

# Work Quality in Northern Ireland

Theme: Labour Market

Frequency: Ad hoc

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

Source: Labour Force Survey

Analysis by industry is presented for eight work quality indicators; earnings, secure employment, under/overemployment, job satisfaction, meaningful work, career progression, employee involvement in decision-making, and flexible working. Analysis is based on employees aged 18 years or over between July 2020 and June 2021 (referred to as 2021).

## Key points

- Secure employment was the most positive indicator across all industry sectors, which was lowest in hospitality and retail (93%) and highest in manufacturing (99%).
- The three work quality indicators with the lowest proportions for NI as a whole were employee involvement in decision making, flexible work and opportunities for career progression (at approximately 50% of employees).
- Whilst some indicators reported little variance across sectors (secure employment and neither under nor over employed), there are notable larger differences across sectors for earnings above the Real Living Wage (RLW) (range of 46 percentage points (pps)), flexible working (29pps range) and career progression (21pps range) indicators in particular.
- The analysis shows that the public services sector reported higher proportions than the NI average for seven of the eight work quality indicators, and had the highest proportion of employees with earnings above the Real Living Wage (91%) and performing meaningful work (92%).
- Less than half (45%) of hospitality and retail employees had earnings above the Real Living Wage, compared to almost 80% of all employees in NI.
- Employees in the banking and finance industry reported similar proportions to the NI average for several indicators. The largest difference was lower levels of job satisfaction (by 7pps) compared to the NI average.
- Transport and communication sector showed less positive responses than the NI average for five indicators, but a higher proportion with earnings above the RLW.
- The construction industry had the lowest percentage of employees across sectors in flexible working (30%), but highest opportunities for career progression (59%).

## Contents

<b>1. Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.1. Things users need to know .....	4
1.2. Context.....	5
1.3. Indicator definitions .....	6
1.4. Overview of indicators by industry sector.....	7
1.5. Commentary.....	8
<b>2. Headline work quality indicators</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>3. Analysis by main industry sector</b> .....	<b>11</b>
3.1. Public services .....	11
3.2. Hospitality and retail.....	13
3.3. Banking and finance.....	15
3.4. Manufacturing .....	17
3.5. Transport and communication.....	19
3.6. Construction.....	21
3.7. Other services .....	23
<b>3. Additional information</b> .....	<b>25</b>
3.1. Background.....	25
3.2. Definitions .....	28
3.3. Further information.....	30
<b>4. Index of tables</b> .....	<b>31</b>

## 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.



Work Quality Indicators are derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). The LFS statistics were designated as National Statistics in August 2010 following a full [assessment of Labour Market Statistics for Northern Ireland](#) against the [Code of Practice for statistics](#) and ASHE statistics were designated as National Statistics in September 2011 following a [full assessment against the Code of Practice](#).

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:

- Improved quality of the LFS data by boosting the sample size and improving precision around headline estimates (Please note since the COVID-19 pandemic sample sizes have decreased due to difficulty of collecting survey information from households).
- Reviewed and updated [quality protocols for release](#) for LFS data
- Improved accessibility of labour market statistics by [changing the release dates of statistics to avoid public holidays](#) and amended the format and structure of reports in line with accessibility regulations.
- Development of work quality questions on the LFS to better meet user needs.
- Confidence intervals provided within all supplementary tables for work quality indicators

A compliance check in March 2020 of the Labour Market Report which contained LFS and ASHE statistics recommended the continued designation of the Labour Market Report as a National Statistic. These statistics were considered as part of a wider [assessment of the UK employment and jobs statistics](#).

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1. Things users need to know

This release provides statistics for eight work quality indicators: earnings, job security, work quantity, job satisfaction, meaningful work, career progression, employee involvement in decision-making and flexible working, with a focus on analysis of employees aged 18 or over by industry sector. Supplementary tables also include breakdowns by age and gender for the indicators. Commentary relating to work quality statistics, broken down by sex, will be included in the upcoming [Women in NI publication](#) on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

This is the third work quality release by NISRA since December 2020, where the most recent [publication released in February 2021](#) provided analysis by gender, age and skills level for the same eight work quality indicators. All indicators, with the exception of earnings, are sourced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The earnings indicator, which shows the proportion of employees earning above the Real Living Wage (RLW), is sourced from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) for 2021. ASHE remains the principal source of employee earnings information and earnings estimates derived from it are National Statistics. The work quality indicators are provided for employees aged 18 or over, in line with data available from ASHE.

The analysis provided within this paper is for July 2020 to June 2021, and therefore during the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time period, Northern Ireland experienced localised lockdowns, a two-week circuit breaker and another national lockdown which lasted for four months, starting in December 2020 and the first easing of restrictions (opening of non-essential retail) began in April 2021. The ASHE 2021 survey reference date (21<sup>st</sup> April 2021) was within the time-period of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) and similar to 2020 data the ASHE 2021 data therefore includes furloughed employees (for the second consecutive year).

The proportion of employees with hourly earnings below the Real Living Wage was 21% in 2021, which was approximately 5 percentage points (pps) lower than in 2020. This decrease in part reflects the change in the number of people furloughed and the introduction of the flexi-furlough scheme. Further information on earnings and the impact of furlough can be obtained in the background information.

Table 2 in the background notes provides the detail of the various sectors included within section 3 of this publication, which account for 96% of employees aged 18 or over as sourced from the LFS. A number of industry sections were excluded from analysis within the publication due to lower sample sizes and less robust estimates. Whilst further disaggregation has been provided within supplementary tables (sections A to S), accompanying notes provide guidance for users in identifying low quality or disclosive data. Confidence intervals have also been provided alongside LFS estimates within the work quality tables.

The LFS indicators are calculated from respondents that provided a response to the relevant questions, with missing cases or those that were unable to be classified excluded from the analysis.

Work quality questions continue to be reviewed, developed and added to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). In January 2022 there was an amendment to a question on the LFS which is

used to derive the current flexible working indicator. This derivation of this indicator will be kept under review. More information on definitions are available in the background of this release.

Figures in this publication have been rounded, and differences between figures have been calculated on unrounded figures.

## 1.2. Context

Measurement of work quality is a developing area and a growing number of frameworks and ways to measure work quality exist.

The indicators have been broadly based on the New Economics Foundation framework as published in [Good Jobs in Northern Ireland](#) and include measures of pay, job security, opportunities for career progression, job satisfaction, meaningful work, decision making, and under/overemployment. In addition, a measure on workplace flexibility is also included that considers flexibility in terms of the place of work, hours worked, and organisation of those hours.

Three additional questions on work quality were added to LFS questionnaire in January 2022. These focus on levels of support from their immediate manager, experiences of bullying and harassment, and skills required to perform their work duties. Resulting data will be analysed when available.

A [consultation for the new Skills Strategy](#) for Northern Ireland 'Skills for a 10x Economy' ended on 19th August 2021. The draft strategy sets out a programme of action required to modernise Northern Ireland's skills system. It includes linkages to the work developed to create the Work Quality Indicators, proposing the introduction of a business pledge to recognise and promote employers who actively engage with principles of the Work Quality Indicators.

A [work quality page](#) was created during 2021 on the NISRA website, which includes links to recent publications and a live work plan.

Feedback on measuring work quality is welcomed and can be addressed to the contact details available at the end of this report.

