

April 2018

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 December - February 2018 indicate that, over the quarter, the employment rate increased, while the unemployment rate and economic inactivity rate both decreased. The number of people on the Northern Ireland claimant count (experimental) decreased in March 2018.
- The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 in work (the employment rate) increased over the quarter (0.5 pps) and the year (0.8 pps) to 69.5%. Although the quarterly and annual change is not statistically significant, the most recent employment rate is statistically significantly above employment rates estimated in 2010.
- The LFS indicated that the NI unemployment rate (16+) decreased over the quarter and the year to 3.5% in December - February 2018. The decrease over the year of 1.8 percentage points is statistically significant and is likely to reflect real change.
- The equivalent UK unemployment rate (4.2%) decreased over the year by 0.4 pps and decreased by 0.1 pps over the quarter. The NI unemployment rate was below the UK unemployment rate this period, and also below the European Union (7.3%) rate and Republic of Ireland (6.1%) rate for January 2018.
- 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 27.9%, representing a decrease of 0.3 pps over the quarter and an increase of 0.5 pps over the year. Although neither change was statistically significant the December-February 2018 rate is statistically significantly lower than the 2009 rates.
- The number of people on the NI claimant count (experimental) decreased by 100 over the month to 28,700 in March 2018. Please note these figures include Jobseeker's Allowance Claimants and those claimants of Universal Credit who were claiming it principally for the reason of being unemployed.

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 (experimental)
- 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.

*** Experimental Statistics**

From 21st March 2018 the Claimant Count based on Jobseeker's Allowance has been replaced by an experimental measure based on Jobseeker's Allowance Claimants and those out-of-work Universal Credit claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. Please see Further Information Section 6 for more details.

1 Summary of Labour Market Statistics

Updated April 2018

Change over quarter / month

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for Northern Ireland for the period December - February 2018 showed that over the quarter:

- the unemployment rate (3.5%) decreased by 0.3 percentage points (pps)
- the employment rate (69.5%) increased by 0.5 pps
- the economic inactivity rate decreased by 0.3 pps to 27.9%.

None of the reported changes over the quarter were statistically significant i.e. the recorded changes did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size and are not likely to reflect real change.

The experimental claimant count (Jobseekers Allowance plus some out-of-work claimants of Universal Credit) showed that in March 2018, there was:

- a decrease of 100 in the seasonally adjusted claimant count to 28,700.

During February 2018 there were:

- 227 confirmed redundancies notified to the Department, representing a decrease on the previous monthly period total of 238 confirmed redundancies.

The employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at December 2017 was 756,030 which was:

- an increase over the quarter (5,330) from the revised September 2017 estimate of 750,710.

Table 1: Northern Ireland Labour Market Summary with sampling variability

Dec - Feb 2018	Estimate	Change over quarter (Sampling variability of change)	Change over year
Unemployment ¹	30,000	-3,000 (+/-9,000)	-15,000 (+/-13,000)
Employment ²	845,000	8,000 (+/-18,000)	18,000 (+/-32,000)
Economically inactive ²	591,000	-3,000 (+/-16,000)	5,000 (+/-29,000)
Unemployment rate ¹	3.5%	-0.3 pps +/-1.0 pps	-1.8 pps +/-1.4 pps
Employment rate ²	69.5%	0.5 pps +/-1.3 pps	0.8 pps +/-2.3 pps
Economic inactivity rate ²	27.9%	-0.3 pps +/-1.3 pps	0.5 pps +/-2.3 pps
March 2018	Estimate	Change over month	Change over year
Claimant Count ³ (experimental)	28,700	-100	-2,900
Redundancies ⁴	227		

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 Jobseekers Allowance plus some out-of-work claimants of Universal Credit.

⁴ Confirmed redundancies in the calendar month.

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Change over year

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for Northern Ireland for the period December - February 2018 showed that over the year:

- the unemployment rate (3.5%) decreased by 1.8 pps
- the employment rate (69.5%) increased by 0.8 pps
- the economic inactivity rate increased by 0.5 pps to 27.9%.

The decrease over the year in the number of those unemployed (16+) and the decrease in the unemployment rate (16+) were both statistically significant i.e. the recorded changes exceeded the variability expected from a sample survey of this size and were likely to reflect real changes.

The most recent measure of claimant count (experimental) shows that in the year to March 2018, there was:

- a decrease in the seasonally adjusted claimant count of 2,900 to 28,700.

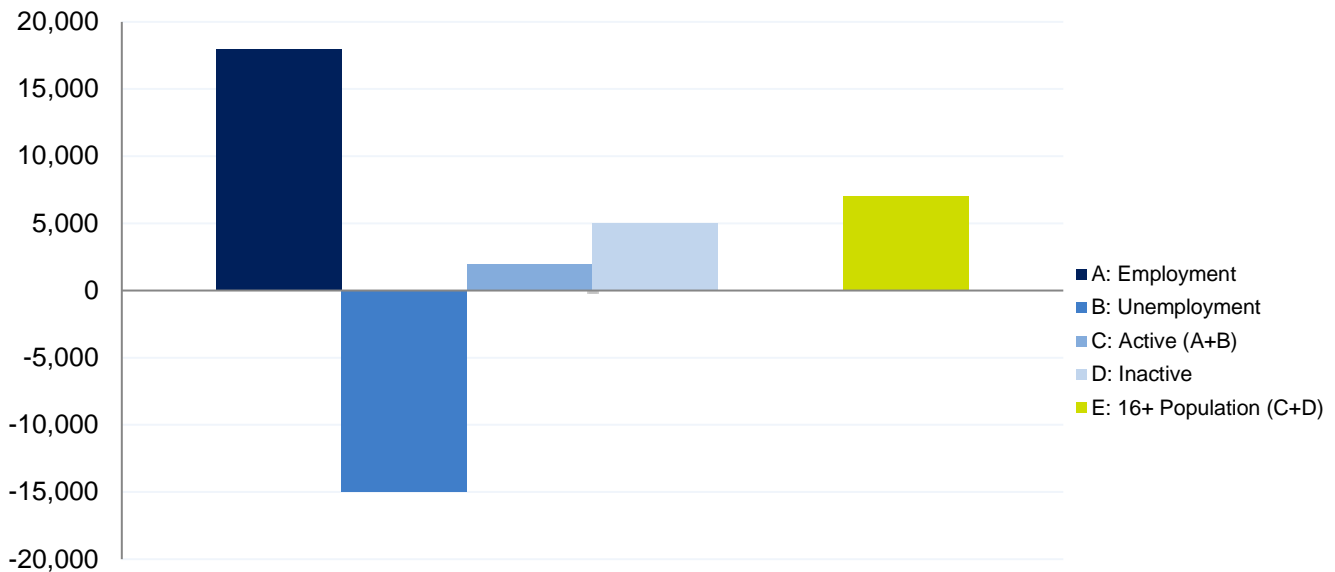
Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 1,903 confirmed redundancies which was a decrease of 45% from the previous year (3,480).

The employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at December 2017 was 756,030 jobs which was:

- an increase of 2.0% (15,090) from the revised December 2016 estimate of 740,940.

