

# Buckinghamshire Works

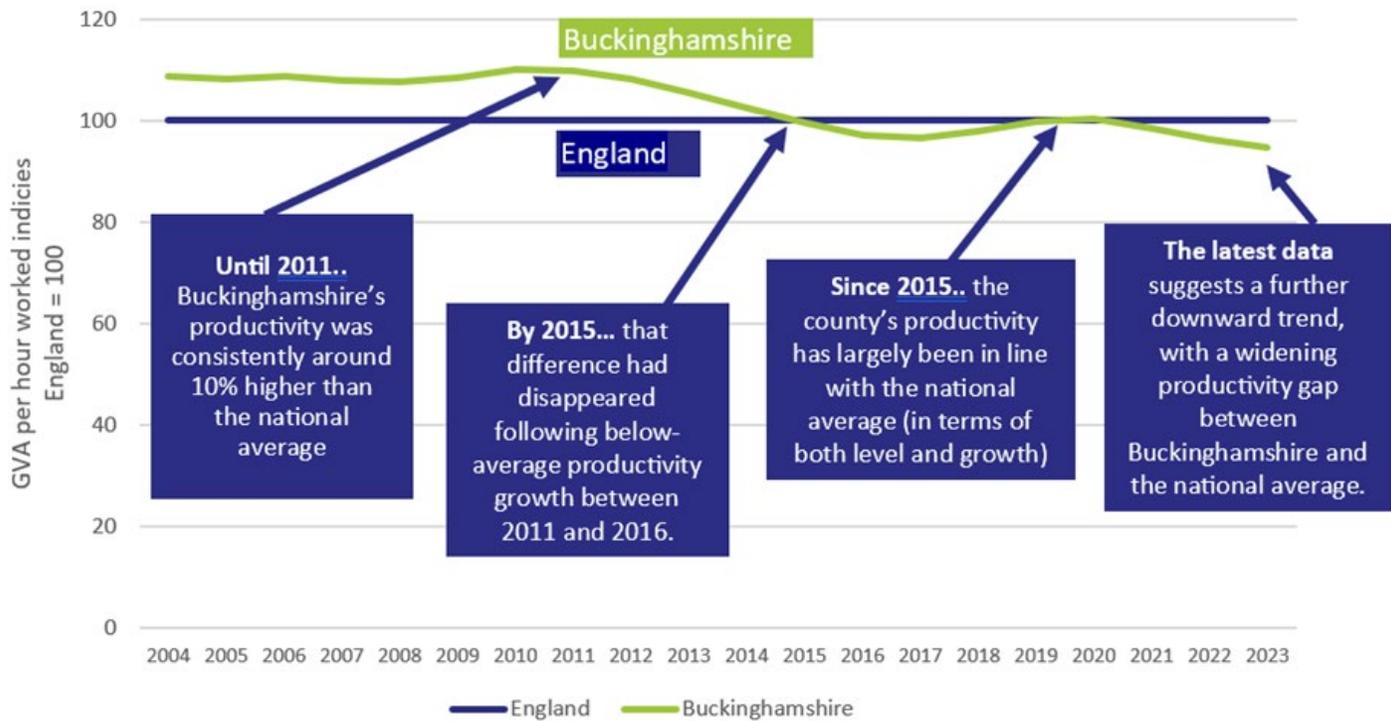
Evidence Pack

November 2025

Economy

# The Buckinghamshire economy is relatively strong, but is not performing as well as it used to

Productivity (GVA per hour worked) indices – Buckinghamshire versus England



## Why?

Structural change within the economy

- Low productivity sectors growing more quickly than high productivity sectors
- High productivity sectors growing more slowly than the national average
- *(public sector productivity performance has been about average)*

## Why have we seen structural change?

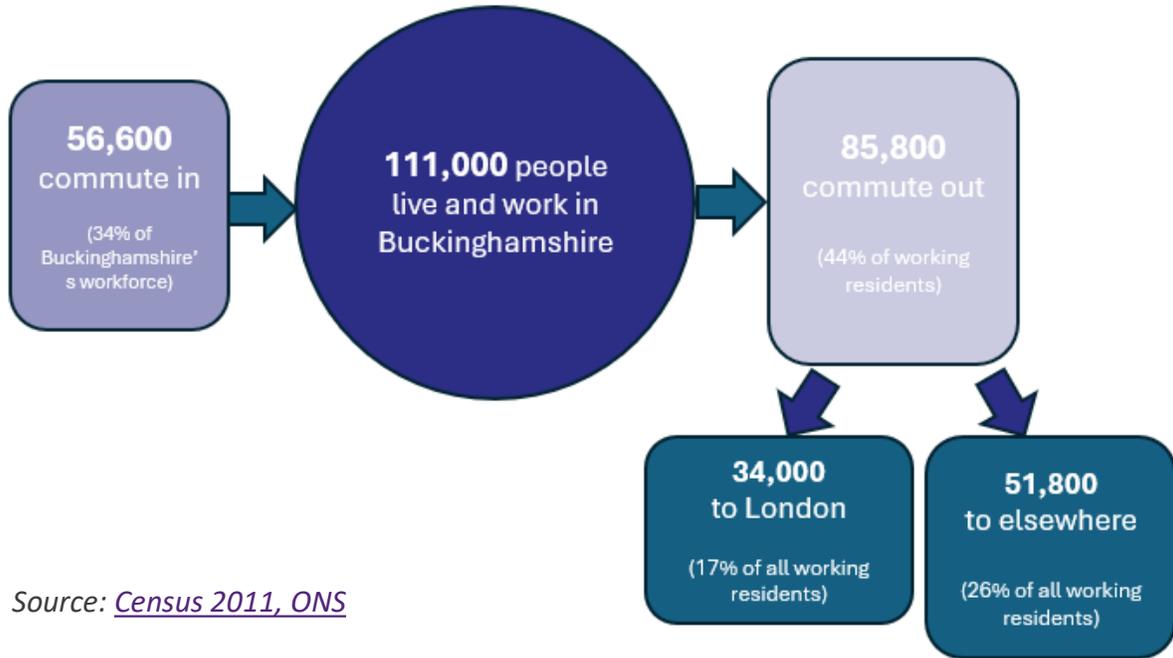
- Loss of some high-value firms (closures, relocations)
- Few high-value firms growing within / moving into the county
- Growth of the local consumer economy

## Skills and productivity

Studies by the OECD, ONS and McKinsey suggest that improving management, higher-order cognitive and digital skills, yield the highest productivity returns.

Source: *Current price (smoothed) GVA per hour worked, ONS, 2025*

# Buckinghamshire is a net exporter of workers, with 29,200 more residents leaving the county for work than non-residents commuting in.



Source: [Census 2011, ONS](#)

Note 1: We continue to present commuting patterns using 2011 Census data as 2021 data was heavily influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Note 2: Hybrid workers who work for an out-of-county employer are recorded as out-commuters. The value that they create for their employer is allocated to the area in which the employer is located.

Buckinghamshire’s labour market is ‘leaky’, with 44% of working residents leaving the county for work and 34% of those working in the Buckinghamshire economy travelling in from elsewhere.

London is a key destination for those leaving the county for work, with 17% of all working residents working in central or greater London.

There are some sector specific commuting patterns. Within the film and TV sector for example (which is concentrated in the south of the county), film crews of up to 1,000 per large production, primarily freelancers, move between studios.

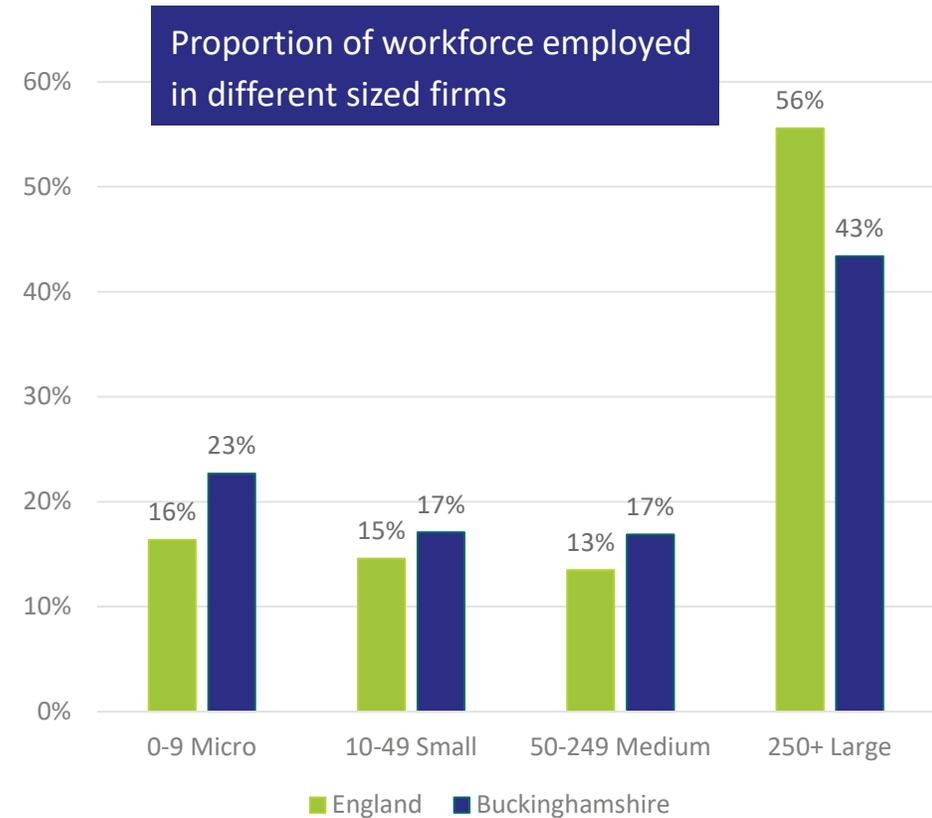
*\*Commuting patterns matter when undertaking local labour market and skills analysis, particularly when trying to compare data on the demand for, and supply of, skills. For example, whilst Buckinghamshire may have a large number of highly qualified residents, high levels of out-commuting, often for high paid jobs, means that the skills of many of these residents are not available to Buckinghamshire employers, nor are these individuals directly contributing to the output and productivity of the local economy\*.*

# SMEs are more dominant in the Buckinghamshire economy than nationally

Small and Medium-Sized companies (SMEs) are more dominant in the Buckinghamshire economy than nationally, particularly micro firms (employing fewer than 10 people).

Micro firms (*VAT/PAYE registered*) provide 23% of jobs in Buckinghamshire, compared with 16% nationally.

Around 40% of all Buckinghamshire's (*VAT/PAYE registered*) SMEs operate in high-value / tradable industries



Labour demand

# Buckinghamshire firms find it harder to recruit than the national average

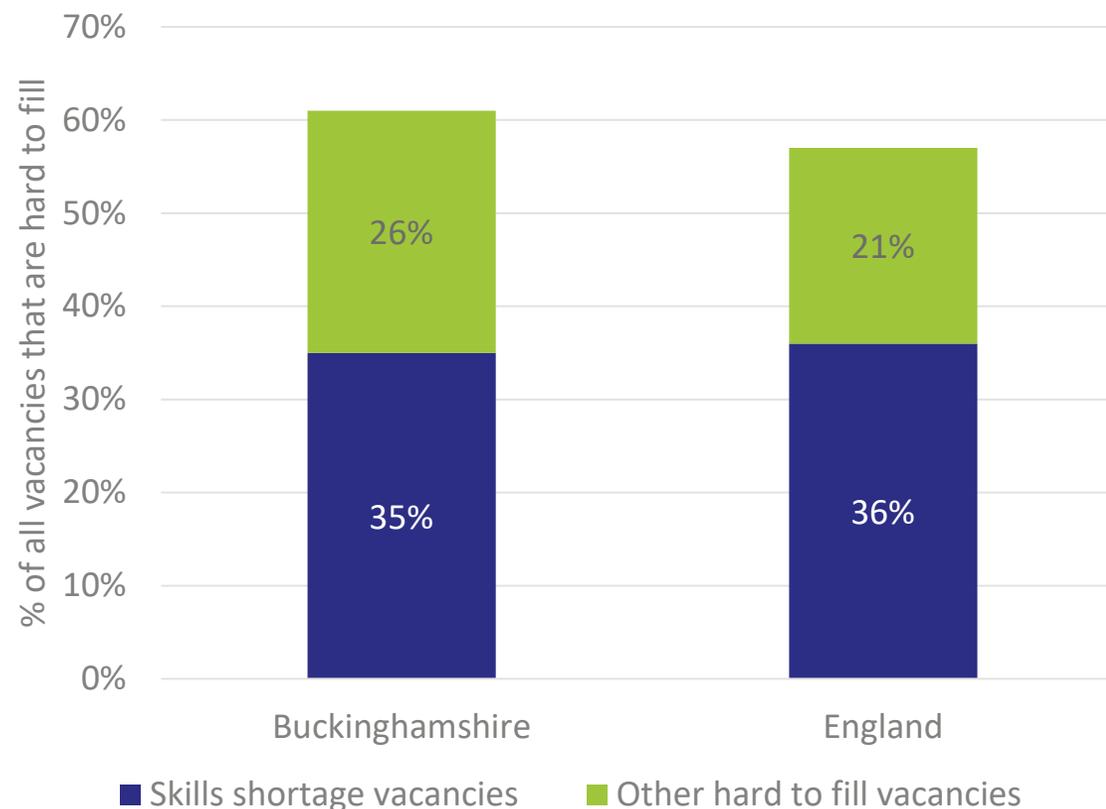
## Hard to fill vacancies – employer base

	Buckinghamshire	England
Have at least one vacancy	26%	23%
Have at least one vacancy that is hard-to-fill	18%	15%
Have a skill-shortage vacancy	12%	10%
Average vacancies per establishment with vacancies	2.8	2.8

Examining vacancies at employer level (table) we see that Buckinghamshire employers are more likely to have vacancies, to have a hard-to-fill vacancy and to have a skills shortage vacancy\* than the national average. The overall average number of vacancies per establishment with vacancies is in line with the national average at 2.8.

At vacancy level, just over a third (35%) of vacancies in Buckinghamshire were skills shortage vacancies in 2022. This is slightly lower than the national average (36%). 26% of vacancies were hard-to-fill for other reasons\*\*, higher than the national average of 21%.

## Hard to fill vacancies – vacancy base



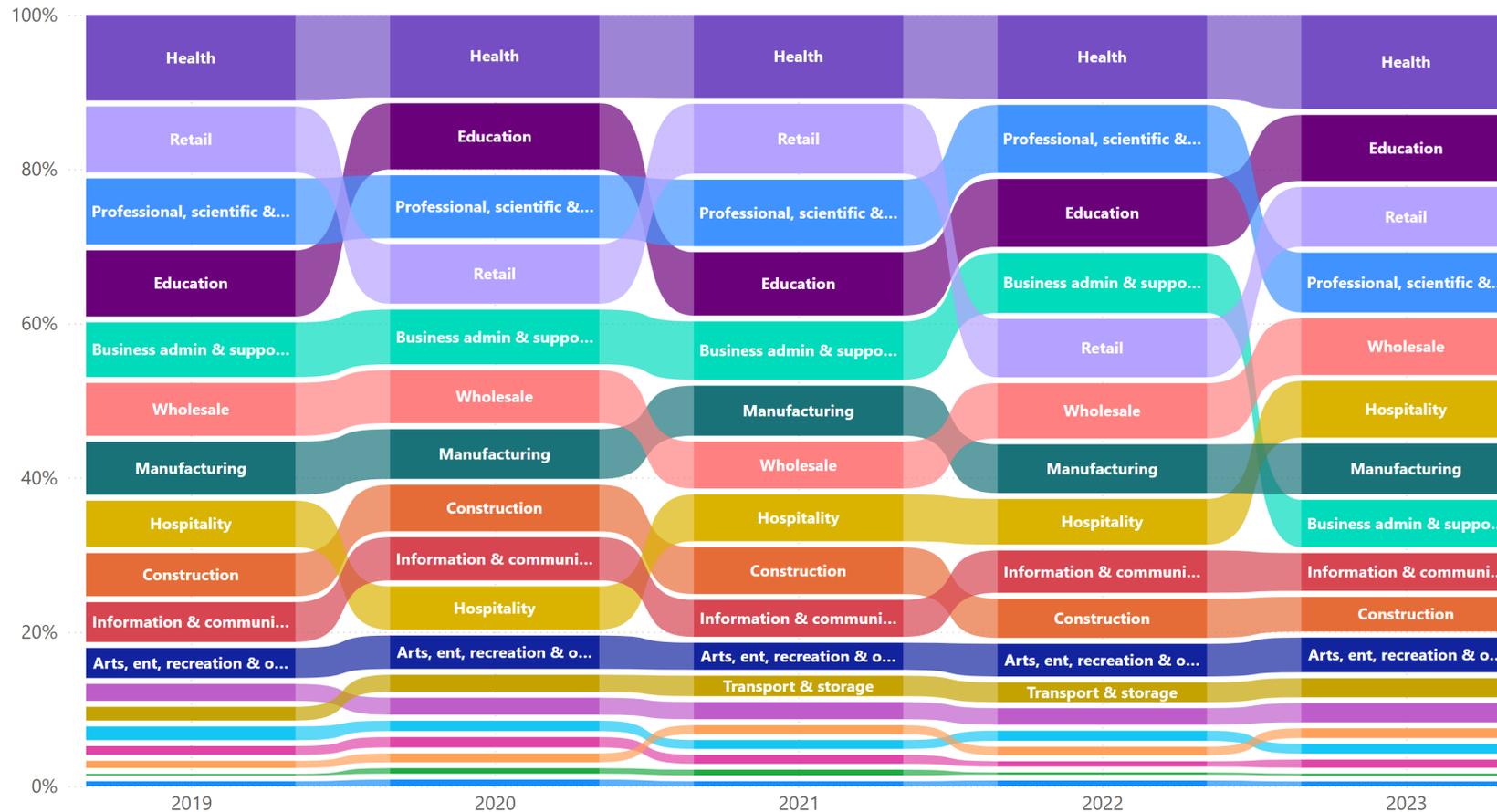
Source: Employer Skills Survey 2022, DfE

\*a skills shortage vacancy is a vacancy that is proving hard-to-fill due to a lack of applicants with the required skills or qualifications.