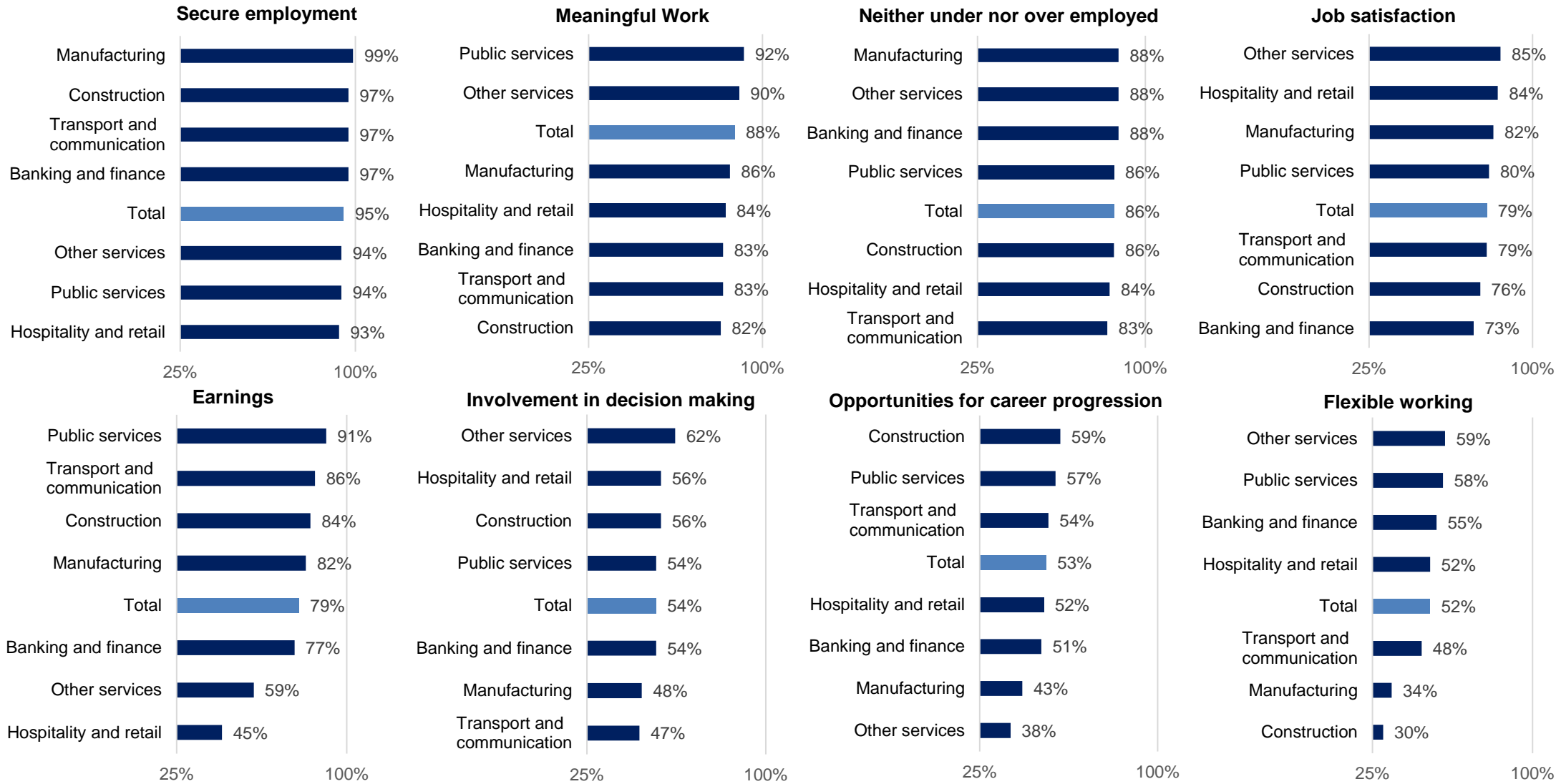
### 1.3. Indicator definitions

**Table 1: Work quality indicator definitions**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Definition of work quality indicator</b>
Secure employment	In a permanent job or in a temporary job who did not want a permanent job
Meaningful work	Agree or strongly agree that they perform meaningful work in their job
Neither under nor over employed	Employees who are neither underemployed or overemployed as per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition
Job satisfaction	Satisfied or very satisfied with their job
Earnings	The proportion of employees earning above the Real Living Wage (RLW)
Involvement in decision making	Managers are good or very good at involving employees and their representatives in decision making
Opportunities for career progression	Agree or strongly agree that their job offers good opportunities for career progression
Flexible working	Employee has a flexible agreed working arrangement of either: flexitime, annualised hours contract, term time working or job sharing; or part-time and not underemployed; or primarily working at home.

## 1.4. Overview of indicators by industry sector

Figure 1: Work quality indicators by industry sector for employees aged 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021



[Download figure 1 data](#)

## 1.5. Commentary

Analysis on employment tends to focus on the quantity, not quality, of work. This analysis builds on two previous publications and compares the quality of work across seven broad sectors using eight statistical indicators. The suite of work quality indicators include subjective and objective measures, relates to employees aged 18 and over and has been derived from the Labour Force Survey and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

The work quality analysis highlights both differences between sectors, and different aspects of work quality within sectors. Notably large differences are shown across industry for earnings above the RLW (range of 46pps), flexible working (29pps range) and career progression (21pps range) while the order and scale of work quality aspects varies by industry.

The most positive work quality indicator in 2021 at the NI level and across each sector was secure employment, where 95% of all employees were in a permanent job or in a temporary job and did not want a permanent job. The least positive indicators were employee involvement in decision making, career progression and flexible working, where approximately 50% met these criteria at the NI level. These indicators were the least positive for 5 of the 7 industries.

Of all the sectors, the public services sector, which includes public administration and defence, education and health and social work, had the largest number of work quality indicators above the NI average, performing higher in 7 out of 8 indicators. The industries which performed lower than the NI average in the most indicators were hospitality and retail, transport and communication and banking and finance industries (5 of the 8 indicators).

As well as reporting higher proportions than the NI average for seven of the eight work quality indicators, the public services sector reported the highest percentage of employees earning above the Real Living Wage (91%) and performing meaningful work (92%) of all sectors.

The manufacturing sector was most positive of all sectors for the secure employment (99%) and neither under nor over employed (88%) indicators. However, the manufacturing sector showed less positive statistics for flexible working, career progression and involvement in decision making.

The hospitality and retail sector reported lower percentages for employees than the NI average for five of the eight indicators. Employees in this sector also had the lowest percentage of employees earning above the RLW (45%) and in secure employment across all sectors, but reported higher levels of job satisfaction and involvement in decision making than most sectors.

Employees in the banking and finance sector had the lowest levels of job satisfaction compared to the other sectors, and were lower than the NI average in four other indicators (earnings above RLW, meaningful work, career progression and involvement in decision making). However, employees in this sector reported higher levels of flexible working, secure employment and neither under nor over employed than the NI average.



The transport and communication sector had the least positive statistics when compared to the other sectors for employee involvement in decision making and neither under nor over employed. The largest difference seen in this sector was earnings above the RLW, which was 7pps higher than the NI average and higher than most sectors.

The construction sector reported the highest level of career progression, but the lowest percentage of employees in flexible working and in meaningful work. Similarly, the other services sector reported the highest levels of job satisfaction, involvement in decision making and flexible work, but the lowest levels of career progression and a low proportion with earnings above the RLW. These two sectors combined account for less than 10% of all employees.

