

# SOUTH YORKSHIRE

CITY REGION EMPLOYMENT PROFILE | NOVEMBER 2023

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## SUMMARY

The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority has the fifth largest population of the nine English Combined Authorities at 1.37 million.<sup>1</sup> Its employment rate of 73.3% is two percentage points below the national average and its unemployment rate (4.7%) is higher than the English average (3.7%). Economic inactivity is higher in South Yorkshire (23%) than the rest of England (21.4%).<sup>2</sup> Workers in the region earn a weekly wage of £547 which is £83 lower than the English average wage.<sup>3</sup>

Over one in five workers in South Yorkshire are in severely insecure work (21.7%), which is two percentage points above the national average of 19.8%. South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority has the second highest levels of severely insecure work out of the nine English Combined Authorities.

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

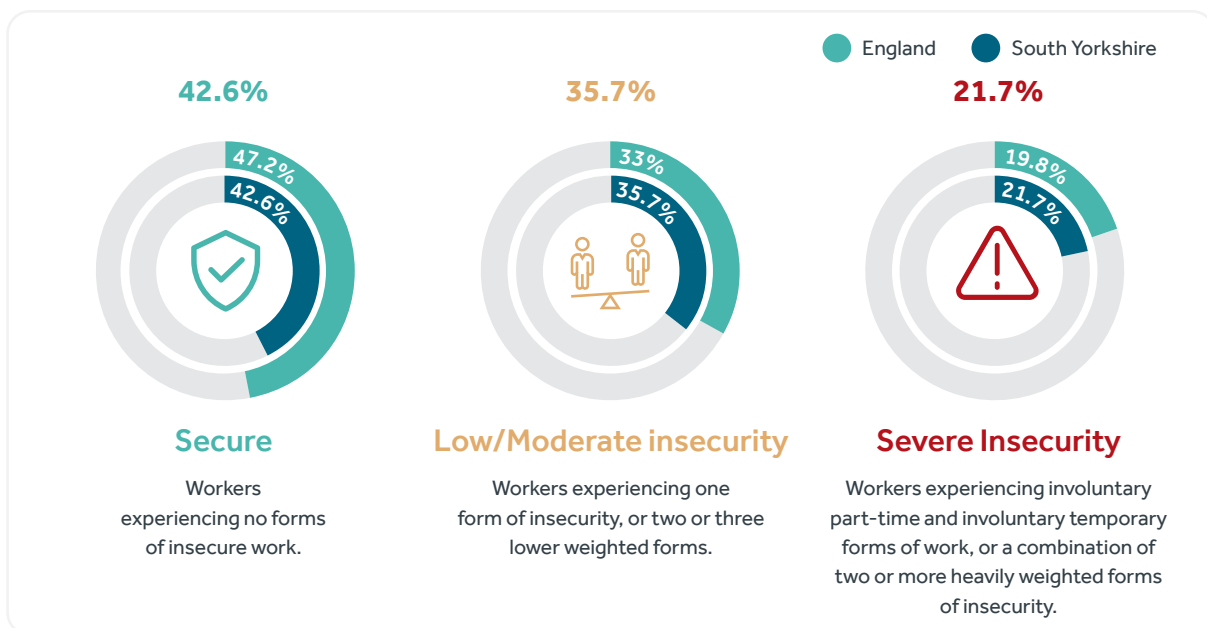
- contractual insecurity, where people are not guaranteed future hours or future work - such as jobs in the gig economy, zero contract work or part-time work
- financial insecurity, where people have unpredictable pay or their pay is simply too low to get by
- lack of access to employment rights and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

The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority has higher than average incidences of solo self-employed workers, involuntary temporary workers and workers with less than two years' service in a role.

Across the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, there is variation amongst the four local authorities. Barnsley is the hotspot in the city region for severely insecure work at 24.9%, which is over five percentage points higher than the national average. In Rotherham, 18.6% of workers are in severely insecure work, which is below the national average.

Analysis shows that women, disabled workers, workers from ethnic minority backgrounds and younger workers are more likely to be in severely insecure work than other workers in South Yorkshire. Workers from ethnic minority backgrounds are 1.8 times more likely than white workers to be in severely insecure work, which is higher than the national average.

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



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

1. ONS 2022, Population estimates-local authority based by five-year age band, 2021 data  
 2. ONS 2023, Annual Population Survey, January-December 2022  
 3. Centre for Cities South Yorkshire Factsheet: [South Yorkshire | Centre for Cities](#)

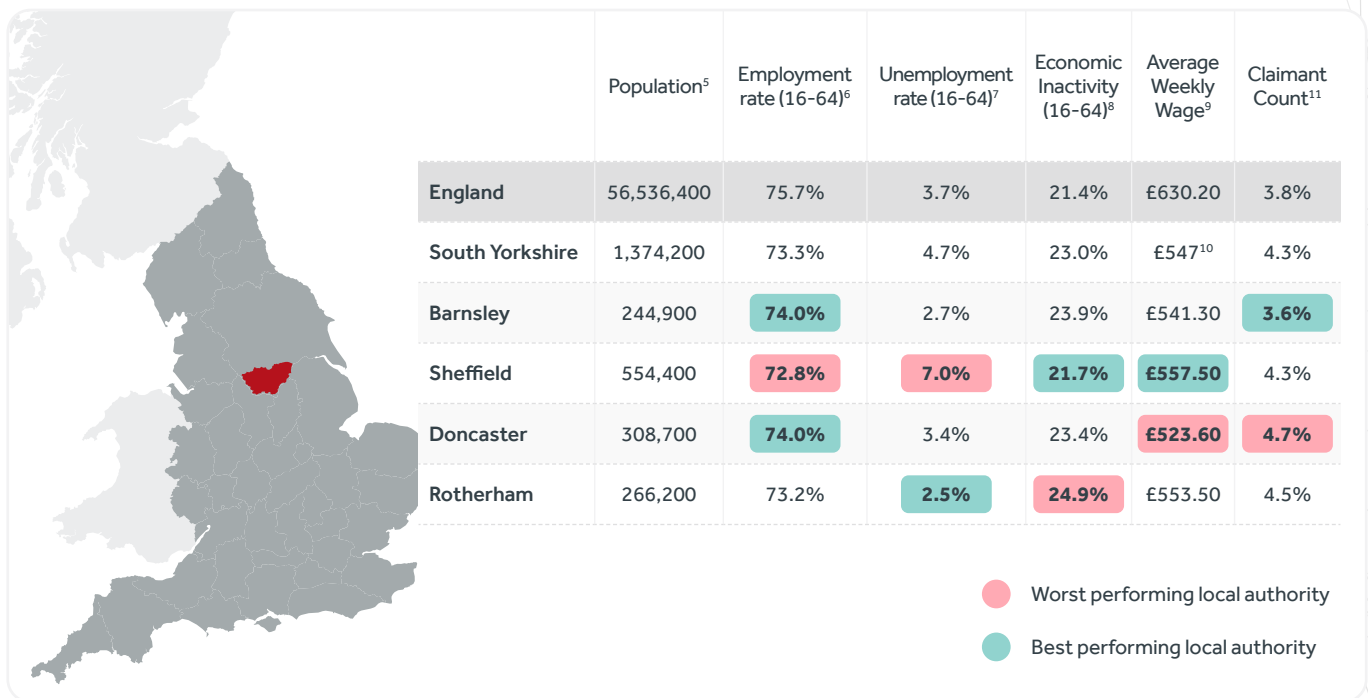
## 1. SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW

The Sheffield City Region Combined Authority was formed in April 2014 and it expanded to become the Sheffield City Regional Mayoral Combined Authority in 2018, comprising of nine local authorities. In 2021, it became the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and brings together four local authorities: Barnsley, Sheffield, Doncaster and Rotherham.

It has a population of 1,374,200 with a working age population of 866,100. The elected mayor, Oliver Coppard, came to office in May 2022, and has focussed on fixing public transport, improving the economy, achieving net zero and tackling health inequalities. Nearly a third of the jobs (31.9%) in the Combined Authority are publicly funded while 10.2% of jobs are high-skilled jobs in the private sector.<sup>4</sup> The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority economy has had an annual economic growth rate of 3.3% from 2001-2021, which is just below the English average (3.6%). Its unemployment rate is 4.7% which is one percentage point higher than the English average of 3.7% but Sheffield is an outlier at 7%. Employment levels are two percentage points lower than the national average, and all local authorities have higher than average levels of economic inactivity.

The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority has devolved powers for adult education but, unlike some other Combined Authorities, does not have powers for employment support.

Figure 2: South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority economy



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

4. Centre for Cities South Yorkshire Factsheet: [South Yorkshire | Centre for Cities](#)

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

6. ONS 2023, Annual Population Survey, resident analysis, January-December 2022.

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

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

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

10. Centre for Cities South Yorkshire Factsheet: [South Yorkshire | Centre for Cities](#)

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

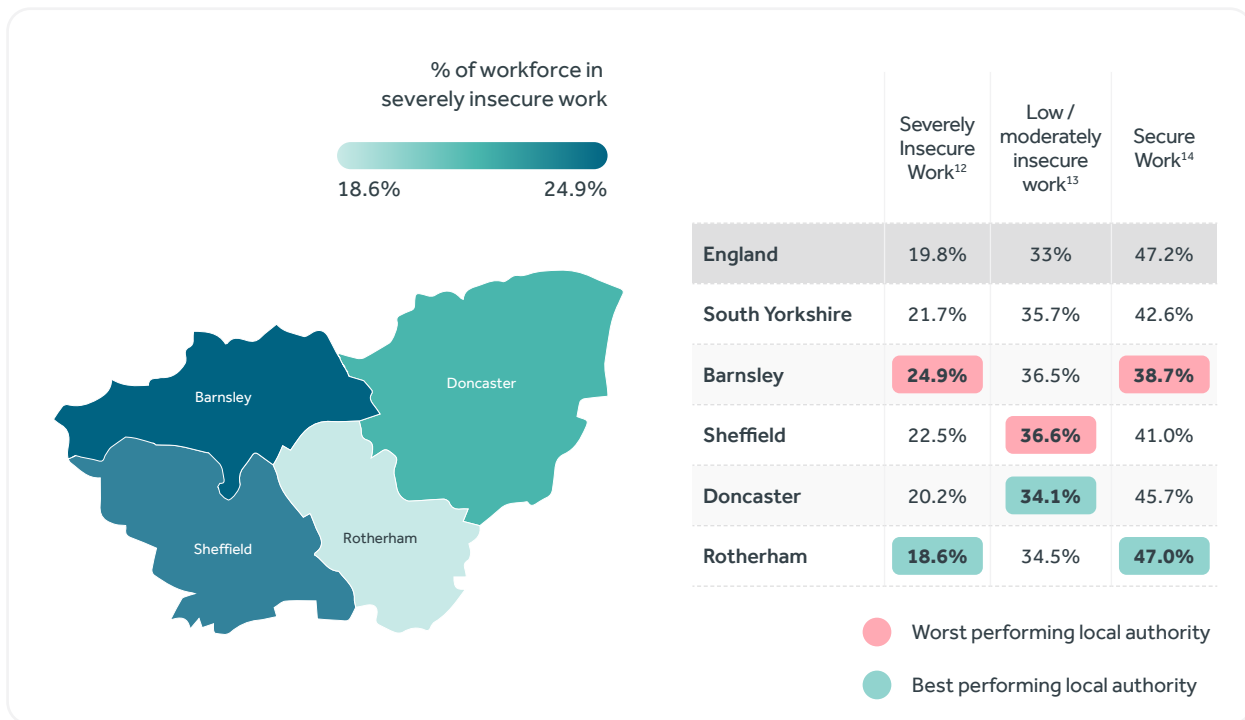
## 2. INSECURE WORK IN THE SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY

Between 2021-2022, we found that South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority was home to a comparatively higher number of solo self-employed workers, involuntary temporary workers and workers with less than two years' service in a role.

Just over one in five workers (21.7%) in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority are in severely insecure work, which is two percentage points above the English average. The Combined Authority has the second 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. Barnsley has the highest proportion of workers in severely insecure work at 24.9% – five percentage points above the national average. In Rotherham, 18.6% of workers are in severely insecure work, which is below the national average, and nearly half of workers (47%) are in secure work. However, it does have the highest level of economic inactivity in the region (24.9%) but a low level of unemployment (2.5%). Both Sheffield and Doncaster have above average rates of severely insecure work.

Figure 3: South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority labour market



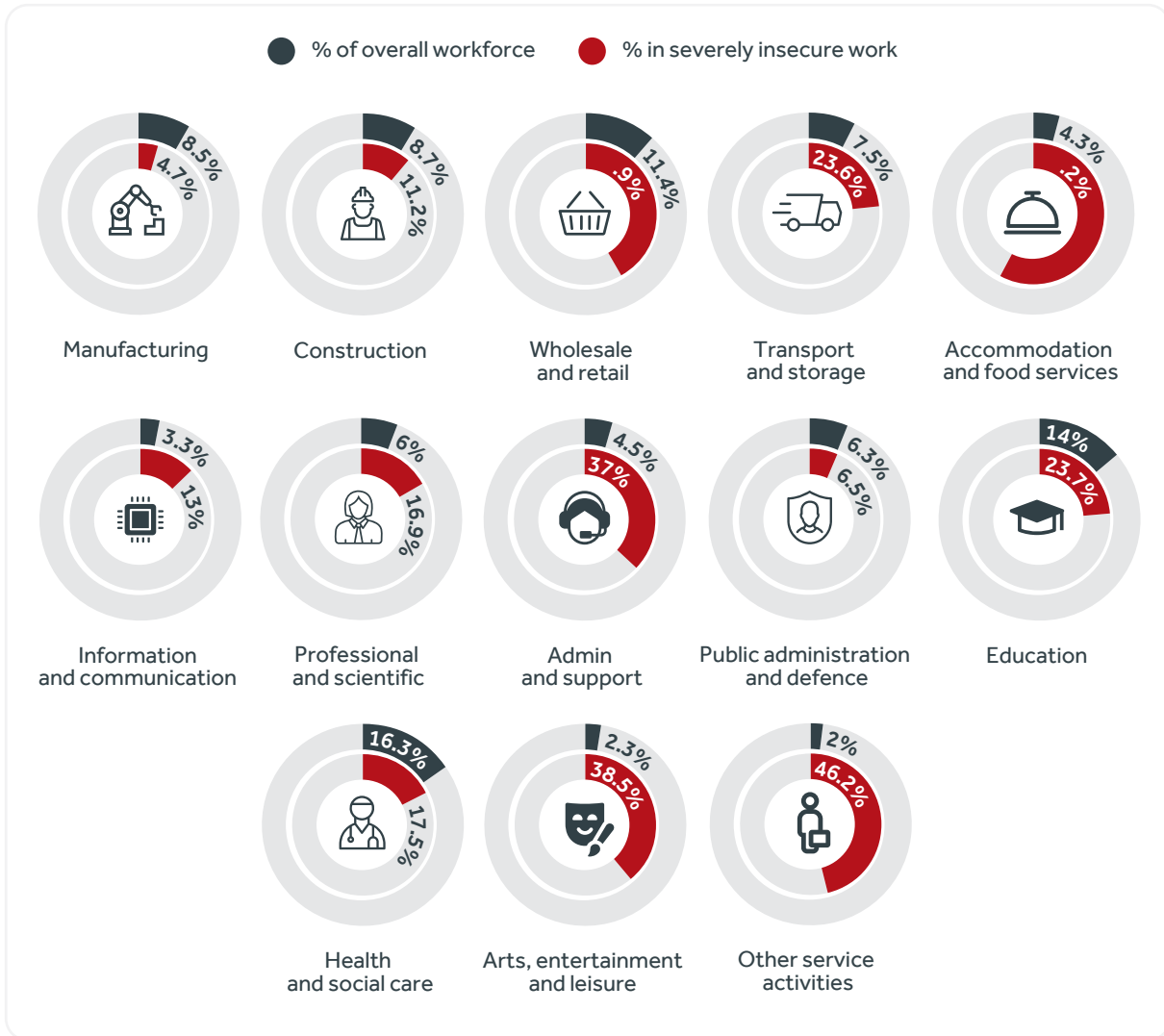
Map created with Datawrapper.

