



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS, DOCUMENT

# Labour market statistics (Annual Population Survey): 2023

Labour market data for UK countries and regions and also for local areas for January to December 2023.

**First published:** 11 April 2024

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# Contents

[Background](#)

[Employment](#)

[Unemployment](#)

[Economic inactivity \(excluding students\)](#)

[Youth statistics \(aged 16 to 24\)](#)

[Long-term unemployment](#)

[Disability status](#)

[Ethnicity](#)

[Quality and methodology information](#)

[Contact details](#)

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# Background

The Annual Population Survey (APS) combines the boosted samples of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). It provides rolling four-quarter labour market data for UK countries and regions as well as for local areas.

The **headline labour market indicators** based on the LFS remain the main source of labour market information 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.

# Employment

The employment rate for people aged 16 to 64 in Wales was 74.1% in the year ending December 2023, up 0.7 percentage points on the previous year. The UK rate was 75.7%, up 0.2 percentage points over the year.

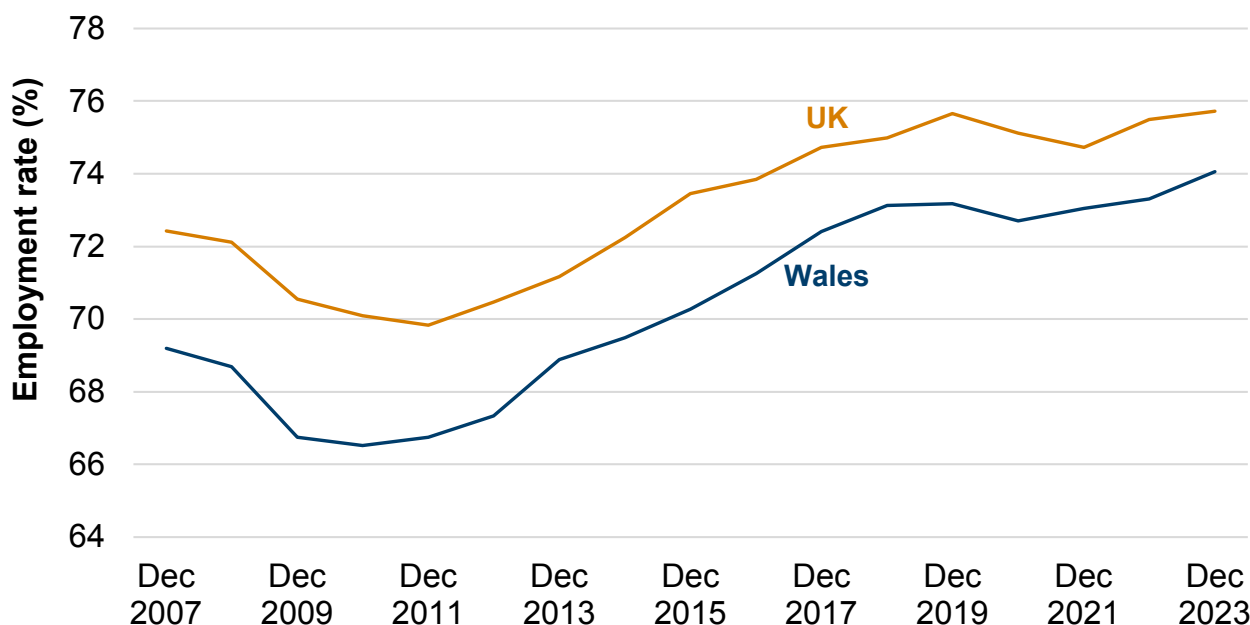
The largest increases in employment rates over the year were seen in Wrexham (up 8.7 percentage points to 80.4%), Neath Port Talbot (up 4.3 percentage points to 73.8%) and Caerphilly (up 4.0 percentage points to 75.9%).

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**Figure 1: Employment rate, year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 1: A line chart showing the employment rate for those aged 16 to 64 has generally increased since the year ending December 2011 in both Wales and the UK. Over the last three years (since the start of the coronavirus pandemic) the rate has been more volatile for both areas. The UK rate has remained higher than the Wales rate since the year ending December 2007, although both show similar trends over this time.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

## Economic Regions

The employment rate in North Wales was 77.0%, an increase of 1.7 percentage points over the year, in Mid and South West Wales the rate was 73.3%, unchanged over the year and in South East Wales the rate was 73.2%, an

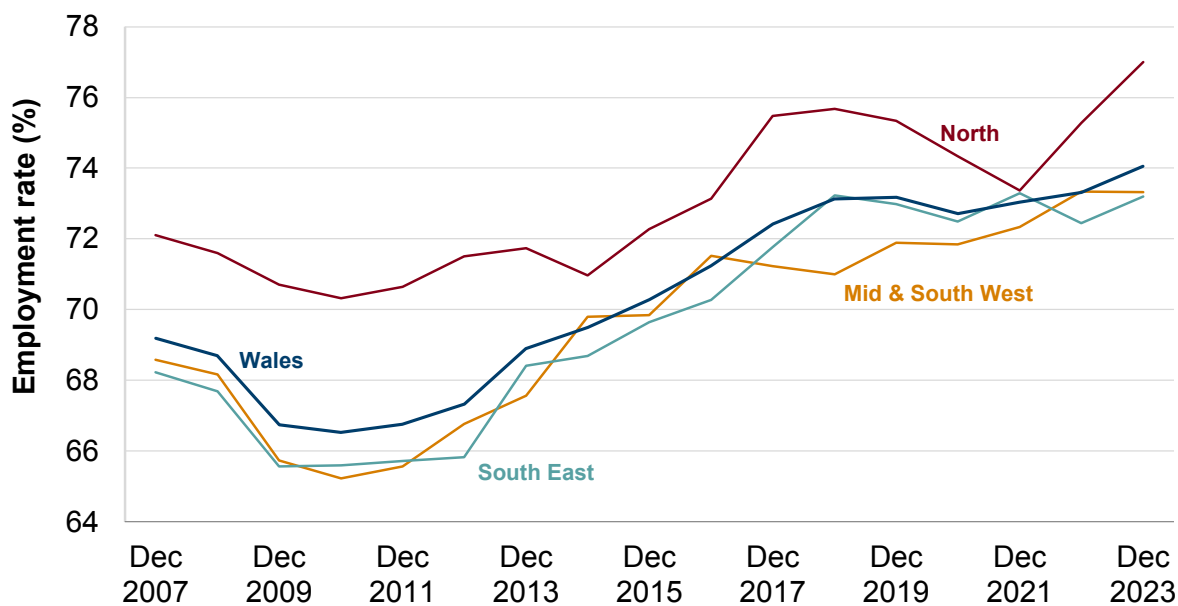
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increase of 0.8 percentage points. North Wales continued to have the highest employment rate of the three Welsh economic regions (differences calculated using unrounded figures).

