

Disability Employment Gap in Northern Ireland 2020

Theme: Labour Market

Frequency: Ad hoc

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

Source: Labour Force Survey

The employment rates for people with disabilities and people without disabilities are presented in this paper, alongside the disability employment gap (the gap between these rates). The paper examines the disability employment gap in Northern Ireland (NI) in the context of the United Kingdom (UK), as well as other characteristics as sourced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

The Government Statistical Service harmonised definition for people with disabilities (as referred to within the paper) are those who have a long term (12 months or more) physical or mental health condition that affects their ability to carry out day to day activities. This paper provides data for working aged people (aged 16 to 64) in NI.

Key points

- In 2020 the employment rate for people with disabilities was 38.1%, the employment rate for people without disabilities was 80.3%. The disability employment rate gap was 42.2 percentage points (pps).
- The disability employment gap for NI in 2020 was 42.2pps, compared to 27.9pps for the whole of the UK. Since 2014, the disability employment gap has consistently been higher in Northern Ireland than the rest of the UK.
- The disability employment gap for males and females in 2020 were 49.2pps and 35.5pps respectively.
- The disability employment gap was lowest for those aged 16 to 24 (when compared with other age groups) in 2020, at 18.0pps. This is consistent with trends since 2014 and is due to lower employment rates for those aged 16 to 24 without disabilities.

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National Statistics Status

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

These statistics were designated as National Statistics in August 2010 following a full [assessment of Labour Market Statistics for Northern Ireland](#) against the [Code of Practice for statistics](#). A compliance check in March 2020 recommended the continued designation of the report as a National Statistic. These statistics were considered as part of a wider [assessment of the UK employment and jobs statistics](#).

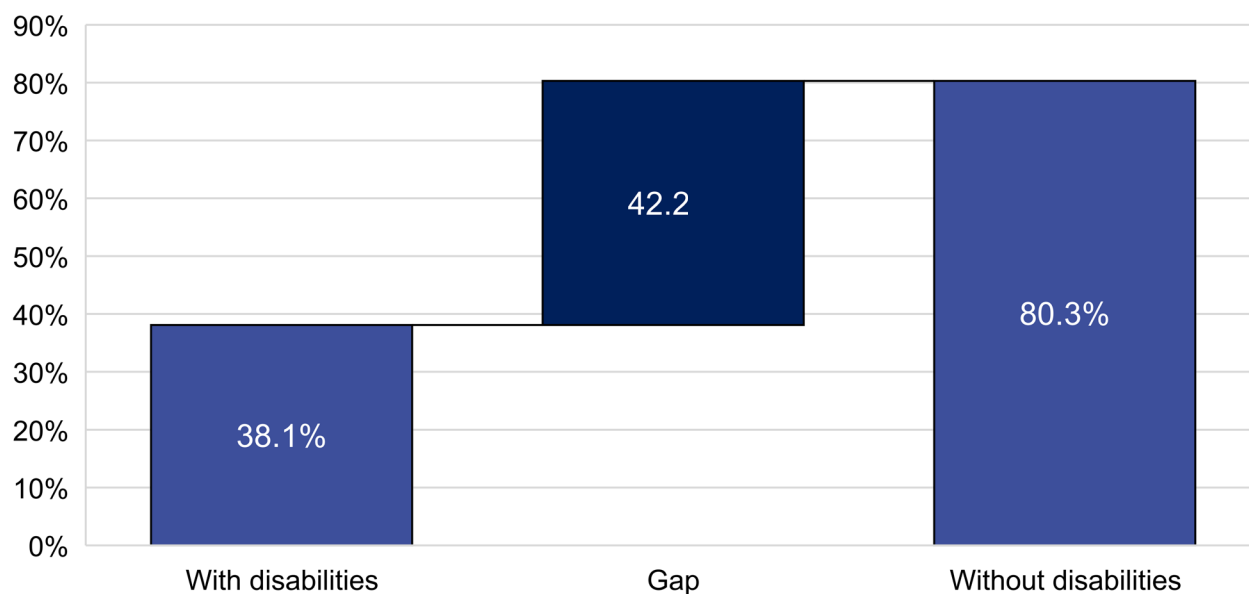
Since the assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- Improved quality of the LFS data by boosting the sample size and improving precision around headline estimates (Please note since the COVID-19 pandemic sample sizes have decreased due to difficulty of collecting survey information from households).
- Reviewed and updated [quality protocols for release](#) for LFS data
- Improved accessibility of labour market statistics by [changing the release dates of statistics to avoid public holidays](#) and amended the format and structure of reports in line with accessibility regulations.

