



A National Statistics publication for Scotland



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET

Scotland's Labour Market Trends May 2021

About this publication

This publication is updated monthly and summarises employment, unemployment and economic inactivity estimates sourced from the Labour Force Survey (ONS) for Scotland and the UK. These are classed as National Statistics. Associated tables are published at the following links.

This release follows the ONS monthly releases of

[Regional Labour Market Statistics in the UK](#)

[Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, UK: May 2021](#)

Source of data

Important Note:

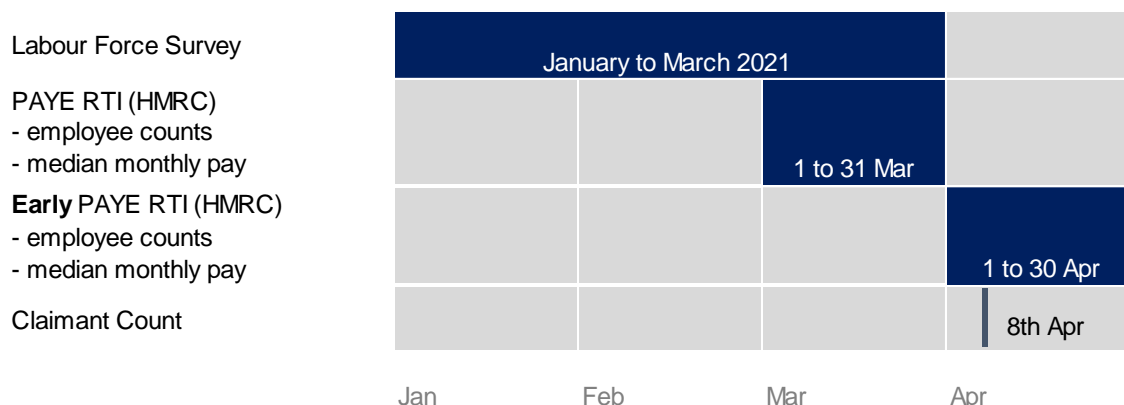
Labour Force Survey (LFS) responses are weighted to official 2018-based population projections on demographic trends that pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic. In the [Coronavirus and the impact on payroll employment](#) article, ONS analyse the population totals used in the LFS weighting process and state their intention to make adjustments. Rates published from the LFS remain robust; however, levels and changes in levels should be used with caution. This will particularly affect estimates for country of birth, nationality, ethnicity and disability.

An [article](#) published on 17 May 2021 describes the new LFS weighting methodology which will be applied to results from July 2021.

This publication also contains claimant count information and HMRC PAYE Real Time Information (RTI) on median monthly earnings and payrolled employees. These are classed as Experimental Statistics.

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

Figure 1: Labour market data source reference periods



Comparisons over time

Comparisons with the latest data over the year have been retained in some parts of the commentary in the publication. However, comparisons with the last data reference point prior to the pandemic have also been provided i.e. employment, unemployment and inactivity rates from the Labour Force Survey are compared with December 2019 to February 2020, HMRC payrolled employee estimates and median monthly earnings are compared with February 2020 and DWP claimant count level and rates are compared with March 2020, to reflect changes in the labour market following the pandemic.

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NATIONAL STATISTICS STATUS

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

These statistics were reviewed, as part of a [compliance check](#), against the [Code of Practice](#) in March 2020 and therefore continue to be designated National Statistics.

Key points

Labour Force Survey estimates are presented for the 3 months to March 2021, compared with the quarter before (October to December 2020) and pre-pandemic (December 2019 to February 2020). Please note percentage point changes are based on unrounded data.

This release, to March 2021, presents an average of the period January to March 2021, therefore this quarter and the previous quarter follow COVID-19 related policies implemented from the end of March 2020, while December 2019 to February 2020 is in the pre-COVID period.

Furloughed employees - Employees who are furloughed will be classed as employed but temporarily away from work in the Labour Force Survey and also included in payrolled employee estimates from HMRC (see page 19 for further details).

- The latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for January to March 2021 indicate that over the quarter, the unemployment rate decreased, the employment rate increased and economic inactivity rate decreased.
- The estimated unemployment rate (16+) in Scotland was 4.3 per cent, up 0.5 percentage points since December 2019-February 2020 (pre-pandemic) but down 0.2 percentage points over the quarter. Scotland's unemployment rate was below the UK rate of 4.8 per cent.
- The estimated employment rate (the proportion of people aged 16-64 in work) in Scotland was 74.4 per cent, down 0.9 percentage points since December 2019-February 2020 but up 0.7 percentage points over the quarter. Scotland's employment rate was below the UK rate of 75.2 per cent.
- The estimated 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 22.2 per cent, up 0.6 percentage points since December 2019 to February 2020 but down 0.6 percentage points over the quarter. Scotland's economic inactivity rate was above the UK rate of 21.0 per cent.
- Early estimates for April 2021 from HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information indicate that there were 2.3 million payrolled employees in Scotland, a fall of 3.2 per cent (76,000) compared with February 2020 (pre-pandemic). This compares with a fall of 2.7 per cent for the UK over the same period.
- 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. In April 2021, there were 208,400 claimants in Scotland, a decrease of 1,400 (0.7 per cent) over the month and an increase of 95,300 (84.3 per cent) since March 2020. The

claimant count rate in April 2021 was 6.5 per cent, compared with 7.2 per cent for the UK as a whole.

