Vol. 5, 2024

Plymouth's Growth Board Economic Dashboard

Plymouth rated top city to live and work in
From the latest PwC's Good Growth for Cities report

The PwC Good Growth for Cities report looks at the priorities of communities across the UK, and how local leaders can play a greater role in delivering inclusive economic growth in their areas.

In a major boost for Plymouth's growing reputation as a vibrant and prosperous city, in the annual Demos-Good Growth for Cities report by consultancy firm PwC has ranked Plymouth as the best city in Britain for economic performance and quality of life. This achievement places Plymouth ahead of larger metropolitan areas such as London, Manchester, and Birmingham, which were named among the lowest-performing cities in the PwC study.

The annual report assessed cities across 12 criteria, including income, jobs, housing, health, skills, and work-life balance. Plymouth's strong showing in these categories highlights the city's ongoing transformation into a hub of opportunity and well-being for its residents and businesses. The city's focus on sustainable development, strategic investment, and fostering a high quality of life has clearly paid off.

Plymouth's top ranking comes as a recognition of its dedication to creating an environment where economic growth goes hand-in-hand with balanced living. The city has seen marked improvements in areas such as job creation, income distribution, and housing accessibility, all of which have contributed to its rise to the top of the PwC index*.

With thriving local industries, strong partnerships between local government, business, and academia, and a commitment to supporting small enterprises and start-ups, Plymouth continues to lead by example in the southwest and beyond.

Key findings

1 **The ongoing squeeze on living standards sees the UK public focus primarily on economic or finance focused measures** - with income, jobs and housing all seeing an increase on last year in relative importance. Along with health, these have seen the largest improvements from last year's Index.

2 **On the other hand, the public is less concerned this year with income distribution, skills and the environment.** This is partially due to the shift away from the pandemic, where there was a heightened focus on gaining skills and education in lieu of employment opportunities and the increased attention that was made during this time towards the UK's Net Zero commitments.

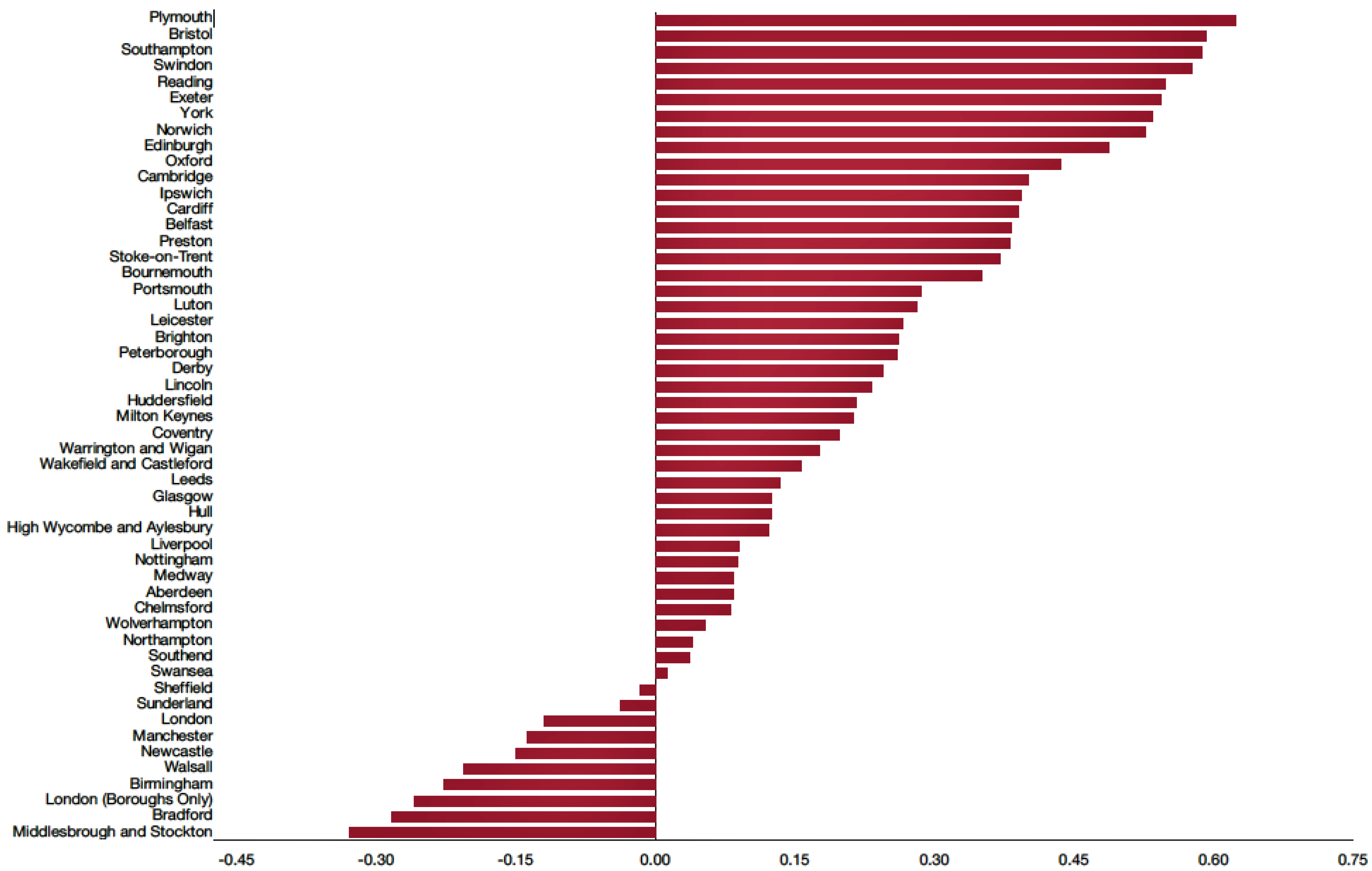
3 **Plymouth and Bristol rise significantly to first and second place in this year's Index, with Southampton remaining strong in third place.** Plymouth does well on income distribution, work-life balance and jobs to secure first place. Bristol similarly performs well on jobs and work-life balance, also scoring highly on skills.

4 **Though the tough macroeconomic environment has affected real economic growth across the UK, we expect a rosier outlook for several cities.** The UK economy is recovering slowly and steadily, and we expect economic growth to bounce back this year and to continue on into 2025. Cardiff, Ipswich and London, for example, are all expected to see growth of at least 1.1% this year and 1.8% in 2025.

* The Good Growth for Cities index 2024 looks beyond core economic growth (GDP/GVA) and instead considers broad measures of economic wellbeing, including jobs, income, health, skills, work-life balance, housing, transport and the environment. The Index measures the performance of 52 of the UK's largest cities against a basket of 12 factors which the public consider most important when it comes to economic wellbeing. These include jobs, health, income, safety and skills, as well as work-life balance, housing, travel-to-work times, income equality, high street shops, environment and business start-ups.

Plymouth rated top city to live and work in
From the latest PwC's Good Growth for Cities report- continued

Figure 5: 2024 Good Growth for Cities Index results by city, ranked highest to lowest



Source: Demos/PwC Analysis (2023) Note: The data covers the period 2020—2022

How has your city or region performed?

See how your city or region compares against others using the Good Growth key performance indicators

