

Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey

Theme: Labour Market

Frequency: Quarterly

Geographical area: Northern Ireland

Reference period: Quarter 4 (December) 2023

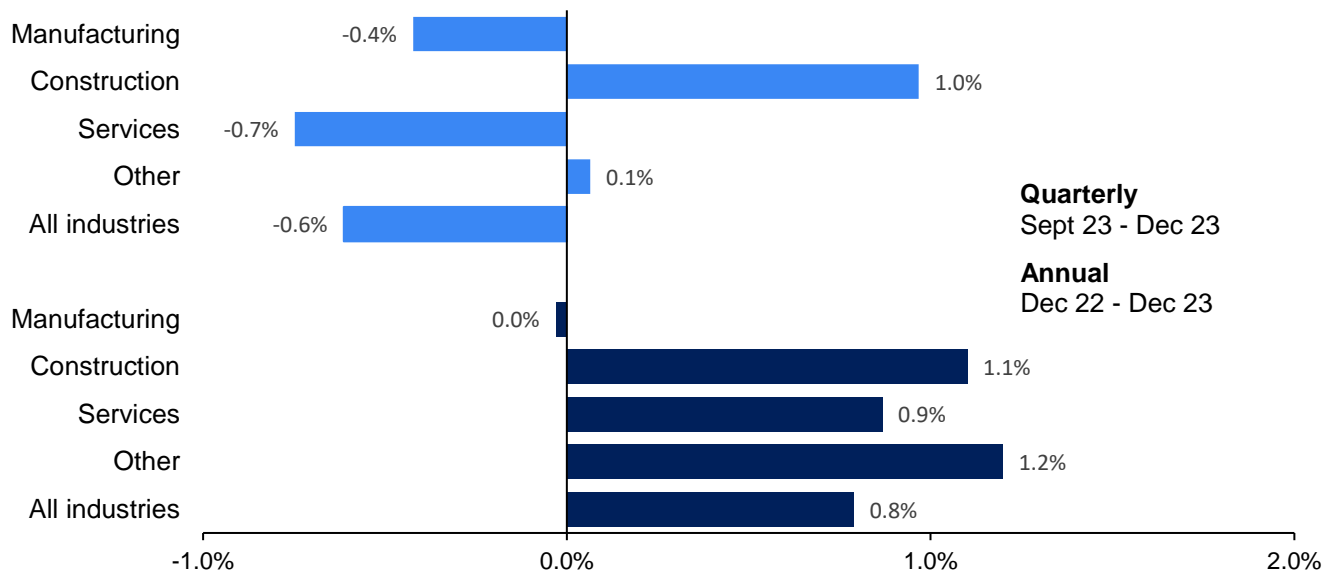
Employee jobs estimates are calculated from the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) aspect of the Quarterly Business Survey (QBS). The QES has a sample size of approximately 6,000 and covers all employers with 25 or more employees, all public sector employers, all businesses with more than one industry activity and a representative sample of smaller firms.

The survey date for Quarter 4 was 4 December 2023. All figures are adjusted for seasonality, unless stated otherwise.

Key Points

- There were an estimated 817,780 employee jobs in Northern Ireland in December 2023.
- This was a decrease of -5,050 jobs (-0.6%) over the quarter and an increase of +6,400 jobs (+0.8%) over the year. The change over both the quarter and the year was not statistically significant.
- Changes in the employee job numbers over both the quarter and the year were mainly driven by changes in the services sector.

Figure 1: **Quarterly** and **Annual** Changes in Employee Jobs at Section Level



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Quarter 4 2023	Total jobs	Manufacturing	Construction	Services	Other Industries	Public	Private
	817,780	89,000	36,410	667,900	24,470	224,070	593,150
Quarterly change	-0.6%	-0.4%	+1.0%	-0.7%	+0.1%	-0.8%	-0.6%
	-5,050	-380	+350	-5,030	+20	-1,710	-3,630
Annual change	+0.8%	-0.0%	+1.1%	+0.9%	+1.2%	+0.5%	+0.9%
	+6,400	-30	+400	+5,740	+290	+1,110	+5,310

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Accredited Official Statistics

[Accredited official statistics](#) are a sub-set of official statistics that have been independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation and confirmed as complying with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in August 2010. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled 'accredited official statistics'.

The full [assessment](#) of Quarterly Employee Jobs estimates is available on our website.

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](#) at Labour Market User Groups and streamlined outputs in line with the UK series;
- Reduced [business burden](#) by offering the option of online data returns.
- Improved accessibility of Labour Market Statistics by [changing publication practices](#) so that reports are [no longer released on public holidays](#) and amended the format and structure of reports in line with accessibility regulations.
- Changed [timing of release](#) in line with change in ONS release practices in response to COVID-19.
- [Consulted users](#) on streamlining the QES statistical bulletin.



