

**David Freeman** | Deputy Director for Labour Markets  
and Households

Siobhian Brown MSP  
Convener, COVID-19 Recovery Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

18 November 2022

Dear Ms Brown,

Thank you for inviting me to give evidence for the Committee's inquiry, *Road to recovery: impact of the pandemic on the Scottish labour market*. During that session, I agreed to follow-up with the Committee with the latest data detailing international comparisons of inactivity rates in Scotland.

Internationally comparisons are generally made based on 15- to 64-year-olds, rather than 16- to 64-year-olds as used in the UK. In the UK, all 15-year-olds are considered to be economically inactive. They are also often presented as participation rates, rather than economic inactivity rates, whereby economic inactivity is the inverse of participation. Although we do not calculate a rate for Scotland on a 15- to 64-year-old basis, the 16- to 64-year-old economic inactivity rate for Scotland has averaged around 1 percentage point above the UK rate over the last five years.

Based on information held by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for 2021, international economic inactivity rates ranged between 46% in India and 15% in Iceland. Across the OECD, the average economic inactivity rate was 28%, with the European Union at 26% and G7 countries averaging 25%. The UK rate of 22% was near the lower quartile mark, just below Lithuania and Malta, and just above Germany and Finland. Only Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, Netherlands, and Iceland have rates 20% or lower.

The latest comparison figures for Labour force participation, along with a number of other key measures, are available from the OECD Data website<sup>1</sup>.

Kind regards,



**David Freeman**

---

<sup>1</sup> Labour Force Participation statistics, OECD; <https://data.oecd.org/emp/labour-force-participation-rate.htm>