

Labour Market and Claimant Headline Figures: Released 18th June 2026

Regional Labour Market¹ –

Please note: Estimates from January to March 2025 include the full effect of recent improvements in Labour Force Survey (LFS) data collection and sampling methods introduced from January 2024 onwards. Some volatility remains particularly for estimates for mid-2023 and throughout 2024, and for granular breakdowns, where sample sizes are smaller. The ONS recommend using the LFS estimates as part of our suite of labour market indicators, alongside Workforce Jobs, Claimant Count and Pay As You Earn Real Time Information (PAYE RTI) estimates.

- For the three months ending April 2026, the West Midlands Region employment rate (aged 16 – 64 years) was 73.3%. Since the three months ending January 2026, the employment rate increased by 0.1 percentage points (pp). When compared to the same period in the previous year, the employment rate increased by 1.2pp. The UK employment rate was 75.0%, unchanged when compared to the previous quarter and the previous year. The highest employment rate within the UK for the three months ending April 2026 was in the East with 78.2% and the lowest in the North East with 72.1%, the West Midlands ranked fifth lowest.
- For the three months ending April 2026, the West Midlands Region unemployment rate (aged 16 years and over) was 5.3%, which has decreased by 0.8pp since the previous quarter but was 0.1pp higher when compared to the previous year. The UK unemployment rate was 4.9%, a 0.3pp decrease from the previous quarter but a 0.3pp increase when compared to the previous year. The highest unemployment rate in the UK for the three months ending April 2026 was in London with 6.6% and the lowest in Northern Ireland with 1.7%, the West Midlands ranked fifth highest.
- For the three months ending April 2026, the West Midlands Region economic inactivity rate (aged 16 – 64 years) was 22.5%, an increase of 0.8pp from the previous quarter, but a decrease of 1.3pp when compared to the previous year. The UK economic inactivity rate was 21.0%, an increase of 0.3pp from the previous quarter but a 0.3pp decrease from the previous year. The highest economic inactivity rate in the UK for the three months ending April 2026 was Northern Ireland with 26.8% with the lowest in the East with 18.3%, the West Midlands ranked fifth highest.
- For payrolled employees², when comparing April 2026 with the same period last year, the UK overall decreased by 0.4% and regional changes ranged from a 1.3% increase in Northern Ireland (the only area to increase) to a 1.0% decrease in London. The West Midlands decreased by 0.2%.
- The estimated number of workforce jobs in the UK was just over 36.8 million in March 2026, down by 97,586 (-0.3%) from a year ago. Workforce jobs decreased in 9 out of 12 regions of the UK between March 2025 and March 2026. The North West had the largest decrease in percentage terms by 1.7%, while for the overall number, the South West saw the largest decrease by 46,846. The West Midlands had 3.0 million workforce jobs in March 2026, an annual decrease of 0.1% (-2,195 jobs). Of the three areas to increase, the North West and Northern Ireland had the joint highest percentage increase, both by 0.9%. The other area to increase was Yorkshire and the Humber by 0.2%.

¹ Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS), Labour market in the regions of the UK: June 2026 (official statistics in development)

² Payrolled employee figures should be treated as provisional estimates and are likely to be revised when more data is received next month.

Claimant Count³

All Claimants Summary

Revised Estimates

- New figures show that there were 140,685 (revised down from 143,080 claimants) in the WMCA area in April 2026. Since March 2026, there has been a decrease of 0.8% (-1,160) claimants in the WMCA area – these figures have been revised from an increase of 0.9% (+1,235). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 1.0%, revised from an increase of 0.9%.
- When compared to April 2025, claimants have now decreased by 3.7% (-5,435) in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from a decrease of 2.1% (-3,040). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 2.0%, revised from a decrease of 0.1%.
- When compared to April 2021, claimants have decreased by 18.8% (-32,560) in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from a decrease of 17.4% (-30,165). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 34.8%, revised from a decrease of 33.6%.
- Overall, for the WMCA the number of claimants as a proportion of residents aged 16-64 years old was 7.3% in April 2026 (revised from 7.4%). For England, the proportion was 4.0% (revised from 4.1%).
- Across the Combined Authorities, the WMCA still had the highest rates, West Yorkshire was second highest at 4.9% (revised from 5.0%) down to 2.0% for York & North Yorkshire (unchanged).

Provisional Estimates

- There were 143,600 claimants in the WMCA area in May 2026. Since April 2026, there has been an increase of 2.1% (+2,915) claimants in the WMCA area, England increased by 2.0%. When compared to May 2025 claimants have decreased by 0.8% (-1,150) in the WMCA area, with England increasing by 0.8%. When compared to May 2021, claimants have decreased by 13.7% (22,760) in the WMCA area, with England decreasing by 29.0%.
- Overall, for the WMCA the number of claimants as a proportion of residents aged 16-64 years old was 7.5% compared to 4.1% for England in May 2026. Across the Combined Authorities, the WMCA had the highest rates, West Yorkshire was second highest at 5.0% down to 2.0% for York & North Yorkshire.

Youth Claimant (Aged 18-24) Summary

Revised Estimates

- New figures show that there were 29,325 (revised down from 29,730) youth claimants in the WMCA area in April 2026. Since March 2026, this has now decreased by 0.5% (-155) in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from an increase of 0.8% (+250). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 0.9%, revised from an increase of 0.7%.
- When compared to April 2025, youth claimants have now increased by 7.3% (+1,985) in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from an increase of 8.7% (+2,390). For England over this period, there has been an increase of 7.6%, revised from an increase of 9.3%.

³ Source: ONS/DWP, Claimant Count, June 2026. This experimental series counts the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance plus those who claim Universal Credit and are required to seek work and be available for work and replaces the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance as the headline indicator of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. Please note, when new data is released, the previous month is also revised.

- When compared to April 2021, youth claimants have decreased by 14.7% (-5,055) in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from a decrease of 13.5% (-4,650). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 32.4%, revised from a decrease of 31.2%.
- Overall, for the WMCA the number of claimants as a proportion of residents aged 18-24 years old was 9.5% (revised from 9.7%) in April 2026. For England, the proportion was 5.8% (revised from 5.9%).
- Across the Combined Authorities, the WMCA still had the highest rates, Tees Valley was second highest at 7.7% (revised from 7.9%) down to 2.8% for York & North Yorkshire (unchanged).

Provisional Estimates

- There were 29,695 youth claimants in the WMCA area in May 2026. Since April 2026, there has been an increase of 1.3% (+370) youth claimants in the WMCA area, England-wide youth claimants increased by 0.4%. When compared to May 2025, youth claimants have increased by 9.8% (+2,650) in the WMCA area, with England increasing by 9.7%. When compared to May 2021, youth claimants have decreased by 9.1% (-2,980) in the WMCA area, with England decreasing by 26.5%.
- Overall, for the WMCA the number of claimants as a proportion of residents aged 18-24 years old was 9.6% compared to 5.8% for England in May 2026. Across the Combined Authorities, the WMCA had the highest rates, Tees Valley was the second highest at 7.9% down to 2.7% for York & North Yorkshire.