

# West Sussex Economy Snapshot

**March 2024 (Issue 44)**

West Sussex County Council

This is a monthly 'snapshot' of the West Sussex economy, produced by the County Council's Performance & Insight team. The data presented here is publicly available and any analysis provided is for information purposes only.

This report includes national data that can provide a context to the trends seen from the data in West Sussex.

Previous reports can be found on the [Business West Sussex](#) pages.

If you have any questions relating to the information in this report, please email [business.support@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:business.support@westsussex.gov.uk) or [sue.cooper@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:sue.cooper@westsussex.gov.uk)

# West Sussex Headlines

In February 2024, there was an increase of 2.7% in the number of claimants aged 16+ in West Sussex compared with the previous month. The region saw an increase of 4.3%, the national figure increased by 4%. Horsham had the same number of claimants as last month; Chichester saw an increase of 5.3%, the highest in West Sussex. Arun has the highest number of claimants and the highest claimant count rate is in Crawley, at 3.9%, higher than the regional but the same as national rates. Adur has the lowest number of claimants in the county, Mid Sussex has the lowest claimant count rate in West Sussex at 1.9%.

The number of employees on payrolls is continuing to increase in West Sussex, from pre-pandemic levels. From the data the number of employees on payrolls is above that seen before April 2020. From January 2024, West Sussex's employees increased by 0.13%, the regional figure increase by 0.09% and the national figure increased by 0.06%. Within West Sussex, Mid Sussex has the highest number of employees at 72,906 and Adur the lowest at 26,706. Similarly, the median monthly pay levels have risen to levels higher than seen at the beginning of 2020. North East West Sussex (Crawley, Horsham & Mid Sussex) continues to have higher monthly pay levels than South West West Sussex (Adur, Arun, Chichester & Worthing).

New business incorporations in West Sussex remain above pre-pandemic levels. The last three months, December 2023 - February 2024 saw a net increase of 281 businesses (1,718 incorporations vs. 1,437 closures/liquidations). In February 2024 alone this positive trend continued with 644 openings exceeding 450 closures. Crawley had the most incorporations, while Mid Sussex has the most closures. The business services sector tops both formations and closures, and the ongoing business creation despite being alongside closures in specific sectors and locations suggest a positive business environment.

ONS has recently released new data on online job postings at local authority level, the data series however, is only up to May 2023. The data shows that Horsham has the most job vacancies with 4700 online job adverts in May 2023. Adur has the least number of job vacancies at 880 online job adverts. The top 5 job vacancy sectors for West Sussex over time were business and public service associate professionals, caring personal service occupations, administrative occupations, health professionals and science, research, engineering and technology professionals. The latest percentage figures for these sectors are for May 2023 which are 10.80%, 10.70%, 8.30%, 7.11% and 5.76% respectively. The top vacancy occupations over time are different to the current top vacancy occupations, with a fall in the health professionals and science, research, engineering and technology professionals.

## National Headlines

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated to have grown by 0.2% in January 2024. Service sector grew in January 2023 by 0.2%. Consumer-facing services showed no growth in the three months to January 2024. Production fell by 0.2% in January 2024 and fell by 0.2% in the three months to January 2024. Construction is estimated to have decreased by 0.5% in December 2023.

In the UK, the total number of online job adverts increased by 1% in January 2024 when compared with the previous week; this number was 18% below the level in the equivalent period of 2023 (Adzuna).

The number of payrolled employees has increased annually and the largest increase was in the health and social work sector which rose by 210,000 employees. The number of employees remain above pre-pandemic levels.

From the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICs), 94% of businesses reported they were trading. Trading businesses that reported a decrease in turnover fell from 26% in January 2024, to 22%. One in five trading businesses expect their turnover to increase in April 2024. Since March 2022, the proportion of trading businesses reporting an increase in the prices of goods or services bought month on month has dropped by 26 percentage points, to 24%. Nearly one in five (18%) trading businesses expect to raise the prices of goods or services they sell in April 2024. Nearly half (47%) of trading businesses reported that they were not considering raising prices in April 2024. Nearly one in five (18%) trading businesses reported that their overall performance had decreased in February 2024.

Data for England and Wales on company insolvencies shows that there were 2,102 in February 2024, 17% higher than in the same month in the previous year.

# Inside this report

This report is split into two sections - local West Sussex data and National trends.

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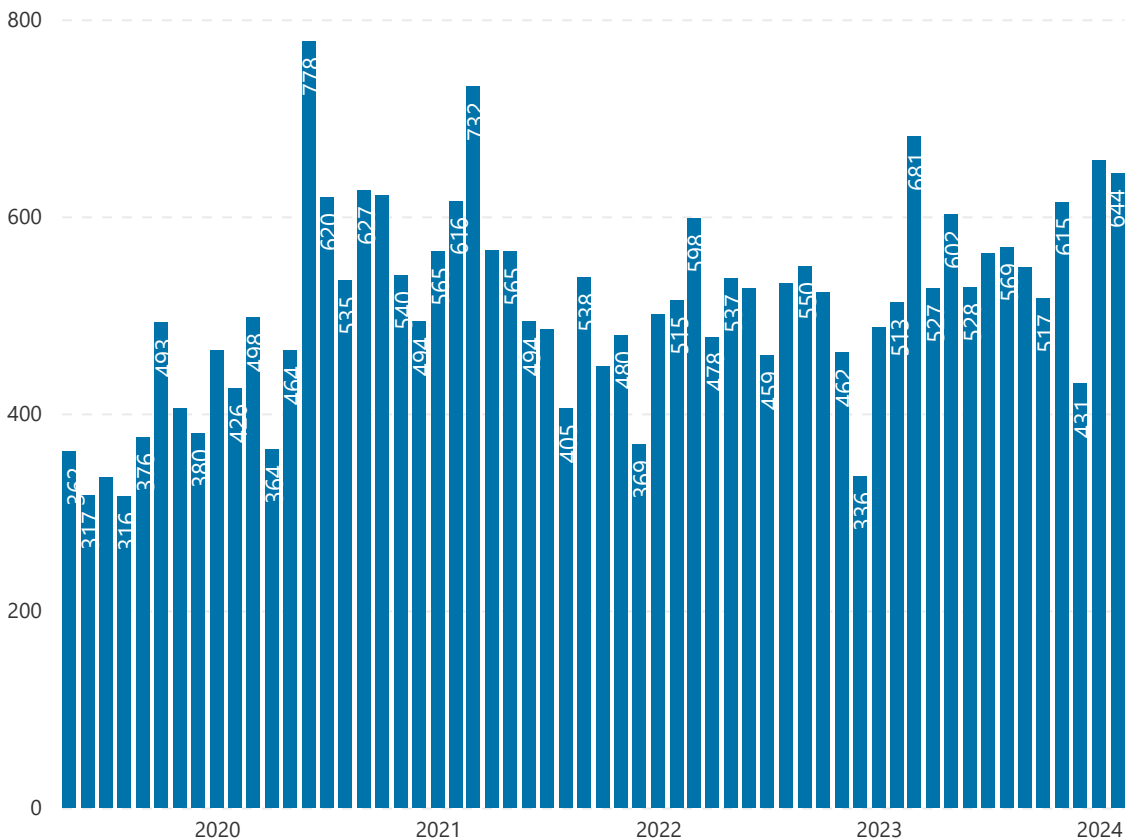
# New Businesses, West Sussex

