

WEST YORKSHIRE

CITY REGION EMPLOYMENT PROFILE | NOVEMBER 2023

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SUMMARY

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority has the third largest population of the nine English Combined Authorities at 2.35 million. It has an employment rate of 73.4% and its unemployment (3.6%) rate is just below the English average (3.7%). Economic inactivity is higher in West Yorkshire (23.9%) than the rest of England (21.4%).¹ Workers in the region earn a weekly wage of £547² which is just under £83 lower than the English average wage.

Just under one in five workers in West Yorkshire are in severely insecure work (19.2%), which is slightly below the national average of 19.8%. West Yorkshire Combined Authority has the third lowest level of severely insecure work out of the nine English Combined Authorities.

The Work Foundation defines insecure work through a single holistic measure which combines:

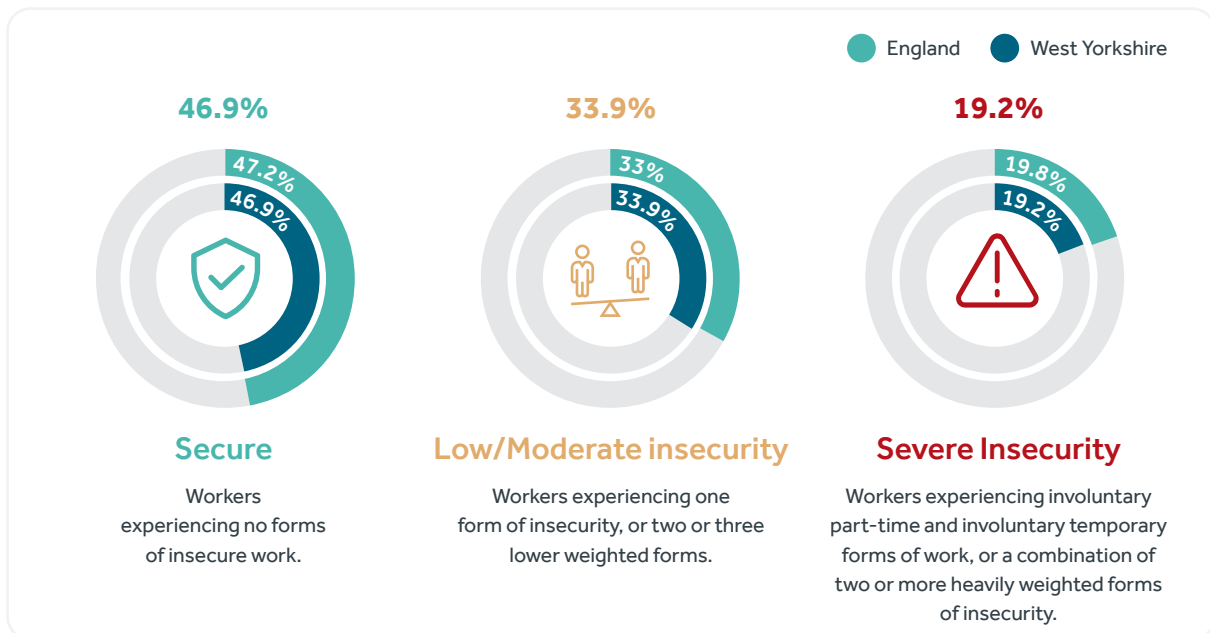
- contractual insecurity, where people are not guaranteed future hours or future work - such as jobs in the gig economy, zero contract work or part-time work
- financial insecurity, where people have unpredictable pay or their pay is simply too low to get by
- lack of access to employment rights and protections.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority has a slightly higher number of low paid jobs and involuntary temporary work than the English average.

Across the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, there is variation amongst the six local authorities. Kirklees is the hotspot in the city region for severely insecure work at 21.9%, which is over two percentage points higher than the West Yorkshire average. Calderdale has the lowest levels of severely insecure work in West Yorkshire at 15.9% and is three percentage points below the national average.

Analysis shows that women, workers from ethnic minority backgrounds and younger workers are more likely to be in severely insecure work than other workers in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. While women in West Yorkshire are 1.4 times more likely to be in severely insecure work than men, it is substantially below the English average of 1.8 times.

Figure 1: Insecurity amongst the West Yorkshire Combined Authority workforce, 2022



Source: Work Foundation calculations of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey; 2021- 2022.