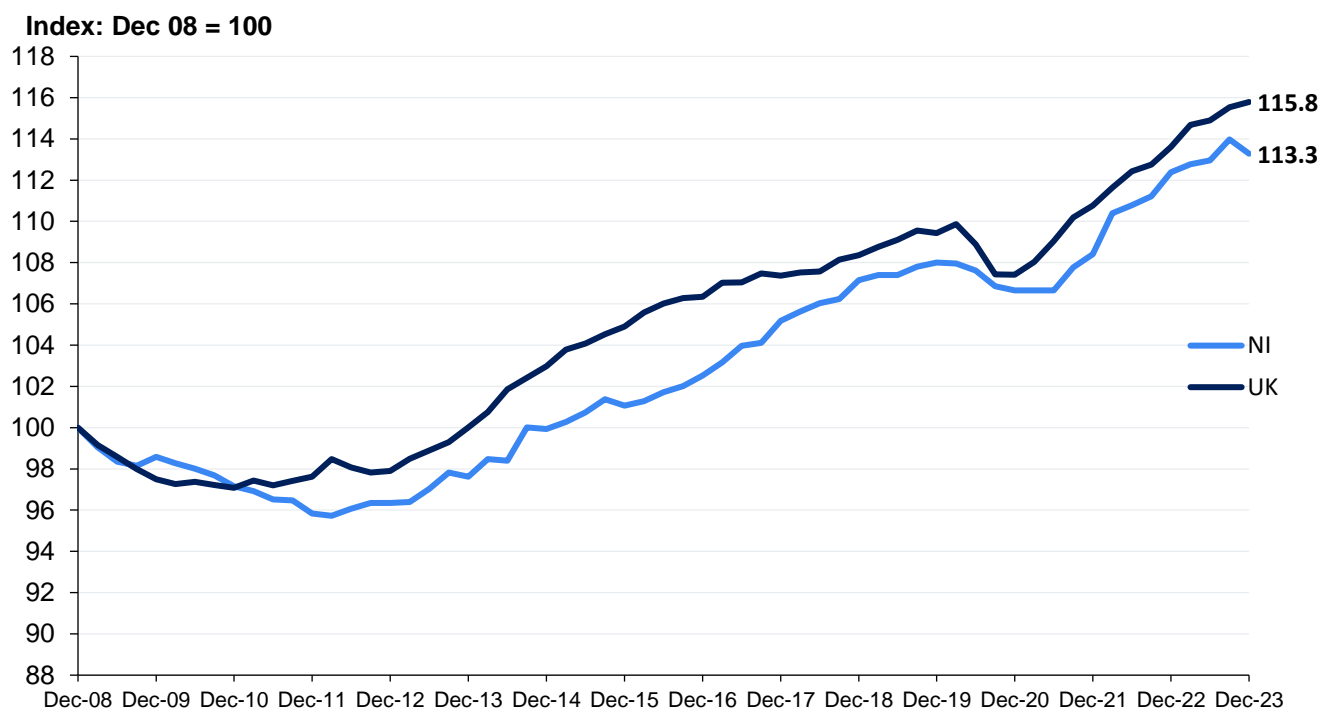
Index of Employee jobs

The latest employee jobs estimate for Northern Ireland (NI) at December 2023 was 817,780 (+/- 5,440)¹.

Figure 2 shows estimated employee jobs, indexed to allow comparison between NI and the UK. NI employee jobs decreased by -0.6% over the quarter (-5,050 jobs). This marks the first decrease following the ten consecutive quarterly increases in employee jobs since Quarter 2 2021. Over the year (December 2022 to December 2023), employee jobs have increased by +0.8% (+6,400 jobs). The decrease in employee jobs over the quarter and the increase over the year was mainly driven by changes in the service sector.

The UK reported an increase in employee jobs over both the quarter (+0.2%) and the year (+1.9%) to reach a series high in December 2023.

Figure 2: Index of Employee Jobs for Northern Ireland and the UK, December 2008 – December 2023



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Following the 2008 downturn, the UK series reached its lowest point in December 2010, more than a year before the NI low in March 2012. NI jobs are now +18.3% (or +126,690 jobs) above the low point in March 2012 while UK jobs are +19.0% (or +5,263,000 jobs) above their December 2010 level.

During the Covid-19 pandemic (beginning in March 2020), total NI jobs declined over four quarters until June 2021 before showing signs of recovery. By comparison, the UK only showed a reduction in total employee jobs between June 2020 and December 2020, with quarter-on-quarter increases seen since then until December 2023. UK jobs have reached a new series-high of 32.57 million jobs.