Source: FAME

Released: March 2024

The time series shows fluctuations month on month, but generally, the numbers of new business formations have tended to be at levels greater than those seen pre-pandemic. In West Sussex in the last 12 months, March 2023- February 2024, there were around 7,091 new business incorporations, 1634 higher than the 5,457 businesses that were dissolved, or which had gone into liquidation. In the last 3 months – December 2023 – February 2024 there were 281 more new business incorporations (1,718) than business that dissolved/in liquidation (1,437). In February 2024, there were more new businesses (644) than closures (450).

## New business incorporations in West Sussex



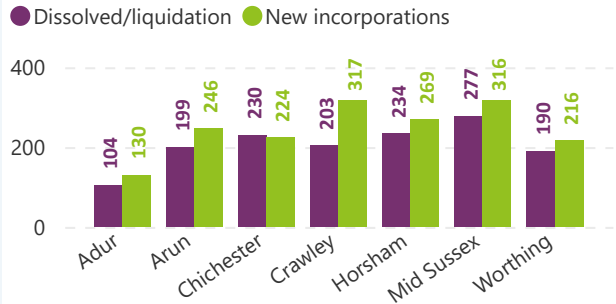
# Businesses, West Sussex

Source: FAME

Released: March 2024

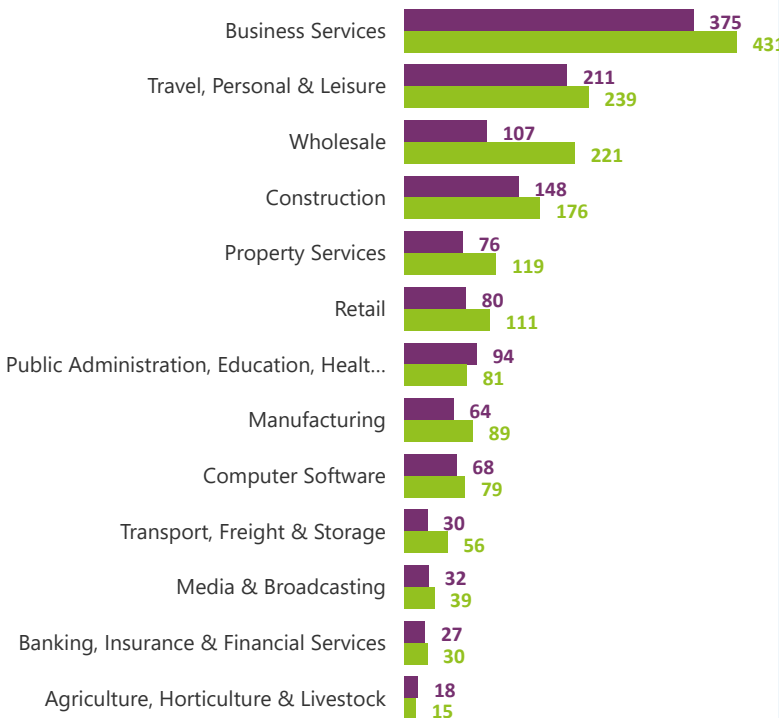
Over the last three-month period (December 2023–February 2024), Crawley had the highest number of new business incorporations and Mid Sussex has highest number of businesses that have dissolved or are in liquidation. Within West Sussex, with the exception of Chichester, local authorities had more new business incorporations than those which had closed.

**Number of new business incorporations and businesses dissolved/in liquidation by local authority (Dec'23-Feb'24)**



**Number of new business incorporations and businesses dissolved/in liquidation by industry (Dec'23 - Feb'24)**

● Dissolved/liquidation ● New incorporations



Business services has the highest number of new incorporations as well as numbers dissolved or in liquidation over the last 3 months, a continuation of the past trends. Agriculture, Public administration sector saw more closed businesses than new business formations. The top three sectors for new business formations are – business services, travel personal and leisure, and wholesale.

