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Employment

Introduction

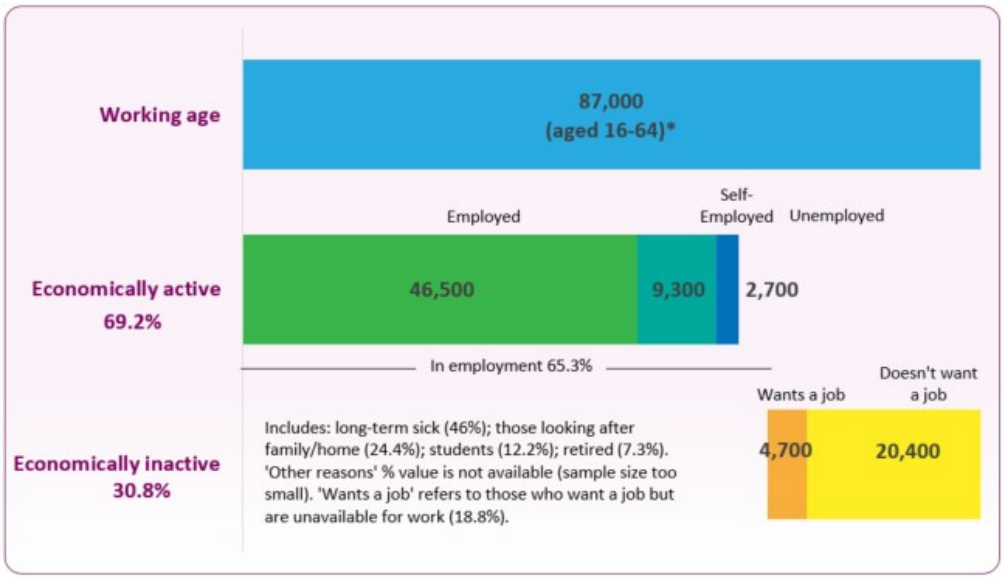
This page provides a brief overview of Blackpool Labour Market statistics. For further information please see NOMIS, the Office for National Statistics official labour market statistics website.

Facts and figures

Overall labour market supply

Supply in the labour market is defined as the availability of people and skills that can fill the roles demanded by employers.

Figure 1: Blackpool economic activity, employment and unemployment estimates, October-23 to September-24



*Source: NOMIS / ONS Annual Population Survey, Oct 2023 - Sept 2024. * Note: Above numbers are for those aged 16 years and above, whilst percentages are for those aged 16-64.*

For the period October 2023 to September 2024:

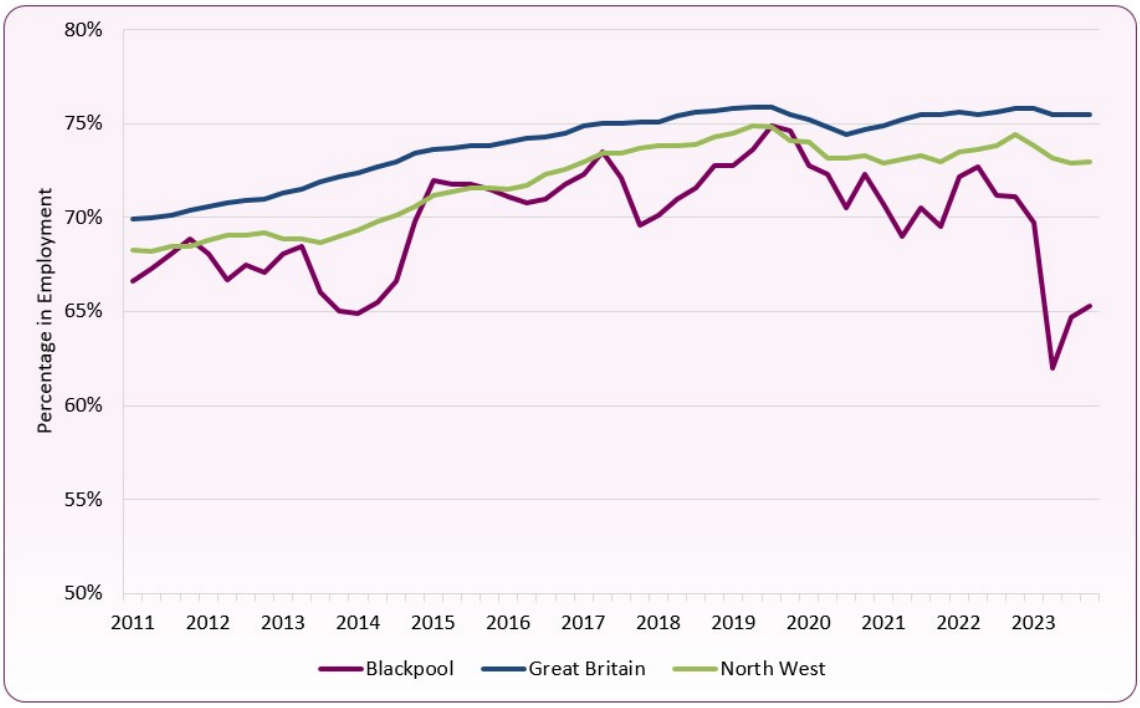
- The employment rate in Blackpool was 65.3% - made up of those currently working or self-employed. This is lower proportionally than both the North West (73.0%) and Great Britain (75.5%)
- Unemployment - essentially those actively seeking employment but currently not in a job - is around 4.6% of those economically active in Blackpool. This is higher than Great Britain (3.7%) and the North West (4.1%)
- Economic inactivity refers to those who are not available for work, or who do not want to work. Blackpool, at 30.8%, has a higher proportion of economically inactive individuals than Great Britain (21.8%) and the North West (23.8%)
- Long-term sickness accounts for 46.0% of all economically inactive in Blackpool. This is a substantially higher proportion than those economically inactive in both Great Britain (28.2%) and the North West (32.5%)

