

Quarterly Supplement to the Labour Market Report January-March 2018

30th May 2018

The Quarterly Supplement provides a more detailed range of statistics from the Labour Force Survey than is available from the monthly [Labour Market Report](#) including information disaggregated by gender, age and by Local Government District.

The additional information is provided as Excel and ODS tables, which can be accessed directly from the attached index of tables (Page 11). The information included is **not seasonally adjusted** unless otherwise stated. The Further Information section provides detail on sampling variability.

The key points from the supplementary tables are:

Unemployment

- Unemployment was at its lowest ever recorded, with the January-March 2018 rate at 3.1% (4.4% for males and 1.8% for females), down from a high of 7.9% in the same quarter in 2013.
- The unemployment rate for males has been consistently higher than for females.
- Almost two-fifths (38%) of all unemployed persons were aged 16-29 years.

Employment

- There were an estimated 819,000 persons aged 16-64 in employment in NI in January-March 2018. The number of those in employment increased by approximately 46,000 in the last five years.
- There were more male employees beyond the age of 60 than females.
- A higher proportion of female (38%) employees worked part-time than males (10%). The main reason cited by female employees for working part-time was that they did not want a full-time job (75%).
- The major industries of all those in employment were public administration, education and health (32%) and distribution, hotels and restaurants (19%). Almost half (47%) of females in employment were in the public administration, education and health sector, compared with 17% of males in employment.
- Professional occupations accounted for the largest proportion of persons in employment (18%); although 21% of females in employment were in this occupation, the highest proportion of males in employment were in skilled trades occupations (24%).
- In January-March 2018, the working age employment rate by Local Government District was highest in Antrim and Newtownabbey (82%) and lowest in Newry, Mourne and Down (62%) and Derry City and Strabane (63%).

Economic activity

- At 76%, the 16-64 economic activity rate for males in January-March 2018 was 7 percentage points higher than that for females (69%). The current differential between the activity rates of males and females has decreased from a 15 percentage point gap ten years ago.
- Economic activity rates were highest in Antrim and Newtownabbey Local Government District (83%) and lowest in Newry, Mourne and Down (64%).

Economically inactive

- The January-March 2018 economic inactivity rate (16-64) was 28%.
- The trend for higher rates among females than males continues (31% and 24% respectively).
- Economic inactivity was higher in NI than the UK in all age groups except for those aged 25-34 years and 65+.
- Under half (45%) of the economically inactive (aged 16+) were aged 65 and over in NI compared to 55% in the UK. NI had a higher percentage of economically inactive (16-64) who were sick / disabled than in the UK (32% compared to 24%).
- In January-March 2018 the highest level of economic inactivity (16-64) by Local Government District was reported in Newry, Mourne and Down (36%) and the lowest in Antrim and Newtownabbey (17%).

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

- In January-March 2018, there were 21,000 young people (aged from 16 to 24) in NI who were NEET.
- The NEET rate among females aged 16-24 (9%) is 2 percentage points lower than last year and down almost 9 percentage points from 3 years ago.
- Among males aged 16-24 the NEET rate is up almost 2 percentage points from last year but down around 7 percentage points from 3 years ago.
- The percentage of all young people in Northern Ireland who were NEET in January-March 2018 was 10.2%.
- Of the 21,000 16-24 year olds who were NEET, 14,000 were economically inactive, with a further 7,000 who were economically active but unemployed.
- Within the UK, Northern Ireland and Scotland had the joint lowest 16-24 NEET rate at 10.2%, while England had a rate of 10.7% and Wales had the highest rate of 10.9%. The UK average 16-24 NEET rate was 10.6%.

Education and training

- Persons who were economically active aged 16-64 were more likely to be educated to a higher level than the economically inactive.
- Specifically, 31% of economically active were educated to degree level or above, whereas only 10% of economically inactive had the same level of education.
- Almost one third (30%) of economically inactive persons had no formal qualifications at January-March 2018, compared with 10% of economically active.
- A higher proportion of younger employees (aged 16-34) received job-related training than older employees (aged 35-64).
- Additionally, a higher proportion of females (any age) received job-related training than male employees.