\*\*other reasons for vacancies proving difficult to fill include: job conditions (e.g. hours, pay), remote or difficult to reach location, nature of the job

# The health sector has been Buckinghamshire largest sector (in terms of employee jobs) over the last five years.

Share of employees by sector in Buckinghamshire, 2019 to 2023



Over the last five years, the proportion of the Buckinghamshire workforce employed in different sectors has remained relatively stable. The health sector has consistently been the largest employer each year, whilst the education, retail and professional, scientific & technical sectors have consistently occupied the remaining top four positions, with the exception of retail in 2022.

The biggest change in recent years has been the decrease in the number of employees working in the business admin & support sector between 2022 and 2023. With the data suggesting a drop of 3,500 employees. The drop appears to be associated with a handful of large outsourcing firms based in Wycombe and Aylesbury.

# The NHS generates by far the greatest number of job vacancies in Buckinghamshire

Estimates suggest that an average of 4,400 Buckinghamshire-based job vacancies were advertised online per month during 2024.

Whilst not all job postings can be attributed to a specific employer (many firms do not include their name on job adverts), of those who do, employers posting the most jobs in 2024 were the NHS (by far) and Buckinghamshire Council.

Identifiable private sector employers posting a relatively large number of jobs included Johnson & Johnson (life sciences), Sodexo (contracted services), Tesco (supermarket) and Danaher (life sciences).

## Unique job postings – by employer, 2024

Company	Number of job postings
NHS	4400
Buckinghamshire Council	1000
Paradigm Housing Group	200
Buckinghamshire College Group	200
Johnson & Johnson	150
Sodexo	100
Tesco	100
Danaher	100
Prospect Health	100
Mitchells & Butlers	100
Maria Mallaband Care Group	100
Dunbar Education	100
The Fremantle Trust	100
Orion Electrotech	100
Biffa	100
Wayman Education	100
Softcat Plc	100
Ministry of Justice	100
Stantec	100

Source: Lightcast, 2025

## Over the last eight years, there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of Apprenticeship starts at Level 4, and a sharp decrease in the proportion of starts at Level 2

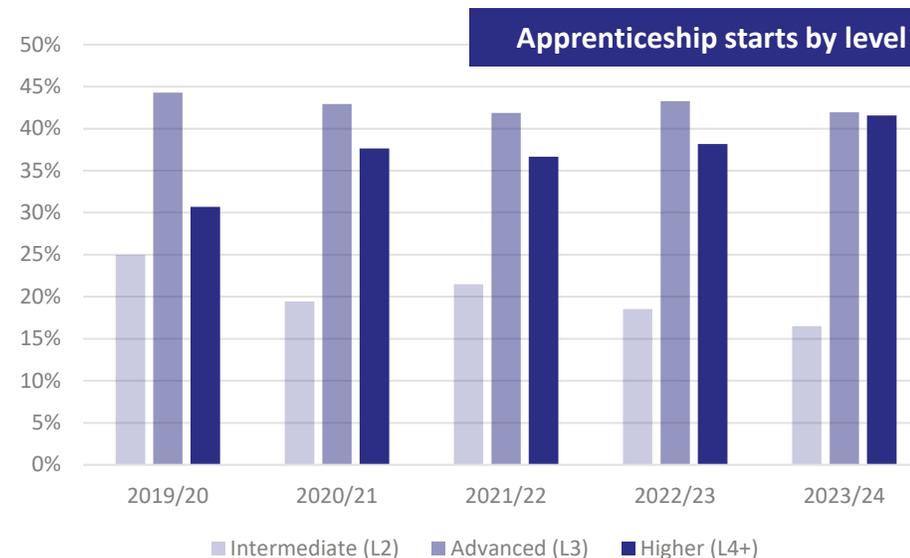
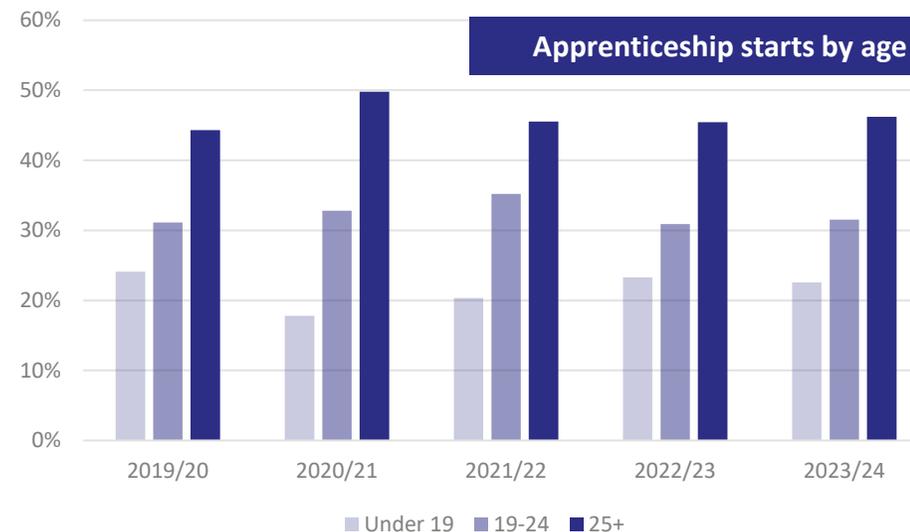
A similar proportion of Apprenticeships are started by women (52%) as men (48%).

The age profile of those starting Apprenticeships has remained fairly similar over the last five years, with a slight increase in older starters (44% in 2023/4 compared with 42% in 2019/20), and a slight decrease in starts by those aged 18 and under.

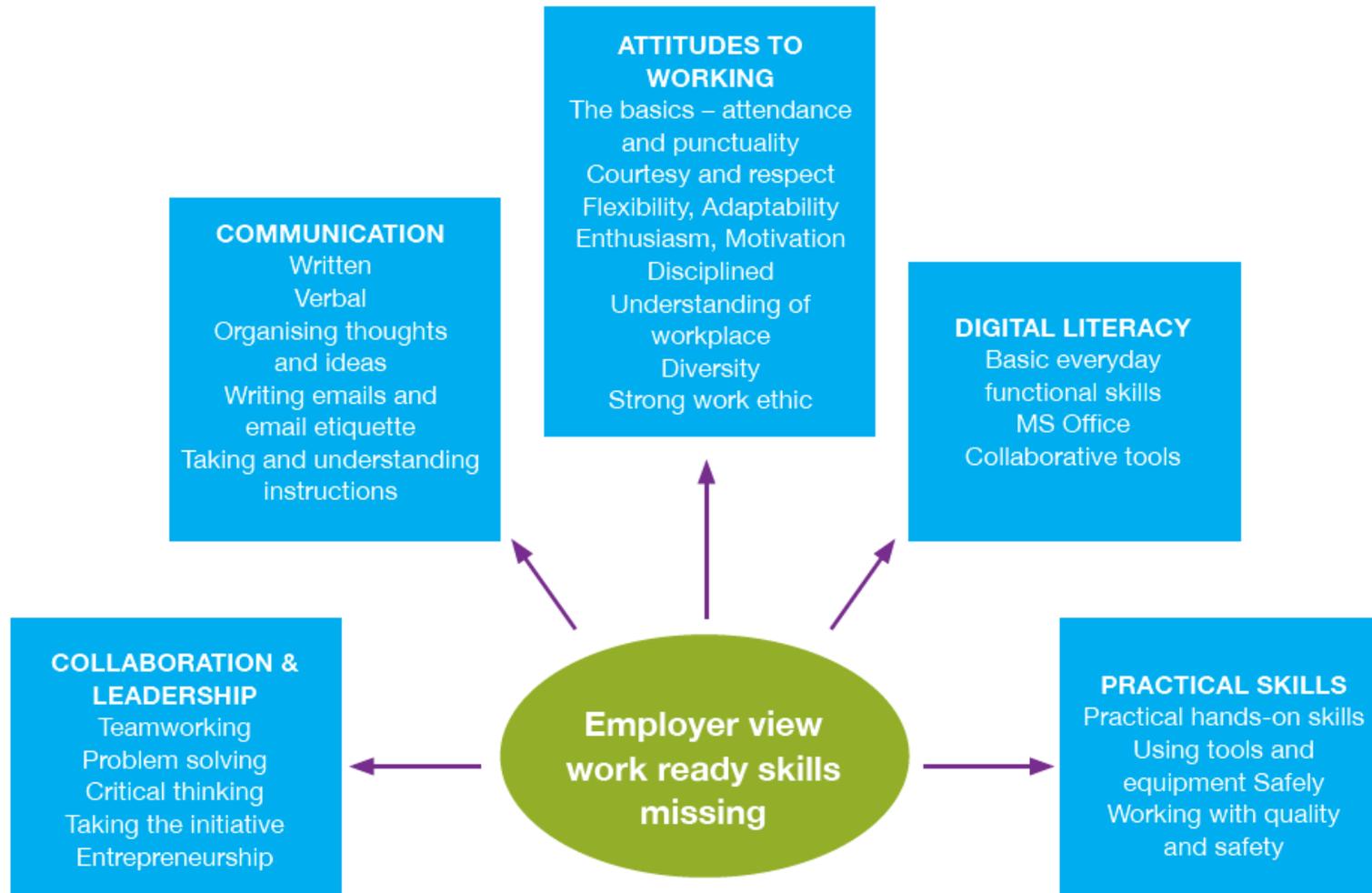
There has been a significant shift in the number of Apprenticeships being started at different levels. In 2016/17, 49% of Apprenticeship starts were at Level 2, dropping to 25% by 2019/20 and to 16% by 2023/24.

Over the same period, there has been a sharp increase in Higher Apprenticeship starts (Level 4 and above). 42% of Apprenticeship starts in 2023/4 were at this level, up from 8% in 2016/17, and 31% in 2019/20.

This trend mirrors the national trend and is likely linked to how firms who are subject to the Apprenticeship levy are utilising Apprenticeships.



# Buckinghamshire employers identify 'work-readiness' as a key skills gap amongst new entrants



The diagram to the left summarises what Buckinghamshire employers believe to be 'work-readiness' skills that are currently lacking amongst job applicants, particularly those seeking early career roles.

# Labour Market Participation

# Labour market participation of Buckinghamshire's working age residents – 2024\*

Working age population (aged 16-64) (330,300)

Economically active (278,700 – 84%)

Economically inactive (51,600 – 16%)

Employed (265,900 – 81%)

Unemployed (9,900 – 3%)

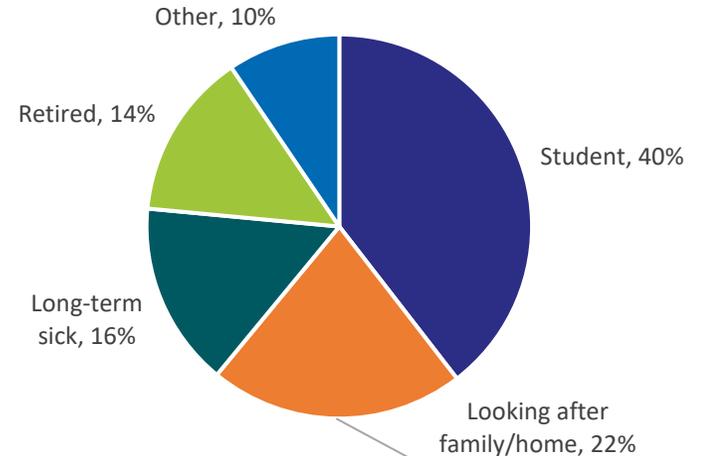
Want a job (12,900 – 4%)

Don't want a job (38,700 – 12%)

Employees (229,100 – 69%)

Self-employed (36,400 – 11%)

Reason economically inactive



**Source:** Annual Population Survey, 12 months to December 2024, ONS and ONS modelled unemployment data for Buckinghamshire local authority geography

\*Note 1: The sample of Buckinghamshire residents participating in the Annual Population Survey is relatively small and therefore **data should be treated as estimates only. Data on the reasons for being economically inactive should be treated with a large degree of caution.**

Note 2: students aged 16+ who are in full-time education (school / college / university) are classified as being economically active if they also have a job (e.g. part-time work) or are actively seeking work. They will be classified as economically inactive if they are not working and are not actively seeking work.

Note 3: Numbers and percentages may not add to totals due to rounding.

In April 2025, 11,285 people were **claiming unemployment related benefits** (80% were estimated to be unemployed and 20% working some hours / having low earnings) (source: DWP StatXplore)

## When examined across 10-year periods, there has been little change the labour market participation of Buckinghamshire residents over the last 20 years

It is difficult to ascertain labour market participation trends over time Buckinghamshire using the UK's primary source of up-to-date local labour participation data (the Annual Population Survey), as the survey sample size for the county is small, resulting in relatively large margins of error. We can however use the Census to give us a sense of change over time. Whilst data from the Census is not timely (as it's conducted every 10 years), and 2021 Census data is influenced by the labour market implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, we can broadly conclude that:

- overall economic activity and inactivity rates in 2021 were very similar to those in 2001
- there was a drop in students who were economically active in 2021, likely due to reduced job opportunities at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic
- there has been a reduction in the number of people who are economically inactive because they are 'looking after home or family' over the last 20 years

Nationally, we know from the more timely Labour Force Survey that unemployment rose following the 2008/09 financial crisis then fell and remains relatively low. And following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the proportion of working age adults who are economically inactive due to long-term health conditions. Although we are unable to say for sure due to the limitations of the surveys, it is likely that both these trends are also true of Buckinghamshire.

### Labour market participation of Buckinghamshire residents over time

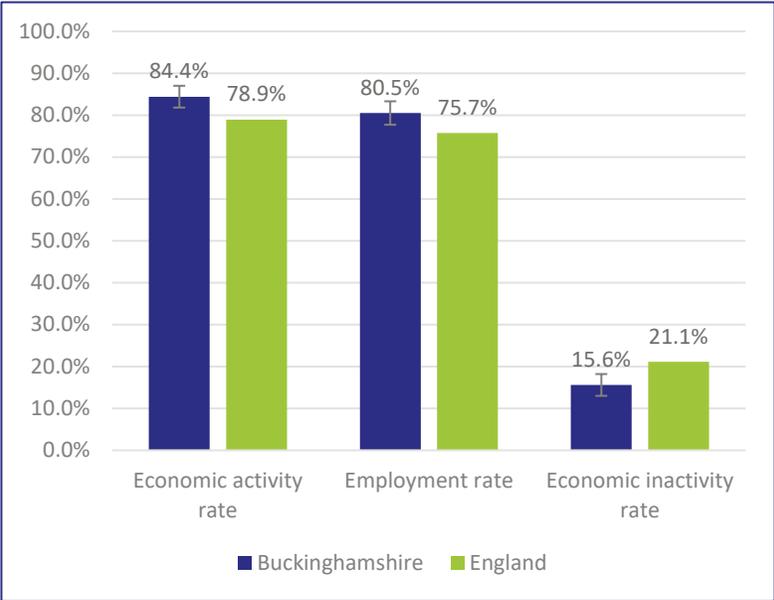
	2001	2011	2021
<b>Economically active</b>	<b>71.8%</b>	<b>73.6%</b>	<b>72.0%</b>
Economically active: In employment	67.3%	67.7%	68.9%
Economically active: Unemployed	2.0%	3.0%	3.1%
Economically active: Full-time student	2.5%	2.9%	1.9%
<b>Economically Inactive</b>	<b>28.2%</b>	<b>26.4%</b>	<b>28.0%</b>
Economically inactive: Retired	12.5%	13.3%	12.8%
Economically inactive: Student (including full-time students)	3.7%	4.5%	4.9%
Economically inactive: Looking after home or family	7.1%	4.7%	5.2%
Economically inactive: Long-term sick or disabled	2.5%	2.0%	2.2%
Economically inactive: Other	2.5%	1.8%	2.8%
<b>All usual residents aged 16 to 74</b>	<b>346,945</b>	<b>363,773</b>	<b>393,578</b>

Source: Census 2001, 2011 and 2021, ONS

Note: this data is not comparable with labour market participation data from the Annual Population Survey as definitions and age groups differ

# Buckinghamshire residents are more likely to be economically active and in employment than the national average and are less likely to be economically inactive or unemployed

## Labour market participation – Buckinghamshire and England

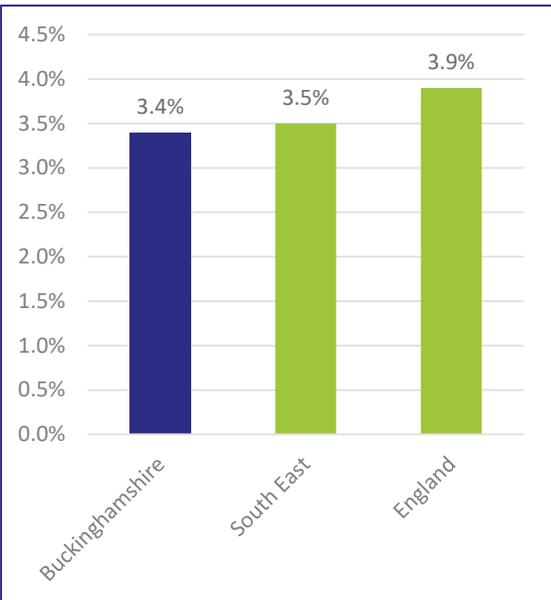


Source: Annual Population Survey, year to December 2024, ONS

\*Data displayed is the labour market participation of the 16–64-year-old population

\*\*Confidence intervals shown for Buckinghamshire

## Unemployment rate estimates



Source: Modelled estimates for Buckinghamshire (ONS) and Annual Population Survey, year to December 2024 for the South East and England.