**Figure 2: Employment rate, economic regions, year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 2: A line chart showing that Wales, and all Welsh economic regions have seen a generally increasing employment rate over the last decade.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of the Annual Population Survey

Since 2011, the overall trend in the employment rate for Wales and the three Welsh economic regions saw a steady increase until the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Despite decreases following the pandemic, employment rates in North Wales have generally remained higher than the other economic regions and Wales overall. Since December 2020, employment rates have increased for Wales and all three of the economic regions, with North Wales having the largest increase.

The percentage of people in employment is one of the **national wellbeing indicators**. A national milestone has been set for this national indicator which is to 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. The employment rate in Wales has gradually increased since 2011 and the gap between the employment rate in Wales and the UK has gradually closed to 1.7 percentage points in the year ending December 2023, a decrease of 0.5 percentage points compared to the gap a year before.

Further information on the national indicators, national milestones and the Well-being of Future Generations Act is provided towards the end of this release.

## Unemployment

In the year ending December 2023, the unemployment rate for people aged 16 and over in Wales was 3.7%, up 0.7 percentage points compared with the previous year. The UK rate was also 3.7%, up 0.1 percentage points over the year.

Please note data for 13 of the 22 local authorities in Wales have been suppressed due to sample sizes being too small to provide sufficient data quality for the unemployment rate. These local authorities are: Bridgend, Ceredigion, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Torfaen, the Vale of Glamorgan and Wrexham.

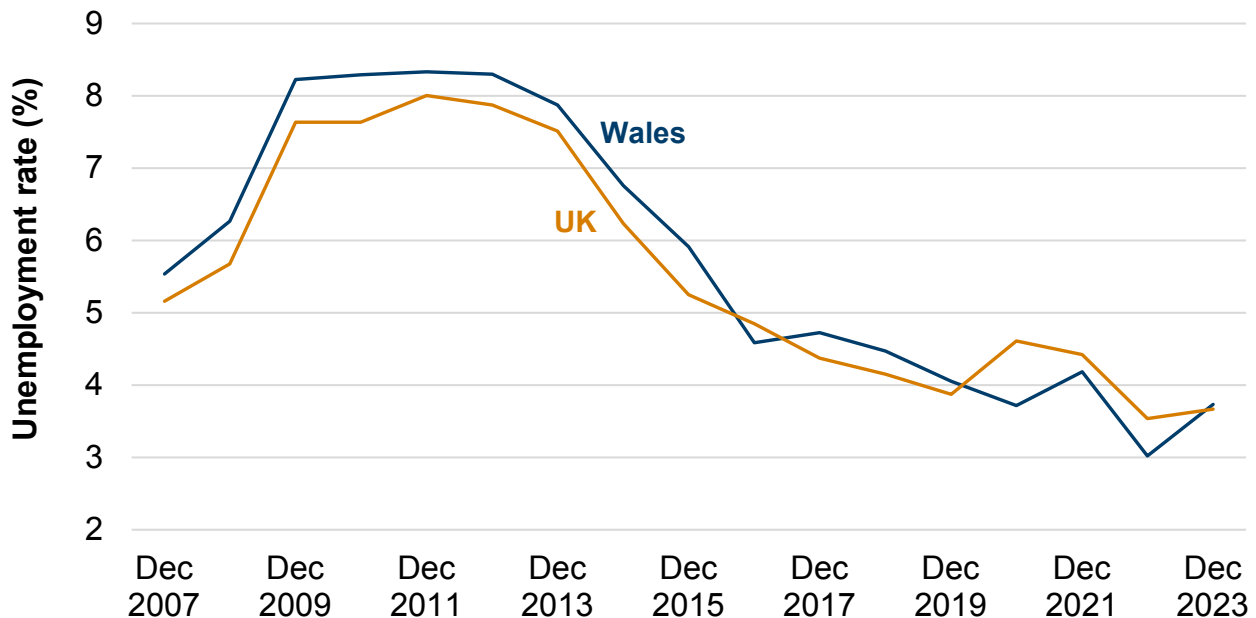
Of the local authorities with sufficient sample sizes, the largest decreases in the unemployment rate over the year were seen in Swansea (down 1.3 percentage points to 4.1%), and Newport (down 0.2 percentage points to 5.0%). Carmarthenshire was the local authority (of those with sufficient sample sizes) with the largest increase over the year, with the unemployment rate rising by 1.6 percentage points to 3.8%.

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**Figure 3: Unemployment rate, year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 3: A line chart showing the unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over has followed a similar trend in both Wales and the UK. The rate increased to the highest point since the year ending December 2007 during the years ending December 2010 to December 2013 in both Wales and the UK, but has since fallen to well below the rate in 2007. The unemployment rate has shown more volatility over the last few years, with Wales' rate rising slightly above the UK rate in the year ending December 2023.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

## Economic regions

The unemployment rate in South East Wales was 4.2%, an increase of 1.7 percentage points over the year, in North Wales the rate was 2.8%, unchanged