# Claimant Count, West Sussex

Source: [ONS, Claimant Count](#)

Released: 12 March 2024 (February 2024 figures are provisional)

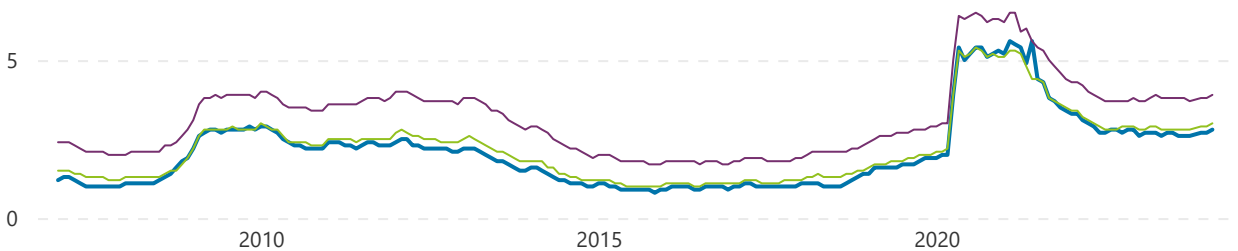
The claimant count includes those people who are claiming either Job Seekers Allowance or Universal Credit principally because they are out of work or working very few hours and/or have a very low wage.

There were 14,720 claimants aged 16+ in West Sussex in February 2024, an increase of 2.7% from the previous month, compared with a national (England) increase of 4% and a regional increase of 4.3%.

Crawley saw a fall of 1% in the number of claimants, whilst Mid Sussex had the same number of claimants as the previous month. Chichester had the highest increase of 5.3%, the highest in West Sussex. Arun has the highest number of claimants at 3115 but the highest claimant count rate is in Crawley at 3.9%, same as national (3.9%) and higher than the regional rate (3%). Mid Sussex has the lowest claimant count rate at 1.9%.

## Claimant count rate

● West Sussex ● South East ● England



## Total Number of Claimants by Local Authority

● January 2024 ● February 2024



# Claimant Count, West Sussex

Source: [ONS, Claimant Count](#)

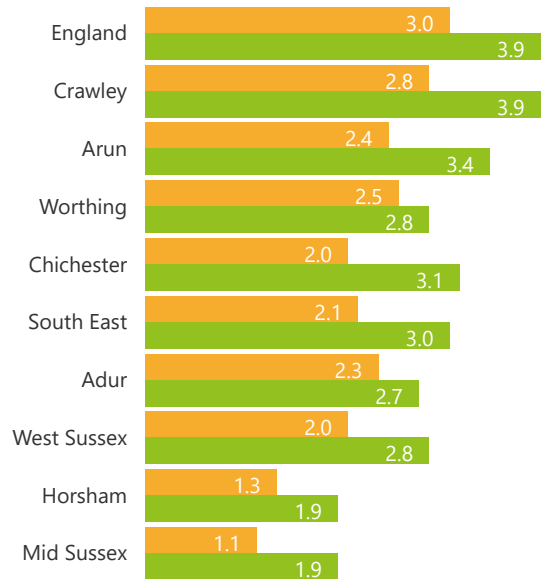
Released: 12 March 2024 (February 2024 figures are provisional)

Age profile of claimants: Worthing (19%) has the highest proportion of 18-24 year olds, and Horsham the lowest at 12.7%. Chichester highest proportion of claimants who are over 50 years.

There are 2,305 claimants aged 18-24 in West Sussex, which is an increase of 3.8% from the previous month. National (England) and regional figures increased by 3.3% and 3.6%, for this age category. Crawley has the highest number of claimants in this age group at 490. In West Sussex all districts (except Horsham) saw an increase in claimants aged 18-24 years. Chichester saw the highest percentage increase at 15.4%, in the claimants aged 18-24 compared to the last month.

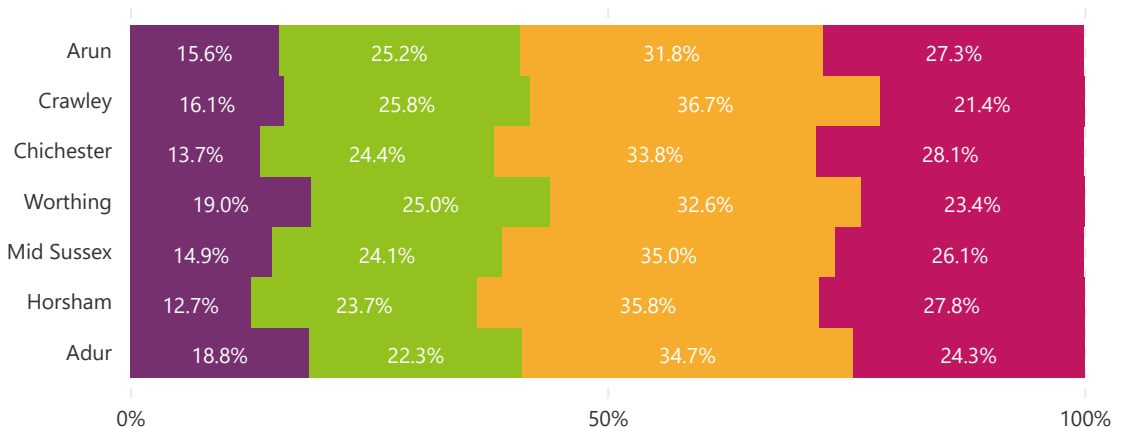
## Claimant count rates change

● March 2020 ● February 2024



## Distribution of claimants by age band

● Aged 18-24 ● Aged 25-34 ● Aged 35-49 ● Aged 50+





# Universal Credit Claimants, West Sussex

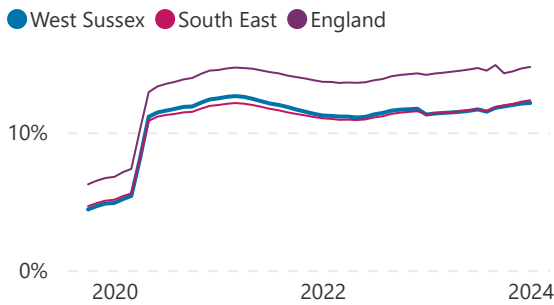
Source: [Department for Work and Pensions](#) Released: 12 March 2024 (February 2024 figures are provisional)

Universal Credit is a single payment for each household to help with living costs for those on a low income or out of work. In February 2024, there were 64,815 Universal Credit claimants in West Sussex, which is a 1.7% increase from previous month. The numbers of people claiming Universal Credit in West Sussex has increased 137% since March 2020 - from 27,355 to 64,815 in February 2024, a higher percentage increase than nationally (113%) and regionally (125%).