Year: **2024** Filter by: **Plymouth** **Overall rating**

Overall 0.62

Jobs 0.39

Income -0.57

Health 0.33

Work-life-balance 1.99

New businesses -0.94

Housing -0.28

Transport 1.37

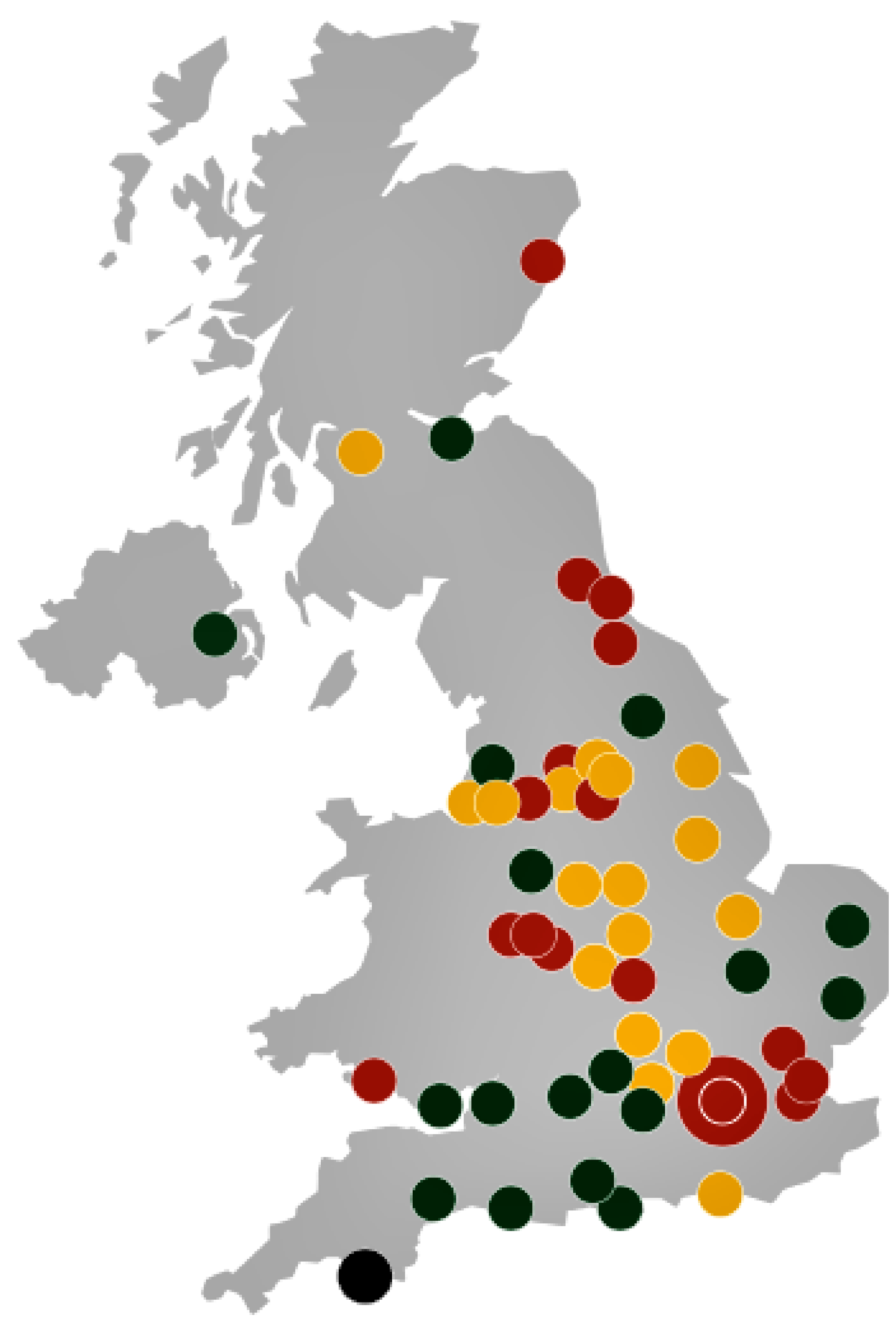
Skills 0.46

Income distribution 2.50

Environment -0.48

Safety -0.18

High Streets & Shops 1.07



Rating: Below average Average Above average

Quick overview: Reaction to the industrial strategy green paper
By Paul Swinney, Centre for Cities

Back in July Centre for Cities set out some guiding principles on how the Government should write its industrial strategy. The publication of its green paper gave the first indication of how the Government will approach the strategy. Here is how it measures up to what Centre for Cities proposed, and what tweaks would improve the forthcoming white paper.

§ **Setting a target:**

Centre for Cities' first proposal was to set a clear, measurable target: to make the UK more productive than Germany. The green paper does identify economic growth as the overall goal. And it frames the strategy as a decade-long plan. Both are welcome. But it doesn't as yet define what it means by growth (for example, output growth, productivity growth or employment growth), or how much of this growth it wants.

§ **Recognising tensions and trade-offs between goals:**

The second proposal was to be unapologetic about focusing on productivity growth, and not confusing this with other agendas.

There is a sense of competing agendas when reading the green paper, without a recognition as yet of the potential trade-offs this brings. It is possible to have more than one objective, but policymakers need to grapple with any trade-offs if these objectives are to be coherent.

The clearest example of this is net zero. As what have been said before, net zero should be at the forefront of what Government facilitates. But this agenda is much more about switching the fuel the UK economy runs on, rather than increasing productivity. Unless the argument is that we are going to get cheaper fuel through the transition to net zero then the Government runs the risk of confusing both agendas.

The same can be said for 'economic resilience'. Given the current instability in global politics, this is a sensible thing to consider. But there could well be a trade-off between greater resilience (however defined) and productivity growth if it ends up being more expensive to produce here what we could buy from abroad.

§ **Recognising the role of big cities:**

The latest iteration of the industrial strategy offers the clearest iteration yet of the role of place in such a strategy. The 2009 version had very little focus on place, and where it did it focused on regional plans. The 2017 version gave greater emphasis of the importance of place without recognising that different places should play different roles in the national strategy. The 2024 version takes this further, noting that the goal should be to allow places to reach their potential (with this potential differing from place to place), and explicitly references the big cities as the parts of the country that need particular focus given the role they should be playing.

There's also recognition of the importance of London in the UK economy. This seemingly had become taboo in policy circles during the Northern Powerhouse and levelling up periods. The recognition is welcome.

The challenge is that place isn't linked to the other main theme of the strategy – sectors – so making it feel somewhat disjointed. Looking at the geography of where cutting-edge part of the UK economy locates shows that this happens in specific places. And for services in particular it is the same places. Life sciences doesn't go to Leeds and finance to Manchester: they locate in each because of the benefits that these places offer to such activities.

There may well be some national initiatives to help a specific sector. But the real goal for policy that wants to support the frontier of the UK economy should be to create locations for these future sectors to grow, whatever they actually end up being. This gives a very clear rationale for place-based interventions. The white paper will be stronger for more explicitly recognising this.

§ **Other positives from the green paper:**

There are three other things worth mentioning that are positive:

- The first is the speed of the paper's publication. This maximises the time the Government has to get on and deliver.
- The second is that there is a lot of continuity with the previous industrial strategy. Centre for Cities' advice to places producing their Local Growth Plans is to avoid throwing out the last strategy and starting again. The same applies to the national strategy. That said, it is interesting to see that the last government's investment zones get no mention.
- Finally, for all the focus on the eight sectors the Government identifies there is a large chunk of the paper given over to discussion of 'horizontal' policies such as skills, R&D and investment. Once again, there may be some specific things national government can do for specific sectors (e.g. the regulation of AI).

But given our poor ability to select the growth sectors of tomorrow, improving how attractive the UK, and its big cities in particular, are to tomorrow's growth industries by improving these 'horizontals' should be what any industrial strategy is about.

Job Posting Analytics

There were **10,687** total job postings in the period between August and September 2024, of which **5,032** were unique*.

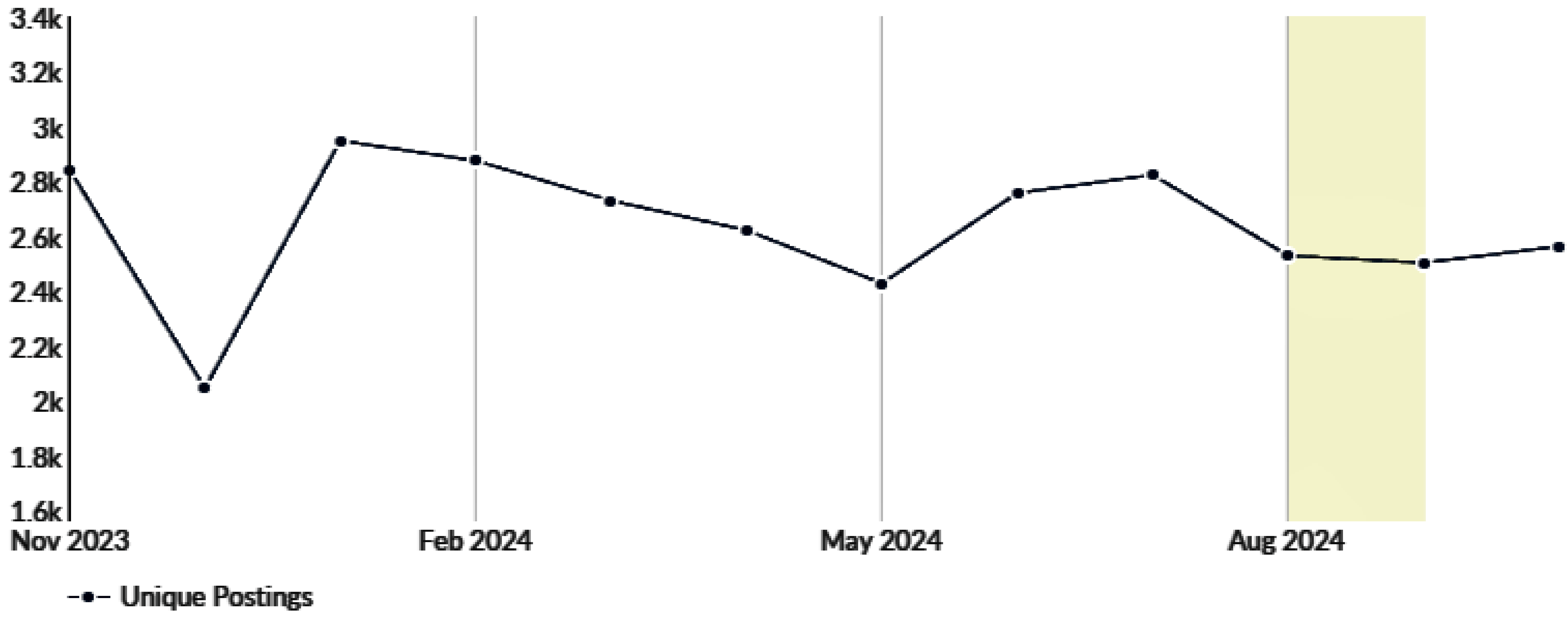
There was a Posting Intensity of **2-to-1**, meaning that for every 2 postings there was 1 unique posting.

* Unique job posting is the number of "deduplicated" advertised jobs where duplicate job postings are advertised and only one of those duplicates is counted.

1%

change in unique job postings between August and September 2024.