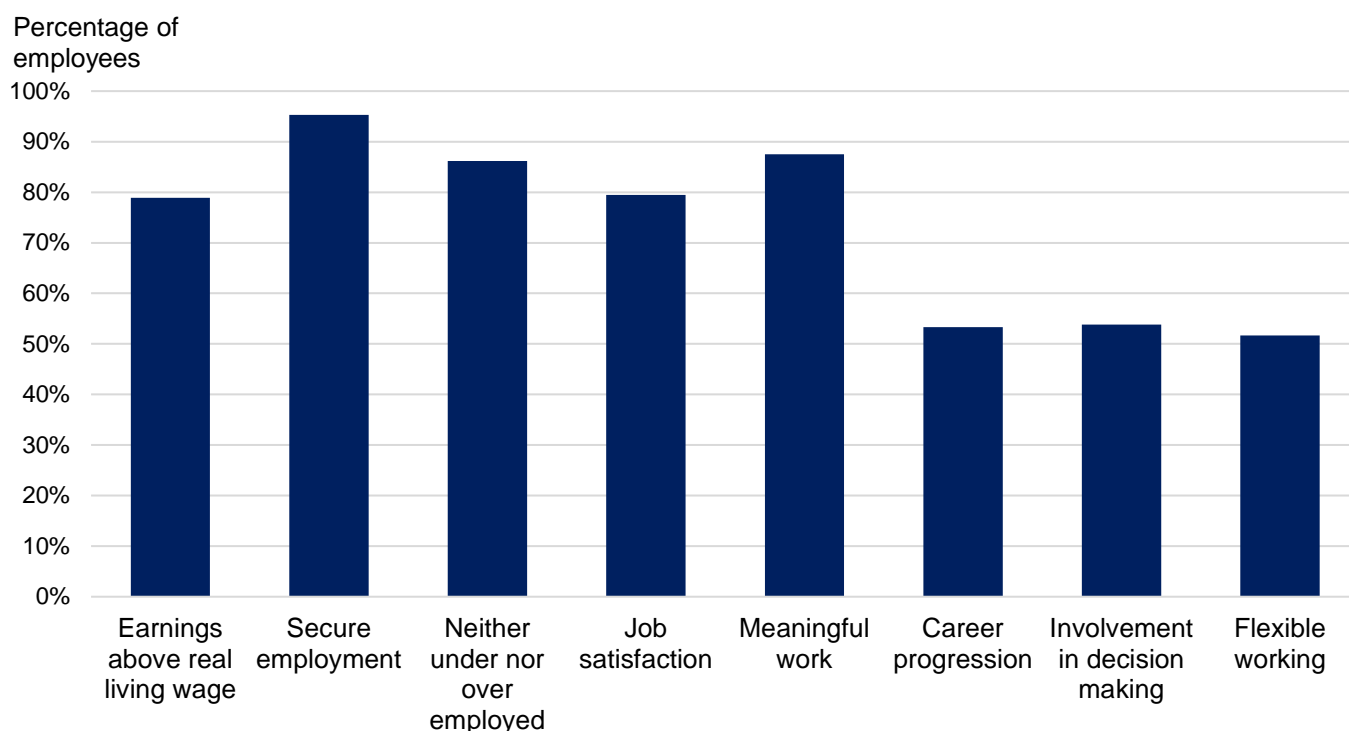
## 2. Headline work quality indicators

The following section gives a brief overview of the eight work quality indicators for all employees aged 18 or over in Northern Ireland for 2021.

### Key points:

- **Secure employment was the most positive indicator, where 95% of employees were in a permanent job or in a temporary job and did not want a permanent job.**
- **Responses to questions on opportunities for career progression, involvement in decision making and flexible working were less positive than other indicators.**

**Figure 2: Work quality indicators, employees aged 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021**



[Download figure 2 data](#)

Figure 2 shows at the NI level the work quality indicators can be broadly separated into two groups, career progression, employee involvement in decision making and flexible working with just over half of all employees agreeing that they worked in jobs that met these criteria; and earnings, secure employment, under/overemployment, job satisfaction and meaningful work with much higher levels of employees (79-95%) reporting their jobs meet these quality of work aspects.

### 3. Analysis by main industry sector

This section provides analysis by industry of all eight work quality indicators sourced from ASHE and LFS for employees aged 18 and over in 2021.

#### 3.1. Public services

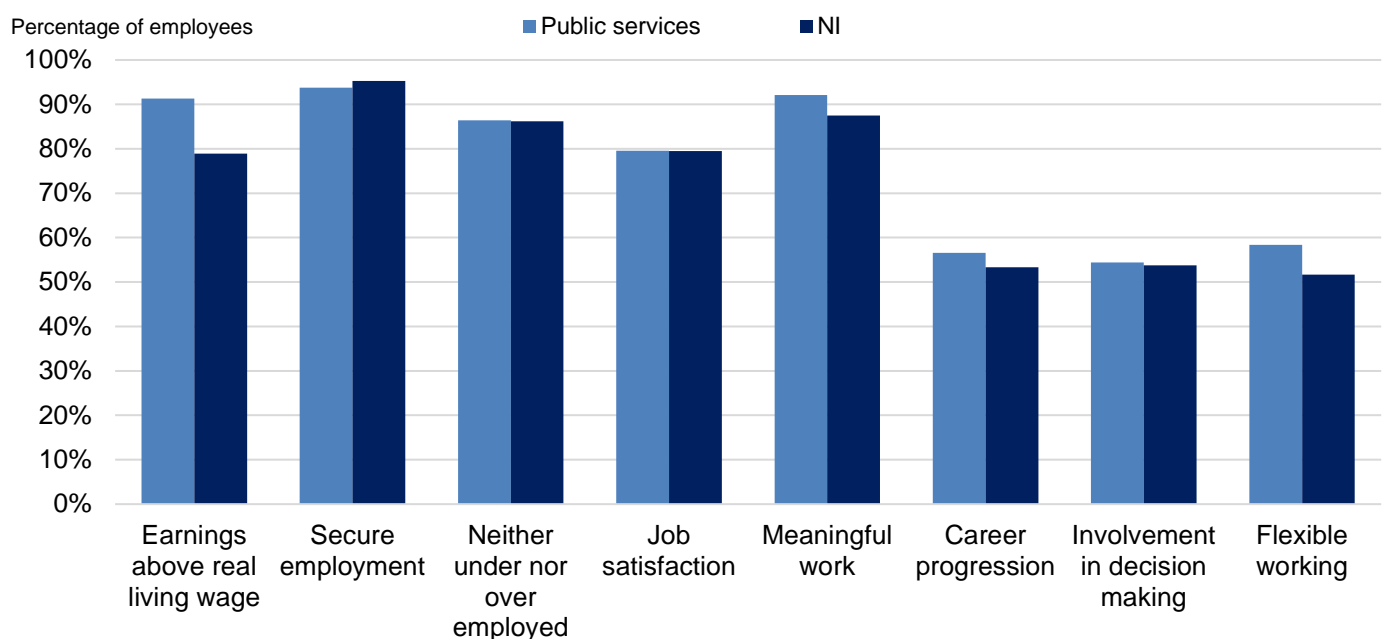
The public services sector encompasses jobs in public administration and defence, education, and health. There were an estimated 270,000 employees (38% of all employees) aged 18 and over in the public services sector in Northern Ireland in 2021, as sourced from the LFS.

- The public services sector is predominantly female where approximately 71% of employees are female, compared to 29% male.
- A higher proportion of employees in the public services sector are aged 40 and over (59%) than aged 18 to 39 (41%).

#### Key points:

- **The majority of work quality indicators were more positive in the public services sector than the NI average, with the exception of secure employment. The largest difference was earnings above the Real Living Wage, which was 12pps higher for public services compared to the NI average.**
- **When comparing across sectors, public services reported the highest percentage of employees earning above the Real Living Wage and meaningful work**

**Figure 3: Work quality indicators, public services and NI, aged 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021**



[Download figure 3 data](#)

Figure 3 demonstrates that the largest differences between public services sector and the NI average were in the earnings above the Real Living Wage and flexible working indicators, where public service employees reported higher percentages than the NI average (by 12pps and 7pps respectively).

Three of the eight indicators reported similar percentages across the public services sector and NI, where the difference was less than 1pps (neither under nor over employed, job satisfaction and involvement in decision making). Secure employment was the only indicator where public services was slightly lower than the NI average (2pps).

Employees working in public service jobs reported the highest proportion with earnings above the Real Living Wage (91%) and meaningful work (92%) when compared across the other industry sectors. The high percentage of earnings above the Real Living Wage within the public services sector is being primarily driven by public administration and defence, and education employees.