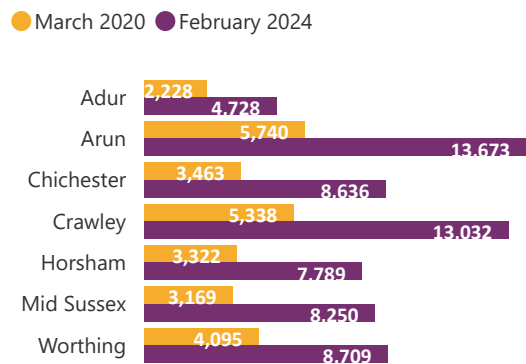
In West Sussex, of those people claiming Universal Credit in January 2024, 44% were in employment. This has increased from 41% seen in March 2020 and is a higher proportion of claimants in employment than in the South East at 40% (January 2024) and nationally in England 38% (January 2024). In January 2024, within West Sussex, Mid Sussex and Horsham has the highest percentage of Universal Credit claimants who are in work at 46%.

Mid Sussex has seen the highest % rise (160%) over the period from March 2020 (at the start of the pandemic) to February 2024, Arun has the highest number of Universal Credit claimants at over 13,673 and since March 2020 there has been a significant rise in the number of residents claiming Universal Credit across the county. Please note February 2024 employment/not in employment breakdown hasn't been released yet.

## Percentage of people aged 16-64 years claiming Universal Credit



## Universal Credit claimants in West Sussex change



## Universal Credit claimants in West Sussex by employment status

Legend: ● In employment ● N/A ● Not in employment



# Real Time Information Pay As You Earn (RTI PAYE), Employees, West Sussex

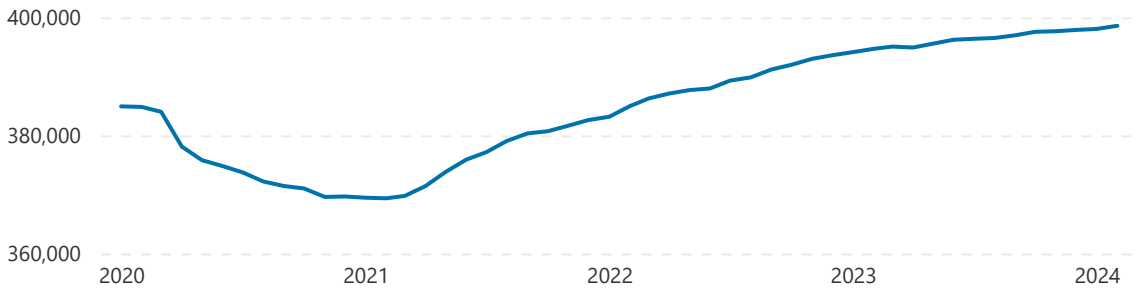
Source: ONS - [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted](#)

Released: 12 March 2024

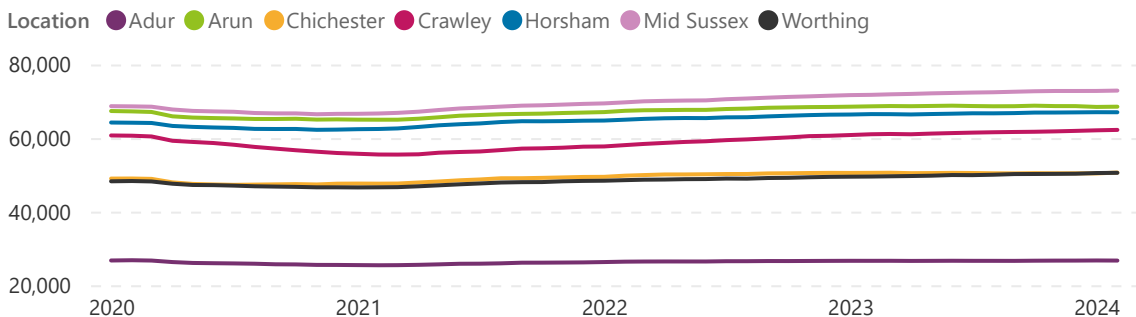
These figures are from a set of 'experimental statistics' from ONS. They outline the earnings and employment statistics gathered from the Pay as You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) seasonally adjusted data set. The latest data is up to the month of February 2024. West Sussex's employees increased by 0.13% from January 2024. The South East's employees increased by 0.09% and the UKs increased by 0.06%. The local authority with the largest growth from November 2023 was Crawley with 0.65%. Arun was the only local authority to see a decline in employees from November 2023 with -0.23%.

The latest data shows that Mid Sussex has the highest number of employees at 72,906 in West Sussex and Adur the lowest at 26,706. The timeline of employees in West Sussex shows a decrease from April 2020, at the beginning of the first lockdown and continuing to decrease until March 2021 at which point the employee figures begin to increase again. This increase has continued to the current date where all districts and boroughs have exceeded the employee figures seen pre-April 2020.