Disability and the Labour Market¹

- Just under one in five persons (20%) of working age in Northern Ireland had a disability.
- More than double the proportion (32%) of disabled persons had no qualifications compared to non-disabled persons (12%) at January-March 2018.
- People without a disability were more than twice as likely to be in employment (79%) than those with a disability (35%).

Self-employment

- The number of self-employed people increased by 7,000 (6%) in the period 2008 to 2018, this compared with an increase in employees of 9%. This is driven mainly by an increase in the number of self-employed females of 62%.
- However, even with the increase in self-employed females, only 9% of females in employment were self-employed, compared to 20% of males.
- The largest occupation group for the self-employed was skilled trade occupations (36%).
- Northern Ireland (14.7%) ranked sixth out of the twelve UK regions in terms of self-employment rates for January-March 2018, similar to the UK average. London reported the highest self-employment rates at 18.3%.

Graduates

- The number of Northern Ireland graduates has increased by 20% in the last five years, to 281,000 in January-March 2018.
- The highest proportion of graduates in Northern Ireland (29%) were in the 30-39 age group.
- The Northern Ireland working age employment rate was considerably higher for graduates (88%) than for non-graduates (64%).
- The Northern Ireland employment rate for non-graduates was the lowest of the twelve regions in the UK, however, the employment rate among graduates ranked second highest of all UK regions (behind the South West).
- Graduates were most likely to be in professional occupations (45%), whereas, non-graduates were most likely to be in other occupations² (49%).

Households³

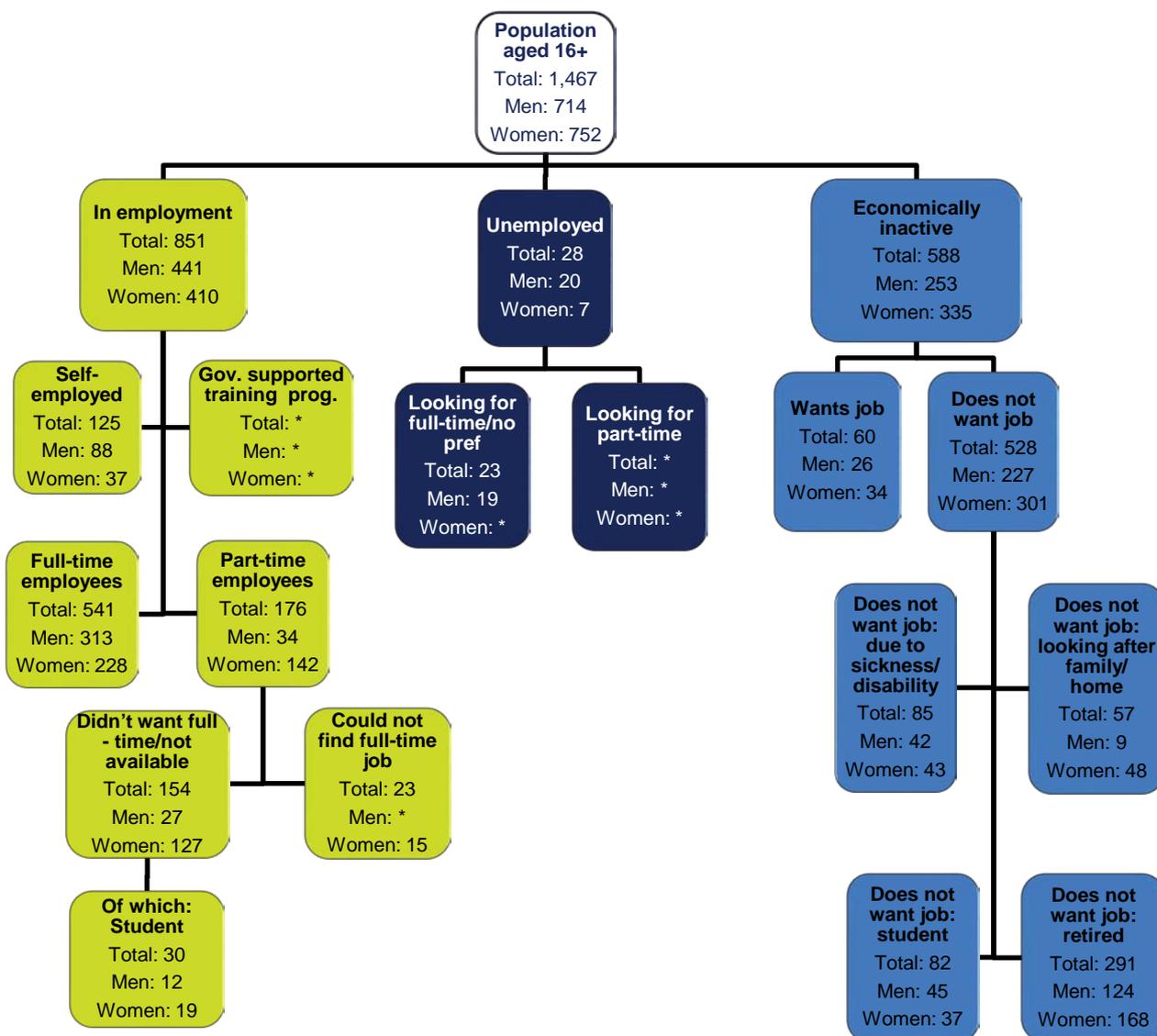
- In October-December 2017, the most common type of household in Northern Ireland consisted of one person which accounted for 32% of all households.
- Northern Ireland had the highest proportion of working age workless households (21%) among the UK regions. This compared to 14% in the UK as a whole.
- The economic activity rate for female heads of family with dependent children declines as the number of children increases.
- When the youngest dependent child was aged 0-4, the economic activity rate of the female head of family (69%) was over 16 percentage points lower than the rate for the 16-18 age group (86%).