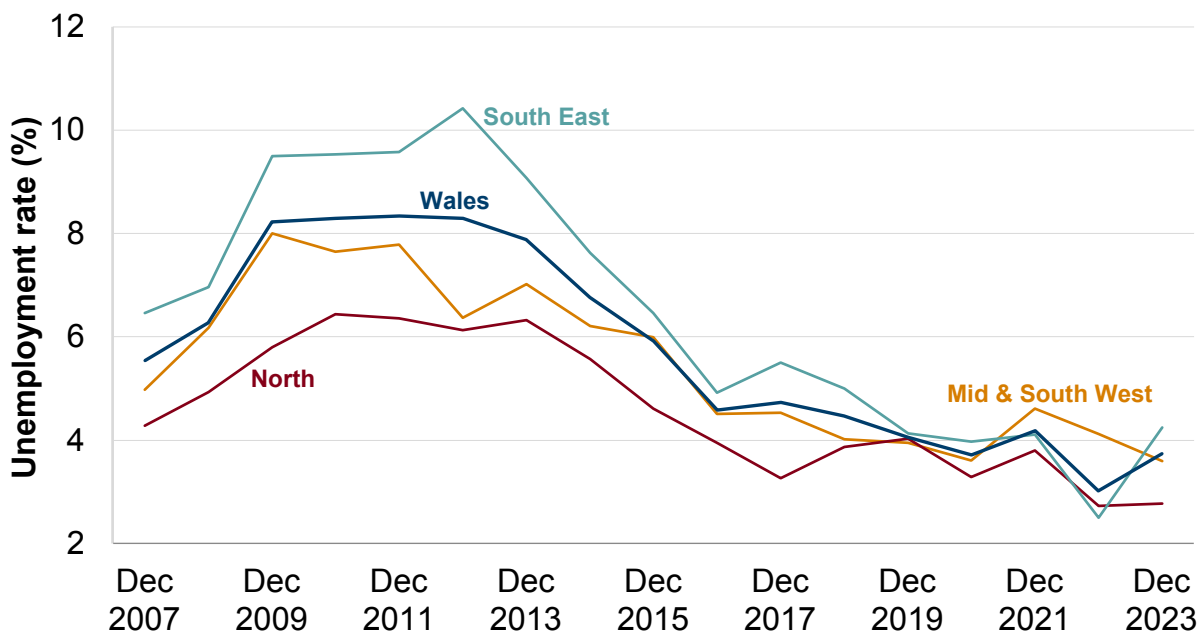
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over the year and in Mid and South West Wales the rate was 3.6%, a decrease of 0.5 percentage points (differences calculated using unrounded figures).

**Figure 4: Unemployment rate, economic regions, year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 4: A line chart showing that the unemployment rate in Wales, South East Wales, North Wales and Mid and South West Wales have all generally decreased over the last decade.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Annual Population Survey

Since the year ending December 2013, the unemployment rate for Wales and the three Welsh economic regions has generally decreased, with the rates falling more sharply until the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Following the pandemic, the unemployment rate of the Welsh economic regions has diverged, with South East Wales having the highest rate and North Wales the lowest rate in the year ending December 2023.

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## Economic inactivity (excluding students)

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. In this section we have excluded individuals who gave being a student as their reason for economic inactivity from the economic inactivity rate, as students not available for work while studying will most likely become economically active when their studies are completed.

In the year ending December 2023, the economic inactivity rate for people aged 16 to 64 in Wales was 19.9%, down 0.8 percentage points over the year. The UK rate was 17.5%, down 0.4 percentage points over the year.

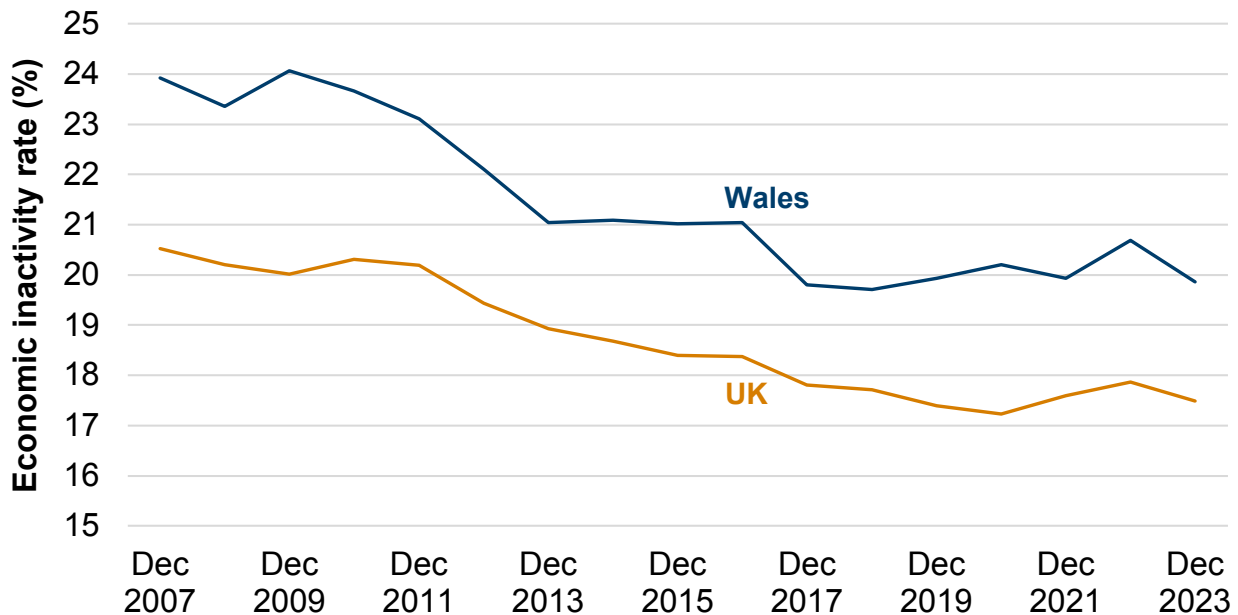
The lowest estimated economic inactivity rates in Wales were in Wrexham (14.7%), Cardiff (15.6%), Isle of Anglesey (16.3%) and Monmouthshire (16.3%).