## West Sussex Number of Employees



## District Number of Employees



# Real Time Information Pay As You Earn (RTI PAYE), Median Pay, West Sussex

Source: ONS - [Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted](#)

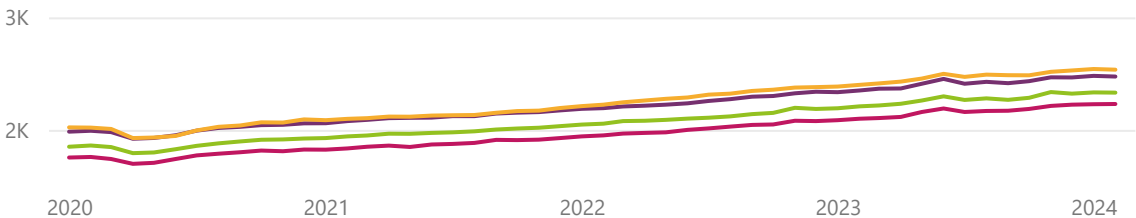
Released: 12 March 2024

As in the previous page, these figures are based on the ONS statistics from the earnings and employment Pay As You Earn (Seasonally Adjusted) RTI data set and are up to the month of February 2024. The local authority with the largest percentage increase of pay from November 2023 was Arun with 1.31% compared to an increase of 0.43% in Mid Sussex which saw the lowest increase. West Sussex South West saw an increase by 0.09% and West Sussex North East had a decrease in median monthly pay of 0.24% from January 2024. The South East's monthly median pay decreased by 0.24% and the UK's decreased by 0.09% since January 2024.

The local authority with the highest median monthly pay is Mid Sussex at £2,596, and the lowest is seen in Arun at £2,164. A decrease in median pay can be seen in between the month of March and April 2020 which was the beginning of the first lockdown. Median monthly pay trends then return to pre lockdown levels by July 2020 for all local authorities. Compared to the regional and national median monthly pay, North East West Sussex (Crawley, Horsham & Mid Sussex) has higher monthly pay levels than South West Sussex (Adur, Arun, Chichester & Worthing).

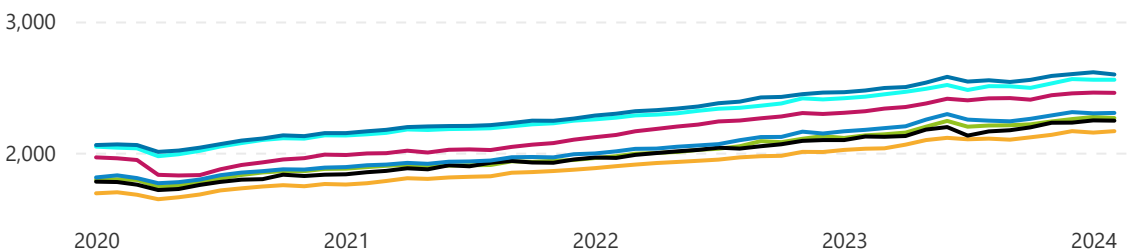
## Median Pay National and Regional Figures

Location ● South East ● UK ● West Sussex (North East) ● West Sussex (South West)



## Median Pay in West Sussex

Location ● Adur ● Arun ● Chichester ● Crawley ● Horsham ● Mid Sussex ● Worthing



# Online Job Adverts, West Sussex

Source: [ONS](#)

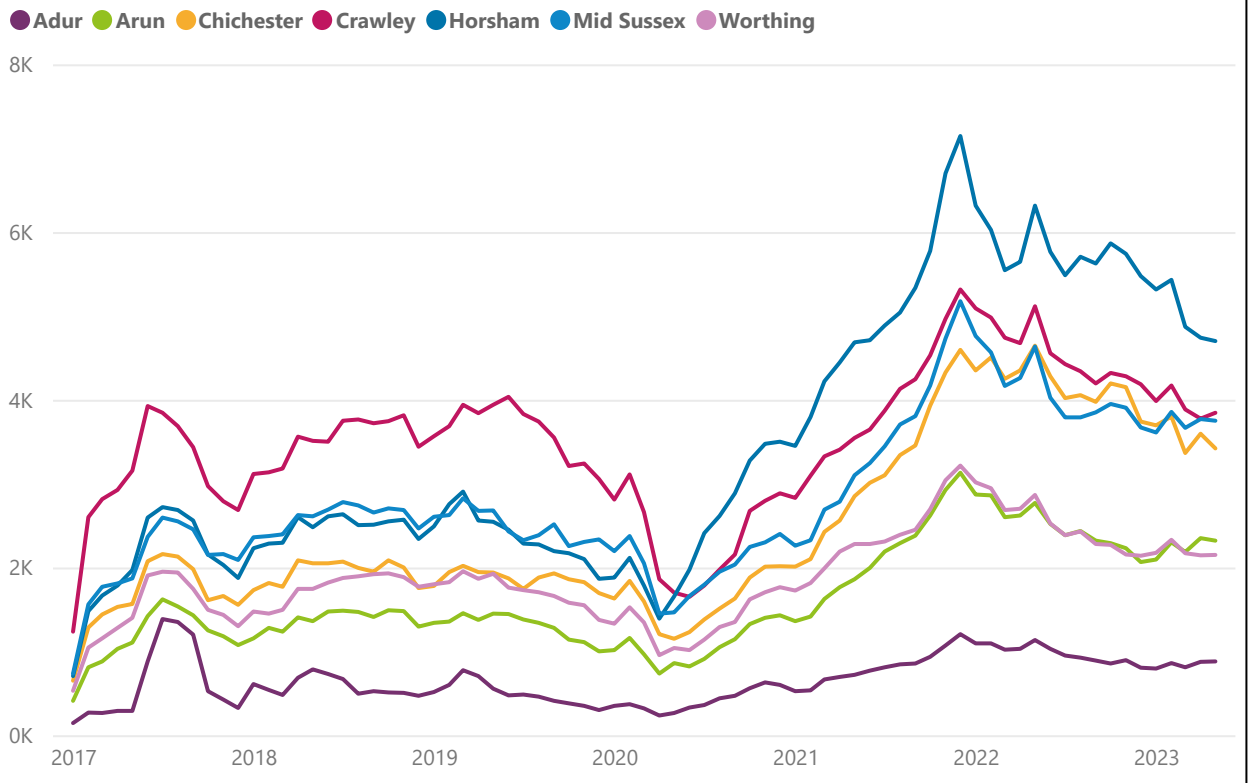
Released: 12 March 2024

ONS has recently released data for the number of online job adverts at local authority level from January 2017 to May 2023. The number of online job adverts in West Sussex remained consistent in the years between 2017 and 2020. After April 2020, the number of online job adverts begin to increase to their peak in December 2021. There is then a decrease in online job adverts after December 2021 to the month of May 2023. While job adverts have fallen since December 2021, they are still at levels higher than seen at pre-pandemic with the exception of Adur.

