

Underemployment and Overemployment in the UK, 2014

Coverage: **UK**

Date: **25 November 2014**

Geographical Areas: **Region, UK**

Theme: **Labour Market**

Key Points

- In 2014, just under 1 in 10, or 3.0 million people, employed in the UK wanted to work more hours than they are currently employed to do and are therefore classified as underemployed.
- On average each underemployed worker would like to work an extra 11.3 hours per week.
- Over 1 in 5 people working in elementary occupations were underemployed in 2014.
- In 2014, over 1 in 5 part time workers were underemployed compared with around 1 in 20 of full time workers.
- The North East had the highest percentage of underemployed workers in Great Britain.
- In 2014, just under 1 in 10 workers in the UK would like to work fewer hours for less pay, and are therefore classified as overemployed.
- On average, in 2014, each overemployed worker would like to work 11.2 fewer hours than they currently do.
- In 2014, 13.9% of workers in Professional Occupations were overemployed.
- The South West had the highest percentage of overemployed workers in Great Britain.

Underemployment

Introduction

The percentage of people aged 16-64 in the UK in employment has been increasing since April to June 2013¹. To provide more information on the current state of the UK labour market this article will investigate the number of people who either want to work more hours, or less hours, than they are currently employed to do. This will provide a broader picture of the labour market as it will show whether workers in the UK are working the amount of hours that they would like to work, or whether they are underemployed or overemployed.

In 2014, just under 1 in 10 people employed in the UK wanted to work more hours

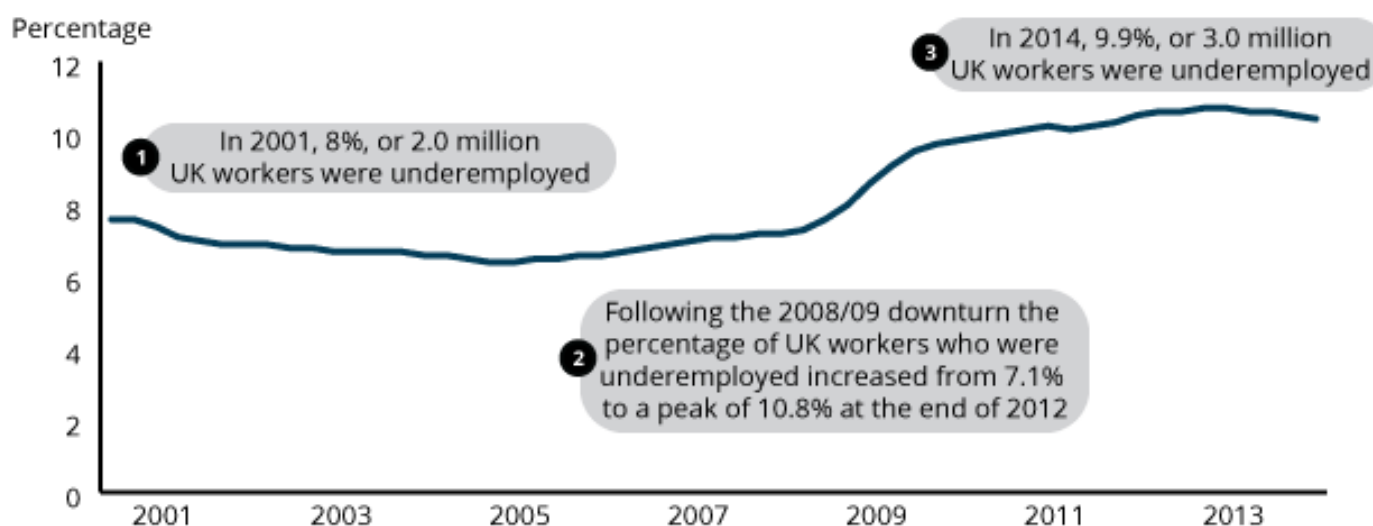
In April to June 2014², 9.9%, or 3.0 million, of those employed in the UK were underemployed. Underemployed workers are those people in employment who are willing to work more hours, either

by working in an additional job, by working more hours in their current job, or by switching to a replacement job. They must also be available to start working longer hours within two weeks and their current weekly hours must be below 40 hours if they are between 16 and 18 and below 48 hours if they are over 18.

Underemployment rates, 2000 to 2014, UK

In 2014, just under 1 in 10 people employed in the UK wanted to work more hours

This means that these workers are underemployed. To be classified as underemployed a worker must want to work more hours than they are currently employed to work, be able to start working the extra hours within the next two weeks and also be within the constrained limits on the number of hours worked, which is 40 hours for those aged 16-18 and 48 for those aged 18 and over.



Note: Graph is four quarter rolling average

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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Following the economic downturn in 2008/09 there was an increase in the percentage of the UK workforce that was identified as underemployed. In 2008, 7.1%, or 2.1 million, of those in work in the UK were underemployed and this increased to a peak of 10.8% seen between Q3 2012 and Q1 2013. Since then the underemployment rate has been decreasing and is now at the same percentage it was in July to September 2009, although it remains 2.8 percentage points above its level prior to the economic downturn.

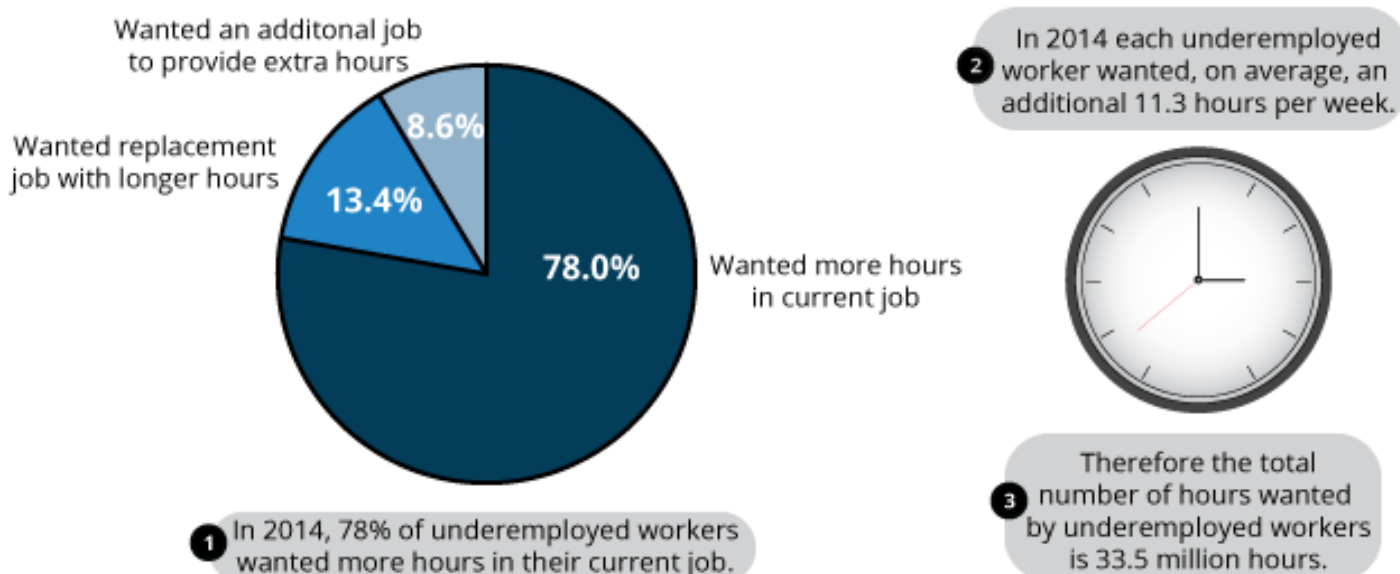
78% of underemployed workers want more hours in their current job

In 2014, 78.0% of workers in the UK who were underemployed wanted to work more hours in their current job. This will include a range of people, from those who actively asked their employer for more hours to those who would merely prefer longer hours if given the opportunity. A further 13.4% want a replacement job with longer hours and 8.6% want an additional job to provide them with the extra hours they desired.

Underemployed by where workers want more hours and average number of hours each underemployed worker wanted to work, 2014, UK

78% of underemployed workers want more hours in their current job. On average each underemployed worker wanted to work an extra 11.3 hours per week.

Average hours wanted by underemployed workers only includes those underemployed workers whose current and desired hours are below the hours threshold



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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11.3 hours per week was the average number of hours extra an underemployed worker wanted to work

In 2014, on average each underemployed worker wanted to work an additional 11.3 hours per week, which equates to 33.5 million hours per week for all those underemployed in the UK. The total weekly hours of all those employed in the UK was 985 million hours³, therefore the 33.5 million hours desired by all underemployed workers equates to 3.4% of the total hours worked in the UK.

The number of extra hours desired by underemployed workers has increased slightly over the last six years. In 2008, the 2.1 million underemployed wanted on average 10.2 extra hours of work so there has been an increase of around an extra hour desired per worker since the downturn. This means that the total number of hours desired by those underemployed has increased from 21.2 million hours to 33.5 million hours.