1. ONS 2023, Annual Population Survey, January-December 2022.

2. Centre for Cities West Yorkshire Combined Authority factsheet: 2023.

Available at: <https://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/15-07-01-West-Yorkshire-CA-Factsheet.pdf>

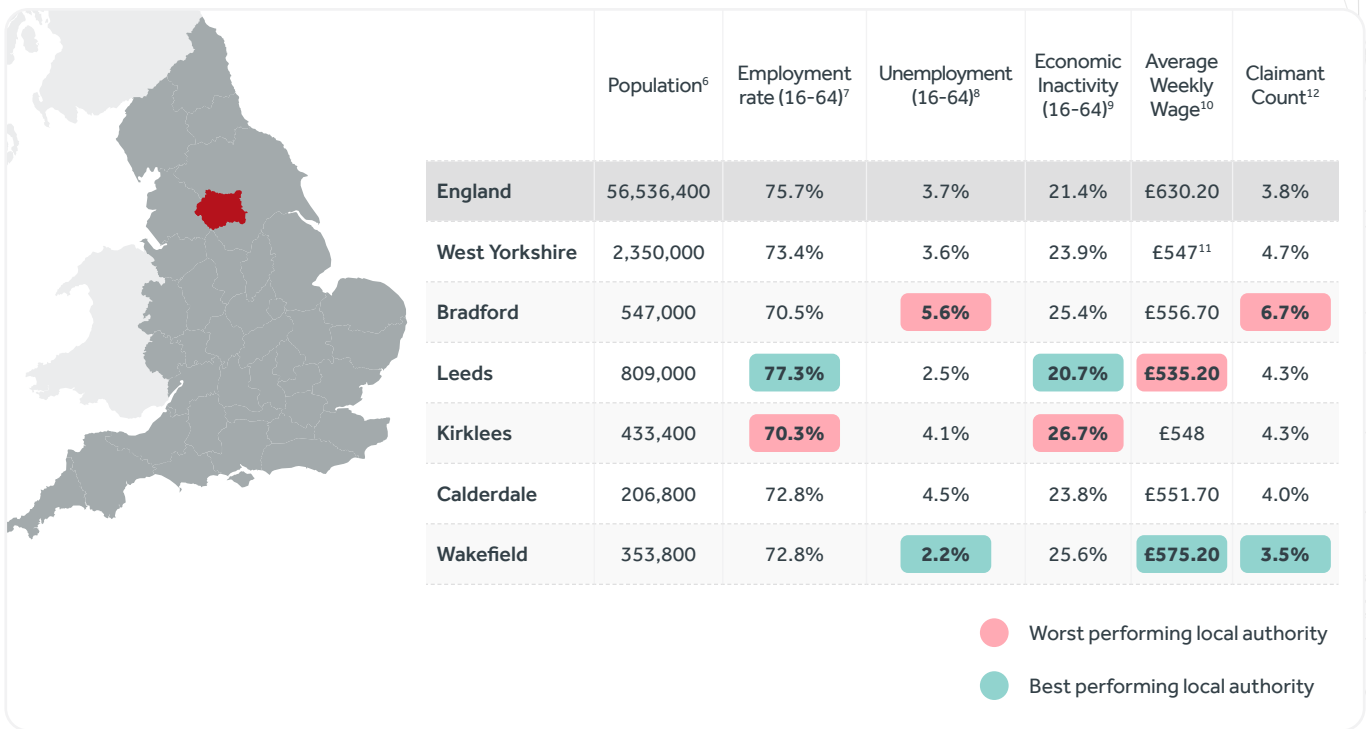
1. WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW

West Yorkshire became a Combined Authority in April 2014 and brings together five local authorities: Bradford, Leeds, Kirklees, Calderdale and Wakefield. It has a population of 2,350,000 with a working age population of 1,485,200. The first elected mayor for West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, came to office in May 2021. Her key 10 pledges include creating well-paid, skilled jobs for young people and prioritising skills training to ensure everyone in West Yorkshire has the skills they need to find work.³

Over half of the workforce in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority work in the public administration, education, wholesale and retail professional and scientific, and health and social care sectors (52%). Over a quarter (28.2%) of the jobs in the Combined Authority are publicly funded while 13.6% of jobs are high-skilled jobs in the private sector.⁴ The West Yorkshire Combined Authority economy has an annual average economic growth rate (2001-2021) of 3.3%, which is below the English average (3.6%). Its unemployment rate is 3.6% which is just below the national average of 3.7%.

