



# SUFFOLK ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS UPDATE

December 2024

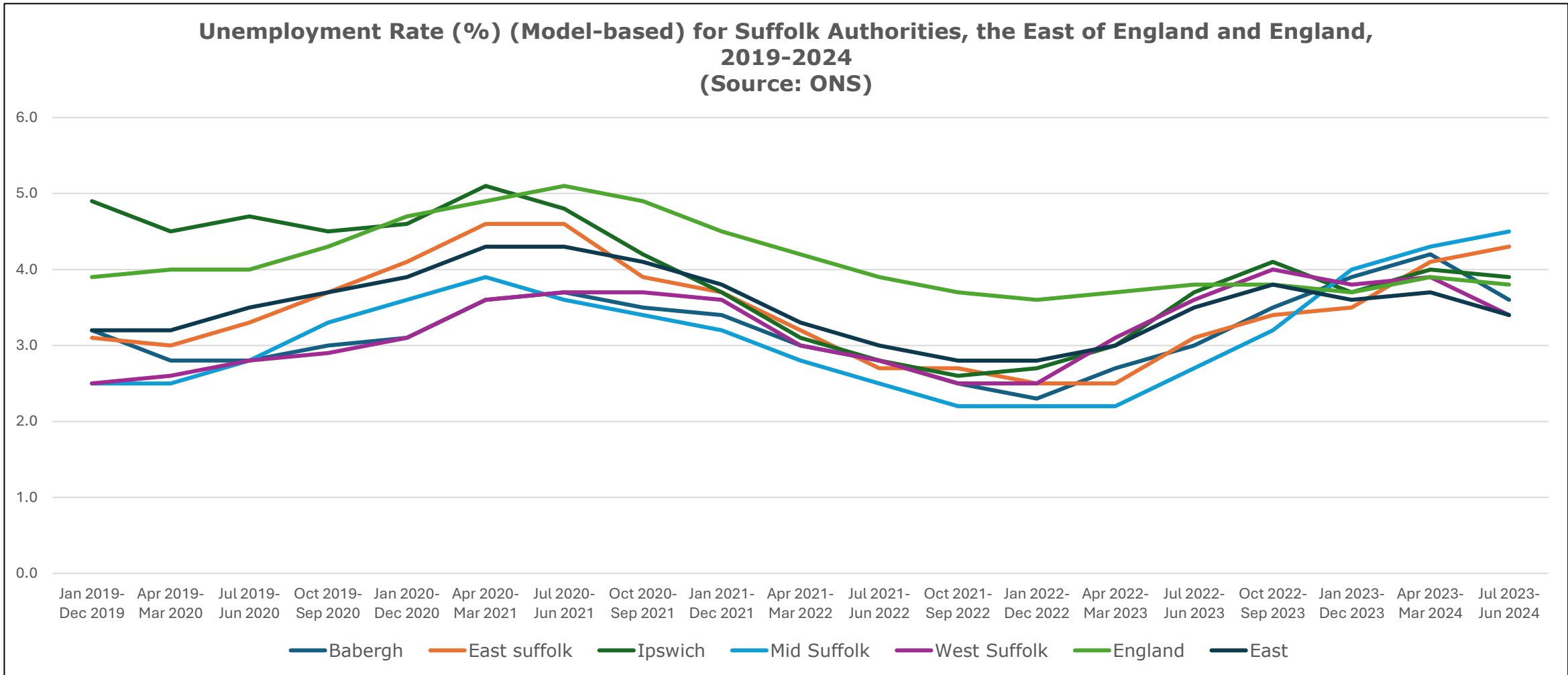
Annabel Bradley, SODA Senior Analyst & Researcher

