

June 2017

Northern Ireland Labour Market Report

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland
Theme: Labour Market
Frequency: Monthly

Key Points

- The latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for the period February - April 2017 indicate that over the quarter, the employment and the unemployment rates decreased while the economic inactivity rate increased. The number of people claiming unemployment related benefits in Northern Ireland (NI) decreased in May 2017.
- The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 in work (the employment rate) decreased over the quarter (0.5 pps) and over the year (1.0 pps) to 68.8%.
- The LFS indicated that the NI unemployment rate (16+) decreased by 0.3 pps over the quarter to February - April 2017 and by 0.3 pps over the year, to 5.4%. The equivalent UK unemployment rate was down over the quarter and over the year to 4.6%.
- The NI unemployment rate was below the European Union (8.0%) rate and Republic of Ireland (6.4%) rate for March 2017.
- The NI economic inactivity rate (the proportion of people aged from 16 to 64 who were not working and not seeking or available to work) was 27.2%, representing an increase of 0.8 pps over the quarter and 1.4 pps over the year. This is the largest quarterly increase since February – April 2009.
- None of the reported changes in employment, unemployment or economic inactivity were statistically significant over the quarter or the year. However, there have been statistically significant changes in the medium term – the increase in the employment rate compared to November - January 2011; the decrease in the unemployment rate compared to November - January 2014; and the decrease in the economic inactivity rate compared to November - January 2010.
- The number of people claiming unemployment related benefits (from NI Jobs and Benefits Offices) decreased by 300 over the month to 31,200 in May 2017. This is the 14th consecutive monthly decrease.
- Businesses reported that the number of employee jobs decreased over the quarter (-600) and increased over the year (9,850) to March 2017 (745,580). Private sector employee jobs increased over the first quarter (Q1) of 2017 and over the year to an historical high while the public sector decreased over the quarter and over the year.

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This Labour Market Report (LMR) contains the following chapters:

1. Summary of labour market statistics

- Labour market summary table
- Infographic summary
- Context

2. Unemployment

- LFS unemployment
- Claimant count unemployment
- Comparison between LFS unemployment and claimant count
- Redundancies

3. Employment

- LFS employment
- Quarterly Employment Survey (QES)
- Vacancies

4. Economic inactivity

- LFS economic inactivity

5. Earnings

- Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

6. Further information

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National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is a producer's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

1 Summary of Labour Market Statistics

Updated June 2017

Change over quarter / month

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for Northern Ireland for the period February - April 2017 showed that over the quarter:

- the unemployment rate (5.4%) decreased by 0.3 pps
- the employment rate (68.8%) decreased by 0.5 pps
- the economic inactivity rate was up 0.8 pps to 27.2%.

(Please note that none of the quarterly or annual changes in the LFS estimates were statistically significant i.e. the recorded change did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size. See Table 1 and Further Information in Section 6 for more details).

The most recent measure of the claimant count showed that in May 2017, there was:

- a decrease of 300 in the seasonally adjusted claimant count to 31,200.

During May 2017 there were:

- 93 confirmed redundancies notified to the Department, representing a decrease on the previous monthly period total of 139 confirmed redundancies.

The employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at March 2017 was 745,580, which was:

- a decrease over the quarter (-600) from the revised December 2016 estimate of 746,180.

Table 1: Northern Ireland Labour Market Summary with sampling variability

	Reference period	Estimate	Change over quarter	Change over year
Unemployment ¹ (Sampling variability of change)	Feb-Apr 2017	47,000	-4,000 (+/-11,000)	-4,000 (+/-15,000)
Employment ² (Sampling variability of change)	Feb-Apr 2017	827,000	-10,000 (+/-18,000)	-15,000 (+/-34,000)
Economically inactive ² (Sampling variability of change)	Feb-Apr 2017	585,000	15,000 (+/-16,000)	27,000 (+/-30,000)
Unemployment rate ¹ (Sampling variability of change)	Feb-Apr 2017	5.4%	-0.3pps +/-1.2pps	-0.3pps +/-1.7pps
Employment rate ² (Sampling variability of change)	Feb-Apr 2017	68.8%	-0.5pps +/-1.3pps	-1.0pps +/-2.5pps
Economic inactivity rate ² (Sampling variability of change)	Feb-Apr 2017	27.2%	0.8pps +/-1.3pps	1.4pps +/-2.3pps
Employee Jobs	Mar -17	745,580	-600	9,850
			Change on month	
Claimant Count	May-17	31,200	-300	-6,100
Redundancies ³	May-17	93		

LFS, claimant count and employee jobs data are seasonally adjusted.

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

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

³ Confirmed redundancies in the calendar month.

[Download in excel](#)

Change over year

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for Northern Ireland for the period February - April 2017 showed that over the year:

- the unemployment rate (5.4%) decreased by 0.3 pps
- the employment rate (68.8%) decreased by 1.0 pps
- the economic inactivity rate increased by 1.4 pps to 27.2%.

The most recent measure of claimant count shows that in the year to May 2017, there was:

- a decrease in the seasonally adjusted claimant count of 6,100 to 31,200.

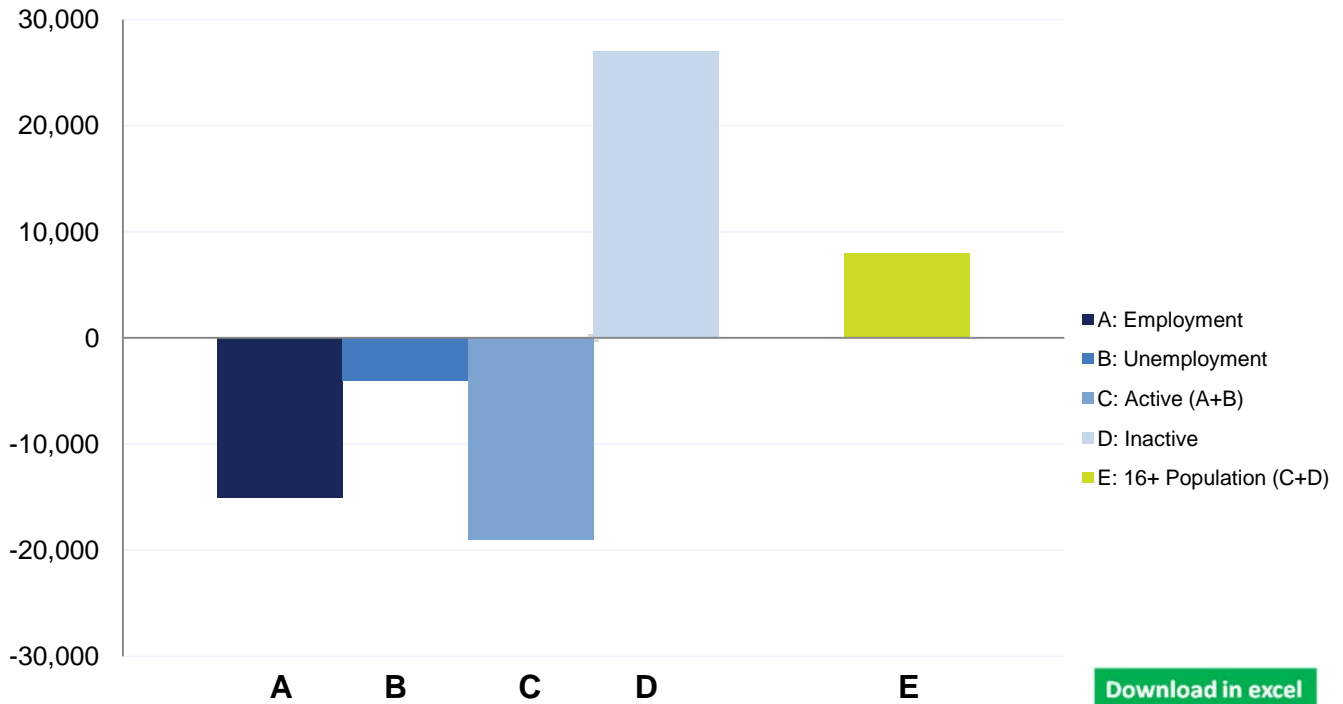
Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 2,493 confirmed redundancies which was a decrease of 22% from the previous year (3,205).

The employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at March 2017 was 745,580 jobs, which was:

- an increase of 1.3% (9,850) from the revised March 2016 estimate of 735,730.

Figure 1: NI labour market structure: change over year



UK summary

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for the UK for the period February - April 2017 showed:

- the unemployment rate (4.6%) was down 0.2 pps over the quarter and by 0.5 pps over the year
- the employment rate (74.8%) increased by 0.2 pps over the quarter and by 0.6 pps over the year
- the economic inactivity rate (21.5%) decreased 0.1 pps over the quarter and decreased by 0.3 pps over the year.

Employee jobs (Business survey based)

Businesses reported (in the Quarterly Employment Survey) that the number of employee jobs decreased over the 1st quarter of 2017 (-600) and increased over the year (9,850) to 745,580.

Comparing seasonally adjusted March 2017 employee jobs to the December 2016 estimates showed:

- an increase in the manufacturing sector by 0.7% (590 jobs) to 81,890 jobs.
- an increase in the construction sector by 2.9% (890 jobs) to 32,020 jobs.
- a decrease in the services sector by 0.3% (-1,980 jobs) to 609,050 jobs.
- a decrease in the other industries sector by 0.4% (-100 jobs) to 22,620 jobs.

