

# Characteristics of Young Unemployed People, 2012

Coverage: **International**

Date: **22 February 2012**

Geographical Area: **Region**

Theme: **Labour Market**

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## Animated video podcast

A podcast explaining this story using audio commentary and graphical animations is available on the [ONS YouTube channel](#).

## Youth unemployment highest since the 1980s

This story on young people covers the following:

- Number and percentage unemployed since the 1980s
- The impact of qualifications on unemployment
- Comparisons across the UK and Europe
- The types of jobs sought by young people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.

Unemployment for young people in the UK aged 16 to 24 in October to December 2011 stood at 1.04 million, the highest number since 1986/87. Of these, 307,000 were full-time students who were actively looking for work but unable to find any to go alongside their study, accounting for around 30 per cent. Over the past 20 years the percentage unemployed who are full-time students has increased, it stood at 9.2 per cent in March to May 1992, mainly driven by more students in the youth population. The increase in full-time students has reduced the pool of young people who are not in full-time education. Therefore, the current level of youth unemployment excluding students is the highest since the start of 1994 but lower than the peaks following the 1980s and 1990s recessions.

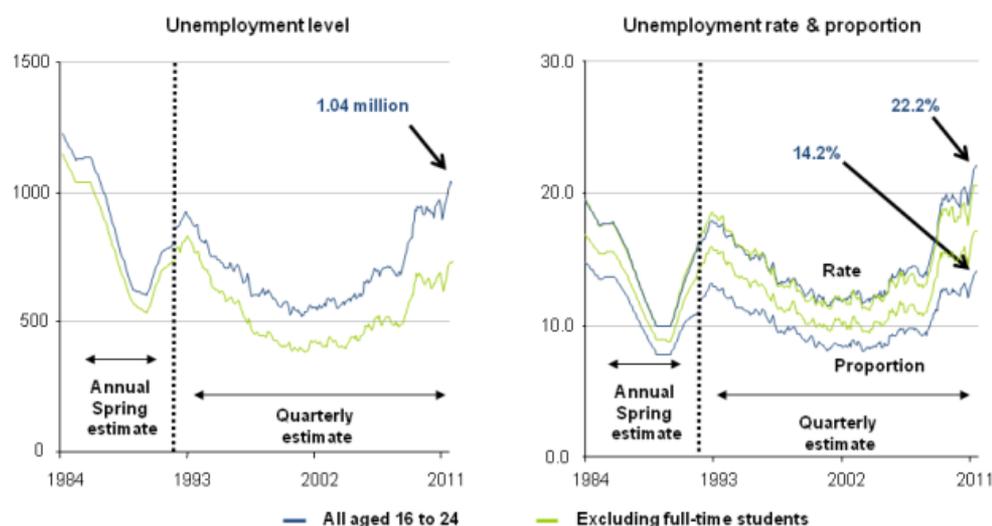
The youth unemployment rate was 22.2 per cent and this measures the percentage of unemployed young people in relation to every young person who is active in the labour market, so either working or looking for work. The rate of 22.2 per cent means that for every five young people actively engaged in the labour market, around one would be looking for work, with the other four in work.

There are many young people not actively engaged in the labour market, for example they remain in education and don't look for work. The number has been increasing and has impacted on the

unemployment rate as the shift to education has largely been from employment. This has meant that those unemployed are a larger percentage of the remaining active population. More information explaining this effect is in the story on [Young People in the Labour Market](#)<sup>1</sup>.

To take account of this, another way to look at the figures is the unemployment proportion. This measures the percentage of unemployed young people in relation to all young people regardless of whether they are active in the labour market or inactive. In October to December 2011 it stood at 14.2 per cent, the highest since 1984/85 and represents around one young person in every seven as unemployed.