# Data Quality: Words of Caution

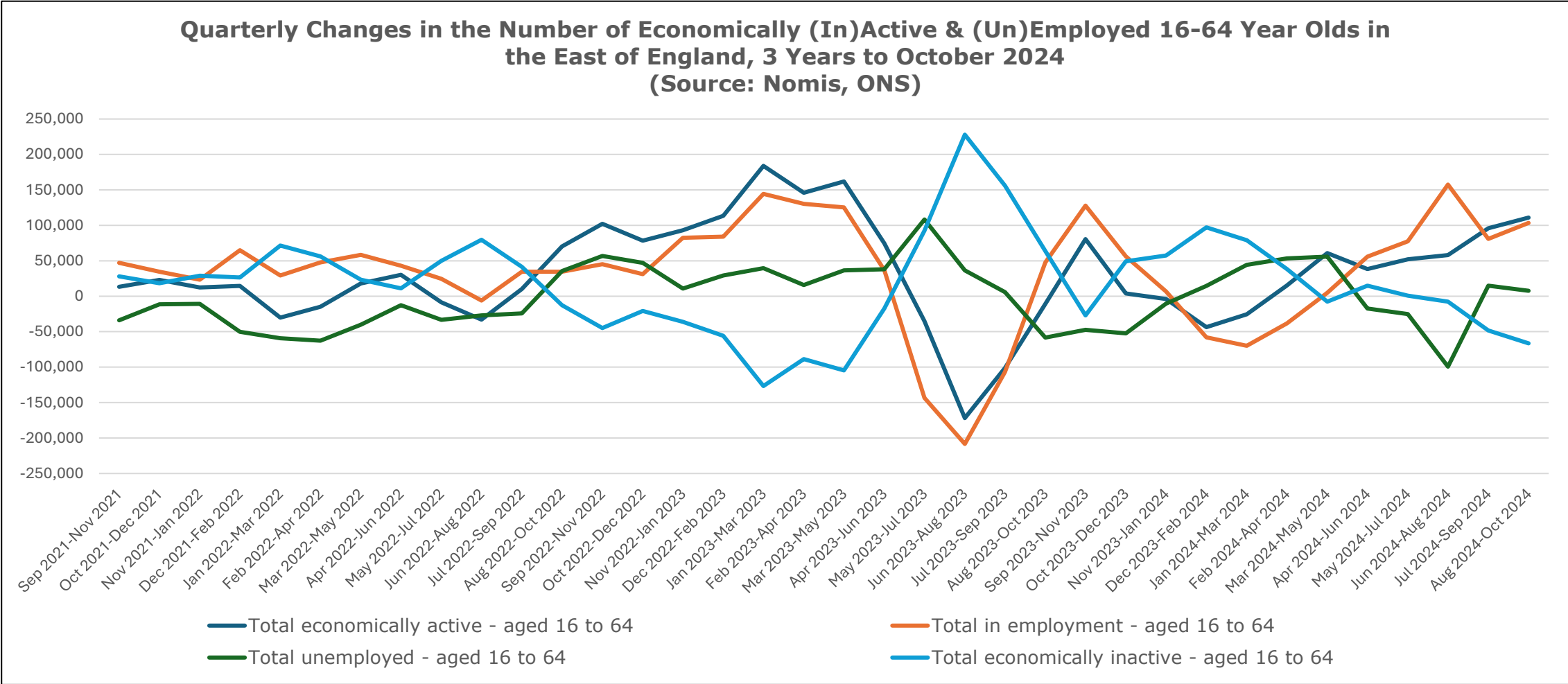
- The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is the largest household study in the UK and has provided the official measures of employment and unemployment to date. However, there have been substantially fewer responses to the LFS in recent years, leading to subsequent volatility of estimates, including those for unemployment and economic activity. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has reweighted the LFS and sourced additional data but still advises caution when interpreting official data with a labour-force component, particularly when making comparisons with levels prior to June 2022.
- The way in which the UK labour market is measured needs to change. The market has changed post-Covid with shifts in employment structures, hybrid working and an increase in long-term sickness. There is therefore all the more reason to draw conclusions about labour market trends only after looking at a series of indicators rather than unemployment rates in isolation.



Model-based figures for the year to June 2024 would suggest a possible end to the continued rise in unemployment since 2022 in West Suffolk , Ipswich and Babergh and better alignment with the unemployment figure for the East of England (3.4% July 2023-June 2024) and lower than the national rate (3.8%). However, Mid-Suffolk and East Suffolk are continuing to see unemployment rate increases (4.5% and 4.4% respectively in June 2024).

