



Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage: 2025



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Acknowledgements and data sources

This report has been produced by the Living Wage Foundation, using published data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). The methodology section at the end of this report sets out how the data has been used to produce the results presented here. This is the fourteenth annual report on employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage and the fifth produced by the Living Wage Foundation. Previous reports were produced by KPMG and IHS Markit.¹ This report draws on the analysis and approaches used in those reports.



Summary

The real Living Wage is the only UK wage rate calculated based on what it costs to live. This report examines how many employee jobs are paid less than the real Living Wage. We use the latest official statistics about earnings in the UK from April 2025, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). At that time, the real Living Wage was £12.60 across the UK and £13.85 in London. These rates were calculated in September 2024. We consider jobs to be low paid when they are paid below the real Living Wage.

In 2025, 14.6 per cent of employee jobs were paid below the real Living Wage, amounting to 4.4 million jobs. This marks a modest year-on-year reduction in the scale of low pay of 1.1 percentage point. However, it follows a year which saw the largest rise in both the number and proportion of jobs below the real Living Wage recorded since 2012.



4.4m

jobs are paid below
the real Living Wage.

Although inflation in the cost of goods and services has eased since its recent peak in 2023, price levels remain 28.3 per cent higher in December 2025 than in December 2020, and inflation remains above the Bank of England's target of 2 per cent.² This matters because low-income families have been disproportionately affected by rising costs as they spend a greater share of their income on essentials like food and electricity which have seen high inflation rates.

Low pay in 2025 is less common than it was during the 2010s, and has declined from its 2023-2024 peak. However, in 2025 it still sits above the historic lows achieved in 2021-2022.³ This highlights the fact that the cost-of-living crisis partially reversed the progress made on eradicating low pay since 2019. As such, the improvement in our headline estimate of jobs paid below the real Living Wage hides a more complex picture, and should be interpreted cautiously. Living costs remain historically high, and low pay continues to be a significant challenge in the UK labour market.

Our analysis finds that:



In 2025, 14.6 per cent of employee jobs were paid below the real Living Wage, amounting to 4.4 million jobs. This marks a modest reduction in the rate of low pay since 2024 (1.1 percentage point).



The prevalence of low pay varies considerably across the UK. The areas with the highest proportion of jobs below the real Living Wage were the North East (18.8 per cent), Northern Ireland (17.3 per cent), and the East Midlands (17.2 per cent). The areas with the lowest proportion of jobs below the real Living Wage were Scotland (11.3 per cent), the South East (12.2 per cent) and London (13.3 per cent).



There are sharp differences in the level of low pay within regions too. London, for instance includes both the local authority with the highest rate of low pay and the one with the lowest, even though the region's overall average is relatively low.



Some of the worst affected areas have seen things get worse, not better. Of the 25 local authorities with the highest rate of low pay, nearly three quarters (72 per cent) experienced increases in the rate of low paid work, compared to a third of all local authorities.



Women are a third more likely to be low paid than men. 16.8 per cent of jobs held by women were paid below the real Living Wage, compared to 12.3 per cent for jobs held by men. The gender gap in jobs paid below the real Living Wage is at its lowest level since records began in 2012. However, women continue to be disproportionately affected by low pay, with 58.6 per cent of all jobs paid below the real Living Wage in 2025 held by women.



In 2025, part-time employees were more than three times as likely to be low paid than full-time employees. 29.7 percent of part-time jobs were paid below the real Living Wage, compared to 8.8 per cent of full-time jobs. Part-time jobs accounted for over half (56.3 per cent) of all jobs paid below the real Living Wage in 2025. This matters because low hourly pay is particularly difficult to manage when it's paired with insufficient working hours.



The hospitality industry had the highest proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage in 2025 (53.1 per cent). This is the 14th consecutive year that hospitality is the industry with the highest proportion of low paid jobs. Other industries with above average levels of low pay in 2025 include arts, entertainment and recreation (29.2 per cent) and retail and wholesale (29.0 per cent).



The retail and wholesale industry had the highest number of jobs below the real Living Wage, with more than a million low paid jobs in 2025. Other industries with above average numbers of low paid jobs were hospitality (760,000) and health and social work (640,000).



Sales occupations (e.g. retail assistants) had the highest proportion and number of jobs paid below the real Living Wage in 2025, with 50.9 per cent of all sales jobs low paid, representing over 650,000 jobs. This was followed by elementary trades and related occupations (e.g. cleaners, security guards) with 33.7 per cent of low paid jobs, and caring personal service occupations (e.g. carers) which made up 500,000 low paid jobs.



Younger workers were much more likely than others to be low paid. Among those aged 18-22, 57 per cent of jobs were paid below the real Living Wage. This is followed by workers aged over 60, at 17.2 per cent.

01

Introduction



What is the real Living Wage?

The real Living Wage is the only wage rate based solely on what it costs to live. It is independently calculated annually by the Resolution Foundation and based on a social consensus of what it costs to live. This process is overseen by the Living Wage Commission. The rate is updated annually to reflect changes in living costs, based on the best available evidence.

Accredited Living Wage Employers pay the real Living Wage to all employed staff aged 18 or over, including third party staff such as cleaners and security guards. The real Living Wage is different to the government's National Living Wage, which is based on median earnings and only applies to workers over the age of 21.⁴ The real Living Wage is paid voluntarily by over 16,000 employers, such as IKEA, Everton FC and Aviva, across a range of sizes and sectors, who choose to pay more than the minimum. £4.1 billion has gone back into the pockets of low paid workers since the real Living Wage movement began.

Labour market context



19.1%

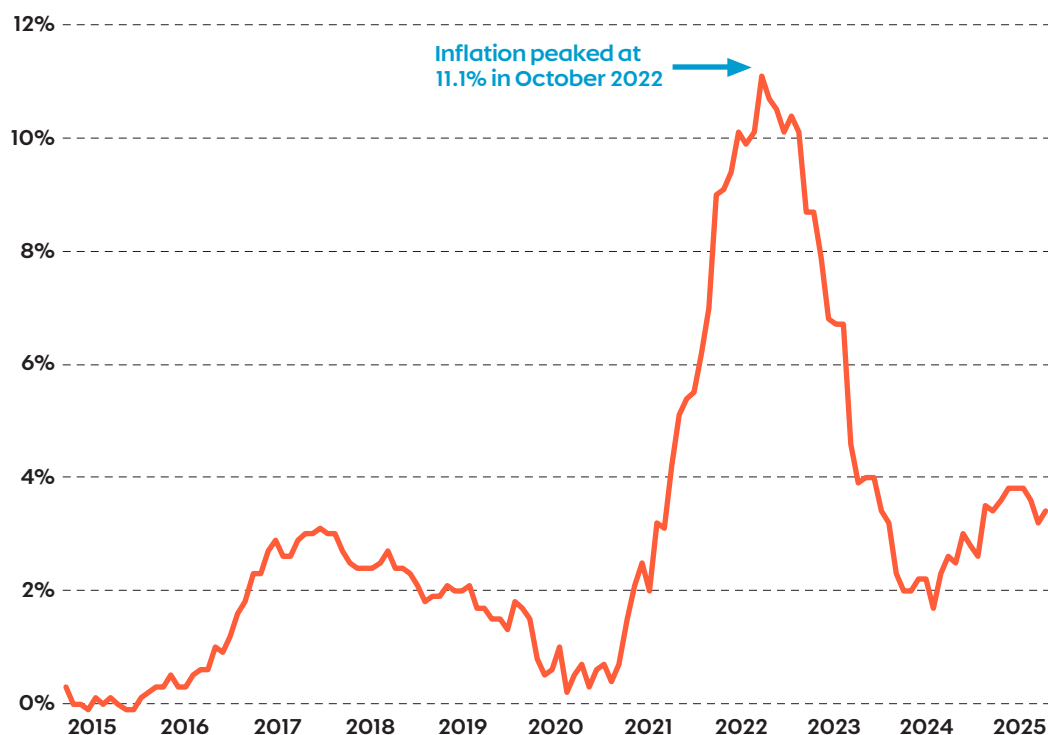
UK food prices rose by 19.1% compared to a year earlier in March 2023, the highest rate since 1977.

The UK labour market has experienced complex challenges in recent years. The Covid-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted the labour market, initially causing widespread job losses before triggering acute worker shortages as the economy reopened. In the immediate post-pandemic period, the labour market remained exceptionally tight, characterised by low unemployment and record numbers of job vacancies.⁵ Meanwhile, economic inactivity due to long-term sickness has risen from 2.2 million in 2020 to 2.8 million in 2025, and has persisted even as other pandemic-era disruptions eased.^{6,7}

This tight labour market coincided with the worst cost-of-living crisis in four decades, which saw inflation peak at 11.1 per cent in October 2022, and food inflation peak at 19.1 per cent in March 2023.⁸ As prices surged, real wage growth turned negative after a decade of wage stagnation; by 2024, the Resolution Foundation estimate that average wages were only £16 a week higher than they were in 2010.⁹ Inflation eased in 2024, but the recovery in real wages has been slow, reaching just 0.5 per cent in August 2025,¹⁰ and inflation started edging upwards again in 2025, alongside a cooling labour market.

Figure 1: Annual change in UK consumer prices (CPI).

Inflation eased in 2024 after record highs, but picked up again in 2025.



Source: ONS Consumer price inflation time series (MM23).

By 2025, unemployment had risen to 5.1 per cent in August 2025, its highest level since 2021, and vacancies fell below their pre-pandemic levels.¹¹ This likely reflects subdued business confidence following the prolonged cost-of-living crisis and challenging market conditions.

Purpose and scope of this report

This report measures the scale of low pay in the UK in 2025. We consider the number and proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage in April 2025, when it was £13.85 per hour in London and £12.60 per hour across the rest of the UK. At the time, the UK's statutory minimum wage (introduced in 2016 and known as the 'National Living Wage') was £12.21 for people aged 21 and over, £10.00 for those aged 18-20, and £7.55 for those under 18 and apprentices.

This report is based on Living Wage Foundation analysis of the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) dataset. We consider recent trends in the scale of low pay, as well as levels of low pay by region (and other geographies), gender, hours, industry and occupation. Our findings underscore the importance of paying a wage that is based on what it costs to live so that workers can live with dignity.



02 Patterns and trends in low pay across the UK

Scale of low pay in the UK in 2025

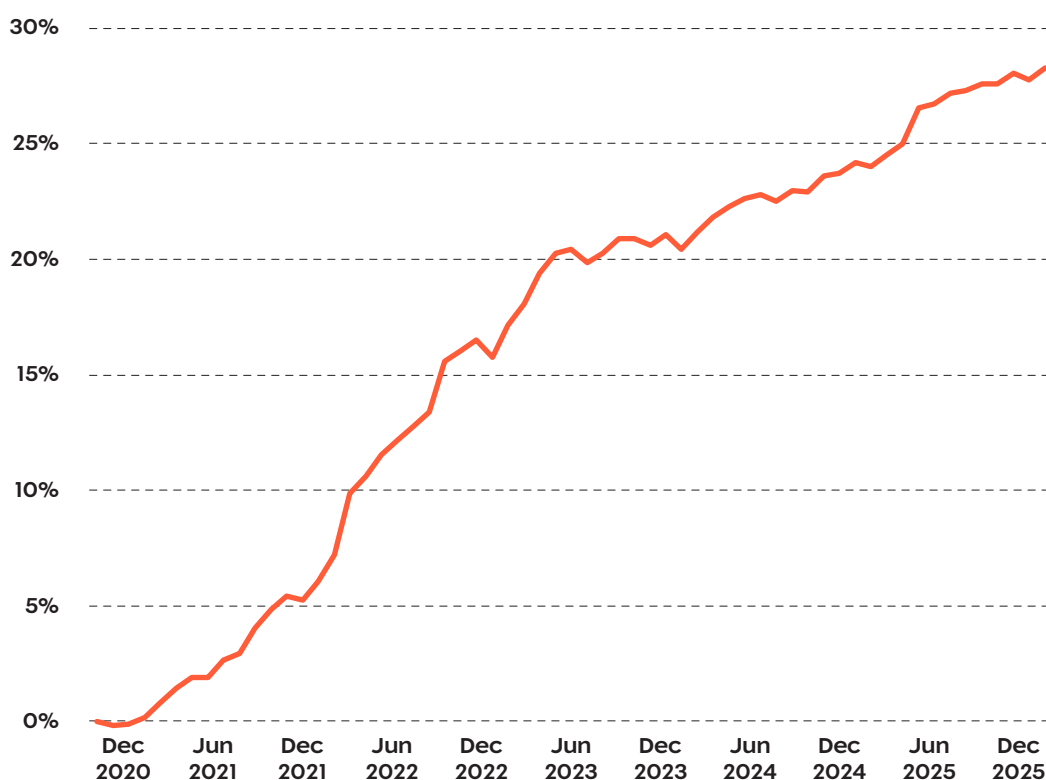
14.6 per cent of all employee jobs in the UK (4.4m jobs) were paid less than the real Living Wage in April 2025.

