

Women in Northern Ireland 2020/21

Theme: Labour Market

Frequency: Ad-hoc

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

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The following publication considers the different labour market experiences of women and men in Northern Ireland. A consistent feature of the labour market is higher employment and unemployment rates for males and higher economic inactivity rates for females. These features are explored using estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) individual annual datasets and household quarterly datasets, in addition to other applicable data sources.

Key Points:

- The employment rate for females in NI has been consistently lower than for males over the past ten years. Although the number of employees in NI was similar for males and females in 2021, the number of self-employed males was more than two and a half times the number of self-employed females.
- Around 3 in 5 female employees were in flexible work compared to 2 in 5 males. Females reported lower levels of opportunities for career progression (by 9pps) and a lower proportion with earnings above the Real Living Wage (by 5pps) than males.
- The largest gender pay gap across all age groups occurred in the 50 to 59 age group, where men earned almost £2.50 more per hour than women (£15.33 compared to £12.87).
- Males were more likely to work full-time than females. Furthermore, approximately 60% of employed women with dependent children worked full-time, compared to 94% of employed males with dependent children.
- Although the female economic inactivity rate has been declining in recent years in 2021, just under a third of working age women were economically inactive, compared to just under a quarter of men.
- The most common reason for economic inactivity among women (29%) and men (36%) in 2021 was long term sickness. For women the proportion looking after family and home in 2021 was almost identical at 28%, which was the least common reason for inactivity (6%) amongst men. The second most common reason for men was being a student, at 34%.
- Women consistently have lower economic activity than men regardless of the age of the youngest dependent child, but rates were lowest for women with a youngest dependent child of pre-school age.

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National Statistics Status

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

These statistics were designated as National Statistics in August 2010 following a full assessment of Labour Market Statistics for Northern Ireland against the Code of Practice for statistics. A [compliance check](#) in February 2022 recommended the continued designation of this report as a National Statistic.

Since the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Improved quality of the LFS data by boosting the sample size and improving precision around headline estimates (Please note since the COVID-19 pandemic sample sizes have decreased due to difficulty of collecting survey information from households)
- Reviewed and updated quality protocols for release for LFS data
- Improved accessibility of labour market statistics by changing the release dates of statistics to avoid public holidays and amended the format and structure of reports in line with accessibility regulations
- Expanded the availability of confidence intervals within all supplementary tables for Women in NI
- Additional analysis has been included related to work quality indicators and earnings

Things users need to know

The Women in Northern Ireland report is a publication summarising key labour market statistics for females compared to males. Please note data within this report are not adjusted for seasonality.

LFS annual datasets are derived from four consecutive quarters of the survey. The resulting sample size of the July 2020 to June 2021 dataset is approximately 8,000 individuals.

Additional analysis has been included in this release (section 2.2) related to eight work quality indicators, and detail on these indicators is contained within the further information section. The majority of these indicators are sourced from the LFS annual dataset noted above, except the earnings indicator which is sourced from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). ASHE information relates to the pay-week (or other pay period if the employee was paid less frequently) which included 21st April 2021, the reference date for the latest survey. ASHE remains the principal source of employee earnings information and earnings estimates derived from it are National Statistics.

Estimates in section 3 are based on the October to December 2020 household quarterly dataset. This dataset is based on 5,000 individuals. Users should note that the estimates from quarterly datasets are less precise (have larger confidence intervals around them) than estimates from annual datasets.

Throughout this report, all LFS breakdowns have been created using the 'sex' variable and the terms men and males, and women and females are used interchangeably. These terms refer to the respondent's self-reported sex.

Context

A Labour Market Outputs consultation in 2019 ([Labour Market Statistics User Engagement page](#)), showed labour market statistics are used for policy monitoring and research, academic and private sector research, service planning and delivery. Responses which related specifically to the Women in NI Report indicated that 63% of respondents found the Women in NI report 'useful' or 'very useful' for their work.

Government departments are key users of Northern Ireland labour market statistics. In particular, they are used by the Department for the Economy (DfE) to design and monitor the impact of economic policy, including a new Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Department for Communities (DfC) have been leading on the development of several Executive Social Inclusion Strategies, including the development of a Gender Equality strategy for Northern Ireland to fulfil the commitments in the New Decade, New Approach deal and use labour market statistics as part of the evidence base.

Other Government departments such as The Executive Office (TEO), 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. Significant non-governmental users (including the media, banks, academics, private consultants, and the general public) use the data primarily for reporting or researching the performance of the economy. 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](#).

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

[Employment and Labour Market page](#)

[Guide to Labour Market Statistics](#)

[Glossary](#)

User Feedback – publication title, timing and topics for consideration

The publication provides a comparison of labour market participation of males and females and has been titled 'Women in NI' since 2003. We are seeking feedback from users on the naming of the publication. If you have any views or suggestions please contact us at the email address below.

To meet user demand for emerging labour market topics of interest the report moved from being published annually to approximately every 18 months to 2 years (and has been published in March to coincide with International Women's Day.)

The following provides links to recent topic papers.

[Young people not in education, employment, or training \(NEET\) 2020](#)

[Qualifications in Northern Ireland 2020](#)

[Disability Employment Gap in Northern Ireland 2020](#)

[Underemployment in Northern Ireland](#)

Please let us know if there are any labour market topics that you would like considered as part of our Topic Paper series.

Feedback on the above or general comments on the publication or timing of the publication can be directed to ifs@finance-ni.gov.uk

1. Commentary

This publication looks at the experiences of women in the labour market in Northern Ireland and makes comparisons to the experiences of men. Historically, the Northern Ireland labour market has seen higher rates of employment and unemployment for males and higher rates of economic inactivity for females. This report looks at these trends in greater depth and examines the reasons for female economic inactivity, as well as the different experiences in work.

Despite decreases in female economic inactivity over recent years, nearly a third of working age women are not in the labour force, while this is the case for just over a quarter of working age men. According to the Labour Force Survey, the main reason that women and men were economically inactive in 2021 was due to long term sickness. However, for females, looking after the family and the home comes a very close second and was the most common reason given by women over the period 2011-2020. Looking after the family and the home has remained the least commonly given reason for male economic inactivity. Examining the data, the difference in inactivity rates between males and females can be entirely attributed to the difference in the number looking after the family and home. In fact, excluding these numbers from the inactivity totals in 2021 would bring the female inactivity rate slightly below that of males (22.1% for women and 22.3% for men).

Women who are working are less likely to be self-employed and are more likely to be working part-time than men. The age of the youngest child in the household is related to the likelihood of working part-time hours for females with dependent children. Those females with dependent children were more likely to work full-time where the youngest dependent child is primary or secondary school age, compared to those with pre-school aged children. Females with dependent children of any age were more likely to work part-time than those without, while the opposite was true for males.

The higher incidence of part-time working is reflected in work quality indicators with a higher proportion of women working flexible working patterns than men. Work quality data also show lower proportions of women than men earning above the Real Living Wage and agreeing that their job offers opportunities for career progression.

2. Women in the labour force

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. Estimates are subject to sampling error (see [Further Information](#) and the [Estimating and Reporting Uncertainty](#) paper for details).