In 2014, over 1 in 5 part time workers were underemployed compared with around 1 in 20 of full time workers

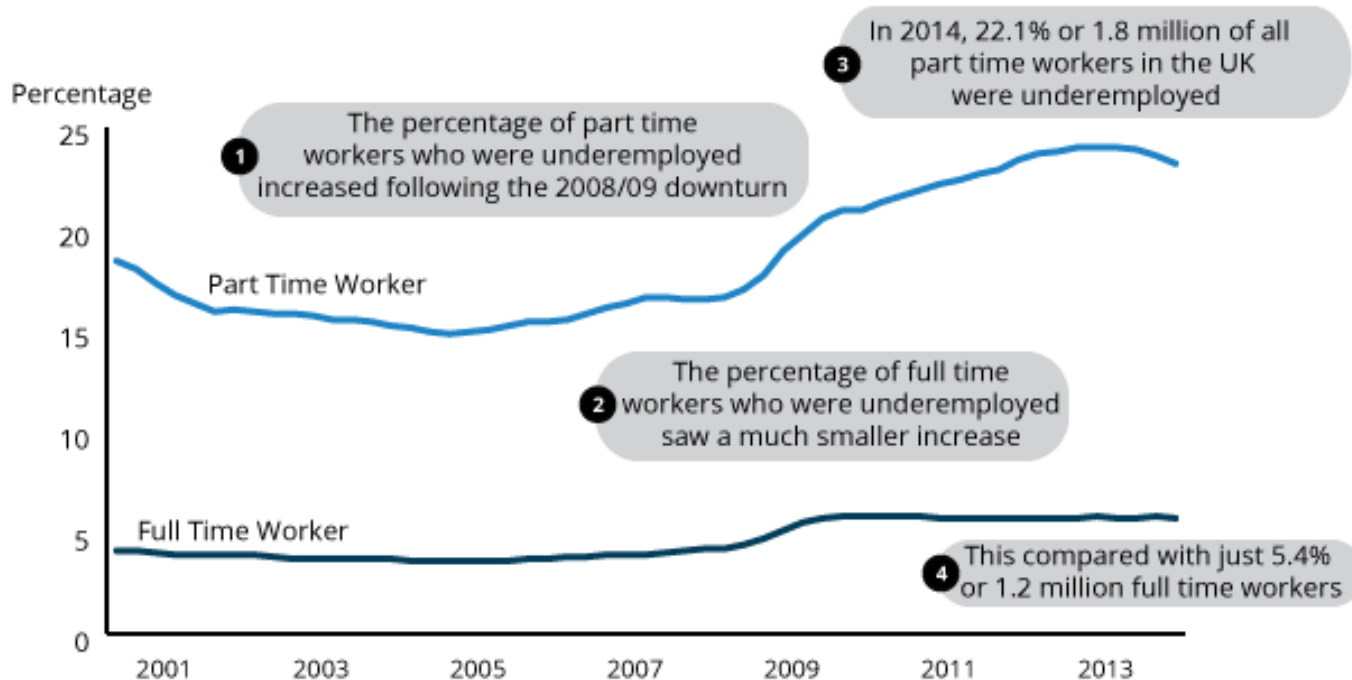
In all 1.8 million, or 22.1%, of all part time workers in the UK were underemployed in 2014, compared with just 5.4%, or 1.2 million, of full time workers. The percentage of full time workers who were underemployed is much lower than that of part time underemployed workers since there are more full time workers than part time workers in the UK.

In order to be classified as an underemployed full time worker an individual must be working 30 hours or more per week and be within the constraints on working hours used to identify underemployment.

Following the economic downturn the percentage of part time workers who were underemployed rose from 15.9%, in 2008, to a peak of 24.4% in July to September 2012 before it started to decline from July to September 2013 to the current rate of 22.1% in 2014, still 6.2 percentage points, or 620,000 workers, higher than in 2008. Full time workers saw an increase since the economic downturn of around 1.2 percentage points since 2008, an increase of 274,000 workers.

Underemployed full time and part time workers, 2000 to 2014, UK.

In 2014, over 1 in 5 part time workers were underemployed compared with around 1 in 20 full time workers



Note: Graph is four quarter rolling average

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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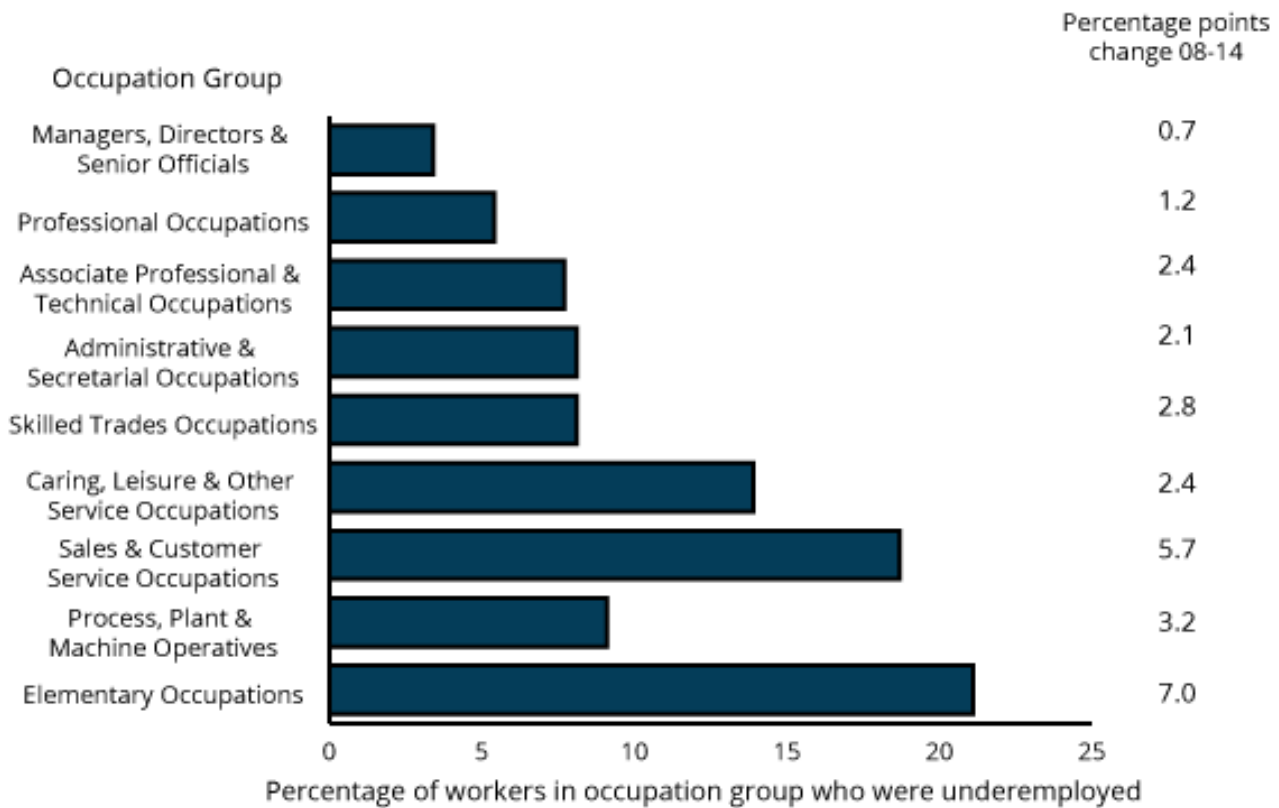
Over 1 in 5 people working in Elementary Occupations were underemployed in 2014

In 2014, 21.1% of people who worked in Elementary Occupations were underemployed, making this the occupation group with the highest percentage of underemployed workers. This occupation grouping includes roles in elementary personal service, elementary cleaning and elementary security occupations. All three of these specific occupations have over 19% of their work force classifying themselves as underemployed.

The occupation grouping with the second highest percentage of underemployed workers was Sales and Customer Service Occupations where 18.7% of workers in these types of jobs were underemployed, and most notably in the sub category of Sales Assistants and Retail Cashiers where 22.9% of workers were underemployed.

Underemployed workers by occupation group, 2008 & 2014, UK.

Over 1 in 5 people working in Elementary Occupations were underemployed in 2014



1 21.1% of people who worked in Elementary Occupations are underemployed

2 Workers in Elementary Occupations have also seen the largest percentage point increase in underemployed since 2008, an increase of 7.0 percentage points

The top 3 roles with the highest percentage of underemployed workers was,

Elementary Personal Service Occupations such as bar staff & waiters and waitresses



27.9%

Elementary Cleaning Occupations



23.0%

Sales Assistants and Retail Cashiers



22.9%

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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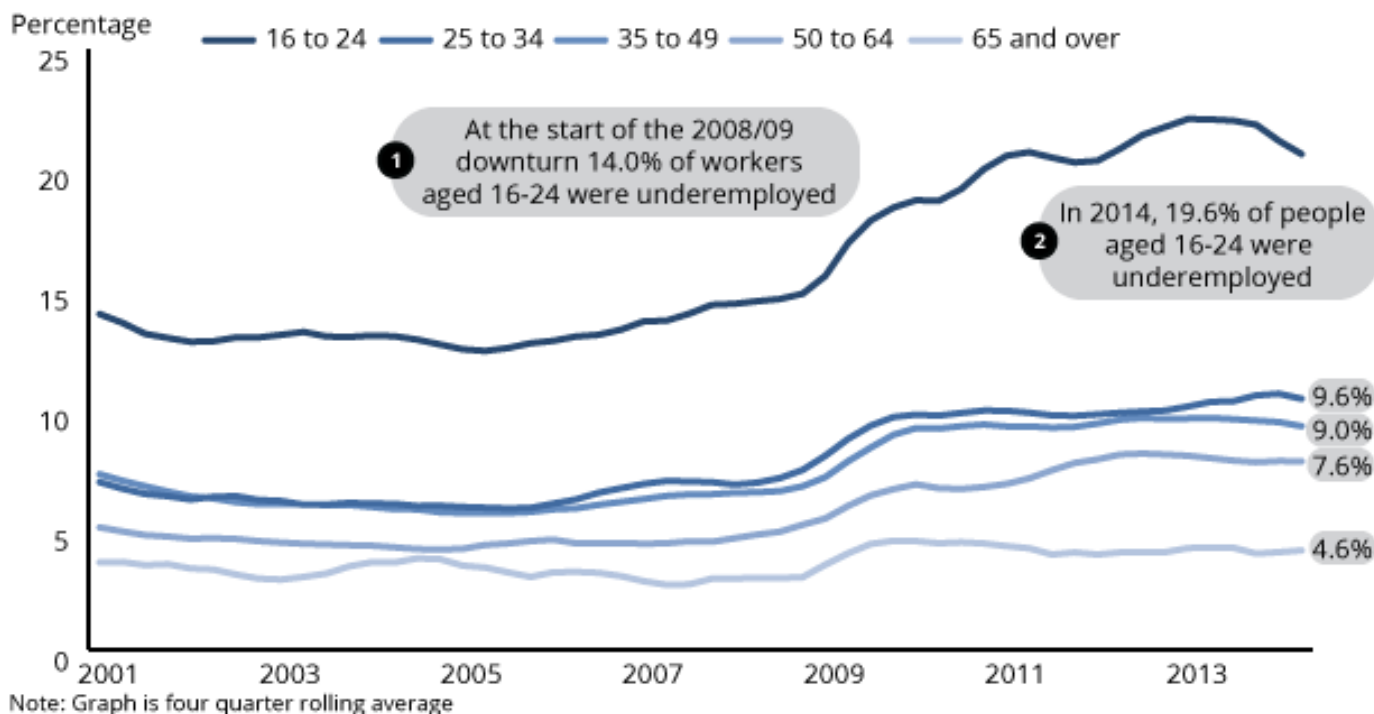
Since 2008 all of the major occupation groupings have seen an increase in the percentage of workers who are underemployed with the largest increase, of 7.0 percentage points, for those working in Elementary Occupations.