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it economic shutdown of some parts of the economy and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), or furlough scheme, operated between March 2020 and 30th September 2021 to provide financial support for companies and employees. Nationally, the number of people on furlough peaked at 8.9 million (May/June 2020 lockdown period)

and 1.3 million employers benefited from the scheme. In 2021 the number of people furloughed reduced steadily after the opening of retail outlets from 12th April and the lifting of all restrictions on 19th July. Not all jobs were protected during this period, however, and an estimated 1 million people were made redundant nationally between April 2020 and June 2021.[1] In Blackpool 20,900 'employments' were furloughed in the period up to August 2020, representing 36% of those eligible. In January 2021 this figure was 11,100 (20% of eligible), falling to 2,100 (4%) at the end of the scheme.[2]

Employment rate trend data reflects the impact of the pandemic (figure 2) and the years afterwards. Employment rates in Blackpool had been climbing steadily since late 2017 (69.6%) to a peak of 74.9% for the period July 2019 to June 2020, before falling to a low of 62.0% fro the period April 2023 to Mar 2024 (a sharper decrease than seen nationally or regionally). However, from October 2024 it should be noted that these figures have been downgraded to 'official statistics in development' by the Office for National Statistics, meaning that while the quality is robust for national and regional values, there may be data concerns for local authority estimates.

Figure 2: employment rate trends, 2011-12 to 2023-24: Blackpool, Great Britain and North-West (quarterly 12-month rolling data)



Source: NOMIS / ONS Annual Population Survey

Employment by occupation

Figure 3 shows the number and proportion of those employed across Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC 2010) in Blackpool. 38.3% of those employed in Blackpool are within occupational groups 6-9, compared to 31.2% in the North West and 28.6% across Great Britain. A higher proportion work in caring, leisure and other services (16.0%) compared to the North West (8.8%) and Great Britain (8.3%). Proportions of those employed as managers, directors and senior officials; those in professional occupations; and skilled trade occupations are lower than regional and national levels.

Data from the ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (via NOMIS) identified that 24.2% of jobs in Blackpool are within the human health and social work industry (13.9% nationally), with 13.0% in wholesale, retail, and trade motor vehicle repair (13.7% nationally), 9.7% in public administration and defence and compulsory social security (4.7% nationally) and 12.9% in accommodation and food services activity (7.9% nationally).

