Labour Force and Annual Population Surveys User Conference 2025

Abstracts

Keynote presentation

Rethinking Work: Measuring work in the age of remote working, digitalisation of work and the 'always-on' work culture
Heejung Chung, Director of the King's Global Institute for Women's Leadership and Professor of Work and Employment, Kings College London

What does it mean to "work" in an age where we're always digitally connected, but traditional data barely scratches the surface? This talk explores this issue by first presenting the various studies I have carried out using the LFS data in exploring access to remote working and the well-being outcomes of remote working, highlighting both the power and the pitfalls of existing measures. While the LFS tells us *where* people work, it rarely tells us *how often*, *how intensely*, or *under what digital demands*. This talk calls for a fundamental rethink in how we capture work in the new digitalised age of work. I argue that traditional measures of hours of work do not capture the way in which work can encroach upon the private lives of workers through digital presenteeism and hyper-connectivity. If the future of work is already here, it's time our data caught up.

Research paper abstracts

Why do LFS employment trends disagree with administrative data?
Adam Corlett, Resolution Foundation

Given ongoing concern about the accuracy of the LFS since 2020, we have produced alternative estimates of headline labour market statistics based largely on HMRC earnings records and ONS population totals. This method – which broadly replicates LFS results prior to the pandemic – suggests that it is right to question LFS results since then. Whereas the LFS shows a 1.3 percentage point fall in the 16+ employment rate between the start of 2020 and the start of 2023, our alternative estimates show zero net decline. Conversely, this would imply that the LFS has likely over-stated the net rise in economic inactivity over that period.

This presentation will discuss the construction of our alternative measure; explore key uncertainties; and present additional evidence on the likelihood of a downwards bias in LFS post-pandemic employment trends. Administrative-based labour market statistics offer a novel point of comparison for the LFS and planned TLFS, and may also be of use for sub-UK estimates.

The UK Insecure Work Index 2024
Aman Navani, University of Lancaster

For this research briefing, we analysed the Office for National Statistics' Labour Force Survey microdata along with the Work Foundation's flagship Insecure Work Index to measure the extent of insecure work in the UK.

In 2023, an estimated 6.8 million people (21.4%) were in severely insecure work. Three in five (60%) newly insecure workers were women, who were twice as likely than men to experience severely insecure work when accounting for other factors. Young workers (16-24) were more than twice as likely than older workers (50-65) to be in severely insecure work. The rate of insecure work rose more steeply among young workers which, together with a rise in youth unemployment, suggests a challenging job market for this group.

We don't need no (over)education: new evidence for UK graduates
Robyn Smith, National Institute of Economics and Social Research

We provide new evidence on the labour market outcomes of overeducated graduates in the UK over the 2017-2020 period, focusing on skill heterogeneity. Using the Annual Population Survey, we find that 27% of graduates are overeducated. Netting out those with a foreign qualification, reduces the extent of overeducation to 19%. Graduates employed in low-skilled occupations (overeducated but not overskilled), account for approximately 13% of total overeducation, while the proportion of graduates in high skilled occupations (skill mismatched) is 8%. Wages differ substantially between truly skill mismatched and overeducated (only) graduates. Improving graduates' skills and achieving a better match between foreign qualifications and occupations, could lead to a more efficient use of graduates' talents.

Workforce Wage Gap in Space, Labour Market Transformations and Structural Inequality
Concetta Gigante, University of Liverpool

This paper studies within space structural variations on wage inequality and the workforce wage gap in the UK. I first analyses the factors contributing to the workforce wage gap across geographical regions and the causes affecting wage inequality along the lines of vertical segregation, horizontal segregation and labour market transformations. I then examine the causal effects of the Gender Wage Gap Reporting policy-a policy reform enacted in the Equality Act 2010 regulation in 2017 in the UK-on the workforce wage gap. Using data from the British Quarterly Labour Force Survey, I implement a synthetic control method to examine the effects of the policy across geographical regions.

Synthetic control method estimators estimate the treatment effects by finding a weighted combination of units for the control group that best resembles the characteristics of the treated group in the absence of the policy. I find a positive impact effect of the policy and after the policy implementation the average treatment effect on treated is 2.32%.

Time Series Analysis of Youth Employment in the Labour Force Survey
Anna Brian, RAND Europe

The labour market conditions of young people are becoming increasingly politically salient. For example, youth will be highly susceptible to any effect of the proposed changes to bring the 'development' minimum wage rate in line with the adult National Living Wage and reducing the growing population of young people Not in Employment, Education or Training ('NEET') has emerged as a priority for government. Using evidence from the Labour Force Survey (1993-2023), we study changes in young people's labour market conditions in England.

