

Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours & Earnings 2015 Pension Results



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

Key points

- The proportion of employees in Northern Ireland (NI) who belonged to a workplace pension scheme was in steady decline between 2004 and 2012. From 2012, the proportion of employees who belonged to a workplace pension scheme has increased.
- Sixty percent of all employees were members of some form of workplace based pension scheme, up from 44% in 2012.
- The most popular form of workplace pension was an Occupational Defined Benefit Pension which was held by 32% of all employees. However, this figure has shown signs of decline over the longer term (40% in 2004).
- In 2015, approximately 84% of public sector employees and 46% of private sector employees were members of a workplace pension scheme.
- Age is a key factor affecting workplace pension scheme membership. In 2015, pension membership was highest for those aged 50-59 years old (70%) and lowest for those aged 18-21 years old (13%).
- Full-time employees had a higher percentage of workplace pension participation than part-time employees in 2015, with 71% of full-time employees members of workplace pension schemes compared with 35% of part-time employees.
- Those in professional occupations were most likely to have a pension, with around 79% membership of workplace pension schemes in 2015.
- Those employed in public administration and defence were most likely to have a pension. Around 95% of employees in this sector had a workplace pension in 2015.

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National Statistics

The UK 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.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Context

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is a UK wide survey that provides a wide range of information on hourly, weekly and annual earnings by gender, work pattern, industry and occupation including public and private sector pay comparisons. This report presents provisional results from the pensions element of the 2015 Northern Ireland ASHE, which surveyed employee earnings for the pay-week (or other pay period if the employee was paid less frequently) that included 22nd April 2015, the reference date for the latest survey.

A [Summary of usage of the Northern Ireland Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#) is available on the NISRA-ELMS website. Users of NI ASHE statistics include the economists in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) for the purpose of briefing the minister on current labour market trends for policy purposes and Trade Unions who use the data to monitor pay levels and the differences between NI and UK earnings.

Full details of the Northern Ireland survey can be found on the ASHE section of the NISRA – Economic and Labour Market Statistics website:

[Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#)

Methodology and quality information

ASHE is based on a 1 per cent sample of employee jobs taken from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) PAYE records. Information is obtained from employers and treated confidentially. ASHE does not cover the self-employed nor does it cover employees not paid during the reference period.

Further information on ASHE can be found on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) website:

[Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings methodology and guidance](#)

[Summary quality report for the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#)

Pensions analysis

ASHE is a key source of information on workplace pension provision in the UK as it collects information on group personal and group stakeholder pensions as well as occupational pension schemes. The survey results are used widely in order to analyse pension participation and monitor the impact of pension reforms.

As ASHE is a survey of employers, it only covers workplace pensions, which are those that are either provided or facilitated by employers; it does not cover individual personal or stakeholder pensions, where individuals enter into a contract with an insurance company that is not facilitated by an employer.

ASHE only collects information on the current employer's pension scheme. An employee may hold preserved rights in a former employer's pension scheme or be in receipt of a pension from a former employer. This information would not be captured by the survey.

In ASHE, employees are defined as making contributions to a workplace pension if they have made a contribution, or had a contribution made on their behalf, in the survey reference period.

Detailed tables on pensions from the 2015 and 2014 (revised) surveys are published alongside this bulletin and can be found on the NISRA – Economic and Labour Market Statistics website at:

[Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Pensions](#)

Automatic Enrolment

Every employer must automatically enrol workers into a workplace pension scheme if the employee:

- is aged between 22 and State Pension age
- earns more than £10,000 a year
- works or usually works in the UK

This is called 'automatic enrolment' and began in the UK in October 2012 for the biggest businesses (in excess of 120,000 employees). This process is to be completed by 2018 when all employees meeting the above criteria must be automatically enrolled in a workplace pension regardless of the size of their employer.

Although this does not create a discontinuity in the data with previous years it is likely to have a significant impact on the ASHE pension data from 2013.