Over the year, March 2016 to March 2017, the seasonally adjusted employee jobs figures showed:

- an increase in the manufacturing sector by 0.5% (430 jobs) to 81,890 jobs.
- an increase in the construction sector by 5.0% (1,520 jobs) to 32,020 jobs.
- an increase in the services sector by 1.3% (7,600 jobs) to 609,050 jobs.
- an increase in the other industries sector by 1.4% (300 jobs) to 22,620 jobs.

Commentary

The latest official statistics reflect a continuation of recent trends in terms of steady or falling unemployment, growth in private sector employee jobs and increasing output. At 5.4%, the unemployment rate for the most recent quarter is the lowest rate since August – October 2008 and continues the gradual decline in the unemployment rate recorded over recent years (from 7.2% in 2013/14 to 5.6% in 2016/17). This is also reflected in the claimant count series, which has fallen by 33,500 since its most recent peak in February 2013.

However, the falling unemployment rate has also been accompanied by a fall in the (LFS) employment rate and an increase in economic inactivity.

The falling (LFS) employment rate is also reflected in the quarterly decrease in the total number of employee jobs (covering both public and private sector). Private sector employee jobs have grown over both the quarter and year, which is now at a series high (545,560 jobs). However there is some evidence that the annual growth in private sector jobs is slowing (from 19,250 over the year to June 2016 to 12,170 over the year to March 2017).

The latest official statistics also released today show the growth in private sector jobs is also reflected in continuing growth over the year in private sector output. The slight quarterly fall in Production sector output was from a series high in the previous quarter and Service sector output is at its highest since Q3 2008. Growth over the year was broadly based across all sectors, with Transport and Communication faring particularly well.

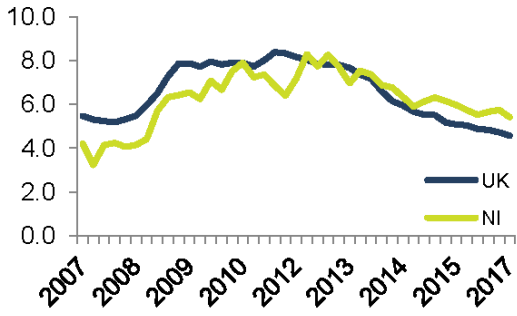
Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website:

[LMR Headline Tables](#).

NISRA Labour Market Statistics

Labour Force Survey

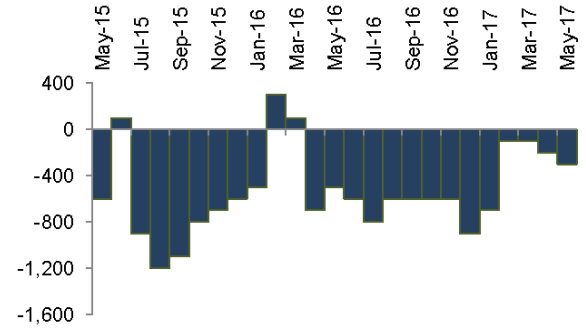
NI unemployment **5.4%** versus UK unemployment **4.6%**



↓ NI Unemployment (Feb-Apr 2017)
Change on Quarter: **-0.3pps**

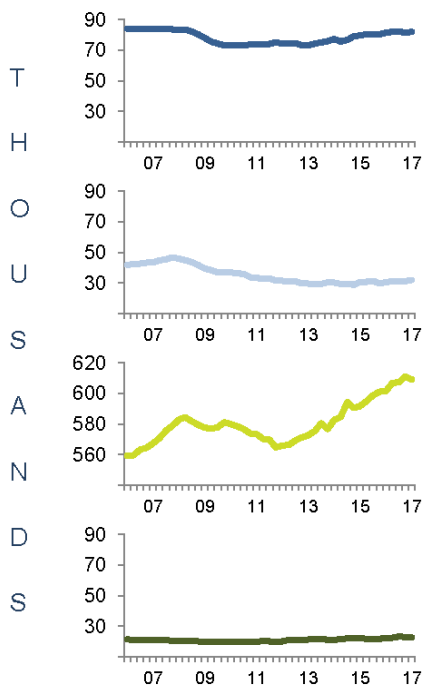
Claimant Count

Claimants decrease by 300 over the month

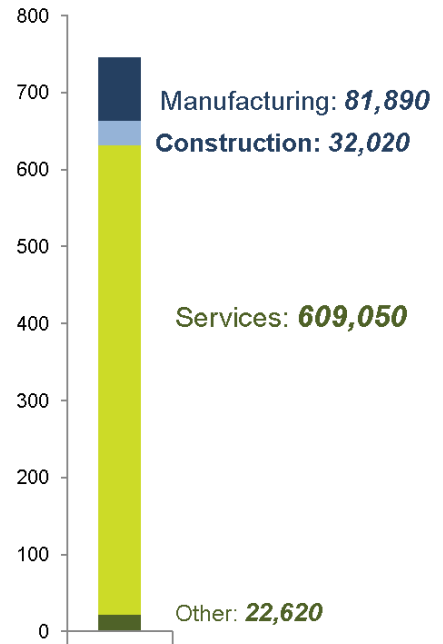


31,200 people claiming unemployment related benefits at May 2017

Quarterly Employment Survey – March 2017



Total employee jobs:
745,580



All data seasonally adjusted and subject to future revisions.
Data published on 14th June 2017 by Economic and Labour Market Statistics branch (NISRA).

Context

The Labour Market Report is a monthly overview of Northern Ireland key labour market statistics. It includes figures from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the claimant count, the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) as well as up to date redundancies data. More information about the data sources can be found in Section 6.

Comparative UK data produced by the ONS are presented where these are available. The latest labour market statistics are available on the [ONS website](#).

Key users of Northern Ireland labour market statistics include government departments, in particular the Department for the Economy (DfE), to design and monitor the impact of economic and labour market policy. Other Government departments such as the Executive Office, the Department of Finance (DoF) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), as well as bodies such as Invest NI and Belfast City Council, regularly require specific ad hoc labour market analysis in order to monitor policies for example, equality and employment. In addition, significant 'non-governmental' users of labour market statistics include the media, banks, academics, private consultants and the general public, primarily for reporting or researching the performance of the economy in general. Labour market statistics attract widespread media coverage, with a number of broadcasters publishing articles on the labour market on a monthly basis, generally on the day of publication of the Labour Market Report.

Labour market statistics feature in the [Economic Commentary](#) 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](#) of the website.

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

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

2 Unemployment

Updated June 2017

Labour Force Survey

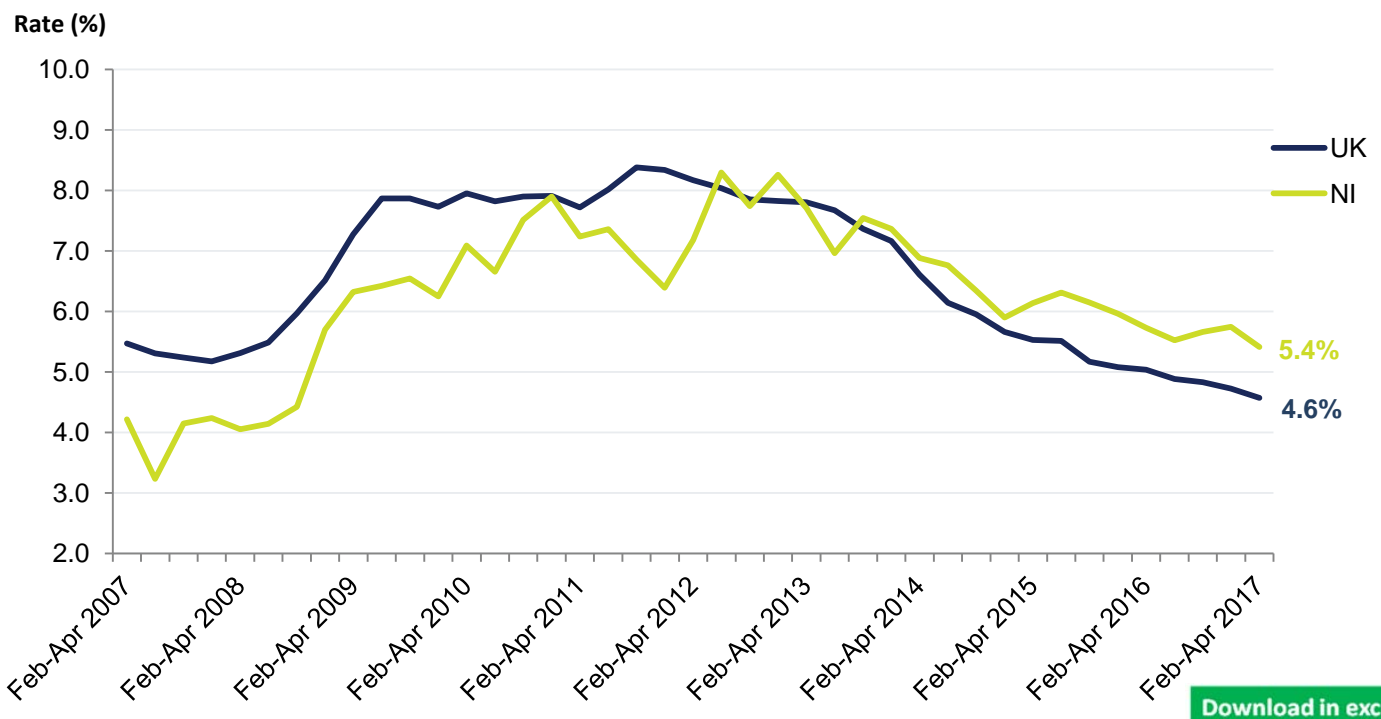
The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household sample survey carried out by interviewing individuals about their personal circumstances and work. It provides a rich source of information on the labour force using internationally agreed definitions. However, the estimates from it are subject to sampling error and care should be taken when making inferences from them (see section 6 for details).