Different statistics tell different stories about youth labour market conditions, particularly in comparing outcomes by personal characteristics. While women's unemployment rates are generally lower than men's, NEET and employment rates suggest that young women's labour market engagement has only caught up recently and still falls behind for the 25-29-year-olds. Conversely, the NEET rates of young people from non-white ethnic backgrounds are now comparable to young people from white ethnic backgrounds, but their elevated unemployment rates suggest persistent disadvantage in the labour market. We also observe persistent labour market disadvantage for young people with disabilities. Regional analysis suggests that it is areas with less urban density such as the North East, West Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humber, which have the worst youth employment outcomes during nationwide economic shocks. During this analysis, we encountered limitations to the representativeness and continuity of the dataset.

In addition to descriptive time series analysis, we conducted structural break analysis to see if events such as changes minimum wage legislation, and the 2008 Financial Crisis are associated with significant changes in youth labour market trends. This analysis is not causal but shows the significant breaks one would expect in 2008, while the results for the introduction of the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage are less certain.

Socio-economic diversity of Doctors in the United Kingdom
Nathan Cheetham, King's College London

Research suggests that doctors are the single most socio-economically exclusive profession in the United Kingdom, with data from 2014 showing only 4% of practising doctors came from lower income working-class backgrounds [1]. Nevertheless, an explicit aim in NHS England workforce plans is that "doctors should be as representative as

possible of the society they serve in order to provide the best possible care to the UK population" [2].

In this study, 10 years of social mobility data from the Labour Force Survey July-September quarter between 2014 and 2023 was analysed to estimate how the likelihood of being a doctor was associated with socio-economic background.

Of 358,934 respondents, 2,772 (0.8%) were currently working as doctors. 13% of doctors were from working class backgrounds (NS-SEC 5-8), compared to 43% of non-doctor respondents, while 69% of doctors came from professional backgrounds (vs. 32% of non-doctors) (unadjusted proportions).

From multivariable regression models, the likelihood of being a doctor varied largely according to socio-economic background, with those from professional backgrounds 3 and 6 times more likely to become doctors than those from intermediate backgrounds and working class backgrounds respectively. Likelihood of working as doctor varied by a factor of 100 when looking across specific occupational groups, with respondents where the main earner during adolescence was a doctor being by far the most likely to themselves be doctors as adults. Stratified analyses suggested socio-economic inequalities were highly stable over time among respondents who turned 18 between the 1960s and the 2000s, and then weak evidence of decreasing diversity from 2010-2018.

There are large, persistent, and potentially widening inequalities in the socio-economic background of doctors working in the UK between 2014 and 2023. As such, doctors are highly socio-economically unrepresentative of the UK population. Wider data collections on socio-economic background are needed to monitor this inequality fully.

A profile of shiftworking fathers and mothers of young children in the context of the Employment Rights Bill
Martha Done, University of Kent & the Fatherhood Institute
Rebecca Goldman, University of Kent & the Fatherhood Instftute

The Employment Rights Bill requires employers to give reasonable notice of shifts and compensation for cancelled shifts. Fathers and mothers will be able to arrange childcare more readily and avoid unnecessary childcare costs. Yet it is the increase in hybrid- and home- working which has been the focus of recent parental work and childcare research (eg Chung and Yuan, 2025). This is not available to all employees, including those working in critical public services (Timewise, 2025).

This presentation reports a descriptive analysis of the 2022-24 Quarterly Labour Force Survey to profile the demographic, socio-economic, employment and family characteristics of shiftworking fathers and of shiftworking mothers (living with child/ren under 10 years and not working mainly from home). Previous analyses of shiftworkers have not incorporated parental status (eg ONS, 2019).

Key results:
Around half of the shiftworking fathers and of the shiftworking mothers are in lower socio-economic groups. 75% of the fathers and 60% of the mothers work in the private sector; a

third of the mothers work in the NHS; and a third of each parent group work for small employers. Further analysis to be reported includes a comparison of shiftworking fathers and mothers with all male and female shiftworkers to investigate whether the parent groups are distinctive apart from parental status.
Implications

This descriptive work will influence the design of a follow-on multi-method research project to inform employment policy and practice. A focus is needed on the 65% of shiftworking fathers and mothers who are not managers or supervisors and have least control over shifts.