

Unemployment and mental health

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July 2021

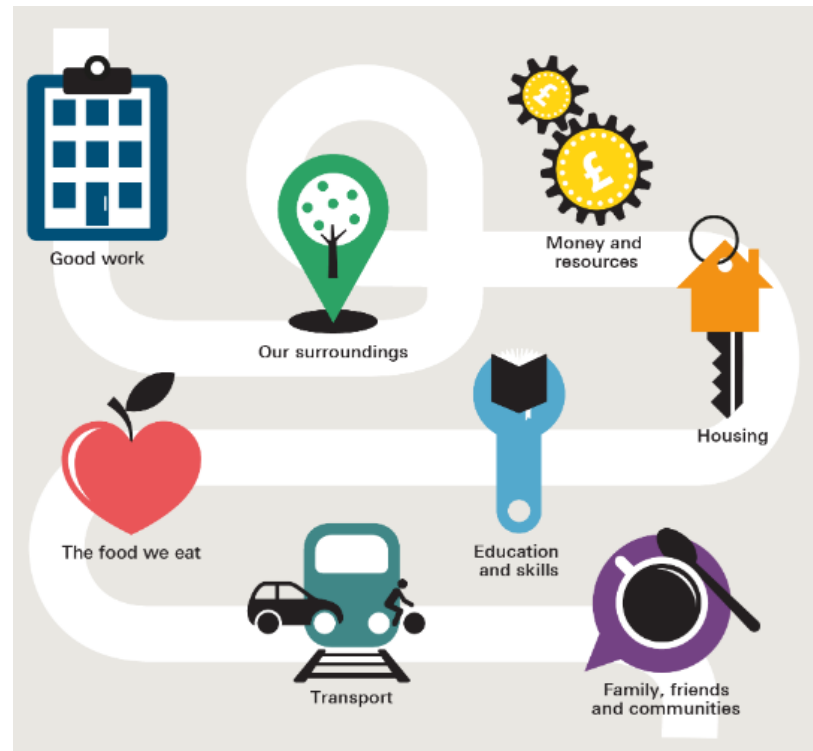


@davidfinchthf @Healthfdn

Improving health and reducing health inequalities

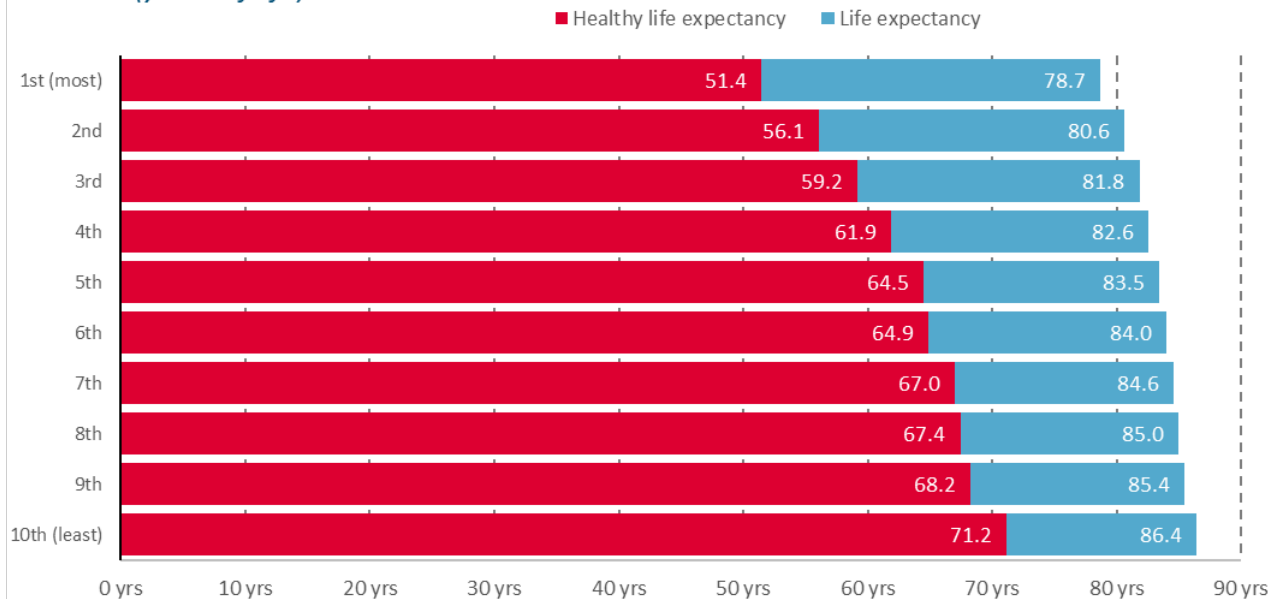
The greatest influences on our health come from outside health care.

