

15th December 2020

Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey

Theme: Labour Market

Frequency: Quarterly

Geographical area: Northern Ireland

Reference period: Quarter 3 (September) 2020

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 and covers all employers with 25 or more employees, all public sector employers, all businesses with more than one industry activity and a representative sample of smaller firms.

The survey date for Quarter 3 was 7th September 2020. Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in employee jobs estimates.

All figures are adjusted for seasonality, unless stated otherwise.

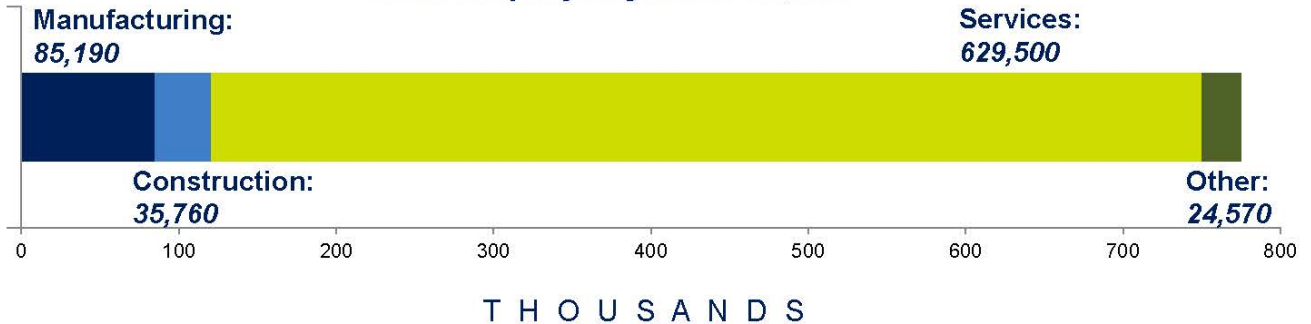
Key Points

- The number of employee jobs in September 2020 was estimated at 775,020. This was a decrease of 3,260 jobs (-0.4%) over the quarter and a decrease of 4,080 jobs (-0.5%) over the year. Neither the quarterly nor the annual changes in employee jobs were found to be statistically significant.
- September 2020 marked the third consecutive quarter of decline in employee jobs, and the first annual decline since September 2012.
- Quarterly decreases in employee jobs were seen within the manufacturing, services and other industries sectors to September 2020. Construction was the only broad industry sector to report an increase over the quarter (+1.3% or +470 jobs).
- Both the manufacturing (-3.3% or -2,930 jobs) and services (-0.4% or -2,760 jobs) sectors experienced decreases in employee jobs over the year. The manufacturing sector has experienced five consecutive quarters of decline since the peak in June 2019 (-3.7% or -3,280 jobs since June 2019).
- The annualised growth rate of total employee jobs has fallen every quarter between March 2018 (2.3%) and September 2020 (0.3%).
- Despite the reclassification of approximately 3,000 Registered Housing Association employee jobs from the public to the private sector this quarter, private sector jobs decreased over the quarter (-0.4% or -2,410 jobs) and the year (-0.9% or -5,160 jobs). The annual decrease in private sector jobs was the first annual decrease seen since June 2012.
- In the last five years, employee jobs have increased by 5.8% (+42,780 jobs). There has been an increase of 12.1% (+83,720 jobs) from the low in March 2012.

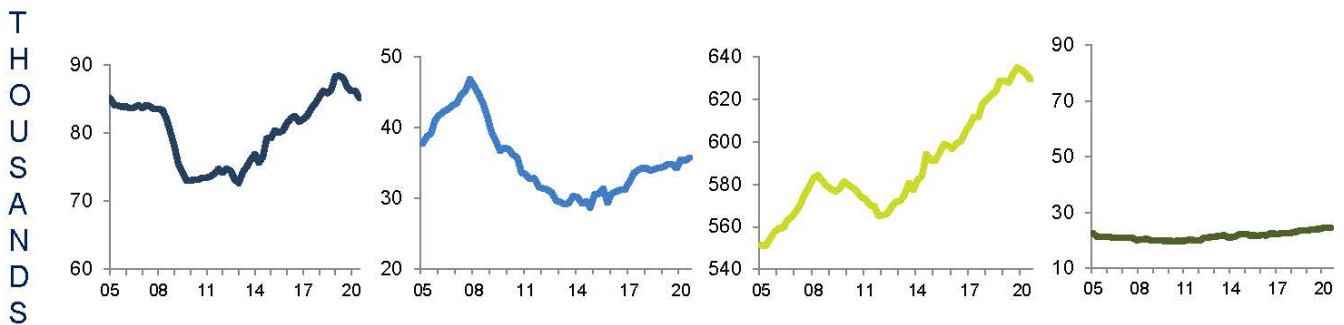
NISRA Labour Market Statistics

Quarterly Employment Survey – September 2020

Total employee jobs: 775,020



Change on quarter



Change on year



All data seasonally adjusted and subject to future revisions.
Data published on 15th December 2020 by Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch (NISRA).

Northern Ireland employee jobs annual change by industry Q3 2019 - Q3 2020

Change by broad industry sector (seasonally adjusted)

Manufacturing



-3.3% (-2,930 jobs)
total jobs 85,190

Construction



+2.8% (970 jobs)
total jobs 35,760

Services



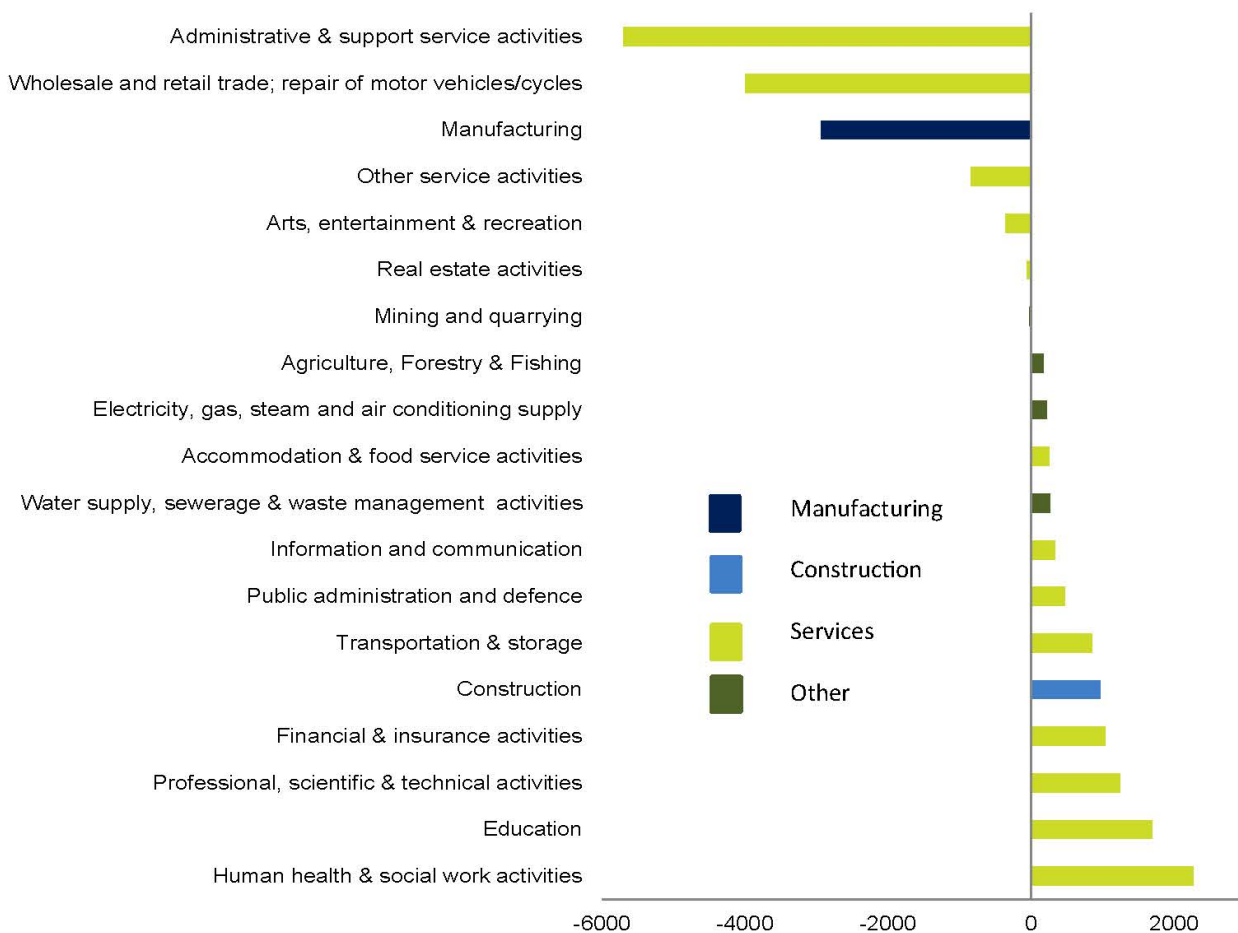
-0.4% (-2,760 jobs)
total jobs 629,500

Other



+2.7% (640 jobs)
total jobs 24,570

Change by industry section (seasonally adjusted)



Data published on 15th December 2020 by Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch (NISRA)

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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 \(opens in a new window\)](#) against the [Code of Practice \(opens in a new window\)](#).