Further information on automatic enrolment can be found through the link below:

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/workplacepensions>

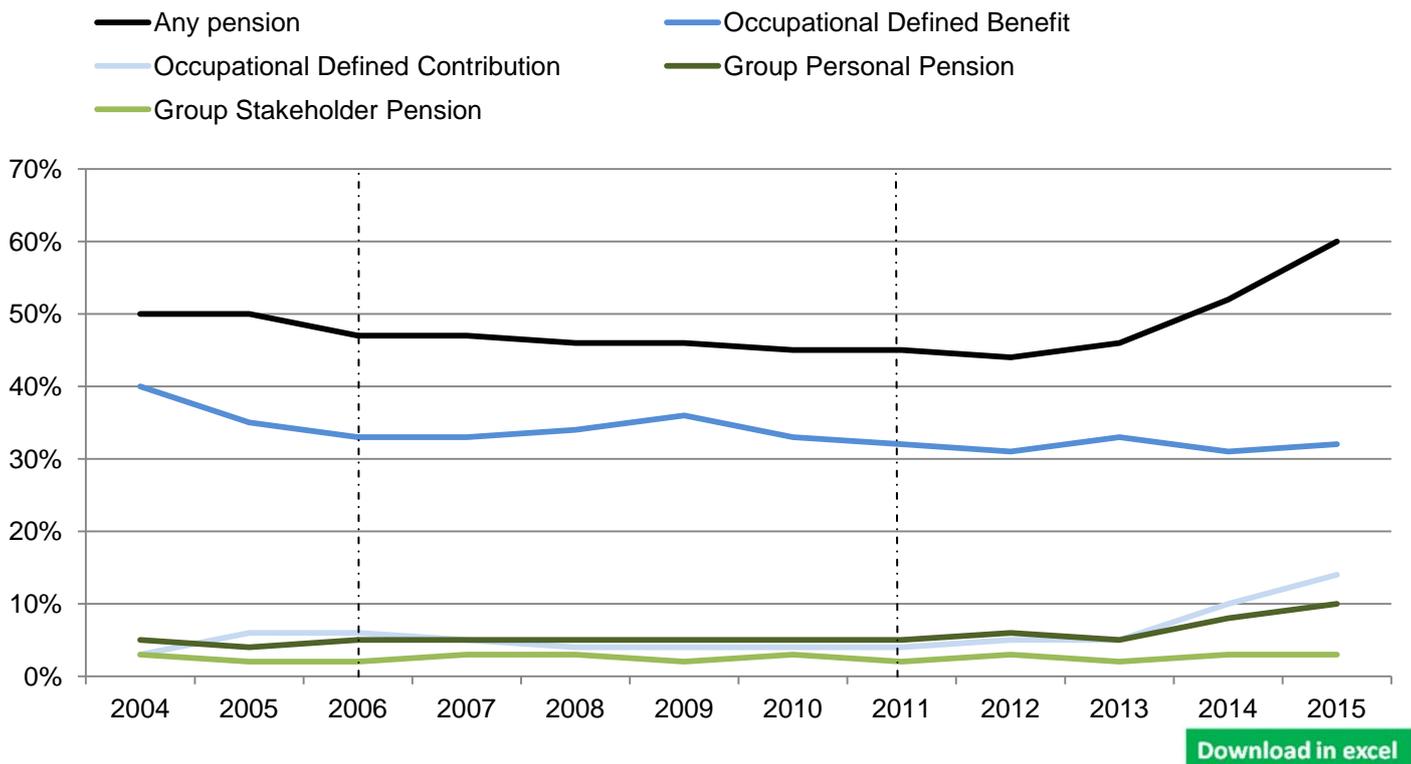
1

Workplace pension membership

Key points

- In 2015, 60% of all employees were members of a workplace pension scheme.
- Sharp increase in the last three years, likely due to the introduction of automatic enrolment.
- In 2012, the recent low point of overall pension membership, 44% of all employees were members of a workplace pension scheme.

Figure 1: Proportion of employees with workplace pensions by type of pension, 2004-2015



1. Dashed lines represent the introduction of methodological changes to improve the quality of ASHE data has resulted in discontinuities in trends. More details of this can be found in further information (section 9).
2. The Occupational Defined Contribution category includes employees who have pensions with the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST).
3. Data for Group Self-Invested Personal Pensions (GSIPP) are included within the category Group Personal Pensions (GPP).

Figure 1 shows that:

- the proportion of employees in Northern Ireland who belonged to any type of workplace pension scheme was in steady decline between 2004 and 2012.
- from 2012 onwards the proportion of employees who belonged to a workplace pension scheme showed significant increases. The introduction of Automatic Enrolment in 2012 is likely to have been a key factor in this increase. (Further information on automatic enrolment can be found on pages 3 and 4).
- Occupational Defined Benefit pension schemes were the largest category of workplace pension in 2015 with approximately 32% of all NI employees participating in this type of pension.
- Occupational Defined Contribution Pensions and Group Personal Pensions have shown the largest increases since 2013.