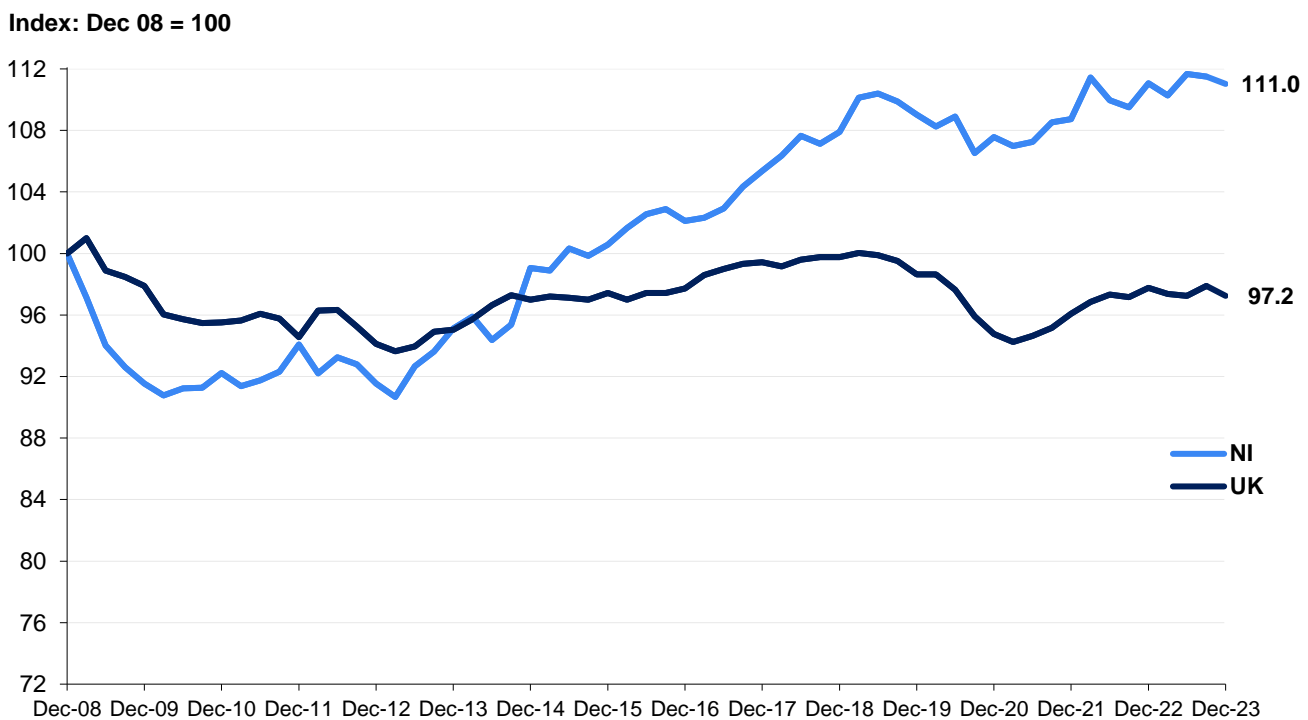
¹ Represents 95% confidence interval around estimate. More information is available in the [QES Confidence Intervals User Guidance PDF](#)

Manufacturing

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.

NI manufacturing sector jobs decreased over the quarter (-0.4% or -380 jobs) to December 2023 (89,000 jobs). The UK manufacturing sector experienced a decrease over the same period (-0.7% or -16,000 jobs). Over the year, NI manufacturing jobs remained stable with only marginal change (-30 jobs), with the UK manufacturing sector decreasing by -0.5% (-13,000 jobs).

Figure 3: Index of manufacturing employee jobs for Northern Ireland and the UK, December 2008 – December 2023



