Labour Market Statistics – Newsletter

June 2021

Welcome to the Labour Market Statistics Newsletter

This short newsletter follows feedback from attendees at the Labour Market Statistics User Group in October 2020. Users told us that they would like more regular updates on developments in Labour Market Statistics. We are using this newsletter to provide an overview of things you may have missed since the last user group and plans for the next six months.

The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted labour market statistics in many ways. The following few pages summarizes the changes we have made to how we collect, statistically process, publish and interpret our statistics.

Although the pandemic has driven a lot of change, we have continued to develop outside of this. The second half of the newsletter provides an overview of some of these developments – improvements to the accessibility of our outputs, implementation of SOC 2020, and new questions on the Labour Force Survey.

Labour Market Statistics User Group

This year's user group meeting will take place on Thursday 30th September.

We are considering the best format for this year's group following the success of last year's online event. Details will be advertised at the end of the Summer via email, on the NISRA website and NISRA's twitter account.

Data collection during the pandemic

NISRA's data collection from businesses and households changed during the pandemic.

NISRA suspended all face-to-face household interviews in the middle of March 2020 and from April 2020 all Labour Force Survey interviews have been conducted by telephone.

To try and maintain an appropriate sample size for analysis and to make it as easy as possible to take part, NISRA made changes to the number of households invited to respond as well as changes to communication materials and processes. The achieved sample size in January to March 2021 was approximately 25% lower than January to March 2020. The smaller achieved sample size impacts the precision of the estimates, for example the employment rate 95% confidence interval increased by 0.6pps from January-March 2020.

Similarly, the number of businesses responding to business surveys decreased during the year. To try to make it as easy as possible for businesses to respond, NISRA used a new online survey platform and encouraged businesses to respond online.

Falling response rates in business surveys mean that estimates may be subject to higher revisions in the next release of the data. Quarterly employee jobs, annual employee jobs and annual earnings and pensions estimates are derived from business surveys. Detailed response rates and revisions are included in each of the publications.

Reweighting Labour Force Survey data – July 2021

Headline indicators of unemployment, employment and economic inactivity are derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) in a process where survey returns are weighted to population totals to provide estimates at NI and UK level.

Typically, the LFS is reweighted every two years to take account of updated population estimates and projections. In October 2020, the LFS was reweighted outside of this normal timetable due to changes in the sample composition. This change in sample composition resulted from the change in survey methods from face-to-face household interviews to telephone interviews. The reweighting in October included additional factors (household tenure) to mitigate the changing sample composition, and estimates were revised from January 2020. The impact of the revisions were to increase the unemployment and economic inactivity rates and decrease the employment rate. More information on the reweighting and graphs showing the impact to estimates is available on the NISRA website - LFS Revision Note – October 2020.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has continued to monitor the impact of the pandemic and the most appropriate statistical methods to use. Between July and September, LFS quarterly and annual datasets will be reweighted back to January 2020. The provision of data in response to ad-hoc data requests will pause during the reweighting period.

The reweighting will build on insights from HMRC 'Real Time Information' data that showed that at a UK level changes in employment varied by country of birth.

A blog on Meeting the challenges in population estimation | National Statistical (ons.gov.uk) is available on the ONS website as well as a more detailed article for more technical readers on Labour Force Survey weighting methodology - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk).

Furlough Statistics

Government schemes developed to support people during the pandemic have affected how we should interpret labour market statistics. In particular, it is important to consider the 'location' of furloughed employees when considering labour market statistics over the past year.

Those furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) or receiving a grant through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) are included in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates of employment and not within the LFS unemployment estimates. Similarly, employees on the CJRS are included in the HMRC count of employees paid through payroll and estimates of quarterly and annual employee jobs from the Quarterly Employment Survey and Business Register and Employment Survey. In contrast, a proportion of those receiving grants through CJRS and SEISS may be accessing Universal Credit unemployment benefits as a 'top-up' payment and be included in the experimental Claimant Count.

HMRC provide regular statistical publications including disaggregation of the CJRS and SEISS by region and industry. The most recent CJRS and SEISS publications are available online.

Quarterly and Annual Employee Jobs

Annual employee jobs statistics are derived from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). 13,000 businesses were selected for the BRES in September 2020, a decrease from the 2019 selected sample size of 30,000. The smaller sample size reduces the level to which the data can be disaggregated. The 2020 results will be published in late July (date to be confirmed) and will include employment breakdowns by headline industry and Local Government District area. Employee jobs totals include furloughed jobs.

