

Compendium

Chapter 3 - Work status

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Table of contents

1. [Main findings](#)
2. [Aims of the chapter](#)
3. [Work status by age – impairment group comparisons](#)
4. [Work status – Impairment group comparisons](#)
5. [Work status and educational attainment](#)
6. [Work status and occupation](#)
7. [Economic activity and caring responsibilities](#)
8. [Hours spent on caring responsibilities inside or outside of the home](#)
9. [Background notes](#)

1 . Main findings

- Working age adults without impairment at both waves were twice as likely to be employed at both Wave One and Wave Three than working age adults with impairment at both waves – 69% compared to 33%
- Working age adults with impairment at both waves were less likely to have a degree level qualification and more likely to have no formal qualifications than those without impairment at both waves. This was true for both employed and inactive adults
- Working age adults with impairment at both waves were more likely to work in semi-routine and routine occupations than those without impairment at both waves, and were less likely to work in higher, managerial and administrative and professional occupations
- For employed adults, those with impairment at both waves were more likely to have caring responsibilities than those without impairment at both waves
- The majority of adults with caring responsibilities spent between 0 and 19 hours a week caring, regardless of impairment status

2 . Aims of the chapter

This chapter explores changes in economic activity¹ experienced by working age adults (aged 16 to 64) between Wave One and Wave Three. It then considers working age adults' educational achievement and occupation status at Wave Three. Finally, caring responsibilities and hours spent caring are considered. For this last section, comparisons with those aged 65 and over are made.

Adults are broken down by their economic activity at Wave Three. Economic activity (work status) is described as being employed², unemployed, or economically inactive (that is, not being available for or seeking paid work)³.

Comparisons are made between adults who are employed and those who are inactive. The number of unemployed adults in each group was too small to include in the analysis.

Comparisons throughout are made between 4 groups of adults as described in [Chapter 2](#):

1. adults with impairment at both waves
2. offset adults
3. onset-acquired adults
4. adults without impairment at both waves

These groups reflect the diversity of impairment status, in that impairment status may be stable, or may change over time. A person may have impairments at both waves (group 1) or no impairment at both waves (group 4), or they may no longer have impairments (group 2) or they acquire impairments at Wave Three (group 3).

Where age is referred to, unless otherwise stated this is based on adults' age at Wave One.

Notes for 3.2 Aims of the chapter

1. Further details on economic activity status see [Interpreting Labour Market Statistics](#)
2. Employment – Anyone doing 1 hour or more a week of paid work is counted in the employed group. This includes people on government supported training programmes if they are engaging in any form of work, work experience or work-related training and the self employed
3. Economically inactive people are not in employment but are not counted as unemployed either because they have not been looking for work in the last 4 weeks or because they are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks. The economically inactive population includes retired people, those looking after the family or home, those unable to work due to illness or disability and those students who choose not to look for work

3 . Work status by age – impairment group comparisons

This chapter focuses on working age adults, with comparisons made by work and impairment status. Table 3.1 demonstrates that the distribution of age ranges is very different for the different work and impairment statuses. Inactive adults generally tended to be older than those who were employed. The difference by impairment status was much smaller for inactive adults than employed adults, although there were still a higher proportion of 19 to 24 year olds in the adults without impairment at both waves and onset-acquired groups than the adults with impairment at both waves and offset groups.

It is therefore possible that differences seen between the inactive and employed groups throughout this chapter are partly due to the different age profiles of these 2 groups. This should be considered when interpreting any results.

Table 3.1: Age bands: Percentage of working age adults (16 to 64 at Wave One)[1] by impairment groups and work status at Wave Three[2]

Great Britain					
	Percentage at Wave 3				
	19-24	25-49	50-64	65-68	Sample size (number)
Employed					
Adults with impairment at both waves	5	51	40	4	630
Offset	9	53	35	3	700
Onset-acquired	7	62	26	5	500
Adults without impairment at both waves	12	59	26	3	2,460
Total	10	58	28	3	4,290
Inactive					
Adults with impairment at both waves	4	29	46	21	910
Offset	3	27	40	31	280
Onset-acquired	10	31	32	28	270
Adults without impairment at both waves	18	20	35	27	770
Total	11	25	38	25	2,230

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. All longitudinal analysis is based on the working age of adults as at Wave One but beyond this, we are interested in their work status at Wave Three. In Table 3.2, therefore, as we are looking at work status of a cohort three years on at Wave Three, the youngest age group used for analysis is age 19 to 24 years and the oldest is 65 to 68 years
2. Numbers of unemployed adults are too small to include
3. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number
4. Sample sizes have been rounded independently to the nearest 10

4 . Work status – Impairment group comparisons

This section looks at changes in work status between Wave One and Wave Three across the 4 analysis groups.

