

Northern Ireland Labour Market Report

Theme: Labour Market

Frequency: Monthly

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

Key Points

- The number of people on the NI claimant count (experimental) decreased by 1,200 over the month to 63,100 in June 2020. This was more than double the number recorded in March. The experimental Claimant Count includes Jobseeker's Allowance Claimants and those claimants of Universal Credit who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed.
- There were 2,473 proposed redundancies in June 2020 and 745 proposed between 1st and 15th July. The number of proposed redundancies in June was the highest since comparable records began and accounted for over a third of proposed redundancies in the year to end of June.
- The department was notified of 40 confirmed redundancies in June 2020, taking the number of confirmed redundancies to 2,602 in 12 months to end of June; compared to 1,813 the previous year.
- Earnings from the HMRC PAYE indicated that NI employees had a median monthly pay of £1,688 in the three months to May 2020, a decrease of 0.5% on the previous three months and an increase of 1.2% from the same time last year. Although relatively small at 0.5%, this is the first quarterly decrease since 2015.
- The latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates relate to March-May 2020. The estimates indicate that, over the quarter, the unemployment and employment rates decreased and the economic inactivity rate increased.
- The NI unemployment rate (16+) decreased over the quarter (0.1pps) and over the year (0.7pps) to one of the lowest rates on record (2.4%) in March-May 2020. Although recent changes were not statistically significant, the unemployment rate was significantly below rates in late 2018. The NI unemployment rate was below the UK rate (3.9%), the Republic of Ireland rate (5.6%) and the EU (27) rate (6.6%).
- The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 in work (the employment rate) decreased over the quarter (0.9pps) and over the year (0.1pps) to 71.6%. Although recent changes were not statistically significant, the employment rate was significantly above rates in late 2017. The latest employment rate recorded for the whole of the UK was 76.4%.
- The NI economic inactivity rate (the proportion of people aged from 16 to 64 who were not working and not seeking or available to work) increased over the quarter (1.0pps) and over the year (0.7pps) to 26.6%. Although recent changes were not statistically significant, the economic inactivity rate was significantly below rates in 2010. The NI economic inactivity rate remained above the UK rate (20.4%).

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NATIONAL STATISTICS STATUS

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

These statistics were designated as National Statistics in August 2010 following a full [assessment](#) against the [Code of Practice](#). A [compliance check](#) in March 2020 recommended the continued designation of the report as a National Statistic. These statistics were considered as part of a [wider assessment](#) of UK employment and jobs statistics.

Since the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Redesigned the Labour Market Report, providing more context to results by setting recent changes within context of longer term trends;
- Removed pre-release access to enhance trustworthiness, and brought forward the publication date as a result;
- Improved timeliness of [calendar quarter data](#) (ranging from 1 week to 3 months) by incorporating quarterly tables in the main Labour Market Report Publication
- Improved quality of the LFS data by boosting the sample size and improving precision around headline estimates
- Improved accessibility of labour market statistics by [changing publication practices](#) so that reports are [no longer released on public holidays](#). Temporarily changed [timing of release](#) in line with change in ONS release practices in response to COVID-19.

1 Summary of Labour Market Statistics

Updated July 2020

Change over quarter

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for Northern Ireland for the period March-May 2020 showed that, over the quarter:

- the unemployment rate decreased by 0.1pps to 2.4% Not statistically significant
- the employment rate decreased by 0.9pps to 71.6% Not statistically significant
- the economic inactivity rate increased by 1.0pps to 26.6% Not statistically significant

The seasonally adjusted experimental claimant count (Jobseekers Allowance plus some out-of-work claimants of Universal Credit) showed that in June 2020, there was:

- a decrease of 1,200 over the month to 63,100.

Experimental earnings statistics from HMRC PAYE indicated that, in the three months to May 2020:

- median monthly pay for employees in NI was £1,688, an decrease of 0.5% (£8) over the quarter.

During June 2020 there were:

- 40 confirmed redundancies notified to the Department, lower than the previous month's revised total of 135
- 2,473 proposed redundancies, and a further 745 proposed in the current month to 15th July.

Table 1: Labour Market Summary

	Time Period	Estimate (95% Confidence interval)	Change over quarter (95% Confidence interval)	Change over year (95% Confidence interval)
Unemployment ¹	Mar-May 2020	21,000 (+/-6,000)	-2,000 (+/-5,000)	-7,000 (+/-8,000)
Employment ²	Mar-May 2020	865,000 (+/-21,000)	-12,000 (+/-19,000)	-6,000 (+/-27,000)
Economically inactive ²	Mar-May 2020	589,000 (+/-20,000)	15,000 (+/-18,000)	20,000 (+/-26,000)
Unemployment rate ¹	Mar-May 2020	2.4% (+/-0.6pps)	-0.1pps (+/-0.6pps)	-0.7pps (+/-0.9pps)
Employment rate ²	Mar-May 2020	71.6% (+/-1.7pps)	-0.9pps (+/-1.4pps)	-0.1pps (+/-2.2pps)
Economic inactivity rate ²	Mar-May 2020	26.6% (+/-1.6pps)	1.0pps (+/-1.4pps)	0.7pps (+/-2.1pps)
Median Monthly pay ⁴	Mar-May 2020	£1,688	-£8	£20
		Estimate	Change over month	
Experimental Claimant Count ⁵	June 2020	63,100	-1,200	
Redundancies ⁶	Confirmed	40	-95	
	Proposed	2,473	2,131	

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LFS data are seasonally adjusted. More information on confidence intervals is available on the NISRA website – [Estimating and reporting uncertainty](#) paper.

¹ People aged 16 and over. Unemployment rate = total unemployed as a proportion of the economically active.

² Levels for all persons aged 16 and over, rates for working age (16-64).

³ Employee jobs survey date for Quarter 1 was 2nd March 2020. QES data therefore pre-dates the introduction of any COVID-19 restrictions

⁴ HMRC Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, Seasonally adjusted

⁵ The number of claimants on 11th June, seasonally adjusted

⁶ Redundancies in the calendar month, not seasonally adjusted.

NI Labour Market Structure: Change over year

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for Northern Ireland for the period March-May 2020 showed that over the year:

- the unemployment rate decreased by 0.7pps to 2.4% Not statistically significant
- the employment rate decreased by 0.1pps to 71.6% Not statistically significant
- the economic inactivity rate increased by 0.7pps to 26.6% Not statistically significant

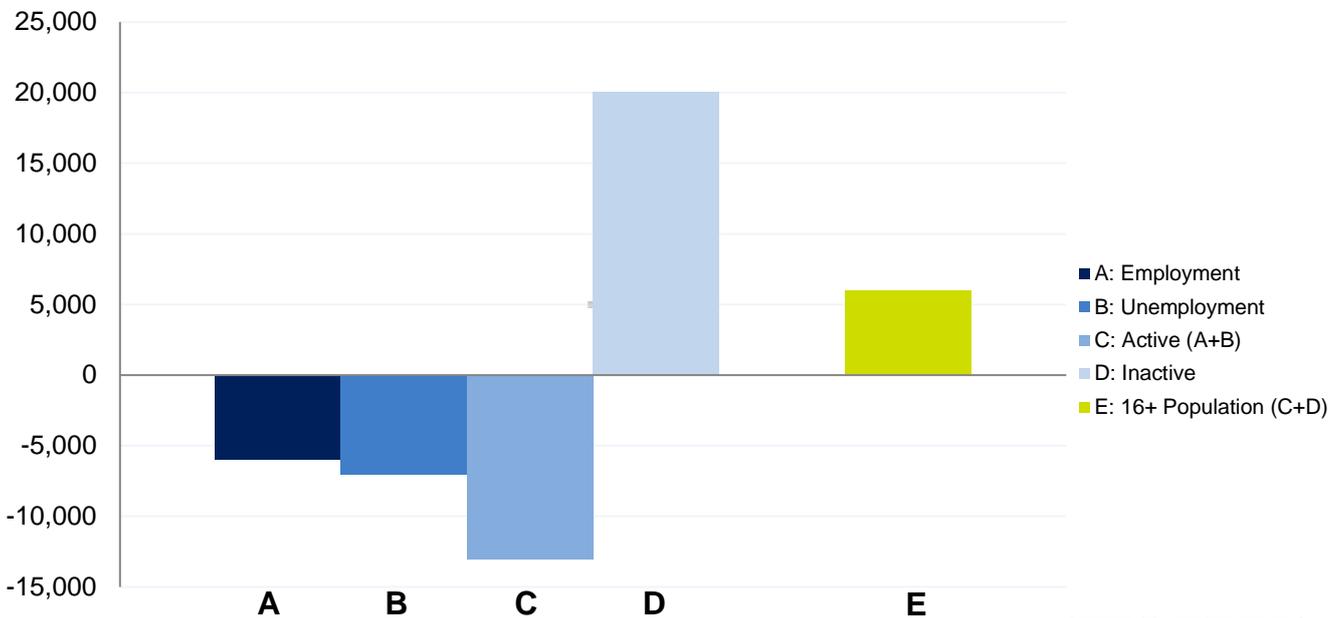
Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 2,602 confirmed redundancies which was an increase of 44% from the previous year (1,813).

Experimental earnings statistics from HMRC PAYE indicated that, in the three months to May 2020:

- median monthly pay for employees in NI was £1,688, an increase of 1.2% (£20) from the same period one year earlier.

Figure 1: NI labour market structure (16+): change over year



Note: figures rounded so may not sum

[Download in excel](#)

UK summary

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for the UK for the period March-May 2020 showed:

- the unemployment rate (3.9%) was unchanged over the quarter and increased by 0.1pps over the year
- the employment rate (76.4%) decreased by 0.2pps over the quarter and increased by 0.3pps over the year
- the economic inactivity rate (20.4%) increased by 0.2pps over the quarter and decreased by 0.4pps over the year

Commentary

The Labour Force Survey estimates for March to May 2020 are based on interviews before and during lockdown. Decreases in the employment and unemployment rates, and an increase in the economic inactivity rate are shown over the quarter and year to March to May 2020. Although unemployment remains as one of the lowest on record (2.4%) and the employment rate (71.6%) remains relatively high, 18% of employed people were temporarily away from work. Furloughed workers alongside people working fewer than their normal hours has had a large impact on the number of hours worked across the economy. The average number of hours worked per week is now the lowest on record at 27.4 hours per week, a decrease of 6.5 hours per week or 19% over the year.

The claimant count (experimental) remained at over 60,000 people for May and June, levels last seen during 2012 and 2013, and has more than doubled since March. In the month of June the number of proposed redundancies reached a record high at almost 2,500 redundancies and a further 745 were proposed in the current month to 15th July. The number of proposed redundancies since the start of March is now 4,900. The increases have been driven by redundancies in four sectors; transport and storage, wholesale and retail trade, food and accommodation services, and manufacturing.

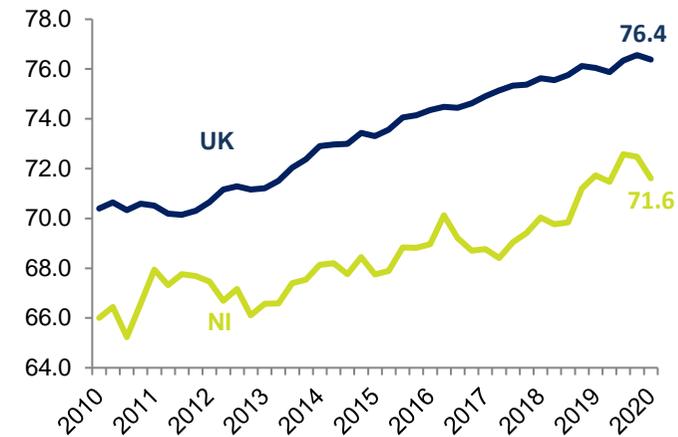
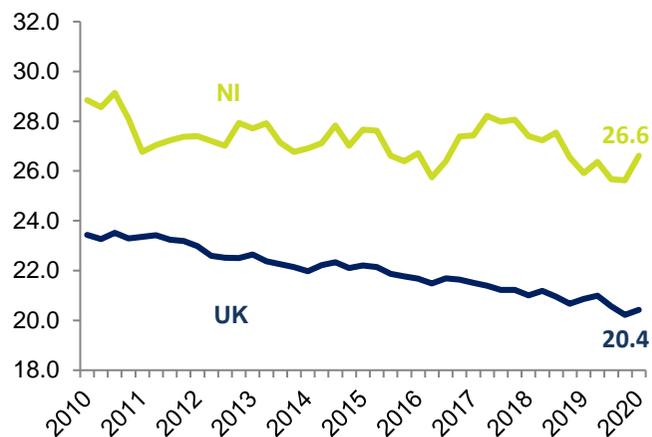
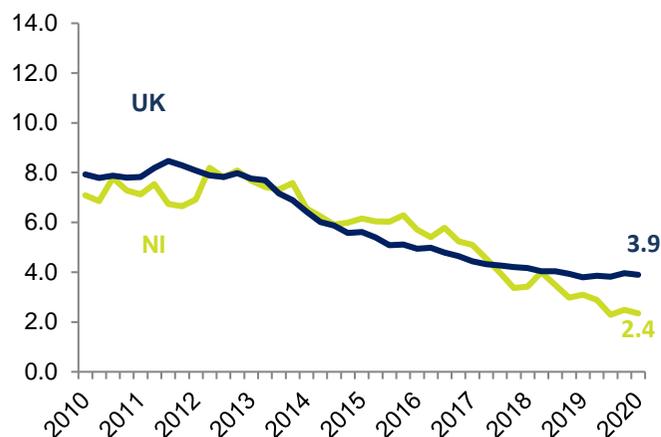
Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website: [LMR Headline Tables](#).