The majority (approximately 84.4%) of Buckinghamshire’s working age residents are economically active (i.e. they are either in work or are not currently working but are actively seeking work\*).

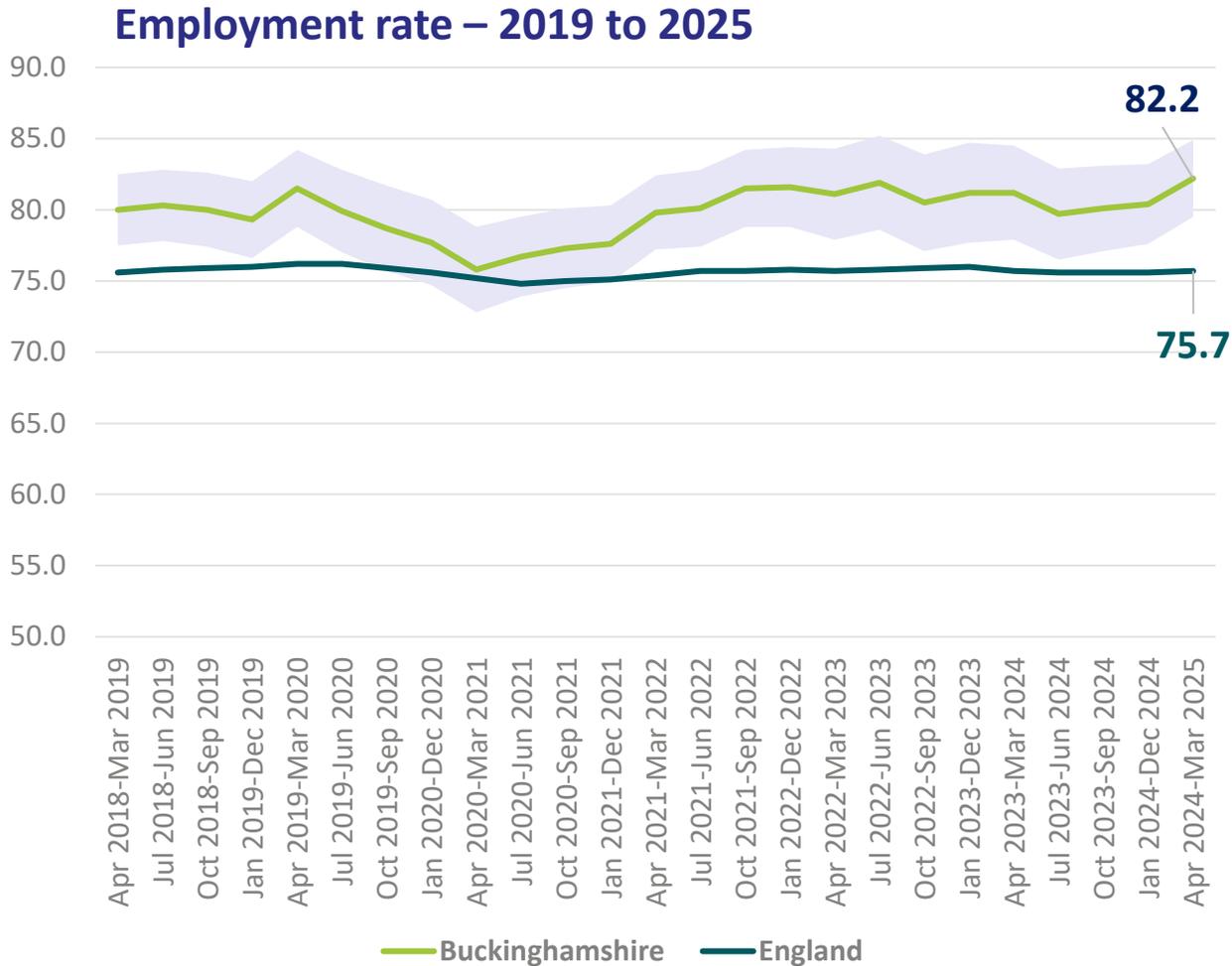
Whilst Buckinghamshire-level estimates are not precise, we can say with a good degree of confidence that Buckinghamshire’s economic activity rate is higher than the national (England) average (of 78.9%).

Buckinghamshire also has a higher employment rate (proportion of working age residents who are in employment) than the national average (approximately 80.5% versus 75.7%).

Conversely, Buckinghamshire has a lower economic inactivity rate than the national average (approximately 15.6% versus 21.1%). And, although small sample sizes make precise estimates difficult, fewer people who are economically inactive for potentially negative reasons (e.g. long-term sick) than for potentially positive reasons (studying, early retirement, looking after family / home).

There are currently data quality concerns with the UK’s unemployment data, particularly at local level. This has been partly addressed by ONS combining survey data with administrative data on people claiming unemployment-related benefits. The resulting data suggests that Buckinghamshire’s unemployment rate is below the national average, and just under the regional average.

# Buckinghamshire's estimated employment rate of 82% already exceeds the national average and the Get Britain Working White Paper outcome target of 80%



The Get Britain White Paper outcome target is to raise the country's employment rate (for 18–66-year-olds) to 80%, from around 75.8% currently.

Whilst we do not have local level data 18-66 years olds, using data for 16-64 year olds as a proxy, the Annual Population Survey (APS) suggests that Buckinghamshire's employment rate already exceeds this target.

As the Buckinghamshire sample size within the APS is relatively small, the estimated rate of 82.2% should be treated with caution. The true rate is highly likely to be somewhere between 80% and 85% (the grey area shown in the chart)

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

# Buckinghamshire's economically inactive residents are more likely to be students and less likely to be long-term sick or disabled than the national average

Due to the previously mentioned limitations of the Annual Population Survey, it is difficult to compare the reasons for Buckinghamshire residents being economically inactive with the national average.

However, we can draw two conclusions:

- A higher proportion of Buckinghamshire's economically inactive population are students than the national average<sup>1</sup>
- A lower proportion of Buckinghamshire's economically inactive population are long-term sick or disabled<sup>2</sup>.

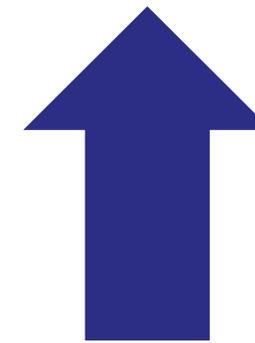
The first could be linked to Buckinghamshire households, on average, having higher levels of income than the national average, meaning that parents are more able to financially support their (16-year-old plus) children whilst they study.

<sup>1</sup>In 2024, 31.1.% to 48.3%\* of economic inactivity in Buckinghamshire was due to being a student, significantly higher than the national level of 27.5%

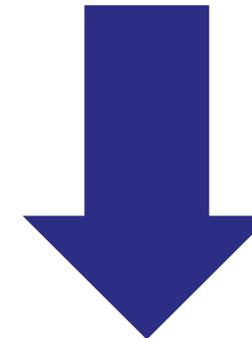
<sup>2</sup>In 2024, some 9.2% to 22%\* of economic inactivity was explained by long term sickness, below the national rate of 27%.

\*95% confidence interval

Buckinghamshire's economically inactive residents



Higher proportion are students



Lower proportion are long-term sick or disabled

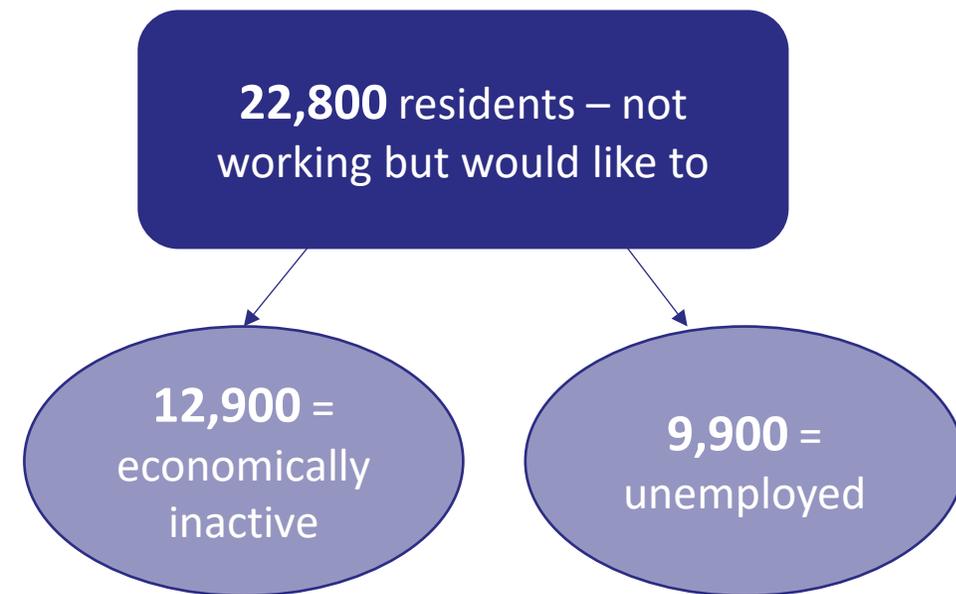
## Approximately 7% of Buckinghamshire's working age residents are not working but would like to

Whilst Buckinghamshire has lower economic inactivity and unemployment rates than many other parts of the country, a sizeable minority of residents are currently not working but would like to. We estimate the figure to be in the region of 22,800 residents, or 7% of the working age population.

Just over half of this group are economically inactive. This means they are not working, are not actively seeking work, but would like to work. It could be that caring responsibilities or transport limitations make finding work difficult.

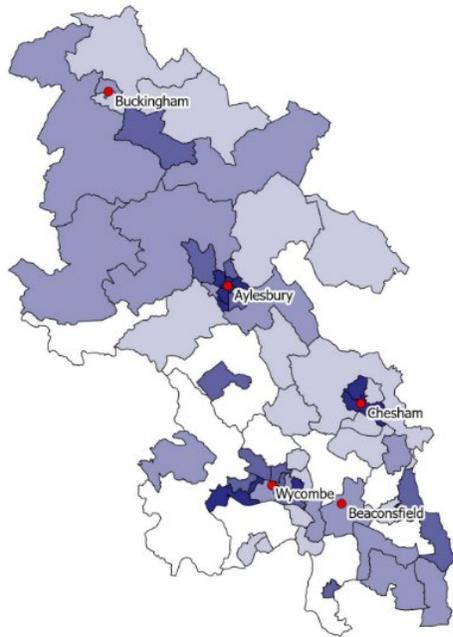
Just under half of this group are unemployed. This means that they are not working but have actively sought work in the last four weeks and are available to start work. Using modelled data, we estimate that just under 10,000 residents fall into this category.

The majority of those who are unemployed will claim out-of-work related benefits via Universal Credit, but not all.



# Economic inactivity due to long term sickness is more prevalent in urban areas and to the north of the county, whilst inactivity due to early retirement is more common in rural areas

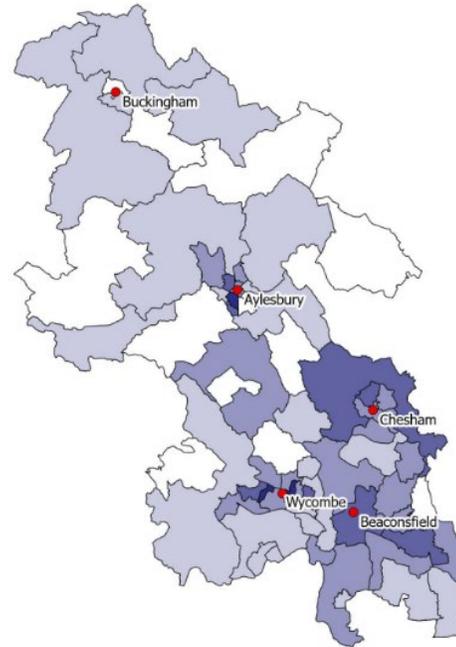
% of working age residents who are economically inactive due to long term sickness or disability



% Residents

- 0.8% - 1.4%
- 1.5% - 1.9%
- 2.0% - 2.6%
- 2.7% - 3.5%
- 3.6% - 4.8%

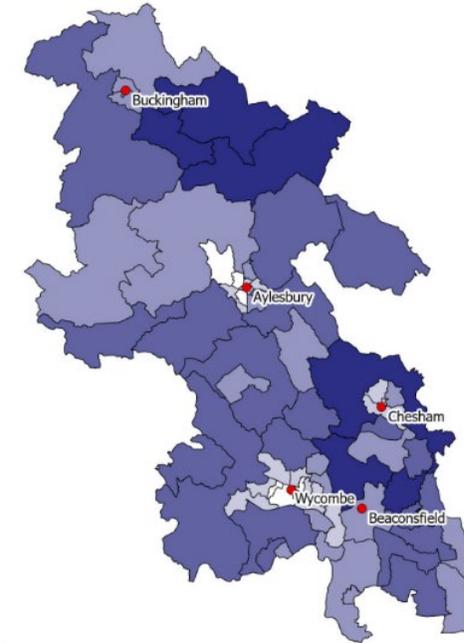
% of working age residents who are economically inactive due to looking after home or family



% Residents

- 3.6% - 4.7%
- 4.8% - 5.6%
- 5.7% - 6.6%
- 6.7% - 7.6%
- 7.7% - 11.6%

% of working age residents who are economically inactive due to being (early) retired



% Residents

- 0.9% - 1.6%
- 1.7% - 2.3%
- 2.4% - 3.6%
- 3.7% - 4.4%
- 4.5% - 5.4%

# Residents of Opportunity Bucks wards are more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive due to ill health than the Buckinghamshire average and are more likely to be economically inactive due to looking after family or home

## Unemployed and inactive due to poor health

Ward	% working age population who are unemployed or economically inactive due to poor health*
Booker, Cressex and Castlefield	15%
Aylesbury South West	12%
Aylesbury North West	12%
Totteridge and Bowerdean	12%
Aylesbury North	11%
Abbey (Buckinghamshire)	10%
Downley	10%
Ryemead and Micklefield	10%
Terriers and Amersham Hill	9%
Aylesbury East	9%
West Wycombe	9%
Stoke Poges and Wexham	9%
Chesham	9%
Grendon Underwood	9%
<b>Buckinghamshire average</b>	<b>8%</b>

Source: 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

\*Note – data excludes full-time students

Opportunity Bucks wards are highlighted in light purple

## Inactive due to looking after family / home

Ward	% of working age population who are economically inactive due to looking after family / home
Booker, Cressex and Castlefield	10%
Totteridge and Bowerdean	8%
Aylesbury South West	7%
Aylesbury North West	7%
Gerrards Cross	7%
Abbey (Buckinghamshire)	7%
Chesham	6%
Beaconsfield	6%
Downley	6%
Ryemead and Micklefield	6%
Terriers and Amersham Hill	6%
West Wycombe	6%
Aylesbury West	6%
Chiltern Ridges	6%
Aylesbury North	6%
<b>Buckinghamshire average</b>	<b>5%</b>

## Disabled working age residents, those who can't speak English well or at all, and those providing 50 hours or more a week of unpaid care, are least likely to be employed

### Labour market participation of different groups of Buckinghamshire residents

	Employed	Unemployed	Economically inactive	Number of residents
Female	72%	3%	25%	172,785
Male	81%	4%	15%	166,898
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	69%	4%	27%	45,107
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	72%	6%	22%	10,123
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	68%	6%	26%	9,250
Other ethnic group	69%	5%	25%	5,983
White	78%	3%	19%	269,219
Disabled*	51%	4%	44%	38,141
Not disabled	80%	3%	17%	301,541
Main language is English	77%	4%	20%	308,105
Main language is not English	78%	4%	19%	27,393
Main language is not English: Cannot speak English	33%	4%	63%	418
Main language is not English: Cannot speak English well	54%	5%	41%	3,767
Provides 19 or less hours unpaid care a week	78%	3%	18%	18,846
Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	68%	3%	29%	5,912
Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week	52%	2%	46%	6,652
Provides no unpaid care	77%	4%	20%	308,274

This table compares the labour market participation of different groups of Buckinghamshire residents. We see that men are more likely to be employed and unemployed than women, who are more likely to be economically inactive.

