

# Characteristics of Home Workers, 2014

Coverage: **UK**

Date: **04 June 2014**

Geographical Area: **Local Authority**

Theme: **Labour Market**

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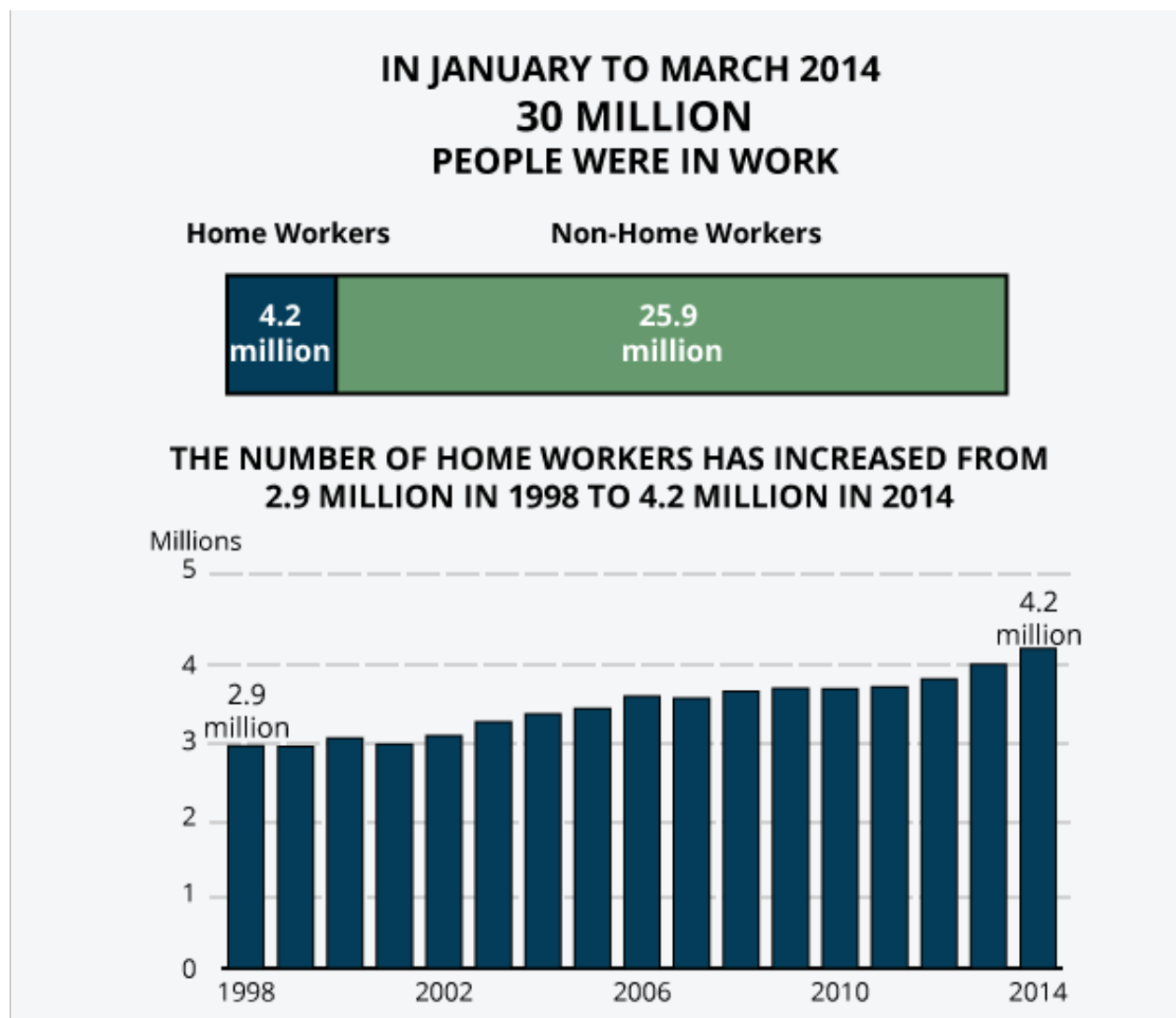
## Key Points

- Of the 30.2 million people in work in January to March 2014, 4.2 million were home workers, giving a home worker rate of 13.9% of those in work. This is the highest rate since comparable records began in 1998.
- The number of home workers has grown by 1.3 million and the rate by 2.8 percentage points since 1998
- Home workers tend to work in higher skilled roles than the rest of the population and consequently earn on average a higher hourly wage.
- Almost two-thirds of home workers were self-employed in 2014.
- Using the home for work is most prevalent within the agriculture and construction industries.
- Working from home is more prevalent among individuals who are older.
- The South West was the region of Great Britain with the highest home working rate at 17.1%.
- The local area with the highest home working rates across England and Wales was West Somerset at 25.7% while the lowest was Kingston upon Hull at 5.2%.

## Characteristics of home workers in the UK

In January to March 2014 there were just over 30 million people in work across the UK. Of this number, 4.2 million said that home working was a significant factor in their employment as they spend the majority of their time working from home. This represented 13.9% of all those in employment in the UK.