Around 1 in 5 workers aged 16 to 24 were underemployed, more than double the percentage of any other age group

In 2014, 19.6% of people in work aged between 16 and 24 were underemployed, which was more than double the percentage of any other age group. As age increases the percentage of workers who were underemployed decreases. Those aged 25-34 had the second highest percentage of underemployed workers with 9.6%, followed by those aged 35-49 where 9.0% of workers were underemployed. Workers aged 50-64 saw an underemployment percentage of 7.6% and the oldest age group of 65 and over saw an underemployment percentage of 4.6%.

Underemployed workers by age groups, 2000 to 2014, UK.

In 2014, around 1 in 5 workers aged 16-24 were underemployed, more than double the percentage of any other age group



The top occupations for underemployed 16-24 year olds were:

Sales and Retail Cashiers



164,000 workers

Other Elementary Service Occupations, such as bar staff and waiters and waitresses



146,000 workers

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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Focusing on those underemployed and aged 16-24, 32.7% of workers in this age group worked in elementary occupations and a further 27.7% worked in sales and customer service occupations. The most common occupation for underemployed workers aged 16-24 was sales assistants and retail cashiers where there were 164,000 underemployed workers, which equates to 48.6% of workers of this age in this occupation. The second most common occupation was other elementary service occupations, including waiters, waitresses, bar staff and kitchen and catering assistants with

146,000 underemployed workers in this age group which equates to 53.3% of workers of this age in this occupation.

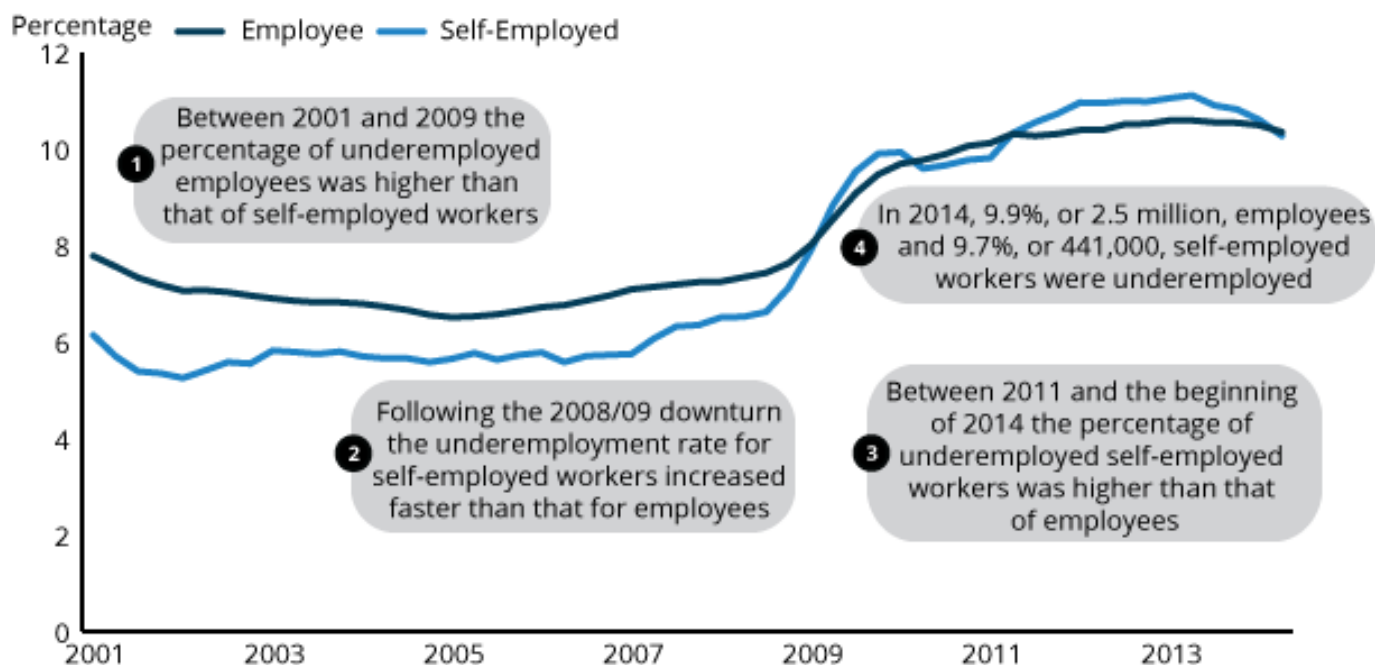
The percentage of self-employed workers who were underemployed increased faster than that of employees between 2008-10

The 2008/2009 downturn saw the percentage of self-employed workers who were underemployed increase much quicker than that for employees. In 2008, 6.3% of self-employed workers and 7.2% of employees were underemployed but by 2009 the percentage of underemployed self-employed workers had risen by 3.8 percentage points to 10.1% compared with a rise of 2.2 percentage points to 9.4% for underemployed employees.

In 2014, the percentage of self-employed workers and employees being underemployed was very similar, at 9.7%, or 441,000, and 9.9%, or 2.5 million, respectively.

Self employed workers and employees who were underemployed, 2000 to 2014, UK.

The percentage of self-employed workers who were underemployed increased faster than that of employees between 2008 and 2010



Note: Graph is four quarter rolling average

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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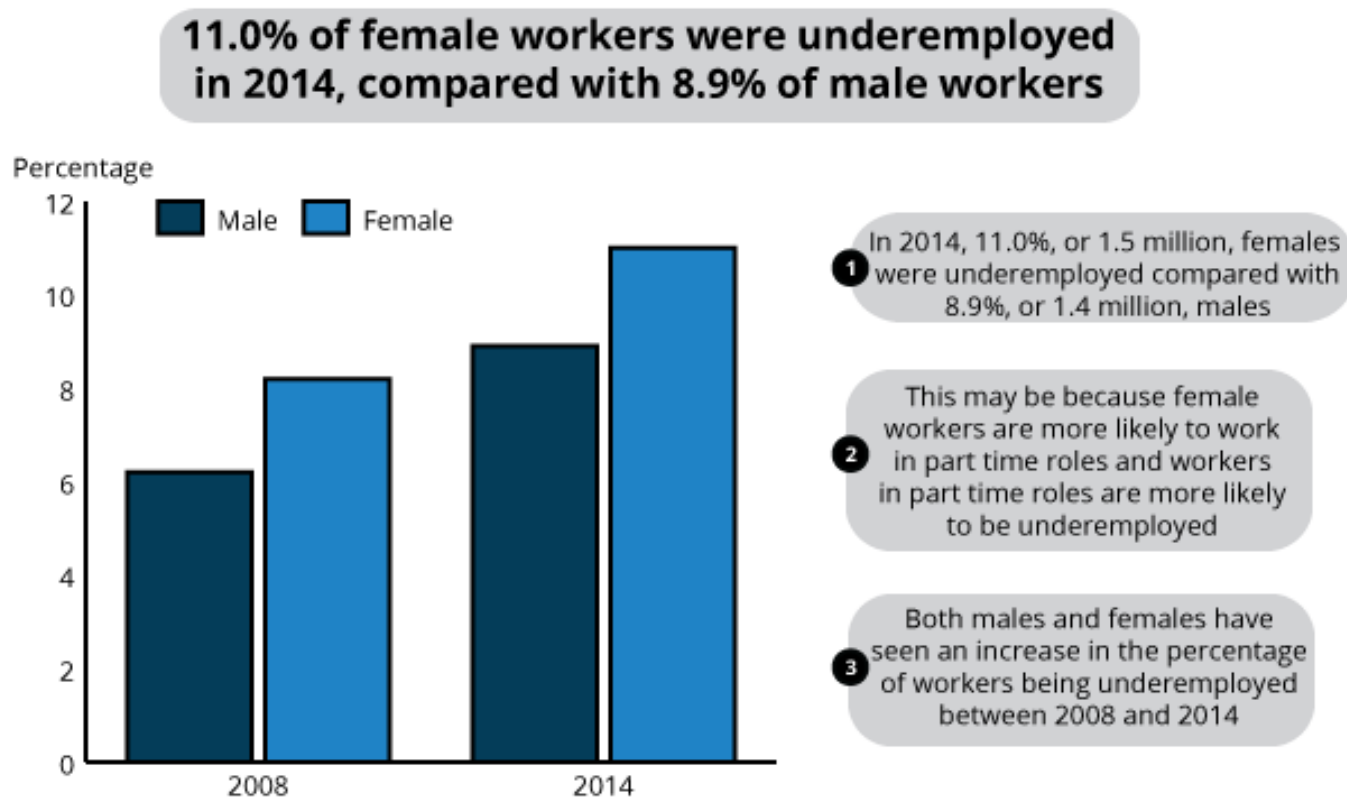
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11.0% of female workers were underemployed in 2014, compared with 8.9% of male workers

In 2014, 11.0%, or 1.5 million, female workers were underemployed compared with 8.9%, or 1.4 million male workers. This may indicate that women are more likely to work in part time roles and a part time roles are where underemployment is more evident.

