

Article

UK and non-UK people in the labour market: November 2019

Estimates of labour market activity by nationality and country of birth.



Contact:
Bob Watson
Labour.Supply@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)1633 455070

Release date:
12 November 2019

Next release:
18 February 2020

Table of contents

1. [Other pages in this release](#)
2. [Main points for July to September 2019](#)
3. [Employment](#)
4. [Unemployment](#)
5. [Economic inactivity](#)
6. [Employment data](#)
7. [Glossary](#)
8. [Measuring the data](#)
9. [Strengths and limitations](#)
10. [Related links](#)

1 . Other pages in this release

Other commentary from the latest labour market data can be found on the following pages:

- [Labour market overview](#)

2 . Main points for July to September 2019

- There were an estimated 29.21 million UK nationals working in the UK, 182,000 more than a year earlier. The level is at a record high.
- There were an estimated 2.24 million EU nationals working in the UK, 6,000 more than a year earlier.
- There were an estimated 1.35 million non-EU nationals working in the UK, 116,000 more than a year earlier. The level is at a record high.

The data in this article come from the Labour Force Survey, a survey of households. It is not practical to survey every household each quarter, so these statistics are estimates based on a large sample.

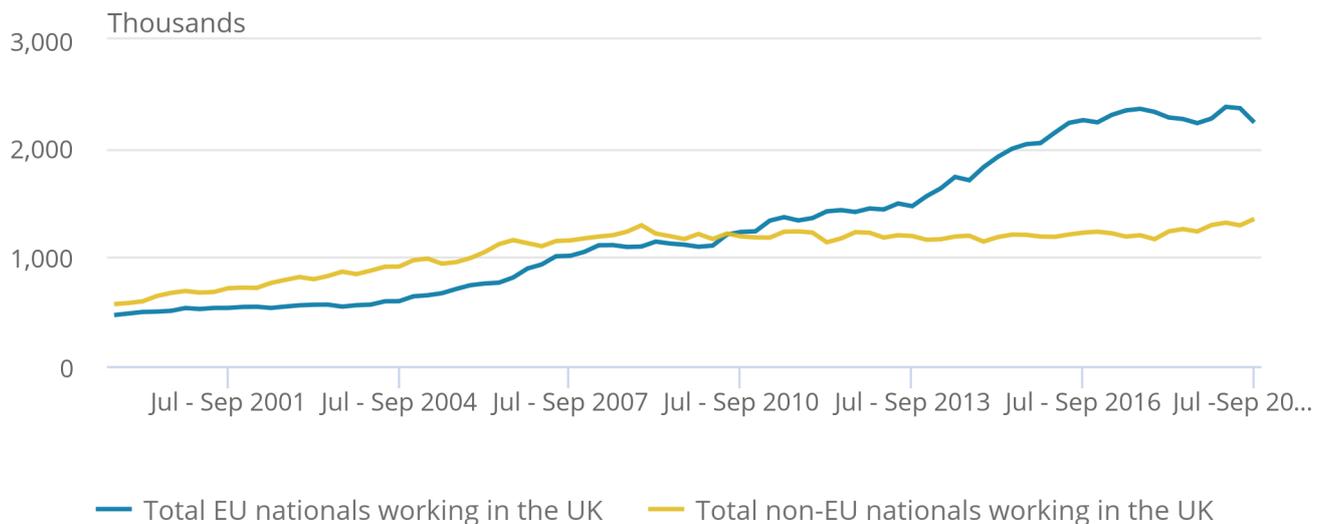
3 . Employment

Figure 1: The number of EU nationals working in the UK has generally increased over the last 20 years but has been broadly flat for the last three years

Non-UK nationals (aged 16 years and over) working in the UK, not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019

Figure 1: The number of EU nationals working in the UK has generally increased over the last 20 years but has been broadly flat for the last three years

Non-UK nationals (aged 16 years and over) working in the UK, not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. The EU series are based on the current membership of the EU; for example, Poland is included in the EU series throughout the entire time series, although Poland did not join the EU until 2004.