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

Key Findings

- LFS unemployment rate lowest since August - October 2008
- LFS unemployment rate in NI above the UK average and below the EU and RoI rates
- NI long-term unemployment rate and the youth unemployment rate decreased over the year

Figure 2: Seasonally adjusted unemployment rate, Feb-Apr 2007 to Feb-Apr 2017



LFS unemployment

The unemployment rate for the period February - April 2017 was estimated at 5.4%. This was:

- a decrease of 0.3 percentage points (pps) over the quarter and
- a decrease of 0.3 percentage points (pps) over the year.

The number of unemployed persons was estimated at 47,000, which was:

- down 4,000 over the quarter
- down 4,000 over the year.

UK national and international LFS comparisons

Figure 2 shows unemployment rates on the current 3 month rolling average for NI and UK over the last decade. The unemployment rate in NI was at its lowest point (3.2%) in May - July 2007 and peaked at 8.3% in November - January 2013. NI has had a lower unemployment rate than the UK for most of the past decade until August - October 2013. Since 2014 the NI rate has been higher than the UK rate.

The most recent NI unemployment rate (5.4%) was:

- above the overall UK average rate (4.6%)
- the joint third highest rate among the twelve UK regions
- below the European Union (8.0%) rate and Republic of Ireland (6.4%) rate for March 2017.

Long-term and youth unemployment

The long-term unemployment rate (percentage of unemployed who have been unemployed for 1 year or more) was 47.0%, which was:

- down 3.1 percentage points over the year
- markedly higher than the UK average rate (26.0%).

The youth unemployment rate (percentage of economically active 18 - 24 year olds who are unemployed) was 13.3% and was:

- down 0.1 percentage points over the year
- higher than the UK average rate (10.0%).

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

[LFS unemployment](#)

Claimant count

The claimant count is an administrative data source derived from Jobs and Benefits Offices systems, which records the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits (Jobseeker's Allowance). Please note from March 2017 comparisons between the NI and GB claimant count are no longer valid. See overleaf for more detail.

Claimant count: The NI claimant count consists of all people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) at Jobs and Benefits offices. They must declare that they are out of work, capable of, available for and actively seeking work during the week in which their claim is made. From June the GB claimant count includes JSA claimants and out-of-work claimants of Universal Credit.

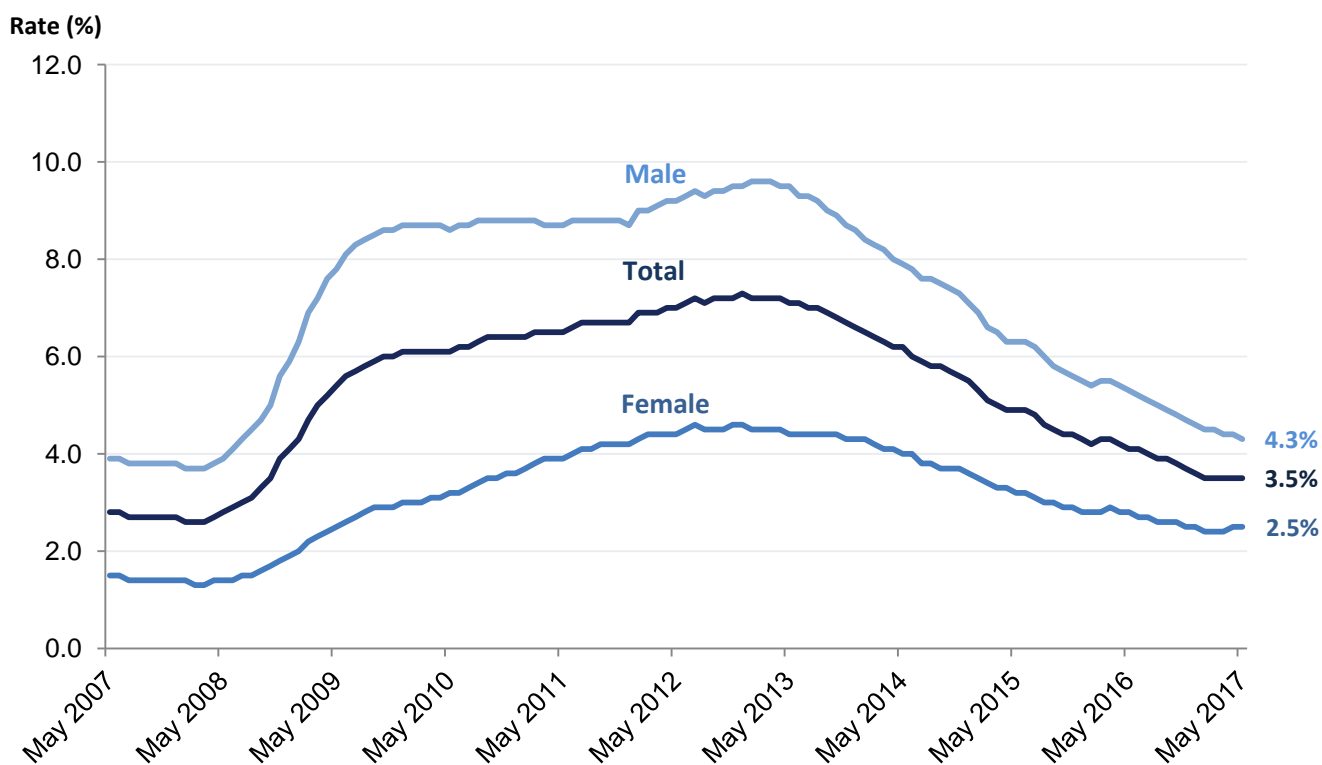
Percentage of workforce: This measure expresses the number of claimants as a percentage of workforce jobs plus claimants. Workforce jobs are the sum of employee jobs, self-employment jobs, HM Forces, & government-supported trainees. This measure is only available at the NI level.

Residence-based proportions: This is the official measure below national/regional level. It expresses the number of claimants as a percentage of the population aged 16-64, sourced from the mid-year population estimates. This measure is used for sub regional analysis.

Key Findings

- Over the month to May 2017, the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits in NI decreased by 300
- Claimant count (31,200) was down by 6,100 over the year to May 2017
- The male claimant count showed a larger decrease over the year than the female count
- Claimant count rate was highest in Derry City and Strabane District Council Area

Figure 3: Seasonally adjusted claimant count monthly rates, May 2007 – May 2017



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Claimant count unemployment

NI seasonally adjusted claimant count stood at 31,200 (3.5% of the workforce) in May 2017, representing:

- a decrease of 300 from last month's revised total
- a decrease of 6,100 (16.4%) over the year
- a decrease of 0.7 pps in the workforce unemployment rate over the year.

The NI figure has fallen by 33,500 since its most recent peak in February 2013 and is now less than half of that total. The most recent level remained above the low-point in September 2007 (23,500) and showed a decrease of 300 over the month to May 2017.

Claimant count gender comparison

The seasonally adjusted claimant count by gender showed:

- the claimant count is made up of 21,000 males and 10,200 females
- 4.3% of the male workforce were on the claimant count, much higher than the female rate (2.5%)
- female claimants decreased by 11.3% (1,300) over the last year, which was a lower percentage decrease than male claimants, who decreased by 18.6% (4,800).

Youth claimants (not adjusted for seasonality)

A total of 6,797 under 25's (22.3% of all claimants) were claiming benefits in May 2017, which showed:

- a decrease of 5.5% (395 claimants) over the month
- a decrease of 22.8% (2,003) over the year.

Long-term claimants (not adjusted for seasonality)

At May 2017, 10,101 (33.2% of all claimants) were claiming benefits for a year or more, which showed:

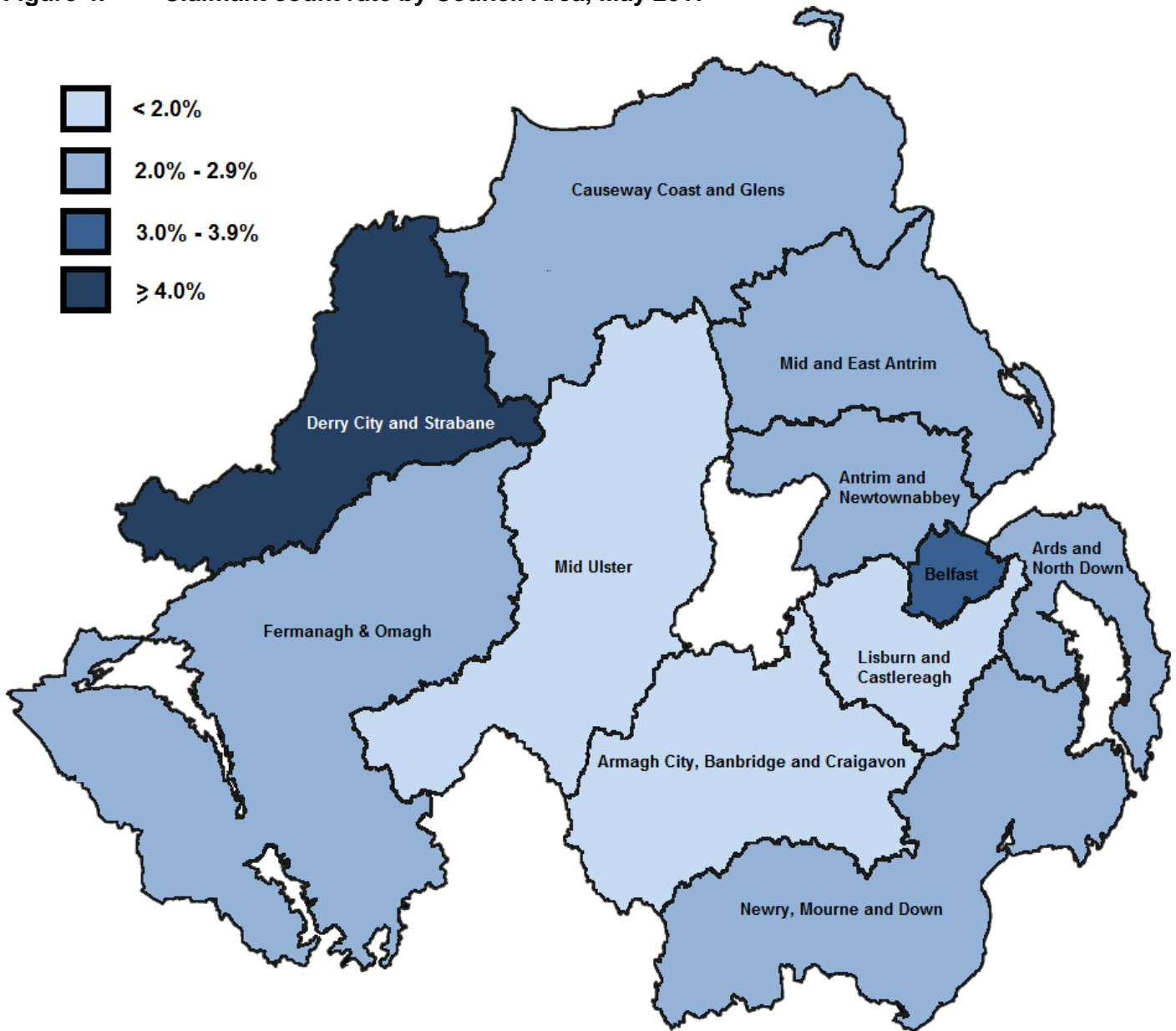
- a decrease of 2.8% (291 claimants) over the month
- a decrease of 24.7% (3,320) over the year.

Changes in unemployment benefit

From 17 June 2015, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) replaced the claimant count based on JSA for Great Britain (GB) with an experimental claimant count based on JSA claimants and a measure of out-of-work claimants of Universal Credit (UC). As the roll-out of Universal Credit has progressed the ability of the experimental claimant count to provide a useful indicator of the labour market has decreased resulting in the removal of the claimant count from the UK and Regional Statistical Bulletins on 15 March 2017. This is explained in further detail [here](#).

As Universal Credit has not yet been introduced in Northern Ireland, the local Claimant Count measure has not been impacted. NISRA will therefore continue to publish the Northern Ireland Claimant Count measure, as usual, though without UK comparisons. Universal Credit is due to be introduced locally from September 2017 and NISRA will monitor its impact on the Northern Ireland Claimant Count measure. In the future if NISRA consider that changes are required, users will be consulted.

Figure 4: Claimant count rate by Council Area, May 2017



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Claimant count Council Area comparison

The Council Area comparison (see Table 2 overleaf) using claimant count data unadjusted for seasonality found that:

- the highest claimant count rates were in Derry City and Strabane (5.1%) and Belfast (3.5%).
- all 11 Council Areas showed a decrease over the year, with the largest decreases in Fermanagh and Omagh (23.5%), Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (22.0%) and Lisburn and Castlereagh (20.7%).

Annual and monthly claimant count data are available on the NINIS website in the form of interactive maps for Parliamentary Constituency and Council Area and can be accessed via the [NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website](#).

Table 2: Claimant count by Council Area, May 2017

Council Area	Number of claimants			% of working age			Change over month		Change over year	
	Males	Females	All	Males	Females	All	Number	%	Number	%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	1,297	595	1,892	3.0	1.3	2.1	-57	-2.9	-267	-12.4
Ards and North Down	1,573	675	2,248	3.3	1.4	2.3	-73	-3.1	-312	-12.2
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	1,528	909	2,437	2.3	1.4	1.9	-45	-1.8	-688	-22.0
Belfast	5,620	2,262	7,882	5.2	2.0	3.5	-206	-2.5	-1,350	-14.6
Causeway Coast and Glens	1,594	852	2,446	3.5	1.9	2.7	-98	-3.9	-526	-17.7
Derry City and Strabane	3,244	1,613	4,857	6.9	3.3	5.1	-105	-2.1	-836	-14.7
Fermanagh and Omagh	1,042	536	1,578	2.9	1.5	2.2	-32	-2.0	-484	-23.5
Lisburn and Castlereagh	928	432	1,360	2.1	1.0	1.5	-73	-5.1	-355	-20.7
Mid and East Antrim	1,377	630	2,007	3.2	1.5	2.3	-116	-5.5	-214	-9.6
Mid Ulster	837	560	1,397	1.8	1.2	1.5	-53	-3.7	-237	-14.5
Newry, Mourne and Down	1,583	781	2,364	2.9	1.4	2.1	-86	-3.5	-557	-19.1
Northern Ireland	20,623	9,845	30,468	3.5	1.7	2.6	-944	-3.0	-5,826	-16.1

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Notes:

1. This information is not adjusted for seasonality.

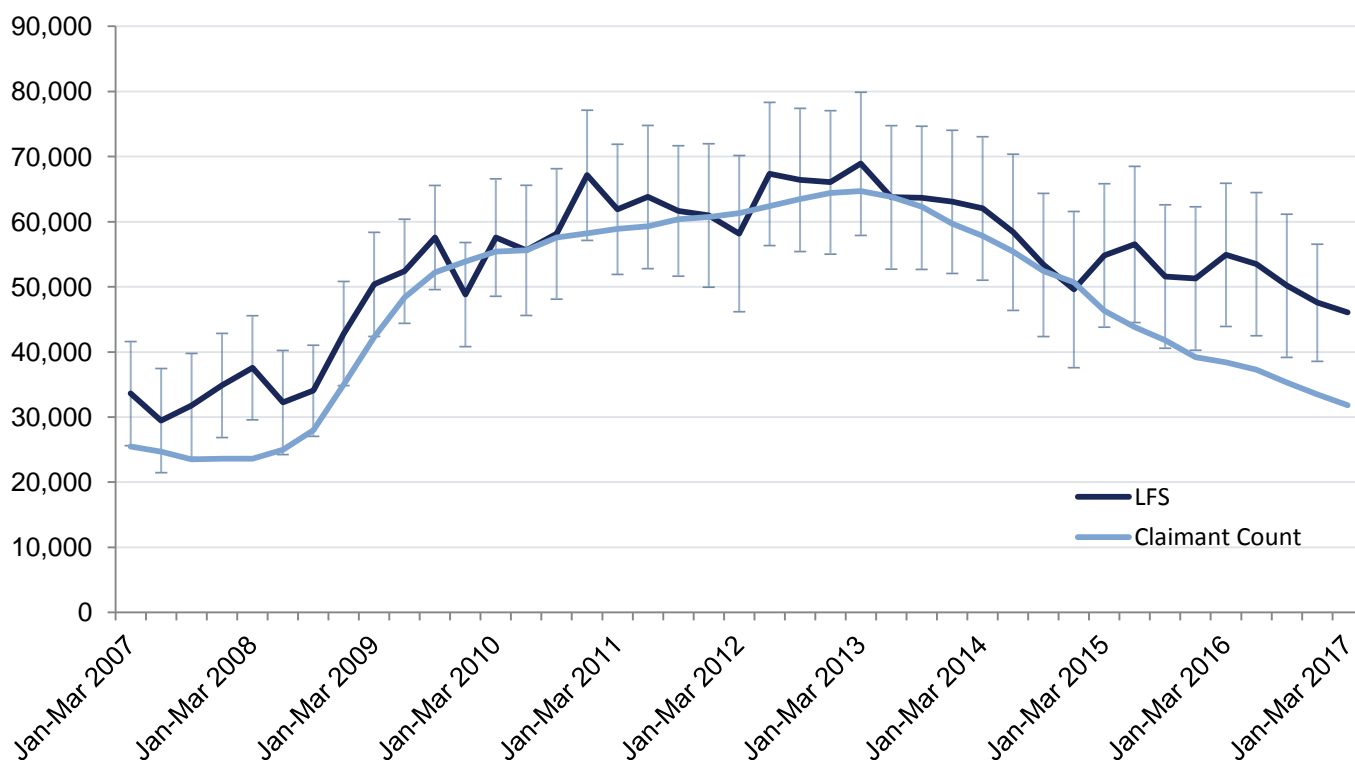
Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website: [Claimant count unemployment](#)

Comparison between LFS unemployment and claimant count

Economic and Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) publishes two measures of unemployment – the LFS unemployment and the claimant count. Although there is a large degree of overlap between the two series, they measure unemployment using different criteria. An overview of the differences between the LFS and claimant count measures of unemployment is provided at the following link: [Differences between LFS and claimant count unemployment](#)

Figure 5 compares quarterly movements in unemployment and the monthly headline claimant count since 2005. The unemployment estimates shown in this comparison are based on aged 16 and over and refers to the total unemployed as a proportion of the economically active. The claimant count includes all claimants aged 16-64.

