

WEST OF ENGLAND

CITY REGION EMPLOYMENT PROFILE | NOVEMBER 2023

Reiss Tigwell, Aman Navani, Rebecca Florisson



SUMMARY

The West of England has the fifth largest population of the nine English Mayoral Combined Authorities. Its employment rate is 79.4%, which is higher than the English average, while its unemployment (2.7%) and economic inactivity rates (18.4%) are lower than the English average.¹ It has a lower level of economic inactivity at 18.4%. Workers in the region earn a weekly wage of £640,² which is £10 above the national average.

The West of England's rate of severely insecure work of 20.4% which is slightly higher than the national average of 19.8%. It has the fifth highest level of severely insecure work out of the nine English Combined Authorities.

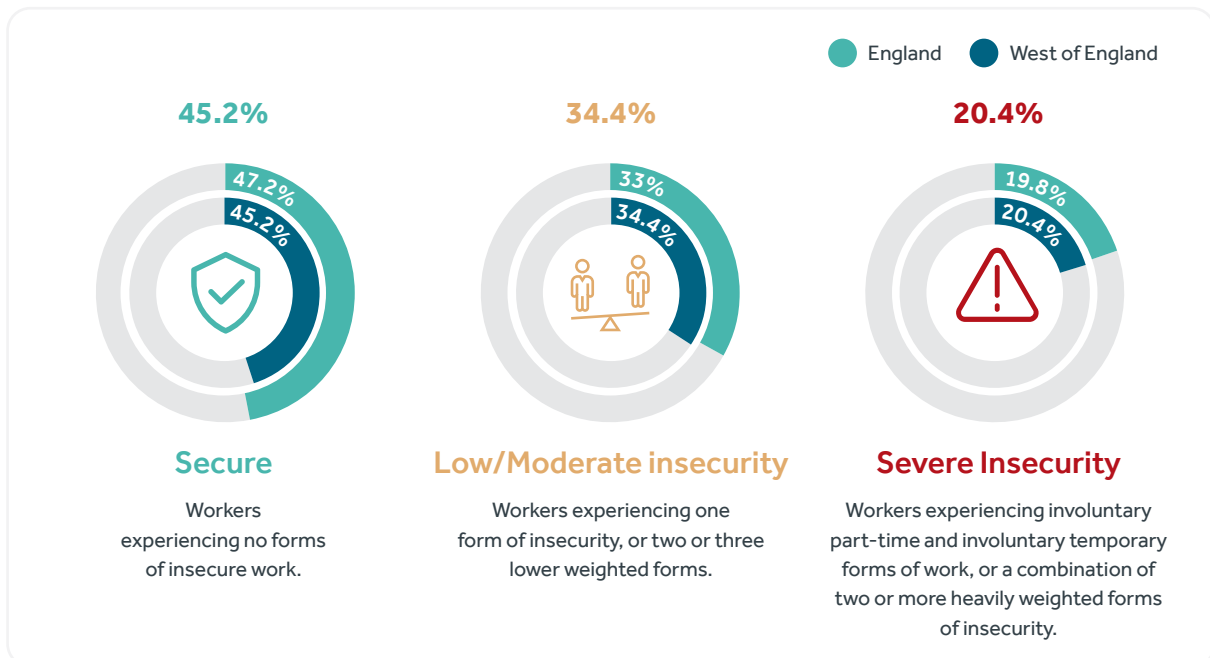
The Work Foundation defines insecure work through a single holistic measure which combines:

- 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 of England Combined Authority has higher than average incidences of second jobs, part-time workers and workers with less two years' service.

Across the West of England, there is significant variation in the incidence of severely insecure work amongst the four local authorities. South Gloucestershire is the hotspot in the city region with 23.9% of its workers in severely insecure work. The City of Bristol is two percentage points below the national average for workers in severely insecure work.