2.1 Employment

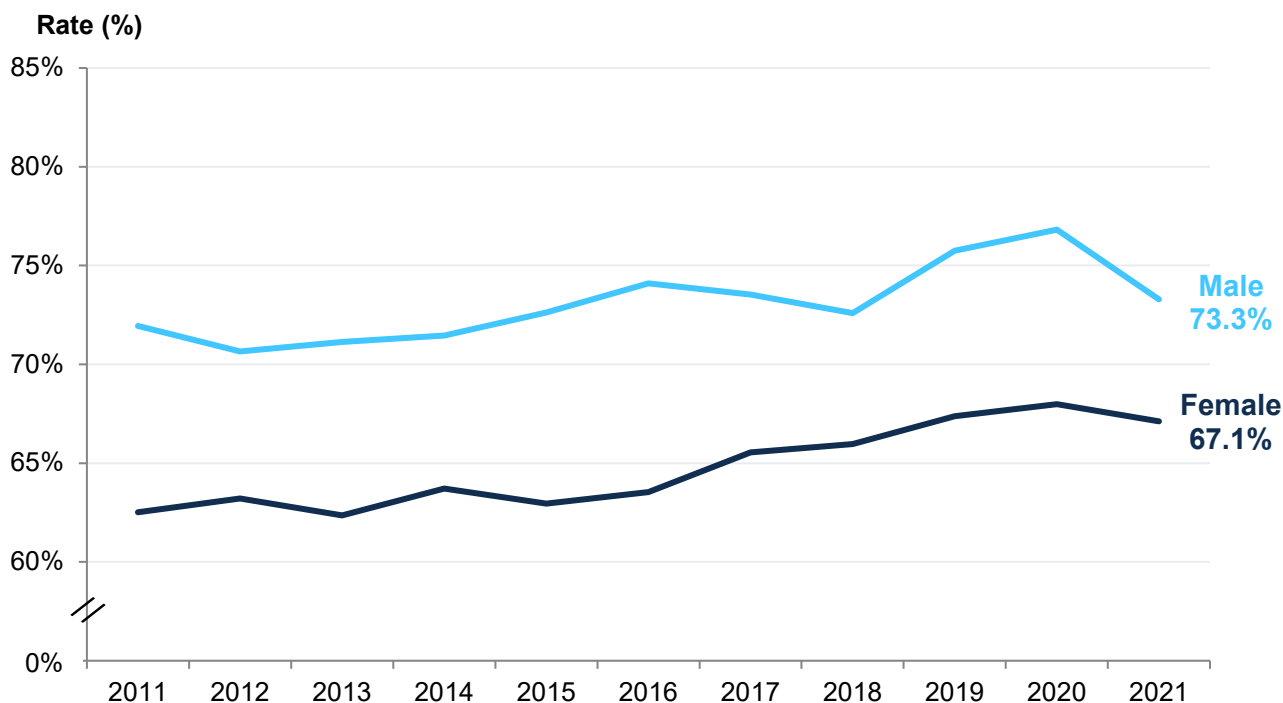
LFS employed: people aged 16 or over who did at least one hour of paid work in the reference week (whether as an employee or self-employed); those who had a paid job that they were temporarily away from; those on government-supported training and employee programmes and those doing unpaid family work.

Employment rate: calculated by taking the number of employed people aged 16 to 64 as a proportion of all working age people

Key findings:

- In 2021, the estimated number of women (aged 16 and over) in employment was 395,000, whilst the employment rate (aged 16 to 64) was 67.1%.
- Women accounted for just under half of those currently in employment (48%).
- Women in employment was made up of 372,000 employees (92%), 31,000 self-employed (8%) and a small number on government training and employment schemes or unpaid family workers.

Figure 1: Employment rate by sex (aged 16 to 64), July to June 2011 to July to June 2021



[Download Figure 1 data](#)

Please note: figure 1 has a non-zero x axis

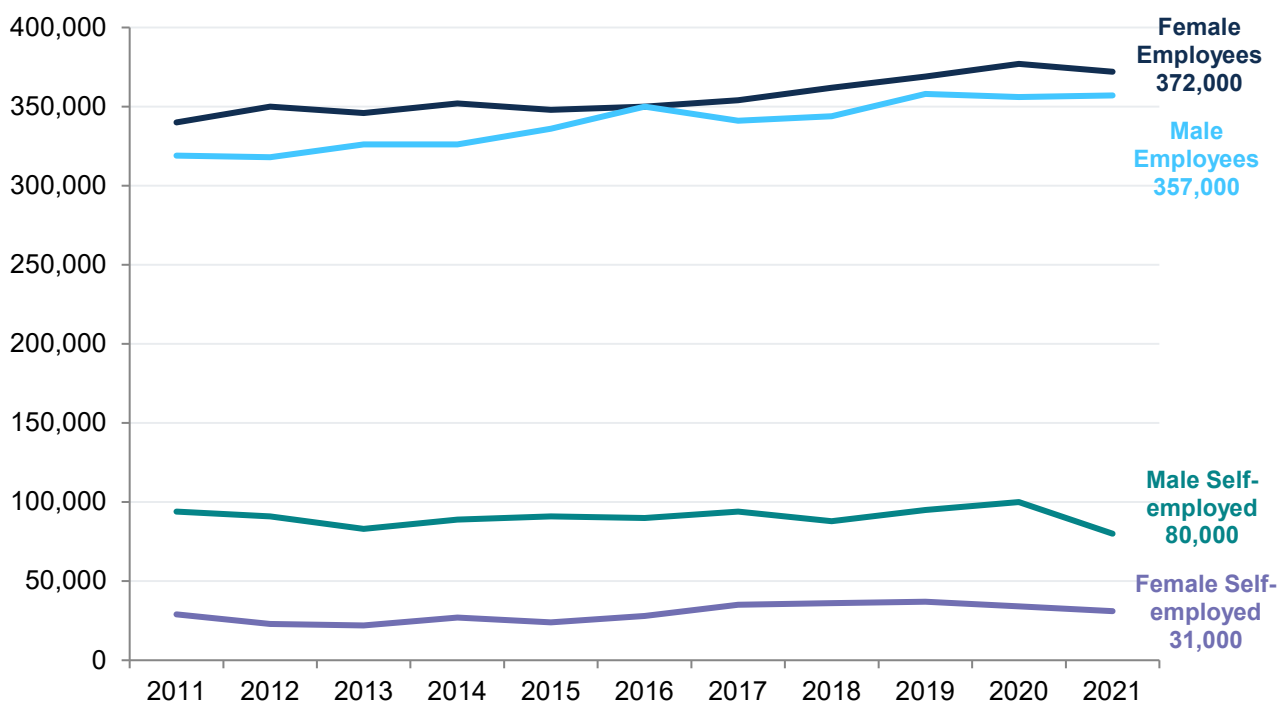
Figure 1 demonstrates that, over the past decade, both the male and female employment rates have generally trended upwards towards 2020 before decreasing in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (although please note that furloughed employees are included within the employment total), where the male rate decreased more than females. During the decade the female employment rate has consistently been lower than the rate for males, although the gap between these rates has narrowed by 3 percentage points (pps) over ten years. The gap between males and females was the smallest in the series in 2021 at 6.2pps, decreasing from the largest gap (10.6pps) seen in 2016.