2

Pension membership by public and private sector

Key points

- Workplace pension participation continues to differ significantly between the public and private sector, although the gap is closing.
- In 2015, 84% of all public sector employees were members of a workplace pension scheme (decreasing from 85% in 2014).
- In 2015, 46% of all private sector employees were members of workplace pension schemes (increasing from 35% in 2014).

Table 1: Proportion of employees with workplace pensions by sector and type of pension

	Any Pension	Occupational Defined Benefit	Occupational Defined Contribution	Group Personal Pension	Group Stakeholder Pension
April 2015					
Public sector	84%	78%	5%	x	x
Private sector	46%	7%	19%	15%	4%
All employees	60%	32%	14%	10%	3%
April 2014					
Public sector	85%	82%	3%	x	x
Private sector	35%	6%	13%	11%	4%
All employees	52%	31%	10%	8%	3%

1. The Occupational defined contribution category includes employees who have pensions with the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST).

2. Data for Group Self-Invested Personal Pensions (GSIPP) are included within the category Group Personal Pensions (GPP).

x = Co-efficient of variation too large to provide a reliable estimate.

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Table 1 shows that in 2015:

- 84% of public sector employees had a workplace pension, with 78% having an Occupational Defined Benefit Pension, which was slightly lower than 2014.
- 46% of employees within the private sector had a workplace pension, with 19% having an Occupational Defined Contribution pension, which was higher than in 2014.
- Occupational Defined Contribution and Group Personal or Stakeholder pensions were more common in the private sector than in the public sector.

3

Pension membership by age

Key points

- Workplace pension scheme membership increased steadily with age, up to 60+ years.
- Those aged 50-59 years had the largest proportion of workplace pension scheme membership (70%) in 2015.
- In comparison, 13% of employees aged 18-21 years were members of workplace pension schemes.

Table 2: Proportion of employees with workplace pensions by age band and type of pension, 2015

Age	Any Pension	Occupational Defined Benefit	Occupational Defined Contribution	Group Personal Pension	Group Stakeholder Pension
18-21	13%	x	x	x	x
22-29	58%	21%	19%	14%	4%
30-39	66%	34%	17%	12%	3%
40-49	68%	41%	13%	10%	4%
50-59	70%	46%	13%	8%	3%
60+	41%	x	9%	x	x

1. The occupational defined contribution category includes employees who have pensions with the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST).
 2. Data for Group Self-Invested Personal Pensions (GSIPP) are included within the category Group Personal Pensions (GPP).
- x = Co-efficient of variation too large to provide a reliable estimate.

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Table 2 shows that in 2015:

- the highest proportion of people with an Occupational Defined Benefit Pension was in the 50-59 age group (46%).
- the highest proportion of people with an Occupational Defined Contribution Pension and a Group Personal Pension was in the 22-29 age group (19% and 14% respectively).
- 13% of the 18-21 age group had a pension (up from 3% in 2014).

4

Pension membership by gender

Key points

- Males (61%) and females (58%) displayed similar proportions of membership of workplace pension schemes in 2015.

Table 3: Proportion of employees with workplace pensions by gender and type of pension

	Any Pension	Occupational Defined Benefit	Occupational Defined Contribution	Group Personal Pension	Group Stakeholder Pension
April 2015					
Men	61%	29%	15%	12%	4%
Women	58%	36%	13%	8%	2%
All	60%	32%	14%	10%	3%
April 2014					
Men	52%	28%	11%	10%	3%
Women	51%	35%	8%	6%	2%
All	52%	31%	10%	8%	3%

1. The Occupational defined contribution category includes employees who have pensions with the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST).
2. Data for Group Self-Invested Personal Pensions (GSIPP) are included within the category Group Personal Pensions (GPP).

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Table 3 shows that over the year to 2015:

- there was an increase in the percentage of both men and women who had a pension.
- pension uptake among men increased by 9 percentage points to 61% and increased by 7 percentage points to 58% among women.
- the uptake of the type of pension for both men and women was broadly similar, with the most popular for both genders being Occupational Defined Benefit.