In 2025, about one in seven (14.6 per cent) employee jobs in the UK were paid less than the real Living Wage, amounting to 4.4 million low paid jobs. This represents a small reduction of 1.1 percentage points in the scale of low pay from 2024. However, it follows the largest rise in both the proportion and number of jobs below the real Living Wage in 2024 since the timeseries began in 2012. This fall therefore reflects a correction from last year's exceptional spike.

Although the acute inflation that drove the cost-of-living crisis has eased, its cumulative impact on the price level endures. Crucially, prices haven't fallen: in December 2025 prices were 28.3 per cent higher than they were in 2020, compared to an 8.9 per cent rise in the previous five-year period.¹²

Figure 2: Cumulative percentage change in price level since December 2020 on CPI measure.

UK consumer prices rose by 28.3 per cent between December 2020 and 2025



Source: ONS Consumer price inflation time series (MM23).

Moreover, while inflation briefly returned to target levels in 2024, it began to edge upwards again in 2025. Headline inflation in April 2025 stood at 3.5 per cent, much lower than the double-digit rates of 2022 yet still the highest level recorded since 2012 outside of that recent spike. The price of many essentials continued to rise: food prices in the year up to April 2025 increased by 3.2 per cent, water bills by 26.4 per cent, electricity by 4.6 per cent, and gas 12.2 per cent.¹³

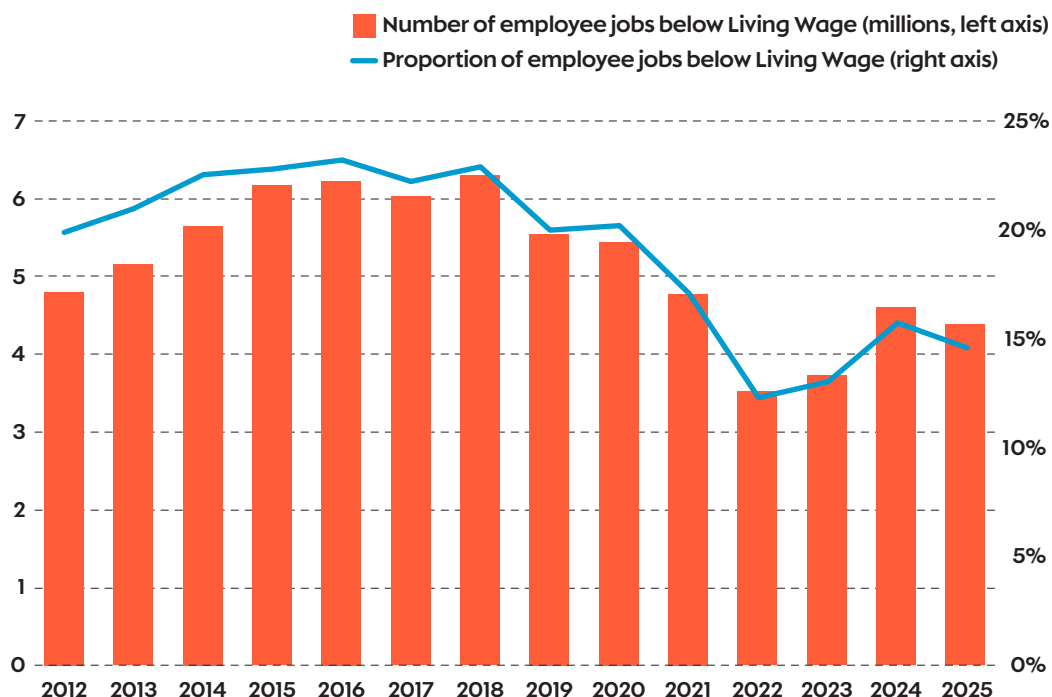
Research shows low-income families have been disproportionately affected by inflation in recent years as they spend a greater share of their income on essentials which have seen high inflation rates.¹⁴ As such, it remains more important than ever for workers to earn a wage that genuinely reflects the cost of living.

Changes over time

Looking back over the past decade, low pay fluctuated between 2012 and 2019 with approximately a fifth of jobs paid below the real Living Wage, peaking at 23.3 per cent in 2016. The rate of low pay declined sharply from 2020 to 2022, reaching a record low of 12.3 percent in 2022. This progress was supported by the government's target to raise the National Living Wage to two thirds of median earnings, which they achieved in 2025. Increases to the wage floor directly increased wages for those earning the statutory minimum, and indirectly pushed up wages for those earning slightly more as employers sought to maintain wage differentials.

Figure 3: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, UK, 2012-2025

The rate of low pay fell slightly in 2025, following a year which saw the largest annual increase in low pay recorded since 2012.



Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings



Because the government has now met its target of setting the National Living Wage at two thirds of median earnings, the ONS's measure of low pay based on that benchmark is at a record low.¹⁵ While this is a welcome improvement in working conditions for many, our research shows low pay continues to shape the lives of millions of workers. The real Living Wage remains the only wage rate calculated according to the cost of living, based on a basket of household goods and services defined by the public. In the aftermath of a period of soaring costs and stagnating wages, using a definition of low pay that reflects real living costs is more important than ever.

2024 saw the largest annual increase in both the proportion and number of jobs paid below the real Living Wage since the timeseries began in 2012, undoing some of the progress made in previous years. This sharp rise was largely due to soaring consumer prices during the cost-of-living crisis, as well as changes to the real Living Wage methodology, which raised the rate to maintain a minimum acceptable living standard as living costs increased.

For those who are paid below the real Living Wage, rising prices have had a real impact on their standard of living. Almost 6 in 10 workers earning below the real Living Wage polled in October 2025 said they had skipped meals, turned off the heating, fallen behind on bills, or taken out a pay-day loan in the past year to cover essentials. Over 2 in 5 said they had used a foodbank in the past year.¹⁶

Regions, nations and local authorities



The North East, Northern Ireland and the East Midlands remain the areas with the highest levels of low pay.

Regions and nations

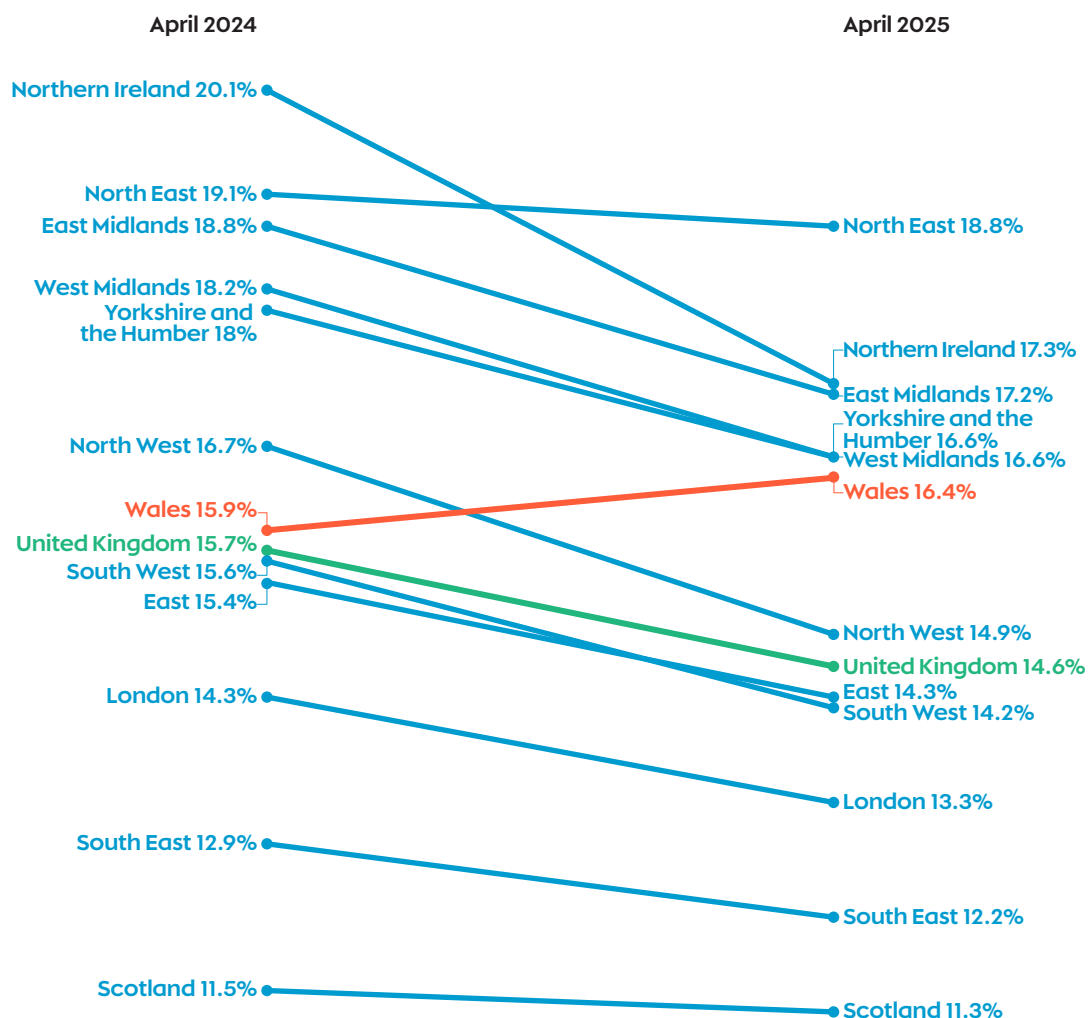
The picture of low pay varies significantly across UK regions and nations. The area with the highest proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage in 2025 was the North East (18.8 per cent), followed by Northern Ireland (17.3 per cent) and the East Midlands (17.2 per cent). These same areas had the highest rate of low pay in 2024, though the North East overtook Northern Ireland.

The areas with the lowest proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage in 2025 were Scotland (11.3 per cent), followed by the South East (12.2 per cent) and London (13.3 per cent). ‘These same areas had the highest rates of low pay in 2024.

All regions and nations saw a decrease in the share of jobs below the real Living Wage between 2024 and 2025 except Wales, which saw a small increase in the scale of low pay (see Figure 4). Northern Ireland saw the largest fall in low pay in 2025, of 2.8 percentage points.

Figure 4: Proportion of Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, by region and nation in 2025, 2024

All regions and nations except Wales saw a decline in the scale of low pay in 2025.