In 2020, West Yorkshire leaders and Government agreed a new devolution deal which included devolved powers for adults skills. The Mayor of West Yorkshire is launching a Fair Work Charter in Autumn 2023 to encourage good pay, fair and flexible working conditions, and promote diversity within the workforce.⁵

Figure 2: West Yorkshire Combined Authority Economy



Source: Work Foundation calculations of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey; 2021- 2022.

3. Mayoral Pledges West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Available at:

<https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/a-mayoral-combined-authority/mayoral-pledges/>

4. Centre for Cities West Yorkshire Combined Authority factsheet: 2023. Available at:

<https://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/15-07-01-West-Yorkshire-CA-Factsheet.pdf>

5. West Yorkshire Combined Authority online (n/a). Fair Work Charter. Available at:

<https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/a-mayoral-combined-authority/mayoral-pledges/fair-work-charter/>

6. ONS 2022, Population estimates-local authority based by five-year age band, 2021 data.

7. ONS 2023, Annual Population Survey, January-December 2022.

8. ONS 2023, Annual Population Survey, January-December 2022.

9. ONS 2023, Annual Population Survey, January-December 2022.

10. ONS 2022, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), average gross weekly workplace-based earnings, 2022 data.

11. Centre for Cities West Yorkshire Combined Authority factsheet: 2023. Available at:

<https://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/15-07-01-West-Yorkshire-CA-Factsheet.pdf>

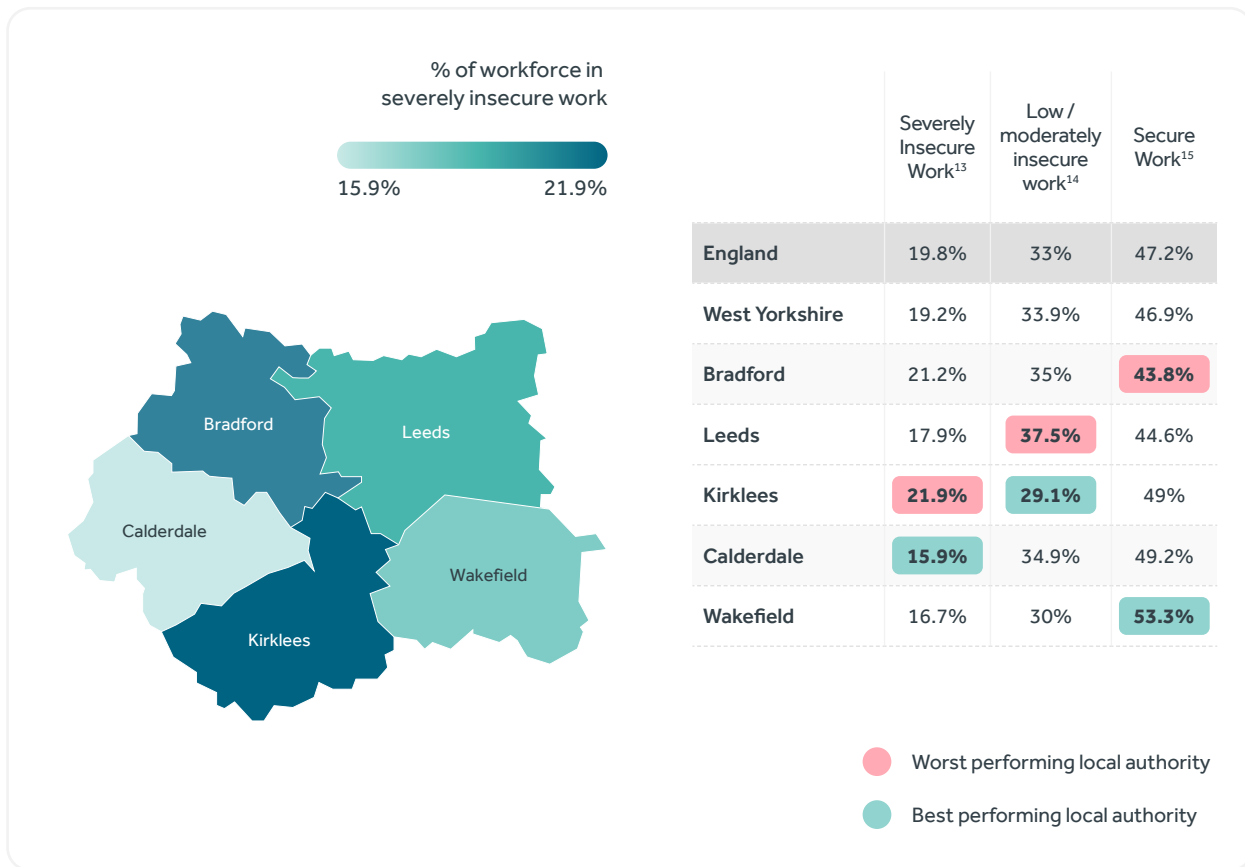
12. ONS 2023, Claimant Count, June 2022 data.

