

FIFE LABOUR MARKET UPDATE - JANUARY 2026

This quarterly update reports on the performance of Fife’s labour market presenting the latest data on **People in Work** (rates of employment, the number of employees and earnings); **People Out of Work** (unemployment and inactivity rates along with the number of people in Fife claiming out-of-work benefits); and the number and type of **Job Postings**.

PEOPLE IN WORK

1.0 Employment Rate

As shown in Table 1, during the 12 months to September 2025, an estimated **73.9% of people aged 16 to 64 years in Fife were in work**. This was lower than the employment rate during the same period the previous year (75.3%), but 2.3 percentage points higher than the rate prior to the pandemic in 2019/20 (71.6%).

In comparison, the estimated Scottish employment rate (74.4%) was higher than the previous year but lower than before the pandemic.

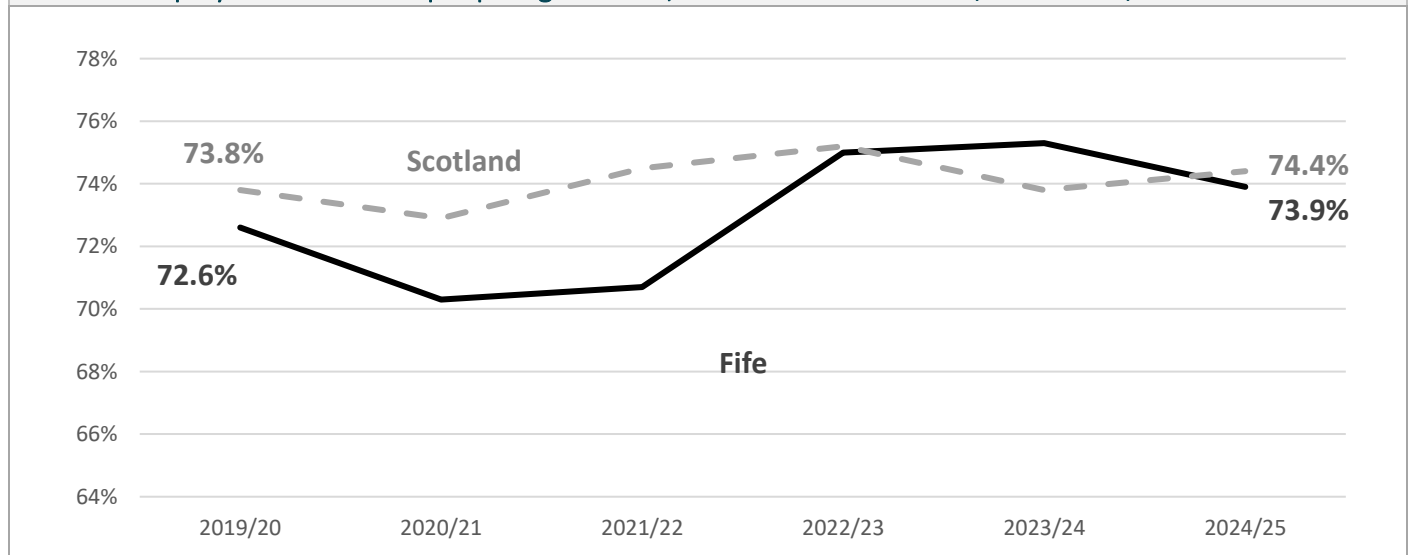
Fife’s employment rate fell to slightly below the Scottish rate after having been higher in 2023/24 (Chart 1). It is also more volatile than the Scottish rate, which could be related to the fact that Fife estimates are less robust than those for Scotland due to smaller sample sizes at the sub-national level.

Table 1: Percentage of people aged 16-64 in work in Fife and Scotland

	Employment Rate Oct 2024- Sep 2025	Annual Change (2023/24 – 2024/25)		Difference with pre-pandemic rate (2019/20 – 2024/25)	
Fife	73.9%	-1.4 pp	↓	+2.3 pp	↑
Scotland	74.4%	+0.6 pp	↑	-0.1 pp	↓

Source: Annual Population Survey, Oct-Sep datasets, Office for National Statistics. The changes shown represent the difference in percentage points (pp) between the latest rates and the rates for previous periods.

