

# Economic Activity Summary Bulletin for Shropshire

March 2023

## Key Points

- The number of people in Shropshire who are economically active has fallen slightly since 2011, despite overall population growth. The ageing population and economic circumstances at the time of the Census have undoubtedly influenced the trend.
- Traditionally, Shropshire has enjoyed high levels of participation in the labour market, especially amongst the 16-64 population. Considering the total 16+ population, fewer Shropshire residents are now economically active than the national average, which reverses the 2011 situation.
- Levels of economic activity overall have also been impacted by the significant decline in full-time students who were classed as economically active between 2011 and 2021 (and corresponding increase in student population which is inactive); this is likely to have arisen as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, when casual workers and those with zero hour contracts were less likely to be beneficiaries of Government schemes such as the CJRS (Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme), and as such may represent a temporary decline.
- Lower levels of economic activity also translates into a largely stagnant number of people who are employed. Although growth has been low, the number of people in employment in the West Midlands and England has increased, which has not been the case in Shropshire.
- Shropshire continues to support very high levels of self-employment, especially in rural parts of the county.
- Unemployment was lower in 2021 than in 2011, both regionally and nationally as well as in Shropshire. This notwithstanding, rates were still elevated in 2021 as a result of the national restrictions adopted as a result of the pandemic. The difference in unemployment rates in 2021 and 2011 highlights the exceptionally high level of unemployment that was still in evidence in 2011 following the economic downturn in 2008.

*Prepared by the Business Improvement: Data, Analysis and Intelligence – Resources Directorate*



## Economic Activity Numbers & Rates

The number of economically active people in Shropshire declined by 2,539 people (-1.6%) between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses despite growth of 7.6% in the 16+ population. Nationally, the 16+ population rose by a similar amount (+7.0%), but the economically active population also rose, albeit at a much slower pace than population growth (+1.3%). A more rapidly ageing population in Shropshire than in the West Midlands or England has been a main factor squeezing the labour market in Shropshire although everywhere has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated impacts on the labour market.

However, there has also been a very sizeable decrease in the number of full-time students who are classed as economically active – that is working or looking for work. There were 3,899 full-time students in Shropshire in 2021 who were economically active. This represents a significant decline compared with 2011. The number of economically active students also fell in England and in the West Midland but slightly less rapidly. The student cohort may have been more adversely affected by the pandemic than their non-student counterparts, so the downturn in the number of students who work or who are seeking work may be temporary.

### Number of Economically Active People

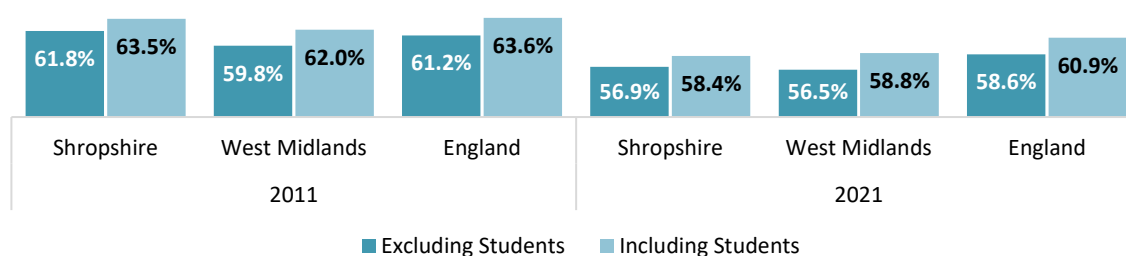
	16+ Population			Economically Active Population		
	2011	2021	% change	2011	2021	% change
Shropshire	252,979	272,245	+7.6%	161,449	158,910	-1.6%
<i>of which students</i>	14,033	13,586	-3.2%	5,232	3,899	-25.5%
West Midlands	4,507,405	4,801,331	+6.5%	2,828,200	2,823,816	-0.2%
<i>of which students</i>	376,668	393,810	+4.6%	134,021	113,221	-15.5%
England	42,989,620	46,006,957	+7.0%	27,650,097	28,001,502	+1.3%
<i>of which students</i>	3,600,808	3,651,703	+1.4%	1,337,827	1,056,250	-21.0%

Note: Full-time students only

Historically, Shropshire has had higher levels of economic activity than the West Midlands and England, especially amongst the working age population. Considering the total adult (16+) population, the size of the labour force has traditionally been more aligned to the national average, with the higher proportion of the population which is above retirement age counterbalancing high participation in the labour market amongst 16–64-year-old adults.