Before May 2020, Crawley saw the highest number of online job adverts. After May 2020, Horsham saw the highest number of online job adverts and continues to see the highest number of online job adverts.

## Online Job Adverts in West Sussex by Local Authority

Number of Online Job Adverts in West Sussex, January 2017 - May 2023



# Online Job Adverts, West Sussex

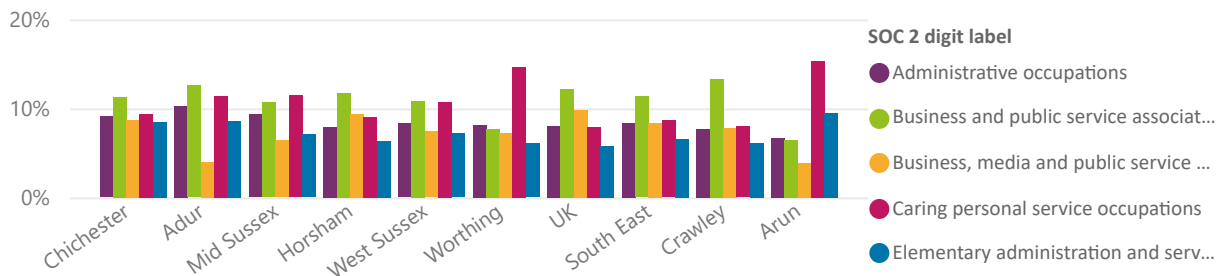
Source: [ONS](#)

Released: 12 March 2024

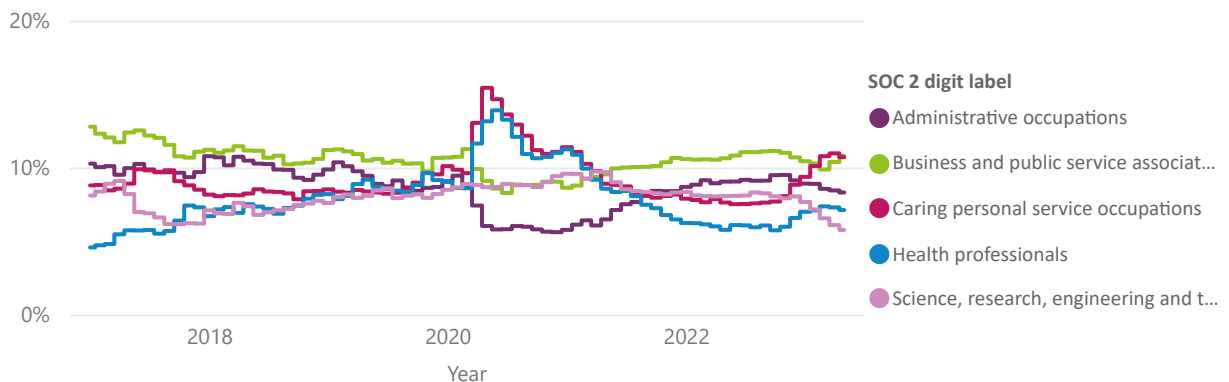
The top 5 highest percentage online job advert sectors for West Sussex, the South East and the UK in May 2023 were administrative occupation (8.30%, 8.34%, 8.03%), business and public service associate professionals (10.80%, 11.33%, 12.18%), business, media and public service professionals (7.40%, 8.35%, 9.83%), caring personal service (10.70%, 8.63%, 7.89%) and elementary administration and service (7.18%, 6.52%, 5.74%).

Over the longer term the top 5 highest percentage online job advert sectors for West Sussex from January 2017 to May 2023 were administrative occupations, business and public service associate professionals, caring personal service occupations, health professionals and science, research, engineering and technology professionals. The top 5 sectors have changed positions over time with May 2020 showing caring, personal and health professionals increasing by almost 6% from March 2020. This rise in caring personal and health professionals then begins to decrease from May 2020 back to their pre-March 2020 percentages on May 2021. Business and public service associate professionals are the most common online job advert after May 2021 which has seen a recent decrease in February 2023 where caring personal service occupations become the most common online job advert.

## West Sussex, Regional and National Breakdown of Top 5 % SOCs Job Adverts May 2023



## West Sussex Top 5 % SOCs Job Adverts Over Time



# Job Vacancies, UK

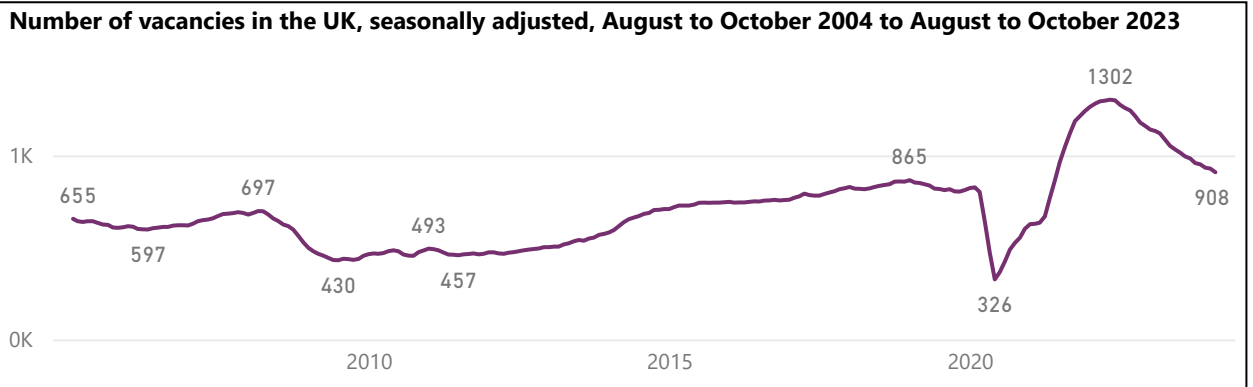
Source: [ONS](#)