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**Figure 5: Economic inactivity rate (excluding students), year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 5: A line chart showing the economic inactivity rate (excluding students) has steadily decreased since the year ending December 2007 in both Wales and the UK. The Welsh rate has always been higher than the UK rate, with the size of the gap fluctuating over time.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

## Economic regions

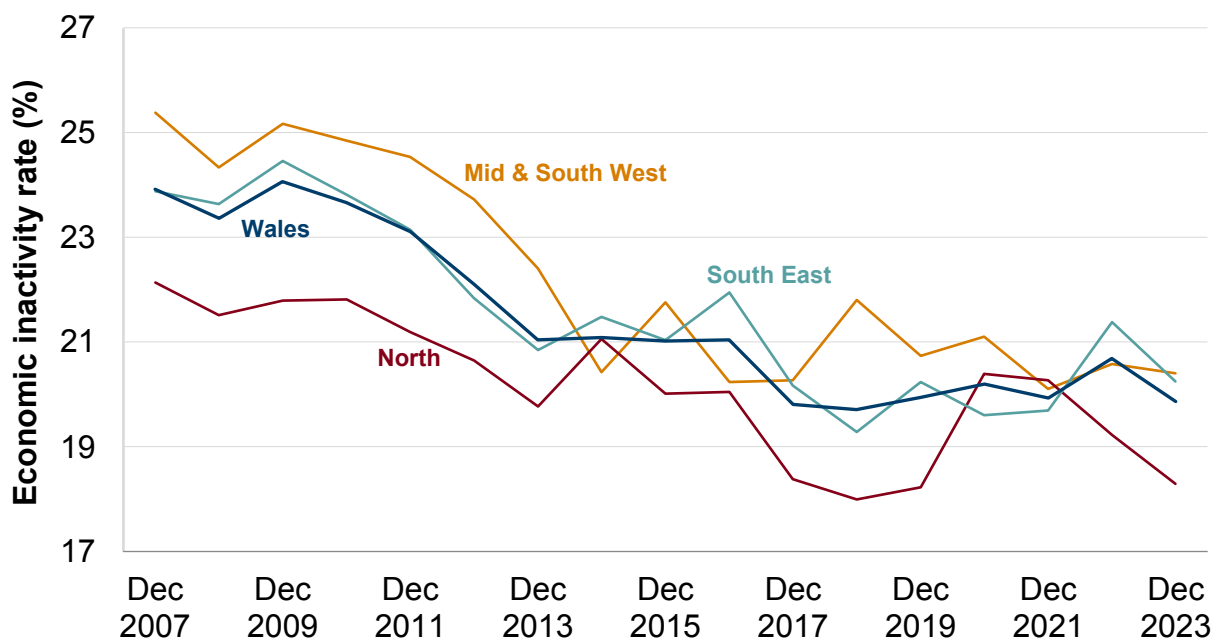
The economic inactivity rate in Mid and South West Wales was 20.4%, a decrease of 0.2 percentage points over the year, in South East Wales the rate was 20.2%, a decrease of 1.1 percentage points, and in North Wales the rate was 18.3%, a decrease of 0.9 percentage points (differences calculated using unrounded figures).

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**Figure 6: Economic inactivity rate (excluding students), economic regions, year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 6: A line chart showing the economic inactivity rate (excluding students) for Wales has generally decreased over the last decade, with the three Welsh economic regions fluctuating around the Wales rate.

Source: Welsh Government analysis of Annual Population Survey

North Wales generally had the lowest economic inactivity rate of all three economic regions until the year ending December 2020, when the rate increased above the other regions, but has since fallen back below them. Mid and South West Wales had the highest rate historically, but has occasionally fallen below other regions in recent periods. Latest data shows Mid and South West Wales had the highest economic inactivity rate of the Welsh economic regions in the year ending December 2023, with North Wales having the lowest rate.

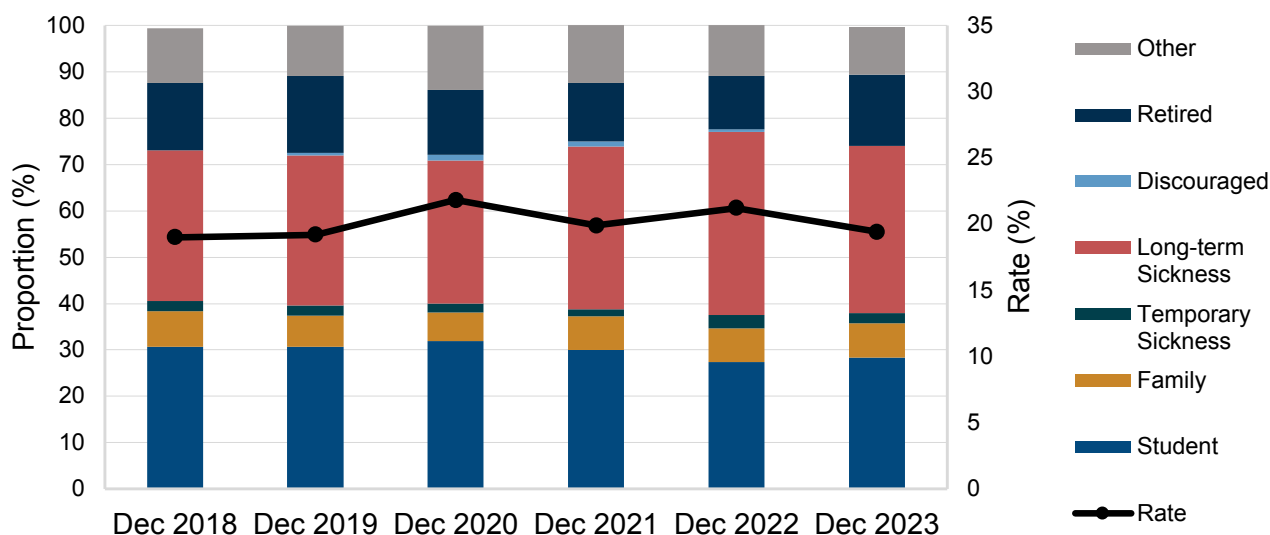
## Reasons for economic inactivity

This section analyses the reasons given for people being economically inactive, the proportions and rates presented in this section include students in order to provide a comprehensive breakdown of these reasons.

The categories for this measure are; Student, Looking after family, Long-term sickness, Temporary sickness, Discouraged, Retired and Other.