### Unemployment levels, rates and proportions of people aged 16 to 24, 1984 to 2011, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

#### Download chart

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(71 Kb)

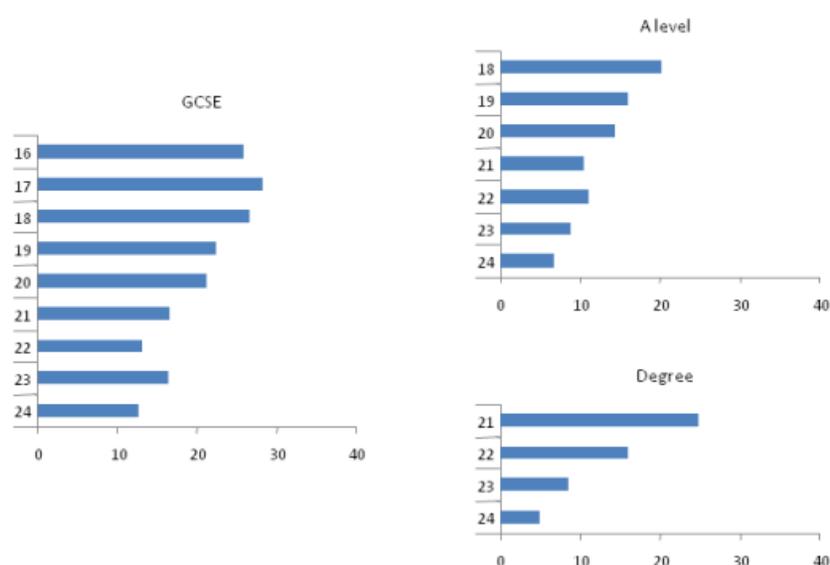
Youth unemployment has risen in each of the last three recessions and the immediate years following their end. The current total of 1.04 million compares with peaks of 924,000 in 1993 and 1.2 million in 1984. Excluding students, today's total of 731,000 (10 per cent of the youth population) compares with 832,000 (12 per cent) in 1993 and 1.1 million (14 per cent) in 1984. However because the number of students has been rising, just looking at young people not in full-time education, the unemployment proportion was 17.2 per cent in the final quarter of 2011, the highest since records began.

#### Better qualified and older young people have lower unemployment

Looking at young people who have left full-time education and the proportion that are unemployed, around 25.9 per cent of 16-year olds who left school with only a GCSE qualification were unemployed, and around 26.6 per cent of 18-year olds with only a GCSE were unemployed. However, for 24-year olds who left school with only GCSEs the percentage who were unemployed was 12.8 per cent.

Looking at 18-year olds who had left full-time education with an A-level, around 20.3 per cent were unemployed, falling to 6.7 per cent for 24-year olds. Finally, looking at 21-year olds who had left university with a degree around 24.8 per cent were unemployed as they start looking for work. However, the percentage of 24-year olds unemployed was just 4.9 per cent.

### Percentage of young people unemployed who have left full-time education by age and highest level of qualification, January to December 2011



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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### London has highest youth unemployment rate but the North East the highest proportion

Looking at the annual period July 2010 to June 2011, the highest unemployment rate for young people aged 16 to 24 was in London at 23.7 per cent with the lowest in the South West at 14.8 per cent. However because London has a high number of its young people not actively engaging in the labour market and in study because of its many universities it does not have the highest proportion unemployed. This was in the North East at 14.6 per cent while the lowest proportion was in Northern Ireland at 9.5 per cent.

