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UK unemployment down again

Unemployment fell more than expected in September, official figures show.

The number of unemployed people under the Labour Force Survey count fell by 103,000 to 1.75 million in the three months to September. The unemployment rate was down to 5.3%, the lowest jobless rate since the second quarter of 2008, according to the Office for National Statistics.

The number of unemployed males fell by 58,000 to 957,000 and their unemployment rate was cut to 5.4% from 5.8%.

The number of unemployed women was down to 793,000 on the back of a 45,000 cut in their numbers and their unemployment rate was down to 5.1% from 5.5%.

In October, unemployment under the claimant count, which includes claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance and those on the means-tested Universal Credit, was 795,500. That was a 3,300 increase on the revised total for August of 792,200. However, the joblessness rate remained at 2.3%.

Male claimant numbers were up by 1,200 to 515,600, but their joblessness rate remained at 2.8%. Wom-

en claimant numbers were up by 2,100 to 279,900 and their joblessness rate was unchanged at 1.7%.

Unemployment seasonally adjusted

	Claimants ¹		LFS ³	
	(000s)	% ²	(000s)	%
October 2014	935	2.7	1,958	6.0
November	909	2.6	1,914	5.8
December	881	2.6	1,862	5.7
January 2015	846	2.5	1,856	5.7
February	821	2.4	1,838	5.6
March	806	2.3	1,827	5.5
April	798	2.3	1,813	5.5
May	797	2.3	1,853	5.6
June	797	2.3	1,852	5.6
July	791	2.3	1,823	5.5
August	792	2.3	1,774	5.4
September (r)	792	2.3	1,749	5.3
October (p)	796	2.3		

¹ Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit claimants ² Percentage of working population – the employees, unemployed, self-employed and the armed forces.

³ The Labour Force Survey definition of unemployment – the number of unemployed people who want a job and are ready to start work in two weeks, and have looked for work in the past four weeks. Each figure is the average of the past three months – a rolling average. (p) provisional (r) revised

Regions The LFS unemployment count fell in nine of the 12 regions/countries in the three-month period ending September. There was a 27,000 fall in the South East and a 20,000 fall in numbers in the North West.

LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

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The three regions posting increases were: Scotland (+11,000), North East (+6,000) and Wales (+3,000).

The unemployment rate was above the UK average of 5.3% in eight out of the 12 regions/countries. The highest rates were 8.6% in the North East and 6.4% in London.

In October, the claimant count increased in seven of the 12 region/countries and fell in remaining five. The claimant count rate was above the UK average of 2.3% in seven regions/countries. The highest rates were 4.4% in Northern Ireland and 3.9% in the North East.

Region	Oct claimants		LFS July – Sept	
	Number	%	Number	%
North East	47,300	3.9	109,000	8.6
North West	116,200	3.1	193,000	5.5
Yorkshire & the Humber	80,500	3.0	157,000	5.9
East Midlands	48,100	2.1	105,000	4.4
West Midlands	79,400	2.8	157,000	5.7
East of England	49,800	1.6	132,000	4.2
London	111,000	1.9	297,000	6.4
South East	59,300	1.2	180,000	3.9
South West	39,900	1.4	110,000	3.9
Wales	45,400	3.1	93,000	6.1
Scotland	79,100	2.8	166,000	6.0
Northern Ireland	39,700	4.4	51,000	5.9

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_421089.pdf

Average earnings growth punctured

The rise in average weekly earnings for the whole economy was provisionally 2.0% in September – down from the revised figure of 3.2% for August – according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

In September, the manufacturing sector posted a rise of 1.2%, down from 1.7% the previous month. In services, growth was down to 2.0% from 3.2% the previous month, while in the private sector as a whole, growth down to 2.2% from 3.6%.

For the public sector, excluding financial services, growth was down to 1.5% from 1.6%.

Headline earnings growth (the rolling three-month average) for the whole economy was steady at 3.0% in the period ending September.

Manufacturing growth was down to 1.6% from 1.7%, while service sector growth was down to 3.0% from 3.1%. For the private sector as a whole, growth was down to 3.4% from 3.5% the previous month.