In the year ending December 2023, the most common reason for economic inactivity for males in Wales was long-term sickness, which decreased by 3.5 percentage points over the year to 36.0% of all economically inactive males. This was followed by being a student accounting for 28.3% of all economically inactive males, up by 0.9 percentage points from a year earlier.

**Figure 7: Male economic inactivity by reason and male economic inactivity rate, aged 16 to 64, year ending December 2018 to December 2023**



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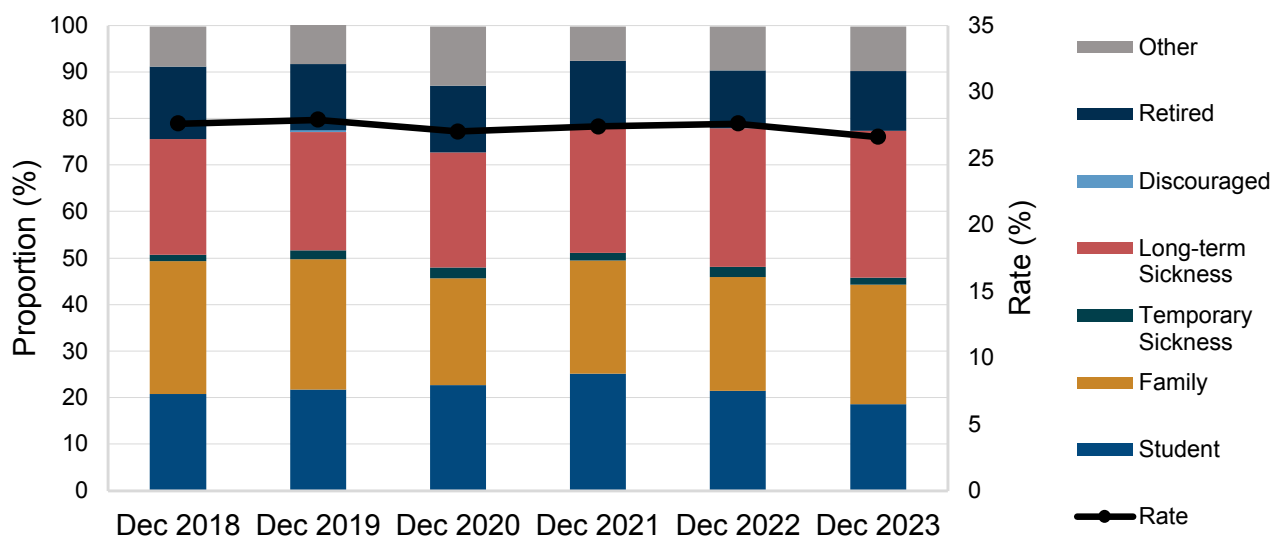
Description of Figure 7: A stacked bar chart showing the proportion of economic inactivity by reason for males in Wales over the last 6 years. The most common reason for inactivity in recent periods for males was long-term sickness, followed by being a student. The 'Discouraged' category has been suppressed for the year ending December 2018 and the year ending December 2023 due to insufficient sample sizes.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

Historically, the most common reason for economic inactivity for females in Wales has been looking after family/home, although the overall trend has been decreasing over time. During 2020-21, this proportion dropped suddenly, which could be due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as an opposite trend can be observed for those giving 'other' reasons. Since 2020, the proportion of females economically inactive whilst looking after family/home has started to increase again.

In the year ending December 2023, the most common reason for economic inactivity for females in Wales was long-term sickness representing 31.5% of all economically inactive females, up by 1.7 percentage points on the year. Over the same period, the proportion of those looking after family / home increased by 1.2 percentage points, accounting for 25.7% of all economically inactive females.

**Figure 8: Female economic inactivity by reason and female economic inactivity rate, aged 16 to 64, year ending December 2018 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 8: A stacked bar chart showing the proportion of economic inactivity by reason for females in Wales over the last 6 years. The most common reason for inactivity in recent years for females was long-term sickness, followed by looking after family / home. The 'Discouraged' category has been suppressed for all periods shown except for the year ending December 2019 due to insufficient sample sizes.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

## Youth statistics (aged 16 to 24)

### Employment

The youth employment rate in Wales in the year ending December 2023 was

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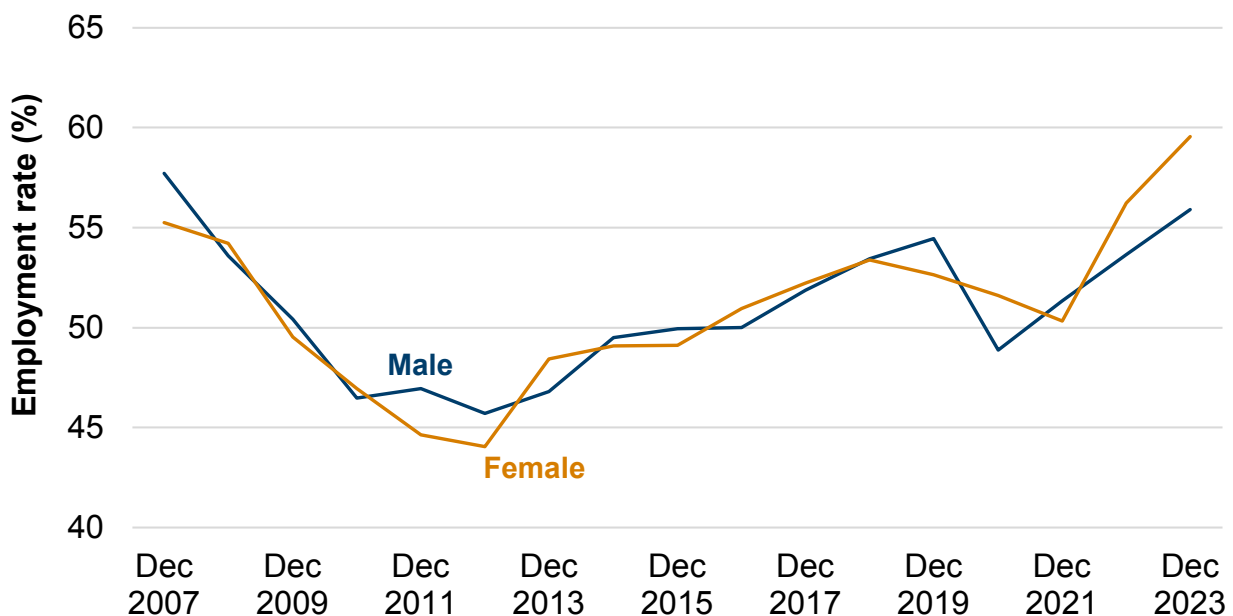
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57.7%, up 2.8 percentage points compared to the previous year. The UK rate was 54.0%, up 0.3 percentage points compared to the previous year.