Underemployed workers by gender, 2008 & 2014, UK.



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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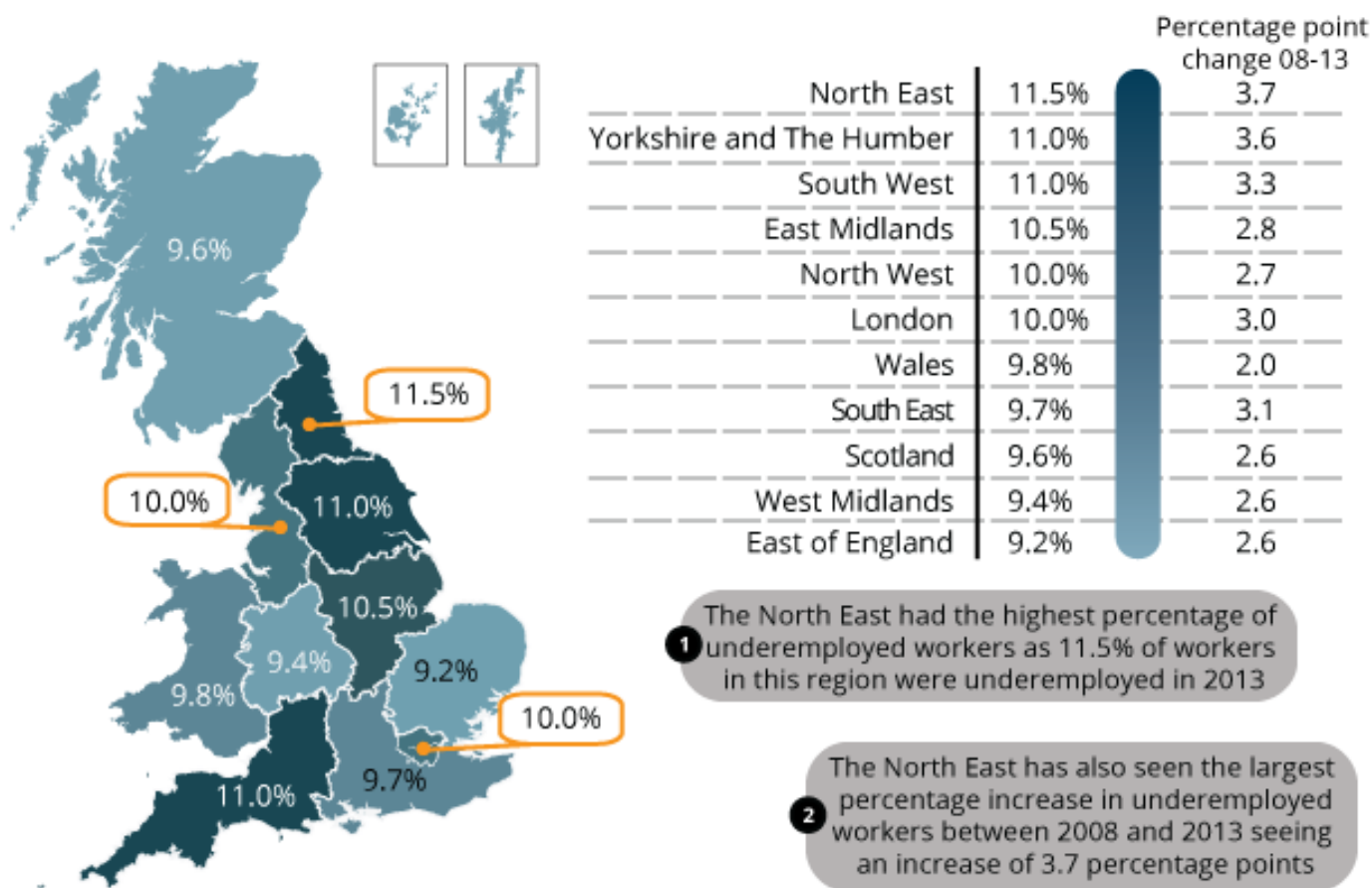
Both men and women have seen an increase in the percentage of underemployed workers since the start of the economic downturn in 2008 from 6.2% of males and 8.2% of females to 8.9% and 11.0% respectively in 2014.

The North East had the highest percentage of underemployed workers in Great Britain

In 2013⁴, 11.5% of workers in the North East were underemployed, the highest regional percentage in Great Britain. The North East was followed by Yorkshire and The Humber and the South West where 11.0% of their workforces were underemployed.

Underemployed workers in the regions of Great Britain, 2013.

The North East had the highest percentage of underemployed workers in Great Britain



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Note: Excludes Northern Ireland due to small sample sizes

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

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The lowest percentage of underemployed workers was seen in the East of England where 9.2% of workers were underemployed. The results show that the percentage of workers who are underemployed does not vary too much by which area of Great Britain they are in.

All regions of Great Britain have seen an increase in the percentage of workers being underemployed since 2008. The largest increase of 3.7 percentage points was seen in the North East and the lowest increase of 2.0 percentage points was seen in Wales.

In 2014, Cyprus has the highest percentage of part time underemployed workers within the EU

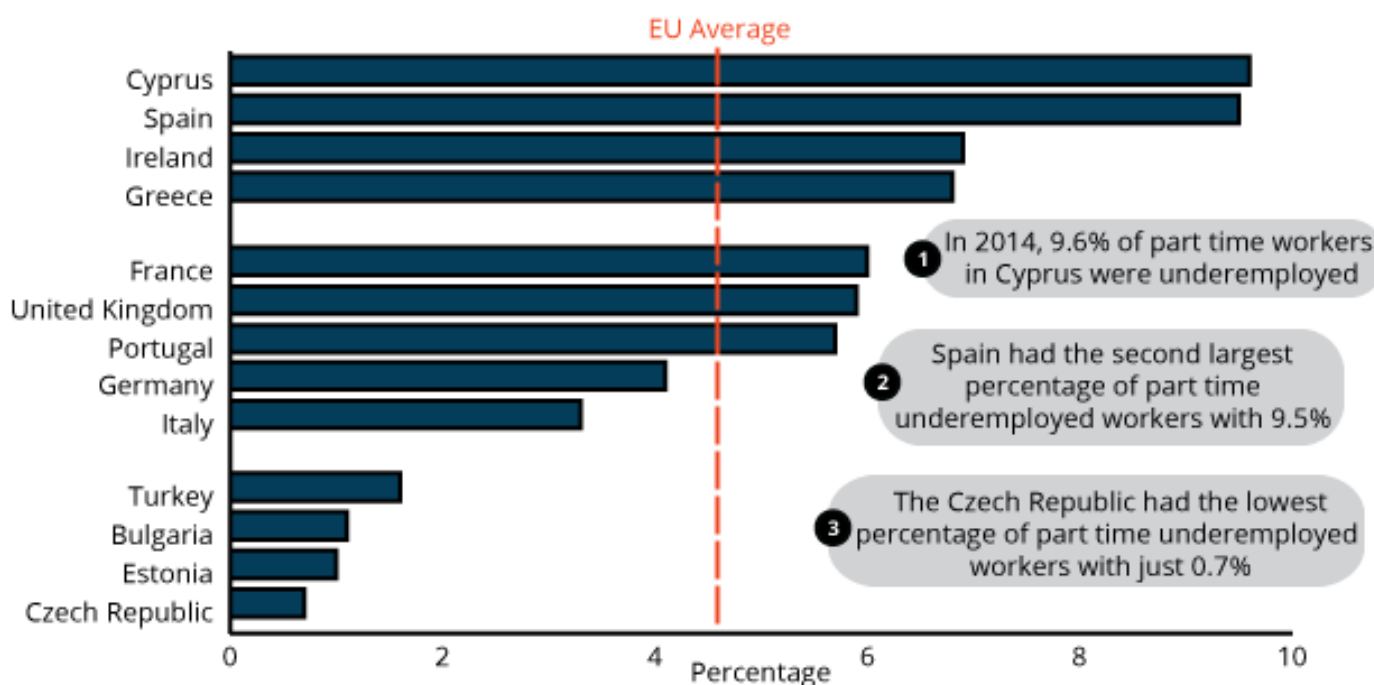
Looking at the percentage of underemployed workers across EU countries is important to see how the UK fares in comparison. Eurostat data allows international comparisons of underemployment but only for part time workers. This reflects a slightly different definition of underemployment from the UK in that the EU definition states that an individual is underemployed if they are aged 15-74, are working part time and would like to work additional hours if available.

Using this definition of underemployment, Cyprus had the largest percentage of underemployed workers at 9.6%. For the UK, this percentage was 5.9%, a similar percentage to France, at 6.0%. The average for the European Union was 4.6%.

Part time underemployed workers within the EU, 2014.