- Early estimates for April 2021 from HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information indicate that median monthly pay for employees in Scotland increased to £2,021, an increase of 8.1 per cent compared with February 2020 (pre-pandemic). This is higher than the growth in median monthly pay for the UK over the same period (5.8 per cent).

1. Summary of labour market statistics

Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity estimates are presented for the 3 months to March 2021, compared with the quarter before (October to December 2020) and compared with a year before (January to March 2020).

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

Table 1: Labour Market Statistics, Scotland and UK, January to March 2021

	Rate (%)	CI	Percentage point				Level (000's)					
			Change on quarter	CI	Change on year	CI	Level ('000)	CI	Change on quarter	CI	Change on year	CI
Employment¹												
Scotland	74.4	(± 1.7)	0.7	(± 2.3)	0.0	(± 2.3)	2,663	(± 58)	26	(± 78)	5	(± 79)
UK	75.2	(± 0.4)	0.2	(± 0.4)	-1.2	(± 0.6)	32,476	(± 190)	84	(± 167)	-529	(± 259)
Unemployment²												
Scotland	4.3	(± 0.8)	-0.2	(± 1.2)	0.1	(± 1.2)	119	(± 23)	-4	(± 32)	3	(± 32)
UK	4.8	(± 0.3)	-0.3	(± 0.3)	0.8	(± 0.3)	1,623	(± 88)	-121	(± 98)	258	(± 113)
Economic Inactivity³												
Scotland	22.2	(± 1.6)	-0.6	(± 2.2)	0.0	(± 2.1)	764	(± 68)	-21	(± 93)	-1	(± 91)
UK	21.0	(± 0.4)	0.1	(± 0.4)	0.6	(± 0.5)	8,712	(± 170)	48	(± 151)	255	(± 227)

Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

Note: Levels: 1,2: All persons aged 16+; 3: All persons aged 16-64. Rates: denominator: 1,3: all persons 16-64 years; 2. economically active 16+.

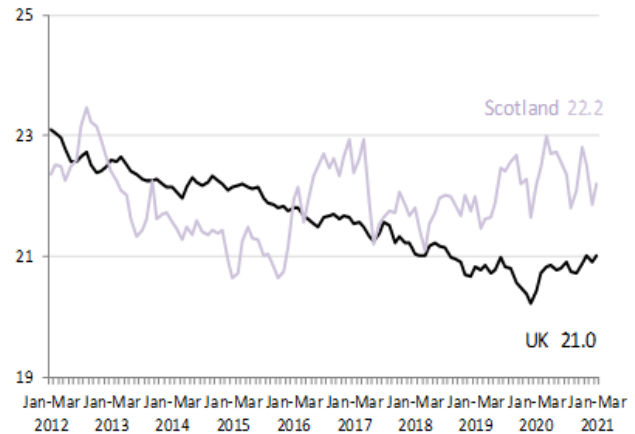
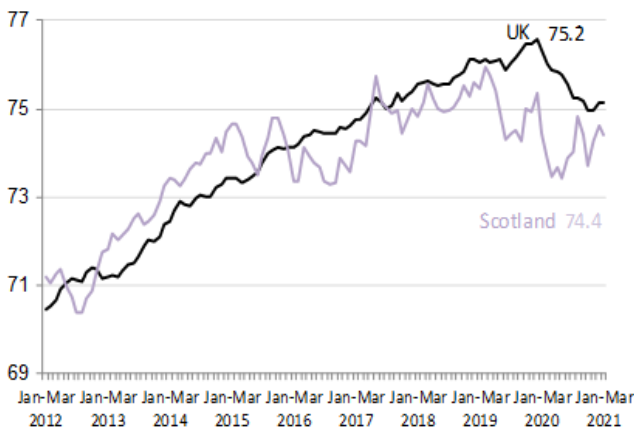
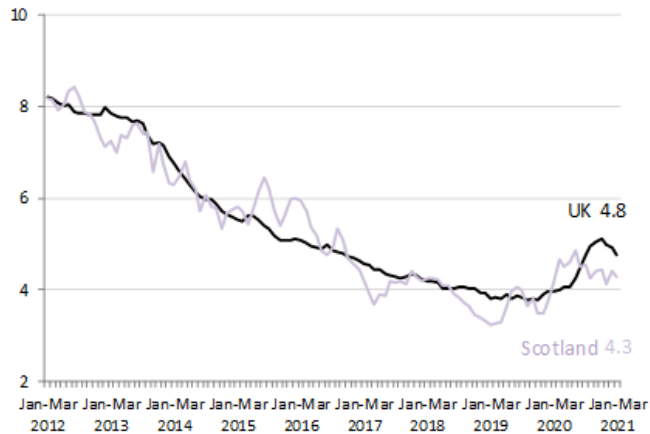
Infographic summary of Labour Force Survey Statistics