Chart 1: Employment Rates for people aged 16-64, Fife and Scotland 2019/20 to 2024/25



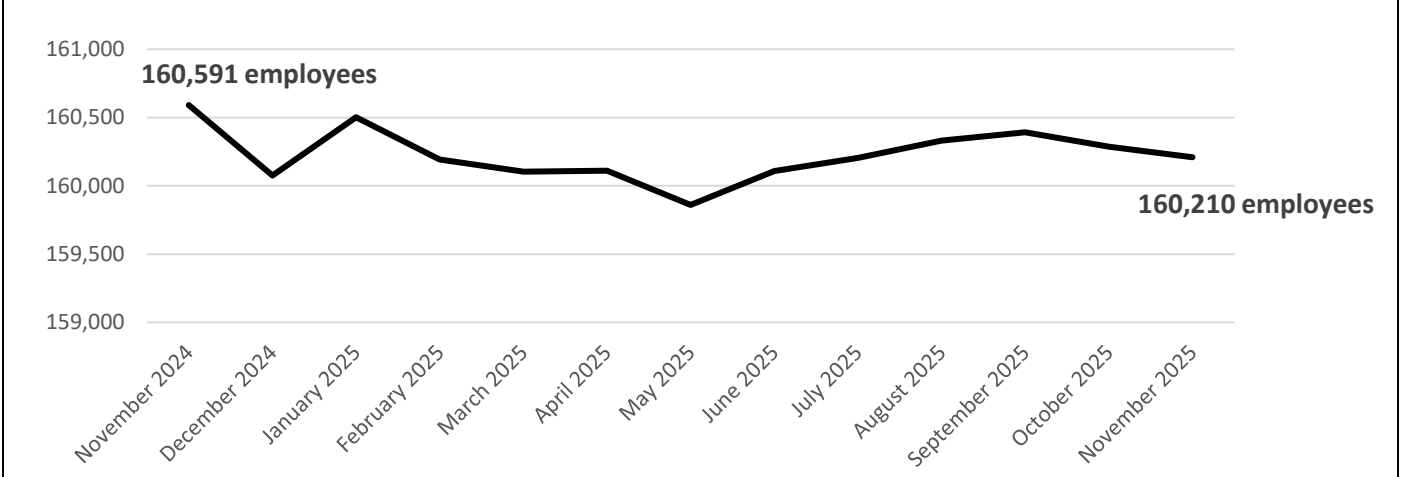
Source: Annual Population Survey, Oct-Sep datasets, Office for National Statistics .

2.0 The Number of Payrolled Employees

In November 2025, there were an estimated **160,210 payrolled employees in Fife**, 381 or -0.2% fewer than the same period the previous year (November 2024).

The number of payrolled employees in Fife fell by 77 jobs (-0.0%) between October and November 2025.

Chart 2: Number of payrolled employees living in Fife November 2024 - November 2025



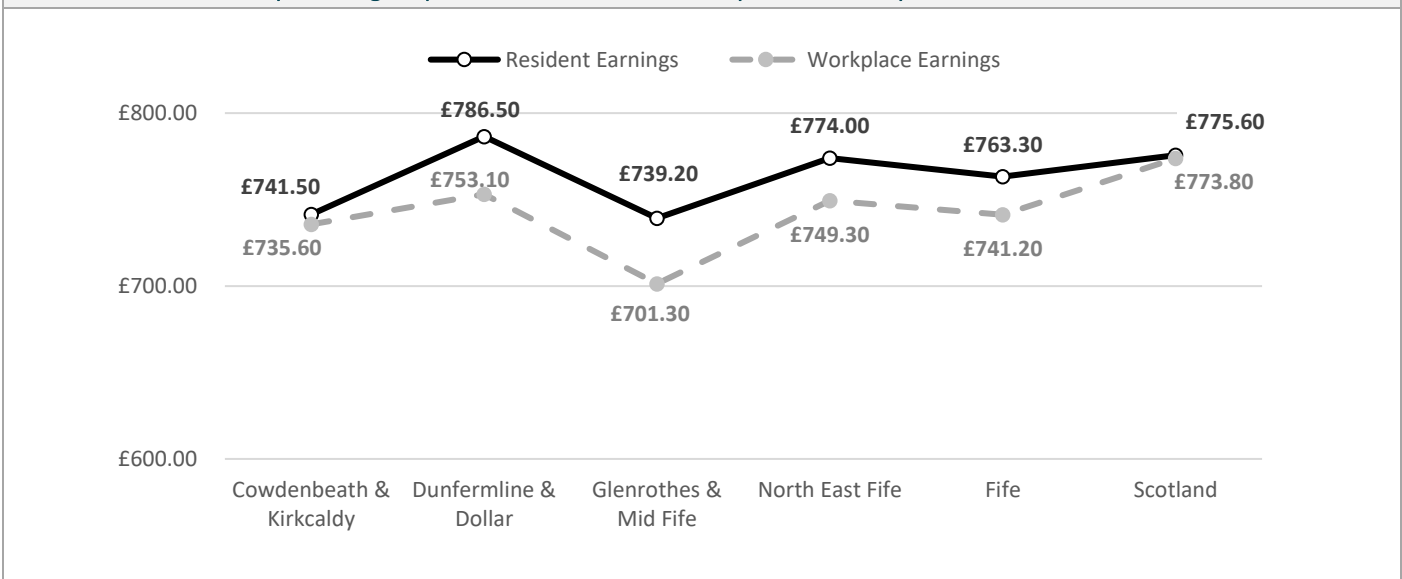
Source: Earnings and Employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted, Office for National Statistics. The data are based on where employees live and not the location of their work.