Figure 3: employment by occupation, Blackpool, North West and Great Britain, October-23 to September-24

	Blackpool (n)	Blackpool %	North West %	Great Britain %
SOC 2010 major group 1-3	19,800	35.4	50.0	53.0
1 Managers, directors & senior officials	4,200	7.6	9.8	11.1
2 Professional occupations	10,700	19.2	25.4	26.8
3 Associate professional and technical	4,900	8.7	15.2	15.4
SOC 2010 major group 4-5	14,500	25.9	18.2	17.9
4 Administrative and secretarial	7,500	13.5	9.9	9.3

5 Skilled trades occupations	7,000	12.5	8.3	8.7
SOC 2010 major group 6-7	10,800	19.3	15.7	14.4
6 Caring, leisure and other services	9,000	16.0	8.8	8.3
7 Sales and customer services	1,800	3.2	6.8	6.1
SOC 2010 major group 8-9	10,600	19.0	15.5	14.2
8 Process plant and machine operatives	3,900	6.9	5.8	5.5
9 Elementary occupations	6,700	12.1	9.7	8.8

Source: NOMIS / ONS Annual Population Survey, October 2023 to September 2024

Out-of-work benefits

The main benefit available for those who were unemployed but able and available for work was Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) up to November 2014. From this date Universal Credit started to replace a number of benefits including:

- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working Tax Credit

Under Universal Credit a broader span of claimants are required to look for work than under Job Seeker's Allowance. As the Universal Credit full service is rolled out the number of people on the claimant count continues to rise.

At the end of December 2024 there were 26,139 Blackpool residents on Universal Credit (of these 8,567 were in employment, 17,566 were not in employment). Those on some form of out-of-work benefits (including those on incapacity benefits and not expected to work due to ill-health or caring roles) are outlined below:[3]

- 6,047 people on Employment and Support Allowance, 75 on Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance, and 161 receiving Income Support (quarter to Aug-24)
- 12,557 on Universal Credit who are not expected to work at present as health or a caring responsibility prevents claimant from working or preparing for work (Dec-24)
- 143 on Jobseeker's Allowance

Figure 4 shows the proportion of unemployment-related Universal Credit claimants (those who are required to seek and be available for work) between January 2004 and Jan 2025. The 2008 recession sharply increased unemployment, and the further increase in 2011-12 is partly due to austerity measures taking effect on public sector employment. Following a peak of over 6,000 claimants (7.1% of the 16-64 resident population) in late 2012 / early 2013, figures returned to almost pre-recession levels by 2016. It is, however, noteworthy that national and regional claimant rates fell to below-recession levels during this period, suggesting that Blackpool's employment market recovered less well than other areas.

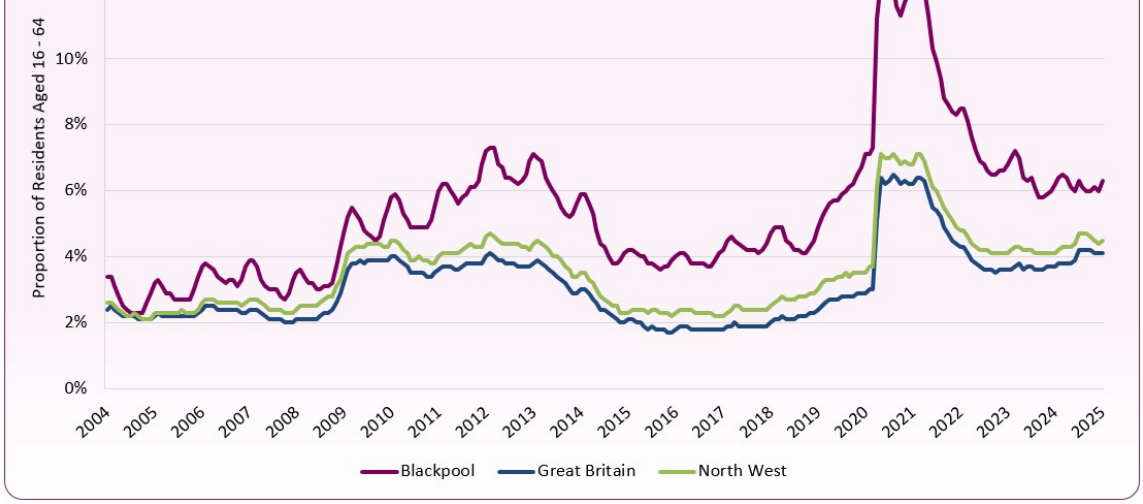
The effects of the seasonal labour market can also be seen in the chart, with differences between September and February claimant rates of around 1%, though claimant peaks and troughs were more shallow in the post-recession period between 2015 and 2019.