Quarterly employee jobs statistics are derived from the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES). QES data commentary and analysis are published in a detailed publication and summary statistics are included in the Labour Market Report. The next QES publication date is Tuesday 15th June 2020.

Earnings Survey and Furlough Questions

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings was issued to businesses at the end of April 2021. The publication date has not yet been set but is likely to be at the end of October.

Similar to last year's survey, businesses have been asked to include whether the employee has been furloughed (question 2i shown below) and their furlough rate of pay. A copy of the 2021 ASHE survey form is available online.

| 2i was the employee furloughed (either fully or partly) for any of the pay period that included 21 April 2021?		
Yes ☐	No ☐	Information not available ☐

Pre-pandemic earnings estimates were based on all those employees whose pay was not lower than usual due to for example sickness, or maternity leave. Consistent with the ASHE 2020 analysis, our intention is to again exclude those recording loss of pay for all reasons apart from furlough.

Below is an example of one of the outputs we published last year relating to furloughed employees.

Figure 1: Median gross weekly earnings for public and private sector full-time employees, April 2019 and April 2020
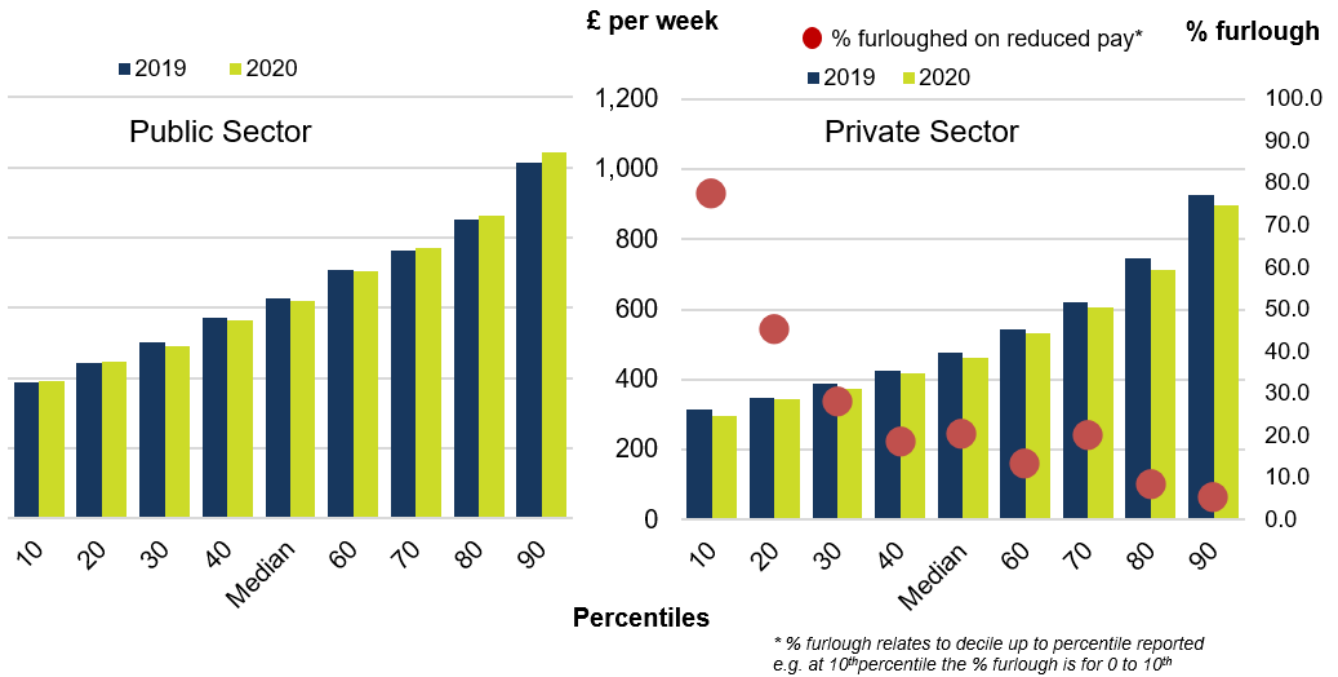
Last year, alongside the ASHE 2020 publication we produced materials to help explain how the median is calculated and why it is used when reporting on earnings, as well as a short guide to how furlough pay affects the median. We intend to develop further visuals with the ASHE 2021 publication. Please let us know of anything you would like more information on.