3.0 EARNINGS

Resident earnings represent the average earnings of people who live in the area, but do not necessarily work in the area. Workplace earnings are the average earnings of those who work in the area, but do not necessarily live there.

Dunfermline & Dollar UK Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA) was the only parts of Fife where resident earnings were above Scottish average earnings (Chart 3). Workplace earnings were below Scottish averages in all parts of Fife. The Dunfermline & Dollar PCA had both the highest resident and workplace earnings and Glenrothes & Mid Fife had the lowest. The largest gap between resident and workplace earnings was in the Glenrothes & Mid Fife PCA (a difference of £37.90).

Chart 3: Median Weekly Earnings, April 2025: UK Parliamentary Constituency Areas, Fife, Scotland



Source: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. Estimates below the Fife level should be viewed with caution due to small sample sizes. The data do not include the self-employed. Median weekly earnings = the median gross weekly pay for full-time workers.

PEOPLE NOT IN WORK

4.0 Unemployment Rate

In the 12 months to September 2025, Fife's unemployment rate was higher than the same period the previous year but lower than prior to the pandemic in 2019/20. It was also higher than the unemployment rate for Scotland as a whole. An estimated 7,100 people aged 16 and over were unemployed in Fife over this period.

Table 2: Percentage 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 2024-Sep 2025	Annual Change (2023/24 – 2024/25)		Difference with pre-pandemic rate (2019/20-2024/25)	
Fife	3.9%	+0.7 pp	↑	-0.2 pp	↓
Scotland	3.7%	+0.4 pp	↑	+0.3 pp	↑

Source: Model-Based Estimates of Unemployment, Sep-Oct datasets, Office for National Statistics. The changes shown represent the difference in percentage points (pp) between the latest rate and the rates for previous periods.

5.0 Economic Inactivity Rate

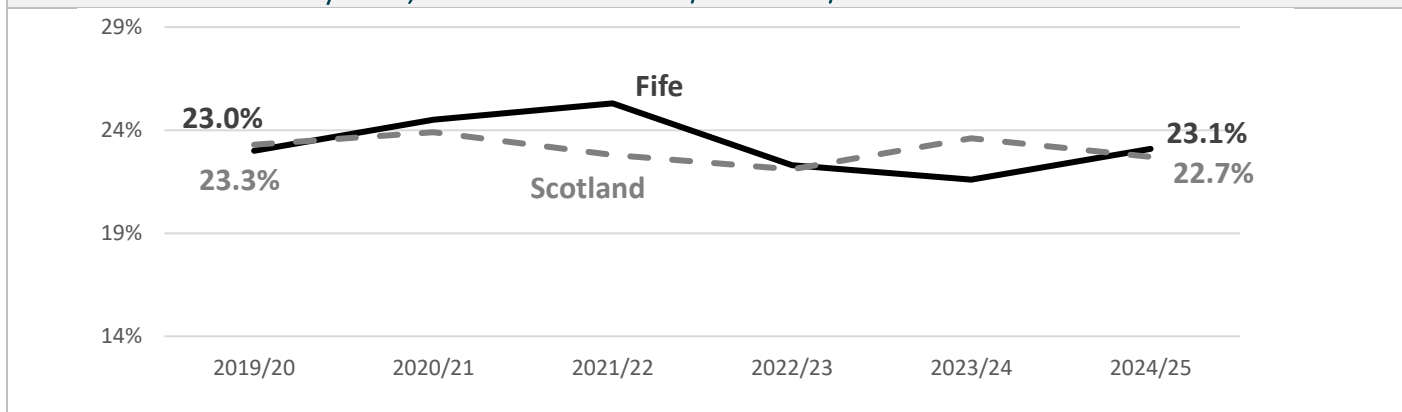
An estimated 52,500 people in Fife, **23.1% of the area's working age population, were 'economically inactive'¹** during the year ending September 2025. This is more people than the same period the previous year (48,000) but fewer than prior to the Covid pandemic in 2019/20 (54,500). Fife's economic inactivity rate rose above the Scottish rate in 2024/25 after falling below it in 2023/24 (Chart 4).

