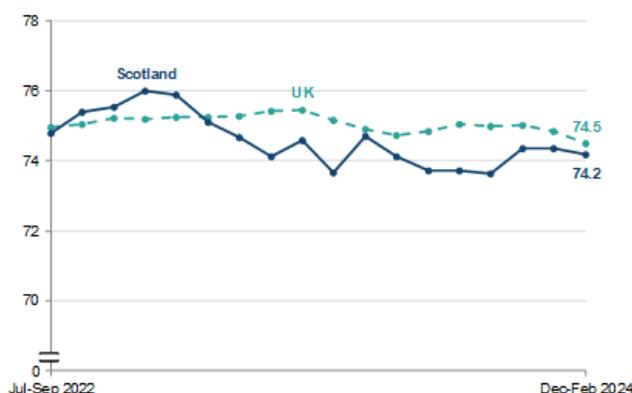
Infographic summary of ONS Labour Force Survey Statistics

December 2023 to February 2024

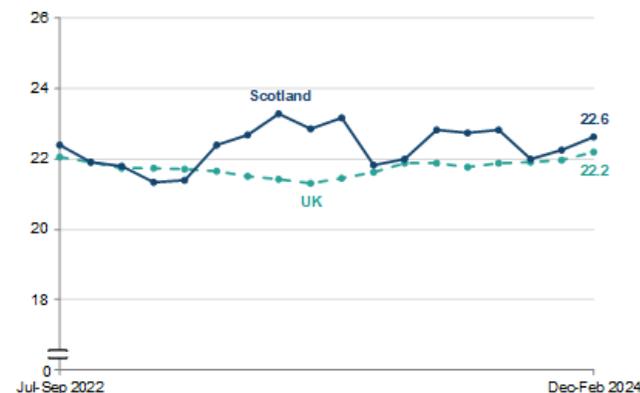
Unemployment rate 4.0%



Employment rate 74.2%



Economic Inactivity rate 22.6%



Quarterly Change

Scotland -0.4 pp ↓ UK 0.3 pp ↑

Scotland 0.5 pp ↑ UK -0.5 pp ↓

Scotland -0.2 pp ↓ UK 0.3 pp ↑

Annual Change

Scotland 0.8 pp ↑ UK 0.3 pp ↑

Scotland -0.9 pp ↓ UK -0.8 pp ↓

Scotland 0.2 pp ↑ UK 0.6 pp ↑

Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

% pts= percentage points
16 April 2024

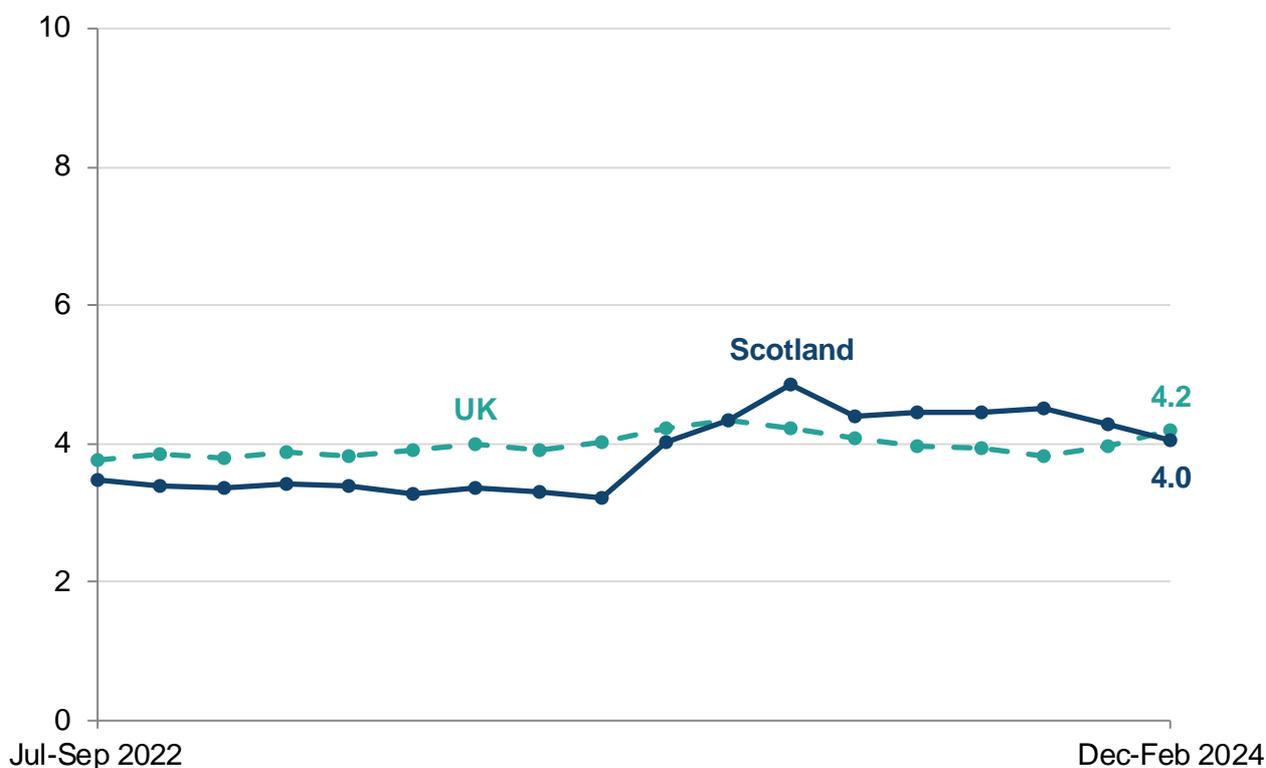
6. Unemployment estimates

The unemployment rate for people aged 16 years and over in Scotland was estimated at 4.0 per cent in December 2023 to February 2024. This is 0.4 percentage points down over the quarter but 0.8 percentage points up over the year.