Whilst there was a high proportion in secure employment (94%), this was lower in comparison to the majority of the other industry sectors. The lower proportion in secure employment for public services is being driven by the education sector, where there was a lower percentage in permanent jobs (88%) compared to Health and Social Work (93%) and public administration (95%).

### 3.2. Hospitality and retail

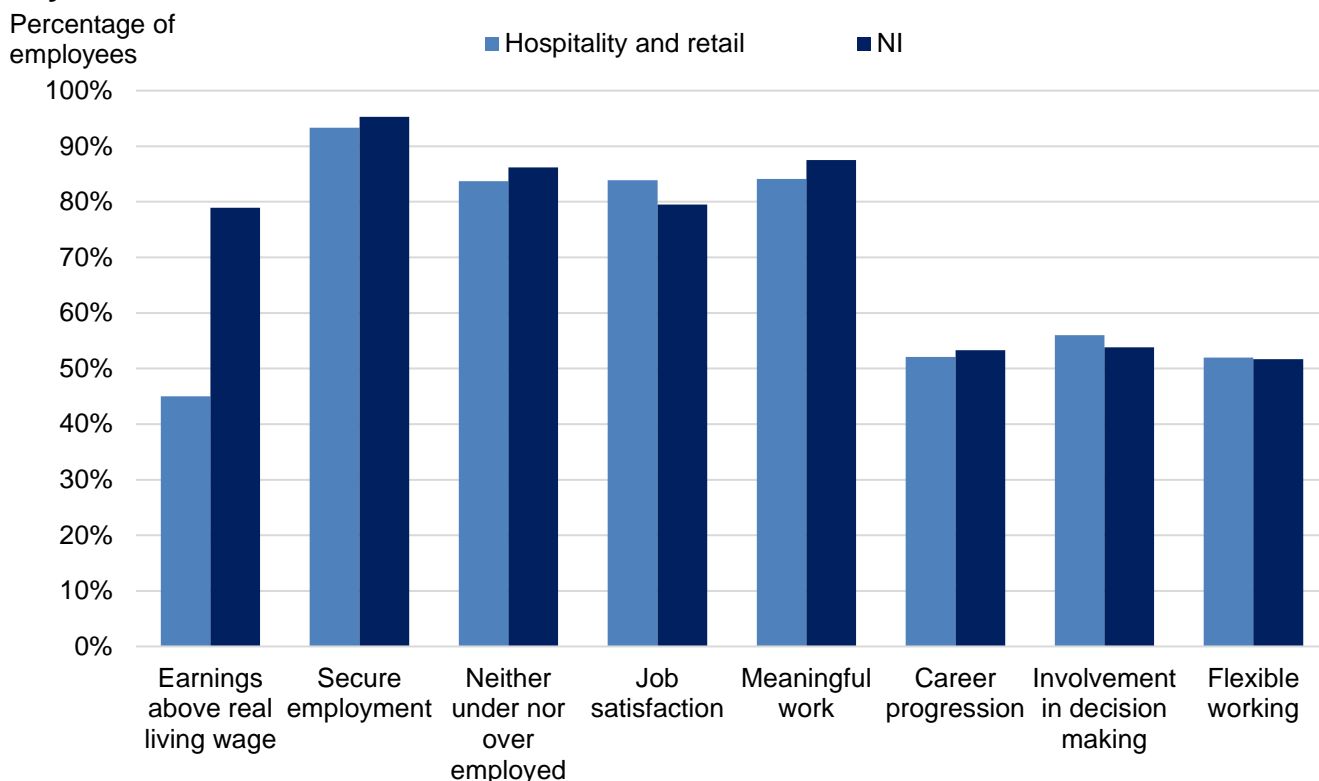
The hospitality and retail sector includes those involved in distribution, retail, accommodation and food services. There were an estimated 120,000 employees (17% of all employees) aged 18 and over in the hospitality and retail sector in Northern Ireland in 2021, as sourced from the LFS.

- Employees in the hospitality industry are evenly split between males (50%) and females (50%).
- A higher proportion of employees in the hospitality industry are aged 18 to 39 (58%) than aged 40 and over (42%).

#### Key points:

- **Less than half (45%) of employees in the hospitality and retail sector earned above the Real Living Wage compared to almost 80% of all NI employees**
- **Employees in the hospitality and retail sector had lower percentages than the NI average in five of the eight work quality indicators.**

**Figure 4: Work quality indicators, hospitality and retail and NI, aged 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021**



[Download figure 4 data](#)

Figure 4 shows that while employees in the hospitality and retail sector reported lower percentages than the NI average in five of the eight indicators, there was little variance for some indicators, such as flexible working and career progression.

The largest difference in the hospitality and retail sector and the NI average was in the earnings above the Real Living Wage indicator (by 34 pps), where less than half (45%) of employees in the hospitality and retail sector reported earnings above the Real Living Wage in comparison to almost 80% of all employees.

Employees in the hospitality and retail sector reported higher levels of job satisfaction, involvement in decision making and flexible working when compared to the NI average.

When comparing across industry sectors, the hospitality and retail sector had the lowest percentage with earnings above the Real Living Wage, dominated by the accommodation and food section (where approximately 1 in 5 employees earned above the RLW). The hospitality and retail sector reported the lowest percentage of employees in secure employment (93%) when compared across industry sectors.

### 3.3. Banking and finance

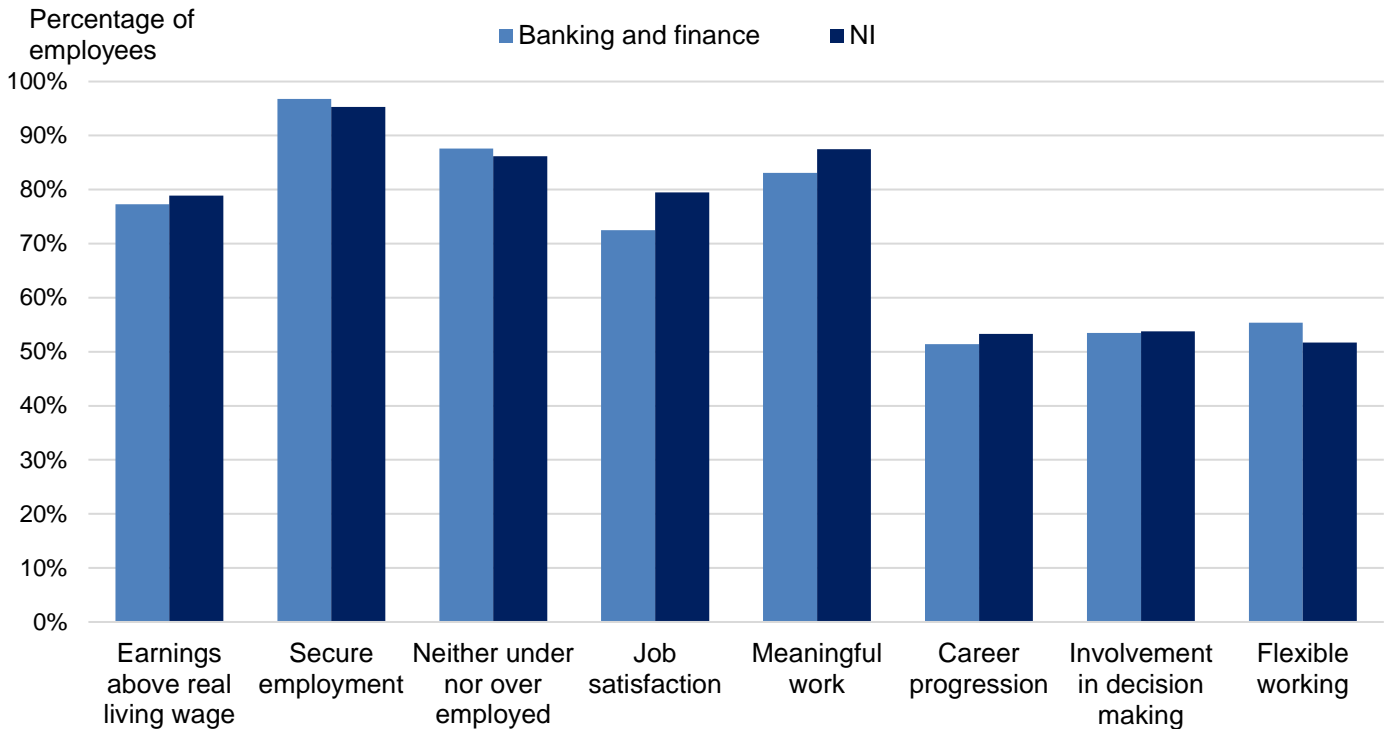
The banking and finance sector includes those in banking, insurance, real estate, professional, technical, and administrative activities. There were an estimated 118,000 employees (16% of all employees) aged 18 and over in the banking and finance sector in Northern Ireland in 2021, as sourced from the LFS.