Unique Postings Trend



Top Posted Job Titles

Job Title	Total/Unique (Aug 2024 - Sep 2024)	Posting Intensity	Median Posting Duration
Support Workers	204 / 85	2 : 1	17 day
Cleaners	199 / 72	3 : 1	13 day
SEN Teaching Assistants	88 / 39	2 : 1	31 day
Health Care Assistants	95 / 37	3 : 1	20 day
Primary Teachers	89 / 37	2 : 1	30 day
Teaching Assistants	80 / 36	2 : 1	28 day
Administrators	57 / 35	2 : 1	14 day
Quantity Surveyors	54 / 32	2 : 1	21 day
Mechanical Engineers	46 / 24	2 : 1	27 day
Team Members	73 / 23	3 : 1	31 day

Lightcast,2024

Overview

Unemployment

5,965

UC/JSA claimants in September 2024

The **total number of UC/JSA claimants** was **6,125** and **5,965** in **August** and **September 2024** in **Plymouth** respectively– with a **rate of 3.6%** in **August** and **3.5%** in **September**- of which **1,270** and **1,245** individuals were **under 25** ; **1,260** and **1,245 over 50**; while **3,375** and **3,315** were **males** and **2,750** and **2,650 females** in **August** and **September 2024** respectively.

The claimant count rate is currently stable in Plymouth at the near-full employment position. The claimants' rate in Plymouth in September 2024 was (3.5%) which is **lower than the national average** for Great Britain (4.3%). Plymouth's claimant count rate has **remained lower than the national average since August 2021** when it was higher (Plymouth: 6.6% UK: 6.5%).

It is important to note the above UC/JSA claimant number is only representative of the unemployed population or those classified as **'searching for work',** while claiming universal credit. The **total number of people on universal credit** in **Plymouth** was **30,993** and **31,372** in **August** and **September** 2024 respectively.

31,372

People on Universal Credit September 2024

Output & Productivity

£5.44bn real GVA in 2021
(+7.8% from 2020, this is in 2019 money value)
Productivity - nominal GVA per hour worked at 81.5% of UK average (2021), down from 83.2% in 2020
£988m exports (goods & services) in 2020
(19.6% of GVA, v. UK 32.5% of GVA)

Business

6,325 enterprises in 2023 (ONS Business Count)
Active Enterprises - ONS BRES, 2021 (411 per 10,000 working age population v. 697 UK-wide)
Business Growth: +26.8% since 2012 (v. +28.8% UK-wide)
Enterprise birth rate, 2021: 61.4 births per 10,000 working age residents (v. UK 86.3)
Survival rate, 2021 (after 5 years): 39.4% of businesses still active
(v. UK 38.4%)

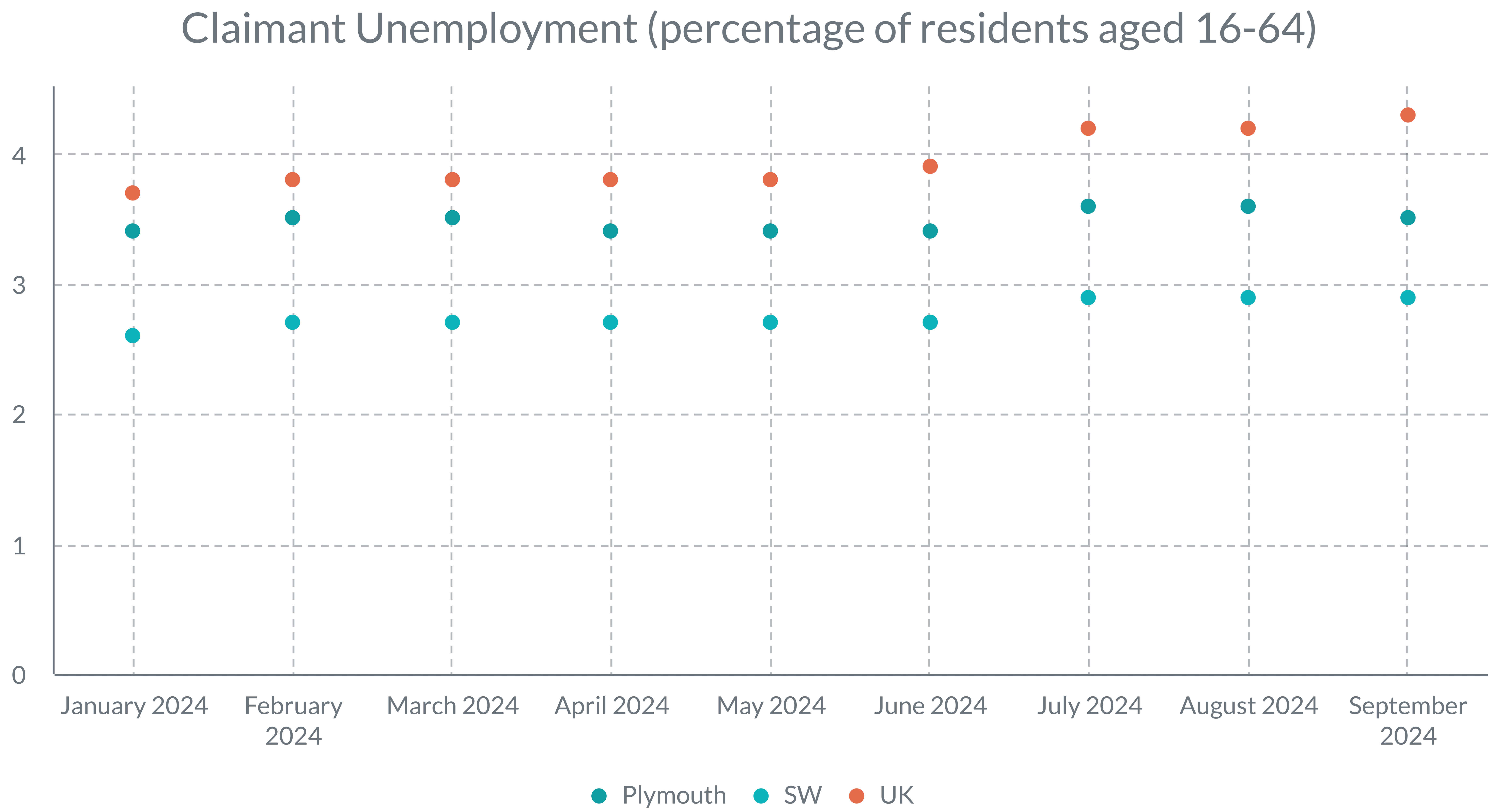
Skills & Attainment

33.4% of working-age residents NVQ4+ qualified (v. 47.3% UK) in 2023
GCSE Attainment-8 Score: 57.1 (v. UK 46.7) in 2019
A level APS per entry: 30.8 (v. UK 33.1) in 2019
27% in HE after 16-18 study (v. UK 35%) in 2019
16% in app'ship after 16-18 study (v. UK 10%) in 2019.

Labour Market

116,000 jobs in 2022 (+0.87% on 2021)
73.6% employment rate (v. UK 75.6%)
Median Gross weekly pay -workplace 2023
Full time - £657.2 (96.41% of UK median)
Part time - £218.3 (90.62% of UK median)