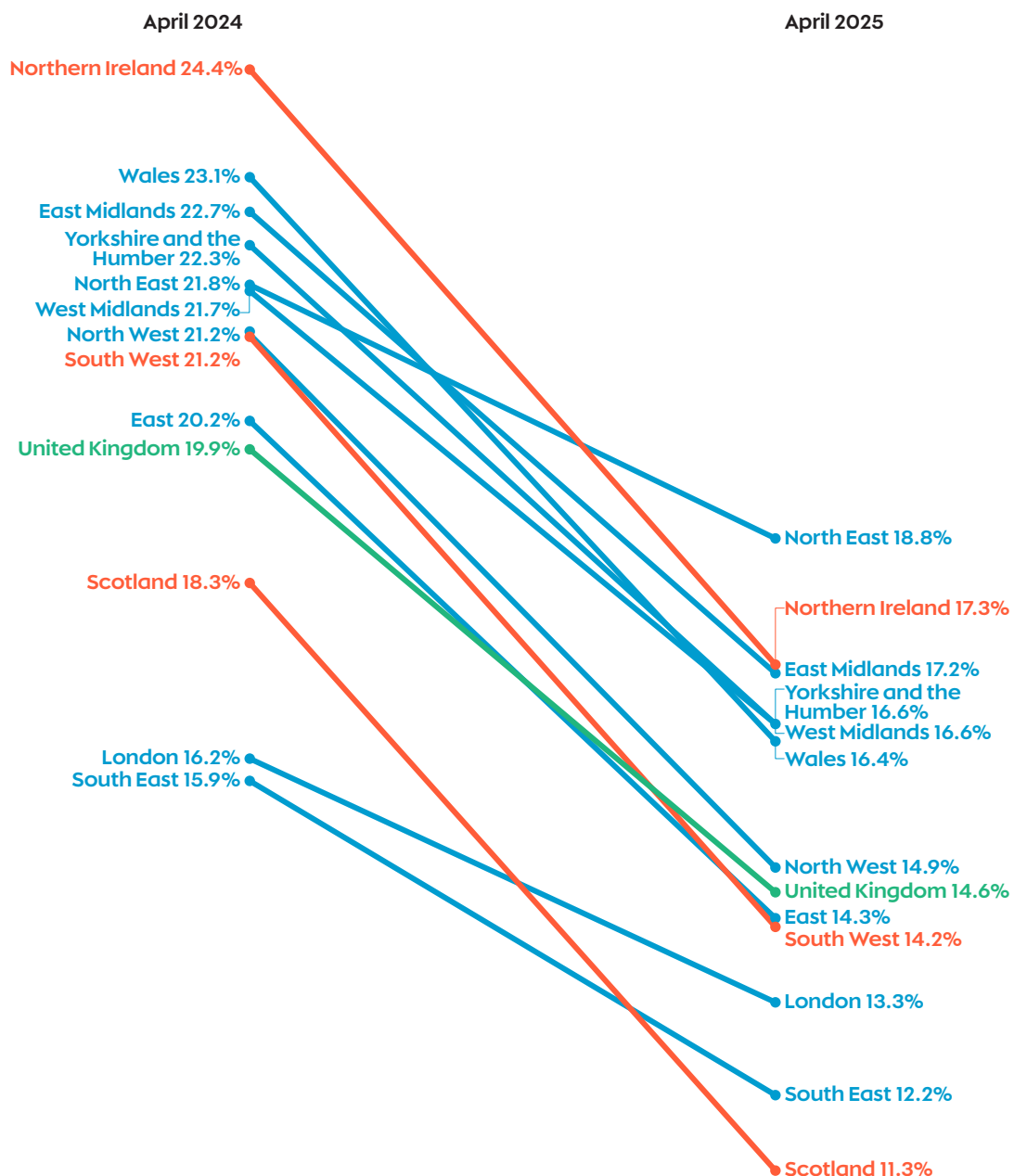
Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

The areas which saw the largest reductions in the share of low paid jobs since 2012 were Northern Ireland, Scotland and the South West. In contrast, London, the North East and the South East made the least progress. However, it is important to note that London and the South East began with relatively low levels of low pay and have remained low, whereas the North East started from a much higher level and has remained high.

Figure 5: Proportion of employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, by region and nation in 2025, 2012

Northern Ireland, Scotland, and the South West made the most progress on eradicating low pay between 2012 and 2025.



Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

It is worth noting that there is significant variation within regional and national averages. For example, London's low pay landscape is very unequal. Despite ranking among the regions with the lowest average rates of low pay, it contains both the local authority with the highest share of low-paid workers in the UK (Redbridge, 34.5%) and the one with the lowest level of low pay (City of London, 2.8%).

Local authorities



Local authorities which already had the highest levels of low pay got worse, not better.

The local authority with the highest proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage was Redbridge at 34.5 per cent, followed by Barking and Dagenham (31.2 per cent) and Haringey (29.7 per cent). These three local authorities were already in the top eight local authorities with the highest rates of jobs paid below the real Living Wage last year.



34.5%

The proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage in Redbridge, the local authority with the highest level of low pay.

London local authorities are over-represented in the areas most affected by low pay: of the 25 local authorities with the highest rate of low pay, eleven are in London. This is a similar pattern to that in 2024, when London Boroughs made up 10 of the top 25 local authorities with the highest proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage.

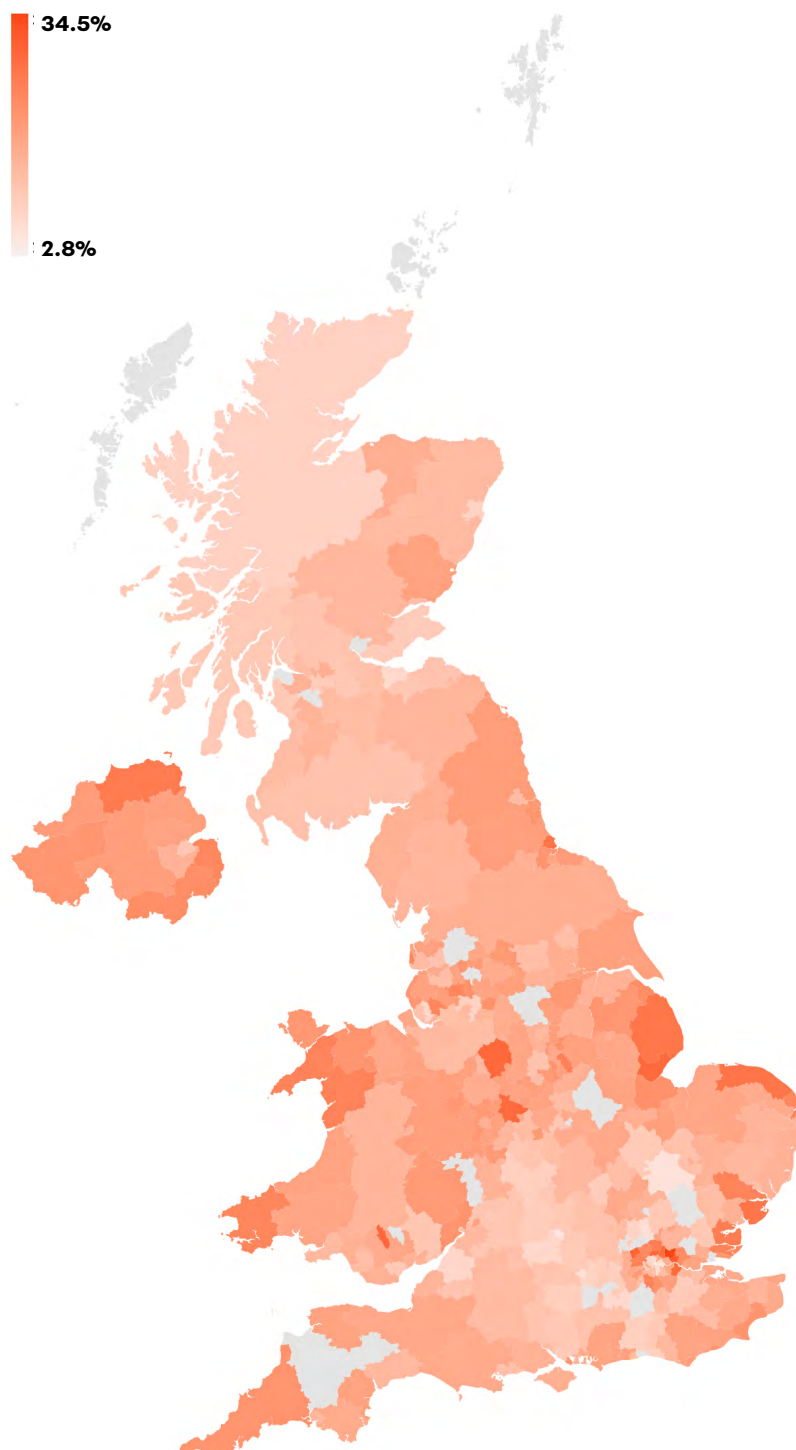
This pattern has remained the same over the years and is driven by the fact that the National Living Wage does not vary by region. Although London has its own higher London Living Wage to account for the city's higher living costs, the statutory National Living Wage applies uniformly across the UK. Consequently, many low paid workers in London experience a larger gap between their wages and their cost of living.

Beyond London, the two other regions most represented among the 25 local authorities with the highest proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage are the West Midlands and the East of England.

At the regional and national level, differences in the rate of low pay narrowed from 2024 to 2025. But looking more locally, a different pattern appears. Among the 25 local authorities with the highest proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage in 2024, the vast majority (72 per cent) saw the share of low paid jobs rise over the past year. This means that many areas where low pay is most prevalent are seeing things get worse rather than better. This contrast between the worst-affected local areas – which are stagnating or worsening – and the overall picture of slow improvement underscores the need for place-based strategies that expand access to decent, secure jobs which allow workers to earn enough to live with dignity.

Figure 6: Percentage of employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, by local authority area in 2025.

The local authorities which already had the highest level of low pay got worse, not better.



Notes: Data for 2025 is provisional. Areas in grey do not have available data.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Gender and working hours



Women and part-time workers continue to be disproportionately affected by low pay compared to men and full-time workers.

This section examines the scale of low pay by gender (men and women) and working hours (full-time and part-time) in the UK in 2025.¹⁷ You can find more detail in tables two to four in the appendix.

All employee categories across gender and working hours saw a decrease in the scale of low pay between 2024 and 2025.

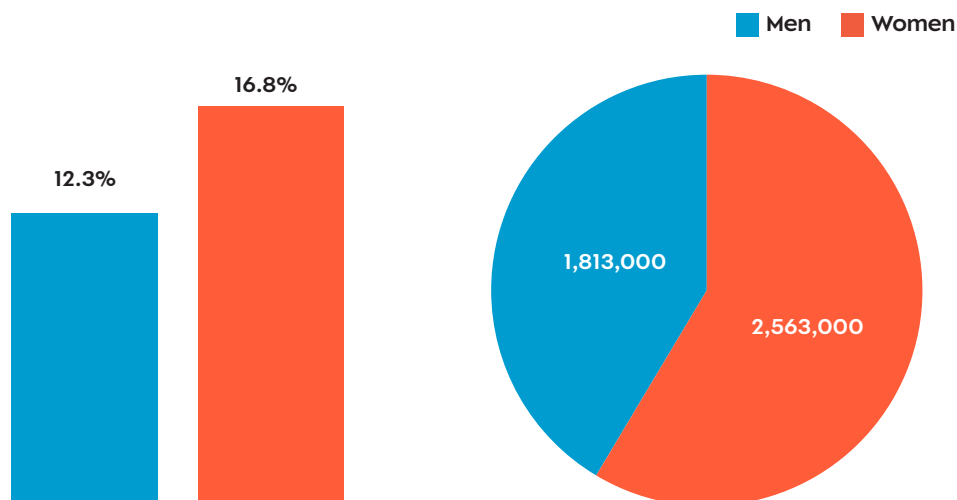
In 2025, women continued to be considerably more likely to earn less than the real Living Wage than men, with 16.8 per cent of jobs held by women being low paid, compared to 12.3 per cent among men. However, the gap between both groups has decreased: in 2024, women were nearly 50 per cent more likely to be low paid than men, compared to about a third more likely in 2025.

In 2025, there were 2.5 million jobs held by women that were paid below the real Living Wage, compared to 1.8 million held by men. Jobs held by women represent well over half (58.6 per cent) of all jobs paid below the real Living Wage.

Research shows that jobs held by women are concentrated in the lowest-paying occupations, with 23 per cent of women employed in the lowest-paying occupations compared to 15 per cent of men.¹⁸ Women are also much more likely to be working part-time jobs, which are themselves much more likely to be low paid than full-time jobs.

Figure 7: Proportion (left) and number of jobs (right) paid below the real Living Wage by gender, 2025.

Jobs held by women have a higher rate of low pay and represent a majority of all jobs paid below the real Living Wage.

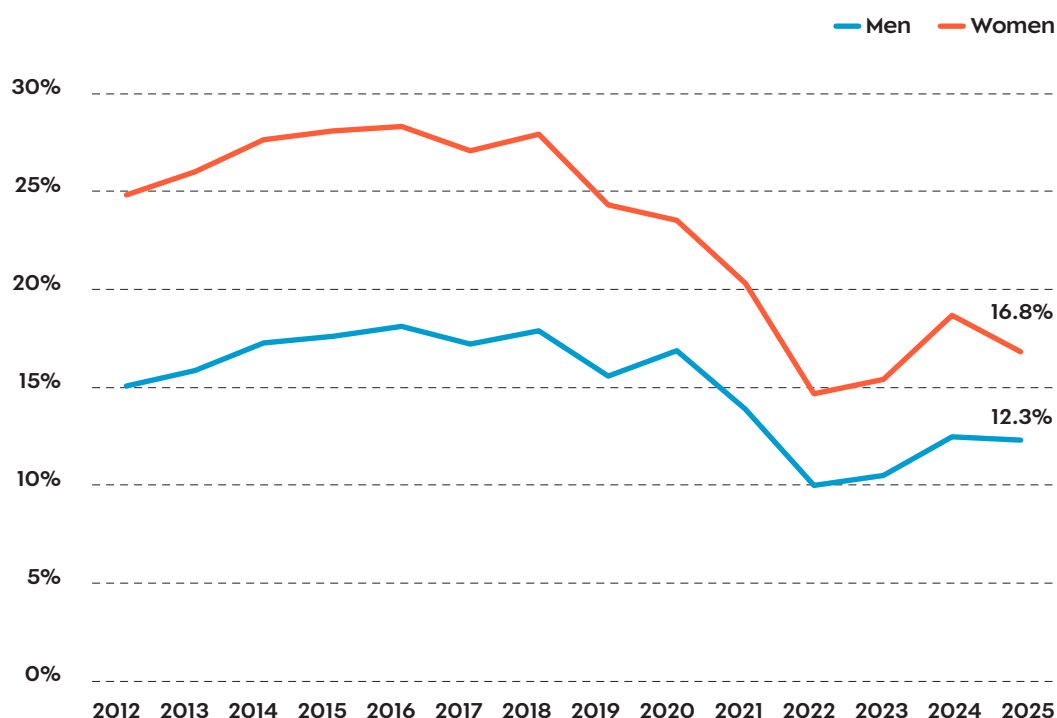


Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

The low pay gender gap narrowed from a 10-percentage-point difference in 2018 to 4.7 percentage points in 2022, before widening between 2022 and 2024 in conjunction with the overall rise in low pay. The gap narrowed again between 2024 and 2025 to 4.5 percentage points, bringing it to its lowest level since the timeseries began, as seen in figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Proportion of jobs below the real Living Wage by gender, 2012-2025:
 The low pay gender gap narrowed to its lowest level in 2025.



Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

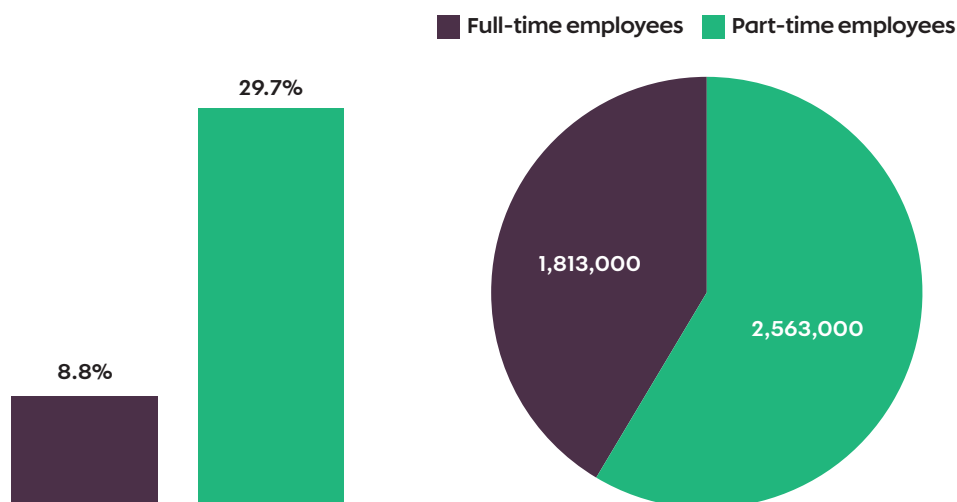
Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Turning to the patterns in low pay by working hours in 2025, part-time employees were still considerably more likely (3.3 times) to be in jobs earning less than the real Living Wage (29.7 per cent) than full-time employees (8.8 per cent).

In 2025, there were 2.5 million part-time jobs paid below the real Living Wage, compared to 2 million full-time jobs. Overall, part-time jobs represented over half (56.3 per cent) of all jobs paid below the real Living Wage, which underlines the disparity in rates of pay between part-time and full-time jobs.

Figure 9: Proportion (left) and number of jobs (right) paid below the real Living Wage by working hour, 2025

Part-time jobs are over three times as likely than full-time jobs to be low paid, and represent a majority of all jobs paid below the real Living Wage.



Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

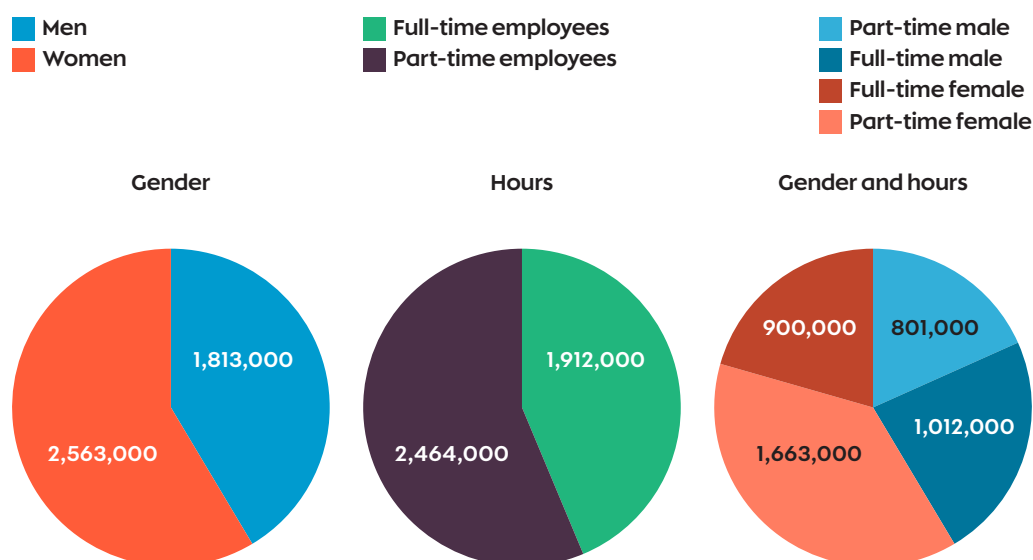
The disparity in the rate of low pay between part-time and full-time roles narrowed slightly, but remains higher than before the cost-of-living crisis. The gap in the rate of low pay between full-time and part-time workers narrowed between 2018 and 2022, from 29.1 percentage points to its lowest level at 19.2 percentage points in 2022. It then widened between 2022 and 2024, before narrowing in 2025 at 20.9 percentage points – still higher than before the cost-of-living crisis.

This disparity is especially concerning given its scale: more than one in four part-time jobs are low paid. This combination of earning a wage that does not cover living costs alongside few, or insufficient hours results in a double hit to earnings.

Going into further detail, full-time female employees are more likely to be in jobs earning less than the real Living Wage (9.7 per cent) compared to full-time male employees (8.1 per cent). Among part-time employees, men are more likely to be in jobs earning less than the real Living Wage (34.5 per cent) than women (27.9 per cent). However, women hold twice as many low paid part-time jobs than men do (1.6 million jobs vs 800,000). As a result, part-time jobs held by women made up 38.0 per cent of all low paid jobs.

Figure 10: Number of jobs paid below the real Living Wage by gender and working hour, 2025.

Part-time jobs held by women represent over a third of all low paid jobs.



Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings



Industry

Hospitality remains the industry with the highest proportion of low pay, with over half of jobs paid below the real Living Wage.

For the fourteenth year in a row, hospitality (accommodation and food services) had the highest proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage in 2025, with over half of hospitality jobs being low paid (53.1 per cent). This shows how concentrated low pay remains in hospitality. Arts and recreation also had a high share of jobs below the real Living Wage, at 29.2 per cent, closely followed by retail and wholesale at 29.0 per cent. These are the same industries which had the highest level of low pay in 2024. You can see in the graph below all of the industries which had above-average shares of jobs below the real Living Wage. Virtually all industries saw a decline in the rate of low pay since last year.

The industry with the highest number of jobs below the real Living is retail and wholesale, with over 1m jobs being low paid. This represents a quarter of all low paid jobs in the UK (24.6 per cent), which highlights the size of the retail industry. Other industries with a large volume of low paid jobs are hospitality, which represented almost 760,000 jobs paid below the real Living Wage, and health and social work, with 640,000 jobs.

Figure 11: Proportion (left) and number (right) of jobs paid below the real Living Wage by industry, 2025.

Hospitality has the highest proportion of low paid jobs, but wholesale and retail has the highest number of low paid jobs.



Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Occupation



Sales jobs (e.g. retail assistants) have the highest share and number of low paid jobs out of any other occupation.

In 2025, sales occupations (e. g. sales assistants and retail cashiers) had by far the highest share of jobs paid below the real Living Wage, with half of sales jobs being low paid (50.9 per cent). The next highest rate of low pay was found in elementary trades and related occupations, (which includes farm labourers, general construction labourers) where a third of all jobs fell below the real Living Wage (33.7 per cent).