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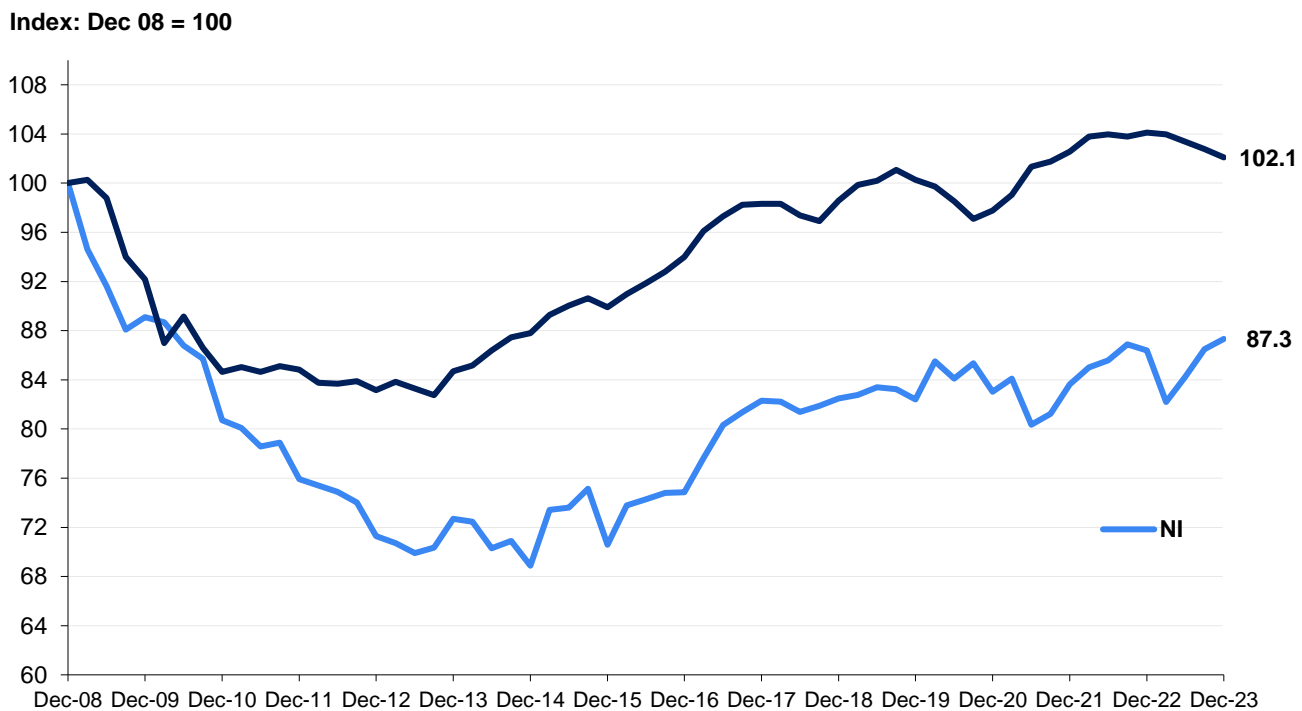
Both NI and the UK followed a similar trend in reaching a series low in March 2013. However, from then the two series begin to diverge, with NI showing stronger growth in the manufacturing sector compared to the UK. Manufacturing jobs in NI are currently +22.4% (+16,320 jobs) above the March 2013 low point.

Construction

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.

NI construction sector jobs showed an increase over the quarter to December 2023 (+1.0% or +350 jobs) and an increase over the year (+1.1% or +400 jobs) to 36,410 jobs. Conversely, the UK construction sector jobs decreased over the quarter by -0.7% (-10,000 jobs) and over the year by -1.9% (-30,000 jobs).

Figure 4: Index of construction employee jobs for Northern Ireland and the UK, December 2008 – December 2023



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The series low in NI construction sector jobs was in December 2014 (28,720 jobs). The latest estimates show a +26.8% (+7,690 jobs) improvement on this level; however, the number of employee jobs in the NI construction sector remains -12.7% (-5,280 jobs) lower than the series peak in December 2008.

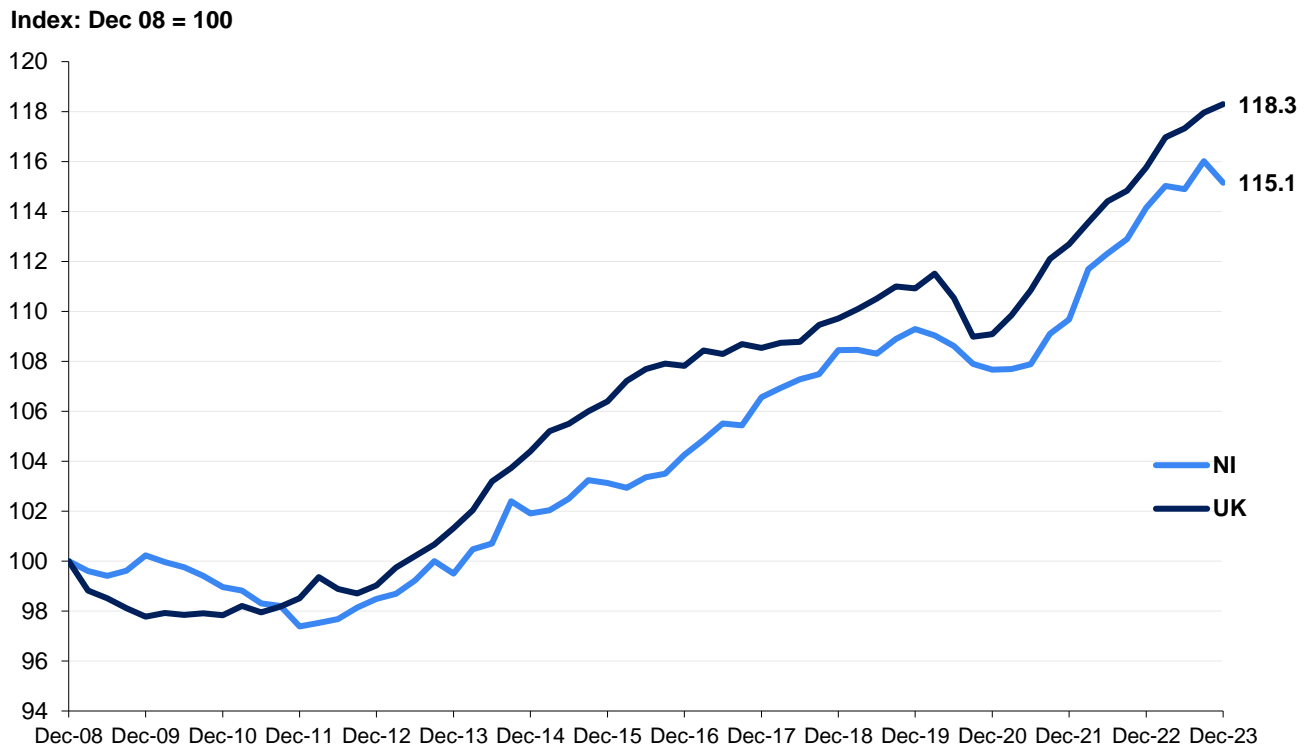
For the UK, the series low was in September 2013; however, since September 2013, UK construction sector jobs have recovered at a comparable rate to NI, by +23.4% (+287,000 jobs).