March-May 2020

Unemployment – 2.4%

Economic Inactivity – 26.6%

Employment – 71.6%



Quarterly Change

NI - 0.1pps¹



UK 0.0pps



NI 1.0pps



UK 0.2pps



NI -0.9pps



UK -0.2pps



Annual Change

NI - 0.7pps



UK 0.1pps



NI 0.7pps



UK -0.4pps



NI -0.1pps



UK 0.3pps



pps¹ = percentage points

Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted and subject to future revisions.

Data published – 16th July 2020

Things users need to know

A quick guide to data source reference periods and key events is presented below.

The Labour Force Survey estimates for March to May 2020 are based on interviews before and during lockdown. NISRA suspended all face to face household interviews in the middle of March due to COVID-19. From April all LFS interviews were conducted by telephone. The resulting individual sample size (16+) for March-May 2020 was 19% lower than the previous quarter and 14% lower than the same quarter last year. This has had a marginal impact on the precision of the estimates (for example employment rate 95% confidence interval increased by 0.2 percentage points) from the December to February 2020 quarter.

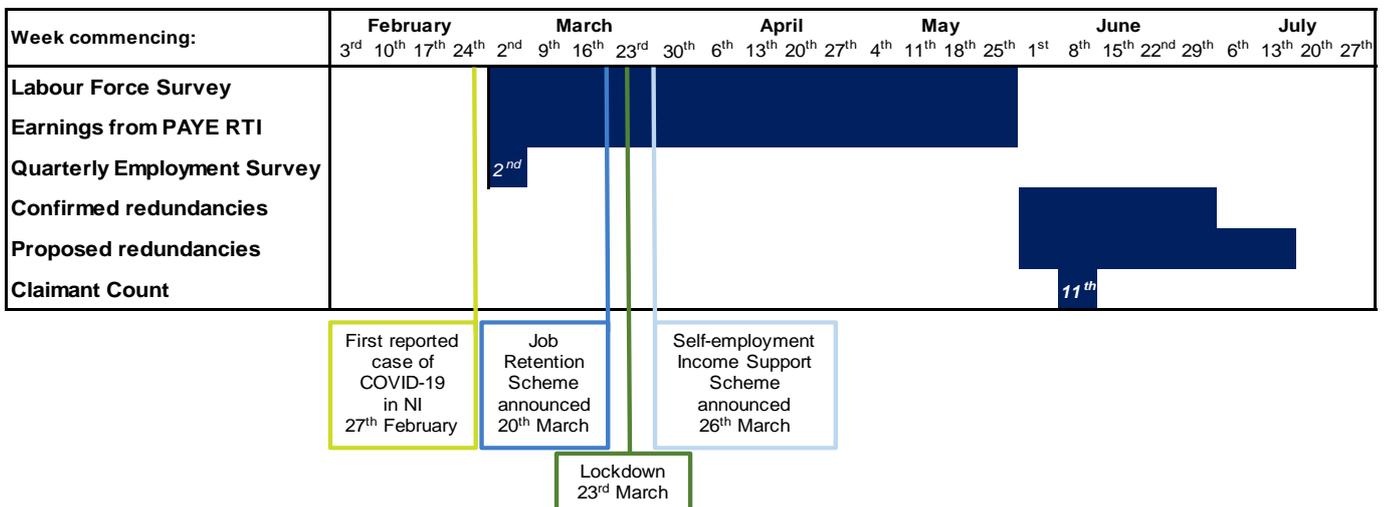
This month’s release includes analysis to help users understand movements in the labour market. An experimental estimate of ‘Those temporarily away from work’, is provided to help users understand the composition of the employment rate. Those furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in estimates of ‘temporarily away from work’ and total employment.

Early indications of the impact of the coronavirus on survey imputation methodology show that there is little impact from the use of existing methodology on the headline measures of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity (less than 0.1 percentage points). Measures relating to hours in this release understate the reduction in the actual number of hours worked by approximately 2 to 3%. Further information is available within [ONS’s latest Employment in the UK release](#).

Experimental statistics from HMRC Pay As You Earn system are included in today’s release as well as the experimental [claimant count](#) and [redundancy](#) data for the first weeks of July. Although these sources provide more up-to-date indicators of the Labour Market, users should continue to note the experimental nature of the claimant count and earnings data. This means the data series are still in their development stage and as such revisions are expected. In addition, redundancy notifications, although a useful indicator, provide an incomplete picture of the total number of redundancies in the economy as they relate to collective redundancies (redundancies of 20 or more).

Vacancies statistics are usually updated in May’s LMR following the publication of annual Vacancy Statistical Bulletin. Due to the impact of COVID-19 on the availability of staff to access data streams, quality assure its production and release, DfC have delayed its publication until 29th July 2020. The August Labour Market Report will contain updated vacancies data. See [DfC website](#) for more information about vacancies data and publication dates.

Data source reference periods and key dates



Context

The LMR is a monthly overview of Northern Ireland key labour market statistics. It includes figures from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Quarterly Employment Survey, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, claimant count, redundancies counts and vacancies data. More information about the data sources can be found in Section 6. Where available, comparative UK data (produced by the ONS) have been included. The latest labour market statistics are available on the [ONS website](#).

A recent Labour Market Outputs consultation ([Labour Market Statistics User Engagement page](#)) showed labour market statistics are used for policy monitoring and research, academic and private sector research, service planning and delivery. Key users of Northern Ireland labour market statistics include government departments, in particular the Department for the Economy (DfE), which uses the statistics to design and monitor the impact of economic and labour market policy. Other Government departments such as the Executive Office, the Department of Finance (DoF) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), as well as bodies such as Invest NI and Belfast City Council, regularly require specific [ad hoc](#) labour market analysis in order to monitor policies for example, equality and employment. In addition, significant 'non-governmental' users of labour market statistics (including the media, banks, academics, private consultants and the general public) use the data primarily for reporting or researching the performance of the economy in general. Labour market statistics attract widespread media coverage, with a number of broadcasters publishing articles on the labour market on a monthly basis, generally on the day of publication of the LMR.

Labour market statistics feature in the [DfE Economic Commentary](#), which provides an overview of the state of the Northern Ireland economy, in context with the UK and Republic of Ireland. The most up-to-date official statistics on the economy and labour market are available on the [Economic Overview section](#) of the NISRA website. More information on the production of LFS outputs in general can be found in the [Background information – LFS](#) section of the NISRA website.

Further information on using labour market statistics can be found on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website:

- [Guide to Labour Market Statistics](#)
- [Glossary](#)

Ad-hoc data requests related to the labour market impacts of coronavirus and associated schemes are added to the [COVID-19 related analysis](#) section of the NISRA website.

For more on how COVID-19 has impacted the production of statistics please see the [COVID-19 and the production of statistics](#) section on the NISRA website and an [ONS Statement](#) on ensuring the best possible information during COVID-19 through safe data collection.

Labour Force Survey

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household sample survey carried out by interviewing individuals about their personal circumstances and work. It provides a rich source of information on the labour force using internationally agreed definitions. Estimates are subject to sampling error (see section 6 and the [Estimating and Reporting Uncertainty](#) paper for details).

LFS unemployment: The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines unemployed as those aged 16+ without a job who were able to start work in the two weeks following their LFS interview and had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained.

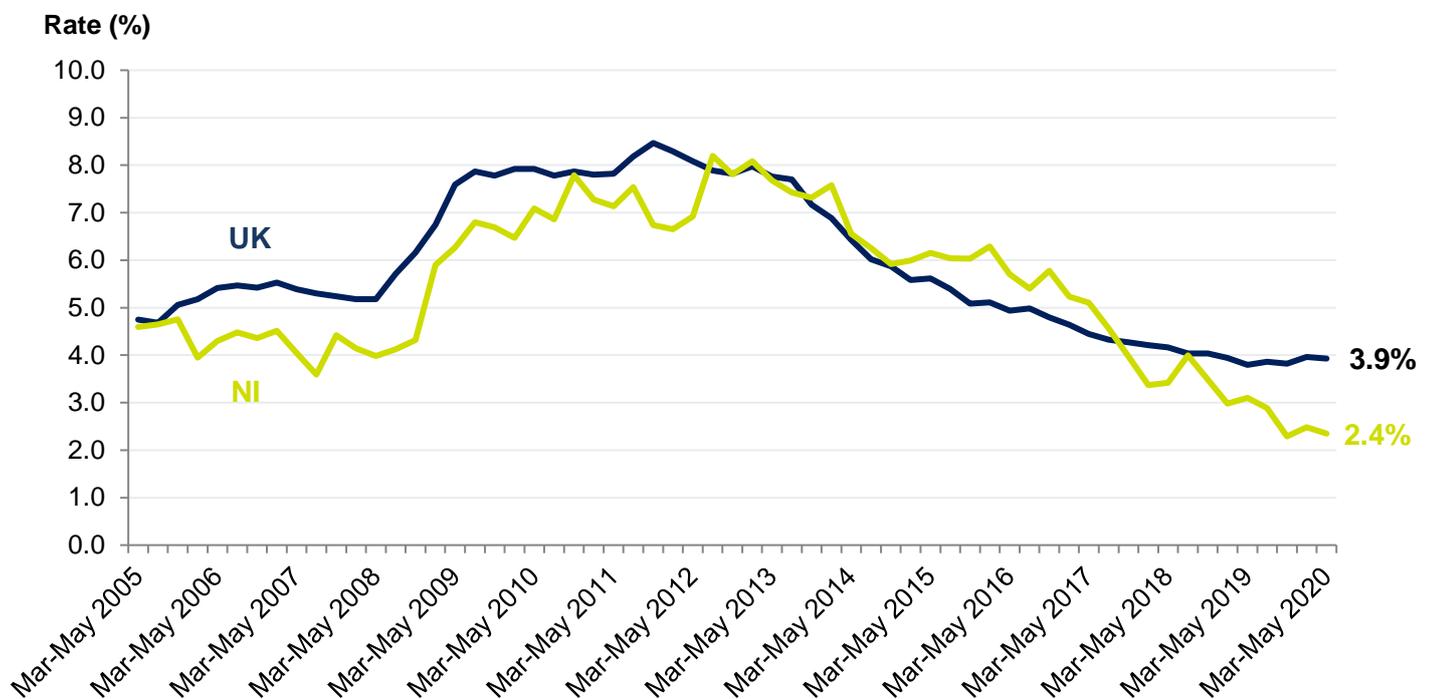
Long-Term Unemployment: those who have been unemployed for 12 months or more.

Youth Unemployment: unemployed people aged 16-24 years.

Key Findings

- LFS unemployment rate for March to May in NI decreased over the quarter and over the year to 2.4% (one of the lowest rates on record)
- The NI unemployment rate has remained below the UK rate since mid-2017
- The UK unemployment rate is estimated at 3.9%

Figure 2: Seasonally adjusted unemployment rate (16+), Mar-May 2005 to Mar-May 2020



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Figure 2 shows unemployment rates on the current 3 month rolling average for NI and the UK over the last 15 years. The unemployment rate in NI reached over 8% in 2012 and is now at one of the lowest rates on record at 2.4% in March-May 2020. This is in line with the recent trends in the UK unemployment, where the rate is at one of its lowest points of 3.9% in March-May 2020. The NI unemployment rate has been below the UK rate since mid-2017.