The Disability Employment Gap

The disability employment gap is the difference in the employment rates of those with disabilities and those without disabilities, in percentage points (pps).

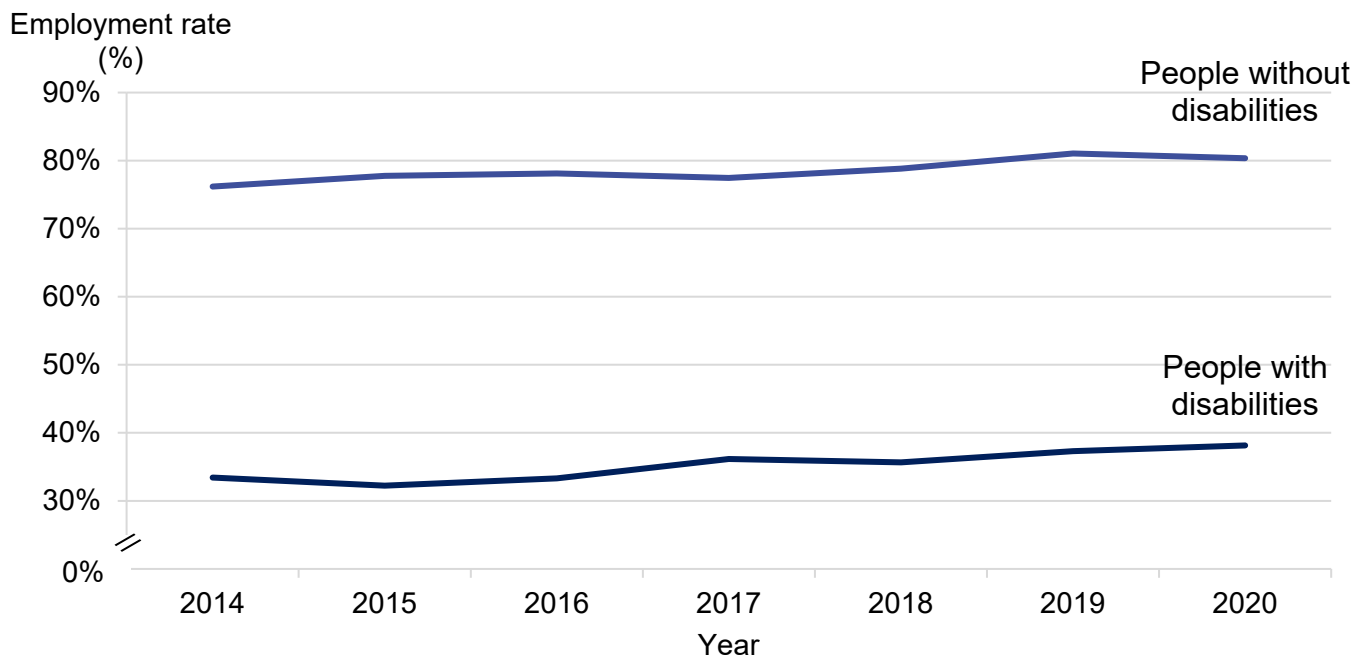
Figure 1: Employment rates by disability status and the disability employment gap (pps), NI, aged 16 to 64, 2020



[Download figure 1 data](#)

Figure 1 presents the employment rates for 2020 for those aged 16 to 64 with and without disabilities alongside the disability employment gap. In 2020, the employment rate for people with disabilities was 38.1%, and the rate for those without disabilities was 80.3%. Therefore, the disability employment gap for NI for 2020 was 42.2pps.