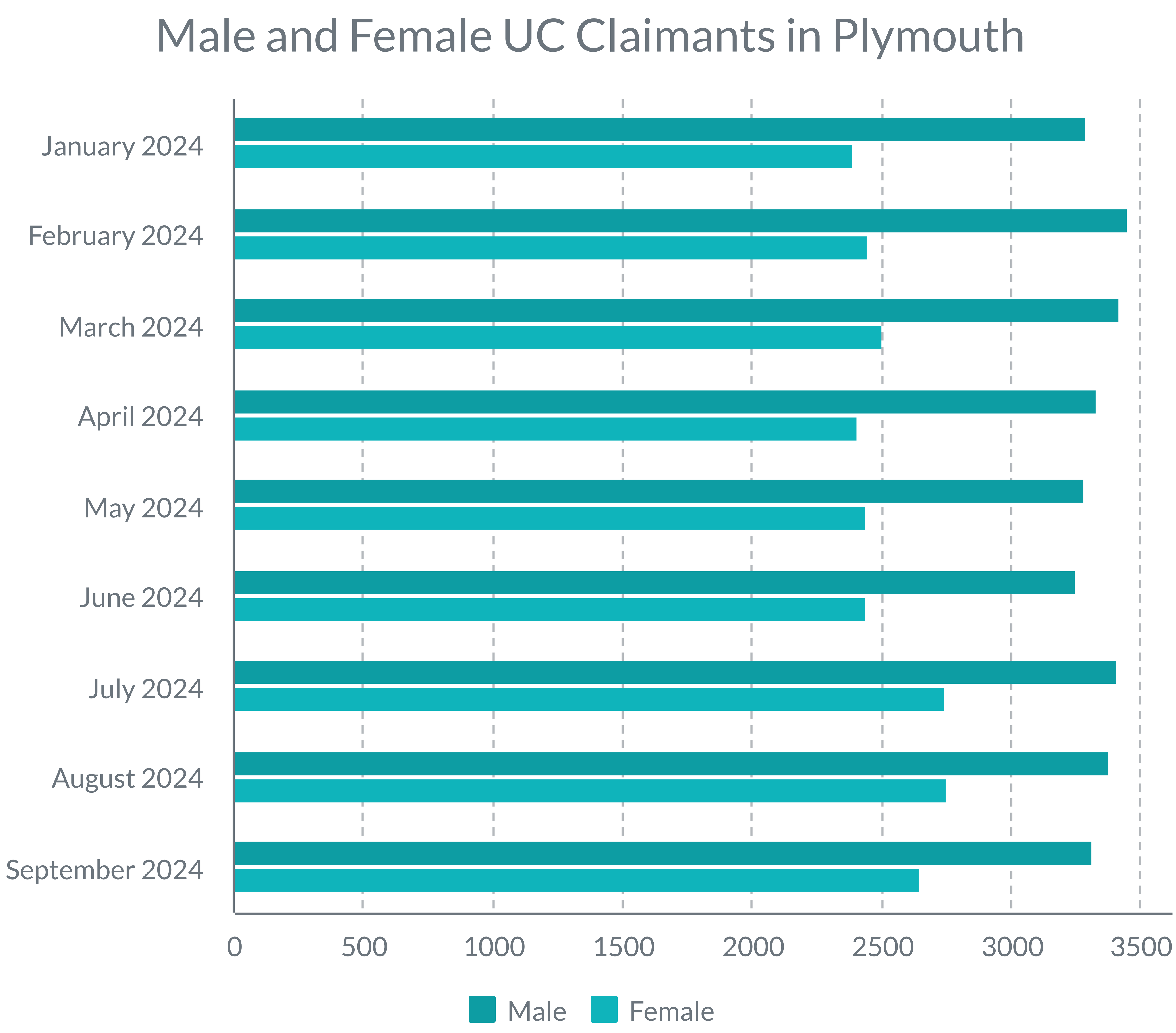
Highlights



Source: Claimants Count, NOMIS, 2024

We can see that HotSW is very closely tracking the South West, while Plymouth has been more closely tracking Great Britain but has achieved a lower rate since mid-2020.

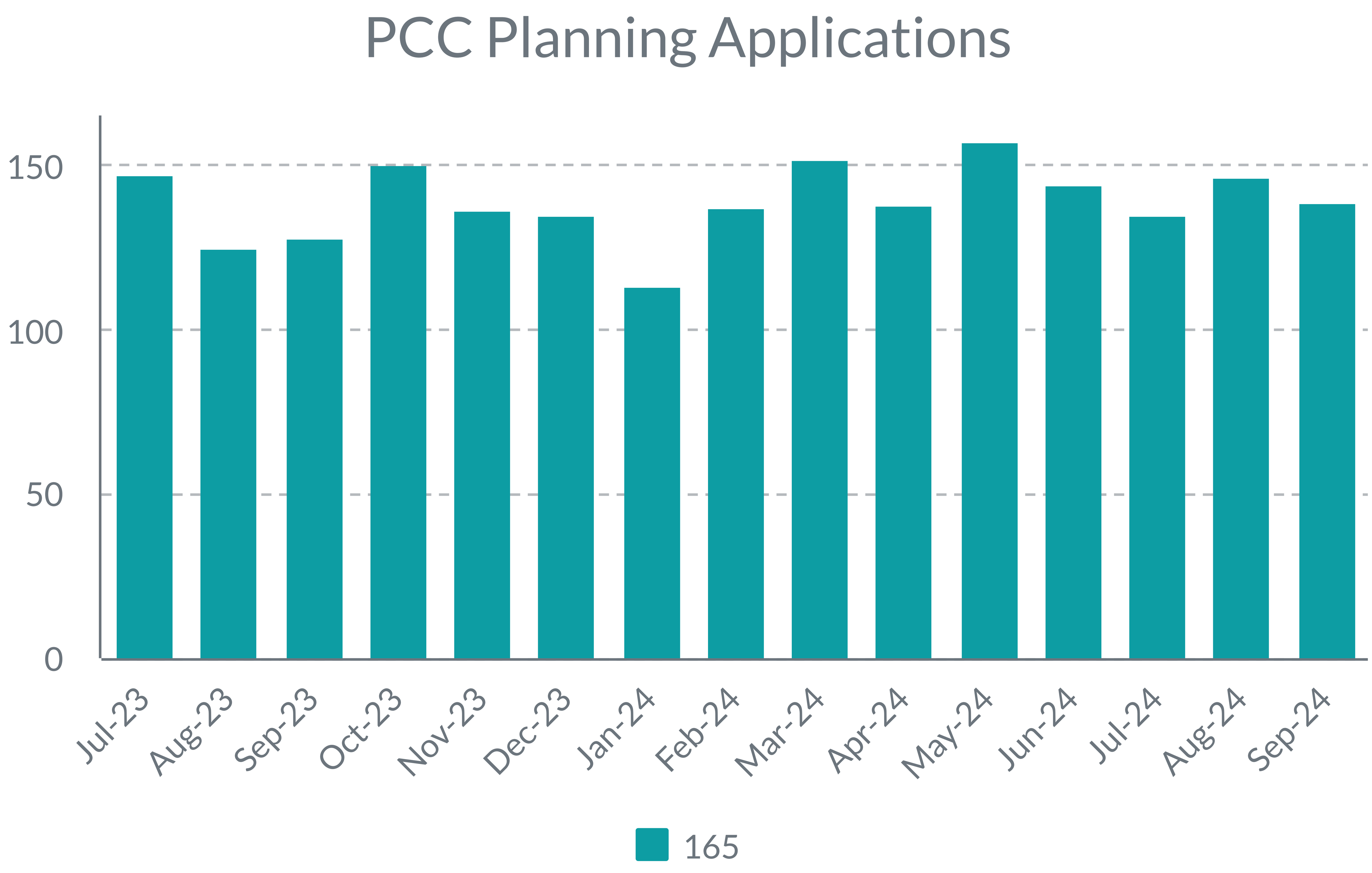
Plymouths JSA/UC unemployment rate is now below the pre-pandemic level seen in March 2020.



JSA/UC claimant numbers for both males and females is now below the numbers seen pre-pandemic.