[Employment](#) measures the number of people aged 16 years and over in paid work. The employment rate is the proportion of people aged from 16 to 64 years who are in paid work.

Since January to March 2009, the number of non-UK nationals from outside the EU working in the UK has been broadly flat; however there has been a slight increase since early 2018, with the level reaching a record high of 1.35 million in July to September 2019.

In contrast, the number of non-UK nationals from the EU working in the UK has generally increased, reflecting the admission of Poland and other East European countries to the EU in 2004. However, the series has been broadly flat since the latter half of 2016.

Looking at employment by nationality, between July to September 2018 and July to September 2019, the estimated number of:

- UK nationals working in the UK increased by 182,000 to a record high of 29.21 million
- non-UK nationals from the EU working in the UK increased by 6,000 to 2.24 million
- non-UK nationals from outside the EU working in the UK increased by 116,000 to a record high of 1.35 million

Looking at how the figures have changed since the EU referendum (which took place on 23 June 2016), between July to September 2016 and July to September 2019:

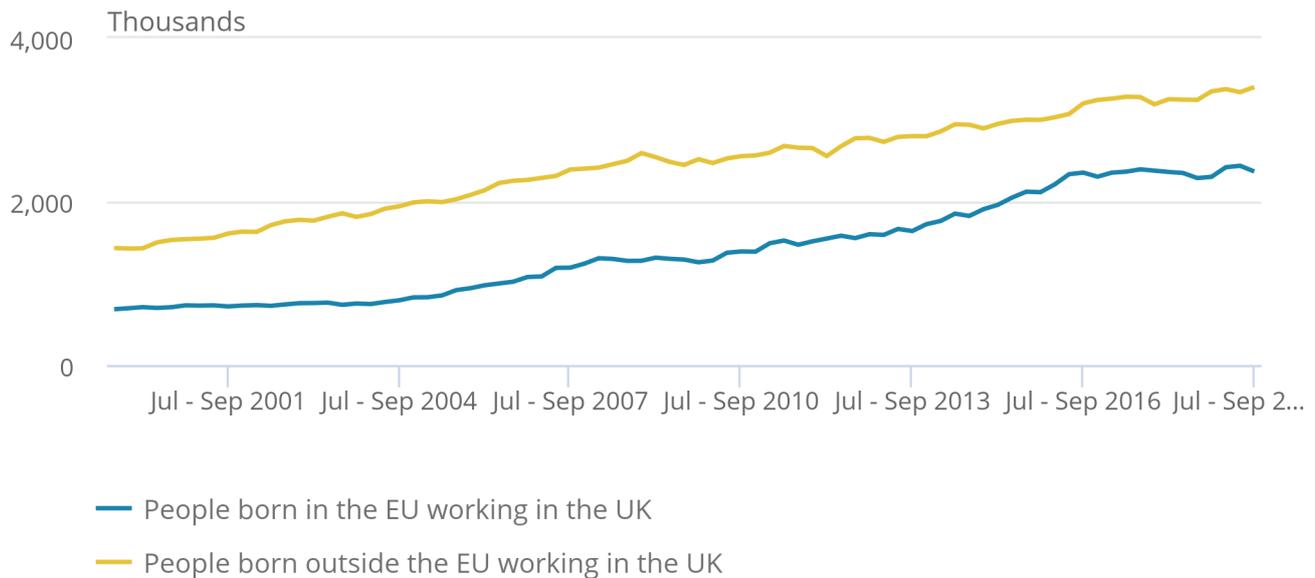
- UK nationals working in the UK increased by 807,000
- non-UK nationals from the EU working in the UK decreased by 21,000
- non-UK nationals from outside the EU working in the UK increased by 126,000

Figure 2: The number of non-UK-born people working in the UK has generally increased over the last 20 years

Non-UK-born people (aged 16 years and over) working in the UK, not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019

Figure 2: The number of non-UK-born people working in the UK has generally increased over the last 20 years

Non-UK-born people (aged 16 years and over) working in the UK, not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. The EU series are based on the current membership of the EU; for example, Poland is included in the EU series throughout the entire time series, although Poland did not join the EU until 2004.