Standard Occupation Codes (SOC) 2020

This year earnings data from ASHE will be coded to SOC 2010 and SOC 2020.

The earnings results for 2021 will be published on SOC 2010 initially.
SOC2020 data will be published after the main release of ASHE data.

The main areas of change from SOC 2010 to 2020 were:
- a review of professional and associate professional occupations at major group level e.g. paramedics are reclassified from associate professional to professional
- changes to how information technology occupations are classified e.g. creation of web and multi-media design professional (3-digit group)
- disaggregation within groups at 4-digit level e.g. senior professionals of educational establishments disaggregated to 'head teachers and principals', 'education managers' and 'other education professionals'
- aggregation of groups declining in size at 4-digit level e.g. creation of mining and quarry workers and related activities

More detail on SOC 2020 is available on the ONS website.

HMRC data on earnings and employees

In October, experimental data from HMRC Real Time Information (RTI) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system was added to the monthly Labour Market Report. This source provides timely measures of the number of payrolled employees and employee earnings in NI and the UK. As furloughed employees are still paid through PAYE, they are included in these statistics.

The data are classed as Experimental Statistics as the methodologies used to produce the statistics are still in their development phase.

Redundancy Statistics Disclosure Control Policy

In August 2020 we introduced a new [statistical disclosure control policy](#) for redundancy statistics.

Redundancy statistics are derived from administrative data collected from 'advance redundancy notification' HR1 forms that businesses are required to submit if they plan to make 20 or more redundancies.

Since the pandemic began, there has been a growing interest in the number, sector and place of redundancies. Our previous policy restricted the provision of data to monthly tables with geography or industry splits. The [Statistics Disclosure Control policy](#) allows us to carry out more bespoke analysis of redundancies but at the same time ensuring that we release data in a safe way, where individual businesses cannot be identified.

One impact on the use of the new policy is that, when there are low or no proposed redundancies, a figure is not provided in the monthly Labour Market Report. In such cases, where it is possible to do so, data will be grouped for more than one month.

New questions on the Labour Force Survey

In 2020 and 2021 the following questions were adapted to take the pandemic into account:
1. Occupation details
2. Sickness absence
3. Home Workers
4. Reasons respondent was away from work or worked fewer hours in the reference week
5. Reasons respondent worked more hours than usual in the reference week
6. Reasons why the respondent was paid less than usual in the reference week
7. Second job
8. Additional work
9. Redundancy
10. Starting work
11. Universal Credit

New questions were also added on passports held, and gender identity. In Autumn 2021 further questions on work quality and improvements to recording of education will be tested in the Labour Force Survey.

The [Labour Force Survey questionnaire](#) is available to view online.

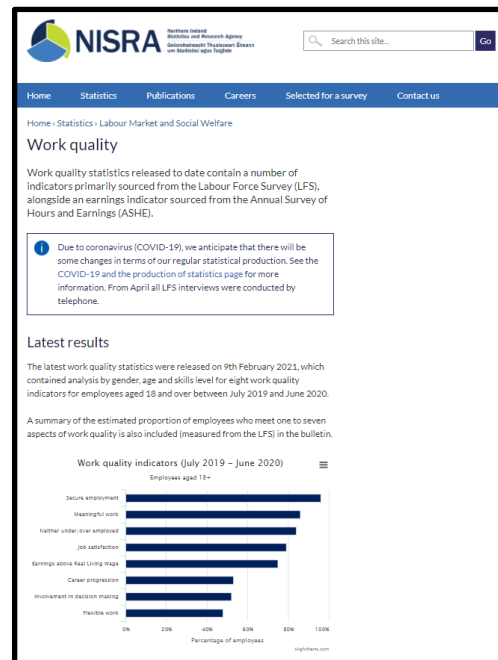# Accessing Labour Market Statistics   www.nisra.gov.uk

We have made some changes to the Labour Market Statistics section of the NISRA website.

To make it easier to find the Labour Market Report at 7am on release day, a new Labour Market Overview page has been created. This contains only the Labour Market Report and headline tables. More detailed monthly, quarterly and annual LFS data continue to be housed in the Labour Force Survey page.

