



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 February 2021

### About this publication

This publication is updated monthly and summarises employment, unemployment and economic inactivity sourced from the Labour Force Survey for Scotland and the UK. These are classed as National Statistics.

Important Note for estimates for Jan-Mar 2020 onwards:

Labour Force Survey (LFS) responses are weighted to official population projections. As the current projections are 2018-based, they are based on demographic trends that pre-date the COVID-19 pandemic. ONS are analysing the population totals used in the weighting process and may make adjustments if appropriate. Rates published from the LFS remain robust; however, levels and changes in levels should be used with caution.

This publication also contains claimant count information and HMRC RTI median monthly earnings. These are classed as Experimental Statistics.

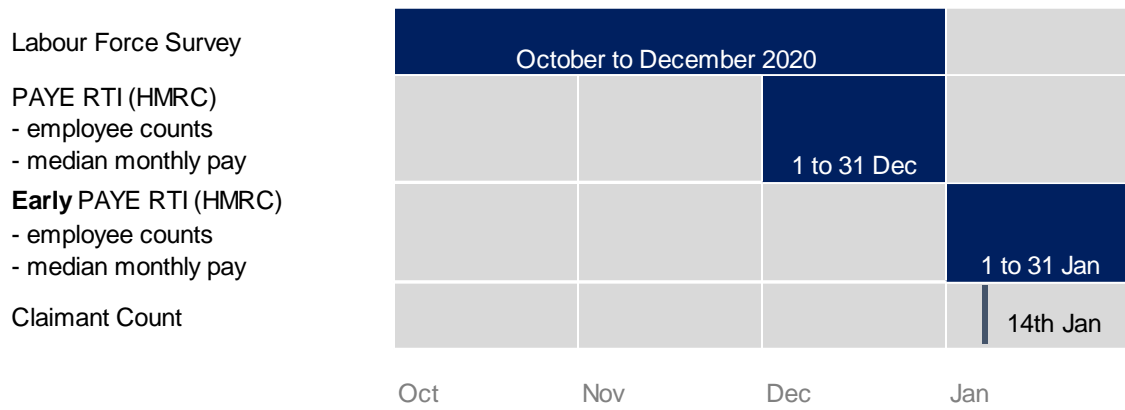
This release follows the ONS monthly releases of

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

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

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

**Figure 1: Impact of the main coronavirus (COVID19) dates on labour market data**



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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

This months, Labour Force Survey, estimates are presented for the 3 months to December 2020, compared with the quarter before (July to September 2020) and compared with a year before (October to December 2019). Please note percentage point changes are based on unrounded data.

This release to December 2020, presents an average of the period October to December 2020, therefore this quarter and the previous quarter follow COVID-19 related policies implemented from the end of March 2020, whereas October to December 2019 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 18 for further details).

The latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for October to December 2020 indicate that over the quarter, the unemployment rate decreased slightly, the employment rate decreased and economic inactivity rate increased.

The LFS indicated that Scotland's unemployment rate (16+) decreased slightly over the quarter (0.1 percentage points) and increased over the year (1.0 percentage points) to 4.5 per cent. Scotland's unemployment rate was below the UK rate of 5.1 per cent.

The proportion of people aged 16-64 in work (the employment rate) decreased over the quarter (0.3 percentage points) and decreased over the year (1.3 percentage points) to 73.7 per cent. Scotland's employment rate was below the UK rate of 75.0 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) increased over the quarter (0.4 percentage points) and increased over the year (0.6 percentage points) to 22.8 per cent. Scotland's inactivity rate is above the UK rate of 20.9 per cent.

Early estimates for January 2021 from HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information indicate that there were 2.3 million payrolled employees in Scotland, a decrease of 2.8 per cent (68,000) compared to the same month the year before. The number of payrolled employees in the UK decreased by 2.5 per cent 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 January 2021, there were 208,800 claimants in Scotland, a decrease of 800 (0.4 per cent) over the month but an increase of 95,300 (83.9 per cent) over the year. The claimant count rate in January 2021 was 7.4 per cent, compared with 7.2 per cent for the UK as a whole.

Early estimates for January 2021 from HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information indicate that median monthly pay for employees in Scotland increased to £1,944, an increase of 4.1 per cent compared to the same month the previous year. This is higher than the annual growth in median monthly pay for the UK over the same period (4.0 per cent).