The UK unemployment rate was estimated at 4.2 per cent in December 2023 to February 2024. This is 0.3 percentage points up on the quarter and 0.3 percentage points up over the year.

Chart 7: Unemployment rates for Scotland and the UK have increased over the year

Unemployment rates for persons aged 16 and over, Scotland and the UK, July-September 2022 to December-February 2024



Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

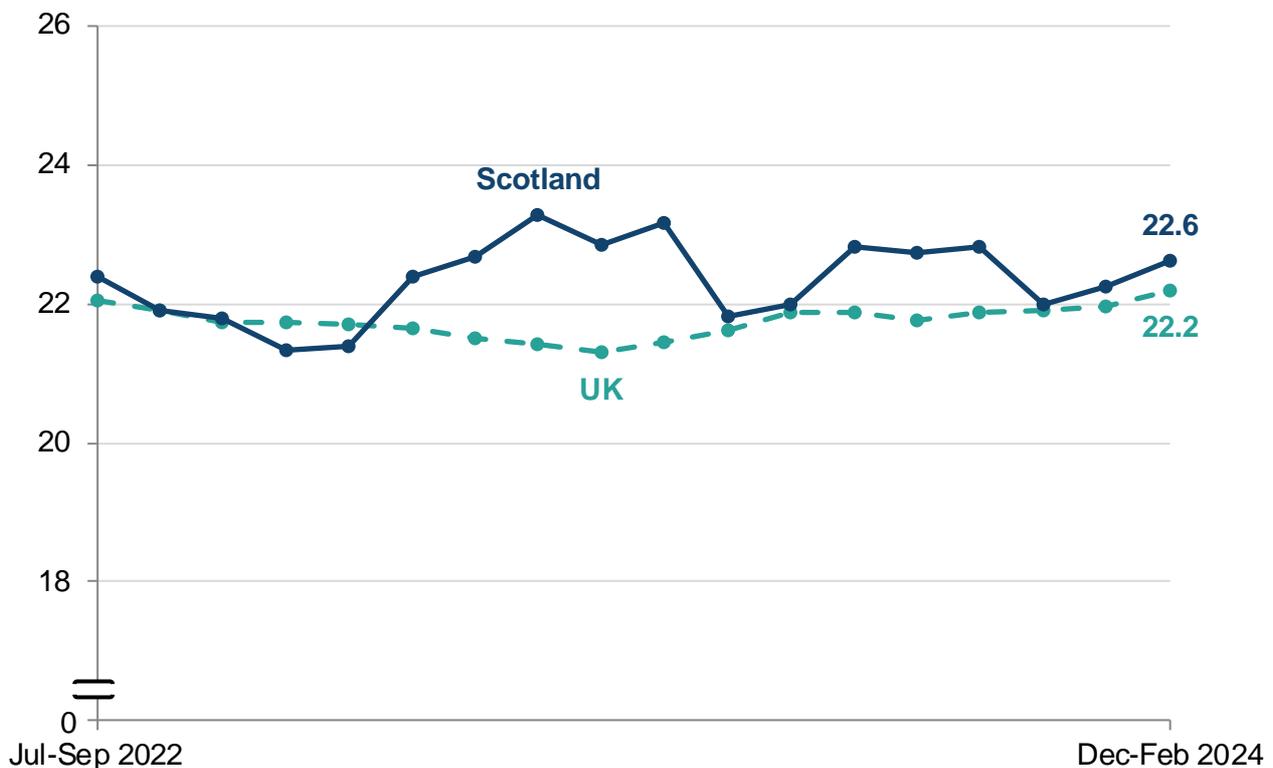
7. Economic Inactivity estimates

The economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64 years in Scotland was estimated at 22.6 per cent in December 2023 to February 2024. This is 0.2 percentage points down over the quarter but 0.2 percentage points up over the year.

