

Claimant Count Data

for February 2026

March 19th Release

The Claimant Count is a measure of the number of people who are unemployed and claiming benefits. From 1996 until the recent introduction of Universal Credit, this was based on the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance. However, since its introduction some unemployment benefit claimants will be claiming Universal Credit instead. To reflect this change, the Claimant Count has been expanded to include people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance plus those who claim Universal Credit and who are searching for work.

The claimant count is simply a count of people claiming relevant benefits, so it is subject to changes in benefit rules and welfare to work schemes. Since 2016 Gloucestershire has been in the process of transitioning to full Universal Credit with the process due to be completed in 2025. This means a broader span of claimants will be required to look for work than previously under Jobseekers Allowance. As more people are brought within the coverage of Universal Credit, the Claimant Count is set to rise noticeably over time. In addition in May 2024 the Department for Work and Pensions rolled out an increase in the administrative earnings threshold (AET) for full work search conditionality. This means a cohort of claimants who are in work but on an income below the AET will now be required to search for work. This change is likely to affect around 180,000 claimants across the country over a period of around 6 months, increasing the Claimant Count over that time.

For more information about Universal Credit please see the [ONS website](#).



The Claimant Count* in the County increased by 600 persons to 10,930 a rate of 2.7%.

Claimant Count* for GB, England & Wales, SW, Gloucestershire and Districts

Area	Feb'26 Number	Feb'26 Rate	Jan'26 Number	Jan'26 Rate	Monthly change	% monthly change	Monthly Change of rate %
UK	1,717,150	3.9	1,635,860	3.8	81,290	5.0	0.1
GB	1,681,640	4.0	1,601,500	3.8	80,140	5.0	0.2
England & Wales	1,572,665	4.1	1,498,470	3.9	74,195	5.0	0.2
England	1,506,680	4.1	1,435,740	3.9	70,940	4.9	0.2
South West	101,820	2.9	97,010	2.7	4,810	5.0	0.2
Gloucestershire	10,930	2.7	10,330	2.6	600	5.8	0.1
Cheltenham	2,110	2.8	1,990	2.6	120	6.0	0.2
Cotswold	1,085	2.1	1,045	2.0	40	3.8	0.1
Forest of Dean	1,410	2.7	1,335	2.5	75	5.6	0.2
Gloucester	3,230	3.6	3,035	3.4	195	6.4	0.2
Stroud	1,620	2.2	1,515	2.0	105	6.9	0.2
Tewkesbury	1,475	2.4	1,410	2.3	65	4.6	0.1

Source: Office for National Statistics, Crown Copyright Reserved (Nomis)

Produced by: Data, Analysis & Insights Team, Corporate Resources, Gloucestershire County Council

The Claimant Count* in Great Britain **increased** by 80,140 persons to **1,681,640** a rate of **4.0%**.

Gloucestershire's Claimant Count* rate **increased to 2.7%**.

All districts saw an **increase** in the estimated number of unemployed claimants.

The number of males unemployed in the County stands at **6,095 (3.1%)**, which represents an **increase** on last month. The number of females unemployed stands at **4,835 (2.4%)**, which also represents an **increase** on last month.

* Numbers are rounded to the nearest 5 and may be revised.

The figures quoted above cannot be compared with:

- 1) the UK figure of **1.9 million** unemployed at a rate of **5.2%****. This is based on the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition of unemployment. It is obtained from an ongoing national household survey and updated on a quarterly basis.
- 2) the seasonally adjusted unemployment claimant count (which includes claimants of Jobseekers Allowance and Universal Credit) for the UK of **1.7 million** at a rate of **3.9%**.

NB: These figures cannot be replicated at a local level

**** Nov 2025 - Jan 2026 unemployment rate:**

From 17 December 2024, ONS has reweighted Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates.

Notes from ONS:

The reweighted LFS estimates incorporate information on the size and composition of the UK population, based on 2022 mid-year estimates. For England, Wales and Northern Ireland they are projected forward using scaling factors from 2021-based National Population projections, published in January 2024. For Scotland they are projected forward using scaling factors from 2020-based National Population Projections, published in January 2023.

Given time constraints, we were only able to reweight LFS data from January to March 2019 onwards. Therefore, this reweighting exercise created a discontinuity between December 2018 to February 2019 and January to March 2019 where there is a step change in LFS estimates. However, we have modelled the seasonally adjusted UK levels of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by sex and age-band back to June to August 2011, to ensure that headline rates and levels by sex and age-band (datasets A02SA and A05SA) can be assessed without a discontinuity.

Important note: Reweighting increased the levels of all labour market statuses but did not address issues surrounding increased LFS volatility, resulting from smaller achieved sample sizes.

Estimates from January to March 2025 include the full effect of the improvements in LFS data collection and sampling methods introduced from January 2024. However, estimates may be subject to the effect of further ongoing improvements. An increased amount of volatility will remain in the LFS estimates from mid-2023 and throughout 2024, so we would advise additional caution when interpreting change involving those periods.

We recommend using LFS estimates as part of our suite of labour market indicators, alongside Workforce Jobs, Claimant Count and Pay As You Earn Real Time Information (PAYE RTI) estimates.

These are official statistics in development.

[Impact of reweighting on Labour Force Survey key indicators: December 2024 - Office for National Statistics](#)