January to March 2021

Unemployment 4.3%

Employment 74.4%

Economic Inactivity 22.2%



	Scotland		UK	
	Value	Change	Value	Change
Quarterly Change	Scotland -0.2 %pts	↓	UK -0.3 %pts	↓
Annual Change	Scotland 0.1 %pts	↑	UK 0.8 %pts	↑

	Scotland		UK	
	Value	Change	Value	Change
Quarterly Change	Scotland 0.7 %pts	↑	UK 0.2 %pts	↑
Annual Change	Scotland 0.0 %pts	↔	UK -1.2 %pts	↓

	Scotland		UK	
	Value	Change	Value	Change
Quarterly Change	Scotland -0.6 %pts	↓	UK 0.1 %pts	↑
Annual Change	Scotland 0.0 %pts	↔	UK 0.6 %pts	↑

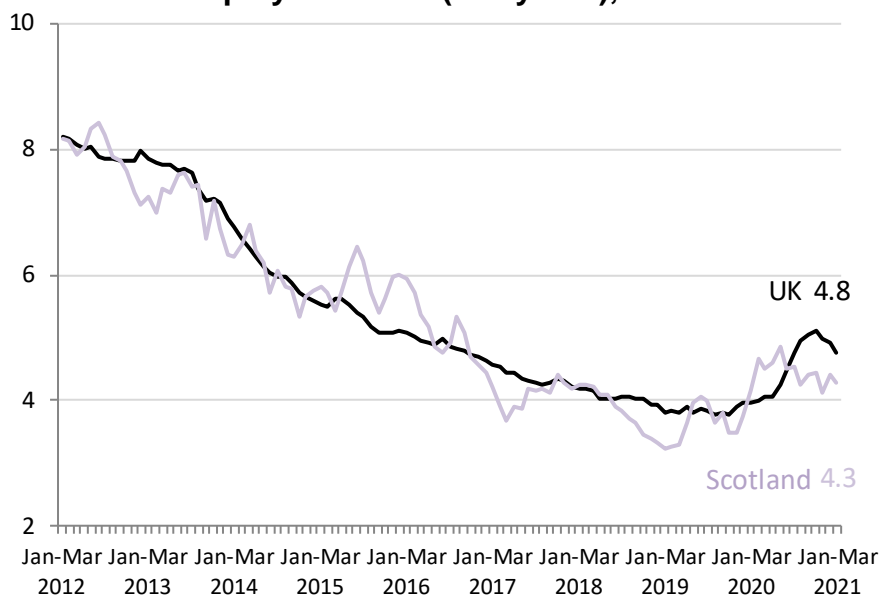
% pts=percentage points
 Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS
 18th May 2021

2. Unemployment estimates

The estimated unemployment rate for people aged 16 years and over in Scotland was 4.3 per cent in January to March 2021. This is 0.5 percentage points up on December 2019 to February 2020 but 0.2 percentage points down on the quarter.

The estimated UK unemployment rate was 4.8 per cent in January to March 2021. This is 0.8 percentage points up on December 2019 to February 2020 but 0.3 percentage points down on the quarter.

Chart 1: Unemployment rate (16+ years), Scotland and UK

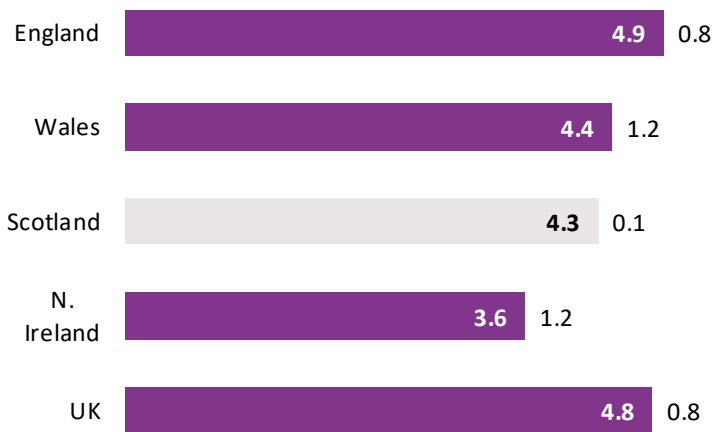


Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

Compared with the UK countries, Scotland's unemployment rate was the 2nd lowest.

The estimated unemployment rate for Scotland was 0.1 percentage points higher than the year before (January to March 2020) while the estimated UK unemployment rate was 0.8 percentage points higher than the year before.