The youth employment rate for males in Wales was 55.9%, an increase of 2.2 percentage points compared to the previous year.

The employment rate for young females in Wales saw an increase of 3.3 percentage points over the year to 59.5%.

**Figure 9: Youth employment rate by sex in Wales, year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 9: A line chart showing that the employment rate for those aged 16 to 24 in Wales is volatile for both sexes, but has generally increased over the last 10 years. The rate rarely differed between males and females until the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Since December 2021 youth employment rates for females have increased faster than males.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

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## Unemployment

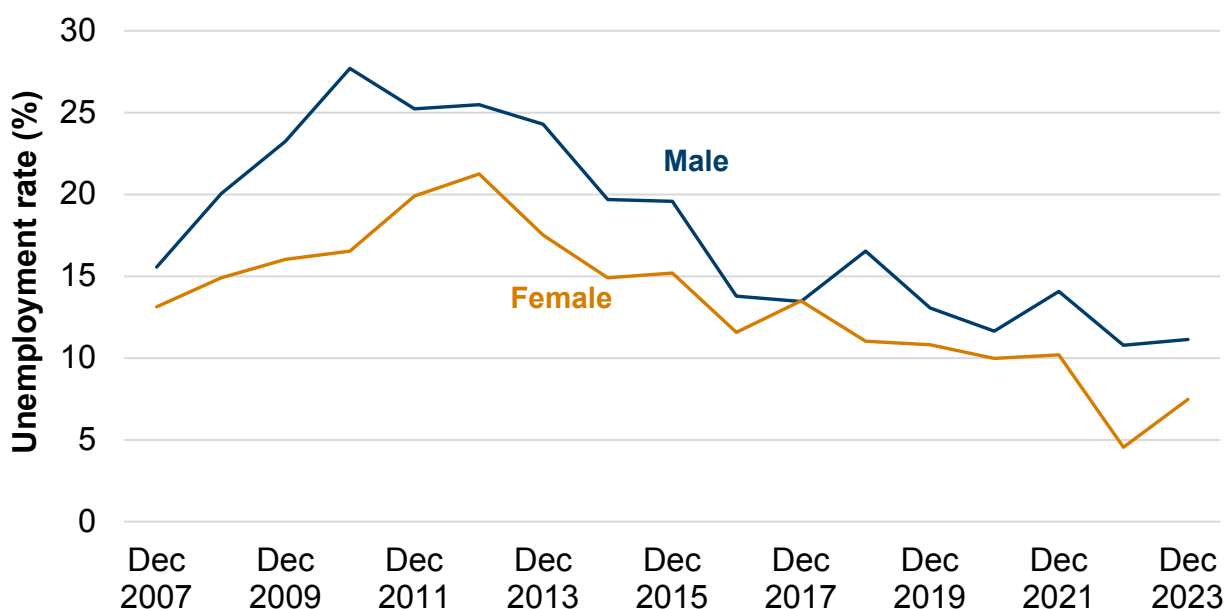
The youth unemployment rate in Wales in the year ending December 2023 was 9.4%, up 1.5 percentage points compared to the previous year. The equivalent UK rate was 10.4%, unchanged compared to the previous year.

In Wales, the youth unemployment rate for males was higher than females at 11.1% and 7.5% respectively. The male youth unemployment rate increased by 0.4 percentage points compared to the previous year whilst the female rate increased by 2.9 percentage points over the same period.

The difference in the youth unemployment rates between males and females in Wales was 3.6 percentage points in the year ending December 2023, with a higher rate for males than for females, down from 6.2 percentage points the previous year. The difference in the youth unemployment rates between males and females in the UK was 2.5 percentage points in the year ending December 2023, which compares to 3.1 percentage points in the year ending December 2022.



**Figure 10: Youth unemployment rate by sex in Wales, year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 10: A line chart showing the unemployment rate for those aged 16 to 24 in Wales is volatile for both males and females but has generally decreased over the last decade, to record lows in recent periods.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

## Economic inactivity (excluding students)

The youth economic inactivity rate in Wales in the year ending December 2023 was 20.1%, up 0.1 percentage points compared to the previous year. The UK rate was 18.3%, down 0.9 percentage points over the year.

The youth economic inactivity rate for males in the year ending December 2023 was 20.6%, an increase of 1.7 percentage points compared to the previous year

