

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

Employment

Summary points

- The employment rate for Bristol was 78.5% in the twelve months ending December 2022.
- The unemployment rate for Bristol was 3.1% in the twelve months ending December 2022, lower than the Great Britain average.

Findings

In the 12 month period January to December 2022, the percentage of working age economically active people in Bristol was 80.8%, higher than the Great Britain average of 78.5%.

The unemployment rate¹ for Bristol has been rising incrementally since September 2018 when the rate was 3.4%², to 4.0% in the twelve months ending March 2020 (pre pandemic) continuing to rise until June 2021 when it appears to have peaked at 4.8%. Since then it has gradually decreased and currently stands at 3.1% for the twelve month period ending December 2022. This is below the Great Britain rate of 3.6% and is the lowest rate of all UK core cities.

The employment rate in Bristol has been on an upward trend, and despite a dip to 74.3% for the 12 months ending June 2021 it peaked a year later at 82.0% (June 2022). As of the twelve months ending December 2022 the employment rate was 78.5%, higher than the national average of 75.6%. It is also the highest rate of the UK core cities. This is due in part to economic recovery nationally and productivity for all sectors returning to above or at least pre-pandemic levels, and also to the high level of job vacancies in specific sectors eg hospitality.

Over the past five years preceding the impact of the pandemic the rate (and numbers) of working age people claiming out of work benefits (the claimant count rate) has been very low in Bristol, up to January 2019 the rate remained below 2%.

More recently the count and rate have increased month on month, largely due to changes in the benefits system where more benefits are classed in the same way as unemployment benefit because of the condition to seek work in order to be eligible.

At March 2020 (pre pandemic impact) the claimant rate was at 2.6%. There was a sharp increase to 4.7% in April 2020 as lockdown measures started to have an impact, with the rate increasing further to above 6% for most of 2020 and the first few months of 2021. Since April 2021 claimant rates have gradually decreased and as at March 2023 the claimant rate is currently 3.3% (10,905 working age residents), just below the rate for Great Britain (3.8%).

In the twelve months ending December 2022, there were 15,900 economically inactive people who wanted a job, while 8,100 people were estimated to be unemployed. This meant that a total of 24,000 people were involuntarily workless. This is 9.1% of the economically active population.

¹ NB the % of economically active working age people who were out of work and looking for work

² Source: ONS Annual Population Survey via NOMIS: [Model-based unemployment data](#)

Economic participation and unemployment: key facts

- Economic activity rate December 2022: 83.6% (Great Britain 78.4%)
- Employment rate December 2022: 78.5% (Great Britain 75.6%)
- Unemployment rate December 2022: 3.1% (Great Britain 3.7%)

Claimant Count³ and employment rate by gender

As of March 2023 there were 6,470 male and 4,435 female out of work benefit claimants resident in Bristol (3.9% and 2.7% of the working age population respectively). This is the lowest percentage for males since pre-lockdown rates in March 2020 when the claimant rate was 3.2%. The rate for females was lowest between August and October 2022 at 2.5% and has been as high as 5% during August and September 2020.

In December 2016 the employment rate for working age (16 to 64) men was 77.1% compared to 74.0% for working age women, a gender gap of 3.1 percentage points. With male and female employment rates of 80.4% and 76.5%, respectively, in December 2022 the gap has increased to 3.9 percentage points,

Youth Unemployment

In March 2023 the number of young out of work benefit claimants, aged 18 to 24 years, resident in Bristol was 1,760. This is a rate of 2.8% of 18-24 year olds and is significantly lower than the national claimant rate for this age group (4.9%).

Unemployment amongst 50 to 64 Year Olds

In March 2022 the number of out of work benefit claimants aged 50+ years was 2,060 a rate of 2.9% which is slightly higher than the national rate for this age group at 2.8%.

UK economic trends and cost of living impact:

The cost of living has been rising in recent months in the UK and across the world. Food and energy prices have been rising markedly over the past year, particularly gas prices, largely in response to the conflict in Ukraine. Global recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is putting further pressure on prices.

In the UK, the price of consumer goods and services rose at the fastest rate in four decades in the year to October 2022, although the annual [inflation rate](#) dropped slightly from 9.2% to 8.9% between February and March 2023 but was still high compared with recent years.

GDP grew by 0.1% in the three months to February 2023.

- The services sector fell by 0.1% in February 2023, with the largest contributions to the fall in services output from education and public administration and defence

³ This is measured by combining the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and National Insurance credits with the number of people receiving Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed.

- Output in consumer-facing services grew by 0.4% in February 2023, the largest contributor to this growth came from the retail trade, except for motor vehicles and motorcycles.
- Production output fell by 0.2% in February 2023
- The construction sector grew by 2.4% in February 2023

Business conditions remain challenging, but estimates show small signs of positive improvement for some measures; examples include a smaller proportion of businesses reporting lower turnover, and a smaller proportion of businesses reporting higher prices for goods or services bought.

Retail sales volumes are estimated to have fallen by 0.9% in March 2023. This follows a rise in both January and February 2023, meaning that the broader picture shows sales volumes rising by 0.6% in the three months to March 2023 when compared with the three previous months.

Non-store retailing, the majority of which are online stores, saw sales volumes fall by 0.8% in March 2023, which followed a rise of 0.3% in February 2023.

Job postings continue to be elevated, but the Bank of England advises the situation is likely to ease over the coming year. There were 1,124,000 job vacancies in the UK in October to December 2022. Vacancies continue to trend downwards, in line with the Bank of England's forecast and the overall slowing of the economy

Further data / links / consultations:

- <https://www.bristolonecity.com/economic-recovery-and-renewal/>
One City Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy
- [Nomis](#): Official labour market statistics

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