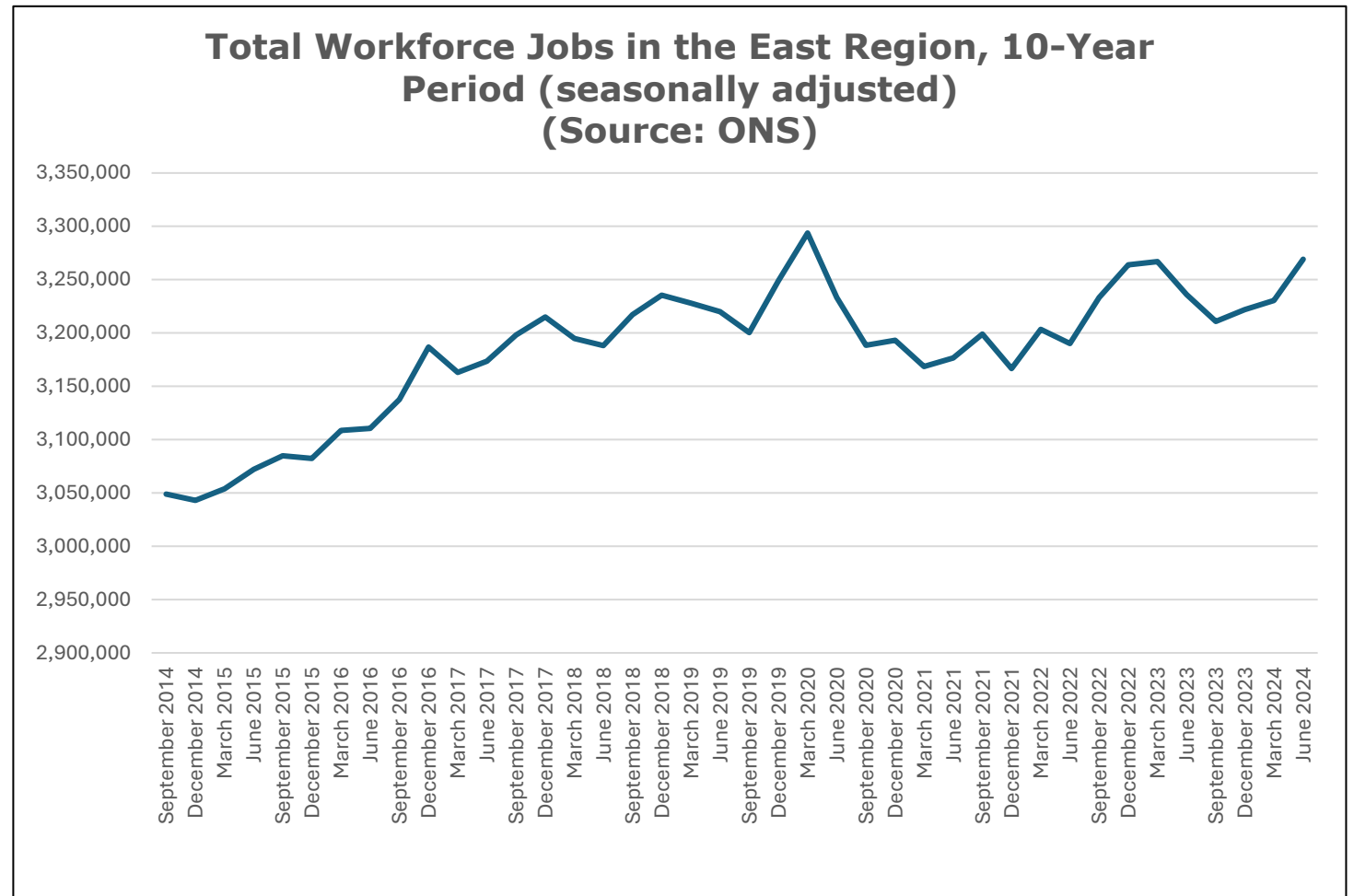


There has been a steady reduction in the number of economically inactive 16-64 year olds in the East of England since March 2024 and an upward trend in employment for the economically active since the start of 2024.