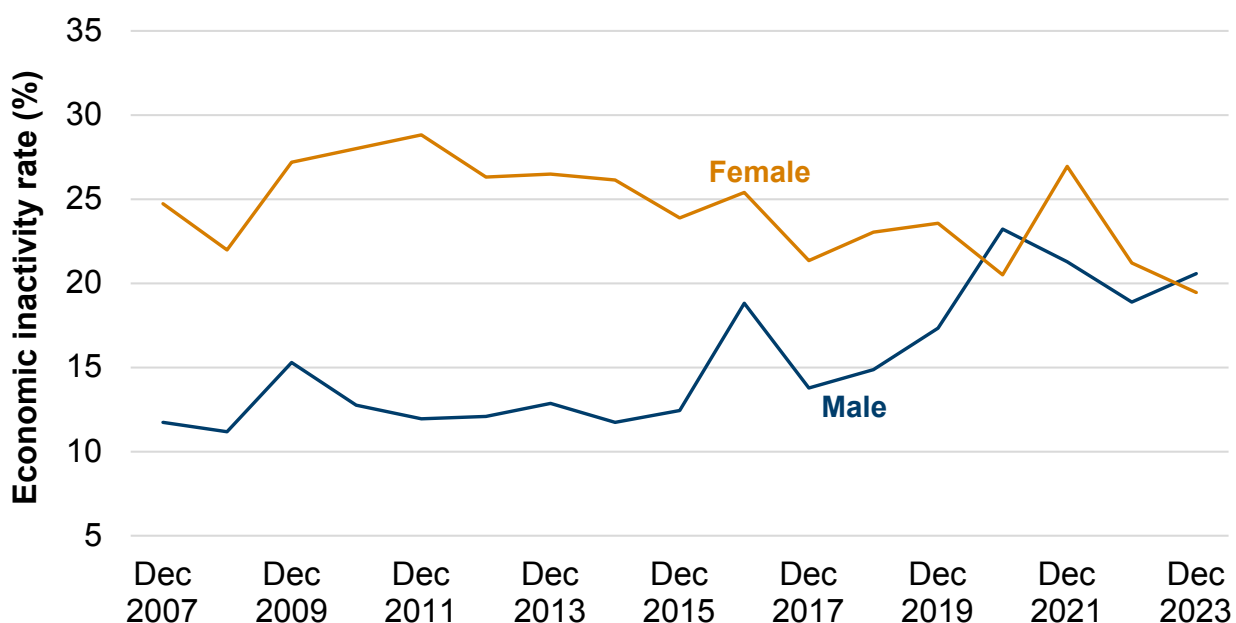
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and the rate for females was 19.4%, a decrease of 1.8 percentage points. Due to the volatility in this series, short-term changes should be considered alongside longer-term trends where possible.

**Figure 11: Youth economic inactivity rate (excluding students) by sex in Wales, year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 11: A line chart showing that the economic inactivity rate (excluding students) for females aged 16 to 24 in Wales has generally decreased throughout the series, whereas the male rate has generally increased. Over recent periods, there has been more volatility in both the male and female rates.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

# Long-term unemployment

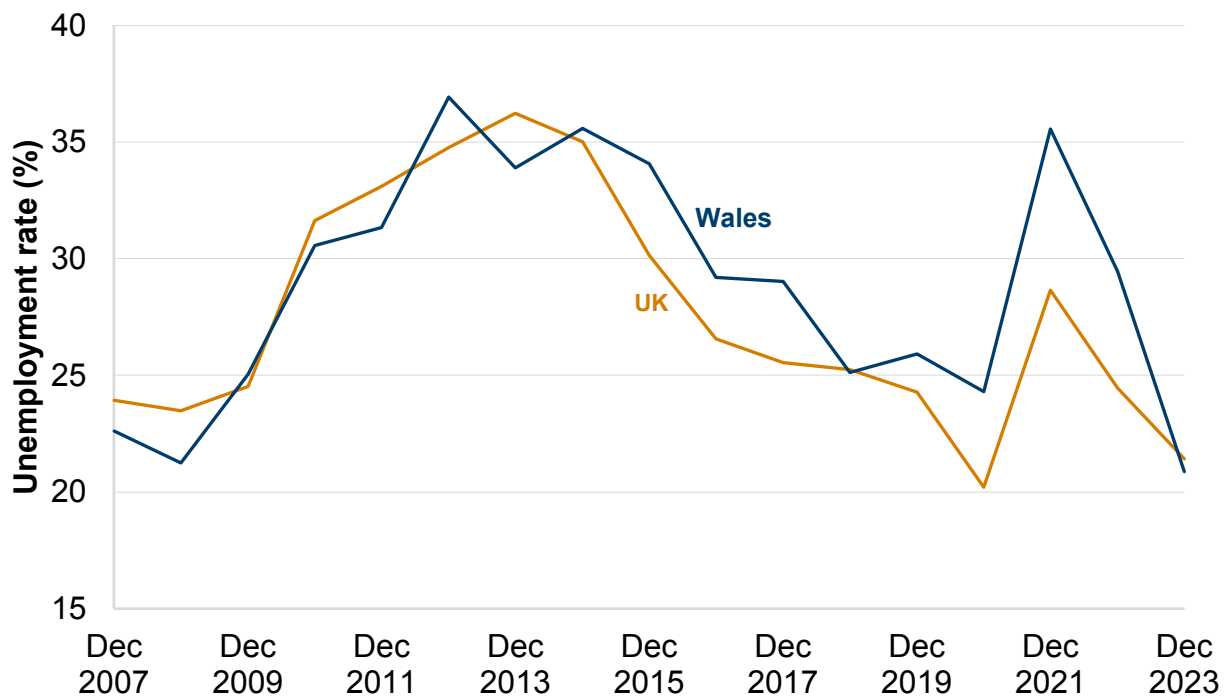
In the year ending December 2023, the APS estimates that 11,900 people in Wales were long-term unemployed (12 months or more). This is a decrease of 11.0% over the year, although please note that year-on-year changes in long-term unemployment for Wales are highly volatile, and long-term trends should be considered where possible.

This represented 20.9% of all those unemployed in the year ending December 2023, down 8.6 percentage points over the year. The equivalent UK rate was 21.4%, down 3.0 percentage points over the year.

The proportion of unemployed males in Wales who had been unemployed for 12 months or more was 19.0%, down 12.8 percentage points over the year. This compares with 23.3% in the UK.

The proportion of unemployed females in Wales who had been unemployed for 12 months or more was 24.1%, down 2.0 percentage point over the year. This compares with 19.0% in the UK.

**Figure 12: Long-term ILO unemployment rates (percentage of all unemployed), year ending December 2007 to December 2023**



Description of Figure 12: A line chart showing both Wales and the UK with a generally decreasing long-term unemployment rate from the year ending December 2013 to December 2020. Since the year ending December 2020, the volatility in the series has increased for both Wales and the UK, with Wales generally having a higher long term unemployment rate than the UK. Unemployment rate changes should be considered alongside longer-term trends where possible due to the recent volatility of the series.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

## Disability status

The employment rate for disabled people in Wales was 51.6% in the year ending December 2023, this is up 2.7 percentage points compared to the previous year. This compares to a rate of 82.3% for non-disabled people, which increased by 0.2 percentage points over the year.