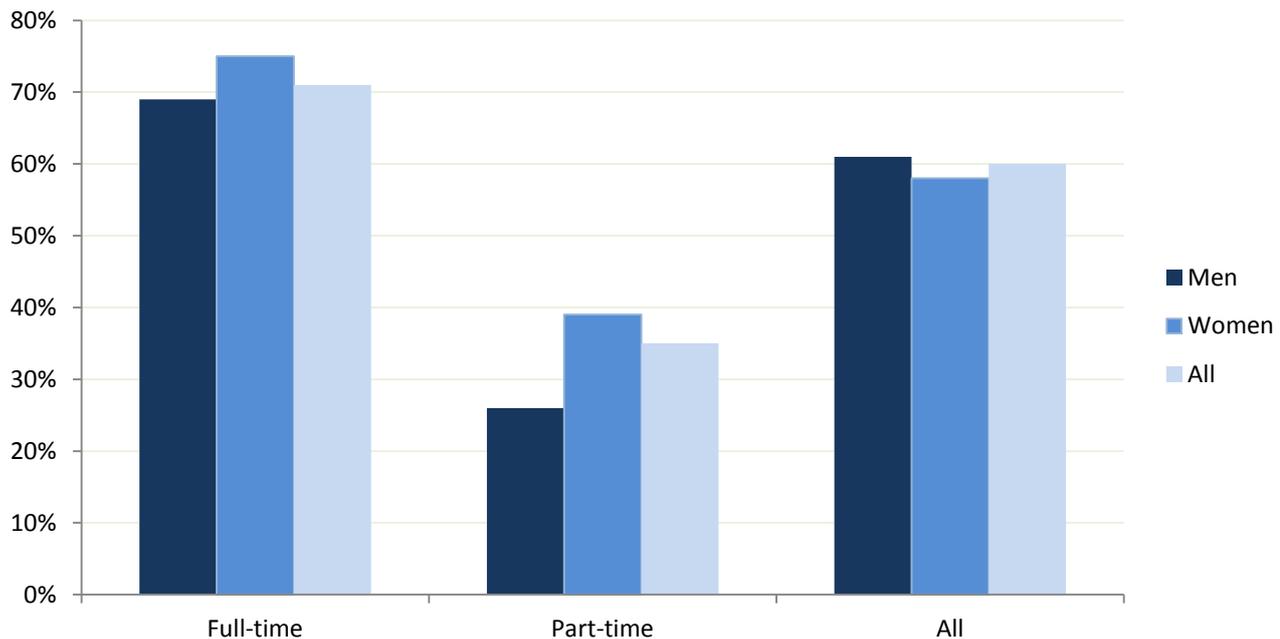
5

Pension membership by working pattern

Key points

- Workplace pension participation was higher among full-time than part-time employees in 2015.
- In 2015, 71% of all full-time employees were members of a workplace pension scheme (increasing from 61% in 2014).
- In comparison, 35% of all part-time employees were members of workplace pension schemes (increasing from 33% in 2014).

Figure 2: Proportion of employees with workplace pensions by working pattern and gender, 2015



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Figure 2 shows that in 2015:

- workplace pension participation was higher for female than male employees, working both full-time and part time.
- approximately 75% of full-time (39% part-time) female employees were members of a pension scheme, compared to 69% full-time (26% part-time) males.
- overall, men (61%) had a slightly higher percentage of pension membership than women (58%).