Figure 1: NI labour market structure: change over year



Note: figures rounded so may not sum

A

B

C

D

E

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UK summary

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for the UK for the period December - February 2018 showed:

- the lowest unemployment rate (4.2%) of the series, which had decreased over the quarter by 0.1 pps and decreased by 0.4 pps over the year
- the highest employment rate (75.4%) of the series, which was an increase of 0.1 pps over the quarter and 0.8 pps over the year
- the joint lowest economic inactivity rate (21.2%) of the series, which remained steady over the quarter and decreased by 0.4 pps over the year.

Commentary

The unemployment rate fell over the year and the quarter to 3.5% which is the lowest value recorded in this quarterly series and statistically significantly below rates recorded in early 2017. This is the second consecutive quarter where the unemployment rate was estimated below 4.0%, as well as below the UK average, and follows a period of generally decreasing unemployment rates seen over the last 5 years. The claimant count (experimental) decreased over the month and the year and has more than halved in the last 5 years.

The employment rate increased over the year and the quarter to 69.5%; one of the highest rates in the series and statistically significantly above rates seen five years ago.

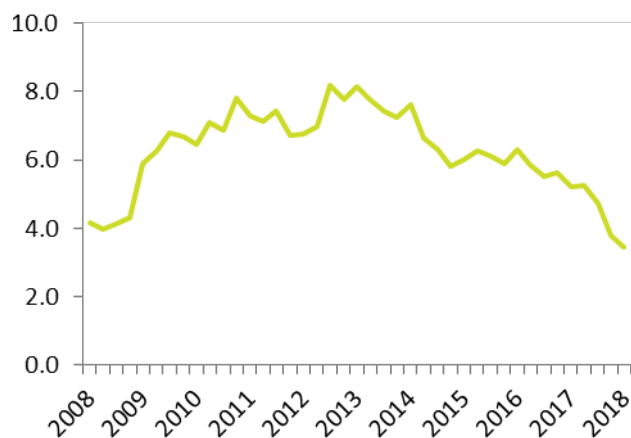
The economic inactivity rate decreased over the quarter and increased over the year. Although one of the highest rates recorded since 2010, the current inactivity rate is statistically significantly below peak rates recorded in mid-2009.

These estimates should be considered within the context of the results for the whole of the UK which is reporting unemployment rates at their lowest and employment rates at their highest on record. However, in contrast to NI, the UK is reporting its joint lowest UK economic inactivity rate.

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

December to February 2018

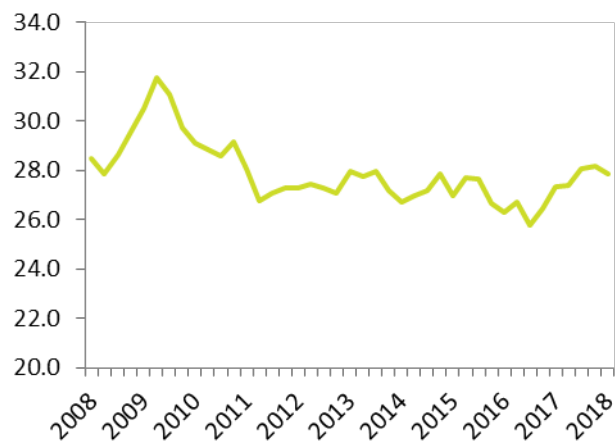
Unemployment – 3.5%



↓ **-0.3 pps¹ over the Quarter**

↓ **-1.8 pps over the Year**

Economic Inactivity – 27.9%



↓ **-0.3 pps over the Quarter**

↑ **0.5 pps over the Year**

Employment – 69.5%



↑ **0.5 pps over the Quarter**

↑ **0.8 pps over the Year**

¹ pps = percentage points

Labour Force Survey, seasonally adjusted and subject to future revisions.

Data published – 17th April 2018

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 [DfE 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 NISRA website.

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

- [Explaining the concepts of employment, unemployment and economic inactivity](#)
- [Interpreting Labour Market statistics](#)
- [Guide to Labour Market Statistics](#)
- [Glossary](#)

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) defines 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 is down over the quarter and the year
- NI unemployment rate has been lower than the UK rate for two consecutive quarters
- NI long-term unemployment rate increased over the year

Figure 2: Seasonally adjusted unemployment rate, Dec-Feb 2008 to Dec-Feb 2018

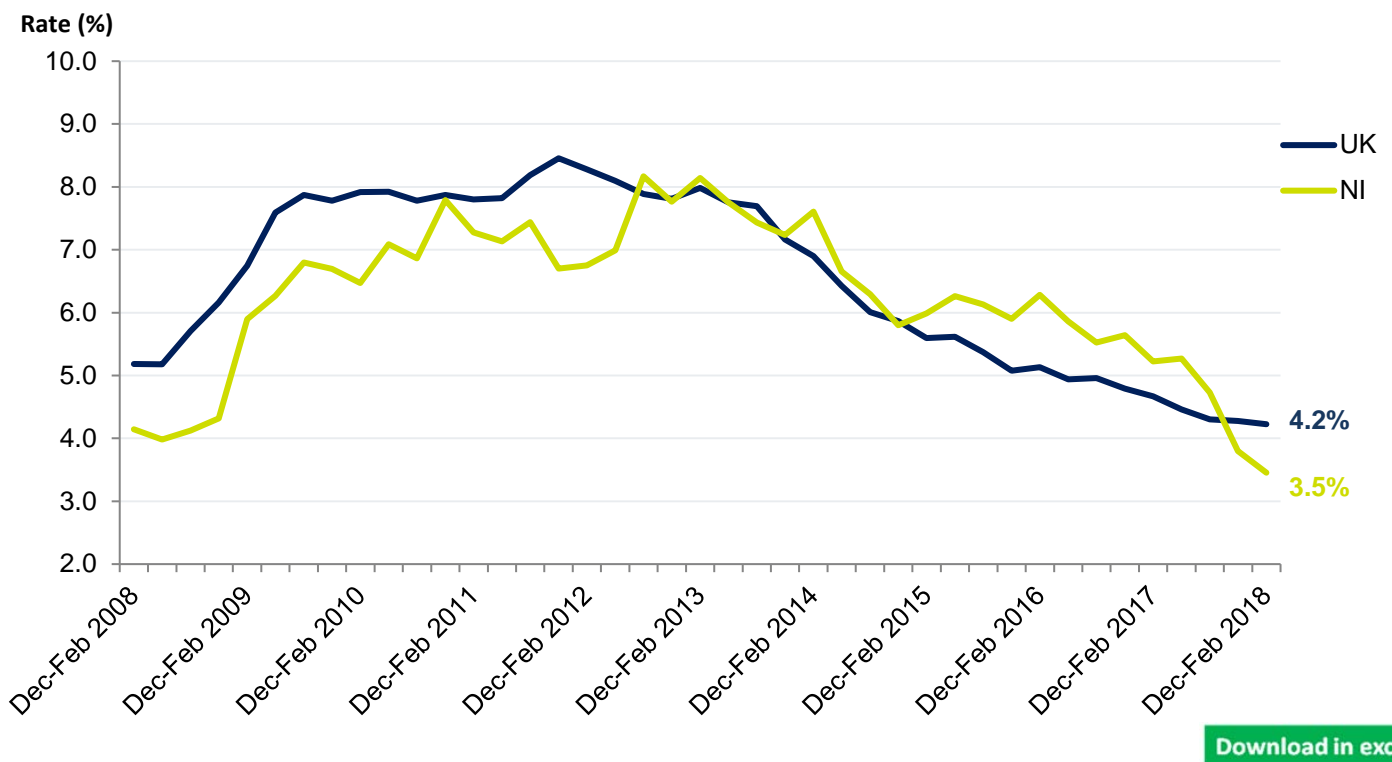


Figure 2 shows unemployment rates on the current 3 month rolling average for NI and the UK over the last decade. The unemployment rate in NI peaked at 8.2% in June-August 2012 but is now at the lowest rate of this quarterly series (3.5%) and has been below the UK rate for the last two consecutive quarters.

