
Professor Sir Ian Diamond | National StatisticianChi Onwurah MP
House of Commons
London
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09 February 2020

Dear Ms Onwurah,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking how many workers are classed as key workers in the latest period for which data is available; and how many workers were classed as key workers during the Covid-19 lockdown announced in (a) March 2020 and (b) November 2020 **(149756)**.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) provided estimates of people employed in key worker occupations and/or key worker industries based on an interpretation of UK government guidance, specifically the guidance concerning eligibility for childcare places during the first wave of the pandemic.

The definitions used by the ONS are indicative of the potential pool of those employed in each key worker occupation group. The guidance is intentionally broad, and it is for employers to decide who is a key worker. Some workers under this definition may be furloughed; this is not captured in this definition.

Estimates of employment are calculated from data gathered in the Labour Force Survey (LFS), a survey of people resident in households. The LFS is a rolling quarterly survey and as such, reports data for three-month periods. In answering your question, the key worker definition has been applied to the following datasets:

- March to May 2020 – covering the first lockdown.
- September to November 2020 – the most up-to-date data we have, also covering the November lockdown.

Table 1 below presents estimates of key workers for these two periods, broken down by key worker occupation groups. As they are based on a sample survey, these estimates should be treated with caution.

For more information on key workers, you may be interested in our original release¹, available on the ONS website.

Yours sincerely,

**Professor Sir Ian Diamond**

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/articles/coronavirusandkeyworkersintheuk/2020-05-15>

Table 1: Estimates of employment in key worker occupation groups, UK, March to May and September to November 2020, Not seasonally-adjusted²³

| Occupation Group | March to May 2020 | | | September to November 2020 | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Estimate | Lower Confidence Limit (LCL) | Upper Confidence Limit (UCL) | Estimate | LCL | UCL |
| Health & Social Care | 3,354,000 | 3,246,000 | 3,462,000 | 3,253,000 | 3,148,000 | 3,358,000 |
| Education & Childcare | 2,223,000 | 2,136,000 | 2,311,000 | 2,146,000 | 2,063,000 | 2,229,000 |
| Public Safety & National Security | 593,000 | 546,000 | 640,000 | 562,000 | 517,000 | 607,000 |
| Transport | 608,000 | 560,000 | 655,000 | 557,000 | 512,000 | 601,000 |
| Utilities & Communication | 1,717,000 | 1,636,000 | 1,798,000 | 1,844,000 | 1,761,000 | 1,927,000 |
| Food & Necessary Goods | 1,380,000 | 1,309,000 | 1,451,000 | 1,342,000 | 1,272,000 | 1,412,000 |
| Key Public Services | 606,000 | 558,000 | 653,000 | 650,000 | 602,000 | 698,000 |
| National & Local Government | 284,000 | 253,000 | 314,000 | 306,000 | 274,000 | 337,000 |
| Total | 10,765,000 | 10,569,000 | 10,961,000 | 10,659,000 | 10,467,000 | 10,851,000 |

Source: ONS

² All counts in this table are individually rounded to the nearest thousand. Totals may not add exactly due to this rounding.

³ We have also calculated confidence limits to give an indication of the precision of the estimates. For the two time periods considered, the estimates have overlapping confidence limits for all key worker occupation groups as well as for the totals. Differences between the estimates for the two time periods are therefore not considered to be statistically significant.