Figure 5: Seasonally adjusted LFS unemployment and claimant count, 2007– 2017



[Download in excel](#)

Notes:

- LFS unemployment is based on persons aged 16 and over and is the total unemployed as a proportion of the economically active.
- Claimant count includes all claimants aged 16-64.

The chart shows that, although the two series are measuring different things, the overall trend is similar over time. The LFS confidence intervals demonstrate the variability of the LFS estimate, showing that on many occasions the claimant count level falls within the range of the LFS estimate. Over the last 10 years, the lowest rates were recorded for both measures just prior to the economic downturn in 2008 – LFS unemployment was 29,000 in April – June 2007 and claimant count reached 23,500 in September 2007. The most recent LFS unemployment was reported as 47,000 (February - April 2017) and claimant count as 31,200 in May 2017.

Redundancies

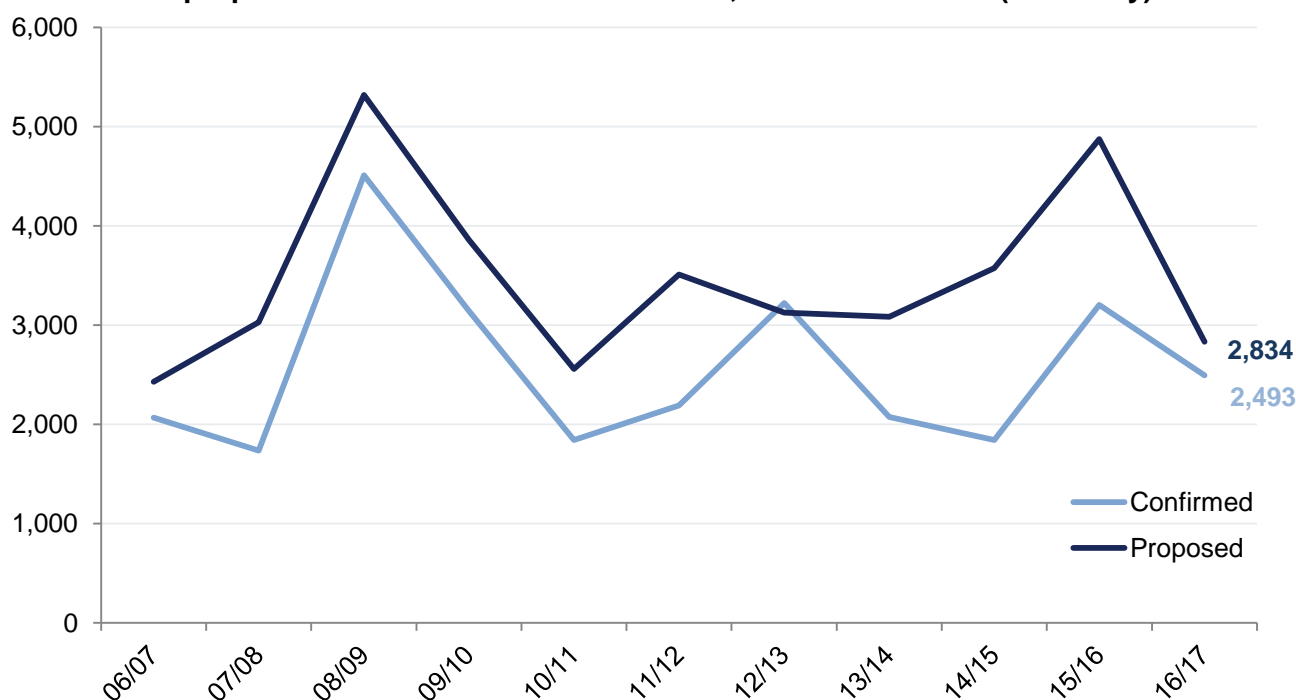
Under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Amended 8 October 2006) companies are only legally required to notify the Department of impending redundancies of 20 or more employees. Companies who propose less than 20 redundancies are not included in the statistics. As a result, the figures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

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

Key Findings

- During May 2017 the Department was notified of 93 confirmed redundancies in Northern Ireland
- Confirmed redundancies decreased over the year
- Highest proportion of redundancies found in Manufacturing
- Outstanding (proposed but not confirmed) redundancies down 30% since this time last year

Figure 6:
Confirmed and proposed redundancies – annual totals, 2006/07 – 2016/17 (June-May)



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Confirmed and proposed redundancies

The latest figures show that there were:

- 56 proposed redundancies notified between mid May 2017 and mid June 2017, representing an increase on the previous monthly period total of 40 proposed redundancies
- 93 confirmed redundancies in May 2017.

Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 2,834 proposed redundancies, a decrease of 42% from the previous year (4,874)
- 2,493 confirmed redundancies which was a decrease of 22% from the previous year (3,205).

Currently there are 1,834 outstanding redundancies (that is, proposed but not confirmed), which is 30% lower than this time last year (2,627). It should be noted that since all proposed redundancies do not actually take place, the confirmed total provides a better indication of real job losses.

Redundancies by sector

Of the 2,493 confirmed redundancies:

- 1,411 or 57% were in manufacturing
- 322 redundancies (13% of all redundancies) occurred in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- a further 256 redundancies (10% of all redundancies) occurred in the financial and insurance activities.

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

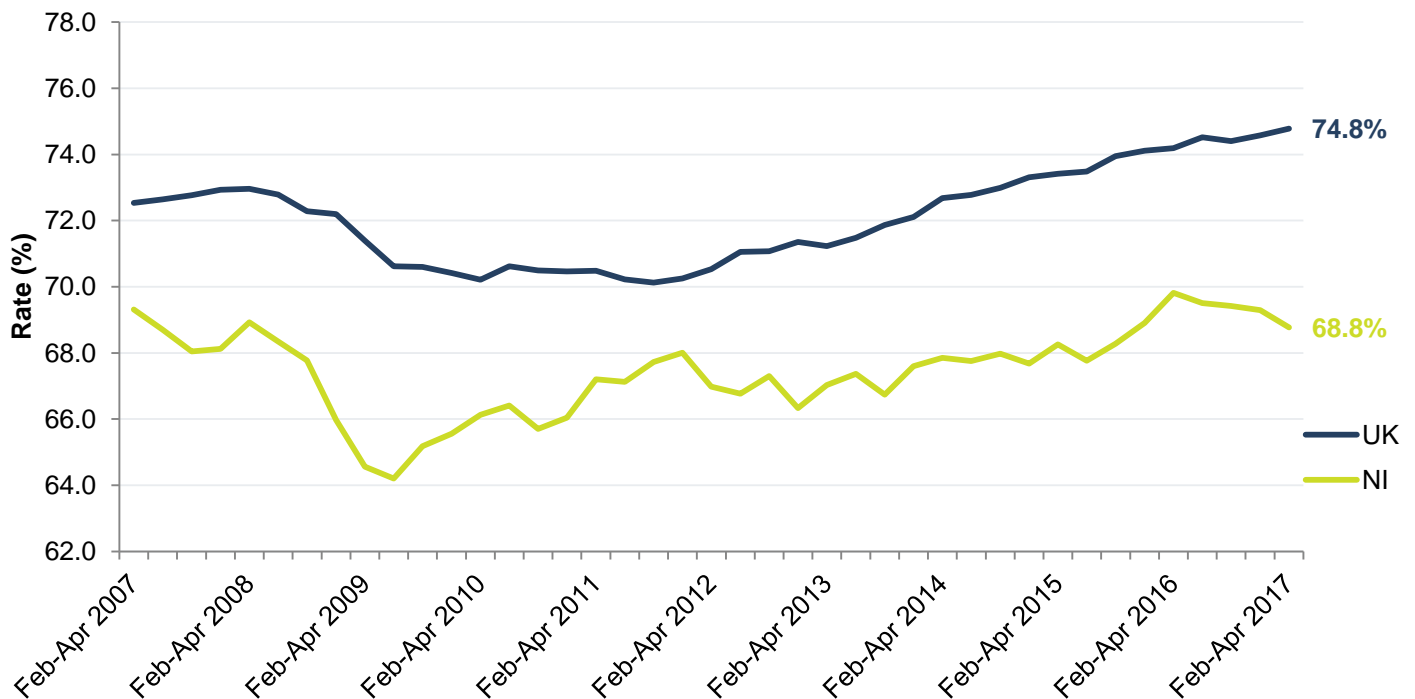
LFS employment

LFS employed: people aged 16 or over who did at least one hour of paid work in the reference week (whether as an employee or self-employed); those who had a paid job that they were temporarily away from; those on government-supported training and employee programmes and those doing unpaid family work.

Key Findings

- Employment falls over the quarter and the year
- The female employment rate was unchanged over the year while the equivalent male rate decreased
- NI employment rate was below the UK average and the lowest of the twelve UK regions

Figure 7: Seasonally adjusted employment rate, Feb-Apr 2007 to Feb-Apr 2017



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Employment

Figure 7 shows that the NI employment rate has consistently been below the UK average over the last 10 years. The most recent NI employment rate for those aged 16-64 for the period February - April 2017 was estimated at 68.8%, this represents:

- a fall of 0.5 pps over the quarter.
- a decrease of 1.0 pps over the year.