Released: 12 March 2024

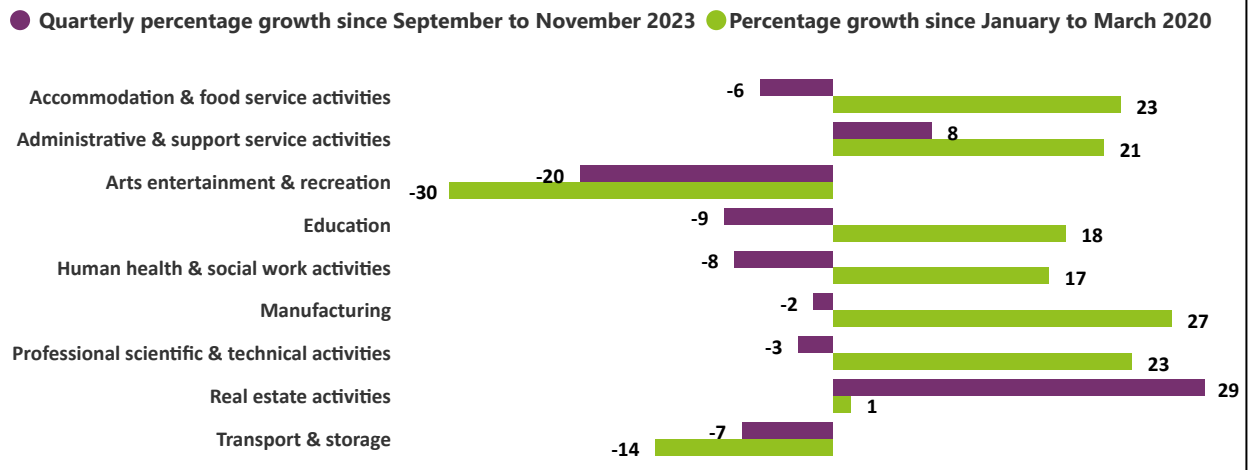
The number of vacancies in the UK, in December 2023 to February 2024 was 908,000, a decrease of 43,000 since September to November 2023 with vacancies falling in 14 of the 18 industry sectors. In December 2023 to February 2024, total estimated vacancies were down by 224,000 from the level of a year ago, although they remained from 107,000 above their pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic January to March 2020 levels.

The industry sectors showing the largest annual decrease in the number of vacancies was arts, entertainment and recreation, which fell by 19.8%.

## Number of vacancies in the UK



## Quarterly growth rate by industry sectors



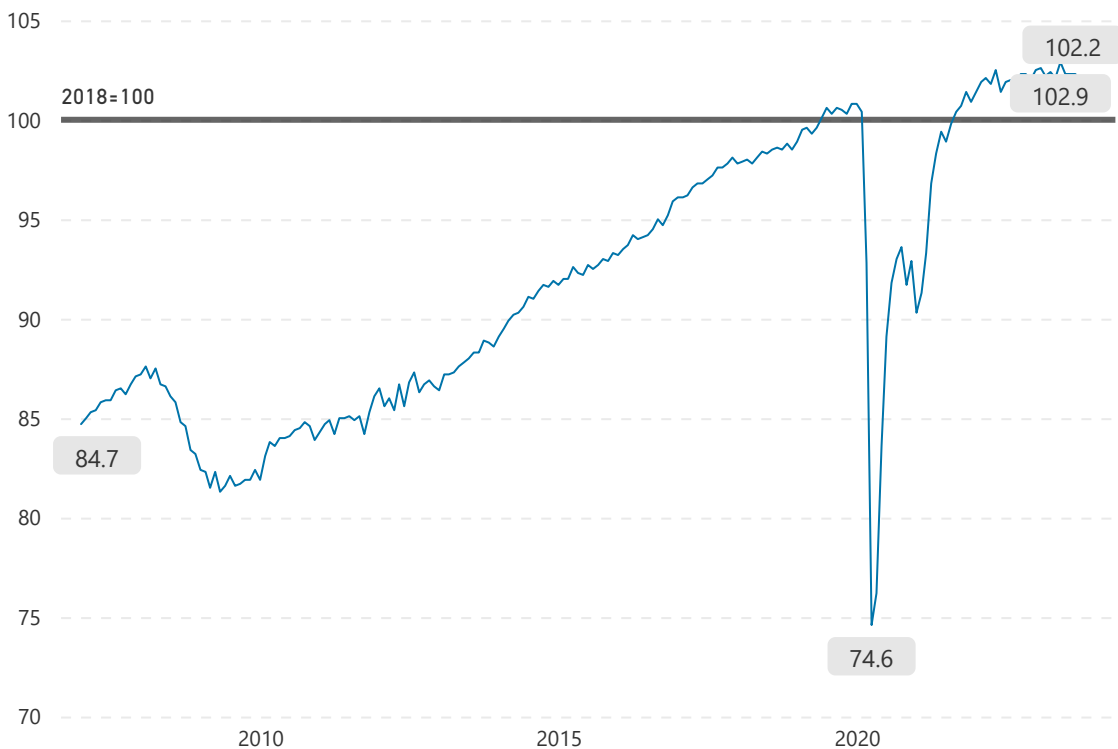
# National Headlines - Gross Domestic Product (GDP), UK

Source: [ONS, GDP Monthly Estimate](#)

Released: 13 March 2024

- Real gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have fallen by 0.1% in the three months to January 2024, compared with the three months to October 2023.
- Monthly GDP is estimated to have grown by 0.2% in January 2024, following a fall of 0.1% in December 2023.
- Services output grew by 0.2% in January 2024 and in the three months to January 2024 services output showed no growth. Services output was the largest contributor to the rise in GDP.
- Consumer-facing services showed no growth in the three months to January 2024, compared with the three months to October 2023.
- Production output fell by 0.2% in January 2024, and in the three months to January 2024 production output fell by 0.2%.
- The construction sector fell by 0.2% in January 2024 and in the three months to January 2024 construction output fell by 0.9%.