# 1. Summary of labour market statistics

This month's data are presented for the 3 months to December 2020, compared with the quarter before (July to September 2020) and compared with a year before (October to December 2019).

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

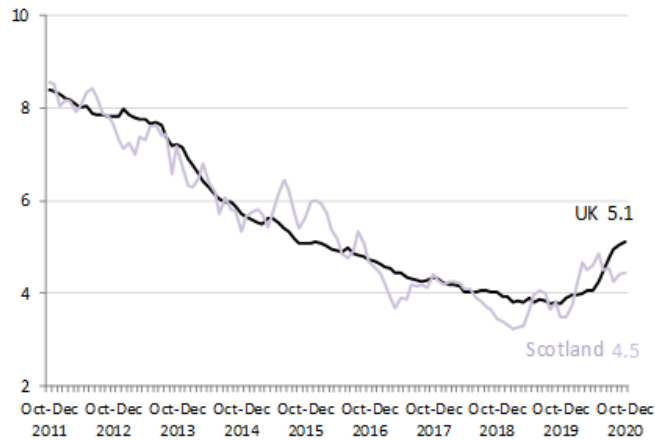
**Table 1: Labour Market Statistics, Scotland and UK, October to December 2020**

	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
<b>Employment<sup>1</sup></b>												
Scotland	73.7	(± 1.8)	-0.3	(± 2.4)	-1.3	(± 2.4)	2,637	(± 62)	-7	(± 81)	-43	(± 80)
UK	75.0	(± 0.5)	-0.3	(± 0.4)	-1.5	(± 0.6)	32,393	(± 201)	-114	(± 174)	-541	(± 256)
<b>Unemployment<sup>2</sup></b>												
Scotland	4.5	(± 0.8)	-0.1	(± 1.2)	1.0	(± 1.1)	123	(± 24)	-3	(± 33)	26	(± 31)
UK	5.1	(± 0.3)	0.4	(± 0.3)	1.3	(± 0.3)	1,744	(± 95)	121	(± 102)	454	(± 115)
<b>Economic Inactivity<sup>3</sup></b>												
Scotland	22.8	(± 1.7)	0.4	(± 2.2)	0.6	(± 2.2)	785	(± 74)	15	(± 96)	20	(± 93)
UK	20.9	(± 0.4)	0.0	(± 0.4)	0.4	(± 0.5)	8,664	(± 179)	2	(± 156)	187	(± 226)

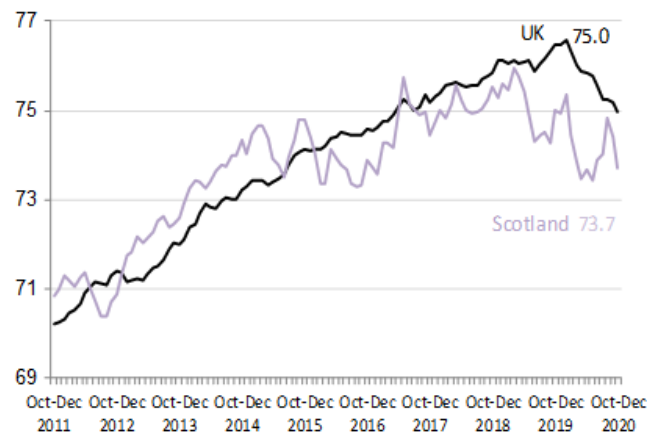
Source: Labour Force Survey, Seasonally adjusted Note: Levels: 1,2: All persons aged 16+; 3: All persons aged 16-64. Rates: denominator: 1,3: all persons 16-64 years; 2: economically active 16+.

