

# Work Audit



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## Age, gender, and the jobs recession

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It's well known that young people aged 16–24 have been hit relatively hard by the jobs recession that began four years ago. A previous Work Audit has also highlighted the relative impact of job losses and rising unemployment on men and women. However, less attention is given to what's happened to men and women across the age spectrum, which as this Work Audit finds, sheds further light on the way in which people will have experienced the prolonged weakness in the labour market since the start of 2008.

### Gender, jobs and unemployment

Comparing the labour market situation at the outset of the recession with the latest available official data shows that men overall have fared less well than women (Table 1).

By the start of 2012 there were 387,000 fewer men in work (a net fall of 2.4%) than in the first quarter of 2008. By contrast the number of women in work was only 8,000 (0.05%) lower.

The number of unemployed men has increased by 600,000 since 2008. The number of unemployed women has also increased substantially, by almost half a million, to reach a record level of 1.12 million, although this is not primarily due to fewer jobs for women but instead to a relatively large rise of 438,000 in the number of women participating in the labour market.

Even accounting for this, the gender unemployment gap (that is, the difference between the male and female unemployment rate) has increased from 0.8 percentage points to 1.3 percentage points. However, compared with 2008 women account for a larger share of total long-term unemployment (up from 31% to 36%).

The relatively stronger employment outcome for women is the result of a substantial rise of 172,000 (16.3%) in the number of women in self-employment (Table 2). The number of women working full-time as employees has fallen by 220,000 (3%), partly offset by a small rise in part-time employment (0.1%). For men the pattern is rather different, with a relatively large fall in full-time employees (552,000, or 4.7%), a relatively larger rise in part-time employees (9.7%) and a relatively smaller rise in self-employment (2%).

Available comparable data for the final quarter of 2007 and the final quarter of 2011 indicate that compared with men, women have seen relatively strong net employment growth in managerial, professional and technical occupations but have done less well in traditionally feminised occupations.

The number of women in administrative, secretarial, sales and customer services roles has fallen by almost 400,000 since the start of the recession (Table 3). Somewhat

surprisingly, the number of men performing this kind of semi-skilled white-collar work has increased, the net fall in male employment resulting from substantial job loss in skilled and semi-skilled blue-collar occupations – skilled trades and plant, process and machine operation – and unskilled work.

### Age, jobs and unemployment

Two broad age groups have clearly fared better than others in the jobs recession (Table 4). The number of 25–34-year-olds in employment has increased by 249,000 (4%) and the number of people aged 50 and over by 392,000 (4.9%). Both these age groups have seen an increase in the number of people participating in the labour market. In the case of 25–34-year-olds this is likely to have been driven by inward migration, while for the over 50s the driving force is a combination of population ageing and fewer workers wanting to retire early, either for financial reasons or because of a broader desire to prolong their working lives.

The age groups to lose out are not only 16–24-year-olds but also the early middle aged 35–49-year-olds, though for the latter this is partly due to fewer people in the demographic group. Unemployment levels and rates have increased in every age group. However, for the 25–34-year-olds and the 50 and over group, higher unemployment is associated with rising employment and a larger number of people participating in the labour market. The older people get, the more likely it is that they will remain out of work for longer when unemployed, although long-term unemployment rates have increased more for younger than older people since the start of the jobs recession.

### Gender, age, jobs and unemployment

Comparisons across gender and age highlight two stand-out groups, women aged 50–64 and women aged 65 and over (Table 5). There are 271,000 (8%) more women aged 50–64 in the labour market than at the start of the recession and 200,000 (6.2%) more in work. The number of men in this age group in work is broadly unchanged but a 122,000 (3%) increase in the number participating in the labour market has raised their unemployment rate relative to that of their women contemporaries.

Women aged 50–64, and men and women aged 65 and over are the only age groups to have registered an increase in both the number in work and employment rates since the start of the jobs recession and also registered the smallest increases in unemployment.

Men have much higher rates of long-term unemployment than women in every age group although the share of women who are long-term unemployed has increased in all age groups (Table 6).

**Table 1: Net change in UK employment, unemployment and economic activity and inactivity by gender, January–March 2008 to November–January 2011–2012 (seasonally adjusted)**

	Employment		Unemployment		Activity		Inactivity	
	000s	%	000s	%	000s	%	000s	%
<b>Men</b>								
2008	15,959	67.0	939	5.6	16,897	70.9	6,923	29.1
2012	15,572	63.3	1,540	9.0	17,112	69.5	7,502	30.5
Change	-387	-3.7	+601	+3.4	+215	-1.4	+579	+1.4
<b>Women</b>								
2008	13,552	53.9	680	4.8	14,231	56.6	10,891	43.4
2012	13,544	52.6	1,126	7.7	14,669	57.0	11,087	43.0
Change	-8.0	-1.3	+446	+2.9	+438	+0.4	+196	-0.4

Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey

**Table 2: Net change in full-time and part-time UK employment by gender, January–March 2008 to November–January 2011–2012 (seasonally adjusted)**

	Employees		Self-employed	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
<b>Men (000s)</b>				
2008	11,696	1,341	2,416	393
2012	11,144	1,472	2,383	482
Change (000s)	-552	+131	-33	+89
Change %	-4.7	+9.7	-1.4	+22.6
<b>Women (000s)</b>				
2008	7,295	5,095	515	535
2012	7,075	5,139	581	641
Change (000s)	-220	+44	+66	+106
Change %	-3.0	+0.9	+12.8	+19.8

Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey

**Table 3: Net change in UK employment by occupation and gender, October–December 2007 to October–December 2011 (not seasonally adjusted)**

	Men		Women	
	change (000s)	change (%)	change (000s)	change (%)
Managers and senior officials	+95	+3.3	+99	+6.4
Professional occupations	-57	-2.3	+95	+5.7
Associate professional and technical occupations	-17	-0.8	+122	+5.6
Administrative and secretarial occupations	+55	+7.7	-254	-9.4
Skilled trades	-184	-6.1	-5	-1.9
Personal services	+79	+20.1	+153	+7.7
Sales and customer services	+32	+4.2	-137	-9.1
Process, plant and machine operatives	-239	-12.7	-39	-15.1
Elementary occupations	-106	-5.4	+34	+2.2

Source: Office for National Statistics, data not seasonally adjusted

**Table 4: Net change in employment, unemployment, activity and inactivity by age, January–March 2008 to November–January 2012**

	Employment		Unemployment		Activity		Inactivity	
	000s	(pp)	000s	(pp)	000s	(pp)	000s	(pp)
16–17	-211	-11.7	+42	+15.2	-169	-8.0	+55	+8.0
18–24	-419	-8.5	+313	+8.0	-106	-3.3	+227	+3.3
25–34	+249	-2.7	+263	+3.4	+515	-0.1	+82	+0.1
35–49	-406	-1.2	+230	+2.1	-176	+0.7	-123	-0.7
50–64	+206	-0.3	+187	+2.3	+393	+1.2	-23	-1.2
65+	+106	+1.2	+10	+0.8	+196	+1.4	+558	-1.4
All	-395	-2.5	+1,048	+3.2	+653	-0.3	+775	-0.5

Note: pp refers to percentage point change in rate

Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey

Table 5: Net change in employment, unemployment, activity and inactivity by age and gender, January–March 2008 to November–January 2012

	Employment		Unemployment		Activity		Inactivity	
	000s	(pp)	000s	(pp)	000s	(pp)	000s	(pp)
<b>16–17</b>								
Male	-124	-13.7	+19	+17.6	-105	-10.3	+45	-10.3
Female	-88	-10.0	+24	+13.2	-64	-5.5	+11	+5.5
<b>18–24</b>								
Male	-267	-10.3	+200	+9.6	-66	-3.7	+122	+3.7
Female	-152	-6.7	+113	+6.1	-39	-3.0	+106	+3.0
<b>25–34</b>								
Male	+134	-0.4	+141	+3.3	+275	-1.0	+67	+1.0
Female	+116	-1.6	+122	+3.4	+238	+1.1	+15	-1.1
<b>35–49</b>								
Male	-208	-1.3	+118	+2.1	-91	+0.6	-46	-0.6
Female	-198	-1.1	+112	+2.2	-85	+0.7	-77	-0.7
<b>50–64</b>								
Male	+3	-2.1	+118	+2.7	+122	-0.1	+46	+0.1
Female	+202	+1.4	+69	+1.7	+271	+2.6	-69	-2.6
<b>65+</b>								
Male	+75	+0.7	+5	+0.7	+80	+0.8	+347	-0.8
Female	+111	+1.7	+5	+1.0	+117	+1.8	+211	-1.8

Note: pp refers to percentage point change in rate

Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey

Table 6: Long-term unemployment by age and gender

	LTU Nov–Jan 2012 (000s)	% age group LTU	%all LTU	%all LTU Jan–Mar 2008
<b>16–17</b>				
Male	22	19.2	2.6	2.0
Female	14	14.1	1.6	1.0
<b>18–24</b>				
Male	151	29.0	17.7	18.7
Female	66	21.7	7.8	5.8
<b>25–50</b>				
Male	246	39.1	28.8	32.0
Female	171	30.3	20.0	18.2
<b>50+</b>				
Male	127	46.8	14.8	16.0
Female	57	36.6	6.7	6.3

Note: LTU refers to people unemployed for more than a year

Source: Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey