

# New report adds heat to 'Leveling Up' debate by revealing England's most 'insecure' regions

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Accessing stable employment with fair pay and predictable hours is harder for workers in the North and Midlands, which can severely affect

their living standards, health, and future job prospects.

A new report published by the [Work Foundation at Lancaster University](#) reveals the regions with the highest and lowest levels of 'severely insecure' work (employment that is involuntarily temporary or [part-time](#), or when multiple forms of insecurity come together, such as casual or zero-hours contracts, or low or unpredictable pay).

The study focuses on the nine Mayoral Combined Authorities and Greater London where over a third of England's workforce—11 million workers—live. Of these workers, 2.2 million (19.4%) are in severely insecure work.

Analysis shows those in Tees Valley are most at risk of severely insecure employment, with levels of insecure work being 4.2 percentage points higher than the national average. This equates to one in four Tees Valley workers experiencing severely insecure work, compared with one in five workers nationally. The picture is even more stark in Middlesbrough, where nearly a third of workers (29.8%) are in severely insecure work—10 percentage points higher than the national average.

This is followed by workers in South Yorkshire, where insecure work is 1.9 percentage points higher than the national average, and the West Midlands, where the rate of insecure employment is 1.1 percentage points higher than the national average.

Researchers state that major Government intervention is required to reduce levels of insecure work nationally. Even if the rate of severely insecure work in England's four worst hotspots—Tees Valley, South Yorkshire, the West Midlands and North of Tyne—was reduced to the current national average (19.8%), this would only lift 40,000 people out of severely insecure work.

"Too often, past debates about Leveling Up or reducing regional inequalities have failed to recognize the damaging role that insecure work plays in the lives of millions of people in England," says Ben Harrison, Director of the Work Foundation. "The reality is, people in severely insecure work are paying the price of Government's failure to strengthen employment rights and protections during this Parliament, and this failure is also holding back wider Leveling Up ambitions."

While insecure jobs tend to be concentrated in sectors such as hospitality, [social care](#) and administrative services, the report finds that job security within these sectors differs wildly across the country—depending on the nature of activities undertaken within places and the wider productivity of the [region](#). For example, hospitality workers in the Liverpool City Region are less likely to face severe insecurity at work than those in the Tees Valley, in large part thanks to the scale and success of the sector on Merseyside in attracting a steady stream of major global events and wider investment.

Findings suggest workers who live in Liverpool are the least likely of the regions analyzed to be trapped in unstable [employment](#), with the rate of insecure work being one percentage point less than the national average. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region also performs comparatively well, with an insecure work rate that is 0.9 percentage points lower than the national average.

However, even within these regions, there are significant pockets of severely insecure work. For example, more than one in four workers in Peterborough local authority are in severely insecure work (25.9%) despite Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority averaging at 18.9%.

"Even in the regions that perform comparatively well, we need to see action to reduce severely insecure work," Ben Harrison continues. "We

know that those who face wider structural disadvantage in the labor market are more likely to find themselves in these kinds of jobs. Women, those with disabilities and those from ethnic minority backgrounds are often particularly at risk, leaving these [worker](#) groups even more vulnerable to the cost-of-living crisis.

"Fundamentally, we can't reduce inequality in England without tackling insecure work and improving access to well paid, secure jobs."

Among the report recommendations, the Work Foundation calls for Government to introduce an Employment Bill in the next Parliament that puts job quality and security at the heart of labor market regulation.

It also offers recommendations for improved access to predictable working patterns and improvements to Statutory Sick Pay, while calling on Government to support and work with Mayoral Combined Authorities and Greater London to explore how regions themselves can work towards reducing levels of insecure work in their area.

Provided by Lancaster University

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