For the public sector excluding financial services, growth increased to 1.3% from 1.2%.

£ a week	Average weekly earnings ¹				
	Whole economy	Manufacturing	Services	Private sector	Public sector ²
July 2014 (r)	477	564	462	474	488
August (r)	479	563	464	476	485
September (r)	482	567	467	480	487
October	484	565	469	482	487
November	484	566	469	482	487
December	489	572	473	487	489
January 2015	485	566	471	482	489
February	483	564	470	480	490
March	493	572	478	492	490
April	492	572	476	489	490
May	492	569	477	490	491
June	489	576	474	491	491
July (r)	495	574	479	494	492
August (r)	494	573	478	494	493
September (p)	492	573	477	491	494
% annual change					
Single month	2.0	1.2	2.0	2.2	1.5
3-month average ³	3.0	1.6	3.0	3.4	1.3

¹ Average weekly earnings in Great Britain, seasonally adjusted, including bonuses, but excluding arrears. ² Excludes financial services. ³ Average of the seasonally adjusted data for the latest three months compared with three months a year earlier. (p) provisional (r) revised

The regular pay figures strip out bonuses and arrears of pay. In September, growth for the whole economy was down to 1.9% from 2.6% the previous month.

The percentage rises in the year to September for various sectors, along with the previous month's rises in brackets, were: manufacturing 1.6% (1.6%); services 1.7% (2.4%); the private sector 2.1% (2.9%); and the public sector, excluding financial services, 1.4% (1.5%).

The average rise for regular pay in the whole economy for the three-month period ending September was down to 2.5% from 2.8%.

The sectoral increases were: manufacturing 1.6% (1.5%); services 2.3% (2.8%); the private sector 2.8% (3.2%); and the public sector, excluding financial services, 1.4% (1.4%).

The table below is based on the mean average earnings figures published in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2014. The original figures have been “uprated” by the 2.7% increase in average weekly earnings for the whole economy between April 2014 and September 2015 to give a rough estimate of earnings now.

Full-time average weekly earnings by occupation	
	£ a week
All employees	636.90
All male	691.20
All female	553.80
Managers	997.60
Professionals	812.60
Associate professionals	688.70
Admin & secretarial	463.40
Skilled/craft	537.30
Services	371.30
Sales	380.90
Operatives	494.00
Other manual jobs	376.60

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_421089.pdf

Life's not fair

Life on many fronts has got worse particular young people and poor white boys, according to the Equality and Human Rights commission (EHRC).

Is Britain fairer? draws on a wide range of major datasets and the commission's own analysis to reveal how, as the country becomes more ethnically and religiously diverse than at any point in its history, new complexities mean many existing assumptions about which of us encounter greater challenges may no longer hold to be true.

The report shows which people were “winners” and “losers” in the five years since the EHRC published its first review, but also how socio-economic status, age, ethnicity and other factors impact on experiences and outcomes for different groups of people at different stages of life.

Key findings of the research are:

- white pupils from poorer backgrounds, especially boys, suffered the worst start in life as they continued to fall further behind every other ethnic group at school – with their chances of a successful and prosperous career decreasing as a result;
- younger people suffered the greatest drop in income and employment compared to older age

groups and now face greater barriers to achieving economic independence and success than they did five years ago;

- women still suffer a pay gap which increases as they enter the “sandwich years” juggling caring for children and parents; and
- too many disabled people are being locked out of mainstream society through poverty and isolation, and at times struggling to get the support needed to live independently.

Positive findings include:

- Chinese and Indian pupils continue to perform better than all other ethnicities at school and a higher proportion of school leavers from ethnic minorities go on to higher education than white pupils; and
- Bangladeshis and Pakistanis have seen the biggest improvements in education and employment, while black workers, who were previously one of the better paid ethnic groups, suffered one of the largest falls in wages.

EHRC commissioner Laura Carstensen said: “It's great to see the barriers being lowered over the last five years for some people: but during the same period they've been raised higher for younger people in particular.”

