

# Northern Ireland Labour Market Report March 2017



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

## Key Points

- The latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates for the period November – January 2017 indicate that over the quarter, the employment rate decreased, the unemployment rate increased while economic inactivity was unchanged. The number of people claiming unemployment related benefits in NI decreased in February 2017.
- The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 in work (the employment rate) decreased marginally over the quarter (0.1 pps) but increased over the year (0.6 pps), to 69.4%.
- The LFS indicated that the NI unemployment rate (16+) increased by 0.1 percentage points (pps) over the quarter to November - January 2017 but decreased by 0.3 pps over the year, to 5.7%. The equivalent UK unemployment rate was down over the quarter and over the year to 4.7%.
- The NI unemployment rate was below the European Union (8.2%) rate and Republic of Ireland (7.2%) rate for December 2016.
- The NI economic inactivity rate (the proportion of people aged from 16 to 64 who were not working and not seeking or available to work) was 26.2%, unchanged over the quarter but a decrease of 0.3 pps over the year.
- None of the reported changes in employment, unemployment or economic inactivity were statistically significant over the quarter or the year. However, there have been statistically significant changes in the medium term – the increase in the employment rate and the decrease in the unemployment rate compared to August - October 2013; and the decrease in the economic inactivity rate compared to August - October 2010.
- The number of people claiming unemployment related benefits (from NI Jobs and Benefits Offices) decreased by 300 over the month to 31,600 in February 2017. This is the eleventh consecutive monthly decrease.
- The number of people claiming unemployment related benefits has fallen by 33,100 since the most recent peak in February 2013. The number of people leaving the register in the previous 36 month period has slowed from 11,500 in the twelve months to February 2015, to 6,800 in the most recent year to February 2017.
- Businesses reported (in the Quarterly Employment Survey) that the number of employee jobs increased over the quarter (1,630) and over the year (2,490) to December 2016 (731,980), following a decrease in the previous quarter. This also represents a slowdown in annual growth compared to recent years.

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

## **1. Summary of labour market statistics**

- Labour market summary table
- Infographic summary
- Context

## **2. Unemployment**

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

## **3. Employment**

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

## **4. Economic inactivity**

- LFS economic inactivity

## **5. Earnings**

- Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

## **6. Further information**

## **7. Index of Tables**

### **National Statistics**

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

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

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

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

## Change over quarter / month

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

- the unemployment rate (5.7%) increased by 0.1 pps
- the employment rate (69.4%) decreased by 0.1 pps
- the economic inactivity rate was unchanged at 26.2%.

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

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

- a decrease of 300 in the seasonally adjusted claimant count to 31,600.

During February 2017 there were:

- 134 confirmed redundancies notified to the Department, representing a decrease on the previous monthly period total of 210 confirmed redundancies.

Employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at December 2016 was 731,980, which was:

- An increase over the quarter (1,630) from the revised September 2016 estimate of 730,350.

**Table 1: Northern Ireland Labour Market Summary with sampling variability**

	Reference period	Estimate	Change over quarter	Change over year
Unemployment <sup>1</sup> (Sampling variability of change)	Nov-Jan 2017	51,000	1,000 (+/-11,000)	-2,000 (+/-15,000)
Employment <sup>2</sup> (Sampling variability of change)	Nov-Jan 2017	838,000	1,000 (+/-18,000)	5,000 (+/-33,000)
Economically inactive <sup>2</sup> (Sampling variability of change)	Nov-Jan 2017	569,000	0 (+/-16,000)	6,000 (+/-30,000)
Unemployment rate <sup>1</sup> (Sampling variability of change)	Nov-Jan 2017	5.7%	0.1 pps +/-1.2 pps	-0.3 pps +/-1.7 pps
Employment rate <sup>2</sup> (Sampling variability of change)	Nov-Jan 2017	69.4%	-0.1 pps +/-1.3 pps	0.6 pps +/-2.4 pps
Economic inactivity rate <sup>2</sup> (Sampling variability of change)	Nov-Jan 2017	26.2%	0.0 pps +/-1.2 pps	-0.3 pps +/-2.3 pps
Employee Jobs	Dec-16	731,980	1,630	2,490
			<b>Change on month</b>	
Claimant Count	Feb-17	31,600	-300	-6,800
Redundancies <sup>3</sup>	Feb-17	134		

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

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Confirmed redundancies in the calendar month.

[Download in excel](#)

## Change over year

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

- the unemployment rate (5.7%) decreased by 0.3 pps
- the employment rate (69.4%) increased by 0.6 pps
- the economic inactivity rate decreased by 0.3 pps to 26.2%.

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

- a decrease in the seasonally adjusted claimant count of 6,800 to 31,600.

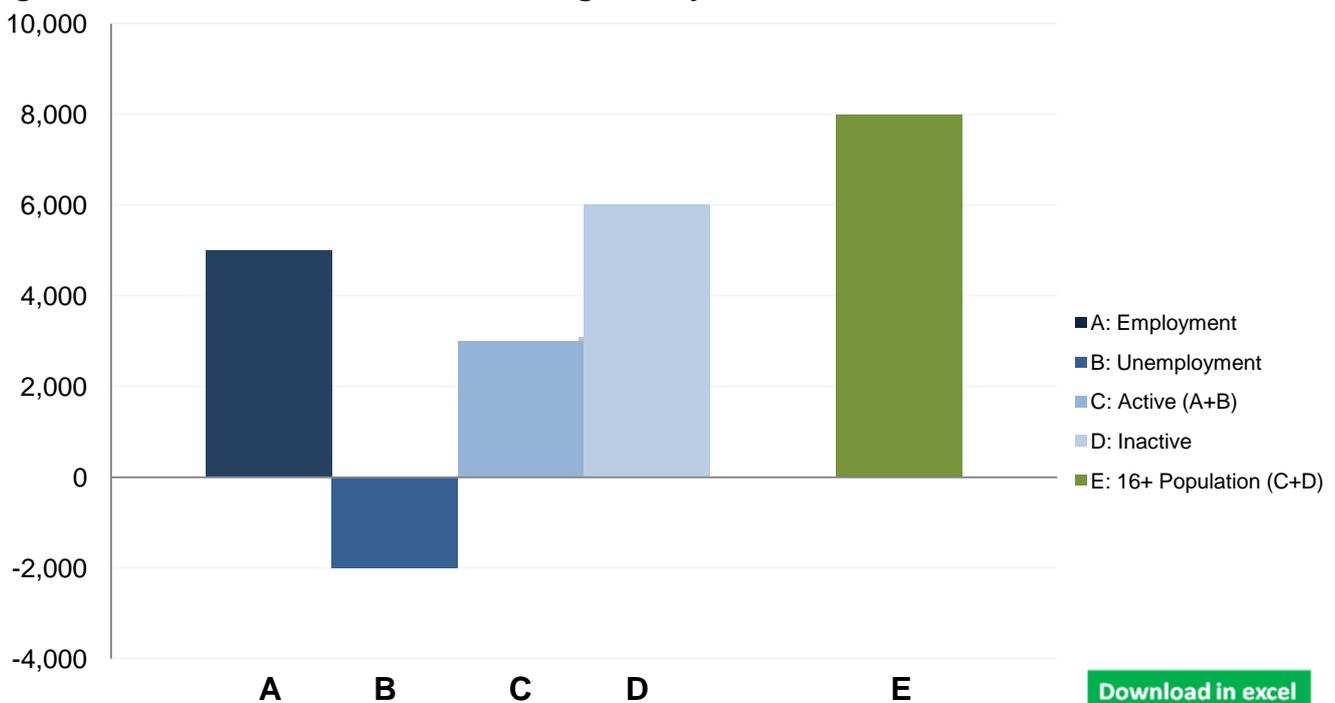
Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 3,552 confirmed redundancies which was an increase of 79% from the previous year (1,987).

Employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at December 2016 was 731,980, which was:

- an increase of 0.3% (2,490) from the revised December 2015 estimate of 729,490.

**Figure 1: NI labour market structure: change over year**



## UK summary

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for the UK for the period November - January 2017 showed:

- the unemployment rate (4.7%) was down 0.1 pps over the quarter and by 0.3 pps over the year
- the employment rate (74.6%) increased by 0.2 pps over the quarter and by 0.5 pps over the year
- the economic inactivity rate (21.6%) decreased by 0.1 pps over the quarter and by 0.2 pps over the year.