- The banking and finance sector employs slightly more males (54%) than females (46%).
- A higher proportion of employees in the banking and finance sector are aged 18 to 39 (55%) than employees aged 40 and over (45%).

**Key points:**

- **The largest difference between banking and finance sector employees and the NI average was job satisfaction, which was 7pps lower than the NI average.**
- **Employees in the banking and finance sector reported fewer positive responses in the majority of indicators, with the exception of secure employment, neither under nor over employed and flexible working, when compared to NI.**

**Figure 5: Work quality indicators, banking and finance and NI, aged 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021**



[Download figure 5 data](#)

Figure 5 shows that the employees in the banking and finance sector reported similar proportions to the NI average for several indicators (less than 2pps difference), such as involvement in decision making and neither under nor over employed.

Flexible working was higher for employees in the banking and finance sector (by 4pps) compared to NI, as well as higher levels of secure employment and neither under nor over employed. However, it was less positive than the NI average for job satisfaction (by 7pps) and meaningful work (by 4pps) in particular. Earnings above the Real Living Wage, career progression and involvement in decision making were also less positive than the NI average in the banking and finance sector, although the variance was lower.

When compared across the industry sectors, the banking and finance sector reported the lowest levels of job satisfaction (73%), as well as less positive responses across a number of other indicators.



### 3.4. Manufacturing

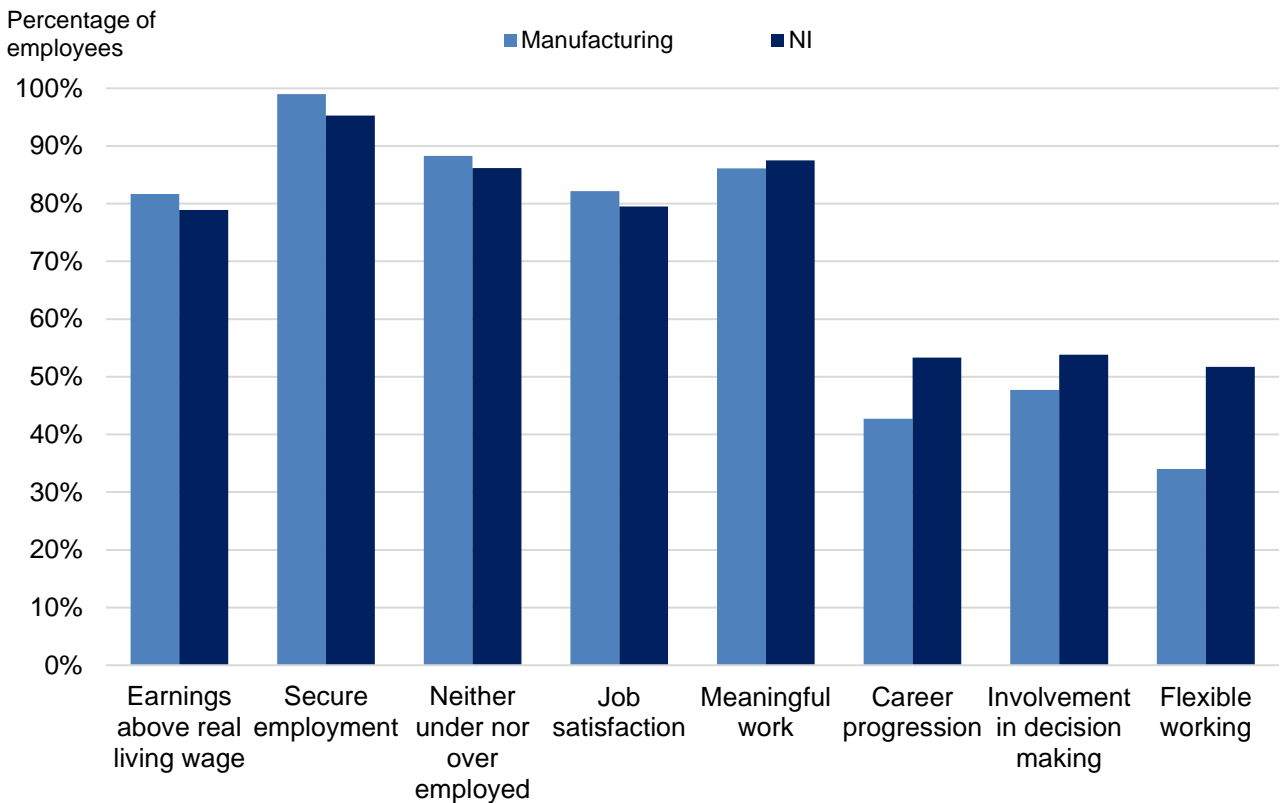
There were an estimated 79,000 employees (11% of all employees) aged 18 and over in the manufacturing industry in Northern Ireland in 2021, as sourced from the LFS.

- The manufacturing industry is predominately male where 73% of employees are male in comparison to 27% female.
- There was a higher proportion aged 18 to 39 (53%) in the manufacturing sector, compared to those aged 40 and over (47%).

#### Key points:

- **Nearly all manufacturing sector employees (99%) reported being in secure employment, which was the highest across all industry sectors.**
- **Flexible working, career progression, involvement in decision making and meaningful work were less positive for the manufacturing sector when compared to the NI average.**

**Figure 6: Work quality indicators, manufacturing and NI, aged 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021**



[Download figure 6 data](#)

Figure 6 shows that whilst employees in the manufacturing industry reported slightly more

positive responses in half of the indicators, specifically earnings above the Real Living Wage, secure employment, job satisfaction, and neither under nor over employed, there were several indicators with less positive statistics and larger variances. Flexible working, career progression, involvement in decision making and meaningful work were less positive for the manufacturing sector when compared to the NI average.

Employees in the manufacturing sector are less likely than the NI average to agree that their job offers good opportunities for career progression (11pps less) and flexible working (18pps less).

Manufacturing employees reported the highest proportion in secure employment (99%) when compared to the other sectors, and were also most likely to be neither under nor over employed (88%).