These are ‘determinants of health’ such as education, employment, housing, community and transport



Before the pandemic there was a 20 year gap in healthy life expectancy in England

Life expectancy & healthy life expectancy at birth by decile of deprivation, England: 2017-19
Women (years of life)



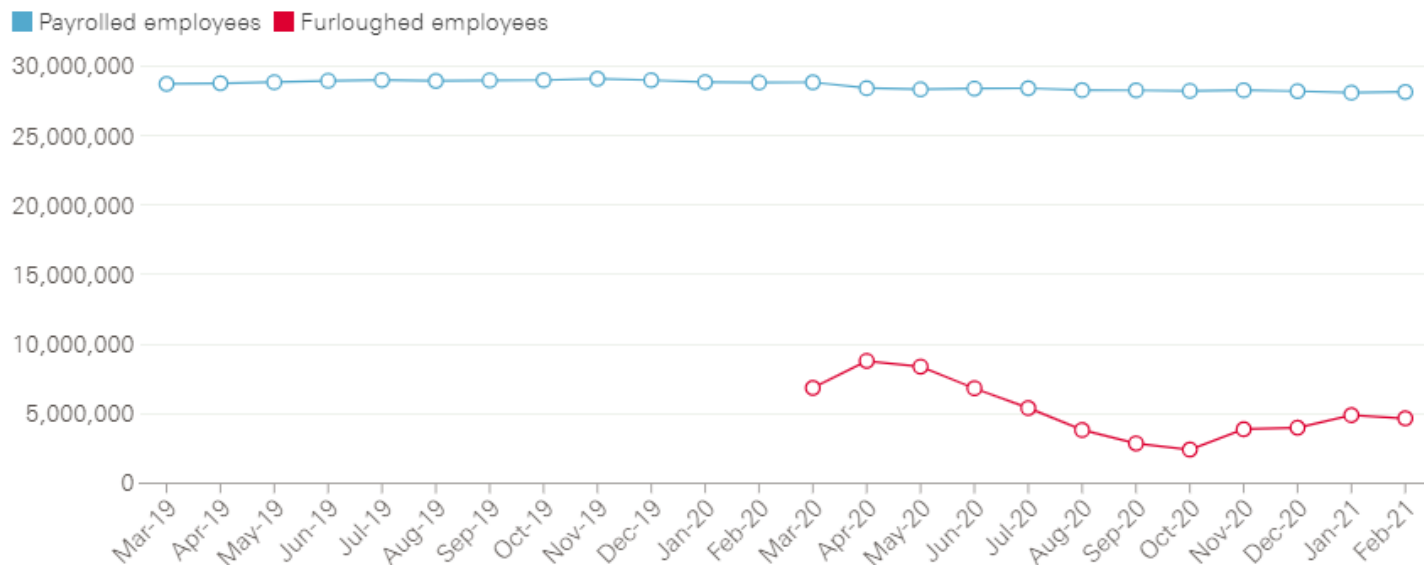
Source: Health Foundation analysis using ONS, Health State Life Expectancies by decile of deprivation, England: 2017-19

How unemployment influences health

- Stress and reduced self-esteem due to stigma or the loss of the structure of work
- The harm to mental health can result in unhealthy coping behaviours
- Short term financial hardship and insecurity leading to stress and fewer resources to support health
- Reduced chances of future employment or earnings potential leaving people with reduced lifetime resources

Pandemic restrictions led to a large economic shock but headline employment measures mask the impact