Chart 2: Unemployment Rate (16+ years), annual change: UK countries



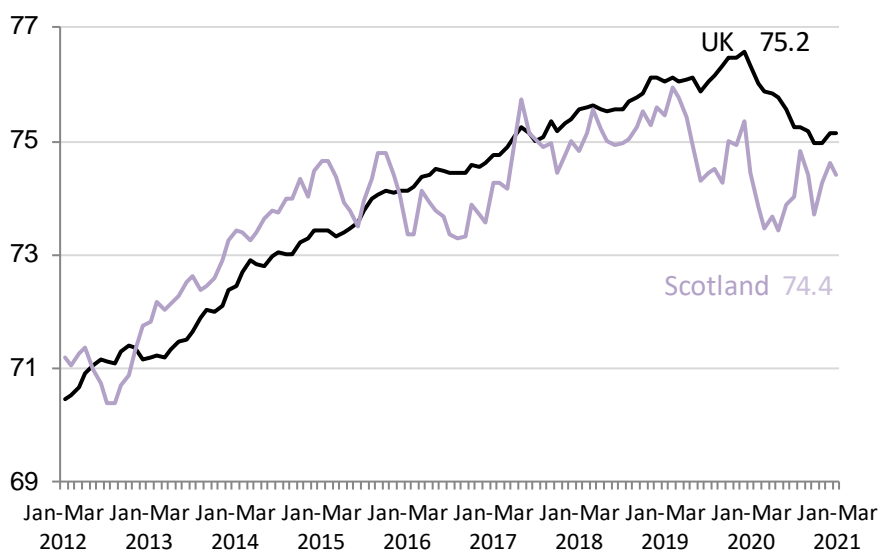
Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS
Annual change shown in percentage points

3. Employment estimates

The estimated employment rate for people aged 16-64 years in Scotland was 74.4 per cent in January to March 2021. This is 0.9 percentage points down on December 2019 to February 2020 but 0.7 percentage points up on the quarter.

The estimated UK employment rate was 75.2 per cent in January to March 2021. This is 1.4 percentage points down on December 2019 to February 2020 but 0.2 percentage points up on the quarter.

Chart 3: Employment rate (16-64 years), Scotland and UK



Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

Compared with the UK countries, Scotland's employment rate was the 2nd highest.

The estimated employment rate for Scotland stayed the same over the year, while the estimated UK employment rate was 1.2 percentage points lower than the year before.

Chart 4: Employment rate (16-64 years), annual change: UK countries



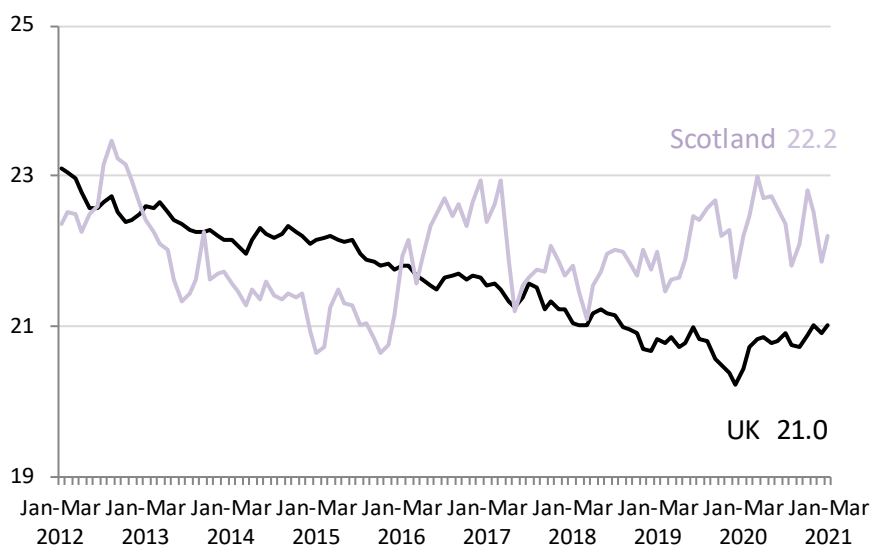
Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS
Annual change shown in percentage points

4. Economic Inactivity estimates

The estimated economic inactivity rate for people aged 16-64 years in Scotland was 22.2 per cent in January to March 2021. This is 0.6 percentage points up on December 2019 to February 2020 but 0.6 percentage points down on the quarter.

The estimated UK economic inactivity rate was 21.0 per cent in January to March 2021. This is 0.8 percentage points up on December 2019 to February 2020 and 0.1 percentage points up on the quarter.

Chart 5: Economic Inactivity rate (16-64 years), Scotland and UK

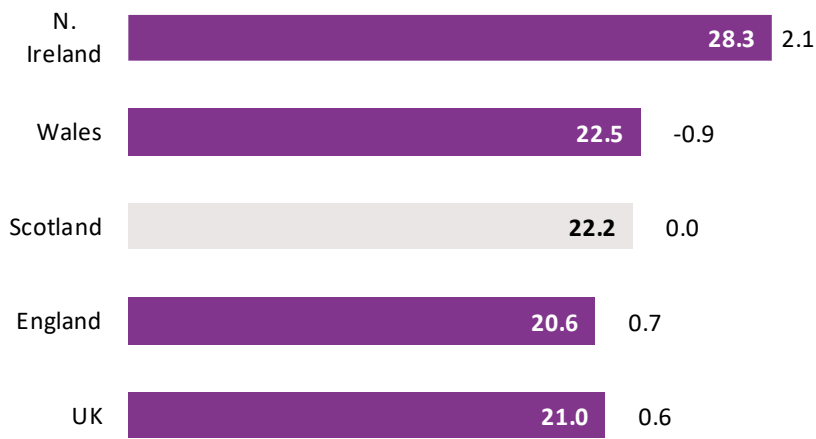


Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

Compared with the UK countries, Scotland's economic inactivity rate was the 2nd lowest.

The estimated economic inactivity rate for Scotland stayed the same over the year, while the estimated UK economic inactivity rate was 0.6 percentage points higher than the year before.