### 3.5. Transport and communication

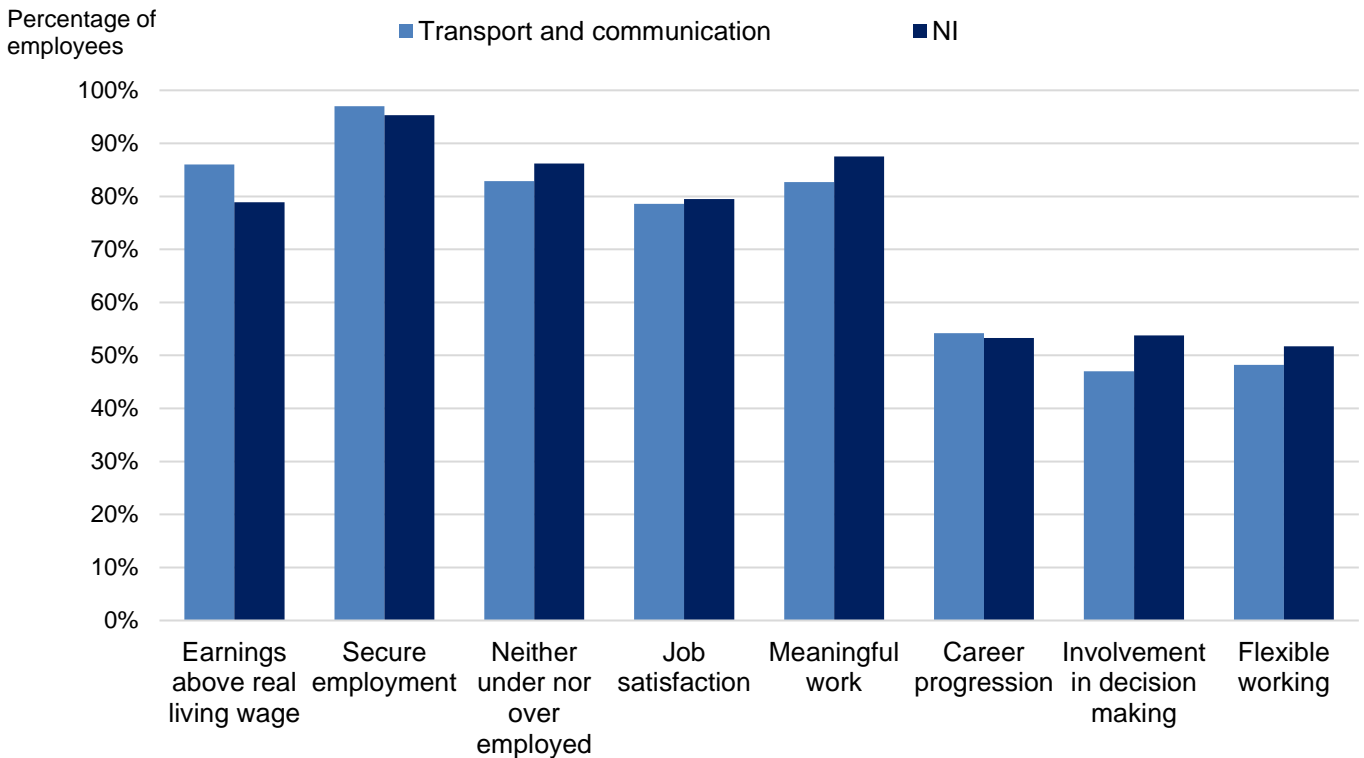
This industry sector includes employees from the storage industry and also the information and communication industry. There were an estimated 48,000 employees (7% of all employees) aged 18 and over in the transport and communication sector in Northern Ireland in 2021, as sourced from the LFS.

- The transport and communication sector is predominately male where 71% of employees are male in comparison to 29% female.
- Nearly three out of five of employees in the transport and communication sector are aged 40 and over (59%), compared to two of out five aged 18 to 39 (41%).

**Key points:**

- **The largest difference was in the earnings above the Real Living Wage indicator, where the transport and communication sector reported a higher proportion (7pps) than the NI average.**
- **When compared to other industry sectors, transport and communication employees were least likely to report involvement in decision making and being neither under nor over employed.**

**Figure 7: Work quality indicators, transport and communication and NI, aged 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021**



[Download figure 7 data](#)

Figure 7 shows that the five of the eight indicators were less positive for the transport and communications sector than the NI average, with the largest variances seen in the involvement in decision making and meaningful work indicators.

However, it was more positive for several indicators. There was a higher proportion of transport and communication employees reporting earnings above the Real Living Wage (7pps), secure employment (2 pps) and career progression (1pps) compared to the NI average.

Employees in the transport and communication sector were least likely to report involvement in decision making (47%) and being neither under nor over employed (83%) when compared to the other industry sectors, yet they had the second highest proportion with earnings above the Real Living Wage.

### 3.6. Construction

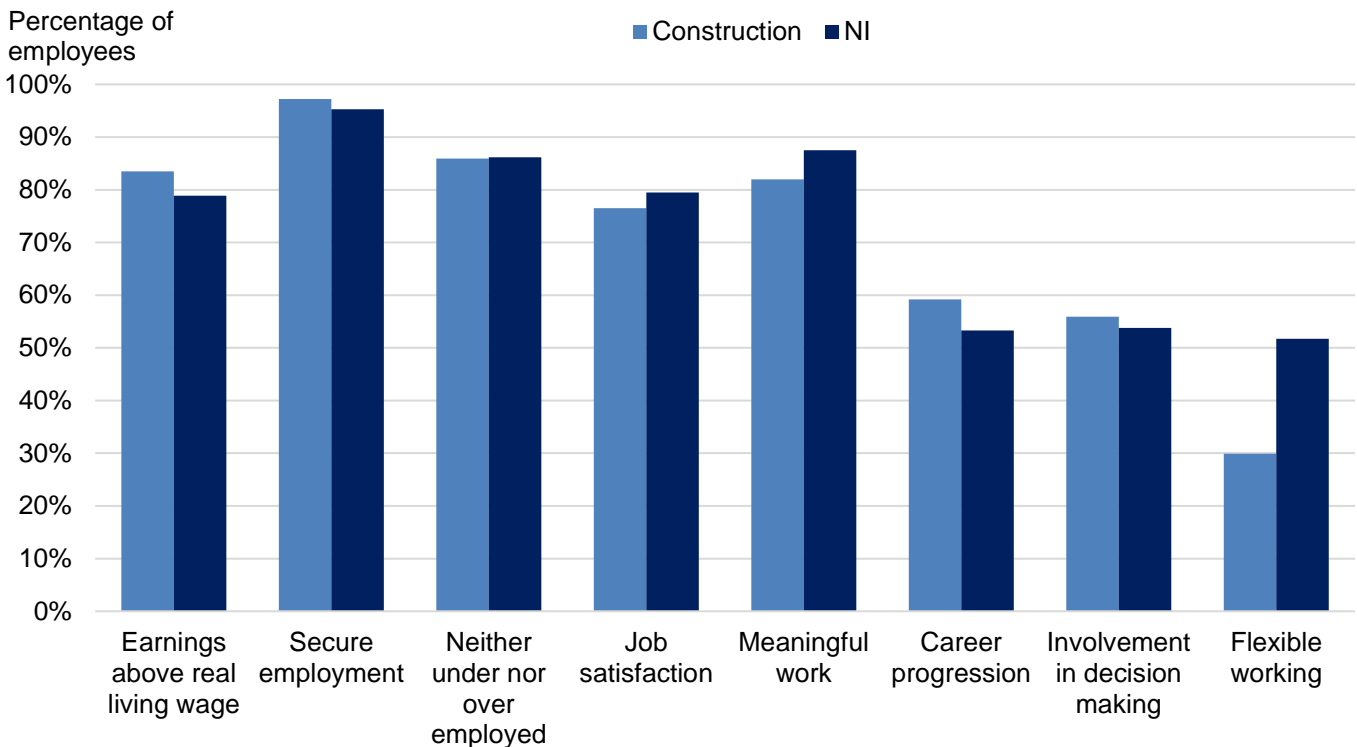
There were an estimated 33,000 employees (5% of all employees) aged 18 and over in the construction industry in Northern Ireland in 2021, as sourced from the LFS.

- The construction industry is predominantly male with 78% of employees being male and 22% being female.
- The age range for employees in the construction sector is similar for those aged 18 to 39 and those aged 40 and over, at 52% and 48% respectively.

**Key points:**

- **Around 3 in 10 construction sector employees were in flexible working compared to 5 in 10 employees in NI as a whole, which was the largest difference across the indicators.**
- **A higher proportion of employees in the construction sector had earnings above the Real Living Wage, good opportunities for career progression, secure employment and involvement in decision making compared to the NI average.**

**Figure 8: Work quality indicators, construction and NI, aged 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021**



[Download figure 8 data](#)

Figure 8 shows that employees in the construction industry reported higher proportions than the NI average for four of the eight work quality indicators: earnings above the Real Living

Wage, good opportunities for career progression, secure employment and involvement in decision making.