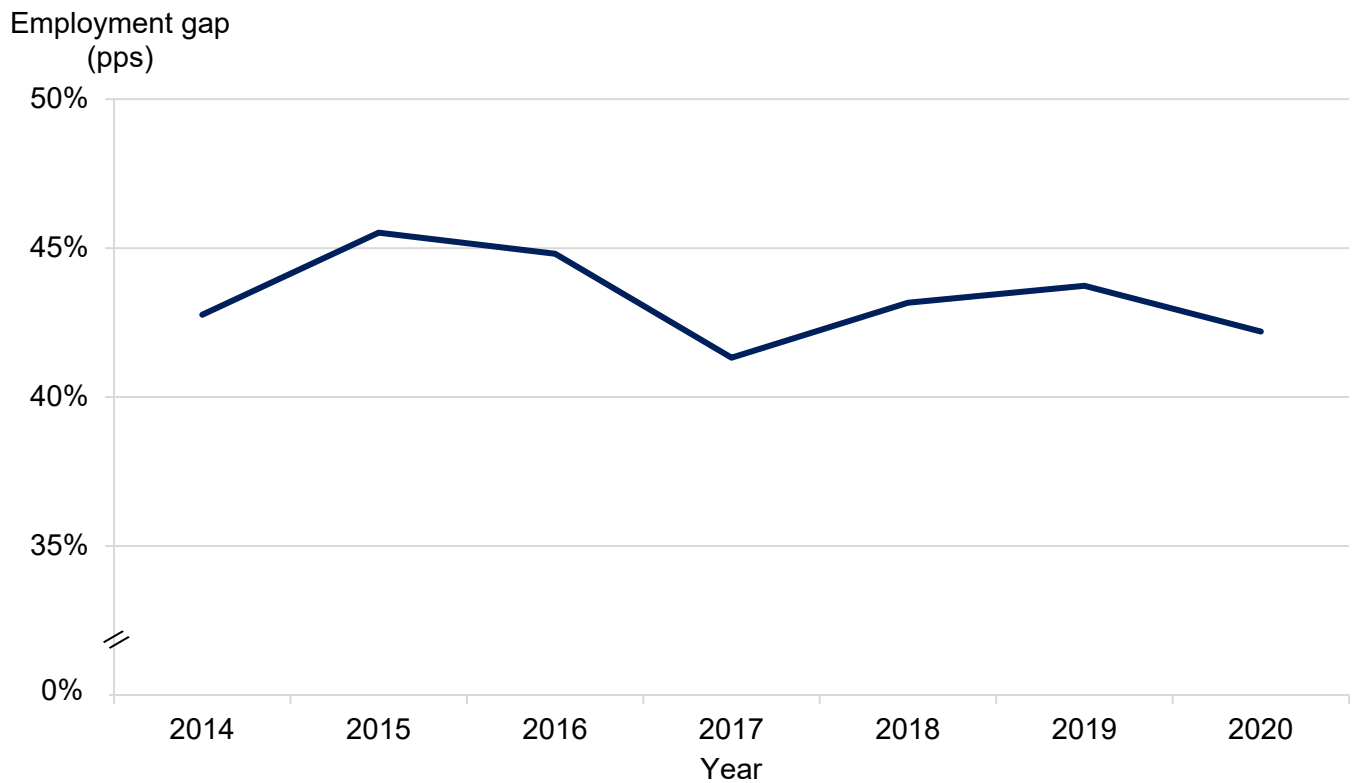
Figure 2: Employment rates by disability status, NI, aged 16 to 64, 2014 to 2020



[Download figure 2 data](#)

Figure 2 shows that the employment rates for people with disabilities has been consistently lower than those without disabilities in NI since 2014. There has been an increase in the employment rates for people with and without disabilities over this time period. In 2020, the employment rate for people with disabilities is 38.1% which is a 4.7pps increase from 2014. For comparison, the employment rate for people without disabilities in 2020 is 80.3%, a 4.2pps increase from 2014.