Changes in work status between Wave One and Wave Three

Looking across the 4 different impairment groups (Table 3.2) there was little movement into and out of employment, unemployment or inactivity between Wave One and Wave Three. This is consistent with findings of a [previous LOS report](#), which considered changes between Wave One and Wave Two.

In general, there was a slight drop in unemployment for all groups, although this change was only statistically significant for adults without impairment at both waves. Adults without impairment at both waves and offset adults¹ – those with impairment at Wave One but not Wave Three – experienced an increase in the percentage who were employed. These findings reflect official labour market figures, which saw employment rise and unemployment fall during the period between Wave One and Wave Three. Those adults with impairment at both waves and onset-acquired adults² saw an overall drop in employment between Wave One and Wave Three. For both these impairment groups, there was a rise in the percentage of economically inactive adults. This could in part reflect the ageing of the survey population, as noted in Section 3.3.

Work status by impairment group

There were differences in work status between impairment groups. As seen in Chapter 2 and a [previous LOS report](#), adults with impairments at both waves were more likely to report severe difficulty and a higher level of frequency of limitation than offset and onset-acquired adults. They were also more likely to report a health condition, illness or impairment as a reason for not working than other groups. This may go some way towards explaining the patterns in work status described in this section below.

Compared with other groups, adults with impairment at both waves were less likely to be employed and more likely to be inactive. Table 3.2 shows around a third of adults with impairment at both waves were employed at both Wave One and Wave Three, compared with over two-thirds of adults without impairment at both waves. In comparison, 44% of adults with impairment at both waves were economically inactive at both Wave One and Wave Three, compared with only 10% of adults without impairment at both waves. This higher inactivity rate for those with impairment at both waves reflects official labour market figures for disabled people³. Those who reported impairment at only 1 of the waves – offset and onset-acquired adults – showed lower levels of inactivity and higher levels of employment than adults with impairment at both waves.

Offset adults and onset-acquired adults had similar levels of economic activity. The movement into or out of impairment did not appear to have a large effect on economic status. A slightly higher percentage of adults who offset, that is, reported an impairment at Wave One but not in Wave Three, moved from inactivity to employment (7%) than those who had an impairment at both waves (4%). This percentage was also higher than for the onset-acquired group (5%), but the difference was not statistically significant. The proportion of offset adults who moved from inactivity to employment was in line with those adults who had never reported impairment (7%).

Table 3.2: Economic activity status for working age adults (16 to 64) at Wave One and Three, by groups

Percentage of adults aged 16-64				Great Britain
Adults with impairments at both waves	Wave Three economic activity status			
	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Total Sample size (number)
Wave one economic activity status				
Employed	33	2	8	43
Unemployed	3	2	2	7
Inactive	4	2	44	50
Total	40	6	54	1,600
Offset				
Wave one economic activity status				
Employed	62	2	6	70
Unemployed	4	2	1	7
Inactive	7	1	15	24
Total	72	5	22	1,020
Onset acquired				
Wave one economic activity status				
Employed	62	2	9	74
Unemployed	3	1	2	5
Inactive	5	2	15	21
Total	70	4	26	810
Adults with no impairments at both waves				
Wave one economic activity status				
Employed	69	2	6	76
Unemployed	4	1	1	6
Inactive	7	1	10	18
Total	80	3	17	3,310

Source: Life Opportunities Survey - Office for National Statistics Notes: Numbers of unemployed adults are too small to include All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number Sample sizes have been rounded independently to the nearest 10.