Services

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](#).

Services sector jobs in NI experienced a decrease over the quarter (-0.7% or -5,030 jobs) to 667,900 jobs in December 2023. Over the year the number of employee jobs in the services sector has increased by +0.9% (+5,740 jobs). The UK experienced an increase in service sector jobs over the quarter (+0.3% or +80,000 jobs) and over the year (+2.2% or +599,000 jobs) to reach a series high in December 2023 of 27.94 million jobs.

Figure 5: Index of services employee jobs for Northern Ireland and the UK, December 2008 – December 2023



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Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic NI services jobs declined each quarter from March 2020 through to December 2020, before beginning to recover in March 2021. In contrast, UK services jobs began to recover much sooner, after only two quarters of decline from June 2020 through to September 2020.

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020), the number of service jobs in NI have increased by +5.6% (+35,410 jobs). Similarly, UK service sector jobs have increased by +6.1% (+1.6 million jobs).

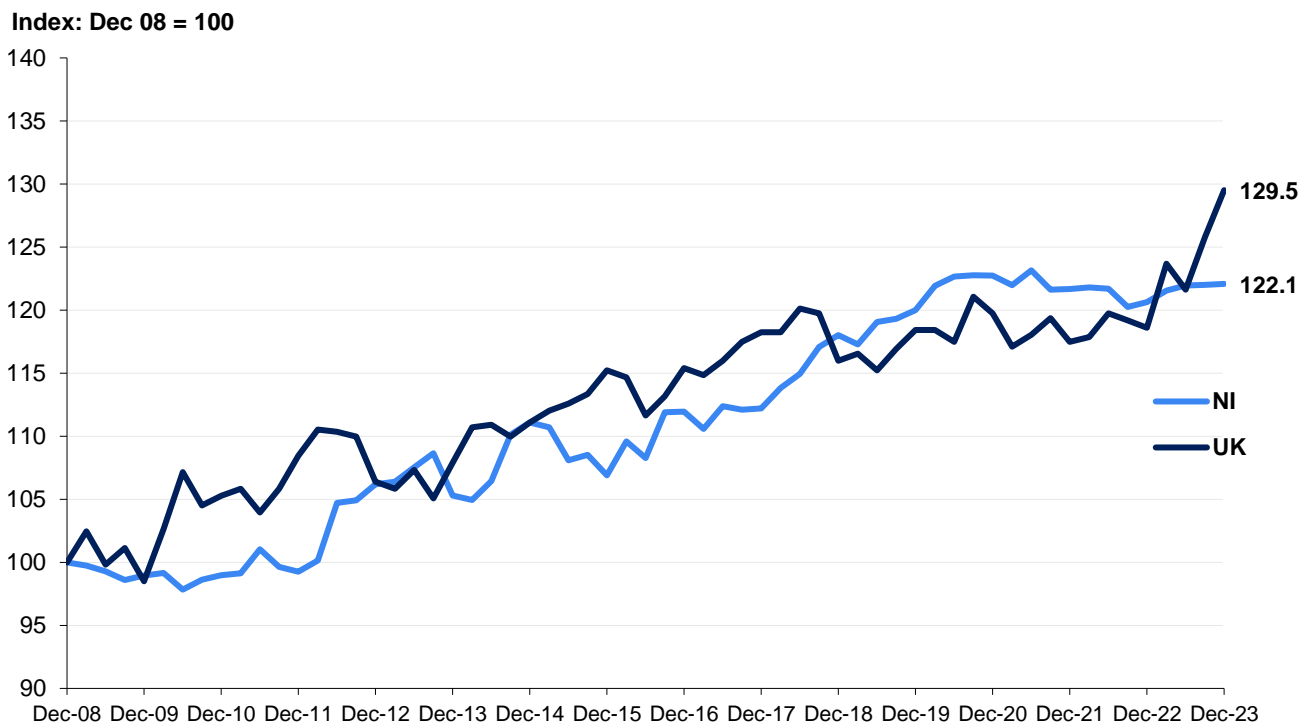
Other industries

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 September.