LFS unemployment

The unemployment rate (16+) for the period December - February 2018 was estimated at 3.5%,

This was:

- a decrease of 0.3 percentage points (pps) over the quarter
- a decrease of 1.8 (pps) over the year.

The number of unemployed persons aged 16+ was estimated at 30,000, which was:

- down 3,000 over the quarter
- down 15,000 over the year.

UK national and international LFS comparisons

The most recent NI unemployment rate (3.5%) was:

- below the overall UK average rate (4.2%)
- the second lowest rate among the twelve UK regions
- below the European Union (7.3%) rate and Republic of Ireland (6.1%) rate for January 2018.

Long-term and youth unemployment

The unadjusted long-term unemployment rate (percentage of unemployed who have been unemployed for 1 year or more) was 45.8%, which was:

- up 0.2 percentage points over the year
- markedly higher than the UK average rate (25.2%).

Estimates of youth unemployment for December-February 2018 did not meet the reliability threshold for publication. For more information on thresholds, see Section 6 Further Information. However, the UK average rate was 9.8%.

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

[LFS unemployment](#)

Claimant count (experimental)

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. From 21st March 2018 NISRA changed the claimant count measure from one based solely on Jobseekers Allowance to an experimental measure based on Jobseeker's Allowance claimants plus out-of-work Universal Credit claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. The definition of out-of-work Universal Credit Claimants is close to but not exactly the same as Jobseekers Allowance claimants. The GB and NI claimant counts are now calculated on an equivalent basis. Please see Section 6 Further information for more details.

Claimant count (experimental): The NI claimant count consists of all people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) plus out-of-work Universal Credit (UC) claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. 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.

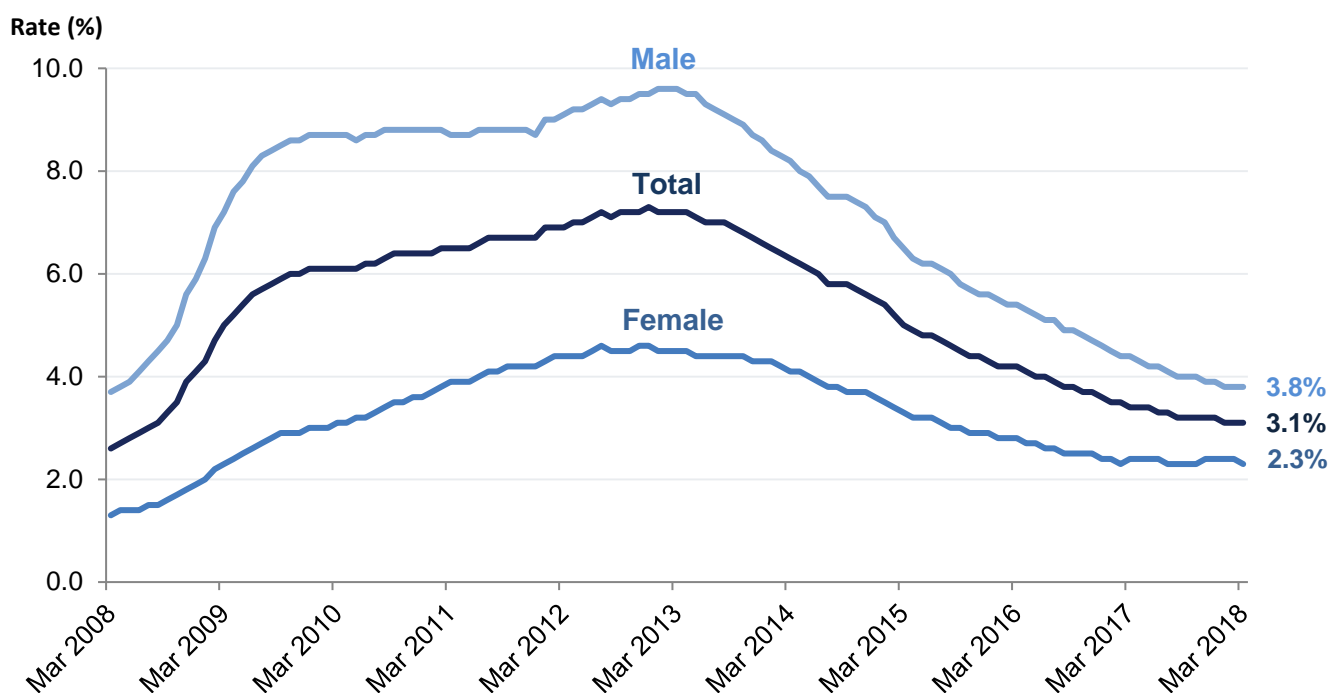
Universal Credit: Universal Credit is being introduced in NI for new claims of six benefits, including income-based JSA, on a phased geographical basis between September 2017 and September 2018. On the March claimant count reference date the claimant count was available in 12 of 35 Jobcentres.

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, and government-supported trainees. This measure is only available at the NI level.

Key Findings

- Over the month to March 2018, the number of people on the NI claimant count (experimental) decreased by 100
- Claimant count (28,700) was down by 2,900 over the year to March 2018
- 7% of the total unemployment benefit claimants were claiming Universal Credit

Figure 3: Seasonally adjusted claimant count (experimental) monthly rates, March 2008 – March 2018



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Claimant count (experimental) unemployment

The NI seasonally adjusted claimant count stood at 28,700 (3.1% of the workforce) in March 2018, representing:

- a decrease of 100 from last month's revised total
- a decrease of 2,900 (9.2%) over the year
- a decrease of 0.3 pps in the workforce unemployment rate over the year.

Since the last peak in February 2013 (64,800) the claimant count has more than halved, decreasing by over 36,000.

Claimant count (experimental) gender comparison

The seasonally adjusted claimant count by gender showed:

- the claimant count is made up of 18,600 males and 10,000 females
- 3.8% of the male workforce were on the claimant count, much higher than the female rate (2.3%)
- female claimants decreased by 0.4% over the last year, which was a much lower percentage decrease than male claimants, who decreased by 13.3% (2,900).

Claimant count (experimental) by age (not adjusted for seasonality)

The not adjusted for seasonality claimant count by age showed:

- a decrease of 18.4% (1,395) over the year for 16-24 year olds to 6,180
- a decrease of 7.6% (1,260) over the year for 25-49 year olds to 15,265
- a decrease of 1.1% (85) over the year for people aged 50 and over to 7,775.