As shown in Figure 2, the number of people working in the UK who were born in both EU countries and outside the EU has generally increased over the last 20 years. This contrasts with the figures for non-UK nationals, shown in Figure 1, as the number of non-EU nationals working in the UK has been broadly flat since 2009 (apart from a slight pickup in the last couple of years). This indicates that the increase in non-EU-born people working in the UK has been largely because there are more non-EU-born workers with British nationality.

For July to September 2019, there were 5.77 million people born abroad working in the UK, but the number of non-UK nationals working in the UK was much lower, at 3.59 million. This is because the estimates for people born abroad working in the UK include many UK nationals.

Looking at the employment estimates by country of birth between July to September 2018 and July to September 2019, the number of:

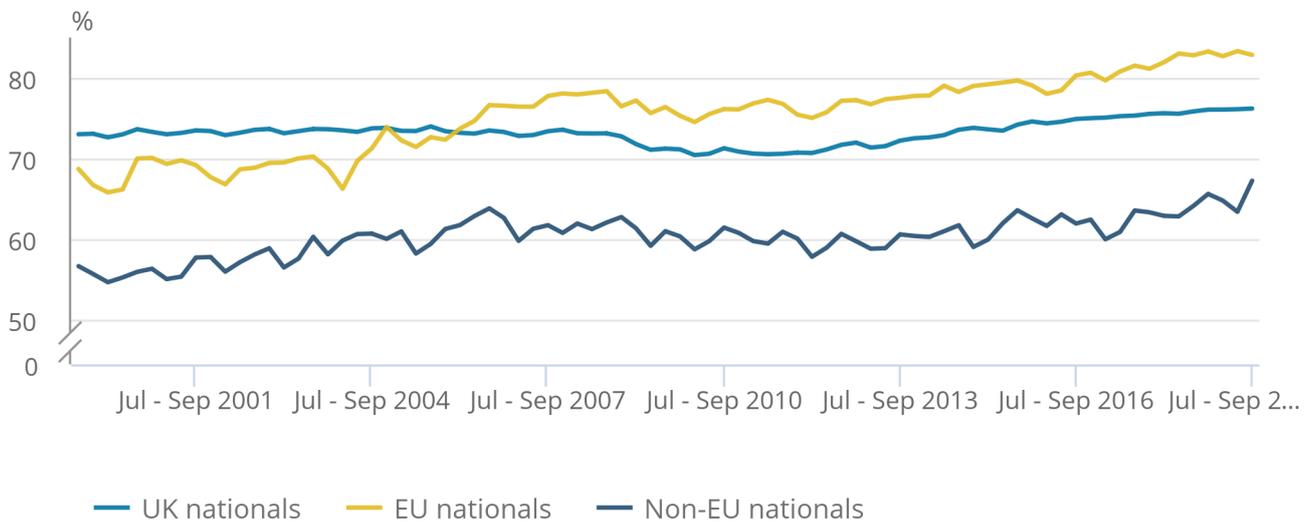
- UK-born people working in the UK increased by 65,000 to a record high of 27.03 million
- people born in the EU working in the UK increased by 81,000 to 2.37 million
- people born outside the EU working in the UK increased by 157,000 to a record high of 3.40 million

Figure 3: Since the mid 2000s the employment rate for EU nationals has been higher than that for UK nationals

Employment rates for UK and non-UK nationals (aged 16 to 64 years), not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019

Figure 3: Since the mid 2000s the employment rate for EU nationals has been higher than that for UK nationals

Employment rates for UK and non-UK nationals (aged 16 to 64 years), not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. The EU series are based on the current membership of the EU; for example Poland is included in the EU series throughout the entire time series, although Poland did not join the EU until 2004.

