

FIFE LABOUR MARKET UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2024

This monthly update reports on the number of people in Fife claiming out-of-work benefits ([the claimant count and claimant rate](#)). It also provides data on the area's latest unemployment rate (people without a job but who are seeking work) and economic inactivity rate (people who are neither working nor seeking work). All data shown are provisional and subject to revision.

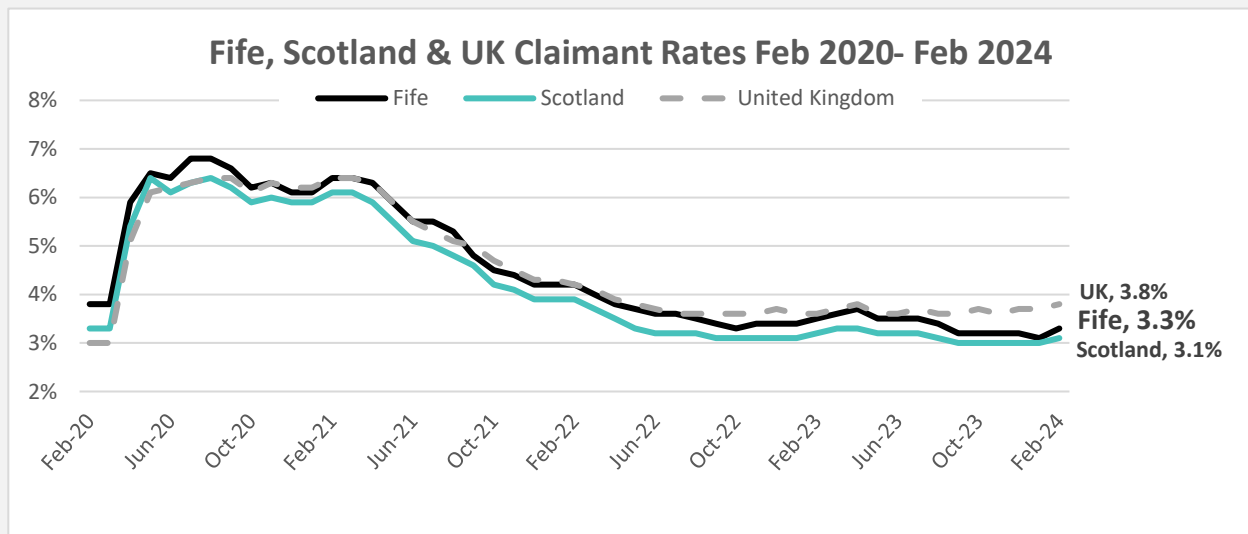
1.1 CLAIMANT RATE

% of working age (16-64) residents claiming out-of-work benefits (Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit)

| February 2024 | Claimant Rate | Monthly Change | | Annual Change | | Change Feb 2020-Feb 2024 | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|---|---------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| Fife | 3.3% | +0.2 | ↑ | -0.2 | ↓ | -0.5 | ↓ |
| Scotland | 3.1% | +0.1 | ↑ | -0.1 | ↓ | -0.2 | ↓ |
| United Kingdom | 3.8% | +0.1 | ↑ | +0.2 | ↑ | +0.8 | ↑ |

Source: ONS Claimant Count. The changes shown represent the difference in percentage points between this month's claimant rate and the rate for the previous periods.

In February, Fife's claimant rate increased from 3.1% to 3.3% as the number of people claiming out-of-work benefits in the region rose by 270 from 7,295 to 7,565. This was the first time the claimant rate had increased in Fife since April 2023. Fife's February claimant rate was however 0.2 percentage points lower than a year ago in February 2023 (3.5%), and 0.5 percentage points lower than its pre-pandemic February 2020 rate (3.8%).



Source: ONS Claimant Count

1.2 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

% of economically active residents aged over 16 who are without a job but are actively seeking or waiting to start a job

| | Unemployment Rate Oct 22 - Sep 23 | Annual Change (2021/22-2022/23) | | Change pre-pandemic 2019/20 - 2022/23 | |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Fife | 3.7% | -0.2 | ↓ | -0.4 | ↓ |
| Scotland | 3.4% | 0.0 | — | +0.1 | ↑ |
| Great Britain | 3.7% | 0.0 | — | -0.2 | ↓ |

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey (the Fife unemployment rate is a model-based estimate). The changes shown represent the difference in percentage points between the latest rate and the rates for previous periods.