Table 3: Percentage of working age (16-64) residents who are neither working nor seeking or available to work

	Economic Inactivity Rate Oct 2024-Sep 2025	Annual Change (2023/24 – 2024/25)		Difference with pre-pandemic rate (2019/20-2024/25)	
Fife	23.1%	+0.3 pp	↑	-2.0 pp	↓
Scotland	22.7%	+0.2 pp	↑	0	—

Source: Annual Population Survey, Jul-Jun datasets, Office for National Statistics. The changes shown represent the difference in percentage points (pp) between the latest inactivity rate and the rates for previous periods.

Chart 4: Economic Inactivity Rates, Fife and Scotland 2019/20 to 2024/25



Source: Annual Population Survey, Oct-Sep datasets, Office for National Statistics.

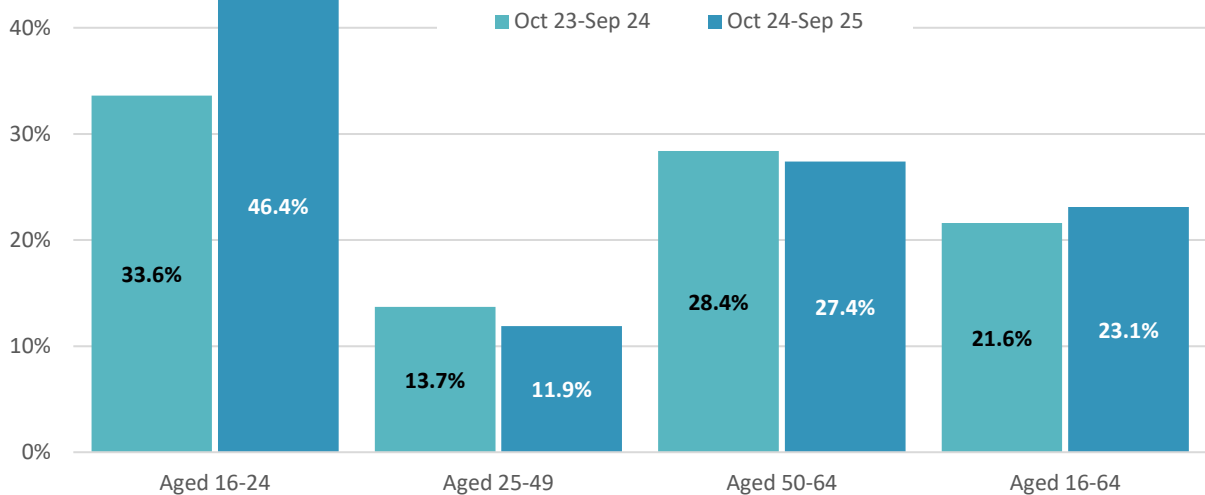
¹ Those who are economically inactive are people aged 16 and over without a job who have not sought work in the last four weeks and/or who are not available to start work in the next two weeks, ie they are neither employed nor unemployed. Economic inactivity estimates at the Fife level should be viewed with caution due to small sample sizes.

5.1 Economic Inactivity Rate by Age

The 16-24 age group had the highest rate of economic inactivity (46.4%) and the 25-49 age group the lowest (11.9%) during the 12 months to September 2025 (Chart 5).

Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, the proportion of people aged 16-24 who were economically inactive increased significantly while the proportion aged over 25 years fell.

Chart 5: Economic inactivity rates in Fife by age group, 2023/24 and 2024/25



Source: Annual Population Survey, Oct-Sep datasets, Office for National Statistics. These estimates should be viewed with caution due to small sample sizes at the Fife level.

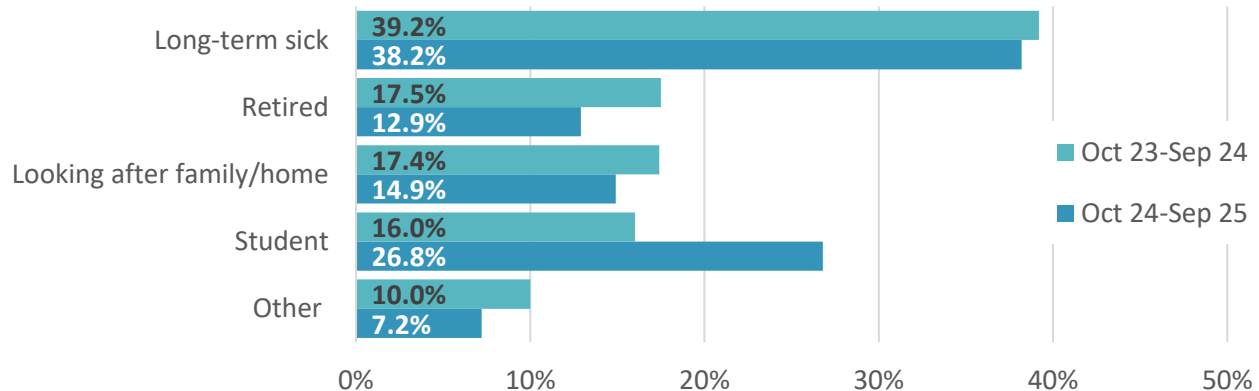
5.2 Economic Inactivity Rate by Reason for Inactivity