As shown in Figure 3, the employment rate for non-UK nationals from the EU has been higher than that for UK nationals since the mid 2000s, reflecting higher employment rates (and correspondingly low economic inactivity rates) for migrants from East European countries within the EU.

The estimated employment rates for non-UK nationals from outside the EU have been consistently lower than that for UK nationals and for EU nationals, partly because of lower participation in the labour market from some population groups, for example, Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals.

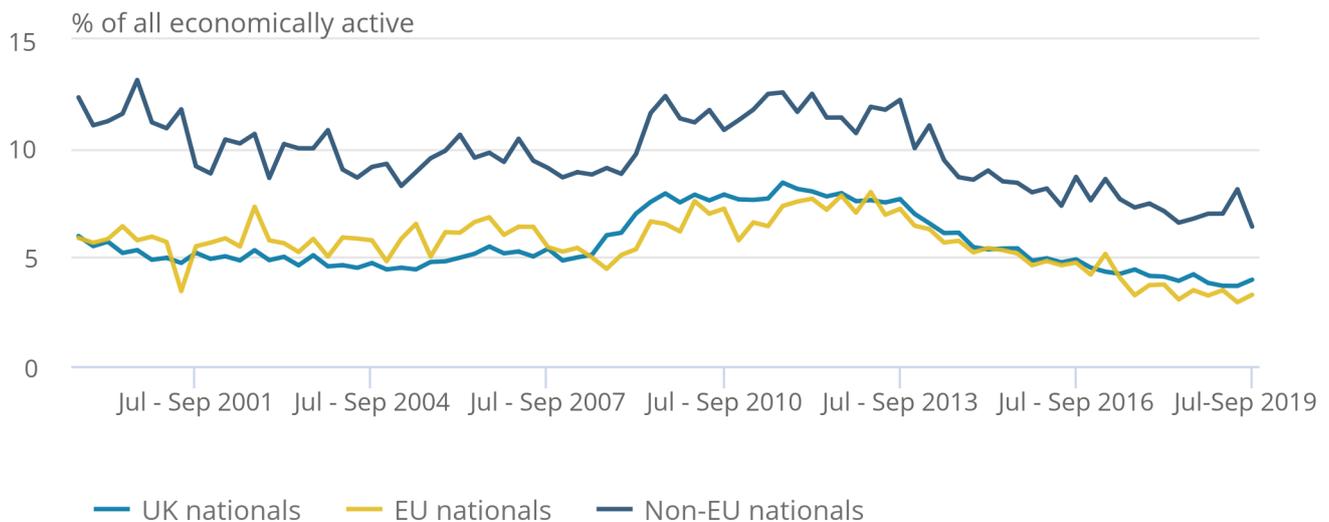
4 . Unemployment

Figure 4: The unemployment rate for non-EU nationals has been consistently higher than that for UK and EU nationals

Unemployment rates for UK and non-UK nationals (aged 16 years and over), not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019

Figure 4: The unemployment rate for non-EU nationals has been consistently higher than that for UK and EU nationals

Unemployment rates for UK and non-UK nationals (aged 16 years and over), not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. The EU series are based on the current membership of the EU; for example, Poland is included in the EU series throughout the entire time series, although Poland did not join the EU until 2004.

[Unemployment](#) measures people without a job who have been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and are available to start work within the next two weeks. The unemployment rate is the proportion of all employed and unemployed people (not the proportion of the total population) who are unemployed.

As shown in Figure 4, the unemployment rate for non-UK nationals from the EU has been broadly similar to that for UK nationals, but the unemployment rate for non-UK nationals from outside the EU has been consistently higher. The unemployment rates for non-UK nationals are more volatile than the rates for UK nationals because of smaller sample sizes resulting in sampling variability issues, as explained in the Strengths and limitations section of this article.