Whilst the number and rate of unemployment-related claimants in Blackpool was rising more sharply than national and regional levels prior to the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 can clearly be seen in claimant figures from March/April 2020 onwards. The number of Blackpool claimants rose from 5,940 (7.1%) in February 2020 to 10,375 (12.4%) in July 2020 at the start of the first lockdown period. Falling slightly between September to December, claimant levels roles again around the second lockdown, peaking at 10,510 (12.5%) in February 2021.

Since the easing of lockdown restrictions, unemployment-related claimant rates for January 2025 (6.3% of the resident 16-64 population) have fallen and are now similar to levels in autumn 2012. It is still higher than pre-pandemic levels and higher than the national rate for Great Britain (4.1%) and the North West region (4.5%).

Figure 4: proportion of unemployment-related claimants (16-64 population): Blackpool, North West and Great Britain, month-by-month January 2004 to January 2025

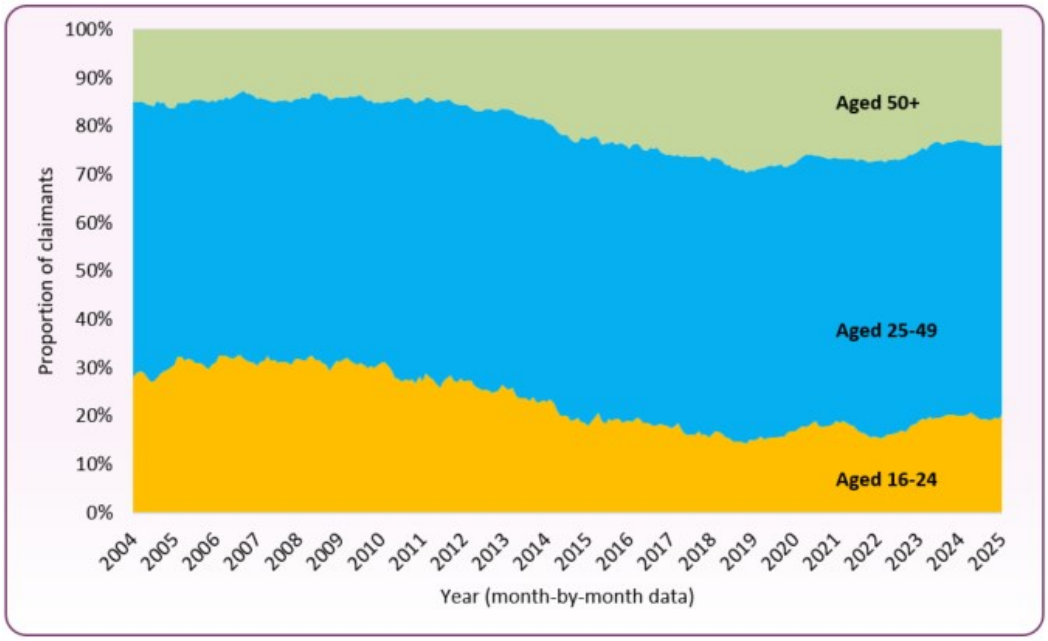




Source: NOMIS / ONS claimant count

The proportion of unemployment-related claimants aged 16 to 24 fell gradually from around 2010 until 2019, whilst the number and proportion of those aged over 50 increased (figure 5). The proportion of claimants aged 50 and over has dropped since the high of 29.6% in November 2018. For those aged 25-49, the proportion has remained similar. This also reflects a national shift towards middle and older age group claimants in recent years. Based on January 2025 data, 23.8% (1,310) of Blackpool's claimants were aged 50 and over, compared to 23.6% across Great Britain and 21.0% in the North West. 55.9% (4,070) were aged 25 to 49 compared to 59.0% nationally and 60.4% regionally. The fall in the overall proportion of unemployment-related claimants aged 16 to 19 may have been impacted by changes to the school leaving age between 2013 and 2017, with current claimant numbers for those aged 16 to 24 (1,115 in January 25) remaining similar over the past two years.