Unemployment is highest amongst those of Black and Mixed ethnicity.

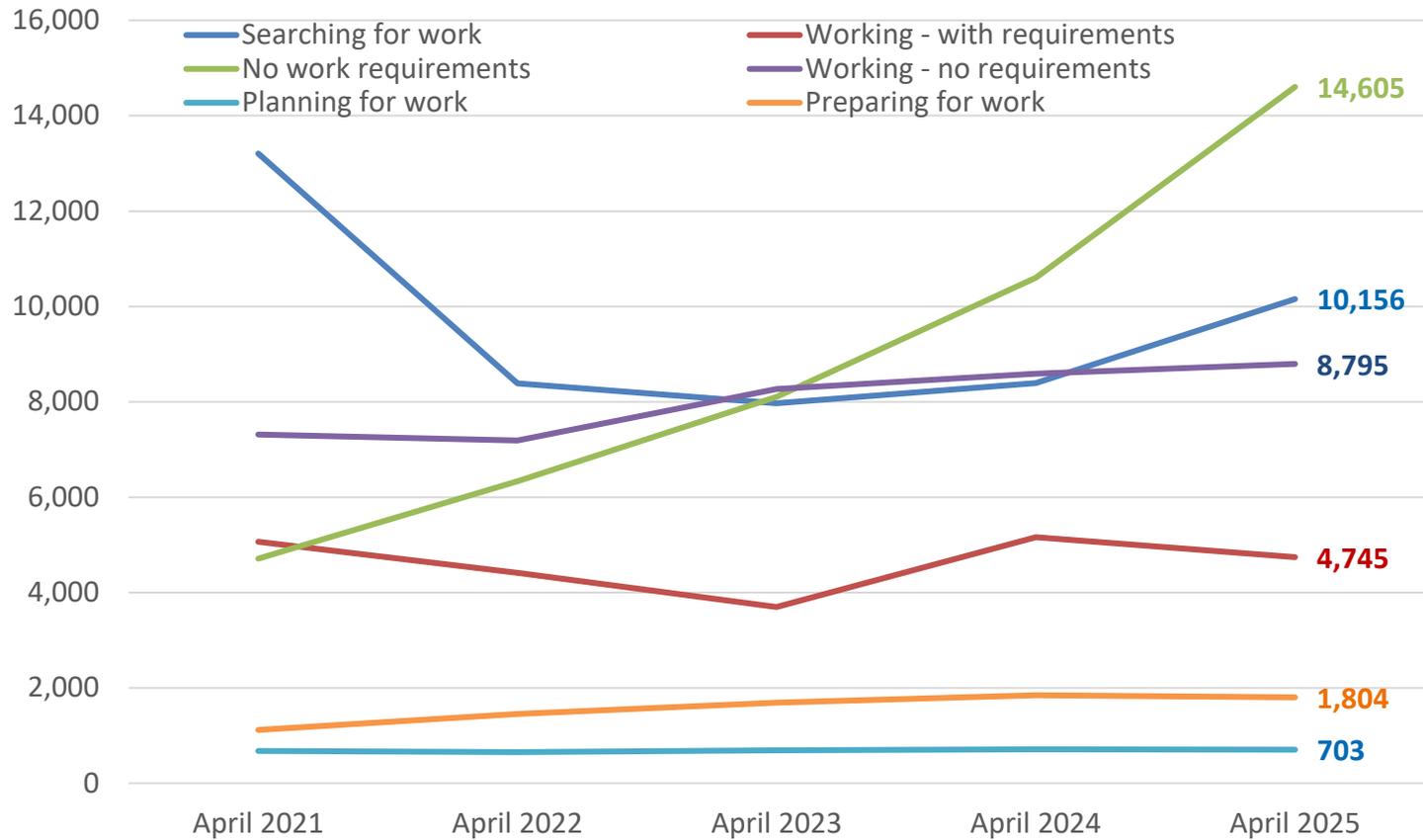
Economic inactivity is highest amongst those who cannot speak English well or at all, those who are disabled and those providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care\*

\*caring for those with long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age.

Benefit claimants

# The number of working age Universal Credit claimants who have no work requirements has increased significantly in recent years

Number of individuals in each Universal Credit conditionality group, 2021 to 2025 (Buckinghamshire)



The number of Universal Credit claimants with **no work requirements** has increased significantly in recent years due to a combination of policy changes, health-related factors and demographic shifts.

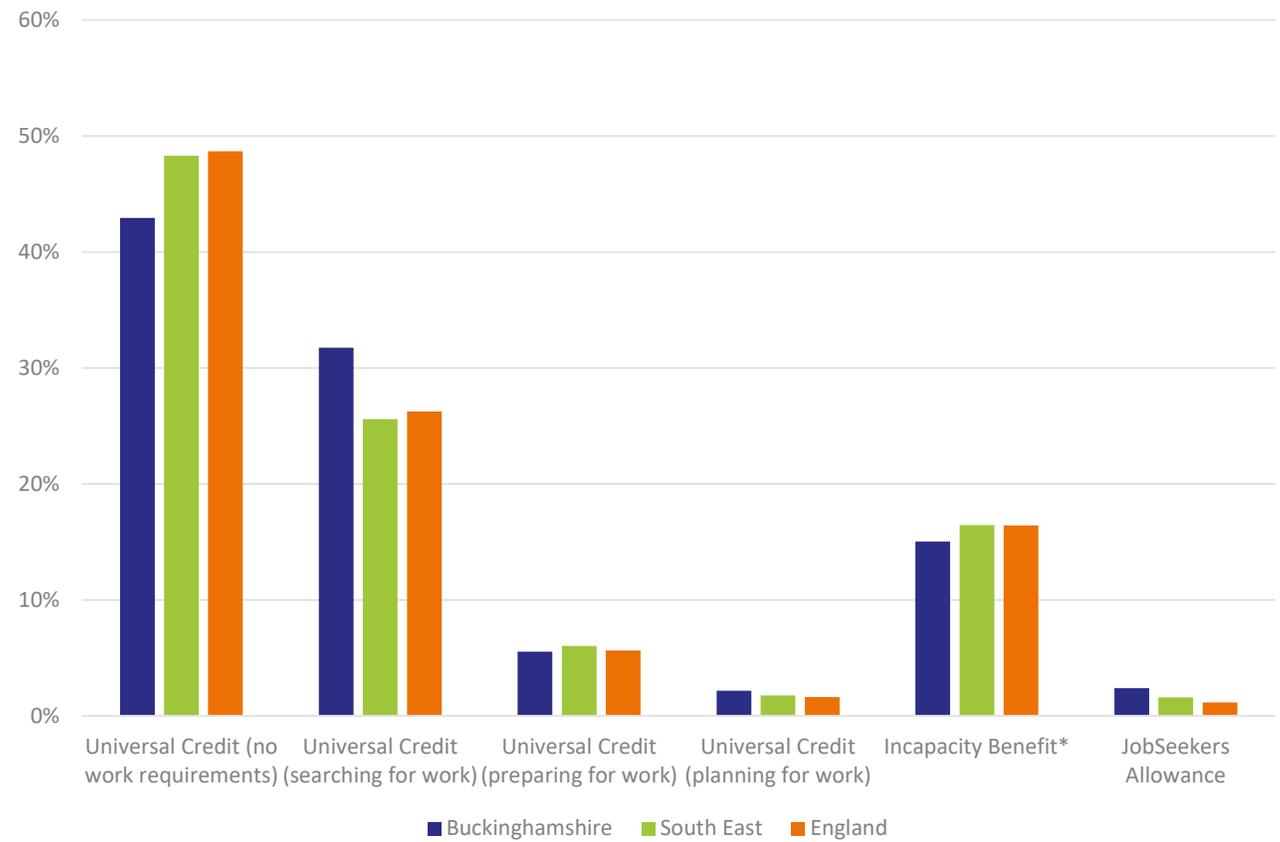
For example, many claimants previously on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) have been migrated to Universal Credit. These individuals often have health conditions or disabilities that exempt them from work requirements. Whilst a growing number of people are being assessed as having limited capability for work and work-related activity. This includes those with long-term illnesses, mental health conditions, or disabilities.

The number of Universal Credit claimants who are required to search for work has increased over the last 12 months. This is likely due to a combination of a) people not previously claiming benefits now doing and b) policy changes including migration from legacy benefits and renewed focus on classification and encouraging work amongst claimants.

Source: DWP, Stat-Xplore (based on chart produced by the Resolution Foundation)

# A greater proportion of 'out of work' benefit claimants in Buckinghamshire are required to search for work (i.e. are 'unemployed') than the regional and national averages (34% versus 28% and 27% respectively)

## Working age 'out of work' benefit claimants – by benefit claimed (February 2025)



In total, 32,117 Buckinghamshire residents of working age claim 'out of work' benefits (February 2025). The majority of whom claim Universal Credit.

**Two thirds** those claiming 'out of work' benefits are **not required to seek work**. We can roughly categorise this group as being 'economically inactive.' This group includes those:

- claiming Universal Credit with no work requirement - primarily due to health issues or caring responsibilities
- claiming some sort of legacy incapacity-type benefit
- claiming Universal Credit who are preparing for or planning for work - mainly lead carers of children under the age of 2 or people with limited capability for work due to health condition.

**A third of** those claiming 'out of work' benefits are Universal Credit or JobSeekers Allowance claimants who **are required to search for work**. A greater proportion of 'out of work' benefit claimants in Buckinghamshire are required to search for work (i.e. they are 'unemployed' rather than 'economically inactive') than the regional and national averages (34% versus 28% and 27% respectively).

Source: DWP, Stat-Xplore

## Residents of Opportunity Bucks wards are more likely to be claiming out-of-work benefits than the Buckinghamshire average

Arrea	Out of work benefits	18-66 year old population	% claiming out of work benefits
<b>Opportunity Bucks Wards</b>			
Aylesbury North West	2,180	8,922	24%
Booker, Cressex and Castlefield	1,707	8,495	20%
Aylesbury South West	1,290	7,420	17%
Aylesbury North	1,389	8,883	16%
Totteridge and Bowerdean	1,207	7,830	15%
Ryemead and Micklefield	1,110	7,593	15%
Abbey	1,295	9,445	14%
Chesham	811	6,491	12%
West Wycombe	876	7,048	12%
Terriers and Amersham Hill	773	7,330	11%
<b>Opportunity Bucks Wards Combined</b>	<b>12,638</b>	<b>79,457</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Buckinghamshire</b>	<b>32,395</b>	<b>340,144</b>	<b>10%</b>
South East	678,367	5,918,561	11%
England	5,523,347	36,713,650	15%

16% of working age people living in Opportunity Bucks wards claim out-of-work related benefits, six percentage points higher than the Buckinghamshire average and slightly higher than the national average.

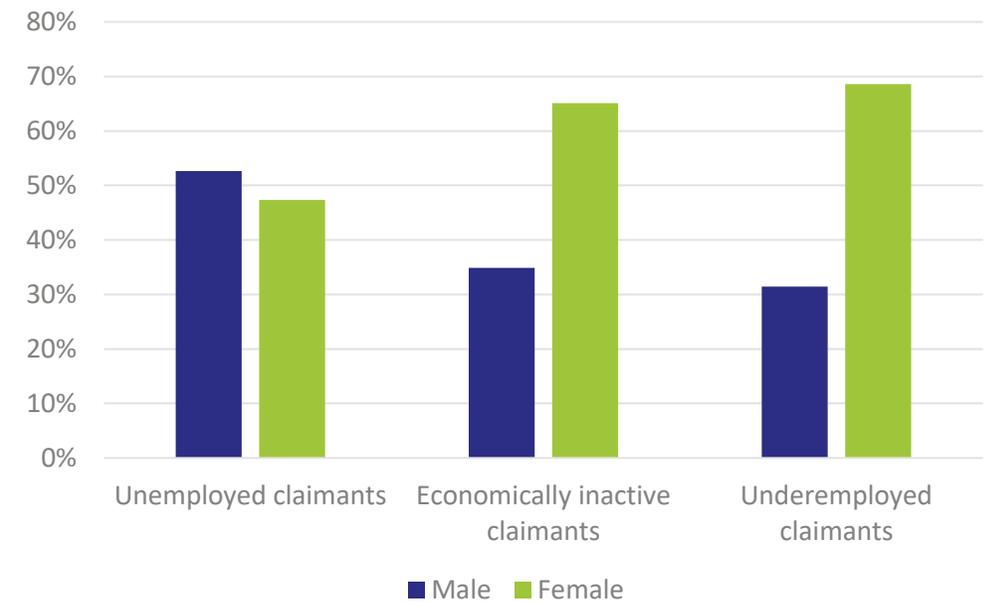
The proportion of claimants varies greatly across the wards, with Aylesbury North West and Booker, Cressex & Castlefield having the highest rates. Three non-Opportunity Bucks wards also have a claimant rate of 11%: Downley, Chess Valley and Aylesbury West.

Source: [Stat-Xplore - Table View](#) (February 2025)

# Women are more likely to be claiming out-of-work and underemployment related benefits than men

Broad category	Benefit / conditionality group	Total individuals	Male	Female
Unemployed claimants	Universal Credit (searching for work)	10,299	52%	48%
	JobSeekers Allowance	772	55%	44%
	<b>Unemployed claimants - total</b>	<b>11,071</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>47%</b>
Economically inactive claimants	Universal Credit (no work requirements)	13,928	32%	68%
	Incapacity benefits*	4,626	48%	52%
	Universal Credit (preparing for work)	1,794	33%	67%
	Universal Credit (planning for work)	698	4%	95%
	<b>Economically inactive claimants - total</b>	<b>21,046</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>65%</b>
Underemployed	Universal Credit (working - with requirements)	4,780	31%	69%
	<b>Underemployed claimants - total</b>	<b>4,780</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>69%</b>
Total	<b>All out-of-work and underemployed claimants</b>	<b>36,889</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>60%</b>

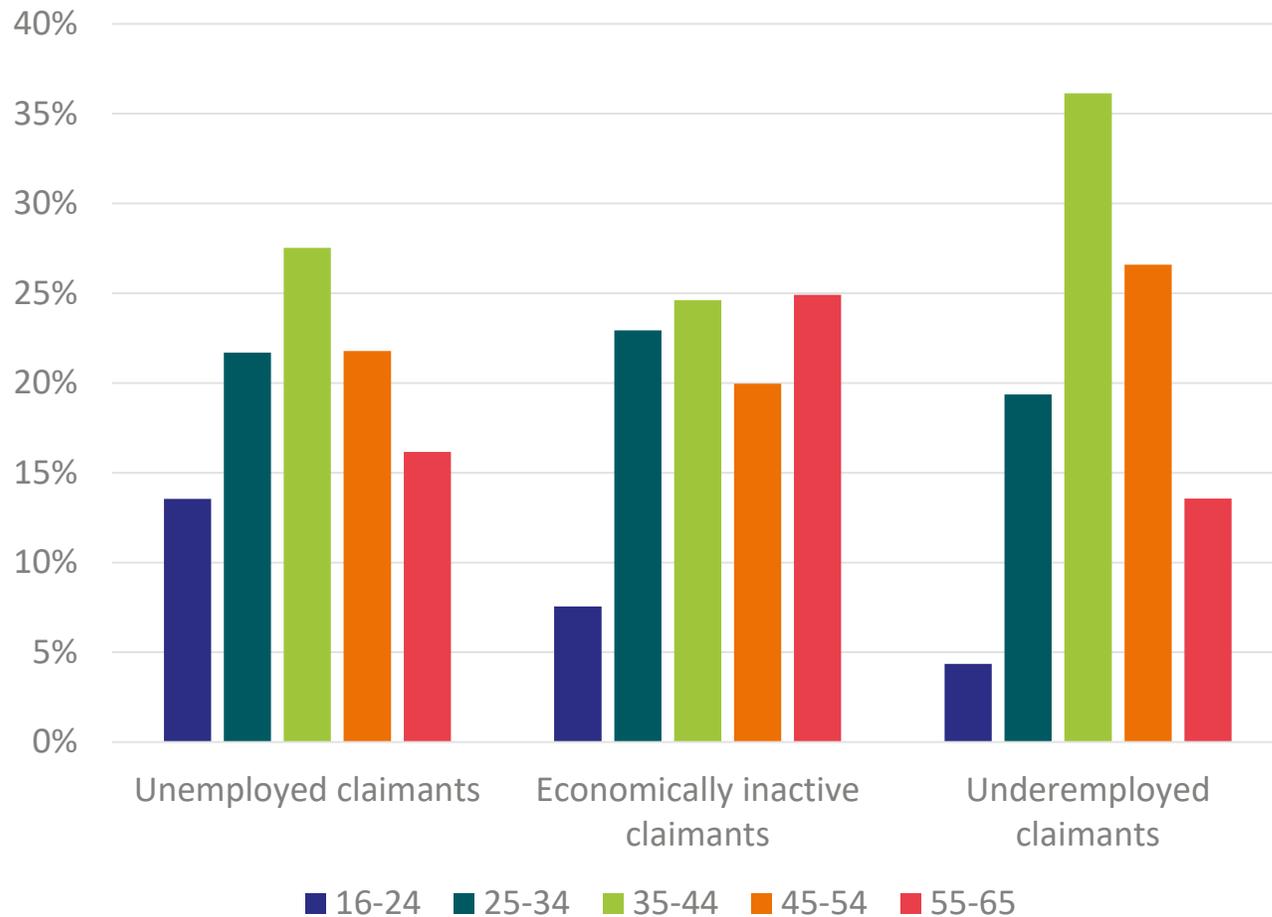
Proportion of claimants who are male and female



The majority (three fifths) of out-of-work and underemployed benefit claimants are women. The proportion is higher for those claiming economic inactivity related benefits and those claiming underemployment related benefits. Slightly more men than women are claiming unemployment related benefits.