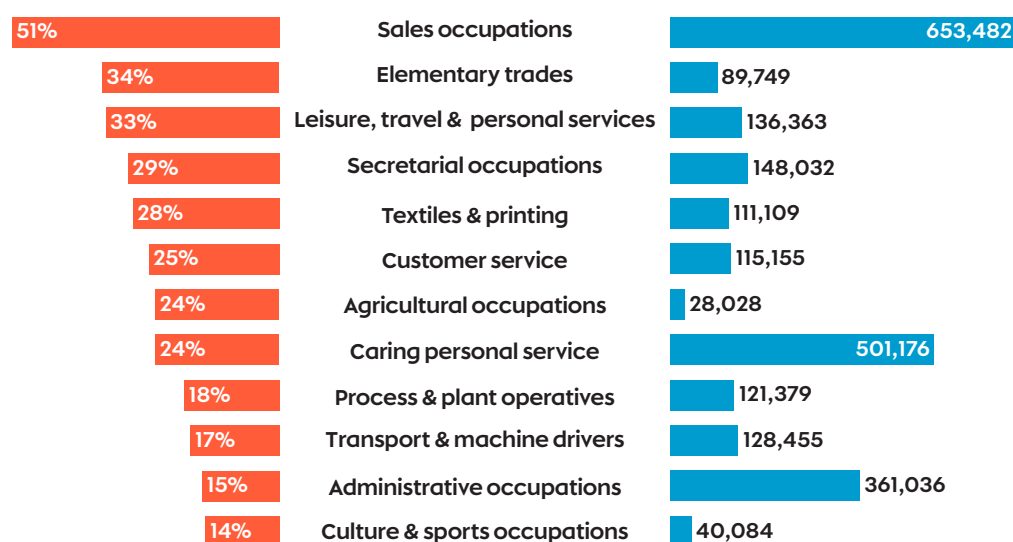
Sales occupations also accounted for the largest number of jobs paid below the real Living Wage, with 650,000 low paid jobs, ‘followed by caring personal service occupations (such as child minders and care workers) which accounted for 501,000 jobs. This pattern of low pay across occupations was the same in 2024.

In 2025, almost all occupations for which we have data saw a decline in low pay, with the exception of skilled construction and building trades.

At a more detailed level, hairdressers and related services had the highest share of jobs paid below the real living Wage with almost two thirds being low paid (61.5 per cent). This is followed by sales assistants and retail cashiers (55.2 per cent), and animal care and control services (51.2 per cent). Sales assistant and retail cashiers accounted for the highest number of jobs paid below the real Living Wage by far, with 630,000 jobs, followed by caring personal services which accounted for 350,000 low paid jobs.

Figure 12: Proportion and number of jobs paid below the real Living Wage by occupation, 2025.

Sales occupations (e.g. retail assistants) have the highest proportion and number of low paid jobs.



Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Age



Workers aged 18-21 are disproportionately affected by low pay, with over half being paid below the real Living Wage.

All age groups saw a fall in low pay between 2024 and 2025. However, there is significant variation in the share of jobs paid below the real Living Wage across age groups. Workers aged 18 to 21 remain by far the most likely to be paid below the real Living Wage: over half (57 per cent) of their jobs fall below the real Living Wage, representing almost 800,000 jobs.

The next highest rate of low pay is among workers aged 60 and over, 17.2 per cent of whom (520,000 jobs) earn less than the real Living Wage, followed closely by those aged 22-29 at 16.8 per cent (770,000 jobs).



57%

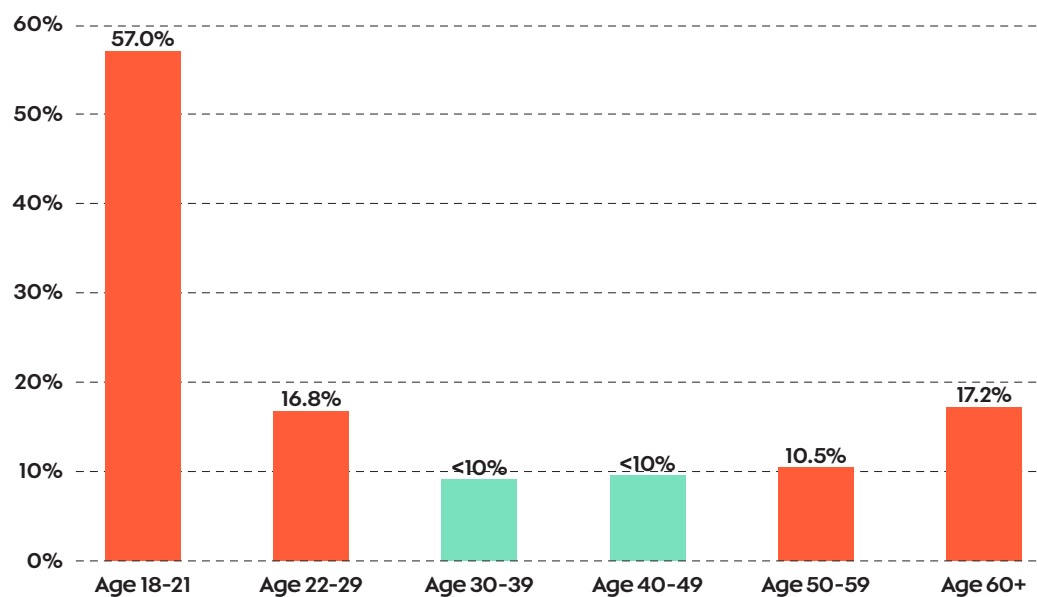
of jobs held by
18-21-year-olds pay
less than the real
Living Wage.

The higher rate of low pay for workers aged over 60 reflects a broader trend of increasing pre-retirement poverty. Research shows that many people experience a dip in income before reaching state pension age, which can push those on low incomes into poverty; average income for those aged 60-65 is 16 per cent lower than for those five years younger.¹⁹ A key driver of this is the rising state pension age, which disproportionately affects those on the lowest incomes. Other factors making workers especially vulnerable before their retirement include lack of adequate support (especially for workers with a health condition), ageism²⁰ and the growing number of older people renting rather than owning their homes²¹.

For workers aged 30 to 49, the data allows us to see only that the proportion of jobs paid less than the real Living Wage is below 10 per cent.

Figure 13: Proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage in the UK by age group, 2025.

Young workers are much more likely to be low paid than any other age group.



Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

This pattern highlights that younger workers are much more likely to be low paid, followed by older workers, while those in their mid-career are less affected. A key driver of this is the fact that the statutory minimum wage sets a lower minimum wage rate for workers aged 18-20, separate from the National Living Wage which only applies to workers aged 21 and over. As a result, many younger workers face a larger gap between their earnings and their cost of living. The government is planning on phasing out age bands and moving towards a single adult rate, which will provide welcome relief to younger workers.²²

03 Conclusion



6 in 10

Nearly six in ten low paid workers reported skipping meals, turning off their heating, falling behind on bills or taking out a pay-day loan to cover essentials in 2025.

The latest data on low pay makes one thing clear: the cost-of-living crisis continues to cast a shadow over low paid workers. Although the proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage fell slightly in 2025, this is not enough to restore the progress made before 2022, and 1 in 7 UK employee jobs (4.4 million jobs) still don't pay a wage that meets workers' cost of living. With inflation picking up again in 2025, and as food and energy prices continue to rise, low-income workers face renewed pressures to make ends meet.

Low pay remains unevenly distributed across the UK, with workers in the North East, Northern Ireland and the Midlands facing the highest likelihood of being paid less than real Living Wage. Many of the local authorities that were already worst affected have seen the least progress in eradicating low pay or have gotten worse in the past year. Women, part-time workers, younger workers aged 18-21 and those in the hospitality industry or in sales occupations continue to be disproportionately affected.

The fact that the worst-faring local areas are stagnating or even worsening - in contrast to the overall trend of slow improvement - highlights the need for place-based strategies to tackle in-work poverty by expanding access to Living Wage and Living Hours jobs.

Our research shows that being paid less than the real Living Wage really matters to people's quality of life, health and relationships. Nearly six in ten low paid workers reported skipping meals, turning off their heating, falling behind on bills or taking out a pay-day loan to cover essentials in 2025.²³

A real Living Wage is essential to ensure workers can live secure, happy and healthy lives. Becoming accredited as a Living Wage Employer is a meaningful step employers can take to provide their workers with a wage that reflects the cost of living so they can afford a decent quality of life.

04 Data tables

Table 1: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, UK, 2012-2025

Year	Jobs (000s)	Median hourly wage (nominal)	National Living Wage	Real Living Wage	London Living Wage	Number of jobs below real Living Wage	Proportion of jobs below real Living Wage
April 2012	24,203	£11.28	£6.19	£7.20	£8.30	4,805	19.9%
April 2013	24,575	£11.59	£6.31	£7.45	£8.55	5,151	21.0%
April 2014	25,036	£11.61	£6.50	£7.65	£8.80	5,644	22.5%
April 2015	25,997	£11.78	£6.70	£7.85	£9.15	6,162	22.8%
April 2016	25,758	£12.16	£7.20	£8.25	£9.40	6,224	23.2%
April 2017	26,241	£12.47	£7.50	£8.45	£9.75	6,023	22.2%
April 2018	26,424	£12.77	£7.83	£8.75	£10.20	6,297	22.9%
April 2019	26,703	£13.28	£8.21	£9.00	£10.55	5,540	20.0%
April 2020	25,910	£13.71	£8.72	£9.30	£10.75	5,448	20.2%
April 2021	27,111	£14.12	£8.91	£9.50	£10.85	4,779	17.1%
April 2022	27,498	£14.79	£9.50	£9.90	£11.05	3,518	12.3%
April 2023	27,645	£16.00	£10.42	£10.90	£11.95	3,730	13.0%
April 2024	28,210	£17.09	£11.44	£12.00	£13.15	4,592	15.7%
April 2025	28,890	£17.96	£12.21	£12.60	£13.85	4,376	14.6%

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. The number and proportion of jobs paid below the Living Wage has been published by the ONS for 2015 onwards; figures for 2012-2014 are estimated from published ONS tables by the Living Wage Foundation. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Table 2: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, by region/nation and gender: April 2025 (unless otherwise stated)

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
All employees									
North East	977	£15.91	£19.67	191	190	+1	18.8%	19.1%	-0.3ppts
North West	3,167	£17.30	£21.64	491	514	-23	14.9%	16.7%	-1.8ppts
Yorkshire and the Humber	2,241	£16.58	£20.69	385	414	-29	16.6%	18.0%	-1.4ppts
East Midlands	1,943	£16.23	£20.19	348	370	-22	17.2%	18.8%	-1.6ppts
West Midlands	2,348	£17.06	£21.25	405	423	-18	16.6%	18.2%	-1.6ppts
East	2,508	£17.56	£22.36	370	400	-30	14.3%	15.4%	-1.1ppts
London	4,606	£23.42	£30.94	637	661	-24	13.3%	14.3%	-1.0ppts
South East	3,861	£18.23	£22.82	490	526	-36	12.2%	12.9%	-0.7ppts
South West	2,391	£17.06	£21.30	351	375	-24	14.2%	15.6%	-1.4ppts
Wales	1,288	£16.61	£20.24	219	203	+16	16.4%	15.9%	+0.5ppts
Scotland	2,442	£18.39	£22.65	286	293	-7	11.3%	11.5%	-0.2ppts
Northern Ireland	1,119	£16.28	£20.31	203	223	-20	17.3%	20.1%	-2.8ppts
United Kingdom	28,890	£17.96	£23.06	4,376	4,592	-216	14.6%	15.7%	-1.1ppts
Men									
North East	472	£16.92	£20.61	76	71	+5	15.6%	14.9%	+0.7ppts
North West	1,545	£18.71	£22.97	203	201	+2	12.8%	13.2%	-0.4ppts
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,112	£17.78	£21.91	150	158	-8	13.1%	14.1%	-1.0ppts
East Midlands	970	£17.49	£21.26	137	138	-1	13.6%	14.0%	-0.4ppts
West Midlands	1,210	£18.48	£22.67	164	172	-8	13.1%	14.7%	-1.6ppts
East	1,255	£18.93	£23.89	150	157	-7	11.6%	12.3%	-0.7ppts
London	2,352	£25.08	£33.71	294	277	+17	12.2%	12.2%	0ppts
South East	1,939	£19.88	£24.38	202	188	+14	10.1%	9.4%	+0.7ppts
South West	1,198	£18.38	£22.65	142	145	-3	11.6%	12.3%	-0.7ppts
Wales	608	£17.51	£20.99	87	86	+1	13.9%	14.2%	-0.3ppts
Scotland	1,136	£19.42	£23.82	123	117	+6	10.5%	10.0%	+0.5ppts
Northern Ireland	531	£17.02	£21.25	85	84	+1	15.4%	15.8%	-0.4ppts
United Kingdom	14,328	£19.26	£24.58	1,813	1,795	+18	12.3%	12.5%	-0.2ppts