2. INSECURE WORK IN THE WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

Nearly one in five workers (19.2%) in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority are in severely insecure work, which is just below the national average. However, there is some variation in the incidence of severely insecure work within the local authorities. Kirklees has the highest proportion of workers in severely insecure work at 21.9%, while in Calderdale only 15.9% of workers are in severely insecure work. Wakefield has similarly low levels of severely insecure work (16.7%) and has the most workers in secure work (53.3%).

Bradford has one of the highest levels of severely insecure work in the city-region at 21.2%, and lower than average employment levels (70.5%) with unemployment (5.6%) and economic inactivity (25.4%) well above national levels.

Figure 3: West Yorkshire Combined Authority labour market



Map created with Datawrapper.

13. Work Foundation calculations of the ONS Labour Force Survey; 2021-2022.

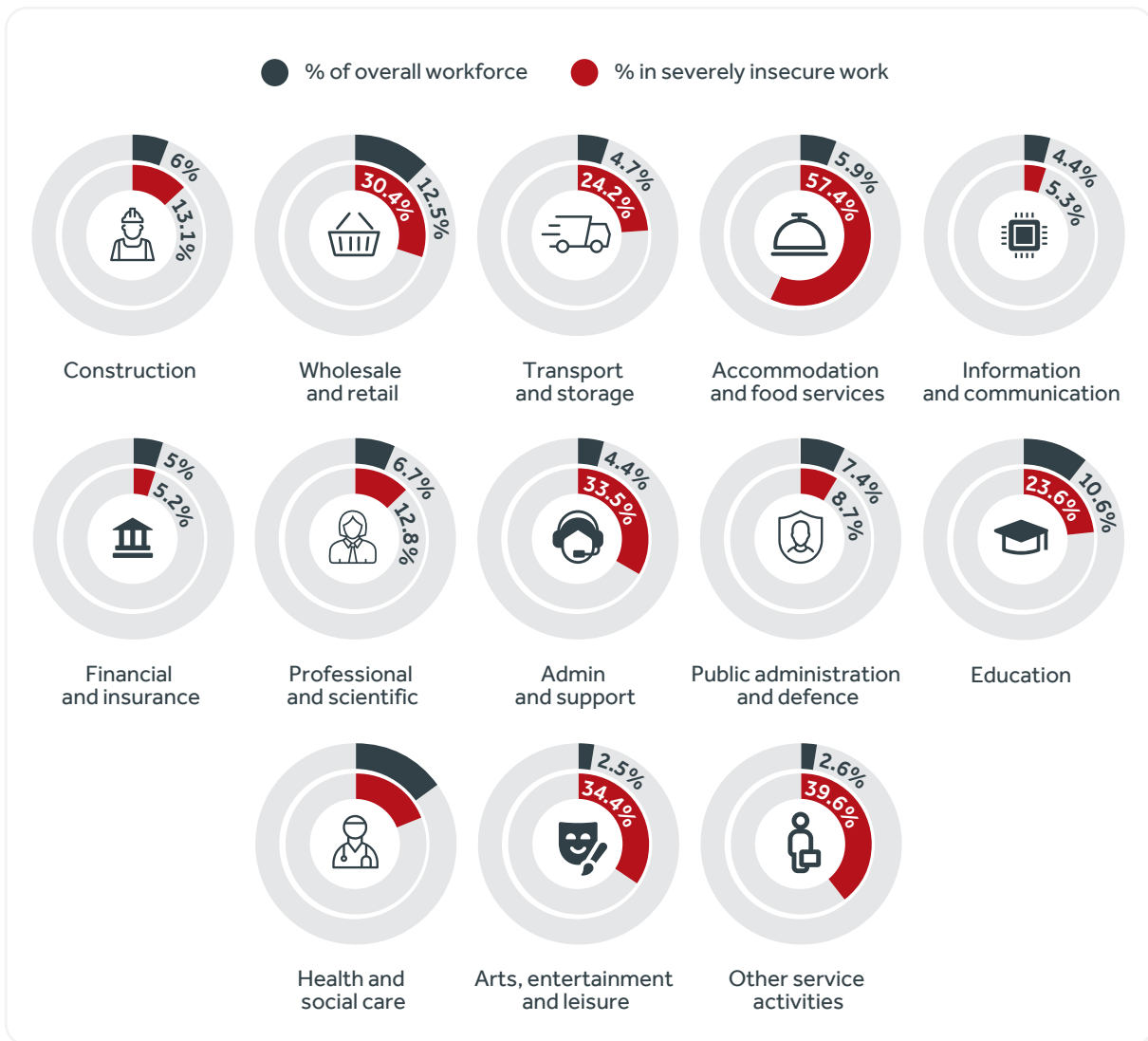
14. Work Foundation calculations of the ONS Labour Force Survey; 2021-2022.