LFS unemployment

The unemployment rate (16+) for the period March-May 2020 was estimated at 2.4%, this was:

- a decrease of 0.1pps over the quarter
- a decrease of 0.7pps over the year

The number of unemployed persons aged 16+ was estimated at 21,000, which was:

- down 2,000 from last quarter
- down 7,000 from the same period last year

UK regional and international LFS comparisons

The most recent NI unemployment rate (2.4%) was:

- below the overall UK average rate (3.9%)
- the lowest rate among the twelve UK regions
- below the European Union (27) rate (6.6%) for April 2020 and the Republic of Ireland rate (5.6%) for May 2020

Long-term and youth unemployment

Please note that the estimates of long-term unemployed and youth unemployment are below the normal statistical quality threshold for release.

Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website:

[LFS unemployment](#)

Comparison between LFS Unemployment and the Experimental Claimant Count

LFS is a sample survey and is conducted to International Labour Organisation (ILO) definitions. It provides the official unemployment measure in NI with a time lag of six weeks between the end of data collection and publication of estimates. The experimental claimant count is a measure of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed and is derived from Jobs and Benefits Offices systems. Statistics derived from it are influenced by changes to benefit system, such as the introduction of Universal Credit. It is a timelier labour market indicator than measures produced from the LFS, with estimates published one month after the claimant count date.

There is a similar overall trend between LFS unemployment and the claimant count for most of the twenty year period from 2000 – 2020. The most recent figures, however, show a clear divergence and highlights the difference in methodology and definitions between the two measures. One important difference contributing to the most recent divergence is that those furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme would be included within the LFS employment estimates as ‘temporarily away from work’, and not the LFS unemployed estimates. In contrast, those who are furloughed could potentially be included within the Universal Credit ‘searching for work’ conditionality and therefore be counted within the experimental claimant count.

A fuller user guide setting out the differences between the experimental claimant count and the LFS unemployment is available from the [differences between the ILO unemployment and claimant count page](#) on the NISRA website.

Claimant count (experimental)

The claimant count is an administrative data source derived from Jobs and Benefits Offices systems, which records the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits.

Claimant count (experimental): consists of all people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) plus out-of-work Universal Credit (UC) claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. They must declare that they are out of work, capable of, available for and actively seeking work during the week in which their claim is made. **The most recent reference date was 11th June.**

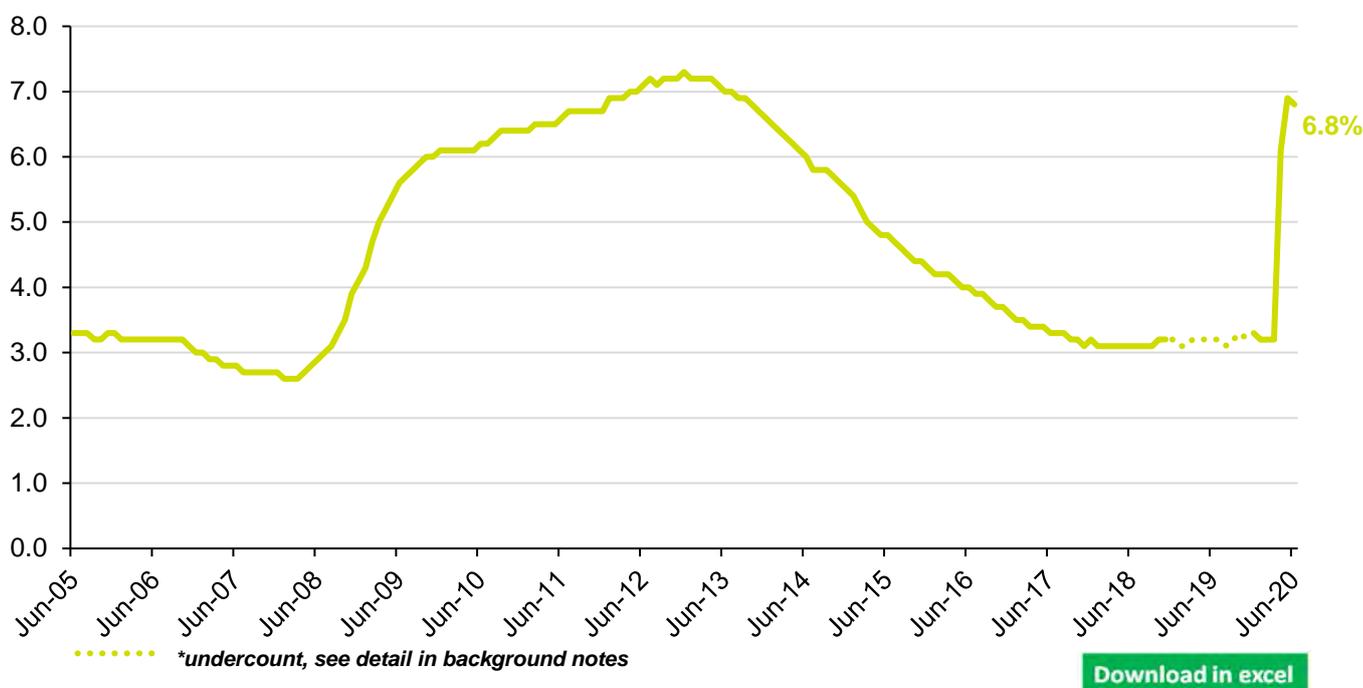
Universal Credit: Universal Credit was rolled out in NI for new claims of six benefits, including income-based JSA, on a phased geographical basis between September 2017 and December 2018.

Percentage of workforce: the number of claimants as a percentage of workforce jobs plus claimants. Workforce jobs are the sum of employee jobs, self-employment jobs, HM Forces, and government-supported trainees. This measure is only available at the NI level.

Key Findings

- NI claimant count (experimental) decreased over the month by 1,200 (1.9%) to 63,100

Figure 3: Seasonally adjusted claimant count (experimental) monthly rates, June 2005 - June 2020



In March 2018 the NI claimant count measure changed from one based solely on Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) to an experimental measure based on JSA claimants and out-of-work Universal Credit (UC) claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. Those claiming unemployment-related benefits (either UC or JSA) may be wholly unemployed and seeking work, or may be employed but with low income and/or low hours, that make them eligible for unemployment-related benefit support. Under UC a broader span of claimants became eligible for unemployment-related benefit than under the previous benefit regime.

The recent increases in claimant count can largely be attributed to the increase in the numbers of people becoming unemployed or having their hours reduced, resulting in very low earnings below the administrative earnings threshold. There may be some persons, previously not eligible for UC due to partner earnings, now eligible as a result of work allowance increases who would now be included within the count. Estimates to identify the extent to which each group has contributed to the increase in claimant count are not available for NI.

In June 63,100 people were recorded on the NI Claimant Count. This is the second month where the number of claimants exceeded 60,000 and is more than double the count in March. The May and June Claimant Counts are similar to levels and rates seen in 2012 and 2013.

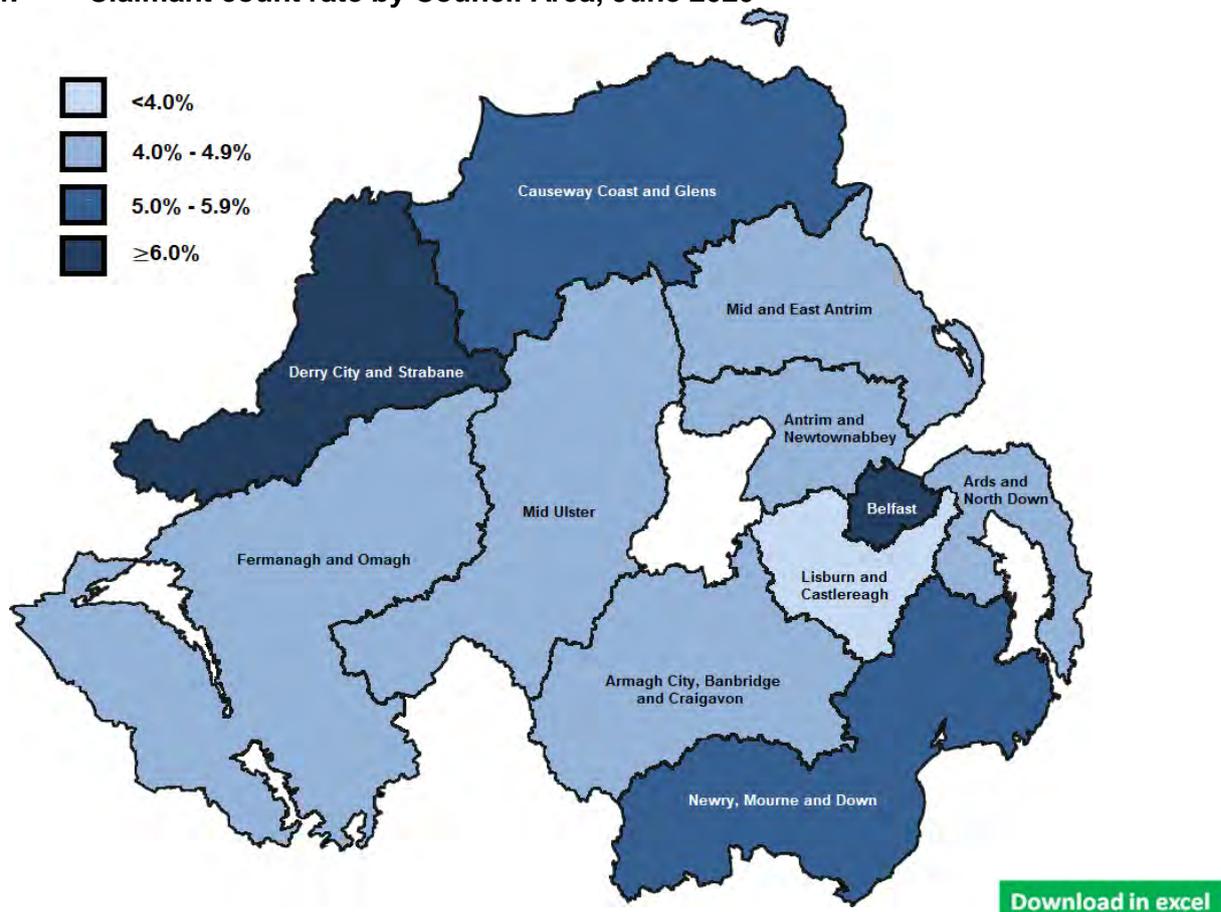
Claimant count (experimental) unemployment

The NI seasonally adjusted claimant count stood at 63,100 (6.8% of the workforce) in June 2020, representing:

- a decrease of 1,200 (1.9%) from last month's revised total
- a decrease of 2.8% in males and 0.3% in females
- a 0.1pps decrease in the workforce claimant count rate over the month.

The UK seasonally adjusted claimant count decreased by 1.1% over the month.

Figure 4: Claimant count rate by Council Area, June 2020



The Council Area comparison using claimant count data unadjusted for seasonality found that:

- the highest claimant count rates were in Derry City and Strabane (7.3%) and Belfast (6.6%).
- the lowest claimant count rates were in Lisburn and Castlereagh (3.7%) and Antrim and Newtownabbey, Mid Ulster and Fermanagh and Omagh (4.4%).

Annual and monthly claimant count data are available on the NINIS website in the form of interactive maps for [Parliamentary Constituency](#) and [Council Area](#).