With the growing importance of Work Quality Statistics, a new area dedicated to work quality statistics has been published. Here you'll find the most recent publications and data tables, as well as the work quality statistics work plan.

We've also separated data on Pensions from the main Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings page. Information on pension uptake is derived from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, but usually published approximately six months after the main earnings release.

On each of our labour market statistics pages a headline graph is now included so you can get an overview of the statistics at a glance too.

Making tables accessible

You may notice changes to the format of some of the labour market statistics tables in the next six months as we work to improve the accessibility of our outputs in line with with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

The new format will be rolled out during 2021 as each publication is produced. The recent 'Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)' tables are a good example of how the new tables will look. These can be accessed at the latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey Tables page. Figure 2 shows a screenshot of one of the key NEETs tables in the revised format.

Figure 2: Example of new NEETs table in accessible format

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), 16 to 24, NI, quarterly series												
2	This worksheet presents 2 tables next to each other horizontally with one blank column in between each table.												
3	Some cells refer to notes where the explanation can be found on the Notes worksheet.												
4	Each table applies to the NEET [note 1] number or rate, alongside 95% confidence interval limits for total persons (lower and upper limits) [note 2].												
5	Full explanation of notes, shading, rounding and disclosive data is available in the Cover_sheet.												
6	Data within this worksheet is not seasonally adjusted [note 3].												
7	**Source:** Labour Force Survey, Jan to Mar 2013 to Jan to Mar 2021												
8	Table 2.40a: Number Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), age 16 to 24 (NI)							Table 2.40b: Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rates, age 16 to 24 (NI)				
9	Quarter	Male NEET (number)	Female NEET (number)	Total NEET (number)	Total NEET lower limit (number)	Total NEET upper limit (number)		Quarter	Male NEET rate (%)	Female NEET rate (%)	Total NEET rate (%)	Total NEET rate lower limit (%)	Total NEET rate upper limit (%)
10	Jan to Mar 2013	18,000	14,000	33,000	26,000	40,000		Jan to Mar 2013	16.6	13.5	15.0	11.8	18.3
11	Apr to Jun 2013	17,000	16,000	33,000	26,000	40,000		Apr to Jun 2013	15.3	15.3	15.3	12.1	18.6
12	Jul to Sep 2013	14,000	20,000	34,000	27,000	42,000		Jul to Sep 2013	13.1	18.9	16.0	12.5	19.4
13	Oct to Dec 2013	16,000	12,000	28,000	22,000	35,000		Oct to Dec 2013	14.5	11.8	13.2	10.1	16.3
14	Jan to Mar 2014	18,000	13,000	31,000	24,000	39,000		Jan to Mar 2014	16.9	12.3	14.6	11.3	17.9
15	Apr to Jun 2014	19,000	12,000	32,000	25,000	39,000		Apr to Jun 2014	17.7	11.9	14.8	11.5	18.1
16	Jul to Sep 2014	22,000	14,000	36,000	28,000	44,000		Jul to Sep 2014	20.2	13.2	16.8	13.2	20.3
17	Oct to Dec 2014	19,000	17,000	37,000	29,000	44,000		Oct to Dec 2014	17.6	16.5	17.1	13.4	20.7
18	Jan to Mar 2015	20,000	18,000	39,000	30,000	47,000		Jan to Mar 2015	18.6	17.4	18.0	14.2	21.9
19	Apr to Jun 2015	18,000	16,000	34,000	26,000	42,000		Apr to Jun 2015	16.8	15.1	16.0	12.4	19.6
20	Jul to Sep 2015	18,000	19,000	37,000	29,000	45,000		Jul to Sep 2015	16.5	18.0	17.2	13.5	21.0

## Modernising our approach to dissemination

We continue to seek new ways to disseminate our economic and labour market statistics.

Many of our headline statistical indicators are available on our interactive Economic Overview Dashboard. The indicators are continuously updated with the latest published economic and labour market data. The dashboard provides users with an interest in the high-level statistics and trends a single point of access. You can access the underlying data and a PDF version on the NISRA website as well.