# October to December 2020

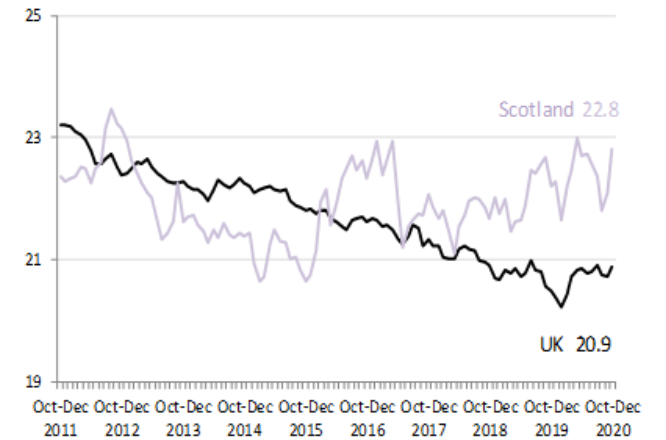
**Unemployment 4.5%**



**Employment 73.7%**



**Economic Inactivity 22.8%**



Quarterly Change

Scotland -0.1 %pts ↓ UK 0.4 %pts ↑

Scotland -0.3 %pts ↓ UK -0.3 %pts ↓

Scotland 0.4 %pts ↑ UK 0.0 %pts ↔

Annual Change

Scotland 1.0 %pts ↑ UK 1.3 %pts ↑

Scotland -1.3 %pts ↓ UK -1.5 %pts ↓

Scotland 0.6 %pts ↑ UK 0.4 %pts ↑

% pts=percentage points  
Source: Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted, ONS  
23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021

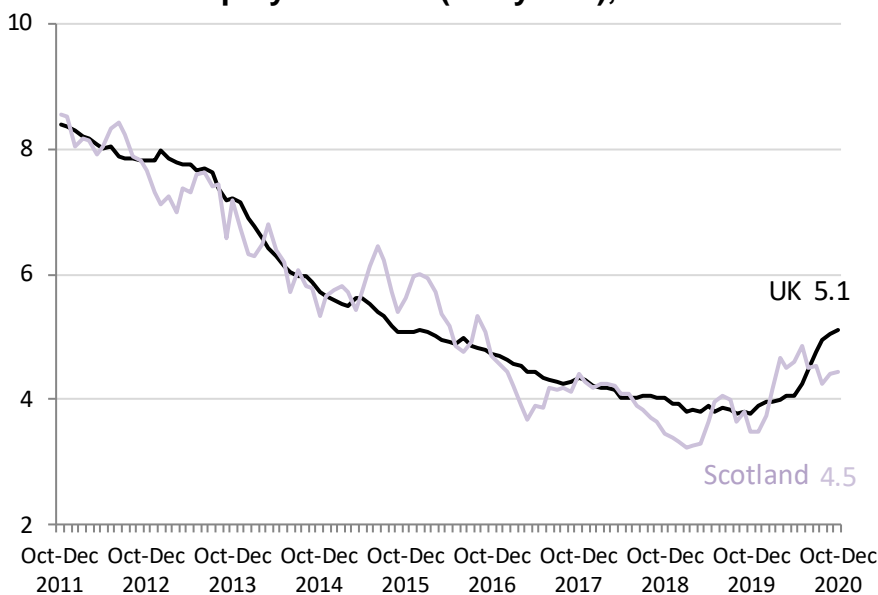


## 2. Unemployment estimates

The unemployment rate in Scotland was 4.5 per cent. This is 0.1 percentage points down on the quarter but 1.0 percentage points up on the year.

The UK unemployment rate was 5.1 per cent. This is 0.4 percentage points up on the quarter and 1.3 percentage points up on the year.

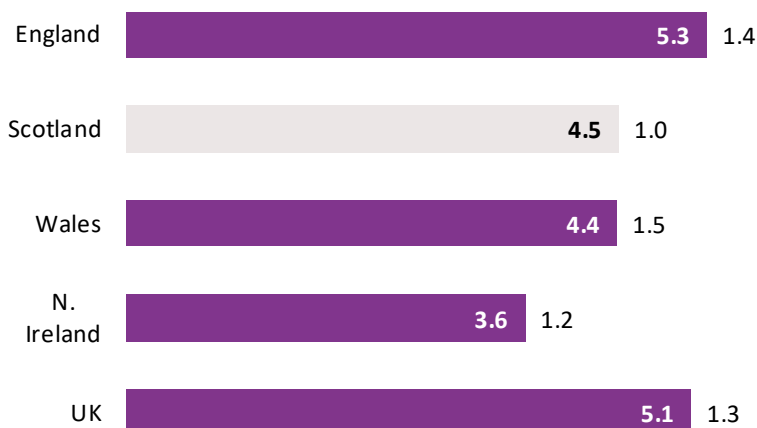
**Chart 1: Unemployment rate (16+ years), Scotland and UK**