The number of persons in employment (16+) in the period February - April 2017 was estimated at 827,000, which was:

- a decrease of 10,000 over the quarter and
- a decrease of 15,000 over the year.

Employment by gender

Of the total, 53% (438,000) were male and 47% (389,000) were female, within which:

- the male employment rate (72.6%) decreased by 2.1 pps over the year
- the female rate (65.0 %) did not change over the year.

Regional comparison

The employment rate in NI (68.8%) was:

- below the UK average (74.8%)
- the lowest rate among the twelve UK regions.

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

[LFS employment](#)

Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) – First published June 2017

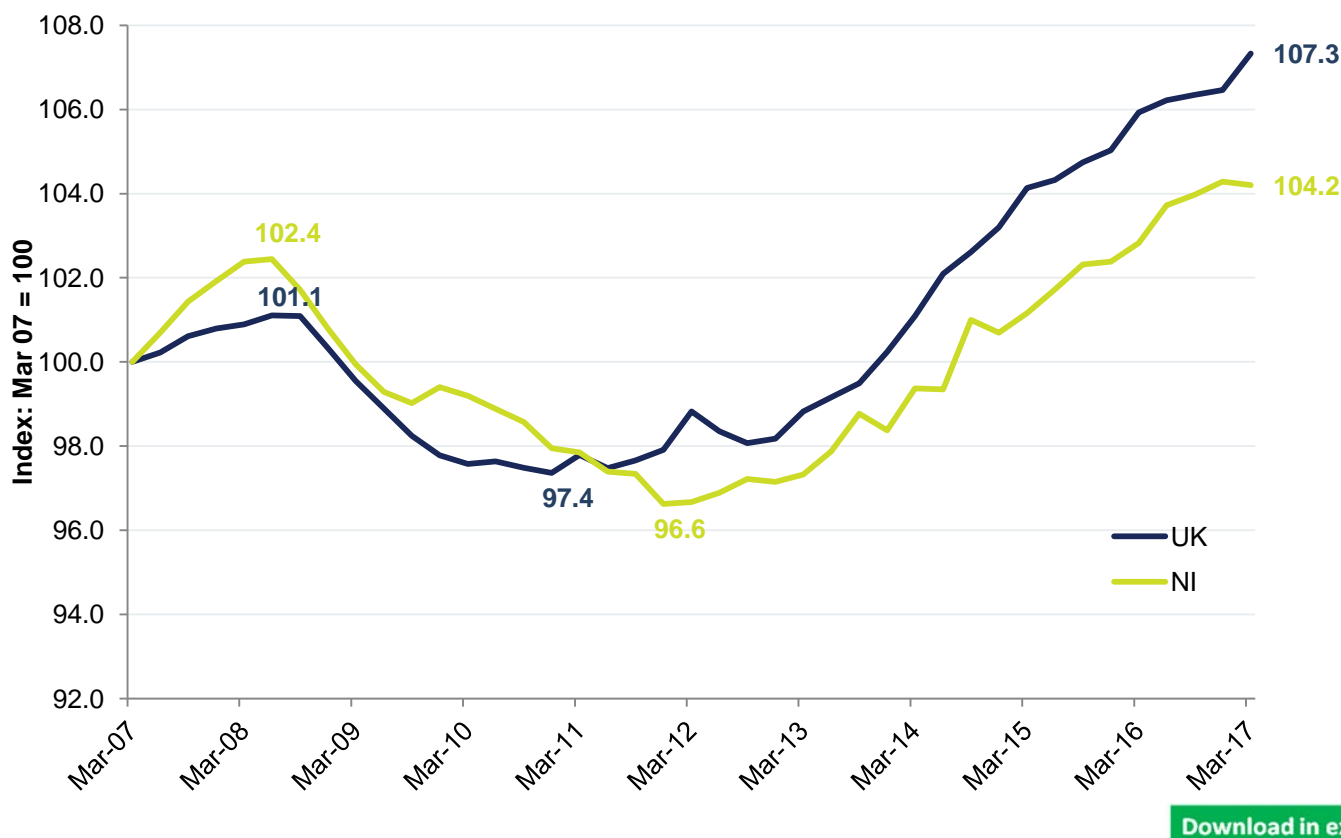
The QES is a business survey which samples approximately 5,700 companies who are asked to supply the Department with employment data for each of their business activities. This information is then collated by Economic and Labour Market Statistics, from which employee jobs estimates are produced.

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

Key Findings

- Employee jobs decreased over the quarter and increased over the year
- The UK figures now stand at 5.3% above their pre-downturn peak, whilst NI now stands at 1.7% of its pre-downturn peak.
- Private sector employee jobs increased over the first quarter (Q1) of 2017 and over the year to an historical high while the public sector decreased over the quarter and over the year.

Figure 8: Index of Employee Jobs, March 2007 to March 2017



Figures are indexed to March 2007

Figure 8 shows the estimated seasonally adjusted employee jobs, indexed to allow comparison between NI and the UK. Both series show a peak in June 2008 with the UK reaching its lowest point in December 2010 –one year before the NI low in December 2011. The UK has now been above its pre-downturn peak since June 2014, whilst NI has been above its pre-downturn peak since March 2016.

Employee Jobs

The seasonally adjusted employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at March 2017 was 745,580, which was:

- a decrease of 0.1% (-600 jobs) from the December 2016 estimate of 746,180
- an increase of 1.3% (9,850 jobs) over the year.

Employee jobs by sector

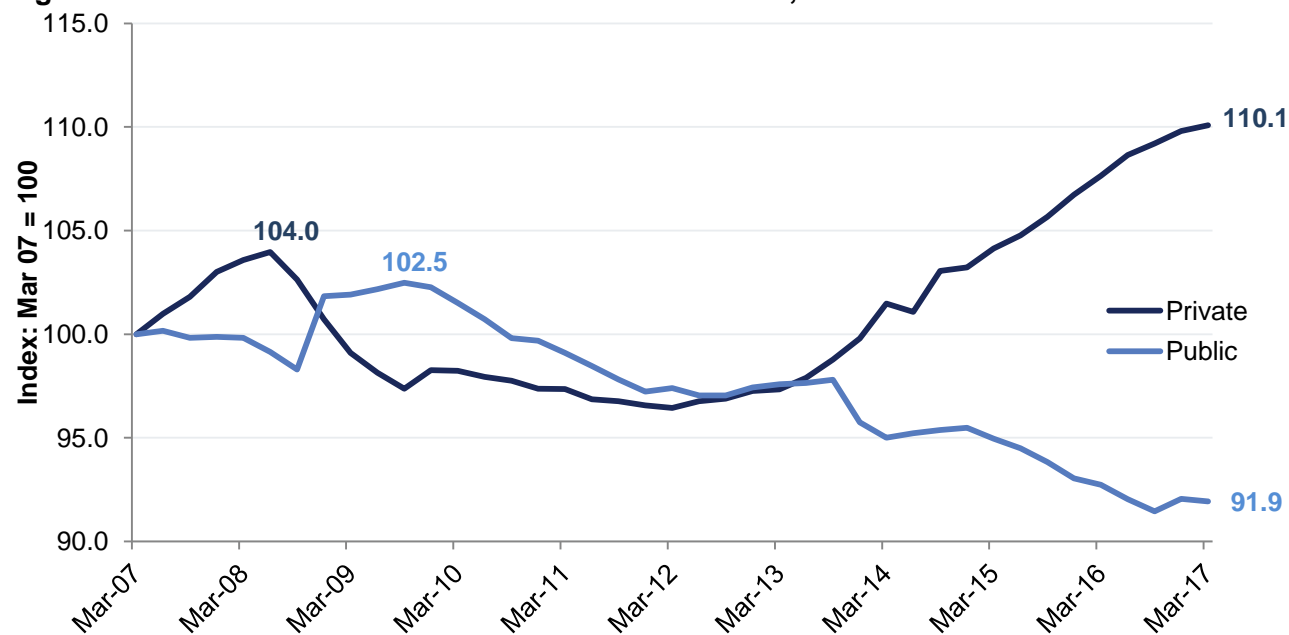
The seasonally adjusted quarterly change consisted of:

- increases of 0.7% in the manufacturing sector (590 jobs) and 2.9% in the construction sector (890 jobs)
- decreases of 0.3% (-1,980 jobs) in the services sector and 0.4% (-100 jobs) in the other industries sector
- a decrease of 0.1% (-280 jobs) in the public sector; and an increase of 0.3% (1,440 jobs) in the private sector.

Over the year to March 2017:

- the public sector decreased by 0.9% (-1,770 jobs)
- the private sector increased by 2.3% (12,170 jobs).

Figure 9: Index of NI Private and Public Sector Jobs, March 2007 – March 2017



Figures are indexed to March 2007

[Download in excel](#)

¹ Users of QES data should be aware that the sample coverage used to derive employee jobs estimates in Northern Ireland has been extended. This has resulted in a discontinuity in the QES employee jobs series from the reference period Q3 2009 onwards.

² Royal Mail plc is included in the public sector for September 2013 and earlier periods, but not for subsequent periods.

³ Lloyds Banking Group and its subsidiaries are included in public sector estimates from December 2008 to December 2013 but not in earlier or subsequent periods.