Chart 6: Economic Inactivity rate (16-64 years), annual change: UK countries



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS
Annual change shown in percentage points

5. Labour market estimates for women and men

Table 2: Labour Market Statistics for Women, Scotland and UK, January to March 2021

	Rate (%)	Percentage point Change on quarter	Percentage point Change on year	Level ('000)	Level (000's) Change on quarter	Level (000's) Change on year
Employment¹						
Scotland	72.2	0.3	0.4	1,316	11	9
UK	72.2	0.4	-0.4	15,575	87	-145
Unemployment²						
Scotland	4.3	0.9	0.2	60	13	3
UK	4.5	-0.3	0.8	737	-47	126
Inactivity³						
Scotland	24.5	-1.1	-0.5	430	-19	-10
UK	24.4	-0.1	-0.2	5,073	-21	-30

Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

Note: Levels: 1,2: All women aged 16+; 3.: All women aged 16-64. Rates: denominator: 1,3: All women 16-64 years; 2. economically active 16+.

Table 3: Labour Market Statistics for Men, Scotland and UK, January to March 2021

	Rate (%)	Percentage point Change on quarter	Percentage point Change on year	Level ('000)	Level (000's) Change on quarter	Level (000's) Change on year
Employment¹						
Scotland	76.7	1.1	-0.5	1,347	15	-4
UK	78.2	0.0	-2.0	16,901	-3	-384
Unemployment²						
Scotland	4.2	-1.2	0.0	59	-17	1
UK	5.0	-0.4	0.8	886	-73	132
Inactivity³						
Scotland	19.8	-0.1	0.5	333	-2	9
UK	17.6	0.3	1.3	3,640	69	285

Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS

Note: Levels: 1,2: All men aged 16+; 3: All men aged 16-64. Rates: Denominator: 1,3: All men 16-64 years; 2. economically active 16+.

6. 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.

Pay As You Earn Real Time Information shows that there were 2.3 million payrolled employees in Scotland in March 2021. Compared with the same month the year before, the number of payrolled employees in Scotland fell by 3.0 per cent (73,000). This compares with a fall of 2.9 per cent for the UK over the same period.

The latest **early** payrolled employee estimates for April 2021 indicate that there were 2.3 million payrolled employees in Scotland. Compared with the same month the year before, the number of payrolled employees had fallen by 1.7 per cent (40,000). This compares with a fall of 0.9 per cent for the UK over the same period.

The estimated number of payrolled employees in Scotland in April 2021 fell by 3.2 per cent (76,000) compared with February 2020, the last month prior to the pandemic. This compares with a fall of 2.7 per cent for the UK over the same period.

Chart 7: Payrolled Employees, Scotland, March 2016 to April 2021, seasonally adjusted

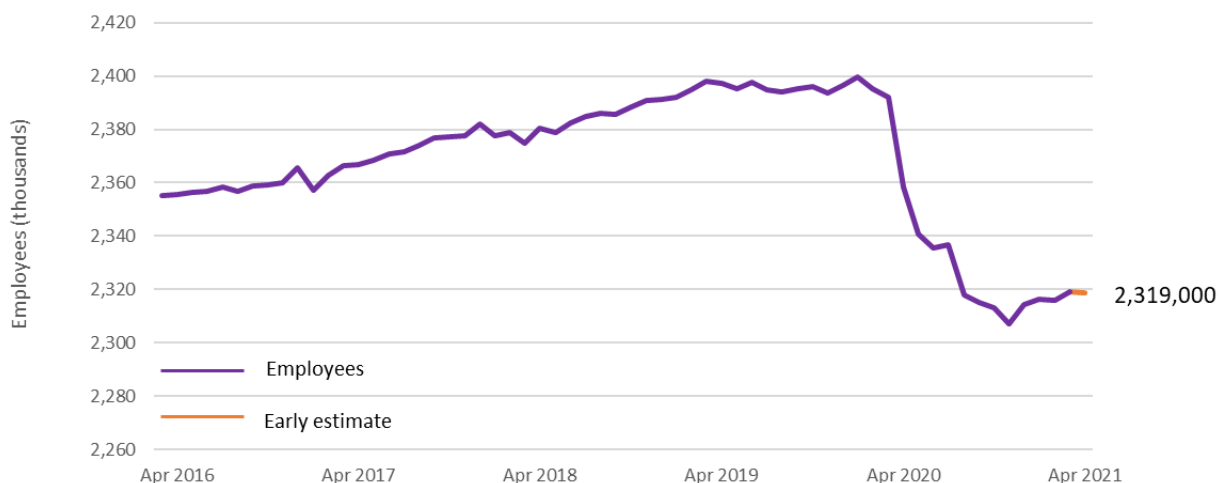
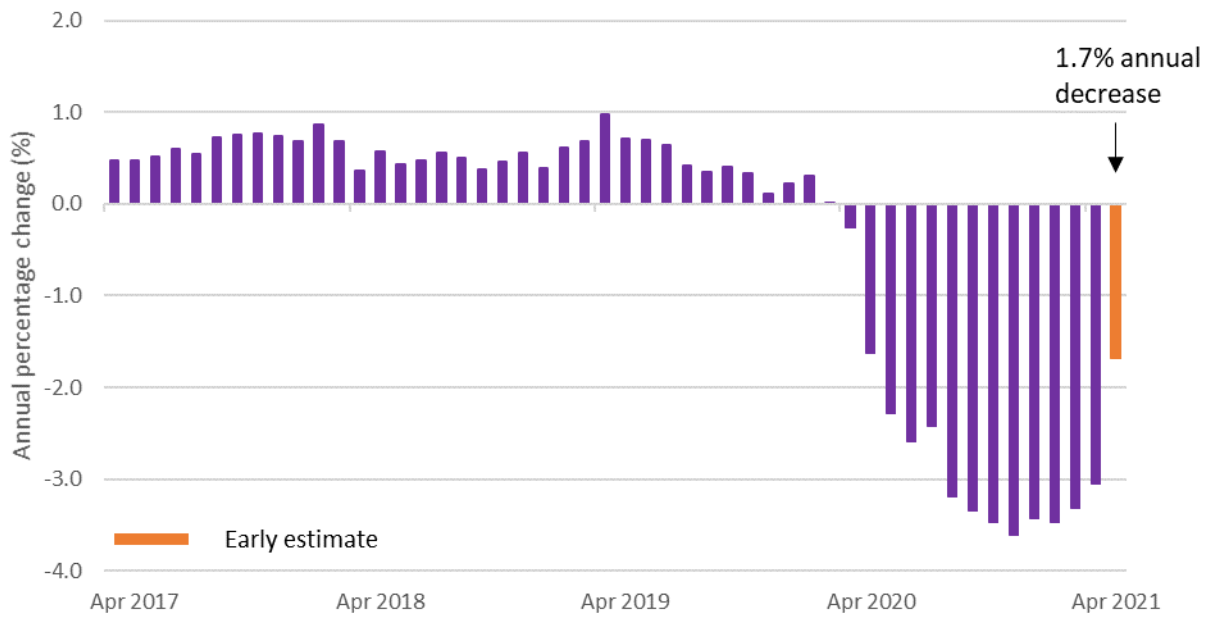