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

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

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



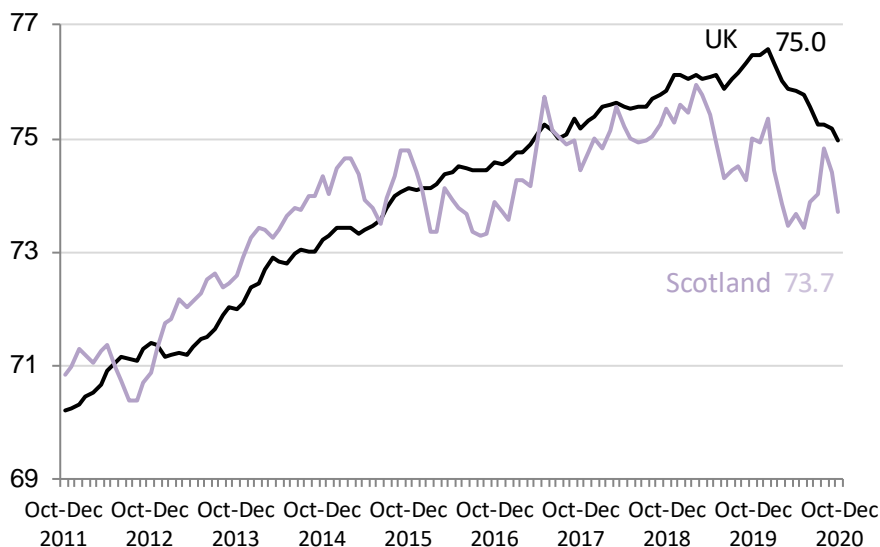
Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS  
Annual change shown in percentage points

### 3. Employment estimates

The employment rate in Scotland was 73.7 per cent. This is 0.3 percentage points down on the quarter and 1.3 percentage points down on the year.

The UK employment rate was 75.0 per cent. This is 0.3 percentage points down on the quarter and 1.5 percentage points down on the year.

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



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

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

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



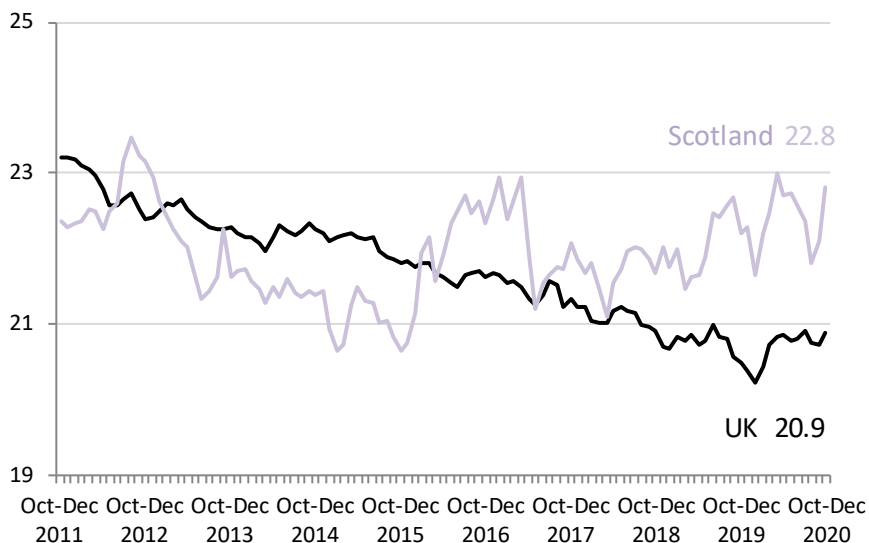
Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS  
Annual change shown in percentage points

## 4. Economic Inactivity estimates

The inactivity rate in Scotland was 22.8 per cent. This is 0.4 percentage points up on the quarter and 0.6 percentage points up on the year.

The UK inactivity rate was 20.9 per cent. This is no change on the quarter and 0.4 percentage points up on the year.

