

INSIGHTS

News about employability, careers
and the labour market in the UK

Welcome to the June edition of Insights.

If you have any feedback or comments, you can contact us at Insights@edt.org.

The future of employment support

The Commission on the Future of Employment Support has been gathering evidence from stakeholders for a year. Its mission was “to develop evidence-led proposals for reform of our system of employment support and services, so that it can better meet the needs of individuals, employers and our economy now and in the future”. Its definition of employment support “as those public or publicly-funded services that:

- Help people who want to move into work, stay in work or progress in work to do so – regardless of what (if any) benefits they are on, and where and how those services are delivered; and
- Help employers to find, recruit and retain the right people for their jobs”

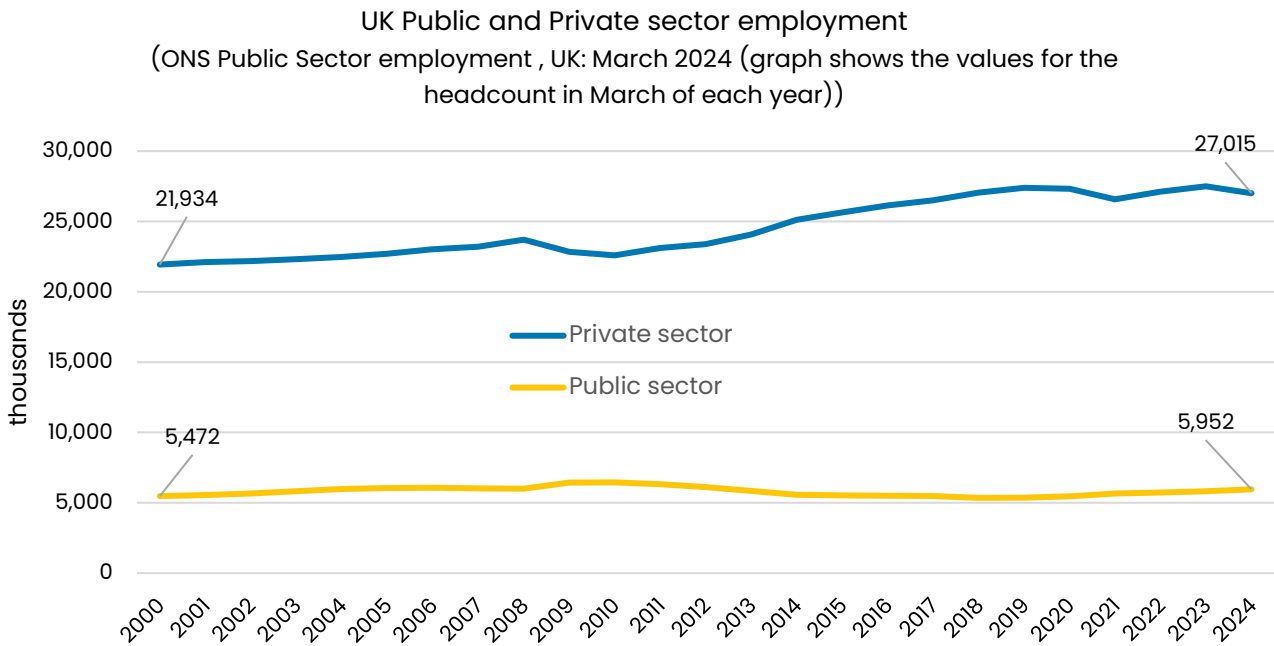
The report has been delayed by the announcement of the election however Tony Wilson, the head of the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), who along with abrdn Financial Fairness Trust ran the Commission, has written a short piece describing the five priorities the Commission has identified for reform of employment support in the UK [Working for the future: five](#)



[priorities for reforming employment support in the next parliament | Institute for Employment Studies \(IES\) \(employment-studies.co.uk\)](#). One of these is the greater integration of job, careers and skills services. A one-stop service that has been echoed by the Local Government Association in its vision for devolved and integrated employment and skills, asking for a ‘one stop’ service [Work Local: vision statement | Local Government Association](#). Alongside this is a priority to remove the centralisation of employment support and provide greater devolution of powers to combined authority or sub-regional level, creating a national network of Labour Market Partnerships.

Public sector employment

A few years back, the relative size of the public and private sector was a talking point as the Government of the day looked at 're-balancing' the economy. That seems to have passed but for those who are interested, ONS provides estimates of the employment levels in the public and private sectors [Public sector employment, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)



There were an estimated 5.95 million employees in the public sector in March 2024, the highest level since March 2012. Since the turn of this century, the public sector has seen a slow increase to a peak of 6.5 million in 2010 falling back to its current level. Employment in the private sector has seen an almost steady increase of five million from 22 million in 2000 to 27 million this year.