Other industry sector jobs in NI remained stable with only marginal change over the quarter (+0.1% or +20 jobs). Over the year, other industry sector jobs increased by +1.2% (+290 jobs). Other industry sector jobs for the UK increased by +3.0% over the quarter (+20,000 jobs) and increased over the year by +9.2% (+58,000 jobs).

Figure 6: Index of other industries employee jobs for Northern Ireland and the UK, December 2008 – December 2023



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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 +15.9% (+3,360 jobs) over the 10-year period to December 2023. UK other industry jobs increased by +20.0% (+115,000 jobs) over the same period.

Public & Private sector jobs

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

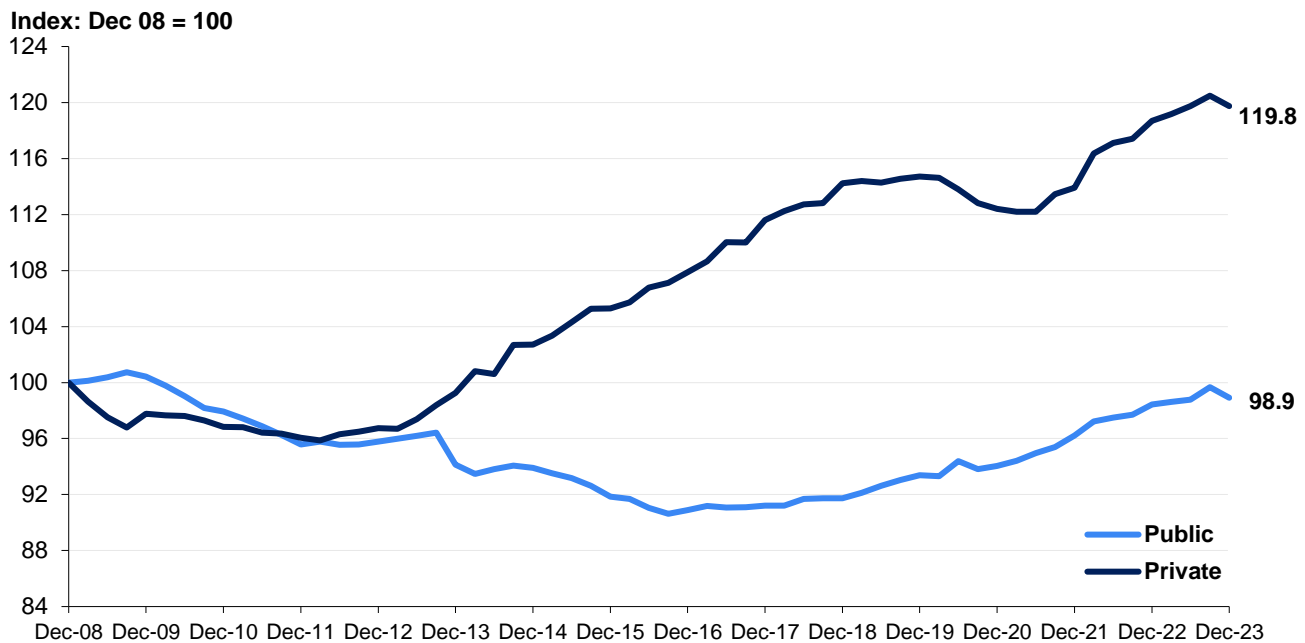
1. NI central government
2. Bodies under aegis of NI central government
3. UK central government employees based in Northern Ireland
4. Local government
5. Public corporations

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

Both public and private sector jobs decreased over the quarter and increased over the year to December 2023.

Public sector jobs decreased by -0.8% (-1,710 jobs) over the quarter and increased by +0.5% over the year (+1,110 jobs) to 224,070 jobs. Private sector jobs decreased by -0.6% (-3,630 jobs) over the quarter and increased by +0.9% (+5,310 jobs) over the year to 593,150 jobs.

Figure 7: Index of Public and Private sector employee jobs for Northern Ireland, December 2008 – December 2023



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The NI public sector made up 27.4% of all employee jobs in December 2023, while the private sector made up 72.5%².

Northern Ireland has consistently had a higher proportion of public sector jobs per population than the UK as a whole. In December 2023, public sector jobs as a proportion of the population were 11.7%, which compares to 8.8% for the UK as a whole.

² The Public and Private sector jobs series are individually seasonally adjusted and as a result the sum of both series may not equal the Northern Ireland total employee jobs estimates and percentage breakdowns may not equal 100.