In 2014, Cyprus had the highest percentage of part time underemployed workers within the EU

When comparing European countries the definition of underemployment differs from the one used earlier in this report. For these European figures an individual is underemployed if they are aged 15-74, are working part time and would like to work additional hours if available



Source: Eurostat

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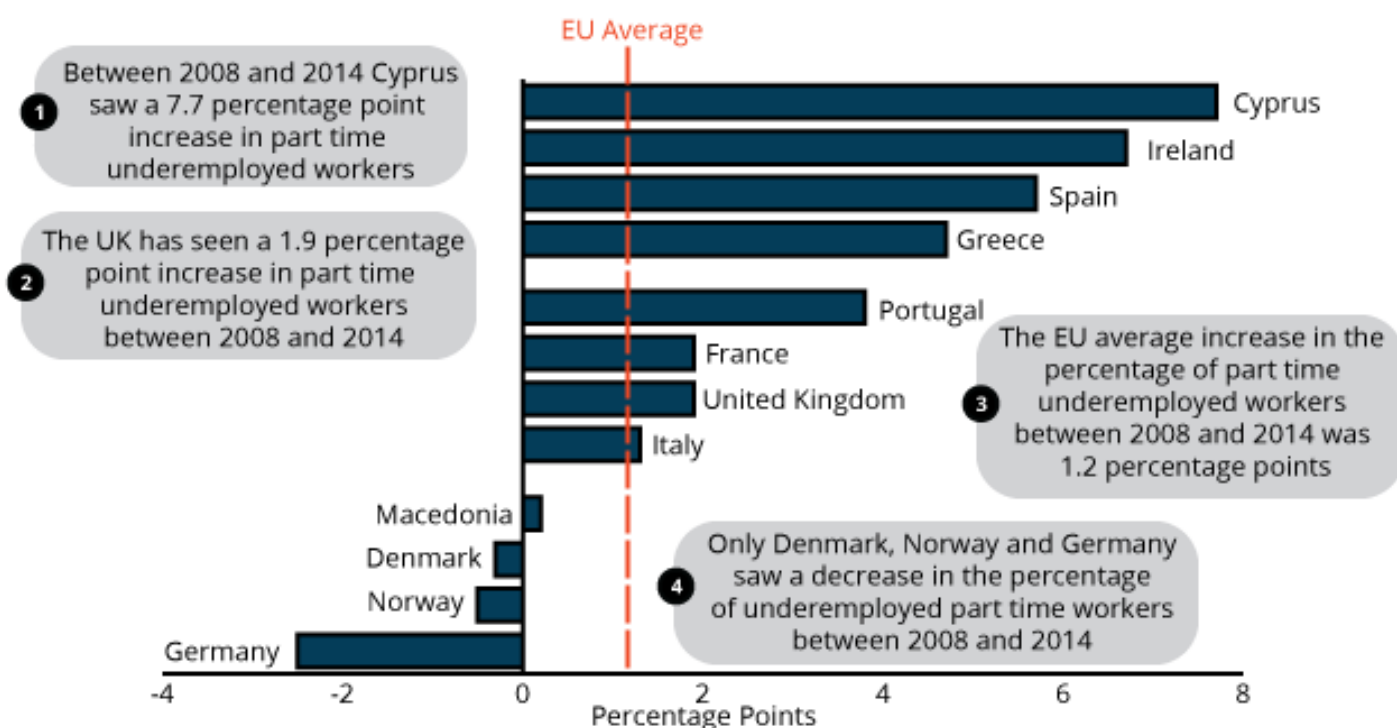
Looking at the change in the percentage of underemployed workers since the second quarter of 2008, the UK has seen a 1.9 percentage point increase, which compares with the European Union average of 1.2 percentage points. The highest increase has been seen in Cyprus where there has

been an increase of 7.7 percentage points, and the largest decrease was seen in Germany where there was a decrease of 2.5 percentage points.

The percentage difference, between 2008 and 2014, of part time underemployed workers within the EU.

Cyprus has seen the largest percentage increase in underemployed part time workers since 2008

When comparing European countries the definition of underemployment differs from the one used earlier in this report. For these European figures an individual is underemployed if they are aged 15-74, are working part time and would like to work additional hours if available



Note: No available information for Estonia in 2008 Q2

Source: Eurostat

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Notes

1. Table A01 from Labour Market Bulletin.
2. Note that all periods mentioned in this report are for the April to June quarter unless otherwise stated.
3. Taken from Table Hour01 from Labour Market Statistics Bulletin, August 2014 for the period April to June 2014.

4. Regional Analysis uses the Annual Population Survey Jan-Dec 2013 dataset.

Overemployment

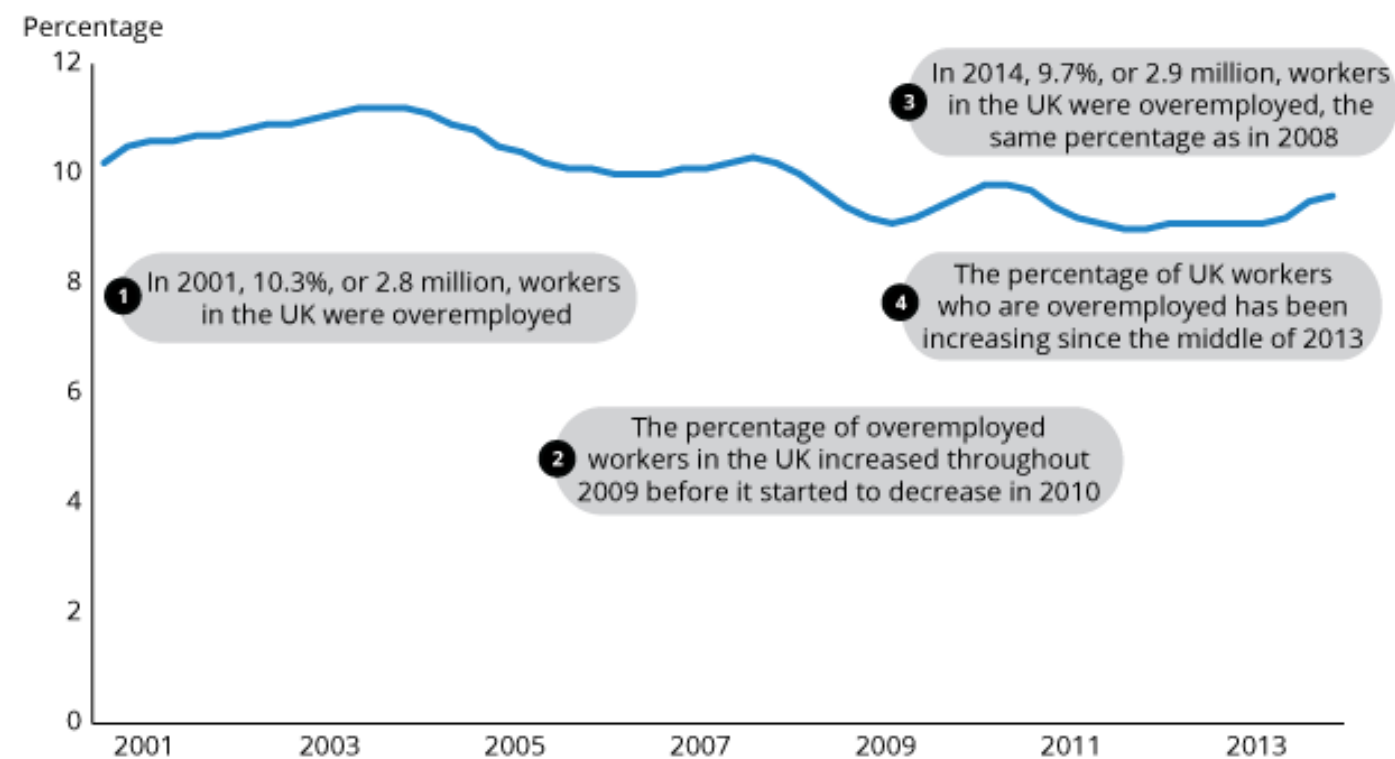
In 2014, just under 1 in 10 workers in the UK would like to work fewer hours for less pay

In 2014¹, 9.7%, or 2.9 million, of workers in the UK were overemployed, meaning that they wanted to work fewer hours for less pay. This is very similar to the number of workers who were underemployed in 2014 as 3.0 million, or 9.9% of UK workers were underemployed. Over 9 in 10 of those workers who were overemployed wanted to work fewer hours for less pay in their current job, with the remaining workers wanting to work fewer hours for less pay in a new job.

Overemployment over time, 2000-2014, UK

In 2014, just under 1 in 10 people employed in the UK wanted to work fewer hours for less pay

This means that these workers were overemployed. To be classified as overemployed they must be employed and wanting to work fewer hours for less pay



Note: Graph is four quarter rolling average

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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The percentage of those in work who were overemployed in 2014 (9.7%) was the same as it was in 2008 (9.7%). There was an increase in the percentage of overemployed workers throughout 2009 before it began to decrease again at the start of 2010. The percentage of overemployed workers has been increasing since the beginning of 2013. Over the longer term the percentage of workers being overemployed has been decreasing since late 2003 when it peaked at 11.5%, although the percentage has been increasing since April to June 2013.

On average, in 2014, each overemployed worker wanted to work 11.2 hours less per week than they currently employed to do

In 2014, the average number of hours less that each overemployed worker wanted to work was 11.2 hours per week, which equates to 32.6 million hours per week for all those overemployed in the UK. The total weekly hours of all those employed in the UK was 985 million hours², therefore the 32.6 million fewer hours those overemployed workers wanted to work equates to 3.3% of the total hours worked in the UK.

The number of hours that overemployed workers wanted to work less has increased slightly over the last six years. In 2008, the 2.8 million overemployed workers wanted to work, on average, 10.8 hours fewer per week. This has meant that the total number of hours that those overemployed want to work less has increased from 30.5 million in 2008 to 32.6 million in 2014.