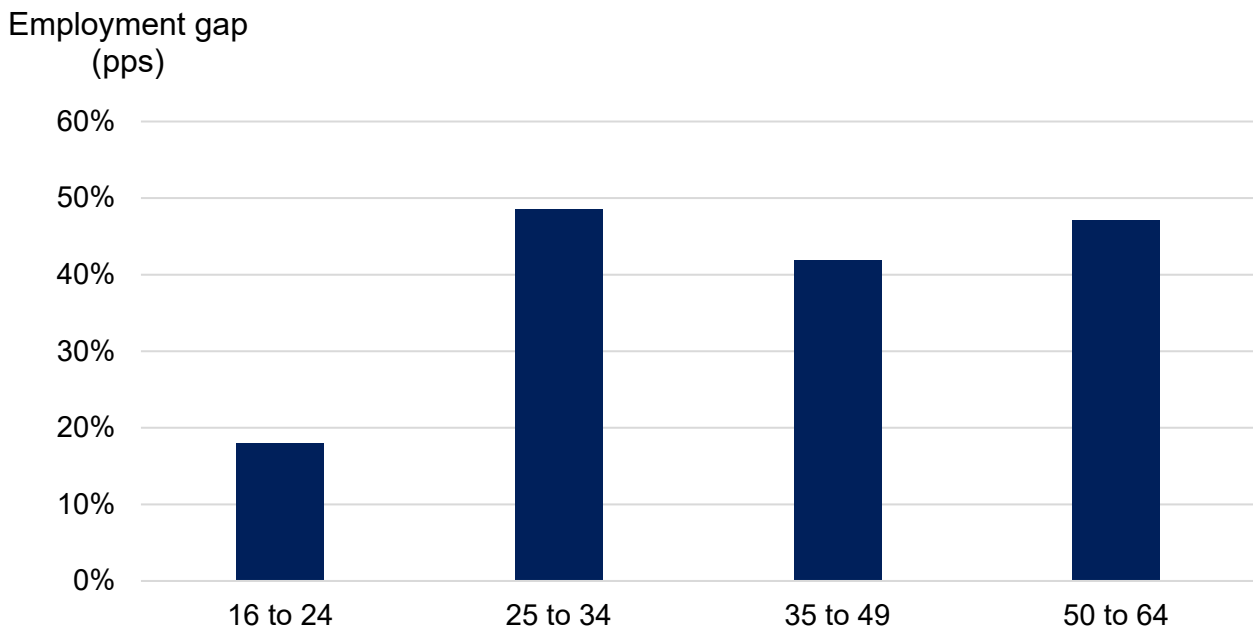
Figure 3: Disability employment gap, NI, aged 16 to 64, 2014 to 2020



[Download figure 3 data](#)

Figure 3 examines the disability employment gap since 2014 for NI. The disability employment gap in NI has ranged between 41pps and 46pps between 2014 and 2020. The disability employment gap of 42.2pps in 2020 was above the low in 2017 (41.3pps) and below the peak gap in 2015 (45.5pps).

Figure 4: Disability employment gap by age, NI, aged 16 to 64, 2020



[Download figure 4 data](#)

Figure 4 shows that the disability employment gap was lowest for those aged 16 to 24 in 2020, at 18.0pps. This trend has been consistent since 2014, where the other age groups had a disability employment gap above 40pps throughout this time period.

Figure 5: Employment rates by disability status and the disability employment gap (pps), NI, aged 16 to 24, 2020