Full-Time & Part-Time jobs

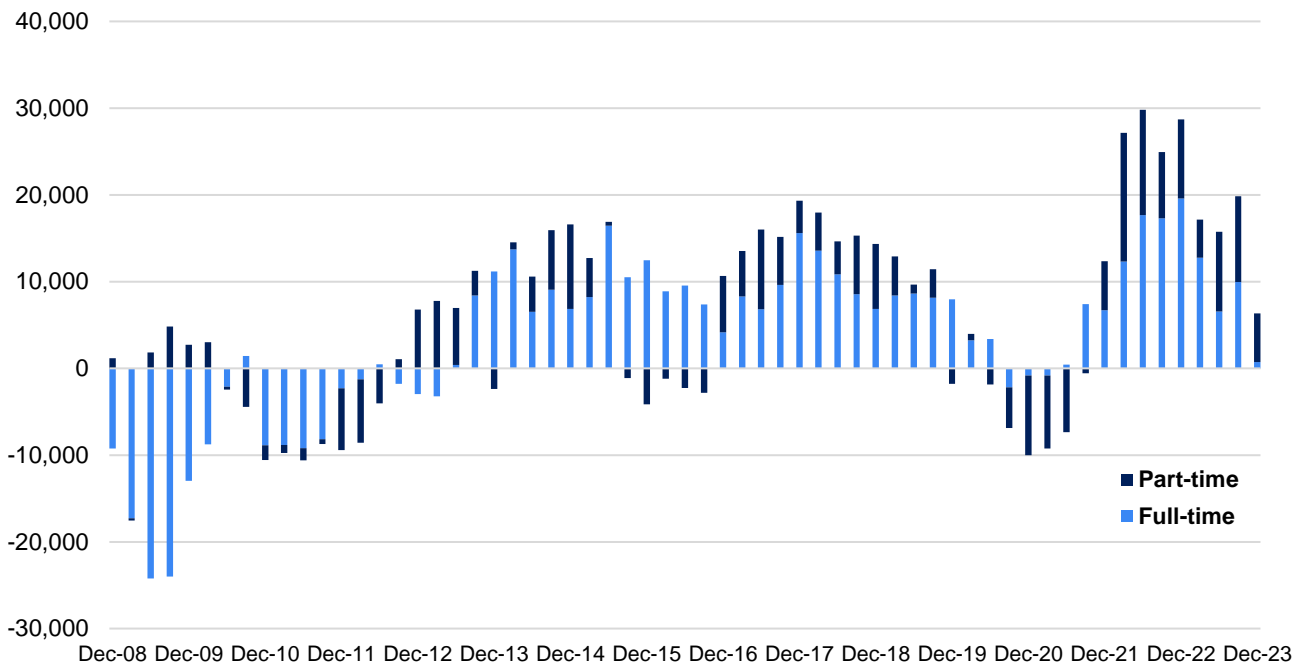
Part-time: part-time means those who normally work 30 hours a week or less.

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

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

Full-time employee jobs decreased by -0.2% (-1,210 jobs) over the quarter to December 2023. However, part-time employee jobs increased over the same period +1.0% (+2,870 jobs) reaching a new series high of 282,820 jobs. Over the year, both full-time (+0.1% or +730 jobs) and part-time jobs (+2.0% or +5,600 jobs) have increased.

Figure 8: Annual change in Full-time and Part-time employee jobs, December 08 – December 23



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Throughout the series the low point for full-time jobs was seen in March 2013. Since then, the number of full-time jobs has increased by +21.0% (+93,610 jobs) to December 2023.

The series low for part-time jobs was in March 2012, and since then there has been an increase in part-time jobs of +17.1% (+41,250 jobs) to December 2023. Part-time jobs currently account for 34.4% of all employee jobs.

Section level

Section level: Employee jobs are reported at Broad sector level which covers Manufacturing, Construction, Services and Other Industries. Each of these broad industries can be further disaggregated into 'Section level' as follows.