Figure 5: proportion of Blackpool unemployment-related claimants by age, January 2004 - January 2025

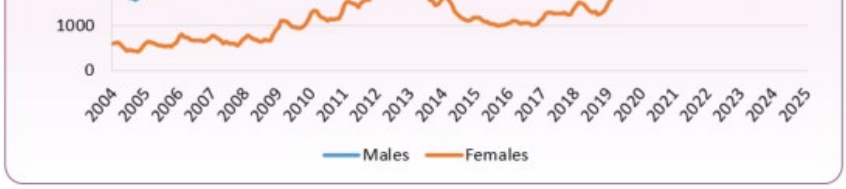


Source: NOMIS / ONS claimant count by age

The number and rate of male unemployment-related claimants is consistently higher than for females in Blackpool, though this gap narrowed between 2015 and the start of the pandemic (figure 6). In January 2025 there were 3,285 male claimants (7.6% of the 16-64 population) and 2,215 female claimants (5.1%). This compares to 4.6% male claimants and 3.6% female claimants across Great Britain. Between February 2020 and May 2020 (initial COVID-19 period) claimant numbers increased by 82% for males and 66% for females. The number of males and females claiming has remained similar over the past twelve months.

Figure 6: proportion of Blackpool unemployment-related claimants by sex 2004-2025





Source: NOMIS / ONS Claimant Count by sex and age, 2004 to March 2022

Universal Credit - conditionality

Universal Credit involves a 'conditionality' element, where a claimant may have to undertake certain activities (conditions) in order to get full entitlement. Each person is assigned one of six conditionality regimes based on their assessed capability and circumstances.

Of the 26,139 people on Universal Credit (including both those in and out of employment) in Blackpool in December 2024:[3]

- 5,082 (19.4%) were searching for work, either currently not working or with very low earnings
- 12,557 (48.0%) were not expected to work at present - with health or caring responsibilities preventing them from working
- 3,191 (12.2%) were working with requirements - in work but could earn more, or not working but with a partner on low earnings
- 3,653 (14.0%) were working with no requirements - with individual or household earnings over the level that conditionality applies
- 1,303 (5.0%) were preparing for work - expected to start preparing for work, with a limited capacity for work at the present time or a child aged two
- 346 (1.3%) were planning for work - lone parents or lead carers of children aged one

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

Employment and Support Allowance replaced Incapacity Benefit in 2008. It provides financial support for people who have limited capability for work due to sickness or disability but do not receive Statutory Sick Pay. Applicants are assessed on their capacity for work, usually through both a questionnaire and a medical assessment. If the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) determines the applicant has limited capability for work, they are placed in one of two groups:

- Work-related activity group - required to carry out activities to prepare for returning to work
- Support group - not required to carry out any activities

Following the Welfare Reform Act 2012, ESA comes as two separate benefits:

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance - this is being phased out and replaced by Universal Credit and new claims are only possible in limited circumstances
- New-style Employment and Support Allowance - a contribution-based benefit based on National Insurance contributions

In the quarter ending August 2024:

- There were 6,047 Employment Support Allowance claimants in Blackpool.
- This is a 40% decrease from May 2018 (figure 7). This reflects national reductions as a consequence of Universal Credit replacing ESA for new income-related claims on the grounds of incapacity. Blackpool's sharper rate of decline between November 2018 and May 2020 may be due to a higher proportion of cases with low income transferring to UC.
- 51.4% of claimants were male and 48.6% female, compared to 51% male and 49% female across Great Britain and the North West region. The number of male claimants has been falling at a faster rate than female claimants.
- 87% of Blackpool claimants were within the 'support group' category, similar to England (86%). 8% were in the 'activity group' (Eng 8%) and 3% in the assessment phase (Eng 3%).

Figure 7: Employment and Support Allowance caseload rates (16-64) - Blackpool, North West and England, May 2018 to August 2024