In the 12 months to September 2023, Fife's unemployment rate increased from the record low of 3.4% recorded during the previous period (Jul 2022-Jun 2023) to 3.7%. An estimated 6,600 people aged 16 and over were unemployed, 500 more than the previous period (Jul 2022-Jun 2023). In the 12 months to September 2023, Fife's employment rate also fell from 76.2% to 75.0% - a rate slightly lower than that for Scotland as a whole (75.2%) for the same period.

1.3 ECONOMIC INACTIVITY

% of working age (16-64) residents who are neither working nor seeking or available to work

| | Economic Inactivity Rate Oct 22 – Sep 23 | Annual Change (2021/22 – 2022/23) | | Change pre-pandemic 2019/20 – 2022/23 | |
|----------|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Fife | 22.3% | -3.0 | ↓ | -2.5 | ↓ |
| Scotland | 22.1% | -0.7 | ↓ | -0.9 | ↓ |
| UK | 21.3% | -0.3 | ↓ | +0.2 | ↑ |

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey. The changes shown represent the difference in percentage points between the latest inactivity rate and the rates for previous periods.

Around 50,200 people or 22.3% of Fife's working age population were 'economically inactive' in the year ending September 2023. This is less than the record high of 60,900 people (26.9%) economically inactive in the year ending June 2022 and is **lower than prior to the Covid pandemic**. Long term ill-health was the reason given for not being in employment or seeking work by 36% of those who were economically inactive in Fife (an estimated 18,100 people). **An estimated 8,400 people – 16.8% of those who are economically inactive - want a job**. This is a fewer number of people than a year ago when an estimated 11,900 or 20.9% of economically inactive people wanted a job.

2.0 PROFILE OF FIFE'S OUT-OF-WORK BENEFIT CLAIMANTS

2.1 Breakdown by Type of Claimant

The number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit who are required to seek work

| February 2024 | Claimant Rate | Claimant Count | Claimant Count - monthly change | | Claimant Count - annual change | |
|---|---------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| People on Universal Credit who are searching for work | 3.0% | 7,037 | +254 | ↑ | -393 | ↓ |
| Jobseeker's Allowance claimants | 0.2% | 525 | +12 | ↑ | -112 | ↓ |

Source: Department for Work & Pensions; ONS Jobseeker's Allowance

Note: claimant count data may not precisely add to the sum of the number of people claiming JSA and the number of people claiming Universal Credit required to seek work due to independent rounding.

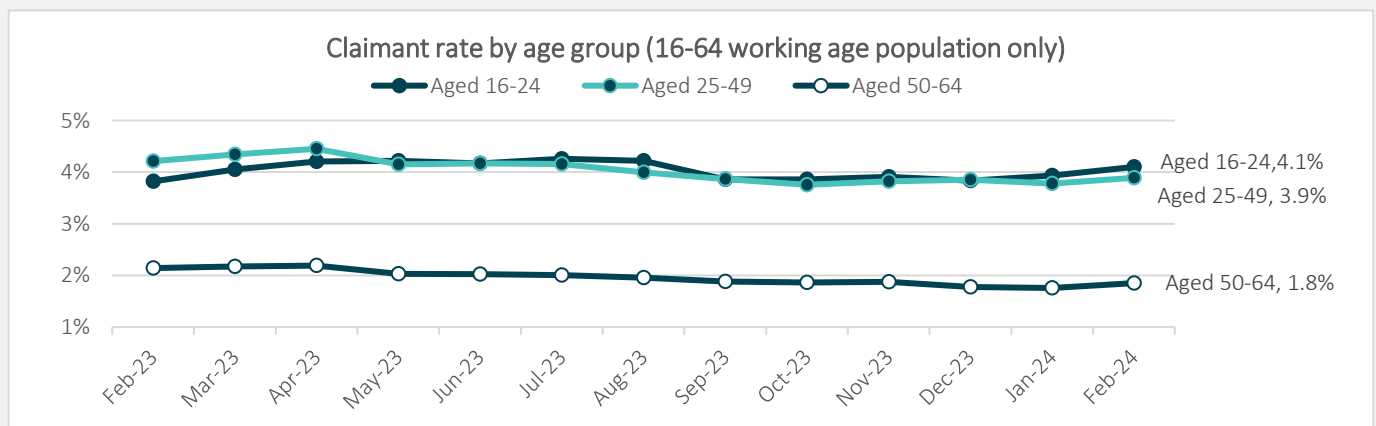
An estimated 254 more people claimed Universal Credit while searching for work in Fife compared with the previous month but 393 fewer than a year ago in February 2023. There were 12 more Job Seeker's Allowance claimants compared with the previous month, but 112 fewer than a year ago.