The organisations and bodies that make up the public sector are in large part what you would expect, the Civil Service, HM Forces, Police, the NHS, Local Government and educational institutions. However, there are some complications as organisations move into and out of public sector designation, for example further education and sixth form colleges were classified as public sector between 1993 and 2012, some banks and building societies such as Lloyds and Northern Rock moved into public ownership during the economic crisis and train operating companies which have been in the public sector since 2020. Following the Skills Act 2022, FE colleges and sixth form colleges will be again reclassified as public sector

The level of public sector employment across the English regions differs with the North East having the largest proportion of public sector work as a share of total employment at 22% and the South East the lowest at 15%. Just under a third of private sector employment is concentrated in London and the South East.

Graduate outcomes

Two sets of graduate outcomes data were published in June. The Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO), data provides data, as the name suggests, over an extended period of time after graduation – one, three, five and ten years [LEO Graduate and Postgraduate Outcomes, Tax year 2021-22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#). The HESA Graduates Outcomes Survey collects information about the activities and perspectives of graduates approximately 15 months after they complete their HE studies [Graduate Outcomes Data | HESA](#).



From the LEO data, considering the 2015/16 graduates five years after graduating in the 2021/22 tax year:

- First degree UK domiciled graduates from 2015/16 were earning on average (median figure) £29,900, five years after graduating
- Postgraduate taught (Level 7) graduates earning were on average £36,100
- In comparison, EU domiciled first degree graduates working in the UK were earning on average £35,800 and non-EU
- UK first degree graduates whose parents claimed Free school meals, earned on average £2,600 (8.5%) less than graduates whose parents did not claim Free school meals.
- 87.8% of UK first degree graduates were in sustained employment, further study or both five years after graduating
- Male graduates have higher average level of earnings than female graduates through all the LEO data 1,3,5 and 10 years after graduating at first and postgraduate levels. Female first degree graduates were earning 12% less than their male counterparts, five years after graduating.

The outcomes from graduates who qualified in the 2021/22 academic year and responded to the Graduate Outcomes Survey 15 months after graduating:

- 83% of UK domiciled graduates were in employment or unpaid work. 61% were in full-time employment and 11% part-time with 10% in employment and study. 5% were unemployed
- When asked three questions to summarise their feelings at the time of the survey

- 84% of UK first degree graduates strongly agreed/agreed that their current activity is meaningful
- 75% that their current activity fits with their future plans and
- 65% that they were utilising what they learnt in their studies in their current activity

One other graduate outcome is a student loan. As reported by the BBC [Student loans: Almost 1.8 million owe more than £50,000 – BBC News](#) The current total higher education student loan balance is £236billion.

School workforce

The annual release of statistics on the state-funded school workforce in England for 2023. The data is derived from the School Workforce Census carried out in November of each year [School workforce in England, Reporting year 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#):

- A total workforce of 979,085 full time equivalent of which 50% are teachers and 30% are teaching assistants
- Teacher numbers are split evenly between nurseries/primary, 47% (218,500) and secondary 46% (217,600) with 6% in special schools, alternative provision and pupil referral units
- The number of teaching assistants has increased from 221,500 in 2011/12 (when data was first collected) to 282,900 in 2023/24
- There were 44,002 new teacher entrants and 43,522 leavers

- The average salary (median pay) of teachers was £43,801
- Retention rates for teachers were 88.7% one year after qualifying, 74.1% after three years, 67.5% after five years and 57.8% after 10 years.

Trade union membership

Official government statistics on trade union membership in Great Britain have been collected since 1892. From 1989, estimates of union membership have been provided through the Labour Force Survey with full UK coverage from 1995. [Trade union statistics 2023 – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

A few points from the latest figures for 2023:

- 1979 was the high point for trade union membership in Great Britain at 13.2 million
- Membership has declined in the last four decades. In 2023 there were an estimated 6.36 million employees in the UK who were trade union members. This represents 22.4% of all employees.
- Nearly 50% of public sector employees are members of a trade union and 12% of private sector employees
- The areas of the UK regions with the largest proportion of union membership amongst all employees are Strathclyde (35.6%) and Merseyside (35.0%). The lowest share of membership is in London and the South East (17.7%)

To find out more about the employability and careers services at EDT, please contact us at careersinfo@edt.org