The UK economic inactivity rate was estimated at 22.2 per cent in December 2023 to February 2024. This is 0.3 percentage points up on the quarter and 0.6 percentage points up over the year.

Chart 8: Economic Inactivity rates for Scotland and the UK have increased over the year

Economic inactivity rate for persons aged 16 to 64, Scotland and the UK, July-September 2022 to December-February 2024



Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

8. Labour market estimates for women and men

Table 2: Labour Market Statistics for women, Scotland and UK, December 2023 to February 2024

	Rate (%)	Percentage point		Level ('000)	Level (000's)	
		Change on quarter	Change on year		Change on quarter	Change on year
Employment¹						
Scotland	72.3	-0.1	-0.7	1,292	-7	-36
UK	71.6	-0.5	-0.3	15,970	-75	-38
Unemployment²						
Scotland	2.5*	-1.1*	-0.6*	34*	-16*	-10*
UK	4.0	0.4	0.2	659	58	30
Inactivity³						
Scotland	25.8	1.0	1.3	452	17	22
UK	25.4	0.3	0.2	5,481	69	66

Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

Note 1: Levels all women aged 16 and over; rates all women aged 16 to 64; denominator all women aged 16 to 64.

Note 2: Levels and rates all women aged 16 and over; denominator all economically active women aged 16 and over.

Note 3: Levels and rates all women aged 16 to 64, denominator all women aged 16 to 64.

* The unemployment level and rate estimates for women in Scotland are based on a small sample size and should be used with caution.

Table 3: Labour Market Statistics for men, Scotland and UK, December 2023 to February 2024

	Rate (%)	Percentage point		Level ('000)	Level (000's)	
		Change on quarter	Change on year		Change on quarter	Change on year
Employment¹						
Scotland	76.2	1.2	-1.1	1,345	18	-11
UK	77.5	-0.5	-1.2	17,010	-81	-158
Unemployment²						
Scotland	5.4	0.2	2.1	77	4	30
UK	4.4	0.2	0.4	781	26	64
Inactivity³						
Scotland	19.3	-1.4	-0.8	325	-24	-14
UK	18.8	0.4	0.9	3,923	81	209

Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

Note 1: Levels all men aged 16 and over; rates all men aged 16 to 64; denominator all men aged 16 to 64.

Note 2: Levels and rates all men aged 16 and over; denominator all economically active men aged 16 and over.

Note 3: Levels and rates all men aged 16 to 64, denominator all men aged 16 to 64.

9. Glossary

Rates: Rates represent the proportion of the population or subgroup with a certain characteristic. They allow changes in the labour market to be interpreted in a wider context by accounting for changes in the population or the number of people who are economically active. Rates can be calculated for different age groups.

For headline employment, economic activity and economic inactivity, the reference population is those aged 16 to 64. For unemployment, the reference population is the active population aged 16 and over. Thus, people aged 65 and over who continue to be economically active are included in the base while those who are economically inactive will not.

Economically active: The population who are either in employment or unemployed.

Economically inactive: People not in employment and who do not meet the criteria for unemployment. This group includes:

- those who want a job but who have not been seeking work in the last 4 weeks
- those who want a job and are seeking work but not available to start
- those who do not want a job

For example, students not working or seeking work and those in retirement.

Employment: There are two main ways of looking at employment: the number of people with jobs or the number of jobs. These two concepts represent different things as one person can have more than one job. The number of people in employment is measured via the Labour Force Survey and consist of those aged 16 and over. Employment measures the number of people who did at least one hour of paid work or had a job they were temporarily away from. People who do unpaid work in a family business and people on Government-supported training and employment programs are also included. This is in accordance with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition.

Unemployment: The ILO definition of unemployment covers people who are 16 years and over:

- without a job, have been actively seeking work in the past four weeks and are available to start work in the next fortnight

or

- out of work, have accepted a job and are waiting to start it in the next two weeks

Employment rate: The proportion of people aged between 16 and 64 years who are in employment.

Unemployment rate: The proportion of economically active people aged 16 and over who are employed.

Economic inactivity rate: The number of economically inactive people expressed as a percentage of the relevant population.

10. Data and Methodology

All estimates presented are sourced from the new adjusted experimental labour market series published by the Office for National Statistics with the exception of those in sections 1, 2 and 3.

Labour Force Survey

An issue was detected in the weighting of the ONS Labour Force Survey for Northern Ireland for the November 2023 to January 2024 quarter only which affected the March 2024 release of the LFS estimates. This issue has now been resolved and the November 2023 to January 2024 figures have been revised accordingly.