The employment rate for females aged 16 to 64 in 2021 was 67.1%, which was:

- An increase of 4.6pps over the last 10 years and a decrease of 0.9pps compared to 2020.
- Lower than the male employment rate (73.3%), which showed an increase of 1.3pps since the same period 10 years ago and a decrease of 3.5pps over the last year.

Higher number of males self-employed than females

Figure 2: Number of employees and self-employed by sex (aged 16 and over), July to June 2011 to July to June 2021



[Download Figure 2 data](#)

* Those on government schemes, training and employment programmes too small for reliable estimate

Overall there has been an increase for both males (10,000) and females (29,000) in employment over the last 10 years, which was mainly driven by increases in the number of male and female employees.

The trend of higher self-employment rates for men than women is evident over the past ten years and accounts for the difference in male and female employment rates. In 2021 the self-employment rate for women was 7.5%, compared to the male rate of 18.1%. The self-employment rate is the percentage of those in employment who are self-employed.

Compared to a decade ago, the female rate was broadly unchanged (-0.1pps) whilst the male rate decreased by 4.3%. Notably the majority of the male decrease was in the past year which could reflect

changes in self-reported employment status on the Labour Force Survey during the pandemic rather than genuine shifts in work.¹

While public administration, education, and health is the most common employment sectors for both men and women, the dominance of this sector differs.

Over half (51%) of employed women in 2021 were employed within the public administration, education, and health sector and a further sixth (17%) were employed within the distribution, hotels, and restaurants sector. This distribution was broadly unchanged from 2011 (where the proportions were 52% and 20% respectively).

Employment across sectors was more evenly distributed for males in 2021, with public administration, education, and health (19%) and banking and finance (17%) being the two largest categories of employed men. This was a change from 2011, where the largest categories were public administration, education, and health (19%) and distribution, hotels, and restaurants (18%).

Professional occupations are the most common occupation types for both males and females.

Over a quarter (28%) of employed women in 2021 were employed in professional occupations and a further sixth (17%) were employed in the administrative and secretarial occupations. These were also the two largest sectors in 2011, where the proportions were 23% and 21% respectively.

For employed males, the largest categories in 2021 were professional occupations (22%) and skilled trades (18%). This distribution was a small change from 2011, when the order was reversed. In 2011 26% of employed males were employed in skilled trades and 16% were in professional occupations.

Although professional occupations were the most common for both males and females, only 2% of females worked in skilled trades (the second most common for males) and only 7% of males worked in administrative and secretarial occupations (the second most common for females).

On average men earn more than women²

Estimates from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings show that median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for women have consistently been below males. Although the gap in male and female earnings has decreased over the past 20 years, in 2021 females earned 5.7% less than males in NI.

The Gender Pay Gap is not uniform across age groups in NI

- In 2021, male and female employees had similar median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for all age groups under 40.
- Both male and female earnings peaked in the 40 to 49 age group; however males earned around £1.50 per hour more than females on average (£15.65 compared to £14.27).
- The largest gender pay gap across all age groups occurred in the 50 to 59 age group, where men earned almost £2.50 more per hour than women (£15.33 compared to £12.87).
- In the 60 plus age group, male employees again earned more than females, with men earning £12.69 compared to £11.02 for women.

¹ For more information on the impact of the pandemic on employee/self-employee shift please see ONS reported in a [blog about labour market statistics](#)

² For more information on earnings in Northern Ireland, visit <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/annual-survey-hours-and-earnings>

Similar Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)³ take-up rates for females and males

The earliest CJRS data available for Northern Ireland split by sex shows that, at 31st July 2020, 58,600 female and 60,800 male employees were on the scheme. This equates to a take-up rate of 15% for females and 17% for males.

The proportions of females and males receiving support remained closely aligned throughout the lifetime of the CJRS, with the largest difference between the sexes in any month being 2%.

When the [scheme closed](#) on 30th September 2021, 12,700 females (3%) and 13,900 males (4%) were receiving support.

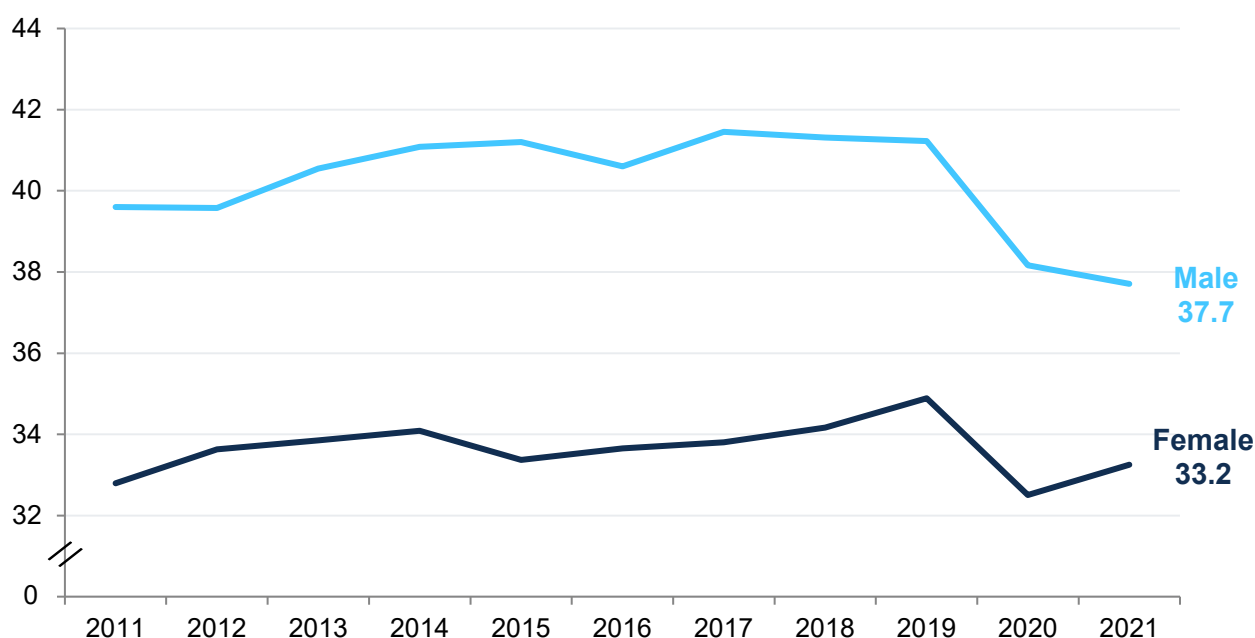
Lower proportion of women work full-time than men

The proportion of female employees (aged 16 to 64) working full-time has increased over ten years by 2.1pps to 64.3% in 2021. Conversely, the male rate decreased by 3.0pps to 89.3% over the same period. In terms of full-time workers⁴, average hours worked by full-time women are consistently below that of men.

