

## What is the current youth unemployment rate?

10% 30% 50% 70% (circle one only)

Widespread concern is repeatedly expressed at the level of youth unemployment. Politicians and public alike seem agreed that it is a more serious problem than adult unemployment. But there is very little knowledge, let alone agreement, about how serious a problem it is.

Part of the problem is the difficulty of definition. It is hard enough to decide who should count as an unemployed youth. Do you include those on training schemes? What about those who are 'parking' in school or college but looking for work? It is even more difficult to define what the base should be for turning the numbers unemployed into a rate; conceptually it should be the total potential labour force within the age-group but once again it is hard to operationalise this, to decide how to treat those in full-time education and so forth.

The data sources for the economic activities of young people are also of very uneven quality. While data on educational participation rates among the 16-19 age group is quite good, data on the numbers unemployed is less satisfactory - the fullest data only relates to unemployed claimants, who are a subset of those seeking work - and information about young people in work or on schemes is extremely thin.

David Raffe, at the Centre for Educational Sociology at the University of Edinburgh, has written a briefing document for the ILO in which he summarises the various statistical estimates of youth unemployment in the UK 1979-1984. With the kind consent of the ILO, we reproduce here his summary of the rate of youth unemployment estimated from various available sources, according to four different definitions of the youth unemployment rate. The last definition includes those on schemes in with the unemployed, and presents them as a percentage of all the economically active in the age group. Estimates of the unemployment rate by this definition are staggeringly high, in 1984 ranging from 39% to 68%. These figures deserve to be more widely known.

Estimated Youth Unemployment Rates, 1979-1984

Source	Date	Scope	Age Group	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
<u>Unemployed as % of age group</u>									
DE1	(January)	GB	under 18	6.1	5.8	10.2	11.9	x11.9	11.2
			18 - 19	7.8	7.7	12.9	16.5	x19.2	20.3
			under 20	6.9	6.8	11.6	14.2	x15.6	15.9
DES1	January	E & W	16	7.4	7.1	13.8	14.2		
			16 - 18	8.1	7.7	13.8	16.7		
DES2	January	GB	16	6.2	5.8	12.0	12.3	x14.1	12.7
			16 - 18	7.4	7.1	12.6	15.2	x16.8	16.9
LFS	April-June	GB	16 - 18	5.5		X15.0		x18	
SSLS	March-April	Sc	SLs	6.8		11.9		13.8	12.0
<u>Unemployed and schemes as % of age group</u>									
DE2	(January)	GB	under 20	9.0	9.0	15.6	19.6	x22.7	23.5
DES1	January	E & W	16	11.0	10.9	21.1	23.9		
			16 - 18	10.9	10.7	19.2	23.9		
DES2	January	GB	16	11.4	11.5	22.4	26.1	x32.8	37.4
			16 - 18	10.1	10.1	18.0	22.4	x26.2	27.0
SSLS	March-April	Sc	SLs	12.5		24.7		31.3	33.8
<u>Unemployed as % of employed and unemployed</u>									
DE3	January	UK	under 18	13.5	13.1	21.7	25.2	x25.8	24.5
			18 - 19	10.8	10.9	18.1	22.8	x26.1	27.0
DES1	January	E & W	16	13.4	13.1	28.3	33.4		
			16 - 18	11.8	11.2	21.0	27.2		
DES2	January	GB	16	11.7	11.2	23.6	31.8	x43.0	41.9
			16 - 18	10.7	10.3	19.3	24.8	x29.0	28.6
LFS	April-June	GB	16 - 19	8.9		X22.9		x27	
GHS	Annual Average	GB	16 - 17	14.8	19.4	27.8			
			18 - 19	9.6	13.8	19.5			
			16 - 19	11.9	16.2	22.6			
SSLS	March-April	Sc	SLs	10.0		19.7		27.9	26.8
<u>Unemployed and schemes as % of employed and unemployed and schemes</u>									
DES1	January	E & W	16	18.8	18.7	37.6	45.9		
			16 - 18	15.2	14.8	27.1	34.9		
DES2	January	GB	16	19.5	19.8	39.8	49.8	x63.7	68.0
			16 - 18	14.1	14.0	25.5	32.7	x39.0	39.1
SSLS	March-April	Sc	SLs	17.0		33.8		46.7	50.8

Note:

Definitions of unemployment, employment, etc, vary between sources: see accompanying notes on sources. All estimates are subject to rounding error. Major discontinuities in series are indicated by "x".

### Sources

DE1: based on published unemployment figures (1979-1982: registrants; 1983-1984: claimants) and provisional population estimates. The unemployment figures refer to January, the population figures to June: no adjustment has been made to allow for this seasonal difference.

DE2: calculated as for DE1 with the addition of estimates for the numbers on YOP or YTS schemes in January.

DE3: estimated unemployment rates prepared by the Department of Employment. The numerator is the January unemployment count by age; it is expressed as a percentage of unemployment plus employment, the latter being obtained by applying age breakdowns from the Labour Force Survey to figures for the total number of employees in employment, with adjustments to allow for seasonal patterns and the years between Labour Force Surveys (see "Unemployment rates by age", Employment Gazette, September 1983, p 411). The employment estimates are unreliable, partly because of the assumptions involved in interpolation and adjustment, and partly because of the weaknesses of the Labour Force Survey data (see below).

DES1: based on estimates of the educational and economic activity of the age group, published in DES (1983). These use data from several official sources, including: DES statistics of students in full-time education; DE figures for registered unemployment, combined with DHSS age details and LFS estimates of unregistered unemployment; and MSC figures on YOP trainees. Estimates of employment are residuals and probably subject to the widest margin of error. Age groups are defined as at 31 August of the previous year.

DES2: based on estimates published in DES (1985). These differ from DES1 in several respects, including: the wider coverage (Great Britain); unemployment figures include only registered (to 1982) or claimant (from 1983); the employment figures, being residuals, therefore include all other unemployed.

GHS: the General Household Survey. Based on households, this does not provide satisfactory population estimates, but since little proxy interviewing is used, the quality of data is likely to be high (compare LFS below). Unregistered unemployment is included. Sample numbers are relatively small for finer age divisions (lowest base n in the table is 443). The data are supplied by Joan Payne: see also Payne (1985).

LFS: based on published tables from the EEC Labour Force Survey. For 1979 and 1981 full-time students are excluded from the economically active; in 1983 they may be recorded as employed, unemployed (seeking work) or neither. The data are further affected by their restriction to residents in private households (making estimates based on the population unreliable) and by the substantial use of proxy interviewing, which may have particularly affected young people, and which probably resulted in some confusion of special employment measures with employment. Unregistered unemployment is included.

SSLS: based on self-reports of a sample of the previous summer's school leavers (of all ages) in a postal survey (the Scottish School Leavers Survey). The occupational and industrial composition of employment in Scotland is broadly comparable to that in the rest of the UK. The 1984 estimates are based on relatively small sample numbers (lowest base n in the table is 642); sample numbers for earlier years are several times larger. From Table 1 of Raffe (forthcoming).