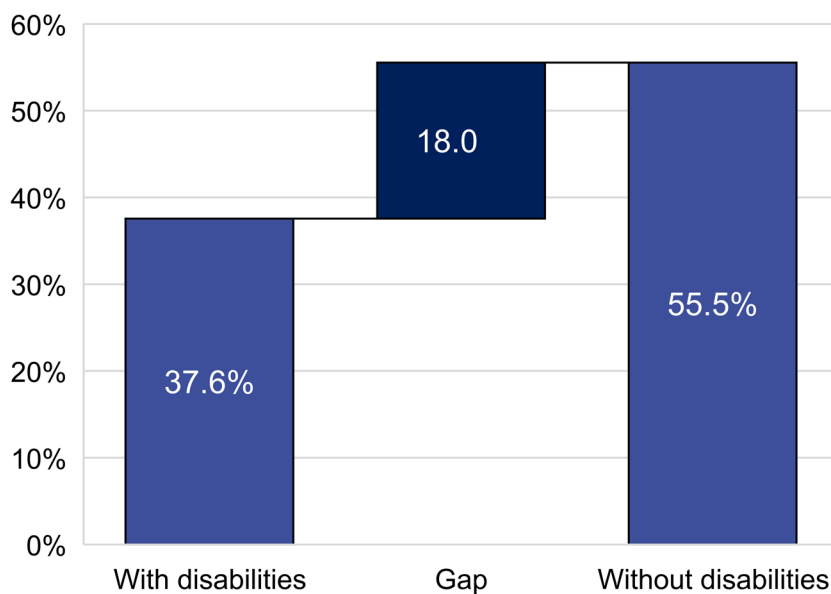


Figure 5 demonstrates the gap for those aged 16 to 24 in 2020. The lower gap is primarily due to the lower employment rate for those without disabilities in this age group (16 to 24) compared to older age groups, while the employment rate for those with disabilities is fairly similar across age groups.

[Download figure 5 data](#)

Figure 6: Disability employment gap by gender, NI, aged 16 to 64, 2020

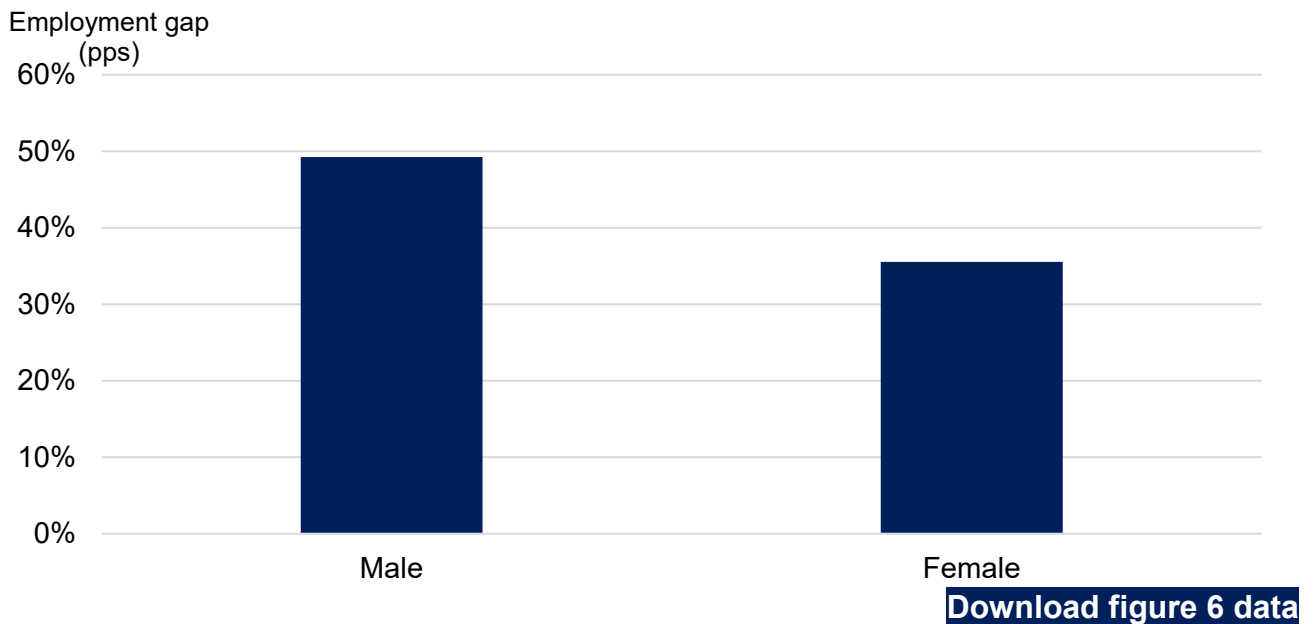
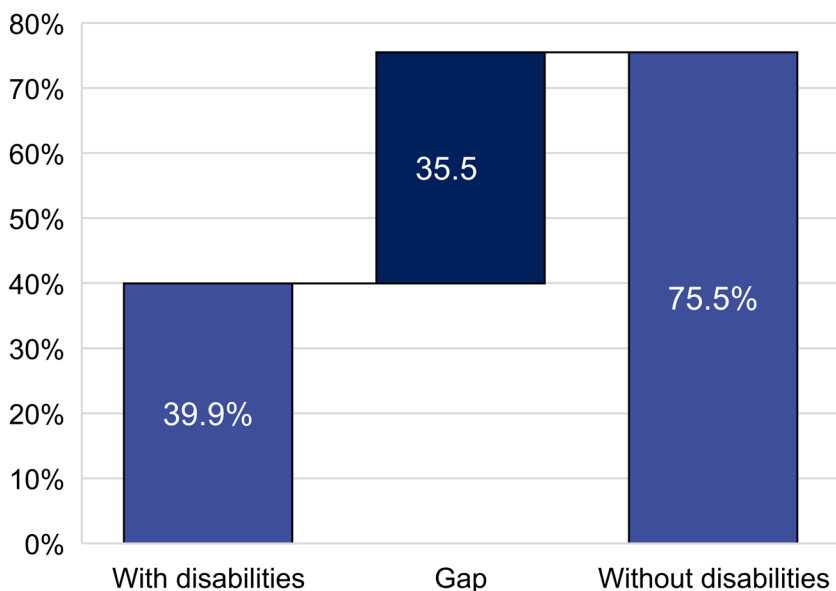