Almost three-quarters (71%) of female employees (aged 16 to 64) working part-time stated that the reason for not working full-time hours was that they 'did not want full-time work'. This proportion and main reason has been broadly consistent over the past decade.

While the proportion of females stating each of the reasons for part-time work has remained stable over the last decade, this has not been the case for males. The reasons for part-time work provided by males and the proportions has varied over this period, and there was no dominant reason amongst 'Student or at school', 'Could not find full-time job' and 'Did not want full-time job'.

Figure 3: Full-time Average Hours Worked by Sex (aged 16 to 64), July to June 2011 to July to June 2021



[Download Figure 3 data](#)

Please note: Figure 3 has a non-zero x axis

³ Further statistics on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-coronavirus-covid-19-statistics#coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

⁴ Full-time and part-time status on the LFS is self-reported, with individuals classifying themselves as either working full-time or part-time. There is no minimum number of hours worked to classify as full-time.

2.2 Work Quality

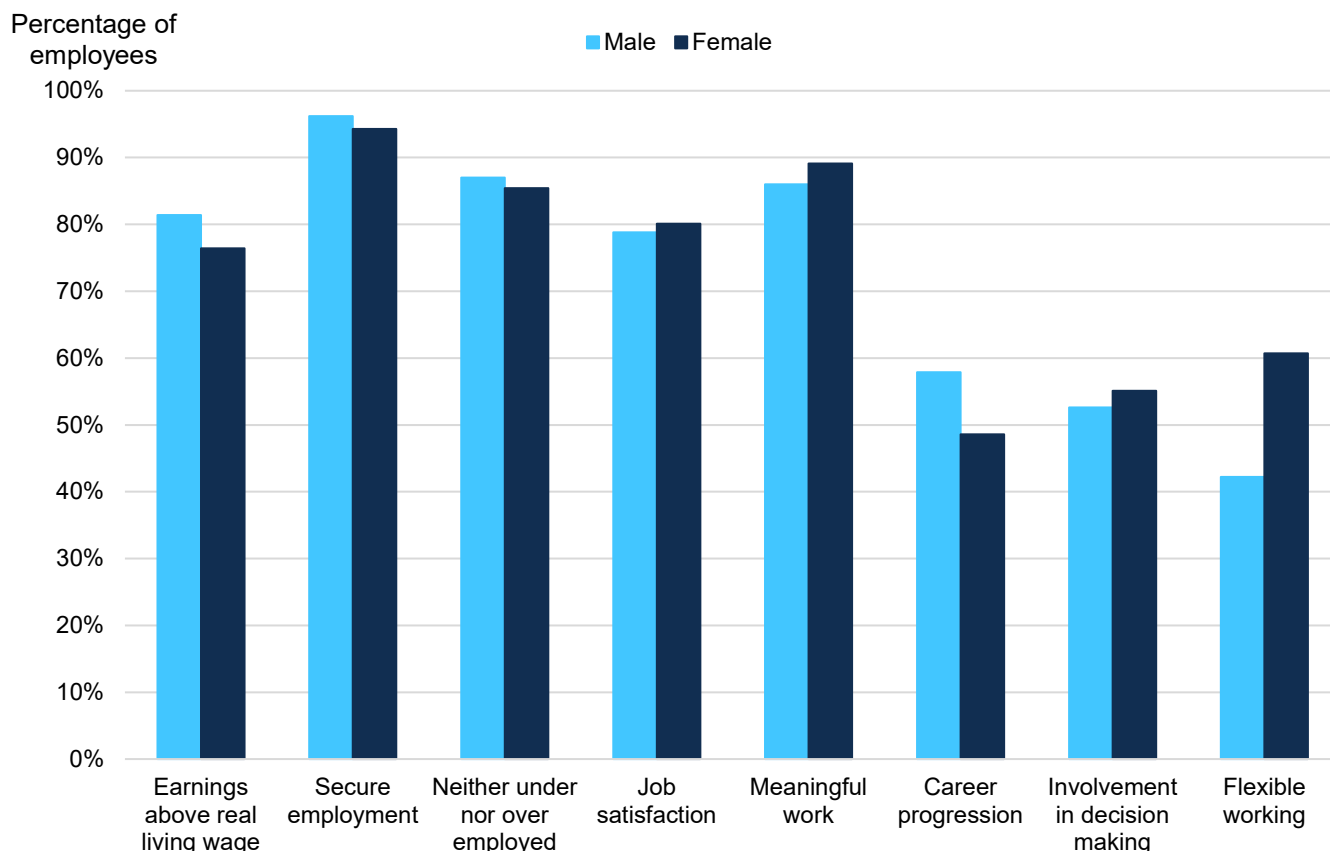
This section provides analysis by sex of all eight work quality indicators sourced from ASHE and LFS for employees aged 18 and over for the period July 2020 to June 2021 (referred to as 2021)⁵. Details and definitions on each of the work quality indicators are available in the further information section.

The work quality indicators refer to those aged 18 and over, in line with data available from ASHE, where the rest of the publication refers to the age ranges 16 and over, or 16 to 64.

Key Findings:

- In 2021, a higher proportion of females reported having flexible work than males (by 19pps).
- The indicators which were least positive for females, when compared to males, were opportunities for career progression and earnings above the Real Living Wage, which were lower by 9pps and 5pps respectively.
- For the five remaining indicators there were more similar proportions for males and females.

Figure 4: Work quality indicators by sex, employees aged 18 and over, NI, July 2020 to June 2021



[Download Figure 4 data](#)

Figure 4 shows that while there are some work quality indicators that have similar proportions between males and females, such as job satisfaction, neither under nor over employed and secure employment, others showed a larger difference.

Self-reported opportunities for career progression were lower for females (by 9pps) and a lower proportion of females received earnings above the Real Living Wage (by 5pps).

⁵ For more information on work quality statistics including Work Quality in Northern Ireland 2020/2021, visit: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/labour-market-and-social-welfare/work-quality>

Flexible working showed the largest difference of 19pps, where over 3 in 5 female employees (61%) were in flexible working, compared to 2 in 5 males (42%). The difference is driven by the higher proportion of females than males working part-time (and not underemployed).

Whilst the proportions were similar between females and males for the remaining indicators, females reported slightly higher levels of job satisfaction, performing meaningful work and involvement in decision-making.

The responses to opportunities for career progression, involvement in decision-making and flexible working were less positive than the other indicators for both males and females.