District Council and Parliamentary Constituency Area Analysis

The Local Government District and Parliamentary Constituency analyses have been removed from the Labour Market Report due to the potential bias caused by the introduction of Universal Credit on a phased geographical basis.

Further details on changes to the claimant count are available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website: [Claimant Count](#)

Redundancies

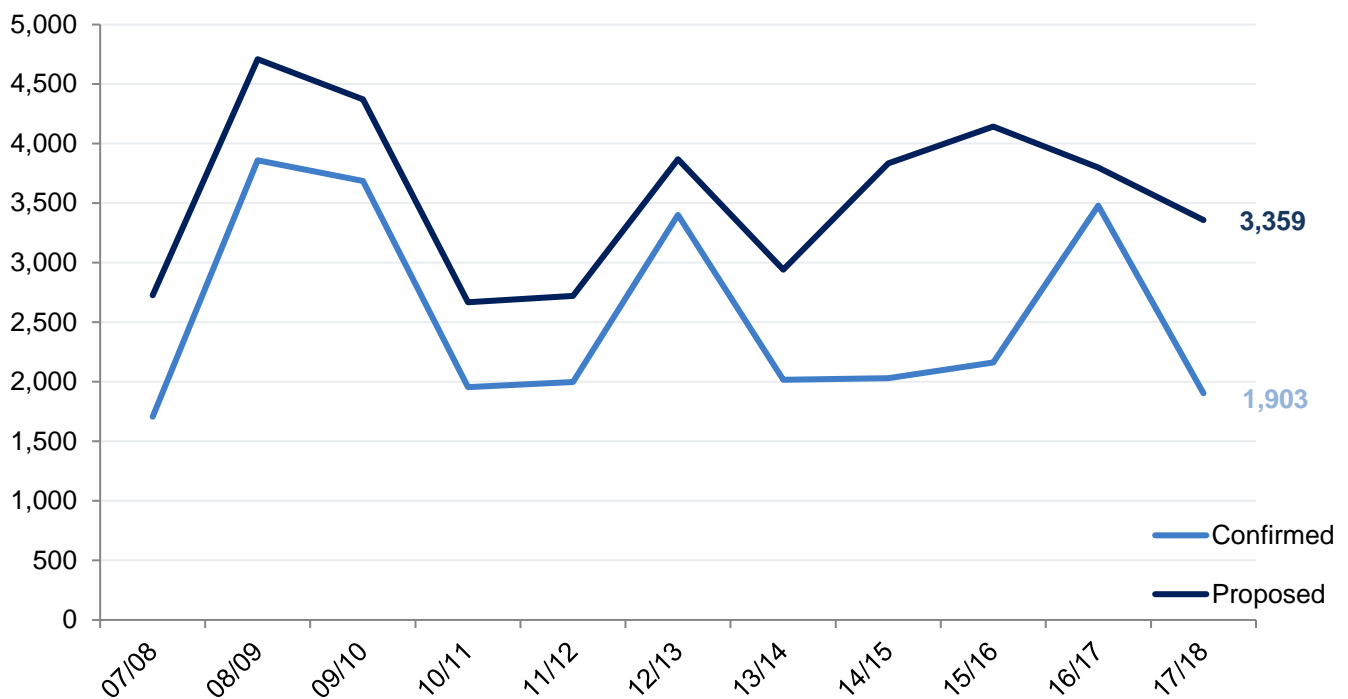
Under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Amended 8 October 2006) companies are only legally required to notify the Department of impending redundancies of 20 or more employees. Companies who propose less than 20 redundancies are not included in the statistics. As a result, the figures 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 March 2018 the Department was notified of 227 confirmed redundancies in Northern Ireland
- Confirmed redundancies decreased over the year
- Highest proportion of redundancies found in Manufacturing
- Outstanding (proposed but not confirmed) redundancies up 41% since this time last year

Figure 4: Confirmed and proposed redundancies – annual totals, 07/08-17/18 (Apr-Mar)



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Confirmed and proposed redundancies

The latest figures show that there were:

- 60 proposed redundancies notified between mid-March 2018 and mid-April 2018, representing a decrease on the previous monthly period total of 275 proposed redundancies
- 227 confirmed redundancies in March 2018, similar to the 238 recorded in February, but 43% higher than the monthly average over the last year (159).

Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 3,359 proposed redundancies, a decrease of 12% from the previous year (3,799)
- 1,903 confirmed redundancies which was a decrease of 45% from the previous year (3,480).

Currently there are 3,033 outstanding redundancies (that is, proposed but not confirmed), which is 41% higher than this time last year (2,155). 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 1,903 confirmed redundancies:

- 579 or 30% were in manufacturing, which was much lower than one year ago (2,007 or 58%).
- 429 redundancies (23% of all redundancies) occurred in the financial and insurance activities.
- a further 281 redundancies (15% of all redundancies) occurred in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles.

Of the 3,359 proposed redundancies:

- 934 or 28% were in manufacturing, which was slightly lower than one year ago (1,034 or 27%).
- 865 redundancies (26% of all redundancies) occurred in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles.
- a further 247 redundancies (7% of all redundancies) occurred in professional, scientific and technical activities.

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

[Redundancies](#)

LFS employment

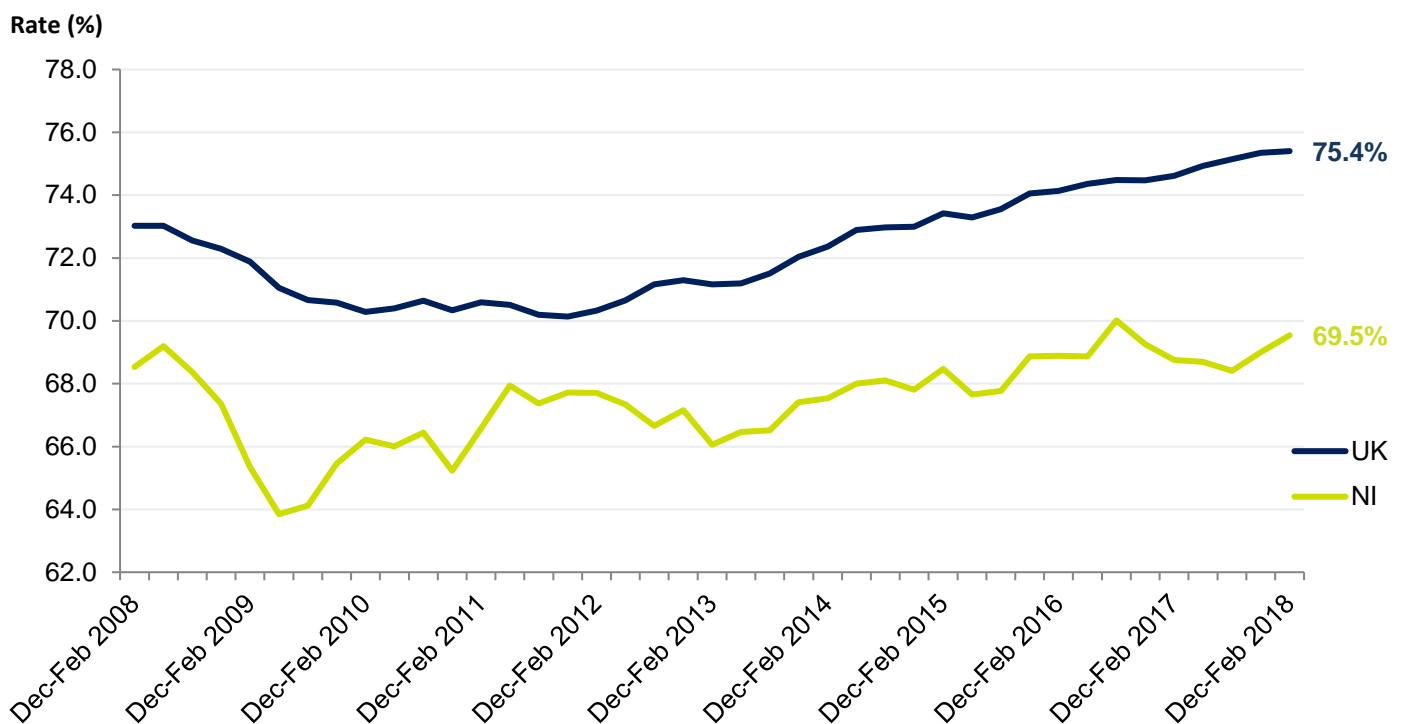
LFS employed: people aged 16 or over who did at least one hour of paid work in the reference week (whether as an employee or self-employed); those who had a paid job that they were temporarily away from; those on government-supported training and employee programmes and those doing unpaid family work.

