

“Number of BME people in insecure work more than doubled under previous government”

12 months ago



Labour’s Employment Rights Bill is vital to lifting living standards for Black and minority ethnic (BME) workers, says the TUC today (Monday).

New TUC analysis published by the union body today shows that the number of BME people in insecure work has reached a record high of 878,800.

Insecure work on the rise across the country

The analysis shows that the overall number of people in insecure or precarious employment – like zero-hours-contracts, low-paid self-employment and casual/seasonal work – increased by nearly one million between 2011 and 2023 to 4.1 million.

Over that period insecure work rose nearly three times faster than secure forms of employment.

While the numbers in insecure work increased by 31%, those in secure jobs increased by just 11%.

BME workers have “borne the brunt”

The new TUC analysis shows that BME workers bore the brunt of that fallout from the financial crash with a huge rise in insecure work.

In 2011, around 360,200 BME workers (1 in 8, or 12.2% of those BME workers in work) were in insecure

employment. But this more than doubled – increasing by over half a million to around 878,800 by 2023.

This huge increase in the numbers of BME workers in insecure work – an increase of 144% – was around 8.5 times the increase in the proportion of white workers in insecure work (an increase of 17%) over the same period.

The TUC estimates that as a result of this rise currently 1 in 6 (16.9%) BME workers in the UK are trapped in precarious employment – compared to 1 in 9 (11.7%) white workers.

Structural racism in action

The TUC says the overrepresentation of BME workers in insecure work shows “structural racism in action”.

The union body says BME workers experience racism at every stage of the labour market.

This includes discrimination in recruitment processes, fewer opportunities for training and development compared to white workers, being unfairly disciplined, and being forced into roles with less favourable terms and pay.

The TUC says these are persistent barriers at work which hold back BME workers across different roles and occupations, leaving disproportionate numbers of BME workers stuck in low-paid jobs, with limited rights and on precarious contracts which mean they can find themselves out of work without notice.

Insecure work pay penalty

Today’s analysis also shows that people in insecure work face a severe pay penalty compared to other workers.

People on zero-hours contracts earn over a third (-35%) less an hour, on average, than workers on median pay.

And the pay gap between workers in seasonal (-33%) and casual (-37%) work and median earners is also stark.

Making work pay

The TUC says the huge rise in insecure and low-paid work highlights the need to boost workers’ rights and make work pay.

Labour’s Employment Rights Bill – which the new government has committed to introduce within its first 100 days – will help these workers by banning zero-hours contracts and make key employment rights available from day one on the job.

TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak said: “Over the last 14 years the Tories have overseen an explosion in insecure, low-paid work – and BME workers have borne the brunt of this rise.

“The massive and disproportionate concentration of BME workers in insecure work is structural racism in action.

“Too many BME workers are trapped in low-paid, insecure jobs with limited rights and protections, and

treated like disposable labour.

“Labour’s election victory is a welcome chance to tackle the systemic discrimination that holds BME workers back and to usher in a fresh start for hard-pressed working families.

“The new government’s Employment Rights Bill to boost workers’ rights – and make work pay – can be a game changer.

“It’s clear that banning zero-hours contracts and placing a duty on employers to report their ethnicity pay gap will make a huge difference to BME workers around the country.

“This is a historic opportunity to address inequality in the labour market and set the nation on course for a better future. We must grab it.”

New Deal for Working People

Labour has pledged to introduce an Employment Rights Bill within its first 100 days.

The Bill is part of the government’s programme to Make Work Pay, which will deliver improvements including:

- ✓ A ban on zero-hours contracts
- ✓ Ending fire and rehire
- ✓ Strengthened sick pay
- ✓ Employment rights from day one of the job
- ✓ Strengthened rights to flexible working
- ✓ An end to lower minimum wage rates for young people so they get the full rate
- ✓ Ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting
- ✓ New rights to support workers to unionise and win better pay