Previous revisions

On 5 February 2024, ONS published a [blog](#) announcing the reintroduction of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates and an [article](#) outlining how they have been affected by reweighting. These estimates were included in the main ONS release on 13 February 2024.

The new reweighted LFS estimates incorporate the latest estimates of the size and composition of the total UK population, improving the representativeness of the LFS estimates.

ONS have used the 2022 mid-year population estimates for England and Wales which incorporate the results of the 2021 Census of England and Wales. However the 2022 mid-year population estimates for Scotland and Northern Ireland have been calculated using the 2011 Census results to produce an updated UK population projection specifically for the purpose of LFS reweighting. 2022 Census data from Scotland and Northern Ireland will be incorporated when they become available. This underlying data affects assumptions on gender and tenure weighting. The socio-economic non-response bias adjustment remains unchanged from the previous weighting approach. Please note that although the tenure distribution was unchanged for Scotland, it should be noted that it has changed for England and Wales and therefore the UK overall.

Given time constraints, ONS have only been able to reweight the LFS data from July to September 2022 onwards. Therefore, this reweighting exercise creates a discontinuity in the series between June to August 2022 and July to September 2022 where there will be a step change in the LFS estimates apart from the headline UK estimates. ONS have modelled the seasonally adjusted UK levels of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by sex and age-band back to June to August 2011, to ensure that headline rates and levels by sex and age-band (datasets [A02SA](#) and [A05SA](#)) can be assessed without a discontinuity. For this reason, the Scottish Government's Labour Market Trends publication will only compare LFS estimates for Scotland and the UK from July to September 2022 onwards.

The reweighting of the LFS estimates does not address the volatility seen in the recent estimates (since May-July 2023), therefore ONS have advised that users should be cautious when interpreting quarterly changes in the LFS estimates and that these should be viewed alongside the wider suite of labour market indicators including the Claimant Count data and HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information (PAYE RTI) estimates.

The longer-term solution remains the replacement of the Labour Force Survey with the Transformed Labour Force Survey (TLFS). It is expected that the TLFS will become the primary source of labour market information from September 2024.

Labour Market Transformation

ONS are transforming the LFS. They have published a [Labour market transformation article](#) providing an update on the transformation of labour market statistics.

ONS also welcome any feedback on this latest update and their plans. Please email them at labour.market.transformation@ons.gov.uk to tell them what you think.

HMRC RTI

This release covers people paid through the HMRC's Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system where their pay is reported through the Real Time Information (RTI) system.

Information presented in this release are experimental monthly estimates of the number of payrolled employees and their median earnings. It includes UK and geographical regions (NUTS1) early estimates of payrolled employment and median pay for the most recent month.

Statistics in this release are based on people who are employed in at least one job paid through HMRC's PAYE system and the monthly estimates reflect the average for each day of the calendar month.

The publication and background information can be accessed on the [ONS website](#).

Claimant Count

The experimental Claimant Count consists of claimants of Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and some Universal Credit (UC) Claimants. The UC claimants that are included are 1) those that were recorded as not in employment (May 2013-April 2015), and 2) those claimants of Universal Credit who are required to search for work, i.e. within the Searching for Work conditionality regime as defined by the Department for Work & Pensions (from April 2015 onwards). The denominator for the claimant count rate is the claimant count plus workforce jobs. Estimates included in this publication are seasonally adjusted.

Where can labour market data for Scotland be accessed

Labour Force information for Scotland is also published on [Nomis](#)

This release follows the ONS monthly release of [Regional Labour Market Statistics in the UK](#)

A range of Labour Market Statistics for Scotland are also published by the [Office for National Statistics](#)

Scottish Government Labour Market Statistics

[Scotland's Labour Market Overview](#) (published on 19 December 2023) is a quarterly publication summarising employment, unemployment and economic inactivity estimates sourced from a range of official labour market statistics for Scotland and the UK.

Labour Market data for 16 to 24 year olds

The [Labour market data for 16 to 24 year olds in Scotland](#) is sourced from the ONS Annual Population Survey (January to December 2023) and is published quarterly (last published on 13 March 2024).

Other SG labour market publications from the ONS Annual Population Survey:

- [Disabled people in the labour market in Scotland: January to December 2022](#)
- [Job-related training in Scotland: January to December 2022](#)
- [Labour Market Statistics for Scotland by Ethnicity: January to December 2021](#)
- [Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions – Protected Characteristics. Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2021](#)
- [Supporting documents - Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions – Protected Characteristics. Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2021](#)

Other SG labour market publications

- [Quarterly Public Sector Employment Q4 2023](#)
- [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2023](#)
- [Topical publications](#)

11. Tell us what you think

We are always interested to hear from our users about how our statistics are used, and how they can be improved.

Feedback survey

We'd appreciate it if you would complete our short [feedback survey](#) on this publication.

Enquiries

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

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For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

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Next update

14 May 2024