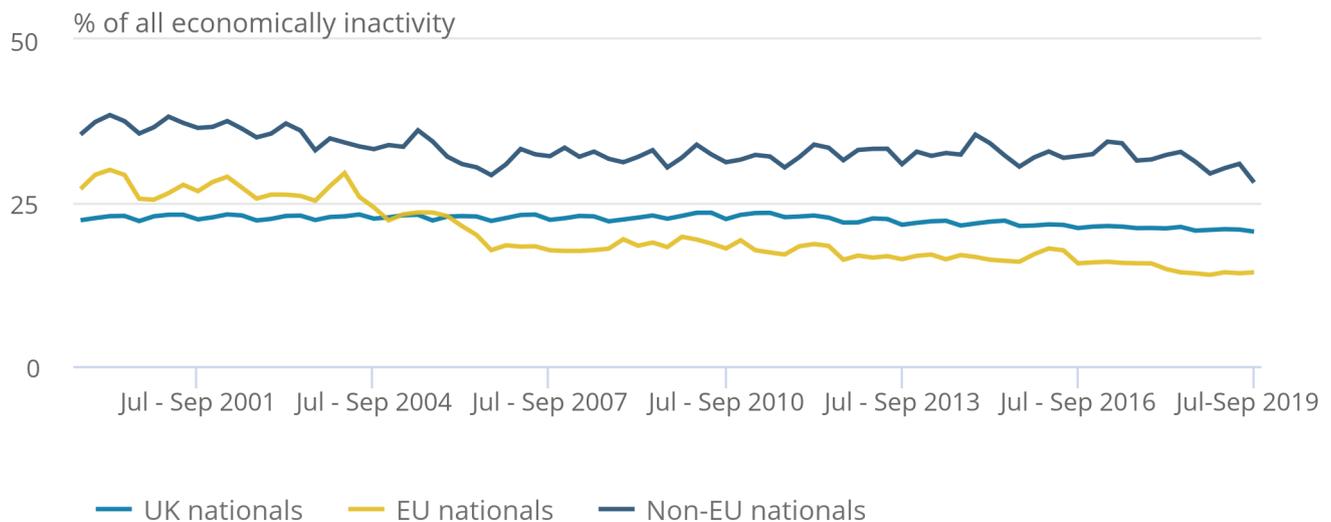
5 . Economic inactivity

Figure 5: Since the mid 2000s the economic inactivity rate for EU nationals has been lower than that for UK nationals

Economic inactivity rates (aged 16 to 64 years) for UK and non-UK nationals, not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019

Figure 5: Since the mid 2000s the economic inactivity rate for EU nationals has been lower than that for UK nationals

Economic inactivity rates (aged 16 to 64 years) for UK and non-UK nationals, not seasonally adjusted, July to September 1999 to July to September 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes:

1. The EU series are based on the current membership of the EU; for example Poland is included in the EU series throughout the entire time series, although Poland did not join the EU until 2004.

[Economic inactivity](#) measures people without a job but who are not classed as unemployed because they have not been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and/or they are unable to start work within the next two weeks. Our headline measure of economic inactivity is for those aged from 16 to 64 years.

As shown in Figure 5, the economic inactivity rate for non-UK nationals from the EU has been lower than that for UK nationals since the mid 2000s. This reflects low economic inactivity rates (and correspondingly high employment rates) among migrants from East European countries within the EU.

The economic inactivity rates for non-UK nationals from outside the EU have been consistently higher than those for UK nationals and EU nationals, partly because of lower participation in the labour market from some population groups, for example, Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals.

Note that the economic inactivity rates for non-UK nationals are more volatile than the rates for UK nationals because of smaller sample sizes, although they are less volatile than the unemployment rates shown in Figure 4. This is a result of sampling variability issues, as explained in the Strengths and limitations section of this article.

6 . Employment data

[Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by nationality and country of birth](#)

Dataset A12 | Released 12 November 2019

Estimates of labour market activity by nationality and country of birth sourced from the Labour Force Survey.

[Employment by nationality and country of birth](#)

Dataset EMP06 | Released 12 November 2019

Estimates of employment by nationality and country of birth sourced from the Labour Force Survey. This dataset provides a more detailed country breakdown of employment than that available in Dataset A12.