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
Women									
North East	505	£15.15	£18.62	116	119	-3	21.8%	23.0%	-1.2ppts
North West	1,622	£16.06	£20.13	288	313	-25	17.0%	20.2%	-3.2ppts
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,129	£15.54	£19.22	235	256	-21	19.9%	21.7%	-1.8ppts
East Midlands	973	£15.16	£18.85	211	232	-21	20.7%	23.7%	-3.0ppts
West Midlands	1,139	£15.54	£19.42	241	251	-10	20.2%	21.8%	-1.6ppts
East	1,253	£16.27	£20.43	220	243	-23	16.9%	18.6%	-1.7ppts
London	2,253	£22.04	£27.73	343	384	-41	14.5%	16.4%	-1.9ppts
South East	1,922	£16.66	£20.90	288	338	-50	14.3%	16.2%	-1.9ppts
South West	1,193	£15.90	£19.64	208	230	-22	16.7%	18.8%	-2.1ppts
Wales	679	£15.81	£19.43	132	117	+15	18.6%	17.5%	+1.1ppts
Scotland	1,306	£17.51	£21.42	164	176	-12	12.0%	12.8%	-0.8ppts
Northern Ireland	587	£15.62	£19.28	118	139	-21	19.0%	24.1%	-5.1ppts
United Kingdom	14,562	£16.71	£21.27	2,563	2,797	-234	16.8%	18.7%	-1.9ppts

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Table 3: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, by region/nation and hours: April 2025 (unless otherwise stated)

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
Full-time employees									
North East	676	£17.31	£20.28	78	83	-5	11.1%	11.6%	-0.5ppts
North West	2,290	£19.10	£22.32	220	241	-21	9.2%	10.5%	-1.3ppts
Yorkshire and the Humber	1,574	£18.04	£21.15	167	196	-29	10.2%	11.7%	-1.5ppts
East Midlands	1,362	£17.78	£20.81	157	170	-13	11.0%	12.1%	-1.1ppts
West Midlands	1,705	£18.64	£21.89	181	195	-14	10.2%	11.6%	-1.4ppts
East	1,730	£19.41	£23.22	148	175	-27	8.2%	9.7%	-1.5ppts
London	3,651	£25.44	£31.88	310	302	+8	8.2%	8.3%	-0.1ppts
South East	2,788	£20.03	£23.68	206	236	-30	7.1%	7.8%	-0.7ppts
South West	1,645	£18.65	£21.93	143	163	-20	8.4%	9.7%	-1.3ppts
Wales	889	£18.18	£20.77	93	88	+5	10.1%	9.7%	+0.4ppts
Scotland	1,711	£20.26	£23.53	117	118	-1	6.6%	6.5%	+0.1ppts
Northern Ireland	787	£17.93	£21.03	91	101	-10	10.9%	12.9%	-2.0ppts
United Kingdom	20,807	£19.74	£23.89	1,912	2,067	-155	8.8%	9.6%	-0.8ppts
Part-time employees									
North East	302	£13.39	£16.89	113	107	+6	36.6%	37.9%	-1.3ppts
North West	877	£13.75	£17.93	271	273	-2	30.2%	34.9%	-4.7ppts
Yorkshire and the Humber	666	£13.72	£18.38	218	218	0	32.0%	34.9%	-2.9ppts
East Midlands	581	£13.68	£17.02	191	200	-9	32.1%	35.6%	-3.5ppts
West Midlands	644	£13.65	£17.70	224	228	-4	33.6%	36.1%	-2.5ppts
East	778	£14.00	£18.07	222	226	-4	28.1%	28.7%	-0.6ppts
London	955	£15.90	£23.37	326	359	-33	32.8%	37.5%	-4.7ppts
South East	1,073	£14.18	£17.95	284	290	-6	25.9%	27.2%	-1.3ppts
South West	746	£14.18	£18.38	208	212	-4	27.2%	29.3%	-2.1ppts
Wales	399	£14.00	£17.84	126	116	+10	30.7%	31.0%	-0.3ppts
Scotland	731	£14.70	£18.46	169	175	-6	22.7%	23.8%	-1.1ppts
Northern Ireland	332	£13.42	£16.69	112	122	-10	33.0%	38.0%	-5.0ppts
United Kingdom	8,083	£14.11	£18.53	2,464	2,525	-61	29.7%	32.2%	-2.5ppts

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Table 4: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, by region/nation, gender and hours: April 2025 (unless otherwise stated)

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
Full-time male employees									
North East	386	£17.95	£20.91	42	42	0	10.4%	10.4%	0ppts
North West	1,292	£19.80	£23.34	115	120	-5	8.6%	9.2%	-0.6ppts
Yorkshire and the Humber	918	£18.72	£22.00	82	99	-17	8.7%	10.4%	-1.7ppts
East Midlands	810	£18.50	£21.57	82	85	-3	9.7%	10.1%	-0.4ppts
West Midlands	1,028	£19.41	£22.97	97	101	-4	9.1%	10.1%	-1.0ppts
East	1,039	£20.08	£24.33	81	90	-9	7.5%	8.3%	-0.8ppts
London	2,018	£26.89	£34.35	164	147	+17	7.9%	7.5%	+0.4ppts
South East	1,638	£21.04	£24.88	108	107	+1	6.4%	6.2%	+0.2ppts
South West	982	£19.40	£22.94	74	86	-12	7.3%	8.6%	-1.3ppts
Wales	504	£18.31	£21.21	51	51	0	9.7%	10.0%	-0.3ppts
Scotland	954	£20.60	£24.37	69	66	+3	7.0%	6.7%	+0.3ppts
Northern Ireland	444	£18.13	£21.68	47	49	-2	10.0%	10.9%	-0.9ppts
United Kingdom	12,014	£20.40	£25.01	1,012	1,044	-32	8.1%	8.5%	-0.4ppts
Part-time male employees									
North East	87	£13.27	£17.75	34	29	+5	39.8%	41.6%	-1.8ppts
North West	253	£13.50	£18.84	88	80	+8	34.8%	37.7%	-2.9ppts
Yorkshire and the Humber	193	£13.65	£20.96	68	58	+10	35.2%	35.8%	-0.6ppts
East Midlands	160	£13.59	£17.61	55	53	+2	34.4%	36.8%	-2.4ppts
West Midlands	181	£13.49	£18.88	67	71	-4	36.2%	41.3%	-5.1ppts
East	215	£13.74	£18.84	69	68	+1	32.4%	33.0%	-0.6ppts
London	334	£15.03	£25.11	130	130	0	37.9%	42.2%	-4.3ppts
South East	301	£13.73	£18.02	94	81	+13	31.5%	29.1%	+2.4ppts
South West	216	£14.05	£19.87	68	60	+8	31.4%	31.5%	-0.1ppts
Wales	104	£13.68	£18.74	36	35	+1	34.6%	36.8%	-2.2ppts
Scotland	183	£13.87	£17.65	53	51	+2	29.4%	29.0%	+0.4ppts
Northern Ireland	87	£12.96	£16.22	38	36	+2	44.7%	40.6%	+4.1ppts
United Kingdom	2,314	£13.85	£19.60	801	751	+50	34.5%	35.8%	-1.3ppts

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
Full-time female employees									
North East	290	£16.61	£19.39	37	40	-3	11.9%	13.4%	-1.5ppts
North West	998	£18.23	£20.93	105	120	-15	10.0%	12.3%	-2.3ppts
Yorkshire and the Humber	656	£17.11	£19.90	84	96	-12	12.2%	13.5%	-1.3ppts
East Midlands	552	£16.77	£19.62	75	85	-10	12.9%	15.2%	-2.3ppts
West Midlands	676	£17.33	£20.15	84	94	-10	11.8%	13.6%	-1.8ppts
East	691	£18.54	£21.43	67	85	-18	9.2%	11.6%	-2.4ppts
London	1,633	£23.96	£28.73	147	155	-8	8.6%	9.2%	-0.6ppts
South East	1,150	£18.69	£21.87	98	129	-31	8.1%	9.9%	-1.8ppts
South West	663	£17.56	£20.37	69	78	-9	9.8%	11.3%	-1.5ppts
Wales	385	£17.93	£20.17	43	36	+7	10.5%	9.2%	+1.3ppts
Scotland	758	£19.76	£22.41	48	52	-4	6.0%	6.3%	-0.3ppts
Northern Ireland	343	£17.73	£20.13	44	53	-9	12.1%	15.4%	-3.3ppts
United Kingdom	8,793	£18.90	£22.29	900	1,023	-123	9.7%	11.1%	-1.4ppts
Part-time female employees									
North East	215	£13.47	£16.55	79	78	+1	35.3%	36.7%	-1.4ppts
North West	624	£13.90	£17.58	183	193	-10	28.4%	33.8%	-5.4ppts
Yorkshire and the Humber	473	£13.75	£17.35	150	160	-10	30.7%	34.6%	-3.9ppts
East Midlands	421	£13.74	£16.80	136	147	-11	31.3%	35.1%	-3.8ppts
West Midlands	463	£13.70	£17.26	157	156	+1	32.6%	34.2%	-1.6ppts
East	563	£14.10	£17.79	153	158	-5	26.5%	27.3%	-0.8ppts
London	621	£16.47	£22.48	196	229	-33	30.1%	35.2%	-5.1ppts
South East	772	£14.36	£17.93	190	209	-19	23.8%	26.5%	-2.7ppts
South West	530	£14.27	£17.78	140	152	-12	25.6%	28.5%	-2.9ppts
Wales	295	£14.10	£17.53	89	81	+8	29.4%	29.0%	+0.4ppts
Scotland	548	£15.03	£18.72	115	124	-9	20.6%	22.2%	-1.6ppts
Northern Ireland	245	£13.57	£16.85	74	86	-12	29.0%	37.0%	-8.0ppts
United Kingdom	5,769	£14.25	£18.13	1,663	1,774	-111	27.9%	30.9%	-3.0ppts

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Table 5: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, over time, by regions and nations

Number of employee jobs paid below the Living Wage (000s), by region														
	April 2012	April 2013	April 2014	April 2015	April 2016	April 2017	April 2018	April 2019	April 2020	April 2021	April 2022	April 2023	April 2024	April 2025
North East	202	233	228	252	255	249	263	227	202	187	161	167	190	191
North West	545	595	652	717	710	689	715	626	588	538	380	416	514	491
Yorkshire and the Humber	438	468	506	544	563	546	564	487	481	409	304	327	414	385
East Midlands	378	408	443	507	511	468	509	430	414	379	258	308	370	348
West Midlands	456	480	549	583	580	570	573	486	472	436	323	341	423	405
East	444	457	522	566	574	528	549	470	463	391	295	303	400	370
London	572	636	727	798	802	814	871	838	790	697	584	564	661	637
South East	515	576	621	667	686	695	712	603	678	531	384	408	526	490
South West	435	460	491	543	532	501	532	479	480	423	267	295	375	351
Wales	245	253	277	300	286	289	305	268	263	220	149	169	203	219
Scotland	390	404	422	460	468	433	473	398	342	335	234	246	293	286
Northern Ireland	183	183	205	226	258	240	232	229	276	235	179	187	223	203
United Kingdom	4,805	5,151	5,644	6,162	6,224	6,023	6,297	5,540	5,448	4,779	3,518	3,730	4,592	4,376