The unemployment rate for disabled people in Wales was 6.2%, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points on the previous year. This compares to a rate of 3.2% for non-disabled people, which increased by 0.9 percentage points over the year.

## Ethnicity

The survey asks respondents what they consider to be their ethnic origin. The White category includes White – Welsh/English/Scottish/Northern Ireland/British and any other White background including Gypsy and Irish Travellers.

The employment rate for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people aged 16 to 64 in Wales was 67.3% in the year ending December 2023, a decrease of 0.4 percentage points on the previous year. The employment rate for White people was 74.4%, a 0.8 percentage point increase over the year.

The unemployment rate for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people aged 16 and over in Wales was 8.9%, an increase of 2.0 percentage points on the previous year. The unemployment rate for White people was 3.5%, a 0.7 percentage point increase over the year.

# Quality and methodology information

## Relevance

The labour market in Wales can be measured by both the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Annual Population Survey (APS). The APS combines the boosted samples of the LFS. It provides rolling four-quarter labour market data for UK countries and regions and also for local areas. The larger sample of the APS allows for estimates at a local authority level and for sub-groups of the population.

The LFS remains the main source for headline labour market indicators at a Wales level, and the data are updated monthly. The latest LFS data is published by the Welsh Government each month in the [Labour Market Overview](#) release. This release combines LFS data with other data sources (including the APS) to provide a more detailed commentary on the labour market in Wales. ONS also publish a monthly [Labour Market Overview \(ONS\)](#) release which provides an overview of the labour market for the UK as a whole and an additional release which provides an [overview of the labour market across the regions and countries of the UK \(ONS\)](#).

The ONS indicate that there is an increasing challenge to maintain response rates for the LFS and that headline numbers and trends for employment are starting to vary from other labour market data sources. It is recommended that greater consideration should be given to the trends exhibited by other sources, such as the APS. In addition to the [Office for National Statistics blog](#) on this topic, please see the latest [Chief Statistician's update on understanding and managing the impact of these challenges for labour market data in Wales](#).

Because of increased uncertainty around the LFS estimates, the ONS have published an alternative series of estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity as experimental statistics for [monthly labour market](#)

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**updates**. The experimental figures were derived using growth rates from PAYE RTI and the Claimant Count for the periods from May to July 2023 onwards. This is to provide a more holistic view of the state of the labour market while the LFS estimates are uncertain. Further information on the experimental statistics are available in the **[methodology report published by ONS](#)**.

ONS published reweighted LFS estimates for Wales in February 2024 after pausing the LFS based estimates in September 2023 following a decrease in data quality. The data has been reweighted from July to September 2022. The full impact of this reweighting is detailed in the article 'Impact of reweighting on Labour Force Survey key indicators in Wales', available in the **[February 2024 Labour Market Overview headline](#)**. Unlike the LFS the APS has not yet been reweighted to include the latest population estimates.

This release brings together the latest key APS statistics relating to the Welsh labour market with a more detailed commentary on the regions in Wales and the protected characteristics of people within the Welsh labour market.

On 18 July 2022, **[the ONS announced an issue with the collection of some occupational data](#)**. On 26 September 2022, users were informed of the **[impact of the coding error \(ONS\)](#)**. A recoding exercise has been undertaken to correct the error and has revised affected LFS estimates in the July 2023 labour market release. **[An article published on 11 July 2023 gives more detail on the new methodology used and its impact \(ONS\)](#)**. The Annual Population Survey estimates was updated and published on **[Nomis](#)** alongside the August 2023 **[labour market release](#)**.

The statistics in this release are used by the Welsh Government to monitor the headline statistics for the Welsh labour market as well as providing comparisons to the UK labour market. This release is also used to monitor progress against some of the targets in Welsh Government's **[Employability Plan](#)**. The release complements the **[Welsh Economy in Numbers dashboard](#)**, which provides a broad picture of the Welsh economy and labour

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market.

This release 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. Our [2012 user consultation](#) provides more information on how our outputs are used.

The Welsh Government is considering how best to meet user need for analysis of the labour market by protected characteristics. Data is currently available on [StatsWales](#) and [Nomis](#).

Welsh Government published a more detailed analysis of [protected characteristics in the labour market in Wales](#) on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021. We welcome your feedback on this publication and priorities for future analyses, please see contact details at the end of this release.

The Welsh Government accepts the social definition of disability, in which it is recognised that barriers in society act to disable people who have impairments or health conditions or who use British Sign Language. The Annual Population Survey captures data during the interview based around the Equality Act 2010 which uses the medical definition of disability ('a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term impact on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities').

## Accuracy

The data presented in this release is based on sample surveys, therefore is subject to sampling variability. This means the data is subject to differing degrees of sampling variability, i.e., the true value for any measure lies in a differing range about the estimated value. This range or sampling variability increases as the detail in the data increases, for example individual local authority data are subject to higher variability than Wales data.

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Estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity are available from both the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the APS. Estimates from the LFS are based on a rolling quarter and are updated monthly. LFS sample sizes are too low 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.

On 13 September 2022, ONS published a reweighted APS dataset for March 2020 onwards. This was due to a planned reweight (using updated Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) data) as well as to correct an error affecting grossing factors for some age groups for the annual periods between April 2019 to March 2020 and July 2020 to June 2021.

## Glossary

### 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.

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

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## 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.

## 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 by the population for that age group.

## National Statistics status

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 Statistics**.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

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All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in March 2010 following a compliance check by the **Office for Statistics Regulation**. These statistics last underwent a **full assessment against the Code of Practice** in March 2010.

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

Changed to a HTML release for increased interactivity and increased accessibility for users.

Expanded the coverage of topics to include more detail about the headline labour market statistics, and added sections on youth employment and long-term unemployment.

Introduced a new section on the labour market by different protected characteristics.

Added charts which allow users to clearly see any trends and volatility in the

data.

## 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 Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. The 50 national indicators laid in December 2021 replace the set of 46 national indicators that were laid in March 2016, and this release includes the following national indicator:

- (21) percentage of people in employment

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being 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.

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

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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 wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

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