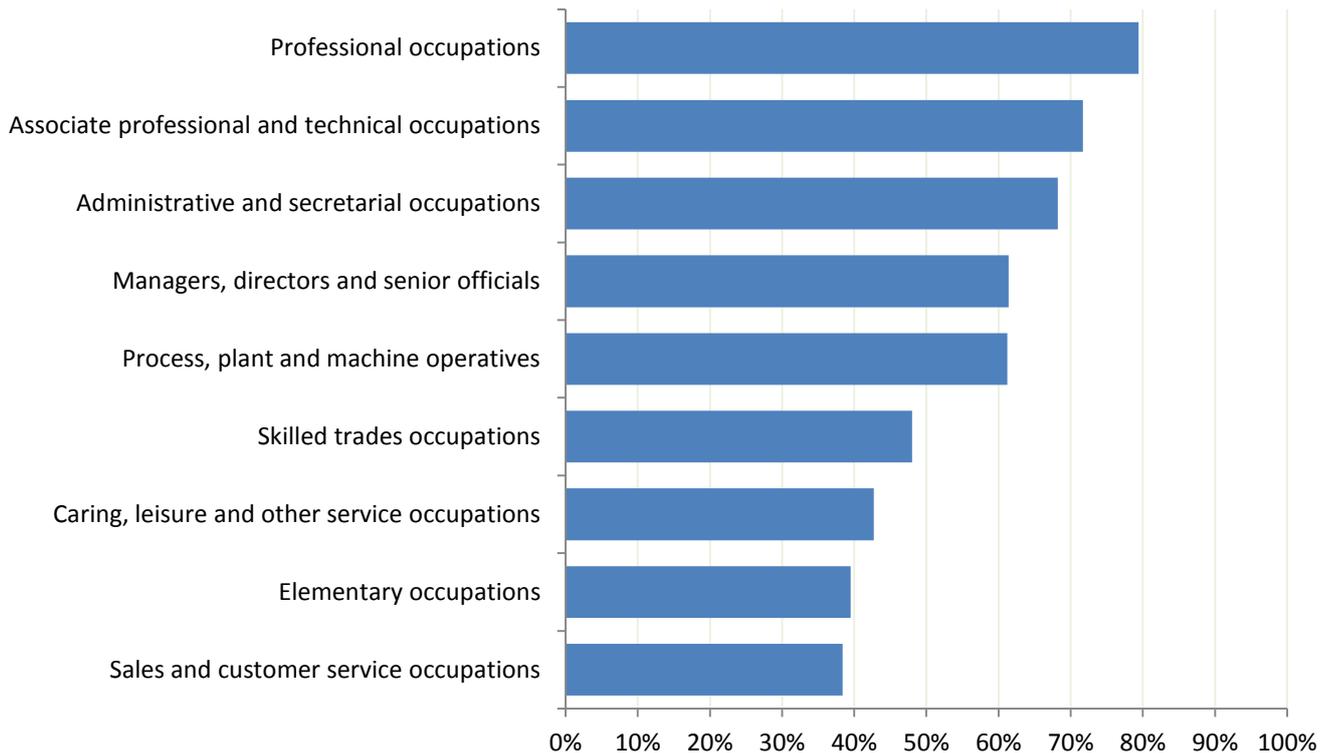
6

Pension membership by occupation

Key points

- Employees in professional occupations were the most likely to have a workplace based pension, while those in sales and customer service occupations were least likely to have a workplace pension.

Figure 3: Proportion of employees with workplace pensions by occupation, 2015



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Figure 3 shows the proportion of all employees with a workplace pension by occupation in 2015. The figures show that:

- 79% of employees in professional occupations were in workplace based pension schemes in 2015, a similar proportion to 2014 (76%).
- participation in workplace based pension schemes was lower in sales and customer service occupations, at 38% in 2015 (a slight increase on 33% in 2014).