Long-term ill-health was the main reason given for not being in employment or seeking work in Fife. In 2024/25, 38.2% of inactive people aged 16 to 64 (an estimated 20,000 people) gave their reason for being inactive as 'long-term sick or disabled' (Chart 6). This was higher than the Scottish rate (33.8%) and more people than the same period the previous year (an estimated 19,100 people).

Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, **the number and proportion of inactive students also increased significantly** while the number and proportion of people inactive **due to retirement and caring responsibilities fell**.

14.9% of those who were economically inactive (an estimated 7,800 people) had caring responsibilities.

Chart 6: Reasons for Economic Inactivity in Fife, 2023/24 and 2024



Source: Annual Population Survey, Oct-Sep datasets, Office for National Statistics. These estimates should be viewed with caution due to small sample sizes at the Fife level.

6.0 Claimants of Out-of-Work Benefits (Claimant Count)

The information in this section is based estimates of the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits collected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in its Claimant Count dataset. Due to the provisional nature of the latest monthly statistics (for December 2025), the average claimant counts and claimant rates for the last quarter (Oct-Dec 2025) are given for sections 6.2 – 6.6. All data are rounded to the nearest 5 and totals may not therefore equal the sums of breakdowns.

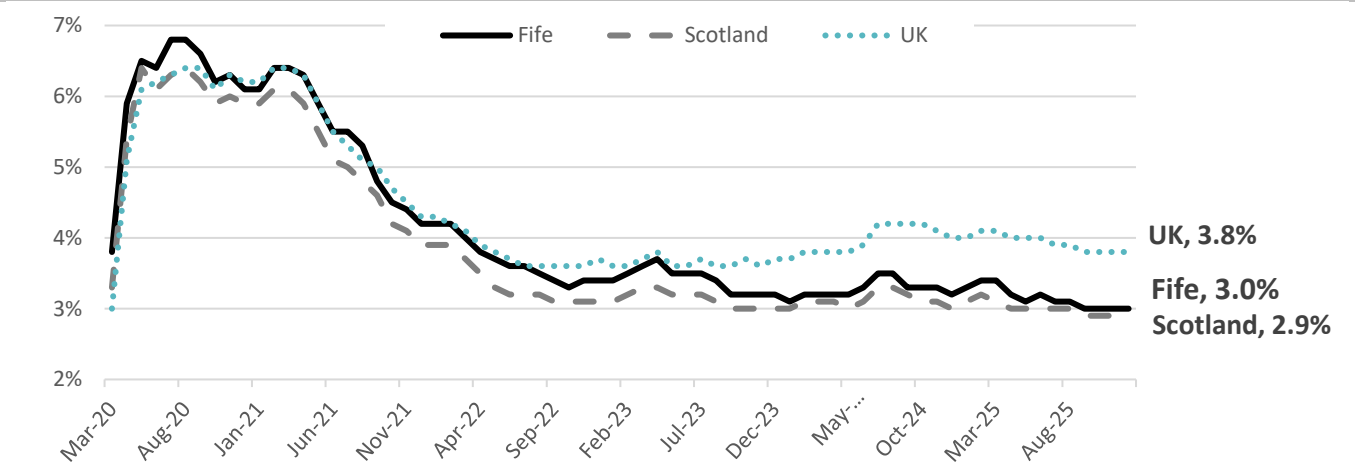
6.1 Fife, Scotland & UK Claimant Rates March 2020 - December 2025

After falling significantly in 2021 and 2022, the number and rate of people claiming out-of-work benefits in Fife remained fairly steady throughout 2023, 2024 and 2025 (Chart 7).

In December 2025, Fife's claimant rate was 3.0% with an estimated 6,940 people claiming out-of-work benefits in the region.

Fife's claimant rate has been below the 2019 pre-pandemic rate of 3.8% since September 2022. Fife's claimant rates are consistently higher than the rates for Scotland as a whole, but are below the UK rates.