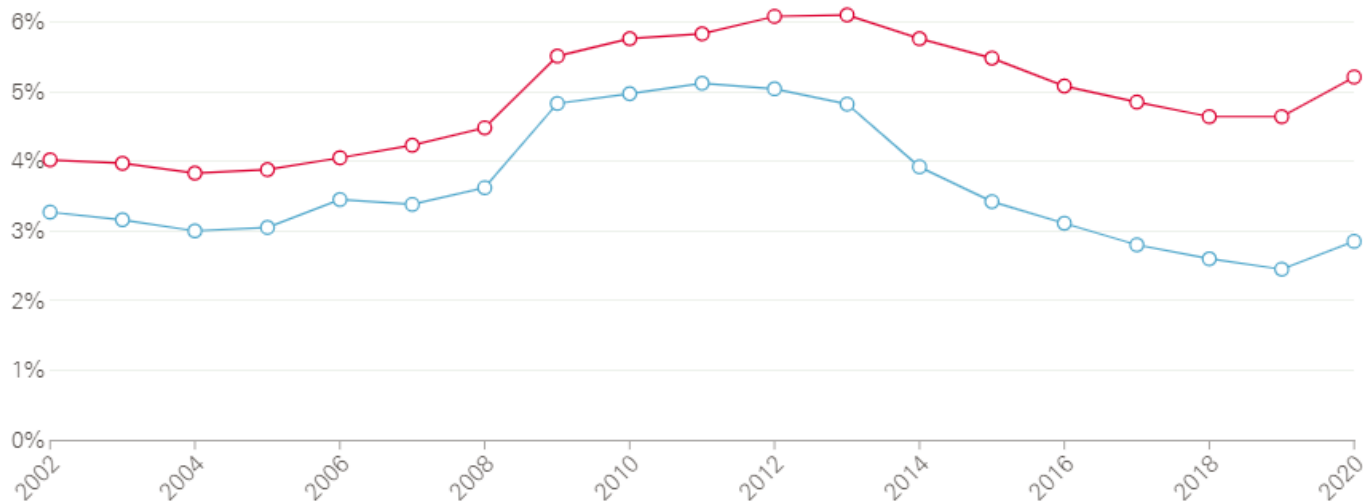
Employee payroll and furloughed employees: March 2019 to February 2021



Policy action has prevented a large rise in unemployment but long term unemployment is rising

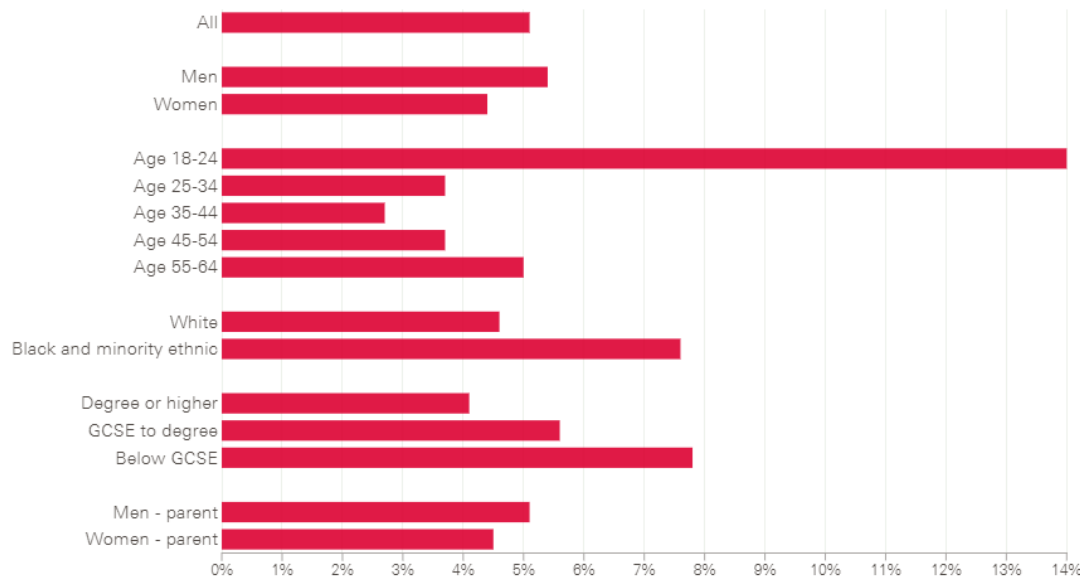
Proportion of adults (16+) who are unemployed or underemployed: UK, 2002–2020