Private sector employee jobs have grown to a series high in March 2017 (545,560 jobs), to now stand at 5.9% above a series peak which occurred in June 2008. However there is some evidence that the annual growth in private sector jobs is slowing (from 19,250 over the year to June 2016 to 12,170 over the year to March 2017). Public sector jobs decreased by 280 jobs (-0.1%) over the quarter and is now 10.3% below its series peak which occurred in September 2009.

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

[Quarterly Employment Survey](#)

Further breakdowns of employee jobs by geography and industry are available from the [Business Register and Employment Survey](#).

Comparisons between LFS Employment and QES Employee Jobs

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

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

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

Vacancies – First published May 2017

Headline figures are presented for vacancies which have been notified to JobCentres / Jobs & Benefits Offices (J&BO) of the Department for Communities (DfC). A small proportion of vacancies notified are based in the UK mainland or in the Republic of Ireland. The statistics do not represent the total unsatisfied demand for staff by employers, but are only those vacant positions notified by employers to DfC.

There were 60,906 vacancies notified in the 2016/17 financial year, an increase of 17% when compared against to the 2015/16 financial year.

Table 3: Monthly Notified Vacancies, 2016/17

Financial Year 2016/17	Notified Vacancies (1)				Total
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Casual	Not Known	
Apr-16	2,880	1,778	476		5,134
May-16	3,139	1,919	433		5,491
Jun-16	3,032	1,869	449		5,350
Jul-16	2,370	1,590	382		4,342
Aug-16	3,384	1,972	490		5,846
Sep-16	3,578	2,626	554		6,758
Oct-16	2,887	2,129	422		5,438
Nov-16	2,889	2,023	521		5,433
Dec-16	1,553	861	220		2,634
Jan-17	2,843	1,634	370		4,847
Feb-17	2,519	1,516	351	1	4,387
Mar-17	3,183	1,685	378		5,246
Total	34,257	21,602	5,046	1	60,906

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Figures in the above table are not National Statistics.

- (1) Monthly notified vacancies are all new vacancy positions notified and added to JobCentres / Jobs & Benefits Offices of the Department for Communities. Notified is subdivided by financial years which run from 1st April to 31st March. All statistics are derived from data extracted from the Department for Communities Client Management System (CMS) on 5th May 2017.
- (2) Vacancies data is published quarterly and reported by financial year. Data for Apr-Jun 2017/18 will be published on 26th Jul 2017.

Further statistics are available on the DfC website: [DfC Statistics](#)

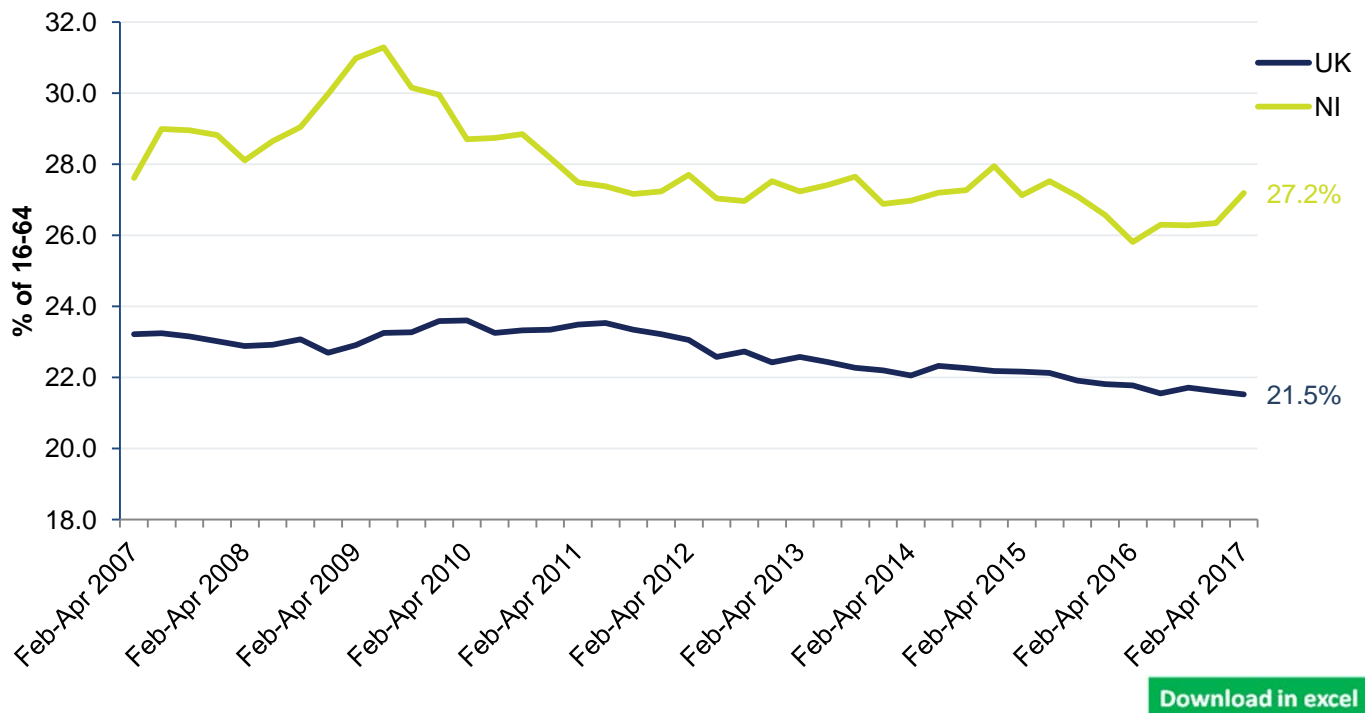
LFS economic inactivity

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

Key Findings

- NI economic inactivity rate increased over the quarter and over the year
- NI economic inactivity highest of the twelve UK regions
- Of the 16-64 economically inactive, 21% wanted to work

Figure 10: Seasonally adjusted economic inactivity rates (16-64), Feb-Apr 2007 to Feb-Apr 2017



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Figure 10 shows that over the last 10 years the NI economic inactivity rate was consistently higher than the UK.

Economically inactive

The seasonally adjusted economic inactivity rate (16-64) for February - April 2017 was estimated at 27.2%, which represented:

- an increase of 0.8 percentage points over the quarter
- an increase of 1.4 percentage points over the year.

The number of economically inactive persons (16-64) was estimated at 318,000, which was:

- an increase of 10,000 over the quarter and
- an increase of 17,000 over the year.

Of the economically inactive:

- 40% (126,000) were male and 60% (192,000) were female

Figures unadjusted for seasonality show that, of the economically inactive:

- 79% did not want a job while 21% did
- 30% were long-term sick / disabled, 27% were students, 24% were looking after the family / home, 10% were retired and 9% cited an 'other' reason for inactivity.

Regional comparison

The NI economic inactivity rate for those aged 16-64 stood at 27.2%. This was:

- significantly higher than the UK average rate (21.5%)
- the highest of the twelve UK regions.

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

[LFS economic inactivity](#)

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

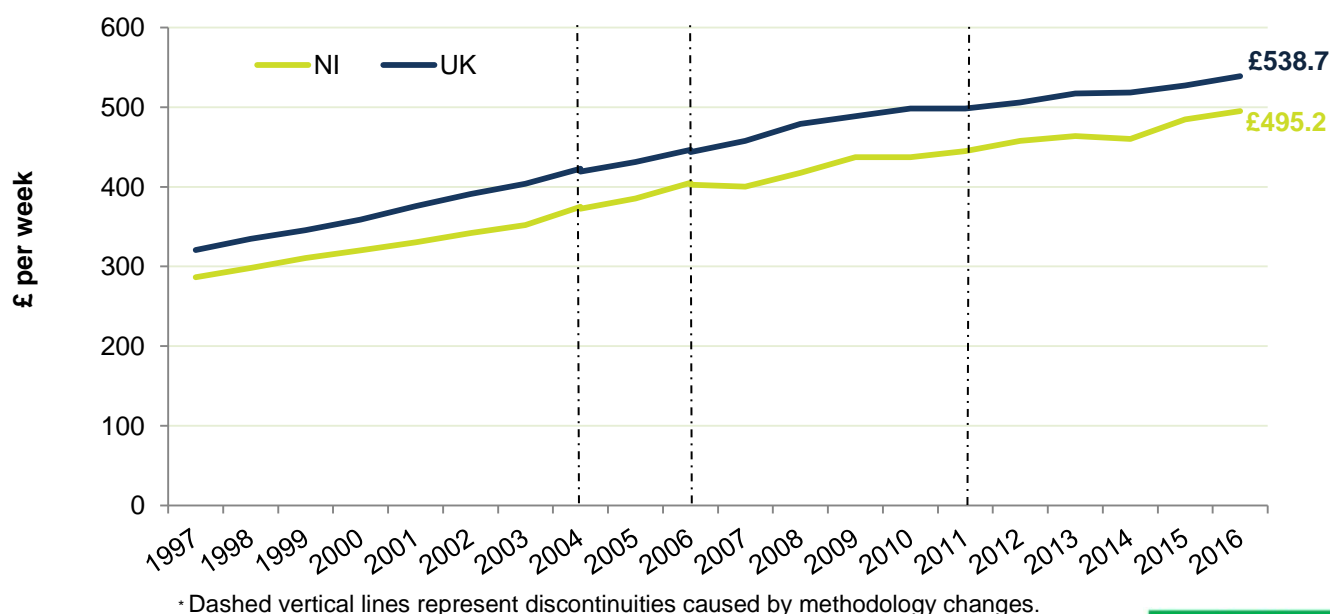
ASHE provides information on employees' hourly, weekly and annual earnings by gender, work pattern, industry and occupation. It has been designed by the Office for National Statistics and is carried out in Northern Ireland by NISRA statisticians.