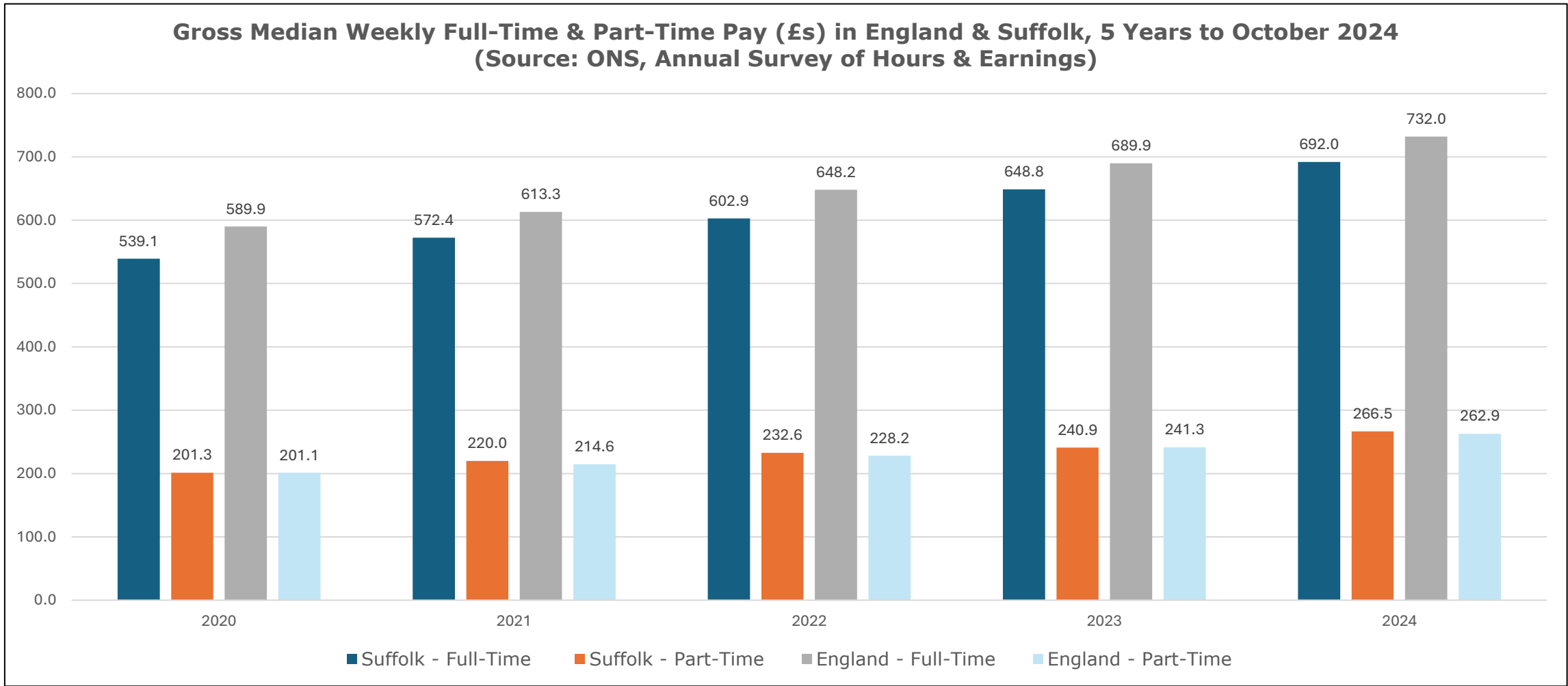


This upturn in the number of economically active in the East of England is supported by data on Workforce Jobs.

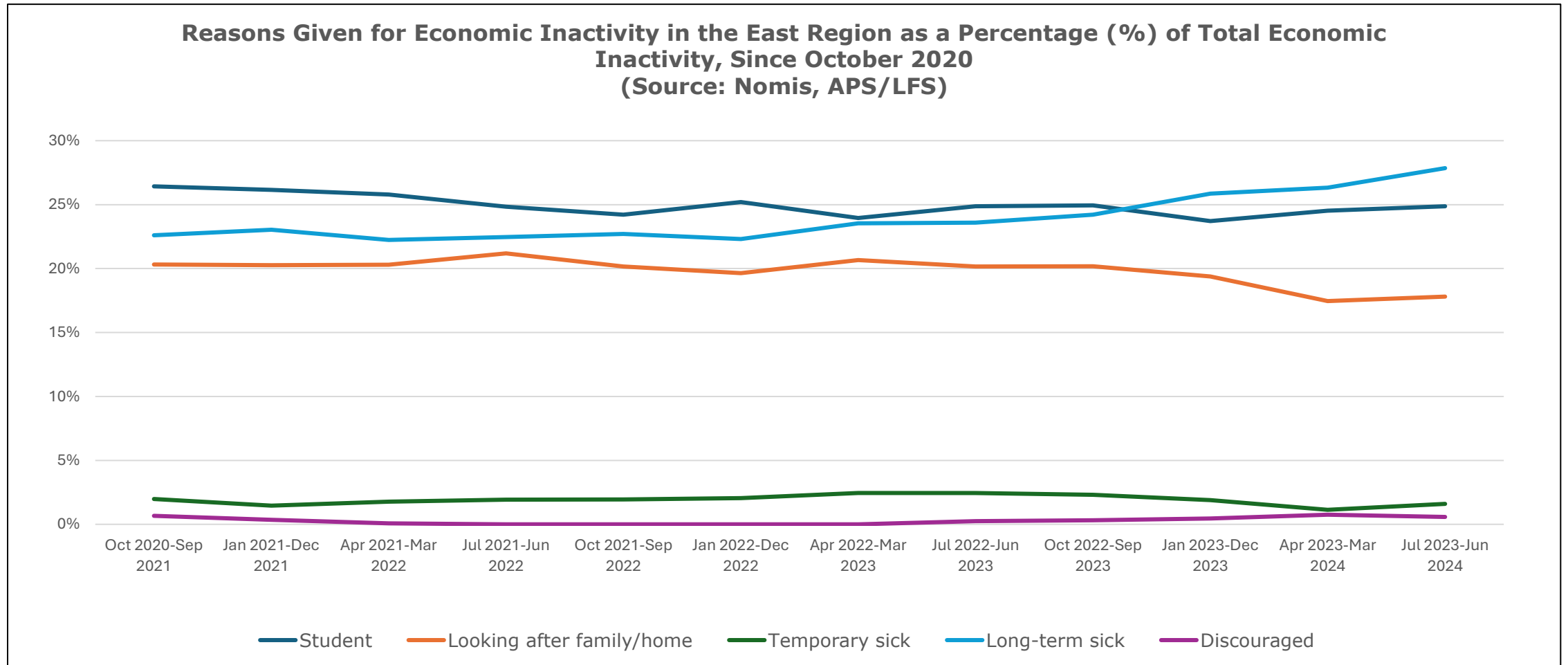
Workforce jobs (WFJ) is a quarterly measure of the number of jobs in the UK and is the preferred measure of the change in jobs by industry. It is a compound source that draws on a range of employer surveys, household surveys and administrative sources. Third quarter figures for 2023 are not available from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the WFJ is not available at County level but the picture for the East does suggest an uptick in the labour market.