# The age profile of those claiming different types of benefits varies, with unemployment claimants more likely to be younger and economically inactive claimants more likely to be older

Proportion of claimants who are unemployed, economically inactive and underemployed, by age



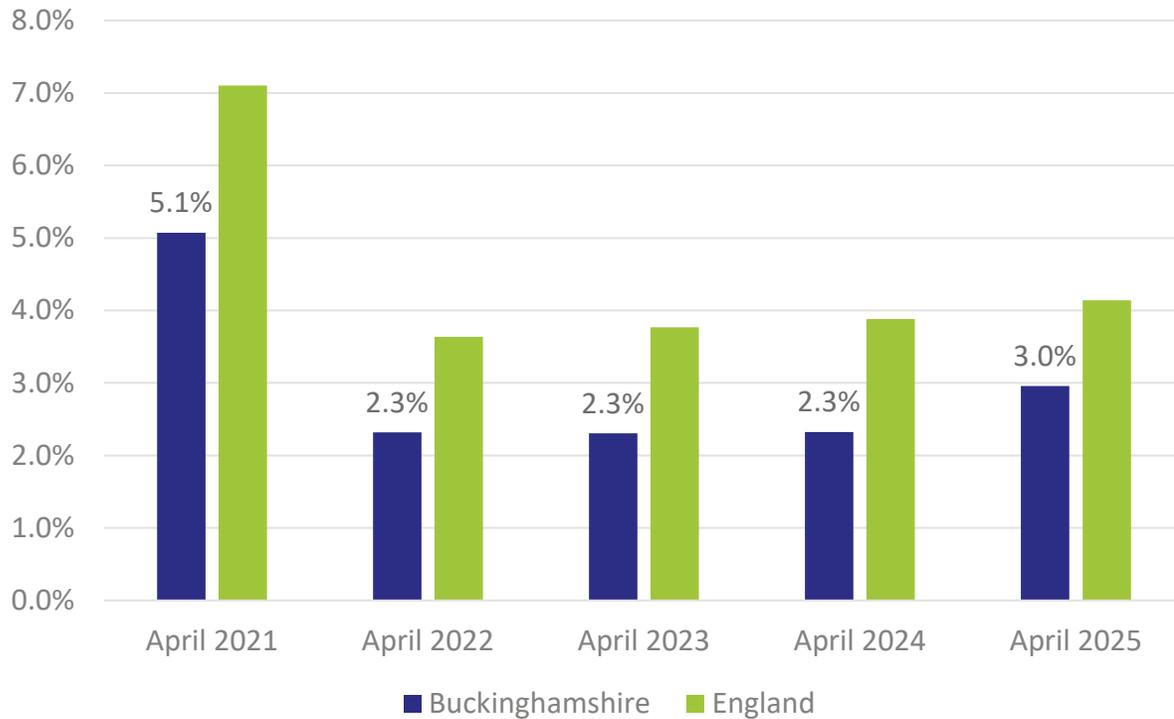
A higher proportion of unemployed claimants are young (age 16-24) than economically inactive and underemployed claimants.

Economically inactive claimants are more likely to be older, with a quarter being aged 55 to 65. Likely a reflection of older people being more likely to experience ill health.

Underemployed claimants are most likely to be aged 35-44, with over a third falling into this age bracket.

# The proportion of young people claiming unemployment related benefits has risen over the last 12 months

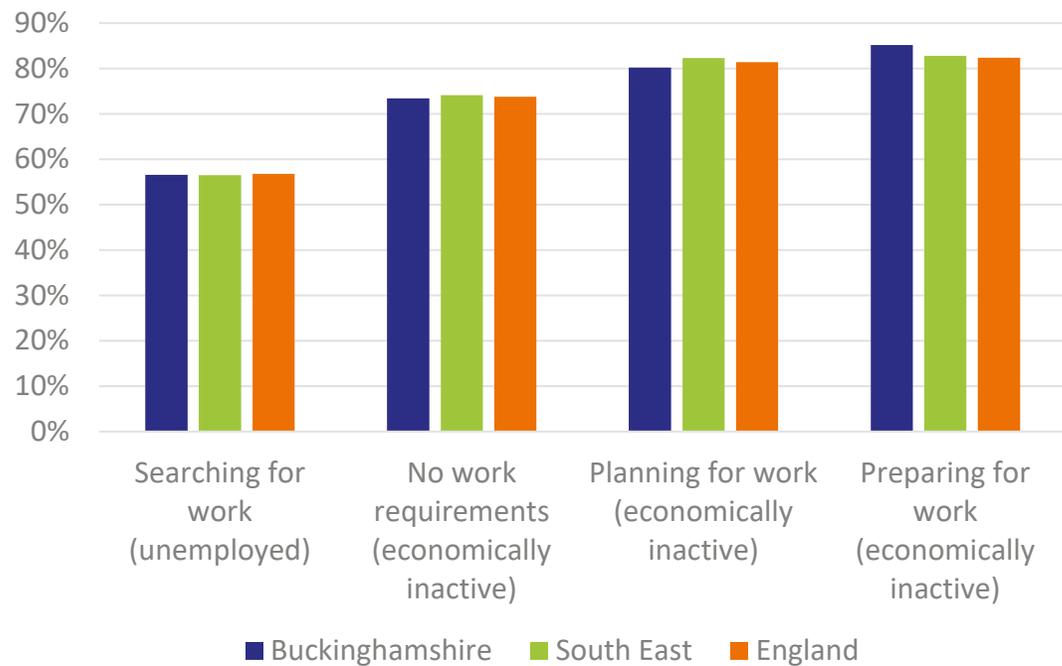
## 16-24 year olds claiming unemployment-related benefits



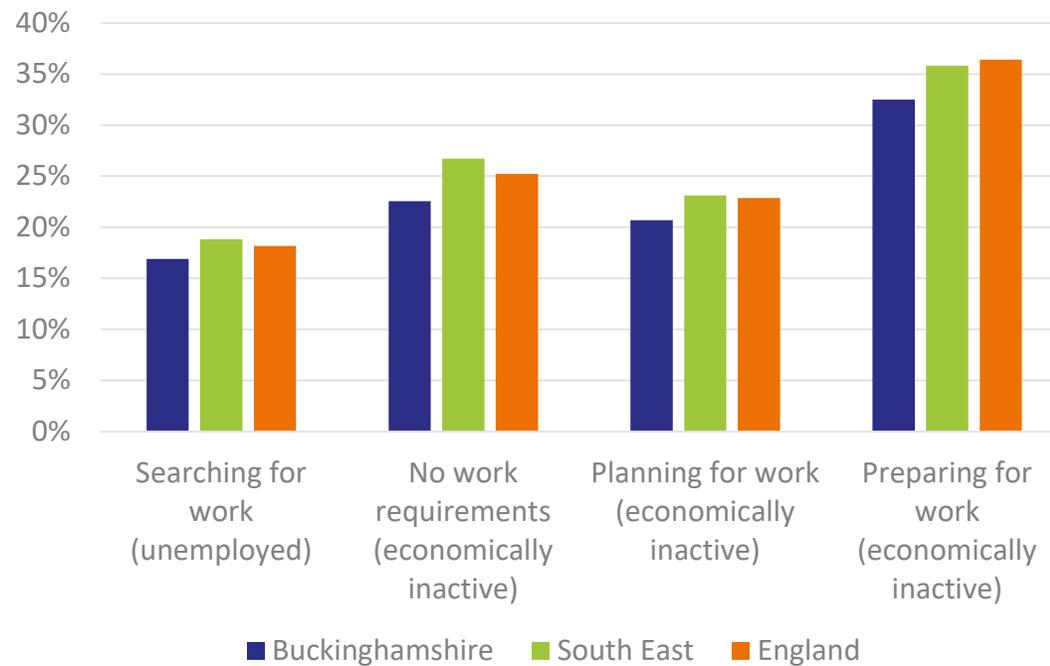
The proportion of young people (16-24) claiming unemployment-related benefits fell sharply between 2021 and 2022. Since 2022, the proportion has risen slightly year-on-year nationally. In Buckinghamshire, the proportion remained steady between 2022 and 2024, before rising between 2024 and 2025

The proportion of 'out-of-work' Universal Credit claimants claiming for more than one year is similar in Buckinghamshire to nationally, and whilst the proportion claiming for more than five years is slightly lower

Proportion of 'out-of-work' Universal Credit claimants claiming for more than one year



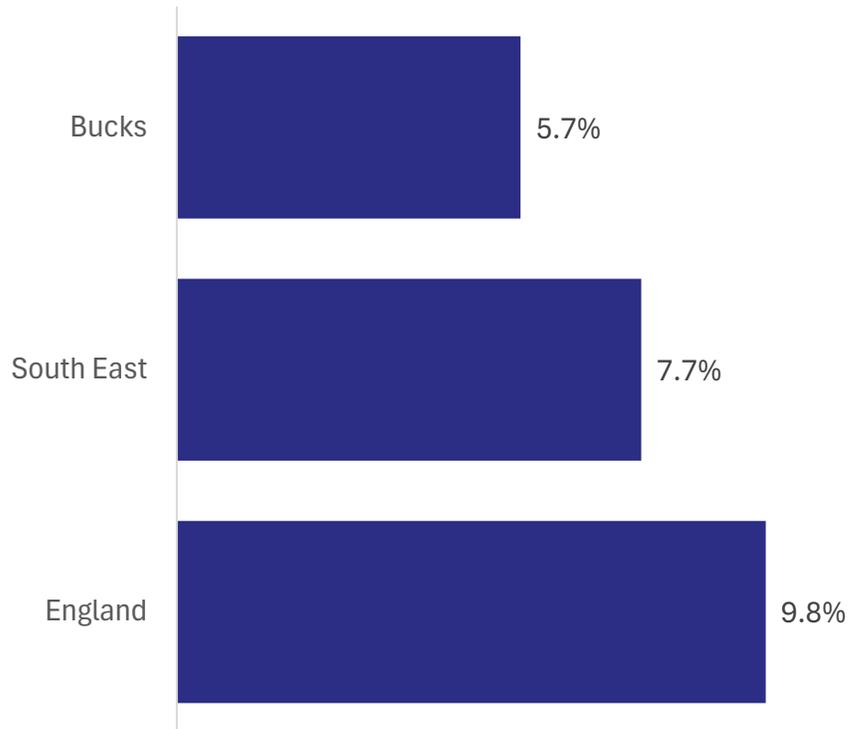
Proportion of 'out-of-work' Universal Credit claimants claiming for more than five years



Source: [Stat-Xplore - Table View](#) (February 2025)

# A smaller proportion of working age people claim health-related benefits in Buckinghamshire than the national and regional averages

## Percentage of working age people claiming health-related benefits

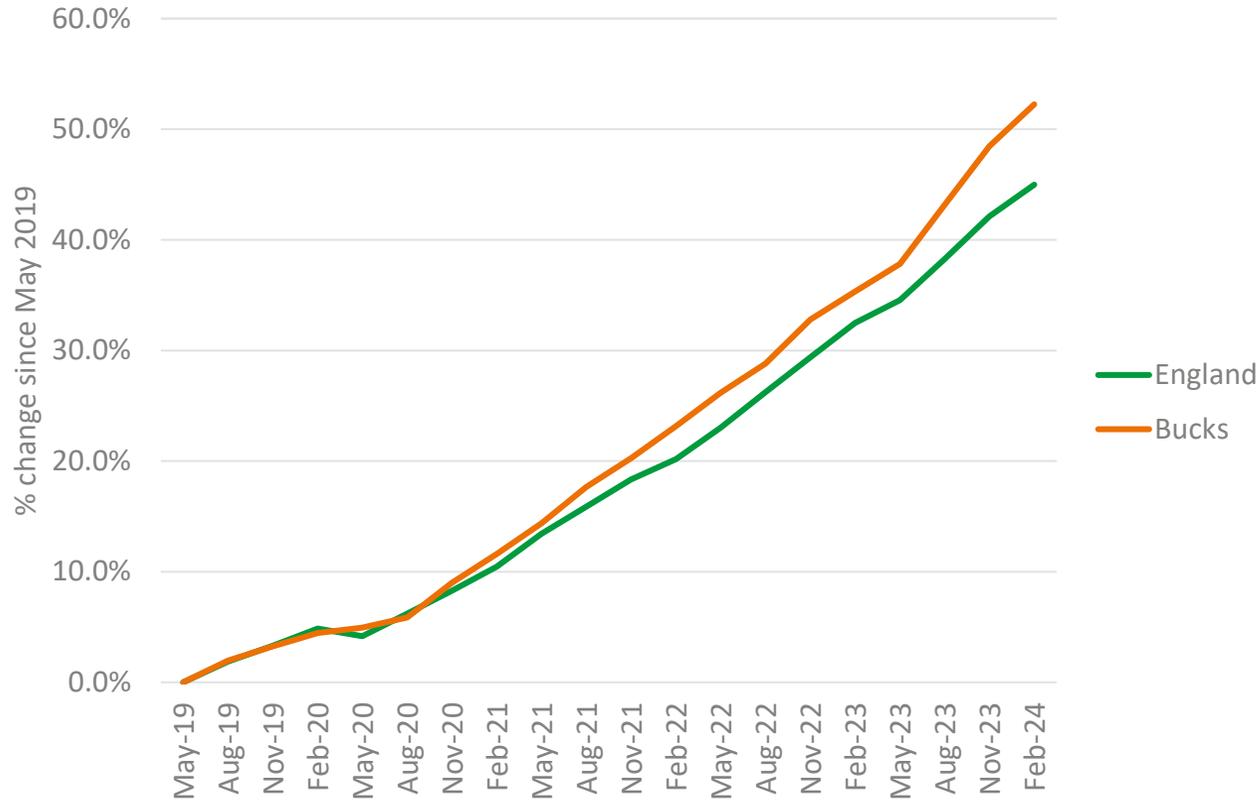


In the region of 20,100 individuals of working age claimed health-related benefits, i.e. some combination of benefits that include incapacity benefits (INCAP) and/or disability benefits (PIP/DLA) and/or Universal Credit on a Health Journey in February 2024.

This equates to 5.7% of the working age population in Buckinghamshire. Lower than for the South East (7.7%) and England (9.8%) averages.

# The number of residents claiming health-related benefits has increased substantially in recent years

5 year % change in health-related benefit claimant numbers (base: May 2019)

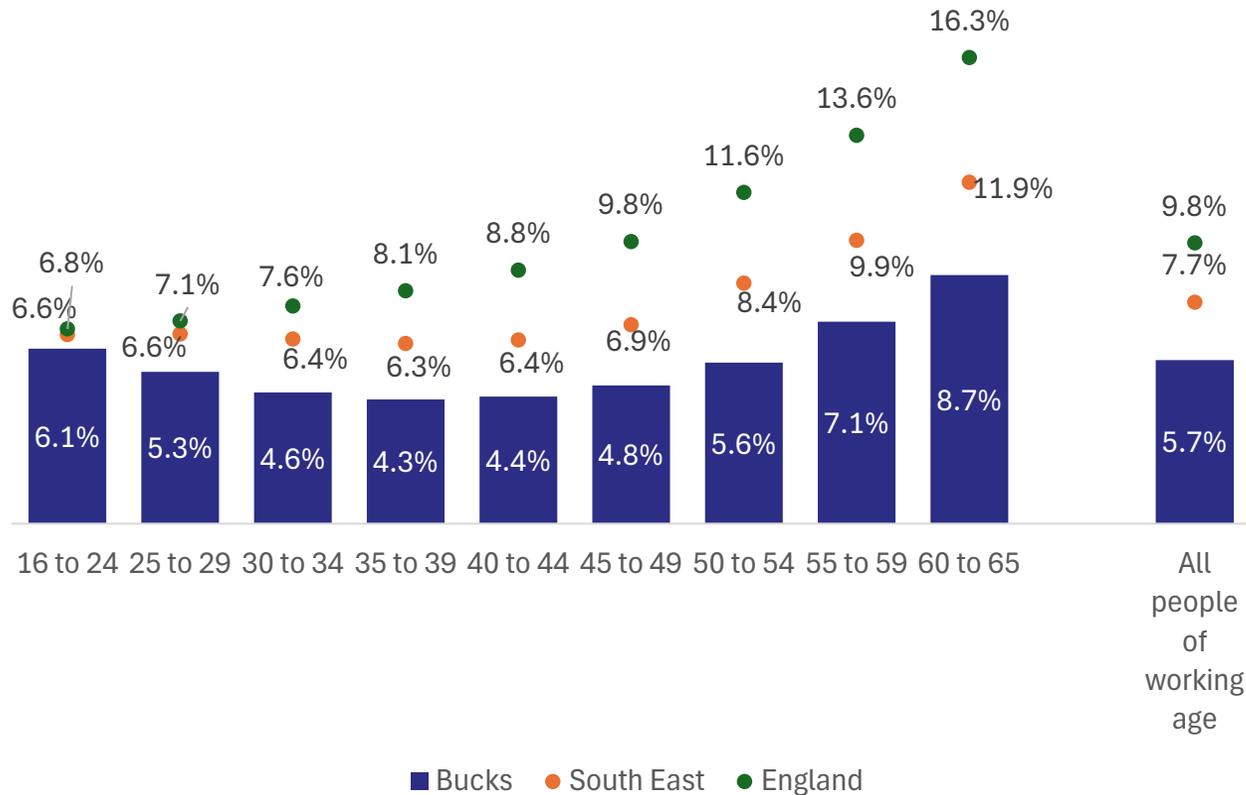


The number of Buckinghamshire residents claiming health-related benefits In Buckinghamshire, has increased by 52.3% in the last five years (since May 2019). This compares with 45.0% and 45.5% in the South East and England respectively.