Figure 1: Numbers of homeworkers in the UK, 1998 to 2014



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

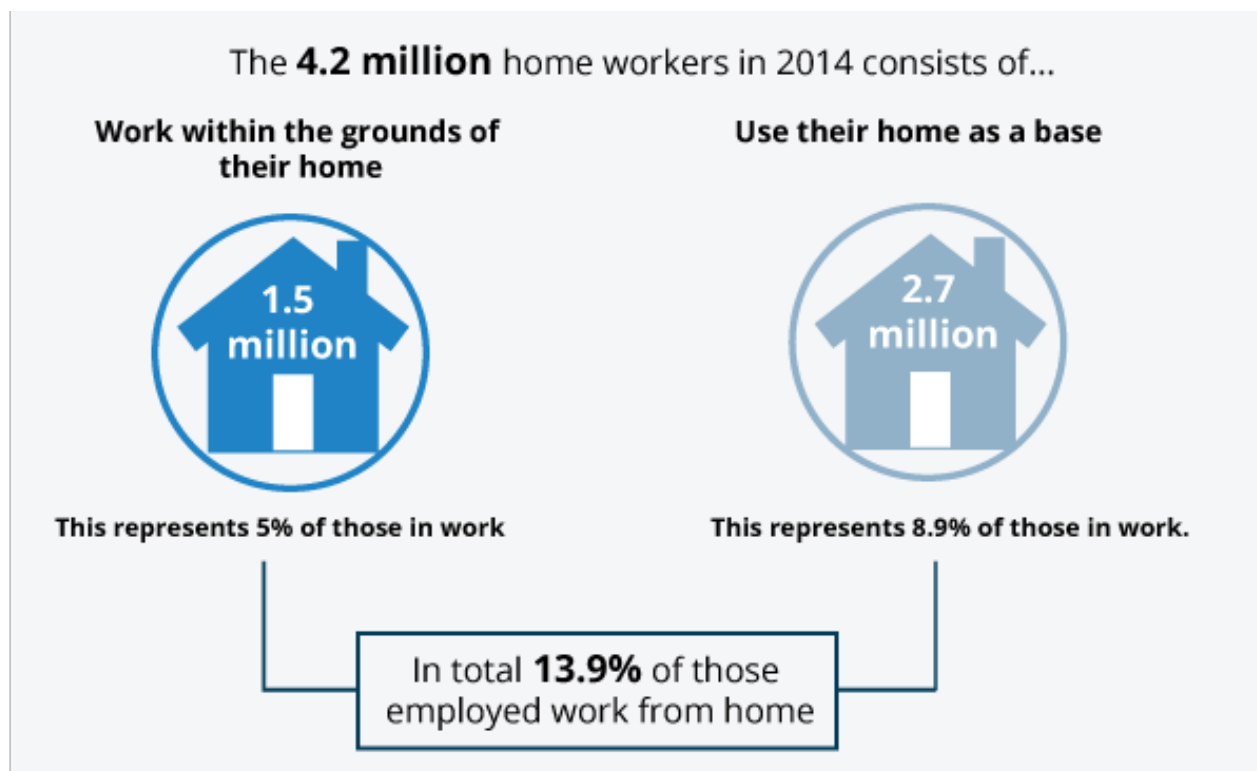
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For the purpose of this analysis, home workers are defined as those who usually spend at least half of their work time using their home, either within their grounds or in different places and using it as a base. Home workers will include both those who are employees of organisations and those who are self-employed. There are two groups of home workers, firstly those who work within their home or the grounds of their home and secondly those who meet clients and customers elsewhere and only use their home as a base. Of the 4.2 million home workers, 1.5 million were in the former group, working within the grounds of their home and 2.7 million in the latter group, using their home as a base.

**Figure 2: Home working levels and rates in 2014**



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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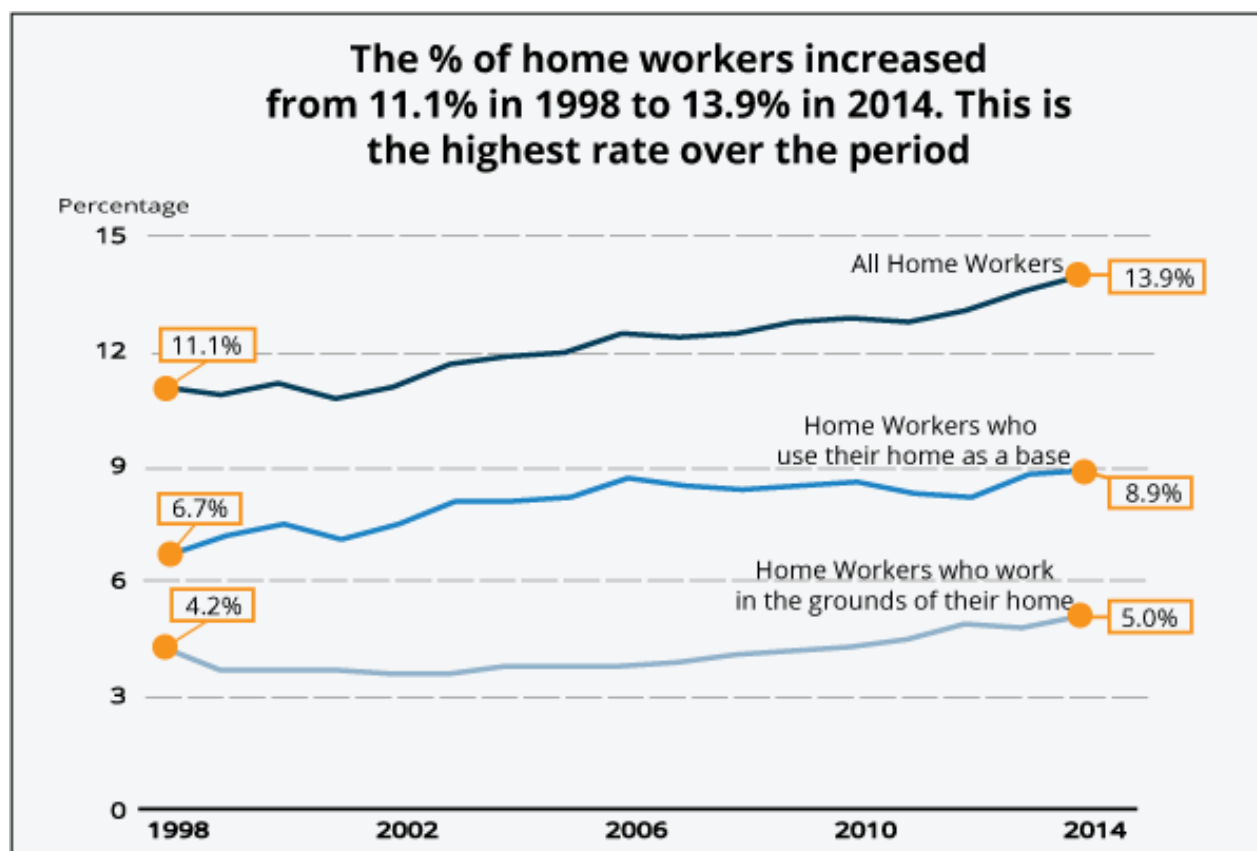
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#### The number of home workers has grown by 1.3 million since 1998

In 1998 around 2.9 million people were home workers and so the number of people working from home has risen by over a million over the past 16 years to 4.2 million in 2014. However over the same period the population of the UK has also been rising and so has the number of people in work. The percentage of those in work who works from home (also known as the home working rate) increased from 11.1% in 1998 to a rate of 13.9% in January to March 2014 which is the highest point in the past decade and a half.