Median earnings: Both median and mean results are reported by ASHE. The mean is the arithmetic average while the median is the value below which 50 per cent of employees fall. The median is often preferred for skewed data such as earnings as it is influenced less by extreme values.

Key Findings

- Median weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI at April 2016 were up from 2015
- The lowest 10% experienced a larger increase than those in the highest 10%
- NI had the fourth lowest median gross weekly earnings of the UK regions

Figure 11: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI and the UK, 1997-2016



* Dashed vertical lines represent discontinuities caused by methodology changes.

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Earnings

Figure 11 shows that for almost 20 years the median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI has consistently been below the UK average. Results for 2016 showed that:

- median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees were £495, up 2.2% from £485 in 2015, which was the second consecutive annual increase in inflation adjusted earnings
- the increase for NI full-time employees mirrored the 2.2% increase in the UK (to £539)
- full-time employees in NI had the fourth lowest median gross weekly earnings (£495) among the twelve UK regions
- those in the lowest 10 per cent of the full-time weekly earnings distribution experienced a larger increase (4.7%) than those in the highest 10 per cent (2.9%)

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

LFS unemployment

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

Unemployment rate - the percentage of economically active people who are unemployed.

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

LFS employment

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

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

Sampling variability

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. The ranges shown for the LFS data in the table overleaf represent 95% confidence intervals i.e. we would expect that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value. These confidence intervals have been calculated using data that is not seasonally adjusted, with the relevant sampling errors produced then applied to the seasonally adjusted data.

If the 'annual change' for an estimate has increased or decreased by more than the 'sampling variability of the change', this change would be statistically significant. The annual changes for the main LFS categories of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity were tested for statistical significance. The results showed that none of the annual changes, for February – April 2017, were statistically significant over the year, i.e. the recorded change did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size and was not likely to reflect a real change.

Table 4 shows the sampling variability of the estimates, and quarterly and annual changes. The final column contains the sampling variability that can be used when assessing change between two independent samples. Due to the LFS five wave structure this means it can be used to assess changes over six quarters or more.

Table 4: Sampling variability of labour market estimates, February – April 2017

	Reference period	Estimate	Sampling variability of estimate	Change over quarter	Sampling variability of quarterly change	Change over year	Sampling variability of annual change	Sampling variability of change
Unemployment ¹	Feb-Apr 2017	47,000	+/-11,000	-4,000	+/-11,000	-4,000	+/-15,000	+/-16,000
Employment ²	Feb-Apr 2017	827,000	+/-26,000	-10,000	+/-18,000	-15,000	+/-34,000	+/-37,000
Economically inactive ²	Feb-Apr 2017	585,000	+/-23,000	15,000	+/-16,000	27,000	+/-30,000	+/-33,000
Unemployment rate ¹	Feb-Apr 2017	5.4%	+/-1.2pps	-0.3pps	+/-1.2pps	-0.3pps	+/-1.7pps	+/-1.8pps
Employment rate ²	Feb-Apr 2017	68.8%	+/-1.9pps	-0.5pps	+/-1.3pps	-1.0pps	+/-2.5pps	+/-2.7pps
Economic inactivity rate ²	Feb-Apr 2017	27.2%	+/-1.8pps	0.8pps	+/-1.3pps	1.4pps	+/-2.3pps	+/-2.6pps

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

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

[Download in excel](#)

Please see attached link for further LFS notes and definitions:

[Labour Force Survey Background Information](#)

LFS Comparisons

Estimates of employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity are derived from the LFS, a survey of households. The most robust estimates of short-term movements in these estimates are obtained by comparing the estimates over rolling three month periods. For example the 3 months ending April 2017 should be compared with the estimates for November – January 2017, which were first published on 15th March 2017. This provides a more robust estimate than comparing with the estimates for January - March 2017. This is because the February and March data are included within both estimates, so effectively observed differences are those between the individual months of January 2017 and April 2017. The LFS is sampled such that it is representative of the NI population over a three month period, not for single month periods.

Seasonal adjustment

All estimates discussed in this Statistical Bulletin are seasonally adjusted except where otherwise stated. Like many economic indicators, the labour market is affected by factors that tend to occur at around the same time every year; for example school leavers entering the labour market in July and whether Easter falls in March or April. In order to compare movements other than annual changes in labour market statistics, such as since the previous quarter or since the previous month, the data are seasonally adjusted to remove the effects of seasonal factors and the arrangement of the calendar.

LFS revisions

LFS microdata have recently been revised to incorporate the latest population estimates. The revisions affect LFS data from the period May - July 2012 onwards and were first published in May 2017. The magnitude of the revisions are relatively small, with the revisions to the unemployment rate falling within +/- 0.1 percentage points and the working age employment rate within +/- 0.2 percentage points. The procedures being applied to the NI LFS results are consistent with those applied by the Office for National Statistics to other UK regions.

More information on the revision policy concerning labour market statistics can be found through the link below:

[Labour market statistics revisions policy](#)

Definition of 'working age'

The 'working age' definition, used in the calculation of employment and economic inactivity rates, was changed in August 2010 to include those aged from 16 to 64 for both men and women. Previously these rates were based on upper age limits of 59 for women and 64 for men, reflecting the state pension ages in the UK.

Claimant count definition

Claimant count figures are derived from records of claimants held at Jobs and Benefits Offices. The term 'claimants' in the claimant count is used to include those who claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and National Insurance credits. The figures include severely disabled claimants, but exclude students seeking vacation work and the temporarily stopped. The claimant count is a very up-to-date measure of those eligible to claim a specific unemployment related benefit and data are available for a range of geographical sub-regions (e.g. District Council Areas, Parliamentary Constituency Areas, Travel-to-Work Areas and Wards). It also provides seasonally adjusted and unadjusted data and as a result is a useful measure for examining both short-term and long-term trends.

Seasonally adjusted claimant count figures are provisional when published and subject to revision, mainly the following month and are only available at NI level. Seasonally adjusted totals are subject to an annual update, which revises back for 3 years (usually May) to take account of latest assessment trends. The most recent revision took place on 17th June 2015. The magnitudes of the revisions are relatively small, with the change of the monthly total claimants within +/- 0.8%. For further information see: [Claimant Count Revisions](#)

Universal Credit

In November 2010 the government announced plans to reform the welfare system by creating a new Universal Credit (UC). The new benefit replaces many of the current separate welfare benefits, as well as subsuming in-work support currently administered through tax credits. Among those benefits being replaced is the means-tested element of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) which makes up a significant proportion of the monthly claimant count.

From 17 June 2015, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) replaced the claimant count based on JSA for Great Britain (GB) with an experimental claimant count based on JSA claimants and a measure of out-of-work claimants of UC, and national statistics status from the JSA based claimant count measure was removed. The full correspondence between ONS and the Statistics Authority can be accessed at the links below:

[Letter from National Statistician to UK Statistics Authority, 9 June 2015](#)

[Reply from UK Statistics Authority to National Statistician, 10 June 2015](#)

As the roll-out of Universal Credit progressed the ability of the experimental claimant count to provide a useful indicator of the labour market decreased. As such, with effect from 15 March 2017, ONS have removed the claimant count from the UK and Regional Statistical Bulletins.

As Universal Credit has not yet been introduced in Northern Ireland, the local Claimant Count measure has not been impacted. NISRA will therefore continue to publish the Northern Ireland Claimant Count measure, as usual, though without UK comparisons. Universal Credit is due to be introduced locally from September 2017 and NISRA will monitor its impact on the Northern Ireland Claimant Count measure. In the future if NISRA consider that changes are required, users will be consulted.

Redundancy Legal Requirements

Under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Amended 8 October 2006) companies are only legally required to notify the Department of impending redundancies of 20 or more employees. Companies who propose less than 20 redundancies are not included in the statistics.

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

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

[Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#)

[ASHE Background Information](#)

Quarterly Employment Survey (QES)

Annualised growth or rolling 4 quarters figures are calculated by taking the average over the most recent 4 quarters and subtracting the average over the same 4 quarters of the previous year. For example annualised growth of 1.7% for Q1 2017 is the average of jobs figures from Q4 2016 to Q1 2017 minus the average of jobs figures from Q4 2015 to Q1 2016 divided by the average of jobs figures from Q4 2015 to Q1 2016. This measure allows for comparison in growth to previous years and is useful in determining trends in the data.

Revisions

QES estimates are revised quarterly to reflect the latest information provided to the Department by employers. The December 2016 seasonally adjusted estimate first published in March 2017 has subsequently been revised up (1.9%). Revisions this quarter are larger than in previous publications due to a refresh of employee variable on the IDBR, which is used for selection and grossing purposes. The source of this refresh is the BRES 2015 figures and affects Q4 2015 to Q4 2016, primarily the services sector.

For further details of QES revisions please see link below:

[QES Revisions](#)

For further information:

AN ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS DOCUMENT WITH ASSOCIATED HYPERLINKS IS AVAILABLE ON THE [NISRA – ECONOMIC AND LABOUR MARKET STATISTICS WEBSITE](#)

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