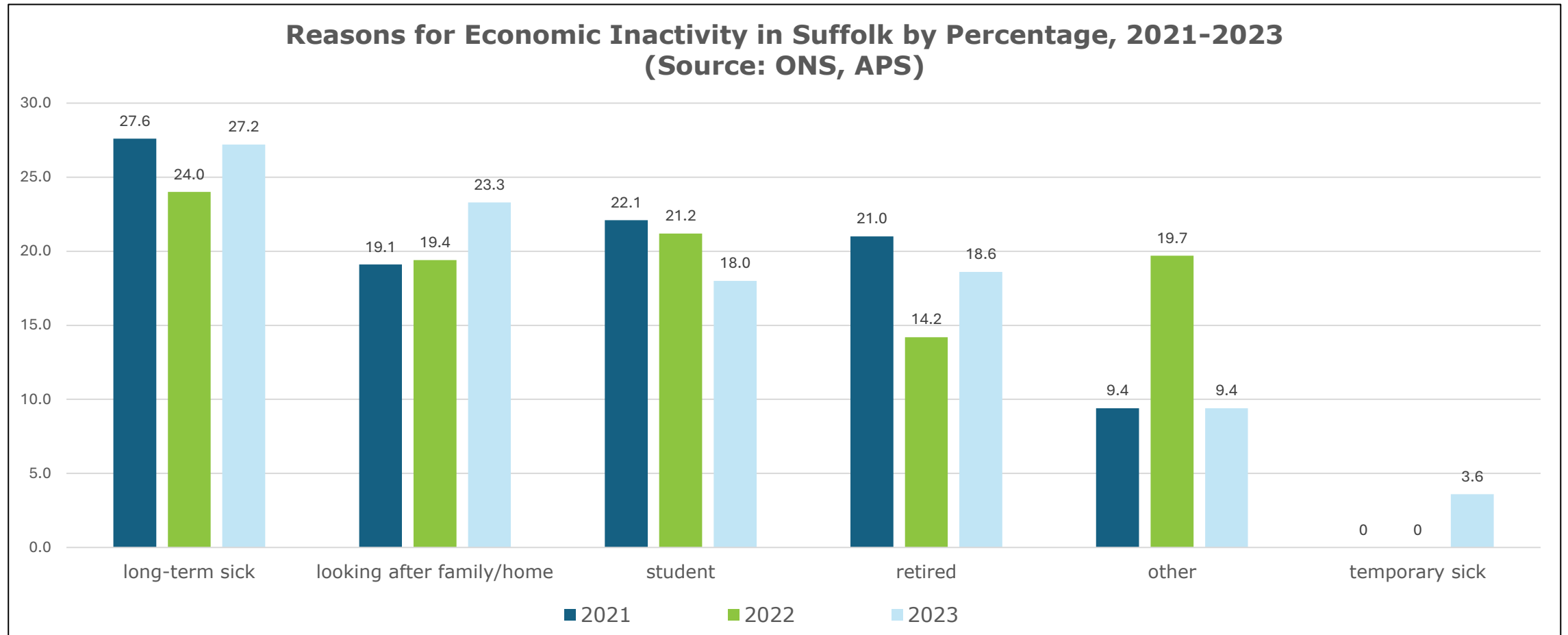
The median gross weekly wage in Suffolk continues to remain below that of the UK for full-time workers, but in the 12 months to October 2024, the gross part-time weekly wage in Suffolk (£266) again overtook that of the UK (£263).



Economic inactivity in the East of England is fuelled by the number of students and those with long-term sickness. The proportion of economically inactive who are temporary/short-term sick has remained steady.