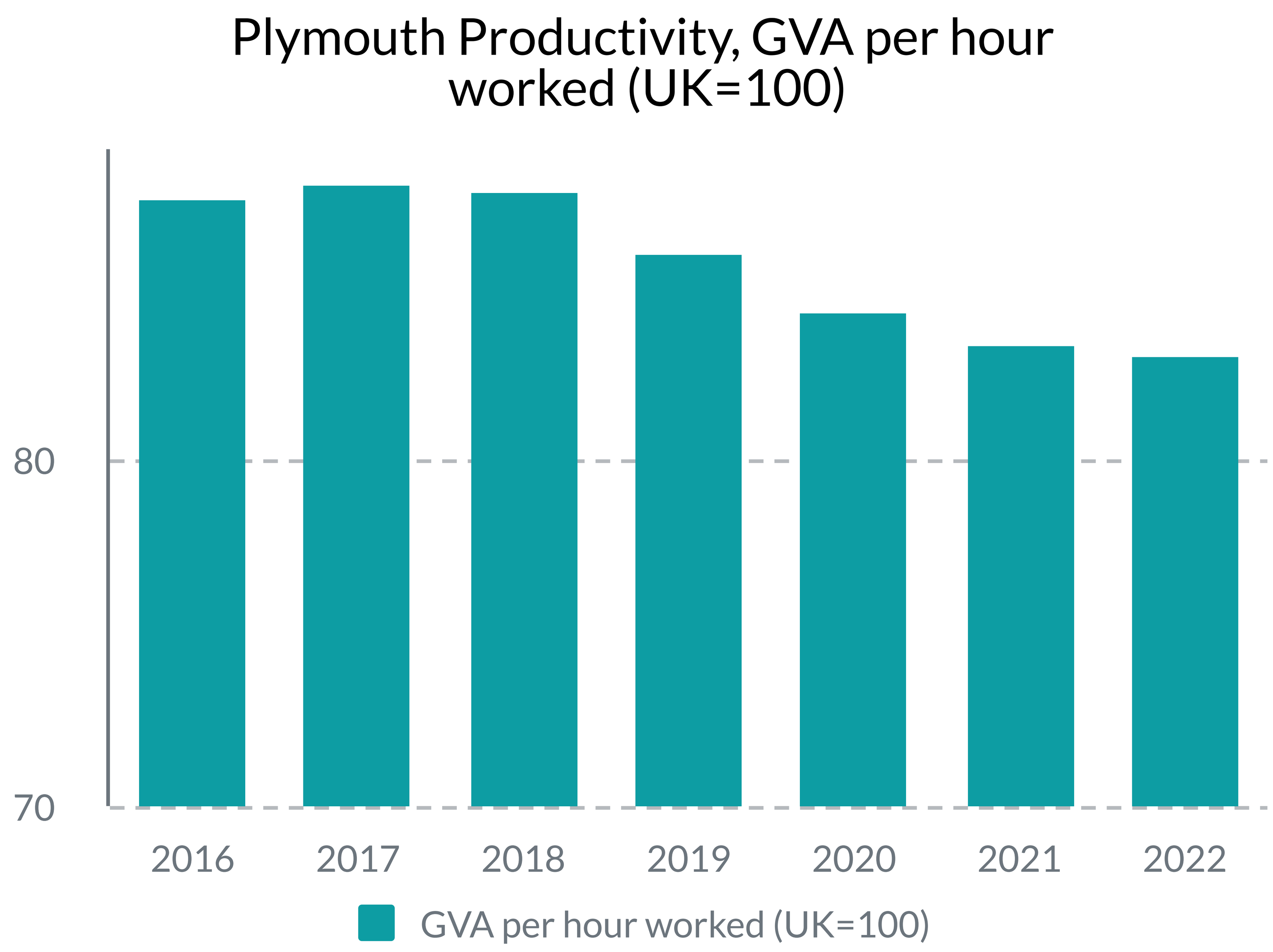
Source: Claimants Count, NOMIS, 2024

Economy

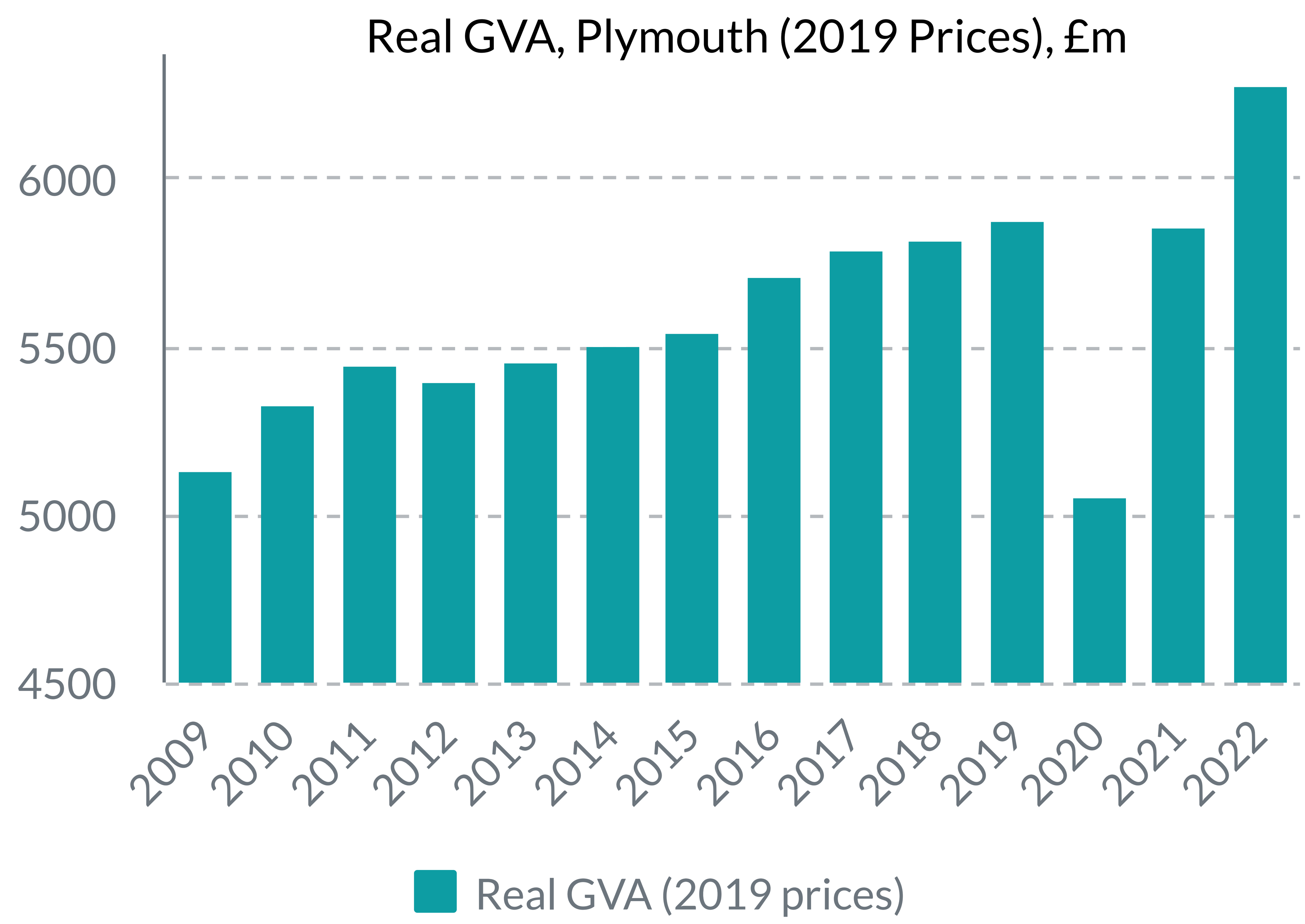


146 and **139** applications were received in **August** and **September 2024** respectively.

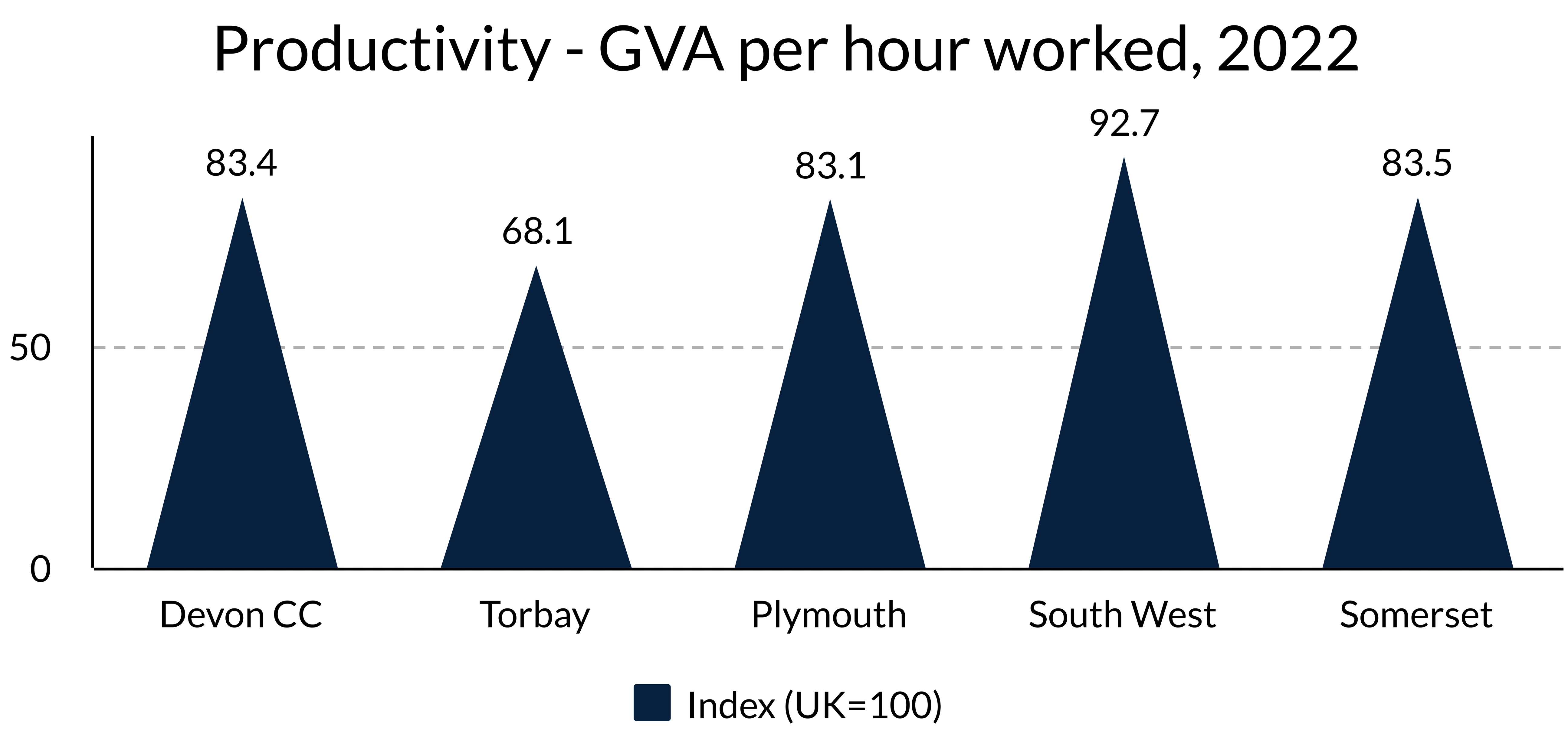
Comparing the number of applications to those of the same months last year, **August 2024** had **21** planning applications more than those of August 2023, and **September 2024** had **11** more applications than September 2023.