2.2 Breakdown by Age

| February 2024 | Claimant Rate | Claimant Count | Claimant Count - monthly change | | Claimant Count - annual change | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| 16-24 year olds claiming benefits | 4.1% | 1,595 | +65 | ↑ | +110 | ↑ |
| 25-49 year olds claiming benefits | 3.9% | 4,355 | +125 | ↑ | -360 | ↓ |
| 50-64 year olds claiming benefits | 1.8% | 1,495 | +75 | ↑ | -235 | ↓ |
| 65+ year olds claiming benefits | 0.1% | 115 | 0 | → | -25 | ↓ |

Source: ONS Claimant Count

Whilst all working age groups saw the number of people claiming out-of-work benefits rise, the 16-24 year old age group was the only age group to see both a monthly and an annual increase. In February, this age group had the highest claimant rate for the second month running.



Source: ONS Claimant Count

2.3 Breakdown by Gender

| February 2024 | Claimant Rate | Claimant Count | Claimant Count - monthly change | | Claimant Count - annual change | |
|------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Female claimants | 2.5% | 2,985 | +70 | ↑ | -110 | ↓ |
| Male claimants | 4.0% | 4,580 | +200 | ↑ | -395 | ↓ |

Source: ONS Claimant Count

There were 200 more men claiming out-of-work benefits than in January, and 70 more women.

The male claimant rate (4.0%) still remains significantly higher than the female rate (2.5%).

2.4 Breakdown by Fife's Local Committee Areas

In this areal breakdown, the monthly and annual change is given for the claimant count and rate for each of Fife Council's seven [Local Area Committees](#). For the claimant rate, the change represents the difference in percentage points between the previous and current claimant rate.

| February 2024 | Claimant Rate | Monthly change | | Annual change | | Claimant Count | Monthly change | | Annual change | |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|---|---------------|---|----------------|----------------|---|---------------|---|
| Cowdenbeath | 4.2% | +0.2 | ↑ | -0.2 | ↓ | 1,085 | +55 | ↑ | -50 | ↓ |
| Dunfermline | 2.7% | +0.2 | ↑ | -0.2 | ↓ | 990 | +50 | ↑ | -70 | ↓ |
| Glenrothes | 3.1% | 0.0 | ▬ | -0.1 | ↓ | 960 | 0 | ▬ | -25 | ↓ |
| Kirkcaldy | 5.1% | +0.2 | ↑ | -0.3 | ↓ | 1,855 | +65 | ↑ | -130 | ↓ |
| Levenmouth | 4.6% | +0.1 | ↑ | -0.6 | ↓ | 1,050 | +40 | ↑ | -140 | ↓ |
| North East Fife | 1.7% | 0.0 | ▬ | -0.1 | ↓ | 805 | +35 | ↑ | -15 | ↓ |
| South & West Fife | 2.4% | 0.0 | ▬ | -0.3 | ↓ | 760 | +10 | ↑ | -80 | ↓ |