However, it was less positive for several indicators. The least positive indicator was flexible working, where around 3 in 10 employees in the construction sector were in flexible working, compared to around 5 in 10 employees in NI as a whole. The construction sector also reported the lowest levels of meaningful work (82%) when compared across the industry sectors.

### 3.7. Other services

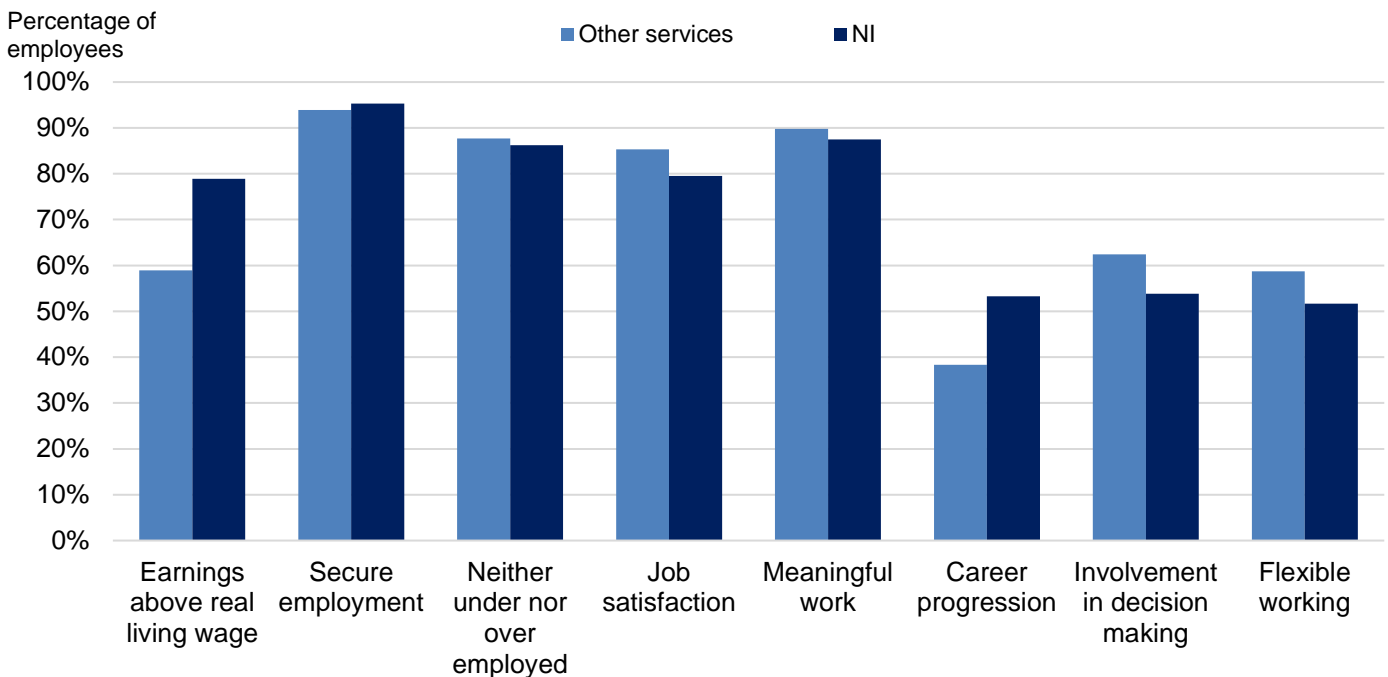
The other services industry is a broad sector which includes other activities not covered elsewhere, including arts, entertainment and recreation and other services. There were an estimated 31,000 employees (4% of all employees) aged 18 and over in the other services industry in Northern Ireland in 2021, as sourced from the LFS.

- The other services sector has similar proportions of males (53%) and females (47%).
- Nearly two out of three employees in the other services sector are aged 40 and over (63%), compared to 37% aged 18 to 39.

**Key points:**

- **Employees in the other services sector had higher proportions than the NI average in five of the eight indicators, such as involvement in decision making and flexible working.**
- **Responses were less positive in the other services sector for earnings above the Real Living Wage and career progression in particular, where there were large variances of 20pps and 14pps respectively.**

**Figure 9: Work quality indicators, other services and NI, aged 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021**



[Download figure 9 data](#)

Figure 9 shows that whilst there were similar proportions for the other services sector employees and the NI average for some indicators, such as secure employment, meaningful work and neither under nor over employed, others reported a larger variance.

Employees in the other services industry were more likely to say they had an involvement in decision making, job satisfaction and flexible working when compared to NI average and the other industry sectors.

However, the statistics were less positive when compared to the NI average for earnings above the Real Living Wage (by 20pps) and career progression (by 15pps) in particular.

Approximately three out of five (59%) employees in the other services industry reported having earnings above the Real Living Wage, compared to four out of five employees in NI as a whole. Only 38% of employees in the other services industry said they had good opportunities for career progression, this is 15pps lower than the NI average and the lowest proportion across all industry sectors.



## 3. Additional information

### 3.1. Background

The data set used for LFS data in this publication is the annual dataset from July 2020 to June 2021. LFS annual datasets are derived from four consecutive quarters of the LFS. Individuals in each wave are interviewed in five successive quarters, such that in any quarter one wave will be receiving their first interview, one wave their second, and so on, with one receiving their fifth and final interview. The annual dataset is created by selecting the relevant cases from each quarter and combining them to create a dataset of unique cases. Selecting all wave one and five interviews allows the maximum number of respondents over a one-year period to be included whilst avoiding double counting. The resulting sample size of the 2021 dataset is approximately 8,000 individuals.

The ASHE 2021 survey reference date was within the time-period of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). This is the second consecutive year that the survey has included furloughed employees. The CJRS was first introduced to support employers from 1st March 2020 whose businesses were impacted by the pandemic. The first CJRS worked by providing grants to employers of up to 80% of the salary to a maximum value of £2,500 per employee per month, while covering some of the cost of employer pension and National Insurance Contributions.

By April 2021, the scheme had changed so that employees could be fully furloughed, or flexi-furloughed, where earnings would be no less than 80%. Businesses were asked to include employees who were supported by the CJRS in their survey return, and provide information relating to the earnings they received, the hours which their earnings related to, and whether they had a loss of pay.

Final results from 2021 showed that approximately 7% of employee jobs were identified as furloughed with reduced pay (i.e. earnings not topped up by their employer). This was down from almost 16% in the previous year. NI had the highest percentage of furloughed staff across the 12 UK government regions in both 2020 and 2021, but also recorded the largest decrease in its furlough rate over the year. Further information on earnings and the impact of furlough can be obtained from the [ASHE 2021](#) publication.

### LFS revisions due to reweighting

Typically, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) would reweight the LFS every two years to take account of updated population estimates and projections. However, investigations by ONS during 2020 showed the composition of the achieved LFS sample had changed because of the change in survey methods introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditionally, the survey is conducted via a face-to-face household interview with follow-up telephone interviews, but this changed to solely telephone interviews in April 2020.

In October 2020 LFS data were reweighted to include additional factors (household tenure) to mitigate the changing sample composition, and estimates were revised from January 2020. More information on the October 2020 reweighting is available on the NISRA website: [LFS Revision Note – October 2020](#).

LFS responses are typically weighted to official population projections. However, in July 2021, ONS reweighted the LFS data from January to March 2020 to February to April 2021

based on an LFS specific population that takes changes shown in HMRC's PAYE Real Time Information source into account. The ONS published the [LFS reweighting methodology](#) in an article. NISRA published the [Impact of the LFS reweighting on annual data](#) paper in August 2021, to show the impact of the new weighting methodology for 2020 headline labour market estimates.