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

## Sectors

Insecure work in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority is driven by insecurity in the wholesale and retail sector. One in ten workers (11%) are employed in the wholesale and retail sector, with 42% of those workers in severely insecure roles. Severe insecurity is widespread in accommodation, arts, retail, admin and other services sectors, although these sectors only make up a quarter (25%) of the overall workforce.

Figure 4: Insecurity across sectors in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority

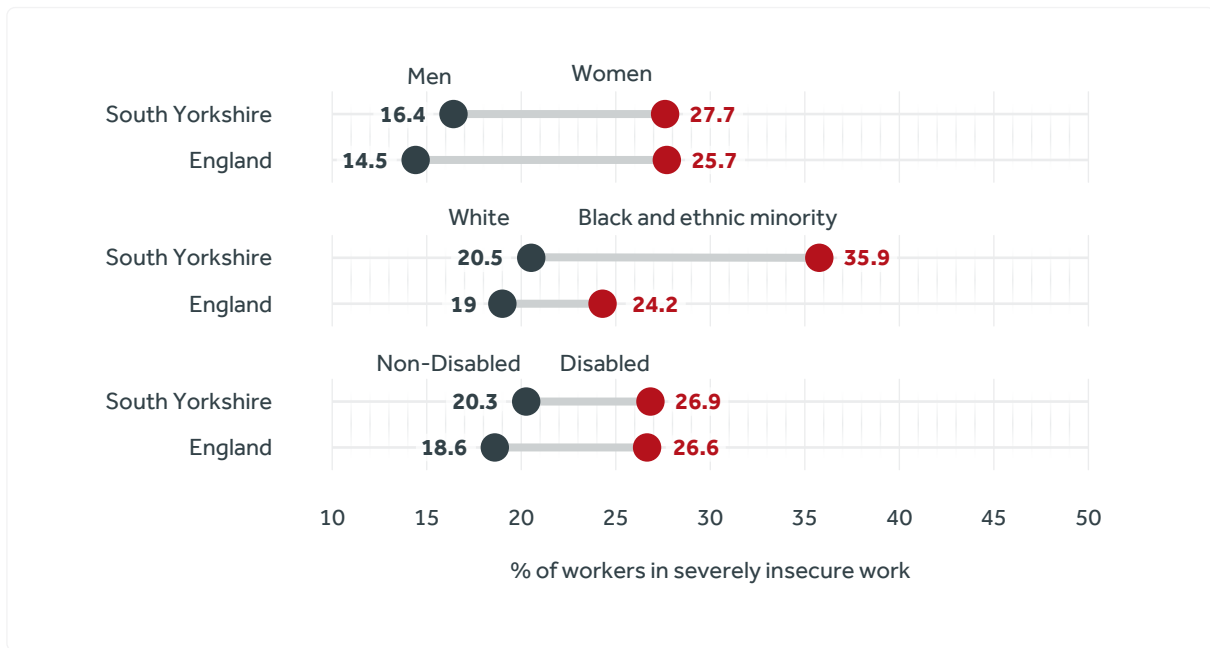


Source: Work Foundation calculations of the Office for National Statistics Labour Force Survey; 2021- 2022.

### The insecurity gap

Women in South Yorkshire are 1.7 times more likely to be in severely insecure work than men, which is just below the English average of 1.8 times. Compared with the average in England, there is a lower proportion of workers from a Black and ethnic minority background in the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (8% compared with 13.8%). Black and ethnic minority workers in South Yorkshire are 1.8 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 1.3 times more likely to be in severely insecure work than non-disabled workers, which is below the English average of 1.4 times.

Figure 5: The gender, ethnicity and disability insecurity gaps



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

In South Yorkshire, 43.6% of workers aged 16-24 are in severely insecure work, making them twice as likely to be in insecure work than older workers aged 50-65. Workers aged 25-34 are least likely to be in severely insecure work, with insecurity gradually increasing through older age cohorts this gradually increases through older worker bands.

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 South Yorkshire Mayoral 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

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### CITATION

If you are using this document in your own writing, our preferred citation is: Fitzmaurice, J., Navani, A. & Florisson, R. (2023). South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority 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](mailto:info@theworkfoundation.com).