Notes for 3.4 Work status – Impairment group comparisons

1. The change in employment figures between Wave One and Wave Three for offset adults was not statistically significant
2. The change in the employed figures for onset-acquired adults was not statistically significant
3. See [table AO8 of Labour Market Statistics, July 2015](#)

5 . Work status and educational attainment

This section examines economic activity at Wave Three and the highest level of education achieved, by impairment status. For many adults these qualifications would have been achieved before the interviewing for LOS took place. It is therefore not possible to know their impairment status at the time, or the effect any impairment may have had on their educational attainment. These results should therefore be treated with caution.

Adults with impairment at both waves were less likely to have a degree and more likely to have no formal qualifications than adults without impairment at both waves. This difference was more pronounced for inactive adults, with less than a tenth of inactive adults with impairment at both waves having a degree, compared with a quarter of inactive adults without impairment at both waves. In a [previous LOS report](#), a health condition, illness or impairment was the second most common reason given by adults with impairment at both waves as to why they faced a restriction to participating in education.

Table 3.3: Highest education: Percentage of working age adults (16 to 64) by impairment groups and work status[1]

							Great Britain
Percentage at Wave 3							
	Degree level qualification (or equivalent)	Higher educational qual below degree (incl A-Levels /Highers/ONC National Level BTEC)	O-Level /GCSE /CSE	Other qualifications (including foreign qualifications below degree level)	No formal qualifications	Sample size (number)	
Working Age (16-64)							
Employed							
Adults with impairment at both waves	23	25	25	16	10	630	
Offset	24	33	23	12	7	700	
Onset-acquired	29	28	24	13	6	500	
Adults with no impairment at both waves	31	31	22	11	5	2,440	
Inactive							
Adults with impairment at both waves	8	15	24	18	35	900	
Offset	14	27	19	17	22	280	
Onset-acquired	15	22	29	14	21	270	
Adults with no impairment at both waves	25	34	21	11	10	770	

Source: Office For National Statistics

Notes:

1. Numbers of unemployed adults are too small to include
2. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number
3. Sample sizes have been rounded independently to the nearest 10

6 . Work status and occupation

As we have seen in Section 3.4, adults with impairment at both waves were less likely to be in employment than other adults. The type of occupation¹ people have may also be affected by impairment status. Table 3.4 shows occupation for employed adults.

Adults with impairment at both waves were more likely to be in semi-routine and routine occupations and less likely to be in higher managerial occupation than adults without impairment at both waves. This may reflect the lower qualification status reported by adults with impairment at both waves, as discussed in section 3.5.

As employment status, occupation and educational attainment are closely related it is difficult to separate the association between impairment and these 3 areas.

Further research is required to understand the relationship between impairment and work-related outcomes as this is a complex area.

Table 3.4: Occupation: Percentage of working age adults (16 to 64) by impairment groups and work status [1]

	Percentage at Wave 3					Sample size (number)
	Higher managerial, admin and professional occupations	Intermediate occupations	Small employers and own account workers	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	Semi-routine and routine occupations	
Working Age (16-64)						
Employed						
Adults with impairment at both waves	32	16	14	6	33	630
Offset	40	13	11	6	30	700
Onset-acquired	39	16	10	12	23	500
Adults with no impairment at both waves	43	17	9	7	24	2,450

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Numbers of unemployed adults are too small to include
2. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number
3. Sample sizes have been rounded independently to the nearest 10

Notes for 3.6 Work status and occupation

1. [National Statistics Socio-economic Classification](#)

7 . Economic activity and caring responsibilities

Many people have to balance caring responsibilities within and outside of the home with their employment activity. Some also have to take account of their own impairment status. This section looks at how work status and impairment status relate to caring responsibilities inside and/or outside of the home. The definition of caring responsibilities for this analysis does not include routine child care responsibilities¹.

Employed adults with impairment at both waves were more likely to report caring responsibilities than employed adults without impairments at both waves. This may be related to age. As seen in Section 3.3, a greater proportion of employed adults with impairment at both waves were over 50 than employed adults without impairment at both waves. Other research has found that older adults are more likely to have caring responsibilities².

Although a higher percentage of inactive adults with impairment at both waves reported having caring responsibilities than inactive adults without impairment at both waves, this difference was not statistically significant.

Inactive adults without impairment at both waves were more likely to report caring responsibilities than employed adults without impairment at both waves. The same was true for offset adults – those with impairment at Wave One but not at Wave Three. The [previous 2014 LOS report](#) found that caring responsibilities³ was one of the top 4 reasons for not being able to work given by adults without impairment at both waves.

