

Labour Market and Claimant Headline Figures: Released 18th August 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 June 2026, the West Midlands Region employment rate (aged 16 – 64 years) was 73.0%. Since the three months ending March 2026, the employment rate decreased by 0.7 percentage points (pp), the second highest decrease across all regions, with the North East the highest at a decrease 0.8pp. When compared to the same period in the previous year, the employment rate decreased by 0.8pp. The UK employment rate was 75.1%, a 0.1pp increase when compared to the previous quarter but decrease of 0.2pp when compared to the previous year. The highest employment rate within the UK for the three months ending June 2026 was in the East with 78.3% and the lowest in the North East with 71.1%, the West Midlands ranked fourth lowest.
- For the three months ending June 2026, the West Midlands Region unemployment rate (aged 16 years and over) was 5.6%, which has increased by 0.1pp since the previous quarter but was 0.1pp lower when compared to the previous year. The UK unemployment rate was 4.9%, a 0.1pp decrease from the previous quarter and a 0.2pp increase when compared to the previous year. The highest unemployment rate in the UK for the three months ending June 2026 was in London with 6.5% and the lowest in Northern Ireland with 2.0%, the West Midlands ranked second highest.
- For the three months ending June 2026, the West Midlands Region economic inactivity rate (aged 16 – 64 years) was 22.7%, an increase of 0.6pp from the previous quarter and an increase of 1.1pp when compared to the previous year. The UK economic inactivity rate was 20.9%, unchanged from from the previous quarter and the previous year. The highest economic inactivity rate in the UK for the three months ending June 2026 was Northern Ireland with 26.4% with the lowest in the South East with 18.4%, the West Midlands ranked fourth highest.
- For payrolled employees², when comparing July 2026 with the same period last year, the UK overall decreased by 0.3% and regional changes ranged from a 1.1% increase in Northern Ireland (the only area to increase) to a 0.7% decrease in London. The West Midlands decreased by 0.1%.

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

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

Claimant Count³

All Claimants Summary

Revised Estimates

- New figures show that there were 141,035 (revised down from 143,115 claimants) in the WMCA area in June 2026. Since May 2026, there has been a decrease of 0.1% (-160) claimants in the WMCA area – these figures have been revised from an increase of 1.4% (+1,920). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 0.3%, revised from an increase of 1.2%.
- When compared to June 2025, claimants have now decreased by 2.8% (-4,135) in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from a decrease of 1.4% (-2,055). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 1.7%, revised from a decrease of 0.2%.
- When compared to June 2021, claimants have decreased by 11.7% (-18,695) in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from a decrease of 10.4% (-16,615). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 25.2%, revised from a decrease of 24.1%.
- Overall, for the WMCA the number of claimants as a proportion of residents aged 16-64 years old was 7.3% in June 2026 (revised from 7.4%). For England, the proportion was 4.0% (unchanged).
- 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 1.9% for York & North Yorkshire (revised from 2.0%).

Provisional Estimates

- There were 142,850 claimants in the WMCA area in July 2026. Since June 2026, there has been an increase of 1.3% (+1,815) claimants in the WMCA area, England increased by 1.1%. When compared to July 2025 claimants have increased by 0.4% (+570) in the WMCA area, with England increasing by 1.1%. When compared to July 2021, claimants have decreased by 8.7% (-13,640) in the WMCA area, with England decreasing by 22.6%.
- Overall, for the WMCA the number of claimants as a proportion of residents aged 16-64 years old was 7.4% compared to 4.0% for England in July 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 29,265 (revised down from 29,685) youth claimants in the WMCA area in June 2026. Since May 2026, this is now unchanged in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from an increase of 1.4% (+420). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 0.8%, revised from an increase of 0.7%.
- When compared to June 2025, youth claimants have now increased by 7.3% (+2,000) in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from an increase of 8.9% (+2,420). For England over this period, there has been an increase of 7.6%, revised from an increase of 9.2%.

³ Source: ONS/DWP, Claimant Count, August 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 June 2021, youth claimants have decreased by 5.5% (-1,710) in the WMCA area - these figures have been revised from a decrease of 4.2% (-1,290). For England over this period, there has been a decrease of 21.8%, revised from a decrease of 20.6%.
- Overall, for the WMCA the number of claimants as a proportion of residents aged 18-24 years old was 9.5% (revised from 9.6%) in June 2026. For England, the proportion was 5.7% (revised from 5.8%).
- Across the Combined Authorities, the WMCA still had the highest rates, Tees Valley was second highest at 7.7% (revised from 7.8%) down to 2.6% for York & North Yorkshire (unchanged).

Provisional Estimates

- There were 30,060 youth claimants in the WMCA area in July 2026. Since June 2026, there has been an increase of 2.7% (+795) youth claimants in the WMCA area, England-wide youth claimants increased by 2.3%. When compared to July 2025, youth claimants have increased by 9.2% (+2,520) in the WMCA area, with England increasing by 9.4%. When compared to July 2021, youth claimants have increased by 1.4% (+415) in the WMCA area, with England decreasing by 15.1%.
- Overall, for the WMCA the number of claimants as a proportion of residents aged 18-24 years old was 9.8% compared to 5.8% for England in July 2026. Across the Combined Authorities, the WMCA had the highest rates, Tees Valley was the second highest at 8.0% down to 2.7% for York & North Yorkshire.