### **Employee jobs (Business survey based)**

Businesses reported (in the Quarterly Employment Survey) that the number of employee jobs increased over the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2016 (1,630) and increased over the year (2,490) to 731,980.

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

- a decrease in the manufacturing sector by 0.5% (-420 jobs) to 80,670 jobs.
- an increase in the construction sector by 1.2% (350 jobs) to 30,230 jobs.
- an increase in the services sector by 0.3% (1,620 jobs) to 598,380 jobs.
- an increase in the other industries sector by 0.4% (80 jobs) to 22,700 jobs.

Over the year, December 2015 to December 2016, the seasonally adjusted employee jobs figures showed:

- an increase in the manufacturing sector by 1.1% (850 jobs) to 80,670 jobs.
- an increase in the construction sector by 3.4% (1,000 jobs) to 30,230 jobs.
- a decrease in the services sector by 0.1% (-710 jobs) to 598,380 jobs.
- an increase in the other industries sector by 6.3% (1,350 jobs) to 22,700 jobs.

### **Commentary**

Annual LFS figures continue to reflect a gradual decline in the unemployment rate over recent years (from 7.4% in 2013 to 5.7% in 2016) coupled with a gradual increase in the employment rate (from 67.2% in 2013 to 69.5% in 2016.) The most recent results show an increase in the unemployment rate (16+) of 0.1 percentage points and a marginal decrease in the employment rate (0.1 percentage points) over the quarter to November – January 2017.

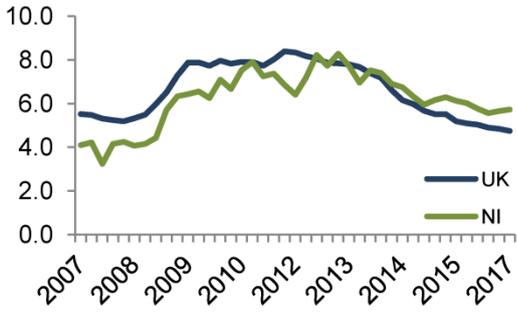
Business surveys show the number of employee jobs has returned to a level similar to the pre-downturn peak in June 2008, although a gradual slowdown in jobs growth is evident since June 2015. Revised September 2016 employee jobs figures show a marginal decrease over the quarter and year. However the most recent quarter records a return to growth over both the quarter and year, though this is not particularly marked.

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

# NISRA Labour Market Statistics

## Labour Force Survey

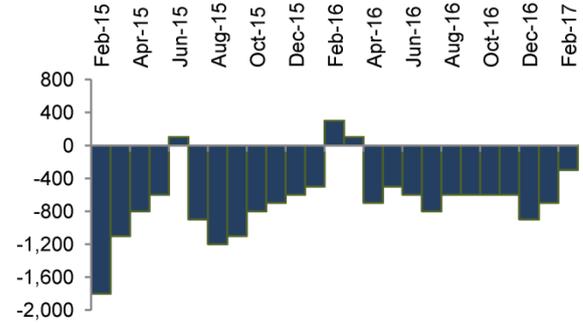
NI unemployment **5.7%** versus UK unemployment **4.7%**



↑ NI Unemployment (Nov-Jan 2017)  
Change on Quarter: **+0.1pps**

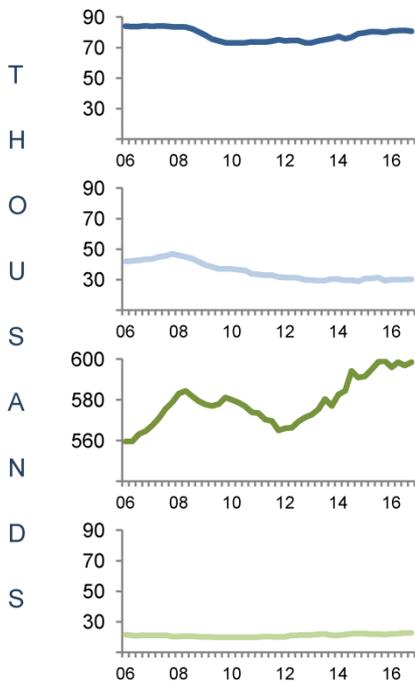
## Claimant Count

Claimants decrease by 300 over the month



**31,600** people claiming unemployment related benefits at **February 2017**

## Quarterly Employment Survey – December 2016



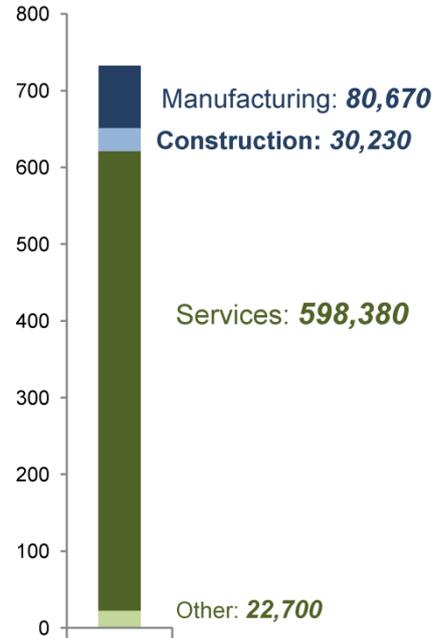
↓ Manufacturing  
Change on Quarter: **-0.5% (-420)**

↑ Construction  
Change on Quarter: **+1.2% (350)**

↑ Services  
Change on Quarter: **+0.3% (1,620)**

↑ Other  
Change on Quarter: **+0.4% (80)**

Total employee jobs:  
**731,980**



All data seasonally adjusted and subject to future revisions.  
Data published on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017 by Economic and Labour Market Statistics branch (NISRA).

## Context

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

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

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

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

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

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

# 2

# Unemployment

## Labour Force Survey

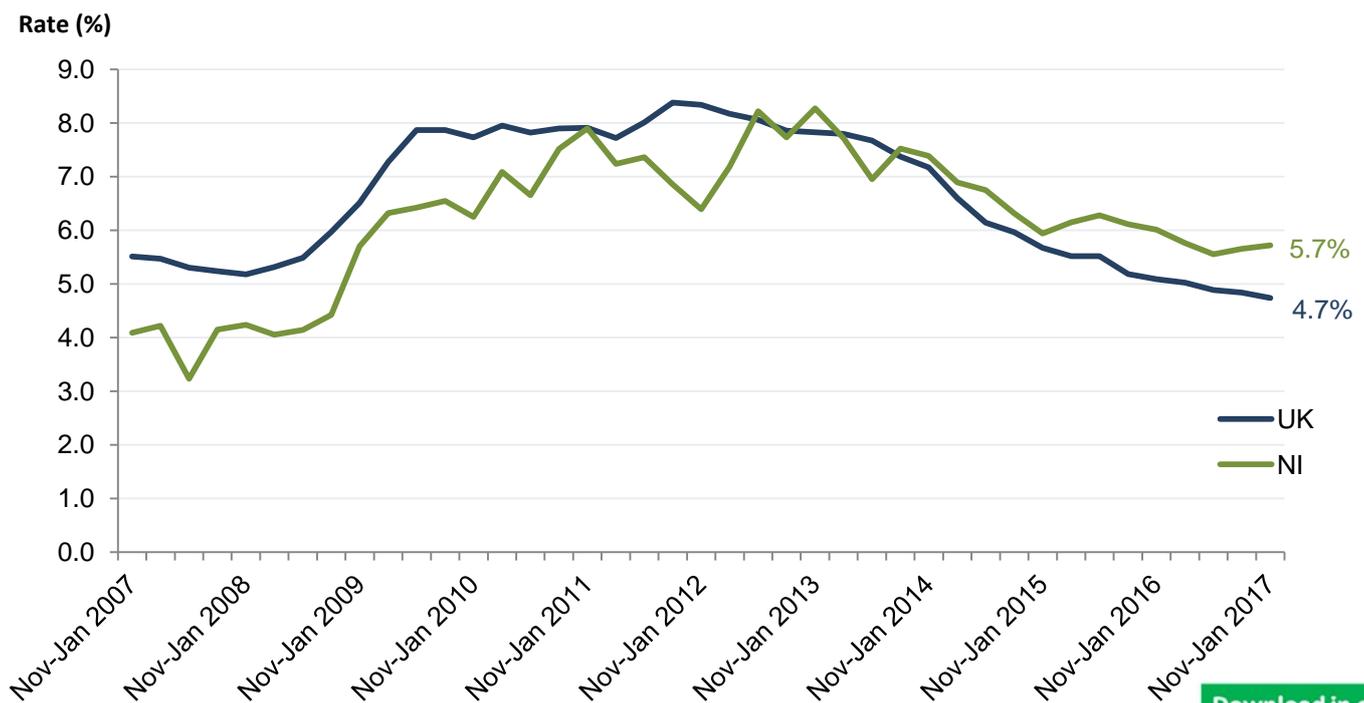
The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household sample survey carried out by interviewing individuals about their personal circumstances and work. It provides a rich source of information on the labour force using internationally agreed definitions. However, the estimates from it are subject to sampling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

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

## Key Findings

- LFS unemployment rate in NI increased over the quarter
- LFS unemployment rate in NI above the UK average and below the EU and RoI rates
- NI long-term unemployment rate markedly higher than that of the UK

**Figure 2: Seasonally adjusted unemployment rate, Nov-Jan 2007 to Nov-Jan 2017**



## LFS unemployment

The unemployment rate for the period November - January 2017 was estimated at 5.7%. This was:

- an increase of 0.1 percentage points (pps) over the quarter and
- a decrease of 0.3 percentage points (pps) over the year.