Chart 7: Percentage of working age (16-64) residents claiming out-of-work benefits – Fife, Scotland and UK, February 2020 to December 2025



Source: ONS Claimant Count.

6.2 Profile of Fife's Out-of-Work Benefit Claimants

6.2.1 Type of Claimant

Between October and December 2025, around **160 fewer people claimed Universal Credit while searching for work** in Fife compared with the previous quarter and 585 fewer than during the same quarter a year ago. There were **40 more Job Seeker's Allowance claimants** compared with the previous quarter but 55 fewer than a year ago.

Table 4: Number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit who are required to seek work

	Average Number of Claimants (Oct-Dec 25)	Change with previous quarter		Annual change	
People on Universal Credit who are searching for work	6,585	-160	↓	-585	↓
Jobseeker's Allowance claimants	360	+40	↑	-55	↓

Sources: Department for Work & Pensions; ONS Jobseeker's Allowance. The change represents the difference between the average claimant count for the latest quarter (Oct-Dec 2025), the previous quarter (Jul-Sep 2025) and previous year (Oct-Dec 2024).

6.2.2 Age Profile

The 16-24 year old age group had the highest average claimant rates (3.7%) (Table 5).

There were fewer out-of-work benefit claimants in all age groups compared to the previous quarter apart from those aged 50-64 years. All age groups had fewer claimants than the same period a year ago.

Table 5: Age Profile of Claimants

	Average Claimant Rate	Average Claimant Count	Claimant Count - quarterly change		Claimant Count – annual change	
16-24 year olds claiming benefits	3.7%	1,510	-40	↓	-45	↓
25-49 year olds claiming benefits	3.6%	3,895	-80	↓	-420	↓
50-64 year olds claiming benefits	1.8%	1,445	+15	↑	-160	↓
65+ year olds claiming benefits	0.1%	100	-10	↓	-5	↓
All people aged 16+ claiming benefits	3.0%	6,950	-115	↓	-635	↓

Source: ONS Claimant Count. The change represents the difference between the average claimant count for the latest quarter (Oct-Dec 2025), the previous quarter (Jul-Sep 2024) and previous year (Oct-Dec 2024).

6.2.3 Gender Profile

Fife's male claimant rate (3.6%) was significantly higher than the female rate (2.4%) (Table 6).

Both genders saw claimant numbers and rates fall over both the quarter and the year.

Table 6: Gender Profile of Claimants

	Average Claimant Rate	Average Claimant Count	Claimant Count - quarterly change		Claimant Count - annual change	
Female claimants	2.4%	2,895	-20	↓	-350	↓
Male claimants	3.6%	4,059	-110	↓	-275	↓

Source: ONS Claimant Count. The change represents the difference between the average claimant count for the latest quarter (Oct-Dec 2025), the previous quarter (Jul-Sep 2025) and previous year (Oct-Dec 2024).

6.3 Breakdown of Claimants by Fife's Local Committee Areas²

Claimant rates and numbers fell in all parts of Fife compared with the previous quarter apart from in the Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy Areas.

In all areas, claimant numbers were lower than a year ago.

The Kirkcaldy Area and Levenmouth had the highest numbers and rates of people claiming out-of-work benefits followed by the Cowdenbeath and Glenrothes Areas; North East Fife and South & West Fife had the lowest.

Table 7: The average number and rate of out-of-work benefit claimants by Local Committee Area, Oct-Dec 2025

	Claimant Count	Claimant Rate	Quarterly rate change		Annual rate change	
Cowdenbeath	945	3.7%	-0.2	↓	-0.4	↓
Dunfermline	900	2.4%	-0.1	↓	-0.3	↓
Glenrothes	955	3.2%	+0.1	↑	0.0	↔
Kirkcaldy	1,695	4.6%	0.0	↔	-0.4	↓
Levenmouth	965	4.3%	-0.1	↓	-0.4	↓
North East Fife	785	1.6%	-0.1	↓	-0.2	↓
South & West Fife	695	2.3%	-0.1	↓	-0.2	↓
Fife	6,950	3.0%	-0.1	↓	-0.3	↓

Source: ONS Claimant Count. The change represents the difference in percentage points between the average claimant rates for the latest quarter (Oct-Dec 2025), the previous quarter (Jul-Sep 2025) and previous year (Oct-Dec 2024).

6.4 Breakdown by Gender and Local Committee Area

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

The greatest differences were in Levenmouth and the Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy Areas. The difference was lowest in South & West Fife.