There has been a notable change in recent years as levels of economic activity has dipped and while this has been more acute in Shropshire the rate has declined regionally and nationally as well.

### Economic Activity Rates, 16+ Population, 2011 & 2021

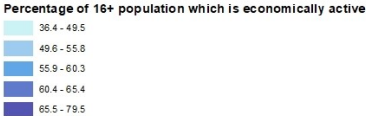
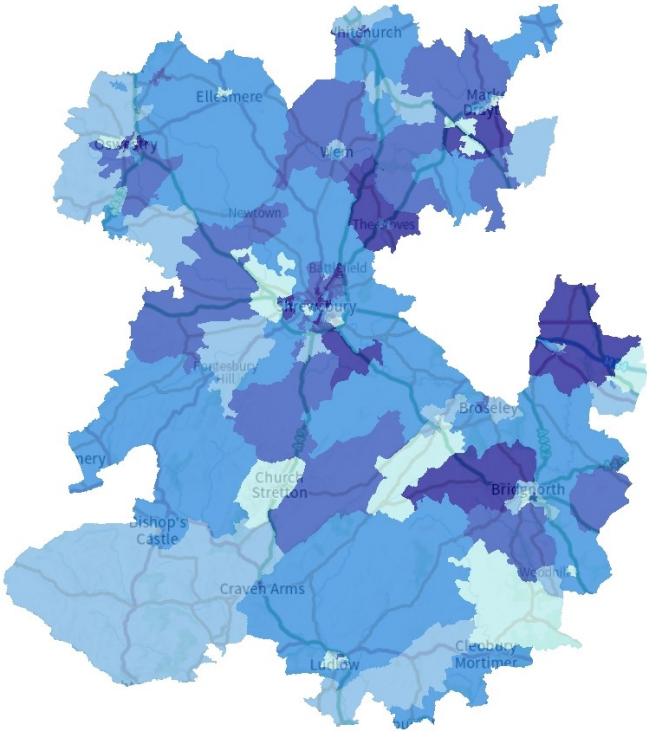


### Economic Activity Rates by LSOA

Economic activity rates vary across Shropshire, as shown in the adjacent map. Rates range from 36.4% of the 16+ population to 79.5%.

Typically, they are lowest in rural areas, especially in the South and South West of Shropshire, where the population is older and more people are retired.

In contrast, labour market participation is higher in the key market towns, especially in Shrewsbury, Oswestry and in the east of the county.



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### Composition of the Economically Active Population

Most economically active people are in employment. Almost a fifth of employment is represented by self-employment in Shropshire. This is notably higher than in either the West Midlands or England. The unemployment rate is lower in Shropshire than in the West Midlands or England but was lower in all three geographies in 2021 than in 2011 despite the pandemic and national lockdown.

### Breakdown of Economic Activity, 2021



## Numbers in Employment and Employment Rate

There were 152,422 people aged 16 and above in employment at the time of the 2021 Census. This represents a minimal increase of 113 since 2011 (+0.1%), which is notably lower than in the West Midlands or England. Again, the ageing population in Shropshire is pushing employment growth down but the main influence on stagnant employment has been the stark reduction in full-time students who work. This has occurred not just in Shropshire but across the region and country as well and indicates that this population segment was particularly badly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

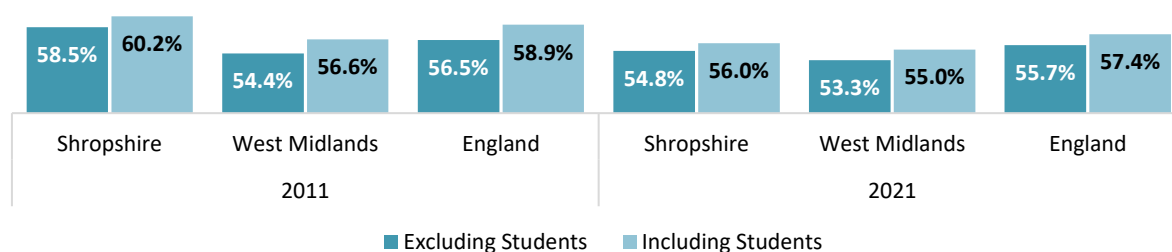
### Number of Employed People

	16+ Population			Employed Population		
	2011	2021	% change	2011	2021	% change
Shropshire	252,979	272,245	+7.6%	152,309	152,422	+0.1%
<i>Of which students</i>	<i>14,033</i>	<i>13,586</i>	<i>-3.2%</i>	<i>4,347</i>	<i>3,154</i>	<i>-27.1%</i>
West Midlands	4,507,405	4,801,331	+6.5%	2,551,312	2,638,889	+3.4%
<i>Of which students</i>	<i>376,668</i>	<i>393,810</i>	<i>+4.6%</i>	<i>99,434</i>	<i>80,973</i>	<i>-18.6%</i>
England	42,989,620	46,006,957	+7.0%	25,308,888	26,405,214	+4.3%
<i>Of which students</i>	<i>3,600,808</i>	<i>3,651,703</i>	<i>+1.4</i>	<i>1,020,103</i>	<i>772,691</i>	<i>-24.3%</i>