Chart 8: Annual Percentage Change in Payrolled Employees, Scotland, March 2017 to April 2021



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

Note:

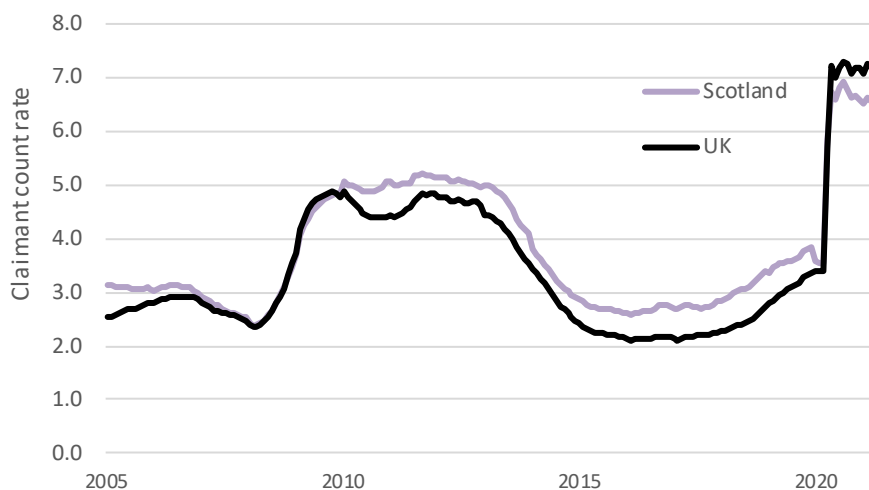
Early estimates for April 2021 are provided to give an indication of the likely level of employees as well as median pay in the latest period. The figures are based on around 85% of information being available and are considered of lower quality and may be subject to revision in next month's release when between 98% to 99% of data will be available.

7. Claimant Count (experimental)

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 about who can claim Universal Credit have changed, meaning an increased proportion of those claiming may actually still be in some kind of work. Therefore, changes in the Claimant Count over time will not be wholly because of changes in the number of people who are unemployed.

In April 2021, there were 208,400 claimants in Scotland, a decrease of 1,400 (0.7 per cent) over the month and an increase of 95,300 (84.3 per cent) since March 2020. The claimant count rate in April 2021 was 6.5 per cent, compared with 7.2 per cent for the UK as a whole.

Chart 9: Claimant Count rate, Scotland and UK



Source: Claimant Count (experimental), seasonally adjusted, ONS and DWP

8. 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.

Earnings from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information show that median monthly pay, seasonally adjusted, for payrolled employees in Scotland in March 2021 was £1,967. Median monthly pay fell sharply between February 2020 and April 2020 but has been recovering since June 2020.

Compared with the same month the year before, median monthly pay for employees in Scotland increased by 5.6 per cent, the same as the UK increase and above the pre-Covid peak annual growth of 5.5 per cent in March 2019.

The latest **early** estimates for April 2021 indicate that median monthly pay for employees in Scotland increased to £2,021, an increase of 10.1 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 (9.8 per cent).