## Regional unemployment rates and proportions for 16 to 24 year olds, July to June 2011

UK, not seasonally adjusted



Source: Annual Population Survey (APS) - Office for National Statistics

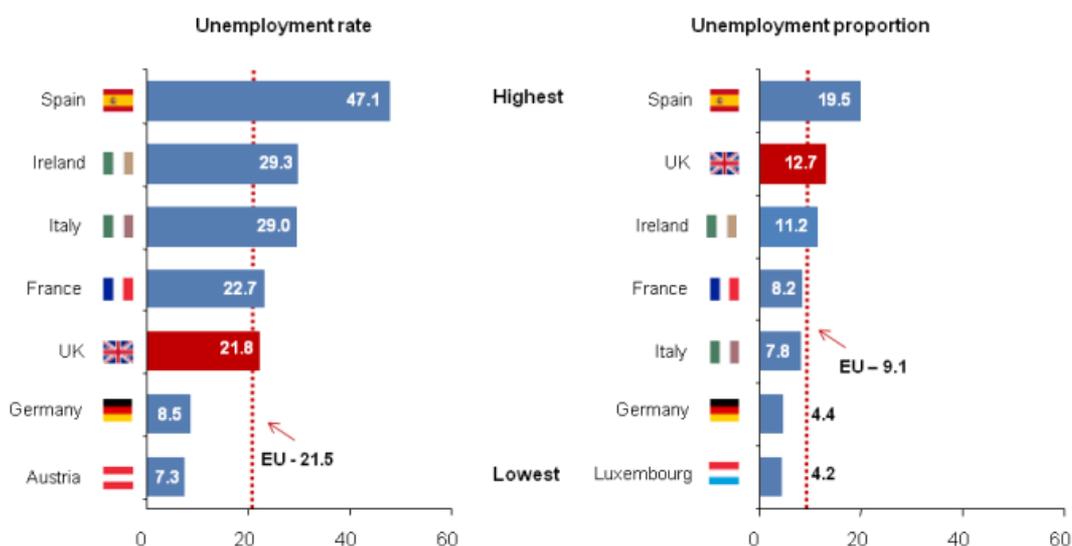
### Spain has the highest youth unemployment in the EU

Across the European Union, Spain tops the list of the 27 member states for unemployment. In the third quarter of 2011 their unemployment rate stood at 47.1 per cent, looking at the youth labour force aged 15 to 24. The lowest rate across the Union was in Austria at just 7.3 per cent. The UK rate of 21.8 per cent was close to the EU average of 21.5 per cent. Apprenticeship schemes which offer work-based training, funded by the Government and businesses, helps to explain the relatively low unemployment rate in Austria and in other countries like Germany that have a similar model.

For the unemployment proportion, Spain comes out on top again at around 19.5 per cent, so just under one in every five young people are unemployed, more than double the EU average of 9.1 per cent. The UK is above the EU average at 12.7 per cent, while Luxembourg has the lowest proportion of young people unemployed, at 4.2 per cent. Its unemployment proportion is much lower than the unemployment rate because a high proportion of the youth population are not engaged in the labour market and are inactive, for example in study.

For comparisons across Europe the youth population is everyone aged 15 to 24. This means the proportions for the UK are lower than when looking at the 16 to 24 population as the number unemployed is divided by a larger number.

## Unemployment rates and proportions for EU countries, Q3 2011



Source: Eurostat

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### Young people looking for sales and low skilled jobs

The claimant count provides information on the types of jobs that young people claiming unemployment-related benefits are seeking. This does not cover every unemployed young person as few 16 to 17 year olds can claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), some young people aged 18-24 choose not to claim and others, such as full-time students, are not eligible. In January 2012 around 484,000 18-24 year olds were claiming jobseekers allowance. Of these, around 6 in every 10 were looking for a job in sales or elementary occupations, with the latter classed as the lowest skilled jobs in the economy. For those looking for a job in sales the main occupation sought was as a sales assistant or retail cashier. For those seeking jobs in the elementary occupations the main two areas were in goods storage and personal services which include jobs such as hairdressing.

## Occupation sought by people aged 18 to 24 claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, January 2012

	Thousands	Per cent
1 : Managers and Senior Officials	4	0.9
2 : Professional Occupations	7	1.4
3 : Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	24	5.0
4 : Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	45	9.4
5 : Skilled Trades Occupations	43	8.9
6 : Personal Service Occupations	39	8.0
7 : Sales and Customer Service Occupations	160	33.0
8 : Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	20	4.2
9 : Elementary Occupations	142	29.2
Total	484	100.0

**Table source:** Work and Pensions

**Table notes:**

1. The claimant count measures the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, on the second Thursday of each month (the 'count date').
2. More detailed estimates are available from Nomis at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

### Download table

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### Background notes

1. The unemployment rate is the number unemployed divided by the number employed or unemployed.

2. The unemployment proportion is the number unemployed divided by the number employed, unemployed or economically inactive.
3. A previous publication by ONS explains the [effect of increases in young people staying on in education on the unemployment rate](#).
4. [Youth unemployment data for European countries](#) can be found via the Eurostat website.
5. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html) or from the Media Relations Office email: [media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

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