The EHRC has also launched a public consultation on its Strategic Plan for 2016-2019. This sets out the commission's key objectives for the next three years, partly in response to *Is Britain fairer?*, and how it will contribute to tackling discrimination, improving equality of opportunity and promoting human rights.

www.equalityhumanrights.com/about-us/our-work/key-projects/britain-fairer-0

www.equalityhumanrights.com/about-us/our-work/ehrc-consultations/2016-2019-strategic-plan-consultation?wssl=1

Reasons behind presenteeism

High job demands, stress and job insecurity are among the main reasons why people go to work when they are ill, according to new research by an academic at the University of East Anglia.

The research analysed data from 61 previous studies involving more than 175,960 participants, including the European Working Conditions Survey which sampled employees from 34 countries. Dr Mariella Miraglia developed an analytical model to identify the most significant causes of presenteeism and absenteeism, with work and personal characteristics relating differently to presenteeism

depending on whether they followed a "health impairment" or "attitudinal/motivational" path.

Job demands, such as workload, understaffing, overtime and time pressure, along with difficulty of finding cover and personal financial difficulties, were found to be key reasons why people might not take a day off sick.

Conflict between work and family, and vice versa, and being exposed to harassment, abuse, and discrimination at work were also positively related to presenteeism. This is because these negative experiences can exacerbate stress and harm health, requiring employees to choose between going to work and staying away.

One of the significant links to presenteeism is the severity of organisational policies used to monitor or reduce staff absence, such as strict trigger points for disciplinary action, job insecurity, limited paid sick leave, or few absence days allowed without a medical certificate.

Construction union UCATT said the absence of sick pay for some workers can endanger not only their own lives, but also the safety of their co-workers, as workers carry on working while ill in order not to lose out on wages.

Brian Rye, acting general secretary of UCATT, said that not only has presenteeism "proven to be counterproductive, but within industries like construction, it could be life threatening for both the individual and his or her colleagues".

In a more supportive work environment, supportive colleagues and a good relationship with managers, the research found that workers felt they did not have to go to work when ill, and were both more satisfied with their jobs and healthier.

www.uea.ac.uk/about/-/research-reveals-key-reasons-people-go-to-work-when-ill
www.ucatt.org.uk/ucatt-backs-new-research-saying-working-while-ill-dangerous

Sunday trading extension on hold

Plans to extend Sunday trading in England and Wales have been put on hold by the government in the face of a defeat in the House of Commons.

Chancellor George Osborne announced in his summer Budget that the government was going to

the give counties and metro mayors the power to set the Sunday trading hours in their areas.

However, the government backed down with the opposition parties and Tory rebels in the Commons set to vote down the proposals.

Shopworkers' union Usdaw welcomed the pause. General secretary John Hannett said: "The *Sunday Trading Act* is a great British compromise, which has worked well for over 20 years and gives everyone a little bit of what they want. Retailers can trade, customers can shop, staff can work; whilst Sunday remains a special day, different to other days, and shopworkers can spend some time with their family."

The union pointed out that shop staff already work long hours at weekends, with over half working every Saturday and three-quarters having to work some Sundays.

The government denied making a U-turn on the proposals. A prime minister's spokesperson said: "We launched a consultation on this in the summer. That consultation has recently completed. It's right we consider that consultation before we consider the next step." In fact the consultation closed on 16 September.

Asked when "the next step" would be announced, the spokesperson said: "In due course."

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-34780273

www.usdaw.org.uk/About-Us/News/2015/November/News-that-Sunday-trading-changes-have-been-put-on

<http://news.sky.com/story/1585201/pm-accused-of-u-turn-over-sunday-trading>

New earnings data

The Office for National Statistics has introduced a new table in their Labour Market Statistics press release on Average Weekly Earnings – real and nominal – for the whole economy, covering total pay, including bonuses, and regular pay.

The real earnings figures take into account the effects of inflation as measured by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI).

For total pay, earnings growth in September was 2.0% in real terms, while the three-month average was 2.9%. For regular pay, the real-terms rises were 2.0% and 2.5% respectively.

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_421089.pdf