- Plymouth's productivity gap with the national average had been narrowing to 2018 but has since widened again. For 2019 to 2020, it is likely this is in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

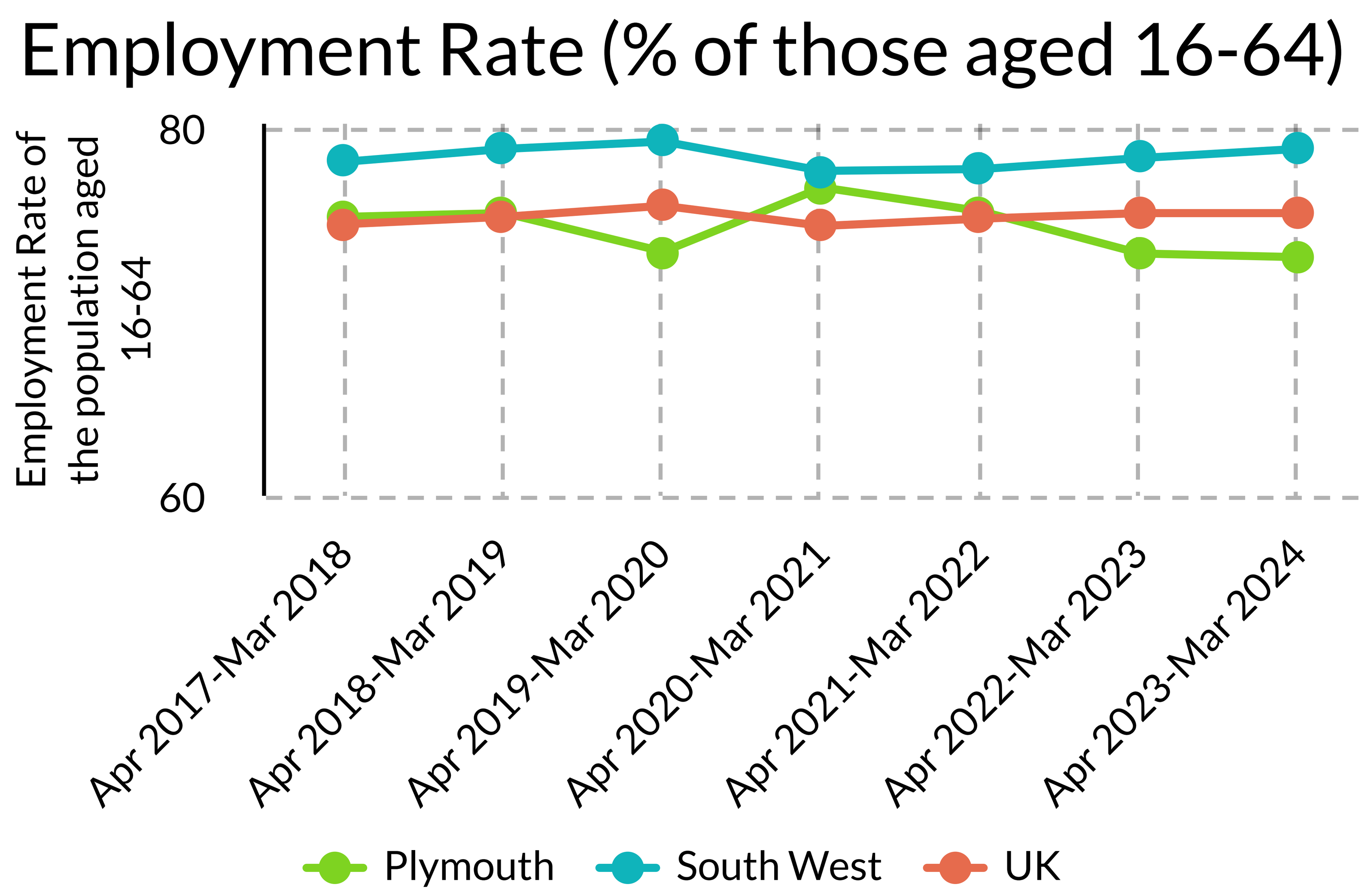


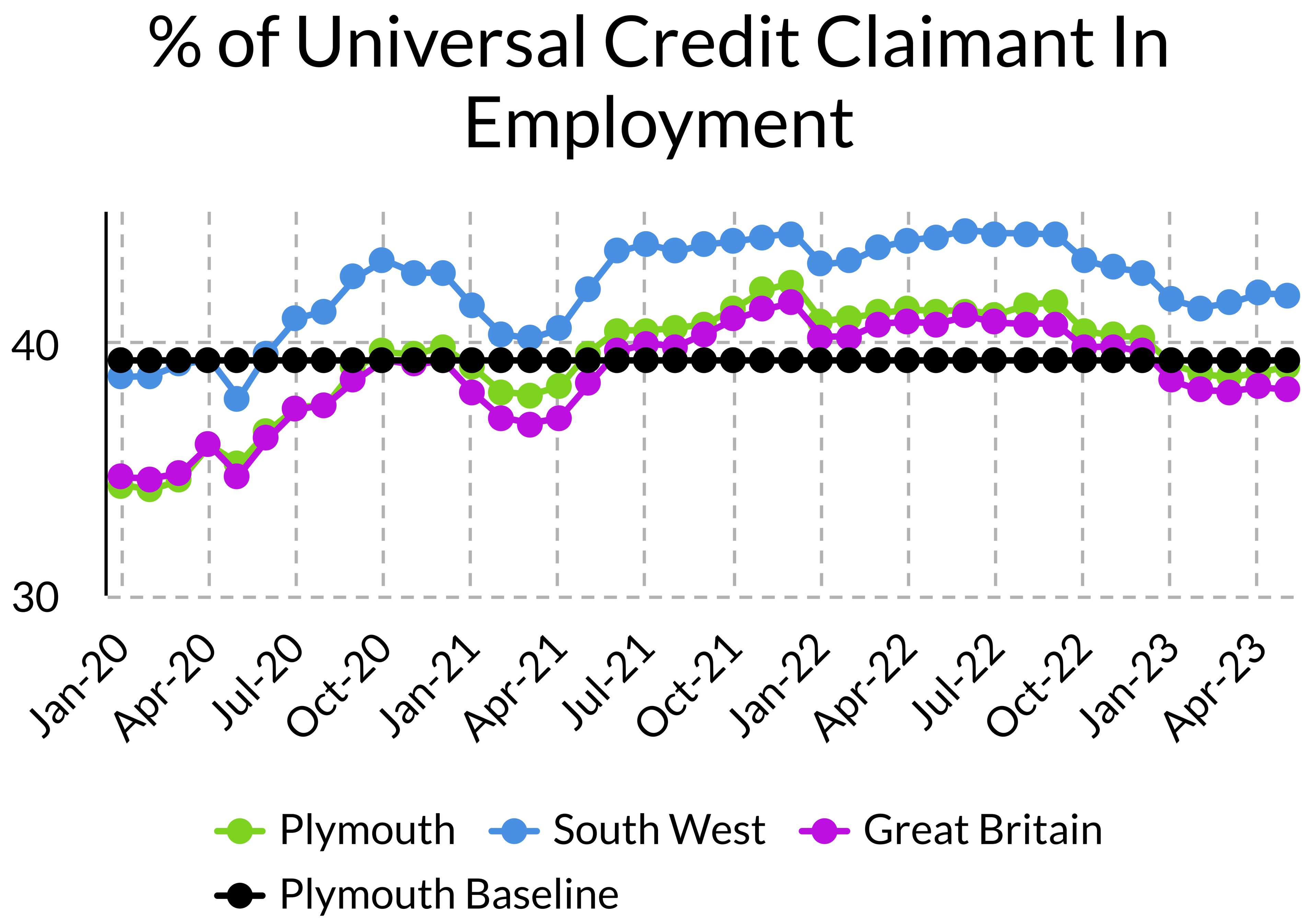
- Real GVA, however, had seen stronger growth up until 2019 but the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is clearly visible in to 2020 with a significant **decline of over 12%.**



Sources: Regional GVA (Balanced) - ONS, 2020;
Sub-regional Productivity - ONS, 2020