7 . Glossary

Country of birth

Country of birth refers to the country that a person was born in and cannot change. However, not all non-UK-born people are foreign nationals. The numbers of non-UK-born people include British citizens who were born abroad, such as children of military personnel or other British workers stationed abroad.

Economic inactivity

People not in the labour force (also known as [economically inactive](#)) are not in employment but do not meet the internationally accepted definition of unemployment because they have not been seeking work within the last four weeks and/or they are unable to start work in the next two weeks. The economic inactivity rate is the proportion of people aged from 16 to 64 years who are not in the labour force.

Employment

[Employment](#) measures the number of people in paid work, or who had a job that they were temporarily away from (for example, because they were on holiday or off sick). This differs from the number of jobs because some people have more than one job. The employment rate is the proportion of people aged between 16 and 64 years who are in employment. A more detailed explanation is available in our [Guide to labour market statistics](#).

Nationality

Nationality refers to the nationality stated by the Labour Force Survey respondent when they were interviewed. Nationality can change over time; for example, some people come to the UK as non-UK nationals and later obtain British citizenship. Some non-UK nationals, such as children of overseas nationals, were born in the UK.

Unemployment

[Unemployment](#) measures people without a job who have been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and are available to start work within the next two weeks. The unemployment rate is not the proportion of the total population who are unemployed. It is the proportion of the economically active population (those in work plus those seeking and available to work) who are unemployed.

A more detailed [Glossary](#) is available.

8 . Measuring the data

This article relies on data collected from the [Labour Force Survey](#), the largest household survey in the UK.

The [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) report pulls together important qualitative information on the various dimensions of data quality, as well as providing a summary of the methods used to compile the output.

The [Labour Force Survey performance and quality monitoring reports](#) provide data on response rates and other quality-related issues for the Labour Force Survey.

9 . Strengths and limitations

The figures in this article come from the Labour Force Survey, which gathers information from a sample of households across the UK rather than from the whole population. The sample is designed to be as accurate as possible given practical limitations such as time and cost constraints. Results from sample surveys are always estimates, not precise figures. This can have an impact on how changes in the estimates should be interpreted, especially for short-term comparisons.

As the number of people available in the sample gets smaller, the variability of the estimates that we can make from that sample size gets larger. Estimates for small groups (for example, South African nationals working in the UK), which are based on quite small subsets of the Labour Force Survey sample, are less reliable and tend to be more volatile than for larger aggregated groups (for example, the total number of non-UK nationals in employment).

In general, changes in the numbers (and especially the rates) reported in this article between three-month periods are small and are not usually greater than the level that can be explained by sampling variability. Short-term movements in reported rates should be considered alongside longer-term patterns in the series and corresponding movements in other sources to give a fuller picture.

These statistics do not measure stocks or flows of recent migrants to the UK, because they include people resident in the UK for many years (many of whom will now be UK nationals) as well as more recent arrivals. This, along with a range of other factors, means that net changes in the number of non-UK workers in the UK cannot be directly compared with long-term net migration for non-UK nationals. Estimates of migration are published separately in the [Migration Statistics quarterly report](#).

The employment estimates in this article do not relate to “new jobs” and cannot be used to estimate the proportion of new jobs that have been filled by UK and non-UK workers. This is because changes in the employment series show net changes in the number of people in work (the number of people entering employment minus the number of people leaving employment). The number of people entering or leaving employment is much larger than the net changes. Also, the estimates of the number of people in work differ from the number of jobs because some people have more than one job.