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:

- Quantified the level of uncertainty around estimates by providing confidence intervals for headline estimates;
- Removed pre-release access to enhance trustworthiness and also brought the publication date forward as a result;
- [Consulted users \(opens in a new window\)](#) at Labour Market User Groups and streamlined outputs in line with the UK series;
- Reduced [business burden \(opens in a new window\)](#) by offering the option of online data returns.
- Improved accessibility of Labour Market Statistics by [changing publication practices \(opens in a new window\)](#) so that reports are [no longer released on public holidays \(opens in a new window\)](#). Temporarily changed [timing of release \(opens in a new window\)](#) in line with change in ONS release practices in response to COVID-19.

1 Summary of Employee Jobs

Updated December 2020

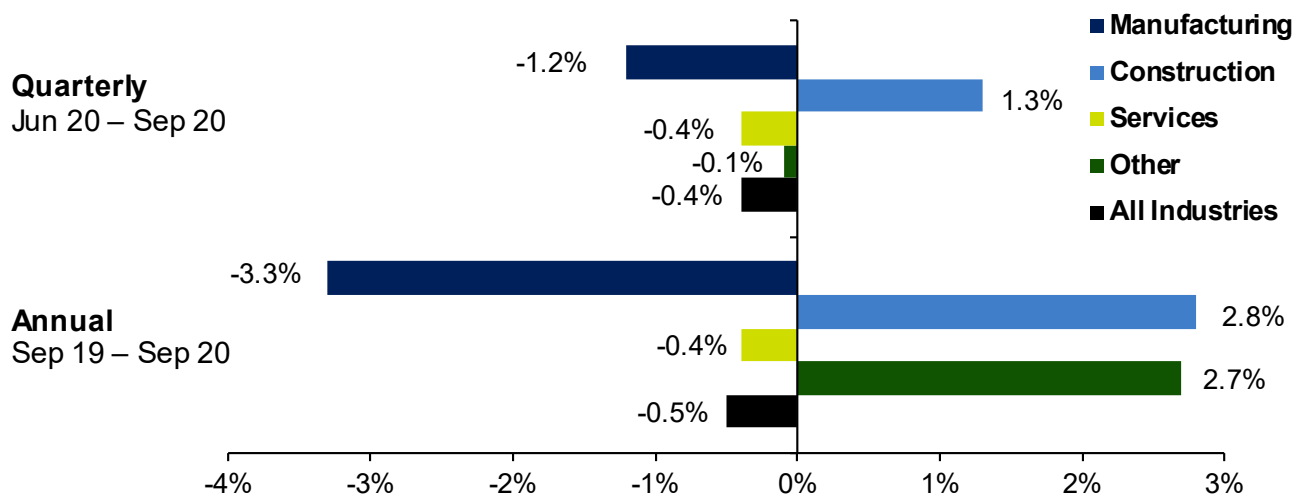
The survey date for Quarter 3 was 7th September 2020 for Northern Ireland (NI). Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in employee jobs estimates.

Change in employee jobs

The seasonally adjusted employee jobs estimate for NI at September 2020 was 775,020 (+/- 5,590¹). This was:

- a decrease of 0.4% (-3,260 jobs) over the quarter from the revised June 2020 estimate of 778,280.
- a decrease of 0.5% (-4,080 jobs) over the year from the revised September 2019 estimate of 779,100. September 2020 saw the first annual decline in employee jobs since September 2012.
- Neither the quarterly nor the annual changes in employee jobs were found to be statistically significant.

Fig 1.1 Annual and Quarterly Changes in Employee Jobs at Section Level



[Download in excel](#)

Change over the quarter

Comparing seasonally adjusted September 2020 employee jobs to the revised June 2020 estimates showed:

- a decrease in the services sector of 0.4% (-2,680 jobs) to 629,500 jobs.
- a decrease in the manufacturing sector of 1.2% (-1,030 jobs) to 85,190 jobs.
- a decrease in the other industries sector of 0.1% (-20 jobs) to 24,570 jobs.
- an increase in the construction sector of 1.3% (+470 jobs) to 35,760 jobs.

¹ Represents 95% confidence interval around estimate. More information is available in the [QES Confidence Intervals User Guidance PDF \(665KB\) \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Change over the year

Comparing seasonally adjusted September 2020 employee jobs to the revised September 2019 estimates showed:

- a decrease in the manufacturing sector of 3.3% (-2,930 jobs) to 85,190 jobs.
- a decrease in the services sector of 0.4% (-2,760 jobs) to 629,500 jobs.
- an increase in the other industries sector of 2.7% (+640 jobs) to 24,570 jobs.
- an increase in the construction sector of 2.8% (+970 jobs) to 35,760 jobs.

Comparing unadjusted data over the year, estimates showed:

- (i) Human health activities; (ii) education; (iii) land transport and transport via pipelines saw the greatest increases over the year, accounting for 36.8% of all increases in employee jobs.
- (i) Employment activities; (ii) wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles; (iii) services to buildings and landscape activities saw the greatest decreases over the year, accounting for 38.6% of all decreases in employee jobs.
- Despite the increases, there was a net decrease of 4,130 employee jobs.

Annualised change

Comparing the seasonally adjusted employee jobs data for Quarter 4 2018 – Quarter 3 2019 to Quarter 4 2019 – Quarter 3 2020 showed:

- an increase in the other industries sector of 2.8%.
- an increase in the construction sector of 1.8%.
- an increase in the services sector of 0.5%.
- a decrease in the manufacturing sector of 2.0%.

Public / private sector changes

Seasonally adjusted employee jobs estimates for the public and private sectors at September 2020 showed:

- a decrease of 0.4% (-850 jobs) in the public sector over the quarter and an increase of 0.5% (+1,030 jobs) over the year to 211,740 jobs.
- a decrease of 0.4% (-2,410 jobs) in the private sector over the quarter and a decrease of 0.9% (-5,160 jobs) over the year to 563,720 jobs.

As a result of an assessment carried out by the Office for National Statistics, Registered Housing Associations in Northern Ireland were reclassified to the private sector from the public sector with effect from 28th August 2020. The reclassification was communicated in a [letter \(PDF, 52KB\)](#) to the Northern Ireland Executive on 30th October 2020. As a result, approximately 3,000 employee jobs that were previously classified as public sector have been reclassified to the private sector from Q3 2020. Further information can be found on page 11.

Commentary

Preliminary estimates from the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) show that employee jobs in NI have been decreasing since the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, with September 2020 marking the third consecutive quarter of decline in employee jobs, and the first annual decline since September 2012.

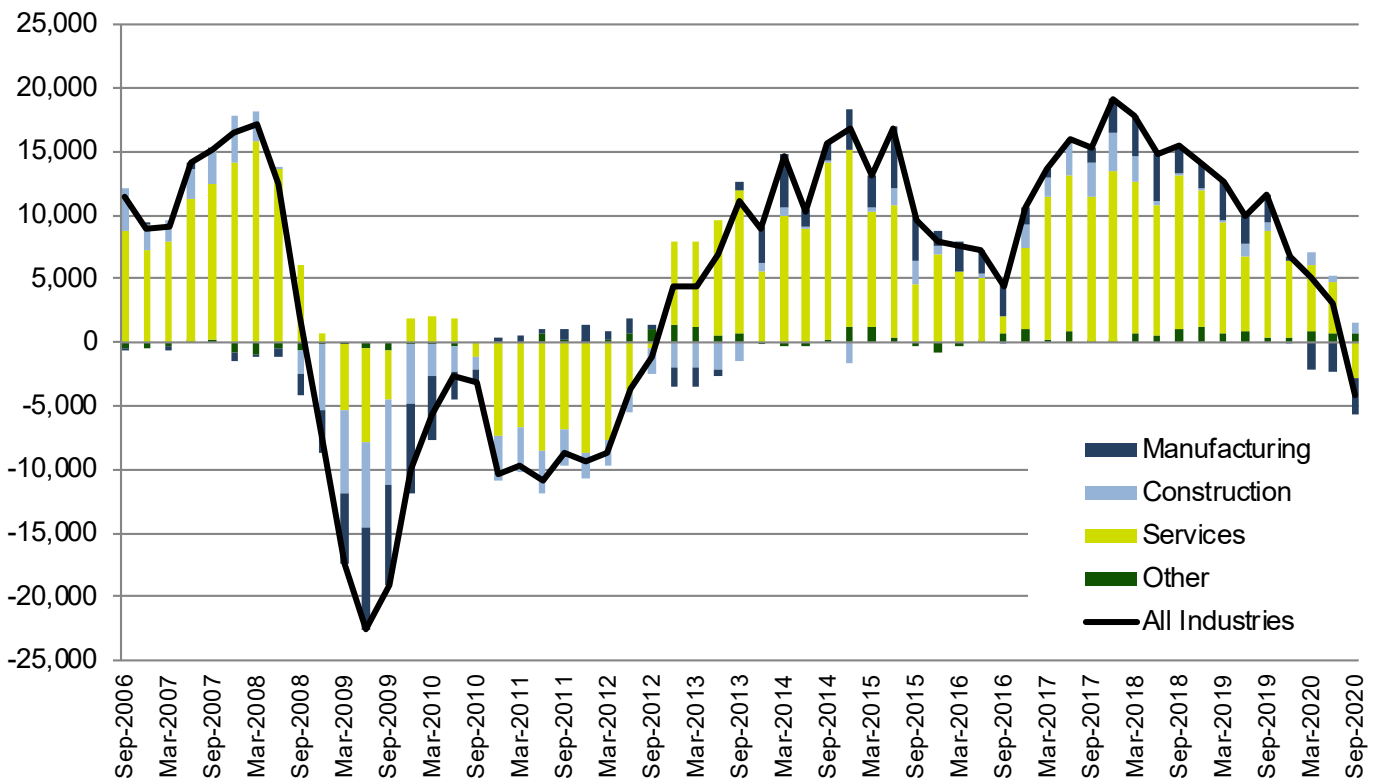
Northern Ireland (seasonally adjusted) employee jobs were estimated at 775,020 in September 2020. This represents a decrease of 0.4% (-3,260 jobs) over the quarter and a decrease of 0.5% (-4,080 jobs) over the year. However, neither the quarterly nor the annual changes were found to be statistically significant.