Inclusive Growth

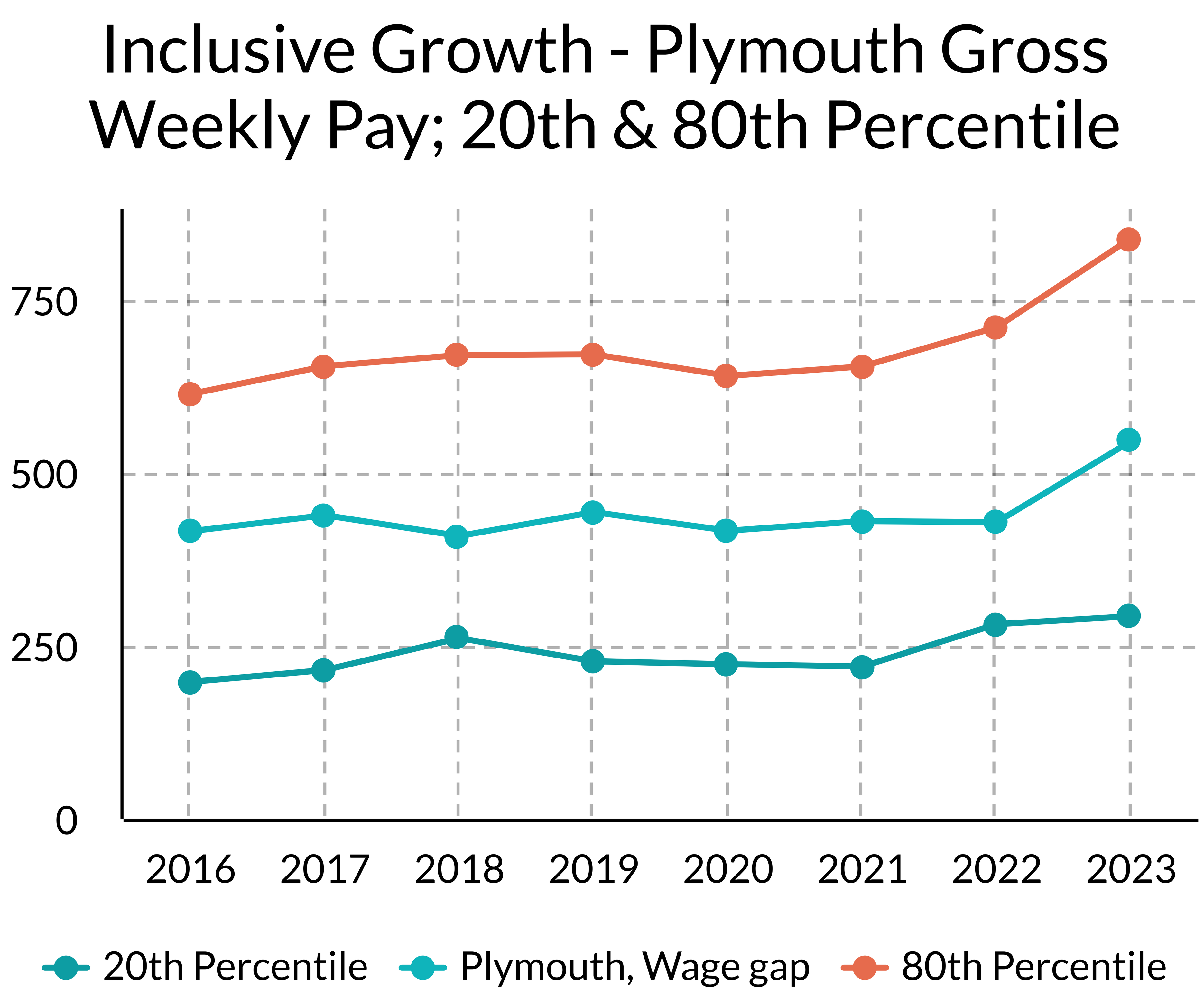


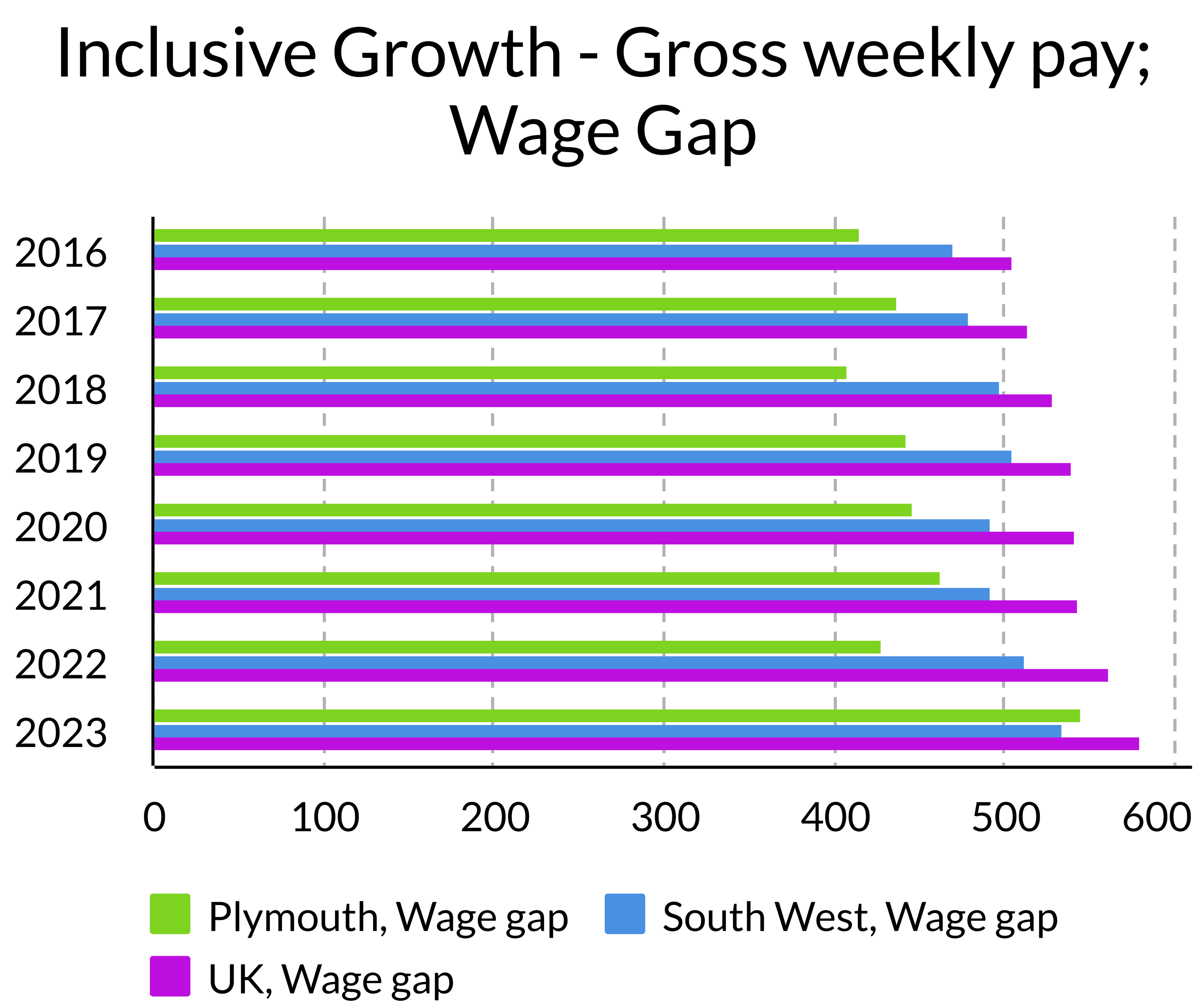


The Employment rate for ages 16-64 in Plymouth for 2024 is slightly below the rate for the United Kingdom since 2022. The rate for Plymouth in 2024 is **73.0%**, the South West is **78.9%** and UK is **75.4%**.

from DWP Stat-Xplore using Alternative Claimant Count. Baseline of average 2013-2019

When reviewing the % of Universal Credit claimants' count who are in employment you should read this in conjunction with both the employment rate and claimants' count rate. These have both fluctuated considerably since March 2020. Notably, the in-work claimant rate has risen as the overall number of claimants have risen. The rate in Plymouth closely tracked the GB rate. We can see that consistently the South West has had a higher rate through-out the whole period. We can see however that all three areas have seen a rise in the % of claimants' who are in employment from pre-pandemic.