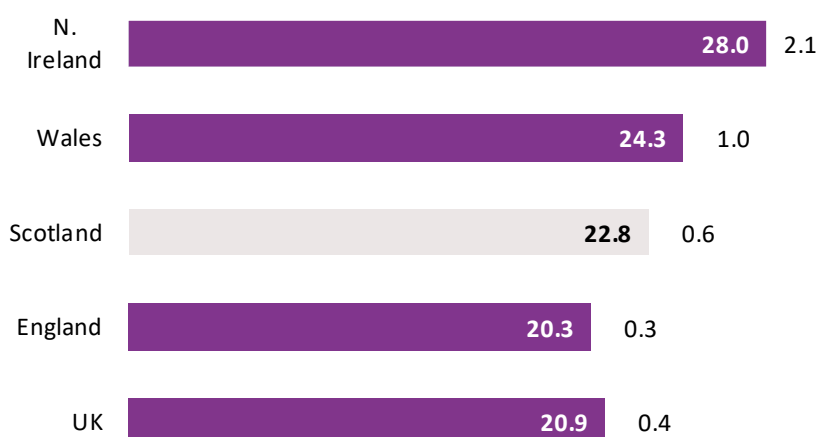
**Chart 5: Inactivity rate (16-64 years), Scotland and UK**



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

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

**Chart 6: 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, October to December 2020**

	Rate (%)	Percentage point Change on quarter	Change on year	Level ('000)	Level (000's) Change on quarter	Change on year
<b>Employment<sup>1</sup></b>						
Scotland	71.9	0.4	0.4	1,306	5	5
UK	71.8	-0.1	-0.6	15,489	-39	-117
<b>Unemployment<sup>2</sup></b>						
Scotland	3.5	-0.7	-0.2	47	-10	-2
UK	4.8	0.6	1.2	785	93	203
<b>Inactivity<sup>3</sup></b>						
Scotland	25.5	0.1	-0.2	449	2	-5
UK	24.5	-0.3	-0.4	5,093	-61	-69

Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS, seasonally adjusted

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, October to December 2020**

	Rate (%)	Percentage point Change on quarter	Change on year	Level ('000)	Level (000's) Change on quarter	Change on year
<b>Employment<sup>1</sup></b>						
Scotland	75.6	-1.1	-3.1	1,331	-12	-48
UK	78.2	-0.4	-2.4	16,904	-75	-424
<b>Unemployment<sup>2</sup></b>						
Scotland	5.4	0.5	2.1	76	7	29
UK	5.4	0.2	1.4	959	28	252
<b>Inactivity<sup>3</sup></b>						
Scotland	20.0	0.8	1.5	335	13	25
UK	17.3	0.3	1.2	3,571	63	255

Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS, seasonally adjusted

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

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. Regional figures are based on where employees live and not the location of their place of work.

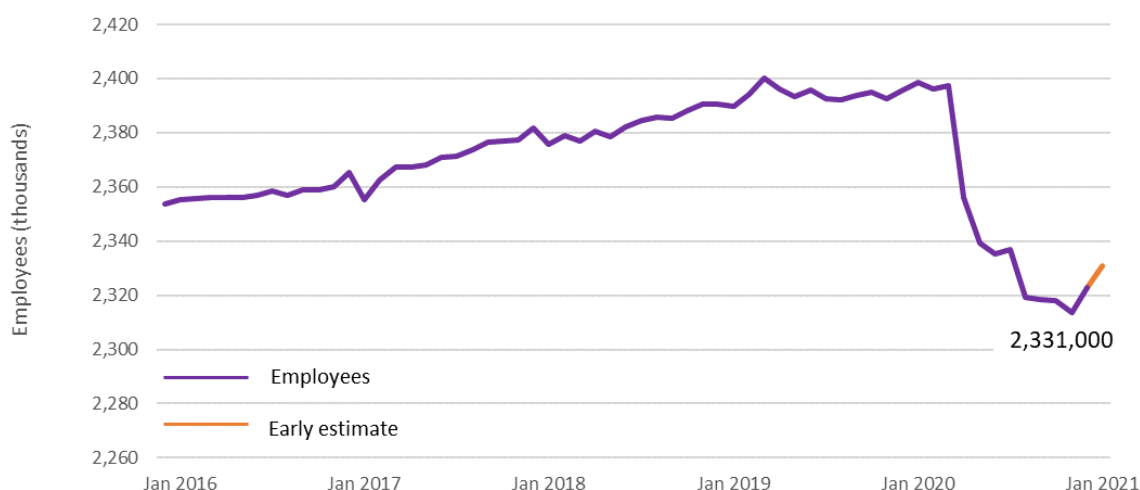
Pay As You Earn Real Time Information shows that there were 2.3 million payrolled employees in Scotland in December 2020.