Overemployment by where workers want fewer hours and the average number of hours they would like to work less, 2014, UK

On average, in 2014, each overemployed worker wanted to work 11.2 hours less per week than they are currently employed to do

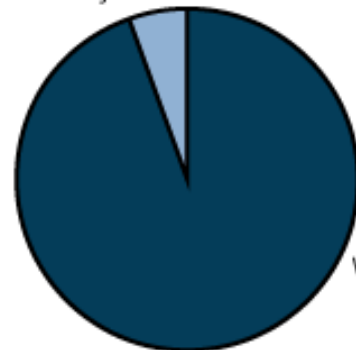
1 In 2014 each overemployed worker wanted, on average, to work 11.2 hours fewer per week



2 Therefore the total number of hours those overemployed wanted to work less was 32.6 million, which equates to 3.3% of the total hours worked per week in the UK

3 In 2014, 94.2% of overemployed workers wanted fewer hours in their current job

Want less hours in a new job



Want less hours in current job

4 The remaining 5.8% wanted fewer hours in a new job

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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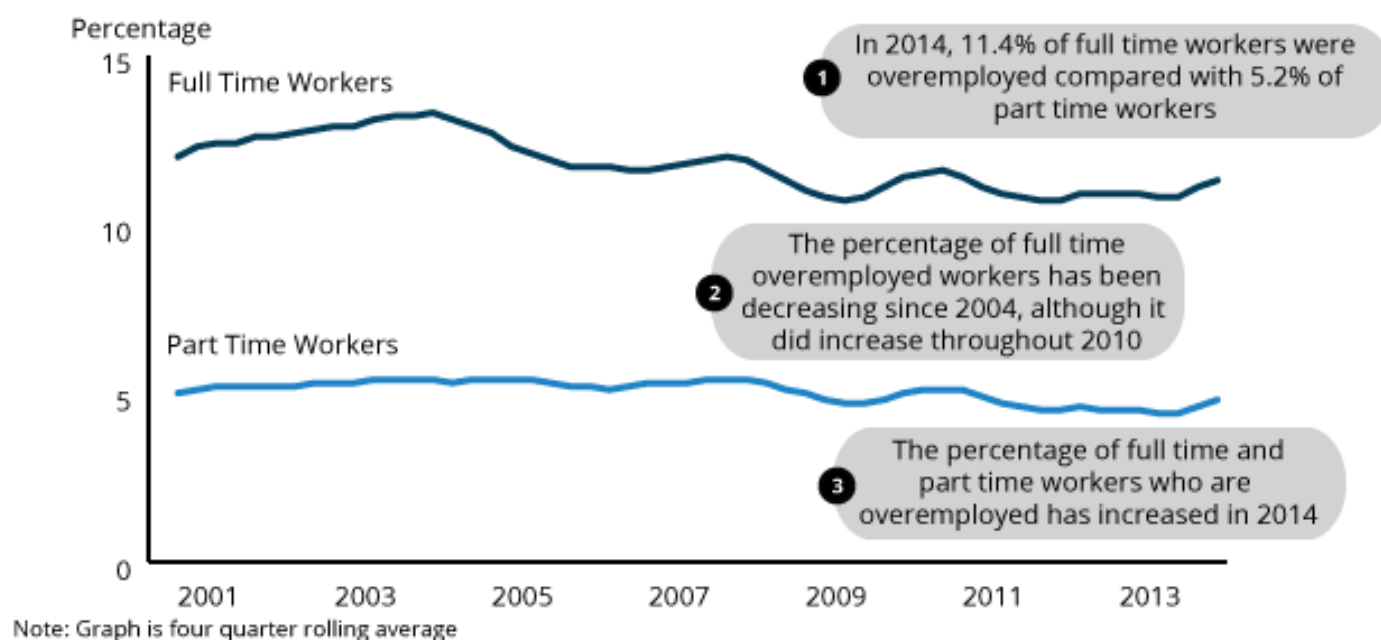
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In 2014, 11.4% of full time workers were overemployed

In 2014, 11.4% of full time workers in the UK were overemployed, compared with just 5.2% of part time workers. Looking at overemployed full time workers, the percentage has been gradually decreasing since the beginning of 2004, although it did increase throughout 2010 and has been increasing over the last two quarters. The percentage of part time underemployed has decreased slightly since the beginning of 2008 although the percentage has increased in the last two quarters.

Overemployment by full time/part time employment status, 2000-2014, UK

In 2014, 11.4% of full time workers were overemployed



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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In 2014, 13.9% of workers in professional occupations were overemployed

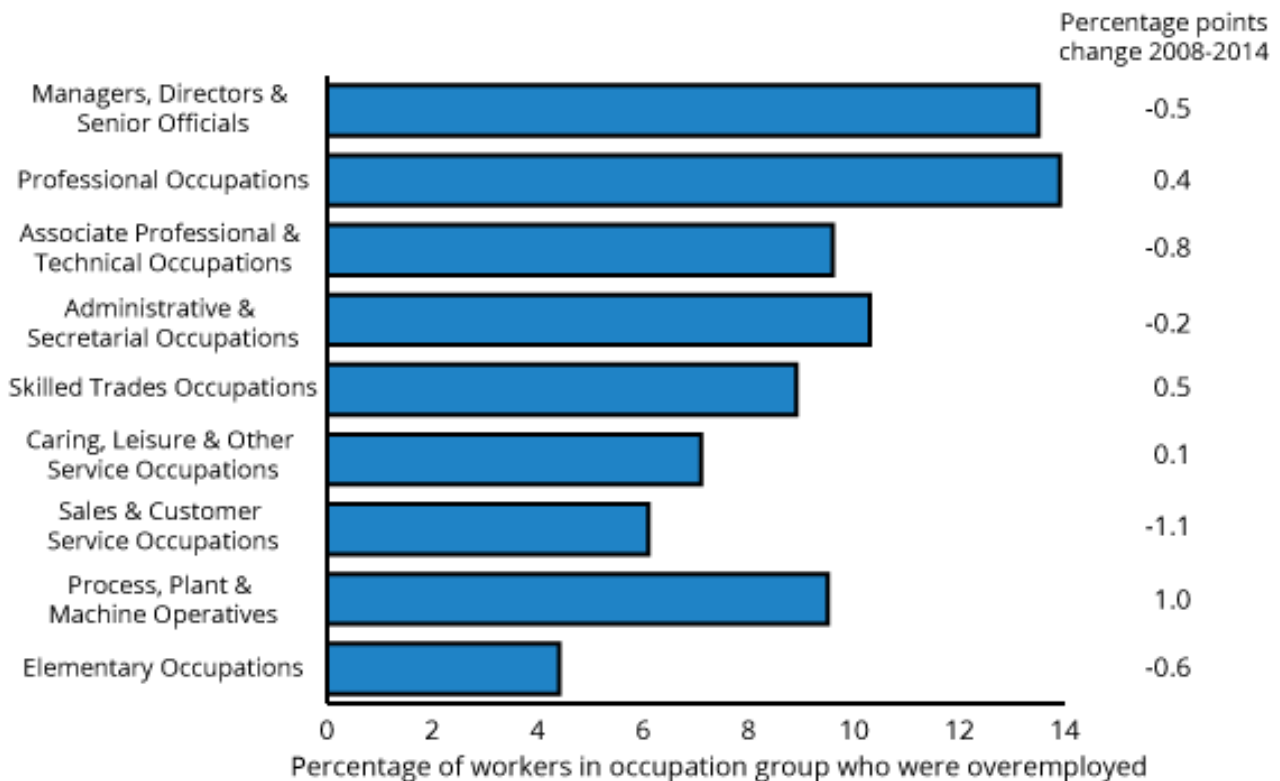
13.9% of people who work in professional occupations were overemployed and wanted to work fewer hours for less pay. 13.5% of people who work as managers, directors and senior officials were also overemployed.

This compares to just 4.4% of people who work in elementary occupations and 7.1% of workers in the caring, leisure and other service occupations. Therefore it seems that those in high skilled and therefore potentially higher paying job roles are those most likely to want to work fewer hours for less pay. Those in low skilled and low paid job roles tend not to be overemployed, and in fact are more likely to want to work more hours and would therefore be underemployed.

The top three occupations for overemployed workers are health professionals, such as medical and dental practitioners, psychologists and pharmacists, where 18.0% of workers are overemployed, followed by chief executives and senior officials and senior officers in protective services, including officers in the armed forces and senior police officers where both occupations have 17.8% of workers stating that they are overemployed.

Overemployment by occupation, 2008 & 2014, UK

In 2014, 13.9% of workers in Professional Occupations were overemployed



1 13.9% of workers in Professional Occupations were overemployed in 2014. Managers, Directors & Senior Officials have the second highest percentage of overemployed workers with 13.5%

2 The largest increase in overemployed workers between 2008-2014 was in Process, Plant & Machine Operatives Occupations which saw a 1.0 percentage point increase

3 The largest decrease in overemployed workers between 2008-2014 was in Sales & Customer Service Occupations which saw a 1.1 percentage point decrease

The top 3 roles with the highest percentage of overemployed workers was,

Health Professionals, such as medical and dental practitioners, psychologists and pharmacists



18.0%

Chief Executives & Senior Officials



17.8%

Senior Officers in Protective Services, such as Officers in the armed forces and senior police officers