Following the [latest reweighting of LFS estimates](#) in July 2021 which impacted datasets from January 2020, a further reweighting is planned for later in the year. The estimates for NI did not have the non-response bias adjustment from the recent reweighting fully applied and in addition there was a small error in the implementation of the reweighting methodology affecting all UK estimates. We will provide further detail on timelines for the reweighting in due course, where LFS quarterly and annual datasets will be reweighted back to January 2020.

### **Precision of estimates**

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.

Estimates under a cell count of 3 are disclosive and therefore suppressed. In tables, estimates based on a small sample size are shaded. Small samples may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution, in particular should not be used to make statements on relative size when compared to similar values. Unshaded estimates are based on a larger sample size. This is likely to result in estimates of higher precision, although they will still be subject to some sampling variability.

The sample used for ASHE survey included approximately 1% of all employees in NI and who were covered by Pay As Your Earn (PAYE) schemes.

### **Reporting differences**

Reported difference is calculated using unrounded data and presented to 1 decimal place. When a difference is less than 0.05pps, it is rounded to 0.0pps and the data is reported as unchanged.

### **Work quality questions on the LFS**

Work quality questions continue to be reviewed, developed and added to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). A job satisfaction question was first added to the LFS in January 2018 and was based on an 11-point Likert scale similar to life satisfaction question already on the questionnaire. The scale was later adapted in July 2019 to a 5-point scale when three questions on meaningful work, opportunities for career progression and involvement in decision making were added. Indicators on work quantity, job security and flexibility have been derived from existing questions on the LFS.

Three additional questions on work quality were added to LFS questionnaire in January 2022. These focus on levels of support from their immediate manager, experiences of bullying and harassment, and skills required to perform their work duties.

## Sampling variability

The Labour Force Survey is a sample survey. It provides estimates of population values. If we drew many samples each would give a different result. The ranges shown for the LFS data in the table below represent 95% confidence intervals. We would expect that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value.

**Table 2: Sampling variability of work quality estimates, NI, ages 18 and over, July 2020 to June 2021**

Work quality indicator	Estimate	Lower limit	Upper limit
Earnings above Real Living Wage	78.9%	77.8%	80.0%
Secure employment	95.3%	94.5%	96.0%
Neither under nor over employed	86.2%	84.9%	87.4%
Job satisfaction	79.5%	77.5%	81.4%
Meaningful work	87.5%	85.9%	89.1%
Career progression	53.3%	50.9%	55.7%
Involvement in decision making	53.8%	51.4%	56.3%
Flexible working	51.7%	49.9%	53.5%

Further information on estimating and reporting uncertainty can be found on the [LFS background information](#) on the NISRA website.

Confidence intervals have been included for the work quality estimates within the tables published alongside this release.

## Industry sectors included within publication

Table 3 below provides the detail of all industry sections contained within the broad sectors analysed within this publication, which account for 96% of all employees aged 18 or over, as sourced from the LFS.

**Table 3: Detail of industry sectors**

Industry Sector	Industry Sections
Public services	O – Public administration and defence P – Education Q – Health and social work
Hospitality and retail	G – Wholesale, retail, and repair of vehicles I – Accommodation and food services

<b>Industry Sector</b>	<b>Industry Sections</b>
Banking and finance	K – Financial and insurance activities L – Real estate activities M – Professional, scientific, and technical activities N – Administrative and support service activities
Manufacturing	C – Manufacturing
Transportation and communication	H – Transport and storage J – Information and communication
Construction	F – Construction
Other services	R – Arts, entertainment, and recreation S – Other service activities

Industry sections excluded within this publication due to low sample sizes:

- A – Agriculture, forestry, and fishing
- B – Mining and quarrying
- D – Electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply
- E – Water supply; sewerage, waste management, and remediation activities
- T – Activities of households as employers
- U – Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies

## **3.2. Definitions**

### **Employment**

The definition of ILO employed applies to anyone (aged 16 to 64) 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.

### **Employee**

Employees are those who are in employment and paid a wage by an employer for the work that they do; this category may be further sub-divided into permanent and temporary employees. The 'Total Employees' figure that is used as the denominator is the total employees who answered the question and should not be used as an estimate of total employees in itself. Estimates of employment and employees are available in the monthly Labour Market Report, which can be found on the [Labour Force Survey](#) section of the NISRA website. Employment status on the LFS is self-reported, with individuals classifying themselves as either an employee or self-employed.

## **Underemployed**

Underemployed workers are those people in employment who would like to work more hours, either by working in an additional job, by working more hours in their current job, or by switching to a replacement job. They must also be available to start working longer hours within two weeks and their current weekly hours must be below 40 hours if they are between 16 and 18 and below 48 hours if they are over 18.

## **Overemployed**

The overemployed are defined as persons in employment who would like to work fewer hours and would accept less pay for shorter hours, either in a different job or in their current job.

## **Job Security**

For the purposes of work quality analysis, job security has been defined as employees who are either in permanent employment, or are in temporary employment but do not want to have a permanent post.

## **Flexible Working**

For the purposes of work quality analysis, flexible work has been defined as employees who either:

- Have an agreed working arrangement in their job of one of the following: flexitime (flexible working hours), annualised hours contract, term time working or job sharing.
- Work part time and are not underemployed
- Primarily working at home

## **Real Living Wage**

The UK Real Living Wage (RLW), which has been in place since 2011, is calculated according to the cost of living, based on a basket of household goods and services. It is higher than the national living wage set by government and is voluntarily paid by employers. The RLW is calculated annually and rates are higher than the National Minimum Wage (NMW)— further information can be accessed at the [Living Wage Foundation website](#).

The Real Living Wage (RLW) is announced in November each year and must be implemented by the following May. As such it is likely that the previous year's living wage was still in place when the survey was completed. (i.e. the 2021 ASHE data relates to the pay period including April 2021, at which time the 2021/2022 Real Living Wage of £9.90 may not have been applied). The 2020/2021 rate of £9.50 is therefore used to calculate the percentage earning above the RLW in the time period covered by this release.

Based on ASHE data, 78.9% of employees were earning above the RLW in NI in 2021, where only the main job has been included for those with more than one job. Data on the proportion of employee's jobs with hourly earnings below the RLW for all regions of the UK between 2014 and 2021 can be accessed [here](#). This data contains all jobs, and not just the main job and so differs from the analysis presented in this report.

### **3.3. Further information**

#### **Feedback**

We welcome feedback from users on the work quality indicators. Please contact the Labour Force Survey team using the contact details below.

#### **Contact**

If you require further information about the figures contained in this publication or the accompanying tables, please contact the Labour Force Survey team using the details below:

Holly McAteer,  
Tel: (028) 9025 576

Email: [LFS@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:LFS@finance-ni.gov.uk)

## 4. Index of tables

Table number	Title
1.1	<a href="#"><u>Employees earning above the Real Living Wage, by age, sex and industry, aged 18 and over, 2021</u></a>
1.2	<a href="#"><u>Employees who are not time-related under employed or over employed, by age, sex and industry, aged 18 and over, 2021</u></a>
1.3	<a href="#"><u>Employees in secure employment, by age, sex and industry, aged 18 and over, 2021</u></a>
1.4	<a href="#"><u>Employees with reported job satisfaction, by age, sex and industry, aged 18 and over, 2021</u></a>
1.5	<a href="#"><u>Employees with reported opportunities for career progression, by age, sex and industry, aged 18 and over, 2021</u></a>
1.6	<a href="#"><u>Employees who reported involvement in decision making, by age, sex and industry, aged 18 and over, 2021</u></a>
1.7	<a href="#"><u>Employees who reported performing meaningful work, by age, sex and industry, aged 18 and over, 2021</u></a>
1.8	<a href="#"><u>Employees in flexible work, by age, sex and industry, aged 18 and over, 2021</u></a>