

Furlough numbers continued to fall in March and April, latest figures show

The number of workers on furlough have fallen to their lowest level this year despite at least 3.4 million people still relying on the job protection scheme, according to government statistics published on Thursday.

The reduction was in part driven by the reopening of pubs and restaurants for outdoor dining in April.

More than one million employees left the scheme between March and April, with some of the biggest falls in people under the age of 25, the government said.

The scheme, which pays up to [80% of salaries to those who are unable to work due to lockdown](#), has given a total of 11.2 million employees cash since the start of the pandemic.

And there were further positive signals from the government's statistics department, which found that the number of employees on furlough continued to fall even further in early May.

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"Today's data is another welcome sign that our Plan for Jobs is working and that the route we have taken is the right one," said Chancellor Rishi Sunak. "These figures show the scheme is naturally winding down as people get back to work and take advantage of the opportunities out there in the jobs market."

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But of the 3.4 million people still on furlough, many were involved in “beverage serving activities”, which includes pubs and restaurants. As of 30 April, the sector still had around 70% of eligible staff not working and instead receiving

government assistance.

The reintroduction of indoor dining in May is not reflected in the latest figures.

This compares with just 12% across all sectors, according to official figures. Other industries with a high reliance on the scheme include hotels, airlines and photographers, all of which have more than 50% of employees still furloughed.

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The Resolution Foundation, a think tank focused on living standards, said that while the rapid fall in furlough numbers was very encouraging, the fact that over three million employees are still not back to work shows there is still the risk of a rise in unemployment [later this year when the scheme ends](#).

“With around one-in-six young workers still on furlough at the end of April, today’s figures are a stark reminder of the risk of rising unemployment when the furlough scheme ends,” said Dan Tomlinson, a senior economist at the Resolution Foundation. “The government must do all it can to ensure those workers find work as quickly as possible.”