The number of unemployed persons was estimated at 51,000, which was:

- up 1,000 over the quarter
- down 2,000 over the year.

## **UK national and international LFS comparisons**

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

The most recent NI unemployment rate (5.7%) was:

- above the overall UK average rate (4.7%)
- the second highest rate among the twelve UK regions
- below the European Union (8.2%) and Republic of Ireland (7.2%) rates for December 2016.

## **Long-term and youth unemployment**

The long-term unemployment rate (percentage of unemployed who have been unemployed for 1 year or more) was 43.3%, which was:

- down 6.2 percentage points over the year
- markedly higher than the UK average rate (25.7%).

The youth unemployment rate (percentage of economically active 18 - 24 year olds who are unemployed) was 14.4% and was:

- down 4.1 percentage points over the year
- higher than the UK average rate (10.4%).

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

[LFS unemployment](#)

## Claimant count

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

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

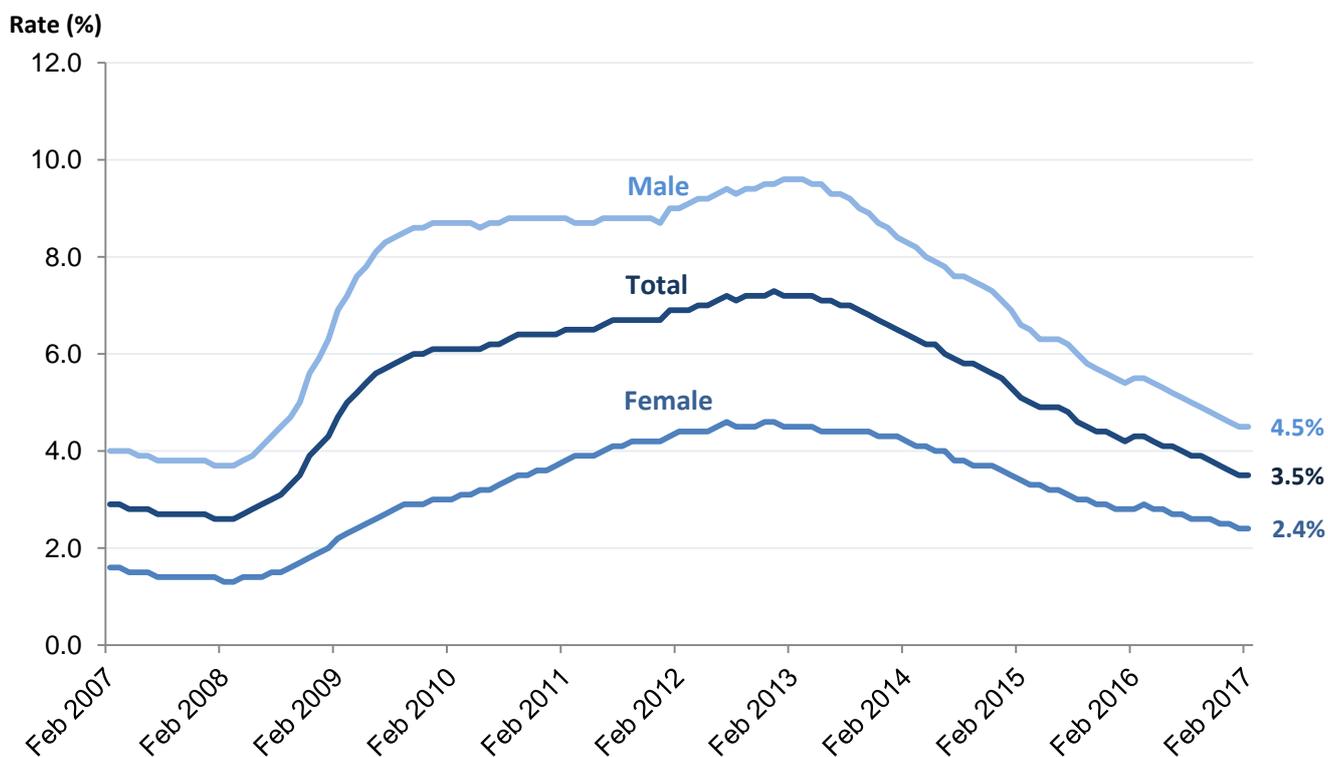
**Percentage of workforce:** This measure expresses the number of claimants as a percentage of workforce jobs plus claimants. Workforce jobs are the sum of employee jobs, self-employment jobs, HM Forces, & government-supported trainees. This measure is only available at the NI level.

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

## Key Findings

- Over the month to February 2017, the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits in NI decreased by 300
- Claimant count (31,600) was down by 6,800 over the year to February 2017
- The male claimant count showed a larger decrease over the year than the female count
- Claimant count rate was highest in Derry City and Strabane District Council Area

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



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## Claimant count unemployment

NI seasonally adjusted claimant count stood at 31,600 (3.5% of the workforce) in February 2017, representing:

- a decrease of 300 from last month's revised total
- a decrease of 6,800 (17.7%) over the year
- a decrease of 0.8 pps in the workforce unemployment rate over the year.

The NI figure has fallen by 33,100 since its most recent peak in February 2013. The most recent level remained above the low-point in September 2007 (23,500) and showed a decrease of 300 over the month to February 2017.

## Claimant count gender comparison

The seasonally adjusted claimant count by gender showed:

- the claimant count is made up of 21,700 males and 9,900 females
- 4.5% of the male workforce were on the claimant count, much higher than the female rate (2.4%)
- female claimants decreased by 16.1% (1,900) over the last year, which was a lower percentage decrease than male claimants, who decreased by 18.4% (4,900).

## Youth claimants (not adjusted for seasonality)

A total of 7,715 under 25's (23.6% of all claimants) were claiming benefits in February 2017, which showed:

- an increase of 3.4% (254 claimants) over the month
- a decrease of 23.9% (2,422) over the year.

## Long-term claimants (not adjusted for seasonality)

At February 2017, 10,850 (33.3% of all claimants) were claiming benefits for a year or more, which showed:

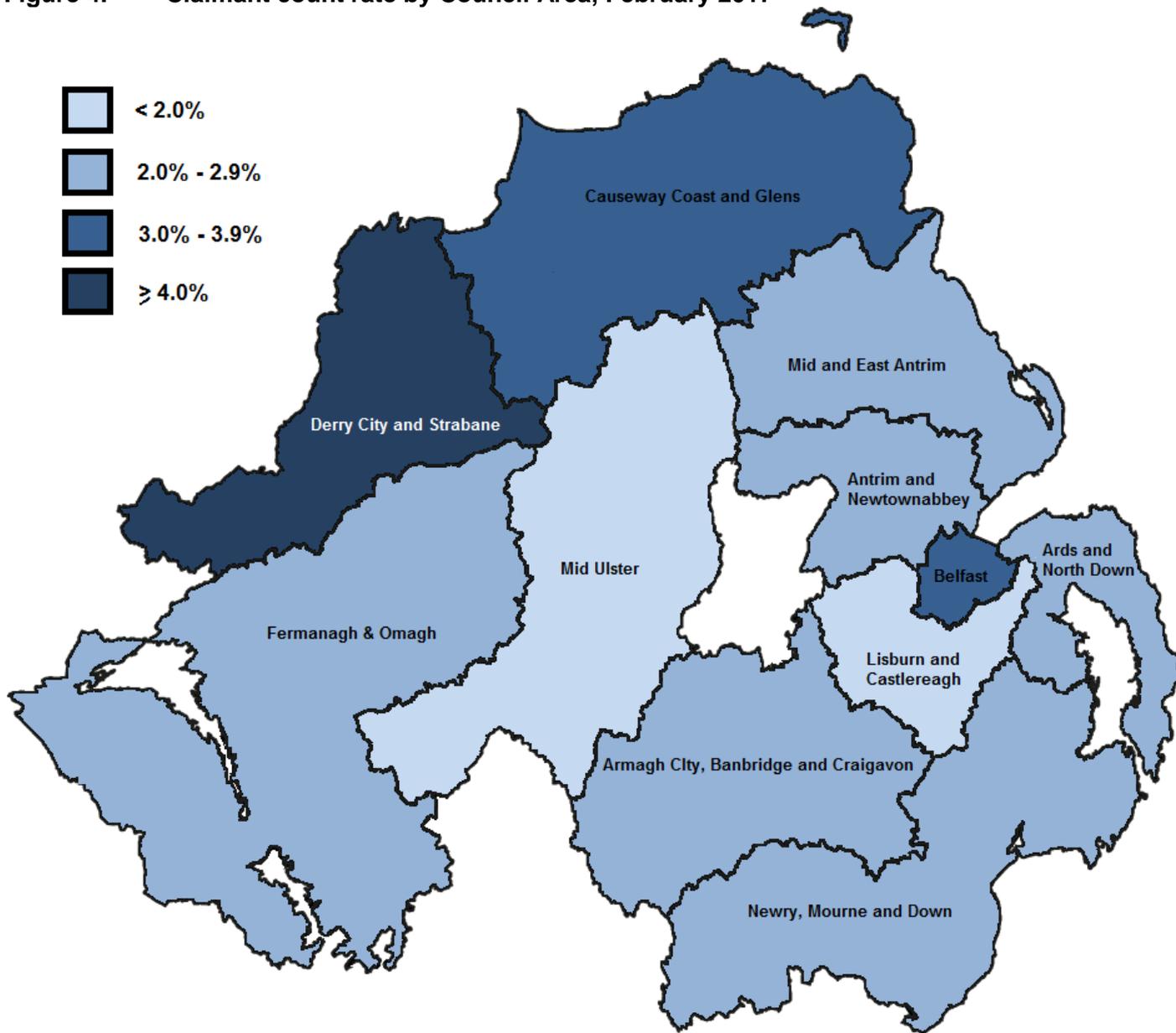
- a decrease of 1.8% (204 claimants) over the month
- a decrease of 24.6% (3,534) over the year.

## Changes in unemployment benefit

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

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

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



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### Claimant count Council Area comparison

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

- the highest claimant count rates were in Derry City and Strabane (5.3%) and Belfast (3.7%).
- all 11 Council Areas showed a decrease over the year, with the largest decreases in Fermanagh and Omagh (25.6%), Newry, Mourne and Down (23.2%) and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (23.1%).

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

**Table 2: Claimant count by Council Area, February 2017**

Council Area	Number of claimants			% of working age			Change over month		Change over year	
	Males	Females	All	Males	Females	All	Number	%	Number	%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	1,411	574	1,985	3.3	1.3	2.2	9	0.5	-278	-12.3
Ards and North Down	1,752	673	2,425	3.7	1.3	2.5	30	1.3	-302	-11.1
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	1,743	873	2,616	2.7	1.3	2.0	15	0.6	-787	-23.1
Belfast	6,054	2,229	8,283	5.6	2.0	3.7	27	0.3	-1,505	-15.4
Causeway Coast and Glens	1,810	897	2,707	4.0	2.0	3.0	-8	-0.3	-672	-19.9
Derry City and Strabane	3,477	1,615	5,092	7.4	3.3	5.3	13	0.3	-1,040	-17.0
Fermanagh and Omagh	1,110	581	1,691	3.0	1.6	2.3	-7	-0.4	-583	-25.6
Lisburn and Castlereagh	1,098	472	1,570	2.5	1.1	1.8	32	2.1	-335	-17.6
Mid and East Antrim	1,573	655	2,228	3.7	1.5	2.6	52	2.4	-195	-8.0
Mid Ulster	933	571	1,504	2.0	1.3	1.6	14	0.9	-406	-21.3
Newry, Mourne and Down	1,730	792	2,522	3.1	1.4	2.3	-1	0.0	-763	-23.2
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>22,691</b>	<b>9,932</b>	<b>32,623</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>-6,866</b>	<b>-17.4</b>

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## Notes:

1. This information is unadjusted for seasonality.

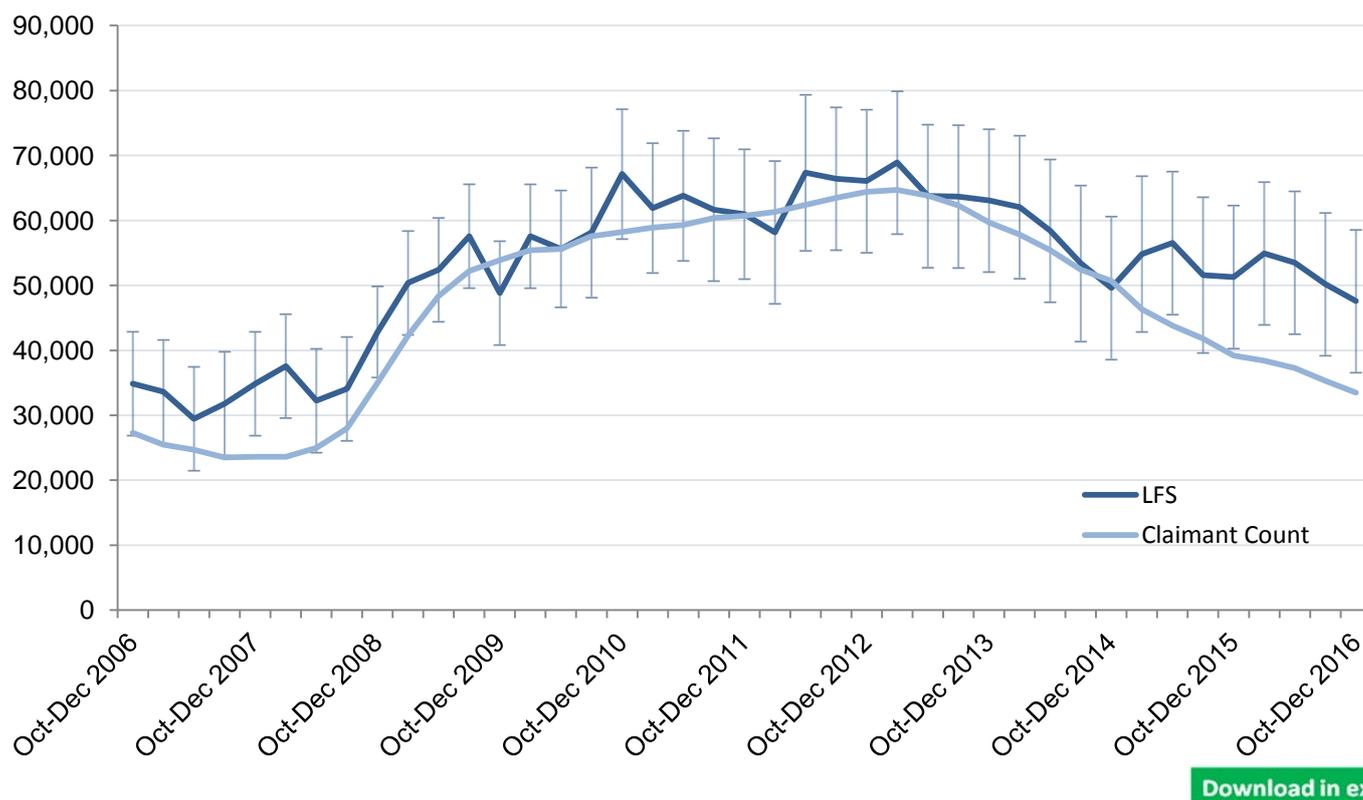
Further information is available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website: [Claimant count unemployment](#)

## Comparison between LFS unemployment and claimant count

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

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

**Figure 5: Seasonally adjusted LFS unemployment and claimant count, 2006 – 2016**



[Download in excel](#)

Notes:

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

The chart shows that, although the two series are measuring different things, the overall trend is similar over time. The LFS confidence intervals demonstrate the variability of the LFS estimate, showing that on many occasions the claimant count level falls within the range of the LFS estimate. Over the last 10 years, the lowest rates were recorded for both measures just prior to the economic downturn in 2008 – LFS unemployment was 29,000 in April – June 2007 and claimant count reached 23,500 in September 2007. The most recent LFS unemployment was reported as 51,000 (November - January 2017) and claimant count as 31,600 in February 2017.