Note: For analysis purposes, numbers refer to people aged 16 and over while rates relate to people aged between 16 and 64

Key Findings

- Employment rate increased over the quarter and the year
- Employment rate remained below the UK average and was the lowest of the twelve UK regions

Figure 5: Seasonally adjusted employment rate, Dec-Feb 2008 to Dec-Feb 2018



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Employment

Figure 5 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 December - February 2018 was estimated at 69.5%, this represents:

- an increase of 0.5 pps over the quarter
- an increase of 0.8 pps over the year.

The number of persons in employment (16+) in the period December - February 2018 was estimated at 845,000, which was:

- an increase of 8,000 over the quarter
- an increase of 18,000 over the year.

Employment by gender

Of the total number of those aged 16+ in employment, 52% (442,000) were male and 48% (403,000) were female, within which:

- the male 16-64 employment rate (72.9%) increased by 0.7 pps over the year
- the female 16-64 rate (66.2%) increased by 0.8 pps over the year

Regional comparison

The employment rate in NI (69.5%) was:

- below the UK average (75.4%)
- 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 March 2018

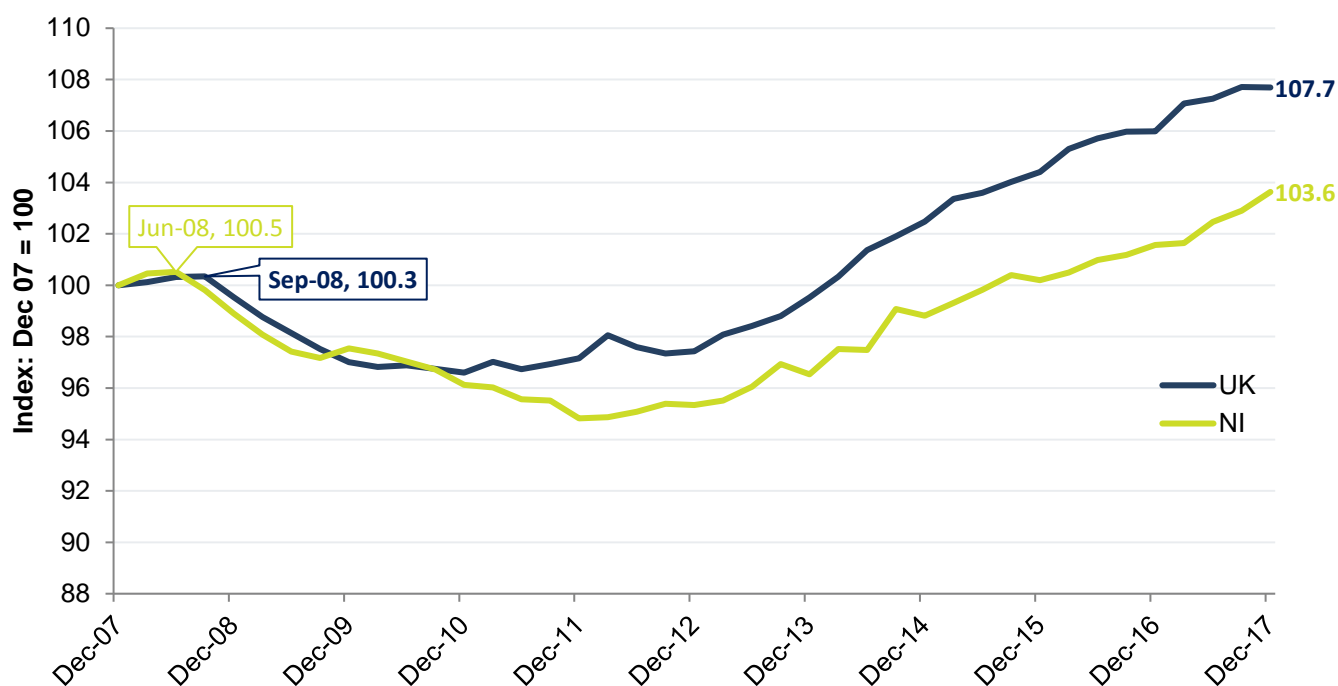
The QES is a business survey which samples approximately 5,700 companies who are asked to supply the Department with employment data for each of their business activities. This information is then collated by Economic and Labour Market Statistics, from which employee jobs estimates are produced.

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 increased over the quarter and year to an historical high in December 2017
- UK employee jobs now stand at 7.3% above their pre-downturn peak, whilst NI employee jobs are 3.1% above their pre-downturn peak.
- Private sector employee jobs increased over the fourth quarter and over the year to an historical high. Public sector jobs increased over the quarter and year.

Figure 6: Index of Employee Jobs, December 2007 to December 2017



Figures are indexed to December 2007

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Figure 6 shows the estimated seasonally adjusted employee jobs, indexed to allow comparison between NI and the UK. NI had a peak in June 2008 and the UK in September 2008. The UK reached 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 June 2016.

Employee Jobs

The seasonally adjusted employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at December 2017 was 756,030, which was:

- an increase of 0.7% (5,330 jobs) from the September 2017 estimate of 750,710.
- an increase of 2.0% (15,090 jobs) over the year.