Earlier this month NISRA also released an interactive dashboard for viewing and downloading data on our key labour market indicators by age-group. This dashboard gives users the ability to select the age-groups they are interested in and to chart the employment, unemployment and inactivity rate time series. Users are also able to select and download data back to the mid-1990s.

https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/economic-overview-dashboard (PDF version and all the data)

Figure 3: Screenshots of economic and labour market dashboards
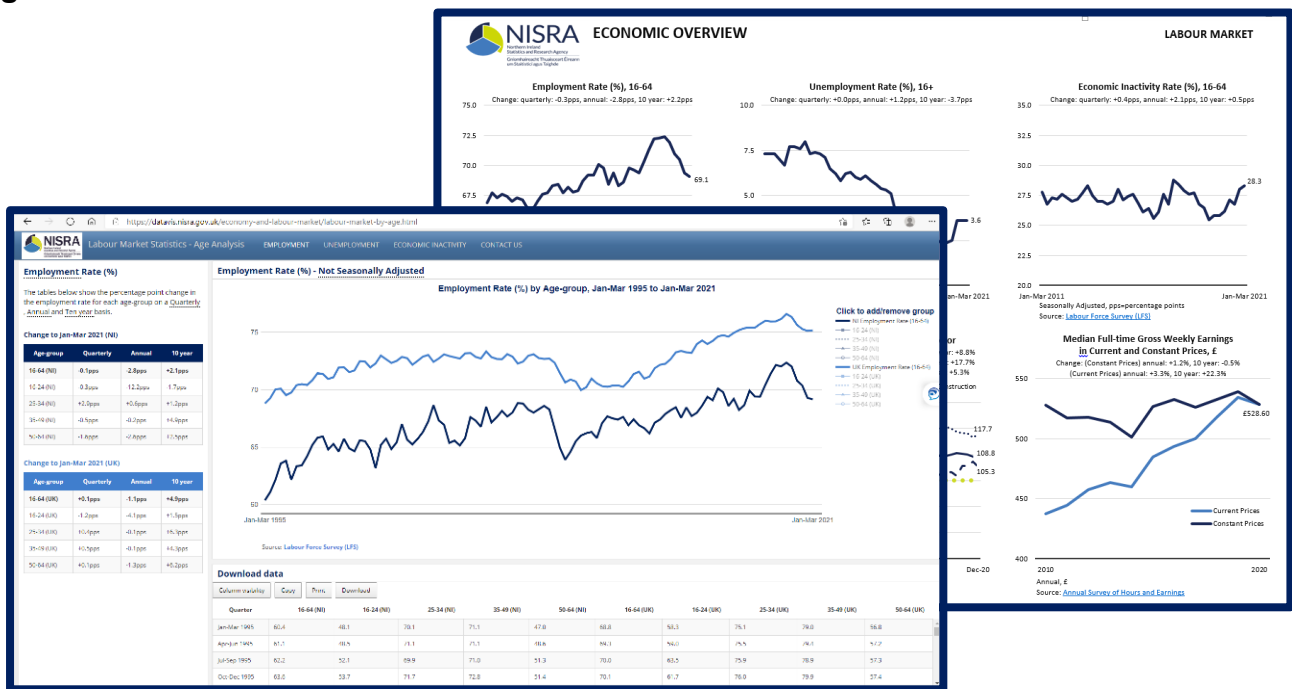
Publication dates and times

In April 2020, the publication time of the Labour Market Report and the Quarterly Employment Survey publication changed from 9.30am to 7am. This followed a change in the Office for National Statistics briefing practices due to coronavirus. There are currently no plans to revert to a 9.30am publication time in the short term.

Tuesdays are the normal publication day for the Labour Market Report. In July, the Labour Market Report and UK Labour Market Statistics will be published on Thursday 15th July to accommodate the NI bank holiday. August's publication will be published on Tuesday 17th August.

Publications since November

- Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2020
- Work Quality in Northern Ireland (headline) – July 2019 to June 2020
- Work Quality in Northern Ireland (additional analysis) – July 2019 to June 2020
- Labour Force Survey Annual Report summary 2020
- Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings Pensions 2020
- Labour Market Report (monthly – most recent - May)
- Quarterly Employment Survey – (most recent March)

Upcoming publications

- Business Register and Employment Survey - July
- Labour Force Survey Annual Report - September/October
- Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - September/October

Thanks for reading

Please let us know if you have found this newsletter useful, and if there is anything else you would like to see in future editions. Please email us at economicstats@nisra.gov.uk