**Figure 3: Home working rates, 1998 to 2014**



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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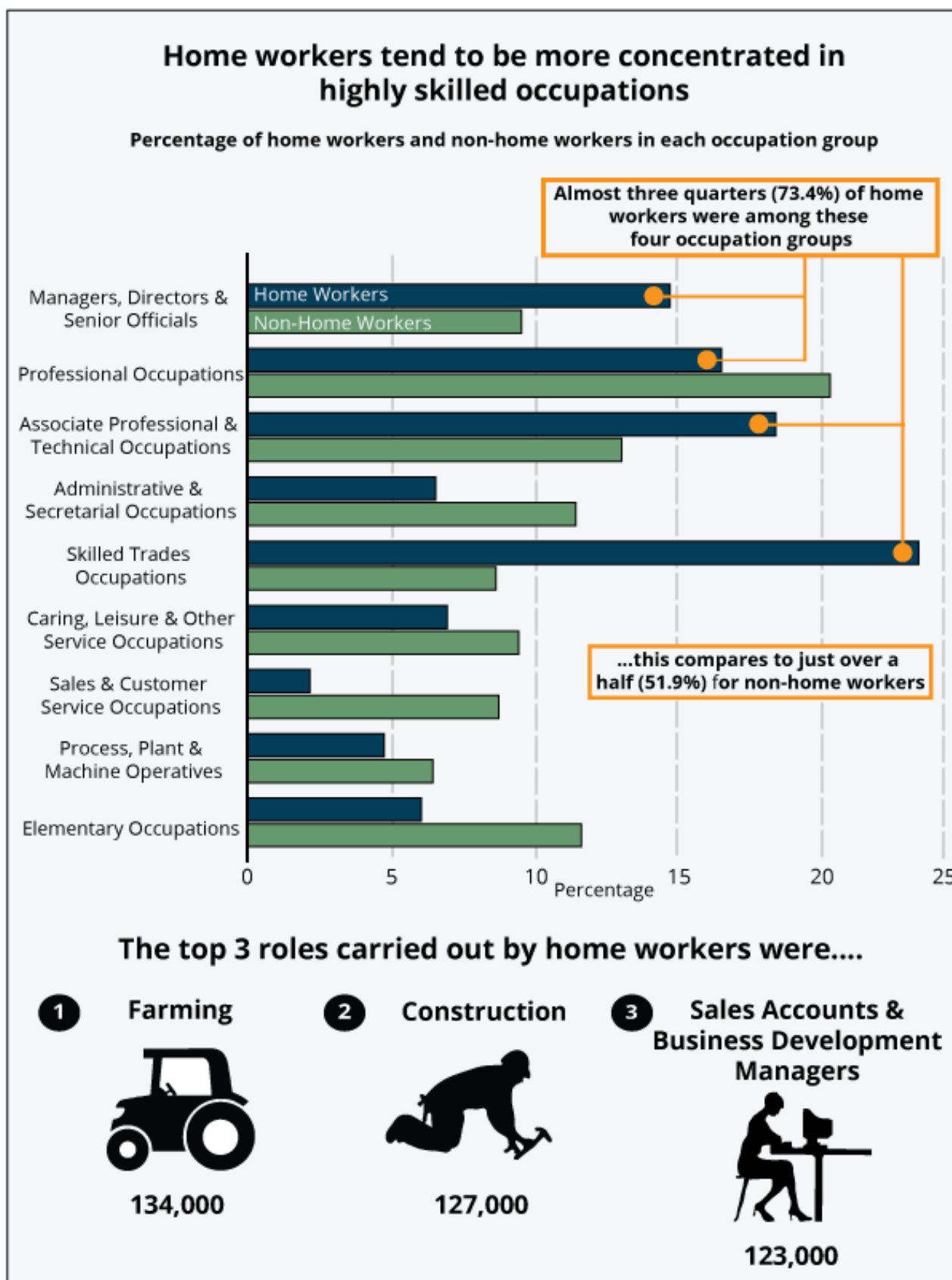
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### Home workers tend to be more concentrated in highly skilled occupations

The jobs that home workers carry out tend to be concentrated more in higher skilled roles compared to those who do not work from home. Of the 4.2 million home workers in 2014, 14.8% were working as managers or senior officials, 35.2% were professionals or associate professionals and a further 23.5% were working within skilled trades. This meant that almost three quarters (73.4%) of home workers were in some of the highest skilled roles in the economy. For non-home workers just over a half (51.9%) were among the same occupational groups.

Looking at the two different types of home workers the main difference in occupations is among those in skilled trades. Around 29.0% of those who only use their home as a base worked in skilled trades compared to 13.7% for those who work within the grounds of their home. This is not unsurprising as many of those working in skilled trades such as in the building trade carry out most of their work at different sites.