Manufacturing: Section C

Construction: Section F

Services: Sections G-S

Other industries: Sections A, B, D, E

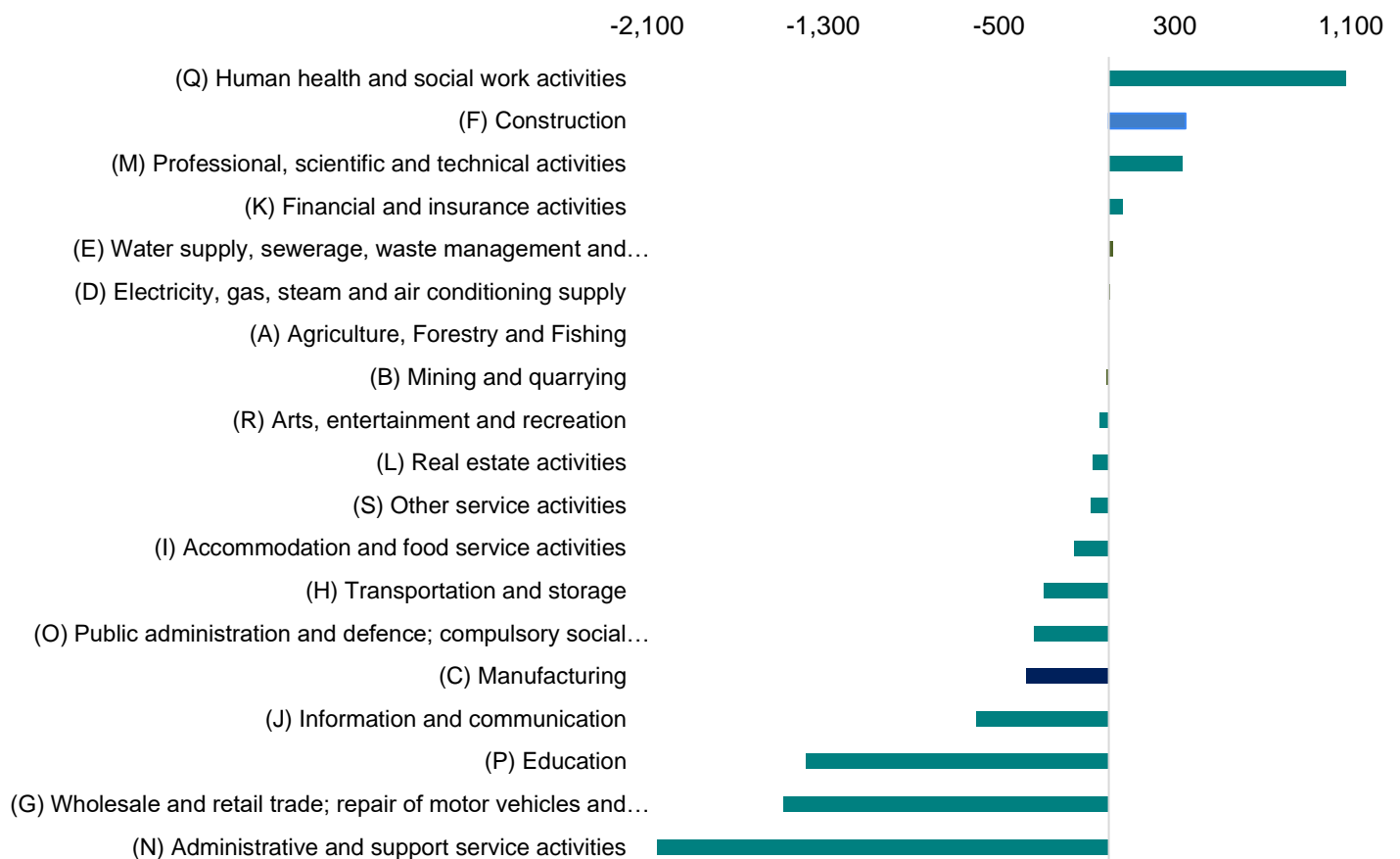
Further details on the section hierarchy can be found online at [Standard Industrial Classification](#).

Figure 9 shows the changes over the quarter (September 2023 to December 2023) by Section. The services sector makes up 81.7% of total employee jobs in Northern Ireland and as a result in December 2023, the majority of the largest changes were seen within the services sector.

The largest increase over the quarter was seen in Section Q, Human health and social work activities, which increased by +0.8% (+1,080 jobs) between September 2023 and December 2023.

There were more significant decreases over the quarter with the largest decrease seen in Section N, Administrative and support service activities (-3.9% or -2,050 jobs). This was followed by Section G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (-1.1% or 1,480 jobs) and Section P Education (-1.6% or 1,380 jobs).

Figure 9: Quarterly changes in employee jobs by Section across manufacturing, construction, services, and other industries (ranked by numerical change).



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Further Information

Data published within this bulletin is available to download from our [website](#) and the new [NISRA Data Portal](#).

Detailed background information documents and methodology information have also been published [online](#) for users to refer to for more detailed information on the QES.

We have also published information on revisions to the QES series which users can access on our [website](#).

Figures from the QES are included in the [Labour Market Report](#) alongside figures from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The Quarterly Employment Survey measures the number of jobs, not the number of people with jobs. A person can have more than one job and some jobs may be shared by more than one person. This differs to the concept of employment measured by the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which defines employment as the number of people in work. LFS employment figures are also based on a rolling three-month period whereas QES measures the number of jobs on a particular day.

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As a user of these statistics, we would welcome feedback on this release, in particular on the content, format and structure.

If you wish to receive regular Quarterly Employment Survey updates via email, please contact:

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