Table 3.5: Caring responsibilities: Percentage of working age adults (16 to 64) by impairment groups and work status[1]

			Great Britain
Percentage at Wave 3			
	Adults with caring responsibilities inside /outside of the home	Adults with no caring responsibilities	Sample size (number)
Working Age (16-64)			
Employed			
Adults with impairment at both waves	29	71	550
Offset	23	77	650
Onset-acquired	23	77	470
Adults with no impairment at both waves	18	82	2,350
Inactive			
Adults with impairment at both waves	32	68	700
Offset	31	69	240
Onset-acquired	32	68	240
Adults with no impairment at both waves	28	72	720

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Numbers of unemployed adults are too small to include
2. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number
3. Sample sizes have been rounded independently to the nearest 10

Table 3.6: Caring responsibilities: Percentage of adults aged 65 and over by impairment groups[1]

Great Britain			
Percentage at Wave 3			
	Adults with caring responsibilities inside /outside of the home	Adults with no caring responsibilities	Sample size (number)
65 and over			
Adults with impairment at both waves	28	72	870
Offset	25	75	300
Onset-acquired	24	76	430
Adults with no impairment at both waves	26	74	980

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Numbers of unemployed adults are too small to include
2. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number
3. Sample sizes have been rounded independently to the nearest 10

Notes for 3.7 Economic activity and caring responsibilities

1. This refers to caring informally for others, for example, a sick, disabled or elderly relative. Caring responsibilities include looking after or giving special help to (other than in a professional capacity) someone who has long-term physical or mental ill health or disability, or problems related to old age. This could include children if they are sick or disabled, but not routine child care
2. [Family Resources Survey, 2013/14](#)
3. Note that "caring responsibilities" as a barrier to working did not exclude child care

8 . Hours spent on caring responsibilities inside or outside of the home

Caring responsibilities (not including routine child care), whether working or not, can take up many hours a week. Focusing just on those who have caring responsibilities, Tables 3.7 and 3.8 show the number of hours adults spent each week looking after or helping others. These adults will be referred to as "carers" throughout this section.

The number of caring hours varied, with most carers spending up to 19 hours a week on caring responsibilities inside and/or outside of the home.

For working age carers who were economically inactive, a similar percentage were caring for more than 50 hours a week across the impairment groups. These percentages are higher than for those carers who were employed, although the differences were not statistically significant. Caring for this many hours could prevent adults working, and these caring responsibilities may be the reason adults are inactive. However, this is unlikely to explain all the difference.

Further research is required to understand the relationship between impairment, work-related outcomes and informal caring responsibilities as this is a complex area.

Table 3.7: Hours spent on caring responsibilities inside or outside of the home: Percentage of working age adults (16 to 64) by impairment groups and work status[1]

					Great Britain
Percentage at Wave 3					
	0-19 hours	20-49 hours	50 hours or more	Varies - 20 hours or more	Sample size (number)
Working Age (16-64)					
Employed					
Adults with impairment at both waves	75	9	11	5	170
Offset	81	12	4	4	160
Onset-acquired	56	28	11	5	140
Adults with no impairment at both waves	80	9	7	4	530
Inactive					
Adults with impairment at both waves	51	18	22	9	240
Offset	64	11	20	6	80
Onset-acquired	61	12	20	7	90
Adults with no impairment at both waves	65	8	20	7	240

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Numbers of unemployed adults are too small to include
2. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number
3. Sample sizes have been rounded independently to the nearest 10

Table 3.8: Hours spent on caring responsibilities inside or outside of the home: Percentage of adults aged 65 and over, by impairment groups[1]

					Great Britain
Percentage at Wave 3					
	0-19 hours	20-49 hours	50 hours or more	Varies - 20 hours or more	Sample size (number)
Adults aged 65 and over					
Adults with impairment at both waves	61	12	18	10	240
Offset	69	10	15	6	80
Onset-acquired	60	13	18	9	110
Adults with no impairment at both waves	73	8	16	3	260

Source: Office For National Statistics

Notes:

1. Numbers of unemployed adults are too small to include
2. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number
3. Sample sizes have been rounded independently to the nearest 10

9. 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 or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gov.uk