2.3 Unemployment

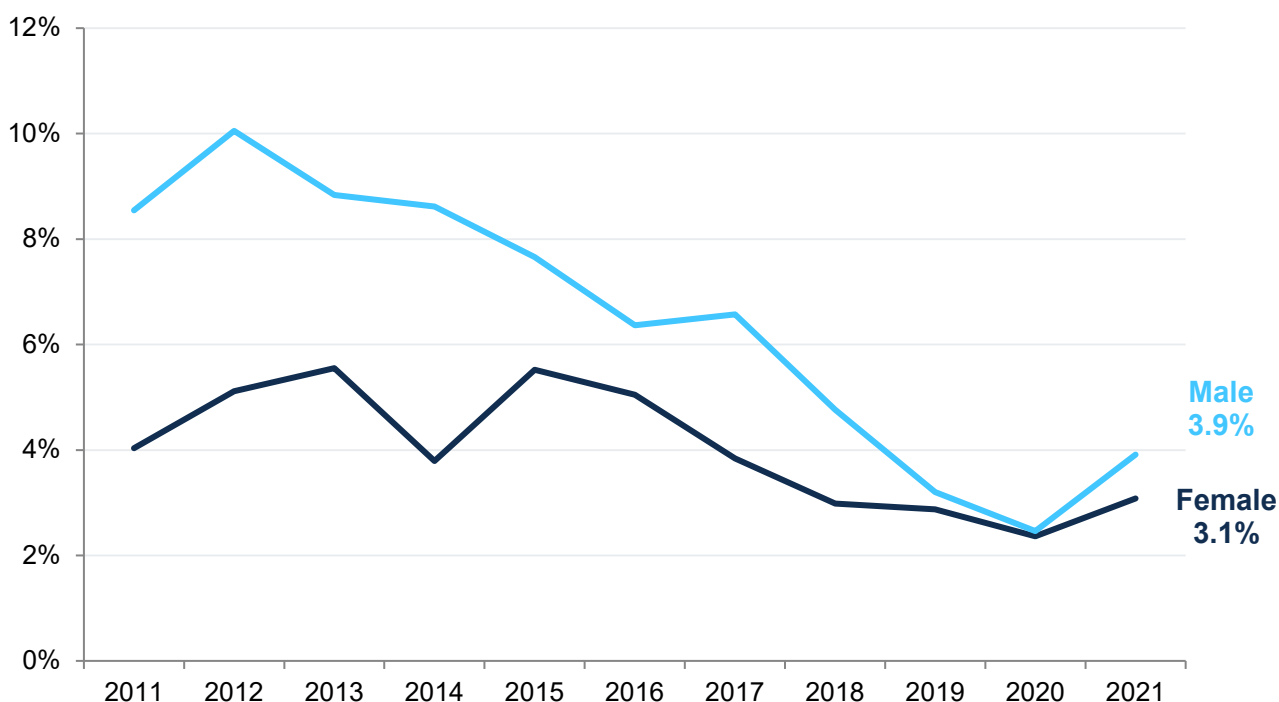
LFS unemployment: The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines unemployed as those without a job who were able to start work in the two weeks following their LFS interview and had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained (numbers and rates refer to aged 16 and over population).

Unemployment rate: total number of those aged 16 and over who are unemployed as a proportion of all economically active people aged 16 and over.

Key Findings:

- In 2021, the estimated number of women who were unemployed (aged 16 and over) was 13,000, whilst the unemployment rate was 3.1%.
- Women accounted for under half of those currently unemployed (42%).
- The female unemployment rate has been lower than the male unemployment rate for the last ten years.
- By 2020 the gap in male and female unemployment rates had almost closed completely, although it widened again in 2021.

Figure 5: Unemployment rate by sex (aged 16 and over), July to June 2011 to July to June 2021



[Download Figure 5 data](#)

Figure 5 shows that the female unemployment rate has consistently been below the male unemployment rate for the last 10 years. When analysing rates over the last decade, while the two series don't mirror each other exactly, they generally follow the same trend and both recorded low rates in 2020 (males: 2.7%, females: 2.4%). Over this period the gap between the male and female rates has narrowed considerably, from 4.5pps in 2011 to 0.8pps in 2021, and where rates were almost identical in 2020.

LFS estimates showed that:

- In 2021, the unemployment rate for women (aged 16 and over) was 3.1% compared with 3.9% for men.
- The number of unemployed females in 2021 increased from the recent low in 2020 (10,000) although at 13,000 it was below 2011 (16,000). During the past decade, the number of unemployed women peaked at 22,000 (in 2013 and 2015).
- Similarly in this period, the number of males unemployed reached a peak in 2012 (46,000) and a low in 2020 (12,000).

2.4 Economic Inactivity

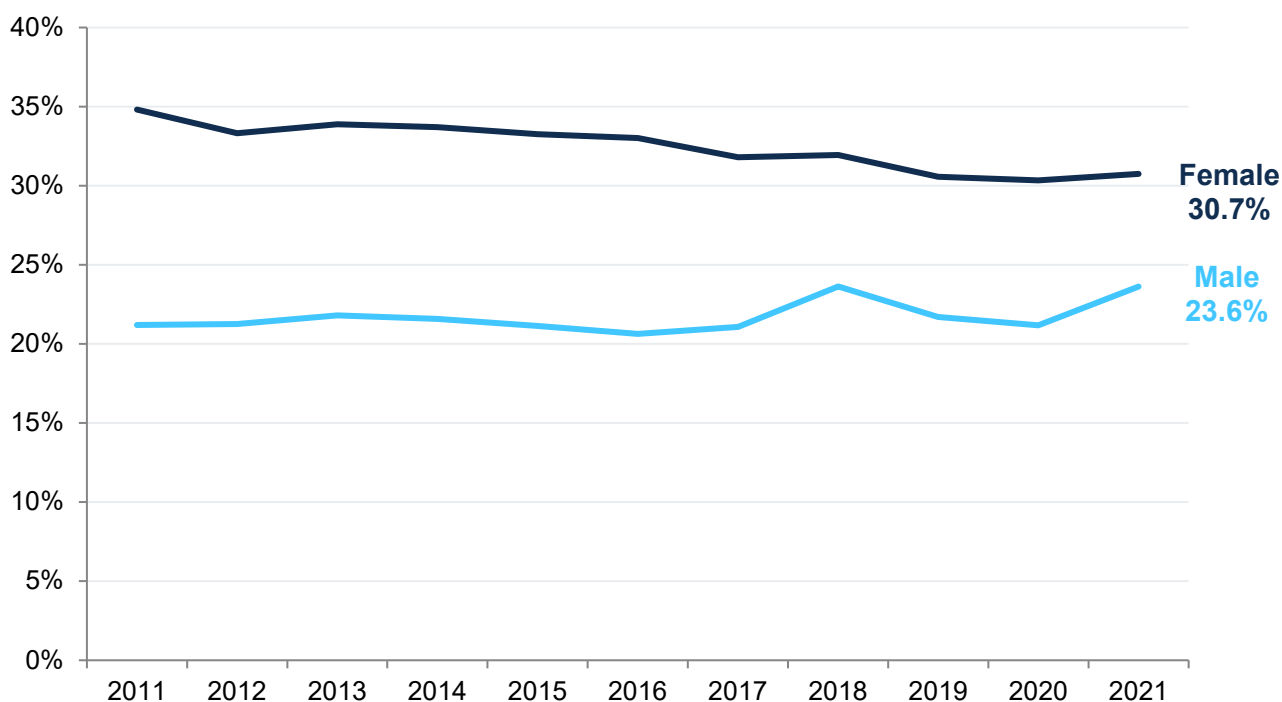
Economically inactive: People not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks (numbers refer to the aged 16 and over population, rates refer to aged 16 to 64 years).