Proportion of employee jobs paid below the Living Wage, by region														
	April 2012	April 2013	April 2014	April 2015	April 2016	April 2017	April 2018	April 2019	April 2020	April 2021	April 2022	April 2023	April 2024	April 2025
North East	14.7%	17.1%	16.8%	18.0%	19.4%	18.1%	19.1%	16.4%	18.1%	16.3%	13.0%	13.7%	14.9%	15.6%
North West	16.0%	17.3%	18.6%	19.4%	20.0%	18.8%	19.1%	16.5%	17.9%	15.5%	10.5%	11.2%	13.2%	12.8%
Yorkshire and the Humber	16.3%	17.8%	18.5%	19.0%	20.3%	19.2%	19.1%	16.2%	18.6%	13.9%	10.2%	10.8%	14.1%	13.1%
East Midlands	16.4%	17.3%	19.5%	20.5%	21.3%	19.4%	20.3%	16.8%	18.0%	15.3%	10.0%	11.4%	14.0%	13.6%
West Midlands	15.9%	17.0%	18.8%	18.8%	19.3%	19.4%	19.9%	16.7%	18.5%	15.3%	10.9%	11.6%	14.7%	13.1%
East	14.5%	14.8%	16.9%	17.1%	17.7%	16.3%	17.1%	14.4%	16.1%	12.8%	9.8%	9.7%	12.3%	11.6%
London	14.3%	14.6%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	16.4%	17.2%	16.3%	15.9%	14.3%	11.8%	11.6%	12.2%	12.2%
South East	12.0%	13.0%	14.0%	13.7%	13.9%	13.1%	13.8%	11.8%	13.2%	9.5%	7.1%	7.5%	9.4%	10.1%
South West	15.7%	16.1%	17.2%	18.0%	18.0%	16.6%	17.9%	15.7%	18.4%	14.9%	9.2%	9.3%	12.3%	11.6%
Wales	17.3%	17.7%	19.6%	19.7%	20.4%	20.1%	20.4%	17.3%	18.8%	15.0%	11.0%	11.6%	14.2%	13.9%
Scotland	13.7%	14.1%	14.3%	14.8%	15.5%	14.5%	16.1%	13.9%	13.7%	12.6%	8.0%	8.8%	10.0%	10.5%
Northern Ireland	22.0%	22.4%	24.4%	22.6%	25.8%	24.2%	24.9%	21.3%	24.9%	18.6%	12.5%	13.5%	15.8%	15.4%
United Kingdom	15.1%	15.9%	17.3%	17.6%	18.1%	17.2%	17.9%	15.6%	16.9%	13.9%	10.0%	10.5%	12.5%	12.3%

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. The number and proportion of jobs paid below the Living Wage has been published by the ONS for 2015 onwards; figures for 2012-2014 are estimated from published ONS tables by the Living Wage Foundation. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Table 6: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, over time, by gender and hours.

Number of employee jobs paid below the Living Wage (000s), by gender and hours: UK														
	April 2012	April 2013	April 2014	April 2015	April 2016	April 2017	April 2018	April 2019	April 2020	April 2021	April 2022	April 2023	April 2024	April 2025
All employees	4,805	5,151	5,644	6,162	6,224	6,023	6,297	5,540	5,448	4,779	3,518	3,730	4,592	4,376
Men	1,852	1,958	2,184	2,367	2,430	2,341	2,474	2,140	2,257	1,927	1,433	1,494	1,795	1,813
Women	2,961	3,181	3,426	3,795	3,795	3,682	3,823	3,400	3,191	2,852	2,086	2,236	2,797	2,563
Full-time employees	2,028	2,240	2,570	2,805	2,939	2,807	2,923	2,582	2,728	2,236	1,482	1,600	2,067	1,912
Part-time employees	2,809	2,928	3,096	3,357	3,285	3,216	3,374	2,958	2,720	2,543	2,036	2,130	2,525	2,464
Full-time male employees	1,064	1,164	1,346	1,445	1,534	1,452	1,528	1,313	1,482	1,160	779	836	1,044	1,012
Part-time male employees	787	809	876	921	895	889	946	827	775	767	653	657	751	801
Full-time female employees	946	1,067	1,205	1,359	1,405	1,355	1,395	1,269	1,246	1,076	703	764	1,023	900
Part-time female employees	2,017	2,121	2,220	2,436	2,389	2,327	2,428	2,131	1,945	1,776	1,383	1,473	1,774	1,663

Proportion of employee jobs paid below the Living Wage, by gender and hours: UK														
	April 2012	April 2013	April 2014	April 2015	April 2016	April 2017	April 2018	April 2019	April 2020	April 2021	April 2022	April 2023	April 2024	April 2025
All employees	15.7%	16.1%	17.2%	18.0%	18.0%	16.6%	17.9%	15.7%	18.4%	14.9%	9.2%	9.3%	12.3%	11.6%
Men	26.7%	28.6%	29.6%	29.7%	29.4%	27.9%	28.8%	24.6%	24.7%	21.1%	13.7%	14.8%	18.8%	16.7%
Women	12.2%	13.0%	14.0%	14.4%	15.0%	14.0%	14.7%	13.0%	15.7%	12.1%	6.6%	7.0%	9.7%	8.4%
Full-time employees	40.3%	41.6%	43.1%	44.0%	42.6%	40.2%	41.7%	35.2%	33.9%	31.1%	22.7%	23.8%	29.3%	27.2%
Part-time employees	10.2%	10.6%	11.9%	12.2%	12.9%	11.5%	12.4%	11.0%	14.5%	10.9%	5.8%	6.2%	8.6%	7.3%
Full-time male employees	43.9%	43.9%	45.9%	50.3%	46.4%	45.1%	47.3%	39.7%	39.2%	36.7%	27.3%	25.9%	31.5%	31.4%
Part-time male employees	14.7%	16.4%	18.0%	17.9%	18.2%	18.0%	18.3%	16.0%	17.8%	14.0%	7.8%	8.3%	11.3%	9.8%
Full-time female employees	38.4%	41.1%	41.6%	42.1%	41.5%	38.7%	40.0%	33.8%	32.1%	29.3%	21.1%	23.0%	28.5%	25.6%
Part-time female employees	17.9%	22.2%	20.6%	24.6%	28.4%	27.6%	29.8%	26.0%	23.6%	18.7%	16.1%	14.8%	20.3%	19.4%

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. The number and proportion of jobs paid below the Living Wage has been published by the ONS for 2015 onwards; figures for 2012-2014 are estimated from published ONS tables by the Living Wage Foundation. See methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Table 7: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage in the top 25 Local Authorities with the highest proportion of jobs paid below the Living Wage: April 2025 (unless otherwise stated, in percentage order)

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
Redbridge	64	£15.93	£19.86	23	17	+6	34.5%	32.7%	+1.8ppts
Barking and Dagenham	44	£17.35	£20.67	15	12	+3	31.2%	29.3%	+1.9ppts
Haringey	49	£17.22	£21.03	15	15	-	29.7%	28.5%	+1.2ppts
Harrow	49	£17.37	£22.92	15	16	-1	29.7%	29.6%	+0.1ppts
Staffordshire Moorlands	26	£14.16	£17.48	8	8	-	29.2%	28.7%	+0.5ppts
Bexley	63	£16.20	£20.94	19	20	-1	29.0%	31.9%	-2.9ppts
Boston	25	£14.63	£18.08	7	8	-1	28.9%	25.6%	+3.3ppts
Merthyr Tydfil / Merthyr Tudful	23	£14.88	£19.70	7	4	+3	28.9%	15.6%	+13.3ppts
Lichfield	54	£14.69	£17.64	16	9	+7	28.8%	21.1%	+7.7ppts
Waltham Forest	41	£16.44	£22.00	12	12	-	28.5%	28.0%	+0.5ppts
Hartlepool UA	26	£14.85	£17.90	7	6	+1	27.3%	23.5%	+3.8ppts
North Norfolk	28	£13.93	£17.30	8	6	+2	27.0%	23.2%	+3.8ppts
East Lindsey	39	£14.36	£17.52	11	11	-	26.9%	27.8%	-0.9ppts
Tendring	36	£14.21	£19.58	10	9	+1	26.9%	27.4%	-0.5ppts
Causeway Coast and Glens	60	£14.76	£17.58	17	17	-	26.0%	29.2%	-3.2ppts
Maldon	17	£14.46	£19.14	4	4	+1	25.7%	20.9%	+4.8ppts
Enfield	90	£17.93	£21.62	24	24	-	25.2%	29.8%	-4.6ppts
Ealing	92	£18.59	£21.99	24	24	-	25.0%	25.4%	-0.4ppts
Gedling	25	£14.97	£19.03	7	6	+1	24.9%	23.7%	+1.2ppts
Sutton	57	£17.42	£21.31	15	14	+1	24.9%	23.2%	+1.7ppts
Brent	87	£17.54	£21.83	22	23	-1	24.7%	25.1%	-0.4ppts
Merton	57	£18.00	£22.04	14	9	+5	24.5%	14.6%	+9.9ppts
Gwynedd / Gwynedd	54	£15.50	£18.73	14	9	+5	24.5%	18.8%	+5.7ppts
Rochford	19	£16.68	£20.46	5	5	-	24.4%	21.3%	+3.1ppts
Babergh	28	£14.85	£17.72	7	6	+1	24.4%	21.1%	+3.3ppts

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. Data refers to jobs in workplaces located in the local authority, not employees who live in the local authority. See the methodology section for further details.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Table 8: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, by industry (one-digit SIC): April 2025 (unless otherwise stated).