Figure 4: Percentage of home workers and non-home workers in each occupation group



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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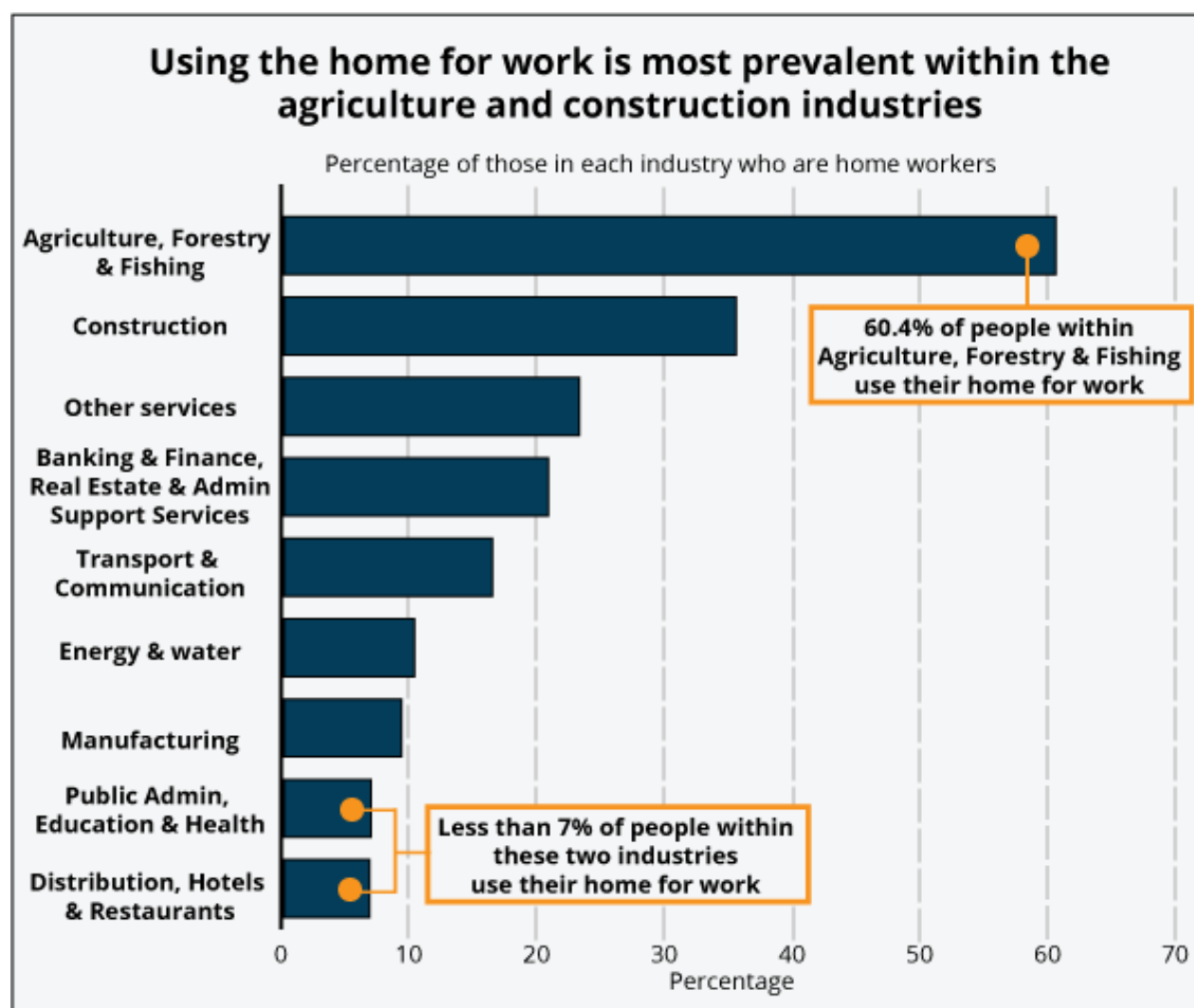
Looking in more detail at the different types of occupations carried out for home workers, the most common role was working in farming followed by construction and sales accounts and business development managers. There were differences in the types of role between men and women. The most common roles for home working men were among construction trade occupations while for women the top roles included childminding and care working.

Overall, of the 4.2 million home workers just under two-thirds (64%) were men and they were concentrated more among the home workers who only use their home as a base. Focusing just on those that use their home as a base, 74.2% were men, explained by the high concentration of them in the skilled trades roles linked to construction. For those home workers who work within the grounds there was a more even gender split and 53.1% of them were women.

### **Using the home for work is most prevalent within the agriculture and construction industries**

Around six in every ten workers in agriculture use their home for work making this the most prevalent industry for home working. The second most prevalent industry was construction where 35% of workers use their home for work. Workers within public administration, education and health along with those in distribution, hotels and restaurants were the least likely to work from home. Less than 7% of people within these two industrial groups used their home for work. This is understandable as many of the roles within these two sectors are difficult to carry out at home.