Figure 1: Insecurity amongst the West of England workforce, 2021-2022



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

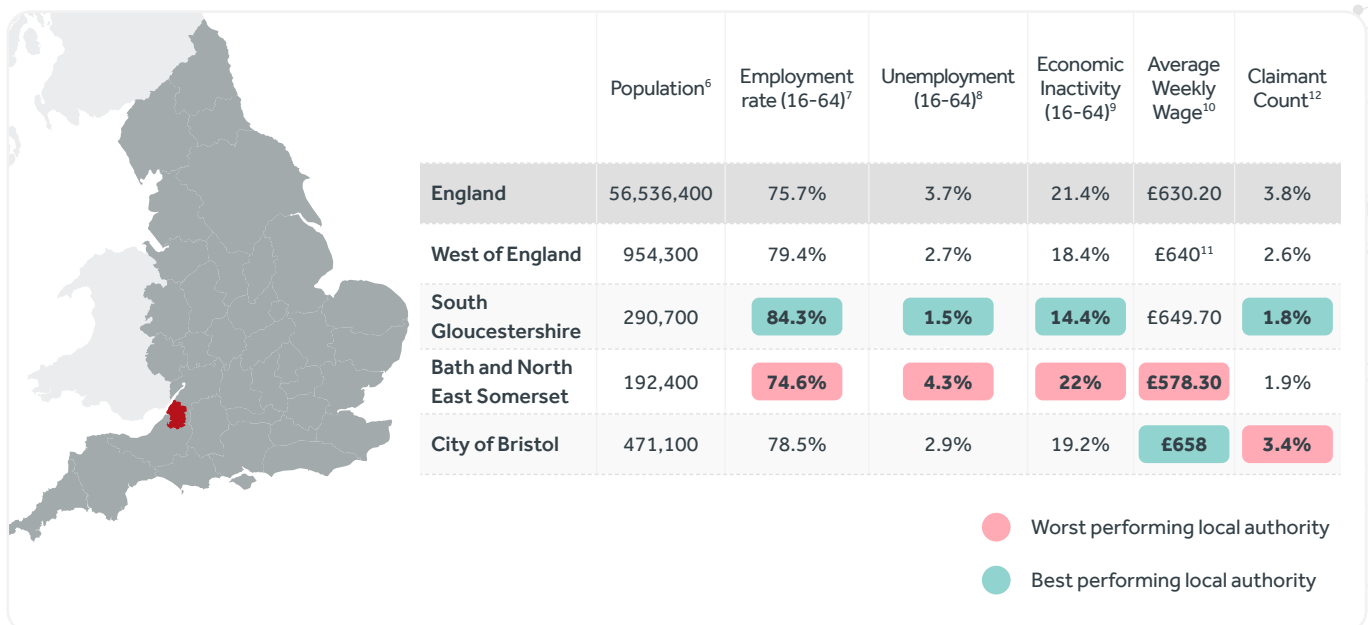
1. ONS 2023, Annual Population Survey, January-December 2022.
 2. Centre for Cities (2023). West of England Combined Authority Factsheet.
 Available at: <https://www.centreforcities.org/combined-authority/west-of-england/>

1. WEST OF ENGLAND OVERVIEW

The West of England became a Combined Authority in February 2017 and brings together three local authorities: South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and the City of Bristol. It has a population of 954,300 with a working age population of 633,800.³ The elected mayor, Dan Norris, came to office in 2021, and was elected on a manifesto of five priorities including securing good jobs and training and rebuilding the economy to work for everyone.⁴

Nearly a third of the workforce in the West of England work in the public administration, education and health and social care sectors. Three in ten jobs (29.9%) in the Combined Authority are publicly funded while 16.6% of jobs are high-skilled jobs in the private sector – which is the highest amongst the nine English Combined Authorities.⁵ The West of England economy has an average annual economic growth rate of 3.9% (2001-21), which is above the UK average. Its unemployment rate is 2.7%, which is lower than the UK average.

Figure 2: West of England Economy



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

3. ONS 2023, Population estimates-local authority based by five-year age band, 2021 data.

4. Dan Norris (2021). Ambition for the West of England. Manifesto. Available from: <https://votedan.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/MANIFESTO-FINAL-compressed.pdf>

5. Centre for Cities (2023). West of England Combined Authority Factsheet Available at: <https://www.centreforcities.org/combined-authority/west-of-england/>

6. ONS 2023, 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 (2023). West of England Combined Authority Factsheet.

Available at: <https://www.centreforcities.org/combined-authority/west-of-england/>

