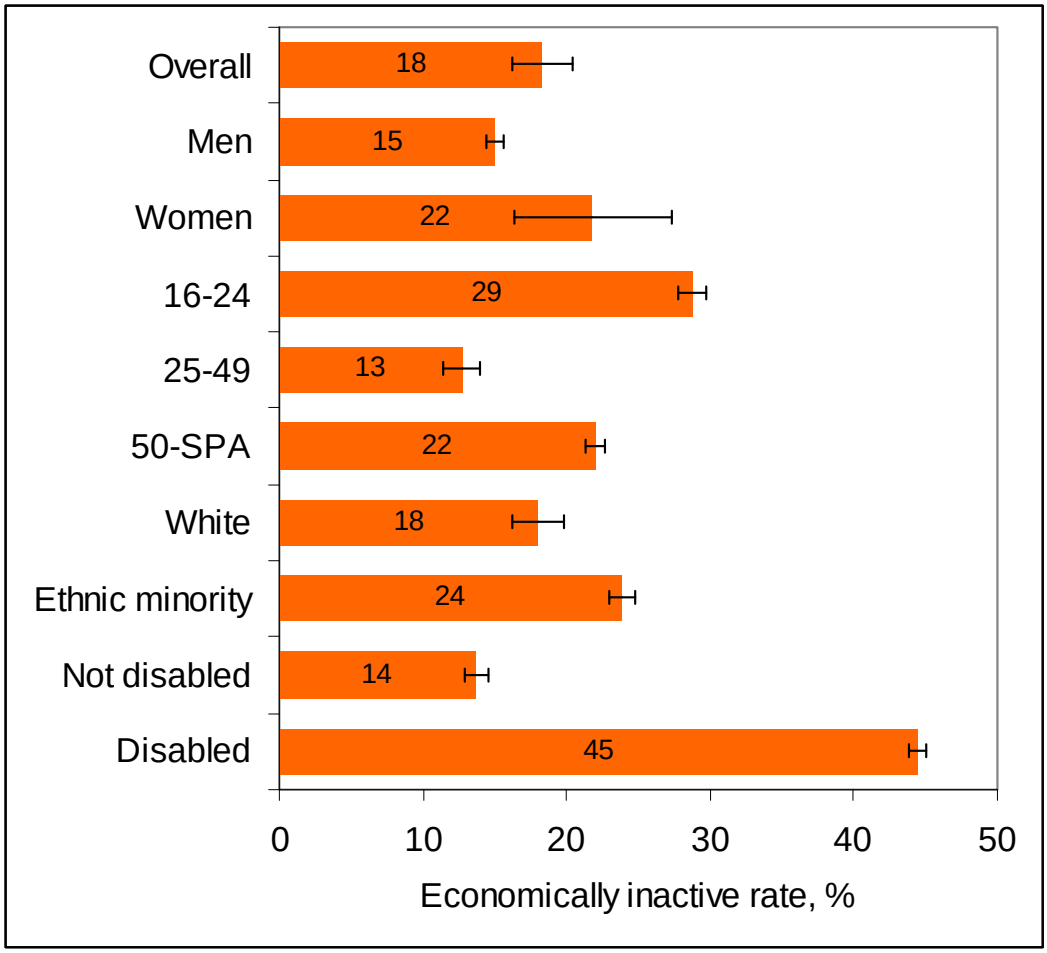
- ECONOMIC INACTIVITY -

Almost one-fifth (18%) of the South West's population of working age is economically inactive (Figure 17) compared with 21% for the UK. This includes students, home-makers, the sick and disabled, retirees and people who are not in work or have looked for work in the last four weeks.

The highest inactivity rates are associated with disability although young people (aged under 25), women and ethnic minorities are more likely to be economically active than older people (25 and over), men and those of white ethnic origin, respectively.

Figure 17: Economic inactivity by equality strand, September 2007 to October 2008, South West



Source: Annual Population Survey

Most men and women of working age are economically inactive because they are retired (65% and 62%). Beyond this, most women are eight times more likely than

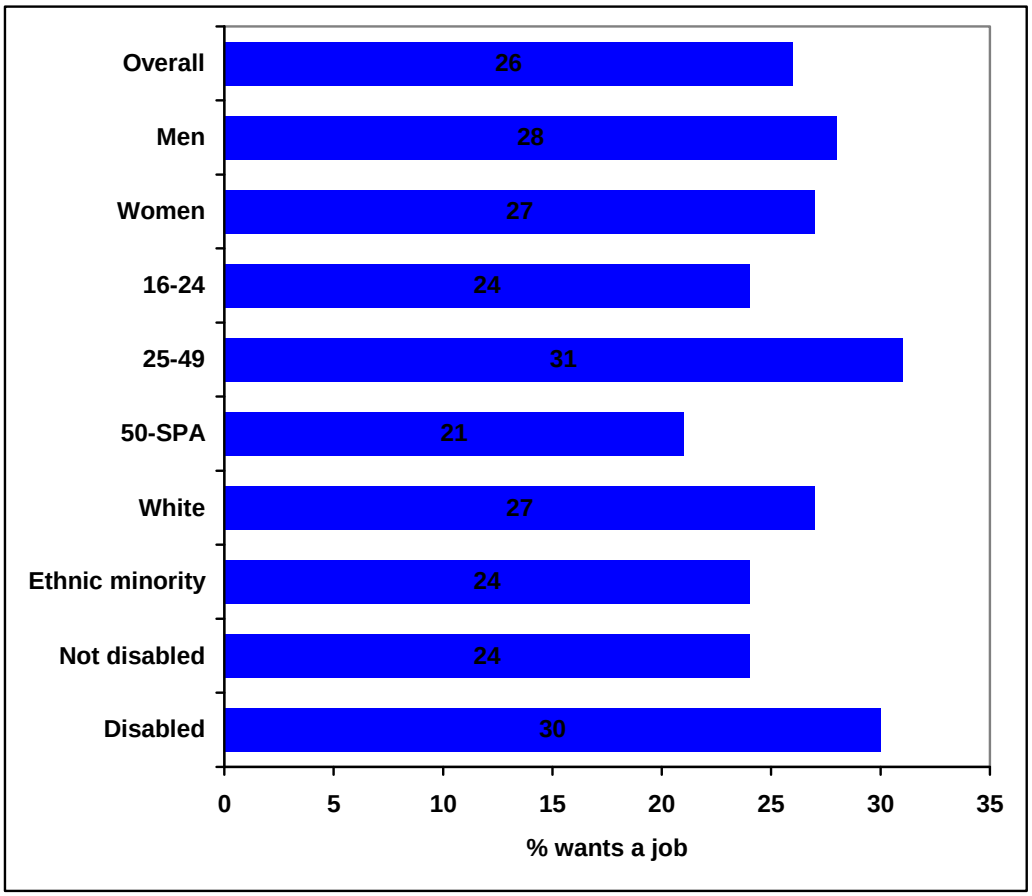
men to be looking after a home and/or family, and men are more likely than women to be sick or disabled, or students. Almost three-quarters of the economically inactive under 25s are students while people aged over 50 are mainly either sick or disabled, or retired. Half of the inactive population aged 25 to 49 are looking after a family with the majority of the remainder sick or disabled.