National research shows that since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in younger people (under 40) claiming health-related benefits, and an increase in the number of people claiming benefits due to mental health problems (including disabilities)

# A smaller proportion of working age people claim health-related benefits in Buckinghamshire than the national and regional averages

Percentage of working age population claiming health-related benefits by age band



6.1% of Buckinghamshire residents 16-24 were claiming health-related benefits in February 2024. This rate reduces with age until the 40 to 44 age band, when it starts to increase again, reaching a peak of 8.7% in the oldest age band (60-65).

The older the age group, the larger the difference between Bucks and its regional and national comparators. In the oldest age bracket (60-65), the percentage of the population claiming HRB in Bucks (8.7%) is around half that of England (16.3%).

Source: [Stat-Xplore - Table View](#) (February 2024)

# Women of working age are slightly more likely than men of working age to be claiming health-related benefits

Percentage of working age population claiming health-related benefits by gender



A slightly greater proportion of female Buckinghamshire residents of working age are claiming health-related benefits than men.

This mirrors the national and regional pattern.

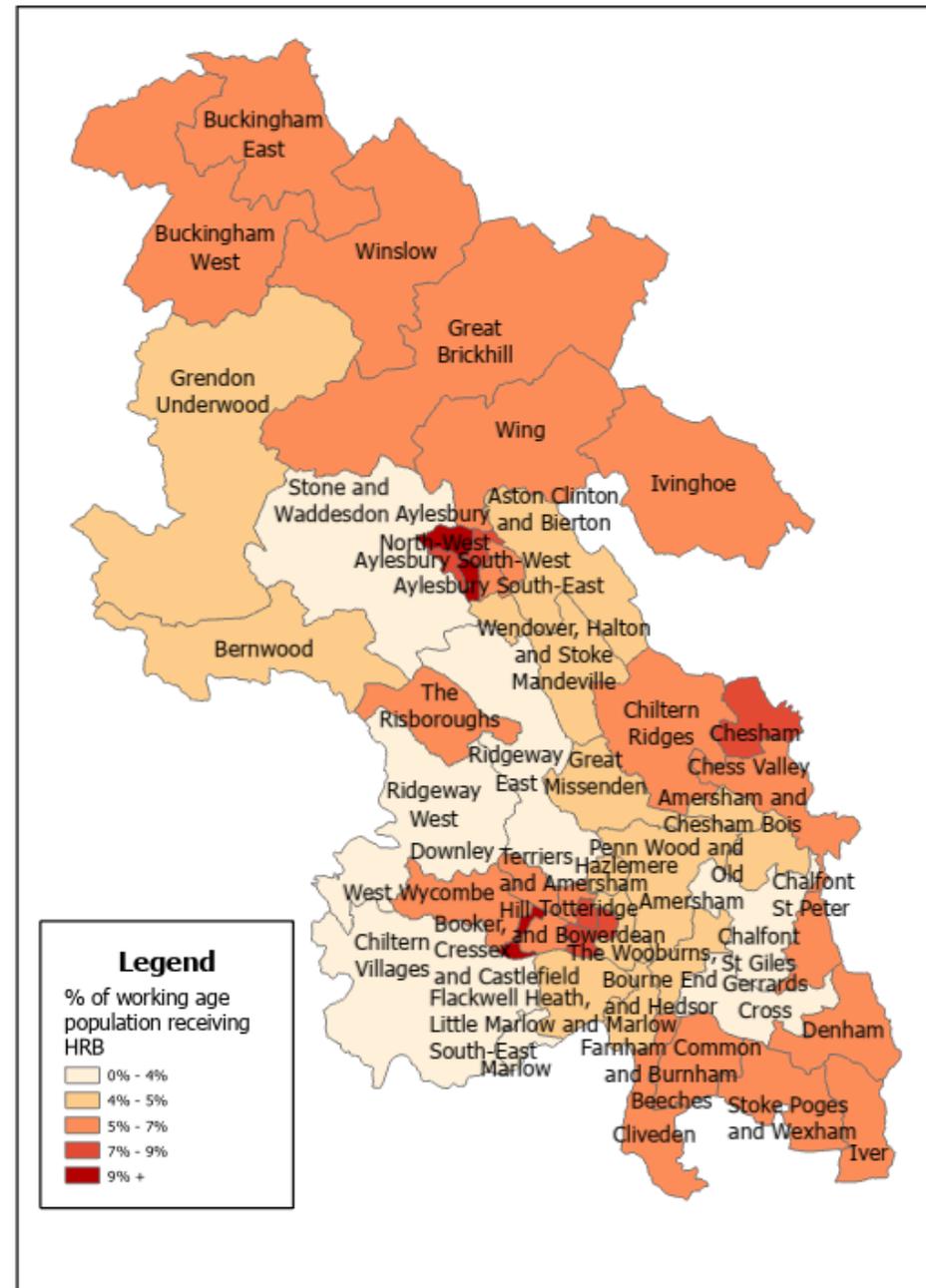
Source: [Stat-Xplore - Table View](#) (February 2024)

**The proportion of working age people claiming health-related benefits (HRB) increase with deprivation. A third (33.4%) of working age people claiming HRB live in Opportunity Bucks wards, despite only 23.5% of Buckinghamshire residents living in these wards.**

There are large variations by ward. The ward with the highest percentage of claimants is Aylesbury North West (13.1%), whilst the lowest is Stone and Waddesdon (2.3%)

	Ward	Number of HRB recipients (Feb 2024)	% of working age population
Top 5	Aylesbury North West	1201	13.1%
	Aylesbury North	776	8.6%
	Aylesbury South West	739	9.7%
	Booker, Cressex and Castlefield	813	9.3%
	Totteridge and Bowerdean	597	7.4%
Bottom 5	Gerrards Cross	161	2.9%
	Ridgeway East	210	3.4%
	Great Missenden	228	4.0%
	Marlow	235	3.7%
	Stone and Waddesdon	238	2.3%

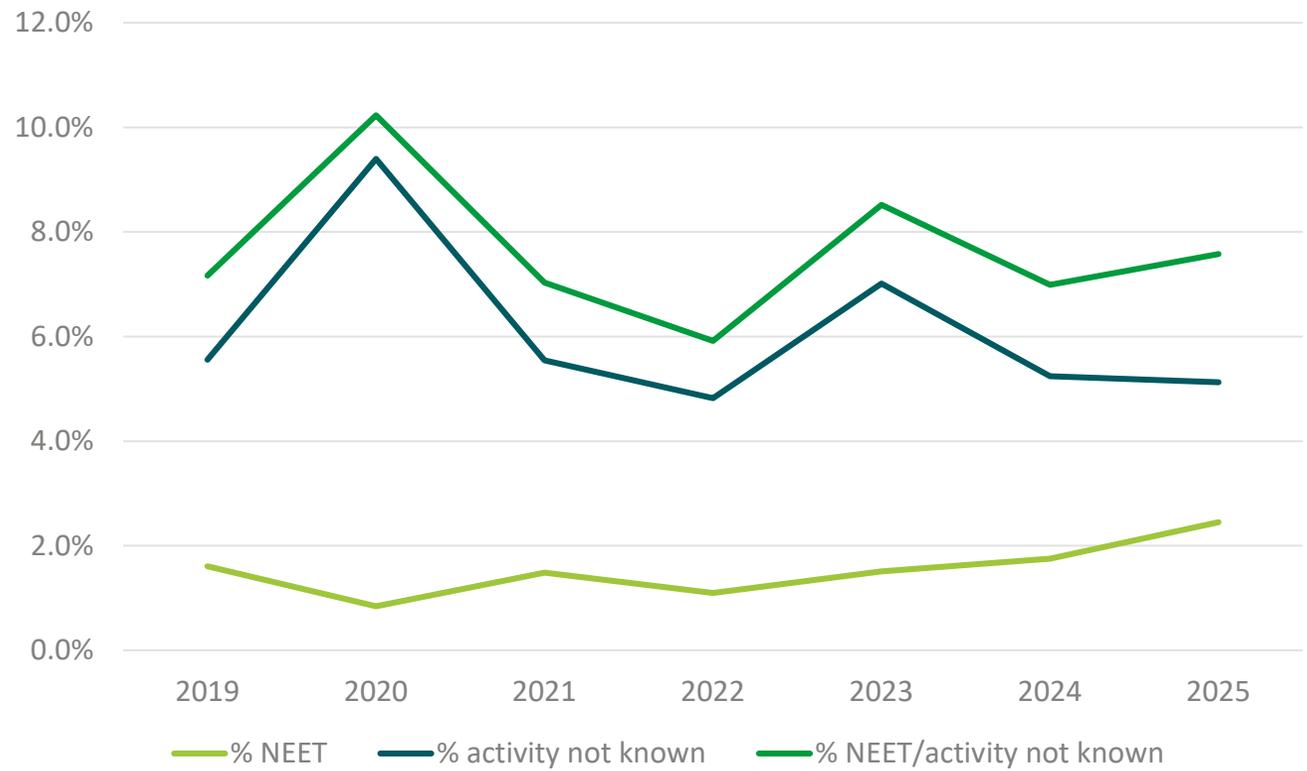
Source: [Stat-Xplore - Table View](#) (February 2024)



Young people

**Nationally, the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has increased in recent years, and the signs are that Buckinghamshire is experiencing a similar trend.**

**Proportion of Buckinghamshire 16–17-year-olds who are either NEET or whose activity is 'not known'**



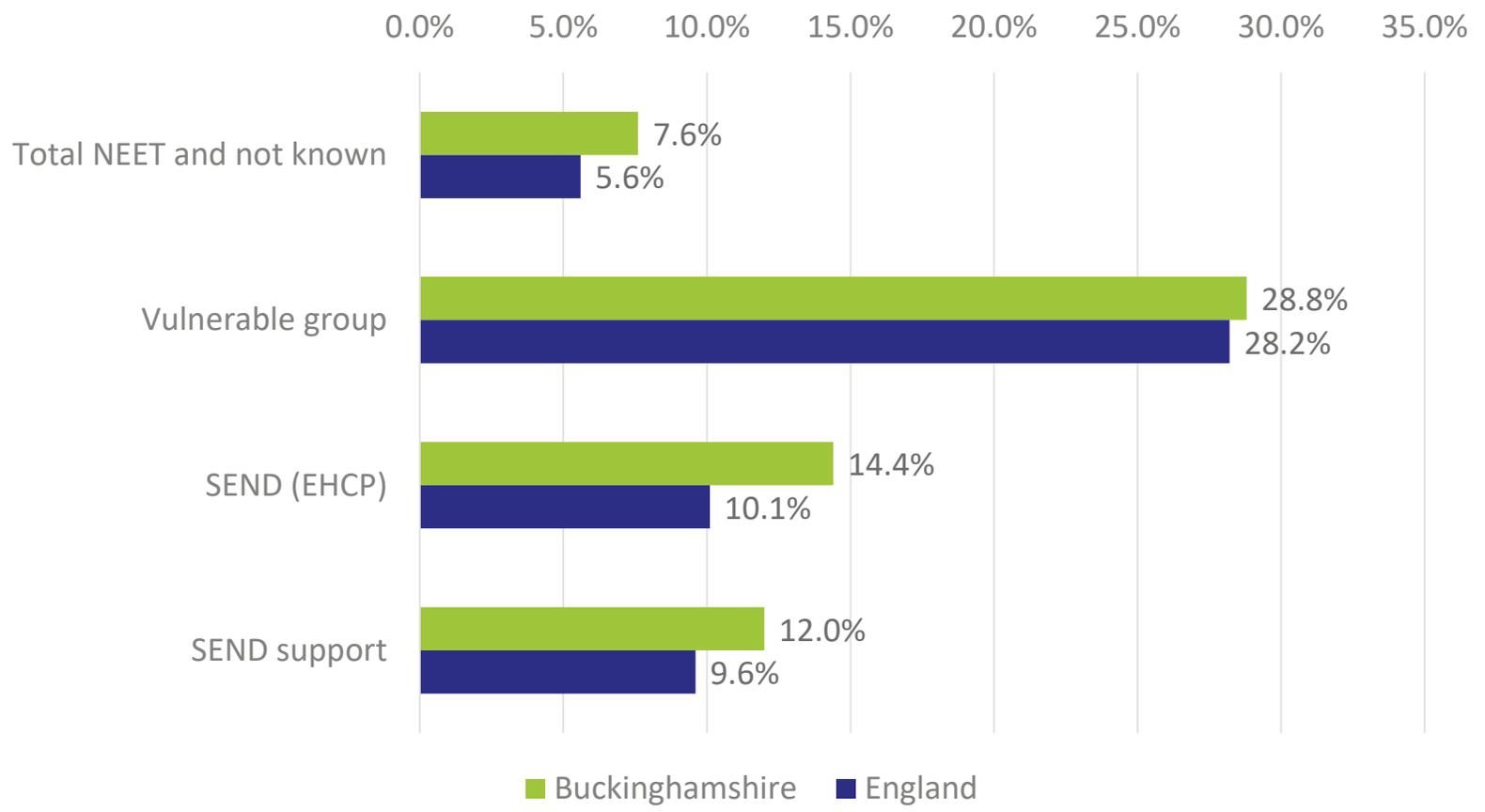
While Buckinghamshire has historically had lower 16–17-year-old NEET rates than the national average, recent data suggests rates have increase since 2022.

Buckinghamshire has a higher proportion of 16-17 year olds whose activity is 'not known', which may mask the true NEET rate.

Recent efforts by Buckinghamshire Council to reduce the number of 'not knowns' has led to a decrease in the number of 'not knowns' and an increase in those deemed to be NEET.

Source: DfE, 2025

# Young people from vulnerable groups and with SEND are more likely than average to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or have 'unknown destination' status



At the end of 2024, 7.6% of 16–18-year-old were NEET or had an unknown status. This figure exceeds the national average (5.6%), largely because Buckinghamshire has a higher proportion of young people whose activity is unknown (5.1% compared to 2.2% nationally).

Vulnerable groups (including those with mental health flags, looked after children, care leavers and youth offenders), are consistently overrepresented in 16-18 NEET statistics.

