

Statistical bulletin

Employees in the UK: 2018

The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) is the official source of employee and employment estimates by detailed geography and industry.



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1 . Other pages in this release

Commentary on topics covered in the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) is split between three separate bulletins in 2019. This is part of our ongoing work to improve bulletins. Other commentary from the latest BRES data can be found on the following pages:

- [Employees in the UK by region: 2018](#)
- [Employees in the UK by industry: 2018](#)

2 . Main points

- The estimated number of employees in the UK increased by 229,500 (0.8%) between 2017 and 2018, from 30.3 million to 30.5 million.
- Between 2017 and 2018, the estimated number of employees increased in all regions except the North East (down 8,900, or 0.8%) and the West Midlands (down 18,200, or 0.7%); the South East showed the greatest increase in terms of the total number of employees (up 43,700, or 1.1%).
- Between 2017 and 2018, the largest increase in employees by industry has been in the professional, scientific and technical industry (up 82,100, or 3.3%); the largest decrease by industry was in the information and communication industry (down 21,200, or 1.6%).
- Between 2017 and 2018, the estimated number of private sector employees increased by 191,500 (or 0.8%); the estimated number of public sector employees increased by 38,000 (or 0.7%).

3 . Regional estimates

About the Business Register and Employment Survey

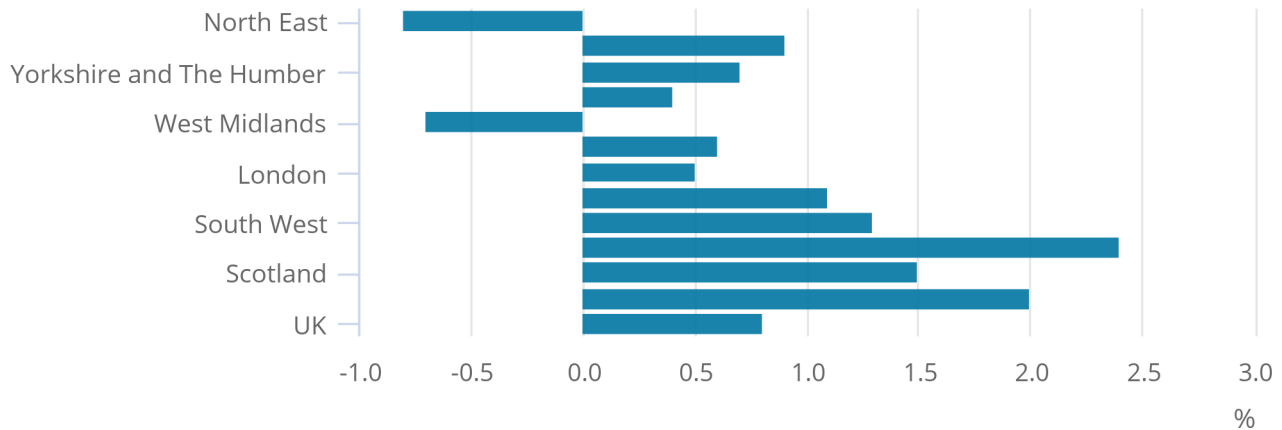
The data in this bulletin come from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). Since these estimates are based on a sample of businesses, they can be affected by sampling variability. In particular, the quality of the estimates may deteriorate for smaller geographies and industries, and this should be taken into account when making inferences about the figures.

Figure 1: Wales saw the largest percentage increase in employees between 2017 and 2018, up 2.4%

Percentage change in employees by region, 2017 to 2018, UK

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Percentage change in employees by region, 2017 to 2018, UK



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Register and Employment Survey

Of the 12 regions in the UK, 10 saw an increase in employees between 2017 and 2018.

Wales saw the largest percentage increase in employees (up 29,700, or 2.4%), followed by Northern Ireland (up 15,000, or 2.0%) and Scotland (up 37,200, or 1.5%).

Only the North East (down 8,900, or 0.8%) and the West Midlands (down 18,200, or 0.7%) saw percentage decreases in the number of employees.

Further analysis of BRES data by region is provided in: [Employees in the UK by region: provisional results 2018, revised results 2017](#)