Economic inactivity rate: the number of economically inactive people aged 16 to 64 as a proportion of all working age people.

Key Findings:

- Just under a third of women (aged 16 to 64) were economically inactive in 2021.
- Women have had a consistently higher rate of economic inactivity than men for the last 10 years.
- The economic inactivity rate for women has decreased over the last decade, by around 4pps, whilst the male rate has increased over the same period (by 2pps).

Figure 6: Economic inactivity rate by sex (aged 16 to 64), July to June 2011 to July to June 2021



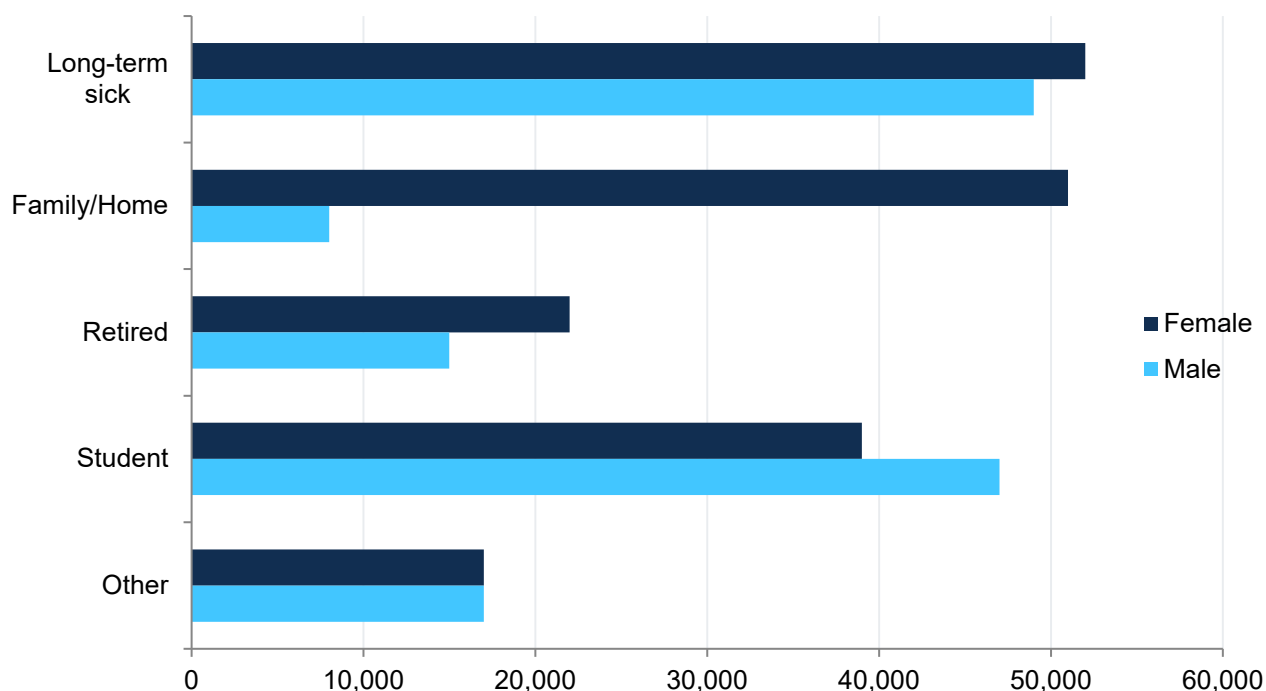
[Download Figure 6 data](#)

The economic inactivity rate for women (aged 16 to 64) has been consistently higher than men, although the gap between the two rates has narrowed over the last decade and reached a low in 2021 (7.1pps). Over the decade, the female rate has decreased by 4.1pps, whereas the male rate has increased by 2.4pps.

LFS estimates show in 2021:

- Just under a third (30.7%) of working age women and just under a quarter (23.6%) of working age men were economically inactive.
- The inactivity rate for working age women (30.7%) was 0.4pps higher than the previous year and 4.1pps lower than the same point 10 years earlier. The corresponding rate for men (23.6%) was 2.4pps higher than both the previous year and 10 years earlier.

Figure 7: Reasons for economic inactivity by sex (aged 16 to 64), July to June 2021



[Download Figure 7 data](#)

“Other” also includes ‘discouraged workers’ (those not in a job who would like work and whose reason for not seeking work in the past four weeks is that they believe there are no jobs available).

Large difference in number of men and women economically inactive due to looking after the family/home

In 2021, the most common reason for inactivity for both men and women (aged 16 to 64 years) was long-term sickness (29% for females, 36% for males). For women, this was a change compared to 2011, when the most common reason was family/home (35%). However, looking after the family and the home was a very close second for females in 2021 (28%) and was the most common reason given by women over the period 2011-2020.

The biggest difference in economic inactivity between males and females in 2021 was in the number citing family/home as their reason for inactivity. For men, this was the least common reason (6%), whereas it was the second most common reason for women (28%).

Excluding those inactive in order to care for family/home, there are almost equal numbers of inactive women and men in 2021 (128,000 males, 130,000 females).

Table 1: Components of economic inactivity rate by sex (aged 16 to 64), July to June 2021

	Males	Females
Sick/Disabled	8.6%	8.9%
Family/Home	1.3%	8.6%
Student	8.1%	6.6%
Retired	2.7%	3.8%
Other	2.9%	2.9%
Total Economic Inactivity Rate	23.6%	30.7%

When those looking after the family or home are excluded from the total economic inactivity rate (Table 1) the inactivity rates for males and females are almost identical (22.1% for females, 22.3% for males).

3. Women with Dependent Children

Analysis in this section relates to the household unit. Where men or women are discussed it relates to head of households rather than all adults. Where dependents are discussed, this relates only to dependent children. There is limited data available on carers of dependent adults and people with disabilities from the LFS and these groups have not been included in the LFS analysis.

Carers UK⁶ have however carried out analysis of those caring for older people and people with disabilities and their research suggests that the number of carers in Northern Ireland has increased substantially during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, there were an estimated 310,000 unpaid carers in Northern Ireland, while before the pandemic this figure was around 212,000.

Unlike the preceding sections, this section uses the October to December 2020 (referred to as 2020) household quarterly dataset. Users should note that the estimates from quarterly datasets are less precise (have larger confidence intervals around them) than estimates from the individual annual dataset.

Dependent children: Those under 16 years and those aged 16 to 18, never married and in full time education.

Key Findings:

- 80% of women with dependent children were economically active in 2020, compared with 91% of men with dependent children.
- The economic activity⁷ rate for women with pre-school age children (72%) was substantially lower (by 20pps) than for men with pre-school age children (92%).

The previous section (2.4) demonstrated that economic inactivity was higher among women and the main difference in reason for economic inactivity between men and women, and the second most common reason for female inactivity, was family/home responsibilities. Analysis of household units shows that 79.4% of women (aged 16 to 64) who were inactive due to family/home commitments had a dependent child.