## Redundancies

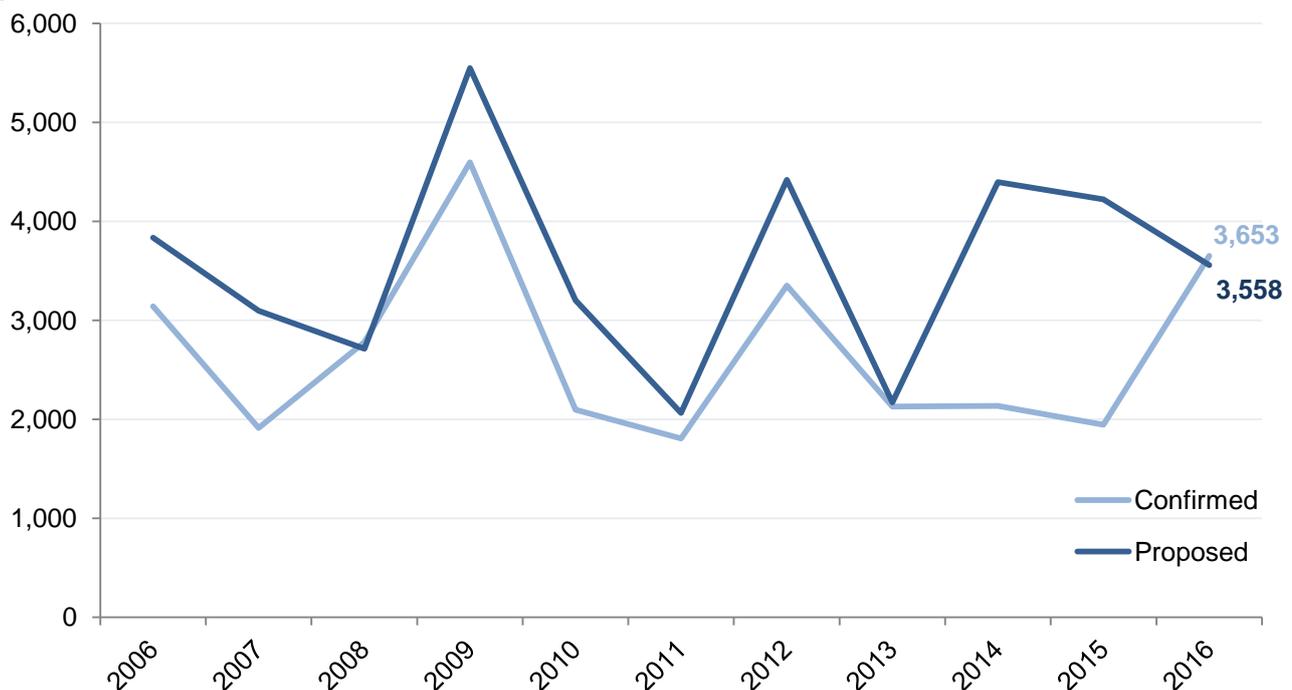
Under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Amended 8 October 2006) companies are only legally required to notify the Department of impending redundancies of 20 or more employees. Companies who propose less than 20 redundancies are not included in the statistics. As a result, the figures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

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

## Key Findings

- During February 2017 the Department was notified of 134 confirmed redundancies in Northern Ireland
- Confirmed redundancies increased over the year
- Highest proportion of redundancies found in Manufacturing
- Outstanding (proposed but not confirmed) redundancies down 31% since this time last year

Figure 6: Confirmed and proposed redundancies – annual totals, 2006 - 2016



[Download in excel](#)

## Confirmed and proposed redundancies

The latest figures show that there were:

- 240 proposed redundancies notified between mid February 2017 and mid March 2017, representing a decrease on the previous monthly period total of 319 proposed redundancies
- 134 confirmed redundancies in February 2017.

Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 3,798 proposed redundancies, a decrease of 13% from the previous year (4,360)
- 3,552 confirmed redundancies which was an increase of 79% from the previous year (1,987).

Currently there are 2,339 outstanding redundancies (that is, proposed but not confirmed), which is 31% lower than this time last year (3,367). It should be noted that since all proposed redundancies do not actually take place, the confirmed total provides a better indication of real job losses.

### **Redundancies by sector**

Of the 3,552 confirmed redundancies:

- 1,986 or 56% were in manufacturing
- 487 redundancies (14% of all redundancies) occurred in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- a further 293 redundancies (8% of all redundancies) occurred in the financial and insurance activities.

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

# 3

## Employment

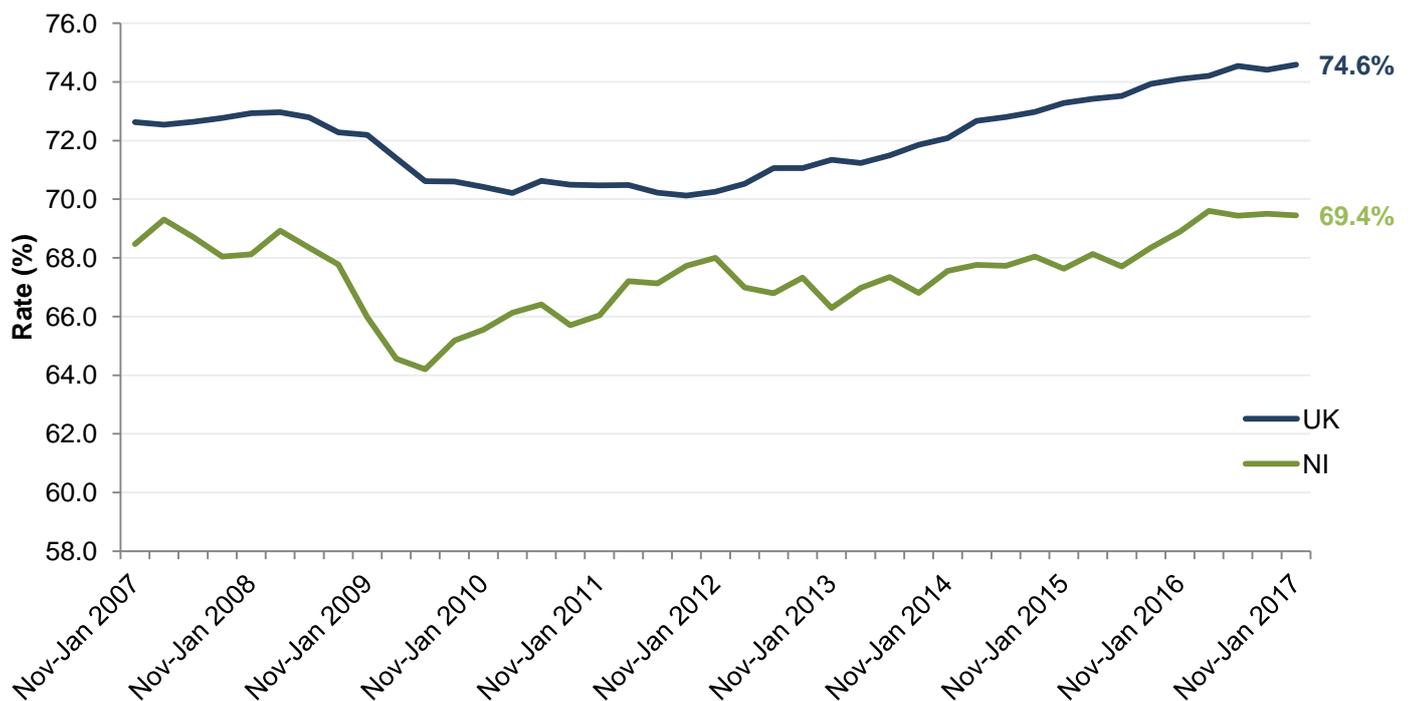
### LFS employment

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

### Key Findings

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

**Figure 7: Seasonally adjusted employment rate, Nov-Jan 2007 to Nov-Jan 2017**



[Download in excel](#)

### Employment

Figure 7 shows that the NI employment rate has consistently been below the UK average over the last 10 years. The most recent NI employment rate for those aged 16-64 for the period November – January 2017 was estimated at 69.4%, this represents:

- an decrease of 0.1 pps over the quarter
- an increase of 0.6 pps over the year.