Note: Full-time students only

As with economic activity, historically, Shropshire has had high levels of employment. In 2011, the employment rate amongst the 16+ population cohort was higher than in England or the West Midlands. By 2021, the rate in Shropshire had fallen slightly below the national average. Disproportionately high growth in the 65+ population is pushing down the number of people in employment as was the decline in the student population which was in work.

### Employment Rates, 16+ Population, 2011 & 2021

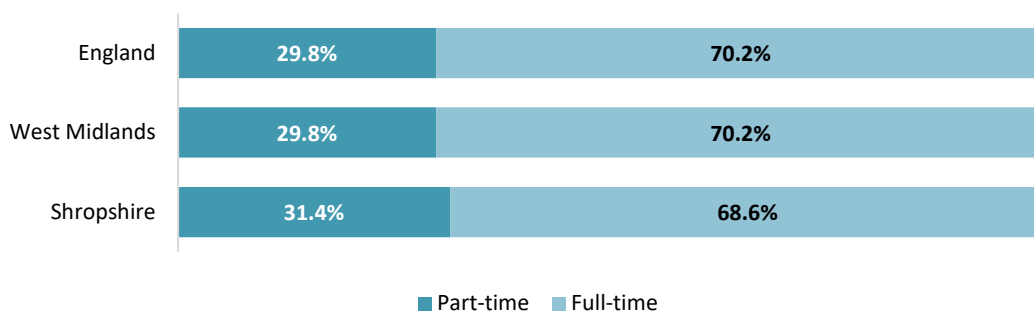


### Employment by Type

Most people in employment work on a full-time basis, but around three in ten work part-time. Part-time employment is very slightly higher in Shropshire than in the West Midlands. The self-employed are more likely to be part-time than employees (except those that have employees), and there are relatively few full-time students that work full-time.



## Breakdown of Employment by Type, 2021



## Numbers Unemployed and Unemployment Rate

There were 6,488 people aged 16 and above who were unemployed at the time of the 2021 Census. This represents a decrease of 1,767 since 2011 (-21.4%). This rate of decline is replicated across the region and nationally and reflects the fact that the country was in the aftermath of recession in 2011. Despite the 2021 Census taking place during an international pandemic, Government measures to protect businesses and employees such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) meant that while unemployment inevitably rose, rates did not hit the levels sustained during the period following the 2008 economic downturn.

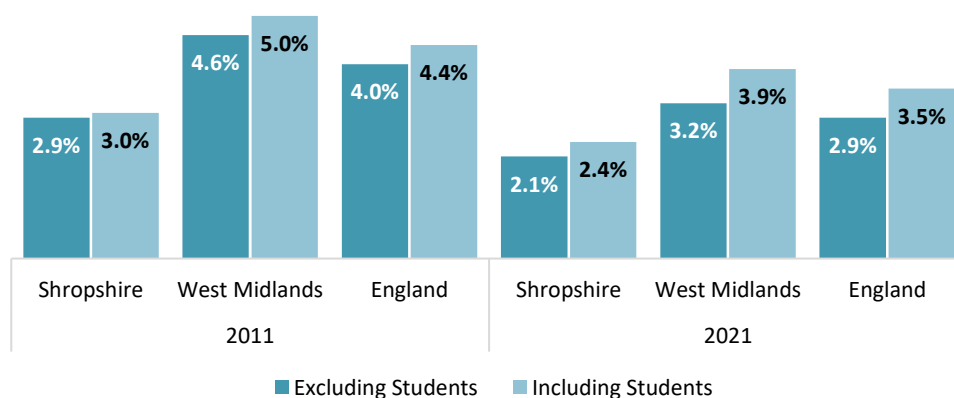
### Number of Unemployed People

	16+ Population			Unemployed Population		
	2011	2021	% change	2011	2021	% change
Shropshire	252,979	272,245	+7.6%	8,255	6,488	-21.4%
<i>Of which students</i>	14,033	13,586	-3.2%	885	745	-15.8%
West Midlands	4,507,405	4,801,331	+6.5%	242,301	184,927	-23.7%
<i>Of which students</i>	376,668	393,810	+4.6%	34,587	32,284	-6.7%
England	42,989,620	46,006,957	+7.0%	2,023,485	1,596,288	-21.2%
<i>Of which students</i>	3,600,808	3,651,703	+1.4	317,724	283,559	-10.8%

Note: Full-time students only

The level of unemployment is comparatively low in Shropshire, at 2.4% of the 16+ population in 2021 (2.1% excluding students). Students accounted for just over a tenth of overall unemployment.