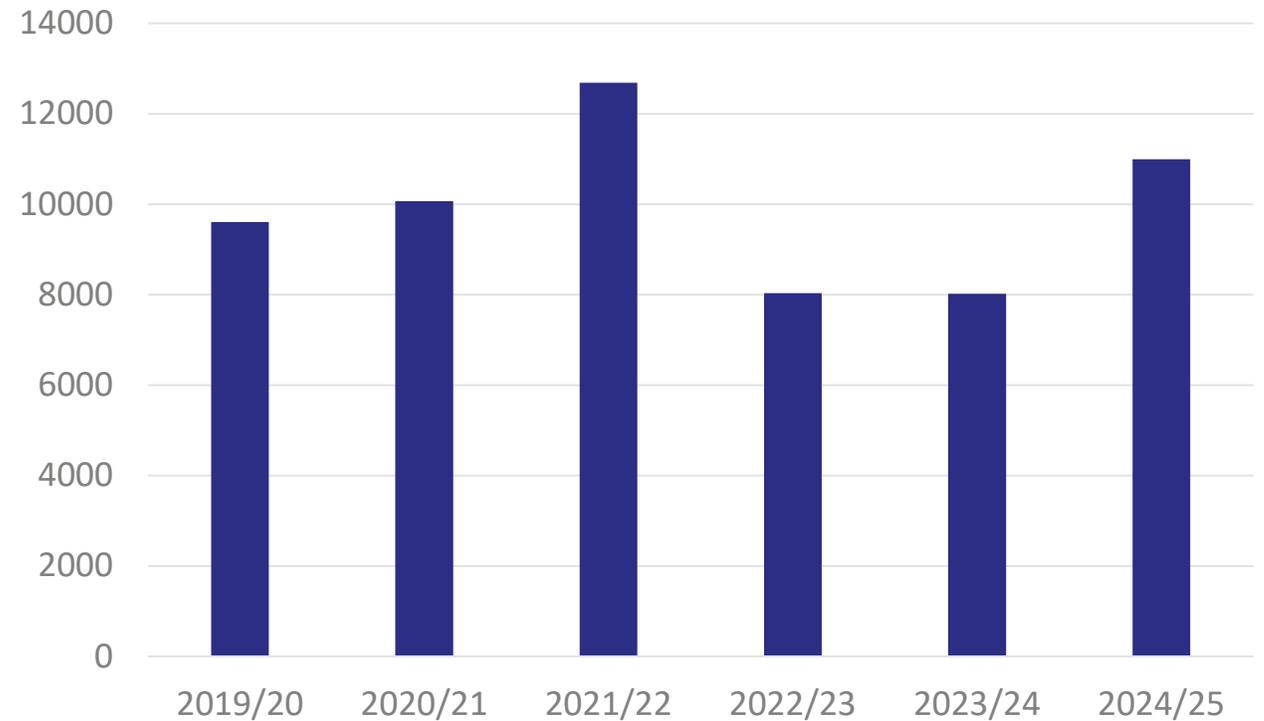
Rates are also higher for those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

Source: [DfE, 2025](#)

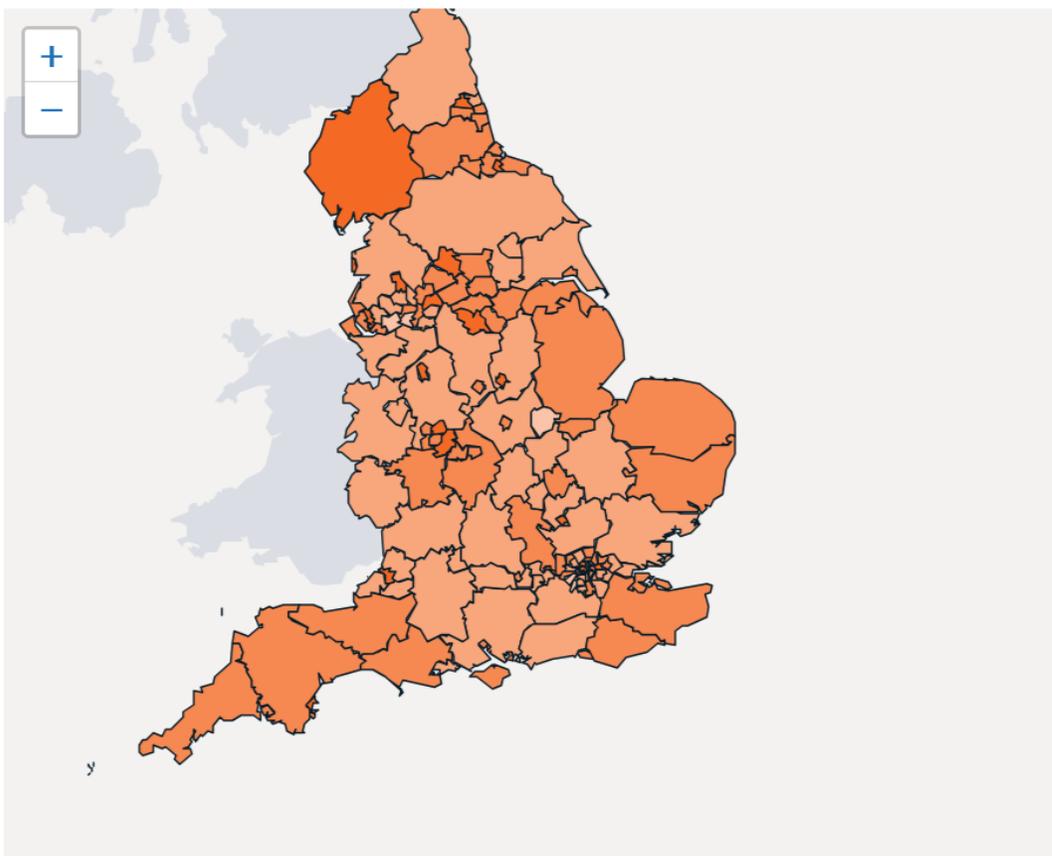
# The number of children and young people being referred to mental health services has been high in recent years

The number of referrals received by Buckinghamshire's Child and Adolescent services (CAMHS) has been high over the last six years. Referrals peaked in 2021/22 before falling for two years then rising again in 2024/25.

**Number of CAHMS referrals received by year**



# The proportion of children who are persistently absent from school has doubled over the last eight years



## Key to Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed) (2022/23)

- 9.8% to 13.3%
- 13.4% to 16.9%
- 17.0% to 20.5%
- 20.6% to 24.1%
- 24.2% to 27.8%

## Buckinghamshire

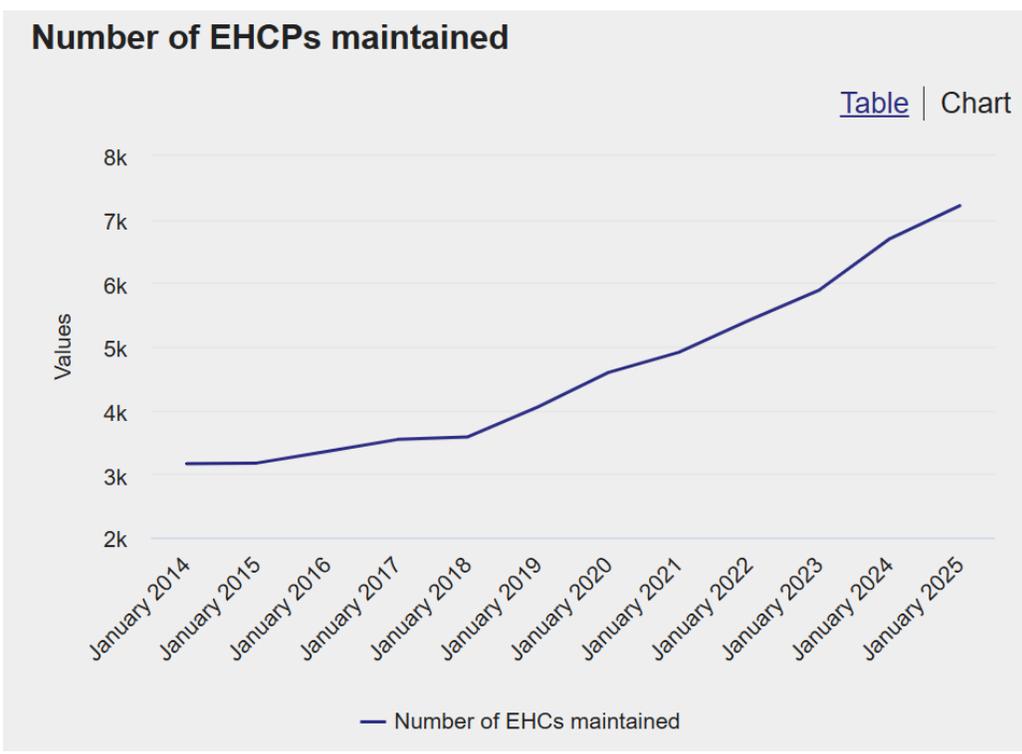
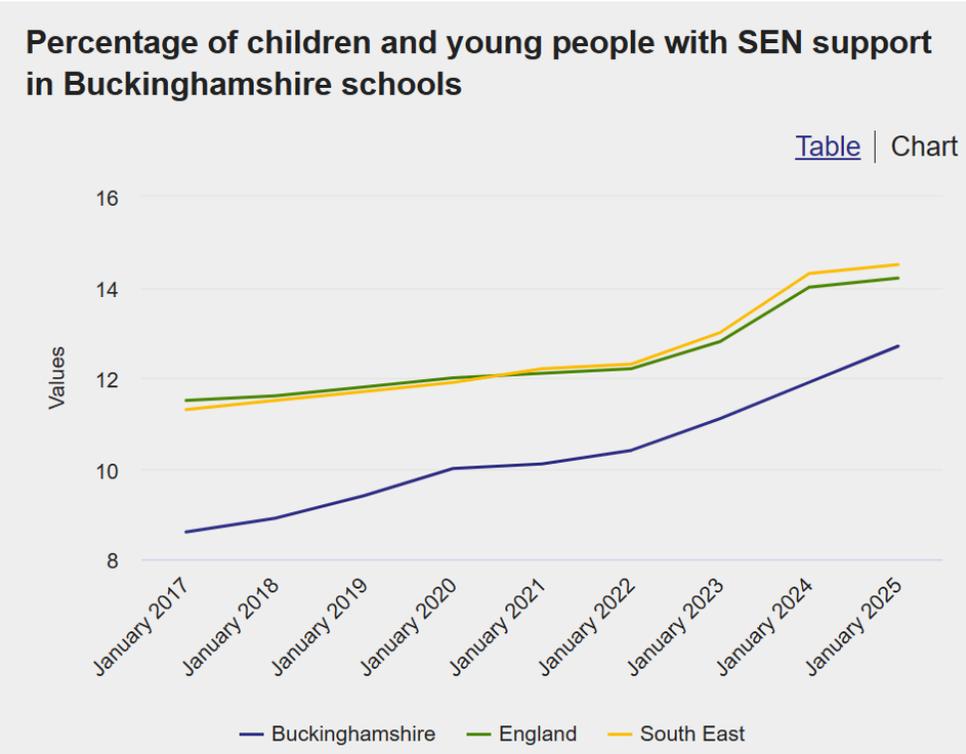
Percentage of persistent absentees (10% or more missed) (2022/23)

**21.1%**

Locally and nationally there has been an increase in the proportion of children who are persistently absent from school (missing more than 10% of available sessions) following the COVID pandemic when schools were shut to most pupils. In Buckinghamshire 21.1% of pupils were persistently absent in 2022/23, in line with the national average.

The proportion of primary school pupils who were persistently absent rose from 6.5% in 2014/15 to 15.5% in 2022/23. Among secondary school pupils, the rate increased from 14.5% to 26.8% over the same period.

# The proportion of children and young people with SEN support or ECHPs in Buckinghamshire schools has increased substantially over recent years, as has been the case nationally



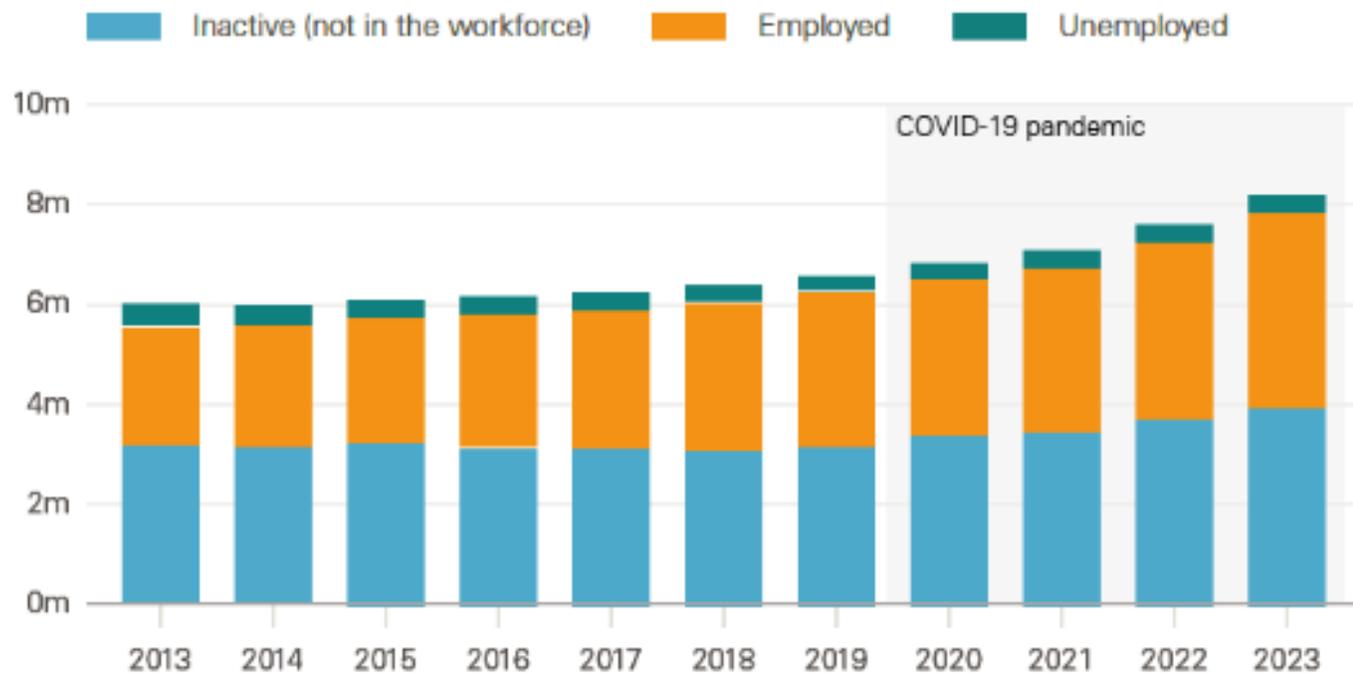
The number of children and young people (CYP) receiving SEN support in Buckinghamshire is below the national average.

In January 2025, 4.9% of pupils attending Buckinghamshire state-funded schools had an EHCP. This is below both the regional (5.5%) and national (5.3%) averages. The number of EHCPs maintained in Buckinghamshire has increased by 128% since 2014

Source: SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2025 to 2030, Buckinghamshire Council

Health

## Proportion of working age population with work-limiting health conditions has increased since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic



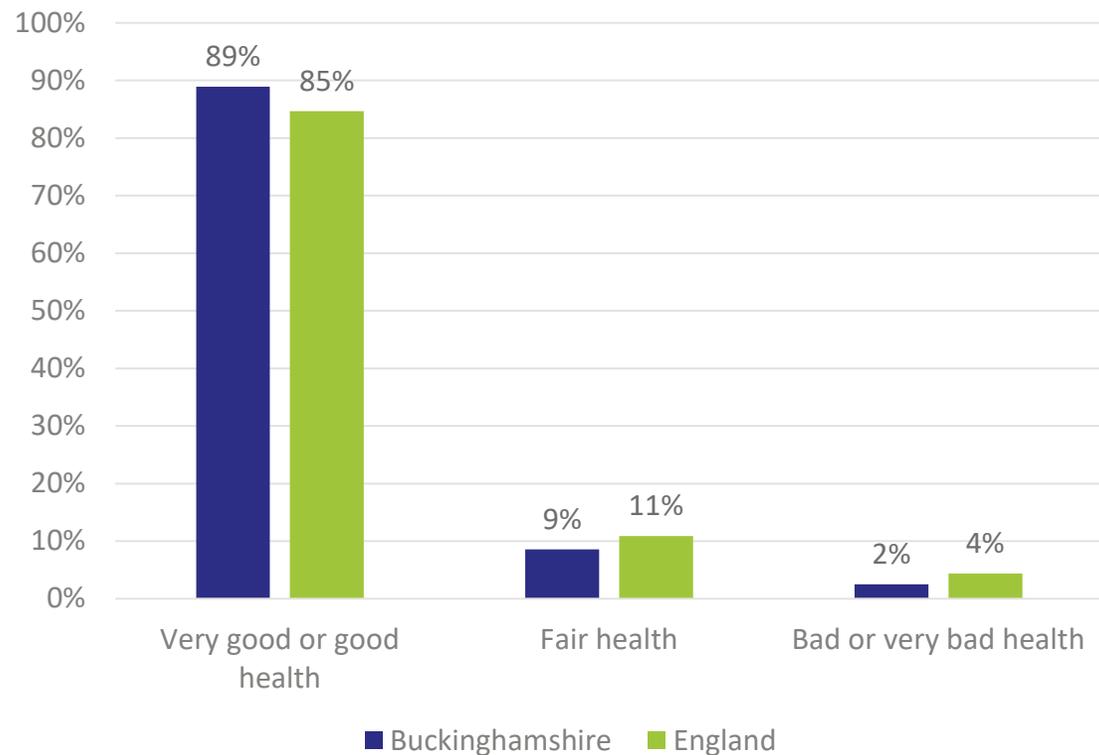
Of the 8.2 million people with work-limiting health conditions in 2023, four million were economically inactive, representing a 24% rise since 2013. Of note, around half of this group received *work-related health benefits*<sup>2</sup> and 2.6 million cited that disability or long-term sickness were their primary reasons for economic inactivity. Additionally, 3.9 million, who were not economically inactive that year, were in employment but reported having work-limiting health conditions, demonstrating a significant increase from previous years.

Source: Health Foundation analysis of Office for National Statistics, Labour Force Survey, 2023. Note: quarterly figures averaged for each year.

