

# News story: February 2017 Labour Market Statistics for Scotland

The Scottish unemployment rate is 4.9 per cent, above the rate of 4.8 per cent for the whole of the UK.

The labour market statistics also show that employment in Scotland increased by 8,000 over the three months to December 2016. The number of those in employment in Scotland now stands at 2,611,000.

The Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell, said:

There is cause for some cautious optimism about the state of Scotland's labour market, with employment up and more women returning to the labour market.

However, declining economic activity during the last 12 months, and the gap between the Scottish and UK labour markets, remains a concern.

We have devolved a raft of new powers to the Scottish Parliament. It now needs to use those levers to strengthen the Scottish economy.

Headline statistics for the October to December 2016 quarter:

- Employment in Scotland increased by 8,000 over the quarter, and fell by 20,000 over the year, to stand at 2,611,000.
- The Scottish employment rate increased by 0.1 pp over the quarter to 73.6 per cent. The rate is below the UK average of 74.6 per cent.
- Unemployment in Scotland rose by 6,000 over the quarter and is down 27,000 over the year. The level now stands at 135,000.
- At 4.9 per cent, the Scottish unemployment rate is above the UK's rate of 4.8 per cent.
- Economic activity increased by 13,000 over the quarter and now stands at 2,746,000. Also, the economic activity rate decreased over the year to stand at 77.6 per cent.
- In January 2017, the number of people out of work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance was 50,100 and claimant count, including Universal Credit was 76,400.

Latest Data for Scotland:

## **Employment**

The Labour Force Survey indicates that the number of people in employment in Scotland from October to December 2016 was 2,611,000. Employment was up by 8,000 compared to the previous three months, and down by 20,000 compared to the same quarter last year. The employment rate was up 0.1 percentage points on the previous quarter, and down by 1.0 percentage points compared the same quarter last year. By comparison, the Scottish employment rate is below the UK average of 74.6 per cent.

## **Unemployment**

Unemployment in Scotland was up by 6,000 over the quarter October to December 2016 at 135,000. The level was down 27,000 on the same quarter last year. The unemployment rate was up 0.2 p.p. on the previous quarter at 4.9 per cent, which is down 0.9 p.p. over the year.

## **Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit**

The number of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) fell by 2,100 to 50,100 in January 2017. The level is down by 10,400 on January 2016. The claimant count level (JSA and Universal Credit) is down 4,300 over the month at 76,400 and the rate is down 0.2 p.p. over the month and up 0.1 p.p. the year to 2.7 per cent.

## **Economic Activity**

The number of economically active (defined as those in employment or ILO unemployed, and seasonally adjusted) in Scotland in the October to December 2016 quarter was 2,746,000. This was up 13,000 on the previous quarter, and down by 47,000 on prior year levels. Among those aged 16-64 the economic activity rate was 77.6 per cent, up 0.2 pp on the previous quarter, and down 1.7 pp over the year.

---

# **Government must now act to stop the growing pressure on low and middle income families – Abrahams**

**Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary**, commenting on today's Labour Market Statistics, said:

"We welcome the overall increase in employment, but are concerned that wide regional differences in the numbers of

people in work remain.

“It is also worrying to see that rising living costs are quickly catching up with wage growth. If this trend continues, the Government’s abysmal record on living standards will get even worse.

“With wages set to be lower in 2021 than before the Tories came to power, they must now act to stop the growing pressure on low and middle income families.

“That’s why Labour is urging the Government to reverse cuts to in-work support that could see some working families worse off by £2,600 a year.”

---

## **News story: Making sure procurement practice is best practice**

From:

First published:

15 February 2017

The Mystery Shopper service is evolving to ensure concerns raised by suppliers about public sector procurements are properly resolved.

The Crown Commercial Service Mystery Shopper team is now actively following up to check how contracting authorities have implemented the recommendations.

This means the investigation doesn’t end when bodies say they will make changes – the Mystery Shopper team is following up to make sure that changes were made that support public procurement in being open to all businesses, including SMEs.

Suppliers already know they can contact the Crown Commercial Service’s Mystery Shopper team to raise issues about a procurement, and the team then works with the supplier and the authority to broker a result.

In many cases, recommendations are agreed with the bodies to make changes to future procurements, and details of these cases are then published.

Now, the results of the follow-up investigations will be published every month alongside the usual Mystery Shopper publication.

For more information about CCS's Mystery Shopper service, visit [the Mystery Shopper webpages](#)

---

## **BCC: UK labour market in good health**

Commenting on the labour market statistics for February 2017, released today by the Office for National Statistics, Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“Overall, with employment levels rising and unemployment still falling, the latest figures confirm that the UK jobs market is in good health.

“It remains likely that even if economic conditions become more subdued over the near-term, the underlying resilience of the UK's jobs market will help ensure that we don't see a marked deterioration in recruitment. Our own survey data suggests that hiring expectations have improved, although firms continue to report considerable difficulties in recruiting the right staff.

“With pay growth slowing slightly, the differential between price increases and wage growth continues to close. If this trend persists earnings in real terms could be squeezed, stifling consumer spending, which is an important determinant of UK growth.

“A key priority for the upcoming Budget must be to support firms looking to recruit and grow their business. This includes tackling the high up-front taxes and costs of doing business in the UK, which weigh heavily on companies regardless of their stage in the economic cycle, performance or ability to pay.”

**Ends**

### **Notes to editors:**

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

### **Media contacts:**

Allan Williams – Senior Press Manager

020 7654 5812 / 07920583381

Orla Hennessy – Press and Communications Officer

# **Official Statistics: Forestry Commission England Headline Performance Indicators at 31 December 2016**

The document will present Forestry Commission England's six headline indicators: number of high priority forest pests in the UK Plant Health Risk Register, percentage of known tree felling that is carried out with Forestry Commission approval, percentage of woodland in active management, area of woodland, cost of managing the Public Forest Estate and number of private sector businesses operating on the Public Forest Estate.