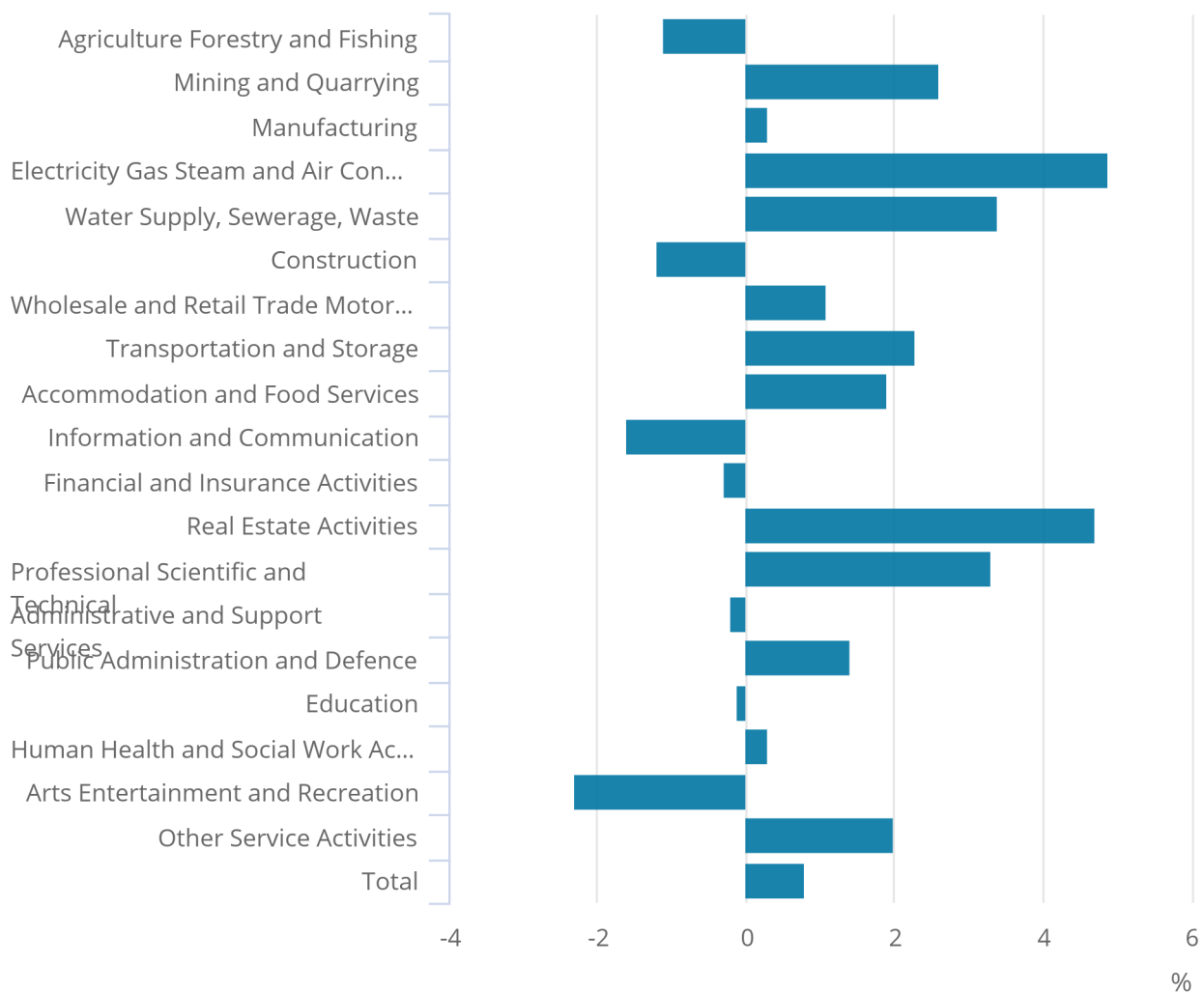
4 . Results by industry

Figure 2: The electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply industry saw the largest percentage increase in employees between 2017 and 2018, up 4.9%

Percentage change in employees by industry (section), 2017 to 2018, UK

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Percentage change in employees by industry (section), 2017 to 2018, UK



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Register and Employment Survey

The electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply industry saw the largest percentage increase in employees between 2017 and 2018 (up 6,700, or 4.9%), followed by real estate activities (up 23,400, or 4.7%).

The arts, entertainment and recreation industry showed the largest percentage decrease (down 17,900, or 2.3%).

Further analysis of BRES data by industry is provided in: [Employees in the UK by industry: provisional results 2018, revised results 2017](#)