¹ ONS has lifted the temporary suspension on the publication of disability statistics due to an apparent discontinuity (see Further Information section for details). This suspension covered only the October-December quarter, which is now included in the accompanying tables.

² Other occupations include caring, leisure and other services, sales and customer service occupations, process, plant and machine operatives, and elementary occupations.

³ The household data refers to a different quarter than the rest of the document as the source for household data is published twice a year. Data relating to individuals is published on a quarterly basis.

Figure 1: Overall labour market structure, 16+ (thousands)



Source: Labour Force Survey, January-March 2018

Notes:

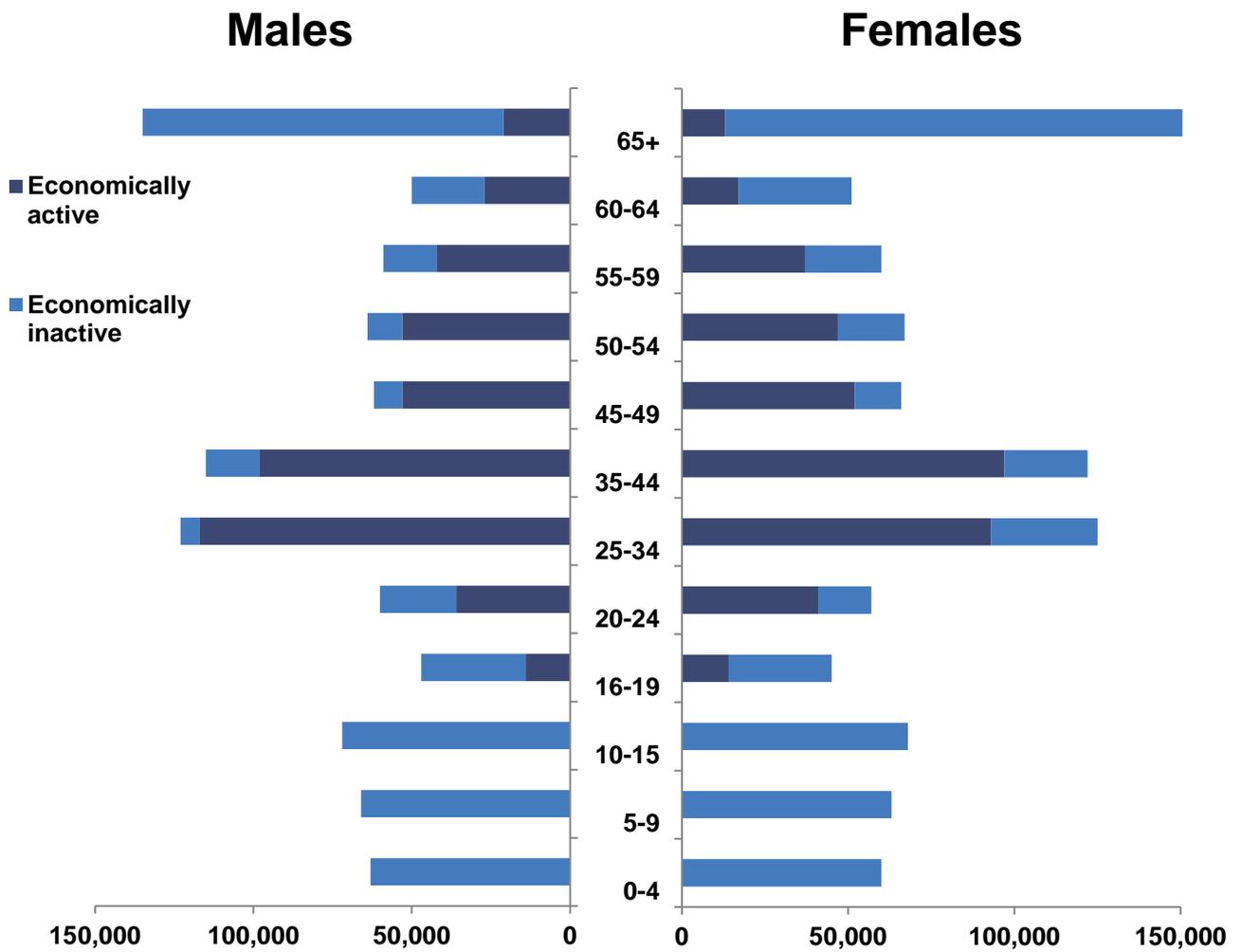
This chart illustrates the structure of the private household population in relation to the key ILO defined categories of in employment, unemployed and economically inactive (see Further Information for definitions).

* Sample size is too small to provide a reliable estimate (this explains why a gender split for some categories is omitted).

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Please note, the number of unemployed females is below the usual threshold for release of 8,000 – the confidence intervals are +0.5% or +3,500.

Figure 2: Northern Ireland population structure by age, sex and economic activity



Source: Labour Force Survey, January-March 2018

Context

The Quarterly Supplement to the Labour Market Report (LMR) provides more detailed statistics from the most recent quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS). The Quarterly Supplement analyses data which has not been adjusted for seasonality whereas the monthly LMR provides headline data adjusted for seasonality. The quarterly publication provides additional data in key areas such as employment, unemployment and economic activity / inactivity. In addition, it provides the most up-to-date information on specific areas such as those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), self-employment and graduates.

In keeping with feedback from various user consultation exercises, which highlighted a demand for data in re-usable format, the quarterly supplement has moved from a traditional publication style to being primarily tabular, with key points highlighted in this summary report alongside figures and notes which are useful for context. The detailed tables are available on the NISRA-ELMS webpage and can be accessed via the attached index of tables (Page 11).

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

Labour market statistics feature in the [economic commentary](#) which provides an overview of the state of the Northern Ireland economy, setting it in context with the UK and Republic of Ireland. The most up-to-date official statistics on the economy and labour market are available on the [Economic Overview section](#) of the website.

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

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

Further Information

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.

LFS unemployment

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

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

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

LFS employment

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

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

LFS economic activity

The economic activity rate is the percentage of people aged 16-64 who are economically active.