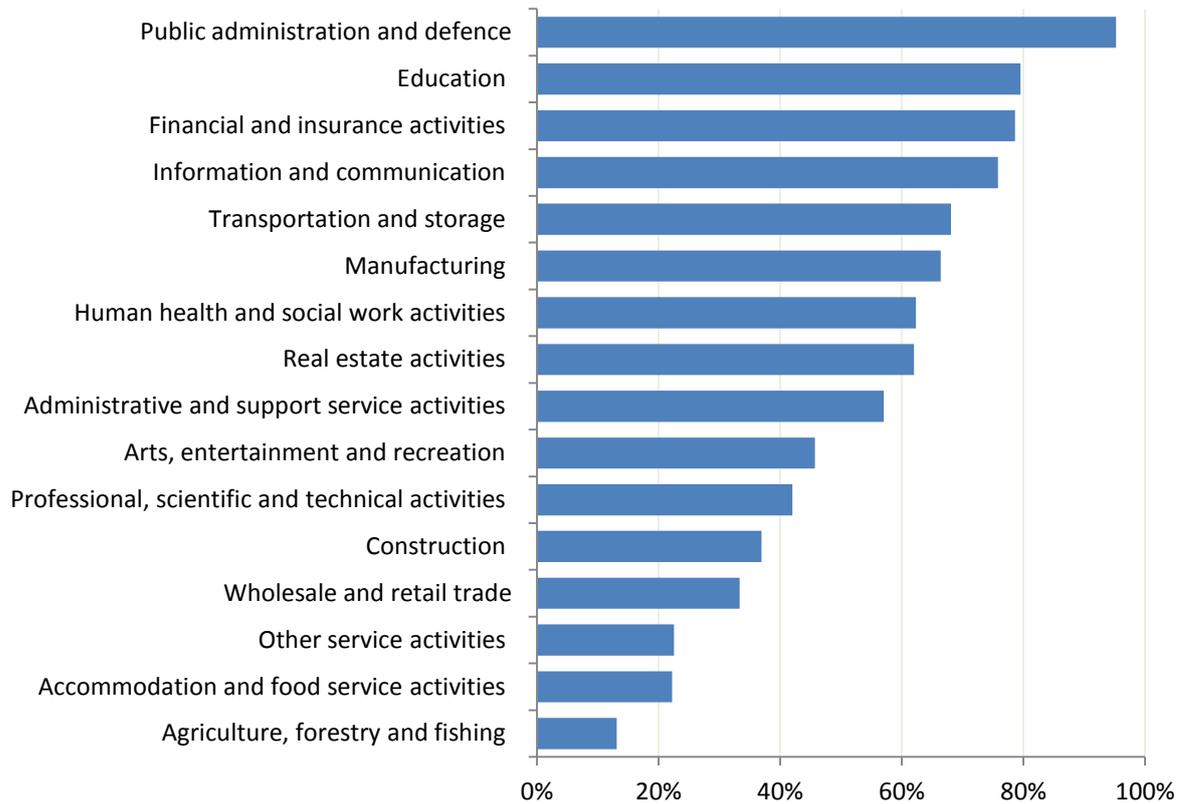
7

Pension membership by industry

Key points

- There was wide variation by industry, with workplace pension participation most likely among employees in public administration and defence and least likely among those in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Figure 4: Proportion of employees with workplace pensions by industry, 2015



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Figure 4 shows the proportion of all employees with a workplace pension by industry in 2015. The figures show that in 2015:

- 95% of employees in public administration and defence had a workplace based pension
- 13% of employees in agriculture, forestry and fishing had a workplace based pension.

Contracted out: This refers to a statutory arrangement under which pension schemes that meet certain conditions may contract out of the State Second Pension (S2P), formerly the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS). The members' and employers' National Insurance contributions are reduced or partially rebated. Members of a contracted out pension scheme obtain rights in the scheme in place of rights to an additional state pension. Contracting out through defined contribution schemes (occupational defined contribution, personal and stakeholder pensions) was abolished from 6 April 2012. Anyone contracted out of a defined contribution scheme at that time will automatically be contracted back into the State Second Pension. Contracting out through an occupational defined benefit scheme continued although this will be affected by proposed changes to the State Pension (see White Paper: The single-tier pension: a simple foundation for saving - <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/pensions-reform/state-pension/>).

Contributions: Payments into a pension by employees (and other individuals) or by employers.

Coefficient of variation (cv): The ratio of the standard error of an estimate to the estimate, expressed as a percentage. The smaller the cv, the higher the quality of the estimate. Therefore, the smaller the cv, the smaller the confidence interval around the estimate will be.

Defined contribution scheme: A pension scheme in which the benefits are determined by the contributions paid into the scheme, the investment return on those contributions, and the type of annuity (if any) purchased upon retirement. It is also known as a money purchase scheme. Defined contribution pensions may be occupational, personal or stakeholder pensions.

Full-time employees: Those working more than 30 hours each week excluding overtime and main meal breaks (25 hours for teachers and academics).

Group personal pension (GPP): An arrangement made for the employees of a particular employer or group of employers to participate in a personal pension on a group basis. This is a collecting arrangement only; the contract is between the individual and the pension provider, normally an insurance company. In ASHE, this category also includes group self-invested personal pensions. GPPs are a form of workplace pension.

Group self-invested personal pension (GSIPP): An arrangement made for the employees of a particular employer, or group of employers, to participate in a personal pension on a group basis. The GSIPP is similar to the group personal pension except that it is the policy holder rather than the pension provider who chooses the investments. GSIPPs are a form of workplace pension. In ASHE, GSIPPs are not collected separately from group personal pensions.

Group stakeholder pension: An arrangement made for the employees of a particular employer or group of employers to participate in a stakeholder pension on a group basis. This is a collecting arrangement only; the contract is between the individual and the pension provider, normally an insurance company. Group stakeholder pensions are a form of workplace pension.

Inter-Departmental Business Register: Introduced in 1994, the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) is the sampling frame for surveys of businesses carried out by the ONS and by other government departments. It is also a key data source for analysis of business activity.