The vast majority of inactive disabled people do not cite their illness or impairment as the reason for their inactivity: rather they are as likely as not disabled people to be retired, although most of the remainder are sick or disabled (30%, compared to 2% of non-disabled people).

Probably reflecting their younger age profile, almost half of ethnic minorities are inactive because they are students with most of the remainder inactive because they are looking after a house and/or family.

More than a quarter (26%) of the UK economically inactive population of working age would like to work. Differences across the equality strands are relatively small with the largest being between disabled and non-disabled people and those aged between 50 and state pension age and younger people aged 25 and over.

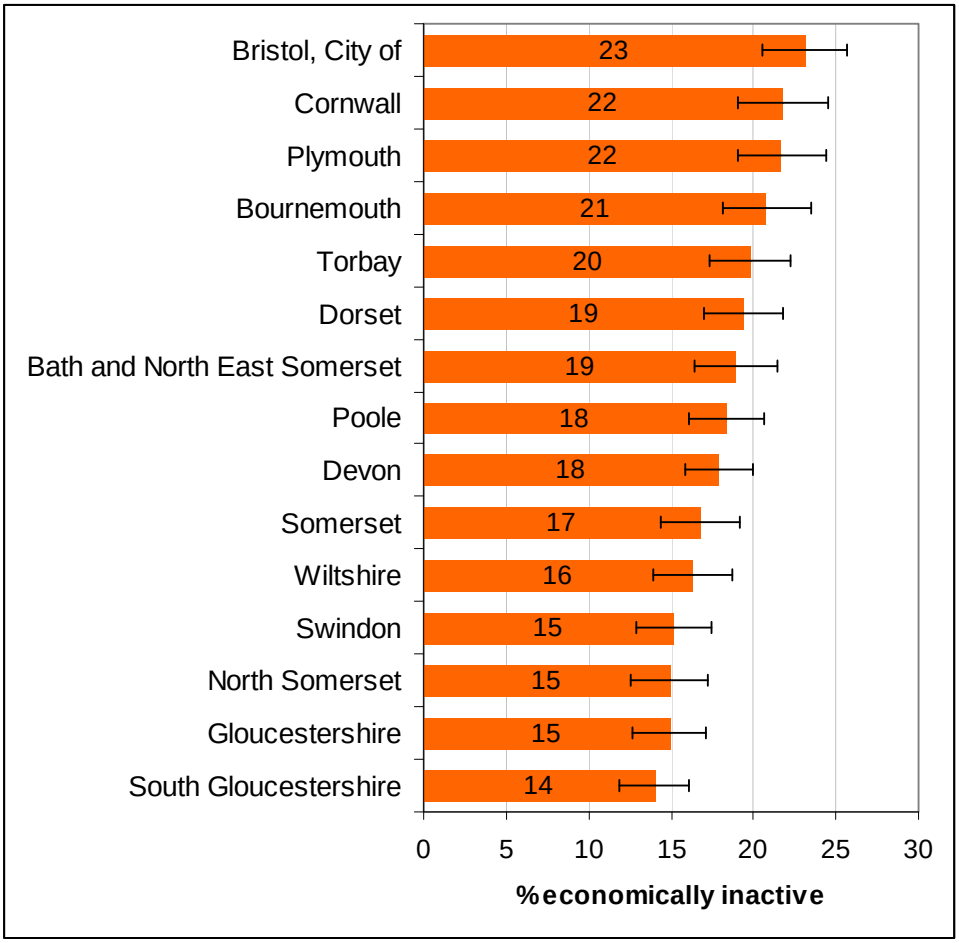
Figure 18: Percentage of the economically inactive population that wants a job by equality strand, United Kingdom



Source: Annual Population Survey (UK Data Archive)

The share of economically inactive residents in the working age population varies from 23% in the City of Bristol to 14% in South Gloucestershire (Figure 19). City of Bristol, Plymouth and Cornwall have levels of economic inactivity that are higher than the South West average, and South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Gloucestershire and Swindon have rates than are lower than average.

Figure 19: Economic inactivity rate (working age) by local authority area, September 2007 to October 2009



Source: Annual Population Survey (NOMIS)