## Monthly index, UK



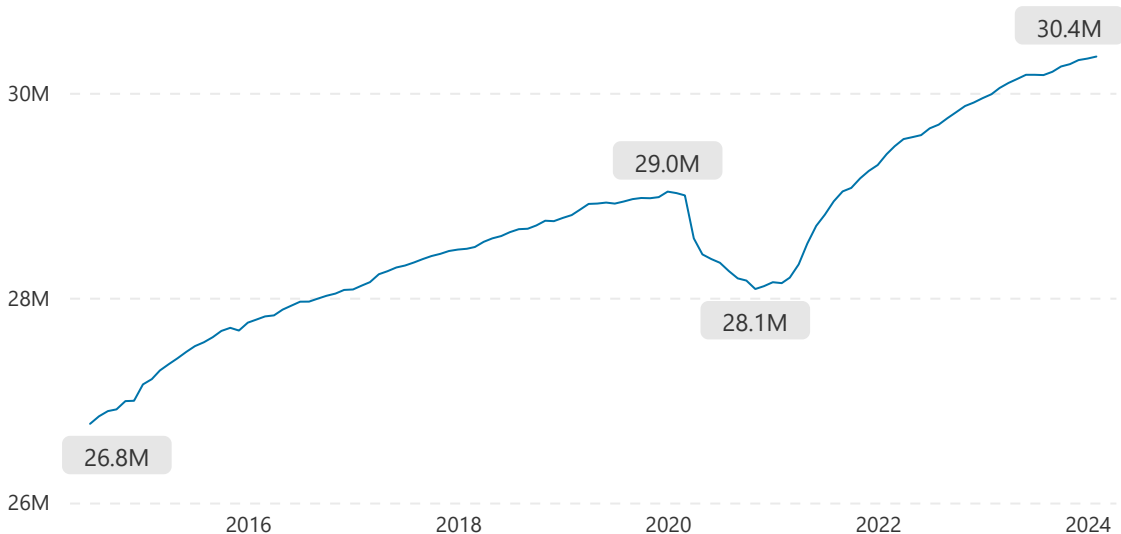
# Labour Market, UK

Source: [ONS, Earning and Employment from Pay As You Earn](#)

Released: 12 March 2024

- Early estimates for February 2024 indicate that the number of payrolled employees rose by 1.2% compared with February 2023, a rise of 368,000 employees.
- This annual increase was largest in the health and social work sector, a rise of 210,000 employees.
- Payrolled employment increased by 20,000 employees (0.1%) in February 2024 when compared with January 2024; this should be treated as a provisional estimate and is likely to be revised when more data are received next month.
- UK payrolled employee growth for January 2024, compared with December 2023, has been revised, from an increase of 48,000 reported in the last bulletin, to an increase of 15,000; this is because of the incorporation of additional real time information (RTI) submissions into the statistics, which takes place every publication and reduces the need for imputation.
- Early estimates for February 2024 indicate that median monthly pay increased by 5.5% compared with February 2023.
- Annual growth in median pay in February 2024 was highest in the other service activities sector, with an increase of 7.4%, and lowest in the finance and insurance sector, with a decrease of 0.3%.

## Payrolled employees, seasonally adjusted, UK





# Businesses currently trading, UK

Source: [ONS, Business insights and impact on the UK economy](#)

Released: 21 March 2024

The data presented in this bulletin are the final results from Wave 101 of the Business Insights and Conditions Survey (BICS), which was live for the period of 22 January to 4 February 2024.

- The proportion of trading businesses that reported a decrease in turnover fell from 26% in January 2024, to 22% in February 2024; in contrast, 55% reported that their turnover stayed the same, which is up 5 percentage points over the same period.
- When asked in early March 2024, one in five (20%) trading businesses expect their turnover to increase in April 2024, which is down 2 percentage points from expectations for March 2024.
- Since March 2022, the proportion of trading businesses reporting an increase in the prices of goods or services bought month on month has dropped by 26 percentage points, to 24%.
- Nearly one in five (18%) trading businesses expect to raise the prices of goods or services that they sell in April 2024, this is up 2 percentage points from expectations for March 2024, but down 6 percentage points on expectations for April 2023.
- Nearly half (47%) of trading businesses reported that they were not considering raising prices in April 2024, which is broadly stable with March 2024.
- Nearly one in five (18%) trading businesses reported that their overall performance had decreased in February 2024 compared with the same calendar month last year, which is down 4 percentage points from January 2024.

# Businesses Closures, UK

Source: Gov.uk, [Monthly Insolvency Statistics](#)

Released: 15 March 2024

Data for England and Wales on company insolvencies shows that there were 2,102 in February 2024, 17% higher than in the same month in the previous year (1,801).

There were 217 compulsory liquidations, 1,707 creditors' voluntary liquidations (CVLs), 166 administrations and 12 company voluntary arrangements (CVAs) in February 2023, Compulsory liquidation, CVLs and administration numbers were higher than in February 2023.

For individuals, the total number of insolvencies in February 2024 was 10,136, 23% higher than in the same month in the previous year (8,239 in February 2023)

For individuals, 709 bankruptcies, 3,007 debt relief orders (DROs) and 6,420 individual voluntary arrangements (IVAs) were registered in February 2024, The higher number of individual insolvencies compared to January 2023 was driven by a 44% increase in the number of DROs and a 16% increase in both the number of bankruptcies and IVAs.

## Company insolvencies in England & Wales