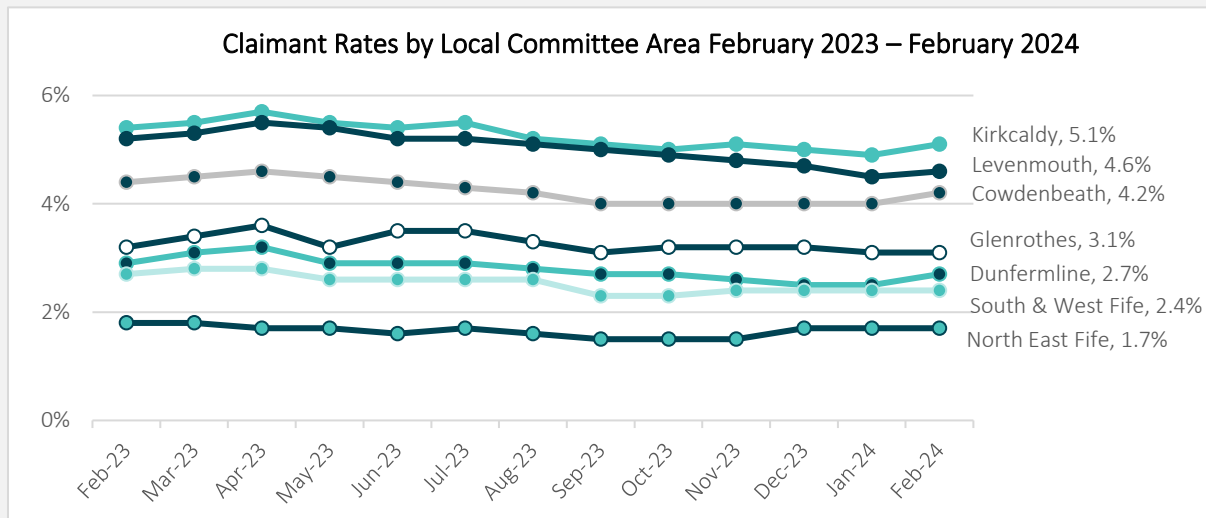
Source: ONS Claimant Count

All parts of Fife saw the number of people claiming out-of-work benefits rise apart from Glenrothes. The Cowdenbeath, Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and Levenmouth committee areas also saw their claimant rates rise.

In all committee areas, both claimant numbers and claimant rates were lower than a year ago.

The Kirkcaldy Area, Levenmouth and Cowdenbeath had the highest numbers and rates of people claiming out-of-work benefits and North East Fife had the lowest.

2.4 Breakdown by Fife's Local Committee Areas (continued)



Source: ONS Claimant Count

2.5 Breakdown by Gender and Local Committee Area

| February 2024 | Female Claimant Count | Female Claimant Rate | Male Claimant Count | Male Claimant Rate |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Cowdenbeath | 415 | 3.1% | 670 | 5.4% |
| Dunfermline | 405 | 2.2% | 590 | 3.2% |
| Glenrothes | 385 | 2.5% | 575 | 3.9% |
| Kirkcaldy | 725 | 3.9% | 1,130 | 6.3% |
| Levenmouth | 360 | 3.1% | 695 | 6.4% |
| North East Fife | 340 | 1.5% | 465 | 2.1% |
| South & West Fife | 330 | 2.1% | 430 | 2.8% |

Source: ONS Claimant Count

In all areas of Fife, the number and rate of men claiming out-of-work benefits were both higher than the number and rate of women.

The greatest differences were in **Levenmouth**, where the male claimant rate was more than twice as high as the female rate, followed by the **Cowdenbeath Area**. The difference was lowest in **South & West Fife**.

2.6 Breakdown by Electoral Ward (February 2024)

| WARDS WITH THE HIGHEST CLAIMANT RATES | | WARDS WITH THE LOWEST CLAIMANT RATES | |
|---------------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------|------|
| Kirkcaldy Central | 7.2% | Tay Bridgehead and Cupar | 2.2% |
| Kirkcaldy East | 6.2% | Inverkeithing & Dalgety Bay | 2.0% |
| Buckhaven, Methil & Wemyss Villages | 6.1% | St Andrews | 0.7% |

Source: ONS Claimant Count


Kirkcaldy Central, **Kirkcaldy East** and **Buckhaven, Methil & Wemyss Villages** remain the electoral wards with the highest claimant rates in Fife.

3.0 CLAIMANT RATES IN FIFE'S CITY REGIONS

Fife is part of two City Region Deals – the [Edinburgh & SE Scotland City Region Deal](#) and the [Tay Cities Region Deal](#). This section shows the percentage of working age residents claiming out-of-work benefits in each of the local authorities that make up the two City Regions.

3.1 Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region

Claimant Rate by Local Authority



| | Jan 2024 | Feb 2024 | Monthly change | | Annual change | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------------|---|---------------|---|
| City of Edinburgh | 2.3% | 2.4% | +0.1 | ↑ | +0.1 | ↑ |
| East Lothian | 2.3% | 2.4% | +0.1 | ↑ | +0.2 | ↑ |
| Fife | 3.1% | 3.3% | +0.2 | ↑ | -0.2 | ↓ |
| Midlothian | 2.2% | 2.2% | -0.1 | → | -0.1 | ↓ |
| Scottish Borders | 2.9% | 3.1% | +0.2 | ↑ | +0.1 | ↑ |
| West Lothian | 2.6% | 2.7% | +0.1 | ↑ | +0.1 | ↑ |

Source: ONS Claimant Count. The changes shown represent the differences in percentage points between this month's claimant rates and the rates for previous periods.

3.2 Tay Cities Region

Claimant Rate by Local Authority and Fife Council Local Committee Area



| | Jan 2024 | Feb 2024 | Monthly change | | Annual change | |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------------|---|---------------|---|
| Angus | 2.8% | 2.8% | 0.0 | → | -0.2 | ↓ |
| Dundee | 4.0% | 4.1% | +0.1 | ↑ | -0.2 | ↓ |
| North East Fife | 1.7% | 1.7% | 0.0 | → | -0.1 | ↓ |
| Perth & Kinross | 2.1% | 2.2% | +0.1 | ↑ | -0.1 | ↓ |

Source: ONS Claimant Count. The changes shown represent the differences in percentage points between this month's claimant rates and the rates for previous periods.