The majority of the decline in (seasonally adjusted) jobs over the quarter was driven by the services sector (-2,680 jobs), although all sectors apart from construction saw decreases over the quarter. The manufacturing sector has experienced five consecutive quarters of decline since the peak in June 2019 (-3.7% or -3,280 jobs since June 2019).

The annual decline in (seasonally adjusted) jobs was driven by the manufacturing (-3.3% or -2,930 jobs) and services (-0.4% or -2,760 jobs) sectors; with the construction and 'other' sectors experiencing increases over the year (+970 and +640 jobs respectively).

The UK also reported a decrease in employee jobs over both the quarter (-1.2%) and the year (-1.9%) to 30.23 million jobs in September 2020.

Figure 1.2: Annual Change in Employee Jobs in NI, September 2006 – September 2020



[Download in excel](#)

Despite the reclassification of approximately 3,000 Registered Housing Association employee jobs from the public to the private sector¹ this quarter, private sector jobs decreased over the quarter (-0.4% or -2,410 jobs) and the year (-0.9% or -5,160 jobs). The annual decrease in private sector jobs was the first annual decrease seen since June 2012.

¹See page 11 for further information.

Public sector jobs experienced a decrease over the quarter (-0.4% or -850 jobs), but increased over the year (+0.5% or +1,030 jobs). Following a period of annual decline in public sector employee jobs between June 2015 and June 2017, since September 2017 there have been thirteen consecutive quarters of annual growth in public sector jobs to September 2020. However, there are 16,450 fewer public sector jobs (-7.2%) than the series peak in September 2009.

Context

This bulletin presents data from the Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey (QES), which is conducted by the Economic & Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) Branch of the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA).

The survey date for Quarter 3 was 7th September 2020 for Northern Ireland. Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in employee jobs 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, recent employee jobs are likely to be subject to higher revisions than normal over the coming quarters. These can be tracked through the [revisions triangle \(opens in a new window\)](#). Comparisons of provisional employee jobs estimates at lower industry levels in particular (e.g. 2 digit Standard Industrial Classification level), should be treated with caution.

The QES provides short-term employee jobs estimates for Northern Ireland and covers all employers with 25 or more employees, all public sector employers, all businesses with more than one industry activity and a representative sample of smaller firms. As it is a sample survey, estimates are subject to sampling variability.

The QES excludes the self-employed, HM Armed Forces, private domestic servants, homeworkers and Training for Success trainees without a contract of employment (non-employed status). The survey collects information on the number of males/females in full-time and part-time employment by business activity and the results are collated into industry classes using the 2007 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC07). The number of jobs are counted rather than the number of persons with jobs. For example, a person holding both a full-time job and part-time job, or someone with two part-time jobs, will be counted twice.

All figures included in the QES are adjusted for seasonality, unless stated otherwise, where the seasonally adjusted series started in 2005.

Figures from the QES are included in the [Labour Market Report \(LMR\) \(opens in a new window\)](#) alongside figures from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Claimant Count, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) and redundancies data.

QES employee jobs are also a component of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) quarterly [workforce jobs estimates \(opens in a new window\)](#) for the UK.

QES employee jobs are included in the [DfE Economic Commentary \(opens in a new window\)](#) which provides an overview of the state of the Northern Ireland economy, setting it 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 \(opens in a new window\)](#) of the website.

Labour Market User Group

The 2020 Labour Market Statistics User Group was held on 21st October 2020 and provided an overview of recent and planned developments in labour market statistics and gave users an opportunity to provide feedback on outputs. The User Group agenda, presentation and a list of user questions and answers can be found on the [NISRA Labour Market Statistics User Group 2020 webpage \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

The CJRS (“furlough scheme”) was introduced from 1st March 2020 to support individuals and businesses impacted by disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The CJRS provided grants to employers of up to 80% of wages (up to a cap of £2,500 per employee) per month up to August 2020. From 1st July 2020, employers could bring furloughed employees back to work part time (‘flexible furlough’), while still being able to claim the CJRS grant for the hours not worked. The level of grant was reduced to 70% of wages for September 2020 and to 60% of wages for October 2020. On 31st October 2020, the government announced an extension to the CJRS, with grant levels mirroring those available under the CJRS in August (up to 80% of wages to a cap of £2,500 per employee).

The QES employee jobs estimates include those who are furloughed under the CJRS. Experimental statistics on the CJRS are produced by HMRC, where those receiving CJRS are referred to as ‘employments’. HMRC publishes data on the number of CJRS claims made as at the end of each calendar month; as a result, this data is not directly comparable to the QES estimates which measure the number of jobs on a particular day each quarter (7th September 2020 for Quarter 3 2020).

However, the latest preliminary HMRC [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme Statistics: November 2020 \(opens in a new window\)](#) showed:

- in Northern Ireland there were 114,800 employments furloughed at 31st July 2020 and 77,500 at 31st August 2020. This number of employments continued to fall throughout September to 54,100 at 30th September 2020. This latest estimate is equivalent to a 7% take-up rate, which is the same rate as Scotland and Wales but slightly lower than in England (8%).
- in the UK, the three sectors with the highest number of employments supported through CJRS were the Accommodation and food services, Wholesale and retail, and Administrative and support services sectors. The take-up rates throughout the UK were highest in Arts, entertainment and recreation (23%), Accommodation and food services (22%) and Other service activities (19%).

Data source reference periods and key dates

Week commencing:	June					July				August				September					
	1 st	8 th	15 th	22 nd	29 th	6 th	13 th	20 th	27 th	3 rd	10 th	17 th	24 th	31 st	7 th	14 th	21 st	28 th	
Quarterly Employment Survey June 2020	1 st																		
Quarterly Employment Survey September 2020															7 th				
First reported case of COVID-19 in NI	27 th February																		
Job Retention Scheme announced	20 th March																		
Lockdown	23 rd March																		
Self-employment Income Support Scheme announced	26 th March																		
Job Retention Scheme opened	20 th April																		
Self-employment Income Support Scheme opened	13 th May																		
						All goods retailers reopened													
						12 th June													
							Tourism & hospitality industry reopened												
							3 rd July												
								Selected service industries reopened											
								6 th -10 th July											
											Self-employment Income Support Scheme rate falls to 70%								
											1 st September								
											Job Retention Scheme rate falls to 70%								
											1 st September								
											Job Retention Scheme falls to 60%								
											1 st October								

[Registered Housing Associations Reclassification \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Following passage of the [Housing \(Amendment\) Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2020 \(opens in a new window\)](#), the Office for National Statistics (ONS) completed an assessment of registered housing associations (RHAs) in Northern Ireland. This assessment concluded that RHAs in Northern Ireland are private, market producers and as such they were reclassified from the public sector to the private sector, with effect from 28th August 2020. The reclassification was communicated in a [letter \(PDF, 52KB\)](#) to the Northern Ireland Executive on 30th October 2020.

As a result, approximately 3,000 employee jobs that were previously classified as 'public sector' in the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) have been reclassified to the 'private' sector from Q3 2020.

[Revisions \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Results are provisional and subject to revision as more up-to-date data becomes available (e.g. through late returns). Figures can also change as a result of the seasonal adjustment process, methodological changes or changes to classifications.

Alternative measures of employment

QES is only one of the measures of employment for Northern Ireland. Other measures are summarised below.

[Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\) \(opens in a new window\)](#)

The BRES is a statutory business survey based on a larger sample than QES. Quarter 3 of the QES is taken at the same survey date as BRES. Breakdowns of employee jobs by geographical location and industry are available from BRES.

[Labour Force Survey \(LFS\) \(opens in a new window\)](#)

The LFS is a household survey carried out by interviewing individuals about their personal circumstances and work. The LFS defines employment as the number of people in work. This differs from the concept of jobs measured by business surveys as a person can have more than one job, and some jobs may be shared by more than one person. LFS employment figures are based on a rolling three month period whereas QES measures the number of jobs on a particular day. LFS employment figures include those who are employed, self-employed, unpaid family workers and those on government supported training programmes.

[Farm Census \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Figures for the number of employees in agriculture are available separately from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Farm Census. The Census is conducted in June of each year, with the results published in the January of the following year. The QES includes farm census figures in the total number of employee jobs.

Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Employee Bulletin

NICS employee jobs figures are included in the QES employee jobs figures and breakdowns can be found in Table 5.12 on the [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website \(opens in a new window\)](#) (in the historical data section).

Further information on NICS employee jobs can be found in the [NICS Employee Bulletin \(opens in a new window\)](#). This bulletin provides details on NICS staff numbers on a quarterly basis. The survey dates for the NICS Employee Bulletin differ from the QES survey dates. As such the figures for the NICS employee jobs may differ.