Figure 6 shows the disability employment gap by gender for 2020. The disability employment gap for males was 49.2pps, which was almost 14pps higher than the female employment gap of 35.5pps.

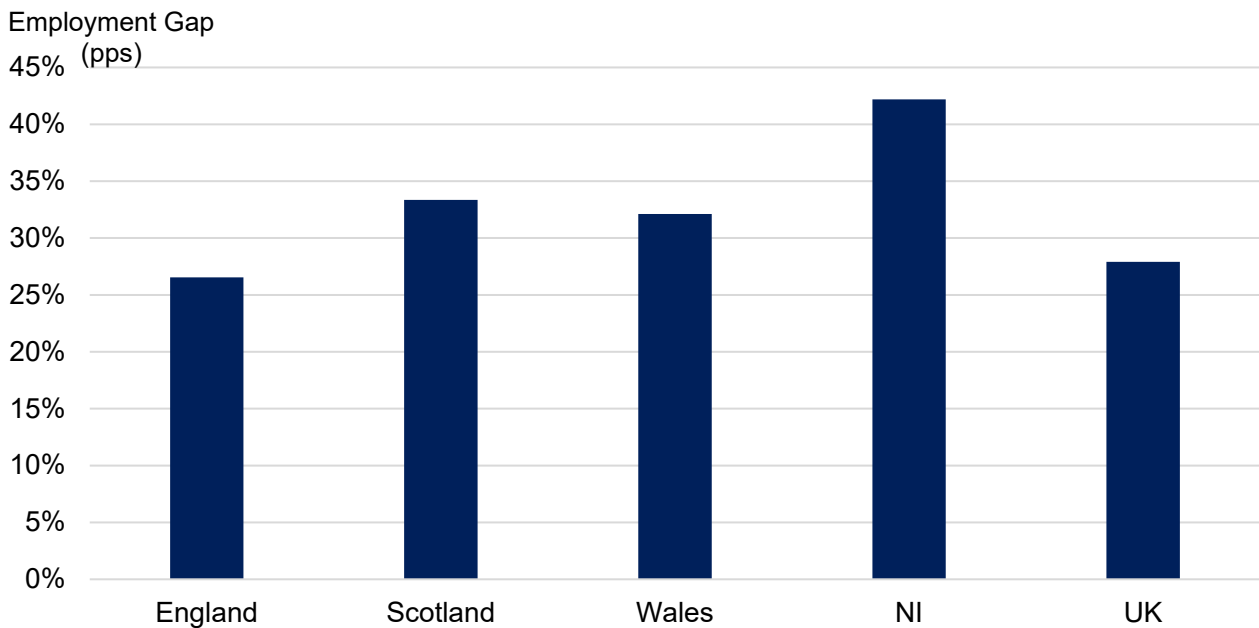
Figure 7: Female employment rates by disability status and the disability employment gap (pps), NI, aged 16 to 64, 2020



Both employment rates (regardless of disability status) *and* the disability employment gap have generally been lower for females than for males since 2014 (This differed only in 2019 and 2020 when employment rates for females with disabilities was higher than males with disabilities).