Further details on the experimental claimant count are available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website: [Claimant Count](#)

Redundancies

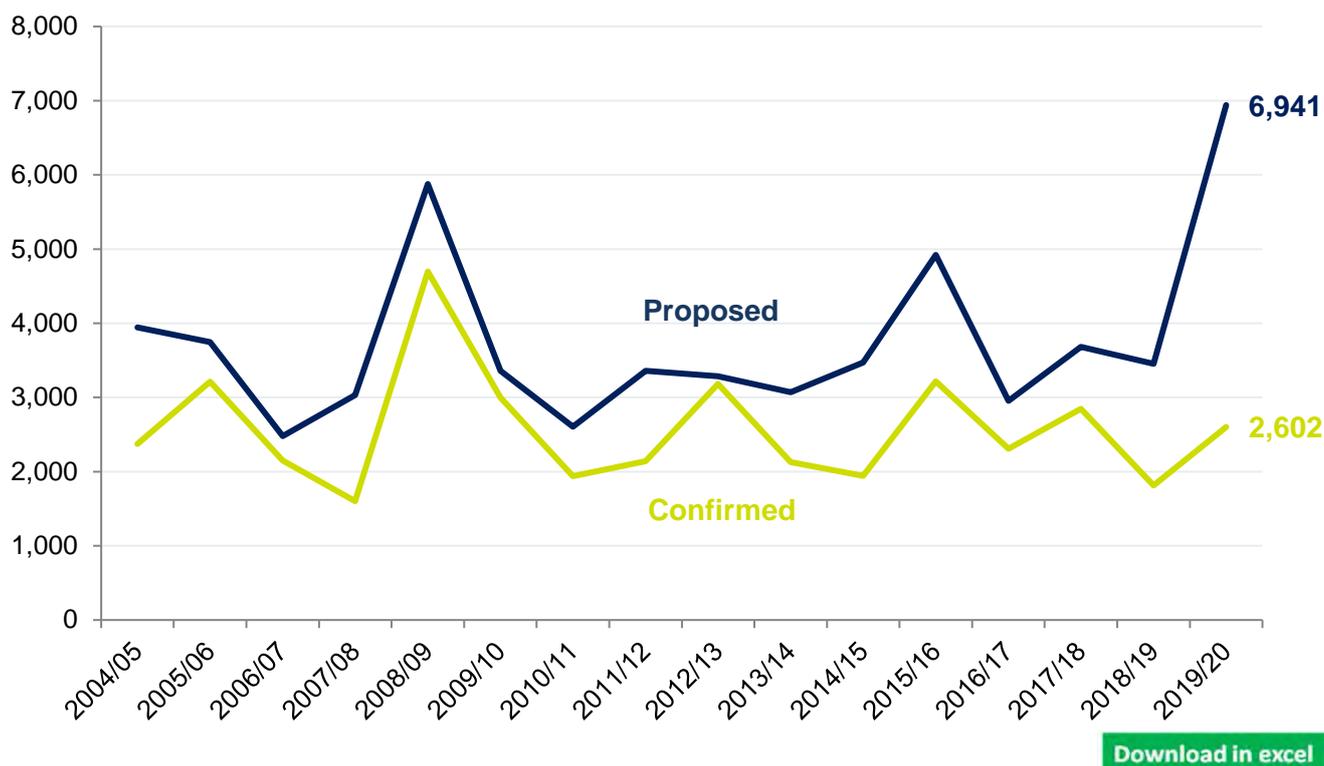
Under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Amended 8 October 2006) companies are only legally required to notify the Department of impending redundancies of 20 or more employees. Companies who propose less than 20 redundancies are not included in the statistics. As a result, the figures provided are likely to be an underestimate of total job losses, however, it is not possible to quantify the extent of the shortfall. Further information can be found in the [Redundancies Background Quality Report](#).

Redundancies: Subject to the criteria mentioned above, employers must notify the Department of (a) redundancies proposed and (b) redundancies confirmed. Since all proposed redundancies do not actually take place, the confirmed total provides a better indication of real job losses.

Key Findings

- 40 redundancies were confirmed and 2,473 were proposed in June 2020 - the largest monthly total on record
- A further 745 redundancies have been proposed in the current month up to 15th July 2020
- From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, 6,941 redundancies were proposed, the highest number of proposed redundancies since comparable records began in 2006

Figure 5: Confirmed and proposed redundancies – Annual totals, July-June 2005 to July-June 2020



Redundancy notification data shows a high degree of correlation between proposed and confirmed redundancies when grouped by year. On a monthly basis the correlation is lower as there is a time lag between proposing and making redundancies. The graph shows the number of proposed redundancies is higher than confirmed redundancies indicating that not all proposed redundancies take place.

In the year to 30th June 2020, 6,941 redundancies were proposed, the highest number of proposed redundancies in the 15 year time period above, while the number of confirmed redundancies in the year to date is similar to that in the last ten years. The highest number of confirmed redundancies in the time period above, was recorded in 2008/09 at 4,697. The lowest number of confirmed redundancies took place in the previous year, 2007/08, numbering 1,602.

Confirmed redundancies

Employers are required by law to notify the Department of proposals to make 20 to 99 redundancies at least 30 days before the first dismissal, and, for 100 or more redundancies, 90 days before the first dismissal. This results in a time lag of at least a month between the redundancies being proposed and then being confirmed.

During June 2020, the Department was notified of:

- 40 confirmed redundancies; lower than the previous month's revised total of 135.

Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 2,602 confirmed redundancies, which was an increase of 44% from the previous year (1,813)
- 1,546 (or 59%) confirmed in manufacturing, more than double the number in the previous year (614 or 34%)
- 354 (14% of all confirmed redundancies) in the wholesale and retail trade which was a lower than the previous year (615 and 34%)
- a further 195 (7% of all confirmed redundancies) in administrative and support service activities similar to the previous year (137 or 8%).

Proposed redundancies

It should be noted that since not all proposed redundancies actually take place, the confirmed total provides a better indication of real job losses.

The most recent data shows there were:

- 2,473 proposed redundancies in June, the highest proposed since comparable records began in 2006 and more than seven times the number of proposed redundancies than in May (342)
- a further 745 proposed redundancies between 1st and 15th July.

Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 6,941 proposed redundancies, more than double the number recorded the previous year (3,453), with 60% of these having occurred since March.
- 3,376 (49%) proposed in manufacturing, which was higher than one year ago (777 or 23%)
- 1,191 (17% of all proposed redundancies) in the wholesale and retail trade, lower than the previous year (1,313 or 38%)
- a further 912 (13% of all proposed redundancies) in transportation and storage which was higher than the previous year (27 or 1%).

There were 4,155 proposed redundancies between 1 March 2020 and 30 June 2020, with more employers making collective redundancy notifications in these 4 months than for the whole of 2019. Following three months which saw proposed redundancies of approximately 560, 780, and 340, the total number of proposed redundancies in June 2020 reached an all-time high. At almost 2,500, the number of proposed redundancies in June was more similar to annual than monthly figures and accounted for a third of all proposed redundancies in the year.

The increase in redundancies since the start of March has primarily been driven by four main industry sectors; transportation and storage, accommodation and food services, manufacturing sector, and wholesale and retail trade. Proposed redundancies from these sectors accounted for almost 90% of proposed redundancies between March and end of June. Although in the previous 8 months over 80% of the proposed redundancies were in manufacturing, and wholesale and retail trade, there were no proposed collective redundancies from the transport and storage sector and less than 1% from the accommodation and food services.

Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website:
[Redundancies](#)

LFS employment

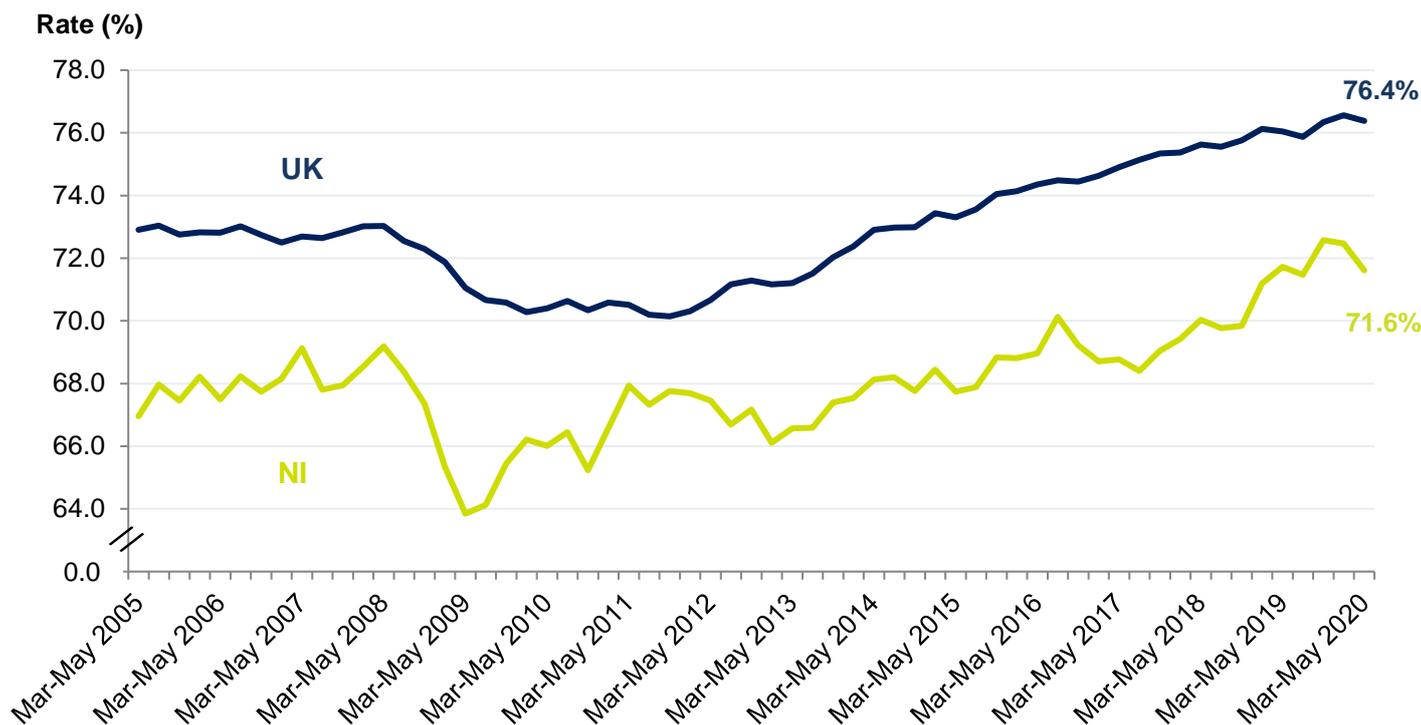
LFS employed: people aged 16 or over who did at least one hour of paid work in the reference week (whether as an employee or self-employed); those who had a paid job that they were temporarily away from; those on government-supported training and employee programmes and those doing unpaid family work. Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in the estimates of 'temporarily away from work' within the employed total.

Note: For analysis purposes, numbers refer to people aged 16 and over while rates relate to people aged between 16 and 64 years

Key Findings

- The employment rate decreased over the quarter and over the year to 71.6%
- Average actual number of hours worked was estimated at 27.4 hours per week for the period March-May 2020. This is 6.5 hours lower than the same period last year and the lowest average weekly hours estimated on record. Hours figures are not adjusted for seasonality.

Figure 6: Seasonally adjusted employment rate (16-64), Mar-May 2005 to Mar-May 2020



[Download in excel](#)

Figure 6 shows that, over the last 15 years, the NI employment rate has been consistently below the UK average. Although showing a similar trend, the fall in the employment rate in NI between 2008 and 2009 (decrease of over 5 percentage points over one year) is steeper than the UK average.

The most recent NI employment rate for those aged 16-64 for the period Mar-May 2020 was estimated at 71.6%. The UK employment rate for those aged 16-64 for the same period was 76.4%. The male employment rate increased over the year but the female employment rate decreased.

Employment rate (16-64 years)

The most recent NI employment rate for those aged 16-64 for the period Mar-May 2020 was estimated at 71.6%. This was:

- a decrease of 0.9pps over the quarter
- a decrease of 0.1pps over the year.

Annual changes by gender included:

- the male (16-64) employment rate (76.0%) increased by 0.6pps over the year
- the female (16-64) employment rate (67.3%) decreased by 0.8pps over the year.

UK Regional comparison

The employment rate in NI (71.6%) was:

- below the UK average (76.4%)
- the lowest rate among the twelve UK regions

Employment 16+

The number of persons in employment (16+) during the period Mar-May 2020 was estimated at 865,000, of which 53% (457,000) were male and 47% (407,000) were female and represented;

- a decrease of 12,000 over the quarter and a decrease of 6,000 over the year
- an increase over the year in the number of males who were employed by 1,000 to 457,000
- a decrease over the year in the number of females who were employed by 7,000 to 407,000.

Temporarily away from work (experimental measure)⁵

The ILO definition of employed includes those who did at least one hour of paid work and those temporarily away from work. Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in the estimates of 'temporarily away from work'. Estimates not adjusted for seasonality for March to May show that:

- 159,000 or 18% were temporarily away from paid work, this includes furloughed workers.
- This compares to 38,000 (4%) in the same quarter last year.

Self-Employment⁶

Of those aged 16+ in employment, 15.1% (131,000) were self-employed, 2,000 lower than same quarter last year. Annual changes by gender included:

- the number of males who were self-employed increased over the year by 3,000 to 100,000
- the number of females who were self-employed decreased over the year by 5,000 to 31,000.

⁵ Workers temporarily absent from a job as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, such as those on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), would still be classified as employed, but temporarily away from work. This release includes an experimental estimate of 'Those temporarily away from work', to help users understand the composition of those in employment.

⁶ Please note that self-employment figures are not adjusted for seasonality and the % of self-employed is calculated as a percentage of the unadjusted total number aged 16+ in employment

Average actual weekly hours

Average actual weekly hours: the number of hours worked in the reference week by those aged 16 or over in employment, in their main and 2nd jobs, averaged over the quarter

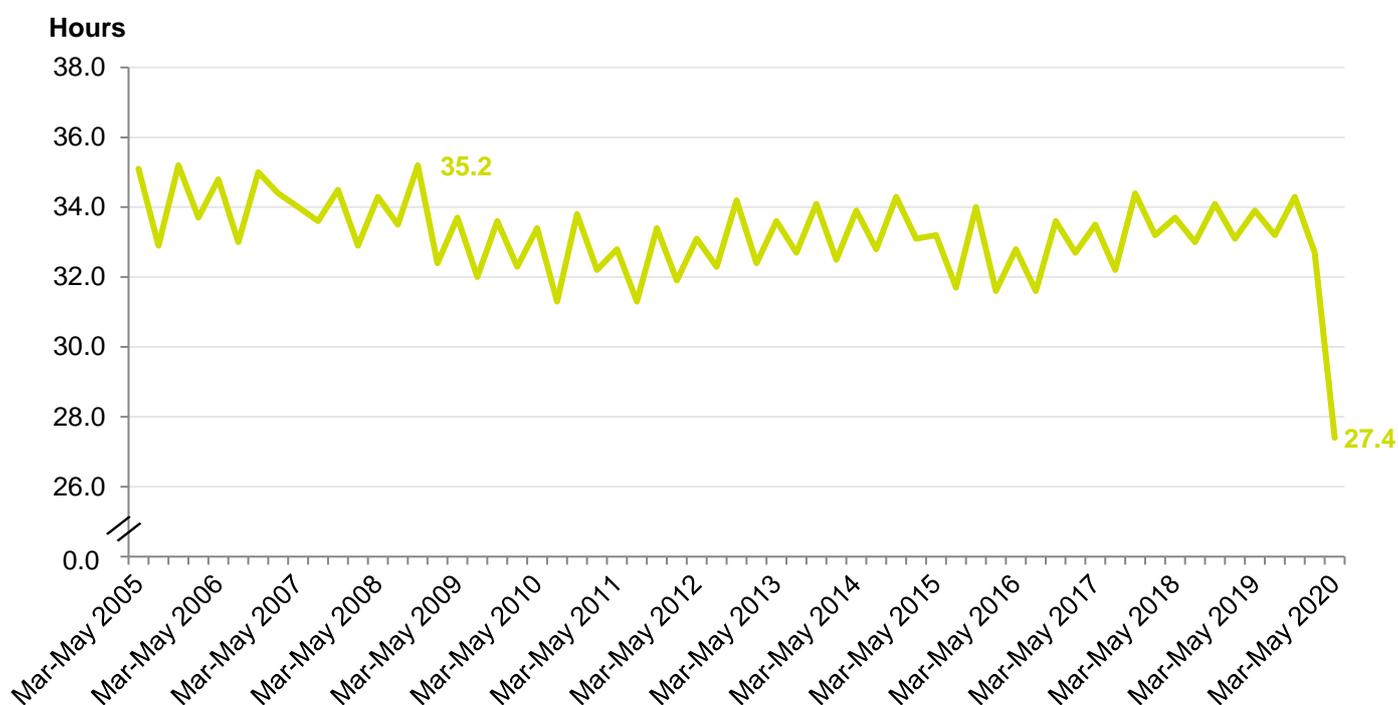
Total actual weekly hours: average actual weekly hours multiplied by the total in employment aged 16 or over.

Note: all numbers refer to people aged 16 and over and have **not** been adjusted for seasonality. Imputation used for the Labour Force Survey was not designed to deal with the changes experienced in the labour market in recent months. Experimental work with adjusted methodology suggests the use of the existing methodology has understated the reduction in the actual numbers of hours worked by approximately 2 to 3%.

Average actual weekly hours worked during March-May was estimated at 27.4 hours, this was:

- down 6.5 hours or 19% over the year;
- the lowest average actual weekly hours worked on record.

Figure 7: Average actual weekly hours worked (16+), Mar-May 2005 to Mar-May 2020



[Download in excel](#)

Figure 7 shows that, like many labour market indicators, estimated average actual hours worked shows a seasonal pattern. Outside of these seasonal variations a trend of decreasing average actual weekly hours worked is seen between 2005 and 2012, decreasing from between 33 and 35 hours per week to 31 and 33 hours, then increasing at a slower rate to between 33 and 34 hours per week in 2019.

The most recent time point (March-May 2020) shows the largest estimated annual decrease (6.5 hours or approximately 19%) in 15 years. The estimated average actual weekly hours worked by men and women decreased to record lows of 31.0 hours and 23.4 hours respectively.

In March-May 2020 an estimated 327,000 (38%) people worked fewer hours in the reference week than their usual hours, of which 159,000 were temporarily away from work⁵. More than a third (36%) worked less due to work being interrupted by economic and other causes; the most common reason for people working fewer hours.

Total actual weekly hours

Total actual weekly hours in Northern Ireland was estimated at 23.7 million hours, this was:

- down by 5.8 million hours, or 20% from March-May 2019
- the largest annual decrease on record.
- below the total actual weekly hours worked in 2009

Figure 8: Total actual weekly hours worked (16+), Mar-May 2005 to Mar-May 2020

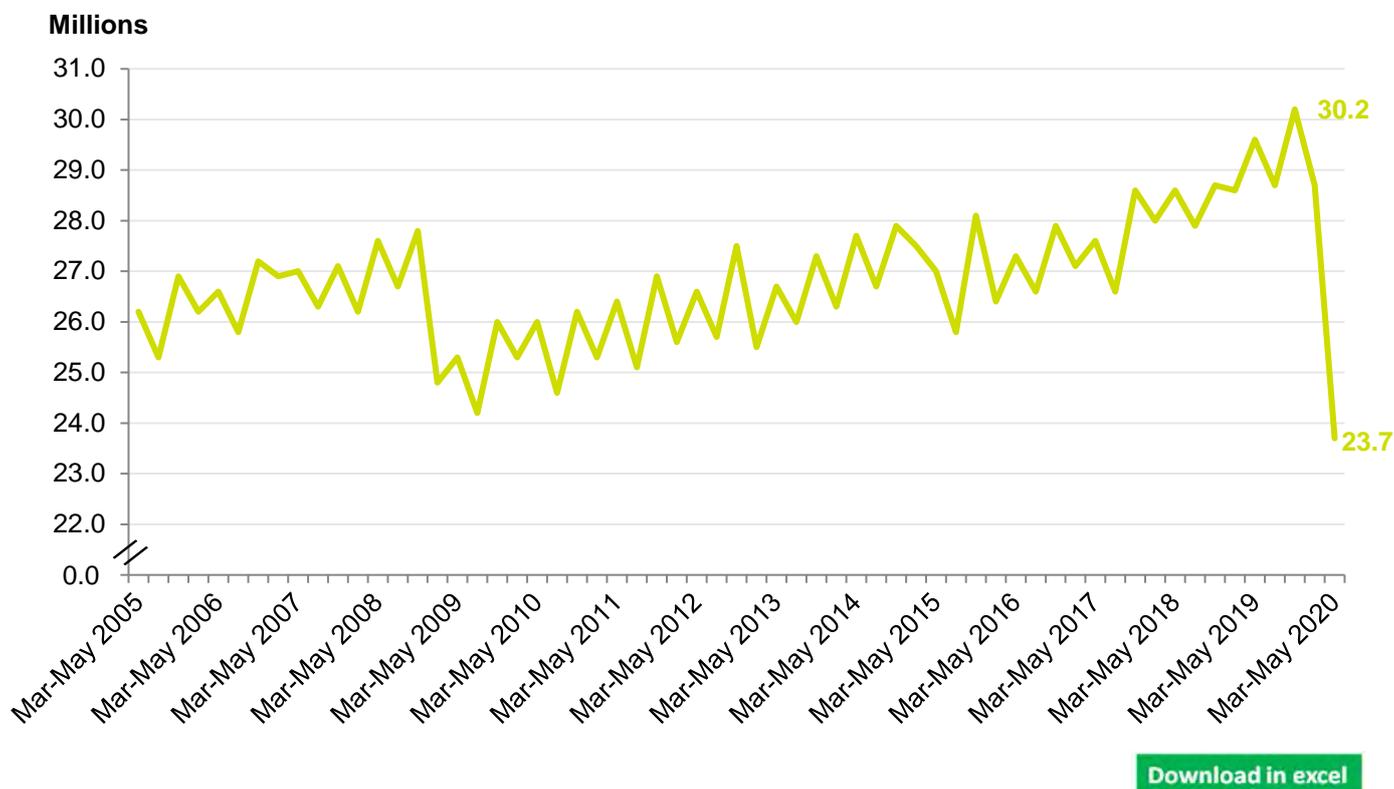


Figure 8 shows that between March-May 2019 and March-May 2020 the estimated total actual weekly hours worked decreased by 5.8 million to 23.7 million hours, the largest annual decrease on record. The decrease in total actual weekly hours worked over the year was driven by a decrease in average hours worked and not by changes in the number of people employed. The decrease in average weekly hours was driven by a decrease in men's total hours worked (3.4 million) and women's total hours worked (2.4 million).

Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website: [LFS employment](#)

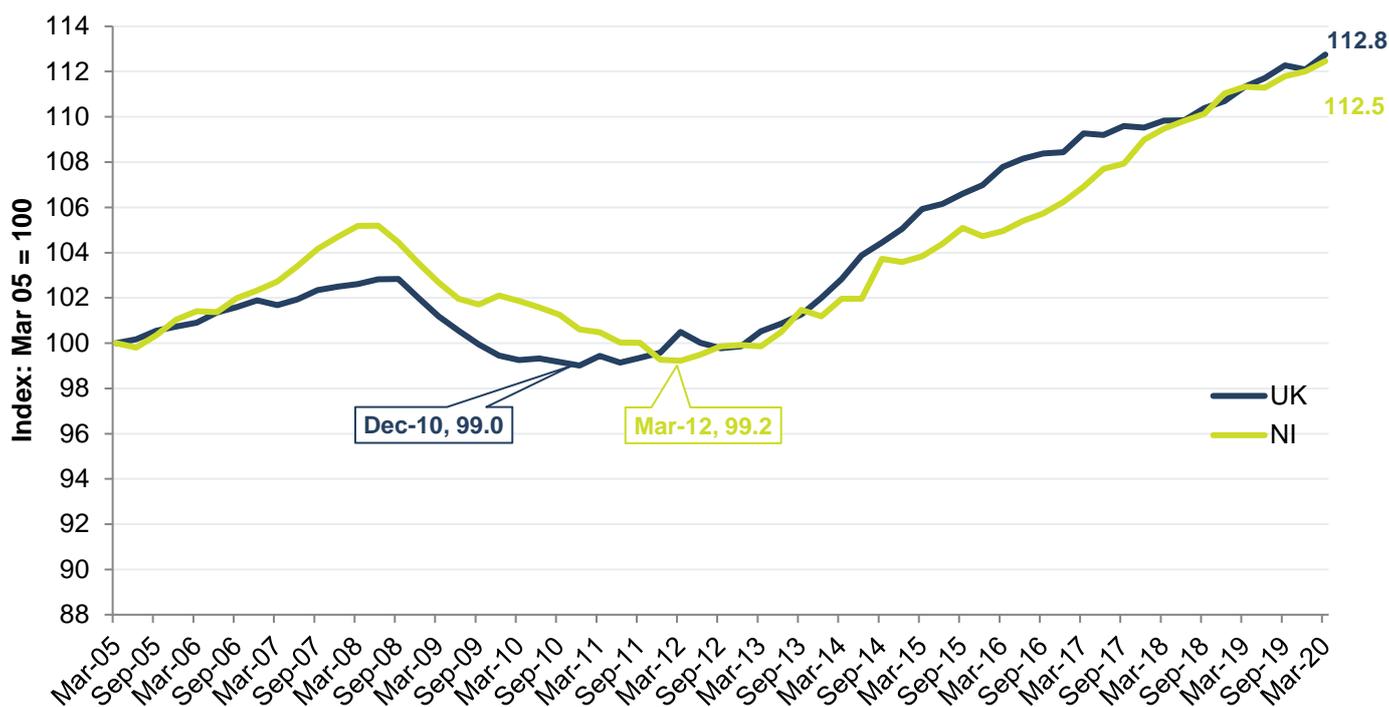
Employee jobs estimates are calculated from the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) aspect of the Quarterly Business Survey (QBS). The QES has a sample size of approximately 6,000 companies that are asked to provide employment data for each of their business activities. **The survey date for Quarter 1 was 2nd March 2020 for Northern Ireland. This pre-dates the introduction of any COVID-19 restrictions, and the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market is therefore not fully reflected in these estimates.**

QES employee: An employee is defined as anyone aged 16 years or over that is directly paid from a business's payroll for carrying out a full-time or part-time job or being on a training scheme in Northern Ireland.

Key Findings

- Employee jobs increased over the quarter and year to a record high in March 2020
- Manufacturing was the only broad industry sector to record a decrease in employee jobs over the year
- Private sector employee jobs increased over the quarter and increased over the year
- Public sector employee jobs marginally decreased over the quarter but increased over the year

Figure 9: Index of Employee Jobs, March 2005 to March 2020



Figures are indexed to March 2005

[Download in excel](#)

Figure 9 shows the estimated seasonally adjusted employee jobs, indexed to allow comparison between NI and the UK.

Since 2005, the UK reached a low point in December 2010, more than a year before the NI low in March 2012. There are now 92,220 more employee jobs in NI since the lowest point in March 2012, and 3,790,000 more jobs in the UK since December 2010.

Employee Jobs

The seasonally adjusted employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at March 2020 was 783,500, which was:

- an increase of 0.4% (3,120 jobs) over the quarter from the revised December 2019 estimate of 780,380.
- an increase of 1.0% (7,930 jobs) over the year from the revised March 2019 estimate of 775,570.
- Neither the quarterly nor the annual changes in employee jobs were statistically significant.

Employee jobs by sector

The seasonally adjusted quarterly change consisted of:

- increases in the services (0.3% or 1,780 jobs), construction (2.3% or 790 jobs), other industries (1.6% or 390 jobs) and manufacturing sectors (0.2% or 160 jobs).
- an increase of 0.6% (3,320 jobs) in the private sector.
- a marginal decrease of 0.2% (-430 jobs) in the public sector.

Over the year to March 2020:

- increases were seen in the services (1.2% or 7,610 jobs), other industries (4.1% or 950 jobs) and construction sectors (1.7% or 580 jobs).
- the manufacturing sector decreased by 1.4% (-1,220 jobs).
- the private sector increased by 1.0% (5,540 jobs).
- the public sector increased by 1.1% (2,350 jobs).

Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics [website](#) and further breakdowns of employee jobs by geography and industry are available from the [Business Register and Employment Survey](#).

Comparisons between LFS Employment and QES Employee Jobs

The concept of employment (measured by the LFS as the number of people in work) differs from the concept of jobs, since a person can have more than one job, and some jobs may be shared by more than one person.

The LFS and QES measure employment in different ways. The LFS is a sample survey carried out by interviewing individuals about their personal circumstances and work. The QES is a quarterly survey of businesses which provides short term employee jobs estimates for Northern Ireland. It surveys all public sector jobs, all private sector firms with 25 or more employees, all businesses with more than one industry activity and a representative sample of smaller firms. LFS employment figures are based on a rolling three month period and QES measures the number of jobs on a particular day.

LFS employment includes those who are employed, self-employed, unpaid family workers and those on Government supported training programmes. QES employee jobs include full-time and part-time jobs and those on a training scheme and excludes self-employed.

Impact of COVID-19 on data collection and estimates

COVID-19 impacted on the data collection and the validation of employee jobs data, which are collected on the Quarterly Business Survey. As a result, the employee jobs estimates for March 2020 are likely to be subject to higher revisions than normal over the coming quarters. Comparisons of provisional March 2020 employee jobs estimates at lower industry levels in particular (eg 2 digit Standard Industrial Classification level), should be treated with caution.

Headline figures are presented for vacancies notified to the Department for Communities (DfC). A small proportion of vacancies notified are based in the UK mainland or in the Republic of Ireland. The statistics do not represent the total unsatisfied demand for staff by employers. This provides a partial picture of the true number of vacancies, as employers may advertise by other means and do not have to notify DfC of their vacancies. The 2016 Employer Skills Survey (ESS) estimated that administrative data sources account for approximately 55% of vacancies. Vacancies in a given month relate to those on the count date, are not seasonally adjusted and are subject to revision in the following periods.

Please note: Due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on the availability of staff to access data streams, quality assure its production and release, a decision was taken by DfC to delay the publication of the Statistical Bulletin for the 2019/20 Financial Year. The publication, along with the January-March 2020 Vacancies Factsheet, will be published on 29th July 2020. The August Labour Market Report will thus contain updated vacancies data. For more information about vacancies data and publication dates, please see the [Department for Communities website](#).

Full-time vacancies: Full-time vacancies include any vacancy 30 hours or over per week.

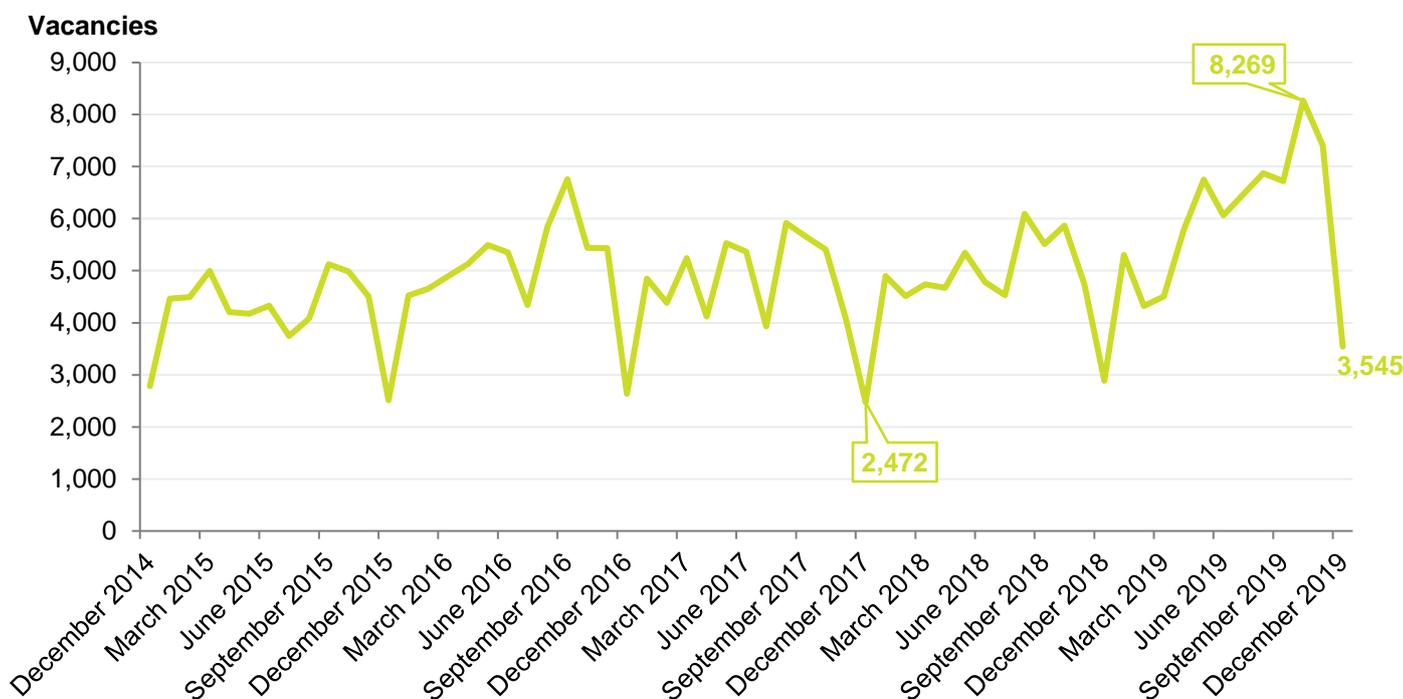
Part-time vacancies: Part-time vacancies include any vacancy between 1 and 29 hours per week.

Casual vacancies: Casual vacancies are vacancies where no regular hours are guaranteed.

Key Findings

- There were 19,221 vacancies notified during October-December 2019. This includes full-time, part-time and casual vacancies.
- 71% of vacancies were full-time

Figure 10: Monthly Notified Vacancies, December 2014 to December 2019



[Download in excel](#)

Figures in the above graph are not National Statistics.
 (1) Monthly notified vacancies are all new vacancy positions notified to Department for Communities. All statistics are derived from data extracted from the Department for Communities Client Management System (CMS).
 (2) Vacancies data is published quarterly and reported by financial year. Data for October-December 2019 was published in January 2020.

The number of vacancies notified to Jobs and Benefits Offices/ Job Centres/ DfC display a seasonal trend, with peaks in the months preceding December and troughs in December each year. Despite these seasonal fluctuations, the number of vacancies between 2014 and 2018 centred around 5,000 per month.

An upward trend is evident in the number of vacancies notified during most of 2019, with the predicted seasonal trough occurring in December. Caution should be taken when comparing these figures to the previous year due to centralisation of the vacancy management process which began on 1st January 2019.

Further breakdowns and background notes are available on the DfC website: [DfC Statistics](#)

UK-wide Vacancy Statistics

UK-level statistics are available on the ONS website: [ONS Statistics](#) and [ONS Vacancy Survey Methodology](#).

Vacancy statistics at the UK level are based on a business survey. Estimates show the number of vacancies had been generally increasing in the UK since 2012, however, the number has been falling since early 2019.

The most recent figures (for the April-June period) were released on the 16th July 2020 and are available from the [ONS website](#).

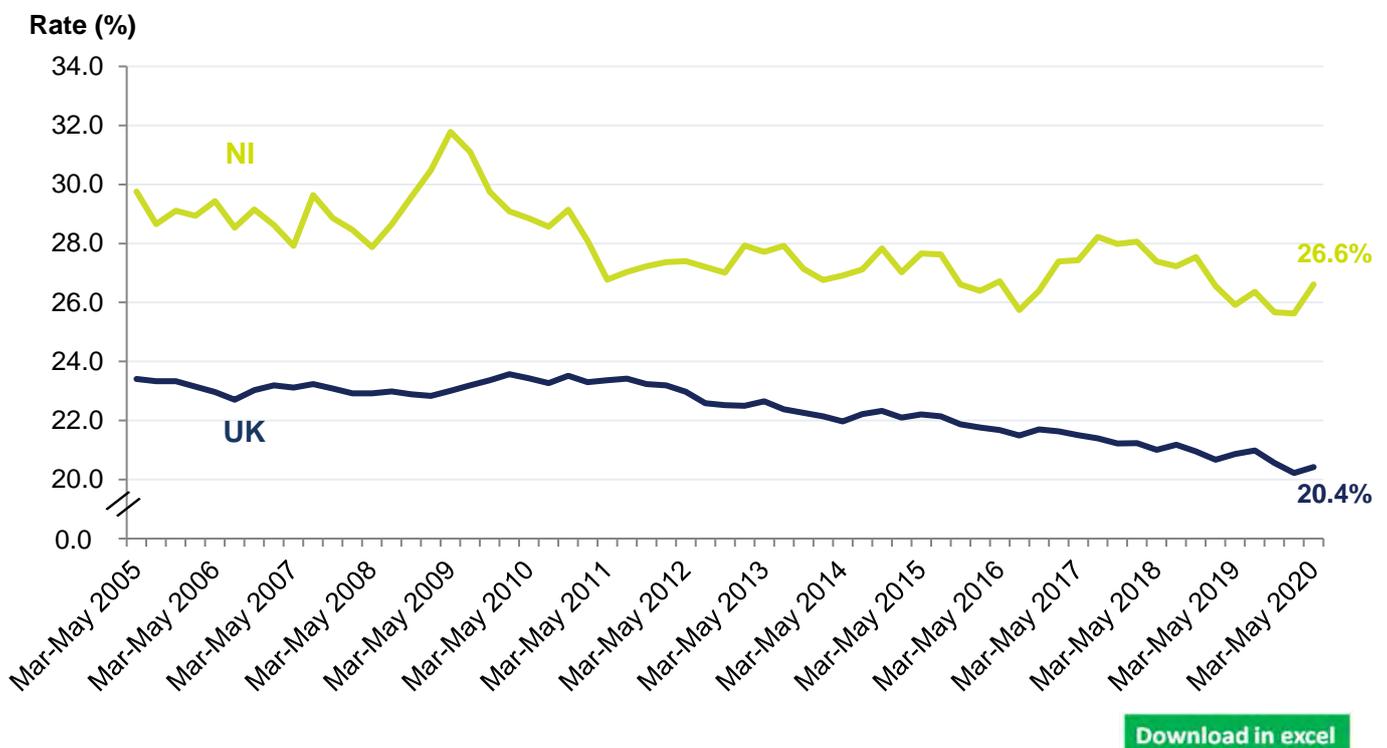
LFS economic inactivity

Economically inactive: people who are neither in employment nor unemployed on the ILO measure. This group includes all those who are looking after a home, long term sick or disabled, students and retired.