Long-term sickness is also the key reason people in Suffolk are economically inactive. In 2023 the percentage of economically inactive people looking after family or the home increased to more than that of students.

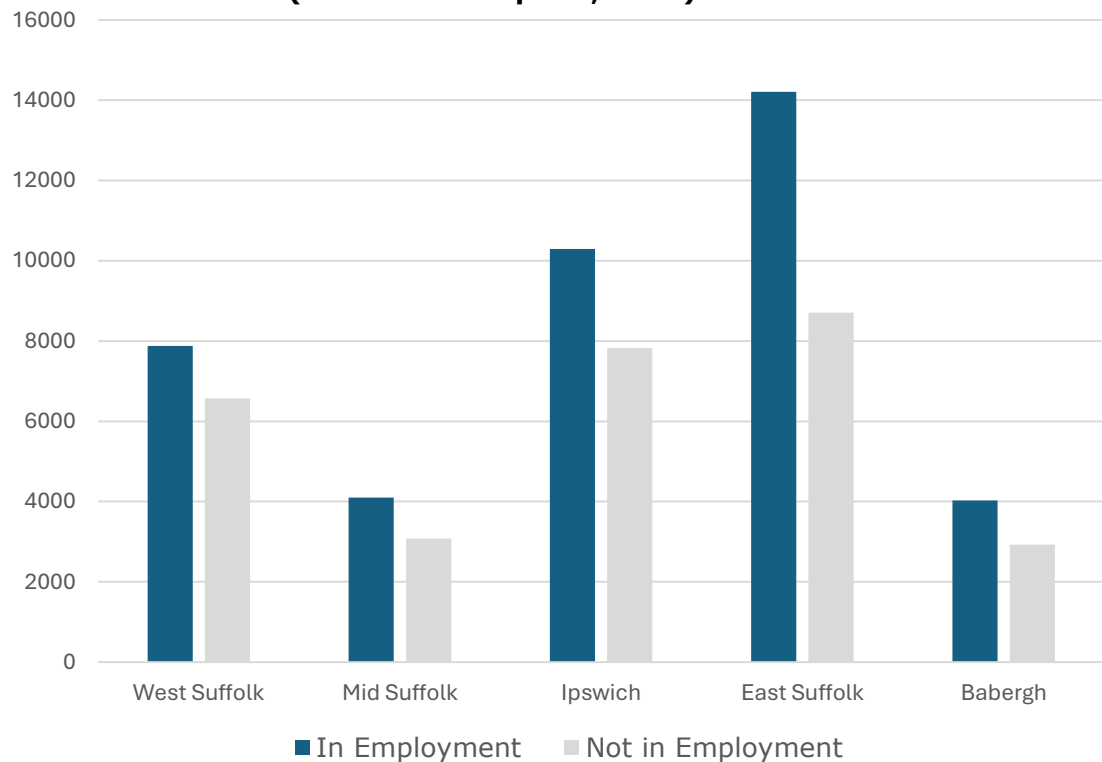




The number of people claiming universal credit has gradually increased in every Suffolk Authority in the 12 months to 2024. The majority of claimants are employed.

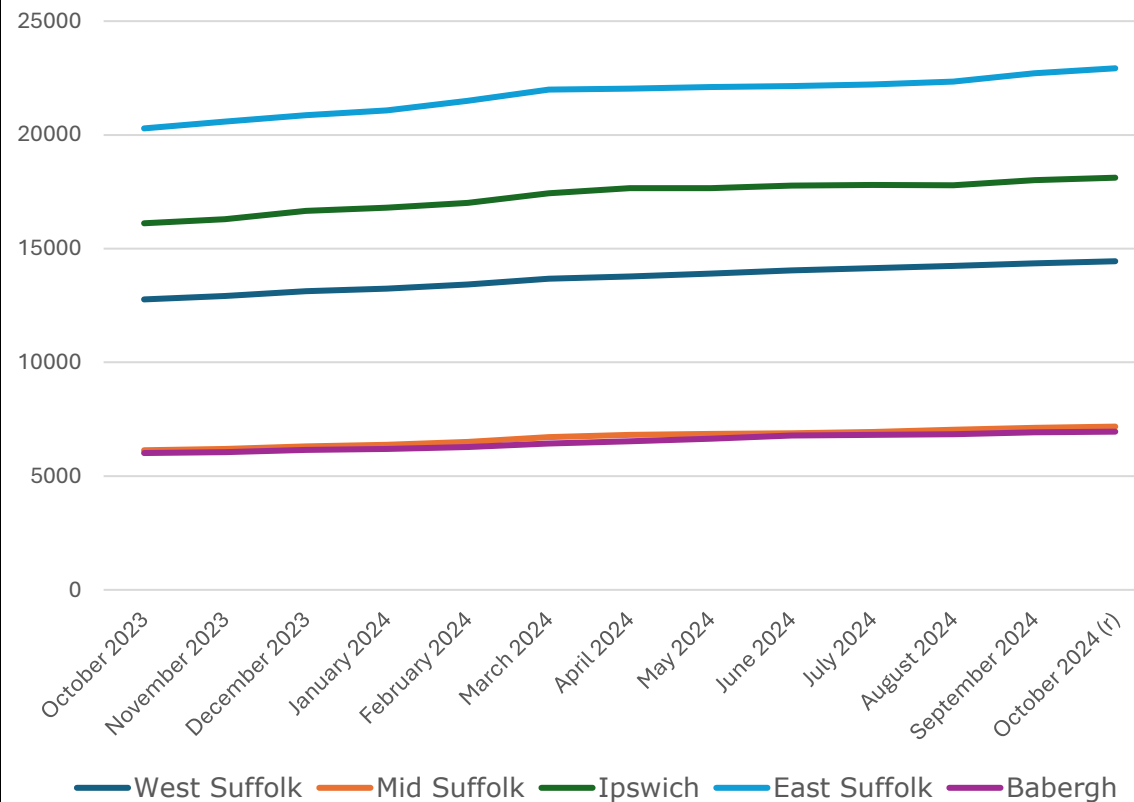
**Employment Status of Universal Credit Claimants, by Suffolk District & Borough, October 2024**