2 NI Employee Jobs

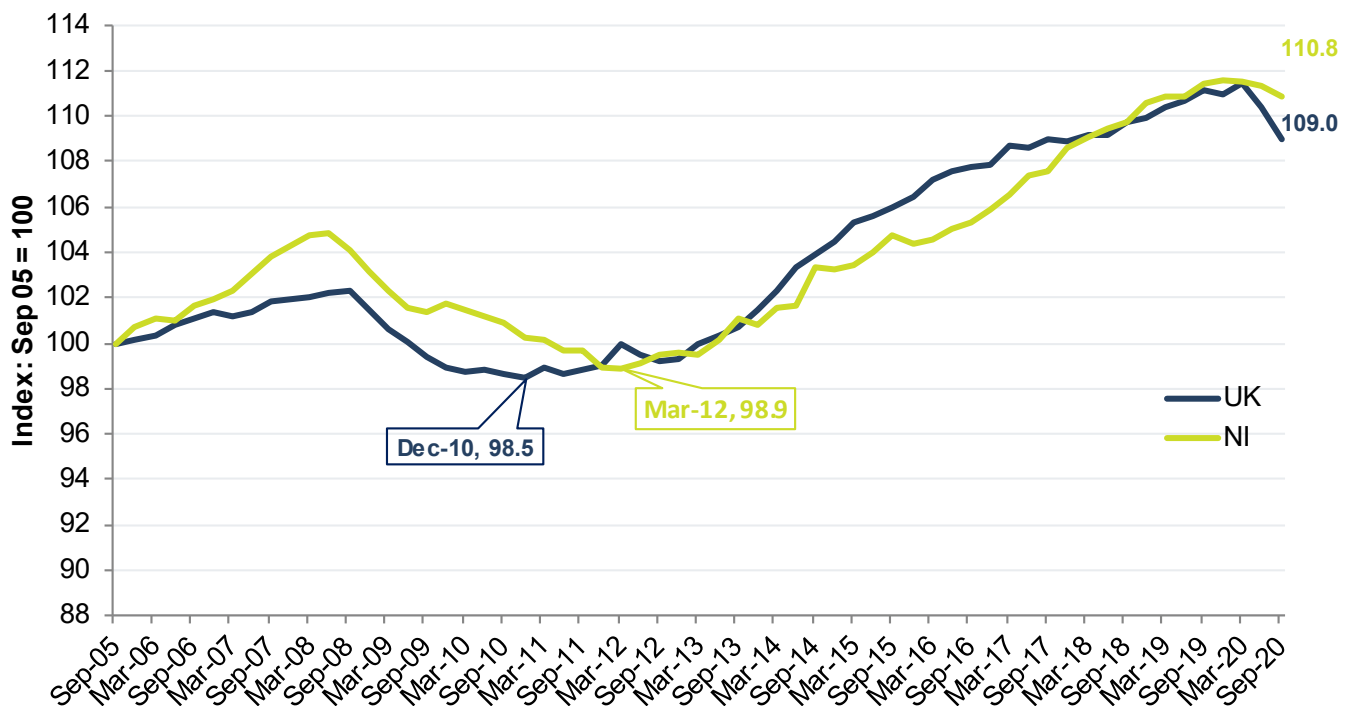
Employee: an employee is defined as anyone aged 16 years or over that is directly paid from a business's payroll for carrying out a full-time or part-time job or being on a training scheme in Northern Ireland.

The QES counts the number of jobs rather than the number of persons with jobs. Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in employee jobs estimates.

Key Findings:

- Employee jobs decreased over the quarter by 0.4% (-3,260 jobs) and decreased over the year by 0.5% (-4,080 jobs) to 775,020.
- The annualised growth rate¹ of total employee jobs has fallen every quarter between March 2018 (2.3%) and September 2020 (0.3%).

Figure 2.1: Index of Employee Jobs, September 2005 – September 2020



Figures are indexed to September 2005

[Download in excel](#)

Figure 2.1 shows estimated seasonally adjusted employee jobs, indexed to allow comparison between NI and the UK. In NI, the annualised growth rate has fallen every quarter between March 2018 (2.3%) and September 2020 (0.3%). The decline in NI employee jobs over the year (-0.5%) is the first annual decline since September 2012, while the UK reported a larger fall in employee jobs (-1.9%) over the year. The 2008 pre-downturn peak for NI was in June 2008, and was in September 2008 for the UK. Following the respective peaks, the UK reached its lowest point in December 2010, more than a year before the NI low in March 2012. Both NI and the UK have surpassed their pre-downturn peaks; NI jobs are now 5.7% above their June 2008 level while UK jobs are 6.6% above their September 2008 level.

¹Annualised growth is calculated as the difference in the average of the most recent 4 quarters and the previous 4 quarters average, as a proportion of the average of the previous 4 quarters. See Section 6 for further information.

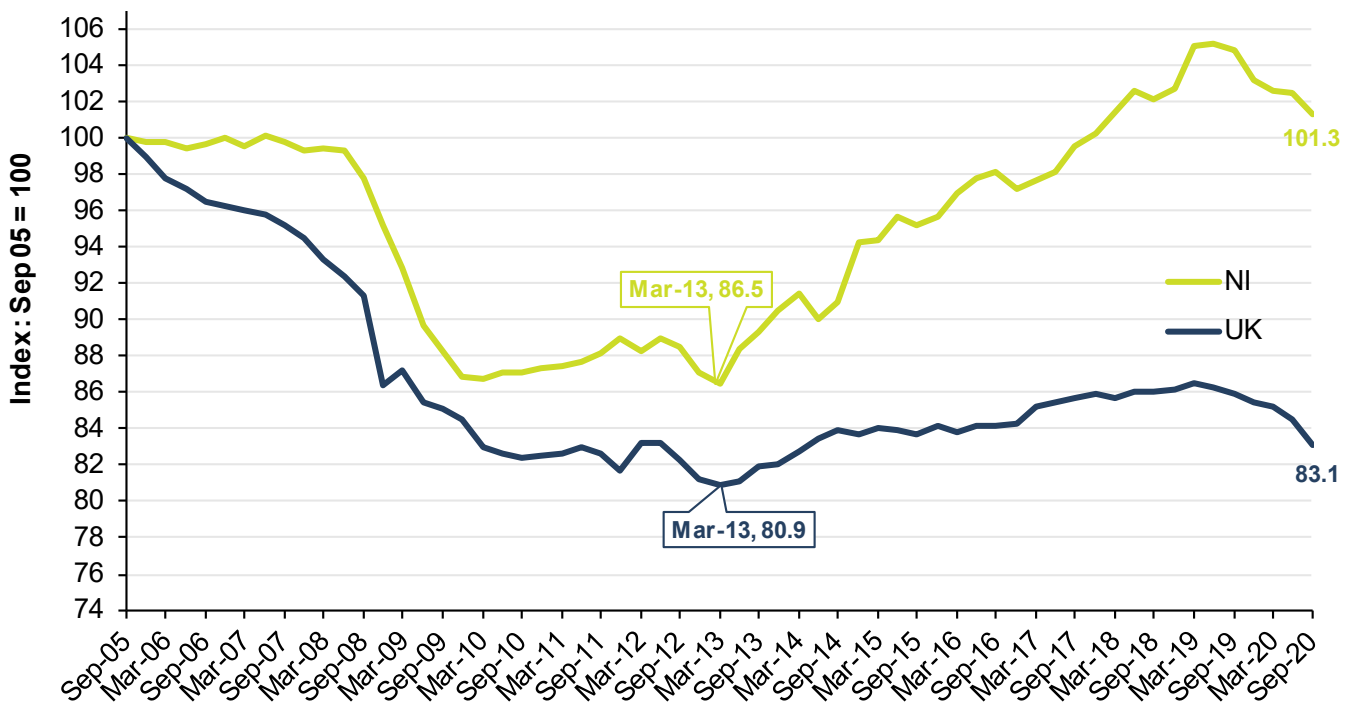
Manufacturing sector

Manufacturing sector: the manufacturing sector contains businesses which produce merchandise for use or sale. It also contains businesses with activity of printing and reproduction of recorded media and businesses that repair and install machinery and equipment. Manufacturing is part of the broader production sector.

Key Findings:

- The manufacturing sector accounted for 11.0% of all employee jobs.
- Seasonally adjusted figures showed a decrease of 1.2% over the quarter and 3.3% over the year to 85,190 jobs in September 2020.
- The manufacturing sector has experienced five consecutive quarters of decline since the peak in June 2019 (-3.7% or -3,280 jobs since June 2019).

Figure 2.2: Index of manufacturing employee jobs, September 2005 – September 2020



Figures are indexed to September 2005

[Download in excel](#)

The manufacturing sector in NI experienced a period of sharp decline between June 2008 and December 2009 whilst the UK showed a sharp decrease in the number of employee jobs in the manufacturing sector between June 2007 and September 2010. Both NI and the UK reached a series low in March 2013. NI jobs increased by 21.6% between March 2013 and the peak in June 2019.

While manufacturing jobs in NI remain 17.1% above the March 2013 low point, there have been five consecutive quarterly decreases to September 2020. This declining trend has also been seen in the UK, where there have been six consecutive quarters of decline to September 2020.

Key Findings

Seasonally adjusted data showed that the manufacturing sector decreased by 1.2% (-1,030 jobs) over the quarter and by 3.3% (-2,930 jobs) over the year to 85,190 jobs.