Definition of 'working age'

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

Sampling

Because the LFS is a sample survey, results are subject to sampling error, i.e. the actual proportion of the population in private households with a particular characteristic may differ from the proportion of the LFS sample with that characteristic. Accordingly, although percentages in most tables are quoted to one decimal place, they should not be regarded as having this degree of accuracy, and indeed some apparent trends over time may be misleading due to sampling error. In general, the larger the group, the more precise (proportionately) is the LFS estimate.

The following table shows the proportions obtained from the January-March 2018 survey for some key LFS variables and indicates their sampling accuracy. The confidence intervals represent the ranges either side of the LFS proportions which are 95% certain to include the true values of the quantities estimated.

LFS proportions of total private household population (16+), including 95% confidence intervals, January-March 2018

| | Estimate | Change over quarter | Change over year |
|--|----------|------------------------|------------------------|
| In employment (Sampling variability of change) | 851,000 | 19,000 (+/-25,000) | 25,000 (+/-32,000) |
| Unemployment (Sampling variability of change) | 28,000 | -8,000 (+/-8,000) | -19,000 (+/-12,000) |
| Economically inactive (Sampling variability of change) | 588,000 | -10,000 (+/-23,000) | 1,000 (+/-29,000) |
| Unemployment rate (Sampling variability of change) | 3.1% | -0.9pps +/-0.9pps | -2.2pps +/-1.4pps |
| Economic activity rate (Sampling variability of change) | 59.9% | 0.7pps +/-1.9pps | 0.1pps +/-2.4pps |

* As a percentage of all in employment.

Confidence intervals for other proportions produced in this publication may be obtained on request from contacts given at the end of this note.

Response Rates

The total eligible sample for the January-March 2018 LFS consisted of 2,363 addresses, (696 chosen at random from the Valuation & Lands Agency list of domestic properties, 1667 carried forward from the previous quarter). A random start, fixed interval sampling technique of the addresses, which are ordered by Council Area and Ward, is used. This ensures a proportional representation across the Council Areas in Northern Ireland.

Only private household addresses were eligible since the LFS is a survey of the private household population. Every selected address is interviewed on five successive occasions, such that in any one quarter, a fifth of the sample will be receiving their first interview, one fifth their second and so on, with one fifth receiving their fifth and final interview. This results in an 80% sample overlap between quarters.

Response rates, January – March 2018

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Total addresses sampled | 2,636 |
| Fully and partially responding | 1,496 |
| Eligible sample | 2,363 |
| Response rate (%) | 63.3% |

*Of the addresses sampled, a small number contained more than one household and some contained households which moved during the quarter. Residents in NHS hospital accommodation (formerly called nurses' homes) and students living in halls of residence or boarding schools are included to improve the coverage of young people.

Breakdown of non-response and ineligible addresses, January-March 2018

| Non-response/non-contact: | Number |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| - Outright refusal | 289 |
| - Circumstantial refusal | 105 |
| - Non-contact | 473 |
| Ineligible addresses: | |
| - Vacant/derelict/under construction | 191 |
| - Holiday accommodation | 15 |
| - Non-residential | 7 |
| - Second residence | 43 |
| - Other ineligible | 14 |
| - Household moves | 3 |
| Total | 1140 |

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 Northern Ireland LFS results are consistent with those applied by the Office for National Statistics to other UK regions.

More information on the revision policy concerning labour market statistics can be found through the link: [Labour market statistics revisions policy](#)

Changes to the Disability data

As of May 2016 the definition of Disability used on the Labour Force Survey in Northern Ireland has changed from the DDA-based definition to the GSS Harmonised Standard definition of Disability. This is to ensure consistence and comparability with the UK. It has caused a discontinuity in the time series at April 2013.

The GSS Harmonised Standards focus on a 'core' definition of people whose condition currently limits their activity. In summary the core definition covers people who report:

- (current) physical or mental health condition(s) or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more; and
- the condition(s) or illness(es) reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

This differs from the DDA-based definition of disability previously used in the LFS in that it excludes the following groups which are "non-core" under the new Act:

- people with a progressive condition (specified in the Equality Act as HIV/AIDS, cancer or multiple sclerosis) that does not currently reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.
- people whose activities would be restricted only without medication or treatment.

