

Latest ONS data on employment (February-April 2020)

Unemployment unchanged:¹

- 3.9% all people unemployed in UK (unchanged compared to previous quarter and 0.1 percentage points higher than year earlier)
- 3.7% women unemployed in UK (unchanged compared to previous quarter or year)
- 4.1% men unemployed in UK (unchanged compared to previous quarter, 0.1 percentage points higher than year earlier)

Credit should be given to government's employment support schemes for this. As many employers prepare to send out redundancy packages soon as furlough scheme tapers off we expect unemployment to start creeping up in future data releases.

Largest decrease ever in weekly hours worked (but no gender differences):²

- Decrease of 8.9% of total weekly hours worked in UK compared to same period last year (fewer 94.2 million hours worked).
- Average weekly hours worked dropped from 32.2 to 29.1 (last year).³
- Women's weekly hours dropped 10% from 27.5 to 24.8 (last year). 9% drop for FT and 11% drop in hours for PT workers.
- Men's weekly hours dropped 10% from 36.4 to 33 (last year). 10% drop for FT and 14% drop for PT workers.

Furloughed staff are classified as employed so the shift is mostly down to millions of furloughed workers working zero hours now, plus others who kept working but saw their hours reduced.

'Economically inactive' slightly decreased:⁴

- The % of people economically inactive decreased compared to same period last year (20.5% now from 20.8% 2019)
- Now 24.4% of women are economically inactive (compared to 25.2% last year) and 16.4% men (compared to 16.3% last year).

It doesn't seem to be the case that women (or men) are moving out of the labour force due to this crisis.

Pay fell for the first time since 2018 (-0.4%):

- Total pay (including bonuses) fell in real terms for the first time since January 2018 (-0.4%). This was mostly driven by subdued bonuses, which fell 6.8%.⁵
- Regular pay (excluding bonus) rose 0.4% in real terms in Great Britain (compared to last year).
- Those with the lowest pay have seen a fall in pay, particularly in accommodation and food services.

¹ <https://bit.ly/2UTXcrt>

² <https://bit.ly/2UTXcrt>

³ ONS (Jun 2020) HOU01 SA: Actual weekly hours worked (seasonally adjusted) Feb-Apr 2020 (<https://bit.ly/2YaMoY5>) based on Labour Force Survey

⁴ ONS (Jun 2020) A02 SA: Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for people aged 16 and over and aged from 16 to 64 (seasonally adjusted) (<https://bit.ly/2zFnCpv>)

⁵ <https://bit.ly/2UTXcrt>

- Looking at gross weekly pay for FT employees for Jan-Mar 2020 we see women's pay rose 3.6% while men's stagnated 0% (nominal, compared to same quarter 2019).⁶

Bonuses (or the lack thereof) seem to be driving the changes in pay. Interesting to see what will happen as bonuses are reinstated but as labour market contracts in coming months.

Record fall in number of job vacancies:⁷

- Fewer 342,000 job vacancies in March-May compared to previous quarter.
- Sectors worst affected were 'wholesale, retail trade and repair of motor vehicles' (down 50%) and 'accommodation and food service activities' (down 70.7%).

This is a worrying indicator for future employment: labour market will be tighter.

600,000 fewer employees in May (experimental stats):⁸

- 600,000 fewer employees on employers' payroll in May.
- This is from the experimental real-time PAYE statistics for May.

Suggests next batch of ONS labour market stats will see unemployment rising. For these, ONS can't do gender breakdowns (I've asked).

SEISS - fewer eligible self-employed women claiming and for less:⁹

- A lower proportion of potentially eligible women have claimed a SEISS grant (66%) compared to men (72%).
- The average claim for women is also lower at £2,300 compared to the average claim for men of £3,200.
- The sector with the highest number of eligible individuals and highest proportion of claims is the construction industry (800,000 claims for SEISS totalling £2.9bn).

Fewer eligible self-employed women are claiming SEISS grants compared to men. Their claims are also lower, although to be expected as FT self-employed women earn 32% less than self-employed men. Also issue of self-employed women who took maternity leave in last two years and had a reduction of income (formula to calculate SEISS grant is average earnings for two previous years).

CJRS (furlough scheme) – no gender data yet:

- 9.1 million people were furloughed as of 14 June, and nearly £21bn had been paid by government on CJRS salaries.
- The Treasury has announced they will publish sex-disaggregated data from July 2020 on the CJRS.

From mid-July (next CJRS data release) we will finally be able to see if there are any gender differences, as some preliminary studies at beginning of lockdown were reporting that women were more likely to be put on furlough than men.

⁶ ONS (May 2020) EARN04: Gross weekly earnings of full-time employees (<https://bit.ly/3fCeHEN>) This is based on the LFS, which is known to underestimate earnings (self-reported). The ASHE, released in October every year, is the most robust dataset for earnings.

⁷ <https://bit.ly/2UTXcrt>

⁸ <https://bit.ly/2UTXcrt>

⁹ HMRC (Jun 2020) Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Official Statistics (<https://bit.ly/2USbTel>)