In order to be able to work, many parents with dependent children require regular reliable childcare. Recent research by the Department of Health⁸ shows that, at 31 March 2021, 3,809 people or facilities were registered for the provision of day care for children under the age of 12, with HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland providing 59,618 places. In terms of those providing day care, this was a decrease of 4% on the previous year, and a 3% decrease in the number of registered places. This provision is made up of child-minders, playgroups, day nurseries, out of school clubs and other organisations.

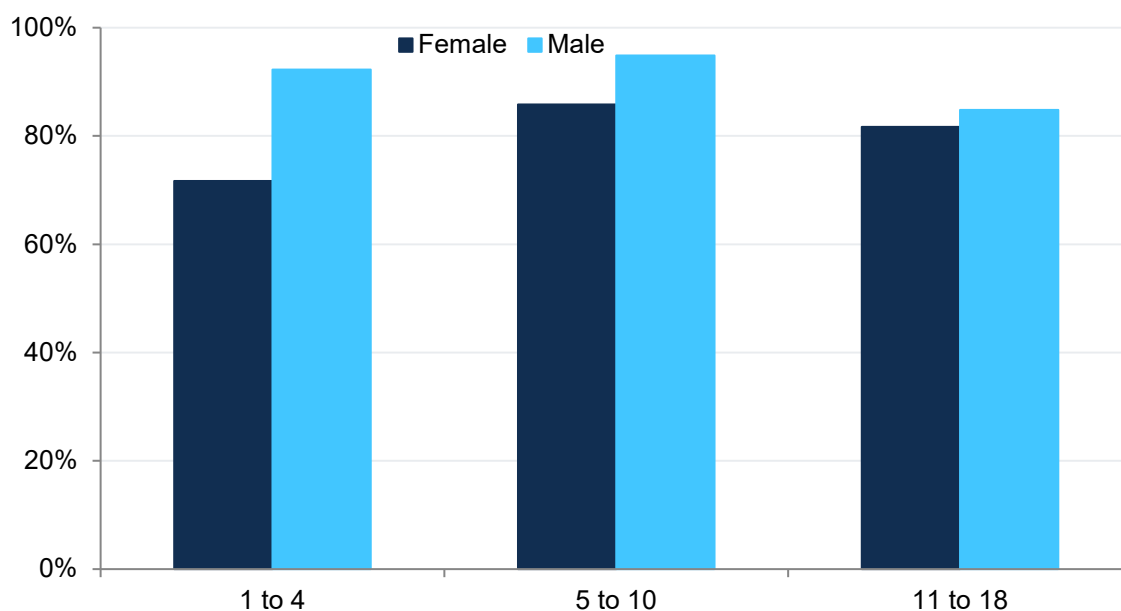
⁶ <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/carers-uk-carers-rights-day-report>

⁷ The economic activity rate refers to people aged 16 to 64 who are either in employment or unemployed.

⁸ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/child-social-care-20-21.pdf>

Women with dependent children have lower economic activity rates compared to men with dependent children, regardless of age of youngest child

Figure 8: Economic activity rates by sex and age of youngest dependent child* (aged 16 to 64), October to December 2020



[Download Figure 8 data](#)

Please note: people with dependent children under the age of 1 have been excluded, as those on maternity leave are included in the employment total

Figure 8 above shows the economic activity rates for males and females disaggregated by age of youngest dependent child. Age groupings of children are aligned with pre-school, primary school and secondary school age. The data indicates that:

- Women consistently have lower economic activity than men regardless of age of youngest dependent child.
- The group with the lowest economic activity is women with a youngest child of pre-school age (71.7%). The difference in economic activity rate for men and women with a youngest child of pre-school age is 20.6pps.

Further examining the difference in economic activity, Table 2 below shows how the working pattern of women relates to the age of their youngest child.

- 50.6% of women whose youngest child was of pre-school age worked full-time.
- This increased to 63.0% of women whose youngest child was of secondary school age.

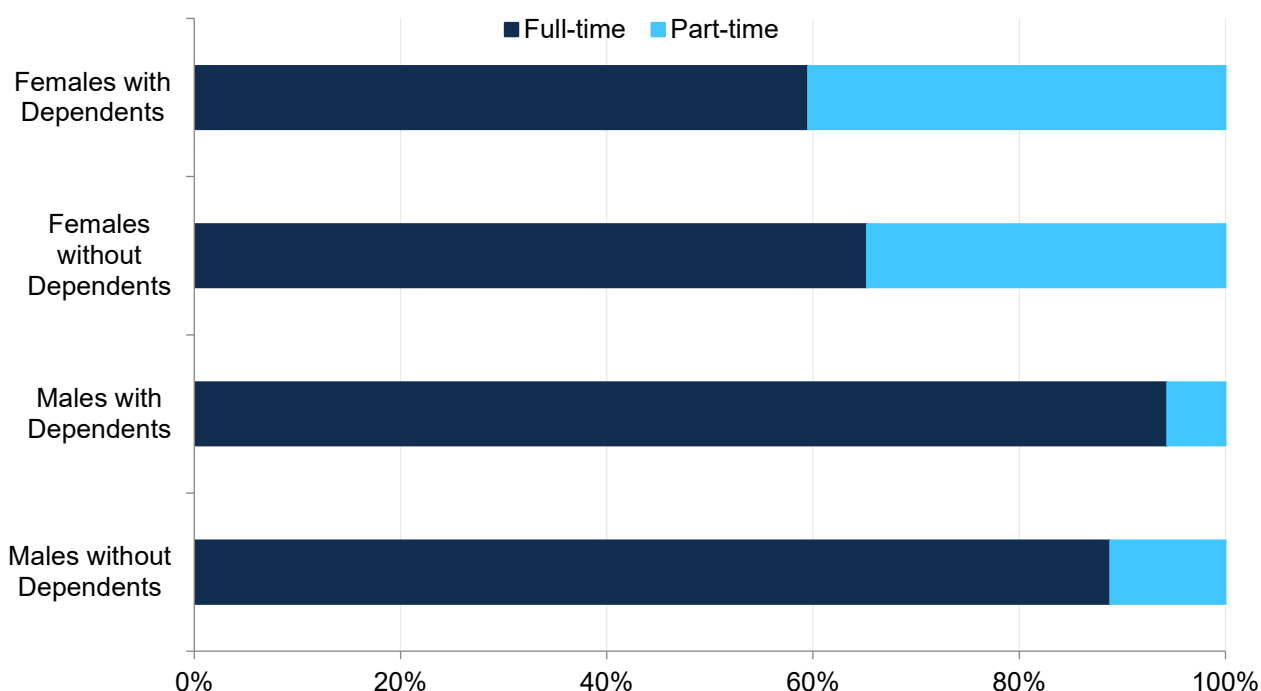
Table 2: Working patterns of women with dependent children by age of their youngest child*, (aged 16 to 64), October to December 2020

	Full-Time Work	Part-Time Work
1 to 4	50.6%	49.4%
5 to 10	63.7%	36.3%
11 to 18	63.0%	37.0%

* **Note:** those women with dependent children under the age of 1 have been excluded to exclude maternity leave from the analysis

Women were much more likely than men to be working part-time, regardless of whether they have dependent children.