The following breakdowns are based on 2 digit SIC manufacturing data that have not been adjusted for seasonality. Please note that estimates at 2 digit SIC can fluctuate due to sampling variability and changes to industrial classification.

Changes over the year

Over the year to September 2020 the unadjusted figures showed a decrease of 3.3% (-2,940 jobs) in the manufacturing sector. The 3 largest contributors to this decrease were:

- a decrease of 13.2% (-980 jobs) in manufacture of other transport equipment.
- a decrease of 12.0% (-920 jobs) in manufacture of machinery and equipment n.e.c (not elsewhere classified).
- a decrease of 24.7% (-910 jobs) in manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers.

The overall decrease was partially offset by some increases in manufacturing subsectors; the 3 largest increases over the year being:

- an increase of 6.7% (+320 jobs) in manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products.
- an increase of 12.9% (+240 jobs) in manufacture of chemicals and chemical products.
- an increase of 6.6% (+170 jobs) in manufacture of electrical equipment.

For figures broken down by 2 digit SIC please see table 5.10 on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

When using table 5.10 please consider the notes on 'Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data' in section 6 – Further Info.

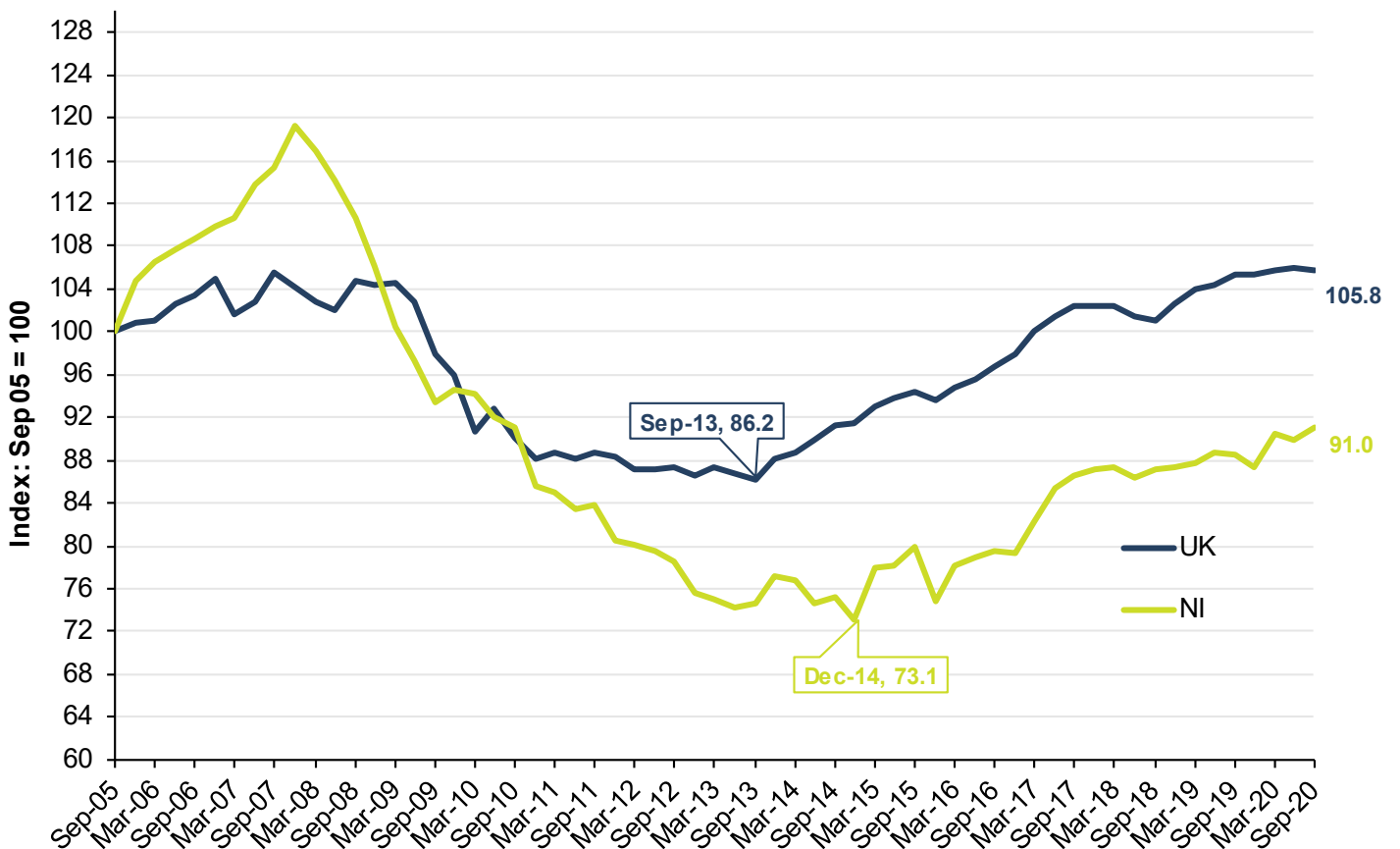
Construction sector

Construction sector: construction is the process of creating and building infrastructure or a facility. It differs from manufacturing in that manufacturing typically involves mass production of similar items without a designated purchaser and construction is typically done on location for a known client. The construction sector consists of businesses with activity in the construction of buildings, civil engineering or specialised construction activities.

Key Findings:

- The construction sector accounted for 4.6% of all employee jobs.
- Seasonally adjusted figures showed an increase of 1.3% over the quarter and 2.8% over the year to 35,760 jobs in September 2020.

Figure 2.3: Index of construction employee jobs, September 2005 – September 2020



[Download in excel](#)

Figures are indexed to September 2005

The most recent series low in the construction sector for NI was in December 2014 (28,710 jobs). The most recent estimates show a 24.5% improvement on this level; however the number of employee jobs in the construction sector is currently 23.7% lower than the series peak in December 2007. Most recent estimates show that the UK construction sector reached the series peak in June 2020, however there has been a marginal decrease (-0.1%) over the quarter to September 2020.

Key Findings

Seasonally adjusted data showed that the construction sector increased by 1.3% (+470 jobs) over the quarter and by 2.8% (+970 jobs) over the year to 35,760 jobs.

The following breakdowns are based on 2 digit SIC construction data that have not been adjusted for seasonality. Please note that estimates at 2 digit SIC can fluctuate due to sampling variability and changes to industrial classification.

Changes over the year

Over the year to September 2020 the unadjusted figures showed an increase of 2.8% (+960 jobs) in the construction sector.

The following changes occurred over the year:

- an increase of 5.9% (+480 jobs) in construction of buildings.
- an increase of 1.8% (+330 jobs) in specialised construction activities.
- an increase of 1.7% (+150 jobs) in civil engineering.

For figures broken down by 2 digit SIC please see table 5.10 on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

When using table 5.10 please consider the notes on 'Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data' in section 6 – Further Info.

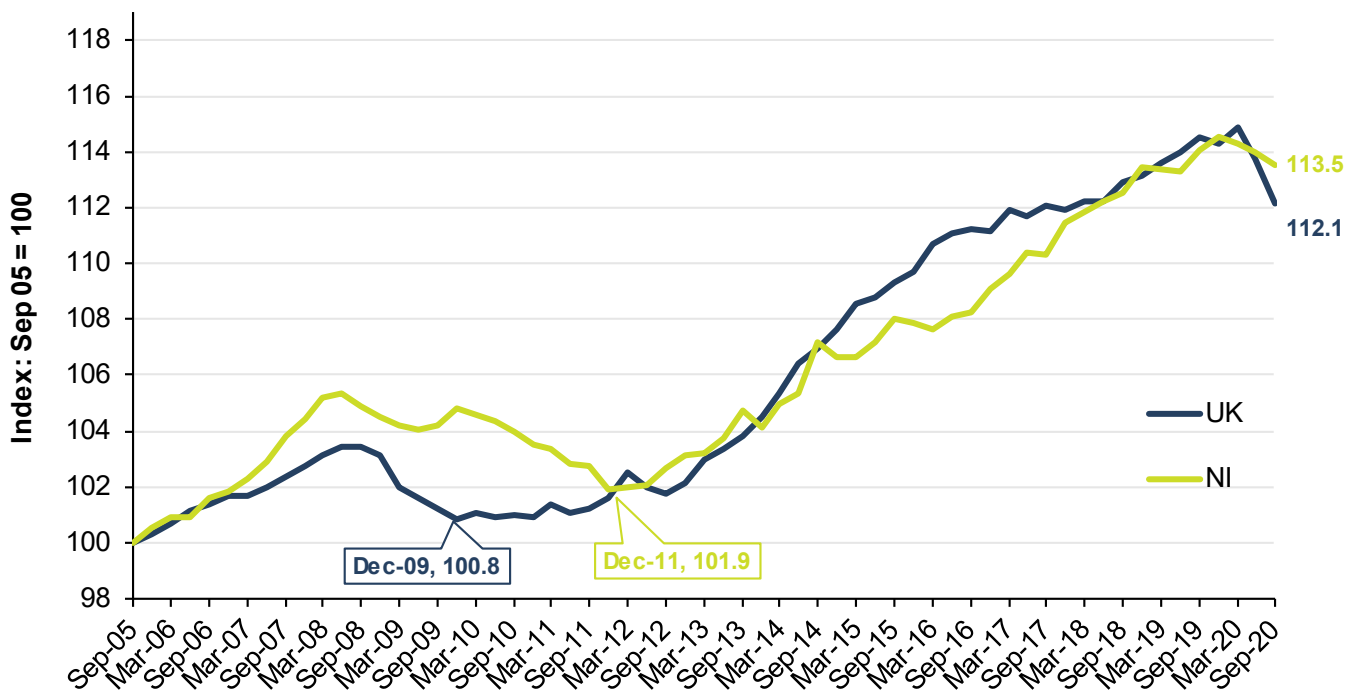
Services sector

Services sector: the services sector contains businesses which sell services and skills; and includes education, public administration and health and social work activities. A full list of the industry sections G-S which are included in the services sector can be found in table 5.5 within the supplementary tables on the [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Key Findings:

- **Seasonally adjusted figures showed a decrease of 0.4% over the quarter and a decrease of 0.4% over the year to 629,500 service sector jobs in September 2020.**
- **Services sector jobs reached a peak in December 2019, and have decreased marginally (-0.9%) since this point following three quarters of decline to September 2020.**
- **The services sector accounted for 81.2% of all employee jobs in Northern Ireland.**

Figure 2.4: Index of services employee jobs, September 2005 - September 2020



Figures are indexed to September 2005

[Download in excel](#)

Despite some fluctuation, employee jobs in the services sector have been on an upward trend since the most recent series low in both NI (December 2011) and the UK (December 2009). The number of employee jobs in the NI services sector increased by 30,500 over the last 5 years and reached a peak in December 2019. There has been a marginal decrease since the peak (-0.9%) following three quarters of decline to September 2020.

When considering the 2008 pre-downturn period, NI employee jobs in the services sector reached a peak in June 2008. The decline of 3.2% between June 2008 and December 2011 is notably smaller than the declines experienced in the manufacturing or construction sectors during the downturn. There has been an increase of 11.4% in employee jobs in the services sector since the low in December 2011.

Key Findings

Seasonally adjusted data showed that the services sector decreased by 0.4% (-2,680 jobs) over the quarter and by 0.4% (-2,760 jobs) over the year to 629,500 jobs in September 2020.

The wholesale and retail trade (section G); and human health and social work activities (section Q) services sections are the two largest industry sections of the NI economy:

- Wholesale and retail trade: 127,220 jobs in September 2020, representing an annual decrease of 3.0% or 4,000 jobs.
- Human health and social work activities: 131,430 jobs in September 2020, representing an annual increase of 1.8% or 2,270 jobs.
- These two sectors, when combined, accounted for approximately a third of all employee jobs in September 2020 (33.4% or 258,650 jobs).

For figures for all services industry sections (G-S), please see table 5.5b within the supplementary tables on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

The following breakdowns are based on 2 digit SIC services data that have not been adjusted for seasonality. Please note that estimates at 2 digit SIC can fluctuate due to sampling variability and changes to industrial classification.

Changes over the year

Over the year to September 2020 the unadjusted figures showed a decrease of 0.4% (-2,790 jobs) in the services sector. The 3 largest contributors to this decrease over the year were:

- a decrease of 15.8% (-3,600 jobs) in employment activities.
- a decrease of 5.9% (-1,610 jobs) in wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles.
- a decrease of 11.4% (-1,340 jobs) in services to buildings and landscape activities.

The overall decrease was partially offset by some increases in services subsectors, the 3 largest increases over the year being:

- an increase of 2.9% (+2,060 jobs) in human health activities.
- an increase of 2.4% (+1,680 jobs) in education.
- an increase of 6.1% (+980 jobs) in land transport and transport via pipelines.

For figures broken down by 2 digit SIC please see table 5.10 on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website \(opens in a new window\)](#)

When using table 5.10 please consider the notes on 'Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data' in section 6 – Further Info.

Other industries sector

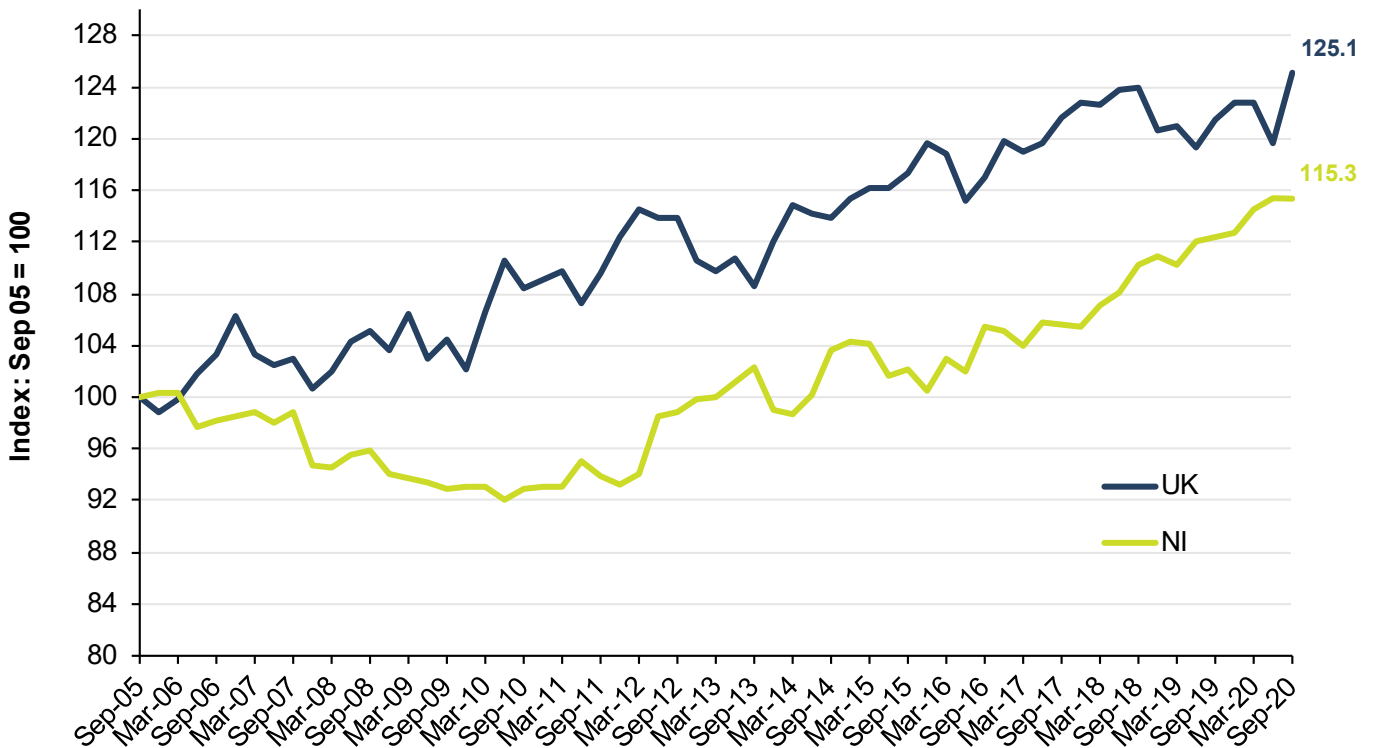
Other industries sector: this sector contains businesses with activity in agriculture, forestry and fishing, mining and quarrying, electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply and water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (industry sections A,B,D and E).

Estimates from the annual Farm Census are included in industry section A (accounting for approximately 90% of the employee jobs in the section). The Farm Census figures are published annually in January and relate to the previous June.

Key Findings:

- Seasonally adjusted figures showed a marginal decrease of 0.1% in the other industries sector over the quarter to September 2020 and an increase of 2.7% over the year to 24,570 jobs.
- The other industries sector made up 3.2% of all employee jobs.

Figure 2.5: Index of other industries sector jobs, September 2005 - September 2020



Figures are indexed to September 2005

[Download in excel](#)

Over the last 10 years the other industries sector in NI and the UK increased overall. The number of employee jobs in the NI other industries sector increased by 4,780 (+24.1%) over the 10 year period to September 2020.

Key Findings

Seasonally adjusted data showed that the other industries sector decreased marginally by 0.1% (-20 jobs) over the quarter and increased by 2.7% (+640 jobs) over the year to 24,570 jobs.

The following breakdowns are based on 2 digit SIC other industries data that have not been adjusted for seasonality. Please note that estimates at 2 digit SIC can fluctuate due to sampling variability and changes to industrial classification.

Changes over the year

Over the year to September 2020 the unadjusted figures showed an increase of 2.7% (+640 jobs) in the other industries sector. The 3 largest contributors to this increase over the year were:

- an increase of 12.5% (+220 jobs) in electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply.
- an increase of 3.5% (+180 jobs) in waste collection, treatment and disposal activities; materials recovery.
- an increase of 1.1% (+140 jobs) in crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities.

For figures broken down by 2 digit SIC please see table 5.10 on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

When using table 5.10 please consider the notes on 'Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data' in section 6 – Further Info.

