

# Press release: Unemployment remains at lowest rate since 1975

The figures, released by the Office for National Statistics, also show that there are now 32.10 million people in work, 317,000 more than last year.

These figures have been driven by increases in full-time and permanent work, and in the last year there are 20,000 fewer people relying on zero hour contracts.

The female employment rate is also at a near record 70.7%, with over 15 million women in work. However, mothers aged between 16 and 49 are still less likely to be in employment than women without dependent children of the same age.

One area of focus for the government is therefore getting more women into work, and in the process boosting their pay income.

Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds said:

Our economy is helping to create full time, permanent jobs which are giving people across the UK the chance of securing a reliable income.

We've boosted the income for people on the lowest pay by increasing the National Living Wage and delivered the fastest pay rise for the lowest earners in 20 years.

That's great progress and we're determined to help more people flourish in the world of work.

For example we've launched our new returnship programme to help more women get into good jobs after taking time out, and to keep their career progressing.

Nancy Wood, 34, is an Associate at BuroHappold who has returned to work after 10 months out. She helps to lead the BuroHappold Engineering Sustainability and Building Physics team in London. She is looking to further her career in sustainability consultancy and has attended a returners course organised by WISE, an organisation set up to achieve a better gender balance in science, technology and engineering.

Nancy said:

I went on the returnship programme to help reignite my career. I'm ambitious, and after 10 months out I have valued learning how to successfully balance work and home life.

The course was extremely helpful and provided some really useful techniques. I already feel more confident in my ability and empowered to do my job well, and have set a clear career path to help me achieve my ambitions.

Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that time out of the labour market has a substantial impact on women's salaries. On returning to work, women earn around 2% less on average for every year spent out of paid work.

According to research by PwC, addressing the career break penalty could provide a £1.7 billion boost to our annual economic output.

In the [2017 Spring Budget](#) £5 million was allocated to increase the number of schemes in the public and private sector for people returning to work after a career break caring for children or family members.

Today's employment figures also show:

- there are a near record 783,000 vacancies in the economy at any one time
- the number of people in employment has increased by over 3 million since 2010
- the UK has the 3rd highest employment rate in the G7
- the number of workers aged 50 and over has reached a record 9.97 million
- youth unemployment has fallen by over 40% since 2010
- the proportion of young people who are unemployed and not in full time education remains below 5%

As part of the government's response to the recent [Race Disparity Audit](#), the Department for Work and Pensions will target 20 hotspots where ethnic minority people are more likely to be unemployed. Measures in these areas could include mentoring schemes to help those in ethnic minorities into work, and traineeships for 16 to 24 year olds, offering English, maths and vocational training alongside work placements.

Separate figures out today show [1.4 million claims have been made to Universal Credit](#). There are 610,000 people on Universal Credit, with 37% in employment.

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