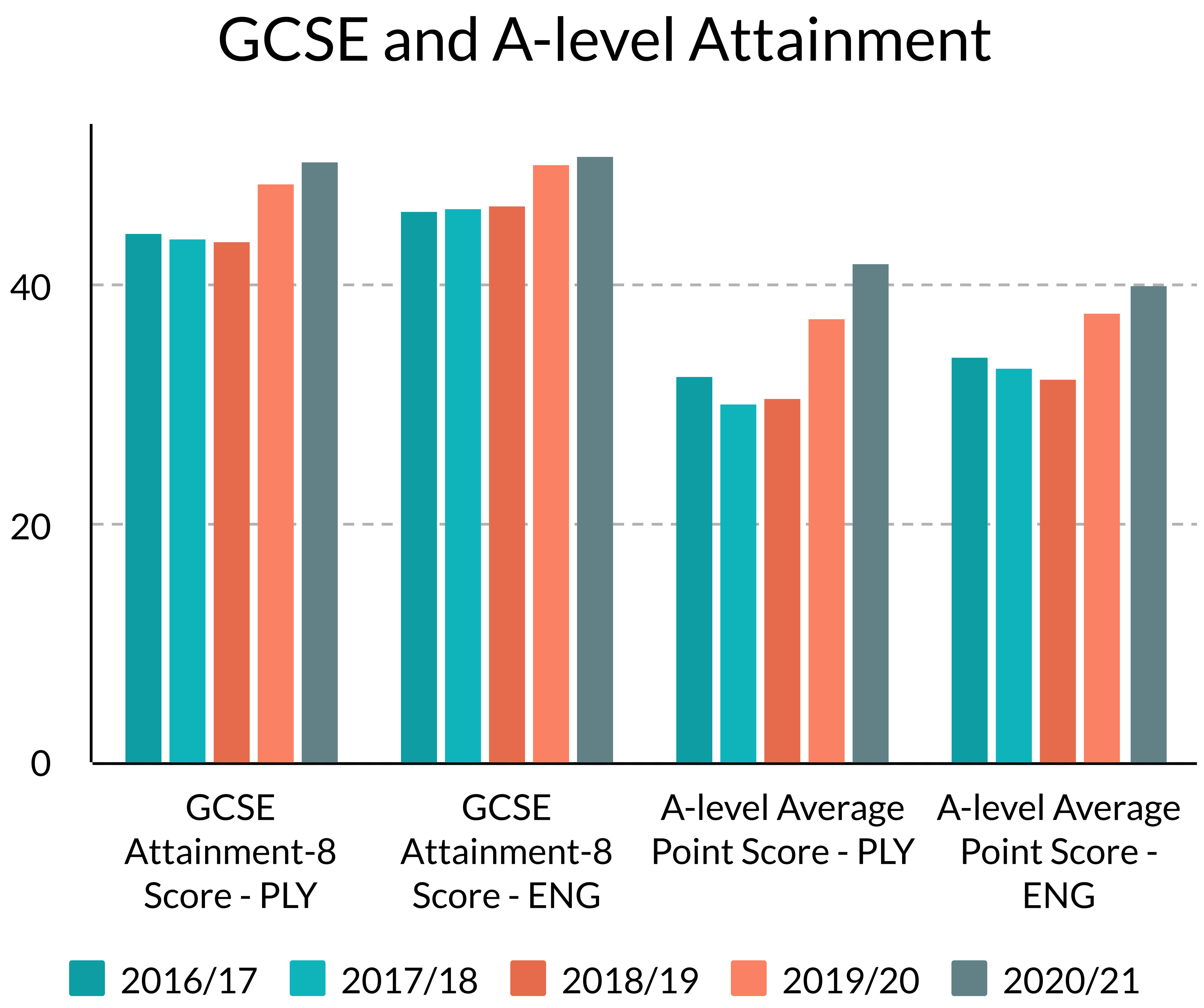


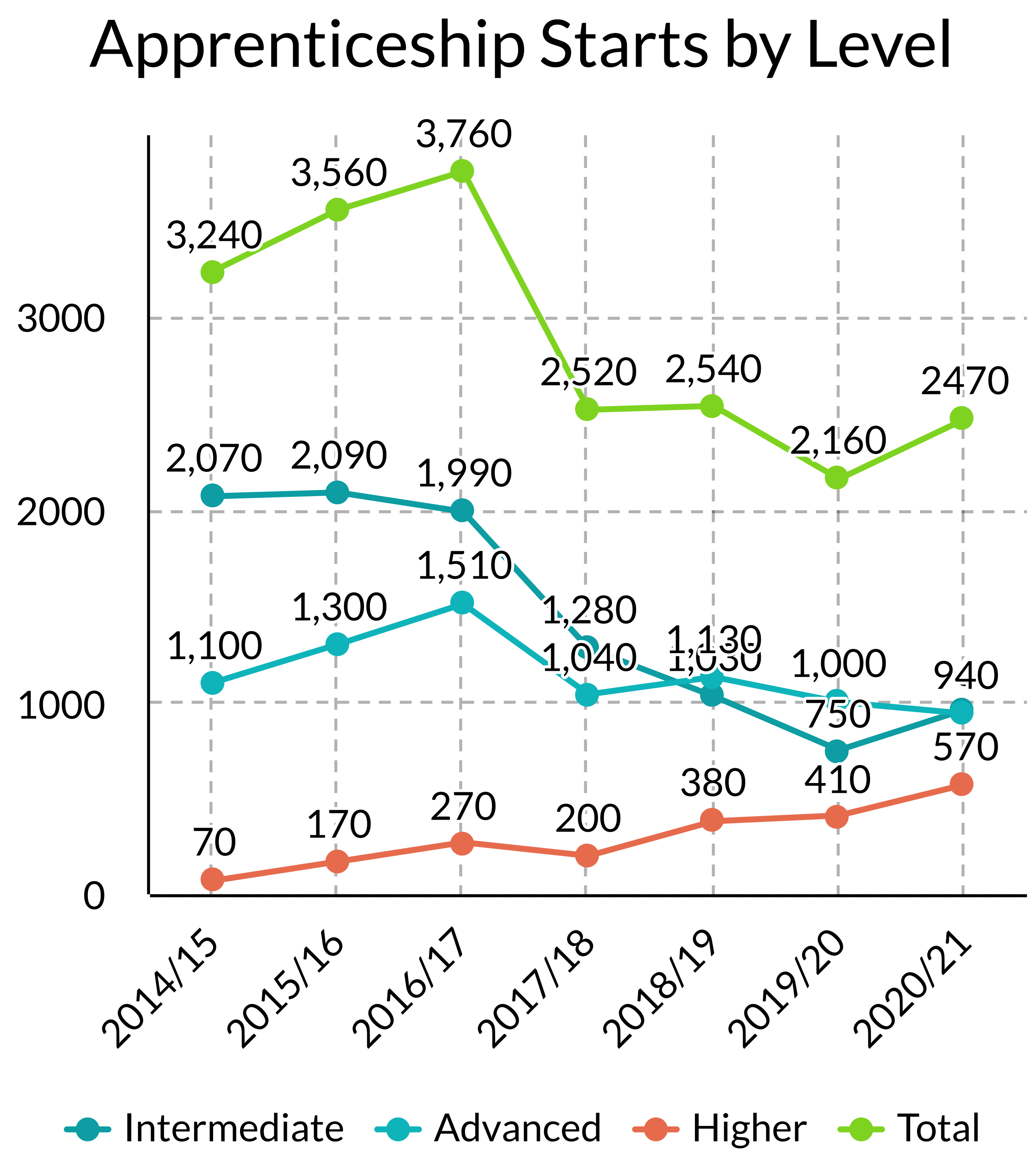


Inequality of wages is an indicator for many underlying causes of inequality. Gross Weekly Pay for Plymouth residents is published annually in increments for each decile of workers. We are monitoring the 20th percentile and the 80th percentile. This shows the maximum wages of the lowest paid 20% of workers and the lowest wage for the highest paid 20% of workers. In 2023, the 20th percentile saw a slight increase of 4.09% to £292.4 and the 80th percentile saw a significant increase of 18.12% to £837.2. As a result, the wage gap increased from 2022 to 2023.

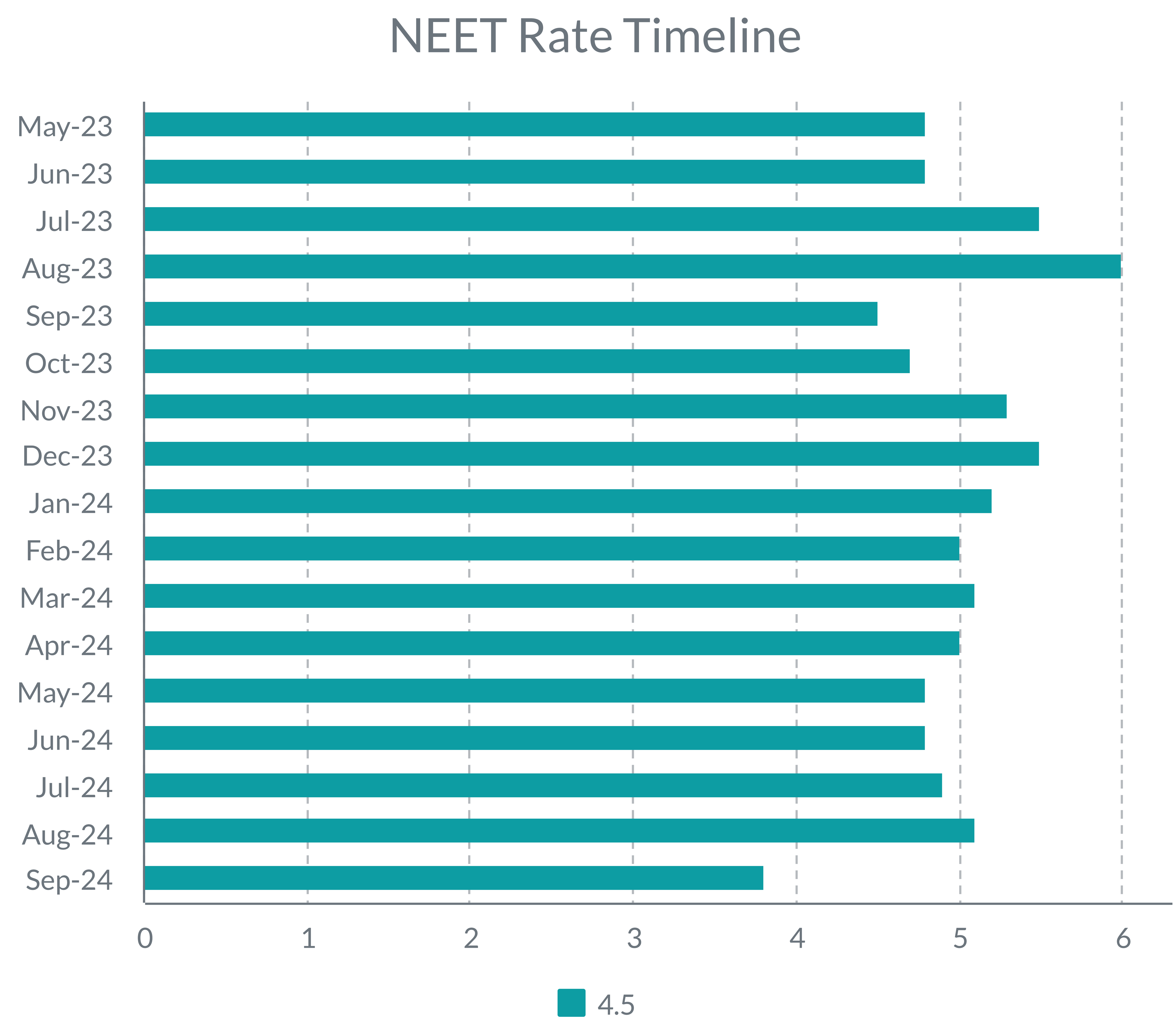
The gap between the 20th and 80th percentile is higher in Plymouth than the South West but lower compared to the UK. Largely due to the increase of the 80th percentile wage in Plymouth in 2023.

Skills





- Plymouth's GCSE and A-level attainment have increased in recent years, with both measures catching up with the average for England.
- Apprenticeship starts has seen an overall downward trend from previous years, however, 2020/21 has seen a reversal in this trend.
- There was an increase in higher level apprenticeship starts over the period.



The absolute NEET figure for **June 2024** was **283** with a rate of **4.8%** and **289** in **July 2024** with a rate of **4.9%.**

Please note that only 2 year groups are now tracked/counted.

This brings measures/KPIs in line with central government and allows for comparison with national and regional benchmarks.