Figure 9: Working patterns by sex and with/without dependent children (aged 16 to 64), October to December 2020



[Download Figure 9 data](#)

Figure 9 shows the working patterns (full-time or part-time) of men and women with and without dependent children.

- Women were much more likely than men to be working part-time, regardless of whether they have dependent children.
- Approximately two-thirds of employed women without dependent children were working full time (65.2%), which was 5.7pps higher than the proportion of employed women with dependent children working full time (59.5%).
- The average age of females without dependent children was higher than that of females with dependent children, particularly for those working part-time (53 compared with 40). The one third of females without dependent children working part-time may, to some extent, be women who began a part-time schedule with young children and did not resume full-time work once those children were grown.
- There was very little difference in the average ages of men with and without dependent children working full-time and part-time. Men with dependent children were the most likely to be working full-time (94.3%) and, on average, were the youngest males.

4. Further information

Background

LFS Datasets

Estimates in sections 1 and 2 are largely calculated from the July 2020 to June 2021 individual annual Labour Force Survey (LFS) dataset. LFS annual datasets are derived from four consecutive quarters of the survey. The resulting sample size of the July to June 2021 dataset is approximately 8,000 individuals.

Individuals in each wave are interviewed in five successive quarters, such that in any quarter one wave will be receiving their first interview, one wave their second, and so on, with one wave receiving their fifth and final interview. The annual dataset is created by selecting the relevant cases from each quarter and combining them to create a dataset of unique cases. Selecting all wave one and five interviews allows the maximum number of respondents over a one-year period to be included whilst avoiding double counting.

Estimates in section 3 are based on the October to December 2020 household quarterly dataset. This dataset is based on 5,000 individuals. Users should note that the estimates from quarterly datasets are less precise (have larger confidence intervals around them) than estimates from annual datasets.

LFS revisions

Typically, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) would reweight the LFS every two years to take account of updated population estimates and projections. However, investigations by ONS during 2020 showed the composition of the achieved LFS sample had changed because of the change in survey methods introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditionally, the survey is conducted via a face-to-face household interview with follow-up telephone interviews, but this changed to solely telephone interviews in April 2020.

In October 2020 LFS data were reweighted to include additional factors (household tenure) to mitigate the changing sample composition, and estimates were revised from January 2020. More information on the October 2020 reweighting is available on the NISRA website: [LFS Revision Note – October 2020](#).

LFS microdata are typically weighted to official population projections. However, in July 2021 the LFS estimates were reweighted from January-March 2020 to February-April 2021 to include new population weights using PAYE Real-Time Information data. ONS published the details of this reweighting at '[Labour Force Survey weighting methodology](#)'. An overview of the [impact of reweighting](#) on the NI estimates of unemployment, employment, and economic inactivity is available on the NISRA website.

Following the [latest reweighting](#) of LFS estimates in July 2021 which impacted datasets from January 2020, a further reweighting is planned for later in the year. The estimates for NI did not have the non-response bias adjustment from the recent reweighting fully applied and in addition there was a small error in the implementation of the reweighting methodology affecting all UK estimates. We will provide further detail on timelines for the reweighting in due course, where LFS quarterly and annual datasets will be reweighted back to January 2020.

Precision of estimates

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.

Estimates based on fewer than 3 events are suppressed to prevent disclosure. In tables, shading is used to draw attention to lower statistical quality/precision of estimates that are based on a smaller sample size. Shaded estimates still provide the best estimate of the size of a group but comparison across time or between groups with similar values should be avoided. Unshaded estimates are based on a larger sample size. This is likely to result in estimates of higher precision, although they will still be subject to some sampling variability.

Sampling variability

The Labour Force Survey is a sample survey. It provides estimates of population values. If we drew many samples each would give a different result. The ranges shown for the LFS data in the table below represent 95% confidence intervals. We would expect that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value.

Table 3: Sampling variability of labour market estimates, July 2020 to June 2021

July 2020 to June 2021	LFS estimate	Lower limit	Upper limit
Unemployment (aged 16 and over)	31,000	26,000	36,000
Employment (aged 16 to 64)	817,000	801,000	832,000
Economically inactive (aged 16 to 64)	317,000	302,000	332,000
Unemployment rate (aged 16 and over)	3.5%	2.9%	4.1%
Employment rate (aged 16 to 64)	70.2%	68.9%	71.5%
Economic inactivity rate (aged 16 to 64)	27.2%	25.9%	28.5%

Further information on estimating and reporting uncertainty can be found in the [LFS background information](#) on the NISRA website.

Confidence intervals have been included for all of the tables accompanying the graphs in this bulletin.

Definitions

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.

The definition of unemployment rate is 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 definition of employment rate is the percentage of all working age (aged 16 to 64) people who are employed.

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.

LFS economic inactivity

Economic inactivity is defined as those individuals who are neither in employment nor unemployed as determined by the ILO measure. This economic status includes all those who are looking after a home, are long term sick or disabled, are students, or are retired.

LFS economic activity

Economic activity is defined as those aged 16 and over who are either in employment or unemployed.

Sex

Throughout this report, all LFS breakdowns have been created using the 'sex' variable. This variable is populated by asking respondents whether their current sex is Male or Female. The ASHE sample is drawn from information on PAYE schemes held by HMRC and sex breakdowns created using ASHE data are based on information from this source.

Standard Occupation Code (SOC)

During the 10 year period 2011 to 2021, used for the majority of LFS trend comparisons in this publication, two updates were made to the classification of occupations (SOC). For 2011, the classification changed from SOC2000 to SOC2010 and, for 2021, the classification changed from SOC2010 to SOC2020. For both of these years mapping variables were used to enable comparisons to be made across the ten year period 2011 to 2021 on a consistent basis.

Please see link for further LFS notes and definitions: [LFS Background Information](#)

Work quality indicators

Section 2.2 of this publication contains analysis of eight work quality indicators for employees aged 18 and over, as sourced from the Labour Force Survey and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. Further information on the evolving area of work quality and additional breakdowns by age and industry can be found within the latest [Work Quality in Northern Ireland - July 2020 to June 2021](#) publication, released on 2nd March 2022.

Table 4: Work quality indicator definitions

Indicator	Definition of work quality indicator
Secure employment	In a permanent job or in a temporary job who did not want a permanent job
Meaningful work	Agree or strongly agree that they perform meaningful work in their job
Neither under nor over employed	Employees who are neither underemployed or overemployed as per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition
Job satisfaction	Satisfied or very satisfied with their job
Earnings	The proportion of employees earning above the Real Living Wage (RLW)
Involvement in decision making	Managers are good or very good at involving employees and their representatives in decision making
Opportunities for career progression	Agree or strongly agree that their job offers good opportunities for career progression
Flexible working	Employee has a flexible agreed working arrangement of either: flexitime, annualised hours contract, term time working or job sharing; or part-time and not underemployed; or primarily working at home

For Further Information contact:

Mark McFetridge

Economic & Labour Market Statistics

Floor 1

Colby House

Stranmillis Court

BT9 5RR

Tel: (028) 90255172

Email: LFS@finance-ni.gov.uk

Web: [Labour Force Survey](#)

Twitter: [@NISRA](#)