Employee jobs by sector

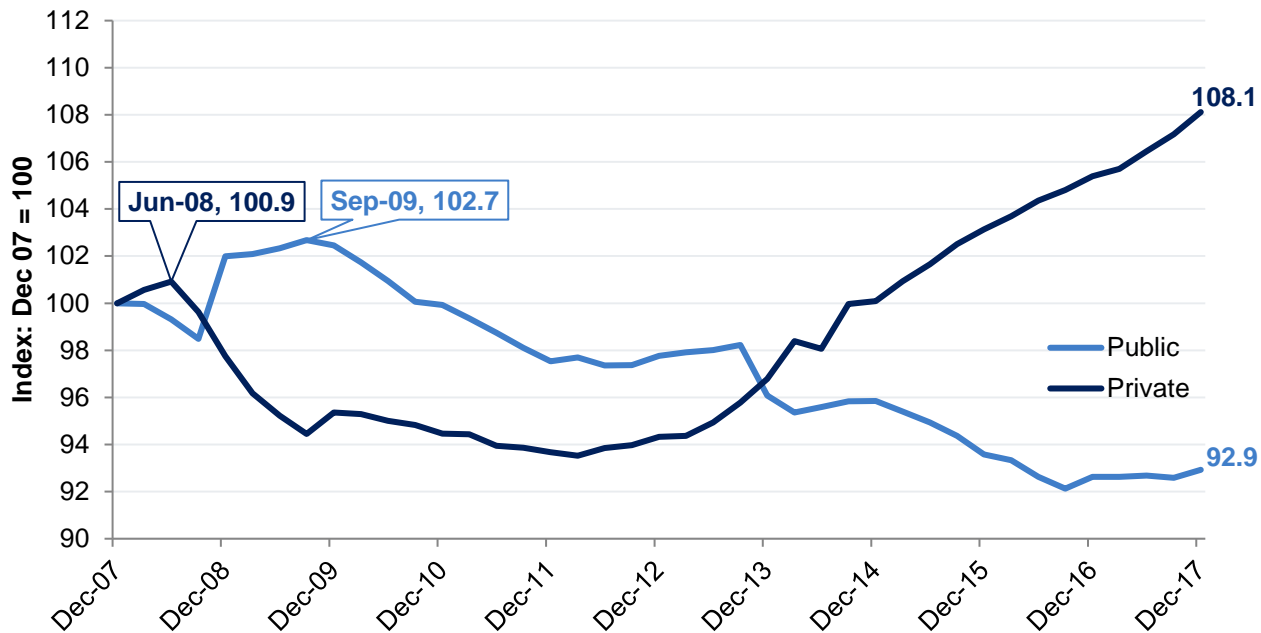
The seasonally adjusted quarterly change consisted of:

- increases in the services sector (0.7% or 4,080 jobs), manufacturing sector (0.8% or 710 jobs) and construction sector (1.6% or 550 jobs).
- decrease in the other industries sector (-0.03% or -10 jobs).
- an increase of 0.9% (4,820 jobs) in the private sector and 0.4% (740 jobs) in the public sector.

Over the year to December 2017:

- the private sector increased by 2.6% (13,840 jobs).
- the public sector increased by 0.3% (670 jobs).

Figure 7: Index of NI Private and Public Sector Jobs, December 2007 – December 2017



Figures are indexed to December 2007

[Download in excel](#)

¹ Royal Mail plc is included in the public sector for September 2013 and earlier periods, but not for subsequent periods.

² 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.

³ All registered housing associations in Northern Ireland have been reclassified to public sector from Q3 1992 onwards, more detail on the decision to reclassify can be found on the [ONS website](#).

Private sector employee jobs have grown to a series high in December 2017 (549,340 jobs), and are now 7.1% above a pre-downturn peak which occurred in June 2008. Annual growth in private sector jobs has slowed from 18,230 over the year to June 2015 to 13,840 over the year to December 2017. Public sector jobs increased by 740 jobs (0.4%) over the quarter and is now 9.5% 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 January 2018

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 11,972 vacancies notified in the third quarter of the 2017/18 financial year, a decrease of 11% when compared against the same period in the 2016/17 financial year.

Table 2: Monthly Notified Vacancies 2017/18

Date	Full-time	Part-time	Casual	Not known	Total
January 2017	2,844	1,637	370		4,851
February 2017	2,522	1,516	357	1	4,396
March 2017	3,188	1,690	378		5,256
April 17	2,535	1,241	344		4,120
May 17	3,403	1,754	375		5,532
June 17	3,287	1,730	373		5,390
July 17	2,474	1,241	214		3,929
August 17	3,701	1,816	402		5,919
September 17	3,360	1,930	366		5,656
October 17	3,130	1,888	390		5,408
November 17	2,504	1,307	281		4,092
December 17	1,547	795	130		2,472
Total	34,495	18,545	3,980	1	57,021

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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 2nd Feb 2018.

(2) Vacancies data is published quarterly and reported by financial year. Data for Jan-Mar 2018 will be published on 25th April 2018.

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

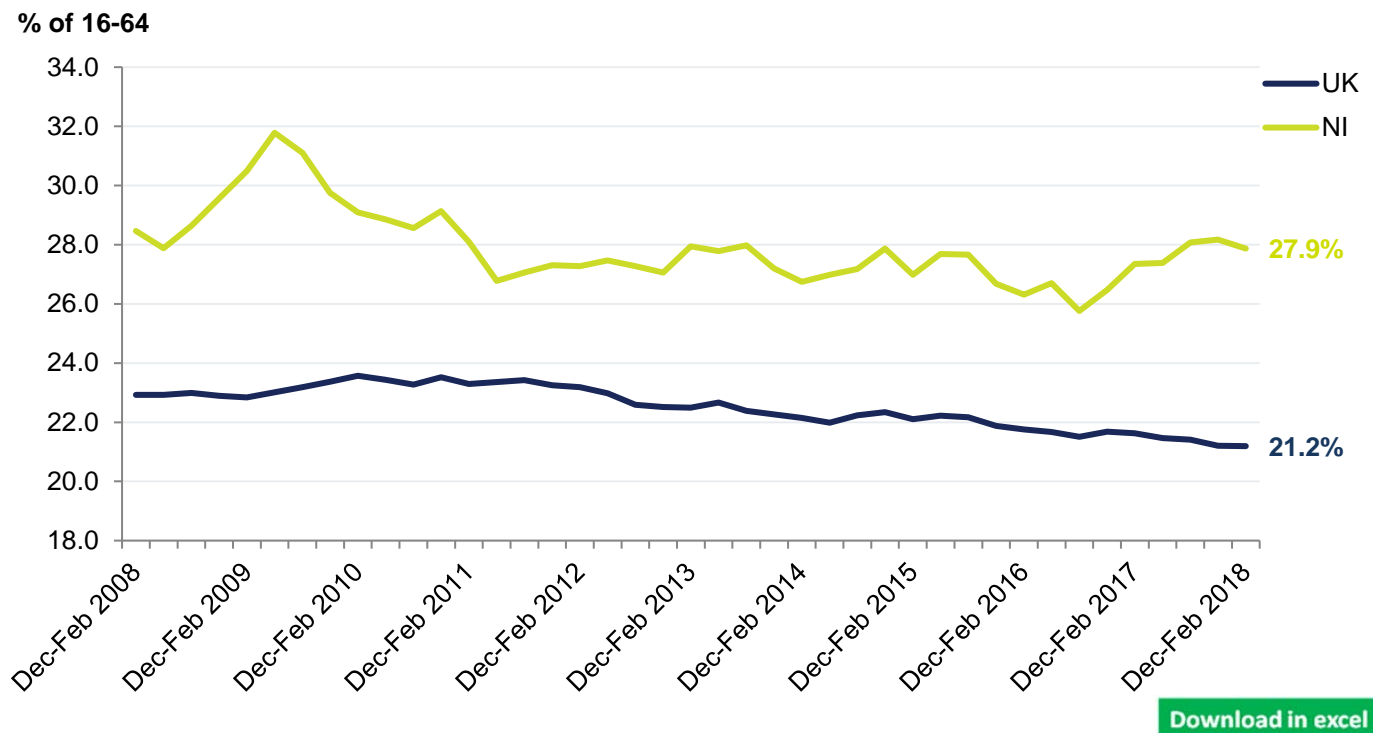
LFS economic inactivity

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

- The economic inactivity rate decreased over the quarter and increased over the year
- NI economic inactivity highest of the twelve UK regions
- Of the 16-64 economically inactive, 18% wanted to work

Figure 8: Seasonally adjusted economic inactivity rates (16-64), Dec-Feb 2008 to Dec-Feb 2018



[Download in excel](#)

Figure 8 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 December - February 2018 was estimated at 27.9%, which represented:

- a decrease of 0.3 percentage points over the quarter
- an increase of 0.5 percentage points over the year.