(Source: Stat Xplore, DWP)



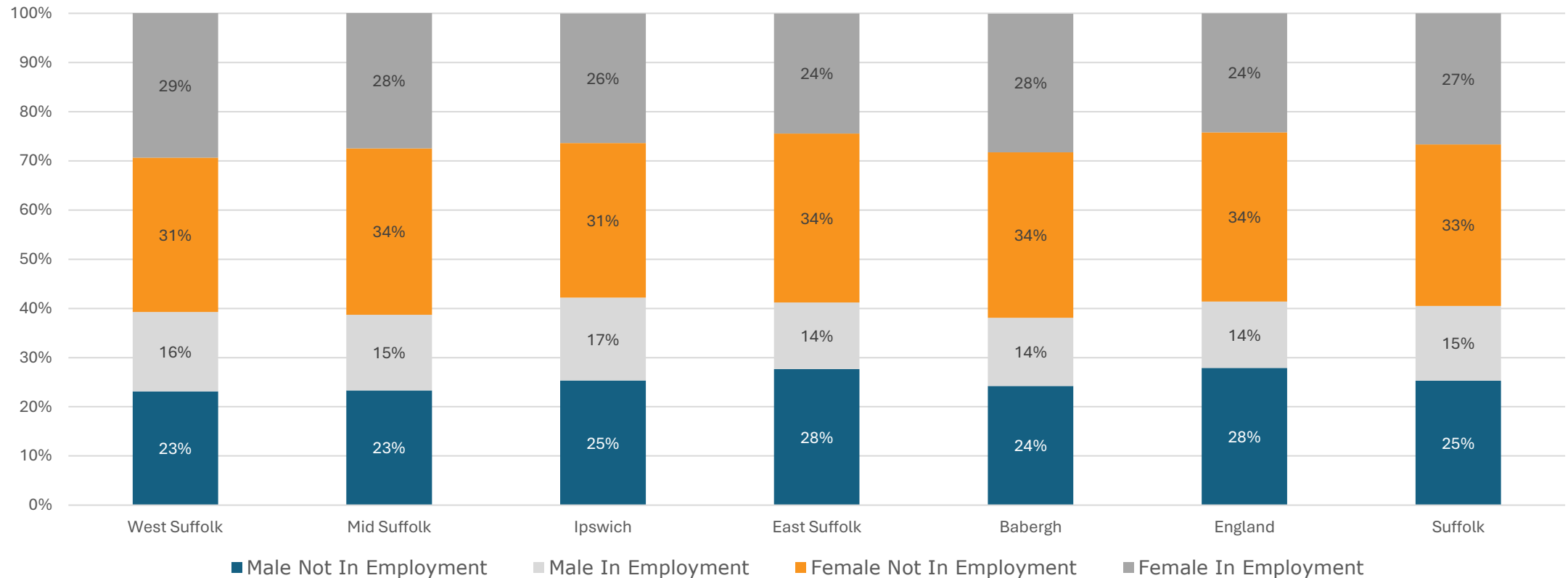
**Number of Universal Credit Claimants in Suffolk Authorities, October 2023-October 2024**