The estimated median monthly pay for employees in Scotland in April 2021 increased by 8.1 per cent compared with February 2020, the last month prior to the pandemic. This is above the UK increase of 5.8 per cent over the same period.

Chart 10: Median Monthly Pay, Scotland and UK, March 2016 to April 2021, seasonally adjusted

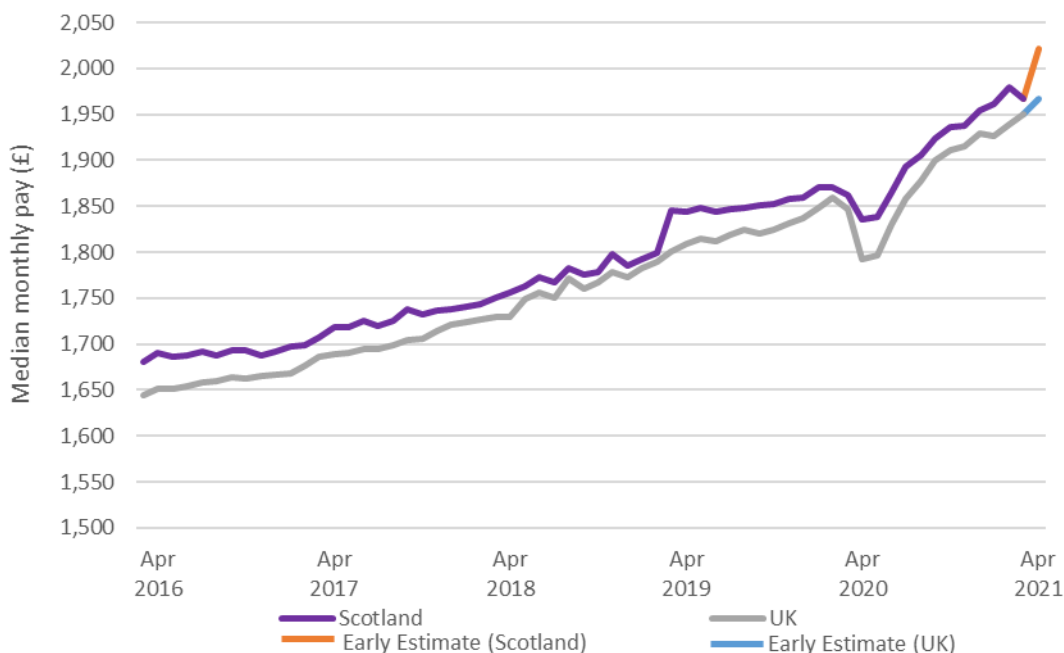
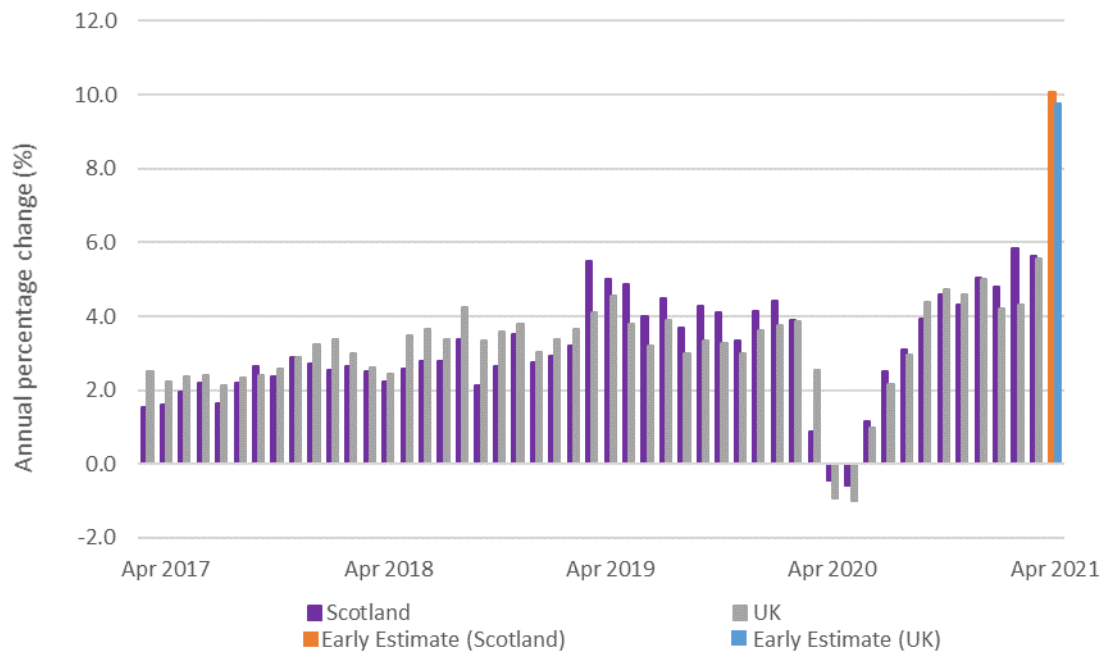


Chart 11: Annual Percentage Change in Median Monthly Pay, Scotland and UK, March 2017 to April 2021



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

Note:

Early estimates for April 2021 are provided to give an indication of the likely level of employees as well as median pay in the latest period. The figures for April 2021 are based on around 85% of information being available and 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.