Occupational defined benefit scheme: An occupational pension scheme in which the rules specify the rate of benefits to be paid. The most common defined benefit scheme is a salary-related scheme in which the benefits are based on the number of years of pensionable service, the accrual rate and either the final salary, the average of selected years' salaries or the best year's salary within a specified period before retirement.

Occupational pension scheme: An arrangement (other than accident or permanent health insurance) organised by an employer (or on behalf of a group of employers) to provide benefits for employees on their retirement and for their dependants on their death. In the private sector, occupational schemes are trust-based. Occupational pension schemes are a form of workplace pension.

Pension scheme: A legal arrangement offering benefits to members upon retirement. Schemes are provided by employers and are differentiated by a wide range of rules governing membership eligibility, contributions, benefits and taxation. Pension schemes in the private sector have trustees. Personal pensions and stakeholder pensions offered by insurance companies may also be referred to as schemes, but technically they are individual accounts rather than schemes.

Personal pension: An arrangement where the contract to provide contributions in return for retirement benefits is between an individual and an insurance company. Such plans may be taken out by individuals on their own initiative – for example, to provide a primary source of retirement income for the self-employed, or to provide a secondary income to employees who are members of occupational schemes. These would not be covered in the ASHE results. Alternatively they may be facilitated by an employer. These pensions are covered by ASHE and include group personal pensions and group stakeholder pensions. Personal pensions are a form of defined contribution pension.

Private sector schemes: Schemes covering the part of the economy consisting of individuals, firms and other institutions. In ASHE, the public and private sectors are classified using the legal status from the Inter-Departmental Business Register. ‘All employees’ categories include employees from the public and private sectors plus employees working for organisations classified as non-profit bodies.

Public sector schemes: Schemes covering the part of the economy that is state-provided, including central and local government, schooling, health and social services, policing and the armed forces. In ASHE, the public and private sectors are classified using the legal status from the Inter-Departmental Business Register. ‘All employees’ categories include employees from the public and private sectors plus employees working for organisations classified as non-profit bodies.

Stakeholder pension: Available since 2001, a flexible, portable, personal pension arrangement (provided by insurance companies) with capped management charges, that must meet the conditions set out in the Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999 and be registered with The Pensions Regulator. They can be taken out by an individual or facilitated by an employer. Stakeholder pensions are a form of defined contribution pension.

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC): The classificatory system used in the UK to place individuals into occupational groups.

Workplace pension: A workplace pension is a pension which is provided or facilitated via a workplace, principally for employees. It includes both occupational pension schemes and all forms of group personal and group stakeholder pensions.

Methodology

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is a UK wide survey that provides a wide range of information on earnings and hours worked. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) carries out ASHE in Great Britain and it is carried out by the NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in NI. ASHE replaced the New Earnings Survey (NES) from 2004, and ASHE comparisons are therefore only available on a consistent basis from that year onwards. This release contains summary statistics from the pension element of the 2015 Northern Ireland survey.

The survey information related to the pay-week (or other pay period if the employee was paid less frequently) which included 22nd April 2015, the reference date for the latest survey. The results are therefore not necessarily representative of pay over a longer period. They do not take account of subsequent changes in rates of pay which have become effective since April or changes which have been introduced with retrospective effect since the survey returns were completed.

Since the 2004 survey, supplementary information has been collected in order to improve coverage and hence make the survey more representative. This includes employees who have either moved jobs or entered the labour market between February, when the main ASHE sample is identified from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) records, and April, when the survey is conducted. In 2007, ONS also introduced a small number of methodological changes (to the sample design) to improve the quality of the results.

The ASHE results since 2004 are therefore discontinuous with earlier results, as are those since 2007. However, for 2004 two sets of results are available (the first exclude supplementary information and the second include this information), and similarly for 2006 (the first set not reflecting the methodological changes to the sample design and the second set consistent with the new methodological changes).

In 2009, in line with the major revision to the European Union's industrial classification system, NACE, ASHE moved from using the SIC 2003 categorisation of business activities to the new SIC 2007 activity codes. The UK is required by European legislation to revise the SIC in parallel with NACE so that both systems remain identical down to and including the 4 digit class level.

These revisions are motivated by the need to adapt the classifications to changes in the world economy. The revised classifications reflect the growing importance of service activities in the economy over the last fifteen years, mainly due to the developments in information and communication technologies (ICT).