(Source: StatXplore, DWP)



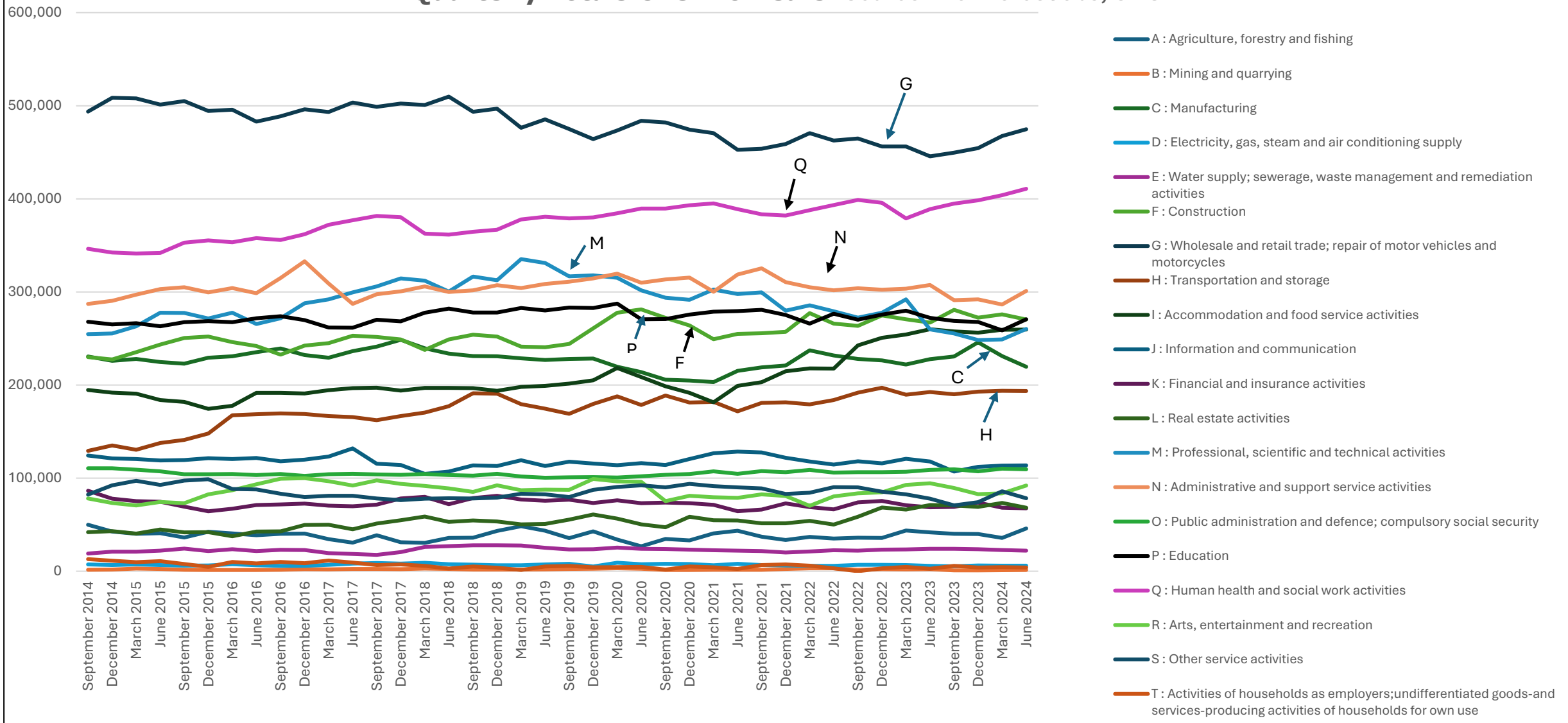
The greatest proportion of Universal Credit claimants in each Suffolk Authority are female, with over 30% being unemployed. The proportion of female claimants who are in work is also significantly higher than the proportion of male working claimants – a reflection of the lower wage jobs for female claimants. East Suffolk mirrors the proportions for England as a whole, with 28% of claimants being men not in employment

**Proportions (%) of Universal Credit Claimants by Gender & Employment Status & by Suffolk Authority, October 2024**  
 (Source: Stat Xplore, DWP)



# Workforce Jobs by Industry (Seasonally Adjusted) for the East of England, Quarterly Totals Over 10 Years

Source: Workforce Jobs, ONS





To discuss this update or to see how SODA could help with a project, please don't hesitate to contact the team at [soda@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:soda@suffolk.gov.uk)

SODA also manages the Suffolk Observatory: [Suffolk Observatory – Welcome to the Suffolk Observatory](#). Previous Economy & Employment Updates are available on the Suffolk Observatory.