Table 8: Average Claimant Counts and Rates by Gender July to September 2025

	Female Claimant Count	Female Claimant Rate	Male Claimant Count	Male Claimant Rate
Cowdenbeath	380	2.9%	565	4.6%
Dunfermline	370	1.9%	535	2.9%
Glenrothes	420	2.7%	535	3.6%
Kirkcaldy	690	3.7%	1,010	5.6%
Levenmouth	385	3.3%	580	5.3%
North East Fife	330	1.3%	460	2.0%
South & West Fife	315	2.1%	380	2.5%

Source: ONS Claimant Count.

² Fife Council's seven [Area Committees](#).

6.5 Breakdown by Age and Local Committee Area

In all parts of Fife, with the exception of North East Fife, 16-24 year olds had the highest rate of people claiming out-of-work benefits of the three main working age groups (Chart 8).

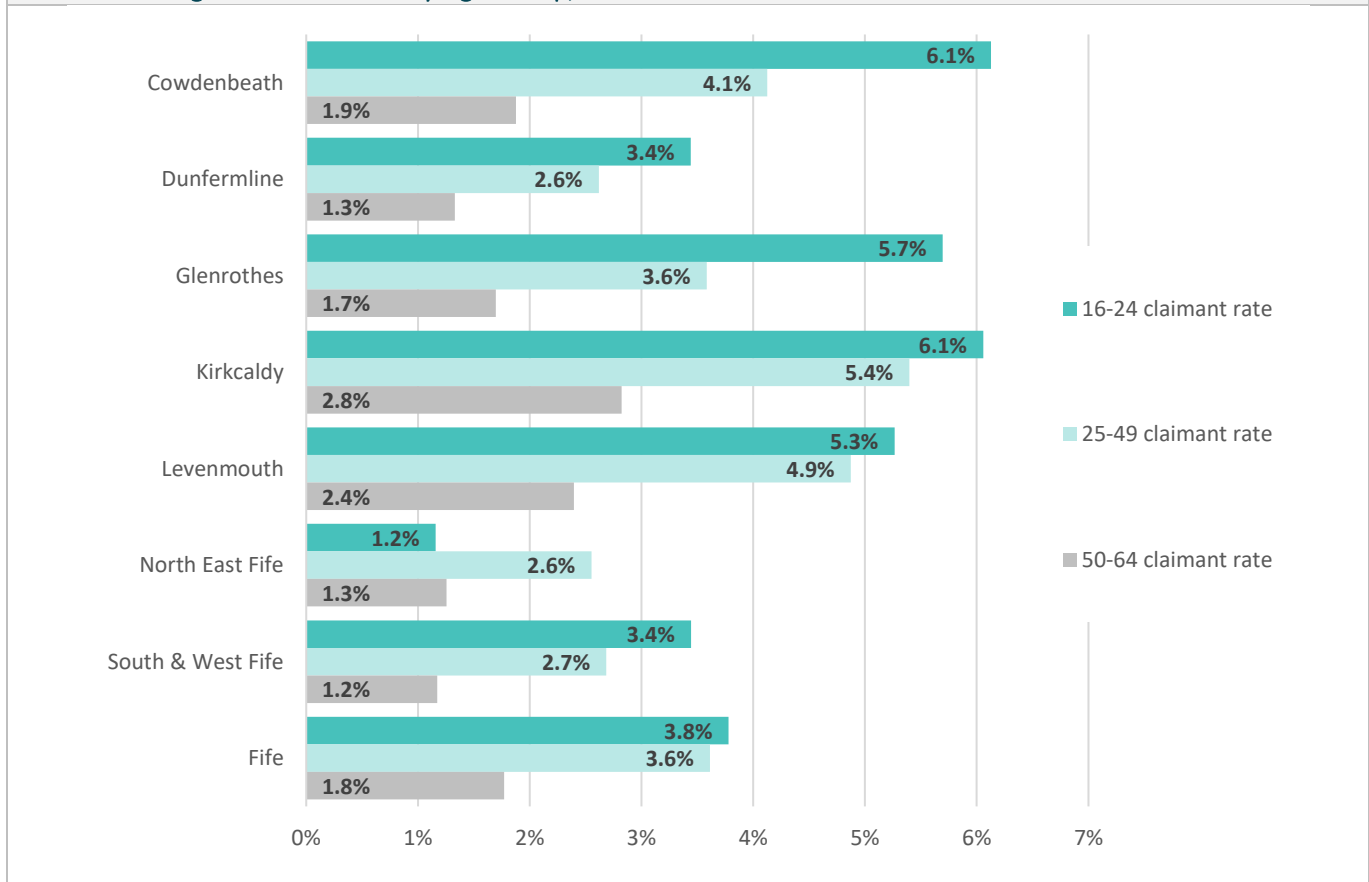
In the Cowdenbeath and Kirkcaldy Areas, the 16-24 age group's claimant rate was the highest of all age groups in Fife (6.1%).