The number of persons in employment (16+) in the period November - January 2017 was estimated at 838,000, which was:

- an increase of 1,000 over the quarter and
- an increase of 5,000 over the year.

### **Employment by gender**

Of the total, 52% (438,000) were male and 48% (400,000) were female, within which:

- the male employment rate (72.6%) decreased by 2.4 pps over the year
- the female rate (66.4%) increased by 3.5 pps over the year.

### **Regional comparison**

The employment rate in NI (69.4%) was:

- below the UK average (74.6%)
- the lowest rate among the twelve UK regions.

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

[LFS employment](#)

## Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) – First published March 2017

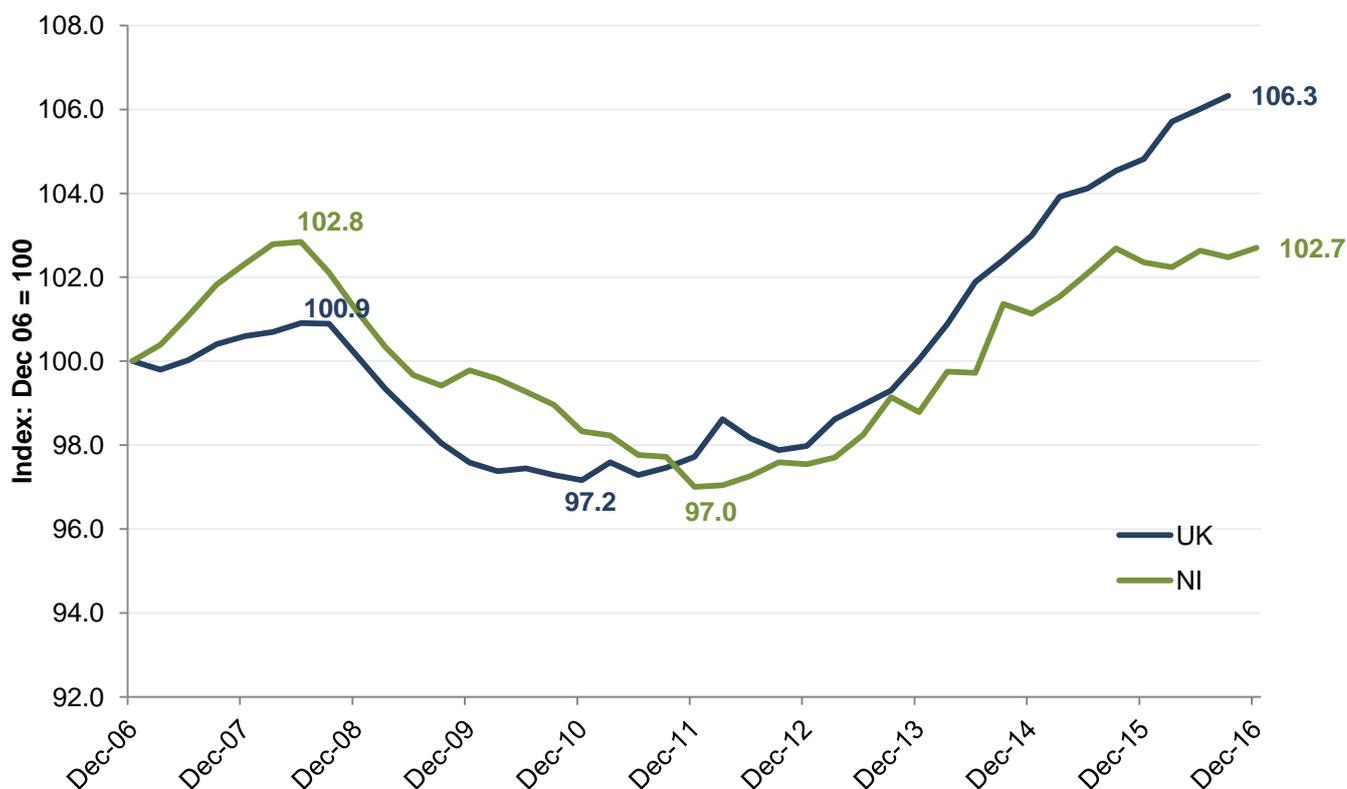
The QES is a business survey which samples approximately 5,700 companies who are asked to supply the Department with employment data for each of their business activities. This information is then collated by Economic and Labour Market Statistics, from which employee jobs estimates are produced.

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

### Key Findings

- Employee jobs increased over the quarter and over the year

**Figure 8: Index of Employee Jobs, December 2006 – December 2016**



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Figures are indexed to December 2006

The latest available UK figures relate to September 2016

Figure 8 shows the estimated seasonally adjusted employee jobs, indexed to allow comparison between NI and the UK. Both series peaked in June 2008 with the UK reaching its lowest point in December 2010 – over one year before the NI low in December 2011. The UK is above their pre downturn peak whilst NI in December 2016 is 0.1% below their series peak.

### Employee Jobs

The seasonally adjusted employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at December 2016 was 731,980, which was:

- an increase of 0.2% (1,630 jobs) from the September 2016 estimate of 730,350
- an increase of 0.3% (2,490 jobs) jobs over the year.

## Employee jobs by sector

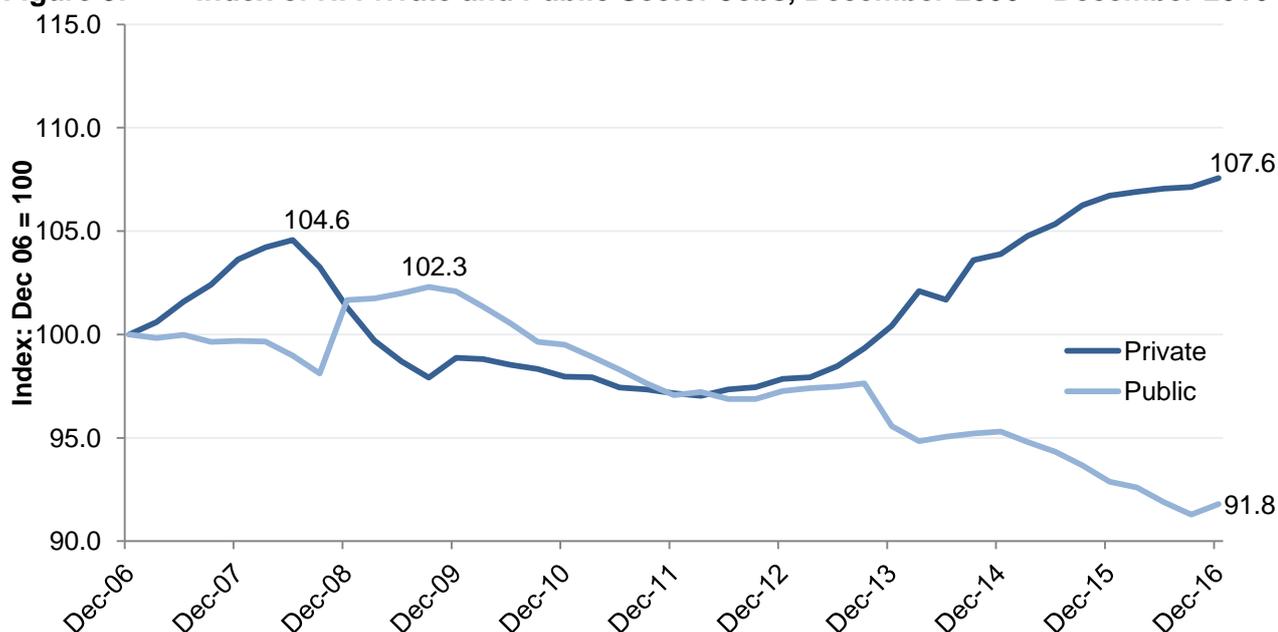
The seasonally adjusted quarterly change consisted of:

- increases of 1.2% in the construction sector (350 jobs), 0.3% in the services sector (1,620 jobs) and 0.4% in the other industries sector (80 jobs)
- a decrease of 0.5% (-420 jobs) in the manufacturing sector
- an increase of 0.5% (1,090 jobs) in the public sector; and an increase of 0.4% (2,170 jobs) in the private sector.

Over the year to December 2016:

- the public sector decreased by 1.2% (-2,410 jobs)
- the private sector increased by 0.8% (4,230 jobs).