Disability

In November 2017 ONS advised suspending publication of disability estimates following identification of an apparent discontinuity between April-June and July-September 2017 estimates. Although a discontinuity was not visible at NI level, NISRA removed disability estimates in the October - December 2017 Quarterly Supplement while further investigations took place.

ONS have since advised that data relating to October-December 2017 should be reinstated as their investigations did not identify any quality issues. However, comparisons of data should be made with caution between April-June 2017 and subsequent time periods. Further recommendations on historical comparisons of the estimates will be given in November 2018 when ONS are due to publish estimates for July-September 2018.

An [article](#) on the ONS website explains the quality assurance investigations conducted.

For further information:

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

You can also contact Economic & Labour Market Statistics Branch by:

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Index of Tables

Table No. Title

Unemployment

| | |
|-------|--|
| QS1.1 | Unemployment by sex, 16+ |
| QS1.2 | Age distribution of the unemployed, 16+ |
| QS1.3 | Duration of unemployment in Northern Ireland by sex and age, 16+ |

In employment

| | |
|-------|--|
| QS2.1 | Employment by sex, 16-64 |
| QS2.2 | Age distribution of those in employment, 16+ |
| QS2.3 | Employment status of those in employment, 16+ |
| QS2.4 | Reasons for females working part-time, 16+ |
| QS2.5 | Persons in employment by industry section, 16+ |
| QS2.6 | Persons in employment by occupation, 16+ |
| QS2.7 | Daily sickness absence rates of employees, 16+ |
| QS2.8 | Employment by sex and local government district, 16-64 |

Economic activity

| | |
|-------|---|
| QS3.1 | Economic activity by sex, 16-64 |
| QS3.2 | Economic activity by sex and local government district, 16-64 |

Economically inactive

| | |
|-------|---|
| QS4.1 | Economic inactivity by sex, 16-64 |
| QS4.2 | Age distribution of the economically inactive, NI & UK, 16+ |
| QS4.3 | Reason for economic inactivity, NI & UK, 16-64 |
| QS4.4 | Economic inactivity by local government district, 16-64 |

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

| | |
|-------|--|
| QS5.1 | Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), 16-24 |
| QS5.2 | Economic overview, 16-24 |
| QS5.3 | NEET rate by UK country, 16-24 |

Education and training

| | |
|-------|--|
| QS6.1 | Qualifications by economic activity, 16-64 |
| QS6.2 | Percentage of employees receiving job-related training by age group, 16-64 |

Disability

| | |
|-------|--|
| QS7.1 | Disability rate by age and sex, 16-64 |
| QS7.2 | Qualifications of persons with or without a disability, 16-64 |
| QS7.3 | Economic activity of persons with or without a disability, 16-64 |

Self Employment

- QS8.1 Employee and self employment, 16+
- QS8.2 Self-employment by sex, 16+
- QS8.3 Self-employment by age group, 16+
- QS8.4 Highest qualification of the self employed and those in employment, 16-64
- QS8.5 Percentage of self-employed persons by industry section, 16+
- QS8.6 Percentage of self-employed persons by occupation, 16+
- QS8.7 Self-employment rate by UK region, 16+

Graduates

- QS9.1 Number of NI graduates, 16-64
- QS9.2 Number of graduates by age group, 16-64
- QS9.3 Graduate & non-graduate employment rates by UK region, 16-64
- QS9.4 Occupational groups for graduates and non-graduates, 16-64

Households

- QS10.1 Household type, NI & UK
- QS10.2 Combined economic activity status of household members by UK regions, 16-64
- QS10.3 Economic activity rates for females (16-64) by number of dependent children
- QS10.4 Economic activity rates for females (16-64) with and without dependent children, by age
- QS10.5 Economic activity rates for females (16-64) by age of youngest dependent child