Compared with the same period the year before, the number of payrolled employees in Scotland decreased by 3.0 per cent (73,000) and decreased by 2.7 per cent for the UK overall.

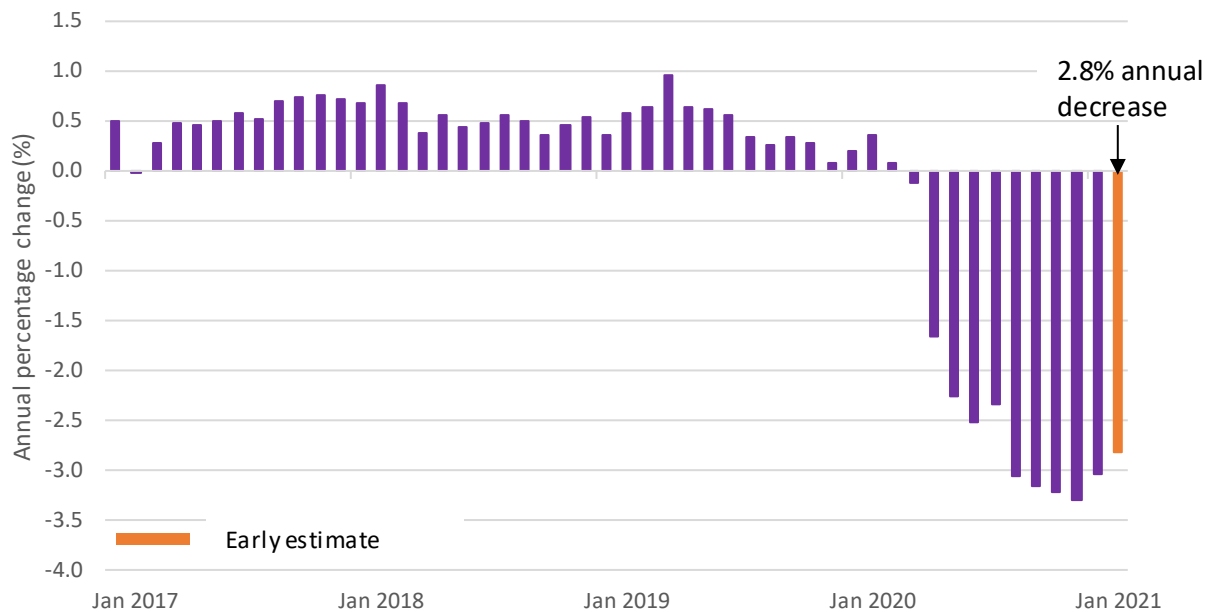
Early estimates for January 2021 indicate that there were 2.3 million payrolled employees in Scotland, a decrease of 2.8 per cent (68,000) compared to the same period the year before. The number of payrolled employees in the UK decreased by 2.5 per cent over the same period.

In January 2021, 8,000 more people were in payrolled employment compared with December 2020. However, 65,000 fewer people were in payrolled employment compared with February 2020.

**Chart 7: Payrolled Employees, Scotland, December 2015 to January 2021, seasonally adjusted**



**Chart 8: Annual Percentage Change in Payrolled Employees, Scotland, December 2016 to January 2021**



Source: HMRC RTI, all industries, seasonally adjusted

Note:

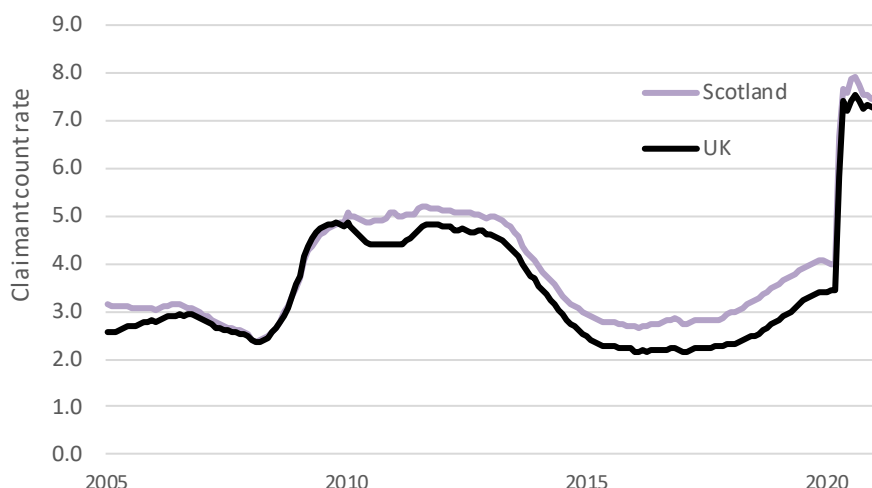
Early estimates for January 2021 are provided to give an indication of the likely level of employees as well as median pay in the latest period. The figures are based on around 85% of information being available and are considered of lower quality and may be subject to revision in next month's release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

## 7. Claimant Count

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.

In January 2021, there were 208,800 claimants in Scotland, a decrease of 800 (0.4 per cent) over the month but an increase of 95,300 (83.9 per cent) over the year. The claimant count rate in January 2021 was 7.4 per cent, compared with 7.2 per cent for the UK as a whole.

**Chart 8: Claimant Count rate, Scotland and UK**



Source: Claimant count experimental (ONS, DWP), seasonally adjusted

Note:

Due to processing issues, a small number of Universal Credit claims may not be included in the January 2021 Claimant Count. This may affect up to 20,000 claims throughout the UK, but the actual number is expected to be substantially fewer. These claims are expected to be included in future Claimant Count releases.

## 8. HMRC earnings

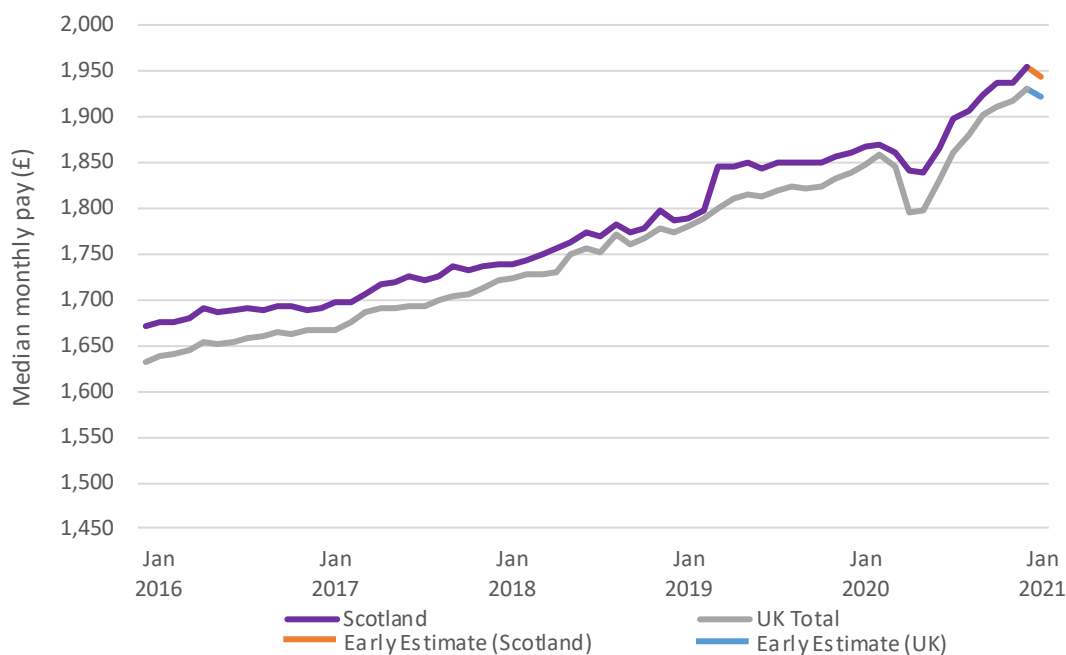
This information is based on experimental monthly estimates of paid employees and their pay from HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) data. Regional figures are based on where employees live and not the location of their place of work.