17.8%

Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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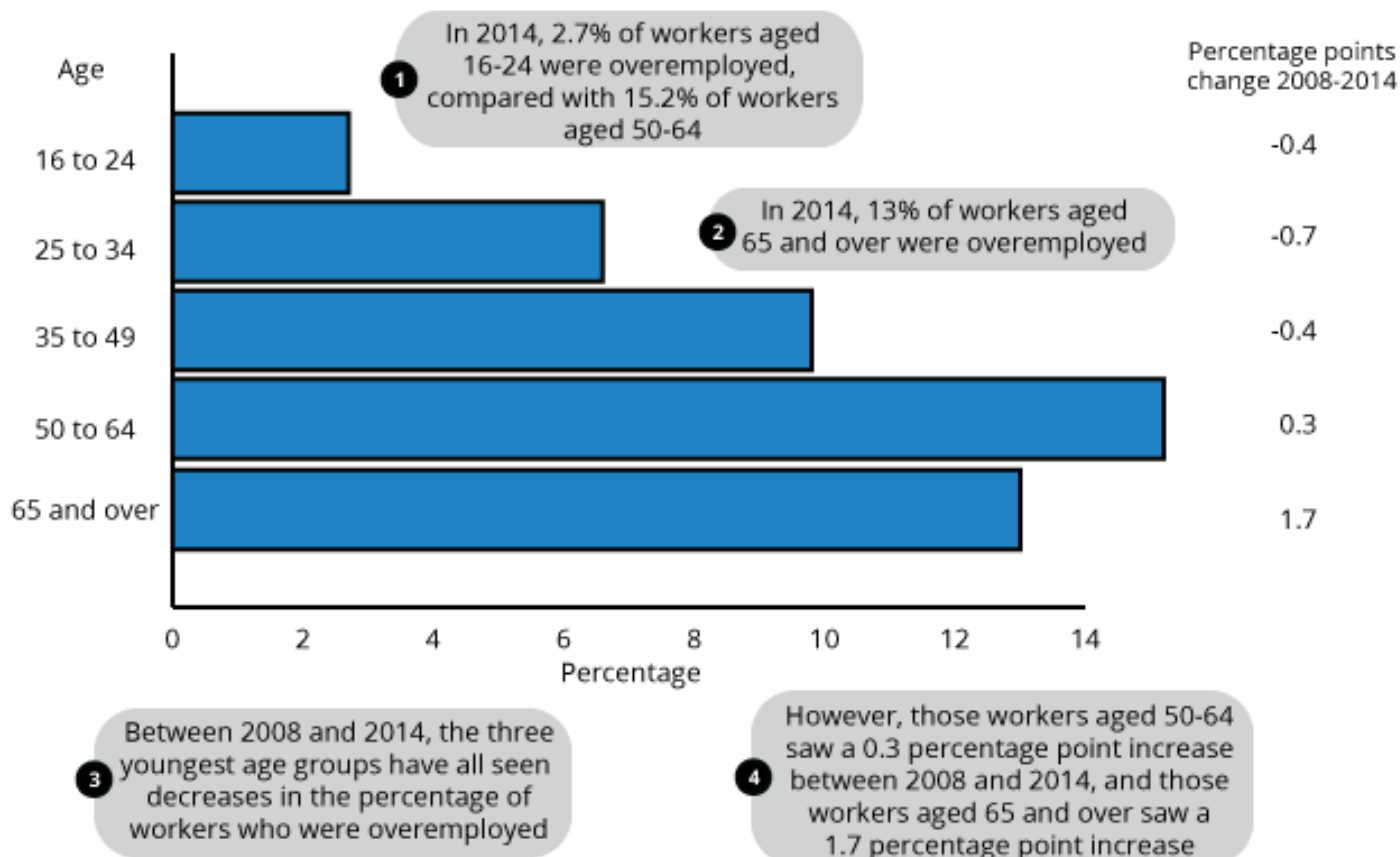
The largest increase in overemployment by occupation group between 2008 and 2014 was in process, plant and machine operatives occupations at a 1.0 percentage point increase. The largest decrease, of 1.1 percentage points, was seen for those working in sales and customer service occupations. This occupation group has instead seen a large increase in the percentage of workers being underemployed and wanting to work more hours over the same period.

In 2014, fewer than 3% of workers aged 16-24 were overemployed, compared with around 15% of workers aged 50-64

In 2014, only 2.7% of workers aged 16 to 24 stated that they were overemployed wanting to work fewer hours for less money. This compares with 6.6% for workers aged 25-34, 9.8% for workers aged 35-49, 15.2% of workers aged 50-64 and 13.0% of workers aged over 65. Therefore as age increases the percentage of workers who are overemployed also increases. This is the exact opposite to those workers who are underemployed.

Overemployment by age groups, 2014, UK

In 2014, fewer than 3% of workers aged 16-24 were overemployed compared with around 15% of workers aged 50-64



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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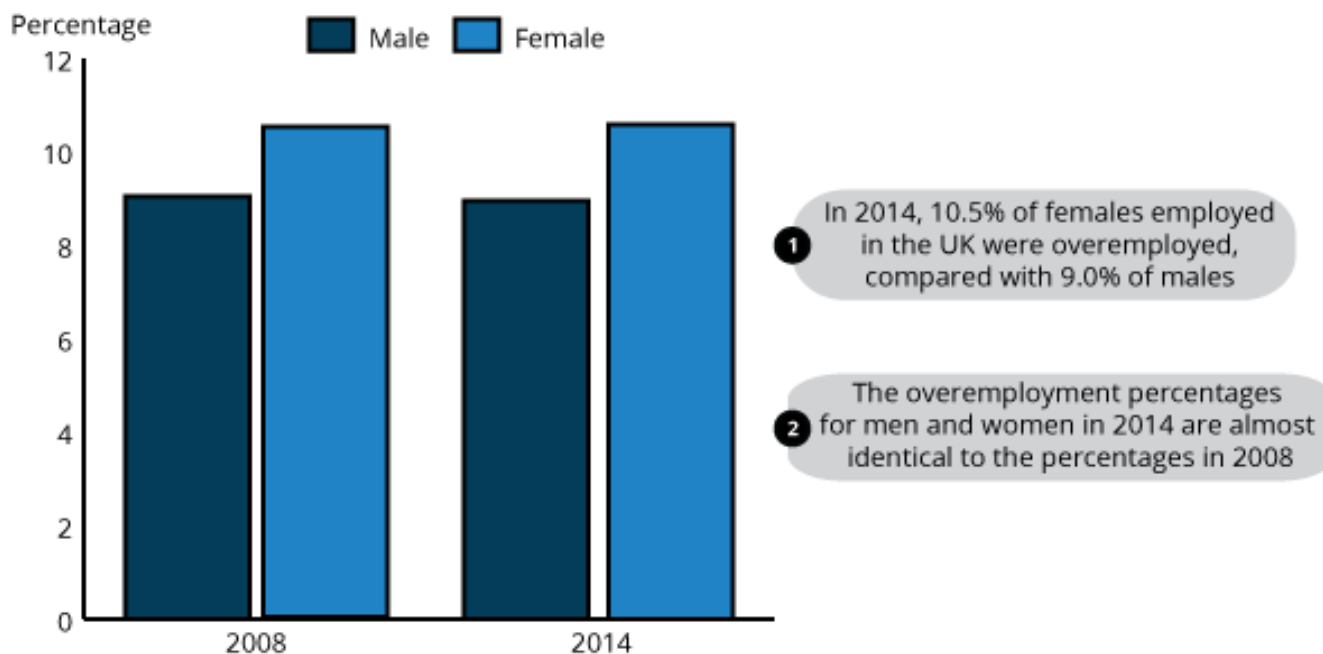
Looking at comparisons between 2008 and 2014, the age groups of 16-24, 25-34 and 35-49, have all seen a decrease in the percentage of workers who are overemployed. In contrast, age groups of 50-64 and over 65 have seen increases in the percentage of workers being overemployed, with those over 65 seeing the largest rise of 1.7 percentage points since 2008. One potential reason for this may be because more people have to work past state pension age but they would like to work fewer hours or even retire but are not able to do so.

10.5% of female workers were overemployed in 2014, compared with 9.0% of male workers

In 2014, 10.5% of females and 9.0% of males were overemployed and therefore stated that they wanted to work fewer hours for less money.

Overemployment by gender, 2008 & 2014, UK

10.5% of female workers were overemployed in 2014, compared with 9.0% of male workers



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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The overemployment percentages for men and women in 2014 are almost identical to the percentages in 2008 when 9.1% of men and 10.5% of women were overemployed.

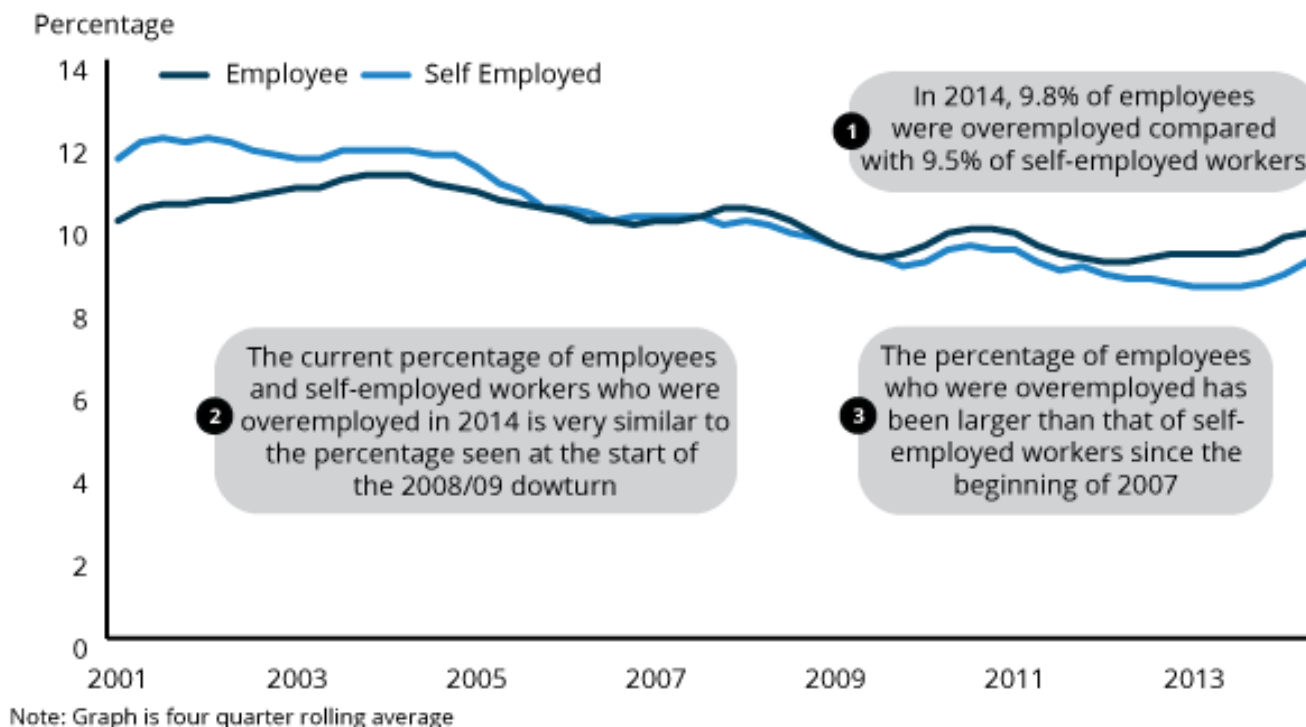
In 2014, just under 10% of employees and self-employed workers are overemployed

In 2014, 9.8%, or 2.5 million employees and 9.5%, or 424,000 self-employed workers were overemployed. The percentage of employees and self-employed workers who are overemployed has been increasing since the beginning of 2013.