[More information on the extent of the revisions and correspondence between SIC 2007 and the former SIC 2003](#)

With the aim of improving the alignment with the new International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO 08), from 2013 the Standard Occupational Classification 2000 (SOC 2000) used for ASHE has been replaced by the Standard Occupational Classification 2010 (SOC 2010). Since the SOC forms part of the methodology by which ASHE data are weighted to produce estimates for NI, this has caused a discontinuity in the ASHE time series. Therefore all of the estimates for 2011 (revised), 2012 and 2013 are not directly comparable to earlier results.

[The major differences between the SOC 2000 and SOC 2010 classifications are summarised in this document, starting at page 62.](#)

Coverage and sampling

As in previous years, the sample used for the survey included approximately 1% of all employees in NI who were covered by PAYE schemes and therefore is subject to an associated level of sampling error. Someone who is in more than one PAYE scheme may appear more than once. Information on earnings and hours is obtained in confidence from employers under the authority of the Statistics of Trade and Employment (NI) Order 1988. Information collected is treated as strictly confidential and is used only for statistical purposes. The resulting analyses do not show information about identifiable people or private businesses.

The ASHE estimates are based on a sample and are therefore subject to an associated level of variability. The coefficient of variation (CV) indicates the quality of an estimate. The CV is the ratio of the standard error of an estimate to the estimate, expressed as a percentage. The smaller the CV, the higher the quality of the estimate. Therefore, the smaller the CV, the smaller the confidence interval around the estimate will be.

ASHE coverage change in 2014

In 2013 HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) changed the criteria which determine how businesses are obliged to report employees' earnings via their Pay as You Earn (PAYE) schemes. The PAYE system is the frame for the ASHE sample. Until this change, businesses were only required to operate PAYE for employees whose earnings were above the Lower Earnings Limit (LEL) for National Insurance contributions (currently £111 per week) and they did not report all new jobs until the end of the tax year. The new rules require employers to report the details of all of their employee jobs via their PAYE schemes, whatever their earnings, provided that they have at least one employee earning above the LEL. In addition, employers must report for all jobs in 'real-time', meaning that they cannot wait until the end of the tax year. This new system is known as 'Real-Time Information' (RTI). In theory, it is possible that the move to RTI results in a coverage change for the ASHE sample.

It should be noted that 2014 is not the first year in which the ASHE sample includes the types of jobs that are affected by RTI. This is because many employers, particularly large businesses, which account for a large proportion of the labour market, chose to report many or all such jobs on their PAYE schemes in previous years.

It is not possible to precisely quantify the impact of this change since it is not possible to identify the specific jobs that are included in the ASHE sample as a direct result of the move to RTI. However, compositional differences between 2013 and 2014 are not unusual when considered in historical context. This is because, as noted above, many of the RTI-type jobs were already being reported by employers in previous years, meaning that the composition of the sample was not substantially distorted as a result of RTI.

Consequently, ONS judges that the impact of the move to RTI on the estimates for ASHE in 2014 is negligible. It is possible that at some lower levels of disaggregation, there may be a more pronounced effect, perhaps because RTI has resulted in different behavioural changes for employers in particular regions or in particular sectors.

Response and weighting

A total of 6,493 returns were received by NISRA (92.1% of those sampled). ASHE responses are weighted to the number of jobs measured by the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and this weighting is carried out by ONS. The weighting factors include age, sex, occupation and workplace and take account of differing response rates.

From 2006, the LFS moved from using seasonal quarters to calendar quarters. As ASHE uses LFS data in the calculation of aggregation weights, it was necessary to move from using data taken from LFS Spring to LFS Quarter 2.

In October 2014, the LFS was re-weighted to the latest population projections for 2014 based on the 2011 Census. Previously, LFS results were based on projections for 2011 from the 2001 Census. The revised LFS figures have been used for 2014 (revised) and 2015 (provisional) ASHE results.

Further information

If you require further information about the figures contained in this publication or the accompanying tables, please contact the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings section using the details below:

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency
Economic and Labour Market Statistics Branch
ASHE Section Room 120
Netherleigh
Massey Avenue
Belfast BT4 2JP

Telephone: (028) 9052 9311

Fax: (028) 9052 9658

Textphone: (028) 9052 9304

Email: brian.grogan@dfpni.gov.uk

Web: [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings](#)

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