The Kirkcaldy Area had the highest claimant rates for all three age groups.

North East Fife had a particularly low 16-24 year old claimant rate (1.2%).

North East Fife, Dunfermline and South & West Fife had the lowest claimant rates for people aged 50-64 years (1.2%-1.3%).

Chart 8: Average Claimant Rates by Age Group, October-December 2025



Source: ONS Claimant Count, Oct-Dec 2025 average rates.

6.6 Breakdown of Claimants by Electoral Ward

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

Table 9: Electoral Wards with the Highest and Lowest Claimant Rates in Fife

WARDS WITH THE HIGHEST CLAIMANT RATES		WARDS WITH THE LOWEST CLAIMANT RATES	
Kirkcaldy Central	6.3%	Howe of Fife & Tay Coast	1.9%
Kirkcaldy East	5.6%	Inverkeithing & Dalgety Bay	1.9%
Buckhaven, Methil & Wemyss Villages	5.3%	St Andrews	0.7%

Source: ONS Claimant Count, Oct-Dec 2025 average rates.

JOB POSTINGS³

7.0 Number and Type of Job Postings

There were 9,178 unique postings for jobs in Fife between October and December 2025. This was 15.3% more job postings than the previous quarter and 30.4% more than the same period in 2024.

The median advertised salary was £13.88 per hour

Employment Activities⁴ saw the largest number of job postings followed by Retail Trade, Public Administration & Defence and Human Health Activities (Table 10).

Care Workers & Home Carers were the most posted occupation followed by Cleaners & Domestic and Teaching Professionals (Table 11).

Table 10: Top Posting Industries

Industry	Number of unique job postings Oct-Dec 2025
Employment Activities ⁴	1,173
Retail Trade (except of motor vehicles & motorcycles)	494
Public Administration & Defence; Compulsory Social Security	438
Human Health Activities	403
Residential Care Activities	366
Food & Beverage Service Activities	344
Manufacture of Other Transport Equipment	300
Services to Buildings & Landscape Activities	192
Education	188
Accommodation	175

Source: Lightcast. Industries defined using 2-digit Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code definitions.

Table 11: Top Posted Occupations

Occupation (Standard Occupational Classification)	Number of unique job postings Oct-Dec 2025
Care Workers & Home Carers	541
Cleaners & Domestic	445
Teaching Professionals (not elsewhere classified)	443
Sales Related Occupations (not elsewhere classified)	298
Sales & Retail Assistants	211
Kitchen & Catering Assistants	209
Deliverypersons & Van Salespersons	206
Market Research Interviewers	189
Chefs	145
Customer Service Occupations (not elsewhere classified)	144

Source: Lightcast.

³ Job postings are job vacancies that employers advertise online.

⁴ Employment Activities = activities of employment placement agencies & other human resources provision.

DATA SOURCES

The data used in this update come from the following sources:

Annual Population Survey

The Office for National Statistics' (ONS) Annual Population Survey (APS), which combines results from its Labour Market Survey with English, Welsh and Scottish boosts, provides data on employment, unemployment and economic inactivity.

Data are obtained from a sample survey and are therefore subject to some error. In addition, over the last several years, and particularly since the pandemic, sample sizes have fallen dramatically. The ONS states that although the APS estimates as robust at a national (Scottish) level, there are concerns with the quality of estimates for smaller groups of the population, for example local authority level estimates. Users are therefore advised to note the increased uncertainty around the estimates for employment, unemployment and economic inactivity.

Earnings and Employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted

This Office for National Statistics dataset provides earnings and employment statistics from Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) at the UK, NUTS 1,2 and 3 areas and local authorities each month - [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted - Office for National Statistics](#).

The data are based on where employees live rather than the location of their work and are official statistics in development.

Claimant Count

Claimant counts and claimant rates given in this update are based on experimental data collected by the Office for National Statistics. 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. In addition, from May 2024, the Department for Work and Pensions rolled out an increase in the administrative earnings threshold for full work search conditionality.

The claimant count dataset is still classified by the ONS as experimental statistics. These figures are also not seasonally adjusted so that each month's figures will be influenced by seasonal effects. Please note that care should therefore be taken when analysing and interpreting the figures.

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

Job Postings

[Lightcast](#) provides detailed local labour market insights and job posting analytics to enable the identification of trends across industries and regions to see what skills are in demand.

For further information about the content of this publication, or to request any bespoke economic information, please contact fifemeansbusiness@fife.gov.uk

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