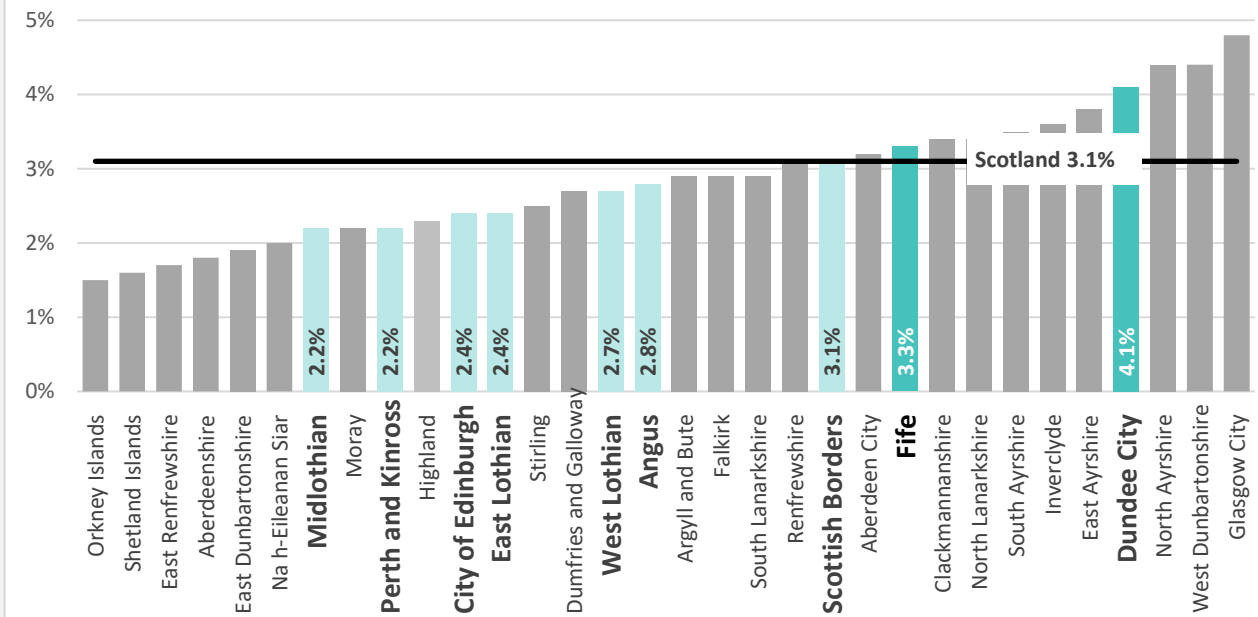
In February, **Midlothian, Angus and NE Fife** were the only parts of both city regions where claimant rates did not rise compared with the previous month. Fife and Midlothian were the only parts of the Edinburgh and SE Scotland City Region where the claimant rate was lower than a year ago; in all parts of the Tay Cities Region claimant rates were lower than February 2023.

As in previous months, **Fife's claimant rate (3.3%)** was the second highest after **Dundee (4.1%)**.

As shown in the graph below, **Fife and Dundee** were the only City Region Local Authorities whose claimant rates were above the Scottish rate.

Note: The Tay Cities Region captures North East Fife only, and the Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region covers an area in the South and West of Fife as indicated on the maps. Care should be taken when using these geographies.

Scottish Local Authority Claimant Rates - February 2024



Source: ONS Claimant Count

CLAIMANT COUNT STATISTICS

The claimant counts and claimant rates given in this update are based on experimental data collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The claimant count represents the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance plus the number of people on Universal Credit who are required to search for work and are available for work.

Universal Credit replaces six legacy benefits and tax credits (including Jobseeker's Allowance and Income-related Employment and Support Allowance) and was fully introduced in Fife on 6 January 2017 after initially going live in the region in April 2016.

Universal Credit requires more people to look for work than was the case for legacy benefits; new claimants who are waiting on or appealing Work Capability Assessments are also required to look for work.

The claimant count dataset is still classified by the ONS as experimental statistics. Please note that care should therefore be taken when analysing and interpreting the figures.

Claimant Count, Jobseekers Allowance and Universal Credit statistics are provisional on their date of release and are subject to revision.

For more information and to access all the labour market statistics from official sources for the UK visit www.nomisweb.co.uk.

For further information about the content of this publication, or to request any bespoke economic information, please contact:

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