3 Public/Private Sector Employee Jobs

Public sector: the NI public sector can be broken down into five areas:

1. NI central government
2. Bodies under aegis of NI central government
3. UK central government employees based in Northern Ireland
4. Local government
5. Public corporations

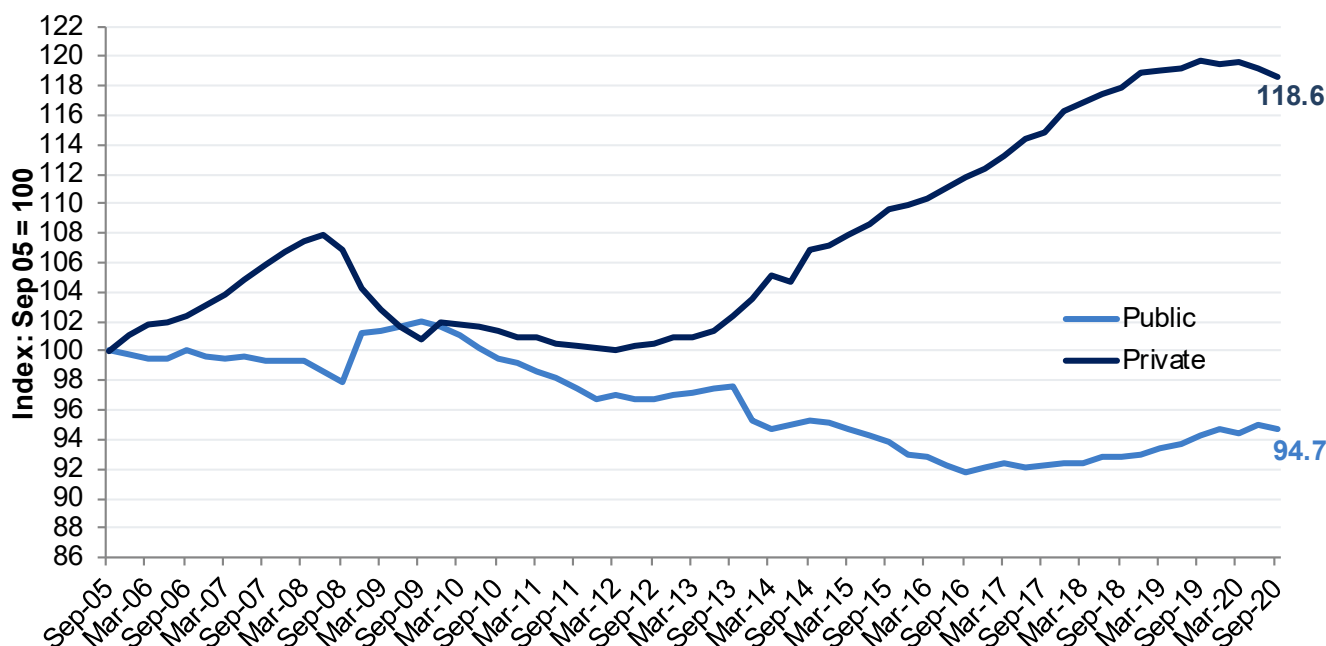
Private sector: the private sector encompasses all for-profit businesses (that are not owned or operated by the government) and the voluntary sector; which includes charities and other non-profit organisations.

Registered housing associations in Northern Ireland were reclassified from the public sector to the private sector with effect from 28th August 2020. As a result, approximately 3,000 employee jobs that were previously classified as ‘public sector’ have been reclassified to the ‘private’ sector from Q3 2020. Further information can be found on page 11.

Key Findings:

- The NI public sector made up 27% and the private sector made up 73% of all employee jobs. NI public sector jobs as a proportion of the NI population¹ was 11%. This compares to 8% in the UK.
- Seasonally adjusted employee jobs in the private sector decreased over the quarter and over the year to 563,720 jobs. The annual decrease of 0.9% is the first annual decline since June 2012.
- Seasonally adjusted employee jobs in the public sector decreased over the quarter but increased over the year to 211,740 jobs.

Figure 3.1: Index of NI Private and Public Sector Jobs, September 2005 – September 2020



[Download in excel](#)

Figures are indexed to September 2005

¹ Latest population estimates available – [June 2019](#).

The latest seasonally adjusted employee jobs figures estimate that there were:

- 211,740 employee jobs in the NI public sector.
- 563,720 employee jobs in the NI private sector.

Changes over the quarter

The latest seasonally adjusted figures represented:

- a decrease of 0.4% (-2,410 jobs) in the private sector.
- a decrease of 0.4% (-850 jobs) in the public sector.

Changes over the year

The latest seasonally adjusted figures represented:

- a decrease of 0.9% (-5,160 jobs) in the private sector.
- an increase of 0.5% (+1,030 jobs) in the public sector.

Despite the reclassification of approximately 3,000 Registered Housing Association employee jobs from the public to the private sector¹ this quarter, private sector jobs decreased over the quarter (-0.4% or -2,410 jobs) and the year (-0.9% or -5,160 jobs). The annual decrease in private sector jobs was the first annual decrease seen since June 2012.

Following a period of annual decline in public sector employee jobs between June 2015 and June 2017, since September 2017 there have been thirteen consecutive quarters of annual growth in public sector jobs to September 2020. There are 16,450 fewer public sector jobs (-7.2%) than the series peak in September 2009.

¹See page 11 for further information.

4 Composition of Employee Jobs

Please note: data in this section have not been adjusted for seasonality.

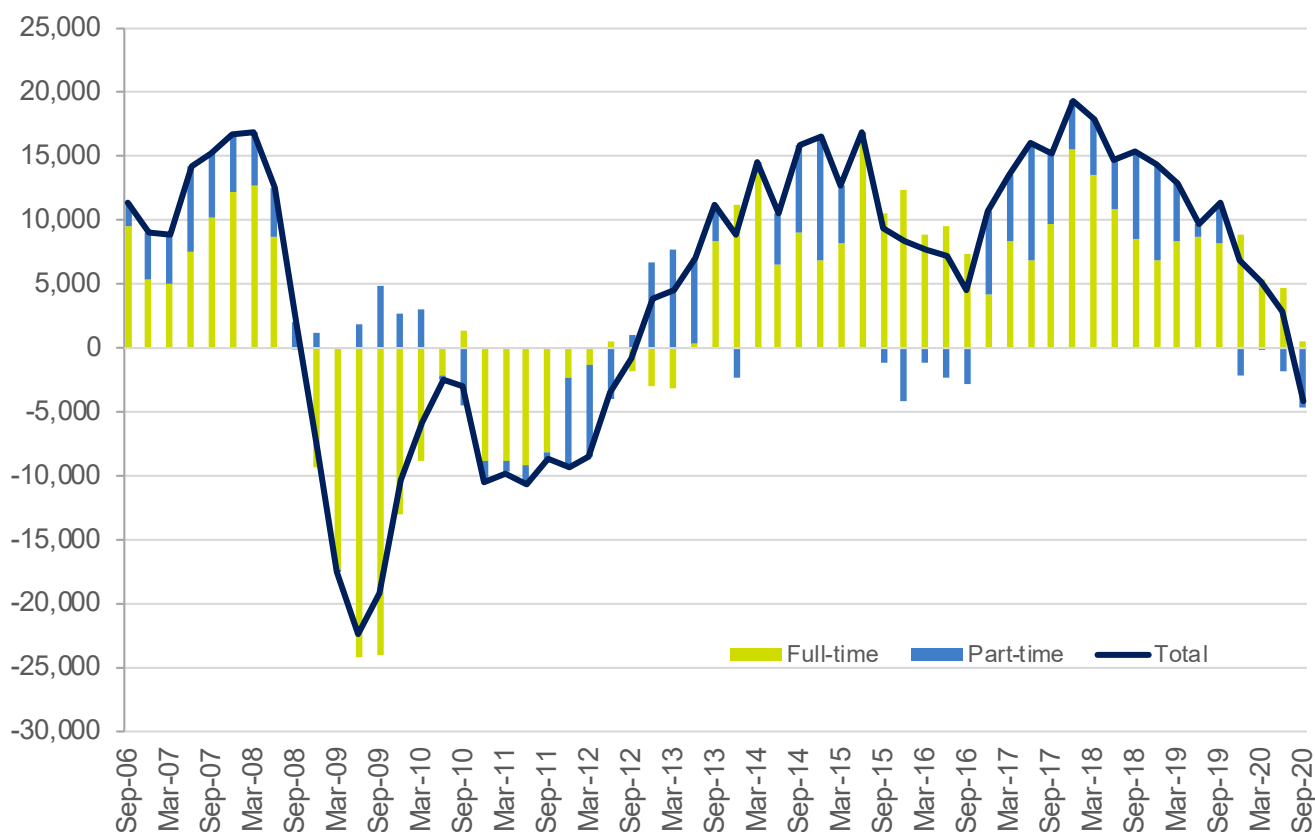
Part-time: part-time means those who normally work 30 hours a week or less.

Full-time: full-time means those who normally work more than 30 hours a week.

Key Findings

- Full-time jobs decreased (-0.9% or -4,730 jobs) and part-time jobs decreased (-0.7% or -1,990 jobs) over the quarter.
- An increase was seen in full-time jobs (+0.1% or +450 jobs) but part-time jobs decreased (-1.7% or -4,580 jobs) over the year.
- Full-time jobs accounted for 66% of all employee jobs, with part-time accounting for 34% in September 2020.

Figure 4.1: Full-time and part-time jobs annual change, September 2006 – September 2020



[Download in excel](#)

The latest estimates showed that:

- Part-time jobs increased by 8.9% (21,530 jobs) since the low point in March 2012.
- The low point for full-time jobs was a year later (March 2013) than for part-time jobs. The number of full-time jobs has increased by 14.1% (62,800 jobs) since this point.

5 UK Comparisons

Employee jobs figures for GB regions are provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). ONS produces a publication on [Workforce Jobs by region \(opens in a new window\)](#). Unlike QES, Workforce Jobs include employee jobs, self-employed, government supported trainees and Her Majesty's Forces.