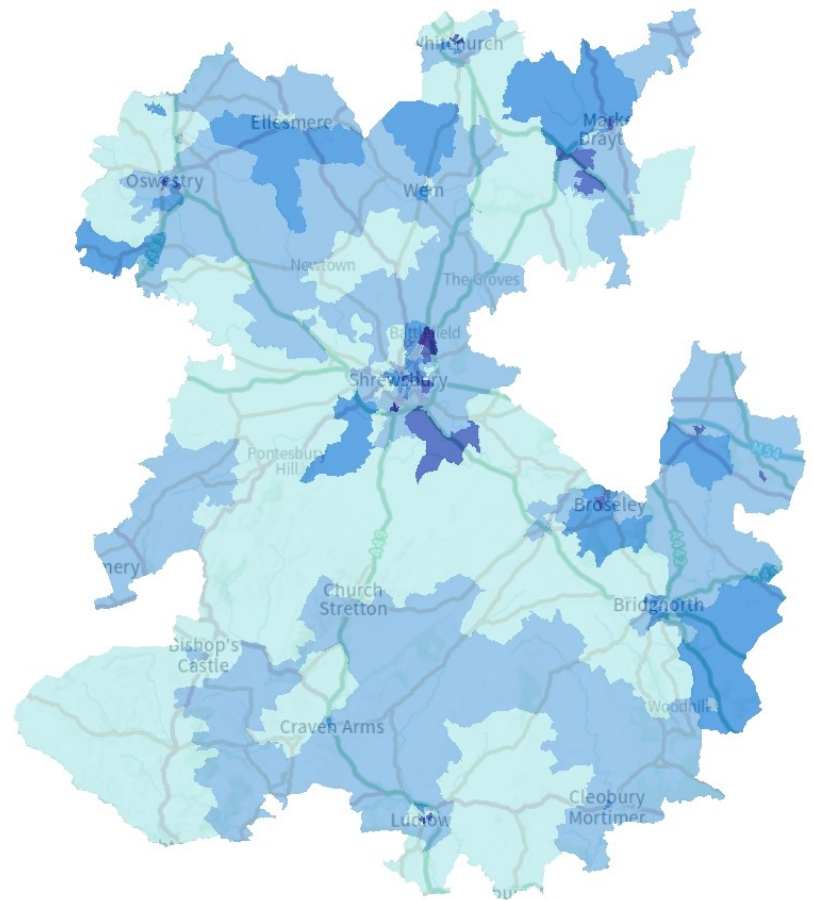
## Unemployment Rates, 16+ Population, 2011 & 2021



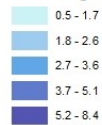
Rates of unemployment are generally higher in Shropshire's main towns, and lower in the more rural locations, particularly in the South and South West.

Across Shropshire, rates as of Census day ranged from 0.5% to 8.4%. There are six LSOAs (lower level super output areas) where unemployment is less than 1% of the population, all of which are outside the main market towns. In contrast, of the five LSOAs where the unemployment rate is more than 5%, four are in Shrewsbury and the other in Oswestry.

## Unemployment Rates by LSOA



Percentage of 16+ population which is unemployed



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## Definitions

There are three main types of economic activity status:

- economically active: in employment (an employee or self-employed)
- economically active: unemployed (those who were looking for work and could start within two weeks, or waiting to start a job that had been offered and accepted)
- economically inactive (those who did not have a job between 15 March and 21 March 2021 and had not looked for work between 22 February and 21 March 2021 or could not start work within two weeks)

Full-time students who either work, or are looking for work, are classified as economically active.

The economically active population includes people who were put on furlough at the time of Census 2021, who were considered to be temporarily away from work.

The data in this bulletin have been extracted from 2021 Census table TS066 and from 2011 Census DC620 EW

For more information please contact: [BusinessIntelligence@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:BusinessIntelligence@shropshire.gov.uk)

Or refer to ONS website:

[Labour market and travel to work: Census 2021 in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