[Download figure 7 data](#)

Figure 8: Disability employment gap, UK comparison, aged 16 to 64, 2020



[Download figure 8 data](#)

The employment rate of people with disabilities in NI is the lowest of the 4 countries within the UK and the disability employment gap is the largest.

For the majority of the 2014 to 2020 period, NI had the lowest employment rates (people with and without disabilities) but the largest disability employment gap.

Figure 8 shows that the disability employment gap in NI (42.2pps) was 14.3pps higher than the UK disability employment gap for the whole of the UK (27.9pps) in 2020. The disability employment gap in NI has been consistently higher than the rest of the UK since 2014, where the gap has been lowest in England throughout this period.

In 2020 England had the lowest disability employment gap (26.5pps), the highest employment rate of people with disabilities (54.3%) and the highest employment rate of people without disabilities (80.9%). This compares to 42.2pps, 38.1% and 80.3% respectively for NI as shown in figure 1.

Additional information

Background

The LFS annual datasets used for this publication are derived from four consecutive quarters of the LFS. Individuals in each wave are interviewed in five successive quarters, such that in any quarter one wave will be receiving their first interview, one wave their second, and so on, with one receiving their fifth and final interview. The annual dataset is created by selecting the relevant cases from each quarter and combining them to create a dataset of unique cases. Selecting all wave one and five interviews allows the maximum number of respondents over a one-year period to be included whilst avoiding double counting. The resulting sample size of the 2020 dataset is approximately 8,000 individuals.

LFS revisions due to reweighting

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

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

LFS responses are typically weighted to official population projections. However, in July 2021, ONS reweighted the LFS data from January to March 2020 to February to April 2021 based on an LFS specific population that takes changes shown in HMRC's PAYE Real Time Information source into account. The ONS published the [LFS reweighting methodology](#) in an article. NISRA published the [Impact of the LFS reweighting on annual data](#) paper in August 2021, to show the impact of the new weighting methodology for 2020 headline labour market estimates.

Precision of estimates

The LFS is a sample survey and, as such, estimates obtained from it are subject to sampling variability. If we drew many samples each would give a different result. Estimates under a cell count of 3 are disclosive and therefore suppressed. In tables, estimates based on a small sample size are shaded. Small samples may result in less precise estimates, which should be used with caution, in particular should not be used to make statements on relative size when compared to similar values. Unshaded estimates are based on a larger sample size. This is likely to result in estimates of higher precision, although they will still be subject to some sampling variability.

Reporting change

Reported change and the disability employment gap are calculated using unrounded data and presented to 1 decimal place. When a change is less than 0.05pps, it is rounded to 0.0pps and the data is reported as unchanged.

LFS definitions

Employment

The definition of ILO employed applies to anyone (aged 16 to 64) who has carried out at least one hour's paid work in the week prior to interview, or has a job they are temporarily away from (e.g. on holiday). Also included are people who do unpaid work in a family business and people on Government-supported employment training schemes.

Employment rate

The employment rate is the percentage of all working age (16-64) people who are employed.

Disability status

The GSS Harmonised Standards focus on a 'core' definition of people whose condition currently limits their activity. Using the harmonised definition, which is only consistent and comparable across the UK from April 2013 onwards, the following conditions must be met to classify a person as having a disability:

- Answered 'Yes' to the question 'Do you have any physical or mental conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more?' **and**
- Answered either 'Yes, a lot' OR 'Yes, a little' to the question 'Does your condition or illness reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities'

People without disabilities are those who do not meet the harmonised standard definition of disability.

Where a respondent answers that they have a physical or mental health condition(s) or illness(es) lasting or expected to last 12 months or more but it doesn't restrict their activity, they are not classified as having a disability.

Disability employment gap

This is the difference in the employment rate of people with disabilities and people without disabilities.

Further information

If you require further information about the figures contained in this publication or the accompanying tables, please contact the Labour Force Survey team using the details below:

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