Figure 5: Home working rates by industry



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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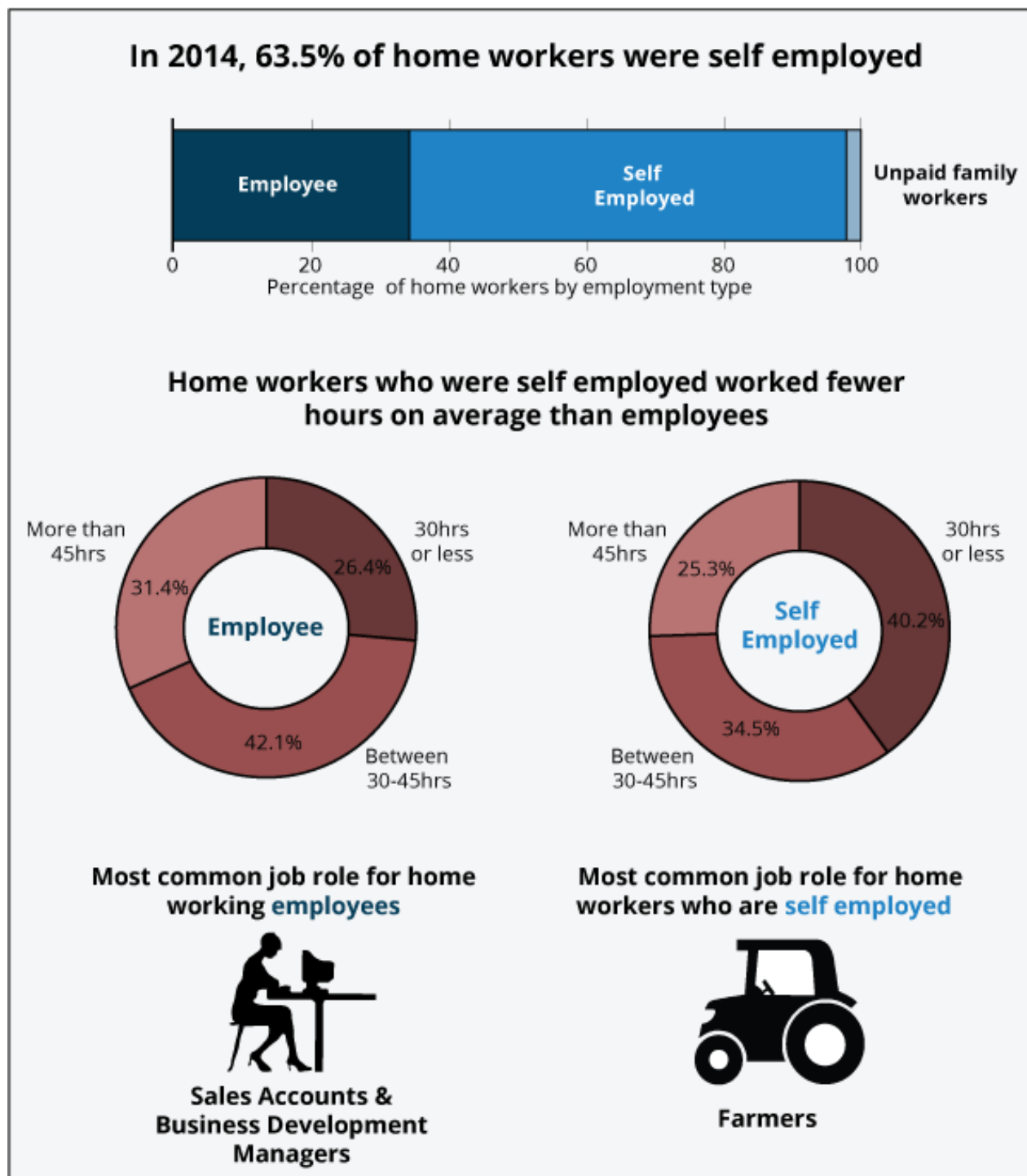
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### Almost two-thirds of those working from home were self-employed

Many of the home working roles are carried out by people who work for themselves. Hence, people working from home are more likely to be self-employed compared to non-home workers. In January to March 2014, 63% of home workers were self employed compared with only 7% of non-home workers. Around 34% of home workers were employees of an organisation with the small remainder being people who worked in the family business and were unpaid. The proportions of home workers who were employees had risen from 32.3% in 1998 to its highest proportion of 37.2% in 2013 before dropping down to 34.4% in 2014.

Home workers who were self-employed worked fewer hours on average than employees in January to March 2014. Around 40% of self-employed home workers reported that they usually work 30 hours or less per week compared to 26% of employees. The most common role for home working employees was working as a sales accounts and business development manager while farming was the most common role for a self-employed home worker.

**Figure 6: Home workers by their employment activity**



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

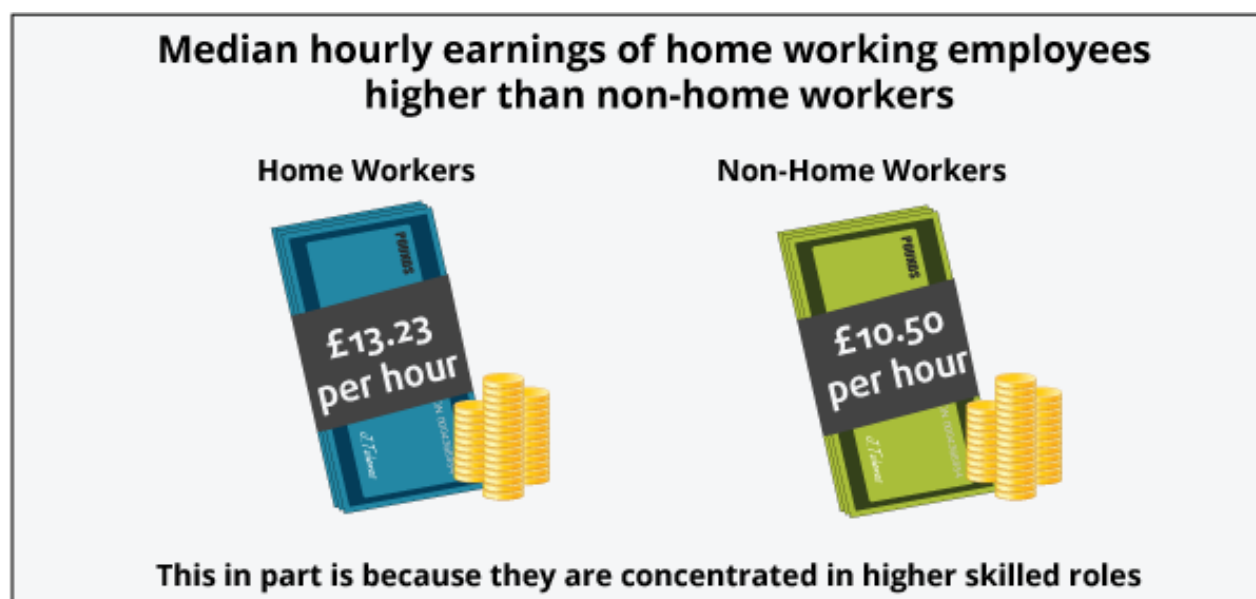


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**Average hourly earnings of home working employees higher than non-home working employees**

The earnings of the 1.4 million employees who were home workers are higher on average than those who are non-home workers. For home workers the average median hourly wage was £13.23 per hour compared to £10.50 for non-home workers in January to March 2014. Home workers tend to on average be concentrated in higher skilled roles than non-home workers which in turn command higher hourly rates of pay.