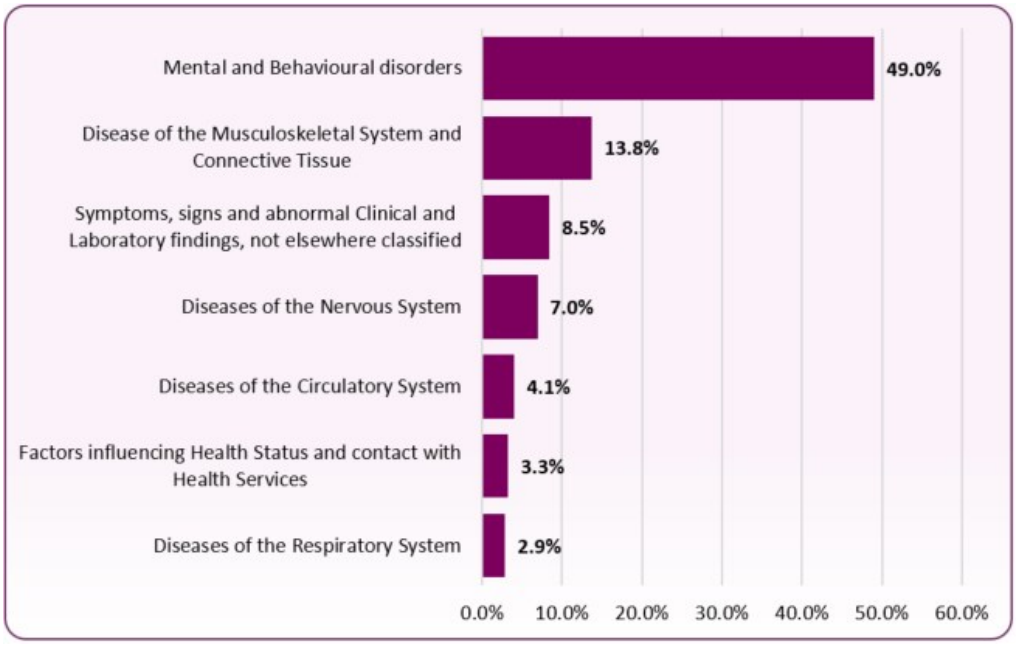




Source: Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions, May 2018 to August 2024 data.

Figure 8 shows the reasons for ESA claims from the Blackpool population. The majority of claims for ESA fall into the International Classification for Disease category of mental and behavioural disorders, which is a very wide spectrum covering disorders such as schizophrenia and personality disorder but also drug use, dementia and learning difficulties (England 48.9%). Disease of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue has the next highest proportion (England 12.4%). The group 'symptoms, signs and abnormal clinical findings' is also a relatively high percentage and generally refers to groups who have not yet received a diagnosis (England 8.8%).

Figure 8 - reason for Employment and Support Allowance claim: Blackpool, quarter to August 2024



Source: Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions, August 2024 data

Lone parents

Lone parents are amongst those vulnerable groups at greatest risk of unemployment due to the demands of balancing working and home life, especially with younger children. Two-thirds of all children in poverty are from lone parent families.

Across England between July and September 2024 the employment rate of lone parents was 66.0% compared to 86.4% for all those with dependant children (aged 0 to 18-years). For lone parents with children aged 0 to 2 years old the employment rate was 45.8% (compared to 83.0% for parents in a couple). The rate for those with children aged 3 to 4 years old was 49.5% (86.9% for a couple), 71.5% for 5 to 10 year olds (88.3% for a couple), and 73.9% for 11 to 15 year olds (88.1% for a couple).[4]

The number of Blackpool lone parents claiming Income Support has fallen since February 2009 (2,471 claimants), to August 2024 (161 claimants). The introduction of a range of lone parent obligations from 2008 onwards, and changes as a consequence of the Welfare Reform Act, led to reductions in child entitlement ages to the point that from May 2012 lone parents could only claim Income Support until their youngest child was aged five years old, they were working less than 16 hours per week, had earnings of less than £16,000 and were living on a low income (or without an income). Those affected by the reductions to the child age limit tended to claim Jobseeker's Allowance.

Lone parents are able to claim Universal Credit on the conditions similar to the previous Income Support, and how much is received depends on circumstances and the number of children (though in most circumstances a parent can only claim for the first two children). In November 2024 there were 7,087 single parent households with children claiming Universal Credit in Blackpool (31.6% of all households compared to 35.5% in England).[3] This does, however, include all households for Universal Credit, and is not a measure of those not in employment.

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[1] House of Commons Library. Examining the end of the furlough scheme, 15th November, 2021.

[2] HMRC Coronavirus (COVID-19) statistics: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

[3] Department for Work and Pensions, Stat-Xplore: NB. Count taken on second Thursday of each month

[4] Office for National Statistics (ONS), Employment rate of parents living with dependent children by family type and age of the youngest child in the UK, November 2024.

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