The current percentage of employees and self-employed workers who are overemployed is similar now to the percentages seen at the beginning of the economic downturn at which time 9.8% of employees and 9.9% of self employed workers were underemployed.

Overemployment by employee or self-employed employment status, 2000-2014, UK

In 2014, just under 10% of employees and self-employed workers are overemployed



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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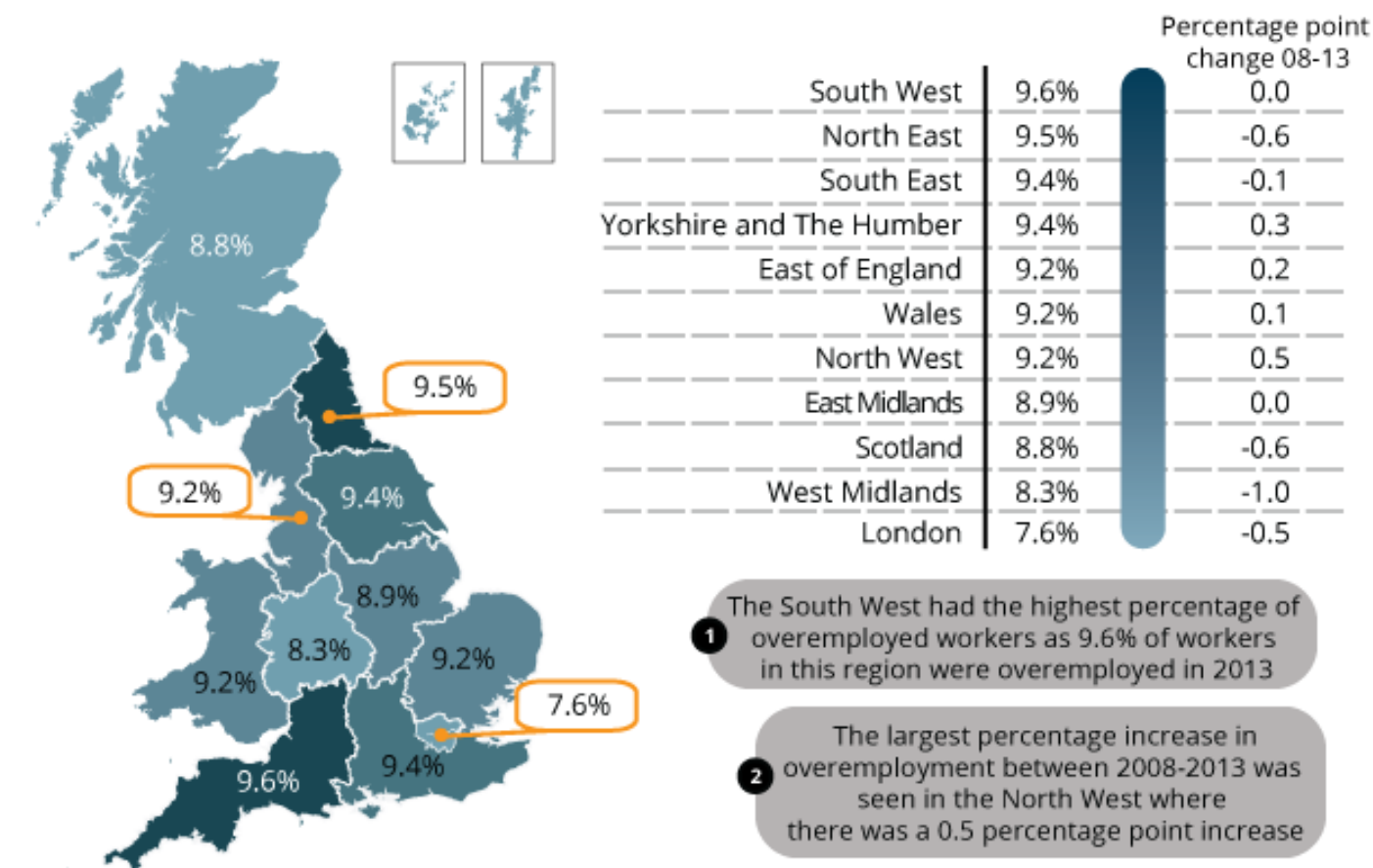
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The South West had the highest percentage of overemployed workers in Great Britain

In 2013³, 9.6% of workers in the South West of England were overemployed; looking across the other regions of Great Britain, with the exception of London, there was not a large variation in the percentage of workers who are overemployed. In London just 7.6% of workers are overemployed.

Overemployment by region of Great Britain, 2013, UK

The South West had the highest percentage of overemployed workers in Great Britain



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Note: Excludes Northern Ireland due to small sample sizes

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

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Looking over the last five years, there are some areas that have seen an increase in the percentage of overemployed workers and some areas have seen a decrease. The largest increase in overemployed workers between 2008 and 2013 was seen in the North West which saw an increase of 0.5 percentage points. The largest decrease was seen in the West Midlands where overemployment decreased by 1.0 percentage points.

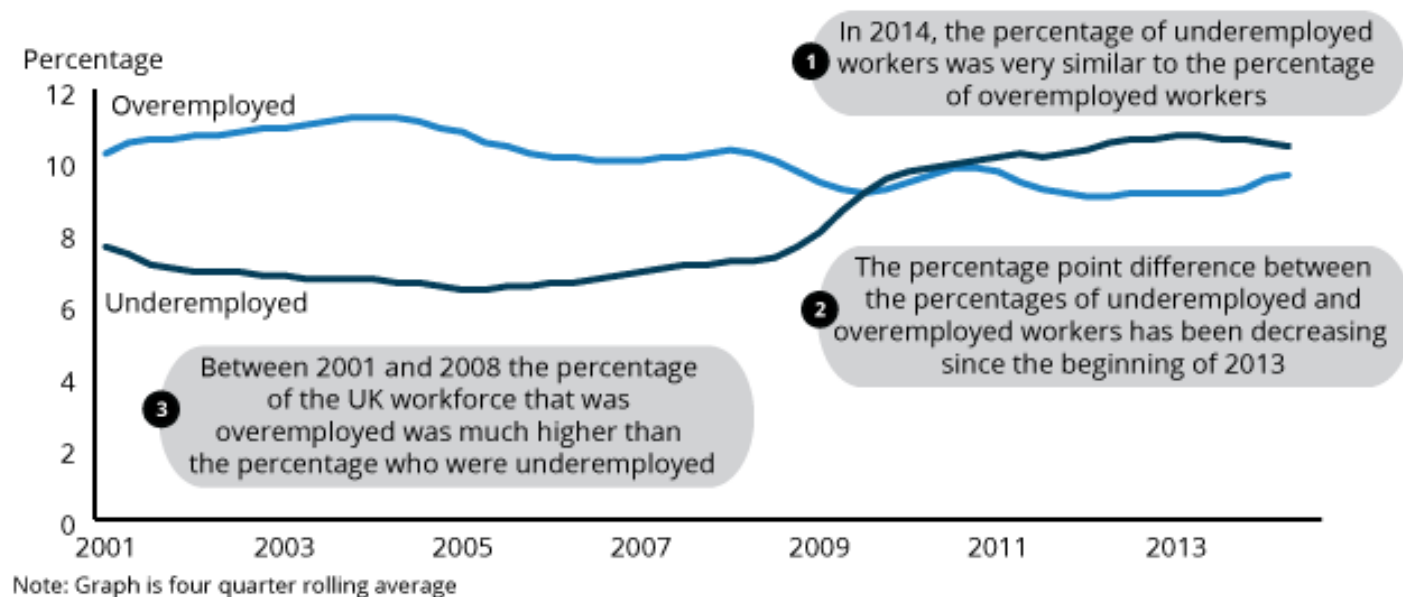
Since the beginning of 2009 the percentage of underemployed workers has been higher than the percentage of overemployed workers

In 2014, the percentage of the UK work force that was underemployed and overemployed is quite similar at 9.9% and 9.7% respectively. The percentage point difference between the percentage of those underemployed and overemployed has been decreasing since the beginning of 2013.

Following the economic downturn, the percentage of the work force who was underemployed became higher than the percentage of overemployed workers in 2009. This means that there are more hours being desired by workers than hours workers want to work less. Therefore over the years following the recession there has been an increase in the slack in the labour market for those in employment, but this has started to decrease since the beginning of 2013.

Underemployment and Overemployment rates, 2000-2014, UK

Since the beginning of 2009 the percentage of underemployed workers has been higher than the percentage of overemployed workers



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

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(32 Kb)

Notes

- Note that all periods mentioned in this report are for the April to June quarter unless otherwise stated.
- Taken from Table Hour01 from Labour Market Statistics, August 2014 for the period April to June 2014.

3. Regional Analysis uses the Annual Population Survey Jan-Dec 2013 dataset.

Background notes

1. Sources:

- Labour Force Survey, ONS
- Annual Population Survey, ONS
- European Labour Force Survey, Eurostat

All UK analysis uses the quarterly Labour Force Survey person datasets for April to June 2014.

All regional analysis uses the Annual Population Survey datasets for January to December 2013.

All European analysis uses the European Labour Force Survey datasets for Quarter 2 for 2008 and 2014.

2. Underemployed workers are those people in employment who are willing to work more hours, either by working in an additional job, by working more hours in their current job, or by switching to a replacement job. They must also be available to start working longer hours within 2 weeks and their current weekly hours must be below 40 hours if they are between 16 and 18 and below 48 hours if they are over 18.
3. Overemployed workers are those people in employment who are willing to work fewer hours than they are currently employed to do, either in a replacement job or in their current job.
4. Occupation group is based on the Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) 2010 major groups. Datasets before 2010 that use SOC 2000 groups have been reclassified to SOC 2010 standards for comparison. The occupation group is not available for some workers and these have been excluded from the tables.
5. For regional analysis Northern Ireland is excluded due to small sample sizes.
6. For European comparisons of underemployment between Q2 2008 and Q2 2014 Estonia is not included due to lack of available information for Q2 2008.
7. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

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