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	168	£14.47	£16.47	38	39	-1	22.7%	25.2%	-2.4ppts
Mining and quarrying	41	£24.79	£28.84	-	-	-	<10%	-	-
Manufacturing	2,416	£18.75	£22.25	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Electricity and gas	113	£26.84	£29.94	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Water supply and sewerage	227	£18.23	£20.79	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Construction	1,052	£19.19	£22.92	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Wholesale and retail	3,706	£14.15	£18.79	1,075	1,070	+4	29.0%	29.9%	-0.9ppts
Transportation and storage	1,197	£17.54	£21.93	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Accommodation and food services	1,431	£12.76	£15.12	759	788	-29	53.1%	53.8%	-0.7ppts
Information and communication	1,213	£25.73	£30.69	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Financial and insurance activities	1,101	£28.87	£38.73	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Real estate activities	455	£18.04	£22.30	51	50	+1	11.2%	12.9%	-1.8ppts
Professional, scientific and technical	2,334	£22.65	£28.73	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Administrative and support services	1,609	£15.68	£20.97	362	387	-24	22.5%	24.4%	-1.9ppts
Public administration and defence	1,753	£20.77	£22.84	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Education	3,965	£20.26	£23.36	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Human health and social work	4,897	£17.99	£21.47	637	681	-44	13.0%	14.7%	-1.7ppts
Arts, entertainment and recreation	594	£14.57	£21.66	173	178	-5	29.2%	29.5%	-0.3ppts
Other service activities	513	£15.64	£20.37	126	117	+8	24.5%	24.1%	+0.4ppts
All industries	28,890	£17.96	£23.06	4,376	4,592	-216	14.6%	15.7%	-1.1ppts

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details. For missing data points, where the scale of low pay is '<10%', this indicates that we cannot provide a more precise estimate beyond confirming that it is less than 10%.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Table 9: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, by occupation (two-digit SOC): April 2025 (unless otherwise stated), UK

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
Corporate managers and directors	2,497	£30.66	£38.95	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Other managers and proprietors (e.g. of bars and service venues)	666	£19.39	£22.83	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Science, research, engineering and technology professionals	1,962	£26.64	£29.18	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Health professionals (e.g. doctors and nurses)	2,126	£24.32	£27.85	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Teaching and educational professionals (e.g. teachers and lecturers)	1,645	£28.74	£29.72	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Business, media and public service professionals (e.g. lawyers, journalists)	2,372	£25.39	£29.06	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Science and technology associate professionals (e.g. IT technicians)	805	£18.11	£19.86	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Health and social care associate professionals (e.g. paramedics, youth workers)	691	£15.83	£16.77	90	93	-4	13.0%	13.6%	-0.6ppts
Protective service occupations (e.g. police and prison officers)	407	£23.11	£22.52	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Culture, media and sports occupations (e.g. designers, fitness instructors)	284	£17.29	£25.04	40	49	-9	14.1%	17.1%	-3.0ppts
Business and public service associate professionals (e.g. paralegals, brokers)	2,212	£20.28	£24.48	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Administrative occupations (e.g. bank clerks, office managers)	2,452	£15.53	£17.34	361	345	+16	14.7%	14.9%	-0.2ppts
Secretarial and related occupations	514	£13.87	£15.95	148	157	-9	28.8%	31.7%	-2.9ppts
Skilled agricultural and related trades (e.g. farmers)	116	£14.14	£15.07	28	25	+3	24.2%	24.1%	+0.1ppts
Skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades (e.g. electricians)	827	£18.74	£19.93	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Skilled construction and building trades (e.g. builders, decorators)	299	£17.17	£18.42	35	33	+3	11.7%	10.8%	+0.9ppts
Textiles, printing and other skilled trades (e.g. tailors)	399	£14.07	£15.29	111	130	-19	27.8%	30.8%	-2.9ppts

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
Caring personal service occupations (e.g. childminders, care workers)	2,121	£14.00	£14.93	501	553	-51	23.6%	27.0%	-3.4ppts
Leisure, travel and related personal service occupations (e.g. hairdressers, caretakers)	413	£13.79	£15.87	136	143	-7	33.0%	36.9%	-3.8ppts
Community and civil enforcement occupations	27	£16.76	£16.82	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sales occupations (e.g. retail assistants)	1,285	£12.72	£13.99	653	683	-30	50.9%	53.4%	-2.6ppts
Customer service occupations (e.g. call centre workers)	463	£13.95	£15.66	115	117	-2	24.9%	26.6%	-1.7ppts
Process, plant and machine operatives (e.g. factory workers)	669	£14.75	£16.22	121	124	-2	18.1%	19.0%	-0.9ppts
Transport and mobile machine drivers and operatives (e.g. bus, train and delivery drivers)	756	£15.50	£17.35	128	127	+1	17.0%	17.6%	-0.6ppts
Elementary trades and related occupations (e.g. forestry workers)	266	£13.57	£14.58	90	94	-4	33.7%	36.7%	-3.0ppts
Elementary administration and service occupations (e.g. bar and waiting staff, cleaners)	2,616	£12.91	£14.06	-	-	-	-	-	-
All occupations	28,890	£17.96	£23.06	4,376	4,592	-216	14.6%	15.7%	-1.1ppts

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details. For missing data points, where the scale of low pay is '<10%', this indicates that we cannot provide a more precise estimate beyond confirming that it is less than 10%.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Table 10: Employee jobs paid below the real Living Wage, by age group: April 2025 (unless otherwise stated), UK

	Employee jobs (000s)	Median wage	Mean wage	Number of employee jobs below Living Wage (000s)			Proportion of employee jobs below Living Wage		
				April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change	April 2025	April 2024	2024-25 change
Age 18-21	1,358	£12.59	£13.60	775	689	+86	57.0%	58.2%	-1.2ppts
Age 22-29	4,589	£15.88	£18.51	771	852	-81	16.8%	18.1%	-1.3ppts
Age 30-39	7,132	£19.70	£23.51	-	727	-	<10%	10.4%	-
Age 40-49	6,671	£20.65	£25.91	-	-	-	<10%	<10%	-
Age 50-59	5,812	£19.31	£25.23	611	703	-92	10.5%	12.0%	-1.5ppts
Age 60+	3,051	£16.45	£21.91	526	526	-	17.2%	18.4%	-1.1ppts
All age groups (inc. 16-17 year olds)	28,890	£17.96	£23.06	4,376	4,592	-216	14.6%	15.7%	-1.1ppts

Notes: Data for April 2025 is provisional. See methodology section for further details. For missing data points, where the scale of low pay is '<10%', this indicates that we cannot provide a more precise estimate beyond confirming that it is less than 10%.

Source: Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

05 Methodology

Calculating the scale of low pay

The analysis in this report on the scale of low pay, and how it is dispersed across demographic and economic factors is based on the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).²⁴ This survey is carried out in April each year and is the most comprehensive source of information on the structure and distribution of hours and earnings among employees in the UK. The ASHE is based on a one per cent sample of employee jobs taken from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) records. Consequently, individuals with more than one job may appear in the sample more than once. Information on earnings and paid hours worked is obtained from employers and treated confidentially. The ASHE does not include data on the self-employed or employees not paid during the reference period. The following definitions apply to the analysis throughout this report:

- ☼ Data is available up to April 2025; however, estimates for 2025 are provisional and will be subject to revisions in 2026.
- ☼ Following the ONS convention, we focus on gross hourly pay for all employees whose pay was not affected by absence (with a slightly adjusted definition for 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and furlough scheme).
- ☼ We use a workplace-based (as opposed to residence-based) definition when assigning regional and other geographical classifications. That is, data for each geographical area relates to the employee jobs at workplaces located in that area, not the employees who live in that area. This approach is necessary for accurately identifying the jobs subject to the London and UK real Living Wage rates.
- ☼ Full-time jobs refer to jobs in which employees work more than 30 paid hours per week (or 25 or more for the teaching professions).
- ☼ Data for industries are classified according to the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) 2007 coding frame.²⁵
- ☼ Data for occupations before 2021 are classified according to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2010 coding frame.²⁶ Data for occupations from 2021 onward are classified according to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2020 coding frame.²⁷

Data limitations

Despite ASHE being the most reliable and authoritative dataset on employee hourly earnings in the UK, some caution must be applied when interpreting our findings. The ASHE faced some sampling attrition after the Covid-19 pandemic,²⁸ with much lower sample sizes compared to previous years: 142,000 in 2021, 148,000 in 2022, and 164,000 in 2023²⁹. However by 2025 the number of observations in the ASHE sample was 174,000 – the highest it has been since 2019 and almost in line with number of observations typically recorded pre-pandemic (usually around 180,000).³⁰

Inspection of the ASHE sample and the employer non-response weighting used in the ASHE dataset has also found that both smaller firms (particularly those with less than 10 employees) and private sector firms are under-represented within the ASHE sample, even after weighting is applied.^{31, 32} This has implications for reported pay levels, particularly for the lower end of the pay distribution, with both the public sector and larger organisations typically having lower incidences of low paid jobs.

Indeed, the Wage Employment Dynamics' (WED) adjusted ASHE weight which boosted the representation of small, young, private sector firms, saw the reported median hourly pay fall by 4.0 percentage points.³³ This has prompted calls for a new official review of ASHE's methodology to improve its accuracy and reliability.

Additionally, over recent years, there has been growing discord between ASHE and other UK earnings datasets, particularly regarding pay growth distribution. For example, Resolution Foundation analysis highlights discrepancy between earnings growth according to ASHE and Real Time Information Pay As You Earn (RTI-PAYE) data.³⁴ According to the ASHE dataset, lower earners in the UK saw higher nominal growth in earnings between April 2022 and April 2023 than those further up the income distribution, for both hourly and weekly pay. However, the data from HMRC contradicts this slightly, showing a much flatter earnings growth across the pay distribution over the same period. Some level of discrepancy is to be expected, particularly as the RTI-PAYE data covers monthly earnings while ASHE covers hourly/ weekly earnings. That being said, in previous years (particularly before Covid-19), there was a much higher degree of congruence between these two datasets. In its efforts to improve the quality of ASHE estimates, the ONS identified that ASHE did not accurately estimate the number of high earners in each profession in recent years. This suggests it would have been understating both the earnings of the highest earners and underestimating mean and median wages.

The ONS adjusted their methods to address this for the 2023 revised and 2024 provisional data by focusing on better processing survey returns for high earners. More high earners are now being counted which has grown the achieved sample size and improved the quality of ASHE data. This means the revised 2023 data had larger-than-usual revisions from the previous year's provisional data and that this data is not directly comparable to earlier years. However, revisions to the 2023 data did not significantly impact our estimates of low pay which suggests we can remain confident in our findings.

Despite these considerations, ASHE remains the most comprehensive dataset in the UK when it comes to employee earnings and is a requisite for studying hourly pay. The ASHE is the only dataset which collects hourly pay data based on firms' Pay As You Earn (PAYE) records. As such, recordings within the ASHE dataset are not reliant upon respondent recollection of pay amounts, nor are they subject to the derivation issues that are present within worker surveys like the Labour Force Survey (LFS). We therefore continue to use the ASHE to analyse the incidence and distribution of below real Living Wage jobs in the UK.

Endnotes

- 1 For example, see: IHS Markit (2019), Living Wage Research for KPMG: 2019 Report.
- 2 Office for National Statistics. (n.d.). CPI INDEX 00: ALL items 2015=100 [Data set]. Available at: ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/timeseries/d7bt/mm23 (Accessed January 2026).
- 3 Based on data collected since 2012.
- 4 The government's minimum wage (National Living Wage) was extended to include workers aged 21 and above in April 2024. Before this, it only applied to those aged 23 and above. In 2025, the Government amended the Low Pay Commission's remit to recommend a National Living Wage rate which takes into account the cost of living, alongside effects on employment and developments in the wider economy.. As such, while the National Living Wage will now consider the cost of living alongside other factors, the real Living Wage remains the only wage rate that is based solely on living costs.
- 5 Powell, A., Francis-Devine, B. & Clark, H. (2022) Coronavirus: Impact on the labour market. House of Commons Library. Available at: commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8898
- 6 Powell, A. (2024) Economic update: Inactivity due to illness reaches record. House of Commons Library. Available at: commonslibrary.parliament.uk/economic-update-inactivity-due-to-illness-reaches-record
- 7 ONS (2025) (2026) 'LFS: Econ. inactivity reasons: Long term sick: UK: 16–64: 000s: SA (Time series LF69)', Labour Market Statistics time series (LMS) dataset, 20 January. Available at: ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/economicinactivity/timeseries/lf69/lms
- 8 ONS (2022) Consumer price inflation, UK: October 2022. Available at: ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/october2022
- 9 Cominetti, N. & Slaughter, H.(2024) Job done?: Assessing the labour market since 2010, Resolution Foundation. Available at: resolutionfoundation.org/publications/job-done
- 10 Francis-Devine, B. & Powell, A. (2025) UK labour market statistics, House of Commons Library. Available at: commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9366
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The Living Wage Foundation is the organisation at the heart of the movement of thousands of leading employers driving up employment standards. Through our Living Wage, Living Hours and Living Pension accreditations, we champion and celebrate employers who make an ongoing commitment to do the right thing by their employees. The Living Wage Foundation is part of Citizens UK, the UK's biggest, most diverse and effective people powered alliance.



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