Table 1: Sampling variability (95% confidence intervals) of UK and non-UK employment estimates from the Labour Force Survey, July to September 2019

	Age group	Estimate	Sampling variability of estimate	Sampling variability of change on year
All people in employment (000s)	16 and over	32,802	± 177	± 237
All people employment rate	16 to 64	76.0%	± 0.4	± 0.5
UK nationals in employment (000s)	16 and over	29,209	± 209	± 279
UK nationals employment rate	16 to 64	76.1%	± 0.4	± 0.6
Non UK nationals in employment (000s)	16 and over	3,589	± 131	± 177
Non UK nationals employment rate	16 to 64	75.8%	± 1.3	± 1.9
UK born people in employment (000s)	16 and over	27,028	± 216	± 287
UK born employment rate	16 to 64	76.2%	± 0.4	± 0.6
Non UK born people in employment (000s)	16 and over	5,770	± 152	± 203
Non UK born employment rate	16 to 64	75.3%	± 1.0	± 1.4

Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes

1. The sampling variability estimates shown at Tables 1 2 and 3 are for 95% confidence intervals and are calculated on data that are not seasonally adjusted. [Back to table](#)
2. This data is part of data table A11: Labour Force Survey sampling variability, which is part of the Labour market overview, UK release. [Back to table](#)

Table 2: Sampling variability (95% confidence intervals) of UK and non-UK unemployment estimates from the Labour Force Survey, July to September 2019

	Age group	Estimate	Sampling variability of estimate	Sampling variability of change on year
All unemployed people (000s)	16 and over	1,374	± 71	± 100
All people unemployment rate	16 and over	4.0%	± 0.2	± 0.3
UK nationals unemployed (000s)	16 and over	1,206	± 66	± 93
UK nationals unemployment rate	16 and over	4.0%	± 0.2	± 0.3
Non UK nationals unemployed (000s)	16 and over	168	± 27	± 40
Non UK nationals unemployment rate	16 and over	4.5%	± 0.7	± 1.0
UK born unemployed people (000s)	16 and over	1,115	± 64	± 88
UK born unemployment rate	16 and over	4.0%	± 0.2	± 0.3
Non UK born unemployed people (000s)	16 and over	259	± 32	± 50
Non UK born unemployment rate	16 and over	4.3%	± 0.5	± 0.8

Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes

1. This data is part of data table A11: Labour Force Survey sampling variability which is part of the Labour market overview, UK release. [Back to table](#)

Table 3: Sampling variability (95% confidence intervals) of UK and non-UK economic inactivity estimates from the Labour Force Survey, July to September 2019

	Age group	Estimate	Sampling variability of estimate	Sampling variability of change on year
All economically inactive people (000s)	16 to 64	8,503	± 154	± 207
All people economic inactivity rate	16 to 64	20.6%	± 0.4	± 0.5
UK nationals economically inactive (000s)	16 to 64	7,546	± 147	± 198
UK nationals economic inactivity rate	16 to 64	20.6%	± 0.4	± 0.5
Non UK nationals economically inactive (000s)	16 to 64	940	± 67	± 94
Non UK nationals economic inactivity rate	16 to 64	20.2%	± 1.2	± 1.7
UK born economically inactive people (000s)	16 to 64	6,933	± 140	± 189
UK born economic inactivity rate	16 to 64	20.5%	± 0.4	± 0.5
Non UK born economically inactive people (000s)	16 to 64	1,556	± 82	± 114
Non UK born economic inactivity rate	16 to 64	20.9%	± 0.9	± 1.3

Source: Office for National Statistics - Labour Force Survey

Notes

1. This data is part of data table A11: Labour Force Survey sampling variability which is part of the Labour market overview, UK release. [Back to table](#)

10 . Related links

[Employment in the UK](#)

Statistical Bulletin | Updated on 12 November 2019

Estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for the UK.

[Labour market economic commentary](#)

Article | Updated on 12 November 2019

Additional economic analysis of the latest UK labour market headline statistics and long-term trends.

[Migration statistics quarterly report](#)

Statistical Bulletin | Last updated on 22 August 2019

A summary of the latest long-term international migration statistics for the UK.

[Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality](#)

Statistical Bulletin | Last updated on 24 May 2019

Latest population estimates for the UK by country of birth and nationality, from the Annual Population Survey.