The number of economically inactive persons (16-64) was estimated at 327,000, which was:

- a decrease of 3,000 over the quarter and
- an increase of 7,000 over the year.

Of the economically inactive:

- 41% (135,000) were male and 59% (191,000) were female

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

- 82% did not want a job while 18% did
- of those who didn't want to work 30% were long-term sick / disabled, 27% were students, 22% were looking after the family / home, 12% were retired and 9% cited an 'other' reason for inactivity.

Regional comparison

The NI economic inactivity rate for those aged 16-64 stood at 27.9%. This was:

- significantly higher than the UK average rate (21.2%)
- 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.

Gross weekly pay includes basic pay, overtime pay, commissions, shift premium pay, bonus or incentive pay and allowances, and is before deductions for PAYE, National Insurance, pension schemes, student loan repayments and voluntary deductions.

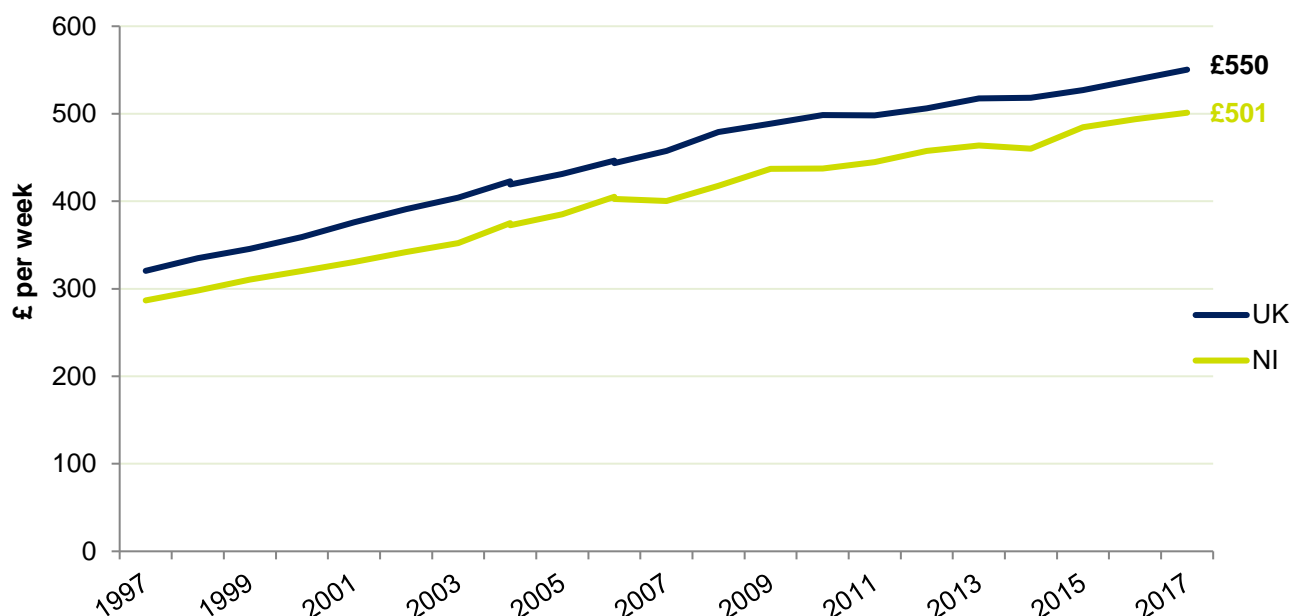
Median measures the amount earned by the average individual, i.e. the level of earnings at which half the population are above and half the population are below.

Full-time employee is defined as anyone aged 16 years or over that is directly paid from a business's payroll for carrying out more than 30 paid hours per week (or 25 or more for the teaching professions).

Key Findings

- The median full-time weekly earnings in NI was £501 compared with £550 in the UK
- Earnings increased over the year in both NI and the UK
- When adjusted for inflation, weekly earnings decreased over the year in NI and the UK

Figure 9: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI and the UK, 1997-2017



Note: there were a number of methodological changes during the series in 2004, 2006 and 2011 – see Section 9 Further information for full details

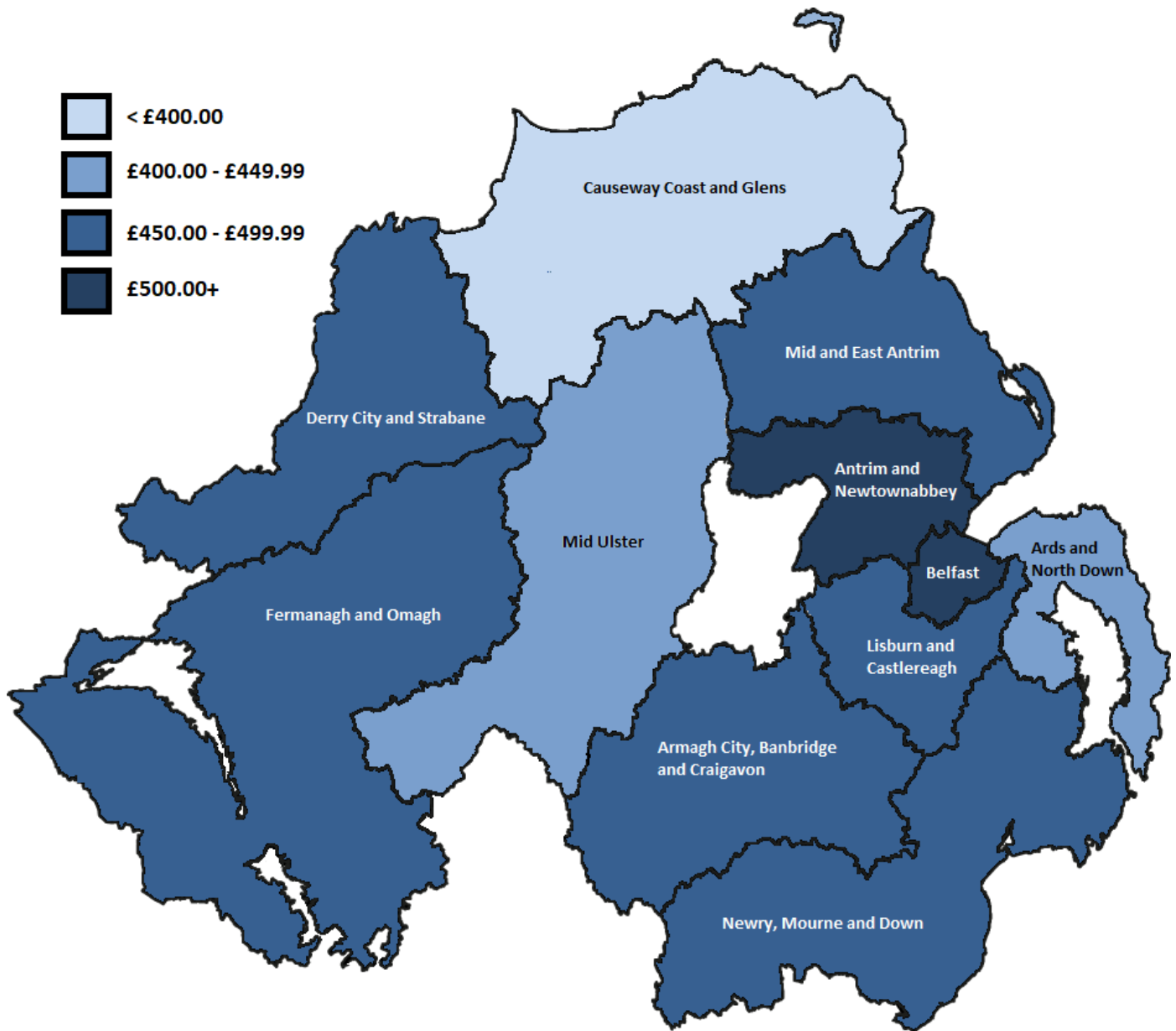
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The median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI at April 2017 (£501):