**Figure 9: Index of NI Private and Public Sector Jobs, December 2006 – December 2016**



Figures are indexed to December 2006

[Download in excel](#)

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

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

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

Figure 9 shows that private sector jobs peaked in June 2008 and public sector reached its peak in September 2009. In the latest quarter, private sector jobs experienced an increase of 2,170 jobs (0.4%) while public sector jobs increased by 1,090 jobs (0.5%); the first quarterly increase in public sector jobs since December 2014.

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

[Quarterly Employment Survey](#)

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

## **Comparisons between LFS Employment and QES Employee Jobs**

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

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

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

## Vacancies – First published January 2017 by Department for Communities

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

There were 13,507 vacancies notified in the third quarter of the 2016/17 financial year, an increase of 12% when compared against the same period in the 2015/16 financial year.

**Table 3: Monthly Notified Vacancies, 2015/16 - 2016/17**

Financial Year 2015/16	Notified Vacancies (1)			Total
	Full-Time	Part-Time	Casual	
Jan-16	2,479	1,584	497	4,560
Feb-16	2,601	1,667	390	4,658
Mar-16	2,813	1,653	449	4,915
Financial Year 2016/17				
Apr-16	2,880	1,779	476	5,135
May-16	3,139	1,920	433	5,492
Jun-16	3,032	1,870	451	5,353
Jul-16	2,370	1,590	383	4,343
Aug-16	3,385	1,975	492	5,852
Sep-16	3,583	2,627	554	6,764
Oct-16	2,887	2,131	422	5,440
Nov-16	2,888	2,024	521	5,433
Dec-16	1,552	862	220	2,634
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,609</b>	<b>21,682</b>	<b>5,288</b>	<b>60,579</b>

Figures in the above table are not National Statistics.

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(1) Monthly notified vacancies are all new vacancy positions notified and added to JobCentres / Jobs & Benefits Offices of the Department for Communities. Notified is subdivided by financial years which run from 1st April to 31st March. All statistics are derived from data extracted from the Department for Communities Client Management System (CMS) on 6th Jan 2017.

(2) Vacancies data is published quarterly and reported by financial year. Data for Jan-Mar 2017 will be published on 26th Apr 2017.

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

# 4

## Economic inactivity

### LFS economic inactivity

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

### Key Findings

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

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

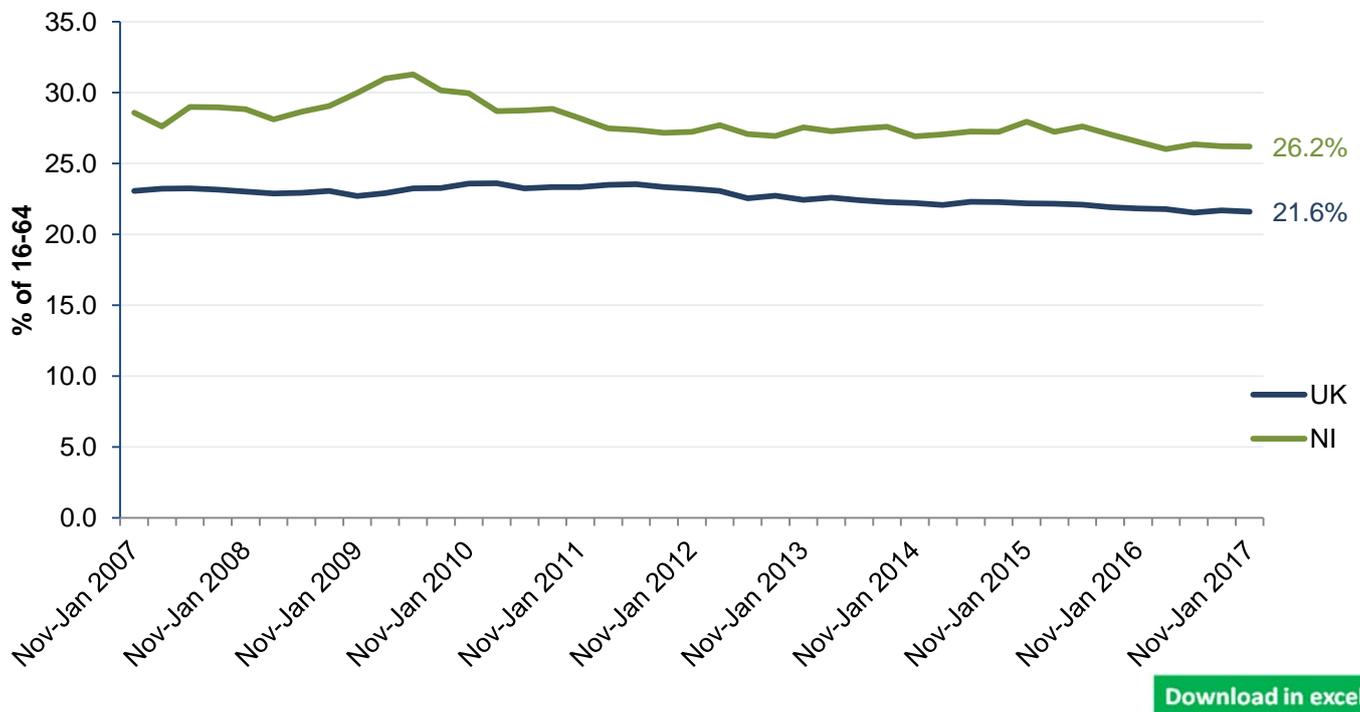


Figure 10 shows that over the last 10 years the NI economic inactivity rate was consistently higher than the UK.

### Economically inactive

The seasonally adjusted economic inactivity rate (16-64) for November – January 2017 was estimated at 26.2%, which represented:

- no change over the quarter and
- a decrease of 0.3 percentage points over the year.

The number of economically inactive persons (16-64) was estimated at 307,000, which was:

- unchanged over the quarter and
- a decrease of 3,000 over the year.

Of the economically inactive:

- 41% (125,000) were male and 59% (182,000) were female

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

- 79% did not want a job while 21% did
- 31% were long-term sick / disabled, 25% were students, 24% were looking after the family / home, 10% were retired and 10% cited an 'other' reason for inactivity.

### **Regional comparison**

The NI economic inactivity rate for those aged 16-64 stood at 26.2%. This was:

- significantly higher than the UK average rate (21.6%)
- the highest of the twelve UK regions.

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

[LFS economic inactivity](#)

# 5

## Earnings

### Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) – First published October 2016

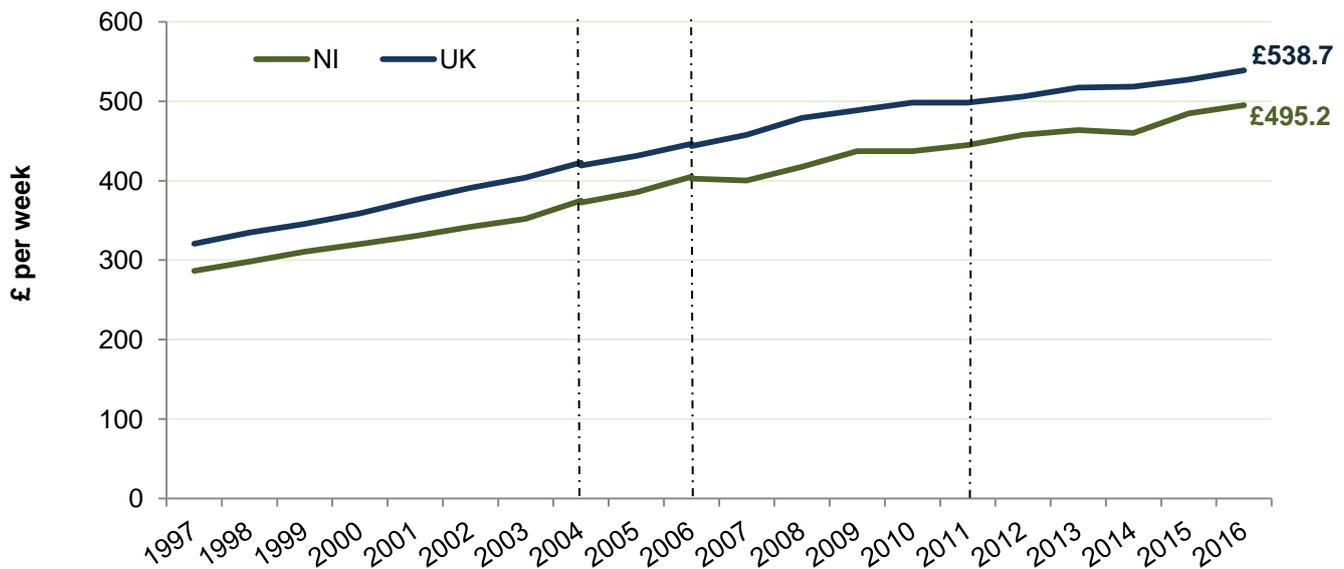
ASHE provides information on employees' hourly, weekly and annual earnings by gender, work pattern, industry and occupation. It has been designed by the Office for National Statistics and is carried out in Northern Ireland by NISRA statisticians.