■ Underemployment ■ Unemployment



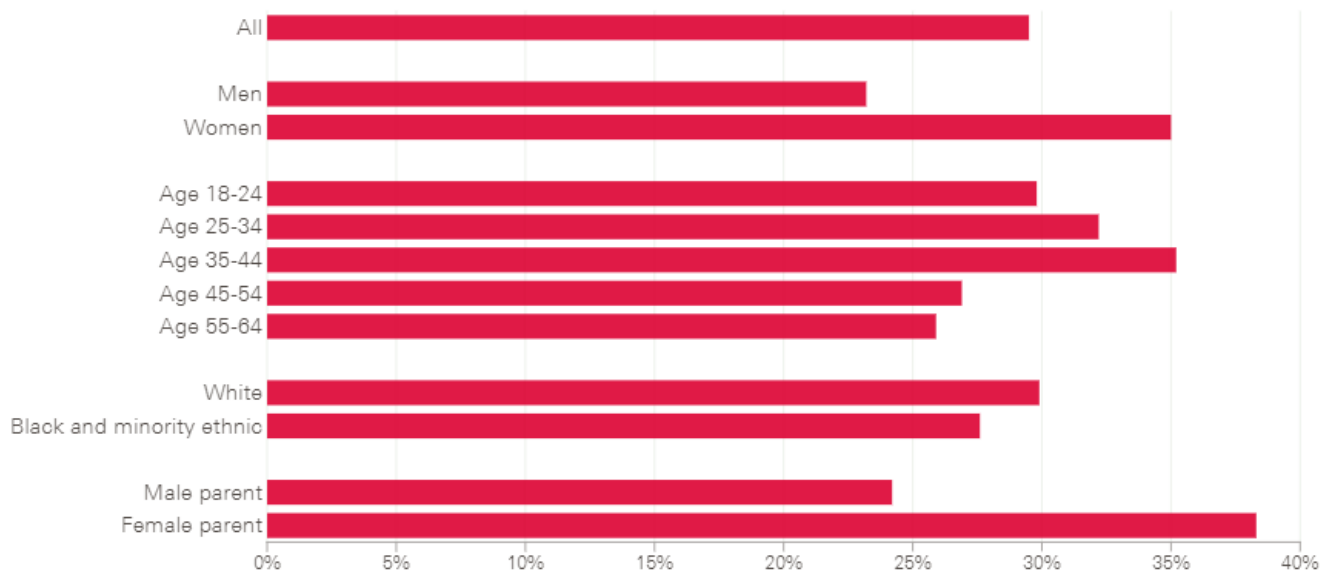
Unemployment has been higher for young and old, ethnic minority groups and workers with low qualifications

Unemployment rate for working age adults (age 18-65), UK, January 2021



Women, mothers and younger people were more likely to have poor mental health

Proportion of working age adults (age 18-65) with poor mental health, UK, January 2021



Mental health worsened with unemployed people more likely to have poor mental health

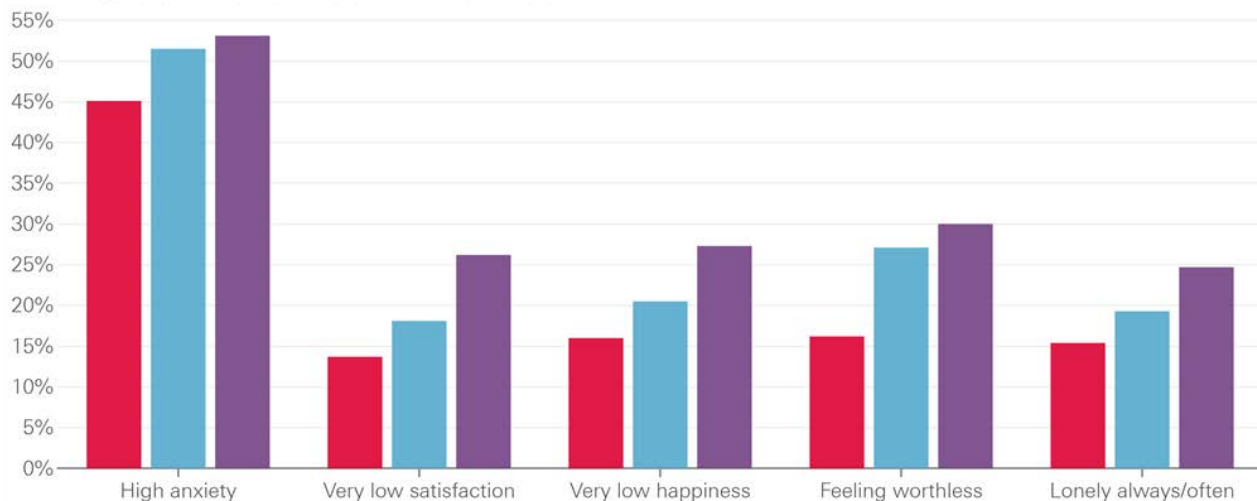
Proportion of working age adults (age 18-65) with poor mental health by economic status: UK, January 2021



Persistent reductions in pay through the pandemic are linked to lower wellbeing

Comparison of wellbeing scores of those persistently receiving lower pay and not
September 2020

■ Same or higher pay ■ Temporary lower pay ■ Persistently lower pay



Supporting people into work is crucial for health but existing policies can reduce rather than improve health

- Unemployment benefit provides only 12% replacement rate of average wage
- Social security system has strict conditionality and difficult claims process which has been found to increase psychological distress
- Employment programmes have little explicit focus or recognition of poor mental health

Designing employment programmes to support mental health

- Regular and intensive support that provides stability for individuals
- Targeting high quality and lasting employment, pay progression and addressing skill gaps
- Providers held accountable to outcome metrics that include mental health and wellbeing
- Integrating personalised support services in employment provision

Thank you

<https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/unemployment-and-mental-health>

<https://www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/unequal-pandemic-fairer-recovery>



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