Key Findings

- The UK reported a decrease in employee jobs over both the quarter (-1.2%) and the year (-1.9%) to 30.23 million jobs in September 2020.
- Employee jobs decreased over the quarter in all regions of the UK, with the West Midlands recording the largest estimated quarterly decrease (-2.1%). Northern Ireland employee jobs decreased by 0.4% over the quarter.
- All UK regions showed a decrease in employee jobs over the year except Wales, where there was a marginal increase (+0.05%). The West Midlands recorded the largest estimated annual decrease (-4.0%). Northern Ireland employee jobs decreased by 0.5% over the year.

Figure 5.1: Annual and Quarterly Percentage Change in Employee Jobs by UK Region, September 2019 – September 2020 and June 2020 – September 2020



[Download in excel](#)

6 Further Information

Background

Estimates of the number of employee jobs are obtained from the Quarterly Business Survey (QBS). The QBS is a statutory survey issued under the Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 and is designed to collect information on employees and turnover. The main outputs are published in four quarterly publications – the [Quarterly Employment Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#) (QES), [Index of Services \(opens in a new window\)](#) (IOS), [Index of Production \(opens in a new window\)](#) (IOP) and [Quarterly Construction Enquiry \(opens in a new window\)](#) (QCE).

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.

The following provides an overview of coverage response rates for 2019, compared to Quarter 3 2020:

Response rate type	Quarter 3 2020	2019 (median*)
Coverage response rate (<i>returned employees</i>)	69%	77%

*median value achieved at QES database closure of quarter 1, quarter 2, quarter 3 and quarter 4 2019.

COVID-19 has resulted in a decrease in coverage response rate in Q3 2020 when compared to 2019, primarily due to the restrictions in place for businesses. The coverage response rate for Q3 2020 was higher than that obtained in Q2 2020 (62%).

As a result, employee jobs estimates for 2020 are likely to be subject to higher revisions than normal over the coming quarters. These can be tracked through the [revisions triangle \(opens in a new window\)](#). Comparisons of provisional employee jobs estimates at lower industry levels in particular (e.g. 2 digit Standard Industrial Classification level), should be treated with caution.

Sample

The QES, IOS, IOP and QCE are sampled independently and there is an overlap between QES and IOS/IOP/QCE of approximately 2,250 businesses.

The QES covers all public sector bodies, all private sector firms with 25 or more employees, all businesses with more than one industry activity and a sample of the remainder. QES covers all industrial sections apart from agriculture. Employee estimates for the agricultural sector are provided, on an annual basis (figures for June are provided in the January of the following year), from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Farm Census. Agriculture employees include all workers on agricultural businesses other than (a) part-time farmers and partners and (b) farmers' spouses. They include full-time, part-time and casual workers, both paid and unpaid.

The QES sample is drawn from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), as follows:

Employment Size/Sector	Percentage of businesses selected
0-9 employees	Sample (4%)
10-24 employees	Sample (9%)
Multiple Industry Activities	Full Count (100%)
25+ employees	Full Count (100%)
Public Sector	Full Count (100%)

As the QES is a sample survey, estimates obtained from it are subject to sampling variability i.e. if we drew many similar samples each would give a different result. [Confidence intervals PDF \(665KB\) \(opens in a new window\)](#) provide a measure of the size of the sampling variability. The 95% confidence interval for the September 2020 employee jobs estimate is 775,020 +/- 5,590. This means that in 100 similar samples we would expect 95 (95%) of the confidence intervals to contain the true population value of the number of employee jobs.

The survey collects information on numbers of persons in full-time and part-time employment. It should be noted that the survey counts the number of jobs rather than the number of persons with jobs. For example, a person holding both a full-time job and a part-time job, or someone with two part-time jobs, will be counted twice.

Employment results are collated into industry classes using the 2007 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). As a result, no individual business can be identified.

Updates to the sample frame

The annual Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) results are used to update employee and SIC code variables on the Inter Departmental Business Register annually in quarter 1. The impact of this update is greatest at 2 digit SIC level. Users should be aware that changes at this level may be due to a reallocation of jobs/businesses to SIC codes following the sample frame update.

Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data

The introduction of sample rotation from March 2014 contributed to the volatility of the series. To counteract these effects from March 2016 the number of businesses selected in SIC and size bands experiencing the greatest impact of rotation increased.

Volatility also arises when businesses inform NISRA of SIC code changes via business surveys, ONS and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). This new information helps to improve the industry estimates of employee jobs each quarter but also adds volatility to quarterly and annual changes, particularly at 2 digit SIC level. SICs 74 (Other professional, scientific and technical activities) and 82 (Office administrative, office support and other business support activities) are most affected by updates to industry codes. More information can be found in Section 3 of the [Analysis of the Impact of Quarterly Employment Survey Data Revisions PDF \(555KB\) \(opens in a new window\)](#) document. It is therefore recommended that changes in employee jobs estimates at 2 digit SIC level are considered in the context of a longer time series.

[Discontinuity PDF \(368KB\) \(opens in a new window\)](#)

The sample coverage used to derive employee jobs estimates in NI was extended in 2009. This change was introduced to provide more comprehensive estimates of employee jobs and also to ensure a consistency of methodology between the QES and BRES. The extension in sample coverage has resulted in a discontinuity in the employee jobs series from the reference period Q3 2009 onwards.

[Revisions Policy \(opens in a new window\)](#)

QES estimates are revised quarterly to reflect the latest information provided by employers. The June 2020 seasonally adjusted estimate published in September 2020 has been revised down (-0.2%). Estimates for the latest quarter as well as the previous four quarters are provisional and subject to revision in light of (a) late responses to surveys and administrative sources and (b) where cross survey congruence checks provide more accurate data. As a result of seasonal adjustment factors which are re-estimated every quarter, there may be amendments to the seasonally adjusted series outside of the revisable period (previous four quarters) and applicable back to March 2005. Only rarely are there avoidable 'errors' such as human or system failures, and such mistakes are made quite clear when they do occur. The revisions triangle can be accessed on the [Quarterly Employment Survey Revisions \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Public Sector Reclassifications

Public sector jobs comprise Central Government (including Bodies under the aegis of Central Government), Local Government and Public Corporations. The following table summarises the changes announced by the Public Sector Classification Committee and the date the changes took place.

Date of change	Summary	Revision applied from
Dec 2006	NI Housing Executive reclassified from SIC 75 to SIC 70	Mar 2004
Jan 2012	Water service became a Government owned company, as a result employees transferred from "NI Central Government" to "Bodies under the Aegis of NI Central Government"	Apr 2007
Dec 2013	Royal Mail Plc reclassified to private sector	Oct 2013
Mar 2014	Lloyds Banking Group and its subsidiaries reclassified to private sector	Dec 2013
Sep 2017	Registered housing associations in NI reclassified to public sector	Sep 1992
Sep 2018	Registered housing associations in NI moved from section N to L in sections level data	Mar 2005 (in line with seasonally adjusted series)
Aug 2020	Registered housing associations in NI reclassified to private sector*	Sep 2020

*See note on the [Quarterly Employment Survey Revisions \(opens in a new window\)](#) page for further information.

Seasonal Adjustment

A seasonally adjusted series provides a better indication of underlying trends in employment. Time series data for seasonally adjusted employee jobs from 2005 to date for industry section (A-S) and main industrial sector are available on the [Quarterly Employment Survey webpage \(opens in a new window\)](#).

The following series are seasonally adjusted:

- Male employee jobs in Manufacturing (Section C); Wholesale and Retail Trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles (Section G); Transportation and Storage (Section H); Accommodation and Food Service Activities (Section I); Administrative and Support Service Activities (Section N); Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security (Section O); Education (Section P) and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (Section R).
- Female employee jobs in Mining and Quarrying (Section B); Manufacturing (Section C); Construction (Section F); Wholesale and Retail Trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles (Section G); Accommodation and Food Service Activities (Section I); Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (Section M); Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security

(Section O); Education (Section P); Human Health and Social Work Activities (Section Q) and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (Section R).

Seasonal adjustment models are periodically reviewed as seasonal trends can change over time. The [latest review PDF \(555KB\) \(opens in a new window\)](#) was carried out in November 2018. The next seasonal adjustment review is scheduled to take place in early 2021. Following this, larger revisions than usual may be seen in the seasonally adjusted series.

[Business Register and Employment Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Information on employee jobs at a sub Northern Ireland level (e.g. District Council Area) and at the 5-digit SIC07 level are available from the Northern Ireland Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). The QES sample size is designed so that estimates of total employee jobs are within +/- 1% of the BRES total.

Annualised or Rolling 4 Quarters

Annualised growth or rolling 4 quarters figures are calculated by taking the difference between the average over the most recent 4 quarters and the average over the same 4 quarters of the previous year, as a proportion of the average over the same 4 quarters of the previous year. For example annualised growth of 0.3% in September 2020 reported in this publication is the average number of jobs from Q4 2019 to Q3 2020 minus the average number of jobs from Q4 2018 to Q3 2019, divided by the average number of jobs from Q4 2018 to Q3 2019. This measure allows for comparison in growth to previous years and is useful in determining trends in the data.

Date of next publication

Forthcoming release dates are published in the [Economic & Labour Market Statistics Branch Publication Schedule \(opens in a new window\)](#). The next Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey publication is planned for 23rd March 2021.

Further information

If you require further information about the figures contained in this publication or the accompanying tables, please contact the Quarterly Employment Survey section using the details below:

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Twitter: @NISRA

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