**Figure 7: Median hourly earnings of home working and non-home working employees**

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

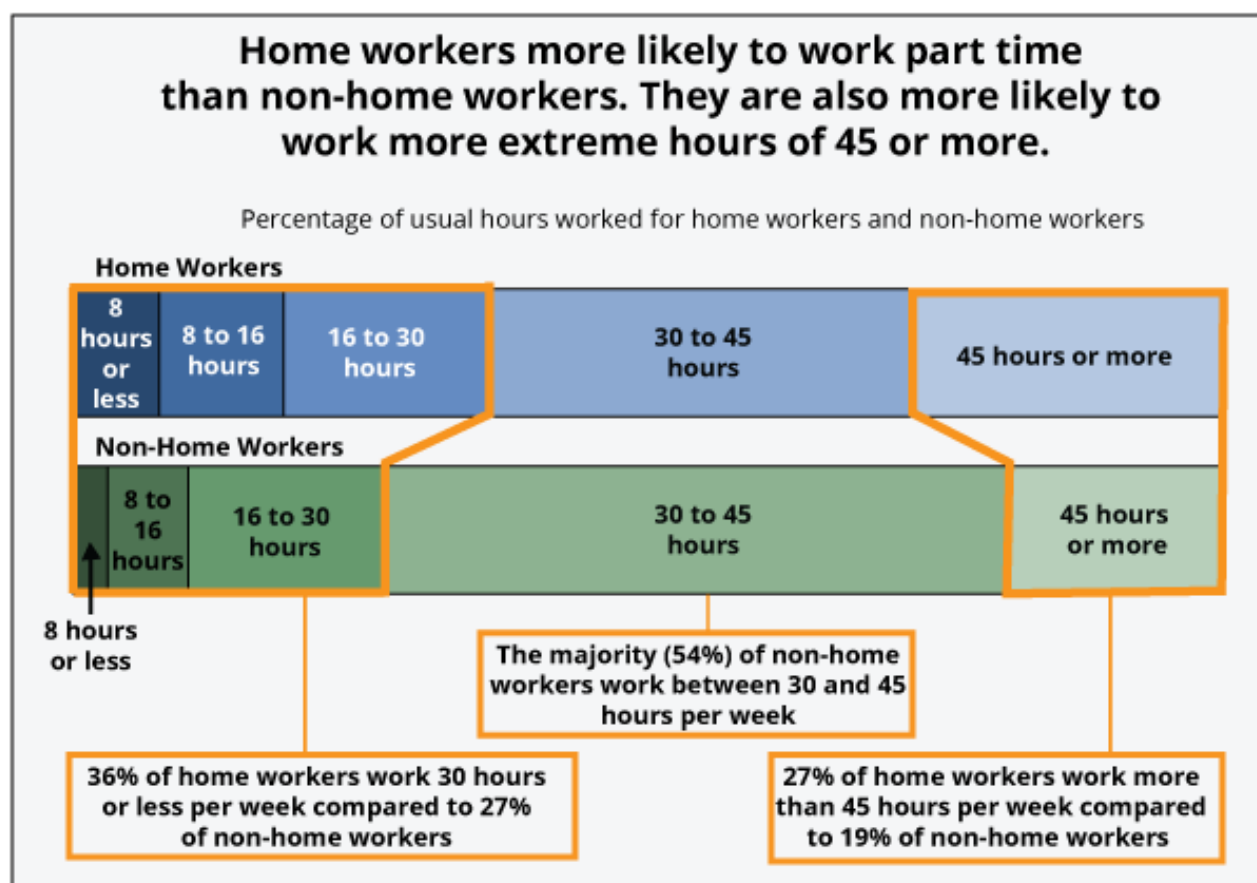
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**Home workers more likely to work part-time than non-home workers**

Just over a third (36%) of home workers reported that they usually work 30 hours or less per week in January to March 2014. This was higher than those who were non-home workers where 27% worked 30 hours or less per week. A similar percentage of home and non-home workers worked between 16 and 30 hours per week at 18% and 17% respectively so the main difference was for those working 16 hours or less per week. Around 8% of home workers reported they usually work up to just eight hours per week compared to just 3% of non-home workers. Home workers also reported they are more likely to work extreme hours with 27% reporting usually working over 45 hours per week as opposed to 19% for those who are non-home workers.

**Figure 8: Percentage of usual hours worked for home workers and non-home workers**



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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For the different types of home workers those who work within the grounds of their home were more likely to work shorter hours than those who only use it as a base, who in turn work longer hours. This in part is explained by the different types of occupations carried out, where some of the construction roles consist of long working weeks.