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

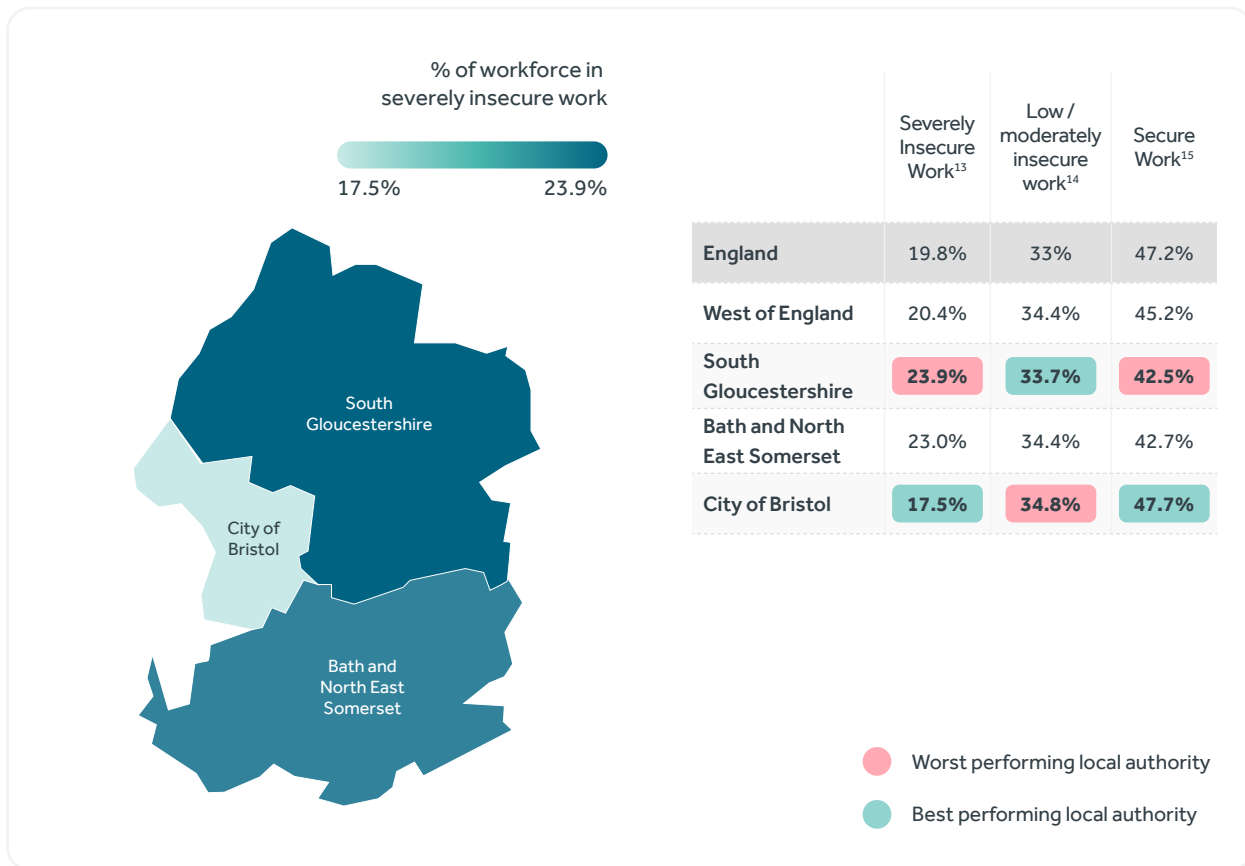
2. INSECURE WORK IN WEST OF ENGLAND

Between 2021-2022, we find that the West of England Combined Authority area was home to a comparatively higher number of second jobs, part-time workers and workers with less two years' service. On the other hand, we see lower levels of solo-self-employment.

One in five workers (20.4%) in the West of England Combined Authority are in severely insecure work. The Combined Authority area has the fifth highest incidence of severely insecure work out of the nine English Mayoral Combined Authorities.

There is some variation in the incidence of severely insecure work within the local authorities of the West of England. South Gloucestershire has the highest proportion of workers in severely insecure work (23.9%). In the City of Bristol, only 17.5% of workers are in severely insecure work and nearly half are in secure work. Its workers also earn an average weekly wage of £658 which is the highest in the region. Bath and North East Somerset has the lowest employment rate (74.6%) and highest inactivity rate (22%) in the region.

Figure 3: West of England 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.

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 of England, 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.

CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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