5 . Public and private sector estimates

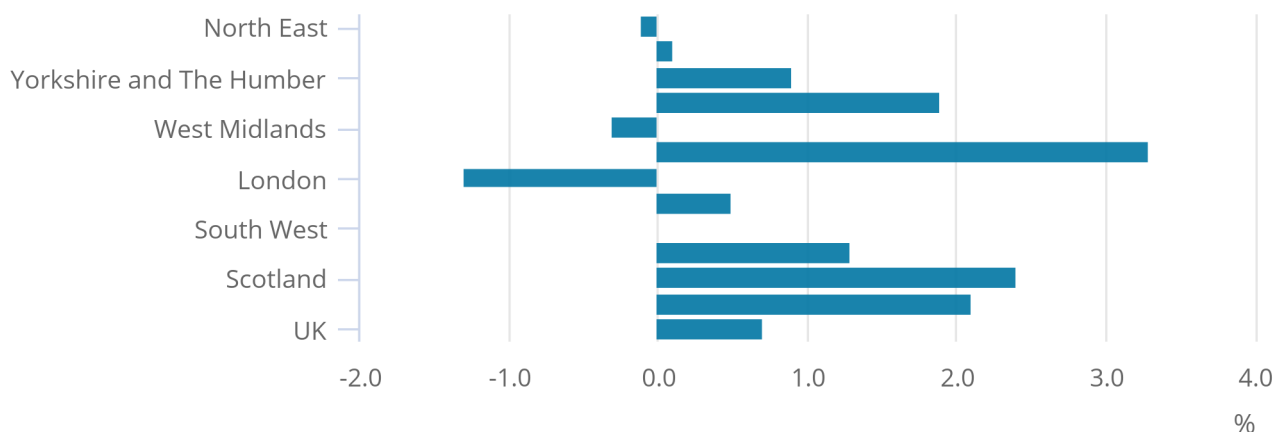
Public sector estimates

Figure 3: Public sector employees in the UK increased by 0.7% between 2017 and 2018

Percentage change in public sector employees by region, 2017 to 2018, UK

Figure 3: Public sector employees in the UK increased by 0.7% between 2017 and 2018

Percentage change in public sector employees by region, 2017 to 2018, UK



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Register and Employment Survey

Public sector employees increased by 38,000 (or 0.7%) between 2017 and 2018.

Of the 12 UK government regions, nine regions saw an increase in the estimated number of public sector employees and three regions saw a decrease.

Increases were largest in the East of England (up 14,000, or 3.3%) and Scotland (up 13,500, or 2.4%). The largest decrease in public sector employees was in London (down 10,100, or 1.3%).

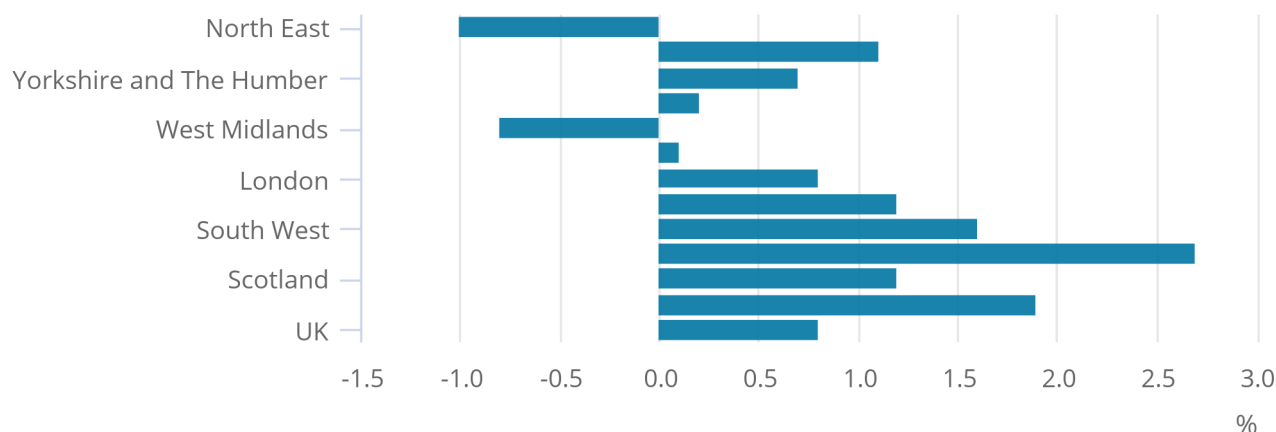
Private sector estimates

Figure 4: Private sector employees in the UK increased by 0.8% between 2017 and 2018

Percentage change in private sector employees by region, 2017 to 2018, UK

Figure 4: Private sector employees in the UK increased by 0.8% between 2017 and 2018

Percentage change in private sector employees by region, 2017 to 2018, UK



Source: Office for National Statistics – Business Register and Employment Survey

Private sector employees increased by 191,500 (or 0.8%) between 2017 and 2018.

All regions except the North East and West Midlands saw an increase in the estimated number of private sector employees. The largest increases were for Wales (up 26,000, or 2.7%) and Northern Ireland (up 10,800, or 1.9%).