Key Findings

- The economic inactivity rate increased over the quarter and over the year to 26.6%
- NI economic inactivity remains the highest of the twelve UK regions

Figure 11: Seasonally adjusted economic inactivity rates (16-64), Mar-May 2005 to Mar-May 2020



[Download in excel](#)

Figure 11 shows that, over the last 15 years, economic inactivity in NI has been consistently higher than the UK average. Economic inactivity peaked in NI during this time period in 2009 at over 31% compared to the peak in the UK as a whole at 23.6% in 2010. During the past 10 years, the UK inactivity rate has mostly been on a downward trend while there is a trend of decreasing economic inactivity in NI since 2017.

Economically inactive

The seasonally adjusted economic inactivity rate (aged 16-64) for March-May 2020 was estimated at 26.6%, which was:

- an increase of 1.0pps over the quarter
- an increase of 0.7pps over the year.

Annual changes by gender included:

- the male (16-64) economic inactivity rate (21.9%) increased by 0.1pps over the year
- the female (16-64) economic inactivity rate (31.2%) increased by 1.3pps over the year.

The number of economically inactive persons (aged 16-64) was estimated at 311,000, of which 41% (127,000 were male) and 59% (184,000) were female and represented:

- an increase of 12,000 over the quarter and of 8,000 over the year.
- an increase over the year in the number of males who were economically inactive by 1,000 to 127,000
- an increase over the year in the number of females who were economically inactive by 8,000 to 184,000.

UK Regional comparison

The NI economic inactivity rate for those aged 16-64 stood at 26.6%. This was:

- higher than the UK average rate (20.4%)
- the highest of the twelve UK regions

Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website:

[LFS Economic Inactivity](#)

[Economic Inactivity in Northern Ireland topic paper](#)

[Women in Northern Ireland](#)

Experimental Median monthly earnings from HMRC PAYE Real Time Information System

HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) system is the system employers use to take Income Tax and National Insurance contributions before they pay wages to employees. These data relate to employees paid by employers only, and do not include self-employment income. Data are based on where employees live and not the location of their place of work within the UK. Data are seasonally adjusted but not adjusted for inflation.

The HMRC PAYE covers the whole employee population rather than a sample of employees or companies. The data are classed as Experimental Statistics as the methodologies used to produce the statistics are still in their development phase. As a result, the series are subject to revisions.

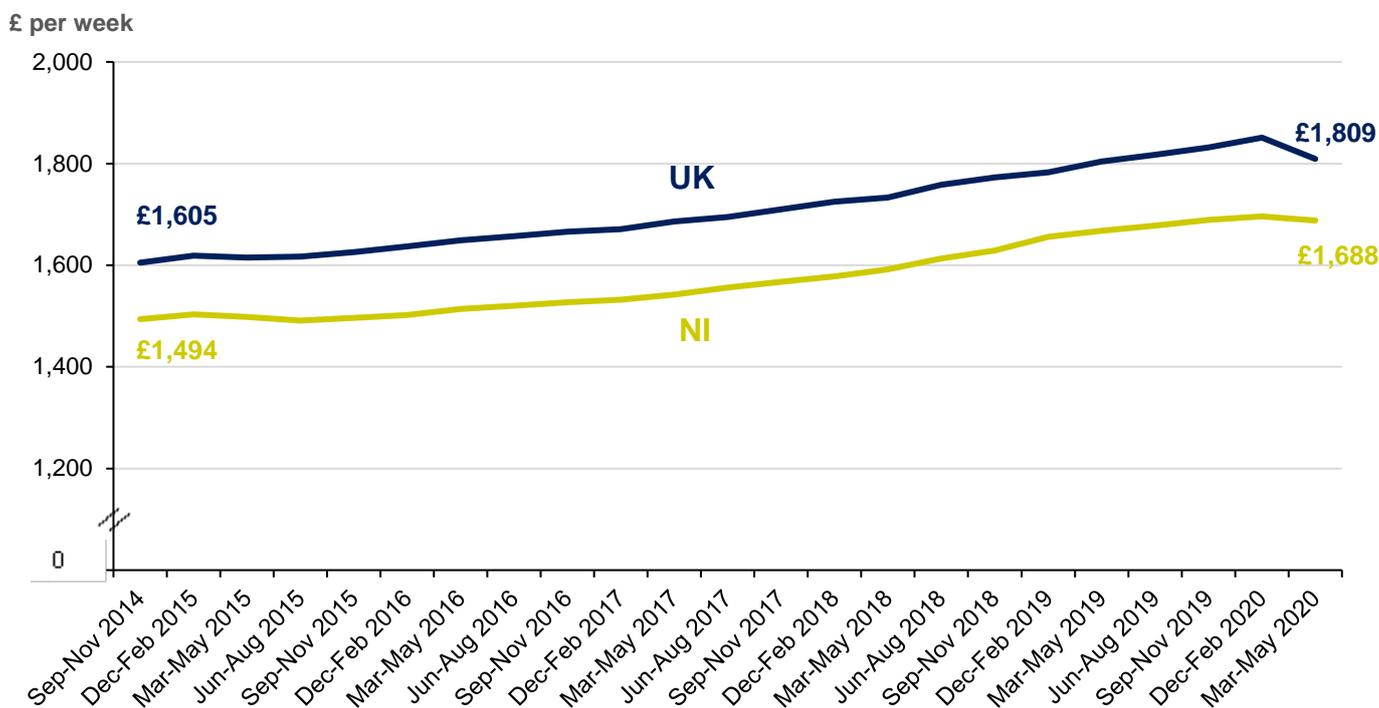
Median measures the amount earned by the average employee, i.e. the level of earnings at which half the population are above and half the population are below.

Note: The percentage change of the median has been calculated using rounded figures.

Key Findings

- Median monthly pay for NI employees in the three months to May 2020 was £1,688
- Median monthly pay decreased by 0.5% over the quarter to May. Although relatively small, it is the first quarterly decrease since 2015
- Median monthly pay in the quarter to May 2020 was 1.2% higher than same period last year

Figure 12: Median Monthly Pay from PAYE RTI, Sep-Nov 2014 to Mar-May 2020



[Download in excel](#)

Data from the latest HMRC PAYE RTI show that:

- NI had a median monthly pay of £1,688 in the three months to May 2020, which was a decrease of 0.5% on the previous three month period and an increase of 1.2% from the same time last year.
- UK had a median monthly pay of £1,809 in the three months to May 2020, which was a decrease of 2.3% on the previous three month period and an increase of 0.3% from the same time last year.
- NI had the lowest median monthly pay (£1,688) of the 12 UK regions in the three months to May 2020 and London had the highest (£2,186).

Difference between PAYE and ASHE estimates.

Estimates from ASHE are the principal source of employee earnings information and are National Statistics. Estimates from PAYE provide a more timely indication of employee earnings trends and are still in the development stage. Estimates from PAYE are classed as Experimental Statistics.

ASHE is based on 1% sample of employees and produced on an annual basis, using a reference day in April. It can be used to analyse earnings by industry, occupation, geography, sex, and full- or part-time status. Headline statistics focus on gross weekly earnings for full-time employee jobs on adult rates of pay whose pay in the reference period was unaffected by absence. PAYE does not differentiate based on full-time or part-time job status, and includes those whose work was affected by absence. PAYE also measures pay per person which can include pay from more than one job, while ASHE measures pay per job.

The most comparable statistic to median earnings from PAYE is ASHE data on median gross weekly earnings of all employees surveyed, including those who work part-time. A comparison of ASHE and PAYE data based on April data in both sources shows that PAYE is typically lower, though both show the same trend. Likely reasons for this is that ASHE excludes workers whose pay is affected by absence and those not on adult rates of pay, while PAYE includes these. Further details have been published by [HMRC and ONS](#)

Further information on UK monthly pay, UK Pay distribution, methodology, data source, collection and coverage of the PAYE RTI data can be found on the [ONS website](#).

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

ASHE is a UK wide survey that provides a wide range of information on hourly, weekly and annual earnings by age, gender, work pattern, industry and occupation including public and private sector pay comparisons. The sample used comprises approximately 1% of all employees in NI who were covered by Pay As You Earn (PAYE) schemes.

Gross weekly pay includes basic pay, overtime pay, commissions, shift premium pay, bonus or incentive pay and allowances, and is before deductions for PAYE, National Insurance, pension schemes, student loan repayments and voluntary deductions.

Median measures the amount earned by the average individual, i.e. the level of earnings at which half the population are above and half the population are below.

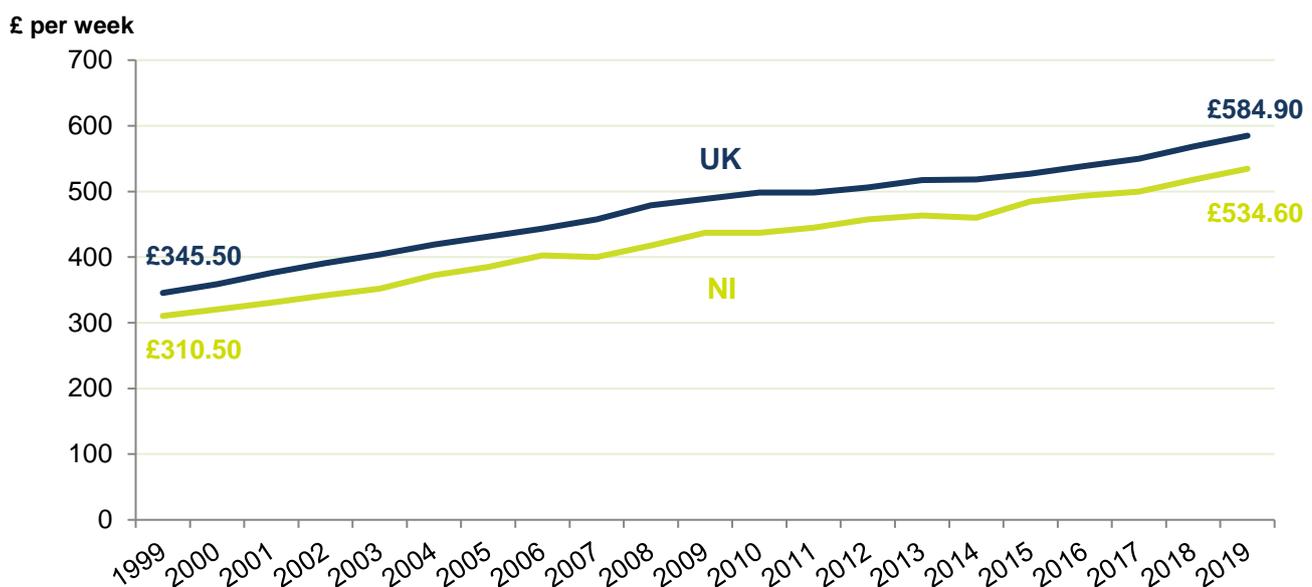
Full-time employee is defined as anyone aged 16 years or over that is directly paid from a business's payroll for carrying out more than 30 paid hours per week (or 25 or more for the teaching professions).

Gender pay gap: The headline measure is calculated as the difference between the median full-time hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of males and females, as a proportion of median full-time hourly earnings (excluding overtime) of males earnings.