15. Work Foundation calculations of the ONS Labour Force Survey; 2021-2022.

Sectors

Insecure work in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority is driven by insecurity in the wholesale and retail, education and accommodation and food sectors. While accommodation and food only makes up 6% of the jobs in West Yorkshire, 57% of workers are in severely insecure work. Health and social care is the largest sector in West Yorkshire (15.3%), with nearly one in five of those workers in severely insecure work (19.3%). Wholesale and retail is the second largest sector (12.5%) and has higher than average levels of severely insecure work (30.4%).

Figure 4: Insecurity across sectors in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority

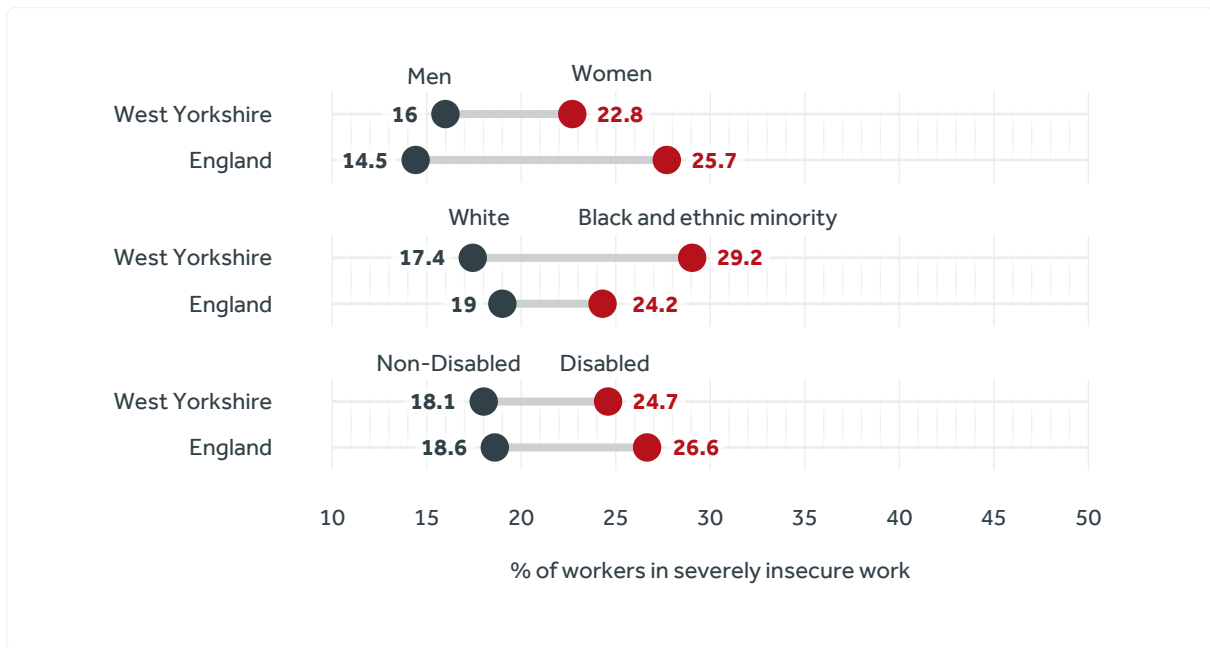


Source: Work Foundation calculations of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey; 2021- 2022.

The insecurity gap

Women in West Yorkshire are 1.4 times more likely to be in severely insecure work than men, which is substantially below the English average of 1.8 times. Compared with the average in England, there is a slightly larger share of workers from a Black and ethnic minority background in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (15.1% compared with 13.8%). Black and ethnic minority workers are 1.7 times more likely than white workers to experience severely insecure work which is higher than the English average of 1.3 times. Disabled workers are 1.4 times more likely to be in severely insecure work than non-disabled workers, which is same as the English average.