- was the third lowest out of 12 UK regions
- was 8.9% lower than the UK median (£550)
- increased by 1.5% over the year which was lower than the 2.2% increase in the UK median
- when adjusted for inflation decreased by 1.0%

- was highest for those who work in Belfast (£550) and Antrim and Newtownabbey (£518) Local Government Districts (LGDs).
- Was lowest in the Causeway Coast and Glens LGD (£385), which was the only LGD where earnings were below £400 per week on average.

Figure 10: Median Gross Weekly Earnings in Northern Ireland by place of work, 2017



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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 carried out at least one hour's paid work in the week prior to interview, or has a job they are temporarily away from (e.g. on holiday). Also included are people who do unpaid work in a family business and people on Government-supported employment training schemes.

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 over the year the decrease over the year in the number of those unemployed (16+) and the decrease in the unemployment rate (16+) were both statistically significant i.e. the recorded changes exceeded the variability expected from a sample survey of this size and were likely to reflect real changes. None of the reported changes over the quarter were statistically significant i.e. the recorded changes did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size and are not likely to reflect real change.

Table 3 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 3: Sampling variability of labour market estimates

Dec-Feb 2018	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	30,000	+/-8,000	-3,000	+/-9,000	-15,000	+/-13,000	+/-13,000
Employment ²	845,000	+/-25,000	8,000	+/-18,000	18,000	+/-32,000	+/-35,000
Economically inactive ²	591,000	+/-23,000	-3,000	+/-16,000	5,000	+/-29,000	+/-32,000
Unemployment rate ¹	3.5%	+/-1.0pps	-0.3pps	+/-1.0pps	-1.8pps	+/-1.4pps	+/-1.5pps
Employment rate ²	69.5%	+/-1.8pps	0.5pps	+/-1.3pps	0.8pps	+/-2.3pps	+/-2.6pps
Economic inactivity rate ²	27.9%	+/-1.8pps	-0.3pps	+/-1.3pps	0.5pps	+/-2.3pps	+/-2.5pps

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).

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Please see link for further LFS notes and definitions: [LFS 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 February 2018 should be compared with the estimates for September-November 2017, which were first published on 24th January 2018. This provides a more robust estimate than comparing with the estimates for November-January 2018 as the December and January data are included within both estimates, so effectively observed differences are those between the individual months of November 2017 and February 2018. 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 unless 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. To compare over months or quarters, the data are seasonally adjusted to remove the effects of seasonal factors and the arrangement of the calendar.

Thresholds

Thresholds are used to determine whether LFS data are suitably robust for publication. The threshold used for the quarterly LFS datasets is 8,000. As such, data below 8,000 is suppressed.

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 following link: [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.

Experimental Claimant Count (Jobseekers Allowance claimants plus some out-of-work Universal Credit claimants)

The roll-out of Universal Credit (UC) began in Northern Ireland on the 27th September 2017 and is currently available in 12 of the 35 Job Centres. From March 2018 the NI JSA-only claimant count has been replaced by an experimental measure based on JSA claimants plus out-of-work UC claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. The NI and GB claimant counts are now calculated on a consistent basis.

The new claimant count is categorised as experimental as the statistics are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed. The ONS have produced a useful '[Guide to Experimental Statistics](#)' and an FAQ document explaining the difference between the two measures is available on the [NISRA website](#).

The original series of claimants of JSA, although still available, will no longer be designated as a National Statistic. Although the original measure will continue to reflect the number of people claiming JSA, the relevance of it as a measure of unemployment will diminish each month as UC is introduced in more and more Job Centres across NI. The [letter](#) from NISRA requesting de-designation and the [reply](#) from the Office for Statistics Regulation are available on the UK Statistics Authority website.

This move to the experimental measure follows the approach taken by the Office for National Statistics in 2015. 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](#)

Claimant Count Revisions

Seasonally adjusted claimant count figures are only available at the NI level and are provisional when they are published so they are subject to revision. These revisions are usually made the following month, however, seasonally adjusted totals are also subject to an annual update, which revises data for the previous 5 years to take account of the latest assessment trends. The most recent revision was published on 17th April 2018. The magnitude of the revisions is relatively small, with the changes within +/- 0.8% to the monthly claimant totals. For further information see: [Claimant Count Revisions](#)

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](#)

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 1.6% for Q4 2017 is the average of jobs figures from Q1 2017 to Q4 2017 minus the average of jobs figures from Q1 2016 to Q4 2016 divided by the average of jobs figures from Q1 2016 to Q4 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 September 2017 seasonally adjusted estimate first published in December 2017 has subsequently been revised down -0.2%.

For further details of QES revisions please see the following link: [QES Revisions](#)

Pre Release Access

The UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) announced the removal of early access by Ministers and officials to all ONS official statistics from 1 July. For further information please see [correspondence](#) between John Pullinger the National Statistician on this issue and the [reply](#) from Sir David Norgrove, the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority.

As a number of ONS publications affected by this decision include Northern Ireland (NI) level statistics, NISRA also removed early release access for NI officials to the equivalent NISRA publications and associated economic output statistics. This is based on analysis of the proxy nature of NI data for UK trends. The Labour Market Report published on 12th July 2017 was the first release under these new arrangements.

For further information contact:

Carly Gordon
Economic & Labour Market Statistics Branch,
Floor 1
Colby House
Stranmillis Court,
BT9 5RR

Tel: (028) 9025 5172

Email: economicstats@nisra.gov.uk

Web: [Labour Force Survey](#)

Twitter: [@ELMSNISRA](#)

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