



Gig economy

Young people who lost jobs in pandemic in UK 'returning to insecure work'

Resolution Foundation thinktank report says third of 'returners' on temporary or zero-hours contracts

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Young people who lost their jobs during the pandemic in the UK have returned to less secure work, often in gig economy roles, according to research from a leading thinktank, which also found almost 50,000 more men under the age of 24 are now economically inactive.

A report by the Resolution Foundation published on Monday found young people had **returned to work** rapidly in late 2021, with unemployment now slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels, but a third of the 18- to 34-year-olds back in the workplace were now in atypical, insecure work.

The young “returners” - those who were employed pre-Covid but became **unemployed in the pandemic** - were now much more likely than those who stayed in work to be on a temporary or zero-hours contract, or doing agency work or unsteady hours. Thirty-three per cent of the returners, among 6,100 people surveyed by YouGov for the study, were now in such roles, compared with 12% of those who had stayed in work throughout the pandemic.

While the thinktank said the furlough scheme had been a success in limiting youth unemployment, joblessness during the pandemic nonetheless had blighted future employment and pay prospects, as well as the mental health, of many.

Although the youth unemployment rate decreased from 10.5% to 9.8% from spring 2020 to autumn 2021, the number of 18- to 24-year-olds who are economically inactive and not in full-time education, known as Neets, rose by 75,000 last year - with young men accounting for more than 60% of the increase, the report said.

Researchers found about two-thirds of those who lost work reported mental health problems. The thinktank said policymakers should not be led into complacency by the headline unemployment figures, and needed to focus on tackling insecure work.

Louise Murphy, an economist at the Resolution Foundation and author of the report, said: “One in three young people who experienced worklessness during the last lockdown have returned to atypical contracts, which often means insecure work. The fact that they are more likely to be looking for new or additional work suggests higher dissatisfaction with their current jobs.

“And while unemployment has fallen, the number of young people dropping out of education and the labour market altogether has risen – especially young men.

“A return to the workplace, on its own, is not enough. Ensuring that young people have the confidence and knowledge to find and apply for work, and access to good quality jobs and sufficient hours, must be a priority for employers and policymakers in the months and years to come.”