Earnings from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information show that median monthly pay, seasonally adjusted, for payrolled employees in Scotland in December 2020 was £1,956.

Compared with the same period the year before, median monthly pay for employees in Scotland increased by 5.1 per cent, above the UK increase of 5.0 per cent and lower than the peak annual growth in March 2019 (5.5 per cent). The annual percentage change in median monthly pay decreased for April 2020 and May 2020 but has been increasing more recently.

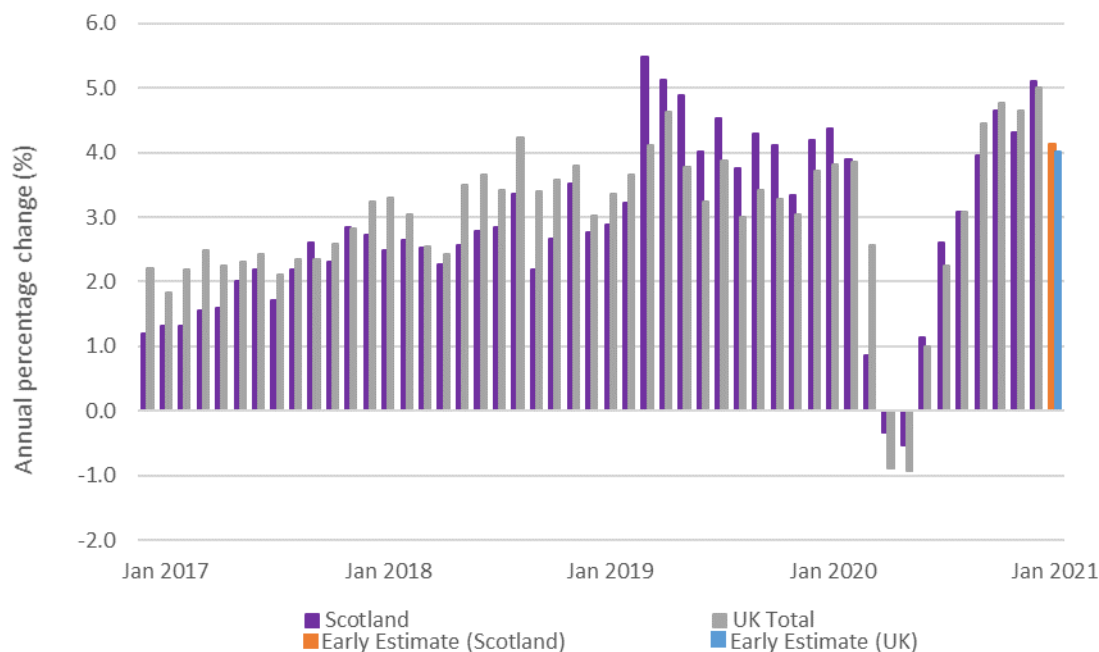
Early estimates for January 2021 indicate that median monthly pay for employees in Scotland increased to £1,944, an increase of 4.1 per cent compared to the same period the previous year. This is higher than the annual growth in median monthly pay for the UK over the same period (4.0 per cent).

**Chart 10: Median Monthly Pay, Scotland and UK, December 2015 to January 2021, seasonally adjusted**





**Chart 11: Annual Percentage Change in Median Monthly Pay, Scotland and UK, December 2016 to January 2021**



Source: HMRC RTI, all industries, seasonally adjusted

Note:

Early estimates for January 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 January 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

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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 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) from 15<sup>th</sup> 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

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## **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 (October 2019 to September 2020), is published in a [quarterly release](#) (16<sup>th</sup> December 2020).

### **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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 Q3 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

For enquiries about this publication please contact:

Labour Market Statistics Team,  
OCEAES: Labour Market Analysis Unit,  
Telephone: 0131 244 6773,  
e-mail: [lmstats@gov.scot](mailto:lmstats@gov.scot)

For general enquiries about Scottish Government statistics please contact:

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

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Details of forthcoming publications can be found at [www.gov.scot/statistics](http://www.gov.scot/statistics)

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Next update: 23 March 2021