6 . Business Register and Employment Survey data

[Broad Industry Group \(SIC\) - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 1](#)

Dataset | Released on 26 September 2019

Annual employee and employment estimates for Great Britain and UK split by Broad Industry Group (SIC2007). Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits

[Industry \(2, 3 and 5 - digit SIC\) - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 2](#)

Dataset | Released on 26 September 2019

Annual employee and employment estimates for Great Britain and UK split by 2, 3 and 5-digit (SIC2007). Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

[Region - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 3](#)

Dataset | Released on 26 September 2019

Annual employee and employment estimates for Great Britain and UK split by Region. Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

[Region by broad industry group \(SIC\) - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 4](#)

Dataset | Released on 26 September 2019

Annual employee and employment estimates for the UK split by Region and Broad Industry Group (SIC2007). Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

[Local Authority county - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 5](#)

Dataset | Released on 26 September 2019

Annual employee and employment estimates for the UK split by Local Authority County. Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

[Local Authority district - Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\): Table 6](#)

Dataset | Released on 26 September 2019

Annual employee and employment estimates for the UK split by Local Authority District. Results given by full-time or part-time and public or private splits.

7 . Glossary

Employee

An employee is defined as anyone aged 16 years or over who is paid directly from the payroll, in return for carrying out a full-time or part-time job or being on a training scheme.

Employment

Employment includes employees plus the number of working owners who receive drawings or a share of the profits.

Full-time and part-time

Full-time is defined as working more than 30 hours per week and part-time is defined as working 30 hours or less per week.

Legal status

BRES includes breakdowns by public and private sector according to the legal status for national accounts classification purposes.

Standard Industrial Classification

Figures are classified to the [Standard Industrial Classification 2007: SIC 2007](#). In this bulletin, the term “industry” refers to a “Section” as defined in SIC 2007.

8 . Measuring the data

All estimates for 2018 are provisional and relate to the reference date 14 September 2018. Data from the 2017 survey have been subject to small revisions since the [provisional estimates](#) were published on 27 September 2018. For the charts in this bulletin, the following notes apply.

1. All charts show data for “Total Employees” rather than “Total Employment”. Employees is the more robust of the two measures and is recommended for use in analysis.
2. Figures by industry are classified to the [2007 revision of the Standard Industrial Classification](#) (Figure 2).
3. The public sector comprises units in the following legal statuses: central government, local government and public corporations (Figure 3).
4. The private sector comprises companies, sole proprietors, partnerships and non-profit bodies (Figure 4).

Further information about BRES can be found in the [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) report.

9 . Measuring the data

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Further information about BRES can be found in the [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) report.

10 . Strengths and limitations

BRES is a sample survey. For the 2018 survey period, approximately 85,000 businesses were sampled for Great Britain. The response rate for the 2018 BRES survey was 85.1%. Northern Ireland data were collected independently by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

Due to the survey’s large sample size, BRES is able to produce good-quality estimates for detailed breakdowns by industry and geography. Furthermore, being a business survey, the quality of this industry data is very good and is recommended in preference to industry data from household surveys such as the Annual Population Survey. BRES provides both employee and employment data and is particularly recommended for analysis of employee data.

Since BRES is based on a sample of businesses, it can be affected by sampling variability. In particular, the quality of the estimates may deteriorate for smaller geographies and this should be taken into account when making inferences about the figures. Quality measures accompany the BRES datasets on our website.

We apply statistical methods to the survey returns to ensure that the estimates derived are as representative of the population as possible. Nevertheless, there is still some error associated with these estimates and we measure this by calculating coefficients of variation (CV), which are defined as the ratio of the standard error of an estimate to the estimate itself.

For example, an estimate with a CV of 5% will have a standard error that is 5% of the estimate. The smaller the coefficient of variation, the greater the accuracy of the estimate. CVs that are greater than or equal to 20% should be used with caution. CVs are provided within the published datasets that accompany this release.

Alternative employment estimates are available from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and workforce jobs (WFJ). BRES is the primary source for employee estimates at a detailed regional and industrial level. Workforce jobs benchmarks the private sector employee component to the BRES private sector employee estimates on an annual basis. The WFJ series, which is compiled mainly from surveys of businesses, is the preferred source of statistics when comparing changes in employment over time. The LFS, which collects information mainly from residents of private households, is the preferred source of statistics on employment at the whole economy level.

The public sector employee job figures from BRES aggregated to regional or national level will not match those produced from the [Public sector employment release](#), which is the recommended source for public sector employment figures.

The strengths and limitations of the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) can be found in the [Quality and Methodology Information report](#).

11 . Related links

[Labour market overview](#) Bulletin | Released 10 September 2019
Estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity for the UK.

[NOMIS](#)
A service provided by the ONS, to give free access to the most detailed and up-to-date UK labour market statistics from official sources.

[Vacancies and jobs](#) Bulletin | Released 10 September 2019
Estimates of the number of vacancies and jobs for the UK.

[Regional labour market](#) Bulletin | Released 10 September 2019
Regional, local authority and Parliamentary constituency breakdowns of changes in UK employment, unemployment, economic inactivity and other employment-related statistics.

[Public sector employment](#) Bulletin | Released 10 September 2019
Estimates of people employed in the public and private sectors in the UK.