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

#### Key Findings

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

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



\* Dashed vertical lines represent discontinuities caused by methodology changes.

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#### Earnings

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

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

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

### **LFS unemployment**

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

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

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

### **LFS employment**

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

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

### **Sampling variability**

The LFS is a sample survey, and as such, estimates obtained from it are subject to sampling variability. If we drew many samples each would give a different result. The ranges shown for the LFS data in the table overleaf represent 95% confidence intervals i.e. we would expect that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value. These confidence intervals have been calculated using data that is not seasonally adjusted, with the relevant sampling errors produced then applied to the seasonally adjusted data.

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

**Table 4: Sampling variability of labour market estimates, November - January 2017**

	Reference period	Estimate	Sampling variability of estimate	Change over quarter	Sampling variability of quarterly change	Change over year	Sampling variability of annual change	Sampling variability of change
Unemployment <sup>1</sup>	Nov-Jan 2017	51,000	+/-11,000	1,000	+/-11,000	-2,000	+/-15,000	+/-16,000
Employment <sup>2</sup>	Nov-Jan 2017	838,000	+/-25,000	1,000	+/-18,000	5,000	+/-33,000	+/-36,000
Economically inactive <sup>2</sup>	Nov-Jan 2017	569,000	+/-23,000	0	+/-16,000	6,000	+/-30,000	+/-32,000
Unemployment rate <sup>1</sup>	Nov-Jan 2017	5.7%	+/-1.2pps	0.1pps	+/-1.2pps	-0.3pps	+/-1.7pps	+/-1.8pps
Employment rate <sup>2</sup>	Nov-Jan 2017	69.4%	+/-1.8pps	-0.1pps	+/-1.3pps	0.6pps	+/-2.4pps	+/-2.6pps
Economic inactivity rate <sup>2</sup>	Nov-Jan 2017	26.2%	+/-1.7pps	0.0pps	+/-1.2pps	-0.3pps	+/-2.3pps	+/-2.5pps

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

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

[Download in excel](#)

Please see attached link for further LFS notes and definitions:

[Labour Force Survey Background Information](#)

### LFS Comparisons

Estimates of employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity are derived from the LFS, a survey of households. The most robust estimates of short-term movements in these estimates are obtained by comparing the estimates over rolling three month periods. For example the 3 months ending January 2017 should be compared with the estimates for August - October 2016, which were first published on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016. This provides a more robust estimate than comparing with the estimates for October - December 2016. This is because the November and December data are included within both estimates, so effectively observed differences are those between the individual months of October 2016 and January 2017. The LFS is sampled such that it is representative of the NI population over a three month period, not for single month periods.

### Seasonal adjustment

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

### LFS revisions

LFS microdata have recently been revised to incorporate the latest population estimates. The revisions affect LFS data from the period May - July 2012 onwards and were first published in May 2016. The magnitude of the revisions are relatively small, with the revisions to the unemployment rate falling within +/- 0.1 percentage points and the working age employment rate within +/- 0.2 percentage points. The procedures being applied to the NI LFS results are consistent with those applied by the Office for National Statistics to other UK regions.

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

[Labour market statistics revisions policy](#)

## **Definition of 'working age'**

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

## **Claimant count definition**

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

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

## **Universal Credit**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Redundancy Legal Requirements**

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

## **Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)**

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

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

[ASHE Background Information](#)

## **Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) Revisions**

QES estimates are revised quarterly to reflect the latest information provided to the Department by employers. The September 2016 seasonally adjusted estimate first published in December 2016 has subsequently been revised down (0.3%). For further details of QES revisions please see link below:

[QES Background Information](#)

**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:

### **Writing to:**

Andrew Mawhinney  
Economic & Labour Market Statistics Branch,  
Room 110, Netherleigh,  
Massey Avenue,  
Belfast BT4 2JP.

Tel: (028) 9052 9668

Fax: (028) 9052 9658

Textphone: (028) 9052 9304

Email: [statistics@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:statistics@finance-ni.gov.uk)

Twitter: [@ELMSNISRA](#)

## Table No. Title

### Labour Force Survey

2.1a	Labour Market Structure – Seasonally Adjusted
2.1b	Labour Market Structure
2.2	Economic Activity by Age
2.3	Economic Activity Rates by Age
2.4a	Economically Inactive Who Want Work
2.4b	Economically Inactive Who Do Not Want Work
2.5	Economically Inactive by Age
2.6	Employment by Category
2.7	Actual Weekly Hours of Work
2.8	Employment by Age
2.9	Unemployment by Age
2.10	Unemployment by Duration
2.11	International Comparisons of Unemployment

### Claimant Count

3.1	Latest Seasonally Adjusted
3.2	Latest Unadjusted
3.3	Seasonally adjusted over the year
3.4	Unadjusted over the year
3.5	Long-term Claimant Count Over the Year
3.6	Youth Claimant Count Over the Year
3.7	Travel-to-Work Area
3.8a	District Council Area
3.8b	New District Council Area
3.9	Parliamentary Constituency Area
3.10	NUTS iii
3.11	Usual Occupation
3.12	Outflows by Destination (including percentage recycled)
3.13	Total Annual Outflows by Destination
3.14	On flows by District Council Area and Age
3.15	Ward Data
3.16	Super Output Area

### Redundancies

4.1	Council Area
4.2	Parliamentary Constituency
4.3	Travel-to-Work Area
4.4	Standard Industrial Classification

## **Quarterly Employment Survey**

- 5.1 Northern Ireland Seasonally Adjusted Employee Jobs by Gender - December 2016
- 5.2 Northern Ireland Seasonally Adjusted Employee Jobs by Industry Section March 2005 - December 2016
- 5.3 Northern Ireland Unadjusted Employee Jobs by Industry Section - March 2005 - December 2016
- 5.4 Northern Ireland Employee Jobs (Unadjusted) by Industry Section – December 2016
- 5.5 Northern Ireland Unadjusted Employee Jobs by Gender and Industry Section - December 2016
- 5.5b Northern Ireland Seasonally Adjusted Employee Jobs by Industry Section - December 2015, September 2016 and December 2016
- 5.6 Self Employment Jobs in NI by Broad Industry Group (June of Each Year)
- 5.7 Workforce in Employment in Northern Ireland (June of Each Year)
- 5.8 Northern Ireland Unadjusted Employee Jobs by Industry Section - December 2016
- 5.9 Northern Ireland Unadjusted Public Sector Jobs - December 2016
- 5.10 Northern Ireland Seasonally Adjusted Public and Private Sector Employee Jobs March 2005 - December 2016
- 5.11 Northern Ireland Unadjusted Public and Private Sector Employee Jobs March 2005 - December 2016
- 5.12 Northern Ireland Employee Jobs by SIC code June 1971 to December 2016
- 5.13 Northern Ireland Employee Jobs by broad industry sector June 1971 to December 2016
- 5.14a Northern Ireland Employee Jobs for public sector December 2006 to December 2016
- 5.14b Northern Ireland Employee Jobs for public sector June 1974 to September 2006

## **Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings**

- 1.1 ASHE 2016 (provisional)
- 2.1 ASHE 2016 (provisional) by industry
- 2.2 ASHE 2016 (provisional) by occupation (2 digit)
- 2.3 ASHE 2016 (provisional) by occupation (4 digit)
- 2.4 ASHE 2016 (provisional) by age
- 2.5 ASHE 2016 (provisional) by public/private sector
- 2.6 ASHE 2016 (provisional) by skill level
- 3.1 ASHE 2016 (provisional) Local Government District (by place of work)
- 3.2 ASHE 2016 (provisional) Local Government District (by residence)
- 3.3 ASHE 2016 (provisional) Parliamentary Constituency (by place of work)
- 3.4 ASHE 2016 (provisional) Parliamentary Constituency (by residence)