Figure is taken from *Action of Healthier Working Lives* (Health Foundation, 2025)

# Buckinghamshire's working age residents are in better health than the national average

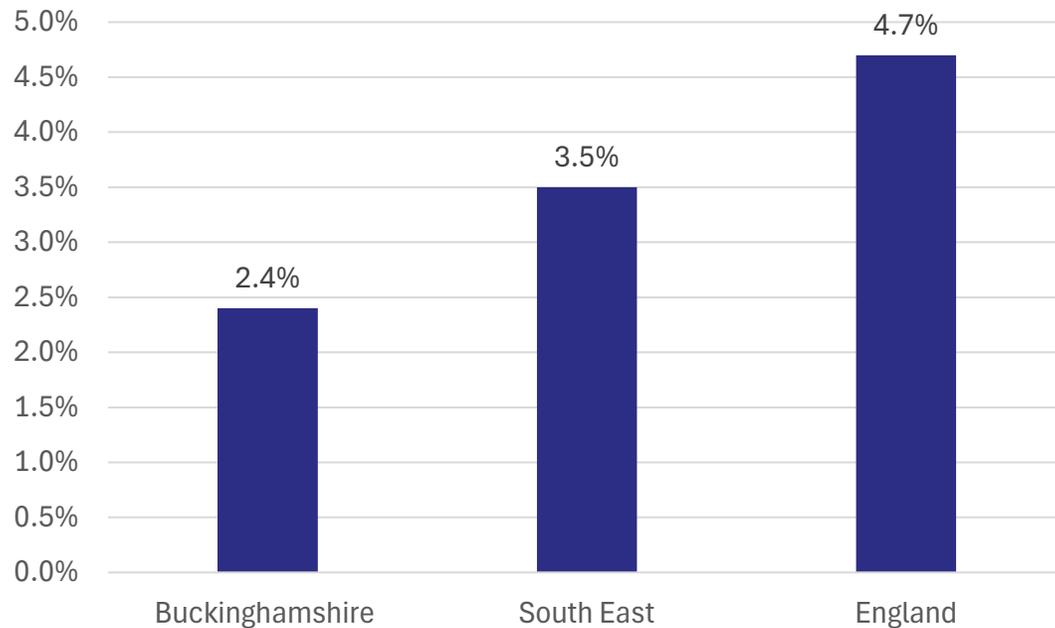
## General health of working age residents



11% of Buckinghamshire's working age residents report being in fair, bad or very bad health, lower than the national average of 15%.

# Working age residents who are economically inactive due to long term sickness or disability

## Working age residents who are economically inactive due to long term sickness or disability

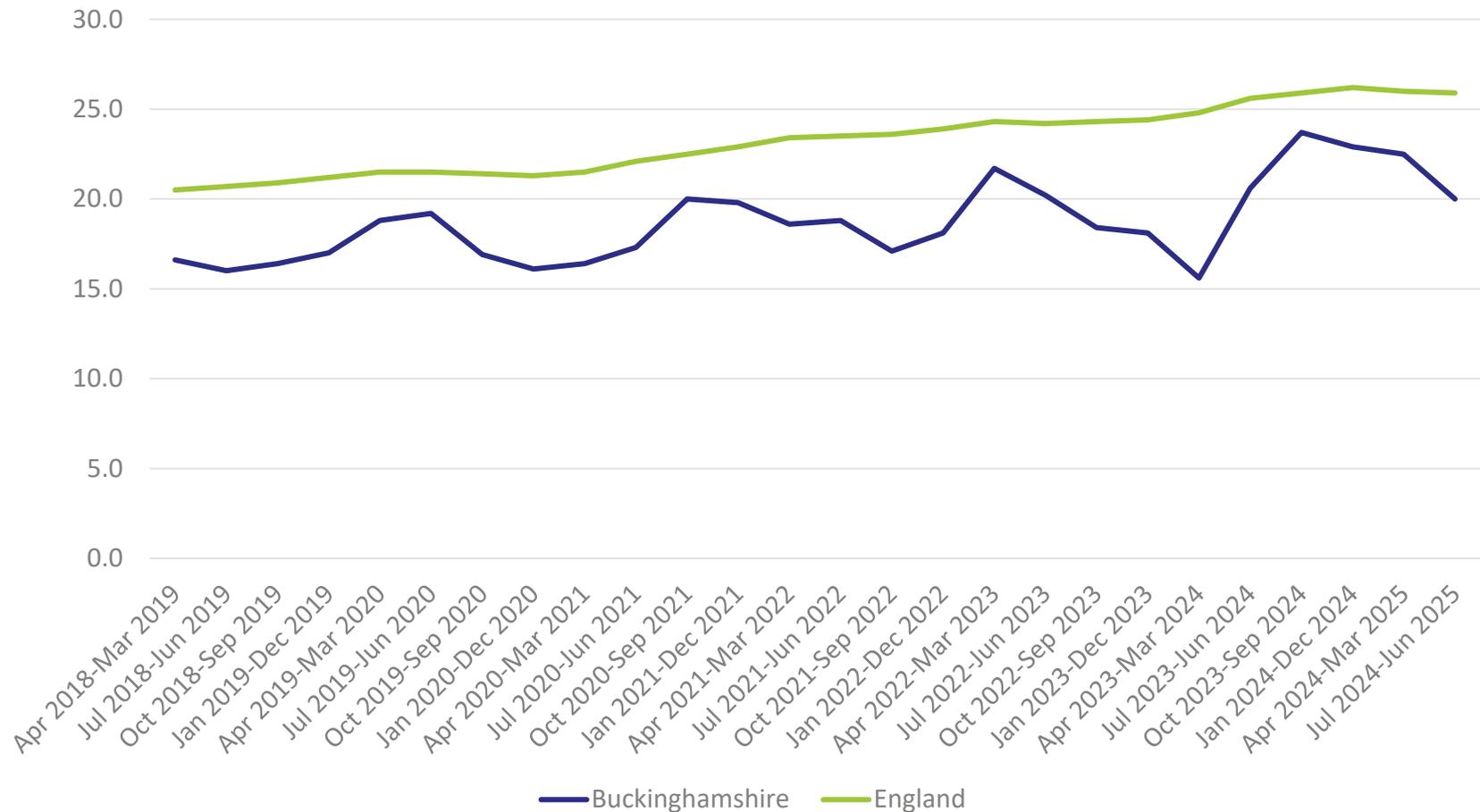


## Buckinghamshire wards with rates higher than the regional average

Ward	% economically inactive who are long term sick
Aylesbury North West	4.6%
Aylesbury South West	4.5%
Aylesbury North	4.0%
Booker, Cressex and Castlefield	4.0%

Buckinghamshire residents are less likely to be economically inactive due to long term sickness or disability than the regional and national average. Four wards have rates higher than the regional average, all of which are Opportunity Bucks wards.

# Proportion of working age residents with a disability (Equality Act core) or work-limiting disability has been increasing in recent years.



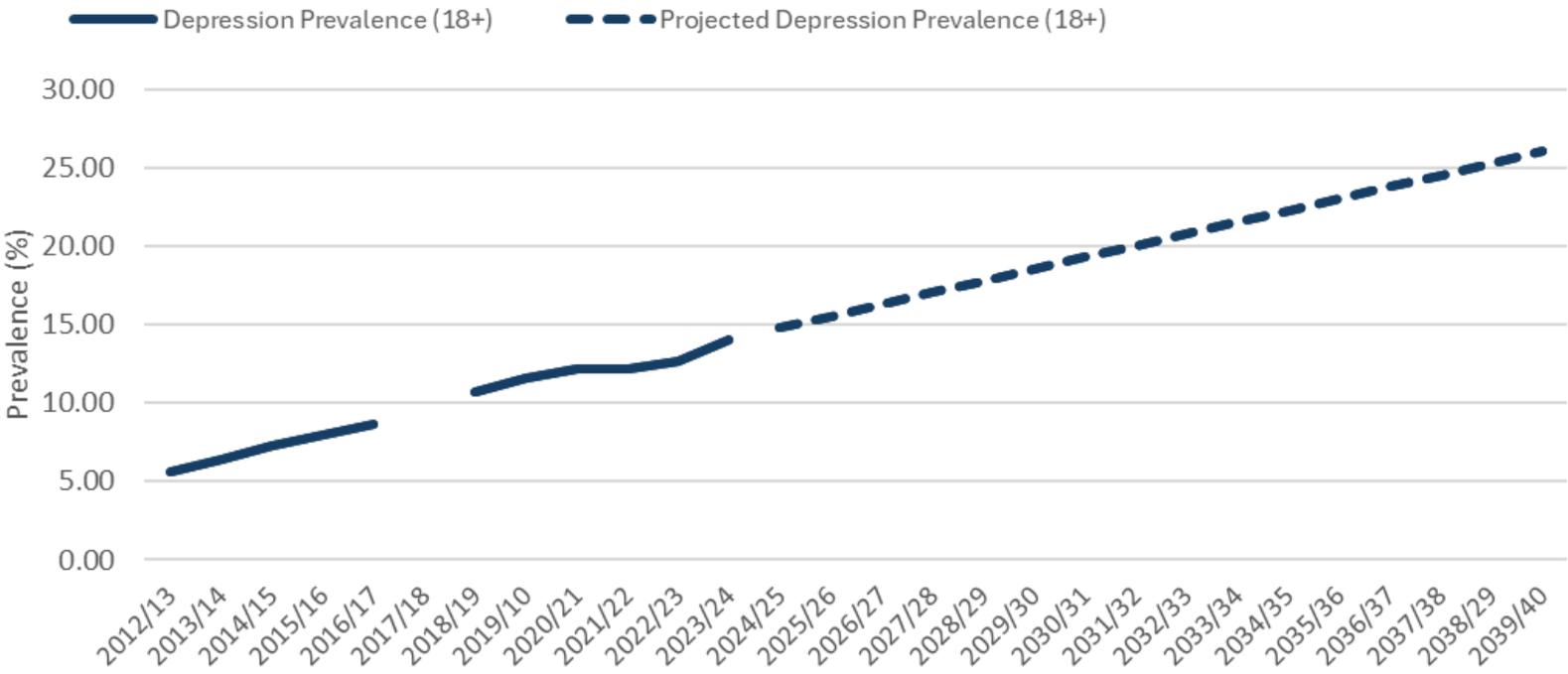
Buckinghamshire has a smaller proportion of working age residents with a disability (Equality Act core) or work-limiting disability than the national average.

Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS

Note: Data fluctuations for Buckinghamshire can in part be attributed to the small survey sample size and relatively large margins of error

# The prevalence of depression in Buckinghamshire is projected to more than double by 2039/40

Recorded prevalence and future projected prevalence of depression in Buckinghamshire  
QOF prevalence 2012/13 to 2022/23 actual, 2023/24 onwards projected

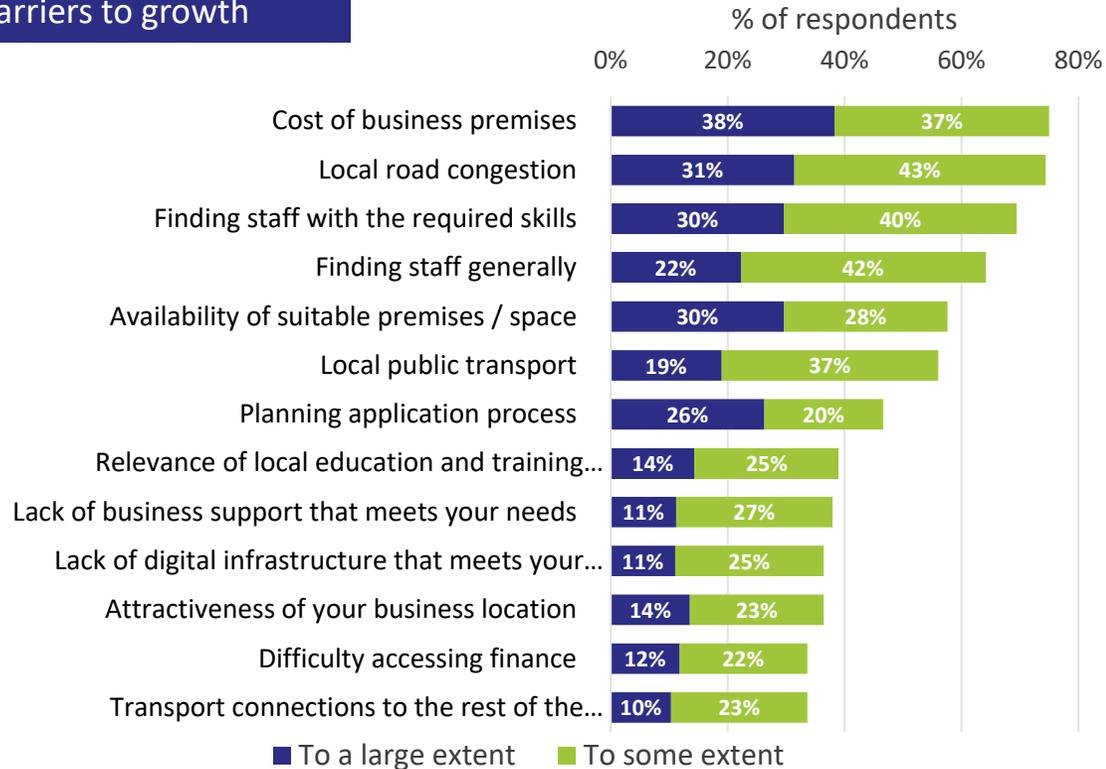


The recorded prevalence of depression amongst Buckinghamshire residents has tripled in the last 10 years and is projected to continue to rise.

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) (2025) *Mental health and wellbeing: Depression prevalence (18+ yrs), England, E06000060*. Available at: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/Depressions#page/4/gid/1/pat/15/par/E92000001/ati/502/are/E06000060/iid/848/age/168/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/1/cid/4/tbm/1/page-options/car-do-0> (Accessed: 21 August 2025).

Wider barriers

## Barriers to growth

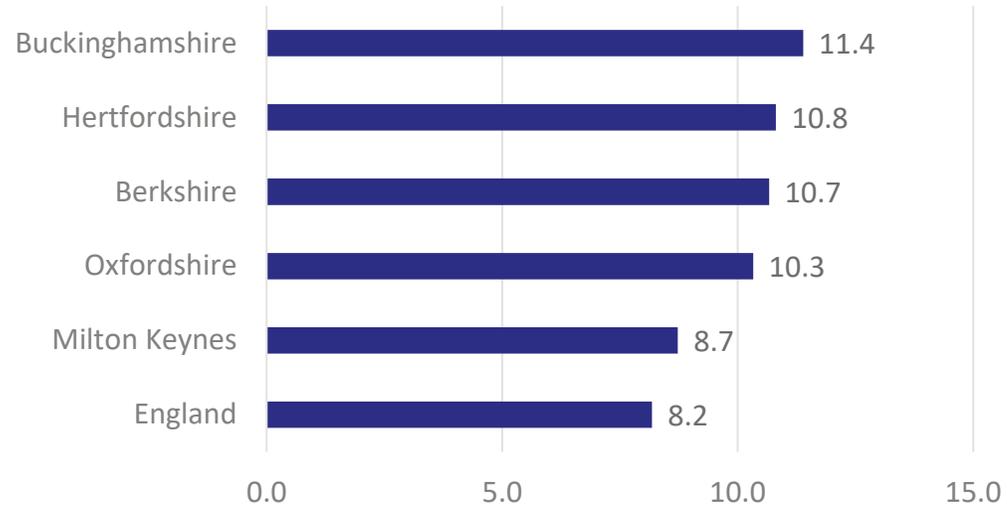


**Over half of firms responding to a Buckinghamshire Council business survey conducted in 2024 stated that local public transport was a barrier to growth – largely due to prospective employees without access to a car, not be able to easily access workplaces at the times required**

Source: Buckinghamshire Business Survey, Buckinghamshire Council, 2024\*  
 \*results to be treated as indicative only due to sample size / sampling method

# Housing affordability in Buckinghamshire is poor and has worsened over the last 20 years

## Housing affordability



Housing is less affordable in Buckinghamshire than in neighbouring areas with average house prices 11.4 times average earnings

Source: ONS, 2024

**Overall, there is greater utilisation of funded childcare in Buckinghamshire than nationally. However, rates are lower in Opportunity Bucks wards**

<b>Take up of 3&amp;4 year Old Entitlements by Buckinghamshire Opportunity Wards</b>			
<b>3&amp;4 Year Olds</b>	<b>% of Children taking funding</b>	<b>2 Year Olds</b>	<b>% of Children taking funding</b>
Abbey	75.24	Abbey	94.12
Aylesbury North	69.26	Aylesbury North	56.82
Aylesbury North-West	84.72	Aylesbury North-West	81.48
Aylesbury South-West	89.95	Aylesbury South-West	62.79
Booker, Cressex and Castlefield	77.86	Booker, Cressex and Castlefield	80.00
Chesham	74.21	Chesham	77.42
Ryemead and Micklefield	91.06	Ryemead and Micklefield	77.78
Terriers and Amersham	87.38	Terriers and Amersham	30.30
Totteridge and	92.06	Totteridge and	70.00
West Wycombe	96.47	West Wycombe	88.24

The average take up for 3 and 4-year-olds in the Buckinghamshire Opportunity Wards is 84% which is lower than the average take up of 97% across Buckinghamshire.

The average take up of 2-year-old funding entitlements across Buckinghamshire Opportunity Wards is 72% which is lower than the average take up of 78% across Buckinghamshire.

N/B Some children accessed funded entitlements outside of their home ward which results in a higher or lower percentage per ward.

## Further analysis

For further information about the Buckinghamshire labour market, please see the [Buckinghamshire Labour Market and Skills Analysis 2025](#) report