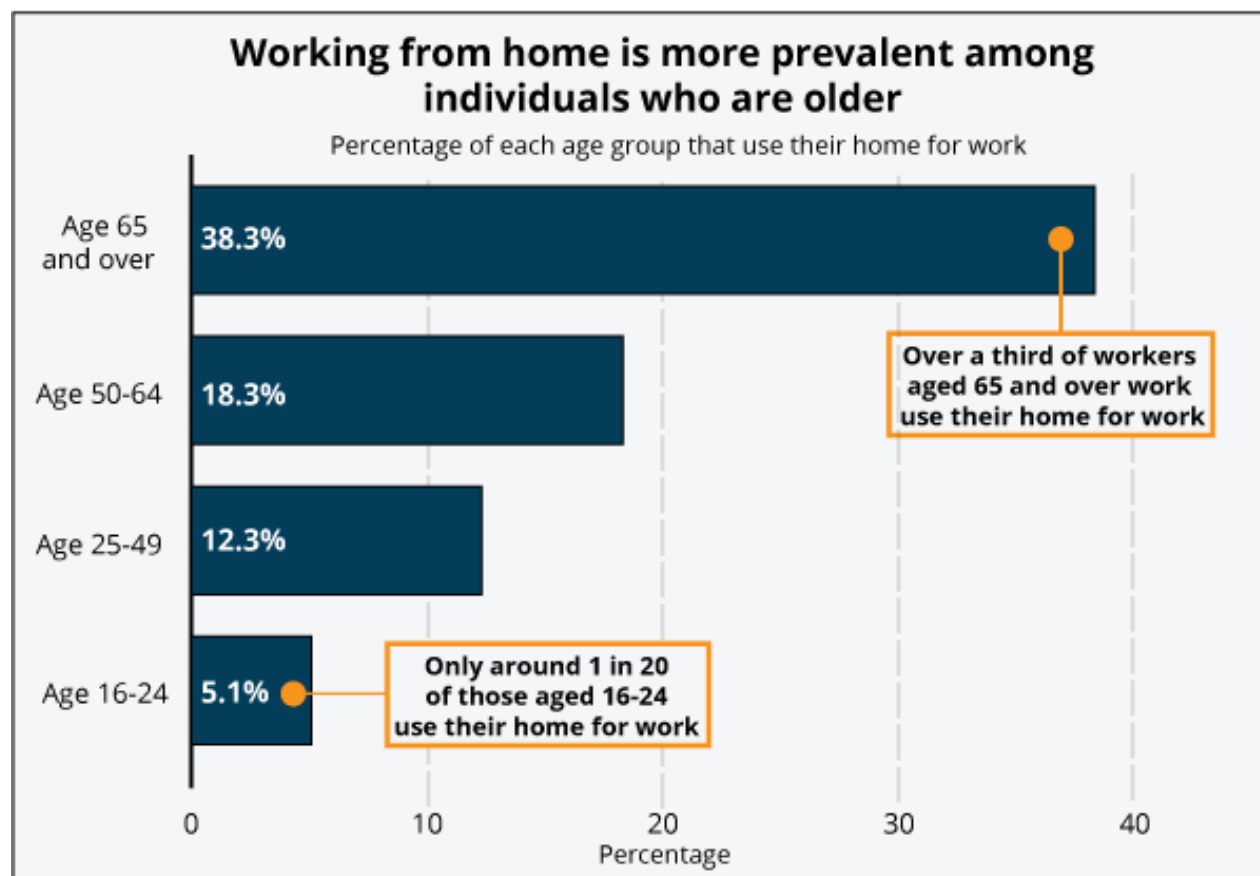
### Working from home is more prevalent among individuals who are older

Working from home is more prevalent among individuals who are older. This in part could be down to the fact that as people get older they tend to be more concentrated in roles with more responsibility which in turn may enable them to work with less supervision. Additionally, as people get older they are more likely to be self-employed and this group tends to work from home, but mainly using their home as a base.

For all those in work, 13.9% were home workers in January to March 2014. For those aged 16 to 24 the rate stood at 5.1% and for those aged 65 and over more than a third (38.3%) worked from home. With the exception of the oldest age group of 65 and over, home workers were more likely to use

their home as a base rather than work within the grounds of their home. For the oldest age group they are less likely to be working within construction type roles which reduce the numbers working from home and using it a base when compared to those who work within their grounds.

**Figure 9: Percentage of each age group that use their home for work**



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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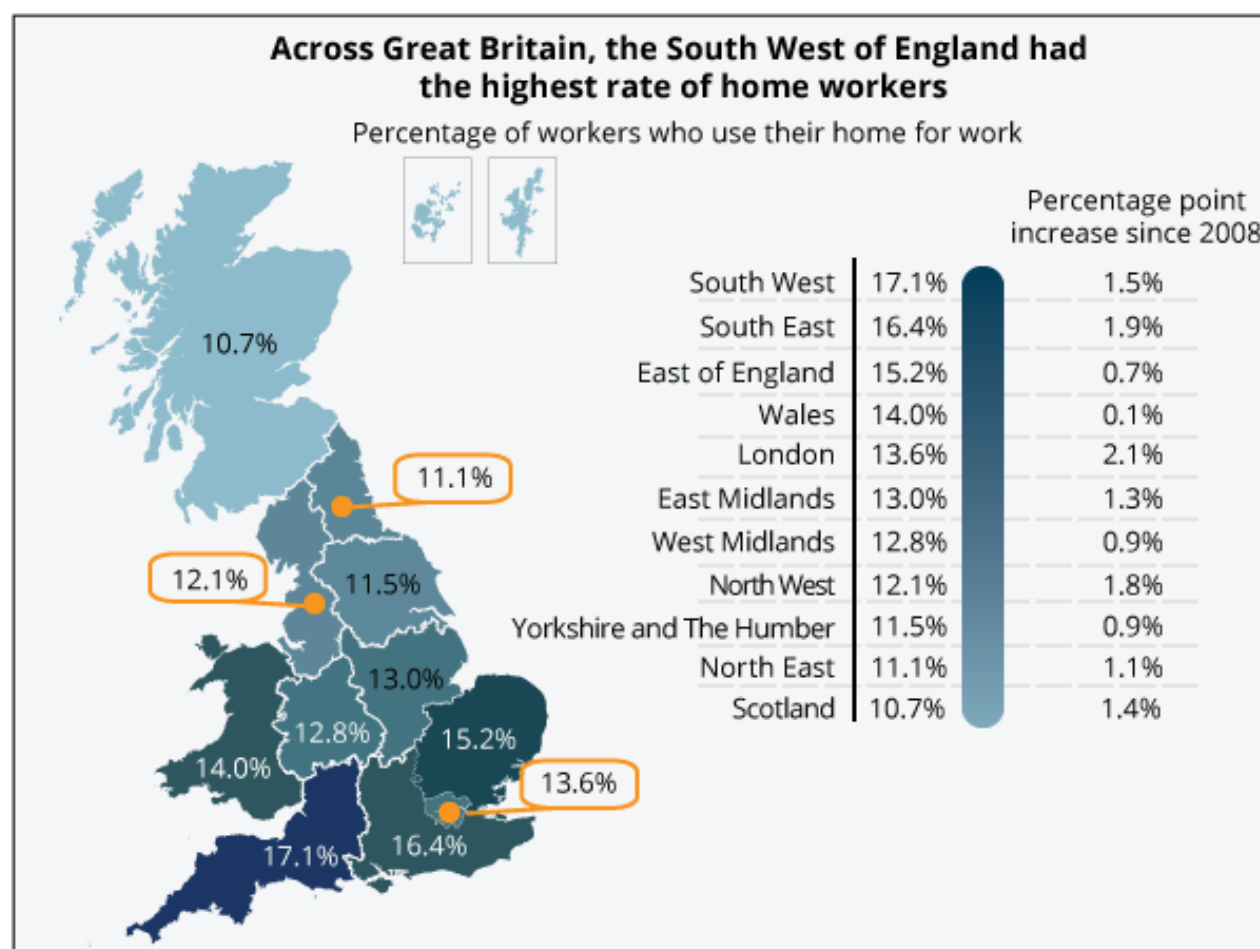
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#### Across Great Britain the South West of England had the highest rate of home workers

Looking across the whole of 2013 and comparing the regions of England with Wales and Scotland, the South West of England had the highest rate of home workers at 17.1%. This was followed by the South East (16.4%), East of England (15.2%), Wales (14.0%) and London (13.6%). The lowest rate was in Scotland at 10.7%.