9. About the Labour Force Survey

All estimates are sourced from the labour force survey with exception of those in section 6, 7 and 8.

Sources of information

Information presented are sourced from the Labour Force Survey, a survey of households collected and published by the Office for National Statistics. Information are obtained from a sample survey and are therefore subject to some error.

Unemployment:

The ILO definition of unemployment covers people who are: not in employment, want a job, have actively sought work in the previous 4 weeks and are available to start work within the next fortnight, or, out of work and have accepted a job which they are waiting to start in the next fortnight.

Unemployment rate:

The number of unemployed people expressed as a percentage of the relevant economically active population.

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. People aged 16 or over are classed as in employment (as an employee or self-employed) by the LFS, if they have done at least one hour of paid work in the week prior to their LFS interview or if they have a job that they are temporarily away from. People who do unpaid work in a family business and people on Government-supported training and employment programs are also included according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention.

Employment rate: The number of people in employment expressed as a percentage of the relevant population.

Economically inactive:

Economically inactive people are not in employment, but do not satisfy all the criteria for unemployment. This group is comprised of 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 and those who do not want a job. For example, students not working or seeking work and those in retirement are classed as economically inactive. It can be useful for some purposes to consider only those who are both economically inactive and not of state pension age.

Economic inactivity rate:

The number of economically inactive people expressed as a percentage of the relevant population.

Reliability of these estimates

When estimates are based on a sample of the population, confidence limits can be used to assess the range of values that the true value lies between. 95% confidence intervals are included in Table 1. ONS publish these in the following tables for [Scotland](#) and [UK](#).

What does the 95% confidence limit mean?

If, for example, we have an LFS estimate and confidence limit of 63% +/- 0.27%, this means that 19 times out of 20 we would expect the true rate to lie between 62.73% and 63.27%. Only in exceptional circumstances (1 in 20 times) would we expect the true rate to be outside the confidence interval around the LFS estimate. The smaller the confidence limits, the more reliable the estimate.

What is statistical significance?

To determine whether a change is statistically significant, we first calculate the difference between 2 quarters or over the year. The difference between 2 quarters for a rate is measured in 'percentage point' terms. The confidence interval around this difference is published by [ONS](#). If the calculated change is greater than the sampling variability of the change, the change was determined to be statistically significant.

Further links to information on reliability

Further information on reliability can be accessed in the ONS publication at [link](#). ONS note that regional estimates for the unemployment rate are quite volatile, which needs to be allowed for when considering the pattern of change over time. Sampling variability information is published at [link](#).

Impact of the Coronavirus on the measurement of the labour market

ONS have published a summary at this [link](#) where full definitions are provided. In summary:

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, both the UK government and devolved administrations have implemented a wide range of policies. The interventions that are likely to be most significant in terms of the direct impact on the labour market are the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) from 20th April 2020 and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) from 15th May 2020.

Applying the guidance on measuring labour market statistics, employees who are furloughed will be classified as employed, but temporarily away from work. This will mean that, all things being equal, furloughed workers will not reduce the number of people in employment (or the employment rate). However, the scheme will lead to an increase in the number of employees working no hours and an overall reduction in the number of hours worked. There may be a compensating effect if employees on furlough take other employment, which can be detected from the number of people with second jobs.

The expected impact of the SEISS in labour market statistics is that people will remain as self-employed, but may class themselves as temporarily away from work and record no hours of employment. However, as under the terms of the scheme, they can continue to work or take on other employment, their labour market status and number of hours worked may change during the scheme's lifespan.

Further information on sources is also published by ONS at:

[Understanding the impact on jobs and pay- how the ONS is now measuring the labour market](#)

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 via the following link: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/earningsandemploymentfrompayasyouearnrealtimeinformationuk/previousReleases>

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.

10. Other labour market statistics for Scotland

Where can labour market data for Scotland be accessed

Labour Force information for Scotland is also published on **nomisweb**

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

Labour Market [Monthly Brief](#)

This additional monthly brief, published soon after Scotland's Labour Market Trends contains the latest key statistics for Scotland from the Labour Force Survey, Annual Population Survey, alternative claimant count and the claimant count. These cover topics including:

Labour market outcomes for equality groups

Latest alternative claimant count and claimant count by age and local authority, for Scotland and the UK

Youth labour market data (16-24 years) for Scotland

Labour market information for young people (16-24 years) in Scotland, sourced from the Annual Population Survey (January to December 2020), is published in a [quarterly release](#) (24th March 2021).

Other SG labour market publications from the Annual Population Survey

[Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions 2019](#)

[Annual Population Survey: Results for the year to 31st December 2019](#)

Information on characteristics of the workforce by sectors were published in a tool

[Scotland's Labour Market - People Places and Regions - Industry Tables - 2019](#)

Other SG labour market publications

[Quarterly Public Sector Employment Q4 2020](#)

[Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2020](#)

Other topical publications can be found at:

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/labour-market-statistics/>

A National Statistics publication for Scotland

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Correspondence and enquiries

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Office of the Chief Statistician, Telephone: 0131 244 0442,
e-mail: statistics.enquiries@gov.scot

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