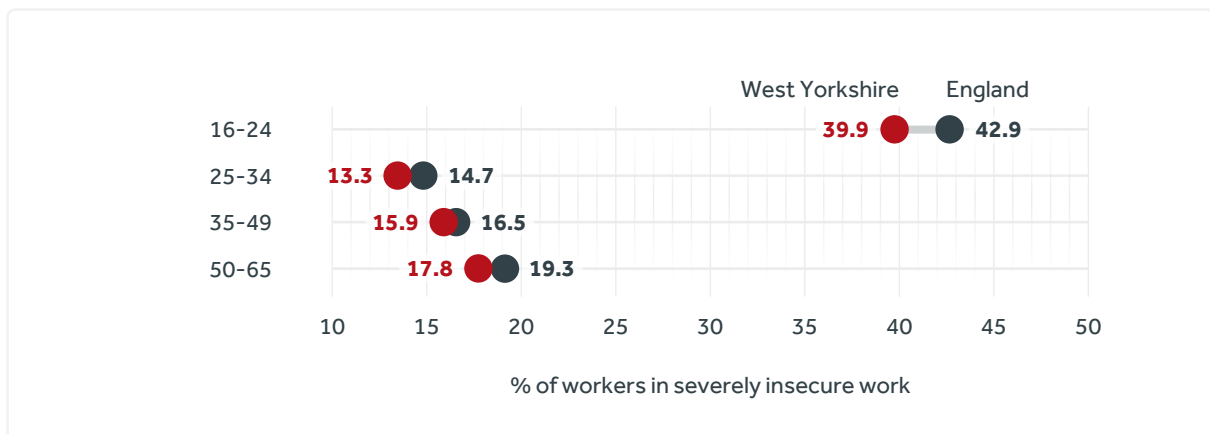
Figure 5: The gender, ethnicity and disability insecurity gaps



Source: Work Foundation calculations of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey; 2021-2022.

Fewer workers aged 16-24 are in severely insecure work compared to the national average (39.7% vs 43%). This is 2.2 times higher than older workers aged 50-65. Workers aged 35-49 are most likely to be in secure work (52.7%), followed by those aged 50-65 (52.4%) and 25-34 (48.7%). However, only 19.1% of 16-24 year olds were in secure work.

Figure 6: The age insecurity gap



Source: Work Foundation calculations of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey; 2021-2022.

3. HOW SECURE WORK CAN REDUCE REGIONAL INEQUALITY

Insecure work is a national issue, but the consequences are felt locally. In order to reduce regional inequalities and limit the impacts of severely insecure work on individuals in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the UK Government and Combined Authority Mayors must focus on two complementary ambitions over the next five years:

1. To significantly reduce levels of severely insecure jobs across the UK by 2030
2. To ensure that no English Mayoral Combined Authority is home to higher levels of severely insecure work than the national average.

Recommendations for Combined Authorities

- **Recognise insecure work in economic development and skills strategies** based on the sectors and roles within where it is concentrated, and the worker groups who are primarily impacted
- **Include the regular tracking of insecure work indicators** as part of existing Combined Authority labour market analysis
- **Explore partnerships and engagement with employment charters** to share lessons and best practice
- **Harness procurement and investment incentives** by building clear employment standards requirements into the commissioning and procuring goods and services
- **Support national enforcement bodies** by helping to build relationships with local employers and reporting non-compliance or violations of rights in your area.

For further research and recommendations on insecure work across England's Mayoral Combined Authorities, please see: [Delivering Levelling up? How secure work can reduce regional inequality \(2023\)](#).

For further information on our methodology, please see our [Technical Annex for the UK Insecure Work Index](#).

Please note: our insecurity measure counts people where they live as opposed to where they work. Household composition and demographic traits can therefore affect results meaning that insecurity at a local level will not always correlate with the level of economic deprivation in that area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Peter Glover at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority for his feedback and reflections.

CITATION

If you are using this document in your own writing, our preferred citation is: Fitzmaurice, J., Navani, A. & Florisson, R. (2023). West Yorkshire Combined Authority city region employment profile. The Work Foundation at Lancaster University.

MORE INFORMATION

For further information, please contact the Work Foundation at Lancaster University at: info@theworkfoundation.com.