**Figure 10: Home working rates by regions across Great Britain**



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

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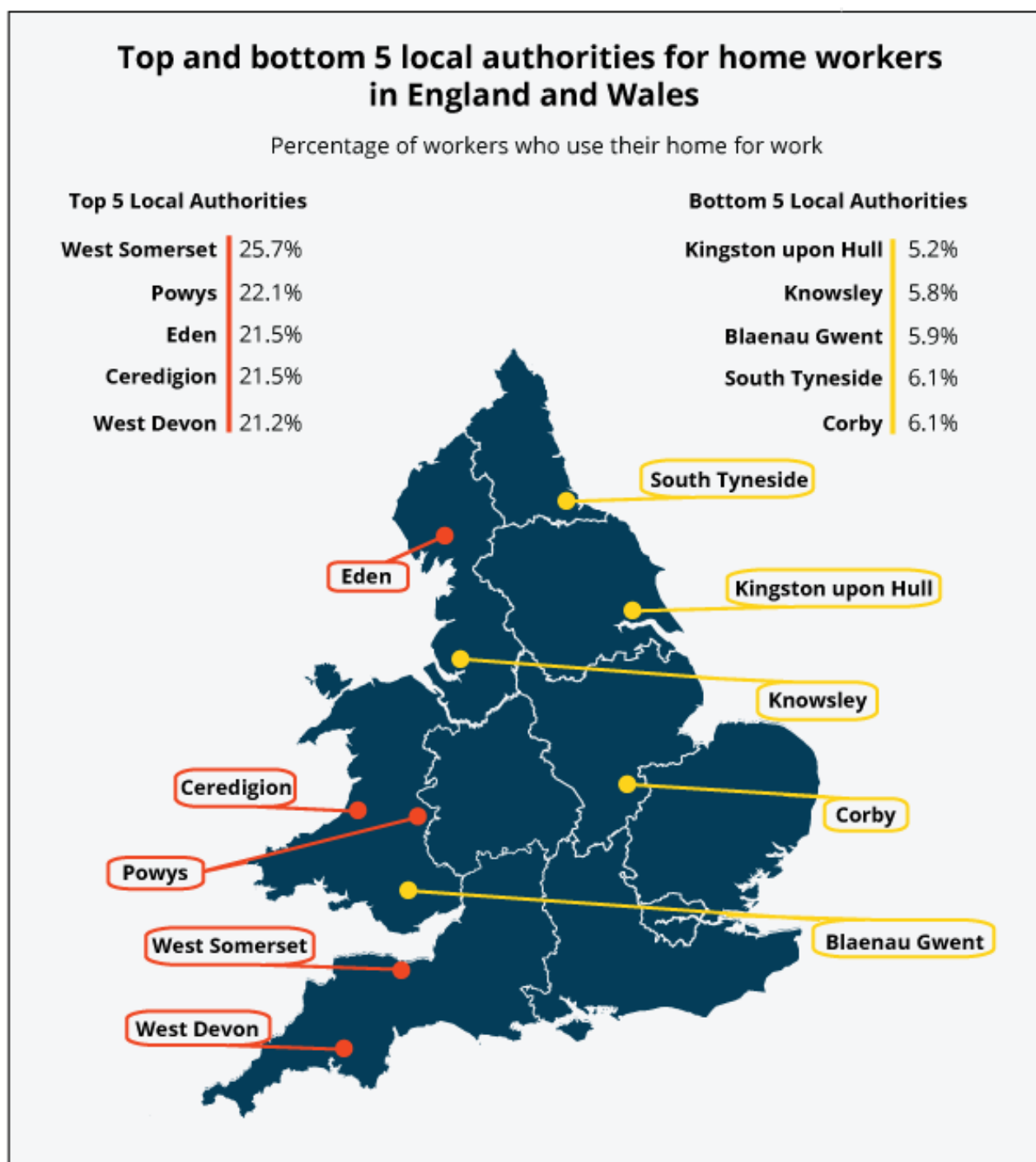
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### West Somerset had the highest home working rates across England and Wales

To examine the distribution of home workers at a more local level we rely on the 2011 Census. Among the Local Authorities of England and Wales, West Somerset at 25.7% had the highest home worker rate in 2011. This was followed by Powys (22.1%) and then Eden and Ceredigion both at 21.5%. A third of all home workers in West Somerset worked in the hotel and distribution sector and 16% worked in the agricultural sector. Powys, Eden and Ceredigion had a third of their home workers employed within the agriculture and fishing industry. What is common among these local areas is that they have some of the lowest population densities and are largely rural and a large proportion of the working population are employed in agriculture and tourism related industries.

Figure 11: Top and bottom local authorities for home workers across England and Wales



Source: Census - Office for National Statistics

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The lowest ranked Local authority in England and Wales was Kingston Upon Hull with a home working rate of 5.2%. This was followed by Knowsley (5.8%) and Blaenau Gwent (5.9%). Prevailing

industries within these local authority areas are in retail, heavy industry, education, transport and port services and these are areas where working from home is difficult.

## Notes

1. For all data included in this report please follow this link:

[All tables in Characteristics of Home Workers in the UK, 2014 \(110 Kb Excel sheet\)](#)

## Background notes

1. 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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