Key Findings

- Weekly earnings in NI increased by £16.80 (3.3%) over the year and by £16.60 (2.9%) in the UK
- Real earnings increased over the year (1.2%) and have almost returned to 2009 levels
- Median public sector earnings were almost a third higher than private sector earnings
- 2019 was the tenth year where full-time females in NI earned at least as much as full-time males on average

Figure 13: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI and the UK, April 1999-April 2019



Note: there were a number of methodological changes during the series in 2004, 2006 and 2011 – see Section 4 of the [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#) publication for further information

[Download in excel](#)

Over the last 20 years, the median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees has increased by an average of £11 each year in NI. At April 2019, weekly earnings:

- were £535, £50 (8.6%) lower than the UK median (£585)
- were the second lowest of the 12 UK regions
- increased by more (3.3%) than the equivalent UK median (2.9%), however, had the joint third smallest increase of the UK regions over the year.
- when adjusted for inflation, increased by 1.2%, similar to the increase of 1.3% recorded the previous year and larger than the increase in the UK (0.9%)
- in the private sector increased by 3.4% over the year, while public sector weekly earnings increased by 0.7%
- in the public sector (£625) were 31% higher than in the private sector (£479).

Hourly earnings (excluding overtime) from the 2019 ASHE show that:

- the gender pay gap for full-time employees in NI is negative (2.9% in favour of females)
- females who work full-time earned 37p per hour more on average than males (£13.13 per hour compared to £12.76 per hour for males)
- in the UK full-time females (£13.97) earned less than full-time males (£15.34) on average; a gender pay gap of 8.9% in favour of males.

Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website:
[Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#)

LFS unemployment

The definition of unemployment used in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is in accordance with that of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The ILO unemployed includes those without a job who were able to start work in the two weeks following their LFS interview and had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained.

The definition of unemployment rate is the percentage of economically active people who are unemployed.

Please note that it is possible for the number of unemployed to increase and the unemployment rate to fall during the same period, as the latter measure is a ratio e.g. if the number of economically active has increased at a faster rate than the number unemployed, the unemployment rate will fall.

LFS employment

The definition of ILO employed applies to anyone (aged 16 or over) who has carried out at least one hour's paid work in the week prior to interview, or has a job they are temporarily away from (e.g. on holiday). Also included are people who do unpaid work in a family business and people on Government-supported employment training schemes.

The definition of employment rate is the percentage of all working age (16-64) people who are employed.

The ILO measures are particularly useful for examining short term and long term trends over time and key LFS time series data are available both seasonally adjusted and unadjusted.

LFS economic inactivity

Economic inactivity is defined as those individuals who are neither in employment nor unemployed as determined by the ILO measure. This economic status includes all those who are looking after a home, are long term sick or disabled, are students or are retired.

Reporting Change and Sampling variability

Reported change is calculated using unrounded data and is presented to 1 decimal place. When a change is less than 0.05pps, it is rounded to 0.0pps and the data is reported as unchanged. 'Over the quarter' refer to comparisons between the latest quarterly estimates for the period March-May 2020 and the quarter previous to that (i.e. December-February 2020). 'Over the year' refer to comparisons between the latest quarterly estimates for the period March-May 2020 and those of the corresponding quarter one year previously (i.e. March-May 2019).

The LFS is a sample survey and, as such, estimates obtained from it are subject to sampling variability. If we drew many samples, each would give a different result. Table 2 shows the sampling variability of the estimates, and quarterly and annual changes using 95% confidence intervals. We would expect that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value. The final column contains the confidence interval that can be used when assessing change between two independent samples. Due to the LFS five wave structure, this means it can be used to assess changes over six quarters or more. The confidence intervals have been calculated using data that are not seasonally adjusted, with the relevant sampling errors produced then applied to the seasonally adjusted data.

If the 'quarterly or annual change' of an estimate is larger than the 'confidence interval around the change', the change is statistically significant. If none of the reported changes over the year or the quarter were statistically significant, then the recorded changes did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size.

Table 2: Sampling variability of labour market estimates

March-May 2020	Estimate	Confidence interval around estimate	Change over quarter	Confidence interval around quarterly change	Change over year	Confidence interval around annual change	Confidence interval around change
Unemployment ¹	21,000	+/-6,000	-2,000	+/-5,000	-7,000	+/-8,000	+/-8,000
Employment ²	865,000	+/-21,000	-12,000	+/-19,000	-6,000	+/-27,000	+/-28,000
Economically inactive ²	589,000	+/-20,000	15,000	+/-18,000	20,000	+/-26,000	+/-28,000
Unemployment rate ¹	2.4%	+/-0.6pps	-0.1pps	+/-0.6pps	-0.7pps	+/-0.9pps	+/-0.9pps
Employment rate ²	71.6%	+/-1.7pps	-0.9pps	+/-1.4pps	-0.1pps	+/-2.2pps	+/-2.3pps
Economic inactivity rate ²	26.6%	+/-1.6pps	1.0pps	+/-1.4pps	0.7pps	+/-2.1pps	+/-2.2pps

¹ People aged 16 and over. Unemployment rate = total unemployed as a proportion of the economically active.

² Levels for all persons aged 16 and over, rates for working age (16-64).

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Please see link for further LFS notes and definitions: [LFS Background Information](#)

Response Rates – Updated quarterly (last updated 19/05/2020)

The total eligible sample for the January-March 2020 LFS consisted of 3,964 addresses (1,216 chosen at random from the Land and Property Services (LPS) list of domestic properties and 2,748 carried forward from the previous quarter). A random start, fixed interval sampling technique of the addresses, which are ordered by Council Area and Ward, is used. This ensures a proportional representation across the Council Areas in Northern Ireland.

Only private household addresses were eligible, since the LFS is a survey of the private household population. Every selected address is interviewed on five successive occasions, such that in any one quarter, a fifth of the sample will be receiving their first interview, one fifth their second and so on, with one fifth receiving their fifth and final interview. This results in an 80% sample overlap between quarters.

Table 3: Response rates, January-March 2020

Fully and partially responding	2,609
Eligible sample	3,964
Response rate (%)	65.8%

*Of the addresses sampled, a small number contained more than one household and some contained households which moved during the quarter. Residents in NHS hospital accommodation (formerly called nurses' homes) and students living in halls of residence or boarding schools are included to improve the coverage of young people.

LFS Comparisons

Estimates of employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity are derived from the LFS. The most robust estimates of short-term movements in these estimates are obtained by comparing the estimates over separate three month periods. For example, estimates relating to March-May 2020 should be

compared with the estimates for December-February 2020. This provides a more robust estimate than comparing with the estimates for February-April 2020, as the March and April data are included within both estimates. Effectively, observed differences are those between the individual months of February 2020 and May 2020. The LFS is sampled such that it is representative of the NI population over a three month period, not for a single month period.

Seasonal adjustment

All estimates discussed in this Statistical Bulletin are seasonally adjusted unless otherwise stated. Like many economic indicators, the labour market is affected by factors that tend to occur at around the same time every year, for example, school leavers entering the labour market in July and whether Easter falls in March or April. To compare over months or quarters, the data are seasonally adjusted to remove the effects of seasonal factors and the arrangement of the calendar.

Thresholds

Thresholds are used to determine whether LFS data are suitably robust for publication. The threshold used for the quarterly LFS datasets is 8,000. As such, data below 8,000 are suppressed.

LFS revisions

Estimates derived from the Labour Force Survey (including estimates of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity) are calculated using 2016 based population projections and the 2017 mid-year population estimates. LFS microdata are routinely revised to incorporate the latest population estimates. The latest revisions were published in February 2019 and affect LFS data from the period June-August 2011 onwards. In addition, data from November-January 2018 onwards also reflects a boost to the LFS sample that has been rolled out from January 2018 beginning with wave 1 and was fully implemented through all 5 waves by April-June 2019. To illustrate this boost in sample size, the November-January 2017 eligible sample was 2,394 (with 1,517 of those fully or partially responding), while the December-February 2020 sample size was 3,846 (with 2,773 of those fully or partially responding). More information on the increased sample size is available in a [separate paper](#).

A review of seasonal adjustment methodology also took place in February 2019 and affected seasonally adjusted data from June-August 2011 onwards. The majority of revisions to the unemployment rate fell within +/-0.1 percentage points and the largest revision was -0.3pps; the working age employment rate mostly fell within +/- 0.1 percentage points and the largest revision was 1.0pps. More information on the revision policy concerning labour market statistics can be found through the following link: [Labour market statistics revisions policy](#)

Data collection changes due to COVID-19

Data collection methods for the Labour Force Survey changed in March 2020 with the suspension of all face-to-face household interviews. From April, all face-to-face interviews have been replaced by telephone interviews. In addition, from April, an online Labour Market Survey has been rolled out, designed to capture key labour market variables and to supplement main Labour Force Survey data.

For further information on the impacts of COVID-19 to collection and production of statistics see the [COVID-19 and the production of statistics](#) section on the NISRA website and an [ONS Statement](#) on ensuring the best possible information during COVID-19 through safe data collection.

Temporary change in release time

Due to a change in ONS release and briefing practices in light of COVID-19, from April NISRA market sensitive statistics are released at 7am and not the standard release of 9.30am. NISRA requested the temporary change in time from the Office for Statistics Regulation. Correspondence between NISRA and

OSR is available on the [OSR website](#), and more detail on the change in ONS practices is available on the [ONS website](#).

Experimental Claimant Count (Jobseekers Allowance claimants plus some out-of-work Universal Credit claimants)

In March 2018, the NI JSA-only claimant count was replaced by an experimental measure based on JSA claimants plus out-of-work UC claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. The measure is categorised as experimental as the statistics are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed. ONS have produced a useful '[Guide to Experimental Statistics](#)' and an FAQ document explaining the difference between the two measures is available on the [NISRA website](#).

Additional data tables are published on the [NISRA](#) website and counts are available from [NOMIS](#).

Claimant count correction note

A number of claims across the UK to the UC element of the Claimant Count were coded to incorrect locations for data relating to December 2018 to November 2019. This has been corrected for December 2019 onwards, but previous periods remain affected. The impact of the revision on NI for December 2019 was an increase of fewer than 1,000 cases.

Claimant count revisions

April and May 2020 counts have been revised. Seasonally adjusted estimates are revised on a regular basis. Each month the previous estimate is revised in line with the current seasonal adjustment model, giving the best estimate of change for the latest period. During the Covid-19 outbreak the seasonal adjustment parameters for the Claimant Count will be under constant review and may result in revisions to the seasonally adjusted Claimant Count. Further details and previous seasonal adjustment revisions are available [here](#).

Redundancy Legal Requirements

Under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (amended 8 October 2006), companies are only legally required to notify the Department of impending redundancies of 20 or more employees. Companies who propose less than 20 redundancies are not included in the statistics, so there is likely to be an undercount.

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

Please note, changes in NI earnings over the year and relative to the UK can be influenced by a range of factors including the timing of pay settlements, the extent of overtime and differences in the composition of the workforce. As ASHE is a sample survey, results are also subject to an associated level of sampling variability. Further information is available at: [Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#)

HMRC PAYE

[Experimental Statistics](#) on earnings from HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) system are included in Section 5. HMRC PAYE RTI is the system employers use to take Income Tax and National Insurance contributions before they pay wages to employees. Data in section 5 relate to employees paid by employers only, and do not include self-employment income or income from pensions, property rental or investments. Data are based on where employees live and not the location of their place of work within the UK. Data are seasonally adjusted but not adjusted for inflation. The HMRC PAYE covers the whole population rather than a sample of employees or companies. The data are classed as Experimental Statistics as the methodologies used to produce the statistics are still in their development phase. As a result, the series are subject to revisions. Background information including the

methodology used to compile the statistics, strengths and limitation and a comparison with other labour market sources is available on the [ONS website](#).

Quarterly Employment Survey (QES)

All QES data contained in the LMR are adjusted for seasonality. The seasonally adjusted series started in 2005. Public sector and private sector series are seasonally adjusted separately to the industry breakdowns. As such, the two series may differ at the NI level.

QES Revisions

QES estimates are revised quarterly to reflect the latest information provided to the Department by employers. The December 2019 seasonally adjusted estimate first published in March 2020 has subsequently been revised down 0.5%. For further details of QES revisions please see the following link: [QES Revisions](#)

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency wishes to thank the participating households and businesses for their co-operation in agreeing to take part in the surveys and for facilitating the collection of the relevant data. For further information contact:

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